



LGBTQ Family Fact Sheet

*In Support of August 2017 presentation to
NAC Undercount of Young Children Working Group*

LGBTQ Families: Who We Are and What Our Families Look Like

Who We Are:

- **LGBTQ.** Approximately 4.3% of adults in the U.S. identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ). That means that there are more than 10.7 million LGBTQ adults in the U.S. ([Romero 2017](#); [Gallup Poll 2017](#)).
- **Transgender.** A recent Williams Institute Report estimates that 1.4 million adults (.6% of adults) in the U.S. identify as transgender. ([Flores et al 2016](#)).
- **Bisexual.** Roughly half of the LGBTQ population identify as bisexual. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#)).

What Our Families Look Like: Like other parents, LGBTQ parents are married, unmarried and cohabitating, separated or divorced, and single. There are intact families and blended families, and children who live between households.

- **Married.** While the prevalence of marriage in the general population continues to decline, the number of same-sex married couples has increased significantly in the last decade as LGBTQ people gained the freedom to marry nationwide. Nearly 1.1 million LGBTQ people in the U.S. are married to someone of the same-sex. That means, there are more than 547,000 married same-sex couples nationwide. ([Romero 2017](#); [Gallup Poll 2017](#)).
- **Unmarried.** According to a 2015 Gallup Poll, over 1.2 million LGBTQ people in the U.S. are in an unmarried same-sex relationship. Given that this poll was conducted prior to nationwide marriage equality, some of these couples may have married since gaining the legal right to do so. ([Press Release 2015](#); [Gallup Poll 2015](#)).
- **Parenting.** Between 2 million and 3.7 million children under age 18 have an LGBTQ parent, and approximately 200,000 of them are being raised by a same-sex couple. Many of these children are being raised by a single LGBTQ parent or by a different-sex couple where one parent is bisexual. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#)).

Family Formation: How LGBTQ Families Are Created

- **Family Formation.** The legal and social climate for LGBTQ people has a direct impact on how LGBTQ people form families and become parents. Historically, in the face of an anti-LGBTQ legal and social climate, LGBTQ people have tended to come out later in life, oftentimes after having a different-sex relationship. As such, most children today who are being raised by a same-sex couple were conceived in a different-sex relationship; however, this trend is changing as the legal and social climate has become more accepting of LGBTQ people and same-sex relationships. Today, LGBTQ people are coming out earlier in life, and an increasing number of same-sex couples are planning

and creating their families through assisted reproductive technology (ART) and surrogacy, as well as adoption and foster care. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#)).

- **Adoption/foster care.** LGBTQ people and same-sex couples are more likely to foster and adopt than their non-LGBTQ counterparts. Same-sex couples are six times more likely to foster children, and at least 4 times more likely to adopt. ([Gates 2013](#)).

Demographics of LGBTQ Families

- **Where LGBTQ Families Live.** The proportion of same-sex couples raising kids tends to be higher in more socially conservative areas of the country where LGBTQ people have come out later in life, and were more likely to have a child with a different-sex partner earlier in life. Overall, the highest proportions of same-sex couples raising children under age 18 reside in Southern, Mountain West, and Midwestern states – areas with the fewest protections for LGBTQ families. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#); [Gates 2013](#)).
- **Family Composition.** Among LGBTQ adults under 50 living alone or with a spouse or partner, 48% of women and 20% of men are raising a child who is under 18 years old. ([Gates 2013](#)).
- **Race and Ethnicity.** Racial and ethnic minorities who are LGBTQ are more likely to be raising or having kids. More than a third of same-sex couples raising children are racial or ethnic minorities – approximately 12% are African American and 15% Latinx. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#); [Gates, Demographics 2015](#); [Gates 2013](#)).
- **Income.** LGBTQ individuals and same-sex couples raising children have lower incomes than different-sex counterparts and higher levels of poverty. Nearly one in five children being raised by same-sex couples (24%) live in poverty compared to 14% of children being raised by different-sex couples. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#); [Gates, Demographics 2015](#)).
- **Education.** Nearly all research shows that individuals in same-sex couples have higher levels of education; however, this is not true for those raising children. Only one third of same-sex couples raising children have a college degree. ([Gates, Marriage and Family 2015](#)).

Unique Challenges for LGBTQ Families That May Contribute to The Undercount of Small Children

Confusion. The complex and varied family structures of LGBTQ families may cause confusion for some parents on how to accurately fill out the census. This is especially true for blended families, families where one parent is not legally recognized as a parent, or families raising foster children.

Discrimination. The LGBTQ community has seen considerable legal and social progress in recent years; however, discrimination continues and increasing hostility under the current Administration may cause government mistrust and fear of discrimination amongst LGBTQ parents that could impact how they fill out the census. For more information on laws affecting LGBTQ parents, please see our [Equality Maps](#).

- While same-sex couples have the right to marry nationwide, anti-LGBTQ discrimination and social stigma remains. There is no comprehensive federal nondiscrimination law expressly protecting LGBTQ people and less than half of states have state nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ

people. So, in over half of the states, an LGBTQ person can marry their same-sex partner on Saturday, and get fired from their job on Monday because they are gay. In states where LGBTQ people feel vulnerable to such discrimination, they may be reluctant to report marital and parental status.

- Parenting and foster and adoption laws, practices, and procedures vary throughout the U.S., and many states do not have express protections for LGBTQ parents. Thus, depending on the law of a given state, LGBTQ parents may feel vulnerable to discrimination or retribution. This is especially true for transgender parents who have historically faced discrimination in the courts, custody disputes, foster care, and adoption, and a non-biological parent who does not have legally established rights to her or his child.
- In the last few years, there has been a notable increase in hate crimes and hostility toward LGBTQ people. Those who live in a hostile or socially conservative community may feel vulnerable and may be reluctant to fill out the census in a manner that reveals their sexual orientation or familial relationships, especially where such relationships are without legal recognition or protection.

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