

UCLA

Census Snapshots

Title

Census Snapshot: United States

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6nx232r4>

Authors

Romero, Adam P.
Baumle, Amanda K
Badgett, M.V. Lee
et al.

Publication Date

2007-12-01

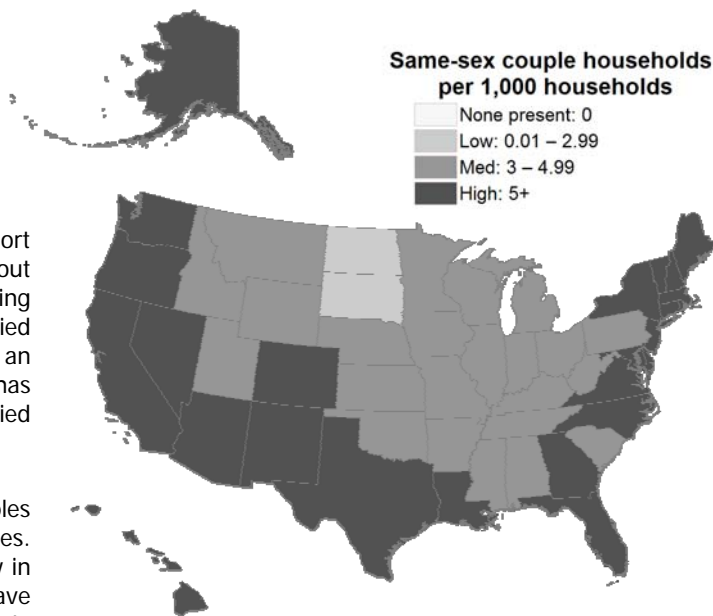
UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 2007

Adam P. Romero, *Public Policy Fellow*
Amanda K. Baumle, *Public Policy Fellow*
M.V. Lee Badgett, *Research Director*
Gary J. Gates, *Senior Policy Fellow*

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 the U.S. 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 the U.S.¹

In many ways, the almost 777,000 same-sex couples living in the U.S. are similar to married couples. According to Census 2000, they live in every county in every state, are racially and ethnically diverse, have partners who depend upon each other financially, and actively participate in the U.S. economy. Census data also show that 20% of same-sex couples in the U.S. are raising children. However, same-sex parents have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than do their married counterparts: they have lower household incomes, on average, and lower rates of home ownership.



SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGBT POPULATION IN THE U.S.

- In 2000, there were 594,391 same-sex couples living in the U.S.²
- By 2005, the number of same-sex couples increased by more than 20% to 776,943.³ This increase likely reflects same-sex couples' growing willingness to disclose their partnerships on government surveys.
- In 2005, there were an estimated 8.8 million gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) living in the U.S.⁴

INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

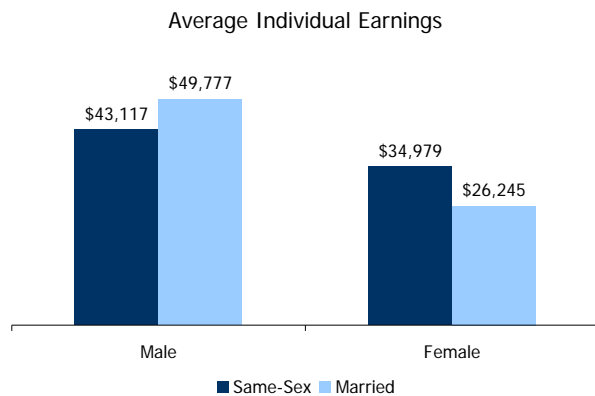
- There are more male same-sex couples (51%) than female same-sex couples (49%) in the U.S.⁵
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 40 years old, and significantly younger than married individuals (48 years old) in the U.S.

- Same-sex couples live in every state in the U.S. and constitute 1.0% of coupled households and 0.6% of all households in the country. California reported the most same-sex couples with 92,138 couples, followed by New York with 46,490 couples, Texas with 42,912 couples, Florida with 41,048 couples, and Illinois with 22,887 couples. Washington, D.C. reported the highest proportion of same-sex couples per total households (1.48%), followed by Vermont (0.80%), California (0.80%), Washington (0.70%), Massachusetts (0.70%), and Oregon (0.67%).⁶
- Same-sex couples are slightly more racially and ethnically diverse than their married counterparts: 24% of same-sex and 22% married couples are nonwhite.

PEOPLE IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE U.S. ECONOMY

- Individuals in same-sex couples in the U.S. are significantly more likely to be employed than are married individuals: 78% of individuals in same-sex couples are employed, compared to 65% of married individuals.

- Contrary to a popular stereotype, the annual earnings of men in same-sex couples are significantly lower than those of married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in the U.S. earn \$43,117 each year, significantly less than \$49,777 for married men. The median income of men in same-sex couples in the U.S. is \$32,500, or 15% less than that of married men (\$38,000).
- Women in same-sex couples in the U.S. earn an average of \$34,979 per year (with a median of \$28,600), more than married women, whose earnings average \$26,245 (with a median of \$21,000). Women in same-sex couples earn, on average, less than married men and men in same-sex couples in the U.S.



- Individuals in same-sex couples in the U.S. are more likely to work in the private sector: 74% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the private sector, compared to 71% of married individuals; 16% of individuals in same-sex and married couples work in the public sector; and 11% of individuals in same-sex couples are self-employed, compared to 12% of married individuals.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are more likely to have a college degree: 40% of individuals in same-sex couples and 27% 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 16% of married individuals.

SAME-SEX PARTNERS IN THE U.S. DEPEND UPON ONE ANOTHER IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO MARRIED COUPLES

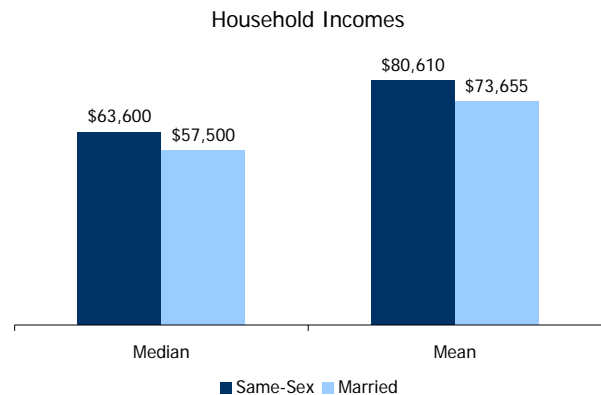
- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. Almost one in

four same-sex couples (23%) have only one wage earner, compared to almost one in three (31%) married couples.

- A similar percentage of same-sex (28%) and married (29%) couples in the U.S. have at least one partner who is disabled.
- 7% of same-sex couples have at least one partner over the age of 65, compared to 19% of married couples.

SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN THE U.S. HAVE SIMILAR ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS

- The median income of same-sex coupled households in the U.S. is \$63,600, more than that of married couples (\$57,500). The average household income of same-sex couples is \$80,610, more than \$73,655 for married couples.

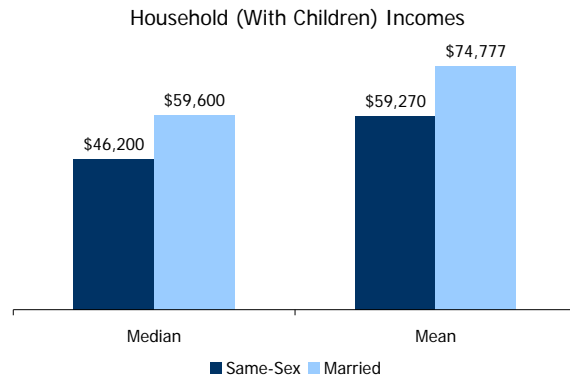


- Same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 60% of same-sex couples in the U.S. own their home, compared to 81% of married couples.

SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN THE U.S., YET WITH FAR FEWER ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAN MARRIED PARENTS

- 20% of same-sex couples in the U.S. are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2005, an estimated 270,313 of the U.S.'s children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.⁷
- In the U.S., married and same-sex couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, 2 children.
- An estimated 65,500 of the U.S.'s adopted children live with a lesbian or gay parent.⁸

- Same-sex parents in the U.S. have fewer financial resources to support their children than married parents. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$46,200, or 23% lower than that of married parents (\$59,600). The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$59,270, significantly less than \$74,777 for married parents.
- While 51% of same-sex couples with children own their home, a much larger percentage of married parents (77%) own their home.



CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in the U.S. While in many respects the U.S.'s same-sex couples look like married couples, those with children have significantly fewer economic resources than married couples to provide for their families and significantly lower rates of home ownership.

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity ⁹		
White	75.9%	78.2%*
Black	8.7%	6.7%*
Hispanic	10.6%	9.4%*
Asian	1.9%	3.8%*
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.9%	0.5%*
Other	2.0%	1.3%*
Average age	40.3	47.7*
Percent with a college degree or better	40.4%	26.7%*
Percent Employed	77.9%	64.8%*
Employment		
Private employer	73.7%	71.1%*
Public employer	15.6%	16.1%*
Self-employed	10.6%	12.4%*
Veteran Status	9.8%	16.1%*
Average individual salary		
Men	\$43,117	\$49,777*
Woman	\$34,979	\$26,245*
Median individual salary		
Men	\$32,500	\$38,000
Woman	\$28,600	\$21,000

* 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 over 65	6.9%	18.7%*
Percent disabled	28.4%	28.9%
Average household income	\$80,610	\$73,655*
Median household income	\$63,600	\$57,500
Income gap between partners	\$26,131	\$29,626*
Single wage earner	22.7%	31.1%*
Homeownership	59.8%	81.0%*
Percent with children under 18	19.6%	48.3%*

* 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	1.8	1.9*
Single wage earner (parents)	32.4%	34.8%*
Average household income (parents)	\$59,270	74,777*
Median household income (parents)	\$46,200	\$59,600
Homeownership	51.1%	76.9%*

* 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 state

State	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Alabama	8109	0.47%
Alaska	1180	0.53%
Arizona	12332	0.65%
Arkansas	4423	0.42%
California	92138	0.80%
Colorado	10045	0.61%
Connecticut	7386	0.57%
Delaware	1868	0.63%
DC	3678	1.48%
Florida	41048	0.65%
Georgia	19288	0.64%
Hawaii	2389	0.59%
Idaho	1873	0.40%
Illinois	22887	0.50%
Indiana	10219	0.44%
Iowa	3698	0.32%
Kansas	3973	0.38%
Kentucky	7114	0.45%
Louisiana	8808	0.53%
Maine	3394	0.65%
Maryland	11243	0.57%
Massachusetts	17099	0.70%
Michigan	15368	0.41%
Minnesota	9147	0.48%
Mississippi	4774	0.46%
Missouri	9428	0.43%
Montana	1218	0.34%
Nebraska	2332	0.35%
Nevada	4973	0.66%
New Hampshire	2703	0.57%
New Jersey	16604	0.54%
New Mexico	4496	0.66%
New York	46490	0.66%
North Carolina	16198	0.52%
North Dakota	703	0.27%
Ohio	18937	0.43%
Oklahoma	5763	0.43%
Oregon	8932	0.67%
Pennsylvania	21166	0.44%
Rhode Island	2471	0.61%
South Carolina	7609	0.50%
South Dakota	826	0.28%
Tennessee	10189	0.46%
Texas	42912	0.58%
Utah	3370	0.48%
Vermont	1933	0.80%
Virginia	13802	0.51%
Washington	15900	0.70%

State	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
West Virginia	2916	0.40%
Wisconsin	8232	0.39%
Wyoming	807	0.42%
Puerto Rico	6818	0.54%

About the Authors

Adam P. Romero is Public Policy Fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. J.D. Yale Law School; A.B., *summa cum laude*, Cornell University. His current research examines the significance of family in society and law, especially as relevant to disabled adults without family.

Amanda K. Baumle is Public Policy Fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law as well as Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Houston. Ph.D Texas A&M; J.D. University of Texas. She specializes in demography, social inequality, and the sociology of law.

M.V. Lee Badgett is Research Director at The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, and Director of the Center for Public Policy and Administration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where she is also on the faculty of the Department of Economics. She studies family policy and employment discrimination related to sexual orientation.

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 Gary J. Gates, M.V. Lee Badgett, Kate Chambers, Jennifer Macomber, The Williams Institute & The Urban Institute, *Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States (2007)*, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/Williamsinstitute/publications/Policy-Adoption-index.html>.

⁹ Due to rounding, percent may not add to 100.

For more information, contact:
The Williams Institute
UCLA School of Law
Box 951476
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1476
T (310)267-4382
F (310)825-7270
williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu
www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute