

Population Characteristics

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Living Arrangements of College Students: October 1976

INTRODUCTION

This report presents information for 1976 and earlier years on the residence of college students 14 to 34 years old. Changes in the characteristics of college students during the 1970's have resulted in changes in living arrangements while attending college. For example, students in 1976 were older, more likely to be women, and more likely to be enrolled in 2-year colleges than students enrolled a decade earlier.¹ The choice of living arrangements for college students is influenced by a variety of factors including the amount and cost of available housing, family relationships, marital status, and the desire to live independently from one's parents. The increased level of governmental support for college costs during the past 10 years (such as through the Basic Education Opportunity Grant Program) may be responsible for the increased number of students being able to live away from their parents while attending college. This report considers the demographic changes among college students and how these changes have influenced their type of living arrangements while attending college.

The data for this report were collected in the Current Population Surveys (CPS) of October 1958, 1966, 1971, and 1976. According to the CPS rules of household membership, a family member who was living away from home because he or she was attending college but would usually live at home, is included as a member of the parents' household. However, questions asking specifically about the living arrangements of college students while at college were included in the survey for the years shown in the report (see definitions section).

Some of the major shifts between 1958 and 1976 in the choice of living arrangements while in college are shown in table A. In 1958, there were somewhat more college students living with their parents or other relatives than either the number who were maintaining their own households or the number living in college housing. By 1976, however, the

number of students maintaining their own households had risen sharply so that it was about the same as the number living with their parents, (about 3 million) and was much larger than the number living in college housing, (about 2 million). The proportion of students living with their parents or in college housing decreased from 64 percent in 1958 to 54 percent of all students in 1976. Thus, barely a majority of college students lived in "traditional" living arrangements (i.e., with parents or in college dormitories) in 1976.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF UNMARRIED COLLEGE STUDENTS

About 9 out of 10 married students maintained their own households in each of the survey years between 1958 and 1976, while the living arrangements of unmarried college students changed considerably during this time. For example, in 1958, about 82 percent of unmarried college students 14 to 34 years old were living in college housing or with relatives, and only 5 percent were maintaining their own households (table B); by 1976, the proportion in traditional arrangements had decreased to 68 percent and the proportion maintaining their own household had risen to 15 percent. Of course, older unmarried students, 22 to 34 years old, were more likely to be maintaining their own households than persons 21 or younger; only 5 percent of the unmarried men and women students 14 to 21 years old had such living arrangements in 1976. The increasing age of unmarried students has contributed to the increase in these students maintaining their own households. A significant increase in the proportion of unmarried college students maintaining their own households occurred for both younger (14 to 21 years) and older (22 to 34 years) students between 1958 and 1976 (table B).

Even though more college students are living on their own, parents have remained a very important source of support for unmarried students by providing housing and other necessities. About 4 out of 10 of the unmarried students (14 to 34 years old) lived with their parents or other relatives while attending college in 1976. The proportion

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 319, "School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1976."

**Table A. Living Arrangements of College Students 14 to 34 Years Old, by Marital Status:
October 1976, 1971, 1966, and 1958**

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Living arrangements and marital status	Total				Percent of reported ¹			
	1976	1971	1966	1958	1976	1971	1966	1958
ALL STUDENTS								
Total, 14 to 34 years old..	9,950	8,087	5,999	3,242	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	3,207	2,379	1,429	852	33.3	30.8	24.4	26.3
In household of parents or other relative.....	3,121	2,607	1,991	1,114	32.4	33.7	34.0	34.4
In college housing.....	2,063	1,801	1,725	958	21.4	23.3	29.4	29.5
Other.....	1,247	941	718	318	12.9	12.2	12.2	9.8
Not reported.....	310	359	136	-	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
MARRIED, SPOUSE PRESENT								
Total, married 14 to 34 years old.....	2,248	2,029	1,246	781	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	2,081	1,813	1,148	718	94.9	94.4	94.5	91.9
Other.....	112	109	69	62	5.1	5.7	5.7	7.9
Not reported.....	55	109	31	-	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
OTHER MARITAL STATUS								
Total, 14 to 34 years old....	7,702	6,058	4,753	2,460	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	1,126	566	281	134	15.1	9.7	6.0	5.4
In household of parents or other relative.....	3,045	2,547	1,951	1,062	40.9	43.9	42.0	43.2
In college housing.....	2,038	1,782	1,714	957	27.4	30.7	36.9	38.9
Other.....	1,236	912	703	308	16.6	15.7	15.1	12.5
Not reported.....	255	251	105	-	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)

X Not applicable

¹Percent distribution based on reported cases.

Table B. Living Arrangements of Unmarried College Students, by Sex and Age: October 1976, 1971, 1966, and 1958

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Living arrangements and age	Both sexes				Male				Female			
	1976	1971	1966	1958	1976	1971	1966	1958	1976	1971	1966	1958
14 TO 34 YEARS OLD												
Number.....	7,702	6,058	4,753	2,460	3,942	3,436	2,803	1,492	3,760	2,622	1,950	968
Percent ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household....	15.1	9.7	6.0	5.4	14.8	9.3	5.8	3.0	15.4	10.3	6.4	9.2
In household of parents or other relatives.....	40.9	43.9	42.0	43.2	37.0	45.2	41.8	45.7	40.9	42.0	42.3	39.3
In college housing.....	27.4	30.7	36.9	38.9	26.5	27.5	34.7	36.7	28.2	34.9	40.0	42.3
Other.....	16.6	15.7	15.1	12.5	21.6	17.9	17.7	14.5	15.4	12.8	11.3	9.4
14 TO 21 YEARS OLD												
Number.....	5,376	4,656	3,899	1,924	2,608	2,495	2,223	1,103	2,767	2,162	1,676	821
Percent ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household....	5.2	3.8	1.8	1.8	5.3	3.5	1.8	0.7	5.0	4.1	1.8	3.3
In household of parent or other relatives.....	44.6	46.6	44.5	40.5	44.9	48.4	44.5	42.3	44.4	44.5	44.5	38.0
In college housing.....	36.4	36.8	41.1	45.3	36.0	33.6	38.8	42.9	36.6	40.5	44.2	48.6
Other.....	13.8	12.9	12.8	12.4	13.8	14.5	15.1	14.1	13.8	11.0	9.7	10.2
22 TO 34 YEARS OLD												
Number.....	2,327	1,399	853	536	1,334	941	580	389	993	459	273	147
Percent ¹	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household....	37.8	29.7	25.8	18.5	33.5	24.7	21.1	9.5	43.5	40.3	36.5	42.2
In household of parents or other relatives.....	32.4	34.8	30.6	52.8	33.1	36.8	31.6	55.3	31.5	30.4	28.2	46.3
In college housing.....	6.9	10.3	17.5	15.9	8.1	11.3	19.2	19.3	5.3	8.2	13.7	6.8
Other.....	22.9	25.2	26.1	12.9	25.3	27.1	28.1	15.9	19.5	21.5	21.6	4.8

Note: Unmarried students include persons who are single, divorced, separated or widowed.

¹Excludes persons who did not report on living arrangements.

for younger students was somewhat higher than that for older students. In 1976, 36 percent of the young unmarried students lived in college housing compared with only 7 percent of the older unmarried students. Because of the increased tendency for students to live off campus, the proportion of all unmarried students in college housing has declined from 39 percent to 27 percent; however, because of the tremendous growth in college enrollment, the total number of students living on campus in dormitories and other college housing has actually doubled.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND TYPE OF COLLEGE

Four-year colleges and universities are much more likely to provide on-campus housing than 2-year community colleges, and the expense of living away from home is probably a major factor in determining whether a member of the family will attend a 4-year college or a community college. Table C shows that about one-half of students attending 2-year colleges and one-quarter of students in 4-year colleges were living with their parents or families. Among students 21 years old or younger, even larger proportions lived with parents. This table also shows that an increasing proportion of 2-year college students were maintaining their own house-

holds. However, the increase in that living arrangement was significantly higher for 2-year college students 22 years of age and older than for 2-year college students under 22 years of age. Among the younger, traditional college-age students, little change in choice of living arrangements occurred in either 2-year or 4-year colleges in the 1966-76 decade.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS BY YEAR OF COLLEGE

As college students progress through school, their choice of living arrangements changes. As table D indicates, a large proportion of freshmen were still living with their parents or other relatives while attending school (41 percent), while about only one-fifth of the seniors chose this arrangement. The proportion of students living in college housing was also lower for seniors than for freshmen; only a very small proportion of graduate students (5 percent) were living in college housing. Freshmen were least likely to be living in their own households or with nonrelatives, 24 percent compared with 39 percent of seniors.

Students living in their own households, (table D) are of two types: those living with their own families and those who are living alone or with other persons not related to them. In both of these situations, graduate students dominate since they are somewhat older than undergraduates,

Table C. Living Arrangements of College Students 14 to 34 Years Old, by Type of College and Age: October 1976, 1971, 1966, and 1958

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Living arrangements and age	All colleges ¹				2-year colleges			4-year colleges		
	1976	1971	1966	1958	1976	1971	1966	1976	1971	1966
14 TO 34 YEARS OLD										
Number.....	9,950	8,087	5,999	3,242	2,435	1,830	1,046	7,205	5,901	4,817
Percent ²	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	33.3	30.8	24.4	26.3	39.3	31.5	18.8	31.2	30.6	25.6
In household of parents or other relatives.....	32.4	33.7	34.0	34.4	51.4	59.4	63.4	25.9	25.8	27.6
In college housing.....	21.4	23.3	29.4	29.5	3.2	4.8	9.2	27.5	29.0	33.8
Other.....	12.9	12.2	12.2	9.8	6.1	4.4	8.7	15.3	14.6	13.0
14 TO 21 YEARS OLD										
Number.....	5,615	5,007	4,110	2,037	1,351	1,235	834	4,061	3,571	3,198
Percent ²	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	8.7	9.4	6.0	6.3	9.6	10.5	5.3	8.4	9.0	6.2
In household of parents or other relatives.....	43.2	43.9	42.6	39.0	77.5	78.0	74.3	31.8	32.1	34.3
In college housing.....	34.9	34.6	39.2	42.9	5.6	7.0	11.3	44.6	44.1	46.4
Other.....	13.2	12.2	12.3	11.8	7.3	4.5	9.1	15.2	14.8	13.1
22 TO 34 YEARS OLD										
Number.....	4,334	3,080	1,889	1,204	1,084	595	212	3,143	2,327	1,619
Percent ²	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Maintaining own household.....	64.7	66.0	64.9	60.0	76.2	74.8	72.2	60.7	63.7	64.0
In household of parents or other relatives.....	18.5	17.0	15.0	26.6	18.9	20.7	20.3	18.4	16.1	14.3
In college housing.....	4.2	4.8	8.0	7.1	0.3	0.2	0.9	5.5	5.9	8.9
Other.....	12.6	12.2	12.2	6.3	4.6	4.0	6.6	15.3	14.3	12.9

¹Includes some persons who did not report type of college or living arrangement, about 3 percent.

²Excludes persons who did not report living arrangements.

Table D. Living Arrangements of College Students 14 to 34 Years Old, by Year of College and Sex: October 1976

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Year of college and sex	Total	In own household ¹		Member of parents' household			Not reported
		With family	With non-relative or alone	With parents or other relative	Away at college		
					In college housing	Off campus	
NUMBER							
Both Sexes							
All students.....	9,950	2,311	1,366	3,025	2,063	873	310
Freshman.....	2,632	428	199	1,066	692	80	167
Sophomore.....	2,535	513	235	951	619	160	57
Junior.....	1,748	363	233	472	405	236	38
Senior.....	1,356	278	245	296	265	235	38
Graduate.....	1,680	729	453	241	83	161	11
Male							
All students.....	5,296	1,311	769	1,540	1,027	486	162
Freshman.....	1,276	187	107	500	348	51	83
Sophomore.....	1,365	300	144	493	289	105	33
Junior.....	934	213	127	257	202	117	18
Senior.....	726	171	136	160	124	112	23
Graduate.....	995	439	254	131	65	100	5
Female							
All students.....	4,654	1,001	598	1,485	1,036	387	149
Freshman.....	1,356	241	93	566	344	29	84
Sophomore.....	1,170	214	91	457	330	54	23
Junior.....	813	150	106	215	203	118	20
Senior.....	630	106	109	136	141	123	15
Graduate.....	685	290	199	111	19	61	6
PERCENT							
Both Sexes							
All students.....	100.0	23.2	13.7	30.4	20.7	8.8	3.1
Freshman.....	100.0	16.3	7.6	40.5	26.3	3.0	6.3
Sophomore.....	100.0	20.2	9.3	37.5	24.4	6.3	2.2
Junior.....	100.0	20.8	13.3	27.0	23.2	13.5	2.2
Senior.....	100.0	20.5	18.1	21.8	19.5	17.3	2.8
Graduate.....	100.0	43.4	27.0	14.3	4.9	9.6	0.7
Male							
All students.....	100.0	24.8	14.5	29.1	19.4	9.2	3.1
Freshman.....	100.0	14.7	8.4	39.2	27.3	4.0	6.5
Sophomore.....	100.0	22.0	10.5	36.1	21.2	7.7	2.4
Junior.....	100.0	22.8	13.6	27.5	21.6	12.5	1.9
Senior.....	100.0	23.6	18.7	22.0	17.1	15.4	3.2
Graduate.....	100.0	44.1	25.5	13.2	6.5	10.1	0.5
Female							
All students.....	100.0	21.5	12.8	31.9	22.3	8.3	3.2
Freshman.....	100.0	17.8	6.9	41.7	25.4	2.1	6.2
Sophomore.....	100.0	18.3	7.8	39.1	28.2	4.6	2.0
Junior.....	100.0	18.5	13.0	26.4	25.0	14.5	2.5
Senior.....	100.0	16.8	17.3	21.6	22.4	19.5	2.4
Graduate.....	100.0	42.3	29.1	16.2	2.8	8.9	0.9

¹Includes household heads and wives and other persons who were not members of their parents' households.

and are much less likely to be dependent on parents. Therefore, about twice the proportion (43 percent) of graduate students as undergraduates were living with spouse and/or own children, and slightly more than twice the proportion of graduates (27 percent) as undergraduates were living in their own households alone or with nonrelatives.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND FAMILY INCOME

Family income is a significant factor in determining the living arrangements of college students. Students whose families had a high income were much more likely to live away from home while attending college, either in college housing or in off-campus housing. Of students 14 years old

and over who were members of their parents' household in 1976, about one-half were living away at school; almost all of these were undergraduates at 4-year colleges (table 1). A previous CPS report found that persons 18 to 24 years old who were members of their parents' households were three times as likely to be attending college if their family income was \$25,000 or more than if the family income was less than \$5,000.² About 69 percent of students in families with less than \$5,000 annual income were living with their families compared with 40 percent of students in families with incomes of \$25,000 or more (table E). And about 23 percent of lowest income students were in college housing compared with 39 percent of high income students.

² Ibid.

Table E. Living Arrangements of Dependent Family Members 14 Years Old and Over Enrolled in College, by Family Income and Race: October 1976

(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutional population)

Living arrangement and race	All students	Family income							Income not reported
		Less than \$5,000	\$5,000 to \$9,999	\$10,000 to \$14,999	\$15,000 and over			Total	
					\$15,000 to \$19,999	\$20,000 to \$24,999	\$25,000 and over		
ALL RACES									
Number.....	6,112	315	651	1,018	3,564	1,030	970	1,564	564
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
In college housing.....	33.0	23.2	26.0	29.8	36.1	32.5	34.7	39.3	33.2
With parents or other relatives..	51.1	69.2	60.5	58.0	47.1	54.8	50.9	39.6	43.4
With nonrelatives or alone.....	12.2	6.0	8.9	9.5	14.0	10.6	10.9	18.2	12.1
Not reported.....	3.7	1.9	4.5	2.7	2.8	2.1	3.4	2.8	11.2
WHITE									
Number.....	5,278	159	478	819	3,311	917	895	1,499	511
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
In college housing.....	33.6	17.6	25.3	29.2	36.5	32.5	35.0	39.8	34.8
With parents or other relatives..	49.0	70.4	58.4	57.0	46.0	53.9	49.7	38.9	40.7
With nonrelatives or alone.....	13.6	9.4	11.5	11.2	14.8	11.7	11.8	18.5	13.1
Not reported.....	3.8	3.1	4.8	2.6	2.7	2.0	3.5	2.8	11.4
BLACK									
Number.....	700	148	152	175	196	87	59	50	29
Percent.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	(B)	(B)	(B)
In college housing.....	31.9	29.7	29.6	33.1	35.2	42.5	(B)	(B)	(B)
With parents or other relatives..	62.3	66.9	63.8	64.6	56.1	50.6	(B)	(B)	(B)
With nonrelatives or alone.....	3.0	2.7	2.6	2.3	4.1	2.3	(B)	(B)	(B)
Not reported.....	2.9	-	3.9	0.6	4.1	4.5	(B)	(B)	(B)

B Base is less than 75,000.

NOTE

In the past the Census Bureau has designated a head of household to serve as the central reference person for the collection and tabulation of data for each member of the household (or family). However, the trend toward recognition of equal status and roles for adult family members makes the term "head" less relevant in the analysis of household and family data. As a result, the Bureau is currently developing new techniques for the enumeration and presentation of data which will eliminate the concept "head." Although the data in this report are based on this concept, methodology for future Census Bureau reports will reflect a gradual movement away from this traditional practice.