



FATHER FACTS

SEVENTH EDITION

7

**National
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FATHER FACTS

SEVENTH EDITION

7

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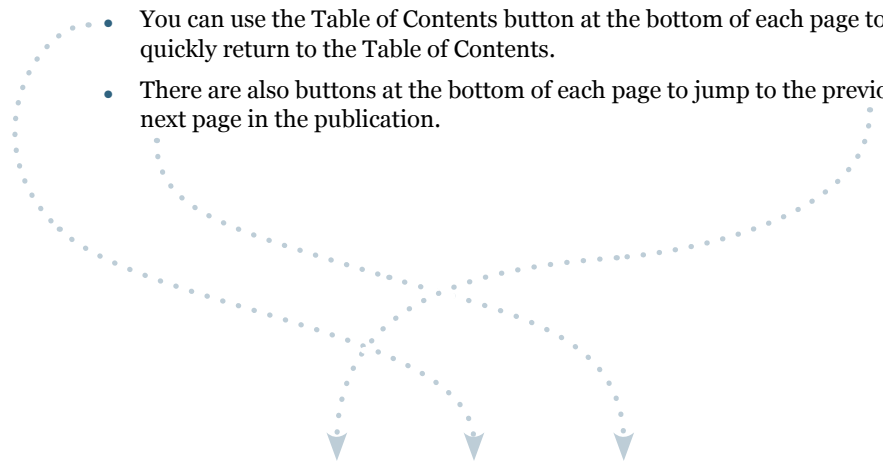


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Foreward

Christopher A. Brown,
President, National Fatherhood Initiative

Welcome to the seventh edition of *Father Facts*, NFI's flagship research tool!

We have published *Father Facts* since the early 1990s, when our organization first started its work to end father absence and connect fathers to their children, heart to heart.

From the one-page fact sheet of yesterday to the 122-page volume you have today, *Father Facts* continues to make the same point, loud and clear: children need good dads. The data in this book are ideal for writing effective grant proposals, for providing a news story with the statistic that will drive the story home, or for giving an issue brief or piece of legislation the fact-based evidence it needs to make an impact.

Father Facts 7 contains the research you need to be more effective in your work to promote involved, responsible, and committed fatherhood. As with past editions, it includes abstracts of the most recent studies, published since the last edition, and helpful tables that organize the data on rates of father absence. For this edition, we added brief summaries at the start of each chapter and section on the state of the research in each area that distills what we know related to that fatherhood-related topic.

We also dedicated an entire chapter—the first chapter—to a single study. It is arguably the most important study done on the causal effects of father absence. It proves beyond reproach that father absence causes many of the poor outcomes we see for children.

We decided to publish this edition in an ebook format. This format makes acquisition of *Father Facts* faster and easier (just purchase and download), while maintaining the “searchable” aspect of the previous edition. **It also allows us to update *Father Facts* as relevant data and research are released from sources we monitor, shared with us by others committed to addressing father absence, or that we find in the course of our work.** As a result, we now have the ability to provide every user of *Father Facts* with the most recent data and research the moment they acquire it.

Father Facts is only a part of the story here at NFI. While we continue to be one of the leading producers of research on the causes and consequences of father absence, we do a whole lot more. Please visit our websites, fatherhood.org and fathersource.org, to learn about our state-of-the art portfolio of fatherhood skill-building materials, training programs, and technical assistance. Also, join our online community on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and our blog *The Father Factor* so you can stay connected to all of the work we do to ensure a brighter future for our nation's children.

I hope you find *Father Facts 7* to be an extremely valuable tool. Please let us know about your experiences using it by emailing us at info@fatherhood.org.

Wishing you the very best,



Christopher A. Brown

President
National Fatherhood Initiative

I. The Proof is In: Father Absence Harms Children

Despite reams of data that NFI compiled in the previous six editions of *Father Facts* (the most comprehensive collection of data available on the consequences of father absence and the benefits of father involvement for children), the recognition among people across the political spectrum of the need to combat father absence, and the commitment of many private and public funders to addressing this problem, there are still some scholars and members of the public who are not convinced that dads are important to children. Many people believe that family structure doesn't really matter, as long as children are cared for and loved by someone, anyone. One valid reason for the skepticism among scholars, at least, is the lack of rigorous analytical methods employed in much of the research.

Late last year, researchers Sara McLanahan, Laura Tach, and Daniel Schneider stepped into the fray with their review of nearly 50 studies that employed innovative, rigorous designs to examine the causal effects of father absence. Published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, "The Causal Effects of Father Absence" examined studies that focused on the relationship between father absence and four outcomes for children: educational attainment, mental health, relationship formation and stability, and labor force success. Although these studies varied in the use of analytical approaches and found different effect sizes, they prove beyond reproach that father absence causes poor outcomes for children in each of these areas.

This is a critical distinction. The old adage, "correlation does not imply causation," does not apply to the effects of father absence on children. In other words, for many of our most intractable social ills affecting children, father absence is to blame.

Furthermore, what's impressive about the review is not only its inclusion of studies that employed a variety of analytical methods; it also included studies from nine countries, mostly developed countries (including the U.S.) but also developing countries. Consequently, this cross-cultural analysis of research lends strength and credibility to the conclusion about the devastating effects of father absence. Father absence isn't just a U.S. problem. It's a human problem.

One particular conclusion of these scholars is very sobering and should haunt us as a nation given that the U.S. has reached an all-time high in the number of children born to single parents: the earlier in their lives that children experience father absence the more pronounced are its effects.

As you continue to review the data and research in *Father Facts 7*, keep this study and that conclusion in the forefront of your mind.

Source: McLanahan, S., Tach, L., & Schneider, D. (2013). The causal effects of father absence. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 39, 399-427.

II. The Facts of Father Absence

This chapter provides the most recent general data on father absence. These data include national data on rates of father absence by examining children's living arrangements by type of family form and race. This edition of *Father Facts* adds rates of father absence in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. **Detailed tables on the national and state data are included in Appendix A.**

National Level

What We Know

Father absence has rapidly increased since 1960 with the number of children growing up without their fathers having stabilized somewhat in the past decade. Father absence disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic children, and nearly a quarter of all American children live in father-absent homes. The relationship between the mother and father at birth affects later father involvement. Fathers who have a romantic relationship with the mother are more likely to be involved compared to fathers who do not have a romantic relationship with the mother.

The Data and Research

In America, 23.6% of children (17.4 million) lived in father-absent homes in 2014.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). C3. Living arrangements of children under 18 years/1 and marital status of parents, by age, sex, race, and hispanic origin/2 and selected characteristics of the child for all children: 2014. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

In 2014, 68.7% of children under age 18 lived in two-parent families, 23.6% in single-mother families, 3.9% in single-father families, and 3.8% with neither parent. Of those children residing with neither parent, 56.2% live with grandparents, 23.8% live with other relatives, 16.1% live with nonrelatives, and 3.9% live in an other arrangement.

Source: US Census Bureau. (2015). Children/1 by presence and type of parent(s), race, and hispanic origin/2: 2014. Table C9. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

Of the 73.7 million children under 18 years living in the United States in 2014, 68.7% (50.6 million) were living with two parents, 27.5 % (20.3 million) were living with one parent, 23.6% (17.4 million) of those in single parent households were living with a single mother, and 3.8% (2.8 million) were living with neither parent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2015). C3. Living arrangements of children under 18 years/1 and marital status of parents, by age, sex, race, and hispanic origin/2 and selected characteristics of the child for all children: 2014. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

A study of 3,197 fathers from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study examined father identity and involvement patterns. The study found:

- ◆ Resident fathers had consistently higher levels of involvement than separated/divorced and nonresident fathers; however, both types of fathers did not have statistically different involvement when their child was 1 year old.
- ◆ Separated/divorced fathers had higher levels of involvement than nonresident fathers.
- ◆ Father involvement was found to decrease over time.
- ◆ Fathers with a high school education or bachelor's degree were found to be more involved than fathers with lower education.

Source: Goldberg, J.S. (2015). Identity and involvement among resident and nonresident fathers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 36, 852-879.

A nationally representative sample of urban families from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study examined the circumstances of previously married and unmarried parents who were living apart 5 years after the birth of their child. Major findings included:

- ◆ About 66% of parents who were unmarried at the time of their child's birth reported living in separate households when their child was 5 years old. The figure showed that, among unmarried parents, those who had no relationship at birth were the most likely to be living apart (92%) when their child was 5 years old, followed by those who had romantic non-cohabitating relationships (82%), and those who were cohabiting at birth (47%). About two (2) percent of unmarried parents reported living together part-time or inconsistently 5 years after their child's birth.
- ◆ Compared to other fathers, fathers who did not have a close relationship with the mother at birth had less contact with their children and the weakest connections with their children.
- ◆ Unmarried mothers who were cohabitating with the father at the time of their child's birth were more likely to have established legal paternity for the child (87%). In comparison, of those who did not have a romantic relationship at birth, 63% established legal paternity.

Source: Waller, M. R., & Dwyer Emory, A. (2014). Parents apart: Differences between unmarried and divorcing parents in separated families. *Family Court Review*, 52, 686-703.

About 41% of children born in the U.S. in 2012 were born to never-married parents. The percentage of births to unmarried women is more than double the percentage in 1980 (18.4%).

Source: Martin, J.A., Hamilton, B.E., Osterman, M.J.K., Curtin, S.C., & Matthews, T.J. (2013). Births: Final data for 2012. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 62(9). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau:

- ◆ In 2012 Black children and Hispanic children were more likely to live with one parent than non-Hispanic White children or Asian Children.
- ◆ The percentage of mother-only and father-only family households increased since 2007. Among single-parent households, single-father families rose from 10% to 17% between 1980 and 2012.
- ◆ In 2012, father-only family groups were in better economic standings than mother-only families. This is evidenced by better educational attainment, higher employment rates, higher home ownership rates, and lower rates of SNAP benefits.
- ◆ In 2012, 19% of single fathers had a bachelor's degree compared with 17% of single mothers. Fifty-seven (57) percent of single-father families were homeowners compared with 38% of mother-only families.
- ◆ In 2012, 44% of children living with father-only had a divorced father.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). America's families and living arrangements: 2012. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

A Pew Research Center analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth yielded the following findings:

- ◆ 87% of males aged 15-44 with no children would like to have children at some point. Fifty-one (51) percent of childless men aged 40-44 also indicated a desire to have children.
- ◆ More than 25% of fathers with children under 18 lived apart from their children. Eleven (11) percent lived apart from some of their children and 16% lived apart from all of their children.
- ◆ Twenty (20) percent of fathers who live apart from their children have visits more than once a week, 29% visit at least once a month, 21% visit several times a year, and 27% do not have visits at all.

- ◆ Of fathers who lived apart from their children, 41% were in touch with their children by phone or email several times a week, 28% communicated at least monthly, and 31% talked with their children less than once a month.
- ◆ Ninety (90) percent of resident fathers shared a meal and spoke with their children about their children's day almost daily, 63% helped their children with homework, and 54% took their children to or from activities throughout a given week. In comparison, 31% of non-resident fathers spoke with their children about their children's day several times a week, 16% have shared a meal with their children several times a week, 10% helped with homework, and 11% took a child to or from activities.

Source: Taylor, P., Parker, K., Livingston, G., Wang, W., & Dockterman, D. (2011). A tale of two fathers: More are active, but more are absent. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

In 2013, 24.7 million fathers were part of married-couple families with children under 18 years old. Twenty-one (21) percent of fathers among married-couple family households were raising three or more children younger than 18 years old.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Facts for Features: Father's Day: June 15, 2014. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau.

One-third of children in the United States are expected to live with a non-biological parental figure at some point in their lives. This is in part related to the fact that out-of-wedlock births, divorce, and re-partnering have become more common, contributing to greater complexity in family structures.

Source: Bendheim-Thomas Center for Research on Child Wellbeing and Social Indicators Survey Center. (2010). CPS involvement in families with social fathers. *Fragile Families Research Brief*, 46.

About 21% of American children will see at least two live-in partners of their mothers by the time they are 15, and an additional 8% will see three or more. Only six (6) percent of American children have parents who live together without being married.

Source: Luscombe, B. (2010). Marriage: what's it good for? *Time*, 176, 48-54.

More adults are living alone—27% are married and living with kids, 23% are married, living without kids, 14% are living alone, 14% are living with another family member, and 10% are unmarried, living with kids.

Source: Luscombe, B. (2010). Marriage: what's it good for? *Time*, 176, 48-54.

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, a joint project of Princeton and Columbia, followed 5,000 children from birth to age 9, and found that more than half of the unmarried parents were living together at the time their child was born and 30% of them were romantically involved but living separately.

Source: Luscombe, B. (2010). Marriage: what's it good for? *Time*, 176, 48-54.

In 1970, 85% of children under age 18 lived in two-parent families, 11% in single-mother families, 1% in single-father families, and 3% lived with neither parent. In 2004, by contrast, only 61% of children lived with married biological parents, 9% lived with two parents who were either unmarried or only one of whom was the child's biological parent, 23% lived with single mothers, three (3) percent with single fathers, and four (4) percent resided with neither parent—usually with grandparents or other relatives.

Source: Kreider, R. M. (2008). Living arrangements of children: (2004). *Current Population Reports*, P70-114. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

A national two-generation longitudinal survey revealed that 80% of children were born to married mothers, but only 64% remained with both parents by 2000. In 2000, children aged 5 to 14 had experienced, on average, slightly less than one household transition. Ninety-one percent of white children surveyed were born into a married household. Sixteen percent of these households dissolved by 2000. In contrast, 52.9% of black children were born into a married household; 30% of those households dissolved by 2000.

Source: Fomby, P. & Cherlin, A. J. (2007). Family instability and child well-being. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 181-204.

Fifty-nine percent of young adults have had contact with their noncustodial fathers at least once a month. 10% had contact less than once a month, and 31% report no contact in the past 3 months. Sixty-two percent of young adults said they would not talk to their noncustodial father if they were depressed or unhappy, while 21% said they definitely or probably would.

Source: Aquilino, W.S. (2006). The noncustodial father-child relationship from adolescence into young adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 929-946.

State Level

What We Know

Father absence rates for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico highlight trends in the regions most impacted by father absence. Rates of father absence vary dramatically across the country and within specific regions and states. Data on father absence for the major and most populated cities in each state reflect this variance. Nevertheless, it's clear that more children in the south and in Puerto Rico live in father-absent homes compared to other areas of the country. **Detailed tables on the state data are included in Appendix A.**

The Data and Research

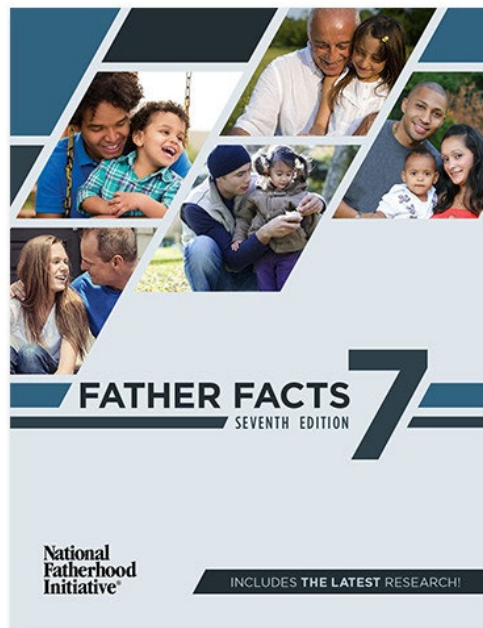
Among the 50 states, the three states with the highest numbers of children growing up in father absent homes are in the southern region. Specifically:

- ◆ Mississippi has the highest number of children living in father absent homes (36.2%) followed by Louisiana (34.4%), and Alabama (30.7%).
- ◆ In Puerto Rico, 42.7% of children are raised in father-absent homes.
- ◆ Major cities with the highest numbers of children in father-absent homes include Wilmington, DE (65.5%), Detroit, MI (63.3%), and Birmingham, AL (61.5%).
- ◆ The states with the lowest rates of father absence include Utah (11.5%), North Dakota (14.4%), and Idaho (16.0%).

The latest facts and statistics on father absence! This data can serve a host of purposes for the following individuals:

- **Dads** – Advocate for greater support of fathers in your community
- **Community-based Organizations** – Write stronger grant proposals and bolster support for your program in your community
- **Scholars and Educators** – Use data as a reference for your students and a source of the latest scholarship on family
- **The Media** – Back up your stories and make better pitches to your editors
- **Policymakers** – Write stronger findings in legislation and to bolster support for fatherhood-related policies
- **Anyone considering Fatherhood Work** - Inform your mission, and help establish goals you may want to reach to demonstrate marked improvement in your community as a result of your work

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