

**REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

**STUDY OF THE STATUS
OF VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 57

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1995**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

George Allen
Governor

Kay Coles James
Secretary of Health and Human Resources

March 21, 1995

To: The Honorable George Allen

and

The General Assembly of Virginia

The report contained herein is pursuant to House Joint Resolution 180, agreed to by the 1994 General Assembly.

This report constitutes the findings of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources achieved during the course of this study of the status of Virginia's families. As requested, various policies and practices which threaten the strength and stability of the family were examined, and appropriate policies to support the formation and preservation of two-parent families were recommended.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kay Coles James", written over a horizontal line.

Kay Coles James
Secretary of Health and Human Resources

Executive Summary

House Joint Resolution 180 requested the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to study the status of Virginia's families and the impact of current public policies on family stability and structure, and to recommend policies to strengthen families.

In the last three decades Virginia has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of single-parent families, divorces, and out-of-wedlock births. Currently, there are no signs that the increases in any of these trends will taper off.

Associated with single-parent families are a wide range of serious personal and social problems, including crime, poor educational performance, and an array of behavioral, medical, and developmental difficulties suffered by children of single-parent families. Over two-thirds of violent criminals are males who grew up without a father.

If the current trend of weakening family structure is not reversed, Virginia communities could see more severe social difficulties, including large escalations in poverty and violent crime.

Contemporary social science research confirms the nearly unanimous historical opinion that children are best raised in two-parent families. Strengthening intact two-parent families is the most effective way to stem the tide of child poverty, criminal behavior, and other associated social ills which the Commonwealth and the nation are experiencing at alarming levels.

The strong connection between public policy and family structure offers an opportunity for renewal. This study offers options to eliminate disincentives to two-parent family formation and preservation, as well as some positive proposals to strengthen existing two-parent families.

- **Aid to Families with Dependent Children.** Replacement of the AFDC program with temporary employment-based assistance would emphasize the value of work and personal responsibility. The current welfare policy is a powerful deterrent to the formation of two-parent families and fosters dependency rather than independence.

With the intent of preventing family break-up and long-term AFDC dependency, the new program should include a diversion program with short-

term assistance for families in a crisis. To discourage additional out-of-wedlock births, additional AFDC funding for children conceived and born while their family is on welfare should be eliminated.

Further elements to strengthen families include requiring teen mothers to live with their parents, placing financial support responsibility on minor fathers, and requiring AFDC children to attend school.

To discourage family break-up and encourage stable family formation, the time limit restriction of six months in the AFDC-Unemployed Parent program should be changed to mirror the regular AFDC program. The current disincentive to the formation and maintenance of two-parent families created by the six-month time limit is very powerful.

- **Adoption.** Encouraging more adoptions would foster two-parent families as it would give the children the benefits of a two-parent family and the young unmarried mother an increased likelihood of completing high school and becoming economically self-sufficient.

Positive policy changes include easing regulatory obstacles and providing financial and tax assistance to low-income families who cannot afford to adopt. Further, public and private social workers should receive training to inform unwed expectant mothers about the personal, social, and economic benefits of adoption.

- **Parental Notification.** In addition to discouraging both teenage pregnancy and abortions, parental notification for minors seeking abortions would foster communication between parents and children, strengthen family ties, and increase the likelihood that the parents will instill positive behavior in their children. Parental notification legislation would also introduce social service intervention on behalf of families where the threat of abuse or neglect exists. As a result, pregnant girls and their younger siblings would benefit from help before such a threat is manifested.
- **Family Education.** Strategies for reducing out-of-wedlock births should focus on instilling family values, building self-reliance and self-worth, and encouraging abstinence before marriage. Emphasis should be placed on

"family education" over "sex education" to encourage abstinence and to reinforce positive and mature behavior on the part of teenagers, with parental approval for student participation in sex and contraceptive education classes.

- **Education.** Rigorous, measurable, and specific academic performance standards in basic subjects as well as increased flexibility, autonomy, and accountability are all needed for Virginia's local schools. It is anticipated that these changes would achieve measurable results in academic quality and parental involvement. The capability and legal protections for teachers and principals to discipline and restore order in the classroom would aid in promoting school safety and maximize learning. School divisions should have options for offering family life education and parents should maintain elective control over when and how their children will participate in offered courses.
- **Family Tax Policy.** A reduction in the tax burden would reduce economic stress and allow parents to save for a home or child's education as well as allow some parents to work fewer hours and spend more time with their children. Increasing the amount of the personal and dependent exemptions allowed in Virginia would particularly assist low-income families, many of whom must pay state tax even if they pay no federal tax.
- **Divorce Law.** The institution of marriage should be strengthened as divorce can have serious, long-term negative effects on children. Virginia should eliminate the practice of no-fault divorce, increase length of residency requirements, and require parents to participate in separation and divorce prevention programs prior to divorce. Consideration should also be given to the establishment of an "informed consent" provision which would require those entering into a marriage contract to be reasonably informed about its nature and the benefits of a stable monogamous relationship for spouses and children.
- **Custody.** Child custody policy should support the well-being of the child and reflect the principle that parents have a responsibility toward their children. Where parents are unable to settle custody issues, policy should encourage or

require participation in a mediation program before resorting to a court settlement.

- **Child Support.** Less than one-quarter of never-married mothers have a child support order and, in all situations where child support orders exist, only 50 percent of custodial parents receive the full amount. Establishment of paternity in the hospital before mother and baby are discharged and establishment of paternity as an eligibility requirement for AFDC benefits would strengthen child support collection efforts.

Policies governing AFDC eligibility and child support require re-examination. Currently, mothers on AFDC must sign over rights to child support to the state, with only \$50 passed through to the family. This often provides little incentive for fathers to meet full child support obligations. Consideration should be given to using child support as a primary source of income and AFDC payments as supplemental, with all child support paid directly to the family. This may signal to fathers that they, and not the government, have primary responsibility for the child.

A fatherhood education program to educate fathers on the critical importance of their roles, beyond merely providing monthly payments, would encourage marriage and involvement of fathers in their children's lives as well as add positive incentives for making support payments.

- **Family Impact Analysis.** Finally, to ensure attention remains focused on positive and negative impacts of public policies on the family, Virginia should consider formalizing analysis of legislative proposals.

In conclusion, public policies and the erosion of personal responsibility appear to be negatively impacting the formation and preservation of two parent families. Since children, our nation's greatest resource for the future, are the ones hardest hit by these changes, the trends over the last three decades can and must be reversed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction	1
Study Charge	1
Organizational Scope of Study	1
Background	1
II. Trends in Virginia's Families	4
Families	4
Divorce	8
Out-of-Wedlock Births	10
Teen Births	12
Conclusion	13
III. Single and Two-Parent Families: A Comparative Analysis	14
Family	14
Parents and Spouses	16
Children	17
Society	31
Conclusion	32
IV. Policies Affecting Virginia's Families	34
Aid to Families with Dependent Children	34
Adoption	36
Parental Notification	37
Sex Education	38
Parental Control and Community Involvement in Education	39
Taxes and Family Time	40
No-Fault Divorce	46
Child Support	47
Conclusion	48

V. Strengthening Virginia's Families	50
Aid to Families with Dependent Children	50
Adoption	51
Parental Notification	52
Family Education	53
Education	54
Family Tax Policy	54
Divorce Law	55
Custody	55
Child Support	56
Family Impact Analysis	57
Annual Family Studies	57
Endnotes	58
House Joint Resolution 180	64

I. INTRODUCTION

Study Charge

House Joint Resolution 180 requested the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to conduct a study of the status of Virginia's families and policies supportive of strong families. The Resolution noted that "certain attitudes, policies, and other influences have taken their toll on the stability of the family and have affected its structure." The Resolution charges the decline of family stability as a major factor in the rise of crime, and cites strong families as an influential factor in the promotion of excellence in education. Accordingly, it directed the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to conduct a comprehensive review of the Commonwealth's divorce, tax, child custody and child and spousal support laws, and determine whether revisions are needed to ensure the promotion of strong Virginia families.

Organization and Scope of Study

This study, organized into four parts in addition to the introduction: (II) examines current and historical empirical data on family status, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, children being raised in single-parent families, and other pertinent indicators of the strength of families in the Commonwealth of Virginia; (III) investigates statistical correlations between familial status and a wide range of indicators of personal and social well-being, including poverty, health and development, educational achievement, criminal behavior, child abuse, and youth suicide; (IV) identifies current public policies which negatively impact the formation and preservation of two-parent families in Virginia; and (V) examines policy options aimed at encouraging the formation and preservation two-parent families.

Background

The data indicates that the last three decades have witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of single-parent families. Since 1960, there has been an alarming increase in the number of divorces and out-of-wedlock births. Currently, there are no signs that the increases in any of these indicators will taper off.

At the same time, the data indicates that single-parent families are associated with a wide range of serious personal and social problems. Especially hard-hit are children raised in single-parent homes. The data reveal that these children have a substantially higher likelihood of suffering from an array of behavioral, medical, and developmental difficulties than do children raised in two-parent homes. In fact, the data that has come to light in recent years has been sufficiently compelling to have attracted the nearly universal concern of social scientists working in this field.

Where possible, the data was controlled to isolate family status as a contributor to identified problems. The incidence of juvenile criminal behavior, for example, is highly correlated to being raised in a single-parent home. When family status is controlled, there is no significant correlation between crime and either race or poverty, characteristics commonly held to precipitate crime.

The serious developmental difficulties associated with children being raised in single-parent families indicate that it is incorrect to view the family as merely undergoing a transition into new structures. "Sharply rising rates of divorce, unwed mothers, and runaway fathers do not represent 'alternative lifestyles,'" according to William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, advisors to President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore. "They are, rather, patterns of adult behavior with profoundly negative consequences for children."¹

Indeed, contemporary social science research confirms the nearly unanimous historical opinion that children are best raised in two-parent families. The social trends of the last thirty years have realized with frightening accuracy the predictions made by President Lyndon Johnson in his Howard University address in 1965:

The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitude, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged. When it happens on a massive scale the community itself is crippled.

This highly perceptive judgement by President Johnson is now being echoed by many social scientists. According to Rutgers University analyst David Popenoe,

I know of few other bodies of data in which the weight of evidence is so decisively on one side of the issue: on the whole, for children, two-parent families are preferable. If our prevailing views on family structure hinged solely on scholarly evidence, the current debate never would have arisen in the first place.²

Statistical projections indicate that the current trend of weakening family structure, if not reversed, could lead to severe social difficulties in the Virginia community, including large escalations in poverty and violent crime.

In light of the magnitude of the changes which have already occurred, this study examines public policy areas which have had an impact on the formation and preservation of two-parent families. To be sure, not all of the profound changes that Virginia and the nation have experienced in family structure are directly attributable to public policy decisions. Most would agree, for example, that a decline in cultural standards cannot be completely ascribed to government policy as its sole cause. Nonetheless, this study has found that particular policies have played a substantial role in the decline of family stability by creating an environment which erodes the strength of families.

Part IV of this study, therefore, seeks to isolate those public policy areas which have contributed to the decline in two-parent families. Conspicuous among these policies are welfare, particularly AFDC, and the change in divorce laws. The study indicates the nature of these policies and how they have contributed to this decline.

The strong connection between public policy and family structure offers an opportunity for renewal, however. As a result, part V of this study recommends for the consideration of legislators and interested groups public policy options aimed at containing and even reversing the decline in two-parent families. Given the statistical correlations outlined in the study, strengthening intact two-parent families appears to be the only effective way to stem the tide of child poverty, criminal behavior, and other associated social ills which the Commonwealth and the nation are experiencing at alarming levels.

II. TRENDS IN VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES

Families

The majority of children in Virginia are raised in two-parent families. However, the Commonwealth has experienced steady growth in the number of single-parent families over the past three decades (Figure 1).

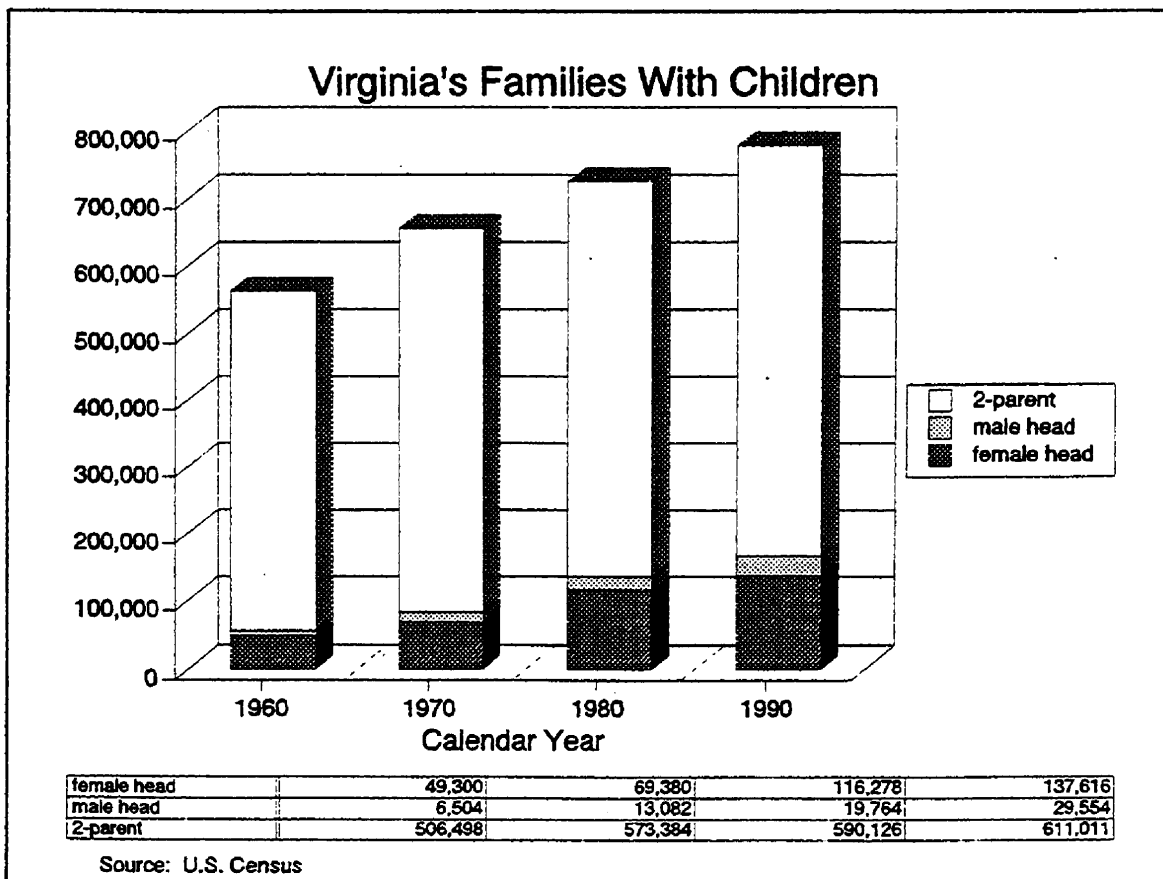


Figure 1

Since 1960, the number of single-parent families in Virginia has grown by 200 percent (Figure 2). In 1960, 10 percent of all families with children in Virginia were single-parent families. By 1990, the percentage had jumped to over 21 percent.

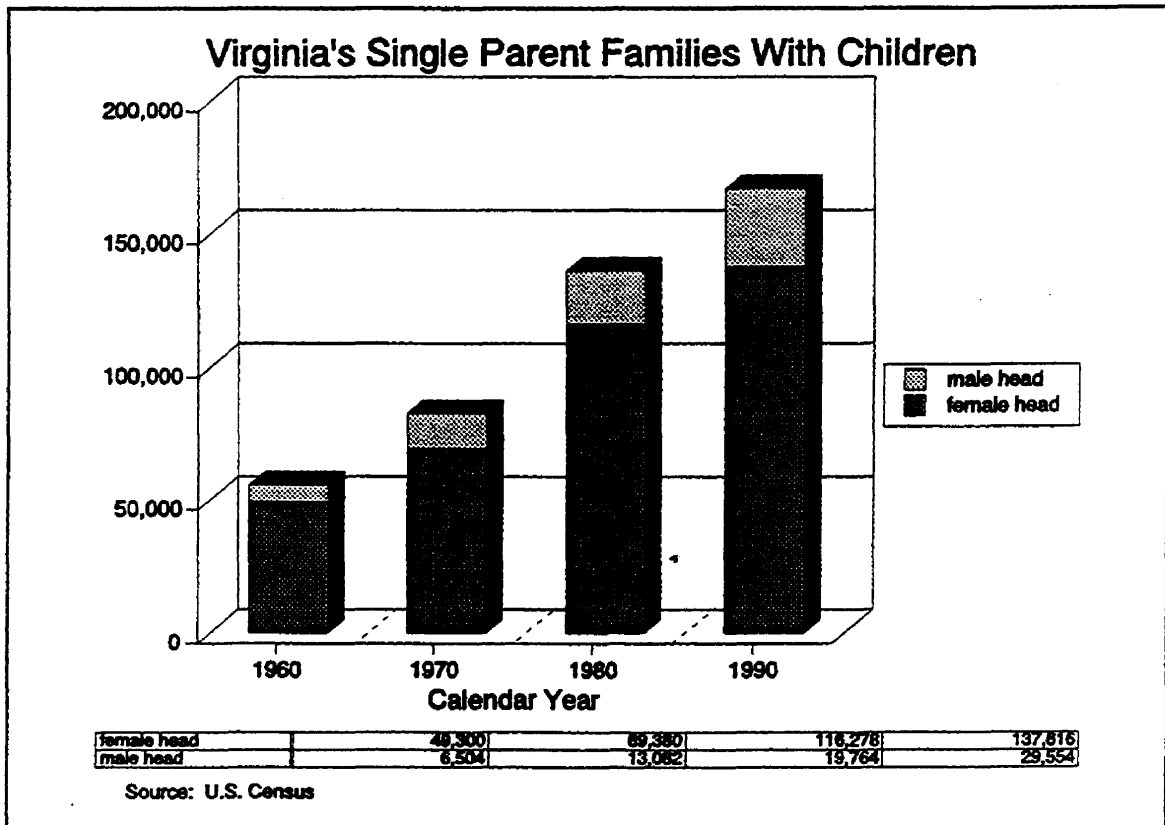


Figure 2

Since 1960, the number of children living in female-headed families has increased by 100 percent. As a result, the vast majority of children raised in single-parent families lack the presence and involvement of their fathers. Meanwhile, the number of children lacking mothers has increased by over 200 percent (Figure 3).

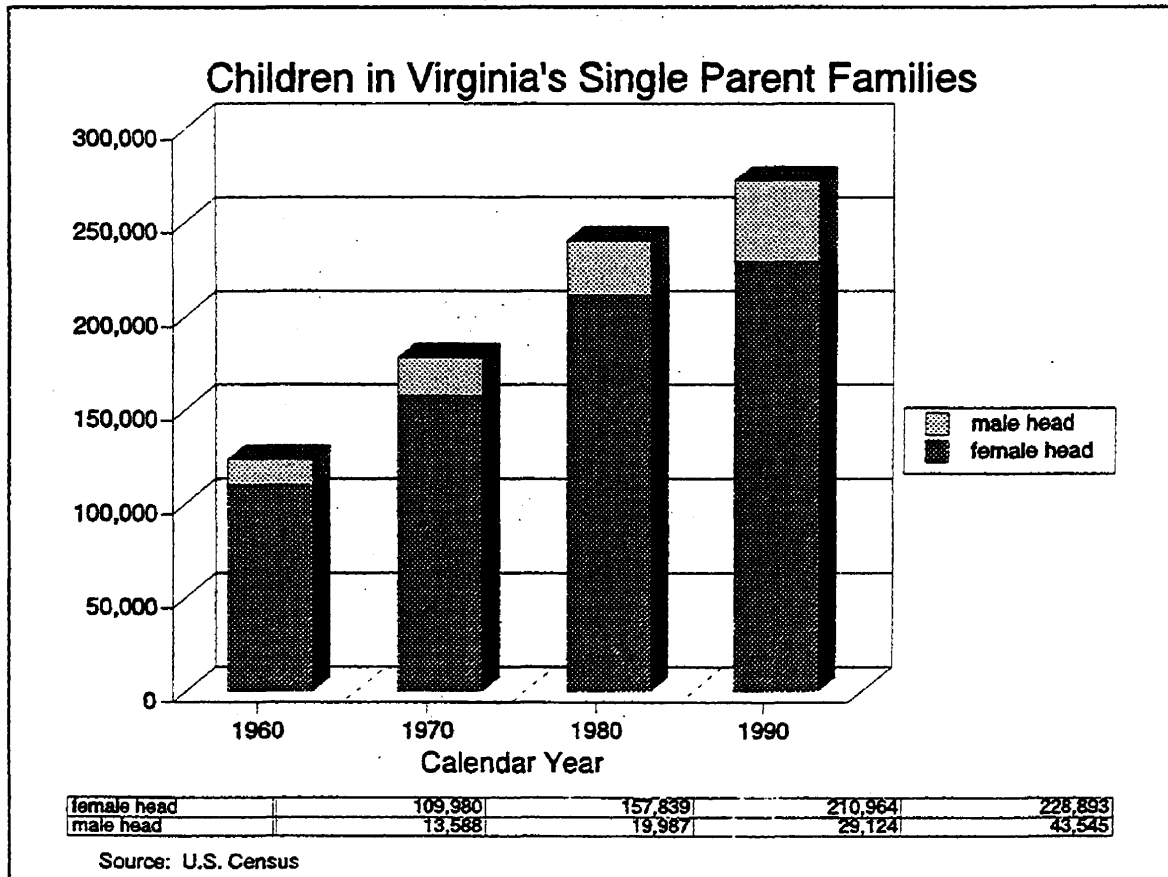
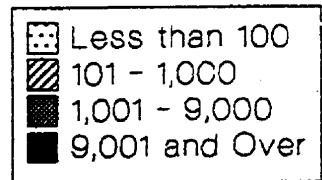


Figure 3

Even though state social spending has tended to be higher in urban areas, Figure 4 indicates a higher concentration of single-parent families in urban areas. Within this context, it appears that social spending has not yielded any positive gains in family stability.

Geographic Location of Single Parent Families With Children



Source: 1990 U.S. Census

Figure 4

Single-parent families tend to perpetuate their own condition. A study of Americans indicated that females raised in single-parent homes are 92 percent more likely to end their own marriages and 164 percent more likely to have a birth out of wedlock than their counterparts raised in two-parent homes.³

Since the percentage of the population being widowed has remained relatively constant, the sharply rising number of single-parent families is directly attributable to increased divorces and out-of-wedlock births.

Divorce

In the last three decades, divorces in Virginia and in the nation at large have increased at an unprecedented rate. The United States now has the highest divorce rate of any nation in the world.⁴ Paralleling the national trend, between 1960 and 1992, divorces in Virginia increased by 300 percent (Figure 5).

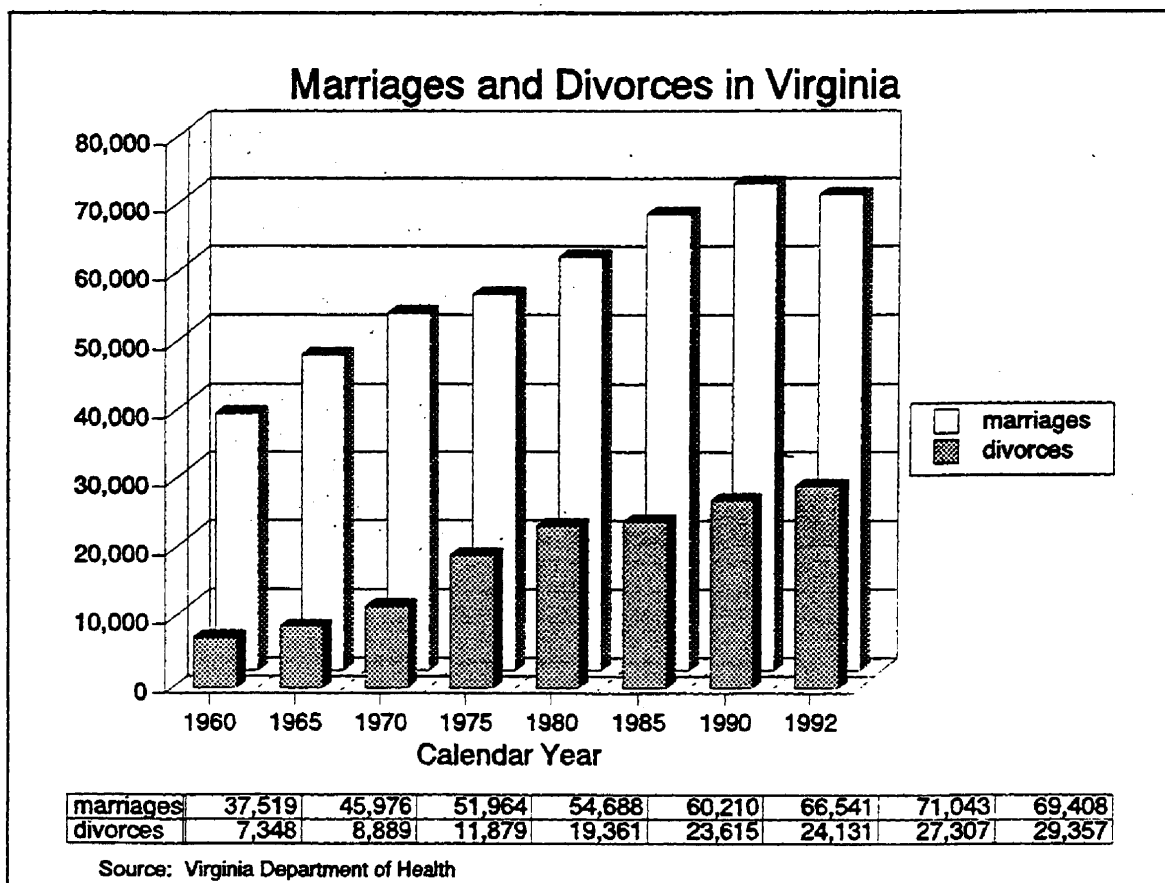


Figure 5

Based on current divorce rates, it has been estimated that between two-fifths and two-thirds of all marriages in this nation will end in separation or divorce.⁵ In fact, in the United States at present, a full 40 percent of all children will experience a parental divorce before the age of 16.⁶

As Figure 6 illustrates, approximately half of all divorces in Virginia involve one or more children.

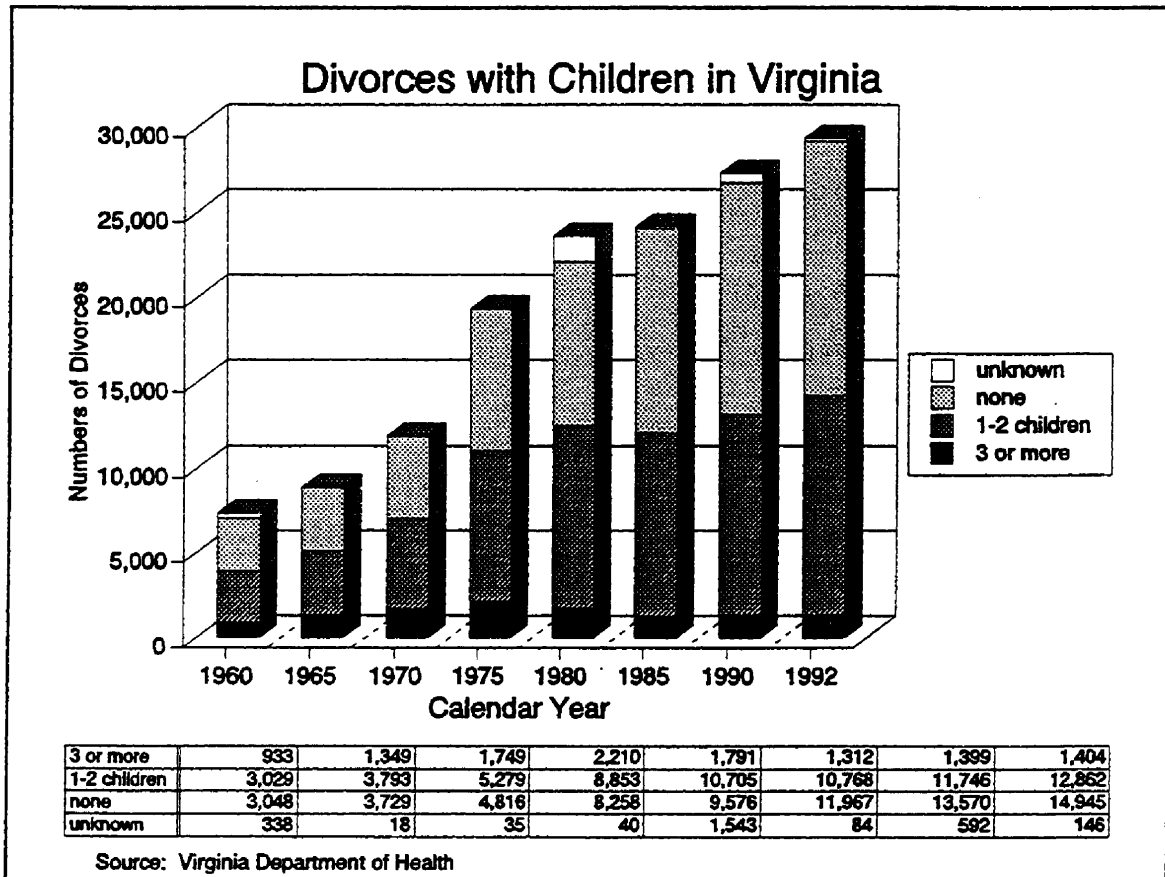


Figure 6

In the last three decades, the number of Virginia children directly impacted each year by divorce has increased by nearly 400 percent.⁷

After divorce, most children live with their mothers. Contact between children and their fathers rapidly declines after divorce even though most fathers are given visitation rights.⁸ About 40 percent of children of divorced parents have not seen their father in the past year.⁹

Research data suggests that the divorces currently taking place are likely to encourage further divorces in the future. Remarried couples are significantly more likely to divorce than couples in first marriages.¹⁰ And a 1987 study indicated that women whose parents divorced before they reached the age of 16 were 60 percent

more likely to be divorced or separated than girls whose parents had stayed together in marriage.¹¹

Out-of-Wedlock Births

Out-of-wedlock births are now nearly equal to divorce as a factor contributing to the rise in single-parent families. Indeed, if the current trend continues, out-of-wedlock births will soon outpace divorces.

The rate of live births in Virginia has fluctuated over the last thirty years. However, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births has risen steadily, with the rate of increase rising sharply in the last decade (Figure 7).

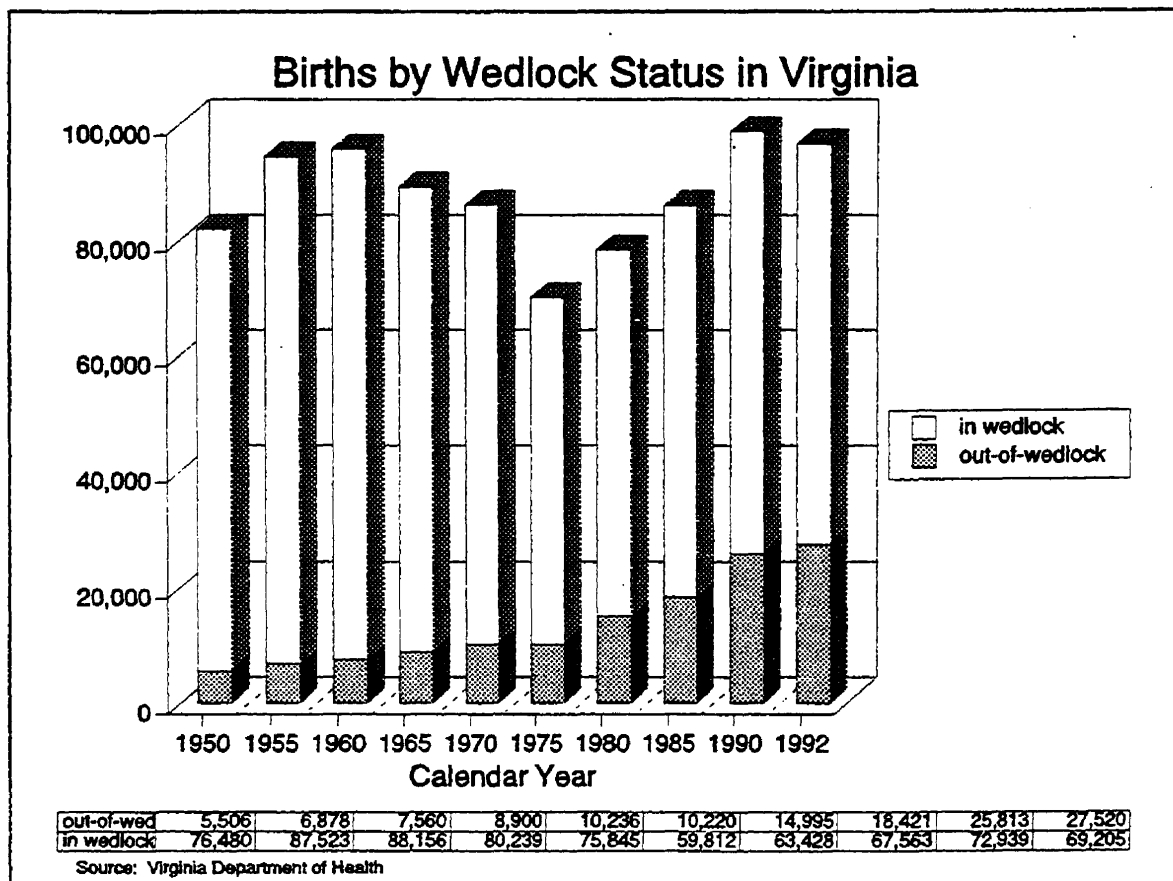


Figure 7

The number of out-of-wedlock births has grown by 400 percent in the last 40 years, with the most explosive growth occurring since 1980. This statistical rise in the number of out-of-wedlock births could not have occurred if such births had been confined to traditionally disadvantaged groups. Over the past few decades, out-of-wedlock births have risen more sharply in the white community than in the non-white community (Figure 8).

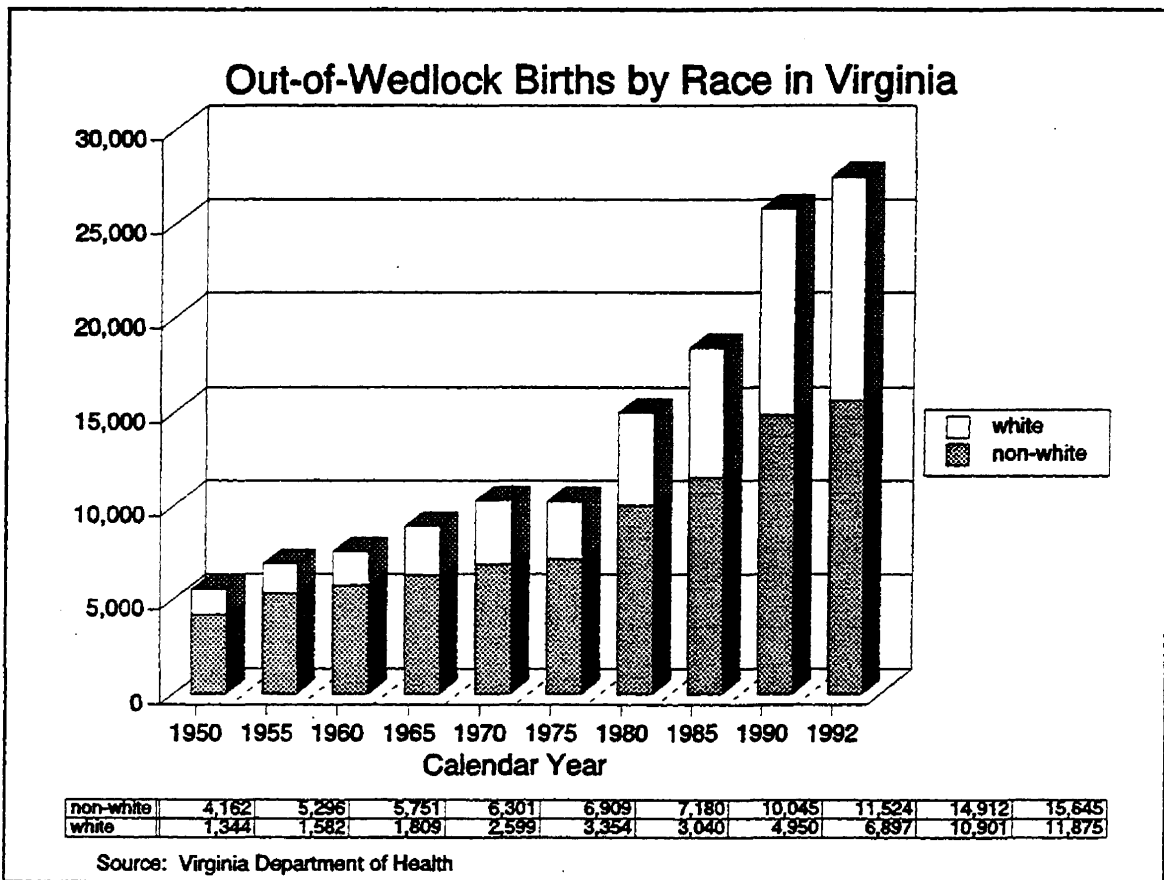


Figure 8

The largest increase in out-of-wedlock births has occurred among well-educated, affluent women. This suggests that the historic cultural stigma against bearing children out of wedlock is declining.¹² Christopher Jencks of Northwestern University explains some of the contributing factors of this social phenomenon:

• "[T]he mass media, the schools, and even the churches have begun to treat single parenthood as a regrettable but inescapable part of modern life."¹³

According to Harvard population researcher Nicholas Eberstadt,

*[T]he out-of-wedlock lifestyle has gone "main-stream": Unmarried mothers are increasingly likely to be white, chronologically mature, and well-educated. The stereotype of the unwed mother as a black teenager is completely outdated. Less than one-eighth of the illegitimate babies of 1991 were born to African American teenagers -- fewer in fact, than were born to white women in their 30s. So drastic was the change in norms over the past generation that illegitimacy ratios now appear to be higher for white women in their very early 20s than they had been for black teenagers in 1961.*¹⁴

The rate of out-of-wedlock births in Virginia is currently over 28 percent. This rate represents a rise between 1980 and 1992 of almost 50 percent. If the current national trend continues, some studies have projected that by the year 2000, an alarming 40 percent of all births nationally and 80 percent of minority births will occur out of wedlock.¹⁵

Teen Births

Today, the United States has the highest rate of teen pregnancy of all developed countries.¹⁶ Nationally, births among unwed teens have risen sharply since 1960, quadrupling from 91,700 to over 368,000 in 1991.¹⁷ Although Virginia has experienced a decline in overall teen births, out-of-wedlock teen births have grown by more than 100 percent since 1960. In 1960, out-of-wedlock teen births were slightly more than 20 percent of total teen births. By 1992, over 70 percent of teen births occurred out of wedlock (Figure 9).

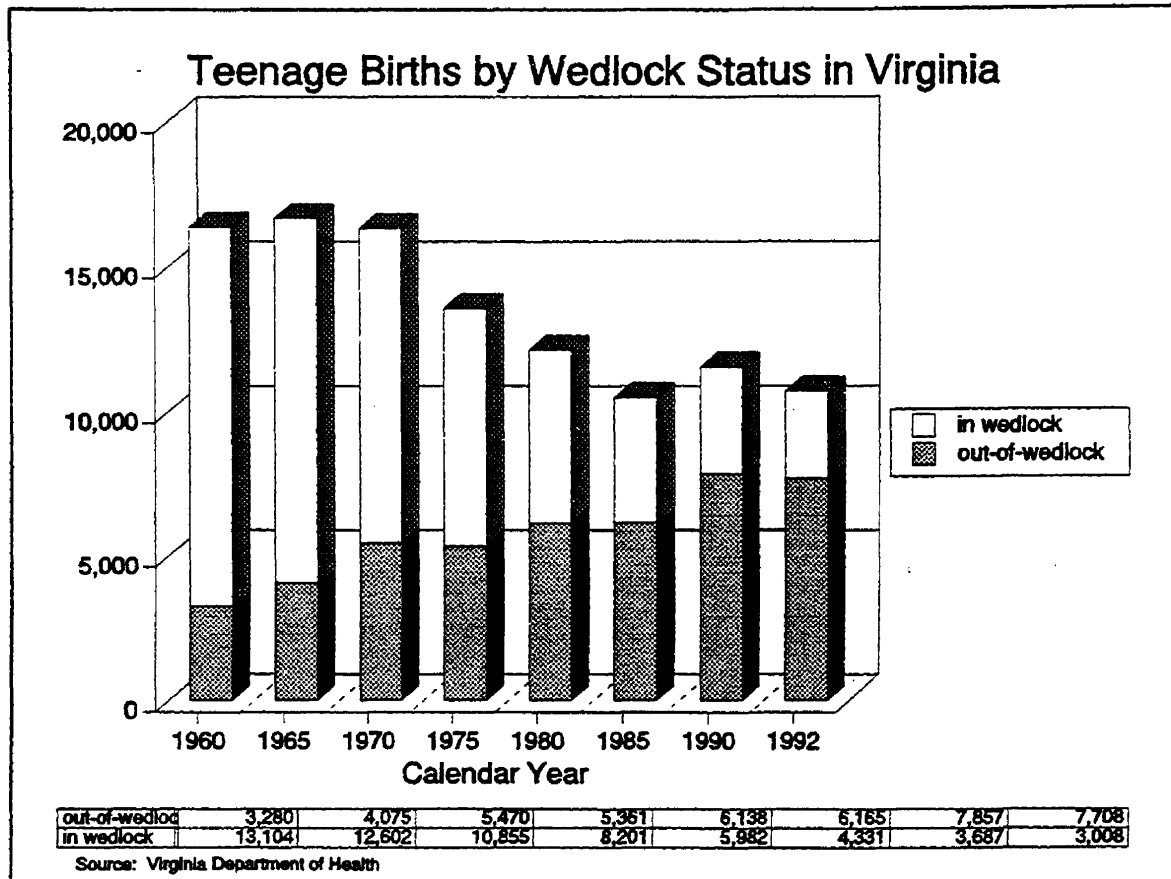


Figure 9

Conclusion

Statistical data indicates that 52 percent of minority children and 81 percent of white children born in 1950 lived with both parents through the age of 18. In contrast, researchers have found that among children born in 1980, only 6 percent of minority children and 30 percent of white children will live with both parents through the age of 18.¹⁸ This projection and the trends in family status detailed in this section map a profound shift in our cultural structure over the short span of three decades. Researchers, as well as the Commonwealth's citizens and taxpayers, are now coming to terms with some of the effects of this radical shift. By all indications there are serious social pathologies associated with the rapid decline in two-parent families. These findings are detailed in the next section.

III. SINGLE AND TWO-PARENT FAMILIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The differences in both personal and social consequences, between married-couple families and single-parent families are striking. The following analysis focuses on the resulting impact in four different areas: (a) the family as a whole, (b) the parents or spouses, (c) the children, and (d) society at large.

Family

Economic Well-Being. In recent decades family structure has come to play a dominant role in economic well-being. Nationwide, single-parent families with children are 600 percent more likely to be poor than married-couple families with children.¹⁹ As illustrated by Figure 10, the disparity in Virginia is even greater. Almost 40 percent of Virginia's single parent families live in poverty compared to 5 percent of two parent families.

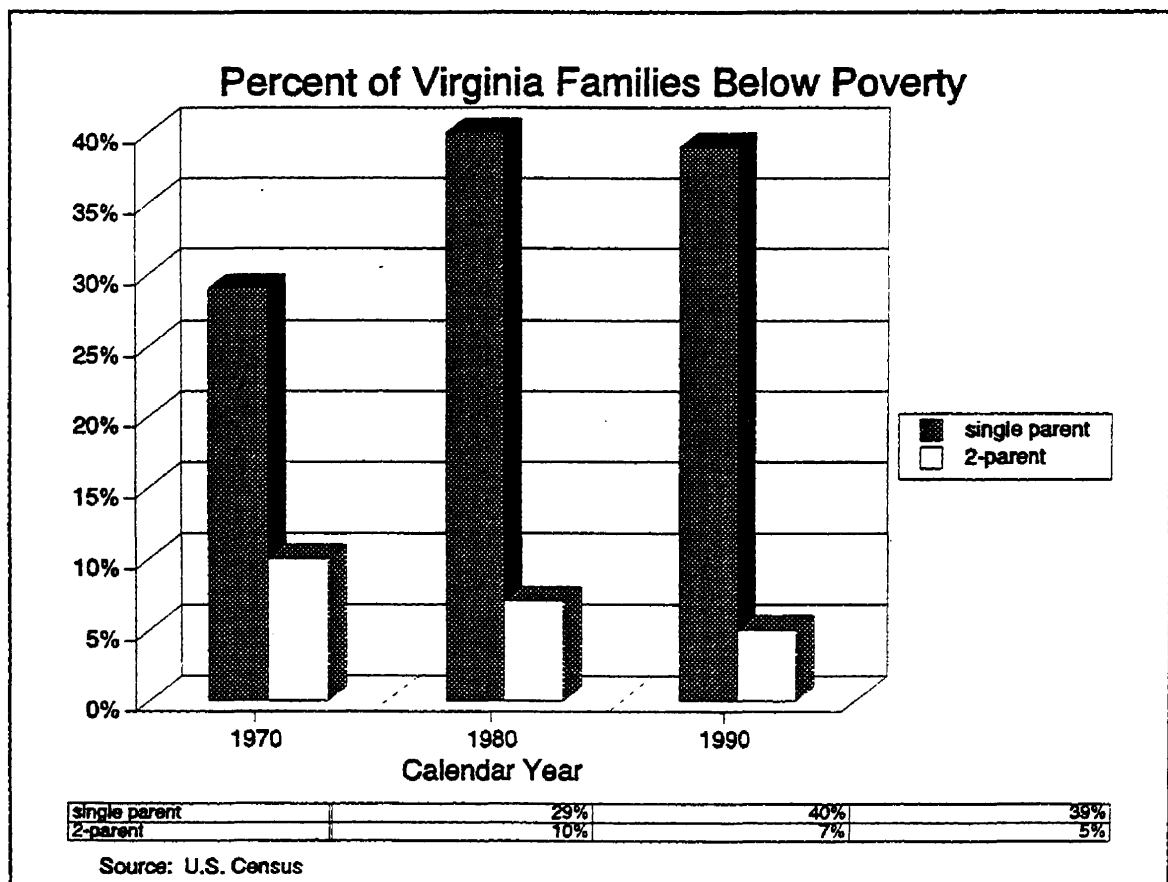


Figure 10

In 1992, the median income of all married-couple families was \$44,483. In contrast, single-parent households average \$14,858 in annual income, less than one third the level enjoyed by married-couple households (Figure 11).

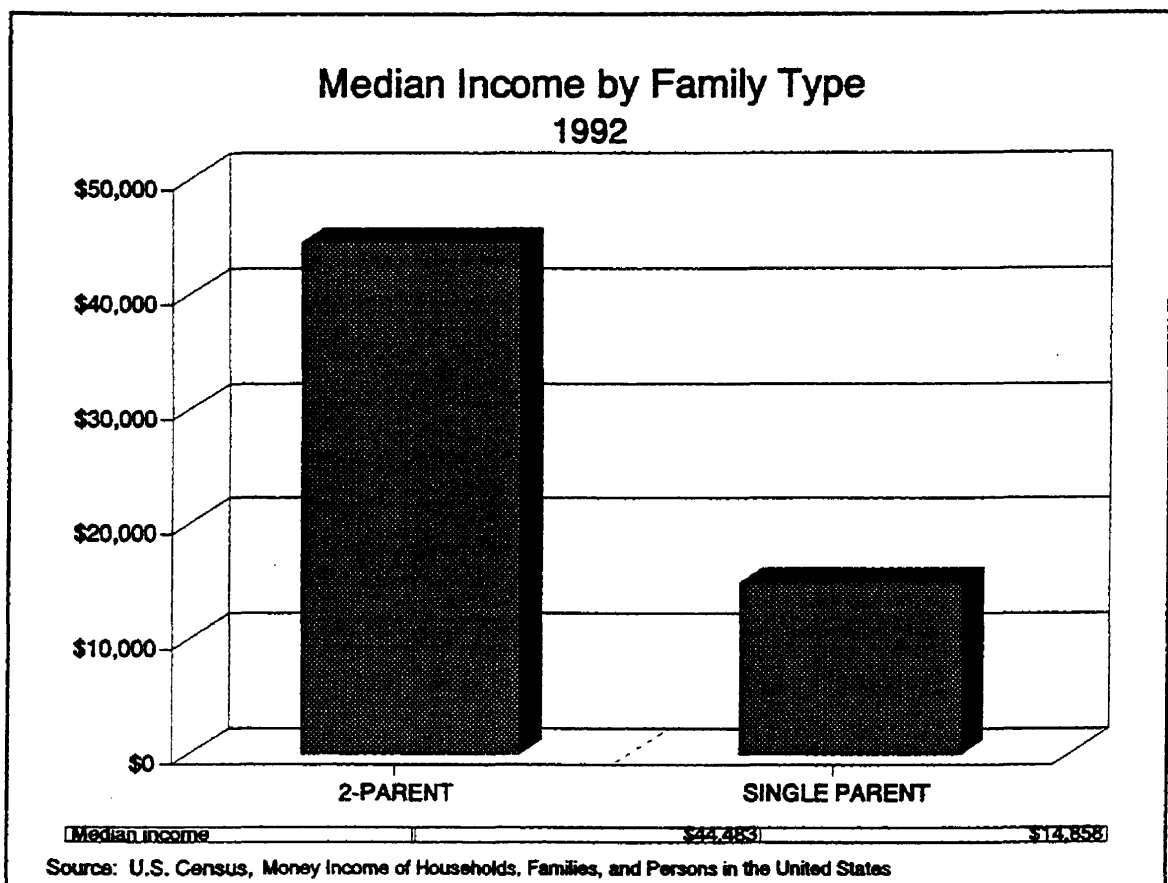


Figure 11

The correlation between family structure and economic self-sufficiency is nothing short of profound. Single-parent families are far more likely to suffer economic hardship and become economic dependents of the state.

Further, single-parent families are less than half as likely than two-parent families to own their own home. Only 35 percent of single-parent families are homeowners, versus 74 percent of their two-parent counterparts. For African-American families, two-parent families are more than three times as likely to own their own home.²⁰

This disparity is due in large part to the fact that median family income varies significantly between two-parent and single-parent families as Table I illustrates. As

a result, marital status is a significant factor in the home purchasing power of families.²¹

Table I

Housing	Single Parent Median Income	Two Parent Median Income
Owner	\$26,344	\$45,033
Renter	\$11,393	\$25,828

Source: U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Commerce, 1989

Parents and Spouses

Poverty among Divorced Women. The role that family structure plays in calculations of economic well-being is supported by the data on divorce and its financial impact on women. Divorce has a more pronounced negative economic impact upon women than upon men. A full 40 percent of divorced women live in poverty.²² For women who do not remarry after divorce, economic well-being typically declines by over 30 percent.²³ In fact, the mean monthly income of broken two-parent families is approximately 17 percent less than that of intact families.²⁴

The impact on children of divorce is no less severe. Even though 72 percent of divorced mothers are awarded child support, the average support order is small and does not fully cover the considerable financial costs of raising a child. In addition, studies have shown that the depression and anxiety often experienced by custodial parents following divorce affects their children in the form of increased stress and impaired child rearing.²⁵

Health Impacts upon Spouses. In addition to severe economic effects, there also appear to be serious health consequences to family dissolution. According to a recent study in *Social Science and Medicine*, "compared with married men and women, the divorced and separated suffer much higher rates of disease, disability, mental neuroses, and mortality." This pattern, the study confirms, holds for every age group over 20, for both genders, and for all racial and ethnic backgrounds.²⁶

A 1987 American Public Health Association study supports this finding, as it revealed that "married persons had fewer health problems than unmarried persons." Among men and women in the 45 to 64-year-old category, one-third of single people suffered chronic disability compared with only one-fifth of the married individuals in the same age category.²⁷

Children

Perhaps the most significant difference between single and two-parent families arises in the impact of the family structure upon children. In many single-parent families, children have very little contact with their fathers. About 40 percent of children in single-parent homes have not seen their father in the past year.²⁸ In fact, more than one-half of all children who do not live with their father have never even been in their father's home.²⁹

In the past three decades, fatherlessness has become a social catastrophe of epidemic proportions. According to New York University researcher Lawrence Mead,

*The main challenge [for social policy] is no longer to expand economic opportunity but to overcome social weaknesses that stem from the "post-marital" family. . . . The inequalities that stem from the workplace are now trivial in comparison to those stemming from family structure. What matters for success is less whether your father was rich or poor than whether you knew your father at all.*³⁰

Children in single-parent families have significantly higher incidences of health problems, emotional difficulties, drug abuse, and suicide. These children are more likely to suffer from poor academic progress than children in two-parent families and are substantially more likely to engage in criminal activity. Children raised in single-parent families are also more likely to perpetuate the cycle by conceiving children out-of-wedlock who are, in turn, far more likely to be aborted.

• **Child Poverty.** The rate of poverty in Virginia's children is largely dependent upon family structure. Although the proportion of children in two-parent families in poverty has declined significantly and the proportion of total children in poverty has declined, the proportion of single-parent families with children in poverty has increased dramatically. Currently, even though single-parent families represent 21 percent of total Virginia families with children, they comprise nearly 68 percent of the total number of poor families (see Figure 12).

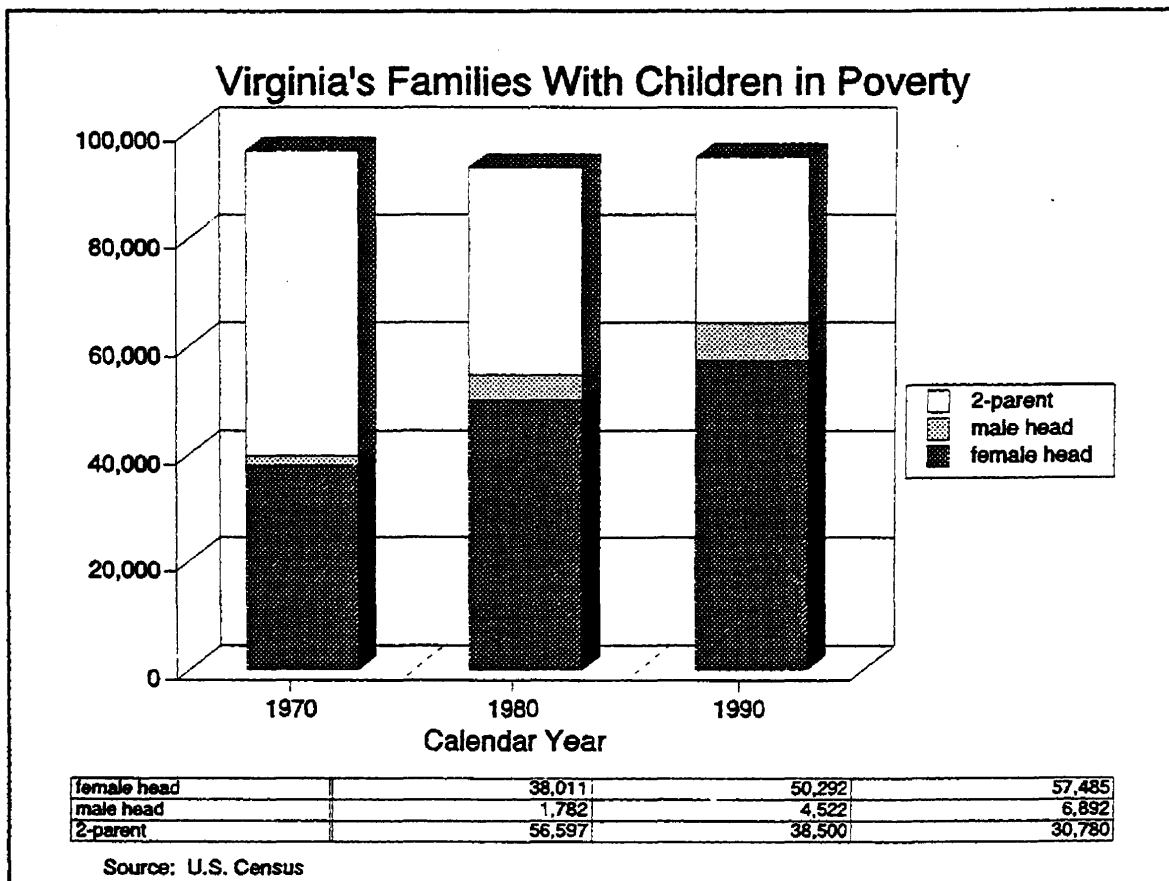


Figure 12

The number of poor children dependent on AFDC has increased dramatically in the past three decades (Figure 13).

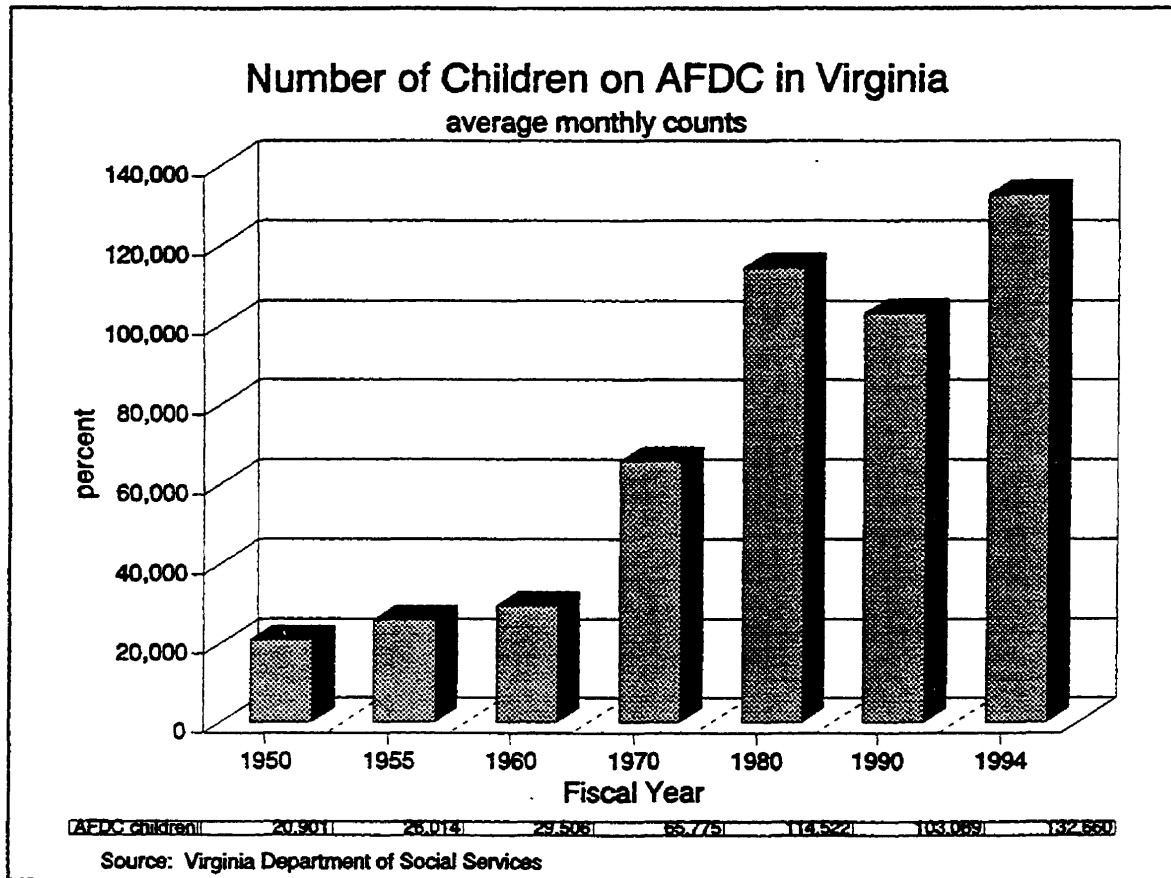


Figure 13

A child in a single parent family has a significantly higher risk of living in poverty than a child in a two parent family. In Virginia, only about 5 percent of children in two parent families live in poverty. In contrast, a full 46 percent of children in single parent families live in poverty (Figure 14).

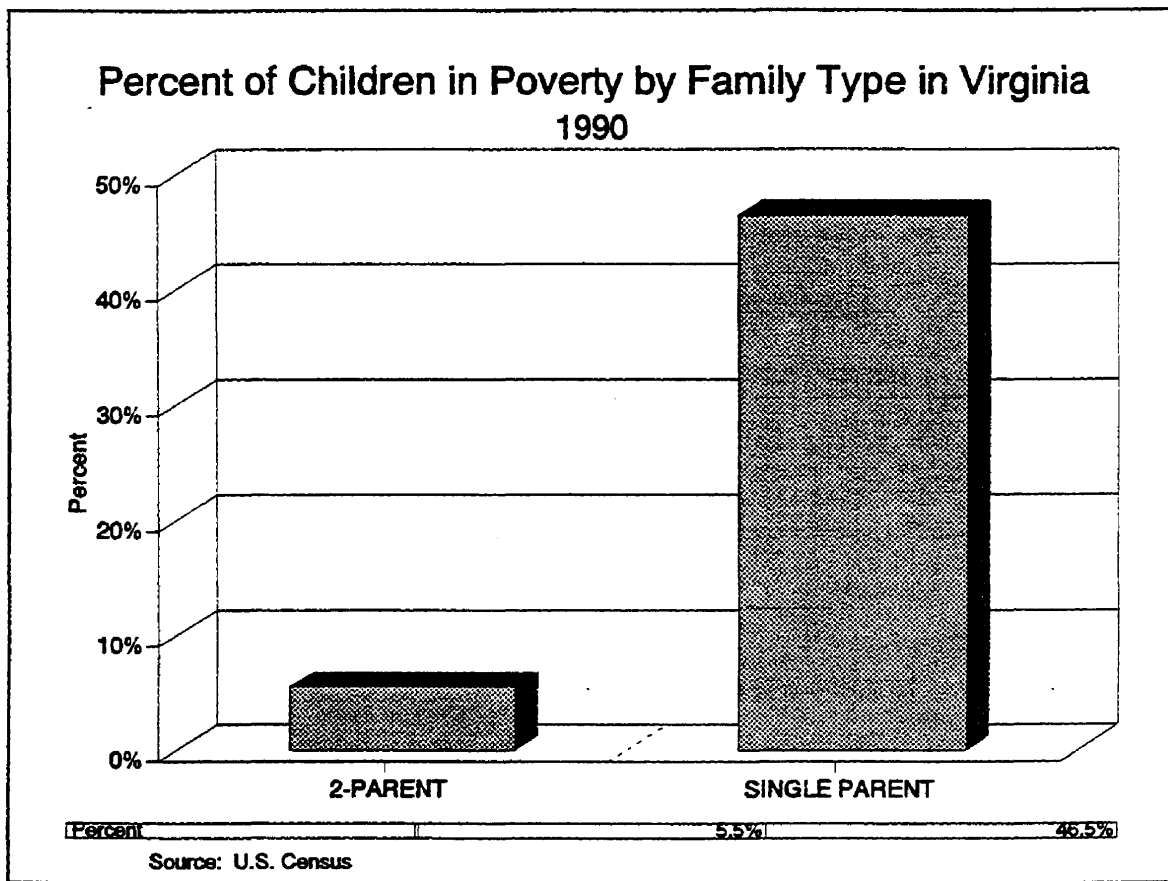


Figure 14

This disparity is even more striking when the plight of children born out of wedlock is concerned. Nationally, 75 percent of children born out of wedlock experience poverty before age 11, compared with only 20 percent in two-parent families.³¹ The data linking child poverty to single-parent families is so overwhelming that William Galston and Elaine Kamarck, advisors to President Clinton and Vice-President Gore, have declared that "[t]he best anti-poverty program for children is a stable, intact family."³²

Health and Developmental Problems. As compared with children raised in two-parent families, children in single-parent families are substantially more prone to a wide array of health, emotional and developmental problems. Children in single-parent families experience increased levels of depression, stress, and aggression.³³ Throughout childhood and adolescence, children from mother-only families appear to

have more mental health and developmental health problems than children from two-parent families.³⁴

Harvard psychiatrist Armand Nicholi has studied the importance of two attentive parents for emotional stability:

*If one factor influences the character development and emotional stability of a person, it is the quality of the relationship he experiences as a child with both of his parents. Conversely, if people suffering from severe non-organic emotional illness have one experience in common, it is the absence of a parent through death, divorce, time-demanding job, or absence for other reasons.*³⁵

Young children born out of wedlock tend to have developmental delays, including verbal and other cognitive skills and are more likely to be hyperactive.³⁶

According to Dr. George Rekers, a clinical psychologist and professor at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, "[r]esearch has documented that children without fathers more often have lowered academic performance, more cognitive and intellectual deficits, increased adjustment problems, and higher risks for psychosexual development problems."³⁷

Furthermore, children born out of wedlock are more likely to be born premature, have low birth weight, and die during the neonatal period.³⁸ A child born out of wedlock is more likely to die during the first year of life, according to Center for Disease Control data, regardless of the mother's race, age, or educational achievement.³⁹

Academics. Children raised in families with two parents have fewer academic difficulties than other children. On average, school age children in single-parent families have poorer academic progress and set lower educational goals than children with married parents.⁴⁰ In fact, children in families where the mother never marries are nearly three times as likely to repeat a school grade or be expelled or suspended from school (Figure 15).

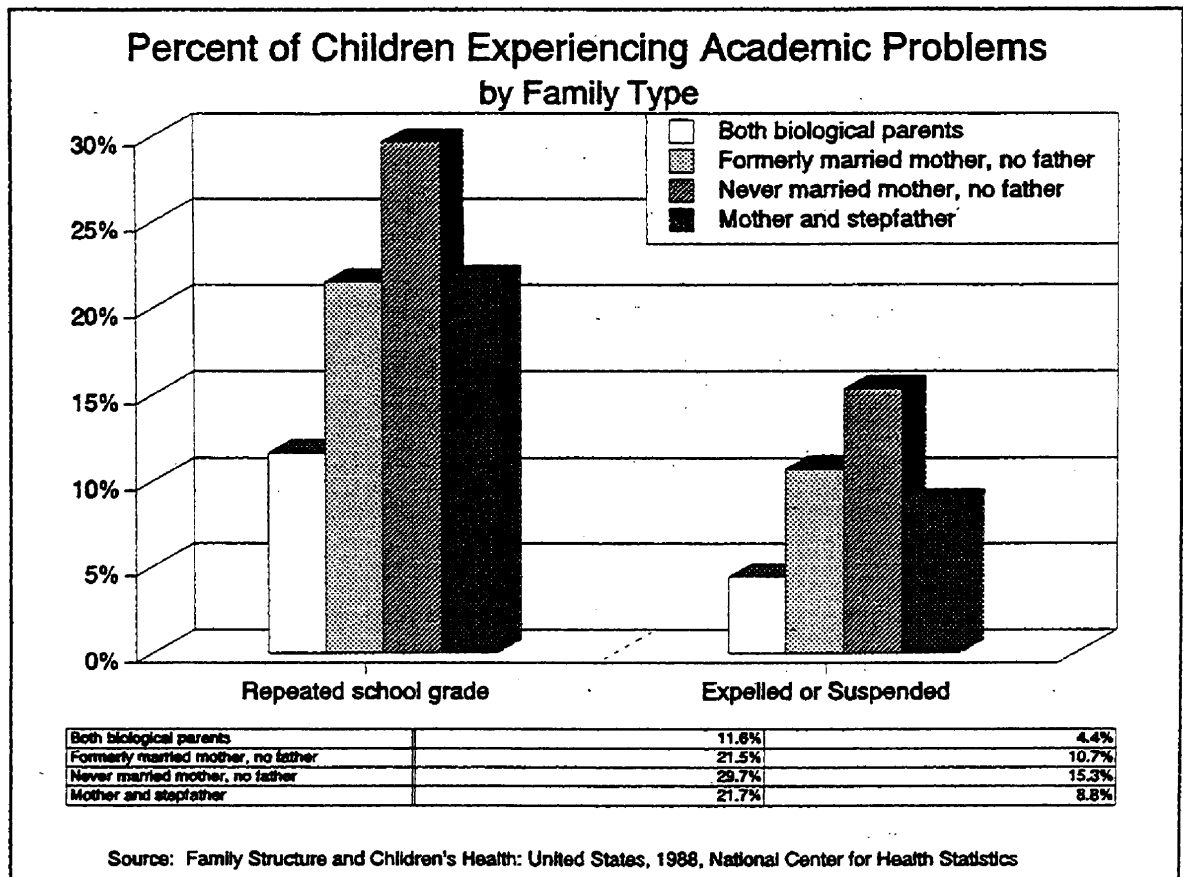


Figure 15

In Virginia, as well as nationally, the strongest factor affecting student achievement is family status. Given their tendencies to realize substantially higher-income levels, two-parent families have more flexibility to choose effective educational environments for their children, either by moving to a more successful school district or by sending their children to private schools.

School districts in which more two-parent families reside also have a stronger tax base with which to support student achievement. School districts with a higher proportion of single-parent families have fewer resources for educational objectives. These higher poverty districts are more likely to experience lower test scores, greater percentages of over-age students, and higher rates of absenteeism, withdrawal, and failure.⁴¹

Nonetheless, the amount of education spending per pupil does not appear to be a major or even substantial factor in student achievement.⁴² A much stronger factor influencing educational achievement is the involvement of parents in their children's

education. Families with two biological or adoptive parents show higher levels of involvement in their child's school activities than those with a single parent or step-parent (Figure 16).⁴³

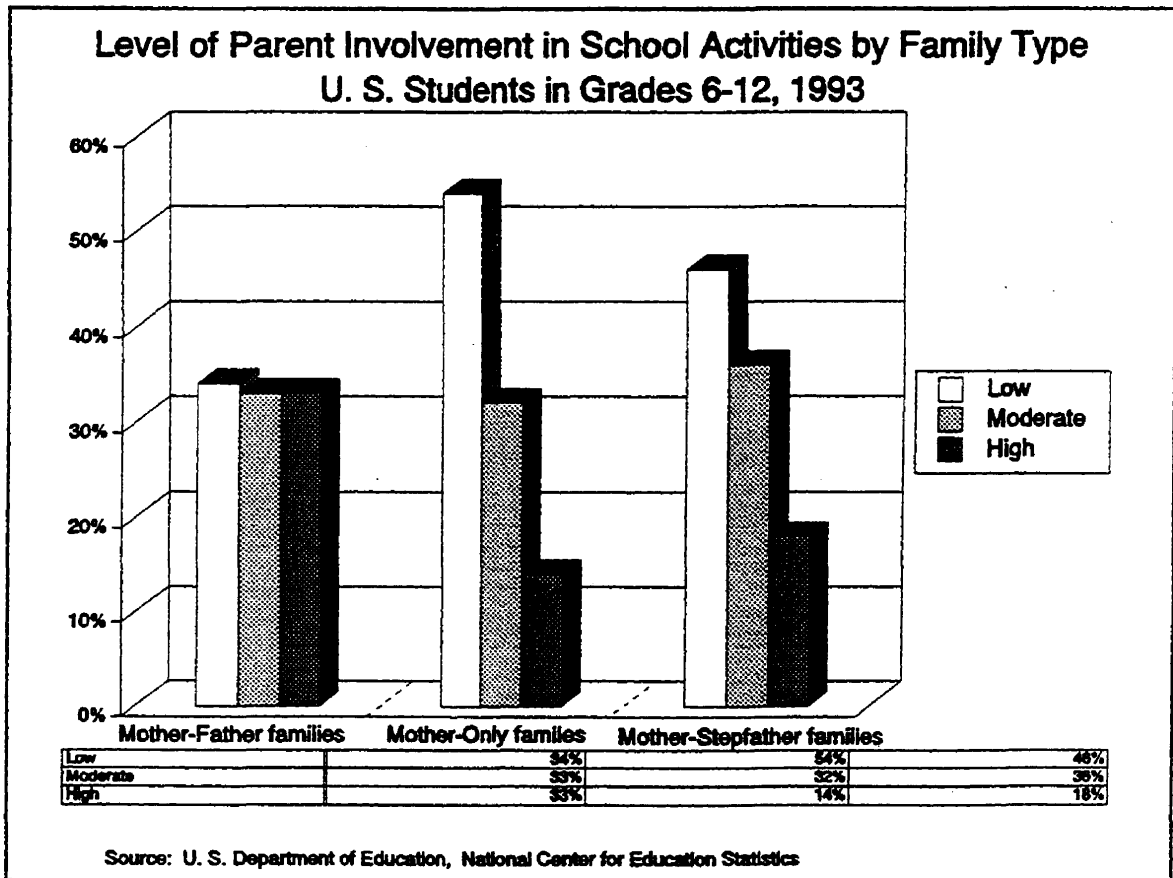


Figure 16

Indeed, as Figure 16 clearly illustrates, lower educational attainment is experienced primarily by children raised in single parent and step-parent families.

Crime. Children raised in single-parent families are far more likely to become involved with crime. In fact, the relation between family structure and criminal activity is so strong that it far outweighs the correlation between crime and race and between crime and income.⁴⁴ Most violent criminals are males who grew up without fathers, including 70 percent of long-term prisoners⁴⁵, 72 percent of adolescent murderers,⁴⁶ and 60 percent of rapists.⁴⁷ In fact, according to the "Journal of

Research in Crime and Delinquency," the best predictor of violent crime in a neighborhood is the proportion of households without father.

An example of this correlation can be found in the cities of Richmond and Petersburg. Richmond and Petersburg ranked one and two in violent crimes between 1990 and 1992⁴⁸, the same time period during which they ranked two and one, respectively, in out-of-wedlock births.⁴⁹

According to 1993 statistics, 87 percent of juveniles committed to the Virginia Department of Youth and Family Services did not live with both of their birth parents at the time of commitment (Figure 17).

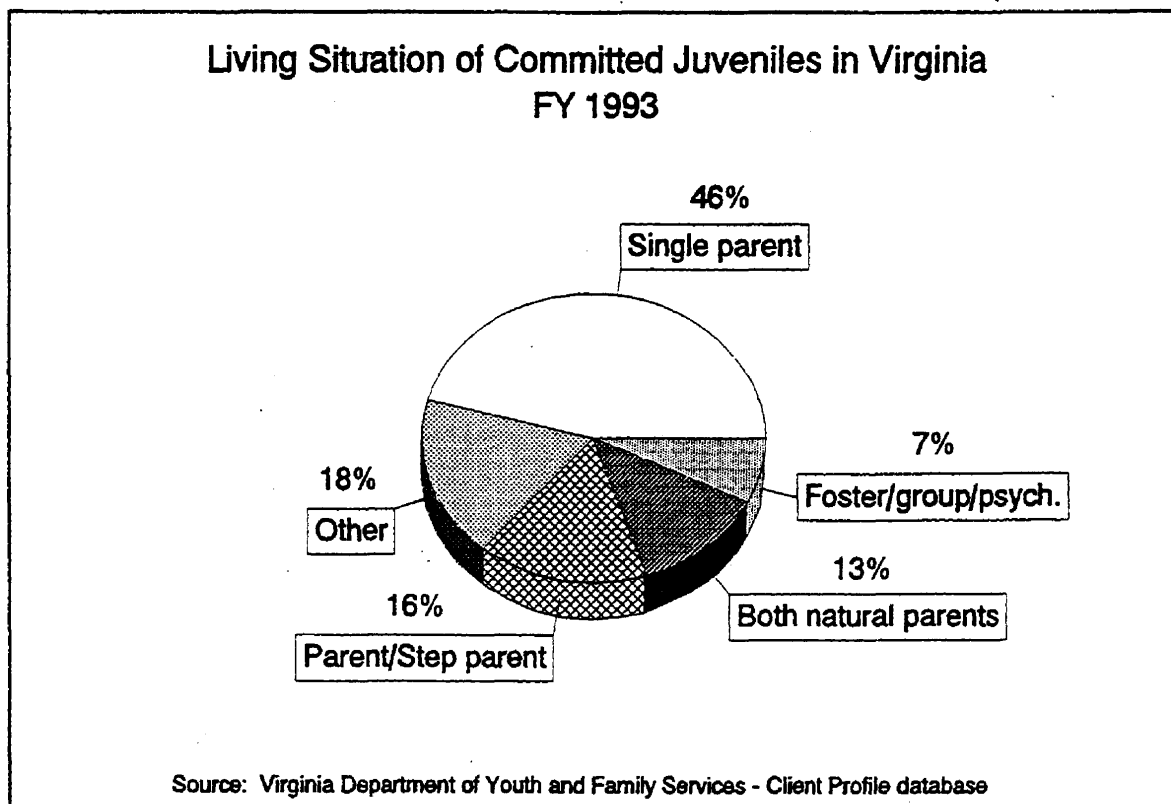


Figure 17

Typically, criminal careers for youth begin around the age of 14.⁵⁰ For Virginia youth, ages 13 through 19, the violent crime arrest rates have been increasing since 1985 (Figure 18). Juvenile violent crime increased by 29 percent in central cities, 18 percent in suburbs, and 22 percent in rural areas between 1987 and 1992.⁵¹ During this period, juvenile murder arrests also climbed alarmingly, posting an increase of 275 percent. In 1992 alone, 72 murder arrests involved Virginia juveniles -- a rise of 28 arrests over 1991.⁵² Nationally, juvenile violent crimes have increased by over 550 percent since 1960.

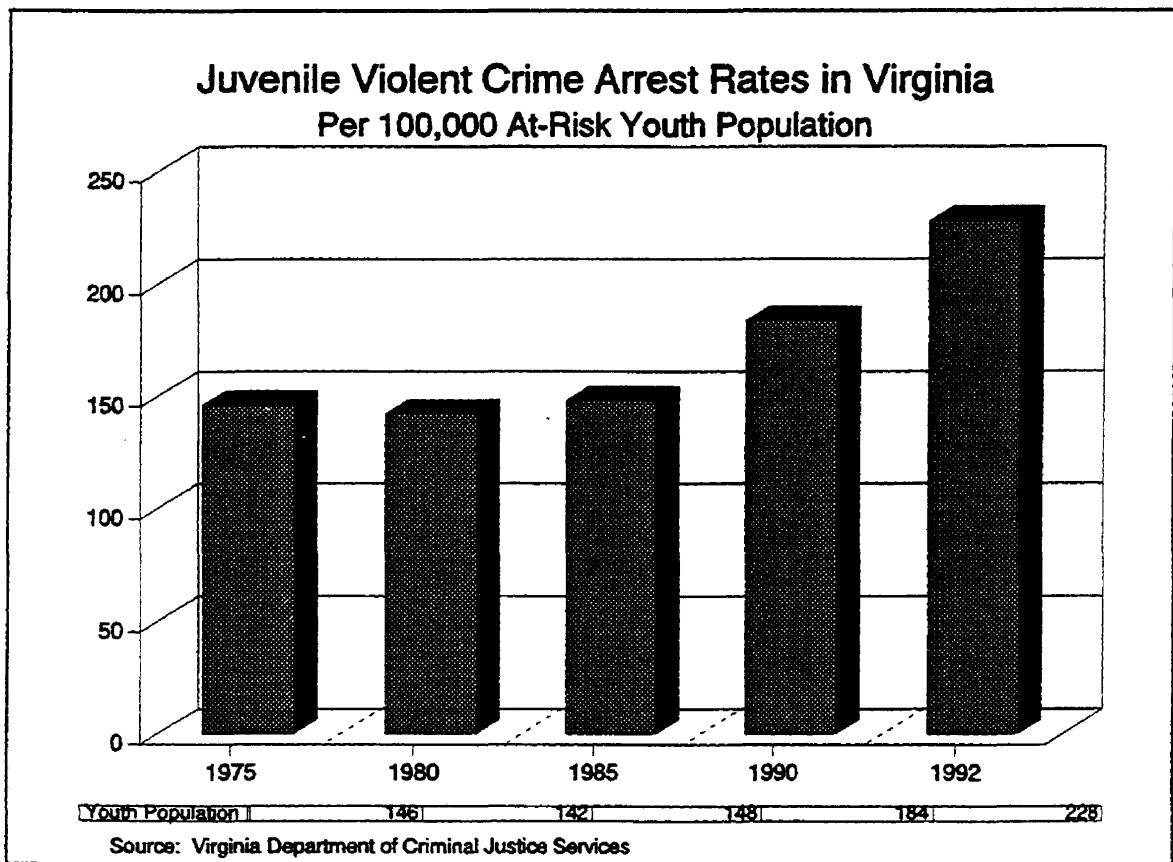


Figure 18

Self-Perpetuation of Single-Parent Families. Children raised in single-parent households are far more likely to have a child out of wedlock than their intact-family counterparts. In fact, the National Survey of Children has found that fully half of the daughters born to single teen-aged mothers became teen parents themselves.⁵³ A sharp contrast exists between daughters continuously living in a two-parent family and daughters who live with an unmarried mother at any time between the ages of 12 and 16. Living in a single-mother household for even a short time increases the daughters' incidence of becoming a single household head by 150 percent among white females and 100 percent among black females.⁵⁴ This correlation is based in part upon the increased likelihood of adolescent daughters raised by single-parent mothers to engage in premarital sex, thereby resulting in higher rates of out-of-wedlock pregnancies. In fact, one study found that girls who live in single parent families are 111 percent more likely to have a baby as a teen, 164 percent more likely to have a child out-of-wedlock, 53 percent more likely to marry as a teen, and 92 percent more likely to have a marital breakup than those from a two-parent family.⁵⁵ Boys raised by single mothers are similarly impacted and, as a consequence, are less likely to become responsible fathers and husbands.⁵⁶

Substance Abuse. Both family structure and the parent-child relationship significantly influence the incidence of substance abuse of youth (ages 10 to 18), according to two studies by researchers at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Youth living in single-parent homes engage in substance usage to a higher degree than those in two-parent homes. By contrast, youth raised with stronger parental relationships exhibited significantly lower rates of substance usage.⁵⁷

A *New York State Journal of Medicine* article reported similar findings when it determined that adolescents cared for in crisis shelters for homeless and runaway youth were typically from single-parent families. According to the *Journal*, these youth were frequent abusers of alcohol and drugs and had engaged in commercial sex.⁵⁸

Abortion and Adoption. Unmarried mothers are involved in the vast majority of abortions in Virginia. In fact, fully 82 percent of pregnancies terminated in the Commonwealth were performed on unmarried mothers (Figure 19). As a result, a child conceived in Virginia by an unmarried woman has substantially greater likelihood of being aborted than a child conceived by a married woman.

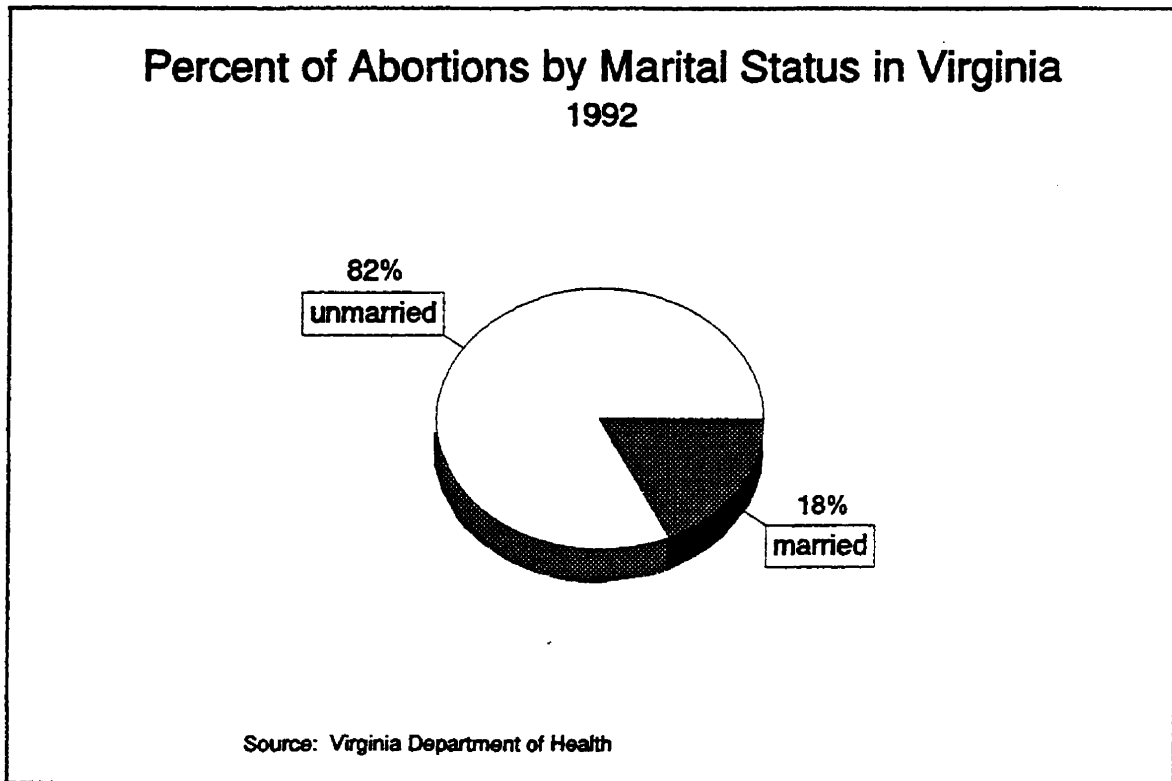


Figure 19

In Virginia, the numbers of abortions peaked in 1990 after rising steadily since the Roe vs Wade decision in 1969 (Figure 20).

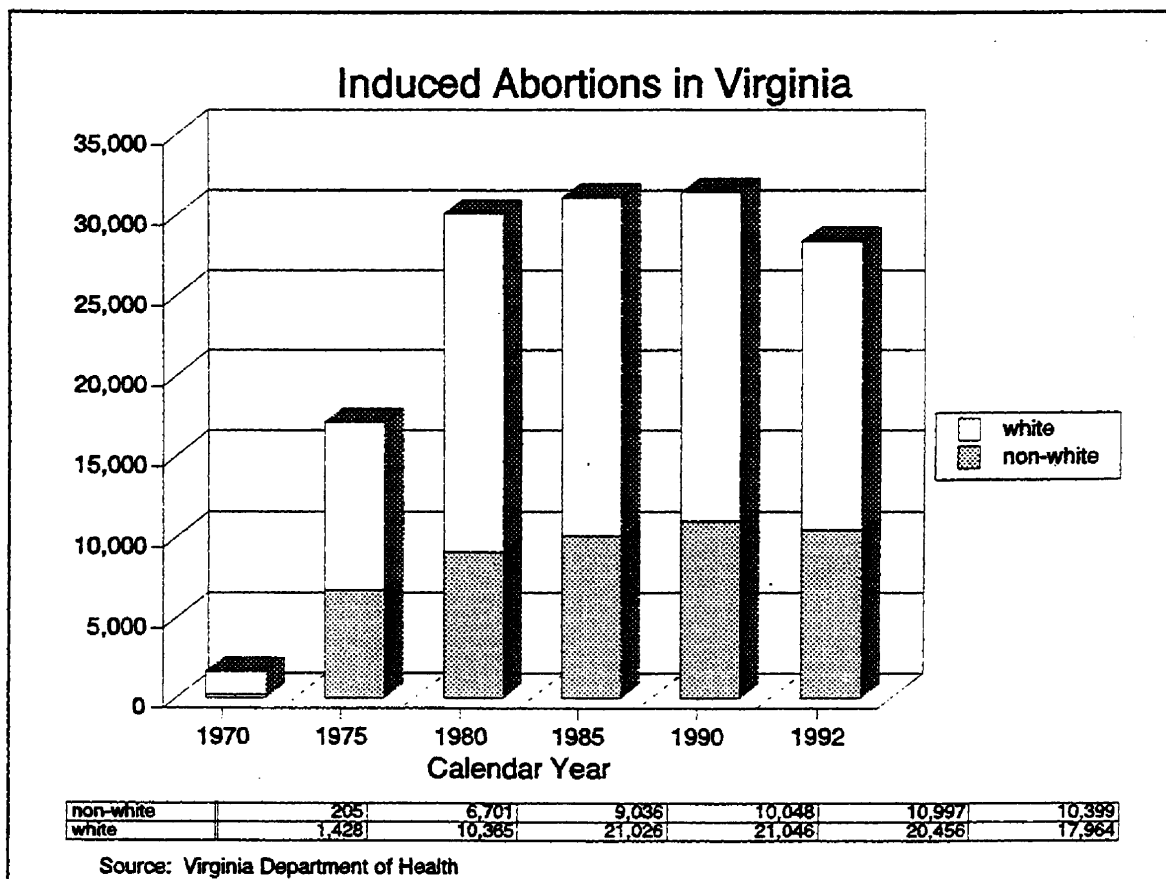


Figure 20

Fueling this trend has been the rise of abortions undergone by teens and unmarried mothers. According to Virginia Department of Health statistics, approximately 20 percent of Virginia abortions result from teen pregnancies, and fully 97 percent of teens undergoing an induced abortion are unmarried.

Abortions, moreover, significantly outpace adoptions in Virginia. There were only 2634 adoptions in Virginia in 1993, compared with 29,207 abortions (Figure 21). Of the total adoptions, only 221 were infants and as a result, the number of families waiting to adopt infants significantly exceeds the number of infants available for adoption.

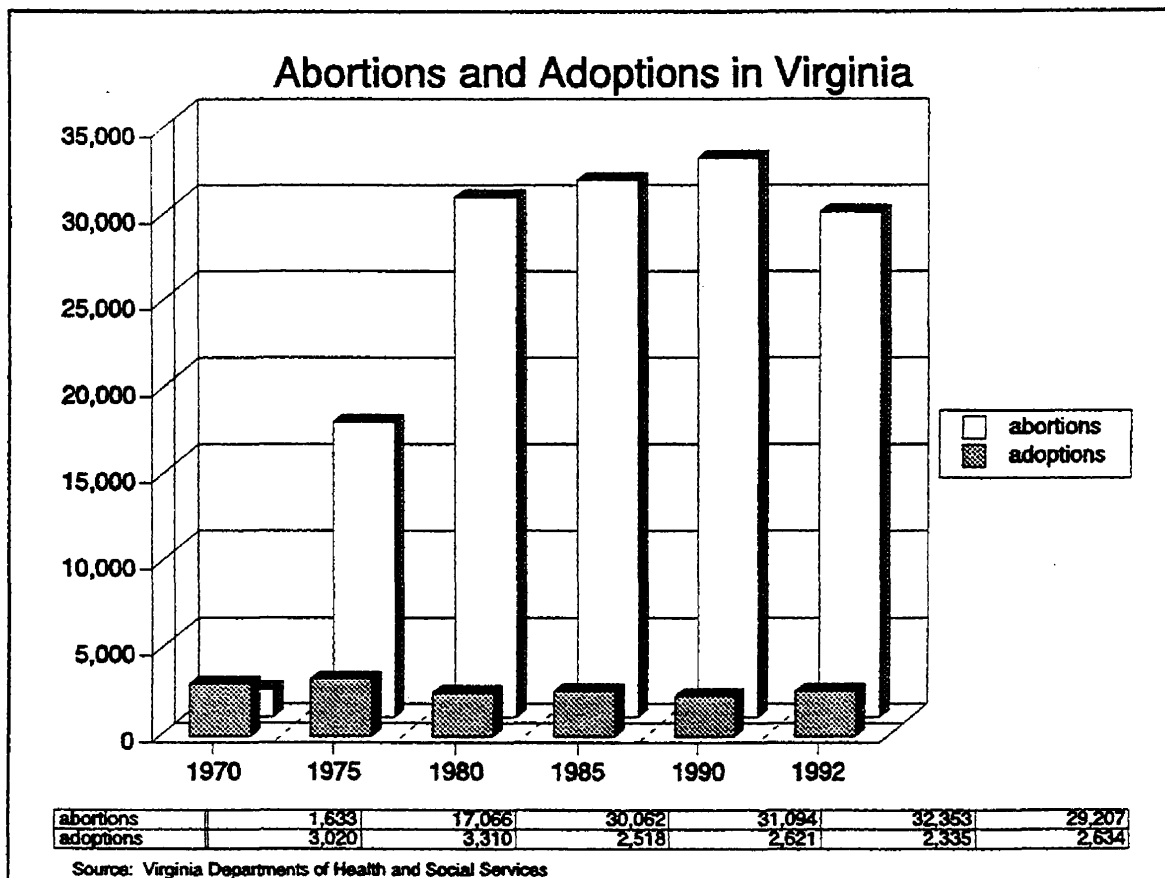


Figure 21

A decrease in the historic cultural stigma of unmarried motherhood and the proliferation of abortions have decreased the number of pregnant mothers choosing to place their children up for adoption, thereby placing their children at greater risk of abortion or, if delivered, of poverty.

While fewer than six percent of teen mothers choose adoption, those who do tend to deliver their children into stable and financially secure homes. Only about two percent of adopted children nationwide live in poverty, compared with 62 percent of children raised by unmarried mothers. This disparity is largely due to the fact that approximately 90 percent of adopted children live with married parents. A related benefit of adoption is that teens who choose adoption are less likely to have a repeat pregnancy.

Child Abuse. Single parents were involved in about 38 percent of Virginia's founded and reason-to-suspect investigations of child abuse. Worse still, this

proportion is greater even than the 21 percent share that single-parent families comprise of all Virginia families.

Child and Teen Suicide. The number of child and teen suicides in Virginia today is more than 200 percent the number experienced in 1960 (Figure 22). Although chilling, these statistics do not completely detail the severity of the problem. Many mental health experts believe some deaths classified as accidents are actually suicides. Moreover, statistics on suicide do not capture serious physical or emotional injuries caused by suicide attempts or the psychological harm that is experienced by family, friends, and peer groups.⁵⁹

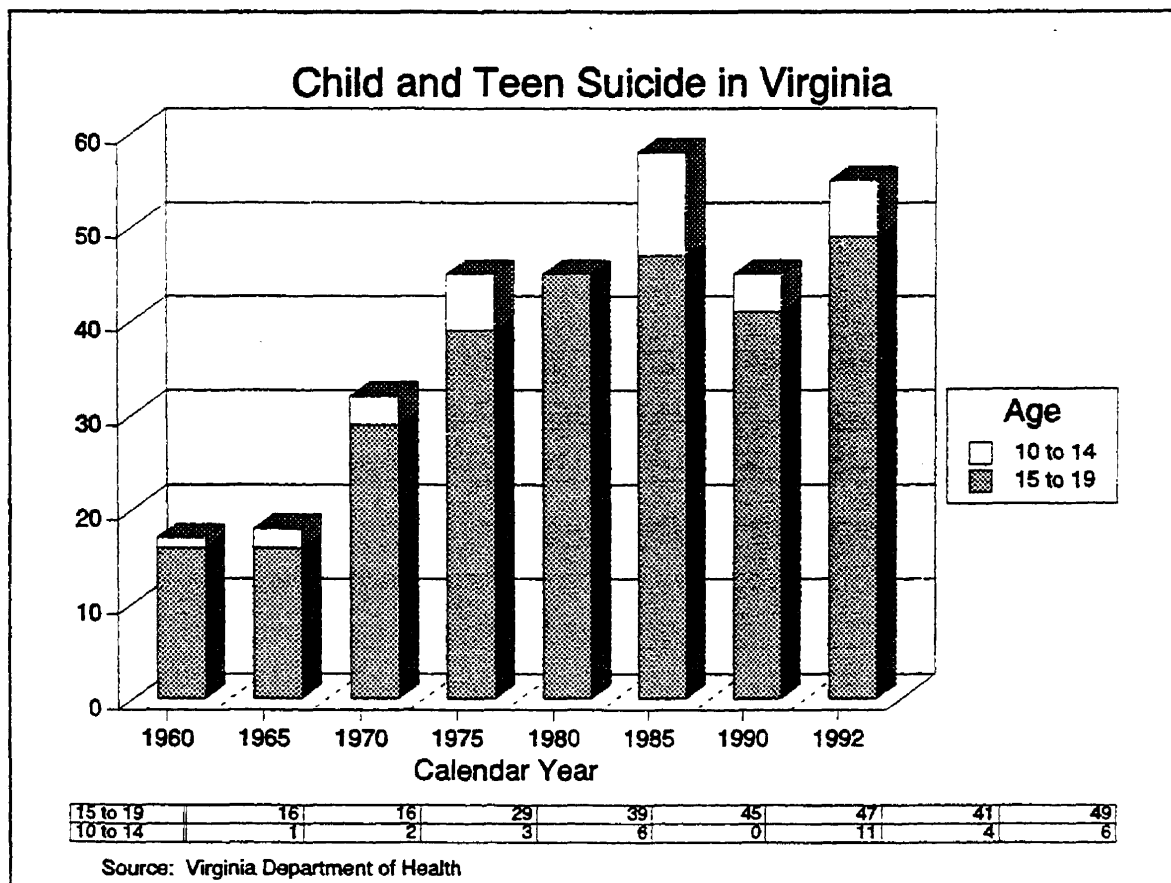


Figure 22

Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among adolescents. Furthermore, experts estimate that for every successful suicide, there are at least 50 to 100 suicide attempts.⁶⁰

Researchers have found that suicides are linked to a lack of stability and order in the lives of some youth. Harvard psychiatrist Armand M. Nicholi estimates that 50 percent of suicidal youth come from broken homes. In this regard, he finds that the early loss of a father is especially significant. According to Dr. Nicholi,

*An overview of recent research in the field points -- with unmistakable clarity -- to the changes in child-rearing practices and in the stability of the home as significant factors in the rising rate of suicide.*⁶¹

This determination is evidenced by the plea of a suicide note that a Houston teen pinned to his clothing before hanging himself from a park tree. The note read, "This is the only thing around here that has any roots."⁶²

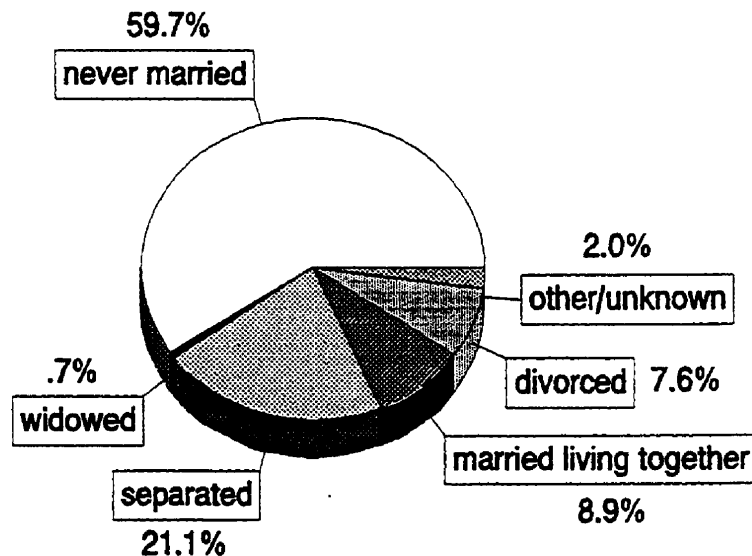
Society

Perhaps the most evident and measurable of the social costs associated with single-parent families are the social service expenditures that result from the financial strains experienced by single-parent families. For example, of all Virginia households receiving AFDC in 1994, only 8.9 percent were married-couple households.

From 1976 to 1992, the proportion of never-married mothers in the United States receiving AFDC more than doubled, rising from 21 percent to 52 percent. National data reflect that slightly over one fourth of never-married mothers and about half of all AFDC mothers have income below 50 percent of the federal poverty line.⁶³

As detailed in Figure 23, almost 60 percent of AFDC recipients in Virginia have never married. When viewed with those recipients who are separated or divorced, nearly 90 percent of all Virginia AFDC recipients are heads of single-parent households.

Marital Status of AFDC Recipients in Virginia July 1994



Source: Virginia Department of Social Services

Figure 23

Conclusion

Although public assistance illustrates in the most concrete terms the social costs of single-parent families, nearly all the preceding data on spouses and children in single-parent households point to broader significant social costs. While such related social ills as crime, poor educational performance, child abuse, and developmental problems may be difficult to completely quantify, their correlation to the increased number of single-parent families is unmistakable. Accordingly, social scientists are increasingly concluding that these social costs would be significantly ameliorated if the numbers of single-parent families were to decline. According to noted welfare analyst Michael Novak,

[T]he public costs of having children out of wedlock are very high. Children born out of wedlock tend to have high infant mortality, low birth weight (with attendant morbidities), and high probabilities of being poor, not completing school, and staying on welfare themselves. As a matter of public policy, if not of morality,

*it pays for society to approve of marriage as the best setting for children, and to discourage having children out of wedlock.*⁶⁴

Nothing in this study, however, should be construed to imply a subjective judgment about the workability or well-being of any particular family when compared with another. Individual families, whether of one-parent or two-parent structure, may have particular qualities which are not susceptible to a general quantitative analysis. An example might be the special skills and commitment of a particular single mother, coupled with a strong male role model outside the home. Moreover, no claim is made that family structure is the *only* cause of the costs and benefits identified in this section. Nonetheless, it is clear that family structure is an exceptionally important factor in bringing about overall well-being, as illustrated by the measurements of impact detailed in this section.

IV. POLICIES AFFECTING VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES

Due to the broad scope of the causal factors that affect the formation and preservation of strong families in Virginia, some may not be susceptible to general empirical analysis. There are many factors, too, which do not fall within a government policy context. Despite the difficulty of enumerating all of the causes of family dissolution, a number of important causes of family structure relevant to public policy can be isolated. As a result, this section will focus upon those public policies that have a substantial impact on the formation and preservation of Virginia's families.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Current AFDC policy serves as a powerful deterrent to the formation of two-parent families in low-income communities. Frequently, single women who become pregnant may not marry without incurring a substantial economic penalty. A related impact of AFDC is its tendency to foster economic dependency by distorting intrinsic human motivations and values. Many people on AFDC are caught in a cruel web. They want to be employed, self-reliant, and responsible for themselves and their children. However, the perverse economic disincentives of AFDC make it difficult for them to make that choice. And when individuals and families lose the incentive to earn that which they receive, they can become economically dependent on public support. This dependency further erodes self-reliance and personal responsibility.

Policies which act as deterrents to the formation and preservation of two-parent families and the achievement of economic self-sufficiency include:

Deprivation Policy. The basic AFDC program, with its federally-based deprivation policy, requires a child to be deprived of a parent's support due to death, incarceration, continued absence, or incapacity in order to be eligible for benefits. While this policy supports the poorest of single-parent families, it serves as a major barrier to the formation and preservation of two-parent families. Only with incapacity can two-parent families become eligible under this policy. As a consequence of this deprivation policy and the strict limits placed on assistance to two-parent families, few incentives currently exist to encourage single women who become pregnant to marry.

Further a single mother who marries and becomes a member of a two-parent family would thereby lose eligibility under the basic AFDC program, unless one of the spouses is incapacitated.

Unemployed parent program. Separate AFDC eligibility may be obtained through the AFDC-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program. However, the stringent restrictions of this program act to deter two-parent family formations. These limitations include (a) requiring the family's primary wage earner to document having worked for six quarters in the last three years (a federal requirement) and (b) limiting AFDC-UP benefits to six months in a twelve-month period (a state option). For many types of employment typical of lower-income workers, records may not exist or employers may not be able or willing to review them for the purpose of verifying information. Moreover, many young parents do not have sufficient work histories to qualify and, therefore, may be forced to split up in order to qualify for AFDC.

Stable family formation is further hindered by the six-month time limit imposed upon a married couple in Virginia as compared to the unlimited period of eligibility for AFDC benefits if the single parents remain unmarried. A single mother, for example, must choose between guaranteed long-term benefits (which are not infrequently supplemented by live-in partners) and six months of benefits followed by an income which, in the short term at least, may lack the relative security of AFDC benefits. This disincentive to the formation and maintenance of two-parent families created by this policy is very powerful. Worse still, statistical data indicate that single mothers and their children would be far better off in a two-parent family structure than in the single-parent arrangement tacitly encouraged by this policy.

Step-parent income. By federal policy, when a parent on AFDC marries someone other than the child's parent, the income of the step-parent is included in the determination of continued eligibility of the children. As a result, the treatment of step-parent income serves as a disincentive for marriage. It is important to recall that, prior to the institution of changes in federal policy in 1981, step-parent income did not interfere with benefits eligibility of children. In April 1994, Virginia implemented a three-year federal waiver permitting less stringent requirements for the application

of step-parent income. Under this waiver, the Commonwealth will only treat income above 150 percent of poverty guidelines as criteria contributing to benefits eligibility. This change in policy is expected to remove some obstacles to the formation and maintenance of step-parent families.

Resource limits. Under federal AFDC policy, a family is not eligible for assistance if they own a vehicle with an equity value greater than \$1,500. As a result, families on AFDC are hindered in their ability to obtain a reliable vehicle for transportation to and from work or training, thereby reducing the potential for self-sufficiency. Similar resource limits also restrict low-income Virginians' opportunities for home ownership and educational opportunities.

Child Support. A minor who bears an out-of-wedlock child can be treated as an adult and receive AFDC, with no requirement to reside with her parents. Further, parents of a minor mother or minor father have no obligation to support their grandchild.

Increased Benefits for Additional Children. When an AFDC mother bears a child, the grant is increased to cover that child's needs, assuming child support is not sufficient.

Not surprisingly, several national studies have identified a correlation between increased welfare benefits and a lower rate of participation in the labor force.⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ Moreover, studies have also linked benefit levels with increased out-of-wedlock births.⁶⁷

Adoption

Although there were over 27,000 out-of-wedlock births in Virginia in 1992, there were less than 250 finalized infant adoptions in the Commonwealth during that year.⁶⁸ In Virginia, three forces converge which help explain this very low number of infant adoptions:

(a) Adoptions are highly regulated. Not infrequently, those wishing to adopt as well as those wishing to put up their child for adoption are deterred by highly-burdensome regulations.

(b) There is a great deal of misinformation and social stigma attached to adoption. Contrary to much of this misinformation, however, children adopted into stable two-parent homes have shown none of the negative propensities of children being raised in single-parent homes.

(c) Counselors, social workers, and the like are not well informed on the benefits of adoption. Single mothers are often not presented with adoption as a viable option.

These structural and social deterrents to adoption encourage the perpetuation of single-parent homes. Instead of being raised in an economically independent two-parent family, many children born out of wedlock experience child poverty, developmental difficulties, and a tendency to perpetuate the out-of-wedlock birth cycle.

Parental Notification

In Virginia, abortions are currently committed on minor females without prior notification or consent of their parents. This is true in spite of the fact that parental consent is required for virtually every other type of invasive medical procedure, such as physical exams, ear piercing, dentistry, and acne treatment. In fact, parental consent is often required before common medications, such as aspirin, asthma inhalants, and basic antibiotics, can be administered to minors.

Failure to require parental notification or consent fosters a lack of communication between parents and children. It fosters a sense among the young of complete autonomy from responsible authority and guidance. Researchers have found a link between decreased communication between parent and child and a number of social pathologies, including teen suicide and illegitimate births.

Moreover, there are potentially serious health hazards associated with the failure to require parental notification for teen abortions. Minors undergoing abortion are at risk for a number of medical complications, including hemorrhaging, future infertility, and death. This risk is substantially heightened without the mature care of

a parent or guardian who lives with the minor. The lack of a parental notification requirement places teens at risk of suffering these medical complications without the knowledge of their parents or guardians. Unaware that their daughters have undergone an abortion, parents are not able to be vigilant for such real consequences as late night hemorrhaging. As a result, they may not be in a position to aid their daughters when potentially life-saving assistance is needed.

Sex Education

Most sex education programs currently funded in schools operate from the assumption that young unmarried minors, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, will be unable to refrain from sexual activity. Given this assumption, the strategy in these programs is to encourage the use of contraceptives, particularly condoms, to prevent both conception and the spread of disease. For a number of reasons, this assumption and the strategy that follow from it are flawed and unlikely to encourage the formation and preservation of two-parent families.

(a) This approach implicitly assumes that minors are incapable of self-restraint. Moreover, making this assumption simultaneously excludes the possibility of encouraging restraint in an environment that, due to media and other influences, is already rife with messages encouraging promiscuity.

(b) Contraceptive education may tacitly encourage sexual behavior while not at the same time ensuring a high incidence of contraceptive usage. Indeed, researchers William Marsiglio and Frank Mott have found that "prior exposure to a sex education course is positively and significantly associated with the initiation of sexual activity at ages 15 and 16." It is not, however, as closely associated with the observance of safe sexual practices.⁶⁹

(c) Condom failure rates can be dangerously high. In the 15 to 24 year old range, condom failure ranges from a low of over 10 percent to a high of over 35 percent.⁷⁰ With the current threat of HIV and AIDS infection, this fact is particularly disturbing.

(d) Finally, contraceptive education may send a message to youth -- particularly male youth -- that sexual activity can be engaged in without the risk of begetting a child. If contraception fails and conception takes place, the resulting attitude may be

less that of the assumption of responsibility than the rejection of unintended consequences. As a result, current contraceptive education may increase the likelihood that fathers will hide from or renege on their paternity obligations.

Parental Control and Community Involvement in Education

A crucial ingredient in education reform is increasing parental control and community involvement in local schools. Almost always, parental involvement in education improves student performance.

Academic standards. Rigorous, measurable, and specific performance standards in the basic subjects of English, math, science, and social studies would promote real accountability. Parents need to be able to use these standards to determine if their children are learning what they need to know to make a living and be good citizens. The lines of communication between home and school should be improved so that parents, students, and teachers know exactly what the student is expected to learn.

Charter schools. Public schools established by parents, teachers, community workers, and administrators to operate as "charter schools" with increased autonomy and flexibility can foster parent involvement and academic achievement. These schools operate under a results-based contract (charter) with guaranteed specific results. Parents usually serve on the board of directors or school council and play a greater role in their children's education.

School discipline and safety. No child can learn if the classroom is disrupted by misbehaving students or if he feels he will be beaten in the hall or on the bus. School must be an oasis of safety for children in order to maximize learning. Many teachers and principals express fear of being sued if they discipline a child. We must give teachers the confidence and ability to retake control of their classrooms by protecting them from liability when they are sued for meting out discipline in good faith. Additionally, a criminal record check of all new school employees would assist in protecting students to help assure their safety.

• **Family life education.** The current statewide policy for family life education requires that all children – starting in kindergarten – be automatically enrolled in family life education classes unless the parents file a written objection. Many parents are forced to choose between allowing their child to attend these classes or placing their children in a situation where they may be stigmatized and subjected to teacher or peer pressure when they are removed from class.

Taxes and Family Time

The tax burden on families has increased dramatically since the 1940s. In 1948, the average family of four paid just 2 percent of their income in federal taxes; by 1993, that figure had swelled to 24 percent.⁷¹ The strain of meeting the additional tax burden, in combination with other economic strains, has forced many mothers into the work force. However, the loss of family time does not appear to be offset by appreciable income gains. Approximately two-thirds of working mothers' income goes to increased federal taxes, and only about one-third of the mother's income is available to support the family.⁷²

By compelling more and more two-parent families to jointly enter the work force, the nation's heavy tax burden reduces the amount of time that both parents can spend with their children. Parents spend 40 percent less time interacting with their children than parents of earlier generations.⁷³

Current federal tax policy impacts Virginia's families in a number of ways. The federal income tax system has three major provisions targeted to families raising children: (i) the personal exemption; (ii) the Dependent Care Tax Credit; and (iii) the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Personal and dependent exemption. The dependent exemption is intended to offset part of the annual cost of raising a child by allowing a specified amount of taxable income to be exempted from taxation. However, over the past four decades, increases in personal and dependent exemption allowances have not kept up with inflation. Consequently, the real burden upon families of federal income taxation has increased significantly. As noted above, the average share of family income consumed by federal taxes has grown from 2 to 24 percent of income.

In 1948, the tax exemption for a child was \$600, or 42.1 percent of the per capita personal income at that time. In 1993, it is \$2,500, equivalent to 11.4 percent (see Figure 24). In order to restore the value of the exemption received by families in 1948, it would have to be increased to more than \$9,200. In fact, the Urban Institute has recommended an increase to \$8,000 in order to mitigate the loss in value that has occurred during the last 46 years.

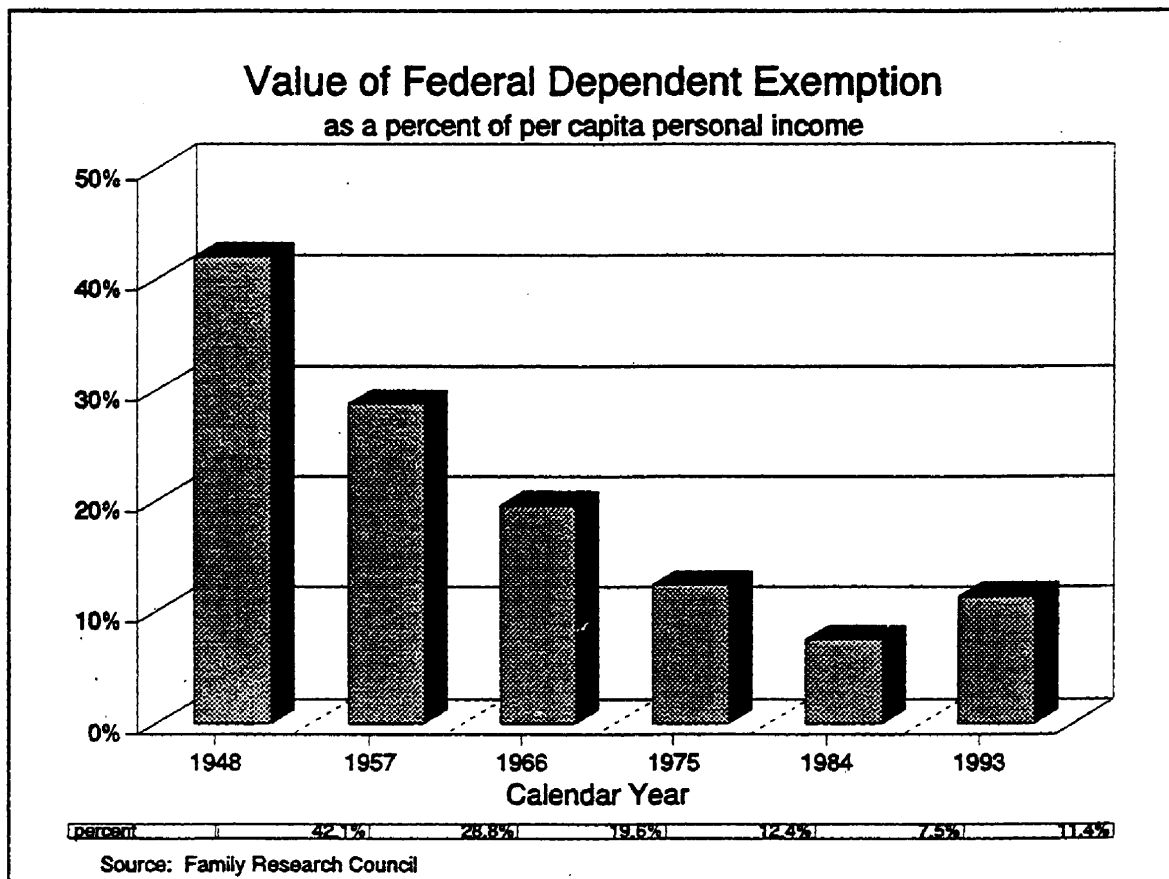


Figure 24

Virginia's personal and dependent exemption lags behind the federal exemption amount. In 1972, Virginia's exemption amount was \$600 while the federal one was \$700. Today, Virginia's exemption is \$800 while the federal exemption, indexed annually for inflation, is \$2,500. A low personal and dependent exemption particularly affects low and middle-income taxpayers with families. Since a high

percentage of General Fund revenue is derived from income tax, low and middle-income taxpayers bear a disproportionate share of the tax burden.

Economic strains, including the loss of household income that has resulted from the burden of increased taxes, has compelled many spouses to work. In fact, today the average employed mother earns about 34 percent of total family income. Only about one-third of the mother's income is available to support the family, however, since approximately two-thirds of it is consumed by federal taxes (see Figure 25).

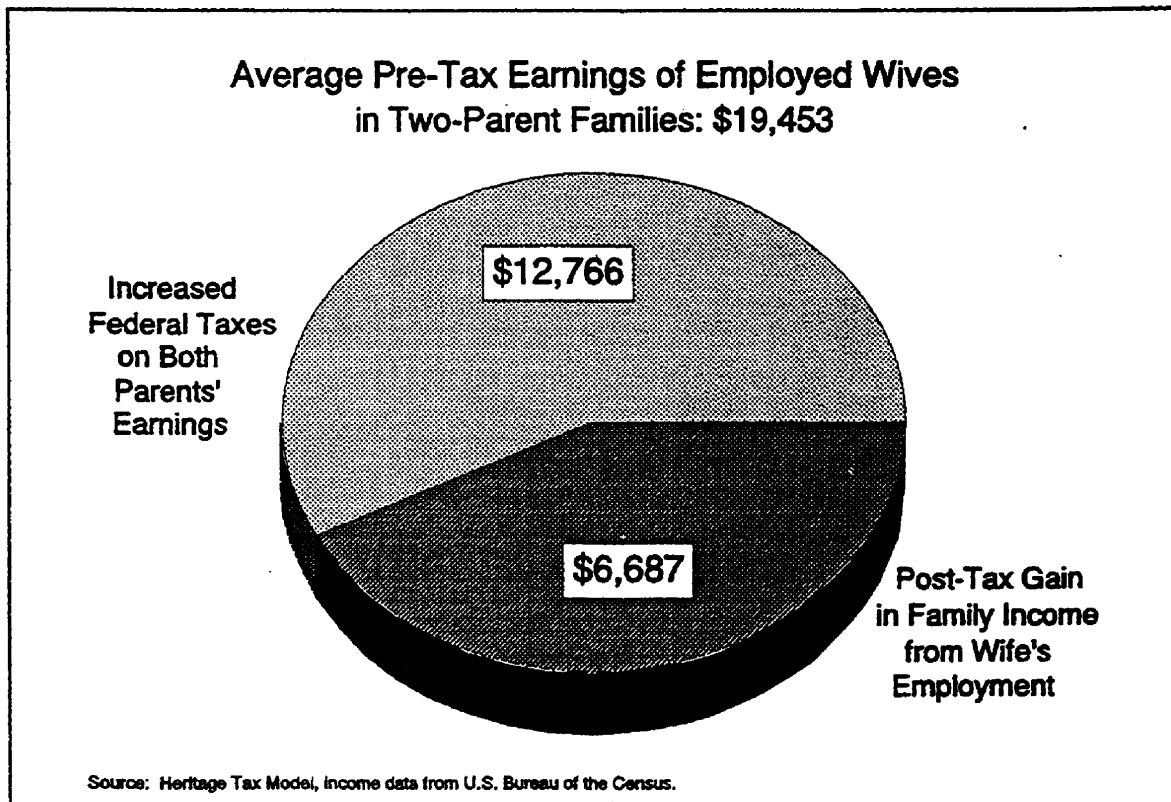


Figure 25

Due in large part to the rise in two-parent workers, parents are unable to spend as much time interacting with their children as did parents of earlier generations. In fact, parents spent an average of 30 hours per week in 1965 with their children, versus 17 hours in 1985, a reduction by nearly 50 percent.⁷⁴

Although not every working mother would leave employment if given the opportunity, a 1988 *USA Today* survey indicated that 73 percent of two-parent families would prefer that one parent remain home to care for their children if money was not an issue.⁷⁵ Many other surveys have shown that most parents wished they had more time to spend with their children. In 1989, for example, a *New York Times* survey found that 72 percent of employed fathers and 83 percent of employed mothers felt torn by the conflict between their jobs and their wish to spend increased time with their families.⁷⁶

In addition to the eroding value of the personal exemption, Social Security taxes have risen significantly. In 1948, payroll deductions made to fund Social Security totalled 2 percent of income; today they consume a total of 15 percent of wages up to \$55,000 annually. And since Social Security does not make any adjustments for dependents, this tax is particularly burdensome on families with children.

Dependent Care Tax Credit. Creating additional tax credits for dependent children is also cited as a way to reduce the tax burden on families. In 1991, the National Commission on Children proposed a \$1,000-per-child tax credit for families with children age 18 and under. In fact, the Commission recommended that the personal exemption for dependent children be eliminated to offset the costs of the tax credit. Since then, lawmakers including Virginia Representative Frank R. Wolf have introduced family tax relief measures to offset the increased federal tax burden.

Nevertheless, a dependent care tax credit is not seen as the optimal solution to the current federal tax burden. According to the National Commission on Children, the effectiveness of a dependent care tax credit is limited. Because the credit can only be deducted from taxes owed, it does not benefit families whose earnings are not high enough for them to owe taxes. Moreover, the credit is limited to paid and documented child care expenses and cannot be claimed for care by parents or for arrangements where the caregiver does not claim the payment as income. Unfortunately, the dependent care tax credit favors families with employed mothers over families where one parent chooses to remain out of the work force to care for their child.

• Virginia's child and dependent care deduction is equal to the amount of expenses upon which the federal credit is based, with a maximum of \$2,400 for the care of one child or \$4,800 for two or more children.

Earned Income Tax Credit. The EITC is a credit on federal income tax liability for poor families with children. Intended to encourage work, the EITC benefit increases with earnings up to a specified limit. If a family's benefit exceeds the taxes they owe, a refund payment is due to them.

There are, however, certain drawbacks to the EITC. As a targeted anti-poverty initiative, the EITC supports both one and two-parent families. For example, two-parent and single-parent families with the same income receive the same wage supplement for one child. If two low-income working individuals with families marry, they lose some portion of the value of their individual credits because of the resulting combined income. Likewise, low-income two-parent families with two incomes would receive a greater EITC if they separated.

Marital Penalties. The EITC, unfortunately, is only one source of marital penalties in the tax code. Federal taxes currently utilize two schedules, one for single individuals and parents and one for married couples. The net effect of the different tax treatment that results is marked, as married couples bear a greater tax burden than do their single counterparts.

For example, a two-parent family in which both parents work and earn a total of \$30,000 annually will pay \$1,794 in taxes. By contrast, an unmarried couple in the same circumstances would actually receive a net tax refund of \$602. The basis for this substantial difference is that the unmarried parents would each receive an earned income tax credit based on each individual's income of \$15,000, whereas the married couple would not qualify for this with a combined income of \$30,000. There is an even less justifiable penalty involved if only one parent works and the other spouse remains at home to care for their children. Unlike the two-income couples described above, a married couple with only one wage earner at the \$30,000 level pays taxes of \$3,159.

Unlike the federal government, the Commonwealth's tax code does not provide different tax schedules for taxpayers of varying marital status. However, Virginia does make a standard deduction available to non-itemizing state income taxpayers that does vary by marital status. This deduction is valued at \$3,000 for a single taxpayers but only \$5,000 for their married counterparts, thereby resulting in a \$1,000 penalty for married filers.

Figure 26 illustrates these varying burdens on different family structures, all with income of \$30,000 and two children.

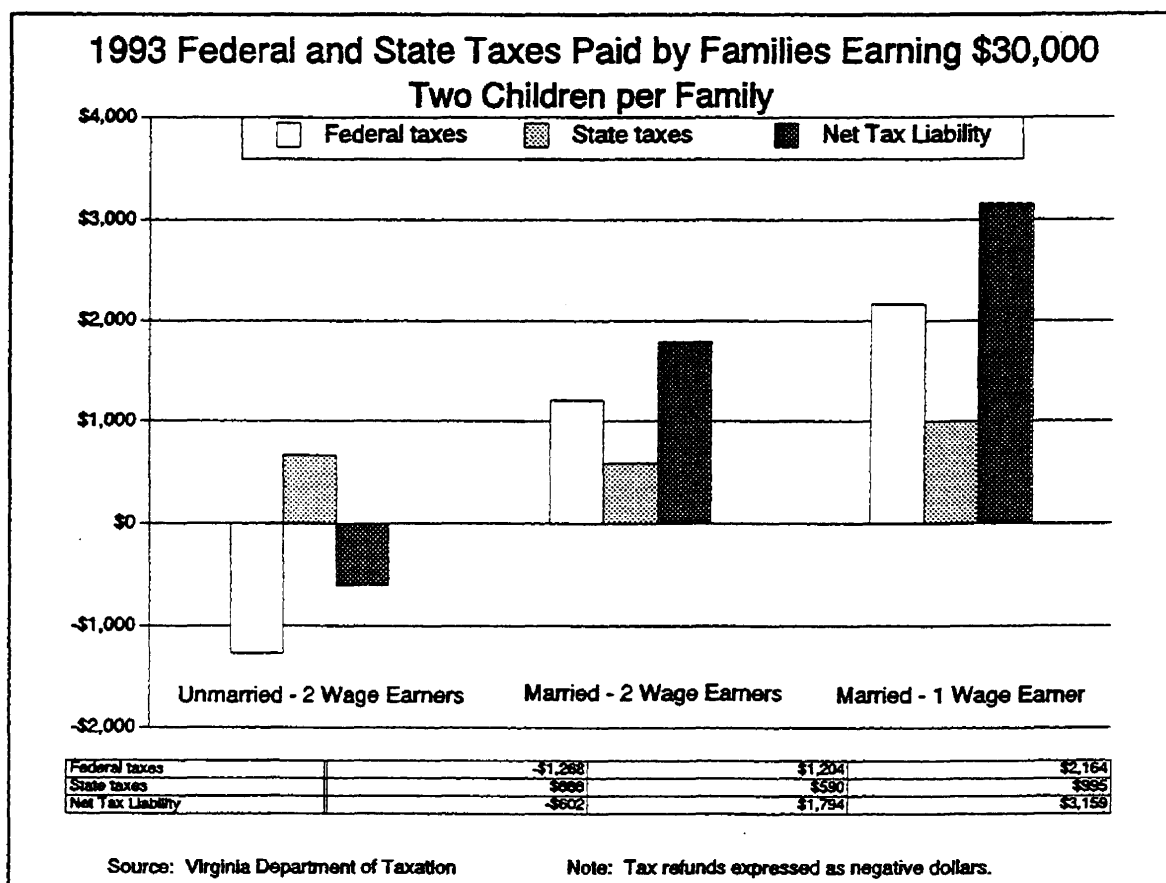


Figure 26

As Figure 27 illustrates, the marital penalty extends even to middle income taxpayers. For taxpayers with earnings of \$60,000, federal and state taxes are lowest for unmarried two-income couples and highest for single-income married couples.

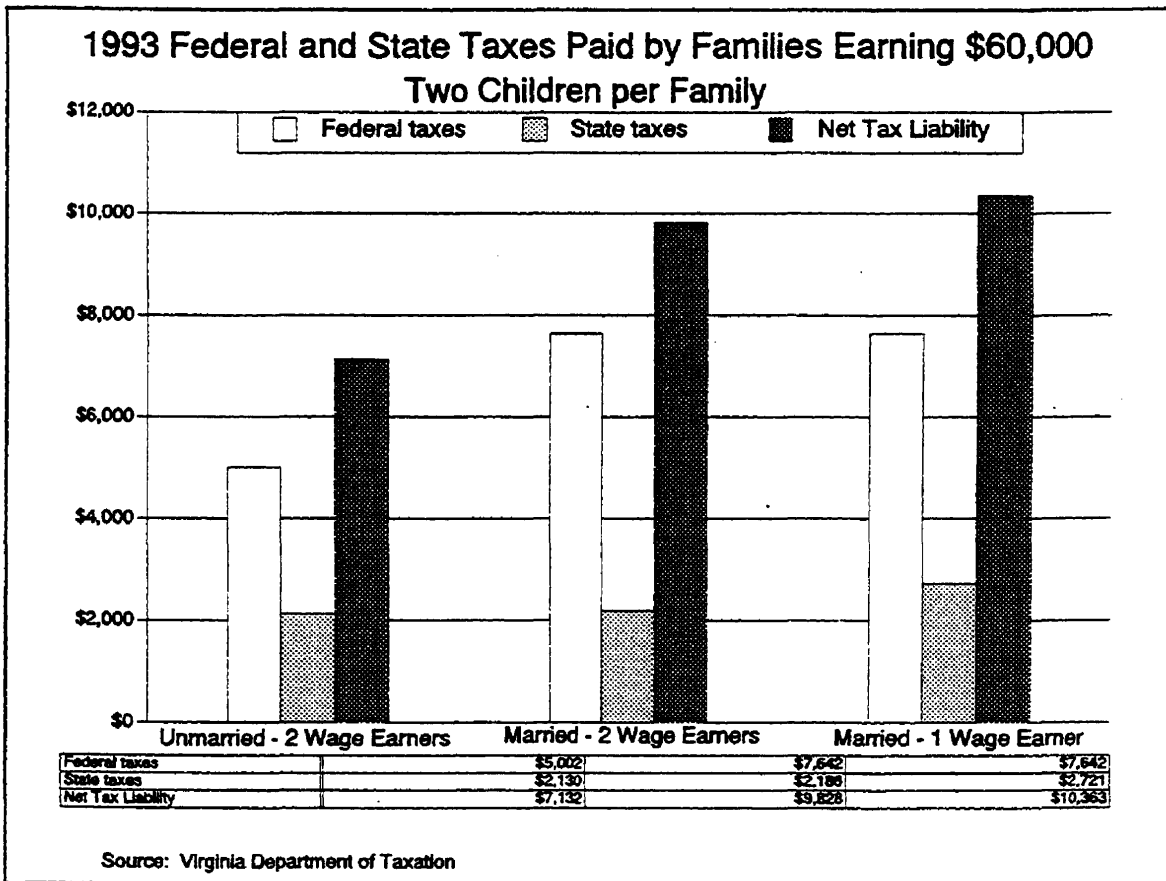


Figure 27

No-Fault Divorce

In the 1960s, substantial changes in the divorce laws began to take place throughout the United States. This change contributed to a substantial increase in the number of divorces. In fact, the marriage contract is now unlike most any other contract one can make: its central terms can be unilaterally broken by either party with almost no penalty.⁷⁷

University of California social analyst James Q. Wilson has analyzed the social phenomenon associated with the changes in divorce laws. According to Wilson,

The contemporary legal system views people as autonomous individuals endowed with rights and entering into real or implied contracts. The liberalization of laws pertaining to marriage and divorce arose out of just such a view. Marriage, once a sacrament, has become in the eyes of the law a contract that is easily negotiated, renegotiated, or rescinded. Within a few years, no-fault divorce on demand became possible, after millennia in which such an idea would have been unthinkable. It is now easier to renounce a marriage than a mortgage; at least the former occurs much more frequently than the latter. Half of all divorced fathers rarely see their children, and most pay no child support.⁷⁸

Even remarriage -- which is otherwise preferable to the maintenance of single-parent families -- is unable to reverse the serious negative effects of divorce on children. For children whose development is disrupted by divorce, the resulting harm is not likely to be completely ameliorated by a second marriage, even if that union lasts longer than the one which preceded it.

This point was succinctly stated recently by social analyst Irving Kristol:

The new focus on the father derives mainly from the realization that the social pathologies exhibited by families on welfare, or in the "underclass" generally, have a lot to do with the fact that these are so often fatherless families. (It may also flow from a sense of disquiet among the middle classes at the discovery, from our statistical data, that even divorced parents -- even when they are remarried - - create problems for their children.)⁷⁹

In light of these findings, the role that no-fault divorce has played in encouraging or facilitating the destruction of two-parent families is becoming increasingly evident. As a result, many social scientists and lawmakers have been giving careful consideration to policies that may be able to strengthen the institution of marriage.

Child Support

Children in families headed by single mothers are eight times more likely than those in married-couple families to live below the poverty line. This disparity is often attributable to the lack of consistent or meaningful child support payments. In

households where the mother was never married, it is uncommon for the mother to receive child support from the father of her children. Less than one-quarter of mothers who have never married have child support orders, a fact that is often due to their failure to establish paternity. In fact, for all families where child support orders exist, roughly 75 percent of families actually receive any support and only 50 percent receive the full amount.⁸⁰

As the Governor's Commission on Citizen Empowerment has revealed, the welfare system provides powerful disincentives that dissuade low-income Virginians from forming stable two-parent families. This influence is especially evident where child support is involved, since the system provides disincentives for the father to support his children financially. In order to receive AFDC benefits, a single mother must sign over her rights to child support payments to the state. The process of distribution of child support payments provides little incentive for the absent father to pay. For a typical child support payment, only \$50 per month is "passed through" to the family above and beyond the AFDC grant.

The treatment of child support payments as supplemental to AFDC benefits is complemented by the personal complications frequently inherent in establishing paternity. Because the welfare system currently provides only \$50 of child support collections to recipients, single mothers often make private arrangements with the fathers of their children. However, absent adequate enforcement or official paternity establishment, many fathers renege on these arrangements, thereby leaving their children without any support.

Conclusion

Public policies and the erosion of personal responsibility alike appear to be subtly recreating family conditions that have been largely absent in America since the institution of slavery was abolished. However, there is a significant difference between these two eras. Today's disintegration of the family differs from that which occurred during the time of slavery in that the victims of slavery knew of the great loss they were suffering. As internationally-acclaimed social scientist Edith Schaeffer has observed,

One shattering aspect of slavery was the breakup of homes. Human beings were sold out of their families, never to have contact and sometimes never to meet again. Quite rightly, this is spoken of as a shadow spoiling the history of a nation wherever it occurred. But the staggering thing in the twentieth century is the abandonment of responsibility to keep a family together, on the very part of the two adults whose family it is. What a hue and cry there would be today if men and women were put on a block and auctioned off, leaving behind weeping babies, and children in the split which would be taking place as they were carted off to two different geographic locations! But the same people take themselves off, expecting to give some sort of substitute for the continuity they should be providing, by dividing their children's time or in some cases sending their children off to foster homes. Homes of today -- shattered and split as thoroughly as in any slave-auctioning times -- by cold choice.⁸¹

V. STRENGTHENING VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES

A number of proposals have come to light in recent years to eliminate the anti-family incentives currently incorporated into a broad spectrum of public policies. The following recommendations offer a number of options to eliminate disincentives to two-parent family formation and preservation, as well as some positive proposals to strengthen existing two-parent families.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children

(a) Develop a welfare to work program to replace the current AFDC system with one providing temporary employment-based assistance which emphasizes the value of work and personal responsibilities.

(b) Require all recipients to sign an agreement of personal responsibility and to participate in a work requirement. Provide access to quality medical, child care, and transportation services for participants.

(c) Subject all able-bodied recipients to a two year time limit on their eligibility for benefits, with up to 12 additional months of transitional assistance.

(d) Develop an AFDC "diversion" program for families in a crisis to provide limited assistance with the intent of preventing family break-up and long-term AFDC dependency.

(e) Eliminate additional AFDC funding for children conceived and born while their parent(s) are on AFDC. Allow the family to keep all child support collected for such a child without impacting the amount of the AFDC grant for the family.

(f) Revise the role of eligibility workers so that they serve as self-reliance workers, assisting welfare recipients to achieve economic independence and build strong families.

(g) Restructure benefits to unwed teen mothers by requiring them to live with their parents, grandparents, or guardian and to attend school or achieve satisfactory progress toward an equivalency degree.

(h) Require minor fathers, and if necessary, their parents to contribute financially to the support of their children and fully prosecute adult fathers of children born to minor mothers for statutory rape.

(i) Require the establishment of paternity as a condition of eligibility for continued AFDC after six months.

(j) Require children in families benefitting from AFDC to attend school to enhance the chances of economic security and family stability in future generations.

(k) Expand the time limit restriction on the AFDC-Unemployed Parent program.

Adoption

Current legislation makes the legal requirements for adoption easier to meet, and provides greater protection to involved parties in adoptive placement. For children who are placed for adoption, the pending legislation provides greater protection by requiring judicial decisions to be based on what is the best interest of the child. In addition, it provides a mechanism for the adoption to proceed in situations where birth parents fail to follow through with the execution of consent, consequently assuring that custody of the child is not left in legal limbo.

Additionally, the following recommendations are made to enhance the Commonwealth's Adoption program and foster strong Virginia families:

(a) Ease current restrictions in Virginia on adoptions by reducing or eliminating the current regulatory obstacles and providing financial and tax assistance to low-income families who cannot afford the cost of adopting a child.

(b) Train welfare case managers and other social workers to inform unwed expectant mothers about the personal, social, and economic benefits of adoption.

(c) Reduce publicly-processed fees for adoption and encourage private sector attorneys to provide adoption-related legal services to low-income families on a *pro bono* basis.

(d) Examine the merits of establishing an AFDC savings exemption for adoption-related fees.

Encouraging more adoptions would foster two-parent families for a number of reasons. Adoption typically gives the children in question the benefits of a two-parent family, thereby significantly lowering the probability that the adopted child will experience the many negative effects statistically associated with single-parent families. Moreover, a young unmarried mother choosing adoption significantly

increases the likelihood that she will complete high school, will not live in poverty, and will not become dependent on public assistance.⁸² In fact, 60 percent of welfare recipients under the age of thirty nationwide are or were at some time teenage mothers.⁸³ Finally, compared with teenagers who choose parenting or abortion, teenagers who choose adoption are statistically less likely to have a repeat pregnancy.⁸⁴

Parental Notification

A parental notification requirement for minors seeking abortions should be established, with appropriate exemptions for girls who are or may be victims of abuse.

According to the *American Journal of Public Health*, such a statutory change would discourage both abortions and teenage pregnancies. The Journal published a study of the effects of Minnesota's parental notification requirement and found that the state's abortion and adolescent pregnancy rates declined significantly. Any drop in the adolescent pregnancy rate, of course, would result in fewer women entering parenthood as single teen mothers.⁸⁵

A parental notification law would also foster communication between parents and children, strengthening family ties, and increasing the likelihood that the parents will instill positive behavior in their children. Parents are most likely to provide unconditional support in these difficult circumstances because they will invariably share the consequences of their daughter's decision with her.

Finally, a parental notification statute would introduce social services intervention into those households where assistance is needed. By exempting from its provisions those girls who are or may be victims of abuse, a parental notification measure would alert social services professionals of the existence of an actual or potentially abusive family situation. As a result, the law would mobilize assistance that may not otherwise be made available, thereby assisting the girls in question as well as other children in their households.

Family Education

Strategies for reducing out-of-wedlock births should focus on instilling strong family values, building self-reliance and self-worth, and encouraging abstinence before marriage. Messages of abstinence before marriage are currently being promoted in a variety of ways, including experimental programs within school systems in such cities as Atlanta, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Chicago; by the community of faith; by a small but growing number of media personalities; and by famous athletes. In addition, successful national programs include "Campaign for Our Children," "Best Friends," and "Teen Choice" -- all of which promote positive messages of responsibility to young people. However, further progress can and should be made.

(a) Increase parental involvement in their teen-aged children's lives in order to foster mature behavior and discourage the irresponsible promiscuity which leads to out-of-wedlock births. One positive step to increase this involvement would be to mandate an "Opt In" rather than an "Opt Out" requirement for students participating in sex and contraceptive education classes. Requiring parental approval for a child's participation in such programs would encourage direct parental input in this sphere of their child's life and would encourage mature behavior on the part of teenagers.

(b) Emphasis should be placed on "family education" over "sex education." The elements of such a program would include (i) a clear message about the benefits of two-parent families for spouses and children alike, and (ii) an emphasis on abstinence before marriage as the best way to achieve a successful married-couple family. Such a policy would reflect the growing awareness that increased sex education has not resulted in increased numbers of stable two-parent families.

One of the developers of the pill, Dr. Robert Kistner of Harvard Medical School, stated this growing awareness succinctly: "About ten years ago I declared that the pill would not lead to promiscuity. Well, I was wrong."⁸⁶ Dr. Kistner's remarks reflect the growing consensus that sexual and contraceptive education of our youth in the last three decades have encouraged rather than discouraged sexual irresponsibility and the corresponding rise in illegitimate births.

Education

(a) Establish rigorous, measurable, and specific academic standards in the basic subjects of English, math, science, and social studies which are clear and understandable to parents, teachers, and citizens.

(b) Allow establishment of charter schools to promote innovation and local autonomy, increase flexibility in exchange for real accountability of measurable academic results, and encourage strong parental involvement and more choice of public schools.

(c) Ensure that teachers and principals have the ability to restore order in the classroom and that they will not be legally liable when they mete out discipline in good faith.

(d) Allow a school division to decide whether to offer family life education and, if it does, what the content should be. Further, require parental permission for children to participate in family life education, instead of the present policy of automatically enrolling students unless parents object.

Family Tax Policy

A reduction in the tax burden would increase take-home pay, reducing economic strains on families, allowing savings for a home or children's education, and possibly allowing parents to work fewer hours and spend more time with their children. This would also provide a greater incentive for a parent to remain in the workforce, promoting the value of personal responsibility.

(a) Increase the amount of the personal and dependent exemption to bring it more in line with the federal exemption. Virginia's current exemption is \$800, the second lowest in the nation, while the federal exemption is \$2,500. Many low-income families pay state income tax even though they owe no federal tax. Raising the exemption to \$2,400 would exempt about 84,000 families from income tax, thus removing a disincentive to work for lower income families.

(b) Consider changing the Virginia standard deduction for married couples to be double the amount for single persons to eliminate the disadvantage of marriage. Currently the standard is \$5,000 for a married couple and \$3,000 for a single person.

(c) Encourage reforms on the national level to eliminate penalties for marriage and for mothers who stay home with their children.

Divorce Law

Virginia should implement the following revisions to its policies governing divorce:

(a) Give careful consideration to the elimination of the practice of no-fault divorce and the re-establishment of penalties for unilaterally breaking the marriage contract by emphasizing fault as a factor with bearing in property settlements.

(b) Consider the establishment of an "informed consent" provision which would require those entering into a marriage contract to be reasonably informed about its nature and about the benefits of a stable monogamous relationship for spouses and children.

(c) Increase the residency requirement before divorce proceedings can begin in light of the decrease from a two-year to a six-month residency requirement that has accompanied the increase in the divorce rate.

(d) Increase the amount of child support ordered, and strengthen enforcement measures. Maintaining two households is more expensive than one and may cause some families to re-think separation while decreasing the likelihood of the custodial family living in poverty.

(e) Require participation in separation and divorce prevention programs prior to divorce proceedings. This would encourage parents to consider the destructive emotional and developmental effects of divorce on children.

Custody

(a) Child-custody policy should support the well-being of the child and reflect the principle that parents have a responsibility toward their children. Since numerous studies have documented losses experienced by children and non-custodial parents in determinations of single-parent custody,⁸⁷ the current trend is toward shared custody in order to preserve parental status and responsibilities. In fact, studies indicate dramatic increases in joint legal custody when state statutes permit it.⁸⁸

(b) Where parents are unable to settle custody and mediation issues, encourage or require participation in a mediation program before resorting to a court settlement. Visitation agreements achieved as a result of mediation have much higher rates of compliance than those resulting from litigation. For example, in 1989 in Chesterfield County where mediation is used, only about five percent of mediated cases returned to court within one year.⁸⁹ By contrast, the conflict that typically attends divorce, custody, and visitation litigation create more problematic parent-child relationships and greater emotional and behavioral maladjustment for children.⁹⁰

(c) Where a custody case must go to court, consider the establishment of "fault" as one of the criteria for the determination of custody.

Child Support

(a) Encourage the establishment of paternity in the hospital before mother and baby are discharged and require the establishment of paternity as an eligibility standard for AFDC benefits.

(b) Consider treating child support as a primary source of income and AFDC payments as supplemental, as illustrated by current Georgia practice. Georgia has a federal waiver to pay all child support directly to the family. Since AFDC payments in Georgia supplement the child support awards, AFDC payments are reduced accordingly. In contrast to the current system, this may signal to fathers that they, and not the government, have primary responsibility for the child.

(c) Further privatize the collection of child support payments. Currently one-tenth of collection activities have been privatized in Virginia. This trend should continue, along with automated child support order processing, the statewide publication of "most wanted lists," and other recent improvements in child support enforcement.

(d) Establish a fatherhood education program to educate fathers on the critical importance of their roles beyond merely providing monthly payments. Such education could encourage marriage and the involvement of fathers in their children's lives and would add positive incentives for making payments.

Family Impact Analysis

Virginia should extend information gathering on families in the Commonwealth in light of the findings of this report. As such, consideration should be given to the requirement of a "Family Impact Statement" for all legislative proposals in the same way that the state now requires the use of a fiscal impact statement. At a minimum, this would increase awareness of the potential positive and negative impact of public policies on Virginia's families.

Such a family impact statement would emphasize the reality that strong families are at least as important to society as are positive economic outcomes. According to social researcher Daniel Yanelovich,

Americans suspect that the nation's economic difficulties are rooted not in technical economic forces (for example, exchange rates or capital formation) but in fundamental moral causes. There exists a deeply intuitive sense that the success of a market-base economy depends on a highly developed social morality -- trust-worthiness, honesty, concern for future generations, an ethic of service to others, a humane society that takes care of those in need, frugality instead of greed, high standards of quality, and concern for community. These economically desirable social values, in turn, are seen as rooted in family values. Thus, the link in public thinking between a healthy family and a robust economy, though indirect, is clear and firm.⁹¹

ENDNOTES

1. Elaine C. Kamarck and William A. Galston, "Putting Children First: A Progressive Family Policy Study for the 1990's," (Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute, September 1990), p. 4.
2. David Popenoe, "The Controversial Truth," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1992.
3. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993.
4. National Commission on Children, *Just the Facts: A Summary of Recent Information on America's Children and Their Families* (Washington, D.C., 1993).
5. A. Cherlin, *Marriage, Divorce, Re-marriage*, Harvard University Press, 1992.
6. L. Bumpass, "Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update," *Demography*, 1984.
7. Vital Statistics Annual Reports, 1960-1992, Virginia Department of Health
8. Shiono, Patricia H. and Quinn, Linda Sandham, "Epidemiology of Divorce," *The Future of Children: Children and Divorce*, Spring 1994
9. Frank Furstenberg and Kathleen Mullan Harris, Study at Pennsylvania State University.
10. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Dan Quayle Was Right," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993.
11. Norval Glenn and Kathryn Kramer, University of Texas, cited in Barbara Kantrowitz, "Breaking the Divorce Cycle," *Newsweek*, January 13, 1992.
12. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 470, "Fertility of American Women: 1992."
13. Christopher Jencks, "Review: The Truly Disadvantaged," *The New Republic*, June 13, 1988.
14. Nicholas Eberstadt, "A Revolution in 'Family' That is Eating its Children," *The Washington Times*, September 24, 1993.
15. Congressional Testimony of Lee Rainwater, Harvard University, in George Will, "The Tragedy of Illegitimacy," *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1993.
16. Eby, Lloyd and Donovan, Charles A. "Single Parents and Damaged Children," *The World and I*, July 1993
17. "Facts at a Glance," Child Trends, Inc., Washington, D.C., January 1994.

18. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Toward a Post-Industrial Social Policy," *The Public Interest*, Summer, 1989.
19. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, Series P-60, No. 181, "Poverty in the United States, 1991," in National Commission on America's Urban Families, *Families First* (Washington, D.C., 1993).
20. Grail, Timothy S. Housing Characteristics of One-Parent Households: 1989, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
21. Grail, Timothy S. Housing Characteristics of One-Parent Households: 1989, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
22. Jay D. Teachman, "Financial Impact of Divorce on Children and Their Families," *The Future of Children: Children and Divorce*, Spring 1994.
23. Kate J. Sterling, "Women Who Remain Divorced: The Long-Term Economic Consequences," *Social Science Quarterly* 70 (1989), 549-561. [**On p. 14, it is stated that divorce is detrimental to parents -- this will be clarified in terms of lower education, job status, standard of living, etc.]
24. Teachman, Jay D. and Paasch, Kathleen M. "Financial Impact of Divorce on Children and Their Families," The Future of Children: Children and Divorce, Spring 1994
25. Simons, Beaman, Conger, and Chao. "Stress, Support, and Antisocial Behavior Traits as Determinants of Emotional Well-being and Parenting Practices Among Single Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1993
26. Catherine K. Riessman and Naomi Gerstel, *Social Science and Medicine*, as reviewed in Bryce Christensen, "In Sickness and in Health: The Medical Costs of Family Meltdown," *Policy Review*, Spring.
27. Charlotte Schoenborn and Barbara Wilson, "Are Married People Healthier? Health Characteristics of Married and Unmarried U.S. Men and Women," paper presented at the American Public Health Association, Boston, MA, (Nov. 15, 1988).
28. Furstenberg, Frank and Cherlin, Andrew. *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part*. Harvard University Press, 1991
29. Furstenberg, Frank and Cherlin, Andrew. *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part*. Harvard University Press, 1991
30. Lawrence M. Mead, "The New Politics of the New Poverty," *The Public Interest* no 103, (Spring 1991), p. 10.

31. *Just the Facts: A Summary of Recent Information on America's Children and Their Families.* National Commission on Children.
32. Elaine C. Kamarck and William A. Galston, "Putting Children First: A Progressive Family Policy Study for the 1990's," (Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute, September 1990), p.4.
33. Deborah A. Dawson, "Family Structure and Children's Health and Well-being: Data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Care," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, August 1991.
34. Nicholas Zill and Charlotte A. Schoenborn, "Developmental, Learning, and Emotional Problems - Health of Our Nation's Children," 1988.
35. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr., "The Impact of Parental Absence on Childhood Development: An Overview of the Literature," *The Journal of Family and Culture* 1 (Autumn 1985), 19-28.
36. J. J. Card, "Long Term Consequences for Children Born to Adolescent Parents," *Final Report to NICHD American Institute for Research*, 1977; "Long Term Consequences for Children of Teenage Parents," *Demography*, 1981; and J. Brooks-Gunn and Frank Furstenberg Jr., "The Children of Adolescent Mothers: Physical, Academic, and Psychological Outcomes," *Developmental Review*, 1986.
37. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, (Testimony submitted by George A. Rekers), "Research on the Essential Characteristics of the Father's Role for Family Strength: The Rationale for Programs to Reinforce and Restore Fathering for Family Well-Being," 99th Congress, 2nd session, February 25, 1986, p. 4.
38. Christine Bachrach and Karen Carver, *Outcomes of Early Childbearing*, National Institute of Health, May 1992.
39. Nicholas Eberstadt, "A Revolution in 'Family' That is Eating its Children," *The Washington Times*, September 24, 1993.
40. J. J. Card, "Long Term Consequences for Children Born to Adolescent Parents," *Final Report to NICHD American Institute for Research*, 1977; "Long Term Consequences for Children of Teenage Parents," *Demography*, 1981.
41. "Examining Educational Spending and Achievement," Virginia Senate Finance Committee Report, October 20, 1993
42. "Examining Educational Spending and Achievement," Virginia Senate Finance Committee Report, October 20, 1993
43. Zill, Nicholas and Nord, Christine Winqvist. Running in Place: How American Families are Faring in a changing Economy and an Individualistic Society; Child Trends, Inc., 1994

44. Elaine Kamarck and William Galson, *Putting Children First: A Progressive Family Policy for the 1990's*, Progressive Policy Institute, September 1990; Arthur B. Elsters, et al, "Judicial Involvement and Conduct Problems of Fathers Born to Adolescent Mothers," Pediatrics, 1987; Douglas Smith and Jajoura Smith, "Social Structure and Criminal Victimization," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, February 1988.
45. Zinsmeister, Karl. "Crime is Terrorizing our Nation's Kids;" *Citizen*, August 20, 1990
46. U.S. Bureau of Justice
47. Davidson, Nicholas. "Life Without Father;" *Policy Review*, 1990
48. Violent Crime Trends and Issues, Legislative Recommendations, Governor's Commission on Violent Crime in Virginia, January 1994
49. Vital Statistics 1990 Annual Report and Vital Statistics 1992 Annual Report, Virginia Department of Health
50. Parole Abolition & Sentencing Reform, Governor's Commission, August 1994
51. Criminal Justice Research Center, DCJS, Crime in Virginia, Dept of State Police
52. Violent Crime Trends and Issues, Legislative Recommendations, Governor's Commission on Violent Crime in Virginia, January 1994
53. "Facts at a Glance," Child Trends, Inc., Washington, D.C., January 1994.
54. Sarah S. McLanahan, "Family Structure and Dependency: Early Transitions to Female Household Headship," *Demography*, 25, February 1988, 1-16.
55. Garfinkel, Irwin, and McLanahan. *A New American Dilemma*. Urban Institute Press, Washington, DC, 1986
56. Lloyd Eby and Charles A. Donovan, "Single Parents and Damaged Children," *The World and I*, July 1993. [*Searching for additional specifics to support this.]
57. Selnow, Gary W., "Parent-Child Relationships and Single and Two Parent Families: Implications for Substance Abuse," *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*, 1987
58. Ritter, Bruce, "Abuse of the Adolescent," *New York State Journal of Medicine*, March 1989
59. Senate Document 30, Youth Suicide Prevention, 1988
60. E. Zigler, *Children: Developmental and Social Issues*, 1988; S.M. Finch and E.D. Poznanski. *Adolescent Suicide*. 1971; P.C. Hollinger. "Adolescent Suicide: An Epidemiological Study of Recent Trends," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 1978.

61. Armand Nicholi, Jr., "The Impact of Family Dissolution on the Emotional Health of Children and Adolescents," *When Families Fail . . . The Social Costs*, (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1991), pp. 35-36.
62. David Breskin, "Dear Mom and Dad," *Rolling Stone*, November 8, 1984.
63. 1992 March Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
64. Michael Novak, "Families: The Best Anti-Poverty Plan," *The Washington Times*, February 5, 1993.
65. SRI International, "Final Report of the Seattle-Denver Income Maintenance Experiment, volume I, Design and Results," Washington, DC. May 1983
66. Christiansen, Gregory B. and Williams, Walter E. "Welfare Family Cohesiveness and Out-of-Wedlock Births," *The American Family and the State*, 1986
67. Studies by: Winegarden, C.R., University of Toledo; Lundberg, Shelley and Plotnick, Robert D., University of Washington; O'Neill, June; all cited in: Fagan, Patrick. "Rising Illegitimacy: America's Social Catastrophe," The Heritage Institute, June 1994
68. Virginia Department of Social Services. Figure is based on finalized adoptions. Many children placed as infants may not have the adoption finalized until they are over one year old.
69. William Marsiglio and Frank Mott, "The Impact of Sex Education on Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Premarital Pregnancy Among American Teenagers," *Family Planning Perspectives* 18, (July/August 1986), 158.
70. S. Harlap, K. Kost, and J.D. Forrest, "Preventing Pregnancy, Protecting Health: A New Look at Birth Control Choices in the United States," The Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York, and Washington, D.C. 1991, pp. 36-37.
71. Rector, Robert. *The Backgrounder*, The Heritage Foundation, March 7, 1994
72. Rector, Robert. *The Backgrounder*, The Heritage Foundation, March 7, 1994
73. John P. Robinson, *How Americans Use Time: A Social-Psychological Analysis of Everyday Behavior*, (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 70; Robinson, "Caring for Kids," *American Demographics*, (July 1989) 52.
74. Mattox, William R. Jr. "The Parent Trap," *Policy Review*, Winter 1991
75. Mattox, William R. Jr. "The Parent Trap," *Policy Review*, Winter 1991
76. Alison L. Cowan, "Woman's Gains on the Job: Not Without a Heavy Toll," *The New York Times*, Aug. 21, 1989.

77. Mary Ann Glendon, *Abortion and Divorce in Western Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
78. James Q. Wilson, *The Moral Sense* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).
79. Irving Kristol, "Fathers Give Young More than Paternal Love," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Nov. 13, F4.
80. Child Support and Alimony: 1989, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census
81. Edith Schaeffer, *What is a Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 38.
82. *Adoption Factbook*, (Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Adoption, 1989), p. 148 and Stephen D. McLaughlin, Diane L. Manninen and Linda D. Wings, "Do Adolescents Who Relinquish Their Children Fare Better or Worse Than Those Who Raise Them?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 20 (Jan/Feb 1988).
83. U.S. Congress Congressional Budget Office, *Sources of Support for Adolescent Mothers*, (September 1990), 45.
84. Stephen D. McLaughlin, Diane L. Manninen and Linda D. Wings, "Do Adolescents Who Relinquish Their Children Fare Better or Worse Than Those Who Raise Them?" *Family Planning Perspectives* 20 (Jan/Feb 1988), 29-30.
85. J. L. Rogers et al., "Impact of the Minnesota Parental Notification Law on Abortion and Birth," *American Public Health Journal* 81 (March 1991).
86. Robert Kistner, *Family Practice News*, December 15, 1977.
87. J. S. Wallerstein and J. B. Jelly, "Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce," 1980
88. Studies by Maccoby and Mnookin, 1992; Kelly, 1993; Duryee, 1991
89. House Document 68, *Mediation of Child Support, Custody and Visitation*.
90. Janet R. Johnston, "High Conflict Divorce," *The Future of Children*, Spring 1994.
91. Daniel Yanelovich, "Foreign Policy After the Election," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1992.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA -- 1994 SESSION

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 180

Requesting the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to study ways of strengthening the family.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 8, 1994

Agreed to by the Senate, March 8, 1994

WHEREAS, families are the foundation of a prosperous and civil society; and

WHEREAS, certain attitudes, policies, and other influences have taken their toll on the stability of the family and have affected its structure; and

WHEREAS, the breakdown of the family has been documented as a major factor in the rise of crime; and

WHEREAS, strong families have been an influential factor in the promotion of excellence in education and the benefits of an educated citizenry; and

WHEREAS, there is a compelling state interest in promoting policies that ensure the perpetuation of strong, viable, and stable families; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive review of the Commonwealth's divorce, tax, child custody, and child and spousal support laws is needed to determine whether revisions are necessary to ensure the promotion of strong families; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Secretary of Health and Human Resources be requested to study ways of strengthening the family. In the course of the study, the Secretary is requested to (i) determine the impact of state and federal welfare laws and regulations, including aid to families with dependent children, Medicaid, general relief, and other public assistance programs, on family stability and permanence; (ii) determine whether state tax policies provide disincentives for marriage; (iii) assess the need for changes in the state's divorce laws and the efficacy of instituting certain interventions designed to help save troubled marriages, such as marriage counseling prior to the court's granting of a divorce; (iv) review the state's child custody and child and spousal support laws and evaluate the need to further strengthen such provisions to ensure that divorced mothers and their minor dependent children are fully protected in property settlements, the allocation of assets among the parties, and child support orders; (v) ascertain the status of child support enforcement efforts and recommend alternatives to enhance the effectiveness of such efforts; (vi) analyze state and federal laws and regulations, and practices which affect the rights of fathers in child custody and child and spousal support areas, and recommend ways to balance and protect the rights of mothers and fathers, while ensuring the welfare of children; (vii) review other states' laws, regulations, policies, and initiatives implemented to discourage family disintegration; (viii) identify exemplary programs designed to support and promote the family, including any evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs; and (ix) examine such related matters as the Secretary may deem appropriate.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Secretary, upon request.

The Secretary shall complete her work in time to submit her findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1995 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.