

SPP Dads' Perspective

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From the Project Director

Welcome to this first issue of Dad's Perspective. For the past two years we have called you from the Center for Family Research in Rural Mental Health at Iowa State University to gain your perspective on parenting.

While gathering and analyzing data can be a painfully slow process, we do want to get back to you with some information we have found about more recently separated or divorced fathers. We hope that the information we have chosen to share with you is of interest as you think about your own experience. Maybe you have wondered about the experience of other dads who have a similar situation to yours. If so, I hope this newsletter gives you some helpful information.

Jay Beaman,
Project Director

You surprised us!

Before we began to look for recently separated or divorced fathers of 8th and 9th grade children, we were continuously warned that none of them would talk to us. Imagine our initial shock when almost none of you turned us down. We have been surprised for two years now at how open you are as a group to being interviewed about your experience of being a parent and former spouse. Some of you are so busy that we almost cannot find you, but you find us and allow us to ask questions. Some of you are on the road because of work. Thanks for allowing us to hear a side of the story that is not yet understood!

Dads and Kids Together

Here are two questions about dads and kids keeping together.

How often have you seen your 8th/9th grade child in the last 6 months?

1991	1992
6.5%	7.2% never
10.9%	12.0% less than once/month
10.1%	6.4% once a month
22.5%	28.0% 2-4 times a month
50.0%	40.8% once a week or more
-----	5.6% daily (the child lives with me)

How often have you talked on the telephone to your 8th/9th grade child in the last 6 months?

1991	1992
5.1%	5.1% never
8.0%	5.1% less than once/month
5.1%	13.6% once a month
18.1%	21.2% 2-4 times a month
63.8%	55.1% once a week or more

Clearly, many of you struggle to maintain contact with your child or children.

Dads and Kids Apart

We also asked about what it's like to be apart.

We asked fathers what they found most frustrating about being a father to children outside their household. Here's what they told us.

1991	1992
55.9%	52.4% lack of time with or access to the child
18.0%	18.4% lost input into child's development; can't discipline the child
9.0%	7.8% being an outsider, no communication, not knowing what is happening
7.2%	2.9% missing child's affection; being lonely
5.4%	5.8% the child has turned against the father
2.7%	4.9% feel child is developing bad behavior
-----	5.8% mom fails to supervise child
0.9%	----- money problems
0.9%	2.0% other problems

When we asked you if you get to see your 8th or ninth grade child as often as you would like, only 20% could say yes, while 80% of you do not get to see your child as often as you would like. When asked if you found it frustrating being a father to your child who is not living with you, 80% found it frustrating and 20% did not.

Dads' Employment

In 1991, about 85.5% of you told us you were employed full-time.

Another 2.9% were employed part part-time. 5.1% were disabled and 6.5% were unemployed at the time of the interview. Twenty-five percent of you also had a second job or business besides your first employment.

In 1992, about 81.6% of you reported full time employment, with another 4.0% reporting part time employment. There were 7.2% unemployed, 5.6% disabled, and 1.6% retired

About 14% of fathers in 1991 and 15% in 1992 were self-employed.

We asked those of you who were employed how many hours you worked in a normal week on your main job.

1991	1992
5%	3% less than 40 hours / week
69%	81% 40 to 50 hour / week
26%	16% more than 50 hours / week

Dads' Education

Highest level completed

- 5.8% Advanced degree
- 2.9% some graduate work
- 11.6% four year college degree
- 8.7% two year or vocational school graduate
- 34.8% some college or vocational school
- 30.4% high school or G.E.D.
- 5.8% less than high school

About 71% of you agreed or strongly agreed that your job matches your education and experience.

Working with your Former Spouse in Parenting

We wanted to know how often you had contact with your former spouse in the six months before the interview. In 1991, 92% of the fathers had some contact with their former spouse, while 8% had no contact. In 1992 84.8% had some contact and 15.2 had no contact in the previous six months.

When asked how often you have constructive conversations with your former spouse about your child's development,

in 1991	in 1992,
12.6%	13.2% never
10.2%	20.8% less than once a year
33.9%	23.6% less than once a month
30.7%	33.0% one or two times per month
12.6%	9.4% once a week or more

When we asked how often you and your former spouse attend your child's school-related activities at the same time,

in 1991	in 1992,
23.6%	22.6% never
15.0%	27.4% rarely
29.1%	17.0% sometimes
32.3%	33.0% often

New toll-free number

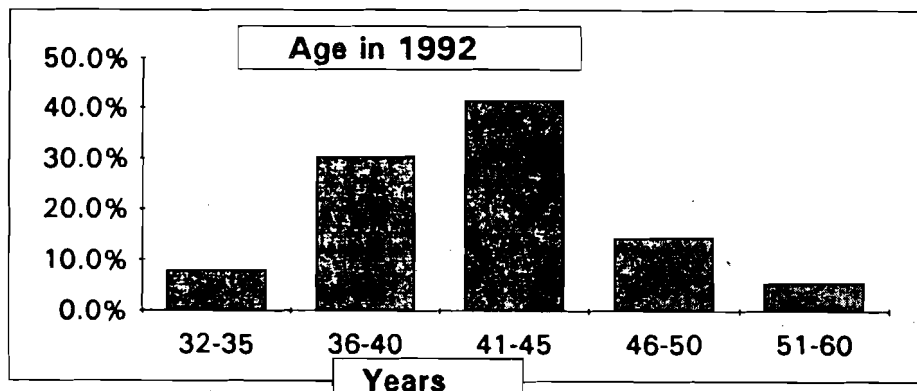
For your convenience, we now have a free phone number you can call in Ames, at the Center for Family Research in Rural Mental Health. If you have any important changes since last year, such as a new address or a new phone, please call us at no charge to you.

Call 1-800-428-9599 and mention that you are part of the Single Parent Project (SPP) phone survey.

Dads' Age

In 1991 the average age of fathers in our study was 40 years old. In 1992 the average age was 42 years old. The two year difference in average age may be a result of younger dads dropping out of the study.

Percent	Age
8.0%	32-35
30.4%	36-40
41.6%	41-45
14.4%	46-50
5.6%	51-60



Dads' Marital Status and Dating

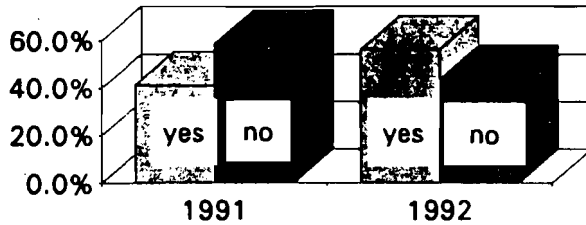
We asked you which of the following best described your current living situation. By the second year, a number of dads had remarried, many more were dating, and they were dating more often.

In 1991	In 1992	
0.7%	-----	back with your former spouse
24.6%	31.2%	married to a new partner
20.3%	17.6%	living with a new partner
53.6%	50.4%	living alone

Nine fathers had married between the first and second interview. This is a transitional period for many fathers. Not only will a large number of fathers get married, but more are dating in the second year than the first, and they are dating more often.

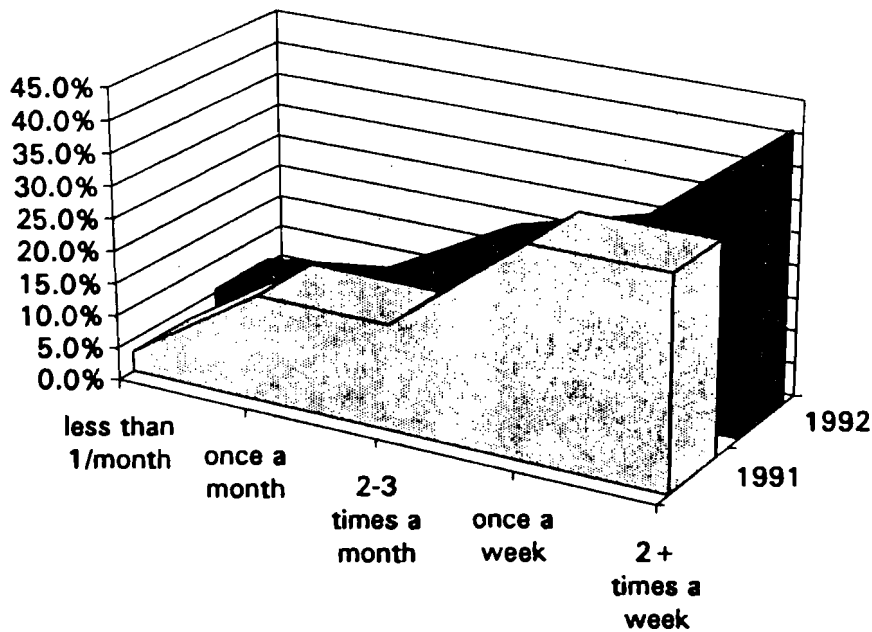
In 1991 we asked 75 of you if you were currently dating.
In 1992 we asked 64 of you the same question.

Are You Currently Dating?



Of those dating, we asked,

How often are you dating?



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