



Family Profile No. 23, 2022

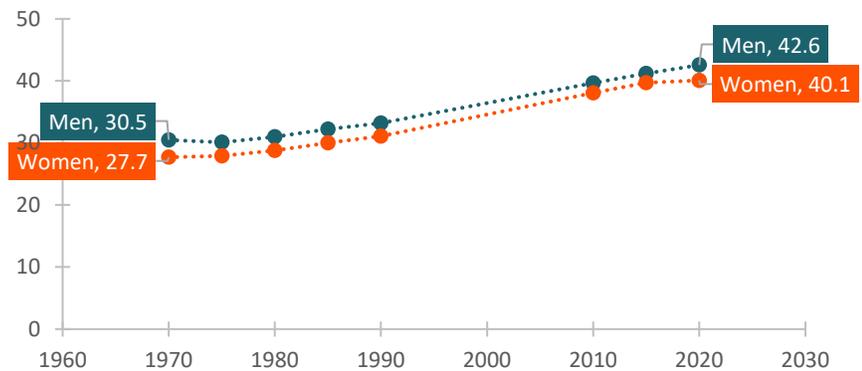
Median Age at First Divorce, 2020

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The median age at first divorce in the United States has increased steadily since 1970 with a persistent gender gap. At the same time, the overall divorce rate has been on a downward trend ([Westrick-Payne, 2022](#)). The counterpart of the median age at first divorce, the median age at first marriage has also increased over time ([Julian, 2022](#)). In this profile, we use the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Experimental IPUMS data to examine differences in the median age at first divorce by race/ethnicity and educational attainment as of 2020.¹ This is an update to our previous profiles on the topic for the years 2018 ([Schweizer, 2018](#)) and 2015 ([Anderson, 2017](#)).

- In 1970, the median age at first divorce for men was 30.5 and 27.7 for women; by 2020, it reached 42.6 and 40.1, respectively (see Figure 1).
 - This represents historic highs for both men and women in their median ages at first divorce.
- The gender gap in age at first divorce has persisted over time. In 1970, the gap was 2.8 years and in 2020 it was about 2.5 years

Figure 1. Median Age at First Divorce in the U.S., 1970-2020

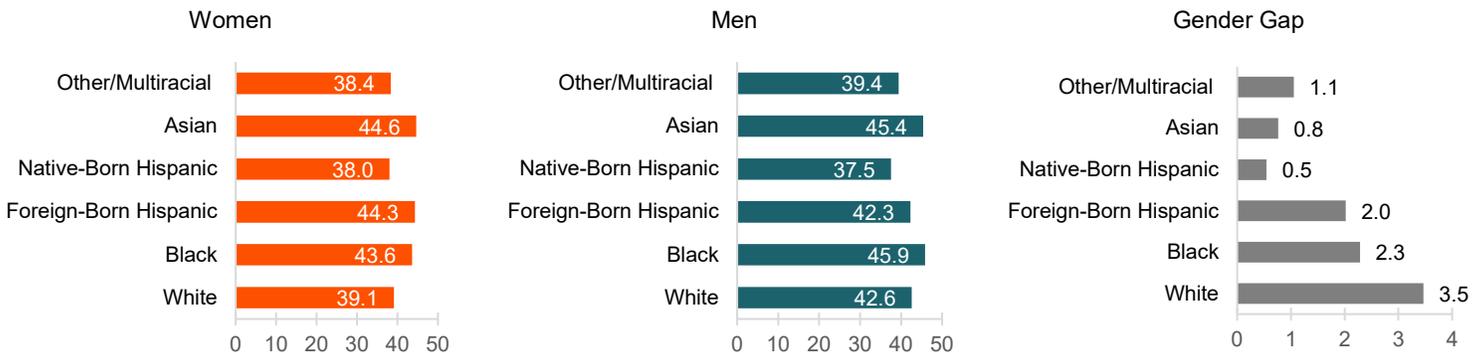


Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates (IPUMS USA University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org), 2020

Median Age at First Divorce by Race and Ethnicity

- Among women who divorced in the 12 months preceding the 2020 ACS, Asian women had the oldest median age at first divorce (44.6) and native-born Hispanic women had the youngest median age at first divorce (38.0).
- Among men who divorced the preceding year, Black men had the oldest median age at first divorce (45.9). Similar to native-born Hispanic women, native-born Hispanic men had the youngest median age at first divorce (37.5).
- The age variation in median age at first divorce by race/ethnicity was greater among men compared to women.
 - Men’s median age at first divorce varied by over 8 years whereas among women it varied by 5.5 years.
- The largest gender gap was between White men and women (3.5 years). The narrowest gap was between native-born Hispanics (about half a year).

Figure 2. Median Age at First Divorce by Race and Ethnicity, 2020



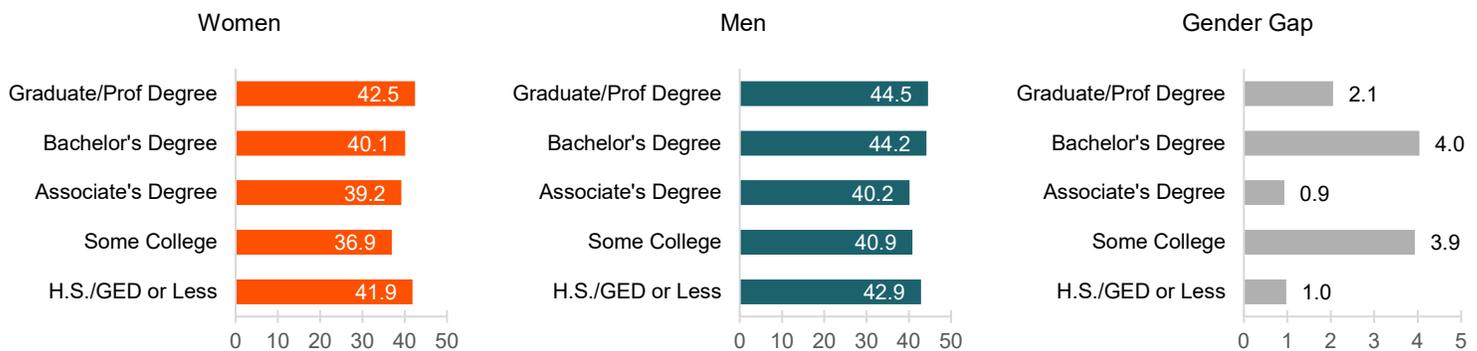
Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates (IPUMS USA University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org), 2020

¹ The standard 2020 ACS 1-year data products will not be released due to the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection and data quality (for more information click [here](#)).

Median Age at First Divorce by Educational Attainment

- Among women who married in the 12 months preceding the 2020 ACS, the median age at first divorce by educational attainment differed by 5.6 years.
 - Those with a graduate/ professional degree had the oldest median age at first divorce (42.5) compared to women with some college, no degree with the youngest median age at first divorce (36.9).
- Among men, those with a graduate/ professional degree had the oldest median age at first divorce (44.5). Men with an associate degree had the youngest median age at first divorce (40.2) for a range of 3.6 years, which was 2 years smaller than that of women
- The largest gender gap was between men and women with a bachelor's degree (4.0 years). The narrowest gap was between men and women with an associate degree (less than a year).
- The older median age at first divorce for those with graduate/ professional degrees corresponds to their older median age at first marriage (FP-15-22).
 - The oldest median ages at first marriage for women are among those with a doctorate degree (31.5) followed by those with a masters/ professional degree (30.5) (FP-15-22).
 - Among men, those with doctorate degrees and masters/professional degrees shared the oldest median age at first marriage (31.6) (FP-15-22).

Figure 3. Median Age at First Divorce by Educational Attainment, 2020



Source: NCFMR analyses of American Community Survey 1-year estimates (IPUMS USA University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org), 2020

Data Source:

Ruggles, S. Flood, S., Foster, S., Goeken, R., Pacas, J., Schouweiler, M., & Sobek, M. (2021). IPUMS USA: Version 11.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V11.0>

References:

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>

Julian, C. A. (2022). Median age at first marriage, 2021. *Family Profiles, FP-22-15*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-22-15>

Schweizer, V. J. (2020). Median age at first divorce, 2018. *Family Profiles, FP-20-18*. National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-20-18>

Westrick-Payne, K. K. (2022). Divorce rate in the U.S.: Geographic variation, 2020. *Family Profiles, FP-22-08*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-22-08>

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