Statistics on Fatherless Children in America
By Wayne Parker, About.com Guide

There is no question that children who grow up in fatherless homes have a much greater risk of major challenges in life than those who grow up with a father at home. These statistics are alarming and should give any father pause.

Incarceration Rates. "Young men who grow up in homes without fathers are twice as likely to end up in jail as those who come from traditional two-parent families...those boys whose fathers were absent from the household had double the odds of being incarcerated -- even when other factors such as race, income, parent education and urban residence were held constant." (Cynthia Harper of the University of Pennsylvania and Sara S. McLanahan of Princeton University cited in "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration." Journal of Research on Adolescence 14 (September 2004): 369-397.)

Suicide. 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (Source: What Can the Federal Government Do To Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities? - see link below)

Behavioral Disorders. 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes (Source: What Can the Federal Government Do To Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities? - see link below)

High School Dropouts. 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes (Source: What Can the Federal Government Do To Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities? - see link below)


Juvenile Detention Rates. 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes (Source: What Can the Federal Government Do To Decrease Crime and Revitalize Communities? - see link below)

Confused Identities. Boys who grow up in father-absent homes are more likely that those in father-present homes to have trouble establishing appropriate sex roles and gender identity. (P.L. Adams, J.R. Milner, and N.A. Schrepf, Fatherless Children, New York, Wiley Press, 1984).


Delinquency. Only 13 percent of juvenile delinquents come from families in which the biological mother and father are married to each other. By contract, 33 percent have parents who are either divorced or separated and 44 percent have parents who were never married. (Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Social Services, April 1994).

Criminal Activity. The likelihood that a young male will engage in criminal activity doubles if he is raised without a father and triples if he lives in a neighborhood with a high concentration of single-parent families. Source: A. Anne Hill, June O'Neill, Underclass Behaviors in the United States, CUNY, Baruch College. 1993