

## Definition of family becoming broader

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The definition of who makes a family is shifting in the minds of Americans to include more same-sex couples, new research shows. Children seem to be the deciding factor for most people.

The new research is contained in a book, *Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans? Definition of Family*, and in a separate 2010 survey overseen by the book?s lead author, sociologist Brian Powell of Indiana University in Bloomington.

In 2010, almost everyone -- 99.8 percent -- agreed that a husband, wife and kids count as a family. Ninety-two percent said that a husband and wife without the kids made a family.

In 2010, 39.6 percent said that an unmarried man and woman living together were a family -- but give that couple some kids and 83 percent say that?s a family.

Between 2003 and 2010, three surveys conducted by Powell?s team showed a significant shift toward counting same-sex couples with children as family -- from 54 percent of respondents in 2003 to 68 percent in 2010. In all, more than 2,300 people were surveyed.

Powell said, ?Having children signals something. It signals that there really is a commitment and a sense of responsibility in a family.?

Powell also linked the changing attitudes to a 10 percent rise between 2003 and 2010 in the share of survey respondents who reported having a gay friend or relative.

?This indicates a more open social environment in which individuals now feel more comfortable discussing and acknowledging sexuality,? Powell told The Associated Press.

Powell separated the people surveyed into three groups according to how they defined family: ?inclusionists,? who counted same-sex couples with or without children; ?moderates,? who counted same-sex couples with children but not those without; and ?exclusionists,? who did not count any same-sex couples.

Powell found a correlation between religious ideology and how people view same-sex couples, based on whether people see the Bible as the actual word of God, the inspired word of God, or a book of history and moral precepts written by men.

Those who viewed the Bible as the actual word of God were more likely to not consider same-sex couples as a family, with 65 percent falling into the ?exclusionist? category.

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