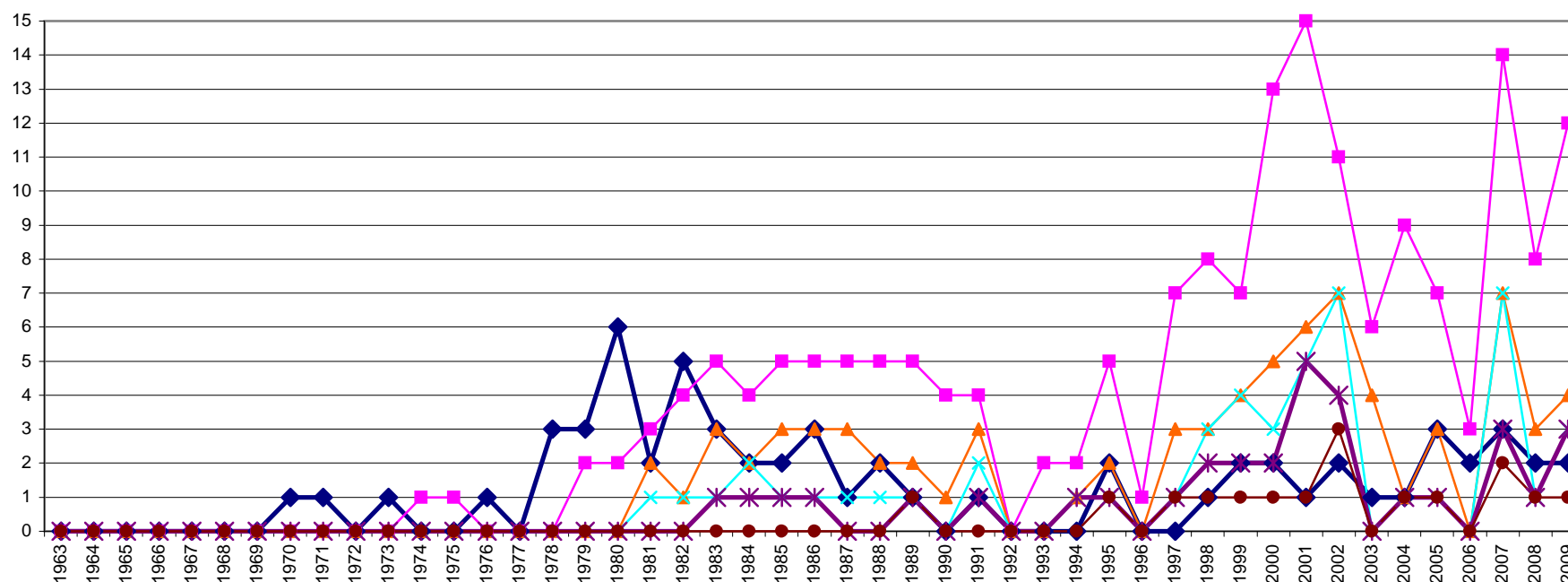


Female Runner Equinox Marathon Benchmark Times Year-by-Year Quantity Achieving Benchmarks (and Quantity of Men Under 3:00:00 Each Year)



This graph shows the number of men under 3:00:00 each year, as well as the number of women under 4:00:00, 3:45:00, 3:40:00, 3:35:00, and 3:30:00 each year. My purpose in generating this graph was to try to see if there is a female time equivalent to the men's "benchmark" time of 3:00:00. Other than a few blips in the late 70's and early 80's, the men's field has been pretty consistent, with zero runners, one runner (9 years) or two runners (8 years) breaking 3:00:00 most years. Only four times have there been three men under 3:00:00, and only twice have there been more than three men under 3:00 (6 in 1980 and 5 in 1982).

Until about 15-20 years ago, the women's benchmark equivalent was 4:00:00. However, while the difficulty men experienced in breaking 3:00:00 has not changed much, more and more women have broken 4:00:00. In 1986, three hours had been broken 33 times, and four hours had been broken 32 times by women. By 1999, four hours had been broken by women more than twice as many times as three hours had been broken by men (87 times v. 43 times); through 2008 it's almost 3:1 (174 to 60). Obviously, four hours for women is no longer the equivalent of three hours for men.

With that in mind, we tested 3:45:00 as a reasonable equivalent. However, that, too, proved to be somewhat of a moving target. In 2000 and 2001, the number of times men had broken three and women had broken 3:45:00 was about equivalent (45 men v. 43 women in 2000; 46 v. 47 in 2001). However, that has changed, too: through the 2009 race, there have been 61 performances by men under 3:00:00. Women have recorded 79 performances under 3:45:00 and 50 performances under 3:40:00

Taking a deeper look, we added to the data set the number of women's performances under 3:40:00 (50 performances), 3:35:00 (32) and 3:30:00 (16). , to the point of equivalence is probably somewhere around 3:41-3:42. If you look closely at the period SINCE 1983, it seems like the 3:35:00 line most closely resembles the 3:00:00 line for men.

One interesting note: in 1980 Pat Kling was the 5th woman to break 4:00:00 (after Mel Langdon, Carol Coe, Mara Rabinowitz and Helen Desinger). However, Pat was the first woman to break 3:45:00 and 3:40:00 (3:37:59 in 1981). In 1982, Pat missed, by 53 seconds, becoming the first woman to break 3:35:00. The very next year, 1983, Nancy Felix became the first woman to break 3:35:00 and nearly broke 3:30:00 (3:30:34). In 1989, Felix did become the first woman to break 3:30:00 with a 3:25:19. Tina Devine was the first to break 3:25:00 with a 3:21:21 in 1998. Susan Faulkner and Jane LeBlond became the only two sub-3:20:00 runners with their stirring duel in 2002, Faulkner winning the race in 3:18:16 to LeBlond's 3:19:59.