

Bowling Green State University
ScholarWorks@BGSU

National Center for Family and Marriage
Research Family Profiles

Sociology

2012

FP-12-05 Age Variation in the Divorce Rate, 1990-2010

Susan L. Brown

Bowling Green State University, browns1@bgsu.edu

I-Fen Lin

Bowling Green State University, ifenlin@bgsu.edu

Krista K. Payne

Bowling Green State University, kristaw@bgsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ncfmr_family_profiles



Part of the [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Brown, Susan L.; Lin, I-Fen; and Payne, Krista K., "FP-12-05 Age Variation in the Divorce Rate, 1990-2010" (2012). *National Center for Family and Marriage Research Family Profiles*. 124.
https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/ncfmr_family_profiles/124

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in National Center for Family and Marriage Research Family Profiles by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

Age Variation in the Divorce Rate, 1990-2010

Susan L. Brown, I-Fen Lin, & Krista K. Payne



National Center for
Family & Marriage Research
Bowling Green State University

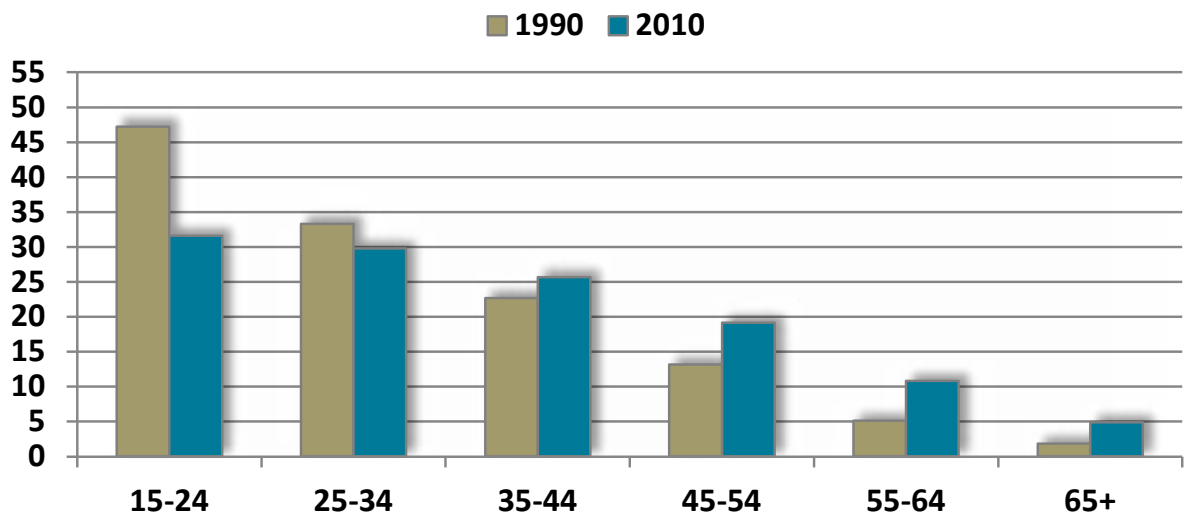
The overall U.S. divorce rate has remained essentially unchanged over the past 20 years. In 1990, 19 people divorced for every 1,000 marrieds versus 18 per 1,000 in 2010. This stability over time belies considerable variation by age group. A recent study indicates that the divorce rate among those ages 50 and older doubled since 1990 (Brown & Lin, 2012), which suggests that the risk of divorce declined among younger adults. Combining data from the 1990 U.S. Vital Statistics and the 2010 American Community Survey, this profile documents the change in the divorce rate between 1990 and 2010 by 10-year age groups.

Divorce Rates

In general, the risk of divorce declines with age. The rate of the decline across different age groups is steeper in 1990 than in 2010. The range of the divorce rates across age groups is wider in 1990 than in 2000.

- The divorce rate for adults under age 35 has decreased since 1990.
 - The decline was greatest among those ages 15-24, for whom the divorce rate dropped by 33% from 47 to 32 per 1,000.
- For adults over age 35, the divorce rate has increased, and this growth is most dramatic for the oldest age groups.
 - Among those ages 55-64, the risk of divorce has more than doubled (5 to 11 per 1,000). For those 65 and older, the rate of divorce has nearly tripled (2 to 5 per 1,000).

Figure 1. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, VitalStats, 1990 and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010

Family Profiles examine topics related to NCFMR's core research themes. Data are presented at both the national and state levels using new data sources. Written for both researchers and broad communities, these profiles summarize the latest statistics on U.S. families.



Divorce Rates by Gender

The trends in the divorce rate are similar for men and women. For both groups, the divorce rate declines with age. The range of the divorce rates across age groups is narrower now than in 1990.

- For men and women, the divorce rate has decreased among adults under age 35.
 - The decrease was most evident for the youngest group, ages 15-24, for whom the divorce rate declined by 38% (from 49 to 30 per 1,000) and 30% (46 to 32 per 1,000) for men and women, respectively.
- For men and women ages 35 and older, the divorce rate has risen. The rise is largest among older adults (ages 55-64 and 65 plus).
 - The increase in the risk of divorce for older adults is much greater for women than men. For women ages 55-64, the divorce rate nearly tripled (4 to 11 per 1,000). For women ages 65 and older, the rate almost quadrupled (1.4 to 5.4 per 1,000). By comparison, the divorce rate among men ages 55-64 nearly doubled (6 to 11 per 1,000), and the rate for men ages 65 and older doubled (2 to 4 per 1,000) since 1990.

Figure 2. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups, Men Only

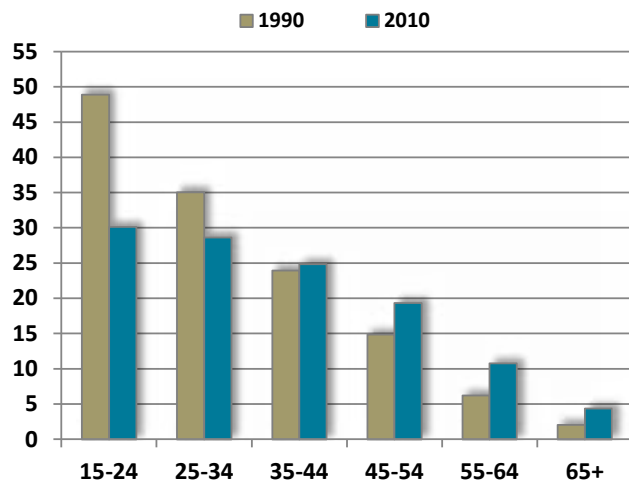
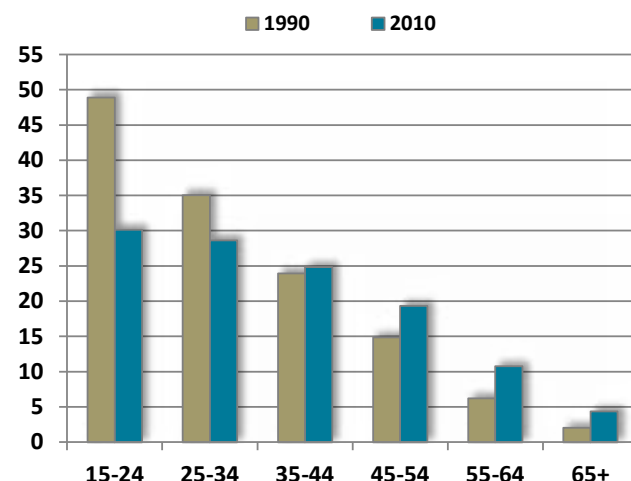


Figure 3. Divorce Rates by 10-Year Age Groups, Women Only



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, VitalStats, 1990 and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010

Suggested Citation:
Brown, S. L.,
Lin, I.-F., & Payne, K.
K. (2012).
Age Variation in the
Divorce Rate, 1990-
2010 (FP-12-05).
National Center for
Family & Marriage
Research.
Retrieved from
<http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-12-05.pdf>



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.