

A Statistical Portrait of
WOMEN
in the United States: 1978



CURRENT POPULATION REPORTS

Special Studies
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U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Contents

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A Statistical Portrait of **WOMEN** in the United States: 1978

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Contents

Introduction	1	2-6. Time interval since last physician and dental visit, and visits per person per year, by sex and age: 1977	20
Highlights	2		
Chapter 1		Chapter 3	
Population Growth and Distribution	3	Marital Status, Living Arrangements, and Housing Characteristics	21
Figure		Figure	
1-1. Estimates and projections of the population of the United States, by age and sex: 1978 and 2000	5	3-1. Age distribution of persons living alone, by sex: 1970 and 1978	23
Table		Table	
1-1. Estimates and projections of the population of the United States, by age and sex: 1970 to 2000	6	3-1. Number and rate of first marriages, divorces, and remarriages for women: 3-year averages, 1921 to 1977	24
1-2. Estimates and projections of the sex ratios of the population, by age: 1970 to 2000	7	3-2. Median age at first marriage, by sex: selected years, 1890 to 1978	24
1-3. Percent distribution of the population, by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence, sex, and age: 1978 and 1970	8	3-3. Marital status, by age and sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970	25
1-4. Sex ratios, by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence and age: 1978 and 1970	9	3-4. Householders, by type of household, presence of spouse, presence of children, and sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970	26
1-5. Mobility status, by age, sex, and marital status: 1975 to 1976	10	3-5. Selected housing characteristics, by type of household: 1976	27
Chapter 2		Chapter 4	
Longevity, Mortality, and Health	11	Fertility	29
Figure		Figure	
2-1. Mean days of disability per person, by type of disability, sex, and age: 1977	14	4-1. Total fertility rate and number of live births: 1970 to 1978	31
Table		Table	
2-1. Life expectancy at selected ages, by sex: 1970 to 2000	15	4-1. Children ever born per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years old, by marital status and age: 1978, 1976, and 1970	32
2-2. Age adjusted female death rates and sex mortality ratios for the 15 leading causes of death: 1970 to 1976	16	4-2. Children ever born per 1,000 women ever married, by age and selected socioeconomic characteristics: 1978	33
2-3. Incidence rates for acute conditions, by type of condition, age, and sex: 1977 and 1970	17	4-3. Marriage and childbearing at early ages, for cohorts, of women born from 1920-24 to 1950-54: 1978	34
2-4. Persons with limitation of activity due to chronic conditions and the four leading chronic conditions causing limitation, by age and sex: 1976	18	4-4. Lifetime births expectations of women 18 to 29 years old, by age: 1978, 1975, and 1971	34
2-5. Mean days of disability per person, by type of disability, sex, and age: 1977	19		

Chapter 5

Education

Figure

- 5-1. Percent of persons 20 to 70 years old, by years of school completed and sex: 1978 37

Table

- 5-1. Years of school completed by persons 25 to 29 years old, by sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970 38
- 5-2. College enrollment of persons 16 to 34 years old, by level, type, and sex: 1978 and 1970 38
- 5-3. Degrees conferred by institutions of higher education in the United States, by selected fields of study: academic years 1976-77 and 1969-70 39
- 5-4. Years of school completed by persons 25 to 34 years old, by marital status and sex: 1978 39
- 5-5. Enrollment of children 3 to 5 years old in preprimary programs, by years of school completed by their mothers: 1978, 1974, and 1970 40

Chapter 6

Labor Force Participation

Figure

- 6-1. Employment status, by sex: annual averages for 1970, 1975, and 1978 44

Table

- 6-1. Labor force, by age and sex: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970 45
- 6-2. Labor force participation rates, by age and sex: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970 46
- 6-3. Civilian labor force participation rates, by years of school completed and sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970 47
- 6-4. Civilian labor force, by marital status and sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970 48
- 6-5. Civilian labor force participation rates, by marital status and sex: 1978, 1975, and 1970 49
- 6-6. Civilian labor force participation rates for ever-married women, by presence and age of children: 1978, 1975, and 1970 50
- 6-7. Part-time workers, by age and sex: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970 50
- 6-8. Civilian labor force, number unemployed, and unemployment rates, by age and sex: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970 51
- 6-9. Projected size of civilian labor force, by age and sex: 1978 (actual), 1985, 1990, and 1995 52
- 6-10. Persons in the Armed Forces, by officer-enlisted status, for total military and women: 1977, 1975, and 1970 52

Chapter 7

Work Experience

Figure

- 7-1. Annual work experience, by sex and extent of work experience: 1970, 1975, and 1977 54

Table

- 7-1. Annual work experience, by sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970 55
- 7-2. Major reason for part-year work, by annual work experience and sex: 1977 56
- 7-3. Annual work experience, by age and sex: 1977 and 1970 57
- 7-4. Annual work experience, by marital status and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970 58

Chapter 8

Occupation, Industry, and Women-Owned Businesses

Figure

- 8-1. Percent change in employment of women, by major occupation group: 1972 to 1978 61
- 8-2. Receipts of firms owned by women, by industry: 1972 62

Table

- 8-1. Occupation of employed persons, by sex: annual averages for 1978 and 1972 63
- 8-2. Years of school completed by employed persons 25 to 64 years old, by major occupation group and sex: 1978 65
- 8-3. Major occupation group of employed married women with husband present, by employment status and major occupation group of husband: 1978 66
- 8-4. Industry of employed persons, by sex: annual averages for 1978 and 1972 67
- 8-5. Number and receipts of women-owned firms compared with all U.S. firms, by industry: 1972 67

Chapter 9

Income and Poverty Status

Figure

- 9-1. Female/male median income ratio for year-round, full-time workers 25 years old and over and 25 to 34 years old, by years of school completed 72

Table

- 9-1. Number and median earnings of year-round, full-time civilian workers with earnings, by sex: 1967 to 1977 73
- 9-2. Median income of year-round, full-time civilian workers with income, by age and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970 74

9-3.	Number and median income of year-round, full-time civilian workers 25 years old and over and 25 to 34 years old with income, by years of school completed and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	75
9-4.	Number and median earnings of year-round, full-time civilian workers with earnings, by occupation of longest job and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	76
9-5.	Number and median earnings of civilian workers with earnings, by work experience and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	77
9-6.	Number and mean income of persons 14 years old and over and 65 years old and over, by type of income and sex: 1977	78
9-7.	Contribution of wife's earnings to total family income for married-couple families, by selected characteristics: 1977, 1975, and 1970	79
9-8.	Median income of families, by type of family: 1977, 1975, and 1970	79
9-9.	Persons below the poverty level, by age and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	80
9-10.	Poverty status of families, by sex of householder and presence of family members under 18 years old: 1977, 1975, and 1970	81
9-11.	Family status of persons below the poverty level, by sex of householder: 1977, 1975, and 1970	82

Chapter 10

Voting and Public Officeholding

Figure

10-1.	Number and percent of persons who reported voting in Presidential elections: 1964 to 1976	84
-------	---	----

Table

10-1.	Reported voter registration rates for congressional and Presidential elections, by sex and age: 1968 to 1978	85
10-2.	Reported voter participation rates for congressional and Presidential elections, by sex and age: 1968 to 1978	86
10-3.	Number of women candidates for public office and number of women in elected public office: 1978 and 1974	86

Chapter 11

Crime: Victims and Offenders

Figure

11-1.	Victimization rates for violent crimes against women, by age: 1977	89
-------	--	----

Table

11-1.	Victimization rates for crimes against persons, by age, sex, and marital status: 1977	90
-------	---	----

11-2.	Percent of victimizations involving strangers and percent reported to police, by type of crime and sex of victim: 1977	91
11-3.	Arrest rates for the total population and for women, by type of crime: 1977 and 1970	92
11-4.	Sentenced prisoners in State and Federal institutions, by sex: 1971 to 1977	92

Chapter 12

Black Women

Figure

12-1.	Years of school completed by women 25 to 29 years old, by race: 1970, 1975, and 1978	96
12-2.	Median earnings of year-round, full-time workers with income, by race and sex: 1970 to 1977	97

Table

12-1.	Female population, by age and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	98
12-2.	Percent distribution of the female population, by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	99
12-3.	Life expectancy of women at selected ages, by race: 1970 to 1976	100
12-4.	Age-adjusted death rates for the 10 leading causes of death, by sex and race: 1976 and 1970	101
12-5.	Marital status of women, by race; 1978, 1975, and 1970	102
12-6.	Selected characteristics of families with female householder, no husband present, by race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	103
12-7.	Children ever born per 1,000 women, by marital status, age, and race: 1978, 1976, and 1970	104
12-8.	Births to date and lifetime births expected per 1,000 wives 18 to 34 years old, by age and race: 1978, 1975, and 1971	105
12-9.	College enrollment of persons 14 to 34 years old, by sex and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	105
12-10.	Years of school completed by persons 25 to 29 years old, by sex and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	106
12-11.	Percent of women 20 years old and over who completed high school and college, by age and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	106
12-12.	Civilian labor force participation rates, by age, race, and sex: annual averages for 1978 and 1970	107
12-13.	Labor force participation rates for married women with husband present, by presence and age of own children and race: 1978, 1975, and 1970	108
12-14.	Employment status of women, by marital status and race: 1978	109

12-15.	Civilian labor force, number unemployed, and unemployment rates, by age, race, and sex: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970	110
12-16.	Annual work experience, by sex and race: 1977, 1975, and 1970	111
12-17.	Employment status and major occupation group, by sex and race: annual averages for 1978, 1975, and 1970	112
12-18.	Median income and median earnings of persons with income or earnings, by work experience, sex, and race: 1970 to 1977	113
12-19.	Median income, by work experience, sex, and race: 1977 and 1970	114
12-20.	Persons below the poverty level, by family status, sex of householder, and race: 1977 and 1970	115
12-21.	Poverty status of families with female householder, no husband present, by race: 1970 to 1977	116
12-22.	Reported registration and voter participation of women, for congressional and Presidential elections, by region and race: 1968 to 1978	117
12-23.	Victimization rates for crimes against women, by age and race: 1977	118

Chapter 13 American Indian Women and Asian Women

Figure

13-1.	Percent of women 25 to 34 years old who completed high school and college, by selected races: 1970	122
13-2.	Percent of women in the labor force, by selected races and age: 1970	123

Table

13-1.	Age and urban and rural residence of women, by selected races: 1970	124
13-2.	Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino women, by nativity and age: 1970	125
13-3.	Marital status and children ever born for women, by selected races: 1970	126
13-4.	Marital status and presence of own children for families with female householder, no husband present, by selected races: 1970	127
13-5.	Years of school completed by persons 25 years old and over, by selected races and sex: 1970	128
13-6.	Percent of women 20 years old and over who completed high school and college, by selected races and age: 1970	128
13-7.	Employment status, by selected races and sex: 1970	129
13-8.	Labor force participation rates for women, by selected races and age: 1970	129
13-9.	Major occupation group of employed persons, by selected races and sex: 1970	130

13-10.	Income, by selected races and sex: 1969	131
13-11.	Family income and poverty status of families with female householder, no husband present, by selected races: 1969	132

Chapter 14 Spanish-Origin Women

Figure

14-1.	Years of school completed by women 25 years old and over, by Spanish origin: 1978	135
-------	---	-----

Table

14-1.	All women and women of Spanish origin, by age and type of Spanish origin: 1978	136
14-2.	Marital status of all women and women of Spanish origin, by type of Spanish origin: 1978	136
14-3.	Families with female householder, no husband present, by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence and type of Spanish origin: 1978	137
14-4.	Selected characteristics of families with female householder, no husband present, by type of Spanish origin: 1978	138
14-5.	Percent of all women and women of Spanish origin 25 years old and over, by years of school completed, type of Spanish origin, and age: 1978	139
14-6.	Employment status and major occupation group of all women and women of Spanish origin, by type of Spanish origin: 1978	140
14-7.	Major activity of women not in the labor force, by Spanish origin and age: 1978	141
14-8.	Income of all women and women of Spanish origin, by type of Spanish origin: 1977	141
14-9.	Median earnings of all civilian female workers and civilian female workers of Spanish origin, by occupation and class of worker of longest job: 1977	142
14-10.	Poverty status of families with female householder, no husband present, and female unrelated individuals, by age, for all women and women of Spanish origin: 1977	143
14-11.	Victimization rates for crimes against women, by Spanish origin and age: 1977	144

Appendix A Definitions and Explanations

Appendix B Base Tables

Table

B-1.	Population, by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence, sex, and age: 1978 and 1970	151
------	--	-----

Appendix C Source and Reliability of the Estimates

B-2.	Population 16 years old and over, by age, sex, and marital status: 1976	152
B-3.	Currently employed persons, by age and sex: 1977	152
B-4.	Population 16 years old and over, by age and sex: 1977 and 1970	153
B-5.	Persons and workers, by marital status and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	153
B-6.	Noninstitutional population excluding members of the Armed Forces living in barracks, by age and sex: 1977, 1975, and 1970	154
B-7.	Noninstitutional population excluding members of the Armed Forces living in barracks, by sex of householder: 1977, 1975, and 1970	154
B-8.	Civilian noninstitutional population of voting age, by sex and age: 1968 to 1978	155
B-9.	Number of women, by marital status, age, and race: 1978, 1976, and 1970	156
B-10.	Civilian noninstitutional population 16 years old and over, by age, race, and sex: annual averages for 1978 and 1970	157
B-11.	All women and women of Spanish origin, by type of Spanish origin and age: 1978	158

Source of data	159
Reliability of CPS estimates	160

Table

C-1.	Standard errors of estimated numbers: total, White, or Spanish-origin population	165
C-2.	Standard errors of estimated numbers: Black-and-other-races population	165
C-3.	Standard errors of estimated percentages: total, White, or Spanish-origin population	166
C-4.	Standard errors of estimated percentages: Black-and-other-races population	166
C-5.	Factors to be applied to tables C-1 through C-4 to estimate standard errors of specific characteristics	167
C-6.	Parameters to be used to calculate standard errors of specific characteristics	168
C-7.	Parameters to be used to calculate standard errors of health statistics	169
C-8.	Standard errors of children ever born per 1,000 women	169

SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.
 - NA Not available.
 - X Not applicable.
 - B Base of the derived figure is less than 75,000.
 - S Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision (i.e., has more than 30-percent relative standard error).
-

Introduction

This report provides a statistical overview of the changing status of women in American society during the 1970 decade. Data have been compiled primarily from U.S. Government sources: surveys, decennial censuses, vital statistics, and administrative records. While the majority of the statistics have been published previously in Bureau of the Census or other governmental reports, they are assembled here to document the patterns of demographic, social, and economic change that have affected American women in the 1970's. The factors involved in these changes and their interrelationships may have a pervasive influence in shaping the future life situation of American women.

The analyses examine the recent trends (generally from 1970 to 1978) among women in the areas of population growth and distribution, longevity, mortality, health, marital status, living arrangements, housing characteristics, fertility, and education. Other topics include labor force participation, work experience, occupation, industry, women-owned businesses, income, poverty status, voting, public officeholding, and crime and victimization. Attention is focused on the socioeconomic condition of women relative to that of men. Comparisons of Black women with White women are discussed separately, and recent data are included for women of Spanish origin. Separate data are also presented for American Indian women and Asian women.

The statistics in this report update those presented in "A Statistical Portrait of Women in the United States," Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 58, April 1976. The earlier report contains historical data relating to women, beginning in 1900 where available.



Highlights

- In July 1978, the female population of the United States was estimated to be about 112.0 million, representing 51.3 percent of the total population and outnumbering males by 5.5 million. By the year 2000, females are projected to outnumber males by 6.7 to 7.6 million.
- Among the 15 leading causes of death, women experienced lower death rates than men during the 1970's from all causes except diabetes. In 1976, the death rate for women from diseases of the heart—the leading cause of death for both sexes—was only about one-half (48 percent) that for men, and the death rate for women from cancer, which ranked second, was about two-thirds (67 percent) that for men.
- Recent trends in marriage and divorce have resulted in a much greater increase of never-married and divorced women than of those married and living with a husband. Between 1970 and 1978, the number of women 25 to 34 years old who had not yet married rose by 111 percent, while the number of women of this age group who were divorced and not remarried increased by 170 percent. Over the same period, the number of women 25 to 34 who were married and living with a husband increased by only 17 percent.
- Since 1970, there has been a greater proportional increase in the number of women maintaining a family with no spouse present (46 percent) than in the number of comparable men (27 percent). At the same time, however, the growth in the number of nonfamily households maintained by men (92 percent) was about twice that of nonfamily households maintained by women (43 percent).
- The fertility of American women has declined during the 1970's, reaching a level even lower than the previous low point recorded during the mid-1930's. By 1970, women 18 to 44 years old had borne an average of 1.9 children per woman, an average that dropped to about 1.6 children per woman in 1978.
- The number of women 16 to 34 years old enrolled in college has risen far more rapidly than the comparable number of men since 1970 (57 percent compared with 16 percent). This expansion of women's college enrollment helped to raise the number of women per 100 men in college from 68 in 1970 to 92 in 1978.
- The changing social and economic roles of women are most evident in the increase in their labor force participation. Between 1970 and 1978, the annual average labor force participation rate for women increased from 43 percent to 50 percent. Women 25 to 34 years old showed an even greater gain, with their rates rising from 45 percent to 62 percent in this time span.
- About 46 million women (nearly 56 percent of all women 16 years and over) had at least some work experience in 1977, compared with approximately 61 million men (about 81 percent of all men 16 years and over). The number of female workers has grown by 20 percent since 1970, while the number of male workers has increased by 11 percent.
- Although employment of women increased during the 1970's, female workers remained concentrated in a few major occupation groups, with over one-half of them working in clerical and service positions.
- The substantial earnings differential between women and men remained unchanged between 1970 and 1977. Women working year round full time had median earnings of \$8,620 in 1977, or 59 percent of that of comparable men (\$14,630); in 1970, such women had median earnings of \$8,310 (in 1977 dollars), which also was 59 percent of that of comparable men (\$13,990).
- Of the 24.7 million persons below the poverty level in 1977, about 58 percent (14.4 million) were women and female children. While women maintained about 14 percent of all families in 1977, they maintained 49 percent of families below the poverty level in that year.
- In the elections since 1968, men have been slightly more likely to vote than women, but because women have outnumbered men of voting age, more votes have been cast by women than men. In the 1978 Congressional election, the largest difference in voting between the sexes was found among persons 65 years old and over.
- For crimes of violence, there were about 5 women for every 10 men victimized in 1977; for crimes of theft, the ratio was about 8 to 10. Since 1970, the rates of arrests for both women and men have increased, and arrests of women have risen slightly as a proportion of all arrests for violent crimes and property crimes.