Median Age at First Divorce, 2015

The median age at first marriage in the United States has been increasing since the mid-1950s when it was just 20 for women and 22 for men (FP-16-07). The counterpart to the median age at first marriage is the median age at first divorce, which has also risen over the past few decades. While the divorce rate has been declining, the age at divorce has increased as fewer divorces occur among married couples in their late teens and early 20s, and more occur among those over the age of 40 (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). See profiles FP-16-22 and FP-16-21 for more details on the marriage and divorce rate. This profile uses data from the 2015 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates to examine the median age at first divorce separately for men and women by race and ethnicity and by educational attainment.

Median Age at 1st Divorce, 1970-2015

- The median age at first divorce for men and women in 2015 — or the age at which half of men or women in first marriages divorced — was 41.2 and 39.7, respectively. This is a 45-year highpoint.

- Both the median age at first marriage and median age at first divorce have been increasing since 1970, although the median age at first divorce has risen more rapidly than the age at first marriage.

- The steeper increase in the median age at first divorce reflects an increasing duration of first marriages at time of first divorce; the median duration increased from 7.6 years in 1970 (Clark, 1995) to 12 years in 2012 (FP-14-11).

- There has been a persistent gender gap in the median age at first marriage and first divorce, with men experiencing both at older ages than women.

Race & Ethnicity

- Hispanic men and women have the lowest median ages at first divorce at 38.8 for men and 39.1 for women.
- Asian men and women have the highest median ages at first divorce at 43.5 for men and 43.4 for women. They also have the smallest gender gap, having nearly the same age at first divorce.
- White men and women have the largest gender gap at 2.5 years.

Educational Attainment

- Men and women with some college education have the lowest median age at first divorce at 39.0 and 36.9, respectively.
- Among men, those with a college degree or higher have the highest median age at first divorce at 43.7.
- Among women, those with less than a high school degree have the highest median age at first divorce at 42.3.

Figure 2. Median Age at First Divorce by Race and Ethnicity, 2015

Figure 3. Median Age at First Divorce by Educational Attainment, 2015

Source: 2015, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est.

References:


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Family Profiles: Original reports summarizing and analyzing nationally representative data with the goal to provide the latest analysis of U.S. families. These profiles examine topics related to the NCFMR's core research themes.

http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr.html

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