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First Premarital Cohabitation in the United States: 2006–2010 National Survey of Family Growth

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Abstract

Objective—This report provides an updated description of trends and patterns in first premarital cohabitations among women aged 15–44 in the United States using the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). Trends in pregnancies within first premarital cohabiting unions and differences by Hispanic origin and race, and education are also presented.

Methods—Data for 2006–2010 were collected through in-person interviews with 22,682 women and men aged 15–44 in the household population of the United States. This report is based primarily on the sample of 12,279 women interviewed in 2006–2010, and is supplemented by data from the 1995 and 2002 NSFGs.

Results—Forty-eight percent of women interviewed in 2006–2010 cohabited with a partner as a first union, compared with 34% of women in 1995. Between 1995 and 2006–2010, the percentage of women who cohabited as a first union increased for all Hispanic origin and race groups, except for Asian women. In 2006–2010, 70% of women with less than a high school diploma cohabited as a first union, compared with 47% of women with a bachelor's degree or higher. First premarital cohabitations were longest for foreign-born Hispanic women (33 months) and shortest for white women (19 months). In 2006–2010, 40% of first premarital cohabitations among women transitioned to marriage by 3 years, 32% remained intact, and 27% dissolved. Nearly 20% of women experienced a pregnancy in the first year of their first premarital cohabitation.

Keywords: union stability • marriage • nonmarital births

Introduction

This report presents national estimates of first premarital cohabitations with a male partner for women aged 15–44 in the United States using the 2006–2010 National Survey of

Family Growth (NSFG). Estimates from the 2006–2010 NSFG show that nearly one-half (48%) of women aged 15–44 had ever cohabited before marriage (Table 1). Similarly, most young couples live together first before entering

marriage (1,2). Cohabitations are typically short-lived: one-half of women's first premarital cohabitations that began in 1997–2001 became marriages and another one-third dissolved within 5 years (2).

Cohabitation has become a more frequent site for childbearing. A recent report on fertility using the 2006–2010 NSFG showed that 23% of recent births among women aged 15–44 occurred within cohabitation, a significant increase from 14% in 2002 (3). One-half of births to cohabiting women in recent years were unintended (4). Unintended births are associated with poorer social, economic, and health outcomes for both the mother and the child (5).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has conducted the NSFG seven times since 1973. NSFG is jointly planned and funded by NCHS and several other programs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (see "Acknowledgments"). NSFG is designed to provide national data that complement NCHS vital statistics data on registered births in the United States, by collecting data on the factors that affect birth and pregnancy rates—including sexual activity,



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marriage, divorce, cohabitation, contraceptive use, and infertility (6). Since 1973, NSFG has included fertility histories that provide data on the factors that explain fertility in the United States. In addition to fertility data, the 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010 NSFGs collected marriage and cohabitation histories for women.

The current report presents estimates from the 2006–2010 NSFG on the first premarital cohabitation experiences of women aged 15–44 in the United States and describes trends in these data since 1995. Estimates of how long women’s first premarital cohabiting unions lasted and whether they remained intact, transitioned to marriage, or dissolved are presented. A concurrent aim of this report is to present trends in the likelihood and timing of pregnancies within first premarital cohabiting unions, and to describe differences across Hispanic origin and race and education groups for these women.

The Transition From Cohabitation to Marriage

Given the increase in cohabitation in the United States over the past several decades, considerable research has focused on how long these unions last and whether they transition to marriage. Researchers often frame questions on the meaning of cohabitation in terms of two possibilities: whether cohabitation serves primarily as a step toward marriage, much like dating and engagement, or as an alternative to marriage (7–9). Economic circumstances are related to the marriage decision-making process (10–15). Transitions to marriage are more likely for cohabiting women with higher levels of education and income than for cohabiting women of lower socioeconomic status (10). Economic barriers to marriage are particularly significant for cohabiting women with children (16). Other factors that influence the progression from cohabitation to marriage include relationship commitment and attitudes toward marriage (17,18).

Source of the Data

This report uses data primarily from the 12,279 female respondents of the 2006–2010 NSFG. Data were collected through in-person interviews from a representative sample of women and men aged 15–44 in the household population of the United States from June 2006 through June 2010. Data on women from the 1995 and 2002 NSFGs are presented in some tables to show trends in premarital cohabitation over time. The survey year(s) referenced in the results refer to when female respondents were interviewed, not when an event such as a marriage, cohabitation, or a pregnancy occurred.

The NSFG sample is a nationally representative, multistage area probability sample drawn from 110 areas, or primary sampling units, across the country. To protect the respondent’s privacy, the sample design of NSFG is based on independent samples of women and men, not couples. That is, only one person was interviewed in each selected household. The response rate for the 2006–2010 NSFG was 77% overall and 78% for women. More detailed information about the methods and procedures of NSFG and its sample design, weighting, imputation, and variance estimation has been published (6,19).

Demographic variables

Demographic characteristics of women presented in this report include: age at interview, age at first premarital cohabitation, education, Hispanic origin and race, and nativity for Hispanic women, that is, whether she was born in the United States.

The 2006–2010 NSFG collects retrospective histories of cohabitations, marriages, pregnancies, and births of women aged 15–44. For marriages, the histories are complete and include data on premarital cohabitations, if applicable. For cohabitations with partners to whom she was never married, detailed information was collected for up to four cohabitations. The variables from the marital and cohabitation histories used in this report

include dates of when the first premarital cohabitation began and, if applicable, dates of when a first marriage began or the cohabitation ended.

NSFG also contains a pregnancy and birth history—that is, information on each pregnancy the woman has ever had up to the survey date and the relationship with her partner at the time of the pregnancy and at the time of the birth. To examine whether a woman had a pregnancy within a cohabiting union, her fertility history was used to determine if she had any pregnancies leading to a live birth with her first cohabiting partner during the cohabitation. This report measures only pregnancies ending in a live birth, in part because it is more difficult to collect reliable data in the same degree of detail on pregnancies that end in fetal loss or abortion. For convenience, a pregnancy leading to a live birth is referred to in this report as a “pregnancy.”

The definition of Hispanic origin and race used in this report takes into account the reporting of more than one race, in accordance with the 1997 guidelines from the Office of Management and Budget (20). For convenience in writing, the term “black” or “non-Hispanic black” is used instead of the full phrase “non-Hispanic black or African American, single race.” Similarly, the term “white” or “non-Hispanic white” is used instead of the full phrase “non-Hispanic white, single race.” The full phrases of these categories are shown in the tables. In selected tables where sample sizes permit, Asian women are shown separately. Further technical details on the variables in this report can be found in the Technical Notes and in earlier NSFG reports (1,21,22).

Statistical analysis

Some of the results presented in this report use life table methodology. The life table is a tool that demographers use to study mortality, but it is also applied to the study of fertility, marriage, cohabitation, and divorce (1,2,21–25). In studying mortality, a cohort life table is

a summary of the mortality history of a group of people from birth to death. To apply life table analyses to the study of cohabitation stability, the cohort of people is replaced with a cohort of cohabitations, age is replaced by union duration, and death is replaced by marriage or dissolution (22). Life table analyses account for “censoring,” a term used in the statistical literature to denote that the outcome of interest is unknown at the time of observation (26). For the analysis of age of entry into first premarital cohabitation, women aged 15–44 who had neither cohabited nor married by the date of interview are referred to as “censored” because it is unknown whether they will form a premarital cohabiting union at a later time. Previous NSFG reports on marriage and cohabitation provide more detail on life table techniques (1,22). In the description of the results, probabilities are presented as percentages, such as the percentage of first premarital cohabitations that transitioned to marriage by 3 years.

This report contains estimates from both single-decrement and multiple-decrement life tables. For the single-decrement life table, a woman exits the table in only one way (e.g., from having never cohabited to entering a first premarital cohabitation). The multiple-decrement life table operates under similar conditions as a single-decrement life table; however, a key difference is that there are multiple ways an event can end, and these events are mutually exclusive (27). In this report, the multiple-decrement life table presents estimates that a first premarital cohabitation remained intact, transitioned to marriage, or dissolved by 3 years (Table 3). The cohabitation duration is measured from the start of cohabitation to the end of cohabitation, whether it ended by marriage, by dissolution, or through censoring.

Statistics for this report were produced using SAS software, Version 9.3 (<http://www.sas.com>). Probabilities from single-decrement life tables were calculated using the Kaplan-Meier procedure using SUDAAN software (<http://www.rti.org/sudaan>). This method accounts for censored data and NSFG’s

complex survey design. Significant differences between probabilities were tested using the PROC SURVIVAL procedure in SUDAAN.

For frequency tables, significant differences between groups were determined by using two-tailed *t* tests at the 5% level. No adjustments were made for multiple comparisons. Terms such as “greater than” and “less than” indicate that a statistically significant difference was found. Terms such as “similar” or “no difference” indicate that the statistics being compared were not significantly different. Lack of comment regarding the difference between any two statistics does not mean that the difference was tested and found not to be significant. The data presented in this report are bivariate associations that may be explained by other factors not controlled for in the tables or included in the report.

To make reading easier and to remind the reader that the results are based on samples and subject to sampling error, percentages above 10% are generally shown rounded to the nearest whole percentage. When the percentage being cited is below 10%, the text cites the percentage to 1 decimal point. In this report, percentages are not shown if the sample denominator is less than 100 cases, or if the numerator is less than 5 cases. The numerators and denominators are much larger for most statistics presented in this report. Results from life table analyses where the sample sizes were less than 100 cases are not shown. When a percentage or other statistic is not shown for these reasons, the table contains an asterisk (*) signifying that the statistic does not meet standards of reliability or precision.

Results

Marriage or cohabitation as a first union

One way to describe the increase in premarital cohabitation for women over time is to show whether her first union was a cohabitation or a marriage.

Table 1 presents trends in the type of first union for all women aged 15–44 in

1995, 2002, and 2006–2010. Trends in first premarital cohabitation by subgroup are presented by Hispanic origin and race and education.

- In more recent years, women were increasingly likely to cohabit with a partner as a first union rather than to marry directly: 48% of women interviewed in 2006–2010 cohabited as a first union, compared with 43% in 2002 and 34% in 1995 (Table 1, Figure 1).
- The rise in cohabitation as a first union over this time period led to a lower percentage of women aged 15–44 whose first union was a marriage: 23% in 2006–2010, compared with 30% in 2002 and 39% in 1995.
- An increase in cohabitation as a first union for all Hispanic origin and race groups occurred between 1995 and 2006–2010, except among Asian women. The percentage of women who cohabited as a first union increased 57% for Hispanic women, 43% for white women, and 39% for black women over this time period.
- In 2006–2010, 70% of women with less than a high school diploma cohabited as a first union, compared with 47% of women with a bachelor’s degree or higher. In 1995, the difference between these education groups was smaller but statistically significant: 46% of women with less than a high school diploma cohabited as a first union compared with 34% of women with a bachelor’s degree or higher (Figure 2).

Age at first premarital cohabitation

The probability of cohabiting by ages 20, 25, and 30 is shown in Table 2. By age 18, 9% of women aged 15–44 in 2006–2010 had ever cohabited (data not shown).

By age 20, 26% of women in 2006–2010 had cohabited, compared with 23% in 2002 and 19% in 1995. By age 25, over one-half of women (55%) in 2006–2010 had cohabited, compared with 52% in 2002 and 46% in 1995. By

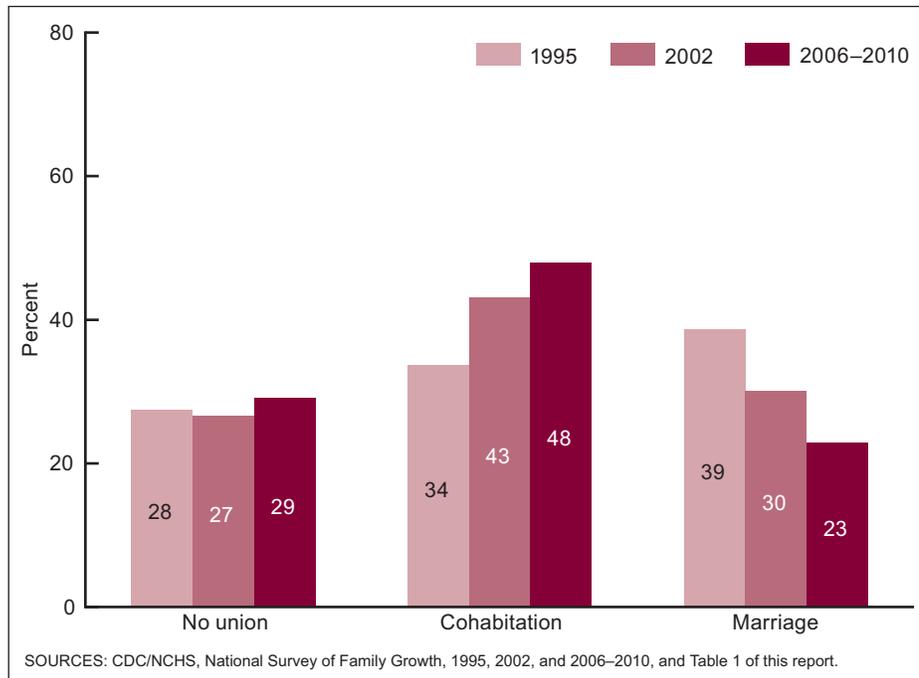


Figure 1. Type of first unions among women aged 15-44: United States, 1995, 2002, and 2006-2010

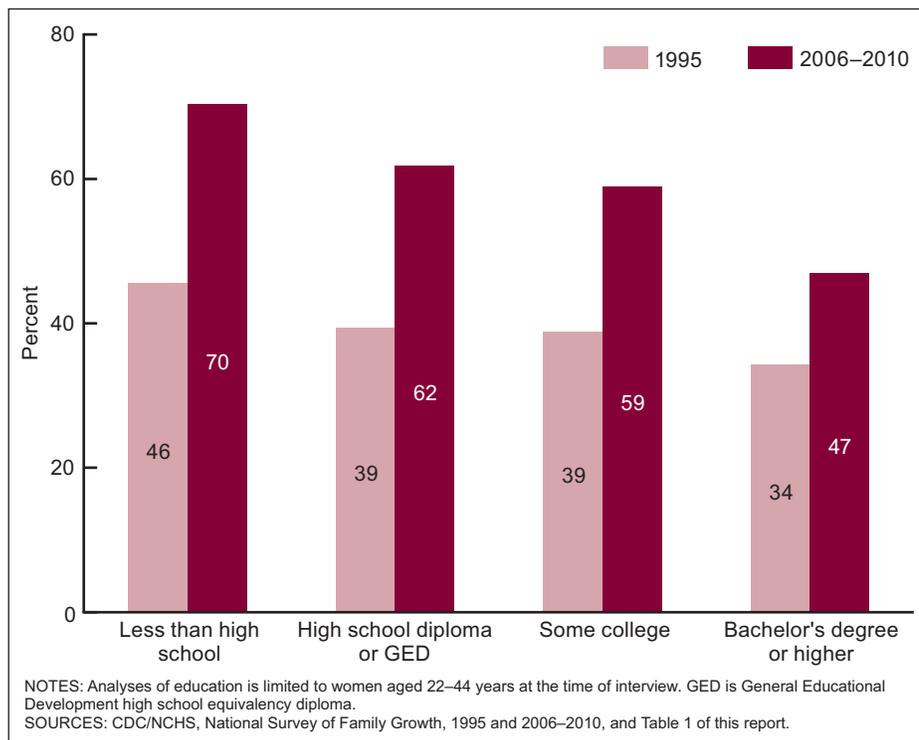


Figure 2. Percentage of women aged 22-44 whose first union was a cohabitation, by education: United States, 1995 and 2006-2010

age 30, 74% of women in 2006-2010 had cohabited, compared with 70% in 2002 and 62% in 1995.

Because the median age at first marriage for women in 2006-2010 was

25.8 (1), the results for the subgroups presented here focus on the probability of premarital cohabitation by age 25.

- In 2006-2010, 62% of women aged 25-29, 61% of women aged 30-34,

and 47% of women aged 35-44 had cohabited by age 25. The increase in cohabitation among younger women suggests a rising trend in premarital cohabitation in recent years.

- U.S.-born Hispanic women had the highest probability (65%) of premarital cohabitation by age 25, compared with white women (57%), foreign-born Hispanic women (53%), and black women (51%). Asian women had a lower probability of cohabiting by age 25 (19%), compared with other race groups.
- Women with less than a high school diploma had the highest probability of cohabiting by age 25 (76%), compared with women with a bachelor's degree or higher (36%).

Length of first premarital cohabitation

Since 1995, the length, or median duration, of first premarital cohabitations has increased, regardless of whether these unions remained intact, transitioned to marriage, or had dissolved by the time of the interview (Table A). The length of first premarital cohabitations for women aged 15-44 in 2006-2010 was 22 months, compared with 20 months in 2002, and 13 months in 1995. Cohabitations that transitioned to marriage also lasted longer in 2006-2010 and 2002 than in 1995—21 months in 2006-2010, 19 months in 2002, and 14 months in 1995. Table B shows the median length of first premarital cohabitations for women by age group, Hispanic origin and race, and education:

- Cohabitations among women under age 20 were longer (25 months) than cohabitations among those aged 20 and over (17-20 months).
- The length of a first premarital cohabitation was 33 months for foreign-born Hispanic women, 27 months for black women, 25 months for U.S.-born Hispanic women, and 19 months for white women.
- First premarital cohabitations were longer for women aged 22-44 with less than a high school diploma (30 months) than for women with a

Table A. Median duration of first premarital cohabitation among women aged 15–44: United States, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010

	Number in thousands	All premarital cohabitations	Outcome of cohabitation		
			Intact	Marriage	Dissolution
Median duration (in months)					
1995	20,317	13	22	14	11
2002	26,559	20	28	19	15
2006–2010	29,609	22	32	21	18

NOTE: Medians were calculated using the Kaplan-Meier procedure, which accounts for censoring.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010.

bachelor’s degree or higher (17 months).

Outcome of first premarital cohabitation

Table 3 presents the percent distribution of the outcome of first premarital cohabitations for women aged 15–44 in 2006–2010: whether the cohabitation remained intact, transitioned to marriage, or dissolved. The median duration of premarital cohabitations among women in the

NSFG was 22 months, or about 2 years, with longer durations for selected race and education subgroups. The results that follow discuss the outcome of these cohabitations at the 3-year time point. These estimates were obtained using the multiple-decrement life table method described in the “Source of the data” section.

- Forty percent of first premarital cohabitations among women transitioned to marriage by 3 years, 32% remained intact, and 27% dissolved.

Table B. Median duration of first premarital cohabitation among women aged 15–44: United States, 2006–2010

Characteristic	Median duration (in months)
Total ¹	22
Age at first cohabitation	
Under 20 years	25
20–24 years	20
25–29 years	17
30–44 years	20
Hispanic origin and race	
Hispanic or Latina	29
U.S. born	25
Foreign born	33
Not Hispanic or Latina	
White, single race	19
Black or African American, single race	27
Education ²	
No high school diploma or GED	30
High school diploma or GED	24
Some college, no bachelor’s degree	22
Bachelor’s degree or higher	17

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.
²Limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.
NOTE: Medians were calculated using the Kaplan-Meier procedure, which accounts for censoring.
SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010.

- A higher percentage of first premarital cohabitations among white women (44%) and foreign-born Hispanic women (42%) transitioned to marriage by 3 years, compared with cohabitations for both U.S.-born Hispanic women and black women (31% for each).
- Almost one-half of the first premarital cohabitations of foreign-born Hispanic women remained intact by 3 years (46%), followed by 41% of both black women and U.S.-born Hispanic women.
- First premarital cohabitations among women aged 22–44 with higher education were more likely to transition to marriage by 3 years. Over one-half of cohabitations among women with a bachelor’s degree or higher had transitioned to marriage (53%), compared with less than one-third of cohabitations among women with less than a high school diploma (30%) (Figure 3).
- A higher percentage of first premarital cohabitations among women with less than a high school diploma (43%) had remained intact by 3 years, compared with 20% of cohabitations among women with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Probability of a pregnancy during first premarital cohabitation

The probability of a pregnancy within the first 2 years of a woman’s first premarital cohabitation is shown in Table 4. The results discussed are during the first year of cohabitation; however, similar results are seen at the 2-year time point.

- Since 1995, the probability of a pregnancy within a cohabiting union among women aged 15–44 has increased, from 15% in 1995, to 18% in 2002, and to 19% in 2006–2010.
- Nearly one in five women in 2006–2010 (19%) experienced a pregnancy in the first year of cohabitation.
- One out of four women (25%) who were under age 20 when they began cohabiting experienced a pregnancy

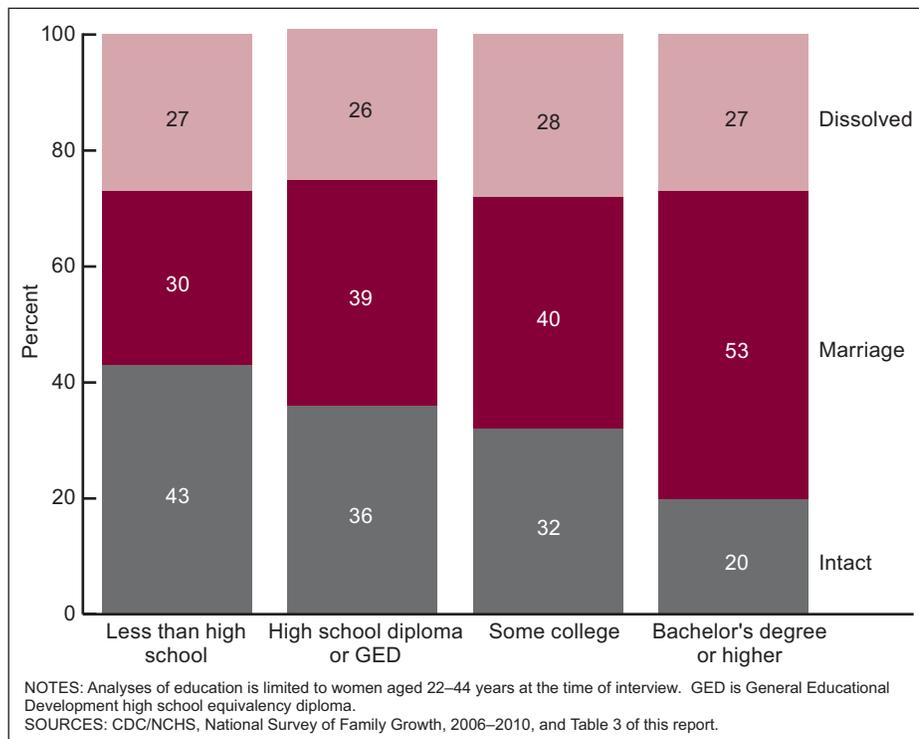


Figure 3. Percentage of first premarital cohabitations that dissolved, transitioned to marriage, or remained intact by 3 years among women aged 22–44, by education: United States, 2006–2010

in the first year, compared with about 1 out of 12 women (8%) who were aged 30–44 when they began cohabiting.

- Forty percent of foreign-born Hispanic women experienced a pregnancy in the first year of cohabitation, followed by 24% of both U.S.-born Hispanic women and black women, 14% of white women, and 13% of Asian women (Figure 4).
- One-third of women with less than a high school diploma experienced a pregnancy in the first year of cohabitation (33%), compared with 5% of women with a bachelor's degree or higher.

Probability of marriage among cohabiting women with a pregnancy

Table 5 shows the probability of marriage among the subgroup of women who became pregnant in their first premarital cohabitation, shown at 6 months and 1 year. For this analysis, the duration is measured from the month the pregnancy began until a marriage occurred, if applicable. The “6 months”

category is a rough indicator of marriage before the birth of the child. The results are discussed for 6 months; however, similar results are seen at the 1-year time point.

- By 6 months, the probability of marriage among women who became pregnant in their first premarital cohabitation was higher in the 1995 NSFG (32%) compared with the 2002 and 2006–2010 NSFGs (19% each).
- The probability of marriage by 6 months among women who became pregnant in their first premarital cohabitation was higher for women who were in their twenties when they started cohabiting (23%–26%), compared with those under age 20 (16%).
- The probability of marriage by 6 months among women who became pregnant in their first premarital cohabitation was 28% among white women, compared with 9%–11% for women in other race groups.
- The probability of marriage by 6 months among women who became pregnant in their first premarital

cohabitation was three times higher for women with a bachelor's degree or higher (45%) than for those with less than a high school diploma (15%).

Discussion and Conclusion

This report presents the latest estimates for women from the 2006–2010 NSFG on how long first premarital cohabitations lasted and whether these unions transitioned to marriage. Trend data from the 1995 and 2002 NSFGs support earlier research showing an increase in premarital cohabitation in the United States (2,28,29). The length, or median duration, of first premarital cohabitations among women in 2006–2010 increased over the past decade to 22 months, up from 13 months in 1995. Estimates from the 2006–2010 NSFG showed that 40% of women's first premarital cohabitations transitioned to marriage, which is larger than the percentages of cohabiting unions that remained intact (32%) or dissolved (27%) within the first 3 years following union formation.

There was variation by Hispanic origin and race in the incidence, duration, and outcome of women's first premarital cohabitations. The percentage of women who cohabited before marriage increased for women in all Hispanic origin and race groups, except for Asian women. First premarital cohabitations were longest for foreign-born Hispanic women (33 months) and shortest for white women (19 months). A higher percentage of first premarital cohabitations among white women (44%) and foreign-born Hispanic women (42%) transitioned to marriage by 3 years, compared with cohabitations for both U.S.-born Hispanic women and black women (31% each).

Different cohabitation patterns by education were also seen. Among women aged 22–44, premarital cohabitation increased for all levels of education. However, the increase between 1995 and 2006–2010 in the percentage of women who cohabited before marriage was larger for women with less than a high school diploma

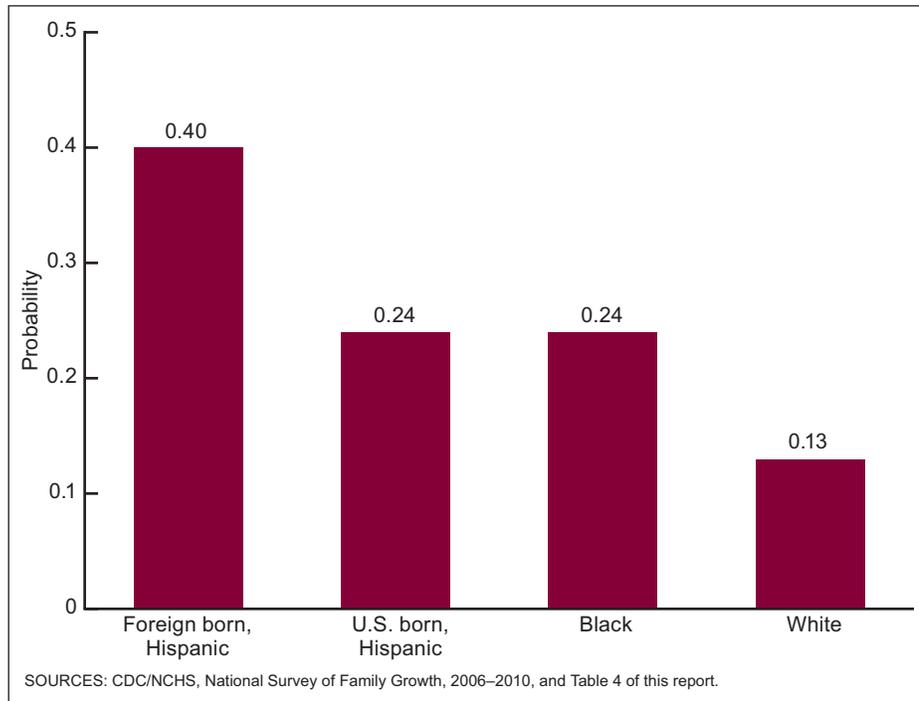


Figure 4. Probability of a pregnancy leading to a live birth in the first year of a first premarital cohabitation among women aged 15–44, by Hispanic origin and nativity and race: United States, 2006–2010

(46% in 1995 and 70% in 2006–2010) than for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (34% and 47%, respectively). Women with less than a high school diploma had longer cohabitations (30 months) than women with a bachelor's degree or higher (17 months). Thirty percent of first premarital cohabitations among women with less than a high school diploma transitioned to marriage by 3 years, compared with over one-half of those with a bachelor's degree or higher (53%).

This report also describes the probability of pregnancies within first premarital cohabiting unions. Nearly one out of five women experienced a pregnancy in the first year of a first premarital cohabitation. Probabilities of a pregnancy were higher among women who were under age 20 when they began cohabiting, among foreign-born Hispanic women, and among women with less than a high school diploma. Alongside the increase in fertility within cohabiting unions over the past decade was a decrease in the probability of marriage among women who became pregnant in a cohabiting union. These

findings support literature showing an upward trend in nonmarital childbearing in the United States (30).

Cohabitation is a common part of family formation in the United States, and serves both as a step toward marriage and as an alternative to marriage (7–9). Childbearing outside of marriage continues to increase, and about one-half of nonmarital births occur to cohabiting women (3,30). This report shows differences for women in how long first premarital cohabitations lasted, and whether these unions transitioned to marriage, by Hispanic origin and race and education. NSFG is a useful data source that provides up-to-date descriptions of family formation and fertility in the United States.

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Table 1. Type of first unions among women aged 15–44, by Hispanic origin and race and education: United States, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Total	Type of first union		
			No union	Cohabitation	Marriage
Percent distribution (standard error)					
Total, 1995	60,201	100.0	27.5 (0.6)	33.7 (0.6)	38.7 (0.6)
Total, 2002	61,561	100.0	26.7 (0.8)	43.1 (0.9)	30.2 (0.9)
Total, 2006–2010 ¹	61,755	100.0	29.1 (0.9)	47.9 (1.2)	23.0 (0.9)
Hispanic origin and race					
Hispanic or Latina					
1995	6,702	100.0	28.2 (1.2)	29.6 (1.3)	42.2 (1.6)
2006–2010	10,474	100.0	27.0 (1.1)	46.6 (1.4)	26.4 (1.3)
U.S. born					
1995	4,166	100.0	34.8 (1.7)	31.9 (1.6)	33.3 (1.8)
2006–2010	5,369	100.0	37.6 (1.6)	47.2 (1.8)	15.2 (1.6)
Foreign born					
1995	2,527	100.0	17.4 (1.9)	25.9 (1.7)	56.7 (2.1)
2006–2010	5,104	100.0	15.8 (1.5)	46.1 (1.9)	38.1 (1.8)
Not Hispanic or Latina					
White, single race					
1995	42,154	100.0	24.7 (0.6)	34.5 (0.8)	40.9 (0.8)
2006–2010	37,384	100.0	27.1 (1.2)	49.4 (1.7)	23.6 (1.3)
Black or African American, single race					
1995	8,060	100.0	39.4 (1.2)	35.4 (1.1)	25.2 (1.1)
2006–2010	8,451	100.0	38.4 (1.5)	49.2 (1.5)	12.5 (1.2)
Asian, single race					
1995	2,090	100.0	35.3 (5.6)	21.6 (2.1)	43.1 (5.3)
2006–2010	2,456	100.0	32.8 (3.6)	21.9 (3.0)	45.3 (3.4)
Education ²					
No high school diploma or GED					
1995	5,396	100.0	8.5 (0.9)	45.5 (1.7)	46.0 (1.7)
2006–2010	6,844	100.0	7.1 (0.8)	70.3 (1.9)	22.6 (2.0)
High school diploma or GED					
1995	18,177	100.0	8.7 (0.6)	39.4 (1.2)	51.9 (1.2)
2006–2010	11,578	100.0	9.4 (0.9)	61.8 (1.4)	28.8 (1.5)
Some college, no bachelor's degree					
1995	12,362	100.0	16.9 (1.1)	38.8 (1.1)	44.3 (1.1)
2006–2010	13,702	100.0	13.9 (1.0)	58.9 (1.9)	27.1 (1.7)
Bachelor's degree or higher					
1995	11,741	100.0	20.2 (0.9)	34.3 (1.2)	45.5 (1.2)
2006–2010	15,083	100.0	18.8 (1.2)	46.6 (2.0)	34.6 (1.9)

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.

²Limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010.

Table 2. Probability of a first premarital cohabitation by ages 20, 25, and 30 among women aged 15–44: United States, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Probability of first premarital cohabitation					
		Age 20	Standard error	Age 25	Standard error	Age 30	Standard error
Total 1995	60,201	0.19	0.005	0.46	0.008	0.62	0.010
Total 2002	61,561	0.23	0.008	0.52	0.011	0.70	0.012
Total 2006–2010 ¹	61,755	0.26	0.011	0.55	0.013	0.74	0.012
Age at interview							
Under 20 years	10,478	...	...	...	...	...	...
20–24 years	10,365	0.30	0.020	...	...	...	...
25–44 years	40,912	0.25	0.011	0.54	0.013	0.73	0.012
25–29 years	10,535	0.30	0.017	0.62	0.020	...	...
30–34 years	9,188	0.28	0.018	0.61	0.020	0.79	0.014
35–44 years	21,190	0.20	0.011	0.47	0.015	0.68	0.017
Hispanic origin and race							
Hispanic or Latina	10,474	0.30	0.015	0.59	0.017	0.76	0.016
U.S. born	5,369	0.34	0.021	0.65	0.019	0.80	0.026
Foreign born	5,104	0.27	0.016	0.53	0.025	0.72	0.024
Not Hispanic or Latina							
White, single race	37,384	0.26	0.014	0.57	0.018	0.76	0.016
Black or African American, single race	8,451	0.21	0.014	0.51	0.017	0.69	0.021
Asian, single race	2,456	0.07	0.018	0.19	0.035	0.38	0.060
Education ²							
No high school diploma or GED	6,844	0.51	0.022	0.76	0.020	0.88	0.014
High school diploma or GED	11,578	0.35	0.018	0.64	0.019	0.79	0.017
Some college, no bachelor's degree	13,702	0.24	0.015	0.59	0.017	0.77	0.015
Bachelor's degree or higher	15,083	0.08	0.010	0.36	0.019	0.61	0.022

... Category not applicable.

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.

²Limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010.

Table 3. Percent distribution of first premarital cohabitations that remained intact, transitioned to marriage, or dissolved among women aged 15–44, by cohabitation duration: United States, 2006–2010

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Cohabitation duration							
		1 year				3 years			
		Total	Intact	Marriage	Dissolution	Total	Intact	Marriage	Dissolution
Percent distribution (standard error)									
Total ¹	29,609	100.0	67.0 (0.001)	19.4 (0.001)	13.6 (0.001)	100.0	32.2 (0.001)	40.3 (0.001)	27.4 (0.001)
Age at first premarital cohabitation									
Under 20 years	13,393	100.0	70.2 (0.001)	15.1 (0.001)	14.7 (0.001)	100.0	37.7 (0.001)	30.7 (0.001)	31.5 (0.001)
20–24 years	11,131	100.0	65.2 (0.001)	20.4 (0.001)	14.3 (0.001)	100.0	28.5 (0.001)	44.0 (0.001)	27.5 (0.001)
25–29 years	3,829	100.0	61.5 (0.003)	29.5 (0.002)	8.9 (0.001)	100.0	22.9 (0.002)	58.4 (0.002)	18.7 (0.002)
30–44 years	1,255	100.0	65.1 (0.004)	29.2 (0.003)	5.7 (0.001)	100.0	32.2 (0.004)	49.6 (0.004)	18.2 (0.003)
Hispanic origin and race									
Hispanic or Latina	4,884	100.0	70.8 (0.002)	17.5 (0.001)	11.7 (0.001)	100.0	43.5 (0.002)	36.3 (0.002)	20.2 (0.002)
U.S. born	2,533	100.0	71.0 (0.002)	13.2 (0.002)	15.8 (0.002)	100.0	40.6 (0.003)	31.2 (0.003)	28.2 (0.003)
Foreign born	2,351	100.0	70.7 (0.003)	22.0 (0.002)	7.4 (0.002)	100.0	46.2 (0.002)	41.5 (0.002)	12.3 (0.002)
Not Hispanic or Latina									
White, single race	18,451	100.0	64.4 (0.001)	21.2 (0.001)	14.5 (0.001)	100.0	26.7 (0.001)	43.9 (0.001)	29.4 (0.001)
Black or African American, single race	4,154	100.0	71.6 (0.002)	15.3 (0.002)	13.1 (0.001)	100.0	41.1 (0.002)	30.8 (0.002)	28.0 (0.001)
Education ²									
No high school diploma or GED	4,810	100.0	73.1 (0.002)	15.3 (0.001)	11.5 (0.001)	100.0	43.2 (0.002)	30.0 (0.002)	26.8 (0.002)
High school diploma or GED	7,149	100.0	69.8 (0.002)	19.4 (0.001)	10.8 (0.001)	100.0	35.8 (0.002)	38.6 (0.002)	25.7 (0.001)
Some college, no bachelor's degree	8,076	100.0	65.8 (0.001)	19.7 (0.001)	14.5 (0.001)	100.0	31.5 (0.001)	40.0 (0.001)	28.4 (0.002)
Bachelor's degree or higher	7,034	100.0	62.3 (0.002)	24.9 (0.002)	12.8 (0.001)	100.0	20.3 (0.002)	53.2 (0.002)	26.6 (0.002)

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.

²Limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTE: Life table estimates shown as a percent distribution; percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010.

Table 4. Probability of a pregnancy within 2 years of a first premarital cohabitation among women aged 15–44: United States, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Cohabitation duration			
		1 year		2 years	
		Probability	Standard error	Probability	Standard error
Total 1995	20,317	0.15	0.007	0.26	0.011
Total 2002	26,559	0.18	0.009	0.29	0.013
Total 2006–2010 ¹	29,609	0.19	0.009	0.31	0.013
Age at first premarital cohabitation					
Under 20 years	13,393	0.25	0.015	0.41	0.019
20–24 years	11,131	0.15	0.013	0.25	0.016
25–29 years	3,829	0.13	0.018	0.20	0.031
30–44 years	1,255	0.08	0.022	0.13	0.030
Hispanic origin and race					
Hispanic or Latina	4,884	0.32	0.020	0.50	0.029
U.S. born	2,533	0.24	0.029	0.41	0.044
Foreign born	2,351	0.40	0.030	0.59	0.030
Not Hispanic or Latina					
White, single race	18,451	0.14	0.011	0.23	0.014
Black or African American, single race	4,154	0.24	0.018	0.40	0.026
Asian, single race	538	0.13	0.039	0.24	0.088
Education ²					
No high school diploma or GED	4,810	0.33	0.021	0.53	0.027
High school diploma or GED	7,149	0.24	0.020	0.38	0.024
Some college, no bachelor's degree	8,076	0.18	0.014	0.27	0.021
Bachelor's degree or higher	7,034	0.05	0.009	0.10	0.015

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.

²Limited to women aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTE: This table includes only pregnancies ending in a live birth.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010.

Table 5. Probability of marriage within 1 year of a pregnancy in a first premarital cohabitation among women aged 15–44, by cohabitation duration since pregnancy: United States, 2006–2010

Characteristic	Number in thousands	Cohabitation duration (since pregnancy)			
		6 months		1 year	
		Probability	Standard error	Probability	Standard error
Total 1995	4,110	0.32	0.019	0.44	0.021
Total 2002	6,810	0.19	0.025	0.28	0.028
Total 2006–2010 ¹	8,848	0.19	0.014	0.26	0.016
Age at first premarital cohabitation					
Under 20 years	5,437	0.16	0.018	0.24	0.021
20–24 years	2,543	0.23	0.030	0.30	0.033
25–29 years	700	0.26	0.056	0.30	0.056
Hispanic origin and race					
Hispanic or Latina	2,346	0.10	0.017	0.16	0.022
U.S. born	1,020	0.09	0.022	0.16	0.025
Foreign born	1,326	0.10	0.024	0.16	0.033
Not Hispanic or Latina					
White, single race	4,083	0.28	0.024	0.37	0.027
Black or African American, single race	1,647	0.11	0.027	0.16	0.030
Education ²					
No high school diploma or GED	2,616	0.15	0.027	0.19	0.027
High school diploma or GED	2,702	0.17	0.026	0.30	0.034
Some college, no bachelor's degree	2,271	0.20	0.024	0.27	0.027
Bachelor's degree or higher	616	0.45	0.060	0.53	0.049

¹Includes women of other or multiple-race and origin groups, and those with missing information on nativity, not shown separately.

²Limited to persons aged 22–44 years at the time of interview. GED is General Educational Development high school equivalency diploma.

NOTES: The subgroup of women aged 30–44 who became pregnant in their first premarital cohabitation was too small to show separately. This table includes only pregnancies ending in a live birth.

SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Survey of Family Growth, 1995, 2002, and 2006–2010.

Technical Notes

Definition of terms

Further details on the variables used in this report are provided in previous National Survey of Family Growth reports (e.g., reference 1).

Age at first premarital cohabitation—Calculated as the number of months between the date of birth (computed variable **CMBIRTH**) and the date of first premarital cohabitation (recode variable **COHAB1**) divided by 12. In the analysis of entry into a first premarital cohabitation, women are “at risk” of entering a first premarital cohabitation until a marriage occurred or the date of the interview (i.e., they are censored).

Cohabitation dissolution—When the woman and her first premarital cohabiting partner stopped living together for the last time.

Cohabitation status relative to first marriage—Whether the respondent had ever cohabited, and if so, whether the first cohabitation was before or after first marriage (recode variable **COHSTAT**).

First premarital cohabitation duration—Calculated as the number of months elapsed from the beginning of the first premarital cohabitation to the end, either by marriage, by dissolution, or through censoring at the time of the interview for intact cohabiting unions (recode variable **COHIDUR**).

Multiple-decrement life table—Describes transitions out of first premarital cohabiting unions. First premarital cohabiting unions could remain intact, transition to marriage, or dissolve. Percent distributions derived from the life table survivor function are presented in [Table 3](#). These percentages represent the distribution of women in each state at the specified time point. An SAS macro was used to calculate the multiple-decrement life table estimates (27). Further information about this procedure is available at http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data_access/space.htm.

Outcome of first premarital cohabitation—Indicates the outcome of the first premarital cohabitation at the

time of interview: whether the cohabitation was intact, had transitioned to a marriage, or had dissolved without marriage (recode variable **COHOUT**).

Pregnancies with first premarital cohabiting partner—Pregnancies that a respondent has had with her first premarital cohabiting partner were determined by comparing the date when her pregnancy began (recode variable **DATCON**) for pregnancies ending in live births (recode variable **OUTCOM**) with the date of her first premarital cohabitation (recode variables **COHAB1** and **COHSTAT** respectively), to determine if she had any pregnancies with this partner during the cohabitation.

Union—Refers to two different types of co-residential relationships: a marriage or cohabitation.

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