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Children's Coresidence with Half Siblings

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A substantial proportion of children will live with half siblings at some point during their childhood. Recent research has shown that children who live with half siblings tend to fare worse on some measures of child well being than children who live with two biological parents without half siblings. Yet we have few measures of how much time children spend living with half siblings. This paper provides a cross sectional profile of detailed living arrangements for children living with half siblings, and uses a life table model to estimate the proportion of time during ages 0 to 17 the average child may spend living with half siblings.

Why look at coresidence for half siblings?

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first, to provide nationally representative estimates of detailed living situations for all children living with half siblings; and second, to provide a basic estimate of the proportion of childhood the average child might expect to spend living with a half sibling. Since recent research suggests that living with a half sibling is associated with lower well being, this paper seeks to contribute a sense of how much exposure children may have to this living arrangement over the course of childhood. Given the relatively high prevalence of divorce in the United States, and the sense that multi-partner fertility may be increasing (Guzzo and Furstenberg 2007), a look at the prevalence of living with half-siblings will contribute a baseline measure by which to assess the potential overall impact of differences in outcomes for children by whether they live with a half sibling.

Recent research has demonstrated variety in child well-being outcomes among children living in two-parent families. Some of these studies find that children in two-parent families who are living with one biological parent and one stepparent fare worse than children living with two biological parents (Evenhouse and Reilly 2004, Hofferth 2006) (See Figure 1: Child 2 in Group C compared with Child 1 in Group C). As a group, these studies find negative outcomes for children living with two biological parents and half siblings, compared with those who live with two biological parents and no half siblings (Wood Strow and Kent Strow 2008, Ginther and Pollak 2004, Halpern-Meekin and Tach 2008) (See Figure 1: Child 1 in Group C compared with the children in Group A or Group B).

Not all of the research finds an unequivocally negative effect of living with half siblings. One study of children ages 5 to 10 found little support for the idea that children living in blended families have worse outcomes on achievement test scores (Gennetian 2005). Another used family fixed effects to explain away the relatively negative outcomes for stepchildren compared with biological children for two thirds of their indicators (Evenhouse and Reilly 2004). Ginther and Pollak (2004) also found that the negative effects on test scores for stepchildren and their half siblings living with two biological parents were lessened substantially when controlling for factors such as family income, mother's education, sibship size, birth order, and religion. Hofferth (2006), using a sample of children age 3 to 12 living with their biological mother and a biological or stepfather, found that some of the differences in outcomes between children in blended families and those not in blended families could be accounted for by controlling for characteristics and resources of the fathers and the children themselves.

We are not aware of studies comparing outcomes for children living with one biological parent and half siblings with children living with one parent and no half siblings. This may be due in part to a lack of data that show the detailed relationship type between siblings even when two parents are not present. Given that research has shown that outcomes differ for children living with two parents by whether they live with half siblings, this may also be true for children living with one parent. Halpern-Meekin and Tach (2008) categorize the several hypotheses/explanations for the negative outcomes seen for children living with half siblings: 1) biology–parents who may devote more resources to biological children; 2) family environment–resources available; 3) family instability–the number of transitions children experience; and 4) parental selection–the group of parents who divorce and remarry/repartner may have particular characteristics.

While the research finds a generally negative effect of living with half siblings, it is not clear if this is primarily due to a selectivity effect related to characteristics of the parents who form blended families. Controlling for economic and social characteristics can sometimes explain a substantial amount of the difference between outcomes for children who live with half siblings and those who do not. While biology generally would not apply as an explanation for children living with one parent and half siblings, since most of these children live with a biological parent, the other explanations may still apply since single parents who have had children with multiple partners may have fewer resources and more transitions than other single parents, and may be a selective group. Harknett and Knab (2007) find that women with multipartnered fertility have

lower expectations of support from their social networks. Other research has noted particular characteristics associated with multipartner fertility. Carlson and Furstenberg (2006) found that unmarried parents, Black non-Hispanics, mothers who were young at the birth of their first child, fathers who had been incarcerated were more likely to have multipartner fertility.

The fact that unmarried parents are more likely to have multipartner fertility may or may not translate into a greater likelihood that children living with unmarried parents may live with a half sibling than children living with married parents. However, some research has found that nonmarital multipartner fertility has increased among recent cohorts of men (Manlove, Logan, Ikramullah and Holcombe 2008). An important contribution of this paper is that we show estimates of the number and proportion of all children living with half siblings, regardless of the number of parents living with the child. While we know of no studies that have looked specifically for a link between living with half siblings and child well being for children living with one parent, Bronte-Tinkew, Horowitz and Scott (2009) find that father's multipartner fertility is negatively associated with children's well being.

Data

This paper uses both cross sectional and longitudinal estimates from Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) 2004 panel data. SIPP is a longitudinal survey, with interviews every four months for 3 to 4 years.[1] In the first section of results, cross sectional data are used

[1] For further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, see <www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/2004sanda.pdf>.

from the Wave 2 interview conducted in June through September of 2004.[2] In the 2004 panel, the wave 2 topical module provides us with a detailed household relationship matrix of every household member's relationship to every other member during the second interview. In that cross section, we have detailed information about whether children in the household are biological, step, half or adoptive siblings, regardless of the number of coresident parents with whom they live. The second section will use these data in a life table model to estimate the proportion of time children spend living with a half sibling.

Using a life table model to estimate time spent during childhood living with a half sibling

The multistate life table includes three living states and one absorbing state. The four states are:

1. Child lives with no siblings;
2. Child lives with at least one sibling (biological, step, or adoptive), but no half siblings;
3. Child lives with at least one half sibling, regardless of whether biological, step or adoptive siblings are present;
4. Child ages out (becomes 18) or is not interviewed for this time point.

Figure 2 diagrams the life table model, and the flows between the states. State 2, for children living with at least one sibling, but no half siblings, also includes children who have siblings for whom we cannot determine the precise relationship.[3] This happens when the child lives with only one parent and we do not have a Wave 2 interview for them with the detailed household relationship matrix. Another source of error in our estimates is that when respondents fail to report the type of relationship between the child and their mother or father, the edit routine often

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2 The population represented (the population universe) in the 2004 SIPP is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from the population universe, is composed primarily of people in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized people in Census 2000).

3 We estimate that 11.5 percent of the children across the panel have at least some months in which they live with other children under 18 with whom we cannot determine the exact relationship. So our estimates of exposure to living with a half sibling are conservative.

assigns them a value of "step." Allocation rates in the 2004 panel for the value of "step" in type of relationship to mother and father are artificially high due to an instrument malfunction, in addition to real error introduced by item nonresponse for this question.[4] So allocation rates for stepmother and stepfather should be understood as large overestimates of the actual error, especially in later waves of data collection.

The rates of movement among the model states are created as follows.[5] We start from the household relationship matrix data collected in the second interview. If child A and his sister child B live together at wave 2, we have a detailed report about whether these children are biological, step, half or adoptive siblings. The child's siblings are included regardless of their age. So we include children under 18 as living with a half sibling even if the half sibling is 18 year or older. For children who are half siblings in wave 2, we extend this report across the

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4 In the 2004 panel, a followup question was asked if the respondent reported that the type of relationship between the mother or father and their child was "step." The followup question asked if the stepparent was also the adoptive parent of the child. Reported answers to the followup question were "yes" too often to be realistic, so in the edit, we maintained the value of step as the type of relationship, but the allocation flag was set if the followup question had been answered yes—that the parent was also the adoptive parent. Once the allocation flag was set for one interview, it was usually set for all subsequent interviews as well, so that the rates go up over the course of the panel, even if respondents were not changing their reports, or failing to report.

5 The 2004 SIPP panel was not longitudinally edited, so we did some necessary editing for age, sex, and race and origin taking the wave 2 edited value or earliest value if there was no wave 2 interview. In cases where the child was reported as the biological child of more than one mother or father over the course of the panel, we chose the wave 2 report or earliest.

entire panel, so that these children are indicated as half siblings for all other interviews at which they appear together in the same household.

For children who were not living together in a wave 2 household, but lived together at some other point during the panel, we looked at each child's relationship with any parents who were present. We know whether each child was living with their mother or father, and whether their relationship with each parent was biological, step or adoptive. We use this information to flag all half sibling relationships between children under 18 and older siblings living with them in the household.

We count transitions for each child at the month in which they have their birthday (time 1) to the month of their birthday the following year (time 2).[6] Children may contribute up to three transitions over the course of the panel, if they were interviewed during the entire panel.[7] This allows us to create transition rates by single years of age for children age 0 to 17.[8]

As we will discuss in the cross sectional estimates results section, the prevalence of living with half siblings differs by race and origin. After running a model for all children, we run separate life table models for white non-Hispanic, Black and Hispanic children.

Results: Cross sectional estimates of the proportion of children living with half siblings

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[6] The observation for children at age 0 (for children less than age 1) is taken at the earliest point at which they appear in the panel, so the transition from age 0 to age 1 may reflect less than a year of time.

[7] There was a 50 percent sample cut at wave 8 which affects the length of time we can observe children.

8 These transition rates are fed into a modified version of multistate marriage life table found in Schoen, Robert. 1988. *Modeling Multigroup Populations*. Plenum Press: New York.

In this section, we use the second interview of the SIPP panel, which collects not only the household relationship matrix, but marital history. This allows us a detailed look at the marital history characteristics of the parents of children who live with half siblings.

Cross sectional estimates: overall proportions living with a half sibling

Earlier SIPP panels provide estimates of the proportion of children living with a half sibling. In the 1991 SIPP panel, an estimated 10.6 percent of children under 18 lived with a half-sibling (Furukawa 1994), compared with 10.8 percent in the 1996 panel (Fields 2001), 10.1 percent in the 2001 panel (Kreider and Fields 2005), and 11.7 percent in the 2004 panel (Kreider 2008).9 Since there have been some differences in the collection and editing of the data among the four panels, it's difficult to determine whether there is a substantive trend, based on these estimates. Clear variation does exist by the race and origin of the child, with higher proportions of Black and Hispanic children and lower proportions of Asian children living with a half-sibling, compared with White non-Hispanic children (Fields 2001). This is to be expected, given higher rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing for Black women, and lower rates of divorce and non-marital childbearing for Asian women, compared with White non-Hispanic women (Kreider and Fields 2002, Martin et al 2009).

Cross sectional estimates: variation by race and origin, and number of parents present

9 The estimates for 1991, 1996 and 2001 do not differ statistically. The 2004 estimate differs from the 1991, 1996 and 2001 estimates, however.

Table 1 provides cross sectional estimates of coresidence with a half sibling for children by race/origin and number of parents present.[10] These estimates are from the second interview (wave 2) of the 2004 SIPP panel, when the detailed household relationship matrix and marital history data were collected. Overall, 12 percent of children under 18 lived with a half sibling. This varied by race and origin, with 11 percent of white non-Hispanic children, 15 percent of black children, 3 percent of Asian children and 13 percent of Hispanic children living with a half sibling.[11]

Among the 51 million children living with two parents, 12 percent were living with a half sibling, as were 12 percent of the 19 million children living with one parent.[12] The percentage living with half siblings was lower for children living with no parents however–4 percent. The prevalence of living with a half sibling did not differ for white non-Hispanic children by whether they lived with one or two parents. In both cases, it was 11 percent. Percentages also did not differ statistically for Hispanic children–13 percent for those living with two parents, and 14 percent for those living with one parent.

Wider gaps were seen for Black children–20 percent who lived with two parents lived with half siblings, compared with 12 percent among those who lived with one parent. The pattern was apparently reversed for Asian children, with 3 percent of those living with two parents also having half siblings, and 9 percent of those living with one parent also living with half siblings,

10 Parents include biological, step and adoptive mothers and fathers identified by the respondent when asked if the child's mother and father were present in the household, and the type of relationship between the child and parent.
11 The percentage living with a half sibling for Black children and Hispanic children does not differ statistically.
12 The percentage living with a half sibling for children living with 2 parents and those living with 2 parent did not

although these estimates do not differ statistically. The estimates for Asian children have a larger standard error since the group is smaller and thus more difficult to estimate than Black children.

Cross sectional estimates: variation by age and race/origin

Since we create transition rates by age for use in the life table model later in the paper, this section provides a cross sectional look at the percentage of children living with a half sibling, by age. Figure 3 graphs the percentage living with a half sibling by the child's race and age. These are cross sectional data, with the data points representing different children at each age. The data are reported for them in the second interview (wave 2) of the 2004 SIPP panel and indicate whether they were currently living with half siblings. The percentage of children who live with half siblings does not vary in a predictable direction across age, at least when viewed cross sectionally. The age pattern is affected by various factors, including variation in the age at which children first begin to live with a half sibling due to their parents' remarriage or multipartner fertility, as well as the number of transitions in and out of living with half siblings. It is also possible that because younger half siblings are often paired with older half siblings, any age effect is washed out in a cross section.

Cross sectional estimates: variation in parents' marital history, by race/origin

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differ statistically.

Table 2 provides an overall distribution of half siblings, by the number of coresident parents, and several marital history characteristics of the parents. SIPP is a large nationally representative sample, and provides an overview of the detailed living situations of children with half siblings.[13] Figure 4 graphs the proportion of children living with half siblings by the number of parents with whom they live. Of the 8.6 million children under 18 who live with a half sibling, 6.1 million (72 percent) live with two parents, while 2.3 million (27 percent) live with one parent. This distribution varies by race, with a higher percentage of White, non-Hispanic children who live with half siblings living with two parents, 80 percent, than Black (52 percent) or Hispanic children (69 percent). Overall, 58 percent of those 6.1 million children living with two parents live with two biological parents, while the remainder lives with one.

Studies that are only able to include children living with two parents and half siblings miss a significant proportion of children living with half siblings. About 20 percent of White non-Hispanic children, 31 percent of Hispanic children, and about 48 percent of Black children living with a half sibling are not living with two parents. One contribution of this paper is that it includes all children, regardless of the number of parents with whom they live.

The marital history characteristics of children's parents' in Figure 5 (also see Table 2) shed some light on variation by race and Hispanic origin in whether children are living with half siblings because their parents divorce, remarry and have subsequent children in the new marriage, or through their parents' multipartner fertility outside of marriage. Higher proportions of White

13 Since there are only 73,000 weighted Asian alone children living with half siblings, they are not shown in the table, since the base is too small to yield reliable estimates of this group by detailed characteristics.

non-Hispanic children who live with two biological parents and half siblings live with at least one parent previously divorced parent (68 percent) than Black (36 percent) or Hispanic children (30 percent).[14] Higher percentages of White non-Hispanic children living with two biological parents and half siblings also had both parents who had experienced a divorce (26 percent) than either Black children (10 percent) or Hispanic children (6 percent).[15]

Overall, a higher percentage of children living with two biological parents and half siblings had a mother who had divorced but not father (21 percent) than a father who had divorced but not mother (15 percent). However, this pattern appears to be reversed for Black children, for whom 9 percent lived with a mother who had divorced, but not father, and 17 percent lived with a father who had divorced, but not mother, although these estimates do not differ statistically. The majority of Black and Hispanic children had neither parent divorced, among those living with two biological parents and half siblings: 64 percent and 71 percent, respectively.[16]

For the 2.6 million children living with two parents, but just one biological parent, and half siblings, Figure 6 shows whether the child's biological or non-biological parent has divorced.[17] Black and Hispanic children are more often living with two parents, neither of whom had ever divorced: 64 percent for Black children and 62 percent for Hispanic children than White non-

14 The percentages of Black and Hispanic children living with half siblings and two biological parents who live with at least one previously divorced parent do not differ statistically.
15 The percentages of Black and Hispanic children living with half siblings and two biological parents who live with both parents who divorced do not differ statistically.
16 The percentages of Black and Hispanic children who lived with half siblings and two biological parents, neither of whom had divorced do not differ statistically.
17 Eighty-one percent of these children live with their biological mother, and 19 percent live with their biological father.

Hispanic children (29 percent).[18] The relatively high proportion of Black and Hispanic children living with half siblings and two parents, neither of whom had divorced shows that multiple partner fertility outside of marriage is a more frequent pathway to living with a half sibling for these children. White non-Hispanic children were more often living with half siblings after the divorce and remarriage of their biological parent (including both ever divorced)—62 percent compared with 22 percent for Blacks and 30 percent for Hispanics.[19]

For children living with one parent and half siblings, Figure 7 shows times married for mother only, since few of these children live with their father.[20] Although a majority of these children, regardless of race/origin group, lived with an ever-married mother (56 percent), higher proportions of Black (62 percent) and Hispanic children (41 percent) lived with a never married mother than White non-Hispanic children (24 percent). Thirty-eight percent of the White non-Hispanic children lived with a mother who had been married two or more times, compared with 5 percent of the Black children, and 18 percent of the Hispanic children. These differences highlight the fact that marriage and remarriage are more important factors in creating living situations where children coreside with a half sibling for White non-Hispanic children than for Black or Hispanic children.

This cross sectional look at the prevalence of living with half siblings provides nationally representative estimates for all children, and a more detailed look at the characteristics of the children and their living arrangements than is possible with many smaller data sets. While many

18 Percentages for Black and Hispanic children do not differ significantly.
19 Percentages for Black and Hispanic children do not differ significantly.

children end up living with half siblings due to divorce and remarriage, these estimates underline the fact that multipartner fertility outside of marriage is also a significant factor in creating situations in which children live with their half siblings. Next, we run life table analysis to model the amount of time the average child might spend living with half siblings, given the cross sectional prevalence of coresidence.

Results: Life table estimates of the proportion of time children live with half siblings

Discussion

This section will provide an estimate of the proportion of time the average child might expect to spend living with a half sibling during their childhood.

Conclusion

20 The denominator is still all children living with a half sibling who live with one parent.

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Table 1. Children Living With Half Siblings, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004
(Numbers in thousands.)

	Total	White	White non-Hispanic	Black	Asian	Hispanic
Children	73,227	55,901	43,079	11,354	2,279	13,984
Number						
Living with at least 1 sibling	57,703	44,577	34,063	8,610	1,757	11,437
Living with half siblings	8,587	6,327	4,633	1,644	73	1,835
Living with two parents	51,013	42,469	33,518	4,268	1,987	9,508
Living with half siblings	6,142	4,877	3,688	857	51	1,272
Living with two bio parents	3,555	2,804	2,068	518	24	796
Living with one parent	19,335	11,816	8,495	6,090	250	3,861
Living with half siblings	2,319	1,385	897	733	22	545
Living with no parents	2,879	1,616	1,066	996	43	614
Living with half siblings	126	65	48	55	0	17
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with at least 1 sibling	78.8	79.7	79.1	75.8	77.1	81.8
Living with half siblings	11.7	11.3	10.8	14.5	3.2	13.1
Living with two parents	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with half siblings	12.0	11.5	11.0	20.1	2.6	13.4
Living with two bio parents	7.0	6.6	6.2	12.1	1.2	8.4
Living with one parent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with half siblings	12.0	11.7	10.6	12.0	8.8	14.1
Living with no parents	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Living with half siblings	4.4	4.0	4.5	5.5	B	2.8

B Base less than 75,000 weighted cases.

Note: Children are under 18. Their siblings may be any age.

Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 2. Children Living with Half Siblings, by Number of Coresident Biological Parents: 2004
(Numbers in thousands.)

	Total	White	White non-Hispanic	Black	Hispanic
Children	73,227	55,901	43,079	11,354	13,984
Number					
Living with half siblings	8,587	6,327	4,633	1,644	1,835
Living with two parents	6,142	4,877	3,688	857	1,272
Living with two biological parents	3,555	2,804	2,068	518	796
Only mother ever divorced	752	654	544	45	112
Only father ever divorced	520	397	326	90	79
Both ever divorced	650	575	531	52	44
Neither ever divorced	1,633	1,178	667	331	561
Living with one biological parent	2,588	2,073	1,620	338	476
Only biological parent divorced	760	679	568	39	117
Only non-biological parent divorced	243	180	143	49	37
Both ever divorced	536	465	438	36	27
Neither ever divorced	1,049	750	471	215	295
Living with one parent	2,319	1,385	897	733	545
Mother never married	975	407	218	453	224
Mother married once	805	507	318	232	212
Mother married 2 or more times	493	436	336	39	100
Living with father	45	34	25	8	9
Living with no parents	126	65	48	55	17

Note: Children are under 18. Their siblings may be any age.
Asian children are not shown since the weighted number of children with half siblings is less than 75,000.
Source: Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Figure 1. Living arrangements of children living with two parents

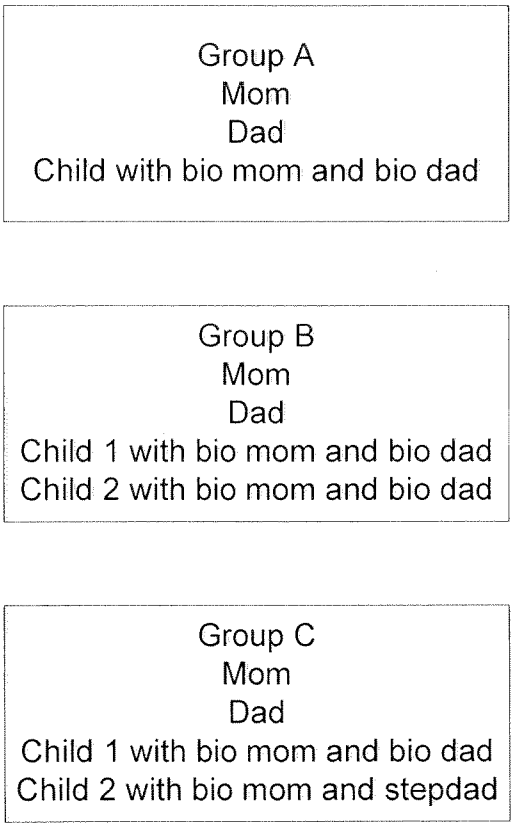
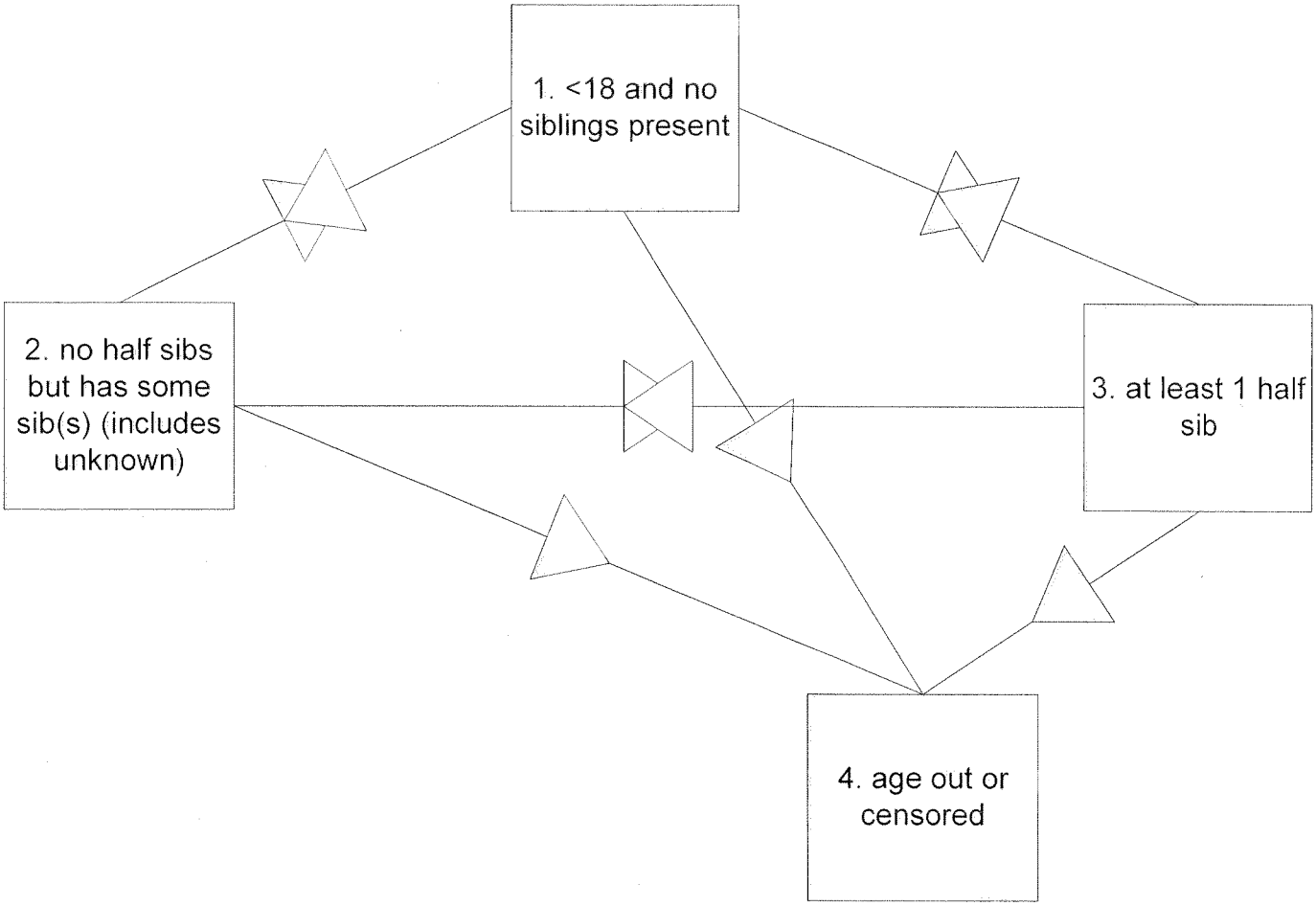
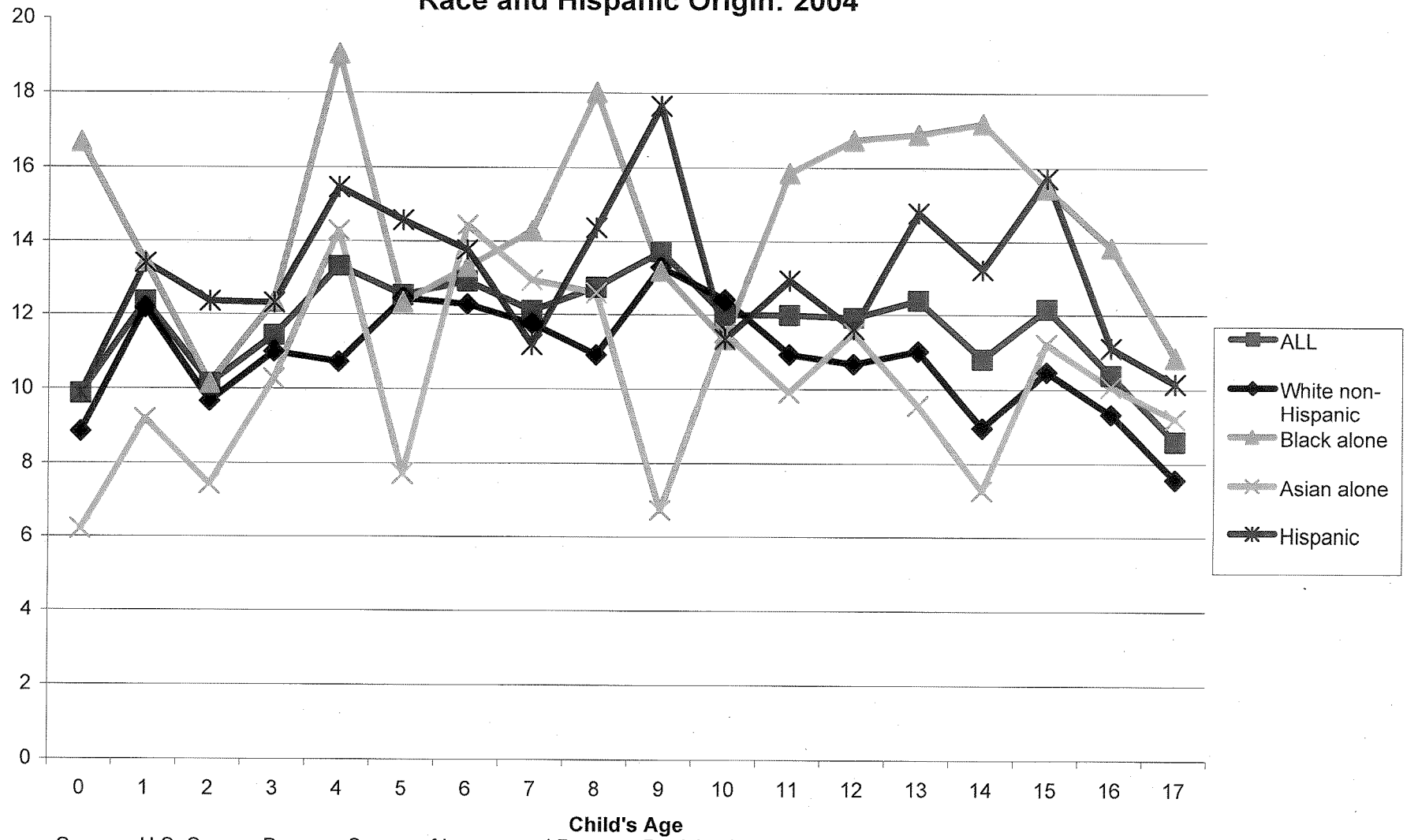


Figure 2. The Life Table Model



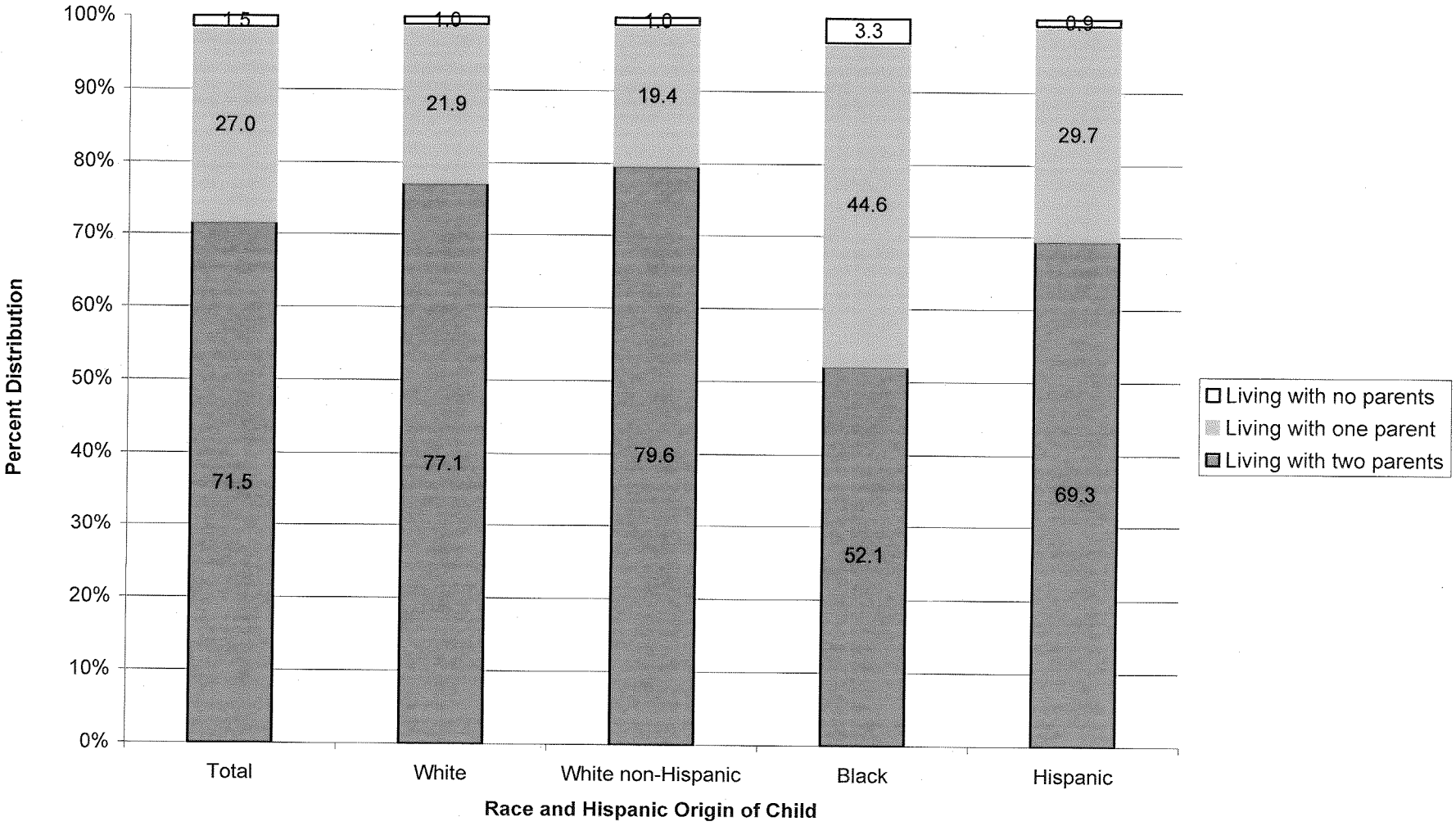
NOTE: The sample is children age 0 to 17. The siblings with whom they live may be of any age.
Transition rates are calculated for the arrows in the flow chart.
There are 3 model states, 1 absorbing state, and 12 possible transitions, including staying in states 1, 2, or 3.

Figure 3. Percentage of Children Under 18 Living with Half Siblings, by Age and Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004



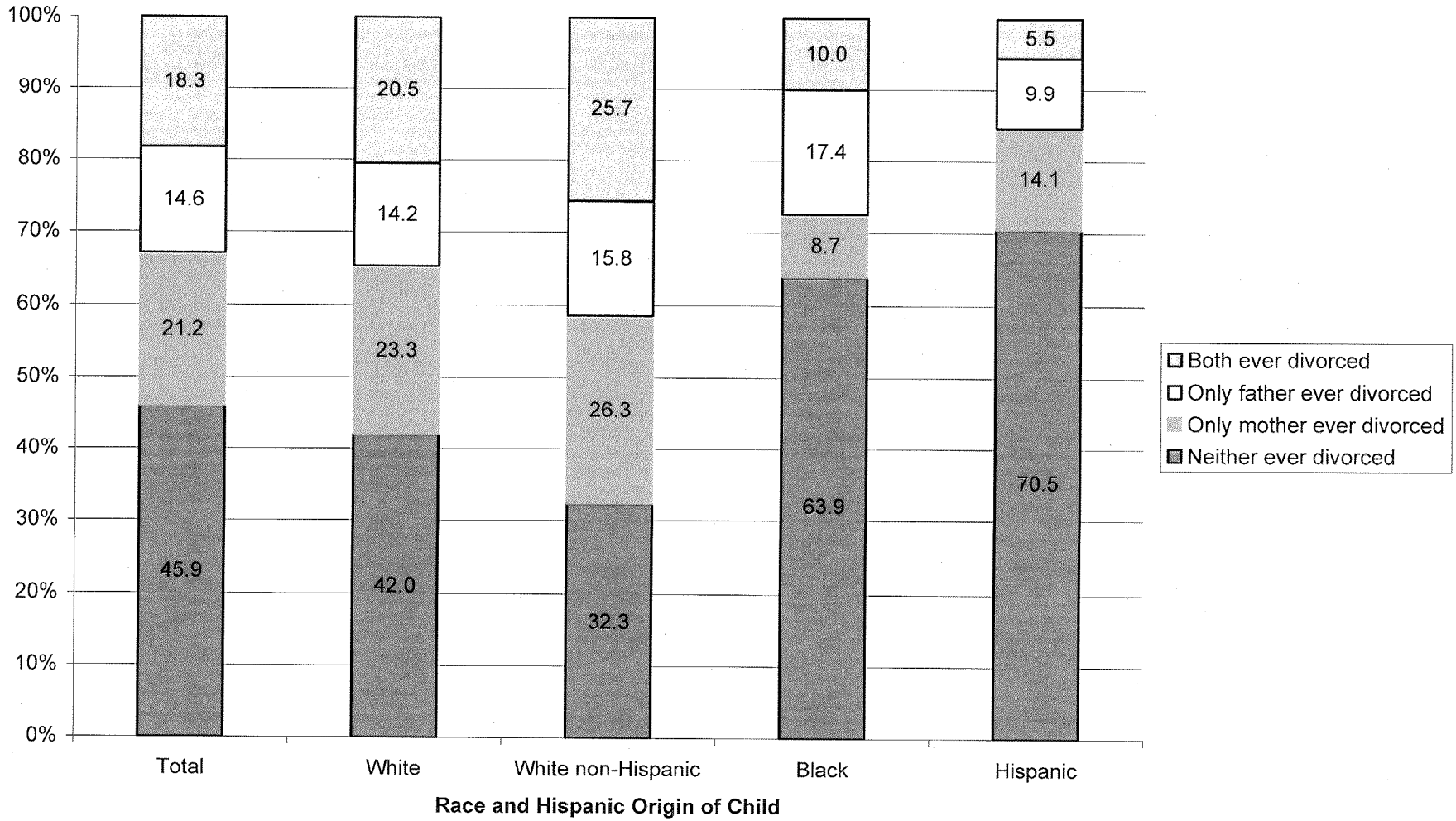
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 panel, Wave 2.

Figure 4. Children Living with Half Siblings, by Number of Coresident Parents



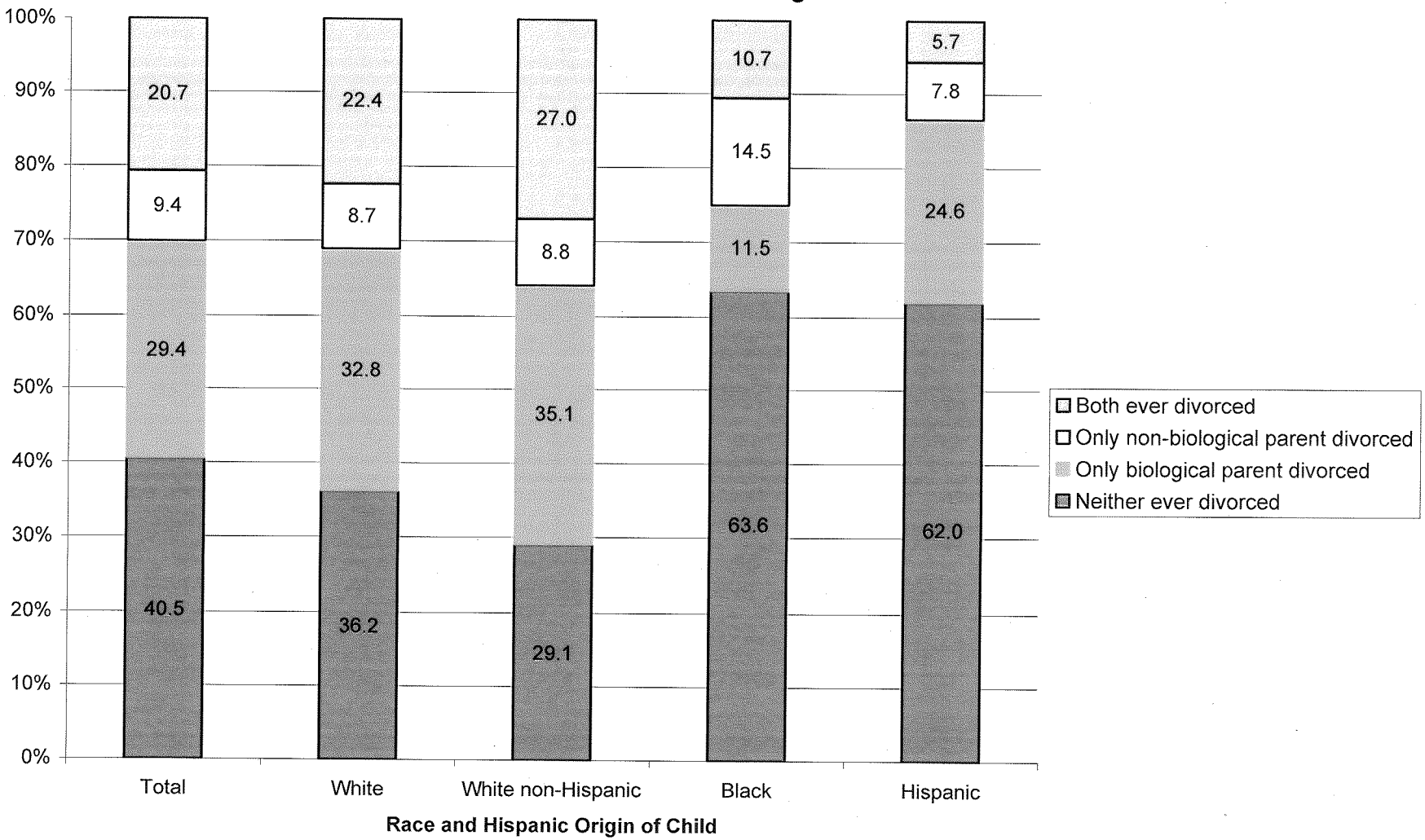
Note: Total for Asian children living with half siblings is too small to show the percent distribution--base less than 75,000 weighted.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 panel, Wave 2.

Figure 5. Whether Parents Ever Divorced, for Children Living with Half Siblings and Two Biological Parents



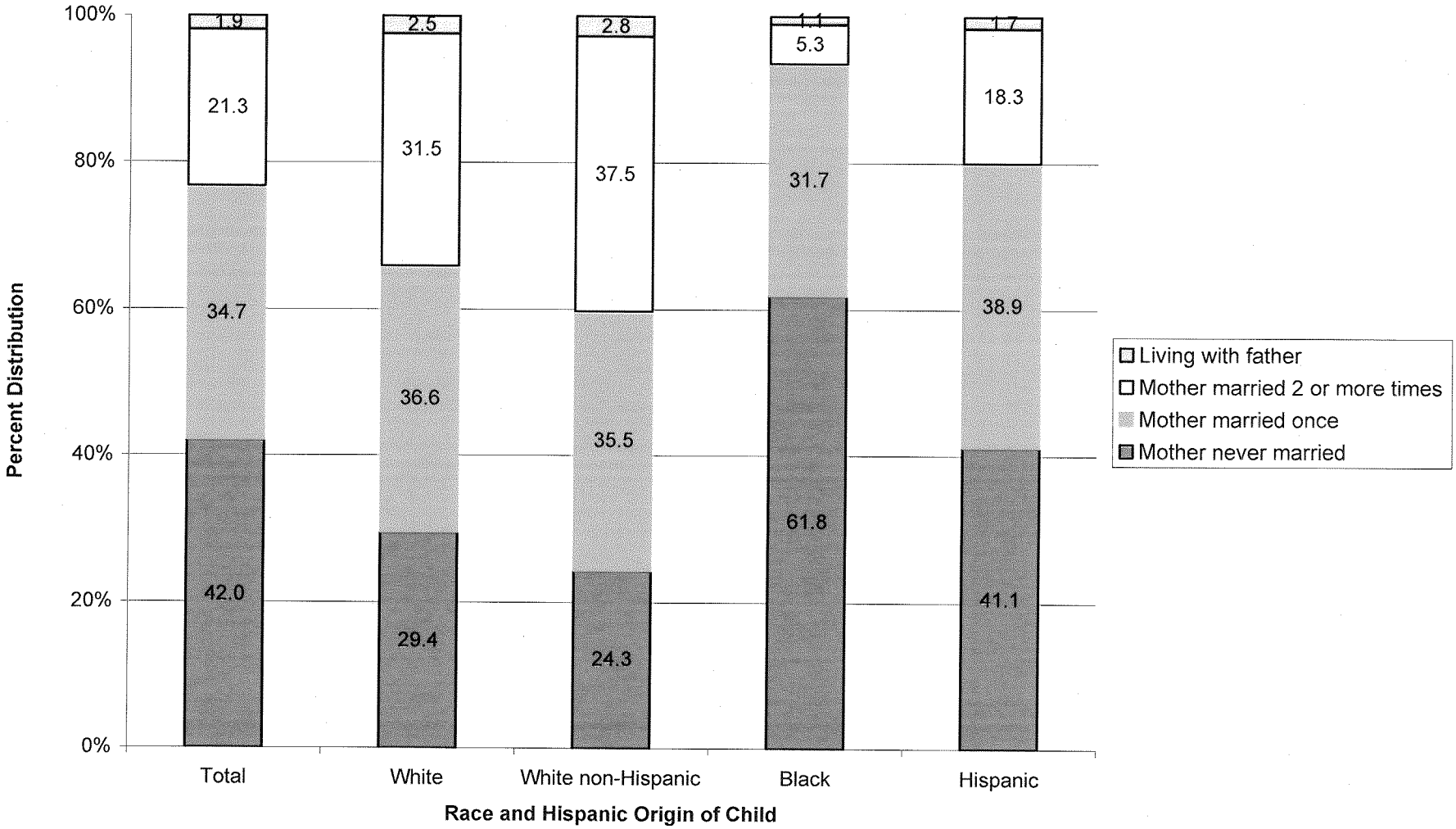
Note: Total for Asian children living with half siblings is too small to show the percent distribution--base less than 75,000 weighted.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 panel, Wave 2.

Figure 6. Whether Coresident Parents Have Divorced, for Children Living with Half Siblings, Two Parents, and One Biological Parent



Note: Total for Asian children living with half siblings is too small to show the percent distribution--base less than 75,000 weighted.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 panel, Wave 2.

Figure 7. Mother's Marital History for Children Living with Half Siblings and One Parent



Note: Total for Asian children living with half siblings is too small to show the percent distribution--base less than 75,000 weighted.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 panel, Wave 2.