



Questions and Answers about CHANGING DEFINITIONS OF FAMILIES: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets that provide statistical answers to some important questions about work–family and work–life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Changing Definitions of Families. (Last updated: June 2008)



How have families changed?

- ✓ **Fact 1** In 2000, 73% of families with children were headed by a married couple raising their children. In 2006, that percentage dropped to 71%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✓ **Fact 2** In 2000, 22% of families with children were headed by a single mother raising her children. In 2006, that percentage rose to 23%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✓ **Fact 3** In 2000, 5% of families with children were headed by a single father raising his children. In 2006, that percentage rose to 6%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✓ **Fact 4** 12% of all U.S. children lived with one parent in 1970; in 1996, 28% of all U.S. children lived with one parent. (Kuttner, 2002, p. 22)
- ✓ **Fact 5** The average number of persons in a family in 2006 was 3.13. This average is down from 3.29 persons in 1980. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✓ **Fact 6** “Since 1960, the number of households headed by unmarried partners (same or opposite sex) has rocketed from 500,000 households to 5.5 million households. (It has increased by 72 percent in the past 10 years alone)” (Abbott, 2002, p. 3).



How have marriage trends changed?

- ✓ **Fact 1** 72% of all U.S. adults were married in 1970; in 1996, 60% of all U.S. adults were married. (Kuttner, 2002, p. 22)
- ✓ **Fact 2** “The average age of first marriage is now 25 for women and 27 for men– up from 20 and 23 in 1960” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).



- ✔ **Fact 3** In 2006, 3.8% of married couples were interracial couples. This is up from 2.6% in 2000 and 1.8% in 1990. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✔ **Fact 4** “Twenty-two percent of U.S. women 30 to 34 were never married in 2000. That is also about triple the percent of never-married women in that age group in 1970” (Spraggins, 2005, p. 5).
- ✔ **Fact 5** According to the 2000 Census, since 1990 “...there’s been nearly a 72 percent increase in the number of cohabiting couples...” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).



What do we know about households today?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “In 2003, 68 percent of all U.S. households were ‘family households’ (at least two members related by birth, marriage or adoption)” (Fields, 2004).
- ✔ **Fact 2** In 2006, 23 percent of all U.S. households were married with their own children. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✔ **Fact 3** “There were 57 million married-couple households residing in the United States in 2003 – 76 percent of family households” (Fields, 2004).
- ✔ **Fact 4** In 2006, 72% of households were White, 12% of households were Black, 4% of households were Asian, and 11% of households were Hispanic. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008)
- ✔ **Fact 5** One out of ten (9.8%) U.S. households in 2003 contained five people or more. (Fields, 2004)



What is the composition of U.S. families today?

- ✔ **Fact 1** It is estimated that one-third of all Americans are part of a stepfamily: through birth, divorce, and remarriage. (Jones, 2003)
- ✔ **Fact 2** “1.7 million American households include adopted children. That’s just four percent of all households where the householder has any children” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Six percent of adopted children under 18 in the United States are black. Seven percent of adopted children are Asian, and two percent are American Indian and Alaska native. Adopted children have a higher chance of being within race groups than they do as biological children or stepchildren” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).
- ✔ **Fact 4** “2.3 million grandparents – 1.5 million grandmothers and 860,000 grandfathers – 43 percent of the American grandparents who live with their grandchildren – are responsible for providing their grandchildren’s basic needs (i.e., food, shelter, and clothing)” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).



✔ **Fact 5** “Between 30 and 40 percent of stepchildren in the U.S. will go through the divorce of their custodial parent and stepparent” (Jones, 2003).

✔ **Fact 6** “Almost 15 percent of the U.S. births in 2004 were to mothers who were not U.S. citizens” (Johnson & Dye, 2003 or 05?).



What do we know about out-of-wedlock births?

✔ **Fact 1** “One and a half million of U.S. births in 2004 were to unmarried women in the U.S., a record high. That is 35.7 percent of all U.S. births that year, compared to 34.6 percent in 2003 and 33 percent in 2002” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

✔ **Fact 2** In 1980, approximately 18.4% of births were to unwed women in the U.S.; in 2003, more than 34% of births were to unwed women in the U.S. (Martin, Hamilton, & Sutton et al., 2005, p. 10).

✔ **Fact 3** “The median age for unmarried mothers is the late 20s, and the fastest-growing category is white women. She may be divorced or never-married. Forty percent are living with men who may be the fathers of one or more of their children...” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).

✔ **Fact 4** “Almost half of U.S. out-of-wedlock births were to cohabiting mothers” (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit a topic page on Changing Definitions of Families: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=15>
Topic pages provide resources/information including statistics, definitions, overviews & briefs, bills & statutes, interviews, teaching resources, audio/video, suggested readings and links.
2. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Afterschool Care. You can connect to this database at: http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-0&local_base=BCL_WF



References

Abbott, R.K. (2002, March 21). The changing definition of “family.” *Compensation & Benefits Report*, 16(6), 3–4.

This finding is from analysis of United States Census data.

For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau’s main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.



For a glossary of definitions of terms used in the Census, please visit, <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html> and click on the "Glossary" link at the top of the page.

To access this data, go to the Census Bureau's homepage: <http://www.census.gov/>.

Fields, J. (2004). *America's families and living arrangements: 2003, current population reports, P20-553*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

This document is archived at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-553.pdf>

Heuveline, P., & Timberlake, J.M. (2004, December). The role of cohabitation in family formation: The United States in comparative perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, pp. 1214-1230.

Johnson, T., & Dye, J. (2005). *Indicators of marriage and fertility in the United States from the American Community Survey: 2000 to 2003*. U.S. Census Bureau.

Abstract, Slides 36, 38 archived at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/fertility/mar-fert-slides.html>

Jones, A.C. (2003, April 1). Reconstructing the stepfamily: Old myths, new stories. *Social Work*. Retrieved from <http://www.highbeam.com/library/doc3.asp?docid=1G1:100767739>

Leo, J. (2001). Married with children. *U.S. News & World Report*, 130(21), 12.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

Kantrowitz, B., Wingert, P., Scelfo, J., Springen, K., Figueroa, A, Brant, M., & Abrams, S. (2001, May 28). Unmarried, with children. *Newsweek*, p. 46.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

Kuttner, R. (2002, April 28). The politics of family. *The American Prospect*, 13(7), 22-23.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

Martin, J., Hamilton, B., & Sutton, P. et al. (2005). *Births: Final data for 2003. National vital statistics reports; vol 54 no 2*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf

"Data shown in this report for 2003 are based on 100 percent of the birth certificates in all States and the District of Columbia. The data are provided to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program (VSCP) (p. 99)"



See the Technical Notes section of this report for more information about the sample (p. 99).
For information on how marital status was determined, please see page 106.

Spraggins, R. (2005). *We the people: Women and men in the United States, Census 2000 special report*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

This document is archived at: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/censr-20.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau (2003). *Percentage of childless women 40 to 44 years old increases since 1976, Census Bureau reports*. Press release. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/fertility/001491.html>

U.S. Census Bureau (2004). *Facts for features: National adoption month*. Press release. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/002683.html on 8/15/2005.

U.S. Census Bureau (2004–05). *Table no. 33. social and economic characteristics of the White and Black populations: 1990 to 2003*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

Direct link to stat: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>

The chief source of these data is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The sample includes employed full-time wage and salary workers 16 years old and over in the US. Excludes the self-employed. Data relate to the primary job. For description of data sources, see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/labor.pdf>. See <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/app3.pdf> for limitations of data.

U.S. Census Bureau (2005). *Facts for features: Grandparents day 2005*. Press release. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/005353.html

U.S. Census Bureau (2008). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2008 (127th edition)*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/statab/www/>

"The *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, published since 1878, is the authoritative and comprehensive summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the United States. Sources of data include the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and many other Federal agencies and private organizations."
