

means that same-sex spouses are entitled to the same federal benefits as heterosexual spouses, such as exemption from the federal estate tax if one spouse dies and leaves money to the other.

Massachusetts was the first U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage, in 2004. A few other states followed between 2004 and 2012, but during that period more states have passed state versions of something like DOMA. Other states have provided an option of domestic partnerships for same-sex couples that have some of the benefits of marriage. However, shortly after the *U.S. v. Windsor* case was decided, many lower courts started to overturn prohibitions on same-sex marriage so that by

2014, 30 of the 50 states permitted same-sex marriage.¹ The Netherlands became the first country to allow same-sex marriage in 2001, and since then Belgium, Canada, Spain, South Africa, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Argentina, Denmark, Brazil, France, Uruguay, New Zealand, England, Wales, and Luxembourg have followed suit.

Attitudes toward same-sex marriage are clearly changing. As Figure 12.8 shows, there has been a massive increase in support for same-sex marriage since 1998.

¹See <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/us/map-same-sex-marriage/> for up-to-date information on states allowing and prohibiting same-sex marriage.



12.4 How Has Sexual Behavior Changed in the Last 50 Years?

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION AND BEYOND

Over the last 50 years sexual behavior of young unmarried adults has changed substantially. There has been some, but much less, change in the practices of married couples. In this section, we will explore changes in attitudes in the practice of premarital sex and in births outside of marriage. We will also explore persisting gender inequality in sexual relationships and generational differences in sexual behavior.

Premarital Sex

12.4.1: Discuss how attitudes toward premarital sex and the context in which it typically occurs have changed over the last 50 years.

To look at changes in sexual behavior, it is best to rely on data from surveys that were based on **probability samples**. This method of drawing a sample to survey from the U.S.

population ensures that everyone has an equal probability of being in the sample, so we can be sure that it is representative of the population. Surveys using probability samples have asked Americans about the age at which they first had intercourse as well as the age they first married, if they have. These surveys paint a picture of a substantial increase in the proportion of Americans having sex before marriage. Among people coming into adulthood after the 1960s, 90 percent or more have had premarital sex; it has become accepted in most groups in American society (Finer 2007). In some religiously conservative groups (Christian, Jewish, or Muslim), young people are taught to avoid premarital sex, and some even take virginity pledges. However, studies show that a teen's religious denomination doesn't have much effect on whether he or she has sex. Instead, more religious youth, from almost any denomination or faith tradition, tend to start having sex later (Regnerus 2007).

Although many American high school students have sex, most American parents disapprove. One study