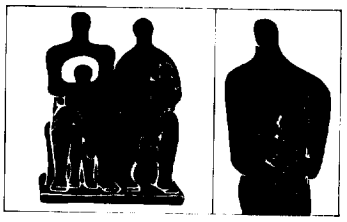

American families: 75 years of change

American families have changed in many ways in this century, as our population adapted to evolving technologies, economic conditions, and social trends; changes were particularly pronounced during the 1960's and 1970's, as the baby-boom generation reached adulthood

James R. Wetzel

Families are the quintessential institution of our Nation, providing both biological and social continuity as they simultaneously shape, and are shaped by, the larger society. Families also are the locus of consumption, savings, and some production activities that are vital to our overall economic well-being, and they bear special responsibilities for nurturing and educating the Nation's future work force, a critical function that is not well-served by the deterioration of the nuclear family over the past 25 or more years.

Each of us has a concept of the typical family and how it has changed over time. Being rooted in our own family experience and community, our views are seldom, if ever, an accurate depiction of the typical family. Indeed, it is fair to say that there is no such thing as a "typical" family. In a nation as heterogeneous as the United States, the characteristics of families vary dramatically by race and ethnicity; education, age, and income of the adult members of the family; religious affiliation; region of the country; and by the interplay of these and other demographic, social, and economic factors. However, over the 75 years since first publication of the *Monthly Labor Review*, there have been dramatic secular changes that are observable in most subgroups of the Nation's population. Among the most visible of those changes:

- Today, relatively fewer of us are living in family households, and particularly in "traditional" nuclear families, than did so earlier in the 20th century. The trend toward living in nonfamily households (usually alone) is associated with widowhood at older ages, the increased incidence of divorce among adults of all ages, and delayed marriage among young adults.
- Women in the United States are bearing fewer children during their lives, and they are doing so later in their reproductive years. Consequently, the average size of families today is smaller than it has ever been before. The Nation's total fertility rate—the number of children the average woman would be expected to bear in her lifetime—has been below the replacement level since 1972.
- Those who live in family households—still a very substantial majority of the population—live in less stable, more heterogeneous families than did earlier generations. Kinship networks now often include former spouses and former in-laws, stepchildren, and, with increased life expectancy, more generations than was typical earlier in this century.
- Finally, economic roles within the family have shifted significantly in the post-World War II years. In particular, regardless of the presence

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of children, including infants, wives now are more likely to work outside the home than to work solely as homemakers. (See Howard V. Hayghe, "Family members in the work force," pp. 14–19.)

Long-term trends

Because data on families are sparse for the period before World War II, we have to base our prewar assessments on decennial census data that focus on households.[1] A household, of course, is any separate living unit occupied by one or more persons. As shown in chart 1, the number of households in the United States grew rather steadily from 20.3 million in 1910 to 43.6 million in 1950, and to 92.8 million in 1989.[2]

Households may be subdivided into nonfamily (one householder living alone or with unrelated persons) and family households (a householder with at least one additional person in the household who is related by blood, marriage, or adoption). Family households may be of several types, including, predominantly, husband-wife families with or without children, single-parent families with children, and a small number of adult child/parent, multiple sibling, or other relative combinations (grandparent, aunt, uncle, and the like). Data are not available on family and nonfamily households for the pre-World War II years, but we do have decennial census information on married couples that indicated whether they had their own household or lived in another household. The total number of married couples more than doubled from 17.2 million in 1910 to 34.1 million in 1950, and then rose much more slowly than the number of households to 52.9 million by 1989.[3]

Before the 1950's, the number of married couples with their own household and the total number of households tended to grow in tandem. Thus about 4 out of 5 households were occupied by married couples in 1910, 1930, and 1950. After 1950, however, nonfamily living arrangements became much more common. The ratio of married couples with their own household to total households dropped gradually from 78 percent in 1950 to 74 percent by 1965. After 1965, the ratio fell more rapidly, declining to 64 percent by 1977 and 56 percent by 1989.

Relatively slow growth in the number of married-couple families was accompanied by large increases in the number of family households maintained by a person with no spouse present—for the most part, divorced, separated, and, more recently, never-married women with children. Family households maintained by women (with no spouse present) rose more than 50 percent, from 3.6 million in 1950 to 5.5 million in 1970, while married-couple households increased 31 percent to 44.7 million in 1970. After 1970, the rise in married-couple households slowed; the 52.1 million such households in 1989 represented an increase of only 16 percent over the 1970 level. Over the same period, the number of family households maintained by men more than doubled, to 2.8 million, and those maintained by women soared 98 percent to 10.9 million by 1989. (See table 1.)

In 1989, 16.5 percent of all family households were maintained by women, compared with 9.2 percent in 1950. In addition, 1.9 million mother-child subfamilies lived in someone else's household, most often the home of the mother's parents.[4] Until the late 1940's, an important contributor to the number of female-maintained families was widowhood (about 30 percent of the total in 1950). By 1989, the percentage of family households maintained by widows had shrunk to 7 percent of the total, while the proportion maintained by divorced, separated, or never-married women had risen from about 70 percent in 1950 to 93 percent.

After 1950, nonfamily living arrangements became much more common.

In a particularly dramatic shift away from traditional nuclear family living, families maintained by never-married women increased tenfold over the past two decades, rising from 248,000 in 1970 to 2.7 million in 1988.[5] These changes in the distribution of households by family and nonfamily status and by type of family household are driven by changing preferences and behaviors of individuals that, on balance, empirically demonstrate a substantially reduced commitment to the traditional nuclear family and to married life as the preferred status. As a consequence, family life cycles have changed dramatically.

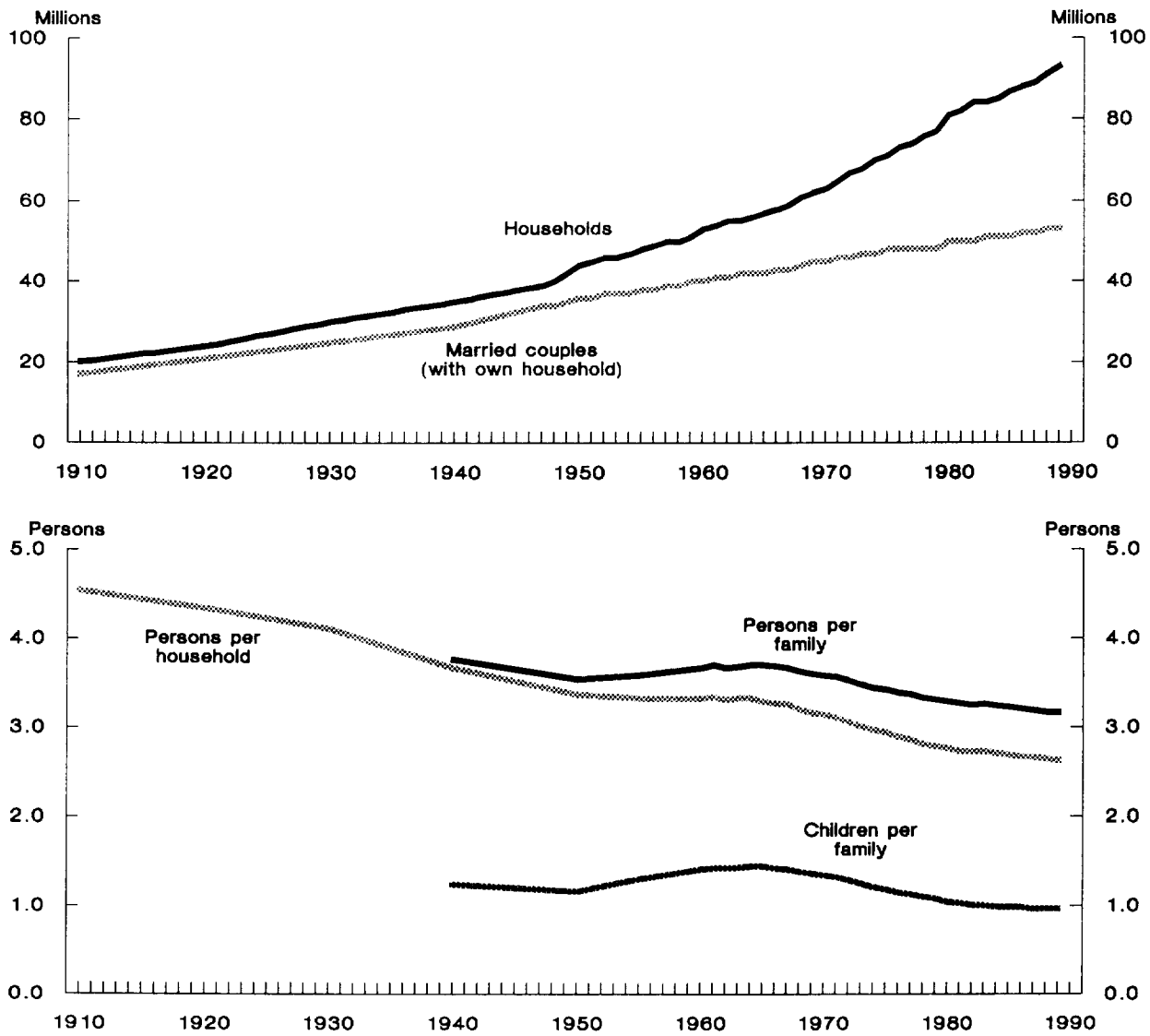
Changes in the family life cycle

In 1915, when the first *Monthly Labor Review* was published, most Americans could expect to spend most of their lives playing a succession of four primary family-life roles—as a dependent child in the home of one's biological parents, as a spouse, as a parent, and as a grandparent. At that time, more than half of the Nation's 100 million residents lived in rural areas, and persons were likely to fulfill family-life roles within the same small geographic area, often in an overlapping fashion. That is, young adult children seldom left the parental home to live alone prior to marriage, and indeed, more than 5 percent shared a household—usually with parents or other relatives—at least temporarily after marriage.[6] Similarly, it was much more common for widowed parents or other relatives

to share the homes of grown children. Divorce was uncommon, affecting less than 1 percent of the at-risk population, while the marriage rate was nearly 10 for every 100 unmarried women over age 14. Single-person households were rare, accounting for only 1 of every 20 households at the turn of the century.

In 1915, we were nearing the end of a period of intense immigration from Europe. About 10 million immigrants entered the United States between 1905 and 1914, compared with fewer than 4 million from 1915 to 1924. In those days, about 6 of every 10 immigrants were men. As a result, men outnumbered women by a significant margin (2.6 million in 1915), a circumstance that would persist until the early 1940's despite the greater life expectancy of women of all ages. Families were the order of the day early in the 20th century, and large families were common. Indeed, more than 1 of every 5 households included seven or more persons. We were a youthful Nation in 1915—less than half of our population was at least 25 years old, and 11 percent was under 5 years of age. Today, by

Chart 1. **Numbers of households, married couples, and persons per household, 1910-89**



contrast, almost half our population is 33 or more years of age, and only about 7.5 percent is under age 5.[7]

American families have changed in many ways over the past 75 years as our population adapted to evolving technologies, economic conditions, and social trends. In particular, family and nonfamily living arrangements have greatly multiplied. Based on patterns of the last decade, it appears that 6 of 10 of today's children will live for some length of time with a single parent.[8] Indeed, about 24 percent are doing so at this moment. Subsequently, many live with a step-parent; in 1985, for example, almost 1 in 5 married-couple families with children still at home had a stepchild living in the household.[9] With recent delays to later ages at first marriage, many young adults now live in nonfamily households, sometimes as couples or with other nonrelatives, but often alone. After marriage, many Americans experience divorce. The latest annual figures show almost 1 divorce for every 2 marriages since the mid-1970's. With extended life expectancy, a significant minority of Americans can look forward to being great-grandparents, but primarily because of gender differences in longevity, many elderly women experience periods of widowhood, often living alone for many years.

Table 1. **Households, by type, in the United States, selected years, 1950–89**

Type of household	Households (in thousands)			Percent increase	
	1950	1970	1989	1950–70	1970–89
Total	43,554	63,401	92,830	46	46
Family:					
Married couples	34,075	44,728	52,100	31	16
Female householder, no spouse present	3,594	5,500	10,890	53	98
Male householder, no spouse present	1,169	1,228	2,847	5	132
Nonfamily:					
Single person	3,954	10,851	22,708	174	109
Multiple persons	762	1,094	4,286	44	292
Unmarried couples	(1)	523	2,588	(1)	395

[1] Data not available.

SOURCE: *Households, Families, Marital Status, and Living Arrangements: March 1989, Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 441 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), pp. 6–9.

Family formation

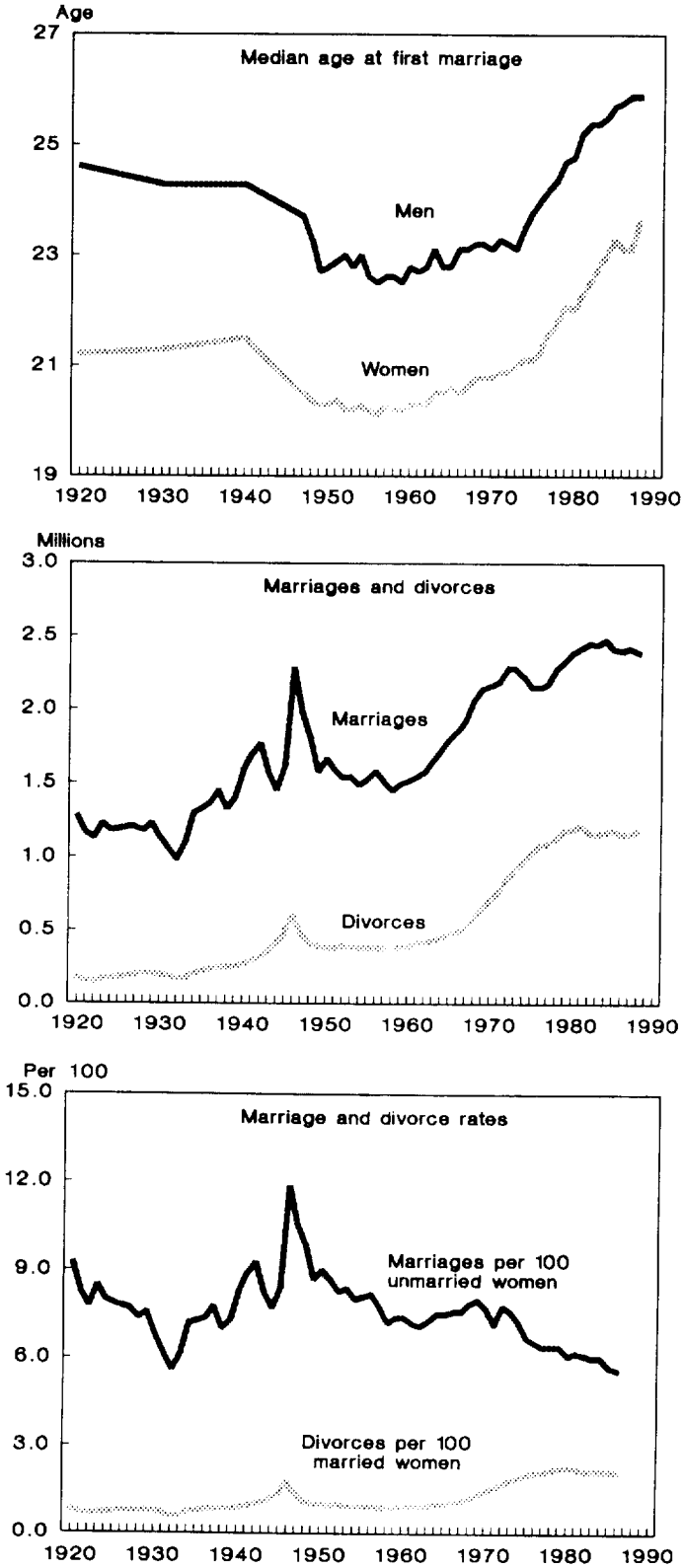
In general, marriages are the primary source of family formation.[10] But demographic, economic, and social trends have an important bearing on marriage and childbearing decisions, and therefore on family formation rates. Demographically, for example, a surplus of young men brought about by heavy immigration between 1905 and 1914 meant a steady demand for marriageable women. Marriages averaged about 1.2 million annually from 1920 to the late 1930's. Economically, the adverse conditions of the Depression years reduced the marriage rate (for example, there were only about 1 million marriages annually in 1931–33), but the comparatively prosperous conditions and pro-family social attitudes of the post-World War II period stimulated earlier marriages and a sharp, albeit temporary, upturn in childbearing.

By the late 1950's, the median age at first marriage had fallen to 20.1 years for women and 22.5 for men. From 1950 through the early 1960's, the number of marriages averaged about 1.5 million annually. Since then, as illustrated in chart 2, the median age at first marriage has trended steadily upward, reaching highs of 23.6 years for women and almost 26 years for men in the late 1980's. And, despite a huge rise in the young adult population as the baby-boom generation moved through the prime marriage ages, the number of marriages rose relatively slowly and leveled off at about 2.4 million annually after 1980. At its latest reading—in 1987—the rate of marriages per 100 unmarried women age 15 and over was only 5.6. This matched the all-time low of the Depression years and represents a decline of about two-fifths from the average for the 1950's. At the same time, the divorce rate is almost triple the rates of the 1920's and 1930's, and easily double the rates from 1950 through 1965. Thus, today's population is marrying as late as ever recorded in our history and, once married, is much more likely to divorce than were their peers of both the pre- and post-World War II periods.

Rising age at first marriage is a profound behavioral change with major implications for initial and lifetime fertility and perhaps for marriage dissolution rates in the 1990's and beyond, because older ages at first marriage are associated with lower divorce rates.[11] Delayed marriage has roughly paralleled major increases in the educational attainment and rising labor force participation of women. Similar trends are observable in most of the developed nations. (See Constance Sorrentino, "The changing family in international perspective," pp. 41–58.)

Later marriage also increases the period during which a young woman is at risk of out-of-wedlock childbearing. During the 1980's, out-of-wedlock childbearing apparently was the second most common source of new family formation. During 1987, 933,000 births (24.5 per-

Chart 2. **Selected marriage and divorce indicators, 1920–89**



cent of all births) were to unmarried women (includes those never-married, divorced, and widowed.).[12] Because many of these infants were borne by women who had other children, their births did not result in additional family formation. However, the number of households maintained by never-married women with children of their own stood at 1.75 million in 1988 and included more than 2.9 million children under 18 years of age. There were an additional 1.1 million never-married, usually quite young women with children under 18 years of age who lived in someone else's household, generally that of the mother's parents.[13]

Childbearing

From 1790, when there were an estimated 55 births per 1,000 population in the United States, until the late 1930's, the basic trend in reproduction rates was down. Still, by today's standards, childbearing in 1915, at a rate of about 29 per 1,000 population, might reasonably be described as high. In the ensuing years, the rate declined sharply—by 1934, it had fallen to a Depression low of 18.4 per 1,000. During World War II, it rose gradually, then even faster amid the postwar prosperity, reaching a peak of 25.3 per 1,000 in 1957 at the apex of the baby boom. During the 1960's and 1970's, childbearing resumed a downward trend, reaching a low of 14.6 per 1,000 in 1975–76. Since then, there has been a slight rise to 15.9 per 1,000, brought about by a large increase in the number of women in the prime childbearing ages.[14]

A better measure of basic fertility—births per 1,000 women in the childbearing range of 15 to 44 years of age—is presented in chart 3. As indicated, the general fertility rate trended decisively downward in the 1920's, falling more than 35 percent (from almost 121 births per 1,000 women of childbearing age in 1921 to about 89 per 1,000 in 1930), and another 17 percent to a Depression low of 75.8 per 1,000 in 1936. Despite continued severe economic conditions, fertility edged up somewhat late in the Depression years and accelerated very sharply after World War II, to a peak of almost 123 per 1,000 by 1957. During the 1960's and early 1970's, the general fertility rate nosedived to 68 per 1,000 by 1974. Since then, the fertility rate has essentially stabilized between 65 and 68 per 1,000 women of childbearing age.[15]

The total fertility rate measures the number of children the average woman would have during her lifetime if her reproductive experience matched the population's fertility rates by single years of age in any particular year. As shown in chart 3, the total fertility rate stood at 3.7 chil-

dren per woman in 1957, at the peak of the baby boom. By the early 1970's, the total fertility rate had fallen below the replacement level (2.1 children) necessary to offset mortality in the population, and it has remained below that figure since then. Whether the underlying factors are economic or social, we are, on average, choosing to have fewer children and to have them later in life. As a result, the average American family is smaller today than ever before in our history. With fewer children, increased divorce, and increased life expectancy that has sustained more married couples in family households after their children have grown to adulthood and left home, the average family contained 3.16 persons in 1989, down from 3.67 in 1960 and 3.76 in 1940 (chart 1). The bulk of the net reduction since 1960 occurred among children, whose average number per family fell from 1.41 in 1960 to 0.96 in 1989.

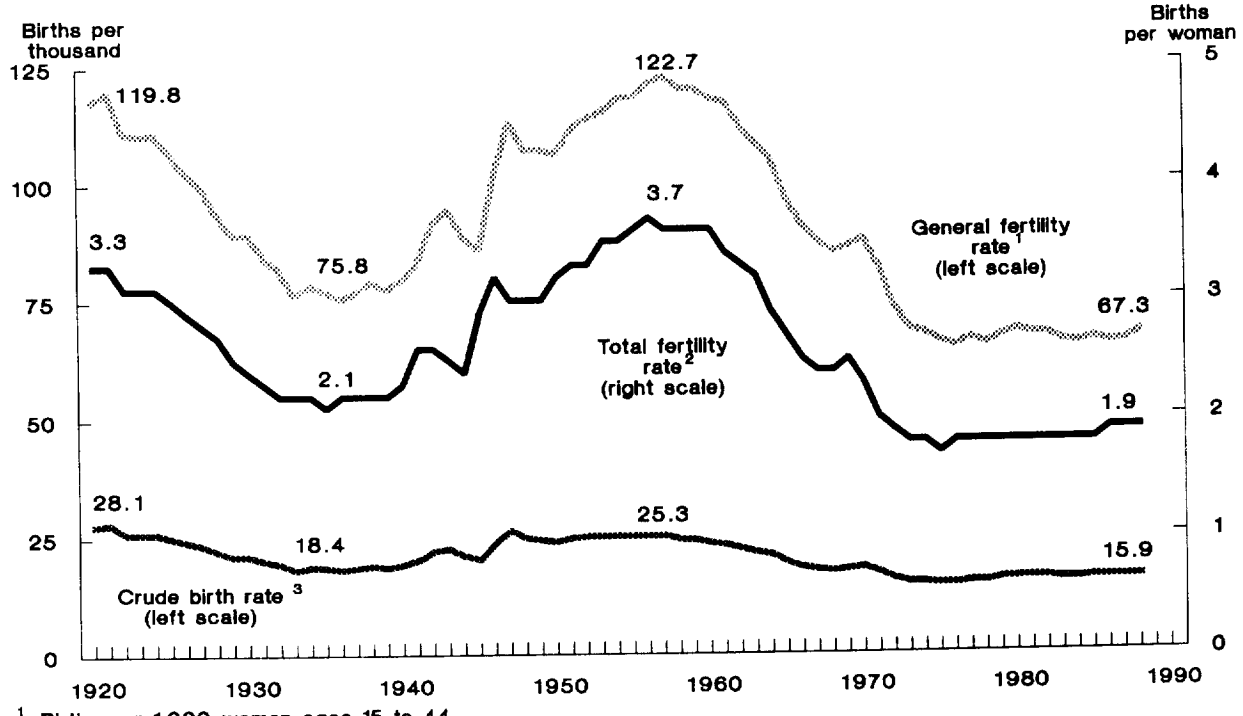
Family dissolution

The divorce rate in the United States moved unevenly higher for most of the period from 1915 to 1975 and then leveled off at a high rate. As illustrated in chart 2, the average rate has shown little change since the mid-1970's; but over the years that followed, it was about twice its average for the 1950–65 period, and about triple the average of the 1920's and 1930's. There were 14 million currently divorced persons in the United States in 1988, up from 2.4 million in 1950. Almost 9 percent of the population age 25 and over is currently divorced, up from an estimated 2.6 percent in 1950.[16]

Current patterns suggest that more than half of all marriages contracted during the 1970's will end in divorce, about double the ratio of the 1950's.[17] Because many divorces involve children and because of the rise in out-of-wedlock childbearing, almost one-fourth (15.3 million) of the Nation's children (under 18) lived with only one parent in the late 1980's. That compares with only 9 percent (5.8 million) in 1960 and 12 percent (8.2 million) in 1970.[18] Almost 9 out of every 10 children living with a single parent live with their mothers, who often have lower-than-average incomes.

Death of a spouse is the second leading reason for dissolution of married-couple family households. In 1988, there were 13.5 million widowed persons (7.2 percent of the population age 15 or older), compared with 5.7 million (7.7

Chart 3. **Selected fertility indicators, 1920–88**



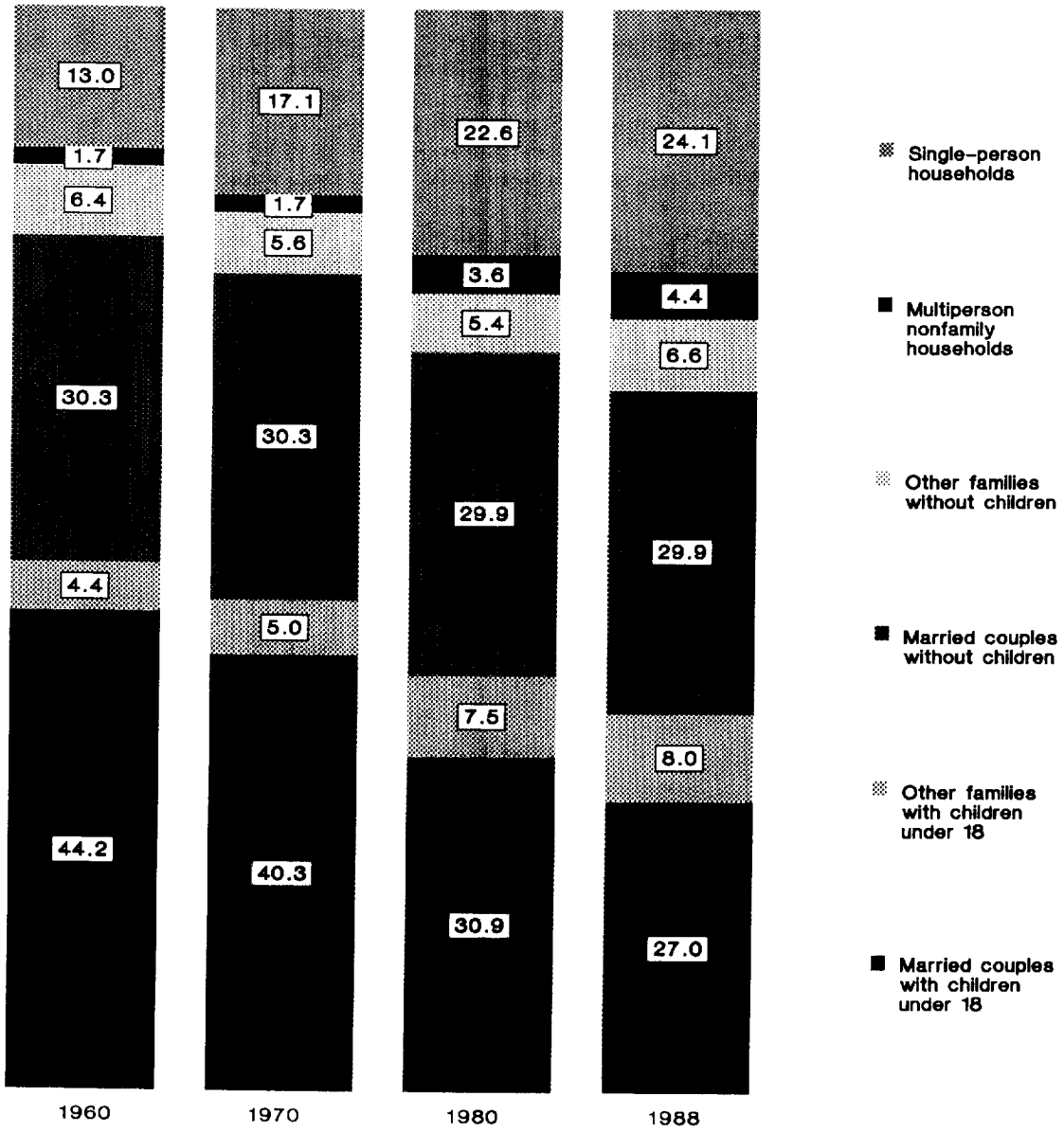
[1] Births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44.
[2] The number of children that a woman would have in her lifetime at the rates prevailing during the reference year.
[3] Births per 1,000 population.

percent) in 1920. Almost 89 percent of the widowed were age 55 or older in 1988, and 83 percent were women.[19] Most widowed persons live alone in their own households, and the proportion doing so has risen over time.

Changing family composition

While comprising an ever-shrinking share of all households, family households also have been undergoing progressive alterations in character. In 1950, married-couple households made up almost 88 percent of all family households, 9.3 percent were family households maintained by a woman (with no husband present), and 2.7 percent were family households maintained by a man (no wife present). By 1989, married-couple households were only 79 percent of all family households, and there had been a dramatic rise in the percentages of family households maintained by women with no husband present (16.5 percent) and by men with no wife present (4.3 percent). As chart 4 shows, the proportion of married-couple households with children present has declined dramatically—falling from 44.2 percent of all households in

Chart 4. **Composition of American households, selected years, 1960-88**



1960 to 27.0 percent in 1988, and the overall percentage of households with children present has fallen from almost half in 1960 to just over one-third in 1989.

Reflecting underlying changes in social attitudes and behavior, many more of today's new mothers are unmarried at the time their children are born than was the case in earlier generations. The annual out-of-wedlock birth rate rose from 7.1 per 1,000 unmarried women ages 15 to 44 years in 1940 to 19.3 per 1,000 in 1955, 26.4 per 1,000 in 1970, and 36.1 per 1,000 in 1987. In 1960, slightly more than 5 percent of all births were to unmarried women, but by 1987, the rate had risen to almost 25 percent.[20] Much of the change in distribution of births between married and unmarried women arises from steep declines in childbearing rates of married women, especially young married women.

Bearing and raising an out-of-wedlock child creates a family unit; this trend, coupled with higher divorce rates, means that an increasing percentage of our children are living in single-parent homes. Today, almost one-fourth of family households with children are maintained by a single parent, 9 out of 10 of whom are women. This is double the percentage in 1970 and almost triple the proportion during the late 1940's. Comparable data are not available for the prewar years, but the circumstances leading to single parenthood then were more likely to result from death of a spouse than from divorce or out-of-wedlock childbearing. As late as 1960, when only 9.1 percent of all children lived with a single parent, more than one-fourth of those children lived with a widowed parent. By contrast, only 6.3 percent lived with a widowed parent in 1988.[21]

A basic societal problem of single parenthood is that children of single parents are much more likely than children in intact marriages to be living in poverty. In 1988, for example, the poverty rate for married-couple families with children was 7.2 percent, but the rate for like families maintained by women was 44.7 percent. In large part, this means more children in poverty; almost 20 percent of all children—1 of every 5—were living in poverty during 1988, compared with 10.7 percent for persons 18 or more years of age.[22] A large share of these poor children were in single-parent homes. The poverty gap between children and adults has increased significantly since the early 1970's, a trend that is inexorably linked to out-of-wedlock childbearing and to divorce. Social science research has repeatedly shown that, among other difficulties, children raised in poverty are at higher risk of low educational attainment, more frequent involvement with the criminal justice system, and out-of-wedlock childbearing themselves.[23] These risks are closely correlated with unsuccessful worklife patterns, and do not bode well for the quality of the new-entrant labor supply in the next century.

Growth of nonfamily households

There has been a decisive upward trend in living in nonfamily households—those not consisting of persons related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal arrangement—in the United States. In 1940, there were about 2.7 million nonfamily households, about 7.7 percent of all households. By 1989, the number of nonfamily households had risen almost tenfold to nearly 27 million, or 29.1 percent of the total. More than four-fifths of all nonfamily households are occupied by a person living alone. Three trends contribute to the sharp rise in nonfamily households: Since the 1960's, young adults have increasingly deferred first marriages to older ages and often live away from the parental home, either alone or with others; among those who have married, divorce is more frequent, often creating two households, of which one is usually a nonfamily household; and, finally, there has been a sharp rise in the number of widows and widowers who maintain independent nonfamily households.

Families were the order of the day early in the 20th century; large families were common.

The number and percentage of single-person households has risen dramatically over this century, reaching 21.9 million, or 24 percent of all households, in 1989. Half again as many women (13.1 million) live alone as do men (8.8 million). The entire excess of women living alone occurs among those age 55 or older and is closely associated with widowhood. Between the ages of 15 and 55, both never-married and divorced men are somewhat more likely to be living alone than are their female counterparts. The two latter categories often are transitional—as of March 1989, more than 93 percent of Americans were or had been married at least once by their early 40's, and, on average, 60 percent of divorced persons remarry. Because unmarried (widowed, divorced, and never-married) women in their 60's and older outnumber unmarried men by a huge margin, older women are particularly unlikely to marry and form a married-couple family. In part because of income maintenance programs like Social Security, however, currently unmarried older women are much more likely to be living independently in their own household than were their predecessors.

The number of multiperson nonfamily households also has grown rapidly over the post-World War II period, rising from 762,000 in

1950 to 5.1 million in 1989. Just over half of these households (about 2.6 million) are maintained by unmarried couples who share living quarters, a quadrupling of such arrangements since 1970. In many instances, such couples behave like families—indeed, there are children under age 15 present in about 800,000 of the unmarried-couple households.[24] More than half of the partners in unmarried-couple households have not been married, and more than 60 percent are less than 35 years of age. According to research conducted at the University of Wisconsin, within 2 years such living arrangements among young adults were a precursor to marriage (and therefore formation of a family household) for 37 percent of the couples studied, to disestablishment of the household for 23 percent of the couples, or to continuation as an unmarried-couple household for 40 percent.[25]

Where are we tending?

The past 75 years brought momentous changes in family life patterns of Americans as we adapted to dynamic economic, social, and demographic developments. Changes in family living arrangements and preferences were particularly pronounced from the early 1960's to the late 1970's, about the time of the transition of the baby-boom generation from adolescence to adulthood. During the 1980's, average family living arrangements and family size exhibited comparative stability, fertility stabilized at a rate just below the replacement level, and the divorce rate leveled off just below the 1979 peak.

During the 1990's, all of the Nation's net population growth will occur among persons age 35 and older, with the bulk of the increase in the prime childrearing and working years, from the mid-30's to the mid-50's. The young adult population will be smaller in 2000 than it is now. This general aging of the population augurs well for a period of comparative stability, if not a slight drift back toward a traditional family orientation. That is, with delayed marriage, the divorce rate may continue to edge lower, reducing family dissolution somewhat. Childbearing patterns and data on birth expectations suggest a continuation of small families.[26] Over the last decade, young adults have shown an increased tendency to remain in the parental home during their 20's, damping one source of nonfamily-household formation. However, barring drastic changes in either personal tastes or Social Security and pension arrangements, it appears likely that there will be continuing growth in the number and proportion of elderly persons living alone in nonfamily households.

Even with comparative stability, areas of particular societal concern require attention. In part because of the continuing rise in out-of-wedlock childbearing, more than half of all children are likely to experience a period of living with a single parent during the 1990's, usually in reduced economic circumstances. For as many as 1 in 5, that means living in poverty—some for many years—with all the adverse implications for obtaining an adequate education and the opportunity to develop an effective working and family life as adults. □

Footnotes

[1] Household-based definitions leave much to be desired in describing familial economic and social support networks. For example, almost 1 of every 25 Americans provides some financial support for a person living outside his or her household. During 1985, $18.9 billion was transferred from individuals, largely to relatives living elsewhere. Such transfers include child support payments and former-spouse support payments, and significant sums flow from parents to adult children and vice versa. See *Who's Helping Out: Support Networks Among American Families*, Series P-70, No. 13 (Bureau of the Census, 1988), pp. 1, 11.

[2] *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 1* (Bureau of the Census, 1975), p. 41; and *Households, Families, Marital Status, and Living Arrangements: March 1989, Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 441 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), pp. 4–9.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Steve W. Rawlings, "Single Parents and Their Children," in *Studies of Marriage and the Family, Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, No. 162 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), p. 13.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[6] All data in this and the following paragraph are drawn from *Historical Statistics*, pp. 15, 20–21, 41–42, 49–56, 64, 105, 112, 117, and 133–34.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 41–42; and *State Population and Household Estimates With Age, Sex, and Components of Change, 1981 to 1988, Current Population Reports*, Series P-25, No. 1044 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), p. 18.

[8] Arthur J. Norton and Paul Glick, "One Parent Families: A Social and Economic Profile," *Family Relations*, January 1986, pp. 9–17.

[9] Louisa F. Miller and Jeanne E. Moorman, "Married-Couple Families With Children," in *Studies of Marriage and the Family*, p. 31.

[10] Donald J. Hernandez, "Components of Longitudinal Household Change for 1984–85," SIPP Working Papers 89–22, November 1989, pp. 1–28.

[11] Arthur J. Norton and Jeanne E. Moorman, "Current Trends In Marriage and Divorce Among American Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, February 1987, pp. 3–14.

[12] National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1987" (and various earlier years), *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, vol. 38, no. 3, suppl. (Hyattsville, MD, Public Health Service, 1989),

pp. 32–34; and *Historical Statistics*, pp. 49–56.

[13] *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1988, Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No 437 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), pp. 79, 83.

[14] National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics," p. 15.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988, Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 433 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), p. 3; and *Historical Statistics*, p. 20.

[17] Overall marital disruption appears likely to be even larger. See Teresa C. Martin and Larry L. Bumpass, "Recent Trends in Marital Disruption," *Demography*, February 1989, pp. 37–52.

[18] *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988*, p. 62.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 3–8; and *Historical Statistics*, pp. 20–21.

[20] National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics," pp. 32–34; and *Historical Statistics*, p. 52.

[21] *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988*, p. 42.

[22] *Money Income and Poverty Status: 1988, Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 166 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), pp. 60, 62.

[23] Susan Hofferth, "The Children of Teenage Childbearers," in National Academy of Sciences, *Risking the Future: Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy, and Childbearing*, vol. II (Washington, National Academy Press, 1987), pp. 174–206.

[24] *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1988*, p. 63.

[25] Andrew Thorton, "Cohabitation and Marriage in the 1980's," *Demography*, November 1988, pp. 497–508.

[26] *Fertility of American Women: June 1988, Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 436 (Bureau of the Census, 1989), pp. 1–11.

Tradeoffs in parental leave

While attention is focused largely on mothers, there is growing evidence of a greater desire for involvement in childbearing from fathers. According to Joseph Pleck of Wheaton College, former director of the National Fatherhood Project, "Because they do not understand or accept the idea of child care leave, many employers find the concept of paternity leave incomprehensible or frivolous." As a result, the policy is offered in about one-third of major corporations and rarely used by fathers. Pleck also found that when asked what they did when their wives had babies, men indicated that they pieced together various time-off policies, such as sick leave and vacations, in order to take off about three weeks. Fathers were reluctant to refer to this as "paternity leave."

—Dana E. Friedman and Wendy B. Gray
"A Life Cycle Approach to Family Benefits and Policies," *Perspectives*, No. 19 (The Conference Board, Inc., 1989), p. 11.