

Family Structure Outcomes of Alternative Family Definitions



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The term **FAMILY** may get you to think of **ALL** or **SOME** of the following:

- A married couple & their children at home
- A married couple, their children & grandchildren wherever they live
- A single mother & her children living in subsidized housing
- Two sisters living together
- Two unrelated married couples living in the same residence
- An unmarried couple cohabiting
- A divorced couple, their children & stepchildren wherever they live
- A military wife staying with her parents
- A couple, the woman's ex-husband, children & step-children
- An extended kin network
- **AND MANY OTHERS**



GOVERNMENT AND SURVEY DEFINITIONS OF THE FAMILY

- The concept of the FAMILY that is found in US Censuses and most surveys is restricted and excludes some of the foregoing relationship patterns.
- In the US Census, the CPS, and other surveys, a FAMILY is defined as:
 - “All persons related by blood, marriage, and adoption AND living in the same residence”
- This definition was formally established in the 1940's and has never been changed.



GOVERNMENT AND SURVEY DEFINITIONS OF THE FAMILY (Cont'd)

- The FAMILY so defined differs from a HOUSEHOLD (which includes one or more persons, related or unrelated, living in a given residence).
- A FAMILY is always part of a HOUSEHOLD but a HOUSEHOLD may not include a FAMILY.
- In early censuses, the terms FAMILY and HOUSEHOLD were often used interchangeably.



WHY IS THE STANDARD DEFINITION OF THE FAMILY SO RESTRICTIVE?

- 1) Responsible census and survey designers have not recognized some societal changes in social relationships as altering the FAMILY definition.
- 2) Responsible census and survey designers often argue for keeping definitions constant to preserve historical data series.
- 3) Data collection in censuses and surveys is based on complete coverage or sampling of housing units, and a given family can only be observed within a single household.
- 4) The logistics and costs of identifying family members at a different residence in a census or survey would be prohibitive.



EXAMINING OTHER FAMILY MEASURES AND THEIR IMPACT

- 1) Using family history (or genealogical) data
- 2) Using kinship surveys

We give examples of the use of each of these.



EXPLANATORY NOTES FOR CHART OF A SINGLE NUCLEAR FAMILY HISTORY

1. The chart is designed to compare family structures based on the demographic (census or survey) household concept with an alternative based on genealogical information for the family.
2. The particular family that is described in the chart is used for illustrative purposes only. There obviously will be substantial variation in patterns when other families are described in similar ways.
3. Years of change are reported, along with markers for the census years. Reference is to April of the year, when censuses are taken.



EXPLANATORY NOTES FOR CHART OF A SINGLE NUCLEAR FAMILY HISTORY (Cont'd)

4. Initials refer to different family members.
5. The first column indicates who would be included under the demographic (residence-based) family definition.
6. The second column refers to the nuclear family, irrespective of residence.
7. In the first column, members are deleted in the year of death or when a family member leaves the household. Members are added through birth or when a family member returns to the household.

CHART -- ALTERNATIVE FAMILY FORMS

YEAR	<u>IN SAME</u> <u>RESIDENCE</u>	<u>TOTAL</u> <u>FAMILY</u>
1956	CN, MT	CN, MT
1960 CEN	CN, MT	CN, MT
1961	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN
1962	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1970 CEN	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1971	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1975	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1980 CEN	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1981	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1982	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1983	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1984	CN, MT, DN, RN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1985	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1986	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1988	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN, RN
1989	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1990 CEN	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1991	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1992	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1995	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
1999	CN, MT, DN	CN, MT, DN, RN
2000 CEN	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
2000	CN, MT	CN, MT, DN, RN
2001	CN	CN, DN, RN
2002	CN	CN, DN, RN



FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF CHART:

1. The nuclear family has very different time profiles, as shown in the two columns. Ignoring household residence, the 4-person family established by 1962 remained constant in size until 2000, a period of 39 years. The residence-based nuclear family changed its composition sharply over time, remaining intact for only 18 years.
2. Factors accounting for the changing residence-based family are births, deaths, leaving to go to college, returning for a short period after college, leaving after marriage, returning after divorce, and leaving after a second marriage.



FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF CHART (Cont'd):

3. Relevant information about the children is that one of them has always lived in the same community and visited parents often, while the other one lived in another state but visited frequently and telephoned (and more recently emailed) almost every day.
4. In 2001, one of the couple died. Consequently, in the first column, there was no longer a family in the one-person household. In the second column, there is still a 3-person family, and a family has existed for 46 years and counting.



NETHERLANDS KINSHIP PANEL STUDY

- A large panel study that allows examination of family and kinship from a dynamic multi-actor perspective.
 - “Anchor,” their spouse or cohabiting partner (if applicable), max. of 1 parent, max. of 2 children aged 15+, and max. of 1 sibling aged 15+.
- Drawn from two samples of Dutch population:
 - Random sample of individuals within private households between age 18 and 79.
 - Stratified random sample of members of 4 largest migrant groups: Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese & Dutch Antilleans.
- 8,151 interviews conducted in Oct. 2002 – Jan. 2004



STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC MEASURES OF FAMILY

- *Family Structure* = grouping of people living together who are related by birth, marriage or adoption
 - Marital status, presence of children, duration of union
- *Resident Family Size* = anchor, resident spouse, & children related through birth, adoption or marriage
- *Resident Children* = children related through birth, adoption or marriage (step-children)
 - Number of resident children, age of resident children



ALTERNATIVE MEASURES USING BROADER DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY

- *Total Family Size* = anchor, spouse (resident or non-resident) or cohabiting partner, & children related through birth, adoption, marriage or cohabitation

- *All Children* = biological, adoptive, step-, and/or cohabiting partners' children
 - Total number of children, biological/legal relationship of all children to anchor, age of all children

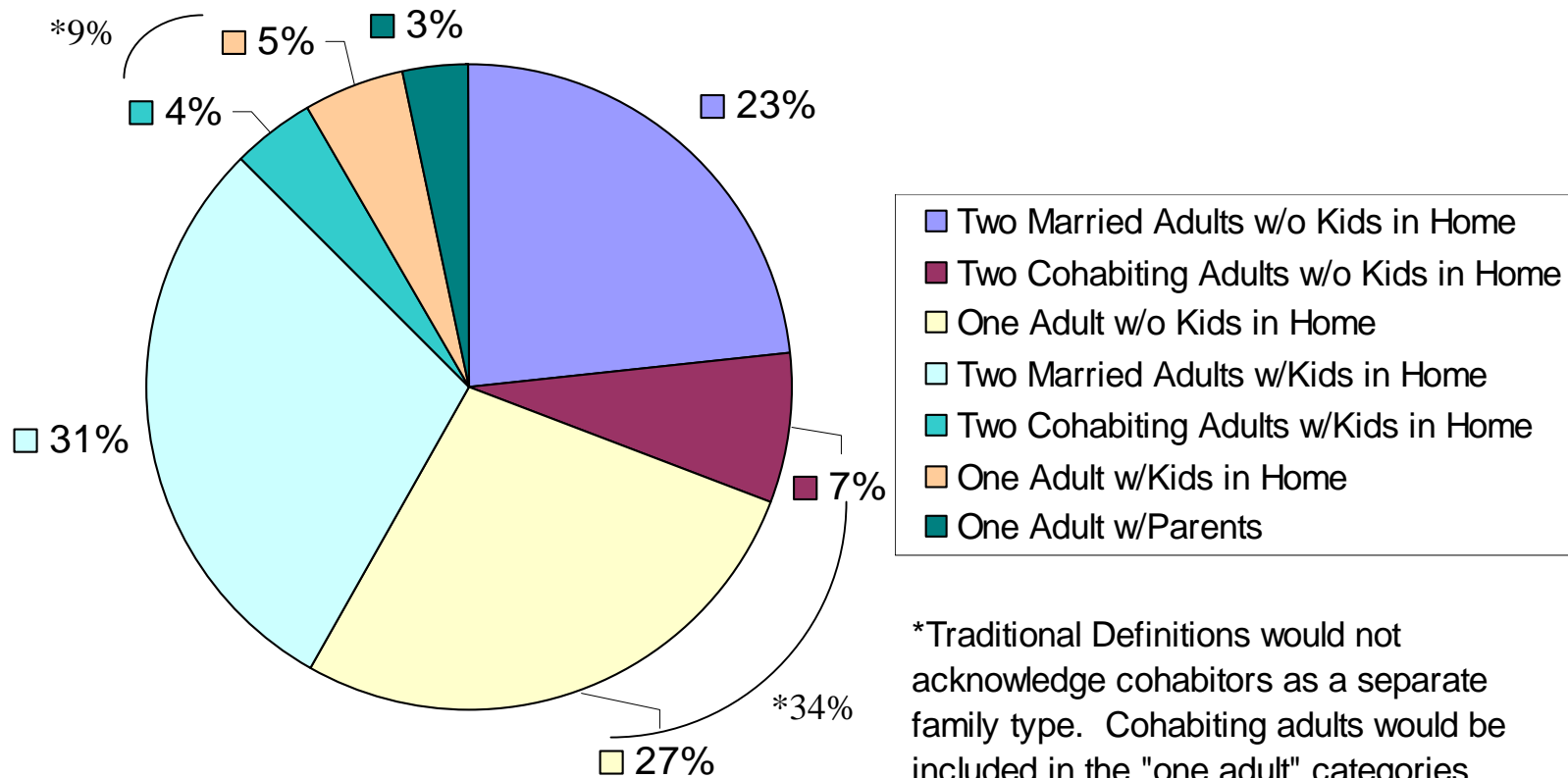
- *Proximity of All Children*
 - All children living inside the home;
 - Child/ren living outside the home, but all in same municipality;
 - Child/ren living outside municipality, but all in same province;
 - Child/ren living outside the province



TABLES AND FIGURES

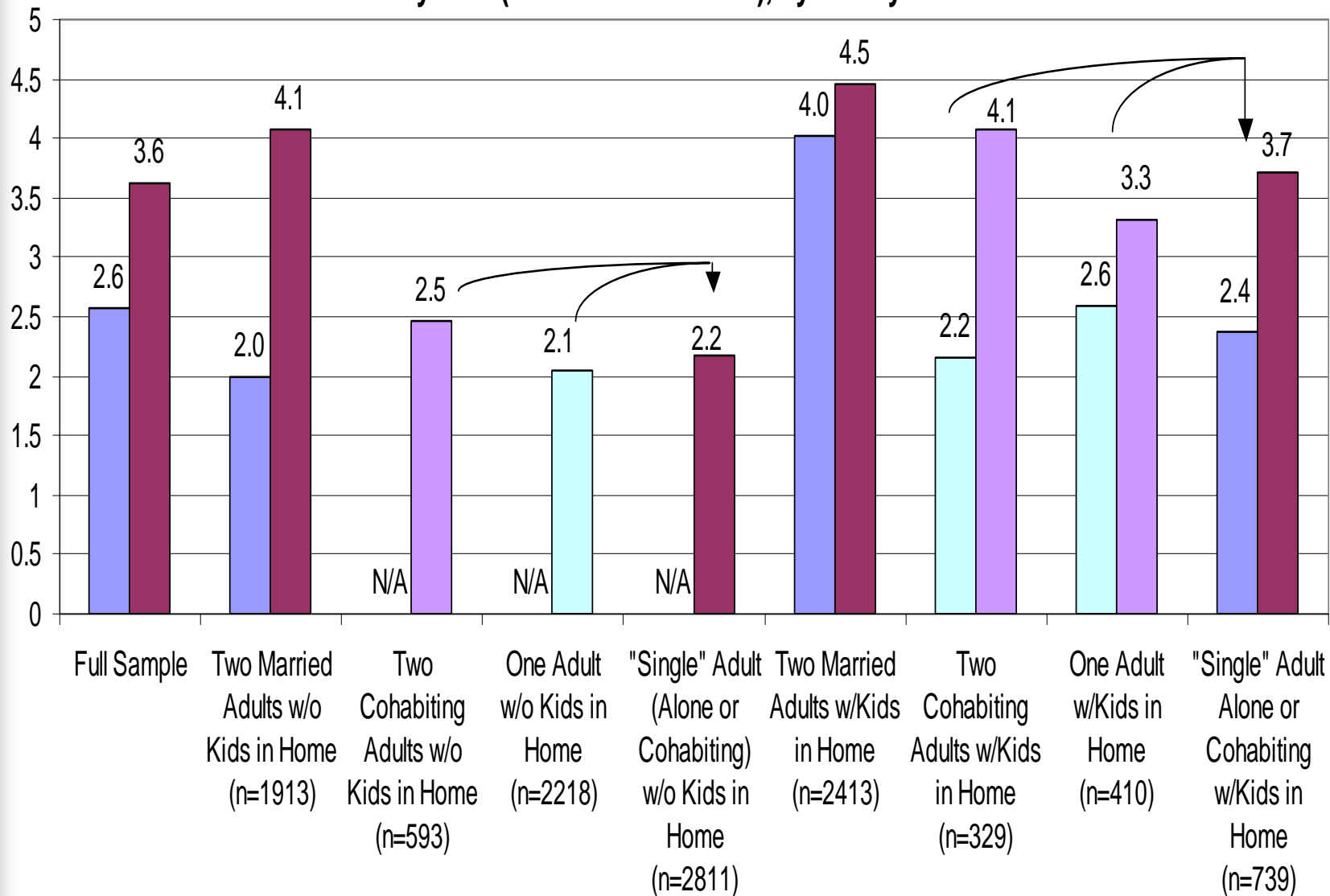
- Tables provide a comparison of demographic measures across 3 different definitions of family.
 - 1) Traditional (Census-like) Residence-Based Definition
 - 2) Expanded Residence-Based Definition (includes cohabiting partners & their children as family members)
 - 3) Broader Non-Residence-Based Definition (includes cohabitators, their children, & any non-resident children & spouses)
- Figures provide a comparison of the Definitions #1 and #3.

Percentage of Sample in Each Family Structure (n=8151)



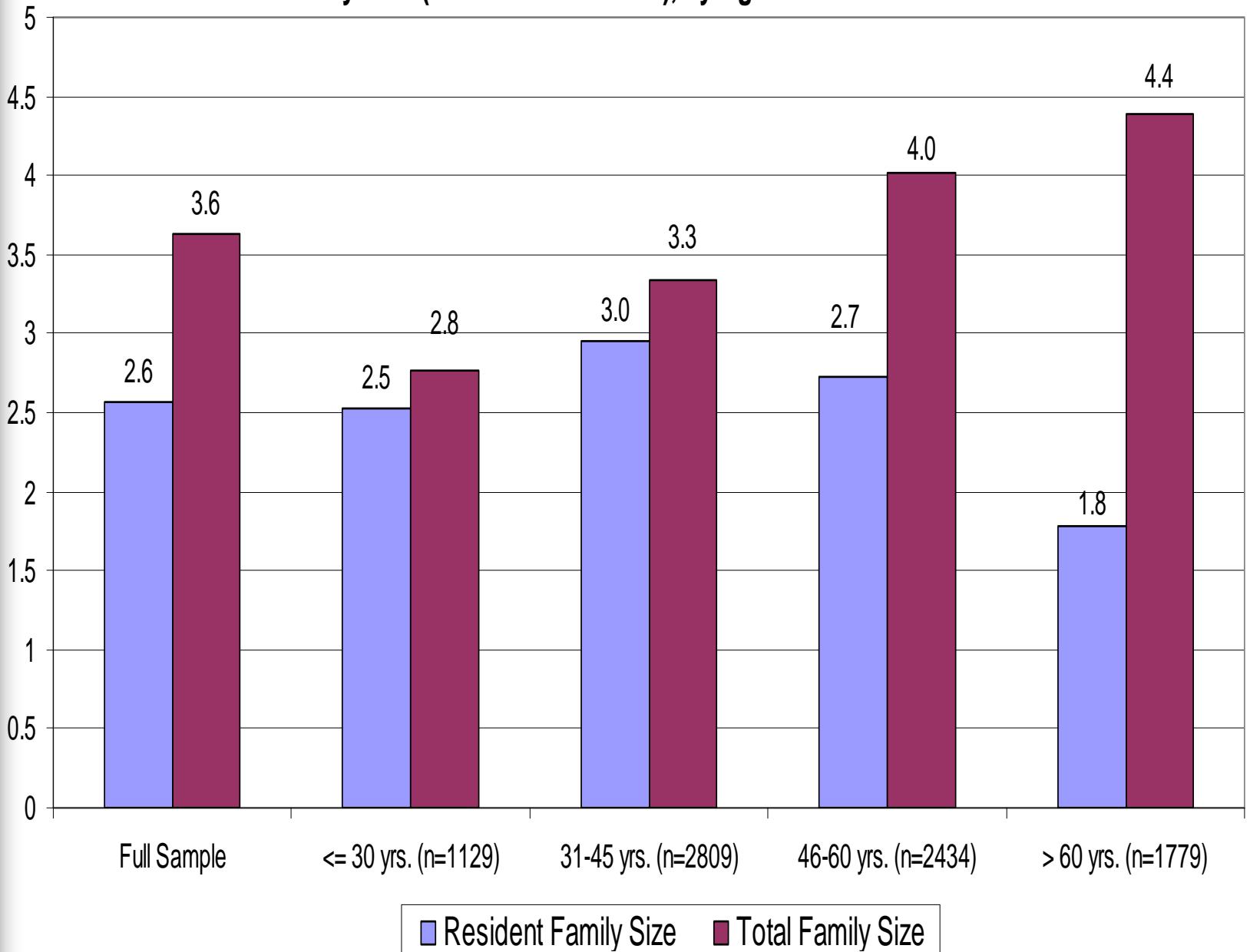
*Traditional Definitions would not acknowledge cohabitators as a separate family type. Cohabiting adults would be included in the "one adult" categories, and labeled as "single".

Resident Family Size (Traditional Definition) vs. Total Family Size (Broadest Definition), by Family Structure

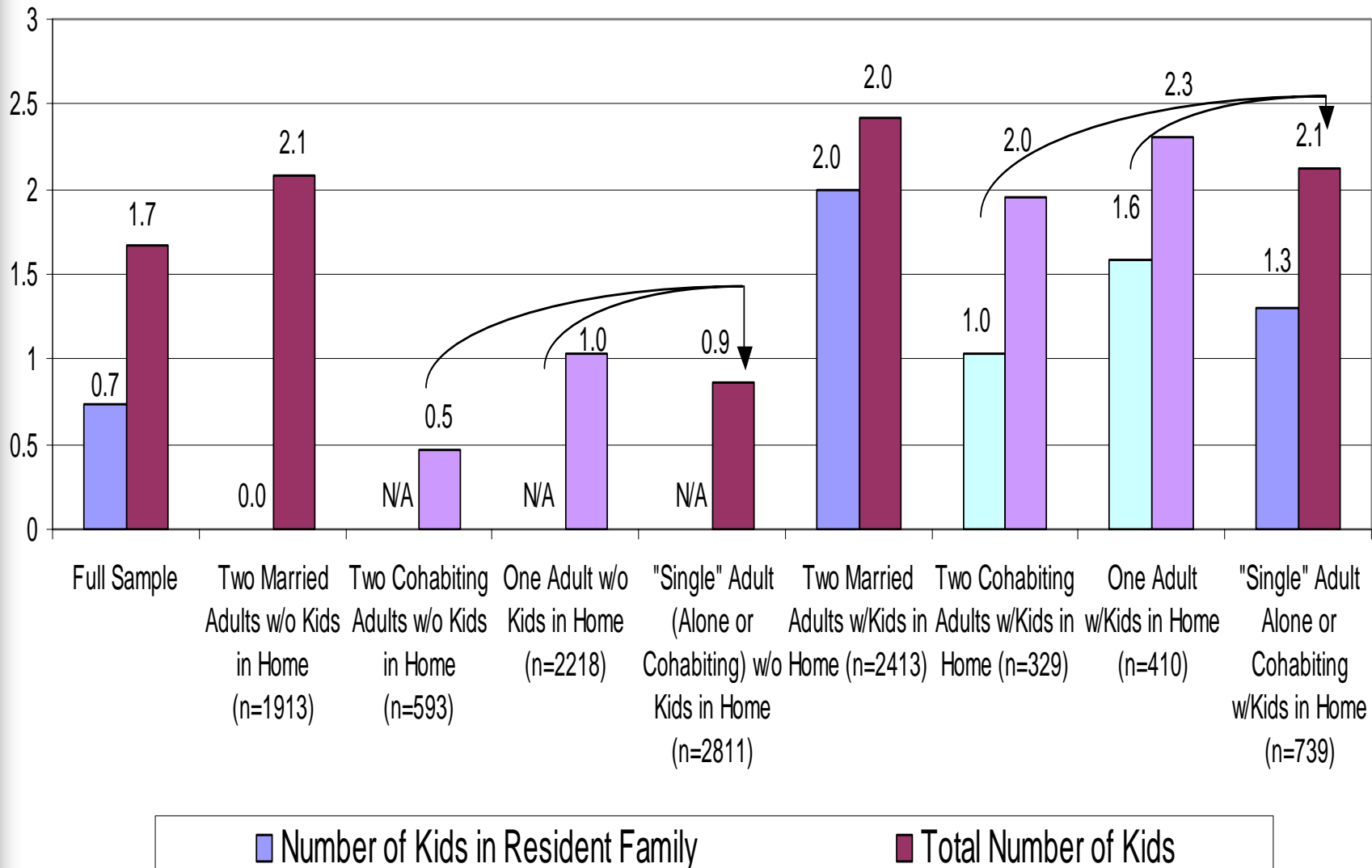


Resident Family Size
 Total Family Size

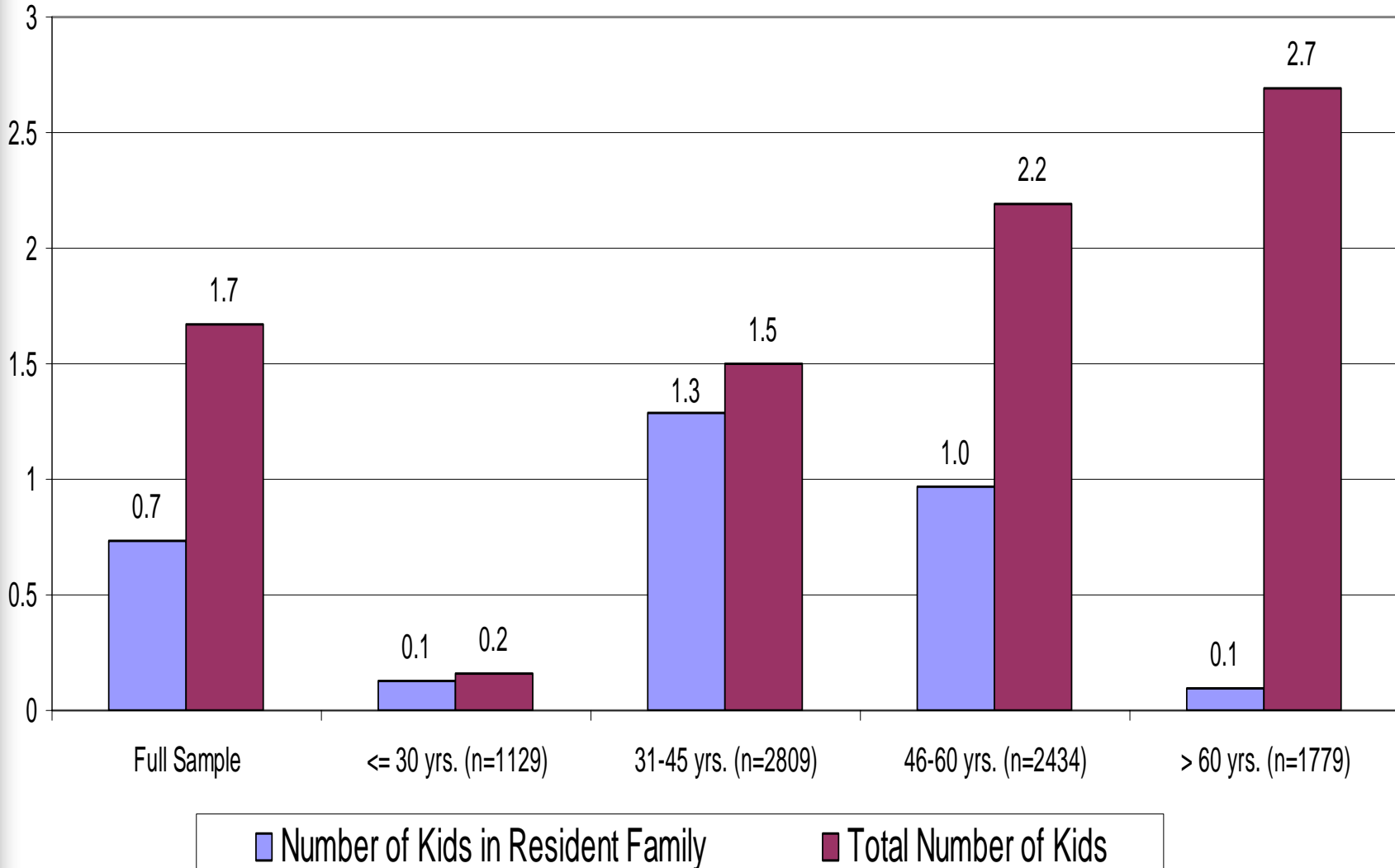
Resident Family Size (Traditional Definition) vs. Total Family Size (Broadest Definition), by Age of Household Head



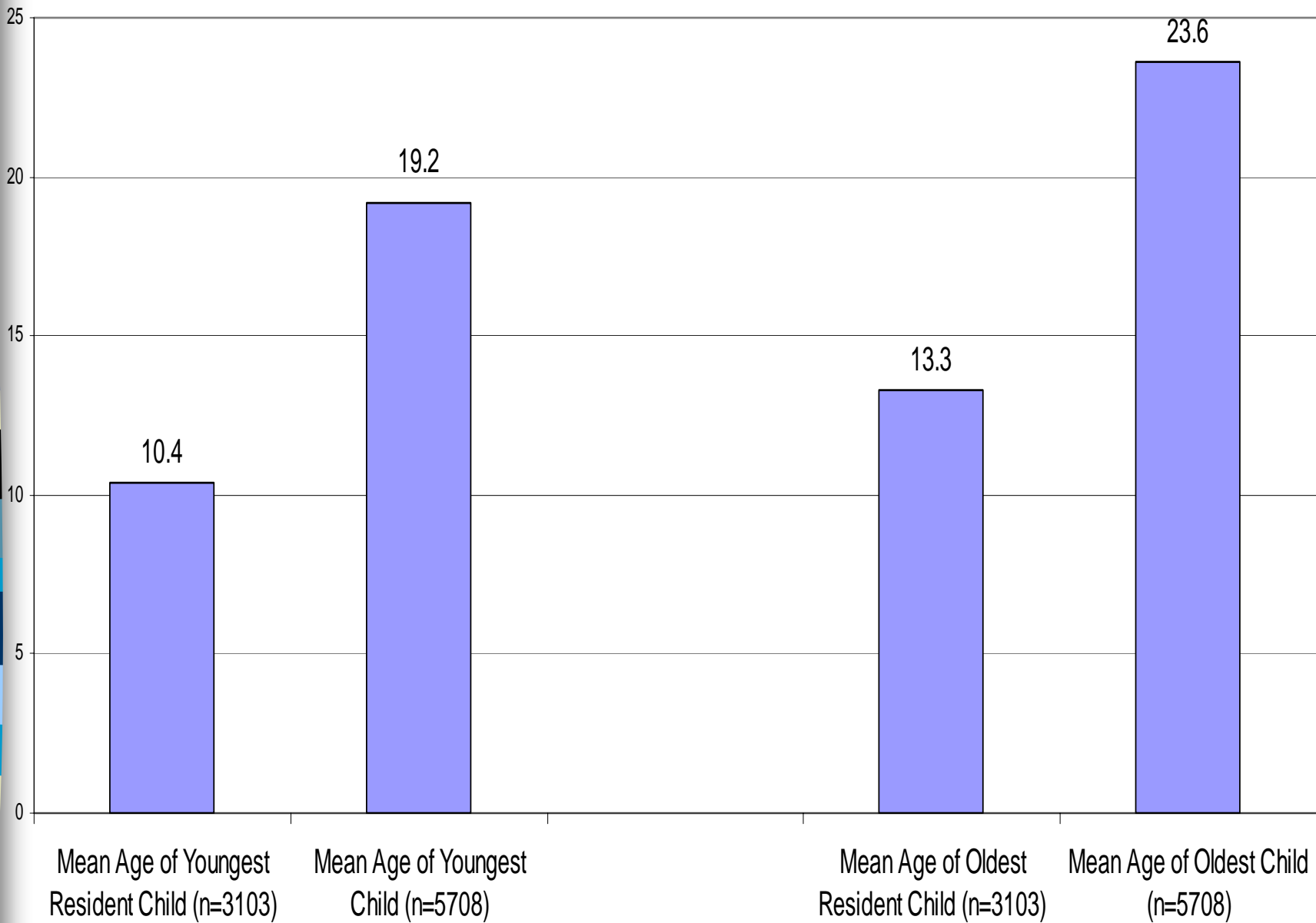
Mean Number of Children in Resident Family (Traditional Definition) vs. Mean Total Number of Children (Broadest Definition), by Family Structure



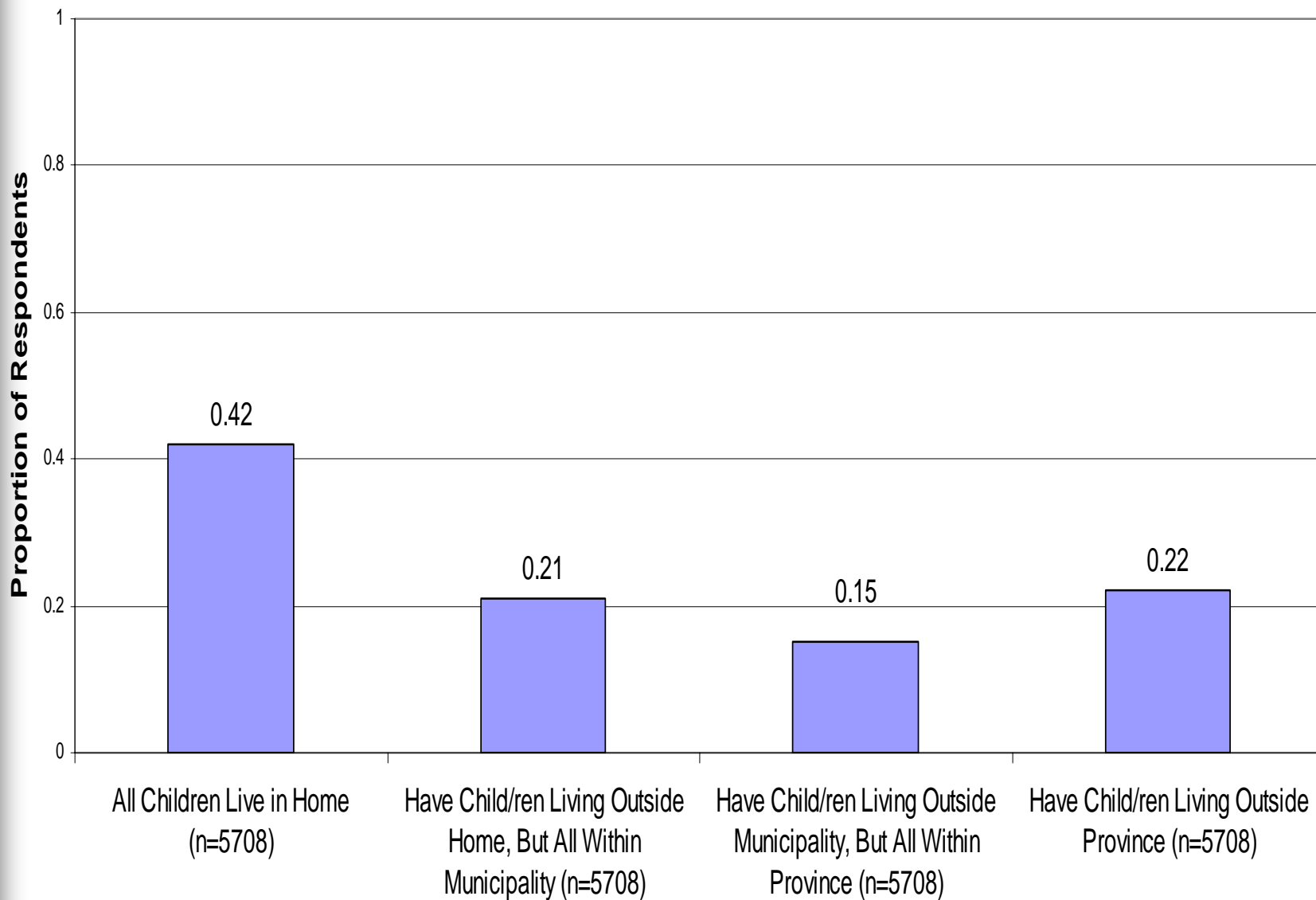
Mean Number of Children in Resident Family (Traditional Definition) vs. Mean Total Number of Children (Broadest Definition), by Age of Household Head



Mean Age of Children in Household vs. Mean Age of All Children



Respondents' Proximity to All Children





Conclusions

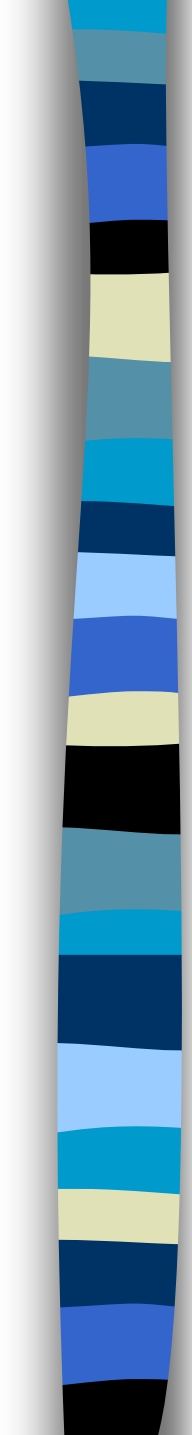
- Which definition of “family” is correct?
 - The correct definition remains a matter of sociological judgment.
- However, the definition chosen makes a significant difference when describing family size and characteristics.



Conclusions

- Measuring family characteristics with a broader definition of family allows us to:
 - Capture a greater number of family members, particularly non-resident children.
 - Determine the age of all children, regardless of residence.
 - Determine the general proximity of non-resident children (residence in the same municipality or province).
- The difference between family characteristics when measured using a standard demographic definition vs. our alternative definition is greater for:
 - Respondents in the older age categories (46-60 & 60+).
 - Respondents living without children in the home.

Conclusions

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- Future work will:
 - Examine the qualitative content of family relationships to determine whether non-resident nuclear family members provide similar benefits as resident nuclear family members.
 - particularly for those in the older age categories and those living w/o children in the home.
 - Further expand our definition of family to include more relatives (e.g. siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, etc.).