

Family Profile No. 3, 2017

Median Age at First Divorce, 2015

Author: Lydia R. Anderson

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.

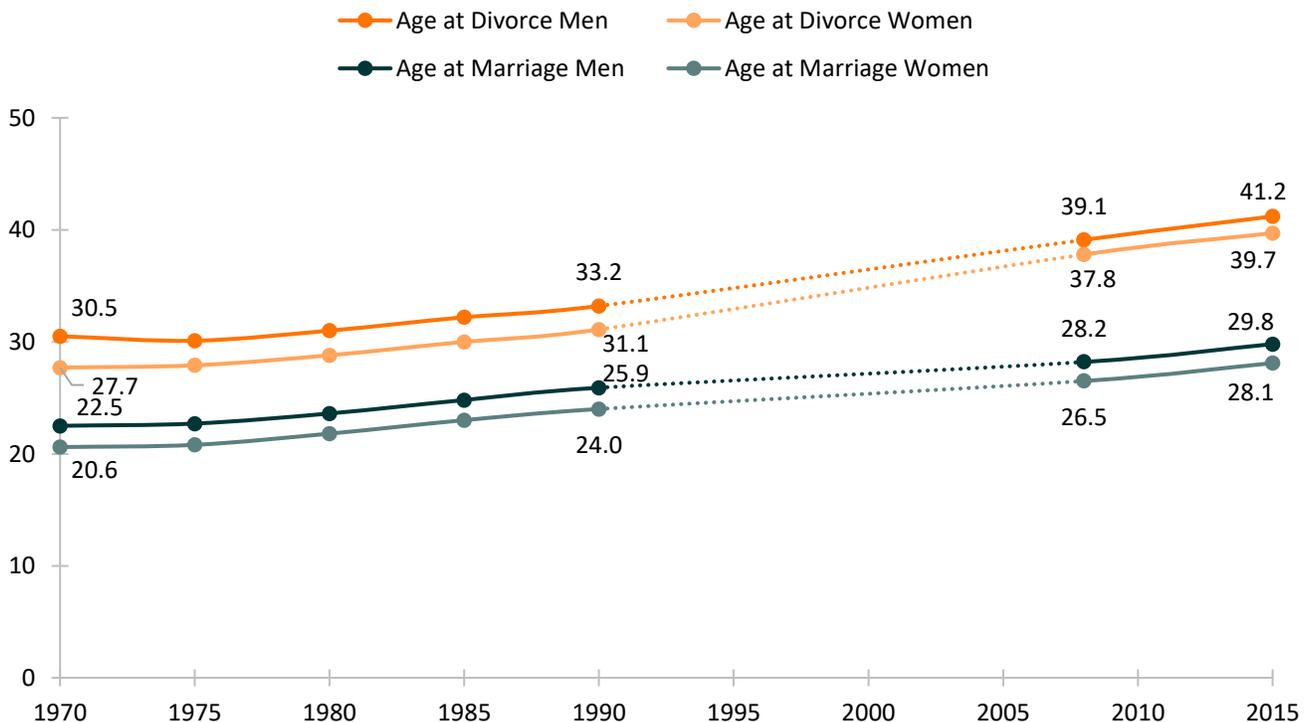
Median Age at 1st Divorce, 1970-2015

- 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 had been increasing since 1970, although the median age at first divorce rose 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.

In 2015...

the median age at 1st divorce was at a 45-year highpoint.

Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage and First Divorce, 1970-2015

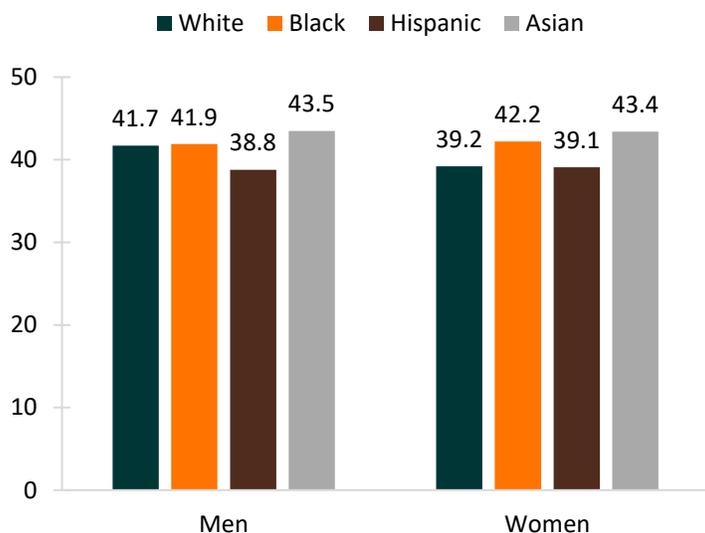


Sources: NCFMR analyses of 1970-1990, National Center for Health Statistics; 2008-2015, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est.

Race & Ethnicity

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

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

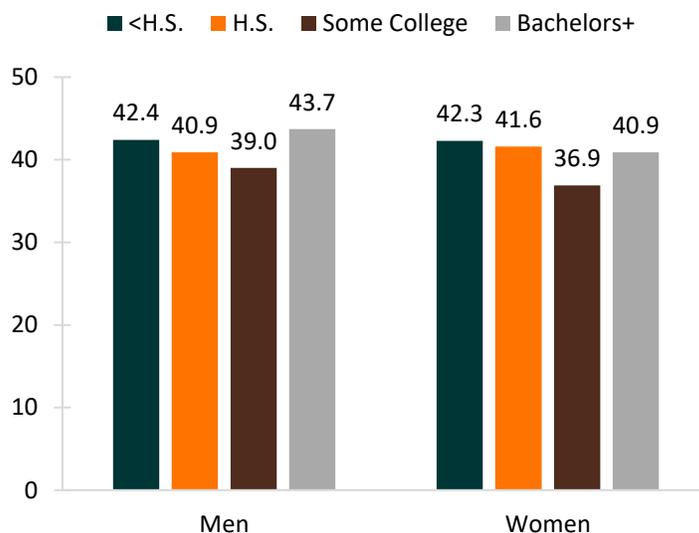


Sources: NCFMR analyses of 2015, American Community Survey, 1-yr. est.

Educational Attainment

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

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



References:

- Anderson, L., & Payne, K. K. (2016). Median age at first marriage, 2014. *Family Profiles, FP-16-07*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/anderson-payne-median-age-first-marriage-fp-16-07.html>
- Clarke, S. C. (1995). Advanced report of final marriage statistics, 1989 and 1990. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 42*(12), Supp. National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/supp/mv43_12s.pdf
- Clarke, S. C. (1995). Advance report of final divorce statistics, 1989 and 1990. *Monthly Vital Statistics Report, 43*(9), Supp. National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/supp/mv43_09s.pdf
- Kennedy, S., & Ruggles, S. (2014). Breaking up is hard to count: The rise of divorce in the United States, 1980-2010. *Demography, 51*(2): 587-598. doi:10.1007/s13524-013-0270-9

Suggested Citation:

Anderson, L. R. (2017). Median age at first divorce, 2015. *Family Profiles, FP-17-03*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr/resources/data/family-profiles/anderson-median-age-first-divorce-fp-17-03.html>