

Never-married adults constitute lowest percentage of US homeowners, new research finds

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New research by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research

at Bowling Green State University finds homeownership has declined nationally in recent years, with adults who have never been married constitute the lowest percentage of homeowners.

Rising [home prices](#) and an increase in the percentage of never-married U.S. adults could be contributing factors, though BGSU researchers didn't distinctly draw that conclusion.

The [research](#), conducted by first-year sociology graduate student Francesca Marino with guidance from NCFMR co-directors and nationally recognized demographers and BGSU professors Drs. Wendy D. Manning and Susan L. Brown, is based on data from the 2021 American Community Survey, sent to 3.5 million households annually by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Roughly 48% of adults who have never been married owned a home in 2021. Divorced adults comprised 59% of homeowners, with widowed individuals at 71%. Married adults contributed to the largest share of ownership at 80%.

Homeownership across all populations was 64% in 2019, down from 67% in 2006.

"While there may be a variety of reasons why never-married adults own fewer homes, the age of this group is likely a factor to consider along with housing prices and a growing never-married [population](#). Half of this population is between 18 and 28 years old, while the average age of first-time homebuyers is mid-30s," Marino said.

"We anticipate conducting additional research to determine what factors are contributing to the low percentage of homeownership among never-married adults using this research as our foundation."

Established in 2007, the NCFMR's research focuses on how [family structure](#) is connected to the health and well-being of children, adults, families and communities and is used to inform policy development and programmatic responses.

"This research shines a light on a demographic that is often overlooked in family research, but is growing rapidly," Brown said. "Single adults now constitute about 40% of the [adult population](#) in the U.S. and they are not a monolithic group. Understanding how never-married adults compare with their divorced and widowed counterparts is key. At the NCFMR, we don't just study marriage and families. We're now delving into the single population, too."

Homeownership in the U.S. is commonly considered an indicator of financial well-being and is one pathway to building wealth. However, Marino cautioned against attributing the low percentage of homeownership among never-married adults strictly to financial means.

The percentage of those who have never been married doubled from 15% in 1960 to 31% in 2020, a significant factor to consider. Additionally, there could be geographic variables or generational trends at play, Marino said.

For example, Washington, D.C., has the highest percentage of never-married adults, yet its homeownership rates are the lowest in the country at 29.3%. New York and California also are in the bottom five.

West Virginia, New Mexico, Michigan, New Hampshire and Delaware have the highest percentage of homeownership among never-married adults. In Ohio, 48% of its never-married population own homes.

"An analysis of housing prices in each state could provide some context, but there are also other factors to consider, including the availability of

housing in those areas," Marino said.

The percentage of homeownership among never-married [adults](#) has only varied by about 6% during the last two decades, holding a relatively consistent share at half or nearly half. It dropped to its lowest level of 45.9% in 2015, following a 10-year decline.

Ownership also varied by gender, race and education level.

"Within the never-married population, ownership varied by several different sociodemographic characteristics and geographically," Marino said. "There's a lot of future research opportunities to explore within this one population."

More information: Francesca Marino, Unmarried Adulthood: More than a Century of Change, 1900-2020 (2023). [DOI: 10.25035/ncfmr/fp-23-04](#)

Provided by Bowling Green State University

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