

## Census Reaffirms Unmarried Majority

Unmarried Households Still the Majority; Unmarried Partnerships Continue to Grow; Outdated Rhetoric Fails to Serve Children or Singles

Census data released on September 23rd reaffirm that unmarried people head the majority (50.3%) of households in the United States. This figure has held steady since 2005. Nicky Grist, executive director of the Alternatives to Marriage Project, says "Policy makers and the public need to recognize that being married is no longer the norm. While most people marry at some point in their lives, the unmarried portion of the population continues its decades of steady growth."

Unmarried and Single Americans Week (September 21st – September 27th) stands as an annual reminder that marriage represents just one of the many caring and interdependent relationships that are vital in every American's life.

More and more people tell the Census they are living together. Over 6.2 million households identify as unmarried partners, an increase of 3.2% over 2006 and 13.4% over 2000. Same-sex couples comprise 12% of unmarried partner households. Twenty-six percent of "families" do not involve a married couple. The Census Bureau defines "family" as a householder plus others who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption and who live in the same household. Nicky Grist notes that "at least twelve and a half million people are waiting for their employers and their elected representatives to recognize that their real family responsibilities may fall outside the bureaucratic definition of "family."

Over one third of households with minor children (33.8%) are headed by unmarried people, while more than four in ten married couples (41.1%) do not live with minor children. Says Grist: "Marital status cannot be equated with child rearing. For example, there is an oft-repeated myth that the income tax system helps children by favoring married couples. If that is really the goal, then the data clearly show that giving tax bonuses to married people shortchanges more than a third of our children and lets childless couples keep the change." People living alone comprise 27.3% of households.

Twenty-three percent of households contain neither couples nor solos, but people living in complex webs of important yet undefined relationships.

Roughly 85 million unmarried people are eligible to vote and eager to hear candidates speak to the reality of their lives. Grist suggests "candidates could get more votes by promising to help all working people balance their work-life obligations, and offering health care reforms that work for every single one of us."

The Alternatives to Marriage Project fights marital status discrimination and the stigma against being single or unmarried. More at [www.unmarried.org](http://www.unmarried.org).

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