

# Same-sex Couples in Wisconsin: A demographic summary



by Gary J. Gates  
August 2014

## 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 Wisconsin 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 2010, 2011, and 2012, yielding sample sizes of:

- 275 same-sex couples
- 88 children under age 18 being raised by same-sex couples
- 43,814 different-sex married couples
- 30,634 children under age 18 being raised by different-sex married couples

## Same-sex couples

Tabulations from Census 2010 show that there are 9,179 same-sex couples living in Wisconsin. These couples were identified in all but one of Wisconsin's counties. The majority of same-sex couples are female (57%).<sup>1</sup>

### Age

The average age of individuals in same-sex couples in Wisconsin is more than three years younger than that of different-sex married couples—46.6 and 49.7 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 (12%) while the lowest percentage of different-sex married couples is in the youngest age group of those under age 30 (10%).

**Table 1. Individuals in couples, by age (2010-2012 ACS)**

Age	Same-sex	Different-sex married
<30	17%	10%
30-49	41%	40%
50-64	30%	32%
65+	12%	18%

<sup>1</sup> Gates, GJ, Cooke, A (2011). *Wisconsin Census Snapshot: 2010*. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved from: [http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census2010Snapshot\\_Wisconsin\\_v2.pdf](http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Census2010Snapshot_Wisconsin_v2.pdf).

A greater percentage of individuals in same-sex couples than in different-sex married couples are members of racial or ethnic minorities. Table 2 shows that, in Wisconsin, 11% of individuals in same-sex couples and 10% of individuals in different-sex married couples are racial or ethnic minorities.

**Table 2. Individuals in couples, by race/ethnicity (2010-2012 ACS)**

Race/ethnicity	Same-sex	Different-sex married
White	88.9%	90.0%
African-American	4.0%	2.7%
Latino/a	3.0%	4.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.5%	1.9%
Am. Indian/AK Native	0.0%	0.6%
Other	1.6%	0.7%

## Same-sex couples with children

One in five same-sex couples in Wisconsin (20%) are raising children under age 18 in their homes. 1,798 same-sex-couple households in the state are raising 3,193 children.

More than eight in ten of the children being raised by same-sex couples in Wisconsin are biologically related to one member of the couple (81%), 7% are adopted children, and 6% are stepchildren. This implies that same-sex couples in the state are raising an estimated 2,600 biological children, 234 adopted children, and 185 stepchildren. An additional 5% of children being raised by same-sex couples in Wisconsin, or 174 children, are identified as grandchildren or other children.

Among couples with children, same-sex couples in Wisconsin are two-and-a-half times more likely than their different-sex married counterparts to be raising an adopted child. An estimated 7.9% of same-sex couples with children have an adopted child, compared to 3.3% of different-sex married couples with children. Approximately 7% of the children of same-sex couples in Wisconsin are adopted, compared to 2% of the children of different-sex married couples.

The data do not identify any same-sex couples fostering children in Wisconsin. Only 0.4% of different-sex married couples with children are fostering children, and only 0.3% of the children of different-sex married couples are foster children.

*Race/ethnicity*

One in three individuals in same-sex couples who are members of racial or ethnic minorities (36%) are raising a child under age 18, compared to 17% of their White counterparts.

*Income*

The median annual household income of same-sex couples with children under age 18 in the home is 43% less than the median annual household income of comparable different-sex married couples (\$46,778 versus \$82,767).

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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**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

**Suggested citation**

Gates, G.J. (2014). Same-sex Couples in Wisconsin: A demographic summary. Los Angeles, CA: The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law. Retrieved from The Williams Institute website:  
<http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/WI-same-sex-couples-demo-aug-2014.pdf>.