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## FP-14-11 Marital Duration at Divorce, 2012

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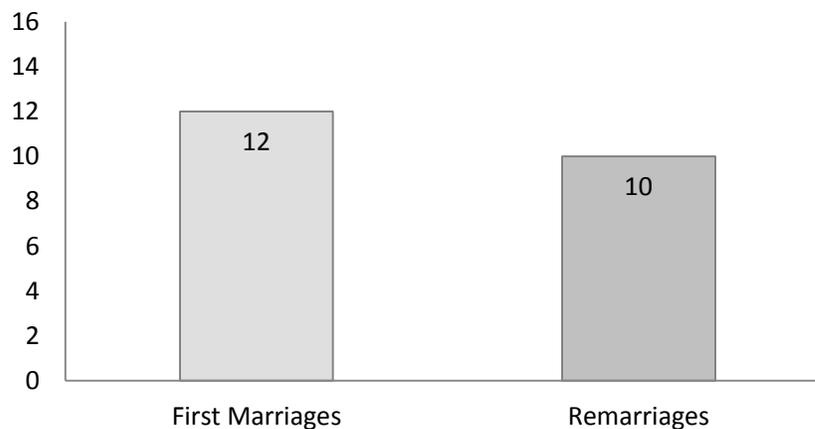
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How long do marriages typically last before ending through divorce? The seven-year itch was an accurate characterization of past divorces (Kreider and Ellis, 2011). Using data from the American Community Survey (ACS) we assess whether today's divorces adhere to this pattern. Beginning in 2008, new questions were added to the marital history section of the ACS that capture marital duration at the time of divorce for those who divorced in the past year.

- In 2012, the median duration of first marriage (the point at which half of first marriages end) among women aged 15 years and older who reported divorcing in the past 12 months was 12 years (Figure 1). The median duration has increased by one year since 2008 (FP-11-13).
- Half of remarriages ended within 10 years of nuptials. Remarriages end in divorce sooner than first marriages.
- The seven-year itch is actually a 10-12-year itch. Only one-third of today's divorces occurred within the first seven years of marriage (results not shown).

Figure 1. Median Duration of Marriages at Time of Divorce Among Women Aged 15 and Older by Type of Marriage, 2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

\*The ACS asked all respondents in 2012 if they divorced in the past 12 months; therefore, they could have divorced in 2011 or 2012. For ease of discussion, all women who reported divorcing in the past 12 months are considered to have divorced in 2011.

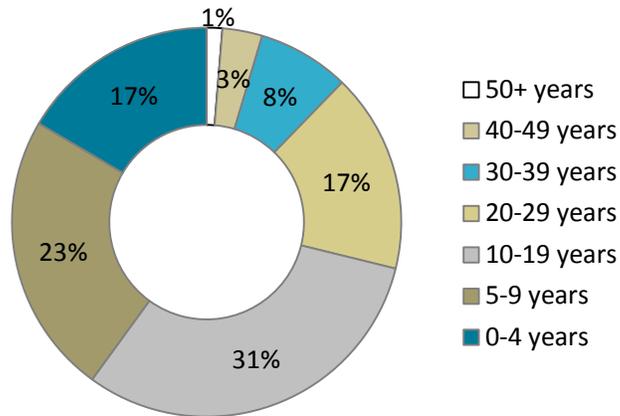
The median duration of marriage for those divorced in the last 12 months = 2012 – last year married. Because the ACS does not provide the month of the last marriage, the actual duration is plus or minus 1 year. This is estimated for female respondents aged 15 years and older who report being divorced in the last 12 months, current marital status is divorced, and have only married once.

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.

## How Long Are Marriages Lasting?

- About one-sixth (17%) of women who divorced in 2012 ended their marriage before their 5th wedding anniversary.
- Among women who divorced in the past 12 months, two-fifths divorced within the first 9 years of marriage.
- Thirty-one percent of women who divorced in 2012 had been married between 10-19 years.
- About 1% of women who divorced in the last year made it past their golden wedding anniversary before divorcing.

Figure 2. Percentage of First Divorces by Duration of Marriage at Time of Divorce Among Women Aged 15 Years and Older, 2012

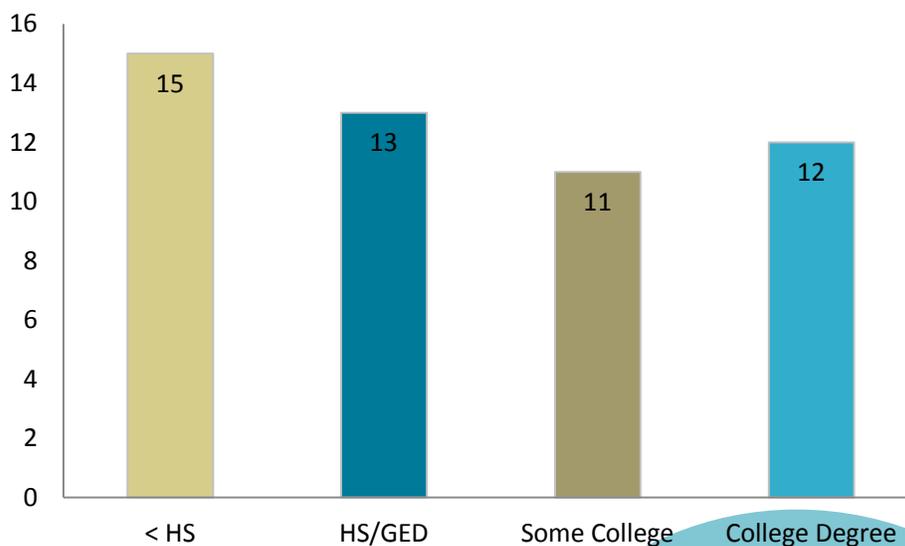


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

## Duration of First Marriage at Divorce and Educational Attainment

- The association between education and median duration of marriage at time of divorce reflects a slight U-shaped distribution (Figure 3). This is not surprising given the curvilinear association of educational attainment by first divorce rate (FP-11-09). Half of the women who have not earned a high school degree or GED and divorced in 2012 did so within 15 years of marrying. In contrast, the median duration of marriage among college educated women who divorced in 2012 was 12 years.
- Women who have attained some education after high school but have not earned a Bachelor's degree ('some college') were the most vulnerable to marital dissolution with a median duration of 11 years.

Figure 3. Median Duration of First Marriages at Time of Divorce Among Women Aged 15 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

### Reference:

Kreider, R. M., & Ellis, R. (2011). Number, timing, and duration of marriages and divorces: 2009. *Current Population Reports*, P70-125, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

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