

# Fertility Research Brief

## Household Economic Studies

### Current Population Reports

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The reengineered 2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) collects complete fertility histories for all respondents aged 15 and older. The same questions—including the number of children ever born to or fathered by the respondent, when those children were born, and whether the respondent is a grandparent—are asked of both men and women. This research brief provides a short overview of all of the key markers of fertility included in the 2014 SIPP, paying special attention to the differences between men and women.<sup>1,2</sup>

About 69 percent of women and 59 percent of men are the biological parent of at least one child (see Table 1). Number of children ever born or fathered reflects the number of biological children that the respondent had at the time the survey was administered (February–June 2014). Many older respondents will have completed childbearing, while some younger respondents may not yet have started having children. The numbers presented here show cumulative fertility up to the time of the survey, and these counts are reported regardless of whether the children in question live with the respondent. These data show that 15.8 percent of women and 14.5 percent of men have had one child at the time of the survey, while 26.0 percent of women and 22.9 percent of men have had two children, and 26.9 percent of women and 21.9 percent of men have had three or more children (see Table 1).

<sup>1</sup> Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. For further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, see <[www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp/tech-documentation/source-accuracy-statements.html](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/sipp/tech-documentation/source-accuracy-statements.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing, and, unless otherwise noted, all comparisons are statistically significant at the 10 percent significance level.

#### ABOUT THE SIPP

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a nationally-representative panel survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau that collects information on the short-term dynamics of employment, income, household composition, and eligibility and participation in government assistance programs. It is a leading source of information on specific topics related to economic well-being, family dynamics, education, wealth and assets, health insurance, child care, and food security. Each SIPP panel follows individuals for several years, providing monthly data that measure changes in household and family composition and economic circumstances over time. For more information, please visit the SIPP Web site at <[www.census.gov/sipp](http://www.census.gov/sipp)>.

The difference between men and women in terms of childlessness is noteworthy, however. We find that men are significantly more likely to report being childless at the time of the survey; this is in line with other federal data on men's fertility.<sup>3</sup>

Age at first birth shows the same sex differences found in other datasets; women generally begin childbearing

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, G. Martinez, K. Daniels, and A. Chandra, *Fertility of Men and Women Aged 15–44 Years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–2010*, National Center for Health Statistics: National Health Statistics Reports, no. 51, 2012.

Table 1.  
**Fertility Indicators: 2014**

Characteristic	Women aged 15 and over			Men aged 15 and over		
	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Margin of error (±) <sup>1</sup>	Number (in thousands)	Percent	Margin of error (±) <sup>1</sup>
<b>All adults</b> . . . . .	<b>130,253</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>121,836</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Have biological children . . . . .	89,523	68.7	0.4	72,151	59.2	0.4
Do not have biological children . . . . .	40,730	31.3	0.4	49,685	40.8	0.4
<b>Children ever born</b>						
None . . . . .	40,730	31.3	0.4	49,685	40.8	0.4
One . . . . .	20,603	15.8	0.4	17,634	14.5	0.4
Two . . . . .	33,916	26.0	0.4	27,843	22.9	0.4
Three or more . . . . .	35,004	26.9	0.5	26,674	21.9	0.4
<b>Age at first birth<sup>2</sup></b>						
Under 20 . . . . .	19,338	21.6	0.6	5,890	8.2	0.4
20–24 . . . . .	33,285	37.2	0.6	22,355	31.0	0.6
25–29 . . . . .	21,227	23.7	0.5	21,842	30.3	0.7
30–34 . . . . .	10,944	12.2	0.4	14,057	19.5	0.6
35–39 . . . . .	3,875	4.3	0.2	5,636	7.8	0.4
40 and over . . . . .	854	1.0	0.1	2,371	3.3	0.2
<b>Multiple Partner Fertility<sup>2</sup></b>						
Does not have children with multiple partners . . . . .	74,618	83.4	0.4	61,653	85.4	0.5
Has children with multiple partners . . . . .	14,905	16.6	0.4	10,498	14.6	0.5
<b>Childbearing and coresidential relationships<sup>3</sup></b>						
Married parents . . . . .	52,279	100.0	0.0	51,486	100.0	0.0
Has children with spouse . . . . .	42,995	82.2	0.6	43,009	83.5	0.6
Does not have children with spouse . . . . .	9,283	17.8	0.6	8,477	16.5	0.6
Spouse is also a parent . . . . .	6,487	12.4	0.5	6,486	12.6	0.5
Cohabiting parents . . . . .	5,389	100.0	0.0	5,394	100.0	0.0
Has children with partner . . . . .	2,687	49.9	2.7	2,858	53.0	2.8
Does not have children with partner . . . . .	2,701	50.1	2.7	2,536	47.0	2.8
Partner is also a parent . . . . .	1,727	32.1	2.5	1,796	33.3	2.5
<b>Grandparenthood<sup>4</sup></b>						
Is a grandparent . . . . .	40,277	61.1	0.6	29,241	57.2	0.8
Is not a grandparent . . . . .	25,659	38.9	0.6	21,904	42.8	0.8

<sup>1</sup> This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90 percent confidence interval around the estimate.  
<sup>2</sup> Includes only respondents who have at least one biological child.  
<sup>3</sup> Relationships include marriage or cohabitation at the time the survey was administered. These estimates are limited to opposite-sex couples.  
<sup>4</sup> Includes only respondents aged 30 or older, with a child aged 15 or older.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation 2014, Wave 1.

at slightly younger ages than men.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 60 percent of the women who are mothers<sup>5</sup> had their first child before the age of 25, while the proportion of men who entered childbearing in their late 20s is not significantly different from the proportion who entered childbearing in their early 20s (about 30 percent

of fathers were in each group). We also see that a larger percentage of fathers had their first child at or after age 35 (11.1 percent) than did mothers (only 5.3 percent of mothers first became mothers at 35 years old or older).

Having children with more than one person is known as multiple partner fertility (MPF). Multiple partner fertility is not a new phenomenon, but the 2014 SIPP is the first

nationally-representative dataset to directly measure the frequency of MPF. We limit our estimates to parents and find that about 16.6 percent of mothers and 14.6 percent fathers have children with more than one partner, or about one out

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of these fertility estimates, the term mothers refers to women who have given birth, and fathers refers to men who have biologically fathered a child.

of every six mothers, and one out of every seven fathers.<sup>6</sup>

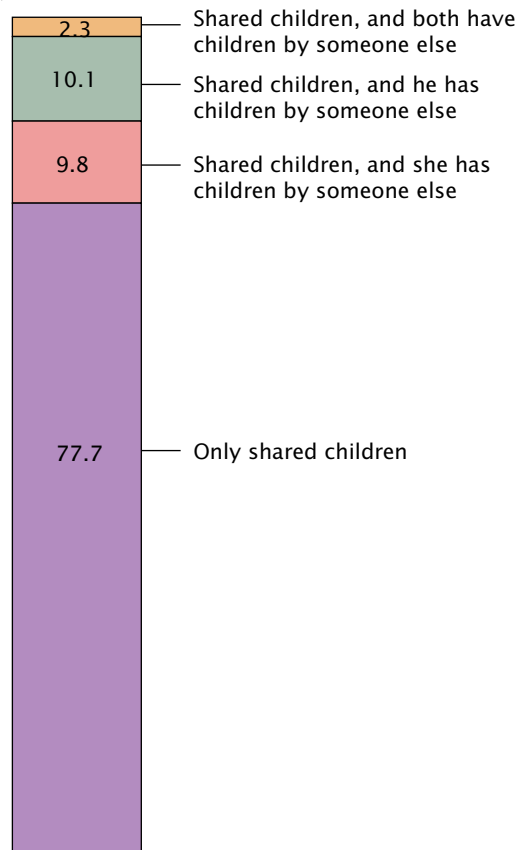
In addition to multiple partner fertility, the 2014 SIPP also collected information about shared fertility within opposite-sex married and cohabiting couples.<sup>7</sup> These data allow us to identify childbearing relationships even when the children do not live in the household. The majority of both mothers and fathers are married, and the majority of married parents have children with their spouse. However, 17.8 percent of married mothers and 16.5 percent of married fathers do not have children with their current spouse; these are parents who have children only by someone other than their current spouse. These data also show the complexity of modern families; 12.4 percent of married mothers and 12.6 percent of married fathers do not have children with their current spouse but their spouse also brought children from a prior relationship into the marriage.

Cohabitation refers to couples who live together but are not married. Roughly half of cohabiting mothers have children with their partner, while just over half of cohabiting fathers do. Notably, about a third of cohabiting parents of either sex do not have children with their current partner, but their partner is nonetheless also a parent by a prior relationship. Although some of these cohabiting parents are likely older with adult children, some certainly have minor, coresident

<sup>6</sup> Additional information about multiple partner fertility and multiple partner fertility parents can be found in a separate SIPP Brief on Multiple Partner Fertility, at <[www.census.gov/library/publications/2017/demo/p70br-146.html](http://www.census.gov/library/publications/2017/demo/p70br-146.html)>.

<sup>7</sup> The data reported here on childbearing relationships reflect only childbearing to opposite-sex couples due to data limitations.

Figure 1.  
**Fertility of Couples With Shared Biological Children: 2014**  
(In percent)



Couple who have at least one biological child together

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1.

children.<sup>8</sup> Such households are not connected by either birth or marriage, but nonetheless represent a common living arrangement for many children.

The SIPP only asks respondents about their own fertility, not about their parents' fertility, which makes it difficult to look at family structure from a child's perspective.

<sup>8</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau's Table UC3: Opposite Sex Unmarried Couples by Presence of Biological Children under 18, and Age, Earnings, Education, and Race and Hispanic Origin: 2016, Current Population Survey, 2016 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Retrieved from <[www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2016UC.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/cps2016UC.html)>.

However, data from parents about their own fertility are suggestive. Figure 1 shows the fertility of couples who live together and have had at least one child together. In 9.8 percent of couples who have had at least one child together, the mother has also had a child with someone else; in 10.1 percent, the father has also had a child with someone else; and in 2.3 percent, both parents also have children with other partners. This means that in more than 20 percent of these apparently nuclear families—two coresident parents with at

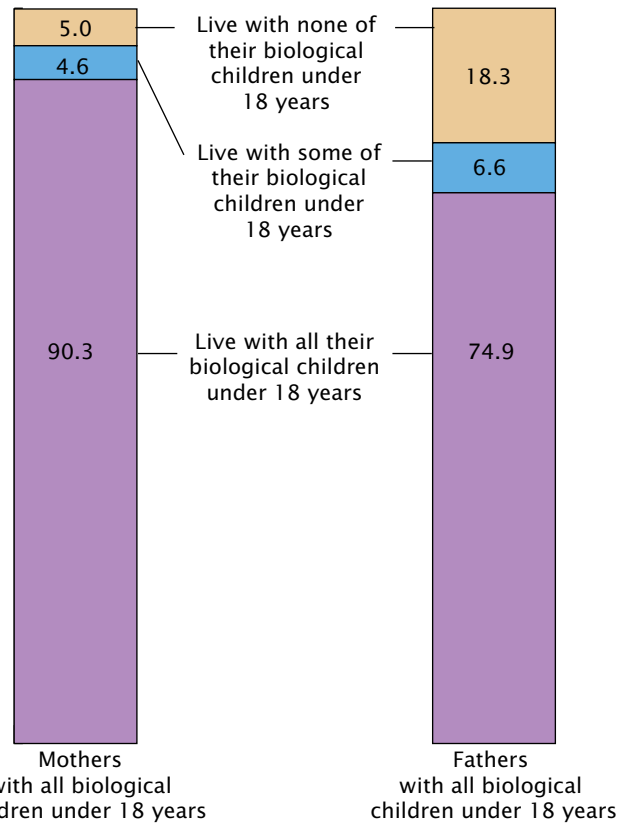
least one shared child—the child or children also have at least one half sibling.<sup>9</sup>

Detailed data about how the people in sampled households are related to each other are available in the SIPP, which permits an examination of men’s and women’s fertility in the context of where minor children live. Looking at parents of only minor children (meaning that all of their children are under the age of 18), Figure 2 shows that a significantly lower proportion of men than women live with all of their minor children, and that almost 20 percent of men do not live with any of their minor children.

The SIPP also asks respondents who are at least 30 years old, and who have a child who is at least 15 years old, whether they are a grandparent. About 61 percent of such women are grandmothers, and 57 percent of such men are grandfathers. These counts of all grandparents, independent of their residence with children or grandchildren, provide the denominators for estimates such as the percentage of grandparents in the United States who live with grandchildren.<sup>10</sup>

The 2014 SIPP was the first SIPP instrument to collect full fertility histories from both men and women, as well as measures of shared and nonshared fertility. These data are unique for the scope of this content. SIPP fertility data, as well as demographic information and additional measures of household composition and child and adult well-being, are available for

Figure 2.  
**Living Arrangements of Parents of Biological Children Under 18 Years and Those Minor Children: 2014**  
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1.

review and analysis on the Census Bureau Web site: <[www.census.gov/sipp](http://www.census.gov/sipp)>.

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<sup>9</sup> The children referenced here include both minor and adult children.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, R.R. Ellis and T. Simmons, *Coresident Grandparents and their Grandchildren: 2012*, U.S. Census Bureau: Population Characteristics Report P20-576, 2014. Available from: <[www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p20-576.pdf](http://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2014/demo/p20-576.pdf)>.