Deaf Children Living with Deaf Parents

# Using 2012-2016 5-year ACS

## Identifying family relationships in the ACS

To estimate the proportion of deaf children living with deaf parents, we need to establish family relationships within a household—who is a parent to whom?

The ACS is a sample of households—one survey is filled out in each household. Each household in the survey is given a household ID, enabling researches to know which persons in the ACS belong to the same household. The person who fills out the survey is called the “reference person.” The reference person reports their relationship with each other member of the household, choosing the appropriate option from those listed in Table 1. They choose “reference person” for themselves. To my knowledge, this is the only source of relevant information in the ACS on within-household relationships.

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| --- |
| Reference person |
| Husband/wife |
| Biological son or daughter |
| Adopted son or daughter |
| Stepson or stepdaughter |
| Brother or sister |
| Father or mother |
| Grandchild |
| Parent-in-law |
| Son-in-law or daughter-in-law |
| Other relative |
| Roomer or boarder |
| Housemate or roommate |
| Unmarried partner |
| Foster child |
| Other nonrelative |
| Institutionalized group quarters population |
| Noninstitutionalized group quarters population |

*Table 1: Relationship options in the ACS*

This analysis excludes people living in group or institutional quarters.

## Identifying “Children”

In the following, I use the term “child” to refer to someone age 18 or younger who lives with their parent(s) (adopted or biological), step-parent(s), foster parent(s), and/or grandparent(s). It is impossible to identify all children in the dataset with complete certainty; however, I believe that we can identify the vast majority with near certainty. Table 2 outlines four survey response patterns that we associate with children. These differ in terms the family structure of the household, and the identity of the reference person (the one who filled out the form).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identity of**  **Reference Person** | **Relationship of Reference to Child (Code)** | **Other Criteria** | **Notes** | **% of Identified Deaf Children** |
| Child | Self (0) | Someone in HH is identified as the reference person’s parent | Children as young as 15 may fill out the form | 0.05% |
| Parent | Biological child (2), adopted child (3), step-child (4), or foster child (14) | none |  | 89% |
| Unmarried partner of parent (inferred) | “other non-relative” (15) | Someone in HH is identified as the reference person’s unmarried partner (13) AND is at least 15 years older than the child. | This category could mistakenly count unrelated children who happen to live with unmarried partners (over-count). It could also miss the children of unmarried partners who gave birth at an age younger than 15 (under-count). | 1% |
| Grandparent | Grandchild (7) | none | We are counting grandparents as “parents.” | 10% |

*Table 2: Identifying “children” in the ACS*

## Identifying parents

In the following, I use the term “parent” to refer to someone in a parental role in the household. This includes parents of biological and adopted children, step-parents, foster parents, grandparents, and parents’ unmarried partners. Table 3, below, outlines six survey response patterns that we associate with parents. These differ in terms the family structure of the household, and the identity of the reference person (the one who filled out the form).

**Unmarried partners and parents**

There are two scenarios in which unmarried partners enter in to our analysis:

1) The reference person identifies a household member as their child, and a different household member as their unmarried partner. Then both the reference person and their unmarried partner are counted as “parents.” These are covered by the first and second rows of Table 2, respectively.

2) The reference person’s unmarried partner is the deaf child’s parent. Then the child is listed as unrelated to the unmarried partner. In this scenario, we cannot identify parents and their children with certainty. If a person listed as an “unmarried partner” is also at least 15 years older than a child in the household, and that child is listed as unrelated to the reference person, we assume that that the unmarried partner is the child’s parent. This is covered in the fifth row of Table 2. We also count the reference person—who is the assumed parent’s partner—as a parent, in the sixth row of Table 2.

**Multigenerational Households**

Multigenerational households can lead to additional uncertainty in the identification of parents. Counting grandparents as parents reduces this uncertainty. Identification of parents in multigenerational households depends on the identity of the reference person. There are three possibilities:

1) The reference person is a grandparent. Then, the reference person (row 1 of Table 2), the reference person’s spouse or unmarried partner (row 2), and the reference parent’s children (biological, adopted, step, foster, or in-law) who are at least 15 years older than the grandchild (row 4) are counted as parents. This last category, row 4 of table 2, can over-count parents by including aunts and/or uncles of the grandchild, who also live in the household, as parents. For instance, Bob lives with two daughters, Mary and Sally, and Sally’s deaf son Tom. Bob is reference person, lists Mary and Sally as daughters and Tom as a grandson. We mistakenly count Mary as a parent.

2) The reference person is a parent, and his or her parents (i.e. grandparents) also live in the household. In this case, the reference person (row 1), the reference person’s spouse or unmarried partner (row 2), and the reference person’s parents (row 3) are counted as parents.

3) The reference person is a child living with both parents and grandparents. In this case, the reference person’s parents (row 3) are counted as parents. However, the reference person’s grandparents are *not* counted as parents—“grandparent” is not included in the list of relationship options in Table 1, so the reference person’s grandparents are not identifiable. However, there are only 75 cases in the dataset of a reference person who is a deaf person 18 or younger, so the number of undercounted grandparent cases is probably small.

An additional challenge in multigenerational households occurs when the parents—the middle generation—are 18 or younger. Then they are counted as both parents and children. For instance, Bob (hearing, age 60) lives with his deaf daughter Sally (age 18), Sally’s deaf partner Beth (age 19) and Sally and Beth’s deaf son Tom (age 1). There are two deaf parents in the household, Sally and Beth. Tom, indeed, has two deaf parents. However, even though Sally lives in a household with two deaf parents, they are not *her* parents—one of them is herself, and the other is her partner. Instead, we should count her as living with *no* deaf parents, since she lives with her hearing father Bob. To avoid this sort of miscount, to count the number of deaf parents of people are identified as both parents and children, we only count parents in the household who are at least 15 years older.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identity of**  **Reference Person** | **Relationship of Reference to Parent (Code)** | **Other Criteria** | **Notes** | **% of Identified Parents** (in HHs containing at least one deaf person 18 or younger) |
| Parent of deaf child | Self (0) | Reference person identified someone in HH as biological (2), adopted (3), step- (4), foster- (14), or grand- (7) child. |  | 52.4% |
| Parent of deaf child | Spouse (1) or unmarried partner (13) | Reference person identified someone in HH as biological (2), adopted (3), step- (4), foster- (14), or grand- (7) child. | e.g. if mother fills out form, father falls in this category | 29.4% |
| Deaf child OR parent of deaf child | Parent (6) |  | When deaf child is the reference person, this is their parent; when deaf child’s parent is the reference person, this is the deaf child’s grandparent | 8.6% |
| Grandparent of deaf child | Biological (2), adopted (3), step- (4), foster- (14), or grand- (7) child. | Someone in HH is reference person’s grandchild (7) AND is at least 15 years younger than parent | This potentially over-counts by including deaf child’s aunts or uncles. | 8.9% |
| Unmarried partner of parent of deaf child | Unmarried partner (13) | Some child in HH at least 15 years younger than parent AND listed as reference person’s “other non-relative” (15) | Could include some non-parents | 0.4% |
| Unmarried partner of parent of deaf child | Self (0) | Someone in HH listed as unmarried partner (13) and previous row’s criteria apply | Could include some non-parents | 0.6% |

## Results

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | % Deaf children with at least one deaf parent | % Deaf children with at least two deaf parents |
| Estimate | 11.8% | 2.0% |
| Standard error | 0.3% | 0.2% |
| Sample Size | 18,299 | 18,299 |

## Alternative Analysis: Counting “Responsible Adults” and “Charges”

Given the complexities and uncertainty involved in identifying familial relationships in the ACS, I conducted an alternative analysis that only considers peoples’ ages. In this analysis, we consider minors (18 or younger) who live with adults who are at least 15 years older than they are. This includes children with parents, but also any other scenarios or relationships in which a young person lives with an older adult. We then count how many of these older adults are deaf. The relevant definitions are:

* “Responsible Adult”: An adult (18+) who lives in a household with a minor (18-) who is at least 15 years younger than they are.
* “Charge”: a minor (18-) who lives in a household with an adult (18+) 15 years older than they are.

For each deaf Charge, we count the number of adults in the household who are at least 15 years older than they are.

## Results

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|  | % Deaf charges with at least one deaf responsible adult | % Deaf children with at least two deaf parents |
| Estimate | 12.7% | 2.3% |
| Standard error | 0.4% | 0.2% |
| Sample Size | 19,111 | 19,111 |