

Family Structure

INDICATORS ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The proportion of children living with both parents, following a marked decline between 1970 and 1990, has fallen more slowly over the most recent two decades, dropping from 69 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2013.

Importance

Both mothers and fathers play important roles in the growth and development of children. The number and the type of parents (e.g., biological, step) in the household, as well as the relationship between the parents, are strongly linked to a child's well-being.¹ (Nationally representative data on adoptive families are relatively new, and warrant a separate treatment.²)

Among young children, for example, those living with no biological parents or in single-parent households are less likely than children with two biological parents to exhibit behavioral self-control, and more likely to be exposed to high levels of aggravated parenting, than are children living with two biological parents.³ Children living with two married adults (biological or adoptive parents) have, in general, better health, greater access to health care, and fewer emotional or behavioral problems than children living in other types of families.⁴

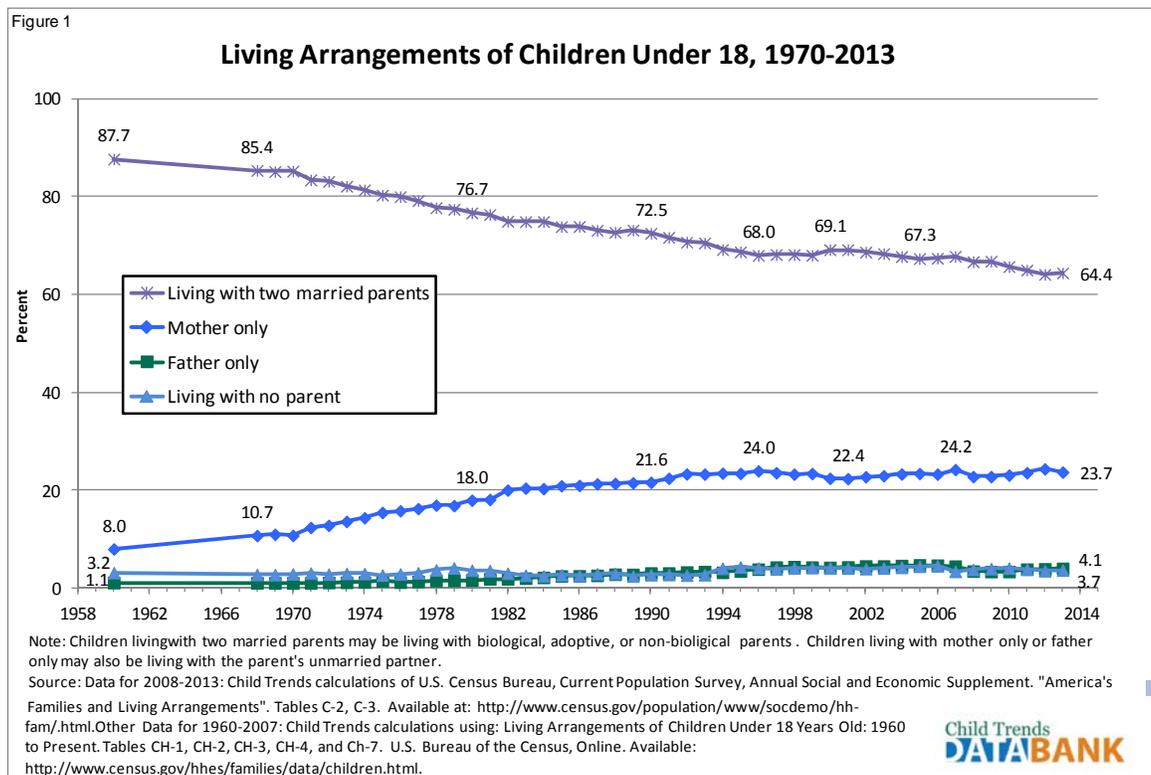
Among children in two-parent families, those living with both biological parents in a low-conflict marriage tend to do better on a host of outcomes than those living in step-parent families. Outcomes for children in step-parent families are in many cases similar to those for children growing up in single-parent families.^{5,6} Children whose parents are divorced also have lower academic performance, social achievement, and psychological adjustment than children with married parents.⁷ Reliance on kin networks (for example, living with grandparents) can provide social and financial support for some families, particularly single-parent families. However, the evidence suggests that children living in households with their single mothers in some cases fare better, and in other cases worse, when also living with a grandparent.⁸

Single-parent families tend to have much lower incomes than do two-parent families, while cohabiting families fall in-between. Research indicates, however, that the income differential only partially accounts for the negative effects on many areas of child and youth well-being (including health, educational attainment and assessments, behavior problems, and psychological well-being) associated with living outside of a married, two-parent family.^{9,10}

Trends

Between 1960 and 1996, the proportion of all children under age 18 who were living with two married parents decreased steadily, from 85 to 68 percent. This share was stable during much of the late 1990s and into the 2000s, but by 2013 it had decreased to 64 percent. (Figure 1)

In 1960, the proportion of children living in mother-only families was eight percent, but by 1996 that proportion had tripled, to 24 percent. Since then, it has fluctuated between 22 and 24 percent, and was at 24 percent in 2013. Between 1990 and 2013, the share of children living in father-only families has fluctuated between three and five percent, and was at four percent in 2013. The proportion living without either parent (with either relatives or with non-relatives) has remained steady, at approximately four percent. (Figure 1)

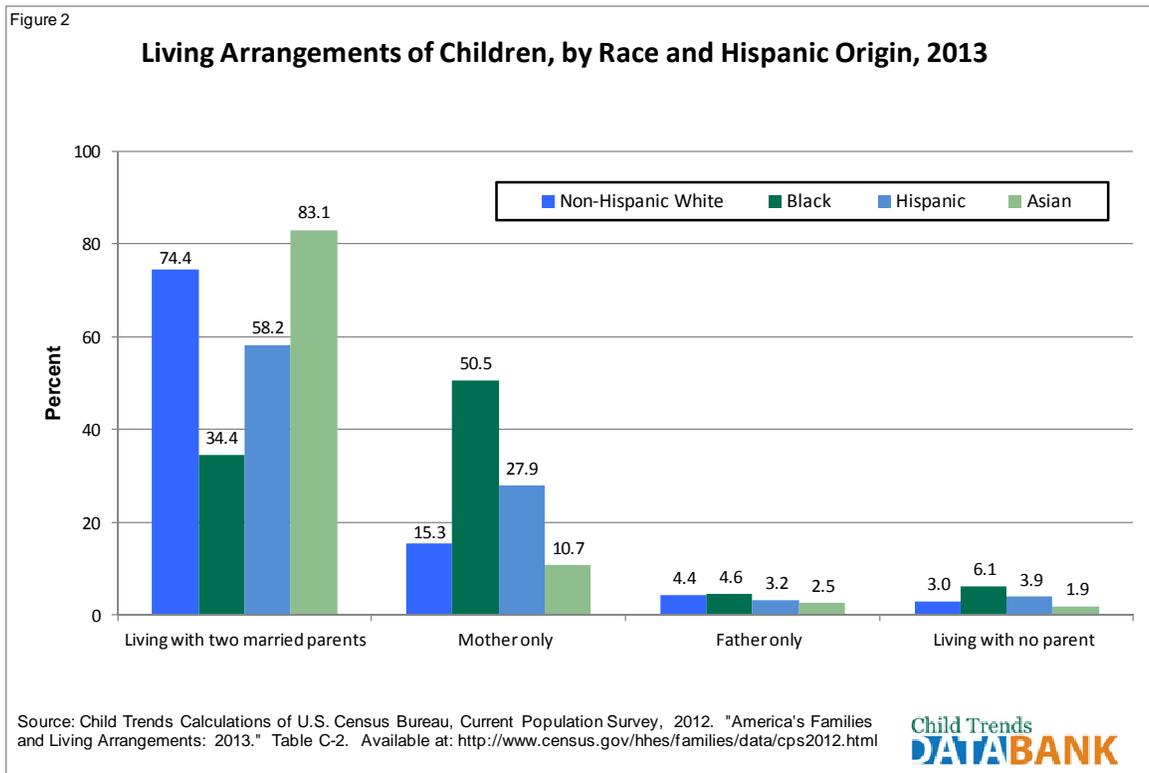


In 2013, six percent of all children lived in the home of their grandparents. In two-thirds of these families, one or both parents were also present. The proportion living with grandparents increased until the mid-1990s, from three to six percent of children. After remaining at around five percent until 2006, the proportion increased until 2011, but has since fallen slightly. (Appendix 2)

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin¹¹

Black children are significantly less likely than other children to be living with two married parents. In 2013, 34 percent of black children were living with two parents, compared with 83 percent of Asian children, 74 percent of white children, and 58 percent of Hispanic children. (Figure 2)

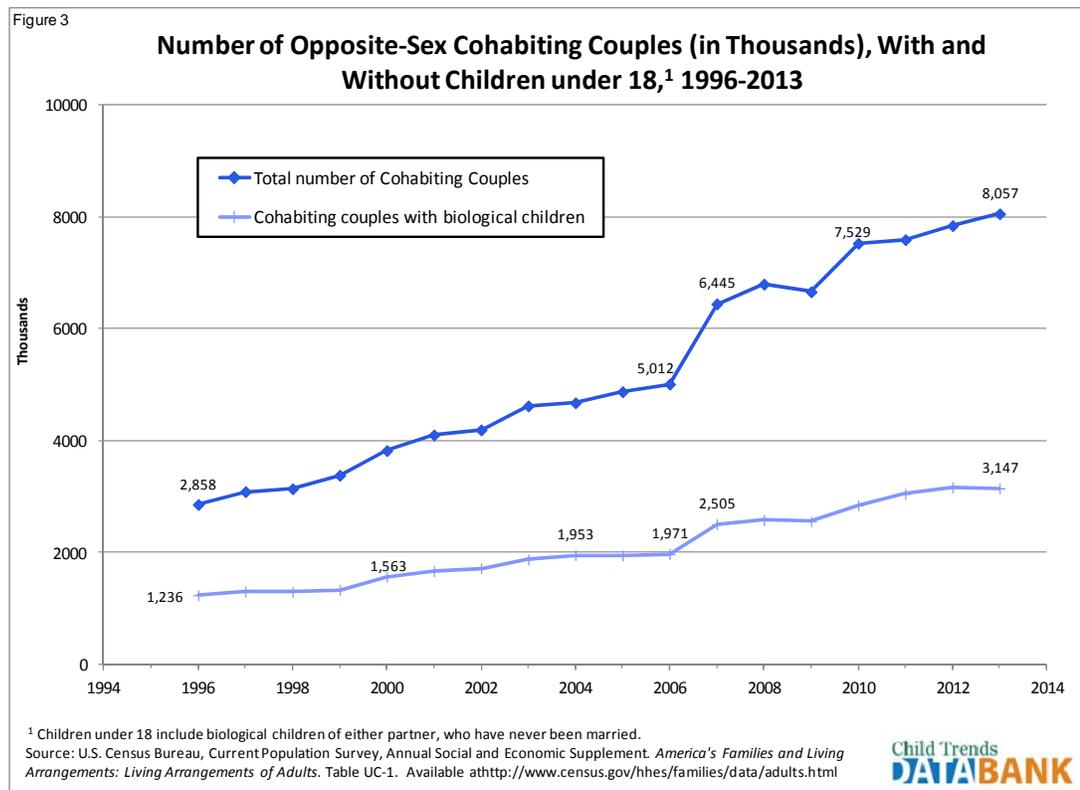
Most children who live with just one parent, regardless of race or Hispanic origin, live with their mothers. This is the case for more than half of all black children, and more than one-quarter of all Hispanic children; among white and Asian children, smaller proportions (about one in seven, and one in ten, respectively) live with their mothers only. (Figure 2)



In 2013, six percent of all black children did not live with either parent, compared with four percent of Hispanic children, three percent of white children, and two percent of Asian children. (Figure 2)

Cohabiting Couples

In 2013, there were 3.1 million unmarried cohabiting couples with children under 18. This number has been steadily increasing: in 1996, it was 1.2 million. However, the number of all unmarried couples (with or without children) has increased even more during the same time period. (Figure 3)



In cohabiting couples with children, four in ten parents are between 25 and 34 years old, compared with less than a third of parents in married couples. A quarter of parents in cohabiting couples are between 35 and 44 years old, compared with four in ten parents in married couples. Among women in cohabiting couples, 18 percent have no high school diploma, and another 34 percent have no college-level education. Among mothers in married couples, nine percent have no high school diploma, and 22 percent have no college-level education. In cohabiting couples with children, 61 percent of women, and 77 percent of men, were employed, compared with 65 and 90 percent of mothers and fathers, respectively, in married couples. In 11 percent of unmarried couples with children, neither person was employed in 2013, compared with only four percent among married couples with children. (Appendix 3)



State and Local Estimates

State and local estimates of children's living arrangements are available from the KIDS COUNT Data Center at: <http://www.datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/2/23/24>.

International Estimates

Data for selected countries (1980-2008) are available in the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 Statistical Abstract. See www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2010/tables/10s1302.pdf

National Goals

Federal welfare reform under the "*Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*," specifically encouraged the promotion of marriage and two-parent families as a means of reducing welfare dependence. For additional information see:

www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/programs/tanf/about

Related Indicators

- Births to Unmarried Women: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=births-to-unmarried-women
- Adopted Children: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=adopted-children
- Foster Care: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=foster-care
- Child Support Receipt: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=child-support-receipt
- Child Care: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=child-care
- Adverse Experiences: www.childtrends.org/?indicators=adverse-experiences

Definition

For this indicator, unless otherwise specified, a two-parent family refers to parents who are married to each other and living in the same household. They may be biological, adoptive, or stepparents. The Current Population Survey identifies all parents who are family or subfamily heads. Where cohabitants are concerned, until 2007, the CPS did not ask whether that person



was also the parent of the child. Single-parent families refer primarily to families in which only one parent is present, but before 2007 may include some families where both parents were present but unmarried. No-parent families refer to families where neither parent of the child lives in the household. Data about children living with grandparents reflect those living in households headed by their grandparents, and do not include families where a grandparent is in the household as a dependent. Parents may or may not be present in such cases.

Data Sources

- 2013 data on cohabiting and married couples: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Table UC3, FG2, and FG3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/.html>
- All other data for 2008-2013: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Tables C-2, C-3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/.html>
- Data for non-Hispanic white and Asian children, 2000-2007: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Tables C-2, C-3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2000.html>
- Other Data for 1960-2007: Child Trends calculations using: *Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960 to Present*. Tables CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, and Ch-7. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/children.html>

Raw Data Sources

March Current Population Survey, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau.

<http://www.census.gov/cps/>

U.S. Decennial Census.

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>



Appendix 1 - Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old, Percentages by Race and Hispanic Origin,¹ Selected Years, 1960-2013

	1960 ²	1970 ²	1975	1980 ²	1985	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Living with Two Married Parents³	87.7	85.0	80.3	76.6	73.9	72.5	68.7	69.1	68.4	67.8	67.3	67.4	67.8	66.7	66.8	65.7	65.0	64.1	64.4
White	90.9	89.5	85.4	82.7	80.0	79.0	75.8	75.3	74.8	74.3	73.5	73.8	73.9	72.9	72.9	71.4	70.9	70.0	70.3
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77.5	76.9	76.9	75.9	75.9	76.2	75.4	75.8	75.0	74.6	73.7	74.4
Black	67.0	58.5	49.4	42.2	39.5	37.7	33.1	37.6	36.1	34.8	35.0	34.6	36.6	34.5	34.7	34.7	33.0	33.4	34.4
Hispanic	-	77.7	-	75.4	67.9	66.8	62.9	65.1	64.6	64.6	64.7	65.9	65.6	64.2	63.7	60.9	60.2	59.0	58.2
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83.1	83.1	83.6	83.8	85.2	83.5	83.8	84.2	85.3	82.4	83.1
Living with One Parent⁴	9.1	12.0	17.0	19.7	23.4	24.7	27.0	26.7	27.5	28.0	28.2	28.0	25.8	26.3	26.2	26.6	27.2	28.3	27.8
White	7.1	8.7	12.8	15.1	18.0	19.2	21.2	21.6	22.1	22.4	23.1	22.5	23.3	24.2	24.0	25.2	25.9	23.3	22.5
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.9	20.2	20.2	21.2	20.8	21.3	22.0	21.4	21.8	22.4	20.7	19.6
Black	21.9	31.8	42.7	45.8	54.0	54.7	56.1	53.3	55.4	56.2	55.2	56.0	56.7	57.4	57.0	57.8	59.5	55.2	55.1
Hispanic	-	-	-	21.1	28.8	30.0	32.7	29.5	30.1	30.7	30.2	29.1	30.9	31.9	32.4	35.1	35.9	31.1	31.1
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13.7	14.3	13.9	13.2	12.6	14.1	14.2	13.7	12.5	12.9	13.2



	1960 ²	1970 ²	1975	1980 ²	1985	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Living with Mother Only⁴	8.0	10.9	15.5	18.0	20.9	21.6	23.5	22.4	23.0	23.3	23.4	23.3	22.6	22.8	22.8	23.1	23.6	24.4	23.7
White	6.1	7.8	11.3	13.5	15.6	16.2	17.8	17.3	17.5	18.0	18.4	17.9	18.9	17.5	17.7	18.3	18.7	19.3	18.5
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.6	15.9	15.9	16.4	16.0	15.3	15.5	15.3	15.5	15.9	16.4	15.3
Black	19.9	29.5	40.9	43.9	51.0	51.2	52.0	49.0	50.8	50.4	50.2	51.2	51.7	51.1	50.2	49.7	51.3	50.9	50.5
Hispanic	-	-	19.6	26.6	27.1	28.4	25.1	24.5	25.4	25.4	25.0	26.8	24.1	24.9	26.3	26.5	28.0	27.9	
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.9	12.3	10.2	9.7	9.0	10.2	10.3	10.2	9.1	10.6	10.7
Living with Father Only⁴	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.5	3.1	3.5	4.2	4.6	4.6	4.8	4.7	3.2	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	4.0	4.1
White	1.0	0.9	1.5	1.6	2.4	3.0	3.4	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.7	4.6	4.4	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.2	4.0	4.0
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.8	4.8	3.6	4.1	3.8	3.8	3.0	4.3	4.4
Black	2.0	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.9	3.5	4.1	4.2	4.6	5.8	5.0	4.8	4.9	3.3	3.4	3.6	3.5	4.2	4.6
Hispanic	-	-	-	1.5	2.2	2.9	4.2	4.4	5.5	5.3	4.8	4.1	4.1	2.3	2.5	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.2
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.8	2.0	3.6	3.6	1.6	2.3	2.5	2.2	1.3	2.3	2.5



	1960 ²	1970 ²	1975	1980 ²	1985	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Living with No Parent	3.2	3.0	2.7	3.7	2.7	2.8	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.5	4.6	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.1	3.9	3.6	3.7
White	1.4	1.2	1.3	1.7	1.5	1.4	2.2	2.0	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.9	3.1	3.4	3.2	2.9	3.2
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	2.6	2.9	2.9	3.2	2.5	2.6	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.8	3.0
Black	11.1	9.8	7.9	12.0	6.6	7.5	10.8	9.2	8.5	9.1	9.8	9.4	6.8	8.1	8.3	7.5	7.6	6.7	6.1
Hispanic	-	-	-	3.5	3.3	3.2	4.4	5.4	5.3	4.7	5.1	5.0	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.2	3.9
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.2	2.6	2.5	3.0	2.1	2.4	2.0	2.1	2.3	2.0	1.9

¹From 2003 forward, data for race reflect only those who selected a single race.

²Revised based on population from the decennial census for that year.

³Whether biological, adoptive, or non-biological parents.

⁴Before 2007, the parent may be residing with an unmarried partner.

Note: Based on Current Population Survey (CPS) (unless otherwise indicated)

Sources: Data for 2008-2013: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Tables C-2, C-3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/.html>. Data for non-Hispanic white and Asian children, 2000-2007: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements". Tables C-2, C-3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2000.html>. Other Data for 1960-2007: Child Trends calculations using: Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960 to Present. Tables CH-1, CH-2, CH-3, CH-4, and Ch-7. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/children.html>.



Appendix 2 - Percentage of Children Living in Households Headed by Their Grandparents, Selected Years, 1970-2013

	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of children under 18 (in thousands)	69,276	63,369	64,137	70,254	72,012	73,001	73,205	73,494	73,664	73,746	74,104	74,230	74,718	74,630	73,817	73,910
Living with Grandparents	3.2	3.6	4.9	5.6	5.3	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.1	5.5	5.9	6.1	6.5	6.6	6.2	6.2
With parent(s) present	1.8	2.1	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.2
Both parents present	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.2
Mother only present	1.2	1.5	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.7
Father only present	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4
Without parent(s) present	1.4	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.9	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.0	1.9

Source: Child Trends calculations using: *Grandchildren Living in the Home of Their Grandparents: 1970 to Present*. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/children.html>.

Appendix 3 - Men and Women in Cohabiting and Married Heterosexual Couples¹ with Children Under 18²: Percentages by Selected Characteristics, 2013

	Cohabiting		Married	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Currently Cohabiting or Married (numbers in thousands)	3,147	3,147	24,677	24,677
Age				
15-24 years	13.3	21.4	2.0	3.4
25-34 years	41.6	43.2	22.6	29.0
35-44 years	29.6	26.1	39.9	41.4
45 years or more	15.6	9.3	35.5	26.2
Education				
No high school diploma or GED	20.2	18.1	10.6	9.1
High school diploma or GED	41.4	34.1	25.7	21.8
Some college, no bachelor's degree	28.7	35.6	25.2	27.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	9.8	12.2	38.4	41.4
Annual Income				
Under \$5,000, without income, or loss	16.8	37.1	8.3	36.1
\$5,000 to \$14,999	12.3	17.7	5.3	10.4
\$15,000 to \$29,999	28.0	22.3	13.9	16.5
\$30,000 to \$74,999	35.7	20.7	43.4	28.8
\$75,000 and over	7.2	2.3	29.1	8.2
Race/Hispanic origin				
White only, not Hispanic	51.0	54.4	64.0	64.0
Black only, not Hispanic	15.4	12.3	8.1	7.1
Hispanic	27.7	26.5	19.0	19.1
Labor Force Status				
In Labor Force	88.6	68.5	93.9	68.1
Employed	77.0	61.1	89.7	64.5
Unemployed	11.6	7.4	4.1	3.6
Not in Labor Force	11.4	31.5	6.1	31.9

	Cohabiting	Married
Employment Status of Household Adults		
Both are employed	48.9	58.0
Man only is employed	28.1	31.7
Woman only is employed	12.2	6.5
Neither is employed	10.8	3.8

¹ Same-sex couples with children are excluded from the analysis because, due to differences in state laws, the distinctions between married and unmarried couples are less clear, and vary by state. Additionally, due to the relative rarity of same-sex couples with children, heterosexual married or cohabiting couples with a misidentified gender have an outsize influence on this population.

² Excludes children who have been married.

Sources: Cohabiting data: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements." Table UC3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>. Married data: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements." Tables FG2 and FG3. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>



Endnotes

¹ Amato, P. R. (2005). The impact of family formation change on the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of the next generation. *The Future of Children*, 15(2), 75-96.

² For a first nationally representative look at adopted children and their families, see Vandivere, S., Malm, K., and Radel, L. *Adoption USA: A chartbook based on the National Survey of Adoptive Parents*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/09/NSAP/chartbook/>.

³ Manning, W. D. and Lamb, K. A. (2003). Adolescent well-being in cohabiting, married, and single-parent families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65(4), 876-893.

⁴ Blackwell, D. L. (2010). Family structure and children's health in the United States: Findings from the National Health Interview Survey, 2001-2007. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Statistics*, 10(246).

⁵ Moore, K. A., Jekielek, S. M., and Emig, C. (2002). *Marriage from a child's perspective: How does family structure affect children, and what can we do about it?* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends. Available at: <http://www.childtrends.org/Files/MarriageRB602.pdf>

⁶ Manning, W. D. and Lamb, K. A. (2003). Op. cit.

⁷ Amato, P. R., (2001). The consequences of divorce for adults and children. In Robert M. Milardo (ed.), *Understanding Families into the New Millennium: A Decade in Review*. (Lawrence, KS: National Council on Family Relations), 488-506.

⁸ Dunifon, R. & Kowaleski-Jones, L. (2007). The influence of grandparents in single-mother families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(2), 465-48.

⁹ Brown, S. L. (2004). Family structure and child well-being: The significance of parental cohabitation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66(2), 351-67.

¹⁰ The Urban Institute. (2006). *Parents and children facing a world of risk: Next steps towards a working families agenda*. Available at: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311288_parents_and_children.pdf

¹¹ Hispanics can be any race. Estimates for whites in this report do not include Hispanics.