



Indiana Parenting Institute, Inc.

# Youth and Families

**P**arents and family are the most important influence in every child's life, providing a foundation of love and support.

- Teens with involved and satisfying relationships with their parents are more likely to do well in school, be academically motivated and engaged, have better social skills, and have lower rates of risky behavior than their peers.
- Teens who believed that their parents cared about and supported them were less likely to be exposed to weapon violence or to commit violence with a weapon.
- Youth who have positive relationships with their parents, meaning they perceive their parents as caring, value their parents' opinions about serious decisions, and feel that they can talk to their parents about problems, are less likely to use alcohol or drugs, attempt suicide, have low self-esteem, or use unhealthy strategies to control their weight.
- Teens whose parents demonstrate positive behaviors on a number of fronts are more likely to engage in those positive behaviors themselves. For example, teens of parents who are highly involved in community activities are themselves more likely to be involved in community activities such as leadership roles, sports, or other extracurricular or community service activities.

- Parents who know about their children's activities, friends, and behaviors, and monitor them in age-appropriate ways, have teens with lower rates of risky physical and sexual behaviors, as well as lower rates of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use than their peers. Teens who perceive that their parents have this monitoring role are more likely to do well academically and socially.
- Research has shown that father involvement and support is also linked with more positive outcomes for children, even taking into account the support children receive from their mothers.

## Key Statistics on Youth and Families

- Children who grow up in households with their married mother and father do better on a wide range of economic, social, educational, and emotional measures than do children in other kinds of family arrangements.
- Children raised in married-parent homes are less likely to experience mental health, behavioral, or health problems, achieve higher levels of education, and are less likely to become teen parents.
- The percentage of children under 18 years of age living with two married parents remained stable at approximately 68% between 1996 and 2005. This followed a 26-year period of decline starting in 1970, when 85% of children lived with two married parents.

- Committed and responsible fathering during infancy and early childhood contributes to the development of emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills.
- In 2006, 38% of all births were to unmarried women, up from 37% in 2005. Between 1980 and 2006, the percentage of birth to unmarried women rose sharply for women in age groups. Among teenagers, the percentage rose from 62% to 92% for ages 15-17 and from 40% to 81% for ages 18-19. The percentage tripled for births to women in their 20s, from 19% to 58% for women ages 20-24 and from 9% to 31% for women ages 25-29. The percentage of births to unmarried women in their 30s more than doubled from 8% to 18%. The percentage of children under age 18 living with two married parents fell from 77% in 1980 to 68% in 2007. In 2007, 23% of children lived with only their mothers, 3% lived with only their fathers, 3% lived with two unmarried parents and 4% lived with neither of their parents.
- An analysis of 67 studies indicated that, compared with children who have experienced a divorce, children who live with their married parents have significantly better academic achievement, psychological and emotional adjustment, self-concept, and social relations, and lower levels of misconduct such as delinquency or aggression.
- Poverty is a well-known risk factor for negative outcomes in youth. In 2004, 17% of children under the age of 18 lived in families with an income below the poverty threshold, and 7% of children lived in severe poverty, with family income less than 50% of the poverty threshold.
- Children living in households headed by unmarried women in 2004 were more likely to be poor 42% compared with 9% of children living with two married parents. There are large disparities in poverty rates by children's race and ethnicity.
- More than 80% of teens aged 14 to 17 years think highly of their mothers, and a similar percentage think highly of their fathers.
- The psychological consequences of child abuse during early childhood can be long-lasting and can

affect the development, mental health, and behavior of adolescents.<sup>[22]</sup>

- In 2004, the rate of child abuse and neglect was 9.3 per 1,000 12 to 15 year olds, and 6.1 per 1,000 16 to 17 year olds. Rates of child maltreatment per 1,000 are similar for African-American (19.9), Pacific Islander (17.6), and American Indian/Alaska Native (15.5) children. Rates per 1,000 are lower for Asian (2.9), Hispanic (10.4), and non-Hispanic white (10.7) children.
- Adolescents living with a mother who either has a serious mental illness, abuses alcohol, or uses illicit drugs are themselves more likely to use alcohol and illicit
- drugs. Teens who have fathers with substance-abuse problems are also more likely to use alcohol and drugs or to have mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, or conduct disorder.
- More than 500,000 children and adolescents live in foster care. In 2005, nearly half (47%) of all children in foster care were adolescents aged 11 to 18 years, and an additional 2% were at least 19 years of age. Youth who age out of the foster-care system often have multiple challenges: 38% have mental health challenges, 50% have used an illicit drug, and 25% are already involved with the judicial system.<sup>[29]</sup> In addition, only 54% of youth have graduated from high school up to four years following discharge from foster care. In 2005, 18% of children who exited foster care were adopted, the vast majority of them (81%) aged 10 years and under.

Source: [http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/Facts.aspx#Fact\\_12](http://www.findyouthinfo.gov/Facts.aspx#Fact_12)