FP-22-03 High School Seniors’ Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage, 2020

Adrianne R. Brown
Bowling Green State University, adrbrow@bgsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ncfmr_family_profiles

Part of the Family, Life Course, and Society Commons

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Repository Citation

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in National Center for Family and Marriage Research Family Profiles by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.
High School Seniors’ Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage, 2020

Author: Adrianne R. Brown

The share of couples who cohabit prior to marriage has increased over time. Among marriages that took place between 2015 and 2019, three quarters were preceded by cohabitation, up from only one-third in the mid-to-late 70s (FP-21-04). This shift in behavior has been accompanied by a shift in attitudes toward cohabitation. Using Monitoring the Future data, this profile examines change in high school seniors’ attitudes toward cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage from 1976 to 2020. This measure is based on agreement or disagreement (neutral responses are not shown) with the statement “It is usually a good idea for a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out whether they really get along.” This profile updates previous profiles on high school seniors’ attitudes toward cohabitation using the most recent available data (FP-19-10; FP-16-13), and is a companion profile to High School Seniors’ Expectations to Marry, 2020 (FP-22-04).

Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage Over Time

- The share of high school seniors who agreed with the notion of cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage increased from four out of ten (40%) in 1976 to seven out of ten (69%) in 2020.
- The share who disagreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage decreased from 44% in 1976 to just 15% in 2020.

Figure 1. High School Seniors’ Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage, 1976-2020

Source: NCFMR calculations of Monitoring the Future, 1976-2020

Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Parental Educational Attainment

- The share of high school seniors who agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage increased across all four categories of parental educational attainment between 1976 and 2020.
- In 1976, the share of those who agreed that cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage was a good idea was smallest among those whose parents had less than a high school diploma (37%). In both 2006 and 2020, the share who agreed with cohabitation was largest among this group (75% and 79%, respectively).
- In 2020, those whose parents had some college education and those whose parents had completed college had the smallest shares who agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage (68% for both).

Source: NCFMR calculations of Monitoring the Future, 1976-2020
• In 1976 and 2006, larger shares of men than women agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage. By 2020, a larger share of women than men agreed with this view.

• In 1976, about half of men (48%) and one third of women (33%) agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage. In 2020, over two thirds of men and women agreed with cohabitation (68% among men and 70% among women).

Attitudes Toward Cohabitation as a Testing Ground for Marriage by Race/Ethnicity

• In 2006, there was little variation by race/ethnicity in agreement with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage. The share of Black students who agreed with this notion (66%) was slightly higher than the share of White and Hispanic students who agreed (63% and 62%, respectively).

• By 2020, nearly three quarters (74%) of Hispanic students agreed with cohabitation as a testing ground for marriage compared to 69% of White students and 65% of Black students.

Data Source:

References:

Suggested Citation: