Issues in Measuring Family Structure and Child Outcomes for the World Family Map

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About Child Trends

Child Trends is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research center that improves the lives and prospects of children and youth by conducting high-quality research and sharing the resulting knowledge with practitioners and policymakers.

We . . .

1. take a whole child approach
2. study children/youth of all ages and social groups
3. seek ways to help children flourish
4. value objectivity and rigor
5. pursue knowledge development and knowledge transfer
6. have expertise in diverse methodologies and broad research topics (e.g., youth development, early childhood, parenting, reproductive health and family formation)

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World Family Map

Created to monitor family well-being and investigate how family characteristics affect children’s healthy development.
World Family Map

- Annual publication
- Regionally representative
- Indicators
  - Family structure
  - Family economics
  - Family process
  - Family culture
- Essay on different well-being topic annually
Indicators

Family Structure
- Living arrangements
- Marriage and cohabitation
- Fertility rate
- Nonmarital childbearing

Family Socioeconomics
- Poverty-absolute and relative
- Undernourishment
- Parental education
- Parental employment
- Public spending

Family Process
- Family satisfaction
- Housework disagreement
- Family meals
- Parent-child communication

Family Culture
- Voluntary single motherhood
- Child needs mother and a father
- Working mothers
- Family trust
WORLD FAMILY MAP 2014

MAPPING FAMILY CHANGE AND CHILD WELL-BEING OUTCOMES

ESSAY
FAMILY INSTABILITY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

An International Report from

Sponsors:

Focus Global

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DIFI

Netherlands Youth Institute

Universidad de Los Andes (Chile)

Universidad de la Sabana (Colombia)

Social Trends Institute

New York • Barcelona

Seoul National University

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (Spain)
2014 World Family Map

Highest percentage of children living with 1 or no parents were found in Sub-Saharan Africa; Central and S. America 2nd highest

• In South Africa, high percentage reflects high incidence of AIDS orphans, adult mortality, and labor migration

• In Central and South America: consensual unions, increases in divorce, father absenteeism, mothers choosing to be single
2014 Essay: Family Instability and Early Childhood Health in Low Income Countries

Family Instability

- Diarrhea
- Stunting
- Child mortality
Two, One, or No Parents? Children’s Living Arrangements and Educational Outcomes Around the World

• Children living with two parents experience better educational outcomes (literacy, grade repetition) in middle- and high-income countries.

• In low-income countries, experiences with school enrollment and being on-grade for age are more diverse. Living with one parent is not always negative, and can be positive.

• In all regions, children living without either parent have the worst educational outcomes.
Data Sources

• Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)*
• Integrated Public-Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)
• International Social Survey Program (ISSP)
• LIS (formerly the Luxembourg Income Study)
• Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)*
• World Values Survey (WVS)
• Country-level sources

• Secondary sources:
  Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
  UNICEF
  Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

* Used for essay and indicator sections
Data sources for family structure

- IPUMS
- DHS
- Country-specific sources, including personal correspondence
- OECD report Doing Better for Families

Alternative sources we opted not to use:
- LIS (excluded children without parents)
- PISA (15-year olds only)
Issues with currently available data sources

• **Exclusion of children living without a parent from data**
  • Most common in Europe
  • Ex: Census denominator is children in families in Australia and Germany
  • Not able to report on no parent households in: Australia, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, UK
  • Under-reporting of children in institutions/group settings/homeless

• **Definitions vary by dataset:**
  • **Child** varies by:
    • Age
    • Being a parent
    • Marital status
  • **Parent** status varies by:
    • Biological relation (most data sets omit)
    • Formality of relationship (not biological or married to biological parent)
    • Foster parent
Issues with currently available data sources

• Lack of information about non-residential parents

• Years of data for each country inconsistent between sources

• Proxies for Parent: Used head of household as proxy for parent in parental employment and parental education indicators in order to include kids living with neither parent
Suggestions to Improve DHS

• Parental survival status
  • Collect in every country not just high HIV countries
  • When survival status is missing, include info on whether parent is present in household
    • Expand the "not in household" response to include where parent is
  • Follow up with contact questions: How long has it been since...

• Determining parental unions
  • Collect detailed union status for all adult respondents in every country
  • Alternatively, clarify cohabiting unions in relationship to household head
  • Ask union status for children living with neither parent
MICS

Strengths:
• Detailed family structure
  • including “natural mother” and “natural father”
  • Children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS module with extended household listing
• Child labor module
• Maternal and newborn health module
• Limited family process and culture variables
  • Interactions with child < 5 years old
  • Optional modules on discipline and attitudes toward domestic violence

Limitations:
• Marital status not available for all adults (women and household head only)
• Education variables are basic (preschool attendance, educational attainment, educational attendance, women’s literacy)
Ideal data set

- Longitudinal, or cohort, from birth to adult
- Frequent iterations and multiple cohorts
- Consistent dates of data collection
- Multiple respondents: child, parent, and head of household
- Outcomes measured across domains of child well-being: physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development
- Consistent definitions of key terms (child, parent, etc.)
- Complete household roster that links all individuals
- Comprehensive background information including: parental health, employment, education, rich indicators of family structure, economics, process and culture at baseline and throughout study
Contact Information

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