



Summary of Study Findings

FATHERING IN AMERICA

May, 2009

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Study Purpose

- This 2009 study represents a repeat of research conducted in 1999 which looked at attitudes about the role of fathers in America. The purpose of the current study is to measure the extent of change that has occurred, whether positive or negative, during the ten-year gap.

Research Method

- Both studies employed national samples, obtained through telephone interviews.
- Final samples totaled 906 and 1000 adults in the 1999 and 2009 surveys, respectively.
- Questions concern father's attitudes or behaviors.
- The current study was conducted May 2009; the previous study took place in January 1999.

Key Findings

An overwhelming majority of Americans agree that fathers play an important and irreplaceable role in the lives of children:

- 89% agree that it is important for children to live in a home with both their mother and father.
- 92% agree that fathers make a unique contribution to their children's lives.

Americans recognize that significant progress has been made on a number of fronts related to fathers and fathering:

- Most fathers know what's going on in their children's lives +6 percentage points
- Most fathers feel comfortable discussing spiritual issues with their children +10 percentage points
- Employers recognize the strain fathers face between the demands of family and the demands of work +13 percentage points
- Dads are eating one or more meals with their family each day + 19 percentage points

Americans have a high level of satisfaction with fathers and fathering:

- Almost eight out of ten give most fathers credit for doing a good job of providing for and protecting their families (77%) and for caring enough about their children's feelings (78%).
- 89% of fathers are satisfied with themselves as fathers.
- 94% of fathers are satisfied with their ability to talk to their children.
- 95% of fathers are satisfied with their relationship with their children.

Despite all the positive attitudes expressed by respondents, the state of Fathering in America is decidedly mixed:

- *7 out of 10* people surveyed agree that the physical absence of fathers from the home is the most significant family or social problem facing America.
- Less than two in three (64%) believe that most fathers have a good picture of what it takes to be a good father.
- Only half give most fathers credit for knowing what is going on in their children's lives.
- Nearly all respondents (97%) believe that fathers need to be more involved in their children's education.

Summary of Study Findings, 2009 National Fathering Survey,
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Attitudes About Fathering

<u>Agree or Disagree?</u>	<u>Strongly Agree or Agree</u>		
	<u>Jan 99</u> %	<u>May 09</u> %	<u>+/- Chg</u>
It is important for children to live in a home with both their mother and father.	91*	89	-2
Fathers make a unique contribution to their children's lives.	90*	92	+2
Most fathers know what is going on in their children's lives.	44	50	+6
Most fathers feel comfortable discussing spiritual matters with their children.	52	62	+10
Employers recognize the strain fathers face between the demands of family and the demands of work.	38	51	+13
Most fathers are doing a god job in providing for their families financially.	80	77	-3
Most fathers are doing a good job of providing a safe environment for their children to grow up in.	79	77	-2
Fathers do care enough about children's feelings.	76	78	+2
The most significant family or social problem facing America is the physical absence of the father from the home.	72	70	-2
Most men have a good picture of what it requires to be a good father.	63	64	+1
Fathers need to be more involved in their children's education.	96**	97	+1
Most people have unresolved problems with their fathers.	56	56	0
Fathers today spend less time with their children than their fathers did.	57	58	+1

* - from 1996 survey, ** - from 1992 survey

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Fathers and Family Meals

<u>How Many Meals Do Fathers Eat with Their Family Each Day?</u>	<u>Oct 99</u>	<u>May 09</u>	<u>+/- Chg</u>
	%	%	
Less than one	32	14	-18
At least one	53	60	+7
At least two	13	25	+12

Father Satisfaction

<u>How Satisfied Are You With.....</u>	<u>Satisfied</u>		
	<u>Oct 99</u>	<u>May 09</u>	<u>+/- Chg</u>
	%	%	
Yourself as a father	92	89	-3
Your ability to talk with your children	90	94	+4
Your relationship with your children	93	95	+2

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About the National Center for Fathering

The National Center for Fathering is a non-profit research and education organization whose vision is to see every child with an involved father or father figure. Its mission is to inspire and equip men through research, training, programs and resources to be the fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. The Center's website at fathers.com serves as the portal to its many initiatives including Championship Fathering, WATCH D.O.G.S., the Father-Daughter Summit, Fathering Court, and training for dads, father trainers, and coaches.