

HOW COLOR-BLIND IS LOVE? INTERRACIAL DATING FACTS AND PUZZLES

A fact sheet for the Council on Contemporary Families

by Colleen Poulin and Virginia Rutter

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How colorblind is love? In interracial and intercultural romances, color counts for less than ever. But when it comes to marital commitments, and even public displays of affection, barriers still remain.

The following fact sheet was prepared for the 2011 Council on Contemporary Families conference, "[Tipping Point? When Minority Families Become the Majority](#)" (April 8-9 at the University of Illinois Chicago), by researchers at

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consider what's working and what remains challenging in interracial relationships.

Interracial dating has increased dramatically

- About half of Americans have dated someone from a different racial group. One study found that 36 percent of white Americans, 57 percent of African Americans, 56 percent of Latino Americans, and 57 percent of Asian Americans have interracially dated.

- Attitudes in every generation have become more accepting of interracial dating: millennials are the most accepting, with almost 90 percent approving.

- Experience makes all the difference: 92 percent of those who have dated interracially before will do so again; and attendance at a more diverse college or living in a multi-racial setting makes interracial dating more likely.
- Many people in today's dating pool are themselves children of parents of different races. According to estimates from the Census Bureau, the mixed-race population has grown by more than a third, from 2.4 percent of the population in 2000 to 3.5 percent today. Among children, the mixed-race population has grown by 50 percent in the same period of time.
- Diversity is complex. In one set of interviews at Framingham State University, we found 10 different types of interracial pairings in just 13 couples.

But the increase in types of interracial romance is uneven

- Latinos and Asians report being most willing to date members of another group. Forty-five percent of 18 to 19 year-old Latinos and 33 percent of 24 to 25 year-old Latinos engage in interracial relationships.
- Some studies show that youth from higher income families are slightly less likely to date interracially, but the opposite is true for Latinos: better-off Latinos are more likely to interracially date than less affluent Latinos.
- Though pairings of blacks and whites are increasing, such interracial matches are among the least frequent.

And interracial couples still feel hesitant about engaging in public displays of affection

- Compared to same-race couples, interracial couples are less likely to hold hands, tell others they are a couple, go out with friends, or meet their partner's parents.
- Interracial daters report receiving less social support, such as positive affirmation or help from friends, family, or just people they interact with in public.
- Due to perceived lack of support, interracial couples are less likely to exchange gifts and to report thinking of themselves as a couple.
- Yet interracial couples and same-race couples are no different when it comes to private displays of affection, like kissing and having sex.

Interracial dating is less likely to lead to marriage (or long term commitment) than same-race dating

- While a lot of dating relationships never end up in marriage, daters from different races are less likely to end up tying the knot than same-race daters. The odds of going from dating to

living together or getting married are 1 in 4 for same-race daters and about 1 in 5 for interracial daters.

- Fewer couples of any type these days get married before living together, but interracial couples are half as likely as same-race couples to get married before they live together.
- Interracial couples who cohabit are only 60 percent as likely as same-race cohabiters to get married to each other.

Still, interracial marriages have increased

- The number of interracial marriages has increased more than 20-fold in the past 40 years. Today more than 14 percent of marriages are interracial.
- According to the Pew Research Center, more than 60 percent of Americans approve of interracial marriage in their own families. In addition, about one-third of Americans report that they have a family member who is married to someone of a different race.
- There are gender differences in interracial marriage. For example, black men are more likely to marry interracially than black women, and Asian women are more likely than Asian men to marry interracially.
- Because millennials are more likely to date interracially and to approve of interracial marriage, we can expect higher rates in the future.
- One interesting exception to increasing rates of intermarriage overall in the past two decades has been among Latinos, as higher rates of immigration have actually decreased intermarriage.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS:

For further information on interracial dating trends, contact sociologist Virginia Rutter, Associate Professor, Framingham State University, vrutter@framingham.edu or 206-375-4139.

For information on the challenges and opportunities of interracial dating, contact Linda Young, a counseling psychologist in private practice, at drlindayoung@gmail.com or [\(425\) 698-9008](tel:4256989008).

For information on demographic changes in American families, contact demographer Daniel Lichter, Professor of Policy Analysis and Management and Sociology, Cornell University, dtl28@cornell.edu

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For information on interracial dating and same-sex couples, contact Mignon R. Moore, Associate Professor of Sociology, UCLA. Email: moore@soc.ucla.edu ; Phone: [310-206-9678](tel:310-206-9678) .

For information on the history of interracial unions in the United States, contact Michael Rosenfeld, Associate Professor of Sociology, Stanford University, at michael.rosenfeld@stanford.edu

For more information on interracial dating, including online and other ways that couples "make connections" contact Pamela Anne Quiroz, Professor of Public Policy and Sociology at University of Illinois at Chicago at pamelaquiroz@comcast.net or [708-769-2890](tel:708-769-2890).

The Council on Contemporary Families is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of family researchers, mental health and social practitioners, and clinicians dedicated to providing the press and public with the latest research and best practice findings about American families. Founded in 1996 and based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Council's mission is to enhance the national understanding of how and why contemporary families are changing, what needs and challenges they face, and how these needs can best be met.

CCF's April 8-9, 2011, Conference in Chicago:

The topic of our 14th Annual Conference, April 8-9, 2011, is "**Tipping Point? When Minority Families Become the Majority.**"

The conference is held at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Panels in our customary brief formal presentation/long dialogue format convene experts on minority families. The program includes a keynote by Dan Lichter of Cornell University: "The Reshaping of Racial Boundaries in Personal Relationships."

Other topics at the conference examine race, ethnicity, and social class related to: **multiracial identities, sexual diversity, child-rearing and transitions to adulthood, paid and unpaid care at home, and family counseling beyond the white middle-class model. A detailed program is at**

<http://www.contemporaryfamilies.org/conference/2011-conference-program.html>

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