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FP-22-15 Median Age at First Marriage, 2021

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Family Profile No. 15, 2022

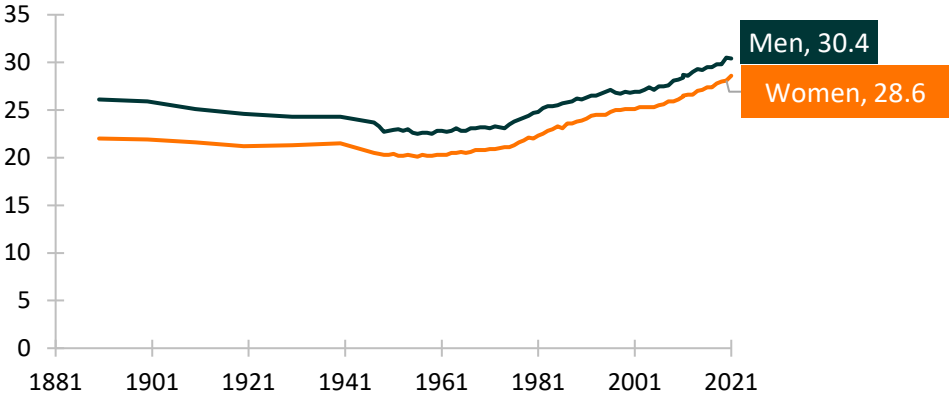
Median Age at First Marriage, 2021

Author: Christopher A. Julian

The median age at first marriage in the United States has increased steadily since the mid-20th century, with a persistent gender gap (FP-21-12). In this profile, we use the 2021 Current Population Survey to document overall trends through 2021 and the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Experimental IPUMS data to examine differences by race/ethnicity and education as of 2020.¹ The CPS and ACS tend to mimic each other for the median age at first marriage but differ slightly due to differences in how age at marriage is measured.² For instance, in 2020, the CPS median age at first marriage for men was 30.5, and for women it was 28.1; the comparable figures for the 2020 ACS are 29.7 and 28.3, respectively. This is an update to our previous profiles on the topic for the years 2019 (FP-21-12), 2017 (FP-19-06), 2014 (FP-16-07), 2013 (FP-15-05), 2010 (FP-12-07), and 2008 (FP-09-03).

- In 1890, the median age at first marriage for men was 26.1 and 22.0 for women; by 2021, it reached 30.4 and 28.6, respectively (see Figure 1).
 - This represents a historic high for women, though a slight decline from the high in 2020 for men.
- The gender gap in age at marriage persists and is about 2 years with a slight narrowing in recent years.

Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage in the U.S., 1890-2021

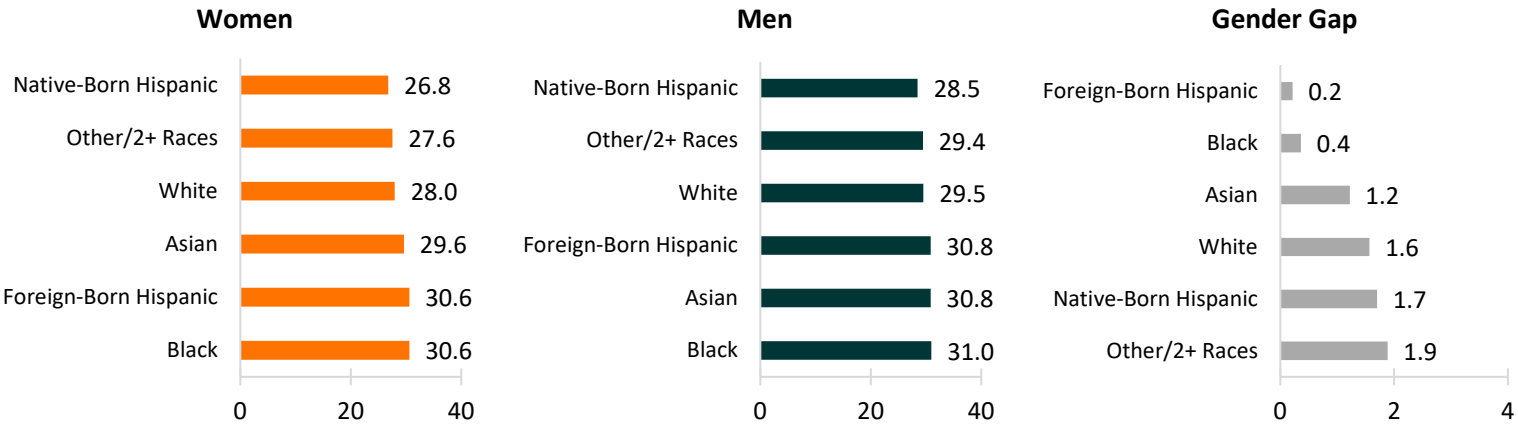


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements, published Table MS-2 Estimate Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to the Present. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/marital.html>

Median Age at First Marriage by Race and Ethnicity

- Among women who married in the year preceding the 2020 ACS, foreign-born Hispanic and Black women had the highest median age at first marriage (30.6), and native-born Hispanic women had the lowest median age at first marriage (26.8).
- Among men who married the preceding year, Black men had the highest median age at first marriage (31.0). Like native-born Hispanic women, native-born Hispanic men had the lowest median age at first marriage (28.5).
- In terms of the gender gap, the largest gap was between men and women of Other/2+ races (1.9 years). The narrowest gap was between foreign-born Hispanic men and women as well as Black men and women (less than half a year).

Figure 2. Median Age at First Marriage by Race and Ethnicity, 2020



Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates (IPUMS USA University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org), 2020

¹ The standard 2020 ACS 1-year data products will not be released due to the impact from the COVID-

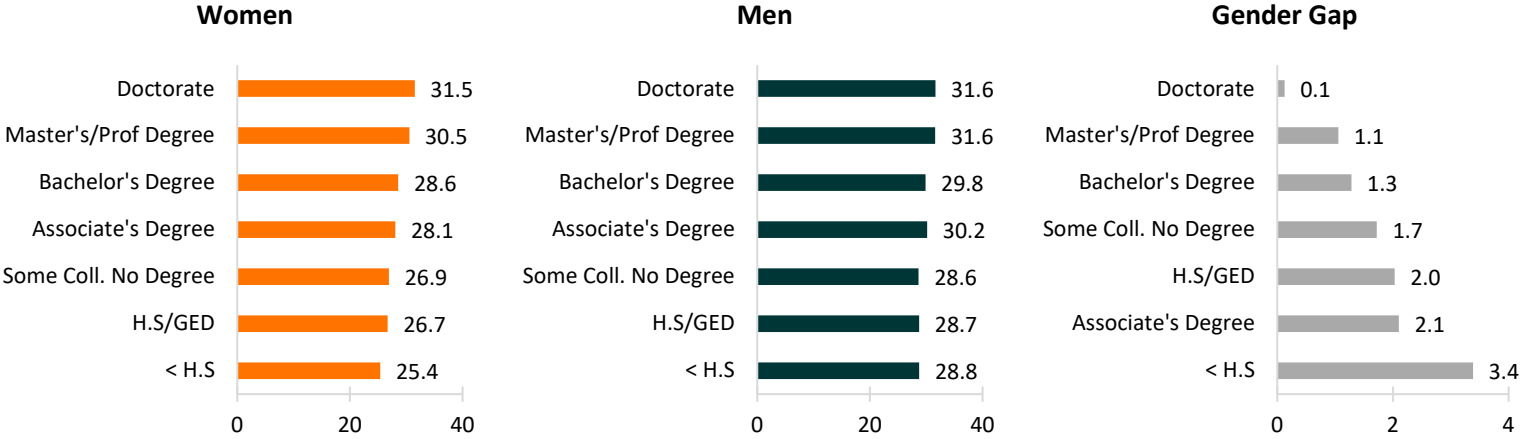
19 pandemic on data collection and data quality (for more information click [here](#)).

² The ACS provides annual data to directly estimate the median age at first marriage whereas the CPS is an indirect measure.

Median Age at First Marriage by Educational Attainment

- Among women who married in the year preceding the 2020 ACS, those with a doctorate degree had the highest median age at first marriage (31.5). Women with less than a high school degree had the lowest median age at first marriage (25.4).
- Among men, those with a doctorate degree, as well as those with a masters/professional degree, had the highest median age at first marriage (31.6). Men with some college but no degree had the lowest median age at first marriage (28.6) and those without a high school degree or a high school or GED degree shared a similarly low age at first marriage (28.8 and 28.7, respectively).
- In terms of the gender gap in age at marriage, the largest gap was between men and women with less than a high school degree (3.4). The narrowest gap was between men and women with a doctorate (less than 2 months).

Figure 3. Median Age at First Marriage by Educational Attainment, 2020



Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates (IPUMS USA University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org), 2020

Data Source:

Ruggles, S. Flood, S., Foster, S., Goeken, R., Pacas, J., Schouweiler, M., & Sobek, M. (2021). IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0>

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