

Family Structure and Anti-Poverty Policy

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The Charge

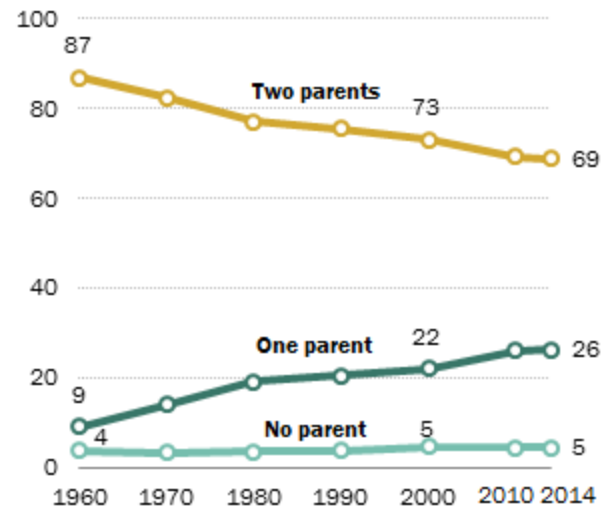
This session will highlight marked changes in family structure over the last 30 years and the relationship to poverty, policymaking and responsiveness.

- How might local and federal policies respond to these documented changes?
- What do we know and what are the implications?

What are these changes?

The two-parent household in decline

% of children living with ...



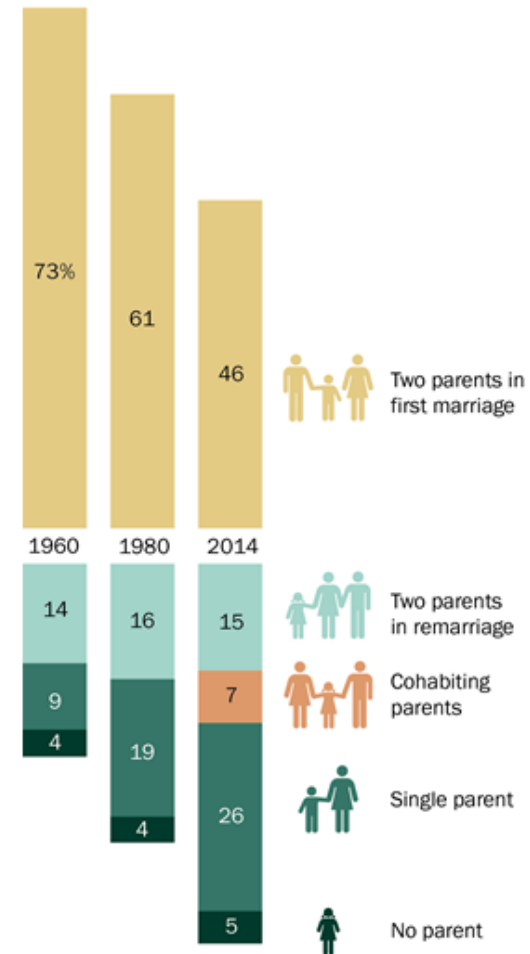
Note: Based on children under 18. From 1990-2014, a child living with cohabiting parents is counted as living with two parents. Prior to 1990 cohabiting parents are included in "one parent."

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1960-2000 Decennial Census and 2010 and 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS)

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For children, growing diversity in family living arrangements

% of children living with ...

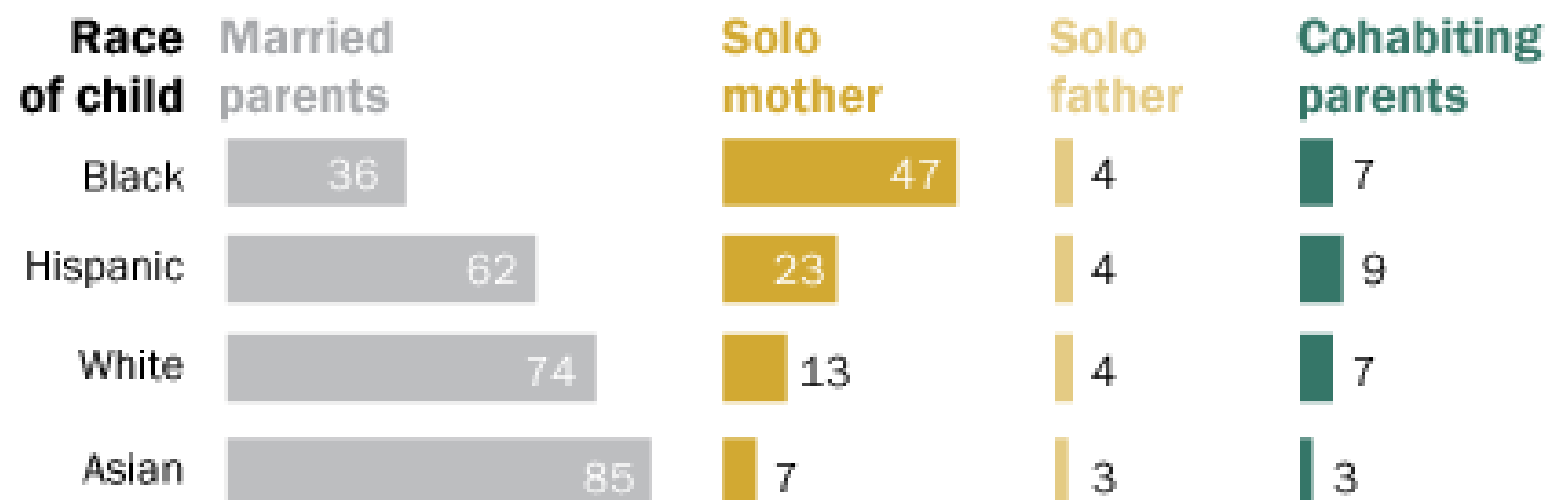


Note: Based on children under 18. Data regarding cohabitation are not available for 1960 and 1980; in those years, children with cohabiting parents are included in "one parent." For 2014, the total share of children living with two married parents is 62% after rounding. Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1960 and 1980 decennial census and 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS)

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% of children younger than 18 living with ...

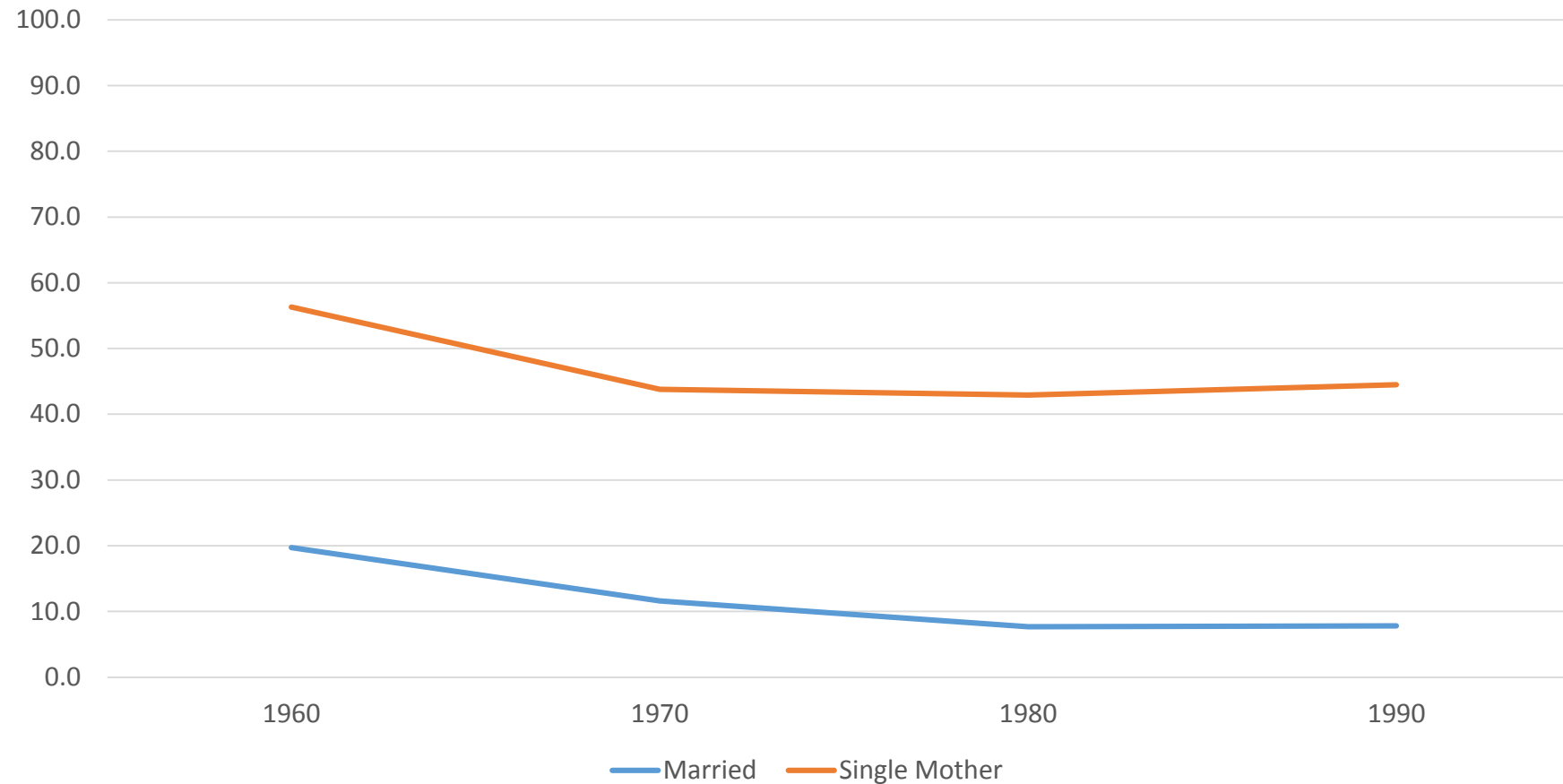


Note: Children who are not living with any parents are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2017 Current Population Survey March Supplement (IPUMS).

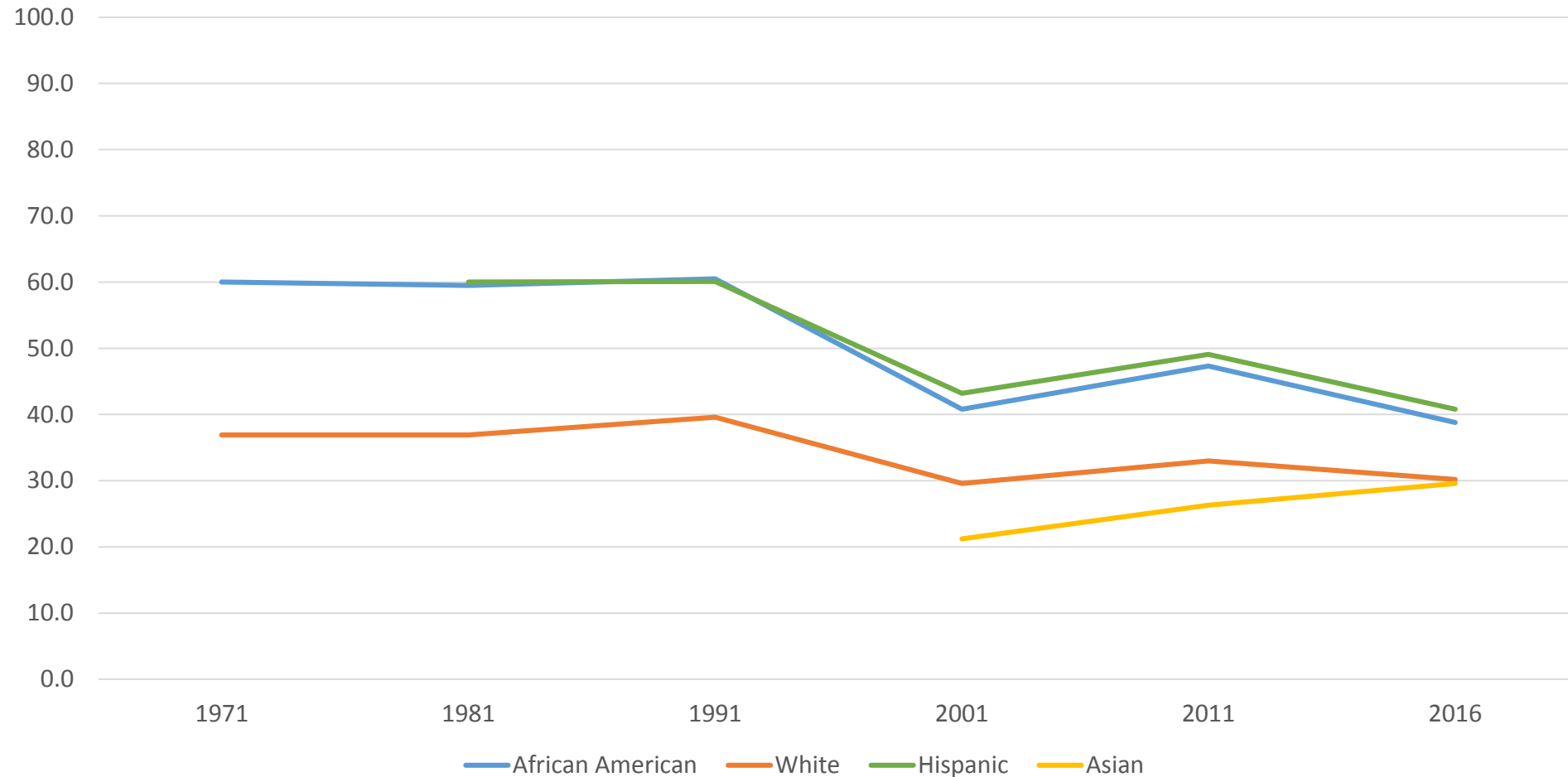
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Poverty Rates of Households with Children under 18



**1960 and 1970 married rates are for all families
Author's calculations from U.S. Census data

Poverty Rates for Single Mothers with Minor Children, by Race/Ethnicity



Family Structure and Child Outcomes

Compared to children growing up with both biological parents, children growing up with a single parent are:

- More likely to drop out of school;
- Less likely to be employed as adults;
- More likely to be teen moms (girls).

(McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994)

What Should We Do?

- Encourage formation of two parent households?
- Discourage single people from having children?
- Support the family/children?

Taking a Step Back

Underlying issues

- Whose responsibility is a child?
- What role has policy played in shaping trends?
- How did slavery and past and ongoing institutionalized racism contribute to these “changes”?
- Is policy responsive, or is it used to privilege a certain type of family, maintain inequality, and uphold a racial hierarchy?

English Poor Laws

- Colonial officials demarcated between “deserving” and “undeserving” mothers based upon willingness to work and how well they followed the “family ethic”
Abramovitz, 1988
- Settlement laws could leave husbandless white women without a place to claim assistance

Social Security Act

- Aid to Dependent Children
 - Widows and their children
- Exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers
 - One mechanism through which wealth accumulation is stalled
 - GI Bill
 - Lending and housing discrimination

Slavery, Sharecropping, and the Great Migration

- No legal marriage for slaves
- Separation of families for sales
- Reconstitution of families during Reconstruction
- Sharecropping creates a system of **economic hardship**
- Great Migration does not bring promised **economic opportunity**

Might economic opportunity matter?

- Fragile Families research and *Promises I Can Keep*
 - Single parents value marriage
 - Want economic stability before entering into it
- Why not postpone childbearing?
 - Lack of meaningful economic opportunities?

More Recent Policy

- Healthy Marriage Initiative (HMI)
- Responsible Fatherhood programs
- Child support
- Earned Income Tax Credit

HMI and Responsible Fatherhood

- Focus on giving couples/fathers tools they need to engage in positive relationships
- HHS-funded HMI evaluations:
 - Some improvement in relationship quality for some couples (more economically secure; already married)
 - No increases in marriage
- HHS-funded Responsible Fatherhood evaluations:
 - Increases in self-reported nurturing and engagement with child
 - Increased duration of employment (2.07 consecutive quarters vs 1.97 in 1st year)
 - No impact on co-parenting

Child Support

- Must cooperate in order to receive other public benefits
- Complex family structures and low earnings of many non-custodial parents makes collection difficult
- Just over half of custodial mothers have a child support order
- Fewer than half of those receive payment (a quarter receive nothing)

Earned Income Tax Credit

- Large anti-poverty effects: 3.3 million children lifted out of poverty
- Does not penalize single (custodial) parents
- Only available to those with earnings

Other Family Types

- LGBTQIA households
- Grandparent households
- Multi-generation households
- Mixed status families

What's the goal?

- Supporting children regardless of family type?
- Promoting and rewarding a certain family type?

Possibilities

- Universal Child Allowance
- Baby bonds
- Meaningful economic opportunity
 - Free college
 - Federal jobs guarantee