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A Tale of Two Fathers

More Are Active, but More Are Absent

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A Tale of Two Fathers

More Are Active, but More Are Absent

By Gretchen Livingston and Kim Parker

OVERVIEW

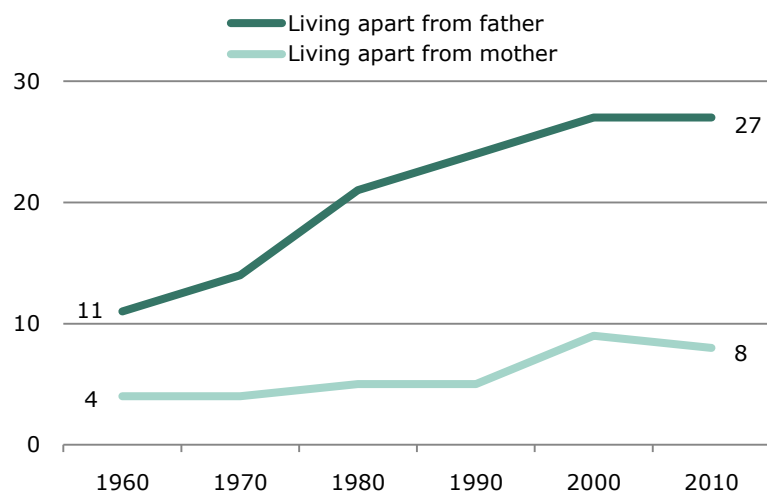
The role of fathers in the modern American family is changing in important and countervailing ways. Fathers who live with their children have become more intensely involved in their lives, spending more time with them and taking part in a greater variety of activities. However, the share of fathers who are residing with their children has fallen significantly in the past half century.

In 1960, only 11% of children in the U.S. lived apart from their fathers. By 2010, that share had risen to 27%. The share of minor children living apart from their mothers increased only modestly, from 4% in 1960 to 8% in 2010.

According to a new Pew Research Center analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), more than one-in-four fathers with children 18 or younger now live apart from their children—with 11% living apart from some of their children and 16% living apart from all of their

Living Apart, 1960-2010

% of children younger than 18



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey and 1960 Census of Population

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children.¹

Fathers' living arrangements are strongly correlated with race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status as measured by educational attainment. Black fathers are more than twice as likely as white fathers to live apart from their children (44% vs. 21%), while Hispanic fathers fall in the middle (35%). Among fathers who never completed high school, 40% live apart from their children. This compares with only 7% of fathers who graduated from college.

Almost all fathers who live with their children take an active role in their day-to-day lives through activities such as sharing meals, helping with homework, and playing. Fathers who live apart from their children are much less likely to be involved in these types of activities. Many compensate by communicating with their children through email or by phone: four-in-ten nonresident dads say they are in touch with their children several times a week. At the same time, however, nearly one-third of fathers who do not live with their children say they talk or exchange email with them less than once a month. Similarly, one-in-five absent fathers say they visit their children more than once a week, but an even greater share (27%) say they have not seen their children at all in the past year.

The analysis of the NSFG was paired with a new Pew Research survey of attitudes toward fatherhood that finds a strong majority of the public saying children need a father in the home. Fully 69% say having a father in the home is essential to a child's happiness. Only a slightly higher share (74%) says the same about having a mother in the home.

The Pew Research survey also finds that most fathers (63%) say being a dad is harder today than it was a generation ago. And the public gives today's dads mixed grades for the job they are doing as parents. Only about one-in-four adults say fathers today are doing a better job as parents than their own fathers did. Roughly one-third (34%) say they are doing a worse job, and 40% say they are doing about the same job. Dads themselves have similar opinions: 26% say today's fathers are doing a better job than their own fathers did. However, when asked about the job *they* are doing raising their own children, 47% say they're doing a better job than their own dad did; while 3% say they're doing a worse job.

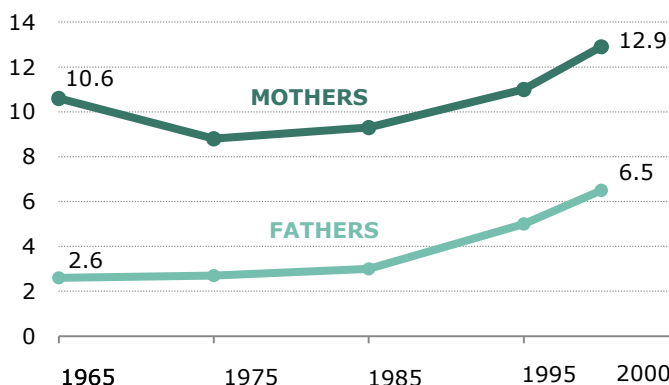
¹ The National Survey of Family Growth is conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This analysis is based on data collected from 2006 to 2008 among a nationally representative sample of 13,495 men and women ages 15-44.

More Time Spent, But Fewer Fathers in the Home

The changing role of fathers in the home can be measured in different ways. One approach is to look at the amount of time fathers spend caring for their children. Changing trends in time use data help illustrate the extent to which fathers who reside with their children have become more involved in their lives over time. In 1965, married fathers with children under age 18 living in their household spent an average of 2.6 hours per week caring for those children. Fathers' time spent caring for their children rose gradually over the next two decades—to 2.7 hours per week in 1975 and 3 hours per week in 1985. From 1985 to 2000, the amount of time married fathers spent with their children more than doubled – to 6.5 hours in 2000. From 1965 to 2000, married mothers consistently logged more time than married fathers caring for their minor children, though the gap between mothers and fathers in time spent on child care narrowed significantly.

Mothers, Fathers and Time Spent with Children

Average weekly hours of child care among married mothers and fathers living with their children younger than 18



Note: Figures reflect the average number of hours spent in primary child care activities, which includes daily care, teaching and playing.

Source: Suzanne Bianchi, John Robinson and Melissa Milkie, *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007 (Table 4.1)

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Alongside this trend toward more time spent with children is a trend toward more children living apart from their fathers. Declining marriage rates and increases in out-of-wedlock births and multi-partner fertility have given rise to complicated family structures and have increased the likelihood that fathers will not reside with all of their children.² According to the NSFG, nearly half of all fathers (46%) now report that at least one of their children was born out of

² For more information on declining marriage rates and changing family structure, see "The Decline of Marriage and Rise of New Families," Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, November 18, 2010 (<http://pewsocialtrends.org/2010/11/18/the-decline-of-marriage-and-rise-of-new-families/>).

wedlock, and 31% report that all of their children were born out of wedlock. In addition, some 17% of men with biological children have fathered those children with more than one woman.³

Living Apart from the Kids

What is life like for fathers who live apart from their children? As would be expected, there is a wide variety of experiences. Some fathers are highly involved with their children, in spite of the fact that they do not live together. Others have little or no contact with their children. Roughly one-in-five fathers who live apart from their children say they visit with them more than once a week, and an additional 29% see their children at least once a month. For 21% of these fathers, the visits take place several times a year. And for 27% there are no visits at all.⁴

Communicating by phone or email is more prevalent than face-to-face contact. Among fathers who live apart from their minor children, 41% say they are in touch with them via phone or email several times a week; 28% say they communicate at least monthly. Still, a sizable minority (31%) say they talk on the phone or email with their children less than once a month.

Fathers, Children and Day-to-Day Activities

When it comes to spending time with a child, being in the same home makes a huge difference. More than nine-in-ten fathers who live with their children at least part of the time report that they shared a meal with their child or talked with their child about the child's day almost daily over the past several weeks. Nearly two-thirds (63%) say they helped their child

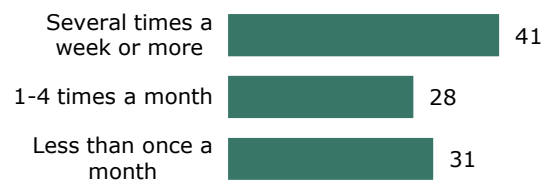
When Fathers and Children Live Separately

%

Frequency of visits



Frequency of calls/emails



Notes: Based on fathers who are living apart from at least one child 18 or younger. Frequencies are for the prior year. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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³ Karen Benjamin Guzzo and Frank Furstenberg. 2007. "Multipartnered Fertility among American Men," *Demography* 44(3): 583-601.

⁴ Fathers who report that they never share a household with their children are "living apart" from those children. Fathers who report that they live in the same household with their children at least part of the time are "living with" those children.

with homework or checked on their homework at least several times a week, and 54% say they took their child to or from activities several times a week or more.

By comparison, relatively few fathers who live apart from their children report taking part in these activities. Three-in-ten (31%) say they talked with their child about his or her day several times a week or more. Only 16% say they had a meal with their child several times a week over the past month. One-in-ten helped out with homework several times a week or more, and 11% took a child to or from activities.

Are You a Good Father?

A father's presence or absence in the home is closely related to how he evaluates the job he is doing as a parent. Among fathers who live with their children at least part of the time, nearly nine-in-ten say they are doing a very good (44%) or good (44%) job as fathers to those children. An additional 11% classify themselves as okay fathers, and less than 1% say they are doing a bad or not very good job as a father.

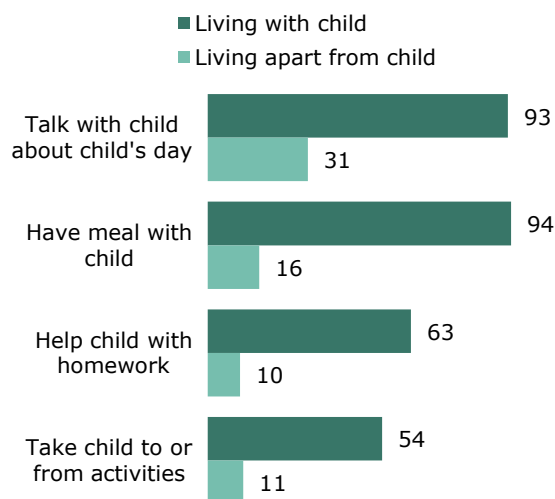
Fathers who do not live with their children rate themselves much more negatively. Only 19% say they are doing a very good job as fathers to the children they live apart from, and 30% say they are doing a good job. One-in-four say they are doing an okay job, while nearly as many describe their parenting as not very good (13%) or bad (9%).

About the Report

This report is based mainly on Pew Research Center analysis of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG). The NSFG gathers information on family life, marriage and divorce, pregnancy, infertility, and men's and women's health. The survey is an ongoing initiative of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Data used for this report are drawn from Cycle 7, which was a continuous survey conducted from June 2006 to June 2010. Data from

The Activities of Daily Life

% of fathers saying they participated in each activity at least several times a week over the past month



Note: Based on fathers of children ages 5-18.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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2006-08 is based on interviews with 13,495 respondents ages 15-44; 7,356 were female and 6,139 male. Unless otherwise noted, all findings in this report are from the NSFG.

The results of a new Pew Research Center survey complement the findings from the NSFG. The Pew Research survey was conducted by landline and cellular telephone May 26-29 and June 2-5, 2011, among a nationally representative sample of 2,006 adults living in the continental United States.

The charts for this report were prepared by Daniel Dockterman. Paul Taylor, director of the Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends project, provided editorial guidance. Wendy Wang provided valuable comments and research assistance. Daniel Dockterman and Wendy Wang did the number checking, and Marcia Kramer copy-edited the report.

The report is divided into three sections: (1) Overview; (2) Living Arrangements and Father Involvement; (3) Attitudes about Fatherhood. A detailed methodology and topline can be found in the appendices.

Notes on Terminology

The definition of “father” varies from question to question in the report, in order to reflect the wording and structure of the NSFG.

- *For questions regarding marital status at birth, and whether a father is living with the mother of all of his biological children:* “Fathers” are limited to men who have biological children.
- *For questions regarding co-residence and time spent with children:* “Fathers” refer to men with children 18 or younger. For **co-residers**, “fathers” include men with biological children, adopted children, stepchildren, or those who are living with their partner’s children. For **non-co-residers**, “fathers” are based on men with biological or adopted children only.
- *For NSFG attitude questions and questions regarding childlessness,* “father” includes any man with biological or adopted children. Conversely, childless men have no biological or adopted children.

Any father who says that his child lives full time or part time in his household is considered a “co-resident” father. Any father who does not live with his biological or adopted children is a “non-co-resident” father. Part-time co-residence is self-identified by the father.

The terms “whites,” “blacks” and “African Americans” are used to refer to the non-Hispanic components of their populations. Hispanics can be of any race.

Other Key Findings

- **Men have a strong desire to be fathers ...** Overall, 87% of males ages 15-44 who have no children say that they want to have children at some point. Among childless men between the ages of 40-44, a narrow majority (51%) still want children.
- **... But most say you don't need children to be happy.** Men who do not have children reject the idea that people can't be happy unless they have children. Only 8% of childless men agree with this statement, and even among fathers, only a small minority (14%) agree that children are necessary in order to be happy.
- **Most say being a father is harder today than it was a generation ago ...** Among all adults, 57% say it is more difficult to be a father today than it was 20 or 30 years ago. Only 9% say being a father is easier today, and 32% say it's about the same. Among dads themselves, 63% say the job is harder now.
- **... But there is no consensus on whether today's fathers are more involved.** The public is evenly split over whether today's fathers play a greater role or a lesser role in their children's lives compared with dads 20 or 30 years ago. While 46% say fathers play a greater role now, 45% say they play less of a role now.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS AND FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Fatherhood and Marriage

Nearly half (46%) of men ages 15 to 44 with biological children report that at least one of their children was born outside of marriage,⁵ and 31% report that all of their children were born outside of marriage. In contrast, 69% report that they have had at least one of their children within a marriage.

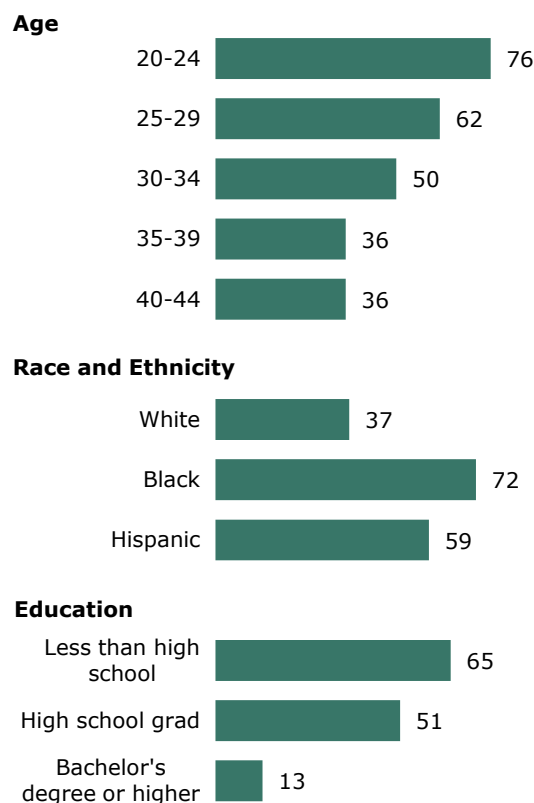
Among young and middle-aged men, the likelihood of having a child out of wedlock varies by cohort. Among biological fathers ages 20 to 24, more than three-fourths (76%) have had a child out of wedlock, while this share drops to 36% for fathers ages 35 to 44.

There are notable differences by race and ethnicity, as well. Some 37% of white biological dads have had at least one child out of wedlock, while 77% have had a birth within a marriage. Black and Hispanic fathers are much more likely to report having had a nonmarital birth. Among black men, 72% have had a child out of wedlock, and 48% have had one in marriage; and among Hispanic men, 59% have had a birth out of wedlock, and 58% have had a birth within a marriage.

Biological fathers with high levels of education are far less likely to have had a child out of wedlock than their less-educated counterparts. Only 13% of those with at least a bachelor's

Share of Fathers with Nonmarital Births

% with biological children



Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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⁵According to the NSFG, a similar share (47%) of women who have given birth report having at least one birth outside of marriage, and a [Pew Research Center report](#) using National Center for Health Statistics data revealed that 41% of all 2008 births were nonmarital births.

degree report a nonmarital birth. In comparison, almost two-thirds (65%) of those who never completed high school have a child out of wedlock, as do over half (51%) of those whose highest educational attainment is a high school diploma.

Just over half (55%) of men with biological children are married to the biological mother of all of those children. An additional 7% of biological fathers are cohabiting with the mother of their children.

Fathers under age 30 are less likely than older fathers to be married to the mother of their children. Some 26% of dads ages 20-24 report as much, as do 47% of dads ages 25-29. In comparison, 58% of fathers ages 40-44 are married to the mother of their children. While they are far less likely than their older counterparts to be married to the mother of their children, more than half of fathers ages 20-24 (53%) and 25-29 (62%) are still in a relationship—marital or cohabiting—with the mother of their children.

Black biological fathers are far less likely than white biological fathers to be married to the mother of their children. Some 36% of blacks are in this situation, compared with 59% of whites. Among Hispanic biological fathers, this share is 50%.

Education is closely linked with the likelihood of a biological father's being married to the mother of his children. Among fathers with less than a high school diploma, 40% are married to their children's mother. The share rises to 50% for fathers who have a high school diploma. For fathers with at least a bachelor's degree, the share married to the mother of their children jumps to 83%.

Fathers and their Children

Overall, 73% of men with children 18 or younger report that they live with those children at least part of the time (i.e., they “co-reside”).⁶ Conversely, more than one-fourth of fathers (27%) are living apart from at least one of their children: 16% are living apart from all of their children, and 11% are living apart from some of their children.

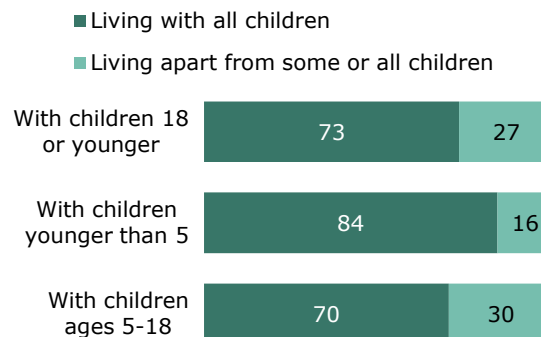
Among fathers of children ages 5-18, 70% are living with all of those children—meaning that three-in-ten are living apart from at least one of their children. Rates of co-residence with younger children are generally higher, even so almost one-in-six (16%) fathers are living apart from at least one of their children under age 5.

There is little historical trend data directly measuring the share of fathers co-residing with their children. However, the U.S. Census Bureau offers a related measure—the share of *children* living with, or living apart from, each of their parents. In 1960, 89% of minor children were living with their fathers, and 96% of children were living with their mothers. In other words, 11% of children were living apart from their fathers, and 4% were living apart from their mothers. Fifty years later, the share of children living with their fathers fell to 73%, meaning that 27% (some 20.3 million) were living apart from their fathers. In comparison, 92% of minors were living with their mothers, and 8% were living apart from them ([U.S. Census Bureau, 2010](#)).

The increased share of children living apart from their fathers is due at least in part to the decline in the share of children living in two-parent households in general, which in turn is related to a decline in marriage rates. While 72% of the adult population was married in 1960, that share dropped to 52% by 2008. And while 87% of children ages 17 and younger were living with two married parents in 1960, in 2008 the share dropped to 64%, with an additional 6% of children living with two cohabiting parents ([Pew Social and Demographic Trends, 2010](#)).

Living Arrangements of Fathers

%



Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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⁶ For measures of co-residence and time spent with children, “fathers” include men with biological or adopted children or stepchildren, and men residing with their partner’s children.

Multi-partner fertility also contributes to complex family structures and to the large share of fathers living apart from at least some of their children. Research indicates that about 17% of biological fathers have fathered children with more than one woman.⁷

A father's age is not linked to the likelihood that he is living apart from any of his children 18 or younger. Some 31% of dads ages 20-24 are living apart from at least one of their children, compared with 25% of those ages 40-44. When the sample is limited to fathers of children younger than 5, though, some age differences do emerge, with fathers in their twenties being more likely than older fathers to live apart from their young children. For instance, 27% of fathers ages 20-24 are living apart from at least one of their young children, compared with 6% of fathers ages 40-44.

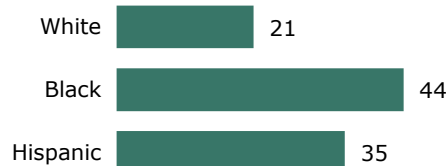
Race and ethnicity are strongly associated with the likelihood that a father will live apart from at least one of his children. While about one-fifth (21%) of white fathers live apart from at least one of their children, this number rises to 35% among Hispanic fathers, and 44% among African American fathers. This pattern persists when examining fathers of children younger than 5, with 10% of white fathers living apart from at least one of their young children, compared with 24% of Hispanic fathers and 32% of African American fathers.

Four-in-ten fathers lacking a high school diploma live apart from at least one of their children. Among high school graduates, the share decreases to 29%, and among college graduates, it drops to 7%.

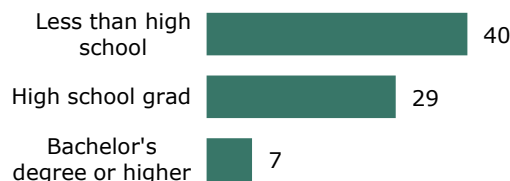
Share of Fathers Living Apart from Children

% with children 18 or younger

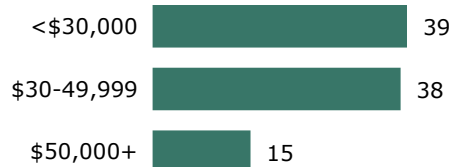
Race and Ethnicity



Education



Family Income



Note: Includes fathers who are living apart from at least one child 18 or younger.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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⁷ Karen Benjamin Guzzo and Frank Furstenberg, 2007.

And while three-in-ten (29%) fathers with less than a high school diploma live apart from at least one of their children under age 5, the share declines to 17% for high school graduates, and 4% for fathers with a bachelor's degree or more.

Fathers with higher family incomes are much less likely to be living apart from any of their children than are those with lower incomes. Some 15% of fathers with annual family incomes of \$50,000 or more live apart from a child, compared with 39% of those with incomes below \$30,000 and 38% of those with incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,999. The pattern holds true when looking only at fathers of young children. Just 5% of fathers with family incomes of \$50,000 or more are living away from a child less than 5 years of age. In comparison, some 29% of dads with family incomes of less than \$30,000 live apart from a child, as do 24% of dads with incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,999.

Absent Fathers: Involvement from a Distance?

While more than one-quarter (27%) of fathers are living apart from their children 18 or younger, there is a huge variation in the type of involvement that these “non-co-resident” fathers have with their children. On one end of the spectrum, almost one-fifth (18%) report only occasional contacts with their children, and no visits in over a year. At the other end of the spectrum are the 14% of fathers who live apart from their children but report still seeing them several times a week, and talking with or emailing them several times a week, as well.

Among dads who are not living with their children, less than one-fourth (22%) report that they visited with their children more than once a week on average over the past year. Some 29% saw their children 1 to 4 times a month, and 21% saw them several times in the past year. More than one-fourth of non-co-residential dads (27%)

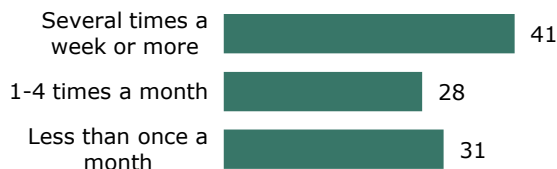
Father Involvement with Non-Co-Residential Children

(%)

Frequency of visits



Frequency of calls/emails



Notes: Based on fathers who are living apart from at least one child 18 or younger. Frequencies are for the prior year. “Don’t know/Refused” responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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report that they did not see their non-co-residential children at all in the past year.

There are no age differences in the likelihood of a father's seeing his non-co-resident child at least once a month.

Hispanic fathers living apart from their children are much less likely than others to see those children monthly or more. Roughly one-third (32%) do so, compared with 59% of whites and 67% of blacks.

Some 41% of non-co-resident fathers lacking a high school diploma saw their children at least once a month, and this share rises to 57% among fathers with a high school diploma. In terms of income, though, there were no major differences—fathers with family incomes below \$30,000 who were living apart from their children were statistically as likely as fathers with higher incomes to visit with those children at least once a month.

While just over two-in-ten fathers saw their non-co-resident children several times a week during the prior year, almost double that share (41%) report that they communicated with their children via phone or email several times a week during that same time period. On the other end of the spectrum, a sizable minority—31%—report that they communicated with their non-co-resident children less than once a month. An additional 28% emailed or called their children one to four times a month during the prior year.

There are no race or ethnic differences in the likelihood of having email or phone contact with a non-co-resident child several times a week or more.

Three-in-ten (31%) fathers with less than a high school diploma report communicating with their children several times a week or more in the past year. This is a lower share than the 48% of fathers with a high school diploma who report the same.

Fathers with low family incomes were less likely than higher income fathers to contact their non-co-residential children at least several times a week. One-third (31%) of fathers with annual family incomes of less than \$30,000 report having had contact via phone or email with their children at least several times a week in the prior year. In comparison, this share is 45% for those with incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,999 and 49% for those with family incomes of \$50,000 or more.

Time Spent with Children

When it comes to spending time with children, co-residence matters—a lot. In fact, whether a father lives with his children is more directly associated with his day-to-day involvement with them in the prior four weeks than his race, ethnicity, age, education or income. The vast majority of fathers who live with their children report regular involvement in their routine care, while the story is much more mixed for fathers who live apart from their children.

Talking with children about their day:

More than nine-in-ten (93%) fathers who live with their children ages 5-18 report that they talked with their children about things that happened in their children's day several times a week on average in the four weeks prior to the interview. Three-in-ten (31%) fathers living apart from their children report the same. The plurality of non-co-resident fathers (44%) report that they hadn't talked to their children about their day at all in the previous four weeks. One-fourth (25%) report doing so occasionally, up to about once a week.

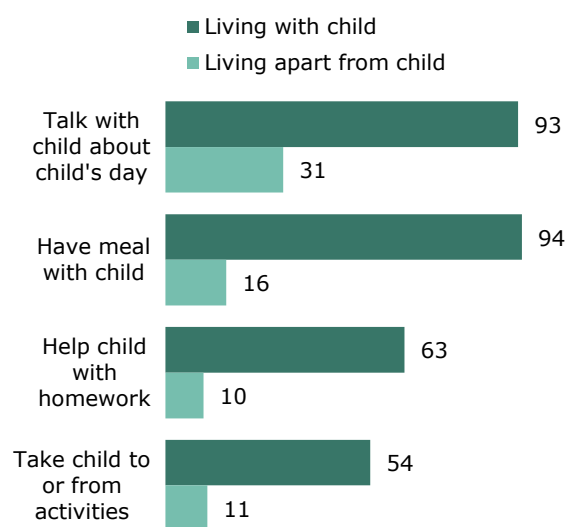
Co-resident fathers ages 25-29 are less likely to talk with their children about their day at least several times a week than are those ages 35-39 (89% vs. 96%), but otherwise no significant age differences emerge.

The only other notable difference among fathers who reside with their children occurs by educational level. While 89% of co-resident fathers with less than a high school diploma talked with their children several times a week about their day, this share rises to 97% among college graduates. For high school graduates, the share is 93%.

Among fathers living apart from their children, there are some differences by race and ethnicity in the likelihood of talking with their children several times a week about their day. Blacks are far more likely to do so than their white or Hispanic counterparts. While almost half

Fathers, Children and Daily Life

% of fathers with children ages 5-18 saying they participated in each activity at least several times a week in the past month



Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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(49%) of blacks talk with their children several times a week about their day, the share of Hispanics who do so is 22%, and of whites, 30%.

Sharing meals with children: When it comes to sharing meals with their children, the vast majority of co-resident dads report doing so often. Fully 94% report eating with their children ages 5-18 several times a week in the four weeks prior to being interviewed. This is far higher than the 16% of non-co-resident fathers who share several meals a week with their children. In fact, the majority (57%) of fathers who live apart from their children report sharing no meals with their children ages 5-18 in the last four weeks, and just over one-fourth (26%) ate with their children sometimes, but no more than once a week.

Among fathers who live with their children, the likelihood of sharing several meals a week with children ages 5-18 is quite consistent across almost all categories. The only exception occurs in terms of education—high school graduates were less likely than those with a bachelor’s degree to eat several times a week with their children ages 5 to 18. Some 92% of high school graduates did so, compared with 98% of those with a bachelor’s degree. The share of fathers with less than a high school diploma who did so is 94%.

There are no differences among subgroups of non-co-resident fathers in this measure.

Helping children with homework: More than six-in-ten (63%) fathers who live with their children ages 5-18 report that they helped those children with homework or checked with their children about their homework several times a week in the four weeks prior to being interviewed. An additional 22% helped or checked at least sometime (up to once a week), and 15% did not inquire about or help with homework at all. In contrast, one-in-ten (10%) non-co-residential fathers helped with or inquired about the homework of their children at least several times a week, 15% helped out or inquired at least sometime, and fully three-fourths (75%) did not help or check on homework in the four weeks preceding the interview.

Taking children to and from activities: More than half (54%) of fathers report that they took their co-resident children ages 5-18 to and from activities several times a week or more in the four weeks prior to being surveyed. Some 31% did so up to once a week, while 15% report not doing so at all. Among the dads living apart from their children, only about one-in-ten (11%) transported their children several times a week, compared with 17% who did so up to once a week, and fully 72% who didn’t transport their child at all in the four weeks preceding the survey.

In terms of subgroup differences in the likelihood of transporting children several times a week, education emerges as an important indicator for fathers who live with their children. Those with a bachelor's degree were far more likely to do so (65%) than were those lacking a high school diploma (49%) or those with only a high school diploma (51%).⁸

Among fathers not living with their children, there were no subgroup differences in the likelihood of chauffeuring children several times a week or more in the four weeks prior to being interviewed.

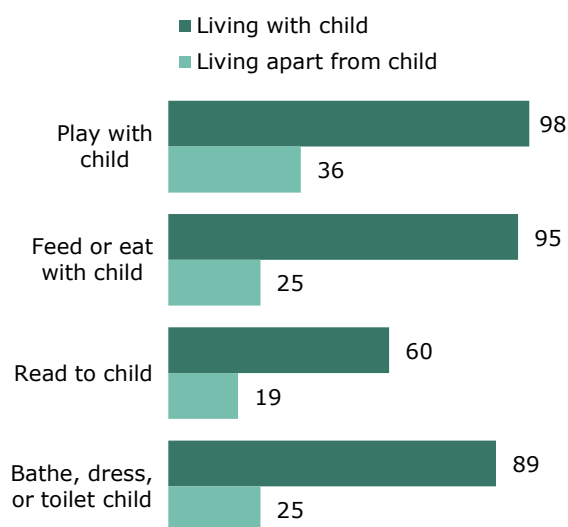
Playing with young children: Fathers of children younger than 5 years of age were asked how often they played with their children in the four weeks prior to being interviewed. Almost all fathers living with their young children (98%) played with those children at least several times a week. Among fathers not living with their young children, more than one-third (36%) report the same. About one-fifth of the non-co-resident fathers (21%) played with their young children at least some, and 43% did not play with their young children at all.⁹

Sharing meals or feeding young

children: The vast majority (95%) of fathers living with their children under the age of 5 shared meals with or fed those children several times a week or more over the four-week period prior to being interviewed. In contrast, this share was 25% among fathers living apart from their children. The plurality (48%) of non-co-resident fathers of young children shared no meals with their children, and just over one-fourth (26%) ate with or fed their young children at least occasionally during that period.

Fathers, Young Children and Daily Life

% of fathers with children younger than 5 saying they participated in each activity at least several times a week in the past month



Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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⁸ Educational differences in this measure may relate in part to the fact that more highly educated parents are more likely to schedule formal activities for their children than other parents, and thus create more of a need for transporting the children. See Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

⁹ Sample sizes do not allow for subgroup analysis of non-co-residential fathers of children less than age 5.

There are no differences among co-resident fathers in the likelihood of feeding or eating with their young children.

Reading to young children: Six-in-ten (60%) co-resident fathers report reading to their children under age 5 at least several times a week in the four weeks prior to being interviewed. One-fourth (25%) did so occasionally, and 15% didn't read to their children at all. Almost two-in-ten (19%) non-co-resident fathers read to their young children several times a week or more, while 22% did so occasionally, and 59% didn't read to their children at all.

Unlike most of the preceding measures, there are a number of subgroup differences among co-resident fathers when it comes to reading to their children.

Less than half (45%) of co-resident Hispanic fathers read to their children ages less than 5 several times a week or more, compared with 65% of white co-resident dads. Some 62% of black co-resident fathers read to their young children several times a week or more in the four weeks preceding the survey.

Co-resident fathers with a bachelor's degree were far more likely than others to read to their young children several times a week or more. More than three-fourths (76%) did so, compared with 48% of those with less than a high school diploma and 57% of those with a high school diploma.

Economic circumstances were also linked to the likelihood of reading often to a young child. While more than two-thirds (68%) of co-resident fathers with family incomes of \$50,000 or more read to their children at least several times a week, some 54% of fathers with annual family incomes of less than \$30,000 did so, and half (50%) of fathers with annual family incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,999 did so.

Bathing, dressing or toileting young children: Almost nine-in-ten (89%) fathers who live with their young children report that they helped in bathing, dressing or toileting them several times a week in the four weeks preceding the survey. In contrast, one-fourth (25%) of fathers living apart from their young children report the same. More than half (54%) of non-co-resident fathers report no participation in these activities in the prior four weeks, and 21% report occasionally being involved in these activities during this period.

There are no subgroup differences in the likelihood of bathing, dressing, or toileting young children among co-resident fathers in the four weeks prior to being surveyed.

How Good a Father Are You?

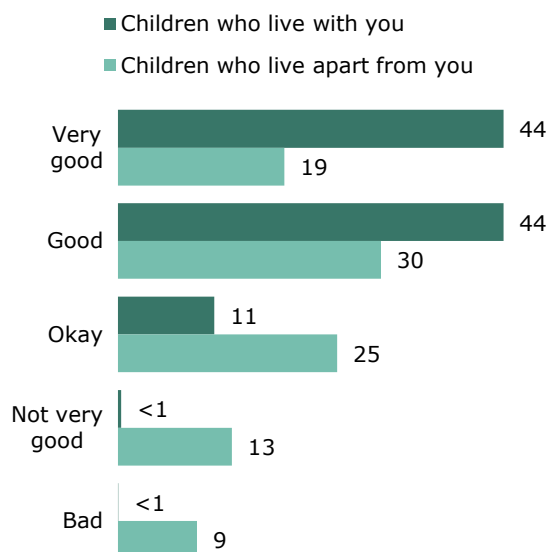
All men with children 18 or younger were asked, “How good a job do you think you do as a father?” The question was asked separately in reference to co-resident and non-co-resident children, and results differ markedly for each group.

Almost 9-in-10 (88%) fathers who live with their children rate themselves as doing a good or very good job, while just under half (49%) of non-co-resident fathers evaluate themselves similarly. Some 44% of fathers think they do a very good job with co-resident children, and another 44% think they do a good job. Some 11% think they do an “okay” job. In contrast, only 19% of fathers report that they are very good parents to their non-co-residential children, while 30% think they are a good parent. One-fourth (25%) think they are doing an okay job parenting non-co-residential children, and 22% think they are doing a not very good or bad job.

Among co-resident fathers, there are no subgroup differences in the likelihood of rating one’s parenting as either good or very good. Among non-co-resident fathers, the only significant difference emerges on age—fathers ages 25-29 are more likely to rate themselves as good or very good than are fathers ages 40-44 (63% vs. 41%).

How Good a Job Do You Think You Do as a Father to...?

(%)



Note: Based on fathers with children 18 or younger. “Don’t know/Refused” responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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How Parenting Self-Evaluations Differ Between Mothers and Fathers

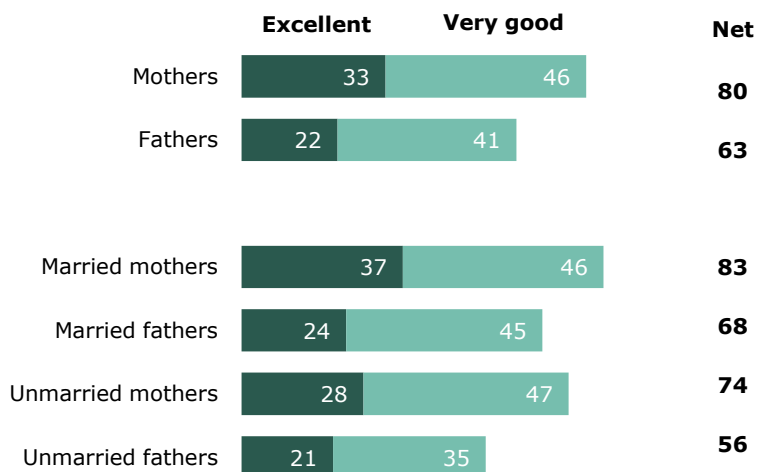
In October of 2010, the Pew Research Center conducted a [nationwide survey](#) of 2,691 adults regarding their attitudes about and experiences with family. According to that survey, the majority (71%) of parents with children under age 18 say that they are doing an “excellent” or “very good” job as parents.

However, fathers give themselves lower marks than mothers: 63% of fathers with children under age 18 think that they are doing an “excellent” or “very good” job as parents, compared with 80% of mothers with similarly aged children.

Married mothers are the group that rates their parenting the highest. More than eight-in-ten (83%) rate their parenting as either “excellent” or “very good.” On the other end of the spectrum, unmarried fathers give themselves the lowest rating: some 56% think that they are doing an “excellent” or “very good” job as parents.

Mothers and Fathers Rate Themselves

% saying the job they have done or are doing as a parent is ...



Notes: Based on 1,043 parents with children younger than 18. Individual categories may not add up to Net totals due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center survey conducted Oct. 1-21, 2010, N=2,691

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Future Birth Intentions and Desires

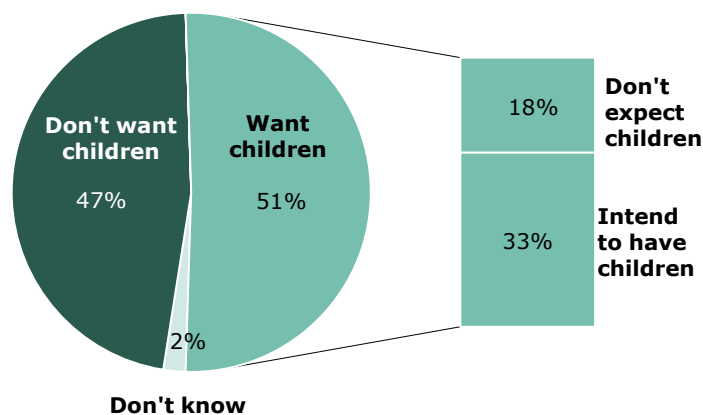
Data from the NSFG indicate that 53% of males ages 15-44 have no children, and among men ages 40-44, that share is 20%.¹⁰

The survey asked two separate questions about future fertility: It inquired “*If it were possible, would you want to have (more) children?*” and it also asked whether someone *intended* to have (more) children. Overall 87% of men ages 15-44 who had no biological or adopted children (and who did not have a pregnant spouse or partner at the time of survey) *wanted* to have children, but only about 82% of those males *intended* to have children. The discrepancy between these two statistics points to the fact that about 6% of childless men wanted children but were not expecting to ever have them.

Among men ages 20-24, the share of those who are childless who want children but aren’t expecting to have them is very low (3%). Among childless men ages 40-44, about half (51%) reported that they want children, however, some 18% weren’t expecting to ever have children, despite their desire to do so. In comparison, 20% of childless women ages 40-44 wanted children but weren’t expecting to ever have them.

Across other major demographic characteristics, there is little variation among childless men in the intention for children, desire for children or unmet desire for parenthood.

Fertility Desires and Intentions of Childless Men Ages 40-44



Note: Based on men with no biological or adopted children who were not expecting a biological child at time of survey.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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Over one-fourth (27%) of childless men say that it would bother them a great deal if they never have children. Roughly one-third (32%) report that it would bother them some, 19% say it

¹⁰ [Pew Research Center calculations](#) using National Center for Health Statistics data show that about 18% of women ages 40-44 have no biological children.

would bother them a little, and one-fifth (21%) report that it wouldn't bother them at all if they never had children. Among childless women, 36% would be bothered a great deal if they never had children, 32% would be bothered some, 14% would be bothered a little, and 17% wouldn't be bothered at all.

Younger males are more likely than their older counterparts to report that they would be bothered a great deal by childlessness—28% of 15- to 19-year-olds say as much, as do 35% of those ages 20-24. In contrast, only 16% of men ages 35-39 say that they would be bothered a great deal by not having children, and 5% of those 40-44 say the same.

There are no other notable subgroup variations.

ATTITUDES ABOUT FATHERHOOD

Among fathers, only a small minority (14%) agrees or strongly agrees with the statement that people can't be really happy unless they have children. Men with no children are less likely than fathers to think that people can't be really happy unless they have children—some 8% agree or strongly agree with that statement, while 91% disagree or strongly disagree.

Hispanic fathers are more likely to agree that people can't be really happy unless they have children—30% believe that. That is much higher than the 8% of white and black fathers who report similar attitudes. Education and income are also linked to attitudes on this question among fathers. While 22% of

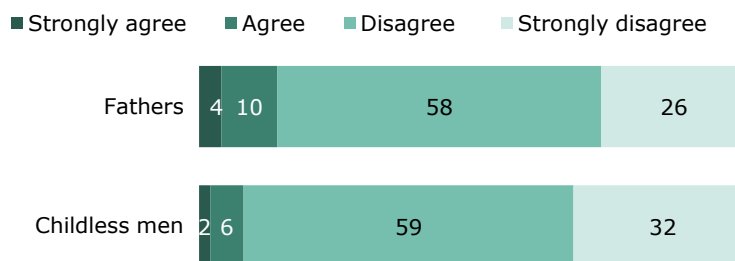
fathers with less than a high school diploma agree with the statement, only 12% of fathers with more education have the same attitude. And while 24% of fathers with annual family incomes below \$30,000 agree that people can't be happy unless they have children, this share drops to 14% for fathers with incomes of \$30,000 to \$49,999, and 9% for fathers with incomes of \$50,000 or more.

Among childless men Hispanics are more likely than whites to agree or strongly agree that people can't be really happy unless they have children. Some 19% of childless Hispanic men have this attitude, compared with 4% of whites. And again, family income is associated with this attitude. While 12% of childless men with annual incomes below \$30,000 agree or

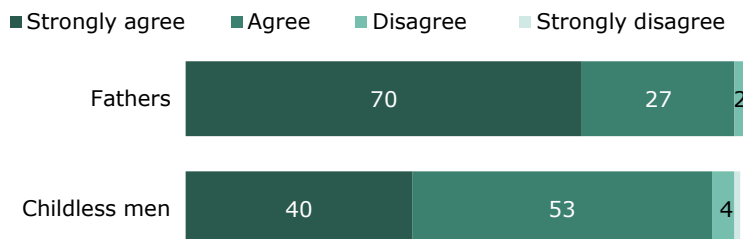
Attitudes about Parenthood, by Fatherhood Status

(%)

People Can't Be Really Happy Unless They Have Children



The Rewards of Being a Parent Are Worth it, Despite the Costs And the Work that Goes into It



Notes: "Fathers" include men with biological or adopted children. "Strongly disagree" responses are included but not labeled. "Don't know/Refused" and "Neither agree nor disagree" responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center calculations of the 2006-08 National Survey of Family Growth

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strongly agree with the statement, only 6% of those earning \$50,000 or more feel that people can't be really happy unless they have children.

While few think that parenthood is crucial to happiness, the vast majority of all men, whether fathers or childless, believe that the rewards of being a parent are worth it despite the costs and the work that goes into it. Among fathers, 70% strongly agree and 27% agree. The majority of non-fathers also concur with the statement, but only 40% strongly agree, while 53% agree.

Public Opinion Favors Fathers in the Home

In spite of the fact that more children are now growing up in homes without a father, the public holds fast to the ideal that having a father in the home is essential for children.

According to a new Pew Research survey, seven-in-ten respondents (69%) tend to agree that a child needs a father in the home to grow up happily. Only 27% disagree with this statement, and 4% are not sure. Survey respondents were also asked how important it is to have a mother in the home. The share agreeing that a child needs a mother in the home was only slightly higher—74%.¹¹

Men, whether they are fathers or not, are much more likely than women to say a child needs a father in the home. Fully 77% of men (including 79% of fathers with children younger than 18) agree that a child needs a father at home to grow up happily. Only 61% of women (including 60% of mothers with children younger than 18) agree.

When it comes to the importance of having a mom in the home, men and women are in closer agreement. Roughly eight-in-ten men (79%) and 71% of women agree that a child needs a mother in the home to grow up happily.

A Child Needs a Father/Mother in The Home to Grow Up Happily

(%)

Needs a Father

Agree 69

Disagree 27

Needs a Mother

Agree 74

Disagree 22

Note: Based on all adults. "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 26-29 & June 2-5, 2011, N=2,006

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¹¹ In the survey questionnaire, the two categories—father and mother—were rotated so that half of the sample was asked about fathers first and the other half of the sample was asked about mothers first.

While valuing the role that fathers play in their children's lives, most Americans believe being a father has become more difficult in recent decades. When asked whether the job of being a father is easier, more difficult or about the same as it was 20 or 30 years ago, 57% say it is more difficult now. Only 9% say it is becoming easier to be a dad, and 32% say the job is about the same as it was a generation ago. Fathers are more likely than mothers to say fatherhood is harder these days: 63% say being a dad is more difficult today than it was 20 or 30 years ago. Less than half of mothers (48%) agree.

Time use data indicate that married fathers are spending much more time these days caring for their children than fathers did a generation ago. However, the public is not convinced that all fathers have taken on a more prominent role in the children's lives. When asked

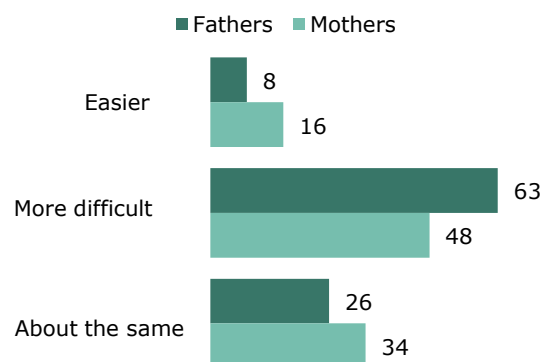
whether fathers today generally play a greater role or a lesser role in raising their children compared with fathers 20 or 30 years ago, 46% say fathers play a greater role now while an equal share (45%) say today's fathers play a lesser role. Only 3% say there has been no change.

Among men, fathers with children younger than 18 are more likely than other men to say dads have taken on a greater role in recent decades (52% vs. 39%).

When asked specifically about time spent with children, the public is not convinced that today's fathers are putting in more time with their kids. Just over one-third (36%) say that compared with fathers 20 or 30 years ago, today's dads are spending more time with their children (14% say they're spending a lot more time, 22% say somewhat more time). More than four-in-ten (43%) say today's dads are spending less time with their children (24% somewhat less, 19% a lot less). And 17% say fathers are spending about the same amount of time with their children now as they did a generation ago.

Compared with 20 or 30 Years Ago, Being a Father Today Is ...

(%)



Note: Based on parents with children younger than 18. Sample sizes are as follows. Fathers n=253, mothers n=273. "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 26-30 & June 2-5, 2011, N=2,006

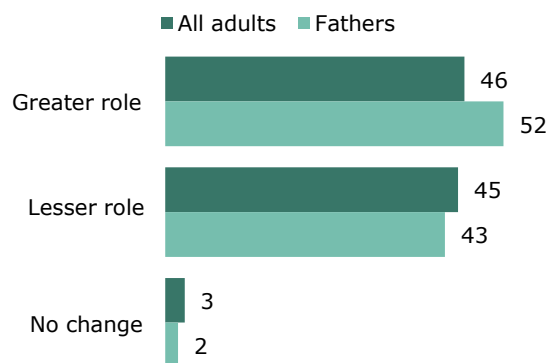
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Mothers are more likely than fathers to say that today's dads are more engaged with their children. Among mothers with children 17 or younger, 49% say fathers today spend more time with their children than fathers did 20 or 30 years ago. Only 36% of dads agree.

Overall, today's fathers get mixed grades for the job they are doing as parents. Only 24% of all adults say fathers are doing a better job than their own fathers did. One-third (34%) say they are doing a worse job. And 40% say they are doing their job about as well as dads did a generation ago. Fathers' assessments of the job they are doing raising their own children are much more positive. Nearly half (47%) say they are doing a better job than their own father did. Only 3% say they are doing a worse job, and 47% say they are about the same as their own dads.

The Changing Role of Fathers

% saying, compared with 20-30 years ago, today's fathers are playing a...



Note: Fathers are those with children younger than 18 (n=253). "Don't know/Refused" responses are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, May 26-29 & June 2-5, 2011, N=2,006

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APPENDIX I: METHODOLOGY

NATIONAL SURVEY OF FAMILY GROWTH ANALYSIS

Description of Survey and Analysis

Since its inception in 1973, the [National Survey of Family Growth](#) (NSFG) has been conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) in seven cycles. While originally focused on the fertility and family formation patterns of women of childbearing age, since 2002 the NSFG has expanded to interview men as well.

Cycle 7 of the NSFG includes interviews conducted from 2006 to 2010 with a national sample of men and women ages 15-44 living in households in the United States. In each year, a nationally representative sample of men and women in 33 areas (Primary Sampling Units, or PSUs) was interviewed. By the end of four years of interviewing, in June 2010, more than 22,600 interviews had been completed in 110 areas.

The first Cycle 7 public use data files were released in May 2010 and consist of 13,495 interviews conducted between 2006 and 2008 (7,356 female and 6,139 male). These interviews are the basis for all NSFG analyses included in this report.

All noted subgroup differences were tested at the 95% confidence interval. An absence of comment on any subgroup difference does not necessarily mean that the difference was non-significant. Statistics for cell sizes with unweighted counts smaller than 100 are excluded.

Pew Research Center Survey

Results for this survey are based on telephone interviews conducted with a nationally representative sample of 2,006 adults living in the continental United States. A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. A total of 1,344 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline phone and 662 interviews were completed with respondents contacted on their cell phone. The data are weighted to produce a final sample that is representative of the general population of adults in the continental United States.

- Interviews conducted May 26-29 and June 2-5, 2011
- 2,006 interviews
- Margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points for results based on the total sample at the 95% confidence level.

Interviews were conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. Respondents in the landline sample were selected by randomly asking for the

youngest adult male or female who is now at home. Interviews in the cell sample were conducted with the person who answered the phone, if that person was an adult 18 years of age or older.

APPENDIX II: OMNIBUS TOPLINE

PEW SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS
MAY-JUNE 2011 FATHERHOOD OMNIBUS SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
May 26-29 and June 2-5, 2011
TOTAL N= 2,006

NOTE: ALL NUMBERS ARE PERCENTAGES. THE PERCENTAGES GREATER THAN ZERO BUT LESS THAN 0.5 % ARE REPLACED BY AN ASTERISK (*). COLUMNS/ROWS MAY NOT TOTAL 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED, ALL TRENDS REFERENCE SURVEYS FROM SOCIAL & DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER FOR THE PEOPLE & THE PRESS.

ASK ALL:

Q.5 If someone said a child needs a [READ AND ROTATE] in the home to grow up happily, would you tend to agree or disagree?¹²

a. Father

May-June

2011

69	Tend to agree
27	Tend to disagree
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

b. Mother

May-June

2011

74	Tend to agree
22	Tend to disagree
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)

¹² In the first wave of interviewing (May 26-29) Q.5a and Q.5b were asked following Q.4. To ensure that there were no context effects due to question order, Q.5a and Q.5b were moved to the beginning of the survey in the second wave of interviewing (June 2-5). Results from the two waves of interviewing were nearly identical (and within the margin of error), and the combined results are shown in this topline.

A Tale of Two Fathers

ASK ALL:

Here are some questions related to Fathers' Day. First,

Q.1 Do you feel fathers today generally play a greater role or a lesser role in raising their children than twenty or thirty years ago?

May-June <u>2011</u>		Gallup/CNN/USA Today <u>May 1997</u>
46	Greater role	49
45	Lesser role	43
3	No change (VOL.)	5
6	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4

ASK ALL:

Q.2 Generally speaking, do you think it is easier to be a father today than it was 20 or 30 years ago, more difficult or about the same?

May-June <u>2011</u>		Feb <u>2007</u> ¹³	Gallup/CNN/USA Today <u>May 1997</u>
9	Easier	12	9
57	More difficult	60	68
32	About the same	26	22
2	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	2	1

ASK ALL:

Q.3 All in all, do you think that fathers today are doing a better job as parents than their own fathers did 20 or 30 years ago, a worse job or about the same?

May-June <u>2011</u>		Gallup/CNN/USA Today <u>May 1997</u>
24	Better	29
34	Worse	32
40	About the same	37
3	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	3

¹³ In February 2007, the question began: "In general, do you think..."

A Tale of Two Fathers

ASK ALL:

Q.4 Compared with fathers 20 or 30 years ago, do you think fathers today ... [READ]?

May-June

2011

14	Spend a lot more time with their children
22	Somewhat more time with their children
17	About the same amount of time with their children
24	Somewhat less time with their children, OR
19	A lot less time with their children
3	[VOL. DO NOT READ] Don't know/Refused

ASK FATHERS OF CHILDREN <18: [n=253]

Q.6 Now, just one more question about fatherhood. Do you think you are doing a better job as a parent than your own father did, a worse job or about the same?

May-June

2011

Gallup/CNN/USA Today

May 1997

47	Better	43
3	Worse	6
47	About the same	48
4	Don't know/Refused (VOL.)	4