

## **Census Brief: The Changing Household and Family**

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How we all live our lives is reflected in our living arrangements—married or not, with kids or not. California and Los Angeles, much like the rest of the nation, are changing the meaning of what is a conventional household. These changes appear to be spreading everywhere.

This Census Brief will track major changes over the last decade, drawing upon the 2010 census to examine the decline of the nuclear household and the rise of non-nuclear types of households.<sup>1</sup> In terms of households with children, while married households have decreased in number, male-headed households have increased. In addition, unmarried partner households are a small but rapidly growing share of all households. These changes in households and families may be widespread, but living arrangements are characterized by distinct patterns in different places.

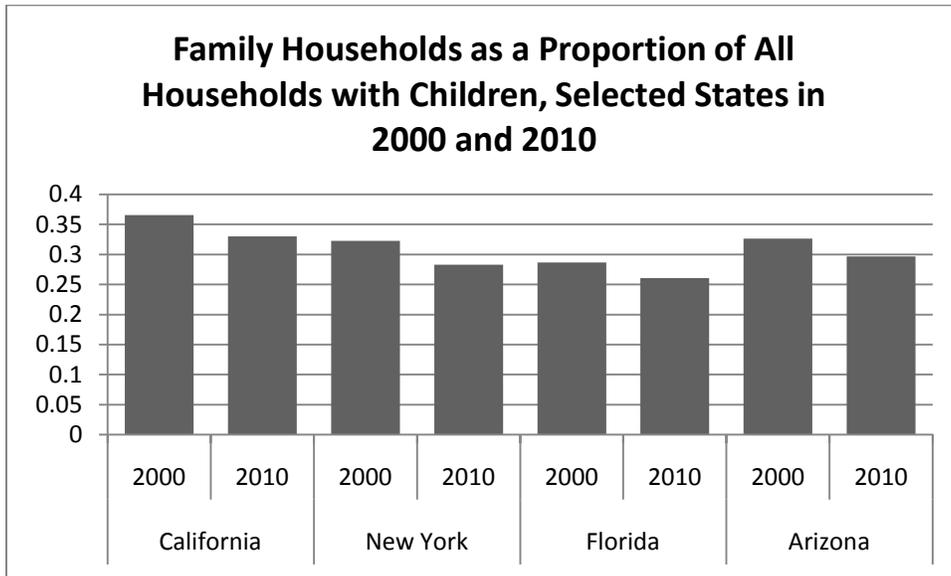
### **Introduction**

The total number of households in California grew at a pace that matched population growth. The number of households, which are defined as the individual or group of people sharing a housing unit, increased to 12,577,498 in California, an increase of 9.3%, and to 3,241,204 in Los Angeles County, an increase of 3.4%. This compares to population growth of 10.0% in the state and 3.1% in Los Angeles County.

The interesting change involves the types of living arrangements practiced in those households. Fewer households in California and Los Angeles match the conventional notion of the nuclear family. The proportion of households that are comprised of families with children is declining, a trend exhibited in other states as well (see Exhibit 1).

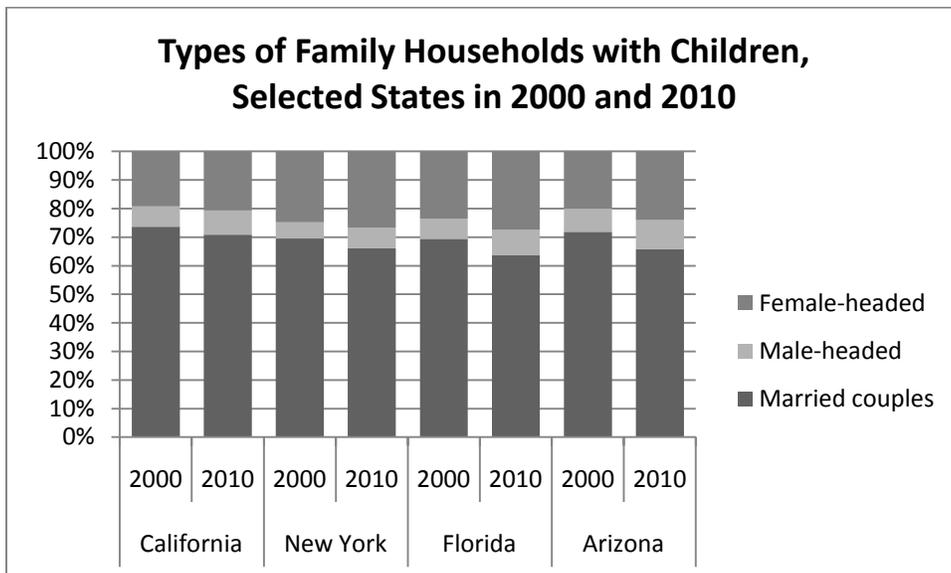
California's 2010 ratio of families with children to all households fell to one-third (.33), but it stands higher than in New York (.28), Florida (.26) or Arizona (.30); nonetheless, the ratio fell in all these states between 2000 and 2010. Family households are living groups in which at least one other person is related to the householder (the person named as the renter or homeowner of the housing unit). Thus a family could be a married couple, or a single mother and a child, or two adult brothers. A family with children has at least one person under age 18 who is related by birth or adoption to the householder.

Exhibit 1



Since 2000, the types of households with children living at home under age 18 have changed. Households consisting of married partners and children have declined, while increases are seen in the prevalence of single male-headed or single female-headed households with children (see Exhibit 2). California, Los Angeles and other major counties in Southern California all have experienced these demographic shifts.

Exhibit 2



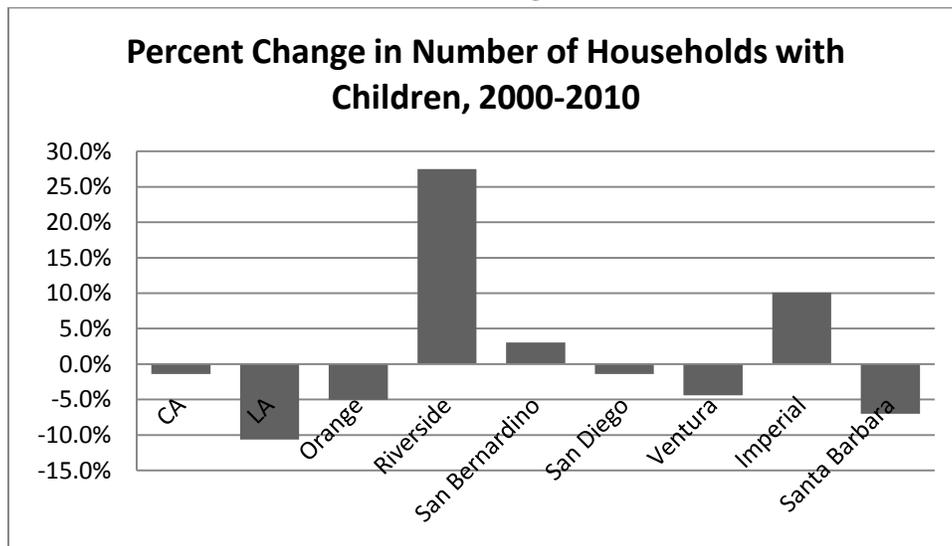
## Shrinking Numbers of Nuclear Families

Across the state, the number of households composed of married couples and children is down since 2000; Los Angeles lost 117,322, and California lost 156,401. Accordingly, Los Angeles by itself accounted for 75.0% of all the “lost” married couples with children in the state.

Part of Los Angeles' decline in numbers of married couple households with kids could be attributed to broader declines in the total number of households with kids (see Exhibit 3). As observed in the Lou and Myers (2011) Census Brief on changes in age groups, the loss of children is related to a declining number of Latino children and families, a trend where Los Angeles departs from all other areas in the nation. In fact, counting families of all types, Los Angeles lost 125,414 households of families with children, while California lost 58,252.<sup>2</sup>

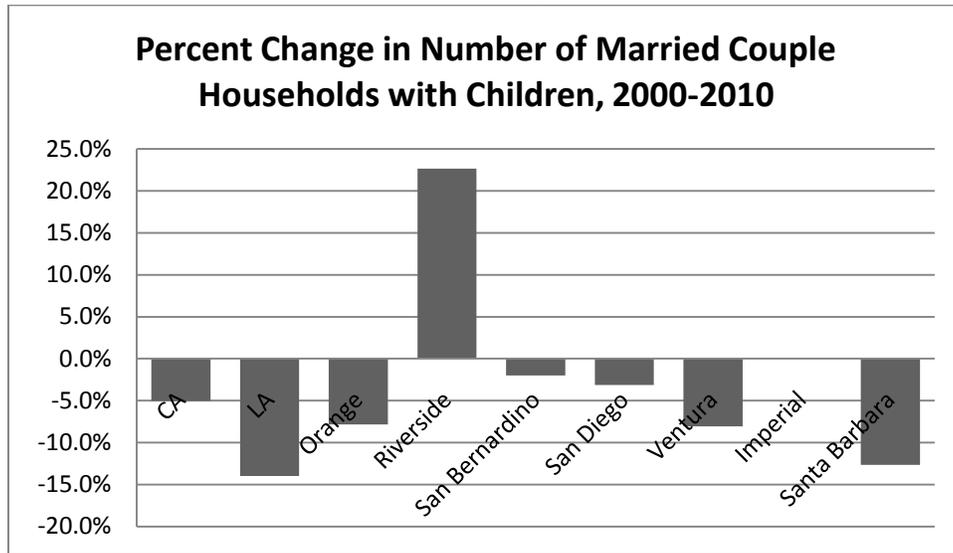
Los Angeles accounted for so much of the statewide change, that its losses far outweighed gains that occurred elsewhere in the state. However, most major Southern California counties also experienced a loss in households with kids.

Exhibit 3



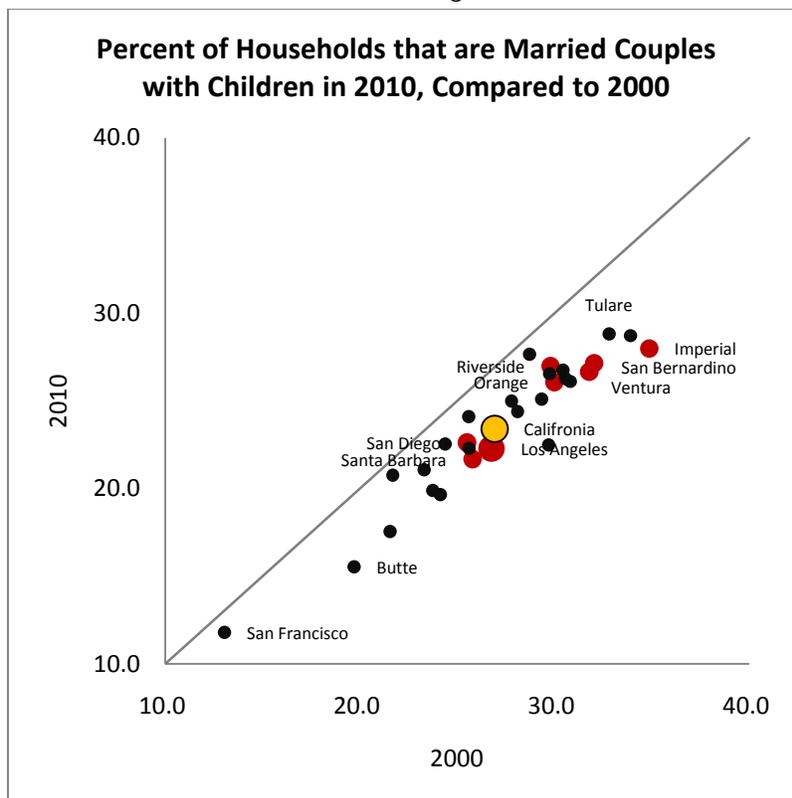
When we focus on married couples with children, the losses are greater (see Exhibit 4). Among large counties in Southern California (those with a population over 200,000), only Riverside experienced substantial growth in the number of married couple households with children; Imperial County also grew, but is not considered a large county due to a population size less than 200,000. Riverside County experienced a 22.6% (34,193) increase since 2000. Married couples with children declined in the others: Orange County lost 7.8% (21,972), San Bernardino lost 2.0% (3,388), San Diego lost 3.1% (7,957), Ventura County lost 8.1% (6,233), and Santa Barbara lost 12.6% (4,458).

Exhibit 4



We find that married couple households, as a proportion of all households, declined in every one of the larger counties in California (defined as having at least a population of 200,000). Exhibit 5 displays the decline from 2000 to 2010. San Francisco County had the lowest rate of married couples with children in 2000 (13.0%), but further decreased to 11.8% by 2010. Southern California counties are highlighted in red, and the black dots represent other large counties in the state.

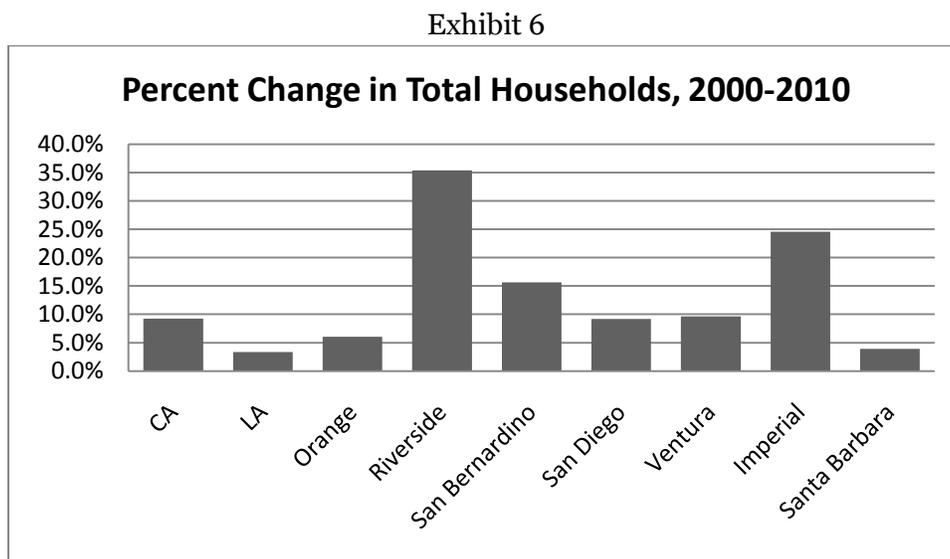
Exhibit 5



Note that even Riverside had a declining proportion of married couples with children. Despite the large growth shown above, other household types grew even faster so the proportion married with children declined.

### Slow Growth in LA Households, Fast Growth in California Households

Overall, Los Angeles experienced slow growth in the total number of households (see Exhibit 6). Households only increased 3.3%, from 3.1 million households in 2000, to 3.2 million in 2010. This increased just slightly faster than the pace of population growth (3.1%), but was slower than the pace of California’s sizeable growth. California experienced a 9.3% increase in households, a little shy of the 10.0% increase in population over the same time period.



Every major county in Southern California experienced significantly larger growth in number of total households than Los Angeles: Orange (6.0%), Riverside (35.4%), San Bernardino (15.7%), San Diego (9.2%) and Ventura (9.6%).

Riverside County's number of households grew by a whopping 179,479, and Orange County experienced modest growth with 56,627 new households (but at a slower rate due to its larger overall size). Other smaller counties, such as Imperial County, also experienced significant household growth (24.6%, 9,693), while Santa Barbara County did not (3.9%, 5,335).

The growth of total households, despite declines in married households with children, was due to increases in the number of non-nuclear households. In the following section we review increases in two types of non-nuclear households: male-headed households and unmarried partner households.

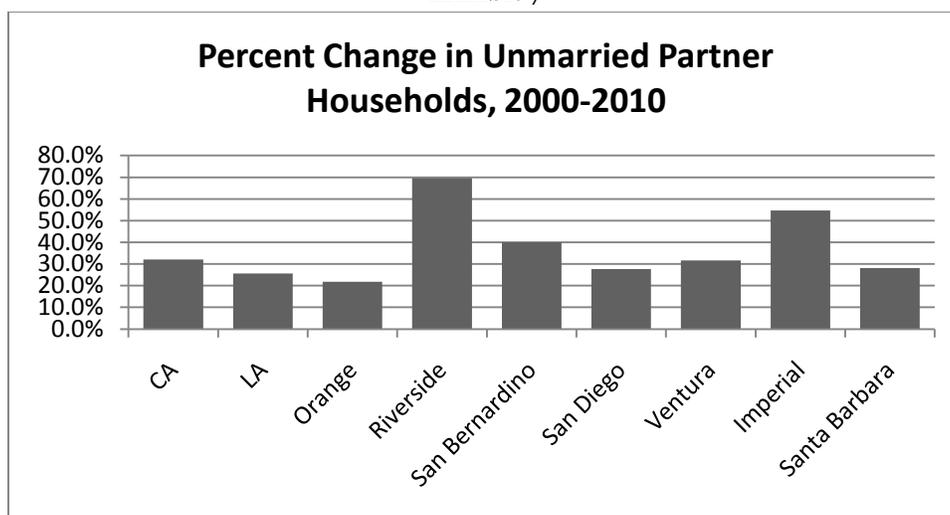
### Increasing Numbers of Non-Nuclear Households

Two widespread trends emerged with the 2010 Census data: the steady growth of single male-headed households, and the large growth of households composed of unmarried partners.

Unmarried partners are a newly recognized type of household that was first introduced in the 2000 census. The 2010 census is our first opportunity to measure trends over time in the new type of household. The Census Bureau defines an unmarried-partner household as “a household that includes a householder and an unmarried partner.” An unmarried partner must share living quarters with the householder, be unrelated, have a close personal relationship, and may be of the same or opposite sex. Furthermore, householders cannot have a spouse and an unmarried partner, and by census definition “there may be only one unmarried-partner per household.”

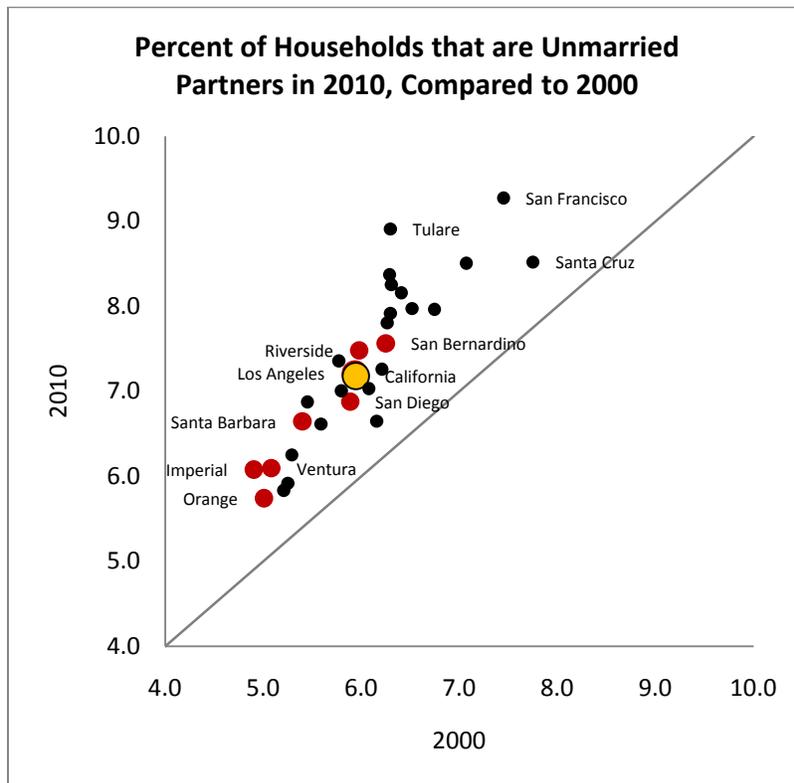
Only a small share of all households are comprised of unmarried partners, but the numbers of unmarried partners increased by 47,707 (25.7%) in Los Angeles and 219,451 (32.1%) in California. In addition, the number of unmarried partner households increased in each of the other seven counties in Southern California (see Exhibit 7), as well as every major county in the state.

Exhibit 7



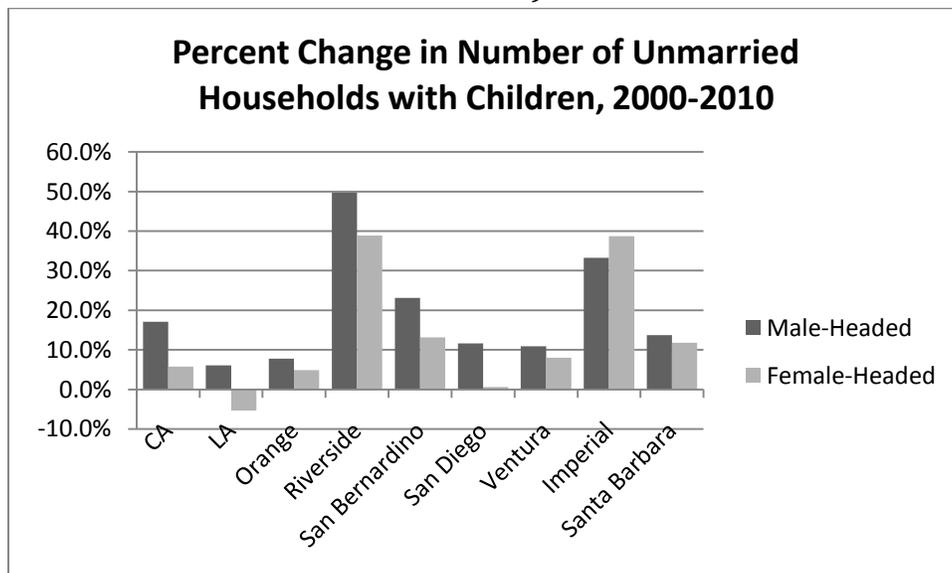
The prevalence of unmarried partner households varies across the state of California, but these households are growing everywhere over time (see Exhibit 8). Unmarried partners as a share of all households in California were 5.9% in 2000 and 7.2% in 2010, an increase of 32.1% and a gain of 219,451 households. San Francisco (9.3%) and Santa Cruz County (8.5%) had among the highest rates of unmarried partner households, but even Tulare County, nestled in California’s rural Central Valley, experienced a 41.5% increase from 6.3% to 8.9%. The lowest prevalence of unmarried partner households is witnessed in Orange County, likely reflecting a combination of conservative lifestyles among its non-Hispanic white residents and traditional family structures among its growing Latino and Vietnamese populations. (Note in Exhibit 8 that the unmarried partner prevalence in Los Angeles exactly matches the state average and so its dot is obscured beneath that for California.)

Exhibit 8



We find that single male-headed households with children were also on the rise across the state. The numbers of male-headed households rose by 51,206 (17%) in California (see Exhibit 9). In fact, the absolute growth in these households (51,206) was larger for California than for single female-headed households with children (46,943) (see Exhibit 9).

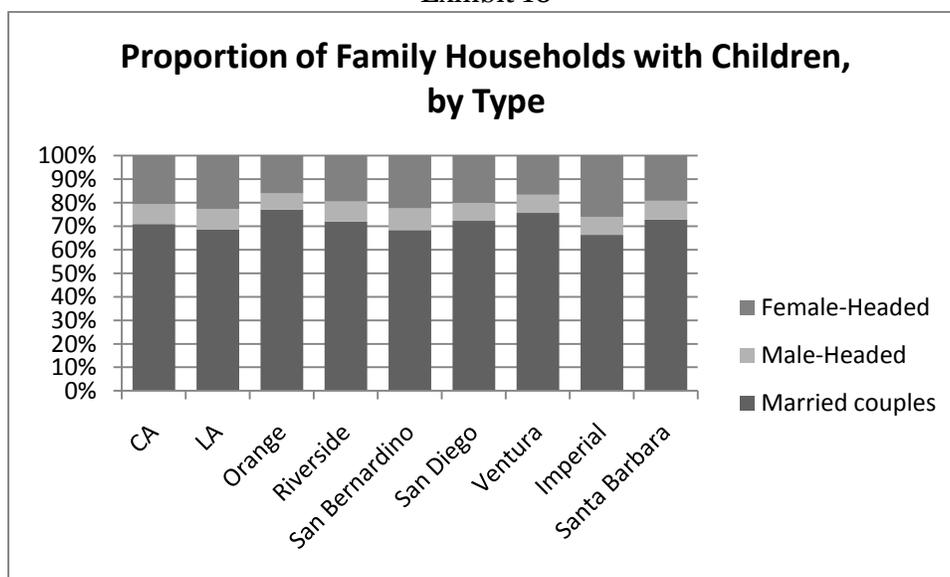
Exhibit 9



Every county in Southern California save Imperial experienced faster growth of male-headed than female headed households (see Exhibit 9). Los Angeles increased by 5,304 (6.1%), which was lowest among counties in Southern California. Orange (7.8%), San Bernardino (23.1%), San Diego (11.7%), Ventura (10.9%), Imperial (33.2%) and Santa Barbara (13.7%) all increased in number of male-headed households.

Riverside experienced the highest increase of male headed households, 49.8% (7,329), in Southern California. In fact, Riverside, previously mentioned as the only county to experience growth in married couples with kids, actually saw the percentage of married couples with kids decline due to growth in proportion of non-nuclear households. Male headed households in Riverside increased from a share of 2.9% to 3.2% of all households with children; households of unmarried partners increased 69.7% (21,086), from a share of 6.0% to 7.5% of all households.

Exhibit 10



Virtually every larger county in California experienced a relative increase in share of households that were single male-headed families with children, between 2000 and 2010 (Exhibit 11). Tulare County topped the list with a rate of 4.7% in 2010, while San Bernardino ranked highest among major counties with 3.7%. San Francisco ranked the lowest, where male-headed families with children comprised only 1.1% of all households, but still even this was a slight rise from 0.9% in 2000. The only counties to experience a decrease were Santa Cruz (down from 2.6% to 2.4%), Solano (down from 3.2% to 3.1%) and Yolo (down from 2.4% to 2.3%).

Conversely, most larger counties in California experienced a very slight decline in the share of households with children that were female headed, between 2000 and 2010 (Exhibit 12). Imperial County had the highest rate in the state (11.0%), while San Francisco had the lowest rate (3.1%). Most counties experienced losses in female-headed households, such as Los Angeles (down from 8.0% to 7.4%), San Diego (down from 6.8% to 6.3%), Alameda (down from 6.8% to 6.3%) and Sacramento (down from 8.5% to 8.1%). Many other counties, however, experienced gains over 2000 in the share of female-headed households with children, such as Riverside (up from 7.1% to 7.3%), Santa Barbara (up from 5.3% to 5.7%) and Fresno (up from 9.4% to 9.9%).

Exhibit 11

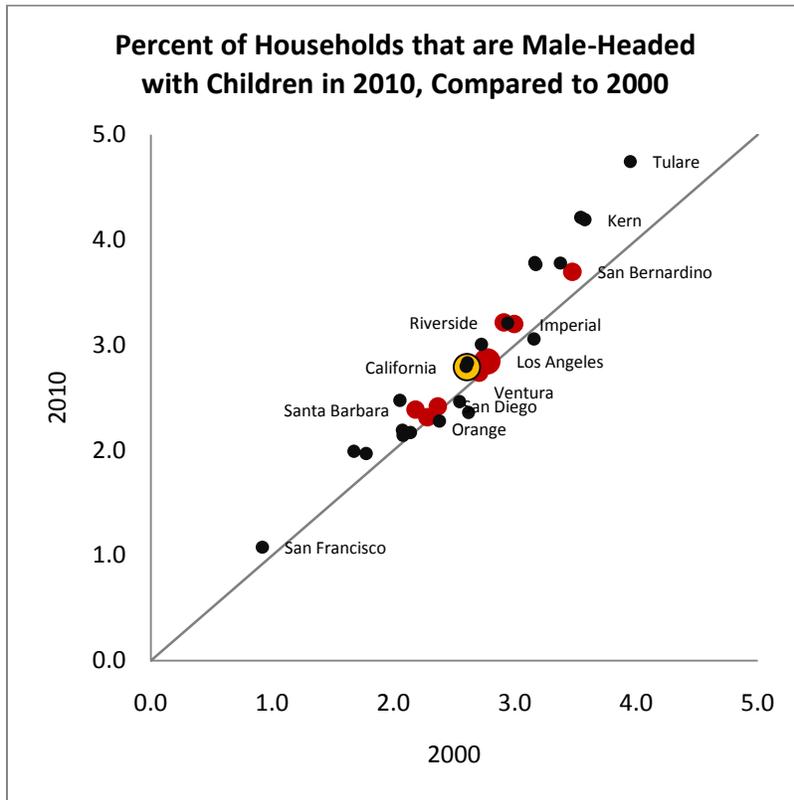
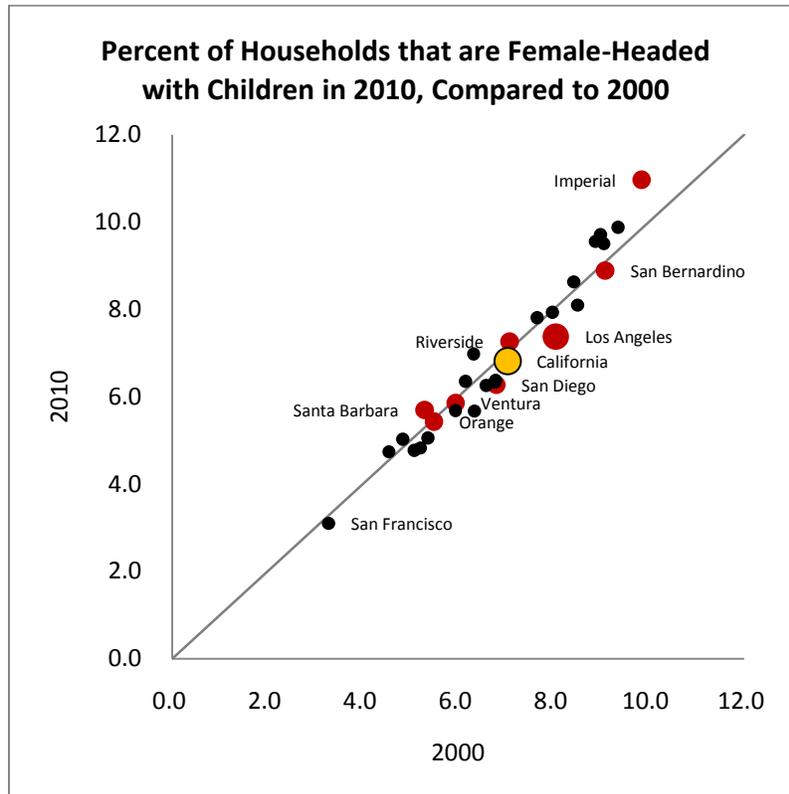


Exhibit 12



## **Summary**

The Census 2010 data provide us a window into major changes occurring within living arrangements and the American household structure. We find that, first, the number of households with children is declining as a proportion of all households. Second, the number of married family households with children is declining even more rapidly as a proportion of all households. Third, non-nuclear households are increasing. This includes an increase in male-headed households with children and also a widespread rise in the frequency of unmarried partners living together. Although the nuclear family household remains the dominant type among households with children, emergent changes are appearing in Los Angeles and other major Southern California counties. In 2010, San Francisco still stands out in the state, but more counties are departing from the nuclear household.

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## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All data in this report are taken from the following sources, unless otherwise noted: Data from 2010 are taken from the Census Bureau's Demographic Profile Report (DP-1); Data from 2000 are taken from the Census 2000 SF1 and SF2.

<sup>2</sup> Lou, Linda, and Dowell Myers, "Aging in California and Los Angeles County," Census Brief, Population Dynamics Research Group, May 2011.

### **For more information:**

Copies of all project reports are downloadable from the website of the Population Dynamics Research Group, School of Policy, Planning and Development.

<http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/popdynamics/>

Questions on technical details should be directed to the authors or the Research Director, [popdynam@usc.edu](mailto:popdynam@usc.edu)