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Census Snapshot: West Virginia

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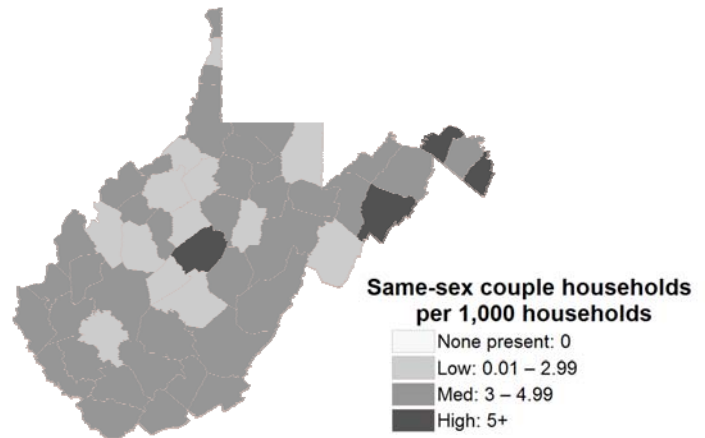
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WEST VIRGINIA

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Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this report provides demographic and economic information about same-sex couples and same-sex couples raising children in West Virginia. We compare same-sex “unmarried partners,” which the Census Bureau defines as an unmarried couple who “shares living quarters and has a close personal relationship,” to different-sex married couples in West Virginia.¹



In many ways, the almost 3,500 same-sex couples living in West Virginia are similar to married couples. According to Census 2000, they live throughout the State, are racially and ethnically diverse, have partners who depend upon one another financially, and actively participate in West Virginia’s economy. Census data also show that 14% of same-sex couples in West Virginia are raising children. However, same-sex couples with children have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than married parents: they have lower household incomes and lower rates of homeownership.

SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGB POPULATION IN WEST VIRGINIA

- In 2000, there were 2,916 same-sex couples living in West Virginia.²
- By 2005, the number of same-sex couples increased to 3,423.³ This increase likely reflects same-sex couples’ growing willingness to disclose their partnerships on government surveys.
- In 2005, there were an estimated 37,692 gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) living in West Virginia.⁴

INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

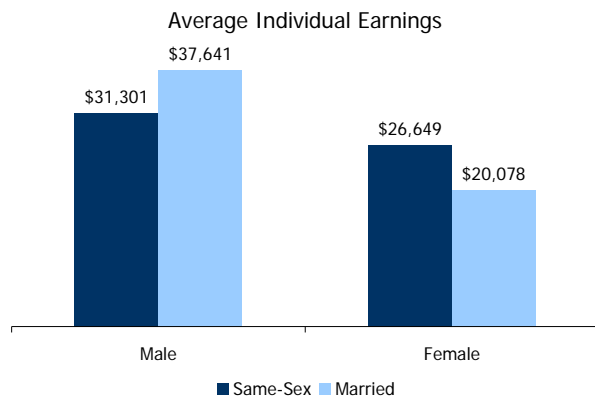
- There are more male same-sex couples (51%) than female same-sex couples (49%) in West Virginia.⁵
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 43 years old, and significantly younger than individuals in married couples (48 years old) in West Virginia.

- Same-sex couples live in every county in West Virginia and constitute 0.7% of coupled households and 0.4% of all households in the state. Kanawha County reported the most same-sex couples with 420 couples (0.49% of all households in the county), followed by Cabell County with 183 couples (0.44%), and Berkeley County with 138 couples (0.47%). The counties with the highest percentage of same-sex couples are Jefferson County (0.74% of all county households), Morgan County (0.62%), and Hardy County (0.52%).⁶
- West Virginia’s same-sex couples are more racially and ethnically diverse than their married counterparts: 8% of same-sex couples are nonwhite, compared to 3% of married couples.

PEOPLE IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE STATE ECONOMY

- Individuals in same-sex couples in West Virginia are significantly more likely to be employed than are married individuals: 65% of individuals in same-sex couples are employed, compared to 56% of married individuals.

- Contrary to a popular stereotype, the annual earnings of men in same-sex couples are lower than those of married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in West Virginia earn \$31,301 each year, less than \$37,641 for married men. The median income of men in same-sex couples in West Virginia is \$27,000, or 10% less than that of married men (\$30,000).
- Women in same-sex couples in West Virginia earn an average of \$26,649 per year (with a median of \$19,000), more than married women, whose earnings average \$20,078 (with a median of \$16,500). Women in same-sex couples earn less than married men as well as men in same-sex couples.



- Individuals in same-sex and married couples in West Virginia are most likely to work in the private sector: 69% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the private sector, compared to 71% of married individuals; 20% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the private sector, compared to 19% of married individuals; and 11% of individuals in same-sex couples are self-employed, compared to 9% of married individuals.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have a college degree: 32% of individuals in same-sex couples, and 16% of married individuals have earned a college degree.
- Despite the military's historic policies of excluding gay men and lesbians from service, individuals in same-sex couples have served in the military: 10% of individuals in same-sex couples are veterans, compared to 17% of married individuals.

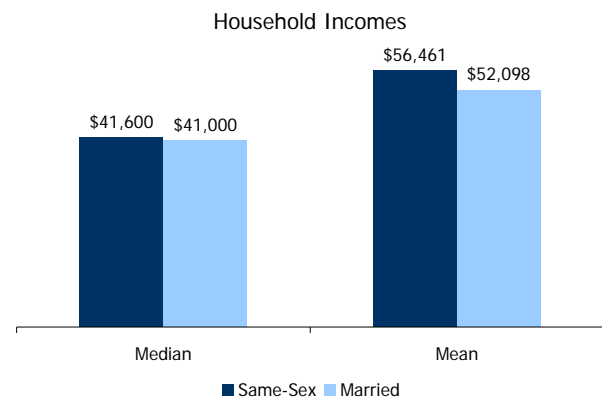
SAME-SEX PARTNERS IN WEST VIRGINIA DEPEND UPON ONE ANOTHER IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO MARRIED COUPLES

- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. 26% of same-sex couples have only one wage earner, compared to 34% of married couples.

- The income gap between same-sex partners is \$17,487, compared to \$20,689 for married couples.
- A larger percentage of same-sex couples in West Virginia have at least one partner who is disabled: 45% of same-sex couples, compared to 36% of married couples.
- 17% of same-sex couples have at least one partner who is age 65 or older, compared to 20% of married couples.

SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN WEST VIRGINIA HAVE SIMILAR ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS

- The median income of same-sex coupled households in West Virginia is \$41,600, compared to \$41,000 for married couples. The average household income of same-sex couples is \$56,461, compared to \$52,098 for married couples.

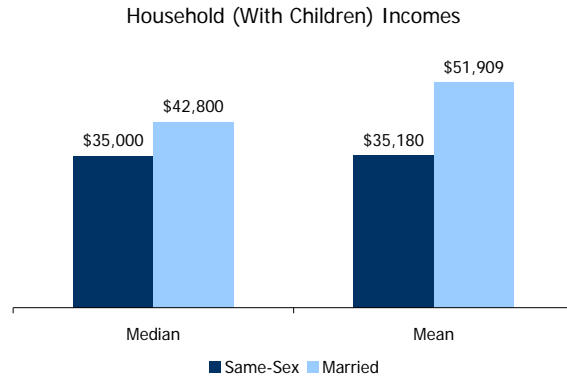


- Same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 68% of same-sex couples in West Virginia own their home, compared to 87% of married couples.

SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN WEST VIRGINIA, YET WITH FEWER ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAN MARRIED PARENTS

- 14% of same-sex couples in West Virginia are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2005, an estimated 713 of West Virginia's children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.⁷
- In West Virginia, same-sex couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, 1.4 children, compared to 1.8 children for married couples.
- 38% of same-sex couples with children in West Virginia have only one wage earner, compared to 39% of married parents.

- Same-sex parents have fewer financial resources to support their children than married parents in West Virginia. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$35,000, or 18% lower than that of married parents (\$42,800). The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$35,180, significantly less than \$51,909 for married parents.
- While 53% of same-sex couples with children own their home, a significantly larger percentage of married parents (82%) own their home.



CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in West Virginia. While in many respects West Virginia's same-sex couples look like married couples, same-sex couples with children have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than married parents and significantly lower rates of homeownership.

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity ⁸		
White	92.5%	96.6%*
Black	3.7%	1.5%
Hispanic	0.0%	0.5%
Asian	0.5%	0.6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.8%	0.2%*
Other	1.5%	0.6%
Average age	42.6	48.4*
Percent with a college degree or better	32.4%	15.7%*
Percent Employed	65.5%	56.3% [^]
Employment ⁸		
Private employer	68.5%	71.4%
Public employer	19.7%	19.2%
Self-employed	10.7%	9.0%
Veteran Status	10.4%	17.5%*
Average individual salary		
Men	\$31,301	\$37,641
Woman	\$26,649	\$20,078
Median individual salary		
Men	\$27,000	\$30,000
Woman	\$19,000	\$16,500

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
[^] Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

	Same-Sex	Married
At least one partner 65 or older	17.4%	19.9%
Percent disabled	45.0%	36.3%
Average household income	\$56,461	\$52,098
Median household income	\$41,600	\$41,000
Income gap between partners	\$17,487	\$20,689
Single wage earner	25.5%	33.8%
Homeownership	68.0%	86.5%*
Percent with children under 18	14.5%	42.6%*

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
[^] Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

	Same-Sex parents	Married parents
Average number of children under 18 in the household	1.4	1.8 [^]
Single wage earner (parents)	38.0%	38.9%
Average household income (parents)	\$35,180	\$51,909*
Median household income (parents)	\$35,000	\$42,800
Homeownership	53.0%	82.0%*

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
[^] Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

Appendix A: Counts and percent of same-sex couples by county

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Barbour	24	0.39%
Berkeley	138	0.47%
Boone	29	0.28%
Braxton	29	0.50%
Brooke	27	0.26%
Cabell	183	0.44%
Calhoun	13	0.42%
Clay	11	0.27%
Doddridge	6	0.21%
Fayette	70	0.37%
Gilmer	5	0.18%
Grant	15	0.33%
Greenbrier	44	0.30%
Hampshire	29	0.36%
Hancock	44	0.32%
Hardy	27	0.52%
Harrison	101	0.36%
Jackson	31	0.28%
Jefferson	120	0.74%
Kanawha	420	0.49%
Lewis	34	0.49%
Lincoln	38	0.44%
Logan	70	0.47%
Marion	89	0.38%
Marshall	56	0.39%
Mason	38	0.36%
McDowell	52	0.47%
Mercer	113	0.43%
Mineral	36	0.33%
Mingo	52	0.46%
Monongalia	127	0.38%
Monroe	24	0.44%
Morgan	38	0.62%
Nicholas	25	0.23%
Ohio	69	0.35%
Pendleton	8	0.24%
Pleasants	11	0.38%
Pocahontas	12	0.31%
Preston	29	0.25%
Putnam	64	0.32%
Raleigh	116	0.36%
Randolph	38	0.34%
Ritchie	8	0.19%
Roane	14	0.23%
Summers	18	0.33%
Taylor	25	0.40%
Tucker	11	0.36%
Tyler	10	0.26%

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Upshur	20	0.22%
Wayne	75	0.44%
Webster	18	0.45%
Wetzel	22	0.31%
Wirt	8	0.35%
Wood	136	0.37%
Wyoming	46	0.44%

About the Authors

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Gary J. Gates is Senior Research Fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He studies the demographic and economic characteristics of the lesbian and gay population.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, we calculate the demographic characteristics from the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (5% file) available from the U.S. Census Bureau. For a detailed discussion of the Census 2000 methodology used in this report, see *Census Snapshot: Methods Note*, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/MethodologicalDetailsForCensusSnapshots.pdf>. In estimating numbers of same-sex couples and children raised by same-sex couples, however, we use the total number of same-sex couples from 2005 and the proportion of couples with children from 2000 in order to provide a more up-to-date estimate.

² Tavia Simmons & Martin O'Connell, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Married-Couple and Unmarried-Partner Households*, Census 2000 Special Reports, CENSR-5, p. 4, tab. 2 (Feb. 2003).

³ Gary J. Gates, The Williams Institute, *Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey*, p. 11, apx. 1, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/SameSexCouplesandGLBpopACS.pdf>. Sample sizes for individual states in 2005 are not sufficiently large for the analyses presented in this report, we therefore use data from Census 2000 where samples are on average five times larger than 2005.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Simmons & O'Connell, *supra* note 2.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Unmarried Partner Households by Sex of Partners*, PCT14. Percentages of total households computed by dividing data in PCT14 by data in P15 (total households).

⁷ Computed by multiplying the number of same-sex couples times the percent of same-sex couples with children times the average number of children under 18 in the household.

⁸ Due to rounding, percent may not add to 100.

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