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Census Snapshot: Rhode Island

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RHODE ISLAND

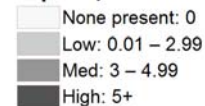
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Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this report provides demographic and economic information about same-sex couples and same-sex couples raising children in Rhode Island. We compare same-sex “unmarried partners,” which the Census Bureau defines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



Same-sex couple households
per 1,000 households



In many ways, the over 2,400 same-sex couples living in Rhode Island are similar to married couples. According to Census 2000, they live throughout the state, are racially and ethnically diverse, have partners that depend upon one another financially, and actively participate in the Rhode Island economy. Census data also show that 12% of same-sex couples in Rhode Island are raising children. However, same-sex couples in Rhode Island, particularly those with children, have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than do their married counterparts. They have lower household incomes, on average, and lower rates of home ownership.

SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGBT POPULATION IN RHODE ISLAND

- In 2000, there were 2,471 same-sex couples living in Rhode Island.²
- We estimate that there are more than 27,000 gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) currently living in Rhode Island.³

INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

- More same-sex couples in Rhode Island are female (53%) than male (47%).⁴
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 40 years old, and significantly younger than individuals in married couples (49 years old).
- Same-sex couples live in every county in Rhode Island. In 2000, Providence County reported the most couples at 1,600 (0.7% of households),

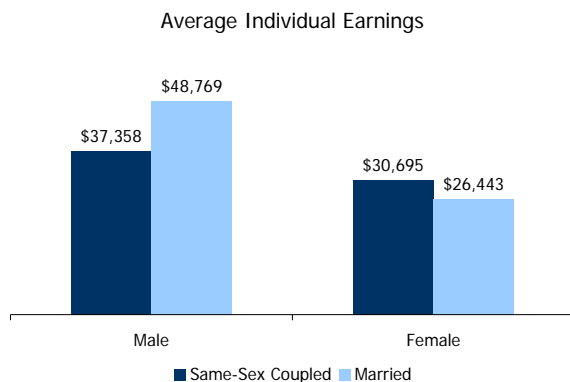
followed by Kent County with 347 same-sex couples (0.5%), and Washington County with 242 same-sex couples (0.5%).⁵

- Rhode Island’s same-sex couples are as racially and ethnically diverse as their different-sex married counterparts: 10% of same-sex couples and 11% of married couples in Rhode Island are nonwhite.

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

- Individuals in same-sex couples in Rhode Island are significantly more likely to be employed than are married individuals: 81% compared to 67%.
- Contrary to a popular stereotype, men in same-sex couples do not have higher incomes than married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in Rhode Island earn \$37,358, compared to \$48,769 for married men.

- The median income of individuals in male same-sex couples in Rhode Island is \$30,000, compared to \$39,400 for married men.
- Women in same-sex couples, on the other hand, earn an average of \$30,695 per year (with a median of \$29,000), significantly more than married women, whose earnings average \$26,443 (with a median of \$22,200). Women in same-sex couples, however, still earn less than men.



- Individuals in same-sex couples in Rhode Island are significantly more likely to be self-employed than married individuals: 17% of individuals in same-sex couples are self-employed, compared to 11% of married individuals. Similar percentages of same-sex and married couples work in the public and private sectors.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have a college degree: 42% of individuals in same-sex couples and 29% 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, albeit at lower rates than married individuals: 10% of individuals in same-sex couples in Rhode Island are veterans, compared to 17% of married individuals.

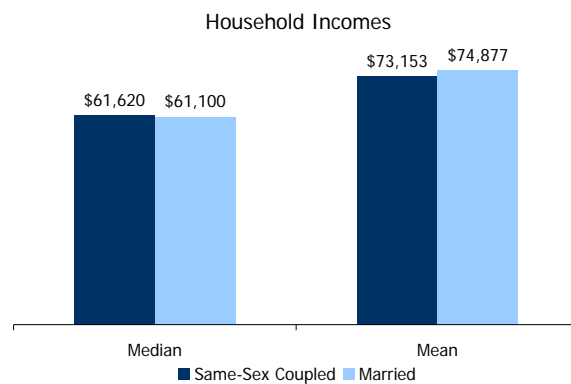
SAME-SEX PARTNERS IN RHODE ISLAND DEPEND UPON ONE ANOTHER IN WAYS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO MARRIED COUPLES

- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. Nearly one in five same-sex couples (19%) have only one wage earner, compared to nearly one in three (28%) married couples.

- The average income gap between same-sex partners is smaller than the gap between married partners, but still sizeable (\$17,899, compared to \$28,001).
- The presence of a senior or disabled partner in a couple may indicate interdependence: 7% of same-sex couples include a partner over age 65, compared to 20% of married couples.
- A similar percentage of same-sex and married couples in Rhode Island have at least one partner who is disabled: 33% of same-sex couples, compared to 28% of married couples.

SAME-SEX COUPLED AND MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS IN RHODE ISLAND FACE SIMILAR ISSUES

- The median income of same-sex coupled households in Rhode Island is \$61,620, about the same as the median household income of \$61,100 for married couples. The average household income of same-sex couples is \$73,153, which is not statistically different from \$74,877 for married couples.



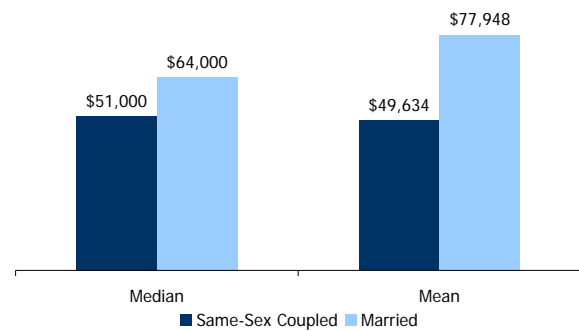
- However, same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 60% of same-sex couples in Rhode Island own their home, compared to 80% of married couples.

SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN RHODE ISLAND

- Approximately 12% of same-sex couples in Rhode Island are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2000, an estimated 400 of Rhode Island's children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.⁶

- In Rhode Island, married couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, 2 children, compared to an average of 1.5 children under 18 for same-sex couples.
- Nearly 7% of Rhode Island's adopted children live with a lesbian or gay parent.⁷
- Same-sex parents have fewer financial resources to support their children than married parents. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$51,000, or 20% lower than that of married parents (\$64,000). The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$49,634, significantly less than \$77,948 for married parents.
- A similar percentage of same-sex and married parents have a single wage earner: 28% of same-sex parents and 29% of married parents have a single wage earner.
- While only 40% of same-sex couples with children own a home, 77% of married parents own a home.

Household (With Children) Incomes



CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in Rhode Island. While in many respects Rhode Island's same-sex couples look like married couples, on average, those with children have fewer financial resources to provide for their families.

Table One: Characteristics of individuals in couples

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity ⁸		
White	90%	89%
Black	5%	2%
Asian	0%	2%
Hispanic	5.5%	5%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0%	<1%
Other	<1%	2%
Average age	40	49*
Percent with a college degree or better	42%	29%*
Employment	81%	67%*
Private employer	70%	73%
Public employer	13%	16%
Self-employed	17%	11% [^]
Veteran Status	10%	17% [^]
Average individual salary		
Men	\$37,358	\$48,769*
Woman	\$30,695	\$26,443 [^]
Median individual salary		
Men	\$30,000	\$39,400
Woman	\$29,000	\$22,200

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
[^] Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

Table Two: Characteristics of couples

	Same-Sex	Married
At least one partner over 65	7%	20%*
Percent disabled	33%	28%
Average household income	\$73,153	\$74,877
Median household income	\$61,620	\$61,100
Income gap between partners	\$17,899	\$28,001*
Single wage earner	19%	28% [^]
Homeownership	60%	80%*
Percent with children under 18	12%	46%*

* Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).
[^] Difference significant at the 10% level or better (two-tailed tests).

Table Three: Characteristics of couples with children

	Same-Sex parents	Married parents
Average number of children under 18 in the household	1.5	2
Single wage earner (parents)	28%	29%
Average household income (parents)	\$49,634	\$77,948*
Median household income (parents)	\$51,000	\$64,000
Homeownership	40%	77%*

* Difference significant at the 5% 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
Bristol	101	0.50%
Kent	347	0.50%
Newport	181	0.50%
Providence	1600	0.70%
Washington	242	0.50%

About the Authors

Adam P. Romero is Public Policy Fellow at the Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. J.D. Yale Law School; A.B., *summa cum laude*, Cornell University. His current research examines the significance of family in society and law, especially as relevant to disabled adults without family.

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Gary J. Gates is Senior Research Fellow at The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. He studies the demographic and economic characteristics of the lesbian and gay population.

¹ 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.

² 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).

³ Gary J. Gates, The Williams Institute, *Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey*, 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

⁴ Simmons & O'Connell, *supra* note 2.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Unmarried Partner Households by Sex of Partners*, PCT014.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Gary J. Gates, M.V. Lee Badgett, Kate Chambers, Jennifer Macomber, The Williams Institute & The Urban Institute, *Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States (2007)*, available at <http://www.law.ucla.edu/Williamsinstitute/publications/Policy-Adoption-index.html>.

⁸ Due to rounding, percent may not add to 100.

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