



## Data Snapshot: Living Arrangements of Fathers and Children

Roughly 80 percent of men become a father by their early 40s.<sup>i</sup> However, the living arrangements of fathers and their children are quite complex. Men and women alike are marrying at older ages than they did in the past, having children at older ages, and increasingly having those children outside of marriage.<sup>ii</sup> These factors, coupled with high levels of divorce or union dissolution (often followed by a new relationship) mean that, at any point in time, fathers may be living with some or all of their own children, no children, stepchildren, children of a cohabiting partner, or in a blended family (with a combination of their children and their partner's children). In turn, while many children live with both of their biological or adoptive parents, others live in single-parent families, with their grandparents, with a step-parent, or in a blended family household.

This data snapshot shows national data compiled from a range of published resources and data sources (see Data Box, page 13) on the living arrangements of fathers and children under age 18.

### Highlights

#### *Living arrangements of fathers*

- Most fathers (just over three-quarters) ages 15–44 reported living with all of their children.
- A substantial number of men report having a child with whom they do not live; 24 percent of non-Hispanic black men, 18 percent of Hispanic men, and 8 percent of non-Hispanic white men report having at least one nonresident child.
- Eight percent of households with children were headed by a single father in 2011, four times the percentage of households with children headed by single fathers in 1960.
- Most single fathers are non-Hispanic white, in their 30s or 40s, and live above the federal poverty level.

#### *Living arrangements of children*

- Most children (69 percent) live in a two-parent family—most often with both of their biological or adoptive parents. However, there is substantial variation by race/ethnicity and poverty status.
  - Forty percent of non-Hispanic black children live with two parents, compared to 74 percent of non-Hispanic white children and 67 percent of Hispanic children.
  - In households below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, 38 percent of children live with two parents.
- Sixteen percent of children live in a blended family (i.e., a two-parent family where one or both parents have children from a previous relationship).
- Nearly 7 percent of children live in a household headed by a grandparent.

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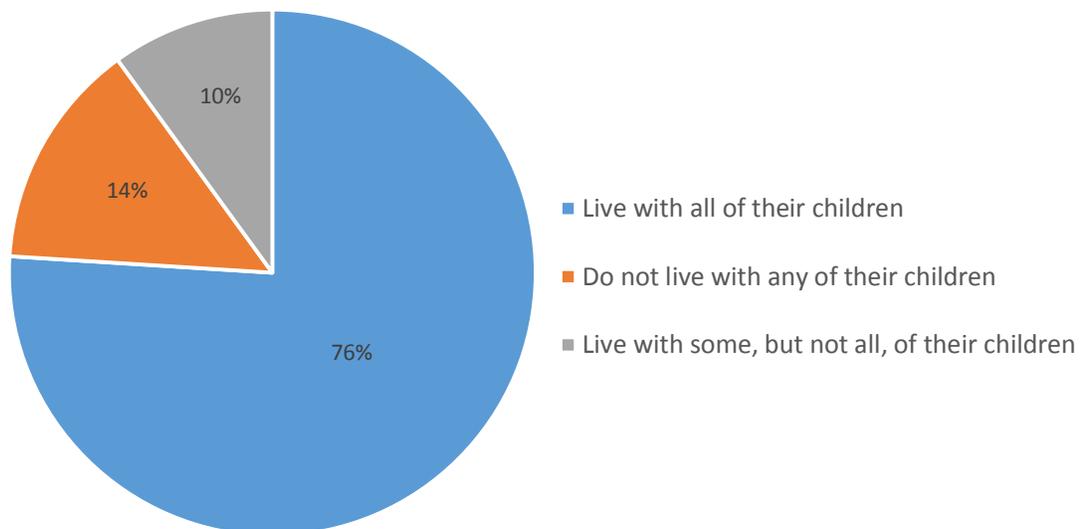
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## Living Arrangements and Characteristics of Fathers

### Living arrangements of fathers ages 15–44

Figure 1 shows the living arrangements of fathers ages 15–44 with respect to their children ages 0–17. It distinguishes between fathers who live with their children all or part of the time and those who do not.

**Figure 1. The Living Arrangements of Fathers Ages 15–44 with Their Children Ages 0–17, 2013**



Source: Childs Trends analysis of the 2011–2015 National Survey of Family Growth. National Center for Health Statistics. 2011–2015 (n=3,503). Note: Data are weighted.

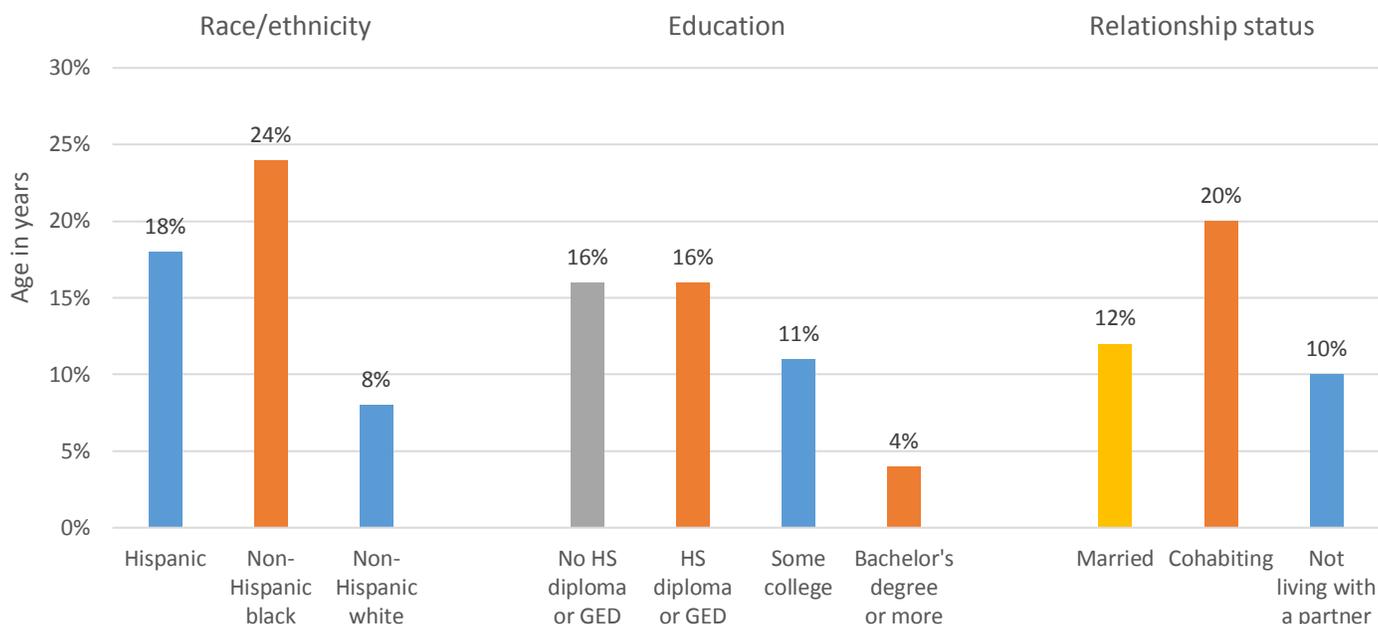
In 2013:

- Seventy-six percent of fathers reported living with **all their children** under age 18 all of part of the time.
- Fourteen percent of fathers reported that they do **not live with any of their children** under age 18.
- Ten percent reported that they live with **some, but not all, of their children** under age 18 all of part of the time.

### Men with at least one nonresident child

Figure 2 shows the percentage of all men who have a child ages 0–17 who does not live with them (either all or part of the time), by race and Hispanic ethnicity, highest education level attained, and relationship status.

**Figure 2. Percentage of Men Ages 15–44 with a Nonresident Child Ages 0–17, by Race/Ethnicity, Educational Attainment, and Relationship Status, 2006–2010**



Source: Stykes, 2012

#### Race and Hispanic ethnicity

- Twenty-four percent of **non-Hispanic black** men and 18 percent of **Hispanic** men reported having a nonresident child, compared to 8 percent of **non-Hispanic white** men.

#### Education

- Four percent of men with a **bachelor's degree or more** reported having a nonresident child, compared to 11 percent of men with **some college**, 16 percent of men with a **high school diploma or GED**, and 16 percent of men who **did not complete high school**.

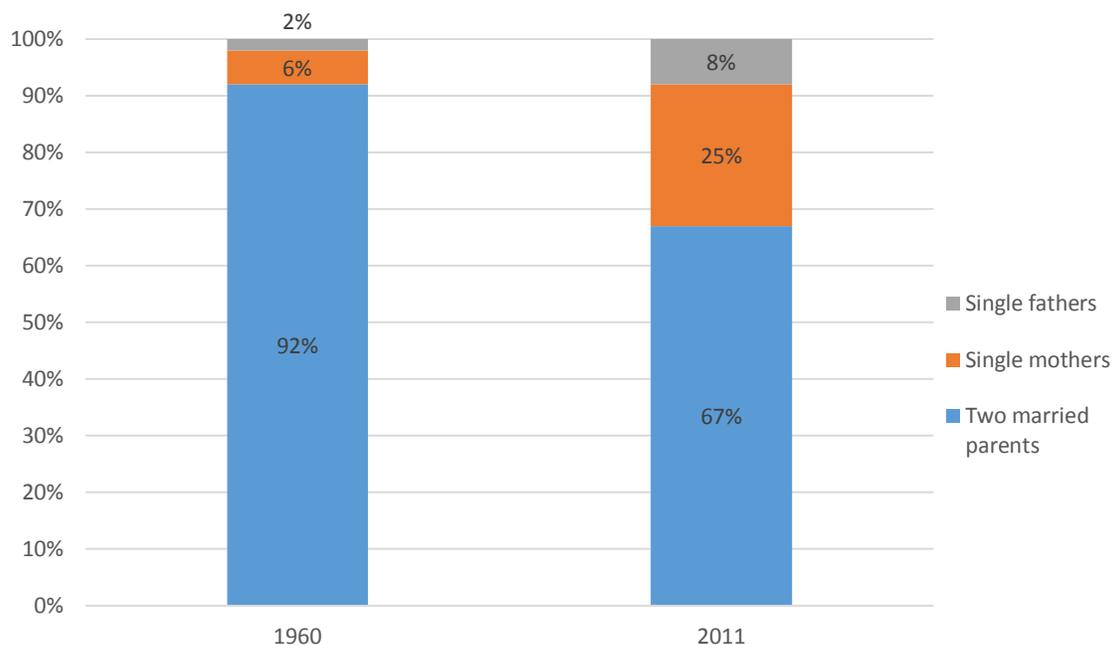
#### Relationship status

- Twenty percent of **cohabiting** men reported being a nonresident father, compared to 10 percent of men **not living with a partner** and 12 percent of **married** men.

## Marital status of parents

Figure 3 shows the percentage of single-father, single-mother, and married two-parent households in 1960 and 2011. In this figure, single-parent households may include parents who are cohabiting with a partner. Married two-parent households may include a stepparent.

**Figure 3. Marital Status of Parents with Children Ages 0–17, 1960 and 2011**



Source: Livingston, 2013

- In 2011, 67 percent of all households with children were headed by **married parents**. This figure is down from 92 percent of households with children in 1960.
- In 2011, 8 percent of households were headed by **single fathers**, which is four times the percentage of such households in 1960 (2 percent).
- In 2011, 25 percent of households were headed by **single mothers**, also four times the comparable percent in 1960 (6 percent).

### Characteristics of single fathers

Figure 4 shows the percentage distribution of single fathers in 2011 across a range of characteristics, including age, race/ethnicity, education level, and poverty status.<sup>1</sup> In this figure, single fathers may include those with a cohabiting partner.

**Figure 4. Profiles of Single Fathers with a Child Ages 0–17 in the Household, 2011**



Source: Livingston, 2013. Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add to 100 percent.  
 \*Total does not add to 100% because other racial and ethnic groups are not shown.

<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the [federal poverty level](#) for family income was defined as \$14,710 for a family of two, \$18,530 for a family of three, and \$22,350 for a family of four.



### Age

- In 2011, 66 percent of single fathers were in their **30s and 40s**.
  - Fifteen percent of single fathers were age **50 or older**.
  - Eighteen percent of single fathers were ages **15 to 29**.

### Race/ethnicity

- In 2011, 56 percent of single fathers were **non-Hispanic white**.
  - Twenty-four percent of single fathers were **Hispanic**.
  - Fifteen percent were **non-Hispanic black**.

### Education

- In 2011, 64 percent of single fathers reported having a **high school diploma/GED** or **some college** education.
  - Nineteen percent reported they did **not have a high school diploma or GED**.
  - Seventeen percent reported having a **bachelor's degree or higher**.

### Poverty status

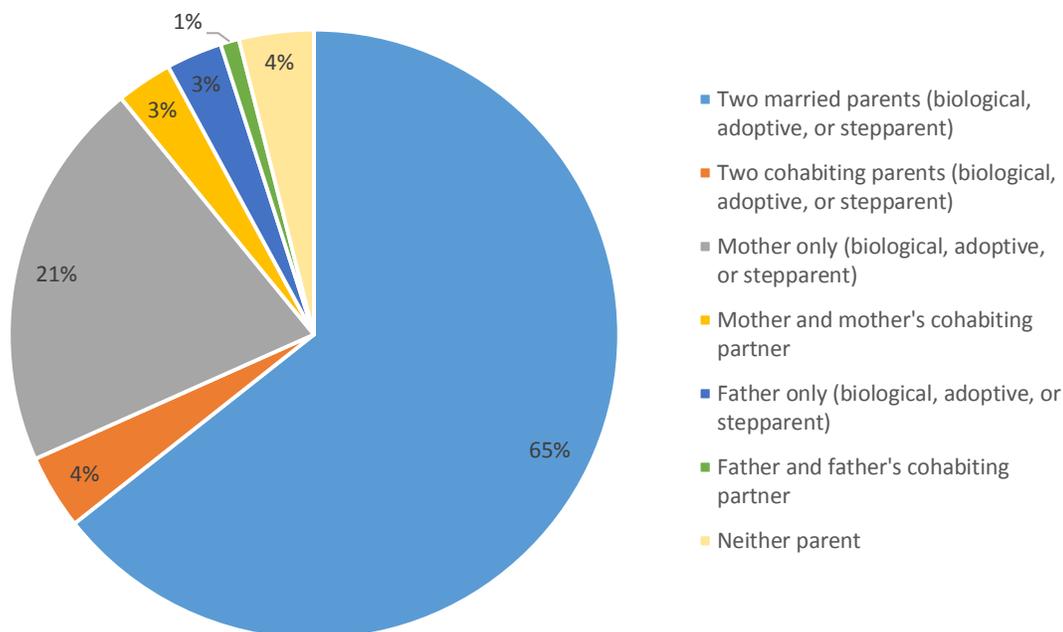
- In 2011, 24 percent of single fathers reported **living in households with an income at or below the federal poverty level**.

## Living Arrangements of Children

### Living arrangements of all children

Figure 5 shows the living arrangements of children ages 0–17 in 2016. Two-parent households (married or cohabiting) include adults who identify as biological parents, adoptive parents, or stepparents of the child.

**Figure 5. Living Arrangements of Children Ages 0–17, 2016**



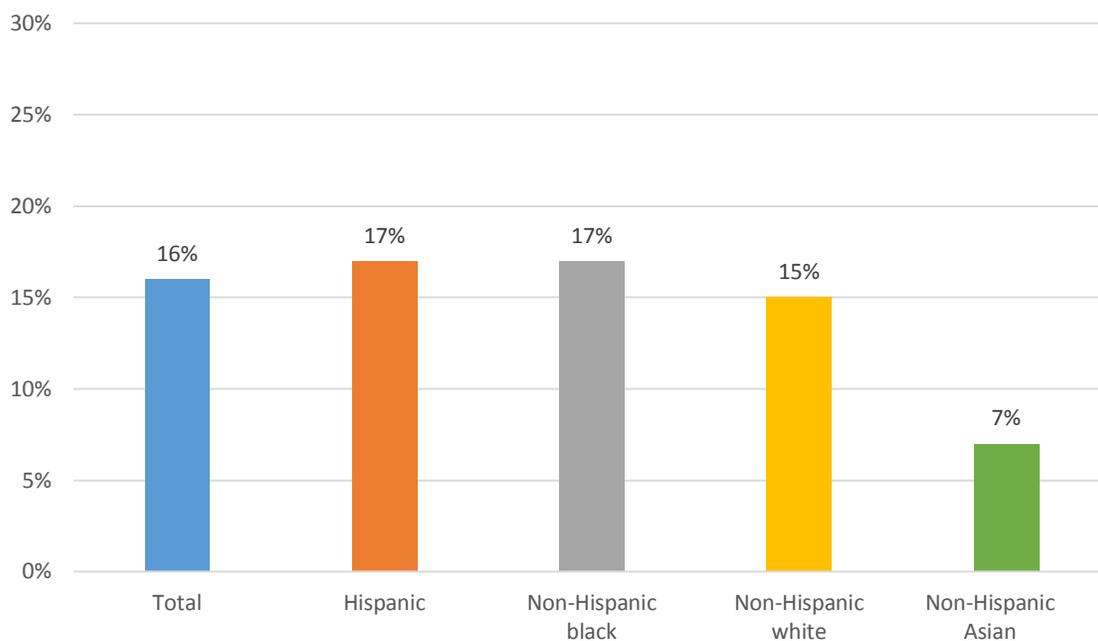
Source: ChildStats.gov, 2017. Note: Due to rounding, total does not add to 100 percent.

- In 2016:
  - o Sixty-five percent of children ages 0–17 lived in a household with **two married parents**, and an additional 4 percent lived with **two cohabiting parents**.
  - o Twenty-one percent lived in a **single-mother** household, and 3 percent lived in a household with their **mother and her cohabiting partner**.
  - o Three percent lived in a **single-father** household, and 1 percent lived in a household with their **father and his cohabiting partner**.
  - o Four percent lived in a household with **neither parent**.

### Children ages 0–17 living in blended families, by race and Hispanic ethnicity

Figure 6 shows the percentage of children ages 0–17 living in a blended family household (a two-parent household where one or both parents have children from a previous relationship) in 2009, overall and by race and Hispanic ethnicity.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Children Ages 0–17 Living in Blended Families, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009**



Source: Pew Research Center, 2015

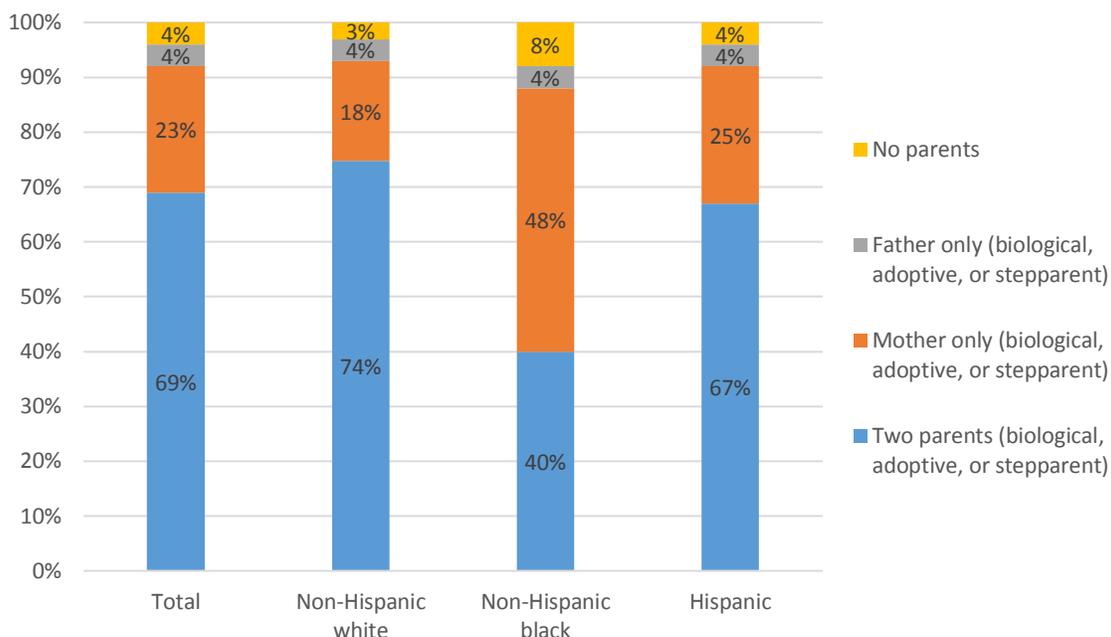
In 2009:

- Sixteen percent of all children ages 0–17 lived in a blended family household.
- Seventeen percent of both **Hispanic** children and **non-Hispanic black** children lived in blended family households.
- Fifteen percent of **non-Hispanic white** children and 7 percent of **non-Hispanic Asian** children lived in blended family households.

### Living arrangements of children, by race and Hispanic ethnicity

Figure 7 shows the living arrangements of children ages 0–17 by race and Hispanic ethnicity in 2017. Households with two parents can be married or cohabiting. Mother-only and father-only households can include a cohabiting partner.

**Figure 7. Living Arrangements of Children Ages 0–17, by Race/Ethnicity, 2017**



Source: Childs Trends analysis of Table C3. Living Arrangements of Children Ages 0–17 And Marital Status of Parents, By Age, Sex, Race, And Hispanic Origin and Selected Characteristics of The Child for All Children: 2017. U.S. Census Bureau.

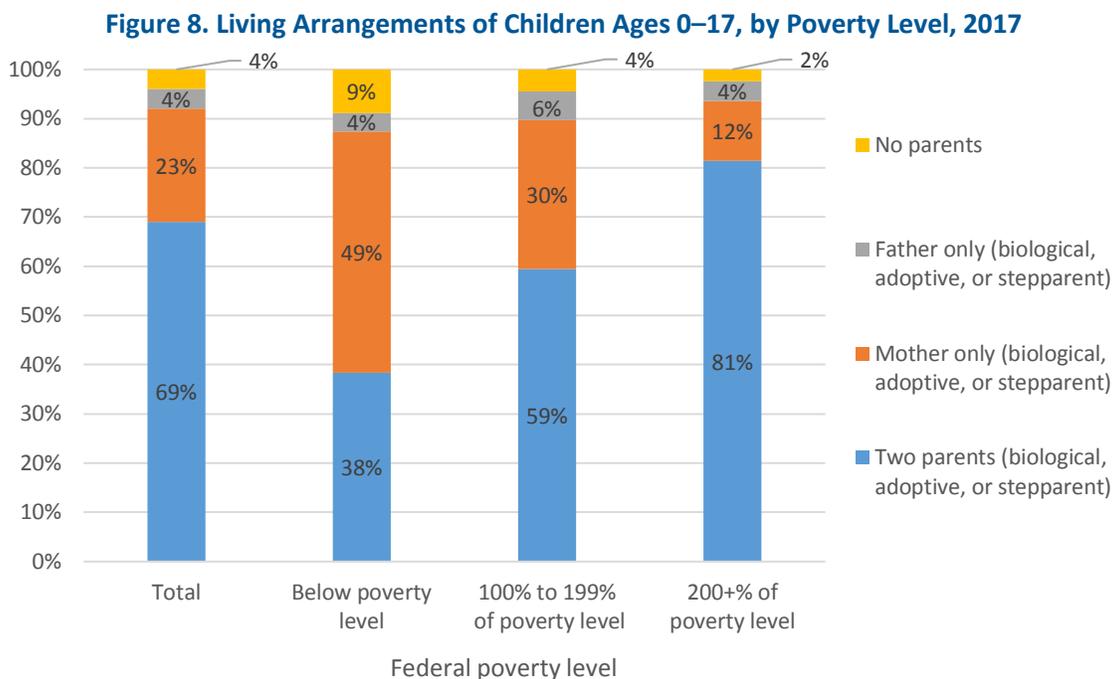
<https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/families/cps-2017.html>

Note: Due to rounding, columns may not total 100 percent.

- In 2017, 69 percent of all children ages 0–17 lived in a household with **two parents**.
  - o Forty percent of **non-Hispanic black** children lived with **two parents**, compared to 74 percent of **non-Hispanic white** children and 67 percent of **Hispanic** children.
  - o Eighteen percent of **non-Hispanic white** children lived in a **mother-only** household, compared to 48 percent of **non-Hispanic black** children and 25 percent of **Hispanic** children.
  - o Four percent of all children, and 4 percent of children in each racial and ethnic category, lived in a **father-only** household.

### Living arrangements of children, by poverty level

Figure 8 shows the living arrangements of children ages 0–17 by poverty level in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Households with two parents include parents who are married or cohabiting. Mother-only and father-only households can include a cohabiting partner.



Source: Childs Trends analysis of Table C3. Living Arrangements of Children Ages 0–17 And Marital Status of Parents, By Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin and Selected Characteristics of The Child for All Children: 2017. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2017/demo/families/cps-2017.html> Note: Due to rounding, columns may not total 100 percent.

In 2017:

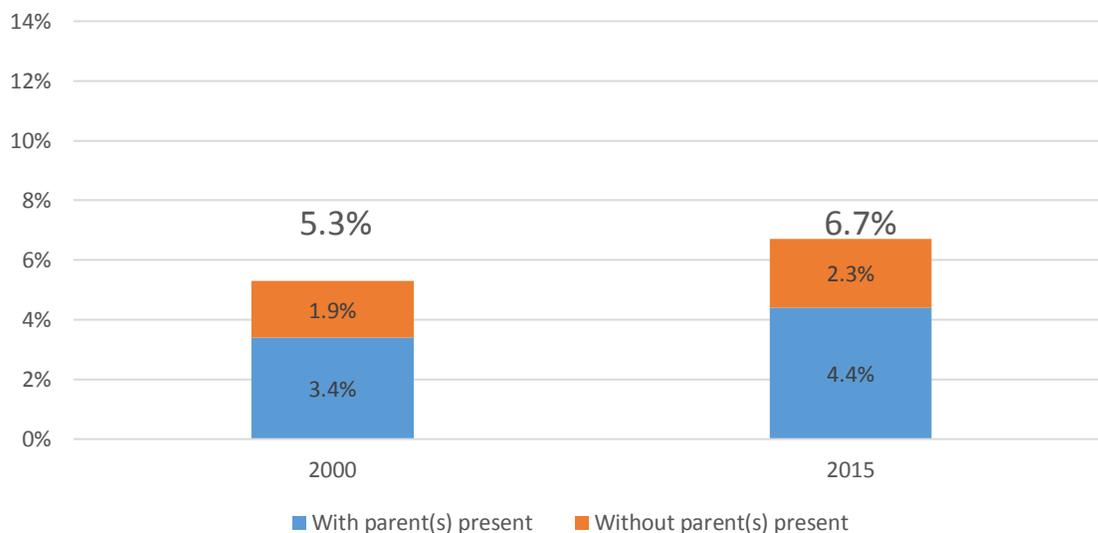
- Forty-nine percent of children in households **below the federal poverty level (FPL)** lived in **mother-only** households.
  - o Thirty-eight percent lived with **two parents**.
- **Two-parent** households were the most common living arrangement for children **above the poverty threshold**.
  - o Fifty-nine percent of children in low-income households (**between 100 and 199 percent of the FPL**) lived with **two parents**.
  - o Eighty-one percent of children in households **at or above 200 percent of the FPL** lived with **two parents**.

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, the [federal poverty level](#) was defined as an income of \$16,240 for a family of two, \$20,420 for a family of three, and \$24,600 for family of four.

### Children ages 0–17 living in households headed by a grandparent

Figure 9 reports the percentage of children ages 0–17 living in a household headed by a grandparent, in 2000 and 2015. A parent may be biological or adoptive.

**Figure 9. Percentage of Children Ages 0–17 Living in Households Headed by a Grandparent, 2000 and 2015**



Source: Child Trends, 2015

- In 2015, 6.7 percent of children ages 0–17 lived in a household headed by a grandparent, up from 5.3 percent in 2000.
- In 2015, 4.4 percent of children ages 0–17 lived in a household headed by a grandparent and with **at least one parent present** in the household, compared to 3.4 percent in 2000.
- In 2015, 2.3 percent of children lived in a household headed by a grandparent and with neither parent present in the household, compared to 1.9 percent of children in 2000. Data Box



## Data Box

This NRFC Data Snapshot draws from a combination of 1) published reports that use nationally representative data and 2) the authors' analyses of [U.S. Census Bureau](#) data and 2011–2015 [National Survey of Family Growth \(NSFG\)](#) data. The U.S. Census Bureau collects household-level data on America's families and living arrangements. The National Survey of Family Growth collects data on family life from a nationally representative sample of men and women ages 15 to 44. When weighted, the 2011–2015 wave of the NSFG is representative of men ages 15 to 44 in 2013.

Published sources include:

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Pew Research Center. (2015). *Parenting in America: Outlook, worries, aspirations are strongly linked to financial situation*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from [http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/st\\_2015-12-17\\_parenting-14/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/parenting-in-america/st_2015-12-17_parenting-14/).

Stykes, B. (2012). *Who are nonresident fathers? Demographic characteristics of nonresident fathers* (FP-12-08). Bowling Green, OH: National Center for Family & Marriage Research. Retrieved from <https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-12-08.pdf>.

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<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control. (2012). *Key statistics from the National Survey of Family Growth – F Listing*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key\\_statistics/f.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nsfg/key_statistics/f.htm).

<sup>ii</sup> McLanahan, S. & Sawhill, I. (2015). Marriage and Child Wellbeing Revisited: Introducing the Issue. *The Future of Children*, 25(2), 3-9. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43581969>.