

# Census Brief:

# 2000

## Women in the United States: A Profile

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### Women outnumber men.

In March 1999, the civilian noninstitutional population of the United States totaled approximately 272 million—139 million were female and 133 million were male. At the younger ages (under 20 years), the male-female ratio was 105 to 100, but for the ages of 20 to 44, it was 98 to 100. This ratio continues to decline with age, reaching 49 men to 100 women at the ages of 85 and over. Women had a higher median age than men, 35.8 years compared with 33.8 years.

### Women are racially and ethnically diverse.

Of the 139 million who were female—

- 71 percent were White;
- 13 percent were Black;
- 4 percent were Asian and Pacific Islander;
- 1 percent were American Indian and Alaska Native; and
- 11 percent were Hispanic (of any race).

### Women have almost achieved parity in educational attainment...

In 1999, the percentage of women and men who had completed high school or more did not differ (83.4 percent). However, the percentage with a bachelor's degree or more was higher for men (27.5 percent) than for women (23.1 percent). These proportions are substantially higher than in earlier decades. In 1970, 55.0 percent of men and 55.4 percent of women had completed 4 years of high school or more,<sup>1</sup> and only 14.1 percent of men and 8.2 percent of women had completed 4 years of college or more. In 1980,

<sup>1</sup>The percentages of men and women who had completed 4 years of high school or more in 1970 did not differ statistically.

69.2 percent of men and 68.1 percent of women had completed 4 years of high school or more, while 20.9 percent of men and 13.6 percent of women had completed 4 years of college or more.

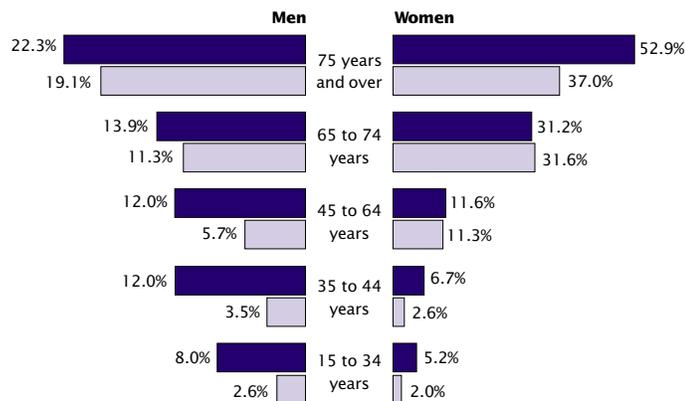
### ...but not earnings equality.

The median earnings of women 25 years and over who worked fulltime, year-round in 1998 was \$26,711, 73 percent of their male counterparts' median earnings (\$36,679). Men working fulltime, year-round consistently earned more than comparable women in each of the education levels:

- The median earnings of women with a high school diploma was \$21,963, compared with \$30,868 for their male counterparts.
- The median earnings of women with a bachelor's degree was \$35,408, compared with \$49,982 for their male counterparts.
- The median earnings of women with a professional degree was \$55,460, compared with \$90,653 for their male counterparts.

Figure 1.  
**More Women These Days Live Alone**

Percent of people living alone by age and sex: 1970 and 1998.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1970 and March 1998.

## Current Population Reports

By  
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## **Families maintained by a woman with no husband present have a lower median income...**

In 1998, the median income for families maintained by a woman with no husband present (\$22,163) was lower than for families maintained by a man with no wife present (\$35,681), and substantially lower than for married-couple families (\$54,180).

### **...and are more likely to be poor.**

In 1998, the poverty rate for families maintained by a woman with no husband present was 29.9 percent, compared with 12.0 percent for families maintained by a man with no wife present, and just 5.3 percent for married-couple families.

### **Women are marrying later...**

In 1998, the median age at first marriage for women was 25.0 years. Just a generation ago, in 1970, the age at first marriage was 20.8 years. The median age at first marriage for men was 26.7 years in 1998, up from 23.2 years in 1970.

### **...or not at all.**

Between 1970 and 1998, the proportion of people aged 30 to 34 who had never married tripled from 6.2 percent to 21.6 percent for women and from 9.4 percent to 29.2 percent for men. For those aged 35 to 39, the corresponding increases were from 5.4 percent to 14.3 percent for women and from 7.2 percent to 21.6 percent for men.

### **These changes have contributed to—**

- *More and more women living alone:* Between 1970 and 1998, the number doubled from 7.3 million to 15.3 million. The percentage of women who lived alone rose for almost every age group. The exception was those aged 65 to 74, where the percentage was statistically unchanged, as shown in Figure 1.
- *More families being maintained by women without a husband:* This proportion rose from 10.7 percent of all families in 1970 to 17.8 percent in 1998.

They constituted 46.7 percent of all Black families and 14.0 percent of all White families in 1998.

### **The marital status of women varies with age.**

In 1999, 51.0 percent of women 15 years and over were married and living with their spouse, 25.1 percent had never married, 12.9 percent were divorced or separated, and 10.0 percent were widowed. Men 15 years and over were more likely than women to be married and living with their spouse (54.7 percent), more likely to never have been married (31.3 percent), equally likely to be divorced or separated (10.2 percent), and less likely to be widowed (2.5 percent).

Among women 65 years and over, the proportion who were widowed was 44.9 percent, while 41.8 percent were married and living with their spouse. By contrast, only 14.0 percent of men in this age group were widowed, while 73.6 percent were married and living with their spouse.

### **Most single female custodial parents had child support awards.**

In the spring of 1996, 11.6 million or 85 percent of the 13.7 million custodial parents were women. Eight million, or 58 percent, of all custodial parents had child support awards—61 percent for mothers and 40 percent for fathers. In 1995, 70 percent of mothers due payments actually received at least a portion of the amount they were owed, getting an average of \$3,767 that year. The corresponding figures for fathers were 57 percent and \$3,370, respectively.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, 33.3 percent of custodial mothers and 14.3 percent of custodial fathers were poor in 1995.

### **Six in ten women participate in the labor force.**

In 1999, the proportion of women aged 16 and over in the labor force was 60.2 percent compared with

73.8 percent for men. The lower labor force participation of women is attributable in part to a greater concentration of women at the older ages. In 1999, over half (72.5 percent) of women aged 15 and over worked in four occupational groups: administrative support, including clerical (23.7 percent); professional specialty (17.8 percent); service workers, except private households (16.7 percent); and executive, administrators, and managerial (14.3 percent).

Even though women have made progress in entering occupations predominately held by men (especially executive and professional specialty occupations), the majority of women are still in traditional “female” occupations.<sup>3</sup> Women continue to be overrepresented in administrative support and service occupations and underrepresented in precision production, craft, and repair occupations, and the transportation and material moving occupations. For example, 79.3 percent of the 18.6 million people involved in administrative support (including clerical) were female, and 95.5 percent of the 859,000 people who were employed as service workers in private households were female.

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<sup>2</sup>The average amount received by women was not statistically different from the average amount received by men.

<sup>3</sup>*We the American...Women.* U.S. Census Bureau, Series WE-8, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1993.