



Fatherhood Stats

Why do we need programs like the Birmingham Fatherhood Initiative?

Nationally, 10.8 million fathers do not live in the same home as their children, 24 percent of them are African American or Latino. Forty-three percent of all single fathers have incomes that average \$20,000 annually, an amount that spreads thinly over more than one household. Of those, 2.6 million fathers have an average income of only \$3,500.

Children living in father-absent homes are also more likely to be suspended from school, or to drop out; be treated for an emotional or behavioral problem; commit suicide as adolescents; and be victims of child abuse or neglect.

Importance of Father Love for Child Well-Being

In an analysis of nearly 100 studies on parent-child relationships, father love (measured by children's perceptions of paternal acceptance/rejection, affection/indifference) was as important as mother love in predicting the social, emotional, and cognitive development and functioning of children and young adults:

- Having a loving and nurturing father was as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother.
- Withdrawal of love by either the father or the mother was equally influential in predicting a child's emotional instability, lack of self-esteem, depression, social withdrawal, and level of aggression.
- In some studies, father love was actually a better predictor than mother love for certain outcomes, including delinquency and conduct problems, substance abuse, and overall mental health and well-being.
- Other studies found that, after controlling for mother love, father love was the sole significant predictor for certain outcomes, such as psychological adjustment problems, conduct problems, and substance abuse.

Source: Rohner, Ronald P., and Robert A. Veneziano. "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence." *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (December 2001): 382-405.





Consequences of Divorce on Father-Child Relationships

In a longitudinal study of 2,500 children of divorce, twenty years after the divorce less than one-third of boys and one-quarter of girls reported having close relationships with their fathers. In contrast, seventy percent of youths from the comparison group of intact families reported feeling close to their fathers.

Source: Hetherington, E. Mavis, and John Kelly. For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2002: 231.

"Fragile Families" Findings

Preliminary survey data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study, a longitudinal study of 2,670 unmarried couples with children, suggests that most unwed fathers are highly involved shortly after the child's birth:

- 50% of unmarried parents were living together at the time of the child's birth, and another 33% were romantically involved but living apart.
- 80% of the fathers were involved in helping the baby's mother during the pregnancy, either financially or in other ways (such as transportation).
- 73% of mothers reported that the chances that they will marry the baby's father are "fifty-fifty" or greater; 88% of fathers reported that the odds of marrying the mother of their child are "fifty-fifty" or greater.
- 64% of the mothers and 75% of the fathers agreed with the statement, "it is better for children if their parents are married."
- 90% of unmarried mothers rated "husband having a steady job" and "emotional maturity" as very important qualities for a successful marriage.
- 37% of the mothers and 34% of the fathers lack a high school degree, and less than a third had any education beyond high school.
- 30% of the fathers were unemployed in the week before their child was born.

* Compared to a nearly perfect response rate from mothers, only 75 percent of fathers responded to the survey, resulting in a selection effect that most likely inflates the above percentages for fathers.

Source: McLanahan, Sara, Irwin Garfinkel, Nancy E. Reichman, Julien Teitler, Marcia Carlson, and Christian Norland Audigier. The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Baseline Report. The Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (Princeton University) and the Social Indicators Survey Center (Columbia University), August 2001.



Child Abuse - The rate of child abuse in single-parent families is nearly twice the rate of child abuse in two-parent households.

Source: America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. Washington, DC: GPO, 1997.

Crime - Even after controlling for family background variables such as mother's education level, race, family income, and number of siblings, as well as neighborhood variables such as unemployment rates and median income, boys who grew up outside of intact marriages were, on average, more than twice as likely as other boys to end up in jail.

Source: Harper, Cynthia C., and Sara S. McLanahan. "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, CA, August 1998.

Drug and Alcohol Use - Even after controlling for the effects of gender, age, race-ethnicity, family income, and residential mobility, teens in single-parent and stepparent families were 2 times more likely to use illegal drugs compared to teens in intact, two-parent married families.

Source: Hoffmann, John P., and Robert A. Johnson. "A National Portrait of Family Structure and Adolescent Drug Use." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60(August 1998): 633-645.

Education - Even after controlling for differences in income, children who were born out of wedlock and either remained in a single-parent family or whose mother subsequently married had significantly poorer math and reading scores and lower levels of academic performance than children from continuously married households.

Poverty - Single-parent families are five times as likely to be poor as married-couple families. In 1999, 6.3 percent of married-couple families with children were living in poverty, compared to 31.8 percent of single-parent families with children.

Source: Cooksey, Elizabeth C. "Consequences of Young Mothers' Marital Histories for Children's Cognitive Development." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59(May 1997): 245-261. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey.



FACT

Boys who grow up without fathers are more than twice as likely to end up in jail

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FICTION

Men who don't pay child support are all dead-beats

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FACT

Children, who grow up without their biological fathers, as a group, have significantly lower reading and math scores than others.

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Source: Cooksey, Elizabeth C. "Consequences of Young Mothers' Marital Histories for Children's Cognitive Development." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59(May 1997): 245-261.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Current Population Survey



Domestic Violence Statistics - Children and Teens

Domestic Violence Statistics related to children and teens in domestic abuse situations:

- In a national survey of over 6,000 American families, 50% of the men who frequently assaulted their wives also frequently abused their children.
- Over 3 million children are at risk of exposure to parental violence each year.
- Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present.
- A comparison of delinquent and non delinquent youth found that a history of family violence or abuse is the most significant difference between the two groups.
- A child's exposure to the father abusing the mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.
- Men who have witnessed their parents' domestic violence are three times more likely to abuse their own wives than children of non violent parents, with the sons of the most violent parents being 1000 times more likely to become wife beaters.
- Children who witness violence at home display emotional and behavioral disturbances as diverse as withdrawal, low self-esteem, nightmares, self-blame and aggression against peers, family members and property.
- In some states, 63% of the children in jail for murder are there for the killing of an abusive parent.
- Children who witness domestic violence are six times more likely to commit suicide.
- Forty percent of teenage girls age 14 to 17 report knowing someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.
- One in five female high school students reports being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.

From Nikki Katz, Your Guide to Women's Issues.

Rate of child abuse by race:

- ◆ White = 51%
- ◆ African American = 25%
- ◆ Hispanic = 15%
- ◆ American Indian/Alaska Natives = 2%
- ◆ Asian/Pacific Islanders = 1%