

# State of Marriage in Alabama

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## NOTES TO USERS AND SUGGESTED CITATION

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marriage is one of the key social institutions of all time. Its importance for adults, children, and communities has been documented throughout the ages. However, the institution of marriage is constantly changing due to socio-economic, biomedical, industrial, and technological developments.

The State of Marriage in Alabama presents both the encouraging signs and sobering realities of marriage and family in Alabama. Alabamians are more likely to get married and less likely to live with an unmarried partner than U.S. residents. However, the state's higher divorce, separation, and widowhood rates mean that more Alabamian children are born out of wedlock and are more likely to be raised by a single parent than elsewhere in the United States. Thus, for some children family life may also include the presence of a non-biological parent.

Some other highlights in this report are:

- ▶ People are getting married later in life.
- ▶ There is a slight increase in the percentage of women marrying younger men.
- ▶ Alabama marriage rate has reached its lowest level in five decades, but it is still higher than the national rate.
- ▶ The highest rate of marriage was found in Washington County, whereas the lowest rate was in Macon County.
- ▶ Fifty-seven percent of Alabama grandparents living with their grandchildren are actually responsible for these children, compared to 41 percent nationwide.
- ▶ The percent of same-sex couples is lower in Alabama (0.3%) than the U.S. (0.5%).

The State of Marriage in Alabama also discusses the beneficial aspects of marriage to spouses, children, and society at large and provides information on resources that are available to those who want to learn how to improve, preserve, and maintain healthy marriages and relationships.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a fundamental institution in nearly every society. Its importance to children, parents, and society has been documented in empirical research for many decades. This section lists some of these facts on the importance of marriage, followed by the definitions of key terms used in this publication and the main sources of data.

### 1.1. Importance of marriage

Traditionally, marriage has been viewed as important for adult, child, and community well-being. While the institution of marriage does hold significant meaning for many, the research has identified the value of *healthy* marital relationships as a key ingredient for adult and child well-being. Additionally, the health of marital relationships within a community can be linked to crime rates, education levels, and the productivity of its citizens. Therefore, the advantages of healthy couple relationships and marriages encompass child, adult, family, and community well-being.

#### *Benefits to children*

The benefits of a healthy, stable marriage for children are among the most significant.<sup>1-6</sup> Children whose parents are in a stable, healthy marriage are more likely to:

- ▶ Do better and stay in school;
- ▶ Have positive social skills;
- ▶ Have a higher quality relationship with their parents;
- ▶ Experience more positive parenting from their parents; and
- ▶ Be healthier.

They are also less likely to:

- ▶ Have emotional or behavioral problems;
- ▶ Be maltreated;
- ▶ Engage in criminal activity;
- ▶ Use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco;
- ▶ Be involved in risky sexual activity;
- ▶ Experience a teen pregnancy;
- ▶ Exhibit sleep and health problems; and
- ▶ Need psychotherapy.



### *Benefits to adults*

Being a part of a healthy marriage also carries benefits to adults.<sup>7-9</sup> Among these are:

- ▶ Better health;
- ▶ Longer life;
- ▶ Lower stress levels;
- ▶ Better health habits and practices (such as eating habits or exercise);
- ▶ Greater emotional stability;
- ▶ Fewer mental health issues;
- ▶ Greater financial stability and capital;
- ▶ Lower average energy consumption per person; and
- ▶ Better physical, social, and emotional well-being in general.

### *Benefits to communities*

Healthy marriage is not only beneficial to children and adults but also to the community.<sup>10-12</sup> Research shows that healthy marriages are vital to community functioning because adults in such marital unions are:

- ▶ More likely to be homeowners;
- ▶ More likely to be involved in schools and churches;
- ▶ More likely to offer volunteer time to support community-strengthening activities;
- ▶ Less likely to abuse substances or be drug dependent;
- ▶ Less likely to commit crime;
- ▶ Lower carbon polluters; and
- ▶ Better employees because they miss less work, are more committed to work, have higher levels of productivity, and change jobs less often.

It is clear from decades of research that healthy, stable, relationships and marriages affect all aspects of our communities and society as a whole. The economic benefits of raising physically, emotionally, and psychologically healthier children, and the contributions to schools, churches, and community are the reasons why statistics pertaining to family stability and healthy marriages can be a measuring stick for a functional community.

“What’s love got to do with it?” icon Tina Turner famously asks.<sup>13</sup> It turns out that love and healthy, stable, adult relationships have everything to do with “it,” regardless of whether “it” refers to individual, family, or community. Another singer and songwriter, Amy Grant, speaks a research-based truth in her words: “The more you invest in a marriage, the more valuable it becomes.”<sup>14</sup>



## 1.2. Definitions

Here are the definitions of some key terms used in this publication.

**Marriage** is the legal union between a man and a woman that establishes their relationship as husband and wife.<sup>15</sup> We are aware of the existence of same-sex unions and report such data in section 4.4.

**Remarriage** is when a person whose precedent marital union ended in divorce or widowhood enters into a new marriage. Because of lack of detailed data on marital history, our estimates of age at marriage are based on current marriage, which includes both first and higher order marriages.

A **household** contains one or more people living in a housing unit. Depending on the size and type of relationship between members of the household unit, some households are designated as family households, whereas others are referred to as nonfamily households.<sup>16</sup>

**Family household** has at least two members related by blood, marriage, or adoption, with one of the members designated as the householder or the head of household.

**Nonfamily household** comprises either one person living alone, or someone sharing a housing unit with non-relatives only, such as roommates. The key characteristic of a nonfamily household is the absence of family ties, either by blood, marriage, or adoption among the members.

**Unmarried partner** is a person, not related to the householder, who shares living quarters and has a close personal relationship with the householder.

**Unmarried-partner household** is a household in which the householder and his or her partner are not legally married or participating in a common law marriage.

**Household size** refers to the total number of people living in a housing unit.

**Family size** refers to the number of people in a family.

**Children** refer to both biological (sons and daughters) and adoptive children (including step-children) under the age of 18.

Race is a self-identification data item in which respondents choose the race or races with which they most closely identify.



### 1.3. Sources of data

Demographic data used in this publication are from four main sources. The first source is the Center for Health Statistics at the Alabama Department of Public Health. The Center for Health Statistics operates the state's vital records system. It collects, compiles, and tabulates health-related statistics for all 67 counties. More information about the nature and quality of the vital statistics issued by the Center for Health Statistics can be found online at [www.adph.org/healthstats](http://www.adph.org/healthstats).

The second source of data used is the American Community Survey (ACS). ACS is a nationwide annual survey of the American population. Fully implemented for the first time in 2005, ACS data sets contain population and housing information that now parallel the decennial censuses. Detailed information about the methodology and coverage of this national survey is available on the Internet at [www.census.gov/acs/www/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/).

The third source is the Census Bureau. Every ten years, the U.S. government conducts a national operation to count and measure the socio-demographic characteristics of its population. Important data on marriage and living arrangements are collected during the census operation. These data and other information on the U.S. population can be accessed through the Census Bureau website at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).

The fourth source is the Current Population Survey. To supplement socio-demographic information between decennial censuses, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau have joined to create the Current Population Survey (CPS), a monthly survey of households conducted in the past 50 years. The March edition of this survey collects data on marital status and living arrangements. More details on CPS are available online at [www.census.gov/cps/](http://www.census.gov/cps/).

All these data are representative of the populations from which they are derived. However, because these data are primarily based on the samples of the civilian, non-institutionalized populations, there are margins of error associated with their statistics. Nonetheless, appropriate analytical and data management techniques were used to select only those estimates that are reliable and valid.



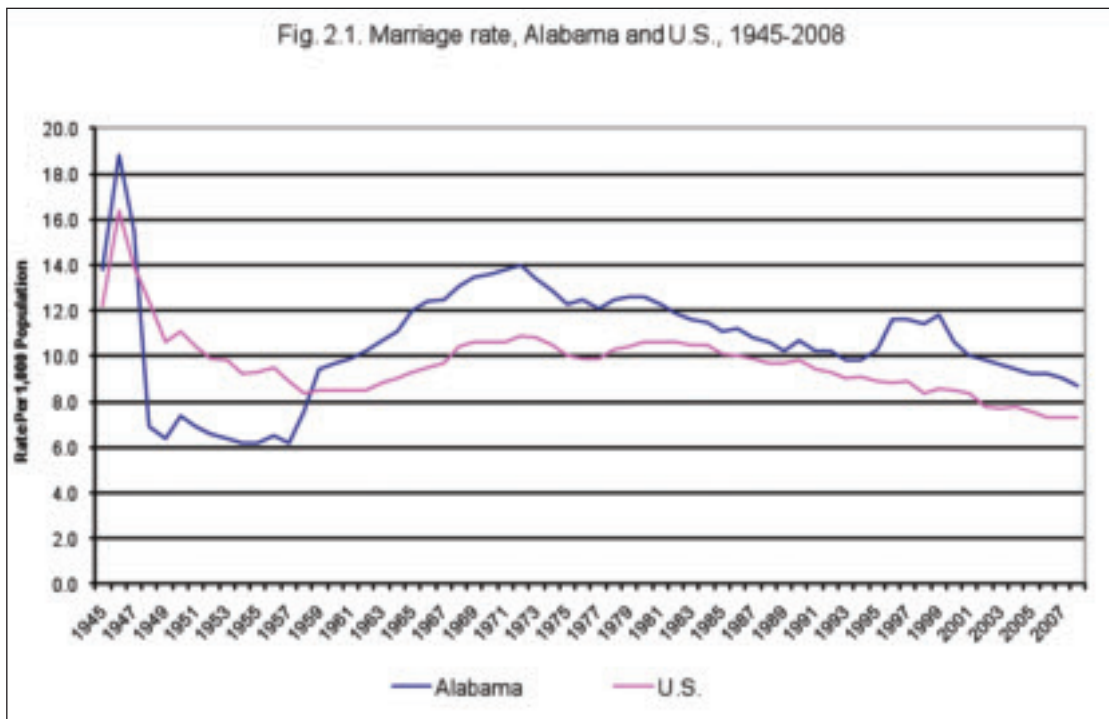
## 2. HISTORICAL TRENDS IN MARRIAGE RATE

Marriage is one of the fundamental social institutions of all time. It was created primarily because of its important functions, including procreation and commitments to maintain an intimate housing unit where members can take care of each other. However, unlike phenomena in the biological and physical environments which tend to conform to natural laws, the institution of marriage is constantly shaped by changing human behavior.<sup>17-19</sup> As such, the desire to marry, the reasons one marries, who one marries, when, and how one marries have changed over time.

This section shows historical changes in marriage in Alabama in comparison to the United States. Overall, the marriage rate (annual number of marriages per 1,000 people) continues to decline for both Alabama and the United States. In Alabama, Whites are more likely to get married than Blacks. There are also important variations per county: the highest rate of marriage was reported in Washington County, whereas the lowest rate came from Macon County.

### 2.1. Overall change: Alabama versus the United States

Alabamians have been more likely to get married compared to all U.S. residents. As shown in Figure 2.1., the rate of marriage was consistently higher for Alabama than the United States in the years 1945-1947 and 1958-2008. Nonetheless, the United States rates were significantly higher than the Alabama figures in 1948-1959.



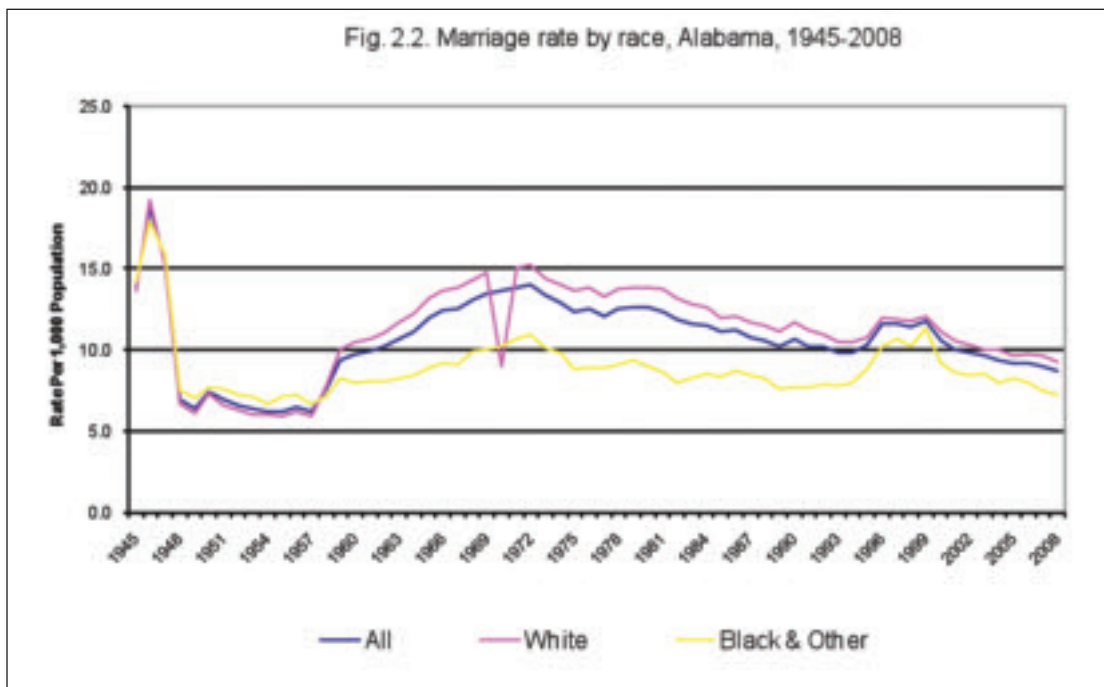
The year 1947 was the golden year of marriage in Alabama and the United States. In Alabama, the marriage rate reached an all time high figure of 19 per 1,000 people aged 15 years and older. A similar pattern was also observed across the nation with a marriage rate peak of 16 per 1,000. Clearly, this post World-War II period was characterized by a prosperous time to get married.

In contrast, there were several years of lowest marriage rates for both Alabama and the United States. For Alabama, the lowest rate came in 1954, 1955, and 1957, with 6.2 per 1,000. The lowest national estimates were reported much later in 2006, 2007, and 2008, with 7.3 marriages per 1,000.

## 2.2. Racial differences in marriage

Records of marriages we used were available only in three racial categories: All; White; and Black and other. Nonetheless, because the “other” category is very small (currently about 3 percent of the Alabama population),<sup>20</sup> the “Black and other” group is primarily composed of the black population.

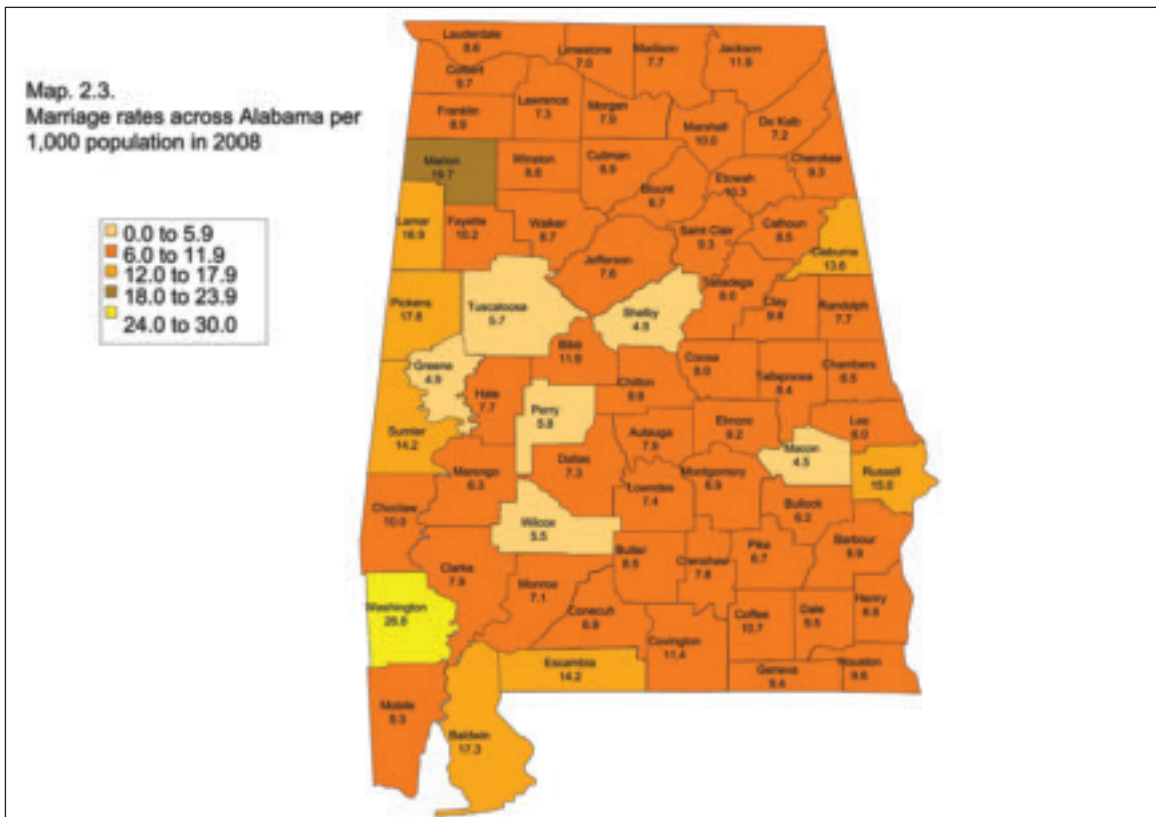
The data in Figure 2.2 show that, during most of the period of 1945-2008, Whites were more likely to marry than Blacks and others. The only exceptions were in 1945, from 1947-1959 and in 1970; years during which Blacks and others’ marriage rates surpassed their White counterparts.



Although there is a continuous decline in marriage rates for both racial groups, scholars suggest the gap will likely remain significant in the next decades. This is most likely due to the intersection of demographic and socio-economic characteristics, which affect the timing of first marriage, the chance of remarriage, and how long people remain married or unmarried in their lives.

### 2.3. Marriage across Alabama: highest and lowest marriage rate counties

As with many other social institutions, the institution of marriage is strongly based on local factors, including demographic, social, and economic conditions. Map 2.3 shows the distribution of marriage rate in the 67 counties in 2008.



Thirty-six counties, from Macon (4.5 per 1,000 population) to Lauderdale (8.6 per 1,000), have marriage rates that are below the state average. Thirty counties, from Winston (8.8 per 1,000) to Washington (26.8 per 1,000) are above the state rate. Walker County has the same rate as the state (8.7 per 1,000).

Based on these figures, people living in Washington County were most likely to get married, whereas those in Macon County were least likely to do so. Residents of Walker County had the same chance of getting married as an average Alabama resident.

## 2.4. Driving forces of declining marriage

Rates of marriage within the United States traditionally have been influenced by societal, cultural and historical events. Looking back over the last century, we see that rates of marriage were high during World War I, but declined during the Great Depression.<sup>7</sup> Rates of marriage in the United States dipped somewhat immediately following the end of World War II, but steadily rose throughout the 1950s and 1960s. During this post World War II era, rates of marriage peaked in the United States as soldiers returned and institutional supports were established that promoted education, jobs, and stable marriages (e.g., the G.I. bill, V.A. loans, etc.).

Around 1970, the numbers of currently married men and women began to decrease, such that approximately 30 percent of men and 25 percent of women aged fifteen years or older described themselves as being “never married” in the 2000 United States census compared to the 1960 US Census in which 25 percent of men and 19 percent of women over the age of 15 reported themselves as “never married.” Rates of marriage in Alabama in the 2000 Census data were somewhat higher than was seen nationally, but there has been a growing concern that marriage is in a decline within our country. It is important to understand and identify factors related to current marriage rates as they can help us hypothesize what the long-term consequences of these changes might be, as well as identify if intervention is necessary, if this pattern is self-correcting, or if there is any need for concern.

### *Putting current rates in context*

First, it is important to note that the patterns seen in the United States are not isolated, and there are similar patterns of decreased marriage throughout Western Europe and Canada. These historical contexts of patterns of marriage are important to recognize, as the declining rates of American marriage are due to a number of contributing forces within the broader culture. Secondly, it is important to point out the marriage rate increase during the period of time from the end of World War II until the mid 1960s was an anomaly in national patterns of marriage<sup>22</sup> with couples getting married more frequently and at younger ages than at any other period of time in American history.

### *The women’s movement and sexual revolution*

#### **The availability of birth control**

Changes in accessibility of birth control and the availability of oral contraceptives (i.e., “The Pill”) and intra-uterine devices (IUDs) may have contributed to shifts in marriage rates in the 1970s. The birth control pill was first approved by the FDA in 1961; however, use among non-married women in their early twenties did not become widespread until the late sixties and early seventies.<sup>23</sup> With the increased availability of reliable birth control methods, couples were able to explore their sexuality with fewer risks of unplanned pregnancy. This is reflected in the changes in the rates of pre-marital sex, with the majority of married women in the 1960’s never having had sex premaritally and the majority of married women in the 1970’s having had premarital sex. Readily



accessible birth control reduced the stigma of premarital sex and the risk of pregnancy, and may have removed one of the motivating forces of early marriage. Thus, oral contraceptives and the increasing array of other inexpensive, reliable, and easily accessible birth control methods in the late twentieth century have contributed to women and men being able to postpone child-bearing and marriage until times of their choosing.

### **Post-secondary education for women**

Another cultural and societal change that has influenced rates of marriage has been the rates of higher education for women. Rates of women who are attending college are at an all time high, with more women currently enrolled in undergraduate degree programs than men.<sup>24</sup> What does this mean for the declining rates of marriage across the state of Alabama and the United States? Historically, post-secondary education for women is negatively correlated with marriage rates. In other words, women who have education that extends beyond high school have been less likely to get married. However, current trends suggest that this pattern may no longer be true, as more and more women enter college. In fact, some researchers have suggested that “Generation X” women who attend and complete college are more likely to get married than women who did not complete college, particularly if they are African-American.<sup>25, 26</sup> However, there is a caveat to this finding for European-American women. A higher percentage of European-American women who complete college are married at some point during their lifetime; however, college education delays their age of marriage. Thus, the higher rates of marriage for women who have completed college are not seen until after the woman’s thirtieth birthday. Since women are more likely to marry men who are older than they, this cultural shift influences the age at which men marry.

### **Women's employment**

Not only are today’s women more likely to receive a post-secondary education, they are also more likely to be employed outside the home than women of previous generations. Women have become more self-sufficient and independent. While the majority of women did not continue working outside the home after they were married in the 1950s and 1960s, by the 1990s most women continued to work outside the home after getting married. As women became increasingly educated, they were able to hold higher level positions and develop career paths that led to options and interests that were focused outside the home. As women’s positions within the workforce advanced, there has been a corresponding increase in women’s income.<sup>27</sup> This economic independence provides women with the ability to postpone marriage and partner selection,<sup>22</sup> as more women are no longer reliant on their husbands’ income. Interestingly, it appears that women who marry experience a decrease in wages during the first year of marriage, and a slower earning potential over the course of the marriage.<sup>28</sup> These individual economic changes may deter women from choosing to marry or to postpone marriage until their careers are better established.



Not all researchers feel that these changes in women's employment have led to decreased rates of marriage over the lifetime; rather, they have led to couples marrying at increasingly later ages.<sup>8</sup> Changes in women's roles in society may be mirrored in the changing dynamics within American marriages. Andrew Cherlin, a sociologist at Johns Hopkins University, has suggested that the shift, from the 1950s' gender-defined roles for men and women to a more egalitarian, balanced and individualized relationship by the end of the twentieth century, may have allowed couples to become more particular about marrying and remaining in a marriage.<sup>29</sup>

### *Changes in social norms: cohabitation and acceptance of children born out-of-wedlock*

#### **Cohabitation**

As with changes in women's roles in society, there have also been shifts in the cultural acceptance of cohabitation and single parenthood. Only 11 percent of couples cohabitated prior to marriage in 1970, but in 1985, 45 percent of couples cohabitated prior to marriage.<sup>30, 31</sup> By the year 2000, this number was even higher with 59 percent of couples cohabitating prior to marriage.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it has been suggested that cohabitation is increasingly being seen as a first step towards marriage, with more and more couples choosing to "test the waters" by living with their partner before making a decision on marriage. The majority of couples who cohabit will either get married within 5 years or end their relationship within the first two years<sup>32</sup>, but a portion of couples elect to permanently cohabit and choose not to get married. As society's cultural acceptance of these relationships increases, permanently-cohabiting-but-never-married couples may continue to contribute to the decline in rates of marriage.

#### **Out-of-wedlock childrearing**

American society in the last fifty years has also become increasingly accepting of children who are born to unmarried mothers. However, if a woman has a child born prior to her first marriage, her likelihood of marriage will decrease,<sup>33</sup> particularly if she is African-American. Over 70 percent of women who have a first birth nonmaritally will go on to have all subsequent children born out-of-wedlock.<sup>34</sup> Further, marriages following out-of-wedlock childbirth tend to be less stable and more prone to conflict.<sup>35</sup> Rates of out-of-wedlock child birth have been steadily rising and in 2007, 28 percent of European-American children and 72 percent of African-American children were born to nonmarried mothers.<sup>36</sup> A contributing factor was the slight increase in teen birth rates in 2006 and 2007, which reversed the previous trend of declining rates since 1991.<sup>37</sup>

### *Shifting age demographics in the population*

Even though marriage rates in a given year may be lower than in previous years, not all researchers feel that life course marriage rates are declining, and have suggested that what we are seeing instead is a higher rate of individuals, particularly women, postponing marriage until after their thirtieth birthday<sup>26</sup> as well as the result of the aging population. Since the 1940s, women were getting married at consistently older ages. Average age at first



marriage for American women in the 1950s was 23 years.<sup>21</sup> By 2008, the median age of first marriage for women in Alabama is just over 25 years, and 26 years for women across the US. Age of first marriage is even higher for better educated and more economically independent women.

This pattern of getting married at increasingly older ages is also seen for American men, but the change is far more modest. Interestingly, while rates of marriage are decreasing across the state and nationally, the percentage of couples who are older than 65 years and currently married are at rates higher than have been observed since the mid nineteenth century. Similarly, in the 2000 census, 24 percent of women and 30 percent of men reported never having been married; however, when adults below the age of 25 were excluded from these figures, only 17 percent of men and 10 percent of women had never married.

Importantly, the marriage rate change may be reflective of the shifting demographics across the United States as the baby-boomers reach retirement age. This is a key factor in explaining the decline in annual marriage rates. When the pool of adults is predominantly older and married, the rate (number of new marriages per 1,000 adults) will be lower. It is likely that over time, this trend will continue as birthrates decrease and medical advances prolong life.

### **3. CURRENT FACTS ON MARRIAGE AND REMARRIAGE**

Although marriage is associated with a variety of positive outcomes, it is important to understand the characteristics of those who marry and the overall marriage patterns. This section describes the marital status of Alabamian men and women, including the timing of marriage, conditions of remarriage, and association between marriage and general happiness.

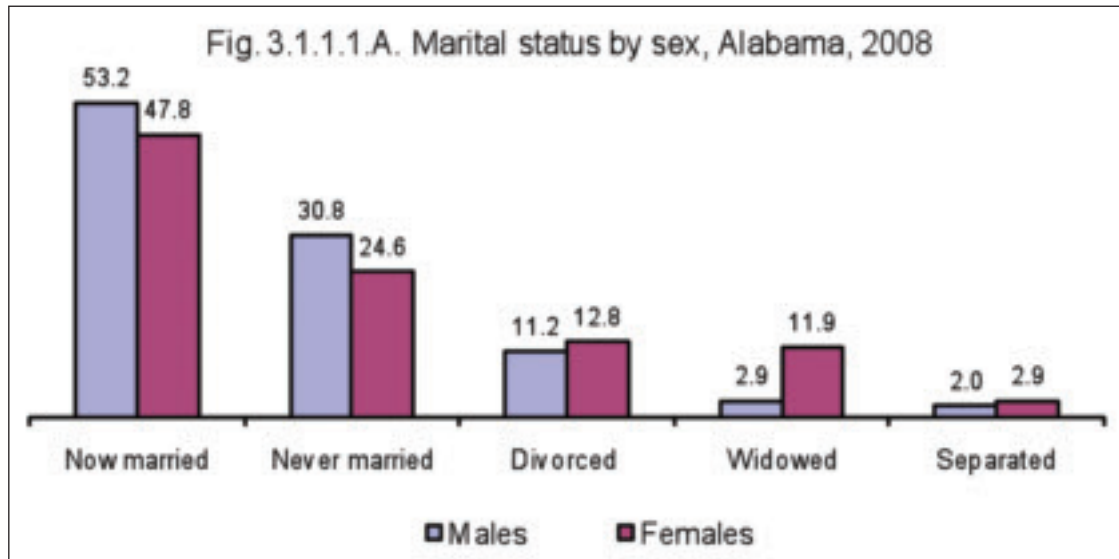
#### **3.1. Who marries and when?**

During the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a substantial increase in the age at marriage,<sup>22</sup> due in part to longer duration of schooling, pursuit of career employment particularly for women, and cohabitation as noted in the previous section. It is, therefore, important to understand the current patterns of entry into marriage and the characteristics of those who are more likely to marry. These factors are examined in terms of marital status, race, and timing of marriage.



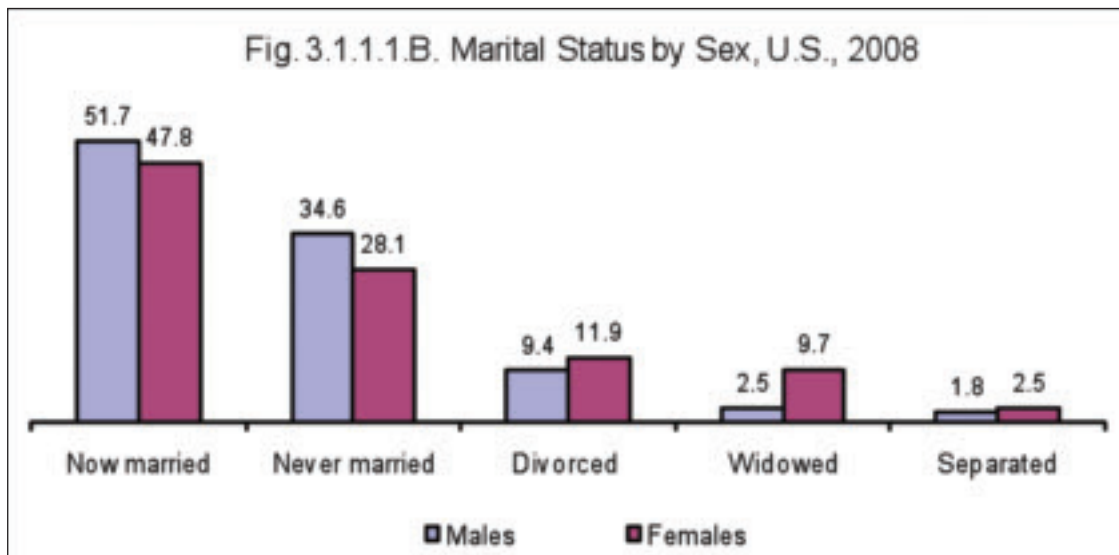
### Marital status

According to data from the 2008 American Community Survey, half (50.4%) of Alabama residents age 15 and older were married.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, men were more likely to be married than women (see Figure 3.1.1.1.A).



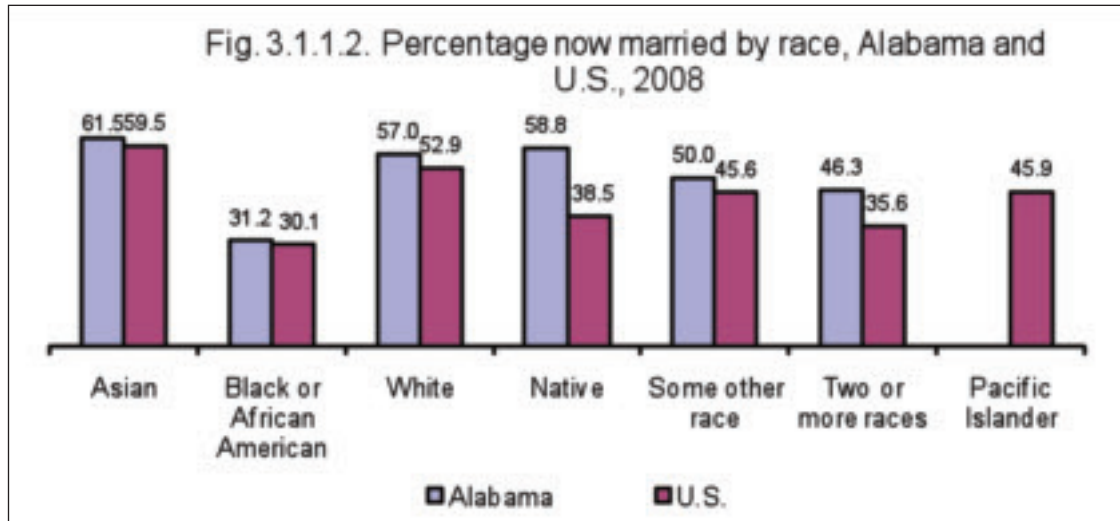
The same is observed for the United States (see Figure 3.1.1.1.B). In fact, both Alabama women and U.S. women had the same chance of being married in 2008 (47.8%). However, the likelihood of remaining single (never married) was higher for U.S. residents than for Alabamians.

Compared to the United States, Alabama has higher divorce rates, higher widowhood rates, and higher separation rates. That is, Alabama residents are more likely to be married and also more likely to find themselves outside of marital unions.



### Marriage by race

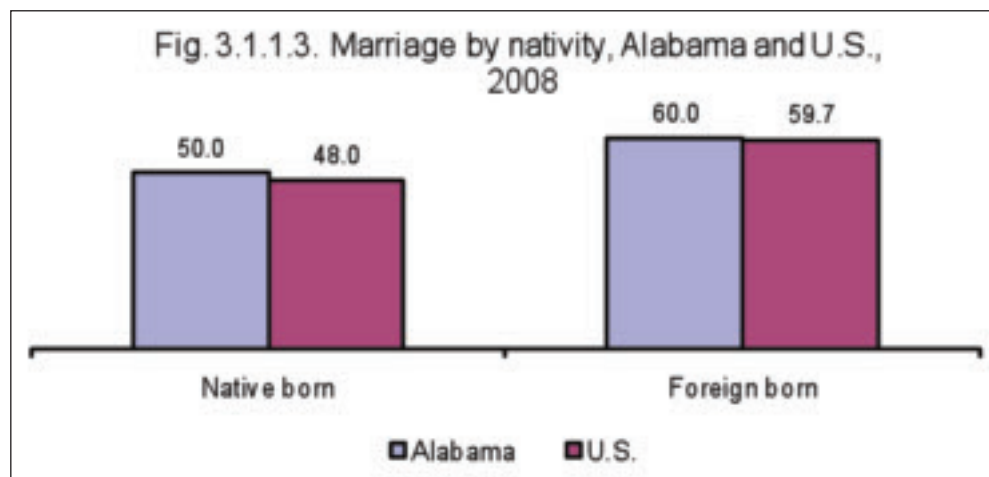
In both Alabama and the United States, Asians were more likely to be married, according to data in Figure 3.1.1.2. The percentages of people aged 15 years and older who were married in Alabama in 2008 were



61.5 for Asians, 57.0 for Whites, 31.2 for Blacks or African Americans, 58.8 for Native Americans, 50.0 for other races, and 46.3 for those with two or more races. The corresponding figures for the United States are 59.5 for Asians, 52.9 for Whites, 30.1 for Blacks or African Americans, 38.5 for Native Americans, 45.9 for Pacific Islanders, 45.6 for other races, and 35.6 for people who self-identified with two or more races.

### Marriage by nativity

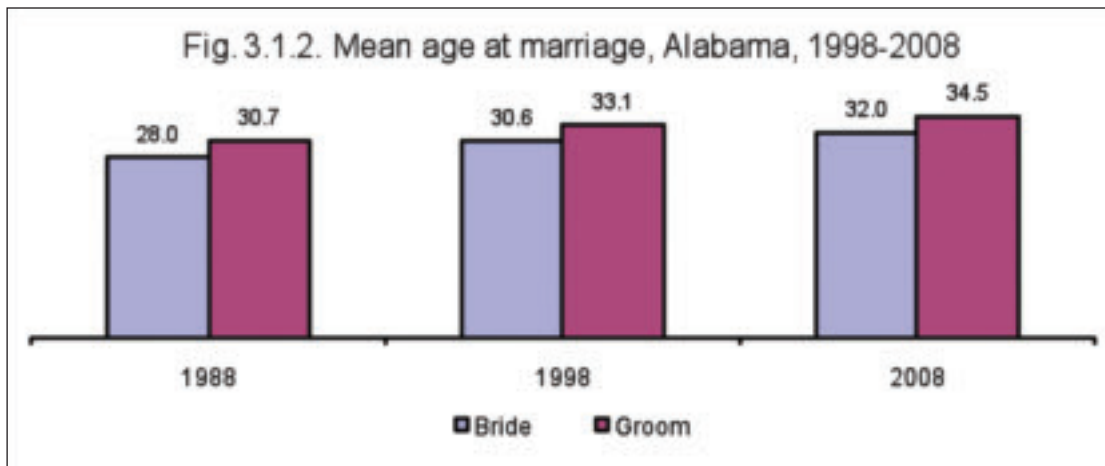
In Alabama and the United States, foreign born people were more likely to be married than native born (Figure 3.1.1.3). Foreign born people also have lower divorce rates as compared to native born, according to the Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey data.<sup>38</sup>



### Timing of marriage

When do people marry? We analyzed the timing of marriage both in terms of age at marriage and calendar year. The results indicate both an increase in age of marriage, due in large part to the growing number of remarriages. Clearly, people marry later in life today than they did decades ago.

Data in Figure 3.1.2 show a constant increase in age at marriage for both brides and grooms in Alabama. The average age of all women who got married in 1988 was 28.01 years, compared to 30.62 and 31.95 years respectively in 1998 and 2008. Men also saw a rise in average age at marriage, from 30.67 in 1988, to 33.08 in 1998 and 34.51 in 2008.

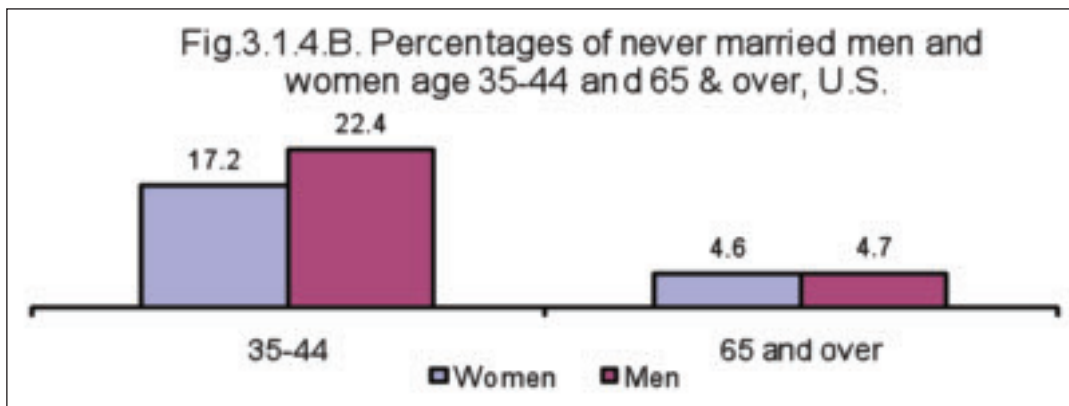
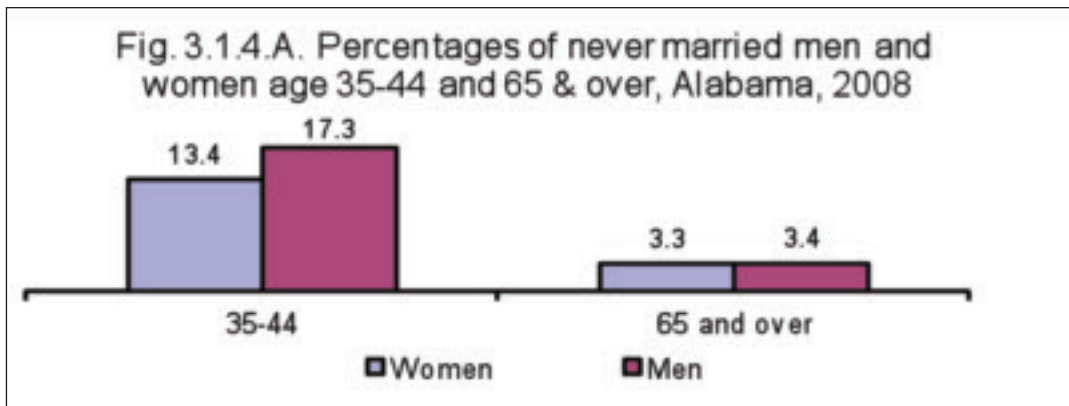


As for the time of the year, most people marry in the summer and fewest do so in the winter, according to data from the Alabama Department of Public Health.<sup>39</sup> Most marriages occur in June, and the fewest in January (see Figure 3.1.3).



### Never married population

Although the majority of men and women age 35-44 have been married at least once in their lives, more women have done so than men. Seventeen percent of men and 13 percent of women aged 35-44 years were not married in 2008 (Figure 3.1.4.A). Comparative figures for United States are 22 percent and 17 percent, higher than the Alabama numbers (Figure 3.1.4.B).



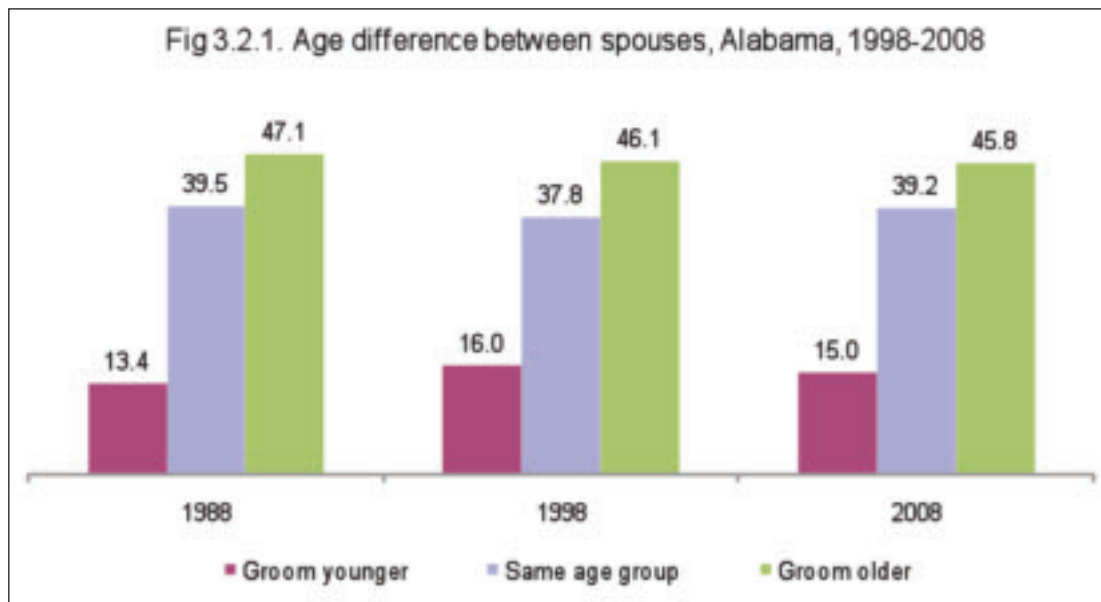
In sum, marriage is still more popular in Alabama than in the United States as a whole. Nonetheless, there are some indications that the current delay in marriage and the growing number of never married people will continue in coming decades, unless some profound changes occur in our society.

### 3.2. Age differences between spouses

#### Overall age differences

In most societies, men marry younger women, and women prefer to marry older men.<sup>40</sup> How is the situation in Alabama? To answer this question, we looked at three different time periods of ten-year intervals (1988, 1998, and 2008). The data presented here are in age-group format (i.e., 15-19, 20-24, ..., 75+). Therefore, this section shows differences in age groups between spouses, not exact age differences.

Overall, most grooms were older than their brides, in nearly half of all marriages contracted in Alabama in 1988, 1998, and 2008 (see Figure 3.2.1). The percentage of marriages in which the bride was older than the groom was relatively low (13.7 in 1988, 16.1 in 1998, and 16.0 in 2008). About 4-in-10 marriages had spouses in the same age group, with most cases found in the group 20-24 years (13.7, 13.1, and 13.4 percent of all marriages reported in 1988, 1998, and 2008 respectively).

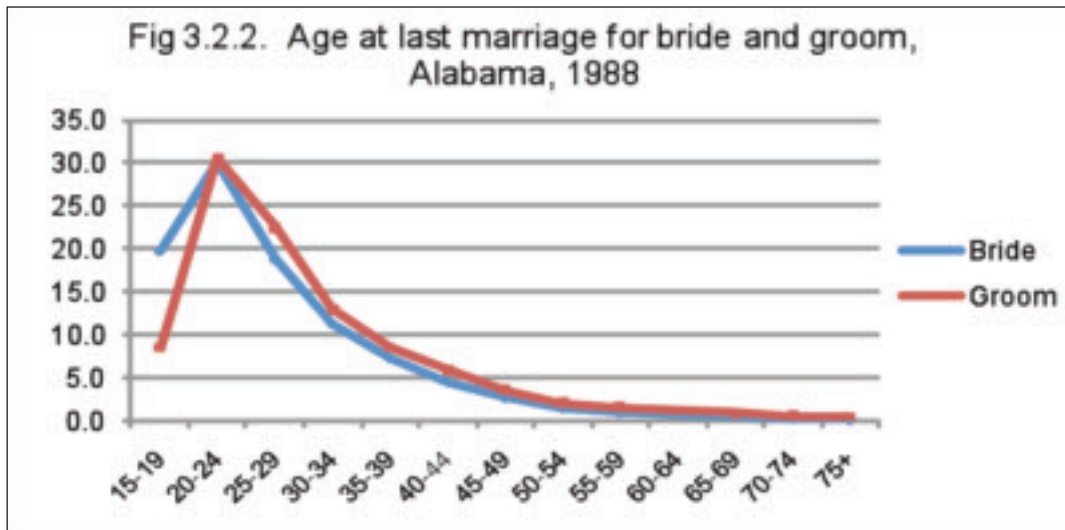


We now turn to age distribution of grooms and brides at each of the three time periods.

#### Age distributions of brides and grooms in 1988

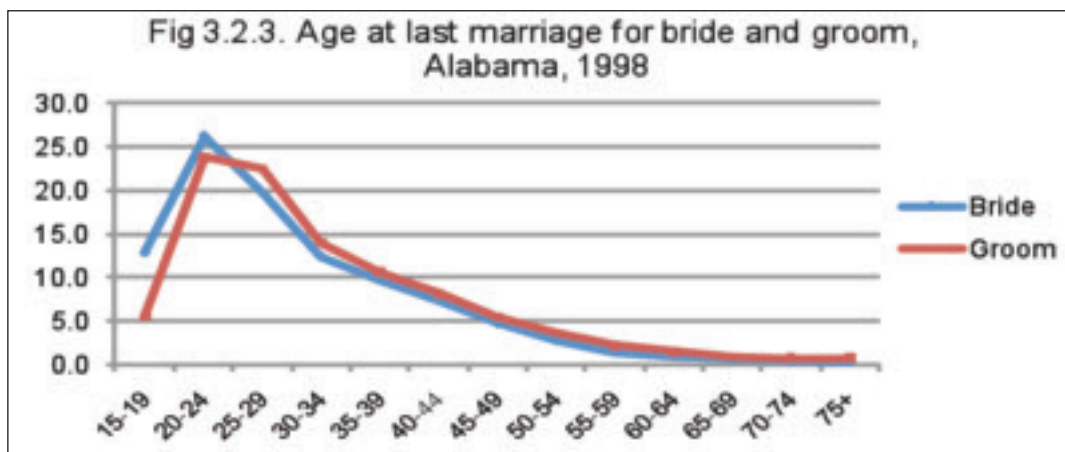
In 1988, approximately 30 percent of Alabama brides were between the ages of 20 and 24 (Figure 3.2.2). Nearly 20 percent were between the ages of 15 and 19, and almost 19 percent were between the ages of 25 and 29. The next largest age category for brides was 30 to 34 at just over 11 percent. Finally, just over 7 percent were between the ages of 35 and 39.

In that same year, most Alabama grooms (31%) were between the ages of 20 and 24. Almost 23 percent were between the ages of 25 and 29, and nearly 13 percent fell in the 30 to 34 age group. Nearly 9 percent were between 35 and 39 years of age. Just under 9 percent of grooms were between the ages of 15 and 19, a notable contrast to the 20 percent of brides who fell into this younger age category.



*Age distributions of brides and grooms in 1998*

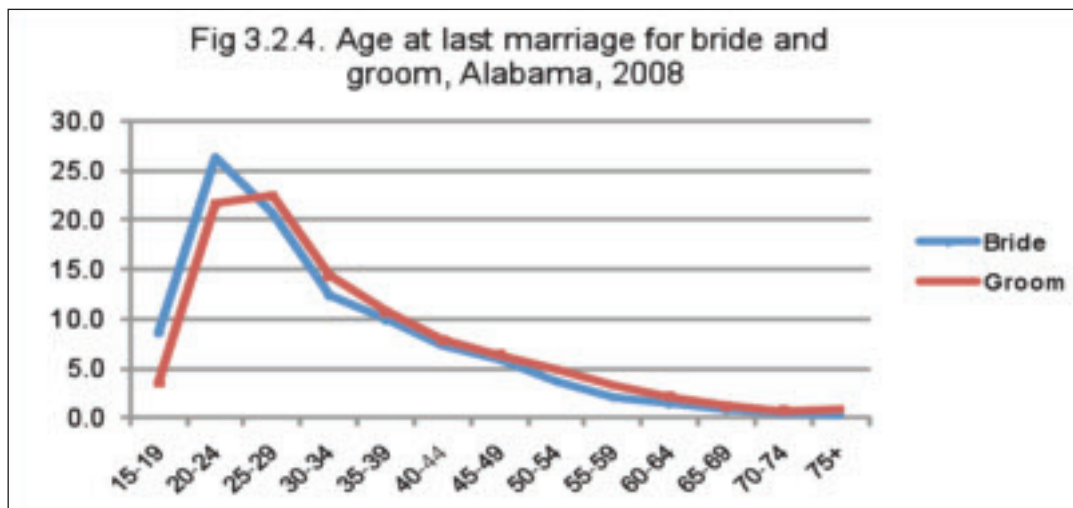
In 1998, 26 percent of brides were age 20 to 24, and 20 percent were between 25 and 29 (Figure 3.2.3). Next, almost 13 percent were between the ages of 15 and 19. This is a change from 1988 in that the second highest number of brides (19.85%) in that year was in the younger age category. Finally, just over 12 percent of brides were age 30 to 34.



Similar to brides, most grooms (23.81%) fell in the age category of 20 to 24. The next largest category was 25 to 29, with just over 22 percent of grooms. Fewer than 14 percent of grooms were between the ages of 30 and 34. Roughly 11 percent were age 35 to 39. Finally, only about 5 percent of grooms were between the ages of 15 and 19.

### *Age distributions of brides and grooms in 2008*

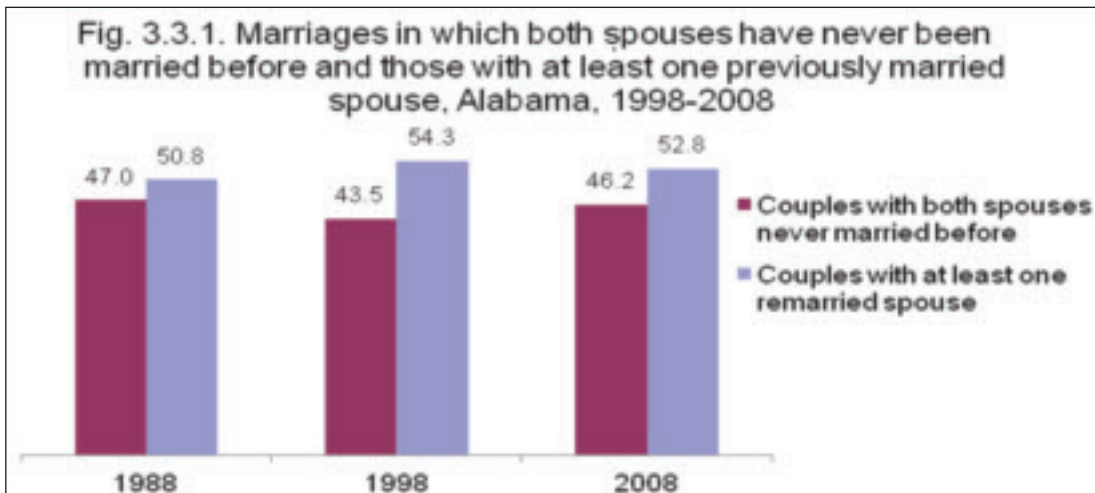
In 2008, the majority of brides (26.33%) still fell in the 20–24 age group (Figure 3.2.4). Just over 20 percent were between the ages of 25 and 29, and slightly more than 12 percent were between the ages of 30 and 34. Only about 9 percent of Alabama brides in 2008 were between the ages of 15 and 19.



Most grooms (22%) were between the ages of 25 and 29, representing the highest number among all age categories. This represents a change from previous years when most grooms were in the 20 to 24 age category. However, the next largest category was 20 to 24, with just under 22 percent of grooms. Approximately 14 percent of grooms were between the ages of 30 and 34, and almost 11 percent were age 35 to 39. Similar to Alabama brides, the number of grooms who were age 15 to 19 fell. In 1988, almost 9 percent were in this age group. In 1998, less than 6 percent were, and by 2008 less than 4 percent were age 15 to 19.

### **3.3. The state of remarriage**

We now turn to the analysis of remarriage. Overall, there are more couples with at least one previously married spouse than couples in which both spouses have never been married before. The data in Figure 3.3.1 show that more than 50 percent of marriages contracted in 1988, 1998, and 2008 had at least one spouse who had been married before. The percentages of couples in which both spouses have never been married before are 47.0, 43.5, and 46.2 respectively in 1988, 1998, and 2008.



What is the situation of remarried couples? Are previously married persons more likely to marry someone who has also been married before? We examine the marriage patterns of previously married persons in 1988, 1998, and 2008 to see if there is a change during the last 20 years.

*Patterns of remarriage in 1988*

In 1988 there were 44,552 marriages in Alabama. In that year, 37 percent of women and about 38 percent of men who got married had been previously divorced (see Figure 3.3.2). In addition, almost 4 percent of brides and just over 3 percent of grooms were widowed. About 10 percent of marriages contracted in Alabama in 1988 had a never married spouse. This is true of brides (10.0% of marriages) and grooms (10.4% of marriages).

The majority of marriages with two previously married spouses were between individuals who had been divorced previously. However, almost 10 percent of marriages that took place in 1988 were between a divorced spouse and a never married spouse.



### *Patterns of remarriages in 1998*

A total of 47,183 marriages were contracted in Alabama in 1998. In this year, about 41 percent of brides and about 40 percent of grooms had been divorced previously (Figure 3.3.3). In addition, almost 4 percent of brides and just over 3 percent of grooms were widowed.

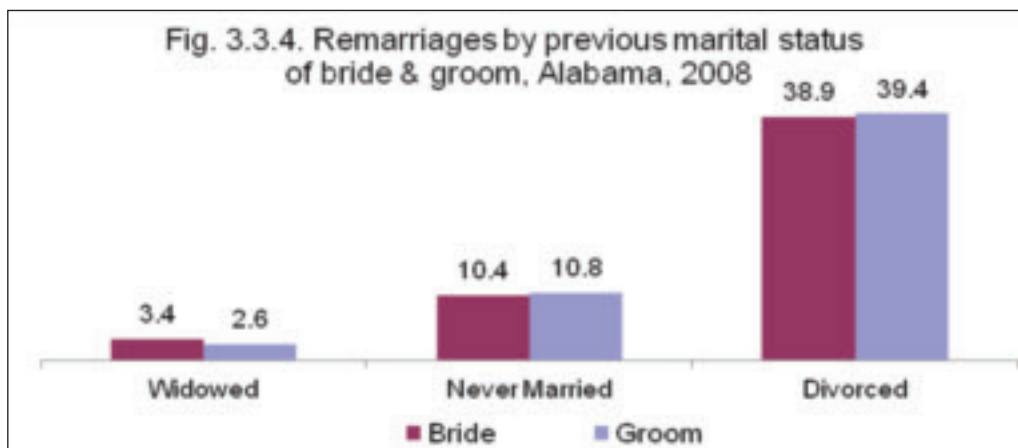
As in 1988, the majority of remarriages (representing 28% of all marriages) took place between women and men who had been divorced previously. However, almost 11 percent of marriages were between a divorced woman and never married man, whereas 10 percent were between a divorced man and a never married woman.



### *Patterns of remarriages in 2008*

There were 40,638 marriages celebrated in Alabama in 2008. As in previous decades, a large number of these marriages included previously married individuals. Roughly 39 percent of brides and grooms had been previously divorced (Figure 3.3.4). About 3 percent of brides and grooms were widowed. In addition, 10 percent of all marriages were between a never married woman and a divorced man, and the same percentage was recorded for marriages between a never married man and a divorced woman.

As in the previous years, most remarriages occurred between individuals who had each experienced a divorce. In 2008, such remarriages accounted for 27 percent of all marriages. Divorced individuals who married never married persons ranked second among all remarriage couples.



### 3.4. Marital happiness: the need to look beyond the numbers

Often when people marry there is a brief time-period of bliss and euphoria. This temporary spike in euphoria can be short-lived, lasting 6 months to 2 years. Importantly, for most people, this does not indicate a steady, linear decline over time.<sup>41, 42</sup> Research indicates that most people return to earlier levels of happiness. The return to previous happiness levels has been characterized in family science research as a “set-point.” Long-term couples who do not let the negatives of life consume the marriage are more successful. Bad things will happen in a marriage.

Most marriages go through highs and lows. An older woman, who had been married for 53 years, when asked how many of those 53 years were happy versus miserable, replied that 19 of those years were miserable or so-so. That left 34 years of marital happiness. She then spoke of how the more negative years were in the beginning of the marriage and that if she had abandoned the relationship when the marriage was young, she would have missed out on the years she cherished.

Overall, levels of happiness in relationships tend to be higher, on average, for married vs. single persons. Some of the most recent research, in fact, shows that 35 percent of couples married longer than 20 years report that they are “deeply/madly” in love with their spouse.<sup>43</sup> Brain research using fMRI scans demonstrates that when these couples see a picture of their beloved that they have an actual brain response similar to couples who are newly engaged or dating.<sup>44</sup> Researchers previously thought that this was simply not possible. When couples would declare that they were still madly in-love with their spouse, researchers assumed that this was either bravado or loving exaggerations. However, when the synapses connect and the brain activity lights up, it is obvious that these people actually do have the “in-love response” that new romantic partners exhibit.



Happiness and contentment exist when multiple aspects of life converge to create a feeling of satisfaction. People who have better relationship and professional functioning and parental experiences are more likely to report being happy and content. But are these circumstances arrived at by chance or effort? A great deal of research on couple relationships and family functioning make it clear that people in successful, satisfying relationships are effortful and work hard to make a healthy relationship a priority on a daily basis.

Recent efforts to summarize the research on healthy, stable marriages indicate several “core” elements.<sup>45</sup> *Choosing* – the use of intentionality and effort in relationships and making the relationship health a priority; *Knowing* – the development of intimate knowledge of the partner’s world; *Caring* – the daily demonstration of kindness, affection, and caring support; *Caring for Self* – the active maintenance and enhancement of physical, psychological, and sexual health and wellness as an individual; *Sharing* – the development of a real friendship and a sense of “we;” *Connecting* – the engagement of social support, community ties, and sources of personal meaning; and *Managing* – the use of positive cognitive (i.e., thinking) and behavioral strategies for engagement and interaction around differences, stresses, and issues of safety.

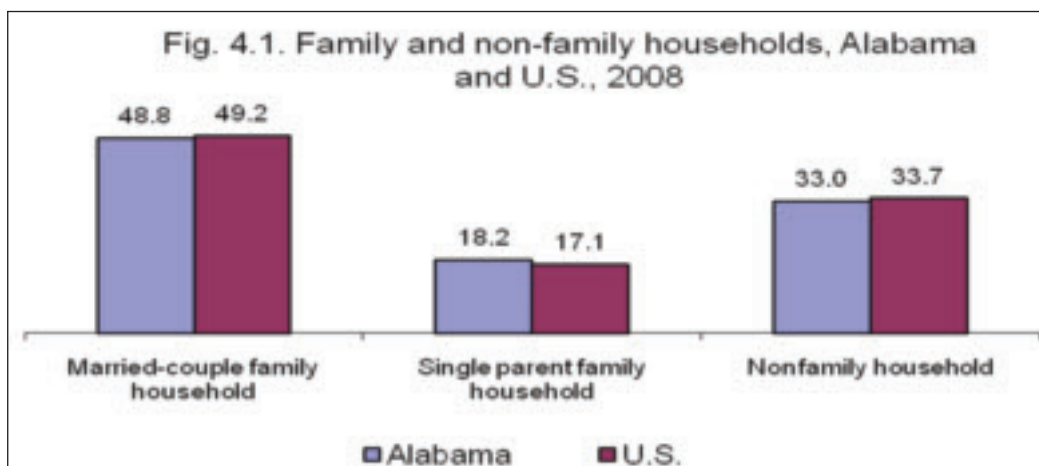
## 4. CURRENT FORMS OF LIVING ARRANGEMENT

There have been major changes in living arrangements of the U.S. population in the last 40 years.<sup>40</sup> Such changes are the result of ongoing transformations that occur in marital status, family context, economy, social norms, values, health status, and other areas of the society. This section illustrates the diversity in living arrangements among persons in Alabama and the United States.

### 4.1. Family households and nonfamily households

There has been a growth in the number of households in the United States by 12 percent from 2000-2008. When looking at type of household, there likewise has been an increase in the number of family (8%) and a greater increase in the number of nonfamily households (19%). Of the family households, the single parent families, especially those headed by men, having greatest percentage increase of all family types.<sup>46</sup> In 2008, the number of households in the United States reached 113,101,329 and totaled 1,815,865 in Alabama. Data from the 2008 American Community Survey<sup>47</sup> show that family households (those consisting of both married couple and single-parent families) were the most common type of living arrangement in the United States (66.3%) and Alabama (67%). Almost half of all households in both the United States (49.2%) and in Alabama (48.8%) consisted of married couple families (Figure 4.1).

Comparatively, Alabama had a slightly larger proportion of single parent family households (18.2%) than in the U.S. (17.1%). Nonfamily households represented about one third of all Alabama (33.0%) and United States (33.7%) households.



Some differences in living arrangements included variation in household size and family size. The household size, which reflects total number of persons in residence, was on average slightly larger in the United States (2.6 persons) than in Alabama (2.5 persons) for all household types. For nonfamily households, the difference in average household size was, likewise, minimal between those in Alabama (1.2) and in the United States (1.3).

Also, differences in average household size were observed in family households. Examination by family household type revealed a similar pattern. Married couple family households, on average, were slightly larger in the United States being comprised of 3.2 persons than those in Alabama with 3.1 persons. The same pattern was found among single parent families with 3.1 persons being the average in United States households and 3.0 persons on average in Alabama households.

There were also slight differences in family size and the number of people in a family within United States and Alabama households. In particular, married couple family households in both the United States (3.2 persons) and Alabama (3.1 persons) had comparable average number of family members. However, there is no difference in the average size of single parent family households between Alabama and the United States (3.0 persons in both entities).

#### **4.2. Living arrangements of grandparents and grandchildren**

The context of family living arrangements may encompass multiple generations of family members residing in the same household, and in some cases this includes grandparents. A small proportion of all households both in the United States (3.7%) and Alabama (4.0%) had a grandparent living with grandchildren, and in most of these households grandparents were responsible for grandchildren.<sup>40</sup>

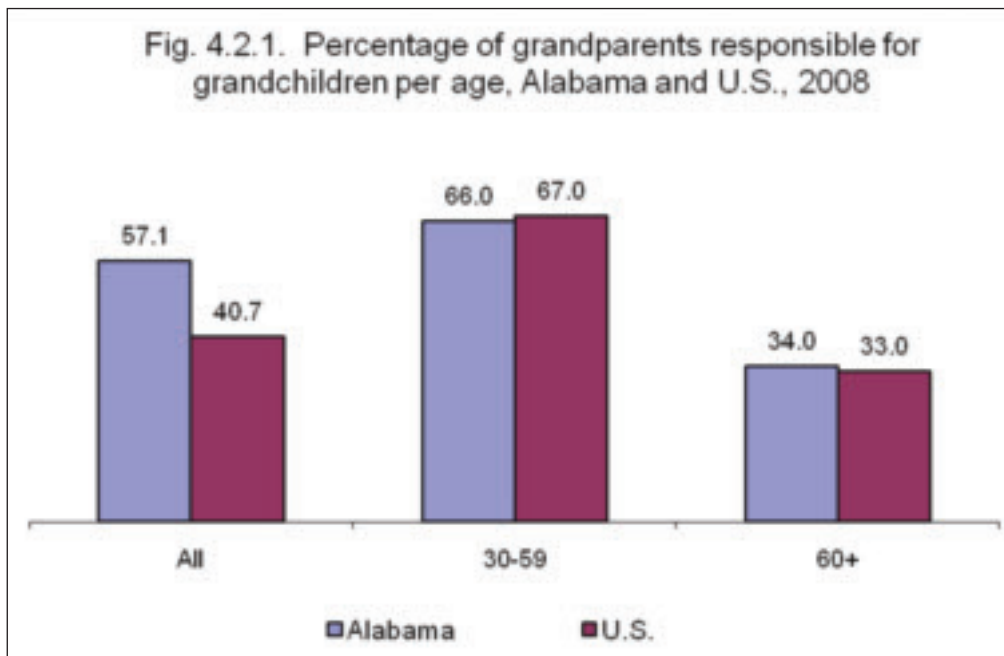


### Characteristics of grandparents responsible for grandchildren under age 18

Fifty-seven percent of Alabamian grandparents living with their own grandchildren are actually the primary providers for those grandchildren, compared to 41 percent of grandparents in the United States. Moreover, parents of these children are absent in 24.7 and 14.4 percent of these households respectively in Alabama and the United States.

How old are these custodian grandparents? Sixty-six percent of custodian grandparents in Alabama and 67 percent of custodian grandparents in the United States are 30-59 years old (see Figure 4.2.1), an age group in which most people are still in the labor force. For example, 67.8 percent of Alabamian grandparents age 30-59 are working. The comparable figure for the United States is 73.3 percent.<sup>48</sup>

Examination of race of grandparents is limited to two racial groups, White and Black, as other race data are not available for Alabama due to a small number of sample cases. By race, Whites comprised the largest proportion with more than half of all grandparents living with at least one grandchild under age 18 in both the United States (62.1%) and Alabama (55.6%). In contrast, the percentage of Black grandparents living with their grandchildren was much higher in Alabama (41.5%) than in the United States (19.1%).



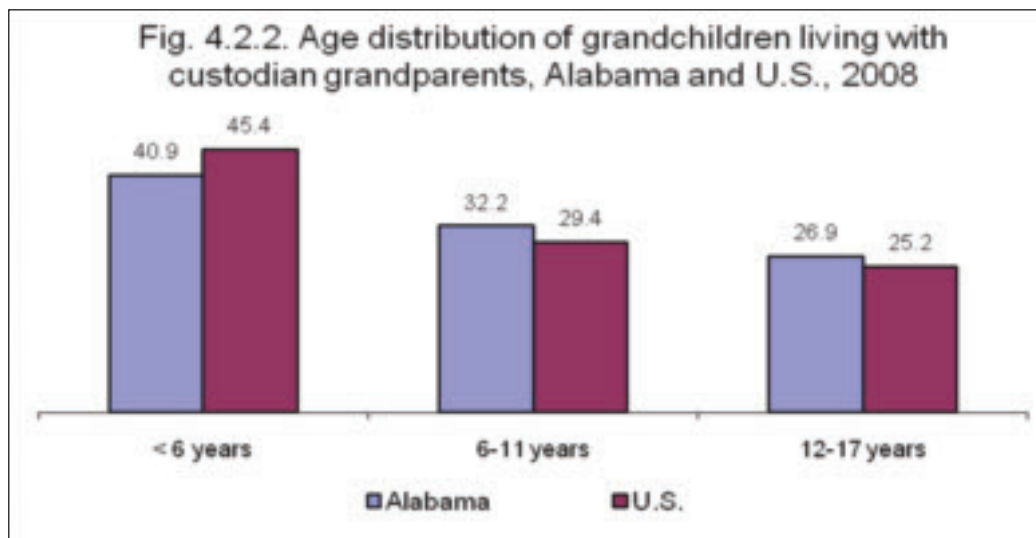
In terms of sex, female grandparents were most likely to live with their grandchildren in both Alabama (65.6%) and in the United States (64.4%). Female grandparents were also more likely to be responsible for their grandchildren than male grandparents in both Alabama (64.7%) and in the United States (62.5%). Custodian grandparents were mostly married (61.3% in Alabama and 62.7% in the United States).

When looking at other demographics such as income, the 2008 statistics indicate that households in the United States and in Alabama in which a grandparent had responsibility for grandchildren, the risk for living in poverty was greater (14.0% and 16.9%) than in married couple families living with children under age 18 (6.5% and 6.9%).<sup>49</sup>

### *Characteristics of grandchildren under age 18 living with grandparent householders*

A larger proportion of children in Alabama (9.0%) lived with a grandparent who was a householder, compared to 6.8% of children in the United States.<sup>48</sup> In 2008, 5,026,289 children under the age of 18 in the United States lived in a residence with a grandparent householder. Of these children, 54.7% had a grandparent responsible for them. Comparative figures for Alabama yielded that 100,799 children lived with a grandparent householder, with a larger proportion of grandparents in the residence responsible for them (64.6%).

How old are these children? Children under grandparent custody are mostly young. The data in Figure 4.2.2 show that younger grandchildren (under 6) were the largest proportion of all children living with a grandparent in Alabama (40.9%) and the United States (45.4%) to have a grandparent responsible. The proportion of children under grandparent custody decreases with age as seen in the 6-11 year and 12-17 year cohorts.



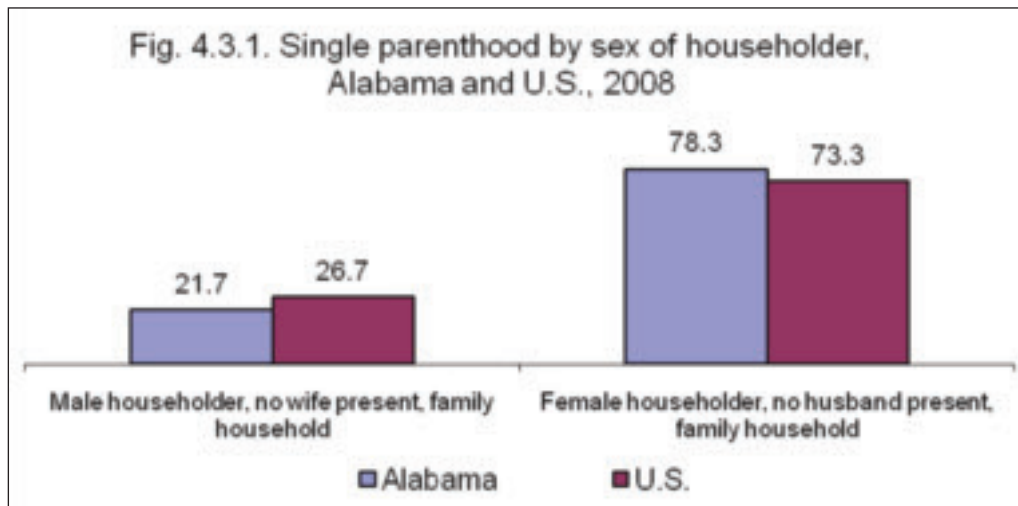
Consistent with the discussion about race of grandparents, likewise examination of race of grandchildren is limited to two categories: White and Black. Here again, other data on other races were not available for Alabama due to a small number of sample cases. By race, White children compared to Black children were the largest proportion of all grandchildren living with a grandparent householder in both the United States (56.8% and 25.5%) and Alabama (48.4% and 47.1%). Notably, there was very little difference in the racial distribution of these grandchildren in Alabama, with almost half being White and half being Black. Data on percentage of grandchildren living with a grandparent householder who has responsibility for them was not available.



### 4.3. Single parenthood

In 2008, single parent family households in the United States totaled 19,338,448, representing 25.7% of family households and 17.1% of all households. Comparable data for Alabama revealed that there were 329,967 single parent family households, and a large percentage (27.1%) of family households and (18.1%) of all households were comprised of single parents. These figures indicate that single parent families represent a substantial proportion of households in Alabama.<sup>47</sup>

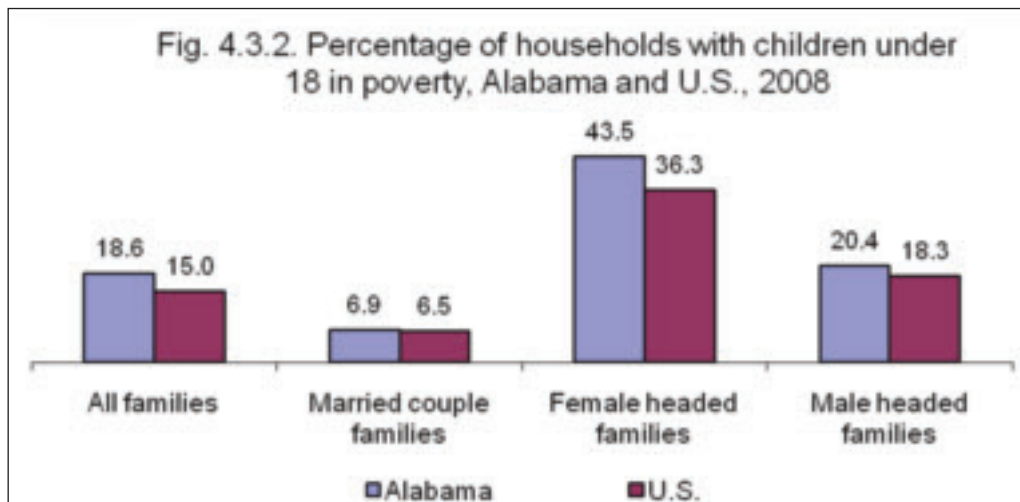
Female headed single parent families were predominant both in the United States (73.2%) and in Alabama (78.2%) as shown in data in Figure 4.3.1. However, male headed were a larger proportion of all single parent families in the United States (26.7%) compared to those in Alabama (21.7%).



Children under age 18 were most likely to be living in a married-couple family household, as did over two-thirds of all children in both in the United States (70.7%) and Alabama (67.8%). Thus, the remaining 29.3 percent of children in the United States and 32.2 percent in Alabama lived in single parent families. By family type, notably, a greater proportion of children in the United States than in Alabama lived in single parent family headed by a male (21.3% vs. 15.8%).<sup>50</sup>

Little variation existed in average family size across single parent households within United States (3.1 persons) and Alabama (3.0 persons). There was, likewise, similarity in terms of family size between female headed and male headed single parent family households in the United States (both have an average of 3.4 persons). An interesting difference was found when looking at family size in Alabama by sex of householder. Female headed single parent families were on average larger in terms of number of family members (3.2 persons) than those headed by males (3.0 persons).<sup>47</sup>

When looking at other family characteristics, in 2008 in the United States, 15.0% of all families (married couple, single parent female headed and single parent male headed) with related children under age 18 lived in poverty (see Figure 4.3.2). When looking at the proportion of the total population of each family type, single parent families were at greatest risk for poverty. In particular, those headed by females had the highest rate of poverty (36.3%), followed by male headed single parent families (18.3%) with married couple families having the lowest poverty rates (6.5%).



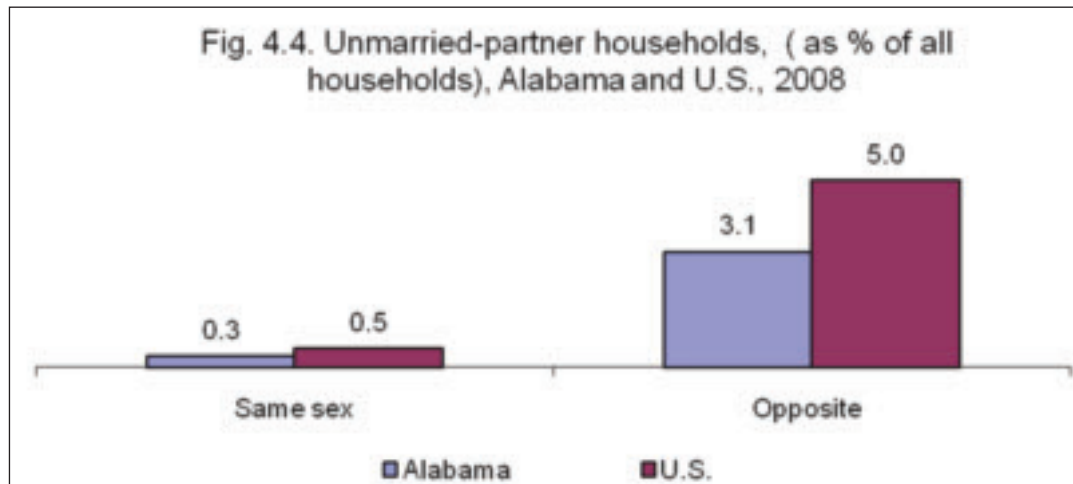
A similar pattern to that in national data was observed for the distribution of poverty in Alabama. However, the proportion of each family type living in poverty was notably higher in Alabama than the United States. For example, 43.5 percent of female headed single parent families, 20.4 percent of male headed single parent families, and 6.9 percent of married couple families lived in poverty in Alabama. The corresponding national figures are 36.3, 18.3, and 6.5.

#### 4.4. Other forms of households

In addition to recognizing that households in both Alabama and the United States consisted of married couples, single parents, and persons living alone, other living arrangements existed. These observations include unmarried partner households.

Unmarried partner households, in which the householder and his or her partner are not legally married or common law married, are classified as nonfamily households if they do not have children. In 2008, unmarried partner households (both opposite-sex and same-sex) comprised a small percent of all households in the United States (5.5%) and in Alabama (3.4%) as Figure 4.4 conveys. The majority of these households were comprised of opposite-sex partners both in Alabama (3.1%) and the United States (5.0%).<sup>47</sup>

Who lives in these type of households? The majority of unmarried partner households have children present in both the United States (93%) and in Alabama (90.6%). Unmarried partner family households are more likely to be headed by females than males both nationally and in Alabama.<sup>50</sup>



## 5. GETTING HELP WITH MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

There are many kinds of resources that can help you learn more about ways to have a healthy marriage and relationship. This section gives a list of some of the agencies and organizations that can assist individuals and couples make informed decisions that can improve the quality of their relationships, marriages, and families.

### 5.1. The Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (ACHMI)

#### *About ACHMI*

ACHMI is a collaborative effort between Auburn University, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Family Resource Center Network, the Montgomery chapter of the 100 Black Men of America, a consortium of state agencies and a growing network of public, non-profit, and faith-based community organizations and individuals who have joined together to build and sustain healthy relationships and stable marriages throughout Alabama. ACHMI provides information and resources to Alabama citizens and professionals to support healthy marriages and stable families. Its website is [www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org).

#### *Why healthy relationships?*

Children in families with healthy, stable couple and marital relationships tend to do better academically, have a more positive sense of self, are more planful of their future, have better social skills, are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, sleep better, and are physically healthier. Adults in healthy relationships and marriages tend to

be more emotionally and mentally stable, physically healthier, are more likely to contribute to their communities, are more nurturing parents, and are more reliable and productive workers. Despite this solid empirical basis for the value of relational knowledge and skills, until the establishment of ACHMI, there had been limited work to systematically address this area of family functioning through prevention and educational family programs and services in our state. Now Alabama is leading the way in offering programs and resources that demonstrate how relationship skills can be taught and learned!

### *Why is ACHMI needed in Alabama?*

While the need for relationship and marriage education exists throughout our country, in Alabama this work is especially critical. Alabama has a persistent history of high levels of marital and family instability. One indicator is our ranking in the Top 5 or Top 10 for highest divorce rate in the nation for the past 65 years. Another is the continually high number of children who experience multiple family structure changes. Remarriages and marriages that form stepfamilies (one or both spouses have children from a previous relationship) are more complex from the start.

Between 2002 and 2005, ACHMI collaborators initiated pilot relationship/marriage education applied research projects around the state for nonmarried parents, married couples, and youth, and documented positive program outcomes. In the fall of 2006, a 5-year award was received through a competitive grant program from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Family Assistance to expand the work of the Initiative. The goal is to broaden outreach and promote access for our citizens to research-based information on skills and knowledge associated with healthy relationships/marriages and to effect positive changes in people's lives - in their homes, in their workplaces, and in their communities.

The ACHMI strives to be inclusive, process-focused, and to meet individuals and families where they are. It serves a broad spectrum of community members diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, relationship status, life course stage and level of need. Auburn's College of Human Sciences, which houses ACHMI, values diversity, promotes tolerance, and seeks ways to improve quality of life. As Auburn faculty, staff, and students work with their partners toward implementing the project, they are carrying out one of the university's stated core values, to serve as an "engaged" university.

### *How ACHMI is improving relational health in Alabama*

Specific activities funded through the grant include: providing curriculum training to community educators; assisting community partners in program implementation and evaluation data-gathering; hosting a multi-disciplinary Best Practices conference; implementing a public awareness campaign that emphasizes the value of healthy, stable relationships and marriages and connects citizens to resources; sponsoring a teen-run public awareness campaign for youth ([www.realteenrelationships.org](http://www.realteenrelationships.org)); participating in community events for distribution of educational resources; distributing the Alabama Marriage Handbook [www.alabamamarriage.org/handbook.php](http://www.alabamamarriage.org/handbook.php); and providing Web-based resources for citizens and professionals ([www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org)).



Through this university-community partnership, programs are integrated into existing services. Objectives for program participants include improved individual knowledge, understanding and decision-making; enhanced skills for couple, co-parenting, and parenting relationships; and overall improved individual well-being and relationship quality.

### *Relationship and marriage education (RME) and domestic violence prevention*

Domestic violence is physical, mental, sexual, or emotional abuse in an intimate relationship. It occurs when one person uses abusive tactics to gain power and control over a partner or former partner. Domestic violence occurs at all socio-economic levels and has a devastating effect on victims, children, families, the workplace and communities. There is no excuse for domestic violence. Individuals who engage in emotionally or physically abusive interactions should talk with a professional counselor. RME classes are not the venue for resolving abusive behavior. The Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative recognizes that domestic violence is a complex problem and that abuse is a serious obstacle to stable and healthy relationships/marriages and works in consultation with the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence ([www.acadv.org](http://www.acadv.org)) to ensure that more teens and adults in Alabama recognize symptoms of the threat or presence of domestic violence and take steps to ensure their safety.

### *ACHMI's impact*

In the project's first four years, public service announcements (PSAs) have reached millions; resources have been distributed to hundreds of thousands of Alabamians; and over 13,000 youth and adults have directly participated in programs. Preliminary results indicate significant benefits in multiple areas of individual and relational functioning. The ACHMI has created jobs at Auburn University and in community organizations working with underserved populations around the state, and has provided valuable hands-on learning experiences in research-practice bridge-building for the many students involved in the project. The ACHMI team is greatly inspired and encouraged by organizations' and business' support, community interest and the family impact reported.

### *What are relationship and marriage education programs? How do they differ from counseling?*

Relationship and Marriage Education (RME) programs teach attitudes, skills, and behaviors designed to help individuals and couples achieve long-lasting, happy and successful relationships. RME provides couples with the tools to have effective communication at any stage of the relationship life-cycle. Didactic teaching, interactive hand-outs, role-playing, video segments and hands-on activities help individuals and couples strengthen their couple and family life, preventing relationship distress or breakdown. Most couples can learn something new, whether they are dating or have been married for many years.



Structured classes are held in a group setting led by a facilitator team (usually, male-female pairs) from the community and trained in a research-based curriculum. Individuals or couples can choose the class that is best suited to their stage in life or marital/parenting status. All facilitators understand the complexities and interdependent nature of relationships. RME education can help keep a marriage/relationship on the right track by providing the tools that couples need when unexpected challenges surface: job stress or unemployment, parenting, aging parents, or money problems. In a class or workshop setting, participants' skills and knowledge are affirmed as they gain new skill sets to enhance healthy family functioning, individual well-being and positive child outcomes. Leaders encourage an awareness of negative thinking and behavioral patterns. Group cohesiveness and the group experience enhance program effectiveness as participants practice skills that enhance individual and couple well-being. Classes are meant to launch individuals and couples on a positive trajectory of more learning and more practice.

In contrast, marriage counseling (or couples therapy) is a service that couples seek when they can no longer manage issues, are feeling emotionally distressed, and are questioning the level of commitment in their relationship or marriage. Counseling or therapy is provided by a trained, licensed mental health professional who provides personal, tailored guidance and helps with any serious issues that are harming the relationship.

*Please join ACHMI in strengthening Alabama families*

The Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative seeks your involvement in hopes of expanding participation in relationship and marriage education programs and improving relationship skills among youth, couples, and families. For more information regarding ACHMI, please visit [www.alabamamarriage.org](http://www.alabamamarriage.org).

## **5.2. Other resources on marriage and family**

*Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES)*

Extension is the primary outreach organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University. Extension delivers research-based educational programs that enable people to improve their quality of life and economic well-being. ACES' website is [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu).

*Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence is physical, mental, sexual or emotional abuse in an intimate relationship. It occurs when one person uses abusive tactics to gain power and control over a partner or former partner. ACADV provides shelter, support and advocacy to battered women and their children through a statewide network of community based programs. Contact information: Alabama Hotline-1-800-650-6522; National Hotline-1-800-799-7233 or TTY for the Deaf 1-800-787-3224; website: [www.acadv.org](http://www.acadv.org). If you are a victim, you can get help by calling the crisis line toll-free 24 hours a day at 1-800-650-6522.



### *The National Stepfamily Resource Center*

A clearinghouse for research-based information on healthy stepfamily living for members of stepfamilies and the professionals who work with them. The website is [www.stepfamilies.info](http://www.stepfamilies.info).

### *100 Black Men, The Greater Montgomery Chapter*

This organization is part of a statewide and nationwide network, whose mission is to improve the quality of life within their communities and enhance educational and economic opportunities for all Africans-Americans. The main focus is strengthening Alabama families by offering couple, family and youth programs. Their website is [www.100blackmen-gma.org](http://www.100blackmen-gma.org).

### *Camellia Health and Human Services Information Tool*

This website provides information about Alabama's programs and services, including eligibility guidelines. Included is a link to Family Resource Centers (FRCs). Family Resource Centers are the "go to" for Alabama citizens needing services and/or seeking assistance in navigating public and private services. They are locally based centers that help coordinate and mobilize available resources in order to support and strengthen families. The website is [www.camellia.alabama.gov](http://www.camellia.alabama.gov).

### *National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (NHMRC)*

Administration for Children and Families/Department of Health and Human Services (ACF/DHHS)–sponsored website that provides information and research related to healthy marriages. It is a "first stop shop" for marriage and family trends and statistics, marriage education and programming, scholarly research, and the latest news and events. This center's website is [www.healthymarriageinfo.org](http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org).

### *Two of Us.org*

This National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (NHMRC) operated website is specifically designed for individuals and couples and provides direct access to relationship resources, including informational articles, quick polls, discussion boards, videos, blogs and live chat opportunities with marriage and relationship experts. The website is [www.twoofus.org](http://www.twoofus.org).

### *The Administration for Children and Families*

Information on the National Healthy Marriage Initiative is found at this U.S. Department of Health and [www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage).

### *Building Strong Families*

A federally-sponsored initiative to develop and evaluate programs designed to help interested unwed parents achieve their aspirations for a healthy marriage and a stable family life. The website is [www.buildingstrongfamilies.info](http://www.buildingstrongfamilies.info).



### *Supporting Healthy Marriage*

A federally-sponsored project focused on strengthening lower resource couples. The project is designed to inform program operators and policymakers of the most effective ways to help couples strengthen and maintain healthy marriages. The website is [www.supportinghealthymarriage.org](http://www.supportinghealthymarriage.org).

### *National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network*

An online clearinghouse of research-based information on healthy relationship and marriage education efforts and resources, including marriage/relationship education programs and services. Cooperative Extension faculty from land-grant universities screen the information and emphasize low or no cost resources available to educators and families. The website is [www.nermen.org](http://www.nermen.org).

### *Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet)*

CYFERnet is a national network of land-grant university human development and family life faculty and county extension educators working to support community-based educational programs for children, youth, parents and families. Research-based information on a wide variety of family life topics can be found on their website. The website is [www.cyfernet.org](http://www.cyfernet.org).

### *Army OneSource*

This Community Support section is the source for local information, news, and valuable resources gathered by the Community Support Coordinators (CSCs), who provide community support networks for geographically dispersed soldiers and their families. The website is [www.myarmyonesource.com/CommunitiesandMarketplace/CommunitySupport](http://www.myarmyonesource.com/CommunitiesandMarketplace/CommunitySupport).

### *National Guard Family Program*

The National Guard Family Program provides information on upcoming events, a resource finder, and an online community forum and comprehensive multi-media online learning modules for service members and their families on a wide range of topics. The website is [www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/](http://www.jointservicessupport.org/FP/).

### *Strong Family Impact*

The goal is to strengthen communities from within by offering programs that focus on character development while uniting applied research to practical issues. Learn more at [www.strongfamilyimpact.com](http://www.strongfamilyimpact.com).



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