

Sustaining Fatherhood Involvement Panel:
Fathers as Assets to their Children, Families and Communities

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**Building the Healthy Start Community
Regional Meeting**

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11 East Adams, Suite 1500
Chicago, Illinois 6060

Social Construction: Parenting Roles

Mothering Role

- Society is more tolerate of a mother who meets her emotional/nurturing obligations to her child and not her financial obligations, than it is of a mother who meets her financial obligations and not her emotional/nurturing obligation.

Social Construction: Parenting Roles

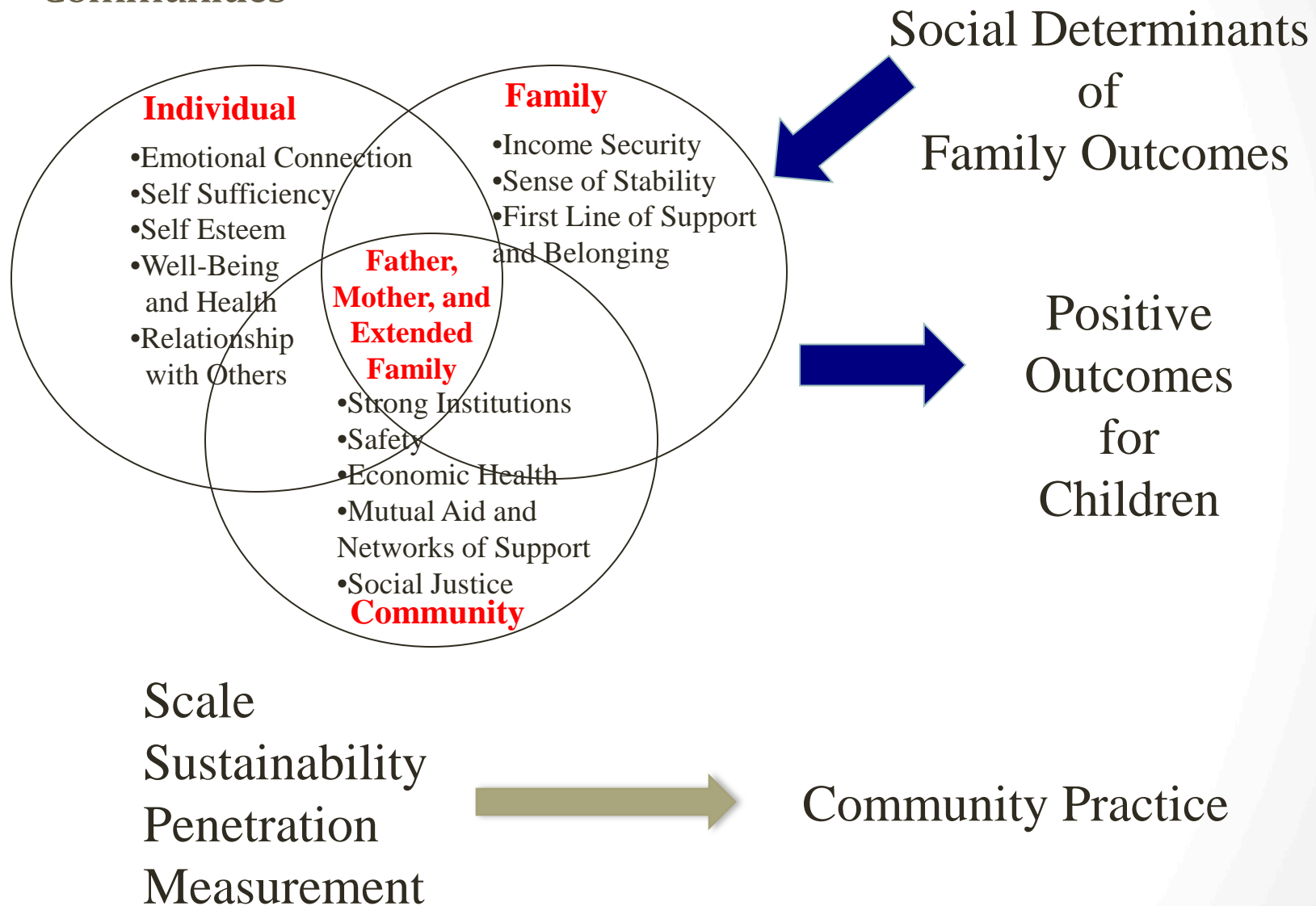
Fathering Role

- Society is more tolerate of a father who meets his financial obligations to his child and not his emotional/nurturing obligations, than it is of a father who meets his emotional/nurturing obligations and not his financial obligation.

Challenges to Realizing Fathers as Assets to their Children, Families and Communities

- The need to establish that fathers matter while heightening the expectations that we have of fathers
- Legitimizing emotional and relational needs and nurturing capacity of males as fathers
- Expanding the articulation of men's roles beyond that of provider when conceiving of their connect to their children
- Working through co-parenting, father and mother attitudes and relationship issues
- Reorienting our service delivery frame to include fathers in the conceptualization of “family” and advance the practice of co-parenting
- Navigating the zero-sum gender game of resource distribution questions in efforts to service fathers
- The need to embrace the importance of healthy relations and healthy relationship building amongst parents whether they are married, unmarried or divorced

Family Supportive Ecological Approach to Creating Child Well-Being and Supporting Parents as Assets to their Children, Families and Communities





WHAT DO WE KNOW
ABOUT FATHERS
AND FAMILIES?

The Questions are Based on National Studies

- National Survey of Adolescent Males
The Urban Institute
- The Fragile Families and Child Well Being Study
Princeton University and Columbia University
- Young Unwed Fathers, Report from the Field
 - Public/Private Ventures
- Doherty, W. J., Kouneski, E. F., Erickson, M. F. (1996) *Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Commissioned by the US Department of Health and Human Services

What is the factor that has the most impact on whether or not a young mother seeks early prenatal care?



- A. Easy access to a clinic
- B. Support of her male partner
- C. Education level
- D. Transportation



Answer B: Support of her male partner.

The others are significant, but partner support plays the most significant role.

What is the percentage of young unmarried fathers who are in a romantic relationship with the mother at the birth of the child?



A. 18%

B. 38%

C. 44%

D. 82%

Answer D: 82%

- 18% are not in a romantic relationship
 - 38% are in romantic relationships but living apart
 - 44% are living together
-
- Over 70% of mothers say their chances of marrying the baby's father are 50-50 or greater.
 - Among couples not romantically involved about one half of the mothers say they are friends with the father.
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- Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2000 - Number 1

What percentage of young, unmarried fathers visited the mother and baby in the hospital at birth?



A. 23%

B. 91%

C. 75%

D. 37%

Answer C: 75%

- 91% of fathers of couples living together visited the hospital at birth
- 37% of fathers in couples not romantically involved with each other visited in the hospital at birth
 - These figures are based on reports by the mother.
- Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2000 - Number 1

What do the majority of young fathers believe to be the most important thing they can provide their child?

- A. Financial Support
- B. Strong Discipline
- C. Care and Support
- D. Teaching



Answer C: Care and Support

- 2nd - Teach the child about life
- 3rd - Financial Support
- Least - Strong Discipline
- Source: Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study
Baseline Report August 2001

What percentage of unmarried fathers age 16 - 25 saw their child/children at least twice a week during the first two years of the child's life?



A. 10%

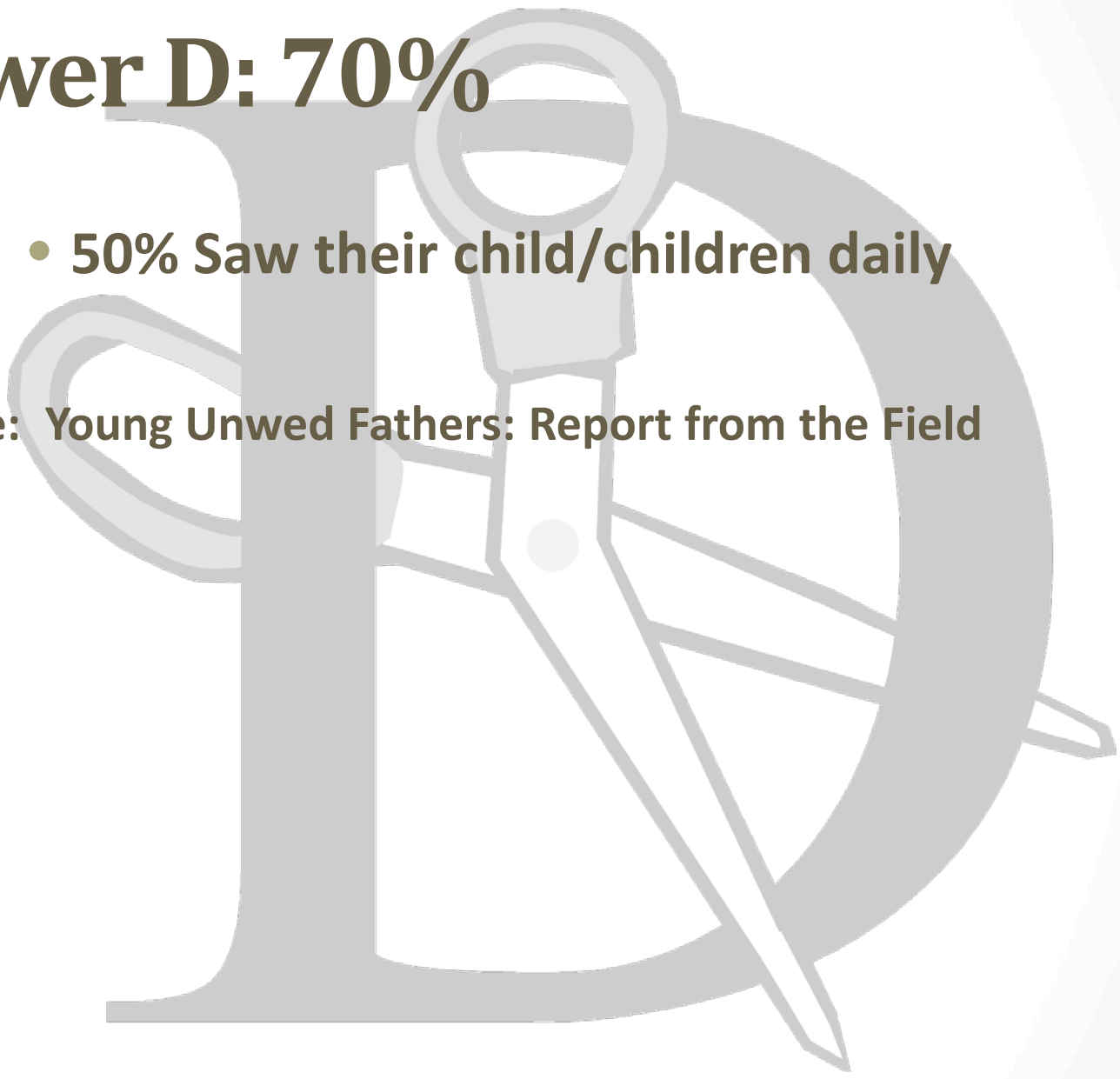
B. 20%

C. 50%

D. 70%

Answer D: 70%

- 50% Saw their child/children daily
- Source: Young Unwed Fathers: Report from the Field



What percentage of fathers age 16 - 25 contribute financially or in kind (groceries, diapers, toys, etc.) to their child/children?

A. 19%

B. 49%

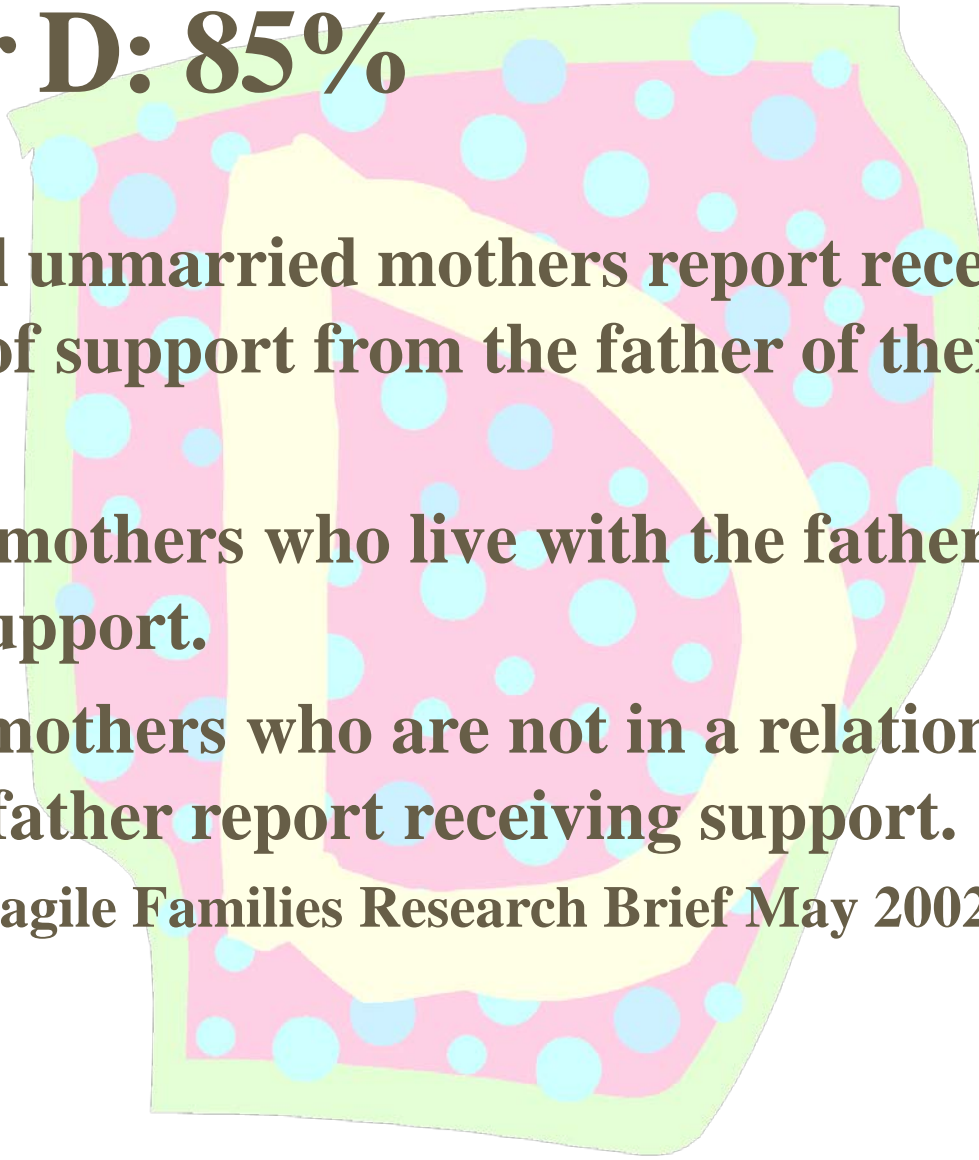
C. 63%

D. 85%



Answer D: 85%

- **85% of all unmarried mothers report receiving some kind of support from the father of their child.**
- **100% of mothers who live with the father receive support.**
- **50% of mothers who are not in a relationship with the father report receiving support.**
- **Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2002 - Number 6**



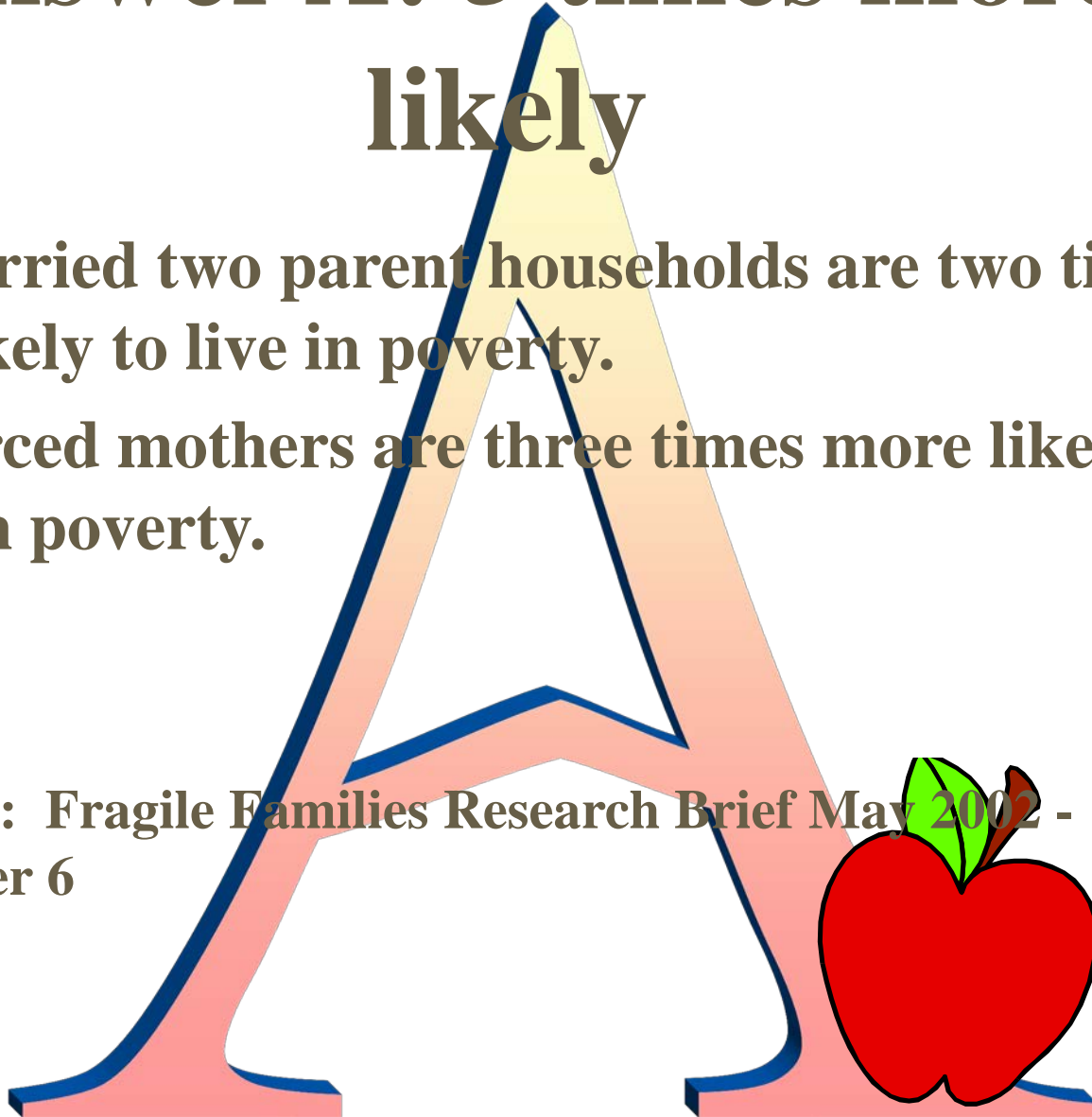
Children living with unmarried mothers are how much more likely to live in poverty than children in two parent married households?



- A. 5 times more likely
- B. 4 times more likely
- C. 3 times more likely
- D. 2 times more likely

Answer A: 5 times more likely

- Unmarried two parent households are two times more likely to live in poverty.
- Divorced mothers are three times more likely to live in poverty.
- Source: Fragile Families Research Brief May 2002 - Number 6



The percentage of 15 - 19 year old males who do **NOT** at all believe that “getting a girl pregnant will make you feel like a real man” is

A. 5%

B. 60%

C. 17%

D. 18%



Answer B: 60% do NOT believe getting a girl pregnant will make you feel like a real man

- **5% - Believe it very strongly**
- **17% - Believe it somewhat**
- **18% - Believe it a little**
- **Source: National Survey of Adolescent Males**

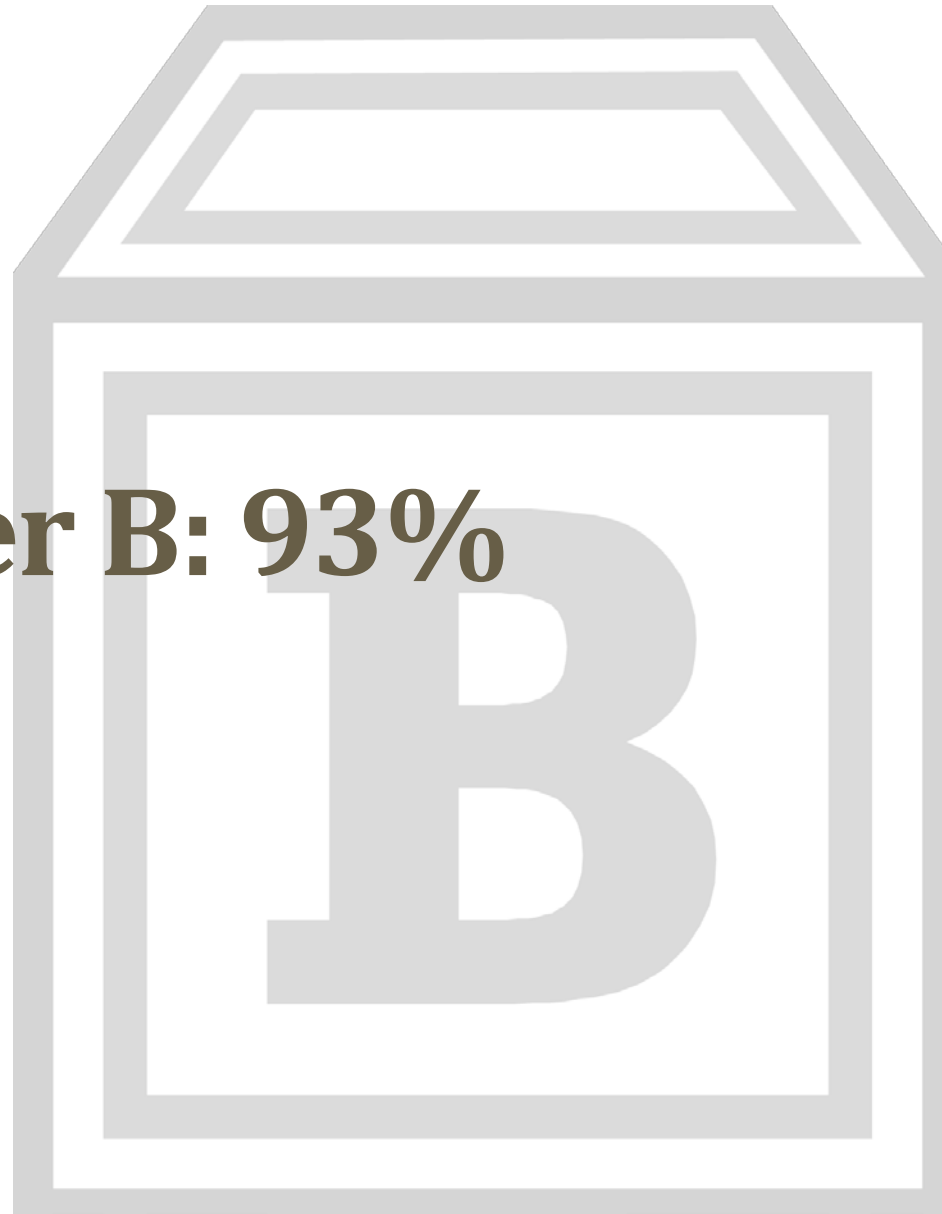


What percentage of unmarried mothers indicated that they wanted the father to help them raise their children?



- A. 5%
- B. 93%
- C. 30%
- D. 50%

Answer B: 93%



What group of unmarried fathers tends to live closest to their children and spends the most time with their children in comparison to other groups of unmarried fathers?

- A. Unmarried African-American Fathers
- B. Unmarried White Fathers
- C. Unmarried Latino Fathers
- D. None of the Above

Answer A: Unmarried African-American Fathers

DID ANY OF THESE
ANSWERS
SURPRISE YOU?

Myths and Stereotypes Distort Our Policies and Practice

This tendency is most pronounced when considering low-income fathers with various barriers.

CHANGING PRACTICE!

Practice Values In Support of Father Engagement

- Acknowledge the father is an important part of the family system and his contributions (or omissions) have a lasting impact on the overall welfare of the mother and child.
- Involve fathers in the lives of their children from the earliest moment possible. Ideally, every man will have a strong sense of his personal responsibility in the planning, conception, development and life of his child(ren).
- Promote a shift in public opinion about a father's positive involvement during his partner's pregnancy, to promote healthy concepts of manliness and fatherhood.
- Define the nature of fatherhood and what it is to be a loving father.
- View the prenatal period, birth and 0-3 years as a key moment for intervention- a time to identify the mother and father's risk factors and to intervene accordingly.

Practice Values In Support of Father Engagement (continued)

- Examine the ways in which programs and service providers can partner to achieve a shared goal of positive father involvement and overall family health and safety.
- Work with local healthcare services and providers to advocate for father involvement during pregnancy and beyond.
- Develop educational materials and trainings for nurses, doctors, midwives and other health care professionals about the importance of including fathers and how to do it and provide them with materials and training.
- Rigorously evaluate program standards and organizational mission statements to ensure they embrace an ecological view of family that is inclusive of fathers.

CHANGING POLICY!

What States Can Do To Promote Father Engagement Practice and Advance Policies that Support Fathers as Assets to their Children, Families and Communities

- It is important for governmental institutions to distinguish fathers who can play child support but won't from fathers who would pay but cannot
- Work on ensuring child support orders are set full consistent with the father's ability to pay so that fathers do not accumulate arrearage that undermine their ability to function financially and be self-sufficient
- Develop forgiveness programs that reduce arrearages and establish flexible policies regarding charging interest and make child support enforcement practices less punitive and counter-intuitive to the circumstance of the father
- Use voluntary paternity establishment at birth to connect fathers with parenting and employment services
- Get rid of the stereotypes that low-income fathers don't care about their children, don't care about the mothers of their children and that mothers don't want fathers involved

What States Can Do To Promote Father Engagement Practice and Advance Policies that Support Fathers as Assets to their Children, Families and Communities (continued)

- Determine how the state institutions (welfare and child support agencies, the courts and education systems) create barriers to father engagement, consider training initiatives that explore family support and family strengthening practices.
- Encourage the recognition by state agencies and the courts that low-income fathers are often as socio-economically vulnerable as the mother of their, but don't typical have access to supportive services. Thus, agencies need to incorporate into their delivery system supports for fathers.
- States can use federal TANF dollars to help support programs that assist fathers in improving their employability and self-sufficiency so they can maintain involvement with their children. This can be achieved without jeopardizing resources directed to mothers and children.

*VIEWING FATHERS FROM THE
EYES OF A CHILD WILL HELP US
REIMAGE THE ROLES OF
FATHERS!*

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?