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FP-13-20 Change in Proportion of Childless Women, 1995-2010

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The U.S. stands out among other industrialized nations for having above-replacement level fertility. Nonetheless, the proportion of childless women aged 40-44 almost doubled between 1976 and 2008 (Dye 2010; Lundquist et al. 2009). This profile documents changes in the proportion of childless women in the U.S. between 1995 and 2010 by educational attainment, race/ethnicity, and marital status.

- The proportion of American women who remain childless through their early-to-mid 40s increased by at least 7% between 1995 and 2010.
- In 1995, 18% of all women aged 40-44 had no child of their own; by 2010, about 19% reported being childless (Figure 1).

**Change in Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Educational Attainment (1995-2010)**

- Between 1995 and 2010, childlessness increased across educational levels except among women earning a bachelor's degrees or higher (Figure 1).
- Although college educated women are the most likely to approach the end of their reproductive years without having borne a child, childlessness decreased by as much as 20% among these highly educated women between 1995 and 2010.
- An increase in childlessness between 1995 and 2010 was most pronounced among women with high school degrees (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Educational Attainment (1995-2010)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; HS</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS/GED</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s +</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Race/Ethnicity (1995-2010)

- Childlessness increased across race/ethnicity between 1995 and 2010 (Figure 2). White women had the highest level and Hispanic women the lowest level of childlessness.
- Hispanic women had the greatest increase in childlessness (24%) followed by Blacks (16%) and then Whites (9%). Asian women had the lowest increase (6%) in childlessness between 1995 and 2010.

![Figure 2. Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Race/Ethnicity (1995-2010)](image)


Change in Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Marital Status (1995-2010)

- Half of never-married women in their early 40s have never had a child, whereas 15 years ago, nearly two-thirds were childless. Even though childlessness declined among never-married women, they represent a growing share of women 40-44 years old.
- About 1 in 8 married women has not had a child. Childlessness increased by about 4% among married women and by 10% among previously married women between 1995 and 2010 (Figure 3).
- Contrary to the increase in childlessness among ever-married women, fewer never-married women (51%) were childless in 2010 than in 1995 (66%).

![Figure 3. Proportion of Childless Women Aged 40-44 by Marital Status (1995-2010)](image)


Note: Previously married includes separated, widowed, and divorced categories

References

