

RESEARCH THAT MATTERS

PARENTING AMONG MARRIED SAME-SEX COUPLES

Experiences, Aspirations,
and Barriers

December 2024

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
BACKGROUND.....	4
RESULTS	5
DEMOGRAPHICS	5
CHILDREN AND PARENTING.....	6
FAMILY BUILDING.....	7
CONCLUSION	14
REFERENCES	15
AUTHORS	16

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on current parenting, desire to parent, and perceived barriers to parenthood among married same-sex couples who are under the age of 50. The analysis is based on a subsample of 263 participants of a larger sample of 448 married same-sex couples, ranging in age from early 20s to 80s. The current subsample represents 58.7% of the larger sample.¹

In limiting the sample to participants under age 50, we aimed to capture participants who were actively parenting children under 18 and those who were in the stage of life where they could or might consider future parenthood.

KEY FINDINGS

Current Parents Among Married Same-Sex Couples Under Age 50

- About one-quarter (27%) of married same-sex couples under the age of 50 had one or more children. Of those with children, 81% were currently raising at least one child under 18. A total of 22% only had adult children (18 years or older).
- Regarding the route to parenthood, two-thirds of parents were biological parents of at least one child. These parents included 39% who were biological parents via insemination to at least one child and 21% who were parents to at least one child conceived via intercourse.
- Almost two-thirds of parents were parents to children they were not biologically related to, including 26% who were stepparents to at least one child, 15% who were non-biological parents of at least one child conceived via insemination, and 14% who were adoptive parents.

Desire to Parent Among Married Same-Sex Couples Under 50

- Forty-one percent of participants indicated that they wanted children, or more children, in the future.
- Among those who did not already have children, 44% said that they very much (18%) or somewhat (26%) wanted children. Among those who already had children, 35% said they either very much (11%) or somewhat (24%) wanted more children.
- Similar percentages of cisgender men (39%), cisgender women (41%), and transgender participants (43%) said that they wanted children in the future.
- There was some discrepancy between what participants felt was the most ideal versus most likely parenting route for future children. A greater percentage of participants viewed biological parenthood (e.g., via insemination and surrogacy) as their ideal method (61%) as compared to non-biological parenthood routes (36%). However, when considering likely parenting routes, more participants believed they would pursue non-biological routes, such as adoption, over biological parenthood (51% vs. 41%).
- Cisgender men were twice as likely to say that adoptive parenthood was their likely path to parenthood as they were to say that it was their ideal path (64% vs. 36%).

¹ The report based on the full sample of married same-sex couples can be found at <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/marriage-equality-in-2024>.

- Further, cisgender men were much more likely to say that adoption was their most likely path to parenting (64%) compared with cisgender women (22%) and trans people (29%).

Barriers to Parenting

- For those who wanted to have children in the future, the number one barrier identified was cost (79%). Cost was the only barrier noted by over one-third of participants interested in having children in the future.
- The next most frequently noted barriers were not having one of the needed parts, such as sperm, egg, or uterus (32%), concerns about discrimination (30%), health insurance coverage (25%), and health challenges (19%).

Legal Parenthood

- Forty percent of the participants said they were not legal parents to all of their children, and 44% said their partners were not.
- Most of these participants explained that they were stepparents without any legal recognition. Some participants with adult children explained that they did not have access to now-available legal protections (e.g., marriage, second-parent adoption) when their children were minors. Others indicated that they had not pursued second-parent adoptions for the non-biological parent or their children had more than two parents.

The Impact of Marriage on Family Planning

- Among married same-sex couples under age 50, more than one in four (28%) said that getting married increased their interest in parenthood. In contrast, almost two-thirds (63%) said it had not.
- Among those who said that marriage had increased their interest in parenting, some explained that they had not seriously considered parenthood until they got married. For some, marriage was a “prerequisite” to becoming parents. The protections that marriage offered, in particular, made parenthood seem possible for some respondents. Participants also perceived marriage’s stability and security, in the form of various benefits and social recognition, to be important to children.
- Many of those who said that marriage did not impact their desire to be parents often explained that they either never wanted children or, less frequently, brought children into the marriage.

BACKGROUND

An increasing number of same-sex couples are interested in becoming, or are already, parents. Historically, one of the greatest legal and social barriers to parenthood among same-sex couples has been a lack of marriage equality or the inability to access the legal, social, material, and symbolic resources associated with marriage. Additional documented barriers include reproductive barriers (i.e., the absence of sperm/eggs to make a baby), financial challenges (e.g., the costs associated with sperm donation, IVF, surrogacy, private adoption, and the like), and internalized stigmas (e.g., heteronormative beliefs such as the idea that children need a mother and a father to develop “normally”) (Goldberg, 2022).

Even with marriage equality now available to same-sex couples, barriers remain—although these barriers may vary by gender (e.g., cisgender women, cisgender men, trans people) and other factors (Goldberg, 2023). Cisgender men, for example, face greater financial hurdles to biological parenthood, should that be their favored route. Surrogacy is far more expensive, on average, than donor insemination, which female same-sex couples often rely on as a means of having a biological child. Transgender people also face specific barriers to achieving parenthood through biological means, including the reality of gender dysphoria that may accompany pregnancy and birth, as well as a history of medical interventions that may impact fertility (Goldberg, 2022). Additionally, some individuals favor adoption but worry about discrimination—particularly if they occupy certain highly stigmatized identities (e.g., nonbinary individuals) and/or they reside in states or communities that are unsupportive of LGBTQ people, where social services and adoption agencies are perceived to be less amenable to them. In turn, LGBTQ individuals who are interested in parenthood may not always be able to pursue their desired or favored route.

This report uses data from a subsample of participants (N = 263), all married to a same-sex partner, who were surveyed as part of a larger study of marriage equality and its impacts on same-sex couples. This subsample was chosen because the participants were under 50 years old, and theoretically, the group most likely to be parenting minor children or considering or having the option of considering future parenthood. It sought to address participants' level of interest in future parenthood, ideal vs. most likely parenthood routes, perceived challenges to parenthood, and the perceived role of marriage equality on parenthood interests or aspirations.

RESULTS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants in the subsample (N = 263) ranged from age 22 to 49, with a mean age of 36.8 (Mdn = 37, SD = 6.6). Among them,² 32% (n = 85) were cisgender men, 39% (n = 102) were cisgender women, 25% (n = 66) were transgender people,³ and 4% (n = 10) described their gender identity as “something else.”⁴

In terms of sexual orientation, 30% of participants identified as gay, 29% as lesbian, and 23% as queer, with smaller numbers identifying as bisexual (8%), pansexual (6%), and “something else” (5%). Most of those who endorsed “something else” shared that they were asexual and lesbian, queer, or bisexual (3%; n = 9⁵).

With regard to religion, 37% identified as nothing in particular, with 18% identifying as atheist and 16% as agnostic. The largest religious groups represented among the remaining 29% of the sample were Protestant (7%), Roman Catholic (6%), and Jewish (3%).

Participants could indicate as many racial categories as they wanted. About half were White only, and about half were people of color. Seventy percent indicated White, 18% indicated Black/African American, 15% Hispanic, 14% Latino/a/x, 10% Asian, 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 1% Middle Eastern, and 3% “something else.”

Regarding income, 18% reported a family or household income of under \$50,000 per year, 32% reported a family income of \$50,000-\$100,000, 29% reported \$101,000-\$150,000, 13% reported \$151,000-\$200,000, 7% reported \$201,000-\$250,000, and 7% reported over \$250,000.

Seventy percent of participants were employed full-time, and 10% were employed part-time. Just 3% were retired or disabled. Regarding the highest level of education achieved, 6% had a high school diploma or GED, 27% had an associate’s degree or some college, 41% had a college degree, 19% had a master’s degree, and 8% had a PhD/MD/JD.

Three-quarters (75%) of participants’ political affiliation was Democrat, 15% were Independent, and 2% identified as Republicans. Eight percent indicated they identified in other ways (e.g., Democratic Socialist, Green Party, Moderate, Leftist).

Regarding marriage, 80% married after 2015; just 20% married before 2015. Participants had been in their relationship with their married partners for an average of 11.1 years (Mdn = 10, SD = 5.6%), and they had been together for an average of 5.87 years before they got married (Mdn = 5, SD = 4.5).

² Percentages in the text may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

³ These 66 transgender people included 37 nonbinary people, 17 transgender men, and 12 transgender women.

⁴ The 10 people who described their gender identity as “something else” included the following: nonbinary trans man (2), nonbinary woman (1), genderqueer (1), gender expansive (1), trans (1), agender (1), demiguy/nonbinary (1), nonbinary and trans (1), and exploring nonbinary (1).

⁵ In addition to these 9, two participants shared that they were demisexual and queer; one identified as both lesbian and queer; and one identified as abrosexual (i.e., as having a sexual orientation that is fluid and/or fluctuates over time).

Participants lived in 45 different states, including most often, California (11%), Texas (9%), New York (8%), Michigan (5%), Florida (5%), North Carolina (4%), Pennsylvania (4%), Massachusetts (4%), Tennessee (4%), and Illinois (4%).

CHILDREN AND PARENTING

Parenting and Paths to Parenthood

Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents under age 50 had no children; about one-quarter (27%) had one or more children. Of those with children, about one-third (35%) had one child, 40% had two, 17% had three, and 8% had four or more children. Of those with children, 81% were currently raising children under 18; of these, 10 also had children over 18. Twenty-two percent of the participants only had adult children.

In terms of biological parenthood routes, two-thirds (67%) were biological parents to at least one child (i.e., via insemination, surrogacy, reciprocal in vitro fertilization, or intercourse). Almost two-thirds (63%) were non-biological parents to at least one child (i.e., via insemination, adoption, foster care, stepparenting, insemination, or surrogacy).

More specifically, in terms of the most frequent biological parenthood routes, 39% were biological parents via insemination to at least one child, and 21% were parents to at least one child conceived via intercourse. Considering non-biological parenthood routes, 26% were stepparents to at least one child, 15% were non-biological parents of at least one child conceived via insemination, and 14% were adoptive parents. Smaller numbers indicated that they were a genetic but not gestational parent (i.e., they provided the eggs but did not carry the child;⁶ 7%), a gestational but not genetic parent (i.e., they carried the child but did not use their own eggs; 6%), a foster parent (4%), a non-biological parent via surrogacy (3%), and a biological parent via surrogacy (1%).

Legal Parenthood

Participants were asked if they and their partners were both legal parents to their children. Forty percent said they were not legal parents to all of their children, and 44% said their partners were not legal parents to all of them. Most of these participants explained that they were stepparents without any legal recognition. For example, as one parent explained, "I am a stepparent to two children from a previous relationship ... it was before marriage was legal, so we were not legally married."

Some participants, however, provided other explanations for the lack of legal protections or recognition. Some participants with adult children explained that they did not have access to now-available legal protections (e.g., marriage, second-parent adoption) during their childhoods. Said one, "I co-parented a child with a former partner, who is the bio parent. I did, do, and always will consider that child my child."

⁶ Participants who were genetic but not gestational parents, and participants who were gestational but not genetic parents, pursued reciprocal in vitro fertilization (RIVF), which enables both parents to have a biological connection to the child.

Other participants indicated that they had simply not pursued second-parent adoptions for the non-biological parent, leaving one parent with tenuous legal standing. Several of these participants indicated that the non-biological parent was on the child's (or children's) birth certificate but were aware that this did not necessarily establish parentage. As one participant explained, "I am on the birth certificate, but it's vague whether or not that counts where I live." A few explicitly recognized the need to ensure greater security for the non-legal parent by seeking a second-parent adoption. As one participant shared about her partner, "She is on the birth certificate, but we haven't completed second-parent adoption paperwork." Another participant explained, "Though my spouse is on our twins' birth certificates (in the 'father/parent' section), we've been advised they should also adopt, so we plan to do that soon."

Some described more complex parenting arrangements, such as three or more co-parents, which meant that at least one parent was unrecognized and legally vulnerable. One participant said, "Our first child is our legal child, born to me. Second (and oldest) is adopted from foster system by our kid's donor and his partner. Third is biologically mine, carried as surrogate for the kids' dads. We blended the families and co-parented for eight years and are now in separate houses." As another participant described their family, "My child's biological father is my gay best friend. We decided in high school to co-parent a child, and 20 years later, our daughter was born via insemination. I met my (now) wife when I was seven months pregnant, and we opted not to include legalities regarding my wife's parenthood. She is a wonderful, active stepmother [but] is not a legal guardian/parent."

FAMILY BUILDING

Future Parenthood: Ideal vs. Likely

Forty-one percent of the participants indicated that they "very much" or "somewhat" wanted (more) children in the future.

The desire for children was somewhat greater among those who did not already have children. Among those who did not already have children, 44% said that they either very much (18%) or somewhat (26%) wanted children in the future. The remainder of those without children (56%) said they did not want children. Among those who already had at least one child, 35% said that either very much (11%) or somewhat (24%) wanted more children, and 65% said they did not.

Most of those who said that they very much or somewhat wanted children wanted either one (40%) or two (46%) children. Similar percentages of cisgender men (39%), cisgender women (41%), and transgender people (43%) said they wanted children.

There was some discrepancy between what participants felt was the most ideal versus most likely parenting route for future children (Table 1). A much greater percentage of participants viewed biological parenthood routes (via insemination, surrogacy, intercourse, reciprocal in vitro fertilization [RIVF], IVF; 61%) as ideal, compared to non-biological parenthood routes (adoptive, foster, stepparent; 36%). However, this tendency was not present when considering likely parenthood route. Namely, more participants believed they would likely pursue adoption or foster care (51%) over biological parenthood (41%).

Figure 1. Ideal versus likely parenthood routes (N = 108)

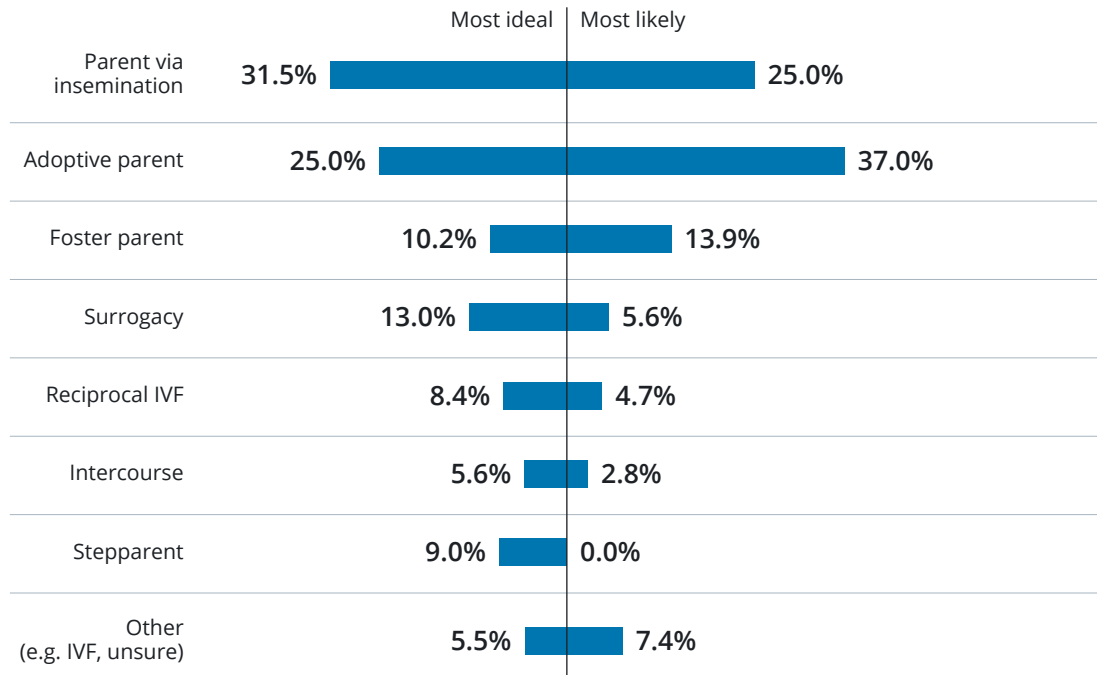


Table 1. Ideal versus likely parenthood routes (N = 108)

ROUTE TO PARENTHOOD	MOST IDEAL		MOST LIKELY	
	%	N	%	N
Parent via insemination	31.5%	34	25.0%	27
Adoptive parent	25.0%	27	37.0%	40
Foster parent	10.2%	11	13.9%	15
Surrogacy	13.0%	14	5.6%	6
Reciprocal IVF (one partner gives eggs, one carries)	8.4%	10	4.7%	5
Intercourse	5.6%	6	2.8%	3
Stepparent	9.0%	1	0.0%	0
Other (e.g., IVF, unsure)	5.5%	6	7.4%	8
Don't Know	2.7%	3	4.7%	5
IVF	1.8%	2	2.7%	3

Because of the greater barriers that gay, bisexual, and queer cisgender men face in achieving biological parenthood compared to lesbian, bisexual, and queer cisgender women, it was important to break out ideal versus likely parenthood routes by gender. Also of interest was considering how trans participants viewed ideal versus likely parenthood at an exploratory level, given the barriers that such individuals may perceive in both biological and adoption/foster care domains. Cisgender men were twice as likely to say that adoptive parenthood was their likely path to parenthood as they were to say that it was their ideal path (64% vs. 36%). Further, cisgender men were much more likely to say that adoption was their most likely path to parenting (64%) compared with cisgender women (22%) and trans people (29%). In contrast, 24% of cisgender women identified fostering as their most likely path to parenthood, compared with 6% of cisgender men and 9% of trans people.

Figure 2. Ideal versus likely parenthood routes by gender (N = 108)

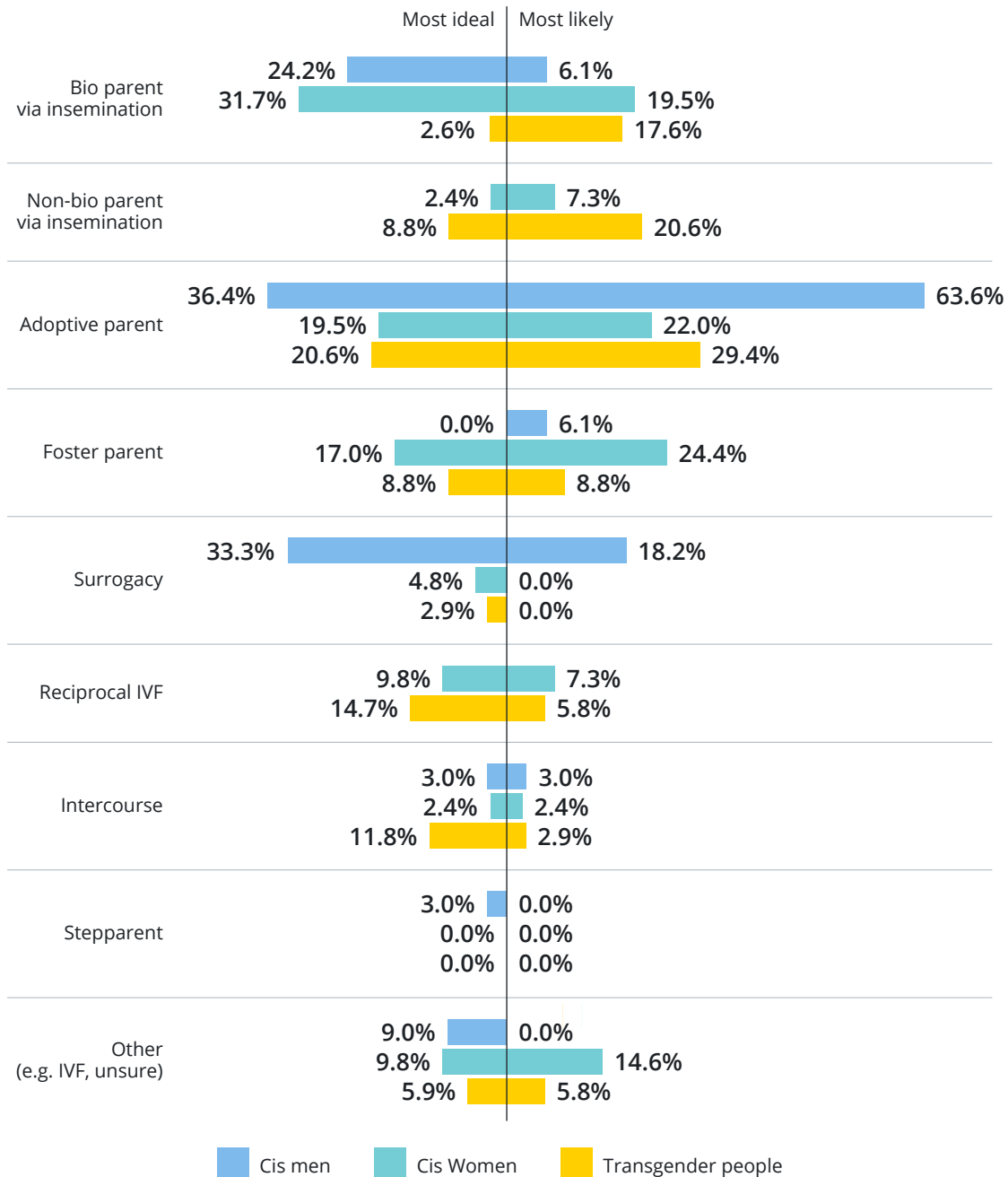


Table 2. Ideal versus likely parenthood routes by gender (N = 108)

ROUTE TO PARENTHOOD	CISGENDER MEN		CISGENDER WOMEN		TRANSGENDER PEOPLE	
	MOST IDEAL*	MOST LIKELY	MOST IDEAL	MOST LIKELY	MOST IDEAL	MOST LIKELY
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Bio-parent via insemination	24.2% (8)	6.1% (2)	31.7% (13)	19.5% (8)	2.6% (9)	17.6% (6)
Non-biological parent via insemination	-	-	2.4% (1)	7.3% (3)	8.8% (3)	20.6% (7)
Adoptive parent	36.4% (12)	63.6% (21)	19.5% (8)	22.0% (9)	20.6% (7)	29.4% (10)
Foster parent	0.0% (0)	6.1% (2)	17.0% (8)	24.4% (10)	8.8% (3)	8.8% (3)
Surrogacy	33.3% (11)	18.2% (6)	4.8% (2)	0% (0)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)
Reciprocal IVF	-	-	9.8% (4)	7.3% (3)	14.7% (5)	5.8% (2)
Intercourse	3.0% (1)	3.0% (1)	2.4% (1)	2.4% (1)	11.8% (4)	2.9% (1)
Stepparent	3.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Other (e.g., IVF, unsure)	9.0% (9)	0.0% (0)	9.8% (4)	14.6% (6)	5.9% (2)	5.8% (2)
Total	(33)	(33)	(41)	(41)	(34)	(34)

*Open-ended data indicate that cisgender men imagining donor insemination as an ideal route were conceptualizing themselves as the sperm donor.

Participants who were somewhat or very much interested in future children were also asked about various barriers/challenges that might prevent them from becoming parents (Table 3). The number one barrier identified was cost (79%). The next most frequently noted barriers were not having one of the needed parts, such as sperm, egg, or uterus (32%), concerns about discrimination (30%), health insurance coverage (25%), and health challenges (19%).

Figure 3. Barriers and challenges to parenthood (N = 108)

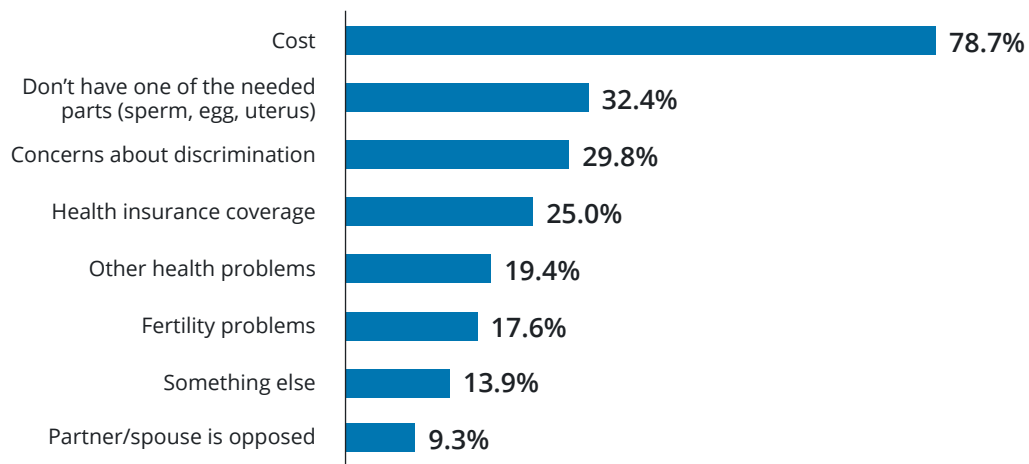


Table 3. Barriers and challenges to parenthood (N = 108)

BARRIER OR CHALLENGE	%	N
Don't have one of the needed parts (sperm, egg, uterus)	32.4%	35
Fertility problems	17.6%	19
Other health problems	19.4%	21
Health insurance coverage	25.0%	27
Cost	78.7%	85
Concerns about discrimination	29.8%	32
Partner/spouse is opposed	9.3%	10
Something else (some cited multiple barriers)	13.9%	15
Age (too old)	2.7%	3
Discriminatory laws re: adoption/foster care for same-sex couples	2.7%	3
Risks associated with pregnancy, previously traumatic pregnancy/birth	2.7%	3
Uncertainty and ambivalence about parenthood	2.7%	3
National/world concerns (e.g., climate change, sociopolitical climate)	2.7%	3
Cost of children, daycare	1.9%	2
Cost of IVF, becoming a parent	1.9%	2
Lack of space	0.9%	1
No spouse	0.9%	1

*Participants were asked to indicate all relevant barriers/challenges and, therefore, could endorse multiple items.

Participants sometimes invoked multiple barriers or challenges to becoming a parent. For example, one Black queer cisgender woman with a nonbinary partner cited financial, health, and ethical barriers, noting:

I love my partner and believe we would have fun embarking on the journey of parenting together. I am somewhat interested in carrying a child with their eggs. But I have financial and medical concerns about them going through the egg donation process (they are a uterine cancer survivor), and I have concerns about birthing as a Black woman given the maternal mortality issues ... Adoption is also complicated: the adoption system in this country is really, really flawed.

A White nonbinary participant married to a trans man emphasized health issues and discrimination concerns, sharing that although they were very interested in becoming a parent, they and their partner were “both disabled and have trauma histories, so we think it’s probably unwise to have kids. I had a hysterectomy, and my husband doesn’t want to birth a child, so even if we want to have kids, we’d have to get a surrogate or likely be turned down by adoption agencies due to being trans, queer, and disabled.”

For some participants, concerns around cost entailed not only the cost of becoming parents but also the anticipated cost of raising children. One participant, for example, noted that “the increasing cost of childcare, schools, and the overall commitment to raising another human being today seems less and less plausible for two gay men in their 40s.”

The Impact of Marriage on Family Planning

Among participants, when asked whether getting married increased their interest in parenthood, more than one in four (28%) said that getting married increased their interest in parenthood, 5% said they weren't sure, 5% said it's complicated, and 63% said that it had not affected their interest.

Marriage increased interest in/pursuit of parenthood

Among those who said that marriage had increased their interest in parenting, some explained that they had not seriously considered parenthood until they got married. That is, they became motivated to become a parent after getting married. Said one, "After I got married I felt the need to want and build a family of my own." Another participant shared, "It opened up the conversation about whether to have children or not. I don't think we took the subject as seriously before we were married."

For some, marriage was a "prerequisite" to becoming parents, whether for symbolic, material, or legal reasons. As one said, "If we [were] going to have children, we were always going to wait until after marriage to do so." Another said, "I have been waiting to be married to have a child, so marriage allowed this to even begin." Another shared, "We waited to initiate our family planning until after we were married." Still, another participant explained:

At the time that we were married, in order for a same-sex partner to be listed on the birth certificate of their non-biological child, the same-sex couple had to be married. When we were engaged and decided to start having children, we also decided to get married first so that my wife could be on our future children's birth certificates.

The protections that marriage offered made parenthood seem possible for some respondents. "We were both ready for children; marriage gave us more protections with parenthood," said one participant. "Marriage benefits like a lower tax rate and the ability for her to be on my health insurance without a tax penalty allowed us to have more income and afford children," said another.

Participants perceived marriage's stability and security, in the form of various benefits and social recognition, to be important to children. Said one, "We knew that to even consider having children, we both wanted to be married to provide a stable and consistent household for any young family member."

Unsure whether marriage increased interest in/pursuit of parenthood

A few participants elaborated on their response that they were unsure of the impact of marriage on their interest in parenthood to note that they had at some point been open to parenthood but ultimately decided against it, and they were uncertain whether marriage played a role in that decision. "I planned to have a biological child, but I changed my mind," said one. Several participants elaborated on their response of "it's complicated" to explain that their partners wanted to become parents, and, in turn, they were considering it and/or were "along for the ride." In this way, marriage had not increased their desire for or interest in pursuing parenthood. However, it had propelled their partners to consider it more carefully, and they, in turn, were now considering it as well. Said one: "My husband has expressed interest in future parenthood, and we have agreed to continue to address how we both feel about this as the years go by."

Marriage did not impact interest in/pursuit of parenthood

Many of those who said that marriage did not impact their desire to be parents explained that they never wanted children. “I believe I knew early as a young adult that I did not want children,” said one participant. In other cases, they were older and/or had brought children into the marriage; therefore, marriage did not make a difference. Said one, “The child I brought from my previous relationship is enough for us.” Another participant said, “Marriage didn’t change our lives in any way except legally. We are both over childbearing age, my wife already had grown-up children.”

In a few cases, participants had children both before and after marriage equality, and they noted that it simply did not enter into their calculus of considerations—but it did have a positive impact once it became law. One participant said, “We adopted children before we were married and after. The only thing that changed after we married was we each took our last names to match our children.”

Some participants indicated that marriage simply did not alter the concerns and considerations they held while contemplating the feasibility of parenthood and the viability of different parenthood pathways. They considered financial, medical, and ethical factors, evaluating whether it was safe to become parents (e.g., given their various health challenges) and whether different routes were possible for them. For example, due to personal issues such as gender identity and health, some felt that pregnancy and birth might not be reasonable or ideal pathways for them to pursue. In turn, they felt that marriage had not erased their concerns, even as it made parenthood seem more plausible. Said one participant, “Over time, we determined that financial hurdles and religious bias will prevent us from having or adopting children.” Likewise, some participants who worried about potential discrimination from social service agencies (e.g., adoption agencies) did not feel that marriage equality necessarily eliminated the possibility of discrimination.

A few participants noted that they had tried to become parents without success. They now assumed they would not become parents. Marriage was, therefore, irrelevant to their plans for parenthood. Said one, “We tried to conceive a few times with donor sperm but were unsuccessful. I have a 20-year-old, and we have nieces and nephews that we love.” Said another, “We wanted children, and we tried for them to no avail.” Yet another said, “We tried to have children naturally, but I had fertility issues that hindered our efforts.”

CONCLUSION

Marriage and parenthood are often seen as intertwined, at least in the heteronormative context. For same-sex couples, the reality that marriage has not always been available and the fact that they face unique considerations and challenges in building families means that the relationship between marriage and parenthood may be unique and complex.

Our findings revealed that one in four participants said marriage impacted their parenthood interest or pursuits. For many of them, marriage was seen as foundational to family building. They wanted the stability and security that marriage offered, along with its legal and symbolic protections, before embarking on parenthood. Among those who shared that marriage had not impacted their parenting plans, many explained that they were not interested in becoming a parent, and marriage had not changed that.

Gender differences emerged in what parenthood route was considered ideal and most likely. Gay cisgender men, for example, frequently desired biological parenthood but were far less likely to view it as their likely path to parenthood; instead, they viewed adoption as most likely. This likely reflects the reality that surrogacy, while often viewed as desirable by gay men, is often financially out of reach (Goldberg, 2022). Indeed, cost was seen as a key barrier to family building for participants as a whole. Not having at least one of the needed parts, discrimination, health issues, and health insurance issues also emerged as salient potential barriers to family building.

Counseling/efforts to guide same-sex couples in their decision-making regarding parenthood should acknowledge the reality of a potential gap between ideal and most likely parenthood routes. At the same time, they should ensure that all members of the LGBTQ community have comprehensive and accurate information about family-building options. In addressing same-sex couples' considerations and concerns regarding parenthood and specific family-building options, professionals should recognize that specific groups (e.g., trans people, low-income couples, couples in which one or both partners have disabilities) may have heightened concerns in particular areas.

Policymakers and advocates should work to ensure that LGBTQ people have access to a variety of family-building routes free from discrimination. They should also ensure that LGBTQ people are informed about the legal protections that marriage provides and the limits to such protections. For example, same-sex couples should be educated about the advantages of additional legal safeguards, such as second-parent adoptions, to protect both parents' legal standing with regard to their children.

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