

# Two-Parent Families Are the Key to Safer Cities

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By Timothy S. Goeglein  
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*Commentary*

Several years ago, after a particularly violent weekend in Chicago, then-Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, [said](#): “This may not be politically correct, but I know the power of what faith and family can do. ... Our kids need that structure. ... I am asking ... that we don’t shy away from a full discussion about the importance of faith and family to develop and nurture character, self-respect, a value system, and a moral compass that allows kids to know good from bad and right from wrong.”

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Emmanuel’s plea for a broader discussion indicates that something must be truly amiss. And it is, as a new [study](#) directed by Nicholas Zill for the Institute for Family Studies indicates.



Looking at cities in Ohio, Zill found that there was a much crime rate in cities where two-parent families were in the minority. For instance,



only 44 percent of mothers in Springfield, Ohio, were married during the period of 2018–2022. The percentage was even worse in Cleveland



with only 33 percent being married, and in Youngstown, which reported only 32 percent were married. Cincinnati fared marginally better at 46 percent.

In contrast, in Cleveland Heights, 63 percent of mothers were married and in New Albany, Ohio, 91 percent were.

And the differences between these cities and their rates of violent crime are startling. Zill found that in Springfield, there were 1,298 incidents of violent crime reported per 100,000 residents, 1,895 incidents in Cleveland, 800 in Cincinnati, and 699 in Youngstown. Meanwhile, Cleveland Heights only reported 267 incidents and New Albany had 99.

This is not surprising. It has been well documented how the rise of fatherless homes has led to a concurrent rise in incarceration rates. Twenty years ago, Cynthia Harper of the University of Pennsylvania and Sara S. McLanahan of Princeton University [found](#) that young men who grow up in fatherless homes are twice as likely to end up in jail as those who come from traditional two-parent families.

The numbers of single-parent homes have only gotten worse since.

Out-of-wedlock births are now rampant among all groups. In 2022, 39.8 percent of children were born to single mothers. In Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico, the [percentage](#) is even higher: over 48 percent.

The issue of missing fathers is particularly acute in our cities but has serious consequences for our society as a whole. Single mothers can be great mothers, but in a single-parent home, as Emmanuel noted, something is lacking—something necessary for children’s emotional and mental development.

What is lacking is the unique role a father plays in a child’s life.

For instance, [fatherless girls](#) often become severely depressed, self-destructive, or sexually promiscuous as they seek to fill the emotional vacuum left by an absent father.

[Boys](#), on the other hand, as this study about the link between the lack of two-parent homes and violent crime documents, tend to deal with that void with anger and rage. Thus, many of the tragic shootings or horrible abuses of women we have seen over the past several years have been instigated by boys from broken homes.

Finally, numerous [studies](#) have shown that children in single-parent homes are more likely to engage in substance abuse than those in stable, two-parent (mother and father) homes. These children eventually grow up into adults and bring their drug dependency with them, creating another generation of children trapped in the cycle of family dysfunction, drug abuse, and single parenthood. It is a triple whammy resulting in a downward spiral of despair with each succeeding generation.

Thus, a society is formed where the dividing line between the haves and have-nots is determined at the very beginning of life. If children are born into a stable, two-parent family they are more likely to be successful in life and avoid bad choices such as engaging in violence and substance abuse. If they are born into the instability of a continued cycle of a broken family, they will likely fall prey to the resulting pathologies.

That is why, if we are to truly deal with the current violence in our inner cities, we need to focus first on the behaviors that have led to that violence—which means a dedicated effort to restore two-parent families rather than continuing to ignore the issue by enacting policies that encourage broken families. That is my hope—and the result of such an effort will not only be healthier children, but a safer and healthier society as well.

*Views expressed in this article are opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Epoch Times.*

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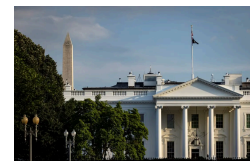
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