

Marriage: More than a Century of Change, 1900-2022

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Despite the substantial decline in the U.S. marriage rate in recent decades, there is significant variation in the pace and magnitude of this decline across demographic groups. This Family Profile charts the marriage patterns of women aged 15 and older since 1900 using data from the National Vital Statistics, Decennial Censuses, and the American Community Survey. It also explores marital status variation by race/ethnicity and educational attainment. This profile is an update of [FP-20-21](#), [FP-18-17](#), and [FP-13-13](#).

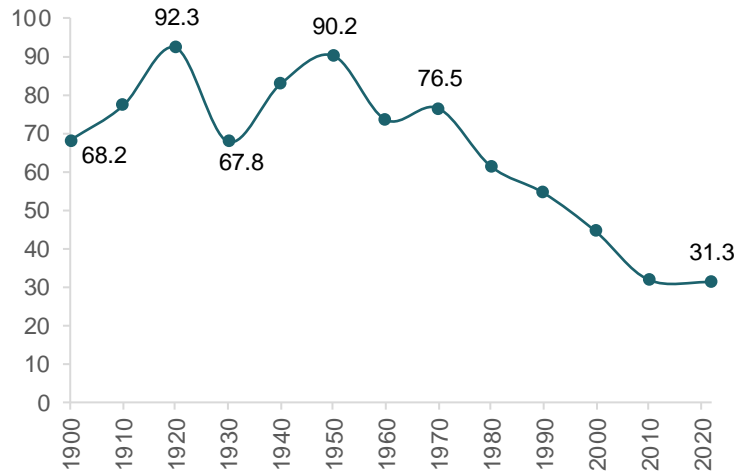
Change in the Marriage Rate in the U.S., 1900-2022

- The marriage rate in 2022 (31.3 women married in the last year per one thousand unmarried women) represents a 54% decline since 1900 (68.2).
- The U.S. marriage rate peaked in 1920 at 92.3, which was almost triple the 2022 rate.
- The marriage rate steadily dropped from 1970 to 2010 but has since stabilized.



The U.S. marriage rate has decreased by 54% since 1900.

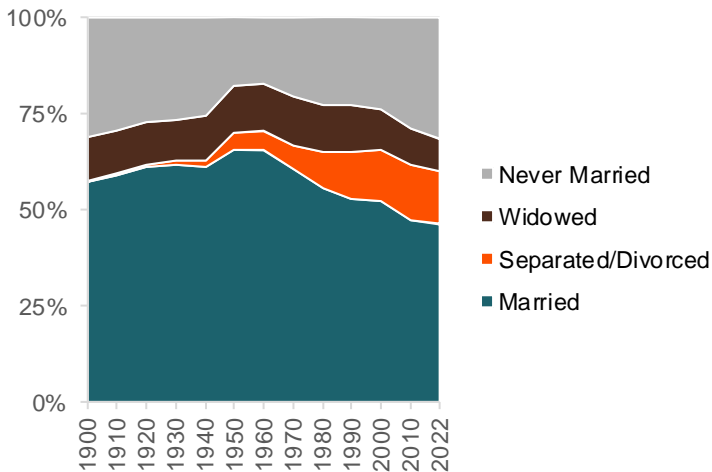
Figure 1. Women’s Marriage Rate, 1900-2022



Source: NCFMR analyses of data from the National Vital Statistics, CDC/NCHS, 1900-2000; U.S. Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census; U.S. Census Bureau (IPUMS), American Community Survey, 2010 and 2018 (IPUMS). Note: Data for Alaska begin in 1959. Data for Hawaii begin in 1960.

Change in Marital Status, 1900-2022

Figure 2: Current Marital Status of Women, 1900-2022



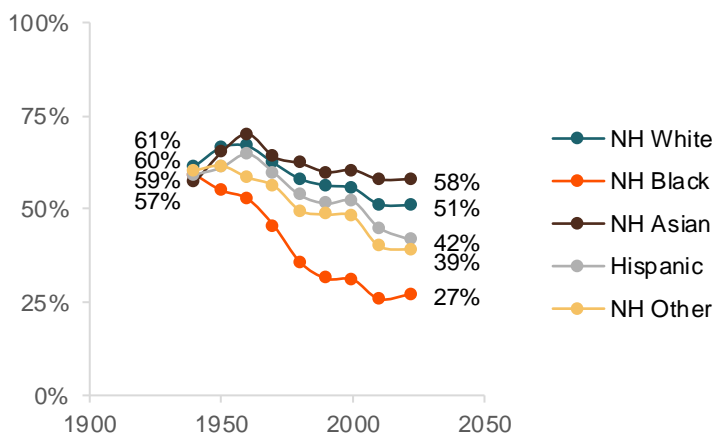
Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1900-2010 (IPUMS); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2018 (IPUMS) Note: Data for separated were not available until 1950.

- The share of currently married women (including those in a remarriage) has decreased from its peak of 65.4% in 1960 to 46.4% in 2022.
- Since 1900, the proportion of women who were currently separated or divorced has increased dramatically from 0.4% of women to 13.7% in 2022.
- After remaining relatively stable since 1900, the proportion of currently widowed steadily declined from 12.8% in 1970 to 8.3% in 2022.
- At 31.5% the percentage of women who were never married in 2022 was nearly equivalent to the rate seen in 1900 (31.3%). The lowest percentage was seen in 1960 with only 17.3% of women being never married.

Variation in Percentage Currently Married According to Race and Ethnicity, 1940-2022

- Regardless of race/ethnicity, about two-fifths of all women were married in 1940.
- Except for Asian women, by 2022 the share of currently married women across all racial and ethnic groups had declined.
- The percentage of Asian women who were currently married remained relatively stable from 1940 (57%) into 2022 (58%).
- The largest drop in the share of currently married women was observed among Black women – dropping by more than half from 59% in 1940 to 27% in 2022.
- In 2022, the percentage of currently married Hispanic women and women of other races/ethnicities dropped to their lowest observed levels, at 42% and 39% respectively.
- Since 1940, the percentage of White women who were married dropped from 61% to 51% in 2022.

Figure 3. Percentage of Women Currently Married among Racial/Ethnic Groups, 1940-2022



Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1900-2010 (IPUMS); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022 (IPUMS).

Data Sources:

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Suggested Citation:

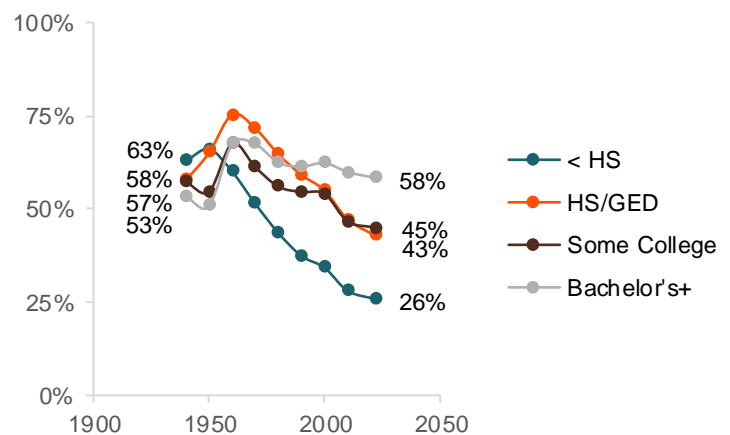
Loo, J. (2024). Marriage: More than a Century of Change, 1900 & 2022. *Family Profiles, FP-24-10*. Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. <https://doi.org/10.25035/ncfmr/fp-24-10>

This project is supported with assistance from Bowling Green State University. From 2007 to 2013, support was also provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the state or federal government.

Variation in Percentage Currently Married According to Educational Attainment, 1940-2018

- Between 53% and 63% of all women across the four educational attainment groups examined were married in 1940. By 2022 this range had increased dramatically.
- The share of women with less than a high school diploma who were currently married has been steadily declining since 1940 (63%), with only 26% being currently married in 2022.
- The percentages of women with a high school education and some college who were currently married have converged with 43% and 45% married in 2022, respectively.
- Since 1980, the share of women with a bachelor's degree or more who were currently married has remained relatively stable, with 58% currently married in 2022.

Figure 4. Percentage of Women Currently Married among Educational Attainment Groups, 1940-2022



Source: NCFMR analyses of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1900-2010 (IPUMS); U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2022 (IPUMS).