



Department for Children
and Families

Strong Families Make a Strong Kansas

House Committee on Federal and State Affairs

February 12, 2015

Testimony on:

Impact of Marriage

Presented by:

Phyllis Gilmore

Secretary

Kansas Department for Children and Families

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Testimony of:

Phyllis Gilmore, Secretary
Kansas Department for Children and Families
Topeka, Kansas

Testimony on: Impact of marriage**Chairman Brunk, Vice Chair Couture-Lovelady, Ranking Minority Member Tietze and Members of the Committee:**

The Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) believes that strong families make a strong Kansas. DCF's mission is to protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility. DCF largely exists in response to the breakdown of the family. A significant majority of our clients come from single-family homes, in which one or both parents are unable to meet the financial needs of the household members. The agency strongly supports any initiatives to strengthen Kansas families. Although not every marriage is healthy, the institution of marriage, as defined by the Kansas Constitution, provides children with the stability and shared responsibility of the parents to help children thrive. Every child deserves to be raised by a loving mother and father.

DCF also supports programs and services that promote the success sequence of education, employment then family. Research shows that people can almost entirely avoid poverty if they complete at least high school, work full time and get married before starting a family.¹ A 2012 report by Robert Rector found that marriage drops the probability of poverty by 82 percent.²

Marriage Outcomes Research**Family Fragmentation Impact on Children**

In 2012, a National Vital Statistics Reports showed an estimated 41 percent of all births were out-of-wedlock.³ In a 2011 University of Virginia report,⁴ a team of 18 scholars concluded that among other findings children are less likely to thrive in complex households; cohabitation is not the functional equivalent of marriage; growing up outside an intact marriage increases the likelihood that children will themselves divorce or become unwed parents; divorce and unmarried childbearing increases poverty for

¹ Haskins, Ron, "Getting Ahead in America," *National Affairs*, Issue 1, Fall 2009, <http://nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/getting-ahead-in-america>

² Rector, Robert, "Marriage: America's Greatest Weapon Against Child Poverty, The Heritage Foundation, Sept. 5, 2012

³ Hamilton, Brady E., Martin, Joyce A., and Ventura, Stephanie., "Births: Preliminary Data for 2012," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Sept. 6, 2013

⁴ Wilcox, B. E. et al., *Why Marriages Matter: Thirty Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (3rd Edition), Institute for American Values 2011

both children and mothers; and cohabitation is less likely to alleviate poverty than is marriage. The study also found parental divorce reduces the likelihood that children will graduate from college and achieve high-status jobs; parental marriage is associated with a sharply lower risk of infant mortality; marriage is associated with reduced rates of alcohol and substance abuse for both adults and teens; cohabitation is associated with higher levels of psychological problems among children; boys raised in non-intact families are more likely to engage in delinquent and criminal behavior; marriage appears to reduce the risk that adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime; and a child who is not living with his/her own two married parents is at greater risk of child abuse. The tragic cases of child abuse are often at the hand of a live-in boyfriend.

Financial Impact on Taxpayers

According to the Institute for American Values,⁵ family fragmentation costs taxpayers approximately \$112 billion per year. In Kansas, that number is \$389 million, which includes welfare benefits, justice system costs and foregone tax revenues.

A 2013 study of the State of Texas⁶ found that Texas spent an estimated \$3.18 billion in 2008 on costs associated with divorce. The researchers of the study concluded that steps taken to promote healthy marriage can reduce the costs associated with divorce.

How Kansans are Affected by the Fragmentation of Families

As stated earlier, DCF serves many families who are in poverty and struggling, which research shows is tied to the fragmentation of families. Agency data from various programs supports this conclusion.

Prevention and Protections Services

The Prevention and Protection Services (PPS) division of DCF is charged statutorily with the receipt, investigation and determination regarding reports of alleged abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults. Determination of safety of children is initially made and necessary steps are taken to ensure safety. In the event services are needed for a family, the services are offered in an attempt to strengthen families so the removal of a child can be avoided or the reintegration of a child who has been removed for safety reasons can be realized with the child's family. The stability and health of a family is paramount to promoting the safety, permanency and well-being of the child.

Three out of four children removed from the home come from a single-parent household. The data found in Attachment A is being provided per the request of this Committee regarding homes from which children were removed in FY2014.

(See Attachment A)

⁵ Scafidi, B., "The Taxpayer Cost of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing," Institute for American Values, 2008, 12,13

⁶ Schramm, D.G. Harris, S.M., Whiting, J.B., Hawkins, A.J., Brown., & Porter, R. "Economic costs and policy implications associated with divorce: Texas as a case study." *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, 2011, 54, 1-24

Economic and Employment Services

Economic and Employment Services (EES) oversees all welfare benefits programs for DCF, including cash, food, child care and energy assistance. These programs observe conditions which further demonstrate the impact family fragmentation has on a household's ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

TANF Cash Assistance

The TANF program is a result of the 1996 Welfare to Work legislation and is a temporary program meant to be a bridge, helping families transition from poverty to employment. The TANF cash assistance program provides a cash benefit to families with minor children, including pregnant women, to assist families with basic living expenses. The amount of the benefit is determined based upon a family's income and county of residence. Employment is the cornerstone of the TANF program. TANF cash assistance recipients are required to take part in work activities that will aid the recipient in finding and maintaining employment and, ultimately, self-sufficiency. TANF funds are limited in their use to individuals who meet the income guidelines to qualify for TANF services.

To support families and remove any disincentive to marriage, in November 2011, DCF implemented policy to include the cohabiting boyfriend/girlfriend of the TANF adult as part of the mandatory filing unit. This policy change mandated that the cohabitant's income and resources be included in the determination of the TANF eligibility and benefit amount. The intent of this policy is to treat cohabiting couples and married couples in a similar manner.

Attachment B shows how family structure relates to cash assistance benefits. Nearly 90 percent of our TANF households are unmarried.

(See Attachment B)

SNAP Food Assistance

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, provides qualifying low-income households with food benefits, access to a healthy diet and education on food preparation and nutrition. In Kansas, the program is known as the Food Assistance Program. It provides crucial support to elderly households, to low-income working households, to other low-income households that include the unemployed or disabled, and to households transitioning from welfare to work.

The federal SNAP work requirements were initially implemented as part of the 1996 welfare reform package. The law states that able-bodied adults without dependent children (ABAWD) are eligible for SNAP benefits three out of every 36 months unless they meet the mandated work requirement, which is a minimum of 20 hours per week or enrollment in a federally-approved job training program. Individuals 18 to 49, who are capable of work and are not pregnant and have no dependent children, are required to meet work program requirements to receive food assistance.

Attachment C shows that 78 percent of our SNAP households are single-parent families.

(See Attachment C)

Child Care Assistance - Head Start and Early Head Start

The child care assistance eligibility system does not capture marital status; therefore, data is unavailable. However, Head Start, a national child development program for children from birth to age five, that provides services to promote academic, social and emotional development, as well as providing social, health and nutrition services for income eligible families, does collect information related to household composition. Head Start is funded by the United States Congress and administered through the Department of Health and Human Services – Agency for Children and Families (ACF). Early Head Start (EHS), which serves pregnant women and children from birth to age five, providing guidance, information and direct services that foster healthy development for children and their families during a child's most formative years, also captures information related to marital status in the household served.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to submit data per their annual Head Start Program Information Report (PIR). Data includes identifying the primary caregiver (parent, custodian, foster parents, etc.), the number of families served, employment at time of enrollment, TANF households, families receiving other services (relationship and marriage education, parenting education, domestic violence services, etc), and participating fathers. The Head Start program year is from June 1 through May 31.

(See Attachment D)

The Average Cost per Child

According to the 2011 Biennial Report to Congress that was prepared in accordance with Section 650 of the Head Start Act, as amended, the national and regional costs per child are as follows:

- The national average cost per child was \$7,582.
- The Region VII average cost per child was \$6,978.

DCF continues to support the Kansas Early Head Start Program offering comprehensive evidence-based programs for at-risk children. Services include both financial and health literacy activities as well as the opportunity for healthy relationship services.

Child Support Services

Child Support Services (CSS) operates under Title IV-D of the federal social security act and has two purposes: to promote long-term financial stability for households with children, and to ease the public assistance burden caused when children are not supported by both parents.

CSS provides a wide range of services to help custodial parents care for their children, including locating non-custodial parents and their assets, establishing parentage,

establishing child support orders, ensuring regular support through administrative actions, enforcing past due child support through court actions, using inter-governmental resources when part of the family lives or works in a different state, modifying ongoing child support orders as needed to reflect the child's current needs, and receiving and distributing payments to the custodial parent.

As of January 2015, Kansas had 138,762 child support cases, with 116,388 of them with established orders. For the month of January 2015, these families were due current support of \$20.6 million. CSS collected and disbursed to the families approximately 52 percent of the amount due that month. The total amount of current support due for FFY2014 was \$241.7 million.

A recent report released by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that "Custodial parents who live in poverty are much more likely to be female, never married, under 30 years old, and have fewer years of education than custodial parents who do not live in poverty."⁷ This is demonstrated in Attachment E.

(See Attachment E)

Strengthening Kansas families is critical to the fight against poverty and other social issues plaguing our state. Please see Attachment F for additional research to demonstrate this fact. The data in this attachment was presented during the Governor's Task Force on Reducing Childhood Poverty meetings, beginning March 4, 2013.

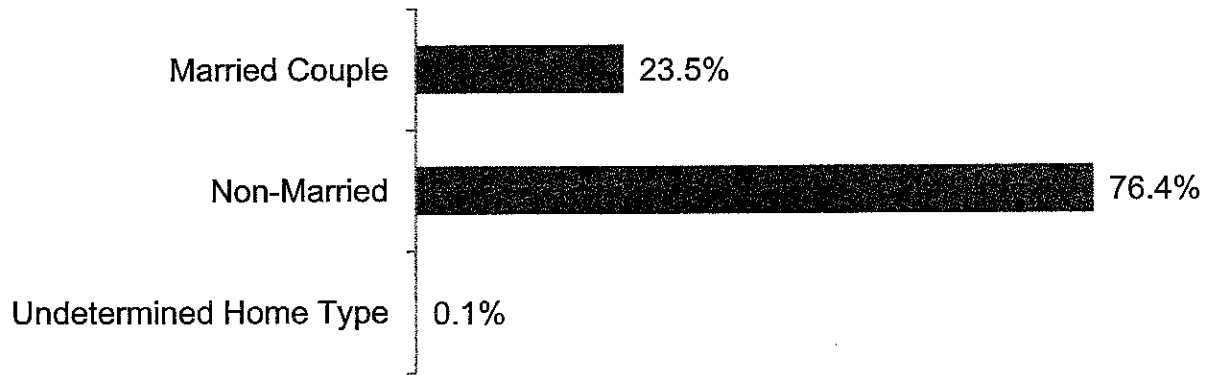
(See Attachment F)

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information to your Committee.

⁷ "The Story Behind the Numbers," *Child Support Fact Sheet Series: Number 3*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January, 2014

Attachment A

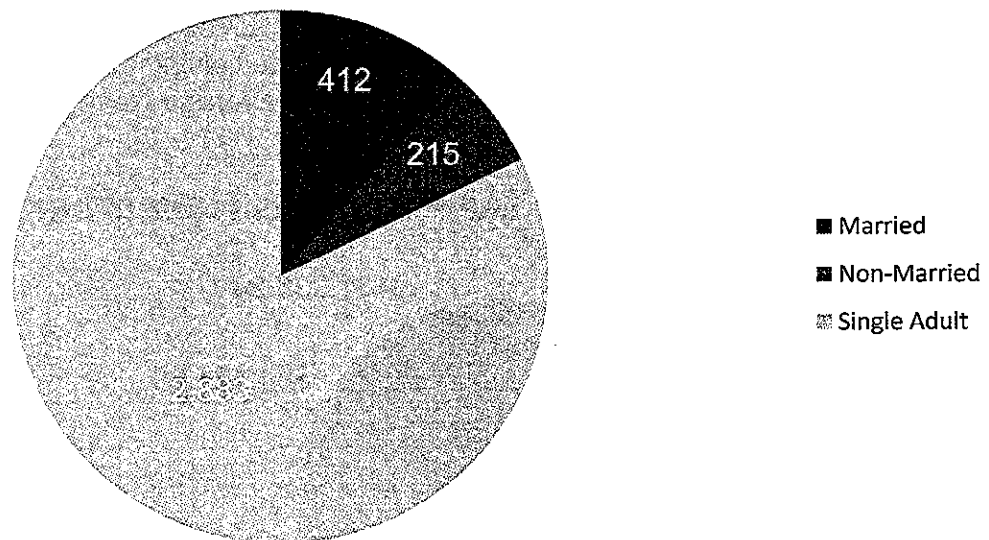
In SFY2014 of the 3,805 children removed into out of home placements



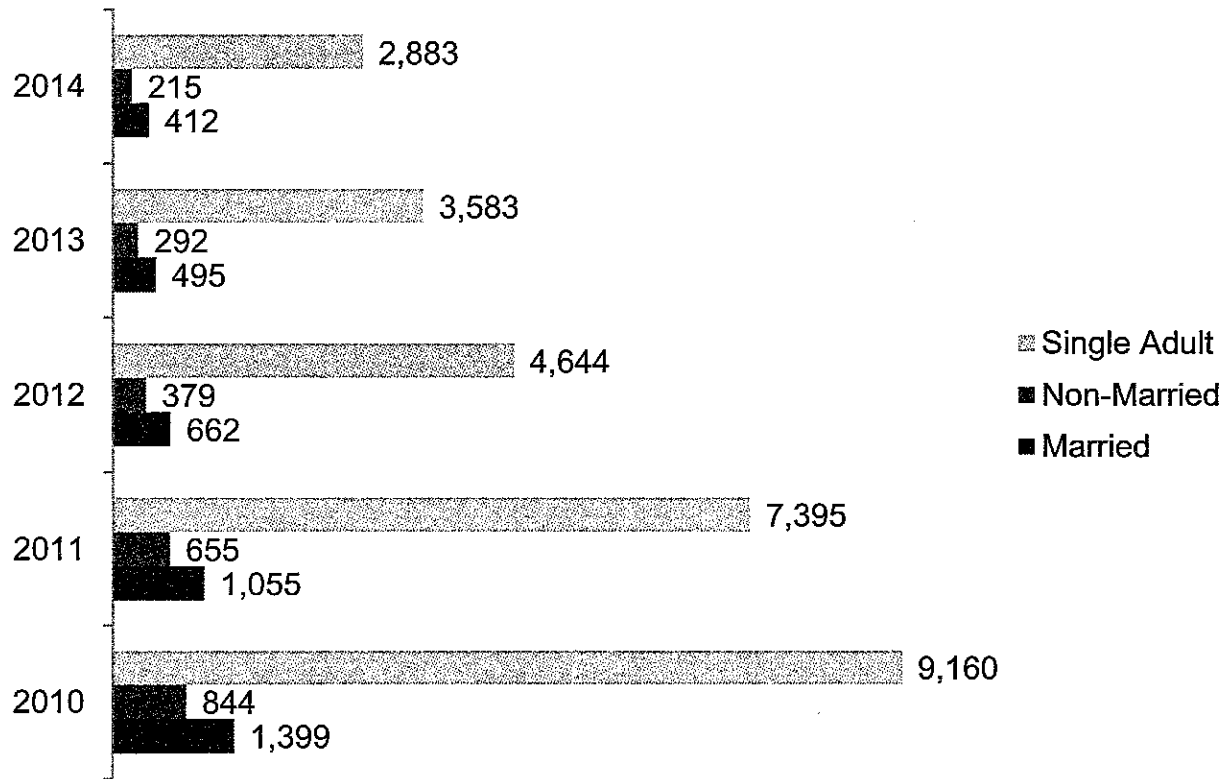
Attachment B

The pie charts below shows the marital status of those receiving TANF assistance.

EES TANF Marital Status Overview 2014

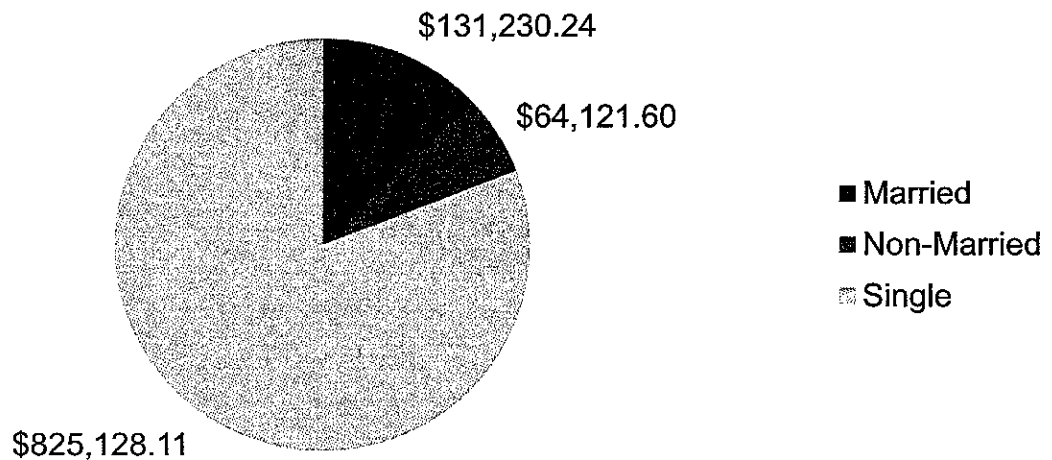


EES TANF Marital Status Overview 2014



The pie chart below shows the total benefits paid in November 2014, by each household type. These figures were calculated by multiplying the number of each married, cohabitating and single households by the average November 2014 benefit.

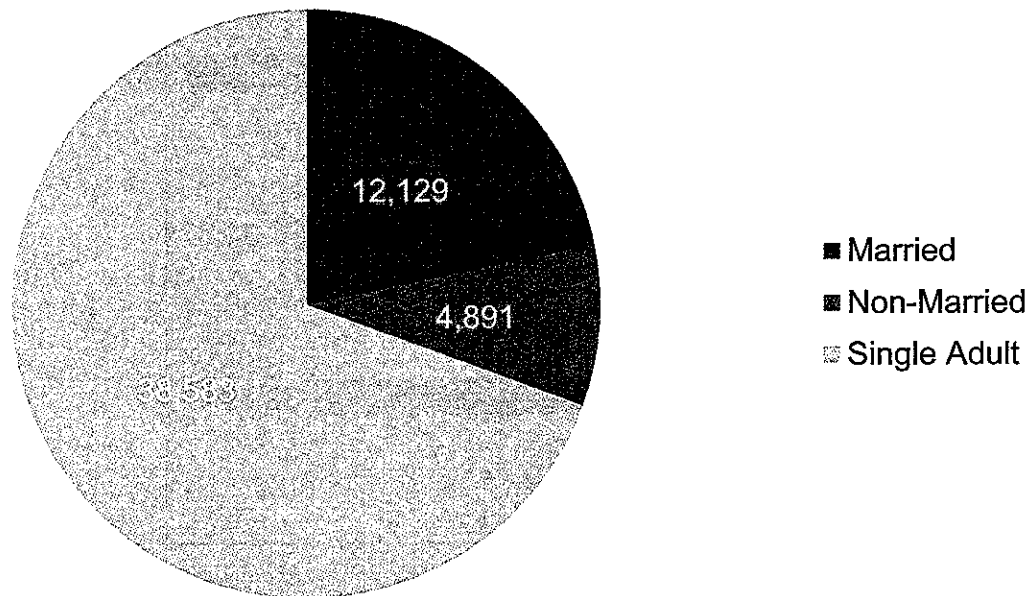
Estimated Total TANF Benefits November 2014



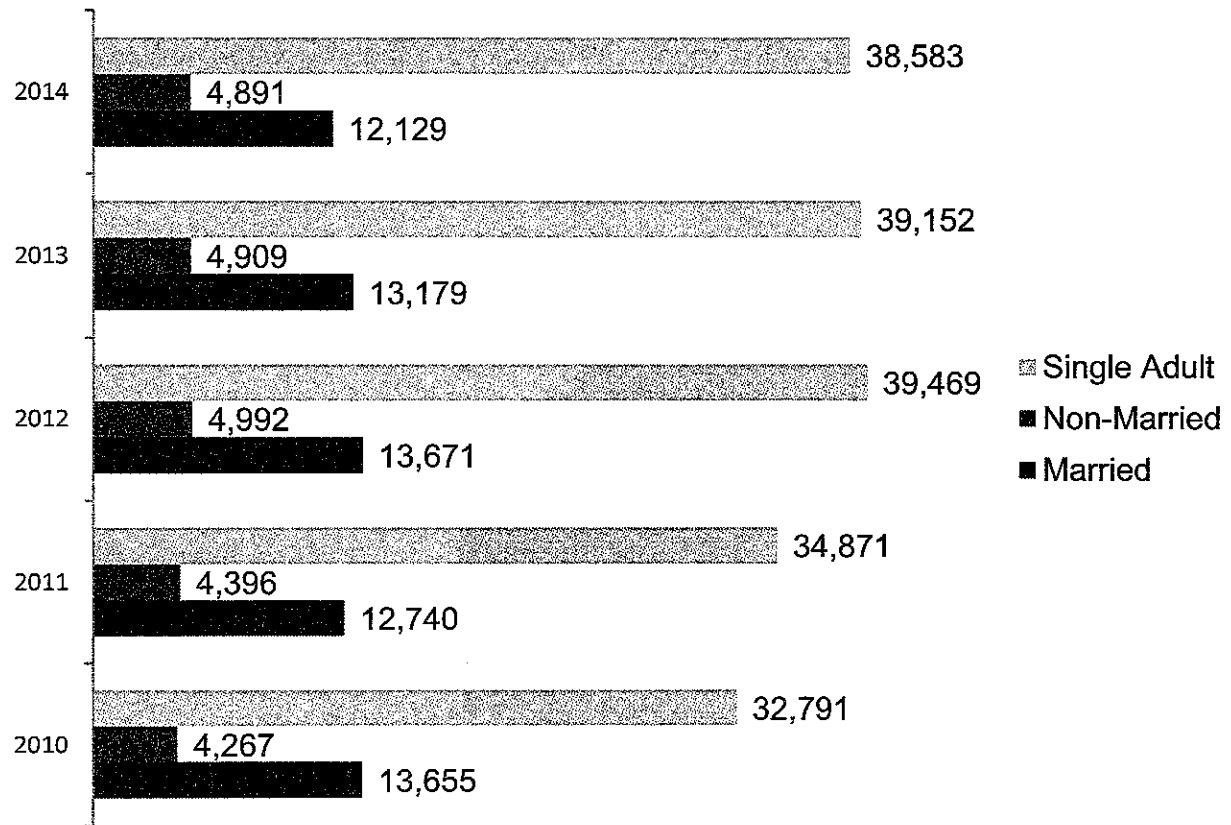
Attachment C

The federal food assistance program SNAP requires all adults living together to be included in the same household for eligibility purposes if they all purchase and prepare meals together for the majority of the month. If members of the household are legally married then the spouses must be included in the same household for eligibility purposes. If the adult members of the household are not legally married they may claim to purchase and prepare separately.

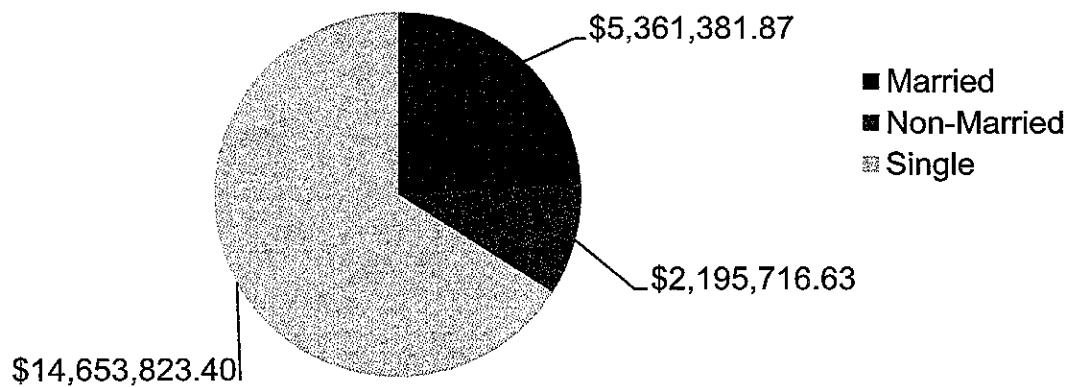
EES SNAP Marital Status Overview 2014



EES SNAP Marital Status



Estimated Total SNAP Benefits November 2014



Attachment D

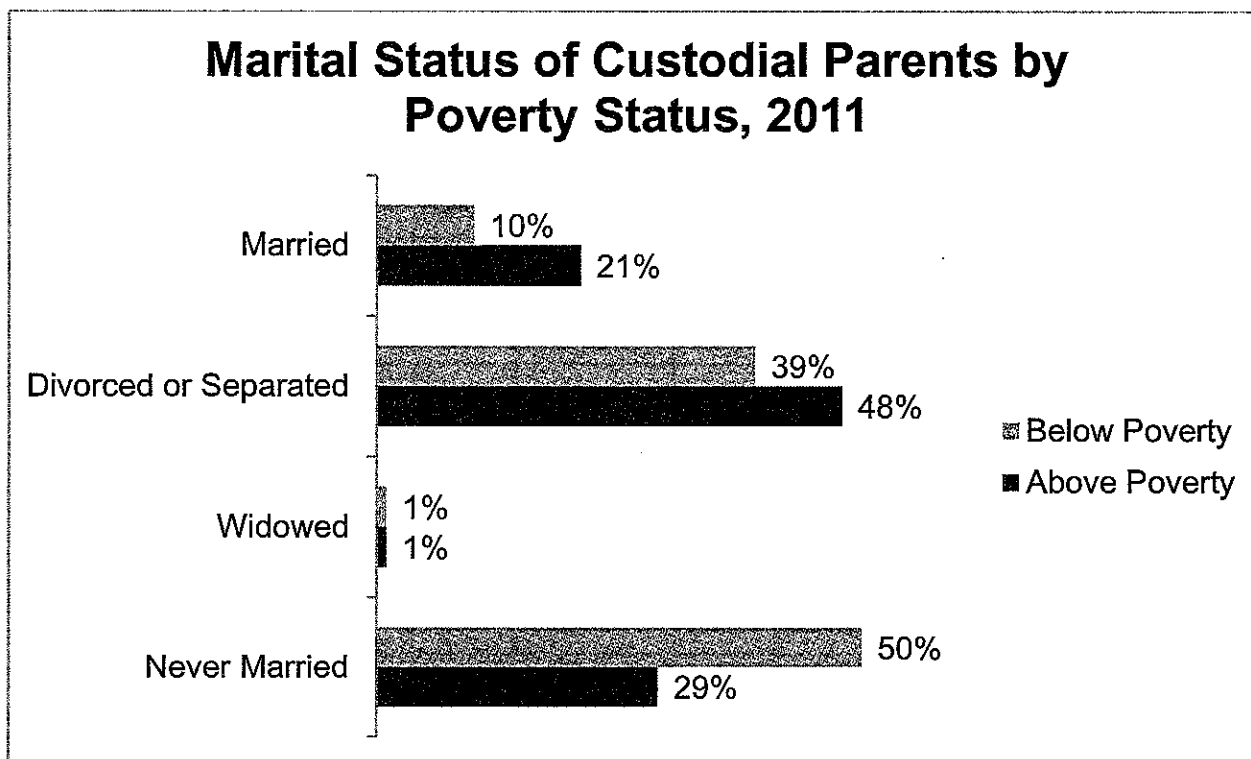
	2011		2012		2013		2014	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Total Number of Families Enrolled	10,843	-	10,752	-	10,642	-	9,209	-
Two Parent Families	4,414	40.71%	4,320	40.18%	4,442	41.74%	3,929	42.66%
Single Parent Families	6,429	59.29%	6,432	59.82%	6,200	58.26%	52,802	57.34%
Both Parents Employed	1,052	23.83%	959	22.20%	1,102	24.81%	1,067	27.16%
One Parent Employed	2,741	62.10%	2,674	61.90%	2,762	62.18%	2,323	59.12%
Both Parents Not Working	610	13.82%	687	15.90%	578	13.01%	539	13.72%
Relationship and Marriage Education	311	2.87%	372	3.46%	259	2.43%	281	3.05%
Parenting Education	6129	56.52%	6,813	63.36%	5,964	56.04%	6,218	67.52%
Domestic Violence Services	178	1.64%	167	1.55%	139	1.31%	141	1.53%
Children with Participating Fathers	2,575	21.40%	1,934	16.25%	2,686	22.80%	2,724	26.66%
Receiving TANF Benefits	1,739	16.04%	1,700	15.81%	1,526	14.34%	972	10.55%

*Source Region VII Head Start Association website information "About Head Start" and "About Early Head Start"

*Source Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health Services, Biennial Report to Congress; 2011The Status of Children in Head Start Programs.

*Source Head Start Program Information Report, 2013-2014 PIR Form (Version 1.0 May 06, 2014) HHS-ACF Office of Head Start

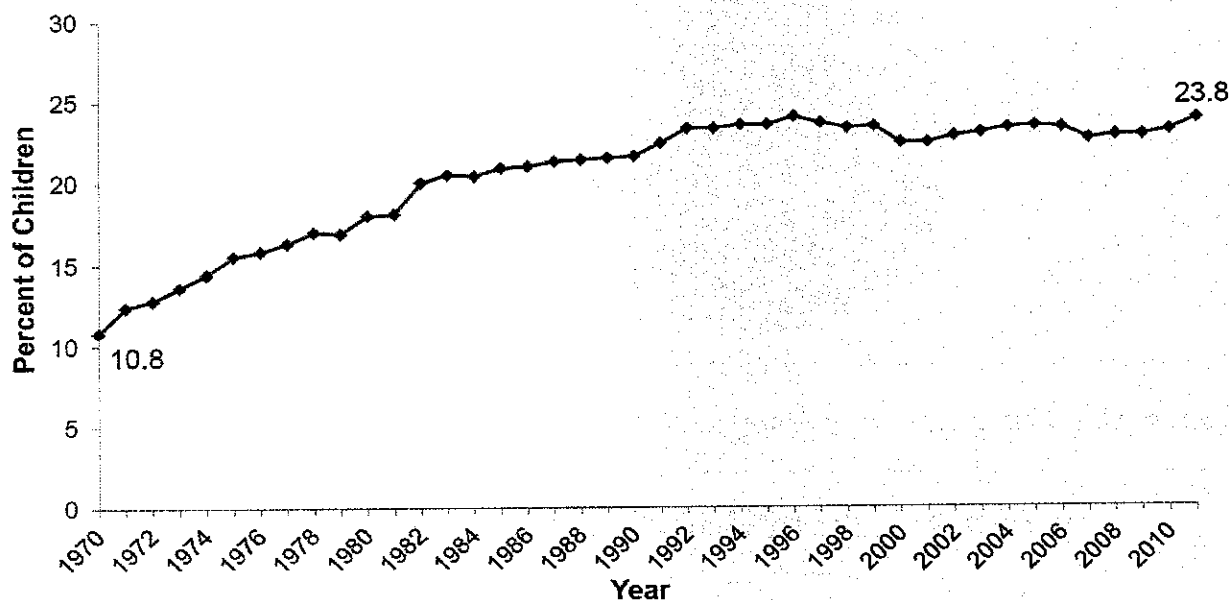
Attachment E



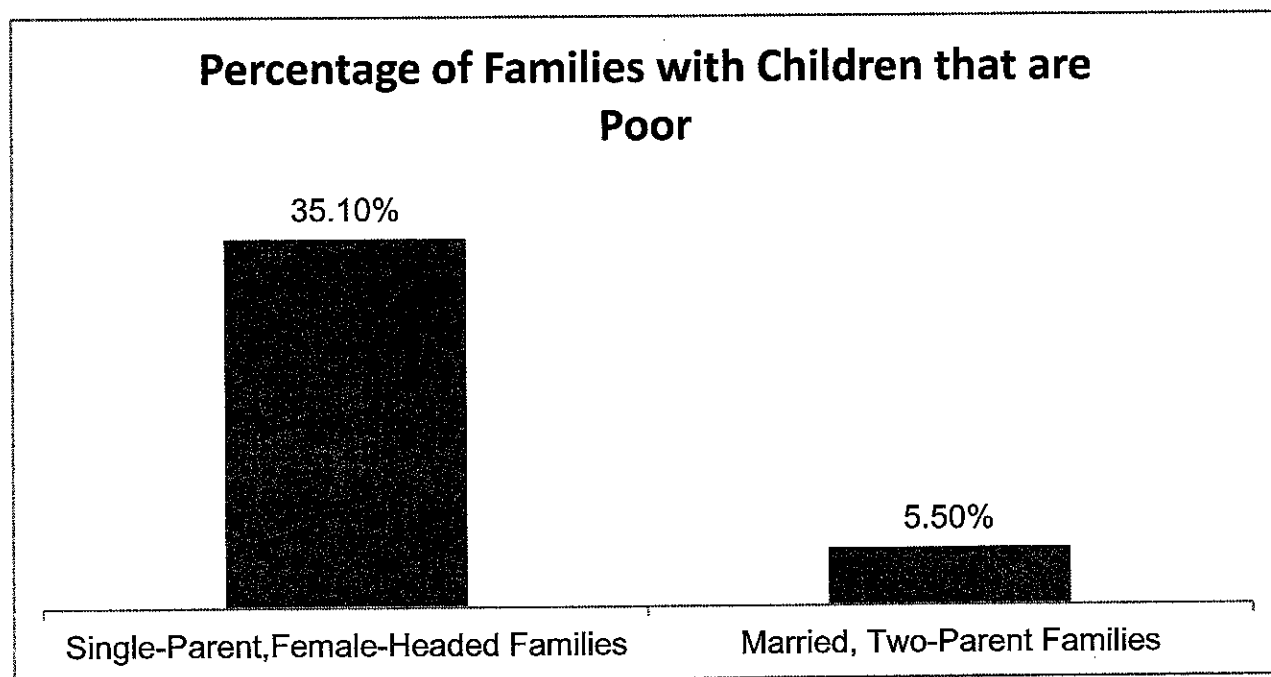
Source: *The Story Behind the Numbers*, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Number 3, (2014).

Attachment F

Percent of Children Living with Mothers Only, 1970-2011

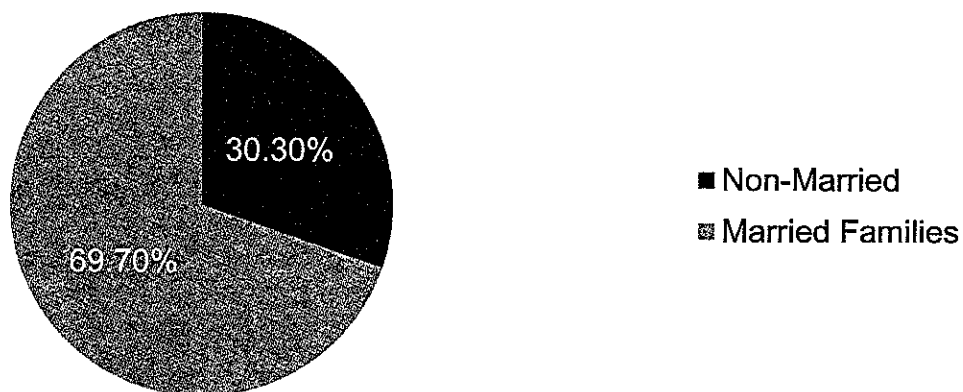


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Living Arrangements of Children, Table CH-1, available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/children.html>.



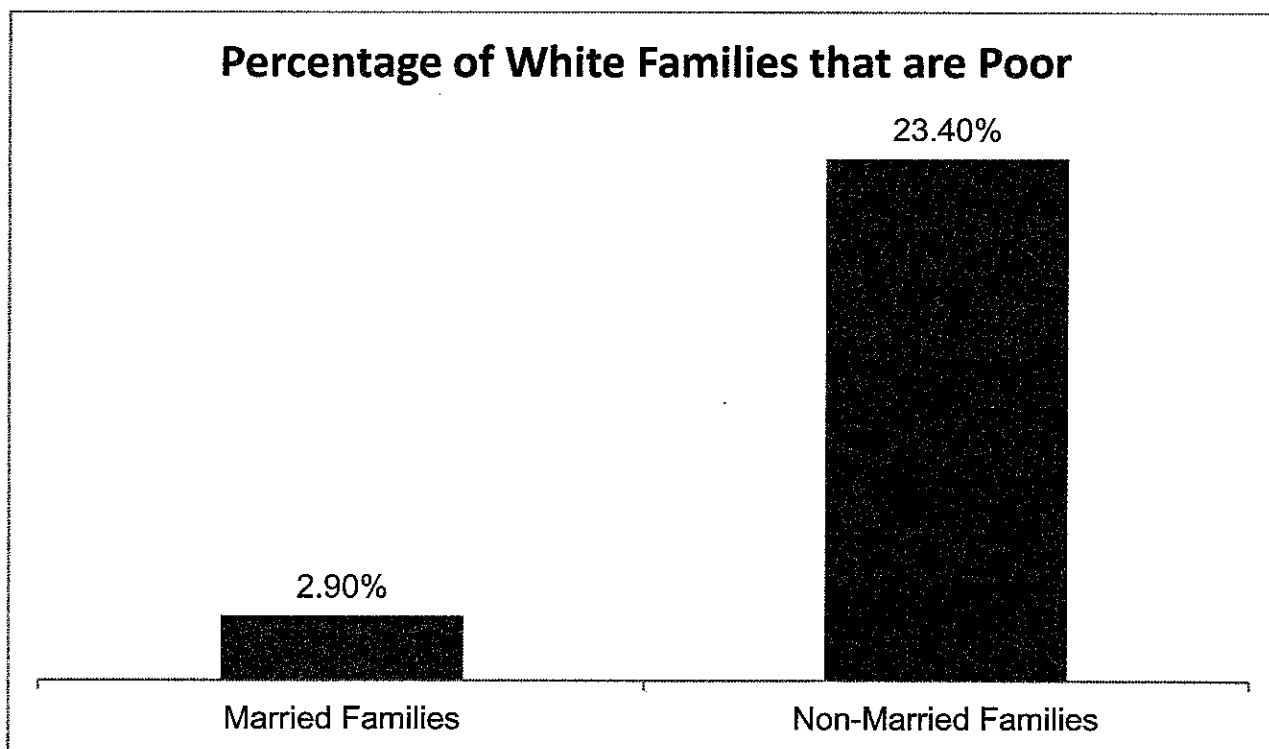
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.

In Kansas, Nearly One-Third of All Families with Children Are Not Married

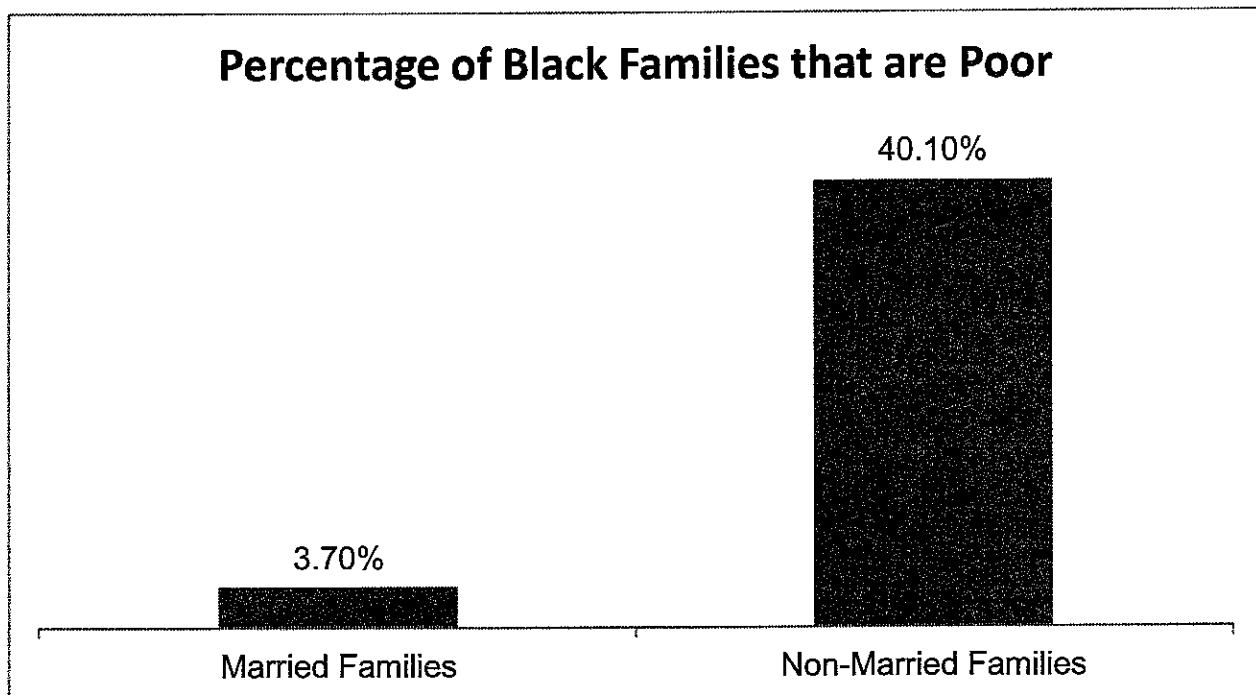


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.

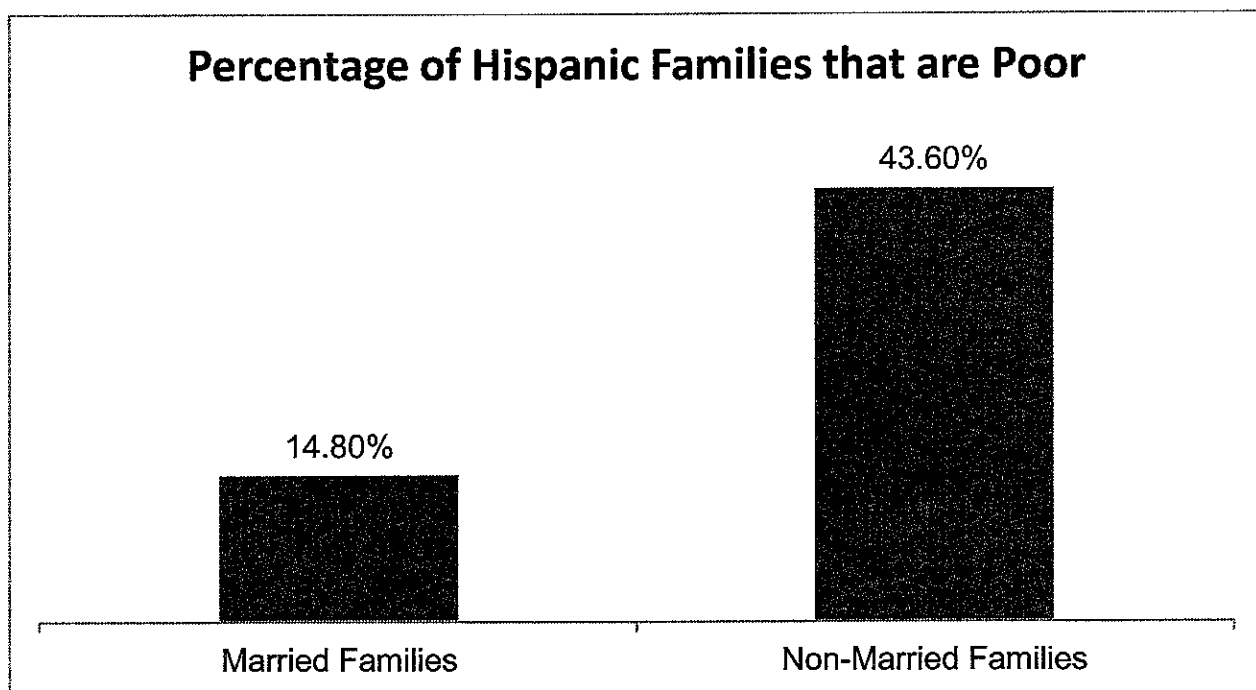
Percentage of White Families that are Poor



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007-2009 data.

