

Family Profile No. 16, 2017

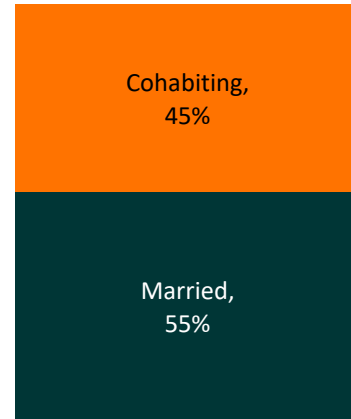
American Children's Family Structure: Stepparent Families

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High levels of remarriage and repartnering mean that a substantial share of children live in a stepfamily (i.e., children residing with one biological or adoptive parent and the parent's spouse or partner) (Manning, 2015; Sweeney, 2010). Using recent data from the 2010 and 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS), we find that nearly one in ten (9%) children were living with a stepparent at both time points (Figure 1, FP-17-15).

This profile, the second in a series on children's family structure in 2016, focuses on children living in a stepfamily. We distinguish between children living in cohabiting stepparent and married stepparent families. Just over half (55%) of children in stepfamilies were living with a biological parent and his/her spouse, and 45% were living with a biological parent and his/her cohabiting partner (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of Children Living with Cohabiting or Married Stepfamilies



Source: NCFMR analyses of Current Population Survey, 2016

Parental Educational Attainment

- In 2016, children in stepfamilies typically lived with a biological parent who had some college education.
- Children who lived in married stepfamilies had parents with higher levels of education, on average, than children in cohabiting stepfamilies. Specifically, one-third (33%) of parents in married stepparent families had at least a Bachelor's degree compared with 20% of cohabiting stepparents.

Racial & Ethnic Composition

- The racial/ethnic composition of children in married and cohabiting stepfamilies was similar in 2016.
- Slightly greater shares of children in cohabiting stepfamilies were Black (16%) or Hispanic (25%) than children in married stepfamilies (11% and 22%, respectively).

Figure 2. Variation in Parental Educational Attainment Among Children in Stepparent Families, 2016

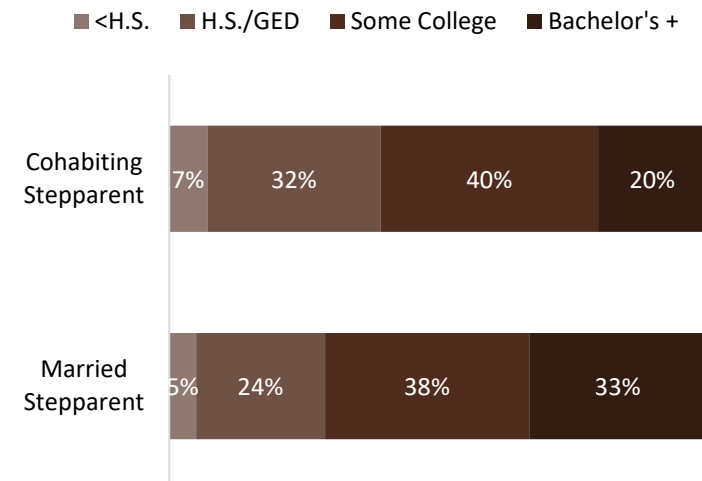
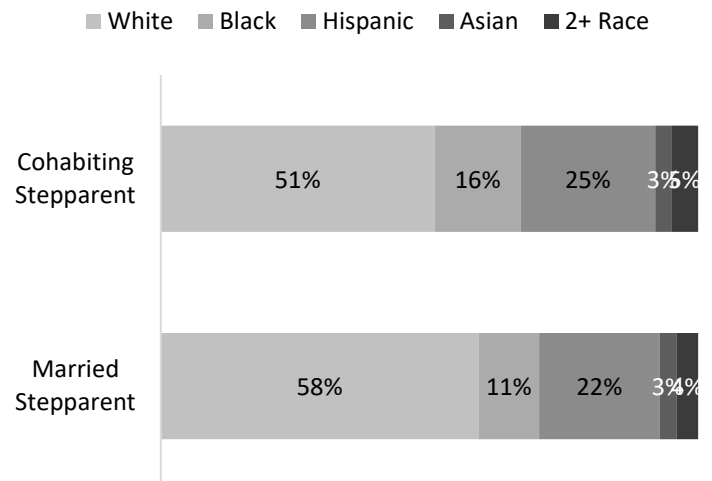


Figure 3. Variation in Racial & Ethnic Composition Among Children in Stepparent Families, 2016

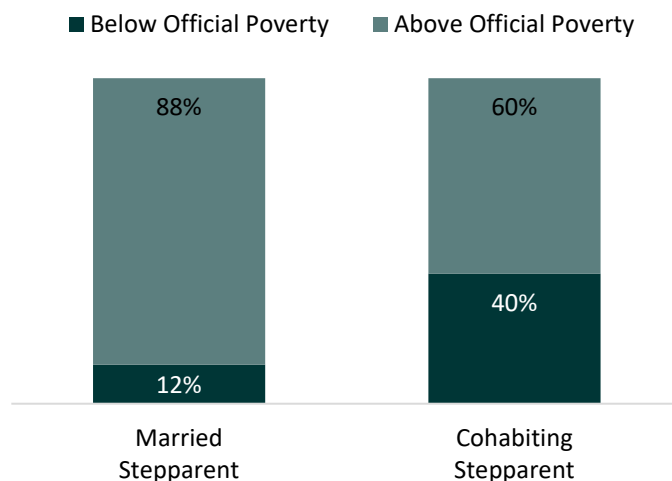


Source: NCFMR analyses of Current Population Survey, 2016

Measures of Poverty

- Most children living with stepparents were living above the poverty level in 2016.
- The share of children living in poverty with cohabiting stepparents (40%) was three times higher than those living with married stepparents (12%).
- Using the supplemental poverty measure (U.S. Census Bureau)-which accounts for both cohabiting parents' incomes and noncash benefits and is represented by the dotted line-we found the percentage of children with cohabiting stepparents living in poverty in 2016 was halved, from 40% to 20%.

Figure 4. Poverty (Official and Supplemental) Among Children in Stepparent Families, 2016

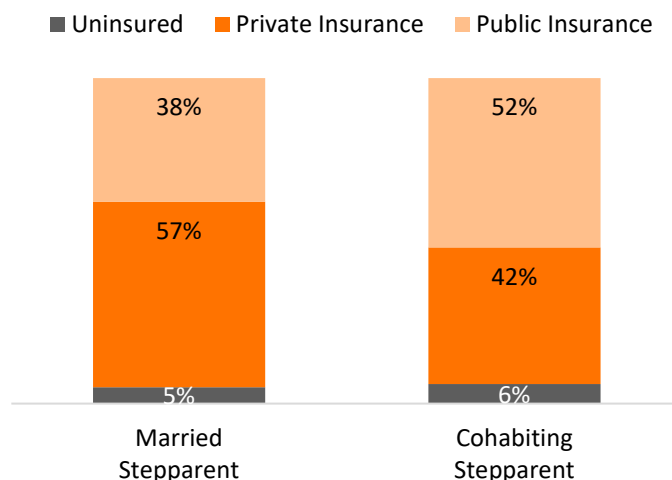


Source: NCFMR analyses of Current Population Survey, 2016

Health Insurance Coverage

- Almost all children (95-96%) living in stepfamilies had health insurance in 2016.
- Children living with married stepparents most often were covered by private insurance (57%), whereas only 42% of children living with cohabiting stepparents had private insurance.

Figure 5. Health Insurance Coverage Among Children in Stepparent Families, 2016



Source: NCFMR analyses of Current Population Survey, 2016

*For more information on the history of the poverty measure, please visit the United States Census Bureau's [website link](#).

Data Sources:

Flood, S., King, M., Ruggles, S., and Warren, J.R. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey: Version 4.0* [dataset]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015. <http://doi.org/10.18128/D030.V4.0>.

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Manning, W. D. (2015). Cohabitation and child wellbeing. *The Future of Children*, 25(2), 51-66. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43581972>

Sweeney, M. M. (2010). Remarriage and stepfamilies: Strategic sites for family scholarship in the 21st century. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72 (3), 667-684. doi:10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00724.x

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