

# Interagency Group on Measuring Relationships in Federal Household Surveys: Measuring Same-Sex Couples

Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) Seminar  
May 10, 2013

Nancy Bates\*  
U.S. Census Bureau

\*Acknowledgements to Theresa J. DeMaio and Martin O'Connell,  
and other members of the Measuring Relationships in Federal  
Household Surveys workgroup



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## *Measuring household relationships and defining "family"*

- Census measurement of family relationships, living arrangements, and marital status has long history
- Marital Status
  - 1880: Single, Married, Widowed/Divorced
  - 1890: Widowed and Divorced categories separated
  - 1950: "Separated" category added
- Relationship
  - 19<sup>th</sup> century included instructions for lodgers, roomers, boarders
  - 1970's persons of opposite-sex sharing living quarters (POSSLQ)
  - 1980: 'partner/roommate' category added
  - 1990: 'unmarried partner' category added



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## *Defining Family*

- Currently, Census Bureau and some other agencies define family narrowly: **live in same household and related by birth, marriage or adoption.**
- Same-sex couples
  - In 2000 no state recognized same-sex marriage
  - Currently, 11 states and DC recognize same-sex marriage
  - Evolving population both from societal and legal perspectives



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## *Interagency Group on Measuring Household Relationships*

- Significant attention on how 2010 Census would classify same-sex couples who report “husband/wife”
  - Bureau decided to keep “unmarried partner” reclassification edit
  - Agreed to produce state-level estimates of married SS couples
- Interagency group formed in fall of 2009
- Mission
  - Research issues related to collection/tabulation of data on marriage and relationships
  - Recommend development and testing of questions to more accurately capture data on marriage and relationship



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Counting same-sex couples

- In Decennial Census, counted indirectly using gender and relationship to householder
- Census 2000
  - 594,000 total same-sex couples
  - 255,000 same-sex “husband/wife” couples (but no state recognized gay marriage until 2004)
  - Why?
- Two hypotheses:
  - Same-sex couples identifying with “husband/wife” category
  - Small misclassification of large pool: opposite-sex married couples (mis-marking sex, data capture/processing errors)



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Testing societal shift hypothesis

- In early 2010 (prior to Census) we conducted 18 focus groups
  - Understand terms commonly used
  - Interpreted as legal or something else?
  - Come up with alternative relationship and marital status questions to cognitively test
- Found little support for hypothesis
  - Interpreted Qs in context of a *federal form* - that means legal status
  - Few selected “husband/wife” or “now married” if not legally married
  - Legally married anywhere = “husband/wife”
  - Need categories to reflect new legal unions
  - “Functional equivalence” problem
  - No place to indicate committed relationship for many same-sex couples



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Same-sex couples: Census 2010

Number of Same-Sex Households				
<u>American Community Survey</u>				
	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2010 Census</u>
Married	150,000	152,000	152,000	349,000
Unmarried partners	415,000	429,000	441,000	553,000

DeMaio T. J., Bates, N. and O'Connell, M.,  
Public Opinion Quarterly 2013;77:145-158



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Misreporting hypothesis

- Questionnaire design differences
  - Sequential versus grid layout
- Mode differences
  - Self-response vs. enumerator administered
  - ACS has built-in edit for CATI and CAPI
- Small errors among very large population lead to big errors among small population



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Census 2010 items to count same-sex couples - mail form

### 1. Print name of **Person 2**

Last Name

First Name

MI

### 2. How is this person related to Person 1? Mark ☒ ONE box.

☒ Husband or wife

☐ Biological son or daughter

☐ Adopted son or daughter

☐ Stepson or stepdaughter

☐ Brother or sister

☐ Father or mother

☐ Grandchild

☐ Parent-in-law

☐ Son-in-law or daughter-in-law

☐ Other relative

☐ Roomer or boarder

☐ Housemate or roommate

☒ Unmarried partner

☐ Other nonrelative

### 3. What is this person's sex? Mark ☒ ONE box.

☒ Male

☐ Female

## Census 2010 items to count same-sex couples – enumerator form

1. Let's make a list of all those people. Please start with the name of an owner or renter who was living here on April 1. Otherwise, start with any adult living here.

#### Person 1

First Name

MI

Last Name

2. Please look at list B on the Information Sheet. How is (Name) related to (Read name of Person 1)?

Mark ☒ ONE box.
☒ Person 1

3. Is (Name) male or female?

Mark ☒ ONE box.
☐ Male  
☒ Female

#### Person 2

First Name

MI

Last Name

☒ Husband or wife

☐ Biological son or daughter

☐ Adopted son or daughter

☐ Stepson or stepdaughter

☐ Brother or sister

☐ Father or mother

☐ Grandchild

☐ Parent-in-law

☐ Son-in-law or daughter-in-law

☐ Other relative

☐ Roomer or boarder

☐ Housemate or roommate

☒ Unmarried partner

☐ Other nonrelative

☐ Male

☒ Female

## *Testing the misreporting hypothesis*

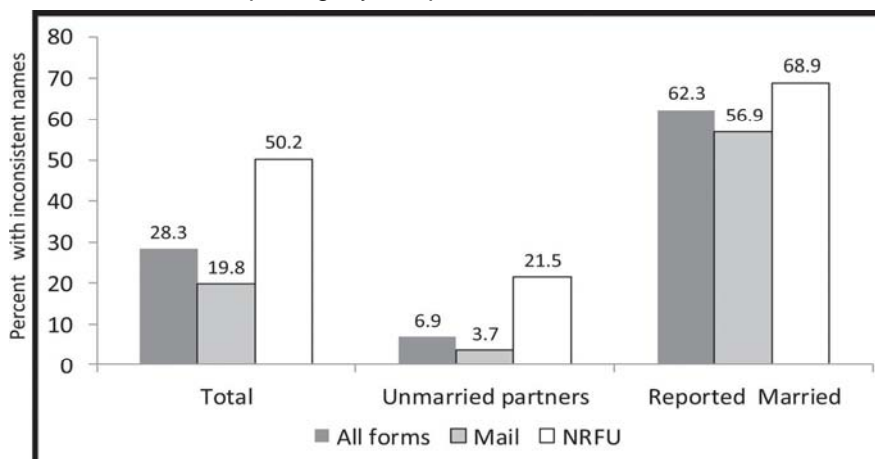
- Sex-by-name analysis
- Statistical “names directories”
- What is probability that first name is male or female?
- How often might sex have been misreported in “same-sex” couples?
- Did it differ by mode in Census 2010?



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



Percentage of Same-Sex Couple Households with Inconsistent Name-Sex Reporting, by Response Mode: 2010 Census.



DeMaio T. J., Bates, N. and O'Connell, M.,  
Public Opinion Quarterly 2013;77:145-158



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Results of research

- In 2011, Census Bureau issued “preferred” state level estimates of same-sex couples
  - Decreased from 902,000 to 646,000
  - Married same-sex couples decreased from 349,000 to 132,000
- In 2011, we developed and cognitively tested new items
- Produced alternative relationship categories and marital status/cohabitation series



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Alternative relationship question

**2** How is this person related to Person 1? Mark (X) ONE box.

<input type="checkbox"/> Opposite-sex husband/wife/spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild
<input type="checkbox"/> Opposite-sex unmarried partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Same-sex husband/wife/spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Same-sex unmarried partner	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relative
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Roomer or boarder
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Housemate or roommate
<input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster child
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative
<input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother	

- Categories better reflect changes in society
- Potential to reduce misreporting by opposite-sex couples



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Alternative marital status and cohabitation questions

**20** a. What is this person's current marital status?  
Mark (X) ONE box.

☐ Now married → SKIP to question 21

☐ Widowed

☐ Divorced

☐ Separated

☐ Never married

b. Is this person currently living with a boyfriend/girlfriend or partner in this household?

☐ Yes

☐ No

c. Is this person currently in a registered domestic partnership or civil union?

☐ Yes

☐ No

United States  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



## Children of same-sex couples

- In 2011, NCES conducted field tests and cognitive interviews for National Household Education Survey
- Tested use of "Parent 1" "Parent 2" in place of "mother" "father"
- Gender neutral wording about parent relationships to children

United States  
**Census**  
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU





## *Future tests and data*

- Parent pointers:
  - Production 2012 NHES
  - Production 2014 SIPP- EHC
- New relationship categories & new domestic partnership/civil union questions:
  - 2013 American Housing Survey (split panel)
  - 2013 American Community Survey (split panel test)
  - Production 2014 SIPP – EHC
  - 2020 Census Test NRFU instrument (relationship only)
- Workgroup - Statistical Policy Working Paper



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



[rose.kreider@census.gov](mailto:rose.kreider@census.gov)

[nancy.a.bates@census.gov](mailto:nancy.a.bates@census.gov)



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economic and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



# Interagency Group On Measuring Relationships In Federal Household Surveys: Measuring Same-sex Couples

## Changes In Family and Household Composition

Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) Seminar  
May 10, 2013

Rose M. Kreider  
U.S. Census Bureau

# *5 Main Trends*

1. Increase in 1-person households
2. Decrease in households containing married couples with children<18
3. Diversity of household type
4. Increase in coresidential unmarried couples
5. Increasing recognition of same-sex households

# *Definitions*

- **Household** - all the people living in a housing unit.
- **Householder** - a person age 15 and over whose name is on the lease or mortgage
- **Family** - a household that contains at least one person who is related to the householder by birth, marriage or adoption.

# *Basic Method: Relationship to Householder only*

- Decennial, American Community Survey (ACS)

**2** How is this person related to Person 1? *Mark (X) ONE box.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Husband or wife	<input type="checkbox"/> Son-in-law or daughter-in-law
<input type="checkbox"/> Biological son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Other relative
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopted son or daughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Roomer or boarder
<input type="checkbox"/> Stepson or stepdaughter	<input type="checkbox"/> Housemate or roommate
<input type="checkbox"/> Brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried partner
<input type="checkbox"/> Father or mother	<input type="checkbox"/> Foster child
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandchild	<input type="checkbox"/> Other nonrelative
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent-in-law	

Source: ACS-1(2009)KFI

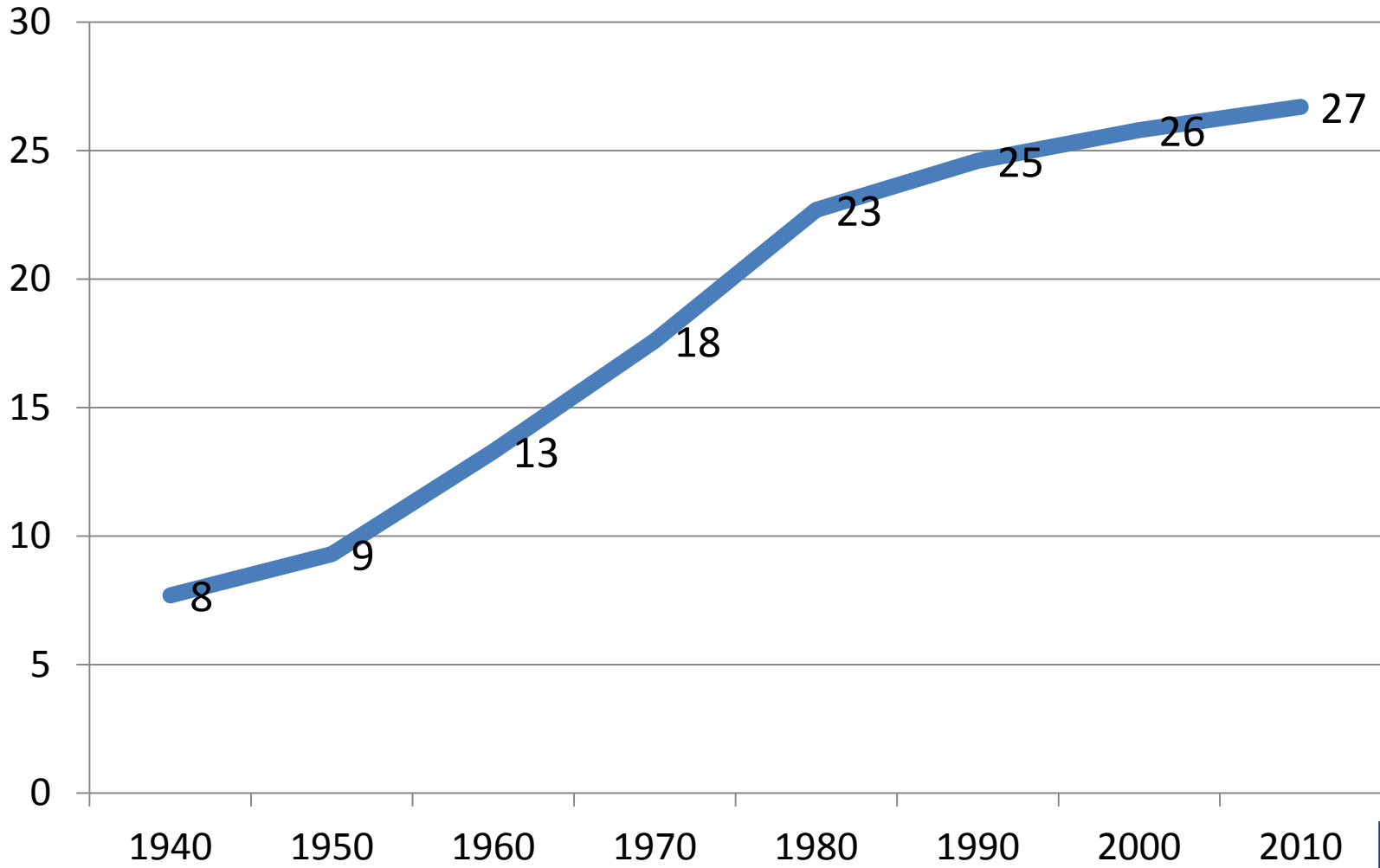
# *More Complex Method: Pointers*

- What is a “pointer”?
  - Variable on my record indicating my mom/dad/spouse/partner
  - Collected in Current Population Survey (CPS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)
    - These data sets also include type of relationship between parents and children, whether biological, step, or adoptive

# *5 Main Trends*

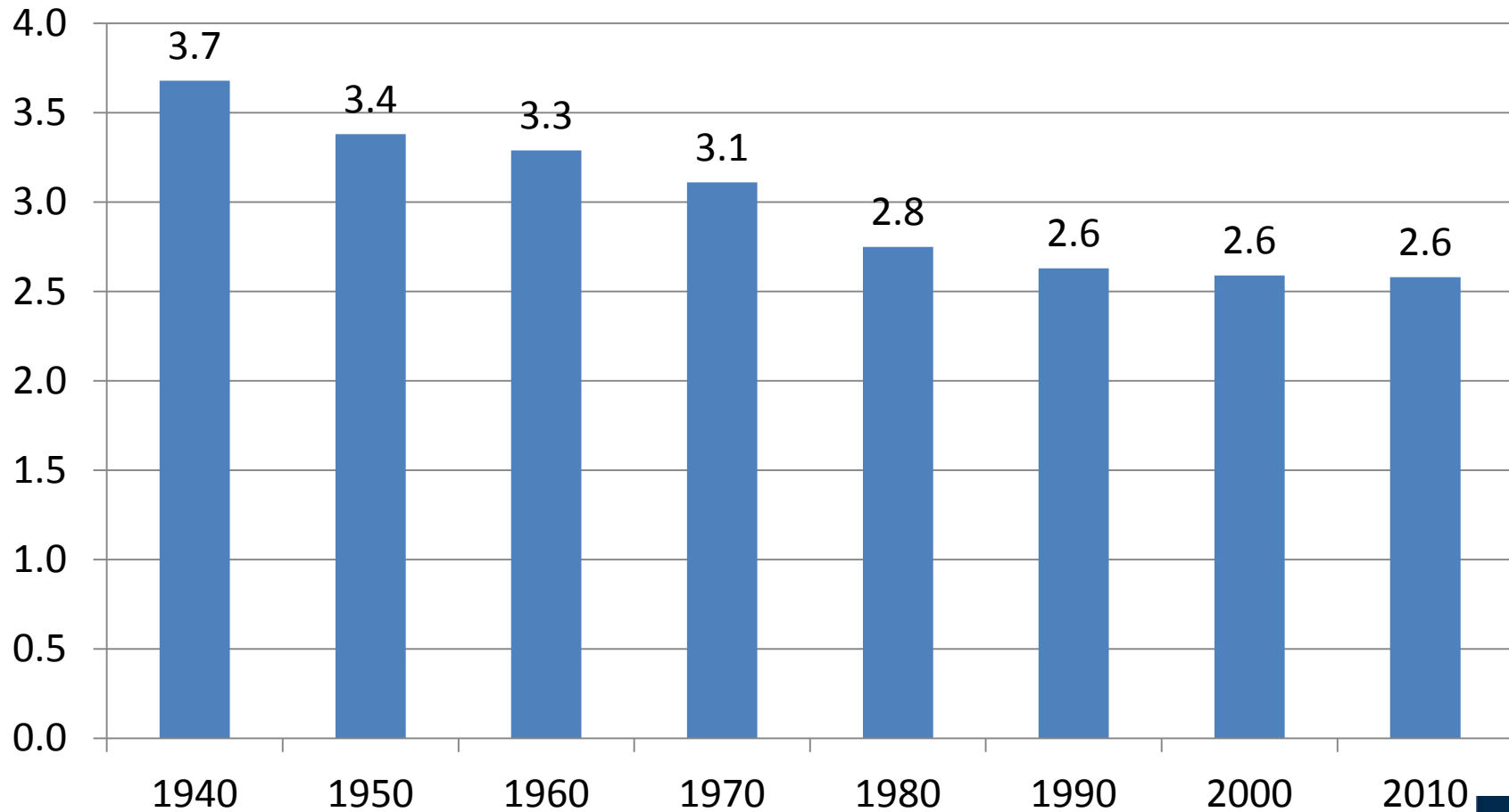
## 1. Increase in 1-person households

# Percent of Households with One Person: 1940-2010

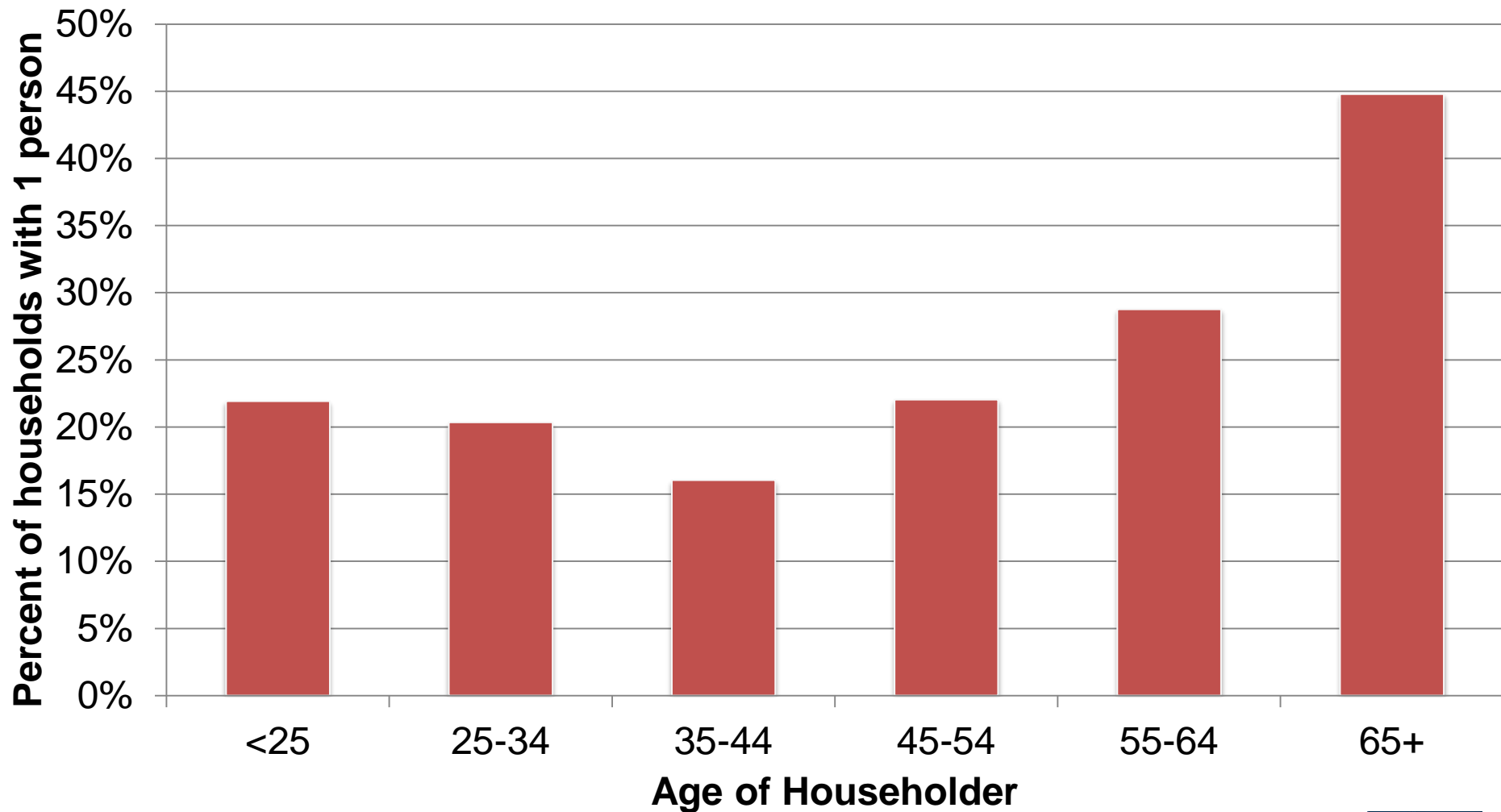




# Average Household Size: 1940-2010



# Percentage One-Person Households by Age of Householder: 2010

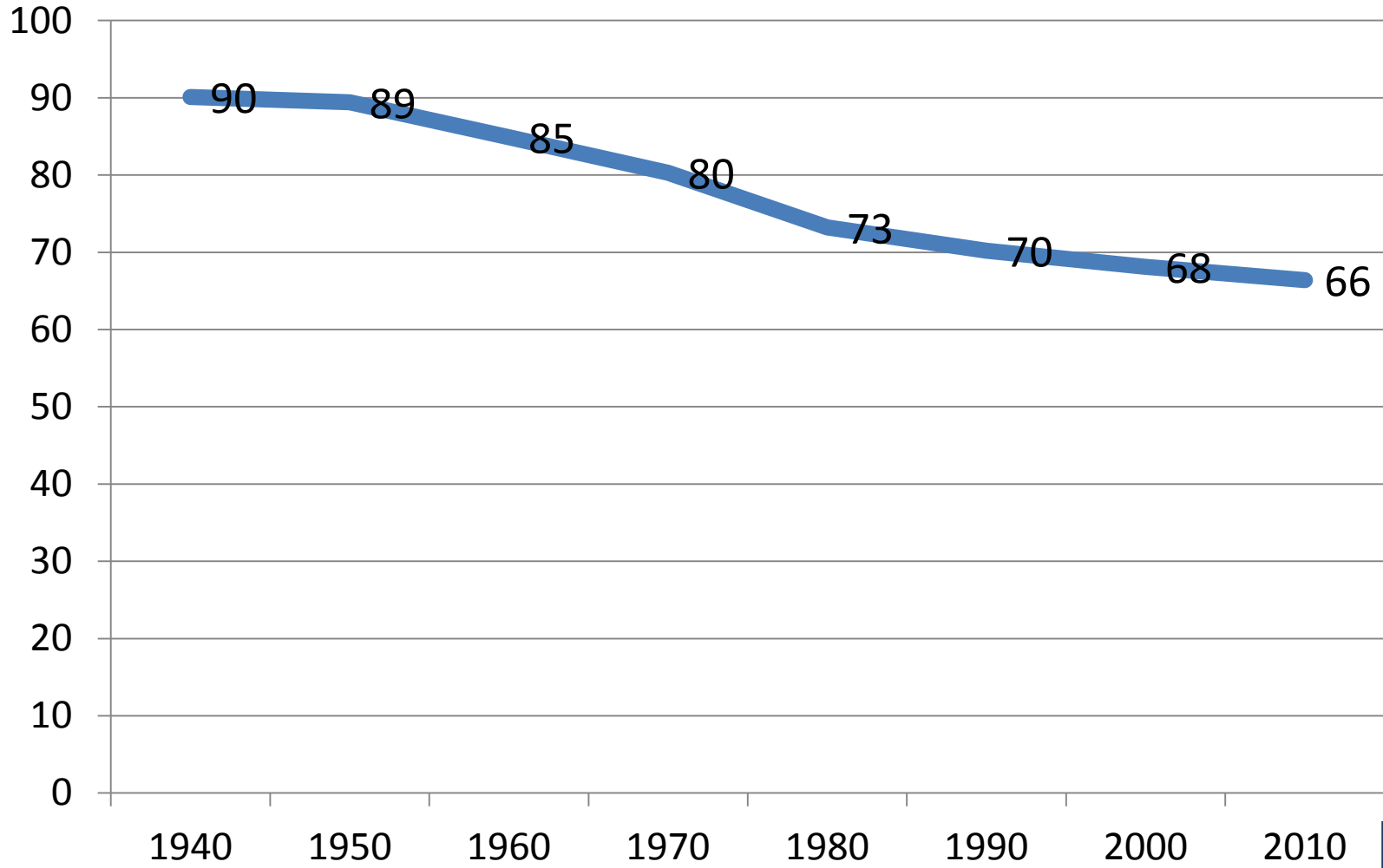


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Commerce Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2010.

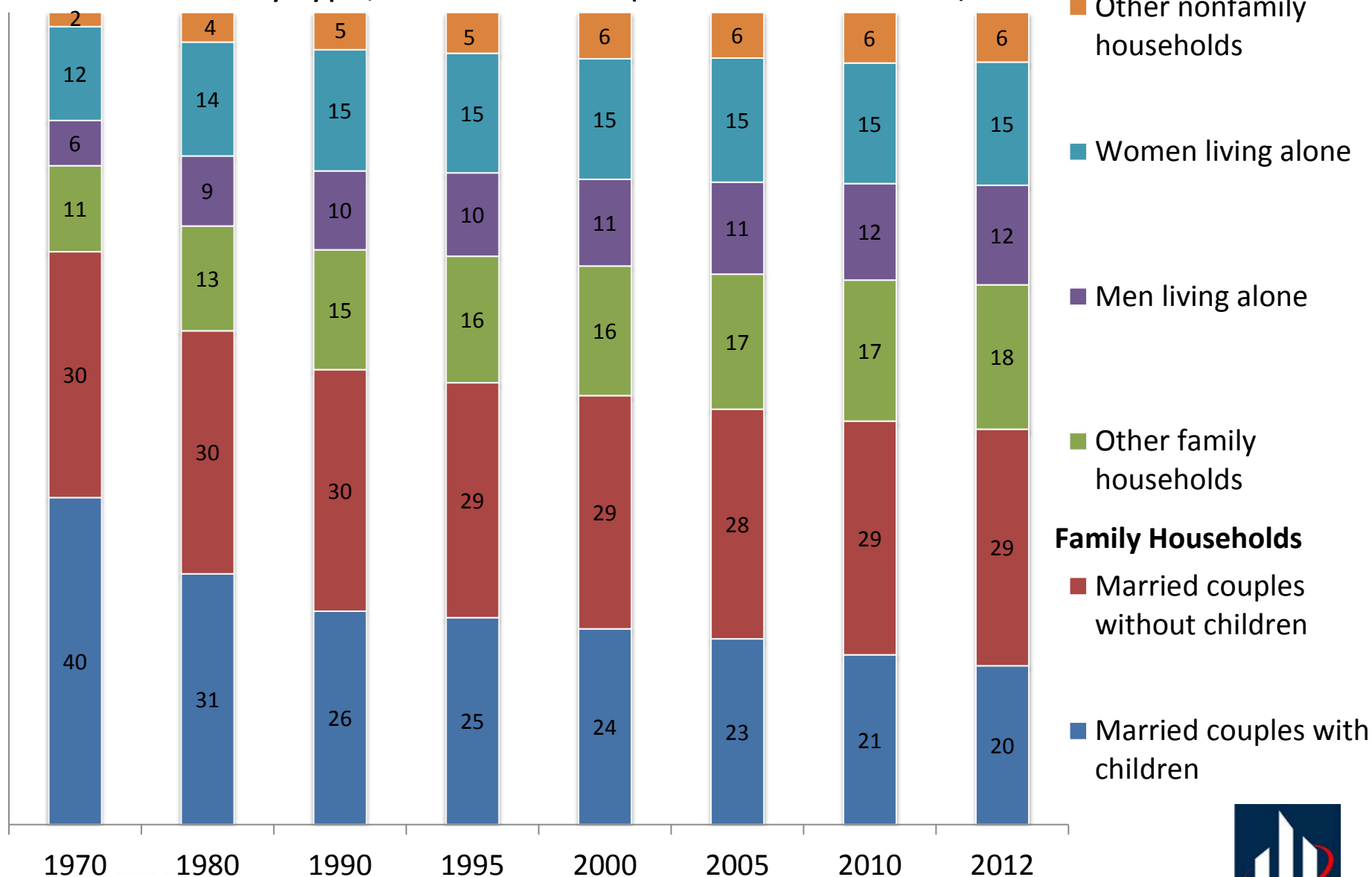
# *5 Main Trends*

2. Decrease in households containing married couples with children < 18

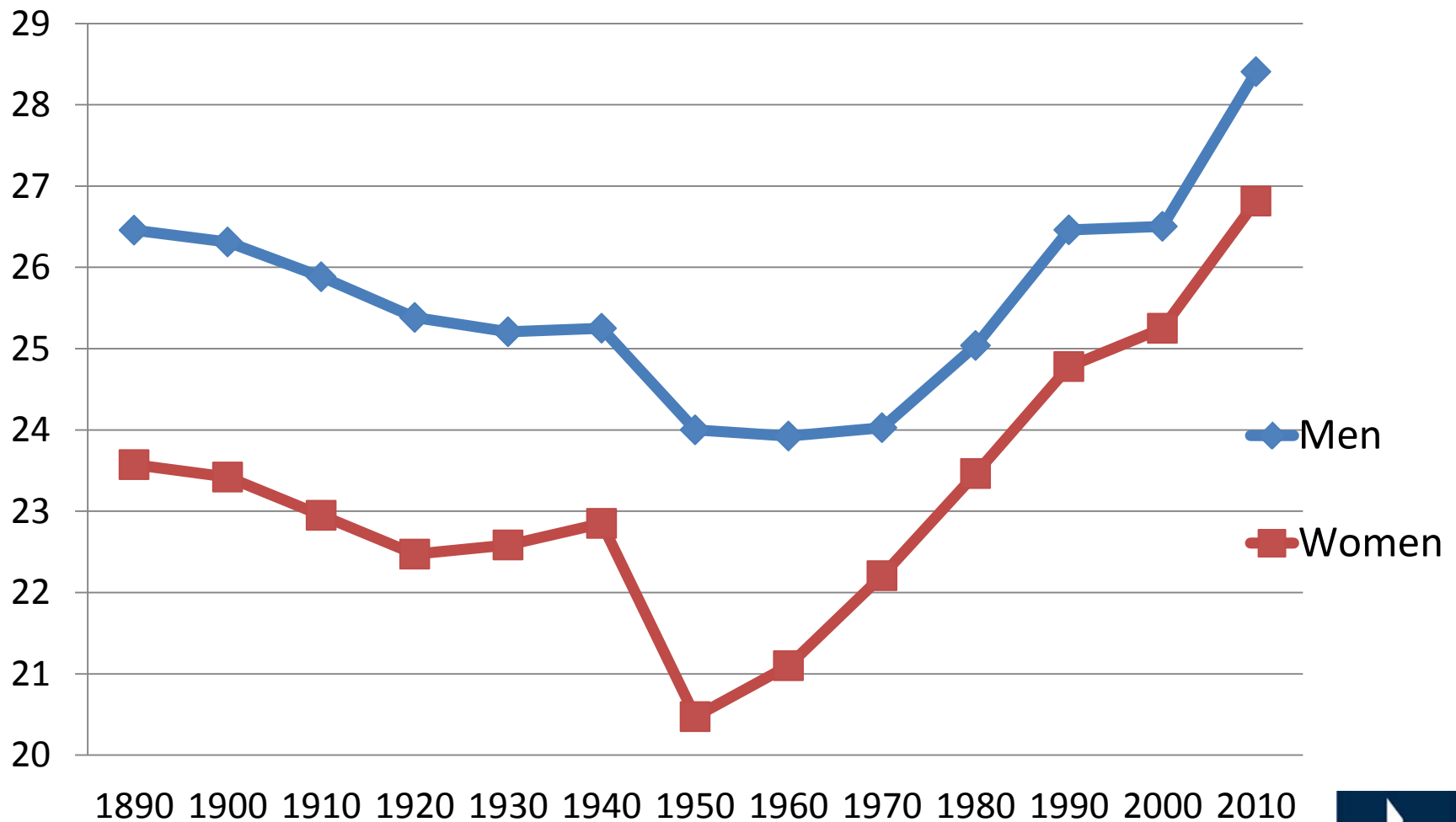
# Percent of Households that are Family Households: 1940-2010



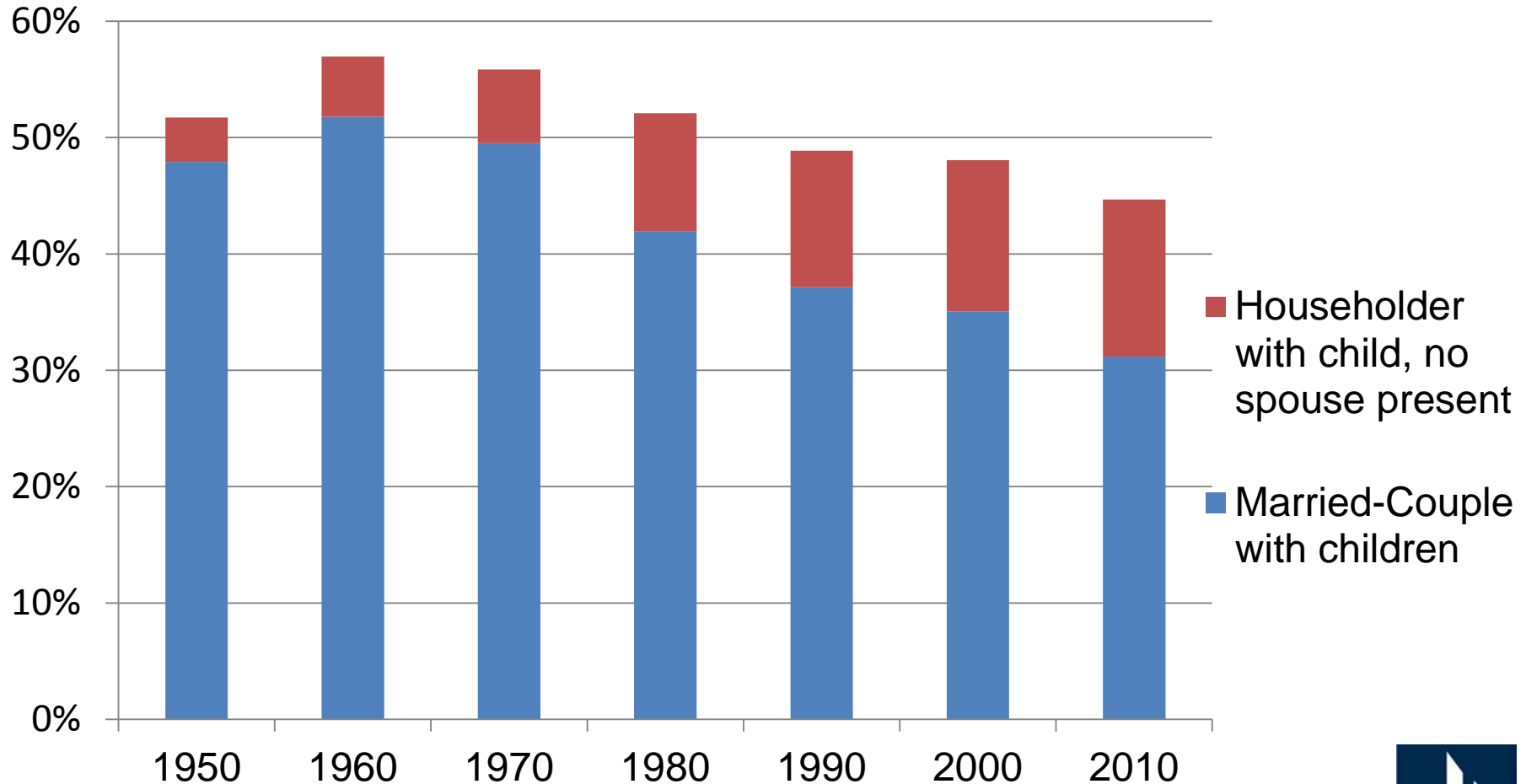
# Households by type, 1970 to 2012 (Percent distribution)



## Median Age at First Marriage by Sex: 1890 to 2010



# Percentage of Families with Children by Family Type: 1950-2010

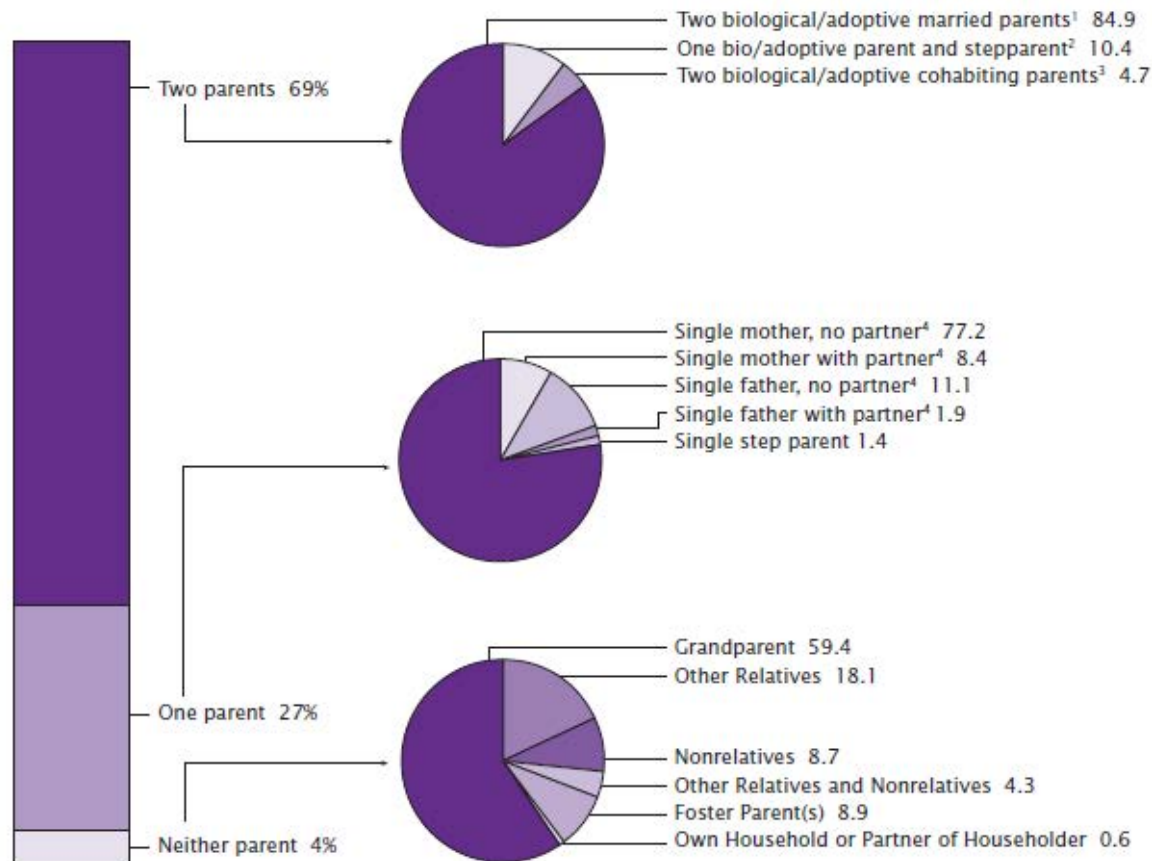


# *5 Main Trends*

## 3. Diversity in household type



Figure 6.  
**Percentage of Children Aged 0-17 Living in Various Family Arrangements: 2009**



<sup>1</sup> Child points to two parents, who are married to each other—either two biological, two adoptive, or one biological and one adoptive.

<sup>2</sup> Child points to two parents, either married or cohabiting—one is a biological or adoptive parent, one is a stepparent, or both are stepparents.

<sup>3</sup> Child points to two parents, who are not married to each other—either two biological, two adoptive, or one biological and one adoptive.

<sup>4</sup> Child points to one parent, biological or adoptive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), 2008 Panel, Wave 2 Topical Module. For information on sampling and nonsampling error, see <[www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A08\\_W1toW3\(S&A-12\).pdf](http://www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/S&A08_W1toW3(S&A-12).pdf)>.

## Percent Distribution of Children Under 18 Living With Grandparents by Presence of Parent(s)

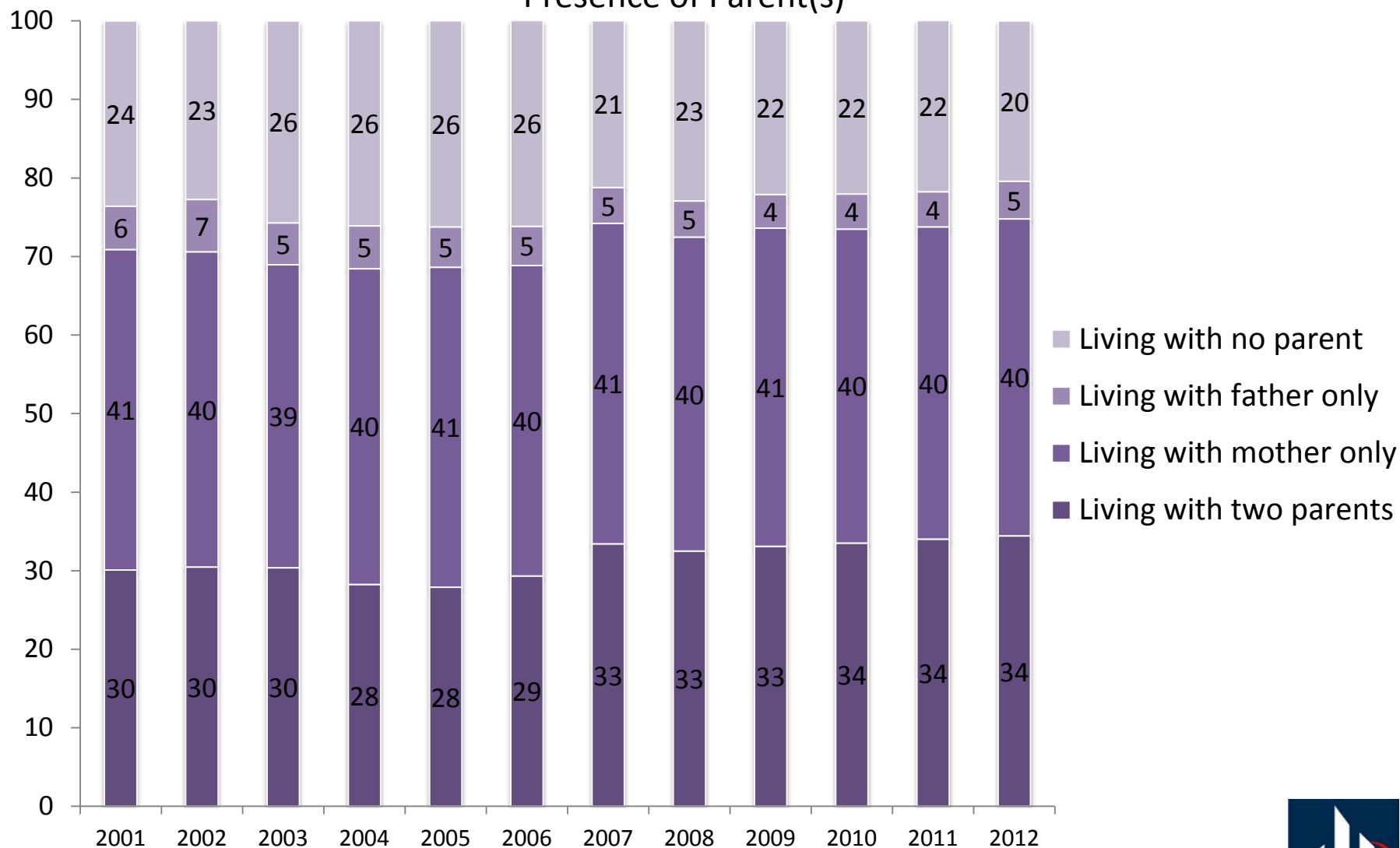
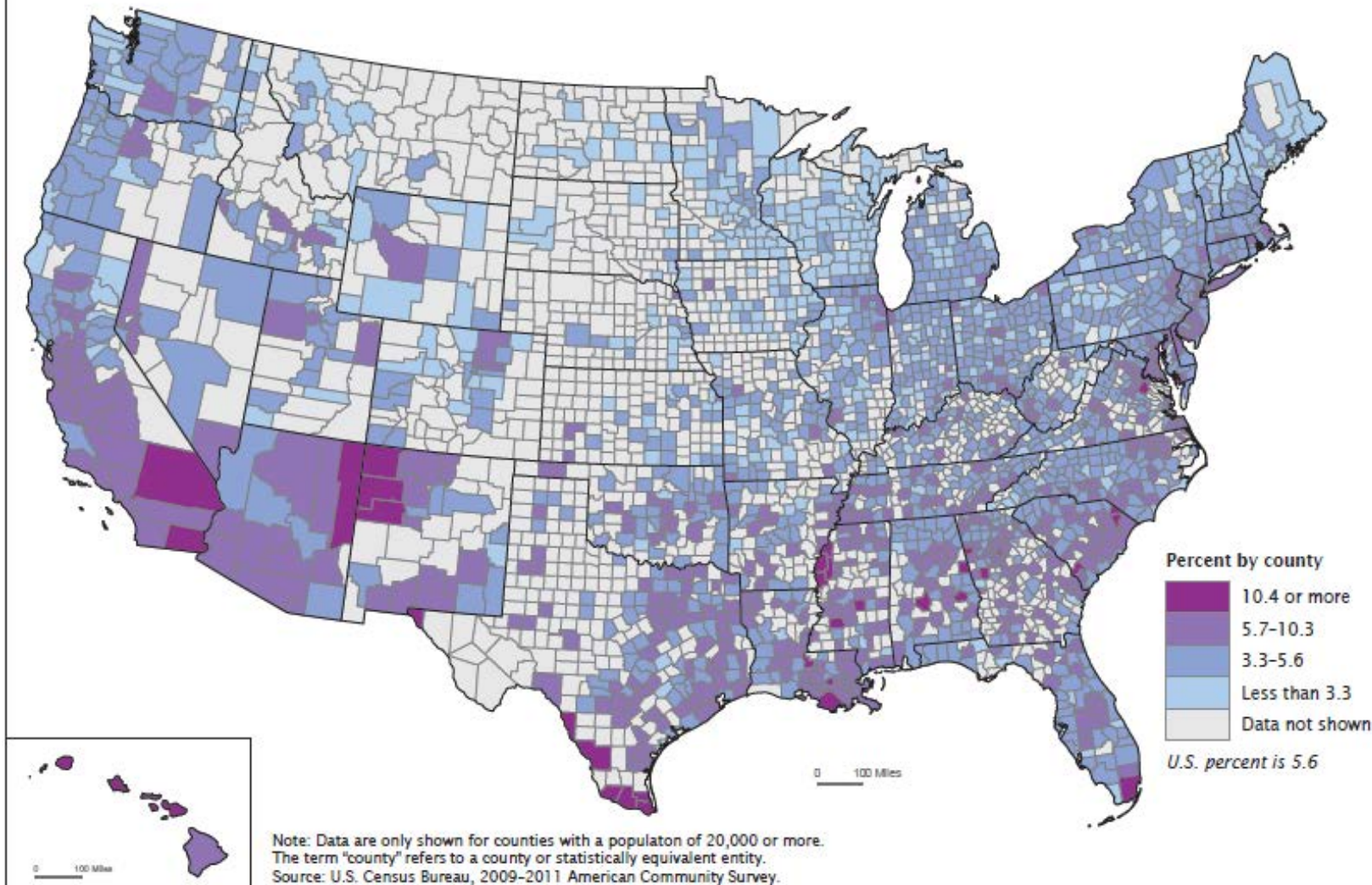


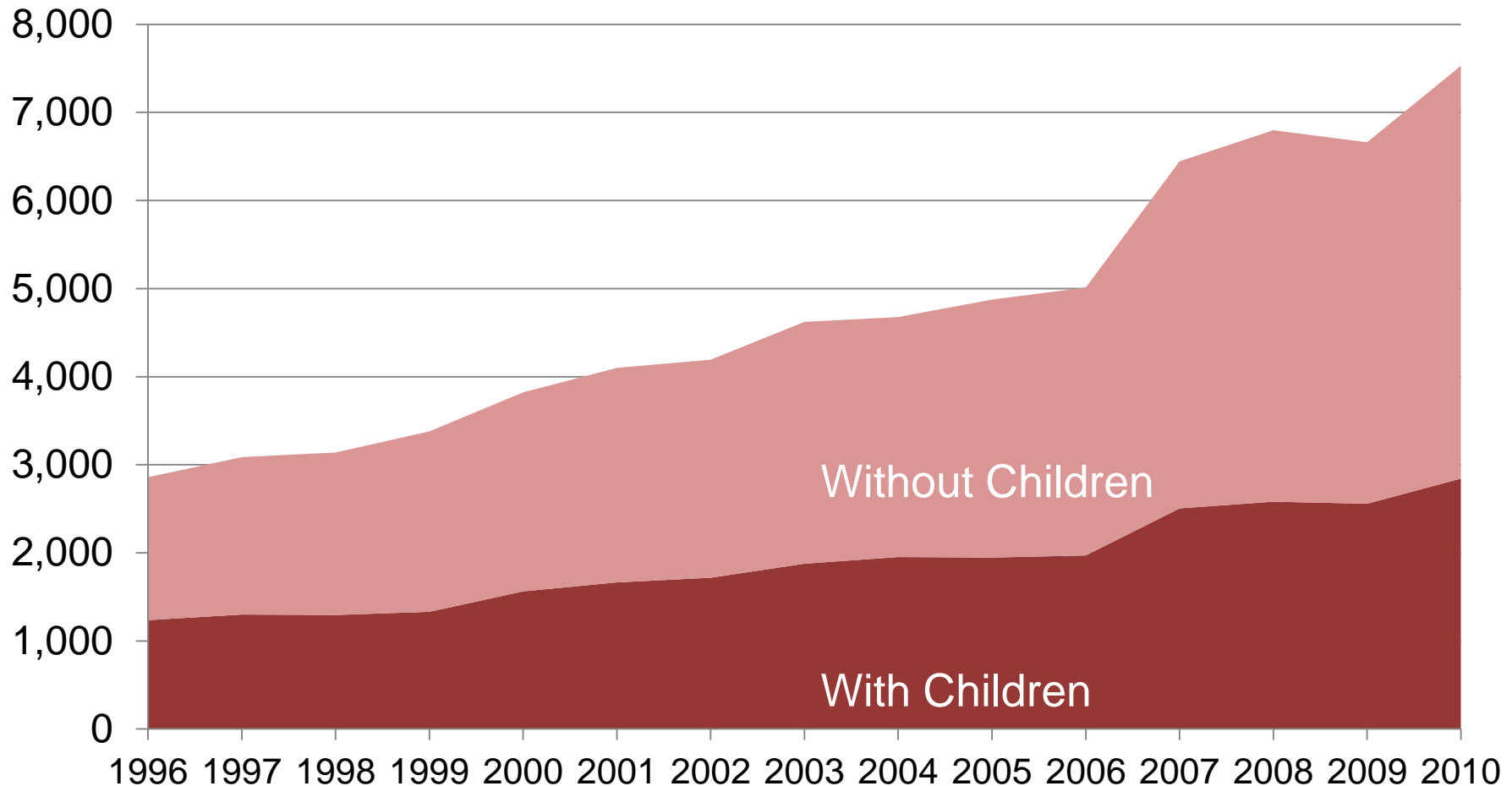
Figure 1.  
**Multigenerational Households as a Percentage of Family  
 Households by County: 2009-2011**



# *5 Main Trends*

## 4. Increase in co-residential unmarried couples

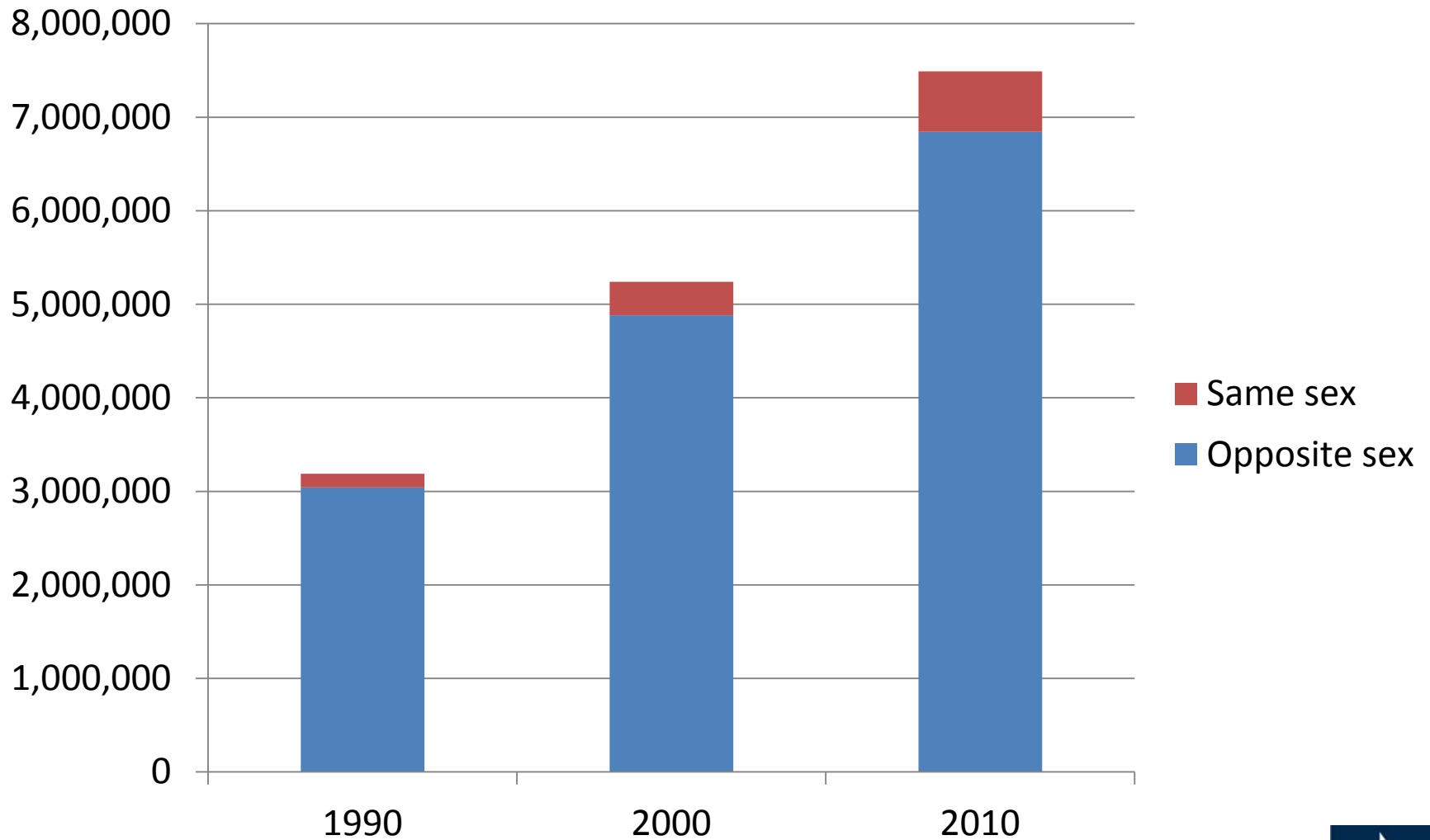
# Unmarried Opposite-Sex Couples in Thousands by Presence of Children: 1996 to 2010



# *5 Main Trends*

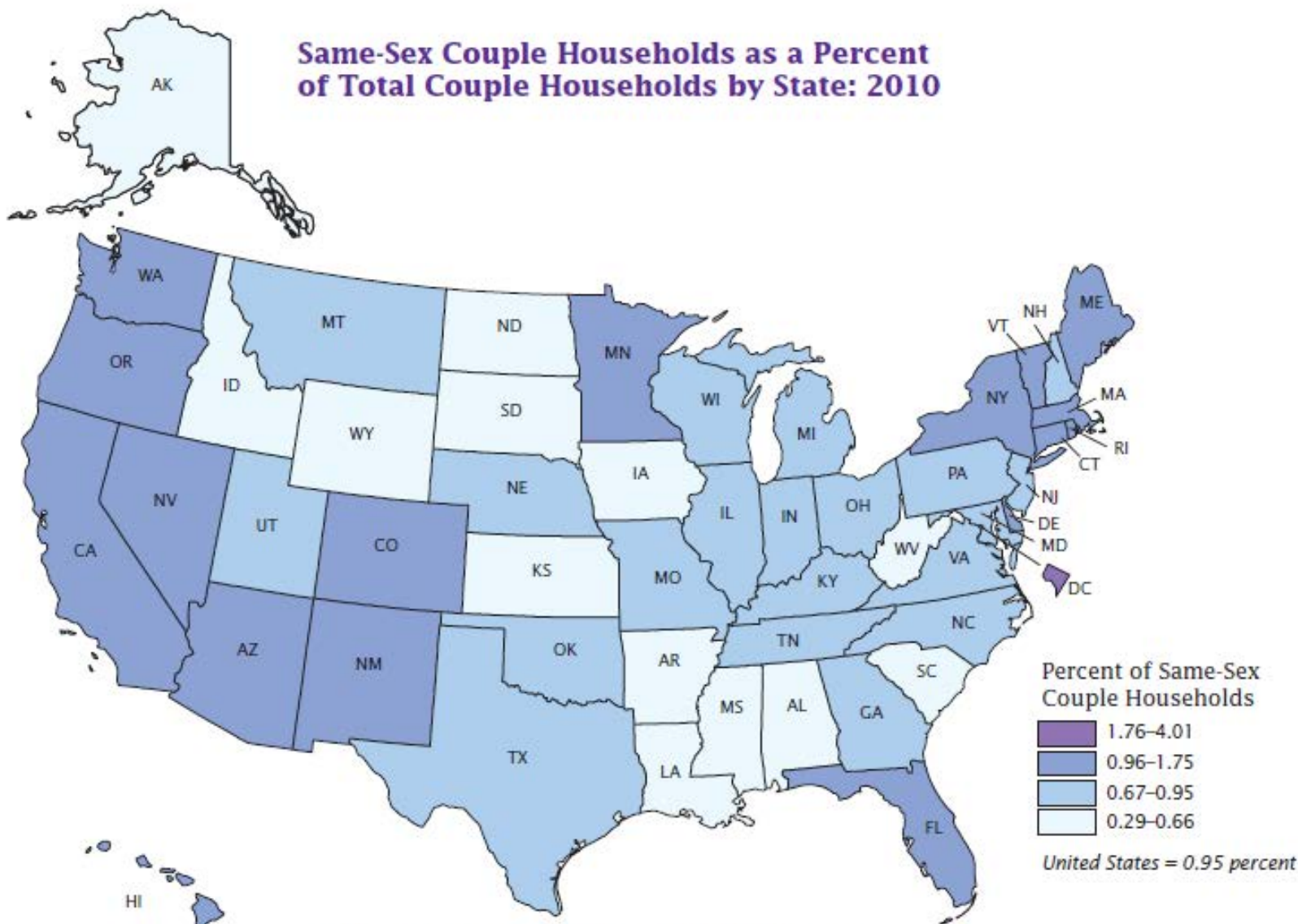
## 5. Increasing recognition of same-sex households

# Unmarried Partner Households: 1990-2010





## Same-Sex Couple Households as a Percent of Total Couple Households by State: 2010



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



# *Substantive effects of incorporating same-sex married couples in published data*

- Same sex married couples would automatically be family households
- Poverty rates are calculated for family members, and spouses are included.
- Spouses are automatically considered a parent.
- Universe for other characteristics of families may not match state definition (true currently in reverse).

## *In summary*

- Estimates are only as good as the data we collect
- Changing social conditions may not be captured
- Desire to maintain comparability with existing data
- Cannot create sizable increases in respondent burden
- If legal conditions change, we need to be able to implement data collection and processing changes



UCLA

# **New Data on Families and Households**

**Judith A. Seltzer**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**California Center for Population Research, UCLA**

**“Changing Social Structures and the Meaning of the ‘Household’ in Federal Surveys.”**  
**Committee on National Statistics, Washington, DC, May 10, 2013**

# Why collect data on individuals in households?

---

- ☐ Households are a place
  - Need geographic location for census
  - Place matters for health, laws, economic opportunities
- ☐ People who live together share resources
- ☐ Within households individuals have different needs (adult vs. child)
- ☐ The relationship between individuals affects how much they share resources (spouses vs. cohabiting partners)

## Getting residence right

---

- ☐ **Rs' vs. researchers' ideas about who is in the household**
- ☐ **Most surveys get it right for most people, but**
  - **Problems at critical life stages and for policy relevant subgroups**
- ☐ **Getting residence wrong means systematic missing data**
  - **Household roster affects skip patterns in surveys**
- ☐ **Could do better on residence – Use rich paradata from federal surveys to improve Qs & As on who is in the household (e.g., ACS)**

## **Need to know about individuals in families *even if they do not live together***

---

- ☐ One person households but “no man – or woman – is an island”
  - ☐ Transfers of time and money affect economic welfare and health
    - Who gives help? Who gets help?  
How does giving / getting help affect individuals?
  - ☐ Some federal data (child support, caregiving) but a lot missed
  - ☐ Challenges for policy analyses
    - Don't know who is available to help or who in a family network needs help
    - Lack info on characteristics of potential givers / receivers
-

## Panel Study of Income Dynamics has a new module: Why?

---

- U.S. data on nationally representative, cross-section of adults are over 25 years old

**BUT FAMILIES HAVE CHANGED**

- More recent estimates for older adults

**BUT INDIVIDUALS MAKE FAMILY TRANSITIONS AT DIFFERENT AGES**

- Need to know who is alive, where they live, how related
  - Many studies ask if a person gives or receives help from a family member, **BUT NOT WHO IS IN THE FAMILY**

## **Family transfers of time and money in the 2013 PSID**

---

- ☐ ***Suzanne Bianchi*, Sociology, UCLA**
  - ☐ ***V. Joseph Hotz*, Economics, Duke**
  - ☐ ***Katherine McGonagle*, Social Psych, SRC-PSID**
  - ☐ ***Robert Schoeni*, Economics, SRC-PSID**
  - ☐ ***Judith Seltzer*, Sociology, UCLA**
  - ☐ ***Emily Wiemers*, Economics, UMASS-Boston**
- and *Vicki Freedman*, Epidemiology, ISR-PSID, P01 PI. NIA funding.**
-



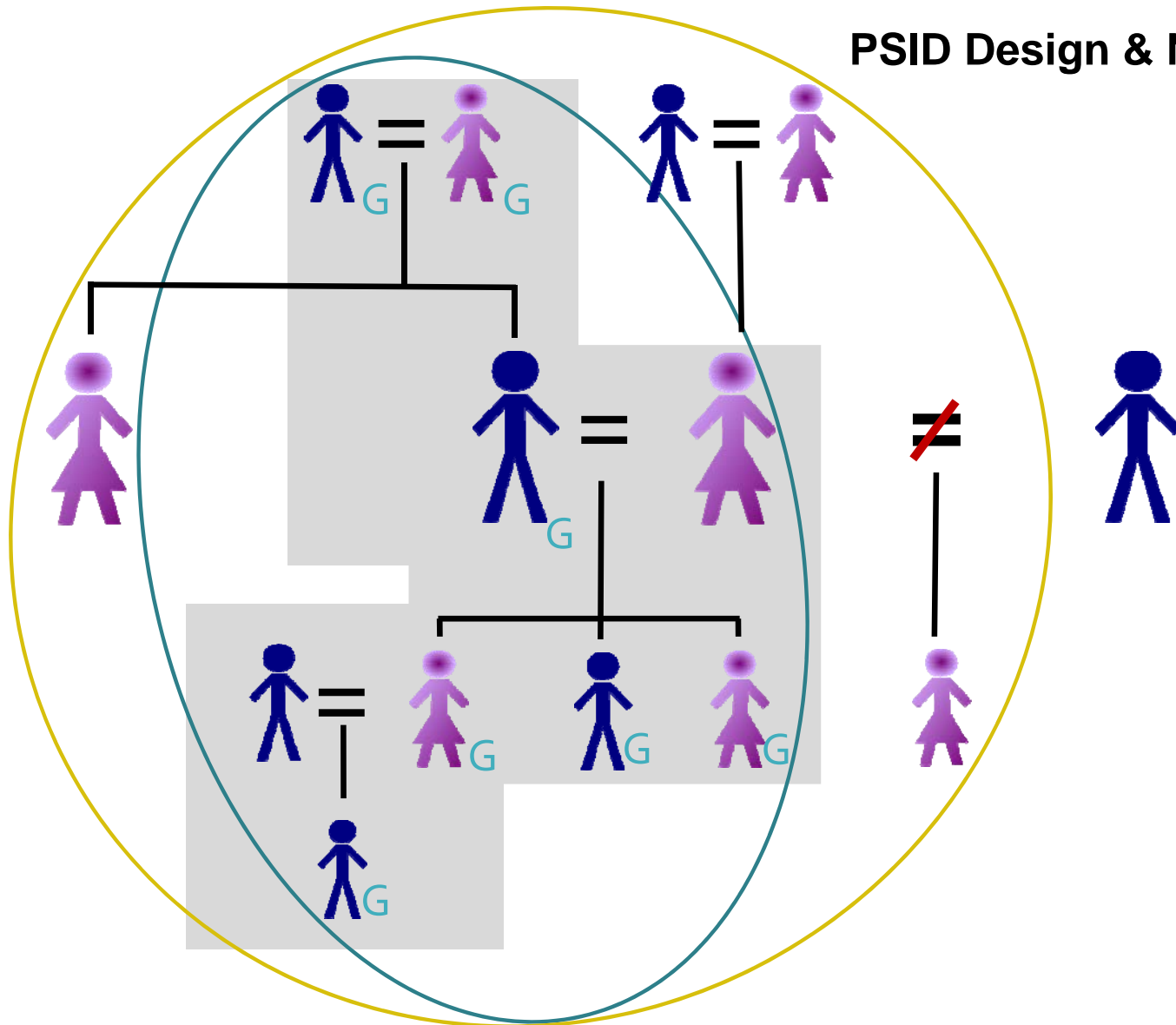
## PSID Design & New Module Coverage

1<sup>st</sup> Generation

2<sup>nd</sup> Generation

3<sup>rd</sup> Generation

4<sup>th</sup> Generation



## **New family roster and transfer module**

---

- ☐ **List parents (& spouses), parents-in law, children including step relationships AND CHARACTERISTICS**
  - ☒ **Bio/step relationship of offspring to Head + Wife; marital status, cohabitation (offspring), grandchildren, labor force participation, health, education, home ownership, income, geographic location**
- ☐ **Short term transfers of time and money**
- ☐ **Longer term, life cycle transfers for education, housing**
- ☐ **Transfers to & from parents; transfers to & from adult children**
- ☐ **12 minutes!!**

## Unique advantages of PSID

---

- ☐ Detailed family and economic histories > 40 years
  - Coresidence histories distinguish family and household
  - Individual histories affect the need for transfers and who is able to provide them
- ☐ Genealogical design + roster enumerates full web of parent-child ties
- ☐ Parents & offspring report about the same transfer
- ☐ Transfers with coresident and non-coresident kin

## New data on families and households

---

- ❑ Public data December 2014

- ❑ *Panel Study of Income Dynamics*

*[psidonline.isr.umich.edu](http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu)*

- ❑ Questionnaire:

*<ftp://ftp.isr.umich.edu/pub/src/psid/questionnaires/q2013.pdf>*

# **Changing Social Structures and the Meaning of the “Household” in Federal Surveys**

## **Thoughts for Discussion**

Margo Anderson  
Distinguished Professor of History &  
Urban Studies  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

## **Current Issues**

- Considering “the complexities of the ‘household’ and relationships within households in survey data collection...”
  - (a) How are household relationships in federal surveys currently measured?;
  - (b) How are household relationship measures in federal surveys currently used by federal agencies?; and
  - (c) How robust are current measures of household relationships in federal surveys?

## A Little Bit of History...

- Why do the census (and other surveys) count by households?
- Has it always done so?
- What was it like in the past and what's changed now?

Francis Edmonds, *Taking the Census*,  
1853



4

## Why does the census count by households?

- **“Households or families mattered [to census takers] for the same reason that banks were important for Willie Sutton, a famous robber of the 1930s. In both cases, these institutions contain the thing of real interest: people for the census-takers, money for Mr. Sutton.”**

– Daniel Scott Smith, *The Meanings of Family and Household: Change and Continuity in the Mirror of the American Census*, *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Sep., 1992), pp. 421-456

## It's not required by the Constitution...

- 1790 Census Statute (selections):
- Sec 1...The several assistants shall, within the said nine months, transmit to the marshals by whom they shall be respectively appointed, accurate returns of all **persons**, except Indians not taxed, within their respective divisions, which returns shall be made in a schedule, **distinguishing the several families by the names of their master, mistress, steward, overseer, or other principal person therein**, in manner following, that is to say: The number of persons within my division, consisting of appears in a schedule hereto annexed, .....

## It's not required by the Constitution...

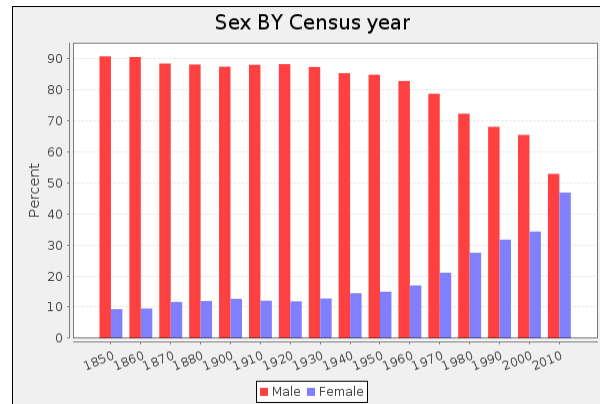
- Sec 5....That every person whose usual place of abode shall be in any **family** on the aforesaid first Monday in August next, shall be returned as of such **family**; and the name of every person, who shall be an inhabitant of any district, but without a settled place of residence, shall be inserted in the column of the aforesaid schedule, which is allotted for the **heads of families**, in that division where he or she shall be on the said first Monday in August next, and every **person** occasionally absent at the time of the enumeration, as belonging to that place in which he usually resides in the United States.

## It's not required by the Constitution...

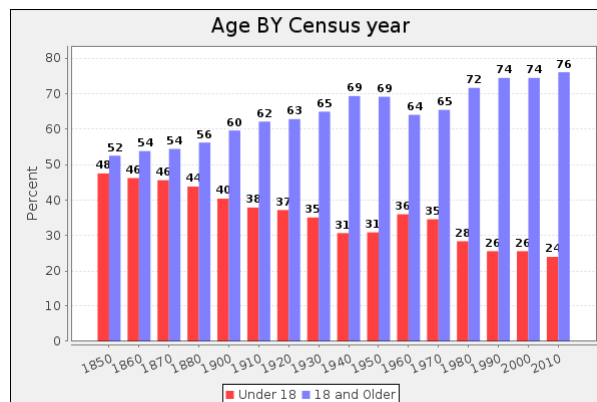
- Sec. 6. *And be it further enacted,* That each and every **person** more than sixteen years of age, whether **heads of families** or not, belonging to any **family** within any division of a district made or established within the United States, shall be, and hereby is, obliged to render to such assistant of the division, a true account, if required, to the best of his or her knowledge, of all and every **person** belonging to such **family** respectively, according to the several descriptions aforesaid, on pain of forfeiting twenty dollars, to be sued for and recovered by such assistant, the one half his own use, and the other half for the use of the United States.

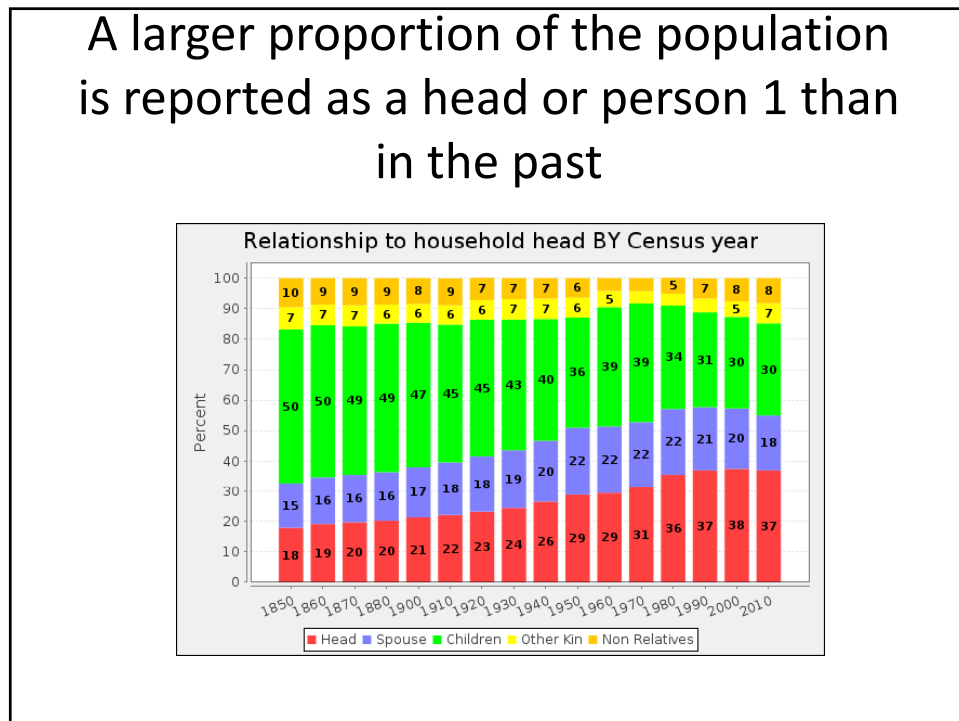
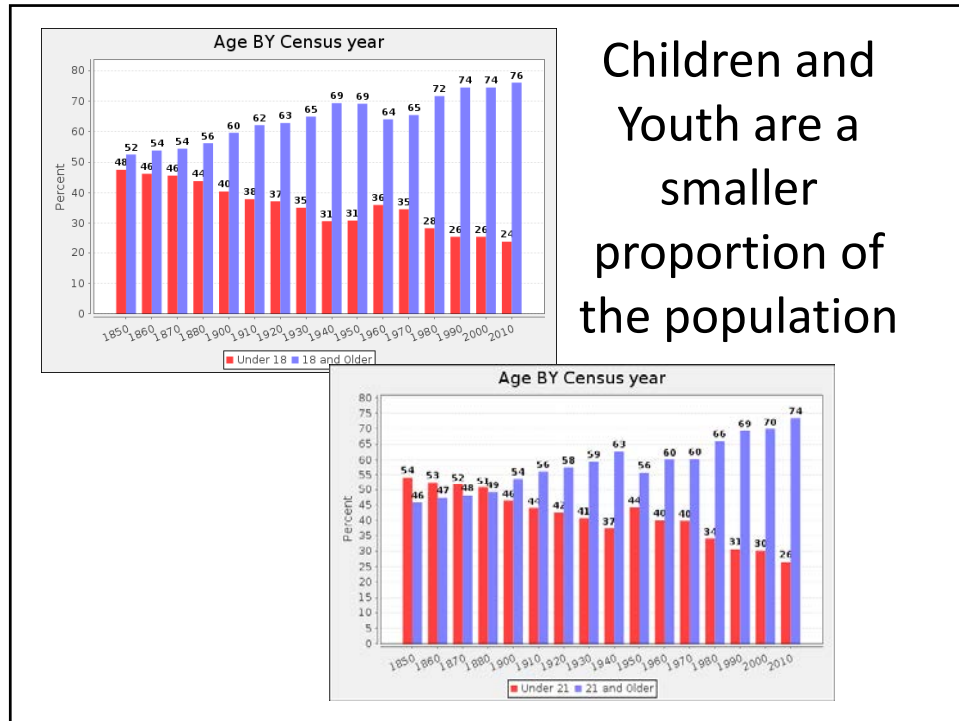


## Household Heads, or Person One, 1850-2010

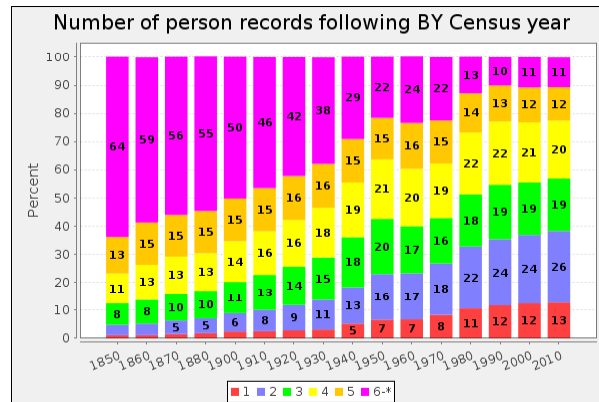


## Children and youth are a smaller proportion of the population





## People live in smaller households...



## Technical Issues: Compiling Household and Family Statistics is hard!

- The goal of the census is to count people, not households or families and their complicated relationships.
- Classifications of family type and household structures were historically designed to facilitate work in the field enumeration, and only secondarily by what might be of interest in published tabulations.
- Example: The first major census print volume publication on “Families” dates to the 1930 census. It required transcription of a portion of the responses on the population schedules to separate transcription sheets, and then punching a separate ‘family’ card for tabulation.

## And this is what was relevant in 1930...

- Variables punched on the Family Card:
  - 1. Tenure of home.
  - 2. Value or rental of home (nonfarm only).
  - 3. Serial number of family in dwelling (first, second, etc.).
  - 4. Related persons in family.
  - 5. Lodgers and boarders.
  - 6. Children under 21.
  - 7. Children under 10.
  - 8. Gainful workers in family.
  - 9. Nativity of head.
  - 10. Marital condition of head.
  - 11. Age of man head.
  - 12. Occupation of head.
  - 13. Age of home-maker
  - 14. Age at marriage (homemaker).
  - 15. Employment status of home-maker.
  - 16. Radio set.