

Over the last four decades, the proportion of Americans who are currently divorced more than quadrupled, rising from 2.9% in 1970 to 13.4% in 2012 (FP-14-07). Although prior research suggests the divorce rate peaked in the late 1970s (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2007), new work indicates researchers may have underestimated the divorce rate in recent years, particularly for persons over age 35 (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Roughly half of first marriages are expected to end in separation or divorce, and the risk of divorce varies substantially according to educational attainment and racial/ethnic status (Amato, 2010; Raley & Bumpass, 2003).

- In 2012, the rate of first divorce in the U.S. was 17.3 per 1,000 women in a first marriage aged 18 years and older (Figure 1), remaining largely unchanged since 2010 (FP-11-09).

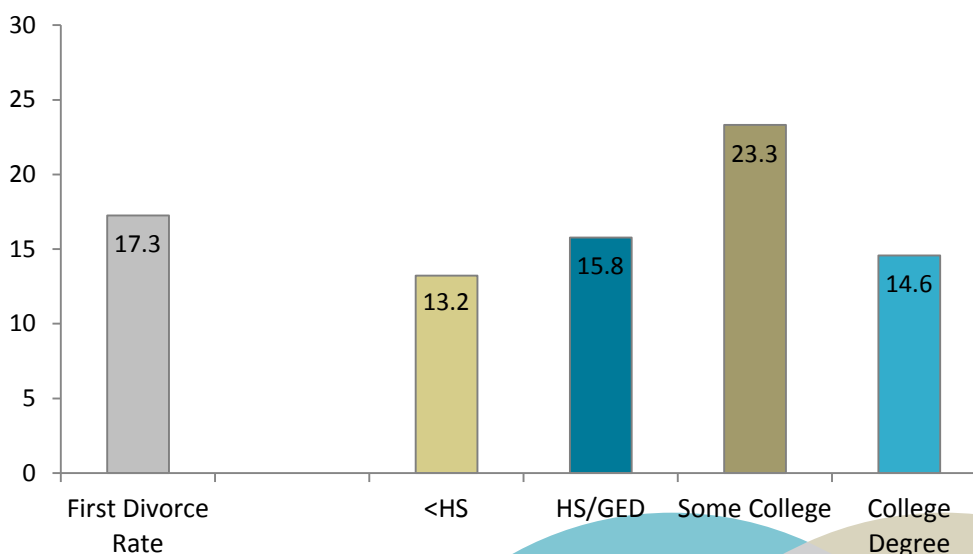
We focus on women 18 and older given this profile’s emphasis on educational differences, however, supplemental analyses confirm similar patterns exist among women aged 15 and older.

First Divorce Rates of Women by Educational Attainment, 2012

Educational attainment is related to divorce rates (Raley and Bumpass, 2003). The association between women’s education and divorce has remained stable since 2010 (FP-11-09).

- Among women in a first marriage, the rate of first divorce is highest for those who have attained some education after high school but have not earned a Bachelor’s degree (‘some college’) (23.3 per 1,000).
- The association between educational attainment and divorce is curvilinear: the least (no high school diploma/GED) and highest (college degree) educated women share the lowest rates of first divorce with 13.2 and 14.6 per 1,000, respectively.
- A similar education pattern in divorce exists for Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, and Whites (results not shown).

Figure 1. First Divorces per 1,000 Women in First Marriages Aged 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2012



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

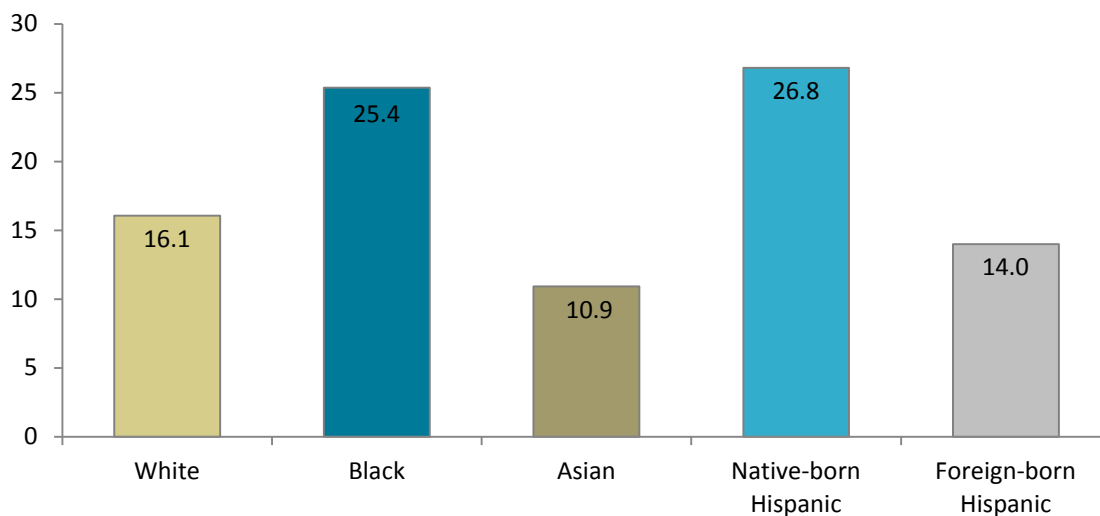
Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR’s core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

First Divorce Rates of Women by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity 2012

Divorce rates have declined for all racial/ethnic groups since 2008 (FP-10-06, FP-11-09). However, in 2008, Black women have the highest first divorce rate, whereas Native-born Hispanic women have the highest rate in 2012.

- Asian women have the lowest first divorce rate at 10.9 divorces per 1,000 women in a first marriage.
- The first divorce rates of White and Foreign-born Hispanic women are comparable at 16.1 and 14.0, respectively.
- Black and Native-born Hispanic women have the highest rates of first divorce at 25.4 and 26.8 (respectively) divorces per 1,000 women in a first marriage.

Figure 2. First Divorce Rates per 1,000 Women in First Marriages Aged 18 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity, 2012



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

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 it constitutes less than 4% of the overall population.

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Suggested Citation:
Stykes, B., Gibbs, L., & Payne K. K. (2014). *First Divorce Rate, 2012*. (FP-14-09). National Center for Family & Marriage Research. Retrieved from <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-14-09-divorce-rate-2012.pdf>



This project is supported with assistance from Bowling Green State University. From 2007 to 2013, support was also provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the state or federal government.