

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% |

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.

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.

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.

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