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ABSTRACT

Using data from the 1980 census and earlier censuses this booklet briefly profiles women in the American population and the changes in their educational levels, workforce participation, income levels, marital status, and roles as mothers. Graphs are used throughout to highlight these changes. Census figures indicate that women are now the majority of the population because they live longer than men, that they are increasingly well-educated and likely to participate in the electoral process, and that they are more likely than previously to be considered for nontraditional jobs in the labor force. However, women are more likely than men to be poor and this is especially true of single parents. Women are also more likely to live alone and marry later than previously, and are also planning smaller families. (IS)

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# We, The American Women

On Census Day, April 1, 1980, we the American women numbered 116,492,644—about 12 million more than a decade earlier, and today we outnumber men by more than 6 million. We're growing in more than numbers. Turn the pages and see for yourself as we paint a portrait of American women on the threshold of the 80's.

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## American women as we enter the 80s

Our numbers are expected to increase to 128 million by 1990—to 155 million by 2025—and in the year 2050, there may be 160 million of us, almost as many as the entire U.S. population 30 years ago.

Category	Total	Number of Females
All persons	226,545,805	116,492,644
White	188,371,622	96,686,289
Black	26,495,025	13,975,836
American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut	1,420,400	718,172
Asian & Pacific Islander	3,500,439	1,807,127
All other races	6,758,319	3,305,220
Spanish origin	14,608,673	7,328,842
Under 18 years	63,754,960	31,172,685
65 and over	25,549,427	15,244,512
College graduates (25 years & over)	22,193,000	9,362,000
High School graduates (25 years & over)	89,506,000	47,002,000
In labor force (16 years & over)	106,084,668	44,668,465
Single (never married)	46,159,302	21,027,177
Married, except separated	100,426,606	50,072,130
Separated	4,079,553	2,424,923
Widowed	13,473,592	11,317,896
Divorced	11,116,413	6,577,489
Female family householder (no husband present)	(NA)	8,409,168
Female family householder (husband present)	(NA)	1,797,158
Female nonfamily householder	(NA)	12,320,427

Includes Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Asian Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Hawaiians, Samoans, and Guamanians only

Persons of Spanish origin may be of any race

These definitions will apply to all tables in this booklet referring to Asian and Pacific Islander population and Spanish origin population

NA—not applicable

Percent female in category

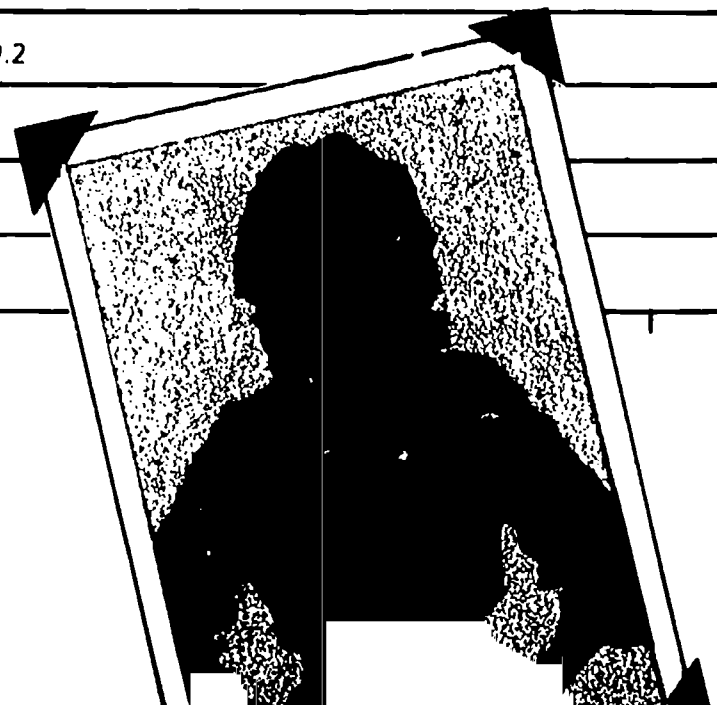
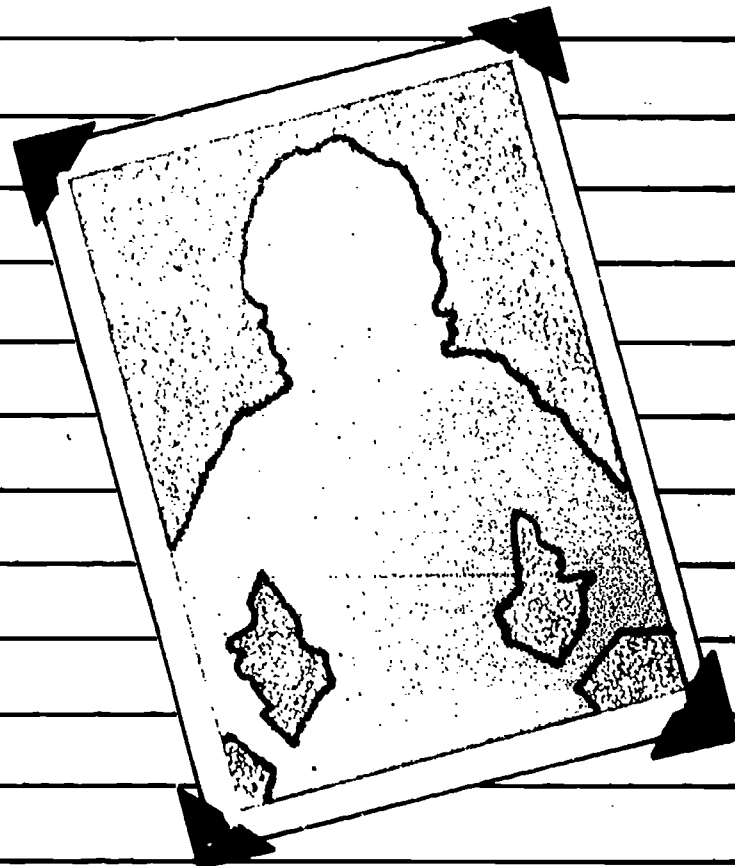
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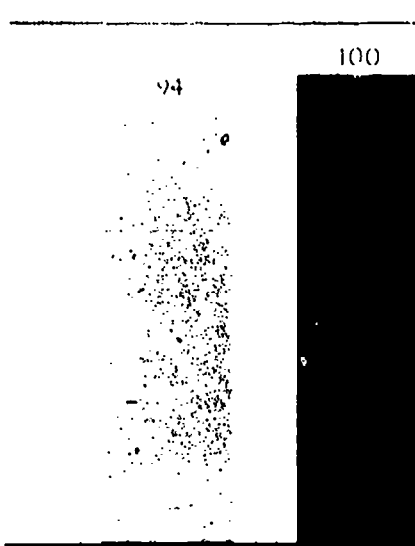


## We're 51.4 percent of the total population . . .

In the 1950 Census, for the first time there were more females than males in the United States, and projections show that this trend will continue at least through the year 2050.

There are more boys than girls born every year and more males than females up to age 28. By the time 2050 arrives, it is projected that there will be more men than women from birth through age 45. Men outnumber women until age 28, but then, because of mortality differences, the ratio reverses. Beyond age 65, there were only 68 males for every 100 females in 1980.

## Number of males per 100 females - 1980



Age	Total	White	Black	American Indian, Eskimo, & Aleut	Asian & Pacific Islanders'	Spanish Origin'
All ages	94	95	90	98	94	99
Under 5	105	105	102	103	102	104
5 to 14	104	105	101	102	101	103
15 to 24	102	102	96	102	105	106
25 to 34	98	100	87	96	85	101
35 to 44	96	98	83	95	93	94
45 to 54	93	95	81	93	82	93
55 to 64	88	89	81	91	87	89
65 and over	68	67	68	79	96	76

- Includes Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Asian Indians, Koreans, Vietnamese, Hawaiians, Samoans, and Guamanians only.
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## Are we the weaker sex? . . .

Despite the heavy work women did at the turn of the century, we were still occasionally called "the weaker sex." However, we continue to outlive our male counterparts by several years. In the early part of this century there was only a two-year difference in the life expectancy between men and women—about 48 years for females and 46 years for males. The gap increased to 5 years by 1950 and to nearly 8 years in 1980. And if the projections are right, a woman born in 2005 can expect to live to 81 years to a man's 73. A woman born in 2050 may live to almost 84 years to a man's 75.

## We're growing older and surviving longer . . .

In the early days of our country, the median age for both men and women was about 17. That is, half the American people were younger and half older than 17. The median age in 1980 for men was 28.9 . . . for women, 31.3. By 2050, the median age of men is projected to be 39.4 . . . for women 43.7.

In 1982, the Nation had an estimated 32,000 people at least 100 years old, and of these 19,000 (nearly 60 percent) were women.

## **We women have voting power . . .**

If all women registered and voted, the power of the ballot box based on sheer numbers would enable women to make their preferences heard with a stronger voice. There were 85.3 million of us of voting age in 1980, nearly 8 million more than men of voting age. By 1982, women represented 52.4 percent of the national voting-age population. Five million of these women were aged 65 and over. Men 18 to 24 years old had a slight edge over women of voting age, but by age 45, women clearly are the majority.

## **Getting out the vote . . .**

In recent years women's voter participation has been rising slightly. When 18-to-20 year olds were given the vote in 1972, voter participation rates for women 18 to 44 years old were about the same as those of men. But by 1980, 54 percent of women in this age group reported that they voted, about 3 percentage points higher than that reported by men of the same age.

Our younger people have not taken full advantage of their voting rights. For instance, of the nearly 4 million men 18 and 19 years old, 42 percent reported that they registered and only 34 percent said they actually voted. For 18 and 19 year old women . . . just over 4 million . . . 44 percent reported that they registered to vote and only 35 percent said they voted. One must remember, however, that these figures are based on responses to a question and that voter participation was actually lower than these figures.

## **We are the educated women of the 80s . . .**

*We have come a long way! In Colonial America, it was said of educating us . . . "fear had been felt that women were too weak to stand the strain of serious mental labor . . ."*

If these colonials could see the progress we have made! In 1950, women made up only 32 percent of all college students. In the early 1970s, that figure





had increased to 43 percent and by 1980 we women made up more than half—52 percent—of the total college student body! What's more, 46 percent of all graduate students under 35 years old in 1980 were women, compared with 32 percent 10 years earlier.

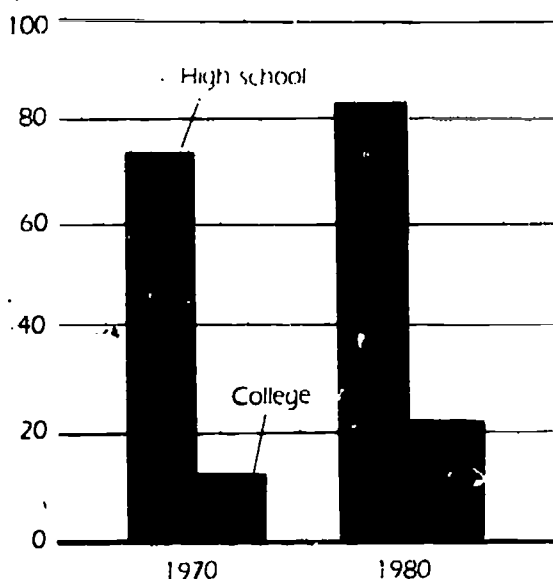
Most of the growth in college enrollment between 1970 and 1980 occurred among women. College enrollment of women under 35 rose from 3.0 million to 5.2 million, while the increase for males was from 4.4 million to 5.0 million.

Among those 35 years old and over in 1980, there were an estimated 802,000 female college students, compared with 405,000 males. Women also account for a majority of the part-time and two-year college students. Probably one of the major factors encouraging the increase in women's education was the fact that a large number of women had entered the work force and wanted to increase their chances for advancement in their chosen fields.

The following table shows the 1970-80 gains of both men and women at high school and college educational levels.



**Women graduates: 25-34 years old**  
(percent)



**Level of School Completed by Persons 25 Years Old and Over, by Sex: March 1980 and 1970**

	1980			1970		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
		High school graduate	College graduate		High school graduate	College graduate
<b>25 years old &amp; over</b>						
Women	69,020,000	68.1	13.6	57,527,000	55.4	8.2
Men	61,389,000	69.2	20.9	51,784,000	55.0	14.1
<b>25 to 34 years old</b>						
Women	18,565,000	84.8	20.9	12,629,000	73.3	12.0
Men	12,051,000	86.0	27.5	12,236,000	74.3	19.7

So we are better educated women in the 80s and we haven't stopped yet. Look ahead and see the work we do.

## More and more of us are working . . .

More than 52 percent of all working-age women—44.7 million—were in the civilian labor force in 1981 . . . up from 43 percent in 1970.

As a result of that growth, women now constitute 43 percent of the entire labor force of the Nation, and are responsible for nearly 60 percent of its growth since 1970.

Working age women in work force: 1900 to 1980

Year	Number	Percentage of working age women
1900 (14 years & over)	4,999,000	20.0
1920 (14 years & over)	8,229,000	22.7
1940 (14 years & over)	13,007,000	25.8
1960 (16 years & over)	22,222,000	35.7
1980 (16 years & over)	44,668,000	49.9

We're spreading our wings and working in fields far removed from the old "men only/women only" designations. Back in the early part of the century, 36 percent of us who worked did so in private households (cooks, maids, etc.). By 1980, only 1.3 percent of us were in those occupations. Nineteen percent of us worked on farms in the early 1900s, while less than 1 percent of us do so now. Also, back in those earlier years, only 8 percent of us were in professional, technical, or similar jobs, usually teachers. By 1980, 13.5 percent of us were in these fields.

Now, women fly and navigate planes . . . load and unload ships . . . climb telephone poles . . . and work at almost all jobs once performed only by men.

In 1980, for example, there were more than 2,000 women firefighters, more than 1,000 pilots and navigators, and about 2,700 crane and tower operators, 12,600 professional athletes, 45,500 policewomen and detectives,



3,600 fishers, 12,000 auto mechanics, 20,200 carpenters, 12,000 electricians, 6,200 plumbers, 4,200 miners, and 44,000 heavy truck drivers.

In 1970, there were only 20,239 of us who were engineers. By 1980 that number had increased to 64,809. The exciting world of the press has attracted us in record numbers. There were 61,478 female editors and reporters in 1970; now we number 103,889. We went from just 13,406 lawyers and judges in 1970 to 74,037 in 1980, and of course one of us was added to the Supreme Court; also we have joined the ranks of the space shuttle pilots. We've found a home in the computer world—in 1970 there were only 35,057 female computer-equipment operators and in 1980 we numbered 249,052, an increase of 610 percent. But women still maintain a high profile in traditionally female jobs such as nursing, teaching, sales workers, typists, and clerical workers. In fact, over half (51%) of the women in the labor force are in these traditional occupations.

### More of us are going into business for ourselves . . .

Though the majority of us work for someone else, more of us are now operating our own businesses. The last census survey of businesses in 1977 showed that there were about 702,000 women-owned businesses with receipts of \$41.5 billion. Though this is only 7 percent of all firms and 6.6 percent of all income from all businesses, the figures have increased greatly since 1972 when there were only 486,000 businesses owned by women with receipts of \$23.5 billion. Therefore—we have another choice—work for someone else or for ourselves. In 1977, 70 percent of women owners were the founders of their businesses.

### These are the jobs we women hold . . .

Selected occupational groups of women, by race and Spanish Origin: 1980

Occupation	Total	White	Black	American Indian, Eskimo, & Aleut	Asian & Pacific Islander	Spanish Origin
Total, female civilian labor force 16 years and over	44,523,329	37,307,269	5,251,644	250,908	825,596	2,399,665
Exec., Admin. and Managers	3,168,857	2,830,044	229,804	15,347	60,758	110,178
Professional	6,027,432	5,243,393	574,629	26,298	129,770	172,106
Technical	1,341,081	1,119,497	161,419	7,048	37,869	47,314
Sales Workers	4,995,335	4,495,264	331,009	20,055	76,969	222,016
Admin. Support, including Clerical	13,545,426	11,759,115	1,291,493	65,845	211,819	627,335
Service Occupations	8,020,694	6,126,079	1,502,133	63,920	141,727	486,505
Private Household Occupations/ Machine Operators, Assemblers	4,102,014	3,128,790	668,200	26,153	102,588	478,858
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	7.1%	7.6%	4.4%	6.1%	7.4%	4.6%
	13.5%	14.1%	10.9%	10.5%	15.7%	7.2%
	3.0%	3.0%	3.1%	2.8%	4.6%	2.0%
	11.2%	12.0%	6.3%	8.0%	9.3%	9.3%
	30.4%	31.5%	24.6%	26.2%	25.7%	26.1%
	18.0%	16.4%	28.6%	25.5%	17.2%	20.3%
	1.3%	0.8%	4.7%	1.4%	1.0%	2.3%
	9.2%	8.4%	12.7%	10.4%	12.4%	17.9%

\* Detail does not add because selected occupations were omitted  
Part of service occupations



alone. Another 4 million homes were owned by women who maintained a family, and still another 380,000 were owned by women who shared their homes with nonrelatives.

### When a woman marries . . .

She isn't as young a bride as her predecessors. More than one-half of women in their early twenties have not married. In the 50s, 60s and 70s, the average age of women at their first marriage was just over 20. In 1970, only 36 percent of women in their early 20s hadn't married, but in 1982, 53 percent were still single.

The percent of men in the same age group who had never married increased from 55 to 72 percent in 1982. Women from 25 to 29 years old who had never married jumped from 11 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1982, and in the same age group, the proportion of never-married men was up from 19 to 36 percent during the same time period.

Women are postponing marriage, allowing time to pursue education, career, and other goals of their choosing.

### And the ones that divorce . . .

While many women are postponing marriage, many marriages are dissolving through divorce.

The divorce ratio rose from 60 divorced women per 1,000 married women living with their husbands in 1970 to 137 per 1,000 in 1982. Black women in 1982 had a higher divorce ratio, 265 per 1,000 married persons, than did White women, 128 per 1,000 . . . or women of Spanish origin, 155 to 1,000 married persons.

These figures show that the proportion of marriages to divorces has been dropping steadily over the last three decades:

	Number of Marriages	Number of Divorces
1980	2,413,000	1,182,000
1970	2,159,000	708,000
1960	1,523,000	393,000
1950	1,667,000	385,000

### Women maintaining households . . .

Though married-couple families still constituted 81 percent of all family households in a 1982 survey, this was down from 87 percent in 1970. However, the number of family households maintained by a woman with no husband present increased by 71 percent. Four out of five family households not maintained by a married couple are maintained by women, most of them divorced.

In 1982, about half (46 percent) of all Black families with children were maintained by the mother alone, compared with about 15 percent for Whites.

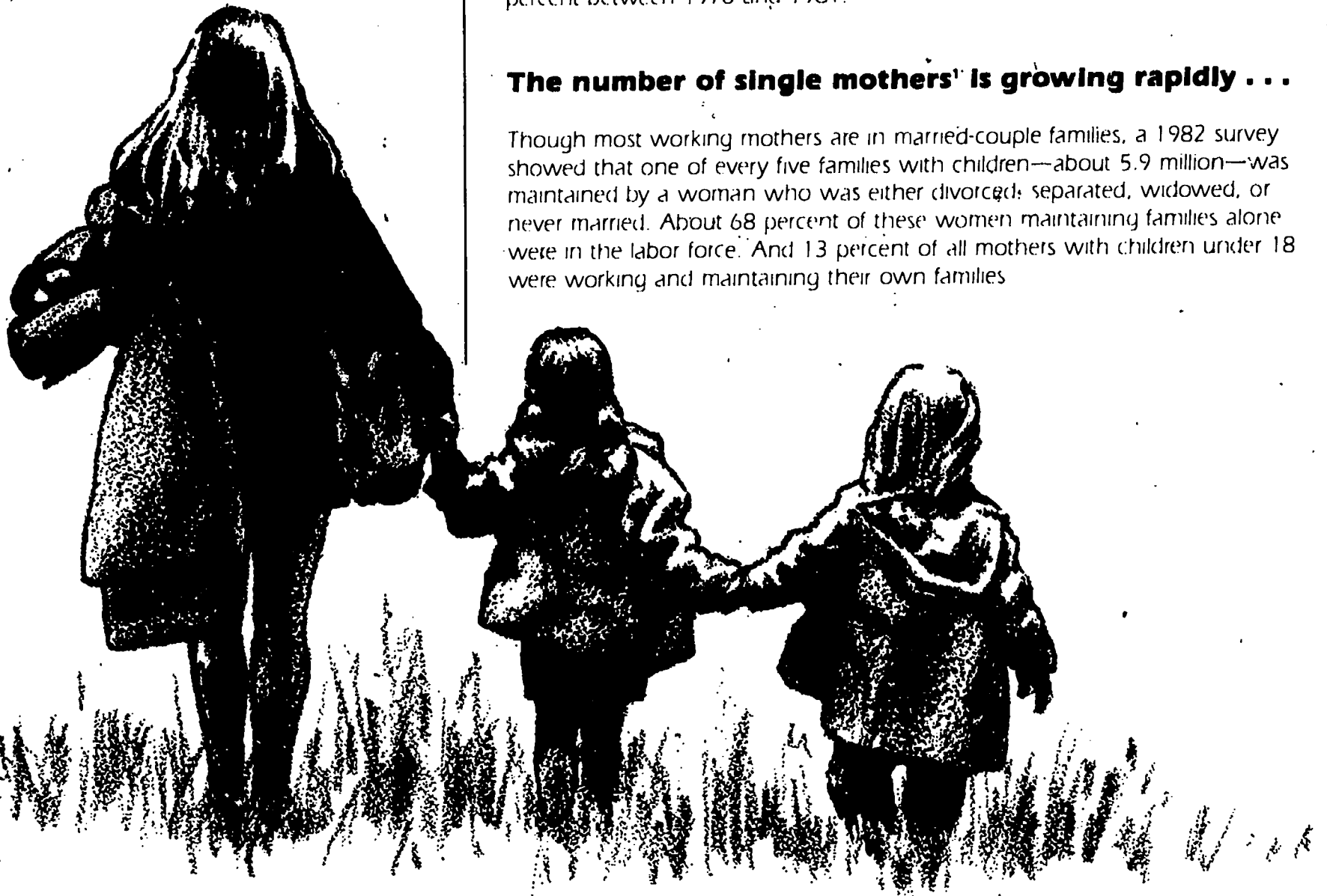
The proportion of children living with only one parent was 22 percent in 1982, up from 12 percent in 1970. Most of these one-parent families are among those on the lower rung of the economic ladder, and they have a major effect on the national economy and our social programs and policies.

## Many call us "super moms" . . .

In 1981, with 67 percent of all women between 18 and 34 in the labor force, working wives and mothers are "the rule" rather than the exception. About 58 percent (18.4 million) of all mothers with either school-age or pre-school children were in the labor force. The proportion of ever-married mothers, with children under 6 years old, who were in the labor force, jumped from 32 to 49 percent between 1970 and 1981.

## The number of single mothers' is growing rapidly . . .

Though most working mothers are in married-couple families, a 1982 survey showed that one of every five families with children—about 5.9 million—was maintained by a woman who was either divorced, separated, widowed, or never married. About 68 percent of these women maintaining families alone were in the labor force. And 13 percent of all mothers with children under 18 were working and maintaining their own families.



## How much money do we have? . . .

The median cash income for single mothers in 1981 was \$9,210, only 35 percent of the \$26,220 median for married-couple families with own children.

The proportion of families maintained by female householders with no husband present grew from 11 percent in March, 1971, to 15 percent in March, 1981, and their lower cash median income resulted in a smaller increase in real income for all families over the 10-year period.

Families with both husband and wife working do not use added income just to buy luxuries. Many wives and mothers work to help maintain their families' basic needs. Married-couple families with a wife in the paid labor force had a 1981 median income of \$29,250, compared with \$20,330 for families where the wife was not employed.

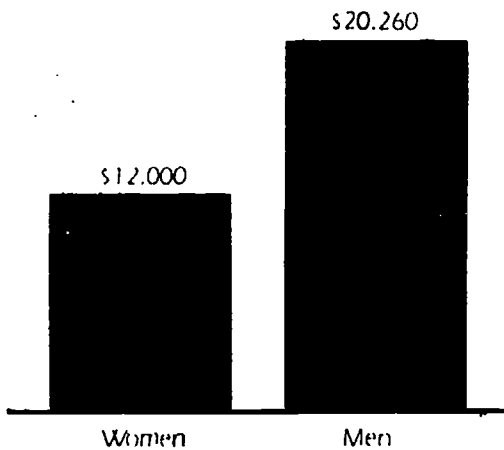
A woman working full time and year round in 1981 had median earnings of \$12,000. (Median means that half had earnings above the median and half

Female Family Householder, no husband present, with one or more own children  
Current Population Survey

had earnings below the median). That was about 59 percent of the \$20,260 median earnings for men. Differences in the work patterns of men and women may account for this, such as time on the job, type of occupation, length of time in the same career, and breaks in employment to raise a family. Since 1970, women had a 37 percent decline in median earnings and men had a 35 percent decline, after adjustment for inflation.

The ratio of women's mean earnings to those of men varies with age, educational attainment, and also with occupation and years in the work force, though the overall ratio hasn't changed much in the last several decades. In 1958, the ratio of women's to men's mean income for all year-round full-time workers (14 years and older) was 58 cents to every \$1.00 a man earned. In 1981, the ratios for mean earnings based on education and age of year-round full-time workers are as follows:

**Median earnings : 1981**

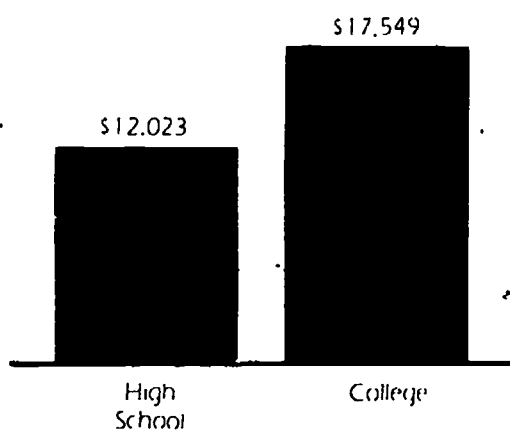


	18 Years and Over	25 to 34 Years Old
Total	59¢	69¢
High School Graduate	62¢	66¢
College (4 or more yrs)	57¢	71¢

It's a fact of life that a better education usually means a larger income. For instance, the mean earnings of women 18 years and over who were college graduates and year-round full-time workers was \$17,549 in 1981, while that of women who only graduated from high school was \$12,023.

The following table shows income by the number of years of education, and the differences between men's and women's incomes.

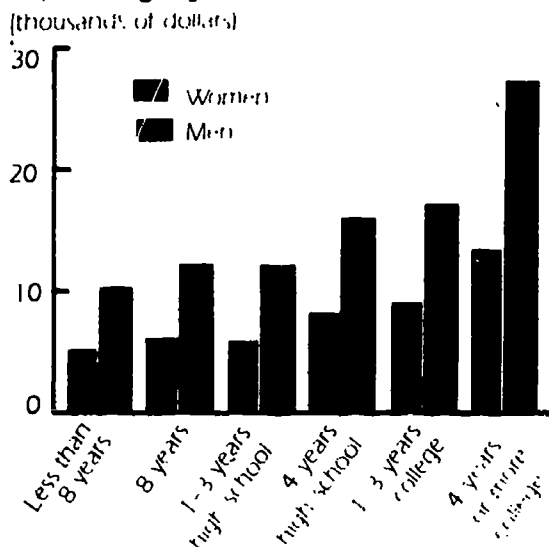
**Mean earnings of women graduates over 18 years of age : 1981**



**Mean Earnings of Persons 18 and Older by Sex and Education: 1981**

Educational Attainment	All persons, 18 years and over		Year-round full-time workers		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Elementary School	Less than 8 years	\$10,244	\$5,149	\$13,561	\$8,133
	8 years	\$12,196	\$6,114	\$15,800	\$9,841
High School	1 - 3 years	\$12,033	\$5,701	\$16,705	\$9,690
	4 years	\$15,900	\$8,063	\$19,545	\$12,023
College	1 - 3 years	\$16,870	\$8,811	\$22,166	\$13,765
	4 years or more	\$26,970	\$12,979	\$30,593	\$17,549

**Earnings by sex and education : 1981**

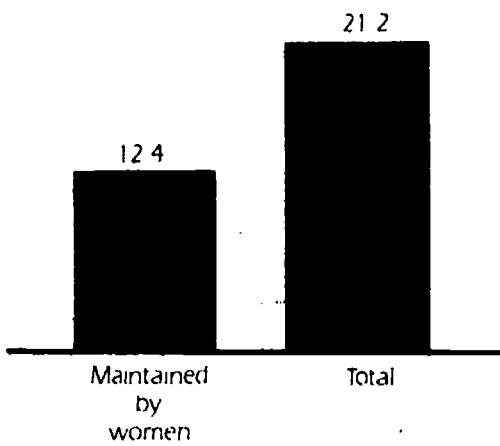


**Half the families maintained by women are poor . . .**

Past figures indicate that poverty is a long-term problem and one that may seriously affect the future of women. A 1982 survey has shown that 69 million American families were below the poverty level in 1981, and they made up 11 percent of the Nation's families. About half were families maintained by women. (In 1981, a family of four was considered poor if annual income was \$9,290 or less. For a three-person family, the amount was \$7,250, and for one person, \$4,620.) The poverty estimates are based on money income alone and do not include the value of benefits such as food stamps, free school lunches, public housing, medicare, and medicaid. If these benefits were counted, the estimated number of poor people would be lower.

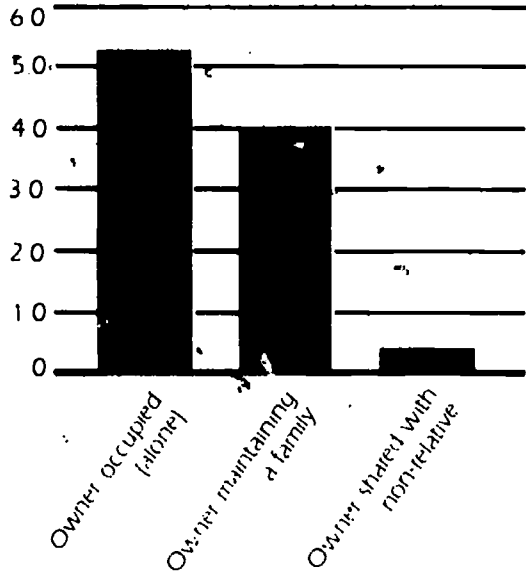
### 1980 nonfamily households

(millions)



### Women-owned homes

(millions)



Of the families with related children in the home, 44 percent of those with a female householder and no husband present were poor in 1981. In comparison, only 14 percent of families maintained by a male householder with no wife present were poor. A census survey showed that in 1981 there were 8.4 million mothers with children whose fathers were not present in 1981. Of these, about 48 percent were supposed to receive child support payments in 1981, but actually, only 23 percent received the full amount they were awarded. The average child support payment in 1981 was \$2,110.

From 1970 to 1981, the number of all families falling below the poverty line increased by 18.3 percent or by a million and a half, most of which were "female householder, no husband present" families.

Female family householders 65 and over in 1981 were twice as likely to be poor as their male counterparts (16 percent versus 8 percent). About one in nine white female family householders 65 and over had incomes below the poverty level, compared with three out of ten black female family householders, 65 and over. And finally, 3 out of 10 elderly females not living with any relative were poor.

### Leaving the nest . . . and living alone . . .

In the first half of this century, most women didn't leave their parents' home until they married. Later, if they became widowed, they often moved in with relatives. Now, women of all ages and circumstances—single, divorced, and widowed—are living alone. These women numbered 11.3 million in 1980 and 52 percent were 65 and over.

In 1980, there were 21.2 million nonfamily households (persons living alone or with nonrelatives), and of these, 12.4 million were maintained by women. In 1970, there were 11.9 million nonfamily households with 7.9 million maintained by women.

Living alone for many women is more a matter of choice in the 80s. Better educations and career opportunities now open to women have led to today's philosophy of "living alone and loving it," according to those who think the pluses of such a lifestyle outweigh the disadvantages. The figures show that in 1960, about 5.1 million women householders lived alone or with nonrelatives. This number climbed to 7.8 million in 1970 and to 12.4 million in 1980, an increase of 7.3 million or 143 percent between 1960 and 1980.

The vast majority of the widowed population are women—about 85 percent in 1982. Among all women who are 75 years and over, almost 7 out of 10 are widowed. About 69 percent of widowed women were living alone in 1982, compared with 56 percent in 1970.

### Women householders living alone or with nonrelatives: 1960-1980

Age	1980	1970	1960	1960 to 1980 Increase	
				Number	Percent Change
All ages	12,419,000	7,882,000	5,179,000	7,240,000	139.8
20-34	2,617,000	781,000	381,000	2,236,000	586.9
35-64	3,646,000	2,971,000	2,448,000	1,198,000	48.9
65 and over	5,983,000	4,057,000	2,326,000	3,657,000	157.2

### Many of us own our own homes . . .

In 1980, about 18.7 percent of all homes were owned by women. 5.3 million women owned and occupied their own homes and lived in them.



alone. Another 4 million homes were owned by women who maintained a family, and still another 380,000 were owned by women who shared their homes with nonrelatives.

### When a woman marries . . .

She isn't as young a bride as her predecessors. More than one-half of women in their early twenties have not married. In the 50s, 60s and 70s, the average age of women at their first marriage was just over 20. In 1970, only 36 percent of women in their early 20s hadn't married, but in 1982, 53 percent were still single.

The percent of men in the same age group who had never married increased from 55 to 72 percent in 1982. Women from 25 to 29 years old who had never married jumped from 11 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1982, and in the same age group, the proportion of never-married men was up from 19 to 36 percent during the same time period.

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### And the ones that divorce . . .

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1950	1,667,000	385,000

### Women maintaining households . . .

Though married-couple families still constituted 81 percent of all family households in a 1982 survey, this was down from 87 percent in 1970. However, the number of family households maintained by a woman with no husband present increased by 71 percent. Four out of five family households not maintained by a married couple are maintained by women, most of them divorced.

In 1982, about half (46 percent) of all Black families with children were maintained by the mother alone, compared with about 15 percent for Whites.

The proportion of children living with only one parent was 22 percent in 1982, up from 12 percent in 1970. Most of these one-parent families are among those on the lower rung of the economic ladder, and they have a major effect on the national economy and our social programs and policies.





## Motherhood—maybe? . . .

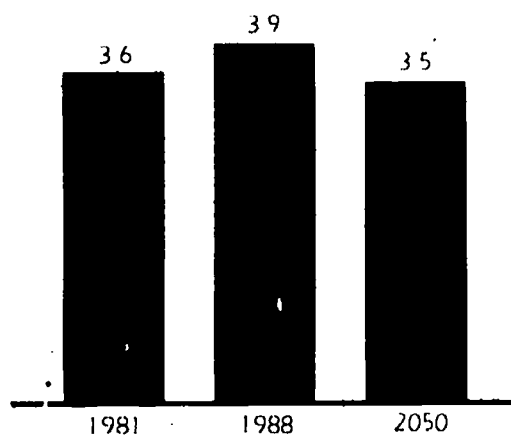
To pursue a career . . . to further our education . . . to maintain a specific style of living . . . we women are postponing or foregoing motherhood in the 80s.

In fact, since the peak in 1957 of the "baby boom" generation—those born in the 20 years after World War II—the birth rate has declined steadily (the average number of children born per woman) and reached the lowest level in history in 1976.

Looking towards the future, annual births are expected to increase from 3.6 million in 1981 to 3.9 million in 1988, as more of the women born in the baby boom period become mothers. But after that, births may decline to 3.5 million by 2050.

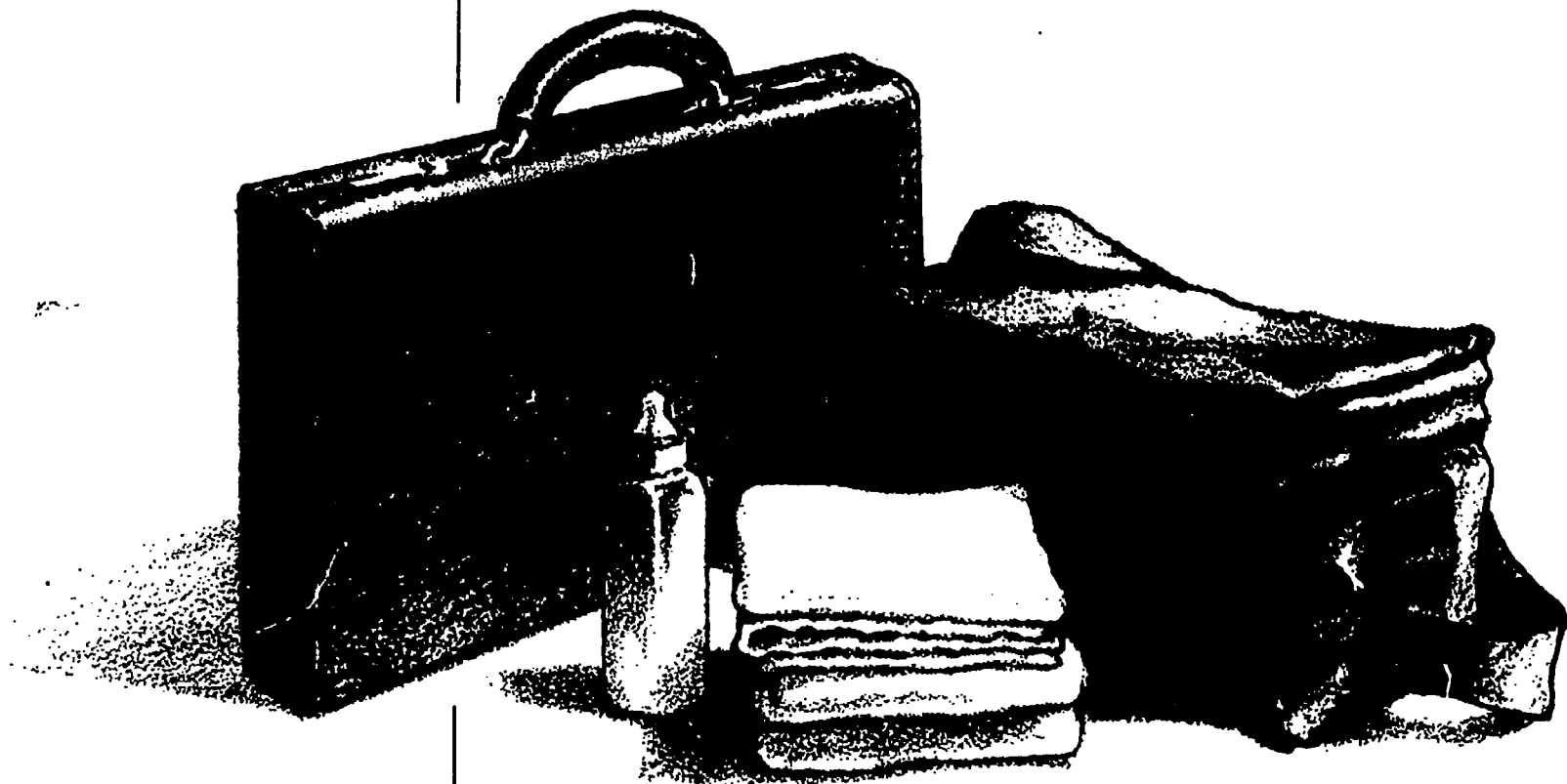
College-educated women expect to have fewer children than women who have not graduated from high school. In 1981, women 18 to 34 years old who were college graduates expected an average of 1.8 births, compared with 2.4 for women who had not graduated from high school. Wives 18 to 24 years old expecting 2 or fewer births rose from about 45 percent in 1967 to 74 percent in 1981.

**Expected births**  
(millions)



### Birth Expectations: 1981

Women 18 to 24 years	2.033 births per 1,000 women
Women 25 to 29 years	2.012 births per 1,000 women
Women 30 to 34 years	2.106 births per 1,000 women



## We are—women of the 80s! . . .

We are making progress. We are better educated. We have more meaningful jobs; we are joining the ranks in all levels of government and corporate power. We are choosing to marry and have families—or to remain single . . . but it's our choice. And . . . we will live longer to enjoy the freedom and opportunities we have continued to struggle for since the enactment of the 19th amendment to the Constitution—giving us the right to vote. Future censuses will measure our progress. There are still many worlds to conquer, but we have the tools . . . our knowledge . . . skills . . . and most of all, our will to progress.



**U.S. Department of Commerce**  
**Malcolm Baldrige**, Secretary  
**Claarence J. Brown**, Deputy Secretary

**BUREAU OF THE CENSUS**

**C.L. Kincannon**, Deputy Director  
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Assistant Director, Communications

**PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

**James E. Gorman**, Chief

This report was prepared  
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as an aid to education.

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