



## **POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS**

Population characteristics describe the diverse social, demographic, and economic features of the Nation's population. There were nearly 153 million females in the United States in 2007, representing slightly more than half of the population.

Examining data by demographic factors such as sex, age, and race and ethnicity can serve a number of purposes for policymakers and program planners. For instance, these comparisons can be used to tailor the development and evaluation of policies and programs serving women.

This section presents data on population characteristics that affect women's physical, social, and mental health. Some of these characteristics include the age and racial and ethnic distribution of the population, household composition, education, income, occupation, and participation in Federal programs.

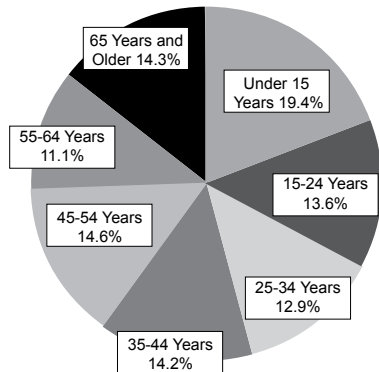
## U.S. POPULATION

In 2007, the total U.S. population was nearly 302 million, with females comprising 50.7 percent of that total. Females younger than 35 years of age accounted for 45.9 percent of the female population, those aged 35–64 years accounted for 39.9 percent, and females aged 65 years and older accounted for 14.3 percent.

The distribution of the population by sex was fairly even across younger age groups; however, women accounted for a greater percentage of the older population than men. Of those aged 65 and older, 57.9 percent were women.

## U.S. Female Population,\* by Age, 2007

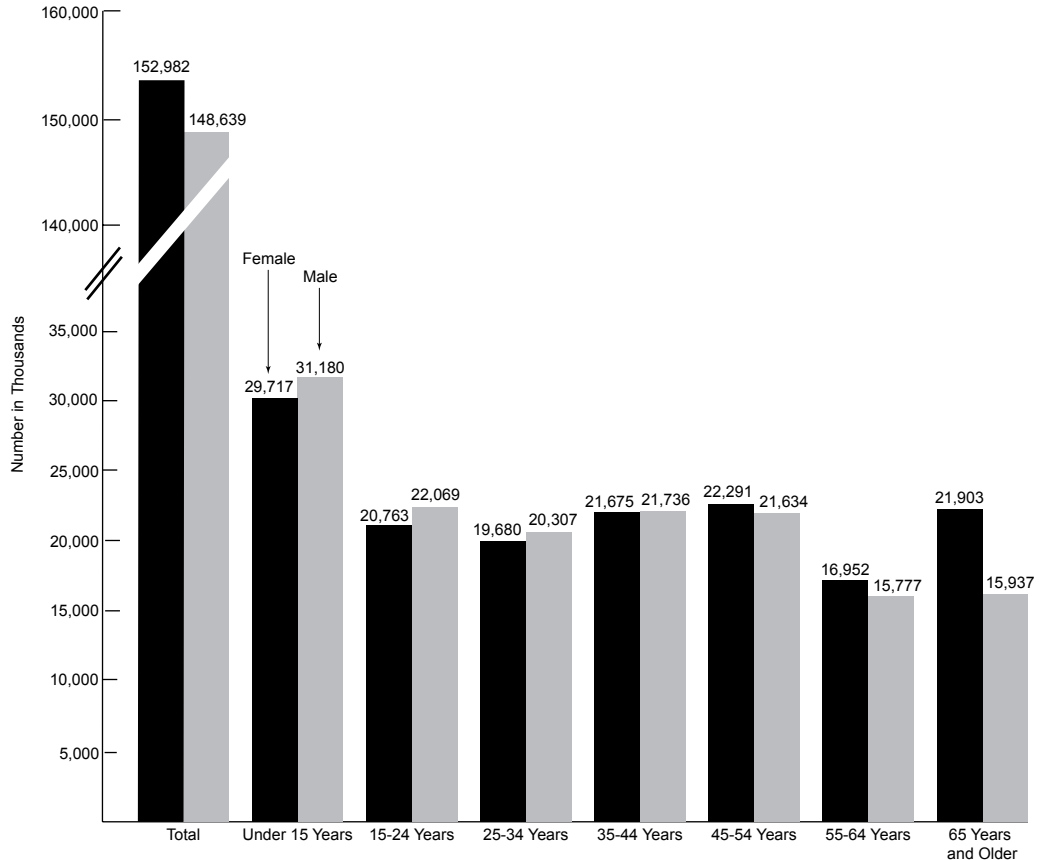
Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



\*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

## U.S. Population,\* by Age and Sex, 2007

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



\*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing.

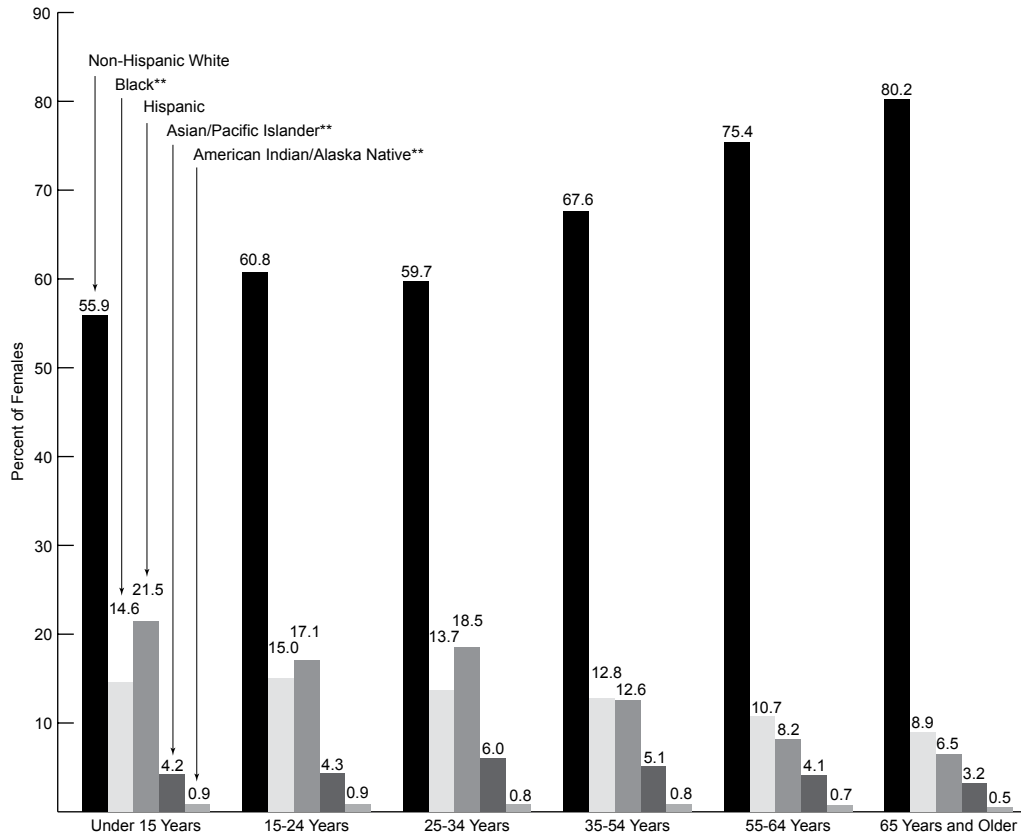
## U.S. FEMALE POPULATION

The growing diversity of the U.S. population is reflected in the racial and ethnic distribution of women across age groups. The younger female population (under 15 years) is significantly more diverse than the older female population. In 2007, 55.9 percent of females under 15 years were non-Hispanic White, while 21.5 percent of that group were Hispanic. In contrast, among women aged 65 years and older, 80.2 percent were non-Hispanic White and only 6.5 percent were Hispanic. The distribution of the Black population was more consistent across age groups, ranging from 14.6 percent of females under 15 years of age to 8.9 percent of women aged 65 years and older.

Evidence indicates that race and ethnicity represent important factors related to health disparities, that is, variations in rates of health conditions and chronic diseases in persons of different races and ethnicities. Coupled with the increasing diversity of the U.S. population, these health disparities make culturally-appropriate, community-driven programs critical to improving the health of the entire U.S. population.<sup>1</sup>

## U.S. Female Population,\* by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2007

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



\*Includes only non-institutionalized population not living in group housing. Percentages do not equal 100 because data are not shown for persons of other races or more than one race. \*\*May include Hispanics.

## HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

In 2007, 52.8 percent of women aged 18 years and older were married and living with a spouse; this includes married couples living with other people, such as parents. More than 12 percent of women over age 18 were the heads of their households, meaning that they have children or other family members, but no spouse, living with them in a housing unit that they own or rent. Housing units may include houses, apartments, groups of rooms or a single room that is intended to be used as separate living quarters.

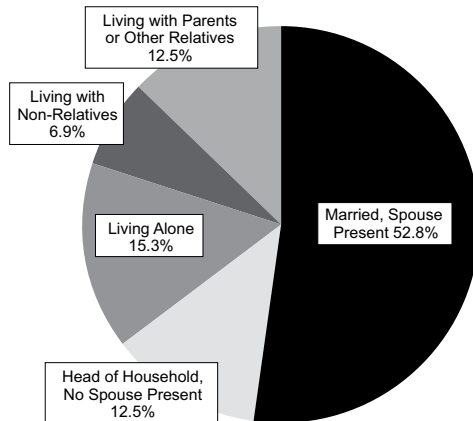
Women who are heads of households include single mothers, single women with a parent or other close relative living in their home, and women with other household compositions. The remaining women lived alone (15.3 percent), with parents or other relatives (12.5 percent), or with non-relatives (6.9 percent).

Women in households with no spouse present are more likely than women in married-couple families to have incomes below poverty (see “Women and Poverty” on the next page). In 2007, non-Hispanic Black women were most

likely to be single heads of households (36.1 percent), while non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander women were least likely (8.0 percent). Hispanic women (19.0 percent) and non-Hispanic women of other races (25.9 percent) were also more likely than non-Hispanic White women to be heads of households (12.0 percent).

### Adult Women,\* by Household Composition, 2007

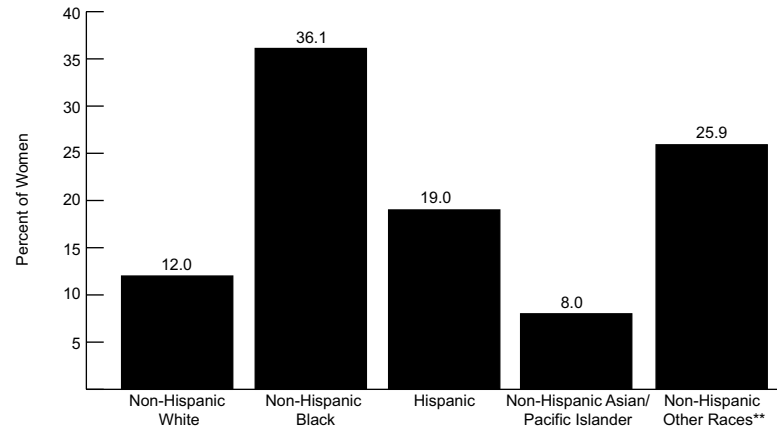
Source I.2: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



\*Civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 18 years and older.

### Women Who Are Heads of Households,\* by Race/Ethnicity, 2007

Source I.3: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



\*Civilian, non-institutionalized population aged 18 years and older; includes women who have children or other family members, but no spouse, living in a house that they own or rent. \*\*Includes American Indian/Alaska Natives, persons of more than one race, and persons of all other races.

## WOMEN AND POVERTY

In 2007, nearly 37.3 million people in the United States lived with incomes below the poverty level.<sup>2</sup> More than 12 percent of women aged 18 years and older (14.4 million) lived in poverty, compared to 8.8 percent of men. With regard to race and ethnicity, non-Hispanic White women were least likely to experience poverty (9.0 percent), while non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Native women were most likely (23.4 percent), followed closely by non-Hispanic Black women (23.3 percent) and Hispanic women (20.8 percent).

Poverty status varies with age. Among women of each race and ethnicity, those aged 45–64 years were less likely to experience poverty than those aged 18–44 and 65 years and older. For instance, 18.1 percent of non-Hispanic Black women aged 45–64 were in poverty in 2007, compared to 25.5 percent of non-Hispanic Black women aged 18–44 and 27.4 percent of those aged 65 years and older.

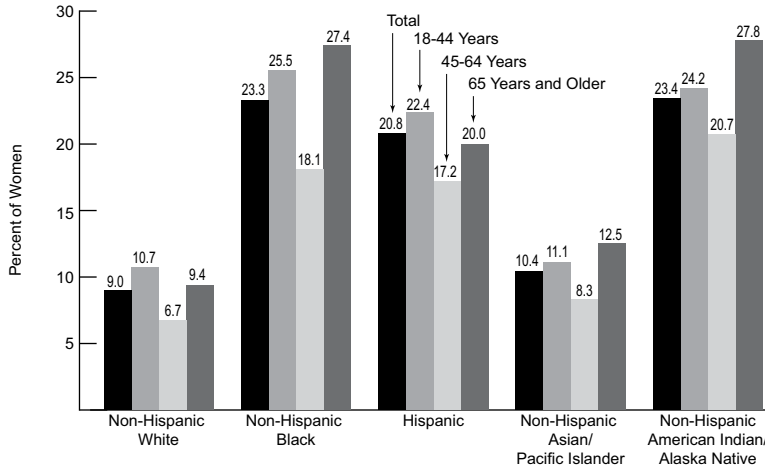
Women in families—a group of at least two people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together—experience higher rates

of poverty than men in families (9.5 versus 6.2 percent, respectively). Men in families with no spouse present were considerably less likely to have family incomes below the poverty level than women in families with no spouse present (11.8 versus 24.9 percent, respectively).

Female-headed households may also be more likely to experience homelessness than male-headed households. In a study of 16 cities, 65 percent of households with children experiencing homelessness were female-headed.<sup>3</sup>

### Women Aged 18 and Older Living Below the Poverty Level,\* by Race/Ethnicity and Age, 2007

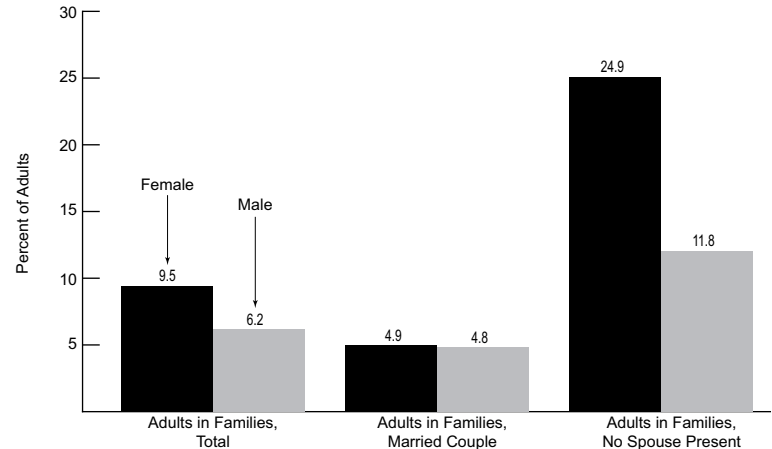
Source I.4: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



\*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$21,027 for a family of four in 2007.

### Adults in Families\* Living Below the Poverty Level,\*\* by Household Type and Sex, 2007

Source I.4: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey



\*Families are groups of at least two people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.

\*\*Poverty level, defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, was \$21,027 for a family of four in 2007.

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security is defined as having access at all times to enough nutritionally adequate and safe foods to lead a healthy, active lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> Food security status is assessed through a series of questions such as whether people worried that food would run out before there would be money to buy more; whether an individual or his/her family cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food; and whether an individual or his/her family had ever gone a whole day without eating because there was not enough food.

In 2007, an estimated 36.2 million people lived in households that were classified as not fully food secure.<sup>4</sup> Households or persons ex-

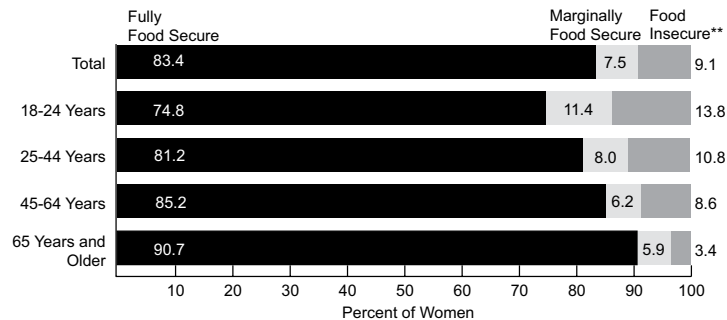
periencing food insecurity may be categorized as experiencing low food security or very low food security (formerly referred to as “food insecurity with hunger”). Low food security generally indicates multiple food access issues, while very low food security indicates reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to inadequate resources for food. Periods of low or very low food security may be occasional or episodic, placing the members of a household at greater nutritional risk due to insufficient access to nutritionally adequate and safe foods. Marginal food security indicates some problems accessing food, but not enough to qualify as food insecure.

In 2005–2006, nearly 17 percent of women lived in households that were not fully food secure, and this percentage varied by age. The proportion of women who were fully food secure increased as age increased. Women aged 65 years and older were most likely to be fully food secure (90.7 percent), while 18- to 24-year-olds were least likely (74.8 percent).

Food security status also varies by household composition. While adult men and women living alone had similar rates of food insecurity in 2007, female-headed households with no spouse present were more likely than male-headed households with no spouse present to experience food insecurity (30.2 versus 18.0 percent, respectively).

### Food Security Status of Women Aged 18 and Older,\* by Age, 2005–2006

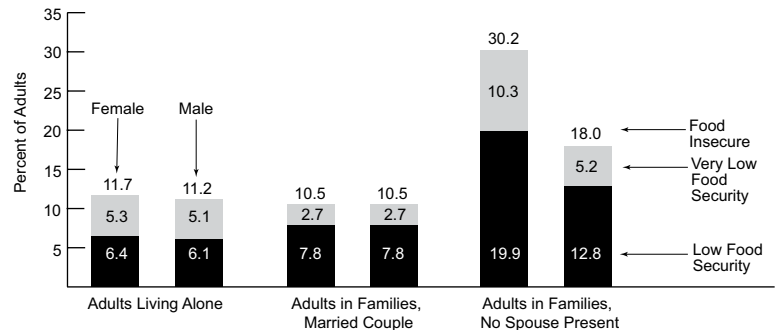
Source I.5: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey



\*Based on household food security status. \*\*Includes “low” and “very low” food security.

### Food Security Status Among Adults Aged 18 and Older, by Household Composition\* and Sex, 2007

Source I.6: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service



\*Percentages may not add to totals due to rounding.

## WOMEN AND FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Federal programs can provide low-income women and their families with essential help in obtaining food and income support. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Federal Food Stamp Program, helps low-income individuals purchase food. In 2007, more than 13 million adults participated in SNAP; of these, nearly 9 million (67.8 percent) were women. Among participating women, nearly 4.1 million (45.7 percent) were in the 18- to 35-year-old age group.

The number of people participating in SNAP increased significantly in 2008 due to the economic downturn resulting in an addition of nearly 4 million people of all ages from January through September 2008 alone.<sup>5</sup>

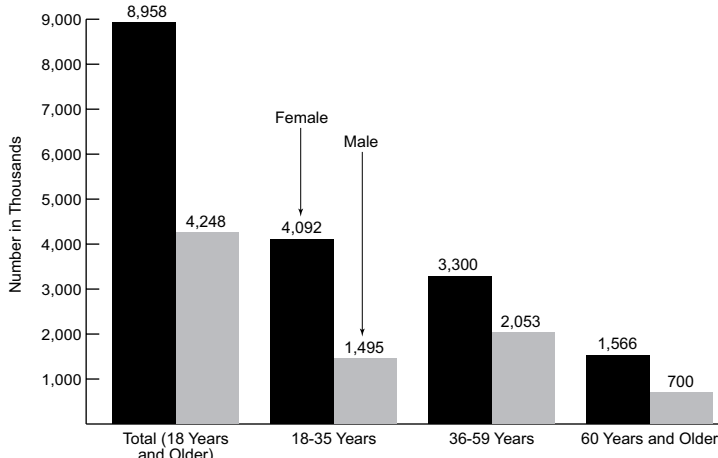
Female-headed households with children make up 30.5 percent of households that rely on food stamps, and represent nearly 60 percent of food stamp households with children (data not shown).

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) also

plays an important role in serving women and families by providing supplementary nutrition during pregnancy, the postpartum period, and while breastfeeding. More than three-quarters of all WIC participants are infants and children (75.3 percent); however, the program also serves more than 2 million pregnant women and mothers, representing 24.7 percent of WIC participants in 2008. During the years 1992–2008, the number of women participating in WIC increased by 75.6 percent, and it continues to rise.

### Adult Recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,\* by Age and Sex, 2007\*\*

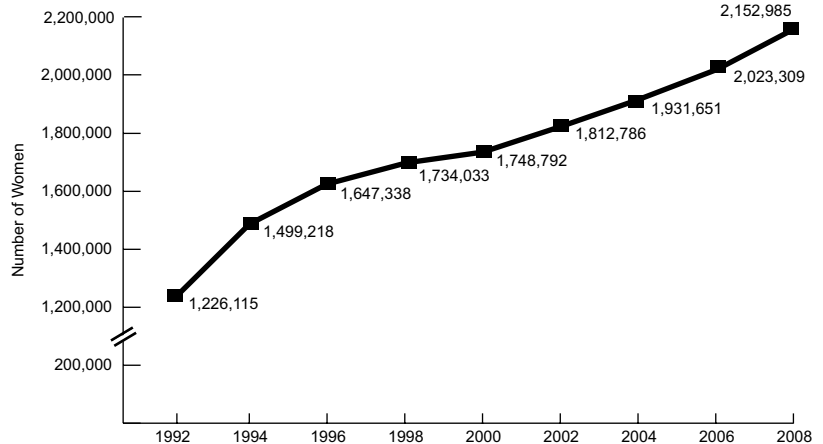
Source I.7: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Stamp Quality Control Sample



\* Formerly the Food Stamp Program. \*\*Based on Federal Fiscal Year (October-September).

### Women Participating in WIC,\* 1992–2008\*\*

Source I.8: U.S. Department of Agriculture, WIC Program Participation Data



\*Participants are classified as women, infants, or children based on nutritional-risk status; data reported include all pregnant women and mothers regardless of age. \*\*Based on Federal Fiscal Year (October-September).

## EDUCATIONAL DEGREES AND HEALTH PROFESSION SCHOOLS

The number of post-secondary educational degrees awarded to women rose from just over half a million in the 1969–1970 academic year to more than 1.7 million in 2005–2006. Although the number of degrees earned by men has also increased, the rate of growth among women has been much faster; therefore, the proportion of degrees earned by women has risen dramatically. In 1969–1970, men earned a majority of every type of post-secondary degree, while in 2005–2006, women earned more than half of all associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees and nearly half of all first professional

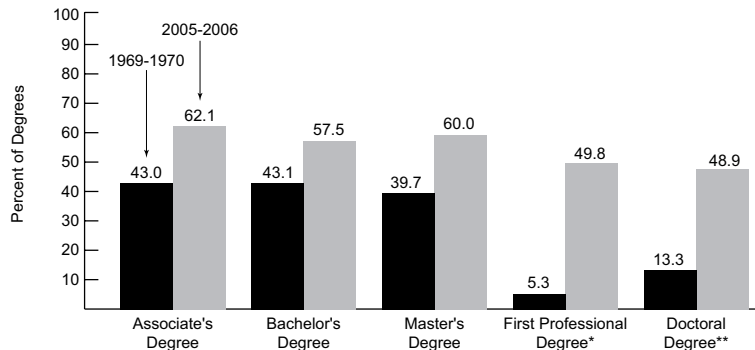
and doctoral degrees. The most significant increase has been in the proportion of first professional degree earners who are women, which jumped from 5.3 percent in 1969–1970 to 49.8 percent in 2005–2006. The total number of women earning their first professional degree in 2005–2006 (43,617) was 24 times greater than in 1969–1970 (1,841).

While the sex disparity in degrees awarded has decreased, a racial/ethnic disparity remains among women enrolled in schools for health professions. During the 2007–2008 academic year, non-Hispanic White women accounted for more than half of all women enrolled in schools of medicine, optometry, pharmacy, and

public health, while fewer than 10 percent of women enrolled in these schools were Hispanic. Non-Hispanic Black women were also under-represented among female students enrolled in schools of medicine, pharmacy, and optometry (9.0, 7.0, and 3.6 percent, respectively). In comparison, non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander women were overrepresented relative to their representation within the population, accounting for 30.3 percent of female students of optometry, 20.3 percent of female students of medicine, and 21.3 percent of female pharmacy students.

### Degrees Awarded to Women, by Type, 1969–1970 and 2005–2006

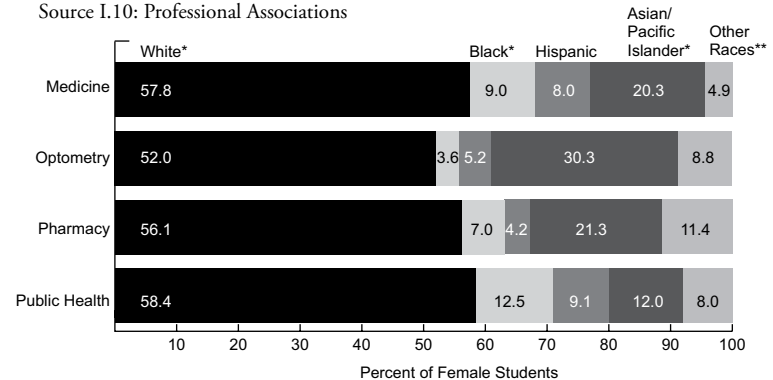
Source I.9: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics



\*Includes fields of dentistry, medicine, optometry, osteopathic medicine, pharmacy, podiatry, veterinary medicine, chiropractic, law, and theological professions. \*\*Includes Doctor of Philosophy degree and degrees awarded for fulfilling specialized requirements in professional fields such as education, musical arts, and engineering. Does not include first professional degrees.

### Women in Selected Schools for Health Professions, by Race/Ethnicity, 2007–2008

Source I.10: Professional Associations



\*Non-Hispanic. \*\*Includes non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaska Natives, persons of other races not specified, foreign students, and students whose race is unknown; medical school enrollment data do not include foreign students.



### WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

In 2007, 58.6 percent of women aged 16 and older were in the labor force (either employed or not employed and actively seeking employment). This represents a 35 percent increase from the 43.3 percent of women who were in the labor force in 1970.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, females accounted for 46.6 percent of workers, while males accounted for 53.4 percent (data not shown).

The representation of females in the labor force varies greatly by occupational sector. In 2007, women accounted for 62.9 percent of sales and office workers, but only 3.4 percent of construction, extraction, and maintenance

workers. Other positions which were more commonly held by women than men included service jobs (56.4 percent) and management, professional, and related jobs (51.2 percent). Women were the minority in production, transportation, and material moving (22.8 percent); farming, fishing, and forestry (20.5 percent); and in the military (14.3 percent). In 2007, a total of 200,337 women were on active duty in the armed services.

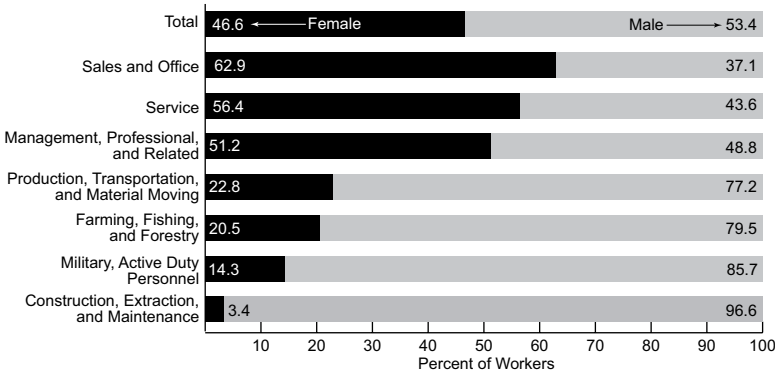
Overall, in 2007 there was a large discrepancy between the annual median earnings of women and men working full-time (\$34,103 versus \$44,250, respectively), and this discrepancy

existed within each occupational sector. Men's median earnings were approximately 40 percent higher than women's in management and professional; service; and production, transportation, and material moving occupations. The smallest disparity was evident in the construction, extraction, and maintenance occupational sector: men's median earnings were only 7.4 percent higher than women's.

The percentage of women working full-time has steadily increased in recent years. In 2007, 75.3 percent of employed women were working full-time, compared to 74.4 percent in 2003 (data not shown).<sup>7</sup>

### Workforce Representation, by Occupational Sector and Sex, 2007

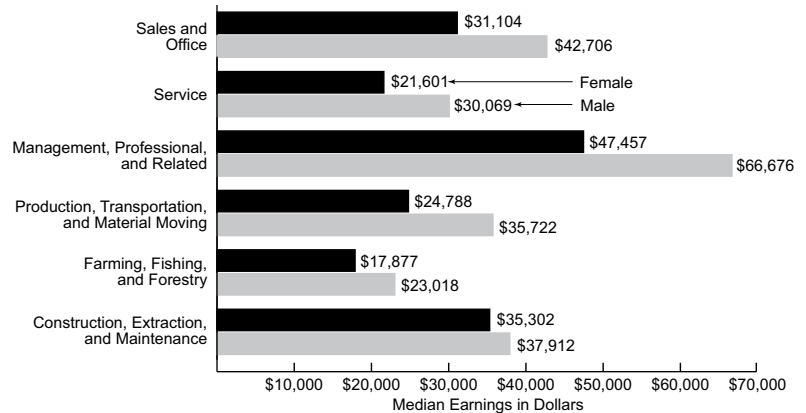
Sources I.1, I.11: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey; U.S. Department of Defense\*



\*Military enlistment data are from the U.S. Department of Defense; all other from the U.S. Census Bureau.

### Median Earnings,\* by Occupational Sector and Sex, 2007

Source I.1: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey



\*In 2007 inflation-adjusted dollars for full-time, year-round, civilian employed population 16 years and over.

## WOMEN VETERANS

As of September 2008, nearly 1.8 million living women veterans had served in the military on behalf of the United States. This number is projected to rise to 1.9 million by 2013. The percentage of veterans who are female has increased by more than 25 percent in recent years. In 2000, 6.1 percent of all living veterans were women, while women accounted for 7.7 percent of living veterans in 2008. Women are expected to account for 8.8 percent of the veteran population by 2013.

Female veterans are eligible for the same Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits as male veterans. Comprehensive health services

are available to all women veterans including primary care, gynecology and maternity care, mental health care, and specialty health care services. Full-time Women Veterans Program Managers are available at all VA facilities to help women veterans seeking treatment and benefits. For more information, visit <http://www.va.gov/womenshealth/>.

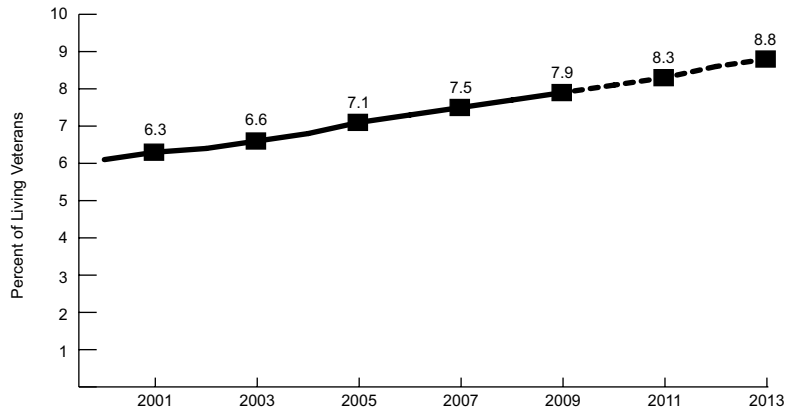
Of the 7.8 million veterans who are enrolled in the VA for health care, women account for more than 500,000 enrollees. The proportion of VA enrollees who are women is expected to increase to 1 in 7 over the next 10 years. The majority of new female veterans—from Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/

OIF)—are more likely to obtain their health care from VA facilities than previous female veterans.

Women are changing the landscape of care in the VA and not by their numbers alone. Women veterans of OEF/OIF are younger than women veterans of the past; more than three-quarters of OEF/OIF women veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are between 20 and 40 years old (i.e., of child-bearing age). These women are likely to be balancing work, motherhood, and transition to civilian life and will rely on the VA to provide high-quality, age-appropriate, and woman-specific care.

### Living Women Veteran Population, 2003–2013\*

Source I.12: Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Policy and Planning



\*Historical data from 2000-2008; projected for 2009-2013

### Women Veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, by Age, 2002–2008

Source I.13: Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards

