

# **W**e the American... --- **Women**

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BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

## Acknowledgments

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# **e, the American Women**

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## **Introduction**

*We, the American Women, have experienced dramatic changes over the last three decades. We are increasingly delaying marriage and childbirth to attend college and establish careers. College enrollment of women is now near that of men, but we still choose subjects of study that are different from those of men and less likely to lead to higher-paying jobs.*

*More of us are in the labor force than ever before and we are more likely to have continuous lifetime work experience. There has been a remarkable increase in the proportion of mothers who work. This is partly a result of noneconomic factors such as changes in the attitudes of society toward working mothers and the desires of women themselves, as well as economic factors such as inflation, recession, and unemployment of husbands.*

*Most of us meet the usual demands of housework and family care in addition to our work in the labor force. The responsibilities of work and home life have changed little for most married men, while for most wives, home responsibilities follow traditional patterns despite the profound change in their lives outside their families.*

*We remain in a secondary economic status despite unprecedented change. Over the past few years, we have been spending more years prior to marriage supporting ourselves; in marriage, we have been contributing more to the household income, and a greater number of us have been rearing children alone, often with little or no financial help.*

*The future course of women is uncertain and remains a challenge to the American economic, political, and social system, and to the American women themselves.*

**Overall, we outnumber men by 6 million.**

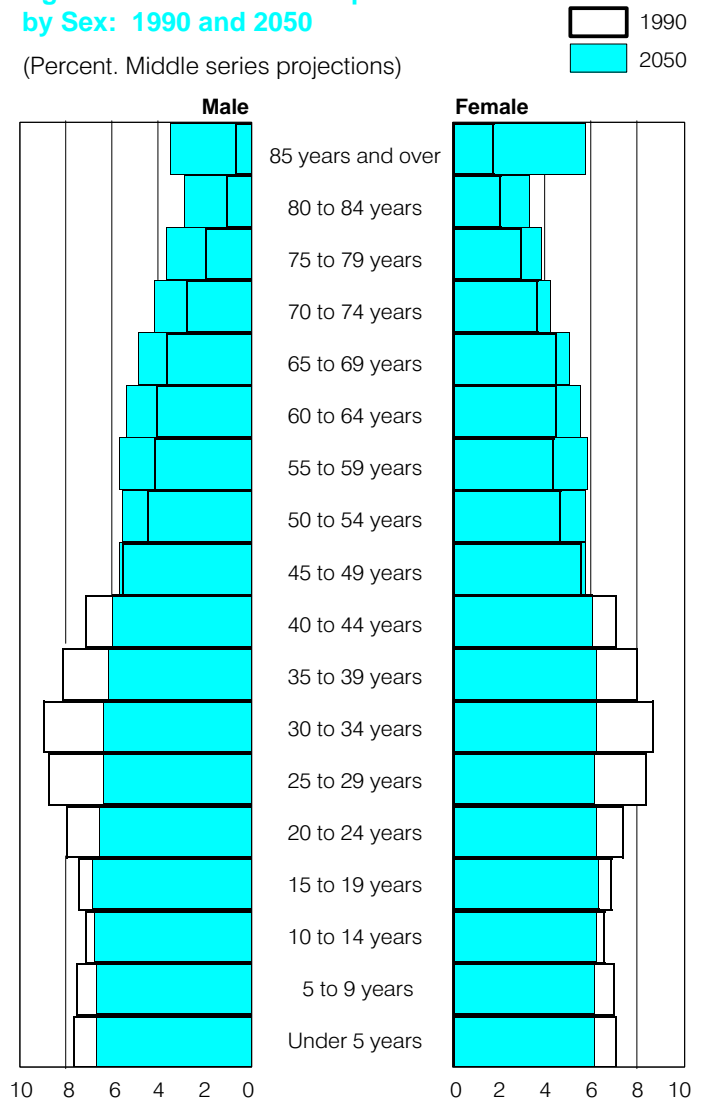
In 1990, there were 127,470,455 women in the Nation. That is about 11 million more than a decade earlier. By 2050, there would be 383 million people, about 195 million females. The Baby Boom bulge would have disappeared and the population pyramid would look more like a sky scraper.

In 1990, beginning at age 40, women outnumbered men. The most notable difference occurred in the elderly ages (65 years old and over). Elderly women outnumbered elderly men 3 to 2 (18.7 million versus 12.6 million).

In 2050, the number of elderly women would be 43 million, more than double the number in 1990. About 11 million elderly women would be among the oldest-old (85 years old and over).

Figure 1.  
**Age Distribution of the Population by Sex: 1990 and 2050**

(Percent. Middle series projections)



**From age 25 to 34, we are about the same number as men.**

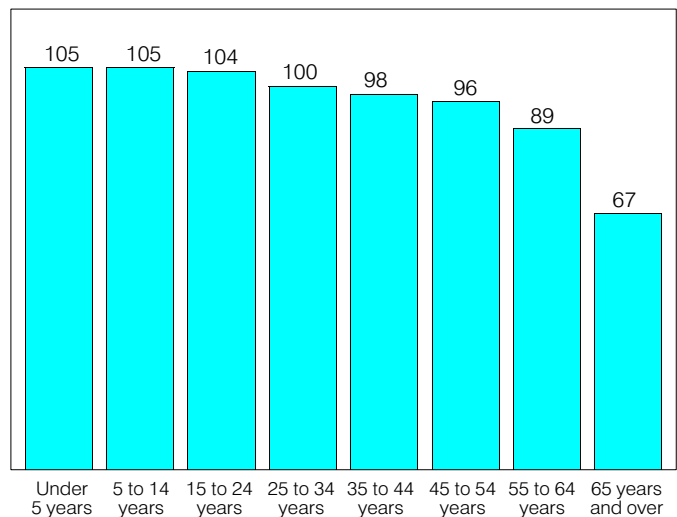
The sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) is a summary measure of the sex composition of the population. More males than females are born each year, and during childhood, there are more males than females.

Males have higher death rates at every age than females. Typically during the young adult years the sex ratio begins to even out.

In 1990, for the 25-to-34-year old group, the proportion of males and females was about the same. For those under 14 years old, the sex ratio was about 105, but for those 65 years old and over, the sex ratio was only 67. In general, the sex ratio has remained constant over time.

Figure 2.  
**Sex Ratio of Persons by Age: 1990**

(Males per 100 females)



**Our life expectancy varies by race, but on average we live longer than men.**

As a result of reductions in mortality, there have been impressive increases in life expectancy. Demographers estimate that life expectancy at birth was about 35 years when this Nation was founded and had increased to about 42 years by the mid-1800's.

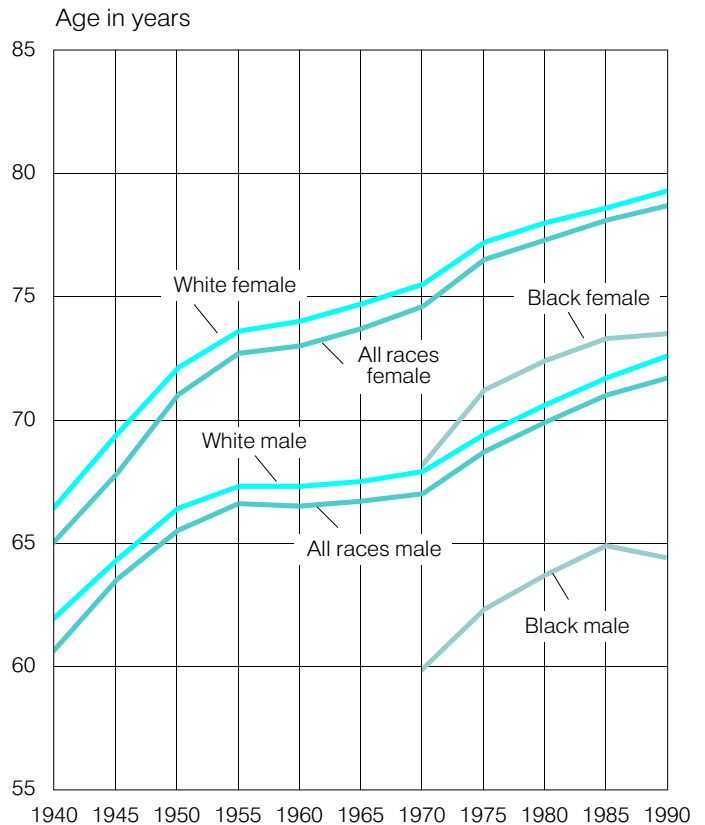
Life expectancy continued to increase dramatically in the first half of the 20th century, primarily because of decreased mortality among the young.

From 1940 to 1990, life expectancy at birth for men increased from 61 years to 72 years; for women, the increase was from 65 years to nearly 79 years.

Life expectancy at birth increased for Black women from 68 years in 1970 to 74 years in 1990 and for White women from 76 years to 79 years.

In the past few decades, the most recent reductions in mortality have occurred among elderly women.

Figure 3.  
**Life Expectancy by Sex and Race:  
1940 to 1990**



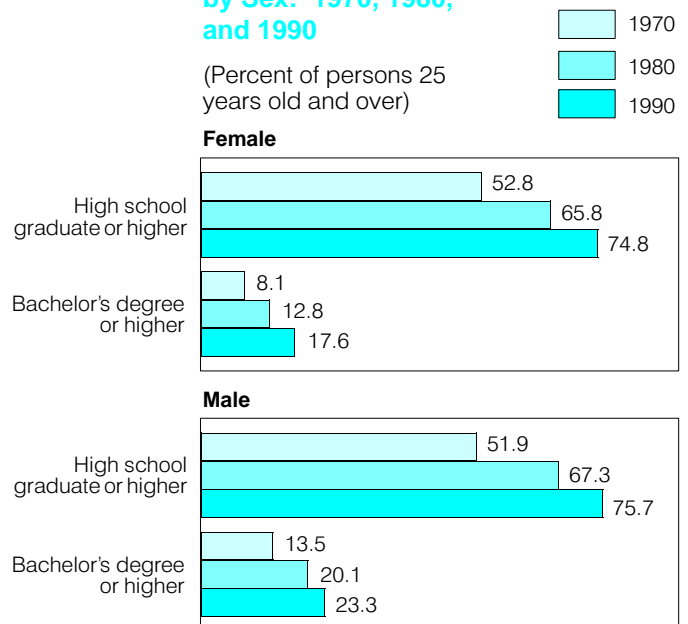
**We are improving our education, especially at the college level.**

As a Nation, a higher proportion of both women and men are earning high school diplomas and college degrees than they did 20 years ago.

In 1990, 75 percent of women and 76 percent of men received a high school diploma. In 1970, about 53 percent of women and 52 percent of men completed high school.

In the last several decades, women have been narrowing the education gap. In 1990, men were more likely to have graduated from college than women (23 percent versus 18 percent). In 1970, 8 percent of women and 14 percent of men completed college.

Figure 4.  
**Educational Attainment  
by Sex: 1970, 1980,  
and 1990**



**More of us are enrolled in college particularly in our twenties and thirties.**

Women have made significant strides in increasing their level of education, making them better qualified for jobs than ever before.

Since 1980, college enrollment of all women 15 to 39 years old has neared that for men, narrowing the significant gap of a decade earlier.

In 1990, about 80 percent of women 15 to 19 years old were enrolled in school compared with about 75 percent in 1980. The most striking difference occurred for women in their thirties. In 1990, 1 of every 5 women were enrolled in school.

Women have been more likely to attend school part time while working or raising families or both.

**We earn over half of all bachelor's degrees.**

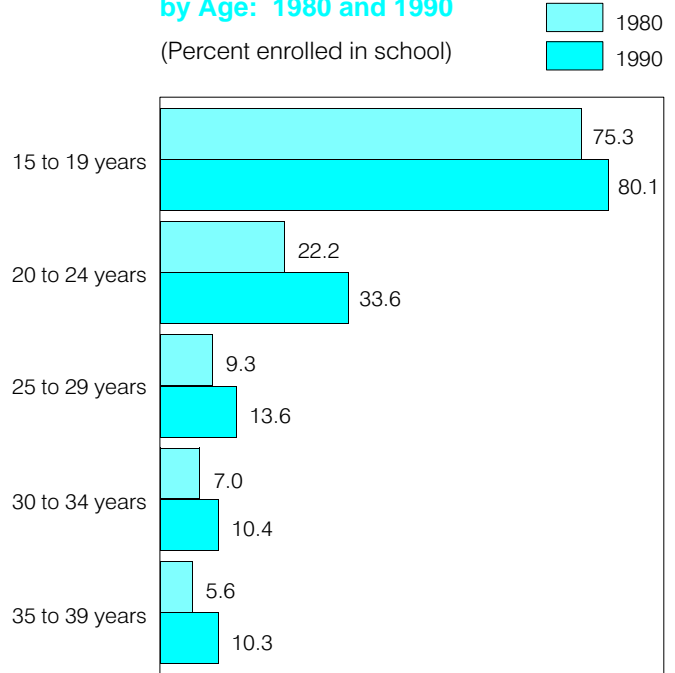
Women received 53 percent of all the bachelor's degrees awarded in 1990. In 1970, women received 43 percent of all bachelor's degrees conferred.

Women are entering male-dominated fields of study in ever-increasing numbers. For example, in 1970, less than 1 percent of all bachelor's degrees in engineering went to women, but by 1990, 14 percent of all such degrees were awarded to women.

In 1970, relatively few women majored in business and only 9 percent of business degrees went to women. By 1990, almost as many women as men were business majors and fully 47 percent of all business degrees went to women.

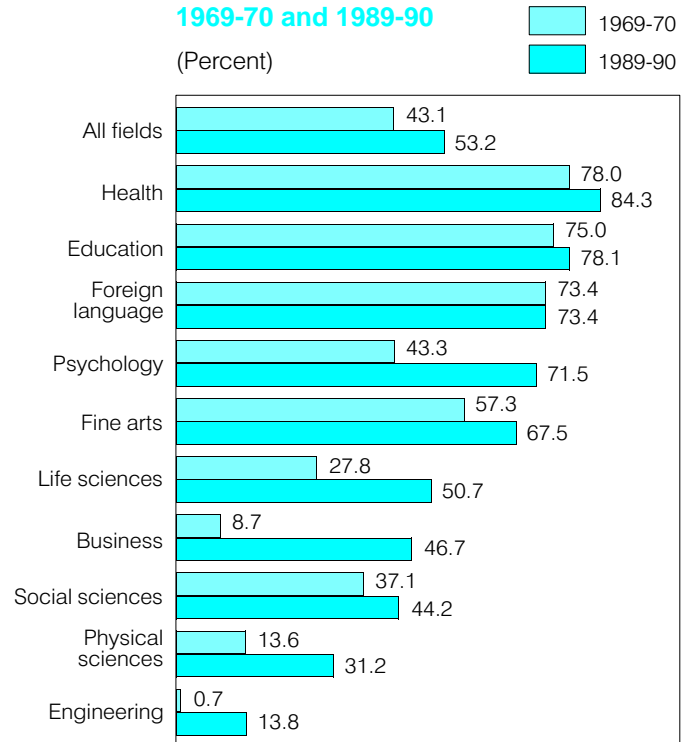
Fields such as fine arts and foreign languages continue to be female dominated. However, fewer degrees were awarded in these fields in 1990 than in 1970; women are majoring in fields that offer higher financial remuneration.

Figure 5. School Enrollment for Women by Age: 1980 and 1990



Source: 1990 Census of Population, Public Use Microdata Sample.

Figure 6. Bachelor's Degrees Conferred to Women: 1969-70 and 1989-90



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 1971*, table 117, and *Digest of Education Statistics, 1992*, table 234.

### Many of us are delaying marriage.

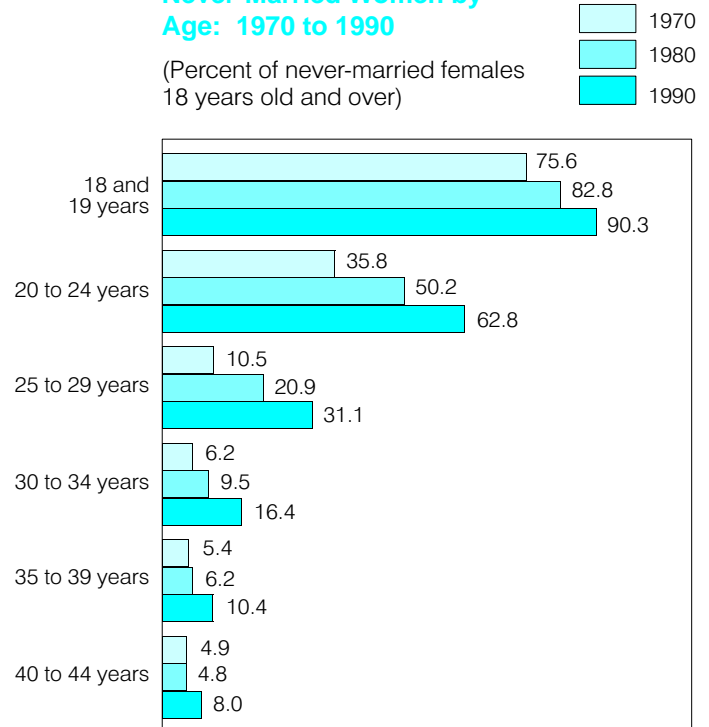
Marriage and childbirth are being delayed while women go to college or establish themselves in the labor force. In 1990, 63 percent of all women in their early twenties had not yet married compared with only 36 percent in 1970.

The most dramatic increase in the proportion of never-married women occurred among women in their late twenties and early thirties. In 1970, 11 percent of women 25 to 29 years old and only 6 percent of women 30 to 34 years old had not married. By 1990, the proportion nearly tripled to 31 percent for women in their late twenties and 16 percent for women in their early thirties.

Figure 7.

### Never-Married Women by Age: 1970 to 1990

(Percent of never-married females 18 years old and over)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1992.

### Increasing proportions of us are divorced.

Divorce has become much more common in the past 20 years. In 1970, just 4 percent of women and 3 percent of men reported their current marital status as divorced. By 1990, 10 percent of women and 7 percent of men were divorced.

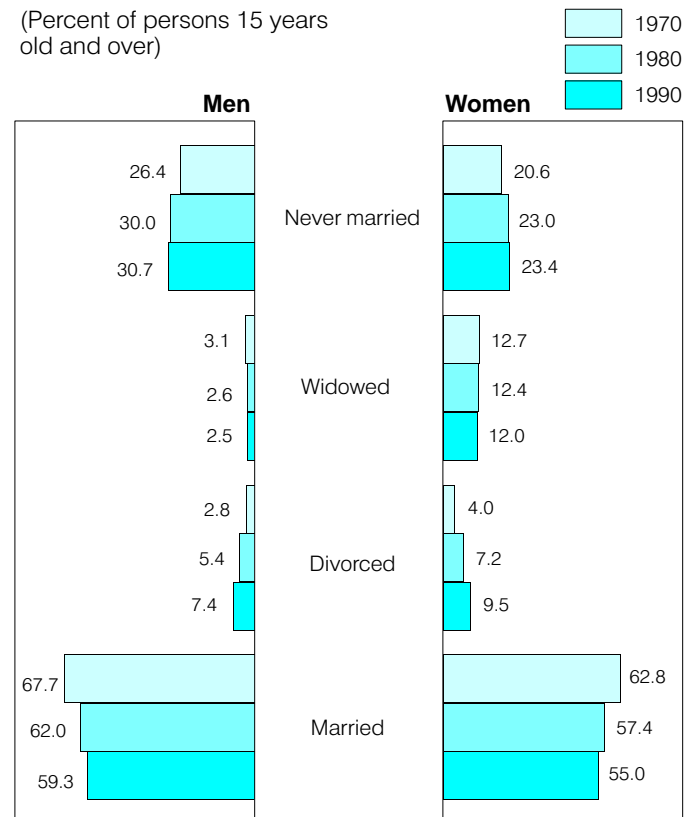
The proportion of women who had never married also increased between 1970 and 1990, from 21 percent to 23 percent. At the same time, the proportion of married women decreased from 63 percent to 55 percent.

Because women live longer than men, it is not surprising that 12 percent of women and only 3 percent of men reported their marital status as widowed.

Figure 8.

### Marital Status by Sex: 1970, 1980, and 1990

(Percent of persons 15 years old and over)



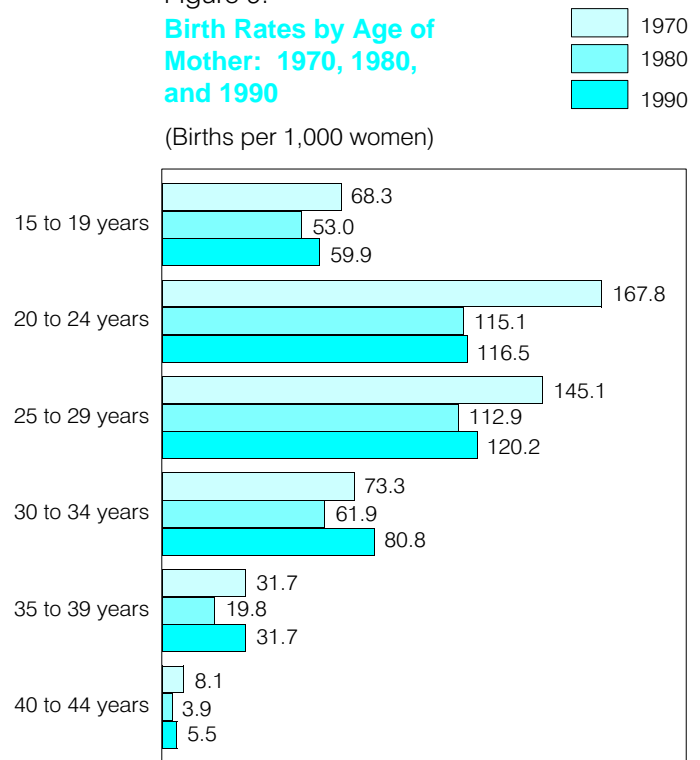
## We are having children later in life.

In 1990, there were about 4,158,200 babies born in the United States. This number was the highest reported since 1962 (4,167,362), near the end of the Baby Boom.

In 1990, the birth rate for women 30 to 34 years old was the highest it has been in the past two decades (81 per 1,000 women). During the past decade, birth rates for women in this age group have increased more than any other age group. Women 35 to 39 had the next highest increase. Their birth rate was the highest it has been since 1971.

Between 1980 and 1990, women 20 to 24 years old experienced the smallest increase in birth rates (115.1 to 116.5).

Figure 9.  
Birth Rates by Age of Mother: 1970, 1980, and 1990



Source: Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 41, No. 9 Supplement, Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1990 (February 25, 1993).

## Many of us are maintaining families without a husband.

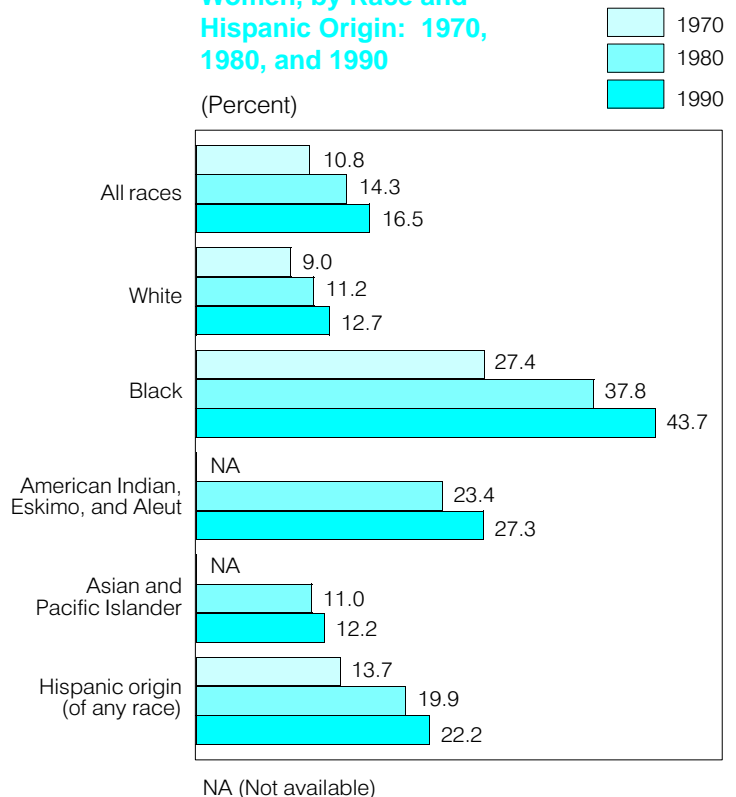
The proportion of families maintained by women has increased steadily since 1970, although the increases in the 1980's were at a slower rate.

The proportion of families maintained by women is higher for Blacks than for any other race group or women of Hispanic origin. Between 1970 and 1990, Blacks also had the greatest increase in the proportion of families maintained by women.

In 1990, the racial groups with the smallest proportions of families maintained by women were Whites (13 percent) and Asian and Pacific Islanders (12 percent).

The proportion of families maintained by Hispanic women increased from 14 percent in 1970 to 22 percent in 1990.

Figure 10.  
Families Maintained by Women, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1970, 1980, and 1990





**In 1990, 13.4 million of us lived alone.**

In 1990, 13.4 million female householders and 9.2 million male householders lived alone. Persons living alone accounted for one-fourth of all households in 1990.

Elderly women were more likely than elderly men to live by themselves. In 1990, 52 percent of all women living alone were elderly, while only 21 percent of men living alone were elderly.

Only 21 percent of women living alone were 25 to 44 years old compared with 48 percent of males living alone. Women in this age group who were not currently married were more likely to have children in their households than their male counterparts.

**We continue to increase our participation in the labor force.**

The majority of adult women are at work or looking for work. In 1990, the number of women with full time year round jobs was 28.7 million. The proportion of women 16 years old and over in the labor force increased from 50 percent in 1980 to 57 percent in 1990.

The increased employment of women is a central issue in the consideration of the economic status of women in our society. Despite the fact that there has been no discernible reduction in household and family responsibilities, women have joined the labor force in record numbers.

Women of every race group, as well as Hispanic women (who may be of any race), increased their labor force participation rates between 1980 and 1990. In 1980 and 1990, Asian and Pacific Islander women and Black women had the highest labor force participation rates. American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut women had the lowest. The range of variation among the race groups diminished between 1980 and 1990, however.

Figure 11.  
**Persons Living Alone by Sex and Age: 1970, 1980, and 1990**  
(Percent)

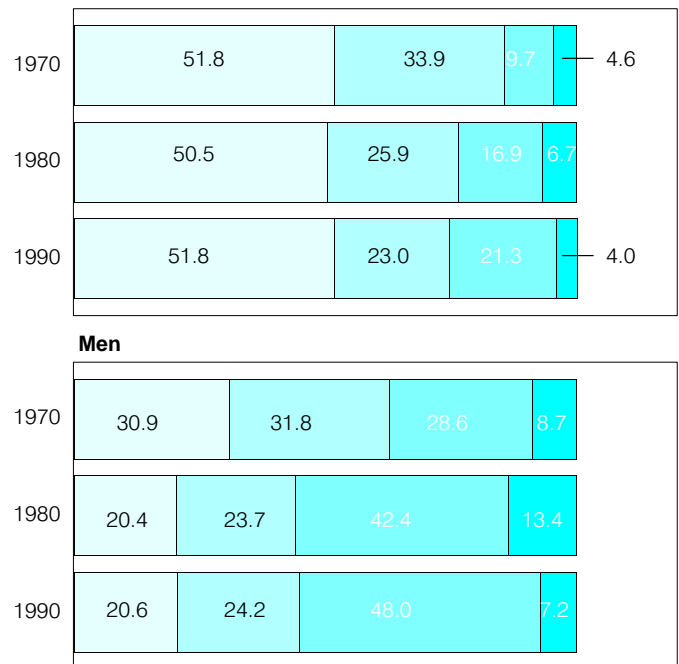
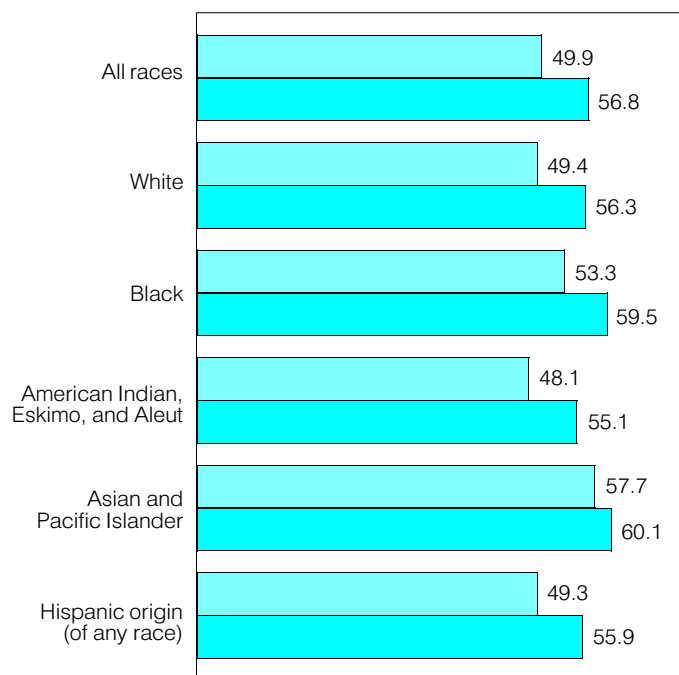


Figure 12.  
**Labor Force Participation Rates of Women by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1980 and 1990**  
(Females 16 years old and over)



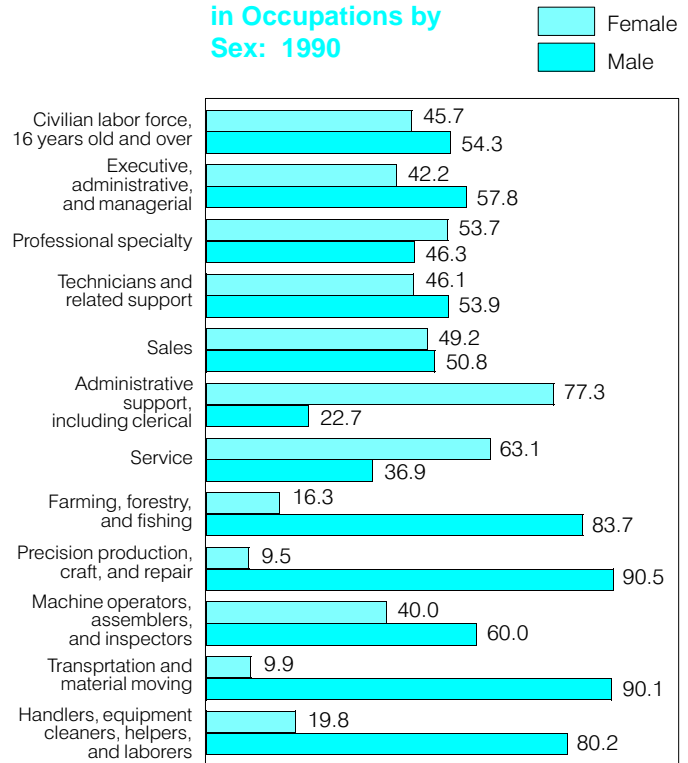
**We are not equally represented in all professions.**

The distribution of both women and men across occupations has changed, sometimes dramatically, since 1970. Despite some evidence of female carpenters and male nurses, the overall labor market remains sharply segregated by sex.

Even though women have made progress in entering occupations predominately held by men in the past, especially managerial and professional specialty occupations, the majority of women are still in traditional “female” occupations.

Women continue to be overrepresented in clerical (administrative support) and service occupations and underrepresented in production, craft, repair, and labor occupations.

Figure 13.  
**Percentage of Persons in Occupations by Sex: 1990**



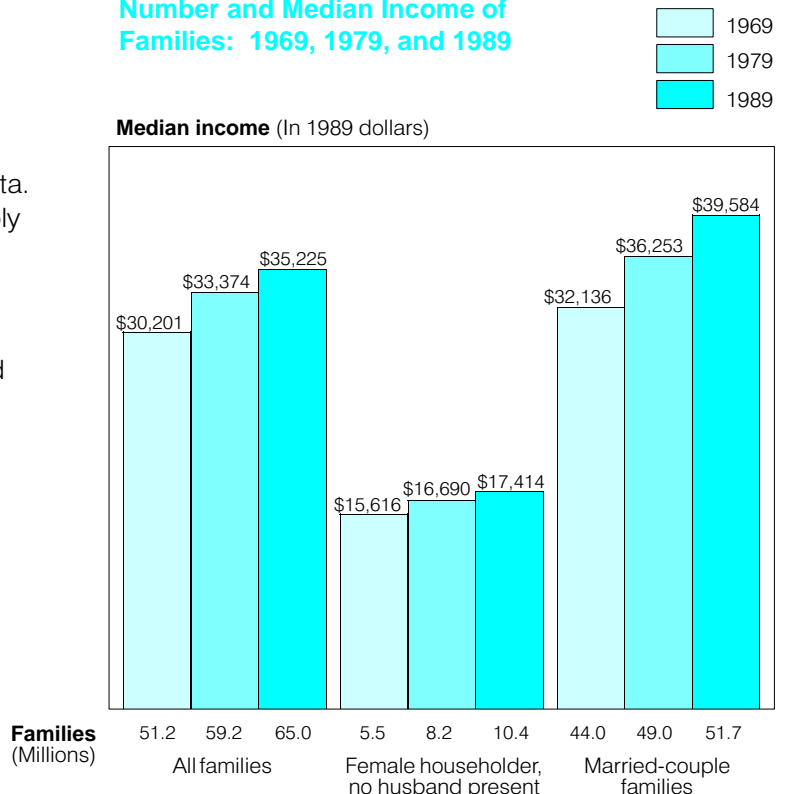
**Those of us who maintain families without husbands have significantly lower incomes.**

Few statistics about women reveal as much about their place in the economy as income data. The economic position of women is considerably lower than that of men.

In 1989, the median family income for families with a female householder, no husband present was \$17,414, significantly less than the median family income for married-couple families (\$39,584).

During the 1980's, the median income of married-couple families rose at a faster rate than that of families with a female householder, no husband present.

Figure 14.  
**Number and Median Income of Families: 1969, 1979, and 1989**



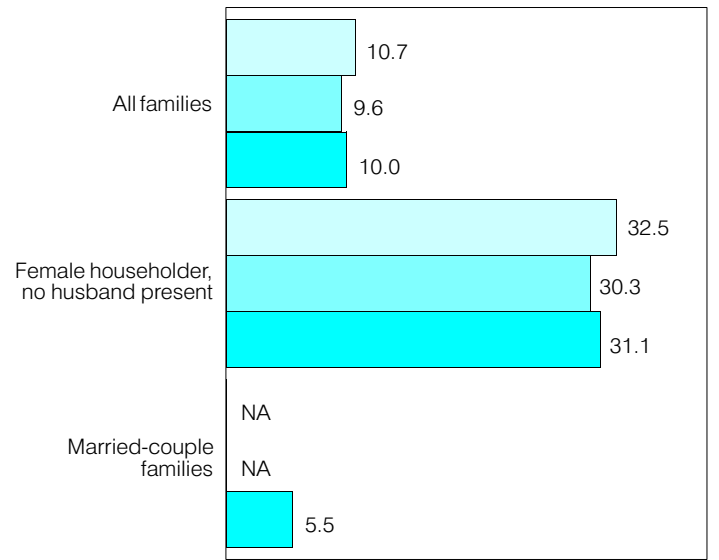
**We are nearly six times as likely to be living in poverty than married-couple families.**

Women who maintain families with no husband present are more likely to be poor than married-couple families. Families maintained by a women had a poverty rate of 31.1 percent in 1989 and accounted for nearly half of all poor families.

Not only is the poverty rate of families maintained by women much higher than that for other families, but also the rate for Black female householders with no husband present is higher than that of their White counterparts.

Since the mid-1960's, even with major changes in the economy over this period, there has been relatively little fluctuation in the poverty rates for families maintained by women.

Figure 15.  
**Poverty Rates of Families by Type: 1969, 1979, 1989**  
(Percent)



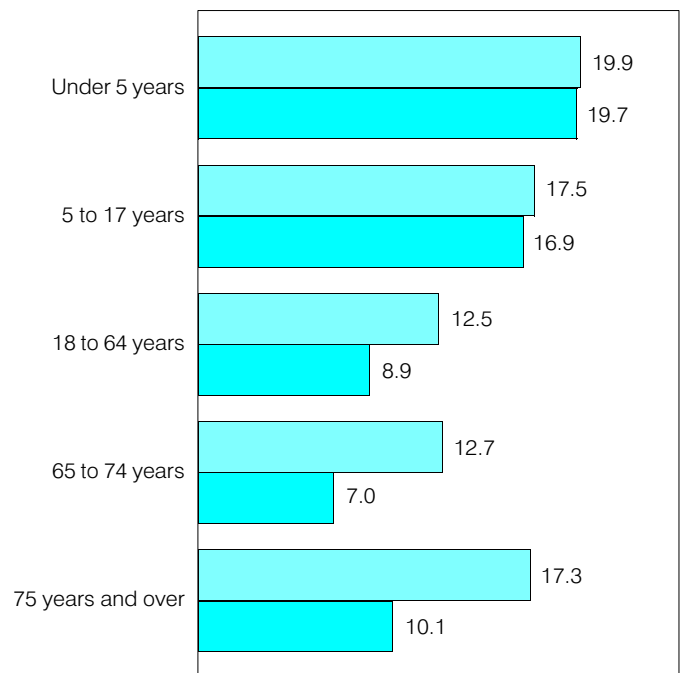
NA (Not available)

**At all age groups, we have higher poverty rates than men.**

Two-thirds of the poor female population in 1989 were either under 18 years old (37 percent) or 65 years old and over (30 percent). The poverty rate for children continues to be higher than that for any other age group and highest for females under 5 years old.

The largest difference between the poverty rates for females and males occurred for the oldest population shown (75 years old and over). The poverty rate for females 75 years old and over was 17.3 percent compared with 10.1 percent for males.

Figure 16.  
**Poverty Rates of Persons by Age and Sex: 1989**



Information in this report is based on the 1990 Census of Population and Housing unless otherwise stated. Estimated population and housing unit totals based on tabulations from only the sample tabulations may differ from the official 100-percent counts. Such differences result, in part, from collecting data from a sample of households rather than all households. Differences also can occur because of the interview situation and the processing rules differing between the 100-percent and sample tabulations. These types of differences are referred to as nonsampling errors.

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