

***Civics: A Christian Worldview.***  
**Single Parenthood: Article Reading and Discussion (15-20 minutes)**

**TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY**

**Instructions**

1. **Objective:** Students read an article about single parenthood and the societal problems it causes.
2. Hand out a copy of Pages 2 & 3 to each student. (Print front and back if possible!)
3. Instruct students to read the article, underline/highlight key facts, and answer in writing the review questions on the second page.
4. When students are finished, discuss **as a class**. Ask for volunteers!

**Answer Key**

1. As the percentage of unmarried mothers rises, the violent crime rate rises exponentially.
2. As the percentage of unmarried mothers rises, the rate of child poverty rises. Fathers don't provide for their children, it's harder for single mothers to provide income themselves, and welfare benefits decrease as income increases (which tempts parents not to work).
3. Single parents who try to date at night often leave their children home alone, which can lead to children getting into trouble and/or being "supervised" by dangerous men ("children in single-parent families are more likely than those in two-parent families to have a father or sibling with a criminal record").
4. When governments give money to unmarried parents, it increases the likelihood that parents will act irresponsibly ("Somebody else is taking care of it!").
5. Answers will vary, but might include these: (a) When people become Christians, it's much more likely they'll get married before having children; (b) the Christian faith puts importance of the responsible raising of children to be godly and stay out of trouble; (c) obviously Christians are much less likely to commit violent crimes; and (d) private charities are MUCH more likely to be careful about giving away their donations to just anyone. There are exceptions, of course, but if men who father children out of wedlock were legally bound to provide for the mother of their children and for those children, too, there would be MUCH less single parenthood. (The families of those fathers would also feel the pressure to contribute toward the expenses and taking care of those children.) Government welfare programs incentivize men NOT to take care of their out-of-wedlock children, because they think: "The government will take care of it for me!"

**Key Points**

- As mentioned in the article, the key characteristic of parents and the increase in child poverty and violent crime is UNMARRIED PARENTS, not parents who aren't "educated" enough or of a certain ethnicity.
- The author of the book saw numerous examples in middle school and high school in which 15- and 16-year-olds had a baby out of wedlock and started receiving government cash payments, food stamps, free housing, free medical care, and so on. Some of these girls had younger sisters 12 and 13 years old who talked in front of the author about how they were going to try to get pregnant soon so they could start getting these "freebies" (taxpayer-funded, of course) like their older sisters got.
- Single parents' character also contributes to the higher likelihood that their children will get into serious trouble—that is, those parents are more likely to be irresponsible about teaching their children about right and wrong, personal responsibility, working hard in school, and so on.

# In Cities Where Single Parenting Is the Norm, Child Poverty and Violent Crime Are High

Nicholas Zill • October 14, 2024

The city of Springfield, Ohio, gained unwanted notoriety recently, but Springfield and other Ohio cities have genuine problems....In these cities, the majority of children under age 18 are being raised by single mothers (either never married or divorced/separated) who do not live with their children's fathers or stepfathers.

## Absent Fathers and Child Poverty

In Ohio cities where single motherhood is the norm rather than the exception, rates of child poverty are high. In Springfield, one-third of all children lived in families below the official poverty level during the 2018-2022 time period. In Youngstown, it was half; in Cleveland, 46%; while in Cincinnati, a third. On the other hand, the child poverty rate in Cleveland Heights, where married parenthood is more common, was 19% and in New Albany, 4%. For Ohio as a whole, the child poverty rate was 18%.

Figure 1 [graph not included] shows the inverse relationship between the percentage of married mothers and the child poverty rate across 17 cities in Ohio. For each 10-point decline in the percentage of married mothers, there is a 7.5-point increase in the percentage of children in poverty in the city....[A] relationship between the two variables accounts for 98% of the variation in child poverty across these jurisdictions.

There are several reasons for higher child poverty rates in Ohio cities with large numbers of unmarried mothers. Many non-resident parents (usually the children's biological fathers) provide little to no financial support for their offspring. Single mothers struggle to work outside the home while also caring for children, especially young ones. Government assistance programs, like Food Stamps, tend to phase out rapidly as family income rises, providing a disincentive to work. Without co-residence or a joint custody agreement, single mothers are unable to benefit from the division of child care and work responsibilities that most married couples practice.

In addition, single mothers tend to have lower levels of education than married mothers in general, reducing their earnings potential. But even when parent educational attainment, child age, and race and ethnicity are controlled, children in disrupted families are more likely to be poor than those in married-couple families.

## Absent Fathers and Violent Crime

Ohio cities where single parenthood is the norm are also characterized by high rates of violent crime. In Springfield, for example, there were 1,298 incidents of violent crime reported to the police per 100,000 residents in 2023. In Cleveland, 1,895 incidents; in Cincinnati, 800; while in Youngstown, 699. By contrast, in Cleveland Heights, again where married parenthood is more common, the violent crime rate was 267 in 2023, and in New Albany, 99. The violent crime rate for Ohio as a whole was 294 in 2022.

Figure 2 [graph not included] shows the inverse relationship between the percentage of married mothers and the violent crime rate in 17 Ohio cities in 2023. As the percentage of married mothers declines, violent crime rates rise exponentially. As shown on the graph, a...relationship between the two variables accounts for 84% of the variation in violent crime rates across these jurisdictions.

Why are violent crime rates so high in Ohio cities where unmarried mothers are in the majority? There are several reasons. Single-parent families with children are apt to make frequent residential moves and to live in unsafe neighborhoods as a result of family disruption. That makes them more vulnerable to becoming victims of both property and violent crime.

Having broken up with the child's other parent, a single parent will usually begin dating and trying to find a new partner. This process often involves being out of the house at night, sometimes leaving children with inadequate supervision, exposing children to strange (and sometimes dangerous) men. As children become adolescents, their peers in their less-than-ideal neighborhoods and schools are often troubled and can lead them into hazardous situations and activities. And children in single-parent families are more likely than those in two-parent families to have a father or sibling with a criminal record.

Many single mothers take great pains and make personal sacrifices to ensure that their offspring do not become victims or perpetrators of violent crime, and most succeed in keeping their children safe and out of trouble. But research continues to show that the best form of home security and delinquency prevention is a stable marriage with a father in the home.

## Policy Prescriptions That May Make Matters Worse

Ohio is certainly not the only state with cities where single parenthood is common and where rates of child poverty and violent crime are high. Unfortunately, popular policy prescriptions for aiding families with children and reducing child poverty may, if implemented, make matters worse rather than better. Most of these prescriptions involve giving money to new parents or even all parents of young children, without regard to whether the parents are married, have completed high school, or have a history of substance abuse, child abuse or neglect, mental illness or criminal behavior. While the intention is to reduce child poverty, the unintended consequence could be to reduce motivation for careful, responsible parenthood.

Instead of handing out cash to new parents, it would seem wiser to initiate efforts to have public schools in Ohio and other states do a better job of instructing students about the importance of marriage prior to childbearing for the success of a parental relationship and the future well-being of children. More students may be acquiring diplomas and learning something about the perils of teen pregnancy. But they do not seem to be sufficiently aware of the benefits of marriage, especially for children.

*Nicholas Zill is a research psychologist and a senior fellow of the Institute for Family Studies. He directed the National Survey of Children, a longitudinal study that produced widely cited findings on children's life experiences and adjustment following parental divorce.*

**Source:** <https://ifstudies.org/blog/in-cities-where-single-parenting-is-the-norm-child-poverty-and-violent-crime-are-high>

**Questions:**

1. What is the relationship between married parents and violent crime rates?  
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2. What are some reasons that single motherhood and child poverty are connected?  
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3. What do single parents' attempts to date in the evening often result in for their children?  
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4. Why are welfare programs ineffective in truly improving single-parent families' situations?  
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5. How would an increase in individuals becoming Christians *specifically* affect (a) the percentage of single parents, (b) the raising of children, (c) violent crime, and (d) private assistance (not government programs) to single-parent families?  
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