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Census Snapshot: Washington

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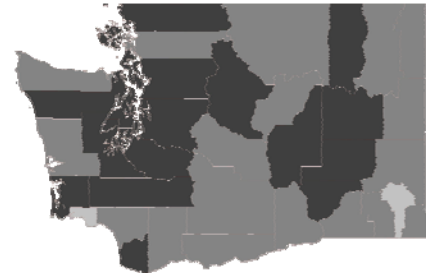
WASHINGTON

APRIL 2008

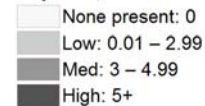
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Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, this report provides demographic and economic information about same-sex couples and same-sex couples raising children in Washington. We compare same-sex “unmarried partners,” which the Census Bureau defines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

In many ways, the almost 24,000 same-sex couples living in Washington 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 Washington’s economy. Census data also show that 18% of same-sex couples in Washington are raising children. However, same-sex couples with children have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than married parents: they have lower household incomes and lower rates of home ownership.



Same-sex couple households
per 1,000 households



SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THE LGB POPULATION IN WASHINGTON

- In 2000, there were 15,900 same-sex couples living in Washington.²
- By 2005, the number of same-sex couples increased to 23,903.³ This increase likely reflects same-sex couples’ growing willingness to disclose their partnerships on government surveys.
- In 2005, there were an estimated 266,983 gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (single and coupled) living in Washington.⁴

INDIVIDUALS IN SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE DEMOGRAPHICALLY AND GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVERSE

- There are more female same-sex couples (52%) than male same-sex couples (48%) in Washington.⁵
- Individuals in same-sex couples are, on average, 39 years old, and significantly younger than individuals in married couples (47 years old) in Washington.

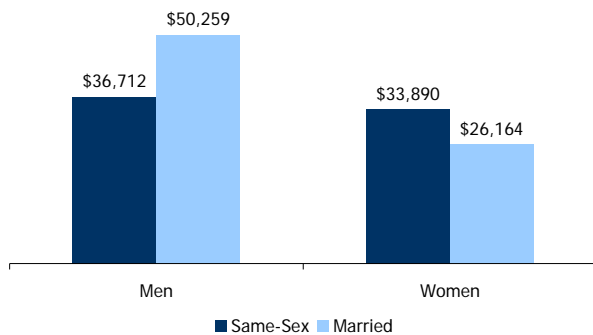
- Same-sex couples live in every county in Washington and constitute 1.2% of coupled households and 0.7% of all households in the state. King County reported the most same-sex couples with 7,751 couples (1.09% of all county households), followed by Pierce County with 1,397 couples (0.54%), and Snohomish County with 1,239 couples (0.55%). The counties with the highest percentage of same-sex couples are King County (1.09% of all county households), San Juan County (0.88%), Thurston County (0.70%), and Jefferson County (0.68%).⁶
- Washington’s same-sex couples are as racially and ethnically diverse as their married counterparts: 17% of individuals in same-sex couples are nonwhite, compared to 16% of married individuals.

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

- Individuals in same-sex couples in Washington are significantly more likely to be employed than married individuals: 82% of individuals in same-sex couples are employed, compared to 65% of married individuals.

- Contrary to a popular stereotype, the annual earnings of men in same-sex couples are significantly lower than those of married men. On average, men in same-sex couples in Washington earn \$36,712 each year, significantly less than \$50,259 for married men. The median income of men in same-sex couples in Washington is \$32,000, or 20% less than that of married men (\$40,000).
- Women in same-sex couples in Washington earn an average of \$33,890 per year (with a median of \$31,500), more than married women, whose earnings average \$26,164 (with a median of \$21,800). 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 Washington are most likely to work in the private sector: 66% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the private sector, compared to 68% of married individuals; 22% of individuals in same-sex couples work in the public sector, compared to 19% of married individuals; and 12% of individuals in same-sex couples are self-employed, compared to 13% of married individuals.
- Individuals in same-sex couples are significantly more likely to have a college degree: 45% of individuals in same-sex couples and 30% 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: 11% of individuals in same-sex couples are veterans, compared to 19% of married individuals.

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

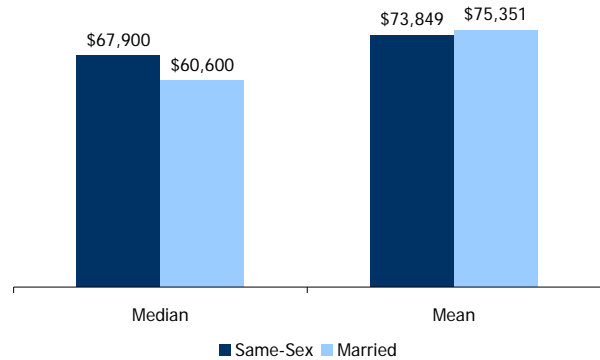
- Couples in which one partner does not work or earns significantly less than the other partner may indicate financial interdependence. 19% of same-sex couples have only one wage earner, compared to 32% of married couples.

- The average income gap between same-sex partners in Washington is \$21,598, compared to \$30,493 for married spouses.
- 27% of same-sex and 28% of married couples in Washington have at least one disabled partner.
- 3% of same-sex couples in Washington have at least one partner who is age 65 or older, compared to 17% of married couples.

SAME-SEX HOUSEHOLDS IN WASHINGTON HAVE SIMILAR ECONOMIC RESOURCES TO MARRIED HOUSEHOLDS

- The median income of same-sex coupled households in Washington is \$67,900, compared to \$60,600 for married couples. The average household income of same-sex couples is \$73,849, compared to \$75,351 for married couples.

Household Incomes

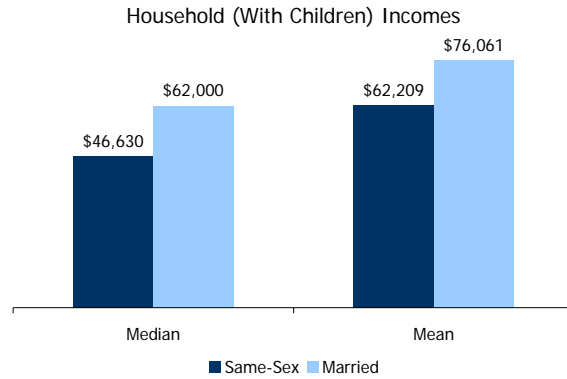


- Same-sex couples are significantly less likely than married couples to own their homes: 61% of same-sex couples in Washington own their home, compared to 80% of married couples.

SAME-SEX COUPLES ARE RAISING CHILDREN IN WASHINGTON, YET WITH FEWER ECONOMIC RESOURCES THAN MARRIED PARENTS

- 18% of same-sex couples in Washington are raising children under the age of 18.
- As of 2005, an estimated 7,249 of Washington's children are living in households headed by same-sex couples.⁷
- In Washington, married and same-sex couples with children under 18 in the home have, on average, 2 children.
- 8% of Washington's adopted children (or 3,004 children) live with a lesbian or gay parent.⁸
- 25% of Washington's same-sex parents have one wage earner, compared to 37% of married parents.

- Same-sex parents have fewer financial resources to support their children than married parents in Washington. The median household income of same-sex couples with children is \$46,630, or 25% lower than that of married parents (\$62,000). The average household income of same-sex couples with children is \$62,209, significantly less than \$76,061 for married parents.
- While 48% of same-sex couples with children own their home, a significantly larger percentage of married parents (76%) own their home.



CONCLUSION

Census data provide valuable information about gay and lesbian couples in Washington. While in many respects Washington's same-sex couples look like married couples, same-sex couples with children have fewer economic resources to provide for their families than married parents and lower rates of home ownership.

	Same-Sex	Married
Race/Ethnicity ⁹		
White	83.0%	84.3%
Black*	3.3%	1.8%
Hispanic*	6.9%	5.3%
Asian*	2.5%	5.8%
American Indian/Alaskan Native*	2.1%	0.9%
Other	2.4%	2.0%
Average age*	39.4	47.3
Percent with college degree or better*	45.5%	29.8%
Percent employed*	82.0%	65.0%
Employment ⁹		
Private employer	66.2%	67.8%
Public employer*	21.8%	18.8%
Self-employed	11.8%	13.1%
Veteran status*	11.4%	18.6%
Average individual salary		
Men*	\$36,712	\$50,259
Women*	\$33,890	\$26,164
Median individual salary		
Men	\$32,000	\$40,000
Women	\$31,500	\$21,800

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

	Same-Sex	Married
At least one partner 65 or older*	3.1%	17.4%
Percent disabled	27.0%	27.6%
Average household income	\$73,849	\$75,351
Median household income	\$67,900	\$60,600
Average income gap*	\$21,598	\$30,493
Single wage earner*	19.5%	31.6%
Homeownership*	60.8%	80.3%
Percent with children under 18*	18.1%	47.8%

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
 ^ 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*	1.7	2.0
Single wage earner (parents)*	25.3%	36.6%
Average household income (parents)*	\$62,209	\$76,061
Median household income (parents)	\$46,630	\$62,000
Homeownership (parents)*	48.3%	76.1%

* Difference significant at the 5% level or better (two-tailed tests).
 ^ 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	33	0.63%
Asotin	26	0.31%
Benton	183	0.35%
Chelan	151	0.60%
Clallam	113	0.42%
Clark	697	0.55%
Columbia	6	0.36%
Cowlitz	146	0.41%
Douglas	50	0.43%
Ferry	16	0.57%
Franklin	87	0.59%
Garfield	2	0.20%
Grant	133	0.53%
Grays Harbor	126	0.47%
Island	151	0.54%
Jefferson	79	0.68%
King	7751	1.09%
Kitsap	511	0.59%
Kittitas	57	0.43%
Klickitat	34	0.45%
Lewis	144	0.55%
Lincoln	23	0.55%
Mason	105	0.56%
Okanogan	74	0.49%
Pacific	58	0.64%
Pend Oreille	19	0.41%
Pierce	1397	0.54%
San Juan	57	0.88%
Skagit	168	0.43%
Skamania	16	0.43%
Snohomish	1239	0.55%
Spokane	790	0.48%
Stevens	56	0.37%
Thurston	571	0.70%
Wahkiakum	4	0.26%
Walla Walla	77	0.39%
Whatcom	356	0.55%
Whitman	62	0.41%
Yakima	332	0.45%

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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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 *Id.*

⁵ Simmons & O'Connell, *supra* note 2.

⁶ 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).

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ Due to rounding, percent may not add to 100.

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