The New Great Migration and Black Marriage Patterns in the South

Chanell Washington and Laquitta Walker

United States Census Bureau

Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division

Abstract

During the second half of the 20th century, Black and White marriage patterns began to dramatically diverge. Specifically, compared to their White counterparts, Black adults are less likely to marry, marry at later ages, and are more likely to divorce. Additionally, marriage has become increasingly selective of college-educated individuals. Since the 1970s, Black people have been returning to the South in large numbers, resulting in a New Great Migration and an increased percentage of affluent Black people residing in the South. Using data from the 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey (ACS), this study seeks to examine whether the percentage of college-educated Black adults in southern metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) is associated with marriage prevalence among Black adults within that MSA. We also examine whether this association has changed from the 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 periods.

INTRODUCTION

Since the latter half of the 20th century, there have been dramatic changes in family formation patterns, particularly regarding marriage (Smock & Schwartz, 2020). For example, women's marriage rates have continuously declined over the past several decades. In 1970, the marriage rate among women who had married in the last year was 76.5 per 1,000 unmarried women; in 2018, that figure had declined to 31.3 per 1,000 unmarried women (Schweizer, 2020). Furthermore, the median age at first marriage has consistently risen for both men and women, and a lower proportion of Americans have ever married. In 1950, the median age at first marriage was about 20 years for women and about 24 years for men. In 2020, however, the corresponding estimates were 28 years and about 31 years, respectively (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

However, there are stark racial differences in marriage patterns. For instance, from 1890 until the latter half of the 20th century, Black people had a lower median age at first marriage than their White counterparts, and among those aged 35 and older, White adults were more likely to have never married than Black adults (Elliott et al., 2012).[1] This trend continued until the middle of the 20th century, when a cross-over occurred: the Black median age at first marriage became higher than the overall median age at first marriage. The median age at first marriage for Black adults continued to diverge from the overall population over the next several decades. By 2010, the median age at first marriage for Black men had risen to 30.7, and for Black women it had risen to 30.0 (Elliot et al., 2012). During this same period, the overall median age at first marriage had risen to just 28.4 and 26.8, respectively (Elliot et al., 2012). Presently, Black adults are less likely to marry, and when they do marry, they marry at later ages and are more likely to divorce compared to other race and Hispanic origin groups (Mayol-Garcia,

[1] For more information about race differences in historical marriage trends, refer to https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2012/demo/SEHSD-WP2012-12.html

Gurrentz, & Kreider 2021; Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015; Manning, Brown, & Payne 2014; Raley & Sweeney, 2009).

Some of the proposed factors associated with disparate marriage patterns between Black and White adults include imbalanced sex ratios (Lichter et al., 1992; Cohen & Pepin, 2018), a higher prevalence of unemployment among Black adults compared to White adults (Semega et al., 2020), relatively high incarceration rates (Mauer & King, 2007), and lower likelihood of intermarriage (Rico, Kreider, & Anderson, 2018).

BACKGROUND

The overall availability of potential marital partners is associated with marriage rates. Research has found that the unmarried sex ratio (i.e., the ratio of men to women) is positively associated with the odds of marriage for women (Cohen & Pepin, 2018; Lichter et al., 1992; Wilson, 1987). However, both quantity and quality matter. It is not enough for there to simply be an adequate number of men within a geography – these men must also be economically attractive. Compared to their White counterparts, Black men earn less money (Semega et al., 2020) and are more likely to be unemployed (Diette et al., 2018), resulting in a "shortage of marriageable men" for Black women, as men's economic stability is positively associated with the transition to marriage (Gibson-Davis, Gassman-Pines, & Lehrman, 2018; Smock, Manning, & Porter, 2005; Wilson, 1987). However, it is important to note that economic factors do not fully account for the racial differences in Black-White marriage patterns (Lichter et al., 1992; Manning & Smock, 1995). For instance, despite the sharper decline in poverty rates since 1970 for the Black alone population relative to the White population, marriage rates have continued to decline more precipitously for Blacks (Curtis, 2018).[2]

[2] For information about historical poverty rates by race and Hispanic-origin, refer to: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/stories/2020/09/poverty-rates-for-blacks-and-hispanics-reached-historic-lows-in-2019-figure-1.jpg

Closely related to the differences in income and employment status are the differences in marriage rates by educational attainment (Schweizer, 2020). Although marriage has become selective of those who are college-educated and have higher incomes (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Cohen & Pepin, 2018), marriage may still be elusive among Black adults with a high socioeconomic status (SES). For several decades, Black people have had the lowest marriage rates across all race groups (Elliott et al., 2012), so Black marriages may still be less common, even among those who are college-educated. In 2015, for example, the percentage of college-educated Black women between ages 35-44 who had a spouse present in the household was about 40%, compared to about 70% for White women (Reeves & Guyot, 2017).

The disproportionate impact of mass incarceration has had a variable effect on Black men and women as it shapes quality and mate availability in local marriage markets (Mauer & King 2007; Carson, 2016; Charles & Luoh, 2010). Lopoo and Western (2005) found the impact of incarceration was minimal after release for Black men, despite the delay in union formation during the period of incarceration (Lopoo & Western, 2005). On the other hand, Charles and Luoh (2010) found that male incarceration within local marriage markets dampened the likelihood of marriage for women. An additional factor is the relatively low likelihood of intermarriage among Black adults, especially Black women (Qian & Lichter, 2011; Livingston & Brown, 2017; Rico, Kreider, & Anderson, 2018), and differences in educational attainment between Black adults and White adults (Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015; Wilson, 1987). In addition, disparities in mortality rates, especially between non-Hispanic Black men and White men in younger age groups, have also played a role in potential mate availability for women (Cunningham et al., 2015; Arias & Xu, 2020).

{ Figure 1 about here}

Yet, it is noteworthy that geographic mobility was also on the rise during a period when, relative to the overall population, the most notable marriage pattern shifts occurred for the Black population.

Extending from roughly 1910 until 1970, the Great Migration was a period of rapidly expanding opportunity for improved living conditions and employment for southern-origin Black people in the Northeast, Midwest, and West (Tolnay, 2003; Frey, 2004; Curtis, 2018).[3] During the Great Migration, the Black population underwent substantial outmigration of approximately 6 million Black people from the South into states in the Northeast, Midwest, and West.

The 1970s marked the end of the Great Migration and the beginning of the Black population's return migration to the South. Myriad factors that occurred throughout the South, such as the modernization and diversification of local economies, lowered costs of living, shifts away from occupational segregation, reduction of poverty, and enduring kinship ties attracted an educationally and economically diverse Black population back to the South (Tolnay, 2003; Frey, 2004; Curtis, 2018). Some of these migrants were returning from the Northeast, Midwest, and West, while others were new arrivals to the region seeking opportunity in the newly expanding economy (Frey, 2004; Curtis, 2018). This trend has continued throughout the 2010s, and in 2019, the South contained approximately 56 percent of the Black population (Tamir, 2021).

Beyond the Black population, there has been sizable population growth in the South across all race and Hispanic-origin groups, as several states in the South underwent population growth above the national average of 7.4 percent between 2010 and 2020.[4] Even so, "return migration" of Black people to the South continues to be an important element in this wave of population growth (Tolnay, 2003; Curtis, 2018). In sum, despite the geographic mobility of Black people over the past century, the South has consistently contained the greatest share of the Black population.

[3] Refer to https://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/020/ for additional information about the Great Migration.

[4] For a map depicting the percentage change in the resident population for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico from 2010 to 2020, refer to https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/apportionment/apportionment-2020-map03.pdf

To our knowledge, previous research of local marriage markets in the U.S. has not focused on metropolitan areas within a specific census region (Tolnay, 2003; Lloyd & South, 2006; Lichter, Anderson, & Hayward, 1995; Cohen & Pepin, 2018). Lichter and colleagues (1995) and South (2005) use Labor Market Areas (LMAs) as proxies for marriage markets and include LMAs across the United States. Other studies, such as Cohen and Pepin (2018), use a minimum sample size requirement to exclude metropolitan areas with small Black populations but use metropolitan areas throughout the United States. While Tolnay (2003) has examined the marriage dynamics of Black migrants in Great Migration destination settings, to our knowledge, there has not been any recent analysis that focuses on Black marriage patterns concentrated in a specific region, such as the South. Given the Black population's relatively limited geographic dispersion compared to the non-Hispanic White population, coupled with a lower propensity to intermarry, geographic location potentially could suppress mate availability beyond the other factors associated with Black marriage prevalence. The historic and contemporary centrality of the South to Black Americans, coupled with the robustness of its Black population size, makes it an ideal geographic context in which to determine factors affecting marriage prevalence for the Black population in the present.

THE CURRENT STUDY

This paper seeks to examine whether a higher prevalence of college-educated Black adults within census-designated metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs)[5] in Southern[6] states is associated with a higher prevalence of marriage among Black adults within that MSA, and whether this association has changed from 2005-2009 to 2015-2019.[7] We examine MSAs rather than states or regions, as metro areas are most likely to organize and structure dating and marriage markets and because the use of

[5] We use the terms metropolitan statistical areas, MSAs, and metropolitan areas interchangeably.
[6] Southern states include AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV.
[7] We include the 'Black alone' population, defined as "a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa". Respondents who marked more than one race category are excluded from our analyses. Refer to https://www.census.gov/topics/population/race/about.html.

metropolitan areas as proxies for marriage markets is well-established in the literature (Brien, 1997; Cohen & Pepin, 2018; Model, 2021).

Additionally, we focus on MSAs that are in the South due to its unique context. Since the late 1970s, there has been a "New Great Migration" occurring, whereby many Black people are returning to the South due to factors such as more job opportunities and a lower cost of living (Inge, 2006). Indeed, of the ten metropolitan areas that gained the largest number of Black people between 1995 and 2000, nine of those metropolitan areas were in the South (the non-Southern exception was Las Vegas; Frey, 2004). And between 2000-2010, the metro areas that experienced the highest Black in-migration were Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Washington, D.C., Charlotte, and Miami (Frey, 2015). Additionally, college graduates have led the way in this new migration to the South (Frey, 2004), and the Black middle class is concentrated in the South, particularly in large metro areas (Brookings Institute, 2020; Frey, 2015). Given the relative affluence of many Black people in the South, this area provides a unique context to study the prevalence of Black marriage.

We focus on marriage among people who are non-Hispanic Black alone because research has shown that they have had the lowest marriage rates of all racial/ethnic groups since the 1980s (Elliot et al., 2012), and Hispanic marriage patterns are more similar to the marriage patterns of White adults (Raley et al., 2015). Given that marriage is associated with many positive outcomes, including better mental well-being (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005), relationship quality (Brown, 2004), and child well-being (Brown, 2004), if marriage among Black people remains elusive even in metropolitan areas that have a more affluent Black population, then despite relative educational and socioeconomic advantage, these Black people may still be disadvantaged compared to their White counterparts.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary focus of this research is to determine whether marriage among Black people is also selective of those with higher socioeconomic status. We use educational attainment as a proxy for

economic well-being as some research has found that having a bachelor's degree or more is more strongly associated with women's likelihood of marriage than income or hourly wages, for example (Cohen & Pepin, 2018). We also examine whether the association between educational attainment and marriage prevalence has changed between 2005-2009 and 2015-2019. Specifically, we aim to answer the following research questions: How is the percentage of college-educated Black people within selected metropolitan statistical areas associated with Black marriage prevalence, and how has this changed over time?

Beyond the primary focus, we acknowledge the role other contextual factors play in the marriage prevalence of the Black population. To address these relationships, we include a secondary research question: Do additional factors (e.g., unemployment among Blacks, household poverty, imbalanced sex-ratios, age) attenuate the association between the percentage of college-educated Black people and Black marriage prevalence?

METHOD

Data and Sample

We use data from the 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an annual survey consisting of approximately 3.5 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico. The 2015-2019 5-year data represent data collected throughout the period, allowing for a more robust sample of smaller population groups. Our sample includes respondents who identify as Black alone and are age 18 and older who resided within census-designated MSAs in Southern states. Additionally, in order to have reliable estimates, we include only MSAs containing a population of at least the smallest congressional district for those data years, which results in a threshold of roughly 500,000 people in 2005-2009 and roughly 530,000 people in 2015-2019.

Furthermore, to ensure that we had an adequate number of Black people in our analyses, these MSAs must have had a Black population of at least 50,000 in both periods. Finally, because MSAs often

have boundary changes, to ensure comparability between the data years, we excluded 35 counties that were not part of their respective MSAs during both periods. These stipulations yielded an analytic sample of 32 MSAs in both 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 (refer to Table 2 for list of MSAs). Since the ACS 5-year data are cross-sectional, any causal or temporal analyses are beyond the scope of this study.

Analytic Strategy

To answer our primary research question, we use OLS regression analyses to predict marriage prevalence based on several predictors. Our dependent variable is marriage prevalence (i.e., the percentage of Black adults who were married at the time of the survey)[8] at the metropolitan area level. Our key predictor is the percentage college-educated for the Black population aged 25 and older within the 32 selected metropolitan areas. Our secondary research question aims to identify the relationship between the percentage currently married and a set of covariates previously associated with Black marriage prevalence. To address the secondary research question, we incorporate additional metropolitan level covariates for the percentage of Black adults who are unemployed, the percentage of Black households in poverty, and sex ratios for Black adults using OLS regression models. Adding these variables to our model allows us to determine the strength of the relationship between percentage college educated and marriage prevalence net of additional factors that have been previously found to be associated with marriage prevalence for the non-Hispanic Black population.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the percentage of the Black population aged 18 and older in the MSA who are currently married.

Independent Variables

Our primary independent variable is the percentage of the Black population within an MSA, age 25 and older, with at least a bachelor's degree. Unemployment is measured as the percentage of the

[8] We included only married respondents who lived with a spouse.

Black population aged 16 to 64 that is unemployed. Poverty is measured as the percentage of households within an MSA with a Black householder that are in poverty. We control for the sex ratio of the Black population between aged 15-49, since adults in this age group are most likely marrying for the first time, and median age of Black people within the MSA.

RESULTS

In 2005-2009, the percentage of Black adults aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher was 17.2% for the nation.[9] The majority of Southern states had a significantly lower percentage of college-educated Black adults or did not significantly differ from the national average. There were only five Southern states with a significantly higher percentage of college-educated Black adults – the District of Columbia, Georgia, Maryland, Texas, and Virginia.

{Figure 2 about here}

From 2005-2009 to 2015-2019, the percentage of college-educated Black adults increased by 4.4 percentage points, to 21.6% in 2015-2019.[10] Compared to the national average, most Southern states had a significantly lower share of college-educated Blacks adults. However, six Southern states – the District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Texas, and Virginia – had a significantly higher percentage of college-educated Black adults in 2015-2019.

{Figure 3 about here}

{Table 1 about here}

At the state level, the vast majority of Southern states had a significantly lower percentage of college-educated Black adults in both time periods. However, an examination of the MSAs portrays a more nuanced story. Of the 32 MSAs examined, many of them had a significantly higher percentage of college-educated Black adults than the national average (Table 2). The Atlanta, Raleigh, and Washington,

[9] The corresponding figure for all U.S. adults was 27.5% in 2005-2009.
[10] The percentage of all U.S. adults who were college-educated in 2015-2019 was 32.1%.

D.C. MSAs had among the largest percentages of college-educated Black adults in the South in both time periods. Additionally, the percentage of college-educated Black adults increased by 4.4 percentage points for the nation, but many of these MSAs had significantly larger increases. The Austin, Baltimore, Charlotte, Nashville, and San Antonio MSAs, for example, experienced a significant increase in college-educated Black adults of 7 percentage points or more.

{Figure 4 about here}

{Figure 5 about here}

{Table 2 about here}

The national percentage of married Black adults aged 18 and over was 32.8% in 2005-2009 and 31.0% in 2015-2019 (a decline of 1.8 percentage points).[11] In both periods, many Southern states had a significantly higher percentage of married Black adults, compared to the national average. For all state estimates of the percentage of married Black adults, refer to Table 3 of the Appendix.

{Figure 6 about here}

{Figure 7 about here}

{Table 3 about here}

Regarding metropolitan areas, many MSAs had a higher share of married Black adults, compared to the national average; this was true for both 2005-2009 and 2015-2019. However, consistent with trends at the national level, several of the 32 MSAs in this study had a lower percentage of Black adults living with a spouse in 2015-2019 compared to 2005-2009. Among these MSAs, the Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Memphis, and Washington, D.C., MSAs had a smaller magnitude of difference between 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 compared to the national average. Additionally, the Jackson and Nashville MSAs had a positive percentage point change compared to the national average.

[11] For all U.S. adults, 53.1% were married in 2005-2009, compared to 50.4% in 2015-2019 (a decline of 2.7 percentage points).

{Figure 8 about here}

{Figure 9 about here}

{Table 4 about here}

2005-2009

Descriptive statistics for study variables are shown in Table 5,and are averages across all MSAs in the sample. For bivariate results in 2005-2009 (Table 6), unemployment (b = -1.13, p < .01) and poverty (b = -0.36, p < .001) were negatively associated with marriage prevalence. The percent of college-educated Black adults was positively associated with marriage prevalence (b = 0.23, p < .05). Neither median age of the MSA nor percent female were associated with marriage prevalence in bivariate models.

{Table 5 about here}

{Table 6 about here}

There are four models for multivariate analyses (Table 7). We first wanted to examine how demographic variables (i.e., median age and percent female) might be associated with Black marriage prevalence, with the exclusion of economic variables. We then sought to examine how economic variables (i.e., percent unemployed, percent college-educated, and percent of Black households in poverty) might attenuate the association between demographic variables and the prevalence of Black marriage. Thus, the first model includes the demographic variables median age and percent female. Consistent with the bivariate results, median age and percent female were not associated with marriage prevalence. Model 2 adds unemployment; in this model, percent unemployed continued to be negatively associated with marriage prevalence (b = -1.05, p < .05). Model 3 includes median age, percent female, percent unemployed, and percent college educated. When percent college-educated was included in the model, unemployed was no longer statistically significant. Model 4 includes median age, percent female, percent unemployed, and percent in poverty. Only poverty was significantly

associated with marriage prevalence in this model (b = -0.28, p < .01). Percent in poverty and percent college-educated were not included in models together because of the very high correlation between the two (r = -0.68).

{Table 7 about here}

2015-2019

Regarding bivariate results for 2015-2019, percent college-educated was positively associated with marriage prevalence (b = 0.31, p < .001), while percent unemployed (b = -1.20, p < .05) and percent in poverty (b = -0.46, p < .001) were negatively associated with marriage prevalence. Consistent with results for 2005-2009, percent female was not associated with marriage prevalence in bivariate models. However, median age was negatively associated with marriage prevalence in the bivariate model for this period (b = -0.48, p < .05).

For multivariate analyses, compared to 2005-2009, percent unemployed was no longer associated with marriage prevalence with median age and percent female in the model in 2015-2019. Additionally, contrary to results from 2005-2009, percent college-educated was positively associated with marriage prevalence (b = 0.28, p < .01). The final model includes percent in poverty and excludes percent college educated. Poverty continued to be negatively associated with marriage prevalence (b = -0.42, p < .001).

{Table 8 about here}

DISCUSSION

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge regarding Black marriage by examining how the prevalence of those with college degrees is associated with marriage prevalence in the South, and how this association may have changed over time. Since the late 1970s, there has been a return of many Black people to the South, and these Black migrants are often young and college-educated, especially in metropolitan areas such as Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Raleigh (Frey, 2015). Given the unique

backdrop of the South, this paper provides a look at Black marriage in a region of the country where large numbers of Black people are economically thriving.

Results from both 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 show that at the state level, a smaller share of Black people were college-educated compared to the national average for the majority of Southern states. However, when examining the prevalence of college education by metropolitan area, a more nuanced picture emerges. Specifically, for several MSAs, the prevalence of college-educated Black adults was higher than the national average. Additionally, results indicate that from 2005-2009 to 2015-2019, several MSAs had an increase in the prevalence of college-educated Blacks that was larger than the increase for the nation overall. These results are consistent with research that has shown that college education has increased over time (McElrath & Martin, 2021).

During the period that college education has been on the rise, marriage has also become less prevalent and more selective of those with a higher socioeconomic status (Schweizer, 2020). Regarding marriage, many Southern states and MSAs had a higher prevalence of married Black adults compared to the national average. However, the prevalence of marriage was lower in the latter time period, which is consistent with other research (e.g., Mayol-García et al., 2021; Schweizer, 2020). Despite the lower marriage prevalence in the 2015-2019 period, a handful of MSAs, had a difference in marriage prevalence between the two periods that was smaller in magnitude compared to the national average. Furthermore, a couple of MSAs (i.e., Jackson and Nashville) experienced a positive and significant percentage point change in the 2015-2019 period. These results offer a different perspective of Black marriage than what is typically seen in the literature. Whereas several studies have found that Black adults are less likely to be married than their White counterparts (Mayol-García et al., 2021; Raley, Sweeney, & Wondra, 2015; Schweizer, 2020), the results of the current study point to how the intersection of region and the prevalence of college-educated Black adults within that region may differentially shape Black marriage patterns.

Results from OLS analyses reveal that median age was only negatively associated with marriage prevalence in the bivariate model, and only in the 2015-2019 period. The percentage of female adults in an MSA was not associated with the prevalence of Black marriage for either period. It appears that economic characteristics are more strongly associated with marriage prevalence than demographic characteristics like age and sex. Indeed, in bivariate models, unemployment, education, and poverty were all associated with marriage prevalence. In multivariate models, unemployment was not significantly associated with marriage prevalence in 2015-2019, while the prevalence of college-educated adults was only significantly associated with marriage prevalence for 2015-2019.

That economic characteristics are more strongly associated with marriage prevalence than demographic characteristics is not particularly surprising. As trends such as premarital sex, nonmarital childbearing, and cohabitation have become commonplace in the American landscape, Cherlin (2004) argues that marriage has lost its practical significance and become more symbolically important. He contends that it is now the capstone experience of adulthood – it is what one does after he or she has completed an education, found a good job and loving partner, and perhaps even bought a home. In support of this, in a qualitative study of cohabiters, many of the participants indicated that financial instability or lack of financial resources was an impediment to transitioning to marriage (Smock et al., 2005). Similarly, in a study of low-income mothers, many of these women indicated that they would not marry until their partners were able to reach some level of financial stability (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Thus, many adults view economic stability as a crucial precursor to marriage.

In 2005-2009, the percentage of college-educated Black adults was not significantly associated with marriage prevalence; however, in 2015-2019, there was a positive association between the percentage of college-educated Black adults and marriage prevalence. This finding is consistent with other research that has found that educational attainment is becoming even more important over time for marriage (Schweizer, 2020). As this shift occurs, those without college degrees may be increasingly

likely to delay or even forgo marriage, which may exacerbate inequalities between those with college degrees and those without them.

This study is not without its limitations. Although we found evidence that many Southern metropolitan areas had a greater share of both married and college-educated Black people compared to the national average, this study is limited in that the ACS data are cross-sectional, so there is a migration piece that we are unable to account for. That is – are Black people with greater socioeconomic advantage moving to the South, which may promote better odds of marriage? Or are they getting married in other regions of the nation, and then moving to the South? Although the ACS does inquire about whether a respondent has moved in the past year, we do not know the specific timing of marital events, as the marital history question is limited to whether the marriage occurred within the past year. In other words, we cannot disentangle whether marriages occurred in the South for these migrants, or whether they occurred elsewhere. Without specific information about the order of events, we limit our focus on the relationship between the contextual characteristics of southern metropolitan areas and marriage prevalence.

Other limitations that we acknowledge are the roles that nativity and intermarriage continue to play in marriage market dynamics. Among the Black population, one in ten are foreign born (Tamir & Anderson, 2021). One of the fastest growing groups are the foreign-born population from Africa, many of whom are highly educated and settle in large metropolitan areas, including those in the South (Tamir and Anderson, 2021). Like other international migrant populations, the foreign-born from Africa, along with other Black migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, bring aspects of the origin culture to their destinations, including marriage patterns and other family dynamics. While the specific impact of Black international migrant populations on marriage prevalence is beyond the scope of this study, we acknowledge how such dynamics are likely increasingly at work and can affect estimates of marriage prevalence within the increasingly diverse Black population.

In addition to the role of nativity are the limitations presented by using the Black alone category. In an effort to remain consistent with historic race and Hispanic-origin measurement, we excluded respondents who identified as more than one race.[12] To illustrate, if we include all respondents who identified as Black alone or in combination, including both Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black respondents, the Black population increases from approximately to 41.1 million to 46.9 million in 2020 (Jones et al. 2021).[13] Lichter & Qian (2018) mention that in an increasingly diverse population, conceptualizing racial identity is complicated (see also Humes & Hogan, 2009; Jones et al., 2021). While we do not limit this analysis to instances in which both spouses were Black alone, we do exclude the multiracial Black population as well as Black Hispanic adults, thereby underestimating Black marriage prevalence throughout the metropolitan South. Future research can potentially disentangle these dynamics.

In sum, this study provides a unique context to studying marriage among the Black population. Scholars (e.g., Frey, 2015) have documented that many middle-class Black adults are returning to Southern metropolitan areas. With this reverse migration and a high prevalence of well-educated Black adults in these areas, it appears that for many MSAs, the decline in marriage prevalence is smaller than for the nation overall. Additionally, we find that educational attainment has become increasingly important for marriage formation, so places like the Atlanta, Raleigh, and Washington, D.C. MSAs, for example, may continue to have different marriage patterns than the rest of the U.S., especially if the Black middle-class continues to migrate to these areas.

[12] For more discussion on the history of race and Hispanic-origin categories, refer to https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about/comparing-race-and-hispanic-origin.html and https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/race/MREAD_1790_2010.html.

[13] https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html

REFERENCES

Arias, E., & Xu, J. Centers for Disease Control (2018). *United States life tables, 2018*. (National Vital Statistics Reports Vol. 69, No. 12).

Brien, M.J. (1997). Racial differences in marriage and the role of marriage markets. *Journal of Human Resources*, *32*, 741-778.

Brookings Institute. (2020). The Black middle class needs political attention, too. Retrieved from The Black middle class needs political attention, too (brookings.edu)

Brown, S.L. (2004). Family structure and child well-being: The significance of parental cohabitation. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 351-367.

Carson, E.A. (2018). Prisoners in 2016. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Report No.: NCJ 251149.

Charles, K.K., & Luoh, M.C. (2010). Male incarceration, the marriage market, and female outcomes. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92, 614-627.

Cherlin, A.J. (2004). The deinstitutionalization of American marriage. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 848-861.

Cohen, P.N., & Pepin, J.R. (2018). Unequal marriage markets: Sex ratios and first marriage among Black and White women. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, *4*, 1-10.

Collins, W.J. (2021). The great migration of Black Americans from the US south: A guide to interpretation. *Exploration in Economic History,* 80 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2020.101382

Cunningham, T.J., Croft, J.B., Liu, Y., Lu, H., Eke, PI., Giles, W.H. Vital Signs: Racial Disparities in Age-Specific Mortality Among Blacks or African Americans — United States, 1999–2015. MMWR Morbidity Mortality Weekly Rep 2017; 66:444–456. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6617e1External

Curtis, K.J. (2018). U.S. return migration and the decline southern black disadvantage, 1970 – 2000. Social Science Quarterly, 99(3): 1214-1232.

Diette, T.M., Goldsmith, A.H., Hamilton, D., & Darity Jr., W. (2018). Race, unemployment, and mental health in the United States: What can we infer about the psychological cost of the Great Recession across racial groups? *Journal of Economics, Race, and Policy*, *1*, 75-91.

Edin, K., & Kefalas, M. (2005). *Promises I can keep: Why poor women put motherhood before marriage.* University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.

Elliott, D.B., Krivickas, K., Brault, M.W. & Kreider, R.M. (2012). Historical marriage trends from 1890 – 2010: A focus on race differences. *SEHSD Working Paper Number 2012-12.* U.S. Census Bureau.

Frey, W.H. (2004). *The new great migration: Black Americans' return to the South, 1965-2000*. The Brookings Institution, 1-17.

Frey, W.H. (2015). *Diversity explosion: How new racial demographics are remaking America*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Gibson-Davis, C., Gassman-Pines, A., & Lehrman, R. (2018). "His" and "hers": Meeting the economic bar to marriage. *Demography*, *55*, 2321-2343.

Goldstein, J.R., & Kenney, C.T. (2001). Marriage delayed or marriage forgone? New cohort forecasts of first marriage for US women. *American Sociological Review*, *66*, 506-519.

Inge, L. (2006). "Blacks on the move, back to the South." *NPR*, 20 April 2006. Retrieved from Blacks on the Move, Back to the South : NPR

Humes, K. & Hogan, H. (2009). Measurement of race and ethnicity in a changing, multicultural America. *Race and Social Problems 1, 111, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-009-9011-5*.

Jones, N., Marks, R., Ramirez & R. Ríos-Vargas. (2021). 2020 Census illuminates racial and ethnic composition of the country. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/improved-race-ethnicity-measures-reveal-united-states-population-much-more-multiracial.html#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20Black%20or,million%20and%2012.6%25%20in%202010.

Kamp Dush, C.M., & Amato, P.R. (2005). Consequences of relationship status and quality for subjective well-being. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *22*, 607-627.

Lichter, D.T., McLaughlin, D.K., Kephart, G., & Landry, D.J. (1992). Race and the retreat from marriage: A shortage of marriageable men? *American Sociological Review*, *57*, 781-799.

Lichter, D. T., & Qian, Z. (2018). Boundary Blurring? Racial Identification among the Children of Interracial Couples. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *677*, 81–94. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26582319

Lopoo, L. M., & Western, B. (2005). Incarceration and the Formation and Stability of Marital Unions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *67*(3), 721–734. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600200

Livingston, G., & Brown, A. (2017). Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 years after Loving v. Virginia Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/05/18/intermarriage-in-the-u-s-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia/

Manning, W.D., Brown, S.L. & Payne, K.K. (2014). Two decades of Stability and Change in Age at First Union Formation. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 76, 247-260.

Manning, W.D., & Smock, P.J. (1995). Why marry? Race and the transition to marriage among cohabitors. *Demography*, *32*, 509-520.

Mauer, M., & King, R.S. (2007). *Uneven justice: State rates of incarceration by race and ethnicity*. Washington, DC. The Sentencing Project.

Mayol-Garcia, Y., Gurrentz, B., & Kreider, R. (2021). Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriage and Divorces: 2016 *Current Population Reports,* P70-167, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

Model, S. (2021). Patterns of Black-White partnership: Black ethnics and African Americans compared. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *83*, 137-151.

Payne, K.K. (2019). Median age at first marriage: Geographic variation, 2017. *Family Profiles*, *FP-19-07*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-19-07.

Qian, Z., & Lichter, D.T. (2011). Changing patterns of marriage in a multiracial society. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *73*, 1065-1084.

Raley, R.K., & Sweeney, M.M. (2009). Explaining race and ethnic variation in marriage: Directions for future research. *Race and Social Problems*, *1*, 132-142.

Raley, R.K., Sweeney, M.M., & Wondra, D. (2015). The growing racial and ethnic divide in marriage patterns. *The Future of Children*, *25*, 89-109.

Reeves, R.V., & Guyot, K. (2017). "Black women are earning more college degrees, but that alone won't close the race gap." Brookings Institute, 2017 December 4. Retrieved from Black women are earning more college degrees, but that alone won't close race gaps (brookings.edu)

Rico, B., Kreider, R.M., Anderson, L. (2018). Examining change in the percent of married-couple households that are interracial and interethnic: 2000 to 2012-2016. Presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, April 2018.

Schweizer, V.J. (2020). Marriage: More than a century of change. *Family Profiles, FP-20-21*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family and Marriage Research. https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-20-21.

Semega, J., Kollar, M., Shrider, E.A., & Creamer, J.F. (2020). *Income and poverty in the United States 2019*. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-270, U.S. Government Publishing Office, Washington, D.C.

Smock, P.J., Manning, W.D., & Porter, M. (2005). "Everything's there except money": How economic factors shape the decision to marry among cohabiting couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *67*, 680-696.

Smock, P.J., & Schwartz, C.R. (2020). The demography of families: A review of patterns and change. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *82*, 9-34.

Tamir, C. (2021, March 25). The growing diversity of Black America. *Pew Research Center.* Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/03/25/the-growing-diversity-of-black-america/#over-half-of-the-black-population-lives-in-the-south

Tolnay, S. E. (2003). The African American "Great Migration" and Beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *29*, 209–232. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036966

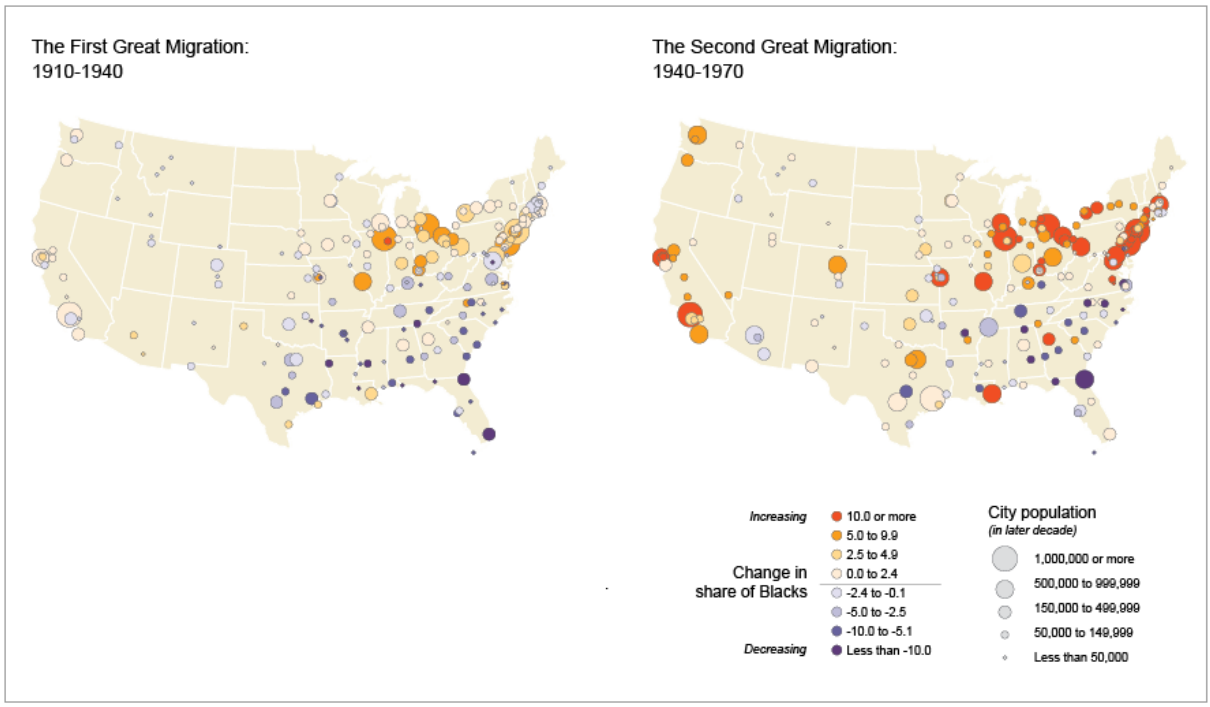
U.S. Census Bureau (2012). The Great Migration, 1910 to 1970. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/dataviz/visualizations/020/

U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Median age at first marriage: 1890 to present. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/visualizations/time-series/demo/families-and-households/ms-2.pdf

Wilkerson, I. (2010). *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration.* New York: Vintage Books.

Wilson, W.J. (1987). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Figure 1. The Great Migration from 1910 to 1970



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1910-1970 Decennial Censuses.

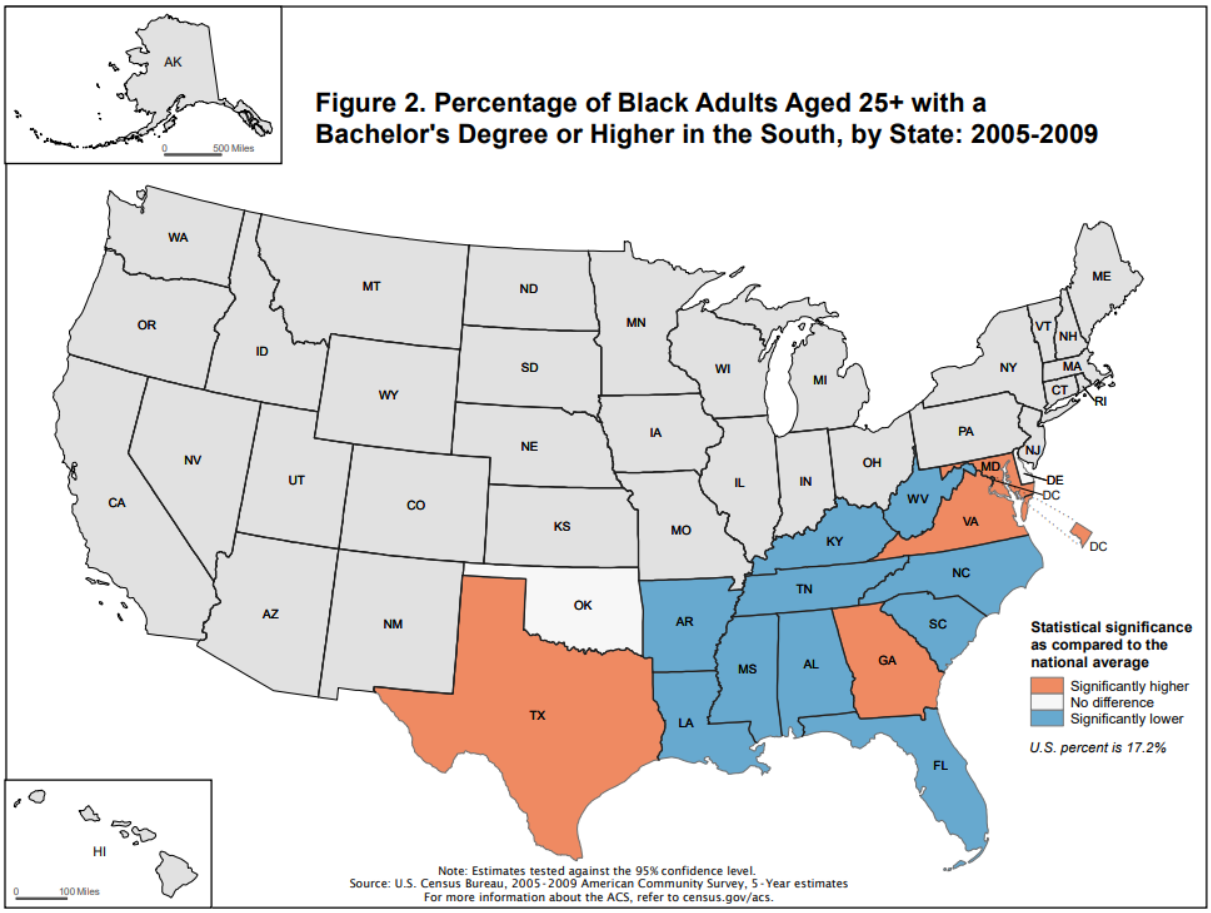


Figure 2. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in the South, by State: 2005-2009
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
DC
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 17.2%
Note: Estimates tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

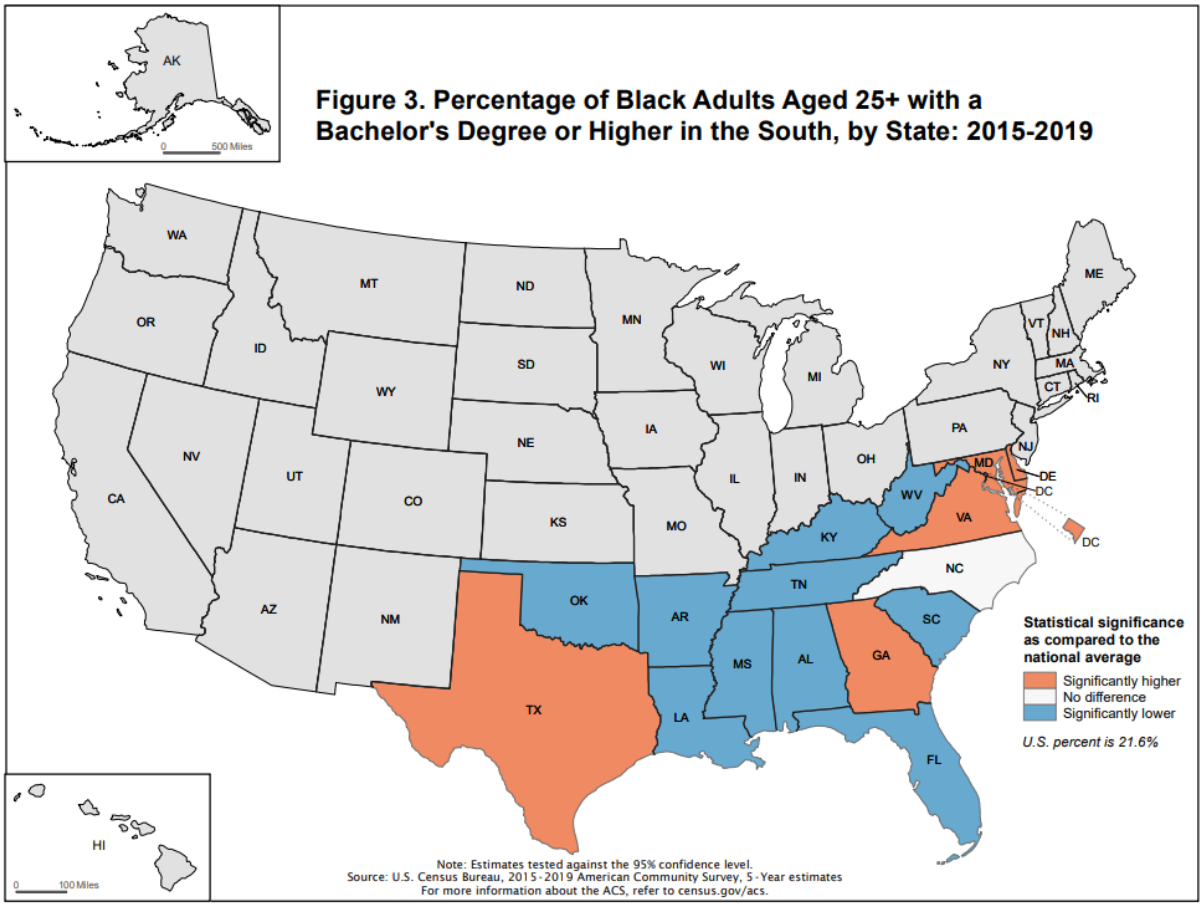


Figure 3. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in the South, by State: 2015-2019
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
DC
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 21.6%
Note: Estimates tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 1. Percentage of College-Educated Black Adults Aged 25+ in 2005-2009 and 2015-2019, by State

	2005-2009		**2015-2019**	
State	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*
Alabama	13.8*	0.43	18.0*	0.50
Alaska	17.9	3.60	21.3	3.15
Arizona	22.6*	1.20	25.6*	1.02
Arkansas	12.3*	0.65	15.8*	0.74
California	21.3*	0.32	25.7*	0.38
Colorado	22.7*	1.29	26.2*	1.14
Connecticut	17.4	0.83	21.6	0.91
Delaware	17.7	1.16	23.2*	1.17
District of Columbia	21.5*	0.95	27.2*	0.91
Florida	15.7*	0.35	19.2*	0.32
Georgia	18.8*	0.32	23.9*	0.41
Hawaii	27.0*	3.84	30.0*	3.17
Idaho	28.8*	7.13	28.1	7.27
Illinois	18.2*	0.38	21.6	0.45
Indiana	14.2*	0.64	18.1*	0.60
Iowa	16.5	1.76	17.1*	1.73
Kansas	17.8	1.33	20.2*	1.11
Kentucky	13.6*	0.78	17.0*	0.85
Louisiana	12.3*	0.37	15.7*	0.44
Maine	20.8	5.53	26.0	4.59
Maryland	24.1*	0.42	30.0*	0.39
Massachusetts	22.4*	0.99	26.9*	1.02
Michigan	14.2*	0.36	17.5*	0.40
Minnesota	19.9*	1.12	21.3	0.99
Mississippi	11.7*	0.40	15.4*	0.50
Missouri	14.8*	0.47	18.5*	0.58
Montana	18.9	9.52	33.0*	7.14
Nebraska	16.4	1.98	21.4	1.67
Nevada	15.8*	1.03	17.9*	1.03
New Hampshire	32.5*	5.45	28.5*	4.37
New Jersey	20.4*	0.49	24.4*	0.56
New Mexico	25.3*	2.84	29.1*	2.88
New York	20.1*	0.28	24.3*	0.32
North Carolina	16.3*	0.43	21.3	0.38
North Dakota	20.3	8.69	22.4	4.87
Ohio	14.2*	0.37	17.2*	0.40
Oklahoma	16.2	1.04	19.5*	0.77
Oregon	20.7*	2.11	27.2*	1.92
Pennsylvania	14.6*	0.46	19.3*	0.36
Rhode Island	19.9	2.42	21.6	2.37
South Carolina	12.3*	0.37	15.7*	0.52
South Dakota	15.9	5.98	16.6	4.59

Tennessee	15.2*	0.48	20.4*	0.57
Texas	18.0*	0.36	24.6*	0.36
Utah	22.6*	3.96	24.5	3.34
Vermont	41.8*	10.15	35.8*	5.68
Virginia	17.9*	0.42	24.2*	0.40
Washington	19.6*	1.02	25.3*	1.04
West Virginia	13.0*	1.30	15.2*	1.60
Wisconsin	12.7*	0.73	14.6*	0.68
Wyoming	19.3	8.70	29.9	8.70

*Indicates a significant difference from the national average at the 95% confidence level. The national average was 17.2% in 2005-2009, and 21.6% in 2015-2019.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

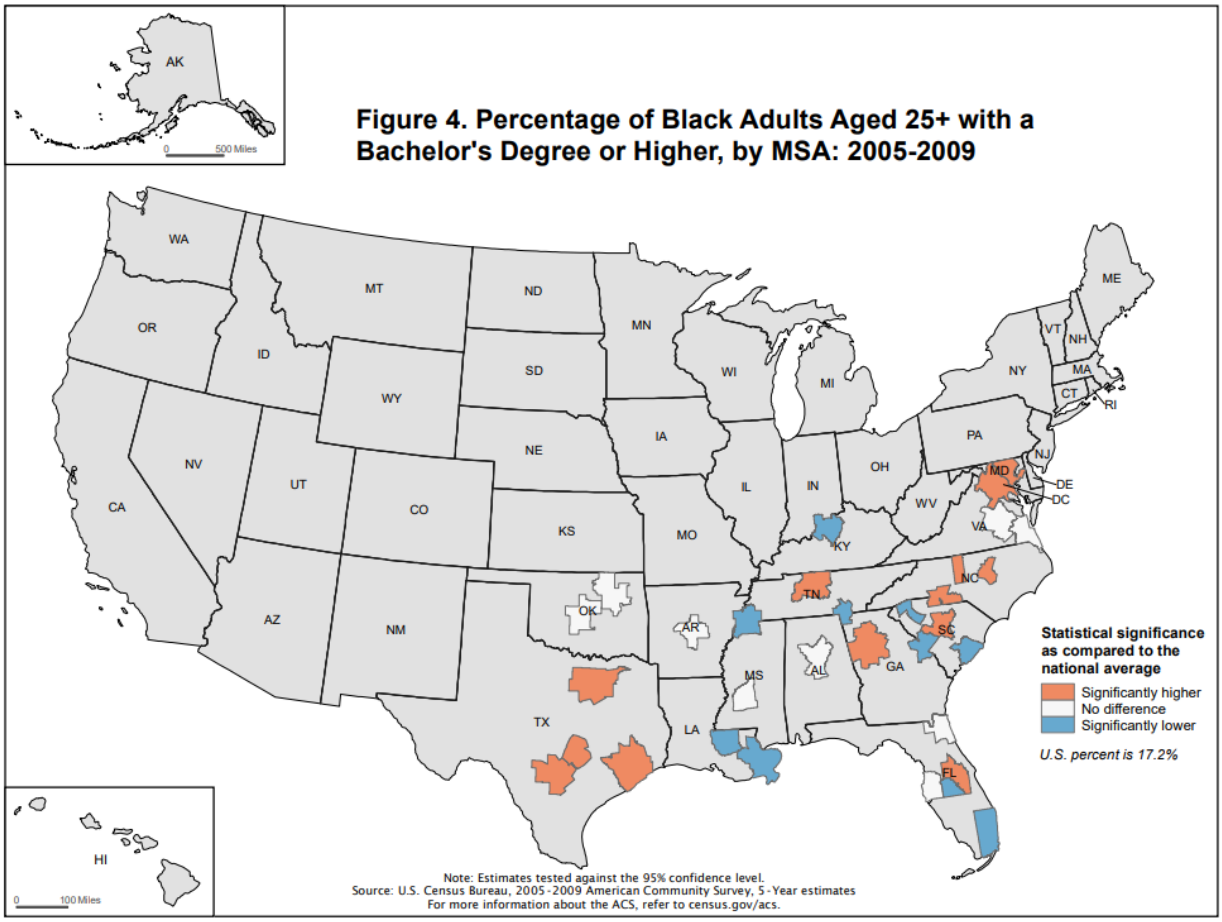


Figure 4. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, by MSA: 2005-2009
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
NJ
DE
DC
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 17.2%
Note: Estimates tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

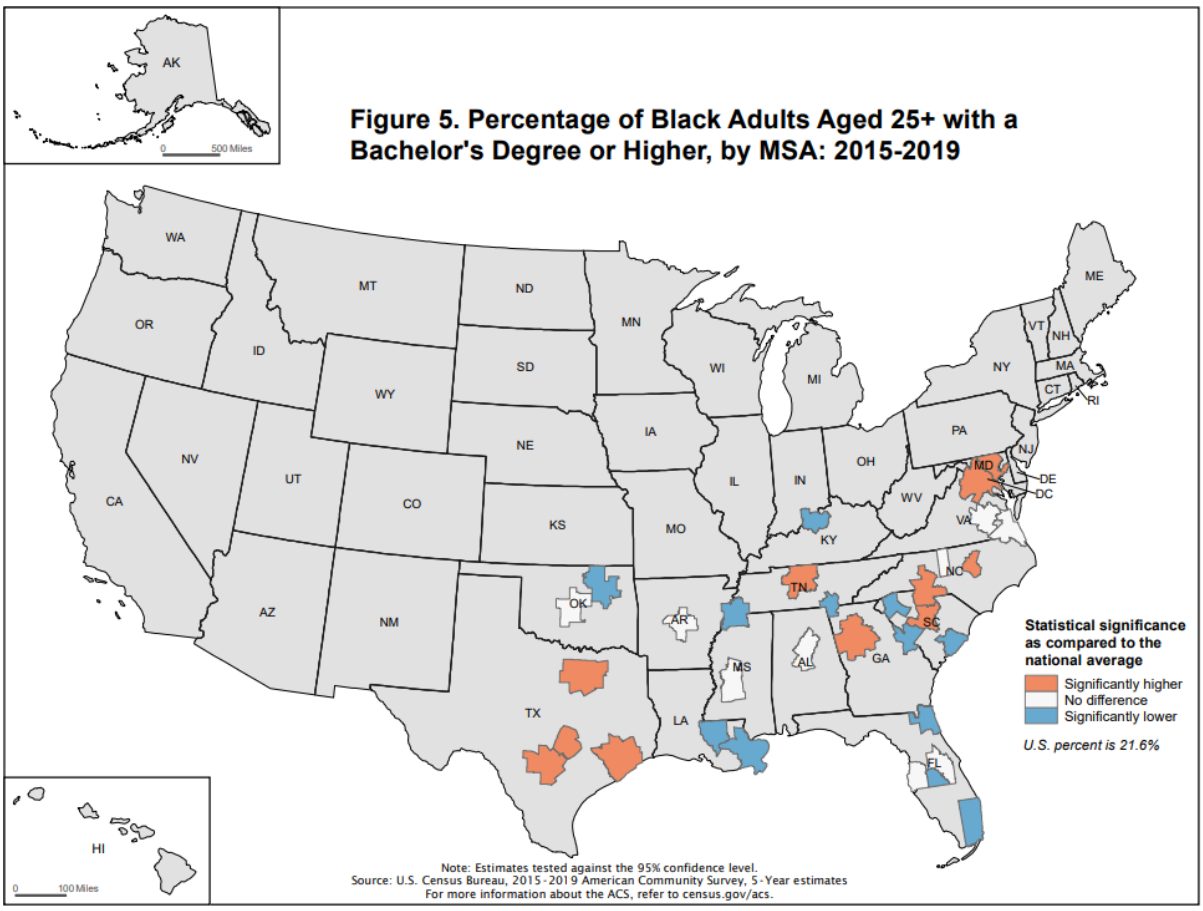


Figure 5. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, by MSA: 2015-2019
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
DC
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 21.6%
Note: Estimates tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 2. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 25+ with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher in 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 and Percentage-Point Change, by MSA

	2005-2009		**2015-2019**		**Both Periods**	
MSA	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percentage-Point Change*	*Margin of Error*
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	24.8*	0.47	30.3*	0.60	5.5*	0.76
Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	12.6*	0.89	16.9*	1.27	4.3	1.55
Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	21.9*	1.52	29.2*	1.63	7.3*	2.23
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	19.2*	0.61	26.5*	0.63	7.3*	0.87
Baton Rouge, LA	15.8*	0.86	18.5*	1.11	2.7*	1.41
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	16.7	0.79	20.8	0.89	4.1	1.18
Charleston-North Charleston, SC	12.7*	1.10	16.5*	1.05	3.8	1.52
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	21.4*	0.87	28.5*	0.92	7.1*	1.27
Chattanooga, TN-GA	13.6*	1.70	15.1*	1.72	1.5*	2.41
Columbia, SC	19.4*	1.08	23.2*	1.24	3.8	1.64
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	20.8*	0.60	27.4*	0.62	6.6*	0.86
Greensboro-High Point, NC	19.1*	1.37	23.1	1.33	4.0	1.91
Greenville-Anderson, SC	12.7*	1.39	15.4*	1.51	2.7	2.05
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	20.5*	0.60	27.5*	0.72	7.0*	0.93
Jackson, MS	17.8	0.89	21.9	1.18	4.1	1.48
Jacksonville, FL	16.2	0.98	19.9*	1.07	3.7	1.45
Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	12.6*	1.46	15.0*	1.48	2.4	2.08
Little Rock-North Little Rock, AR	16.7	1.29	21.9	1.44	5.2	1.94
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY, IN	14.3*	1.20	18.3*	1.24	4.0	1.72
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	13.6*	0.65	19.1*	0.69	5.5	0.95
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	16.4*	0.50	19.7*	0.55	3.3*	0.74
Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	21.4*	1.19	28.8*	1.35	7.4*	1.80
New Orleans-Metairie, LA	14.3*	0.81	18.8*	0.75	4.5	1.11
Oklahoma City, OK	19.1	1.72	21.3	1.37	2.2	2.20
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	18.5*	0.94	22.8	1.02	4.3	1.38
Raleigh-Cary, NC	24.9*	1.52	31.0*	1.08	6.1	1.86

Richmond, VA	17.0	0.75	21.8	0.87	4.8	1.15
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	21.7*	1.43	29.0*	1.33	7.3*	1.95
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	18.0	0.87	22.2	0.86	4.2	1.23
Tulsa, OK	15.8	1.54	19.2*	1.20	3.4	1.95
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA, NC	16.5	0.60	22.2	0.80	5.7*	1.00
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC, VA, MD, WV	28.8*	0.55	34.9*	0.51	6.1*	0.75

*Indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level. The national average was 17.2% in 2005-2009, and 21.6% in 2015-2019.

Note: Estimates for 2005-2009 are being tested against the national average for 2005-2009, and estimates for 2015-2019 are being tested against the national average for 2015-2019.

Note: There were instances in which the names of the MSAs were different in 2005-2009 than in 2015-2019. We use the names of the MSAs from 2019.

Note: For the Louisville/Jefferson County MSA, we use the official name of the MSA but exclude respondents who lived in Jefferson County, since this is not a county in the South.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

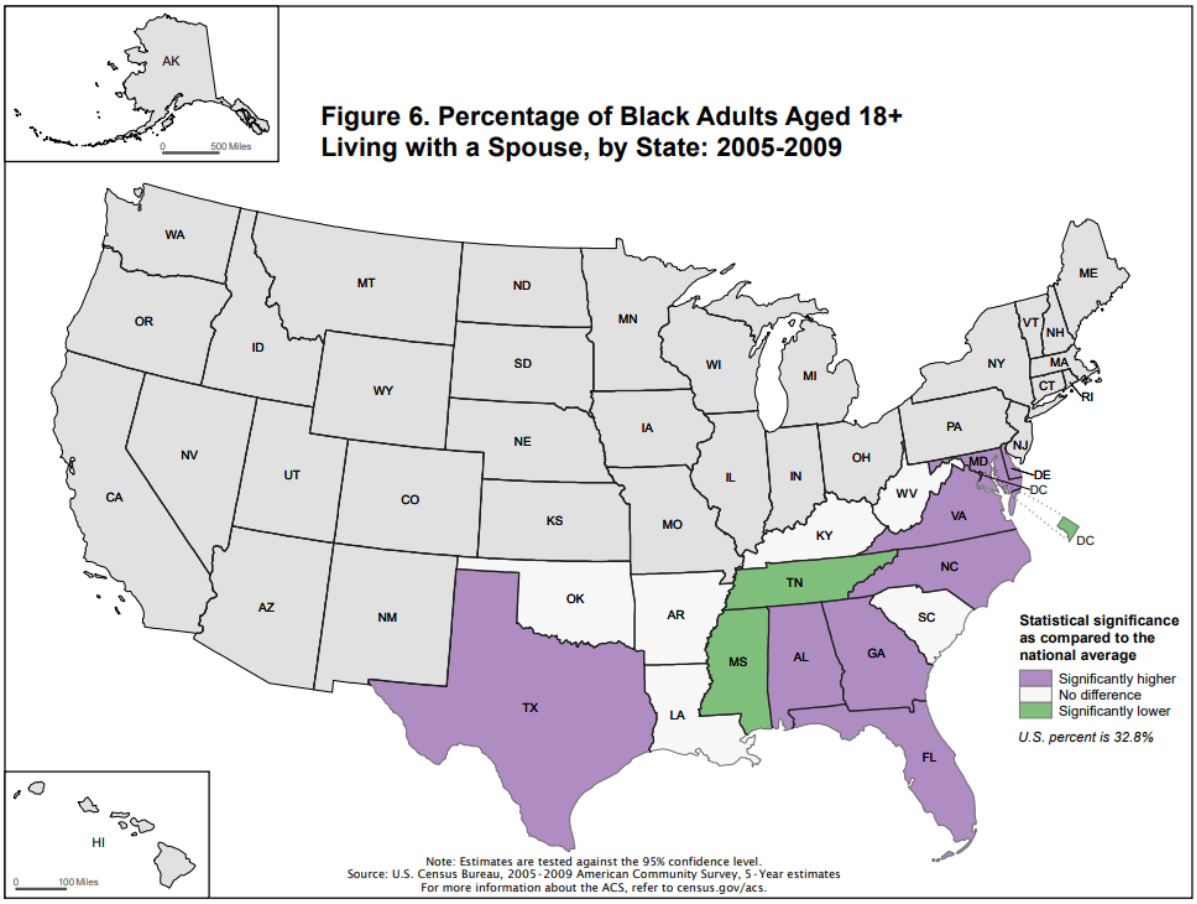


Figure 6. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse, by State: 2005-2009
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
DC
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 32.8%
Note: Estimates are tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

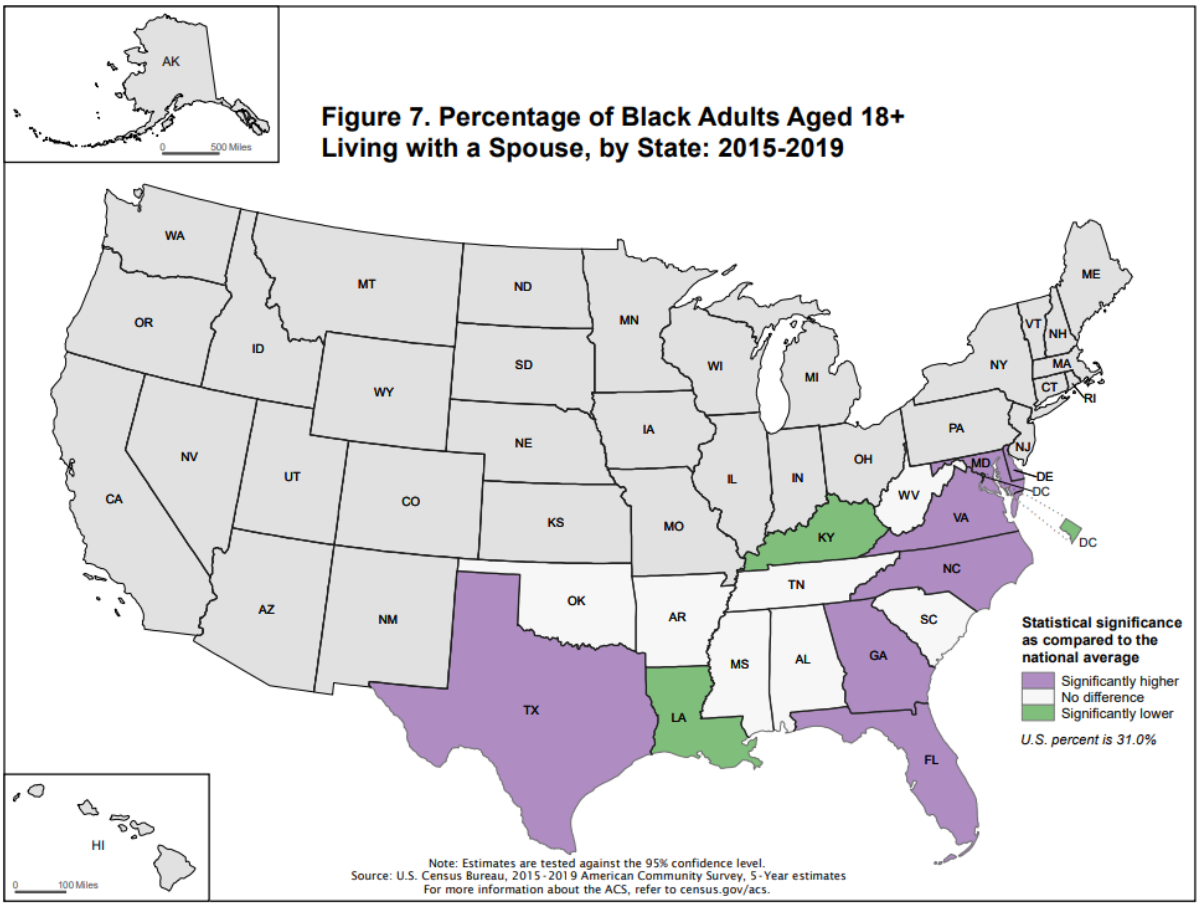


Figure 7. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse, by State: 2015-2019
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
DC
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 31.0%
Note: Estimates are tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 3. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse in 2005-2009 and 2015-2019, by State

	2005-2009		2015-2019	
State	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*
Alabama	33.7*	0.56	30.8	0.52
Alaska	46.2*	3.50	39.7*	4.66
Arizona	36.4*	1.41	33.7*	1.06
Arkansas	32.8	1.00	30.8	1.11
California	31.6*	0.38	30.2*	0.40
Colorado	39.1*	1.41	37.5*	1.14
Connecticut	33.7	0.93	31.7	1.03
Delaware	35.6*	1.58	34.7*	1.44
District of Columbia	20.7*	0.83	19.6*	0.98
Florida	35.7*	0.38	32.7*	0.37
Georgia	34.0*	0.44	32.7*	0.42
Hawaii	57.8*	4.52	52.1*	3.78
Idaho	47.4*	7.25	40.8*	7.20
Illinois	28.4*	0.43	25.6*	0.42
Indiana	31.6*	0.82	28.5*	0.82
Iowa	30.5	2.19	29.4	2.06
Kansas	34.8*	1.44	34.6*	1.38
Kentucky	32.1	1.10	28.9*	0.87
Louisiana	32.1	0.65	28.5*	0.50
Maine	39.9*	5.01	37.8*	4.31
Maryland	36.1*	0.52	35.0*	0.44
Massachusetts	33.6	0.96	33.6*	0.89
Michigan	27.9*	0.45	25.6*	0.53
Minnesota	32.2	1.25	34.9*	0.97
Mississippi	31.7*	0.69	30.2	0.69
Missouri	29.1*	0.74	28.0*	0.69
Montana	33.3	8.11	41.7*	7.88
Nebraska	29.7*	1.67	32.1	1.97
Nevada	36.6*	1.57	30.3	1.31
New Hampshire	41.1*	5.20	40.2*	4.26
New Jersey	33.2	0.55	31.9*	0.49
New Mexico	39.3*	2.71	38.1*	2.74
New York	30.9*	0.33	29.9*	0.35
North Carolina	35.8*	0.52	32.5*	0.40
North Dakota	40.8	7.76	37.1*	4.30
Ohio	29.6*	0.58	27.2*	0.51
Oklahoma	32.7	1.21	31.4	0.92
Oregon	33.6	2.46	33.6*	1.96
Pennsylvania	27.8*	0.49	25.6*	0.53
Rhode Island	32.5	2.38	32.1	2.38
South Carolina	33.2	0.61	31.1	0.56
South Dakota	30.7	6.46	35.0	4.75

Tennessee	30.9*	0.61	30.2	0.68
Texas	35.7*	0.36	34.7*	0.40
Utah	44.0*	4.39	40.7*	3.59
Vermont	34.1	7.27	31.9	5.89
Virginia	37.5*	0.63	35.7*	0.50
Washington	38.0*	1.33	37.7*	1.23
West Virginia	32.3	2.08	29.1	1.96
Wisconsin	24.7*	1.03	23.1*	0.85
Wyoming	40.3	9.52	42.6	10.34

*Indicates a significant difference from the national average at the 95% confidence level. The national average was 32.8% in 2005-2009, and 31.0% in 2015-2019.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

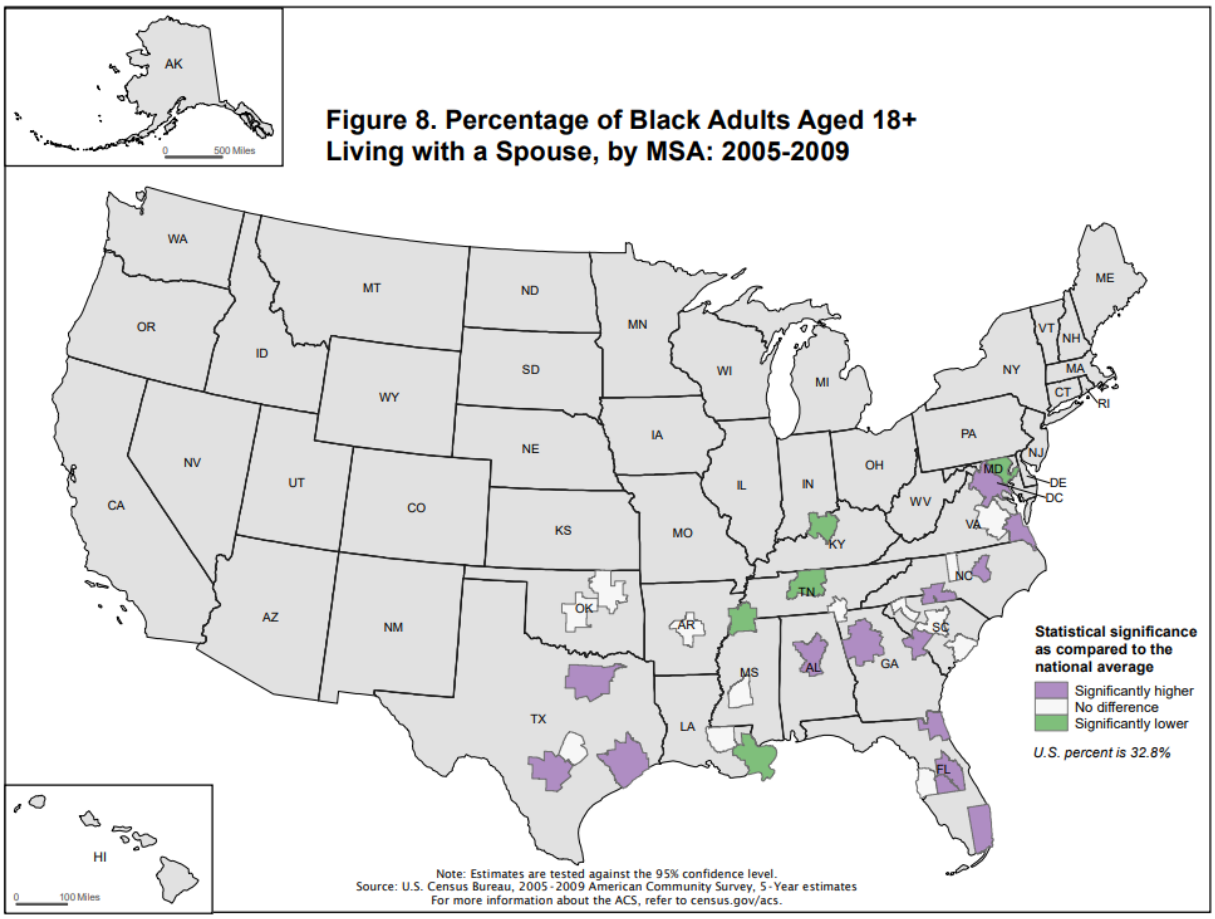


Figure 8. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse, by MSA: 2005-2009
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
NJ
DE
DC
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 32.8%
Note: Estimates are tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

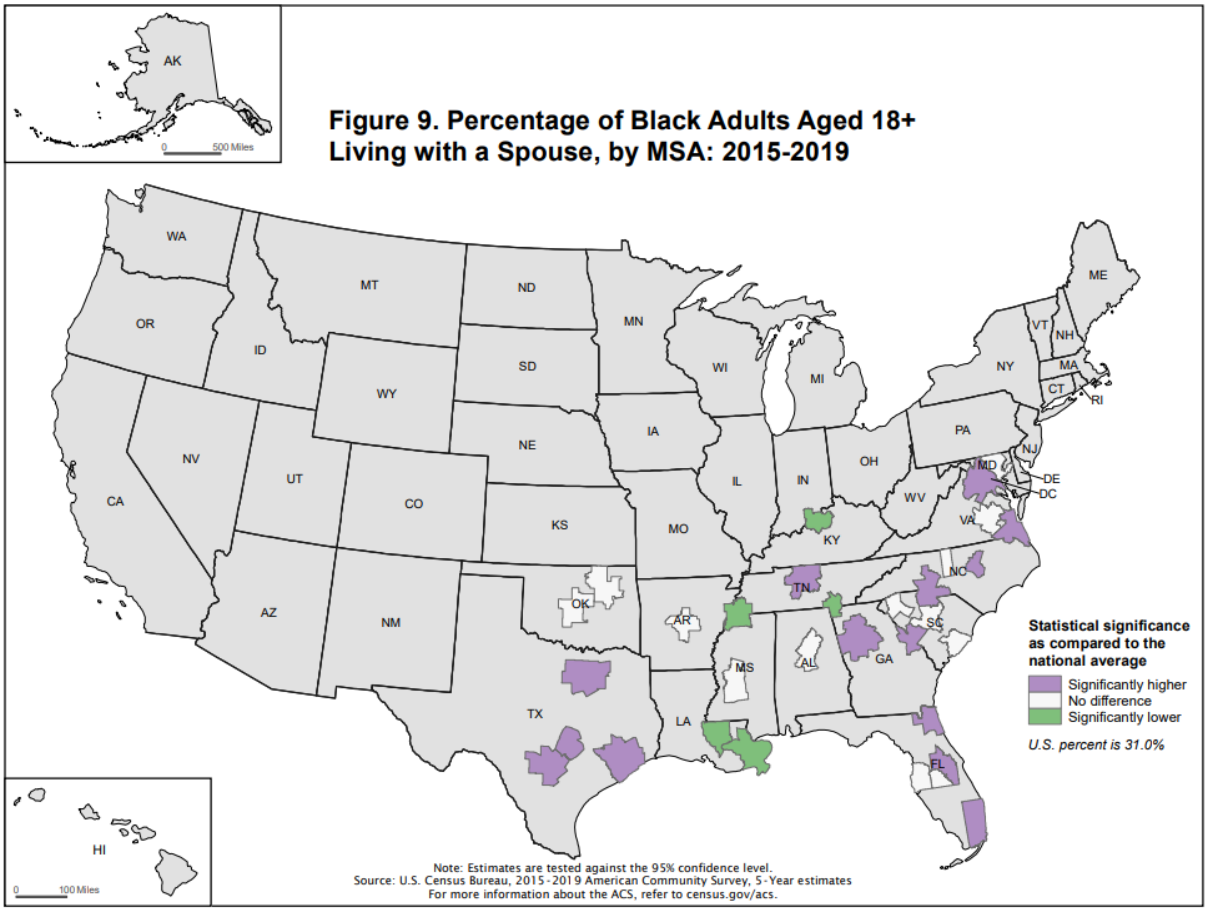


Figure 9. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse, by MSA: 2015-2019
AK
0 500 Miles
HI
0 100 Miles
WA
OR
CA
ID
NV
MT
WY
UT
AZ
CO
NM
ND
SD
NE
KS
OK
TX
MN
IA
MO
AR
LA
WI
IL
MS
MI
IN
KY
TN
AL
OH
WV
GA
FL
SC
NC
VA
PA
NY
MD
DE
DC
NJ
CT
RI
MA
VT
NH
ME
Statistical significance as compared to the national average
Significantly higher
No difference
Significantly lower
U.S. percent is 31.0%
Note: Estimates are tested against the 95% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates
For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 4. Percentage of Black Adults Aged 18+ Living with a Spouse in 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 and Percentage-Point Change, by MSA

	2005-2009		**2015-2019**		**Both Periods**	
MSA	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percent*	*Margin of Error*	*Percentage-Point Change*	*Margin of Error*
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Alpharetta, GA	34.7*	0.54	34.1*	0.58	-0.6*	0.79
Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	35.5*	1.61	33.3*	1.36	-2.2	2.10
Austin-Round Rock-Georgetown, TX	33.8	1.73	34.2*	1.88	0.4	2.55
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson, MD	30.7*	0.84	30.3	0.71	-0.4*	1.10
Baton Rouge, LA	33.9	1.26	28.8*	1.32	-5.1*	1.83
Birmingham-Hoover, AL	34.5*	1.21	32.2	1.06	-2.3	1.60
Charleston-North Charleston, SC	33.1	1.34	31.9	1.39	-1.2	1.93
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC	36.9*	1.08	33.0*	1.04	-3.9*	1.50
Chattanooga, TN-GA	30.6	2.15	27.9*	2.20	-2.7	3.08
Columbia, SC	34.3	1.35	32.3	1.33	-2.0	1.90
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	35.6*	0.61	34.9*	0.58	-0.7*	0.84
Greensboro-High Point, NC	34.3	1.66	31.7	1.27	-2.6	2.09
Greenville-Anderson, SC	31.6	1.96	30.4	1.71	-1.2	2.60
Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX	36.5*	0.66	35.0*	0.71	-1.5	0.97
Jackson, MS	31.4	1.41	32.3	1.37	0.9*	1.97
Jacksonville, FL	37.9*	1.18	33.8*	1.03	-4.1*	1.57
Lakeland-Winter Haven, FL	38.6*	2.33	32.8	2.08	-5.8*	3.12
Little Rock-North Little Rock, AR	34.2	1.54	31.5	1.77	-2.7	2.35
Louisville/Jefferson County, KY, IN	30.1*	1.40	27.9*	1.39	-2.2	1.97
Memphis, TN-MS-AR	29.6*	0.90	29.4*	0.92	-0.2*	1.29
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	36.1*	0.63	32.8*	0.58	-3.3*	0.86

Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN	30.8*	1.17	32.9*	1.17	2.1*	1.65
New Orleans-Metairie, LA	30.8*	1.22	27.8*	0.75	-3.0	1.43
Oklahoma City, OK	32.7	2.01	30.8	1.67	-1.9	2.61
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	37.5*	1.20	36.1*	1.13	-1.4	1.65
Raleigh-Cary, NC	36.7*	1.53	35.3*	1.29	-1.4	2.00
Richmond, VA	33.8	1.04	30.7	1.06	-3.1	1.48
San Antonio-New Braunfels, TX	37.8*	1.64	36.6*	1.45	-1.2	2.19
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	34.0	1.08	31.5	0.96	-2.5	1.45
Tulsa, OK	32.1	2.23	31.6	1.14	-0.5	2.51
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA, NC	37.3*	0.80	35.2*	0.75	-2.1	1.10
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC, VA, MD, WV	37.2*	0.51	36.8*	0.50	-0.4*	0.71

*Indicates a significant difference at the 95% confidence level. The national average was 32.8% in 2005-2009, and 31.0% in 2015-2019.

Note: Estimates for 2005-2009 are being tested against the national average for 2005-2009, and estimates for 2015-2019 are being tested against the national average for 2015-2019.

Note: There were instances in which the names of the MSAs were different in 2005-2009 than in 2015-2019. We use the names of the MSAs from 2019.

Note: For the Louisville/Jefferson County MSA, we use the official name of the MSA but exclude respondents who lived in Jefferson County, since this is not a county in the South.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables for MSAs.

	2005-2009		2015-2019	
	Mean or Percent	SD	Mean or Percent	SD
Percent Married	34.2	2.6	32.4	2.5
Percent College-Educated	18.0	4.0	22.7	5.2
Age	35.2	2.0	36.9	2.0
Percent Female	52.8	1.0	52.6	1.4
Percent in Poverty	22.9	4.3	20.6	3.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 6. Bivariate Results of OLS Regression Analyses Predicting Marriage Prevalence: 2005-2009 and 2015-2019.

	2005-2009		**2015-2019**	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Age	-0.23	0.24	-0.48*	0.21
Percent Female	-0.72	0.44	-0.50	0.31
Percent Unemployed	-1.13**	0.33	-1.20*	0.45
Percent College-Educated	0.23*	0.11	0.31***	0.07
Percent in Poverty	-0.36***	0.09	-0.46***	0.08

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 and 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 7. Multivariate Results of OLS Regression Analyses Predicting Marriage Prevalence: 2005-2009.

	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**		**Model 4**	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Age	-0.15	0.24	-0.06	0.22	0.05	0.24	-0.03	0.20
Percent Female	-0.66	0.46	-0.15	0.46	-0.31	0.48	-0.33	0.41
Percent Unemployed			-1.05*	0.39	-0.85	0.43	-0.53	0.39
Percent College-Educated					0.14	0.13		
Percent in Poverty							-0.28**	0.10

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.

Table 8. Multivariate Results of OLS Regression Analyses Predicting Marriage Prevalence: 2015-2019.

	Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**		**Model 4**	
	b	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*	*b*	*SE*
Age	-0.42	0.22	-0.30	0.22	-0.00	0.20	-0.20	0.17
Percent Female	-0.37	0.30	-0.28	0.29	-0.39	0.25	-0.28	0.23
Percent Unemployed			-0.89	0.47	-0.36	0.43	-0.08	0.41
Percent College-Educated					0.28**	0.08		
Percent in Poverty							-0.42***	0.09

***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey, 5-Year estimates.

For more information about the ACS, refer to census.gov/acs.