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Same-sex Couples in Census 2010: Race and Ethnicity

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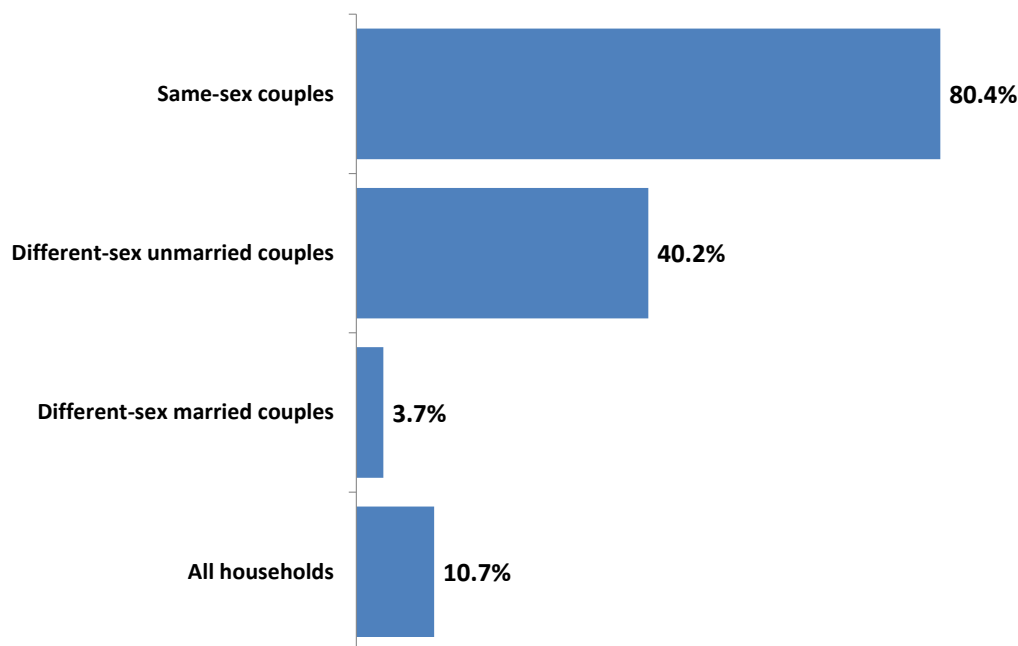
by Gary J. Gates, PhD

With the publication of [Households and Families: 2010](#), the US Census Bureau released the first data from Census 2010 on the racial and ethnic compositions of households headed by couples in the United States, including same-sex couples. This research brief summarizes the 2010 data for same-sex couple households and compares them to their different-sex counterparts, both married and unmarried. The Census Bureau did not release data that would allow for consideration of the characteristics of married same-sex couples compared to those in civil unions or registered domestic partnerships or those who are not in a legally recognized relationship. All of these groups are combined into the category of same-sex couple households.

Same-sex couple households increased more rapidly than different-sex couple households

The number of same-sex couple households has increased between 2000 and 2010 at a faster rate than the increases observed for all households, or for married or unmarried different-sex couple households (see Figure 1). The number of same-sex couple households increased by more than 80% from 358,390 in 2000 to 646,464 in 2010. Different-sex unmarried couple households increased by 40% while increases in different-sex married couple households were less than 4%. The total number of households in the US increased by nearly 11%.

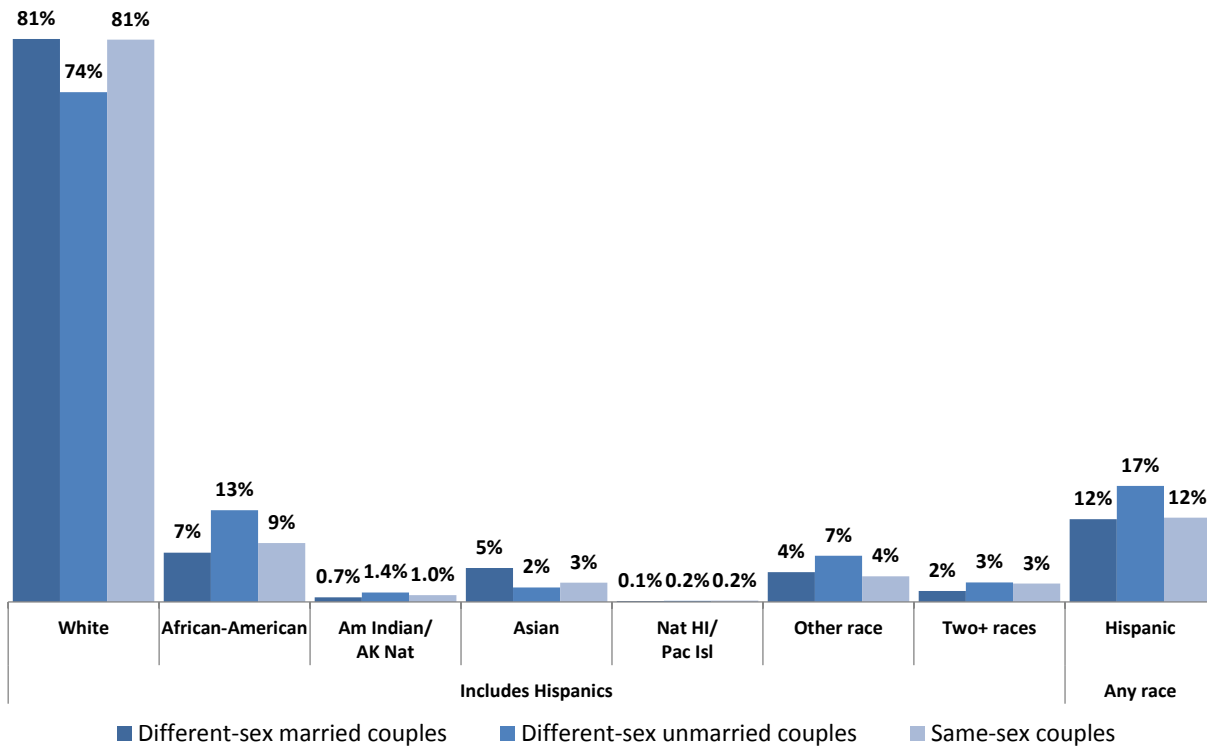
Figure 1. Percent increase between 2000 and 2010
by household type



Same-sex couples are as likely as different-sex married couples to include a racial or ethnic minority

The Census data describes couples by the race or ethnicity of the “householder”, who was Person 1 on the Census form and is usually the person in whose name the home is either owned or rented. Among different-sex unmarried partners, just 74% of householders were White. In general, the racial/ethnic distribution of householders does not differ much between same-sex couples and different-sex married couples, while different-sex unmarried couples include a larger proportion of racial/ethnic minorities (see Figure 2). For both same-sex and different-sex married couples, 81% of householders were White. Compared to different-sex married couples, same-sex couples had slightly higher proportions of African-American householders and slightly smaller proportions of Asian householders. The proportion of Hispanic householders did not differ between the two groups (12%).

Figure 2. Percent of couples with a specified race/ethnicity of the householder



Same-sex couples with children include a larger portion of racial/ethnic minorities than different-sex married couples

In general, couples where the householder is a racial or ethnic minority are more likely to be raising their “own” children (defined as biological or adopted children of the householder and a different-sex spouse or, in the case of same-sex couples or different-sex unmarried couples, biological or adopted children of just the householder). This is particularly true for same-sex couples. Among those raising children, 28% of householders in same-sex couples are non-White compared to 24% of householders in different-sex married couples. Among different-sex unmarried couples, 36% of householders are non-white (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Percent of couples with "own" children with a specified race/ethnicity of householder

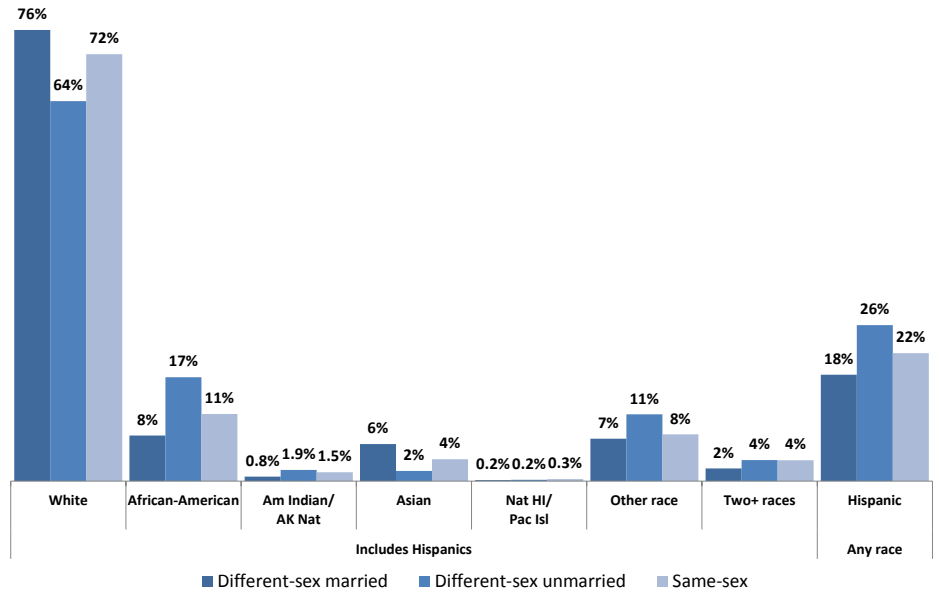
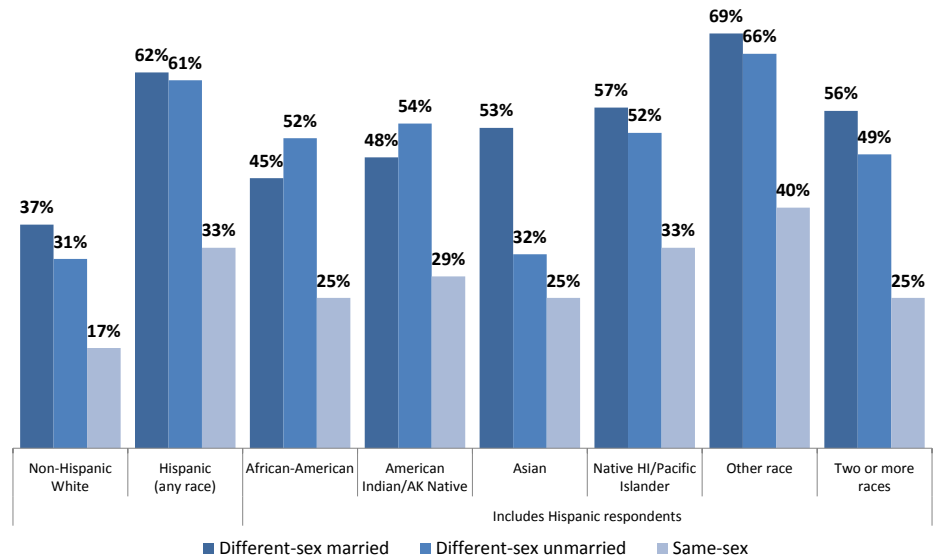


Figure 4. Percent of couples raising "own" children by couple type and race/ethnicity of householder



Among all racial and ethnic groups, same-sex couples are less likely to be raising children than their different-sex counterparts. However, like their different-sex counterparts, same-sex couples with a householder who is a racial or ethnic minority are more likely to have children (see Figure 4). Fully a third of same-sex couples with an Hispanic householder are raising children compared to just 17% of same-sex couples with a non-Hispanic White householder. A quarter of same-sex couples with either an African-American or Asian householder have children. Among same-sex couples with an American Indian or Alaska Native householder, the figure is 29% and among those with a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander householder, fully a third are raising children.

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Same-sex couples are the most likely to be interracial or interethnic

More than one in five same-sex couples (20.6%) are interracial or interethnic compared to 18.3% of different-sex unmarried couples and just 9.5% of different-sex married couples (see Figure 5).

More than half of same-sex couples in Hawaii (53%) are interracial or interethnic (see Figure 6). About a third fit that category in California (33%), New Mexico (31%), and Nevada (30%). Other states where same-sex couples are likely to be interracial or interethnic include Alaska (28%), District of Columbia (28%), Oklahoma (26%), Arizona (26%), Texas (25%), and Colorado (24%). Less than 10% of same-sex couples are interracial or interethnic in Maine, Mississippi, Vermont, West Virginia, and New Hampshire, and Alabama.

Figure 5. Percent of couples that are interracial/ethnic by couple type

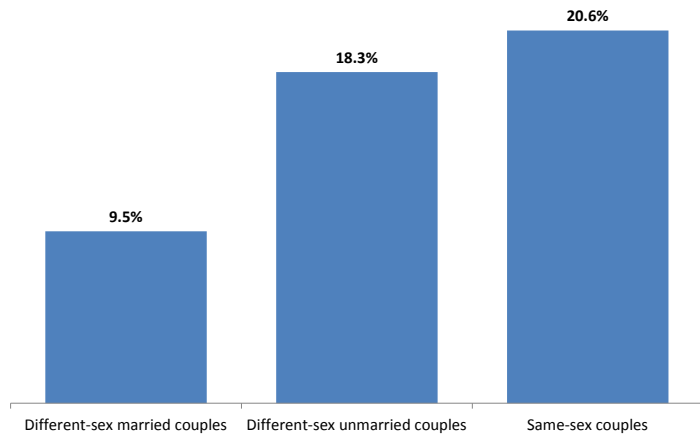


Figure 6. Percent of same-sex couples who are interracial or interethnic

