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FP-11-12 First Marriage Rate in the U.S., 2010

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First Marriage Rate in the U.S., 2010

Since 1970, the percentage of Americans who are currently married has declined (FP-10-01). This decline is associated with decades-long increases in the age at first marriage and the proportions of unmarried and never-married adult Americans (Goodwin, P., McGill, B., & Chandra, A., 2009) coupled with a relatively stable divorce rate over the same time period (FP-11-09). Taken together, these trends contribute to an overall decrease in the marriage rate in the U.S. (FP-09-01).

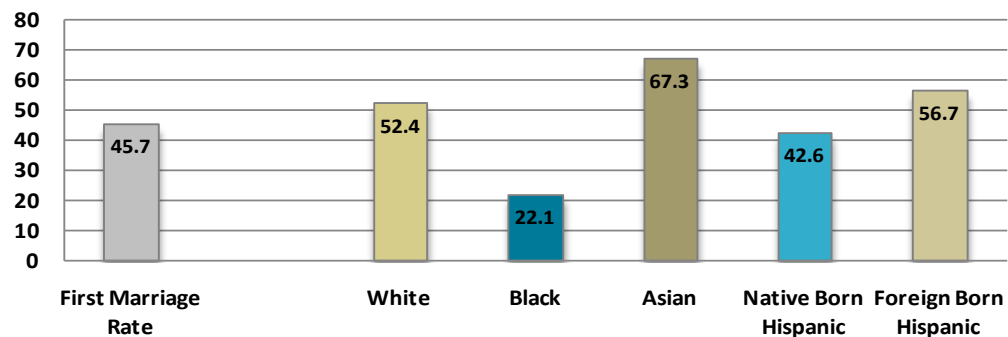
- In 2010, the overall marriage rate was 35 per 1,000—roughly 35 marriages occurred per 1,000 unmarried women aged 18 and older. Most of these marriages were first marriages (70%).
- In 2010, approximately 5% of never-married women married for the first time. The rate of first marriage in the U.S. was 45.7 per 1,000 never-married women aged 18 years and older (Figure 1). This reflects a decrease from 2008 with a rate of first marriage of 49.8 per 1,000 unmarried women aged 18 and older.

Note: This profile limits analyses to the female population aged 18 and older because of the focus on educational attainment. Similar patterns by educational attainment exist when the population is limited to women aged 15 and older or women aged 25 and older.

First Marriage Rates of Women by Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 2010

- Asian women have the highest rate of first marriages (67.3 per 1,000) while Black women have the lowest (22.1 per 1,000) across all races and ethnicities. In other words, roughly 7% of never-married adult Asian women married for the first time in 2010 compared to 2% of Black women.
- Approximately 5% of never-married White women married for the first time in 2010 (52.4 per 1,000).
- Among Hispanic women, the first marriage rate for native born Hispanics (42.6 per 1,000) aligns with the overall first marriage rate. Foreign born Hispanic women's first marriage rate is considerably higher at 56.7 per 1,000.

Figure 1. First Marriage Rate per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010

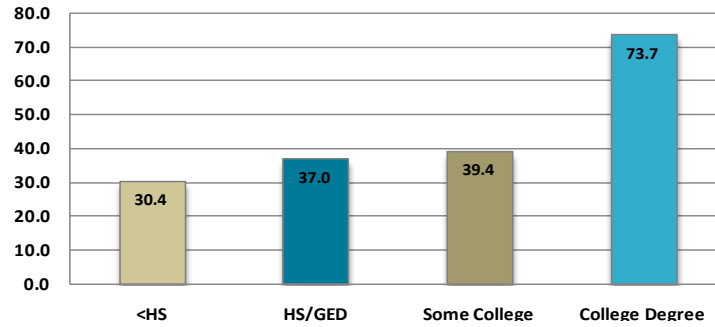
Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

First Marriage Rates of Women by Educational Attainment, 2010

Educational attainment is positively associated with marriage. College educated individuals are more likely to ever marry than the less educated (Goldstein and Kenney, 2001).

- Figure 2 illustrates a positive association between education and the first marriage rate.
 - Women with less than a high school education have the lowest first marriage rate at 30.4 per 1,000.
 - First marriage rates are highest for those who have completed a Bachelor's degree (73.7 per 1,000).
 - Unmarried women who attain a high school diploma/GED or some post high school education but have not earned a Bachelor's degree ('some college') share similar rates of first marriage (approximately 37 and 39.4 per 1,000 respectively).

Figure 2. First Marriage Rates per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2010



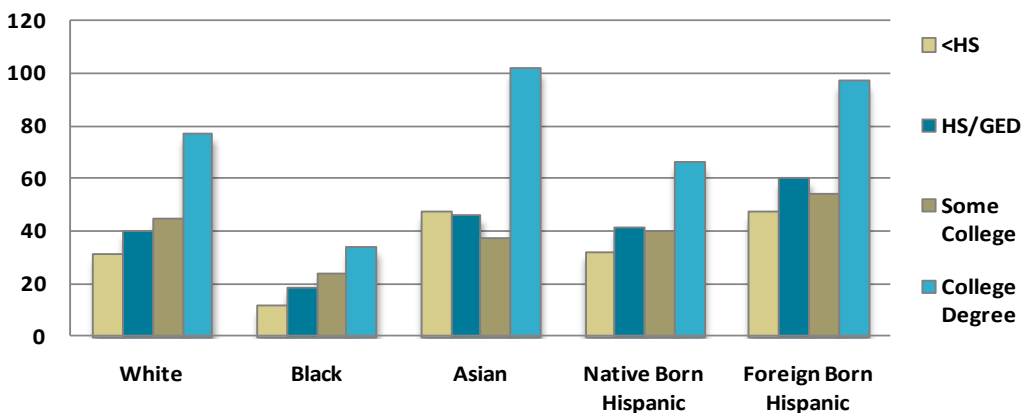
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010

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Educational Attainment and Racial and Ethnic Variation in the Rate of First Marriage, 2010

- Across all racial and ethnic groups, the highest rate of first marriage is among women with a college degree.
- Among the women who attain a college degree, Asian women have the highest rate of first marriage (101.9 per 1,000), and Black women have the lowest (34.5 per 1,000).
- Foreign-born Hispanic women—compared to all other women—have higher first marriage rates at all educational attainment levels except college degree.

Figure 3. First Marriage Rates per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 2010



Source: American Community Survey, 2010

Note: This graph does not include racial categories comprising American Indians, Alaska Native Tribes, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders and/or a combination of these racial/ethnic groups, as they only constitute 3% of the overall sample.

Goldstein, J. R., & Kenney, C. T. (2001). Marriage delayed or marriage forgone? New cohort forecasts for first marriage for U.S. women. *American Sociological Review*, 66(4), 506-519. doi:10.2307/3088920

Goodwin, P., McGill, B., & Chandra, A. (2009). Who marries and when? Age at first marriage in the United States: 2002. *NCHS Data Brief*, no 19. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

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