

Since 1970, the percentage of Americans who are currently married has declined (FP-14-01, FP-11-12, FP-10-01). This decline is associated with decades-long increases in the age at first marriage and rising shares of never-married adult Americans (Goodwin, P., McGill, B., & Chandra, A., 2009). This profile updates estimates presented in profile FP-11-12, by noting racial/ethnic and educational differences in the first marriage rate for the U.S. in 2012.

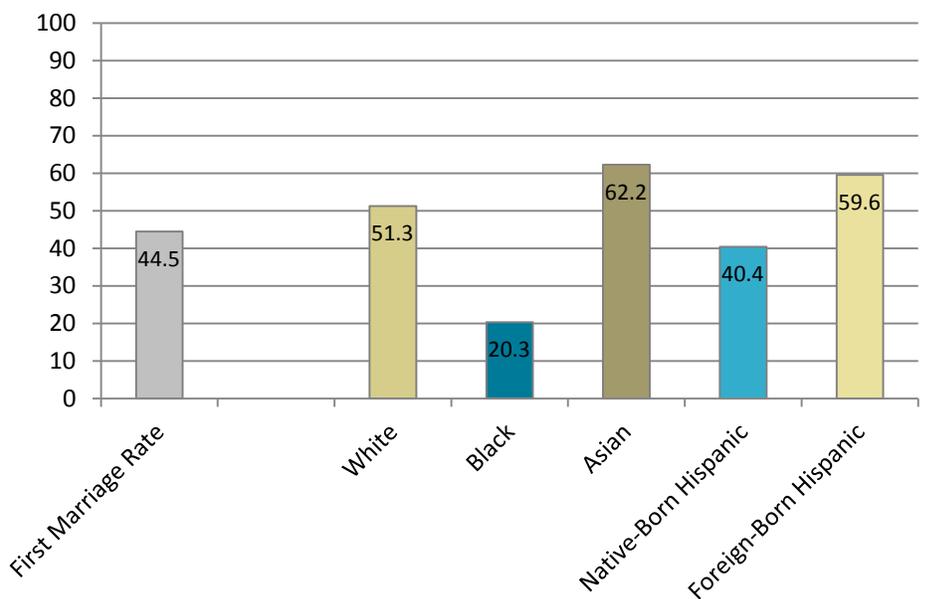
- In 2012, the overall marriage rate was 39 per 1,000—roughly 39 marriages occurred per 1,000 unmarried women aged 18 and older. Most of these marriages were first marriages (70%) with little change since 2008.
- In 2012, approximately 5% of never-married women married for the first time. The rate of first marriage in the U.S. was 44.5 per 1,000 never-married women aged 18 years and older (Figure 1). This reflects a slight decrease from 2008 with a rate of first marriage of 49.8 per 1,000 unmarried women aged 18 and older.

*Note:* This profile limits analyses to the female population aged 18 and older because of the focus on educational attainment. Similar patterns by educational attainment exist when the population is limited to women aged 15 and older or women aged 25 and older.

## First Marriage Rates of Women by Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 2012

- Asian and foreign-born Hispanic women have the highest rate of first marriages (62.2 and 59.6 per 1,000, respectively) while Black women have the lowest (20.3 per 1,000) across all races and ethnicities. In other words, roughly 6% of never-married adult Asian and foreign-born Hispanic women married for the first time in 2012 compared to 2% of Black women.
- Approximately 5% of never-married White women married for the first time in 2012 (51.3 per 1,000).
- The first marriage rate for native-born Hispanics (40.4 per 1,000) is considerably lower than the foreign-born Hispanic marriage rate.

Figure 1. First Marriage Rate per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 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 they only constitute 3% of the overall sample.

## References:

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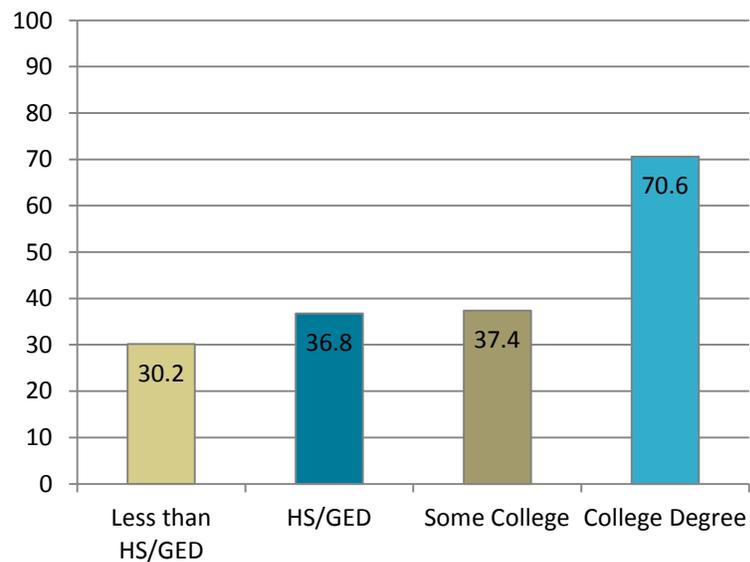
Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.

## First Marriage Rates of Women by Educational Attainment, 2012

Educational attainment is positively associated with marriage. College educated women and men are more likely to ever marry than the less educated (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Manning, Brown, & Payne, 2014).

- Figure 2 illustrates a positive association between education and the first marriage rate.
  - Women with less than a high school education have the lowest first marriage rate at 30.2 per 1,000.
  - Unmarried women who attain a high school diploma/GED or some post high school education but have not earned a bachelor's degree ('some college') share similar rates of first marriage (approximately 36.8 and 37.4 per 1,000, respectively). First marriage rates are highest for those who have completed a bachelor's degree (70.6 per 1,000).

Figure 2. First Marriage Rates per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, 2012

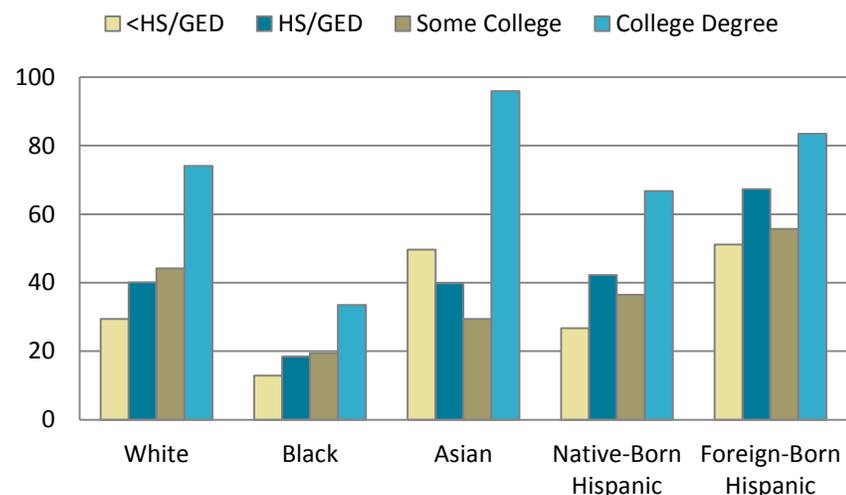


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012 (IPUMS)

## Educational Attainment and Racial and Ethnic Variation in the Rate of First Marriage, 2012

- Across all racial and ethnic groups, the highest rate of first marriage is among women with a college degree. For each race and ethnic group, except foreign-born Hispanics, women with a college degree have at least twice the marriage rate as their counterparts without a high school degree.
- Foreign-born Hispanic women—compared to all other women—have higher first marriage rates at all educational attainment levels except college degree.

Figure 3. First Marriage Rates per 1,000 Never-married Women Aged 18 and Older by Educational Attainment, Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Nativity Status, 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 they only constitute 3% of the overall sample.

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*Family Profiles*  
FP-14-08



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