

# FAMILIES AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS IN 2005

Many businesses are interested in information about living arrangements because household composition is associated with the consumption of goods and services, preferences for housing types, and other market issues. State and local governments pay attention to households when making decisions about issues such as traffic patterns and school lunch programs. A broad spectrum of decision makers look to U.S. Census Bureau data to help them understand how the characteristics of families and living arrangements have changed over the decades.

While many adults live alone, the majority live with a spouse. Some live with grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, and other relatives, and others live with people who are not related to them by birth or marriage. Living arrangements of children are also of interest to educators and service providers.

## Family Households

Family households represented 81 percent of households in 1970 and 68 percent of America's 113.1 million households in 2005, according to the Census Bureau's Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Between 1970 and 2005, married-couple families with children under 18 fell from 40 percent of all households to 23 percent. The share of married couples without children under 18 declined slightly, accounting for 30 percent of all households in 1970

<sup>1</sup> The ASEC numbers in this chapter differ from ASEC estimates prior to 2001 in that they are based on an expanded sample and use Census 2000-based population controls using administrative records on factors such as births and deaths. These changes have been implemented to improve the reliability of the survey's results. The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text and figures) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

## Words That Count

**Householder** refers to the person (or one of the people) in whose name a housing unit is owned, rented, or maintained. If the house is owned or rented jointly by a married couple, the householder may be either the husband or the wife.

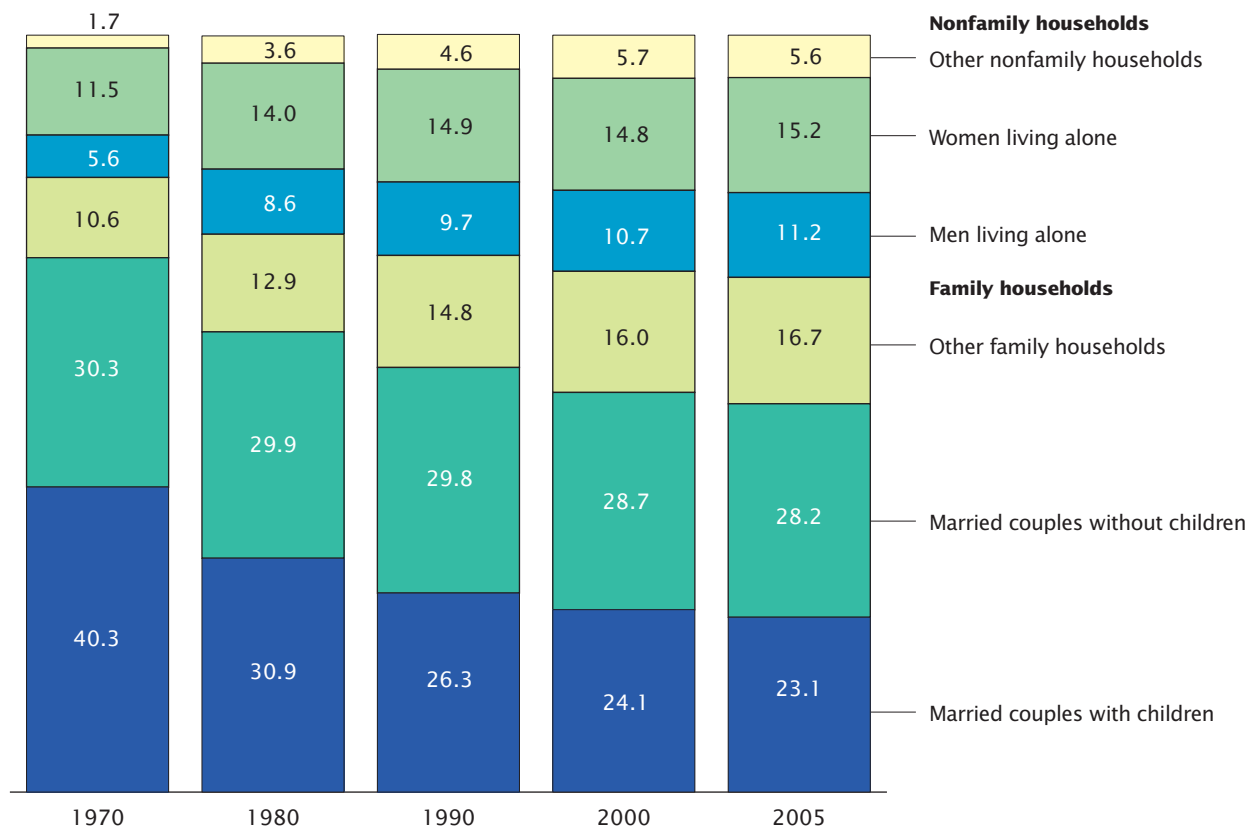
A **household** consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, regardless of their relationship. In a **family household**, at least one person is related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. A **nonfamily household** can be either a person living alone or a householder who shares the home with nonrelatives only; for example, boarders or roommates.

**Subfamilies** can be either married couples or a parent and child who do not include the householder. They may be part of a family household regardless of their relationship to the householder. They may also be part of a nonfamily household if they are not related to the householder. For instance, a mother and a child living in the home of an unrelated single friend would be a subfamily within a nonfamily household.

**Marital status** includes the following categories: never married, married, separated, widowed, and divorced. For the purpose of this report, the term "unmarried" includes never-married, widowed, and divorced.

and 28 percent in 2005. The percentage of other families, including those with no spouse present, rose from 11 percent to 17 percent over that same time period. Since 1995, the proportion of households that are single-parent families stabilized—representing 9 percent of all households both in 1995 and in 2005.

Figure 1.  
**Households by Type: 1970 to 2005**  
 (Percent distribution)



Note: For the purpose of this report, children are people under age 18.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1970 to 2005.

Family households made up 78 percent of Hispanic households and 76 percent of Asian households, compared with 68 percent of all households in 2005.<sup>2</sup> The corresponding proportions were 65 percent for Black households and 67 percent for non-Hispanic White households.

### Living Alone and Other Nonfamilies

From 1970 to 2005, people living alone grew from 17 percent of all households to 26 percent. At the same time, women living alone decreased from 67 percent of one-person households to 58 percent.

<sup>2</sup> The race or origin of the household is based on the race or origin of the householder, regardless of the race or origin of the other household members. Data in this chapter describe households with a householder who reported only one race. The percentage of households that were family households were not statistically different for Hispanic and Asian households.

Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). This report (text and figures) shows data using the first approach (race alone). Use of the single-race population in this report does not imply that this is the preferred method of presenting data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches.

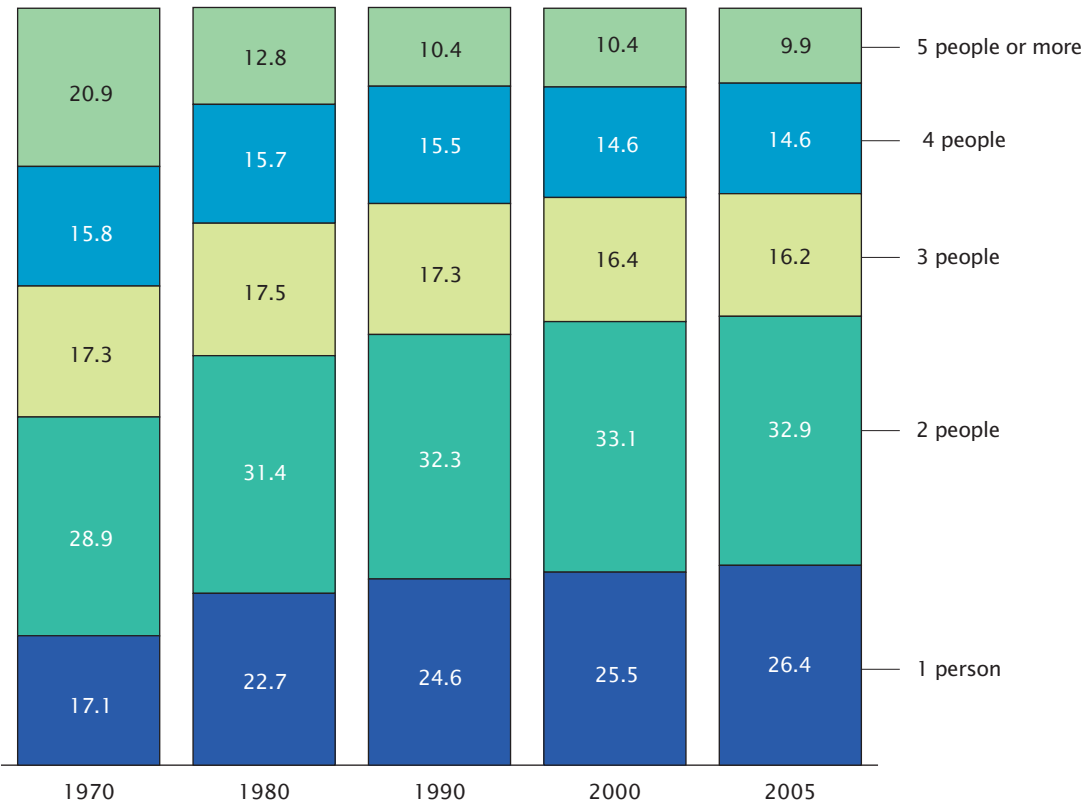
For data for 2005 and beyond, this chapter uses the term "non-Hispanic White" to refer to people who are not Hispanic and who reported White and no other race. The Census Bureau often uses

non-Hispanic Whites as the comparison group for other race groups and Hispanics.

Data users should exercise caution when interpreting aggregate results for the Hispanic population or for race groups because these populations consist of many distinct groups that differ in socioeconomic characteristics, culture, and recency of immigration. In addition, the CPS does not use separate population controls for weighting the Asian sample to national totals. Data were first collected for Hispanics in 1972 and for Asians and Pacific Islanders in 1987. For further information, see <[www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/adsmain.htm](http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/ads/adsmain.htm)>.

Because Hispanics may be any race, data for Hispanics overlap with data for every race. Based on the total male and female population surveyed in the CPS ASEC, 3 percent of the single-race Black population and 1 percent of the single-race Asian population were also Hispanic. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population, the Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population, and the Two or More Races population are not shown here based on their small sample size in the ASEC.

Figure 2.  
**Households by Size: 1970 to 2005**  
 (Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1970 to 2005.

Other nonfamily households—people who live with nonrelatives only—grew from 2 percent to 6 percent of all households.

### Household Size

Households decreased in size between 1970 and 2005, as shown in Figure 2. The share of households with five or more people dropped from 21 percent to 10 percent of all households, while those with one or two members grew from 46 percent to 59 percent of all households. In 2005, the average number of people per household was 2.57, compared with 3.14 in 1970.

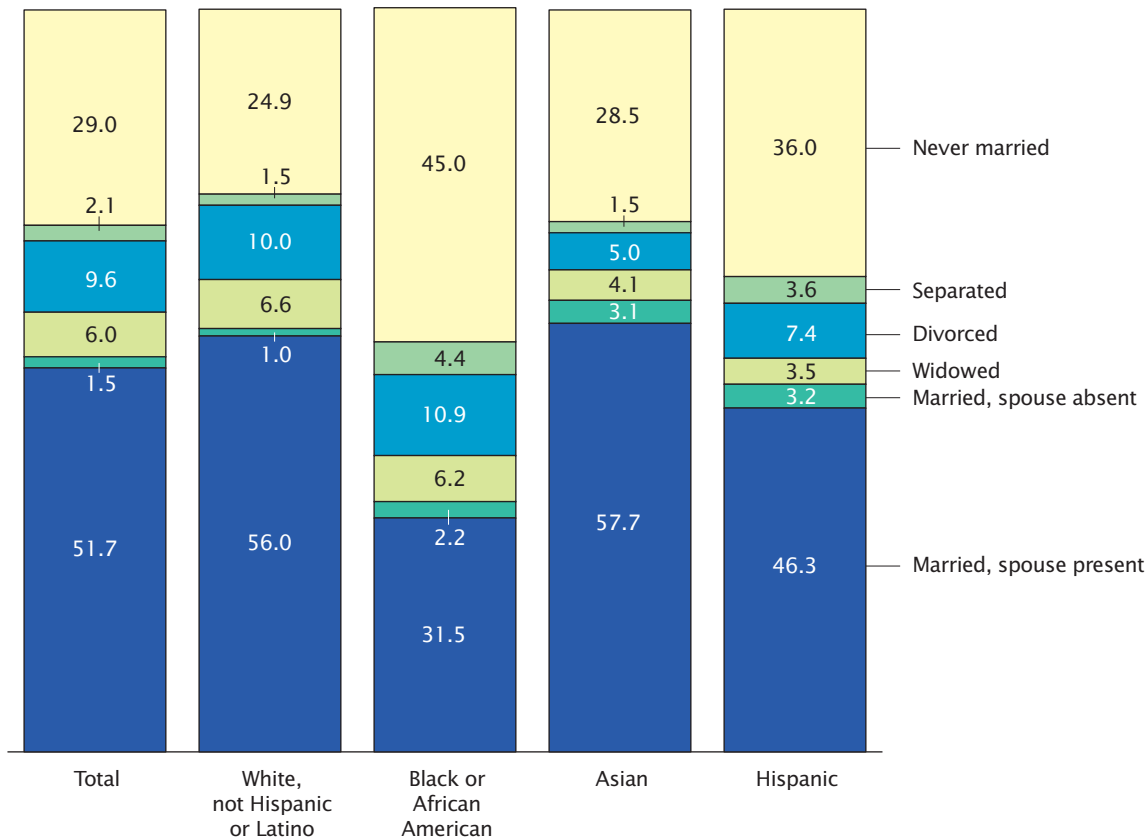
### Unmarried Couples

Unmarried-couple households composed of unmarried partners of the opposite sex represented 5 percent of

all households in 2005.<sup>3</sup> In 6 in 10 of these households, the householder had never been married. In another 3 in 10 households, the householder was divorced. One-third of unmarried-couple households contained children under 15 years of age. Unmarried-partner households may be classified as family or non-family households, depending on whether or not someone in the household is related to the householder by blood or adoption.

<sup>3</sup> This number may underrepresent the true number of cohabiting couples because only householders and their partners are tabulated, not all unmarried couples within the household. Same-sex unmarried partners are also excluded from these estimates. Further, respondents may be reluctant to classify themselves as cohabiting couples in a personal interview.

Figure 3.  
**Marital Status of People 15 Years and Older by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2005**  
 (Percent distribution)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2005.

### The Postponement of Marriage

One reason that nonfamily households have increased is the postponement of marriage. In 1970, the median age at first marriage was 21 for women and 23 for men.<sup>4</sup> In 2005, the median age at first marriage was 25 for women and 27 for men.

Delayed marriage has contributed to increases in the percentages of young men and women who have never married. The proportion of never-married women 25 to 34 increased between 1970 and 2005, from 9 percent to 32 percent. Among men this age, the share rose from 15 percent to 43 percent.

<sup>4</sup> Median age at first marriage 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 by interpolation the age (at the time of the survey) of people at this half-way mark. The figures do not represent the actual median age of the population who married during the year.

### Marriage and Divorce Patterns

In 2005, 53 percent of men aged 18 to 24 lived at home with one or both parents. Forty-six percent of women this age also lived at home with at least one parent. People aged 25 to 34 were more likely to be married. In 2005, 48 percent of men and 55 percent of women in this age group were married and living with their spouse.

Differences in living arrangements also occur among older men and women and are frequently related to differences in life expectancy and the likelihood of remarriage.<sup>5</sup> Among people 75 and older in 2005, men were more likely than women to be living with a spouse, 67 percent compared with 30 percent for women. Forty-eight percent of women in this age group were living alone, compared with 23 percent of men.

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see the chapter on older adults.

## Marital Status by Race and Hispanic Origin<sup>6</sup>

Among people 15 and older in 2005, 56 percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 58 percent of Asians were married and living with a spouse (Figure 3). The proportion married and living with a spouse was 31 percent for Blacks and 46 percent for Hispanics.

<sup>6</sup> Age distribution influences marital status by race and Hispanic origin. For more information, see the chapter on race and Hispanic origin.

The percentage of people 15 and older who were divorced was highest for Blacks (11 percent) and non-Hispanic Whites (10 percent) and lowest for Asians (5 percent). Seven percent of Hispanics were divorced.

Twenty-five percent of non-Hispanic Whites and 29 percent of Asians had never been married, compared with 45 percent of Blacks. Among Hispanics this age, 36 percent had never been married.

## Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces (2001)

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is one of a few data sources that can provide a comprehensive look at both current and historical marriage and divorce data. In 2001, marital history data were collected from men and women 15 and older. They were asked about the number of times they had been married and the month and year of marital events (including marriage, divorce, widowhood, and the date of separation).

The study in 2001 found that among people born from 1935 to 1939, 21 percent of men and 51 percent of women had been married by age 20. Among those born from 1975 to 1979, 8 percent of men and 18 percent of women were married when they were this young.

The proportion of divorced by age 40 increased among men born from 1935 to 1939 through 1950 to 1954. For men born later, the proportion divorced actually declined, although it was still higher than pre-war levels.<sup>7</sup> A similar pattern exists for women, as shown in Figure 4.

<sup>7</sup> Except for the percentage of men born in 1955 to 1959 who were divorced by age 40, which is not statistically different from the percentage of men born in 1935 to 1939 who were divorced by age 40.

By age 40, about 15 percent of men and women born from 1935 to 1939 had been married two or more times. This proportion increased to 22 percent among those born from 1945 to 1949 (the oldest Baby Boomers). While the rate was also 22 percent

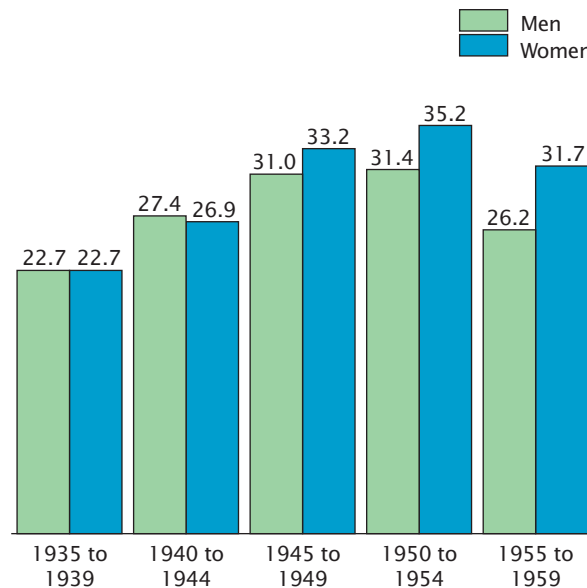
for women born from 1955 to 1959, it declined to 17 percent for men born during that same time period.

While 76 percent of men who first married during the 1955 to 1959 time period stayed married for at least 20 years, 58 percent of those married in 1975 to 1979 stayed married as long. Similarly, marital longevity fell for women who married during those same time periods.

In 2001, 31 percent of men and 25 percent of women 15 and older had never been married. Most

people this age had been married only once—53 percent of men and 59 percent of women. Thirteen percent of men and 14 percent of women had married twice and 3 percent of each had married three or more times.

Figure 4.  
**Percentage of Men and Women Divorced by Age 40 for Selected Birth Cohorts: 1935–39 to 1955–59**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2001 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module.

### **The Census Bureau Can Tell You More**

Consult the following Census Bureau Current Population Reports: *America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2003* (P20-553) by Jason Fields and *Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 2001* (P70-97) by Rose M. Kreider.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's Web site <[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)>. Click on "Subjects A to Z." Click on "H" and select "Households and Families Data" or "M" and select "Marriage and Divorce Data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Demographic Call Center (toll-free) at 1-866-758-1060.

E-mail <[ask.census.gov](mailto:ask.census.gov)>.

See Appendix A for information on the accuracy of the estimates.