STATE OF AMERICA'S FATHERS

2016

MenCare

PROMUNDO

State of America's Fathers
A MenCare Advocacy Publication

View the report at: www.men-care.org/soaf

This report was produced by Promundo-US, as a MenCare advocacy publication. MenCare is a global fatherhood campaign active in over 35 countries on five continents. Its mission is to promote men's involvement as equitable, nonviolent fathers and caregivers in order to achieve family well-being, gender equality, and better health for mothers, fathers, and children.

MenCare partners work at multiple levels to engage men, women, institutions, and policymakers in achieving gender equality. Partners launch media campaigns; implement evidence-based programming; conduct training with healthcare and service providers; and execute targeted advocacy with health and social-service systems, governments, and the international community. Many partners have adapted MenCare's Program P, a program that engages men in active fatherhood from their partners' pregnancies through their children's early years. Qualitative results from Program P's implementation have shown positive changes in the lives of men and their families: in Sri Lanka, men decreased their use of alcohol, while in Nicaragua, they improved relationships with their children and partners and increased their participation in household work and childcare.

Around the world, MenCare partners are working to show how men's involvement in caregiving can help improve health and child development outcomes and decrease violence. From Guatemala to Indonesia, evidence from partners indicates that working with the health sector has led to positive policy changes that support men's involvement in prenatal and postnatal care. In South Africa, advocacy initiatives encourage policymakers to take a stand against corporal punishment and to legislate paid leave for new parents. In Armenia, work with youth and couples aims to transform norms that lead to prenatal sex selection, while in Portugal, materials in health centers inform patients about parental leave legislation and the benefits of involved fatherhood. To learn more about MenCare, visit: www.men-care.org.

MenCare and its partners launched the first-ever *State of the World's Fathers* report in June 2015, providing a global view of the state of men's contribution to parenting and caregiving. The report was unveiled at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and subsequently launched in ten other cities around the world. It has reached millions of individuals and informed new paternity leave bills and legislation in three countries, as well as regional and thematic summaries that have inspired further advocacy for men's involvement in equitable, nonviolent caregiving. Building on the momentum of *State of the World's Fathers* and partners' related reports around the world, MenCare has prepared this *State of America's Fathers* report – just in time for Father's Day, 2016.

MenCare is coordinated by Promundo and Sonke Gender Justice in collaboration with its steering committee: the MenEngage Alliance, Save the Children, and Rutgers.

Suggested citation: Heilman, B., Cole, G., Matos, K., Hassink, A., Mincy, R., Barker, G. (2016). *State of America's Fathers: A MenCare Advocacy Publication.* Washington, DC: Promundo-US.

Version revised June 12, 2016.

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Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities
AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY

Families and Work Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND 18 56

national partnership for women & families

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Coordinated by: Promundo-US, as an advocacy publication of MenCare: A Global Fatherhood Campaign. For more information about MenCare, visit www.men-care.org. For more information about Promundo, visit www.promundoglobal.org.

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Special thanks go to Ruti Levtov, Nina Ford, and Magaly Marques from Promundo-US for their strategic inputs, technical oversight, and ongoing guidance in the production and dissemination of this first-ever comprehensive report on the state of fatherhood in the United States.

Expert reviewers:
The report benefited tremendously from thoughtful comments from the following experts. Please note that all errors and omissions are those of the authors and not the responsibility of the expert reviewers.

- Scott Behson, Professor of Management, Fairleigh Dickinson University; author, *The Working Dad's Survival Guide*
- Gayle Kaufman, Professor, Sociology and Gender & Sexuality Studies, Davidson College; author, *Superdads: How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century*
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Communications, public relations, and dissemination were led by: Alexa Hassink, Promundo-US, with Rebecca Ladbury, Ladbury PR, and with special thanks to Simon Isaacs, Fatherly. Additional support was provided by Rachel Lyons, National Partnership for Women & Families, and Nina Ford, Promundo-US.

Production and design were led by: Nina Ford, Promundo-US, with support from Alexa Hassink, Promundo-US. Thanks to Ameya Naik for fact-checking, Katherine Lewis for copyediting, Alice Brett for proofreading, and Blossom Communications for providing the branding and design for *State of America's Fathers*.

This report would not have been possible without support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Oak Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

PREFACE

Gary Barker, PhD
President and CEO,
Promundo-US

WHAT IS THE STATE OF AMERICA'S FATHERS IN 2016?

Fatherhood in America is changing, and changing fast. Never before have fathers been so visible – in commercials and in the media in general, in research, and in our communities. There's a reason for that: men are doing more of the care work than ever before in the U.S., and the new research we present here shows that the majority of fathers want to spend *even more time* with their children. Women, too, want men to take on more of the caregiving. Yet, too often, our society still thinks of fathers as the secondary parent – the helper – and we, as fathers, too often consider or refer to ourselves as such. As this report will show, holding a lower bar for fathers' caregiving contributions works against our efforts to reach true gender equality at work and at home.

Never before has the gap been so large between what parents of all genders want in terms of parental leave and support for their caregiving roles, and what our state and federal governments, workplaces, and social norms permit. It is shameful, for instance, that the U.S. is the only high-income country in the world with no nationally guaranteed paid leave for parents of infants and young children. In fact, we don't even guarantee *unpaid* leave after the birth of a child for a great many employees.

The situation is not entirely dire. Certain large companies have gotten the message that parents are seeking greater so-called work-life balance, and now offer generous paid leave and flexible work policies to attract top talent. This is clearly a positive trend. But these options are still mostly available only to the highest-income, best-educated fathers and mothers in the country, if at all. Behind the scenes, and in the majority of workplaces in the country, the opportunities and options available to the poorest families and fathers in the U.S. are appalling. In spite of how much we know about the importance of their involvement, our policies toward nonresident fathers tend to be punitive and nearly exclusively focused on their financial contributions, harming children's well-being.

It's time to push the change forward – to acknowledge and support parents of all genders in their desire to offer the best possible lives for their children. It's time to achieve full equality in caregiving between women and men, and for families of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It's time to support the lowest-income families in our country, who face the greatest challenges in supporting their children – in particular, the lowest-income fathers who struggle for adequate employment and income, and who are too often cut off from their children as a result. This support must include the nearly one million fathers and families who suffer under our reprehensively high incarceration rates.

What is the state of America's fathers in 2016? We've come a long way toward achieving gender equality in parenting. Fathers are more present in the lives of their children than in the past, and they are doing more of the caregiving. *But we have a long way to go*. We do not adequately prepare our sons to see themselves as caregivers and as full and respectful partners in sexual and reproductive health. We do not sufficiently support our families, through parent training and other means, to ensure that our children's lives are free of violence. We have not created a workplace culture that recognizes that being a caring parent and leading a productive work life are not and must not be treated as mutually exclusive.

In short, we are not yet a child-friendly and parent-supportive country. However, as we present in this report, we know what we need to do to become one.

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STATE OF AMERICA'S FATHERS AT A GLANCE

Fatherhood in America is changing – and changing fast.

We have come a long way toward achieving gender equality in parenting, but there are key areas where the United States (U.S.) is failing its parents and failing to achieve equality. National data show that women with children under the age of six spend just over an hour a day on hands-on care, while men only do about half that amount. Fathers are taking on more childcare and domestic work than ever before – and they say they want to do more – but we still have a long way to go.

The U.S. also fails to support its families – particularly those at the lowest income levels – with living wages, paid parental leave, and other programs and policies to ensure that children get the care they need. We are not yet a child-friendly and parent-supportive country. In this first-ever *State of America's Fathers* report, we present a plan for how to become one.

State of America's Fathers provides recommendations on what it will take to reach equality in caregiving, to achieve work-life balance for parents in all their diversity, and to support nonresident, low-income fathers. The report also presents new, preliminary data on changes in work-life fit from the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce.

MEN'S ROLES AS CAREGIVERS:
It's about (more than) time

While men's time spent on childcare and housework has increased, women continue to do more of both.

The last half-century has seen incredible progress when it comes to mothers and fathers proactively and equitably sharing household work and childcare responsibilities. Over the past 30 years, American fathers have increased time spent with children during the workday by 65 percent.[1] In a 2007 survey, 50 percent of fathers with young children reported diapering and feeding their children more than once per day, 56 percent reported bathing their children a few times or more per week, and 39 percent reported getting up always or often with their children at night.[2]

Women, on the other hand, say that men are still not doing a fair share of the care work. New data in this report show that, as of 2016, half (50 percent) of married/partnered American fathers self-identify as their children's primary caregiver or report sharing that responsibility equally with their partners. However, only 34 percent of married/partnered mothers report that this is the case. Additionally, most of these mothers report taking the primary responsibility for cooking (66 percent) and cleaning (68 percent). And this is the case even though women, including mothers, are entering the workforce at a higher rate than ever before, while men's workforce participation has slightly declined.

Even in the workforce, men are not participating equally in caring. While women have made great strides into traditionally male professional spaces, men have not made similar moves into caring professions. Many female-dominated professions are still paid less than traditionally male-dominated professions, even if the job requires a similar level of education. As one example of how slow the change has been: the percentage of kindergarten or pre-kindergarten teaching jobs held by men in 1980 was 2 percent – and in 2014, it was still 2 percent.[3]

Despite these trends, new evidence shows that men are as hard-wired to take care of children as women are. The neural-network and brain-hormone changes displayed by primary-caregiving fathers are similar to those found in primary-caregiving mothers.[4] Multiple studies confirm that men who are in close physical contact with their infant children show changes in body chemistry similar to women's – hormonal changes that promote or facilitate adult-infant bonding. The bottom line is that, apart from breastfeeding, men can care for children in every way that women can.

FATHERHOOD AND THE WORKPLACE:
Everybody wants to "have it all"

Men are now facing the same work-life stress that women have for decades. Paid leave for all parents, along with other supportive policies, would make life substantially easier for many working Americans. But as it stands, most fathers – and many mothers – do not have these options.

Parents of all genders want men to spend more time with their children, but the workplace still has not caught up. In 1977, 35 percent of fathers in dual-earner families reported work-life conflict. By 2008, that number had increased to 60 percent.[5]

One reason for this increase in work-life conflict is the lack of adequate leave policies; the U.S. is the only high-income nation that does not offer paid parental leave – for mothers or fathers. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 established unpaid leave for new parents, including adoptive and foster parents, but its restrictions mean that only about 40 percent of the workforce actually has access to it, with the least access among the poorest segment of the workforce.[6] Fully 95 percent of low-wage workers in the U.S. do not have the option of taking paid family leave through their employers' policies for the birth of a child or to care for a seriously ill family member.[7]

However, flexible policies that include paid time off for men are beneficial for women, children, and men alike. Longer leave for fathers is associated with reduced stress for mothers and fathers' greater involvement in the long term. It is also a protective factor against postpartum depression.[8] States like California that offer some paid leave provide additional evidence for its benefits: 91 percent of participants in California's new Paid Family Leave program who had low-quality jobs reported that taking paid leave had a positive effect on their ability to care for a new child.[9] Shorter leave allotments for fathers, on the other hand, are associated with increased marital dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety.

States that offer up to 16 weeks of paid leave for both fathers and mothers have been able to achieve it via a payroll tax of about 1 percent. They have also seen multiple benefits for women's wages, women's participation in the paid work force, and increased equality in the share of caregiving across genders. States like California and New York are paving the way for the kinds of leave policies that other states, cities, and the federal government should emulate.

FATHERS, SEX, AND HEALTH:
Fathers' multiple roles in their families' well-being

The healthiest families are those in which fathers are doing their part to support sexual health and healthy pregnancies, where all family members are seeking and receiving adequate healthcare, and where no one is using violence.

Raising men to be responsible partners as adults means talking to them from early on about healthy sexuality. Unfortunately, sexuality education remains a highly politicized issue in the United States, with great variability across states, school systems, and religious institutions. One study found that roughly half of the students surveyed in grades 7 through 12 reported needing more information regarding their sexual health.[10] And as many as 30 percent of teenage boys report not receiving any sexuality education before first intercourse.

When men share in contraceptive decision-making, they are more likely to be involved fathers. Men who feel that a pregnancy is intended and well-timed tend to be more likely to attend childbirth classes, to be present at the child's birth, and to engage more fully after the child's birth.[11] The report authors firmly advocate for a woman's autonomy and right to choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. A supportive male partner can help to ensure her access to safe and legal abortion services, as well as provide emotional support as needed during the termination of a pregnancy.

If and when their partners become pregnant, fathers can provide crucial emotional and psychological support during the pregnancy. Fathers' attendance at breastfeeding classes is linked with increased uptake of healthy breastfeeding, and fathers' financial support to unmarried mothers during pregnancy is linked with decreased risk of low birth weight.[12,13] Pregnant women with emotionally supportive male partners are more likely to maintain healthy pregnancy behaviors, to have deliveries without complications, and to exhibit better postpartum mental health.[14,15,16]

The lifelong health prospects of men in the U.S. are significantly poorer than women's, stemming in part from men's poor health-seeking behaviors. Some research finds that men who are involved fathers are more likely to care for their own health. When men do not take care of their own health, their families – including their children – bear the burden. Research from the U.S. and around the world concludes that men who self-identify most strongly with a definition of manhood pegged to physical strength and self-reliance are less likely to seek adequate healthcare.[17,18,19,20,21] In a recent study in the U.S., men aged 30 to 44 were three times less likely than women to have visited a physician in the prior year. In the same study, 24 percent of men said they would handle worries about health by waiting as long as possible before seeking help.[22]

While most men, and most fathers, are not violent, we know that too many men still use violence against female partners and children. The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that nearly 700,000 children in the U.S. were victims of abuse and/or neglect in fiscal year 2013.[23] Children in the first year of life were most at risk of one or more forms of violence or neglect, with more than 2 percent of children being victimized. Child maltreatment and abuse are complex issues, with multiple common perpetrators other than parents, but they are also preventable. Parent-training programs that include fathers have shown evidence of effectiveness in reducing rates of child maltreatment; these should be scaled up.

NONRESIDENT, LOW-INCOME FATHERS:
Dismantling inequality

Marriage is not the defining feature of American families anymore, and against the cultural narrative or stereotype of absent fatherhood, the greatest proportion of nonresident fathers are consistently very active in the lives of their children.

More children are being born into cohabiting or unmarried families than ever before. Census data from 2014 identify 7.9 million opposite-sex unmarried-couple households in the United States, up from 5.5 million in 2000 and close to zero in 1960.[24] Combined with high divorce rates, data confirm that as many as 50 percent of all children in the U.S. spend some portion of their childhood years living in single-parent households.[25]

In the U.S. today, there are approximately eight to ten million nonresident fathers, including both divorced and never-married fathers – an unprecedented development in American family life.[26] Men with lower incomes and less education are far more likely to become nonresident fathers; the majority of men of childbearing age who lack a four-year college degree either are or will eventually become nonresident fathers.[27]

Due to the legacy of unjust sentencing policies in the U.S., incarceration is the cause for many fathers' nonresident status. One study estimates that nearly 10 percent of children in the United States who are under the age of 18 have a parent who is either currently incarcerated or who has been incarcerated at some point.[28] In the U.S., 2.7 million children have an incarcerated parent,[29] and 92 percent of incarcerated parents are fathers.[30]

Nonresident fathers' financial support – via court-ordered child-support payments or other informal contributions – *does* meaningfully benefit the health and development of children. The provision of child support is associated with positive cognitive, academic, and behavioral outcomes for children; financial support from a nonresident father has also been shown to decrease childhood food insecurity.[31,32] Research has further shown positive associations between economically disadvantaged fathers' *informal* child-support contributions and children's well-being.[33] Additional evidence shows more positive effects for families where child support was cooperative rather than court-ordered. Fathers who paid their child support were also more likely to be involved in other ways in their children's lives.

Even as nonresident fathers' financial contributions have been shown to be beneficial, seeking *unrealistic* financial contributions may do unintended harm to children, fathers, and families. Too often, efforts to reduce the high poverty rates faced by children in female-headed families have attempted to induce noncustodial parents – mostly fathers – to provide more financial support.[34] One study found that overall government expenses to enforce child-support payments jumped from $800 million in 1978 to $5.2 billion in 2002, but that the majority of children eligible for this support still do not receive it.[35] High child-support obligations may therefore have the opposite of their intended effect. Rather than increasing children's well-being, evidence suggests that the imposition of higher and unrealistic obligations on low-income fathers increases their noncompliance.[36]

High child-support obligations take a particular toll on men who lack a four-year college degree, most of whom have earnings in the bottom half of the earnings distribution. Many of these men have not completed secondary school, are chronically unemployed, and have criminal records. These characteristics increase their likelihood of being nonresident fathers in the first place. According to data from the National Survey of Family Growth, approximately 71 percent of the country's nonresident fathers earn no more than $40,000 per year.[37]

The key point is this: fathers' inability to pay is a paramount reason that these men do not provide child support; fathers with incomes under $20,000 are those with the highest arrears.[38] Mothers of children with nonresident fathers acknowledge that financial and structural factors – far beyond the fathers' intransigence or unwillingness to pay – are the primary obstacles to their receiving full child support. Mothers list fathers' unemployment, incarceration, and economic disadvantage among the primary reasons that they do not expect to receive child-support payments.[39,40,41,42] Many single mothers in low-income families *want* their children's nonresident fathers to be involved in their children's lives, as co-parents and caregivers, as well as financial providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to become a child-friendly, parent-supportive, and gender-equal country, we must:

1. Teach *all* of our children, from early on, about the value of – and their opportunity to be – both caregivers *and* professionals.

This education starts in childhood with a fundamental shift in how we treat boys and girls, the expectations and aspirations we set for them, and – importantly – the ways we teach them about caregiving. This education needs to take place at home, in schools, and in our communities. If we value the participation of *all* genders as equal caregivers, we must teach this at the youngest ages. This means scaling up youth programs and classroom activities that give boys and girls hands-on experiences with caregiving and break down traditional gender norms.

2. Improve services and education – related to sexuality, caregiving, violence, and parenting – for youth and adults.

Involved parenting is built on a foundation of reproductive justice and the ability of couples and individuals to plan when and how they want to have children. Supportive programs and services include comprehensive sexuality education (that is developmentally appropriate, that is biologically and anatomically accurate, and that includes discussions of contraception, abortion, and consent) and quality reproductive health services. This also means teaching both parenting and co-parenting skills to individuals of all genders, and regardless of their resident status, as well as investing in programs that prevent violence. Special efforts are needed to engage men and boys more fully in reproductive health and rights, and to help them see themselves as full reproductive partners.

3. Pass national paid, equal, and non-transferable leave for mothers and fathers.

A national policy guaranteeing *fully* paid, job-protected leave of equal length for mothers and fathers after a birth or adoption can and should be combined with other policies – subsidized childcare and early childhood education, among others – to fundamentally improve parents' and children's relationships, well-being, and opportunities to thrive. Families need it, want it, and will vote for it. Paid, equal, non-transferable parental leave can bring great social benefits for low implementation cost.

4. Push for supportive workplaces.

Workplace policies should value what our parents do as caregivers as much as they value their professional achievements. Such policies should include, in addition to parental leave: flexible work hours, sick leave, and a living wage, as well as others that allow parents to have greater work-life balance. These policies should be supported by workplace cultures that respect the caregiving responsibilities of all genders.

5. Encourage men to enter health, caregiving, and teaching professions.

Compared with the great strides women have made into traditionally male-dominated professions, including the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, men's movement into

traditionally female-dominated professions has been inadequate. Bringing more men into the HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) professions will accelerate social shifts toward greater acceptance and valuing of caregiving qualities in all genders. In addition to these steps, we can also implement national campaigns to eradicate outdated notions that men are inept – or worse, dangerous – when it comes to care of children.

6. End the unnecessary battle of the sexes over fit parents' custody of children, in cases of divorce and separation, and enact legislation to promote shared custody, in the interest of gender equality and children's well-being.

The issue of custody in cases of divorce and separation has been a political fault line for families for too long. It is time to support common-sense reforms that move us toward equality. As men do a more equitable share of caregiving and become full co-parents, the time has come to support joint custody when it is in the best interest of the child. In situations where there is no history or threat of violence or abuse, the presumption of joint physical custody of children after a relationship or marital breakdown is the fairer, more gender-just approach. Contrary to the misguided notion that this debate is one of men versus women, legislation to encourage more equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities (in most, not all, cases) after divorce or separation will bring real benefits to mothers, fathers, and children alike. This step, which many states have already taken, will further erode the inequitable care burden placed on women, as it simultaneously encourages men to play their part not only as breadwinners but also as caregivers.

7. Support the poorest fathers and families with a living wage, a reformed justice system, and additional services that encourage and support their caregiving.

The challenges of fully involved fatherhood are amplified for America's lowest-income and nonresident fathers, a great majority of whom seek to play a positive role in their children's lives. Increasing the minimum wage to a *living* wage for low-income individuals would bring significant benefits to these parents and their families. The federal tax code must also be modified so that nonresident fathers who pay child support are eligible for an increased Earned Income Tax Credit in line with these contributions. Reforming the criminal justice system – which systematically and disproportionately incarcerates young, low-income men of color – will help more fathers to be involved with their children, and will substantially improve the employment and financial prospects of these young men. These policies should be combined with those mentioned above – such as universal, paid, non-transferable, job-protected family leave, and increased affordability and accessibility of childcare and healthcare for all fathers.

8. Count fathers and carry out more research on fathers.

We know that if we do not count fathers and what they do, then fathers will not count. More resources need to be invested in collection of time-use data to better understand who is responsible for the childcare and domestic work in our country and how this is changing. These investments should also include improved research on low-income families and effective methods of tracking nonresident fathers. The better we understand the attitudes and behaviors of all types of fathers, the better we can encourage and support them as involved caregivers.

THE FATHERS' INDEX

Cost of raising a child, born in 2013, until the age of 18: **$245,340**
Full-time, full-year federal minimum wage income over the course of 18 years: **$271,440**
Cost of childcare for an infant, as a share of full-time, full-year minimum wage income in Washington, DC: **103%**

Share of **stay-at-home fathers** who said that they are not working because they are caring for their home and family rather than because they are unable to find work, ill or disabled, in school, or retired,
in 1976-1979: **1 in 100**
In 1989: **1 in 20**
In 2012: **1 in 5**

Percentage of American working **men who agreed that it is better** for all involved if "the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children," in 1977: **74**
In 2008: **40**

Percentage of physician/surgeon **jobs held by women** in 1980: **14**
In 2014: **37**
Percentage of kindergarten or pre-kindergarten teaching **jobs held by men** in 1980: **2**
In 2014: **2**

Percentage of heterosexual couples with children under age 18 in the home who have an adopted child: **3**
Of **same-sex couples**: **13**
Minimum estimated number of U.S. children with at least one gay parent: **6,000,000**

Percentage of workers with low-quality jobs who took leave under California's new **Paid Family Leave** program and who reported that the leave had a positive effect on their ability to care for a new child: **91**
Percentage of low-wage workers nationwide who have access to paid family leave through their employer: **5**

Percentage increase in the **time U.S. fathers spend with their children** on workdays, over the past 30 years: **65**
Percentage of fathers in dual-earner families who reported work-life conflict in 1977: **35**
In 2008: **60**

Percentage of parents who work 35 to 40 hours per week who feel they do not **spend enough time with their children**: **63**
Of those who work more than 40 hours per week: **73**

Other than the United States, which does not guarantee nationwide **paid maternity leave**, percentage of remaining 33 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who do: **100**
Year when Norway established one of the first maternity leave policies in Europe: **1909**

Weeks of paid leave provided by California's Paid Family Leave program, the most generous in the nation, in 2016: **6**
To be provided starting in 2018 by New York's newly approved program: **8**
Starting in 2021: **12**

Number of U.S. states where **sexuality and/or HIV education** provided in public schools is required to be medically, factually, or technically accurate: **20**
Number of U.S. states where public schools are not required to provide any sexuality education: **26**
Percentage of American 18-year-olds who have had sex: **61**
Estimated annual cost to U.S. taxpayers resulting from teen childbearing: **$9,400,000,000**

Proportion of U.S. resident men born in 2001 expected to go to prison during their lifetime, if current **incarceration rates** remain unchanged: **1 in 9**
Among white men: **1 in 17**
Among black men: **1 in 3**

Number of children in the U.S. with a **parent in prison** or jail: **2,700,000**
Percentage of parents in prison who are fathers: **92**
Percentage increase in the number of U.S. children with a parent in prison since 1991: **79**

Minimum estimated number of **nonresident fathers** in the United States: **8,000,000**
Percentage of children who will live in a household without their biological father at some point in their childhood: **50**
Percentage of nonresident fathers who earn less than $40,000 annually: **71**

Number of unauthorized **immigrant parents** living with their U.S. citizen children under age 18,
in 1995: **1,300,000**
In 2012: **3,300,000**
Total number of children of first-generation immigrants living in the U.S., in 2013: **17,600,000**

Note: Sources for The Fathers' Index are available on page 135.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Why a report on fatherhood in America?

"As fathers, we need to be involved in our children's lives not just when it's convenient or easy, and not just when they're doing well – but when it's difficult and thankless, and they're struggling. That is when they need us most."

Barack Obama
Father and President of the United States

INTRODUCTION:
Why a report on fatherhood in America?

Few, if any, human experiences can match the emotional power of becoming a parent. Parenthood – and all of the warmth, work, diligence, drudgery, and joy it entails – is a hallmark of adult life for a great majority of Americans. Likewise, the relationships one has with one's parents are absolutely fundamental to any person's lifelong health, well-being, and identity. To be sure, increasing numbers of Americans are choosing not to become parents, and living nonetheless rich, emotionally rewarding lives. Millions of children raised by non-biological parents also, undeniably, thrive in our society. While the link between a child and its parents is universal – hard-wired, even – the shapes, colors, and tones of these relationships are as varied as the American population itself. Whether you are a parent or not, whether you aspire to be one or not, and whatever your relationship with your own parents was like, there is no denying that *parents and parenting matter.*

Approximately 80 percent of American men will become biological fathers at some point in their lives, and virtually all men engage in some kind of caregiving relationship with children or others.[43] However, we still do not have a clear or accurate national picture of what fatherhood looks like. We need to use data, and men's and their partners' own experiences, to uncover the truth. Are men embracing the spectrum of roles, responsibilities, and riches of fully involved fatherhood and care work? Do they desire a healthy balance between professional success and family well-being? If so, do they have the financial security to achieve it? It is hard to overstate the stakes: the next generation depends on them.

Fatherhood is now central to high-profile national conversations on gender equality, work-life balance, economic inequality, and underlying questions of what it means to be a man in America today. More men than ever are stay-at-home fathers and even more are involved, equitable caregivers for their children. More women than ever are taking leadership roles in the workplace, and balancing caregiving and income-earning roles with their partners. And, many parents are just struggling to find a way to make a living and raise a family at the same time, in any arrangement.

Today's parents of all genders both *want* and *need* to combine caregiver and breadwinner identities in new ways, but many of our policies obstruct those desires and needs. Paid parental leave policies are increasingly on both corporate and government agendas, and more and more men and women are making use of these opportunities. However, we are falling short on policies that support all parents, especially low-income fathers,

to be involved substantively in their children's lives. Engaging men in caregiving and care work is key to achieving women's empowerment and supporting the well-being and rights of children. Fathers, mothers, and children are telling us what they want and need. Why is it taking so long for us listen?

WHAT IS IN THIS REPORT?

This report will highlight new and powerful data, and pay particular attention to the most vulnerable families and fathers – including low-income families, parents who are unemployed or in part-time work, nonresident fathers, and incarcerated fathers. It will explore men's roles as caregivers (Chapter 2); take a look at fatherhood and the workplace, and what it means for fathers to "have it all" (Chapter 3); discuss fathers' roles in their families' well-being more broadly, including these roles as they relate to sex, health, and violence prevention (Chapter 4); and take a look at nonresident and low-income fatherhood (Chapter 5). It will also highlight successful programs and policies, relevant to families across income levels, that must be expanded and offered more broadly.

This report concludes with specific recommendations – rooted in fairness and equity – for how we can support fathers to promote gender equality and accelerate positive outcomes for women, children, and men, and for how we can embrace the diversity of America's families (Chapter 6). We must:

1. **Teach *all* of our children, from early on, about the value of – and their opportunity to be – both caregivers *and* professionals.** This education starts in childhood with a fundamental shift in how we treat boys and girls, in the expectations and aspirations we set for them, and, importantly, in the way we teach them about caregiving. This education needs to take place at home, in schools, and in our communities.

2. **Improve services and education – related to sexuality, caregiving, violence, and parenting – for youth and adults.** This extends from comprehensive sexuality education (that is developmentally appropriate, that is biologically and anatomically accurate, and that includes discussions of contraception, abortion, and consent), to teaching both parenting and co-parenting skills to parents of all genders and regardless of their resident status. Being an involved father also means being fully engaged in reproductive-health decisions and contraceptive use, and being responsible for one's own sexuality and reproductive health.

3. **Pass national paid, equal, and non-transferable leave for mothers and fathers.** We know families need it, want it, and will vote for it. We know the incredible social benefits it can bring. But, we still fall shamefully far behind other countries. A national policy guaranteeing paid, job-protected leave of equal length for mothers and fathers after a birth or adoption can and should be combined with other policies – subsidized childcare and early childhood education, among others – to fundamentally improve parents' and children's relationships, well-being, and opportunities to thrive.

4. **Push for supportive workplaces.** We need workplace policies that value what parents do as caregivers as much as they value professional achievements. In addition to parental leave, such policies should include flexible work hours, sick leave, a living wage, and other policies that allow parents to better balance work and life.

5. **Encourage men to enter health, caregiving, and teaching professions.** While women have made incredible strides into traditionally male-dominated professions, including the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, men's movement into traditionally female-dominated professions has been unremarkable. Bringing more men into the HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) professions could accelerate social shifts toward more acceptance of caregiving qualities in all genders.

6. **End the unnecessary battle of the sexes over fit parents' custody of children in cases of divorce and separation, and enact legislation to promote shared custody in the interest of gender equality and children's well-being.** The issue of custody in cases of divorce and separation has been a political fault line for families for too long. It is time to support common-sense reforms that move us toward equality. As men do a more equitable share of caregiving and become full co-parents, the time has come to support joint custody when it is in the best interest of the child. This also promotes greater equality in division of childcare.

7. **Support the poorest fathers and families with a living wage, a reformed justice system, and additional services that encourage and support their caregiving.** The challenges of fully involved fatherhood are amplified for America's lowest-income fathers, as well as for its eight to ten million nonresident fathers, most of whom seek to play a positive role in their children's lives. Increasing the minimum wage to a living wage for hard-working, low-income families would

significantly benefit children in these families. The federal tax code must also be modified so that nonresident fathers who pay child support are eligible for an increased Earned Income Tax Credit in line with these contributions. These steps, in addition to reforming the harsh sentencing guidelines for nonviolent offenders that imprison disproportionate numbers of young men of color, including many fathers, would begin to dismantle these layered injustices.

8. **Count fathers and carry out research on fathers.** Because we know that if we don't count it, it doesn't count.

WHAT DOES "MASCULINITY" REALLY MEAN, ANYWAY? OPENING UP "THE MAN BOX"

Masculinity is a catch-all term for the qualities that are associated with being a man. Ideas related to masculinity – or what is considered manly – are instilled from a young age, and are often understood in opposition to ideas about femininity, or what we associate with women. Raewyn Connell, a preeminent scholar on masculinity, has helped show how sticking to just one definition of masculinity – based on physical strength, sexual prowess, stoicism, aversion to caregiving, and other characteristics – creates a barrier for men to become actively involved in their children's lives. Connell argues that there are multitudes of ways to be a man.[44] Embracing the term and the concept of *masculinities* – plural – can be empowering for the many men who do not subscribe to the single, culturally dominant style of masculinity, and it can open the door for caregiving to become a central part of any man's masculine identity.

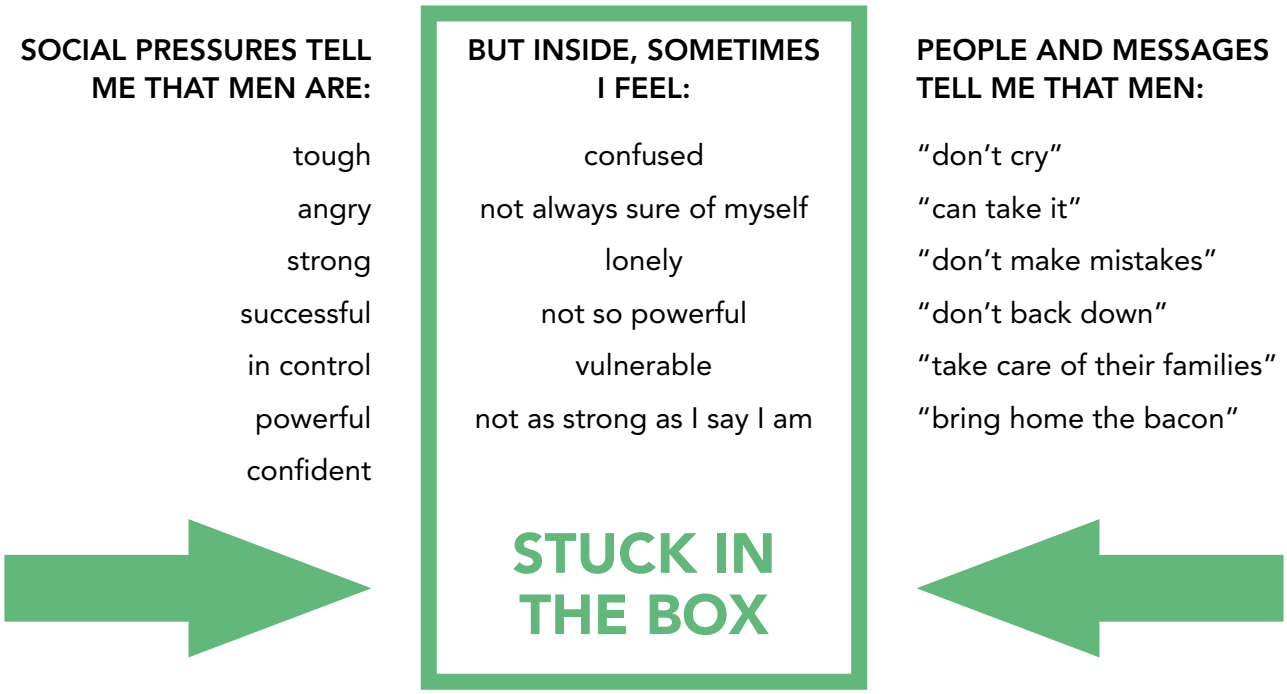
Ideas about what it means to be a man or to be a woman are just that: ideas. They are not hard-wired in our bodies or biology, and they sideline the realities of people with other, or fluid, gender identities. These restrictive, oppositional ideas about gender can be imposed even before birth – painting the nursery with blue cars for a boy or pink flowers for a girl, for instance – and are evident in the marketing of a variety of products, from toys to deodorants to writing utensils and beyond.[45]

So, we see a troubling scenario with enormous relevance for a report on men's full participation as caregivers and fathers: men in the U.S. and around the world are too often put in a figurative box by the words "act like a man." Many of the elements of this "man box" hold them back from being the parents they want to be and are capable of being. The graphic on the next page, adapted from work by Paul Kivel, attempts to illustrate some of the turmoil that may be experienced by a man struggling to balance his own internal feelings with societal messages about how to "act like a man."

FIGURE 1.1:

"The Man Box"

Source: Adapted from Paul Kivel, "The Act-like-a-Man Box."[46]



Many of today's fathers want out of the box. Many boys and men want more. They know they are capable of a full range of emotional experiences. They can admit that they need help. They know that they cannot do it on their own. They know they are capable of being both breadwinners and caregivers, just as they know that women can successfully be both breadwinners and caregivers. They know that they are no less a man when they care for another person or when they ask for help.

WHY DOES FATHERHOOD MATTER? WHY NOW?

Evidence is piling up that fathers' positive involvement in the lives of their children brings broad benefits. It is not hyperbolic to affirm that men's full participation as fathers and caregivers brings benefits that pay forward in multiple and dramatic ways. As we will present in greater detail in the next section, research is overwhelming that men's involvement as fathers brings benefits for children, for women, for businesses, for economies, and for men themselves. See an overview of the evidence starting on page 46.

80%

of American men will become biological fathers at some point in their lives, and virtually all men engage in some kind of caregiving relationship.

HOW TRADITIONAL IS THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY? THE MYTH OF THE WORKING FATHER AND THE STAY-AT-HOME MOTHER

What does it really mean when someone in the U.S. says that they "grew up in a traditional family," or when a politician calls for a return to "traditional family values"? These ideas are not as simple as we often think.

For most of American history, from colonial times until the mid-1800s, the country's economy was predominantly agricultural. In most parts of the country, families tended to be self-contained, self-sufficient economic units, and the majority of productive work took place at home – with men, women, and children all expected to contribute. To be sure, some responsibilities fell along gendered lines, with men more likely to take on certain – though not all – tasks on the farm, and women more likely to manage certain household tasks. **For at least the first two centuries of early U.S. history post-colonization, however, the notion of a male breadwinner and female caregiver was irrelevant for most families.**

This is not to idealize early U.S. history. Native American families suffered extreme violence and displacement over the course of the colonization of North America, with devastating effects on families and communities that are barely acknowledged in most discourse on U.S. history. Among members of the slave population in the U.S., whose fundamental human dignity and agency were tragically violated, unremitting and often backbreaking labor was commonly demanded of all ages and genders. These vicious facts reflect early U.S. family life, as well.

These shameful chapters of our history notwithstanding, the industrial revolution ignited a fundamental transformation in the landscape of gender and work. For large portions of the U.S. population, factories replaced farms as the centers for production, shifting workplaces outside the home. At this point, gender roles started to diverge more starkly, with men more likely to work outside the home and women more likely to focus on childcare and domestic work. This trend characterized American society into the early 20th century, but it was by no means universal. Immigrant, minority, and lower-income families often required two incomes to subsist. Married African-American women were, for instance, about five times more likely to be employed outside the home than the national population of married women at the turn of the 20th century.[47]

If the binary of male breadwinner and female caregiver/homemaker only became dominant around the turn of the 20th century, it was relatively short-lived, and nearly nonexistent by the turn of the 21st century. By 2000, some 60 percent of American women were participating in the labor force, shattering the divisions of the so-called traditional family. Yet, this traditional model seems to be more idealized and prominent in America's collective consciousness than either the earlier all-hands-on-deck model of the agricultural family or our current dual-earner reality.

The prominence of this traditional model comes from multiple converging factors. The rise of the binary, heterosexual family model coincided with major advancements in popular media – from newspapers to radio to TV and the Internet – which may have given these family roles more symbolic

power. The evolution of the modern workplace also coincided with these shifts in important ways, as Gayle Kaufman summarizes well:

> While the traditional family was relatively short-lived, it was the dominant family form during the crucial initial stages of the modern workplace. This meant that workplaces and employers came to rely on having what is called an ideal worker, one who could focus entirely on work, with the assumption that someone else (a wife) would be able to take care of any household needs.[48]

Much of the strain, stress, and shifts that this report addresses emerge from an unfortunate coincidence: the so-called traditional family model was never even very traditional to begin with for most American families – it just happened to appear at the same time as the modern workplace and mass media were taking shape. Even for families who have done away with the breadwinner/caregiver model, these traditions – whose historical reality does not match their prominence in the national imagination – continue to pose powerful barriers to family well-being. When someone says that our traditional ways of being families worked better, they are not only ignoring present economic realities that demand multiple incomes in a home, they are also ignoring the fact that the truer tradition defining American families is one of cooperation and flexibility across gender lines.

Interested readers are encouraged to learn more about the history of gendered divisions of labor in the 2006 volume The Economics of Women, Men, and Work*, by Francine D. Blau, Marianne A. Ferber, and Anne E. Winkler.*

WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT? WHAT IS IT NOT ABOUT?

The national conversation on "traditional family values," as well as on hot-button issues such as child custody and visitation, so-called fathers' rights, and other topics linked to fatherhood, makes it essential that we clarify our core values up front.

THIS REPORT IS *NOT* ABOUT...

..."FATHERS' RIGHTS" OR FATHERS VERSUS MOTHERS. While the report adopts a specific focus on the benefits of fathers' rich involvement in their children's lives, it keeps its eye on the ultimate goal: gender justice.[a] We are not interested in pitting the needs of mothers against the needs of fathers. Rather, we want to move toward a country where *everyone*, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, is able to choose and define their own roles within the family – without discriminatory policies or restrictive cultural norms holding them back. Fathers' and men's increased care-work contributions bring such broad benefits for a simple reason,

a. The pursuit of gender justice can be defined as an effort to realize a world without any inequality of rights or opportunities based on gender, whether in relationships, families, communities, workplaces, or states.

and it is *not* because the caregiving realm will be any better managed by men than women, or because men have superior abilities. Rather, men's caregiving contributions stand to create broad personal and social benefits precisely because they open more spaces for parents of all genders to pursue full, uninhibited personal and professional lives. In other words, these contributions advance gender justice. The pursuit of gender justice is not a zero-sum game whereby gains for women mean losses for men, or vice versa. Indeed, true gender justice is an abundant and self-perpetuating resource, offering benefits and expanded opportunities to *all* members of society.

…HETEROSEXUAL COUPLES/FAMILIES EXCLUSIVELY. We affirm the need to respect and support families and caregivers in all their diversity, including nuclear families; extended families; single-parent households; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) couples, parents, and caregivers; adoptive families; and all other caregiving arrangements that amplify the well-being of all people, regardless of age, sexual orientation, marital status, or gender. The voices, stories, and realities of this broad range of families and caregivers appear throughout the report, and we have endeavored to use male/female assumptions and language only where we cite a prior publication that used this language.

…UNDULY CELEBRATING MEN'S MINIMAL INVOLVEMENT AS "HELPERS" WITH REGARD TO CARE WORK. This report holds fathers and men to a high standard: full, equal involvement in the entire range of childcare requirements – those that take place inside the home and out, those that are traditionally expected of men and those that are traditionally expected of women, *all* care work. This equality does not mean uniformity: each family will negotiate the exact arrangement of "equal" on its own terms. But, we acknowledge and agree with author Michael Chabon, who, after being repeatedly congratulated in the supermarket simply for caring for his children on his own, remarked, "The societal standard for what constitutes being a good father is pathetically low. And men are praised much more frequently, much more readily, for doing much less than women."[49] This report does not indulge unearned praise for fathers every time they take their children out to play. We know and believe they can do more, should do more, and are doing more.

…MINIMIZING OR CRITICIZING THOSE WHO CHOOSE NOT TO BECOME FATHERS OR PARENTS. Alongside the many other demographic trends this paper analyzes, we also acknowledge the fact that increasing proportions of Americans are choosing to wait longer to have children, and often choosing not to have children at all. The report adopts

It is impossible to separate involved and equitable fatherhood from reproductive justice and broader social justice.

a core principle of reproductive justice, which occurs when "all people and communities have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about [their] bodies, sexuality, and reproduction. This includes the right to have children, to not have children, and to parent the children we have in safe and healthy environments."[50]

THIS REPORT *IS* ABOUT...

...EQUITY, GENDER JUSTICE, AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE. Parenthood must be by choice. Women and men deserve the services and information to determine how and when they have children. We call attention when these basic rights are infringed based on income and other disparities. We believe it is impossible to separate involved and equitable fatherhood from reproductive justice and broader social justice. Men and women need access to affordable contraception and women need access to safe and legal abortion services. We support every person's right to choose when to become a parent, as well as to choose not to do so. Ideally, these choices and hopes are defined in advance, with both parties, and inform the collaborative decision and use of contraception and family-planning methods. The foundation of involved fatherhood and healthy parenthood rests on being able to plan whether and when to have children.

This report approaches men's involvement positively and hopefully, considering men and fathers as part of the solution. From looking at fathers' roles in childcare and how they achieve work-life balance, to examining what it means to be a nonresident father, we intend for this report to take an honest look at what fatherhood means for American families in 2016.

EXCLUSIVE TO *STATE OF AMERICA'S FATHERS*: ABOUT THE NEW DATA IN THIS REPORT

The report includes new data related to key report themes. For this report, the Families and Work Institute prepared new, preliminary data analyses of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). These analyses, which are found in Chapters 2 and 3, provide evidence of shifting trends in American workers' hopes for work-life fit, as well as in their attitudes on gender roles and family values.

The Families and Work Institute's NSCW is the only ongoing study of its kind or scale, providing valuable, timely information on the work and personal/family lives of the U.S. workforce. Conducted approximately every five years, the NSCW provides trend data on Americans' lives on and off the job, dating from 1977. The study is widely used by policymakers, employers, the media, and others interested in the widespread impacts of the changing conditions of work and home life.

The sample for the 2016 NSCW consisted of 1,833 English-language and 124 Spanish-language interviews completed via online surveys. Respondents were, at the time of the survey, at least 18 years old and either worked for pay or owned a business.

The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago was responsible for conducting the survey, drawing from their AmeriSpeak® Panel and Survey Sampling International for the sample sources. Kenneth Matos, PhD and James T. Bond conducted the bivariate and multivariate analyses of these data for the Families and Work Institute. These new data are visually highlighted throughout the report.

This is a preview of a series of studies conducted on the NSCW. When the Families and Work Institute begins publishing these studies, information on the NSCW design, sampling, and analysis will be available at: www.familiesandwork.org.

American fathers have increased the time they spend with their children during the workday by

65%

over the past 30 years.

CHAPTER 2

MEN'S ROLES AS CAREGIVERS

It's about (more than) time

"We've always shared responsibilities, so I don't want it to seem like she's done more than me or I've done more than her. But in my eyes, it's kind of been an equal thing. Ya know, those duties have just really been shared. I don't think one of us did more than the other – in my opinion. Again, I've dressed him up, bathed him; I mean, it's normal."

Greg
Stepfather

The quotation above comes from Gayle Kaufman's book Superdads: How Fathers Balance Work and Family in the 21st Century.

MEN'S ROLES AS CAREGIVERS:
It's about (more than) time

NEW DATA

Relatively few Americans raising children aspire to be, or have the luxury to be, *only* a caregiver (a role historically assigned to women) or *only* a breadwinner (a role historically assigned to men) anymore. Today's parents in the United States are struggling to be both caregivers and breadwinners simultaneously. According to new data from the National Study of the Changing Workforce, 81 percent of employed, married/partnered parents with children under 18 live in dual-earner households, while only 19 percent live in one-income households.

The idea of both dads and moms happily bringing home the bacon *and* being hands-on parents promises benefits to children, mothers, fathers, and American society as a whole, but the reality often looks quite different. Women in American workplaces continue to face discrimination, unequal pay, and other barriers to entry and success, and men who aim to engage fully in unpaid care work continue to face regressive social pressures and policy barriers to involvement. This chapter will explore how involved America's fathers are in their children's care, and how involved they *want* to be. We address crucial questions such as:

- ***Where are we***, as a nation, in the process of valuing and sharing care work equally among partners? How do notions of manhood shape fathers' involvement?
- ***What do we know*** about the advantages of fathers' involvement in childcare? How can this involvement benefit children, mothers, men, and society at large?
- ***Where do we go from here*** to encourage fathers' increased involvement in childcare and unpaid work, to increase the social value of all care work (including caregiving professions), and to overcome the harmful stereotypes of masculinity that are holding us back?

WHERE WE ARE

NEW DATA

Most Americans today support sharing household work and childcare between men and women. New data from the National Study of the Changing Workforce show that the majority of American men and women across all age categories *disagree* with the outdated notion that "it is best if men work and women take care of the home and children."

The last half-century has seen incredible progress in terms of mothers and fathers proactively and equitably sharing household work and childcare responsibilities. Over the past 30 years, American fathers have increased the time they spend with their children during the workday by 65 percent on average, according to a 2014 report by the Families and Work Institute.[51] Instead of spending time with their children as a "helper" who mainly supports the mother or just plays, dads are also stepping up at home to take on the less glamorous, though nonetheless essential, elements of the daily childcare routine. In one 2007 survey, 50 percent of fathers with young children reported diapering and feeding their children more than once per day. Fifty-six percent of dads reported bathing their children a few times or more per week, and 39 percent reported getting up always or often with their children at night.[52]

NEW DATA

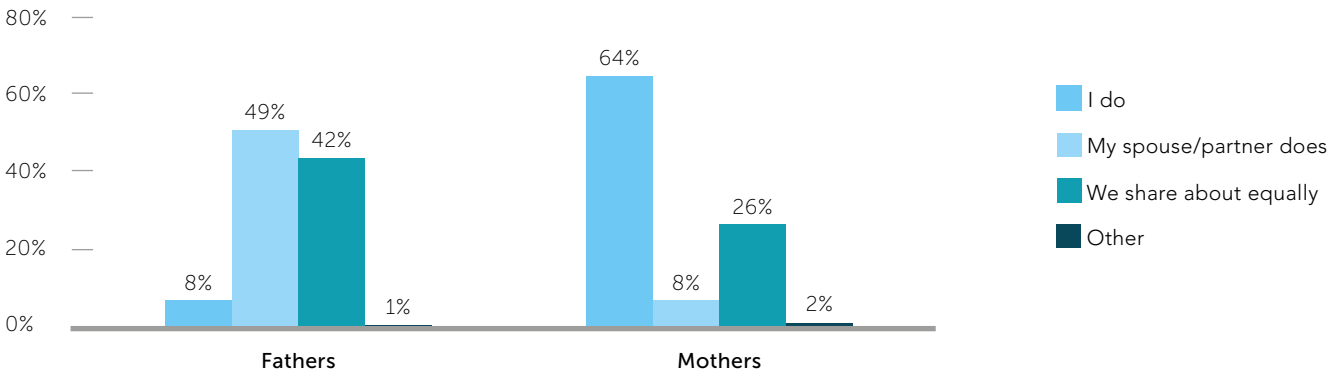
Despite this progress, by women's reports, men still have some distance to go. Our new data show that, as of 2016, half (50 percent) of married/partnered American fathers self-identify as their children's primary caregiver or report sharing that responsibility equally with their partners. However, only 34 percent of married/partnered mothers report that this is the case, as seen in Figure 2.1. In fact, well more than half (64 percent) of married/partnered, employed mothers in this study still report taking primary responsibility for childcare, while slightly more than a fourth (26 percent) of them report sharing these responsibilities equally. Additionally, most of these mothers report taking primary responsibility

NEW DATA

FIGURE 2.1:

Mothers' and fathers' reports of who takes the greatest responsibility for childcare within heterosexual couples

Source: *State of America's Fathers* new data analysis of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Families and Work Institute



for cooking (66 percent) and cleaning (68 percent). What this divergence between women's and men's reports suggests is that men often aspire to be equitable caregivers, but are not there yet.

Although women have begun to shatter glass ceilings in the workplace in recent decades, social norms that compel them to be primary caregivers have proven persistent. Even as the old gender order slowly dissolves, many men – and women – still expect mothers to take the lead on childcare. This trend is true globally as well as here in the United States, and its roots are complex. A recent United Nations report affirms that much of the lingering inequality in caregiving is due to traditional norms that place the burden of care on women, combined with household decisions on how to divide labor, which are based, at least in part, on men's (generally) higher income and the lower status and value given to care work.[53] Women's disproportionate share of care work limits their earning potential and perpetuates global gender inequality, creating a care cycle that is very difficult to break.[54]

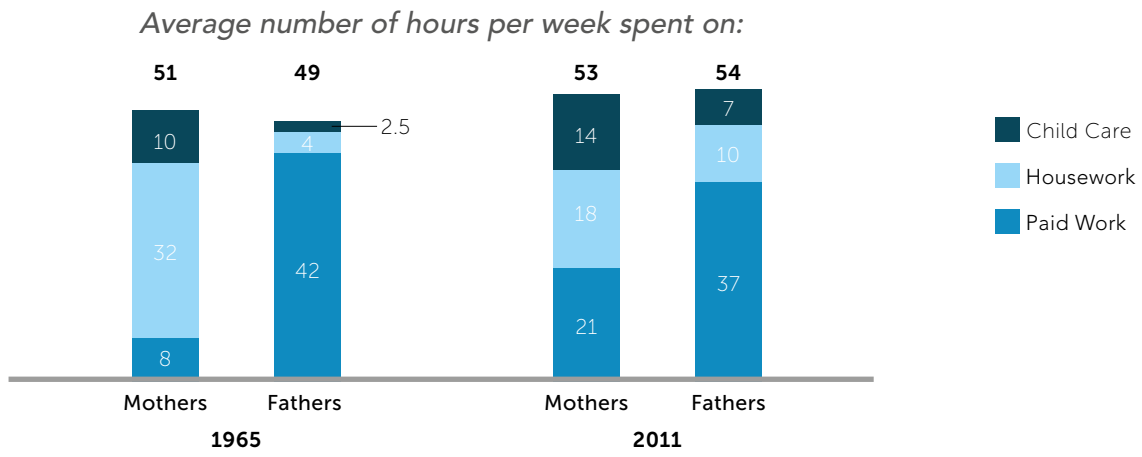
Figure 2.2 shows how mothers' and fathers' time use has changed between 1965 and 2011.[b] While we see significant shifts in the division of household work by 2011, mothers were still spending twice as much time on childcare as fathers were (an *increase* in women's total time on childcare from 1965) and significantly more time on housework. The 2012 American Time Use Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the same care gap. In households with children under the age of six, women reported spending 66 minutes on average each day providing physical care to children in the household (feeding or bathing a child), while men spent less than half that amount – 26 minutes on average each day.[55]

b. Data cited are from a 2011 Pew Research Study looking specifically at currently partnered heterosexual parents.

FIGURE 2.2:

Mothers' and fathers' roles are converging, but not enough

Source: Pew Research Center[56]



Women spend an average of

66 MINUTES

per day providing physical care to children, while men spend less than half that amount, in households with children under six.

The gendering of certain care acts takes place not just within the closed doors of a family home, but also in society at large.

Even as men are doing more in the home, many other caregiving tasks continue to fall on gendered lines. While routine tasks such as feeding, bathing, and clothing children come foremost to mind and are measured more often, childcare encompasses an enormous range of activities. As Chapter 4 investigates further, many men tend to cede most responsibility for family healthcare practices – arranging doctor visits, communicating with pediatricians and other medical staff – to female partners or family members. But these and other caregiving acts which take place *outside the home* (parent-teacher conferences, recitals, check-ups, soccer practices, etc.) are nonetheless essential components of childcare, and show how the gendering of certain care acts takes place not just within the closed doors of a family home, but also in society at large.

When media messages do portray men as fathers, they are often visibly excluded from routine caregiving practices. For example, parenting magazines are almost never directed at fathers, and when they are, they try to send a message about how fatherhood can be fun and manly.[57] The necessity of affirming masculinity in these scenarios makes it explicit that "warm, loving, and involved parenting and primary caregiving are still considered feminine."[58] Some examples of able, loving, nurturing fathers do exist in the national media, however.

Fatherly is a magazine that bucks the aforementioned trend, focusing on hands-on, involved fatherhood. The Dad 2.0 conference and community brings various Internet voices – dad bloggers – with corporate sponsors to support men's fuller involvement in caregiving. Campaigns in traditionally masculine media spaces such as sports coverage have sought to shift these norms. The partnership between the National Football League (NFL) and United Way is one example, as is the National Basketball Association's NBA Cares campaign. These campaigns show sports stars engaged with children in order to challenge assumptions about men's roles. Fatherhood scholar William Marsiglio observes that these kinds of campaigns can be effective because of their striking contrast of power with vulnerability.[59] They are evidence of a hopeful trend toward involved fatherhood gaining mass appeal and resonance.

STAY-AT-HOME DADS ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE GENDER REVOLUTION

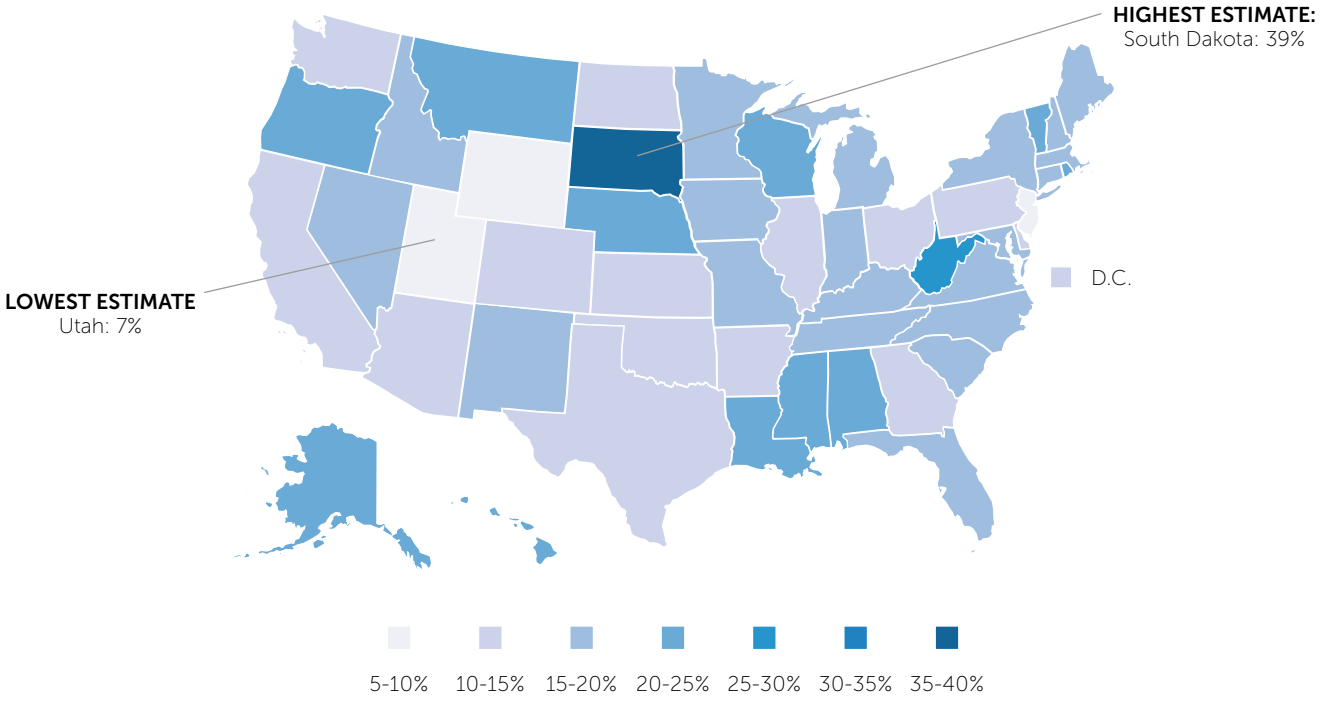
In recent years, the number of stay-at-home dads has grown, both because that choice is becoming more socially accepted and because, for some, high unemployment and slow recovery from the recession have left little choice. According to census data, the number of stay-at-home dads (SAHD) has risen from just six self-identified fathers in the 1970s to almost two million fathers in 2012.[60] In a 2012 study by Livingston and Parker, only 23 percent of stay-at-home dads surveyed reported staying at home because they were unable to find work.[61] However, according to the same study, these dads are half as likely to have a high school diploma as working fathers, and almost half of stay-at-home dads are living in poverty.

These figures diverge from the image in the popular imagination of upper-income, well-educated men who choose to stay home as primary childcare providers, but it also broadens our understanding of what the average SAHD looks like – and how it can be as much about circumstances as choice.

FIGURE 2.3:

Estimated proportion of stay-at-home parents who are men

Source: *The Huffington Post*[62]



Many dads who end up staying home as primary caregivers, voluntarily or otherwise, report personal struggles, ranging from loneliness and social isolation on a day-to-day level to broader fallout from their lifestyle choice. The National At-Home Dad Network is one of multiple support groups that have emerged to support these fathers, helping them turn the tables on any stigma they may face. The National At-Home Dad Network aims, in its own terms, "to empower fathers and champion a culture that recognizes them as capable and competent parents" by providing "support, education, and advocacy for fathers who are the primary caregivers for their children."[63] Initially started as a local playgroup in 2003 by three stay-at-home fathers, the National At-Home Dad Network is now a national nonprofit that supports fathers in their choice to be the primary caregivers for their young children.

As one gay father of an adoptive child shares below – and as many stay-at-home moms have affirmed from their own experiences – full-time parenting is, in some ways, even more exhausting than the workplace routine:

> "I actually find that being able to go to work is helpful for me. It's really very demanding and exhausting being home alone with the baby all day. I mean, there are a lot of really neat, wonderful things about it… But you have no other adult contact and you're not as good at it as you are your regular job. […] I think it actually has been good, having 50 percent time. It is working out really well."[64]

Whether out of economic necessity or out of a desire to fully embody gender equality, the work of stay-at-home dads, like stay-at-home moms, is often under-appreciated, even as it is crucial work for their families and communities. As one stay-at-home dad featured in a recent *GQ* profile put it:

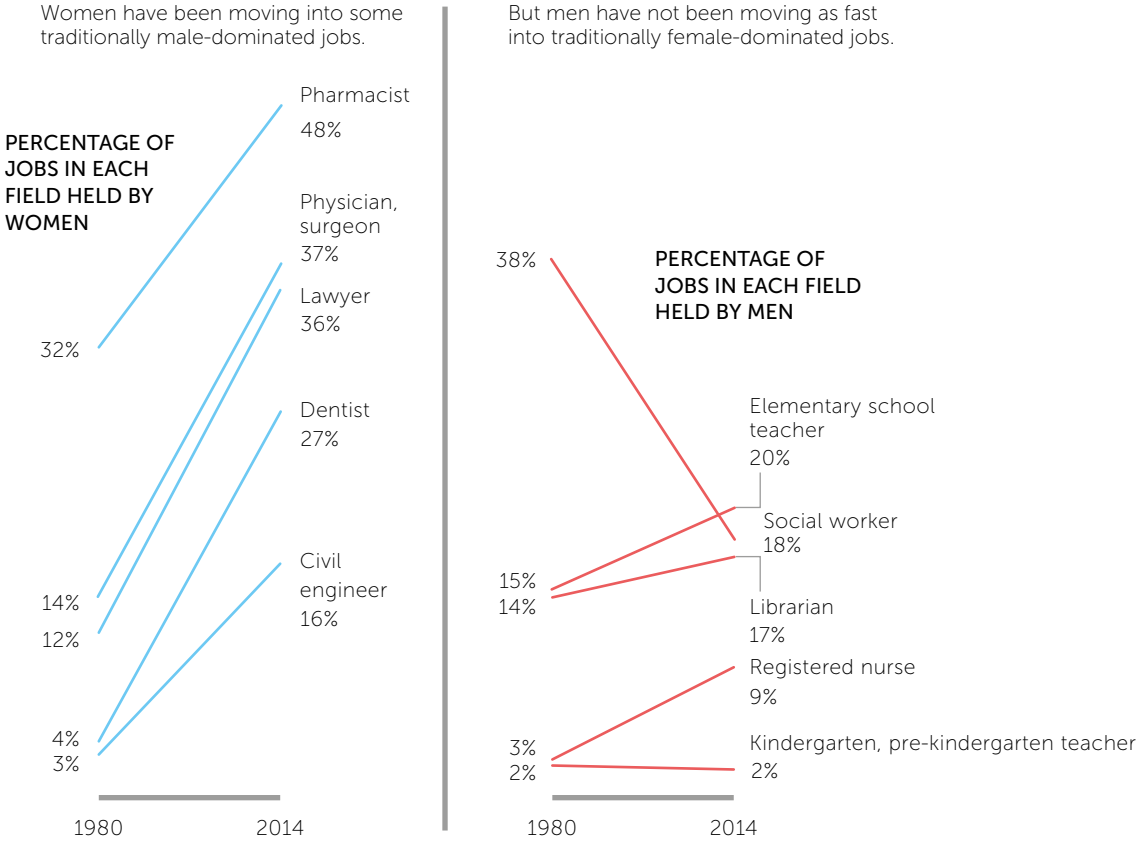
> "All of that time I'd taken getting this new career off the ground, I was worried about my kids not seeing me as the type of solidly successful parent they could look up to as a role model, the way I had with my own father. The thing is, they'd always had one: my rock-star wife. While I was chasing my ambitions, she was forever heading off to her nine-to-five, forever striving to earn them a better future. Kids need that figure, just like they need dinner on the table and clean clothes. As for me, I didn't need to choose just one role. Being a SAHD doesn't mean letting go of your ambition. Just like being ambitious no longer means leaving your kids with a sitter every day. Even with fading gender norms, we're still putting ourselves in boxes. It's time to have it all."[65]

In the workforce, men have resisted pursuing careers that involve caring, even as these fields have grown and as women have made great strides into traditionally masculine professional spaces. This trend emerges, in part, because many female-dominated professions are still paid less than traditionally male-dominated professions, even if the professions require a similar level of education. As Figure 2.4 shows, between 1980 and 2014, women made great progress in pursuing traditionally male-dominated career fields, while men lagged far behind in pursuing traditionally female-dominated professions. To be sure, certain traditionally feminine fields like nursing and teaching are paid significantly less well than those considered to be more masculine; economic forces may be partially to blame for keeping men from traditionally female professions. These forces also serve to

FIGURE 2.4:

Women are branching out in their career choices, but men are not

Source: *New York Times*[66]



reinforce inequalities: men's higher salaries on the whole, as well as the continued consideration of care work (and the women who take on the majority of it) as less valuable. A recent study by economists at Cornell has found that, even when women expand into less traditional careers, wages decrease as women become a majority in the field.[67]

There continue to be many cultural barriers to men's participation in the caregiving professions. The media is at least partially responsible for perpetuating a fear of single males' involvement with children.

Over-emphasis on stories about men as child molesters may reinforce a public sentiment that men are likely to treat children badly.[68] Such images and messages may dissuade men from getting involved in nurturing activities or work with children in caregiving professions. Additionally, pernicious and unfounded associations between homosexuality and pedophilia have contributed to a perception that gay men are threats to children, affecting their ability to adopt, and even, in extreme cases, blocking them from certain professions and volunteer roles involving caring for children.

Social norms that devalue caregiving fields for non-financial reasons are likely at play as well. Writing for the *New York Times*, authors Reeves and Sawhill point out that while there has been a concerted effort to get more women involved in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, there has been no equal attempt to get more men into HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) professions.[69] As recently as 2010, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 80 percent of jobs are performed by predominantly one gender.[70] Rigid, binary gender norms play no small part in reinforcing this dynamic. Elevating care as something that is both financially valued *and* expected of all genders may help to increase men's participation in both paid and unpaid care work, benefitting everyone in these professions.[71]

While women have made greater inroads into traditionally male careers than men have into more female-dominated fields, many men are nonetheless pursuing careers that focus on caregiving or that are otherwise considered feminine, such as nursing, day care, social work, and teaching. Men in these careers may face a stigma, but many find these careers rewarding nonetheless. One male nurse found that shifting from being a paramedic to being a nurse provided him with the salary needed to support his family, as well as the freedom and flexibility to spend time with them. Another male nurse, a Marine combat veteran, said about his career choice in nursing: "I've gone from taking lives to saving them, and for me, that was something I needed."[72]

80%

of jobs are performed by predominantly one gender.

If more men were to pursue care-related professional work, there would be mutual benefits at home, in these workplaces, and in American society at large. A recent study of men who work directly with children, some of whom are already fathers, found that they tend to have more confidence in their abilities to be good fathers now

and in the future because of their work with children.[73] In a specific example, one father found that helping his young daughter navigate childhood improved his ability to communicate and connect with the young girls in his classroom. This is not to say that the only good fathers are the ones who engage in care work professionally, nor to say that men should pursue HEAL professions to make themselves better fathers. However, greater shifts by men into traditionally female fields of work would be a marker of greater equality in society, and one with proven benefits for certain men's home lives. As the following section shows, evidence is overwhelming that shattering *all* gender-based barriers to men's full involvement as nurturing, reliable, loving caregivers will bring broad benefits to American families and to society at large.

WHAT WE KNOW

New evidence is showing that men are as hard-wired for caregiving as women are. Further debunking the socially constructed notion that women are innately more able caregivers than men, a 2014 study found that primary-caregiving fathers display similar neural-network and brain-hormone changes as primary-caregiving mothers. The authors found that maternal care and paternal care share a "common neural basis," and demonstrated that *actual caregiving behavior* plays a central role in driving changes in the parental brain.[74] Research like this seems to indicate that it is the act of providing direct care for a child, not any biological characteristic, that catalyzes one's aptitude for caregiving, even at the level of brain and body chemistry. What the data demonstrate is that men who are in close physical contact with their infant children show changes in body chemistry similar to those shown by women – hormonal changes that promote or facilitate adult-infant bonding.

There is ample evidence that fathers' increased engagement in caregiving activities boosts a variety of social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral outcomes for children. Children show higher test scores and better cognitive achievement in homes where fathers take on 40 percent or more of the caregiving responsibility.[75,76] A review of 18 previous research studies on fathers' involvement and child outcomes found that in 17 studies, fathers' greater involvement was associated with positive social, behavioral, psychological, and cognitive outcomes for children.[77] Fathers' involvement is particularly associated with fewer behavioral problems in boys and fewer psychological problems in girls.[78]

Involved fatherhood begets involved fatherhood. Increasing fathers' involvement in caregiving has also been shown to have a unique impact on the future of gender equality. A study conducted by researchers at the University of British Columbia found that fathers' "implicit gender role associations" predicted their daughters' future career preferences.[79] This study found that the more moms and dads find themselves falling into a traditional gendered division of labor in their marriage and in parenting, the more traditional their daughters' career choices will be. Data from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), co-led by Promundo, which has now been conducted in some 15 countries around the world, also show a consistent relationship in which men whose fathers participated actively in childcare and household work are significantly more likely to do so in their own adult families.[80] The authors have called this effect the "intergenerational transmission of caregiving." Not only do children whose fathers are active caregivers have more positive outcomes on a variety of developmental measures, but they are also more likely to move beyond traditional gender roles in their future careers and relationships.

FURTHERMORE, EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING THAT WHEN MEN ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN NURTURING AND POSITIVE WAYS IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LIVES…

…CHILDREN BENEFIT. Evidence shows that when men are engaged from the start of their children's lives – by active participation in prenatal visits, by attending childbirth, and by taking leave when a child is born – they establish a pattern of greater lifelong participation. When fathers are more involved in the lives of their sons and daughters, their children are more likely to experience good physical and mental health.[81,82] Involved fatherhood also contributes to boys' acceptance of gender equality and to girls' sense of autonomy and empowerment. Children with positively involved fathers are less exposed to violence and have higher academic achievement, better cognitive and social skills, higher self-esteem, fewer behavioral problems, and increased stress tolerance.[83,84] Encouraging and supporting the positive involvement of fathers has the long-term potential to make a major contribution to the protection of all children from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, and to the realization of their right to safety, education, development, and participation.[85,86]

…WOMEN BENEFIT. *First*, men's increased involvement in care work promotes women's economic equality. In the U.S., women and girls spend almost three times as much time each day doing unpaid care

and domestic work than men and boys spend. This holds back women's income compared to men's, and it continues to be a crucial driver of inequality. *Second*, it leads to improvements in women's health, especially maternal health. Studies from around the world find that when men are present in prenatal visits, women experience safer and less painful births, and decreased risk of postpartum depression.[87,88] *Third*, it leads to better relationships. American women report being more satisfied in their relationships with their partners or husbands when men do more at home.[89] *Fourth*, involved fatherhood can help break the cycle of violence: data from numerous studies in the U.S. show that boys who saw their fathers use violence against their mothers are more likely to use violence against their own partners later in life, as compared to the sons of nonviolent parents.[90]

…MEN THEMSELVES BENEFIT. After becoming fathers, American men tend to show improved health-seeking behaviors, decreased substance abuse, and greater self-esteem, among other benefits. One study finds that engaged and co-residing dads are more likely to be satisfied with their lives, to be more social and connected to their communities and to their families, and to be less embroiled with work.[91] Less engaged fathers in this study (who are often nonresident) are less likely on average to be satisfied with their lives, and they present greater risk for depression and alcohol/drug abuse.[92] New scientific evidence is increasing our understanding of the ways in which men's brain and body chemistries respond to a newborn child, with evidence emerging that fathers' brains and bodies show much of the same hormonal response to the presence of a child as mothers' do.[93]

…RELATIONSHIPS BENEFIT. Men also see an increase in the quality of their relationships when they are involved caregivers. Children whose fathers are actively involved caregivers may increase their "neighborliness" and strengthen intergenerational ties.[94] Children bring their parents into social situations in which they would not normally find themselves, and also lead to increased contact with extended family members. Furthermore, there is evidence that having kids contributes to the development of men's own emotional and moral philosophies; new fathers often discover a newfound need to clarify their own values and priorities in order to set a good example for their children.

…COMMUNITIES BENEFIT. Evidence shows that active fatherhood is associated with greater civic engagement more directly, especially involvement in service-oriented organizations.[95] Even if men are not active participants in religious life before they have children, they are

The U.S. GDP would increase by

5%

if women participated in the labor market at the same rate as men.

much more likely to become active in churches and other religious institutions once they become dads. Fathers are also shown to become more involved in schools and community service throughout the course of their children's lives.[96] For fathers who are separated from their partners, children help them to be integrated into the community, developing social connections and remaining an active part of the community.

…THE AMERICAN ECONOMY BENEFITS. A 2012 study found that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States would increase by 5 percent if women participated in the labor market at the same rate as men, an influence of *several hundred billion dollars*.[97,98] This figure is potentially an underestimate, as the calculation controls conservatively for an overall average decrease in hours worked by employees of all genders. Similar global studies show that if every country in the world increased women's labor market participation to be on a par with that of men's, the global GDP could increase by up to $12 trillion by the year 2025.[99] While the relationship between care work and labor force participation is neither exact nor immediate, it is clear that the gendered division of breadwinning and caregiving roles is a massive historic causal factor in women's lower labor force participation in comparison with men's. Men's equal participation in care work – even if it brings a decline in their own labor force participation – stands not only to provide benefits to health and well-being, but may also contribute to a more open, inclusive, and thriving labor force and economy.

…AMERICAN SOCIETY BECOMES MORE EQUITABLE. As more fathers participate equally in childcare, American society gradually transforms into a more equitable place, where no one's personal or professional ambitions are restricted by the undervaluing or gendering of any work, whether paid or unpaid. Furthermore, the shattering of these restrictions passes on to the next generation.

Children show higher test scores and better cognitive achievement in homes where fathers take on

40%

or more of the caregiving responsibility.

PATHWAYS TO FATHERHOOD FOR GAY AND TRANSGENDER MEN

According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 23 percent of gay and transgender men are fathers and 51 percent of LGBT adults either have children or would like to someday.[100] But these men face an uphill battle to do so, with both social prejudice and financial obstacles standing in their way. While none of the pathways to parenthood presented below are exclusive to gay or transgender men or homosexual couples, the same Pew study identified these as the most common means by which these men pursue their dreams to become fathers.

- **Foster Care:** Many gay and transgender fathers transition from fostering children to adopting them, which is one of the more affordable options for achieving fatherhood. There is no cost to connect with an agency to foster (as opposed to adopting directly), but there can be a wait to get the required training and pass a home study before fostering children. This process can be expedited for roughly $2,000.

- **Domestic Private Adoption:** Gay and transgender fathers can also engage in private or independent adoption domestically, which costs anywhere from $10,000 to $30,000 or more, in certain circumstances. In this method of adoption, fathers engage directly with the birth mother without going through an agency. The costs can include rent, food, clothing, transportation, and medical care for the birth mother for the entire duration of the pregnancy and up to eight months after the birth.

- **Domestic Agency Adoption:** This is similar to domestic private adoption, but gay and transgender fathers work through an agency instead of directly with the birth mother. Agencies often have high fees, making this only an option for the most well off. Adoption through a domestic agency can cost anywhere from $30,000 to more than $50,000.

- **Surrogacy:** For some fathers, a biological connection with their child is important. To achieve this, gay and transgender fathers can hire a surrogate to carry the child and use donated ovum with their own genetic material through in-vitro fertilization. This process is the most expensive pathway to fatherhood, costing, in many cases, over $100,000.

As the above pathways illustrate, gay and transgender fathers face additional expenses which heterosexual couples who are able to conceive successfully can bypass. Because of these prohibitive costs, some couples eager to be parents also adopt and foster children who are otherwise harder to find homes for (because they are disabled, older, or members of a racial or ethnic minority, for example).[101]

WHERE TO GO NEXT

American parents of all genders are increasingly trying – and struggling – to balance the caregiving and the breadwinning, the personal and the professional, the nurturing and the financial, in their families' lives. Even as this shift has the potential to bring broad benefits to children, mothers, fathers, and American society as a whole, many barriers stand in the way. As women in American workplaces continue to face discrimination, unequal pay, and other barriers, men who aim to embrace unpaid care work continue to face regressive social pressures and policy barriers. Below, we present recommendations to raise and transform the profile of care, from a young age, both publicly and privately, to encourage the redistribution of caregiving among men and women. Recommendations specific to achieving work-life balance will be presented in Chapter 3.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **INCREASE RECOGNITION OF THE SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL VALUE OF CARE WORK.**

One way to increase the value of caregiving is, quite simply, to place a monetary value on this work. "Caregiver credits" are a retirement benefit that would pay caregivers for the time they spent out of the formal labor market, which would increase the bargaining power of the primary caregiver. These credits are nearly universally included in public pension systems in other high-income countries.[102] Currently, in the United States, social security provides minimal benefits for surviving spouses of deceased workers, only 50 percent of the rate of the primary worker. This system ignores the changing trends in family structure, and tells caregivers throughout the country that their work is only worth half of paid labor market work. This needs to change. Paid leave and other family-friendly workplace policies also need to be adapted to benefit both men and women who seek to be involved with their families. These issues are addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

- **TEACH ALL CHILDREN ABOUT CAREGIVING IN SCHOOLS.**

Children internalize social norms related to gender, and incorporate these expectations into their identities, at very early ages. In addition to the primary influence of parents themselves, schools have a tremendous

role to play in creating a more equitable society. Curricula should both directly (through specific lessons, discussions, and activities) and indirectly (through the careful use of illustrations and story examples) demonstrate that all humans, regardless of their sex or gender, are capable of being warm, loving, nurturing caregivers. Children should also be encouraged to engage in hands-on caring for younger siblings and/or for other children in their communities and schools through peer-to-peer opportunities, youth mentoring, and volunteer experiences. Service learning could also include more care learning.

- **CREATE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS THAT SEEK TO GET FATHERS MORE INVOLVED IN CAREGIVING TASKS WITH THEIR CHILDREN.**

A program called Boot Camp For New Dads offers training for expectant fathers, as well as help for relatively new fathers, who can bring their children who are under one year old.[103] This boot camp equips fathers with the tools they need to be actively involved caregivers to their new children, facilitating lifelong engagement. Providing a safe space for dads or expectant dads to ask questions, this program helps men overcome the aforementioned "man box" barriers to full participation in the lives of their children.

Started in Canada in 1996, Roots of Empathy is a program that is directed at teaching young children social and emotional competence, while reducing aggression and antisocial behaviors. In this program, children are taught to be aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others.[104] The teacher creates a "culture of caring" within the classroom environment that helps children be more empathic and emotionally aware. The same social and emotional tools are taught to children of all genders because everyone benefits from this awareness. More about how violence can be prevented through educational initiatives is described in Chapter 4.

Head Start has a program aimed at helping low-income dads to move past mere involvement to active engagement – being present for their children and sustaining ongoing relationships with them, as well as with their children's mother.[105] This program provides a space for fathers to interact with their children, engaging in the fathering behaviors, like active play, that are so beneficial to cognitive development. Head Start also helps fathers via substance-abuse services and collaborations with employment agencies and housing authorities, to make sure they can be the best involved father they can be, whether or not they reside with their children.

The Fathers, Families, and Healthy Communities initiative in Chicago teaches men in communities of color how to be better fathers through meaningful engagement with their children. It also provides resources that help with the unique issues facing low-income dads; they not only have access to peer-support groups, but also job training, legal aid, education, and skill-building services.[106] This initiative is making a big difference for the dads, families, and communities it helps.

- **ENCOURAGE MEN TO ENTER "HEAL" PROFESSIONS JUST AS MUCH AS WOMEN ARE ENCOURAGED INTO THE "STEM" FIELDS.**

Since women are now the majority of college graduates and are shifting into traditionally masculine fields at a higher rate than men are shifting into traditionally feminine fields, we are going to suffer a dearth of care workers. Increasing the societal value of caregiving will help alleviate this shortage. Paying those in caregiving professions a fair wage will encourage workers of all genders to enter those fields, and breaking away from traditional concepts of masculinity will tell men that it is okay to care.

- **COLLECT MORE DATA ON THE INEQUITABLE CARE BURDEN AND USE THIS INFORMATION TO ADVOCATE FOR MEN'S GREATER PARTICIPATION IN CARE WORK.**

While it may sound dry and obvious, we need more data. What we have seen, in terms of men's participation as fathers, is that we do not often count it – or at least, that we do not count it as much as we count men's and women's economic performance, for example. We know that what we don't count, doesn't count. What this means is that we need better time-use data from men and women, regardless of marital status or presence of children. These data need to be collected at regular intervals so that we can more effectively track changes over time in caregiving participation and attitudes. There is also a need to be able to compare these data across gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other socio-demographic categories. Finally, these data need to be accessible and widely disseminated to encourage leading scholars to work on this issue.

CHAPTER 3

FATHERHOOD AND THE WORKPLACE

Everybody wants to "have it all"

"I really don't care if I get to buy a fancy new car or live in a super deluxe house. What I do care about is having enough time to play with my kids, spending a relaxing evening with my wife, and enjoying a good book. Yet everything is a balancing act – would I be as content if I worked a job that paid half as much? Not likely. Finding that 'sweet spot' is challenging and probably unique to each person. Ultimately, it's a question of priorities."

Anonymous
Father

The quotation above comes from Scott Behson's book The Working Dad's Survival Guide: How to Succeed at Work and at Home.

FATHERHOOD AND THE WORKPLACE:
Everybody wants to "have it all"

Very few American workplaces are truly parent-friendly. Because of the outdated expectation that a father's primary role in his child's life is as financial provider or breadwinner, however, employers have a critical – perhaps unsurpassed – role to play in accelerating (or hampering) men's involvement as fathers.

This chapter presents the state of America's fathers at work, including the experiences of men across the socioeconomic spectrum, addressing key research questions such as:

- ***Where are we***, as a country, in terms of the changing gender norms related to financial provision in the household and to work-life balance? Is workplace culture keeping pace with social changes?

- ***What do we know*** about the ability of workplace policies to accelerate men taking on more comprehensive caregiving roles in their children's lives? Which particular policies and approaches seem to offer the greatest benefits for workplaces and for families?

- ***Where do we go from here*** in terms of advancing workplace culture, policies, and programs that allow all parents to achieve a rewarding work-life balance?

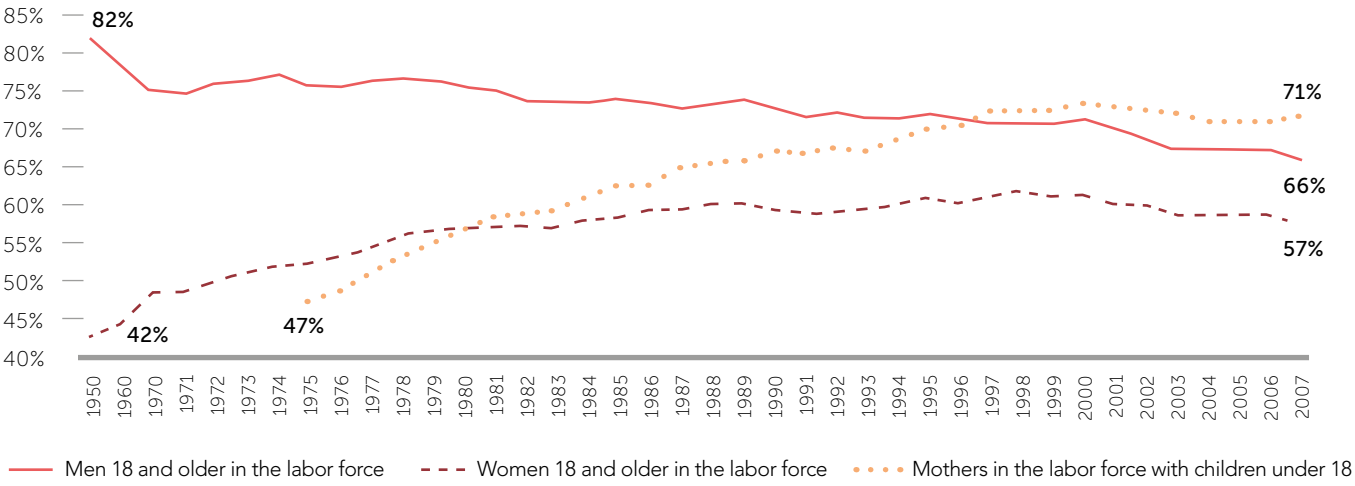
WHERE WE ARE

Changes in American families mean that, in 2016, work-life balance is no longer only a women's issue. As we have seen, fathers are spending more time with their children today than they did three decades ago, and they are taking more responsibility for caregiving work than in previous generations.[107] These changes are driven by a multitude of factors. Women are entering the workforce at a higher rate than ever before (see Figure 3.1), while men's participation has slightly declined; multiple generational and cultural shifts mean that expectations of gender roles are, by and large, becoming more equitable. Of course, American child-rearing couples are neither exclusively heterosexual nor exclusively male-female, but the available data on trends of caregiving tend to apply this lens. Due to the

FIGURE 3.1:

Changing labor force participation by women with children under 18

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey data as cited in Galinsky, Aumann, and Bond, "Times Are Changing"[108]



rise of dual-earner families – in part, the result of the financial unfeasibility, for many families, of having one parent stay home – fathers' involvement in caregiving is a necessity, regardless of the gender of the parents.

More and more fathers now face the tension of reconciling two disparate identities: the professionally successful breadwinner and the hands-on caregiver. A recent Pew study analyzing the shift toward dual-earner households underscored that both mothers and fathers are feeling pressure to find work-life balance.[109] Other data bear this out as well: the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce showed that, while only 35 percent of fathers in dual-earner families reported work-life conflict in 1977, 60 percent did so in 2008.[110] These shifts are not without nuance, however, as the same study emphasizes that in 85 percent of dual-earner couples, a man is the primary income earner, further complicating men's ability to "have it all."

NEW DATA

Both men and women have dramatically changed their attitudes over the past several decades when it comes to what "having it all" really means. According to our new data, 63 percent of employed parents (60 percent of men and 65 percent of women) feel they have too little time with their children, as shown in Figure 3.2. And, as shown in Figure 3.3, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of employed parents who work more than 40 hours

per week at all jobs feel this way. The bottom line for most adults with children in the U.S. is that their work life does not permit them to have the family life they want.

It is not just younger Americans or millennials who are the driving force behind changes in gender attitudes. While 74 percent of men in 1977 agreed that that it is much better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children, only 40 percent of all men surveyed agreed in 2008.[111]

No matter how old, when men become fathers, their priorities tend to shift: family begins to matter to them more, in ways that their workplaces have yet to fully acknowledge and support. Middle-class men, in particular, tend to change their priorities; when they are young and unencumbered, work often comes first, but as these men get older and become fathers, their focus divides between work and family life. Out of the tension between prioritizing family and beginning to make progress and financial gains in their careers comes frustration.[112] Our new data show that this strain and frustration leaves many parents, both mothers and fathers, wishing they could spend more time with their children.

74%

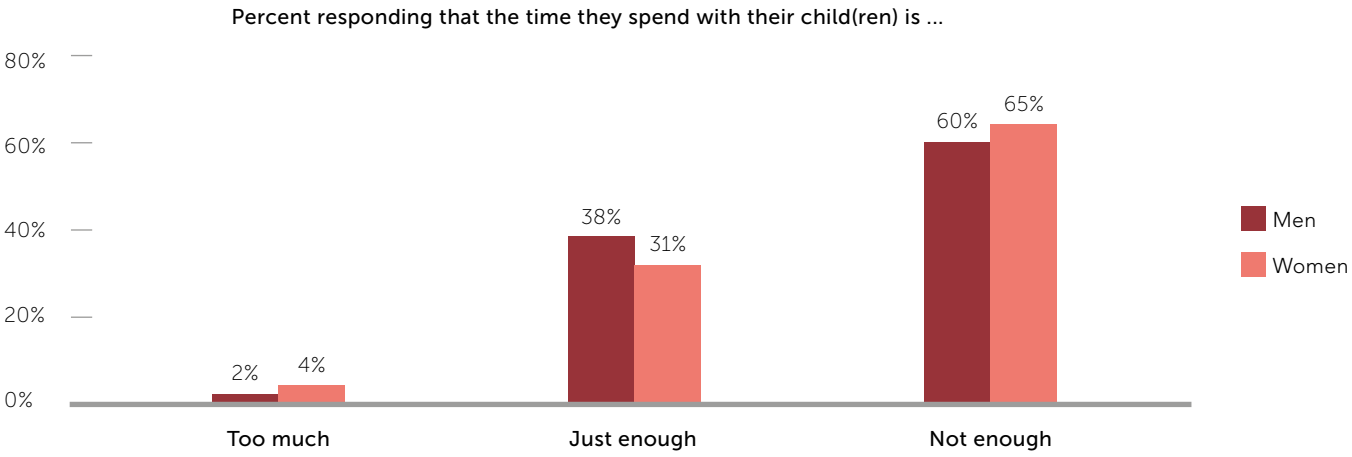
of men in 1977 agreed that it is better for everyone involved if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children, but only 40% of all men surveyed agreed in 2008.

NEW DATA

FIGURE 3.2:

Percentage of employed men and women reporting opinions of time spent with children

Source: *State of America's Fathers* new data analysis of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Families and Work Institute



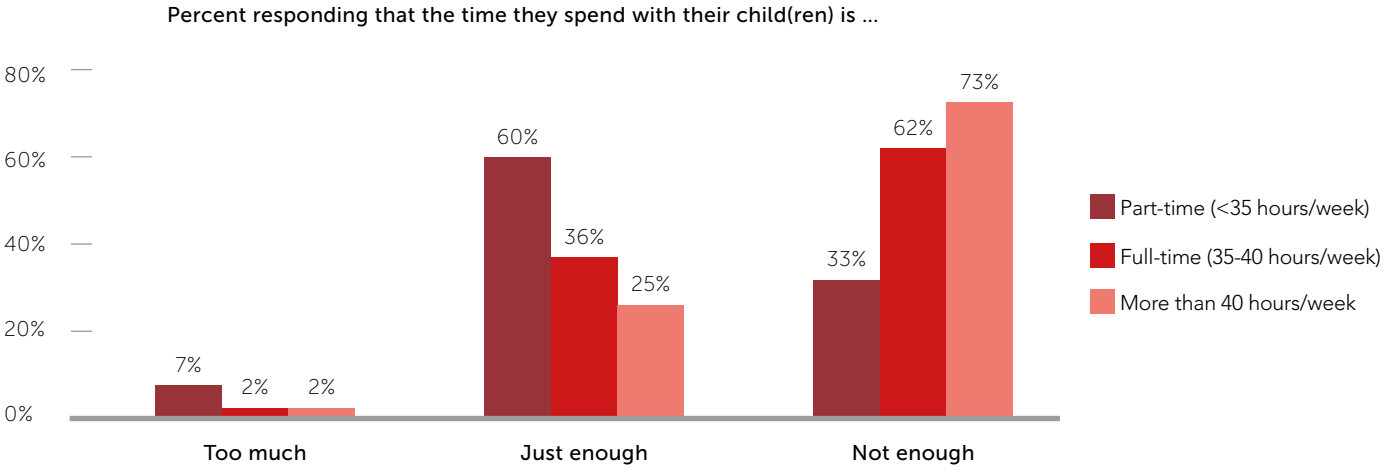
Note: There is no statistically significant difference between men's and women's responses.

NEW DATA

FIGURE 3.3:

Percentage of employed Americans reporting opinions of time spent with children, by hours worked each week at all jobs

Source: *State of America's Fathers* new data analysis of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Families and Work Institute



NEW DATA

While women are more widely accepted in the workforce and men are more widely accepted at home, the expectations for women to be caregivers and men to be financial providers nonetheless remain largely intact. In our new dataset, 64 percent of all Americans surveyed agree or strongly agree with the idea that the father should be a financial provider for his family even if he also takes care of the home and children (see Figure 3.4), suggesting a stigma against the stay-at-home dad. As a result, many fathers feel pressure to provide the main source of income to their families, at the same time as they desire stronger emotional ties to their children and partners. These lingering social norms put further strain on fathers' work-life fit and reconciliation of their competing roles.[113]

NEW DATA

FIGURE 3.4:

Percentage of employed men and women agreeing/disagreeing with the statement "A father should always provide financially for his family, even if he takes care of the home and children"

Source: *State of America's Fathers* new data analysis of the 2016 National Study of the Changing Workforce, Families and Work Institute

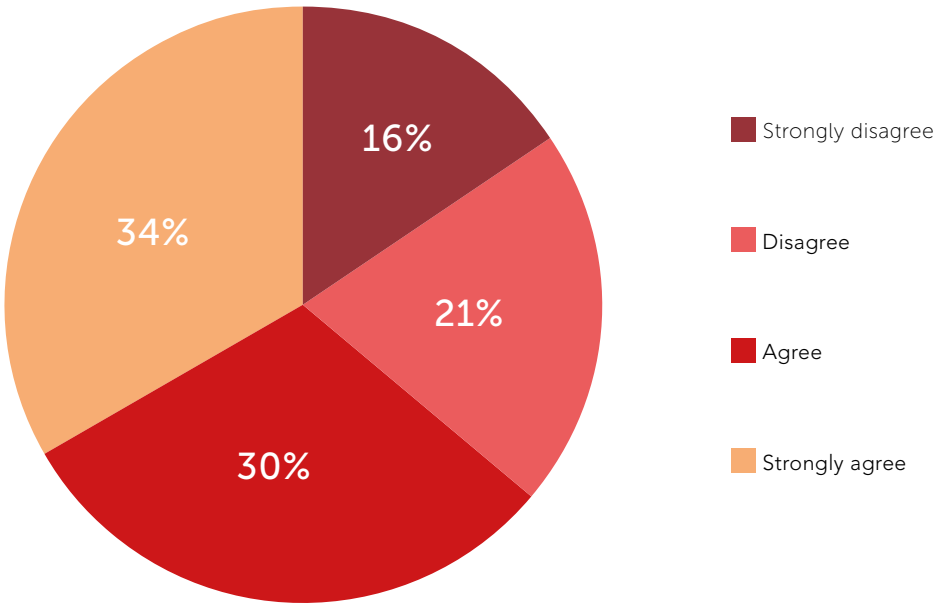
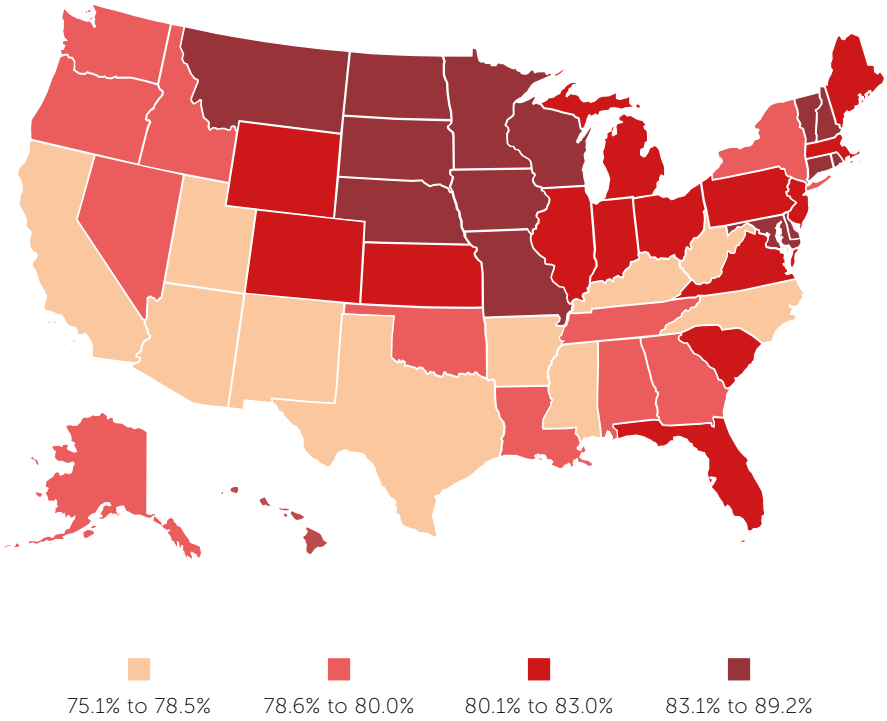


FIGURE 3.5:

Share of parents who are in the labor force

Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of Current Population Survey, January–December 2014 Basic Monthly Survey, Public Use Microdata Files[114]



In every state at least 75 percent of parents are part of the labor force, meaning they have formal employment outside of the home. Especially in the Midwest and the Northeast, this proportion is even higher – as many as 89 percent of parents are in the labor force. This reinforces the need to pass federal legislation regarding paid family leave and provide high-quality childcare for working parents across the country.

FATHERS' VOICES

One working father interviewed in Gayle Kaufman's *Superdads* feels the frustration of not being able to fulfill both professional and caregiving roles.[115] He says: "There's not enough time. Period. To do the good job at work, to be with the family, and then actually to have some time to do things I might want to do."

Another working father, a financial professional interviewed for the same book, experienced workplace stigma when he took flexible leave after the birth of his child. As he recalls: "I took a month of [partial] leave after the birth of my son and this led to negative perception regarding dedication. This is so even though I continued to work about 30 to 35 hours per week (a typical week was about 60 hours)."

Workplaces that are supportive of fathers in their caregiving responsibilities are crucial if we are to get more dads to take full or even partial leave after the birth of their children.

Employers are often oblivious to or unconvinced by the shifting priorities and desire for work-life balance among employees of all genders. With more men seeking to be involved fathers, the traditional, breadwinner view of the role of fathers in the workplace should by now be defunct. However, workplace culture – especially as it is expressed in policies related to family leave – does not tend to appreciate these policies as much as it should. Maternity and paternity leave serve as a primary example. Not only does paid maternity leave in U.S. workplaces fall far behind the offerings of nearly every other wealthy nation, but paternity leave is also often nonexistent. Despite the promising turn of many Fortune 500 companies offering new, more generous leave policies to attract top talent, for most American workers, this is not the reality.

Research indicates that men may suffer greater stigma for seeking flexibility in the workplace than women do.[116] Corporate culture tends to demand long work hours and exclusive professional dedication from all employees. However, a 2011 study found that while both male and female managers who took leave were promoted less, given raises less frequently, and evaluated as being less dedicated than their peers, these penalties were particularly strong for men.[117] While mothers continue to battle professional obstacles resulting from gender biases and their historically disproportionate caregiving responsibilities, this study found that "flexibility seekers were seen as less masculine and rated lower on masculine prescriptive traits and higher on feminine

VALUING CAREGIVING: TURNING DOWN $13 MILLION TO BE AN INVOLVED FATHER

Professional baseball player Adam LaRoche made news when he abruptly retired in advance of the 2016 season because team officials asked him to reduce the amount of time his son spent on team premises. LaRoche's salary for the 2016 season would have been $13 million. About his decision, he said:

"As fathers, we have an opportunity to help mold our kids into men and women of character, with morals and values that can't be shaken by the world around them. Of one thing I am certain: we will regret not spending enough time with our kids, not the other way around."[118]

NEW DATA

prescriptive traits. […] [W]hile men value work flexibility, they may be reluctant to seek it because of fears of stigmatization." Our new data find that, overall, 44 percent of employed parents feel that asking for flexibility to meet family needs would make it less likely for them to get ahead in their careers. There was no statistically significant difference between fathers and mothers. Against this backdrop, it is perhaps less surprising that one study of professional fathers found that a workplace culture supportive of their caregiving responsibilities was *more* important to them than the mere presence of flexible leave options.[119]

Individual men and women want more equality; it is time for the workplace to catch up. The persistence of traditional gender norms in the workplace makes it difficult for men to become active and engaged fathers, and also reinforces societal gender inequality. Recent research is helping to demonstrate that institutional structures and barriers likely have more influence on family-level gender roles and work-family decisions than men's and women's individual hopes and intentions do.[120] Women and men, broadly, hope to have egalitarian relationships, but are hampered by structures that economically incentivize men to specialize in paid labor and disincentivize crossing gender boundaries into caregiving.

"DADDY STIGMA" AND "DADDY BONUS": TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Many fathers report stigma – whether feared or experienced – in their workplaces when they prioritize (or even balance) childcare responsibilities with professional responsibilities. We can think of this trend as a "daddy stigma." At the same time, some researchers have also concluded that, at a population level, fathers may reap a net financial *benefit* – which they call the "daddy bonus" – in their salary and career trajectory because of their status as fathers.[121] Employers may see fatherhood as a marker for traits like loyalty and responsibility and therefore treat it as a positive attribute of their employees. This phenomenon, however, is superficial: men may be rewarded for their status as fathers, but only to the extent that their loyalty and responsibility remain firmly focused on professional – rather than caregiving – objectives. Those men who want to be fathers in a more meaningful, active, and involved sense, and who seek to balance their home and work priorities, soon find that the "daddy bonus" flips to become the "daddy stigma."

Paramount among these structural barriers is the paucity of paid parental leave available in the United States. Indeed, the U.S. is the only industrialized country that does not offer nationally guaranteed paid leave for new parents. We need to have maternity leave for all mothers, but without also having paternity leave, we compromise gender equality in the labor market. This needs to change.

The national, policy-level conversation on family leave also tends to ignore the realities of most low-income fathers. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993 established unpaid leave for new parents, including adoptive and foster parents, but the provisions do not extend to many workers across the nation.[122] For many families in the U.S., unpaid leave is the same as no leave at all; they simply cannot afford to take it. Additionally, these low-income workers have the least access to paid family leave in the country; according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 5 percent of low-wage workers are eligible for the benefit through their employers' policies. This means that fully 95 percent of low-wage workers in the U.S. do not have the option of taking paid family leave through their employers' policies for the birth of a child or to care for a seriously ill family member.[123] The nature of low-income, low-skilled work makes it difficult for many parents in these jobs

91%

of parents with low-quality jobs who took leave under California's Paid Family Leave program report that it had a positive effect on their ability to care for a new child.

to be engaged with their children. The variability of shift work, the stress of barely making ends meet, and the high cost of quality childcare contribute to making involved fatherhood especially difficult for low-income men – as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Low-income dads are at an immediate disadvantage because they seldom have access to flexible workplace programs, and many low-wage jobs are not covered under FMLA.

Paid leave programs can therefore be incredibly beneficial to the lowest-income earners. California's Paid Family Leave program has succeeded in extending benefits to those in low-income jobs: 91 percent of surveyed participants in low-quality jobs (those that pay less than $20 an hour and/or do not provide employer-sponsored health insurance) reported that taking paid leave had a positive effect on their ability to care for a new baby or an adopted child.[124] Low-wage employees who used California's Paid Family Leave program were also significantly more likely than employees who did not use the program to return to their employer after taking leave, benefitting their employers by reducing turnover.[125]

Other options for arranging adequate childcare for low-income parents include informal care by family or friends, home-based day care, or center-based day care. Of all these options, center-based care is considered the highest quality, promoting cognitive skills and social and emotional development in children.[126] Children from low-income families particularly benefit from the cognitive development of center-based care, though it can be prohibitively expensive. Head Start is one of the best center-based options for low-income parents, but the limited enrollment and long waiting lists mean that many families have to seek childcare elsewhere.[127] Even for higher-income families, center-based childcare is expensive to the point of being out of reach. A 2015 report from the Economic Policy Institute found that childcare for infants, as a share of full-time, full-year, minimum-wage income, ranges from 32.2 percent in South Dakota to 102.6 percent in Washington, DC.[128] For low-income families, in particular, it is nearly impossible to obtain the best quality childcare.

THE U.S. SHOULD FOLLOW THE REST OF THE WORLD'S LEAD ON PAID LEAVE

According to the International Labour Organization, at least 49 countries worldwide offer some leave for fathers after the birth or adoption of a new child.[130]

Leave policies for fathers generally fall into two categories: paternity leave and parental leave.

Paternity leave generally refers to the opportunity to take time off from work right after the birth or adoption of a child (from a few days, to several weeks or months). Evidence shows that when governments provide paid paternity leave, fathers take it. In Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and the Netherlands, where new fathers are offered paid time off after a birth or adoption, close to 90 percent of fathers take paternity leave.[131]

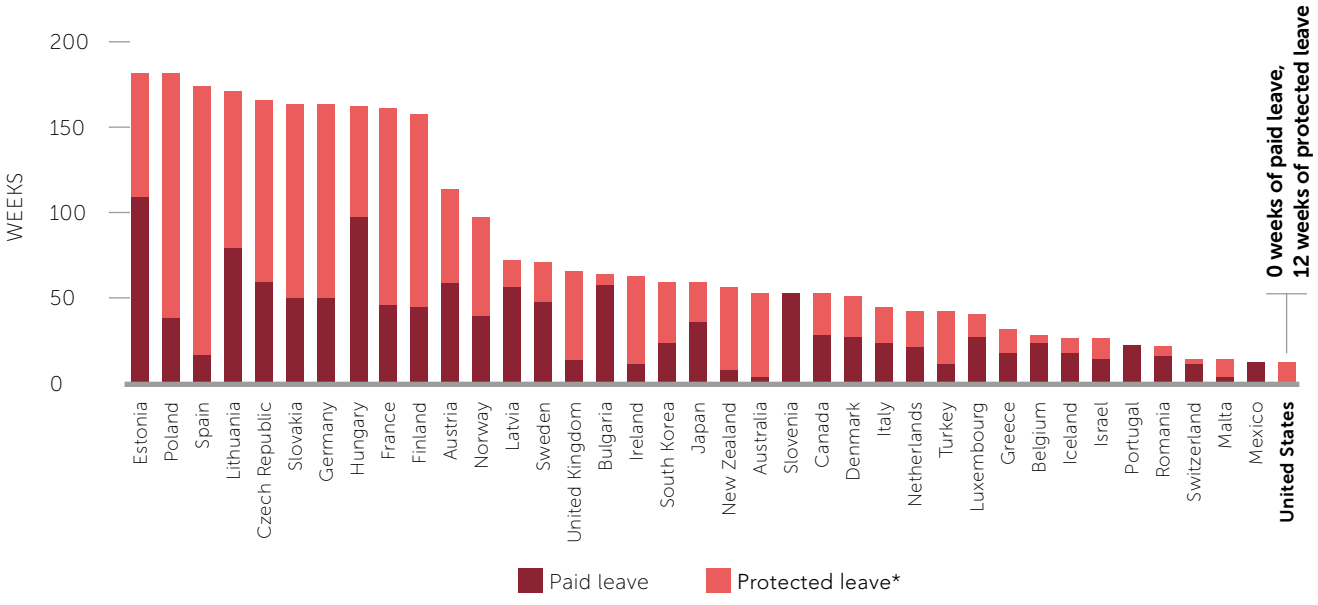
Parental leave refers to longer-term leave available to either or both parents, allowing them to take care of an infant or child, usually after the initial maternity and paternity leave period has ended (this length varies by country). Nordic countries, in particular, have embraced paid parental leave since the early 1990s with great success. These countries have also built gender equality more rigidly into their policies by providing new fathers with *non-transferable* leave, sometimes called "daddy days" or the "daddy quota." This non-transferable leave refers to a proportion of parental leave that these men cannot share with the mothers of their children – they must "use it or lose it."[132]

Among several other examples, Norway and Sweden demonstrate the effects of offering these non-transferable

FIGURE 3.6:

The U.S. ranks last in government-supported time off for new parents

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of OECD data[129]



*Protected leave allows new parents to be away from their job to care for a baby, without fear of losing that job. It may be unpaid.

"daddy days." Norway's parental leave policy offers new parents the option of either 46 weeks at their full salaries, or 56 weeks at 80 percent.[133] Under this policy, 10 weeks are reserved for the mother and 10 are reserved for the father.[134] If the father does not take leave, then the family loses out on that portion of their total benefit. In Sweden, the number of non-transferable "daddy days" of parental leave has risen over time to 90 days at present.[135]

Unpaid leave policies (such as the FMLA in the United States), or policies that provide a low rate of pay for new parents, implicitly encourage the parent with the lowest pay to take time off to care for a new child. For a number of reasons, this is often the mother. However, paid, non-transferable leave policies, such as those outlined here, not only encourage dads to be more involved from early on, but also support equality in women's labor market participation by leveling the rate at which leave is taken by all parents. Therefore, adequate, paid, non-transferable parental leave stands to both increase male caregiving and alleviate the gender gap in paid and unpaid work that comes with the arrival of children.[136]

The most significant federal legislation in support of families in the workplace, the FMLA, leaves much to be desired for American families. The rules for coverage mean that only 40 percent of American workers are eligible under the FMLA.[137] To be eligible under the FMLA, workers must have been with their current employer for at least 12 months in which they worked at least 1,250 hours, and work at a location where at least 50 employees are within 75 miles. This excludes workers at many low-wage jobs who are intentionally kept at less-than-full-time work hours, and those who work at small businesses that can ill afford to pay for leave out-of-pocket.

While the FMLA makes employees eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, Figure 3.8 shows that although their number has been shrinking since 2006, there are still employers who fail to offer that much leave. As of 2014, 6 percent of companies required to comply with the FMLA did not offer a full 12 weeks of maternity leave, and 11 percent did not offer a full 12 weeks for adoption leave. This means that employees of these companies did not have access to the necessary time – which was their legal right, and desire (see Figure 3.2) – to bond with their new children and adjust to the demands of parenting and other family responsibilities.

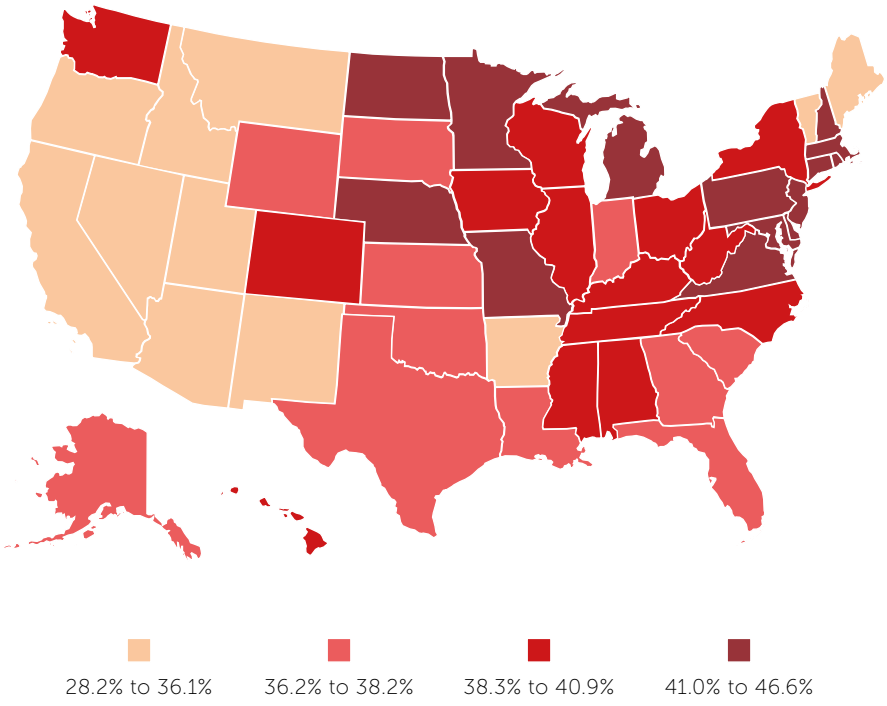
Without formal flexible working policies in place, fathers – and mothers – are unable to take the time they need for their families. Some parents who want to take leave to be involved with their children have to use an informal combination of vacation time and sick days in order to do so. Multiple previous studies have found that most leave – specifically, leave taken by fathers – fits into the category of either vacation or sick time, or a combination of both.[138] When this kind of leave is taken, these fathers no longer have the option of taking personal sick days or going on vacation with their families.

This may even have negative repercussions in the long-term, when these dads cannot take time for doctor's visits for their children, increasing the demand on their partner's time. Plenty of low-income dads – and moms – do not even have the option to take sick days or vacation to care for their children, because their jobs do not offer these benefits; for these parents, taking any time off means losing income. This is a tough choice for all parents, one that could be fundamentally transformed by the provision of paid leave.

FIGURE 3.7:

Working parents who are eligible for and can afford unpaid leave under the FMLA

Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of Current Population Survey, 2011-2014 March Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Public Use Microdata Files[139]



The map above shows the proportion of working parents who are both eligible for leave under the FMLA and are able to afford the unpaid leave that the FMLA permits. Not a single state has more than half of its working parents falling into this category – and this is a huge problem. Certain states, like Minnesota, Nebraska, and Michigan, are approaching half, while states like Maine and Idaho lag far behind. California's generous paid leave policy makes it a special case, despite its low rate of eligibility for FMLA benefits. Even those parents who can afford to take FMLA leave incur significant personal costs in order to do so.

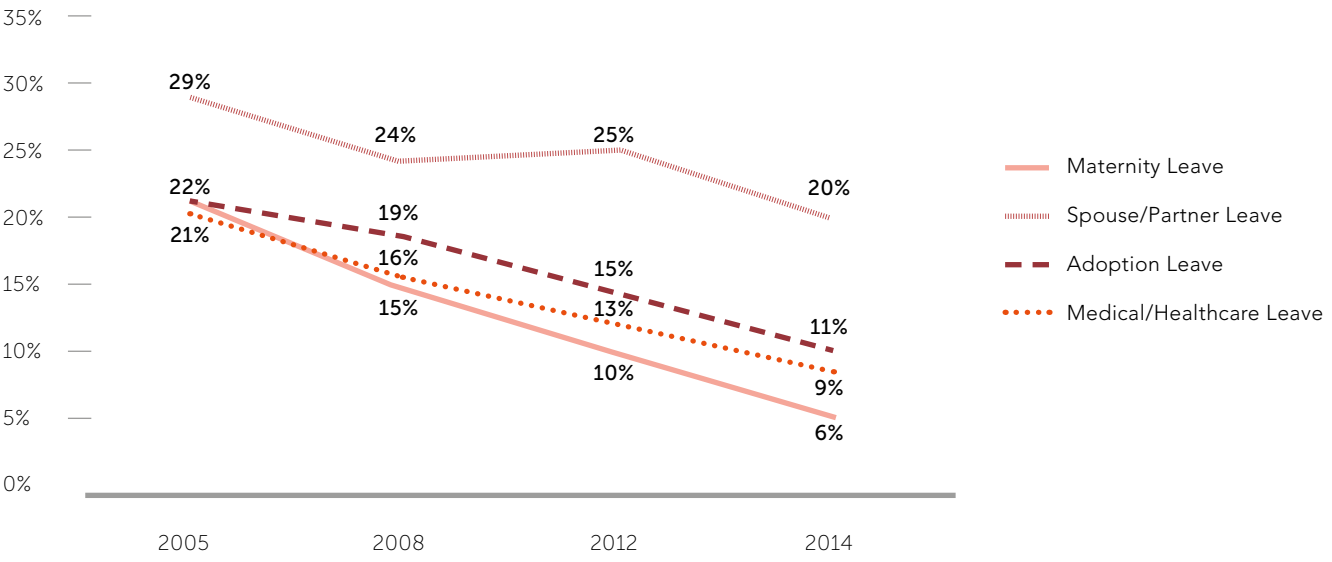
95%

of low-wage workers in the U.S. are not afforded the option of taking paid family leave to care for a new child or for a seriously ill family member.

FIGURE 3.8:

Percentage of employers offering less than 12 weeks of leave among those reporting that they are required to comply with the FMLA: 2005-2014

Source: Families and Work Institute, 2005-2014 National Study of Employer reports as cited in Weisberg and Galinsky, "Family Matters"[140]



Guaranteed paid parental leave for both women and men is urgently needed. It will support women's empowerment and child development – and men want it, too. Making leave available to men encourages them to be more actively involved fathers, which in turn is beneficial for child development and family stability. Furthermore, only providing paid leave to mothers has the perverse result of diminishing women's position in the labor market. Particularly when policies are transferable, rather than being equitable for both men and women (and incentivized for men), women take up these benefits at a higher rate than men do, which makes women riskier for employers to hire. Furthermore, as many policies are subpar even for maternity leave, many women are driven to pursue public-sector jobs that are more family-friendly but lower paid, exacerbating pay inequalities on a broader scale.[141] Paid, *non-transferable* leave helps mitigate these problems by making it affordable and logical for fathers to take leave at a similar rate to that at which mothers take leave.

1%

is the estimated payroll tax required to cover the cost of 12 to 16 weeks of paid leave for new parents.

While federal policy lags behind, many states and employers have started to push the parental leave agenda forward. The FMLA was an important but insufficient first step in furthering the cause of involved fatherhood in the United States, and it leaves much room for improvement. Because of its limited eligibility and provision of only unpaid leave, the FMLA had a negligible impact on the leave-taking practices of new mothers and fathers.[142] In the meantime, however, some states are passing legislation to support paid leave for new parents, broadly expanding on the provisions of the FMLA. Individual employers are also breaking the mold and offering flexible options for parents, along with a crucially important culture supportive of caregiving responsibilities.

California was one of the first states to implement a policy assisting new parents; its Paid Family Leave program currently requires up to six weeks of wage replacement for caregiving obligations, either to a new child or an ill family member.[143] This program is funded by a payroll tax, so it minimizes costs to the employer while providing an affordable option for involved caregiving for new moms and dads. California is now joined by New Jersey, Rhode Island, and (as of April 1, 2016) New York as states with legislation mandating paid leave, and there are ongoing efforts to enact paid leave legislation in a number of additional states. New York's new paid family leave program, which will take effect on January 1, 2018, stands to be the most generous in the country, guaranteeing eight weeks of paid, job-protected leave for caregiving needs in 2018, and gradually increasing to 12 weeks of paid leave in 2021.[144]

These states, in combination with multiple international examples, show that paid leave – even as much as 12 or 16 weeks – can generally be paid for by both mothers and fathers through a payroll tax of about 1 percent.[c] That hardly seems an undue burden for the enormous boost to family and child well-being it will provide.

c. See Figure 3.9. In the states where paid leave laws exist, these laws are funded by various forms of employee and employer contributions ranging from 0.25 percent to 1.2 percent. Initial calculations by Washington, DC's City Council additionally find that 12 weeks of paid leave (with a ceiling, but up to 90 percent for most workers) can be covered by a payroll tax of approximately 1 percent.

FIGURE 3.9:

How are paid leave laws funded?

Source: National Partnership for Women & Families[145]

CALIFORNIA	NEW JERSEY	RHODE ISLAND	NEW YORK
Own disability and family care are funded by the employee only (currently at 0.9 percent of annual wages combined).	State's temporary disability insurance program is financed jointly by employee and employer payroll contributions. As of January 1, 2016, each worker contributes 0.2 percent of the taxable wage base, up to $65.20 per year. The contribution rate for employers varies from 0.10 to 0.75 percent. Family care is funded entirely by the employee. Currently, each worker contributes 0.08 percent of the taxable wage base, and the maximum yearly deduction for family leave insurance is $26.08.	Own disability and family care are funded by the employee only. The current withholding rate is 1.2 percent of worker's first $66,300 in wages.	Own disability is funded jointly by employee and employer payroll contributions. Each worker contributes one half of one percent of the worker's wages, up to 60 cents per week. The employer contributes the balance of the plan costs not covered by the employee. Family care is funded by the employee only. The maximum employee contribution shall be determined by the Superintendent of Financial Services using sound actuarial principles.

Note: Information on states' paid family leave laws was updated in April 2016.

CERTAIN COMPANIES ARE LEADING THE WAY FOR THE BEST-EDUCATED AND MOST-QUALIFIED PARENTS

A few large companies offer policies and programs that lead the way. Ernst & Young is one of the first top companies to offer paid parental leave for both men and women, though the length of leave available for men is shorter than that available to women.[146] Johnson & Johnson offices have onsite child development centers available for children ranging from six weeks to 12 years old.[147] Starting in May 2015, Johnson & Johnson expanded its paid leave policy to include all new parents – biological and adoptive – giving them the option of eight weeks of flexible paid leave; the company had already offered 17 weeks of flexible paid leave for mothers who give birth. Other companies like Chevron and Goldman Sachs also offer on-site childcare and other forms of support for new parents. Many wealthy private companies that tend to hire highly skilled workers have been pushing forward the agenda for paid family leave in recent years. Facebook currently offers four months of paid leave for all employees

worldwide who are new parents; Spotify has a policy offering six months of paid leave; Twitter recently announced an increase to 20 weeks of paid parental leave for new parents of all genders; Zillow offers 16 weeks of paid maternity leave and 8 weeks of paid paternity leave; and many other tech companies are following suit.[148] Notably, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently took two months of paid leave for the birth of his first child.[149] These companies are setting a helpful precedent, even if their motivation is simply to recruit and maintain top talent. The fact remains, however, that paid leave benefits as generous as these are not available for the vast majority of working Americans.

In the absence of nationally guaranteed paid leave, some state and city governments are taking the lead. There are currently campaigns for paid family leave in 26 states and at least 17 cities.[150] In 2015, Boston implemented six weeks of paid family leave for city employees, and Minneapolis, Cincinnati, and Portland followed suit. In 2015, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed an executive order mandating paid parental leave for all non-unionized employees of the city, while also opening the door to negotiations with current unions for the same benefits.[151] This executive order provides six weeks of leave at full-salary level, covering 20,000 employees citywide. While these pieces of legislation do not cover the lowest-wage workers in food and retail industries, they do extend the trend of paid parental leave to more lower- and middle-class families.

WHAT WE KNOW

In addition to strengthening the bonds between father and child, flexible policies that allow for fathers' involvement are beneficial to women. Research shows that longer leave for fathers is associated with these fathers providing stronger support for the mother.[152] In addition to strengthening father-child bonds, the same study demonstrates that fathers' early involvement has been shown to be protective against postpartum depression symptoms among mothers. Shorter leave allotments for fathers, on the other hand, are associated with increased marital dissatisfaction, depression, and anxiety. In addition, as they gain an understanding of the challenges associated with caregiving, men who take parental leave may be more likely to become advocates for women in the workplace, ultimately furthering the agenda of gender equality.

Paid leave reduces turnover and recruitment costs. Paid leave and flexible policies are an important tool for firms in recruiting top talent and reducing employee turnover, with the added benefit of strengthening the relationship between the employer and employee. Of companies surveyed after the implementation of California's Paid Family Leave program, 87 percent reported that there were no cost increases, and some even reported a reduction in costs due to lower employee turnover.[153] Crucially, 91 percent of businesses surveyed in California reported that there were no instances of abuse of the leave policy.[154] A study analyzing the effects of different flexible policies on the profits of businesses found that the mere presence of flexible programs attracted better employees and reduced worker stress.[155] Additional benefits for firms include an increase in employee morale and productivity, lower worker turnover, and greater shareholder returns.[156] Other policies such as flexible-time arrangements, compressed workweeks, and part-time work have been shown to have no effect on profits.[d]

d. Certain smaller companies may be unable to pay a full salary for employees while they take leave for caregiving. This barrier may be unavoidable without a different income stream for the policy. Yet simultaneously, most employees' taking of leave without pay is equally unaffordable.

IF THE MILITARY CAN HAVE IT, WHY NOT THE REST OF US?

In January 2016, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter announced that the military is expanding policies for maternity and paternity leave for those enlisted. This includes an extension of maternity leave from six weeks to 12 weeks fully paid for all uniformed service members, and an increase of paid paternity leave (only available to fathers married to the mother of the child) from 10 to 14 days.[157] In addition, military childcare centers will see extended hours, and military children will get up to 12 hours of subsidized childcare each day. The new policies also include greater flexibility regarding location and family planning. The estimated cost of these policy changes is $380 million over the next five years, but the changes aim to improve retention of service members with families.

While the family-friendly policies expanded by the military this year are valuable, they overlook one key demographic: the paternity leave provision – newly expanded to 14 days – only applies to military fathers who are married.[158] Those who are cohabiting with their partner, or who have terminated romantic involvement, are not granted the same privileges as married military fathers. In the Marine Corps, single fathers can be granted paternity leave under special circumstances, but leave is not extended to unmarried fathers routinely. In order to retain young men from a generation that is delaying marriage, it is important that military policies reflect a recognition of the value of involved fatherhood, regardless of marital status.

FIGURE 3.10:

State laws that offer additional job protection or benefits for new parents who are private sector employees

Source: Kaufman, *Superdads*[159]

	STATES	PROTECTION/BENEFIT
Paid family leave benefits	California, New Jersey, Washington, New York (starting 2018)	Up to 6 weeks paid leave offered presently; New York will reach 12 weeks in 2021
Medical/Disability leave benefits	California	Up to 4 weeks before and 6 weeks after the birth of a child
	Hawaii	Up to 26 weeks
Flexible use of sick days	California, Connecticut (75+ employees), Hawaii (100+ employees), Washington, Wisconsin (50+ employees)	Use of sick days to care for newborn, adopted child, or spouse with pregnancy- or birth-related disability
Job-protected family and medical leave	Iowa (4+ employees), Massachusetts (6+ employees)*	Up to 8 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	California (5+ employees), Connecticut (75+ employees), Louisiana (25+ employees), Tennessee (100+ employees)	Up to 4 months of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	New York	Up to 26 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	Rhode Island	Up to 30 weeks of leave for pregnancy-related disability
	Connecticut (3+ employees), Hawaii, Montana, New Hampshire (6+ employees), Washington (8+ employees)	Reasonable leave of absence for pregnancy-related disability
At-home infant care	Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico	Benefits to low-income parents to care for infants at home
Other	Colorado, Maryland	Employers that provide parental leaves must offer equivalent to employees adopting a child
	Kentucky	6 weeks of parental leave for adoption
	Maine	Up to 10 weeks of family and medical leave (15+ employees)
	Minnesota	Up to 6 weeks of leave (21+ employees)
	New York	Fully effective 2021: 12 weeks of paid, job-protected family and medical leave, regardless of employer size
	Oregon	Up to 12 weeks of unpaid family and medical leave (25+ employees)
	Rhode Island	Up to 13 weeks of parental leave (50+ employees)
	South Carolina	Prohibits employers from firing an employee who takes leave for pregnancy-related disability (15+ employees)
	Vermont	Up to 12 weeks of parental leave (10+ employees)
No additional protection or benefits	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wyoming	

* Recommends similar leave for male employees.
Note: Information on state laws that offer additional job protection or benefits for new parents was updated in 2013, with the exception of legislation in New York, which was updated in March 2016. For updated policies and information, visit www.nationalpartnership.org/expectingbetter and www.nationalpartnership.org/paidleave.

40%

of American workers have no job-protected leave at all, and 88% do not have access to paid family leave through their employers.

One of the biggest questions around providing paid leave is who pays for it, and how. One proposed solution that answers this question is the Family and Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act, currently sponsored in the U.S. Congress by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York. This proposed legislation is more widely applicable than the FMLA and does not increase the federal deficit. The proposal provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave each year to workers, who will be eligible to collect up to 66 percent of their typical monthly wages. This system would not be an entitlement, but an earned benefit. Employees and employers would each pay a nominal amount (0.2 percent of wages each, capped at $237 per year) into the system in order to collect benefits, much like the social security system. At 66 percent of earnings, this plan would provide for some sense of security and a paycheck during time off.[160] Senator Gillibrand proposes creating an independent trust within the Social Security Administration to manage the FAMILY Act, which would minimize costs of implementation and allow efficient expansion of the program.

This legislation has the potential to provide relief to the 40 percent of American workers who have no job-protected leave and the 88 percent of American workers without paid family leave through their employers, all without overburdening the government, firms, or individuals.[161] It will also increase the competitive advantage of small businesses. Government policy like this will help the United States begin catching up to other economically strong countries across the globe while giving necessary aid to working families. Evidence from around the world, as well as from here in the U.S., shows that where progressive, flexible policies have been implemented, and been accompanied by changes in norms, they have worked.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

An increasing number of fathers are struggling to juggle the competing demands of fatherhood and the workplace. With women entering the workforce at a higher rate than ever before, fathers' involvement in caregiving is a necessity for families with two working parents. Beyond policies, workplace cultures have a substantial impact on fathers and what is considered acceptable. Many fathers worry about losing respect or missing out on future promotions because of their decision to take paternity leave or other time off for family reasons.

Low-income dads face different problems when seeking to be more actively involved with their children than do middle- and high-income fathers. Paid leave and schedule flexibility are rare for parents in low-wage jobs, such as those in retail and food service. Paid parental leave policies with purposeful inclusions of leave for fathers have been successful in many of the Nordic countries. Several large American companies have recently joined the conversation by guaranteeing paid leave and other family-friendly benefits to their employees without experiencing oft-feared negative effects. Local policies have also been implemented throughout the United States, and many areas are current battlegrounds for these kinds of work-life balance policies.

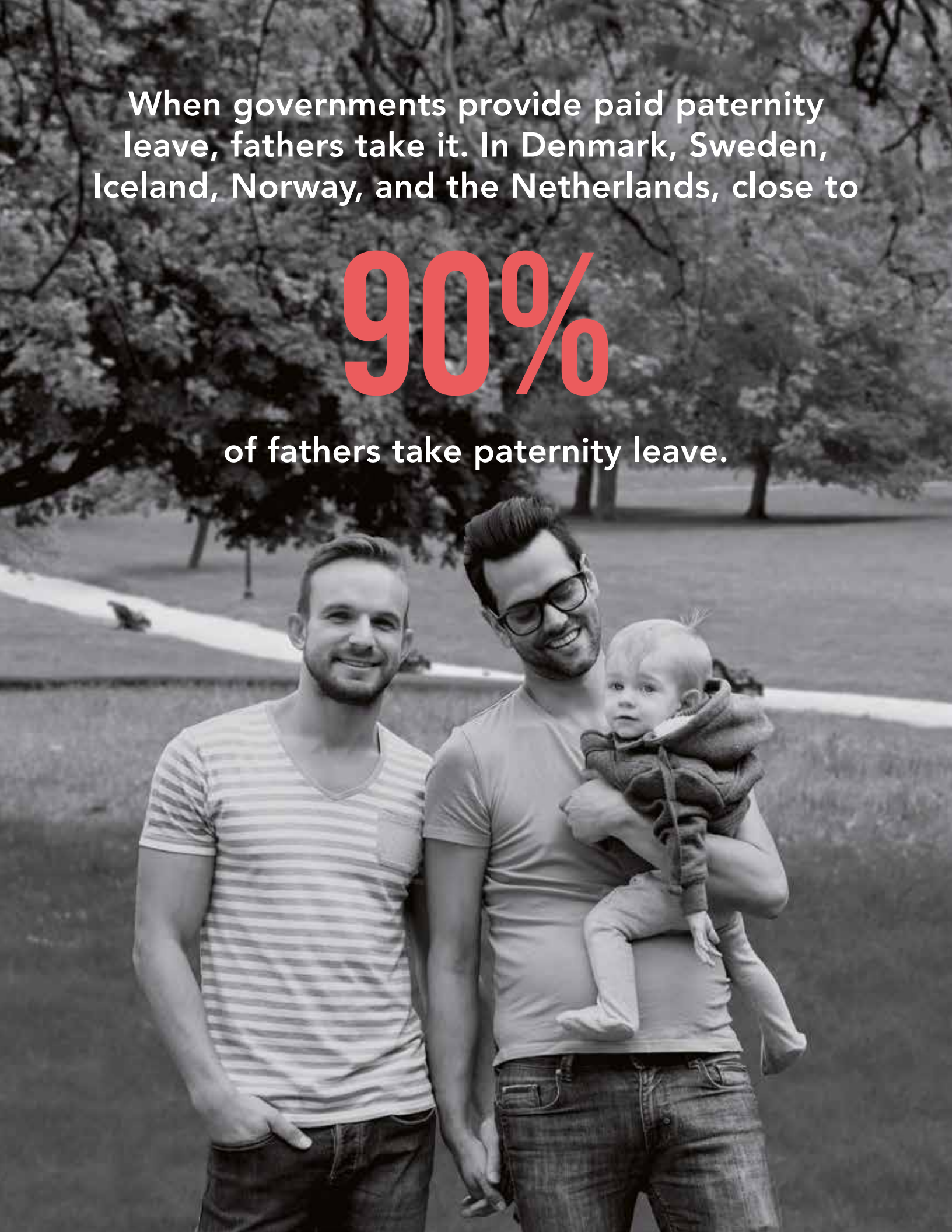
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **PROVIDE ADEQUATE PARENTAL LEAVE TO ELIMINATE THE STRAIN ON – AND HARM CAUSED TO – DUAL-EARNER FAMILIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE WITH LOW AND MIDDLE INCOMES.**

Labor-force and demographic shifts have dramatically changed the landscape of caregiving and professional responsibilities in the United States, but public- and private-sector policies continue to ignore these trends. Every industrialized country on the globe, apart from the U.S., understands that families and societies thrive when work-life balance is achievable for all parents. Until the U.S. catches up in this regard, children, families, cities, and businesses will continue to suffer.

- **PASS PAID, NON-TRANSFERABLE, JOB-PROTECTED LEAVE NOT ONLY BECAUSE IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR FAMILY WELL-BEING, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT IS SMART BUSINESS AND SMART POLICY.**

Providing leave for fathers allows dads to bond with their children in the earliest stages of life, as well as to support their partners, which strengthens their bonds and relationship stability. It is imperative to offer leave to *all* parents to combat the traditionally held belief that caregiving is a woman's job, and making this leave non-transferable encourages fathers' involvement without diminishing women's labor-market position. Policymakers and businesses that support paid leave will reap the returns in the form of votes and worker retention. Society more broadly will see a less stressed workforce, and homes with a greater foundation of equality.


When governments provide paid paternity leave, fathers take it. In Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Norway, and the Netherlands, close to
90%
of fathers take paternity leave.

- **SHIFT WORKPLACE CULTURES AND VALUES TO RESPECT MEN WHO SEEK TO PLAY A MAJOR CAREGIVING ROLE.**

Even when flexible policies and leave are offered, parents face stigma for taking advantage of these programs; this stigma has been shown to harm their long-term career prospects. Shifting corporate culture to value involved parenthood and respect the obligations of caregiving will make it substantially easier for men to become primary caregivers.

- **ESTABLISH AND ADHERE TO ADDITIONAL FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CAREGIVING BY EMPLOYEES OF ALL GENDERS.**

A major obstacle to involved caregiving is a lack of workplace flexibility for parenthood responsibilities. Most flexible scheduling practices – such as allowing employees to work from home, modify work hours, or compress the workweek for any important events throughout a child's life – have been shown to not hurt the bottom line; these policies should be expanded to assist employees in juggling work and family priorities.

- **MAKE IT EASIER FOR LOW-INCOME AND MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES TO ACCESS SUBSIDIZED CHILDCARE.**

Childcare is a huge part of the discussion for low-income families because the cost is burdensome and it can be difficult to obtain with irregular hours and inconsistent schedules. Increasing the availability of financial assistance for childcare, and expanding programs like Head Start to reach more low-income children, will reduce financial and emotional strain on low-income parents, allowing both men and women to be better caregivers. Combining paid parental leave with easy access to high-quality childcare will help alleviate the burden of care and change norms around caregiving.

THE BEST AND WORST STATES FOR WORKING DADS: 2015

To identify the best and worst states for working dads in 2015, personal finance website WalletHub analyzed the various factors that affect paternal roles in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data points included in the ranking (which are presented in more detail below) range from the unemployment rate for dads with kids younger than 18, to male life expectancy, to day care quality.

FIGURE 3.11:

The best and worst states for working dads: 2015

Source: WalletHub[162]

Overall Rank	State	Economic & Social Well-Being Rank	Health Rank	Work-Life Balance Rank	Childcare Rank
1	Minnesota	3	12	3	11
2	New Hampshire	1	4	43	4
3	Massachusetts	8	1	23	5
4	Vermont	17	2	2	16
5	New Jersey	4	17	29	1
6	Virginia	2	7	46	2
7	Wisconsin	13	18	5	14
8	Maryland	5	8	41	6
9	Utah	12	24	10	13
10	Connecticut	14	5	9	21
11	Delaware	9	20	22	8
12	North Dakota	5	40	40	8
13	Rhode Island	28	5	4	29
14	Ohio	24	28	13	14
15	Washington	39	10	13	17
16	Pennsylvania	7	32	39	23
17	Illinois	22	25	19	18
18	Indiana	18	37	27	12
19	Tennessee	23	45	23	7
20	New York	31	19	31	10
21	Iowa	11	36	16	32
22	Kansas	16	39	37	19
23	Maine	33	16	8	34
24	Texas	25	34	49	2

Overall Rank	State	Economic & Social Well-Being Rank	Health Rank	Work-Life Balance Rank	Childcare Rank
25	Nebraska	10	21	34	35
26	Colorado	30	9	25	25
27	Oregon	47	14	1	35
28	South Dakota	19	27	37	24
29	Hawaii	43	3	7	44
30	Florida	40	15	17	27
31	Missouri	35	41	18	26
32	Wyoming	21	37	44	28
33	Oklahoma	26	49	42	20
34	Montana	45	30	12	37
35	Michigan	37	29	19	39
36	District of Columbia	32	22	31	43
37	North Carolina	42	31	29	30
38	Kentucky	38	44	27	30
39	South Carolina	28	33	31	47
40	Georgia	35	42	50	21
41	California	48	11	5	49
42	Arizona	49	13	21	33
43	Idaho	34	35	35	42
44	Alabama	15	48	45	46
45	Alaska	46	26	25	39
46	New Mexico	51	23	11	45
47	Louisiana	19	47	46	48
48	West Virginia	41	43	48	37
49	Arkansas	44	50	35	41
50	Nevada	49	46	15	51
51	Mississippi	27	51	51	50

Economic & Social Well-Being – Total Weight: 10

- Median Income for Families (Dad Present) with Kids Younger than 18 Years (Adjusted for Cost of Living): Full Weight
- Unemployment Rate for Dads with Kids Younger than 18 Years: Full Weight
- Percentage of Dads with Kids Younger than 18 Years Living in Poverty: Full Weight
- Share of Men-Owned Businesses: Full Weight
- High-School Dropout Rate for Men: Full Weight

Health – Total Weight: 5

- Male Uninsured Rate: Full Weight
- Men's Life Expectancy at Birth: Full Weight
- Heart Disease Mortality Rate (per 100,000 Men): Full Weight
- Number of Colorectal Cancer Cases per 100,000 Men: Full Weight
- Number of Prostate Cancer Cases per 100,000 Men: Full Weight
- Number of Urologists per 100,000 Men: Full Weight
- Suicide Rate (per 100,000 Men): Full Weight
- Percentage of Men Who Reported Adequate or Any Physical Activity: Full Weight

Work-Life Balance – Total Weight: 10

- Parental Leave Policy Score: Full Weight
- Average Hours Worked per Day Among Males: Full Weight
- Average Commute Time for Men: Full Weight

Childcare – Total Weight: 10

- Day Care Quality Score: Double Weight
- Childcare Costs (Adjusted for the Median Income for Families (Dad Present): Full Weight
- Access to Pediatric Services (Number of Pediatricians per 100,000 Residents): Full Weight
- WalletHub's "Best School Systems" Ranking: Double Weight

Data used to create these rankings were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Partnership for Women & Families, the American Urological Association, the Social Science Research Council, Child Care Aware, and WalletHub research.

CHAPTER 4

FATHERS, SEX, AND HEALTH

Fathers' multiple roles in their families' well-being

"There's a tradition that I take the boy on his twelfth birthday out to dinner on a dad-and-son date and they get to pick the restaurant and they don't realize why until we get there and I start the conversation... [We are going to go] over everything [...] about sex and dating and STDs and everything. And, my oldest son was horrified. He picked to go to Chili's and we sat right in the bar area [where] they have the high-top tables and we were really the only two and he's like, Dad, you're not really talking about this... I said we're going to be here talking until you answer my questions and I feel that you're listening and we go over everything I want to talk about."

Joseph
Father of three adolescent boys and a girl

The quotation above comes from William Marsiglio's book Dads, Kids, and Fitness: A Father's Guide to Family Health *(in press, Rutgers University press).*

FATHERS, SEX, AND HEALTH:
Fathers' multiple roles in their families' well-being

For fathers, being present is a good start, but it is not enough to ensure the health and well-being of their families. Indeed, the healthiest families are those in which fathers are doing their part to support **sexual health** and **healthy pregnancies**, where all family members are seeking and receiving adequate **healthcare**, and where no one is using **intimate partner violence** or **violence against children**.

This chapter investigates:

- ***Where are we*** in terms of understanding the ways in which fathers are helping or harming family well-being in each of these domains?

- ***What do we know*** about the benefits of advancing violence-prevention initiatives, boosting men's participation in pregnancy/maternal health, and other improvements in family well-being?

- ***Where do we go from here***, whether through social programs, research, policy changes, or other means, to help fathers engage with their children and partners in ways that support family well-being?

SEXUALITY EDUCATION AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Men's active involvement as fathers to their children and as promoters of family well-being starts well before the birth of the child – including in their decision whether or not to become a parent. How can men – and, indeed, how do many men already – continue the movement toward healthy, engaged fatherhood, even years before the birth of their first child? How can we ensure that men have the knowledge and resources necessary for making informed choices for themselves and with their partners?

Fatherhood includes pregnancy. Healthy pregnancies emerge from healthy sexuality. And healthy sexuality needs to start with adequate sexuality education. Sexuality education remains a sensitive, politicized issue in the United States, with great variability across states, school systems, and religious institutions. Americans of all genders will be hampered in their efforts to have fully healthy reproductive lives if we fail to provide them with the necessary knowledge about their own bodies and about sexual

relationships. A comprehensive sexuality education curriculum might look something like the one proposed in 2004 by the Sexuality Information and Educational Council of the United States, which emphasized that this instruction should take place consistently from kindergarten through twelfth grade, and focus on broad themes, including:

- **biology** (anatomy, physiology, puberty, reproduction);
- **self** (body image, sexual orientation, gender identity);
- **relationships** (dating, marriage, sexual behavior, masturbation); and
- **health** (contraception, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections).[163]

This comprehensive curriculum should also include information on reproductive life, and consciousness regarding all gender identities and sexual orientations, which are often less understood. Comprehensive sexuality education – and the consideration of oneself as a potentially procreative, reproductive being – ought to be part and parcel of growing up, for all genders.

All students, regardless of gender, want more sexuality education than we generally offer them. According to a report from the Guttmacher Institute, roughly half of the students surveyed in grades 7 through 12 reported needing more information regarding their sexual health.[164] This comes as no surprise considering that as many as 30 percent of teenage boys report not receiving any sexuality education before first intercourse. Despite this need, there is a significant dearth of comprehensive sexuality education in the United States. As of March 1, 2016, only 24 states and the District of Columbia require public schools to teach sexuality education, and only 20 states require that sexuality and/or HIV education be medically, factually, or technically accurate if provided.[165]

Another key point is that sexuality education works. In an evaluation of sexuality education programs, a Population Council study found significant decreases in pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in programs that included lessons on gender and power compared to those that did not.[166] It is imperative that young people in the U.S. receive comprehensive sexuality education that teaches them not only the biological aspects of reproduction, but also how to navigate the more complicated, personal aspects of sexuality, including consent.

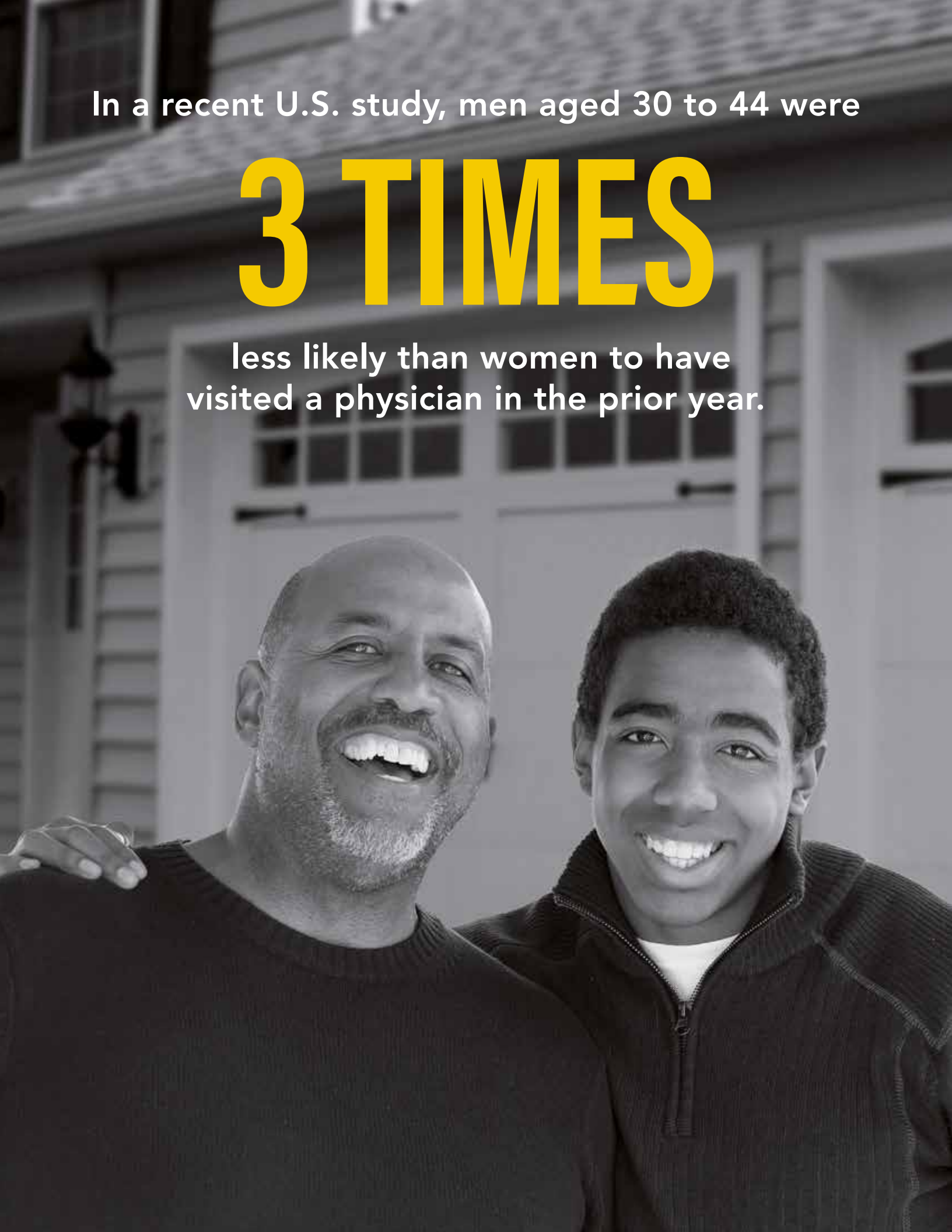
Whenever boys and men become sexually active, it is essential that they take an equal, proactive role in sexual health and contraceptive use. Contraceptive use or other efforts to prevent STI transmission and unwanted pregnancy are still disproportionately considered the sole responsibility of women and girls. Ensuring that sexuality education curricula, as well as public campaigns, emphasize men's equal roles and responsibilities

throughout the reproductive process can help men be better prepared to be fully engaged partners and fathers, and to support women's healthy sexual behaviors. Indeed, one of the most important cultural shifts still to be made in the U.S. is to help young men appreciate what researcher William Marsiglio calls their *procreative capacities*, and to encourage them to focus their attention on healthy sexuality before they become sexually active.[167]

When men share in contraceptive decision-making, they are more likely to be involved fathers. Indeed, men's opinions about whether a pregnancy was intended, mistimed, or unwanted tend to be closely related to their participation in the pregnancy, birth, and life of the child. Men who feel that the pregnancy was intended and well-timed tend to be more likely to attend childbirth classes, to be present at the child's birth, and to engage more fully after the child's birth, according to one study.[168] While some research shows that *resident fathers* who felt the pregnancy was unwanted are still likely to participate in various elements of emotional support during pregnancy, these men are less likely to accompany the mother to a childbirth class or to display positive engagement with their children once they are born.[169] It is important for individuals who plan to become sexually active to discuss their intentions to become or not to become pregnant, as well as their course of action should an intended or unintended pregnancy arise. We firmly advocate for a woman's autonomy and right to choose, and a supportive male partner can help to ensure that she can access safe and legal abortion services, as well as provide emotional support as needed during the termination of a pregnancy.

HEALTH, PREGNANCY, AND CHILDBIRTH

If and when their partners become pregnant, fathers can provide crucial emotional and psychological support during the pregnancy. Indeed, they are increasingly doing so. The benefits to maternal health of emotionally supportive, engaged, nonviolent partners have long been established. Research from the 1990s concluded, among other outcomes, that pregnant women with emotionally supportive male partners are more likely to maintain healthy pregnancy behaviors, to have deliveries without complications, and to exhibit better postpartum mental health.[170,171,172] Researchers have also found that fathers' attendance at breastfeeding classes is linked with increased uptake of healthy breastfeeding, and that fathers' financial support to unmarried mothers during pregnancy is linked with decreased risk of low birth weight.[173,174] More recent evidence from the United Kingdom shows that male partner support during pregnancy is linked with healthier maternal behaviors, including reduced cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption.[175] In this same study, women themselves report valuing their partners' presence and support through the delivery process, with the study also linking the fathers' presence to lower rates of postnatal depression and a greater overall satisfaction with the birth experience.


In a recent U.S. study, men aged 30 to 44 were
3 TIMES
less likely than women to have visited a physician in the prior year.

WHAT WE KNOW – AND HAVE LONG KNOWN – ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Children reap an array of benefits when they have multiple active, involved caregivers. Below, we describe the effects of fathers' involvement on their children's…

…emotional development
Research continues to show significant effects of fathers' active involvement on children's overall life satisfaction and mental health, including greater resilience, decreased reports of depression, less stress, and higher levels of self-reported happiness.[176,177,178,179] Children with actively engaged fathers seem better prepared to handle life's challenges, demonstrating better problem-solving skills and resilience in the face of stress and frustration than their peers with less engaged fathers.[180] Evidence also shows, however, that the quality of a father's engagement is a critical factor in these "father effects" on children's emotional lives. A father's mere presence is not enough; instead, a huge volume of evidence shows emotional benefits for children when their fathers are "secure, supportive, reciprocal, sensitive, close, nurturing, and warm."[181,182,183,184,185]

…social development
Children with actively involved fathers are more confident in exploring their surroundings and have richer connections with their peers.[186] More broadly, we see significant evidence to support the role of an engaged father in supporting his children's overall social competence,[187] including, among other effects:

- Less aggression and more positive friendship qualities with peers;[188,189]
- Better conflict-solving abilities;[190]
- Positive sibling interactions;[191]
- More supportive, long-term social networks of close friends;[192]
- Decreased likelihood of divorce;[193]
- Increased empathy;[194] and
- Higher scores on measures of internal moral judgment, moral values, and conformity to rules.[195]

…cognitive development
Research has made it clear for decades that children of fathers who participate more fully in caregiving activities display higher cognitive scores in their first year of life,[196] and continue to display cognitive advantages throughout their early childhood. This includes evidence of superior problem-solving abilities and higher IQs, all measureable as early as age three.[197,198] An influential study by the U.S. Department of Education found that even after controlling for a family's social status, the likelihood of a child from a two-parent home getting mostly A's in school was substantially higher if the father was highly involved with the school.[199] Regardless of fathers' interactions with the schools themselves, however, adolescent children with actively involved fathers display a wide range of positive academic and cognitive outcomes.[200,201,202] Children of more involved fathers also tend to have better higher-level educational achievement and professional success.[203,204]

…physical health
Fathers' positive involvement is tied to *increased* health practice and *decreased* risk of health complications for youth.[205] This aligns with other findings of links between fathers' obesity and inactivity and their children's.[206]

...gender attitudes
As discussed previously, evidence supports the notion that children who grow up watching their fathers and mothers share caregiving and income-earning responsibilities equitably are themselves more likely to seek out equitable relationships for themselves. Evidence also supports the conclusion that children whose fathers are the primary caregivers are (1) more secure in their gender identity; (2) more flexible in their gender-related attitudes than peers from traditional families; and (3) more accepting of non-traditional gender roles.[207]

It is important to note, of course, that all of the effects observed here are neither perfectly clear-cut nor universal. Factors such as a father's use of violence, a family's income level, a high-conflict divorce, a shift to a single-parent home, and many others can mitigate or supersede the positive effects of an actively engaged father.[208,209,210]

MEN'S HEALTH-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

Men in the U.S. demonstrate significantly worse lifelong health prospects than women do, stemming partly from men's poor health-seeking behaviors. Some evidence finds that men who are involved fathers are more likely to care for their own health. When men do not take care of their own health, their families – including their children – bear the burden. Fathers who suffer or die prematurely from preventable health conditions are clearly less able to provide caregiving and support. Research from the U.S. and around the world concludes that men who self-identify most strongly with a definition of manhood pegged to physical strength and self-reliance are less likely to seek adequate healthcare.[211,212,213,214,215] In a recent study in the U.S., men aged 30 to 44 were three times less likely than women to have visited a physician in the prior year. In the same study, among men over 50 years of age, 41 percent had not had a blood test for prostate cancer, while 60 percent had not been screened for colon cancer in the previous year. Additionally, one in four men said they would handle worries about health by waiting as long as possible before seeking help.[216]

Perhaps the most striking indicator of the discrepancy between women's and men's health-related vulnerabilities, and the one with the most significance for the longevity of men's relationships with their children, is the life expectancy gap. On average, at present, women live about five years longer than men do. This means, as the same study concludes, that there are only 77 men for every 100 women at age 65 in the American population, with the disparity only increasing with age.[217]

Men who use intimate partner violence are often those who subscribe to rigid, unequal notions about gender roles, which means that they are also less likely to be involved caregivers.

There may be benefits to men's health, particularly their mental health, when they become involved fathers. Evidence suggests that marriage and fatherhood can bring health benefits for men. Studies have shown significant mental health improvements among men after the birth of their first child, as men find renewed meaning – and an associated reduction in stress and anxiety – from their new roles as fathers.[218] For instance, in a 2013 study using a sample of some 7,000 people in the U.S., fathers reported higher levels of positive emotion and meaning in life than men without children.[219] Future campaigns should emphasize the two-way positive influence of men's caregiving for *others* and for *themselves*. Men's involvement in the care of others is a good way to promote their self care, and vice versa.

Overall, for men with children, all of the aforementioned health-related vulnerabilities can take a significant toll on their involvement as fathers and on broader family well-being, particularly later in men's lives. While it is certainly not universal, we can observe a pernicious script whereby many men who identify strongly with a traditional breadwinner role may find that their lifetime of high-stress or high-risk income earning for their families' well-being cuts short their lives, at the same time cutting short their opportunities to further bond with their children and partners. Quite simply, without their good health, men cannot be actively engaged, loving fathers and grandfathers. And the onus for dismantling this script falls upon men themselves, upon health systems that are failing to meet men's health needs, and upon a society that both upholds unhealthy gender norms and keeps healthcare unaffordable for its most economically marginalized men.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

While we hope to realize a future where all men's participation in caregiving is done without violence, we know that too many men still use violence against female partners. Most men, and most fathers, are not violent. While a small proportion of women use violence against male partners, often in self-defense or in mutually violent relationships, men are vastly more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence against a female partner than women are against a male partner.[220] Furthermore, the men who use this violence are often those who subscribe to rigid, unequal notions about gender roles, which means that they are also less likely to be involved caregivers.

HOW PREVALENT IS INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE U.S.?

The most recent national data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey demonstrate the enormous prevalence of these forms of violence in the United States. Quoting directly from this source, we see that:

- More than one in three women (36 percent) and more than one in four men (29 percent) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

- Nearly one in ten women in the United States (9 percent) has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime, and an estimated 17 percent of women and 8 percent of men have experienced sexual violence other than rape by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.

- About one in four women (24 percent) and one in seven men (14 percent) have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner (e.g., being hit with a fist or something hard, being beaten, being slammed against something) at some point in their lifetime.[221]

In addition, a 2011 Department of Justice report found that more than one in nine children witnessed or were otherwise exposed to some form of family violence in the past year alone, including intimate partner violence against their mother.[222]

Research also demonstrates how economic vulnerability can exacerbate the risk of violence for families in the United States. One study examining the impact of violence on children found that low-income and unmarried mothers are the most likely to be victims of intimate partner violence.[223] Victimization often impedes mothers' ability to engage in good parenting practices by harming their mental health, and by making them less able to respond positively to their children's needs.[224] This has negative repercussions on their children's health: children whose mothers experience intimate partner violence are more likely to be anxious, to be depressed, and to have attention deficit or oppositional defiant disorders by age three.[225] Poverty is not the cause of intimate partner violence, but it clearly compounds the vulnerabilities – to violence and other negative outcomes – that low-income families face.

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

In addition to witnessing intimate partner violence between adults in the home, children in the U.S. are at significant risk of suffering violence themselves. The most recent available data from the Department of Health and Human Services estimate that nearly 700,000 children in the U.S. were victims of abuse and/or neglect in fiscal year 2013.[226] The report finds that children in the first year of life were most at risk of one or more forms of violence or neglect, with approximately 2 percent of children being victimized. Perpetration of child maltreatment and abuse is complex, with multiple common perpetrators other than the child's parents. Fathers represent the majority of male perpetrators of child maltreatment and abuse, including sexual abuse, in a nationwide U.S. dataset, and sexual abuse by male perpetrators is significantly more common than by female perpetrators. These same data show that mothers perpetrate child abuse at higher levels than fathers do, though women's disproportionate time spent on childcare and supervision certainly influences this trend.[227] This points to the simple but crucial observation that *access to the child* must also be understood as a key factor related to patterns of child-abuse perpetration.

Corporal punishment is still commonly accepted and practiced in American families, although it has become somewhat less popular than in prior generations. Between 65 percent and 85 percent of parents have used corporal punishment against their children.[228] A recent online survey conducted by Ipsos confirmed that most Americans consider corporal punishment an acceptable form of discipline: 68 percent of respondents said that spanking is okay in the home, and approximately 60 percent said that corporal punishment is okay as long as it does not leave a mark.[229] These figures emphasize that both fathers and mothers remain supportive of corporal punishment in the United States, in spite of research showing outcomes such as increased aggression, poor academic performance, and depression among children who have been physically punished, and demonstrated long-term effects such as increased risk of poor physical health outcomes.[230]

68%

of Americans who responded to a recent survey said that spanking is okay in the home.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE GUNS, DADS

Gun ownership exacerbates the risk of violence in the home more often than it prevents it. The per-capita number of privately owned firearms in the United States is drastically higher than that of any other country where data exist. According to a 2012 Congressional Research Service report, as of 2009 there are *more guns than people* in the United States, with 310 million civilian firearms in the country.[231] To be sure, the vast majority of firearm owners register their weapons and use them for recreational purposes. Certainly, only a tiny minority of gun owners specifically seek to harm other people with their firearms. At the same time, evidence overwhelmingly shows that the mere existence of a gun in the home is associated with an increased risk of firearm homicide and firearm suicide in the home.[232] These trends have startling implications for fathers who care for their families' and children's well-being. The U.S. accounts for nearly 75 percent of children murdered in the developed world, and children in this country between the ages of five and fourteen are 17 times more likely to be murdered by firearms than children in this age range in other industrialized nations.[233] Studies in the U.S. furthermore document that legally purchased firearms are mostly responsible for gun murders of children.[234] Fathers who say they care about their children can no longer look at this data and ignore it.

Violence is preventable. Nurturing, loving fathers and partners need to be part of leading the way. Working with men and fathers to challenge harmful beliefs around manhood offers unique opportunities to concurrently address intimate partner violence and violence against children. A transformation in social norms and attitudes related to gender, power, and violence must be part of the solution. Around the country and around the world, more and more states, coalitions, organizations, and individual men are accelerating a movement of men against violence, through progressive policies, programs, and routine personal interactions alike.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

This chapter's exploration of sexual health, healthy pregnancy, healthcare, and violence points to a set of common-sense recommendations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION THAT IS BIOLOGICALLY ACCURATE AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE – AND THAT ENCOURAGES GREATER PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG AND ADULT MEN IN REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES – FOR ALL SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.**

This education must begin long before children become sexually active. The best father is one who is fully prepared to be one, and who has made the decision to become a father in full collaboration with the mother of the child. Men's education about sexuality also needs to provide them with an inclusive script for what they should be doing while their female partners are pregnant, to boost their partners' maternal health and to set their children on the healthiest life path. Images and messages of men as nurturing caregivers should also be a core component of children's education from the earliest stages.

- **MAKE HEALTH SERVICES MORE SUITED FOR MEN'S NEEDS AND PREFERENCES, EVEN AS WE ENCOURAGE MEN TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF THEIR HEALTH.**

There is no doubt about it: men need to abandon the macho mentality that keeps them from seeking healthcare when they need it. This matters not only for men's lives, but also for how they care for the health of their children and how they become involved partners in sexual health. Health services must better understand how to deliver preventive health messages and overall healthcare specifically to men, as well as how to avoid reinforcing the idea that there is only one way to be a "real" man (even if the intentions are positive). Additional research into the types of messages and services that resonate most with men will be beneficial in this regard.

- **MAKE HEALTHCARE MORE ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE, NOT LESS.**

The United States health system is the world's most expensive, even as it falls behind other wealthy nations in its quality of care. This fundamental injustice has particularly harsh repercussions for the country's most economically marginalized fathers and families. The Affordable Care Act – the significant overhaul to the U.S. healthcare system signed

into law in March 2010 and colloquially known as "Obamacare" – was a helpful first step, but calls for its repeal work directly against the promotion of widespread family well-being in the U.S. It is impossible to be family-friendly and father-friendly while calling to scale back healthcare improvements.

- **DRASTICALLY INCREASE FUNDING FOR EVIDENCE-BASED VIOLENCE-PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

In addition to holding perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions, a truly successful nationwide effort to end these forms of violence will work to (1) prevent this violence before it ever takes place through campaigns and curricula that transform gender norms; (2) improve victims'/survivors' access to justice through legal education and stigma-free, non-victim-blaming processes of prosecution; and (3) provide adequate, low-or-no-cost health and support services to survivors, including children. At all turns, we must also find more effective ways to engage fathers – and all men and boys – in adopting nonviolent, nurturing relationships.

- **ENGAGE CARING PARENTS TO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD ON PASSING GUN-SAFETY LEGISLATION AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVELS.**

The gun-safety debate in the U.S. is held hostage by the gun lobby. Engaging caring parents needs to be part of advocacy efforts to move legislation forward. We must use the data we have to affirm what should be obvious: our children's lives are at stake as long as we refuse to take on the gun lobby and pass common-sense gun-safety provisions that the majority of Americans support.

CHAPTER 5

NONRESIDENT, LOW-INCOME FATHERS

Dismantling inequality

"I really want to be there for my kids and help out as much as possible, and I'm willing to make the sacrifices necessary to be there for them as much as I can. Whatever hoops I got to jump through I'm willing to jump through them."

Anonymous
Previously incarcerated father

The quotation above comes from the study "It's Been Hard to Be a Father": A Qualitative Exploration of Incarcerated Fatherhood *by Joyce A. Arditti, Sara A. Smock, and Tiffaney S. Parkman.*

NONRESIDENT, LOW-INCOME FATHERS:
Dismantling inequality

While the majority of American families face barriers that prevent them from providing greater support to their children, many of these challenges affect the country's low-income and nonresident fathers disproportionately and unjustly. In addition, demographic shifts in family composition mean that marriage is not the defining feature of American families anymore. Half of American children will live in households where the parents either are not living together or are not married. Yet social norms and policy frameworks continue to stigmatize unmarried parents, particularly those from marginalized communities. In short, America's low-income and nonresident fathers are often the least able to be involved in caregiving in the ways they should be and in the ways their children need. The lack of adequate support and the legacy of punitive attitudes toward America's nonresident low-income fathers is an immense social problem facing the U.S. in 2016.

This chapter turns its focus to these dilemmas and dynamics by examining:

- ***Where are we***, as a country, in terms of the proportion of children born to unmarried couples, and the proportion of fathers who do not live in the same home as their children? What about incarcerated fathers and adolescent fathers?

- ***What do we know*** about the effect of having a nonresident father on the lives of these children? About the barriers and opportunities for these men to play meaningful roles in their children's lives, and about how these are influenced by income, race, ethnicity, employment, and incarceration?

- ***Where do we go from here*** to boost our knowledge about these critical questions and the effectiveness of policies aiming to improve all children's well-being?

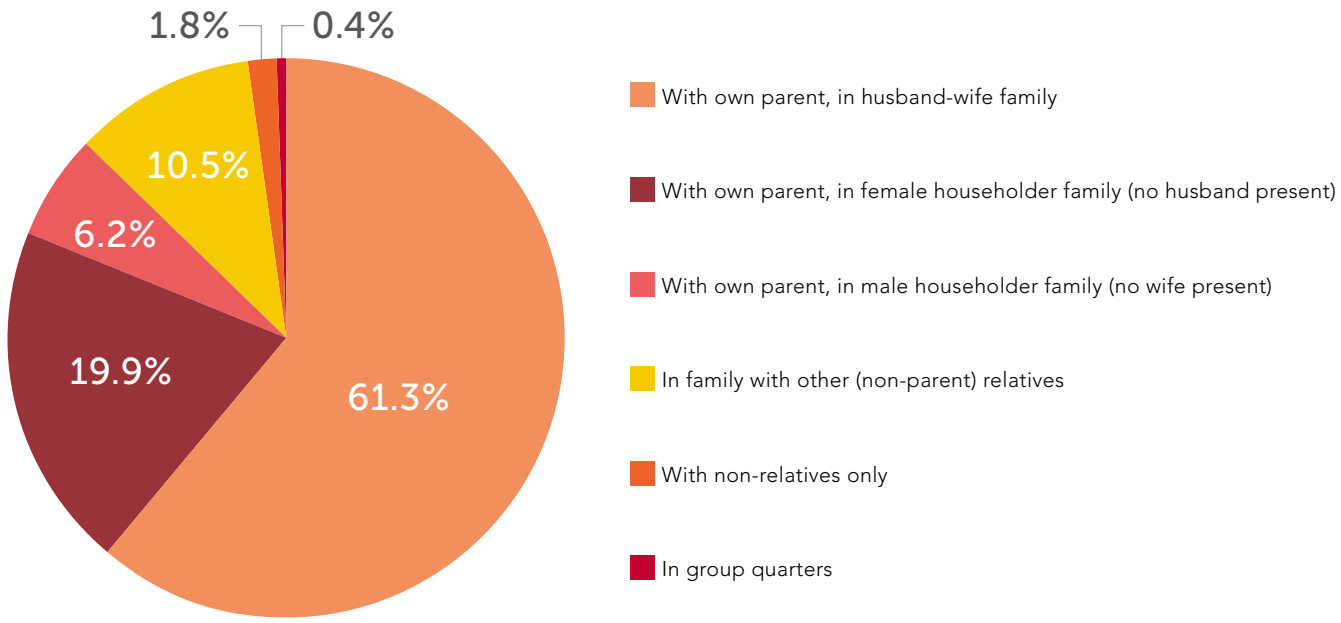
WHERE WE ARE

More children are being born into cohabiting or unmarried families than in any previous generation. A heterosexual, lifelong, child-rearing marriage is no longer the only acceptable life script for couples – this is

FIGURE 5.1:

Living arrangements of children in the United States in 2010

Source: diversitydatakids.org calculations of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Summary File 1[235]



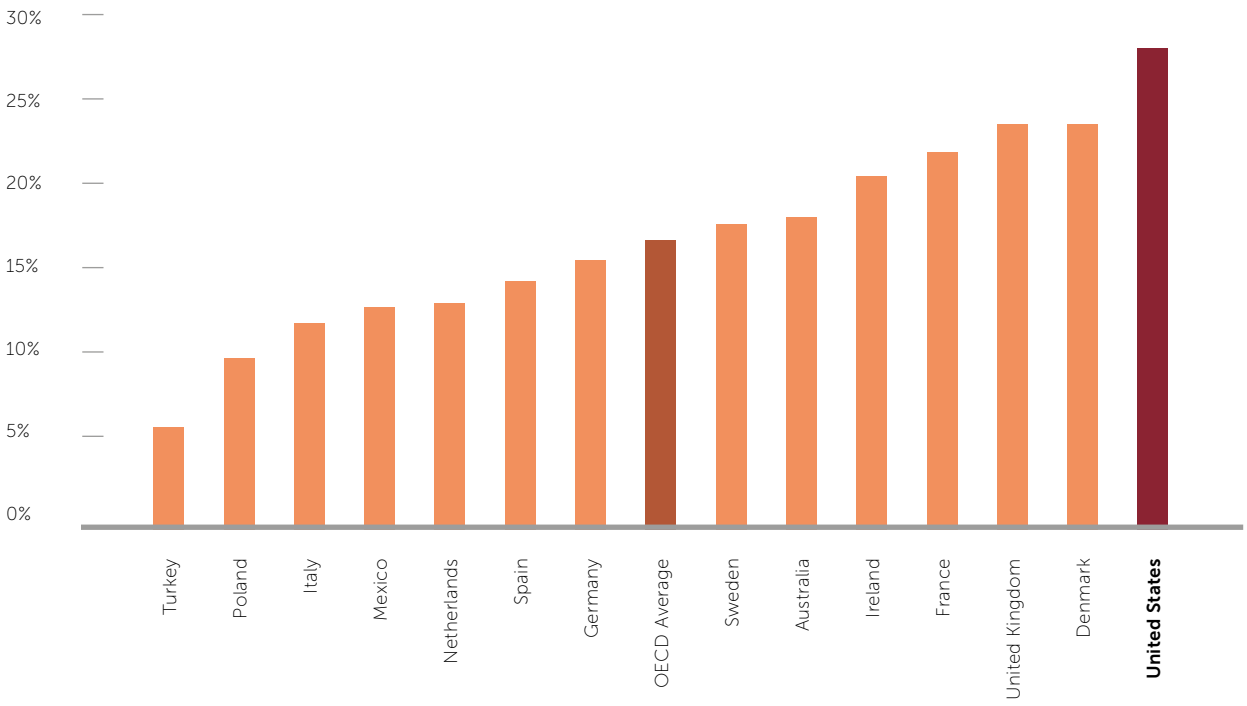
now just one option among many.[236] Census data from 2014 identify 7.9 million opposite-sex, unmarried-couple households in the United States, up from 5.5 million in 2000 and close to zero in 1960.[237] Combined with high divorce rates, some scholars have estimated that as many as one-half of all children in the U.S. spend some portion of their childhood years living in single-parent households.[238]

While some of these trends are taking place across the globe, the U.S. nonetheless stands out. 2013 OECD data found that, on average across the countries included, 17 percent of children lived in households *without* two parents. The figure for the United States was nearly double this average, at 31 percent.[239] A recent study published by the Pew Research Center also echoed these findings, highlighting that the percentage of children living apart from their fathers in the U.S. had increased from 11 percent in 1960 to 27 percent in 2010.[240]

FIGURE 5.2:

Share of children living with a single parent

Source: *New York Times* analysis[241] of 2013 OECD data[242]



There are approximately eight to ten million nonresident fathers – including both divorced and never-married fathers – living in the United States, an unprecedented development in American family life.[243] Research has struggled to keep pace with the relatively sudden emergence of this new class of American fathers. We do know, however, that men with lower incomes and less education are far more likely to become nonresident fathers; indeed, the majority of men of childbearing age who lack a four-year college degree either are or will eventually become nonresident fathers.[244]

Due to the legacy of unjust sentencing policies in the U.S., many fathers are nonresident due to incarceration. One study estimates that nearly 10 percent of children in the United States who are under the age of 18 have a parent who is either currently incarcerated or who has ever been incarcerated.[245] In the U.S., 2.7 million children have an incarcerated parent;[246] and 92 percent of incarcerated parents are fathers.[247]

Despite these trends, we are only slowly learning more about what type of influence an actively involved nonresident father can have on his children's lives and well-being. One 2010 study using nationally representative data attempted to better understand and categorize the depth of connection that nonresident fathers maintain with their children, classifying these men into four categories based on the nature of their involvement in the lives of their children: those with consistently high levels of contact, those with consistently low levels of contact, those with a high but decreasing level of contact, and those with a low but increasing level of contact (see Figure 5.3).[248] Against the cultural narrative or stereotype of absent fatherhood, the largest proportion of nonresident fathers is *consistently very active* in the lives of their children.

FIGURE 5.3:

Four classes of nonresident fathers' involvement

Source: The Sentencing Project[249]

Rank in terms of proportion of fathers	Class	Details	Antecedents & associations
1 (largest)	Consistently high level of contact	1-5 visits or childcare contributions weekly	Older children at time of separation, children born within marriage, older mothers, better educated mothers, fathers who pay child support, fathers who live close to children.
2	Consistently low level of contact	0-1 visits ever	Younger children at time of separation, younger mothers, less educated mothers, children born outside of marriage, fathers who are less likely to pay child support, fathers who maintain geographical distance from children.
3	High but decreasing level of contact	From 1 visit per week to 1 visit per year, over ~12 years after separation	Regular child support payments, fathers who lived close to children in the first year and then relocated.
4 (smallest)	Low but increasing level of contact	From 1 visit per year to 1 visit per week, fluctuating, over ~12 years after separation	Fathers who lived far away from children initially and then moved closer. (The study is unable to account for whether the move was motivated by a desire to be a more active father, but this was the effect.)

Various factors influence a nonresident father's likelihood of maintaining active involvement in his children's lives. These include the father's *ability* to contribute financially to his children; his intrinsic commitment to his role as father; conflict with the mother; so-called maternal gatekeeping; and certain child characteristics, such as health.[250]

Couple dissolution and nonresident fatherhood seem to manifest differently for families from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Research shows that black children are less likely to have ever resided with their fathers, but that their fathers are more likely to be romantically involved with their mothers at birth and to be in and out of a relationship with them.[251] As compared to poor, nonresident white fathers, many poor, nonresident black fathers are more likely to see their children on a regular basis.[252,253] White children are more likely than racial-minority children to live with their fathers at birth, but these children's parents' separation increases between years three and five and subsequent contact varies widely.[254] A study of mothers of two-year-olds found, for instance, that nonresident white fathers were less involved with their children than were African-American and Latino fathers, and that this discrepancy could not be explained by differences in these fathers' education or level of resources.[255]

These dynamics, particularly patterns of visitation by nonresident fathers, do not always sort themselves neatly along racial, ethnic, or economic lines. Although the majority of children living in poor, single-family households are white, according to a 2005 study, the economic costs of living with a single parent are greatest for black children (due to a range of factors including remarriage rates, marital stability, welfare participation, and female labor supply).[256]

WHAT WE KNOW

Fewer Americans are marrying and more children will be born into relationships in which both parents do not reside together. It is far past time to accept this demographic shift and support children rather than implement misguided and ineffective "marriage programs." Indeed, the focus of our efforts should be on supporting children, and research shows that when nonresident fathers are positively involved in their children's lives, children's cognitive, health, behavioral, and academic outcomes improve. Furthermore, an influential meta-analysis of 63 studies on nonresident fathers' involvement, published in 1999, condenses the findings of multiple studies to underscore that the

ADOLESCENT FATHERHOOD

In addition to all of the barriers outlined above, research points to particular difficulties for low-income *adolescent* fathers, both in playing a meaningful role in their children's lives and also in meeting any state-mandated child-support requirements. Evidence shows that adolescent fatherhood leads to fewer years of schooling and reduces the likelihood that a young man will receive a high school diploma, while increasing the chances he will earn a GED. Fathering a child as an adolescent also increases early marriage and cohabitation (due to social pressure) and increases military employment (due to financial pressure).[257, 258] Additionally, because adolescent dads do not qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, they are eligible for less cash assistance.[259] Children of adolescent parents are, therefore, particularly vulnerable to the range of challenges nonresident fathers face. However, none of these challenges are inevitable; a great many adolescent fathers become active, supportive caregivers for their children.

frequency of nonresident fathers' contact with their children may be less important than the quality of that contact.[260]

Research also shows that when nonresident fathers and mothers cooperatively co-parent, children benefit. A 2005 study concluded that cooperation results in more frequent father-child contact, which in turn leads to better father-child relationships and more responsive fathering.[261,262,263]

When both parents are fit to provide care after a divorce or separation, joint custody arrangements have been shown to mitigate conflict between parents and to help allow for this helpful kind of cooperative co-parenting. Children in joint custody arrangements score better on adjustment measures than children in sole custody arrangements, and joint custody also allows nonresident fathers to step up their involvement in caregiving tasks that would be more difficult to accomplish with limited contact and visitation.[264]

Nonresident fathers' financial support – via court-ordered child-support payments or other informal contributions – does meaningfully benefit the health and development of children. One study found not only that the provision of child support is associated with positive cognitive, academic, and behavioral outcomes for children, but also that child support is more strongly associated with these outcomes

IMMIGRATION AND FATHERHOOD

The contentious national debate about immigration reform has left millions of families in limbo with regard to their legal status, and it creates undue pressure and stress for parents and fathers seeking to do their best for their children. In 2013, there were 17.6 million children of immigrants living in the United States.[265] The number of *unauthorized* immigrant parents living with their U.S. citizen children has more than doubled in less than two decades, from 1.3 million in 1995 to 3.3 million in 2012.[266] Many parents, particularly fathers, immigrate to the United States for work *without* their families, setting up another scenario whereby nonresident fathers provide primarily financial contributions to support their children's and families' well-being.

Immigrant parents and their children face particular challenges and vulnerabilities. Studies show that immigrant families are more likely to live in poverty, on average, than non-immigrant families; immigrant fathers are also three times more likely than U.S.-born fathers to have never completed high school.[267,268] Family separation is also a serious concern for the millions of unauthorized immigrants living *with* their U.S.-citizen children, since the risk of deportation looms large. Deportation of an unauthorized immigrant parent of U.S.-citizen children has the potential to tear families apart. It may also eliminate the livelihoods of parents who immigrated without their families. One 2015 study found that unauthorized immigrant parents face greater parenting stress because of deportation risk; this stress involves persistent fear of detection, stigma surrounding their undocumented status, and changes in family dynamics due to the citizenship of their children.[269]

Many immigrant families, whether authorized or unauthorized, face language barriers if their mother tongue is not English, and they may also find that their home-country educational or professional qualifications are not accepted by employers when they apply for jobs. Additionally, accessing necessary services such as healthcare and education in a new country presents major challenges. Immigration reform, then, has to be a central part of the strategy to ensure that immigrant families are kept intact for the good of children and parents; that immigrants are supported in their transitions to life in the U.S.; and that the pathway to citizenship is clear.

than other forms of income.[270] Financial support from a nonresident father has also been shown to decrease childhood food insecurity, although the authors of this study caution that sporadic financial contributions may be worse for children than no contributions at all.[271] There are additional important nuances here, as well. While much of the evidence cited in the above study draws from samples of relatively financially advantaged fathers, other, more recent research has also shown positive associations between economically disadvantaged fathers' *informal* child-support contributions and child well-being.[272] Evidence also shows even more positive effects for families where child support is cooperative rather than court-ordered. Furthermore, fathers who paid their child support were more likely to be involved in other

ways in their children's lives, either because they were more financially stable and therefore felt better able to be involved, or because they wanted to stick around to monitor their investment (the causal pathway is unclear).[273]

Even as nonresident fathers' financial contributions have been shown to be beneficial, seeking *unrealistic* financial contributions may do unintended harm to children, fathers, and families. Too often, efforts to reduce high poverty rates faced by children in female-headed families have attempted to induce noncustodial parents to provide more support.[274] One study found that overall government expenses to enforce child-support payments have jumped from $800 million in 1978 to $5.2 billion in 2002, but that the majority of children eligible for this support still do not receive it.[275] The imposition of higher child-support obligations may therefore have the opposite of the intended effect. Rather than improving children's well-being, evidence suggests that increased obligations also increase fathers' noncompliance.[276]

High child-support obligations take a particular toll on men who lack a four-year college degree, most of whom have earnings in the bottom half of the earnings distribution. Many of these men have not completed secondary school, are chronically unemployed, and have criminal records. These characteristics increase their likelihood of being nonresident fathers in the first place. At the same time, other fathers work full time and full year and are still unable to meet their child-support obligations in full. According to data from the National Survey of Family Growth, approximately 71 percent of the country's nonresident fathers earned no more than $40,000 per year.[277]

Fathers' *inability to pay* is the most important reason that these men do not provide child support; research shows that fathers with incomes under $20,000 are those with the highest arrears.[278] Mothers of children with nonresident fathers acknowledge that financial and structural factors – far beyond the fathers' intransigence or unwillingness to pay – are the primary obstacles to their receiving full child support. In both qualitative and quantitative studies, mothers list fathers' unemployment, incarceration, and economic disadvantage among the primary reasons that they do not expect to receive child-support payments.[279,280,281,282] Nonetheless, a great many single mothers report that they *want* their children's nonresident fathers to be involved in their children's lives, not only as financial providers but also as co-parents and caregivers.[283]

When a low-income father fails to make child-support payments, as we have seen, many billions of dollars worth of federal and state enforcement mechanisms are set into motion. Yet investing such resources in ensuring the timely payment of child support seems to miss the point, since such mechanisms do nothing to shift the underlying causal factors of stagnant earnings, unemployment, incarceration, and economic disadvantage. The disproportionate policy focus on strictly *financial* contributions from nonresident fathers proves counterproductive to the objective of improving child and family well-being.

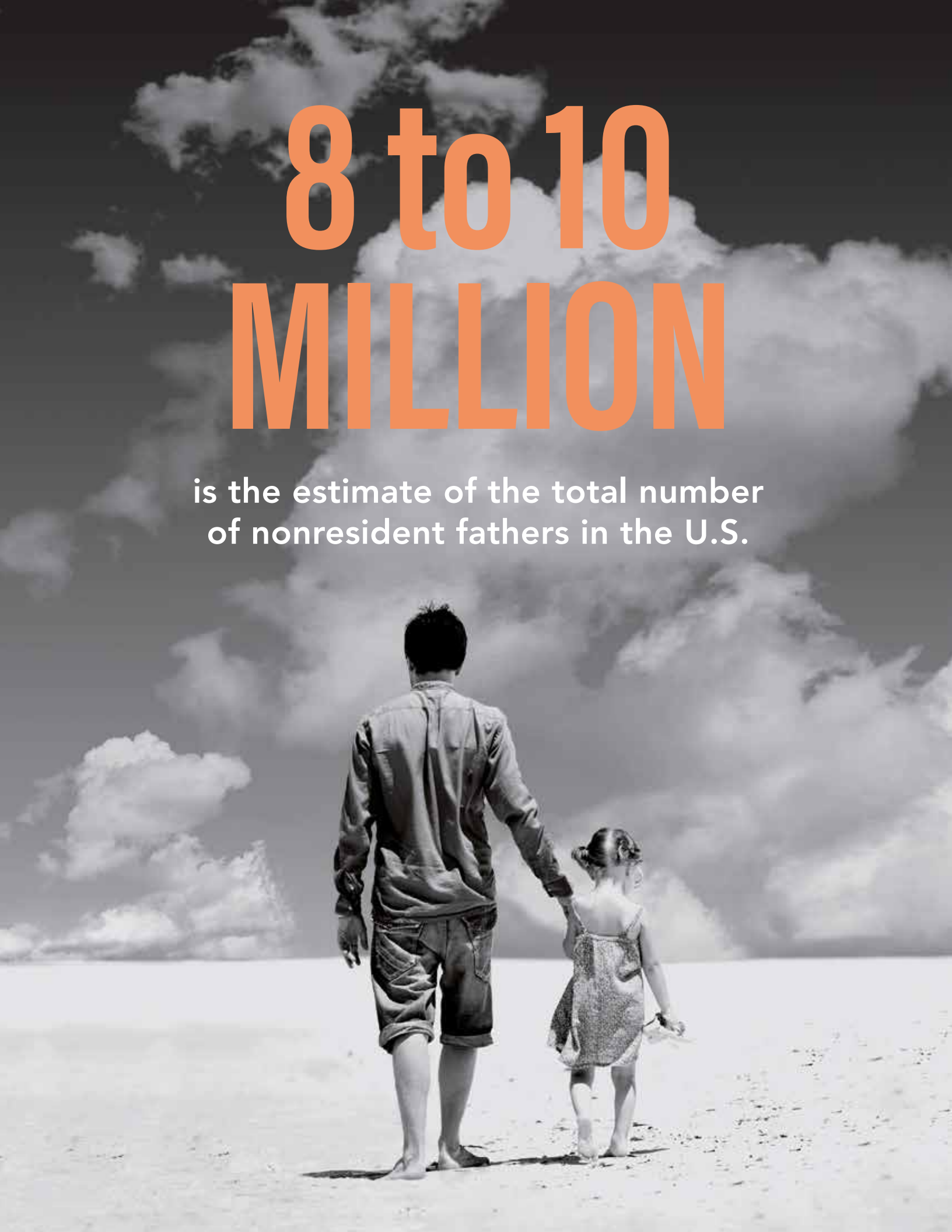
DOING AWAY WITH THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES OVER CUSTODY

In cases of divorce or separation, the question of child custody is one of the most contentious in the discussion of men's participation as fathers. Custody – or lack thereof – is a key grievance of the small but vocal fathers' rights movement. These men are often fathers who have lost custody of their children and are lobbying for changes in policy and legislation because of what they see as bias against them, on the basis of their gender, in family courts and in child-support policies. Many such fathers are experiencing pain, grief, and frustration at the loss of contact or meaningful relationships with their children. Sadly, however, the most vocal fathers' rights advocates tend to blame women in general – and feminism, in particular – for their grievances, unnecessarily polarizing the issue and making a balanced discussion on the topic difficult to achieve.

The issue of custody is further complicated by the fact that many family-service and legal professionals, policymakers, and family members (including some fathers themselves) subscribe to the common gender norm that mothers are more natural or capable caregivers. As this report consistently shows, however, positive caregiving by both parents is enormously beneficial to children. Furthermore, children have a right to access to both parents, as challenging as this can be in practice, following a contentious divorce or separation.

In situations where there is no history or threat of violence, the presumption of joint physical custody of children after a relationship or marital breakdown is the fairer, more gender-just approach. Contrary to the inaccurate notion that this debate is one of men versus women, legislation to encourage more equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities (in most, not all, cases) after divorce or separation will bring real benefits to mothers, fathers, and children alike. This step, which many states have already taken, will further erode the inequitable care burden placed on women, as it simultaneously encourages men to play their part, not only as breadwinners but also as caregivers.

The 2015 State of the World's Fathers *report, from which this text is adapted, deals with this issue in more depth; see page 124 of the full report, available at http://sowf.men-care.org/.*


8 to 10
MILLION
is the estimate of the total number
of nonresident fathers in the U.S.

The real proportion of fathers who neglect to make child-support payments they can actually afford is far lower than the public stereotype of the "deadbeat dad" suggests.

The evidence underscores a need to reframe the conversation about economically vulnerable nonresident fathers in order to focus on the caregiving contributions they make to their children's lives. This does not mean that we should absolve any father who fails to make child-support payments in line with his ability to pay. But, as evidence shows, the real proportion of fathers who neglect to make child-support payments they can actually afford is far lower than the public stereotype of the "deadbeat dad"suggests.[284] Policies could be formulated that draw more closely upon the wealth of evidence presented in this report, and others, to promote economically vulnerable fathers' contributions in caregiving and other parenting responsibilities, as opposed to strictly financial contributions.

The situation of economically vulnerable nonresident fathers makes dramatically clear the double standard in current research, policy, and public conversations about fatherhood in America. Even as we witness the growth of a fatherhood movement across the country, as we celebrate "super dads" and the "Dad 2.0" ideal, and as we continue to dismantle gendered boundaries between care work and financial provision, we must ask: are we doing enough to include the country's millions of nonresident and mostly low-income fathers?

American society increasingly encourages middle-class fathers to be highly engaged with and foster nurturing relationships with their children, to get involved in daily caregiving routines, at the same time that it seems also – at least in the case of nonresident fathers ordered to pay child support – to insist that below-average-income fathers contribute strictly as breadwinners. Their sole valued responsibility is to provide income to the family with the ultimate goal of helping close achievement gaps between their children and the children of their wealthier peers.

This double standard between involved middle- and upper-income fathers and struggling low-income fathers has significant policy and practice implications. Although the current policy emphasis on financial contributions draws upon the aforementioned evidence of their associations with child well-being, it fails to encourage or promote the development of father-child relationships for children in families with below-average incomes. As a result, there is an overall neglect of programs and practices that address father-child relationships. Most parenting interventions are with mothers, and most research on the topic of child well-being does not collect father-child data.

INCARCERATED FATHERS

The current size of the U.S. prison system is unprecedented and is the biggest in the world, largely due to a move toward harsher sentencing, including mandatory minimum sentences, over the last few decades. Nearly 7 percent of all Americans and over 11 percent of U.S. men are expected to go to prison at some point in their lives.[285] How did we get to this point? The civic unrest of the 1960s and 1970s led policymakers to default to imprisonment as the primary form of punishment for nonviolent drug charges, motivated in part by the minority status of the perpetrators.[286] For example, in 2006, 82 percent of those convicted for crack cocaine offenses were black and 9 percent were white – even though only an estimated 25 percent of users of crack cocaine were black.[287] Today, more than 60 percent of people who have been in prison are people of color; a black male born in the year 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison at some point in his life.[288] The size and racial makeup of the U.S. prison state has created an unfair system, not only for black men and people of color, but for their families as well. Many of these incarcerated men are fathers, making our harsh sentencing laws not only racially unjust but also harmful to children.

Incarceration of nonviolent offenders has profound negative effects for both the incarcerated individuals and their families, and it causes financial difficulties for low-income families. As one 2010 study documented, the first instance of incarceration of a parent is negatively associated with children's cognitive skills at age nine, as well as with later behavioral issues.[289] Parental incarceration seems to take a particular toll on boys' early behavioral problems, according to the same study, which noted substantial effects on levels of aggression in the sons of incarcerated fathers.[290]

While none of the relationships can be said to be directly causal, children with an incarcerated parent have also been shown to be more likely to use drugs, display emotional problems, become pregnant at a young age, and/or drop out of school than their peers whose parents are not incarcerated.[291] In homes where fathers are incarcerated, the burden of working and taking care of the children falls on mothers, increasing their stress levels and, in turn, the likelihood of punitive and harsh parenting. Incarceration of a parent during a child's youngest years has particular effects, as well: children whose fathers are incarcerated when they are between the ages of one and five are more likely to be held back between kindergarten and third grade, leading to long-term impacts on their educational attainment.[292]

Research emphasizes that the effects of incarceration on family life stem from more than simple parent-child separation.[293] A 2012 study found that incarceration had significant negative effects for children of fathers who were already nonresident prior to their incarceration, suggesting that "incarceration places children at risk through family hardships including and beyond parent-child separation."[294] Indeed, the influence of incarceration is broad. As one team of authors summarizes:

> Imprisonment diminishes the earnings of adult men, compromises their health, reduces familial resources, and contributes to family breakup. It also adds to the deficits of poor children, thus ensuring that the effects of imprisonment on inequality are transferred intergenerationally. Perversely, incarceration has its more corrosive effects on families whose fathers were involved in neither domestic violence nor violent crime before being imprisoned. Because having a parent go to prison is now so common for poor, minority children and so negatively affects them […] mass imprisonment may increase future racial and class inequality – and may even lead to more crime in the long term.[295]

It is worth noting that these negative effects are not reserved only for children whose fathers are incarcerated. A 2014 study by Tasca and colleagues concludes that children of incarcerated *mothers* are significantly more likely to suffer from mental health issues than children of incarcerated fathers, after controlling for other parental stressors and child risk factors.[296] This conclusion, and others like it, is likely related to the disproportionate share of childcare work that mothers still contribute in American families, making the loss of a mother – at a population level – a more significant challenge for a child. As we have seen, however, a far greater proportion of men/fathers will be incarcerated in their lifetimes than women/mothers.

The vulnerabilities of our country's racially and economically marginalized communities are only exacerbated, not solved, by such a harsh, inequitable justice system. Our country's children – too many of whom are deprived of a potentially positively contributing father – deserve better.

Put simply, we do not know enough about how low-income and nonresident fathers in the U.S. are involved in their children's lives. A lack of research, combined with policies that punish rather than develop skills and provide income, means that we cannot accurately estimate the number of nonresident fathers in the United States. As Mincy and colleagues reflect, fathers who do not provide full financial support for their children tend not to report having these children when asked in surveys. Because of this, the surveys that do provide a nationwide number of nonresident fathers are likely underestimating. Mincy and colleagues' influential 2015 book on nonresident fathers, *Failing Our Fathers*, locates fully two million *more* nonresident fathers than previously accounted for – a total of 9.5 million.[297] Even this may be an underestimate.

One of the reasons that we do not know how many nonresident fathers there are in the U.S. is that nonresident father status is fluid. Another is our deficit assumptions. Many research efforts have sought to better estimate the number of nonresident fathers – and the nature of their relationships with their children – through women's/mothers' reports in surveys. While helpful, these data also likely skew the available evidence toward nonresident fathers in ongoing relationships with mothers, neglecting to count those fathers who are *entirely absent*. These challenges increase the difficulty of accurately estimating the number of nonresident fathers in the country, and more importantly of estimating the nature and outcomes of their involvement in their children's lives.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

As many as 50 percent of children in the U.S. will live in single-parent homes at some point in their childhoods.[298] The rise of cohabitation,

the decline of marriage, and the option of divorce with diminished social censure have contributed to the nonresident status of at least eight to ten million fathers in the United States – more than at any previous point in history.

Rather than misguided marriage-promotion policies, we need to support families in all their diversity of caregiving. Indeed, when nonresident fathers are positively involved in their children's lives, these children's cognitive, health, behavioral, and academic outcomes improve. And one powerful factor that boosts the beneficial outcomes for children of nonresident fathers' involvement in their lives is a cooperative co-parenting relationship between the mother and father. We see that nonresident fathers' financial support – via court-ordered child-support payments or other more informal contributions – benefits the health and development of both children and their mothers. Yet while these financial contributions are undeniably beneficial, research is also recognizing that a disproportionate focus at the state and policy level on financial contributions *alone* may be doing unintended harm to children, fathers, and families.

The conclusion that emerges is that there is a *double standard* and gaping inequality in how our family policies approach fatherhood in America. Upper-middle-class fathers' involvement is celebrated (even if they do not have the policy support they need) while low-income and nonresident fathers are lost, ignored, or demonized. We can add to their numbers adolescent fathers and incarcerated fathers, who face the largest challenges of all in playing a beneficial role in their children's lives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **REFORM CHILD SUPPORT POLICIES TO HELP LOW-INCOME FATHERS BE AS POSITIVELY INVOLVED AS MOST WANT TO BE.**

Financial contributions by nonresident fathers assist children and their mothers, but the current system tends to take a strictly punitive approach that is blind to fathers' income level and ability to pay. This observation in no way seeks to absolve fathers of their responsibility to support their children's well-being. The reality is that high child-support obligations, which men with meager wages are unable to meet, have been shown to *harm* child well-being by increasing these economically vulnerable fathers' noncompliance. States should consider a father's ability to pay in calculating child-support orders; the development of "parenting time

orders" in addition to financial-support orders in certain states is also encouraging, and helps transform often acrimonious custody disputes. As Kruk writes in introducing these policies, "Research is clear that children fare best in post-separation relationships in which they maintain meaningful routine parental relationships with both of their parents beyond the constraints of a 'visiting' or 'access' relationship, in which they are shielded from destructive parental conflict, and in which they are protected, to the highest degree possible, from a marked decline in their standard of living."[299]

- **REMOVE BARRIERS TO NONRESIDENT FATHERS' POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LIVES, PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO CUSTODY.**

States should create policies supporting nonresident fathers' involvement through joint custody, parenting time, positive co-parenting, and paternity leave to allow for men's engagement at the earliest stages of a child's life. Increasing the minimum wage, as well as creating a more generous Earned Income Tax Credit for nonresident fathers who pay child support, would likely allow for greater financial contributions to families' well-being by nonresident fathers. Reducing rates of deportation would also have significant benefits for immigrant families. Meanwhile, elements of the tax code which use the family as the unit of analysis have failed to keep pace with the aforementioned changes in family structure, as it is often difficult to determine who gets to "count" a child who spends a significant amount of time living with both parents, or who receives significant child-support payments from a nonresident father.[300]

- **TEACH PARENTING AND CO-PARENTING.**

The results of programs such as Read Together, The Father and Sons project, and Baby Elmo (which teaches parenting skills to incarcerated fathers) are encouraging; these and other kinds of parenting education curricula serving fathers should be expanded to greater numbers of parents, and they should engage fathers in open, inclusive ways. However, what are most needed are intervention programs that include *both* mothers and fathers. Evidence shows that expanded parent education programs can help mitigate the negative consequences of single motherhood, and perhaps even reduce the rates of couple dissolution.[301] These interventions should take a systemic view of families, involving both parents together regardless of the father's resident status; programs that improve parents' ability to communicate have been shown to produce measureable benefits for children.[302] These types of interventions should also be accompanied

by income support or an increase in the minimum wage, since we know that a father will struggle to concentrate on parenting skills when he is barely surviving himself. Such programs should, however, have the goal of supporting parents' participation in the lives of their children, and not operate from a presumption that marriage or cohabitation are the only viable ways for parents to be good caregivers.

- **REFORM JUSTICE-SYSTEM STRUCTURES THAT LEAD TO HIGH RATES OF INCARCERATION FOR LOW-INCOME MEN, AND ESPECIALLY FOR BLACK MEN, WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OF VIOLENT CRIMES, AND ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE REHABILITATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE.**

Revise policies regarding sentencing for nonviolent crimes and probation/parole violations. Create and fund re-entry programs to reduce recidivism through job training and placement, drug rehabilitation, affordable housing, and other initiatives. Further encourage and facilitate father-child contact for incarcerated fathers through programs such as Baby Elmo, which helps incarcerated fathers to develop a positive relationship with their children. Existing research points to policy alternatives to incarceration that emphasize support for stable family and work life.[e]

e. Wildeman and Western's analysis of Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study data is a helpful resource on these alternatives. See: Christopher Wildeman and Bruce Western, "Incarceration in Fragile Families," *The Future of Children* 20, no. 2 (2010): 157–77.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

What do we need to become a child-friendly and parent-supportive country?

"Looking back on it, the truth be told, the real reason I went home every night was that I needed my children more than they needed me."

Joe Biden
Father and Vice President of the United States

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION:
What do we need to become a child-friendly and parent-supportive country?

What is the state of America's fathers in 2016? In short: the laws and policies of both our governments and workplaces have not caught up with the new realities of U.S. families. Involved, get-your-hands-dirty fatherhood is now the norm for many of America's dads. As evidence in this report has shown, fathers are increasingly eager and expected to do half of the care work – and they are capable of it. **The gender-based boundaries between caregiving and breadwinning have begun to crumble, and today's dual-career, dual-carer parents demand new policies that support them.**

Today's families are more diverse than ever before, and their needs are also more diverse. There are now as many children who live in two-parent, heterosexual households in the U.S. as there are children who live in other family arrangements, including those who live with single parents or gay parents. **Today's diversity of households demands new policies that give every child a chance to thrive.**

The United States is a highly unequal country, however. Inequalities manifest particularly acutely in the lives of parents who work two (or more) jobs to get by, in households surviving on only one parent's income, in families that have a parent who is undocumented, and in the lives and families of the unjust number of black men and black fathers imprisoned in our country. **These inequalities demand new policies to support all families.**

This report has shed light upon an incomplete journey. While equality at home and in the workplace has become a reality in some ways, it still seems out of reach in others. Calling on individual fathers to do more, or be more, is not sufficient. Instead, as the nation sees greater participation by fathers in family life, and as a movement toward gender equality advances, it is essential that programs and policies support and reinforce these changes. **To become a parent-supportive and child-friendly country, we must:**

1. TEACH ALL OF OUR CHILDREN, FROM EARLY ON, ABOUT THE VALUE OF – AND THEIR OPPORTUNITY TO BE – BOTH CAREGIVERS AND PROFESSIONALS.

This education starts in childhood with a fundamental shift in how we treat boys and girls, the expectations and aspirations we set for them, and, importantly, the ways we teach them about caregiving. This needs to take place at home, in schools, and in our communities. If we value the participation of men and women as equal caregivers, we must teach this to our children at the youngest ages. This means scaling up youth programs and classroom activities that give boys and girls hands-on experiences with caregiving and break down traditional gender norms.

2. IMPROVE SERVICES AND EDUCATION – RELATED TO SEXUALITY, CAREGIVING, VIOLENCE, AND PARENTING – FOR YOUTH AND ADULTS.

Involved parenting is built on a foundation of reproductive justice and the ability of couples and individuals to plan when and how they want to have children. Supportive programs and services include comprehensive sexuality education (that is developmentally appropriate, that is biologically and anatomically accurate, and that includes discussions of contraception, abortion, and consent) and quality reproductive health services. Teaching both parenting and co-parenting skills to individuals of all genders, and regardless of their resident status, as well as investing in programs that prevent violence, is also necessary to move toward gender equality and toward men's active, nonviolent caregiving. Special efforts are needed to engage men and boys more fully in reproductive health and rights, and to help them see themselves as full and respectful reproductive partners.

3. PASS NATIONAL PAID, EQUAL, AND NON-TRANSFERABLE LEAVE FOR MOTHERS AND FATHERS.

A national policy guaranteeing fully paid, job-protected leave of equal length for mothers and fathers after a birth or adoption can and should be combined with other policies – subsidized childcare and early childhood education, among others – to fundamentally improve parents' and children's relationships, well-being, and opportunities to thrive. We know families need it, want it, and will vote for it. We know the incredible social benefits it can bring, but we still fall shamefully far behind other countries.

4. PUSH FOR SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACES.

Workplace policies should value what our parents do as caregivers as much as they value their professional achievements. In addition to parental leave, such policies should include flexible work hours, sick leave, a living wage, and others that allow parents to have greater work-life balance. These policies should be supported by workplace cultures that respect the caregiving responsibilities of all genders, and that acknowledge the cultural trend in the U.S. toward dual-earner couples and single, working parents. The most transformational change will come when these policy and norm changes begin to reinforce each other, offering broad benefits for parents, families, and employers.

5. ENCOURAGE MEN TO ENTER HEALTH, CAREGIVING, AND TEACHING PROFESSIONS.

While women have made incredible strides into traditionally male-dominated professions, including the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, men's movement into traditionally female-dominated professions has been inadequate by comparison. Bringing more men into the HEAL (health, education, administration, and literacy) professions could help accelerate social shifts toward greater acceptance and valuing of caregiving qualities in all genders. In addition to these steps, we can also implement national campaigns to eradicate outdated notions that men are inept – or worse, dangerous – in their care of children.

6. END THE UNNECESSARY BATTLE OF THE SEXES OVER FIT PARENTS' CUSTODY OF CHILDREN, IN CASES OF DIVORCE AND SEPARATION, AND ENACT LEGISLATION TO PROMOTE SHARED CUSTODY, IN THE INTEREST OF GENDER EQUALITY AND CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING.

The issue of custody in cases of divorce and separation has been a political fault line for families for too long. It is time to support common-sense reforms that move us toward equality. As men do a more equitable share of caregiving and become full co-parents, the time has come to support joint custody when it is in the best interest of the child. In situations where there is no history or threat of violence, the presumption of joint physical custody of children after a relationship or marital breakdown is the fairer, more gender-just approach. Contrary to the misguided notion that this debate is one of men versus women, legislation to encourage more equal sharing of caregiving

responsibilities (in most, not all, cases) after divorce or separation will bring real benefits to mothers, fathers, and children alike. This step, which many states have already taken, will further erode the inequitable care burden placed on women, as it simultaneously encourages men to play their part, not only as breadwinners but also as caregivers.

7. SUPPORT THE POOREST FATHERS AND FAMILIES WITH A LIVING WAGE, A REFORMED JUSTICE SYSTEM, AND ADDITIONAL SERVICES THAT ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT THEIR CAREGIVING.

The challenges of fully involved fatherhood are amplified for America's lowest-income and nonresident fathers, a great majority of whom seek to play a positive role in their children's lives. Increasing the minimum wage to be a living wage for low-income individuals would present significant benefits to these parents and their families. The federal tax code must also be modified so that nonresident fathers who pay child support are eligible for an increased Earned Income Tax Credit in line with these contributions. Reforming the criminal justice system – which systematically and disproportionately incarcerates young, low-income men of color – will help more fathers to be involved with their children as well, and will substantially improve the employment and financial prospects of these young men. These policies should be combined with those mentioned above – such as universal paid, non-transferable, job-protected family leave, and increased affordability and accessibility of childcare and healthcare for all fathers. By making these reforms, we will not only benefit millions of children in our country, but also realize more complete social justice.

8. COUNT FATHERS AND CARRY OUT MORE RESEARCH ON FATHERS.

We know that if we don't count it, it doesn't count. More resources need to be invested in collection of time-use data to better understand who is responsible for the childcare and domestic work in our country, and how this is changing. This should include more comprehensive research on low-income families and effective methods of tracking nonresident fathers. The better we understand the attitudes and behaviors of all types of fathers, the better we can encourage and support them as involved caregivers.

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"I am tremendously grateful to Promundo for continuing the work started through their 2011 Clinton Global Initiative commitment to engage men as fathers and caregivers and to promote research, practices and policies that are in the best interest of our families and gender equity."

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"*State of America's Fathers* is a welcome step in laying out a plan for how fathers can be positive role models for their children and equal partners in parenting."

Jessica Seinfeld, *Founder & Board President of GOOD+ Foundation*

"The state of America's fathers is every bit as important as the state of America's mothers for our collective health and wealth. It is as demeaning to me to see them only as helpers in the home as it is to see women only as helpers or secondary workers in the office. Bravo to Promundo for putting fathers forward!"

Anne-Marie Slaughter, *President & CEO of New America and author of* Unfinished Business: Women, Men, Work, Family

"At Planned Parenthood we know that every family is unique and deserves to be supported and valued. It's crucial that fathers are becoming more involved in parenting and sharing the responsibility of housework and childcare. All parents – fathers and mothers – need access to paid family leave, supportive workplaces, and affordable childcare. All parents should have the education, healthcare, and support they need to keep themselves and their families healthy and safe."

Cecile Richards, *President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America*

"More men than ever want to be actively involved in creating loving, healthy homes for their families. Unfortunately, as this report points out, our public policy is decades behind and even works against many parents – men and women. On this Father's Day, we honor the power of fathers in raising the next generation of boys to value safe, healthy families and futures without violence for all."

Esta Soler, *President & Founder of Futures Without Violence*

"Gender equality in caregiving has widespread benefits, from the health of our children all the way to a more robust U.S. economy. We must support all parents, so equality isn't just for a select few. It is high time for mothers and fathers to have access to paid family leave, to parent equally, and to model healthy behavior."

Jennifer Siebel Newsom, *Founder & CEO of The Representation Project and filmmaker of* Miss Representation *and* The Mask You Live In

"A CALL TO MEN supports the fatherhood revolution and its potential to advance gender equality. Breaking out of the Man Box will allow fathers to be fully engaged as partners and caregivers. These fathers are sure to be part of the Next Generation of Manhood."

Ted Bunch, *Co-Founder of* A CALL TO MEN

"After *State of the World's Fathers* broke so much important ground, it's great to see Promundo dive deeper, into the peculiar experience of dads in America. It's an equally fascinating read, because Promundo takes such a comprehensive, unflinching look at how American fatherhood stands apart, for better and for worse."

Doug French, *Co-Founder of the Dad 2.0 Summit*

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