



## Questions and Answers about CHANGING DEFINITIONS OF FAMILIES: A Sloan Work and Family Research Network Fact Sheet

### Introduction

The Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared Fact Sheets which provide statistical answers to some important questions about work-family and work/life issues. This Fact Sheet includes statistics about Changing Definitions of Families.



#### How have families changed?

- ✔ **Fact 1** 72% of all U.S. adults were married in 1970; in 1996, 60% of all U.S. adults were married (Kuttner, 2002, p. 22).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “The average age of first marriage is now 25 for women and 27 for men– up from 20 and 23 in 1960” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).
- ✔ **Fact 3** According to the 2000 Census, since 1990 “...there’s been nearly a 72 percent increase in the number of cohabiting couples...” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).



#### What do we know about families today?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “...24 percent of all U.S. households today are ‘married with children’...” (Gardyn, 2001, p. 43).
- ✔ **Fact 2** In 2003, there were 8,928,000 black families in the U.S., 46.7% of those families involved married couples (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004–05).
- ✔ **Fact 3** “Of all adults who took at least one vacation with a family member in the past year, just 30 percent fit the married-with-children mold” (Gardyn, 2001, p. 43).



#### Who heads U.S. families?

- ✔ **Fact 1** “The number of single fathers raising kids on their own is also up; they now head just over 2 million families” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).
- ✔ **Fact 2** “The number of families headed by single mothers has increased 25 percent since 1990, to more than 7.5 million households” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).



✔ **Fact 3** “Since 1960, the number of households headed by unmarried partners (same or opposite sex) has rocketed from 500,000 households to 5.5 million households. (It has increased by 72 percent in the past 10 years alone)” (Abbott, 2002, p. 3).

✔ **Fact 4** In 1980, approximately 18.4% of births were to unwed women in the U.S.; in 2003, more than 34% of births were to unwed women in the U.S. (Martin, Hamilton, & Sutton et al., 2005, p. 10).



### What do we know about families with children?

✔ **Fact 1** 12% of all U.S. children lived with one parent in 1970; in 1996, 28% of all U.S. children lived with one parent (Kuttner, 2002, p. 22).

✔ **Fact 2** “...the proportion of children living with their married biological parents remained steady at 62 percent from 1991 through 1996” (Leo, 2001, p. 12).

✔ **Fact 3** “The median age for unmarried mothers is the late 20s, and the fastest-growing category is white women. She may be divorced or never-married. Forty percent are living with men who may be the fathers of one or more of their children...” (Kantrowitz et al., 2001, p. 46).

The Network has additional resources related to this topic.

1. Visit a topic page on Changing Definitions of Families: <http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/topic.php?id=15>  
Topic pages provide resources/information including statistics, definitions, overviews & briefs, bills & statutes, interviews, teaching resources, audio/video, suggested readings and links.
2. Visit our database of academic literature with citations and annotations of literature related to the issue of Afterschool Care. You can connect to this database at: [http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-&local\\_base=BCL\\_WF](http://library.bc.edu/F?func=find-b-&local_base=BCL_WF)



## References

Abbott, R.K. (2002, March 21). The changing definition of “family.” *Compensation & Benefits Report*, 16(6), 3-4.

This finding is from analysis of United States Census data.

For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau’s main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

For a glossary of definitions of terms used in the Census, please visit, <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html> and click on the “Glossary” link at the top of the page.



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Gardyn, R. (2001). The new family vacation. *American Demographics*, 23(8), 43–47.

This finding is from a nationally representative study of 1,247 adults in the United States conducted by Zogby International.

From Zogby International's FAQ page at <http://www.zogby.com/about/faq.cfm>

*Where do you poll for Zogby America? What regions, area codes or time zones?*

*John Zogby:* "If we are polling the US, we poll from a sample drawn from all households with telephones in 48 states. We, like others, do not poll Hawaii or Alaska because of time differences and because Republican Alaska cancels out Democratic Hawaii. As well, out of a sample of 1000 likely voters there would only be a total of 1 from both states (combined)."

*I read a lot of polls and yours is so different from the others – what makes your answers so different (and accurate)?*

*John Zogby:* "We poll only likely voters who are different from just all adults. In addition, we poll all day long – 9am to 9pm local time (to the region we're calling). Finally, we apply weighting for party identification to ensure that there is no built-in Democratic bias in our sampling."

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Leo, J. (2001). Married with children. *U.S. News & World Report*, 130(21), 12.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

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Kantrowitz, B., Wingert, P., Scelfo, J., Springen, K., Figueroa, A, Brant, M., & Abrams, S. (2001, May 28). Unmarried, with children. *Newsweek*, p. 46.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

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Kuttner, R. (2002, April 28). The politics of family. *The American Prospect*, 13(7), 22–23.

This finding is from an analysis of United States Census data. For frequently asked questions about the Census, please visit the Census Bureau's main page, <http://www.census.gov/>, and click on a topic on the pull-down menu at the top of the page.

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Martin, J., Hamilton, B., & Sutton, P. et al. (2005). *Births: Final data for 2003. National vital statistics reports; vol 54 no 2*. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54\\_02.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr54/nvsr54_02.pdf)

"Data shown in this report for 2003 are based on 100 percent of the birth certificates in all States and the District of Columbia. The data are provided to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program (VSCP) (p. 99)"

See the Technical Notes section of this report for more information about the sample (p. 99).

For information on how marital status was determined, please see page 106.

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U.S. Census Bureau (2004–05). Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2004–05. The National Data Book, Section 1, Population, Table No. 33. Social and Economic Characteristics of the White and Black Populations: 1990 to 2003. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Direct link to stat: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/04statab/pop.pdf>

The chief source of these data is the Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The sample includes employed full-time wage and salary workers 16 years old and over in the US. Excludes the self-employed. Data relate to the primary job. For description of data sources, see <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/labor.pdf>.

See <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/03statab/app3.pdf> for limitations of data.

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