



Current Population Reports
Special Studies
Series P-23, No. 187
January 1994

How We're Changing

Demographic State of the Nation: 1994

This is an overview of some major demographic findings reported by the Census Bureau since January 1993. If you are interested in additional information on the topics in this report, call one of our subject specialists listed on page 4.

Educational attainment levels reach record highs.

In 1993, 80.2 percent of Americans 25 years old and over had completed at least high school and 21.9 percent had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Both figures are the highest ever recorded in the United States. These trends in educational attainment levels are primarily due to a decreasing proportion of older, less-educated persons and an increasing proportion of younger, more-educated persons in the population. For example, in 1993, 88.6 percent of persons 35 to 44 years old had completed high school, compared with 52.1 percent of persons 75 years old and over.

Educational attainment levels of younger persons may be stabilizing. The proportion of persons 25 to 29 years old who had completed high school in 1993 was not different from that in 1983. Similarly, the proportion of younger persons who had obtained a bachelor's degree has been fairly constant since the mid-1970's.

Although there is no difference in high school completion rates by gender, there are gender differences in college completion rates. About 24.8 percent of men and 19.2 percent of women have completed college.

Among race and ethnic groups, 22.6 percent of Whites, 12.2 percent of Blacks, 33.9 percent of persons of other races, and 9.0 percent of Hispanics (of any race) have completed a bachelor's degree or more.

Out-of-wedlock childbearing continues to rise.

In 1992, 24 percent of never-married women 18 to 44 years old had ever borne a child, up from 15 percent in 1982. The higher incidence of out-of-wedlock births among women in their twenties and thirties accounted for much of this increase. Among never-married women in their thirties in 1992, 36 percent had ever borne a child, compared with 24 percent in 1982. Among never-married teenagers 15 to 19 years old in 1992, about 5 percent had ever borne a child.

Over half (54 percent) of women 18 to 44 years old who had a child in 1991 were in the labor force in 1992, compared with 44 percent in 1982 and 31 percent in 1976. The labor force participation rate for recent mothers with less than a high school education in 1992 was 31 percent, compared with 72 percent for recent mothers with a graduate or professional degree (figure 1).

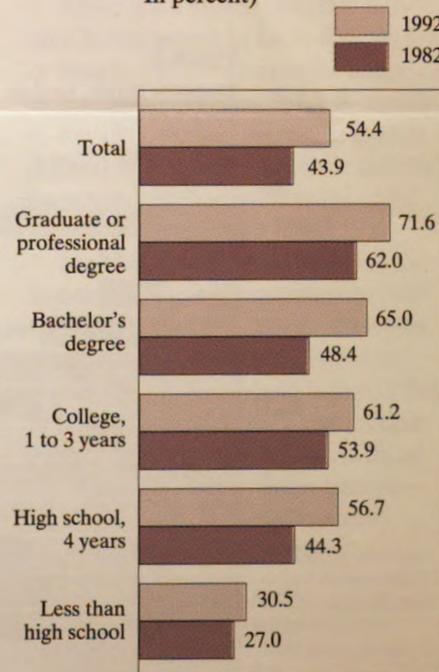
Among women 15 to 44 years old in 1992, 41 percent were childless. The childlessness rate for women 30 to 34 and 35 to 39 years old was about 4 percentage points higher in 1992 (26 percent and 19 percent, respectively) than for women the same age in 1982. About 16 percent of women 40 to 44 years old remained childless in 1992, up from 11 percent in 1982.

Local moves are more common than longer-distance moves.

Between March 1991 and March 1992, 42.8 million Americans, or 17.3 percent of persons 1 year old and over, moved from one residence to another. Local movers (persons who moved within the same county), numbered 26.6 million (10.7 percent), slightly higher than the mobility rate of 10.3 percent in the preceding year. The mobility rate for longer-distance moves (from one county to another) was 6.0 percent, or 15.0 million persons. Among these longer-distance moves, the rate was slightly higher for moves

Figure 1.
Labor Force Participation Rates for Women Who Have Had a Child in the Last Year, by Educational Attainment: 1992 and 1982

(Women 18 to 44 years old. In percent)



between counties in the same State (3.2 percent) than for moves from one State to another (2.9 percent).

Mobility patterns by age are generally in response to life-cycle changes, such as marriage, parenthood, divorce, or widowhood. Other factors include college enrollment, job changes, and retirement. Young adults have the highest rates of moving. One-third of all persons in their twenties moved between March 1991 and March 1992 (figure 2).

The number of farm residents was unchanged in 1991.¹

In 1991, the number of Americans living on farms was about 4.6 million, unchanged from the 1990 figure. The farm population accounted for 1.9 percent of the total population in 1991. Between 1940 and 1980, our farm population dropped from 30.5 million to 6.1 million.

In 1991, 49.3 percent of farm residents lived in the Midwest, and 29.6 percent lived in the South. In 1950, this situation was essentially reversed: 32.3 percent lived in the Midwest, and 51.6 percent lived in the South. This reversal was due to declines in the number of farm residents in the South, not to increases in the Midwest.

¹ Data in this section are from the final annual report on this subject, *Residents of Farms and Rural Areas: 1991*.

Among men 25 years old and over, only about 29.1 percent of farm residents had at least some college, compared with 42.8 percent of nonfarm residents. There was no significant difference in educational attainment levels between farm and nonfarm women.

Voter turnout in the 1992 Presidential election was the highest since the 1972 election.

In the November 1992 general election, 61 percent of the voting-age population reported that they went to the polls, the highest percentage since the 1972 election.² The 1992 voter turnout rate was up 4 percentage points from the 1988 election, when the rate was a record low of 57 percent.

Voting rates vary widely by people's characteristics. From 1988 to 1992, the voter turnout rate for Blacks increased from 52 percent to 54 percent, while the rate for Whites increased from 59 percent to 64 percent. The rate was 27 percent for Asian and Pacific Islanders and 29 percent for Hispanics in 1992. (Because 45 percent of Asian and Pacific Islanders and 40 percent of Hispanics surveyed were

² Reported voting rates tend to be high; the actual figure in 1992 was about 55 percent.

not U.S. citizens, they were ineligible to register to vote. If the universe were restricted to U.S. citizens, the voting rate would rise to 50 percent for Asian and Pacific Islanders and 48 percent for Hispanics.)

In 1992, 43 percent of persons 18 to 24 years old voted (up 7 percentage points from 1988), compared with 70 percent of persons 65 years old and over (up only 1 percentage point from 1988). The voter turnout rate was 69 percent for persons who owned their own homes, versus 44 percent for renters.

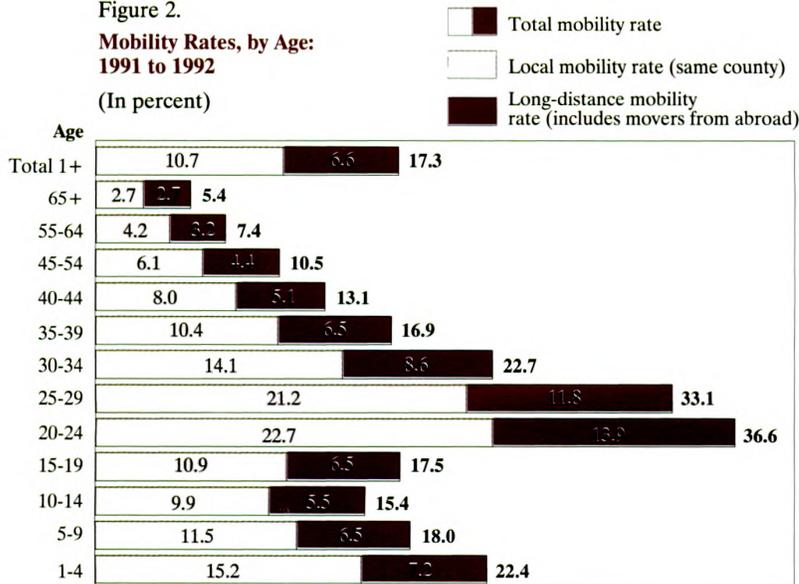
Child care by fathers has sharply increased.

In 1991, about 20 percent of preschoolers (under age 5) whose mothers worked outside the home were cared for by their fathers, a sharp increase from 15 percent in 1988. More preschoolers were cared for by their fathers (20 percent) than by their grandparents (16 percent) or by other relatives (8 percent). Economic conditions, such as unemployment, changes in work schedules, the high cost of child care, and the increasing number of women in the labor force, have contributed to the rise in father-provided child care.

Among married-couples, paternal child care increased from 17 percent in 1977 to 23 percent in 1991. About 7 percent of preschoolers of single mothers (divorced, separated, widowed, or never-married women) who worked outside the home in 1991 were cared for by their fathers, up from only 2 percent in 1988. In both 1988 and 1991, about 50 percent of all children whose fathers were unemployed for at least 4 months were cared for by their fathers.

Families who use child care services spent about 7 percent of their income on child care costs in 1991, up from about 6 percent in 1985. Child care costs for families with incomes below the poverty level amounted to 27 percent of their income, compared with 7 percent for families with incomes above the poverty level.

Figure 2.
Mobility Rates, by Age:
1991 to 1992
(In percent)



Real median household income was unchanged in 1992.³

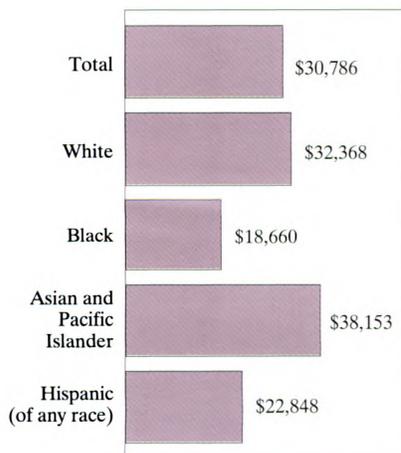
Real median household income in 1992 (\$30,786) was not significantly different from the 1991 figure (\$31,034), after having declined for 2 consecutive years. This was the first full year that median household income has remained unchanged since the July 1990-March 1991 period, our country's most recent recessionary period. Between 1989 and 1992, real median household income declined by 5.9 percent.

Real median income of White households, Black households, Asian and Pacific Islander households, and Hispanic households showed no change from 1991 to 1992 (figure 3). From 1989 to 1992, however, real median household income declined for all of these race and ethnic groups.

The median earnings of women working year-round, full-time in 1992 was \$21,440, up 1.3 percent in real terms from \$21,170 in 1991. This follows 2 years of no significant change in women's earnings. For men working year-round, full-time, real median earnings remained unchanged at \$30,358 in 1992. This follows a 2-percent increase between 1990 and 1991 in real earnings for men. These figures result in a female-to-male

³ Changes in real income refer to comparisons after adjusting for inflation.

Figure 3.
Median Household Income, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992



earnings ratio of .71 in 1992, not different from the all-time high ratio of .72 in 1990.

The above income data are based on money income from regularly received sources before any taxes and excluding capital gains and noncash benefits. A broader income definition which includes capital gains and the value of various noncash programs, such as food stamps, school lunches, subsidized housing, and medical coverage and excludes taxes shows a more equal distribution of income. Using the broader definition, the ratio of Black to White median household income in 1992 increases from 57.6 percent to 64.3 percent, and the Hispanic to White ratio increases from 70.6 percent to 75.6 percent.

Poverty increased for the third consecutive year.

There were 36.9 million persons below the official government poverty level in 1992, up from 35.7 million in 1991 and 31.5 million in 1989. The 1992 poverty rate was 14.5 percent—not statistically different from the 1991 poverty rate of 14.2 percent, but different from the 1989 rate of 12.8 percent.

For children under 18 years old, the 1992 poverty rate was 21.9 percent (figure 4). The corresponding figures for persons 18 to 64 and for persons 65 years old and over were 11.7 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively. Since 1974, the poverty rate for children under 18 years old has been higher than that for other age groups.

The 1992 poverty rates for Whites (11.6 percent), Blacks (33.3 percent), Hispanics (29.3 percent), and Asian and Pacific Islanders (12.5 percent) did not change from their 1991 levels. Among poor persons in 1992, 66.5 percent were White and 28.8 percent were Black.

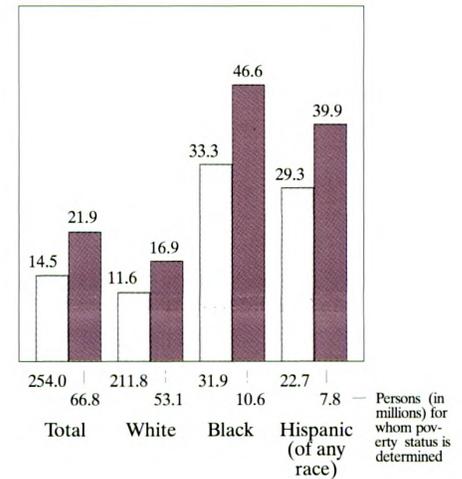
For all families, the 1992 poverty rate (11.7 percent) did not change from 1991. The 1992 rate was 6.2 percent for married-couple families and 34.9 percent for female householder, no spouse present families (neither was significantly different from the

Figure 4.

Poverty Rate, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1992

□ All ages
■ Children under 18

(In percent)



reported 1991 figure). However, the poverty rate for male householder, no spouse present families increased from 13.0 percent in 1991 to 15.6 percent in 1992.

The broader income definition (noted in the previous section on income) would reduce the official poverty rate in 1992 from 14.5 percent to 11.7 percent.

The number of first-time homeowners has declined.

There were about 1,673,000 first-time homeowners in 1989, 400,000 fewer than in 1977.⁴ The median value of all homes in 1989 was \$68,248, similar to the 1977 median (in constant 1989 dollars) of \$69,450. First-time owners' homes in 1989 had an average of 5.6 rooms, compared with 5.3 in 1977.

Median monthly housing costs for first-time owners were higher in 1989 (\$675) than in 1977 (\$600). However, since first-time owners in 1989 had higher median household incomes than first-time owners in 1977, the median percentage of income spent on these housing costs did not differ between 1977 and 1989 (about 24 percent).

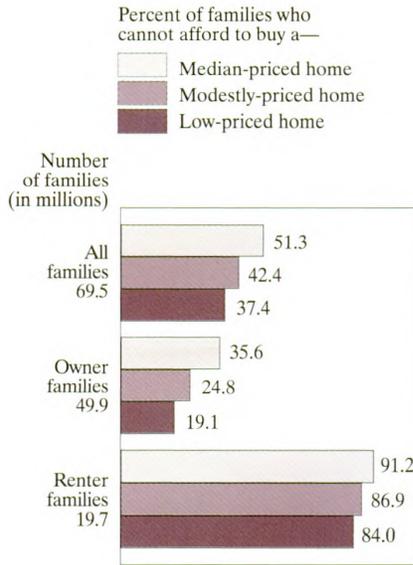
⁴ This difference is partly due to changes in the definition of a "first-time homeowner." In 1977, only the head of the household must never have owned a home. In 1989, the owner and all co-owners must never have owned a home.

In 1989, the 1.7 million first-time owners purchased less expensive, smaller, and older homes than the 2.7 million repeat owners (owners who moved into a home during the period, but the home was not the first ever owned). First-time owners paid an average of \$60,112 for their homes, much lower than the \$86,563 paid by repeat owners. About 52.5 percent of first-time owners' homes had less than 1,500 square feet, compared with 31.0 percent of repeat owners' homes. About 36.5 percent of first-time owners bought homes that were built before 1960, compared with 22.6 percent of repeat owners.

Over half of all families cannot afford to buy a median-priced home in their neighborhoods.

In spring 1991, 51 percent of families could not afford to buy a median-priced home in the area where they lived, up from 49 percent in 1984 and 1988 (using a conventional, fixed-rate, 30-year mortgage with a 5-percent down payment). By comparison, 42 percent of families could not afford a modestly-priced home, and 37 percent of families could not afford a low-priced home in 1991. (Modestly-priced homes are priced lower than 75 percent of all homes in an area. Low-priced homes are priced lower than 90 percent of all homes in an area.)

Figure 5.
Affordability of Housing, by Tenure: 1991



Housing affordability varies by tenure. A much higher percentage of renter families (91 percent) than owner families (36 percent) could not afford to buy a median-priced house (figure 5).

For further information, call (301):

- Educational attainment**
Robert Kominski 763-1154
- Childbearing**
Amara Bachu 763-4547

- Geographical mobility**
Kristin Hansen 763-3850
- Farm population**
Donald Dahmann 763-5592
- Voting**
Martin O'Connell 763-5303
- Child care**
Martin O'Connell 763-5303
- Income**
Carmen DeNavas 763-8576
- Poverty**
Eleanor Baugher 763-8578
- First-time homeowners**
Ellen Wilson 763-8165
- Housing affordability**
Peter Fronczek 763-8165
- General information on this report**
Janice Valdisera 763-7962

Source and Accuracy of Estimates

Data presented here are from the Current Population Survey, the Survey of Income and Program Participation, and the American Housing Survey. The survey data are subject to sampling variability as well as to survey design errors, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing errors. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and statistical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. Further information can be found in detailed reports.

U.S. Department of Commerce
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
Washington, DC 20233
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private Use, \$300

FIRST CLASS MAIL
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
CENSUS
PERMIT NO. G-58