

# Age Differences Among Coresidential Partners

## BACKGROUND

Few changes in age gap between coresidential partners, despite growing diversity in coresidential couples.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Couples who differ on one characteristic (such as age, race, or education) tend to also be heterogamous on other dimensions.<sup>4, 5</sup>

Type of coresidential couple may also influence the age gap between partners:<sup>6</sup>

- In 2021, more married spouses had a partner within 3 years of their age than cohabiters.<sup>2, 3</sup>

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**RQ1:** How does the age gap between partners differ for opposite-sex, same-sex male, and same-sex female cohabiting and married couples?

**RQ2:** Are differences in the age gap between partners across couple type accounted for by sociodemographic characteristics of couples?

**RQ3:** Is the association between sociodemographic characteristics and partners’ age gap similar for cohabiting and married couples?

## DATA AND METHODS

### 2021 1-year American Community Survey

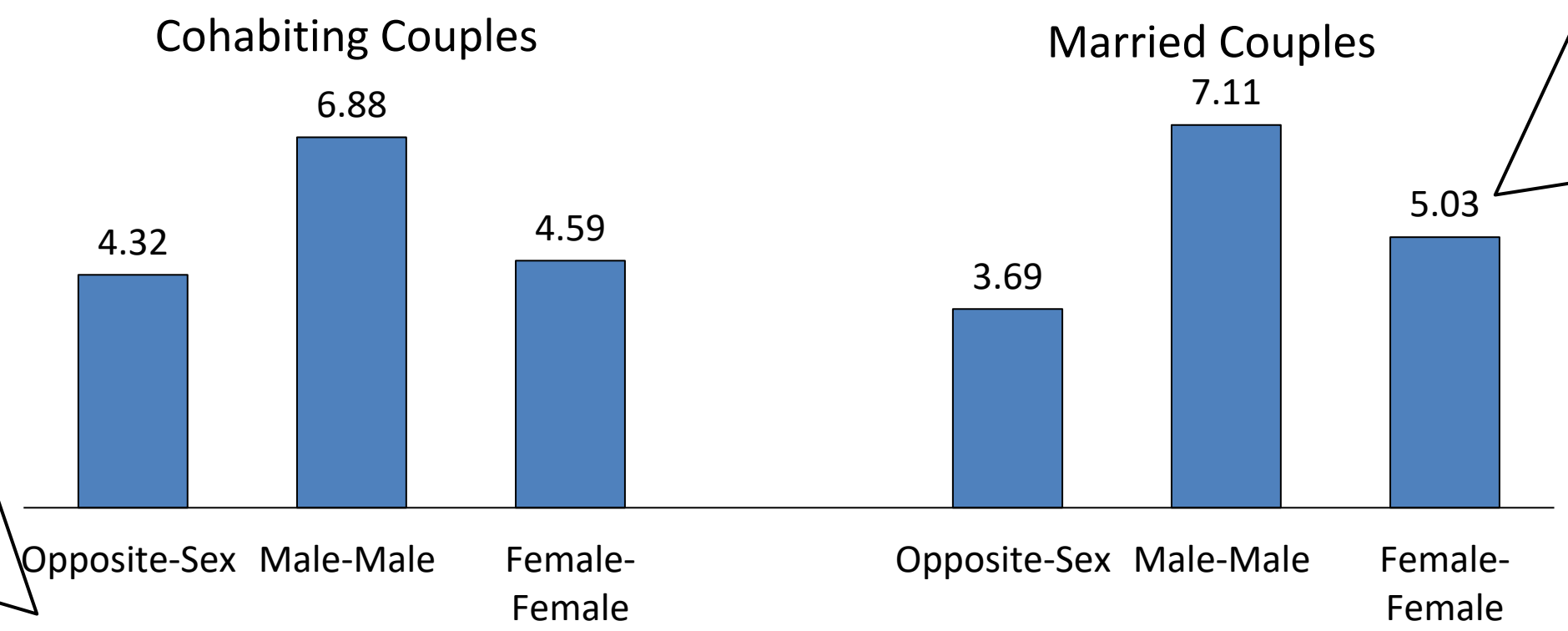
- Sample:** Couples identified using the relationship to reference person question.
- Focal Independent Variable:** Couple type (opposite-sex married, male-male married, female-female married, opposite-sex cohabiting, male-male cohabiting, female-female cohabiting).
- Dependent Variable:** Age gap between partners (absolute value of age difference between partners).
- Control Variables:** Sociodemographic factors associated with the age gap of cohabiting and married couples.

## DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

### Among both married and cohabiting couples:

- The mean age gap of partners in opposite-sex couples was smaller than the gap for partners in same-sex couples.\*
- The average age difference of men in same-sex couples was greater than the difference for women in same-sex couples.

### How Does Partners’ Average Age Gap Differ Across Couple Type?



### Cohabiting vs. married couples:

- The mean age gap of opposite-sex cohabiters and women in same-sex cohabitations significantly differed from the gap for opposite-sex married spouses and female-female spouses, respectively.
- This was not the case for men in a same-sex union; the age gap for men cohabiting with men did not significantly differ from the age gap of male-male married couples.

## MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

### Is Couple Type Associated With Partners’ Age Gap?

	Cohabiting	Married
<i>Couple Type (ref. = Opposite-sex)</i>		
Male-male	3.15**	3.47** †
Female-female	0.52**	1.33** †
<i>Marital History (ref. = One previously married)</i>		
Neither previously married	-2.85**	-2.44** †
Both previously married	-0.68**	-0.01 †
<i>Interracial/interethnic Couple (ref. = Interracial/ethnic couple)</i>		
Same race and ethnicity couple	-0.11**	-0.23** †
<i>Nativity (ref. = One native born)</i>		
Neither native born	0.03	0.05*
Both native born	-0.88**	-1.31** †
<i>Couple Educational Attainment (ref. = One partner has high school or less, one partner has at least some college experience)</i>		
Both partners have high school or less	0.16**	-0.08** †
Both partners have at least some college experience	-0.67**	-0.49** †
<i>Region or Residence (ref. = South)</i>		
Northeast	-0.04	0.06** †
Midwest	-0.22**	-0.13** †
West	-0.05	-0.01
<i>Lives in MSA or CMSA (ref. = No)</i>		
Yes	-0.39**	-0.17** †
Intercept	7.57**	6.99** †
R <sup>2</sup>	0.095	0.110

\*p<0.01; \*\*p<0.001

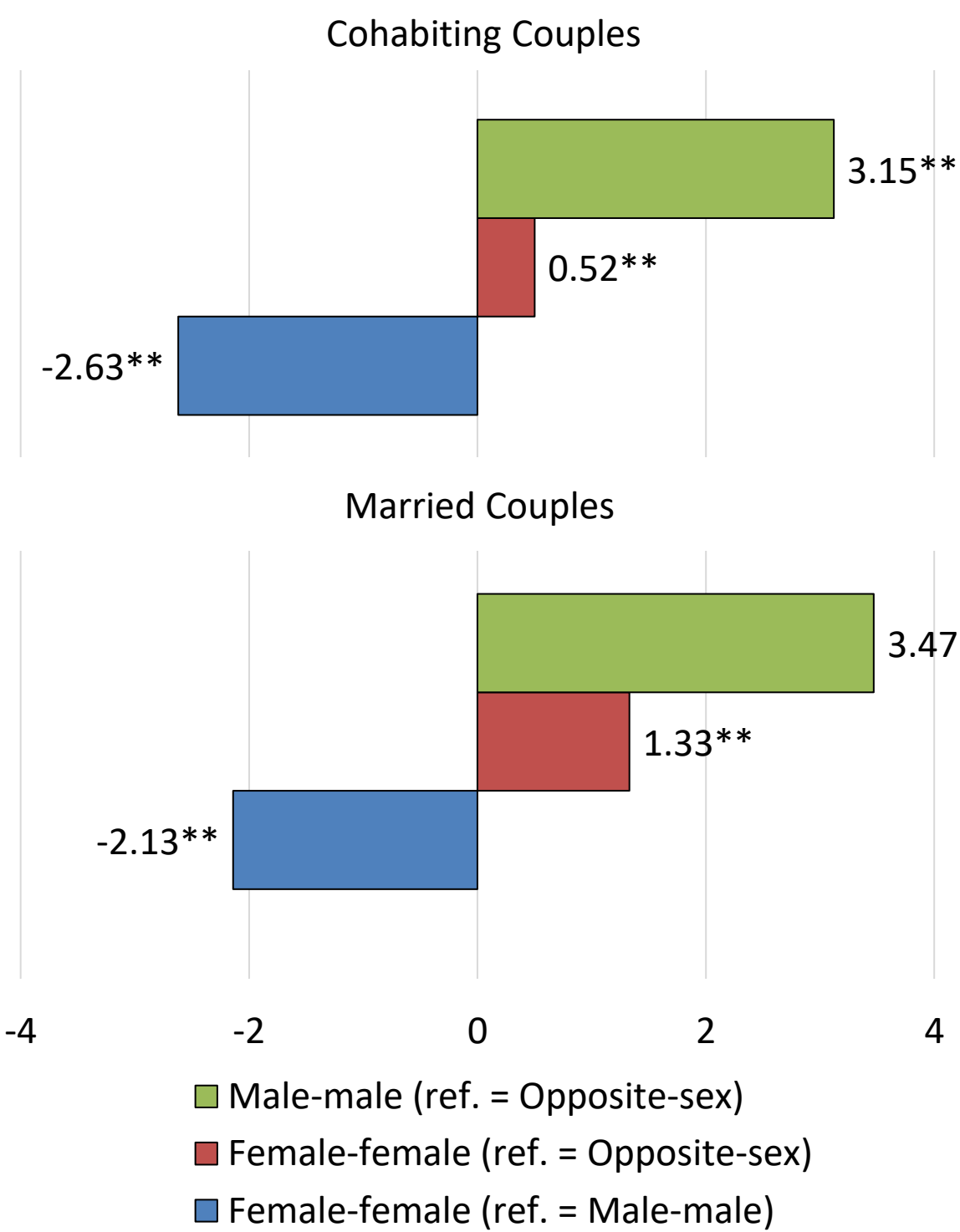
† coefficient significantly different from coefficient for cohabiting couples (p<0.01)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

The association between many predictors and the age gap was significantly different for married and cohabiting couples.

After accounting for sociodemographic characteristics and homogamy of the couple, couple type remains associated with age gap between partners.

### Differences in Age Gap Between Partners Across Couple Type:



Based on regression models; \*p<0.01; \*\*p<0.001  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 1-year data.

## SUMMARY

**RQ1:** On average, the age gap for men with a same-sex cohabiting/spouse is larger than the gap for those with an opposite-sex partner/spouse and women in a same-sex union.

- Grouping men and women in a same-sex union into one group obscures differences in the experiences and characteristics of men and women in a same-sex coresidential union.

**RQ2:** Differences in partners’ age gap persist after accounting for a range of sociodemographic characteristics and couple homogamy indicators.

- Other dimensions of homogamy do not appear to account for age differences.

**RQ3:** Factors associated with the age gap for cohabiters were not associated with the age gap between spouses in the same fashion.

- There continue to be key differences between cohabiters and married couples.

## REFERENCES

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\*All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing, and, unless otherwise noted, all comparisons are statistically significant at the 90 percent significance level.

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