

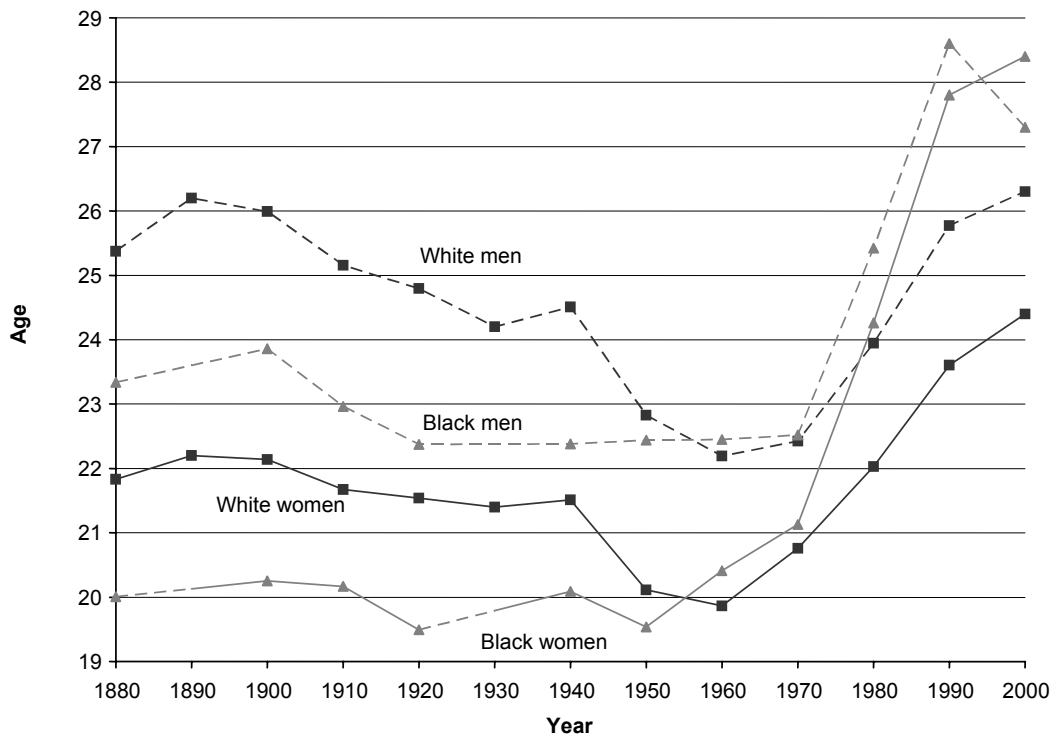
Are Black Men Marrying Younger than Black Women? New Evidence from Census 2000

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Abstract:

Age at first marriage increased dramatically between 1960 and 1990, especially among blacks. The median age at first marriage among black men went from 22.5 to 28.6, and among women from 20.4 to 27.8. These increases are among the most rapid ever recorded for any historical population. Census 2000 reveals a dramatic and unexpected surprise: although median age at first marriage continued to rise for black women, it declined sharply for black men (see Figure 1). The census data indicate that black men are now marrying a year younger than black women. This paper will explore the reasons behind this unusual pattern. In particular, we will assess the effects of changing age intervals between spouses among black married couples; changing patterns of intermarriage between blacks and other racial groups; underenumeration of single black men; and changes in the income distribution of young black men.

Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage: Native-born Whites and Blacks by Sex, 1880-2000.



Sources: 2000: New analysis using the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series. 1880 – 1990: Catherine A. Fitch and Steven Ruggles, “Historical Trends in Marriage Formation.” In Linda Waite, Christine Bachrach, Michelle Hindin, Elizabeth Thomson, and Arland Thornton, eds., *Ties that Bind: Perspectives on Marriage and Cohabitation*. Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000, 59-88.