

Same-Sex Couple Households

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INTRODUCTION

Living arrangements are rapidly changing in America, especially when it comes to both same-sex couple households and the recognition of same-sex marriages by individual states. A description of these households is not complete without identifying the presence of children in these households by their relation to the householder—whether they are biological children, stepchildren, or adopted children. This report addresses these topics by presenting data from the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) on same-sex couple households at national and state levels. The data in this report are for households, not individuals.

This report is one of a series produced to highlight results from the 2010 ACS. The ACS provides detailed estimates of demographic, social, economic, and housing characteristics for congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. A description of the ACS is provided in the text box “What Is the American Community Survey?”

SAME-SEX COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS BY STATE

Approximately 594,000 same-sex couple households lived in the United States in 2010, not statistically different from the 581,000 households reported in the 2009 ACS.¹ Nationally, about 1 percent of all couple households were same-sex

Same-sex couple households:

These households are identified using both the relationship to householder and sex items.

Total couple households:

The total of those households where the householder reports having a spouse or unmarried partner in the household. Includes opposite-sex and same-sex married and unmarried couples.

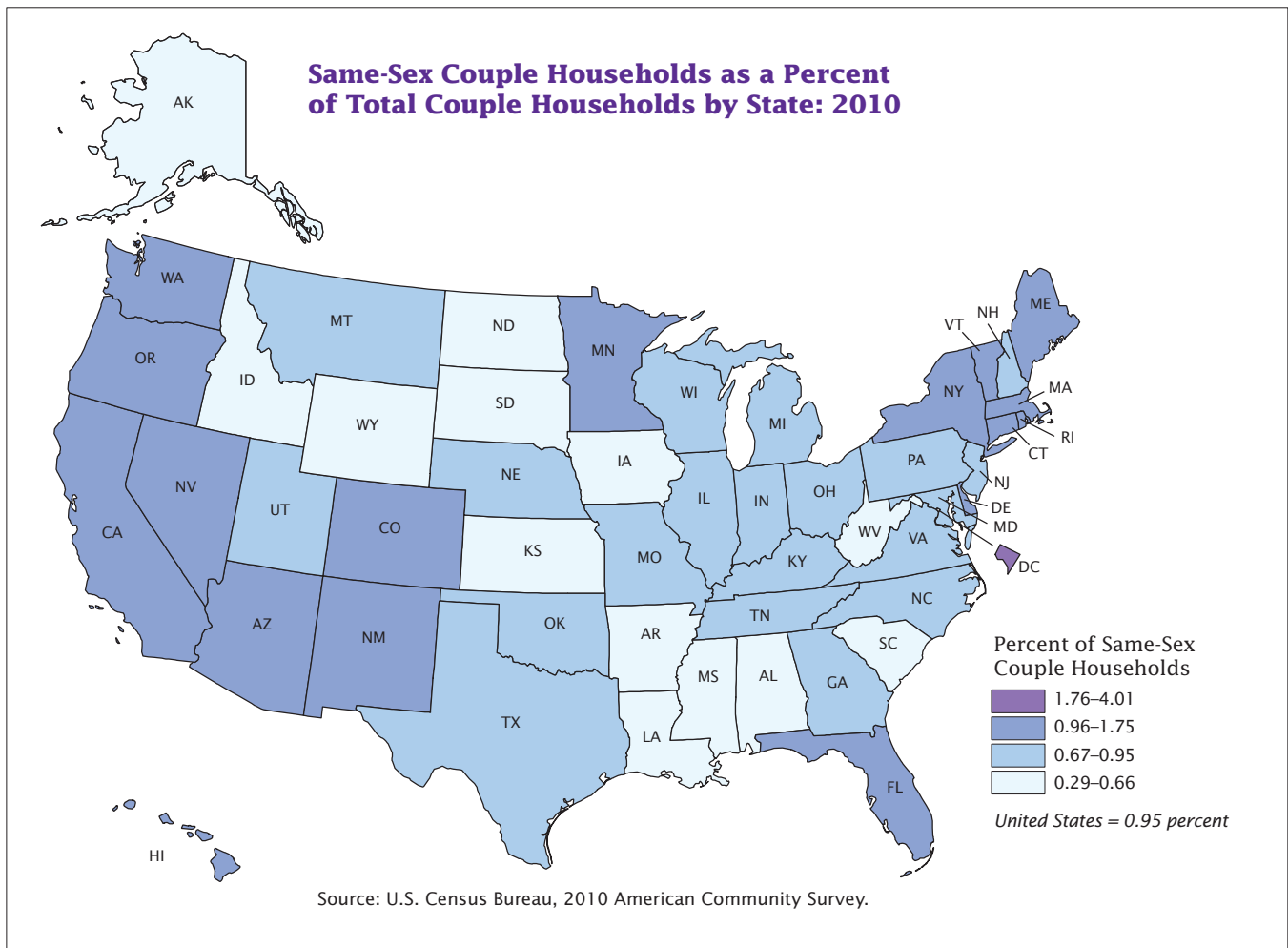
Unmarried partner: A person reported as an “unmarried partner” of the householder and who shares a close personal relationship with the reference person.

Reported as spouse: Those in same-sex couple households who were originally reported as a spouse of the householder. Same-sex spouses were edited during processing to “unmarried partner.”

Own child: A never married child under 18 years old who is a son or daughter by birth, marriage (stepchild), or adoption.

couples. The percentage of same-sex couple households for the 50 states and the District of Columbia ranged from 0.29 percent for Wyoming and 4.01 percent for the District of Columbia (see map). Seventeen states and the District of Columbia had higher

¹ The 2009 ACS number of same-sex couples can be found at <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/files/sssex-tables-2009.xls>.



percentages of same-sex couple households than the nation.

The legal recognition of same-sex couple households vary by state. In 2010, 42,000 of these households were in states that performed same-sex marriages, while 169,000 were in states that had either registered domestic partnerships or civil unions (Table 1). Over half (90,000) of same-sex couple households either registered domestic partnerships or civil unions resided in the state of California.

Overall, 25.7 percent of all same-sex couple households in 2010 reported that they were spouses (152,000). Administrative records indicate less than 50,000 same-sex marriages were performed in the United States between 2004 (when

same-sex marriages were first legalized in Massachusetts) and 2010.² In states where same-sex marriages were performed, 42.4 percent of same-sex couple households were reported as spouses compared with 28.2 percent for states with domestic partnerships or civil unions and 22.7 percent for all other states.

SAME-SEX COUPLE HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN

Out of the 594,000 same-sex couple households, 115,000 reported having children. Eighty-four percent

of these households contained own children of the householder (Table 2). In comparison, 94 percent of opposite-sex married couple households with children reported living with their own children. Same-sex couple households may have reported higher proportions of non-related children because they may have been children of the partner of the householder. This is clearly seen in Table 2 where same-sex couples are shown by whether they reported as spouse or unmarried partner. While 94 percent of married opposite-sex couples were living with own children in 2010, 89 percent of same-sex spousal households with children reported having own children of the householder present. In comparison, 81 percent of same-sex unmarried partner

² Renna, Cathy., "The Williams Institute Experts Comment on Department of Justice DOMA Decision," February 24, 2011, press release prepared by the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law.

Table 1.

Distribution of Same-Sex Couple Households by States Grouped by Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Couple Marriages and Unions: 2010

(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Legal recognition	Total		Reported as spouse		Unmarried partner	
	Estimate	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
Total same-sex couple households . . .	593,324	11,395	25.7	0.8	74.3	0.8
States performing same-sex marriages ²	42,195	3,055	42.4	3.7	57.6	3.7
Domestic partnership/Civil unions ³	169,205	6,133	28.2	1.4	71.8	1.4
California ^{3A}	90,023	4,569	32.1	2.4	67.9	2.4
All other states	381,924	8,804	22.7	0.9	77.3	0.9

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² This includes Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the District of Columbia.

³ This includes California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin.

^{3A} California performed same-sex marriages from June to November 2008.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

household with children contained children of the householder.

The second panel of Table 2 shows more detailed categories of own children living in a household—whether they are biological,

adopted, or stepchildren. In 2010, about 9 out of 10 married opposite-sex couple households with own children contained only the biological children of the householder. Of all same-sex couple households with own children present, 73

percent had only biological children, while 21 percent had either stepchildren only or adopted only. In same-sex unmarried partner households with own children, only 67 percent had only biological children compared with 80 percent

Table 2.

Couple Households With Children: 2010

(In percent. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www)

Characteristic	Married opposite-sex couples		Unmarried opposite-sex couples		Total same-sex couples		Same-sex couples by reporting status			
	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Same-sex spouse		Same-sex unmarried partner	
							Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹	Percent	Margin of error (\pm) ¹
Households with children (number)	24,443,599	83,848	2,684,978	23,359	115,064	5,516	43,933	2,901	71,131	4,381
Own children present ²	93.8	0.05	88.5	0.20	84.1	0.93	89.0	1.43	81.1	1.48
No own children present ³	6.2	0.05	11.5	0.20	15.9	0.93	11.0	1.43	18.9	1.48
Households with own children only	22,872,151	86,426	2,267,016	20,771	94,627	5,026	38,778	2,738	55,849	4,077
Biological only ⁴	90.8	0.10	88.0	0.41	72.8	2.71	80.4	3.11	67.4	3.81
Step only or adopted only ⁵	4.4	0.07	5.2	0.30	21.2	2.26	13.1	2.83	26.8	3.36
Combination of own children only ⁶	4.8	0.07	6.8	0.30	6.0	1.51	6.4	1.84	5.7	1.81

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² Households with at least one own child present under the age of 18 years. Can contain not own children as well.

³ Households that contain grandchildren, other relatives, or other nonrelatives under the age of 18 years.

⁴ Households with biological children only.

⁵ Households with either stepchild only or adopted child only.

⁶ Combination of two or more of the three own children types.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

in spouse households. Among both same-sex spousal and unmarried partner households, family units consisting of children of the partner or through adoption are common.

Statistics on same-sex couples from the 2010 Census are also available for comparison purposes with the 2010 ACS. Detailed tables on the estimates of same-sex couples living with children for the nation and individual states and a technical evaluation of these estimates from both data sources can be found by accessing the Web page “American Community Survey Data on Same Sex Couples” <www.census.gov/hhes/samesex/data/acs.html>.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

Data presented in this report are based on people and households that responded to the ACS in 2010. The resulting estimates are representative of the entire population. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. Due to rounding, some details may not sum to totals. For information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the “2010 ACS Accuracy of the Data” document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2010.pdf>.

What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For more information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.