

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Population characteristics describe the diverse social, demographic, and economic features of the Nation's population. There were over 146 million women and girls in the United States in 2005, representing slightly more than half of the population.

Comparison of data by factors such as sex, age, and race and ethnicity can be used to tailor the development and evaluation of programs and policies serving women.

The following section presents data on population characteristics that affect women's physical, social, and emotional health. Some of these characteristics include the age and racial and ethnic distribution of the population, household composition, education, income, occupation, and participation in Federal programs.



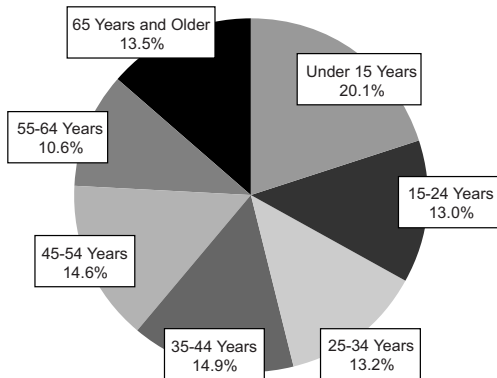
U.S. POPULATION

In 2005, the total U.S. population was over 288 million, with females comprising 51 percent of that total. Females younger than age 35 years accounted for 46.3 percent of the female population, those aged 35–64 years accounted for 40.1 percent, and females age 65 years and older accounted for 13.5 percent.

The distribution by sex was fairly even across younger age groups; however, women accounted for a greater percentage of the older population than men. Of those in the 65 and older age group, 57.3 percent were women.

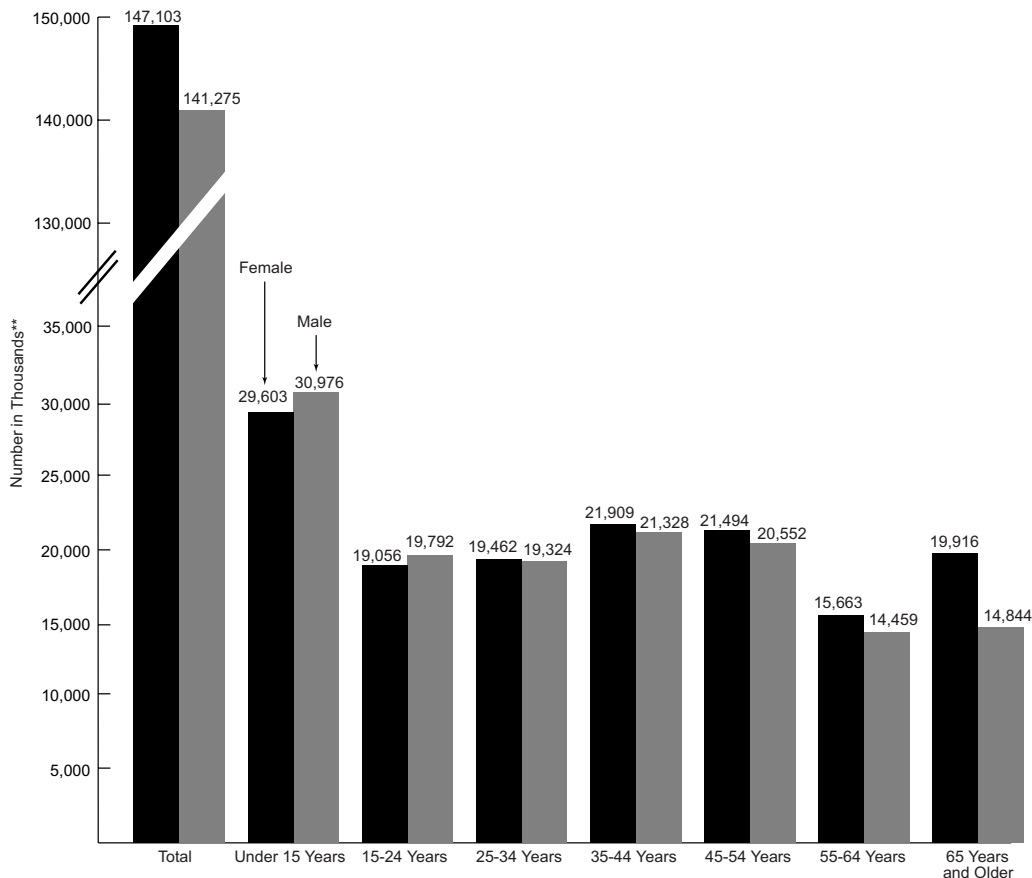
U.S. Female Population,* by Age, 2005

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



U.S. Population, by Age and Sex, in Thousands,* 2005

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



*Non-institutionalized population not living in group housing. **The break in the scale represents the gap between 35,000 and 130,000.

U.S. FEMALE POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

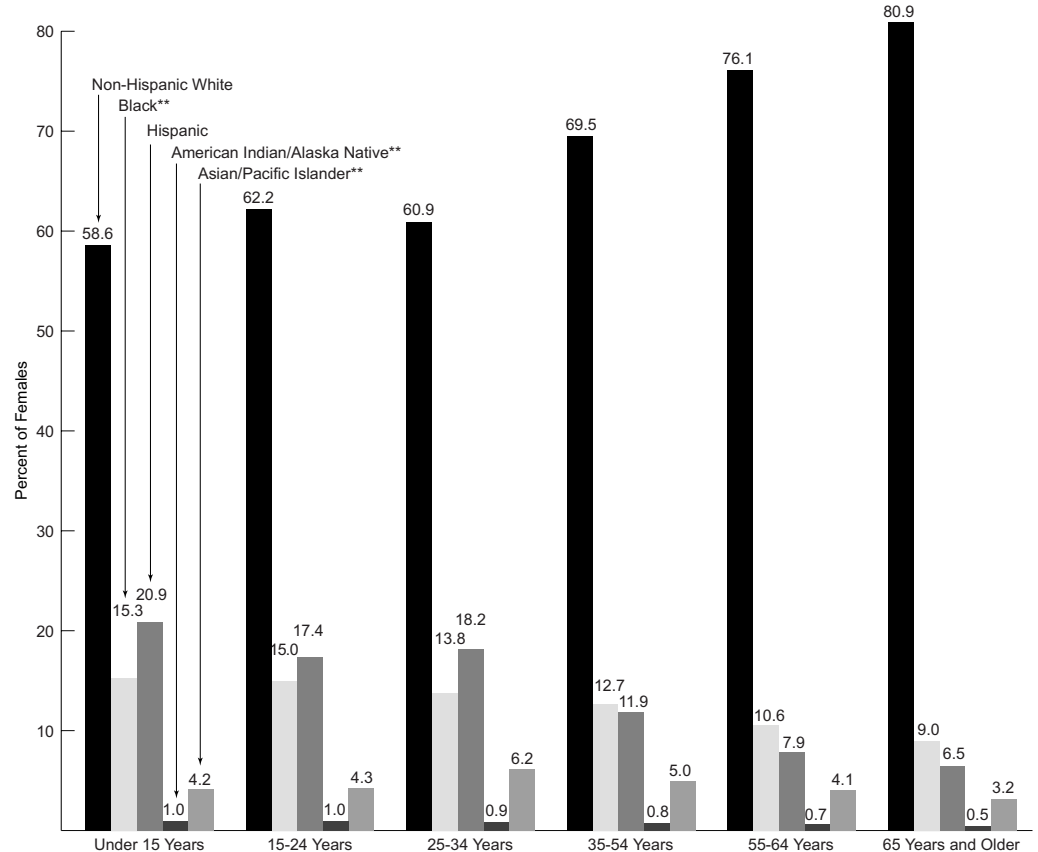
The growing diversity of the U.S. population is reflected by the racial and ethnic distribution of women across age groups. The younger female population (under 15 years) is significantly more diverse than the older female population. In 2005, 58.6 percent of females under 15 years were non-Hispanic White, while 20.9 percent of that group were Hispanic. Among women aged 65 years and older, in contrast, 80.9 percent were non-Hispanic White and only 6.5 percent were Hispanic. The distribution of the Black population was more consistent across age groups, ranging from 15.3 percent of females under 15 years to 9.0 percent of women aged 65 years and older.

Evidence indicates that race and ethnicity correlate with health disparities within the U.S. population. Coupled with the increasing diversity of the U.S. population, these health disparities make culturally-appropriate, community-driven programs critical to improving the health of the entire U.S. population.¹

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Minority Health. Disease burden and risk factors. April 4, 2006. <http://www.cdc.gov/omh/AMH/dbrf.htm>. Viewed 4/16/07.

U.S. Female Population,* by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2005

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



*Non-institutionalized population not living in group housing; totals may not equal 100 percent—data is not shown for persons selecting “other or more than one race.” **May include Hispanics.



HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

In 2005, 52.8 percent of women aged 18 years and older were married and living with a spouse; this includes married couples living with other people, such as parents. Just over 12 percent of women over age 18 were the heads of their households, meaning that they have children or other family members, but no spouse, living with them in a house that they own or rent. Women who are heads of households include single

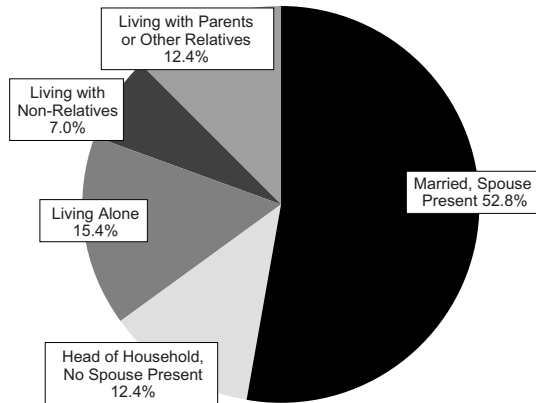
mothers, single women with a parent or other close relative in their house, and women with other household compositions. The remaining women lived alone (15.4 percent), with parents or other relatives (12.4 percent), or with non-relatives (7.0 percent).

Women in households with no spouse present are more likely than women in married couple families to have incomes below the poverty level (see “Women and Poverty” on the next page). In

2005, Black women were most likely to be single heads of households (28.5 percent) while Asian women were least likely (7.0 percent). Hispanic women and women of other races were also more likely than non-Hispanic White and Asian women to be heads of households (16.7 and 17.1 percent, respectively).

Adult Women,* by Household Composition, 2005

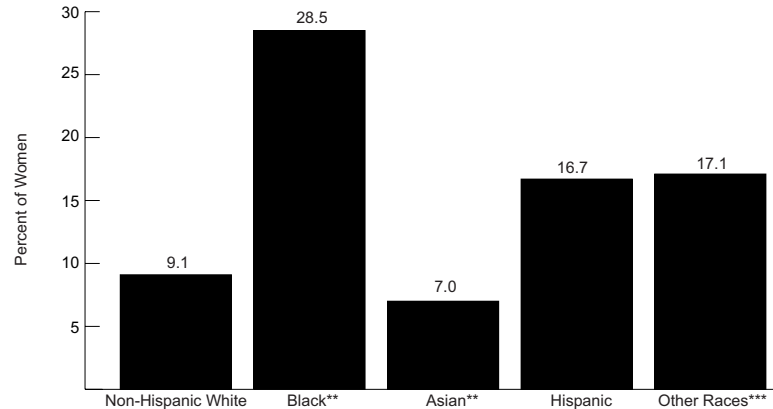
Source I.2: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



*Civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 18 years and older.

Women Who Are Heads of Households,* by Race/Ethnicity, 2005

Source I.2: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



*Civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 18 years and older; includes women who have children or other family members, but no spouse, living in a house that they own or rent. **May include Hispanics.

***Includes American Indian/Alaska Natives and persons of more than one race. May include Hispanics.

WOMEN AND POVERTY

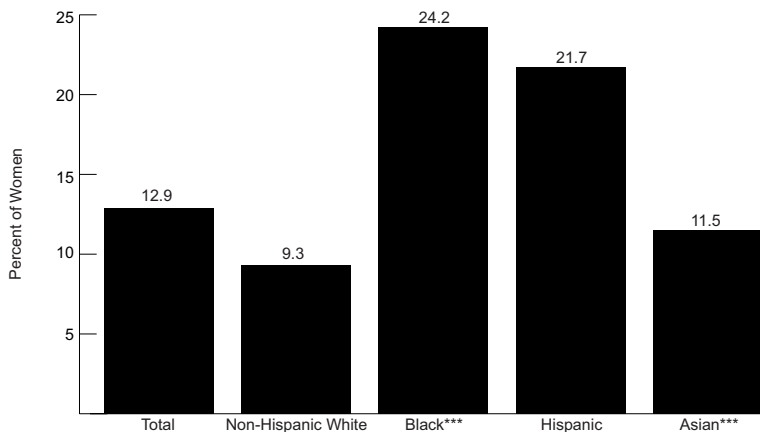
In 2005, nearly 37 million people in the United States lived with incomes below the poverty level.¹ The poverty rate for all women 18 years and older in 2005 was 12.9 percent (14.6 million women), compared to a rate of 8.9 percent for men. With regard to race and ethnicity, non-Hispanic White women were the least likely to experience poverty (9.3 percent), while Black women were the most likely (24.2 percent).

Women in families—a group of at least two people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together—experience higher rates of poverty than men in families (9.6 versus 6.3 percent). Men in families with no spouse present were considerably less likely to be in a family that lived below the poverty level than women in families with no spouse present (11.3 versus 25.9 percent).

¹ The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is poor. If a family's total income is less than that family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered to be poor. Examples of 2005 poverty levels were \$9,973 for an individual, \$12,755 for a family of two, \$15,577 for a family of three, and \$19,971 for a family of four. These levels differ from the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) used to determine eligibility for Federal programs.

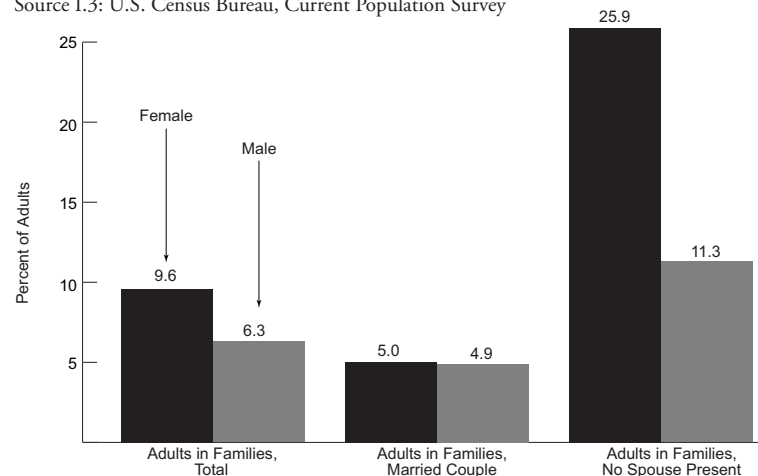
Women Aged 18 and Older Living Below the Poverty Level,* by Race/Ethnicity,** 2005

Source I.3: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



Adults in Families* Living Below the Poverty Level,** by Household Type and Sex, 2005

Source I.3: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



*Poverty level defined by the U.S. Census Bureau was \$19,971 for a family of four in 2005. **Data not reported for American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders and persons of more than one race. ***May include Hispanics.

*Families are a group of at least two people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together. **Poverty level defined by the U.S. Census Bureau was \$19,971 for a family of four in 2005.

EDUCATIONAL DEGREES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

The number of post-secondary educational degrees awarded to women rose from just over half a million in the 1969–70 academic year to more than 1.6 million in 2003–04. Although the number of degrees earned by men has also increased, the rate of growth among women has been much faster; therefore, the proportion of degrees earned by women has risen dramatically. In 1969–70, men earned a majority of every type of postsecondary degree, while in 2003–04, women earned more than half of all associate's,

bachelor's, and master's degrees and earned almost half of all first professional and doctoral degrees. The most significant increase has been in the proportion of first professional degree earners who are women, which jumped from 5.3 percent in 1969–70 to 49.2 percent in 2003–04. In 2003–04, the total number of women earning their first professional degree (40,872) was 22 times greater than in 1969–70 (1,841).

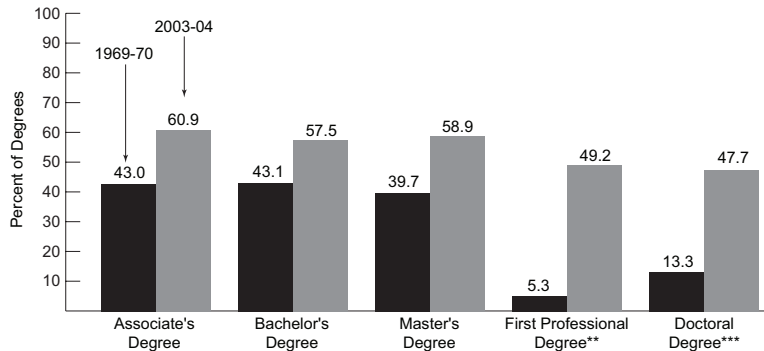
Although sex disparities in education have almost disappeared, there is still a disparity among instructional staff in degree-granting

institutions. In fall 2003, only 39.4 percent of instructional staff were women.

Among female instructors, a significant racial and ethnic disparity exists as well: 80.1 percent of all female instructional staff were non-Hispanic White. This disparity is even more pronounced among higher-level staff, such as professors, where non-Hispanic White women composed 87.3 percent of full-time female staff, compared to 4.9 percent for non-Hispanic Black women and 2.4 percent for Hispanic women.

Degrees Awarded to Women,* by Type, 1969-70 and 2003-04

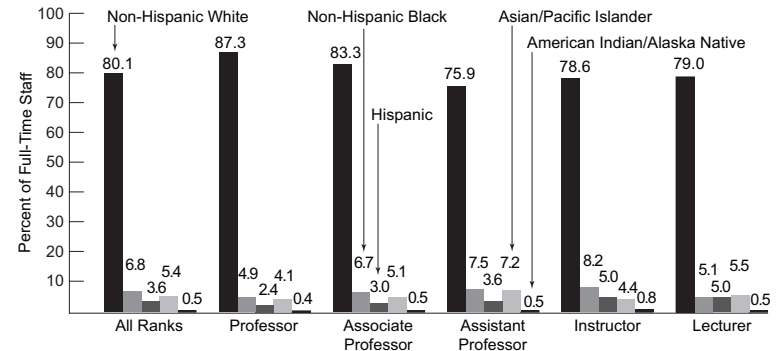
Source I.4: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



*Remaining percentage of degrees are those earned by men. **Includes fields of dentistry (D.D.S. or D.M.D.), medicine (M.D.), optometry (O.D.), osteopathic medicine (D.O.), pharmacy (D.Pharm.), podiatry (D.P.M.), veterinary medicine (D.V.M.), chiropractic (D.C. or D.C.M.), law (L.L.B. or J.D.), and theological professions (M.Div. or M.H.L.) ***Includes Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.) as well as degrees awarded for fulfilling specialized requirements in professional fields such as education (Ed.D.), musical arts (D.M.A.), business administration (D.B.A.), and engineering (D.Eng. or D.E.S.). First-professional degrees, such as M.D. and D.D.S., are not included under this heading.

Full-Time Female Instructional Staff in Degree-Granting Institutions, by Academic Rank and Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2003

Source I.4: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



WOMEN IN HEALTH PROFESSION SCHOOLS

The health professions have long been characterized by gender disparities. Some professions, such as medicine and dentistry, have historically been dominated by males, while others, such as

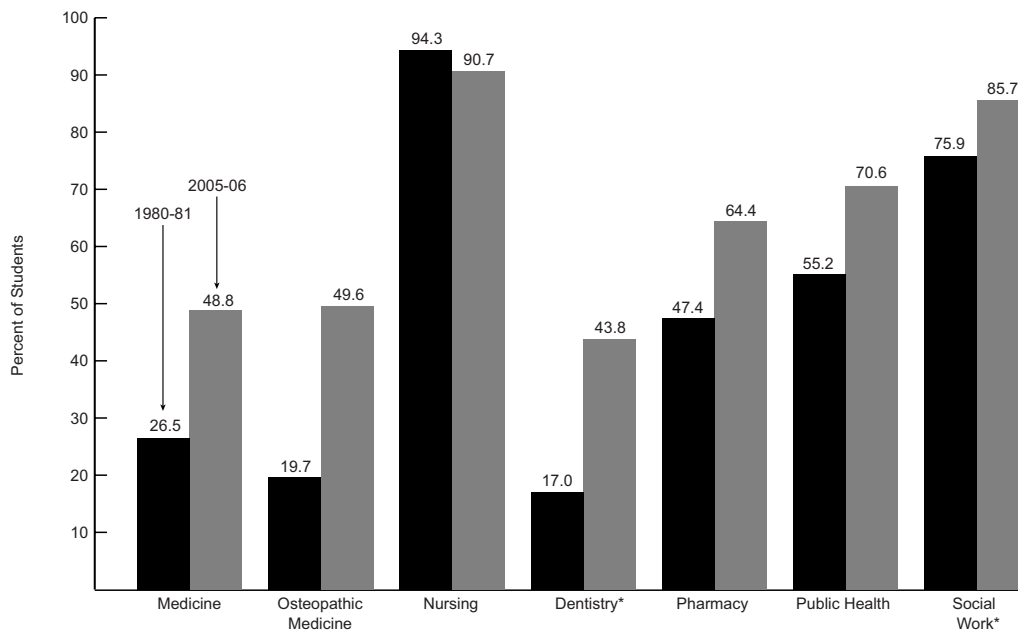
nursing, have been predominantly female. Over the past several decades, these gaps have narrowed, and in some cases reversed. In 1980–81, 47.4 percent of pharmacy students were women, while in the fall of 2005, women represented more than 64 percent of pharmacy

students. Even in fields where men are still the majority, the representation of female students has grown. In 1980–81, only 26.5 percent of medical students were women compared to nearly one-half (48.8 percent) of students in the fall of 2005. Similar gains have been made in the fields of osteopathic medicine and dentistry, where the most recent data indicate that 49.6 and 43.8 percent of students, respectively, were women compared to only 19.7 and 17.0 percent in 1980–81.

During the 2005–06 academic year, female students represented a growing majority in graduate schools of public health (70.6 percent). Similarly, the most recent data for social work programs indicate that 85.7 percent of enrolled students were female. Nursing, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, also continues to be dominated by women, although the proportion of students who are female is slowly declining. In the 1980–81 academic year, 94.3 percent of nursing students were female, while in the fall of 2005, females represented 90.7 percent of graduate students in nursing programs. Women also represent a majority of students studying optometry (63.1 percent), physical therapy (73.0 percent in 2004), and dietetics (90.8 percent; data not shown). Comparative data for these programs are not available for the 1980–81 academic year.

Women in Schools for Selected Health Professions, 1980-81 and 2005-06

Source I.5: Professional Associations



*Most recent data for dentistry and social work are from the 2004-05 school year.

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

In 2006, 59.4 percent of women aged 16 and older were in the labor force (either employed or unemployed and actively seeking employment). This represents a 37 percent increase from the 43.3 percent of women who were in the labor force in 1970. Females aged 16 and older made up 46.3 percent of the total workforce in 2006. Among working females, 75.3 percent worked full-time compared to 89.4 percent of males.¹

The representation of females in the labor force varies greatly by occupational sector. In 2005, women composed 63 percent of sales and office

workers, but only 3.6 percent of construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair workers. Other positions which were more commonly held by women than men include service jobs (56.6 percent) and management, professional, and related jobs (50.7 percent). Women were the minority in production, transportation, and material moving (23.1 percent); farming, fishing, and forestry (20.4 percent); and in the military (14.6 percent).

Earnings by women and men also vary greatly. Women represent a majority of earners making less than \$25,000 per year. Of earners making less than \$2,500 per year, 58.5 percent were women

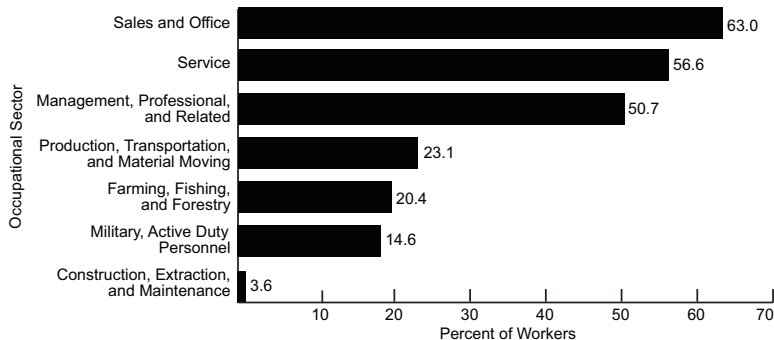
in 2005; however, women represented only 20.2 percent of earners making \$100,000 or more per year. The difference between women's and men's earnings is larger among older than younger workers. For instance, women aged 45–54 made 75 cents for every dollar earned by males, while women aged 16–24 earned 93 cents for every dollar earned by males of the same age.²

¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics Data. <http://data.bls.gov>. Viewed 4/18/07.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2005, Report 995, Table 1. Median usual weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by selected characteristics, 2005 annual averages. September 2006.* <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpswom2005.pdf>. Viewed 4/18/07.

Representation of Females Aged 16 and Older in Occupational Sectors, 2005

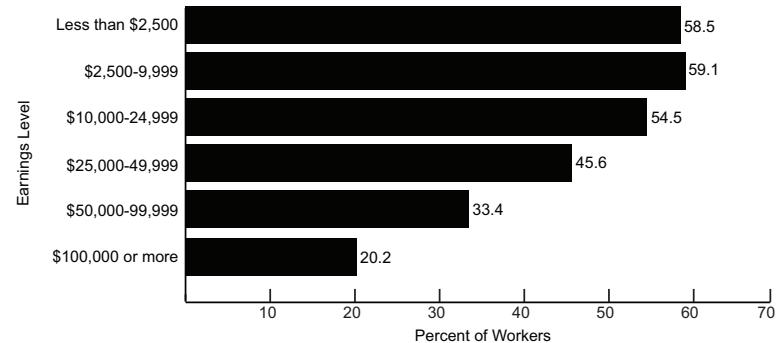
Sources I.1, I.6: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; U.S. Department of Defense*

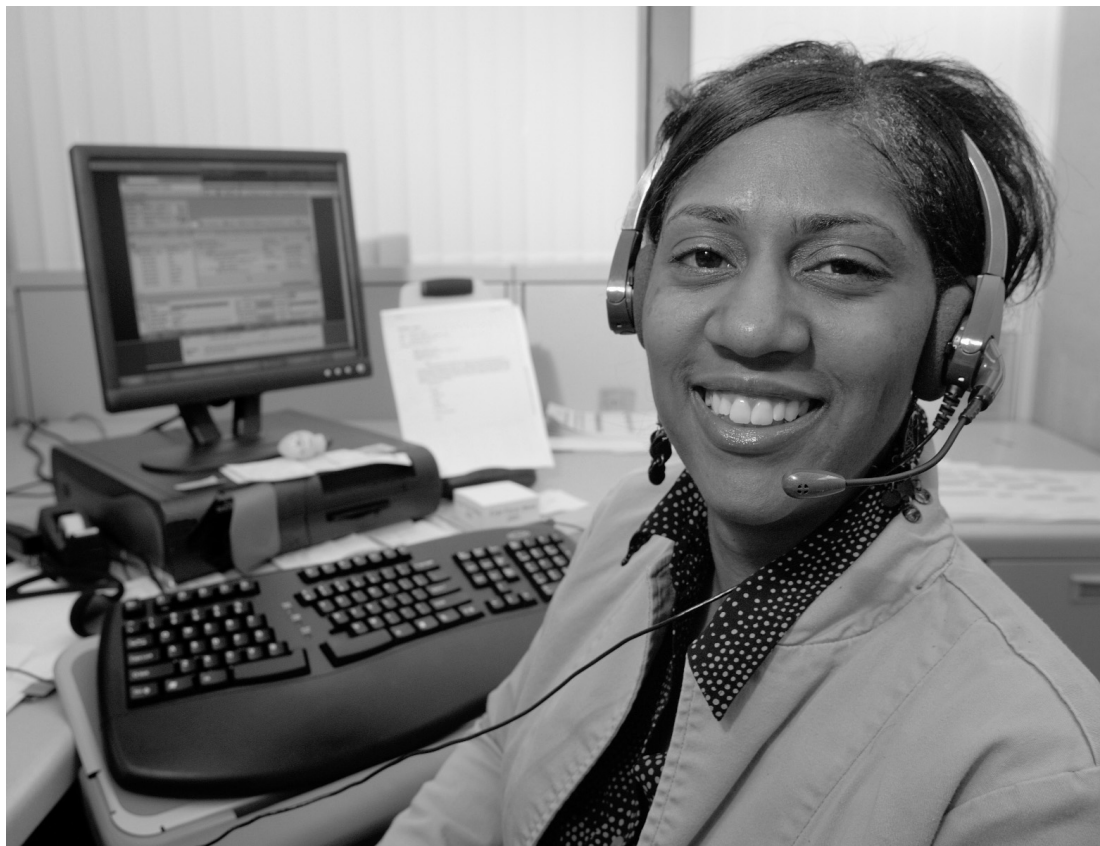


*Military enlistment data from U.S. Department of Defense, FY 2005; all other from U.S. Census Bureau.

Representation of Females Aged 16 and Older in Annual Earnings Levels, 2005

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey





FOOD SECURITY

Food security is defined as having access at all times to enough nutritionally adequate and safe foods to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. Food security and hunger are measured in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) through a series of questions including whether the respondent worried that food would run out before there would be money to buy more; whether the respondent or his/her family could not afford to eat balanced meals; whether the respondent or his/her family cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food; and whether the respondent or his/her family ever went for a whole day without eating because there was not enough food. For many of these questions, respondents were asked how often these situations arose. Cases with occasional or episodic food insecurity and/or hunger were more frequently reported than those with chronic situations; however, any degree of food insecurity places the members of a household at greater nutritional risk due to insufficient access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods.

In 2003–04, over 17 percent of women were not fully food secure, and this varied noticeably by race and ethnicity. Among women, non-Hispanic Whites were most likely to be fully food secure (88.4 percent), while Hispanics were least

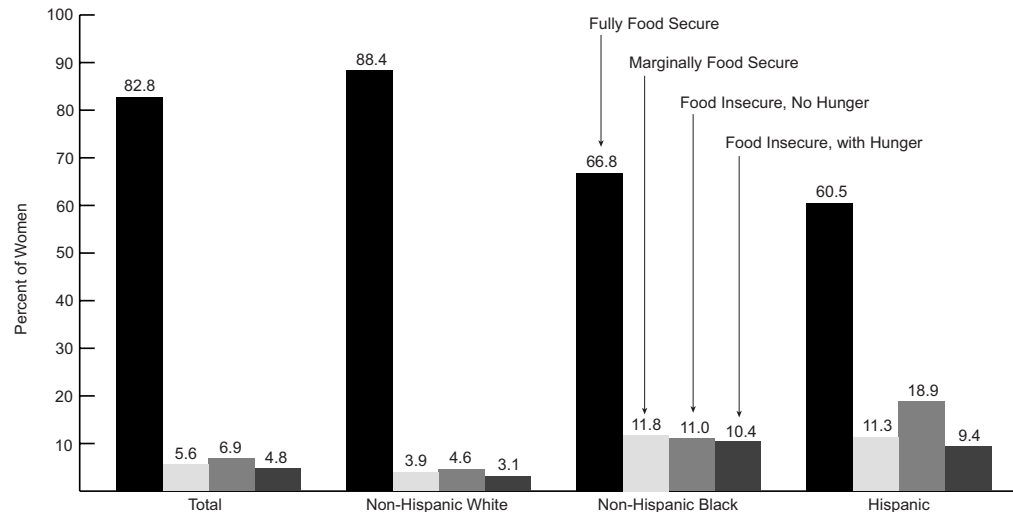
likely (60.5 percent). Hispanic women also had the highest rate of food insecurity without hunger (18.9 percent). Non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic women had similarly high rates of being marginally food secure (11.8 and 11.3 percent) and food insecure with hunger (10.4 and 9.4 percent, respectively).

While nearly 83 percent of women are fully food secure, only 61.5 percent of women with

family incomes below the Federal poverty level (FPL) and 71.0 percent of women with incomes of 100–199 percent of the FPL were fully food secure in 2003–04. Comparatively, nearly 99 percent of women with family incomes of 400 percent or more of the FPL were fully food secure (data not shown).

Food Security Among Women 18 Years and Older, by Race/Ethnicity,* 2003-04

Source I.7: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey



*The sample of American Indian/Alaska Natives, Asian/Pacific Islanders and persons of more than one race were too small to produce reliable estimates.

WOMEN AND FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Federal programs can provide low-income women and their families with essential help in obtaining food and income support. The Federal Food Stamp Program helps low-income individuals purchase food. In 2005, nearly 12.5 million adults participated in the Food Stamp Program; of these, almost 8.5 million (68 percent) were women. Of these women, nearly 4 million (almost half) were in the 18–35 age group.

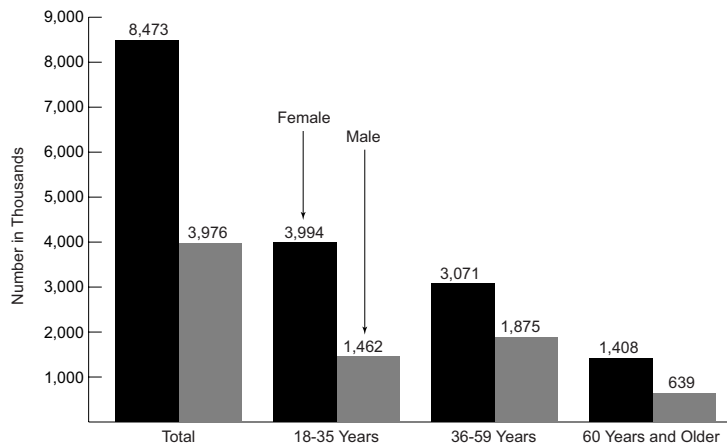
Female-headed households with children make up nearly one-third of households that rely on food stamps, and represent nearly 60 percent of food stamp households with children (data not shown).

The Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) also plays an important role in serving women and families by providing supplementary nutrition during pregnancy, the postpartum period, and while breastfeeding. Most WIC participants are infants

and children (75 percent); however, the program also serves nearly 2 million pregnant women and mothers, representing 25 percent of WIC participants. During the years 1992–2005, the number of women participating in WIC increased by 60 percent, and it continues to rise.

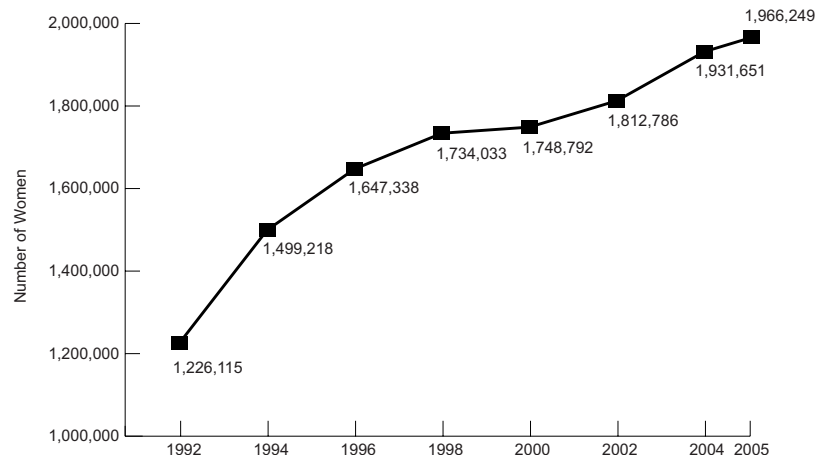
Adult Recipients of Food Stamps, by Age and Sex, 2005

Source I.8: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Stamp Quality Control Sample



Women Participating in WIC,* Selected Years, 1992-2005

Source I.9: U.S. Department of Agriculture, WIC Program Participation Data



* Participants are classified as women, infants, or children based on nutritional-risk status; data reported include all pregnant women and mothers regardless of age.