

The Thirty-Five Million: A Preliminary Report on the Status of Young Women

This report presents highlights, in chart form, of the status of women aged 18-34 from 1970 to the present time, covering demographic, economic and social characteristics. The report is based on data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The age span 18-34 is, of course, one of the most productive of the life cycle. This is the time when education is completed, careers are launched, households and families established. This is also the time when disadvantaged women are most vulnerable to the hardships of poverty, single parenthood, and lack of access to education.

There were 35 million young women in this age group in 1988. This cohort showed an explosive growth in the decade of the seventies (at three times the rate of growth of the population as a whole), with growth slowing during the eighties (except for Hispanic young women).

The statistical data reported here reveal both problems and progress. The most prominent development over the past two decades has been the increased independence of young women and the assumption of responsibility for their own support. With the postponement of marriage and the prevalence of divorce, more and more young women are responsible for support of themselves and their children. In married couple families, the traditional dependence on the male breadwinner is disappearing: most young women are in the labor force and, indeed, more than half of all women with newborn children are in the labor force.

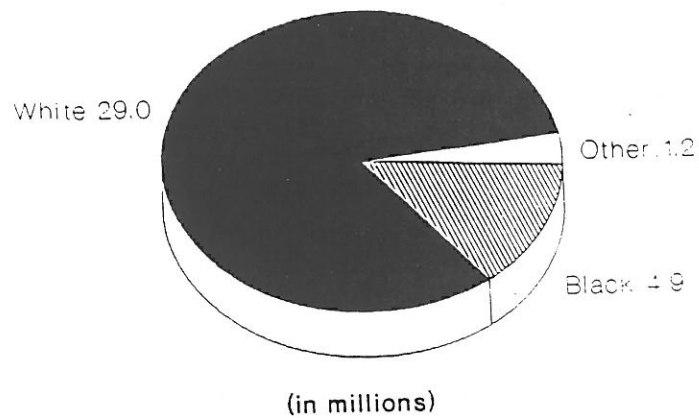
Nearly one-third of single, divorced, and widowed women in this age cohort have children. Most of these women bear the major share of financial and emotional responsibility for their children's well being. This group of families has a very high risk of living in poverty. While ten percent of all families had incomes below the official poverty threshold in 1988, the proportion was 53 percent for female householders aged 15-34.

Although there has been some improvement over time, the earnings of young women continue to trail those of young men of the same age, and, in contrast to the situation for males, there is little improvement in earnings with additional work experience after age 35. For women the traditionally low earnings of the young tend to stay low; for men earnings rise as they age. Thus, as women and men age, the earnings gap between them widens.

The lack of greater progress in closing the earnings gap is surprising in view of the significant changes in women's education. Women now receive over half of all bachelor's and master's degrees. The increase in the proportion of advanced degrees accounted for by women is especially striking. Similar progress has occurred in the achievement of professional degrees, in law, medicine, business, and other fields.

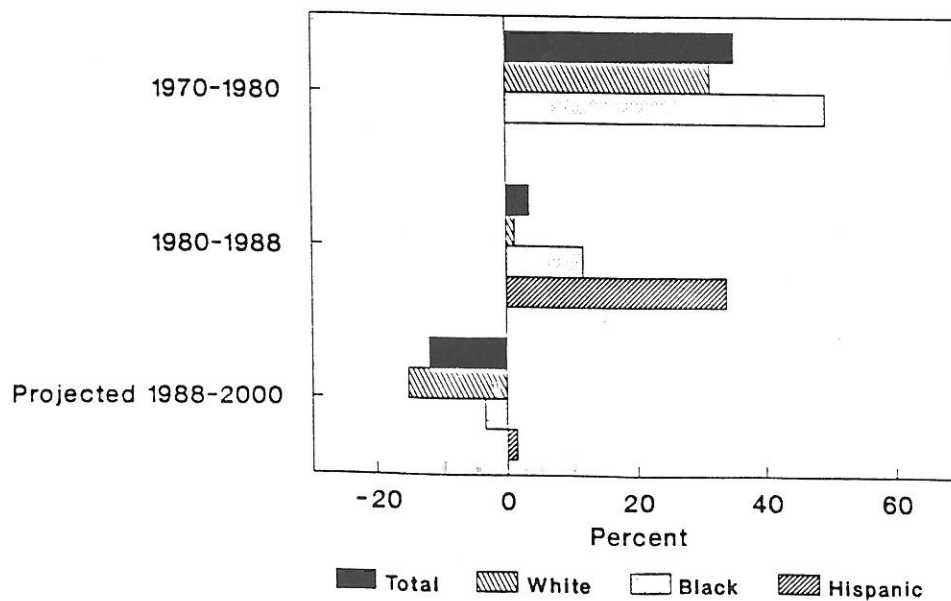
Where data are available, the report shows the experience of white, black and Hispanic women separately. Black women in general exhibit the same problems as white women but to a greater degree. Of particular interest, black young women in many instances were "ahead" of white women with respect to self-sufficiency, dual responsibility for jobs and families, and the like. For example, the proportion of young black women who were single in 1970 was not equaled by white women until 1988. Hispanic women, who may be of any race, are an ever-increasing percentage of the total population of young women.

In 1988, there were 35 million young women age 18-34.



Of all races, 3.2 million were of Hispanic origin.

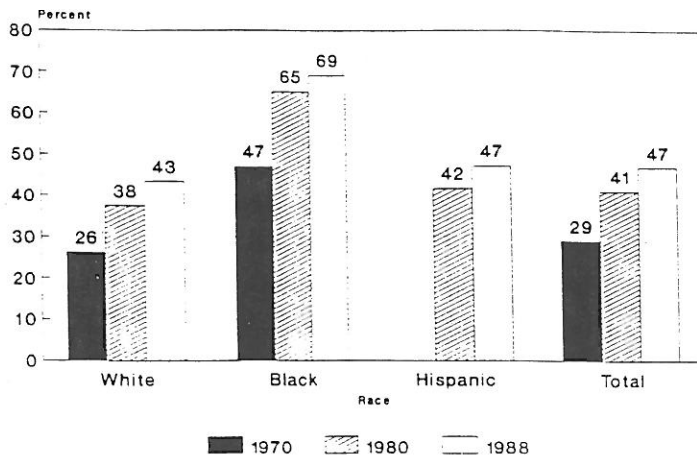
Percent Change of Young Women in the Total Population



	70	80	Proj
T	37.5	4	-12.5
W	30	2	-15
B	48	10	-4.5
H	-	37	2

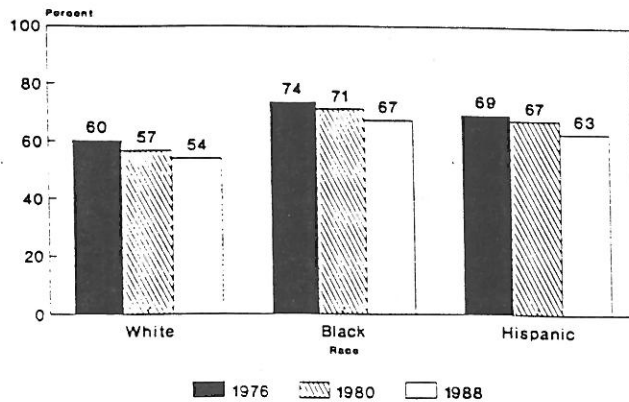
Young Women are Facing More Responsibilities

Percent of Female Population Age 20-34
Single, Divorced, Widowed



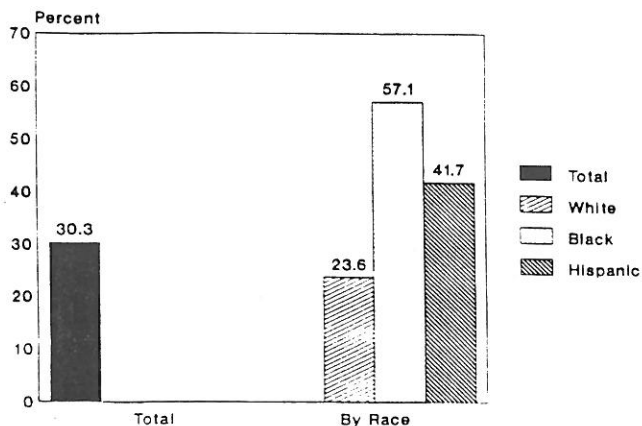
More and more young women are responsible for supporting themselves outside marriage.

Percent of Female Population Age 20-34
with Children



The proportion of women in this age group with children is falling, but the proportion with children outside marriage is rising.

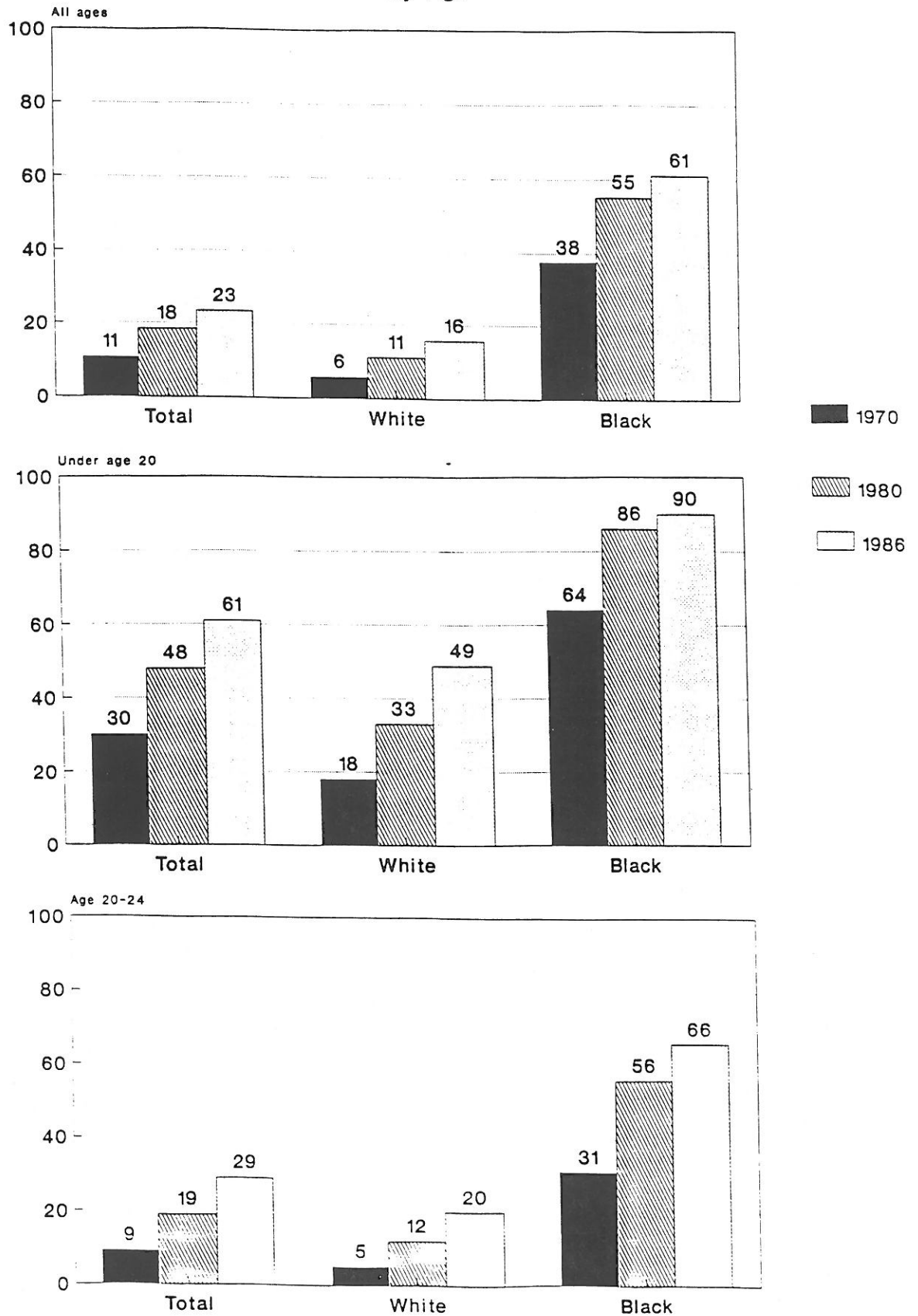
Percent of Single Women, Ages 20-34
with Children, 1988



Four million single women ages 20-34, nearly 1/3 of the total, have children.

More Young Women are Having Children Outside Marriage

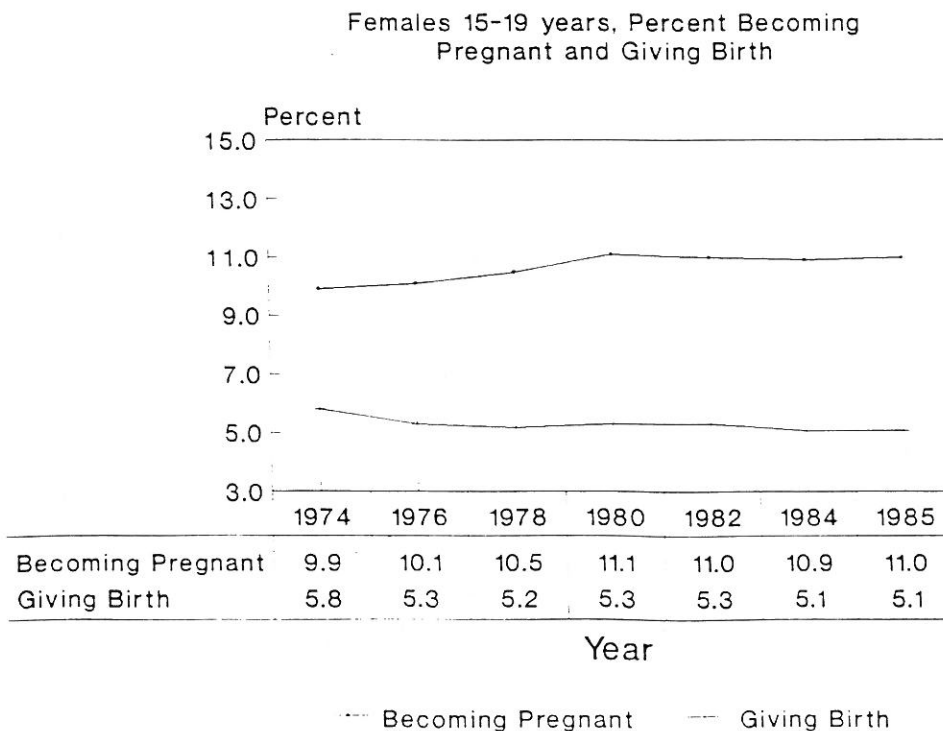
Percent of Births to Unmarried Mothers,
by Age



Birth Rates for Teenagers are Fairly Stable

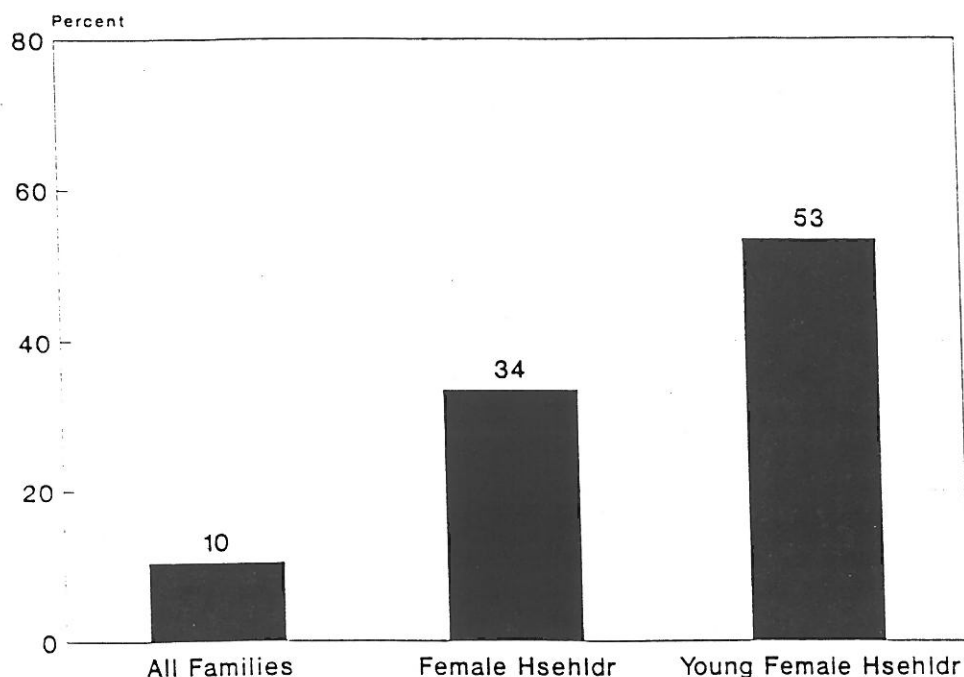
The proportion of teenagers becoming pregnant has stabilized at about 11 percent since 1980. The proportion giving birth has been constant at about 5 percent.

About 61 percent of all births for teenage mothers were to unmarried women in 1986 compared to 30 percent in 1970. For women age 20-24, the proportion of non-marital births was 29 percent compared to 9 percent two decades earlier. Women of color of all ages are more likely to have children outside marriage than white women.



Over Half the Families with Young Female Heads of Households are Poor

Poverty Rate for Families, 1988

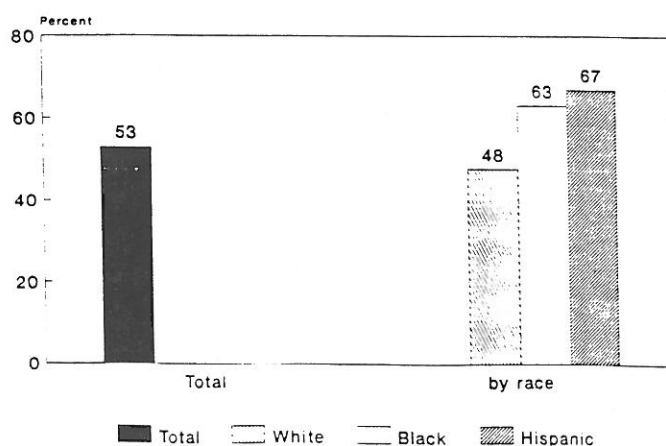


Families with a female householder are three times as likely to be in poverty as all families.

For families with a young woman householder, the proportion in poverty is over 50 percent.

For families with a female householder who is both young and a women of color, the poverty rate is over sixty percent.

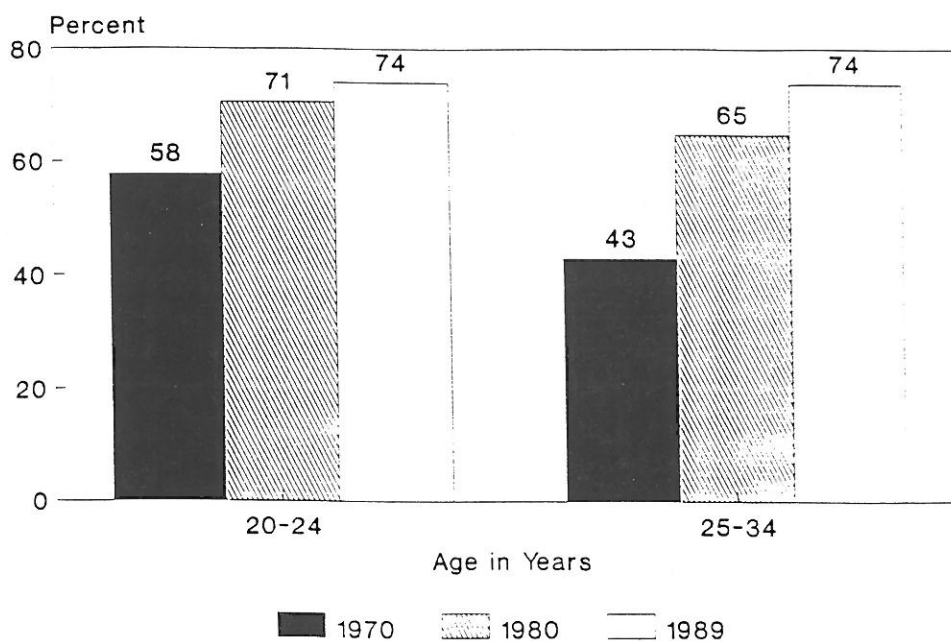
Poverty Rate of Female Householders Age 15-34 by Race



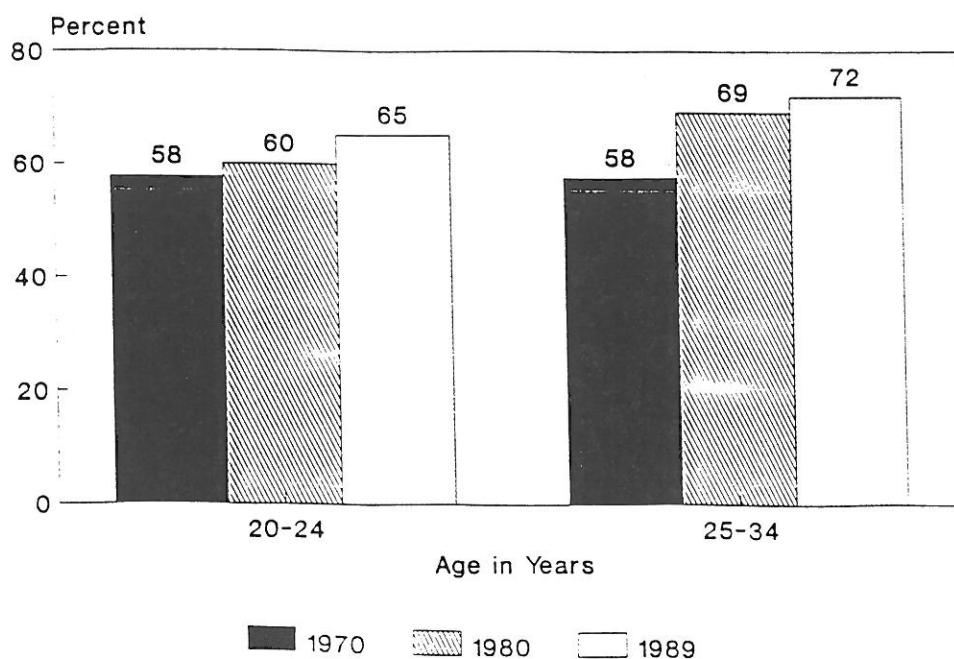
Labor Force Participation Rates Have Increased Substantially for Young Women

There has been a large increase in labor force participation in the last two decades. In the 25-34 age group which traditionally was engaged in child rearing, nearly three-fourths were in the labor force in 1989. Historically women of color have had higher labor force participation rates, but this is less the case today.

Percent of White Females in the Labor Force.

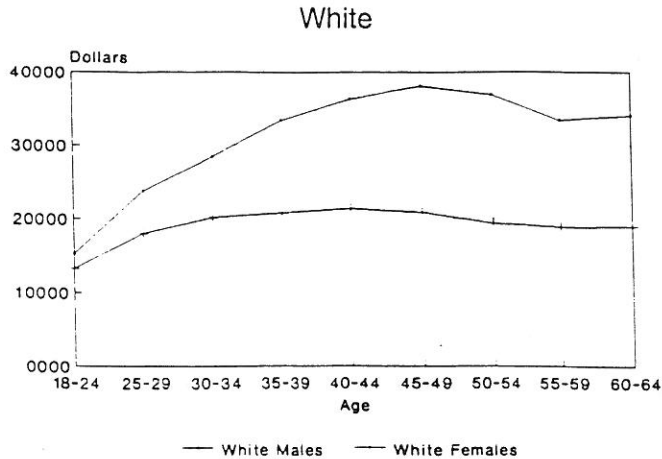


Percent of Black and Other Females in the Labor Force.

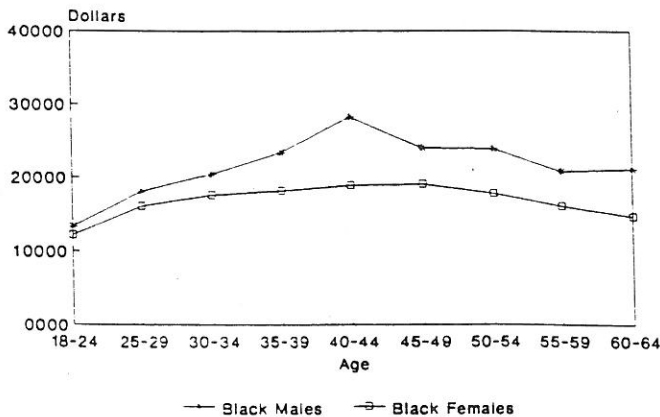


The Female/Male Earnings Gap Increases with Age

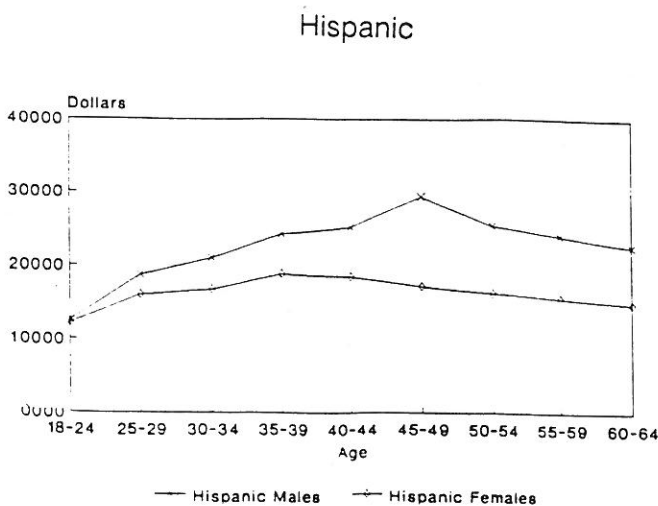
1987 Mean Annual Earnings of Males and Females by Race (Fulltime, Full Year)



Earnings of females in 1987 continue to fall short of earnings of males of the same ages by amounts ranging up to \$15,000.



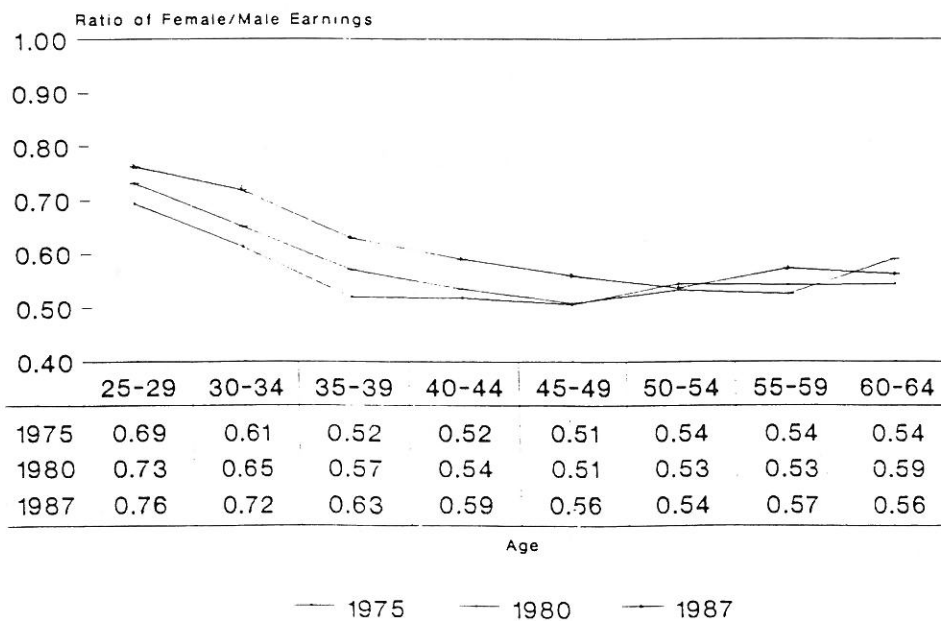
The gap is smaller for black and Hispanic women, compared to black and Hispanic men, than for white women. Men of color earn substantially less than white men on average.



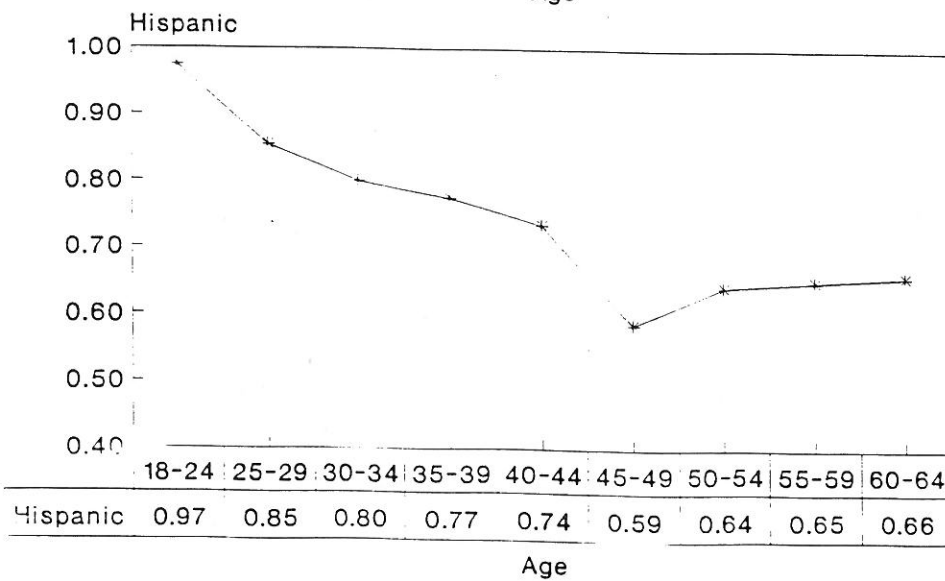
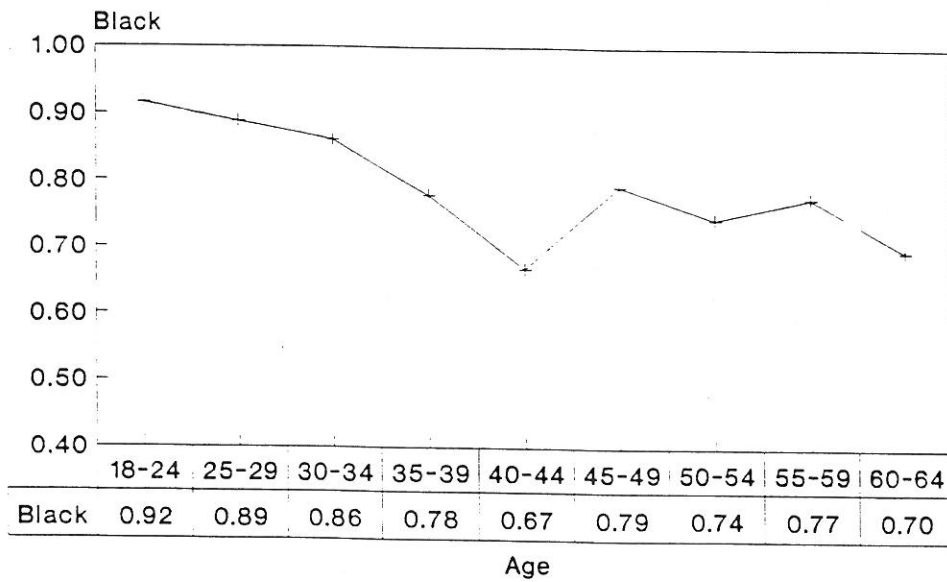
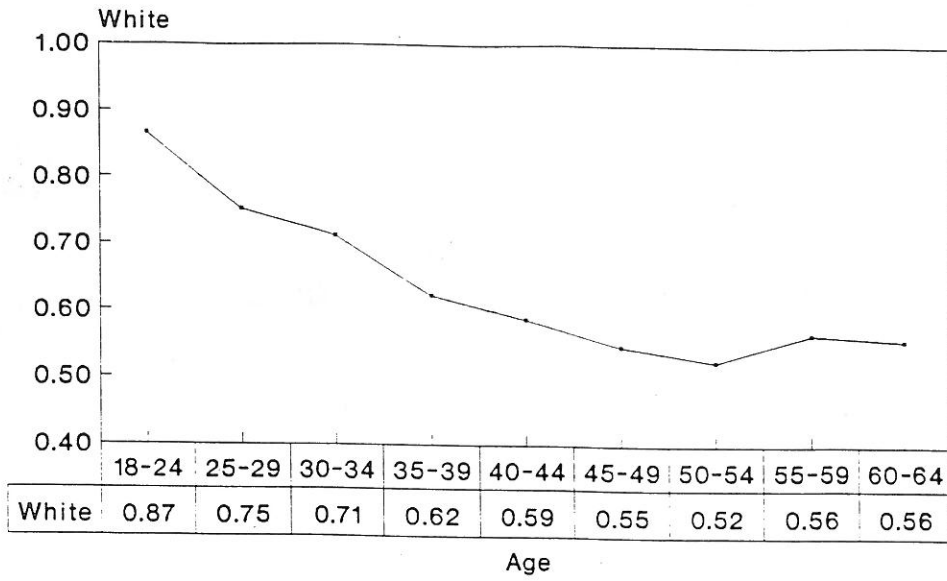
Young Women Workers Earn 60 to 75 Percent of the Salaries of Young Men

Earnings of women relative to earnings of men decline as women age, indicating that women do not reap the advantages of work experience to the same degree as men.

Female/Male Earnings Ratio for
Fulltime, Full Year Workers



1987 Female/Male Earnings Ratio by Race and Ethnicity



In the 1980's, women of all ages made gains in entering non-traditional occupations.

Young women have done especially well in several professional occupations.

Young women account for a growing, but still small, proportion of many nontraditional occupations. The proportion of females in the traditional occupations remains very large at all ages.

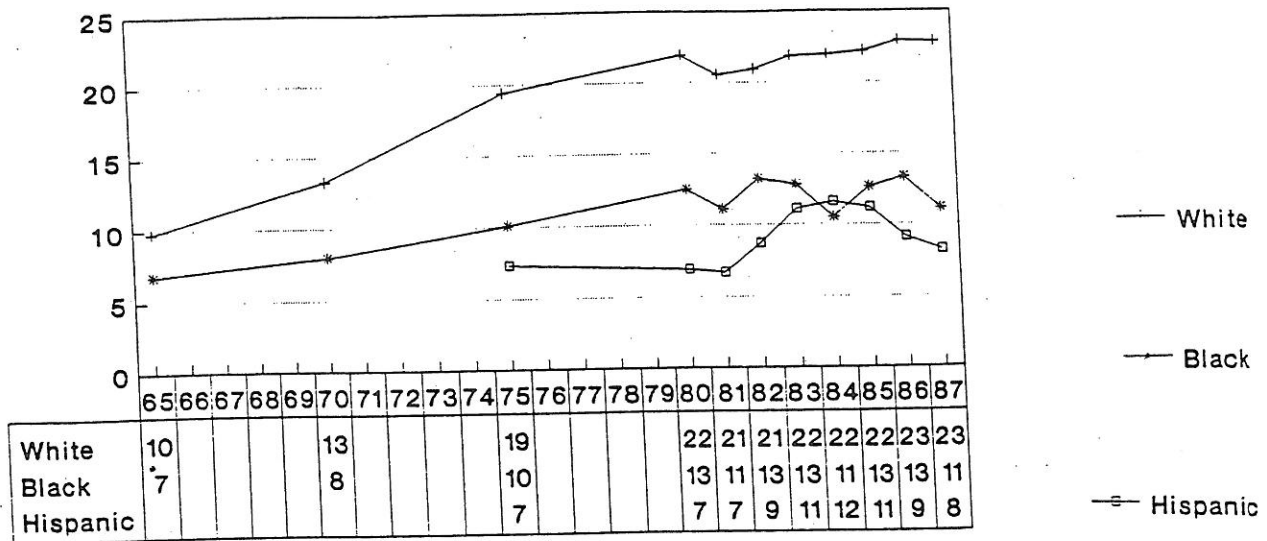
Percent of Women in Selected Occupations by Age

Non-traditional Occupations						
Occupation	25-34 Yrs.		35-44 yrs.		45-54 yrs.	
	1983	1989	1983	1989	1983	1989
Lawyers/Judges	16.0	35.0	13.0	21.0	11.0	13.0
Engineers	7.8	11.2	4.5	6.5	3.5	3.0
Math/Computer Science	37.0	33.0	25.1	33.0	18.1	28.5
Mechanics	3.9	3.7	2.7	4.0	2.7	3.0
Construction Trades	2.3	2.0	1.5	3.1	1.2	2.1
Transport., Material Moving	7.6	8.3	9.0	11.0	7.0	10.0
Freight Handler	16.0	18.0	20.3	23.4	20.1	26.2
Traditional Occupations						
Occupation	25-34 yrs.		35-44 Yrs.		45-54 yrs.	
	1983	1989	1983	1989	1983	1989
Teachers (Exc. Higher Ed)	72.8	74.5	69.5	74.2	68.9	70.0
Adm. Support (Clerical)	79.8	79.7	81.6	81.1	79.9	82.5
Service/Health Occupation	90.4	87.4	91.3	90.8	94.4	93.1
Service/Food Occupation	60.3	65.0	75.6	70.0	76.1	78.3
Service/Private Household	94.9	95.9	98.4	95.6	97.9	97.6

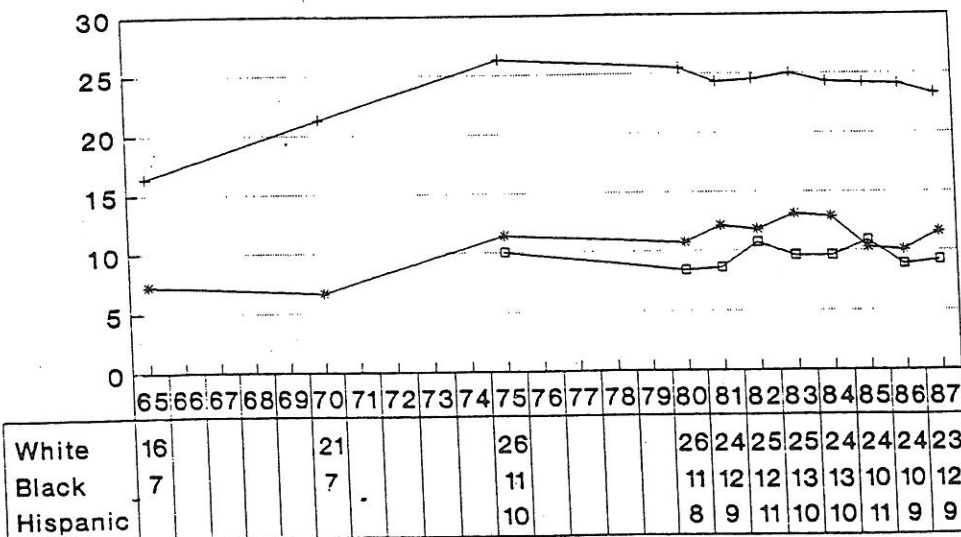
For All Race/Ethnic Groups, Young Women are Now as Likely to Have Completed College as Men.

Young people of color of both sexes are half as likely as whites to have college educations.

Percent of Females, age 25-29, with 4 or More Years of College



Percent of Males, age 25-29, with 4 or More Years of College



The proportion of women finishing college doubled from 1965 to 1975 and rose slowly thereafter. For men, the growth in college education was slower between 1965 and 1975 and the proportion has fallen slightly since 1975. In 1987, both men and women of color were still half as likely to complete a college education than whites were.

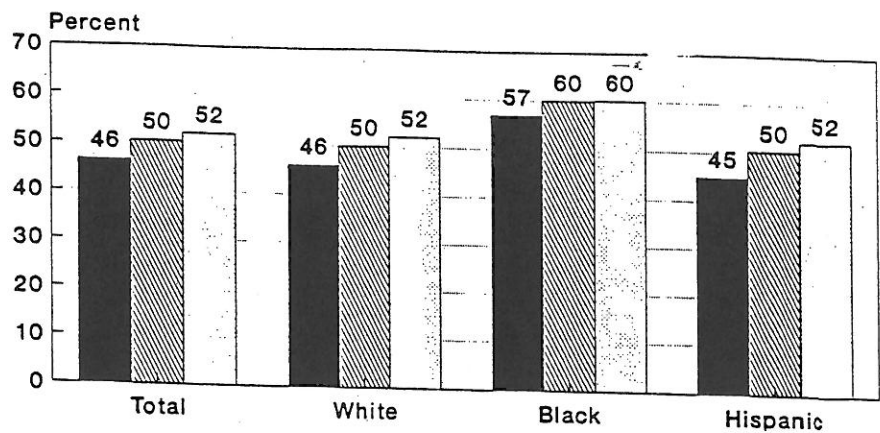
More Women are Pursuing College and Advanced Degrees

Over half of all bachelor's and master's degrees are now earned by women; for doctorates, the percentage is now 40 percent.

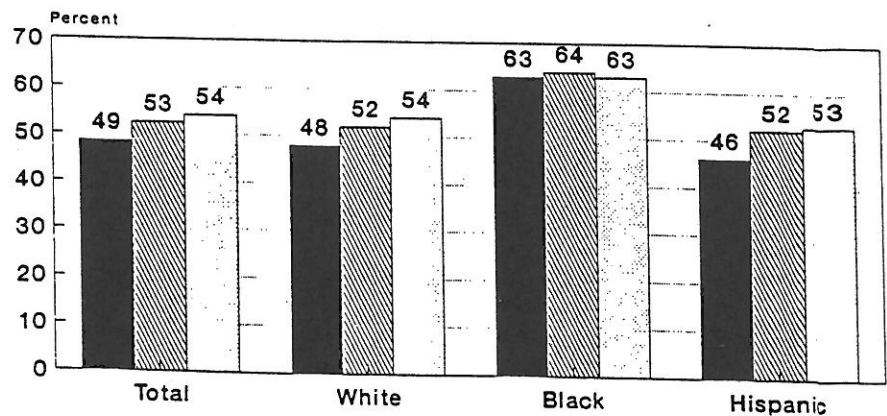
Among blacks, over 60 percent of Master's degrees go to women.

Over the last 15 years, women have steadily earned increasing proportions of the advanced degrees. This is especially true for doctorates.

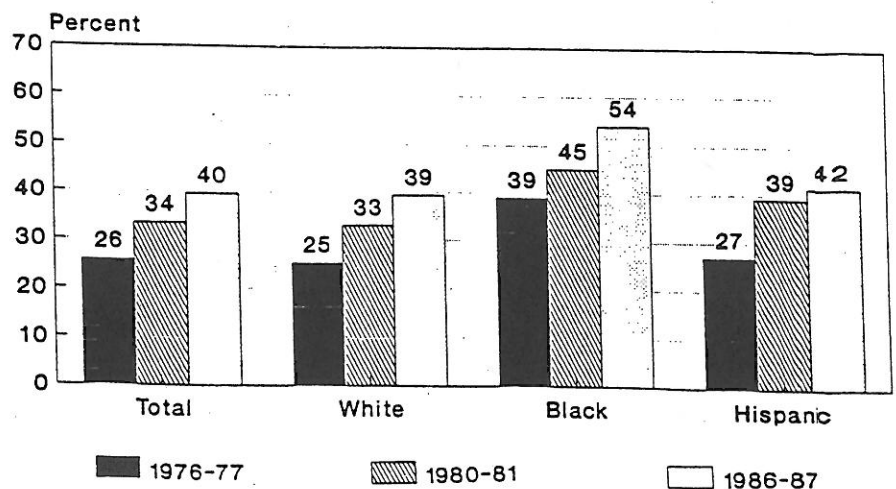
Percent of Bachelor's Degrees Earned by Women.



Percent of Master's Degrees Earned by Women.



Percent of Doctorate Degrees Earned by Women.



More Women are Earning Degrees in Non-Traditional Fields

Percent Female for Selected Non-Traditional Fields

	Bachelor's		Master's		Doctor's	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Architecture						
1970-71	5570	11.9	1705	13.8	36	8.3
1974-75	8226	17.4	2938	20.3	69	15.9
1980-81	9455	28.1	3153	29.1	93	22.0
1986-87	8606	38.6	3159	35.3	98	32.7
Agriculture						
1970-71	12672	4.2	2457	5.9	1086	2.9
1974-75	17528	15.8	3067	12.0	991	3.3
1980-81	21886	30.8	4003	24.0	1067	12.0
1986-87	14222	32.0	3479	30.2	1142	20.0
Business & Management						
1970-71	114865	9.1	26481	3.9	807	3.0
1974-75	133010	16.2	36247	6.0	1009	4.1
1980-81	199338	38.0	57898	25.0	842	15.0
1986-87	243366	26.1	69630	34.0	1109	22.1
Computer Info. Science						
1970-71	2388	14.0	1588	10.3	128	2.3
1974-75	5033	19.0	2299	15.0	213	7.0
1980-81	15121	33.0	4218	2.3	252	1.0
1986-87	3454	32.4	9166	27.0	428	11.2
Engineering						
1970-71	50046	0.8	16443	1.1	3615	7.0
1974-75	46852	2.2	15348	2.4	3108	2.0
1980-81	75000	10.3	16709	8.2	2561	4.0
1986-87	88791	14.0	23426	13.0	4191	7.0
Mathematics						
1970-71	24801	38.0	5191	29.2	1199	0.8
1974-75	18181	42.0	4327	33.0	975	11.3
1980-81	11078	43.0	2567	34.1	728	16.0
1986-87	16489	46.4	3321	39.1	725	17.4
Physical Sciences						
1970-71	21412	14.0	6367	13.3	4390	6.0
1974-75	20778	18.2	5807	14.4	3626	8.3
1980-81	23952	25.0	5284	21.0	3141	12.0
1986-87	19974	28.4	5652	25.0	3672	17.2

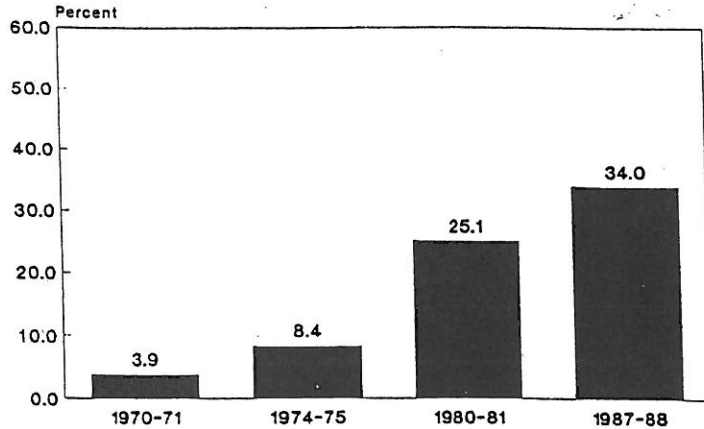
Nontraditional fields have attracted increasing proportions of women. However, there continue to be lags at the master's and doctorate level, particularly in mathematics and the physical sciences.

Women are Rapidly Catching up with Men in Obtaining Professional Degrees, Approaching 50 Percent in Some Fields.

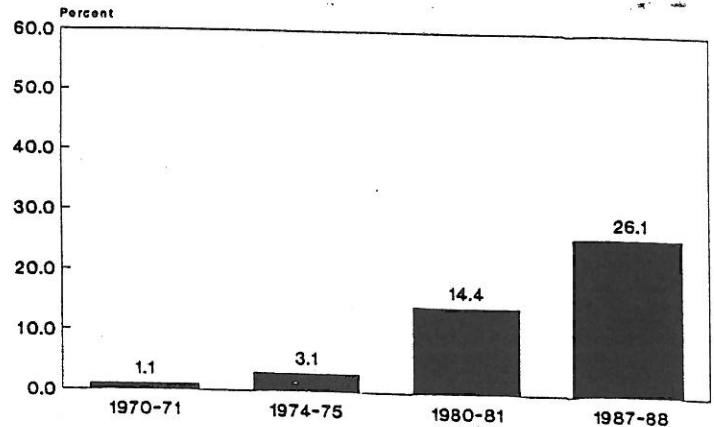
There have been extraordinary increases in the participation of women in some of the learned professions. However, still less than half of the professional degrees in most of these selected fields are earned by women.

Percent Female

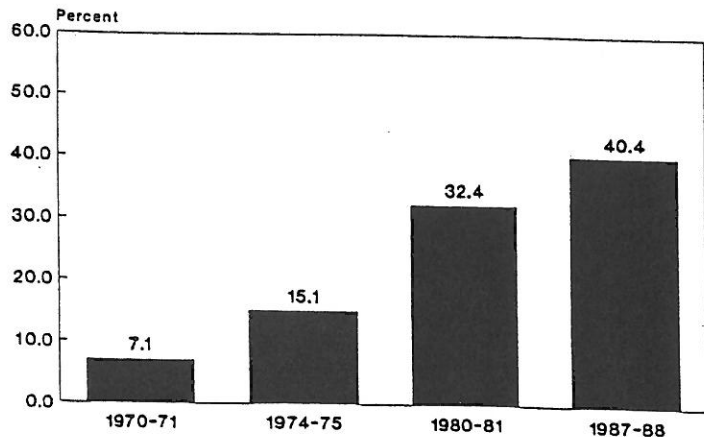
Business



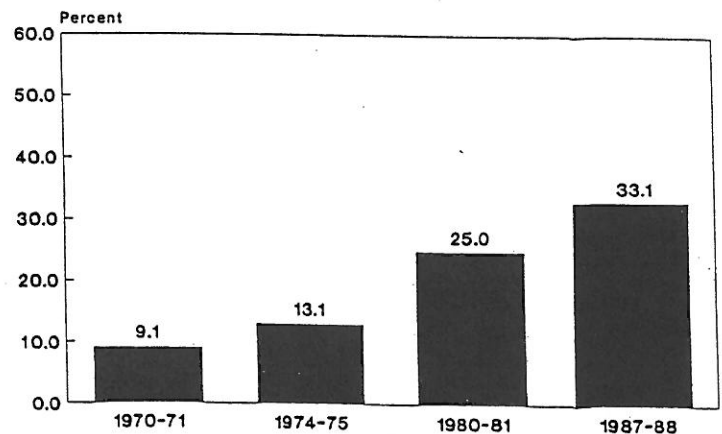
Dentistry



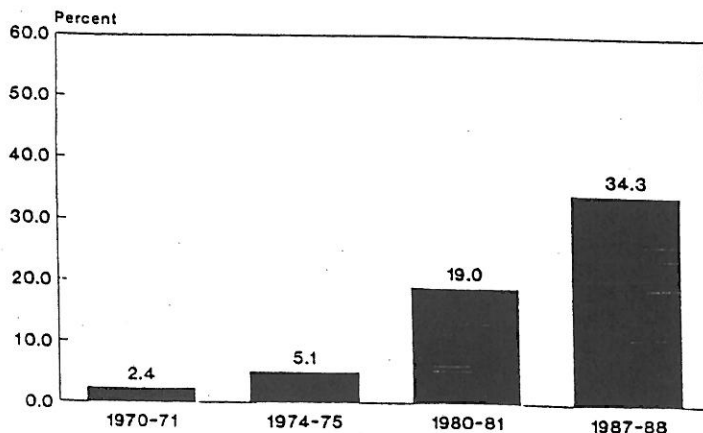
Law Degrees



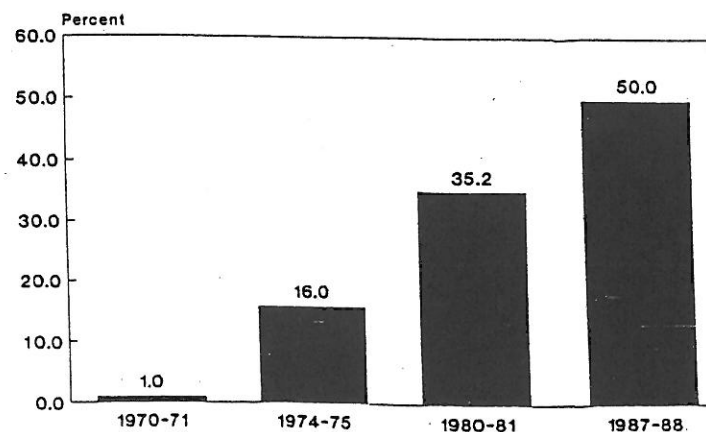
Medicine



Optometry



Veterinary



SOURCES

Page 1: Population and Population Trends

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 917, No. 1018, No. 1045, unpublished data.

Page 2: Singleness and Family Responsibilities

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 212, No. 365, No. 375, No. 433, No. 436, No. 437.

Page 3: Children Outside Marriage

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 428.

Page 4: Teenage Childbearing

Child Trends Inc., November 1988, 1989.

Page 5: Poverty Rates for Female Householders

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 166.

Page 6: Labor Force Participation

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment and Earnings, January 1990; Bulletin 2096.

Page 7: Annual Earnings

U.S. Bureau of the Census, unpublished data.

Page 8: Earnings Ratio

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 105, No. 132, No. 162.

Page 9: Earnings Ratio by Race and Ethnicity

U.S. Bureau of the Census, unpublished data.

Page 10: Employment in Selected Occupations

U.S. Bureau of the Census, unpublished data.

Pages 11-13: Trends in Education

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.