

Intentions of Nonmarital First Births and Maternal Age at Birth, 2000-2010

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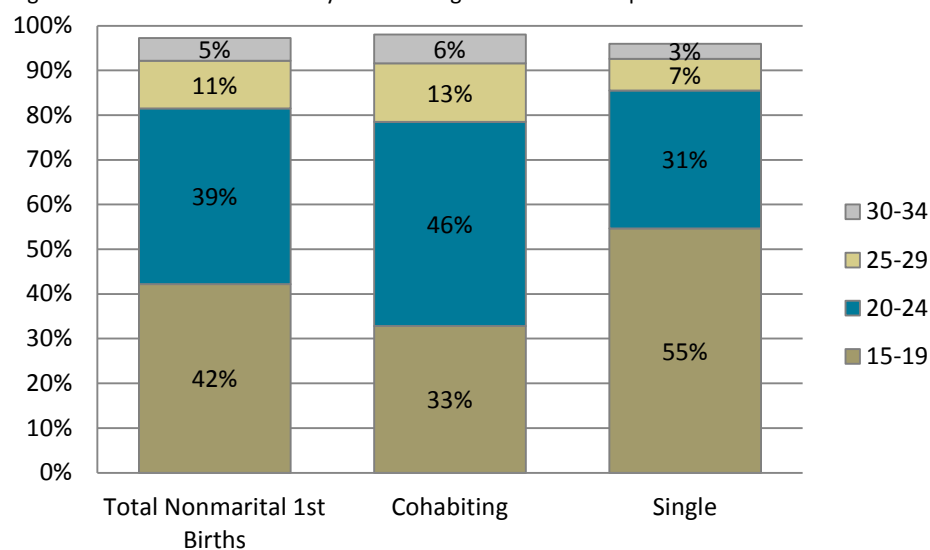
The upward trend in nonmarital first births continues, and now two-fifths of American women enter motherhood outside of marriage (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2012). The relationship context of nonmarital first births is shifting with increasing shares born to cohabiting rather than single women (Kennedy & Bumpass, 2011; Martinez, Daniels, & Chandra, 2012). Children born to cohabiting mothers are more often intended than those to single mothers (Manning, 2001), and thus the levels of unintended fertility (births that occur too early or are unwanted) among single women may be changing, too. Using data from the NSFG 2006-2010 pregnancy file, this profile provides an update linking intendedness and relationship status of recent first births (occurring from 2000-2010). The intention status of a birth has implications for a range of maternal and child well-being outcomes and is linked to family stability (Logan, Holcombe, Manlove, & Ryan, 2007). For example, intended births to cohabiting mothers are protective against dissolution relative to unwanted or mistimed births (Guzzo & Hayford, forthcoming).

Nonmarital First Births by Age and Relationship Status at Birth

- The mean age at the time of a nonmarital first birth occurring from 2000 to 2010 was 21.6. Most nonmarital first births (81%) occurred to women between the ages of 15 and 24. There were very few first nonmarital births to younger (less than 15 years old, 1.1%) or older (35 years old or older) women (1.6%) (not shown).
- On average, women cohabiting at the time of their first birth were two years older than women who were single (22.5 versus 20.5, respectively). Figure 1 shows that one-third of cohabiting first births were to teenagers, while over half of single first births were to teenage mothers.
- A substantial percentage of cohabiting mothers were not living with their partner at the time of conception, but this varies by age. The majority (70%) of teenage cohabiting mothers (15-19 year olds) were not living with their partner when they got pregnant. In contrast, 39% of 20 to 24-year-old mothers were not living with their partner when their child was conceived (not shown).

Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

Figure 1. Nonmarital 1st Births by Maternal Age and Relationship Status at Birth



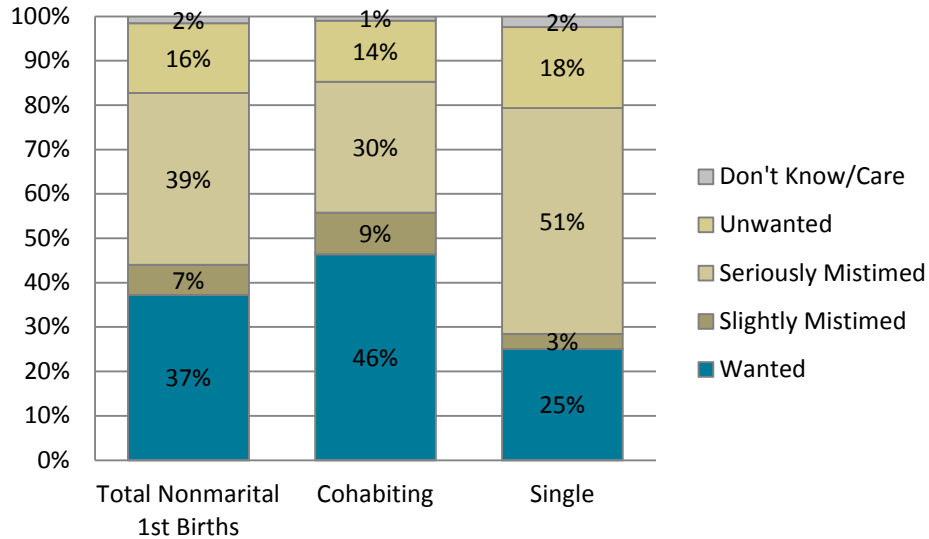
Source: NSFG 2006-10 Pregnancy Data Files

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2. Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Ventura, S. J. (2012). Births: Preliminary Data for 2011. *National Vital Statistics Reports*. Volume 61, Number 5. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.
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4. Logan, C., Holcombe, E., Manlove, J., and Ryan, S. 2007. The consequences of unintended childbearing: A white paper. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends, and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.
5. Manning, W. D. (2001). Childbearing in cohabiting unions: Racial and Ethnic Differences. *Family Planning Perspectives*, 33(5), 217-223.
6. Martinez, G. M., Daniels, K., & Chandra, A. (2012). Fertility of men and women aged 15-44 years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006-2010. *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 51. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Union Status by Intended Status of Nonmarital First Births

- About two-fifths (37%) of all nonmarital first births were wanted. Significantly fewer nonmarital first births (22%) were actively planned; that is, the mother was purposely not contracepting in order to get pregnant (not shown). About one in six nonmarital first births were unwanted.
- Cohabiting first births were nearly twice as likely to be wanted as single first births, 46% versus 25%.
- Over half of single births were mistimed, compared to about two-fifths of cohabiting births.
 - The majority of mistimed nonmarital births were considered seriously mistimed (two or more years too early)—77% among cohabiting and 94% among single births.

Figure 2. Intended Status of Nonmarital First Births by Maternal Union Status

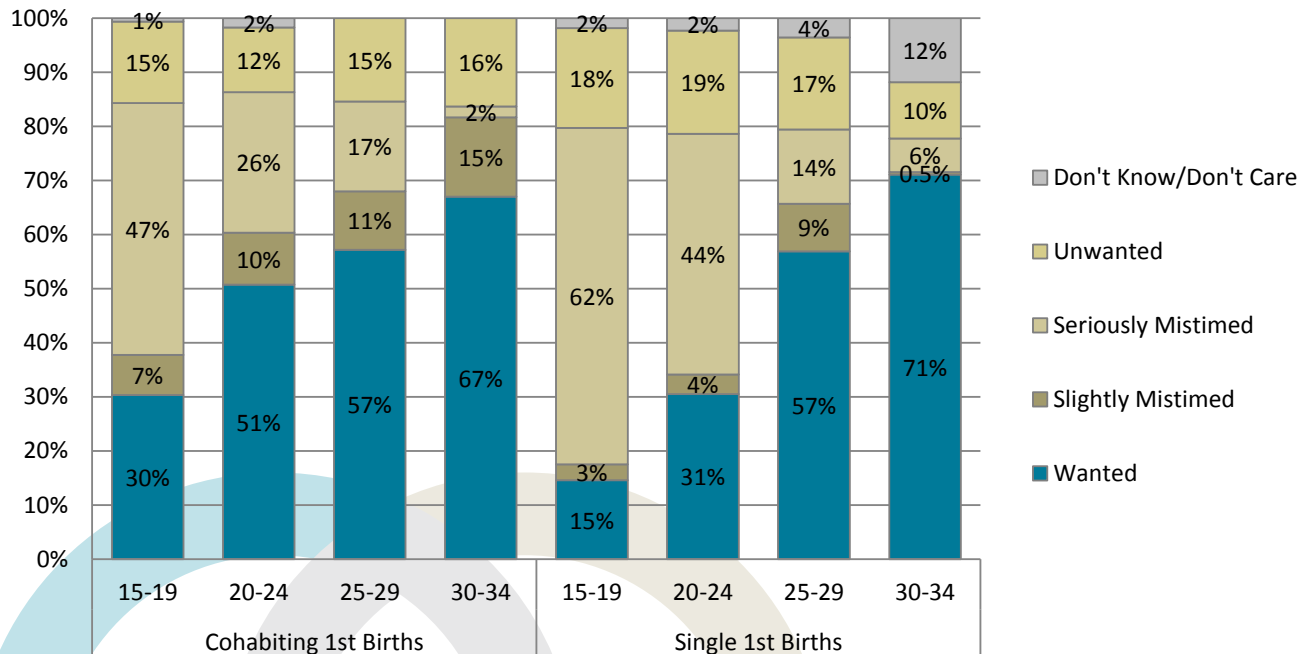


Source: NSFG 2006-10 Pregnancy Data Files

Age, Union Status, and Intended Status of Births

- Wantedness increased with mother's age and most strongly for single first births—even though the proportion of all nonmarital births declined with age.
 - The gap in cohabiting and single mother's wantedness of children narrowed with age. Among teenage mothers, wantedness was twice as high for cohabiting mothers as single mothers, whereas among mothers in their early 20s, wantedness was 65% higher among cohabitators. There was almost no difference in wantedness among cohabiting and single mothers over age 25.

Figure 3. Intendedness Status of Nonmarital First Births by Maternal Age at Birth



Source: NSFG 2006-10 Pregnancy Data Files

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