

# America's Families and Living Arrangements

Population Characteristics

2000

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 1970, the composition of households and families and the marital status and living arrangements of adults in the United States both experienced marked changes. For example, the proportion of the population made up by married couples with children decreased, and the proportion of single mothers increased, while the median age at first marriage grew over time. Much of this variety has been regularly reported in two separate Census Bureau reports — *Household and Family Characteristics and Marital Status and Living Arrangements*.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with the March 2000 Current Population Survey, these two reports are being replaced by this new publication, *America's Families and Living Arrangements*.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to discussing basic trends about households, families, and living arrangements, this new report

<sup>1</sup>See Lynne M. Casper and Ken Bryson, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1998 (Update)*, Current Population Reports, P20-515, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1998; also, Terry A. Lugalla, *Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1998 (Update)*, Current Population Reports, P20-514, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1998.

<sup>2</sup>We gratefully acknowledge the effort and enthusiasm of Lynne Casper in reformatting and producing this report. Data previously shown for children in the two prior report series will be released annually in a future report focusing on children's living arrangements.

highlights characteristics of single-parent families, differences in the living arrangements of younger and older adults, and new data on unmarried-couple households.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey, March 2000. Based on the March 2000 Current Population Survey, 3 percent of the Black population and 2 percent of the Asian and Pacific Islander population are of Hispanic origin.

A *household* contains one or more people — everyone living in a housing unit makes up a household. One of the people who own or rent the residence is designated as the *householder*. For the purposes of examining family and household composition, two types of households are defined: *family* and *nonfamily*.

A *family household* has at least two members related by blood, marriage, or adoption, one of whom is the householder.

A *nonfamily household* can be either a person living alone or a householder who shares the housing unit with nonrelatives only — for example, boarders or roommates. The nonrelatives of the householder may be related to each other.

Family households are maintained by married couples or by a man or woman living with other relatives — children may or may not be present. In contrast, nonfamily households are maintained only by men or women with no relatives at home.

*Children* include sons and daughters by birth, step-children, and adopted children of the householder regardless of the child's age or marital status. *Own children* differ from *children* in that they are never-married and under age 18.

## Current Population Reports

By  
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## HOUSEHOLDS

Changes in the number and types of households depend on population growth, shifts in the age composition of the population, and the decisions individuals make about their living arrangements.

Demographic trends in marriage, cohabitation, divorce, fertility, and mortality also influence family and household composition. Additionally, changes in norms, values, laws, the economy, and improvements in the health of the elderly

over time can influence people's decisions about how they organize their lives. The effects of these trends and individual decisions produce aggregate societal changes in household and family composition.

Table 1.  
**Households by Type and Selected Characteristics: March 2000**

(In thousands, except average size)

Characteristic	All households	Family households				Nonfamily households		
		Total	Married couple	Other families		Total	Male householder	Female householder
				Male householder	Female householder			
<b>All households</b> .....	104,705	72,025	55,311	4,028	12,687	32,680	14,641	18,039
<b>Age of householder</b>								
15 to 24 years old .....	5,860	3,353	1,450	560	1,342	2,507	1,286	1,221
25 to 34 years old .....	18,627	13,007	9,390	886	2,732	5,620	3,448	2,172
35 to 44 years old .....	23,955	18,706	14,104	1,102	3,499	5,250	3,261	1,989
45 to 54 years old .....	20,927	15,803	12,792	713	2,299	5,123	2,583	2,541
55 to 64 years old .....	13,592	9,569	8,138	351	1,080	4,023	1,533	2,490
65 years old and over .....	21,744	11,587	9,437	416	1,735	10,157	2,530	7,626
<b>Race and ethnicity of householder</b>								
White .....	87,671	60,251	48,790	3,081	8,380	27,420	12,204	15,215
Non-Hispanic .....	78,819	53,066	43,865	2,468	6,732	25,753	11,278	14,475
Black .....	12,849	8,664	4,144	706	3,814	4,185	1,876	2,309
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	3,337	2,506	1,996	179	331	831	432	399
Hispanic (of any race) .....	9,319	7,561	5,133	658	1,769	1,758	974	783
<b>Presence of related children under 18</b>								
No related children .....	67,350	34,670	28,919	1,826	3,924	32,680	14,641	18,039
With related children .....	37,355	37,355	26,392	2,202	8,762	(X)	(X)	(X)
One related child under 18 .....	15,493	15,493	9,897	1,321	4,275	(X)	(X)	(X)
Two related children under 18 .....	14,020	14,020	10,567	644	2,809	(X)	(X)	(X)
Three related children under 18 .....	5,510	5,510	4,238	185	1,087	(X)	(X)	(X)
Four or more related children under 18 .....	2,332	2,332	1,690	52	591	(X)	(X)	(X)
<b>Presence of own children under 18</b>								
No own children .....	70,100	37,420	30,062	2,242	5,116	32,680	14,641	18,039
With own children .....	34,605	34,605	25,248	1,786	7,571	(X)	(X)	(X)
With own children under 1 .....	2,939	2,939	2,264	174	501	(X)	(X)	(X)
With own children under 3 .....	8,786	8,786	6,784	441	1,561	(X)	(X)	(X)
With own children under 6 .....	14,986	14,986	11,393	706	2,887	(X)	(X)	(X)
With own children under 12 .....	25,885	25,885	19,082	1,235	5,568	(X)	(X)	(X)
<b>Size of households</b>								
1 person .....	26,724	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	26,724	11,181	15,543
2 people .....	34,666	29,834	22,899	1,730	5,206	4,832	2,607	2,225
3 people .....	17,152	16,405	11,213	1,106	4,086	746	570	177
4 people .....	15,309	15,064	12,455	682	1,927	245	179	66
5 people .....	6,981	6,894	5,723	307	864	87	70	17
6 people .....	2,445	2,413	1,916	130	366	32	26	6
7 or more .....	1,428	1,415	1,105	73	237	13	8	5
Average size .....	2.62	3.24	3.26	3.16	3.17	1.25	1.34	1.17

X Not applicable.

Note: Data are not shown separately for the American Indian and Alaska Native population because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey in March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

**Growth in the number of households slowed dramatically in the 1990s.**

In 2000, the number of U.S. households reached 105 million (see Table 1), up from 63 million in 1970.<sup>4</sup> The growth rate in the number of households has been slowing since the 1970s, from 1.7 million per year between 1970 and 1980, to 1.3 million per year during the 1980s and to 1.1 million

<sup>4</sup>The U.S. Census Bureau produces several different estimates of the number of households using different estimation methods. The Current Population Survey, on which this report is based, is the best source for estimates of the demographic characteristics of U.S. households; housing estimates, derived from decennial census and administrative data, are the best source of the actual number of households.

The estimates in this report are based on responses from a sample of the population. As with all surveys, estimates may vary from the actual (population) values because of sampling variation, or other factors. All statements made in this report have undergone statistical testing and pass U.S. Census Bureau standards for statistical accuracy.

per year in the 1990s, the same as it had been during the 1960s.<sup>5</sup>

**Nonfamily households were more common and family households less common in 2000 than in 1970.**

Traditionally, family households have accounted for a large majority of all households — 81 percent of households in 1970 were family households, but by 2000, family households made up only 69 percent of all households.

Figure 1 divides family and nonfamily households into various categories: married couples with and without children, other family households, men and women living alone, and other nonfamily

<sup>5</sup>Annual estimates of family and nonfamily households are presented in Table HH-1, “Households by Type: 1940 to Present” at the following internet address: [www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/htabHH-1.txt](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/htabHH-1.txt)

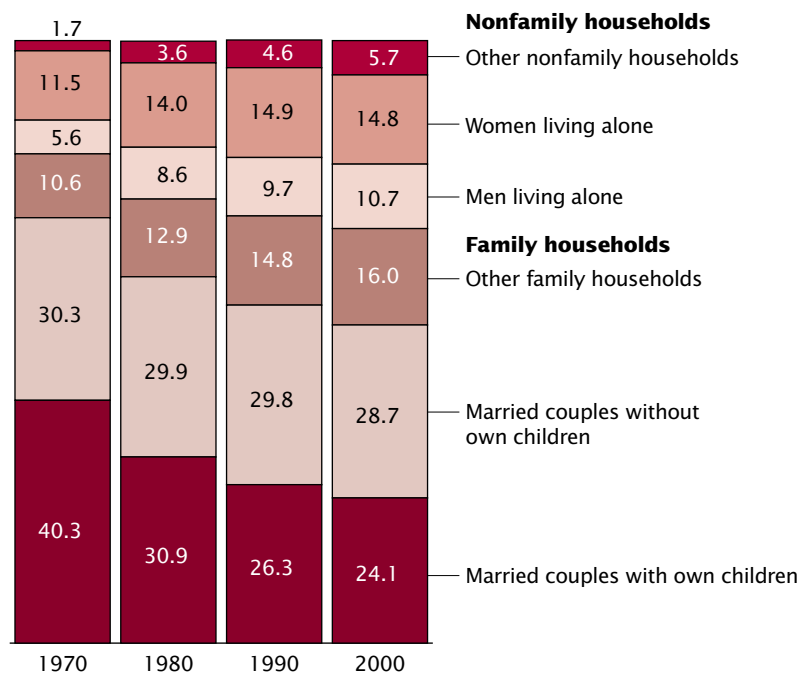
households. The most noticeable trend is the decline in the proportion of married-couple households with own children, from 40 percent of all households in 1970 to 24 percent in 2000.

In contrast, the proportion of households that were made up of married couples without children remained relatively stable over the period — 29 percent in 2000 and 30 percent in 1970. The third family household component — families whose householder has no spouse present, but with other relatives, including children — increased from 11 percent of all households in 1970 to 16 percent in 2000.

The top three segments of the graph in Figure 1 represent all nonfamily household types. The figure shows that the majority of the increase in nonfamily households was due to the growth in one-person households, people living alone. For example, the proportion of households containing one person increased by 9 percentage points between 1970 and 2000 (from 17 percent to 26 percent) compared with other nonfamily households, which increased by 4 percentage points (from 2 percent to 6 percent) during the same period. Women living alone represented 67 percent of one-person households in 1970. By 2000, men were closing this gap, but women living alone still represented more than half (58 percent) of one-person households.

Householders who lived only with nonrelatives comprised the other nonfamily household type, and grew substantially since the 1970s (although they account for a much smaller component of the growth in nonfamily households overall).

Figure 1.  
**Households by Type: Selected Years, 1970 to 2000**  
(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplements: 1970 to 2000.

“Cohabiting” households, or households with unmarried partners, are included in this category. These households will be discussed later in this report.

**Households and families have become smaller over time.**

Households have decreased in size, with the most profound differences occurring at the extremes, the largest and smallest households (see Figure 2). Between 1970 and 2000, households with five or more people decreased from 21 percent to 10 percent of all households. During the same period, the share of households with only one or two people increased from 46 percent to 59 percent. In addition, between 1970 and 2000 the average number of people per household declined from 3.14 to 2.62 percent (see Table 1).<sup>6</sup>

**Households with own children made up only a third of all households in 2000.**

The decline in the proportion of households with own children under age 18 is an important component in the overall decline in household and family size over the last 30 years. Households with own children dropped from 45 percent of all households in 1970 to 35 percent in 1990 and to 33 percent in 2000.

Changes in fertility, marriage, divorce, and mortality have all contributed to declines in the size of American households. Between 1970 and 1990, the births among unmarried women increased, raising the proportion of children living with a single parent.<sup>7</sup> Over this period, the proportion of women

remaining childless also rose.<sup>8</sup> The cumulative effect of these trends was to reduce the average size of households. Increases in divorce also reduced the size of households; divorce generally separates one household into two smaller ones, although the divorce rate’s rapid rise through the 1970s and 1980s leveled off during the 1990s. Delays in marriage and improvements in the life expectancy and health of the elderly may have mixed effects on the average household size. Delays in marriage may increase the number of one-person households or may increase the size of households when children continue living with their parents into young adulthood. Better health status of the elderly could either increase the number of

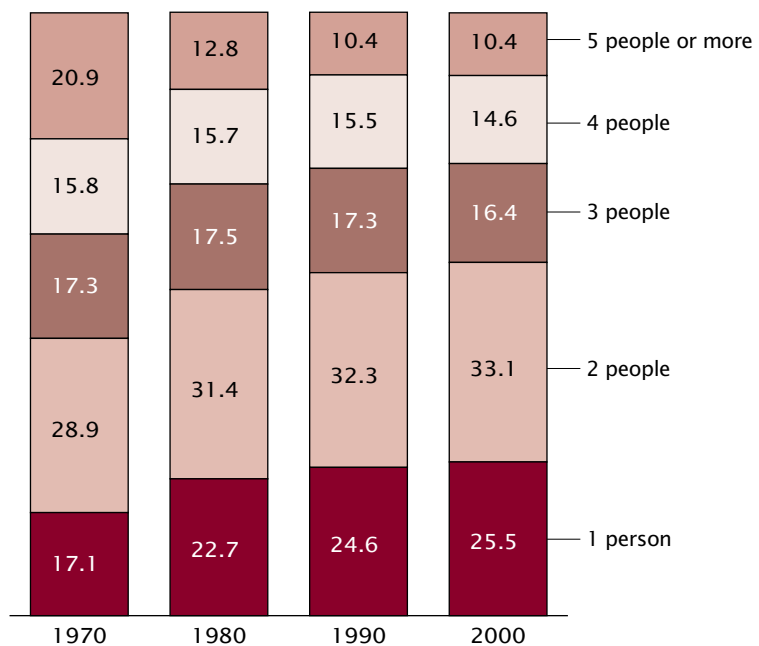
married couples, if both men and women live longer, but if health improves for only one gender, then one-person households would become more common.

**FAMILIES AND FAMILY GROUPS**

The family is a vital institution in American society. Families are often the first and frequently the last source of support for individuals. To measure the demographic changes and characteristics of families, the Census Bureau developed two different conceptual universes. Family households are identified when there are members of the household related to the householder. The count of family units, regardless of whether the householder is in that “family,” is a count of “family groups.” In 2000, there were 72 million family households and 76 million family

<sup>8</sup>See Amara Bachu and Martin O’Connell, *Fertility of American Women: June 1998*, Current Population Reports, P20-526. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2000.

Figure 2.  
**Households by Size: Selected Years, 1970 to 2000**  
(Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplements: 1970 to 2000.

<sup>6</sup>See Table HH-4, “Households by Size: 1960 to Present” at the following internet address: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/htabHH-4.txt>

<sup>7</sup>See Amara Bachu, *Trends in Premarital Childbearing: 1930 – 1994*, Current Population Reports, P23-197, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999.

Table 2.  
**Family Groups by Type and Selected Characteristics of the Family: March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Total	Married couple	Other family groups		
			Total	Male	Female
<b>All family groups</b> .....	75,579	56,497	19,083	4,286	14,797
<b>Family type</b>					
Family household.....	72,025	55,311	16,715	4,028	12,687
Related subfamily .....	2,983	1,149	1,834	201	1,633
Unrelated subfamily.....	571	37	534	57	477
<b>Size of family group</b>					
1 person.....	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)
2 people.....	33,749	23,794	9,955	2,529	7,426
3 people.....	16,909	11,497	5,412	1,016	4,396
4 people.....	14,800	12,640	2,160	446	1,714
5 people.....	6,622	5,668	954	168	786
6 or more.....	3,498	2,897	601	126	475
<b>Number of own children under 18</b>					
No own children.....	38,084	30,726	7,358	2,242	5,116
1 child.....	16,221	9,682	6,539	1,300	5,239
2 children.....	13,949	10,452	3,497	543	2,954
3 children.....	5,235	4,076	1,159	146	1,013
4 or more children.....	2,091	1,561	530	55	475
<b>Presence of own children under 18</b>					
No own children.....	38,084	30,726	7,358	2,242	5,116
With own children .....	37,496	25,771	11,725	2,044	9,681
With own children under 1.....	3,370	2,350	1,020	196	824
With own children under 3.....	9,832	7,002	2,830	511	2,319
With own children under 6.....	16,645	11,711	4,934	819	4,115
With own children under 12.....	28,297	19,519	8,778	1,441	7,337
<b>Family income</b>					
Under \$10,000.....	5,426	1,505	3,921	393	3,528
\$10,000-\$14,999.....	3,919	1,817	2,102	320	1,782
\$15,000-\$19,999.....	4,706	2,675	2,031	341	1,690
\$20,000-\$24,999.....	4,694	3,008	1,686	304	1,382
\$25,000-\$29,999.....	4,606	3,060	1,546	365	1,181
\$30,000-\$39,999.....	8,702	6,323	2,379	638	1,741
\$40,000-\$49,999.....	7,835	6,147	1,688	476	1,212
\$50,000-\$74,999.....	15,495	13,238	2,257	788	1,469
\$75,000 and over.....	20,198	18,723	1,475	663	812
<b>Metropolitan residence</b>					
Metropolitan .....	60,461	44,580	15,881	3,564	12,317
In central cities.....	20,803	13,532	7,271	1,501	5,770
Outside central cities.....	39,658	31,048	8,610	2,063	6,547
Nonmetropolitan.....	15,119	11,917	3,202	722	2,480
<b>Tenure</b>					
Owns/buying.....	56,029	46,280	9,749	2,505	7,244
Rents .....	18,562	9,561	9,001	1,707	7,294
Occupies without payment.....	987	655	332	74	258

X Not applicable.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

groups (see Table 2). The additional family groups were largely related subfamilies (3 million), with 571,000 additional unrelated subfamilies.

**Married couples made up a smaller portion of family households in 2000 than in 1970.**

There were 55 million married-couple family households in 2000,

representing 77 percent of family households (see Table 1). Although the number of married-couple family households has increased since 1970 when they numbered 45 million, they increased at a far slower

rate than other family households did — by an average of 0.7 percent per year compared with 3 percent per year in other types of family households.

Householders in married-couple family households were older than householders in other family households. Thirty-two percent of married-couple family householders were at least 55 years old, while only about 21 percent of unmarried male and female family householders were this age. Less than one-half (48 percent) of Black family households in 2000 were married-couple households. A higher percentage of Hispanic (68 percent) than of Black households were married-couple households, but not as high as for Asian and Pacific Islander and for White non-Hispanic households (80 percent and 83 percent, respectively).

### **Families are smaller today.**

In 2000, only half of the 76 million family groups in the United States included own children — 46 percent of married-couple family groups included an own child under age 18 compared with 61 percent of unmarried-couple family groups (see Table 2). As was the case with households, much of the change in the composition of family groups occurred among larger families. For example, the percentage of family groups with children that have four or more children decreased from 17 percent in 1970 to 8 percent in 1980 and to about 6 percent in 1990 and 2000. Similar proportions of married-couple family groups and family groups with a male reference person included own children under 12 (about 34 percent each) in 2000, while 50 percent of family groups with a female reference person included own children under 12.

Households can contain more than one married-couple or single-parent family, and nonfamily households can contain families that are not related to the owner or renter. In 1970, the Census Bureau developed the concept of the *family group* to count all of these types of families.

*Family groups* are a count of family households plus all related and unrelated subfamilies (family units within either type of household). These subfamilies may consist of either married couples or parent-child units, and the reference person of that family group may be either related or unrelated to the householder. An individual may be counted in two different family groups. For example, a woman may be the daughter of a householder and also the mother of her own daughter living in the household, which would constitute a related mother-child subfamily.

*Reference people* are the members of a household around whom family units are organized. In family households, the householder is always the reference person for the primary family, while another member of the household would be the reference person for a related or unrelated subfamily.

### **Married couple family groups are more likely to live in the suburbs and have college graduates than other family groups.**

The majority (55 percent) of married-couple family groups lived in suburban areas (in metropolitan areas outside of central cities) compared with 48 percent of family groups with a male reference person, and 44 percent of family groups with a female reference person (see Table 2). Most married-couple family groups (82 percent) lived in households that were owned or being bought by the householder. Much smaller proportions of family groups with male or female reference people lived in households that were owned or being bought (58 percent and 49 percent, respectively).

Reference people in married-couple family groups also had higher levels of completed education than in family groups with either male or

female reference people. In 2000, 29 percent of the former had graduated from college, and 55 percent had attended college, compared with 13 percent and 40 percent, respectively, of the latter (see Table 3). Reference people in married-couple family groups were also less likely to be unemployed or out of the labor force (29 percent) than those in family groups maintained by women (35 percent). About 34 percent of reference people in male- and female-maintained family groups were divorced; another 41 percent in male-maintained, and 35 percent in female-maintained family groups were never married.

### **One-parent families numbered 12 million in 2000.**

Another way of looking at family change is by examining the marital status of the parents with whom children reside. In 2000, 37 million family groups included children in the United States, up from 30 million

Table 3.  
**Family Groups by Type and Selected Characteristics of Householder: March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Total	Married couple	Other family groups		
			Total	Male	Female
<b>All family groups</b> .....	75,579	56,497	19,083	4,286	14,797
<b>Age of reference person</b>					
15 to 24 years old .....	4,396	1,663	2,733	609	2,124
25 to 34 years old .....	14,162	9,699	4,463	989	3,474
35 to 44 years old .....	19,509	14,361	5,148	1,177	3,971
45 to 54 years old .....	16,134	12,987	3,147	741	2,406
55 to 64 years old .....	9,675	8,234	1,441	354	1,087
65 years old and over .....	11,704	9,553	2,151	416	1,735
<b>Race and ethnicity of reference person</b>					
White .....	62,721	49,720	13,001	3,274	9,727
Non-Hispanic .....	54,711	44,431	10,280	2,597	7,683
Black .....	9,445	4,218	5,227	762	4,465
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	2,745	2,161	584	187	397
Hispanic (of any race) .....	8,420	5,505	2,915	725	2,190
<b>Marital status of reference person</b>					
Married (spouse present) .....	56,497	56,497	(X)	(X)	(X)
Married (spouse absent or separated) .....	2,821	(X)	2,821	604	2,217
Divorced .....	6,469	(X)	6,469	1,498	4,971
Widowed .....	2,845	(X)	2,845	440	2,405
Never Married .....	6,947	(X)	6,947	1,744	5,203
<b>Education of reference person</b>					
Less than high school .....	12,299	7,760	4,539	974	3,565
High school graduate .....	24,418	17,559	6,859	1,536	5,323
Some college .....	20,030	14,743	5,287	1,085	4,202
College graduate .....	18,832	16,434	2,398	691	1,707
<b>Labor force status of reference person</b>					
Employed .....	52,777	40,018	12,759	3,154	9,605
Unemployed .....	1,931	999	932	202	730
Not in labor force .....	20,872	15,479	5,393	931	4,462

X Not applicable.

Note: Data are not shown separately for the American Indian and Alaska Native population because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey in March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

in 1970. Single-mother families increased from 3 million in 1970 to 10 million in 2000, while the number of single-father families grew from 393,000 to 2 million.

Because the number of two-parent families remained relatively stable at about 26 million over the same period, the proportion of all families that were married-couple families with children declined from 87 percent in 1970 to 69 percent in 2000.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup>This rapid decline in the proportion of family groups that are married couples with children has leveled off during the 1990. The proportion in 2000 (69 percent) is not significantly different from any year after 1993.

Meanwhile, the proportion of single-mother families grew to 26 percent and single-father families grew to 5 percent by 2000 (from 12 percent and 1 percent, respectively, in 1970).

Several demographic trends have affected the shift from two-parent to one-parent families. A larger proportion of births occurred to unmarried women in the 1990s compared with the 1960s and 1970s, increasing the proportion of never-married parents.<sup>10</sup> A partial explanation is that

<sup>10</sup>See Amara Bachu, *Trends in Premarital Childbearing: 1930 - 1994*, Current Population Reports, P23-197, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999.

the delay of marriage also increased the likelihood of a nonmarital birth, because adults were single for more years. Another factor was the growth in divorce among couples with children. These trends have important implications for the well-being of children, and the programs and policies that relate to welfare, family leave, and other areas of work and family life. Further, the family's resources are strongly influenced by the number of parents in the household (see Table 4). Of the 12 million one-parent families, the 10 million maintained by women were more

Table 4.  
**Single Parents by Sex and Selected Characteristics: March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Single fathers					Single mothers				
	Total	Race and ethnicity				Total	Race and ethnicity			
		White	White non-Hispanic	Black	Hispanic (of any race)		White	White non-Hispanic	Black	Hispanic (of any race)
<b>All single parents</b> .....	2,044	1,622	1,331	335	313	9,681	6,216	4,766	3,060	1,565
<b>Type of family group</b>										
Family household .....	1,786	1,429	1,202	280	246	7,571	4,869	3,815	2,409	1,145
Related subfamily .....	201	140	87	50	55	1,633	995	665	550	347
Unrelated subfamily .....	57	53	42	5	11	477	352	286	101	73
<b>Presence of children</b>										
With own children under 18 ..	2,044	1,622	1,331	335	313	9,681	6,216	4,766	3,060	1,565
With own children under 12 ..	1,441	1,145	900	225	260	7,337	4,558	3,459	2,484	1,190
With own children under 6 ...	819	647	466	138	189	4,115	2,519	1,855	1,459	720
With own children under 3 ...	511	393	269	95	129	2,319	1,396	1,027	846	409
With own children under 1 ...	196	152	103	38	51	824	499	372	307	141
<b>Number of own children under 18</b>										
1 child .....	1,300	1,016	849	233	182	5,239	3,544	2,819	1,493	774
2 children .....	543	441	364	74	80	2,954	1,848	1,423	983	463
3 children .....	146	126	91	12	37	1,013	592	390	377	223
4 or more children .....	55	39	27	16	13	475	232	134	207	105
<b>Marital status</b>										
Never married .....	693	497	333	164	168	4,181	2,039	1,422	1,984	686
Married spouse absent <sup>1</sup> .....	350	236	184	84	61	1,716	1,146	782	474	386
Divorced .....	913	824	757	71	74	3,392	2,748	2,369	524	394
Widowed .....	88	65	56	17	10	391	283	193	79	99
<b>Poverty status</b>										
Below poverty level .....	326	225	135	84	99	3,305	1,817	1,190	1,344	678
At or above poverty level .....	1,718	1,397	1,196	251	214	6,376	4,399	3,576	1,716	887
<b>Metropolitan residence</b>										
Metropolitan .....	1,635	1,278	1,014	289	282	8,047	5,005	3,647	2,727	1,464
In central cities .....	631	421	282	169	146	3,790	1,906	1,115	1,727	865
Outside central cities .....	1,004	857	732	120	136	4,257	3,099	2,532	1,000	599
Nonmetropolitan .....	409	344	317	47	31	1,634	1,211	1,119	333	101

<sup>1</sup>Married spouse absent, includes separated.

Note: Data are not shown separately for the American Indian and Alaska Native population or the Asian and Pacific Islander population because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey in March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

likely to include more than one child than the 2 million families maintained by men (46 percent compared with 36 percent). One-parent families maintained by women were also more likely than those maintained by men to have family incomes below the poverty level (34 percent compared with 16 percent). Women maintaining one-parent families are also more likely than men in similar situations

to have never married (43 percent and 34 percent, respectively).

Whether the single parent is divorced or never married may be an important indicator of the quality of life for children in these family groups. Children living with divorced single mothers typically have an economic advantage over children living with those who never married. Divorced parents are, on average, older; have more

education; and have higher incomes than parents who never married.<sup>11</sup> White non-Hispanic single-mother families are more likely to be the result of a marital disruption (50 percent were divorced) than an out-of-wedlock birth (30 percent were never married). Black single mothers are

<sup>11</sup>See Martin T O'Connell, *Children with single parents — how they fare*. Census Brief, CENBR/97-1, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1997.

the least likely to be divorced (17 percent), and the most likely to be never married (65 percent). Black and Hispanic single mothers are also more likely than White non-Hispanic single mothers to be in a related subfamily (18 percent and 22 percent, respectively, compared with 14 percent).

## MARITAL STATUS OF INDIVIDUALS

### The median age at first marriage is rising for both men and women.

One reason that nonfamily households increased over this period is the postponement in marriage as characterized by the rise in the age of first marriage that has occurred since 1970. In 1970, the median age at first marriage was 20.8 years for women and 23.2 years for men. By 2000, these ages had risen to 25.1 years and 26.8 years, respectively (see Figure 3). The gap between men and women has

narrowed over the years, but on average, men are still 1.7 years older than women the first time they marry. Changes in marriage patterns also can be observed in the proportion of the population that has married. In 2000, 31 percent of men and 25 percent of women 15-years-old and over had never married, up from 28 and 22 percent for men and women respectively in 1970 (Figure 4).

### More young adults have not been married.

The delaying of marriage since 1970 by both men and women has led to a substantial increase in the percentage of young, never-married adults. The proportion of women 20 to 24 years old who had never married doubled between 1970 and 2000 — from 36 percent to 73 percent (see Table 5). This increase was relatively greater for women 30 to 34 years old; the proportion of never married

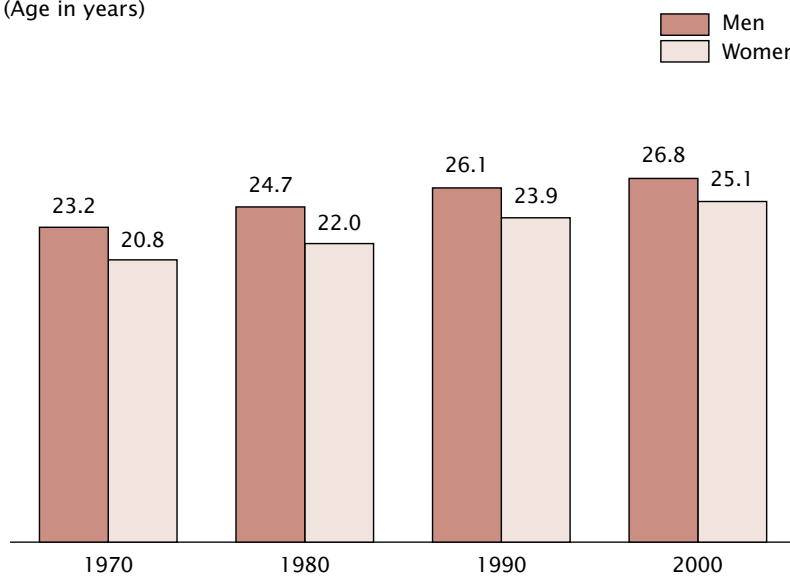
women more than tripled over this time period from 6 percent to 22 percent. Changes were similarly dramatic for men — the proportion of men 20 to 24 years old who had never married increased from 55 percent in 1970 to 84 percent in 2000. Men 30 to 34 years old experienced an increase from 9 percent to 30 percent. However, the vast majority of men

*Marital Status.* Marital status, as shown in this report, reflects the person’s status at the time of the survey. For example, the category “divorced” represents only those divorced and not remarried at that time. It is not a count of divorces that occurred in 2000, nor a count of all people who have ever divorced in their lifetime. The category “married” includes both adults who lived with their spouse and those who lived apart, including those who were separated. “Unmarried” includes those who had never married or were divorced or widowed at the time of the survey.

*Median Age at First Marriage.* The median age at first marriage shown in this report is calculated indirectly by estimating the proportion of young people who will marry during their lifetime, calculating one-half of this proportion, and determining the age (at the time of the survey) of people at this half-way mark by interpolation. It does not represent the actual median age of the population who married during the calendar year.

Figure 3.  
**Median Age at First Marriage of the Population 15 Years and Over by Sex: Selected Years, 1970 to 2000**

(Age in years)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Supplements: 1970 to 2000.



Table 5.  
**Marital Status of People 15 Years and Over: March 1970 and March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	March 2000								March 1970 percent never married <sup>1</sup>
	Number							Percent never married	
	Total	Married spouse present	Married spouse absent	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Never married		
<b>Both sexes</b>									
Total 15 years old and over ..	213,773	113,002	2,730	4,479	19,881	13,665	60,016	28.1	24.9
15 to 19 years old .....	20,102	345	36	103	64	13	19,541	97.2	93.9
20 to 24 years old .....	18,440	3,362	134	234	269	11	14,430	78.3	44.5
25 to 29 years old .....	18,269	8,334	280	459	917	27	8,252	45.2	14.7
30 to 34 years old .....	19,519	11,930	278	546	1,616	78	5,071	26.0	7.8
35 to 44 years old .....	44,804	29,353	717	1,436	5,967	399	6,932	15.5	5.9
45 to 54 years old .....	36,633	25,460	492	899	5,597	882	3,303	9.0	6.1
55 to 64 years old .....	23,388	16,393	308	441	3,258	1,770	1,218	5.2	7.2
65 years old and over .....	32,620	17,827	485	361	2,193	10,484	1,270	3.9	7.6
<b>Males</b>									
Total 15 years old and over ..	103,113	56,501	1,365	1,818	8,572	2,604	32,253	31.3	28.1
15 to 19 years old .....	10,295	69	3	51	29	3	10,140	98.5	97.4
20 to 24 years old .....	9,208	1,252	75	70	101	-	7,710	83.7	54.7
25 to 29 years old .....	8,943	3,658	139	170	342	9	4,625	51.7	19.1
30 to 34 years old .....	9,622	5,640	151	205	712	15	2,899	30.1	9.4
35 to 44 years old .....	22,134	14,310	387	585	2,775	96	3,981	18.0	6.7
45 to 54 years old .....	17,891	13,027	255	378	2,377	157	1,697	9.5	7.5
55 to 64 years old .....	11,137	8,463	158	188	1,387	329	612	5.5	7.8
65 years old and over .....	13,885	10,084	197	171	849	1,994	590	4.2	7.5
<b>Females</b>									
Total 15 years old and over ..	110,660	56,501	1,365	2,661	11,309	11,061	27,763	25.1	22.1
15 to 19 years old .....	9,807	276	33	52	35	10	9,401	95.9	90.3
20 to 24 years old .....	9,232	2,110	59	164	168	11	6,720	72.8	35.8
25 to 29 years old .....	9,326	4,676	141	289	575	18	3,627	38.9	10.5
30 to 34 years old .....	9,897	6,290	127	341	904	63	2,172	21.9	6.2
35 to 44 years old .....	22,670	15,043	330	851	3,192	303	2,951	13.0	5.2
45 to 54 years old .....	18,742	12,433	237	521	3,220	725	1,606	8.6	4.9
55 to 64 years old .....	12,251	7,930	150	253	1,871	1,441	606	4.9	6.8
65 years old and over .....	18,735	7,743	288	190	1,344	8,490	680	3.6	7.7

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup>The 1970 percentages include 14-year-olds, and thus are for 14+ and 14-19.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

(43 percent), lived at home with at least one of their parents (see Table 6). Among people 18 to 24 years old, 10 percent of men and 18 percent of women were married and living with their spouses. In 2000, living alone was not very common among these younger adults — only 4 percent did so. Both men and women in this age group were more likely to cohabit, live with roommates or people other than spouses, or live with their parents than to live alone or with a spouse. Thirty percent of men and 35 per-

cent of women in this age group lived with others who were neither their spouses nor parents.

For 25- to 34-year olds, married life becomes the modal type of living arrangement. In 2000, 50 percent of men and 57 percent of women in this age group were married and living with their spouse. Living alone also becomes more common for both men and women: 12 percent and 8 percent, respectively lived by themselves in 2000. Many 25- to 34-year-olds still lived with at least

one of their parents: 12 percent of men and 5 percent of women.

**Men 75 and over are more likely to live with their spouse — women of that age are more likely to live alone.**

Among the population 75 years and over, 67 percent of men were living with their spouses in 2000 compared with only 29 percent of women the same age (see Table 6). For women, 49 percent, were living alone while another 22 percent were not currently married but liv-

ing with either relatives or nonrelatives. Only 21 percent of men lived alone at this age.

Among the population 65 to 74 years old, the likelihood of living with a spouse is higher for both men and women than among people 75 years and over: 77 percent of men in the younger age group live with their spouses compared to 53 percent of women. Living alone is also less common for people 65 to 74 years old than for people 75 years and over for both men and women. These differences in living arrangements between men and women reflect higher male mortality. With increasing age, however, both men and women experience a greater likelihood of living alone.

**In 2000, more than 3 million unmarried couples cohabited.**

In addition to couples identifying themselves as married in the CPS, a householder may identify the person he or she is cohabiting with as an unmarried partner. In 2000, there were 3.8 million households that were classified as unmarried-partner households, representing 3.7 percent of all households in the United States. These numbers may underrepresent the true number of cohabiting couples because only householders and their partners are tabulated (not all unmarried couples present in a household), and respondents may be reluctant to classify themselves as such in a personal interview situation and may describe themselves as roommates, housemates, or friends not related to each other.<sup>12</sup> Taking these qualifications into consideration, the

<sup>12</sup>For more information on the growth of unmarried-partner households, see Lynne M. Casper and Philip N. Cohen, "How Does POSSLQ Measure UP? National Estimates of Cohabitation." *Demography* 37:2, (May 2000), pp. 237-45.

Table 6.  
**Living Arrangements of Younger and Older Adults:  
March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Number		Percent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>YOUNGER ADULTS</b>				
<b>18 to 34 years old</b>				
Total .....	31,854	32,464	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	2,830	2,156	8.9	6.6
Married spouse present .....	10,603	13,298	33.3	41.0
Not married spouse present - child of householder .....	9,737	6,661	30.6	20.5
None of the above .....	8,684	10,349	27.3	31.9
<b>18 to 24 years old</b>				
Total .....	13,291	13,242	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	551	588	4.1	4.4
Married spouse present .....	1,305	2,332	9.8	17.6
Not married spouse present - child of householder .....	7,497	5,629	56.4	42.5
None of the above .....	3,938	4,693	29.6	35.4
<b>25 to 34 years old</b>				
Total .....	18,563	19,222	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	2,279	1,568	12.3	8.2
Married spouse present .....	9,298	10,966	50.1	57.0
Not married spouse present - child of householder .....	2,240	1,032	12.1	5.4
None of the above .....	4,746	5,656	25.6	29.4
<b>OLDER ADULTS</b>				
<b>65 years old and over</b>				
Total .....	13,886	18,735	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	2,355	7,427	17.0	39.6
Married spouse present .....	10,084	7,743	72.6	41.3
None of the above .....	1,447	3,565	10.4	19.0
<b>65 to 74 years old</b>				
Total .....	8,049	9,747	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	1,108	2,983	13.8	30.6
Married spouse present .....	6,170	5,156	76.7	52.9
None of the above .....	771	1,608	9.6	16.5
<b>75 years old and over</b>				
Total .....	5,837	8,988	100.0	100.0
Living alone .....	1,247	4,444	21.4	49.4
Married spouse present .....	3,914	2,587	67.1	28.8
None of the above .....	676	1,957	11.6	21.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

characteristics of these partners are examined in the following sections.

**Married couples are older than unmarried partners.**

In 2000, 7.6 million men and women were cohabiting, representing 3.8 million unmarried-partner households (see Table 7). Women tended to be younger than men —

25 percent of women were under 25 compared with 16 percent of men. In contrast, only 2 percent of married men and 4 percent of married women were under 25 years old. The proportion of unmarried partners 25 to 34 years old, while considerable (37 percent of men and 33 percent of women), was slightly smaller than the proportion

Table 7.  
**Characteristics of Unmarried Partners and Married Spouses by Sex: March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Number				Percent			
	Unmarried partners		Married spouses		Unmarried partners		Married spouses	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Total</b> .....	3,822	3,822	56,497	56,497	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Age</b>								
15 to 24 years old .....	597	937	1,321	2,386	15.6	24.5	2.3	4.2
25 to 34 years old .....	1,413	1,269	9,296	10,964	37.0	33.2	16.5	19.4
35 years old and over .....	1,811	1,616	45,881	43,146	47.4	42.3	81.2	76.4
<b>Race and Hispanic origin</b>								
White .....	3,127	3,147	49,668	49,581	81.8	82.3	87.9	87.8
Non-Hispanic.....	2,710	2,742	44,350	44,142	70.9	71.7	78.5	78.1
Black.....	562	498	4,294	4,097	14.7	13.0	7.6	7.3
Asian and Pacific Islander .....	63	105	2,118	2,393	1.6	2.7	3.7	4.2
Hispanic (of any race).....	453	433	5,550	5,671	11.9	11.3	9.8	10.0
<b>Education</b>								
Less than high school.....	683	599	8,314	7,160	17.9	15.7	14.7	12.7
High school graduate .....	1,441	1,357	17,506	19,950	37.7	35.5	31.0	35.3
Some college .....	996	1,223	14,002	14,968	26.1	32.0	24.8	26.5
College graduate .....	702	643	16,674	14,419	18.4	16.8	29.5	25.5
<b>Labor force status</b>								
Employed.....	3,179	2,894	42,854	34,067	83.2	75.7	75.9	60.3
Unemployed .....	187	178	992	961	4.9	4.7	1.8	1.7
Not in labor force .....	453	747	12,650	21,468	11.9	19.5	22.4	38.0
<b>Personal earnings</b>								
Without earnings .....	402	642	11,353	19,368	10.5	16.8	20.1	34.3
With earnings .....	3,419	3,178	45,144	37,132	89.5	83.2	79.9	65.7
Under \$5,000 or loss.....	184	373	1,874	4,683	4.8	9.8	3.3	8.3
\$5,000 to \$9,999 .....	286	395	1,665	4,183	7.5	10.3	2.9	7.4
\$10,000 to \$14,999 .....	360	445	2,401	4,497	9.4	11.6	4.2	8.0
\$15,000 to \$19,999 .....	410	441	3,101	4,427	10.7	11.5	5.5	7.8
\$20,000 to \$24,999 .....	401	397	3,561	4,249	10.5	10.4	6.3	7.5
\$25,000 to \$29,999 .....	336	315	3,595	3,429	8.8	8.2	6.4	6.1
\$30,000 to \$39,999 .....	548	405	7,492	4,954	14.3	10.6	13.3	8.8
\$40,000 to \$49,999 .....	337	201	6,096	2,976	8.8	5.3	10.8	5.3
\$50,000 to \$74,999 .....	370	137	8,703	2,683	9.7	3.6	15.4	4.7
\$75,000 and over.....	187	69	6,656	1,051	4.9	1.8	11.8	1.9
<b>Presence of children</b>								
With children <sup>1</sup> .....	1,563	1,563	25,771	25,771	40.9	40.9	45.6	45.6

<sup>1</sup>May be own children of either partner or both partners. Excludes ever married children under 18 years.

Note: Data are not shown separately for the American Indian and Alaska Native population because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey in March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

35 years and over (47 percent of men and 42 percent of women). Among married couples, the vast majority of husbands and wives were 35 years old and over (81 and 76 percent respectively).

**Two-fifths of unmarried-partner households included children under 18 years in 2000.**

Forty-one percent of unmarried-partner households included children under 18, just slightly less than the proportion of married-couple

households with children under 18 (46 percent). About 44 percent of men and 49 percent of women had at least some college education. In 2000, 83 percent of men and 76 percent of women in unmarried-partner households were employed. Married

men and women were employed somewhat less, 76 and 60 percent, respectively. This difference is affected by both the older men and women who are retired and by lower labor force participation among married women than among single women.

### **Twenty-eight percent of women had more education than their partners in unmarried-partner households in 2000.**

Table 8 presents some summary comparisons between men and women who are unmarried partners and comparative statistics for couples who are in married husband/wife households. Twenty-eight percent of women in unmarried-partner households had higher levels of education than their partners, compared with 21 percent of wives in married-couple households. Unmarried partners were more egalitarian in terms of their labor force status. Sixty-five percent of unmarried partners had both partners working in 2000, compared with only 54 percent of married couples.

Women in unmarried-partner households were less likely to be in a traditional homemaking role than were their married counterparts. For example, in 18 percent of unmarried-partner households only the male was employed, compared with 22 percent of married couples. Women in unmarried-partner households were more likely to earn more than their partners when compared with married women — 22 percent of women in unmarried-partner households earned at least \$5,000 more than their partners compared with only 15 percent of married women. In addition, only 14 percent of unmarried partners included men who earned at least \$30,000 more than their partners. For married

couples, men earned at least \$30,000 more than their spouses 30 percent of the time.

### **Four percent of unmarried partners were of different races and 6 percent were of different ethnicities in 2000.**

In 2000, unmarried partners were less similar in other demographic characteristics than spouses. For instance, 21 percent of female unmarried partners were 2 or more years older than their male partners: by contrast 12 percent of wives were 2 or more years older than their husbands. Most partners and spouses are of the same race, and either both are Hispanic or both are not Hispanic. However, unmarried partners were about twice as likely to be of different races than married couples (4 percent compared with 2 percent). They were also more likely to consist of one Hispanic and one non-Hispanic person (6 percent compared with 3 percent). Cohabitation, because of a more informal structure and perceived impermanence, may often be viewed as a trial relationship, a proving ground for relationships prior to marriage, or in some cases a substitute for a more traditional marriage.<sup>13</sup>

### **SOURCE OF THE DATA**

Most of the estimates in this report come from data obtained in March 2000 by the Current Population Survey (CPS). The Census Bureau conducts the CPS every month, although these data are collected only in March.

<sup>13</sup>See Rose Kreider, *Interracial Marriage and Marital Instability*, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 1999. For more general information on the trends and characteristics of cohabitation, see also Pamela Smock and Sanjiv Gupta, "Cohabitation in Contemporary North America." *Just Living Together: Implications for Children, Families, and Public Policy*, ed. by Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter. Lawrence Erlbaum, forthcoming.

### **ACCURACY OF THE ESTIMATES**

Statistics from sample surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet the Census Bureau's standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately answers are coded and classified. The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process — including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The CPS employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact Doug Mayfield of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at [dsmd\\_s&a@census.gov](mailto:dsmd_s&a@census.gov)

Table 8.  
**Characteristics of Unmarried and Married Male-Female Couples: March 2000**

(In thousands)

Characteristic	Number		Percent	
	Unmarried couples	Married couples	Unmarried couples	Married couples
<b>Number of couples</b>				
<b>Total</b> .....	3,822	56,497	100.0	100.0
<b>Age difference</b>				
Male 6 or more years older than female.....	944	11,049	24.7	19.6
Male 2 to 5 years older than female .....	1,093	20,515	28.6	36.3
Within 1 year of each other .....	975	17,982	25.5	31.8
Female 2 to 5 years older than male .....	460	5,086	12.0	9.0
Female 6 or more years older than male....	349	1,864	9.1	3.3
<b>Race difference<sup>1</sup></b>				
Same race couples .....	3,614	55,029	94.6	97.4
Both White .....	3,040	48,917	79.5	86.6
Both Black .....	480	3,989	12.6	7.1
Both Asian and Pacific Islander .....	45	1,914	1.2	3.4
Interracial couples .....	165	1,047	4.3	1.9
Black/White .....	88	363	2.3	0.6
Black/Asian and Pacific Islander .....	9	25	-	-
White/Asian and Pacific Islander .....	67	655	1.8	1.2
<b>Hispanic origin difference<sup>2</sup></b>				
Both Hispanic .....	332	4,739	8.7	8.4
Neither Hispanic .....	3,268	50,015	85.5	88.5
One Hispanic and one non-Hispanic.....	222	1,743	5.8	3.1
<b>Education</b>				
Male more education than female .....	885	13,843	23.2	24.5
Male and female same education .....	1,871	30,590	49.0	54.1
Female more education than male .....	1,065	12,064	27.9	21.4
<b>Employment status</b>				
Male only employed .....	695	12,642	18.2	22.4
Female only employed .....	410	3,855	10.7	6.8
Neither employed .....	230	9,787	6.0	17.3
Both employed .....	2,484	30,212	65.0	53.5
<b>Earnings difference<sup>3</sup></b>				
Male \$30,000 or more higher than female ...	546	16,679	14.3	29.5
Male \$5,000 to \$29,999 higher than female .	1,553	16,549	40.6	29.3
Within \$4,999 of each other .....	902	14,860	23.6	26.3
Female \$5,000 to \$29,999 higher than male..	667	6,256	17.5	11.1
Female \$30,000 or more higher than male ..	154	2,152	4.0	3.8

- Represents zero or rounds to zero.

<sup>1</sup>This race comparison is regardless of Hispanic origin.

<sup>2</sup>This difference does not consider race. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

<sup>3</sup>Includes people with no earnings or loss.

Note: Data are not shown separately for the American Indian and Alaska Native population because of the small sample size in the Current Population Survey in March 2000.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 2000.

## MORE INFORMATION

Detailed tables from the March 2000 CPS are available on the Internet, at the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site

([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). Once on the site, click on Subjects A-Z, select 'F,' then select 'Families.' From the 'Families' page, select '2000 March CPS' and then choose from the list of options.

A paper version of these tables without the race and Hispanic origin tabulations is available as PPL-143 for \$42.00. To receive a paper copy, send your request for "PPL-143, America's Families and Living

Arrangements: March 2000," along with a check or money order in the amount of \$42.00 payable to Commerce-Census-88-00-9010, to U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, P.O. Box 277843, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943, or call our Statistical Information Office on 301-457-2422. A copy of these tables will be made available to any existing Current Population Report P20 subscriber without charge, provided that the request is made within 3 months of the issue date of this report.

### **SUGGESTED CITATION**

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### **USER COMMENTS**

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