

**CENSUS BRIEF
CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURES IN KENTUCKY**

A Census Research Brief

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Increasing Number of Kentucky's Children Living in Single-Parent Families

The most significant change in Kentucky's family structures over the past two decades has been the increasing number of children living in single-parent homes.

Since 1980, two-parent married couple households in Kentucky dropped from 84 percent of families with children to 73 percent. During the same period, single parent families rose from 16 percent of families to 26 percent, an increase of 63 percent, making single parent families the fastest growing segment of Kentucky's families.

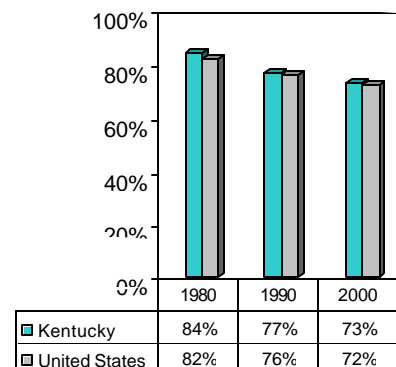
According to the 2000 Census, only 67 percent of Kentucky's children (under 18) live in two-parent married couple families. More children in Kentucky are living in single-parent homes than ever before.

Between 1990 and 2000, the rate of children living in single-parent families rose in all but two Kentucky counties, Elliott and Oldham Counties.

Asian children are much more likely to live in married-couple families than are children in other racial groups, followed by White children. While 12.5 percent of Asian children live in single-parent families, nearly 1 in 4 (22 percent) White children live in single-parent families.

In contrast, 63.7 percent of African American children in Kentucky live with a single parent. In Jefferson County, 7 out of 10 African American children live in single-parent families.

Percent of Families with Children Headed by Married Couples, 1980-2000



Source: U.S. Census 2000

Effects on Children

Single-parent families often lack the resources and parental involvement available in two-parent families. Because of this disparity in family resources, children of single parents face an increased risk of living in poverty compared to children in two-parent families.

In 1999, 43 percent of Kentucky's female headed single-parent families with children were living below the poverty level, compared to 18 percent of all families.

Children growing up in single-parent households are also more likely to participate in risk-taking behaviors, to drop out of high school, and become teen parents, than children in low-conflict two-parent families.¹

While many children of single parents overcome the odds and thrive,

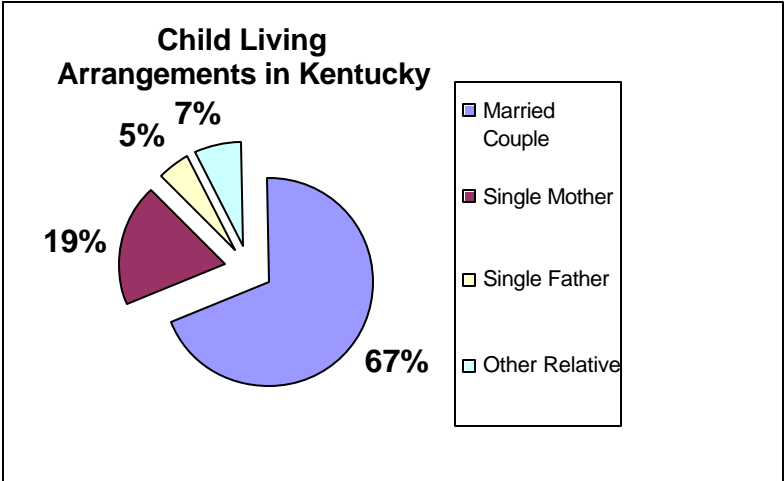
Data in brief:

- More than 70,000 KY children under age 6 live in single parent homes;
- More than 160,000 school-age children and youth in KY live in single parent homes;
- Most single parent families (78%) are headed by single mothers;
- In KY, almost one-third of all births occur to unmarried women, a rate that has nearly doubled since 1980; and
- Divorces in KY declined during the last decade, but were inching upward in the late 1990's.



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“In Kentucky, median family income for a married couple with children is \$49,851; for a single father, it is \$24,350, and for a single mother, it is \$15,713”²



Why has the number of children in single-parent families risen?

The two primary reasons Kentucky has seen an increase in the number of children living with single parents are the increase in births to unmarried women and the steady in-

Source: U.S. Census 2000

too many are unable to reach their full potential because of the social and economic barriers that they and their families face.

Support for Families

Throughout Kentucky, thousands of single parents are providing their children with the love, support, and guidance that they need to thrive. But, as the number of single parents who are working increases, time pressures on these families mount.

Parents with job stress, particularly those with limited incomes and few benefits, are finding it difficult to have the time and energy necessary to parent. Time to prepare young children for school, to help with homework, and to teach good decision-making is becoming increasingly scarce. Target policy areas that would strengthen single-parent families are:

Child Support Collection: The responsibility and cost of raising children must be shared by both parents.

Quality Child Care and After-School Programs: While a single parent works, no child should be left in low quality care or at home alone.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): A Kentucky EITC would benefit approximately 309,000 working families with children, many of them in single-parent homes.

dence of divorce.

Kentucky’s non-marital birth rate increased 33 percent from the early eighties to the early nineties. However, since 1990, the rate of increase in the non-marital birth rate, though still climbing, has slowed.

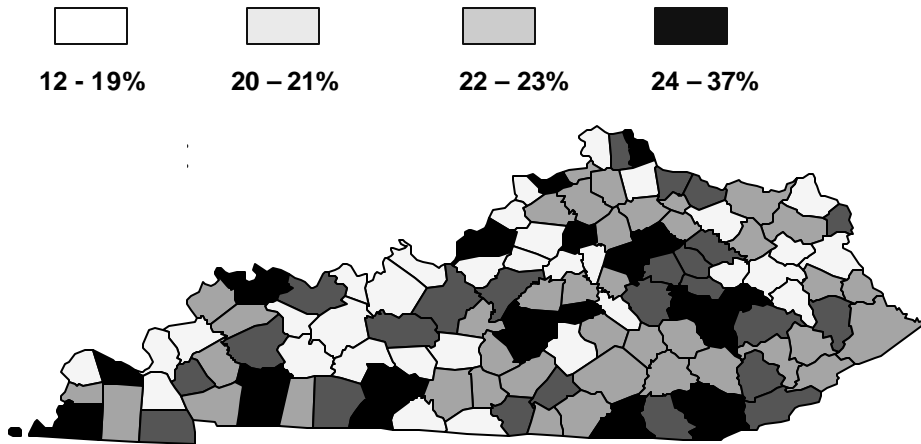
Kentucky’s divorce rate rose steadily from 1982-1992, but leveled off in the late 1990’s. Recently, the rate has begun to inch upward again. As these parents remarry and begin new families, family resources become more scarce, leading to an increase in the number of children living in low-income families.

According to the Joint Center for Poverty Research, to reduce the number of children in single parent homes, communities must both educate couples on preventing unintended pregnancies and strengthen married couples’ relationships.³

However, there are tremendous barriers to these efforts. While there has been public focus on reducing non-marital teen pregnancies, with much success, little is known about how to prevent non-marital births among young women (ages 20-29). In Kentucky, 54 percent of births to unmarried women are to women ages 20-29.

Also, while there are significant findings on methods to strengthen marriages, few methods are applicable to strengthen marriages in which the couple faces both relationship problems and living at or near poverty.

Percent of all children living with a single parent, 2000



Highest %				Lowest %			
Fulton	37	Fayette	26	Oldham	12	Edmonson	17
Jefferson	30	Hickman	26	Spencer	13	Livingston	17
McCracken	28	Wolfe	26	Hancock	16	Woodford	17
Bell	27	Lee	25	Boone	17	Ohio	18
Franklin	26	Estill	25	Morgan	17	Garrard	18

“A healthy marriage, not just any marriage, is optimal for child well-being.”⁵

Healthy Families

Research supports the conclusion that the family structure that is most beneficial to children is a low-conflict marriage between two biological parents.⁴ However, many of the elements that contribute to making such a family structure optimal are present in other family structures:

- A loving, low-conflict environment in which children feel safe and secure;
- Resources such as stable and sufficient income, housing, health insurance, and transportation;
- Dedication to children’s educations; and
- Networks of supportive non-parent caregivers, including quality child care, relatives, neighbors, school per-

1. *Marriage from a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do About It?* (2002, June) Child Trends Research Brief.
2. U.S. Census Bureau (2000).
3. Moore, Kristin Anderson & Jekielek, S. *How Family Structure and Living Arrangements Affect Children*. Joint Center for Poverty Research (May-June 2002 Vol.6 No. 3).
4. *Marriage from a Child’s Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do About It?* (2002, June) Child Trends Research Brief.
5. Ibid.

Kentucky Children Under Age 18*
Living in Single-Parent Households: Census 2000

	1990 %	2000 %	Change % 1990- 2000	2000 # in single parent	2000 Total*	* Data are for "own" or related children, which means that they are related to the head of the household through birth, mar- riage, or adoption. (U.S. Census Bureau)	1990 %	2000 %	Change % 1990- 2000	2000 # in single parent	2000 Total*
Kentucky	21	26	24	231151	873916						
Adair	15	22	47	813	3506	Edmonson	15	19	27	466	2477
Allen	15	20	33	858	3577	Elliott	19	19	0	303	1767
Anderson	15	19	27	906	3585	Estill	21	28	33	930	3548
Ballard	15	20	33	344	1716	Fayette	26	29	12	14543	46268
Barren	17	21	24	1809	7864	Fleming	16	21	31	667	2871
Bath	20	24	20	580	2170	Floyd	18	25	39	2320	11601
Bell	24	30	25	1957	7723	Franklin	23	29	26	2845	9674
Boone	14	18	29	4083	15858	Fulton	30	43	43	722	1800
Bourbon	22	27	23	1196	4603	Gallatin	16	22	38	446	1388
Boyd	20	26	30	2523	11068	Garrard	16	19	19	630	2576
Boyle	21	28	33	1566	5436	Grant	18	24	33	1376	4170
Bracken	19	25	32	468	1876	Graves	17	23	35	1886	7570
Breathitt	21	27	29	959	4104	Grayson	17	24	41	1292	5070
Breckinridge	15	21	40	871	4004	Green	14	23	64	545	2228
Bullitt	14	21	50	3196	12775	Greenup	14	21	50	1695	8733
Butler	14	20	43	596	2750	Hancock	13	17	31	356	2165
Caldwell	20	23	15	604	2896	Hardin	17	25	47	5853	23463
Calloway	16	24	50	1417	5676	Harlan	19	25	32	1852	9538
Campbell	20	26	30	5398	20581	Harrison	19	23	21	934	3983
Carlisle	13	23	77	264	1178	Hart	17	21	24	846	3526
Carroll	22	28	27	643	2252	Henderson	21	26	24	2602	10631
Carter	17	22	29	1317	5979	Henry	19	23	21	806	2949
Casey	16	21	31	718	3485	Hickman	19	29	53	303	1167
Christian	21	26	24	4847	16457	Hopkins	20	25	25	2596	11166
Clark	19	25	32	1834	6928	Jackson	19	22	16	689	3167
Clay	17	23	35	1259	5957	Jefferson	29	34	17	51135	145325
Clinton	17	22	29	438	2115	Jessamine	16	22	38	2072	7763
Crittenden	14	20	43	403	2133	Johnson	16	22	38	1126	5889
Cumberland	21	25	19	380	1437	Kenton	20	25	25	9142	35994
Daviess	20	25	25	5432	22033	Knott	19	24	26	927	4821

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Kentucky	21	26	24	231151	873916						
Knox	24	28	17	2075	7669	Nicholas	18	23	28	333	1423
Larue	16	23	44	693	2690	Ohio	15	19	27	997	5214
Laurel	18	23	28	2803	11016	Oldham	13	13	0	1514	11995
Lawrence	14	21	50	738	3610	Owen	17	22	29	553	2471
Lee	23	28	22	457	1848	Owsley	23	28	22	296	1052
Leslie	19	24	26	665	3776	Pendleton	14	20	43	748	3704
Letcher	16	22	38	1203	7196	Perry	17	24	41	1537	6363
Lewis	15	23	53	734	3335	Pike	16	22	38	3305	14876
Lincoln	17	23	35	1277	4880	Powell	19	25	26	789	3113
Livingston	12	19	58	374	1907	Pulaski	18	24	33	2817	11936
Logan	18	24	33	1478	5861	Robertson	17	24	41	115	482
Lyon	17	23	35	275	996	Rockcastle	18	23	28	860	3674
McCracken	25	30	20	4234	14162	Rowan	21	23	10	953	4092
McCreary	23	29	26	1179	4278	Russell	18	26	44	858	3308
McLean	14	20	43	443	2244	Scott	20	23	15	1860	8074
Madison	20	25	25	3560	11916	Shelby	18	21	17	1612	7520
Magoffin	17	21	24	691	3777	Simpson	22	26	18	1015	3878
Marion	20	27	35	1137	4216	Spencer	14	15	7	445	2903
Marshall	14	20	43	1221	5959	Taylor	17	26	53	1270	4928
Martin	17	23	35	746	3671	Todd	18	22	22	633	2886
Mason	21	24	14	903	3976	Trigg	18	22	22	592	2672
Meade	11	20	82	1407	7520	Trimble	12	20	67	398	1953
Menifee	16	21	31	297	1244	Union	20	25	25	817	3224
Mercer	17	23	35	1052	4331	Warren	22	27	23	5112	19239
Metcalfe	16	22	38	489	2025	Washington	15	22	47	555	2489
Monroe	18	22	22	544	2580	Wayne	18	23	28	1041	4619
Montgomery	19	25	32	1250	4713	Webster	17	23	35	706	3061
Morgan	16	19	19	528	2939	Whitley	23	26	13	2167	8324
Muhlenberg	16	21	31	1331	7371	Wolfe	23	29	26	468	1619
Nelson	19	25	32	2399	8068	Woodford	15	19	27	1018	5471

* Data are for "own" or related children, which means that they are related to the head of the household through birth, marriage, or adoption. (U.S. Census Bureau)



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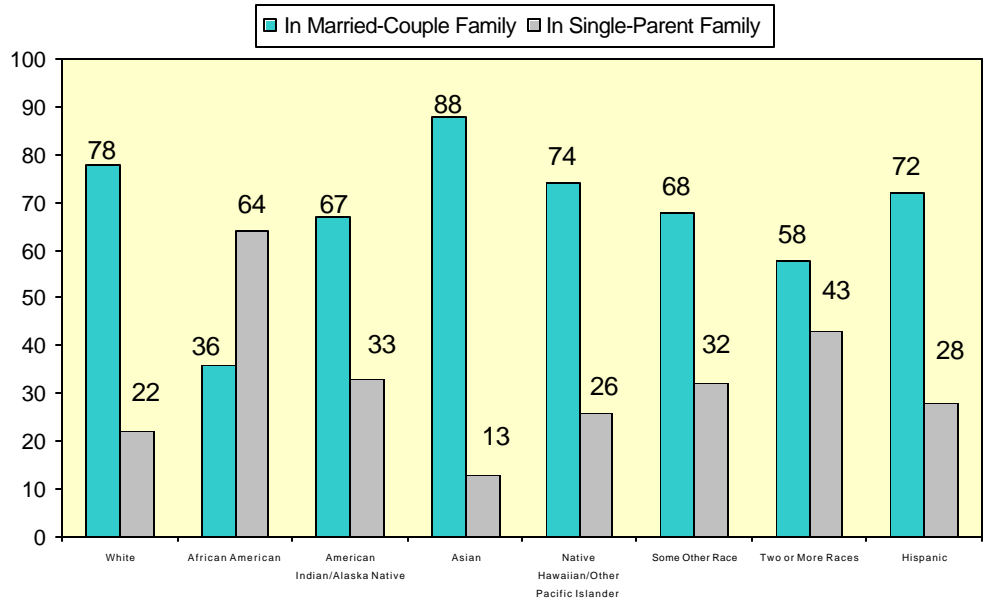
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“An Independent Voice for Kentucky’s Children”

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a census of the population every ten years. The most recent was completed in April 2000. This series of KIDS COUNT reports includes information most relevant to community leaders, policy makers, advocates, and others concerned with the status of Kentucky’s children and families.

Additional information on child well-being and Census 2000 can be found on the Kentucky Youth Advocates web site at www.kyyouth.org and the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Census Data Online web site at www.aecf.org/kidscount/census.

Child Living Arrangements by Race and Hispanic Origin



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
 Source: U.S. Census 2000 (www.aecf.org/kidscount)