

Family Structure

Headline

Following decades of decline, the proportion of children living with both parents has remained relatively stable over the last decade, dropping modestly from 69 percent in 1995 to 67 percent in 2006. ([See Figure 1](#))

Importance

Mothers and fathers both play important roles in the growth and development of children.¹ Both the number and the type of parents (i.e., biological, step) in a child's household can have strong effects on their well-being. Single-parent and cohabitating families tend to have much lower incomes than do two-parent families, but research indicates that the income differential only partially accounts for the negative effects of parent absence on many areas of child and youth well-being, including health, educational attainment and assessments, behavior problems, and psychological well-being.^{2,3} Among young children, for example, those living with no biological parents or in single-parent households are less likely than children with two biological parents to exhibit behavioral self-control. Young children with single parents are also more likely to be exposed to high levels of aggravated parenting.⁴

Among children in two-parent families, those living with both biological parents in a low-conflict marriage tend to be doing much better than those living in stepparent families on a host of outcomes. Children in step-parent families are in many cases similar to children growing up in single-parent families.^{5,6} Research also shows that children whose parents are divorced have lower academic performance, social achievement, and psychological adjustment than do children with married parents.⁷

Trends

From 1970 to 1996⁸, the percentage of all children under age 18 who were living with two married parents decreased steadily from 85 percent to 68 percent. The percentage stabilized during the late 1990s, and was 67 percent in 2006. ([See Figure 1](#))

Since 1970, the percentage of children living in mother-only families has increased from 11 percent to 24 percent in 1997, and was 23 percent in 2006. Between 1970 and 2006, the percentage of children living in father-only families increased from 1 percent to 5 percent. The percentage living without either parent (with other relatives or with non-relatives) rose slightly from 3 percent to 5 percent. ([See Figure 1](#))

In 2006, 5 percent of all children lived in the home of their grandparents. In more than half of these families, however, one or both parents were also present. ([See Table 2](#))

Differences by Race and Ethnicity

Black children are significantly less likely than other children to be living with two married parents. In 2006, 35 percent of black children were living with two parents, compared with 84 percent of Asian children, 76 percent of non-Hispanic white children, and 66 percent of Hispanic children.

In 2006, 9 percent of all black children did not live with either parent, compared with 5 percent of Hispanic children, 3 percent of non-Hispanic white children, and 3 percent of Asian children. ([See Figure 2](#))

State and Local Estimates

State and local estimates for children's living arrangements are available using the KIDS COUNT Census Data Online.

<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/census/>

International Estimates

Information on the influences of family structure on youth health is available for selected countries from the Health Behavior of School-Aged Children survey at

http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/WHO/informationresources/publications/catalogue/20040601_1 (See Chapter 4)

International estimates of the family structure of children are also available for 10 countries at

<http://www.childstats.gov/intnllinks.asp?field=Subject1&value=Population+and+Family+Characteristics> (See POP3)

Information on the size and composition of households for 15 European Union countries (2000), composition of household by type of household for 24 OECD countries (1996), and percent distribution of households by type for ten countries (selected years 1980 – 2002) is available for at www.childpolicyintl.org (See Tables 2.15a – 2.15c under “Context Data” heading on the left side of the homepage)

National Goals

Federal welfare reform under the “*Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996*,” specifically encourages the promotion of marriage and two-parent families as a means of reducing welfare dependence. For additional information see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/welfare/index.htm>

Definition

For this indicator, unless otherwise specified, a two-parent family refers to parents who are married to each other and living in the same household. They may be biological, adoptive, or stepparents. The Current Population Survey identifies all parents who are family or subfamily heads. Where cohabitants are concerned, however, the CPS does not ask whether that person is also the parent of the child. Single-parent families refer primarily to families in which only one parent is present, but may include some families where both parents are present but unmarried. No-parent families refer to families where neither parent of the child lives in the household. Data about those children living with grandparents reflect those children living in the homes of their grandparents. Parents may or may not be present in such cases.

Data Sources

Data for 2006: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2006". Table C-2. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2006.html>

Data for 2005: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2005". Table C-2. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005.html>

Data for 2004: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2004". Table C-2. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2004.html>

Data for 2003 single parent families and children living in the home of their grandparents: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Social and Economic Supplement: 2003 Current Population Survey, *Current Population Reports*, Series P20-553. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2003": Tables C-2 and C-7. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>

All other data for 2003: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004*: Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<http://usa.usembassy.de/etexts/soc/ac04brief.pdf>

Data for 2002: Child Trends calculations using Fields, Jason. 2003. *Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics: March 2002*. Current Population Reports, P20-547. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2002.html>

Data for 2000 adopted children and stepchildren: Kreider, Rose M. 2003. *Adopted Children and Stepchildren: 2000*, Census 2000 Special Reports. CESR-6RV. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-6.pdf>

Data for all other years, Child Trends calculations using:

Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-1.xls>

Living Arrangements of White Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-2.xls>

Living Arrangements of Black Children Under 18 Years Old: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-3.xls>

Living Arrangements of Hispanic Children Under 18 Years Old: 1970 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-4.xls>

Children Under 18 Years Living With Mother Only, by Marital Status of Mother: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-5.xls>

Children Under 18 Years Living With Father Only, by Marital Status of Father: 1960 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-6.xls>

Grandchildren Living in the Home of Their Grandparents: 1970 to Present. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-7.xls>

Raw Data Source

March Current Population Survey, a joint project of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau.

<http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/cpsmain.htm>

U.S. Decennial Census

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>

Approximate Date of Next Update

Summer 2008

¹ Child Trends. (2002). *Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers in America*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends. <http://www.childtrends.org/files/ParenthoodRpt2002.pdf>

² Brown, Susan L. (2004). Family Structure and Child Well-Being: The Significance of Parental Cohabitation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 66(2): 351-67.

³ The Urban Institute. (2006). Parents and Children Facing a World of Risk: Next Steps Towards a Working Families Agenda. http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311288_parents_and_children.pdf

⁴ Manning, Wendy D. and Kathleen A. Lamb. (2003). Adolescent well-being in cohabiting, married, and single-parent families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 65(4) 876-893.

⁵ Child Trends, (2002). "Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It?" (Research Brief). Kristin Anderson Moore, Susan M. Jekielek, and Carol Emig. <http://www.childtrends.org/Files/MarriageRB602.pdf>

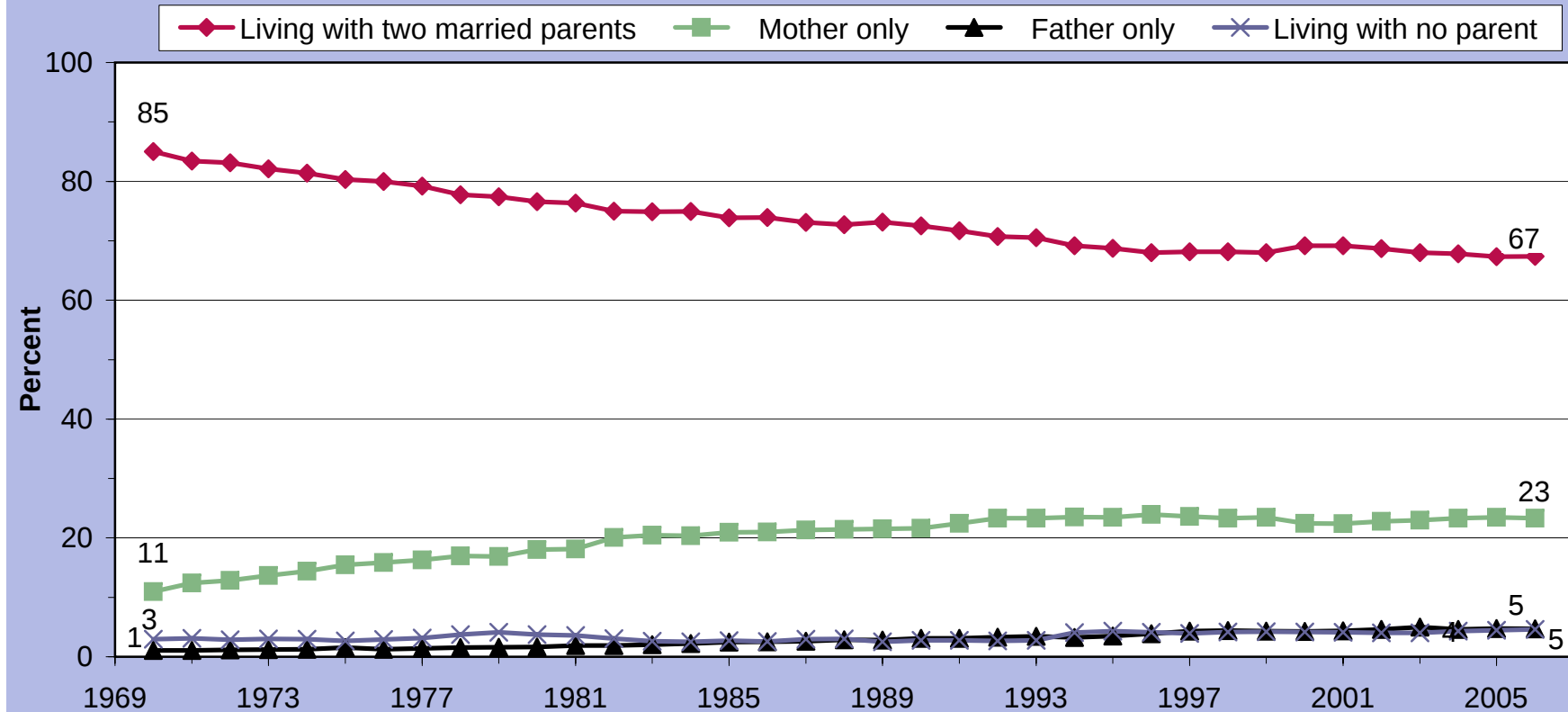
⁶ Manning, Wendy D. and Kathleen A. Lamb.

⁷ Amato, Paul R., (2001). "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children." In Robert M. Milardo (ed.), *Understanding Families into the New Millennium: A Decade in Review*. (Lawrence, KS: National Council on Family Relations): 488-506.

⁸ "Families and Living Arrangements: Living Arrangements of Children" Tables 1-4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>

Figure 1

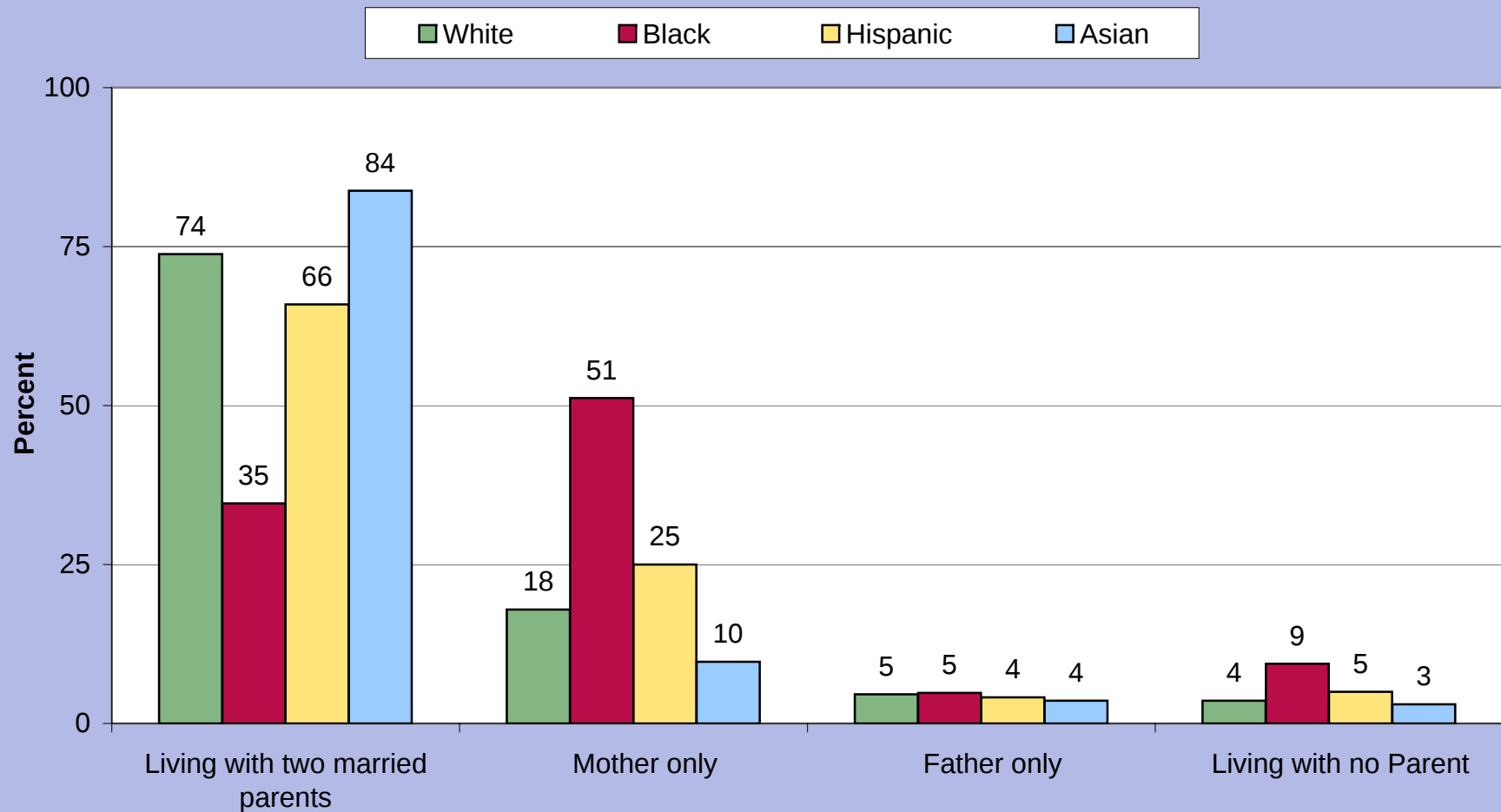
Living Arrangements of Children, 1970-2006



Note: Children living with two married parents may be living with biological, adoptive, or non-biological parents. Children living with mother only or father only may also be living with the parent's unmarried partner. Source: "Families and Living Arrangements: Living Arrangements of Children" Tables 1-4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>. Data for 2003: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004, Table ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.childstats.gov/ac2004/tables/pop6.asp>. Data for 2004: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2004". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2004.html>. Data for 2005: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2005". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005.html>. Data for 2006: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2006. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2006". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2006.html>

Figure 2

Living Arrangements of Children, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2006



Source: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2006. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2006". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2006.html>

Table 1

Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old, 1970-2006													
	1970 ¹	1975	1980 ¹	1985	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003*	2004	2005	2006
Living with Two Married Parents²	85.0	80.3	76.6	73.9	72.5	68.7	69.1	69.1	68.7	68	67.8	67.3	67.4
White	89.5	85.4	82.7	80.0	79.0	75.8	75.3	75.2	74.5	-	-	73.5	73.8
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	77.5	77.5	76.9	77	76.9	75.9	75.9
Black	58.5	49.4	42.2	39.5	37.7	33.1	37.6	37.6	38.5	36	34.8	35.0	34.6
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	37.3	37.3	38.2	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	77.7	-	75.4	67.9	66.8	62.9	65.1	65.2	65.1	65	64.6	64.7	65.9
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	80.5	81.9	81.8	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83.1	83.6	83.8
Living with One Parent³	12.0	17.0	19.7	23.4	24.7	27.0	26.7	26.7	27.3	27.5	28.0	28.2	28.0
White	8.7	12.8	15.1	18.0	19.2	21.2	21.6	21.8	22.4	22.1	-	23.1	22.5
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	19.9	20.2	20.5	20.1	20.2	21.2	20.8
Black	31.8	42.7	45.8	54.0	54.7	56.1	53.3	52.8	53.3	55.4	56.2	55.2	56.0
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	53.4	53.1	53.7	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	21.1	28.8	30.0	32.7	29.5	29.1	30.1	30.1	30.7	30.2	29.1
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.5	15.3	15.0	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.3	13.9	13.2
Living with Mother Only³	10.9	15.5	18.0	20.9	21.6	23.5	22.4	22.4	22.8	23	23.3	23.4	23.3
White	7.8	11.3	13.5	15.6	16.2	17.8	17.3	17.5	17.9	-	-	18.4	17.9
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	15.6	15.8	16.1	16	15.9	16.4	16.0
Black	29.5	40.9	43.9	51.0	51.2	52.0	49.0	48.1	48.1	51	50.4	50.2	51.2
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	49.2	48.3	48.3	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	19.6	26.6	27.1	28.4	25.1	24.5	25.1	25	25.4	25.4	25.0
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.0	13.0	13.0	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.3	10.2	9.7
Living with Father Only³	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.5	3.1	3.5	4.2	4.4	4.6	5	4.6	4.8	4.7
White	0.9	1.5	1.6	2.4	3.0	3.4	4.3	4.3	4.5	-	-	4.7	4.6
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.3	4.3	4.4	4	4.3	4.8	4.8
Black	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.9	3.5	4.1	4.2	4.7	5.2	5	5.8	5.0	4.8
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.2	4.8	5.3	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	1.5	2.2	2.9	4.2	4.4	4.6	5.0	6	5.3	4.8	4.1
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.5	2.3	2.0	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	3.6	3.6
Living with No Parent	3.0	2.7	3.7	2.7	2.8	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.0	4	4.3	4.5	4.6
White	1.8	1.8	2.2	2.0	1.8	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1	-	-	3.4	3.6
White, non- Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	2.3	2.7	3	2.9	2.9	3.2
Black	9.8	7.9	12.0	6.6	7.5	10.8	9.2	9.6	8.2	9	9.1	9.8	9.4
Black, non-Hispanic	-	-	-	-	-	-	9.2	9.6	8.2	-	-	-	-
Hispanic	-	-	3.5	3.3	3.2	4.4	5.4	5.7	4.9	5	4.7	5.2	5.0
Asian and Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.9	2.8	3.2	-	-	-	-
Asian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.6	2.5	3.0

¹ Revised based on population from the decennial census for that year.

² Whether biological, adoptive, or non-biological parents.

³ The parent may be residing with an unmarried partner.

*Data for 2003 and 2004 race estimates reflect only those who selected a single race. Only whole numbers are available for 2003 estimates, except for those children living with one parent, for which Note: Based on Current Population Survey (CPS) (unless otherwise indicated)

Source: Data for 1970-1998: Child Trends calculations using "Families and Living Arrangements: Living Arrangements of Children" Tables 1-4. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Retrieved June 23,

All other 2003 data: Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2004, Table

ECON2. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<http://www.childstats.gov/ac2004/tables/pop6.asp>. Data for 2004: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual

Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2004". Table C-2. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2004.html>. Data for 2005: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population

Survey, March 2005. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2005". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005.html>. Data for 2006: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2006. "America's Families and Living

Arrangements: 2006". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2006.html>



Table 2

Percent of Children Living in the Home of their Grandparents: 1970-2006

	1970	1980	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Number of children under 18 (in thousands)	69,276	63,369	64,137	65,093	65,965	66,893	69,508	70,254	70,908	70,983	71,377	71,703	72,012	72,006	72,321	73,001	73,205	73,494	73,664
Living with Grandparents																			
Total	3.2	3.6	4.9	5.1	4.9	5.0	5.4	5.6	5.7	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.3	5.3	5.1	5.2	5.5	5.6	5.1
With parent(s) present																			
Both parents present	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Mother only present	1.2	1.5	2.4	2.6	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.4	2.5	2.2
Father only present	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3
Without parent(s) present	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.5	2.0	2.1	2.0	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	2.1	2.2	2.0

Source: Child Trends calculations using: *Grandchildren Living in the Home of Their Grandparents: 1970 to Present*. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Online. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabCH-7.xls>; accessed 06/23/02. Data

Characteristics: March 2002. Current Population Reports, P20-547. U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC. Table C4. Data for 2003: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Social and Economic Supplement:

2003 Current Population Survey, *Current Population Reports*, Series P20-553. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2003". Table C-7. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>. Data

for 2004: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2004". Table C-2. Available at:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2004.html>. Data for 2005: Child Trends calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. "America's

Families and Living Arrangements: 2005". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2005.html>. Data for 2006: Child Trends Calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population

Survey, 2006. "America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2006". Table C-2. Available at: <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam/cps2006.html>

