



August 1, 2007

Census Data Confirms Growth Of Unmarrieds Electorate Changing As Demographics Shift

To: Interested Parties
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research
Women's Voices. Women Vote.

America is changing, and newly reported Census data clearly shows that unmarried Americans are leading the way. Since 2000, the number of married Americans between the ages of 21 and 54 years declined, even as the population of the nation as a whole increased. Census data released earlier this year showed that a majority of households are now headed by unmarried Americans. With the continued growth of the unmarried population, unmarrieds are continuing to grow as a percentage of the electorate.

Between the 2002 and 2006 midterm elections, the proportion of unmarried voting age citizens and actual voters grew at a rate that exceeded the married population. In fact, the rate of growth for unmarried voters is 2.4 times higher than the growth rate among married voters.¹ Unmarried Americans still do not participate at the same levels as married, but their overall population growth leaves them with a greater share of the electorate.

Policymakers and politicians would be wise to observe this trend and pay more attention to this emerging electoral bloc, especially unmarried women who account for nearly six in ten of all unmarried voters.²

Shifting Demographics Portend Fundamental Change

While the rapid growth of the unmarried population over the past four years is notable, it is merely the continuation of a long-term trend. Between 1960 and 2006, the percentage of the population (as opposed to households) over 15 years of age that was unmarried increased from 32.4 to 45.2 percent.³ If the current growth trend continues, the unmarried population will become a majority in the next 15 years.

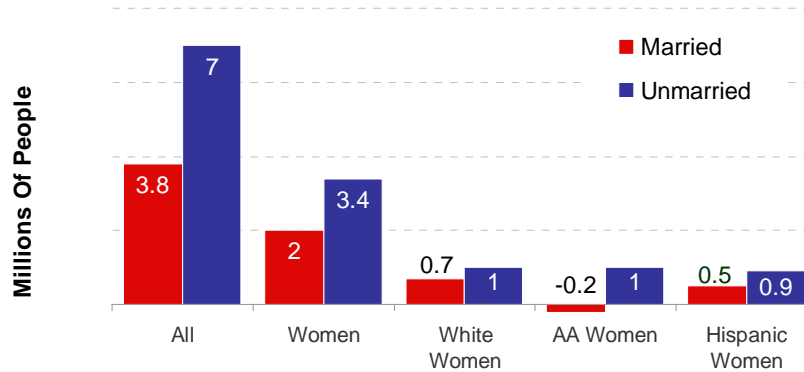
¹ The number of married voters grew 6.5%, compared to 15.7% for the unmarried voters. 2006 November Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement released June 2007.

² 2005 American Community Survey

³ US Census Data 1960-2006

And while the number of married Americans aged 21-54 years is dropping in absolute terms for the first time ever, the number of unmarried couples who cohabit⁴ and the number of women living without a spouse are on the rise. The change is being driven in part by younger women. Since 1950, the percentage of women aged 15-to-34 years who are married has dropped by about 25 percentage points.⁵ Meanwhile, the proportion of people who have never married continues to grow by double digits in every racial and ethnic group.⁶

Increase In Voting Eligible Population 2002-2006



*Note: Data from Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement, June 2007.

Women's Voices. Women Vote.

In fact, this is an increasingly diverse cohort. Between 2002 and 2006, Hispanic unmarried women became the majority of Hispanic women for the first time (now 51 percent of all Hispanic women up from 48 percent). While African American unmarried women (now 70 percent of all African American women up from 67 percent) grew by nearly a million during the same four year period, married African American women declined by 150,000. There are, in fact, more unmarried voting eligible African American women (9.6 million) than there are married African American men and women combined (8.8 million). Non-Hispanic white unmarried women also grew by almost one million, which was nearly double the rate of growth of non-Hispanic white married women. Unmarried non-Hispanic white women are now 43.5% of all non-Hispanic white women.

Overall, the trends illustrate a generational change that has the potential to alter the fundamental social, and therefore political, structure of the country. As William Frey of the Brookings Institution notes, the numbers demonstrate “a clear tipping point, reflecting the culmination of post-1960 trends associated with greater independence and more flexible lifestyles for women. For better or worse, women are less dependent on men or the institution of marriage.” Professor Stephanie Coontz, the director of public education for the Council of Contemporary Families, puts it even more succinctly: “This is yet another of the inexorable signs

⁴ “It’s Official: To Be Married Means to Be Outnumbered.” *New York Times*, 10/15/06

⁵ “51% of Women Are Now Living Without Spouse.” *New York Times*, 1/16/07

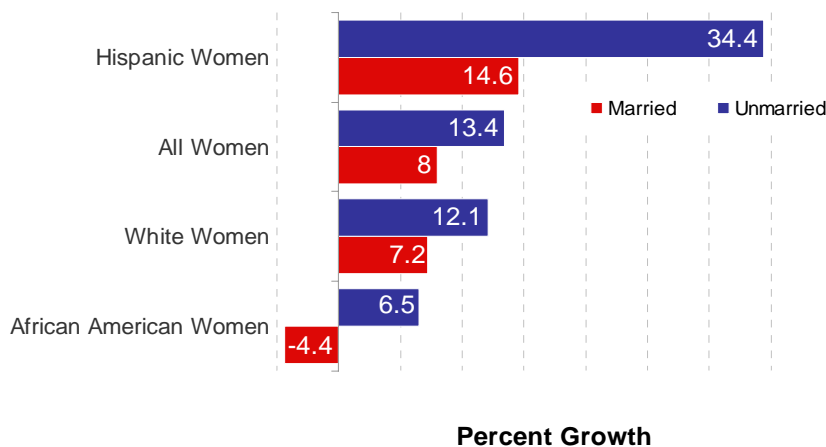
⁶ “The Shelf Life of Bliss.” *New York Times*, 7/1/07

that there is no going back to a world where we can assume that marriage is the main institution that organizes people's lives.”⁷

New Data Shows Unmarrieds Fuel Growth In Electorate

The unmarried population still does not vote at the same levels as married, but we still see some remarkable change. While the number of married voters increased a respectable 6 percent, the number of unmarried voters jumped by nearly 16 percent in just one four-year cycle. Among women, we see an 8 percent increase in the number of married voters, but a 13.4 percent increase in the number of unmarried voters. At 34.4 percent, the growth among Hispanic unmarried women voters is particularly striking.

Growth Rate Of Women Voters 2002-2006



Women's Voices. Women Vote.

*Note: Data from Current Population Survey, Voting and Registration Supplement, June 2007.

Unmarried Hispanic women were 41 percent of Hispanic women voters in 2002, and jumped to 45 percent of Hispanic women voters four short years later. Unmarried African American women voters were 62 percent of all African American women voters in 2002, and increased to 64 percent of all African American women voters in just four years. Meanwhile, the percentage of unmarried white women voters increased from 34 percent to 35 percent. In fact, much of the increased diversity of the American electorate is driven by unmarried voters in general and unmarried women in particular.

Conclusion

The unmarried have grown as a share of the population for the past 50 years, and the latest data shows that this trend is not abating. The growth of the unmarried population is outpacing the growth of the married population two and a half to one. Earlier this year, the *New York*

⁷ *New York Times*, 1/16/07

Census Data Confirms Growth Of Unmarrieds

Times concluded that the growth of unmarried American “could ultimately shape social and workplace policies, including the ways government and employers distribute benefits.”⁸ Indeed it will. As the percentage of unmarried Americans continues to surge, policymakers will need to address the agenda of this growing bloc. Since unmarried women make up nearly 60% of these voters, their importance will be paramount.

⁸ *New York Times*, 1/16/07