“How Many Teens Grow Up In Stable Married Families?”

Finding An Answer in the American Community Survey.

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OBJECTIVES

• To develop an estimate of the proportion of U.S. teenagers who have grown up with both biological parents from the Public Use Micro-data files of the American Community Survey.

• To examine geopolitical and racial-ethnic variation in this index.

• To relate the index to measures of youth, family, and community well-being.
ADVANTAGES OF ACS

• Very large sample survey (3 million plus persons) conducted annually.
• High cooperation rate because conducted by the Census Bureau and legally mandated.
• Since 2008, ACS has been obtaining marital status, marital history, and detailed relationship information for all persons in household.
• Annual samples aggregated over 3 & 5 years.
LIMITATIONS OF ACS

• Relationships only defined with respect to one Reference Person in Household, not others.
• Only date of latest marriage is obtained.
• ACS is cross-sectional survey, not panel study.
• In order to obtain estimates for smaller geographical units, samples must be aggregated over multiple-year periods.
METHOD

• Locate all sample teens aged 15-17 in ACS.
• Identify those who are biological sons or daughters (not step-, foster, or adopted) of Reference Person.
• If so, find out whether parent is currently married and date of latest marriage predates or within two years of birth of teenaged child.
• If so, teen is said to have grown up with both married parents.
RESULTS

• In 2009, some 5.8 million of 12.6 million US teens aged 15-17 -- 45.8% -- had grown up with both married parents.

• Index shows substantial variation across racial/ethnic groups, states and counties.

• Index significantly related to child poverty rates, achievement test scores, teen birth and death rates, crime and imprisonment rates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Percent of Teens in Ethnic Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PERCENT OF TEENS AGED 15-17 IN STATE GREW UP WITH BOTH MARRIED PARENTS

- Middlesex (Lowell), MA: 63.1%
- Nassau (Hempstead), NY: 63.1%
- Suffolk (Brentwood), NY: 56.7%
- Santa Clara (San Jose), CA: 55.6%
- Orange (Santa Ana), CA: 54.8%
- King (Seattle), WA: 53.8%
- Alameda (Oakland), CA: 51.9%
- Tarrant (Fort Worth), TX: 48.1%
- Riverside, CA: 48.0%
- Queens, NY: 47.5%
- Los Angeles, CA: 47.5%
- San Diego, CA: 46.4%
- Harris (Houston), TX: 44.0%
- Kings (Brooklyn), NY: 43.7%
- Cook (Chicago), IL: 43.6%
- Bexar (San Antonio), TX: 42.9%
- Broward (Ft. Lauderdale), FL: 42.5%
- San Bernardino, CA: 42.1%
- Maricopa (Phoenix), AZ: 42.1%
- Clark (Las Vegas), NV: 40.3%
- Dallas, TX: 40.3%
- Miami-Dade, FL: 39.9%
- Cuyahoga (Cleveland), OH: 39.4%
- Wayne (Detroit), MI: 33.3%
- Philadelphia, PA: 18.5%
- Bronx, NY: 18.5%

Percent of Teens In County
FAMILY STABILITY AND CHILD POVERTY FOR US STATES: 2009

\[ y = -0.66x + 0.49 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.56 \]
\[ R = 0.75 \]
FAMILY STABILITY AND READING ACHIEVEMENT FOR US STATES

STATE AVERAGE NAEP 8TH GRADE READING SCORES

PROPORTION TEENS GREW UP WITH BOTH MARRIED PARENTS, 2009

\[ y = 74.7x + 229.5 \]
\[ R^2 = 0.44 \]
\[ R = 0.66 \]
Next Steps/Acknowledgements

• Developing multilevel regression models predicting teen achievement and behavior from family stability and contextual variables.

• Will produce index estimates for smaller counties and cities when 3-year files available.

• Statistical and programming support from Dr. Philip Fletcher of Westat (now at Pearson).

• Work done in collaboration with and with partial support from Dr. Pat Fagan.