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Census Snapshots

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Census Snapshot: Iowa

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Same-sex couple households per 1,000 households

None present: 0
 Low: 0.01 – 2.99
 Med: 3 – 4.99
 High: 5+

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 Iowa. 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 Iowa.¹

In many ways, the almost 5,800 same-sex couples living in Iowa are similar to married couples. According to Census 2000, they live throughout the state, are racially and ethnically diverse, have partners that depend upon one another financially, and actively participate in Iowa’s economy. Census data also show that 19% of same-sex couples in Iowa are raising children. However, same-sex couples in Iowa, particularly those with children, 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 IOWA

- In 2000, there were 3,698 same-sex couples living in Iowa.²
- By 2005, the number of same-sex couples increased to more than 5,800.³ This increase likely reflects same-sex couples’ growing willingness to disclose their partnerships on government surveys.
- We estimate that there are more than 62,000 gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) currently living in Iowa.⁴

INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

- 52% of same-sex couples in Iowa are female; 48% are male.⁵
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 40 years old, and significantly younger than individuals in married couples (49 years old).

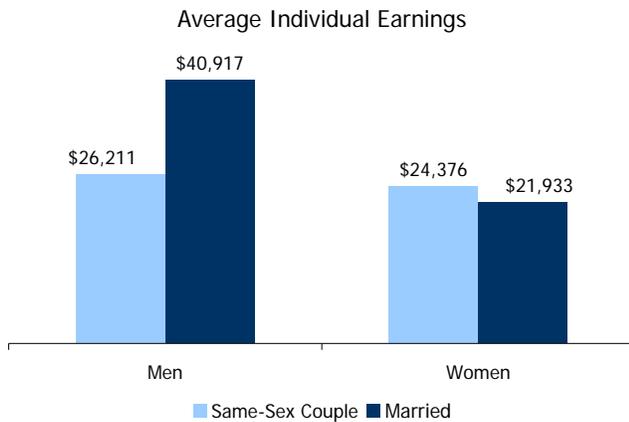
- Same-sex couples live in every county in Iowa. In 2000, Polk County reported the most same-sex couples at 747 (0.5% of households), followed by Johnson County (312 couples, 0.7% of households), and Linn County with 252 same-sex couples (0.3%).⁶ Appendix A is a complete list of counties in Iowa with at least 10 same-sex couples.
- Iowan same-sex couples are as racially and ethnically diverse as their married counterparts; 6% of same-sex couples and 4% of married couples in Iowa are people of color.

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

- Individuals in same-sex couples in Iowa are more likely to be employed than are married individuals: 86% compared to 71%.
- Contrary to a popular stereotype, men in same-sex couples have significantly lower incomes than married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in Iowa earn \$26,211 per year, significantly less than \$40,917 for married men.

The median income of individuals in male same-sex couples in Iowa is \$23,000, or 30% less than that of married men (\$33,000).

- Women in same-sex couples, on the other hand, earn an average of \$24,376 per year (with a median of \$23,200), significantly more than married women, whose earnings average \$21,933 (with a median of \$19,500). Women in same-sex couples, however, still have average earnings that are less than those of men.



- Individuals in same-sex couples in Iowa are more likely to work in the private sector and less likely to work for themselves: 81% of individuals in same-sex partnerships work in the private sector, compared to 70% of married individuals; 7% of same-sex individuals are self-employed, compared to 14% of married individuals.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are more likely to have a college degree: 36% of individuals in same-sex couples and 23% 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 in Iowa have served in the military at similar rates to married individuals: 11% of individuals in same-sex couples are veterans, compared to 16% of married individuals.

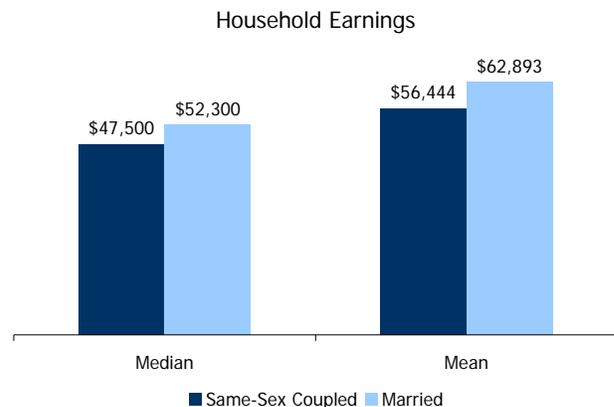
SAME-SEX PARTNERS IN IOWA DEPEND UPON ONE ANOTHER IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO MARRIED COUPLES

- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. 18% of same-sex couples and 24% of married couples have only one wage earner.

- The average income gap between same-sex partners is sizeable at \$13,678, although smaller than \$22,798 for married couples.
- The presence of a senior or disabled partner in a couple may indicate interdependence: 7% of same-sex couples include a partner over age 65 – less than married couples, 21% of whom include a partner over age 65.
- A similar percentage of same-sex and married couples in Iowa have at least one partner who is disabled: 28% of same-sex couples compared to 25% of married couples.

SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN IOWA HAVE FEWER ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAN MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS

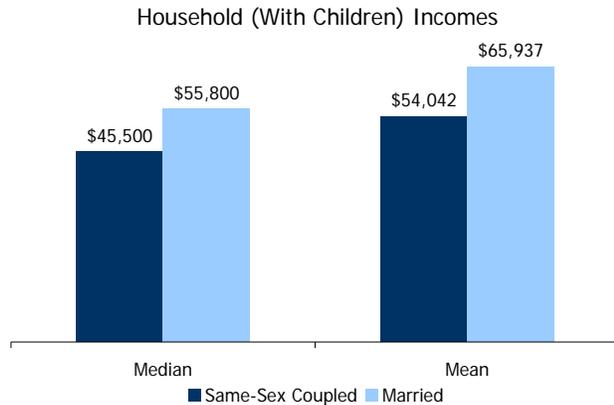
- The median income of same-sex-couple households in Iowa is \$47,500, or 9% less than that of married couples (\$52,300). The average household income of same-sex couples is \$56,444 compared to \$62,893 for married couples.
- Same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 77% of same-sex couples in Iowa own their home, compared to 87% of married couples.



SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN IOWA

- Approximately 19% of same-sex couples in Iowa are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2005, an estimated 1,400 of Iowa's children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.⁷
- In Iowa, married couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, 2 children. Same-sex couples have fewer children (1.2), on average.

- The economic disparities are even greater for couples with children. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$45,500, or 19% lower than that of married parents (\$55,800). The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$54,042, compared to \$65,937 for married parents.



- Roughly 0.5% of Iowa's adopted children live with a lesbian or gay parent.⁸
- While 71% of same-sex couples with children own a home, a much larger percent of married parents (83%) own a home.

CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in Iowa. While in many respects Iowa's same-sex couples look like married couples, on average, they have fewer resources to provide for their families.

Table One: Characteristics of individuals in couples

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity ⁹		
White	94%	96%
Black	<1%	1%
Asian	<1%	1%
Hispanic	4%	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1%	<1%*
Other	0%	<1%
Average age	40	49*
Percent with a college degree or better	36%	23%*
Percent Employed	86%	71%*
Employment ⁹		
Private employer	81%	70%*
Public employer	12%	15%
Self-employed	7%	14%*
Veteran Status	11%	16%
Average individual salary		
Men	\$26,211	\$40,917*
Woman	\$24,376	\$21,933*
Median individual salary		
Men	\$23,000	\$33,000
Woman	\$23,200	\$19,500

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

Table Two: Characteristics of couples

	Same-Sex	Married
At least one partner over 65	7%	21%*
Percent disabled	28%	25%
Average household income	\$56,444	\$62,893*
Median household income	\$47,500	\$52,300
Income gap between partners	\$13,678	\$22,798*
Single wage earner	18%	24%
Homeownership	77%	87%*
Percent with children under 18	19%	45%*

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

Table Three: Characteristics of couples with children

	Same-Sex parents	Married parents
Average number of children under 18 in the household	1.2	2.0*
Single wage earner (parents)	41%	23%
Average household income (parents)	\$54,042	\$65,937*
Median household income (parents)	\$45,500	\$55,800
Homeownership	71%	83%*

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

Appendix A: Counts and percent of same-sex couples by county¹⁰

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Allamakee	13	0.20%
Appanoose	18	0.30%
Benton	22	0.20%
Black Hawk	155	0.30%
Boone	24	0.20%
Bremer	13	0.10%
Buchanan	16	0.20%
Buena Vista	27	0.40%
Butler	17	0.30%
Calhoun	13	0.30%
Carroll	16	0.20%
Cass	15	0.20%
Cedar	28	0.40%
Cerro Gordo	41	0.20%
Chickasaw	15	0.30%
Clarke	15	0.40%
Clay	20	0.30%
Clayton	11	0.10%
Clinton	63	0.30%
Crawford	15	0.20%
Dallas	50	0.30%
Decatur	13	0.40%
Delaware	15	0.20%
Des Moines	51	0.30%
Dickinson	17	0.20%
Dubuque	59	0.20%
Fayette	21	0.20%
Floyd	14	0.20%
Franklin	14	0.30%
Fremont	11	0.30%
Greene	15	0.40%
Guthrie	14	0.30%
Hamilton	15	0.20%
Hardin	19	0.20%
Harrison	16	0.30%
Henry	20	0.30%
Howard	18	0.50%
Ida	11	0.30%
Iowa	25	0.40%
Jackson	12	0.10%
Jasper	43	0.30%
Jefferson	13	0.20%
Johnson	312	0.70%
Jones	21	0.30%
Keokuk	11	0.20%
Kossuth	21	0.30%
Lee	39	0.30%
Linn	252	0.30%

Appendix A Continued: Counts and percent of same-sex couples by county¹⁰

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Louisa	13	0.30%
Lyon	11	0.20%
Madison	14	0.30%
Mahaska	22	0.20%
Marion	29	0.20%
Marshall	44	0.30%
Mills	12	0.20%
Monona	16	0.40%
Monroe	12	0.40%
Muscatine	43	0.30%
O'Brien	10	0.20%
Page	21	0.30%
Palo Alto	15	0.40%
Plymouth	24	0.30%
Polk	747	0.50%
Pottawattamie	106	0.30%
Poweshiek	22	0.30%
Sac	14	0.30%
Scott	211	0.30%
Shelby	18	0.30%
Sioux	16	0.10%
Story	115	0.40%
Tama	20	0.30%
Taylor	11	0.40%
Union	12	0.20%
Wapello	34	0.20%
Warren	59	0.40%
Washington	23	0.30%
Webster	35	0.20%
Winnebago	12	0.30%
Winneshiek	21	0.30%
Woodbury	122	0.30%
Wright	12	0.20%

About the Authors

Danielle MacCartney earned her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Irvine. Her current research interests include wage and labor market differences by race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, focusing on occupational characteristics such as occupational percent female and occupational status.

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

Gary J. Gates is a 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 This September 2007 report replaces an earlier version dated August 2007. Unless otherwise noted, we calculate these figures from the Public Use Microdata Sample (5% file) available from the Bureau of the Census. For a detailed discussion of the methodology used in this report, see *Census Snapshot: Methods Note*, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/MethodologicalDetailsForCensusSnapshots.pdf>.

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*, PCT014.

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 and the Urban Institute, *Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States*, p. 10, tab. 5 (2007).

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

¹⁰ Counties with fewer than 10 same-sex couples are not reported.

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