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Census Snapshot: North Dakota

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Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this report provides demographic and economic information about same-sex couples and same-sex couples raising children in North Dakota. We compare same-sex “unmarried partners,” which the Census Bureau defines as an unmarried couple who “shares living quarters and has a close personal relationship,” to different-sex married couples in North Dakota.<sup>1</sup>



**Same-sex couple households per 1,000 households**

- None present: 0
- Low: 0.01 – 2.99
- Med: 3 – 4.99
- High: 5+

In many ways, the nearly 1,100 same-sex couples living in North Dakota are similar to married couples. According to Census 2000, they live throughout the State, are racially and ethnically diverse, have partners who depend upon one another financially, and actively participate in North Dakota’s economy. Census data also show that about 40% of same-sex couples in North Dakota are raising children. However, same-sex couples have fewer economic resources than married couples: they have lower household incomes and lower rates of homeownership.

### SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGB POPULATION IN NORTH DAKOTA

- In 2000, there were 703 same-sex couples living in North Dakota.<sup>2</sup>
- By 2005, the number of same-sex couples increased to 1,070.<sup>3</sup> This increase likely reflects same-sex couples’ growing willingness to disclose their partnerships on government surveys.
- In 2005, there were an estimated 11,003 gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) living in North Dakota.<sup>4</sup>

### INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

- There are more male same-sex couples (51%) than female same-sex couples (49%) in North Dakota.<sup>5</sup>
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 61 years old, and significantly older than individuals in married couples (49 years old) in North Dakota.

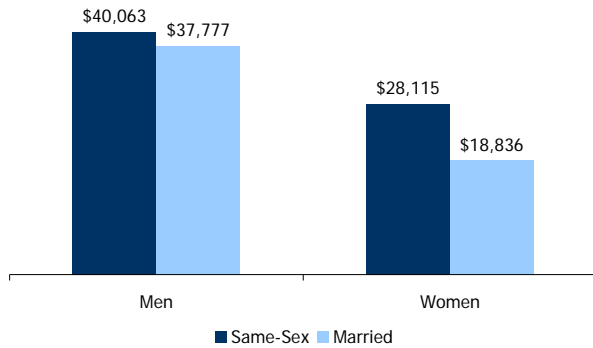
- Same-sex couples live in almost every county in North Dakota and constitute 0.5% of coupled households and 0.3% of all households in the state. Cass County reported the most same-sex couples with 146 couples (0.28% of all households in the county), followed by Burleigh County with 63 couples (0.23%), and Grand Forks County with 59 couples (0.23%). The counties with the highest percentage of same-sex couples are Logan County (0.73% of all county households), Oliver County (0.63%), Rolette County (0.55%), and Billings County (0.55%).<sup>6</sup>
- North Dakota’s same-sex couples are as racially and ethnically diverse as their married counterparts: 5% of individuals in same-sex and married couples are nonwhite.

### PEOPLE IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE STATE ECONOMY

- 47% of individuals in same-sex couples in North Dakota are employed, compared to 69% of married individuals.

- The annual earnings of men in same-sex couples are higher than those of married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in North Dakota earn \$40,063 each year, compared to \$37,777 for married men. The median income of men in same-sex couples in North Dakota is \$46,000, compared to \$30,000 for married men.
- Women in same-sex couples in North Dakota earn an average of \$28,115 per year (with a median of \$31,500), more than married women, whose earnings average \$18,836 (with a median of \$16,300). Women in same-sex couples earn less than married men as well as men in same-sex couples.

Average Individual Earnings



- Individuals in same-sex and married couples in North Dakota are most likely to work in the private sector: 64% of individuals in same-sex and married couples work in the private sector; 36% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the public sector, compared to 18% of married individuals; and no individuals in same-sex couples are self-employed, compared to 17% of married individuals.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are more likely to have a college degree: 31% of individuals in same-sex couples, and 24% of married individuals have earned a college degree.
- Despite the military's historic policies of excluding gay men and lesbians from service, individuals in same-sex couples have served in the military: 4% of individuals in same-sex couples are veterans, compared to 16% of married individuals.

**SAME-SEX PARTNERS IN NORTH DAKOTA DEPEND UPON ONE ANOTHER IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO MARRIED COUPLES**

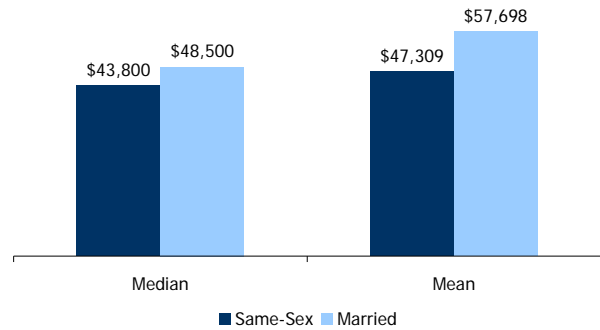
- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. 5% of same-sex couples have only one wage earner, compared to 24% of married couples.

- The mean income gap between same-sex partners is \$2,176, less than the \$20,558 gap for married spouses.
- A significantly larger percentage of same-sex couples in North Dakota have at least one partner who is disabled: 60% of same-sex couples, compared to 25% of married couples.
- A significantly larger percentage of same-sex couples in North Dakota have at least one partner who is age 65 or older: 60% of same-sex couples, compared to 21% of married couples.

**SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN NORTH DAKOTA HAVE FEWER ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAN MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS**

- The median income of same-sex coupled households in North Dakota is \$43,800, less than that of married couples (\$48,500). The average household income of same-sex couples is \$47,309, less than that of married couples (\$57,698).

Household Incomes

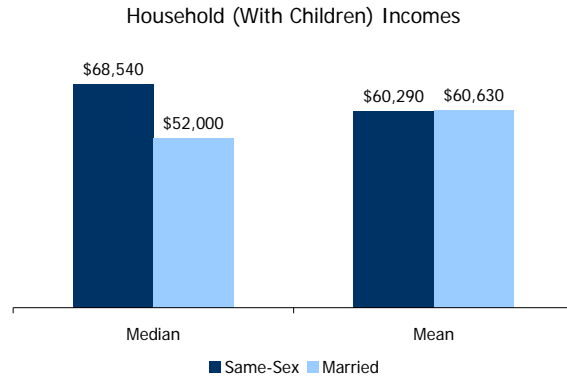


- Same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 43% of same-sex couples in North Dakota own their home, compared to 85% of married couples.

**SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN NORTH DAKOTA WITH SIMILAR ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO MARRIED PARENTS**

- 40% of same-sex couples in North Dakota are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2005, an estimated 424 of North Dakota's children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.<sup>7</sup>
- In North Dakota, same-sex couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, one child, compared to 1.9 children for married parents.
- 13% of same-sex parents have only one wage earner, compared to 23% of married parents.

- Same-sex parents and married parents have similar financial resources to support their children in North Dakota. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$68,540, compared to \$52,000 for married parents. The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$60,290, compared to \$60,630 for married parents.
- Same-sex and married parents have similar homeownership rates in North Dakota: 87% of same-sex couples with children own their home, compared to 83% of married parents.



## CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in North Dakota. While in many respects North Dakota's same-sex couples look like married couples, same-sex couples have fewer economic resources and lower rates of homeownership than married couples.

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity <sup>8</sup>		
White	94.8%	95.3%
Black	0.0%	0.4%
Hispanic	0.0%	0.9%
Asian	0.0%	0.7%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	5.2%	2.2%
Other	0.0%	0.6%
Average age*	60.9	48.9
Percent with college degree or better	31.3%	23.7%
Percent employed	46.6%	68.9%
Employment <sup>8</sup>		
Private employer	64.3%	63.5%
Public employer	35.7%	18.4%
Self-employed	0.0%	17.5%
Veteran status <sup>^</sup>	3.6%	15.9%
Average individual salary		
Men	\$40,063	\$37,777
Women*	\$28,115	\$18,836
Median individual salary		
Men	\$46,000	\$30,000
Women	\$31,500	\$16,300

\* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).  
<sup>^</sup> Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

	Same-Sex	Married
At least one partner 65 or older*	60.4%	20.8%
Percent disabled*	60.4%	24.9%
Average household income	\$47,309	\$57,698
Median household income	\$43,800	\$48,500
Income gap between partners*	\$2,176	\$20,558
Single wage earner <sup>^</sup>	5.2%	24.3%
Homeownership*	42.7%	84.7%
Percent with children under 18	39.6%	46.2%

\* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).  
<sup>^</sup> Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

	Same-Sex parents	Married parents
Average number of children under 18 in the household*	1.0	1.9
Single wage earner (parents)	13.2%	23.2%
Average household income (parents)	\$60,290	\$60,630
Median household income (parents)	\$68,540	\$52,000
Homeownership (parents)	86.8%	82.7%

\* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).  
<sup>^</sup> Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

**Appendix A: Counts and percent of same-sex couples by county**

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Adams	5	0.45%
Barnes	7	0.14%
Benson	10	0.43%
Billings	2	0.55%
Bottineau	8	0.27%
Bowman	3	0.22%
Burke	1	0.10%
Burleigh	63	0.23%
Cass	146	0.28%
Cavalier	9	0.45%
Dickey	8	0.35%
Divide	3	0.30%
Dunn	4	0.29%
Eddy	4	0.34%
Emmons	6	0.34%
Foster	2	0.13%
Golden Valley	1	0.13%
Grand Forks	59	0.23%
Grant	5	0.42%
Griggs	1	0.08%
Hettinger	0	0.00%
Kidder	4	0.35%
LaMoure	5	0.26%
Logan	7	0.73%
McHenry	7	0.28%
McIntosh	5	0.34%
McKenzie	5	0.23%
McLean	16	0.42%
Mercer	12	0.36%
Morton	35	0.35%
Mountrail	12	0.47%
Nelson	5	0.31%
Oliver	5	0.63%
Pembina	7	0.20%
Pierce	7	0.36%
Ramsey	15	0.30%
Ransom	6	0.26%
Renville	1	0.09%
Richland	15	0.22%
Rolette	25	0.55%
Sargent	2	0.11%
Sheridan	2	0.27%
Sioux	3	0.27%
Slope	0	0.00%
Stark	22	0.25%
Steele	2	0.22%
Stutsman	27	0.30%
Towner	1	0.08%

County	Number of same-sex couples	Percent of same-sex couples out of all households
Traill	12	0.36%
Walsh	10	0.20%
Ward	56	0.24%
Wells	8	0.36%
Williams	17	0.21%

## About the Authors

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, we calculate the demographic characteristics from the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (5% file) available from the U.S. Census Bureau. For a detailed discussion of the Census 2000 methodology used in this report, see *Census Snapshot: Methods Note*, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/MethodologicalDetailsForCensusSnapshots.pdf>. In estimating numbers of same-sex couples and children raised by same-sex couples, however, we use the total number of same-sex couples from 2005 and the proportion of couples with children from 2000 in order to provide a more up-to-date estimate.

<sup>2</sup> Tavia Simmons & Martin O'Connell, U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, *Married-Couple and Unmarried-Partner Households*, Census 2000 Special Reports, CENSR-5, p. 4, tab. 2 (Feb. 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Gary J. Gates, The Williams Institute, *Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey* (2006), p. 11, apx. 1, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/SameSexCouplesandGLBpopACS.pdf>. Sample sizes for individual states in 2005 are not sufficiently large for the analyses presented in this report, we therefore use data from Census 2000 where samples are on average five times larger than 2005.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Simmons & O'Connell, *supra* note 2.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Unmarried Partner Households by Sex of Partners*, PCT14. Percentages of total households computed by dividing data in PCT14 by data in P15 (total households).

<sup>7</sup> Computed by multiplying the number of same-sex couples times the percent of same-sex couples with children times the average number of children under 18 in the household.

<sup>8</sup> Due to rounding, percent may not add to 100.

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