

Demographic and Socioeconomic Change in Appalachia

HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES IN APPALACHIA

by

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Population Reference Bureau**

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The Appalachian Regional Commission’s mission is to be an advocate for and partner with the people of Appalachia to create opportunities for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life.

Introduction

Over the past 50 years, the changing age structure of the U.S. population, increases in educational attainment and women's labor force participation rates, changing marital patterns, and changing residential preferences have contributed to major shifts in the structure of U.S. households and families.¹ Between 1950 and 2000, the median age at first marriage increased from 23 to 27 for men and from 20 to 25 for women.² The fertility rate dropped from three births per woman in 1950 to just over two births per woman in 2000,³ and the proportion of families headed by a single parent increased from 7 percent to 27 percent.⁴ There has also been rapid growth in the number of nonfamily households. Since 1950, the number of family households has nearly doubled, but there has been a six-fold increase in the number of nonfamily households.⁵ (See Box 1 for definitions of family and nonfamily households).

These trends have affected families and communities across the United States. But other trends are either unique or have been particularly relevant to families living in the 410 counties that make up the Appalachian region.⁶ For example, in Appalachia, the growth in the number of households has far outpaced the growth in the total population. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of households in Appalachia increased by 14 percent, while the population increased by only 9 percent. Nationwide, the percent change in the number of households and the number of people were about equal (increased by 13 percent each).

These basic trends in household and population growth are linked to the aging of Appalachia's population and the relatively slow growth of households with children in Appalachia (6 percent) compared with the national average (13 percent). The growth in the older population has contributed to the increase in single-person households in Appalachia and has

extended the length of family relationships, leading to more multi-generation households and more grandparents caring for grandchildren.

This report also investigates household and family structure in the context of welfare reform and Appalachia’s unique economic environment. The lack of jobs—combined with the recent declines in public assistance income—presents special challenges to families living in Appalachia’s rural areas.⁷ Many families lack the transportation, child care, and other supports needed to make the transition from welfare to work.⁸ These problems are most acute for families living in Appalachia’s Central region.⁹

Lastly, poverty in the United States is often associated with single-parent families living in urban areas. But in

Appalachia, the majority of families living in poverty are headed by married couples.

Poverty rates in Appalachia’s rural counties far exceed the poverty rates in metro areas.

In part, these patterns reflect the lower levels of racial and ethnic diversity in the region,

but they also reflect the low wages and lack of jobs in remote, rural areas.¹⁰

Box 1

Definitions of Households and Families

Household

A household, according to the Census Bureau, consists of related family members and all the unrelated people, if any, such as lodgers, foster children, or employees who share a housing unit. A house, an apartment or other group of rooms, or a single room, is regarded as a housing unit when it is occupied as separate living quarters; that is, when the occupants do not live and eat with any other persons in the structure and there is direct access from the outside through a common hall. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit such as partners or roomers, is also considered as a household. The count of households excludes group quarters.

Family

The Census Bureau defines two major types of households: “family” and “nonfamily.” A family is a group of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family. Family households include those headed by married couples and those that are male-headed or female-headed, in which a spouse is not present in the home. This report also distinguishes between family households with and without children (see Table 1).

A nonfamily household consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he or she is not related.

Most of the data in this report are based on county-level information from the U.S. decennial census. Data from the 2000 Census are compared with data from the 1990 Census to look at changes in household and family structure during the 1990s. The report is broken down into two major sections: Households and Families in Appalachia, and Family Structure and Poverty. This paper is part of a series of reports being written for the Appalachian Regional Commission on topics including population growth, labor markets, poverty, racial and ethnic diversity, housing and commuting, age structure, migration, and education.

Households and Families in Appalachia

Many perceptions about Appalachian families have been shaped by the popular media, but movies and television shows have not portrayed Appalachian families in a very positive light, instead focusing on hillbillies and moonshiners living in run-down shacks. Just last year, CBS was planning to launch a new reality show called “The Real Beverly Hillbillies” in which a “multi-generational family of five or more” from a “mountainous, rural area” would be put on display in a luxurious mansion in California.¹¹ A large coalition of groups and individuals representing rural communities persuaded CBS to scrap the idea, but stereotypes about Appalachian families persist.

What is true about families living in Appalachia is that they are united by the high poverty rates that have persisted in many parts of the region. With few good jobs available, many families have left Appalachia in search of economic opportunities elsewhere. Those who are left behind tend to have less education and fewer job skills, and live in communities where there are few opportunities to break the cycle of poverty.

The good news is that despite these hardships, families in the Appalachian region have been remarkably resilient. The proportion of married-couple families in Appalachia (combining those with or without children) exceeds the national average. Rates of homeownership in many counties are among the highest in the nation.¹² Families in Appalachia have changed over time, but many of these changes can be viewed as adaptations to new economic realities and shifts in public policies—especially welfare reform.

As shown in Table 1, household and family structure in Appalachia is similar to that of the United States as a whole. In 2000, Appalachia had a slightly higher share of married-couple

families and a lower share of families with children, but the overall distribution of households matched the national pattern. There are extensive geographic and racial variations in household and family structure within the Appalachian region however; those differences are the main focus of this report. There have also been shifts in marriage and family patterns since 1990 that have important implications for policymakers who want to improve the lives of Appalachian children and families.

Table 1
Household and Family Structure in the United States and Appalachia, 2000

	United States		Appalachia	
	Number (thousands)	Percent	Number (thousands)	Percent
Total households	105,480	100	8,995	100
Married couples	54,493	52	4,903	55
With children	24,836	24	2,046	23
Without children	29,658	28	2,857	32
Female householders	12,900	12	999	11
With children	7,562	7	555	6
Without children	5,338	5	444	5
Male householders	4,394	4	342	4
With children	2,191	2	171	2
Without children	2,203	2	170	2
Nonfamily households	33,693	32	2,752	31
People living alone	27,230	26	2,345	26

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

Female-Headed Families

The economic well-being of families and children in Appalachia and across the United States is closely linked to household and family structure. People living in female-headed families typically do not have access to the economic or human resources available to people in married-couple families.¹³ While part of the problem is that there are fewer potential earners in female-headed families, many of these families are also at a disadvantage because of problems

collecting child support payments from absent fathers. In 2000, only about 35 percent of female-headed families with children reported receiving child support or alimony payments.¹⁴

Not all female-headed families include children, however. In 2000, about three-fifths (59 percent) of female-headed families nationwide included children (56 percent in Appalachia). Other female-headed families consist of women living with their parents or other relatives. The increasing life expectancy in the United States has contributed to a higher share of families living with an elderly parent, especially women, who are more likely than men to provide care to parents with age-related disabilities.¹⁵

The growth in female-headed families has been widespread. During the 1990s, the proportion of female-headed families increased in Appalachia, every state, and the District of Columbia. The number of married-couple households in Appalachia increased by 3 percent during the 1990s, while the number of female-headed households increased over six times as fast (20 percent) during this period.

In 2000, there were nearly 1 million female-headed families in Appalachia, accounting for 16 percent of all families in the region (see Table 2). Nationwide, about 18 percent of families were headed by women in 2000. The share of female-headed families in Appalachia increased by 1.1 percentage points in Appalachia, compared with 1.5 percentage points nationwide.

Female-headed families are most often associated with minorities living urban areas, and data from the census indicate that the proportion of female-headed families was higher in Appalachia's metro counties (17 percent) than in nonmetro counties (15 percent). The non-Appalachian United States exhibited a similar pattern, but with a wider metro/nonmetro gap (19 percent versus 15 percent).

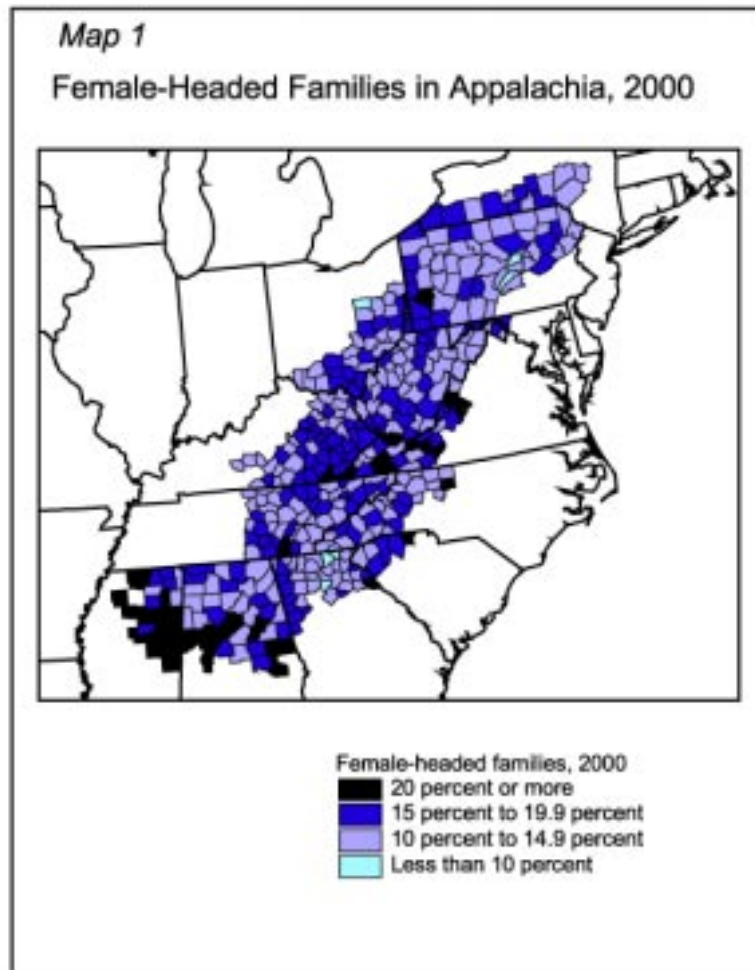
Table 2
Trends in Female-Headed Families in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

	1990			2000			Percent change (number of female-headed families)
	All families (thousands)	Female-headed families (thousands)	Percent	All families (thousands)	Female-headed families (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	65,049	10,382	16	71,787	12,900	18	24
Non-Appalachian U.S.	59,225	9,551	16	65,544	11,901	18	25
Metropolitan areas	48,056	8,088	17	53,403	10,043	19	24
Nonmetropolitan areas	11,169	1,463	13	12,140	1,858	15	27
Appalachia	5,824	830	14	6,244	999	16	20
Metropolitan areas	3,340	497	15	3,578	595	17	20
Nonmetropolitan areas	2,484	333	13	2,666	404	15	21
Distressed	754	115	15	779	134	17	16
Attainment	751	123	16	836	147	18	20
Competitive	520	66	13	601	88	15	32
Transitional	3,800	526	14	4,028	630	16	20
North	2,699	378	14	2,688	417	16	10
South	2,541	372	15	2,939	485	17	30
Central	585	80	14	616	96	16	20

Note: Includes families with or without children.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Counties with the highest share of female-headed families were located in the Southern black belt—counties with historically high numbers of African Americans (see Map 1). Of the 20 Appalachian counties with highest shares of female-headed families, 18 were located in Alabama or Mississippi. In 2000, Macon County, Ala. had the highest share of female-headed families in Appalachia (42 percent). The high share of female-headed families in Macon County puts the area at an economic disadvantage compared with most counties in the United States. In 1999, nearly half (47 percent) of female-headed families in the county had incomes below the poverty threshold.



Note: Includes families with or without children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

Three other counties—Noxubee County, Miss., Clay County, Miss., and Hale County, Ala.—had rates of female-headship that exceeded 30 percent. In 2000, there were 31 counties in which more than one in five families were headed by females. In 1990, there were only 17 counties that met this criterion.

Racial and Ethnic Differences in Female-Headed Families

The lower proportion of female-headed families in Appalachia is closely linked to the racial make-up of the region and the fact that minorities—who generally have higher rates of

female-headship—make up a relatively small proportion of Appalachia’s population. In 2000, minorities accounted for 12 percent of Appalachia’ population, compared with 31 percent nationwide.¹⁶

There are striking racial differences in the proportion of female-headed families (see Table 3). In 2000, rates of female-headship in the United States and Appalachia were highest among blacks and lowest among non-Hispanic whites, with estimates for Hispanics falling in between the other two groups. Black families were more than three times as likely as white families—and twice as likely as Hispanic families—to be headed by females. This is one of the major factors contributing to higher poverty rates in the African American population.

Table 3
Female-Headed Families in the United States and Appalachia, by Race/Ethnicity, 2000

	Percent of Female-Headed Families		
	Non-Hispanic white families	African American families	Hispanic families
U.S.	13	45	22
Non-Appalachian U.S.	13	45	22
Metropolitan areas	13	46	23
Nonmetropolitan areas	12	44	18
Appalachia	14	45	15
Metropolitan areas	14	45	16
Nonmetropolitan areas	14	43	14
Distressed	15	46	18
Attainment	13	46	14
Competitive	13	40	12
Transitional	14	44	17
North	14	47	24
South	13	44	13
Central	15	41	17

Note: Includes families with or without children.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

Among whites and blacks, the proportion of female-headed families in Appalachia was roughly equal to the proportion in the rest of the United States. Among Hispanics, however, the

share of female-headed families was substantially lower in Appalachia (15 percent), compared with the non-Appalachian United States (22 percent). Most Hispanics in Appalachia are of Mexican origin, but there are also increasing numbers of new immigrants from Central and South America. New immigrants are more likely to live in married-couple families compared with more established minority groups,¹⁷ which could account for the lower share of female-headed families among Hispanics in the Appalachian region.

Among Hispanics and blacks, the proportion of female-headed families was highest in Appalachia's Northern region, but for non-Hispanic whites, female-headed families were most common in Central Appalachia. Hispanics and blacks also had higher rates of female headship in metropolitan counties, while white families were equally likely to be headed by females in nonmetro and metro counties.

Married-Couple Families

Trends for married-couple families are inversely related to trends for female-headed families. Although the decline in married-couple families has been fairly widespread, married couples still make up the majority of families in the United States and in Appalachia. In 2000, about 79 percent of families in Appalachia (with or without children) were headed by married couples, compared with 76 percent nationwide (see Table 4). Metropolitan Appalachia had a higher share of married-couple families (78 percent) than metropolitan areas outside of the region (75 percent), but the proportion of married couples in rural counties was the same inside and outside of the Appalachian region (79 percent each). The share of married-couple families was slightly higher in Appalachia's Competitive and Transitional counties, compared with Distressed and Attainment counties.

Between 1990 and 2000, the share of married-couple families dropped throughout the United States and in Appalachia. In 1990, about 81 percent of families in Appalachia were made up of married couples, compared with 79 percent in 2000. In the U.S. as a whole, the share of married-couple families dropped from 79 percent to 76 percent during this period.

Table 4
Trends in Married-Couple Families in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

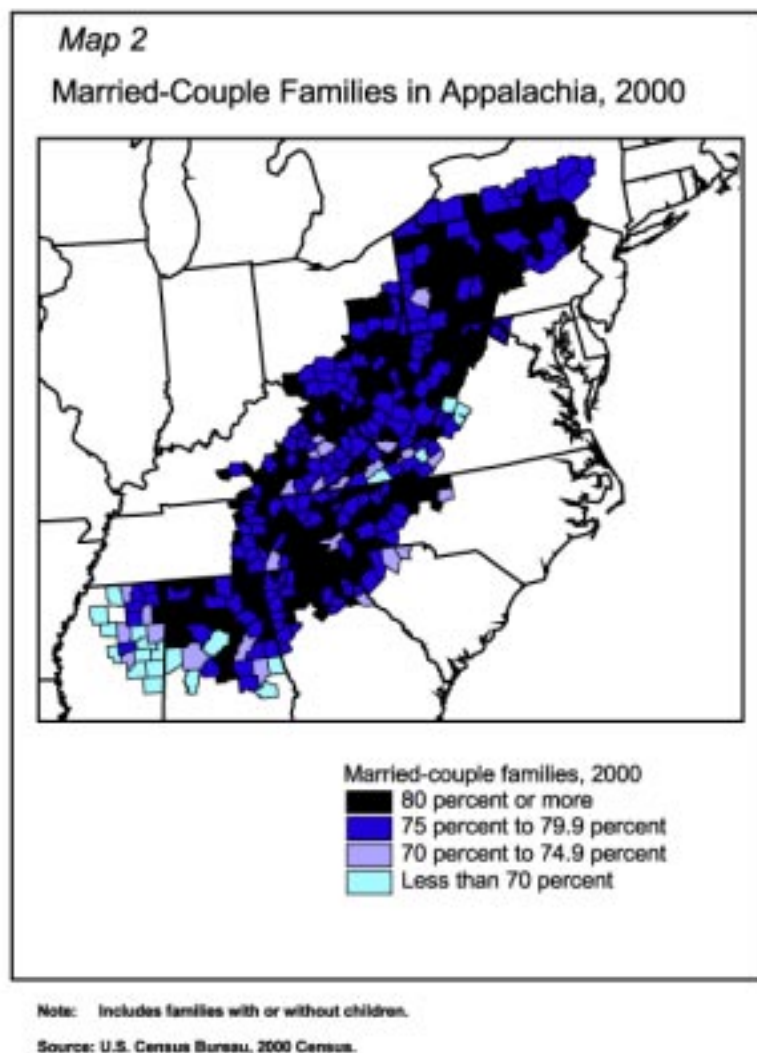
	1990			2000			Percent change (married-couple families)
	All families (thousands)	Married-couple families (thousands)	Percent	All families (thousands)	Married-couple families (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	65,049	51,718	80	71,787	54,493	76	5
Non-Appalachian U.S.	59,225	46,946	79	65,544	49,590	76	6
Metropolitan areas	48,056	37,679	78	53,403	39,994	75	6
Nonmetropolitan areas	11,169	9,267	83	12,140	9,596	79	4
Appalachia	5,824	4,772	82	6,244	4,903	79	3
Metropolitan areas	3,340	2,717	81	3,578	2,791	78	3
Nonmetropolitan areas	2,484	2,055	83	2,666	2,113	79	3
Distressed	754	609	81	779	601	77	-1
Attainment	751	599	80	836	645	77	8
Competitive	520	433	83	601	481	80	11
Transitional	3,800	3,131	82	4,028	3,176	79	1
North	2,699	2,213	82	2,688	2,117	79	-4
South	2,541	2,076	82	2,939	2,298	78	11
Central	585	483	83	616	488	79	1

Note: Includes families with or without children.

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Appalachian counties with the highest proportion of married-couple families in 2000 included Forsyth County, Ga., Holmes County, Ohio, and Towns County, Ga. (88 percent each). In 2000, there were 373 counties in Appalachia (out of 410) where 75 percent or more families were headed by married couples. This represents a slight decrease compared with the 1990

number (394 counties). The share of married-couple households was lowest in the Southern black-belt counties (see Map 2).



Families with Children

The inability to attract and retain families with children is one of the major challenges facing policymakers in the Appalachian region. In the last decade, much of the job growth in the eastern United States has occurred in urban and suburban areas outside or on the fringes of the Appalachian region—particularly in the South.¹⁸ Many young people who are starting families have moved from Appalachia’s interior counties to these areas of job growth. The families who

are left behind often cannot afford the child care, health care, and education expenses associated with raising children that wealthier families take for granted.

Table 5
Trends in Families with Children in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

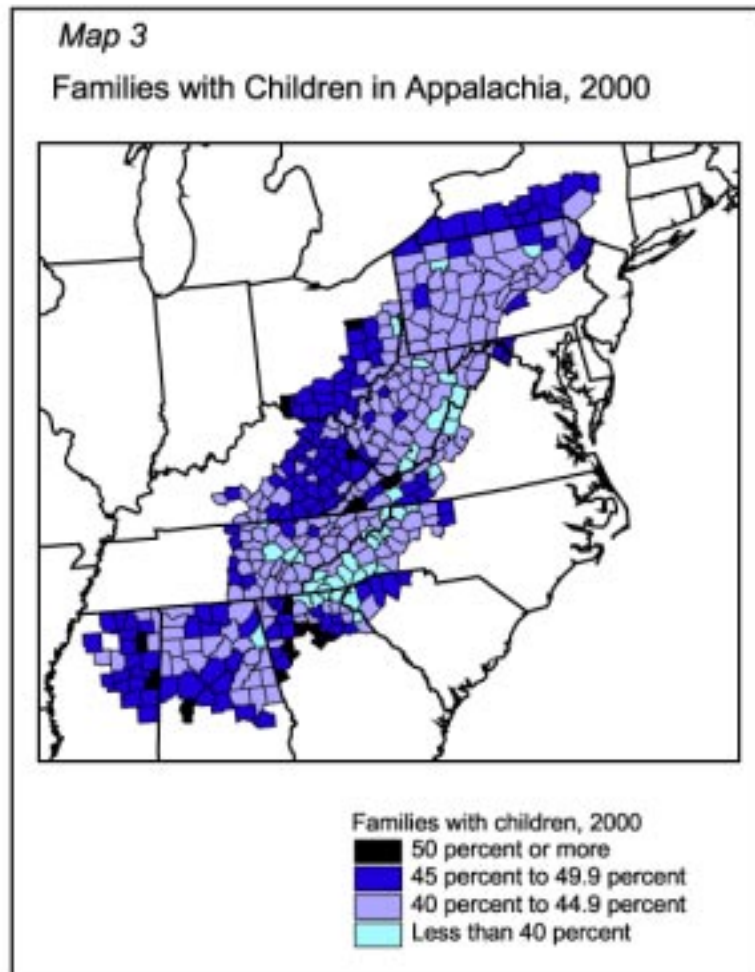
	1990			2000			Percent change (families with kids)
	All families (thousands)	Families with kids (thousands)	Percent	All families (thousands)	Families with kids (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	65,049	31,365	48	71,787	34,588	48	10
Non-Appalachian U.S.	59,225	28,678	48	65,544	31,816	49	11
Metropolitan areas	48,056	23,296	48	53,403	26,242	49	13
Nonmetropolitan areas	11,169	5,382	48	12,140	5,574	46	4
Appalachia	5,824	2,686	46	6,244	2,772	44	3
Metropolitan areas	3,340	1,518	45	3,578	1,604	45	6
Nonmetropolitan areas	2,484	1,169	47	2,666	1,168	44	0
Distressed	754	373	49	779	345	44	-7
Attainment	751	337	45	836	389	47	15
Competitive	520	245	47	601	279	46	14
Transitional	3,800	1,731	46	4,028	1,759	44	2
North	2,699	1,222	45	2,688	1,174	44	-4
South	2,541	1,177	46	2,939	1,329	45	13
Central	585	287	49	616	270	44	-6

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

In 2000, there were about 2.7 million families in Appalachia with children,¹⁹ accounting for about 44 percent of all families (see Table 5). Outside of the Appalachian region, about 49 percent of families included children in 2000. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of families with children increased by 10 percent nationwide, but by only 3 percent in Appalachia. Both the Northern and Central regions of Appalachia experienced decreases in the number of families with children during the 1990s. In Southern Appalachia, however, the increase in the number of families with children (13 percent) exceeded the national average, offsetting the losses in the

other regions. The growth of family households in the South is an important trend and reflects the growing economic divide between Appalachia's fast-growing Southern counties and the Northern and Central regions. Suburban counties in the Atlanta metropolitan area have attracted young families who are drawn to the good schools, employment opportunities, and other amenities that are lacking in many rural areas.

Map 3 shows the concentration of families with children in Southern Appalachia and in counties bordering the Appalachian region. Of the 10 Appalachian counties with the highest percentage of families with children in 2000, six were located in Georgia, mostly in suburbs of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Other counties in the top ten included Clermont County, Ohio, Hale County, Ala., Holmes County, Ohio, and Martin County, Ky. Paulding County, Ga. had the highest share of families with children in 2000 (57 percent).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

There tends to be an inverse relationship between the share of families with children and the share of households with people age 65 and older. For example, Towns County, Ga., which had the lowest share of households with children in 2000 (29 percent), also had the highest share of households with people age 65 and older in 2000 (40 percent). Most counties with high proportions of people 65 and older were located in Northern and Central counties that have been losing population for several decades. These counties are “aging in place” because there are not enough young families staying in or moving to the area to offset the graying of the resident population.

Single-Parent Families with Children

In the United States, the number of single-parent families has risen dramatically over the past three decades, causing considerable concern among policymakers and the public. The percentage of single-parent households with children increased rapidly during the early 1990s but has leveled off during the last five years.²⁰ There are several factors that may have contributed to the stabilization in single-parent families: the rapid economic growth during the late 1990s, expanded programs to support low-income working families, welfare reform legislation, increased immigration, the decline in teen childbearing, and the increase in joint custody divorces.²¹

While local social and cultural norms may influence the situation for children living in single-parent families (for example, those in single-parent families may benefit from extended family support), children growing up in single-parent families are still at an economic disadvantage relative to children growing up in families with both parents at home. In Appalachia, given the shortage of job opportunities and affordable housing, single-parent families are at high risk of being jobless and poor and are likely to have difficulty pulling themselves out of poverty. Research has shown that in rural areas, 80 percent of poor children in female-headed households remained poor for three years or more, compared with 47 percent in metro areas.²²

The majority of single-parent families with children are headed by women. During the 1990s, however, the number of male-headed families with children increased by 72 percent, to 2.2 million. In Appalachia, the number of male-headed families with kids increased by 85 percent, to 171,000. The rising proportion of male-headed families signals more widespread involvement by divorced, separated, and never-married fathers in their children's lives.

However, the precise character of the change is ambiguous: The census data do not indicate whether fathers are spending more time with their children or are simply more likely to have or share custody.²³

In 2000, female-headed families still accounted for 78 percent of all single-parent families nationwide (76 percent in Appalachia). Patterns of growth in female-headed families with children were similar to those for female-headed families as a whole. There was a 29 percent increase in female-headed families with children in Appalachia during the 1990s (see Table 6).

In 2000, female-headed households accounted for 20 percent of all families with own children in the Appalachian region, slightly less than the national average (22 percent). Competitive Appalachian counties had a relatively low proportion of female-headed families with children (18 percent), compared with the other three economic areas.

Table 6

Trends in Female-Headed Families with Children in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

	1990			2000			Percent change (female headed families with kids)
	Total families with kids (thousands)	Female-headed families with kids (thousands)	Percent	Total families with kids (thousands)	Female-headed families with kids (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	31,365	5,865	19	34,588	7,562	22	29
Non-Appalachian U.S.	28,678	5,436	19	31,816	7,007	22	29
Metropolitan areas	23,296	4,563	20	26,242	5,870	22	29
Nonmetropolitan areas	5,382	873	16	5,574	1,137	20	30
Appalachia	2,686	429	16	2,772	555	20	29
Metropolitan areas	1,518	254	17	1,604	331	21	30
Nonmetropolitan areas	1,169	175	15	1,168	224	19	28
Distressed	373	62	17	345	73	21	18
Attainment	337	62	18	389	82	21	33
Competitive	245	35	14	279	51	18	44
Transitional	1,731	270	16	1,759	349	20	29
North	1,222	194	16	1,174	231	20	19
South	1,177	194	17	1,329	273	21	40
Central	287	41	14	270	52	19	26

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Grandparents as Caregivers

In Appalachia, as elsewhere, it is common for grandparents to provide child care while parents are working, and in many households, grandparents are the primary caregivers for young children. For the 2000 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau added a new question to measure the extent to which grandparents provided care to their grandchildren. In Appalachia, there were just over 400,000 grandparents who lived with their grandchildren in 2000, and half (50 percent) reported that they were “responsible for most of the basic needs” of one or more of their co-

resident grandchildren (see Table 7). These statistics show the critical role that grandparents have as caregivers in the Appalachian region. In the United States as a whole, only 42 percent of grandparents who lived with their grandchildren reported being responsible for their care.

Table 7
Grandparents Living with Grandchildren and Providing Care in Appalachia, 2000

	Total grandparents living with grandchildren (thousands)	With caregiving responsibility (thousands)	Percent
U.S.	5,772	2,427	42
Non-Appalachian U.S.	5,370	2,227	41
Metropolitan areas	4,541	1,791	39
Nonmetropolitan areas	829	436	53
Appalachia	402	199	50
Metropolitan Appalachia	227	108	48
Nonmetropolitan Appalachia	175	91	52
Distressed	57	32	56
Attainment	52	23	44
Competitive	40	18	46
Transitional	253	126	50
North	145	65	45
South	217	112	52
Central	40	22	55

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Although we do not have comparable data on grandparents from the 1990 Census, prior research has shown that this is not a new phenomenon. Extended families have long played an important role in providing child care in place of parents who are not available or able to provide for their children's basic needs. High poverty and unemployment rates in Appalachia probably contribute to the higher proportion of grandparents providing care in the region. Grandparents can also provide care in place of parents who are absent because of substance abuse, child abuse, neglect, divorce, and AIDS.²⁴

In 2000, the share of grandparents as caregivers was higher in Appalachia's nonmetropolitan counties (52 percent) compared with metropolitan counties (48 percent). The proportion of grandparents providing care in Appalachia's metro areas far exceeded the proportion in metro counties outside Appalachia (39 percent). Appalachia's Distressed counties had the highest share of grandparents as caregivers (56 percent), while Attainment counties had the lowest (44 percent). Central Appalachia had a higher proportion of grandparents providing care (55 percent) than the Southern (52 percent) or Northern regions (45 percent).

Stepchildren and Adopted Children.

The United States has one of the highest remarriage rates in the world, and most of these remarriages involve children, resulting in a large and growing number of stepchildren.²⁵ In 2000, there were 4.4 million stepchildren of the householder identified in the census, accounting for 5.2 percent of all "own" children. ("Own" children include sons or daughters of the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.) A recent report by the U.S. Census Bureau found that stepchildren are less likely to live in poverty compared with biological children.²⁶ Research has also shown, however, that remarriage can reduce the amount of time children spend with nonresident parents and may negatively affect children's emotional well-being.²⁷

In 2000, there were also 2.1 million adopted children of the householder, accounting for 2.5 percent of all own children. Adopted children are more likely to reside in families with higher incomes and educational attainment than biological children, factors that are associated positively with child well-being. Adopted children are also more likely to have special needs related to disabilities.²⁸

In Appalachia, there were approximately 400,000 stepchildren of the householder in 2000, accounting for 6 percent of all own children. The proportion of stepchildren was higher in the Central and Southern Appalachian regions (7 percent each), compared with Northern Appalachia (5 percent). There were also 153,000 adopted children living in Appalachia in 2000, accounting for 2 percent of own children.

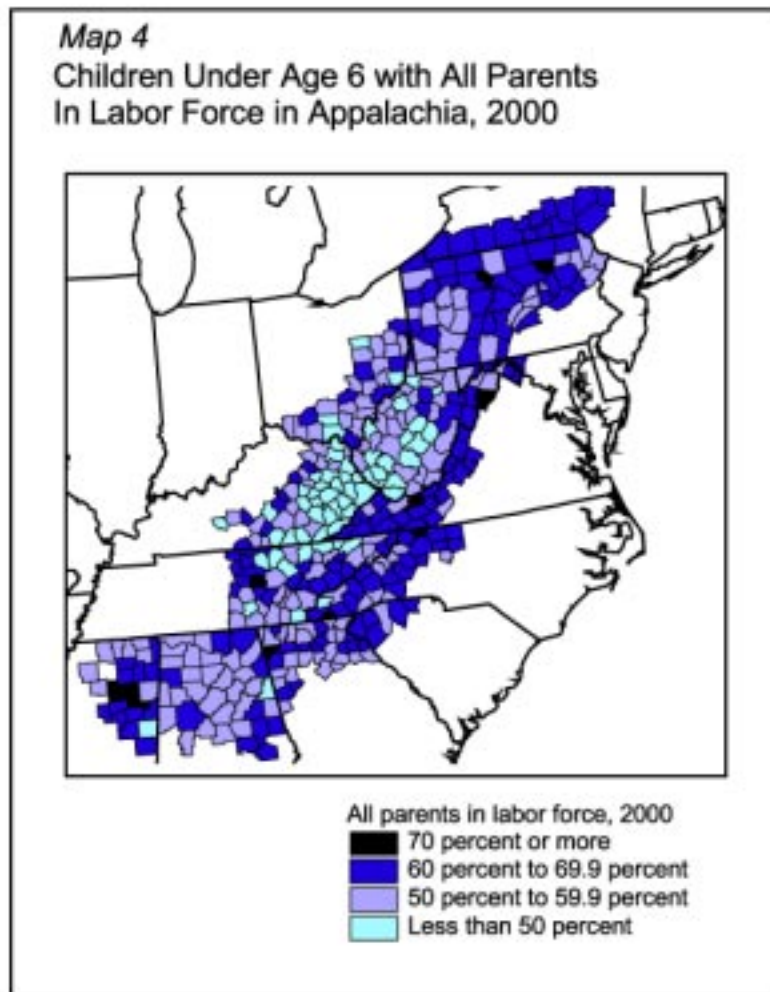
Combined, there are more than half a million stepchildren and adopted children living in the Appalachian region. Although these children probably start their lives with an economic advantage compared with biological children, they may require extra attention because of their unique physical and/or emotional needs.

The Need for Child Care

With changes in welfare legislation and the focus on shifting poor families from welfare to work, one of the major public policy challenges is to provide access to adequate and affordable child care services for low-income working families. Nationwide, 59 percent of children under age 6 lived in families with all parents in the labor force, creating an estimated demand for child care for 12.8 million young children in 2000.²⁹ The need for child care is estimated to be slightly lower in Appalachia (58 percent), in part because there are more families with parents who are not in the labor force.

In more remote parts of Appalachia and in rural areas across the United States, organized child care centers are scarce and unaffordable for many low-income families.³⁰ Families in rural communities are more likely to rely on informal child care arrangements with friends or relatives.³¹ But for families without these informal supports, the lack of organized child care services may be a major obstacle in making the transition from welfare to work. National and

state programs provide subsidies for child care but these programs have been underused in remote, rural areas.³² The quality of child care services in Appalachia is also a serious concern, since there are fewer skilled providers in rural communities.³³ Research has shown that the quality of care—in terms of staff-child ratios, training, turnover rates, and staff salaries—can affect the cognitive development and language skills of children.³⁴



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

As indicated in Map 4, the need for child care is lowest in Appalachia's Central region, where a relatively large number of parents are not in the labor force. It is likely, however, that

the lack of affordable child care in the region is one of the factors limiting labor force participation by women. In Central Appalachia, only 58 percent of men and 45 percent of women ages 16 and older were in the labor force in 2000. Nationwide, the proportions of men and women in the labor force were 71 percent and 58 percent respectively.

Nonfamily Households

Another measure of the transformation in household and family structure is the growth in nonfamily households. Nonfamily households consist of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or a householder sharing living quarters with nonrelatives. Typically, these are homes headed by young singles or older people living alone. Increasingly, they also consist of unmarried couples. The growth of nonfamily households is linked to later ages at marriage, lower fertility rates, and longer life expectancies—all of which reduce the amount of time spent in married-couple families with children over the life course.

Between 1990 and 2000, the growth in the number of nonfamily households far exceeded growth in the number family households in Appalachia and across the United States. The number of nonfamily households in Appalachia increased by 30 percent during the 1990s (see Table 8), while the number of family households increased by only 10 percent. The 2000 Census marks a turning point for households in the Appalachian region. For the first time, the number of nonfamily households in Appalachia (2.8 million) has drawn roughly equal with the number of families with children. Although the share of nonfamily households is slightly lower in Appalachia (31 percent) compared with the national average (32 percent), the growth rate of nonfamily households is faster in the Appalachian region.

Table 8

Trends in Nonfamily Households in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

	1990			2000			Percent change (nonfamily households)
	All households (thousands)	Nonfamily households (thousands)	Percent	All households (thousands)	Nonfamily households (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	91,947	26,944	29	105,480	33,693	32	25
Non-Appalachian U.S.	84,003	24,824	30	96,485	30,941	32	25
Metropolitan areas	68,760	20,731	30	79,136	25,733	33	24
Nonmetropolitan areas	15,242	4,093	27	17,349	5,208	30	27
Appalachia	7,945	2,120	27	8,995	2,752	31	30
Metropolitan areas	4,623	1,281	28	5,217	1,639	31	28
Nonmetropolitan areas	3,322	839	25	3,779	1,113	29	33
Distressed	990	236	24	1,092	314	29	33
Attainment	1,079	328	30	1,248	412	33	26
Competitive	697	178	25	847	246	29	38
Transitional	5,179	1,379	27	5,808	1,780	31	29
North	3,773	1,073	28	3,989	1,300	33	21
South	3,417	876	26	4,152	1,212	29	38
Central	755	171	23	855	239	28	40

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Nonfamily households deserve attention for several reasons. In urban areas, many nonfamily households are headed by young, single, professionals, who can attract businesses and help establish a critical threshold for economic development.³⁵ At the other end of the age scale, policymakers need to pay attention to the number of older people living alone, who are more likely to live in low-income households and to have special health care needs. One of the ongoing problems in Appalachia is the deficit of young adults relative to the growing number of people age 65 and older. In 2000, one in five nonfamily households in Appalachia (20 percent) were headed by people ages 15 to 34, and 37 percent were headed by people age 65 and older.

Nationwide, people ages 15 to 34 accounted for a quarter of U.S. nonfamily households (25 percent), while 31 percent were headed by older Americans (see Table 9). Nonfamily households in Appalachia's Distressed counties were even more likely to be headed by people age 65 and older (41 percent). This will become a critical issue after 2010, when the baby boom cohort begins to reach retirement age.

Table 9
Age Distribution of Nonfamily Households in the United States and Appalachia, 2000

	Percent distribution by age of householder		
	15 to 34	35 to 64	65 and older
U.S.	25	44	31
Non-Appalachian U.S.	25	45	30
Metropolitan areas	26	45	29
Non-metropolitan areas	18	43	39
Appalachia	20	43	37
Metropolitan Appalachia	22	43	35
Non-metropolitan Appalachia	18	43	39
Distressed	15	44	41
Attainment	25	44	31
Competitive	22	46	32
Transitional	20	42	38
North	20	41	40
South	22	45	33

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

People living alone

Most nonfamily households are headed by people living alone. In 2000, over a quarter of all households in the United States and Appalachia were one-person households. The percentage of single-person households in the United States increased slightly between 1990 and 2000, from 25 percent to 26 percent (see Table 10). In Appalachia, the share of single-person households increased from 24 percent to 26 percent during the 1990s. The proportion of single-person households in 2000 was slightly higher in Appalachia's metro areas (27 percent) than in

nonmetro areas (25 percent), and Attainment counties had a higher share of such households (28 percent) than Appalachia's other economic regions.

Table 10

Trends in Single-Person Households in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

	1990			2000			Percent change (householder living alone)
	Total households (thousands)	Householder living alone (thousands)	Percent	Total households (thousands)	Householder living alone (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	91,947	22,580	25	105,480	27,230	26	21
Non-Appalachian U.S.	84,003	20,685	25	96,485	24,885	26	20
Metropolitan areas	68,760	17,054	25	79,136	20,491	26	20
Nonmetropolitan areas	15,242	3,631	24	17,349	4,394	25	21
Appalachia	7,945	1,896	24	8,995	2,345	26	24
Metropolitan areas	4,623	1,139	25	5,217	1,391	27	22
Nonmetropolitan areas	3,322	756	23	3,779	954	25	26
Distressed	990	219	22	1,092	277	25	26
Attainment	1,079	286	26	1,248	346	28	21
Competitive	697	155	22	847	205	24	32
Transitional	5,179	1,235	24	5,808	1,517	26	23
North	3,773	953	25	3,989	1,102	28	16
South	3,417	783	23	4,152	1,030	25	32
Central	755	160	21	855	213	25	33

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Older Americans are more likely than people in other age groups to be living alone.

People age 65 and older headed 41 percent of single-person households in Appalachia, compared with 36 percent nationwide (see Table 11). In Appalachia and across the United States, the share of single-person household headed by people age 65 or older decreased since 1990, reflecting the rising age at marriage and corresponding growth in single-person households headed by young adults. The share of single-person households headed by older Americans is likely to increase when baby boomers start to reach retirement age.

Table 11

Trends in People Age 65 and Older Living Alone in the United States and Appalachia, 1990 to 2000

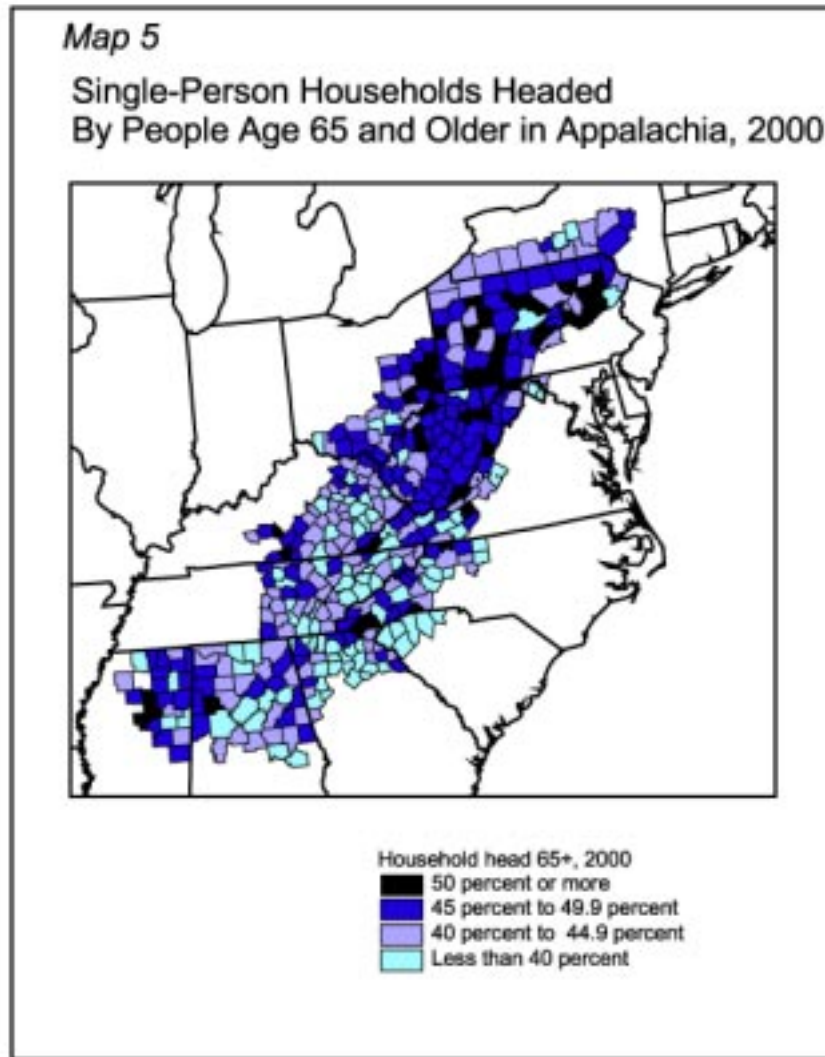
	1990			2000			Percent change (people 65+ living alone)
	Householder living alone (thousands)	People 65+ living alone (thousands)	Percent	Householder living alone (thousands)	People 65+ living alone (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	22,580	8,825	39	27,230	9,723	36	10
Non-Appalachian U.S.	20,685	7,941	38	24,885	8,754	35	10
Metropolitan areas	17,054	6,140	36	20,491	6,834	33	11
Nonmetropolitan areas	3,631	1,801	50	4,394	1,921	44	7
Appalachia	1,896	884	47	2,345	968	41	10
Metropolitan areas	1,139	505	44	1,391	550	40	9
Nonmetropolitan areas	756	379	50	954	418	44	10
Distressed	219	114	52	277	123	44	8
Attainment	286	111	39	346	120	35	8
Competitive	155	62	40	205	75	36	21
Transitional	1,235	597	48	1,517	650	43	9
North	953	471	49	1,102	492	45	5
South	783	332	42	1,030	384	37	16
Central	160	81	51	213	92	43	14

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

In 2000, older people accounted for a larger share of single-person households in Appalachia’s rural counties (44 percent) than in metropolitan counties (40 percent). This difference was much sharper outside the Appalachian region, however. About 44 percent of single-person households in nonmetro areas were headed by people age 65 and older, compared with 33 percent in metro areas.

Single-person households headed by older Americans were most common in Northern Appalachia (45 percent) and least common in the Southern region (37 percent). Among Appalachia’s economic development regions, Distressed counties had the highest share of single-elderly households (44 percent) and Attainment counties had the lowest (35 percent). At the

local level, Schuylkill County, Penn., and Clay County, N.C., had the highest shares of single-elderly households in the Appalachian region (55 percent each). Ten of the top 20 counties were located in Pennsylvania (see Map 5).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Cohabitation

The increasing age at marriage in the United States has been associated with a growing number of unmarried couples who are sharing living quarters. Most of the literature on

cohabitation has focused on opposite-sex couples, but the 2000 Census also provides information about same-sex couples. In 2000, about 4.3 percent of all U.S. households were headed by opposite-sex unmarried couples (see Table 12). In Appalachia, the share of cohabiting couples was slightly lower (3.6 percent). The proportion of cohabiting male-female couples in Northern Appalachia equaled the proportion in the U.S. as a whole (4.3 percent), while rates of cohabitation were lower in Central (2.9 percent) and Southern Appalachia (3.0 percent). *Same-sex* cohabiting couples accounted for a relatively small share of households in 2000 in Appalachia (0.4 percent) and in the United States as a whole (0.6 percent).

Table 12
Cohabitation in the United States and Appalachia, 2000

	Total Households (thousands)	Male-female unmarried- partner households (thousands)	Percent	Same-sex male-partner households (thousands)	Percent	Same-sex female-partner households (thousands)	Percent
U.S.	105,539	4,572	4.3	333	0.3	326	0.3
Non-Appalachian U.S.	96,539	4,249	4.4	313	0.3	304	0.3
Metropolitan areas	79,179	3,530	4.5	275	0.3	261	0.3
Nonmetropolitan areas	17,359	718	4.1	37	0.2	42	0.2
Appalachia	9,000	323	3.6	20	0.2	22	0.2
Metropolitan areas	5,220	185	3.5	12	0.2	13	0.3
Nonmetropolitan areas	3,781	139	3.7	8	0.2	9	0.2
Distressed	1,093	36	3.3	2	0.2	3	0.2
Attainment	1,249	43	3.4	3	0.3	4	0.3
Competitive	847	32	3.7	2	0.3	3	0.3
Transitional	5,811	213	3.7	12	0.2	14	0.2
North	3,991	172	4.3	8	0.2	9	0.2
South	4,153	126	3.0	10	0.2	11	0.3
Central	856	25	2.9	2	0.2	2	0.2

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

Family Structure and Poverty

There are significant economic consequences associated with different household and family types: whether a family is headed by a married couple or a single parent, whether or not a household has children, and whether a household is headed by an older person living alone or an elderly married couple. Female-headed families are of particular concern because of their high poverty rates compared with other family types, and because they are associated with negative outcomes for children that go beyond the effects of economic disadvantage.

Table 13 shows poverty rates in the United States and Appalachia in 1999 for different types of households and families. In every type of household, poverty rates in Appalachia in 1999 were higher than the national average. However, nonfamily households exhibited the biggest difference. Nearly a quarter of nonfamily households in Appalachia (23 percent) were below poverty in 1999, compared with 17 percent nationwide. This has important implications for future poverty rates in Appalachia, because the number of nonfamily households—especially older people living alone—is increasing at a rapid pace.

Table 13
Poverty Status of Households in the United States and in Appalachia, by Household Type, 1999

Type of Household	United States			Appalachia		
	Number of households (thousands)	In poverty (thousands)	Percent	Number of households (thousands)	In poverty (thousands)	Percent
Family households	72,262	6,621	9	6,278	640	10
Married-couple	55,458	2,719	5	4,980	300	6
Male-headed	4,303	586	14	332	53	16
Female-headed	12,501	3,316	27	966	287	30
Nonfamily households	33,277	5,783	17	2,723	632	23

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

Poverty rates in 1999 were highest in female-headed families. Census 2000 data indicate that nearly a third of female-headed families in Appalachia (30 percent) were living in poverty in 1999, compared with 27 percent of female-headed families nationwide (see Table 14). The proportion of female-headed families in poverty was highest, by far, in Appalachia's Central region (40 percent). Poverty rates were also substantially higher in Appalachia's rural counties (34 percent) compared with metro counties (27 percent).

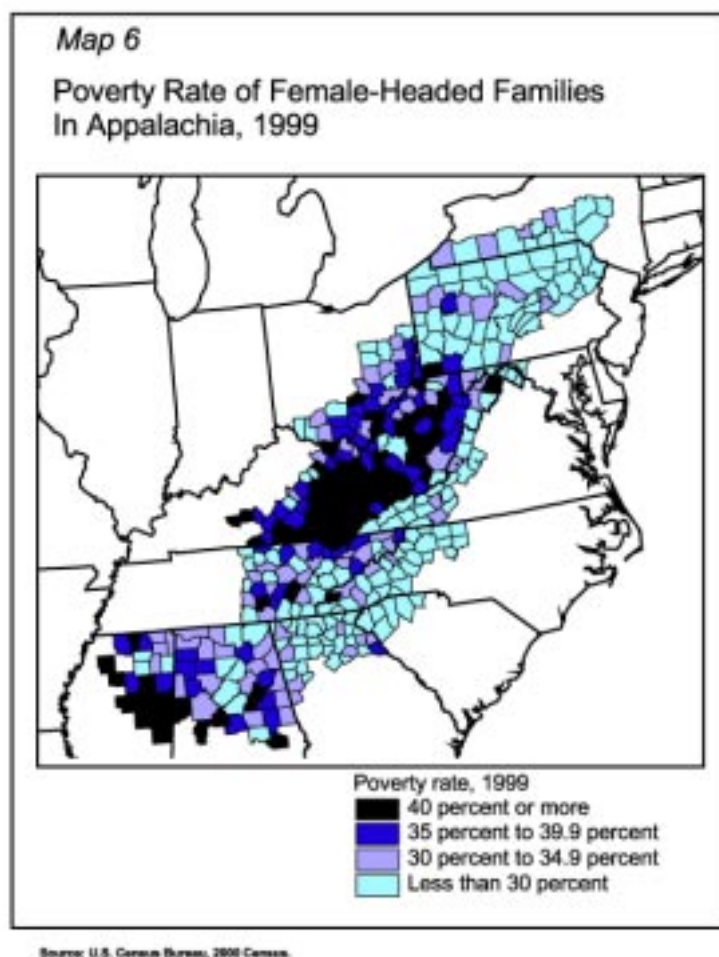
Table 14
Trends in Female-Headed Families Living in Poverty in the United States and Appalachia, 1989 to 1999

	1989			1999			Percent change (number living in poverty)
	Female-headed families (thousands)	Living in poverty (thousands)	Percent	Female-headed families (thousands)	Living in poverty (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	10,382	3,230	31	12,501	3,316	27	3
Non-Appalachian U.S.	9,551	2,948	31	11,535	3,029	26	3
Metropolitan areas	8,088	2,363	29	9,733	2,438	25	3
Nonmetropolitan areas	1,463	585	40	1,802	591	33	1
Appalachia	830	282	34	966	287	30	2
Metropolitan areas	497	155	31	577	155	27	0
Nonmetropolitan areas	333	127	38	389	132	34	4
Distressed	115	57	49	130	55	42	-3
Attainment	123	34	28	143	33	23	-1
Competitive	66	17	26	83	20	24	18
Transitional	526	174	33	610	179	29	2
North	378	126	33	403	114	28	-9
South	372	119	32	469	135	29	13
Central	80	37	46	94	38	40	2

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

Although the number of female-headed families in Appalachia increased sharply during the 1990s, the poverty rate in female-headed families fell by 4 percentage points. As a result of

these offsetting factors, the number of poor, female-headed families in 1999 (287,000) was about equal to the number in 1989 (282,000).



Given the national focus on single mothers living in inner-city areas, it is often assumed that female-headed families account for the majority of families living in poverty. In reality, they account for half (50 percent) of poor families nationwide. In Appalachia, female-headed families accounted for 45 percent of poor families in 1999. And female-headed families in Central Appalachia accounted for only about a third (34 percent) of families living in poverty, with married couples making up the large majority of poor families. In the context of high unemployment rates and low wages, having two potential earners in the households is not

sufficient to lift many families above the poverty level. With the exception of black-belt counties in Alabama and Mississippi, female-headed families accounted for a relatively small proportion of poor families in most counties in Appalachia, distinguishing the region from surrounding areas (see Map 6).

Presence of Children

Research has shown that the presence of children is associated with higher poverty rates for families in Appalachia.³⁶ In 1999, the proportion of female-headed families with children living in poverty was 40 percent—about 10 percentage points higher than female-headed families as a whole (see Table 15). The economic disadvantage of having children is magnified in the poorest areas of the Appalachian region. Over half (52 percent) of female-headed families with kids in Central Appalachia were poor in 1999. Remarkably, this still represents a substantial improvement over the proportion a decade earlier (61 percent).

Table 15
Trends in Female-Headed Families With Children Living in Poverty in the United States and Appalachia, 1989 to 1999

	1989			1999			Percent change (number living in poverty)
	Female-headed families with kids (thousands)	Living in poverty (thousands)	Percent	Female-headed families with kids (thousands)	Living in poverty (thousands)	Percent poverty	
U.S.	6,783	2,867	42	8,575	2,940	34	3
Non-Appalachian U.S.	6,282	2,629	42	7,953	2,693	34	2
Metropolitan areas	5,275	2,113	40	6,677	2,170	33	3
Nonmetropolitan areas	1,007	516	51	1,276	522	41	1
Appalachia	501	238	48	622	248	40	4
Metropolitan areas	296	133	45	371	136	37	2
Nonmetropolitan areas	205	106	52	251	112	45	6
Distressed	73	47	64	84	46	54	-1
Attainment	72	29	40	92	29	32	1
Competitive	41	15	36	56	18	32	20

Transitional	315	148	47	389	155	40	5
North	219	109	50	250	101	40	-8
South	234	100	43	312	116	37	16
Central	48	29	61	60	31	52	7

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

When welfare reform legislation was passed in 1996, there were concerns that declines in public assistance income would result in higher poverty rates among single-parent families with children.³⁷ Census data show, however, that between 1989 and 1999, the share of female-headed families with children living below the poverty threshold decreased from 48 percent to 40 percent. Although poverty rates for female-headed families have declined, they are still high relative to other family types.

Table 16

Female-Headed Families With Children Living in Poverty in the United States and Appalachia, by Race/Ethnicity, 1999

	Percent Living in Poverty		
	Non-Hispanic white	African American	Hispanic
U.S.	26	42	45
Non-Appalachian U.S.	25	42	44
Metropolitan areas	22	40	44
Nonmetropolitan areas	34	54	53
Appalachia	37	46	48
Metropolitan areas	33	44	48
Nonmetropolitan areas	43	52	48
Distressed	54	57	47
Attainment	23	42	46
Competitive	28	45	42
Transitional	37	47	51
North	38	50	56
South	32	45	43
Central	53	50	49

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 2000 Census.

There are also important differences in poverty rates by race and ethnicity (see Table 16). Nationwide, female-headed Hispanic families with children were the most likely to live in poverty (45 percent), followed by African Americans (42 percent) and non-Hispanic whites (26 percent). Appalachia showed a similar pattern, with 48 percent of Hispanic, female-headed families in poverty, compared with 46 percent of blacks and 37 percent of whites. However, in Appalachia's Central region, the pattern was reversed. White, female-headed families with kids had the highest poverty rate (53 percent), followed by blacks (50 percent), and Hispanics (49 percent). The uniformly high poverty rates in the Central region suggest that there are broad-based economic problems beyond the effects of family structure and racial disparities that need to be addressed in that area.

People Age 65 and Older

Older Americans living alone are also at higher risk of living in poverty. In Appalachia, poverty in old age reflects the challenges of accumulating wealth and property in an economically depressed area. Poverty during working ages is carried over into retirement ages and can have serious consequences for the health and well-being of older Americans.³⁸

Table 17
Trends in People Age 65 and Older Living Alone and in Poverty in the United States and Appalachia, 1989 to 1999

	1989			1999			Percent change (number living in poverty)
	People 65+ living alone (thousands)	In poverty (thousands)	Percent	People 65+ living alone (thousands)	In poverty (thousands)	Percent	
U.S.	8,989	2,240	25	9,849	1,814	18	-19
Non-Appalachian U.S.	8,088	1,951	24	8,871	1,589	18	-19
Metropolitan areas	6,264	1,345	21	6,926	1,147	17	-15
Nonmetropolitan areas	1,824	606	33	1,944	442	23	-27

Appalachia	901	289	32	979	225	23	-22
Metropolitan areas	516	146	28	557	111	20	-24
Nonmetropolitan areas	385	144	37	422	114	27	-21
Distressed	116	48	41	124	39	31	-18
Attainment	114	28	24	123	21	17	-22
Competitive	63	19	30	75	15	20	-21
Transitional	608	195	32	657	150	23	-23
North	479	116	24	497	89	18	-23
South	341	139	41	388	107	27	-24
Central	82	34	42	94	30	32	-14

Source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses.

In Appalachia, about 23 percent of people age 65 and older living alone were poor in 1999 (see Table 17). Nearly a third (32 percent) of older Americans living alone in Central Appalachia were poor, while poverty rates were considerably lower in the Northern region (18 percent). There were five counties in Central and Southern Appalachia where poverty rates among older people living alone exceeded 50 percent. In addition to the potential negative effects on the health and well-being of older Americans, these high poverty rates create a potential burden for younger family members.

Between 1990 and 2000, there was a significant decrease in the share of older Americans living alone who were poor: from 25 percent to 18 percent nationwide, and from 32 percent to 23 percent in Appalachia.

Conclusion

This report has focused on family structure as it relates to high poverty rates and joblessness in Appalachia, but it is important to balance these challenges with the good news about families in the region. The proportion of married couples in Appalachia is remarkably high, exceeding the national average even in the most distressed counties. The high proportion of people age 65 and older is generally discussed in terms of the burden on taxpayers and the health care system, but in Appalachia, older Americans also play a critical role as caregivers for young children. This is especially important given the scarcity of organized child care facilities in the region. Although families in Appalachia have high poverty rates, the proportion of families living in poverty dropped dramatically during the 1990s, suggesting that many families benefited from the strong economic growth, and possibly the changes in the welfare system, that took place during that decade.

The Future for Families in Appalachia

The major problems for families in Appalachia are coming in the future, unless steps are taken to prevent them. The fastest-growing households in Appalachia (nonfamily households and those headed by females) are also the households with the highest poverty rates. The increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the region will accelerate the growth in female-headed families. Female-headed families are typically associated with the African American population, but female headship is also an important issue for the growing Hispanic population, especially in Appalachia's Northern region. It will be difficult to improve the situation for minorities in the region until policymakers address the needs of female-headed families. The number of nonfamily households—especially those headed by people age 65 and older—is also growing at

a rapid pace. Supporting elderly relatives will put a strain on many low-income families, and policymakers will need to find ways, as through health care subsidies, to assist older Americans with special health care needs.

A growing number of public policy initiatives have been launched at the national and state level to strengthen families. Some states have instituted policies to encourage marriage—citing the benefits that accrue to children living in married-couple families. One of the primary goals of the welfare reform legislation passed in 1996 was to “encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”³⁹ Issues that affect families and children, including child care, health care, education, and family planning, are increasingly the focus of debates in national, state, and local election campaigns. In recent years, many of the programs that support families—including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families—have passed from the federal government to states that are now struggling with the need to provide services in the face of large budget deficits.

In Appalachia, policies to promote marriage are not likely to have significant benefits for families. Most of the poor families in Appalachia are headed by married couples, and the number of nonfamily households in Appalachia has drawn equal with the number of families with children. Therefore, promoting two-parent families will not solve the underlying economic problems in the region. Future economic growth in Appalachia depends on successes in providing jobs to families, as well as providing access to transportation, affordable rental housing, child care, and health care, to help families make the transition to the labor force. The deficit of families with children and young adults also creates a serious obstacle to economic development in the region. Southern Appalachia has been very successful in attracting new businesses, and population growth in that region has offset many of the losses in the Central and

Northern regions. But too many counties in Appalachia are “aging in place” because there are not enough young families staying in or moving to the area to offset the graying of the resident population.

Addressing these issues is critical because the changes in Appalachian families have important implications for child well-being.⁴⁰ While neighborhood characteristics, schools, and peer networks play an important role, parents provide the major source of social and economic support in children’s lives. Improving conditions for families is the best way to ensure children’s successful transitions to adulthood.

References and Notes

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