

Same-sex Couples' Consistency in Reports of Marital Status

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Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America,
San Francisco, CA, May 3-5, 2012

This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed on statistical or methodological issues are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Background

- 2004
 - Massachusetts was the first state to perform same-sex marriages
- 2010
 - Only 5 states, including the District of Columbia performed same-sex marriage
 - Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and D.C.
 - 10 states had domestic partnerships or civil unions
 - California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Prior Census Bureau Research

- Bates, DeMaio, Robins, and Hicks (2010)
 - Explored how the current decennial Census relationship item and the American Community Survey relationship and marital status items are interpreted by both same-sex and opposite sex couples.
 - Few respondents in same-sex cohabiting relationships chose the answer categories of “husband/wife” for relationship or “now married” for marital status.
 - Most couples who were legally married, regardless of state of residence, reported that they were “husband/wife” and “now married.”

Prior Census Bureau Research

- O'Connell and Lofquist (2009)
 - found that in the 2008 ACS there were 564,743 same-sex couples, with almost 150,000 of those reporting themselves to be “husband or wife” on the relationship item.
 - According to Gates and Steinberger (2009) the number of same-sex couples reporting “husband or wife” in the ACS is much larger than the actual number of legally married same-sex couples in the United States.
- Virgile (2011)
 - Same-sex couples were most likely to report their relationship as “husband or wife” if they resided in a state that recognized same-sex marriage.

International Research

- Milss and Rigt-Poortman (2010)
 - Even in countries in Europe where same-sex marriage is not legally recognized the majority of same-sex respondents report themselves as “married.”

Research Questions

1. Who reports “now married”?
2. Is the presence of children associated with reporting “now married”?
3. Does reporting vary by state recognition?

Data and Methods

- American Community Survey
 - 2008, 2009, and 2010 internal data files
- “Now married” versus not married
- Reported as spouses or unmarried partners
- Variables
- Analyses
 - Bivariate
 - Logistic Regression

Variables

- 10-year age categories of the householder
- Race and Hispanic origin of the householder
- Interracial couples
- Educational attainment
- Household income
- State by legal recognition
 - States performing same-sex marriage
 - All other states

Relationship and Marital Status Questions

Relationship Question

2 How is this person related to Person 1? *Mark (X) ONE box.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband or wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Other relative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Roomer or boarder |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter | <input type="checkbox"/> Housemate or roommate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister | <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Foster child |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild | <input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law | |

Marital Status Question

20

What is this person's marital status?

Now married

Widowed

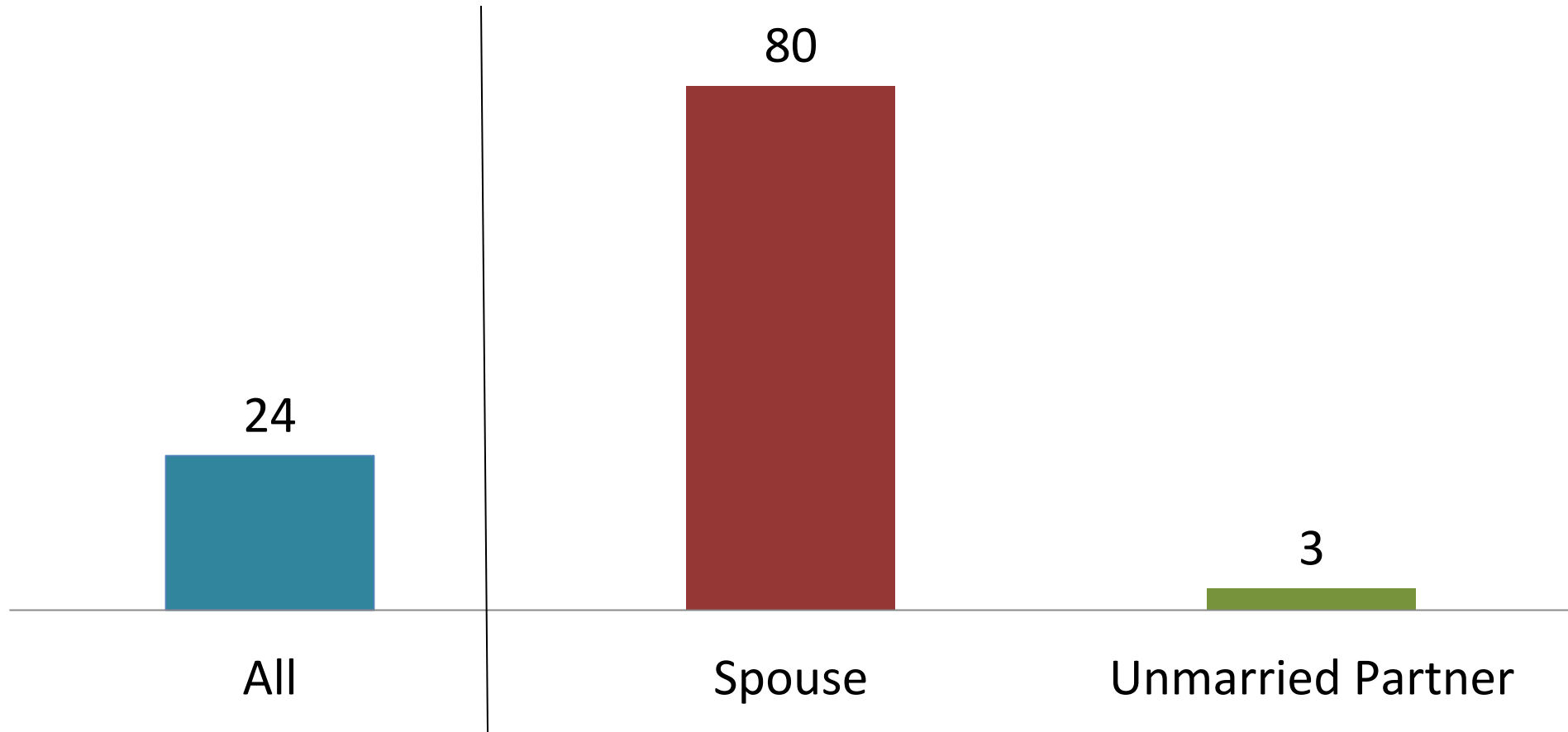
Divorced

Separated

Never married → SKIP to **I**

Who reports “now married”?

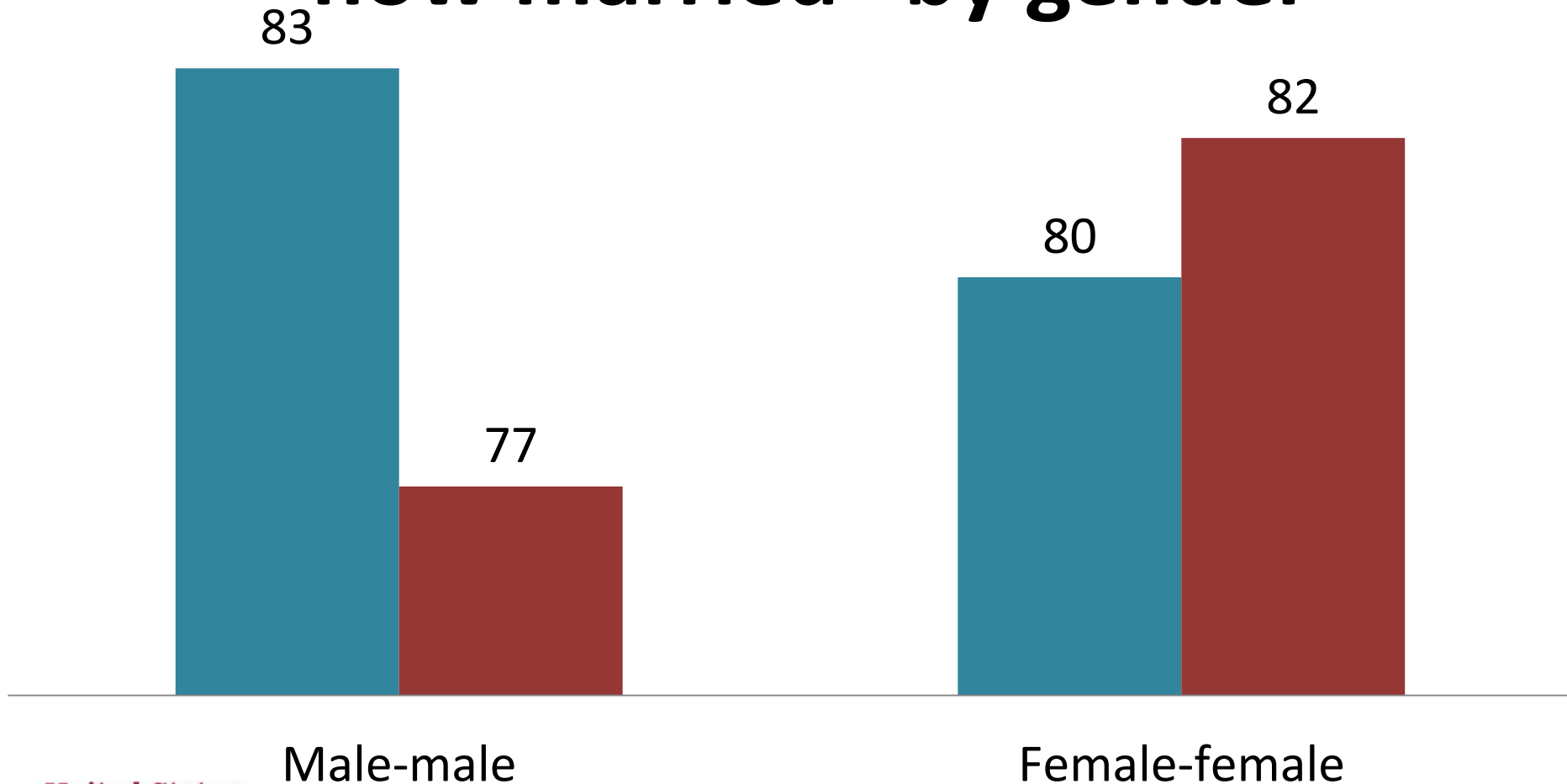
Percent of same-sex households with partners reporting “now married”



Findings

- Percent of same-sex households with partners reporting “now married”
 - Only 24% of all same-sex couples report that they are now married.
 - Broken out by relationship type
 - 80% of those reported as spouse said that they were “now married”
 - 3% of those reported as unmarried partner reported themselves as being “now married”.

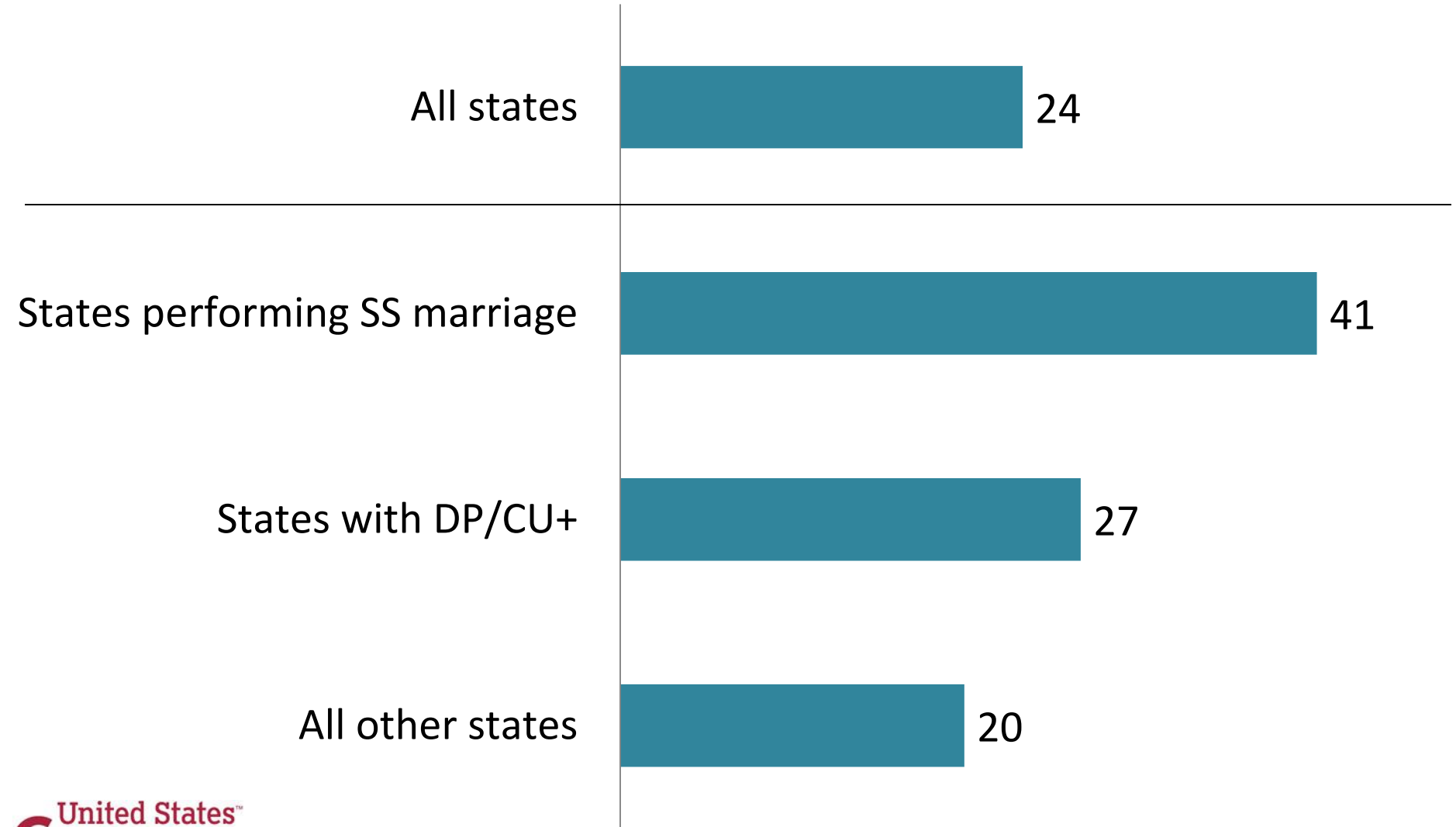
Percent of same-sex spousal households with partners reporting “now married” by gender



Findings

- Percent of same-sex spousal households with partners reporting “now married” by gender
 - Eighty-three percent of male-male spousal households reported “now married” in 2008, compared with only 77% in 2010.
 - While 80% of female-female spousal households reported “now married” in 2008, compared to 82% in 2010

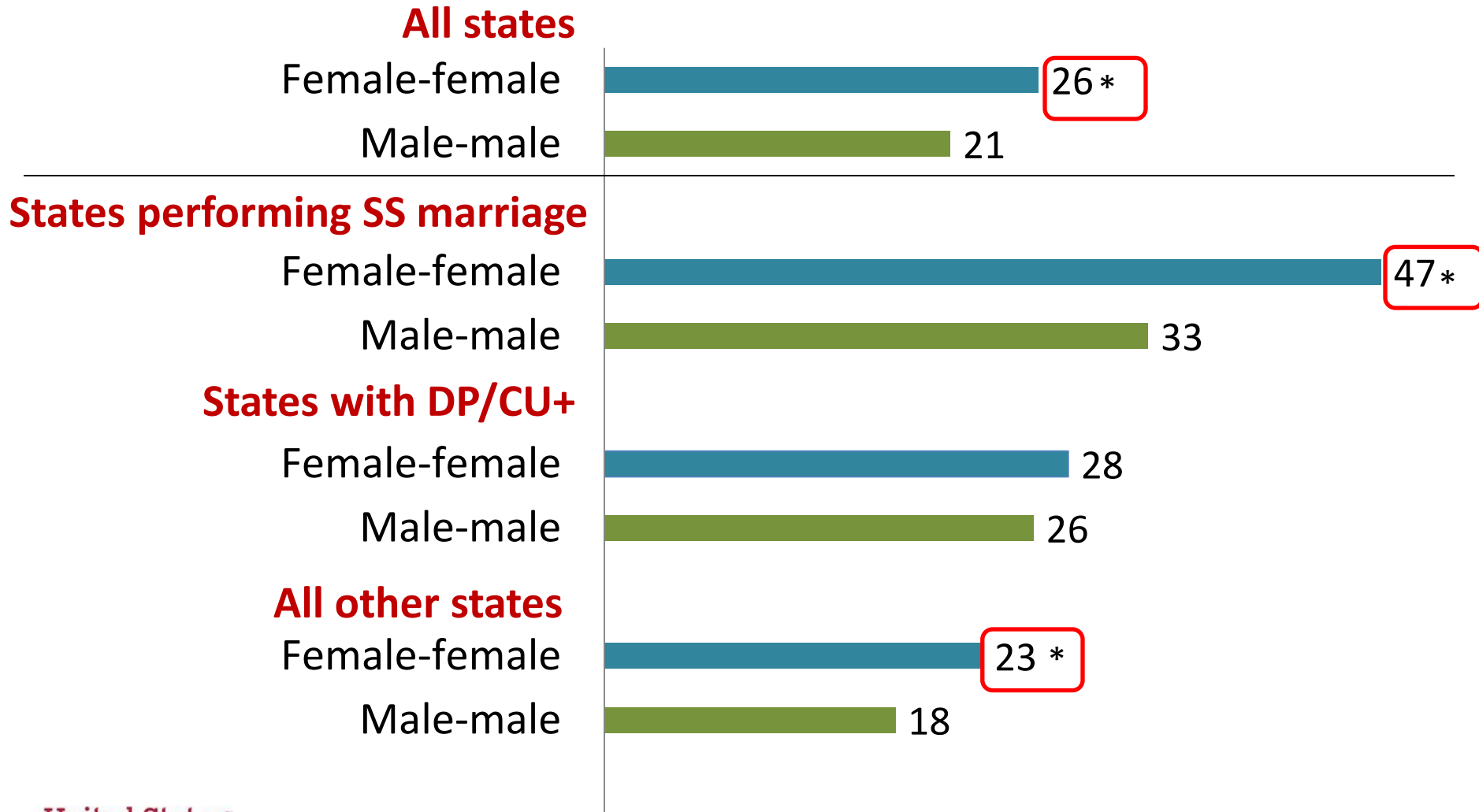
Percent reporting “now married” by state recognition for all same-sex couples



Findings

- Percent reporting “now married” by state recognition for all same-sex couples
 - 24% of all same-sex couples regardless of state recognition
 - 41% of couples residing in states performing same-sex marriages
 - 27 % of couples in states performing domestic partnership/civil unions
 - 20 % of couples in all other states

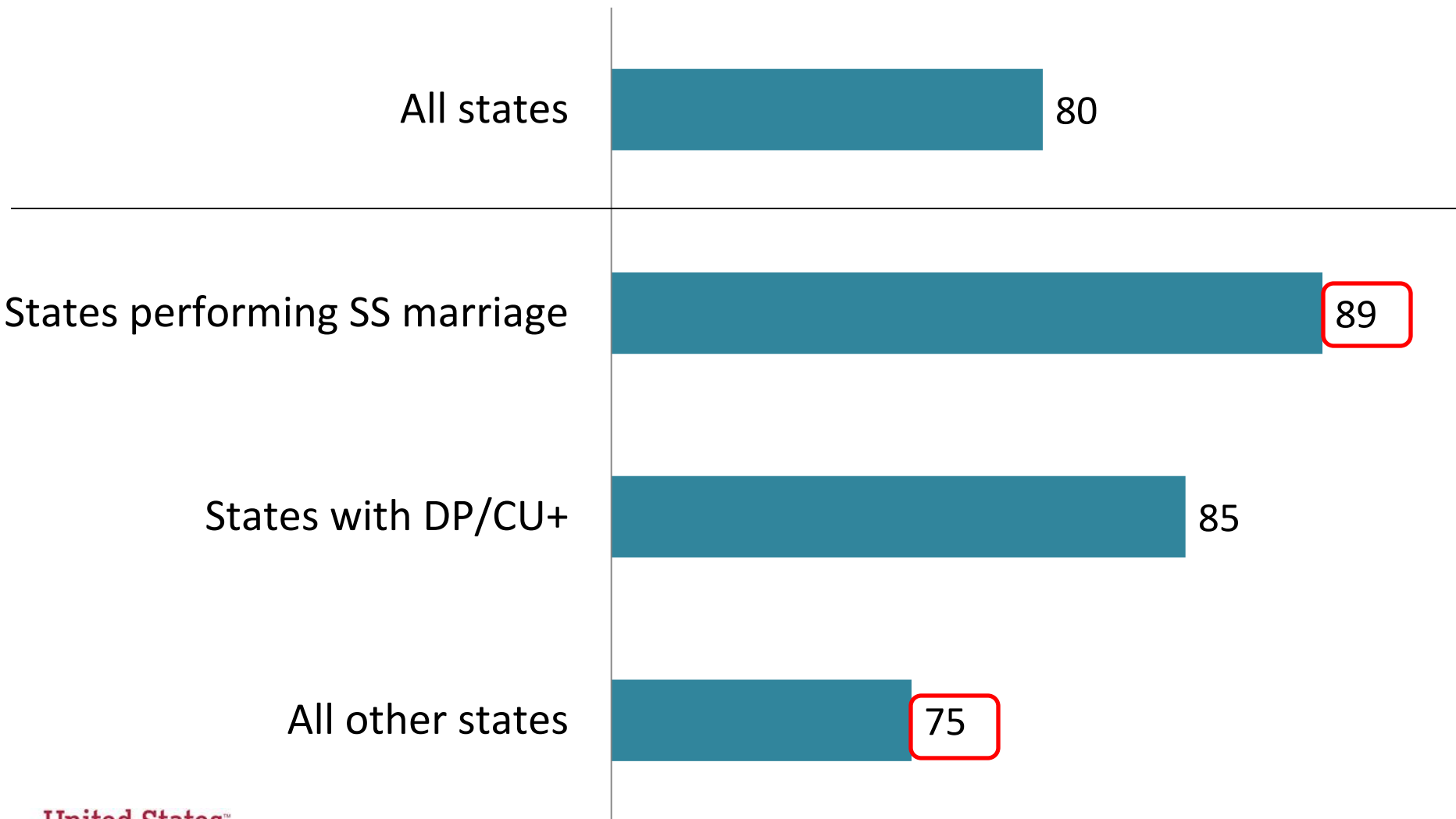
Percent reporting “now married” by state recognition by gender



Findings

- Percent reporting “now married” by state recognition by gender
 - As you can see that for most state types, female-female households are statistically different from their male-male counterparts

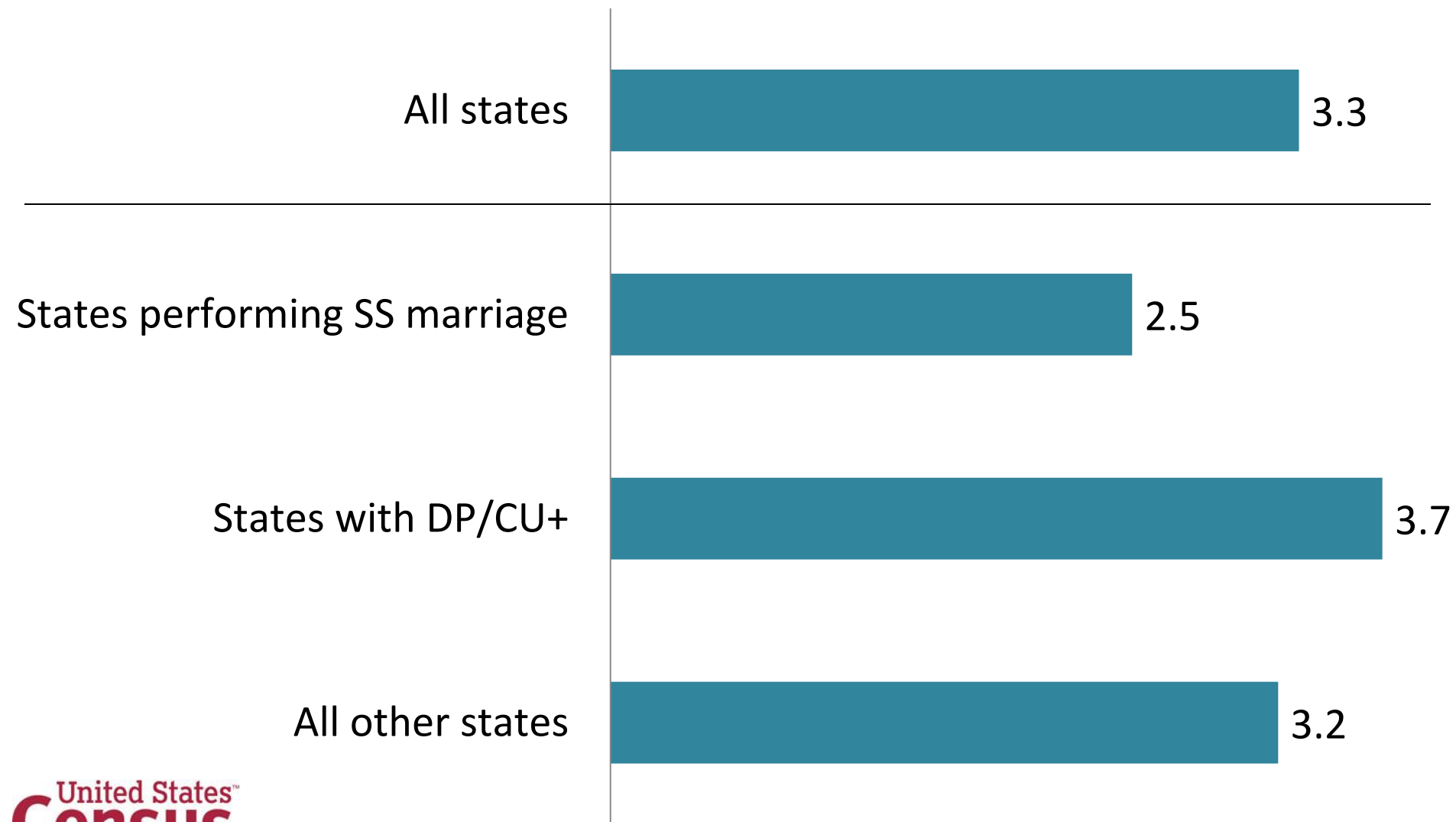
Reporting “now married” by state recognition for spouses



Findings

- Reporting “now married” by state recognition for spouses
 - Eighty-nine percent of spousal couples residing in states performing same-sex marriage report now married.
 - While only 75% of those in all other states report now married.

Reporting “now married” by state recognition for unmarried partners

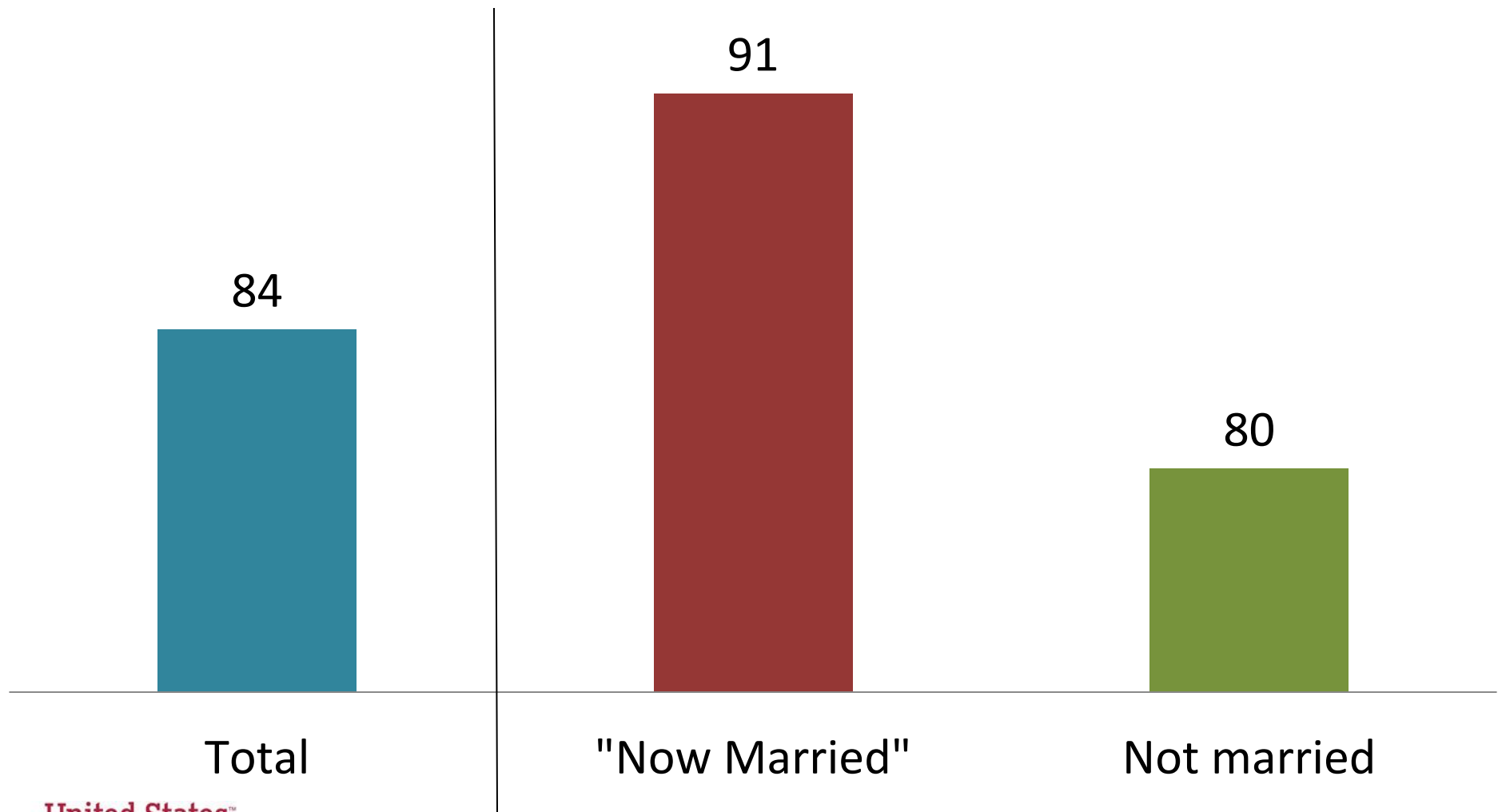


Findings

- Reporting “now married” by state recognition for unmarried partners
 - 3.3% of all same-sex couples report being married
 - 2.5% percent of couples residing in states performing same-sex marriages report married
 - 3.7% reported married in states performing domestic partnership/civil unions
 - 3.2% of those in all other states report married.

*Is the presence of children
associated with reporting
“now married”?*

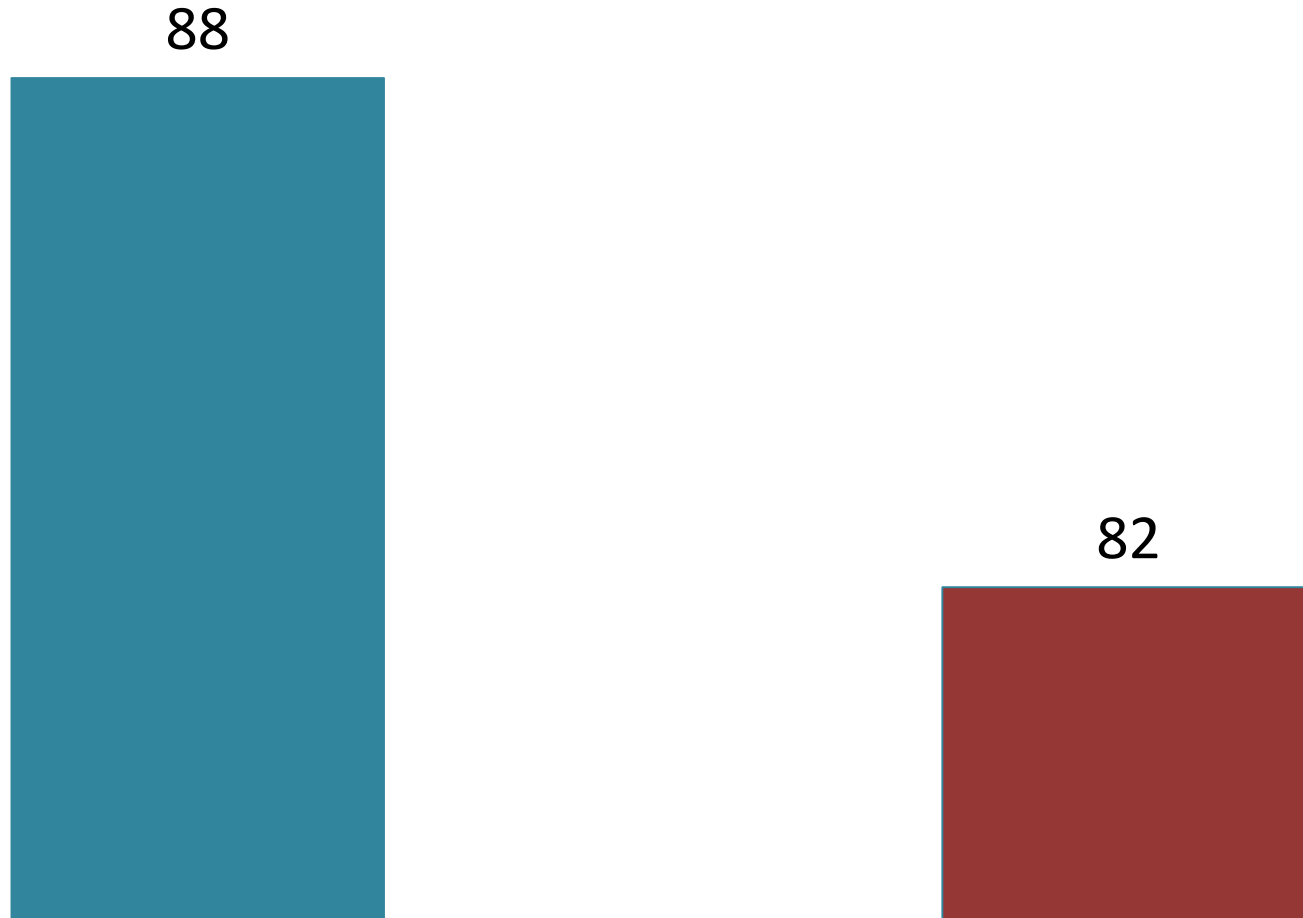
Percent of all same-sex households with children that only have own children



Findings

- Percent of all same-sex households with children that only have own children
 - 84% of all same-sex couples with children report having own children only in their households.
 - Broken out by marital status
 - 91% of those reporting “now married” had an own child only in their household
 - 80% of those reporting something other than married had an own child only in their household.

Percent reporting “now married” with only own children by relationship



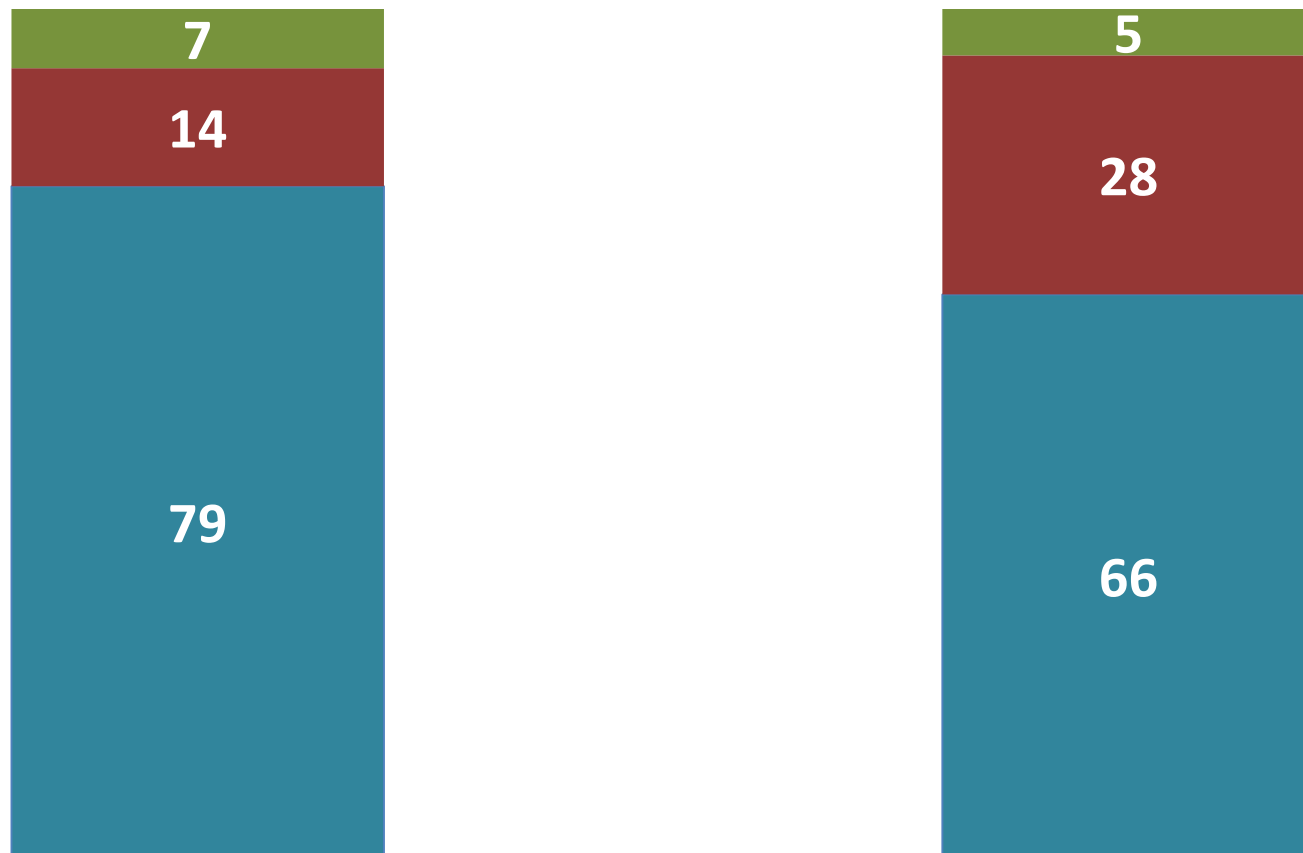
Spouse

Unmarried partner

Findings

- Percent reporting “now married” with only own children by relationship
 - 88% of spouses report own children only in their households
 - 82% of unmarried partner households report only own children in their households.

Percent reporting “now married” by own child type by relationship



Spouse

Unmarried partner

■ Bio only

■ Step/Adopted only

■ Combo

Findings

- Percent reporting “now married” by own child type by relationship
 - For same-sex couples with children, overall, those who report as spouses have a higher percent with biological children only than all same-sex partner households and those reported as unmarried partners.
 - Those reported as unmarried partners have a higher percent of step only or adopted only than reported as spouse households.

*Does reporting of “now
married” vary by state
recognition?*

Odd of reporting “now married” for Spouses

STATES RECOGNITION

States performing ss marriage
(omitted: all other states)

CHILD

Own child in home
(omitted: no own child in home)

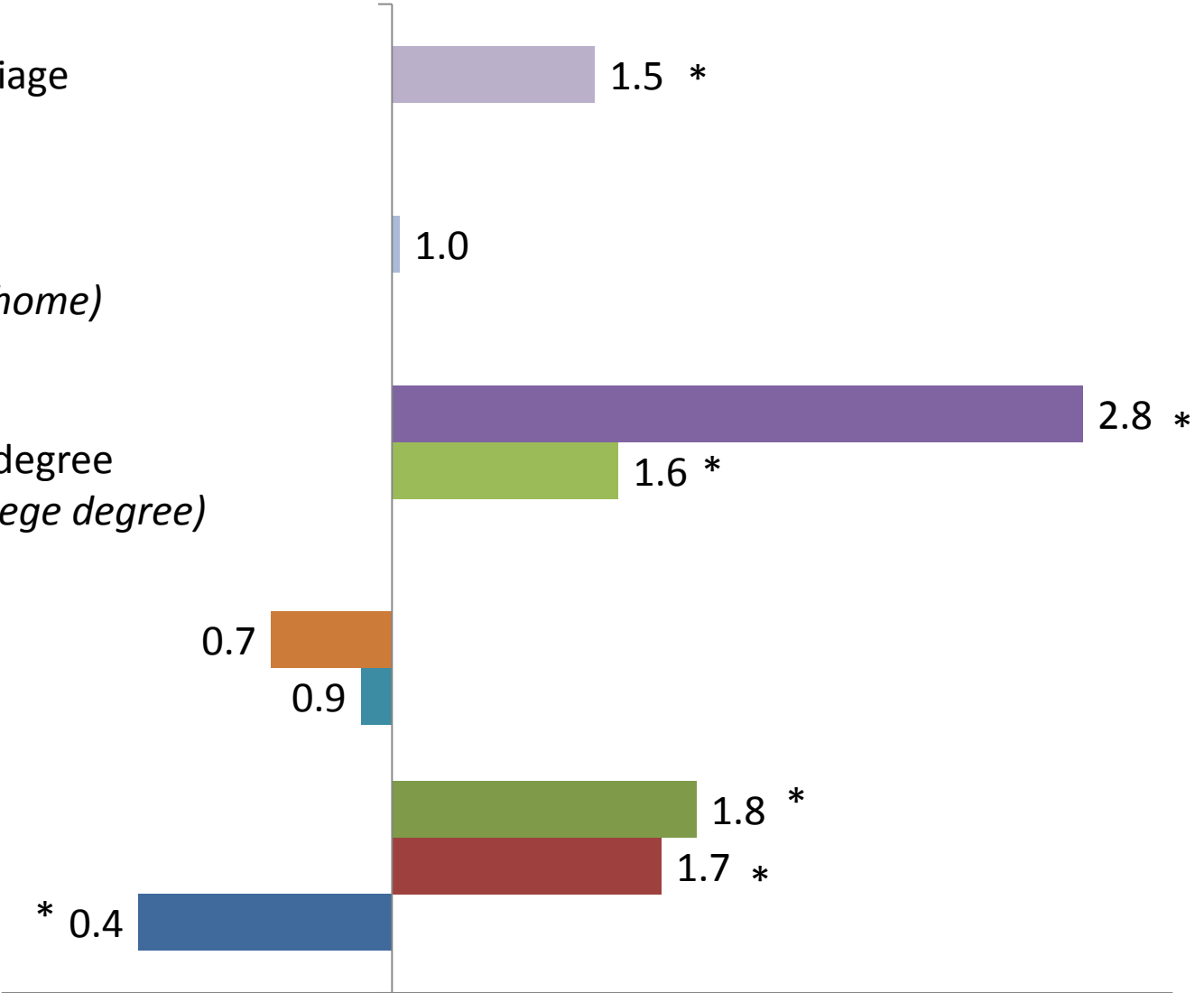
EDUCATION

Both with college degree
(omitted: neither with college degree)

AGE

65+
55-64
(omitted: 45-54)

35-44
25-34
15-24



* Indicates statistically significant at least p<.05



Findings

- This shows the odds ratios predicting “now married” for those who reported as husband or wife on the relationship item.
 - Those aged 15 to 24 years had lower odds of saying that they are married.
 - Couples with at least one partner with a college degree or if both partners had a college degree had higher odds of reporting married when they reported as spouses.
 - Those couples who had an own child related to the householder in their household do not have significantly higher or lower odds of reporting married than those who do not have an own child in their house.
 - Same-sex couples reported as spouse who lived in a state performing same-sex marriages had higher odds of reporting married.

Odds of reporting “now married” for unmarried partners

STATES RECOGNITION

States performing ss marriage
(omitted: all other states)

CHILD

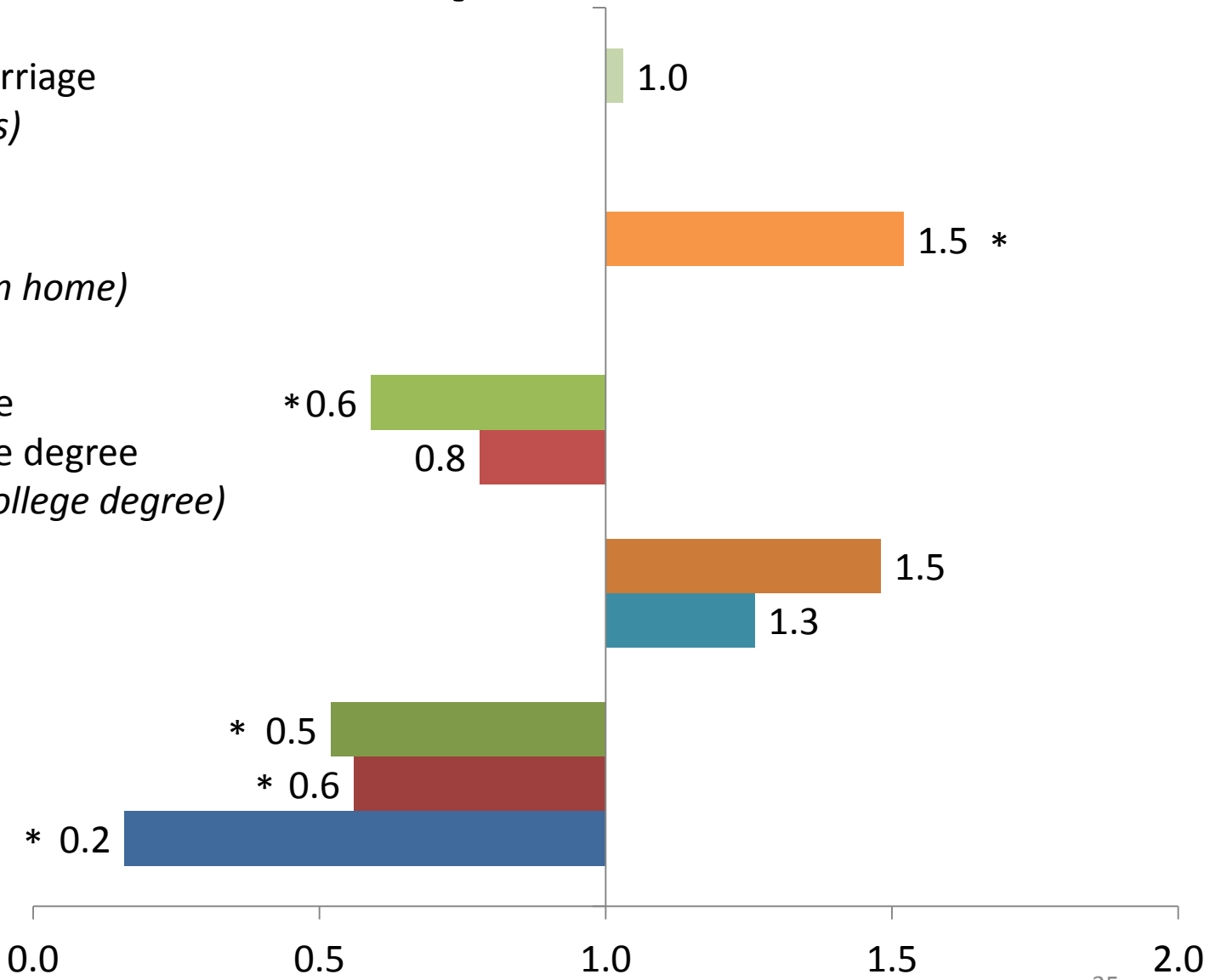
Own child in home
(omitted: no own child in home)

EDUCATION

Both with college degree
 One partner with college degree
(omitted: neither with college degree)

AGE

65+
 55-64
(omitted: 45-54)
 35-44
 25-34
 15-24



Findings

- This shows the odds ratios predicting “now married” for those who reported as unmarried partner on the relationship item.
 - Those unmarried partners younger than 45 years had lower odds of reporting married.
 - If both partners have a college degree then they have lower odds of reporting married than if neither partner has a college degree.
 - Having a child in the household was statistically related to higher odds of reporting married for those reported as unmarried partner.
 - For unmarried partners, living in a state performing same-sex marriages was not statistically significant.

Overall Summary

- *Who reports “now married”?*
 - Reported relationship as husband or wife
 - Reside in states performing SS marriage and
 - Female-female households
- It is interesting to note that those who reported as spouse, also, reported themselves as married.

Overall Summary

- *Is the presence of children associated with reports of “now married”?*
 - Higher percent of own children only living in “now married” households compared to not married.
- Same-sex couples with own children may be more likely to report married because those couples may be in longer term committed relationships or it could be that having children makes them feel more connected.

Overall Summary

- *Does reporting vary by state recognition?*
 - Unmarried partners more likely to report something other than married.
 - Spouses had higher odds of reporting “now married” if living in a state that performs same-sex marriage.
- Unmarried partners who live in a state that performs same-sex marriage and choose to not get married are not choosing “now married”

Contact Information

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