

Methodology and terminology

The data from the Stanford University study “[How Couples Meet and Stay Together 2017](#)” includes U.S. adults who are currently married or in a relationship as well as those who have ever been in a relationship, in which case respondents were asked about their most recent partner. People with multiple current partners are asked about the partner who they consider most important to them. Both opposite-sex and same-sex couples are included.

People who met their partners online include those who met through dating sites and apps, as well as those who met through the internet in other ways, such as online classifieds or social media.

People who are of the same race or ethnicity as their partner include: those where both partners are Hispanic (regardless of race); both are non-Hispanic white; both are non-Hispanic black; both are non-Hispanic American Indian, Aleut or Eskimo; both are non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander; or both are non-Hispanic other race or multiracial. All other pairings are considered to be interracial or interethnic. This is not a perfect measure. A couple in which one partner is Asian and the other is Pacific Islander, or in which one partner identifies with an “other” race and the other identifies as multiracial, might not consider themselves the same race, but this measure would count them as being of the same race. On the other hand, a couple in which one partner is multiracial black and white and the other is non-Hispanic black might consider themselves to be the same race, but this measure would count them as being interracial. Also, the question in which the respondent identifies their own race (they are asked separately about their race and their Hispanic ethnicity) is not identical to the question about their partner’s race. The self-identified race question allows for someone to report being multiracial, but the partner’s race question does not. Although this measure is flawed, we use it as a proxy for whether the couple is interracial or interethnic.

Couples who have different incomes include those who report that, between them and their partner, either they earned more income in 2016 or their partner did (or their partner was not working for pay). If they reported that they earned about the same amount, they were considered to not have different incomes. For couples who are no longer together, the question asks to compare incomes when they were last together.

Couples who have the same level of education include those where both partners have less than a high school education, both have a high school diploma or equivalent, both have some college or an associate degree, both have a bachelor’s degree, or both have a postgraduate degree. All other pairings are considered to be of different levels of education.

The political party question offered seven response options: strong Republican, not strong Republican, leans Republican, undecided/independent/other, leans Democrat, not strong Democrat, and strong Democrat. Couples who are of the same political party include those in which both partners are strong, not strong, or lean Republican; both are strong, not strong, or lean Democrat; or both are undecided/independent/other. All other pairings are considered to be of different political parties.

People who identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual include those who say they think of themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, regardless of the gender of their partner. People in same-sex relationships are those who report that they are in a same-sex couple, regardless of how they or their partner identifies.