

Changes to the Household Relationship Data in the Current Population Survey

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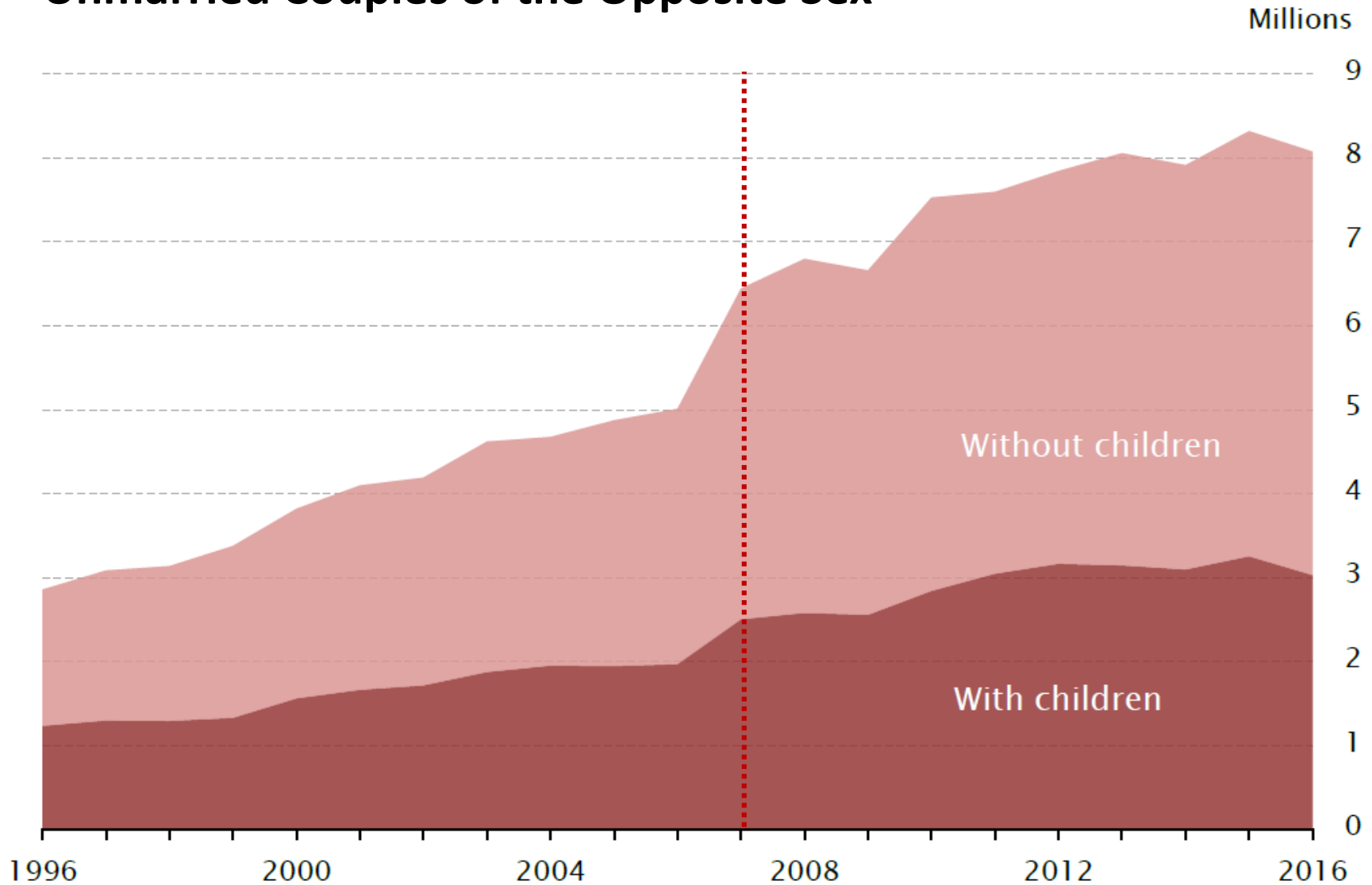
Overview

- Four changes to the CPS household relationship data
 - Direct cohabitation question
 - Changes to parent identification questions
 - Edit procedures for same-sex couples
 - Expansion of the “husband or wife” and “unmarried partner” categories

Recent Changes to CPS Household Relationship Data

- 2007
 - Added a direct cohabitation question
 - Added a second parent identification question

Figure 1. Unmarried Couples of the Opposite Sex



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements 1996 to 2016.

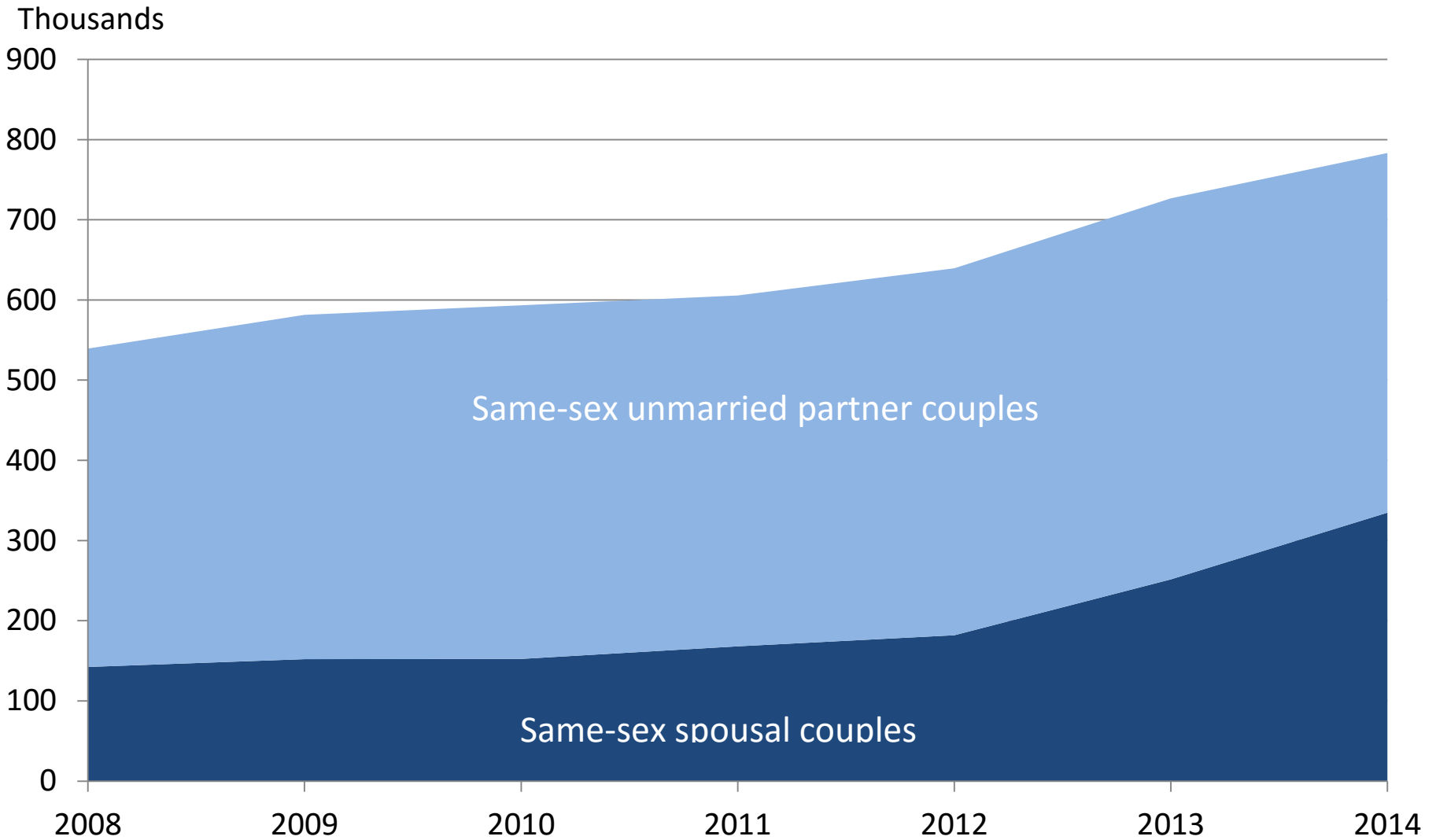
Note: Prior to 2007, marked by the red dashed line in the figure, unmarried partners were counted only if one of the partners was the householder.

Recent Changes to CPS Household Relationship Data

- 2007
 - Added a direct cohabitation question
 - Added a second parent identification question
- 2010
 - Those reported as same-sex spouses now edited and shown as *same-sex unmarried partners*.
 - Previously, the sex of one was changed to show them as *opposite-sex married couples*.

Figure 2.

Estimates of Same-Sex Couple Households by Relationship

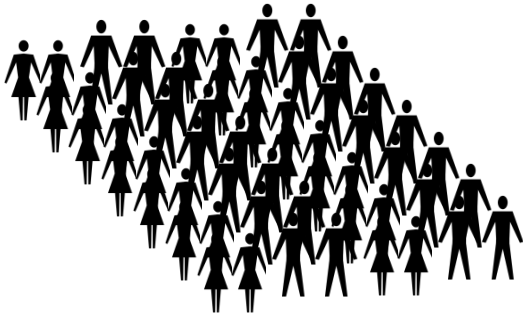


Data Quality Challenges

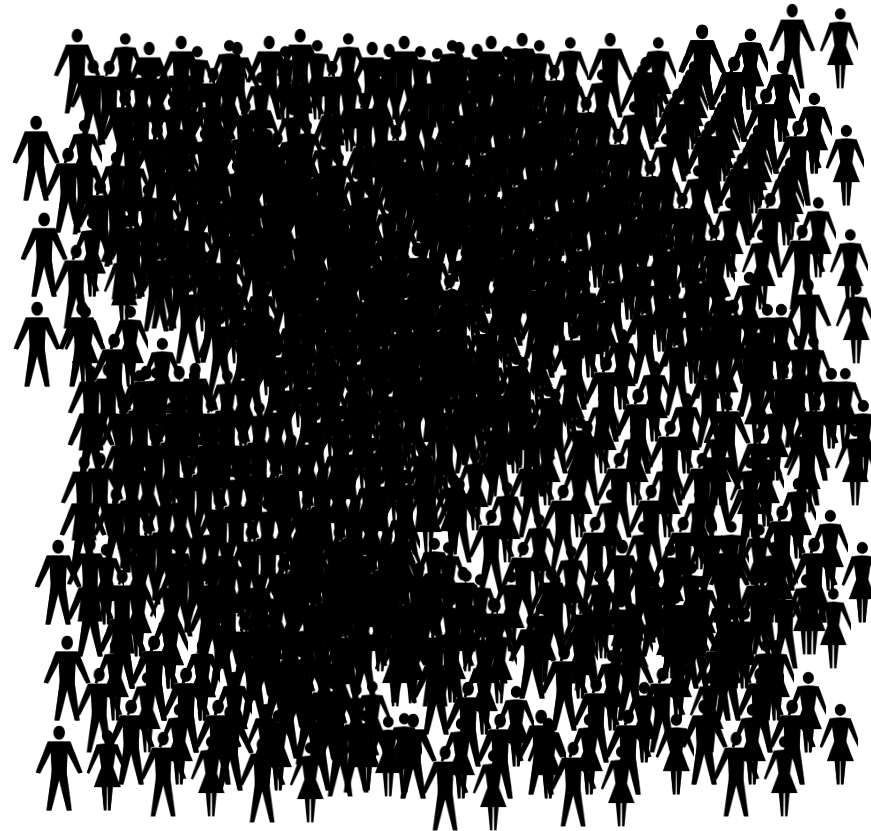
- A statistical problem: a low rate of random error in a large group (opposite-sex married couples) creates issues in the estimates of a small group (same-sex married couples)
 - There are some 56 million opposite-sex married couple households.
 - Only a small proportion mismark their response, but it is enough to create significant error in the estimate of same-sex married couples.

A statistical problem: a low rate of random error in a large group (opposite-sex married couples) creates issues in the estimates of a small group (same-sex married couples)

Same-sex married couples



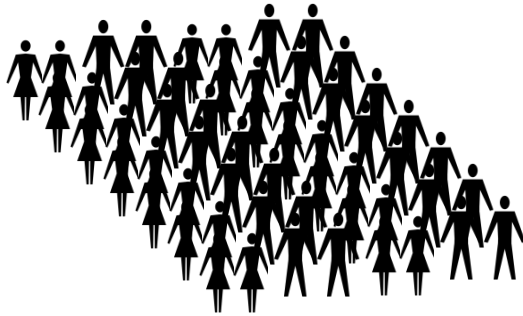
Opposite-sex married couples



There are some **56 million opposite-sex married couple** households and around **400,000 same-sex married couple** households.

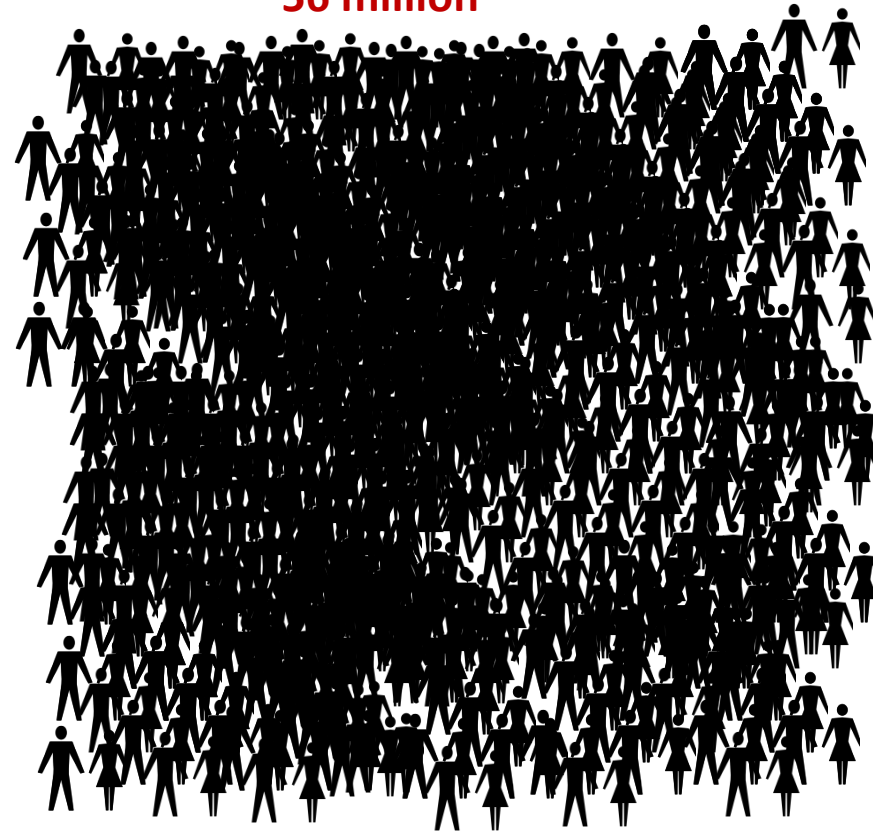
Same-sex married couples

400,000



Opposite-sex married couples

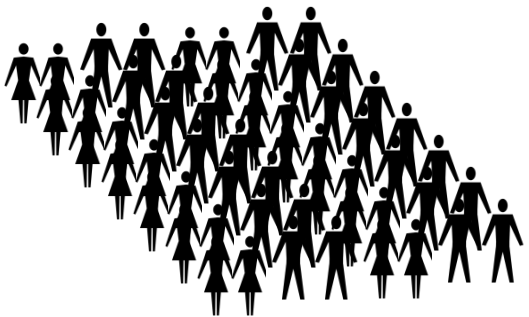
56 million



A small proportion of **opposite-sex married couples** mismark their response, which is enough to create significant error in the estimate of same-sex married couples.

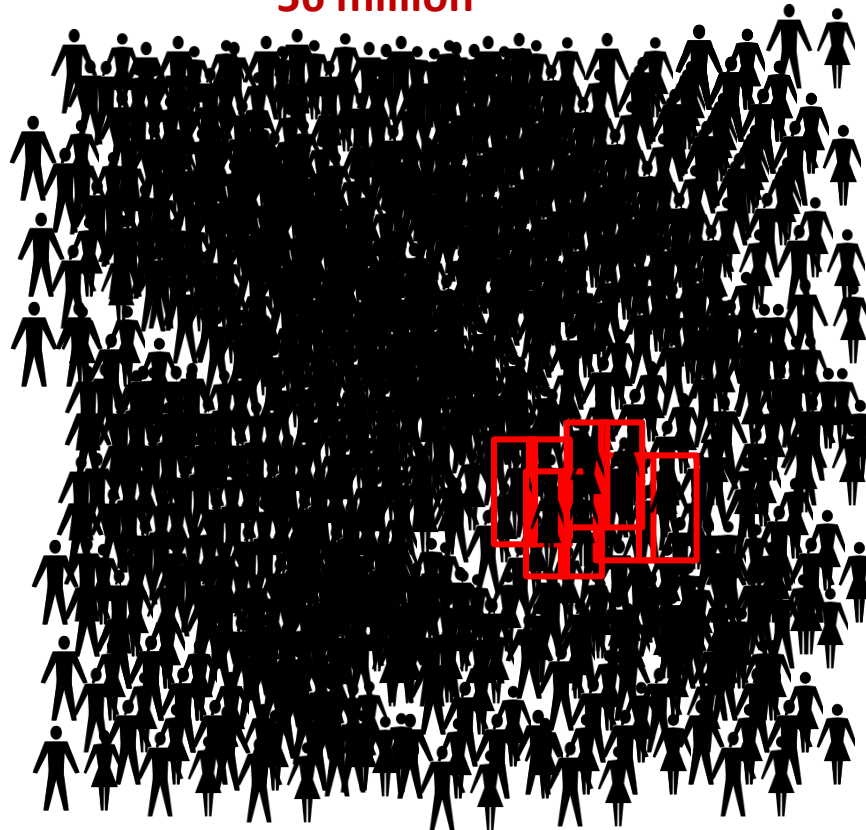
Same-sex married couples

400,000



Opposite-sex married couples

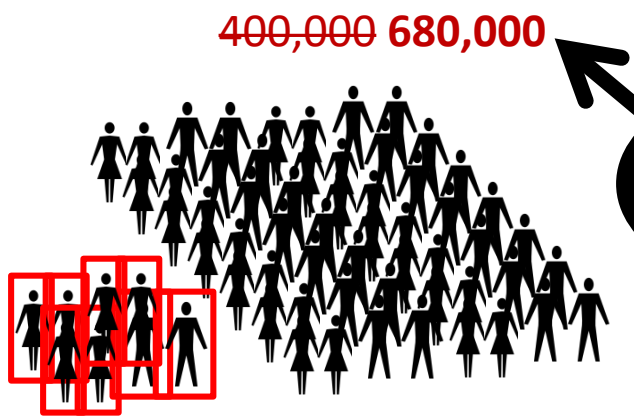
56 million



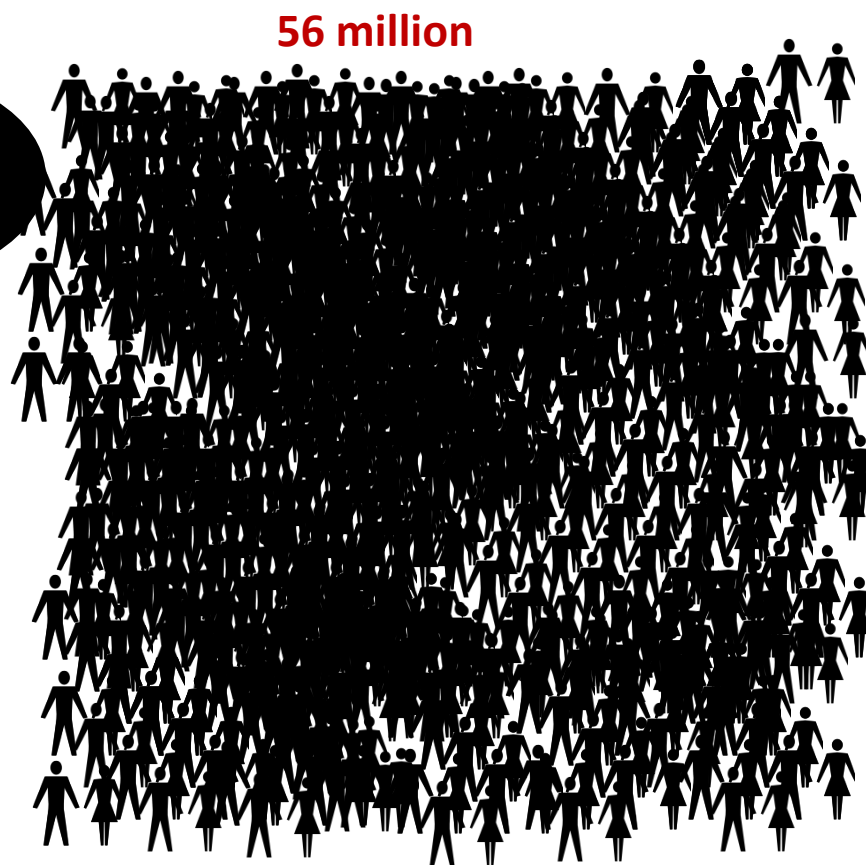
If 0.5% of opposite-sex couples misreported sex for one of the spouses, the number of same-sex married couples is increased by 280,000.

Same-sex married couples

Opposite-sex married couples



Estimate is inflated by 70%



Recent Changes to CPS Household Relationship Data

- 2007
 - Added a direct cohabitation question
 - Added a second parent identification question
- 2010
 - Those reported as same-sex spouses now edited and shown as *same-sex unmarried partners*.
 - Previously, the sex of one was changed to show them as *opposite-sex married couples*).
- 2017
 - Added separate opposite-sex and same-sex categories for the spouse and unmarried partner categories

Revising the Relationship Categories

How (are / is) (name/you) related to (reference person's name/you)?

Current Categories

Spouse (Husband/Wife)

Unmarried Partner

Child

Grandchild

Parent (Mother/Father)

Brother/Sister

Other relative (Aunt, Cousin, Nephew,
Mother-in-law, etc.)

Foster Child

Housemate/Roommate

Roomer/Boarder

Other nonrelative

Revised Categories (2017 ASEC)

Opposite-sex Spouse (Husband/Wife)

Opposite-sex Unmarried Partner

Same-sex Spouse (Husband/Wife)

Same-sex Unmarried Partner

Child

Grandchild

Parent (Mother/Father)

Brother/Sister

Other relative (Aunt, Cousin, Nephew,
Mother-in-law, etc.)

Foster Child

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Other nonrelative

Edit Changes

- Now accept the stated relationship of those who report as same-sex married couples
 - Data will now include same-sex unmarried partners and same-sex married couples
 - Subsequent processing referencing husbands and wives must be updated to recognize same-sex spouses
- Parent identification questions are now gender neutral – parent 1 and parent 2
 - In past these categories represented “mother” and “father”

Implications for Family Measures

- No changes are proposed for the Census Bureau's definition of family:
 - *A family is a group of two persons or more (one of whom is the householder) residing together and related by birth, marriage or adoption.*
- Married-couple families will now include same-sex married couples
- The family units used to present characteristics of families (e.g., economic characteristics) are being evaluated

Timing

- The revised relationship categories will be fully implemented for the 2017 ASEC data collection
- The new edits are planned for full implementation in the 2018 ASEC

Contact Information

Fertility and Family Statistics Branch

301-763-2416

Current Population Survey

<http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>