

College students more eager for marriage than their parents

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Reaching adulthood certainly takes longer than it did a generation ago, but new research shows one way that parents are contributing to the delay.

A national study found that college students think 25 years old is the "right age" to get married, while a majority of parents feel 25 is still a little too soon. So it's no coincidence that when Justin Bieber said he'd like to wed by 25, [Oprah Winfrey](#) urged him to wait longer.

"The assumption has been that the younger generation wants to delay marriage and parents are hassling them about when they would get married," said Brian Willoughby, a professor at Brigham Young University and lead author of the study. "We actually found the opposite, that the parental generation is showing the 'slow down' [mindset](#) more than the young adults."

Willoughby and his co-authors in BYU's School of Family Life gathered info from 536 [college students](#) and their parents from five college campuses around the country (BYU was not in the sample). As they report in *The Journal of Social and [Personal Relationships](#)*, the scholars found the hesitation is consistent across gender.

"Initially we thought that this might be dads wanting their daughters to delay marriage," Willoughby said. "Moms and dads trended together – gender wasn't a factor."

One of the driving forces behind parents' restraint is the feeling that their children should get an education first. While they generally feel marriage is important, parents think the "right age" is one year older than what their children say. Excluding teen marriages, research doesn't support the notion that there is an optimal time to tie the knot.

"I think parents have a lot of fear for their kids that makes them want to delay the transitions to [adulthood](#)," Willoughby said.

According to [Census data](#), the [median age](#) for first marriages is 27. Willoughby says that what people say is the "right age" generally comes a few years before the actual marriage age.

"What happens is that someone thinks that 25 is when they want to get married," Willoughby said. "So at age 25, they start changing their patterns around dating, and it takes two or so years to make the transition."

Though BYU students weren't in Willoughby's sample, the university's own records show about 25 percent of its students are married. Willoughby said that Mormon [young adults](#) typically marry about two years younger than their peers nationally and have risen in sync with national trends.

Provided by Brigham Young University

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