# ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION

## A Tale of Two Stories

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Can data appear to tell two different stories? Absolutely! It all depends on how you view the data.
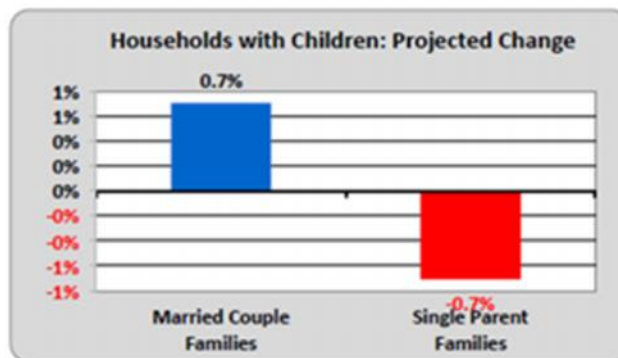
In last month's *Missionary Leader Update*, I brought attention to possible gaps we find in demographic profiles when we compare two sets of data. One such gap in data can appear when we analyze a time gap, or a time interval. Let's take a look at how to easily analyze data trends over time.

Take a look at the data chart below, taken from a MissionInsite ExecutiveInsite report. At first glance, what do you think it tells us?



One interpretation could be that it shows married couples will be increasing between 2019 and 2024 while single parents will be declining.

Let's take a closer look. In some data charts, MissionInsite highlights areas of growth or decline, for quick review – green for growth and red for decline. The data presented is accurate, but here's what we need to look at more closely.

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The heading of the column shaded red and green states "%pt change" over a time interval of five years, and the narrative explains that these family types are increasing or decreasing *as a percentage* of all households. This column analyzes the *composition* of households, or the *distribution* or *concentration* of these family structure types. Composition analysis is dependent upon proportions, and may not reflect true growth or decline of a demographic segment.

Now let's look at the raw numbers in the chart. We see a different side of the story. Of households with children under 18, the number of married couples in 2019 is 4,726 and is projected to be 4,666 in 2024. That's a decline of 1.3%. Similarly, the number of single parent households will decline by 4.2%, and overall, the number of households with children under 18 will decline by 3.1%.

So, after viewing the data in two different ways, here's my overall analysis: of households with children under 18, the number with single parents is expected to decline at a higher rate than those with married couples over five years; hence, an increase in percentage, or concentration, of married couples. But, the number of households in both categories is projected to decline, as well as the total number of households with children.

If you would like to explore these charts, or charts you have in your own reports in more depth, contact me!

Let me know how I can help and support you through your data analysis. I can provide assistance in reading and interpreting the data.

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