

## FAMILY STRUCTURE

### PF 2.1 FAMILY STRUCTURE: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF U.S. CHILDREN BY NUMBER OF PARENTS IN HOUSEHOLD

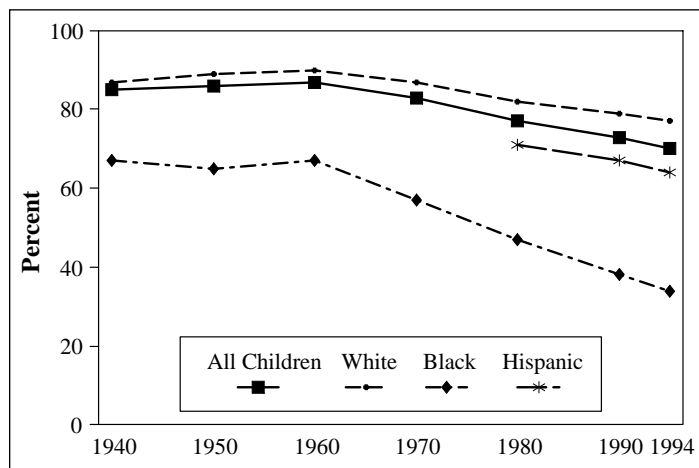
On average, children from disrupted or never-married families are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, to become teen parents, to achieve lower earnings, and are less likely to attain a high school diploma than those from intact families with both biological parents, even after controlling for other background factors including race and family socioeconomic status.<sup>1</sup> Even so, it must also be said that the great majority of children brought up in single-parent families do quite well, with differences in well-being between those from divorced and intact families tending, on average, to be moderate to small.<sup>2</sup>

Figure PF 2.1 presents trends from 1940 to 1994 in the proportion of children in all two-parent families, most but not all of whom are two-parent biological parent families. Over this period, the proportion of children in such families decreased from 85 percent to 70 percent, with a peak of 87 percent in 1960. The downward trend is evident for both black and white children, though the descent is significantly steeper for black children. Between 1940 and 1994, the proportion of black children living in two-parent families decreased by 33 percentage points, from 67 percent to 34 percent. By contrast, the drop for white children was only 10 percentage points, from 87 percent to 77 percent. For Hispanic children, the trend is also towards a smaller proportion of children in two-parent families, decreasing from 71 percent to 64 percent between 1980 (the first year for which Hispanic estimates are available) and 1994.

<sup>1</sup>Amato, P.R. 1993. Children's Adjustment to Divorce: Theories, Hypotheses, and Empirical Support. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 55: 23-58.

<sup>2</sup>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.

Figure PF 2.1 PERCENT OF CHILDREN WITH TWO PARENTS IN HOUSEHOLD: 1940 - 1994



Source: Hernandez, Donald J., "America's Children, Resources from Family, Government and the Economy," Russell Sage Foundation, New York, NY 1993, Tables 3.1, 3.6, and 3.11, calculated from 1940-1980 PUMS. Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1990 Table 4, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports. Tabulations for 1994 by Child Trends, Inc., from March 1994 Current Population Survey.

**Table PF 2.1.A PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF U.S. CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 BY NUMBER OF PARENTS IN HOUSEHOLD AND RACE/ETHNICITY: 1940 - 1994**

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	1994
<b>All Children</b>							
Two parents	85	86	87	83	77	73	70
Mother only	7	6	8	12	16	22	24
Father only	2	1	1	2	2	3	3
Neither parent	6	5	3	4	5	3	3
In group quarters	1	1	1	1	*	*	*
<b>White Children</b>							
Two parents	87	89	90	87	82	79	77
Mother only	6	6	6	9	12	16	18
Father only	2	1	1	2	2	3	3
Neither parent	4	3	2	3	4	2	2
In group quarters	1	1	1	1	*	*	*
<b>Black Children</b>							
Two parents	67	65	67	57	47	38	34
Mother only	12	14	19	30	39	51	54
Father only	3	3	2	3	3	4	4
Neither parent	16	16	11	9	11	7	8
In group quarters	2	3	1	1	1	*	*
<b>Hispanic<sup>a</sup> Children</b>							
Two parents	—	—	—	—	71	67	64
Mother only	—	—	—	—	20	27	28
Father only	—	—	—	—	2	3	4
Neither parent	—	—	—	—	7	3	4
In group quarters	—	—	—	—	*	*	*

Note: \*Indicates < 0.5 percent

Source: Hernandez, Donald J., "America's Children, Resources from Family, Government and the Economy," Russell Sage Foundation, New York, N.Y. 1993, Tables 3.1, 3.6, and 3.11, calculated from 1940-1980 PUMS. Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1990 Table 4, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports. Tabulations for 1994 by Child Trends Inc., from March 1994 Current Population Survey.

## FAMILY STRUCTURE

### PF 2.1 FAMILY STRUCTURE: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF U.S. CHILDREN BY NUMBER OF PARENTS IN HOUSEHOLD (continued)

Of the children who are not in two-parent families, most are in mother only families. In 1994, 24 percent of all children lived in mother only families. (See Table PF 2.1.a) The percent of children living in single father families dropped from 2 percent in 1940 to 1 percent in 1960, then rose to 3 percent by 1994. The percent of families with children where neither parent is present has declined from 6 percent to 3 percent between 1940 and 1994. Black children have consistently been much more likely to live in such families, with rates declining from 16 percent in 1940 down to a still substantial 8 percent in 1994. Finally, it is worth noting that the proportion of children living in group quarters has decreased steadily since 1940 from 1 percent to less than one tenth of one percent by 1994.

Table PF 2.1.b presents Census data for families with children instead of children themselves, reporting the percentage of such families that are headed by married couples, single females, and single males. As such they are not comparable to the data presented in the previous table, but are offered because they include family structure data for two additional racial groups, Asians and Native Americans. Asians had the highest proportion of two-parent families of any race/ethnicity group, comprising 84.3 percent of all Asian families with children in 1990. White families were close behind at 82.2 percent, followed by Hispanics at 71.4 percent, Native Americans at 63.6 percent, and black families at 46.9 percent.

**Table PF 2.1.B PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF U.S. FAMILIES WITH OWN CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18, BY FAMILY TYPE, AND RACE/ETHNICITY: 1980 AND 1990**

	1980	1990
Total		
Families with own children		
Married couple	81.5	77.1
Female head	16.1	17.7
Male head	2.4	4.1
White		
Families with own children		
Married couple	85.7	82.2
Female head	12.1	14.0
Male head	2.2	3.7
Black		
Families with own children		
Married couple	54.3	46.9
Female head	41.7	47.6
Male head	4.0	5.5
Hispanic		
Families with own children		
Married couple	76.6	71.4
Female head	20.4	22.1
Male head	3.1	6.5
Asian American		
Families with own children		
Married couple	88.5	84.3
Female head	9.4	9.8
Male head	2.1	2.9
Native American		
Families with own children		
Married couple	71.5	63.6
Female head	24.2	28.7
Male head	4.3	7.8

Source: *The Challenge of Change: What the 1990 Census Tells Us About Children*, prepared by the Population Reference Bureau for the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Table 14, with data from the Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population, "General Social and Economic Characteristics," PC80-1-C1, United States Summary, tables 100, 121, and 131; and Census of Population and Housing 1990, Summary Tape File 3, tables P-19, P-20, and P-21.

## FAMILY STRUCTURE

### PF 2.2 PERCENT OF ALL BIRTHS THAT ARE TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS

Children who are born to single mothers are, regardless of the age of the mother, considerably more likely to grow up poor, to spend large portions of their childhood without two parents, and more likely to become single parents themselves than children born to two-parent families.<sup>3</sup>

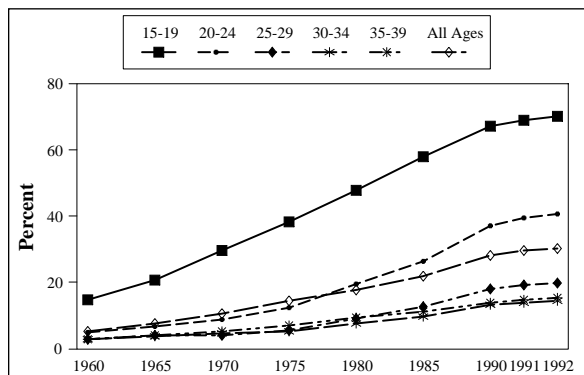
Figure PF 2.2 shows trends from 1960 through 1992 in the percent of all births that were to unmarried mothers. Data are displayed separately for all mothers, and by age of mother in five year increments from ages 15 through 39. The percent of all births to unmarried women has increased very substantially during that period, from 5.3 percent in 1960 to 30.1 percent in 1992. Among women ages 15-19 there was a steady increase from 14.8 percent in 1960 to 70.0 percent in 1992. For women ages 20-24, rates increased from 4.8 percent in 1960 to 40.7 percent during that time period. For women over age 24, rates were all under 3 percent in 1960, but had climbed to between 14.3 and 19.8 percent by 1992.

Table PF 2.2 presents this data separately for white, black and Hispanic mothers. Trend data for black mothers, available for 1970 through 1992, indicate that there have been substantial increases in the percent of births that are nonmarital for all age groups, and particularly for older mothers. For black women ages 20-24, rates increased from 31.3 percent to 75.2 percent during that time. Among black women in the oldest age group, 35-39, the percent of all births that were to unmarried mothers increased from 18.6 percent to 44.7 percent from 1980 to 1992.

Comparisons among white, black, and Hispanic rates for 1992 reveal that white women have the lowest percentage of births to unmarried women, followed by Hispanic women, then black women. This is true for all age groups, though the size of the difference can vary substantially by age of mother. For women ages 15-19, for example, white and Hispanic women are quite close at 60.4 and 61.9 percent, respectively, compared to 92.6 percent for black women. By ages 25-29, however, rates for Hispanic women move midway between white and black rates with whites at 14.3 percent, Hispanics at 30.8 percent, and blacks at 55.0 percent.

<sup>3</sup> See Ventura, S.J., 1995. *Births to Unmarried Mothers: United States, 1980-1992*. NCHS Series 21, No. 53. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Figure PF 2.2 PERCENT OF ALL BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS BY AGE OF MOTHER: 1960 - 1992



Source: Ventura, S.J. 1995. *Births to Unmarried Mothers: United States, 1980-92*. Vital and Health Statistics Series 21, No. 53, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, June 1995.

**Table PF 2.2 PERCENT OF ALL BIRTHS TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS, BY AGE OF MOTHER AND RACE/ETHNICITY:  
1960 - 1992**

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980 <sup>a</sup>	1985	1990	1991	1992
<b>All Races</b>									
All Ages	5.3	7.7	10.7	14.3	17.8	22.0	28.0	29.5	30.1
Ages 15-19	14.8	20.8	29.5	38.2	47.6	58.0	67.1	68.8	70.0
Ages 20-24	4.8	6.8	8.9	12.3	19.4	26.3	36.9	39.4	40.7
Ages 25-29	2.9	4.0	4.1	5.4	9.0	12.7	18.0	19.2	19.8
Ages 30-34	2.7	3.7	4.5	5.3	7.5	9.7	13.3	14.0	14.3
Ages 35-39	2.9	4.0	5.2	7.0	9.4	11.2	13.9	14.6	15.2
<b>White</b>									
All Ages	2.3	4.0	5.7	7.3	11.2	14.7	20.3	21.8	22.6
Ages 15-19	7.2	11.4	17.1	22.9	33.1	44.8	56.4	58.8	60.4
Ages 20-24	2.2	3.8	5.2	6.1	11.7	17.7	27.8	30.2	31.7
Ages 25-29	1.1	1.9	2.1	2.6	5.2	8.1	12.6	13.7	14.3
Ages 30-34	1.0	1.6	2.1	2.7	4.6	6.3	9.3	9.8	10.2
Ages 35-39	1.3	1.9	2.7	3.9	6.4	8.1	10.3	10.9	11.4
<b>Black</b>									
All Ages	—	—	37.6	48.8	56.1	61.2	66.5	67.9	68.1
Ages 15-19	—	—	62.7	76.9	85.7	90.2	92.0	92.3	92.6
Ages 20-24	—	—	31.3	43.0	57.0	65.4	72.6	74.7	75.2
Ages 25-29	—	—	20.3	26.8	36.8	45.2	53.3	54.7	55.0
Ages 30-34	—	—	19.6	24.1	29.6	37.0	45.2	46.5	46.7
Ages 35-39	—	—	18.6	23.9	28.4	35.1	42.0	43.8	44.7
<b>Hispanic</b>									
All Ages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	61.9
Ages 15-19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42.3
Ages 20-24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30.8
Ages 25-29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27.2
Ages 30-34	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28.5
Ages 35-39	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

Notes: <sup>a</sup>Births from 1980 onwards by race of mother. Tabulations prior to 1980 are by race of child, which assigns the child to the race of the non-white parent, if any, or to the race of the father, if both are non-white.

Source: Ventura, S.J., 1995. *Births to Unmarried Mothers: United States, 1980-92*. Vital and Health Statistics Series 21, No. 53, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, June 1995.

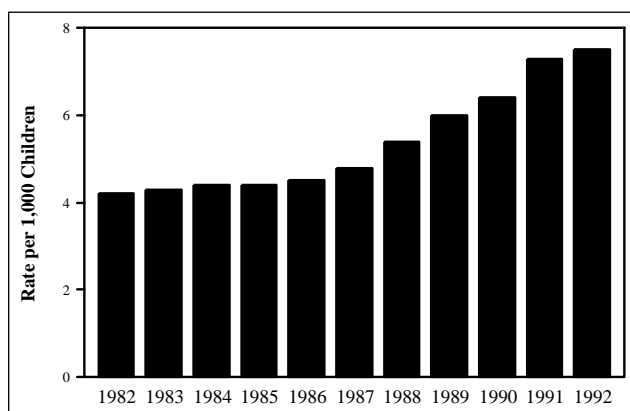
## FAMILY STRUCTURE

### PF 2.3 CHILDREN LIVING IN FOSTER CARE

Placement of a child in foster care occurs when a state protective services worker (under supervision of the state judicial system) determines that a child's family cannot provide a minimally safe environment for the child. Most commonly, placement occurs either because a member of the household has physically or sexually abused the child or because the 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 law strongly discourage removal of children from their families, placement in foster care is an extreme step that protective services workers take only when a child is in immediate danger or when attempts to help the family function better have failed. Thus, the frequency of placements in foster care is an indicator of serious family dysfunction and serious damage to the welfare of children.

As shown in Figure PF 2.3, the rate of children living in foster care per thousand children under age 18 has risen dramatically from 4.2 per thousand in 1982 to 7.5 per thousand in 1992—an increase of nearly 80 percent. Nearly all of this increase was concentrated in the five years between 1986 and 1991. The number of children in foster care has risen steadily from 262,000 in 1982 to 442,000 in 1992.

Figure PF 2.3 CHILDREN LIVING IN FOSTER CARE: 1982 - 1992 (Rate per thousand)



Note: Estimate of total is the number of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year. Estimate of Race/Ethnicity and Age percentages based on children entering the system.

Source: American Public Welfare Association, *Characteristics of Children in Substitute and Adoptive Care: A Statistical Summary of the VCIS National Child Welfare Data Base*, Public Welfare Association, October 1993.

Table PF 2.3 NUMBER OF CHILDREN LIVING IN FOSTER CARE: 1982 - 1992

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Total											
Number	262,000	269,000	276,000	276,000	280,000	300,000	340,000	383,000	407,000	429,000	442,000
Rate per thousand	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.8	5.4	6.0	6.4	7.3	7.5

Note: Estimate of total is the number of children in foster care on the last day of the fiscal year.

Source: Tatara, Tashio. *Characteristics of Children in Substitute and Adoptive care: A Statistical Summary of the VCRS National Child Welfare Data Base*, Washington, DC: October 1993. U.S. Bureau of Census Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1994 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994).