

Family Structure

PF 2.1 Families with Children

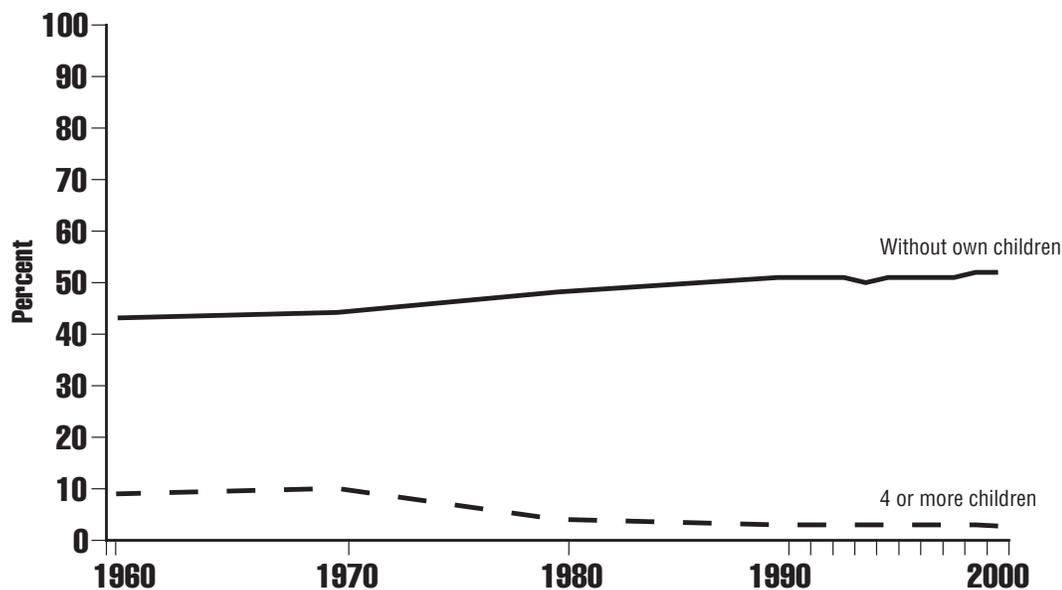
Since 1960, Americans have been moving toward having families with fewer children. Indeed, a growing percentage of families have no minor children of their own in their household. Between 1960 and 2000, the percentage of families with four or more of their own children under age 18 in the household decreased from 9 percent to 3 percent, where it has remained (see Figure PF 2.1). During the same period, the proportion of families with no minor children grew from 43 percent to 52 percent.

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.¹⁰ These general trends are also evident when White, Black, and Hispanic families are considered separately, though the levels are substantially different for each group (see Table PF 2.1). For example, between 1970 and 2000 the percentage of Black families with four or more children dropped from 19 percent to 4 percent. The percentage for Whites during that period went from 9 percent to 3 percent. For Hispanic families, the percentage dropped from 10 percent to 6 percent between 1980 (the first year for which Hispanic estimates are available) and 2000.

In 2000, Black and Hispanic families were considerably less likely than White families to be without any minor children, with proportions of 45 percent and 36 percent respectively, compared to 53 percent for Whites. They were also more likely than White families to have four or more children, though these differences were smaller than in previous decades.

Figure PF 2.1

Percentage of families in the United States with no children, and with four or more resident children: Selected years, 1960-2000



Sources: 2000 data from unpublished tabulations by Jason Fields, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001. Previous years, U.S. Census Bureau, *Households and Family Characteristics*: Series P-20, Nos. 509, 495, 488, 483, 477, 467, 458, 447, and 366, (Table 1) in each; 218, (Table 5); 515, (Table 3); and 106, (Table 7).

¹⁰ Estimates for Whites and Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

POPULATION, FAMILY, & NEIGHBORHOOD

Table PF 2.1

Percentage distribution of families in the United States by number of own children under age 18 and by race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1960-2000

| | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| All families | | | | | | | | | | |
| Without own children | 43 | 44 | 48 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 52 | 52 |
| One child | 19 | 18 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| 2 children | 18 | 17 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 18 |
| 3 children | 11 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| 4 or more children | 9 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| White^a families | | | | | | | | | | |
| Without own children | 43 | 45 | 49 | 51 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 52 | 53 | 53 |
| One child | 19 | 18 | 21 | 21 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 19 |
| 2 children | 18 | 18 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| 3 children | 11 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| 4 or more children | 9 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Black^a families | | | | | | | | | | |
| Without own children | — | 39 | 38 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 42 | 42 | 44 | 45 |
| One child | — | 18 | 23 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 24 |
| 2 children | — | 15 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 19 | 19 |
| 3 children | — | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| 4 or more children | — | 19 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Hispanic^a families | | | | | | | | | | |
| Without own children | — | — | 31 | 37 | 36 | 36 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 36 |
| One child | — | — | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 23 | 24 |
| 2 children | — | — | 23 | 21 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 22 | 22 |
| 3 children | — | — | 13 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| 4 or more children | — | — | 10 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |

^a Estimates for Whites and Blacks include Hispanics of those races. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Sources: 2000 data from unpublished tabulations by Jason Fields, U.S. Census Bureau, 2001. Previous years, U.S. Census Bureau, *Households and Family Characteristics*: Series P-20, Nos. 509, 495, 488, 483, 477, 467, 458, 447, and 366, (Table 1 in each); 218, (Table 5); 515, (Table 3); and 106, (Table 7).

PF 2.2 Living Arrangements of Children

Family structure is one of many factors that contributes to child well-being. It is also associated with the well-being of the child as an adult. For example, children from disrupted families or families where the parents never married are somewhat more likely to use alcohol and drugs, to become teen parents, and are less likely to earn a high school diploma than children from intact families. These associations are evident even after controlling for family socioeconomic status, race, and other background factors.¹¹ Nevertheless, the great majority of children brought up in single-parent families do well. In particular, differences in well-being between children from divorced and those from intact families tend, on average, to be moderate to small.¹²

Between 1970 and 2000, the proportion of children in two-parent families (about 64 percent of whom live with both biological parents)¹³ decreased from 85 percent to 69 percent (see Table PF 2.2.A).

In 2000, 22 percent of children lived with their mother only; 4 percent lived with their father only;¹⁴ and 4 percent lived with neither parent (see Table PF 2.2).¹⁵ Of those who lived with neither parent, more than one-half were residing with one or more grandparents as of 1996 (see Table PF 2.2.B).

Differences by Race and Hispanic Origin.¹⁶ The decrease in the proportion of children living in two-parent families is evident for Black, White, non-Hispanic, and Hispanic children, though the decline is somewhat steeper for Black children (see Figure PF 2.2.A). Between 1970 and 1996, the proportion of Black children living in two-parent families fell by 25 percentage points from 58 percent to 33 percent (see Table PF 2.2.A). However, between 1996 and 2000, that percentage increased modestly to 36 percent. Between 1970 and 2000, the drop for White, non-Hispanic children was 15 percentage points, from 90 percent to 75 percent. For Hispanic children, the percentage living in two-parent families decreased from 78 percent to 65 percent.

¹¹ Amato, P.R. 1993. Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Theories, Hypotheses, and Empirical Support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 55: 23-58.

¹² Zill, N., Morrison, D., and Coiro, M. 1993. Long-Term Effects of Parental Divorce on Parent-Child Relationships: Adjustment and Achievement in Early Adulthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(1): 91-103.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-70, No. 74. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹⁴ The Current Population Survey overestimates the proportion of children living in father-only families, because it identifies many cohabiting biological-parent couples as father-only. Though the precise size of the overestimate is not known, analyses of the 1996 Survey of Income and Program Participation indicate that a little over 2 percent of all children actually lived in father-only families in that year.

¹⁵ Data from the 1996 Current Population Survey (not shown) indicate that 11 percent of all children under age 18 who are living in families live with single parents who are divorced. See Saluter, A. 1997. PPL-66, *Household and Family Characteristics: March 1996 (Update)*, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁶ Estimates for Blacks include Hispanics of that race. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

POPULATION, FAMILY, & NEIGHBORHOOD

Table PF 2.2.A

Percentage distribution of living arrangements of children under age 18 in the United States, by race and Hispanic origin:^a Selected years, 1970-2000

| | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 1995 ^b | 1996 ^b | 1997 ^b | 1998 ^b | 1999 ^b | 2000 |
|--|------|------|------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Total | | | | | | | | | |
| Two parents | 85 | 77 | 73 | 69 | 68 | 68 | 68 | 68 | 69 ^c |
| Mother only | 11 | 18 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 23 | 22 ^d |
| Father only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 ^d |
| No parent | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| White, non-Hispanic^a | | | | | | | | | |
| Two parents | 90 | 83 | 81 | 78 | 77 | 77 | 76 | 77 | 75 |
| Mother only | 8 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 |
| Father only | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| No parent | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Black^a | | | | | | | | | |
| Two parents | 58 | 42 | 38 | 33 | 33 | 35 | 36 | 35 | 36 |
| Mother only | 30 | 44 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 52 | 51 | 52 | 49 |
| Father only | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| No parent | 10 | 12 | 8 | 11 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 |
| Hispanic^a | | | | | | | | | |
| Two parents | 78 | 75 | 67 | 63 | 62 | 64 | 64 | 63 | 65 |
| Mother only | — | 20 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 25 |
| Father only | — | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 |
| No parent | — | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. Estimates for Blacks include Hispanics of that race.

^b Numbers in these years may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey because of newly instituted computer-assisted interviewing techniques and/or because of the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments.

^d Because of data limitations, includes some families where both parents are present in the household, but living as unmarried partners.

Note: Family structure refers to the presence of biological, adoptive, and stepparents in the child's household, thus a child with a biological mother and stepfather living in the household is said to have two parents.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, Nos. 410, 461, 468, 478, 491, 496u, 506u, 514u (Table 4 in each); and 484, (Table A-5); also unpublished data, U.S. Census Bureau.

Family Structure

Table PF 2.2.B

Percentage distribution of children under age 18 in the United States in two-parent, one-parent, or no-parent families, by age and race and Hispanic origin: 1996

| | Two-Parent Families | | | One-Parent Families | | | No Parents Present | |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Total ^a | Biological Parents | One Biological, One Stepparent | Total ^a | Biological Mother | Biological Father | Total ^a | Grandparents |
| All children | 70.9 | 64.2 | 6.7 | 25.4 | 22.7 | 2.5 | 3.7 | 1.8 |
| Under 5 | 74.3 | 72.5 | 1.9 | 23.0 | 21.6 | 1.2 | 2.6 | 1.5 |
| Ages 5 to 14 | 70.5 | 62.8 | 7.7 | 25.9 | 23.0 | 2.8 | 3.6 | 1.8 |
| Ages 15 to 17 | 66.3 | 54.9 | 11.4 | 27.7 | 23.7 | 3.8 | 6.0 | 2.0 |
| Race and Hispanic origin^b | | | | | | | | |
| White, non-Hispanic | 79.0 | 71.5 | 7.5 | 18.5 | 15.5 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 1.1 |
| Black, non-Hispanic | 36.9 | 31.7 | 5.2 | 54.9 | 52.5 | 2.0 | 8.2 | 5.1 |
| Hispanic | 68.2 | 62.9 | 5.3 | 27.5 | 25.7 | 1.7 | 4.3 | 1.4 |
| American Indian/ Alaska Native | 62.2 | 54.0 | 8.2 | 32.1 | 29.4 | 2.1 | 5.8 | 3.2 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 83.6 | 80.3 | 3.3 | 14.3 | 12.6 | 1.4 | 2.1 | 0.9 |

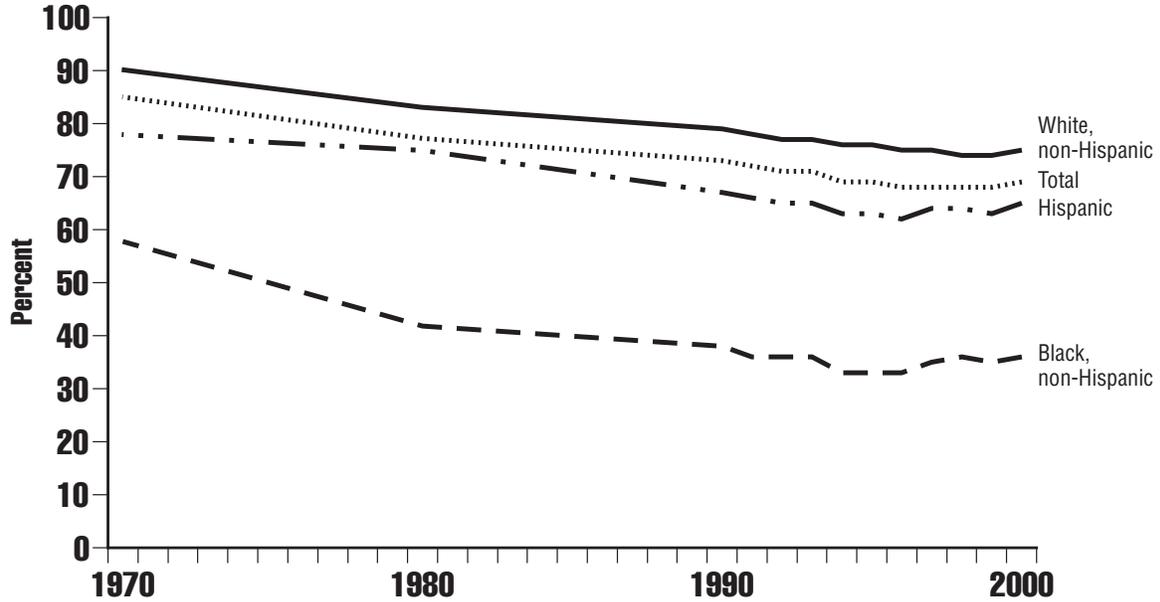
^a Totals for two-parent, one-parent, and no-parent families include categories beyond those presented separately.

^b Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-70, No. 74.

Figure PF 2.2

Percentage of children under age 18 in the United States who are living with two parents, by race and Hispanic origin:^a 1970-2000^b



^a Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.

^b Numbers in the years 1994 and beyond may reflect changes in the Current Population Survey because of newly constituted computer-assisted interviewing techniques and/or because of the change in the population controls to the 1990 Census-based estimates, with adjustments.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, Nos. 410, 461, 468, 478, 491, 496u, 506u, 514u (Table 4 in each); and 484, (Table A-5); Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; also unpublished data, U.S. Census Bureau. As published in *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2001*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, Table POP5.

PF 2.3 Children Living in Foster Care

A child is placed in *foster care*¹⁷ when a court determines that his or her family cannot provide a minimally safe environment. This determination often follows an investigation by a state or county child protective services worker. Placement most commonly occurs either because a member of a household has physically or sexually abused a child or because a child’s caretaker(s) has severely neglected the child. In some cases, children with severe emotional disturbances may also be put into foster care.

Since both federal and state laws discourage removal of children from their families unless necessary to ensure a child’s safety, placement in foster care is an extreme step taken only when a child is in immediate danger or when attempts to help the family provide a safe environment have failed; thus, the frequency of placements in foster care is an indicator of family dysfunction that is so severe that a child cannot remain safely with his or her family.

The number of children in foster care¹⁸ rose sharply from 262 thousand in 1982 to 588 thousand between 1982 and 2000 (see Table PF 2.3). The rate of children living in foster care (i.e., the number of children in foster care per 1,000 children under age 18) also rose dramatically during the same time period, from 4.2 to 8.0 per 1,000 children. However, some of the increase may be a function of the implementation of a new reporting system which became fully operational in 1998.

Table PF 2.3
Number and rate of children in the United States living in foster care: Selected years, 1982-2000

| | 1982 | 1984 | 1986 | 1988 | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 ^a | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Number (in thousands) | 262 | 276 | 280 | 340 | 400 | 427 | 468 | 507 | 560 | 581 | 588 |
| Rate | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 6.2 | 6.5 | 6.9 | 6.6 | 8.2 | 7.4 | 7.5 |

^a 1996 was the last year in which data on foster care were collected through the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS). The Administration on Children and Families (ACF) has implemented the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a replacement for VCIS. While VCIS was a voluntary reporting system, states are required to participate in AFCARS and must use uniform definitions. Most importantly, AFCARS collects case-level foster care data. Estimates in this table may not be comparable to estimates provided in previous issues of *Trends in the Well-Being of America’s Children and Youth* due to the population estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

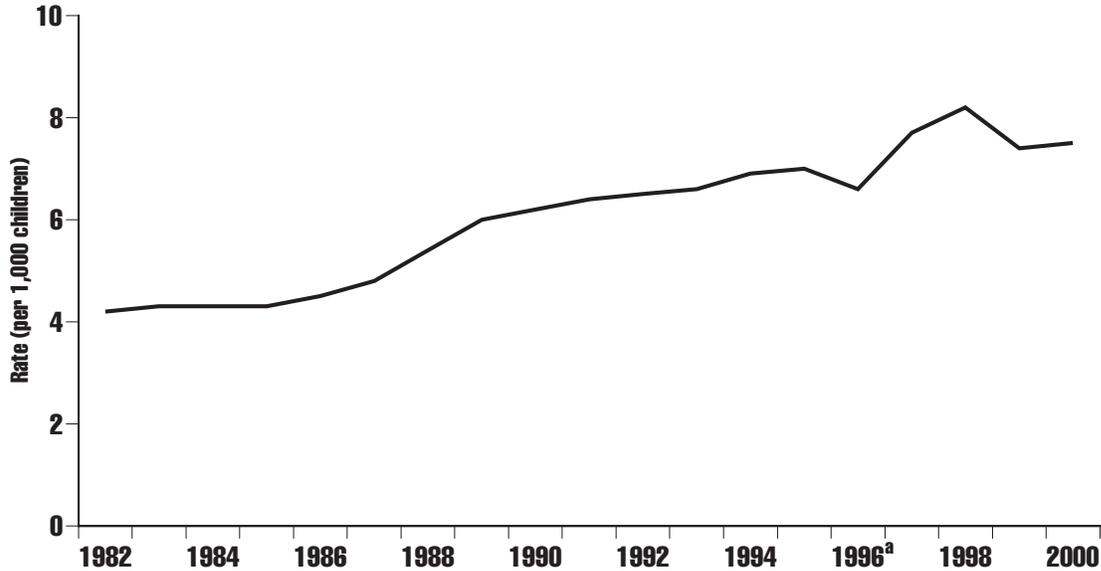
Sources: Estimates for years 1982-1996 from Tashio Tatara, 1995 and 1997; estimates for 1998-2001 from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000, 2001 (April) and 2001 (June) *The AFCARS Report*.

¹⁷ For purposes of this report, “foster care” is defined as a living arrangement where a child resides outside his or her own home, under the case management and planning responsibility of a state child welfare agency. These living arrangements include relative and nonrelative foster homes, group homes, child-care facilities, emergency shelter care, supervised independent living, and nonfinalized adoptive homes.

¹⁸ The Administration on Children and Families (ACF) has implemented the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a replacement for VCIS. While VCIS was a voluntary reporting system, states are required to participate in AFCARS and must use uniform definitions. Most importantly, AFCARS collects case-level foster care data. Estimates in this table may not be comparable to estimates provided in previous issues of *Trends in the Well-Being of America’s Children and Youth* due to the population estimates provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure PF 2.3

Children in the United States living in foster care: 1982-2000



^a 1996 was the last year in which data on foster care were collected through the Voluntary Cooperative Information System (VCIS). The Administration on Children and Families (ACF) has implemented the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) as a replacement for VCIS. While VCIS was a voluntary reporting system, states are required to participate in AFCARS and must use uniform definitions. Most importantly, AFCARS collects case-level foster care data. Estimates in this table may not be comparable to estimates provided in previous issues of *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children and Youth* due to changes in the population estimates provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Estimate of total is the number of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.

Sources: Estimates for years 1982-1996 from Toshio Tataru, 1995 and 1997; estimates for 1998-2001 from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000, 2001 (April) and 2001 (June) *The AFCARS Report*.