



***“One father is more than a hundred schoolmasters.”***  
--17<sup>th</sup> Century English Proverb

# Fatherhood Fact Sheet

## **Crime and Violence**

**In a study of 167 Baltimore mothers incarcerated for drug offenses, 41 percent of the women grew up with their mother as “the sole supporter” of the family, and more than 26 percent had “no father figure [at all] in their lives.”** Thomas E. Hanlon et al., “Incarcerated Drug-Abusing Mothers: Their Characteristics and Vulnerability,” *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 1 (2005): 59-77.

**Even after controlling for income, youths in father-absent households still had significantly higher odds of incarceration than those in mother-father families. Youths who never had a father in the household experienced the highest odds.** Cynthia Harper, and Sara S. McLanahan, “Father Absence and Youth Incarceration,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 14 (September 2004): 369-397.

**A 2002 Department of Justice survey of 7,000 inmates revealed that 39% of jail inmates lived in mother-only households. Approximately forty-six percent of jail inmates in 2002 had a previously incarcerated family member. One-fifth experienced a father in prison or jail.** Doris J. James, “Profile of Jail Inmates, 2002,” (NCJ 201932). Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, July 2004.

**Among adolescents charged with murder, 72 percent grew-up without their fathers.** Dewey Cornell “Characteristics of Adolescents Charged with Homicide” *Behavior Sciences and the Law* 5 (1987): 11-23.

**High-crime neighborhoods are characterized by high concentrations of families abandoned by fathers.** *The Real Root Causes of Violent Crime: The Breakdown of Marriage, Family, and Community* by Patrick F. Fagan Backgrounder #1026 March 17, 1995

**Youths are more at risk of first substance use without a highly involved father. Each unit increase in father involvement is associated with 1% reduction in substance use. Living in an intact family also decreases the risk of first substance use.** Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Kristin A. Moore, Randolph C. Capps, and Jonathan Zaff. “The influence of Father Involvement on Youth Risk Behaviors among Adolescents: A comparison of Native-born and Immigrant Families,” *Social Science Research* 35 (2006): 199.

**Despite the difficulty of proving causation in the social sciences, the weight of evidence increasingly supports the conclusion that fatherlessness is a primary generator of violence among young men.** David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1995): 31.

## **Poverty**

**Children in father-absent homes are five times more likely to be poor. In 2002, 7.8 percent of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 38.4 percent of children in female-householder families.**

U. S. Census Bureau, "Children's Living Arrangements and Characteristics," March 2002, P200-547. Table C8  
Washington D.C. GPO, 2003.

**A child with a nonresident father is 54 percent more likely to be poorer than his or her father.**

Elaine Sorenson and Chava Zibman, "Getting to Know Poor Fathers Who Do Not Pay Child Support, Social Services Review 75 (September 2001): 420-434.

**Throughout the world, the lack of fathers is a key factor in the impoverishment of children.**

The Economist September 9, 1995

## **Physical and Psychological Health**

**"[T] greater the fathers' involvement was, the lower the level of adolescents' behavioral problems, both in terms of aggression and antisocial behavior and negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem."** Marcia J. Carlson, "Family Structure, Father Involvement, and Adolescent Behavioral Outcomes," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68 (1) (February 2006): 137-154.

**Higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, helping with homework, and going on family outings, has been found to be associated with fewer child behavior problems, higher levels of sociability, and higher levels of academic performance in children and adolescents.**

J. Mosley and E. Thomson, "Fathering Behavior and Child Outcomes: The Role of Race and Poverty." *Fatherhood: Contemporary Theory, Research, and Social Policy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications 1995): 148-165.

**"Fathers matter." A father's involvement in a child's life "significantly influences outcomes: economic and educational attainment and [avoidance of] delinquency." Fathers who are "both emotionally close and highly involved in joint activities" play a major role in a child's maturation. Adolescents who experience "increasing closeness" with their fathers are protected from "delinquency and psychological distress."** Kathleen Mullan Harris, Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr., and Jeremy K. Marmar, "Paternal Involvement with Adolescents in Intact Families: The Influence of Fathers Over the Life Course," *Demography* 35 (May, 1998): 201-16.

**"Controlling for associated factors such as low income, children growing up in such [father-absent] households are at greater risk for experiencing a variety of behavioral and educational problems, including extremes of hyperactivity of withdrawal, lack of attentiveness in the classroom, difficulty in deferring gratification, impaired academic achievement, school misbehavior, absenteeism, dropping out, involvement in socially alienated peer groups, and, especially, the so-called 'teenage syndrome' of behaviors that tend to hand together—smoking,**

**drinking, early and frequent sexual experience, a cynical attitude toward work, adolescent pregnancy, and, in the more extreme cases, drugs, suicide, vandalism, violence, and criminal acts.”**

Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Discovering What Families Do," In *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*, ed. David Blankenhorn, Steven Bayme, and Jean Bethke Elshain (Milwaukee, WI: Family Service America, 1990): 34.

**National Longitudinal Survey of Youth found that obese children are more likely to live in father-absent homes than are non-obese children.**

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

**Obesity of fathers associated with a four-fold increase in the risk of obesity of sons and daughters at age 18**

V. Burke, L.J. Beilin, D. Dunbar, "Family Lifestyle and Parental Body Mass Index as Predictors of Body Mass Index in Australian Children: A Longitudinal Study." Department of Medicine, Royal Perth Hospital, University of Western Australia, and the Western Australian Heart Research Institute; Perth, Australia.

**Father's inactivity is a strong predictor of children's inactivity.**

S. G. Trost, L. M. Kerr, D. S. Ward, R.R. Pate, "Physical Activity and Determinants of Physical Activity in Obese and Non-Obese Children," School of Human Movement Studies, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland 4072, Australia. M. Fogelholm, O. Nuutinen, M. Pasanen, E. Myohanen, T. Saatela, "Parent-Child Relationship of Physical Activity Patterns and Obesity," University of Helsinki, Lahti Research and Training Centre, Finland.

**Children who live apart from their fathers are more likely to be diagnosed with asthma and experience an asthma-related emergency even after taking into account demographic and socioeconomic conditions.**

Kristin Harknett, "Children's Elevated Risk of Asthma in Unmarried Families: Underlying Structural and Behavioral Mechanisms," Working Paper #2005-01-FF. Princeton, NJ: Center for Research on Child Well-being, 2005: 19-27.

## **Education**

**Living in a father-absent home is a major contributing factor to school dropout**

**rates.** Suet-Ling Pong and Dong-Beom Jr., "The Effects of Change in Family Structure and Income on Dropping Out of Middle or High School," *Journal of Family Issues* 21 (March 2000): 147-169. Ralph B. McNeal, Jr., "Extracurricular Activities and High School Dropouts," *Sociology of Education* 68 (1995): 62-81.

**Fatherless children are twice as likely to drop out of school.**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Center for Health Statistics. Survey on Child Health. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1993.

**Father involvement in schools is associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly A's. This was true for fathers in biological parent families, for stepfathers, and for fathers heading single-parent families.**

Christine Winquist Nord and Jerry West, "Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools by Family Type and Resident Status," (NCES 2001-032). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001.

**Students living in father-absent homes are twice as likely to repeat a grade in school; 10 percent of children living with both parents have ever repeated a grade, compared to 20 percent of children in stepfather families and 18 percent in mother-only families.**

Christine Winquist Nord and Jerry West, "Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools by Family Type and Resident Status," (NCES 2001-032). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001.

**Black males who identified their fathers as their role model maintained a significantly higher grade point average and reported significantly less truancy than peers who identified a member of the extended family as a role model or did not have a role model.** Alison L. Bryant, "Role Models and Psychosocial Outcomes Among African-American Adolescents" *Journal of Adolescent Research* 18,1 (2003): 36-87

**A study of 1330 children from the PSID showed that fathers who are involved on a personal level with their child schooling increases the likelihood of their child's achievement. When fathers assume a positive role in their child's education, students feel a positive impact.**

Brent A. McBride, Sarah K. Schoppe-Sullivan, and Moon-Ho Ho. "The Mediating Role of Fathers' School Involvement on Student Achievement," *Applied Developmental Psychology* 26 (2005): 201-216.

**Half of all children with highly involved fathers in two-parent families reported getting mostly A's through 12th grade, compared to 35.2% of children of nonresident father families.**

National Center for Education Statistics. *The Condition of Education*. NCES 1999022. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Education, 1999: 76.

## **Sexual Activity**

**Protecting daughters from sexual overtures of other men has long been a major role of fathers. They are also very important in providing models for the kinds of nonsexual relationships with men that daughters need to develop if they are to avoid the ploys of sexual abusers. When daughters grow up without fathers they do not enjoy such protections from sexual abuse perpetrators.** David Popenoe, "Life Without Father: Compelling New Evidence that Fatherhood and Marriage are Indispensable for the Good of Children and Society," (Harvard University Press: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1996): 67-68.

**Girls who identified their biological father as their primary father figure reported fewer depressive symptoms than peers who identified alternative father figures (men who stepped into "father-like roles" for youths who were not the fathers' biological children).** Rebekah Levine Coley, "Daughter-Father Relationships and Adolescent Psychosocial Functioning in Low-Income African American Families" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65, 4 (2003): 867-875.

**Researchers using a pool from both the U.S. and New Zealand found strong evidence that father absence has an effect on early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy. Teens without fathers were twice as likely to be involved in early sexual activity and seven times more likely to get pregnant as an adolescent.**

Bruce J. Ellis, John E. Bates, Kenneth A. Dodge, David M. Ferguson, L. John Horwood, Gregory S. Pettit, and Lianne Woodward. "Does Father Absence Place Daughters at Special Risk for Early Sexual Activity and Teenage Pregnancy," *Child Development* 74 (May/June 2003): 801-821.