

U.S. DIVORCE STATISTICS COMPILED

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WASHINGTON (July 24) - One in three marriages will end in divorce during their first 10 years, with certain couples more likely to split up than others, a government survey finds.

People who marry young, have less money, are not religious and whose parents are divorced are more likely to divorce themselves.

Overall, by age 30, three in four women have been married and about half have lived with a partner outside marriage.

Those are among the findings of an extensive survey of nearly 11,000 women ages 15 to 44 exploring factors influencing cohabitation, marriage and divorce. The survey, conducted in 1995 by the National Center for Health Statistics, focuses on a wide range of family and fertility issues and included only women. A new round of interviews being done now includes both men and women.

Among the findings released Wednesday:

Women whose parents were divorced are significantly more likely to divorce. Among women whose parents stayed together, 29 percent were divorced after 10 years. Among those who came from broken marriages, 43 percent were divorced.

Couples who live together before getting married are more likely to divorce. After 10 years, 40 percent of cohabiting couples had broken up, versus 31 percent of those who did not live together first.

"If you have a couple thinking about getting together, they don't believe it's right to cohabit. These are also the kind of people not likely to divorce," said Matthew Bramlett, the report's lead author.

Black women are significantly less likely to marry than white women. By age 30, 81 percent of white women have been married, whereas only 52 percent of black women. The report notes one explanation, that there are fewer black men considered marriage material, given their high rates of unemployment.

Black women are also less likely to remarry after a divorce than white women.

Broken marriages don't always lead to divorce, with many couples broken up but still legally married.

This was particularly true for black women. Just 67 percent of women who were separated from their husbands were divorced three years after the separation. Among Hispanic women, it was 77 percent; among whites, 91 percent.

Just over half of divorced women - 54 percent - get married again within five years. For white women, it's 58 percent, but just 44 percent for Hispanic women and 32 percent for black women. These rates have been falling since the 1950s, when divorced women had a 65 percent chance of remarrying.

07/24/02 14:52 EDT

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