

Married-Couple Households by Nativity Status: 2011

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INTRODUCTION

According to the results of the 2010 Census, almost 7 percent of married-couple households in the United States included a householder and a spouse of different races.^{1,2} In addition, about 4 percent of married-couple households were composed of partners where one was Hispanic and the other not of Hispanic origin.³ Researchers estimate that the proportion of all marriages that were either interracial or interethnic had increased from about 3 percent in 1980 to over 8 percent in 2010.⁴

The increase in interracial and interethnic marriage over the last four decades may have been partially driven by the steady growth in the number of foreign born in the United States, especially those from Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.^{5,6} Between 1980 and 2010, the foreign-born population increased from 14.1 million to 40.0 million. About two-thirds (65 percent) of that increase was due to the growth in the foreign-born population from Latin America and the Caribbean, with over one-third (34 percent) due to the growth in the foreign born from Asia. Because the growth of the foreign-born population has contributed

¹ Daphne Lofquist, Terry Lugailla, Martin O'Connell, and Sarah Feliz, "Households and Families: 2010," U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, *2010 Census Briefs* (C2010BR-14), 2012.

² In this report, the United States includes the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

³ Lofquist et al., 2012.

⁴ Wendy Wang, "The Rise of Inter marriage: Rates, Characteristics Vary by Race and Gender," Pew Research Center, Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

⁵ Jeffrey S. Passel, Wendy Wang, and Paul Taylor, "Marrying Out: One-in-Seven New U.S. Marriages is Interracial or Interethnic," Pew Research Center, Washington, DC, June 15, 2010.

⁶ Elizabeth M. Grieco et al., "The Size, Place of Birth, and Geographic Distribution of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 1960 to 2010," U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, Population Division Working Paper 96, 2012.

Nativity and Citizenship

Nativity status: Whether a U.S. resident is native born or foreign born.

Native born: Anyone who is a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents. In this report, the terms "native" and "native born" are used interchangeably.

Foreign born: Anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth, including those who have become U.S. citizens through naturalization.

U.S. citizen: Respondents who are either (1) native born or (2) foreign born who indicated that they became U.S. citizens through naturalization.

Not a U.S. citizen: Respondents who indicated that they were not U.S. citizens at the time of the survey. In this report, the terms "not a U.S. citizen" and "non-citizen" are used interchangeably.

to the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States, it is likely that this growth has enlarged the pool of potential spouses for out-marriage, thereby increasing the proportion of interracial and interethnic marriages.⁷ As the growth in the foreign-born population may have influenced the rate of intermarriage among racial and ethnic groups, it is possible that it also influenced the rate of intermarriage between native and foreign-born people. However, while researchers have analyzed

⁷ Passel et al., 2010.

intermarriage among different racial and ethnic groups, considerably less is known about patterns of intermarriage between the native and foreign-born populations.

Using the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS), this report examines the number and geographic distribution of mixed-nativity married-couple households in the United States. Three types of married-couple households are considered: (1) those in which the husband and the wife are both native; (2) those in which they are both foreign born; and (3) those in which one spouse is native and the other is foreign born. This report begins by examining the number and distribution of married-couple households across these types, with emphasis on the citizenship of the householder and spouse within each. Additional information on mixed-nativity married couples regarding sex, citizenship status, and world region of birth is then discussed. Finally, the geographic distribution of mixed-nativity married-couple households by state is also explored.

FINDINGS

According to the ACS, there were 115 million households in the United States in 2011.⁸ Less than half (55.5 million, or 48 percent) were married-couple households, and less than one in seven (16.2 million, or 14 percent) had a foreign-born householder.⁹

⁸ Data from "Selected Population Profile in the United States" (Table S0201), 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau, available via American FactFinder at <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>.

⁹ This report focuses on married-couple households, defined as households including a householder with a spouse present. Households consisting of: (1) a married householder with an absent spouse, or (2) an unmarried householder with an unmarried partner present, were not included in this analysis. In addition, married couples in which neither spouse is a householder were not included.

Table 1.

Married-Couple Households by Nativity Status: 2011

(Numbers in thousands. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)

Nativity status of the married couple	Number	Margin of error ¹	Percent	Margin of error ¹
Total	55,520	157	100.0	(X)
Both native.	44,120	141	79.5	0.1
Mixed nativity.	4,091	38	7.4	0.1
Native householder/foreign-born spouse . . .	2,553	29	4.6	0.1
Foreign-born householder/native spouse . . .	1,538	20	2.8	—
Both foreign born.	7,309	41	13.2	0.1

(X) Not applicable.

— Represents or rounds to zero.

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Note: Some totals may not match the sum of their components due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Households and Housing Concepts

Household: Includes all the people who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or, if vacant, intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other groups of related or unrelated people who share living arrangements.

Householder: One person in each household is designated as the householder. In most cases, this is the person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned, being bought, or rented. If there is no such person in the household, any adult household member 15 years old and over could be designated as the householder.

Foreign-born household: A household in which the designated householder is foreign born (regardless of the other occupants' nativity).

Spouse: Includes a person married to and living with a householder who is of the opposite sex of the householder.

Married-couple household: A householder and his or her spouse living in the same household, with or without other household members.

Married-couple households by nativity type: In a mixed-nativity married-couple household, one of the spouses is native and the other is foreign born. In a native married-couple household, both the husband and wife are native; similarly, in a foreign-born married-couple household, both the husband and wife are foreign born.

Households maintained by foreign-born householders were more likely than those with native-born householders to be married-couple households (55 percent and 47 percent, respectively).

Most of the 55.5 million married-couple households in the United

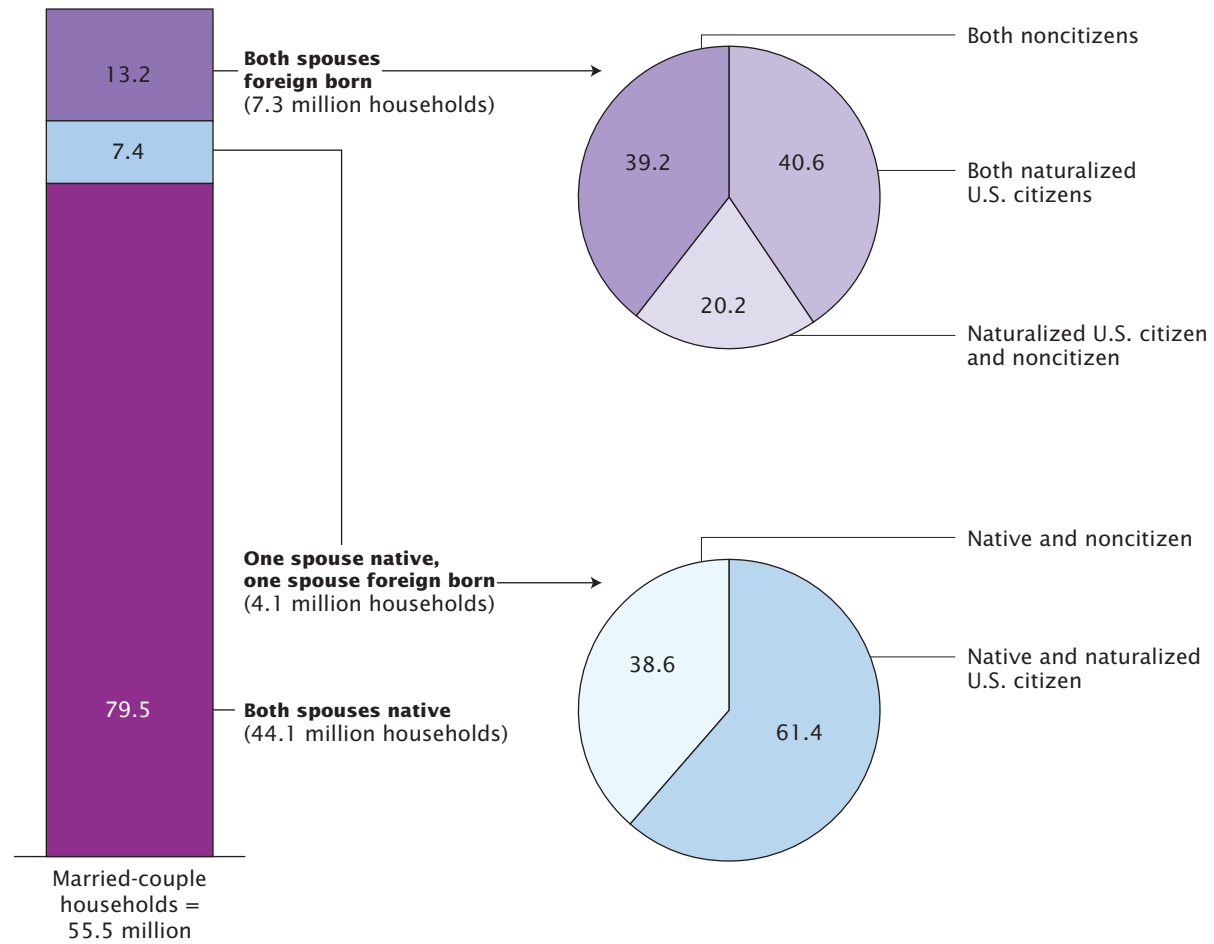
States (79 percent) consisted of a husband and a wife who were both native born (Table 1).¹⁰ Another 13 percent (7.3 million) were households in which both

¹⁰ Data on same-sex married couples in the ACS are edited and shown along with data on same-sex unmarried partners in Census Bureau reports. Only opposite-sex married couples are discussed in this report.

Figure 1.

Married-Couple Households by Nativity and Citizenship Status of Each Spouse: 2011

(Percent distribution. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

spouses were foreign born, and in the remaining 7 percent (4.1 million) of married-couple households, the spouses were of mixed nativity—that is, the spouses differed in their nativity status. Collectively, over one out of every five married-couple households in the United States (11.4 million, or 21 percent) had at least one foreign-born spouse.

Most of the 7.3 million foreign-born married-couple households (61 percent) included at least one foreign-born spouse who was naturalized, including 41 percent where the husband and wife were

U.S. citizens and 20 percent where only one spouse was naturalized (Figure 1).¹¹ In addition, 39 percent of all foreign-born married-couple

¹¹ This report uses an alternative method to determine the nativity status of married-couple households. Traditionally, the nativity status of the household is determined solely by the nativity of the householder (either native or foreign born). In this report, nativity status of the household is determined using the nativity of the householder and the spouse (both native, mixed, or both foreign born). As a result, for example, the number of foreign-born married-couple households using the traditional method is 8.8 million (see footnote 8) versus 7.3 million (see Table 1) using the alternative method. The traditional total can be obtained by adding the 1.5 million mixed-nativity married-couple households with a foreign-born householder in Table 1 to the 7.3 million in which both spouses are foreign born.

households were composed of non-citizen couples.¹²

Among the 4.1 million mixed-nativity married-couple households, foreign-born spouses were more likely to be naturalized U.S. citizens than noncitizens (61 percent and 39 percent, respectively; Table 2). This finding did not vary when considering the sex of the foreign-born spouse. However, foreign-born wives were more likely than foreign-born husbands to be naturalized citizens. Among

¹² In this report, the terms “married-couple households” and “couples” are used interchangeably.

mixed-nativity couples with a native husband, 63 percent of the foreign-born wives were naturalized U.S. citizens and 37 percent were noncitizens. By comparison, in mixed-nativity married-couple households with native wives, 59 percent of the foreign-born husbands had naturalized, while 41 percent were noncitizens.

Foreign-born spouses in mixed-nativity married-couple households were most likely to have been born in Latin America and the Caribbean (40 percent), followed by Europe (26 percent) and Asia (23 percent; Table 3). However, this rank ordering was conditional on the sex of the foreign-born spouse. Foreign-born husbands in this type of household were more likely than foreign-born wives to have been born in Latin America and the Caribbean (45 percent and 35 percent, respectively) or in Africa (5 percent and 2 percent, respectively), but foreign-born wives were more likely than foreign-born husbands to have been born in Asia (29 percent and 15 percent, respectively).¹³

Individual states differed considerably in the proportion of their married-couple households that were composed of mixed-nativity couples. About 16 percent of married-couple households that resided in Hawaii in 2011 were of mixed nativity (Figure 2); this was the highest rate of mixed-nativity couples at the state level. In general,

¹³ In addition, foreign-born husbands in mixed-nativity married-couple households were more likely to be born in Europe or in Oceania (26.5 percent and 1.3 percent, respectively) than were foreign-born wives (25.5 percent and 0.9 percent, respectively). Though these differences by sex were not substantial, they were statistically significant.

Table 2.

Mixed-Nativity Married-Couple Households by Sex and Citizenship Status of the Foreign-Born Spouse: 2011

(Married-couple households in which one spouse is native and the other is foreign born. Numbers in thousands. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)

Citizenship composition of the married couple	Number	Margin of error ¹	Percent	Margin of error ¹
Total households	4,091	38	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born spouse is:				
Naturalized U.S. citizen	2,511	32	61.4	0.4
Not a U.S. citizen	1,580	20	38.6	0.4
Households with native husband	2,270	27	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born wife is:				
Naturalized U.S. citizen	1,437	24	63.3	0.6
Not a U.S. citizen	833	15	36.7	0.6
Households with native wife	1,821	24	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born husband is:				
Naturalized U.S. citizen	1,074	18	59.0	0.6
Not a U.S. citizen	746	14	41.0	0.6

(X) Not applicable.

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Note: Some totals may not match the sum of their components due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

Table 3.

Mixed-Nativity Married-Couple Households by Sex and World Region of Birth of the Foreign-Born Spouse: 2011

(Married-couple households in which one spouse is native and the other is foreign born. Numbers in thousands. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/acs/www/)

World region of birth of foreign-born spouse	Number	Margin of error ¹	Percent	Margin of error ¹
Total households	4,091	38	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born spouse born in:				
Africa	135	7	3.3	0.2
Asia	941	19	23.0	0.4
Europe	1,061	16	25.9	0.4
Latin America and the Caribbean	1,632	23	39.9	0.4
Northern America	276	10	6.8	0.2
Oceania ²	45	3	1.1	0.1
Households with native husband	2,270	27	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born wife born in:				
Africa	48	5	2.1	0.2
Asia	667	15	29.4	0.6
Europe	578	12	25.5	0.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	805	17	35.5	0.6
Northern America	150	6	6.6	0.3
Oceania ²	21	2	0.9	0.1
Households with native wife	1,821	24	100.0	(X)
Foreign-born husband born in:				
Africa	87	5	4.8	0.3
Asia	274	9	15.0	0.4
Europe	483	10	26.5	0.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	827	17	45.4	0.6
Northern America	126	6	6.9	0.3
Oceania ²	24	2	1.3	0.1

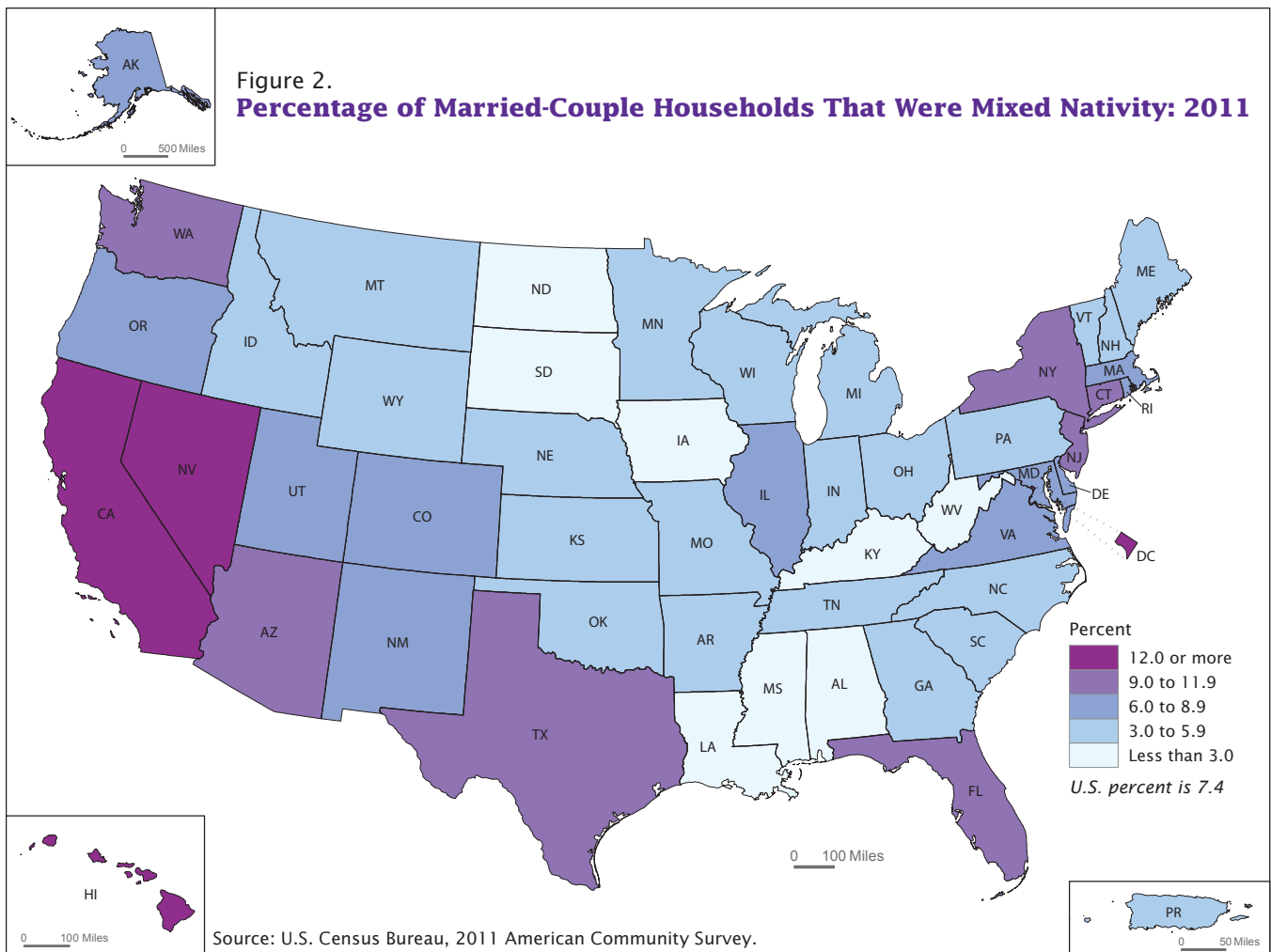
(X) Not applicable.

¹ Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. When added to and subtracted from the estimate, the margin of error forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

² Oceania includes those who were born at sea.

Note: Some totals may not match the sum of their components due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.



mixed-nativity married-couple households were more prevalent among mid-Atlantic and western states and less prevalent among midwestern and southern states (except for traditional immigration gateway states such as Florida, Illinois, and Texas). The states with the lowest mixed-nativity married-couple household percentages were Mississippi, South Dakota, and West Virginia at about 2 percent each.¹⁴

¹⁴ The percentages for these three states were not significantly different from each other.

SUMMARY

Of all married-couple households in the United States in 2011, over one out of five (21 percent) had at least one foreign-born spouse, and in about 7 percent of married-couple households, the marriage was between a native person and a foreign-born person (Figure 1). The married couples of these households were more likely to have a native husband and a foreign-born wife (rather than a foreign-born husband and a native wife) and to include a

naturalized U.S. citizen (rather than a noncitizen). Also, the foreign-born spouses of these households came from diverse places of birth (with a plurality from Latin America and the Caribbean). Furthermore, mixed-nativity married-couple households were found to reside in all 50 states and the District of Columbia with higher proportions in some of the traditional immigration gateway states (e.g., Florida, Illinois, and Texas) and in many mid-Atlantic and western states of the nation.

What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit www.census.gov/acs/www.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates in this report based on this sample approximate the actual values and

represent the entire household population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a

census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for key estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf.