



FREE

FAST FACTS



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FAMILY

FAMILY STRUCTURE

- ▶ Many Americans still want to get married and start a family, but increasingly, only those with higher education and income are doing so.¹
- ▶ Children of divorced parents exhibit moderately lower levels of cognitive, social, and emotional well-being and lower socioeconomic success. They also exhibit increased risk of having a child outside of marriage, weaker bonds with parents, and greater risk of becoming divorced. Factors accounting for observed differences between children of divorced parents and children of married parents include financial strain, limited resources, lack of consistency in parenting, and increased exposure to stress.²
- ▶ Regarding college graduation, poverty, and incarceration, outcomes of black children from married, two-parent households are better than those of white children from single-parent families. Compared to black children living with both biological parents, black children in single-parent households are 3.5 times more likely to live in poverty and 1.8 times more likely to have been incarcerated by their late 20s. Black children raised by two biological parents are 70 percent more likely to earn a college degree than are those from single-parent households.³

1. Social Capital Campaign, "Family Stability: Bridging America's Social Capital Divide," <https://www.socialcapitalcampaign.com/family-stability>.

2. Paul R. Amato, "The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation," *Future of Children* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 75–96, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/188645>.

3. W. Bradford Wilcox, Wendy Wang, and Ian Rowe, "Less Poverty, Less Prison, More College: What Two Parents Mean for Black and White Children," Institute for Family Studies, June 17, 2021, <https://ifstudies.org/blog/less-poverty-less-prison-more-college-what-two-parents-mean-for-black-and-white-children>.

THE SUCCESS SEQUENCE

95% OF NONCOLLEGE-EDUCATED WORKERS WHO HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE, WORK, AND MARRY BEFORE HAVING CHILDREN ARE NOT POOR BY THEIR MID-30S

- ▶ Ninety-six percent of black and 97 percent of Hispanic millennials who follow the success sequence avoid poverty in their mid-30s. If they follow the success sequence, 94 percent of millennials from lower-income households and 95 percent of millennials growing up in non-intact families avoid poverty by their mid-30s. Additionally, 95 percent of noncollege-educated workers who have a high school degree, work, and marry before having children are not poor by their mid-30s. Failure to achieve all steps in the sequence is more detrimental to black and Hispanic adults, but the completion of all three steps nearly closes racial disparities in poverty. Overall, 95 percent of children from non-intact families who follow the success sequence avoid poverty as adults.⁴

4. W. Bradford Wilcox and Wendy Wang, "The Power of the Success Sequence," American Enterprise Institute and Institute for Family Studies, May 26, 2022, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/the-power-of-the-success-sequence>.

RELIGION

TRENDS

62% THE SHARE OF AMERICANS WHO SAY RELIGION IS VERY IMPORTANT HAS FALLEN FROM 62 PERCENT IN 1998 TO 39 PERCENT IN 2023

- ▶ Younger Americans in particular place a low importance on religion, with some 31 percent of adults under age 30 reporting that religion is very important to them, compared with 55 percent of seniors.⁵

BENEFITS OF RELIGION

- ▶ Millennials and Gen Zers who frequently attend religious services are much more likely to say they felt “somewhat” or “very” connected to the people in their local community.⁶
- ▶ Perceived relationship with God is strongly associated with happiness. Religious attendance has a stronger effect on happiness than does happiness on religious attendance.⁷

5. Aaron Zitner, “America Pulls Back from Values That Once Defined It, WSJ-NORC Poll Finds,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 27, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/americans-pull-back-from-values-that-once-defined-u-s-wsj-norc-poll-finds-df8534cd>.

6. Walton Family Foundation, “Opening Doors to Opportunity,” October 6, 2020, <https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/learning/opening-doors-to-opportunity>.

7. Ellen Childs, “Religious Attendance and Happiness: Examining Gaps in the Current Literature—a Research Note,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 3 (September 2010): 550–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40959036>.

EDUCATION

PUBLIC OPINION

**70% OF PARENTS
SUPPORT TEACHING
THE SUCCESS SEQUENCE**

- ▶ Seventy-seven percent of Americans and 76 percent of American parents support teaching students the success sequence, including 70 percent of parents who themselves did not follow the success sequence.⁸

EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

- ▶ Content-rich curricula had a positive effect on math skills, with no discernable difference across race, socioeconomic status, or language spoken at home.⁹
- ▶ Individual-level, rigorous instruction for adolescent students in poverty increased their math scores, demonstrating that some learning loss from poor early childhood education experiences can be overcome.¹⁰

8. Nat Malkus, "Uncommonly Popular: Public Support for Teaching the Success Sequence in School," American Enterprise Institute, December 8, 2021, <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/uncommonly-popular-public-support-for-teaching-the-success-sequence-in-school>.

9. Michelle F. Maier et al., "Content-Rich Instruction and Cognitive Demand in PreK: Using Systematic Observations to Predict Child Gains," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 60 (2022): 96–109, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0885200621001551?via%3Dihub>.

10. Phillip J. Cook et al., "Not Too Late: Improving Academic Outcomes for Disadvantaged Youth" (working paper, Northwestern University, Institute for Policy Research, Evanston, IL, February 2015), <https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/our-work/working-papers/2015/ipr-wp-15-01.html>.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET

- ▶ Employment increases self-efficacy in youth, but sporadically employed youth may experience the effects to a lesser degree. Supervisory support can increase an adolescent's confidence in future family life, community involvement, personal health, and economic achievement.¹¹

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE TRAINING

- ▶ Employed youth tend to have higher GPAs and come from relatively higher socioeconomic families. The inverse is also true: Unemployed youth tend to come from lower socioeconomic households and have lower GPAs.¹²
- ▶ Youth employment can be constrained by a lack of relevant skills or experience, information about opportunities or application processes, or access to the capital necessary to start a business. Interventions that integrate multiple services, have high program retention, are tailored to the population of interest, and are delivered by a partnership of civil society entities, as opposed to simply the public sector, seem to be the most effective at increasing the employment of chronically unemployed youth populations.¹³

11. Keith A. Cunnien, Nicole Martin Rogers, and Jeylan T. Mortimer, "Adolescent Work Experience and Self-Efficacy," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 29, no. 3/4 (April 24, 2009): 164–75, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/01443330910947534/full/html>.

12. William J. Schill, Rosemarie McCartin, and Katerina Meyer, "Youth Employment: Its Relationship to Academic and Family Variables," *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 26, no. 2 (April 1985): 155–63, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/0001879185900156>.

13. Jochen Kluge et al., *Do Youth Employment Programs Improve Labor Market Outcomes? A Systematic Review*, IZA Institute of Labor Economics, October 2016, <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/10263/do-youth-employment-programs-improve-labor-market-outcomes-a-systematic-review>.