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Record number of American wives have more education than their husbands

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American marriages have changed in the last 50-plus years. It used to be that husbands had more education than their wives, and women were perceived as “marrying up” when their husbands were educationally above them. Things sure have changed.

Now, for the first time since [Pew Research](#) began

tracking these sorts of things, **wives are “marrying down” educationally**, and have more education than their husbands. In fact, among women in 2012, 21 percent of them had husbands less educated than they were. This is a dramatic three-fold increase from 1960, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of Census data.

From 1960 to 1990 the number of couples where a husband’s education was higher than his wife’s steadily increased, but has since fallen to 20 percent in 2012. And among younger newlywed women, the trend is even more predominant.

This fact is partly due to younger women in general having exceeded men in acquiring **higher education** over the past two decades – in 2012, 27 percent of newlywed women married men with lower education levels than theirs. Conversely, the stats on newlywed men showed just 15 percent of them married women with less education than they had.

Another 2012 perspective: Among college educated newlyweds –including those with postgraduate and advanced degrees – a significant four-in-ten women, or 39 percent married spouses without college degrees, while just 26 percent of men did so.

An additional consideration in this trend is about marriages between couples with similar education levels. While **college graduates** are more likely to marry each other, overall couples with similar education levels is down to around 60 percent in 2012 from almost 80 percent in 1960.

Actually, the chief reason for a decline in the number of couples who share similar education levels is because marriages between partners with high school or less education are considerable less common these days, in 1960 the share was 74 percent of all marriages, and in 2012 a low of 24 percent. Add to this is the fact that adults with high school or less education are less likely to marry, down from 72 percent in 1960 to 46 percent in 2012.

At the opposite end are college graduates who have steadily married each other in recent decades, from a mere 3 percent in 1960 to 22 percent in 2012, and even spouses with some college education were on the rise through 2000 – from 3 percent to 12 percent -- although that rise seems to have leveled off. In spite of the higher share of newlyweds with college degrees, just 22 percent of new marriages in 2012 fit this profile.

The term “marrying down” when applied educationally does not necessarily equal “marrying down” economically. In fact, newlywed women who married men with less education actually “married up” in economic terms. In 2012 just 39 percent of newlywed women who married men with less education earned more than their spouses, with a majority (58 percent) earning less than their husbands. These statistics are definitely something to think over.

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