

Slug: Generational Changes

Reporter: Cassie Willaert

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Stalling on the way to adulthood

More couples are in long-term relationships without making the commitment of marriage, fewer children are being born per household and even a large increase in age is occurring before settling down.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average age of a first marriage for women in 2016 was 27.4 years. For men, it's slightly older at 29.5 years. That's the longest Americans have ever waited to get married. As the dating timeline increases the amount of time for a family decreases.

Some may say people wait because they are goal oriented, to ensure that they are successful and responsible enough to make a large commitment or start a family, while others believe it's a matter of freedom. More experience leads to more confidence when you believe you've found the one.

And then there are those who believe gender has something to do with it, "Not to stereotype, but in my mind, as I'm sure it is in many others, men just take longer to want to settle down." Says Jessi Goldbloom, a marriage counselor at Family Means. "Women may take longer to find the right person but men take their time with making the big commitment of marriage."

People not only wait longer to get married, a smaller proportion get married at all. Over the last 45 years, marriage in general has decreased and especially so in the millennial generation.

The falling marriage rate leads to a rise in cohabiting couples. American couples are opting to live together before marriage, or choosing not to tie the knot at all and stay in long term relationships without the legal or officialty to their relationship.

"I think the longer you're with someone the more comfortable you get. Marriage is just the official way to 'seal the deal' and that kind of

commitment just isn't for everyone. There's no right or wrong way to live life, there's just the way you want to live it and that's perfectly fine." Grace Libinski, a long term couple of nearly 8 years with no previous marriages.

Money or financial status is often described as one of the biggest reasons that people delay marriage or hesitate when it comes to marriage. Jobs, along with security and success in relationships are directly correlated when compared to the amount of happiness an individual feels in their daily life.

Although there's been a decrease in population of native-born children in America within the last few years, there are even more out of wedlock births and single parents than ever, according to the Pew Research Center.

In women up to age 30, there are now more unmarried mothers than ever before. Having children before marriage or out of wedlock used to lead to an increase in divorce rates later on. As of 2014, that is no longer the case.

"I feel like women are slowly becoming more independent in today's generation. Since they're able to work and make a more reasonable wage than they used to, needing a man isn't the norm anymore." Said Alisabella Hearne, a Women's Studies Major from Hamline University. "Sure, it's tough, but so is staying with someone you don't want to be with just because you need the help"."

So as social norms change, so do our generations behaviors. What was one day, may be the complete opposite today. However, there are several so called trends that are making a comeback. Perhaps one day, marriage and large families will too.

Slug: Divorce Rates

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Surprisingly enough, the world's holder of highest divorce rates isn't North America but rather Europe. According to the Business Insider, US divorce rates are still high in the U.S. at approximately 53 percent. However, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are somehow worse off with divorce rates higher than 60 percent.

Belgium has the highest at 70 percent and the lowest is Chile with only three percent.

Although both marriage and divorce rates seem to be dropping all around the world, relationship specialists are beginning to wonder why they are still at an alarming rate in both developed and underdeveloped countries.

Marriage rates have plateaued over time and remain fairly consistent today, even with the possibility of same sex marriage. But with that possibility, comes the potential for more divorces as well.

So what makes divorce socially acceptable these days? Marriage often seen as a religious act or promise of devoting yourself to that person until the end of time yet those vows seem to be falling short and only lasting a few years at a time.

What's even more surprising, is fewer people continue to get remarried after their first attempt didn't work out. According to the Pew Research Center, only 29 percent of previously married adults ages 18 to 24 had remarried in 2013, compared with 67 percent of those ages 55 to 64. Of those who do choose to get remarried, majority of them are men.

Lacey Arbogast, a divorced mother of six, fills us in on her choice to not remarry "After me and my husband split due to extreme differences in parenting, I decided it was best if my kids didn't have to adapt to a third individual. I still date and my kids are fine with it, but I would rather keep my love life and my kids life separate these days to avoid them getting attached and confused again."

Education and financial security are known to have the most long lasting impacts on these issues. According to the World Economic Forum, the Millennial generation is making better marriage choices than previous generations. Many of the people getting married today are more educated (both partners), and becoming economically stable, which improves the survival rate of their marriages.

While divorce is common in the United States now more than ever, the previous generation had an approach that took place early on in life.

“Wait to get married, or don’t. There’s couples that got married when they were 15 or 16 that are still together today, there’s also some that waited until after they were retired to settle down.” Alisabella Hearne, Women’s Studies Major, says. “Everyone lives their lives differently and you don’t have to do things the same way.”

On the contrary, that same research suggests that the new cohabiting relationships are less stable than they used to be. For example; couples from poor and less educated backgrounds are living together and choosing not to marry and those who do tie the knot tend to be older, better off and more highly educated.

A newly wed, Amy Bobrowski, said “I think more people are becoming obsessed with the idea of getting married because of how rare it is these days. But for me, it was the safety and security of knowing I am bound to that person forever, in more ways than one.”

Whatever route you choose in your love life, there’s been a change in social norms in a way that there is almost always a way out or an alternative. There’s thousands of life paths and yours should be unique to you.

Slug: Same Sex Marriage

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After years of an uphill battle, in 2013, Minnesota made the decision to legalize same-sex marriage along with several other states. 2 years later, the Supreme Court ruled it legal nationwide with only a few states who had yet to approve it, millions of individuals have spoke up about their sexuality and the expression of love.

Religion seems to play a larger factor in marriage than some will admit. Whether it's due to the disapproval of God for getting a divorce, or that Adam and Eve were a man and a woman. Whatever the logic may be. There's always more than one perspective.

There are several studies that prove the 'you can't choose who you love' and others that state the exact opposite of 'it's a choice'. It's always an answer of to each their own, because if we've learned one thing, it's to never force your opinion on someone else.

'I can't say I've ever been attracted to someone of the same sex, but it has never bothered me that others are.' Is a statement made on numerous accounts when asking the community around Hamline University.

Others would say that they believe in the idea of loving outside restrictive boundaries: Man and woman, women and women, man and man or even a few of each is becoming a refreshing perspective yet repetitive argument in today's society.

Even the dictionary and thesaurus have changed its' definition of marriage to " The legally or formally recognized union of a man and a woman (or, in some jurisdictions, two people of the same sex) as partners in a relationship: "

Marriage is a legal right to each and every individual in the United States, love is an emotion that we all have the power to feel. So the question shouldn't be a matter of who you're allowed to be with, but who you want to be with.

