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World Family Indicators

Laura H. Lippman, W. Bradford Wilcox, and Renee Ryberg

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World Family Indicators

Laura H. Lippman, W. Bradford Wilcox, and Renee Ryberg

The indicators section of the 2014 World Family Map report provides information on 16 indicators of family well-being in four areas—family structure, family socioeconomics, family process, and family culture—across 49 countries, representing a majority of the world's population.

The indicators section is an update to the 2013 World Family Map report. With the exception of two parent-child communication indicators in the family culture section, we used the same indicators as the 2013 report. This report is updated with new data, as available, and includes an additional four countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

General Methods

Selecting indicators: Indicators were selected by the study team along with advisors representing every region of the world using a research-based conceptual framework of family strengths. Four groups of indicators were generated in the following domains: family structure, family socioeconomics, family process, and family culture. Indicators were chosen for each domain based upon their importance to family and child well-being, data availability, and regional representation, and in order to achieve balance in the number of indicators across domains.

Selecting countries: When designing this report, it was necessary to select a set of countries for which comparisons could be made. While it was not possible to include all of the approximately 200 countries in the world, countries were selected to ensure regional representation of high-, middle-, and low-income countries, and data availability for the desired time period was considered as well, resulting in 49 countries—an increase from 45 countries in the previous report—that account for over 75 percent of the world's population.[1] See Figure 1. As data availability on key indicators of family well-being increases, the World Family Map will be able to continue to include more countries.

Data sources: There are numerous data sources available on indicators of family well-being. The sources presented here (see Data Sources below) were selected for their quality and coverage of countries as well as indicators. These sources have a strong reputation of rigorous data collection methodologies across countries, or if data are collected from individual country sources, such as censuses, they were harmonized after data collection to ensure comparability across countries. In addition, data sources were chosen in which multiple countries were represented; however, data from the same source may not be available for all countries or for the same year across countries, so caution is needed in making comparisons. For each indicator

[1] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, DVD Edition.

a primary data source was chosen. When data for a particular country were not available from that source, other sources were used to supplement.

When data are available from the same source for multiple years, we will note changes in indicators that are 5 percentage points or larger.

Data Sources

Country-level sources. When data were not available from an international survey, country-level data sources were sought. Examples include data from national statistics bureaus and country-level surveys.

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). DHS is a survey of over 90 developing nations, focusing on population and health information. This report uses the most recent data available for each country, ranging from 2001 to 2012.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). As part of the United Nations, FAO compiles statistics on food- and agriculture-related indicators, including undernourishment. The most recent data are from 2011-13 and are published in their report *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013*.

Integrated Public Use Microdata Series-International (IPUMS). IPUMS is a compilation of harmonized censuses from countries throughout the world. This report uses the most recent data available for each country, ranging from 2000 to 2010.

International Social Survey Program (ISSP). ISSP is a collaboration between annual national surveys to ensure data comparability on social science questions. This report uses their 2002 collection on family and changing gender roles. Unfortunately, data are only available for a handful of countries that are not representative of regions. ISSP fielded a similar set of items in 2012; the data will be released in late spring, 2014.

LIS (formerly known as the Luxembourg Income Study). LIS is a collection of harmonized data on the income and wealth of individuals in middle- and high-income countries. Data from LIS used in this report range from 2002 to 2010.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). OECD's Family Database provides cross-national statistics on the well-being of families and children throughout OECD's member and partner countries. A 2011 OECD report entitled *Doing Better for Families* was also used as a source. OECD data used in this report are generally from 2009.

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA is an international tri-annual assessment of literacy in reading, mathematics, and science. PISA is administered in all OECD member countries as well as additional self-selected countries. This report uses data from the contextual part of the 2012 parent survey. Unfortunately, the items of interest were asked in a small group of countries in this iteration of the survey.

UNICEF Innocenti Research Center. A 2012 UNICEF report entitled *Measuring Child Poverty: New League Tables of Child Poverty in the World's Rich Countries* was used for up-to-date relative poverty rates.

World Values Survey (WVS). WVS is a survey of political and sociocultural values in more than 50 countries. This report uses the most recent data available for each country, from the fourth and fifth survey waves, ranging from 1999 to 2008. The next wave of data will be released in late spring, 2014. For more information on specific sources, see e-Appendix at _________________.

Family Structure

Key Findings

Children's lives are influenced by the number of parents and siblings that they live with, as well as by whether their parents are married. The World Family Map reports these key indicators of family structure in this section.

- Although two-parent families are becoming less common in many parts of the world, they still constitute a majority of families around the globe. Children are particularly likely to live in two-parent families in Asia and the Middle East, compared with other regions of the world. Children are more likely to live with one or no parent in the Americas, Europe, Oceania, and sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions.
- Extended families (which include parent(s) and kin from outside the nuclear family) also appear to be common in Asia, the Middle East, Central/South America, and sub-Saharan Africa, but not other regions of the world.
- Marriage rates are declining in many regions. Adults are most likely to be married in Asia and the Middle East, and are least likely to be married in Central/South America, with Africa, Europe, North America, and Oceania falling in between. Cohabitation (living together without marriage) is more common among couples in Europe, North America, Oceania, and—especially—in Central/South America.
- Childbearing rates are declining worldwide. The highest fertility rates are in sub-Saharan Africa. A woman gives birth to an average of 6.1 children in Uganda. Moderate rates of fertility are found in the Middle East, and levels of fertility that are sufficient to replace a country's population in the next generation (about 2.1) are found in the Americas and Oceania. Below-replacement level fertility is found in East Asia and Europe.
- Given the decline in marriage rates, childbearing outside of marriage—or *nonmarital childbearing*—is increasing in many regions. The highest rates of nonmarital childbearing are found in Central/South America and Western Europe, with moderate rates found in North America, Oceania, and Eastern Europe, varied rates found in sub-Saharan Africa, and the lowest rates found in Asia and the Middle East.

Living Arrangements

Family living arrangements—how many parents are in the household and whether the household includes extended family members—shape the character and contexts of children's lives, as well as the human resources available to them. As evidenced in Figures 2 and 3, which are derived from IPUMS, DHS, and national censuses, the living arrangements that children experience vary substantially around the globe. And the distribution of children across these various types of family living arrangements is changing over time. This report describes such

patterns, without bias. The family strengths that are described in the other indicators in this section can be found in each type of family.

Living with kin is particularly common in much of Asia, the Middle East, Central/South America, and sub-Saharan Africa. As seen in Figure 2, in almost all of the countries in these regions, at least 40 percent of children live in households with other adults besides their parents. In many cases, these adults are extended family members. Indeed, at least half of children live with adults besides their parents in parts of Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo [58 percent], Ghana [53 percent], Nigeria [57 percent], South Africa [70 percent], and Tanzania [60 percent]); Asia (India [50 percent]); South America (Colombia and Nicaragua [55 percent]); and the Middle East (Turkey [58 percent]). In these regions, then, children are especially likely to be affected by their relationships with other adults in the household, including grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins, compared with children living in regions where extended household members played smaller roles in children's day-to-day lives. Living with adults other than parents can generate benefits for children, but, depending on the circumstances, it can also produce difficulties such as overcrowding, violence, and abuse.[2]

Whether in nuclear or extended family households, children are especially likely to live with two parents (who could be biological parents or stepparents) in Asia and the Middle East. See Figure 3. On the basis of the data available for the specific countries examined in these regions, more than 80 percent of children in these three regions live with two parents (ranging from 85 percent in the Philippines and Indonesia to 94 percent in Jordan). About 80 percent of children in European countries live in two-parent households (ranging from 76 percent in the United Kingdom to 89 percent in Italy/Poland). In the Americas, between 62 percent (Colombia) and 78 percent (Canada) of children live in two-parent households. The two-parent pattern is more mixed in sub-Saharan Africa, ranging from 36 percent in South Africa to 76 percent in Nigeria. Some of these children living in two-parent households are also living with extended families, as noted above.

In much of Central/South America and sub-Saharan Africa, children have higher odds of living with either one or neither of their parents than in other regions. Between 13 percent (Nigeria) and 43 percent (South Africa) of children live in single-parent families and from 4 percent (Argentina) to 20 percent (South Africa and Uganda) of children live in homes without either of their parents. Among the South American countries in this study, Colombia had the highest percentage of children living without either of their parents: 11 percent. The high percentage of South African children living with one parent or without either parent—43 percent and 20 percent, respectively—reflects the high incidence of AIDS orphans.[3]

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[2] K. Kopko, "The Effects of the Physical Environment on Children's Development," (Ithica, NY: Cornell Department of Human Development, n.d.); G. Morantz et al., "Child Abuse and Neglect among Orphaned Children and Youth Living in Extended Families in Sub-Saharan Africa: What Have We Learned from Qualitative Inquiry?," *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies: An International Interdisciplinary Journal for Research, Policy and Care* 8, no. 4 (2013).

[3] N. R. Matshalaga and G. Powell, "Mass Orphanhood in the Era of HIV/AIDS," *British Medical Journal* 324, no. 7331 (2002); A. J. McMichael et al., "Mortality Trends and Setbacks: Global Convergence or Divergence," *Lancet* 363, no. 9415 (2004).

Finally, in North America, Oceania, and Europe, a large minority—about one-fifth—of children live in single-parent households, and less than 7 percent of children live in households without at least one of their parents. In Eastern Europe, 11 to 15 percent of children live with a lone parent. In these regions, the United States (27 percent), the United Kingdom (24 percent), and New Zealand (24 percent) have particularly high levels of single parenthood. Many European countries have projected the proportion of children living with single parents to grow through 2030.[4]

In sum, the regional patterns identified in this section suggest that children are especially likely to live with two parents and extended family members in Asia and the Middle East. Extended families also appear to be more common in Asia, Central/South America, and sub-Saharan Africa. A relatively large minority of children are living with single parents or with no parents in the household in Central/South America and sub-Saharan Africa. A relatively large minority of children also live with one parent in Western Europe, North America, and Oceania.

Marriage and Cohabitation

The nature, function, and firsthand experience of marriage vary around the world. Marriage looks and feels different in Sweden, compared with the experience in Saudi Arabia; in China, compared with the experience in Canada; and in Argentina, compared with the experience in Australia. Nevertheless, across time and space, in most societies and cultures, marriage has been an important institution for structuring adult intimate relationships and connecting parents to one another and to any children that they have together.[5] In particular, in many countries, marriage has played an important role in providing a stable context for bearing and rearing children, and for integrating fathers into the lives of their children.[6]

However, today the hold of marriage as an institution over the adult life course and the connection between marriage and parenthood vary around much of the globe. Dramatic increases in cohabitation, divorce, and nonmarital childbearing in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania over the last four decades suggest that the institution of marriage is much less relevant in some parts of the world.[7] At the same time, the meaning of marriage appears to be shifting

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[4] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Doing Better for Families," (OECD, 2011).

[5] See, for example, B. Chapais, *Primeval Kinship: How Pair Bonding Gave Birth to Human Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); K. Davis, *Contemporary Marriage: Comparative Perspectives on a Changing Institution* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1985); W. Goode, *World Revolution and Family Patterns* (New York: Free Press, 1963).

[6] Chapais, *Primeval Kinship: How Pair Bonding Gave Birth to Human Society*; P. Heuveline, J. Timberlake, and F. Furstenberg Jr., "Shifting Childrearing to Single Mothers: Results from 17 Western Countries," *Population and Development Review* 29, no. 1 (2003).

[7] R. Lesthaeghe, "A Century of Demographic and Cultural Change in Western Europe: An Exploration of Underlying Dimensions," *Population and Development Review* 9, no. 3 (1983); P. McDonald, *Families in Australia: A Socio-Demographic Perspective* (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 1995); D. Popenoe, "Cohabitation,

in much of the world. Marriage is becoming more of an *option* for adults, rather than a *necessity* for the survival of adults and children. Cohabitation has emerged as an important precursor or alternative to marriage in many countries for any number of reasons. Adults may look for more flexibility or freedom in their relationships, or they may feel that they do not have sufficient financial or emotional resources to marry, or they may perceive marriage as a risky undertaking, or simply unnecessary once they are cohabiting.[8]

Given the changing patterns and perceptions about marriage and cohabitation in many contemporary societies, this section of the World Family Map measures how prevalent marriage and cohabitation are among adults in their prime childbearing and childrearing years (18-49) around the globe. The prevalence of partnerships of either type is presented first, followed by a discussion of cohabitation and marriage separately.

Figure 4 provides information compiled from censuses and surveys conducted in 43 of the 49 selected countries, primarily in the mid-2000s. In most countries throughout the world, between 50 and 75 percent of adults of reproductive age are in either marital or cohabiting relationships. Exceptionally low rates of partnership are found in South Africa, Chile, and Singapore, where less than half of adults are cohabiting or married. In contrast, adults in India, Indonesia, and Egypt are most likely to be partnered. More than three-quarters of 18- to 49-year-olds in these countries are cohabiting or married.

The prevalence of partnerships is generally highest in Asia (with the exception of Singapore) and the Middle East, ranging from 55 (Israel) to 80 percent (Egypt). Rates of partnership are more moderate in sub-Saharan Africa, where they range from 61 (Ghana) to 70 percent (Uganda) when excluding South Africa's worldwide low rate. Partnership rates are also moderate in Eastern Europe, where they range from 57 (Poland) to 67 percent (Romania and Russia). Partnerships are least prominent in the Americas, Oceania, and Western Europe, where between 49 (Chile) and 67 (Bolivia) percent of adults are cohabiting or married. The following sections look at whether these partnerships are through marriage or cohabitation.

Marriage

Adults aged 18 to 49 are most likely to be married in Asia and the Middle East, and are least likely to be married in Central/South America. Marriage levels fall in the moderate range (about half) in most of Europe, Oceania, and North America. Moreover, the data show that a larger percentage of adults are cohabiting in Europe and the Americas than in other regions.

Marriage, and Child Well-Being: A Cross-National Perspective" (New Brunswick, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2008).

[8] A. Cherlin, *The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today* (New York: Knopf, 2009); M. Pollard and K. Harris, "Cohabitation and Marriage Intensity: Consolidation, Intimacy, and Commitment," in *Working Papers* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Labor and Population, 2013); S. Coontz, *Marriage: A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2005); W. Goode, *World Change in Divorce Patterns* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Heuveline, Timberlake, and Furstenberg, "Shifting Childrearing to Single Mothers: Results from 17 Western Countries."

As Figure 4 shows, between 47 (Singapore) and 77 percent (India) of the adult population in the Asian countries in our study are married, and marriage is even more common in the Middle East, where a clear majority of adults (between 55 [Israel] and 80 [Egypt] percent) are married.

By contrast, marriage patterns fall in the middle range, or are less consistent, in the Americas, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa. In North America and Oceania, about half of 18- to 49-year-old adults are married, ranging from 43 (Canada) to 63 percent (Mexico). Notably, the percentage of adults married in the United States fell from 52 percent in 2005 to 45 percent in 2010. In the sub-Saharan African countries studied, marriage patterns show a great deal of variation, with between 30 (South Africa) and 66 percent (Nigeria) of adults aged 18-49 married. Indeed, South Africa has one of the lowest marriage rates of any country included in our study, and the very lowest proportion of adults in unions (married or cohabiting) at just 43 percent. Likewise, among the European countries, between 37 (Sweden) and 60 percent (Romania) of adults aged 18-49 are married, with marriage clearly being more common in Eastern Europe. By contrast, in Central/South America, generally, less than half of adults are married, with the exception of Costa Rica and Paraguay; in Colombia, the proportion of married adults is a worldwide low 20 percent.

Cohabitation

Figure 4 indicates that cohabitation is rare in Asia and the Middle East, two regions where relatively traditional mores still dominate family life. Moderate to high levels of cohabitation are found in North America and Oceania, where between 9 (United States) and 19 percent (Canada) of adults aged 18-49 are in cohabiting relationships. Levels of cohabitation in sub-Saharan Africa vary considerably, with relatively high levels of cohabitation in Uganda (25 percent) and low levels in Ethiopia (4 percent), Nigeria (2 percent), and Kenya (4 percent).

There are also high levels of cohabitation in much of Europe. For example, about one-quarter of Swedish and French adults aged 18-49 are living in a cohabiting relationship. Cohabitation is most common among South Americans, where consensual unions have played a longstanding role in society.[9] Between 12 (Chile) and 35 percent (Colombia) of adults aged 18-49 live in cohabiting unions in South America, with Colombia registering the highest level of cohabitation of any country in our global study.

In general, marriage seems to be more common in Asia and the Middle East, whereas alternatives to marriage—including cohabitation—are more common in Europe and Central/South America. North America, Oceania, and sub-Saharan Africa fall in between. Both cultural and economic forces may help to account for these regional differences.

It remains to be seen, however, how the place of marriage in society and the increasing popularity of cohabitation in many regions of the world affect the well-being of children in countries around the globe.

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[9] Teresa Castro Martin, “Consensual Unions in Latin America: Persistence of a Dual Nuptiality System,” *Journal of Comparative Family Systems* 33, no. 1 (2002).

Childbearing

Family size also affects the well-being of children, in part because children in large families tend to receive fewer financial and practical investments than do children in small families.[10] Alternatively, some research suggests that children who grow up without siblings lose out on important social experiences and are at-risk for weight issues.[11,12] How, then, is region linked to family size around the globe?

Table 1 presents the total fertility rate (the average number of children born to each woman of childbearing age) as a proxy for family size. Data are for 2011 and come from the United Nations Population Division. These data indicate that large families are most common in sub-Saharan Africa, where the total fertility rate (TFR) ranges from 2.4 children per woman in South Africa to 6.1 per woman in Uganda. Fertility is also comparatively high in the Middle East, ranging from a TFR of 2.1 in Turkey to a TFR of 3.0 in Jordan.

In the Americas and Oceania, fertility rates are now close to or just slightly below the replacement level of 2.1. This means that women in most countries in these regions are having enough children for the population to replace itself from one generation to the next. For instance, the TFR is 2.0 in Australia, 1.8 in Chile, 2.3 in Mexico, and 2.1 in the United States. It is worth noting that fertility has fallen markedly in South America in the last four decades, which is one reason that fertility rates there (which range from a TFR of 1.8 in Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica to 3.3 in Bolivia) now come close to paralleling those in North America and Oceania.[13]

Fertility rates in Europe have increased since their lows in the early 2000s, but generally remain below the replacement level.[14] Ireland has a replacement level TFR of 2.1, but the TFRs for all other countries in this region fall below this level, ranging from 1.4 to 2.0.

Finally, fertility rates in Asia, especially East Asia, have fallen dramatically in recent years and vary substantially, to the point where the TFR ranges from 3.1 (Philippines) to 1.1 (Taiwan).[15] Indeed, no country in East Asia has a fertility rate higher than 1.6. The long-term consequences of such low fertility—both for the children themselves and for the societies they live in—remain to be seen.

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[10] D. Downey, "When Bigger Is Not Better: Family Size, Parental Resources, and Children's Educational Performance," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 5 (1995).

[11] D. Downey and D. Condron, "Playing Well with Others in Kindergarten: The Benefit of Siblings at Home," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 2 (2004).

[12] A. Chen and J. Escarce, "Family Structure and Childhood Obesity, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study--Kindergarten Cohort," *Preventing Chronic Disease* 7, no. 3 (2010).

[13] A. Adsera and A. Menendez, "Fertility Changes in Latin America in Periods of Economic Uncertainty," *Population Studies* 65, no. 1 (201).

[14] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Doing Better for Families."

[15] Social Trends Institute, "The Sustainable Demographic Dividend" (Barcelona: Social Trends Institute, 2011).

Nonmarital childbearing

Tracking nonmarital childbearing is important because, in many societies, children whose parents are not married are more likely to experience instability in their parents' union and are less likely to have positive outcomes in many areas of life, from social behavior to academic performance.[16]

Nonmarital childbearing refers to the percentage of births that are to unmarried women, whether or not they are in a nonmarital relationship. Data for this indicator are from both surveys and official registration data. It is especially important to use caution when comparing rates for this indicator, as these two types of sources are very different. For more information on sources, see the e-ppendix.

Figure 5 indicates that rates of nonmarital childbearing are highest in Central/South America, followed by those in much of Northern and Western Europe. In South America, well over half of children are born to unmarried mothers, with Colombia registering the highest levels (84 percent).[17] In much of Europe, between one third and half of children are born outside of marriage, whereas in France and Sweden, more than 50 percent of children are. In many European countries, the average age at first childbirth is now younger than the average age at first marriage.[18]

Nonmarital childbearing is also common in Oceania and North America. In these regions, about four in ten children are born outside of marriage, with rates ranging from 27 (Canada) to 55 percent (Mexico), with the U.S. at 41 percent. By contrast, trends in nonmarital childbearing are quite varied in sub-Saharan Africa, ranging from a low of 6 percent in Nigeria to a high of 63 percent in South Africa. Finally, nonmarital childbearing is comparatively rare throughout much of Asia and the Middle East. With the exception of the Philippines (where 37 percent of children are born to unmarried parents), nonmarital childbearing is 5 percent or lower in these two regions. Not surprisingly, these patterns track closely with the marriage trends identified above in Figure 3; that is, where marriage is prevalent, the proportion of children born outside of marriage is smaller.

Family Socioeconomics

[16] S. Brown, "Marriage and Child Well-Being: Research and Policy Perspectives," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 5 (2010); Martin, "Consensual Unions in Latin America: Persistence of a Dual Nuptiality System"; W. Bradford Wilcox, "Why Marriage Matters: 30 Conclusions from the Social Sciences" (New York: Institute for American Values/National Marriage Project, 2010).

[17] Argentina appears to be an exception, but their nonmarital birth rate does not include births to consensual unions.

[18] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Doing Better for Families."

Key Findings

Socioeconomic indicators measure the material, human, and government resources that support family and child well-being. The socioeconomic indicators highlighted in our study include poverty, undernourishment (as a marker of material deprivation), parental education and employment, and public family benefits.

- In this study, poverty is calculated as *absolute poverty* (the percentage of the population living on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars per day) and as *relative child poverty* (the percentage of children living in households earning less than half their country's median household income). The prevalence of absolute poverty in the countries in our study ranges from 0 in several countries to 88 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The incidence of relative poverty for children ranges from 6 to 33 percent, with the lowest rates found in Europe and Oceania, and the highest rates found in Central/South America.
- In the Middle East, North America, Oceania, and Europe, less than 5 percent of the population is undernourished. In contrast, the highest levels of undernourishment are found in Africa, Asia, and South America.
- Levels of parental education, as shown by completion of secondary education, range widely around the world. The lowest levels are found in Africa, followed by Asia, the Middle East, and Central and South America. The highest levels are found in Europe.
- Between 38 and 97 percent of parents are employed worldwide, with the highest parental employment rates found in Asia. Consistently high rates are found in the Middle East, and medium to high rates are found in the Americas and Europe.
- Public family benefits across countries represented in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) range from 1.0 to 4.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). According to the limited available data, the highest benefits are offered in Europe and Oceania.

Poverty

Recent economic downturns have placed stress on families with children. Poverty is a well-documented risk factor for many negative outcomes in childhood. Children growing up in poverty have more social, emotional, behavioral, and physical health problems than do children who do not grow up in poverty.[19] Children who are poor also score lower on cognitive tests and are less likely to be ready to enter school than are their more affluent peers.[20]

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[19] D. Lempers, D. Clark-Lempers, and R. Simons, "Economic Hardship, Parenting, and Distress in Adolescence," *Child Development* 60, no. 1 (1989); D. Seith and E. Isakson, "Who Are America's Poor Children? Examining Health Disparities among Children in the United States" (New York: National Center for Children in Poverty, 2011).

[20] T. Halle et al., "Background for Community-Level Work on School Readiness: A Review of Definitions, Assessments, and Investment Strategies. Part II: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors to School Readiness. Paper Prepared for the John S. And James L. Knight Foundation" (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2000);

Poverty affects children differently depending on the age at which it is experienced. Developmental differences between children who are poor and those who are not can be detected by a child's second birthday.[21] In adolescence, poverty can lead parents to provide less nurture and more inconsistent discipline for their children, leading to young people's subsequent feelings of loneliness and depression.[22]

Prolonged poverty is especially detrimental to healthy child development. Experiencing poverty for at least half of childhood is linked with an increased risk for teenage pregnancy, school failure, and inconsistent employment in adulthood in the United States.[23]

In the United States and elsewhere, poverty is often related to family structure as well. Children living in single-parent households, especially those headed by a woman, are more likely to grow up in poverty.[24] This report considers two measures of poverty as indicators of family socioeconomics: absolute poverty and relative poverty.

Absolute poverty

The absolute poverty indicator captures the living conditions in one country, compared with others, by using an international poverty line and determining the percentage of the country's population living below that line. The international poverty line that we used in this report is set by the World Bank at 1.25 U.S. dollars a day. One of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals is to cut the proportion of people who live on less than one U.S. dollar a day in half.[25] Progress has been made in eradicating extreme poverty, and this goal was reached in 2010. However, poverty reduction has not been achieved equally around the world. Very high extreme poverty rates still exist in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Oceania, where the MDG is not expected to be met.[26] In total, there are still over one billion people living in extreme poverty worldwide.[27]

Data for this indicator come from the World Bank, which has compiled information from individual countries' government statistical agencies based on household surveys. Because individuals and countries themselves provide the information on poverty levels, instead of a more objective source, it is possible that these rates underrepresent the true level of absolute

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K. A. Moore et al., "Children in Poverty: Trends, Consequences, and Policy Options," in *Child Trends Research Brief* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2009).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Lempers, Clark-Lempers, and Simons, "Economic Hardship, Parenting, and Distress in Adolescence."

[23] C. Ratcliffe and S. McKernan, "Childhood Poverty Persistence: Facts and Consequences" (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2010).

[24] Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, "America's Children in Brief: Key National Indicators of Well-Being, 2012" (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012).

[25] United Nations, "The Millennium Development Goals Report," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010.

[26] United Nations, "Millennium Development Goals: 2013 Progress Chart" (United Nations, 2013).

[27] United Nations, "Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2014 Fact Sheet: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger" (United Nations, 2013).

poverty. Another limitation is that data are not available for this indicator for the most economically prosperous countries, including the United States and countries in Western Europe. Unfortunately, due to changes in the calculations of absolute poverty, it is not possible to compare results from this year's report to the previous year's report.[28]

Absolute poverty rates vary widely in Asia, ranging from 0 percent in Malaysia to 33 percent in India. The remaining Asian countries have absolute poverty rates between 13 and 18 percent, as shown in Figure 6.

The selected Middle Eastern countries have relatively low levels of absolute poverty. Two percent of people at most live on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars a day in these countries.

The highest rates of absolute poverty are found in Africa. In the sub-Saharan countries selected for this study, between 14 and 88 percent of the population live in poverty. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the highest poverty rate: 88 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line. In both Nigeria and Tanzania, 68 percent of the population lives on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars per day. Ethiopia and Kenya have the next highest poverty rates, at approximately 40 percent. Ghana and South Africa have the lowest absolute poverty rates in sub-Saharan Africa, at 29 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

In Central and South America, two countries (Bolivia and Nicaragua) have poverty rates that, at greater than 10 percent, are much higher than those in the region's other selected countries. In Colombia and Paraguay, 8 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of people live on less than 1.25 USD per day. Brazil and Peru have poverty rates around 5 percent, while in the remaining Central and South American countries, just 1 percent of people live in poverty.

Of the countries for which data are available, those in Eastern Europe, North America, and the Middle East have the lowest rates of absolute poverty. According to the international definition, 0 or 1 percent of people in these countries are poor.

Relative child poverty

The World Family Map also presents rates of relative poverty as an indicator of well-being of children in middle- and high-income countries. These rates speak to the poverty experienced by children whose families are poor relative to other families *within* each country. Specifically, the relative poverty indicator describes the share of children who live in households with household incomes that are less than half of the national median income for each country.[29] The higher the relative poverty rate, the more children live in poverty in comparison with the average income of all households with children within that country. This indicator also speaks to the income distribution within a country.

[28] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The State of the World's Children 2013" (New York, NY: United Nationals Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2013).
[29] Income is adjusted according to household size and composition.

Data for this indicator come from household surveys, as reported by UNICEF's Innocenti Research Center's *Measuring Child Poverty* report card and LIS.[30] Data for this indicator range from 2002 to 2010 and may not be recent enough to reflect the recent economic recession in some countries.

Throughout the countries for which relative child poverty was measured, between 6 and 33 percent of children live in households with incomes that are below half of the national median income. There is wide regional variation on this indicator, as seen in Figure 7. There are not, however, any changes of five or more percentage points for any countries for which more recent data were obtained since last year's World Family Map report.

The selected Asian countries have moderate rates of relative child poverty. In Taiwan, 8 percent of children live in households with incomes that are below 50 percent of the population's median income. The rates are slightly higher for South Korea and Japan, at 10 and 15 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, relative child poverty rates are much higher for China and India, at 29 percent and 23 percent, respectively.

Israel, the sole representative of the Middle East due to data limitations, has a relative child poverty rate of 27 percent.

The three countries included in the study from South America have slightly higher relative poverty rates for children, ranging from 25 to 33 percent. Peru has the highest rate of all countries included in the study, with 33 percent of children living in households earning less than 50 percent of the median income.

The North American countries' relative child poverty rates range from 13 to 23 percent. Canada has the lowest levels of relative child poverty in North America, with 13 percent of children living in households with incomes below half of the country's median income. The United States and Mexico, in contrast, have higher levels of relative child poverty, at 23 and 22 percent, respectively. In fact, the United States has one of the highest relative child poverty rates of the selected high-income nations.

In Oceania, Australia has a relative child poverty rate of 11 percent, and New Zealand one of 12 percent.

Western Europe has the lowest rates of relative child poverty of the regions, led by the Netherlands and Sweden at 6 and 7 percent, respectively, which are the lowest rates in the world. France, Germany, and Ireland all have rates of approximately 10 percent. The United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain have higher rates, ranging from 18 to 20 percent.

[30] UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, "Measuring Child Poverty: New League Tables of Child Poverty in the World's Rich Countries," in *Innocenti Report Card 10* (Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2012). Data come from EU-SILC 2009, HILDA 2009, PSID 2007, the Japanese Cabinet Office, Gender Equality Bureau (2011), and B. Perry, "Household Incomes in New Zealand: Trends in Indicators of Inequality and Hardship 1982 to 2010" (Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Social Development, 2011).

In Eastern Europe, between 10 and 26 percent of children live in households with incomes below 50 percent of the country's median income. Hungary has the region's lowest relative poverty rate, at 10 percent, whereas Romania has the highest, at 26 percent.

Undernourishment

One of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals is to cut the proportion of people who suffer from hunger in half between 1990 and 2015.[31] While this goal has not yet been met, progress has been made and the percentage of people who are undernourished worldwide decreased from 23 percent in 1990-1992 to less than 15 percent in 2010-12.[32] The percentage of the population of each country that is undernourished is an indicator of material deprivation, disproportionately affecting families with children. In an effort to protect their children, mothers tend to go hungry before their children in some cultures.[33] Unfortunately, this tendency means that undernourishment is passed from generation to generation, because pregnant women and their babies are especially vulnerable to the effects of hunger. For example, undernourished mothers are more likely to give birth to undernourished babies.[34]

Not having enough to eat and being poor are related in a cyclical fashion. Children growing up in families that lack the means to provide adequate and nutritious food are more likely to have physical ailments, such as blindness, stunted growth, iron deficiencies, and overall poor health. Children who are undernourished are also more likely to have delays in mental development, to show symptoms of depression, and to have behavior problems. Academically, undernourished youth have lower achievement and lower IQs. Undernourishment is a factor in one in three deaths of children under five throughout the world.[35] The loss of productivity associated with undernourishment among children can cost a country up to three percent of its GDP.[36]

The World Family Map presents information on undernourishment for the entire population rather than for families with children specifically because the available data are limited. As it is, the data on undernourishment come from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the

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[31] United Nations, "United Nationals Millennium Development Goals," United Nations (http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/)

[32] United Nations, "Millennium Development Goals and Beyond 2014 Fact Sheet: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger."

[33] United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, "The Impact of High Food Prices on Maternal and Child Nutrition," in *SCN Side Event at the 34th Session of the Committee on World Food Security* (Rome: United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, 2008).

[34] E. Munoz, "New Hope for Malnourished Mothers and Children," in *Briefing paper* (Washington: Bread for the World Institution, 2009).

[35] M. Nord, "Food Insecurity in Households with Children: Prevalence, Severity, and Household Characteristics," in *Economic Information Bulletin* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, 2009); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The State of the World's Children 2012," (New York, NY: United Nationals Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2012).

[36] Munoz, "New Hope for Malnourished Mothers and Children."

United Nations and the World Bank.[37] The FAO defines undernourishment as "an extreme form of food insecurity, arising when food energy availability is inadequate to cover even minimum needs for a sedentary lifestyle."[38,39]

In the majority of countries throughout the world with available data, less than 5 percent of the population are undernourished. All countries in Europe, the Middle East, North America, and Oceania have undernourishment rates under 5 percent. Countries with higher levels of undernourishment are concentrated in Africa, Asia, and South America, as seen in Figure 8.

Undernourishment rates vary widely in Asia, from under 5 percent (Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea) to 17 percent (India). Following India, the countries with the highest levels of undernourishment are the Philippines and China, at 16 and 11 percent, respectively.

The countries in sub-Saharan Africa for which data are available have higher levels of undernourishment than countries in other regions. In Ethiopia, almost two out of five people are undernourished; in Tanzania and Uganda, one out of three; and in Kenya, one out of four. Rates are much lower in Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, where less than one out of ten people are undernourished.

In Central and South America, undernourishment also varies widely. The highest rates of undernourishment are found in Nicaragua and Paraguay, where 22 percent of the population are undernourished. Bolivia also has a higher undernourishment rate, at 21 percent. Colombia and Peru have more moderate undernourishment rates, at 11 and 12 percent of the population, respectively. In the remaining countries of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica, less than one in ten people are undernourished.

The percentage of the population that suffers from undernourishment varies widely throughout the world, and does not always follow the level of absolute poverty in a given country. Despite having higher poverty levels, some countries are able to protect their populations from undernourishment. While the absolute poverty data predate the undernourishment data, the percentage of the population living in absolute poverty (on less than 1.25 U.S. dollars a day) is greater than the percentage of the population that is undernourished in almost all Asian and sub-Saharan African countries for which data are available: China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda. Strikingly, in Nigeria 68 percent of the population live on less than $1.25 a day and 7 percent are undernourished. Though not as extreme, a similar story is taking place in Ghana, where 29 percent of the population live in absolute poverty and less than five percent are undernourished. Some countries are able to make combating hunger a high priority among expenditures; in addition, private-sector programs as well as international food aid, food pricing

[37] Data for Taiwan come from C. Y. Yeh et al., "An Empirical Study of Taiwan's Food Security Index," *Public Health Nutrition* 13, no. 7 (2010).

[38] FAO, WFP, and IFAD. "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012. Economic Growth Is Necessary but Not Sufficient to Accelerate Reduction of Hunger and Malnutrition" (Rome: FAO, 2012).

[39] Note that dates are not comparable. See Figure 8 for detail.

differences, and a country's food distribution infrastructure may help explain these differences.[40]

Parental Education

Parental education influences parenting behaviors and child well-being. Well-educated parents are more likely to read to their children and provide their children with extracurricular activities, books, cognitive stimulation, and high educational expectations. Such parents are more likely to be active in their children's schools and are less likely to use negative discipline techniques.[41] Internationally, children of well-educated parents have higher academic achievement and literacy.[42,43] Parents transmit their education, knowledge, skills, and other aspects of human capital to their children, and parents' levels of education directly influence their access to social networks and well-paying jobs with benefits. These advantages are, in turn, conferred upon their children.

Due to data limitations, we use a proxy measure for the parental education indicator: the percentage of children who live in households in which the household head has completed secondary education, as shown in Figure 9. Due to this proxy, the household head could be the child's parent, grandparent, or other type of relation, with grandparents generally being most frequent, and this can vary by country. For example, in Russia, 20% of children's household heads are their grandparents. In South Africa, this percentage is 36.

In the United States, completing secondary education equates to earning a high school diploma or GED. Data for this indicator came from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International (IPUMS) the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), and LIS. [44]

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[40] FAO, WFP, and IFAD. "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012. Economic Growth Is Necessary but Not Sufficient to Accelerate Reduction of Hunger and Malnutrition" (Rome: FAO, 2012).

[41] P. Davis-Kean, "The Influence of Parent Education and Family Income on Child Achievement: The Indirect Role of Parental Expectations and the Home Environment," *Journal of Family Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2005); E. Hair et al., "Parents Matter: Parental Education, Parenting and Child Well-Being" (paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development, 2007); S. Hofferth and F.J. Sandberg, "How American Children Spend Their Time," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63, no. 2 (2001); K. R. Phillips, "Parent Work and Child Well-Being in Low-Income Families" (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, 2002).

[42] M. Lemke et al., "Outcomes of Learning: Results from the 2000 Program for International Student Assessment of 15-Year-Olds in Reading, Mathematics, and Science Literacy" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

[43] I. V. S. Mullis et al., "TIMSS 1999 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Repeat of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study at the Eighth Grade" (Boston: International Study Center, Lynch School of Education, Boston College, 2000).

[44] In this report, we present data for the most recent year available, which differs across countries. As with other indicators, we caution readers to refrain from making direct comparisons between countries that have data from different years.

Levels of parental education vary widely across Asian countries. In 2000, 12 percent of Malaysian children lived with a household head who had completed secondary education. Eighteen percent of children did so in India in 2004. In China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, between 31 and 45 percent of children lived with household heads who had completed secondary education. Education rates are much higher in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, where 88, 87, and 67 percent of children live with educated household heads, respectively.

Among the Middle Eastern countries studied, Turkey has the lowest percentage of children living in a household with a household head who has completed secondary education, at 31 percent in 2008. In the remaining surveyed Middle Eastern countries, between 40 percent (Jordan in 2012) and 77 percent (Israel in 2010) of children live with a household head who has completed secondary education. Education levels in Jordan increased by 5 percentage points between 2009 and 2012.

Parental education is lower in sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions. In the sub-Saharan African countries studied, between 1 and 26 percent of children live in households in which the household head has completed secondary education. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, and Nigeria, at least 20 percent of children lived in such households in 2007-10.[45] In contrast, in Ethiopia, 4 percent of children lived in such households in 2011.

In Central and South America, there is a large range in the percentage of children living in a household in which the household head has completed secondary education, from 12 percent in Nicaragua to 44 percent in Peru. In half of the selected countries, between 26 and 30 percent of children lived with a household head with secondary education between 2008 and 2010. Notably, the percentage of Brazilian children who lived in a household in which the head of the household has completed secondary education increased almost 13 percentage points from 17 percent in 2000 to 29 percent in 2010.

For North American children, levels of parental education also vary widely. Twenty-three percent of Mexican children lived in a household in which the head of the household had completed secondary education in 2010. Eighty-five percent of American children lived in such households in 2012.

Europe has some of the highest rates of parental education. In Western Europe, between 41 (France) and 87 percent (Germany) of children live in a household in which the head of the household has completed secondary education. France and Spain have the lowest levels of parental education in Western Europe, at 41 percent and 53 percent, respectively. In contrast, over 85 percent of children live in such households in Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

In Eastern Europe, between 57 percent (Romania) and 89 percent (Poland) of children live with household heads with a secondary education, while in Hungary and Russia, that percentage is 70 and 80 percent, respectively.

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[45] In South Africa, 19.7 percent of children lived in such households.

Parental Employment

Researchers agree that poverty has detrimental effects on child and adolescent outcomes. Employed parents are more likely to be able to provide for their children, as well as to connect their families to important social networks and to serve as important role models for productive engagement. Having an employed parent creates an opportunity for the consumption of goods and services that are especially valuable during childhood, such as health care. In fact, adolescents of unemployed parents report lower levels of health.[46]

Parental unemployment can create stress in a family. The financial and emotional strain associated with unemployment can lead to depression and lower levels of satisfaction with a spouse or partner.[47] Family conflict created from this strain, whether in the setting of an intact family or one separated by divorce, is detrimental to child well-being.[48]

Parental employment is also related to the number of parents present in a household. Children living with two parents are less likely to live in a jobless household than children living with one parent.[49]

Data limitations restricted the measurement of parental employment to the percentage of children who live in households in which the household head has a job. This measure is limited for a number of reasons. It does not provide information on whether the employment is full-time or full-year, paid or unpaid, or on how many hours a day the provider is working. Again, the household head is not necessarily a parent of the child, but could be a grandparent or other relative. In addition, the measure does not shed light on what the parent's work means in the context of the child's life. For example, the data about parental employment do not reveal whether one or multiple adults in the household are working, where and with whom the child spends time while the parent is working, how old the child is while the parent is working, or what hours of the day the parent is working, all of which can have an impact on child well-being.

The data used to calculate parental employment are drawn primarily from LIS and Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, International (IPUMS). Data are from 2000 to 2010. This indicator is very sensitive to country economic conditions and general economic climate, so we do not

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[46] M. Sleskova et al., "Does Parental Unemployment Affect Adolescents' Health?," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38, no. 5 (2006).

[47] A. D. Vinokur, R. H. Price, and R. D. Caplan, "Hard Times and Hurtful Partners: How Financial Strain Affects Depression and Relationship Satisfaction of Unemployed Persons and Their Spouses," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71, no. 1 (1996).

[48] G. Sandefur and A. Meier, "The Family Environment: Structure, Material Resources and Child Care," in *Key Indicators of Child and Youth Well-Being: Completing the Picture*, ed. B.V. Brown (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008).

[49] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Doing Better for Families."

recommend that readers use these data to make comparisons across countries for different years.[50]

Throughout the world, between 38 and 97 percent of children under the age 18 live in households in which the head of the household is employed. See Table 2 for more details.

As a region, Asia has the highest percentages of children living in households with an employed household head, ranging from 76 percent in Japan in 2008 to 97 percent in Taiwan in 2005.

Parental employment levels are slightly lower in the selected Middle Eastern countries. Israel, Jordan, and Turkey have parental employment rates of less than 80 percent. In Egypt, 88 percent of children lived in a household with an employed head of household in 2006.

The selected sub-Saharan African countries have the largest regional variation in parental employment rates. Thirty-eight percent of children live in a household with an employed household head in South Africa, whereas 87 percent do so in Tanzania. Reflecting the global recession, the percentage of children who live in a household with an employed household head decreased from 45 percent to 38 percent between 2008 and 2010 in South Africa.

Central and South America's parental employment rates exhibit a smaller range, from 68 percent in Chile to 82 percent in Argentina and Colombia. Notably, in Argentina the percentage of children who live with an employed household head increased from 68 percent in 2001 to 82 percent in 2010, but this includes those working even minimally in the informal sector as well.

In North America, parental employment rates range from 71 percent in the United States to 82 percent in Mexico and 90 percent in Canada. In Australia, the sole country for which we have data in Oceania, the parental employment rate was 81 percent in 2003.

In Western Europe, parental employment rates range from 55 percent in Ireland to 90 percent in Sweden.[51] In the majority of remaining selected countries in this region, approximately 80 percent of children live in a household in which the head of household is employed. In this region, between 2004 and 2010 the parental employment decreased by at least 5 percentage points in Ireland and Spain, while it actually increased in the Netherlands by 5 percentage points.

Rates are similar in Eastern Europe, where they range from 73 to 91 percent. Romania is an exception to these relatively high rates: 63 percent of children in the country lived in a household in which the head of the household was employed in 2002. In Russia, parental employment fell from 84 percent in 2000 to 73 percent in 2010, while in Hungary, parental employment rose between 2004 and 2010 from 85 to 91 percent.

Public Spending on Family Benefits

[50] Note that dates are not comparable. See Table 2 for detail.

[51] Interpret Sweden's rate with caution. More than 15 percent of data is missing.

Government spending on benefits for families provides support when parents need time off work to take care of a newborn, and to replace lost income during this time, as well as to support parental employment through early care and education.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports family benefits, including child care supports, parental leave benefits, child allowances, and family tax breaks. Unfortunately, these data are only available for members of the OECD, which are middle- and high-income nations. These data are also limited because funding plans differ between countries and local expenditures may not be depicted for all nations.[52]

Public spending on family benefits may be viewed as one potential measure of governmental spending priorities. Here, we focus on the percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) that a country allocates to family benefits. As presented in Table 3, governments spent between 1.0 and 4.2 percent of their GDP on benefits exclusively for families in 2009. There were no changes greater than 5 percentage points in this indicator between 2007 and 2009.

In Asia, Japan spent 1.5 percent of its GDP on family benefits and South Korea spent 1.0 percent. Israel, the only represented country in the Middle East, spent 2.4 percent of its GDP on family benefits, despite a hefty military budget.

In North America, spending on family benefits hovers around 1 percent, ranging from 1.1 percent in Mexico to 1.6 percent in Canada. South American countries, as represented by Chile, have similar levels of spending on families, at 1.5 percent.

Oceanic countries place more monetary emphasis on family benefits. New Zealand spent 3.6 percent of its GDP in this area and Australia spent 2.8.

Western European countries have the highest levels of government spending on family benefits. Ireland and the United Kingdom led the selected countries by spending 4.2 percent of their GDP on family benefits. France, Germany, and Sweden also spent more than 3 percent of their GDP on family benefits.

In Eastern Europe, Hungary spent more than 3 percent of its GDP on family benefits, whereas Poland and Romania spent 1.5 and 1.7 percent, respectively.[53]

Family Process

[52] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Public Spending on Family Benefits" (http://www.oecd.org/els/family/PF1_1_Public_spending_on_family_benefits_Dec2013.pdf).

[53] Data reported for Romania are from 2007, as updated data were not available from OECD.

Key Findings

Family process indicators describe the interactions between members of a family, including their relationships, communication patterns, time spent together, and satisfaction with family life. Data on family processes are challenging to obtain in a way that allows for international comparisons, but this situation is likely to improve as new data are expected to be released. Here are some examples of indicators of family process that can influence child and family well-being: family satisfaction; agreement or disagreement over household work; parent-child discussions about school; family meals together; and the time spent talking between parents and teenagers. While few countries have data on these measures, there is wide variation across the countries that do have data available.

- Between 31 percent (Russia) and 74 percent (Chile) of adults around the world are completely or very satisfied with their family life (8 countries with information).
- Between 55 percent (Russia) and 88 percent (Philippines) of couples report low levels of disagreement around household work (8 countries).
- Across surveyed countries, between 44 and 92 percent of 15-year-olds spend time just talking to their parents every day or almost every day. The percentage of 15-year-olds who eat the main meal with their families varies widely throughout the world, ranging from 60 percent in South Korea to 94 percent in Italy (7 countries).

Family Satisfaction

Family satisfaction both influences and is influenced by family structure, economics, and culture. The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) from 2002 provides data on this indicator for only a handful of countries. So, unfortunately, information in this area is quite limited but will be improved with the release of the 2012 ISSP data.

The highest levels of family satisfaction are found in South America, where 74 percent of Chileans report being satisfied with their family life, as seen in Figure 10. The lowest levels of family satisfaction are found in Eastern Europe, with only 31 percent of Russian adults being satisfied with their family life. The surveyed countries in Western Europe and Asia fall in the middle, with satisfaction rates between 45 and 66 percent.

Disagreement Over Household Work

Research in the United States has demonstrated that children tend to have better outcomes when they are living with two parents and when their parents have a low-conflict marriage.[54]

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[54] G. Brody, I. Arias, and R. Finchman, "Linking Marital and Child Attributions to Family Process and Parent-Child Relationships," *Journal of Family Psychology* 10, no. 4 (1996); S. Brown, "Family Structure and Child Well-Being: The Significance of Parental Cohabitation," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 2 (2004); C. Buehler and J. Gerard, "Marital Conflict, Ineffective Parenting, and Children's and Adolescents' Maladjustment," *Journal of*

Research on relationship quality also points to the importance of low levels of conflict in maintaining healthy relationships.[55] Therefore, maintaining a marriage or partnership that is not plagued by conflict has implications for each member of the entire family. Because responsibility for household work represents one area of potential disagreement that is shared by just about all couples who live together, the extent to which couples disagree about sharing household work can be seen as an indicator of family processes that couples throughout the world have in common.

The extent to which couples share household work is affected by norms in each country, and values related to gender equity, as well as the extent to which each spouse or partner in the relationship is working, or is at home caring for children and the household.

Data on this indicator are only available for a handful of countries from the 2002 International Social Survey Program (ISSP). Even though the information on sharing household work is limited, what little data that exist suggest regional differences.

For the eight countries with information available, the lowest levels of conflict reported are in the Philippines, where 88 percent of adults who are living with a spouse or a partner report a very low incidence of disagreement around housework, and in Chile, where 80 percent do so, as shown in Figure 10.

In the Western European countries represented, low levels of disagreement also are reported, with 71 to 75 percent of coupled adults in all three countries (France, Great Britain, and Ireland) reporting low levels of conflict around housework. These countries are characterized by women's high levels of participation in the labor force and by family policies—such as the provision of child allowances—that are supportive of mothers who stay home with their children in their earliest years of life.[56]

Relative to the other regions for which data are available, married or partnered adults in Eastern Europe are less likely to agree over housework. In the Eastern European countries represented, 55 percent of adults in Russia who are married or living with a partner, 57 percent in Poland, and 69 percent in Hungary report low levels of conflict.

Marriage and Family 64, no. 1 (2002); J. M. Gerard, A. Krishnakumar, and C. Buehler, "Marital Conflict, Parent-Child Relations, and Youth Maladjustment: A Longitudinal Investigation of Spillover Effects," *Journal of Family Issues* 27, no. 7 (2006); G. T. Harold, J. J. Aitken, and K. H. Shelton, "Inter-Parental Conflict and Children's Academic Attainment: A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 48, no. 12 (2007); S. Hofferth, "Residential Father Family Type and Child Well-Being: Investment Versus Selection," *Demography* 43, no. 1 (2006); K. Kitzman, "Effects of Marital Conflict on Subsequent Triadic Family Interactions and Parenting," *Developmental Psychology* 36, no. 1 (2000); S. McLanahan and G. Sandefur, *Growing Up with a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); K. A. Moore, A. Kinghorn, and T. Bandy, "Parental Relationship Quality and Child Outcomes across Subgroups" (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2011); D. K. Orthner et al., "Marital and Parental Relationship Quality and Educational Outcomes for Youth," *Marriage and Family Review* 45, no. 2 (2009).

[55] K.A. Moore et al., "What Is a 'Healthy Marriage'? Defining the Concept" (Washington, D.C.: Child Trends, 2004).

[56] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Doing Better for Families."

Discussions With Parents

Communicating with children, both generally and about school, is a positive family process that any parent can do, and that can enhance parent-youth relationships as well as student academic outcomes.[57] Here we will report on two different indicators of parent-adolescent communication: talking to parents and discussions about school. Recent data for the indicator in the 2013 report on talking about social and political issues were not available; thus these two indicators have replaced it. Data for this indicator come from the 2012 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey. The PISA sample contains primarily middle- and higher-income countries, and only eight countries included in the World Family Map chose to include questions on parental communication with students. PISA asks parents two different questions about the frequency of discussions with their 15-year-old children: how well their child is doing at school and how often they spend time just talking to their child. The indicators report the percentage of 15-year-olds who discuss these topics with their parents every day or almost every day, as reported by the parents.

How often students discuss school and spend time just talking to their parents varies widely throughout the world. In some regions, discussing school is more popular, while in others just talking occurs more often. Across surveyed countries, between 44 and 92 percent of 15-year-olds spend time just talking to their parents every day or almost every day while between 19 and 79 percent of teens discuss how well they are doing at school with their parents as frequently, as seen in Figure 11.

In Asia, 15-year-olds from two Special Administrative Regions in China, Hong Kong and Macau, and South Korea, are less likely to discuss how well they are doing in school with their parents every day or almost every day than those in other parts of the world. In Macau, just 19 percent do so, while in South Korea 28 percent and in Hong Kong 31 percent do so. By contrast, students in these Asian regions talked to their parents frequently about more general topics at similar levels to students in other regions, from 39 percent in Macao to 66 percent in Hong Kong.

In the Americas, represented by Chile and Mexico, students are more likely to discuss school with their parents than to spend time just talking—a pattern unique to these regions. About 60 percent of students discuss school with their parents daily or almost daily, while about 45 percent of students spend time just talking to their parents daily or almost daily.

In Europe, teens have comparatively more discussions with their parents. In Italy and Hungary, approximately three-quarters of 15-year-olds discuss how well they are doing at school and spend time just talking with their parents daily or almost daily. Germany teens, in contrast, are less likely to discuss school with their parents (just 36 percent do so almost every day or daily)

[57] D. Caro, "Parent-Child Communication and Academic Performance: Associations at the Within- and Between-Country Level," *Journal for Educational Research Online* 3, no. 2 (2011); G. Hampden-Thompson, L. Guzman, and L. Lippman, "A Cross-National Analysis of Parental Involvement and Student Literacy," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 54, no. 3 (2013).

but are the most likely to spend time just talking to their parents, with 92 percent doing so daily or almost daily.

Family Meals

Eating meals together can be a regular time for children to talk with their parents and share what is going on in their lives.[58] It is a direct measure of a positive family process.

In the United States, eating together as a family has been associated with myriad positive outcomes, ranging from reduced levels of substance and alcohol use to lower levels of depression, even after accounting for other family factors. Eating meals together is also associated with favorable educational outcomes, such as showing a commitment to learning, seeking and earning higher grades, spending more time on homework, and reading for pleasure.[59] After including controls for background characteristics, one study found that eating meals as a family was the most important predictor of adolescent flourishing.[60] Recent longitudinal research has found that the value of eating meals together as a family may dissipate as adolescents enter young adulthood, leaving only indirect effects on well-being.[61] The influence of sharing meals on positive outcomes also depends on the quality of family relationships. While sharing meals in families with stronger relationships has been found to have positive associations with child well-being, sharing meals in families that are marked by poorer or conflict-filled relationships has been found to have a lesser influence on how well children develop.[62]

Evidence suggests that adolescents and their parents agree that eating together is important, although parents place more value on mealtime.[63]

Internationally, research has demonstrated that students who eat meals with their families more frequently are more likely to achieve high scores in reading literacy in 16 out of 21

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[58] The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "The Importance of Family Dinners VI" (New York, NY: Columbia University, 2010).

[59] M. Eisenberg et al., "Correlations between Family Meals and Psychosocial Well-Being among Adolescents," *Archives of Pediatric Adolescent Medicine* 158, no. 8 (2004); J. Fulkerson et al., "Family Dinner Meal Frequency and Adolescent Development: Relationships with Developmental Assets and High-Risk Behaviors," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 39, no. 3 (2006).

[60] N. Zarrett and R. Lerner, "Ways to Promote the Positive Development of Children and Youth," in *Research-to-Results Brief* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2008).

[61] K. Musick and A. Meier, "Assessing Causality and Persistence in Associations between Family Dinners and Adolescent Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74, no. 3 (2012).

[62] Ibid.

[63] J. Fulkerson, D. Neumark-Sztainer, and M. Story, "Adolescent and Parent Views of Family Meals," *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 106, no. 4 (2006).

countries. This relationship is more consistent than that between discussing general topics with parents and reading literacy.[64]

Families all around the world eat meals together, though the particular meal of importance may vary from country to country. The World Family Map presents the proportion of children who eat the main meal of the day with their families every day or almost every day as an indicator of family processes. The information for this indicator is drawn from the direct answers given by parents of 15-year-olds from a variety of countries participating in the 2012 PISA survey. Unfortunately, due to methodological changes in the new survey, the 2012 responses are not comparable with the responses that were reported in the 2013 World Family Map report.

These data indicate that the percentage of 15-year-olds who frequently eat meals with their families varies widely throughout the world, ranging from 60 percent in South Korea to 94 percent in Italy, as seen in Figure 12.

In Asia, represented by South Korea and two regions in China, there is diversity in the number of teens who frequently eat with their parents. Sixty percent of teens in South Korea eat the main meal with their parents at least almost every day, while more than 80 percent do so in both Macao and Hong Kong. A similar proportion (62 percent) of teens eat the main meal of the day with their parents in South America, as represented by Chile. Rates are higher in North America and Europe, where between 67 percent (Hungary) and 94 percent (Italy) of teens eat the main meal with their parents every day or almost every day. Mexican and German teens are in between, with 74 and 82 percent of teens eating with their parents at least almost every day, respectively.

The differences in the frequency of families' eating meals together may reflect differences in family structure, time use, proximity of work and school to home, rates of female labor-force participation, and cultural patterns.

Family Culture

Key Findings

Family culture refers to the family-related attitudes and norms that are expressed by a country's citizens. Data suggest that adults take a range of progressive and conservative positions on family issues.

- Acceptance of voluntary single motherhood varies by region, with adults in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania leaning more towards acceptance (with a high

[64] Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman, "A Cross-National Analysis of Parental Involvement and Student Literacy."

acceptance rate of 80 percent in Spain), and countries in Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa leaning more towards rejection (as evidenced by an acceptance rate of only 2 percent in Egypt and Jordan).

- In the majority of countries featured in this study, most adults believe that working mothers can establish just as good relationships with their children as stay-at-home mothers, with those holding this view ranging from 47 percent in Jordan to 84 percent in Sweden.
- In the majority of countries, as well, most adults believe that children are more likely to flourish in a home with both a mother and a father, with those sharing this belief ranging from 47 percent of adults in Sweden to 99 percent of adults in Egypt.
- Most adults worldwide report that they completely trust their families; however, attitudes on this issue vary by region and country, with 63 percent of adults reporting they completely trust their families in the Netherlands, and 97 percent reporting this to be the case in Jordan. It should be noted that the willingness of adults to affirm the term "completely" varies across countries.

To shed light on adults' attitudes toward family life around the world, we relied on data from the World Values Survey (WVS), collected between 1999 and 2008, on four cultural indicators in 25 countries: 1) approval of single motherhood, 2) agreement that a child needs a home with a mother and father to grow up happily, 3) approval of working mothers, and 4) presence of family trust.[65] Given that respondents in different countries may interpret the questions and response categories somewhat differently, and that population representation of the survey varies from country to country, the WVS does not allow us to draw a perfect comparison between countries. Nevertheless, the survey is a source of data for international comparisons of adult attitudes towards family-related matters.

Attitudes Toward Voluntary Single Motherhood

Adult attitudes toward voluntary single motherhood vary greatly by region, as seen in Figure 13. The WVS asked adults if they approved of a woman seeking to "have a child as a single parent" without a "stable relationship with a man." In Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, little public support exists for this type of single motherhood. Specifically, in Asia and the Middle East, support for this view ranges from a high of 20 percent (Taiwan) to a low of 2 percent (Egypt and Jordan). Support is also comparatively low in sub-Saharan Africa, where only 19 percent of adults in Uganda and 29 percent of adults in South Africa express approval of voluntary single motherhood.

Support for voluntary single motherhood is markedly higher in the Americas, Europe, and

[65] World Values Survey Association, "World Values Survey 1981-2008 Official Aggregate V.20090901" (World Values Survey Association [www.worldvaluessurvey.org] Aggregate File Producer: ASEP/JDS, Madrid, 2009); Hampden-Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman, "A Cross-National Analysis of Parental Involvement and Student Literacy."

Oceania. Forty percent or more of adults living in Oceanic or American countries surveyed in the WVS express approval of single motherhood. For example, 52 percent of adults in the United States, 46 percent in Canada, 40 percent in Australia, and 74 percent in Chile indicate that they approve of unmarried women having children on their own. Views are more heterogeneous in Europe. Just 32 percent of adults in Poland express support for voluntary single motherhood, compared with 80 percent of adults in Spain. Overall, slightly less than half of the adults in most other European countries register their approval of voluntary single motherhood. In general, adults in countries with more affluence, lower levels of religiosity, or high levels of single parenthood prove to be more supportive of women having children without a husband or male partner. By contrast, countries with strong religious or collectivist orientations are less supportive of women who chose to be single mothers.[66]

Attitudes About Whether Children Need Both a Mother and Father

Despite the considerable regional variation in public attitudes toward voluntary single motherhood, much less variation exists in attitudes toward the value of a home with a mother and a father. In most of the world, the majority of adults appear to believe that a child "needs a home with both a mother and a father to grow up happily," as seen in Figure 14.

This sentiment is especially strong in Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, where between 87 percent (Taiwan) and 99 percent (Egypt) of adults express the belief that children are likely to be happy in homes with a mother and father. Indeed, more than 90 percent of adults in Egypt (99 percent), the Philippines (97 percent), Jordan (96 percent), Turkey (96 percent), Uganda (96 percent), Singapore (94 percent), South Korea (92 percent), and South Africa (91 percent) hold this view.

In addition, support for this belief is high among respondents in Central/South America, where large majorities agree that children are more likely to flourish in mother-father homes, including 88 percent of adults in Argentina, 82 percent in Brazil, 76 percent in Chile, and 93 percent in Peru. North Americans are less likely to agree with this idea, but still 63 percent of U.S. adults, 87 percent of Mexican adults, and 65 percent of Canadian adults express the belief that the mother-father household is optimal for raising happy children. Australian adults (70 percent) hold similar attitudes on this issue.

Agreement with the mother-father family ideal is higher among European adults than among adults in the Americas and Oceania, with the sole exception of survey respondents in Sweden, where only 47 percent of adults agree that a child needs to be raised by a mother and father to be happy. Agreement with a mother-father ideal exceeds 80 percent among adults in Poland (95 percent) and Germany (88 percent). More than three-quarters (78 percent) of adults in Spain also view this family arrangement as best for children.

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[66] R. Inglehart and P. Norris, *The Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World* (New York: Cambridge, 2003).

Thus, even though many adults in the Americas, Europe, and Oceania approve of voluntary single motherhood, the majority of adults in these regions still believe that a child needs to have a mother and a father in the home to grow up happily. And the survey reveals that throughout the rest of the globe more than 80 percent of adults agree.

Support for Working Mothers

In a majority of the world's countries, more than 50 percent of women aged 15 and older are participants in the paid labor force.[67] In line with this trend, as Table 4 indicates, a clear majority of adults in most countries around the globe believe that a "working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work."

This view seems to be particularly common in the Americas and Europe, where more than 75 percent of adults in the survey of countries generally agree that working mothers perform just as well as mothers who do not work outside the home. For instance, 78 percent of adults in Canada, 78 percent of adults in Chile, and 81 percent of adults in Spain express the belief that working mothers can establish just as good a relationship with their children as can stay-at-home mothers.

The support for working mothers seems to be more mixed in sub-Saharan Africa, where 80 percent of adults in South Africa, but only 58 percent of adults in Uganda, agree that working mothers do as well as mothers who do not work outside the home.

Judging by trends in the Philippines and Singapore, where about three-quarters of adults approve of working mothers, public attitudes in Asia also seem to be supportive. By contrast, support for working mothers seems lower in the Middle East, where 47 percent of adults in Jordan and 70 percent of adults in Turkey report that they approve of working mothers.

In general, then, this somewhat limited global survey of public attitudes towards working mothers suggests that in most regions of the world, public support for working mothers is high. The one exception to this trend appears to be in the Middle East, where women's labor force participation is comparatively low and where traditional social mores are strongly held.[68] It is important to keep in mind that this question was asked on surveys around the turn of the millennium, and support for working mothers may have changed in the last decade.

Family Trust

In most societies, the family is seen as a fundamental source of social solidarity, the place where some of humankind's deepest needs for belonging are met, as well as the wellspring of the emotional and social support needed to thrive and survive in society. What, then, does the

[67] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World's Women 2010" (New York: United Nations, 2010).
[68] Ibid.; Inglehart and Norris, *The Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change around the World*.

global public believe about the presence of trust in their own families? The World Values Survey asked respondents if they trust their families, and the results suggest that trust remains high in most families around the world (see Table 5). Here the World Family Map provides information on the percentage of respondents reporting the highest category, in which they affirm that they "completely" trust their families,[69] because there is a tendency for respondents to pick the highest category in reporting on such a socially desirable indicator. However, differences across cultures exist in the degree to which survey respondents will affirm the category "completely." Evidence suggests that in the Netherlands and in Latin America, specifically, and perhaps in other countries, respondents often avoid choosing the highest categories on survey questions because these response options are not culturally acceptable.[70]

With these caveats, we find that family trust is especially high among adults in the African, Asian, Oceanic, and especially Middle Eastern countries studied. In the Middle East, 96 percent of Egyptian and Turkish adults indicate that they completely trust their families, as do 97 percent of adults in Jordan. Likewise, 83 percent of adults in Australia, 85 percent in South Africa, and 87 percent in South Korea and Taiwan express complete trust in their families.

Trends in family trust are more mixed in Europe and the Americas. In Europe, the proportion of adults who report completely trusting their families ranges from 63 percent in the Netherlands to 94 percent in Sweden, with most countries in the region falling close to 80 percent. In the Americas, the proportion of adults who report completely trusting their families ranges from 67 percent in Brazil to 91 in Argentina, with the percentage in other countries in the region falling in between.

Given the heterogeneous character of countries where high levels of family trust are registered—such as Egypt, Jordan, Spain, and Sweden—it remains to be seen how factors like affluence, public policy, religion, and familism (the elevation of the family over individual issues) play a role in fostering high levels of family solidarity in countries around the globe. Nevertheless, the varied character of nations that register high on the attitudinal measure of family trust suggests that different factors in different regional contexts foster high levels of family solidarity.

These indicators for the World Family Map 2014 demonstrate the diversity of families and nations in which children are being raised. There are distinct patterns of family structure, socioeconomics, family process and culture in every region of the world, and often variation within regions. There are promising trends, such as reductions in malnutrition and increases in parental education, as well as continued stressors on families such as high poverty and parental unemployment. Parent-child communication is one indicator that can be improved simply through the efforts and participation of family members.

[69] Respondents could indicate that they trust their family "completely" or "somewhat," or that they "do not trust [their family] very much" or "do not trust at all."

[70] World Family Map partner research institutions in the Netherlands and South America, email message to authors, October 2012.

The need for data on additional countries for the indicators in the family process and culture sections is evident, as well as for more comparable data across regions and countries of the world in the areas of family structure and socioeconomics. Comparable data for additional indicators of family well-being are needed to further understand the family dynamics underlying child well-being outcomes. Specific surveys sometimes allow for analyses of these dynamics. The following section uses survey data to look at the relationship between union stability and early childhood health.

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