

FRAGILE FAMILIES

The Princeton University Study: Fragile and the Wellbeing of Children

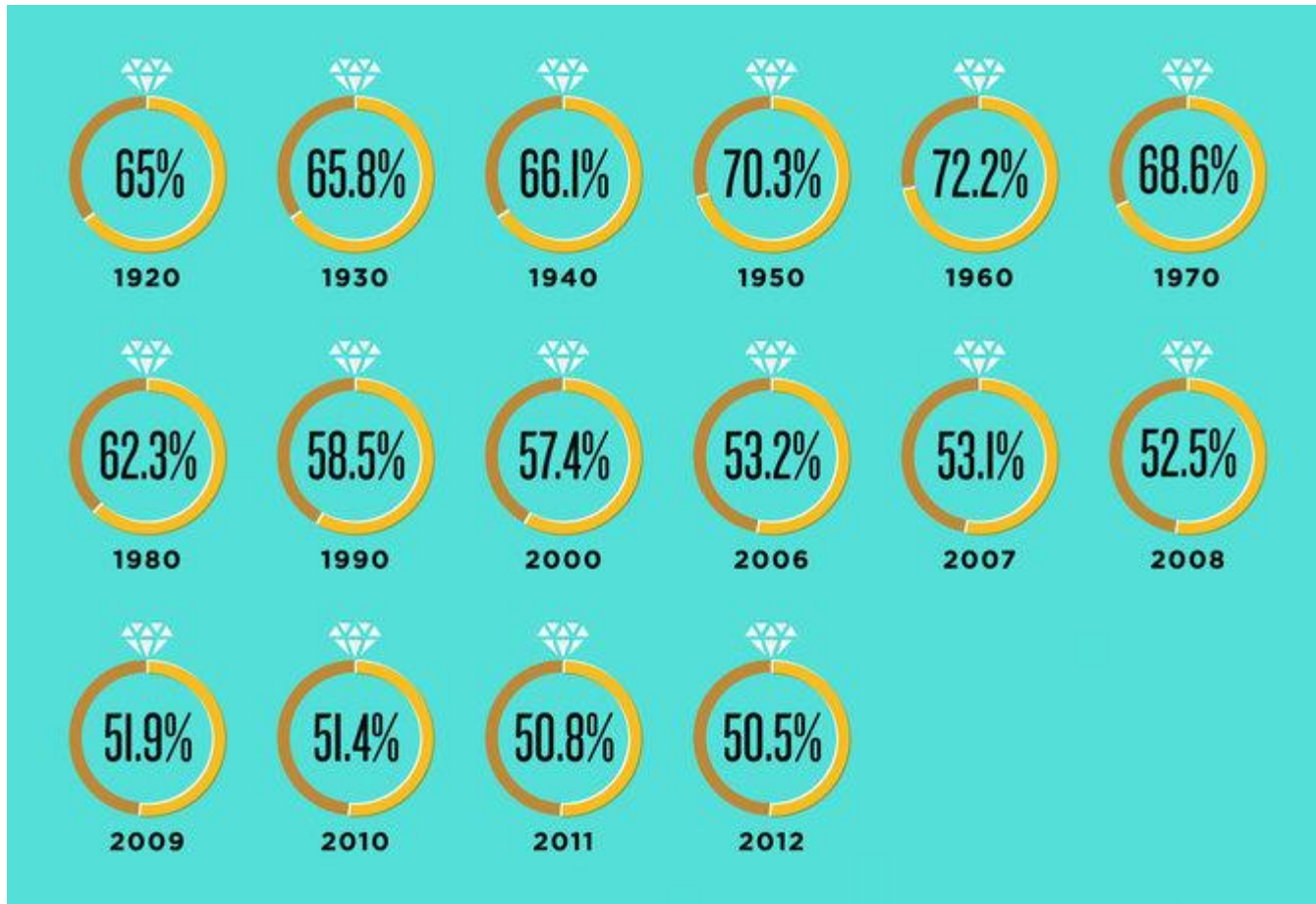
Princeton University studied 5,000 children born between 1998-2000. Three-quarters were born to unmarried parents. The unmarried parents and their children, are the Fragile Families; this term underscores their greater risk of breaking up and living in poverty than more traditional families. Data collection began in 2007 and ended in 2010. The five year findings showed a decrease in the number of fathers who provided financial support and an increase in the number of fathers who were not in a relationship with the mother and child.

As children are our most precious resource we want to ensure a solid foundation for our children.

There is a large Fragile Family- Never Married population in Michigan, and although many courts and friends of the court attempt to use some form of ADR as a way to ensure parents are emotionally and financially engaged with their child. Early stage mediation offers an approach to help ensure the emotional and financial well-being of children of these families.

www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/about.asp

A Decline in Marriage: The New York Times February 6, 2015



Fragile Families in Michigan



ANNUAL LIVE BIRTHS IN MICHIGAN

2009	117,309
2010	114,717
2011	114,159
2012	112,708
2013	113,732

<http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/pha/osr/Natalivity/BirthsTrends.asp> Michigan Department of Community Health

MI Births With No Paternity

2008	18,944	15.2%
2009	19,000	15.7%
2010	18,565	15.8%
2011	18,160	15.7%
2012	16,835	15.4%

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1721-births-with-no-paternity-established>
KIDS COUNT data center

Michigan's Average Day Statistics

In 2013, on an average day in Michigan there occurred:

312
Live Births

152
Marriages

87
Divorces

26
Low Birth
Weight Births

2
Infant
Deaths

253
Deaths

66
Heart
Disease Deaths

24
Diabetes-related
Deaths

6
Sets of Twins Births

12
Stroke
Deaths

4
Kidney
Disease Deaths

9
Alzheimer's
Disease Deaths

11
Accidental
Deaths

56
Cancer
Deaths

4
Suicide
Deaths

MI Births to Unwed Mothers

Year	Number	Percentage of live births to Unwed Mothers
2008	48,662	40%
2009	48,405	41%
2010	47,919	42%
2011	47,919	42%
2012	47,795	42%
Paternity will be established in some of these cases		

<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/1649-births-to-unwed-mothers>

KIDS COUNT data center

Highlights

- DMC Hutzel Hospital in Detroit averages 5,000 born out of wedlock births a year
- Read mothers' stories about their feelings about their out of wedlock births at [Blogs.babycenter.com](https://blogs.babycenter.com)
- Many websites report in 2016 most births will be out of wedlock

COURT INVOLVEMENT

Unwed mothers usually need medical and financial assistance:



- Childcare
- Food Stamps
- Medicaid

A request for public assistance triggers the initiation of a paternity case.

Statewide Circuit Court Summary 2013 SCAO Court Caseload Report

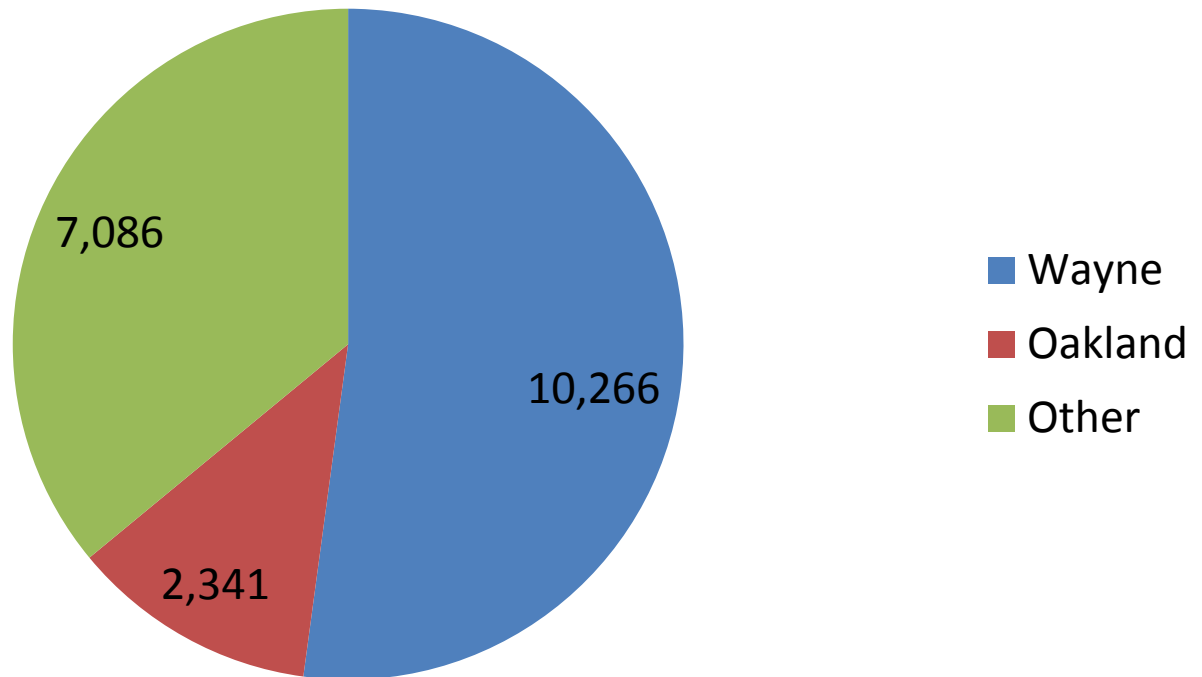
	Divorce Children	Divorce No Children	Paternity	UIFSA
Beginning Pending	11,423	6,953	8,605	362
New Filings	20,060	20,359	19,693	1,080
Reopened	774	552	158	10
Total Caseload	32,257	27,864	28,456	1,452
Bench Verdict	360	169	18	1
Uncontested/Default/Settled	16,812	17,256	11,019	514
Transferred	33	8	23	18
Dismissed by Party	1,511	1,244	2,206	378
Dismissed by Court	3,217	2,715	5,461	141
Inactive Status	132	93	10	7
Case Type Change	32	28	20	0
Total Dispositions	22,097	21,513	18,757	1,059
Ending Pending	10,160	6,351	9,699	393

2013 New Paternity Filings

19,693 Total New Case Filings in 2013

83 Counties

New Case Filings



Fragile Families Compared to Traditional Families

- more likely to have started parenting in their teens,
- less likely to have lived with both biological parents growing up,
- more likely to have had children with other partners,
- more likely to be poor,
- more likely to suffer from depression,
- more likely to report substance abuse,
- more likely to have spent time in jail, and
- disproportionately African American and Hispanic.

<http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/documents/FragileFamiliesandChildWellbeingStudyFactSheet.pdf>

A CLOSER LOOK AT FRAGILE FATHERS

Health and Human Services Grants 2000-2003

The participation of the young fathers, an "ethnographic" or multiple interview study of 9 selected African-American and Latino father participants from Boston and Indianapolis was conducted. Some of the key findings are as follows:

- All respondents were raised at or near poverty in crime and drug-filled neighborhoods.
- Most were raised with single parents although there was some father and step-father presence for some of the time.
- The fathers have one or two young children; multiple children are usually from different parents.
- Education was at a low level; participants were unemployed or held low-level unstable jobs.
- Most had a juvenile crime record.
- Visitation or co-habitation with some of the children is the rule.
- Many had child support orders from \$40 to 90 per week.
- Relations with mothers were poor, especially if there was a new girl friend or the mother had a live-in boy friend. Stress began after pregnancy and was somewhat grounded in inability to provide financially for the child.
- Fathers felt that mothers frequently blocked visitation of children.
- Fathers felt that they were unable to give consistent financial support.
- Men were interested in being good fathers.
- The men felt that the program helped them to focus on the needs of fatherhood-patience, responsibility-and stated that the child needs two biological parents.
- There was concern that the children needed to be protected against gangs and drugs.
- Generally, fathers did not envision marrying the mother of their first child, though some men indicated optimism about their relationship with the mother of their second child. Consequently, the men explained that they had to be careful in navigating actual and potential conflicts with the custodial parents of their first child.
- The young men felt that the program improved their focus and understanding of fatherhood.
- The men developed an understanding and appreciation of the value of child support as a source of predictable, stable support for their children, although there was concern over whether the child would actually get the money or have the money spent on them.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/partners-for-fragile-families-demonstration-projects-analysis>

Early Stage Mediation for MI Fragile Families

The Unique culture of never married/Fragile Families & Why FOCs/Courts can't address this need alone

FRAGILE FATHERS' EARNINGS

Health and Human Services Grants 2000-2003

- Average quarterly earnings improved from \$1,501 at enrollment to \$2,470 two years after enrollment.
- For those who paid child support the average child support payment was \$1,569 for the first year following enrollment and \$2,296 for the second year after enrollment.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/partners-for-fragile-families-demonstration-projects-analysis>

Why FOCs Can't be the Sole Source of Early Stage Mediation for Fragile Families

- Limited Court Staffing Resources
- Lack of funding
- Limited Time: Court are under a 238 deadline to establish paternity and child support orders from date of filing so not enough time for the early stage facilitative model with multiple sessions
- Court forms and paternity establishment process use adversarial terms and legal constructs that are not pro se friendly and do not encourage parties to engage and voluntarily participation
- Parenting Time is not a federal paid incentive for the child support program

What Happens in the Room

Parent's Actions

- The Blame Game
- The starting point of conflict can be dating or pregnancy
- Previous absence indicates disinterest and forfeiture of parenting time
- No interest in keeping a relationship
- Mother views child as an extension of herself and father is viewed as an outsider
- Mother views rejection of the dating relationship as a forfeiture of parenting time
- Parenting time is a right to be earned (timely visits, expectation that father will act in a certain way, etc.)
- Father sees parenting time as right purchased with child support dollars
- Parenting time is interruption to established routines; parenting time needs to be set and kept
- Parenting time needs to be flexible with no set rules or parameters
- Parenting time should mean no support during that time

Parties are slow to agree. Anger, distrust, and discomfort are prevalent.

What Happens in the Room

Mediator's Tools

- Have to bring father up to date on the child's development (Can be very emotional)
- Have to build an environment where parents are willing to talk
- Have to build trust between the parties: they have to communicate what their lives are like how they will parent
- Use the BATNA: mediation vs legal process
- Take baby steps - temporary agreements or progressive agreements
- Normalize parenting time behaviors (how child acts when it's time for parenting time or to end the parenting time, how parents feels, etc)
- Educate parties on parenting time, child support, and custody
- Create a parenting time vision
- Allow venting

#CHILDRENMATTER

By using Early Stage Mediation, the goal is to effect better outcomes for children.

What is needed?

- Education
 - Children need emotional and financial support of both parents
 - Never married parents need to understand that mediation is a way to resolve disputes and works well when there are ongoing relationships
- Training
 - Provide mediation training on the never married culture
- Availability of Early Stage Mediation
 - Mediation has to be as readily available, inexpensive, and satisfying as filing a motion or complaint in the court system
- Funding
 - Clients have limited income so grants, low cost, and pro bono services are needed
- Branding and Marketing
 - Clients should seek the services prior to the Court initiating the paternity case.

Who Can Help?

Educate

- Academic Institutions
Universities and Community Colleges
- Fatherhood groups
- Early Development /Head Start
- Community Influencers
- Courts/FOCs
- Social Service (DHS and partnering programs)
- Mediators
- Hospitals

Train

- Approved MCR 3.216 Trainers
- CDRPs
- Community Colleges
- Fatherhood groups

#CHILDRENMATTER

The entire of the webinar is to effect better outcomes for children.

Who Can Help?

Availability of Mediation

- Private mediators
- CDRPs
- SCAO

Branding and Markets

- Private Mediators
- CDRPs
- Trainers
- Courts/FOCs

Next Action

It's Time for Us to Have the Conversation

- Look into your community and see how well the needs of the Fragile Families are being addressed
- Contact your CDRP, community leaders, court leaders and other stakeholders to determine if Early Stage Mediation may offer a better approach
- Develop and pilot a plan to offer services, educate, train or raise awareness



Questions and Answers

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