

Parents & Children

According to stereotypes, if you have kids, you must be married. In fact, according to the 2000 Census, unmarried different-sex couples are nearly as likely to be living with children as married couples are: 43% compared to 46%. Thirty-three percent of lesbian couples live with children, as do 22% of gay male couples. One-third of babies born in the United States have unmarried parents -- about three-fifths have single mothers, while two-fifths are born to cohabiting unmarried couples. The majority of unmarried families with children are actually unmarried stepfamilies, where the children live with one biological or adoptive parent, and that parent's partner.

Despite the hand-wringing of many pundits, a large body of research shows that the vast majority of children with unmarried parents turn out fine on every measure of well-being. Children need stability and parents who are actively involved in their lives, so pundits are right to worry about unmarried parents who aren't prepared for the long-term commitment parenting entails. But of course, most unmarried parents provide the same kind of love and care that married parents do. And many unmarried couples tell us that once they had children, most people who met them assumed they were married! Given the sheer number of children who live with unmarried parents, we believe it's essential to help unmarried families be healthy and strong -- whether they ultimately marry or not.

Most of the issues facing unmarried parents are the same as those that affect married parents. Kids are still kids, the words "illegitimate" and "bastard" no longer have legal meaning and are fading fast from modern vocabularies, and biological parents have the same legal rights and responsibilities whether they're married or not.

This section also includes information for childfree people, those who choose not to have children (sorry to stick you here among the squalling babies, guys -- we realize it's not exactly where you want to be). While many childfree folks are married, others say, "If we're not having kids, why tie the knot?"

The Parenting (and Non-Parenting) area includes:

Unmarried Parenting FAQ

Q & A about parenting without a wedding ring.

Unmarried Parenting and Childfree Books & Links

We'll point you toward the best sources for information and parenting or childfree community.

Legitimizing Unmarried Parents

Our op-ed, published in The Washington Times, about why it's time to throw out the offensive word "illegitimate."

Experts Speak on Families with Children

Statistics About Unmarried Childbearing and Parenting

A few facts and figures on the subject.

Unmarried Adoption

A source for state adoption policy information.