

# PewResearchCenter

FEBRUARY 14, 2014

## 5 facts about love and marriage

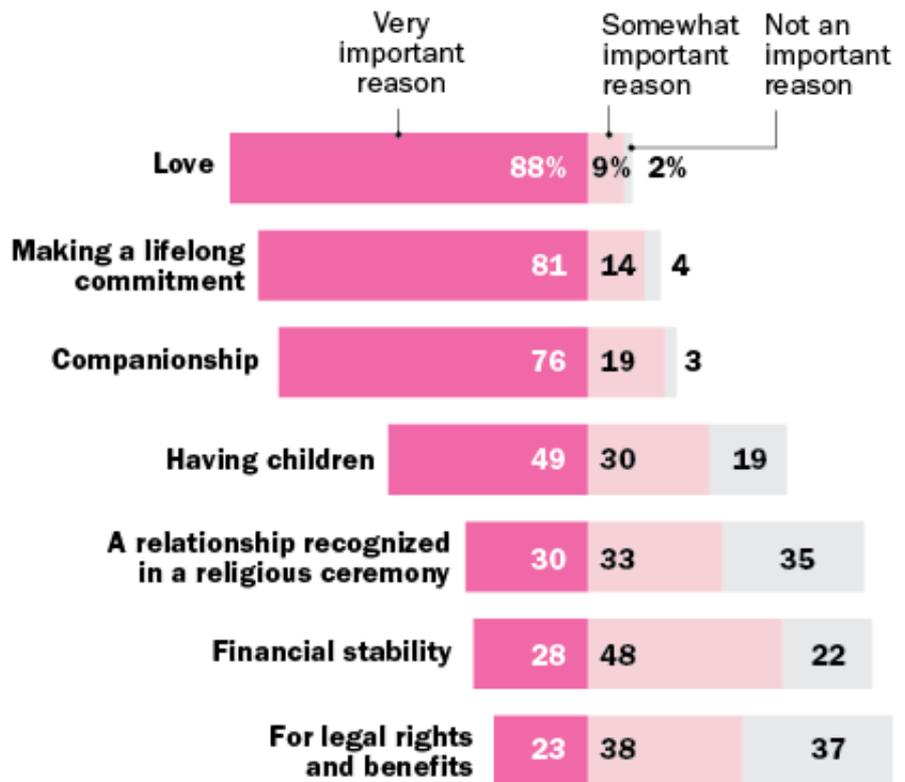
BY DREW DESILVER ([HTTP://WWW.PEWRESEARCH.ORG/AUTHOR/DDESILVER/](http://www.pewresearch.org/author/dsilver/))

### 1 Love remains Americans' top reason to marry.

(Phew.) In a Pew Research Center survey

### Why Get Married?

Percent of general public saying each is a ...



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, May 10-13, 2013 (online poll)

Note: "Don't know/Refused" not shown

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(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/5/#chapter-4-marriage-and-parenting>) conducted last year, 88% of Americans cited love as a “very important” reason to get married, ahead of making a lifelong commitment (81%) and companionship (76%). Contrary to generations of grandmothers’ advice that “It’s just as easy to love a rich person as a poor person,” only 28% of U.S. adults said financial stability was a very important reason to marry (though 48% said it was “somewhat important”).

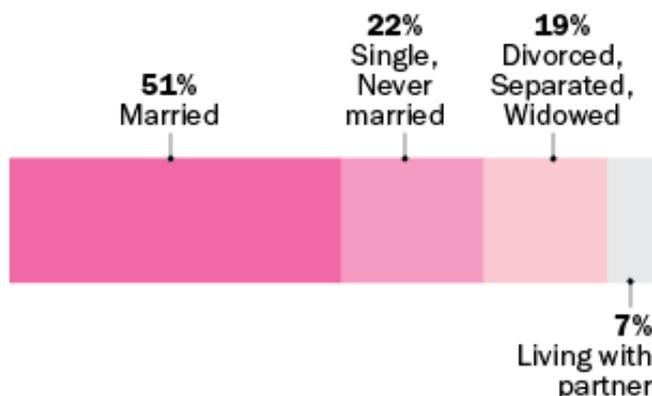
**2 The share of Americans who are married today is at its lowest point since at least 1920.** About half — 50.5% — of Americans ages 18 and over were married in 2012, compared with 72.2% of American adults in 1960, according to a Pew Research analysis (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/06/new-census-data-show-more-americans-are-tying-the-knot-but-mostly-its-the-college-educated/>) of Census Bureau data.

**3 Nonetheless, 70% of American adults said they were in a committed relationship of some sort,** according to the Pew Research survey (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/06/13/a-survey-of-lgbt-americans/5/#chapter-4-marriage-and-parenting>) referred to above. 59% said they were either married or living with a partner; 11% more weren't living with a partner but still described themselves as in a committed relationship.

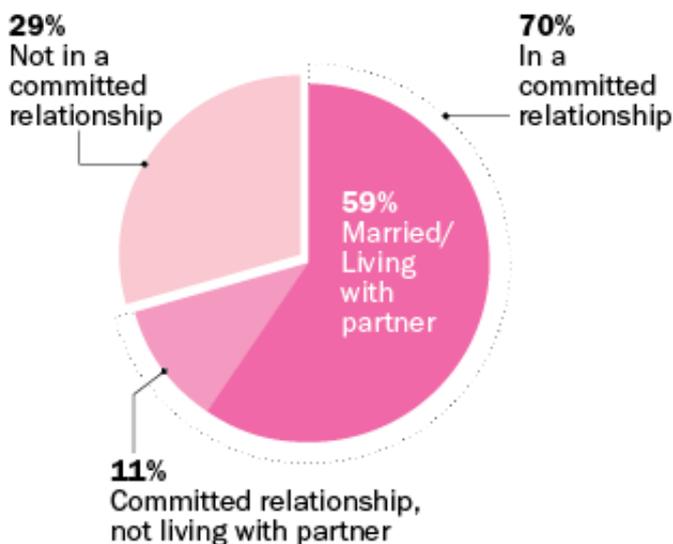
**4 Americans are waiting longer and longer to get married.** Last year, according to Census data

### Marital and Relationship Status

Percent of general public who say they are currently ...



Percent of general public who say they are currently...



Source: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, May 1-5, 2013

Note: "Don't know/Refused" not shown

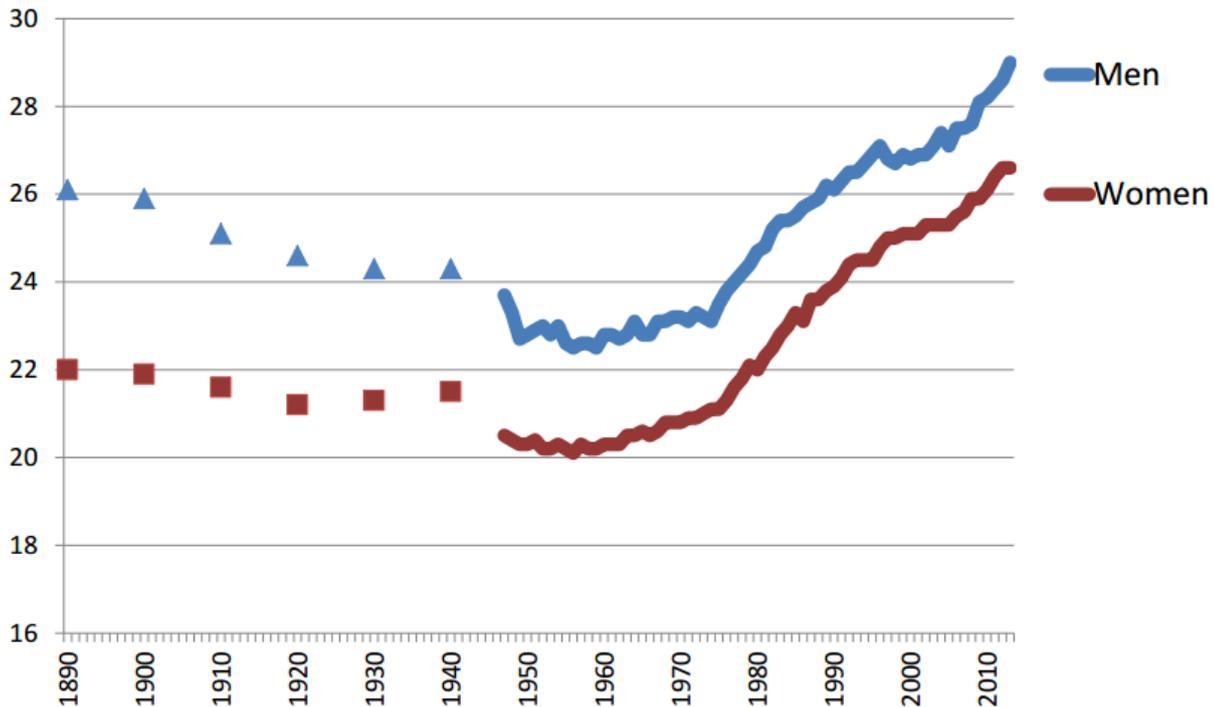
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(<http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>) , the median age at first marriage was 29.0 for men and 26.6 for women, both the highest since at least 1890. The low for both sexes since then came in 1956, when the median age at first marriage was 22.5 for men and 20.1 for women. It rose slowly through the next

two decades, then more sharply starting in the late 1970s.

**5** Cue the recorded organ music and the Elvis impersonator: **Nevada has by far the nation’s highest marriage rate.** According to provisional data, in 2011 there were 36.9 new marriages per 1,000 population in Nevada, about as many as the next three states (Hawaii, Arkansas and Tennessee) combined. That’s most likely a consequence of the Silver State’s popularity as a wedding destination for couples across the country. The nation’s lowest marriage rate: New Jersey, at 4.8 per 1,000 population, according to the National Center for Health Statistics ([http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/marriage\\_rates\\_90\\_95\\_99-11.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/marriage_rates_90_95_99-11.pdf)).

**Figure MS-2. Median age at first marriage by sex: 1890 to 2013**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses, 1890 to 1940, and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1947 to 2013.



(<http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>)



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