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Comparison of Lifestyles Between Married and Unmarried Emerging Adults

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Comparison of Lifestyles Between Married and Unmarried Emerging Adults

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 School of Family Life - Brigham Young University - Mary Lou Fulton Conference

Introduction

Emerging adulthood contains many lifestyle changes such as leaving the comfort of home, working full time, and for some, getting married (Arnett, 2012). To unmarried emerging adults, marriage seems to be an important factor in the changing dynamics of friendship. Married friends seem to no longer attend social gatherings or participate in the same activities they once did. The question that this research team set out to answer is whether or not these observations actually exist or if they are imagined. This study examined areas of lifestyle, such as sociality, financial trends, personal priorities, stress, and religion for unmarried and married emerging adults. By comparing the various aspects of lifestyle in unmarried and married emerging adults, it is possible to see whether or not differences actually exist.

Methods

To examine the alleged differences in lifestyles, this research team chose to survey emerging adults and analyze the responses. The first step was to create survey questions using Qualtrics software. The survey contained seven questions designed for control and to filter the responses and 15 questions designed to obtain a glimpse into the lifestyles of emerging adults. These 15 questions can be clustered into multiple areas, such as spending habits, daily stress, and sleep patterns. To analyze the responses, the first thing that this research team did was exclude the responses from individuals that were not emerging adults. Next, the responses were divided by whether or not the individual is married or unmarried. Finally, the percentages of each response were calculated. The frequency of each response for married respondents was compared to that of unmarried respondents. This was done to determine how similar or different the lifestyles actually are.

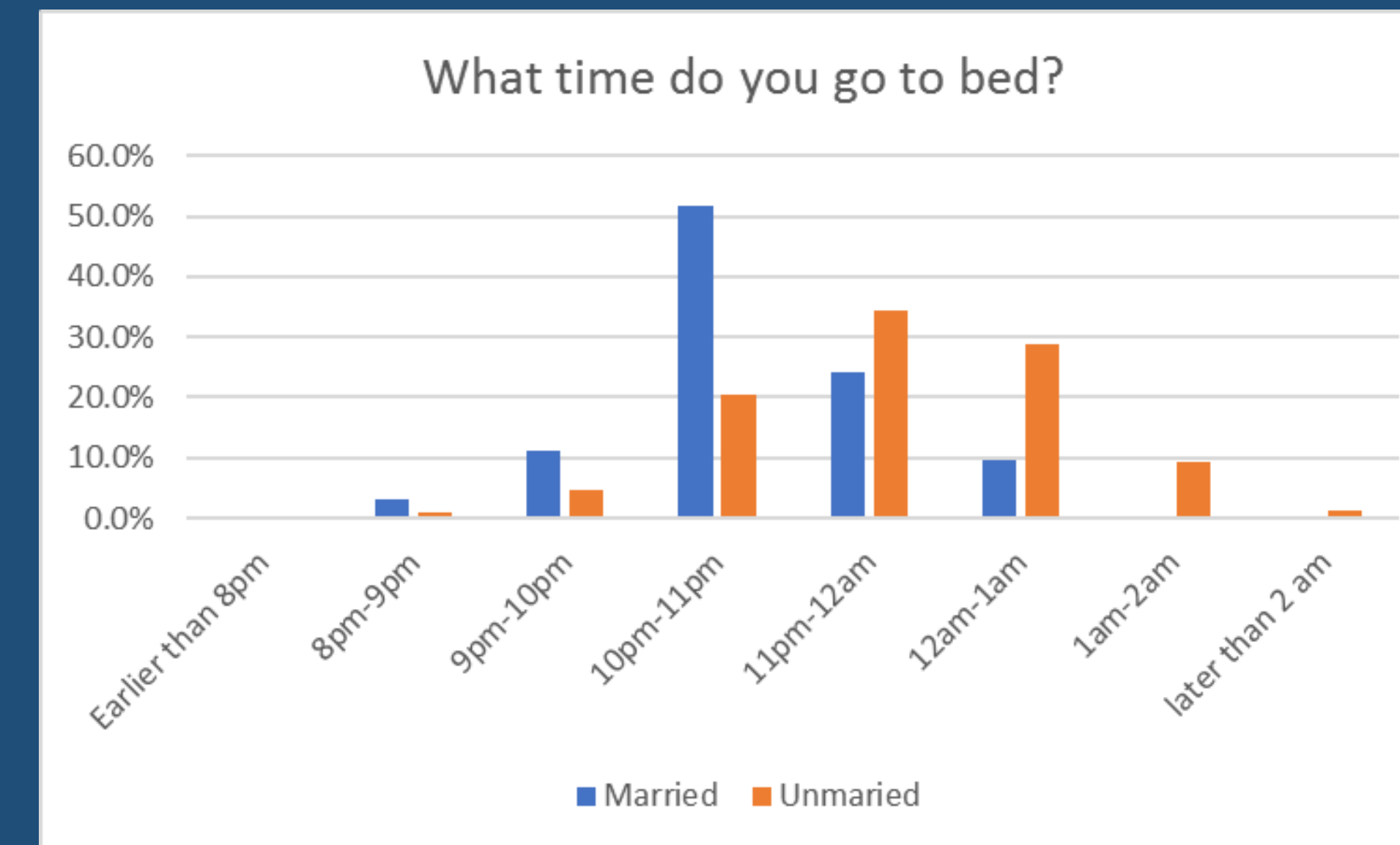


Figure One

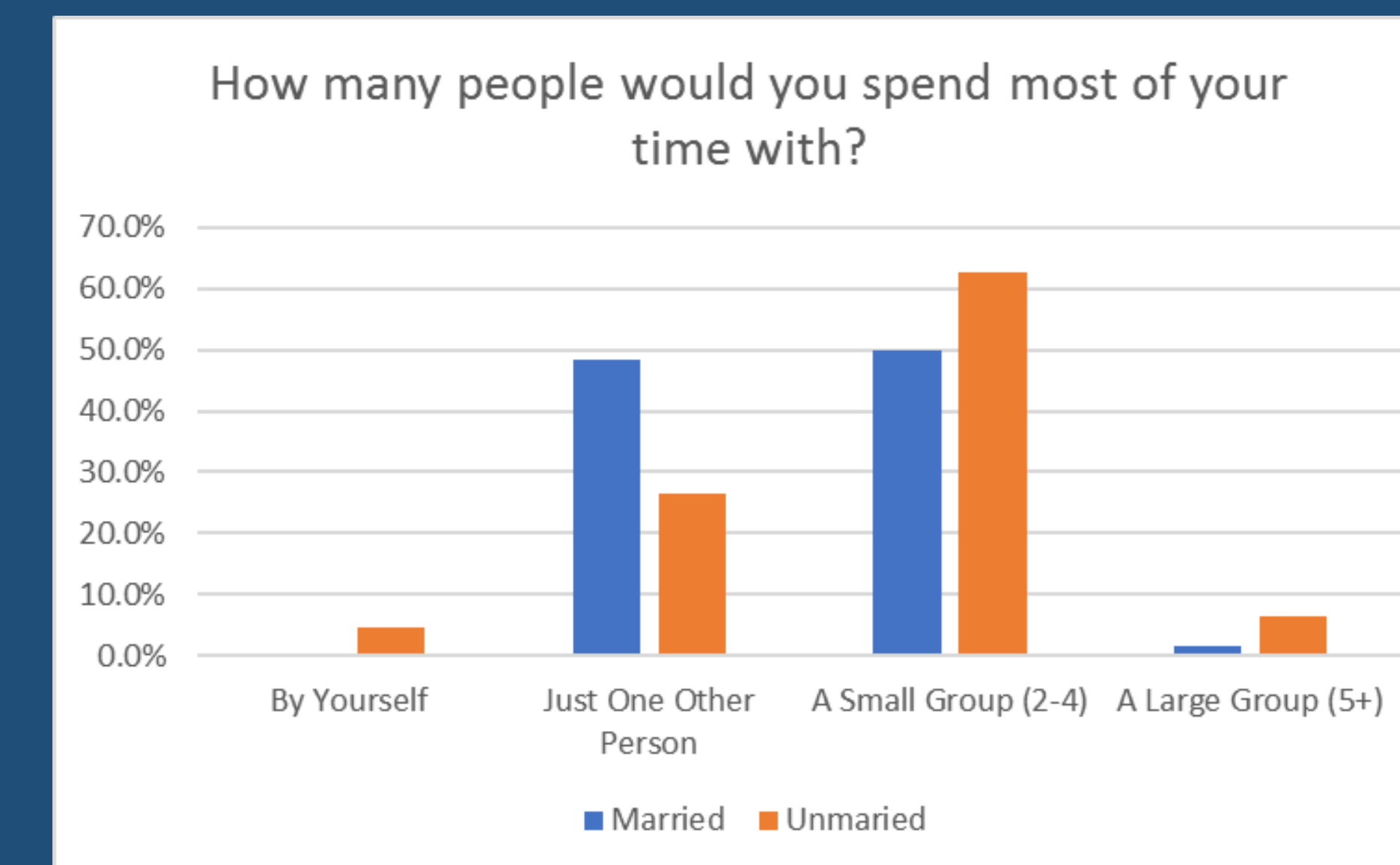


Figure Two

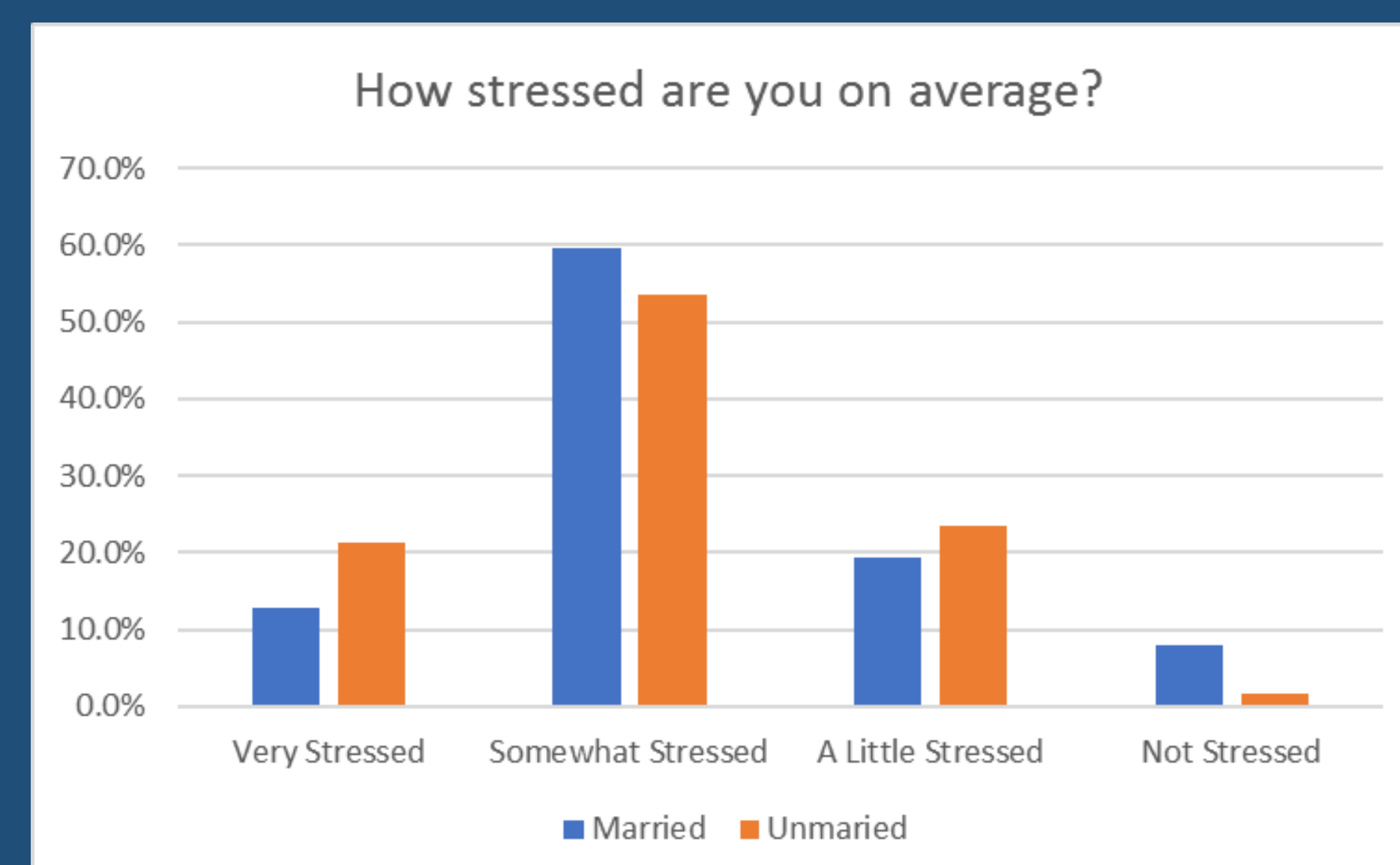
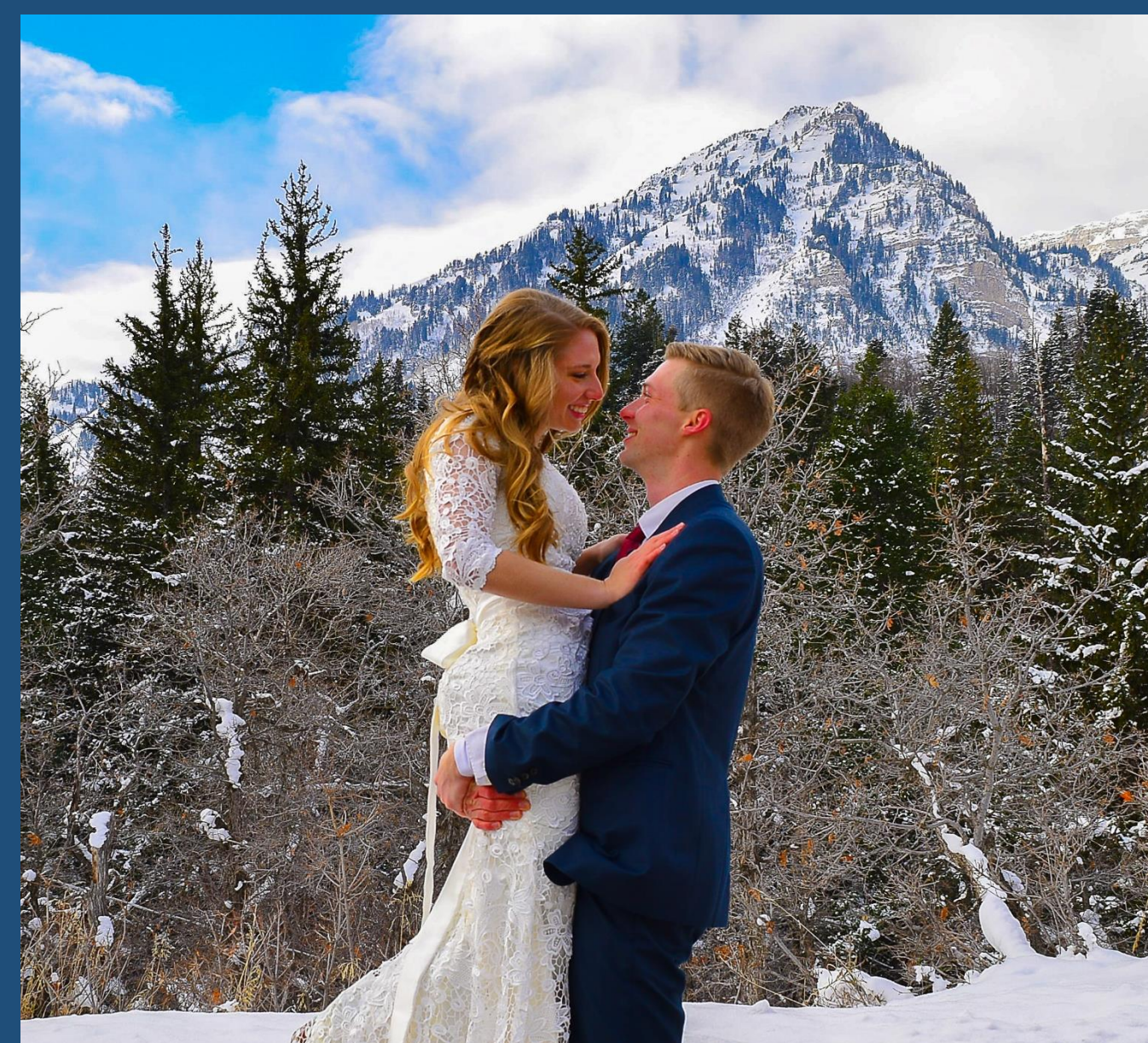


Figure Four

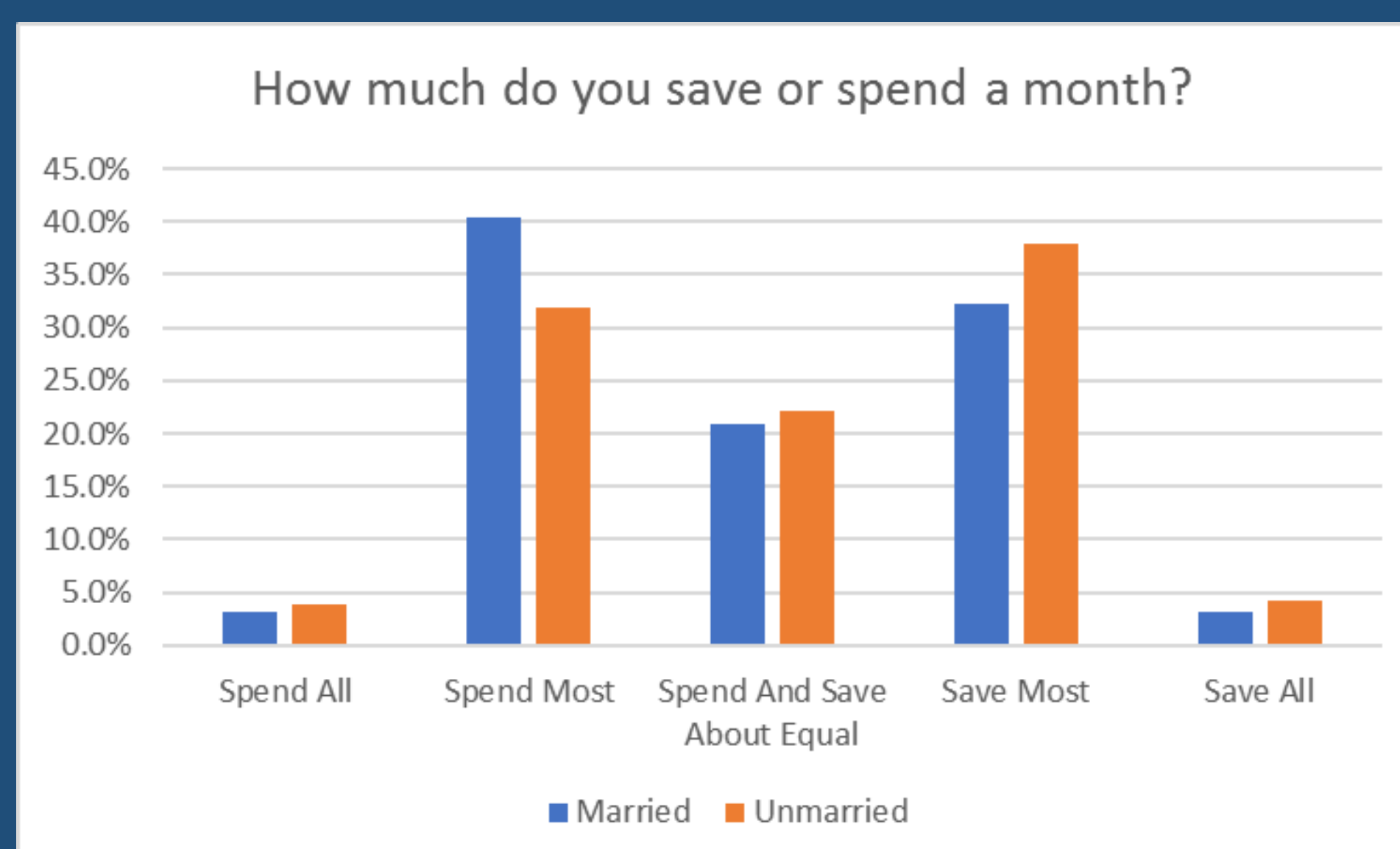


Figure Three

Results

After leaving the survey open for approximately two weeks, over 300 responses were recorded. Of these, only 297 were from people where are in the emerging adulthood stage of life. From here, they were further divided into either married or unmarried respondents. There were, in total, 62 respondents that were married and 235 respondents that were unmarried. Additionally, nearly all of the respondents are of the LDS faith and a majority are attending college. With these statistics in mind, it isn't surprising to see a low ratio of 21% of respondents being married because it is nearly consistent with the ratio of 25% of Brigham Young University students being married (Christensen, 2012), which has a predominantly LDS population. When the results of each survey question were examined, it was found that, for the most part, there are only small differences in lifestyle. Perhaps most interestingly, the mode of for most responses was the same between married and unmarried individuals, but the spread was broader among unmarried. This lead to a concentration of responses in the middle, among married responses (see figure 2). Additionally, some questions had similar spreads, but different centers (see figure 1). For the most part, however, the responses had similar frequencies between married and unmarried respondents.

Conclusions

Although slight differences in the groups existed, they were not evidence of significant differences in lifestyles between married and unmarried emerging adults. In fact, the similarities between the two groups was surprising. However, minor changes may still occur. The evidence for this is in the spread of the distribution of results. Though the center was very similar among married and unmarried respondents, the spread was broader for unmarried individuals. While there are many factors to consider before determining why this is, it is entirely possible that when two individuals marry, the lifestyle becomes slightly more stable and, overall, they regress towards the center. That is to say, overall preferences may not change a lot, but with another individual to consider and care for, outlying traits are toned down. But, with such similar overall frequencies in responses between married and unmarried individuals, it can be concluded that, while getting married is a big change, the lifestyle an individual has does not significantly change.

References

- Arnett, J. J. (2012). Adolescence and emerging adulthood: A cultural approach (5th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Christensen, K. (2012, October 15). The real marriage stats at BYU. *The Daily Universe*. Retrieved from <http://universe.byu.edu/2012/10/15/the-real-marriage-stats-at-byu-2/>