

Family Profile No. 15, 2018

# First Divorce Rate in the U.S., 2016

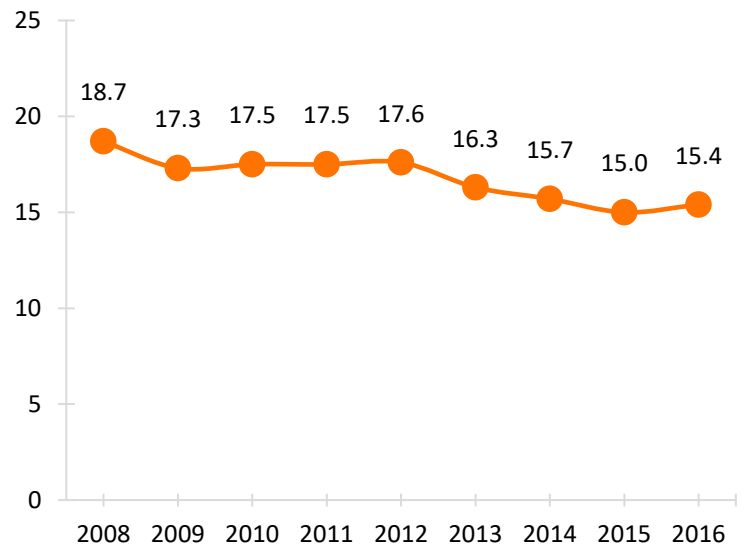
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Over the past forty years, the overall divorce rate has declined to the lowest level since 1970, dropping to 16.7 in 2016 (FP-17-24). Americans often marry more than one time; 24% of ever-married women in 2016 were in a second or higher marriage (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS, 1-yr est., 2016). We examine the first divorce rate, because first marriages are less likely to end through divorce than are remarriages (Cohen, 2016). The first divorce rate is defined as the number of first marriages that ended in divorce per 1,000 first marriages for women 18 years and older in 2014 using data from the American Community Survey. First Divorce Rate, 2016 (FP-18-15) is an update to FP-16-19, FP-14-09, FP-11-09, and FP-10-06.

## Trends in the First Divorce Rate

- The first divorce rate generally decreased from 2008 to 2015.
- From 2009 to 2012, the divorce rate plateaued at around 17.5.
- After 2012, the first divorce rate declined, reaching a seven-year low in 2015 of 15.0 divorces per 1,000 married women before rising slightly in 2016 to 15.4.
- There were 781,398 first divorces in 2016.

Figure 1. First Divorce Rate for Women 18 and Older, 2008-2016

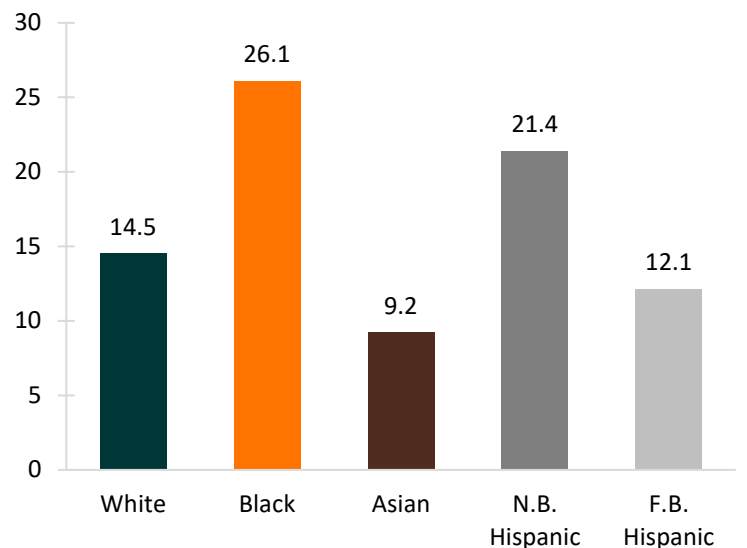


Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est., 2008-2016

## First Divorce Rate by Race and Ethnicity

- In 2016, Black women had the highest first divorce rate (26.1).
- Asian women experienced the lowest first divorce rate (9.2).
- There is a nativity gap among Hispanics with foreign-born Hispanics having a lower first divorce rate (12.1) than native-born Hispanics (21.4).

Figure 2. First Divorce Rate for Women 18 and Older by Race and Ethnicity, 2016

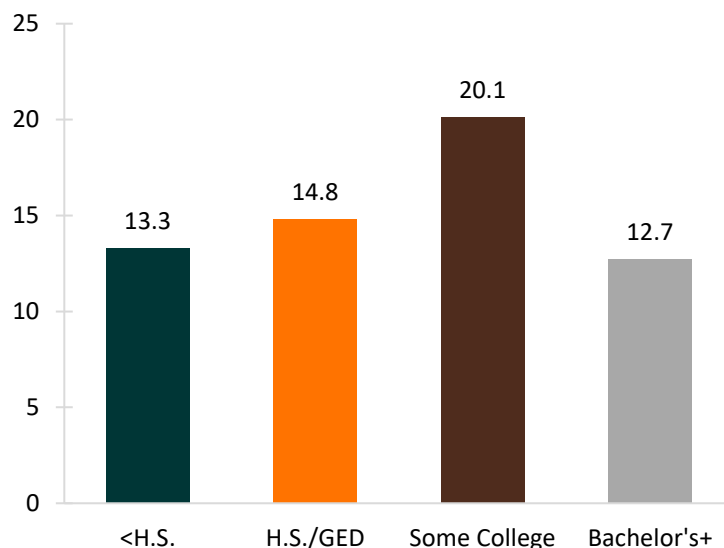


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est., 2016  
Note: N.B. represents Native Born and F.B. represents Foreign Born.

## First Divorce Rate by Educational Attainment

- There continues to be a curvilinear relationship between education and the first divorce rate. Women with the least education (less than high school) and the most education (a bachelor's degree or higher) have the lowest divorce rates.
- The first divorce rate is highest for women with some college education.

Figure 3. First Divorce Rate for Women 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2016



Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est., 2016

There were...  
**781,398**   
First Divorces in 2016.

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