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Author

Gates, Gary J

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Same-sex Couples in Virginia: A demographic summary



by Gary J. Gates
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Introduction

This research brief offers analyses of data from the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) to describe the characteristics of same-sex couples and their families in Virginia compared to their different-sex married counterparts.

Same-sex couples are identified in the ACS when an adult in the household is identified as either the "husband/wife" or "unmarried partner" of the person who filled out the survey, referred to as the householder, and both partners or spouses are of the same-sex. These analyses combine ACS Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from 2011 and 2012, yielding sample sizes of:

- 240 same-sex couples
- 66 children under age 18 being raised by same-sex couples
- 333,362 different-sex married couples
- 24,919 children under age 18 being raised by different-sex couples

Same-sex couples

Tabulations from Census 2010 show that there are 14,243 same-sex couples living in Virginia. These couples were identified in all but one of Virginia's counties. The majority of same-sex couples are female (51%).¹

Age

The average age of individuals in same-sex couples in Virginia is more than seven years younger than that of different-sex married couples—43.0 and 50.4 years old, respectively. Table 1 shows the percentages of adults in same-sex and different-sex married couples by age group. The lowest percentage of same-sex couples is in the 65 and over group (5%) while the lowest percentage of different-sex married couples is in the youngest age group of those less than age 30 (7%).

Table 1. Individuals in couples, by age (2011-2012 ACS)

Age	Same-sex	Different-sex married
<30	20%	7%
30-49	49%	43%
50-64	27%	33%
65+	5%	18%

Nearly one fifth of individuals in same-sex couples in Virginia are members of racial or ethnic minorities. Table 2 shows that 19% of individuals in same-sex couples are members of racial or ethnic minorities compared to 26% of individuals in different-sex married couples.

Latinos and Latinas comprise 11% of individuals in same-sex couples and 6% of those in different-sex married couples. The portion of African-Americans is 4% among those in same-sex couples and 12% among those in different-sex married couples. Asians, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders comprise 3% of individuals in same-sex couples and 7% of those in different-sex married couples.

Table 2. Individuals in couples, by race/ethnicity (2011-2012 ACS)

Race/ethnicity	Same-sex	Different-sex married
White	81%	74%
African-American	4%	12%
Latino/a	11%	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	7%
Am. Indian/AK Native	0.1%	0.2%
Other	1%	1%

Same-sex couples with children

Nearly one in five same-sex couples in Virginia (18%) are raising children under age 18 in their homes. More than 2,500 same-sex-couple households in the state include more than 4,000 children.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of children being raised by same-sex couples in Virginia are biological children, 11% are stepchildren, 2% are adopted, and none are foster children. This implies that same-sex couples in the state are raising an estimated 2,600 biological children, 430 stepchildren, and 100 adopted children. Nearly 23% of same-sex couples are raising children are raising approximately 900 children identified as grandchildren, siblings, or other children.

¹ Gates, GJ, Cooke, A (2011). *Virginia Census Snapshot: 2010*. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved from: http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census2010Snapshot_Virginia_v2.pdf.

Same-sex couples are slightly more likely than their different-sex married counterparts to be raising an adopted child. Approximately 3% of the children of different-sex married couples in Virginia are adopted, compared to 4% of the children of same-sex couples. While the most recent Census Bureau data do not identify any same-sex couples fostering children, only 0.2% of different-sex married couples are doing so in the state.

Race/ethnicity

Nearly one in five individuals in same-sex couples who are members of racial or ethnic minorities (19%) are raising a child under age 18, compared to 18% of their White counterparts.

Income

The median annual household income of same-sex couples with children under age 18 in the home is 36% lower than the median annual household income of comparable different-sex married couples (\$60,683 versus \$94,798).

This may in part be because, compared to different-sex married couples raising children, same-sex couples with children include a higher portion of female couples, who tend to have lower earnings than different-sex married couples.

About the author

Gary J. Gates, PhD is the Williams Distinguished Scholar and a national expert in the demographic, geographic, and economic characteristics of the LGBT population.

About the Institute

The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at UCLA School of Law advances law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates its work through a variety of education programs and media to judges, legislators, lawyers, other policymakers and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website.

For more information

The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law
Box 951476
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1476
(310)267-4382
williamsinstitute@law.ucla.edu
www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute

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