

# Parents Working Nonstandard Schedules: Who's Burning the Midnight (and Weekend) Oil?

Brian Knop, PhD, Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau

Presented at the Annual Meeting of  
The National Council of Family Relations  
Orlando, FL  
November 2017

**What is a nonstandard schedule?**  
Any work schedule that is outside the traditional Mon-Fri, daytime hours. It includes evenings, nights, weekends, and rotating or irregular shifts.

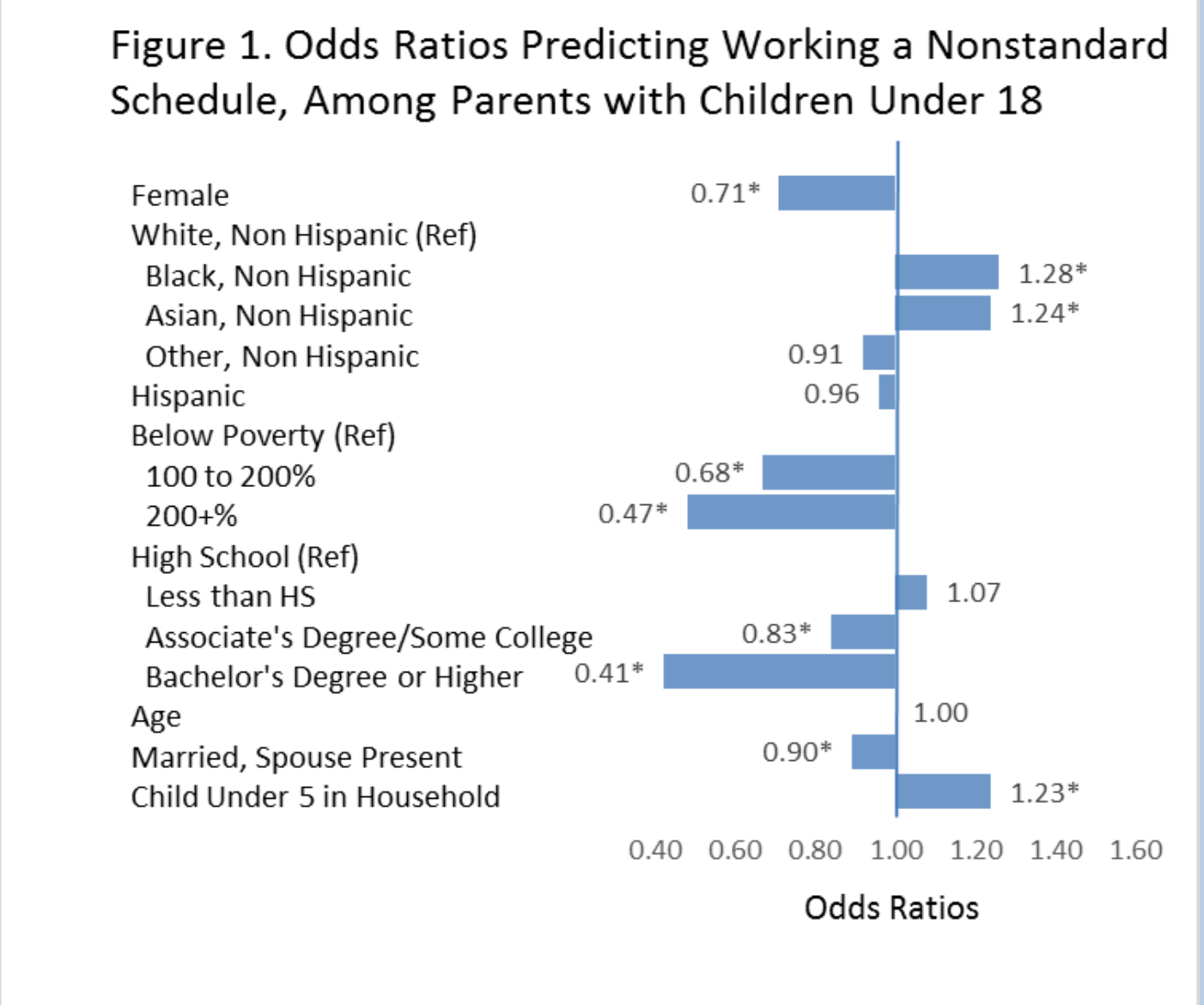
## BACKGROUND

- The 24-Hour economy has pushed many working adults into work schedules that fall outside traditional work hours (McMenamin 2007)
- Coupled parents may use nonstandard work hours to desynchronize schedules so that one parent is always available to care for their child(ren) (Täht and Mills 2012)
- Some parents fall into nonstandard work schedules because of the inflexibility of their job (Lesnard 2008)
- Little is known about parents who work nonstandard schedules and the children of those parents

## DATA

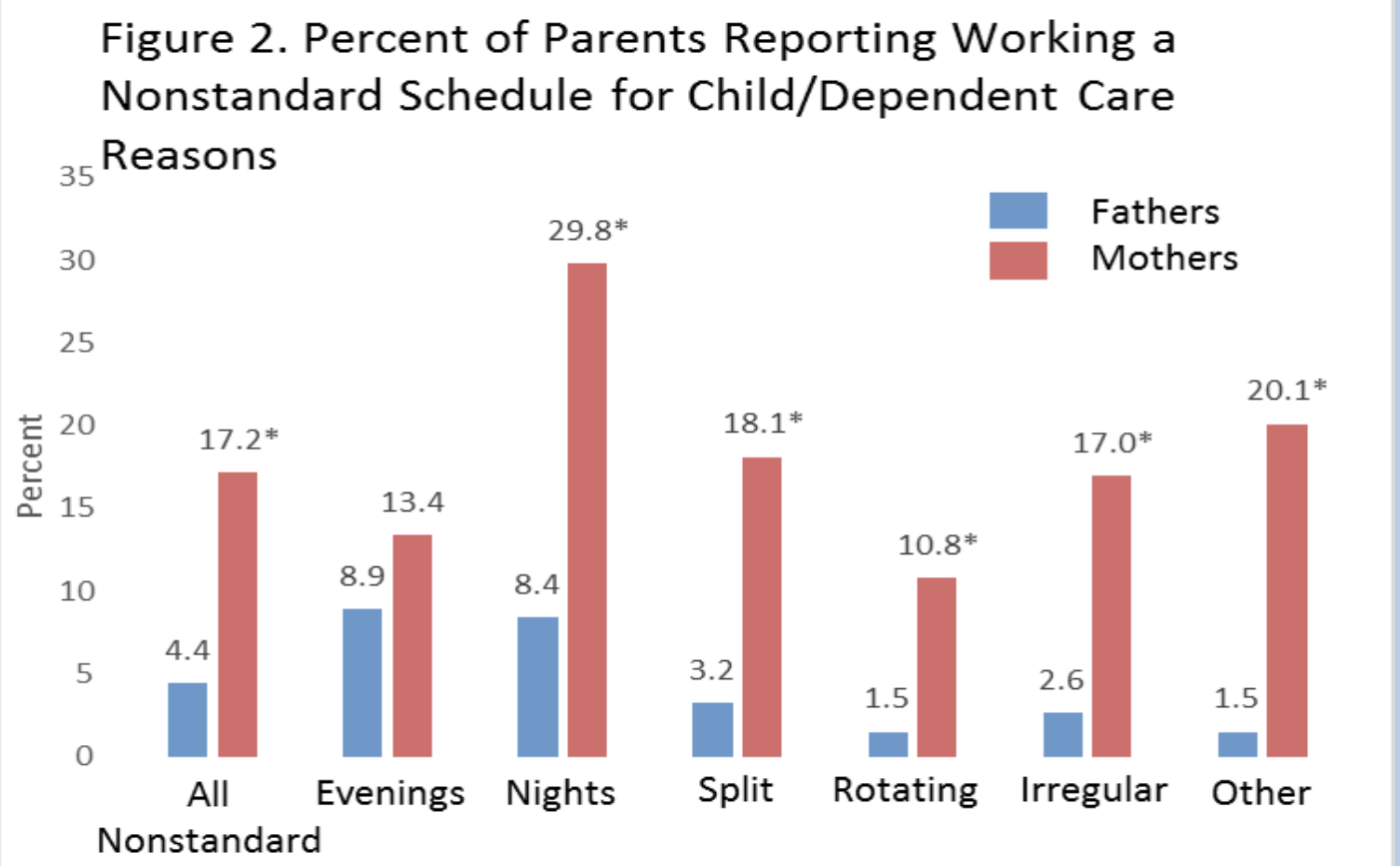
- The **2014 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)** collects detailed demographic and work schedule information from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households
- Work Schedule Data in SIPP:
  - Employed respondents are asked to pick a best description of their work schedule for each job: daytime, evening, night, rotating (that changes regularly), split (consists of two distinct periods each work day), irregular (one that changes day to day), or "other" schedule type
  - They also report whether their work schedule includes Saturdays or Sundays
    - I include schedules that are "daytime," but involve weekend work as nonstandard schedules

## WHO ARE THE PARENTS WORKING A NONSTANDARD SCHEDULE?



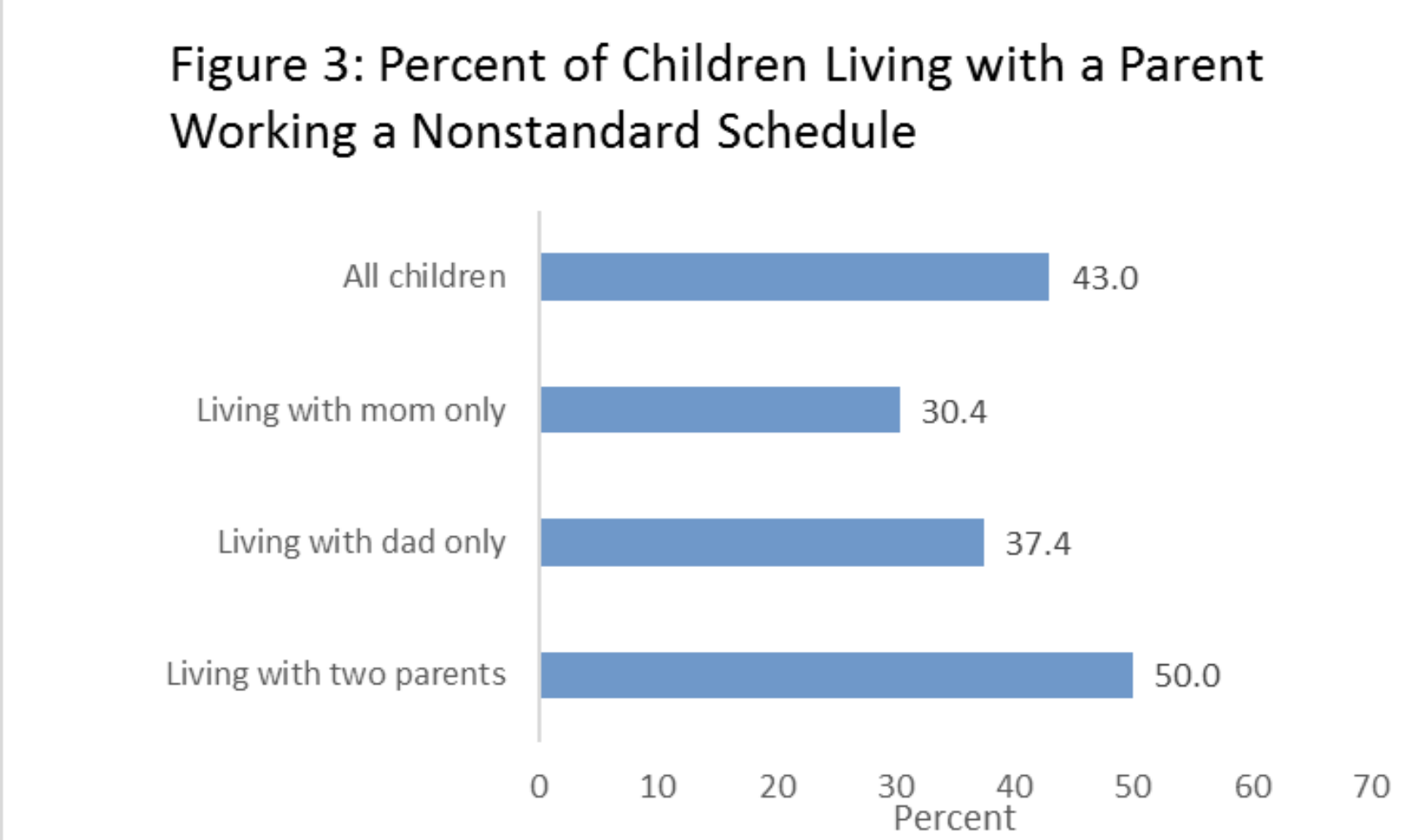
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1  
\*p<0.05  
Note: Model includes control for number of jobs currently working. If a parent has more than one job, they are considered a nonstandard worker if at least one job has a nonstandard schedule.

## DO THEY REPORT WORKING NONSTANDARD SCHEDULES FOR FAMILY REASONS?



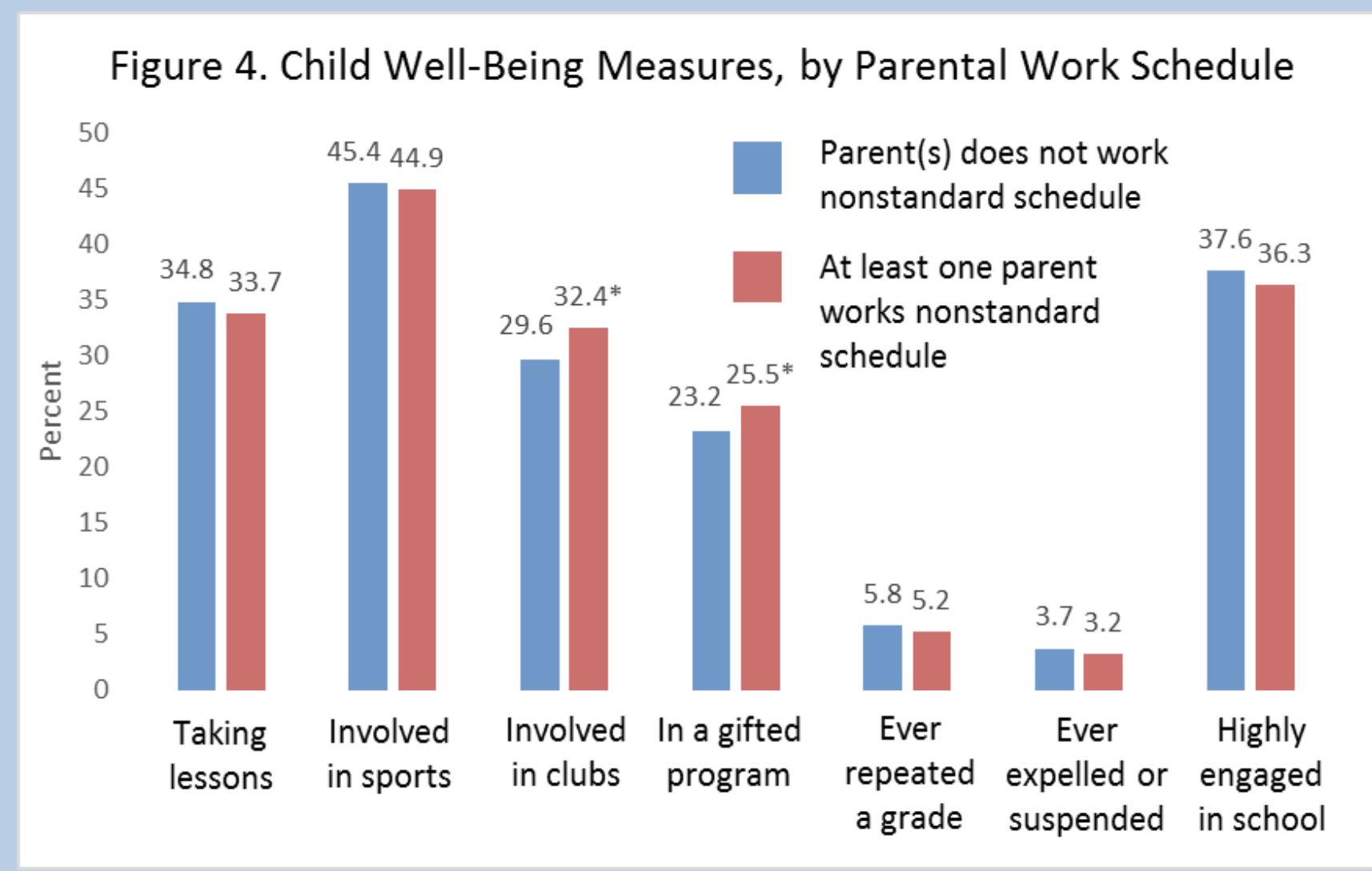
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1  
\*Statistically significant difference (p<0.05) compared to fathers  
Note: Parents who report a daytime schedule with weekend work are excluded because they are not asked about reason for working on Saturday or Sunday

## HOW MANY CHILDREN LIVE WITH A PARENT WORKING A NONSTANDARD SCHEDULE?



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

## ARE PARENTAL NONSTANDARD SCHEDULES ASSOCIATED WITH CHILDREN'S SCHOOL AND EXTRACURRICULAR OUTCOMES?



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2014 Panel, Wave 1  
\*Statistically significant difference (p<0.05) compared to children whose parent(s) does not work nonstandard schedule  
Note: Children are considered highly engaged if their reference parent reports the most positive answers to 4 prompts: the child cares about school, completes their homework, does just enough to get by in school, and only does work when forced.

## RESULTS SUMMARY

- It is not uncommon for a parent to work a schedule outside the traditional Monday through Friday, daytime hours
- Parents living in poverty and those with only a high school education are more likely to work a nonstandard schedule
- Both mothers and fathers, with or without another parent in the home, engage in nonstandard work schedules
- Mothers more often report working a nonstandard schedule for family reasons
- Parental nonstandard schedules are not negatively associated with children's school outcomes or involvement in extracurricular activities

## CONCLUSION

Weeknights and weekends are often seen as opportunities for families to relax and share time together. However, many children live with a parent who works at least some of the time in late (or very early) parts of the day or during the weekend.

This research offers a snapshot of families with a parent working a nonstandard schedule, providing insight into demographic patterns and experiences of both parents and children. Fortunately, parental nonstandard schedules do not appear to be negatively associated with children's school outcomes and extracurricular activities. Potential negative effects of nonstandard schedules on parents' well-being were not analyzed here but warrant future investigation, considering the challenges of balancing work and family responsibilities.

## REFERENCES

Lesnard, Laurent. 2008. "Off-Scheduling within Dual-Earner Couples: An Unequal and Negative Externality for Family Time." *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 2: 447-490.

McMenamin, Terence M. 2007. "A time to work: recent trends in shift work and flexible schedules." *Monthly Labor Review*.

Täht, Kadri, and Melinda Mills. 2012. "Nonstandard work schedules, couple desynchronization, and parent-child interaction a mixed-methods analysis." *Journal of Family Issues* 33, no. 8: 1054-1087.



U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](http://census.gov)

This poster is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.