

## Changes in the Living Arrangements of Children in the United States Since 1970

### What's the main conclusion?

The percentage of children living in two-parent households in the U.S. steadily decreased between 1970 and the mid-1990s (from 85% to 65%). Since then, it has remained steady at 68%. At the same time, the proportion of children living in single-parent homes has more than doubled (12% to 28%). The proportions living with other relatives or non-relatives has remained small and fairly stable.

### What else do the data tell us?

- The increase in single-parent households is primarily due to an increase in mother-only households.
- The number of children living in father-only homes is small compared to those living in mother-only homes, but also has increased since 1970.
- The proportion of children growing up in homes with relatives other than their parents or with neither parent has increased only slightly.

### Why is this an important issue?

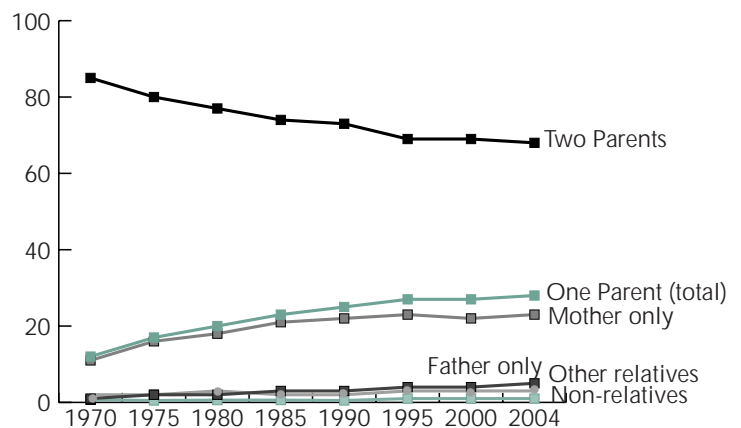
- Childhood living arrangements tell us a lot about a child's future well-being. A large body of research shows that children do best when they are raised by two married parents in a low-conflict relationship.
- Children who grow up in single-parent homes or in homes with neither parent are more likely to:
  - Exhibit behavioral problems
  - Do less well in school and have lower social and psychological well-being
  - Leave home at an early age
  - Engage in sexual activity at an early age and become teen parents
  - Have difficulties that last into adulthood.
- Single-parent households tend to have less money and less free time than two-parent families. Children raised by one parent are also more likely to go through many changes in living arrangements. These reasons may help explain the differences in future well-being between children raised in single- and two-parent households.
- On average, children in two-parent stepfamilies tend to have similar outcomes to children who are raised in single-parent homes.

### Do population groups differ on this issue?

In general, these trends are true across all racial/ethnic sub-groups. However, there are some important differences:

- Black children are far more likely to grow up in single-parent households than white and Hispanic children.
- Black children are also more likely to live in homes without either parent than Hispanic and white children.

### Trends in Children's Living Arrangements, 1970-2004



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2004 and earlier.

### Defining the terms

**Two-parent households** = Those with two married parents living together.

**Single-parent households** = Those with one adult parent living with one or more children; it may include a second cohabiting adult who is not married to the parent.

**Other-relative households** = Those in which children live with other relations (such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles).

**Non-relative households** = Those in which children are raised without parents or other relatives (such as foster homes).

For more detailed information on this topic, visit [www.healthymarriageinfo.org](http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org)