



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Population characteristics describe the diverse social, demographic, and economic features of the Nation's population. There were over 151 million females in the United States in 2006, representing slightly more than half of the population.

Examining data by demographic factors such as sex, age, and race/ethnicity can serve a number of purposes for policymakers and program planners. For instance, these comparisons can be used to tailor the development and evaluation of policies and programs 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.

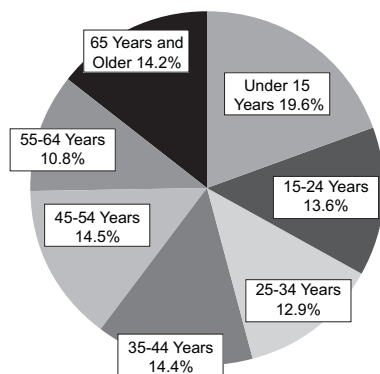
U.S. POPULATION

In 2006, the total U.S. population was over 299 million, with females comprising 50.8 percent of that total. Females younger than 35 years of age accounted for 46.1 percent of the female population, those aged 35–64 years accounted for 39.7 percent, and females aged 65 years and older accounted for 14.2 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 aged 65 and older, 58.0 percent were women.

U.S. Female Population,* by Age, 2006

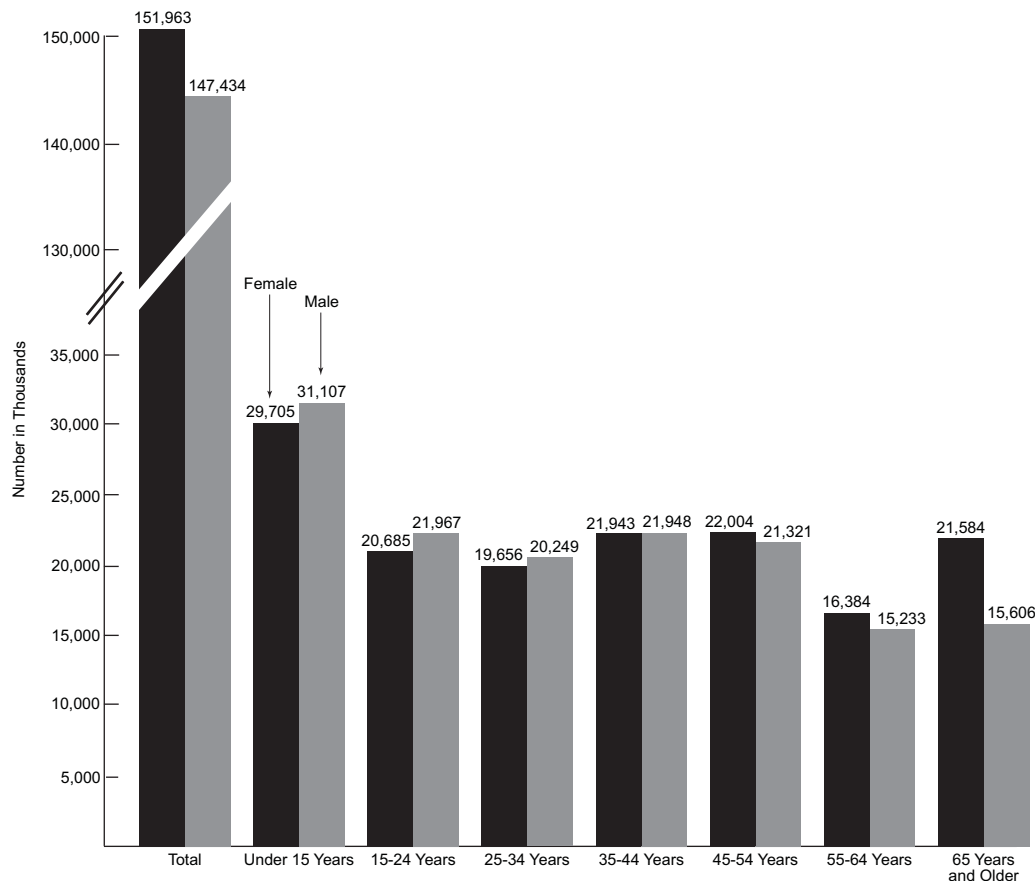
Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing.

U.S. Population,* by Age and Sex, 2006

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



*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing.

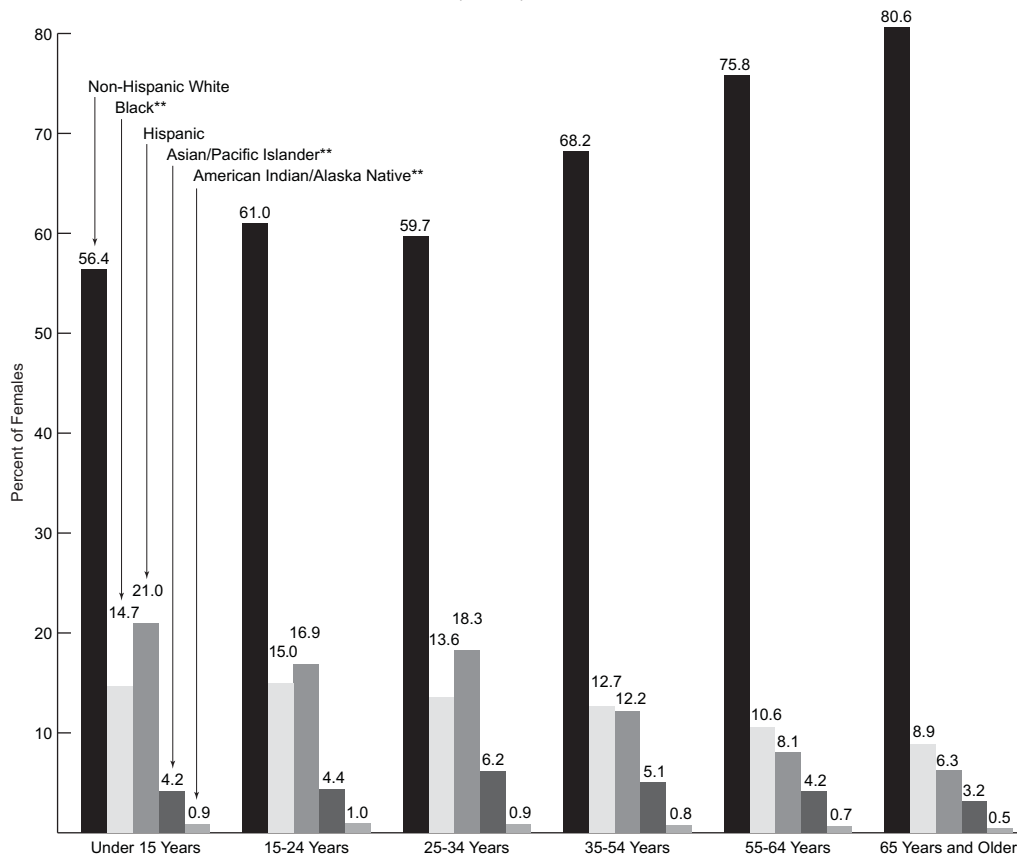
U.S. FEMALE POPULATION

The growing diversity of the U.S. population is reflected in 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 2006, 56.4 percent of females under 15 years were non-Hispanic White, while 21.0 percent of that group were Hispanic. In contrast, among women aged 65 years and older, 80.6 percent were non-Hispanic White and only 6.3 percent were Hispanic. The distribution of the Black population was more consistent across age groups, ranging from 14.7 percent of females under 15 years of age to 8.9 percent of women aged 65 years and older.

Evidence indicates that race and ethnicity represent important factors related to health disparities. 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

U.S. Female Population,* by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2006

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



*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing. Percentages do not equal 100 because data are not shown for persons selecting other races or more than one race. **May include Hispanics.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

In 2006, 52.5 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

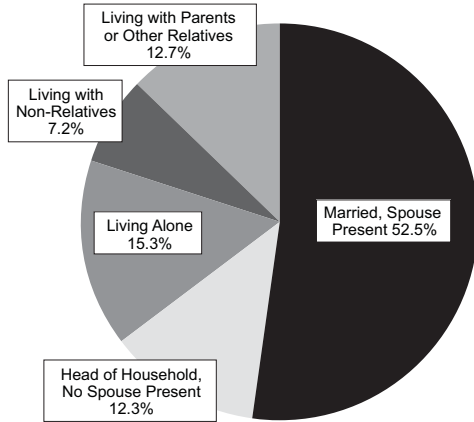
mothers, single women with a parent or other close relative in their house, and women with other household compositions. The remaining women lived alone (15.3 percent), with parents or other relatives (12.7 percent), or with non-relatives (7.2 percent).

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

2006, Black women were most likely to be single heads of households (28.9 percent) while Asian women were least likely (7.5 percent). Hispanic women and women of other races were also more likely than non-Hispanic White and Asian women to be heads of households (16.2 and 17.7 percent, respectively).

Adult Women,* by Household Composition, 2006

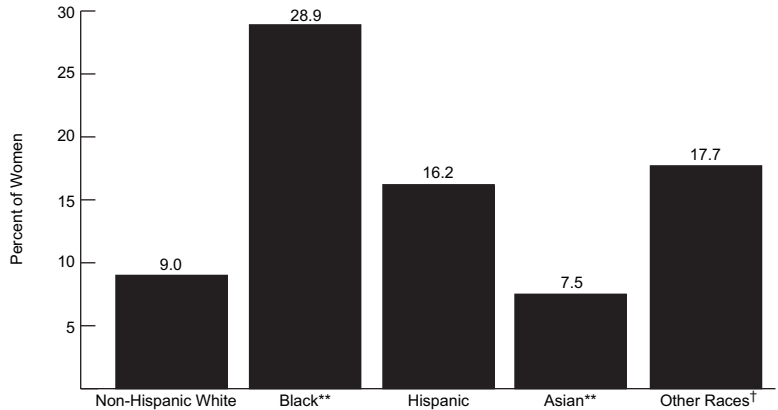
Source I.2: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



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

Women Who Are Heads of Households,* by Race/Ethnicity, 2006

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 2006, nearly 36.5 million people in the United States lived with incomes below the poverty level.² More than 12 percent of women aged 18 years and older (14.1 million) lived in poverty, compared to 8.8 percent of men. With regard to race and ethnicity, non-Hispanic White women were the least likely to experience poverty (9.0 percent), while American Indian/Alaska Native women were the most likely (27.6 percent), followed closely by non-Hispanic Black

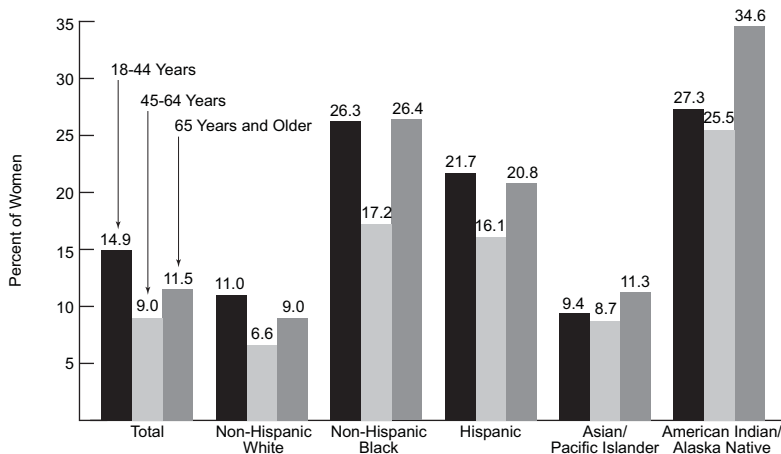
women (23.4 percent) and Hispanic women (20.2 percent; data not shown).

Poverty status varies with age. Among women of each race and ethnicity, those aged 45–64 years were less likely to experience poverty than those aged 18–44 and 65 years and older. For instance, 17.2 percent of non-Hispanic Black women aged 45–64 were in poverty in 2006, compared to more than 26 percent of non-Hispanic Black women aged 18–44 and 65 years and older.

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 (9.4 versus 6.2 percent). Men in families with no spouse present were considerably less likely to have family incomes below the poverty level than women in families with no spouse present (12.0 versus 25.1 percent).

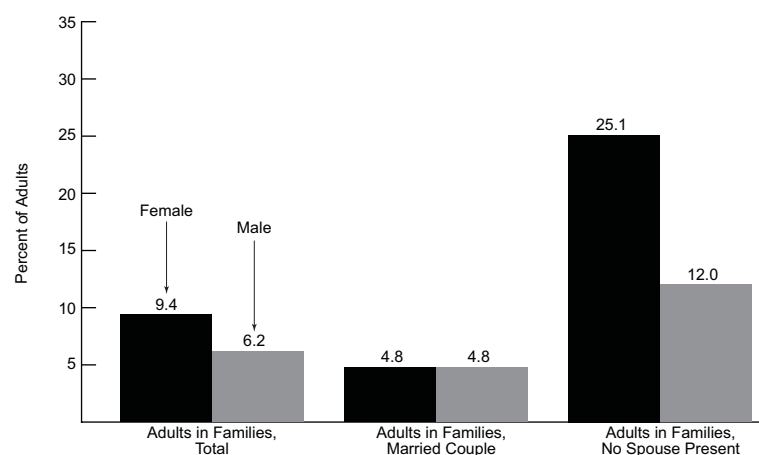
Women Aged 18 and Older Living Below the Poverty Level,* by Race/Ethnicity and Age, 2006

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



Adults in Families* Living Below the Poverty Level,** by Household Type and Sex, 2006

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



*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$20,444 for a family of four in 2006.

*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 \$20,444 for a family of four in 2006.

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.³ Food security is measured through a series of indicators such as whether people worry that food would run out before there would be money to buy more; whether an individual or his/her family cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food; and whether an individual or his/her family ever went a whole day without eating as there was not enough food.

In 2006, an estimated 35.5 million people lived in households that were classified as not fully food secure. Households or persons experiencing food insecurity may be categorized as experiencing low

food security or very low food security (formerly referred to as “food insecurity with hunger”). Low food security generally indicates multiple food access issues, while very low food security indicates reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food. Periods of low or very low food security may be occasional or episodic, placing the members of a household at greater nutritional risk due to insufficient access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods.

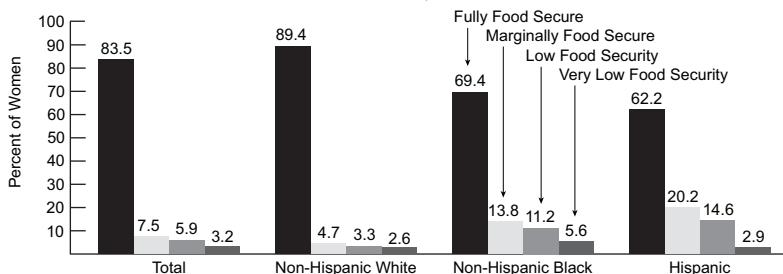
In 2005–2006, nearly 17 percent of women were not fully food secure, and this percentage varied by race and ethnicity. Among women, non-Hispanic Whites were most likely to be fully food secure (89.4 percent), while Hispanics were

least likely (62.2 percent). Non-Hispanic Black women had the highest rate of very low food security (5.6 percent), and Hispanic women had the highest rates of being marginally food secure and having low food security (20.2 and 14.6 percent, respectively).

Food security status also varies by household composition. While adult men and women living alone had similar rates of food insecurity in 2006, female-headed households with no spouse present were more likely than male heads of households with no spouse present to experience food insecurity (30.4 versus 17.0 percent, respectively).

Food Security Status of Women Aged 18 and Older, by Race/Ethnicity,* 2005–2006

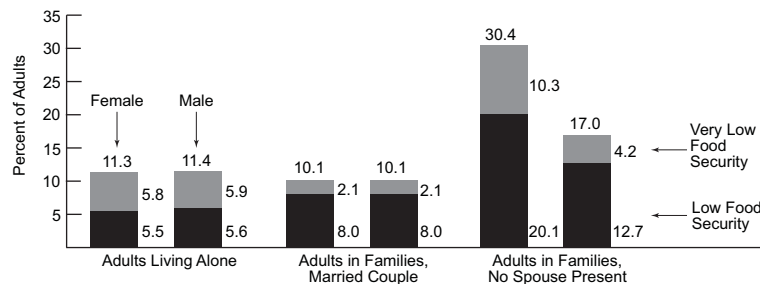
Source I.4: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey



*The sample of Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indian/Alaska Natives, persons of more than one race, and persons of all other races not specified were too small to produce reliable estimates.

Food Security Status Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Household Composition* and Sex, 2006

Source I.5: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service



*Percentages may not add to totals due to rounding.

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 (FSP) helps low-income individuals purchase food. In 2006, nearly 13.0 million adults participated in the FSP; of these, more than 8.8 million (68 percent) were women. Of these women, more than 4 million (almost half) were in the 18- to 35-year-old age group.

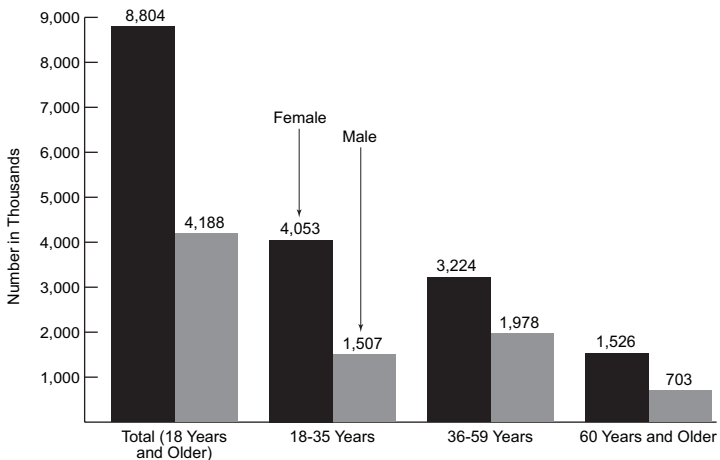
Female-headed households with children make up nearly one-third of households that rely on food stamps, and represent nearly 60 percent of food stamp households with children (data not shown).

The Special Supplemental Nutrition 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 (75.0 percent); however, the program also serves more than 2 million pregnant women and mothers, representing 25.0 percent of WIC participants. During the years 1992–2006, the number of women participating in WIC increased by 65 percent, and it continues to rise.

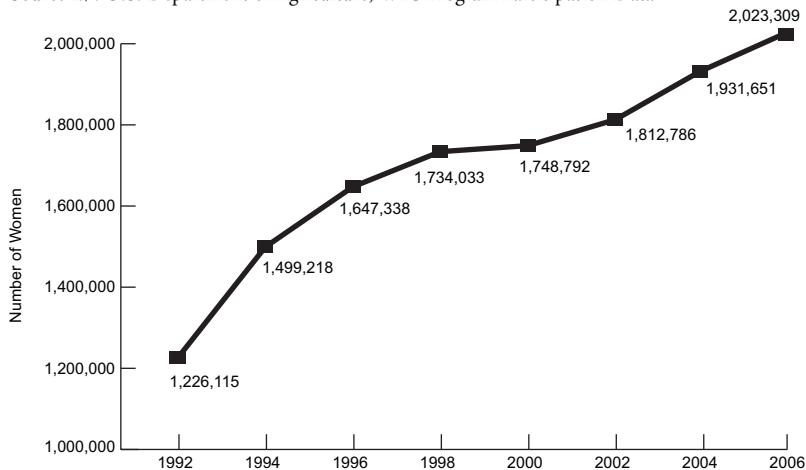
Adult Recipients of Food Stamps, by Age and Sex, 2006

Source I.6: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Stamp Quality Control Sample



Women Participating in WIC,* 1992–2006

Source I.7: 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.

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

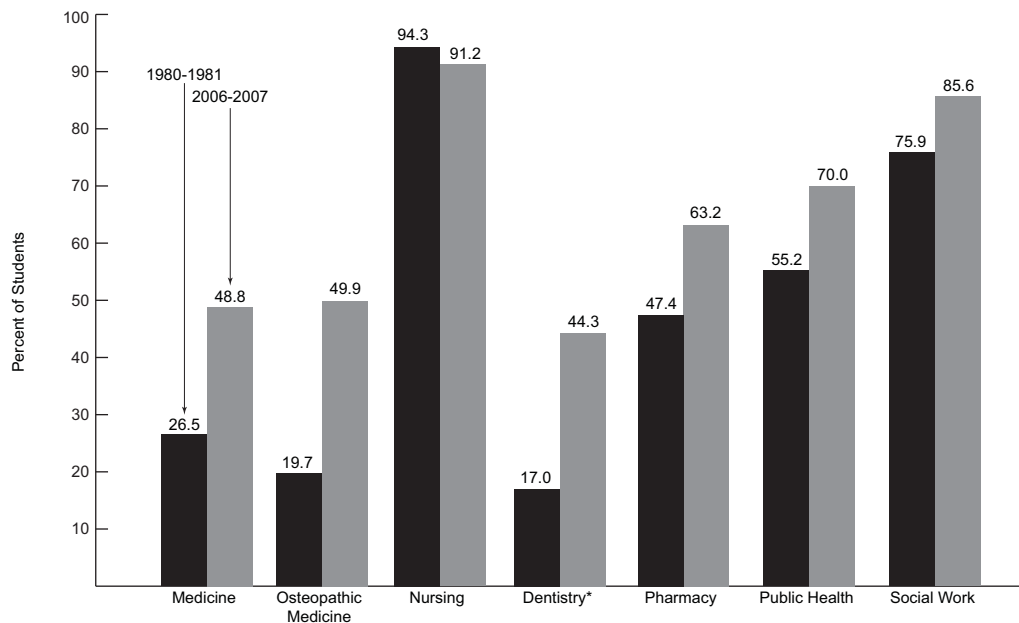
nursing, have been predominantly female. Over the past several decades, these disparities have narrowed, and in some cases reversed. In 1980–1981, 47.4 percent of pharmacy students were women, while in the fall of 2006, women represented more than 63 percent of pharmacy

students. Even in fields where men are still in the majority, the representation of female students has grown. In 1980–1981, only 26.5 percent of medical students were women, compared to nearly one-half (48.8 percent) of students in the fall of 2006. Similar gains have been made in the fields of osteopathic medicine and dentistry, where the most recent data indicate that 49.9 and 44.3 percent of students, respectively, were women, compared to 19.7 and 17.0 percent in 1980–1981.

During the 2006–2007 academic year, female students represented a large majority in graduate public health (70.0 percent) and social work programs (85.6 percent). 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 1980–1981 academic year, 94.3 percent of graduate students in nursing programs were female, while in the fall of 2006, females represented 91.2 percent of graduate students in nursing programs. Women also represent a majority of students studying optometry (64.2 percent) and dietetics (91 percent; data not shown). Comparative data for these programs were not available for the 1980–1981 academic year.

Women in Schools for Selected Health Professions, 1980–1981 and 2006–2007

Source I.8: Professional Associations



*Most recent data for dentistry are from the 2005–2006 school year.

EDUCATIONAL DEGREES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

The number of post-secondary educational degrees awarded to women rose from just over half a million in the 1969–1970 academic year to nearly 1.7 million in 2004–2005. 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 1969–1970, men earned a majority of every type of post-secondary degree, while in 2004–2005, women earned more than half of all associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees and

nearly 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 1969–1970 to 49.8 percent in 2004–2005. In 2004–2005, the total number of women earning their first professional degree (43,440) was 23 times greater than in 1969–1970 (1,841).

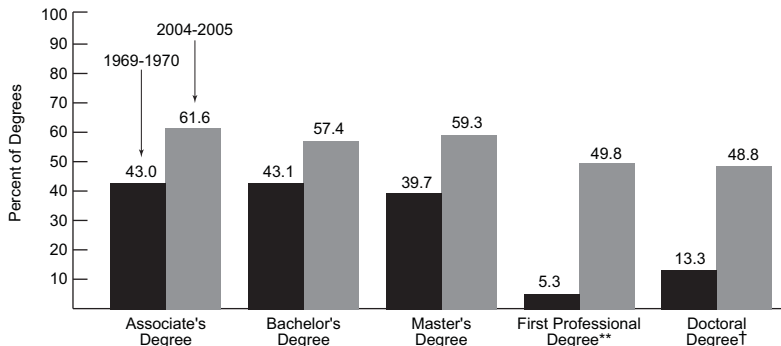
Although sex disparities in education have almost disappeared, there is still a disparity among instructional staff in degree-granting institutions. In fall 2005, only 40.6 percent of full-time instructional faculty were women. While women accounted for more than half of all full-time

instructors and lecturers, they made up only 25.1 percent of professors and less than 39 percent of associate professors.

Among female instructors, a significant racial and ethnic disparity exists as well: 78.1 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 86.8 percent of full-time female staff, compared to 4.7 percent for non-Hispanic Black women and 2.6 percent for Hispanic women (data not shown).

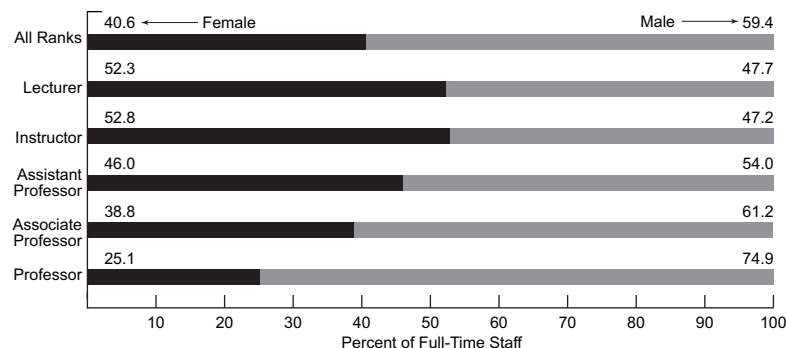
Degrees Awarded to Women,* by Type, 1969–1970 and 2004–2005

Source I.9: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



Full-Time Instructional Staff in Degree-Granting Institutions, by Academic Rank and Sex, Fall 2005

Source I.9: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



*Remaining percentage of degrees were 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 (LL.B. or J.D.), and theological professions (M.Div. or M.H.L.) †Includes Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.) and 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.). Does not include first-professional degrees.

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

In 2007, 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 1970.⁴ In 2006, females accounted for 46.5 percent of workers, while males accounted for 53.5 percent.

The representation of females in the labor force varies greatly by occupational sector. In 2006, women accounted for 63.1 percent of sales and office workers, but only 3.5 percent of construc-

tion, extraction, maintenance, and repair workers. Other positions which were more commonly held by women than men included service jobs (56.5 percent) and management, professional, and related jobs (51.1 percent). Women were the minority in production, transportation, and material moving (23.2 percent); farming, fishing, and forestry (20.3 percent); and in the military (14.6 percent). In 2006, a total of 165,231 women were on active duty in the armed services.

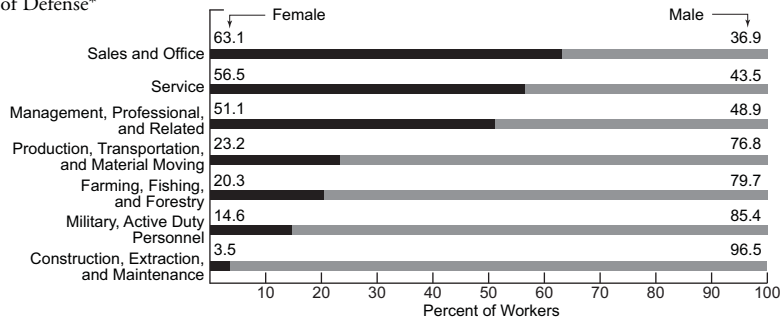
Women are disproportionately represented among lower-income workers. Among workers aged 16 and older, more than 55 percent of those earning less than \$25,000 per year were women,

while 69 percent of those earning more than \$50,000 per year were men (data not shown).

Annual earnings by women aged 16 and older vary greatly by race and ethnicity. In 2006, 24.4 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander women earned more than \$50,000, compared to 8.4 and 8.5 percent of Hispanic and American Indian/ Alaska Native women, respectively. The proportion of female workers earning less than \$25,000 ranged from 68.2 percent of Hispanic women to 47.7 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders. More than half of Black, non-Hispanic White, and American Indian/Alaska Native women earned less than \$25,000.

Workforce Representation in Selected Occupational Sectors, by Sex, 2006

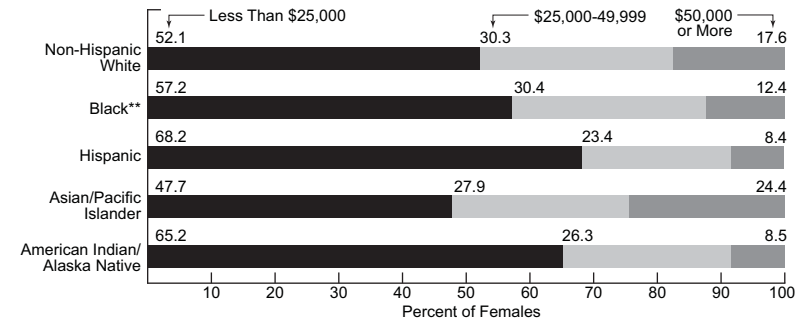
Sources I.1, I.10: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; U.S. Department of Defense*



*Military enlistment data are from the U.S. Department of Defense; all other from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Annual Earning Levels of Females Aged 16 and Older,* by Race/Ethnicity, 2006

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



*Estimates have not been adjusted for area/region of employment or other factors that may influence earnings levels. **May include Hispanics.