

# **Marriage: Minnesota's No. 1 Weapon Against Childhood Poverty**

**How the Collapse of Marriage Hurts the Nation  
and 7 Steps to Reverse the Damage**

A Heritage Foundation Book of Charts • 2011

Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society



# Growth of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing in Minnesota, 1929–2009

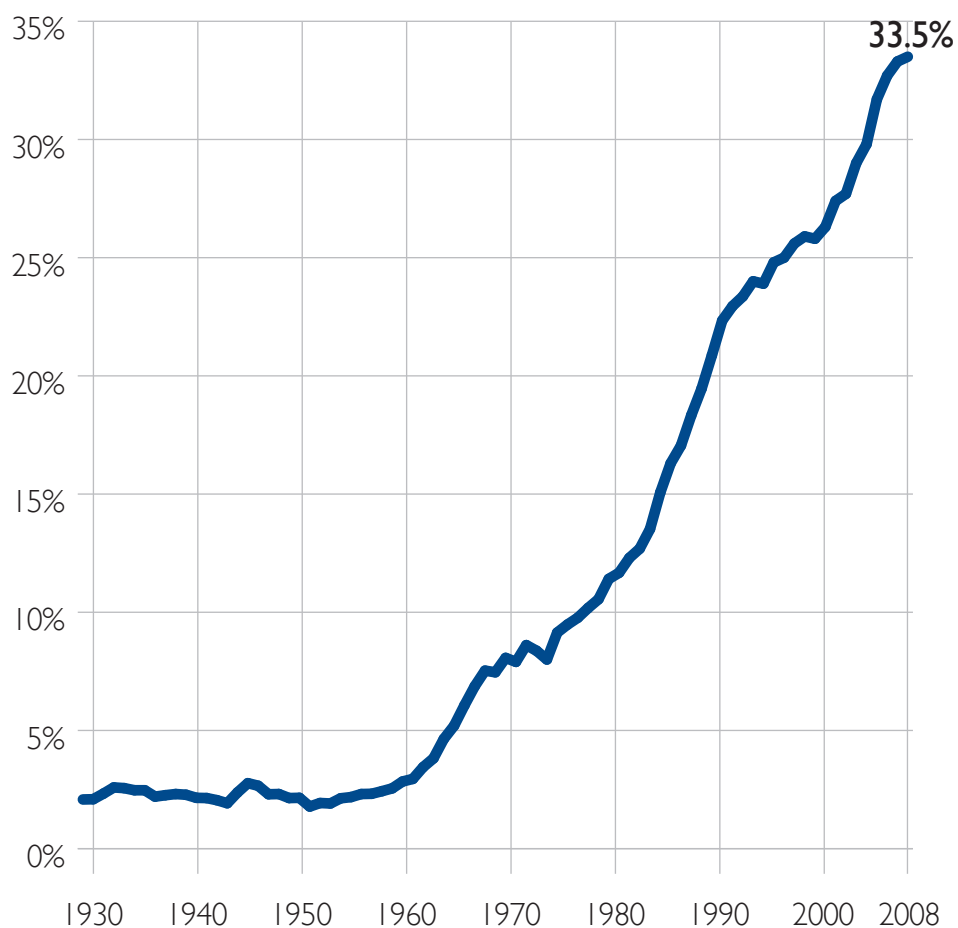
Throughout most of Minnesota history, out-of-wedlock childbearing was rare.

When the federal government's War on Poverty began in 1964, only 4.6 percent of children in Minnesota were born out of wedlock. However, over the next four decades, the number rose rapidly. By 2009, more than one-third of all births in Minnesota occurred outside of marriage.

**Note:** Initiated by President Lyndon Johnson in 1963, the War on Poverty led to the creation of more than three dozen welfare programs to aid poor persons. Government has spent \$16.7 trillion on means-tested aid to the poor since 1964.

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK



# Death of Marriage in Minnesota, 1929–2009

The marital birth rate—the percentage of all births that occur to married parents—is the flip side of the out-of-wedlock birth rate.

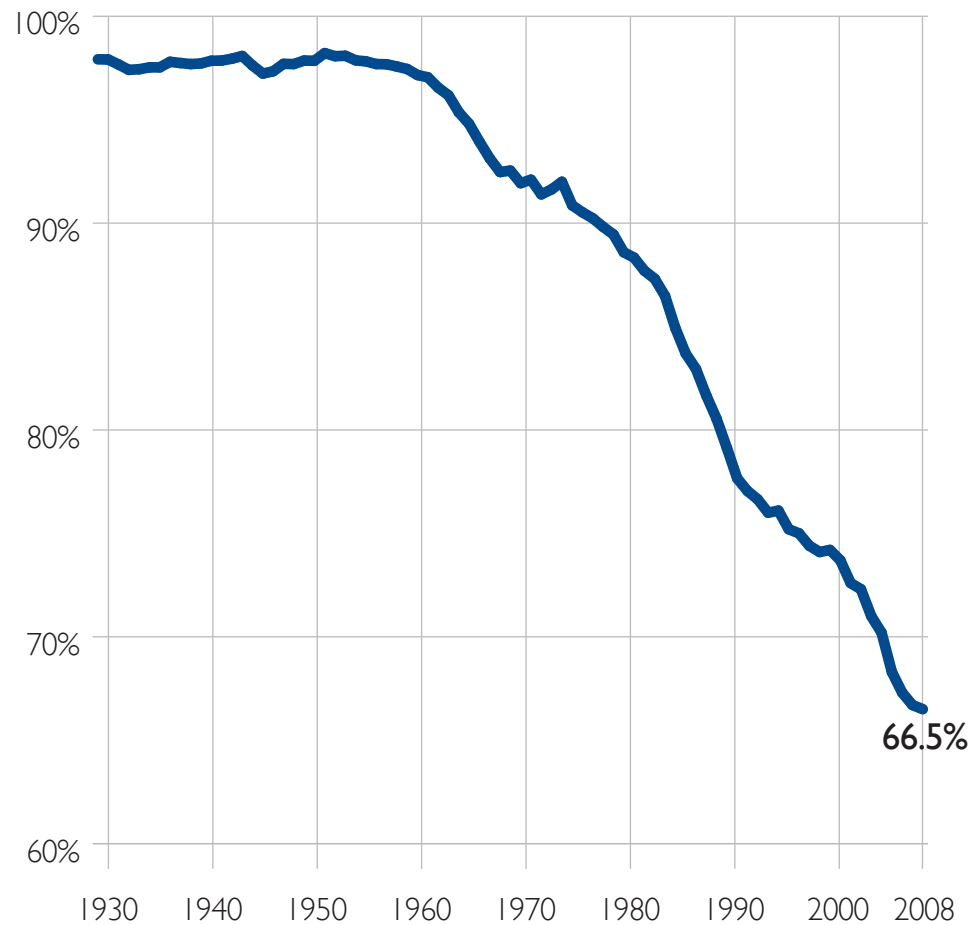
Through most of the 20th century, marital births were the norm in Minnesota. In 1964, more than 95 percent of births occurred to married couples.

However, in the mid-1960s, the marital birth rate began to fall steadily. By 2009, only 66.5 percent of births in Minnesota occurred to married couples.

**Note:** In any given year, the sum of the out-of-wedlock birth rate (Chart 1) and the marital birth rate (Chart 2) equals 100 percent of all births.

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN TO MARRIED COUPLES



# In Minnesota, Marriage Drops the Probability of Child Poverty by 89 Percent

The rapid rise in out-of-wedlock child bearing is a major cause of high levels of child poverty in Minnesota.

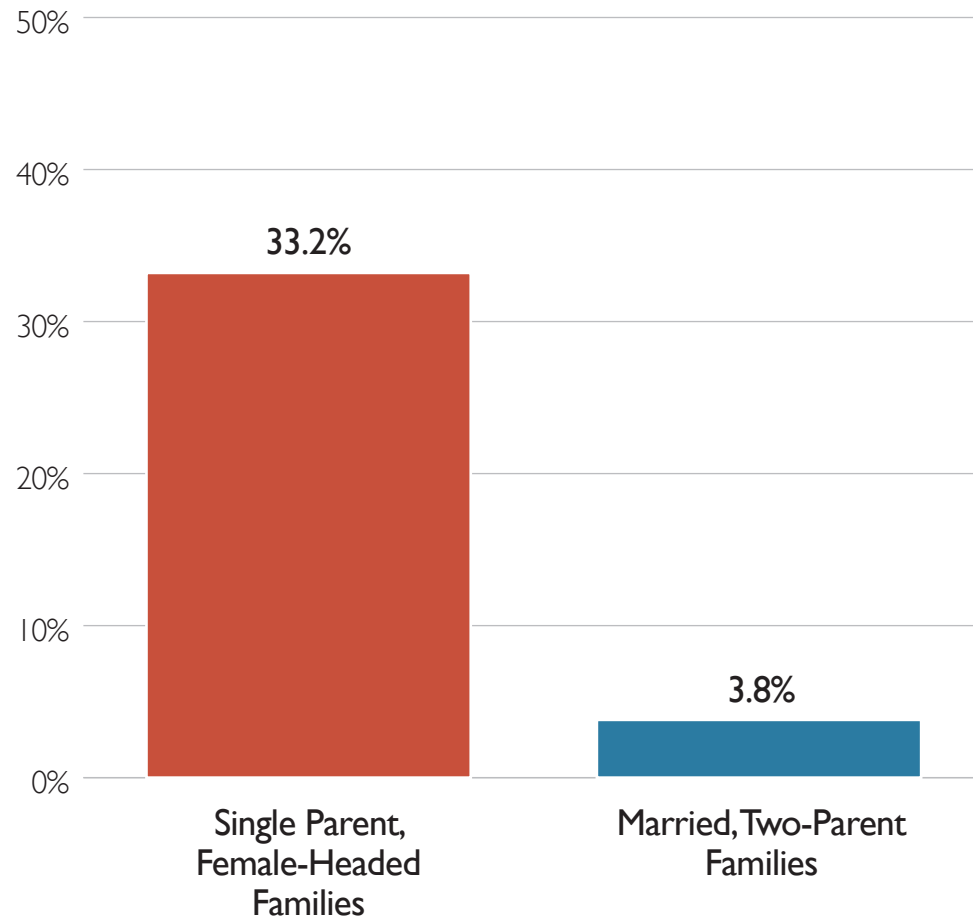
Some 33.2 percent of single mothers with children were poor compared to 3.8 percent of married couples with children.

Single-parent families with children are nearly nine times more likely to be poor than families in which the parents are married.

The higher poverty rate among single-mother families is due both to the lower education levels of the mothers and the lower income due to the absence of the father.

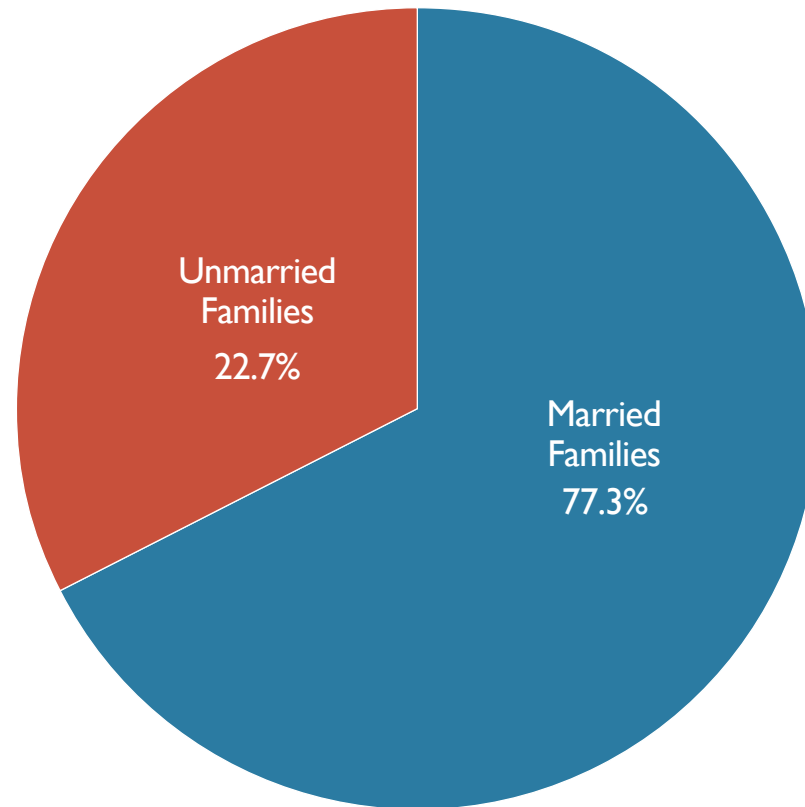
**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN THAT ARE POOR



## In Minnesota, Nearly One-Quarter of All Families With Children Are Not Married

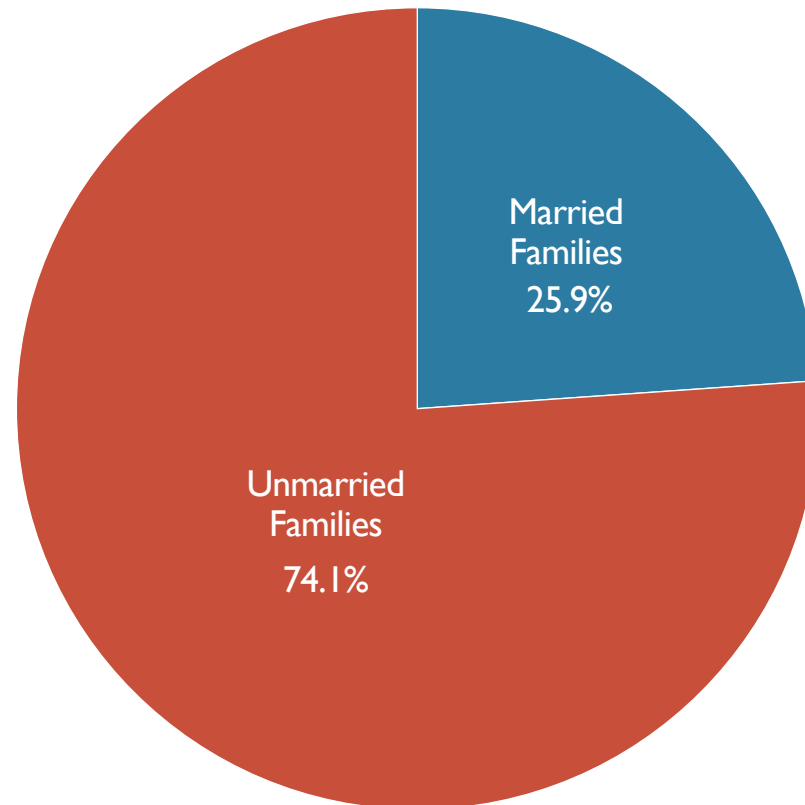
Overall, married couples head three-quarters of families with children in Minnesota. Nearly one-quarter are single-parent families.



**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## In Minnesota, 74 Percent of Poor Families with Children Are Not Married

Among poor families with children in Minnesota, 74 percent are not married. By contrast, one-quarter of poor families with children are headed by married couples.



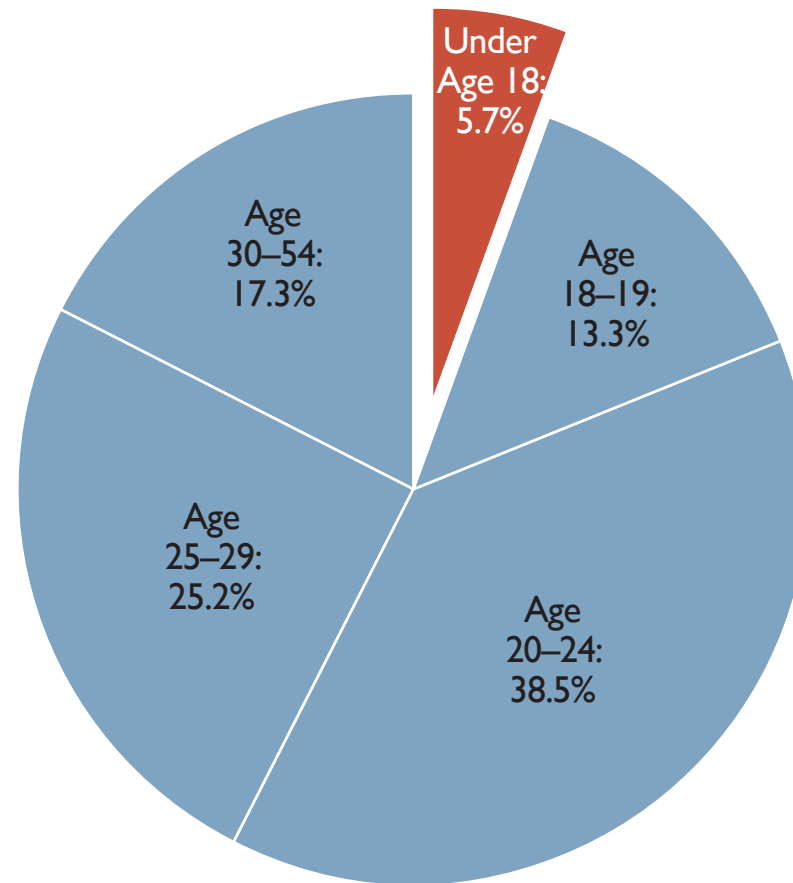
**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

# In Minnesota, Few Unwed Births Occur to Teenagers

Out-of-wedlock births are often confused erroneously with teen births, but only 6 percent of out-of-wedlock births in Minnesota occur to girls under age 18.

By contrast, some 77 percent of out-of-wedlock births occur to young adult women between the ages of 18 and 29.

**PERCENTAGE OF OUT-OF-WEDLOCK BIRTHS BY AGE OF MOTHER**



**Note:** Figures have been rounded.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

# Less-Educated Women in Minnesota Are More Likely to Give Birth Outside of Marriage

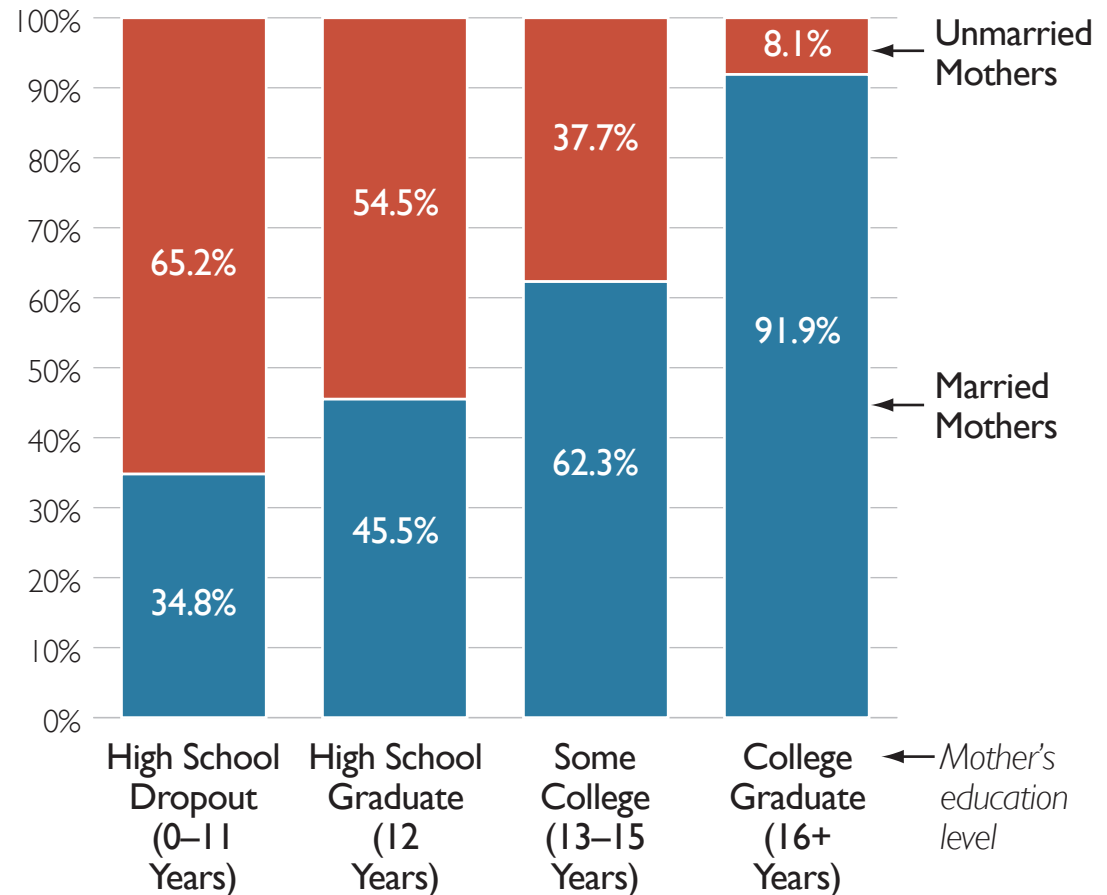
Unwed childbearing occurs most frequently among the women who will have the greatest difficulty supporting children by themselves: those with low levels of education.

Nationwide, among women who are high school dropouts, about two-thirds of all births occur outside marriage. Among women who have only a high school diploma, more than half of all births occur outside marriage. By contrast, among women with at least a college degree, only 8 percent of births are out-of-wedlock.

**Note:** Specific data on out-wedlock births and maternal education are not available in Minnesota. However, the pattern varies little between states. Minnesota data will be very similar to the national data presented in this chart.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

PERCENTAGE OF BIRTHS THAT ARE MARITAL OR OUT OF WEDLOCK



# Both Marriage and Education Are Highly Effective in Reducing Child Poverty in Minnesota

The poverty rate of married couples is dramatically lower than the rate for households headed by single parents. This is true even when the married couple is compared to single parents with the same education level.

For example, in Minnesota the poverty rate for a single mother who has only a high school diploma is 29.5 percent, but the poverty rate for a married couple family headed by an individual who, similarly, has only a high school degree is far lower at 3.6 percent.

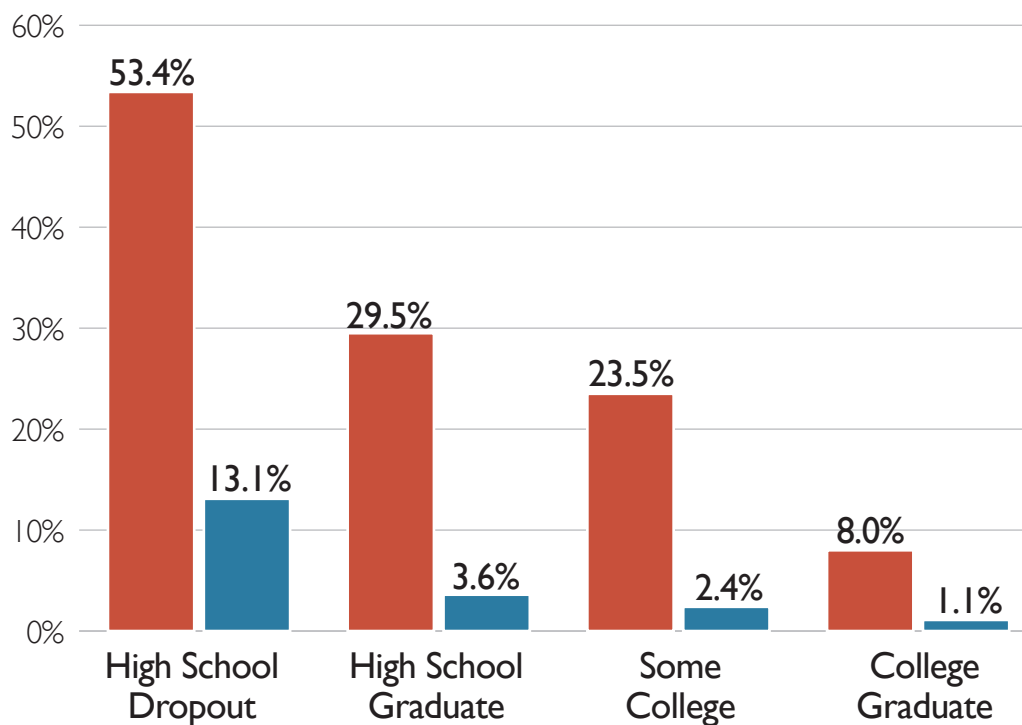
On average, marriage drops the poverty rate by around 85 percent among families with the same education level.

**Source:** U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR

Poverty Rate of Families by Education and Marital Status of the Head of Household

■ Single  
■ Married



**Note:** Virtually none of the heads of families in the chart who are high school dropouts are minor teenagers.

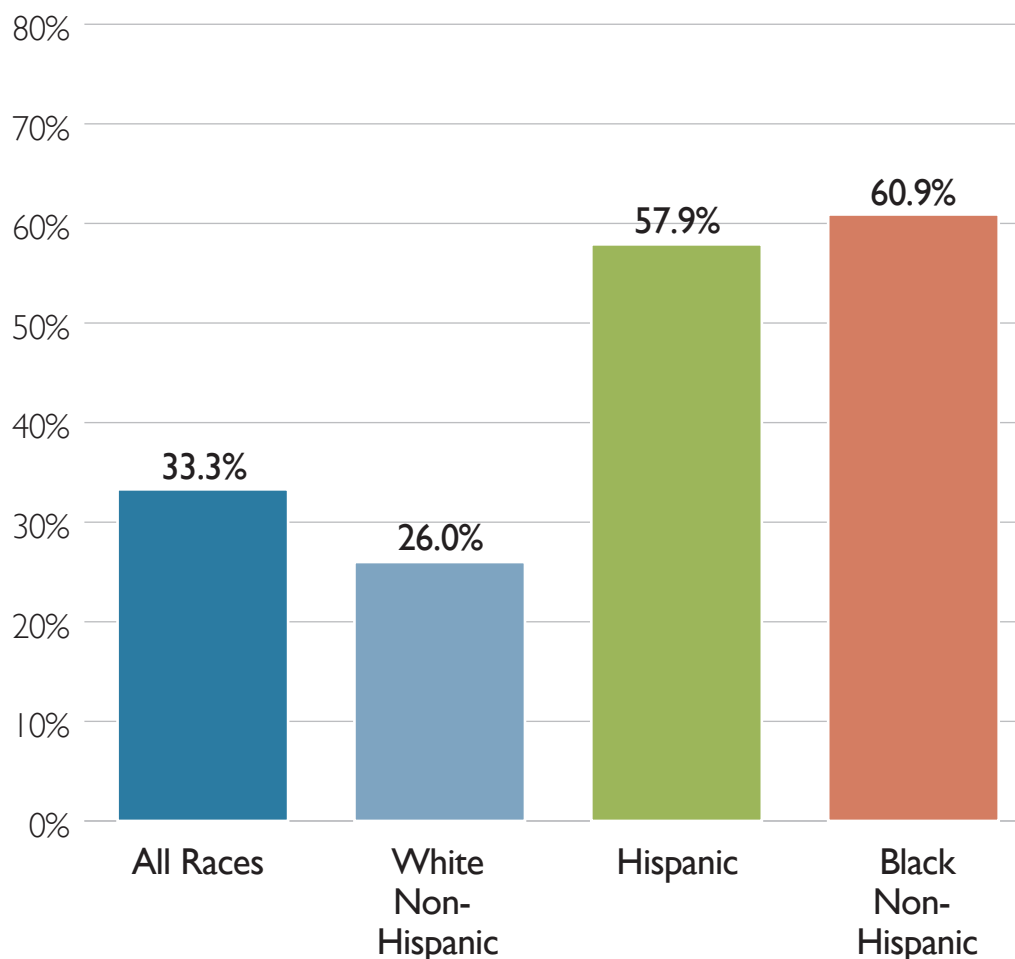
## Unwed Birth Rates Vary Strongly by Race in Minnesota

Out-of-wedlock child bearing varies considerably by race.

In 2008, one in three births (33.3 percent) in Minnesota occurred outside marriage. The rate was lowest among non-Hispanic whites at over one in four births (26.0 percent). Among Hispanics, well over half of births were out-of-wedlock. Among blacks six out of 10 births were to unmarried women (60.9 percent).

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.

PERCENT OF BIRTHS THAT ARE OUT OF WEDLOCK



# Growth of Out-of-Wedlock Childbearing by Race in Minnesota, 1934–2008

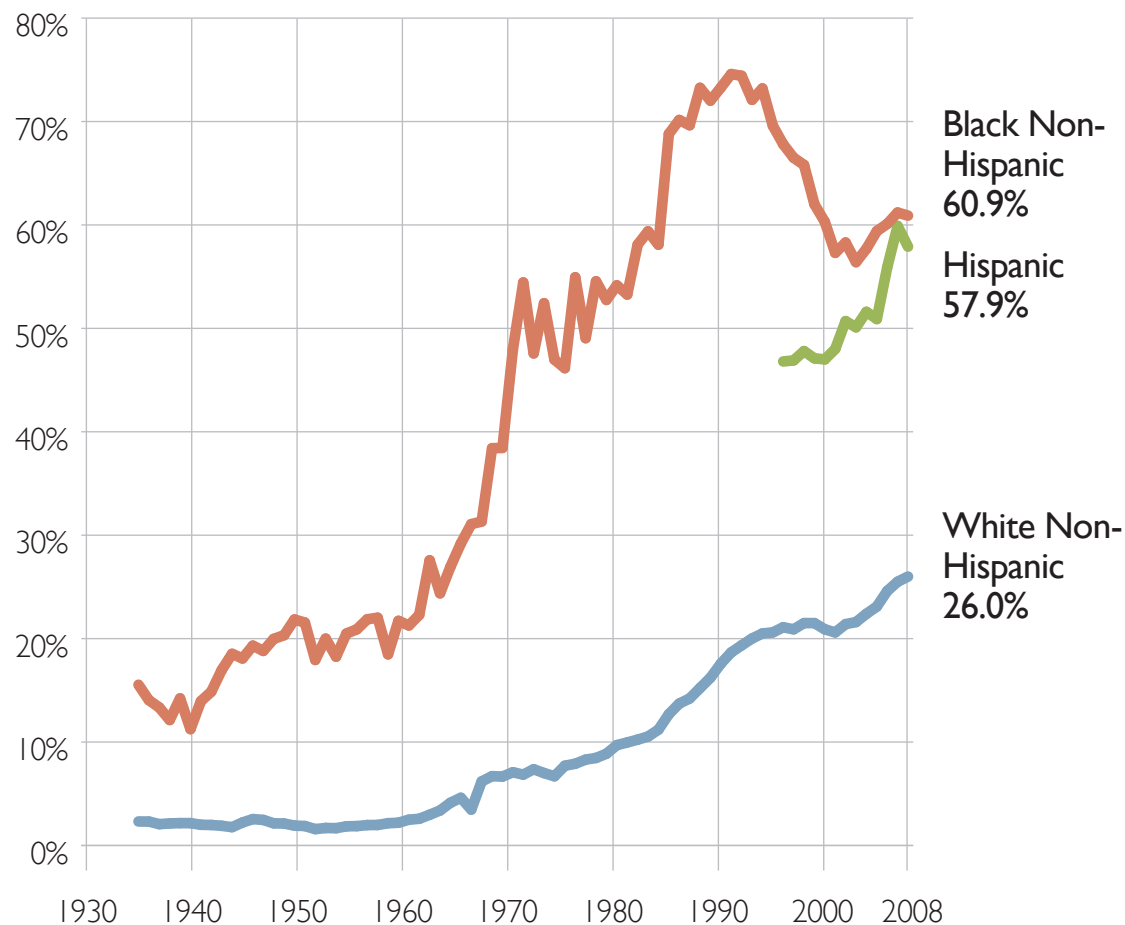
Historically, out-of-wedlock childbearing has been somewhat more frequent among blacks than among whites. However, prior to the onset of the federal government's War on Poverty in 1964, the rates for both whites and blacks were comparatively low.

In 1964, one in twenty-five (4.1 percent) white children were born outside marriage. By 2008, the number had risen to more than one in four (26.0 percent).

In 1964, more than two in ten black children (27.0 percent) were born outside marriage. By 2008, the number had risen to over six in ten (60.9 percent).

**Sources:** U.S. Government, U.S. Census Bureau, and National Center for Health Statistics.

PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK



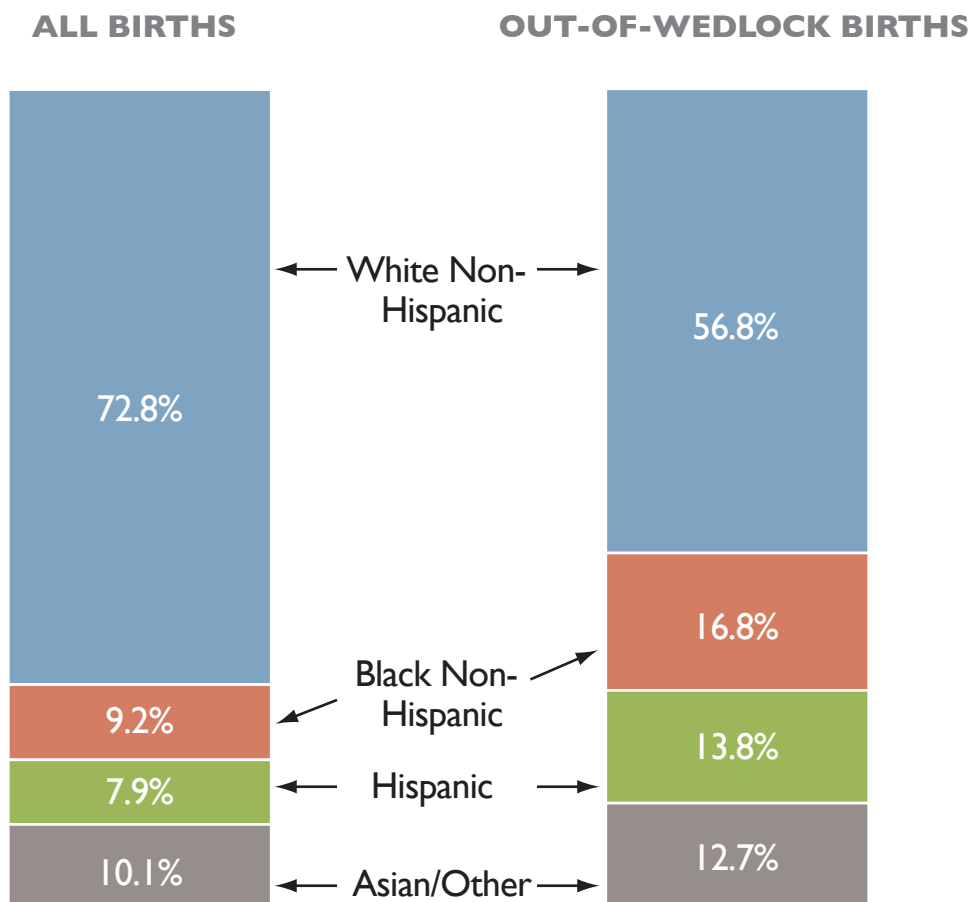
# Racial Composition of All Births and Out-of-Wedlock Births in Minnesota

In Minnesota in 2008, some 72.8 percent of all births (both marital and non-marital) occurred to non-Hispanic whites, 7.9 percent occurred to Hispanics, and 9.2 percent to non-Hispanic blacks.

Because black and Hispanic people are more likely to have children without being married, a disproportionate share of all out-of-wedlock births occur to those groups. Nonetheless, the largest number of out-of-wedlock births still occur to white non-Hispanic women

In Minnesota in 2008, 56.8 percent of all non-marital births were to non-Hispanic whites, 13.8 percent were to Hispanics, and 16.6 percent were to black non-Hispanic women.

**Source:** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008 NHS data.



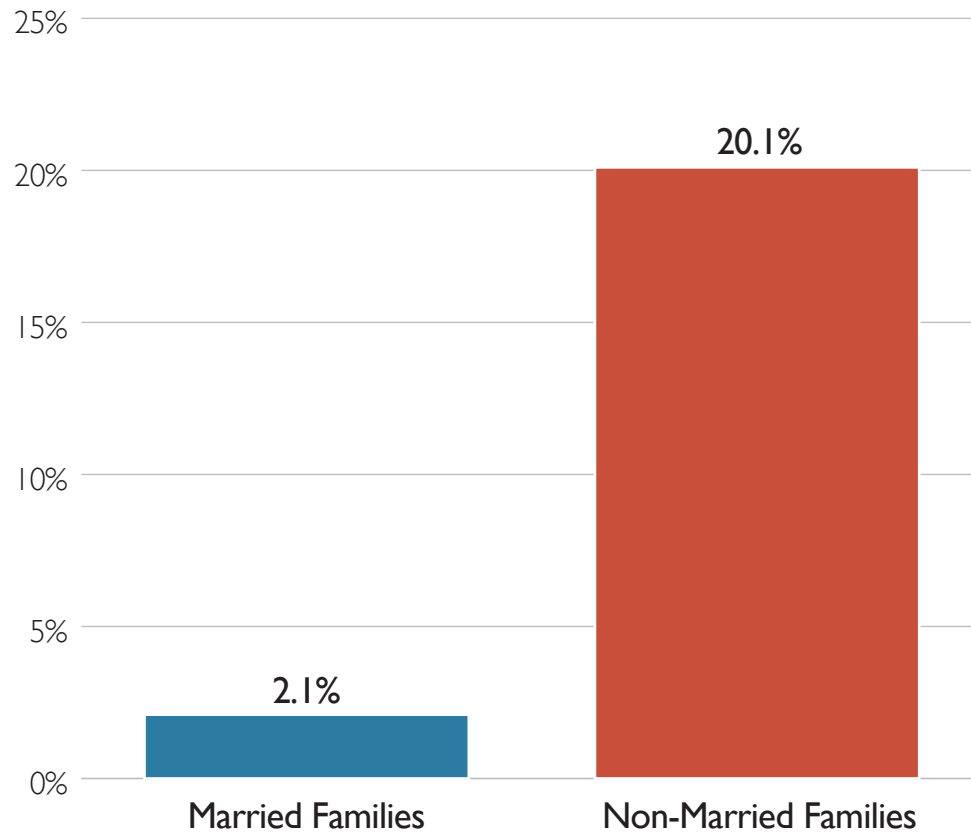
**Note:** Figures have been rounded.

# Non-Married White Families Are Ten Times More Likely to Be Poor in Minnesota

Marriage leads to lower poverty rates for whites, blacks, and Hispanics in Minnesota.

For example, in 2009, the poverty rate for married white families in Minnesota was 2.1 percent. But the poverty rate for non-married white families was nearly ten times higher at 20.1 percent.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR

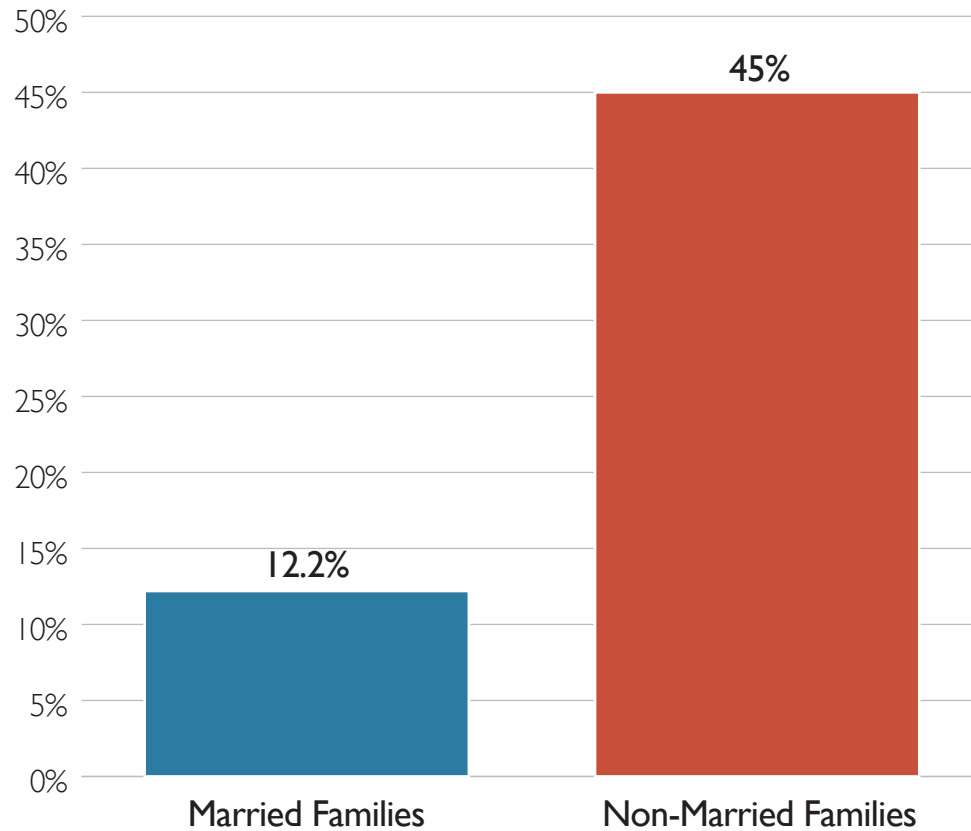


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

# Non-Married Black Families Are Nearly Four Times More Likely to Be Poor in Minnesota

In 2009, the poverty rate for married black couples in Minnesota was 12.2 percent, while the poverty rate for non-married black families was nearly four times higher at 45 percent.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR

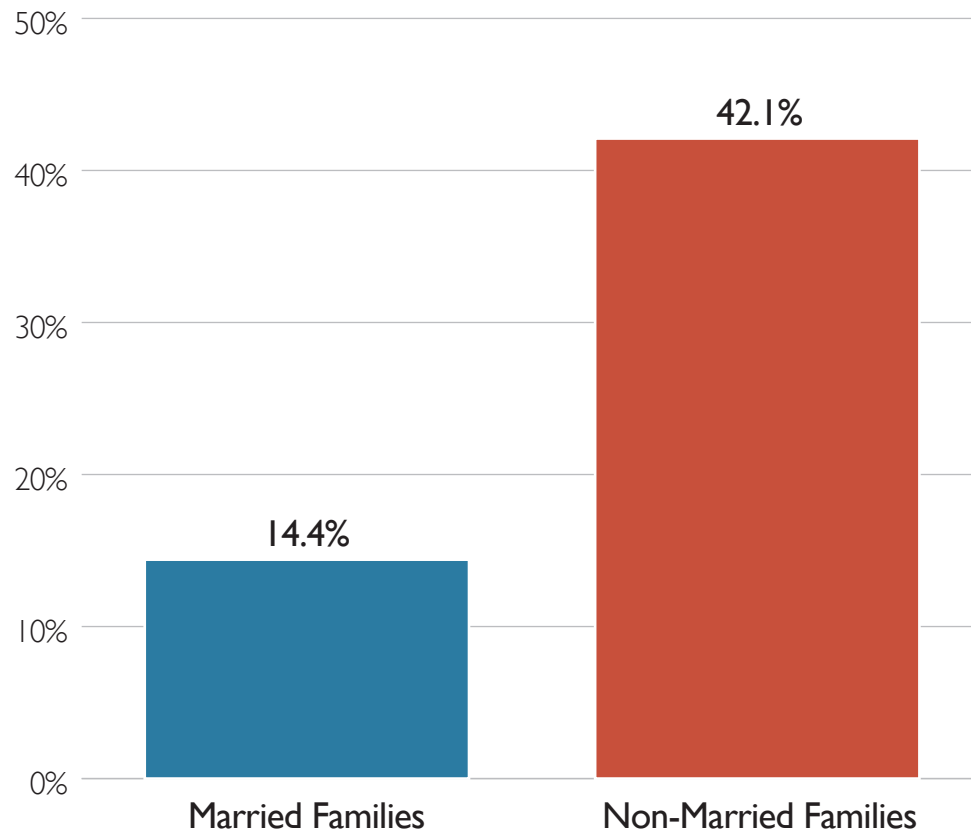


Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

# Non-Married Hispanic Families Are Nearly Three Times More Likely to Be Poor in Minnesota

In 2009, the poverty rate for Hispanic married families in Minnesota was 14.4 percent, while the poverty rate among non-married families was nearly three times higher at 42.1 percent.

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES THAT ARE POOR



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2009 data.

## **7 Steps to Reduce Child Poverty through Marriage**

Given the importance of marriage in reducing child poverty, the following steps should be undertaken to strengthen marriage in low income communities in Minnesota.

- 1) Reduce anti-marriage penalties in welfare programs.
- 2) Create public education campaigns in low-income communities on the benefits of marriage.
- 3) Require welfare offices to provide factual information on the value of marriage in reducing poverty and welfare dependence.
- 4) Explain the benefits of marriage in middle and high schools with a high proportion of at-risk youth.
- 5) Require federally funded birth control clinics to provide information on the benefits of marriage and the skills needed to develop stable families to interested low-income clients.
- 6) Require federally funded birth control clinics to offer voluntary referrals to life planning and marriage skills education to all interested low-income clients.
- 7) Make voluntary marriage education widely available to interested couples in low-income communities.

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