

Chapter 9. School Attendance

A question on school attendance has been asked on every census since 1850. In 1850 and 1860, the question was limited to the free population, and it is assumed here in showing data for the total population that there was no school attendance for the slave population. Data published on school attendance for 1850 to 1880 were classified by sex but not by age, and for the purposes of calculating percentages attending school, it is assumed that they apply to the population ages 5-19. In Figures 9-1 and 9-2, percentages attending school are shown for various age groups, reflecting the data published from each census.

The census question on school attendance has been made more restrictive over time. In general, the question referred to attendance at any time during the preceding year for 1850-1900, and since the preceding September 1 for 1910-1930. Starting in 1940, the question was limited to attendance in “regular” schools, leading, for example, to an elementary or high school diploma or to a college degree. In the 1940-2000 period, the reference day for the census was April 1. The question on school attendance was limited to attendance since the preceding March 1 in 1940 and since the preceding February 1 in the 1950-2000 period. As a result of all these changes and considering that school attendance may frequently have been sporadic in some areas, especially in the late 19th century, the data are not totally comparable over time. In addition, data for 1990 do not appear to be strictly comparable to data for 1980 and 2000 due to differences in the questions asked on the census. For this reason, data for 1990 in Figure 1 are shown with a space after data for 1980 and before data for 2000.

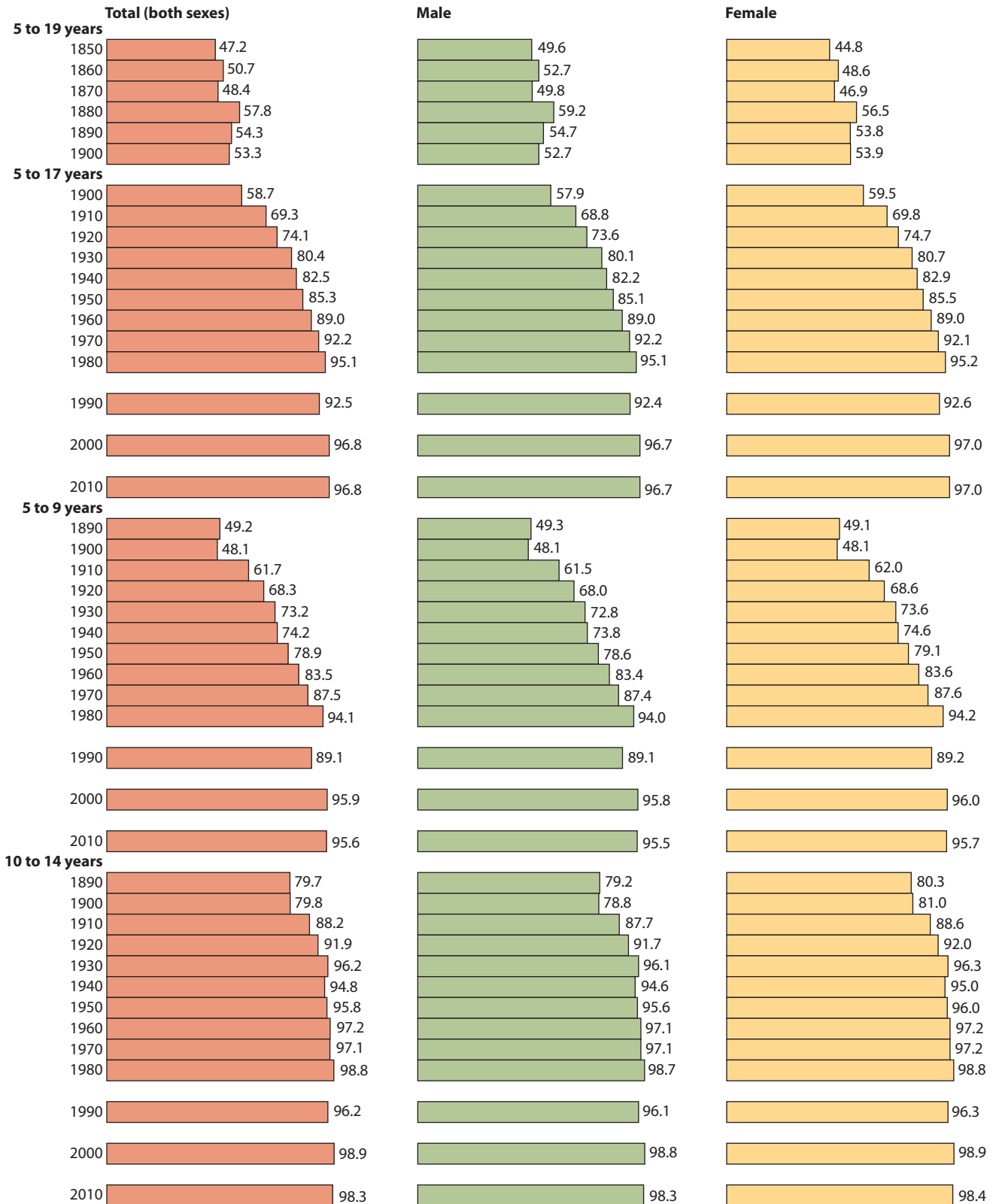
Figures

- 9-1. Percent Attending School by Sex and Age of the Population for the United States: 1850 to 2010
- 9-2. Percent Attending School by Sex and Age of the Population in Selected Broad Age Groups for the United States by Region: 1860, 1900, 1920, 1940, 1970, 2000, and 2010

Figure 9-1.

Percent Attending School by Sex and Age of the Population for the United States: 1850 to 2010

(Data for 1850 and 1860 assume no school attendance for the slave population)

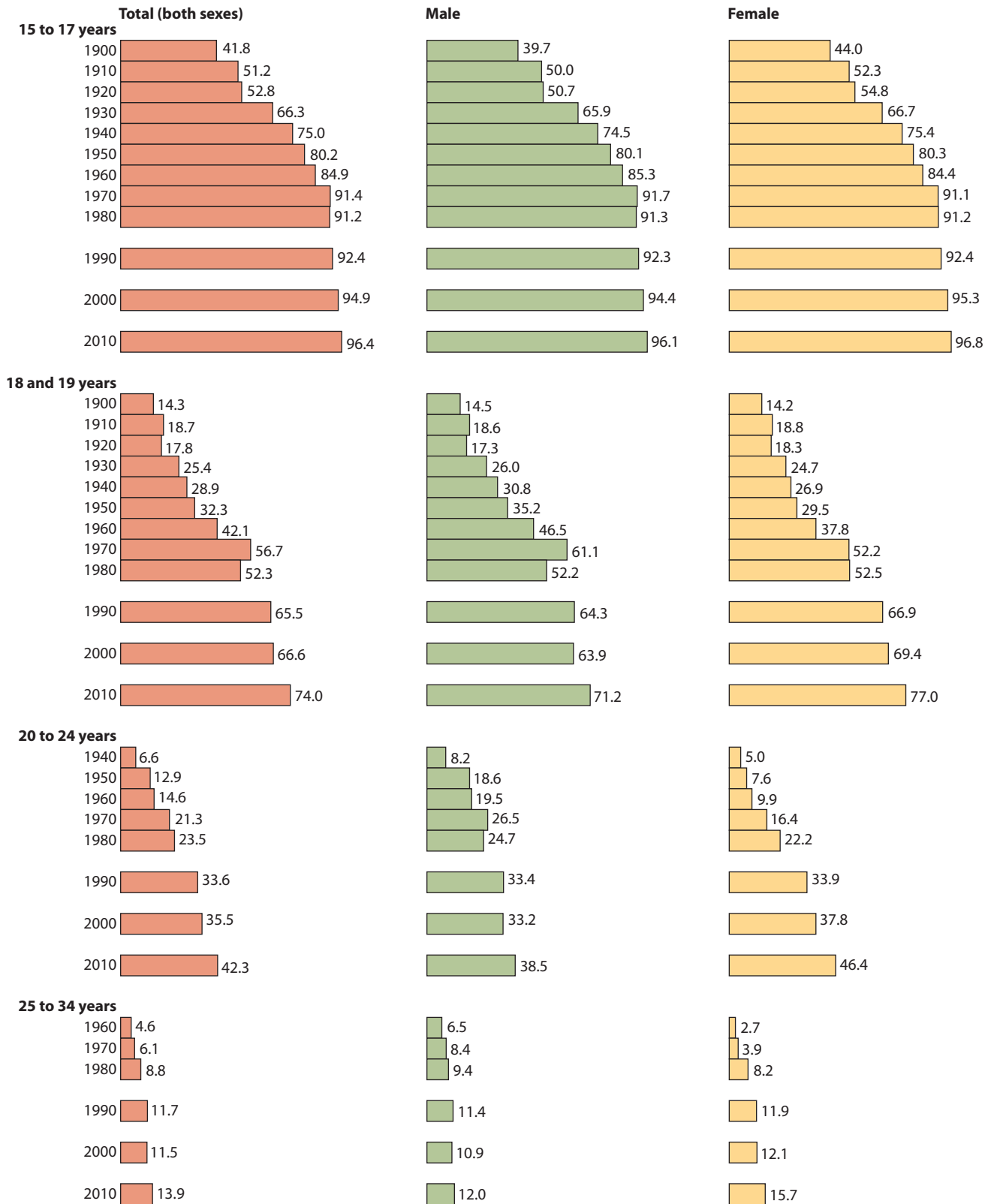


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications, and for 2010, the American Community Survey (ACS). See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 9-1.

Percent Attending School by Sex and Age of the Population for the United States: 1850 to 2010—Con.

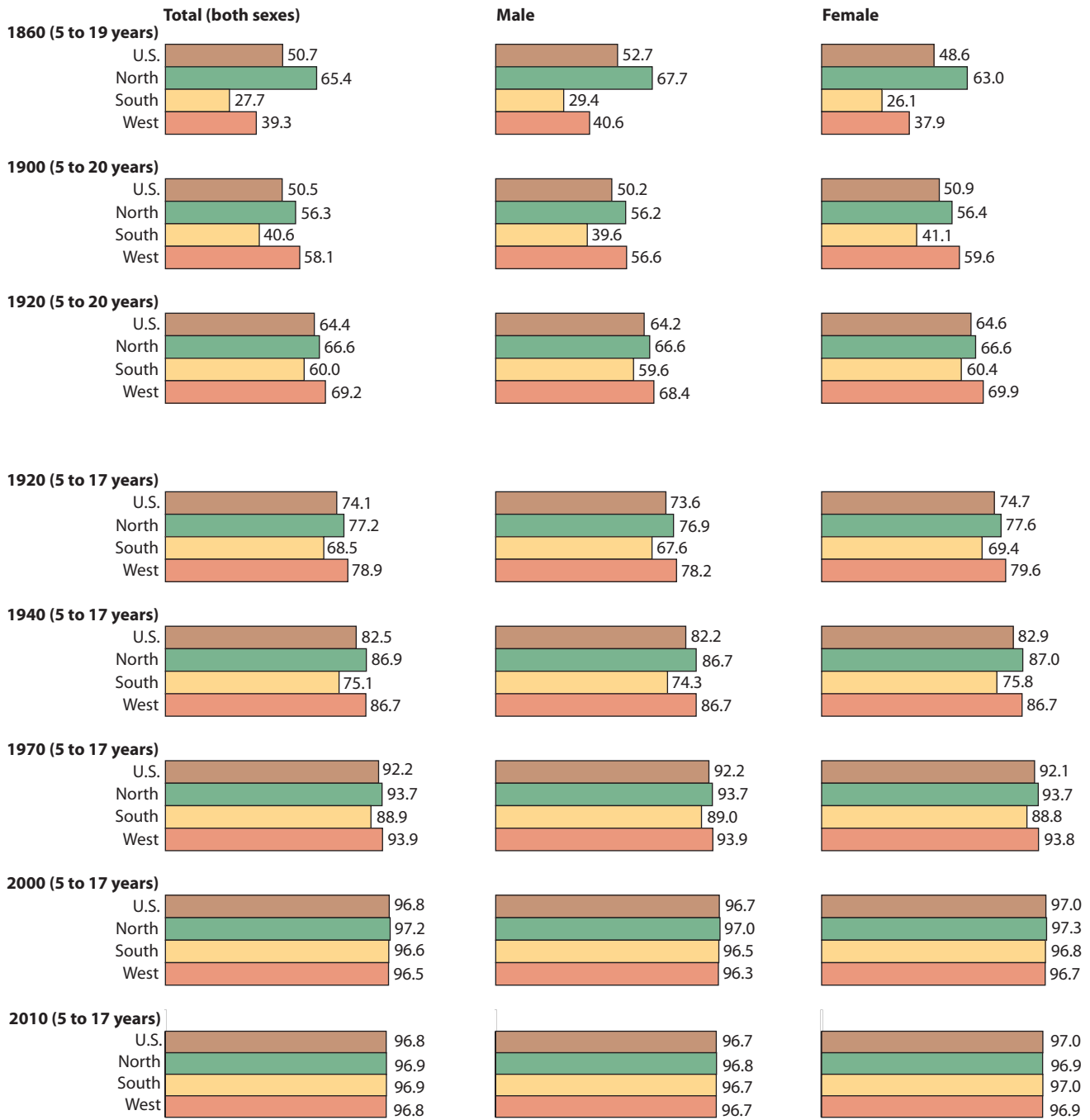
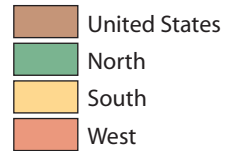


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Figure 9-2.

Percent Attending School by Sex and Age of the Population in Selected Broad Age Groups for the United States by Region: 1860, 1900, 1920, 1940, 1970, 2000, and 2010

(Data for 1860 assume no school attendance for the slave population)



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