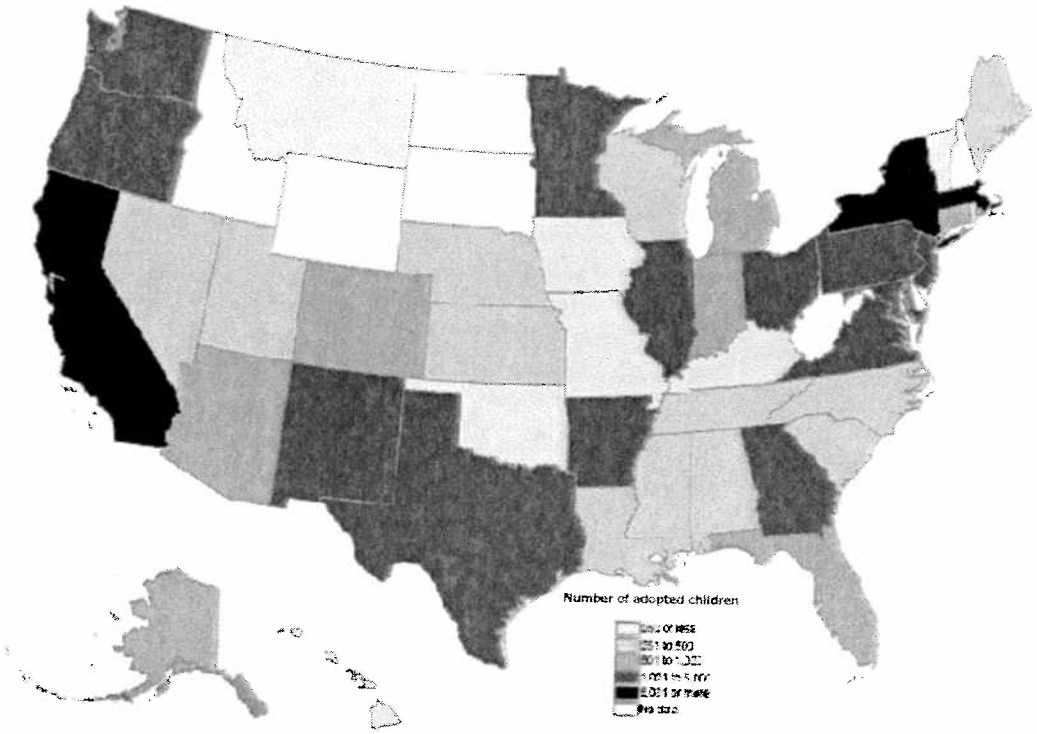
Adoption and Foster Care by Gay and Lesbian Parents in the United States



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Executive Summary

Discussion and debate about adoption and foster care by gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) parents occurs frequently among child welfare policymakers, social service agencies, and social workers. They all need better information about GLB adoptive and foster parents and their children as they make individual and policy-level decisions about placement of children with GLB parents. This report provides new information on GLB adoption and foster care from the U.S. Census 2000, the National Survey of Family Growth (2002), and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (2004).

Currently half a million children live in foster care in the United States and more than 100,000 foster children await adoption. States must recruit parents who are interested and able to foster and adopt children. Three states currently restrict GLB individuals or couples from adopting. Several states have or are considering policies that would restrict GLB people from fostering.

Recent government surveys demonstrate that many lesbians and gay men are already raising children, and many more GLB people would like to have children at some point. We estimate that two million GLB people have considered adoption. Since prior research shows that less than one-fifth of adoption agencies attempt to recruit adoptive parents from the GLB community, our findings suggest that GLB people are an underutilized pool of potential adoptive parents.

The report provides estimates of the number of adopted and fostered children of lesbians and gay men and describes the demographic characteristics of parents and children. We compare gay and lesbian parents and their adopted and fostered children to parents and children in other family arrangements, including married and unmarried different-sex couples and single parents (who might be heterosexual or GLB). While GLB parents are similar in many ways to other kinds of parents, we identify several differences in the key findings below.

The report concludes with an assessment of how proposed bans on allowing GLB individuals and couples to foster might affect foster care systems and fostered children. We estimate the possible financial cost to states if they were to limit or deny GLB people the ability to foster, which could displace 9,000 to 14,000 children if pursued nationally. And while we cannot measure costs to children directly, we explore prior research suggesting that displacing children from their current foster homes may have harmful effects on the children's development and well-being. The report closes with implications of this research for policymakers.

Key Findings

- More than one in three lesbians have given birth and one in six gay men have fathered or adopted a child.
- More than half of gay men and 41 percent of lesbians want to have a child.
- An estimated two million GLB people are interested in adopting.
- An estimated 65,500 adopted children are living with a lesbian or gay parent.
- More than 16,000 adopted children are living with lesbian and gay parents in California, the highest number among the states.
- Gay and lesbian parents are raising four percent of all adopted children in the United States.
- Same-sex couples raising adopted children are older, more educated, and have more economic resources than other adoptive parents.
- Adopted children with same-sex parents are younger and more likely to be foreign born.
- An estimated 14,100 foster children are living with lesbian or gay parents.
- Gay and lesbian parents are raising three percent of foster children in the United States.
- A national ban on GLB foster care could cost from $87 to $130 million.
- Costs to individual states could range from $100,000 to $27 million.

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Foster Care and Adoption in the United States

Foster Care

On any given day in the United States, about a half million children are living in foster care (U.S. DHHS, 2007). In 2004, approximately three million children were investigated by child welfare agencies in the United States for possible child abuse and neglect (U.S. DHHS, 2006a). About 872,000 of these children were confirmed as victims of child abuse and the agency sought to put in place the appropriate services to support the child and family (U.S. DHHS, 2006a). For 268,000 of these children, or about a fifth, their cases rose to a level of seriousness that the agencies determined it was in the children's best interests to be removed from their homes and placed in foster care (U.S. DHHS, 2006a). While a very small portion of children may be in the custody of child welfare agencies because their parents voluntarily relinquish rights to their care, most families become involved with child welfare as a result of some type of abuse or neglect.

Half a million children live in foster care in the United States.

In finding foster care placements for children, agencies seek the least restrictive and most family-like setting that will best meet the child's particular needs. For many children, family settings are found. On September 30, 2005, 236,775 foster children (46 percent) lived in family foster homes with non-relative caregivers and 124,153 (24 percent) lived in family foster homes with relatives providing for their care (U.S. DHHS, 2006b). However, either because a family home was not available or because the child's needs are best met in a congregate care setting, 94,650 children (18 percent) in foster care were cared for in institutions or group homes (U.S. DHHS, 2006b). An additional eight percent of foster children participated in trial home visits or lived in pre-adoptive placements in preparation for adoption (U.S. DHHS, 2006b). A small portion of foster children (one percent) resided in independent living settings as they prepared to "age-out" of the foster care system, and two percent of foster children had run away (U.S. DHHS, 2006b).

Adoption

Many adoptions take place outside the child welfare system, such as private domestic or international adoptions. Other adoptions occur when a child welfare agency determines that a child is unlikely to return home to his or her parent(s). In that case, the agency considers other permanency options for that child. Typically this involves looking for an adoptive family to provide a permanent home. In 2005, there were 114,000 children waiting to be adopted, meaning they had a goal of adoption and/or their parental rights had been terminated (U.S. DHHS, 2006b). This figure represents a substantial decline from 2000 when 131,000 children waited for adoptive families (U.S. DHHS, 2007). This decline is likely attributable to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997, which put pressure on states to find permanent homes for children in a timely manner and placed stricter timelines on agencies to terminate parental rights. Right after ASFA, there was a significant increase in adoptions and since 2000 the number of adoptions out of foster care has remained steady at around 50,000 per year (U.S. DHHS, 2007).

States seeking adoptive homes for children in foster care report that one of the biggest obstacles is finding interested and able families to adopt (Macomber, Scarcella, Zielewski, and Geen, 2004). To address this problem, in recent years state and federal governments have made significant efforts to recruit adoptive families. During the late 1990s, many states initiated statewide campaigns to recruit adoptive families (Macomber, Zielewski, Chambers, and Geen, 2005). At the federal level, in 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Children's Bureau developed a national adoptive parent recruitment and retention campaign, AdoptUSKids. This national effort involved a series of television advertisements and a national online photolisting of children (Macomber, Zielewski, Chambers, and Geen, 2005). In tandem with these efforts to find adoptive parents, states also seek foster parents, who are typically in short supply relative to the number of children needing foster care. Foster parents also constitute an important source of adoptive parents. Roughly 60 percent of all adoptions of children in foster care in 2005 were by their foster parents (U.S. DHHS, 2006b).

114,000 children in the foster care system await adoption.

The costs of recruitment efforts to find these adoptive and foster parents are difficult to estimate. States typically pay for these expenses through Title IV-E of the Social Security Act. This funding stream provides federal payments to states for foster care and adoption assistance. There are many categories of spending under Title IV-E. The costs of recruitment efforts generally fall under the IV-E categories of administration and training costs, yet these categories also include other child welfare expenditures, making it difficult to distinguish recruitment costs. California, one state for which itemized costs on recruitment are available, reported spending over $25 million for foster parent recruitment, training, and retention from July1, 2001 to June 30, 2002. In 2002, Michigan paid a standard rate of $4160 to contracted adoption recruitment agencies per child adopted.

State Policies and Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Adoption and Fostering

Variation in state policies

State law influences whether or not gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) people can be involved as adoptive or foster parents through the state's child welfare system. Some states have passed laws or have regulations that explicitly relate to whether GLB people or same-sex couples can adopt. A few states have laws that block GLB people from adopting; in other cases the law makes it clear that GLB people are eligible to adopt or foster. Other states have policies specifically related to GLB people becoming foster parents.

State GLB Adoption Policies

- Only Florida forbids "homosexuals" from adopting (Florida Statutes § 63.042(3)), and bisexuals are also apparently disqualified.
- Mississippi explicitly bans "same-gender" couples from adopting (MISS CODE ANN § 93-17-3-(5)), as does Utah through a ban on adoption by all unmarried couples (UTAH CODE ANN § 78-30-1(3)(b)). However, single GLB people in Mississippi and Utah might be able to adopt.
- In contrast, some states have policies that either explicitly or implicitly state that sexual orientation *cannot* be a basis to prevent gay and lesbian people from adopting, including California, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and the District of Columbia (Cooper and Cates, 2006, p. 6).

The absence of an explicit policy does not mean that parents' sexual orientation is not considered in adoption and foster care decisions. Although states might not have formal policies forbidding adoption or foster care by GLB parents, some adoption agencies or social workers might discriminate against GLB applicants.

The Evan B. Donaldson Institute studied the policies and practices of 307 adoption agencies during 1999 and 2000.[1] That study found that 60 percent of agencies responding to the survey accepted adoption applications from lesbians and gay men, whether single or in couples (p. 21). Among public agencies responding, 90 percent accepted gay applicants (p. 22). Almost 40 percent of all agencies and 83 percent of public agencies reported making at least one adoption placement with a lesbian or gay man (pp. 24-25). Overall, 1.3 percent of reported adoptions by these agencies were to self-identified lesbian or gay parents (p. 24).

[1] The response rate for the survey was 41%.

State GLB Fostering Policies

- Nebraska has a policy prohibiting gay people from fostering, but the current enforcement of that policy is unclear (Cooper and Cates, 2006).
- As with adoption, Utah forbids fostering by unmarried couples (UTAH CODE ANN § 62A-4A-602).
- A policy banning gay foster parents was recently removed by the Department of Social Services in Missouri and overturned by the state Supreme Court in Arkansas (Cooper and Cates, 2006, p. 11).

However, one third of agencies would reject a gay or lesbian applicant, either because of the religious beliefs guiding the agency, a state law prohibiting placement with GLB parents, or a policy of placing children only with married couples (p. 21).

Furthermore, the discretionary power of social workers in many agencies probably results in some finding that individual GLB parents are unsuitable because of their sexual orientation, even in the absence of a public prohibition (Wald, 2006, p. 415-416; Ryan, Pearlmutter, and Groza, 2004). The Evan B. Donaldson Institute survey of adoption agencies asked directors about their own personal attitudes and beliefs about lesbian and gay parents. They found that negative attitudes about lesbian and gay adoption were correlated with the belief that gay applicants required more evaluation and support (p. 29). Notably, public agency directors were the most supportive of adoption by lesbian and gay parents (p. 32). Other studies have also found evidence of negative social worker attitudes toward adoption by lesbian and gay parents (Ryan, 2000; Kenyon et al., 2003). Finally, GLB prospective foster parents report agency discrimination as a major barrier to becoming a foster parent (Downs and James, 2006).

GLB parenting research

Allowing GLB parents to adopt or foster has been the subject of controversy. In the last few years several states have considered bans on adoption or fostering by GLB people (Cooper and Cates, 2006, p. 6 and p. 11). The debates associated with these bans often consider the fitness of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to parent and the concern that children raised in their homes would be adversely affected. Gay parenting is an area that has received increasing research attention. Studies of child-rearing by GLB people have necessarily focused on relatively small samples and share some other possible limitations that are common to studies in those fields (Stacey and Biblarz, 2001; American Psychological

Association, 2005; Rauch and Meezan, 2005). For instance, most of the available research has focused on parents who are predominantly lesbian, white, and of relatively high economic status. However, findings across these studies are remarkably consistent in showing no negative consequences for children of GLB parents with regard to standard child well-being measures.

A wide variety of professional organizations have official positions recognizing the scientific research on GLB parents and stating that sexual orientation should not be a determinative factor in assessing the ability of individuals to raise children through adoption, foster care, or second parent adoptions. These positions typically address some combination of adoption, foster care, second-parent adoption, and co-parenting by GLB people.[2]

Organizations with such statements include:

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1999)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (2002)
- American Bar Association (1999, 2003)
- American Medical Association (2004)
- American Psychoanalytic Association (2002)
- American Psychological Association (2004)
- Child Welfare League of America (2004)
- National Adoption Center (1998)
- National Association of Social Workers (2002)
- North American Council on Adoptable Children (1998)

In later sections, we consider the implication of policies designed to limit adoption and fostering rights for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals.

[2] One professional organization, the American College of Pediatricians, has a policy statement that does not support parenting by lesbian, gay, or bisexual parents.

GLB parenting

Several recent datasets provide a new picture of GLB parenting. They show that many lesbians and gay men are already raising children and many more GLB people would like to have children at some point. They also demonstrate that as many as two million GLB people have considered adopting children.

Two recent datasets show that many lesbians and gay men are already parents. An estimated 27 percent of same-sex couples identified in Census 2000 have a child under 18 living in the home with them (Gates and Ost, 2004).[3] Data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics in 2002, show that over 35 percent of lesbians aged 18-44 have given birth, compared with 65 percent of heterosexual and bisexual women. Among gay men, 16 percent have had a biological or adopted child compared to 48 percent of heterosexual and bisexual men.

More than one in three lesbians have given birth and one in six gay men have fathered or adopted a child.

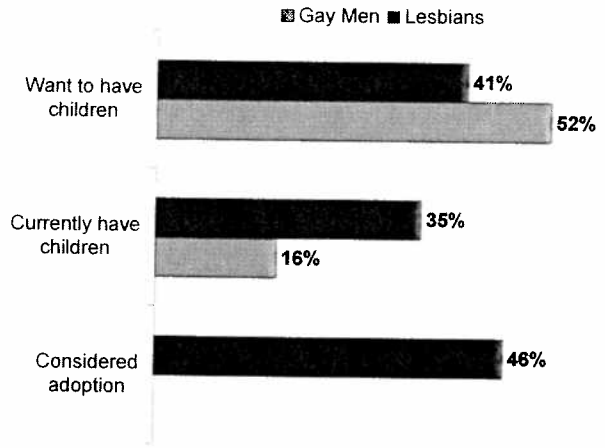
GLB people participate in childrearing in other ways, as well. Interestingly, lesbian and bisexual women are almost twice as likely as heterosexual women to report that they have lived with a non-birth child who was under their "care and responsibility": 23 percent of lesbian and bisexual women compared with 12 percent of heterosexual women reported living with and caring for someone else's birth child. This difference probably reflects the fact that lesbians partner with other women who have given birth in prior relationships or in the context of that particular lesbian relationship.

Table 1. Desire to have children by sexual orientation and prior births.

Sexual Orientation	Women	Men
Heterosexual (all)	53.5%	66.6%
Among those who with children	37.3%	43.6%
Among those without children	83.7%	87.4%
Lesbian or gay (all)	**41.4%**	**51.8%**
Among those who with children	49.0%	24.6%
Among those without children	**37.4%**	**57.0%**
Bisexual (all)	59.2%	65.6%
Among those who with children	39.5%	55.4%
Among those without children	**75.4%**	**70.4%**

Source: National Survey of Family Growth
Bold figures are statistically significantly different at 10% level from heterosexual men or women.

Figure 1. Gay men and lesbians having children.



Source: National Survey of Family Growth

GLB desire to parent

In addition, many more lesbian, gay, and bisexual people would like to be parents. The NSFG asked men and women about their desire to have a child or, if the individual has already had a child, another child (see Table 1). More than half (52 percent) of gay men say they would like a child, compared with two-thirds of heterosexual and bisexual men who say they would like a child. Among lesbians, 41 percent would like to have a child, compared with a bit more than half of heterosexual women and 59 percent of bisexual women.

More than half of gay men and 41 percent of lesbians want to have a child.

The desire to have children depends partly on whether people already have children, however, and those who do not have children usually express more current interest in having a child than people who are already parents. Among men who have had a child, 25 percent of gay men, 44 percent of heterosexual men, and 55 percent of bisexual men would like to have another child. Among men who have not had a child, 57 percent of gay men, 87 percent of heterosexual men, and 70 percent of bisexual men would like to have a child. The pattern for most women is similar

[3] This figure is lower than official Census Bureau figures reported in Simmons and O'Connell (2003). It represents an adjusted estimate that accounts for measurement error due to possible miscoding of different-sex married couples as same-sex couples.

to that of men, with heterosexual and bisexual women who have not had children being more likely to want a child than those with children.

Lesbians who have not had children are somewhat less likely to say they want a child than lesbians who have given birth, however.

GLB interest in adopting

The NSFG asks women in that survey about their adoption considerations and actions. The answers to those questions show that many lesbian and bisexual women are potential adoptive parents. Almost half of lesbian and bisexual women (46 percent) have considered adoption at some point, compared with only one third (32 percent) of heterosexual women (see Table 2). This figure is strikingly similar to that found in a Kaiser Family Foundation survey of GLB people in 15 large metropolitan areas, which found that almost half of GLB people without children would like to adopt someday (Kaiser Family Foundation, p. 4).

Although many women have considered adoption, few have actually taken concrete steps toward adopting a child. According to the NSFG, lesbian/bisexual women are also more likely than heterosexual women to have ever taken steps toward adopting: 5.7 percent of lesbian/bisexual women compared with 3.3 percent of heterosexual women.

Another way of looking at the interest in adoption is that just over one million lesbian or bisexual women aged 18-44 have considered adoption, and over 130,000 lesbian or bisexual women have take a step toward adopting a child.

Unfortunately, the NSFG did not ask the same questions about adoption of men. We do know that gay and bisexual men are even more likely than lesbian and bisexual women to express an interest in having children (even though fewer gay men than lesbians actually have children already). We might reasonably project that at least another million gay/bisexual men are interested in adopting. Since gay/bisexual men are likely to have partners who are not capable of giving birth, it would not be unreasonable to think that even more gay and bisexual men might have an interest in adopting than lesbian and bisexual women. Therefore, our estimate of two million gay, lesbian, or bisexual people who have ever considered adopting a child is likely to be a conservative one.

An estimated two million GLB people are interested in adopting.

Table 2: Adoption considerations for women by sexual orientation.

Sexual Orientation	Hetero-sexual	Lesbian/ bisexual
Ever considered adoption		
Percent	32.1%	**46.2%**
Number (weighted)	16,798,000	1,057,000
Ever took a step toward adoption		
Percent	3.3%	**5.7%**
Number (weighted)	1,751,000	132,000
N (unweighted)	6529	314

Source: National Survey of Family Growth
Figures in bold are statistically significantly different from those for heterosexual women.

A note about bisexuals
Our treatment of bisexual people in this report varies according to the specific context. Existing and proposed laws and policies related to the sexual orientation of adoptive or foster parents are often unclear with respect to bisexuals. We believe it is likely that restrictive policies will discourage bisexual people as well as lesbians and gay men from pursuing adoption and foster care, so in this discussion we include bisexuals in our estimate of the pool of potential adoptive parents. In describing current adoptive and foster parents in later sections, however, we are limited by the available data, as discussed below.

National adoption estimates

We estimate that approximately 65,500 adopted children are being raised by lesbian or gay parents, accounting for more than four percent of all adopted children in the United States (see Table 3). Of the estimated 3.1 million lesbian and gay households in the United States, 1.6 percent (nearly 52,000) include an adopted child under age 18 (see Table 3).

An estimated 65,500 adopted children are living with a lesbian or gay parent.

Actual counts of the number of adopted children living with gay and lesbian parents, both single and coupled, do not exist. We derive our estimate using characteristics of same-sex couples identified in the Census and NSFG estimates of the size of the lesbian and gay population in the United States. It is important to remember that these estimates include all adopted children, including those adopted from both public and private adoption agencies, as well as international adoptions and possibly second parent adoptions of a partner's child. Unfortunately, we are unable to separate out these different kinds of adoptions. Also, these figures do not directly include bisexual adoptive or foster parents. We only know the extent of parenting among same-sex couples from the Census. To the extent that bisexual people are in same-sex couples, they will be represented in our estimates. Further details about the specifics of the estimation procedure are included in the Appendix.

In our analyses of the demographic characteristics of families with adopted children (and later in the analyses of those with foster children), we consider characteristics across four family types: same-sex couples, different-sex married couples, different-sex unmarried couples, and families where the adoptive parent does not report a partner or spouse in the home. These comparisons allow us to identify differences and similarities of characteristics across family types for parents and the adopted or fostered children. It is important to note that Census data do not allow us to separately identify single lesbians and gay men and the children living with them, so single gay and lesbian parents would be included among the non-couple households. As noted earlier, we also cannot identify whether these children were adopted through private adoptions, from foster care, or from other countries.

State and regional estimates

States with the largest number of adopted children living with lesbian and gay parents (see Figure 2) include California (16,458), New York (7,042), Massachusetts (5,828), Texas (3,588), and Washington (3,004). Estimated counts for all states where data were available are shown in Table 5.

Figure 2. Estimated number of adopted children under age 18 living with lesbian or gay parents, by state.

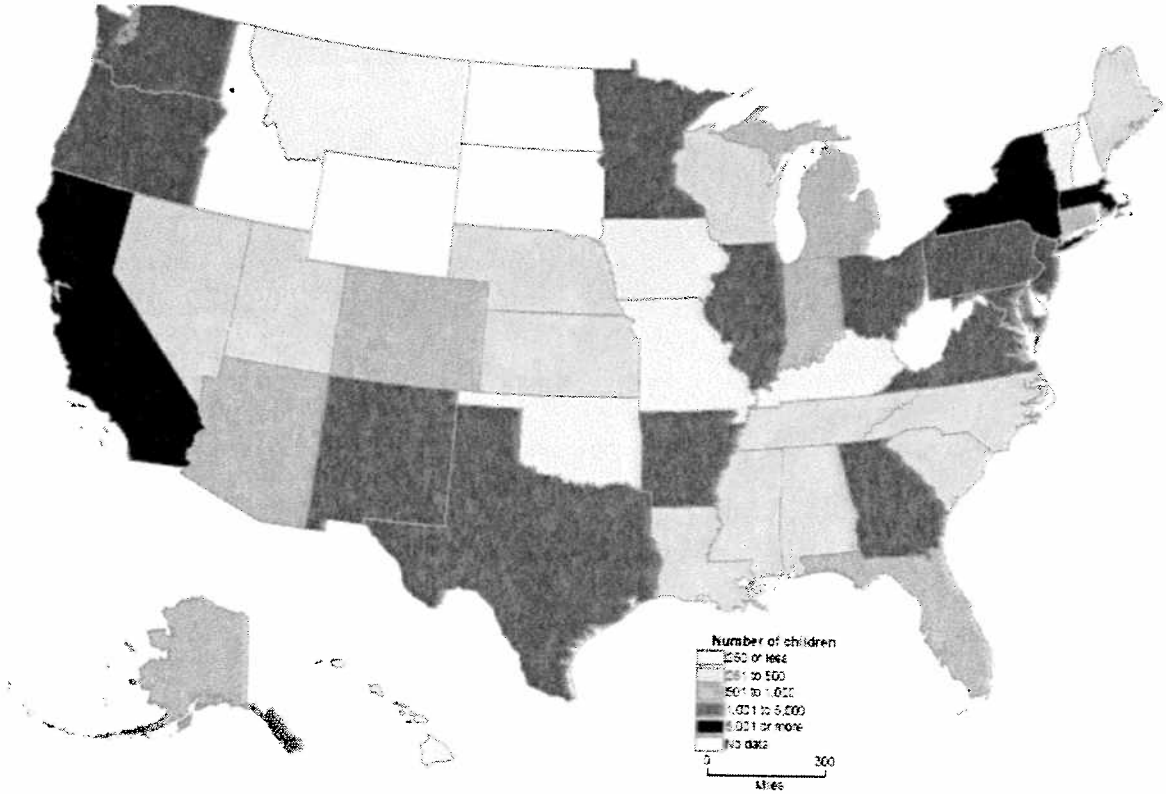


Table 3. Estimates of the number of adopted children under age 18 living in lesbian and gay households, United States.

United States	
Lesbian/gay households	3,134,218
Adopted children (under age 18)[a]	1,586,004
Lesbian and gay households	
Adoption rate[b]	1.6%
Avg. # adopted children[c]	1.3
Lesbian and gay households with an adopted child	50,774
Estimated # adopted children with lesbian/gay parents	65,499
% Adopted children living in lesbian and gay households	4.1%

[a]Census 2000, as reported in Kreider (2003) and Lugalia and Overturf (2004)
[b]Author calculations based on same-sex unmarried partner households with an adopted/foster children under age 18 living in the household, Census 2000 5%/1% PUMS
[c]Author calculations based on same-sex unmarried partner households with at least one adopted/foster child under age 18, Census 2000 5%/1% PUMS

The geographic distribution of adopted children being raised by lesbian and gay parents differs substantially from that of children being raised in other family types (see Tables 4 & 5). Gay and lesbian parents with adopted children are substantially more likely than other families to live in New England, Mid-Atlantic and West coast states. They are generally less likely to live in the Midwest and the South.

More than 16,000 adopted children are living with lesbian and gay parents in California, the highest number among the states.

States where there are high proportions of adopted children living with lesbian and gay parents are shown in Figure 3. In general, the Northeast and the West are the regions of the country where adopted children are most likely to be living with lesbian and gay parents. States with the highest percentages include the Massachusetts (16.4 percent), California (9.8 percent), New Mexico (9 percent), and Alaska (8.6 percent).[4]

Table 4. Geographic distribution of families with adopted children under age 18, by family type.

	All	Same-sex	Different-sex Married	Different-sex unmarried	Single	Same-sex female	Same-sex male
Region							
New England	5%	11%	**5%**	**5%**	**4%**	14%	0%
Middle Atlantic	13%	17%	**12%**	**10%**	16%	18%	15%
East North Central	17%	8%	**17%**	**17%**	**17%**	7%	12%
West North Central	7%	4%	**8%**	6%	**6%**	5%	*1%*
South Atlantic	17%	12%	**17%**	**20%**	**18%**	12%	15%
East South Central	6%	2%	**6%**	**6%**	**7%**	1%	5%
West South Central	11%	8%	11%	10%	10%	8%	8%
Mountain	7%	5%	**8%**	**10%**	6%	4%	6%
Pacific	16%	33%	**15%**	**16%**	**16%**	31%	39%

Source: Census 2000
Bold figures are significantly different ($p<0.05$) from same-sex
Italicized figures are significantly different ($p<0.05$) from same-sex female

[4] The District of Columbia actually has the highest proportion at 28.6 percent.

Figure 3. Estimated proportion of adopted children under age 18 who are living with lesbian or gay parents, by state.

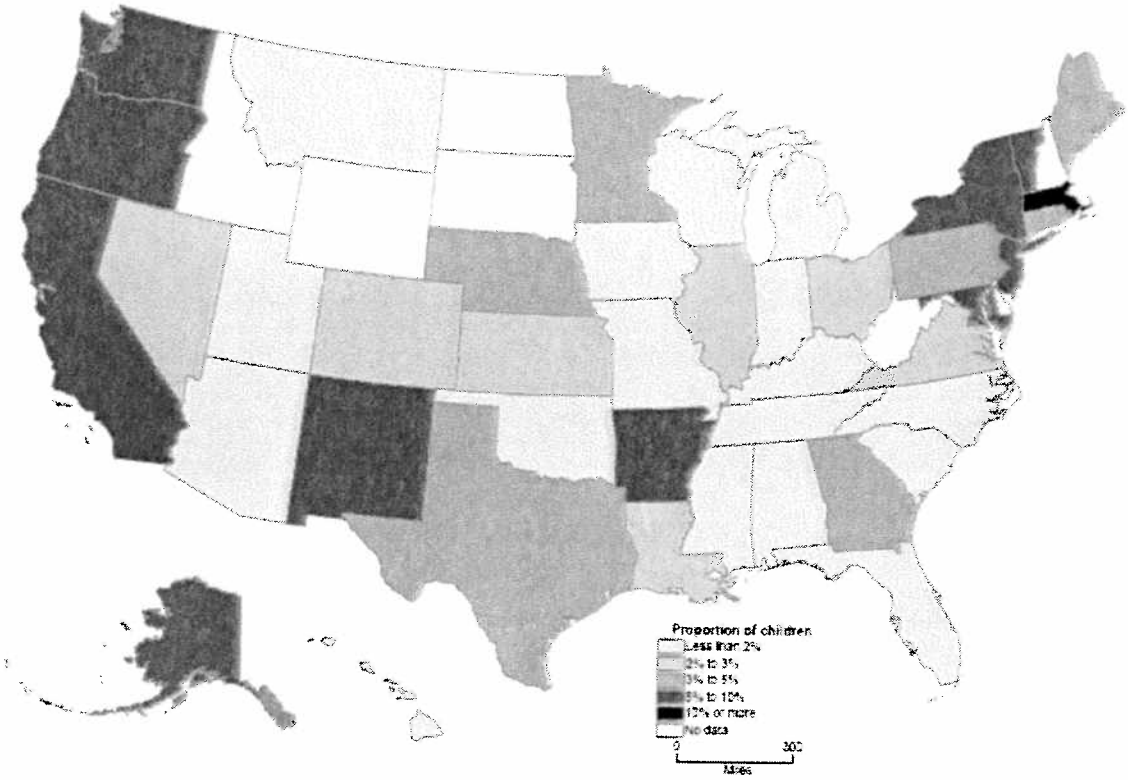


Table 5. Estimates of the number of adopted children under age 18 living in lesbian and gay households, by state.

	Total adopted children	Adopted children living with lesbian or gay parents	Rank	Percent of adopted children living with gay or lesbian parents	Rank
Alabama	24,944	301	32	1.2%	37
Alaska	6,910	594	23	8.6%	5
Arizona	28,966	543	24	1.9%	30
Arkansas	15,973	1,040	16	6.5%	9
California	167,190	16,458	1	9.8%	3
Colorado	29,438	616	22	2.1%	26
Connecticut	19,239	873	19	4.5%	14
Delaware	3,452	-	-	-	-
District of Columbia	2,649	758	20	28.6%	1
Florida	82,179	962	17	1.2%	39
Georgia	49,194	2,377	6	4.8%	13
Hawaii	6,941	95	42	1.4%	34
Idaho	9,562	-	-	0.0%	-
Illinois	73,638	1,887	10	2.6%	23
Indiana	37,004	725	21	2.0%	28
Iowa	18,569	95	43	0.5%	43
Kansas	19,733	462	27	2.3%	24
Kentucky	20,661	248	37	1.2%	38
Louisiana	22,827	469	26	2.1%	27
Maine	7,137	323	31	4.5%	15
Maryland	32,269	2,142	8	6.6%	8
Massachusetts	35,647	5,828	3	16.4%	2
Michigan	61,232	959	18	1.6%	32
Minnesota	31,378	1,328	12	4.2%	16
Mississippi	16,300	286	33	1.8%	31
Missouri	33,156	161	41	0.5%	44
Montana	6,803	95	44	1.4%	33
Nebraska	11,812	367	29	3.1%	20
Nevada	10,588	279	34	2.6%	22
New Hampshire	6,864	-	-	-	-
New Jersey	42,614	2,344	7	5.5%	11
New Mexico	11,764	1,056	15	9.0%	4
New York	100,736	7,042	2	7.0%	7
North Carolina	42,911	499	25	1.2%	40
North Dakota	3,647	-	-	-	-
Ohio	62,653	1,335	11	2.1%	25
Oklahoma	23,518	183	39	0.8%	42
Oregon	23,901	1,232	13	5.2%	12
Pennsylvania	62,328	1,950	9	3.1%	19
Rhode Island	5,496	176	40	3.2%	18
South Carolina	22,027	279	35	1.3%	35
South Dakota	5,691	-	-	-	-
Tennessee	30,980	384	28	1.2%	36
Texas	110,275	3,588	4	3.3%	17
Utah	19,430	367	30	1.9%	29
Vermont	4,181	235	38	5.6%	10
Virginia	38,289	1,143	14	3.0%	21
Washington	38,879	3,004	5	7.7%	6
West Virginia	9,849	-	-	-	-
Wisconsin	30,583	257	36	0.8%	41
Wyoming	3,997	-	-	-	-

Adopted children by family type

Gay and lesbian parents are raising four percent of all adopted children in the United States (see Figure 4). Nearly 80 percent of adopted children have different-sex married parents and three percent are being raised by different-sex unmarried couples.

Gay and lesbian parents are raising four percent of all adopted children in the United States.

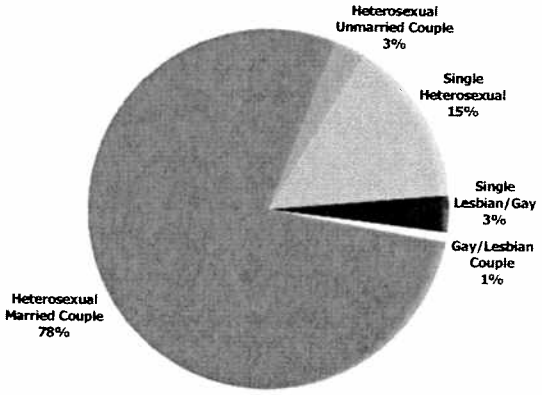
Single heterosexual parents are raising 15 percent of adopted children and an additional three percent have single gay or lesbian parents. This implies that gay and lesbian parents represent nearly one in six single parents raising adopted children.[5]

Same-sex couples are raising one percent of adopted children. Roughly 80 percent of those children have female parents.

Adoptive parent demographics

Same-sex couple adoptive parents, particularly female parents, and adoptive parents without a partner are older than their different-sex married and unmarried couple counterparts, with an average age of 43 (see Table 6).

Figure 4. Estimated distribution of adopted children under age 18, by family type.



Individuals in same-sex couples raising adopted children have the highest levels of education. More than half of them have a college degree, compared to a third of men and women in different-sex married couples, a fifth of single parents, and only 7 percent of those in different-sex unmarried couples.

Same-sex couples with adopted children also have the highest average annual household income of any of

Table 6. Demographic characteristics of adoptive parents by living arrangement.

	All	Same-sex	Different-sex Married	Different-sex unmarried	Single	Same-sex female	Same-sex male
Age (mean)	41.6	42.8	**41.8**	**34.0**	42.8	43.2	41.3
Education							
<High School	14%	13%	12%	**28%**	**21%**	10%	*22%*
High School Diploma	24%	11%	**23%**	**36%**	**25%**	10%	13%
Some College	32%	22%	**32%**	**29%**	**32%**	20%	*30%*
College Degree	18%	20%	19%	**5%**	**12%**	21%	16%
Graduate Studies	13%	34%	**13%**	**2%**	**9%**	38%	*19%*
Household Income (mean)	$73,274	$102,474	**$81,900**	**$43,746**	**$36,312**	$102,508	$102,331
Race/Ethnicity							
White	73%	73%	76%	**54%**	**49%**	77%	*61%*
African/American	12%	10%	9%	**20%**	**33%**	8%	*15%*
Hispanic/Latino(a)	10%	11%	9%	**20%**	12%	11%	15%
Asian/Pac. Islander	3%	2%	3%	2%	2%	1%	4%
Am. Indian/AK Native	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Other	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	2%	4%

Source: Census 2000
Bold figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex
Italicized figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex female

[5]The children who have single parents (both GLB and heterosexual) in these findings might also have another adoptive parent who lives in a different household. The Census data do not allow us to identify those situations.

the adoptive family types ($102,474). Different-sex married couples compare at $81,900 followed by different-sex unmarried couples at $43,746 and single parents (including heterosexual, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people) at $36,312 per year.

Same-sex couples raising adopted children are older, more educated, and have more economic resources than other adoptive parents.

Adoptive parents in both same-sex couples and different-sex married couples are essentially alike with regard to racial and ethnic diversity. Nearly three-quarters of them are white. About one in ten are African-American and another one in ten are Latino(a). Adoptive parents who are single or are in different-sex unmarried couples and single adoptive parents differ from married and same-sex couples, however. About half of single parents and unmarried different-sex couples are white. One fifth of men and women in different-sex unmarried couples is African-American and a similar proportion is Latino(a). Among single adoptive parents, a third are African-American and 12 percent are Latino(a).

Notably, these characteristics differ rather markedly from comparisons between same-sex couples raising children (all children, not just those who are adopted) and their different-sex married counterparts. In general, same-sex couples raising children have lower incomes and education levels than do married couples raising children. They are also less likely to be white (Sears and Gates, 2005).

Adopted children demographics

Adopted children of same-sex couples are the youngest among the various family types (see Table 7). Nearly half (46 percent) are under age five compared to a third of adopted children with different-sex unmarried parents, a fifth of children with different-sex married parents and 16 percent of those with single parents. Unfortunately, we do not know the age of the children at the time of their adoption.

Among same-sex couples, the adopted children of male couples are older than those of their female counterparts. More than one in five children of male couples are aged 13 and older compared to only one in ten among the children of female couples.

Adopted children with same-sex parents are younger and more likely to be foreign born.

Among adopted children of same-sex couples, 14 percent are foreign born, twice the rate among children of different-sex married couples (seven percent) and higher than that of children with single parents. One in five adopted children being raised by a different-sex unmarried couple is foreign born, a higher proportion than among adopted children in any other family type. Almost one quarter of children adopted by female same-sex couples are foreign born.

Table 7. Demographic characteristics of adopted children by living arrangement.

	All	Same-sex	Different-sex Married	Different-sex unmarried	Single	Same-sex female	Same-sex male
Age (mean)	9.4	6.2	**9.4**	**7.5**	**9.9**	5.7	**7.7**
Age group							
Under 5	20%	46%	**20%**	**32%**	**16%**	49%	**34%**
5-12	49%	42%	**49%**	46%	**49%**	42%	45%
13-17	32%	12%	**31%**	**22%**	**34%**	10%	**21%**
Race/Ethnicity							
White	58%	53%	**63%**	49%	**38%**	52%	56%
African/American	16%	14%	**11%**	19%	**36%**	14%	14%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	13%	18%	**13%**	24%	15%	17%	21%
Asian/Pac. Islander	8%	11%	8%	**2%**	**5%**	13%	5%
Am. Indian/AK Native	1%	0%	**1%**	**2%**	**2%**	0%	1%
Other	4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Disabled (age 5+)	13%	14%	11%	12%	14%	5%	**16%**
Sensory	2%	3%	1%	4%	2%	3%	0%
Physical	2%	2%	1%	3%	2%	8%	21%
Mental	11%	11%	10%	9%	12%	1%	5%
Foreign born	13%	14%	**7%**	**20%**	**10%**	23%	**9%**

Source: Census 2000
Bold figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex
Italicized figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex female

Adopted children of different-sex married couples are more likely than children in other family types to be white (63 percent). More than a third (36 percent) of the adopted children of single parents are African-American, the highest percentage among the various family types. Different-sex unmarried couples have the highest percentage of Latino(a) adopted children (24 percent) and same-sex couples have the highest percentage of children of Asian/Pacific Island descent (11 percent).

The portion of children with disabilities (age five and older) among adopted children does not vary much by family type. Disability is defined as those reporting either a mental, physical, or sensory disability. Among all adopted children, 13 percent report some disability. More than one in ten adopted children has a mental disability while two percent have a sensory disability and two percent have a physical disability. Among same-sex couples, male couples are more than three times more likely than female couples to have a child with a disability.

National and regional foster care estimates

We estimate that just over 14,100 children live with a lesbian or gay foster parent. This suggests that nearly three percent of the half million children in all forms of family foster care (both kin and non-kin) in the United States are living with lesbian or gay foster parents (see Table 8). When only those foster children placed with a non-relative are considered, six percent of foster children are living with lesbian or gay foster parents.

An estimated 14,100 foster children are living with lesbian or gay parents.

Because the sample sizes of foster children in the Census are very small in most states, we do not present state-by-state numbers. However, it is clear that the geographic distribution of foster children being raised by same-sex couples differs substantially from that of children being raised in other family types (see Table 9). Like those with adopted children, same-sex couples with foster children are substantially more likely than other families to live in west coast states and are less likely to live in the South.

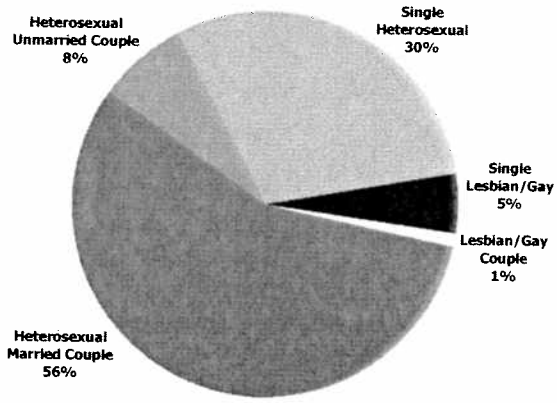
In describing the characteristics of foster children and their families derived from the Census, it is important to remember that these data are primarily observing foster children living in a non-kin family home, or where foster parents do not include a relative. These children represent 46 percent of the total children in foster care. As noted earlier, nearly 20 percent of children in foster care are in institutional settings, and the remaining third of children in the foster care system live with relatives or are in other special living arrangements.

Table 8. Estimates of the number of fostered children under age 18 living in lesbian and gay households, United States.

United States	
Lesbian/gay households	3,134,218
Foster children (under age 18)[a]	501,299
Family, non-kin care	232,301
Institutional	95,280
Other	173,718
Lesbian and gay households	
Fostering rate[b]	0.33%
Avg. # foster children[c]	1.4
Lesbian and gay households with a foster child	10,343
Estimated # foster children with lesbian/gay foster parents	14,134
% Foster children living in lesbian and gay households	
Among children in family, non-kin care	6.1%
Among all children in foster care	2.8%

[a]Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), 2004
[b]Author calculations based on same-sex unmarried partner households with an adopted/foster children under age 18 living in the household, Census 2000 5%/1% PUMS
[c]Author calculations based on same-sex unmarried partner households with at least one adopted/foster child under age 18, Census 2000 5%/1% PUMS

Figure 5. Estimated distribution of foster children in family, non-kin care, by family type.



Six percent of foster children in non-kin care are being raised by lesbian or gay foster parents (see Figure 5). They are divided roughly five to one between single and same-sex coupled parents. Nearly three-quarters of these children likely have female foster parents.

Gay and lesbian parents are raising six percent of foster children in non-kin care in the United States.

More than half (56 percent) of foster children are living with different-sex married couples and eight percent are being raised by different-sex unmarried couples. Single heterosexual parents are raising nearly a third (30 percent) of these children. These estimates imply that among the third of foster parents who are single, one in seven is a lesbian or gay parent.

Foster parent demographics

Like their adoptive parent counterparts, same-sex couple foster parents, whose average age is 48, are older than foster parents from all of the other family types (see Table 10). Also similar to adoptive parents, same-sex couples raising foster children generally have the highest levels of education. One quarter of them have a college degree, compared to 17 percent of different-sex married couples, 13 percent of single parents, and only 10 percent of different -sex unmarried couples.

Table 9. Geographic distribution of foster families, by family type.

	All	Same-sex	Different-sex Married	Different-sex unmarried	Single	Same-sex female	Same-sex male
Region							
New England	5%	3%	**6%**	5%	4%	4%	0%
Middle Atlantic	15%	8%	12%	11%	**21%**	9%	5%
East North Central	20%	15%	20%	15%	21%	20%	**2%**
West North Central	7%	7%	8%	12%	5%	3%	18%
South Atlantic	16%	11%	15%	**22%**	17%	4%	**31%**
East South Central	5%	1%	**6%**	5%	**4%**	2%	0%
West South Central	8%	7%	9%	13%	6%	8%	5%
Mountain	6%	4%	6%	7%	5%	2%	10%
Pacific	17%	44%	**18%**	**8%**	**16%**	49%	29%

Source: Census 2000
Bold figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex
Italicized figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex female

Different-sex married couples with foster children have the highest average annual household income of any of the family types ($63,698), though the differences are not statistically significant. Same-sex couples compare at $57,056, followed by different-sex unmarried couples at $46,314 and single parents at $32,948 per year.

With regard to race and ethnicity, any observed differences among same-sex couples and different-sex married and unmarried couples are not statistically significant. Among those foster parents, between 55 percent (same-sex couples) and 62 percent (different-sex married couples) are white. Between 14 percent (different-sex unmarried) and 21 percent (different-sex married) are African-American, and between 13 percent (different-sex married) and 23 percent (different-sex unmarried) are Latino(a). Single foster parents are more likely than others to be African-American (51 percent) and less likely to be white (31 percent).

Foster children demographics

In general, few statistically significant differences emerged between the characteristics of foster children living with same-sex couples and those living in other family settings (see Table 11). While not statically significant, the portion of foster children with a disability is highest among those in same-sex couple households (32 percent). In particular, female couples appear to be most likely to be fostering a child with a disability. Among all families, roughly half of foster children are between the ages of five and twelve. A quarter of foster children are under age five and another quarter is age 13 and older.

The race and ethnicity of foster children only differs between those with single parents and those in other family types. Foster children of single parents are more likely to be African-American (52 percent) and less likely to be white (26 percent) than children in other family types. Among foster families headed by couples, in contrast, approximately half of foster children are white and about 20 percent are African-American and an additional 20 percent are Latino(a).

Table 10. Demographic characteristics of foster parents, by living arrangement.

	All	Same-sex	Different-sex Married	Different-sex unmarried	Single	Same-sex female	Same-sex male
Age (mean)	44.3	47.8	**44.6**	**35.7**	**38.9**	39.3	42.2
Education							
<High School	24%	20%	22%	**31%**	**30%**	24%	35%
High School Diploma	28%	17%	**27%**	**35%**	**29%**	25%	21%
Some College	32%	39%	35%	**24%**	**28%**	32%	28%
College Degree	11%	17%	12%	**8%**	**8%**	12%	7%
Graduate Studies	5%	8%	5%	**2%**	5%	8%	9%
Household Income (mean)	$49,841	$57,056	$63,698	$46,314	$32,948	$49,599	$70,202
Race/Ethnicity							
White	55%	55%	62%	58%	**31%**	49%	49%
African/American	26%	18%	21%	14%	**51%**	16%	28%
Hispanic/Latino(a)	14%	21%	13%	23%	14%	30%	*12%*
Asian/Pac. Islander	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Am. Indian/AK Native	2%	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	*8%*
Other	2%	4%	2%	1%	3%	4%	*0%*

Source: Census 2000
Bold figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex
Italicized figures are significantly different (p<0.05) from same-sex female

Impacts of Policies Prohibiting Gay Men and Lesbians from Adopting or Fostering Children

Displacement of children

As noted earlier, several states have recently considered legislation that would prohibit lesbians and gay men (and perhaps bisexuals) from adopting or fostering children. Based on the data just presented on the number and characteristics of adopted or foster children with GLB parents, this section and the next discuss the potential ramifications of such a policy change.

As many as 14,000 children could be displaced from their current foster homes.

If a state were to decide to limit adoption and foster care by gay parents, it is likely that children currently placed with existing GLB foster parents would be removed from those families. In the next section, we estimate that 9,300 to 14,000 children would be displaced. Some of those children would be placed in other foster family settings, but others would be placed in group or institutional care.

Foster parents are an important source of adoptive homes. Of children adopted from foster care in 2005, 60 percent were adopted by their foster parents (U.S. DHHS, 2005b). Taking gay and lesbian parents out of the pool of potential foster parents who might also adopt may increase the time to adoption for the children who would have been placed in those homes. Some children might never be adopted and will "age out" of the foster care system.

Taking GLB parents out of the pool of foster parents who might also adopt may increase the time to adoption for some children.

In some circumstances, a lesbian or gay foster parent has a characteristic that makes them best suited to a particular child. Removing children from those homes deprives the child of that placement. For instance, some children might be placed with a stranger rather than a lesbian or gay relative. Or a lesbian or gay foster parent who is a medical professional might have skills that are best suited to the medical needs of a child when compared with other potential foster parents.

One recent study of Midwestern youth who are or were in foster care found that almost seven percent identified as homosexual or bisexual (Courtney, et al., p. 46). Challenges associated with being a GLB youth, including stigma from family and peers, contribute to GLB young people experiencing a variety of difficulties in adolescence. These difficulties could create challenges and conflict within biological families and increase the likelihood that GLB youth are placed in foster care settings (see Mallon, 1998). If these youth are harder to place with non-GLB foster parents, then GLB foster parents might constitute an important pool of parents for these children, in particular.

Prior research on children in foster care shows that all of these policy impacts are likely to have harmful effects on children.

Research on the well-being of children in foster care

Studies show that the frequency of moves between placements is associated with several harmful outcomes for children. Most of these studies cannot control for the possibility that causation runs in both directions, e.g. that the child's behavioral or other problems caused the instability in placements. However, researchers generally believe that children's problems are both a cause and a consequence of instability (Harden, 2004). Such problems include:

- A higher probability of having at least one severe academic skill delay (Zima, Bussing, Freeman, Yang, Belin, and Forness, 2000).
- More outpatient mental health visits, particularly for children who also reported some types of behavior problems (James, Landsverk, Slymen, and Leslie, 2004).
- Behavioral disturbances and conduct problems in school (girls) and difficulty in forming relationships with their foster families (boys) (Leathers, 2002).
- Increased behavior problems, even when not exhibited on entering the child welfare system (Newton, Lintrownik, and Landsverk, 2000)
- Lower probability of adoption (Smith, 2003).

Prior research on children in foster care suggests that policy impacts are likely to have harmful effects on children.

Conversely, stability of placements is associated with positive outcomes for children:

- A review of studies conducted from 1960-1990 showed that having fewer placements was associated with better school achievement, less criminal activity, more social support, increased life satisfaction, greater housing stability, better self-support, better caring for one's own children (McDonald, Allen, Westerfelt, Piliavin, 1993).
- Stability of relationships is generally important for children's development (Harden, 2004).

Research also suggests that family environments are usually best for children. Children who are placed in congregate care settings are more likely to suffer the ill effects of not having a family-like environment. Studies show that such children experience negative outcomes:

- They had lower scores on social and cognitive functioning and reported seeing their biological family members far less often than children in family-like foster care settings (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2003).
- They had a decreased probability of being adopted (Freundlich, 2003).
- They were more likely to demonstrate behavioral problems and to repeat a grade (Zima, et al., 2000).
- Very young children had lower scores on their motor and psychomotor development, and in communication and socialization when compared to matched children in family foster care (Harden, 2002).

Finally, children who are not adopted and instead "age out" of the foster care system face many health, educational, and financial challenges:

- The average income ($6,000) for aging-out youth was below the federal poverty line ($7,890 for a single adult). Aging-out youth also report high levels of unemployment. (Goerge, Bilaver, Lee, Needell, Brookhart, and Jackman, 2002).
- Less adult guidance may account for some of the reasons why foster care children who have aged-out also go to college at extremely low rates (Anderson, 2003).
- In a survey of 141 young adults 18 months after they had aged out of care, 32 percent had received some type of public assistance, 37 percent had no high school diploma or GED, 18 percent had been incarcerated, 51 percent had no health insurance, and only 9 percent were in college (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, and Nesmith, 2000).
- Even years later, foster care alumni show high rates of mental health disorders, high rates of homelessness and poverty, low rates of education beyond high school, low incomes, and low rates of health insurance coverage (Pecora et al., 2005; see similar findings for a different group of youth in Courtney, et al., 2005).

Research suggests children who spend more time in the foster care system have other harmful outcomes (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2007).

Financial Impact of Excluding Gay Men, Lesbians, and Bisexuals from Fostering Children

National cost estimates

Our conservative policy models project that a national ban on GLB foster care could add $87 to $130 million to foster care system expenditures each year. States that do not allow GLB people to be foster parents could incur higher foster care system expenditures for two reasons. First, some children who are removed from non-kin care homes headed by GLB people will be placed in group or institutional care, which is more costly for states than family foster care. Second, the state will incur the cost of recruiting and training new foster parents. The state will want to place some children removed from GLB homes in other family care settings, but most states struggle to recruit a sufficient number of foster parents.

A national ban on GLB foster care could cost from $87 to $130 million.

We estimate the cost of banning foster care by GLB parents in several steps described in detail in the appendix. We assume that six percent of foster children have GLB parents, the national average presented earlier. That figure might overstate the number of GLB parents in states that have or had policies or practices that bar gay parents from foster care. Therefore, we also calculate costs assuming that four percent of foster children have GLB parents to provide a range of estimates. Using those assumptions, we predict how many children will be moved to other family foster care homes that will be recruited or moved into group or institutional care settings. Then we multiply the number going into family foster care by the cost of recruiting a new family to replace the GLB family.

To estimate family recruitment costs, we use Michigan's standard adoption recruitment rate of $4160 per family recruited. While it is very difficult to estimate these costs, this is the best available estimate based on limited published information and inquiries to states (see appendix for further discussion). It should be assumed, however, that family recruitment costs would vary by state. We also estimate the additional cost of congregate care for the children who cannot be placed with another family but instead go into group or institutional settings. Using data from the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS), we estimate the difference in average monthly payments made to providers for family foster care compared with congregate care.

State cost estimates

Although these estimates based on available data cannot be precise, this model provides a rough estimate of the cost to states of a ban on gay foster parents. Table 11 presents estimates for each state. The second and third columns report the number of children who are currently living with GLB parents who would have to be relocated, making different assumptions about how many children now have GLB foster parents. Nationally, we estimate that between 9,300 and 14,000 children will be removed from their foster homes. The fourth column shows the average additional yearly cost per child who moves from a family care setting to a group or institutional placement (averaging that figure for children age 5-12 and age 13 and up). The last two columns present our range of estimates for the additional costs for states in recruitment and the added cost of group placements.

Costs to individual states could range from $100,000 to $27 million.

The wide range of the total effect on the state foster care systems depends to some extent on the size of the state. The potential costs to the states of removing GLB parents from the foster care system range from $100,000 in South Dakota to over $27 million in California.

Cost estimate methodology

These are several reasons to believe that these represent conservative estimates of the financial impact on states since there are a variety of costs that cannot be estimated. First, banning GLB parents from the foster care system takes out a large pool of potential adoptive parents. As noted in an earlier section, in 2005 114,000 children in the foster care system were free for adoption because the child had a goal of adoption and/or the child's parental rights had been terminated. Also noted earlier was that the majority of adoptions from foster care are by foster parents. States and the federal government subsidize adoptions of some children out of foster care. In some states, adoption subsidies are close to foster care rates, but in other states adoption subsidies are much lower than foster care payments. Therefore, some states save money when children are placed in permanent adoptive homes instead of remaining in the foster care system.

Cost calculations are conservative and likely underestimate the cost of a ban on fostering and adoption by GLB parents.

Table 11. Cost of a ban on GLB fostering, by state.

State	Total children displaced		Average additional cost for congregate care per year	Total cost (recruitment + congregate care differential)	
	4% GLB foster rate	6% GLB foster rate	(monthly avg. cost for children age 5-12 and 13+)*12 mos.	4% GLB foster rate	6% GLB foster rate
Alabama	107	161	$ -	$ 336,960	$ 507,520
Alaska	32	47	$ -	$ 112,320	$ 162,240
Arizona	120	180	$ 26,084	$ 1,177,219	$ 1,777,595
Arkansas	78	118	$ -	$ 270,400	$ 411,840
California	1370	2055	$ 42,915	$18,028,645	$ 27,039,386
Colorado	155	234	$ 416	$ 481,723	$ 723,001
Connecticut	112	166	$ 42,852	$ 1,936,430	$ 2,857,633
Delaware	20	31	$ 35,699	$ 269,141	$ 396,810
DC	40	61	$ 8,922	$ 225,362	$ 342,384
Florida	462	694	$ 11,126	$ 2,510,567	$ 3,766,436
Georgia	359	537	$ -	$ 1,243,840	$ 1,859,520
Hawaii	64	95	$ -	$ 249,600	$ 370,240
Idaho	38	58	$ 24,916	$ 283,563	$ 429,505
Illinois	334	502	$ 81,006	$ 4,950,441	$ 7,514,942
Indiana	260	390	$ 160	$ 909,401	$ 1,366,095
Iowa	116	174	$ 12,750	$ 734,758	$ 1,090,702
Kansas	121	180	$ 3,979	$ 547,840	$ 811,541
Kentucky	168	253	$ 22,417	$ 1,445,986	$ 2,183,191
Louisiana	104	157	$ 29,373	$ 951,538	$ 1,444,555
Maine	56	85	$ 667	$ 207,687	$ 315,690
Maryland	171	258	$ 53,364	$ 2,787,690	$ 4,215,373
Massachusetts	209	314	$ 60,824	$ 3,852,264	$ 5,743,373
Michigan	324	486	$ 43,770	$ 3,791,966	$ 5,685,557
Minnesota	134	200	$ 34,764	$ 1,789,556	$ 2,680,174
Mississippi	44	67	$ 21,750	$ 411,440	$ 629,980
Missouri	124	184	$ 18,797	$ 1,063,986	$ 1,587,658
Montana	37	57	$ 7,044	$ 169,459	$ 266,196
Nebraska	95	142	$ 5,124	$ 494,244	$ 742,331
Nevada	77	114	$ 33	$ 266,702	$ 400,020
New Hampshire	28	42	$ 15,098	$ 189,378	$ 298,657
New Jersey	333	501	$ 56,168	$ 4,404,556	$ 6,588,897
New Mexico	46	68	$ -	$ 166,400	$ 249,600
New York	615	922	$ 50,961	$ 8,958,810	$ 13,384,060
North Carolina	166	249	$ 2,337	$ 600,106	$ 901,473
North Dakota	24	35	$ 35,215	$ 264,742	$ 424,008
Ohio	441	661	$ 25,371	$ 3,296,036	$ 4,952,604
Oklahoma	172	258	$ 209	$ 618,221	$ 925,251
Oregon	209	313	$ 588	$ 784,669	$ 1,174,923
Pennsylvania	409	615	$ 34,988	$ 4,857,021	$ 7,306,667
Rhode Island	31	47	$ 58,334	$ 696,113	$ 1,124,634
South Carolina	118	178	$ 9,254	$ 711,911	$ 1,072,026
South Dakota	29	41	$ 2,491	$ 107,285	$ 153,867
Tennessee	198	297	$ 30,954	$ 1,543,202	$ 2,332,585
Texas	448	672	$ 9,079	$ 2,409,105	$ 3,610,907
Utah	54	80	$ 9,781	$ 339,535	$ 489,741
Vermont	32	46	$ 70,174	$ 528,472	$ 824,071
Virginia	166	250	$ 1,897	$ 559,040	$ 840,457
Washington	195	293	$ 58,038	$ 1,713,606	$ 2,546,301
West Virginia	74	111	$ 25,031	$ 776,934	$ 1,158,520
Wisconsin	161	242	$ 49,685	$ 1,760,685	$ 2,614,310
Wyoming	18	25	$ 26,905	$ 214,884	$ 293,030
TOTAL	9298	13946		$87,001,436	$ 130,588,073

States also save when children are adopted because of the extra costs of foster care. Those extra costs might include costs associated with periodic case reviews by courts, administrative costs of case management, independent living costs, and extra health care costs. One recent study estimated that North Carolina saved between $21,000 and $127,000 each time a foster child was adopted, depending on the amount of time the child stayed in foster care (Barth, Lee, Wildfire, and Guo, 2006). A more recent study suggests that including the lifetime social benefits of adoption to children boosts government savings even more (Hansen, 2006). Because detailed state-level estimates of the savings from adoption are not available, we do not estimate these costs here, although we note that it is likely they are considerable.

Second, reductions in the future pool of potential adoptive parents mean that states will need to increase costly recruitment efforts to replace those parents. Furthermore, states are likely to face rising costs of recruiting additional parents as they reach out beyond those potential parents who are most interested and easiest to recruit.

Third, as discussed in the previous section, the children who must be moved out of a gay or lesbian foster parent's home might have added health care and other expenses related to the trauma of the move. Children in foster care have already experienced the trauma of a separation from their biological parents. Additional separations from substitute caregivers to whom they have become attached could have significant effects on their socio-emotional development. Young children, in particular, might not understand the nature of impersonal policy changes and might instead perceive the move to be related to some shortcoming on their part, increasing the level of trauma experienced. Moves for older children might be traumatic because they may be separated from their friends, siblings, or their school.

Fourth, the federal government sets standards for states to meet in placing of foster children who are available for adoption in permanent homes (Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), P.L. 105 89 of 1997, as explained by Wulczyn and Hislop (2002)). States could receive $4,000 for each completed adoption ($6000 per adoption of a special needs child) that exceeded a baseline set based on numbers of recent adoptions. By turning away prospective adoptive parents, states risk missing these goals and losing out on an important source of funding (Doering and Schuh, 2006).

Fifth, a ban on GLB foster parents would also ban care by GLB relatives, which we cannot account for here given the lack of Census data on kin care by GLB people. Moreover, use of kin can vary from state to state (Geen, 2003). If we could include these providers, the number of children displaced and the cost to the state would be higher, and states that rely heavily on kin would be more affected.

Finally, this policy analysis exercise is based on data regarding single gay and lesbian households and for same-sex couple households. If bisexuals who are not currently in same-sex relationships are also restricted from adopting and fostering, the likely costs to children and states will also be much higher than our estimates. Findings from the NSFG (Mosher et al., 2005) suggest that self-identified bisexuals represent fully half of the GLB population. Our estimates for the number of adopted and fostered children being raised by GLB parents would be significantly higher if we could include bisexual parents in these estimates, as would our estimate of the cost of excluding GLB parents.

Overall, then, our estimate of the costs to states are likely to underestimate the cost of a ban on fostering and adoption by GLB parents.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

Implications for the foster care system

As the Census data and other recent federal data show, many GLB people are adoptive or foster parents. Many more have expressed interest in adopting and constitute a large pool of potential adoptive or foster parents. Given the constant need for more adults to care for children who are in the overburdened child welfare system, GLB people are an important new source for child welfare officials to tap. The fact that we already see so many GLB foster parents also implies that changes in policy to ban GLB people from fostering or adopting will have repercussions for children and for state welfare systems.

The conclusions and implications of this study might be thought of in terms of implications for the states and their child welfare agencies, for children, and for GLB adults.

State child welfare agencies are already considerably over-burdened and financially strained. Additional costs to finding new foster homes for children displaced—as much as $130 million nationally—could divert resources from other important child protection activities.

A ban on GLB fostering might divert resources from other child protection activities and create longer term stress on parent recruitment efforts.

Foster and adoptive parents are already a limited resource for state child welfare agencies. In the short term, restricting the pool of potential parents could create financial and logistical challenges for states. In the longer term, states would miss the opportunity to expand pools of potential foster and adoptive parents (Mallon, 2006), which might allow them to save resources currently spent on recruiting and instead use those resources for other important activities.

Implications for children

There are several reasons to be concerned about children's experiences and the potential trauma they may incur should such bans be put in place. For one, these children may have attached to their GLB caregivers. They have already been separated from their biological parents and many have likely experienced several placements. These GLB caregivers might be relatives or other individuals who are best equipped to foster these children. Disrupting yet another attachment could be potentially very detrimental to their well-being and ability to form relationships later in life. Another reason for concern is that children may be moved to institutional settings, and prior research suggests these settings are not as good for children's development. Moreover, moving children to more restrictive settings would be counter to the federal and states goals of finding the least-restrictive placement setting for a child.

A segment of the foster care population to be particularly concerned about in this debate is gay and lesbian youth in foster care. More research is needed to better understand the needs of this population, but research shows that this population exists. They tend to be older and research shows that finding placements for older youth is particularly challenging for states. GLB parents might be more likely to accept a GLB foster youth.

GLB caregivers might be relatives or other individuals who are best equipped to foster these children.

Implications for GLB people

While we did not directly assess the effects of a ban on GLB people, laws or policies prohibiting well-qualified GLB potential parents from adopting or fostering could exacerbate social stigma associated with their sexual orientation by creating additional legal barriers to parenting. They already face documented hurdles in the foster care and adoptive process because of their sexual orientation. Much more research is needed to understand the practices that affect this population's access to foster care and adoption services.

Appendix: Data and Methodology

United States Decennial Census, 2000

Estimates for the number of adopted and fostered children being raised in lesbian and gay household rely in large part on ascertaining the characteristics of same-sex unmarried partner households, commonly understood as gay and lesbian couples, in the United States 2000 Decennial Census. We use a combined 5 percent and 1 percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) to determine the characteristics of same-sex unmarried partner households. The two PUMS samples represent independent draws from the responses to the census long-form, which contains detailed information about all members of the household, including if they are an adopted or foster child.

Identifying same-sex unmarried partners

The census household roster includes a number of relationship categories to define how individuals in a household are related to the householder (the person filling out the form). These fall into two broad categories: related persons (e.g., husband/wife, son/daughter, brother/sister), and unrelated persons (e.g., unmarried partner, housemate/roommate, roomer/border, and other nonrelative). Since 1990, the Census Bureau has included an "unmarried partner" category to describe an unrelated household member's relationship to the householder. If the householder designates another adult of the same sex as his or her "unmarried partner" or "husband/wife", the household counts as a same-sex unmarried partner household. These same-sex couples are commonly understood to be primarily gay and lesbian couples (Black et al. 2000) even though the census does not ask any questions about sexual orientation, sexual behavior, or sexual attraction—three common ways used to identify gay men and lesbians in surveys.

Potential bias and measurement error

There are several selection bias and measurement error issues associated with the same-sex unmarried partner data that could affect estimated rates of adoption and fostering. First, to the extent that the census sample can be used to derive characteristics of gay and lesbian people, it is important to note that the sample is only a representation of couples. Their characteristics, including the likelihood of either adopting or fostering children, may differ from those of single gay men and lesbians. Carpenter (2005) finds that single lesbians and gay men in California were more likely to have children (not specifically adopted or fostered children) than their coupled counterparts. In jurisdictions that restrict adoption and fostering options for lesbians and gay men, it may be easier for single lesbians and gay men to both adopt and/or foster.

Secondly, concerns about confidentiality may lead some same-sex couples to indicate a status that would not provide evidence of the true nature of their relationship. Other couples may believe that "unmarried partner" or "husband/wife" does not accurately describe their relationship. A study of undercount issues relating to same-sex unmarried partners in Census 2000 indicates that these were the two most common reasons that gay and lesbian couples chose not to designate themselves as unmarried partners (Badgett and Rogers 2003). It seems reasonable to believe that the census tends to capture same-sex couples who are more willing to acknowledge their relationship and are potentially more "out" about their sexual orientation. In areas which restrict adoption and fostering options for lesbians and gay men, those who are more open about their relationships may actually be less likely to have adopted or fostered children than those who keep their relationships more private.

These selection biases suggest that estimates of gay and lesbian adoption and fostering rates derived from the census same-sex unmarried partner sample likely represent a lower bound.

Beyond the issue of selection bias, a measurement error issue specific to same-sex unmarried partners identified in Census 2000 creates an additional potential bias. In the 1990 Census, a household record that includes a same-sex "husband/wife" was edited such that, in most cases, the sex of the husband or wife was changed and the couple became a different-sex married couple in publicly released data (Black et al., 2000). This decision is reasonable if most of the same-sex husbands and wives were a result of the respondent checking the wrong sex for either him- or herself or his or her spouse. In Census 2000, officials decided that some same-sex couples may consider themselves married, regardless of legal recognition. As a result, these records were altered such that the same-sex "husband/wife" was recoded as an "unmarried partner."

This process inadvertently creates a measurement error issue. Some very small fraction of the different-sex couples likely make an error when completing the census form and miscode the sex of one of the partners. Under Census 2000 editing procedures, all of these miscoded couples would be included in the counts of same-sex unmarried partners. Because the ratio between different-sex married couples and same-sex couples is so large (roughly 90 to 1), even a small fraction of sex miscoding among different-sex married couples adds a sizable fraction of them to the same-sex unmarried-partner population, possibly distorting some demographic characteristics.

Black et al. (2003) propose a method for at least identifying the direction of the bias when considering various demographic characteristics of same-sex couples. Same-sex unmarried partner households where one member of the couple was identified as "husband/wife" are the "at-risk" group for this form of measurement error. Census data provide no simple way to identify this group, but one way to isolate same-sex "spouses" is to consider the marital status variable allocation flag (a variable indicating that the original response had been changed). Census Bureau officials confirm that their editing procedures altered the marital status of any unmarried partners who said they were "currently married." (Changes in marital status occurred after editing all of the same-sex "husbands" and "wives" into the "unmarried partner" category.) A large portion of the same-sex unmarried partners who had their marital status allocated likely originally responded that they were "currently married" given that one of the partners was a "husband/wife." Same-sex partners who have not had their marital status variable allocated are likely free of significant measurement error. As such, the analyses use estimates of adoption and fostering rates as well as demographic characteristics only among same-sex partners and their families where at least one of the partners did not have his or her marital status allocated.

Identification of adopted and fostered children

The census household roster only identifies the relationship between household members and the householder. Estimates of adopted and fostered children are therefore more technically estimates of households where the householder is the adopted or foster parent of a child. This measurement method likely undercounts the total number of adopted and fostered children since it probably misses households where the parent (or parents) of an adopted or foster child is not the householder. Further, a child who is the "natural born" child of the householder could technically be the adopted child of a spouse or partner. Census data provide no mechanism for distinguishing these types of households.

Foster children identified in the Census are in most cases non-kin fostered children. The household roster includes a variety of kinship relationship categories and it seems reasonable to assume that a householder would identify a foster child as the appropriate kinship relationship even if the child is technically in the home as a foster child.

National estimates for the number of adopted and fostered children being raised by lesbians and gay men

No available data sources provide a direct count or estimate of the number of adopted or fostered children living in all gay or lesbian households, both singles and same-sex couples. Census 2000 estimates of adoption and fostering rates within same-sex couple households provide a mechanism to make estimates among the entire lesbian and gay population if one makes the following assumptions:

1. Rates of adoption and fostering do not vary between same-sex couples and single lesbian and gay households
2. Census 2000 counted all gay and lesbian couples in the United States[6]

The estimation process begins by estimating the total number of lesbian and gay households in the United States. Using the National Survey of Family Growth (described in detail later), Mosher, et al. (2005) find that 2.3 percent of men and 1.3 percent of women aged 18-44 identified themselves as gay or lesbian. If we apply these estimates to the entire U.S. adult population (aged 18 and up), then there are an estimated 2,322,870 gay men and 1,405,738 lesbians in the United States. Census 2000 counted 301,026 same-sex male couples and 293,365 same-sex female couples. Subtracting those figures from the estimates of the number of gay men and lesbians yields a total of 3,134,218 lesbian and gay households (2,021,844 male and 1,112,373 female).

We then derive estimates of the number of adopted or fostered children with gay or lesbian parents by multiplying the total number of lesbian and gay households by the adoption/fostering rates among same-sex couples and the average number of adopted and fostered children within same-sex couple households with adopted/fostered children.

State-level estimates for the number of adopted children being raised by lesbians and gay men

We derive estimates of the number of adopted children being raised by lesbians and gay men within states by first determining the geographic distribution across all states of the adopted children being raised by same-sex couples from Census 2000. We then apply that distribution to the national estimate for the number of adopted children being raised by lesbians and gay men. For example, approximately one-quarter (25 percent) of adopted children living

[6] The measurement error discussed earlier would suggest that Census counts overstate the number of same-sex couples as some portion are actually different-sex married couples. O'Connell and Gooding (2006) assessed this problem by attempting to match names with recorded sex among both same-sex and different-sex couples. They found that sex miscodes among different-sex couples (in other words, different-sex couples who are actually same-sex couples) were sufficient to offset the miscoded same-sex couples. Further, undercount estimates made by Badgett and Rogers (2004) could also lead to the Census figures underestimating the true count of same-sex couples.

with same-sex couples live in California. Our estimate for the number of adopted children living with a lesbian or gay parent (both single and coupled) in California is derived by assuming that one quarter (25 percent) of the national estimate of the number of adopted children being raised by lesbian or gay parents live in California. It should be noted that we are unable to make estimates for the six states (Delaware, Idaho, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming) where there are no observations of adopted children living with a same-sex couple.

In theory, a similar method could be applied to estimate the number of foster children being raised by lesbians and gay men in states. Unfortunately, the sample sizes for foster children being raised by same-sex couples are insufficient to make credible state-level estimates. The samples includes 106 observations of foster children being raised by same-sex couples.

National Survey of Family Growth 2002

The 2002 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) provides data on fertility and the desire to adopt for people of differing sexual orientations. The NSFG was conducted in 2002 and 2003 under the auspices of the National Center for Health Statistics, which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Trained female interviewers conducted in-person interviews with 7,643 women and 4,928 men in the United States who were age 15-44. These individuals sampled are representative of the U.S. population and were chosen through multistage area probability sampling. We use sampling weights in all calculations presented in this report.

The survey asked respondents about topics such as fertility, personal characteristics, and sexuality. Most questions were asked face-to-face by the interviewer. However, a series of questions about sexuality, including sexual orientation, were asked using an Audio Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (ACASI) technique. The respondent used a computer to listen to or read the sensitive questions on sexuality and respond on the computer directly. The additional privacy provided by this method is likely to produce better reporting of sexual identity than face-to-face interviews.

On the ACASI questionnaire, people aged 18 and older were asked, "Do you think of yourself as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or something else?" Appendix Table A presents responses to this question by sex. Respondents were also asked about same-sex attraction and sexual experiences, but we use the identity data for this report because public policies related to adoption and sexual orientation most often appear to relate to self-reported identity. Overall, 4.1 percent of both women and men reported either a homosexual or bisexual identity, although more women reported being bisexual than did men. Because public policies do not always obviously distinguish between homosexual (or gay or lesbian) identity and a bisexual identity, in this report we combine the homosexual and bisexual respondents where necessary.

We draw on several other questions to provide information on the fertility experiences and adoption aspirations of GLB respondents. Unless otherwise noted, all statistics come from the authors' calculations on weighted data from the Public Use sample supplemented with the ACASI datafile made available to us by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Fertility

Women in the NSFG were asked how many live births they had (question BC-2). We calculate the proportion of women who have given birth to a live baby. Men were asked if they had ever fathered or adopted a child.

Desire to have children

Both men (series HA) and women (series GA) were asked about their "feelings about having (a/another) child, whether or not you are able to, or plan to have one." We calculated the percentage answering yes or probably to the following question: "(Looking to the future, do/If it were possible would) you, yourself, want to have (a/nother) baby at some time (after this pregnancy is over/in the future)?" Phrases in parentheses were adapted to the situations of each respondent.

Adoption consideration

Questions specifically related to adoption were asked only of women in the NSFG. One series of questions in the NSFG (BK) probes for intentions and actual actions taken to adopt a child who has not already been adopted or whose adoption is in the process. Question series BL asks respondents whether they "have ever considered adopting (another) child." That question was only asked of those not currently seeking to adopt. We combine people answering affirmatively on either series to give a fuller picture of those who have considered adopting at some point in their lives. Results are presented in Table 2 in the main text.

Appendix Table A: Self-reported sexual orientation by sex.

Sex	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Bisexual	Something Else	Did not report
Women	90.3%	1.3%	2.8%	3.8%	1.8%
Men	90.2%	2.3%	1.8%	3.9%	1.8%

Source: William D. Mosher, Anjani Chandra, and Jo Jones, "Sexual Behavior and Selected Health Measures: Men and Women 15-44 Years of Age, United States, 2002," Advance Data from Vital and Health Statistics, CDC, Number 362, Sept. 15, 2005.

Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) 2004

Children in foster care

The Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) is the federal repository for state administrative data on children in foster care and those that have been adopted. While only developed in the late 1990s and still improving, this system is the preferred source for administrative data on children in the child welfare system. For this report, AFCARS data from 2004 was used to provide the total numbers of children in foster care on September 30, 2004 nationally and for each state. Estimates were also produced for the numbers of children in foster care by age group and types of placement, specifically non-kin foster family homes and group home and institutional care settings.

Payments made on behalf of foster children

AFCARS also provides information on payments made to caregivers and child-caring institutions on behalf of children to provide for their care. Specifically, AFCARS asks states to provide the last full monthly payment made during the reporting period:

> "Enter the monthly foster care payment (regardless of sources) - Enter the monthly payment paid on behalf of the child regardless of source (i.e., federal, state, county, municipality, tribal, and private payments). If Title IV-E is paid on behalf of the child, the amount indicated should be the total computable amount. If the payment made on behalf of the child is not the same each month, indicate the amount of the last full monthly payment made during the reporting period. If no monthly payment has been made during the period, enter all zeros. A blank in this field indicates that the State does not have the information for this element." (National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect, 2002)

If the child is "IV-E eligible," meaning the child resided in a family that met income eligibility requirements prior to coming into care, a portion of this payment is reimbursable by the Federal government. Using AFCARS, estimates were produced of the mean payments made for children of particular ages and in different types of placements. This mean is intended to provide an approximation of state costs, on average, for providing care for foster children of particular ages in different arrangements.

Quality checks and adjustments to the AFCARS data

Several adjustments and checks were done of the AFCARS data to ensure its accuracy. First, the mean was adjusted to exclude erroneous payment amounts and adjust for outlying amounts. Cases where the payment was $0 or $99,999 were removed. It is unlikely that no payment was made on behalf of the child, but instead that this data is simply not available. It is also likely that values of $99,999 were default values in an administrative system. The payment data was also adjusted for outlying values. Payments for children in care are substantially higher if a child has significant special needs. To ensure these cases did not bias the mean, the mean is calculated based on the middle 50 percent of the distribution.

Second, to get a sense of the validity of the AFCARS data, the adjusted means were compared to state payment data collected by the Child Welfare League of America and stored in their National Data Analysis System (NDAS). The NDAS compiles state reports of basic monthly foster care maintenance payments for children ages 2, 9, and 16. NDAS also includes state reports of per diem payments for children in residential and group care settings. Comparing foster care rates from NDAS 2002 and the adjusted means from AFCARS 2002 for non-kin foster care, when both sources were available, rates were comparable within $200 for many states (72 percent of states for age 2, 58 percent for age 9, and 42 percent for age 16). For older youth, the payment amounts did diverge more significantly. In all cases, the AFCARS adjusted mean was higher than NDAS. This likely reflects a reality in child welfare that older children frequently have special needs and receive higher payments on average. Hence, AFCARS data does appear to provide a reflection of the true cost to states in providing care for foster children in non-kin foster care.

Data on institutional and group home care costs were more difficult to compare. NDAS rates were unavailable for many states or were not available for either group home or institutional care. Generally, when rates were available, NDAS and AFCARS estimates differed more substantially. This might be explained by the fact that group home and institutional rates can vary widely between facilities in states, which could get obscured in the state averages provided by NDAS. For the purposes of this study, AFCARS data, collected at the child level, provides the best reflection of costs to states for serving children in group homes and institutional settings.

Third, AFCARS data were checked for small sample sizes. Table B identifies states for which sample sizes were under 50 children for particular ages and placement categories. Since very few children under four reside in congregate care, for most states, these sample sizes were under 50. As congregate care is increasingly seen as a less preferable placement for very young children, cost estimates for placement in congregate care for this age group are not included in the analysis to assess costs to states of limiting gay and lesbian foster parenting. Costs of recruiting additional foster parents to care for children potentially already living with a gay or lesbian foster parent(s) are included for these children.

Appendix Table B: States with sample sizes of fewer than 50 children.

Ages 0-4		Ages 5-12		Ages 13+	
Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional	Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional	Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional
No states	* Most states have less than 50 children age 0-4 in these settings	No states	Alaska Delaware Washington DC Hawaii Idaho Vermont Wyoming	No states	No States

Fourth, AFCARS data were also checked for extensive missing data. Table C lists states for which payment data was missing for more than 20 percent of cases. States for which no data is available, and NDAS rates are used instead (see below), are not included in this list.

Appendix Table C: States with missing payment data for more than 20 percent of children.

Ages 0-4		Ages 5-12		Ages 13+	
Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional	Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional	Foster Care	Group Home / Institutional
California Delaware Florida Kansas Maine Nebraska New York Ohio Virginia Washington West Virginia	* Most states report more than 20% missing data as few very young child reside in these settings	California Delaware Florida Kansas Nebraska New York Ohio Virginia Washington West Virginia	Alabama Arkansas California Connecticut Florida Hawaii Indiana Kansas Maryland Missouri Nebraska New Jersey New Mexico New York Ohio Oregon South Carolina South Dakota Vermont Virginia Washington West Virginia Wyoming	Alabama Arizona California Delaware Florida Kansas Nebraska New York Ohio South Carolina Vermont Virginia Washington	Alabama Arizona Arkansas California Colorado Delaware Florida Hawaii Illinois Kansas Louisiana Maryland Michigan Missouri Nebraska New Jersey New York Ohio Oregon South Carolina South Dakota Vermont Washington West Virginia Wisconsin Wyoming

While this missing data is cause for some concern, it is difficult to determine how it might bias the payment averages. Given that we use the mean of the middle two quartiles of the payment distribution, we are fairly confident that even if bias was an issue, this adjustment would minimize it.

Fifth, adjusted means were checked for data that appeared potentially erroneous or were unavailable, and in a few cases the NDAS rates were used instead. For foster care rates, AFCARS data were not available for Alaska and Mississippi and NDAS rates were used instead. For Georgia, the AFCARS means appeared highly improbable, ranging from over $12,000 to almost $15,000 per month depending on the age group, and NDAS rates were used instead.

For group home and institutional care, data was not available in AFCARS for some age groups in Delaware, Kansas, Mississippi, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these states, NDAS rates for institutional and group home care were used instead. For Alaska and Tennessee, AFCARS and NDAS data were not available for some age groups, and payment estimates are not possible for these states. Again for Georgia, the adjusted average for institutional and group home care seemed highly improbable, ranging from over $15,000 to nearly $27,000 per month depending on the age group. NDAS data on institutional and group home care is not available for Georgia either, so payment estimates are not available for Georgia. For some states, AFCARS institutional and group care rates appeared highly improbable. For adjusted mean monthly payments under $200, we used NDAS data when available or did not report data. This occurred in Nevada for 5-12 year olds (adjusted mean was $165) and the 13 and older age group (adjusted mean was $86). NDAS data was not available for this state. Utah's adjusted mean monthly payment for the 13 and older age group was $42 and was replaced with the NDAS payment of $2129.

States also provide to the Federal government with their AFCARS submissions careful notation of any problems or clarifications needed to understand particular data elements. Consulting this information, Florida, Iowa, and Washington make notations about their 2004 payment information. Looking more closely at the rates for each of these states, they appeared highly comparable to NDAS data when available and to other state estimates. It does not appear that the notes reported affected the quality of the data substantially, and AFCARS estimates were used for these states. However, as described above, both Florida and Washington have missing data for more than 20 percent of children in most age groups.

Estimating foster care recruitment costs

State data on the costs of foster care recruitment are not readily available, and as a result, costs are very difficult to estimate. States pay for these costs through one funding stream, Title IV-E Foster Care Program Funds. This funding stream provides financial reimbursement to states for the costs of foster care for eligible children. Funds for foster parent recruitment and training, however, fall under two different IV-E categories, administration and training costs. These categories of spending also include other expenditures. For example, Title IV-E administrative costs, which include foster parent recruitment costs, also include spending for pre-placement services, placement services, case management, eligibility determinations, and licensing.

To arrive at an estimate of recruiting costs, limited published information from states was assessed and additional phone calls to a few other states were made. The best available data on costs of foster care recruitment comes from published state analyses of spending in this area. Few states, however, have made this data available through public reports. California and Michigan have published some information on spending from which insights into recruitment, retention, and training costs can be gleaned. According to yearly reports provided by California, total spending on foster parent recruitment, training, and retention has ranged from about $16 and $25 million per year (see Table D).

Looking at each of the years for which data is available, it is possible to estimate a range of per family costs. Dividing total costs by number of licensed families gives an upper bound estimate of the costs of recruiting, training, and licensing one family. However, these costs also include retention and training of foster parents who may have been fostering for many years. If instead total costs are divided by all families served, a lower bound estimate can be created. Looking at years for which these data are available, the range is wide. In the 2002-2003 year, costs per family were likely somewhere in between $1100 and $15,500. In the 2002-2003 year, costs per family ranged between $900 and $11,900. While these ranges are large, it can be assumed that the cost would not be exactly at the lower or upper bound, so a conservative estimate would be slightly above the lower bound.

Appendix Table D: California costs of recruitment, training, and retention of foster parents.

Year	Total Spending	Number of Families Sponsored Financially to Attend Recruitment, Training, and Retention Events	Number of Families Licensed	Cost Per Licensed Family	Cost Per Family Served through Recruitment, Training, and Retention
2001-2002	$25,417,999	n/a	2673	$9,509.17	n/a
2002-2003	$18,982,629	16,270	1123	$16,903.50	$1,166.73
2003-2004	$16,106,276	18,109	1350	$11,930.57	$889.41
2004-2005	$15,967,610	12,441	n/a	n/a	$1,283.47

Source: Resource Family Recruitment, Training, and Retention Annual Reports, California Department of Social Services and Urban Institute calculations.

Published data on adoptive parent recruitment costs from Michigan also provide some context for thinking about recruitment costs. The Michigan child welfare agency contracts with various public and private agencies for foster care and adoption services. Table E indicates the reimbursement amounts paid to contracted agencies per adopted child depending on the type of child for whom a family is recruited (i.e. it is more costly to recruit for a child in institutional care). These payments range between $1,300 and $10,000. While the procedures for recruiting, training, and licensing foster and adoptive parents are quite similar, it might be assumed that the process of becoming and adoptive parent would be slightly more extensive and, therefore, more costly. Some of the additional steps involved in this process include trial home visits, extensive data collection on parents' backgrounds, and pre-adoptive services for the family to prepare for the adoption.

Hence for this analysis we use one of Michigan's lower rates, the "standard rate" of $4,160 per adoptive family recruited, to estimate potential costs of recruiting new foster families for displaced children living with gay and lesbian foster parents. This estimate does fall within the California ranges and given the variability in the California estimates, we believe the Michigan data provide the most feasible estimate of recruiting costs, given the limited data available.

Appendix Table E: Data from adoption contract management, 2002.

$10,000	Residential Rate	Paid to an agency that places a child for adoption directly from residential care. Child must be placed within 120 days of leaving residential care.
$9,325	MARE Rate	Paid to a non-custodial agency that places a child registered on MARE (Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange) with a recruited family (does not include foster or relative family).
$7,000	Intra-Agency MARE Rate	Paid to a non-custodial agency that places a child registered on MARE for six or more months with a recruited family (does not include foster or relative family). Documentation of recruitment efforts is required.
$8,660	5 Month Premium Rate	Paid to an agency that places a child in its care in adoption within 5 months of the child's permanent wardship.
$6,520	Enhanced Rate	Paid to an agency that places a child in its care in adoption within 7 months of the child's permanent wardship.
$4,160	Standard Rate	Paid to an agency that places a child in its care seven months after the date of permanent wardship.
$2,600	Enhanced Pre-Placement Fee	Paid to an agency when a child in its care is referred to another agency or DHS local office within three months of the child's permanent wardship date.
$1,300	Standard Pre-Placement Fee	Paid to an agency when a child in its care is placed by another agency or DHS local office and the criteria for an enhanced pre-placement fee does not apply.

Researchers also called several states to supplement available published data on recruitment costs and found reasonable support for an estimate of approximately $4,000. Many states could not provide exact recruitment cost estimates as they either did not have the numbers at that level, were unwilling to share the information, or could not compile the information easily and within the timeframe of the study. Yet, five states provided some information. One state reported the average cost for the recruitment, training and licensure of a foster home to be approximately $3,980. Three states reported costs for different stages of the recruitment process, that when considered together also supported a $4,000 estimate. For example, the first stage of the process involves the actual recruitment activities. Based on available figures from an adoption recruitment initiative in one state, researchers estimated $1,715 per family, but this estimate did not include licensing and training for each family. Looking to the licensing and training stage, another state reported that training and home study costs for foster parents appeared to be around $1,000 per family. Another state estimated costs for a home study and training at $2,500 per family. So combining recruitment activity costs with some of the licensing and training costs in the different states does suggest a total recruitment cost estimate around $4,000 is probably reasonable. It is important to note, however, that recruitment costs could be higher or lower in any state. For example, an adoption agency in one state did estimate a total cost of approximately $1,100 for recruitment, training, and licensing of one family. In determining the most precise estimate of the costs of a ban of GLB foster parents in a particular state, an actual estimate of recruiting costs should be estimated for that particular state.

With a ban prohibiting gay men and lesbians from fostering, it is also possible that states might try to use the resources they already have to find homes for displaced children, which would lower their recruitment costs. For example, states might move more children into currently available foster homes. Given the current shortage of foster parents, it is likely many foster parents are already caring for the maximum number of children for which they are licensed. Hence, states may find it difficult to find enough new placements within the existing pool of foster homes.

The study also assumes a cost of $4,160 per child. There may be some economies of scale if a family is recruited and licensed and fosters more than one child, which would mean costs may be lower than estimated. At the same time, it can also be assumed that the $4,160 estimate is somewhat conservative in that recruitment costs might be much higher for older or special needs children who are more difficult to place. Using one recruitment cost estimate

for all children does not take into account the additional costs that states might incur in trying to find homes for particular populations of children.

Estimating the cost to states of banning GLB foster care

We estimate the total cost of eliminating GLB parents using several assumptions and procedures:

1. If the foster children of GLB parents were removed pursuant to a new state law or policy, we assume that 6 percent of non-kin care placements of foster children have GLB parents, the national average presented earlier. The sample sizes of foster parents in the census data were too small to create state-level estimates. While some states have attempted to screen out GLB potential parents, it is possible that some GLB parents are still in the system, either because they did not consider themselves GLB at the time they became foster parents or because they did not reveal their status to the state child welfare system.
2. We assume those children go either to another family care setting or into group or institutional care in the same proportions as all children are distributed into one of those two kinds of care. (The one exception to this assumption is that we assume 100 percent of children aged 0-4 years stay in family care, since it is thought particularly undesirable to place very young children in congregate care.)
3. We use assumptions in steps #1 and #2 above to calculate the number of children in non-kin placements moving into family care or into group/institutional care based on the number of children reported by states in the AFCARS data from 2004, the most recent year available.
4. We assume that the recruitment cost of a new family to replace the GLB family is $4160 based on the discussion above. Recent studies in California and Michigan provide a range of estimates of recruiting costs. We use the $4160 figure as a conservative estimate.
5. We calculate the difference in monthly payments per child to family caregivers compared with group/institutional care for each state using the AFCARS data on those payments. Because the average time in foster is greater than one year for children in all three age ranges that we used (0-4, 5-12, and 13 and up), we multiply the monthly payment rate by twelve to get an annual payment differential.
6. We use the estimates described in steps #3, #4, and #5 above to calculate the added costs to states by multiplying the number of children moving into a new family or into group/institutional care by the relevant cost figure.

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