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FP-14-16 Age Variation in the Divorce Rate, 1990-2012

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Age Variation in the Divorce Rate, 1990-2012

Susan L. Brown, I-Fen Lin, & Krista K. Payne

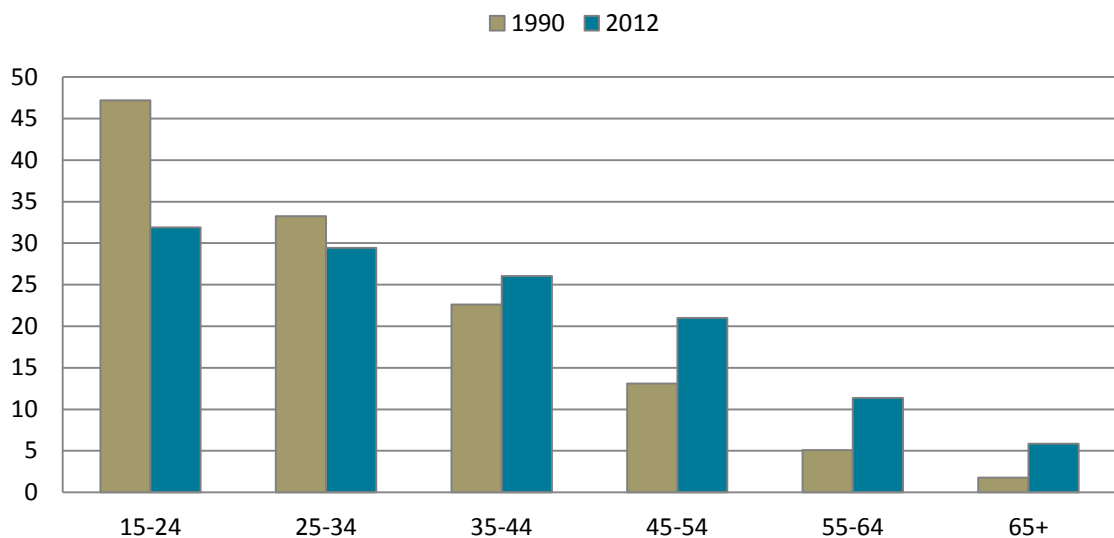
The overall U.S. divorce rate has remained essentially unchanged over the past 20 years. In 1990, 19 people divorced for every 1,000 marrieds versus 18 per 1,000 in 2010. This stability over time belies considerable variation by age group. A recent study indicates the divorce rate among those ages 50 and older doubled since 1990 (Brown & Lin, 2012), which suggests the risk of divorce declined among younger adults. Family Profile [FP-12-05](#) documents the change in the divorce rate between 1990 and 2010 by 10-year age groups. Here we update those findings combining data from the 1990 U.S. Vital Statistics and the 2012 American Community Survey, noting any substantial changes from 2010 to 2012.

In general, the risk of divorce declines with age. The rate of the decline across different age groups is steeper in 1990 than in 2012. The range of the divorce rates across age groups is wider in 1990 than in 2000.

- The divorce rate for adults under age 35 has decreased since 1990.
 - The decline was greatest among those ages 15-24, for whom the divorce rate dropped by 32% from 47 to 32 per 1,000.
- For adults over age 35, the divorce rate has increased, and this growth is most dramatic for the oldest age groups.
 - Among those ages 55-64, the risk of divorce has more than doubled (5 to 11 per 1,000). And for those 65 and older, the rate of divorce has tripled (2 to 6 per 1,000). 

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.

Figure 1. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups, 1990 & 2012



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, VitalStats and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

Reference:

Brown, S. L., & Lin, I.-F., (2012). The gray divorce revolution: Rising divorce among middle-aged and older adults, 1990–2010. *Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences*, 67(6), 731–741, doi:10.1093/geronb/gbs089.

The trends in the divorce rate are similar for men and women. For both groups, the divorce rate declines with age. The range of the divorce rates across age groups is narrower now than in 1990.

- For men and women, the divorce rate has decreased among adults under age 35.
 - The decrease was most evident for the youngest group, ages 15-24, for whom the divorce rate declined by 43% (49 to 28 per 1,000) and 26% (46 to 34 per 1,000) for men and women, respectively.
- For men and women ages 35 and older, the divorce rate has risen. The rise is largest among older adults (ages 55-64 and 65-plus).
 - The increase in the risk of divorce for older adults is much greater for women than men. For women ages 55-64, the divorce rate nearly tripled (4 to 11 per 1,000). For women ages 65 and older, the rate more than quadrupled (1.4 to 6.3 per 1,000). By comparison, the divorce rate among men ages 55-64 doubled (6 to 12 per 1,000) and the rate for men ages 65 and older more than doubled (2.1 to 5.5 per 1,000) since 1990.

Figure 2. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups, Men Only

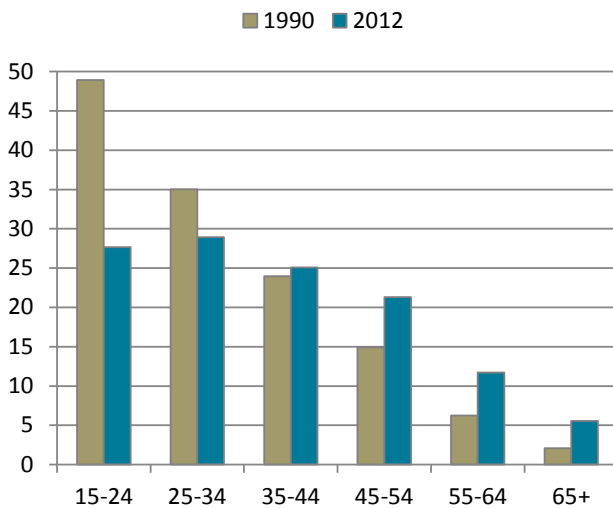
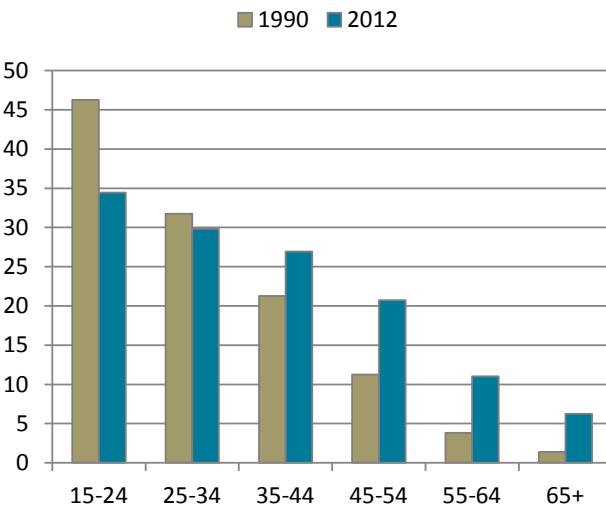


Figure 3. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups, Women Only



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, VitalStats and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012

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