

Unmarried and single parent african american women in the us

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



According to the US Census Bureau report of the year 2010, the total of American population was 301, 237, 703 (US Census Bureau, 2010). African Americans account for 12. 7 percent of the American population (approximately 30 million people). In the year 2000, African Americans accounted for 14. 8 percent of the American population. Many African Americans live in the urban areas, specifically, urban areas located on the southern part of the United States. In 2008, New York had the highest number of African Americans (3. 5 million). Other urban areas with large number of African American residents are Georgia, the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Chicago, Orleans Parish, and the Louisiana border in Claiborne County (Bowman, 2010). Approximately, 53 percent of African Americans live in rented houses within the urban areas, specifically, in the inner parts of urban areas. They account for the largest percentage of house renters in the United States.

African American women account for the largest proportion of the entire population of African Americans in the US. In 2008, there were approximately 18 million African American females, while the males were around 14 million. According to the 2010 Census report, there is one single-mother headed family in every three families of African Americans (US Census Bureau, 2010). The total of single-mother households among the African Americans was 29 percent in 2010. According to Bowman (2010), nearly half of African American women do not get married. In 2008, only 30 percent of the entire population of adult women was married. This means that, around 70 percent of adult African American women were unmarried.

Bowman also indicates that, many women are single mothers of around two to three children each (2010).

Despite the large number of unmarried and single African American women in the inner cities of the United States, most of them live above the poverty line. However, African Americans are among the poorest races residing in the US. In 2008, the average annual income for African American households was \$34, 218. Bowman reveals that, many single and unmarried African American women are poor (2010). The average annual income in a household headed by a single-mother or unmarried African American woman is \$25, 958 (Bowman, 2010).

Studies reveal that, the high rate of unmarried and single African American women is because of low number of African American men (Bowman, 2010). Another reason for high rate of single and unmarried women among the African Americans is imprisonment of many of African American men. Studies indicate that, one in every nine African American men aged between 20 and 29 is in jail. On the other hand, only one in every 150 African American women of the same age is in jail (Bowman, 2010). Therefore, the number of free women, who can get married at will, is more than that of free men. Moreover, African Americans are known to have a tradition of not marrying convicts. Therefore, even after these men are freed from jail, they rarely get marriage partners.

Others reasons for high number of unmarried and single African American women include, the introduction of contraceptive pill, which allows women to

remain sexually active without getting pregnant, and establishment of more employment opportunities for women in the job market. The divorce rate among the African Americans is said to be very high. This is yet another contributing factor to the high number of single African American women in the US. However, according to Charles, one of the researchers at the University of Chicago on matters concerning blacks' welfare, imprisonment of African American men remains to be the biggest reason why many African American women are unmarried and single (Bowman, 2010).

Recent studies indicate that, a single mother raises one in every four American children. America has the highest number of single mothers among all the 27 developed nations of the world (US Census Bureau, 2010). Out of the total 25.8 percent of the American children who are from single-mother households, 72 percent are from African American households (US Census Bureau, 2010). According to Bowman, African Americans have accepted the culture of single-parenting (2010). With the high rate of divorce, and the scarcity of men among the African Americans, many adults, especially women, prefer to raise their children single-handedly. However, Bowman points out that, the high number of single parent children in US is because: the country does not have policies, which support families such as paid maternity leave, and childcare at work.

In order to understand the family setting in which these children are brought up in, it is important to first understand what the term 'single-mother family' means. According to Mather, "a single-mother family is a family headed by a female with no spouse present, living with one or more own, never-married

children under the age of 18" (2010). Single-mother families are part of the large female-headed households. Female-headed households are families, which comprise of mother and children. Children in such families are taken care of by their mothers, grandmothers, or other female relatives. Report from the US Census Bureau indicates that, in 2009, there were 18.1 million single-mother children, and 19.6 million children from female-headed families (US Census Bureau, 2010). More than a half of these children (from both types of families) were born of African American women. The type of community in which the African Americans belong to is a factional community. A factional community is a type of community, which is made of a group of people, who live cohesively, and they form a minor community from a major community. Initially, African Americans were not Americans. They came to America through slave trade. After the end of slave trade, African Americans settled in America, and they became one of the minority communities in America. The African American community in America lives harmoniously, and they depict all the norms present in larger communities, hence a factional community.

One of the challenges faced by children from single-mother and female-headed families is poverty. Statistics indicate that, many single-mothers and female-headed families either are poor, or earn low incomes. In the US, a poor family is the one whose annual income is less \$22,000 for a family of four (a mother and three children). Low-income family is a family whose annual income is less than \$44,000 in a family of four (Mather, 2010). Even though many of the African American single-mothers (62 percent) are

employed, most of them work in lower-income administrative, service, or retail jobs, which offer fewer benefits. One of the consequences of low-income in single-mother families is lack of enough money to support children's education needs. Therefore, many children from single-mother families do not complete their education.

According to Mather (2010), many single-mother children drop out of school during their high school. Studies indicate that, these children are three times likely to drop out of high school more than children from two-parent families are. Apart from poverty being one of the factors contributing to high school dropout rate among African American single-mother children, other factors also contribute to this problem. Since the single-mothers are the sole source of financial support for the family, most of them lack enough time to spend with their children. They are always busy working or looking for work for those who are unemployed. Therefore, they do not have time to assist their children with homework, or assess their children's performance in school (Mather, 2010). For this reason, children either loss interest with education or record poor academic performance, and normally, their parents do not notice it. In the end, they end up dropping out of school.

Lack of enough parent-children engagement also results in indiscipline among the children since children lack parental control and guidance concerning moral uprightness. Consequently, children of single-mothers end up engaging themselves with immoral activities such as drug abuse, alcoholism, and crime. It is hard for a child to concentrate in school, when he/she is engaged in one or more of these activities, hence, they drop out of

school either voluntary or by expulsion. Children of single-mothers also tend to suffer from sociological and emotional problems, and this too, contributes to school dropout among these children (Mather, 2010).

In the larger context, school dropout has been found to be the main cause of high number of single parents. Due to lack of parental control, when children of single-mothers drop out of schools, they engage themselves with irresponsible behaviors, which contribute to teenage pregnancy. Moreover, since these children do not the required qualifications to enable them secure employment, they are end up engaging in irresponsible behaviors as a way of passing time. In the end, many young girls end up becoming pregnant, giving rise to teen parents, hence contributing to increased number of single-mothers and single-mother children. This is the reason behind large number of African American single-mothers and unmarried women in the inner cities.

Preventing school dropouts among African American children from single-mother families is one of the recommendations, which has a high possibility of preventing further increase of single-mother and female-headed households in the US. A study conducted by the National Education Association in 2008 recommended that, dropout prevention strategies among African American children should be implemented from preschool up to age of 21 (Dianda, 2008).

During the early years (preschool), single parents are encouraged to interact more with their children. Even though many of these single-mothers might be busy working, they should ensure that, they spend at least two hours with

their preschool children every day. During these two hours, parents can teach their children some basic education aspects such as, reading and writing the alphabets. Parents can also buy storybooks, and read them to their preschool children during leisure time. Such activities assist in nurturing the culture learning, hence developing children's interest in education at early age (Dianda, 2008). Apart from teaching the children how to read and write, parents should teach them how to nurture responsible behaviors.

Once the children start schooling, parents should be actively involved in their children's academic progress. For instance, parents can assist their children with homework, and/or assign them some reading and writing activities, which they can revise together during free time. Parents can also monitor their children's academic progress by visiting them in schools to see how they behave in class, and talking with their teachers concerning their academic performance.

Even at high school, parents should continue monitoring their children's academic progress. Parent-child interaction is also very important during high school years, since, major development changes take place in high school (transition from childhood to adulthood). Parents, community members, and educators, should provide an environment, which fosters positive social opportunities for high school children. Such an environment should have features, which encourage quality peer and adult relations, self-control, self-efficacy, problem solving, improved interpersonal skills, and commitment in school and academic achievement (Dianda, 2008).

Moreover, the federal government can assist poor and low-income earning single-mothers to provide basic needs to their children. This can be achieved by establishing quality public schools, and public health care facilities, where such families can access quality education and health care at minimal or no cost. The federal government can also support educators in high-poverty schools, by providing them with attractive remuneration packages. This can assist in retaining qualified and diverse educators, who can support education needs of single-mother children (Dianda, 2008).

If school dropout rate is reduced among the African American single-mother children, then their absorption rate in the job market is likely to increase. This will reduce the number of young men involved in crime, hence reducing their numbers in prisons, and the number of teenage mothers. This means that, the number of men in the community will increase and the number of teenage mothers will reduce. Consequently, the ratio of adult men to adult women will increase, hence reducing the number of single and unmarried African American women in the US.