

MARITAL STATUS

Chapter 4. Marital Status

Marriage is an important indicator of socio-cultural patterns in a society, particularly because the age pattern of marriage affects fertility. Usually, there is a relationship between age at first marriage and the number of children a woman will have, partly because earlier marriage gives more time for births, and partly because younger women tend to be more fertile than older women.

The data on marital status were derived from answers to question 6. The marital status classification refers to the status at the time of enumeration. Persons classified as "Now married" included those who had been married only once and had never been widowed or divorced as well as those currently married persons who remarried after having been widowed or divorced. Consensually married persons were those living in a marital union without a civil or religious matrimonial contract and were classified as now married; they were reported separately as "consensually married." Persons reported as separated were those living apart because of marital discord, with or without a legal separation. Persons whose only marriage had been annulled were classified as never married, and all persons under 15 years old were classified as never married. All persons classified as never married are shown as "single."

When marital status was not reported, it was allocated according to the relationship to the householder and sex and age of the person.

Between 1973 and 1980, the percent of the CNMI male population that was single decreased from 42 percent to 35 percent, a drop of 7 percentage points (Table 4.1). The decrease was essentially balanced by the increase in the "married" population, from 54 percent to 60 percent during the 7 years. The percentage of separated and divorced males increased slightly, but the widowed population remained about the same.

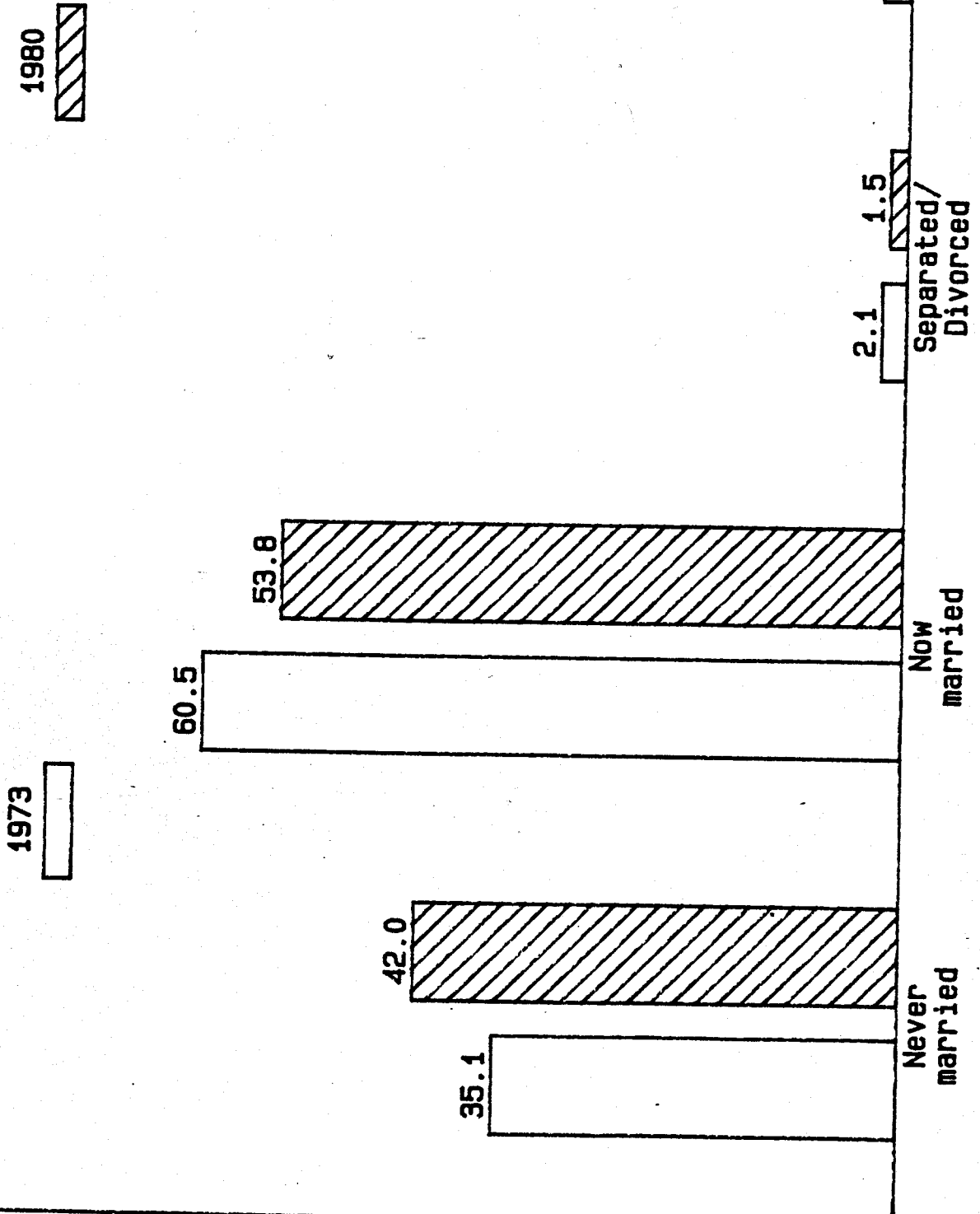
Table 4.1. Marital Status: 1973 and 1980

Marital Status	Number		Percent Change		Percent	
	1980	1973	1973 to 1980	1980	1973	
Males, 15 yrs & over..	5384	3217	40.2	100.0	100.0	
Never married.....	1888	1352	28.4	35.1	42.0	
Now married.....	3257	1731	46.9	60.5	53.8	
Separated/Divorced.....	111	49	55.9	2.1	1.5	
Widowed.....	128	85	33.6	2.4	2.6	

Source: PC80-1-B57A, Table 15 and TIPI Report, 1973

FIGURE 4.1

Marital Status for Males 15 Years and Over: 1973 and 1980 (Percent)



The experience for females was similar, although less pronounced. The percentage of never married persons decreased slightly, while the percentage of married females increased slightly. The percentage of separated and divorced females also increased a little bit, while the percentage of widowed persons remained about the same.

Table 4.2. Marital Status: 1973 and 1980

Marital Status	Number		Percent Change 1973 to	Percent	
	1980	1973	1980	1980	1973
Females, 15 yrs & over	4591	3288	28.4	100.0	100.0
Never married.....	1574	1211	23.1	34.3	36.8
Now married.....	2572	1795	30.2	56.0	54.6
Separated/Divorced.....	146	63	56.8	3.2	1.9
Widowed.....	299	219	26.8	6.5	6.7

Source: PC80-1-B57A, Table 15 and TTPI Report, 1973

There were only small differences in the distribution by marital status by island in 1980 (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). The distributions for males were almost identical except for the very small population in the Northern Islands. On Rota and Tinian there were proportionately slightly more widowers than on Saipan, and slightly smaller proportions of "never married" individuals.

Table 4.3. Marital Status by Island for Males: 1980

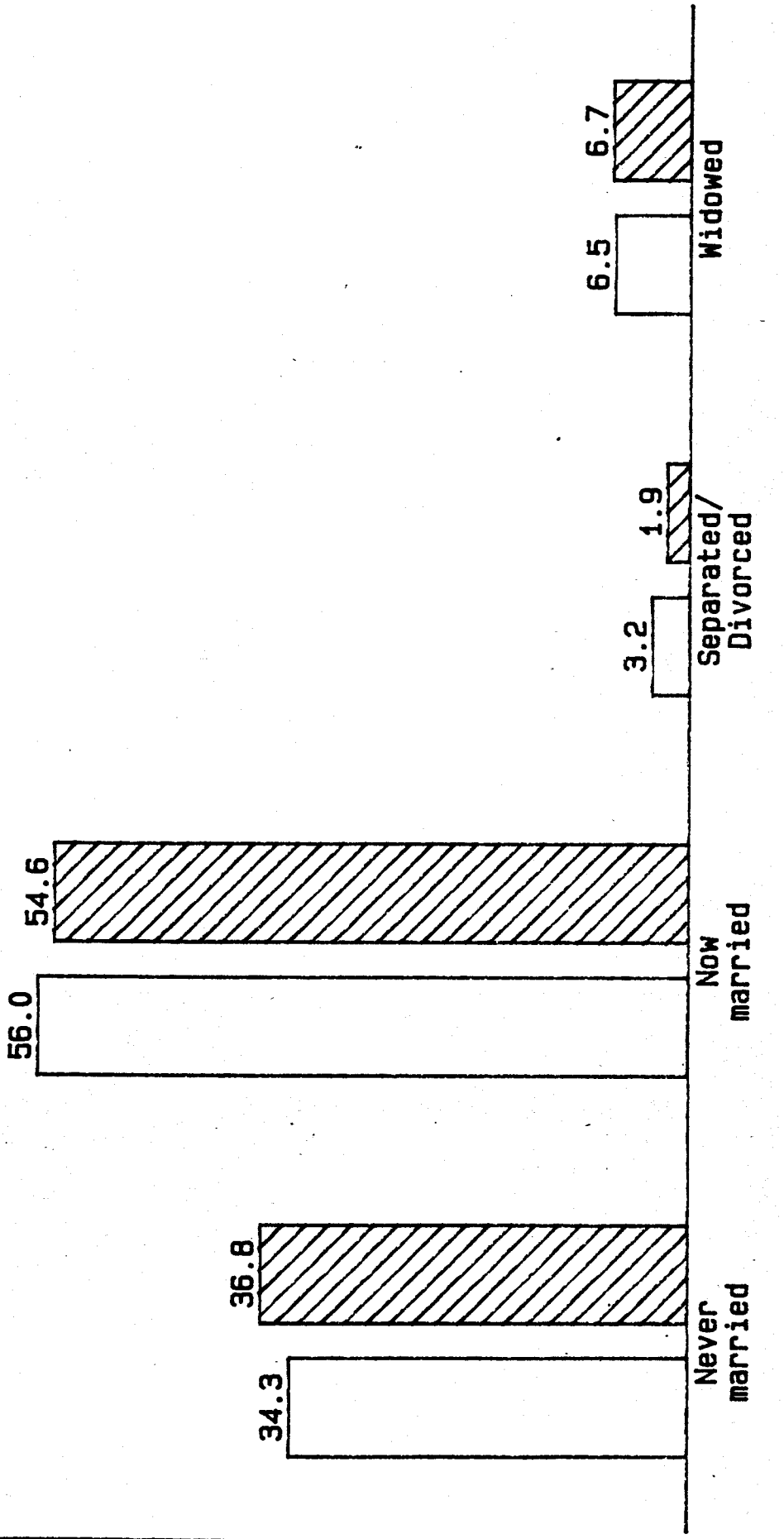
Marital Status	Numbers				Percent				
	Sai- pan	Tin- Rota	N. ian	N. Is.	Total	Sai- pan	Tin- Rota	Tin- ian	N. Is.
Males, 15 yrs & over..	4400	408	269	25	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married.....	1643	142	90	13	37.0	37.3	34.8	33.5	52.0
Now married.....	2562	240	161	12	58.3	58.2	58.8	59.9	48.0
Consensually married..	243	24	14	1	5.5	5.5	5.9	5.2	4.0
Separated.....	56	4	5	0	1.3	1.3	1.0	1.9	0.0
Widowed.....	101	16	11	0	2.5	2.3	3.9	4.1	0.0
Divorced.....	38	6	2	0	.9	.9	1.5	.7	0.0

Source: PC80-1-B57A, Table 15

FIGURE 4.2

Marital Status for Females 15 Years and Over: 1973 and 1980 (Percent)

1973  1980 



Females on the various islands showed a different pattern. Although Saipan, with its disproportionately large population was very close to the CNMI distribution, both Tinian and Rota had higher percentages of widows, with almost 11 percent of the adult females on Rota being widows (and 7 percent of those on Tinian.) The percentage "never married" on Rota and Tinian was much smaller than on Saipan, and although this was compensated for by the large percentage of married persons on Tinian, most of the difference on Rota was the widows.

Table 4.4. Marital Status by Island for Females: 1980

Marital Status	Numbers				Total	Percent			
	Sai-pan	Tin-Rota	N. Is.	N. Is.		Sai-pan	Tin-Rota	Tin-ian	N. Is.
Females, 15 yrs & over.	3810	307	188	15	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never married.....	1413	98	58	5	36.4	37.1	31.9	30.9	33.3
Now married.....	2010	165	116	10	53.3	52.8	53.7	61.7	66.7
Consensually married..	242	14	14	1	6.3	6.4	4.6	7.4	6.7
Separated.....	73	9	1	0	1.9	1.9	2.9	.5	0.0
Widowed.....	253	33	13	0	6.9	6.6	10.7	6.9	0.0
Divorced.....	61	2	0	0	1.5	1.6	.7	0.0	0.0

Source: PC80-1-B57A, Table 15

As noted earlier, the percentage of never married males decreased from 42 percent in 1973 to 35 percent in 1980. The percentage "never married" by age group, however, tended to increase, showing some delay in first marriage (Table 4.5). For the 30 to 34 year olds, for example, the proportion never married increased from 9 percent in 1973 to 19 percent in 1980 (although the numbers for 1973 were small). Also, the change from the TTPI government to the CNMI government, and the large influx unmarried migrants probably has affected the figures.

The Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) (Hajnal 1954) is derived by an indirect technique to obtain the average age at first marriage for a population or group. The average age at first marriage for males in the CNMI in 1980 was 24.5; this increased slightly to 25.3 years in 1980, and although the increase is small, it provides some evidence for delay in first marriage.

FIGURE 4.3

Never Married Persons 15 Year and Over by Island and Sex: 1980 (Percent)

Males

Females

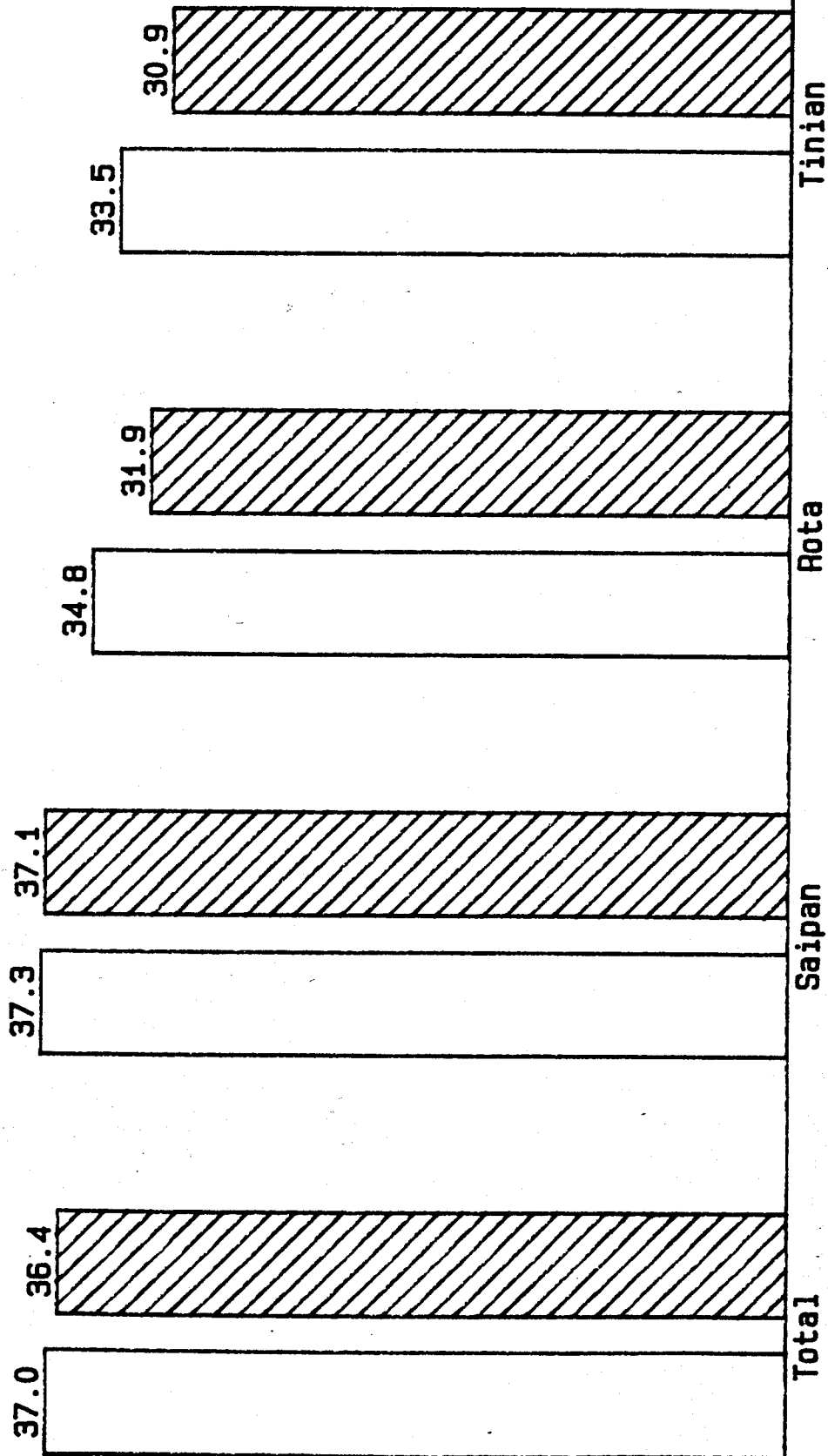


Table 4.5. Percent Never Married by Age for Males: 1973 and 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent Change	Percent of all Persons this Age	
	1980	1973	1973 to 1980	1980	1973
Males, 15 yrs & over..	1888	1349	28.5	35.1	42.0
15 to 19 years.....	819	737	10.0	97.3	98.3
20 to 24 years.....	498	360	27.7	70.2	67.8
25 to 29 years.....	256	138	46.1	34.0	32.1
30 to 34 years.....	140	27	80.7	18.8	9.0
35 to 39 years.....	57	22	61.4	11.0	8.6
40 to 44 years.....	32	12	62.5	6.2	6.2
45 to 49 years.....	23	22	4.3	5.7	11.9
50 to 54 years.....	30	8	73.3	9.5	4.9
55 to 59 years.....	16	10	37.5	7.1	7.6
60 years and over.....	17	13	23.5	4.8	4.8
SMAM.....	...	...	...	25.3	24.5

Source: 1980 Unpublished data and TTPI Report, 1973

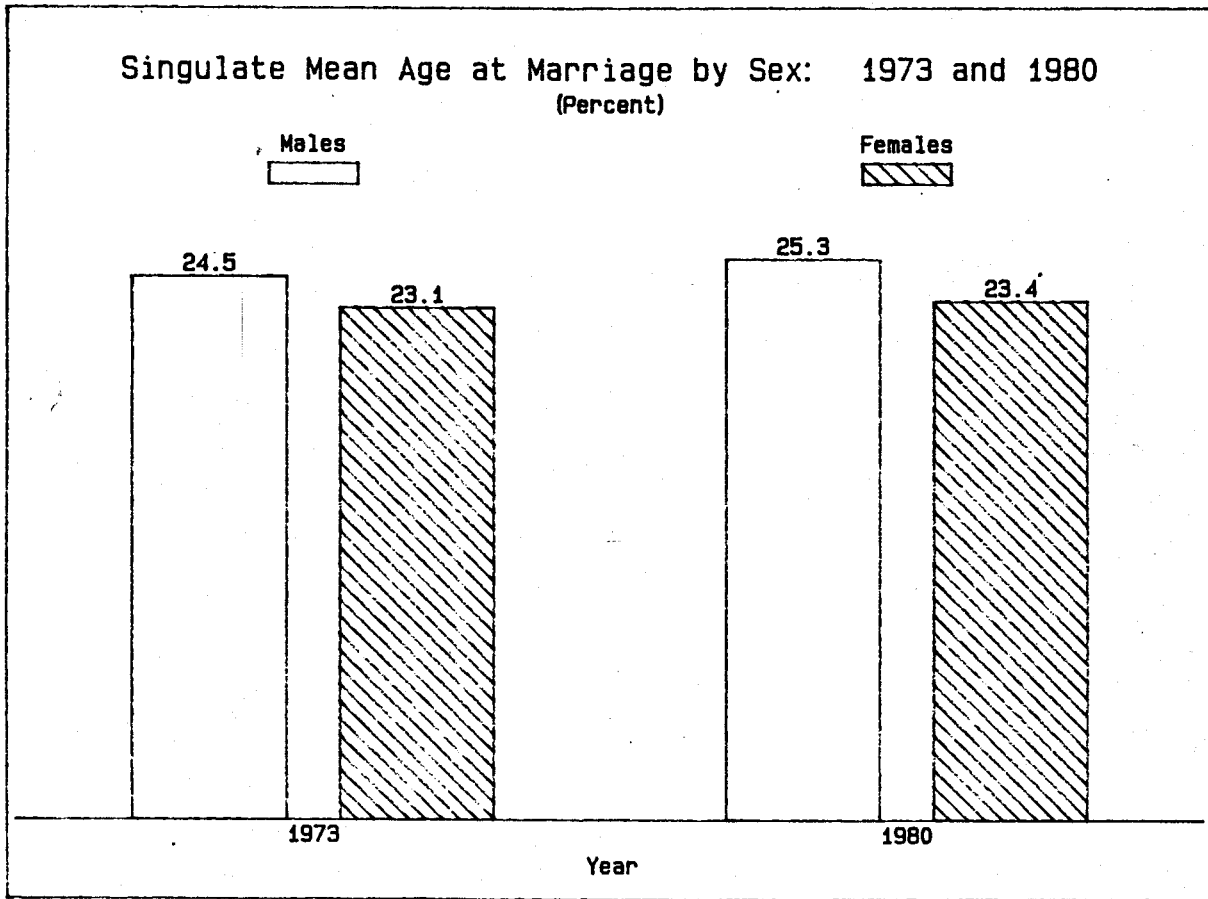
The Singulate Mean Age at Marriage for females in 1973 was 23.1 years, which increased to 23.4 years in 1980 (Table 4.6). Although the increase was small, the figures are still among the highest in Micronesia (Levin and Retherford 1986). As with males, the percentage single by age group increased for almost all age groups between 1973 and 1980, indicating delay of first marriage.

Table 4.6. Percent Never Married by Age for Females: 1973 and 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent Change	Percent of all Persons this Age	
	1980	1973	1973 to 1980	1980	1973
Females, 15 yrs & over	1574	1206	23.4	29.2	37.5
15 to 19 years.....	762	748	1.8	88.5	89.3
20 to 24 years.....	373	262	29.8	46.5	43.0
25 to 29 years.....	186	83	55.4	26.2	22.1
30 to 34 years.....	97	23	76.3	17.3	9.7
35 to 39 years.....	42	27	35.7	12.2	10.7
40 to 44 years.....	34	14	58.8	11.2	6.7
45 to 49 years.....	21	7	66.7	8.2	4.8
50 to 54 years.....	14	7	50.0	7.7	4.3
55 to 59 years.....	10	7	30.0	6.1	4.6
60 years and over.....	35	28	20.0	8.6	9.4
SMAM.....	...	...	...	23.4	23.1

Source: 1980 Unpublished data and TTPI Report, 1973

FIGURE 4.4



The phenomenon seen for the never married in which the percentage for the total decreased while the proportions for the age groups increased was reversed for the currently married persons. Although the percentage of married males increased from 54 percent to 60 percent between 1973 and 1980, the percentage for most of the age groups decreased (Table 4.7). For example, the percentage of married males 30 to 34 years old decreased from 88 percent in 1973 to 79 percent in 1980.

Table 4.7. Percent Now Married by Age: Males: 1973 and 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent Change 1973 to 1980	Percent of all Persons this Age	
	1980	1973		1980	1973
Males, 15 yrs & over..	3257	1726	47.0	60.5	53.7
15 to 19 years.....	23	13	43.5	2.7	1.7
20 to 24 years.....	206	167	18.9	29.1	31.5
25 to 29 years.....	486	287	40.9	64.5	66.7
30 to 34 years.....	587	265	54.9	79.0	88.3
35 to 39 years.....	442	226	48.9	85.0	88.6
40 to 44 years.....	466	173	62.9	89.6	88.7
45 to 49 years.....	358	152	57.5	88.6	82.2
50 to 54 years.....	269	137	49.1	85.4	84.6
55 to 59 years.....	178	109	38.8	79.1	82.6
60 years and over.....	242	197	18.6	68.6	72.4

Source: 1980 Unpublished data and TTPI Report, 1973

A similar pattern was also seen for females (Table 4.8). The percentage married increased for females between 1973 and 1980, from 55 to 56 percent, but most of the age groups decreased in percent married. The percent for 25 to 29 year olds decreased from 76 to 70 percent, and for 30 to 34 year olds from 87 to 78 percent.

Table 4.8. Percent Now Married by Age for Females: 1973 and 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent Change 1973 to 1980	Percent of all Persons this Age	
	1980	1973		1980	1973
Females, 15 yrs & over	2572	1793	30.3	56.0	54.7
15 to 19 years.....	95	89	6.3	11.0	10.6
20 to 24 years.....	417	341	18.2	51.9	56.0
25 to 29 years.....	498	286	42.6	70.1	76.1
30 to 34 years.....	435	206	52.6	77.7	86.9
35 to 39 years.....	277	211	23.8	80.5	83.7
40 to 44 years.....	236	174	26.3	77.6	83.3
45 to 49 years.....	200	115	42.5	78.1	78.8
50 to 54 years.....	129	126	2.3	71.3	77.8
55 to 59 years.....	108	99	8.3	66.3	65.1
60 years and over.....	177	146	17.5	43.3	49.0

Source: 1980 Unpublished data and TTPI Report, 1973

CONSENSUALLY MARRIED

Use of "consensually" married on the questionnaire is somewhat problematic because there is not a generally agreed upon definition of what constitutes a consensual union. As noted previously, for 1980, the Census Bureau defined a consensual marriage as a couple who were "living in a marital union without a civil or religious matrimonial contract". It is likely, however, that respondents and enumerators did not always use this definition to decide on marital status of individuals in the census.

In traditional Micronesian societies, marriage was not necessarily formalized by a religious ceremony, and persons sometimes moved into and out of unions over the years. Marriage among Chamorros was formalized, however, after Hispanization, and certainly under the Catholic Church. Many of the early Carolinian migrants did not interact with the Chamorros and maintained a more traditional form of marriage into the twentieth century. Even in the contemporary population which is almost all Catholic, there is still a certain amount of non-formalized unions; whether these unions are listed as "consensual" or as two "never married" individuals cannot always be determined from the census results.

Of the 5,829 married persons in 1980, 553 were listed as consensually married (10 percent) (Table 4.9). The younger the person, the more likely he or she was to be consensually married. Although only 2 percent of all marriages were to persons 15 to 19, this population made up more than 8 percent of all consensual marriages. Similarly although persons 20 to 24 made up only 1 in 10 of all marriages, this age group made up more than 1 in 4 of all consensual unions. Altogether, more than half the persons in consensual unions were under 29 years old.

This same youthfulness is seen in the distribution of marriages within age groups. Almost 40 percent of all married persons between 15 and 19 years old were in consensual unions, and more than one-fifth of persons 20 to 24. There was generally an indirect correlation between age and percent of consensual unions.

These data indicate that there may be problems in interpreting "consensual" marriage. Since these unions do not seem to persist into middle age, consensual union may be better classified as "trial" marriage. If "consensual" marriage is fully categorized by the Census Bureau definition, then it is very different from non-consensual union, at least in terms of age. If the government of the Northern Mariana Islands is using the data on consensual marriage for planning and policy uses, a re-definition may be necessary, or at least a more thorough evaluation by a survey may be required.

Table 4.9. Consensually Married Persons by Age: 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent	Percent	
	All Married	Consensually	Consensually Married	All Married	Consensually
Persons, 15 + years...	5829	553	9.5	100.0	100.0
15 to 19 years.....	118	47	39.8	2.0	8.5
20 to 24 years.....	623	144	23.1	10.7	26.0
25 to 29 years.....	984	117	11.9	16.9	21.2
30 to 34 years.....	1022	73	7.1	17.5	13.2
35 to 44 years.....	1421	98	6.9	24.4	17.7
45 to 54 years.....	956	47	4.9	16.4	8.5
55 to 59 years.....	286	9	3.1	4.9	1.6
60 to 64 years.....	177	11	6.2	3.0	2.0
65 years and over.....	242	7	2.9	4.2	1.3

Source: PC80-1-C/D57A, Table 19

Females tended to be younger than males in the consensual unions (Table 4.10 and 4.11). Although 15 to 19 year olds made up 4 percent of the males in consensual unions in 1980, they were 13 percent of the females; and, while 20 to 24 year old consensually married males were 17 percent of that population, they were 35 percent of the females. In fact, not quite half of the females in consensual unions were under 25 years old.

Table 4.10. Consensually Married Males by Age: 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent	Percent	
	All Married	Consensually	Consensually Married	All Married	Consensually
Males, 15 yrs & over..	3257	282	8.7	100.0	100.0
15 to 19 years.....	23	12	52.2	.7	4.3
20 to 24 years.....	206	48	23.3	6.3	17.0
25 to 29 years.....	486	60	12.3	14.9	21.3
30 to 34 years.....	587	46	7.8	18.0	16.3
35 to 44 years.....	908	65	7.2	27.9	23.0
45 to 54 years.....	627	33	5.3	19.3	11.7
55 to 59 years.....	178	7	3.9	5.5	2.5
60 to 64 years.....	97	8	8.2	3.0	2.8
65 years and over.....	145	3	2.1	4.5	1.1

Source: PC80-1-C/D57A, Table 19

Males were older, indicating that some of the male consensual unions may have been "second" marriages. About 1 in 4 of the male unions were for males 35 to 44 years old (compared to about 1 in 8 for the females); it should be noted that this was also the largest age group for all male marriages as well.

Table 4.11. Consensually Married Females by Age: 1980

Age Group	Number		Percent	Percent	
	All Married	Consensually	Consensually Married	All Married	Consensually
Females, 15 + years...	2572	271	10.5	100.0	100.0
15 to 19 years.....	95	35	36.8	3.7	12.9
20 to 24 years.....	417	96	23.0	16.2	35.4
25 to 29 years.....	498	57	11.4	19.4	21.0
30 to 34 years.....	435	27	6.2	16.9	10.0
35 to 44 years.....	513	33	6.4	19.9	12.2
45 to 54 years.....	329	14	4.3	12.8	5.2
55 to 59 years.....	108	2	1.9	4.2	.7
60 to 64 years.....	80	3	3.8	3.1	1.1
65 years and over.....	97	4	4.1	3.8	1.5

Source: PC80-1-C/D57A, Table 19

More than half of the marriages for males 15 to 19 were consensual unions, compared to more than one-third of the females for this age group. As for the total population, the percentage of consensual unions tended to decrease with age.

Since the majority of the population was born in the Northern Marianas, the largest percentage of now married, and consensually married persons were born in the CNMI (Table 4.12). However, although 59 percent of all married persons were born in CNMI, this was true for 70 percent of all consensually married people. Filipinos accounted for most of this difference since persons born in the Filipinos made up 18 percent of all married persons, but only 8 percent of consensually married persons. Larger percentages of persons born on Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia were consensually married than their percentages for all married persons, and the opposite was true for United States born.

The percentages for Guam, Palau, and the Federated States of Micronesia do not mean that more people were actually in consensual unions. However, while 10 percent of all marriages in the CNMI in 1980 were consensual, 14 percent of those for Guam, 13 percent for the Federated States of Micronesia, and 12 percent of those for CNMI and Palau were in this category.

Table 4.12. Consensually Married Persons by Birthplace: 1980

Birthplace	Number		Percent	Percent	
	All Married	Consensually	Consensually Married	All Married	Consensually
Persons, 15 yrs & over	5829	553	9.5	100.0	100.0
Northern Mariana Is.....	3392	385	11.4	58.2	69.6
Guam.....	111	16	14.4	1.9	2.9
Palau.....	281	32	11.4	4.8	5.8
Marshall Islands.....	35	2	5.7	.6	.4
Federated States.....	343	44	12.8	5.9	8.0
Asia.....	1253	53	4.2	21.5	9.6
Philippines.....	1043	44	4.2	17.9	8.0
United States.....	302	15	5.0	5.2	2.7
Elsewhere and N.S.....	112	6	5.4	1.9	1.1

Source: PC80-1-C/D57A, Table 24

As mentioned earlier, marriage is a vital indicator of social-cultural patterns in a society, particularly because the age pattern of marriage affects fertility. Since younger women tend to be more fertile than older women, the age of women at first marriage usually relates to the number of children a woman will have.