

Effects of Divorce on Children's Education

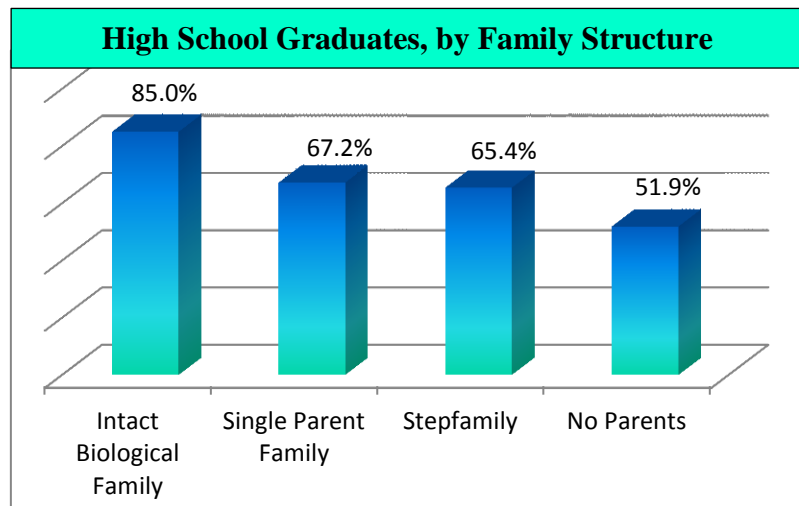
Issue: Family background impacts children's educational success.¹ Specifically, divorce can significantly jeopardize children's educational achievement and attainment.

Achievement

- Divorce and separation correlate positively with diminished school achievement and performance.²
- Elementary school children who experience parental divorce immediately begin performing worse academically than their peers from intact families.³ This gap persists through elementary school.⁴
- Children of divorced parents are more likely to be held back a grade.⁵
- High school students in intact families with married parents have GPAs 11 percent higher than those from divorced families.⁶
- Children from divorced homes performed worse in reading, spelling, and math, and repeated a grade more frequently than did children in intact two-parent families.⁷

Educational Attainment

- Children whose parents divorce get about seven tenths of a year less education than children from intact families.⁸
- Children who experienced their parents' divorce or separation are less likely to complete high school.⁹
- 85 percent of adolescents in intact biological families graduate from high school, compared to 67.2 percent in single-parent families, 65.4 percent in stepfamilies, and 51.9 percent who live with no parents.¹⁰
- Divorce and separation reduce children's likelihood of attending college.¹¹



Children's Engagement

- Children whose parents divorced skipped nearly 60 percent more class periods than children from intact families. Girls appeared to be more affected than boys.¹²
- Adolescents who live in an intact married family are least likely to be expelled or suspended from school.¹³

Conclusion: The intact, married family delivers fundamental education benefits to children. MARRI research available online¹⁴ shows how divorce can negatively impact children's achievement and attainment in school.

¹ Hsiang-Hui, Daphne Kuo, and Robert M. Hauser, "Trends in Family Effects on the Education of Black and White Brothers," *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 68 (1995), pp. 136-160.

² Milling Kinard and Helen Reinherz, "Effects of Marital Disruption on Children's School Aptitude and Achievement," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 48 (1986): 289-290.

Paul R. Amato, "Children of Divorce in the 1990s: An Update of the Amato and Keith (1991) Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Family Psychology* 15 (2001): 355-370.

Paul Amato, "The Impact of Family Formation Change On the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation," *The Future of Children* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 75-96,

http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/15_02_05.pdf. Accessed 4 August 2014.

³ "Married two-parent families," "married-couple families," and similar terms within this document all refer to families in which there is a married mother and father present. Note, according to the US Census Bureau, "Family households and married-couple families do not include same-sex married couples even if the marriage was performed in a state issuing marriage certificates for same-sex couples."

⁴ Daniel Potter, "Psychosocial Well-Being and the Relationship between Divorce and Children's Academic Achievement," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 72, no.4 (2010): 941.

⁵ William H. Jeynes, "The Effects of Several of the Most Common Family Structures on the Academic Achievement of Eighth Graders," *Marriage and Family Review* 30 (2000): 88.

⁶ Barry D. Ham, "The Effects of Divorce on the Academic Achievement of High School Seniors," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 38, no. 3 (2003): 176.

⁷ John Guidubaldi, Joseph D. Perry, and Bonnie K. Nastasi, "Growing Up in a Divorced Family: Initial and Long-Term perspectives on Children's Adjustment," *Applied Social Psychology Annual* 7 (1987): 202-237.

Suet-Ling Pong and Gillian Hampden-Thompson, "Family Policies and Children's School Achievement in Single- Versus Two-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 65 (August 2003), pp. 681-699.

⁸ M. D. R. Evans, Jonathan Kelley, and Richard A. Wanner, "Educational Attainment of the Children of Divorce: Australia, 1940-1990," *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 3 (2001): 285.

Note: This study controlled for parental education, parental occupation, family size, etc.

Marcia J. Carlson and Mary E. Corcoran, "Family Structure and Children's Behavioral and Cognitive Outcomes," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (August 2001), pp. 779-792.

⁹ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15, no. 2 (1994): 179.

Gary Painter and David I. Levine, "Family Structure and Youths' Outcomes," *The Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (January 2000), pp. 524- 549. Accessed 4 August 2014.

¹⁰ Gary D. Sandefur, Sara McLanahan, and Roger A. Wojtkiewicz, "The Effects of Parental Marital Status during Adolescence on High School Graduation," *Social Forces* 71, no. 1 (1992): 112.

¹¹ Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. and Julien O. Teitler, "Reconsidering the Effects of Marital Disruption: What Happens to Children of Divorce in Early Adulthood?" *Journal of Family Issues* 15, no. 2 (1994): 179.

Donna K. Ginther and Robert A. Pollak, "Family Structure and Children's Educational Outcomes: Blended Families, Stylized Facts, and Descriptive Regressions," *Demography*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (November 2004), pp. 671-696.

¹² Barry D. Ham, "The Effects of Divorce on the Academic Achievement of High School Seniors," *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage* 38, no. 3 (2003): 180.

¹³ Patrick F. Fagan and Scott Talkington, "Family Structure and Expulsion or Suspension from School," *Mapping America: Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good* No. 20 available at <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF08110.pdf>

¹⁴ www.marri.us For example, "Marriage, Family Structure, and Children's Educational Attainment"