



FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Report on Single Parent Survey

Prepared by:
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Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to acknowledge that this study was the brainchild of Judge Bruce Peterson, presiding judge of the Family Court division of the Fourth Judicial District. Judge Peterson identified a gap in the system – the fact that never married parents were not receiving the same level of tailored services as divorcing parents – and began putting in place measures to fill that gap. This survey is one of those measures and is a prime example of Judge Peterson’s emphasis on using empirical data to make important policy decisions.

From the beginning, Judge Peterson knew he could not effect change alone, and gathered around himself a group of professionals known as the Unmarried Parent Working Group. This group includes judicial officers, attorneys, child support case managers, and community advocates, among others, and meets on a regular basis to address the issues and concerns of single parents. This group was instrumental in helping us design our survey, and provided feedback as to what data would be most critical to have.

Finally, we were extremely fortunate to have a group of 21 District Court employees who volunteered to help us conduct the survey. These volunteers are: Vicki Albu, Ivy Bambenek, Ann Basta, Patricia Chisolm, Tammie Davis, Heather Harper, Stepheni Hubert, Kerri Mackenthun, Amy Micek, Laurie Middleton, Sherry Morris, Krystyna Sills, Mary Stebbins, Michele Stenzel, Marquetta Stokes, Sue Striker, Wayne Thell, Judy Ulrich, Marsha Unthank, Naomie Youngmark, George Zissos. We appreciate the time they gave us out of their busy schedules to help accomplish this task; we could not have done it without them.

Executive Summary

- Services provided to divorcing couples are not generally available to couples who share children but were never married.
- The Fourth Judicial District Research Division conducted a survey of these single parents who had cases on the child support and paternity calendars from January through March of 2007. The primary purposes of the survey were as follows:
 - To be able to clearly describe the characteristics of single parent litigants
 - To identify the problems and needs of single parent litigants
 - To recommend to the court and other agencies how we can make appropriate resources more accessible to single parent litigants.
- We interviewed 167 single parents. Survey respondents were evenly split by gender, mostly in their 20's and 30's, and primarily African-American (61%). Half of the respondents lived in Minneapolis.
- Respondents were not highly educated (65% had a high school diploma or less), and one-third were unemployed at the time of the survey. Of those that were employed, nearly half worked part-time. Median wage for those employed was \$11.99/hour, or between \$12,000 and \$13,000 per year for those working twenty hours per week. Many who were ordered to pay child support were experiencing problems making those payments.
- Almost half of respondents lacked stable housing.
- One-quarter of respondents, representing one-half of the male respondents, had a criminal record, mostly for drug and assault cases.
- Respondents had anywhere from 1 to 8 children, and the most common age noted was less than 1 year old (infant). There were, on average, two different biological co-parents for each respondent's children. Respondents' relationships with co-parents could be characterized as less than warm.
- Although one-third of respondents said they would like to have more contact with their child, only nine respondents had actually filed a custody or parenting time case with the court.
- We asked respondents about the services they needed, and discovered that the top three services needed were help with education, help with finding a job, and help with childcare. Men were significantly more likely to need help finding a job, younger respondents were significantly more likely to need help finding a job and with education, and respondents who were the sole custodians of their children were significantly more likely to need help with childcare.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Executive Summary	4
Background	6
The Calendars	6
Research Design	8
Basic Demographic Data	9
Socioeconomic Status	11
Employment Stability	15
Child Support Obligations	16
Housing	18
Court Involvement and Criminal History	20
Family Situation	22
Relationship with Co-Parent	25
Treatment	26
Services Needed	27
Conclusions	29
Appendix A: Introduction to Survey	30
Appendix B: Survey	31
Appendix C: Responses to Question about Why No Custody/Parenting Time Case Filed	40
References	41

Background

Children born to parents who are not married to each other have become increasingly common in our society. In 1960, only 6% of births were to single parents; in 2005, that number had risen to 33% (Mathematica Policy Research, 2005). In Minneapolis, the non-marital birth rate for U.S. born African-American women in 2005 was 86.6% (Minnesota Department of Health, 2007). Individuals in these single relationships are often struggling financially, which adds to the difficulties of childrearing and co-parenting. These children in turn are at greater risk of poverty and problems with their health, behavior, and academic performance (Mathematica Policy Research, 2005).

The Fourth Judicial District of Minnesota has worked to increase and improve services to divorcing couples, in part to help them resolve child support and co-parenting issues (see, for example, Family Court: Initial Case Management Conference Program Evaluation, Hennepin County District Court Research Division, 2002); however, those individuals who share children but were never married do not generally benefit from these recent family court initiatives. To this end, the presiding Judge of Family Court, Judge Bruce Peterson, spearheaded an effort in 2006 to begin paying more attention to the needs of the unmarried parent population.

One of the steps Judge Peterson took was to convene a group of interested stakeholders to meet on a regular basis and discuss the needs of the single parents seen on the child support and paternity calendars. This group includes judicial officers, county attorneys, defense attorneys, child support workers, and community advocates, among others. In the fall of 2006, Judge Peterson invited the Research Division of the Fourth Judicial District to meet with this group and work with them to develop a survey for single parent litigants, with the hopes of better understanding and delivering services to this particular population. The primary purposes of the survey were as follows:

1. To be able to clearly describe the characteristics of single parent litigants
2. To identify the problems and needs of single parent litigants
3. To recommend to the court and other agencies how we can make appropriate resources more accessible to single parent litigants.

The Research Division surveyed 167 people between the end of January and the beginning of March 2007. (See more about Research Design, below).

The Calendars

Family court cases for unmarried parents are typically seen on one of three types of calendars: the Paternity Calendar, the County Attorney calendar (also known as the “contempt” calendar), and the Child Support Magistrate calendar. On these calendars, the County Attorney represents the Hennepin County Support and Collections division of the Department of Economic Assistance, and is principally interested in financial issues; thus parenting issues are typically not addressed.

Paternity Calendar (PA)

If a Recognition of Parentage form (ROP) does not exist, a single parent must begin on the Paternity calendar. The Paternity calendar is a “triage” calendar where child support case managers from the county’s Support and Collections division and county attorneys work with litigants to establish parentage. Public defenders are also present to represent the parties if they are deemed eligible.¹ Adjudication of paternity may be as simple as individuals agreeing that they are the parents of the child in question, or it may include a genetic test to establish parentage (typically for the man assumed to be the father, which is why the calendar is labeled a “paternity” calendar). Once paternity is established (either via the results of genetic testing or an agreement), the case can move on to a courtroom where a judicial officer officially adjudicates paternity and sets child support. The child support amount is generally recommended by the Hennepin County Support and Collections employees who have made an assessment of the individuals’ financial background. The Paternity calendar handles cases on Wednesday mornings and afternoons, and typically processes between 30 and 50 cases each week.

JOBS Calendar

The Jobs calendar is a calendar for non-custodial parents (virtually all fathers) who cannot pay child support because they are unemployed. The calendar provides special processing, regular monitoring, and employment and education services to help these parents find and maintain steady employment. The calendar only meets once a month, but can handle up to 92 cases each time.

Child Support Magistrate Calendars (CSM)

If a Recognition of Parentage (ROP) form has already been signed (e.g., at the hospital when the child is born), cases can go directly to one of the two Child Support Magistrate calendars to set child support. The cases are usually set on this calendar by the County Attorney. The cases can also be set on these calendars by the litigants themselves, if a review of or modification to child support is requested. For example, if a father loses his job, he may request a modification to his child support payments until he has stable income again.

Child Support Magistrate calendars are officiated by a magistrate² and heard every weekday, both mornings and afternoons. There are approximately 20 cases per day seen on each of these two calendars.

¹ Eligibility determination is somewhat subjective and takes into account family size and other current child support orders. Typically, individuals need to make less than \$8.00 per hour or \$1,000 per month to be eligible for a public defender.

² Attorneys hired by contract to handle these types of cases.

County Attorney Calendars (CA)

Cases on these calendars are set by the County Attorney, usually because someone who has been court ordered to pay child support is currently not paying. These calendars are also often referred to as “contempt” calendars, as one of the parties is often in contempt of court for refusal to make adequate child support payments. The calendars are officiated by a judicial officer, and are heard Mondays and Thursdays, both mornings and afternoons. Hennepin County Support and Collections workers and public defenders also staff these calendars. There are a minimum of twelve cases scheduled on these calendars, three times per week.

Research Design

Research staff and volunteers were present at as many calendars as possible during the study period. We would arrive approximately fifteen minutes before the calendar was scheduled to begin. The protocol was to approach litigants before their court hearing, at times when they were not engaged in discussion with an attorney or child support case manager. When approaching a potential survey respondent, researchers were instructed to ask two screening questions and provide a brief introduction to the survey (see Appendix A). The screening questions were designed to ensure that we were not interviewing any previously married couples and also that we were interviewing individuals from the appropriate calendars.³

After asking the screening questions, we asked litigants whether they would be willing to answer some questions to help improve the services the court offers to people in similar situations to their own. We informed them that the survey was completely anonymous, and would only take 5-10 minutes.

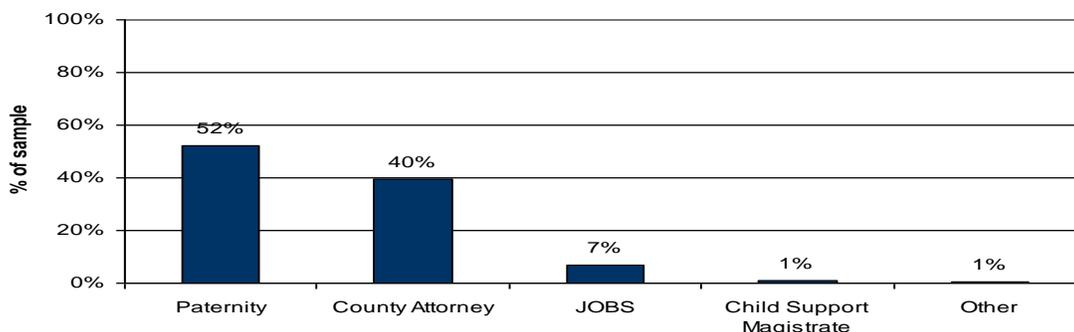
A full copy of the survey can be found in Appendix B. We asked litigants questions about their demographics, education, employment, children, involvement with the courts, and personal struggles (e.g., physical and mental health, financial stress, etc.) as well as specific questions about the types of services which might be most helpful to them. The following sections provide descriptive analysis of the single parents’ responses to the survey items.

³ Sometimes people wander down the hall to sit in a waiting area outside of a different courtroom. There were at times individuals from, for example, domestic assault hearings outside the paternity calendar.

Basic Demographic Data

We interviewed a total of 167 single parents on four different types of calendars. Of these respondents, 87 (52%) appeared on the Paternity calendar, 66 (40%) on the County Attorney calendar, eleven (7%) on the JOBS calendar, and the remaining three (2%) on either the Child Support Magistrate (CSM) or other type of calendar.⁴

Chart 1. Calendar Type
(N=167)



Survey respondents were relatively young and were fairly evenly split by gender. Forty-six percent were male and 54% were female; approximately half were under age thirty.

Over half the respondents (61%) were Black/African American, approximately one-fourth (26%) were White, and the remainder (13%) were Asian, Native American, or Multiracial/Other. Regardless of race, 7% indicated that they were of Hispanic descent; more than half of these people did not self-report identifying with any other racial group.

Table 1. Demographic Data

Gender (N=166)	Male	76 (45.8%)
	Female	90 (54.2%)
Age (N=167)	18 or younger	4 (2.4%)
	19 - 24	42 (25.1%)
	25 - 29	40 (24.0%)
	30 - 39	66 (39.5%)
	40 or older	15 (9.0%)
Race (N=165)	Black/African American	100 (60.6%)
	White	43 (26.1%)
	Other	22 (13.3%)
Hispanic (N=166)	Yes	12 (7.2%)
	No	154 (92.8%)

Most respondents (90%) spoke English as their primary language at home. For the 10% that did not, seven spoke Spanish as their primary language, four Somali, three Hmong,

⁴ Due to the scheduling of CSM cases, we were not able to accomplish interviews on the paternity or county attorney calendars and simultaneously on the CSM calendars.

one French, and one Swahili. Of the 16 who did not speak English most often at home, all but one *did* speak English in addition to their primary language.

Over half of respondents (51%) lived in Minneapolis, and more than a third (37%) lived in a Hennepin County suburb. Seven percent resided in St. Paul or a St. Paul suburb, and 5% outside of the Twin Cities. Of the 85 Minneapolis residents, over half (54%) lived in North Minneapolis and the remainder lived in South Minneapolis (39%) or another area of Minneapolis (7%)

Chart 2. Geographic Breakdown of the Sample
(N=166)

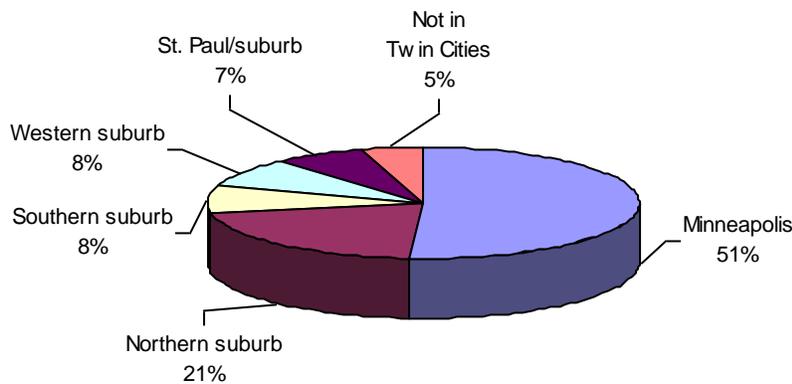
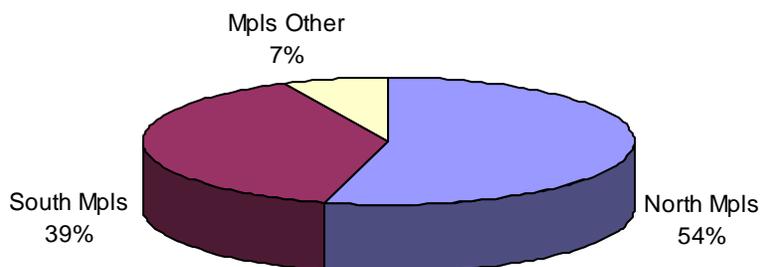


Chart 3. Geographic Breakdown of the Minneapolis Residents
(N=85)



Socioeconomic Status

In the social sciences, socioeconomic status is generally interpreted as a three-pronged construct which includes education, income, and occupation. Although we did not collect information on specific occupations, we did ask the respondents to provide employment status, as well as education and income data.

Overall, the survey respondents were not highly educated. More than one-fourth (28%) did not complete high school, and another group of more than one-third (37%) had no formal education beyond a high school diploma/GED. Although more than one-third (35%) of respondents had some education beyond high school, only 10% obtained a college degree or post-graduate education; an additional 6% graduated from a vocational school program.

Table 2. Education

Level of Education (<i>N=163</i>)	Less than high school	45 27.6%
	High school graduate/GED	61 37.4%
	Some vocational school	6 3.7%
	Vocational school graduate	10 6.1%
	Some college	25 15.3%
	College graduate	13 8.0%
	Post-graduate studies	3 1.8%

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents reported being employed; the remaining one-third relied on public assistance (15%), Social Security payments (3%), relatives (7%), or another unspecified source of support (9%). Nearly all (92%) of those who relied on public assistance were women, although there were nearly as many women as men employed. This is one of the largest gender differences we saw in all the survey data. The eleven individuals who relied on friends/relatives for income were all men.

Chart 4. Primary Source of Income

(N=163)

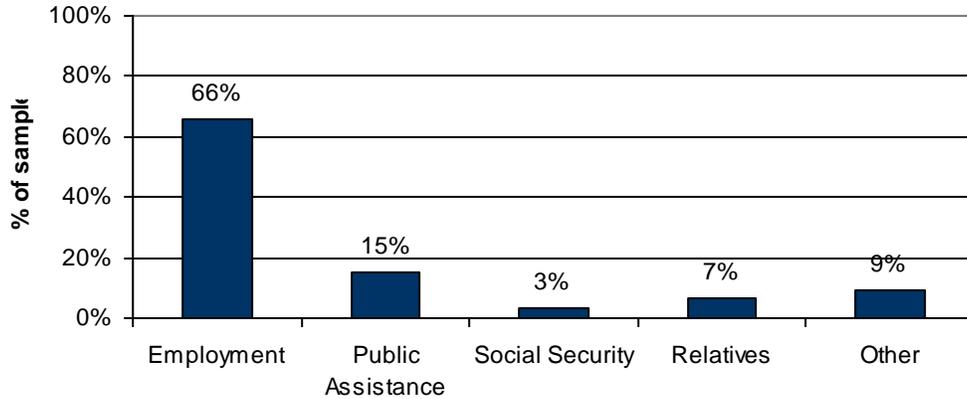
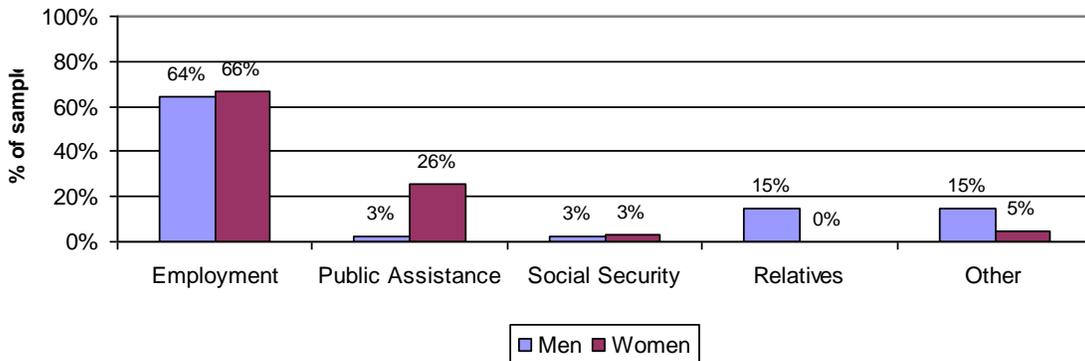


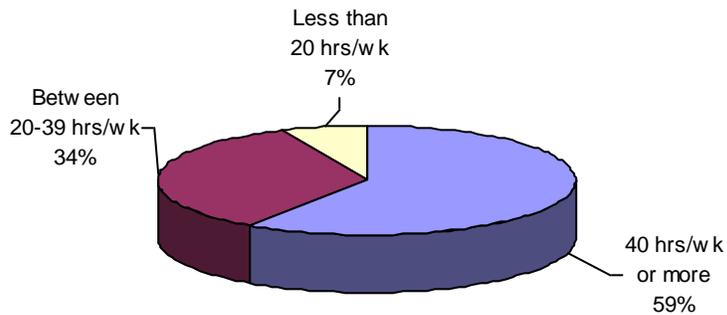
Chart 5. Primary Source of Income by Gender

N=163



Of the 66% of respondents who were employed, almost half (41%) of the employed respondents worked less than full time. In other words, two-thirds of all respondents had less than full-time employment. Approximately one-third (34%) worked between 20 and 39 hours per week, and 7% worked less than 20 hours per week.

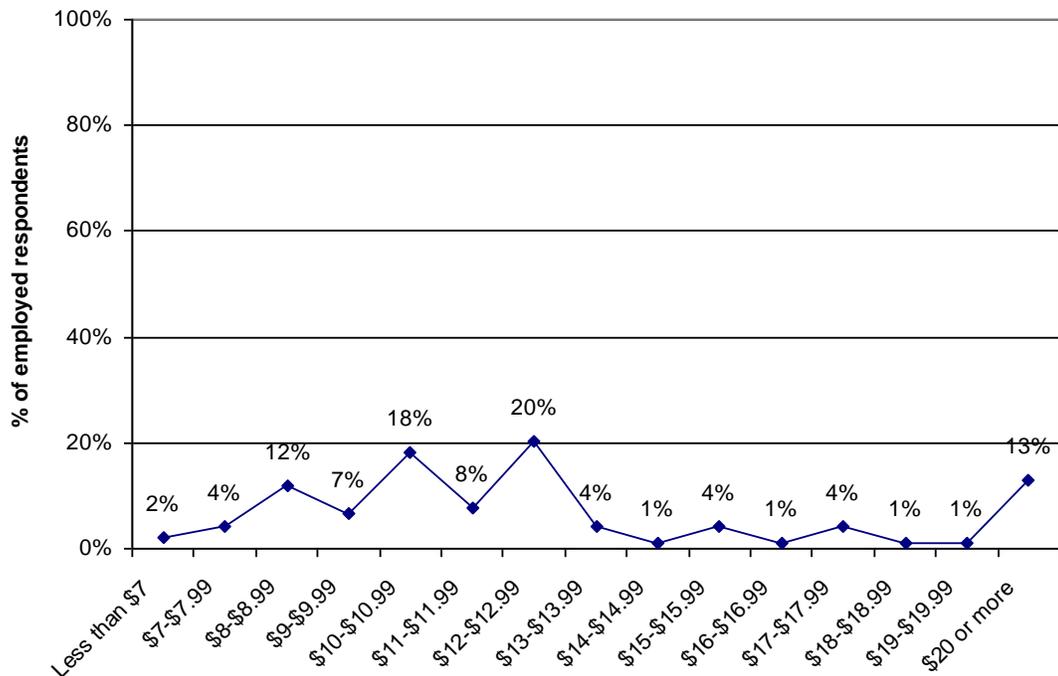
Chart 6. If employed, number of hours per week
(N=106)



Overall, employed respondents were not highly paid. Although 10% of employed respondents earned \$21.00 or more per hour, two people (2%) reported earning the minimum wage of \$6.15/hour and more than two-thirds (69%) earned more than minimum wage but less than \$13.00 per hour. Eight people reported a figure other than an hourly wage (e.g., commission, “varies”, a weekly or monthly figure, etc.). The adjusted average hourly wage of those respondents who reported an hourly figure was \$12.81.⁵ The median, or midpoint, was \$11.99. In addition, this salary figure only represents two-thirds of our sample, as one-third are not working at all (See Chart 5 on previous page).

Taking into consideration the data in the previous chart which shows that nearly half of respondents work less than full-time, we can safely say that the income level of these individuals is low. Specifically, at 20 hours a week we are looking at an average income of between \$12,000 and \$13,000; even at 40 hours per week, average salary would be approximately \$25,000. In the last census, the median income for Minneapolis was reported as \$48,602 (Wikipedia 2007), putting our population well below the median. In 1999, 19% of Minneapolis families with children under the age of 18 fell below the poverty level (City of Minneapolis 2007). This will be important as we look at the child support payments required.

Chart 7. Hourly Wage of Employed Respondents
(N=94)



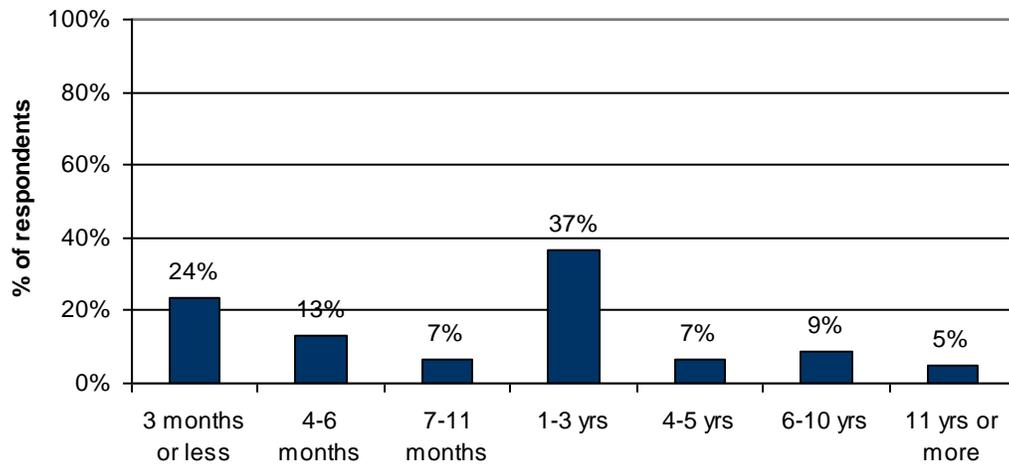
⁵ An adjusted average indicates that statistical outliers were removed for analysis. In this case, we removed the individual who indicated that he earned \$200/hour.

Employment Stability

Of employed respondents, nearly half had only been at their current jobs less than one year, and half of those for three months or less. More than a third of respondents had worked at their current job between one and three years, and one-fifth had done so for four years or more. If we include all respondents in these figures (i.e., including those who are unemployed), we find that half of all the respondents had been working three months or less at the time that we conducted the interviews, and nearly two-thirds had been working less than a full year.

Chart 8. Time at Current Job

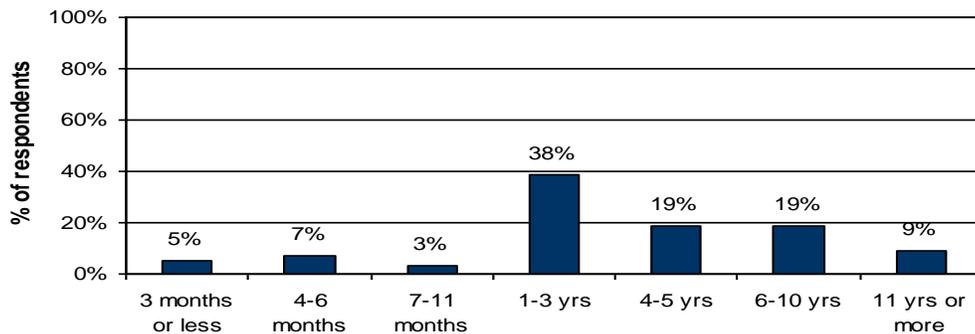
(N=106)



Fifteen percent of respondents had never held the same job for at least one year, and just one third reported their longest period of regular employment at one job to have been between one and three years.

Chart 9. Longest Time at One Job

(N=159)



Child Support Obligations

Nearly one-third of all respondents reported having a current child support obligation; more than 60% of males and a very small percentage of females (3%) were currently ordered to pay child support. Not all cases had a child support obligation imposed on at least one parent. Because over half of respondents were appearing on the Paternity calendar, where paternity was still in the process of being adjudicated, initial child support may not yet have been set at the time the respondent completed the survey. In addition, a respondent's obligation may have been temporarily suspended due to a financial hardship or other situation.

Chart 10. Have a Current Child Support Obligation?

(N=162)

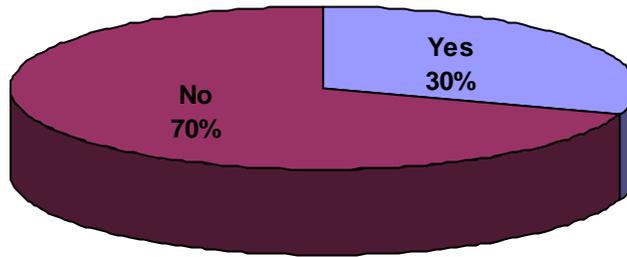
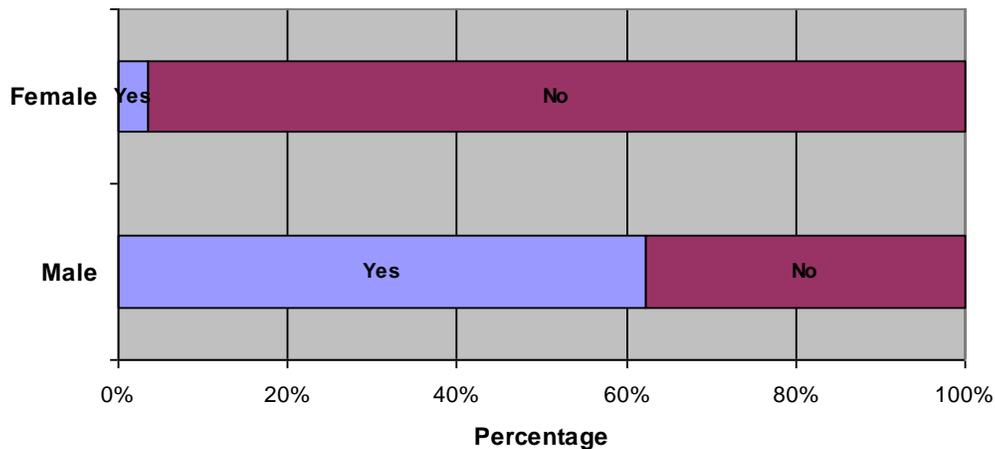


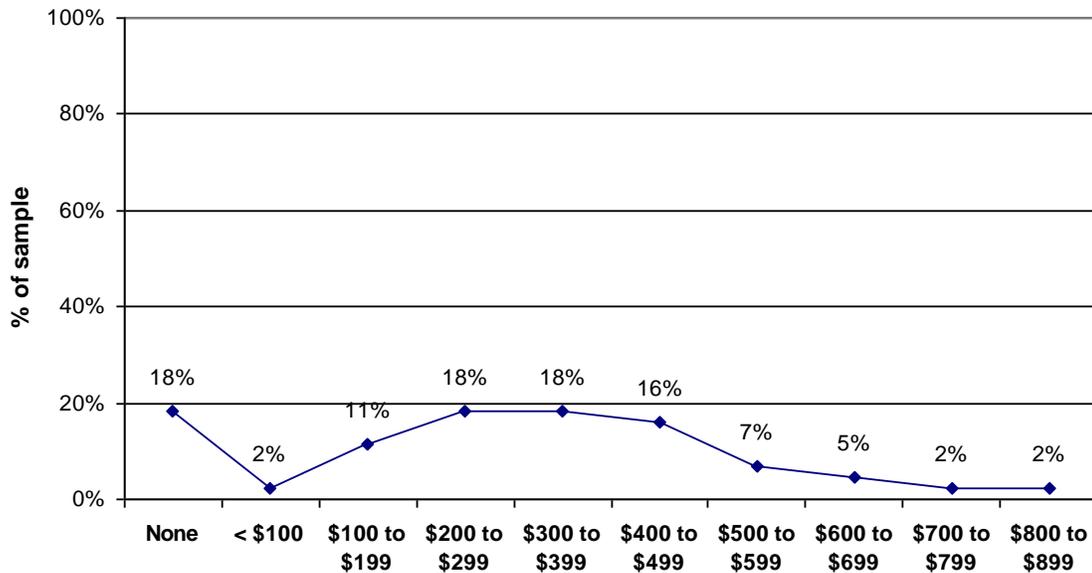
Chart 11. Have Current Child Support Obligation by Gender

(N=161)



Approximately one-fifth (18%) of those ordered to pay child support were currently not paying any of that ordered support. Nearly one-third (32%) reported paying less than \$300 per month, about another third (34%) reported paying between \$300 and \$499 per month, and the remainder (16%) reported paying \$500 or more per month in child support. The average amount of child support respondents were currently paying per month was \$298. Calculating child support payment by monthly income, we determine that for many of our respondents, court ordered child support payments are roughly one-third of their monthly income for those who are working. Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that 34% of our survey respondents were unemployed at the time we interviewed them, making the child support payments a severe financial hardship.

Chart 12. Amount of Child Support Currently Paying per Month
(N=44)



Half of those respondents who were required to pay child support reported that there were life situations currently preventing them from paying their child support obligations in full. Lack of employment was by far the most common reason, cited by more than three-fourths (77%) of those currently unable to fully meet their child support obligations. Other reasons given included medical and chemical dependency issues, being on government assistance, and a general “lack of money.”

Housing

Almost half of respondents lacked stable housing; approximately a third lived with a friend or relative. A small percentage of respondents reported being homeless, “couch hopping,” or living in an “other” type of situation. Of those living independently in stable housing, nearly three-fourths were renters.⁶ Significant gender differences emerged with regard to housing; significantly more women than men lived in stable housing, and significantly more men were staying with a friend or relative.

Chart 13. Current Housing Situation
(N=162)

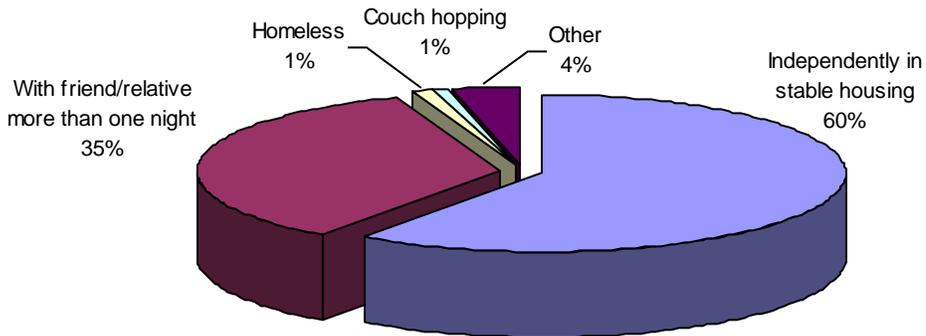
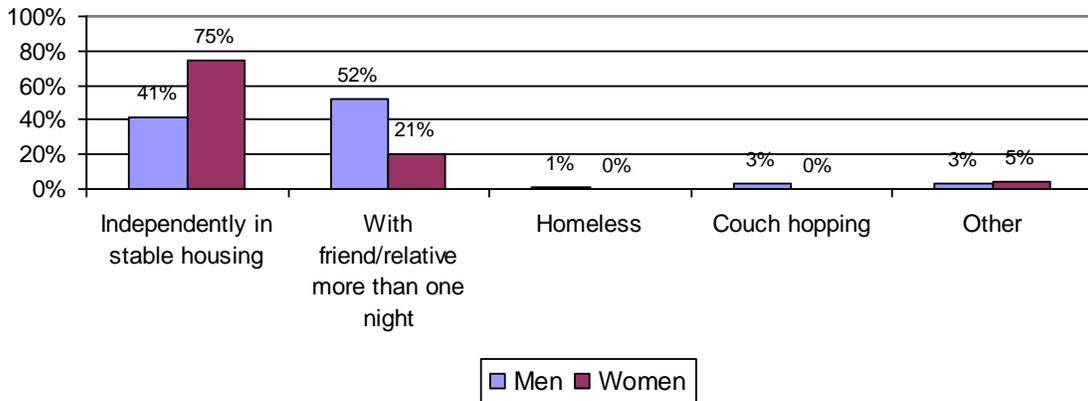


Chart 14. Housing by Gender
(N=162)



⁶ Median home prices in Minneapolis in 2007 are nearly \$300,000, making home ownership nearly impossible for many of our respondents.

A small percentage of respondents (6% of those with stable housing) had lived at their current address for less than one month; of these eight people, six reported living independently in stable housing, one was living with a friend or relative, and one was couch-hopping. Twenty people (15%) reported living at their current address for between one and six months, either independently in stable housing (60%) or with a friend or relative (35%).⁷

Chart 15. Time at Current Address

(N=135)

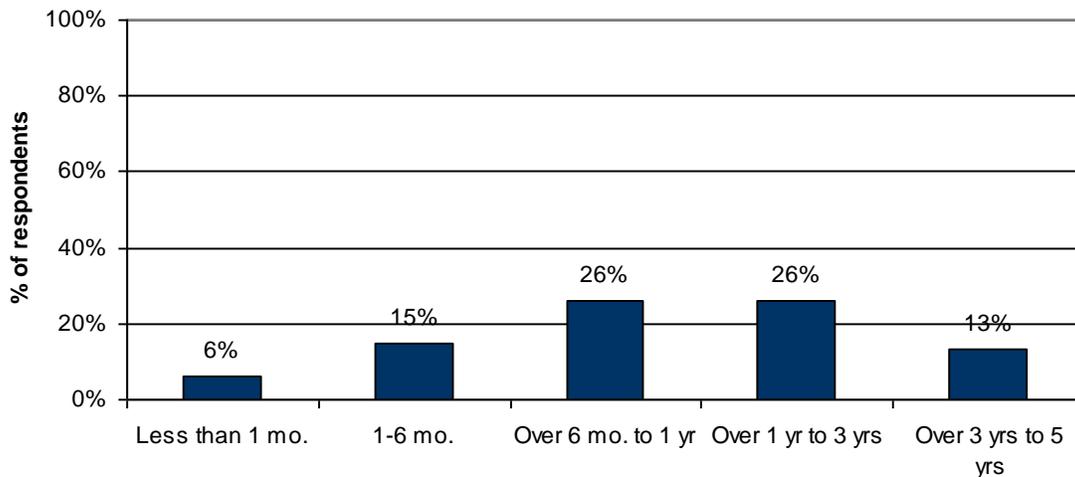


Table 3. Housing

	Current Housing Situation				
	Couch hopping	With friend or relative for more than 1 night	Independently in stable housing	Other housing situation	Total
Time at Current Address (N=134)					
Less than 1 mo.	1 12.5%	1 12.5%	6 75.0%	0 0.0%	8 100.0%
1-6 mos.	0 0.0%	7 35.0%	12 60.0%	1 5.0%	20 100.0%
Over 6 mo. – 1yr	0 0.0%	6 17.6%	26 76.5%	2 5.9%	34 100.0%
Over 1 yr – 3 yrs	0 0.0%	8 22.9%	26 74.3%	1 2.9%	35 100.0%
More than 3 yrs	0 0.0%	9 24.3%	27 73.0%	1 2.7%	37 100.0%

Three in five respondents (61%) did not live with anyone other than their children or a significant other. Those who lived with people other than, or in addition to, their children

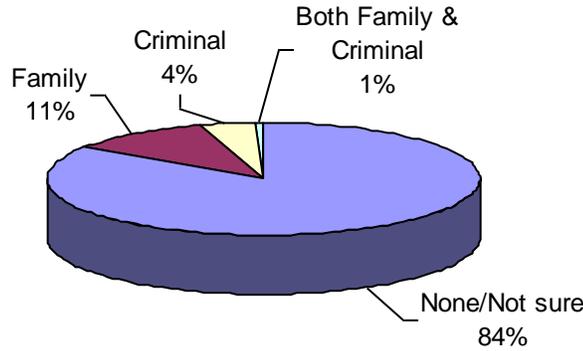
⁷ Does not total 100% because one person reported length of time at current address, but not their housing situation.

or partners listed a variety of living situations - primarily parents, siblings, and extended family (grandparents, aunts, cousins, nieces, and nephews). Other non-relatives with whom respondents reported living with include friends and children of their partner.

Court Involvement and Criminal History

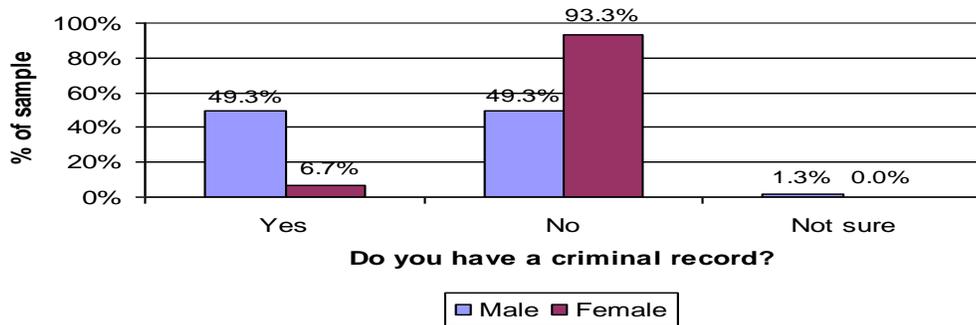
In addition to the case for which they were appearing on the day they were surveyed, 26 respondents (16%) self-reported having another pending case in the Hennepin County court system. One person reported pending cases in both Family and Criminal court; everyone else reported a pending case in either Family or Criminal Court, but not both. Nearly three-fourths of people (70%) who reported additional pending court cases in Hennepin County were involved in another Family Court case. The remaining 30% had a pending Criminal Court case.

Chart 16. Self-Reported Additional Pending Cases in Hennepin County
(N=167)



Approximately one-fourth of the sample (26%) reported having a criminal record; this number actually represented 50% of the men in the sample.

Chart 17. Criminal Record by Gender
(N=165)



Forty-two of the 44 respondents who stated that they had a criminal record detailed their criminal history for us; the most commonly reported convictions were for Drug offenses (36% of respondents with a criminal record) and Domestic offenses (29% of those with a criminal record). All reported conviction types are listed in the table below.

Table 4. Criminal History

Criminal Record Type (<i>N</i> =42)	Offense Category	Percent of Cases⁸
	Drug	15 35.7%
	Domestic	12 28.6%
	Non-domestic Person (e.g., Assault)	7 16.7%
	Traffic	5 11.9%
	Property	4 9.5%
	Unspecified Misdemeanor	4 9.5%
	DWI/Alcohol-related	2 4.8%
	Unspecified Felony	2 4.8%
	Petty (e.g., Litter, Disorderly Conduct)	2 4.8%
	Weapons	1 2.4%
	Child Protection	1 2.4%

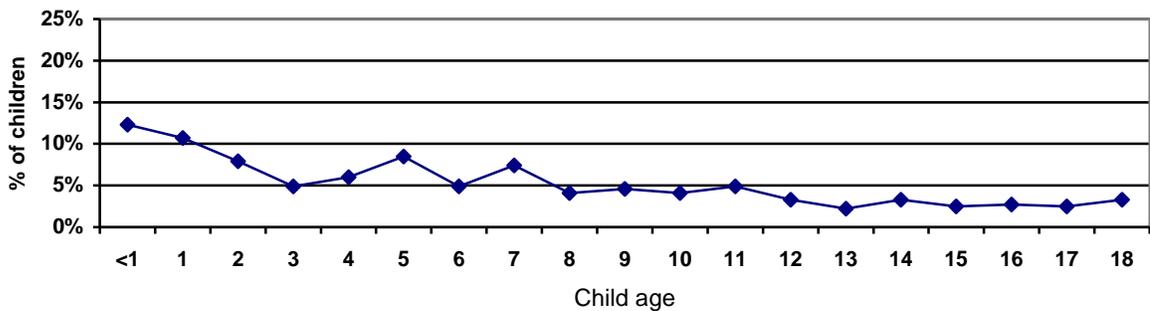
⁸ Percentage will total more than 100% because the 42 people who admitted to having a criminal record provided us with information about more than one offense type.

Family Situation

The litigants we surveyed had anywhere from 1 to 8 children.⁹ Average number of children per respondent was 2.4. The children ranged in age from less than one year to 32 years old in the raw data. For the purpose of analysis, however, we capped the maximum age at 18, leaving us with an average age of 6.5, and a midpoint of 5 years old.¹⁰ The mode, or most common response, was less than 1 (infant); twelve percent of respondents reported having at least one infant. Fourteen percent said they were currently expecting a baby.

Ten percent of respondents said they had at least one child with special needs, and 75% of those said it was only one child that had special needs. Very few people (9) said their children had other cases pending in the Hennepin County court system, and of those 9, all but one were describing another Family Court (i.e., child support or custody) case. The remaining case was a juvenile/child protection case.

Chart 18. Age of Respondents' children
(N=366)¹¹



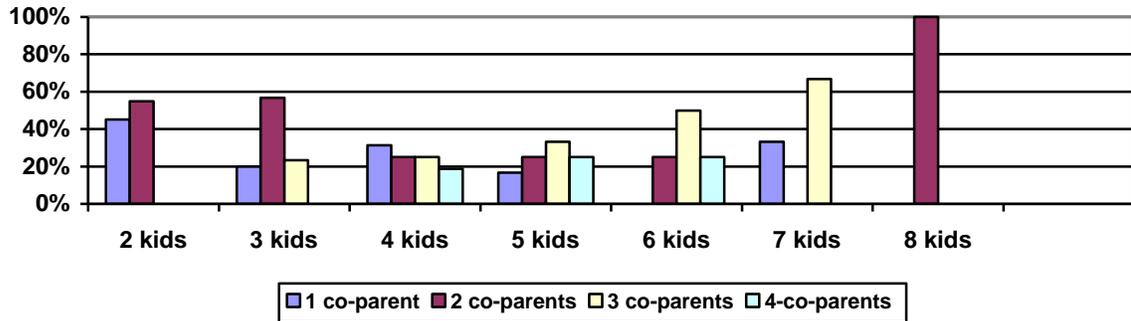
We asked respondents with more than one child “not including yourself, how many total biological parents do all of your children have?” Answers to this question ranged between 1 and 4 for those who responded, with the average response being “2”. Thirty-one percent of respondents said there was only one other biological parent for all their children.

⁹ Two respondents said they had “zero” children, because they were on the paternity calendar and disputing their paternity of the child in question.

¹⁰ The midpoint, or median, is somewhat different from the average, in that it indicates that 50% of the children were five years old or less, and the other 50% were older than 5.

¹¹ This number of children double counts children for whom both parents took the survey, and is thus inflated.

Chart 19. Number of Children by Number of Co-Parents
(N=108)



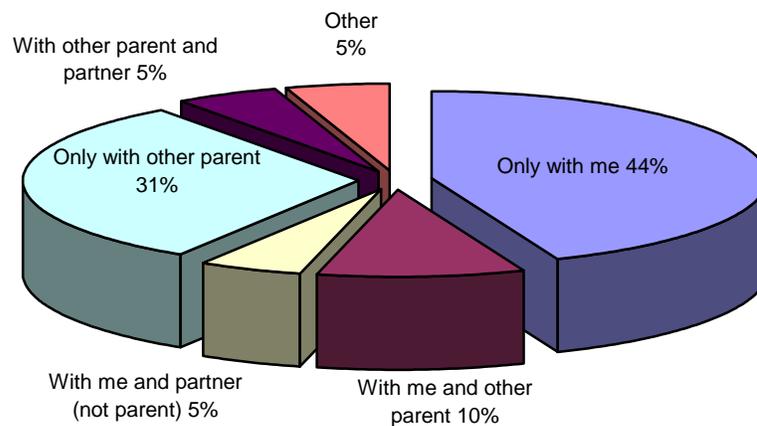
Percentages associated with Chart 19 can be found in Table 5 (below).

Table 5. Number of Children by Number of Co-Parents

Number of Children (N=108)	Number of Co-Parents			
	1	2	3	4
2	19	23	0	0
	45.2%	54.8%	.0%	.0%
3	6	17	7	0
	20.0%	56.7%	23.3%	.0%
4	5	4	4	3
	31.3%	25.0%	25.0%	18.8%
5	2	3	4	3
	16.7%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%
6	0	1	2	1
	.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
7	1	0	2	0
	33.3%	.0%	66.7%	.0%
8	0	1	0	0
	0%	100%	0%	0%
TOTAL	33	49	19	7
	30.6%	45.4%	17.6%	6.5%

Thirty percent of respondents said they did not live in the same household with any of their children. As we would expect, there was a significant gender difference ($p < .001$) with regard to children living with the respondent; 88% of the respondents who said that none of their children lived with them were men. The following graph provides detail regarding with whom their children live; for this question, we focused on the child about whom the respondent was in court the day we conducted the survey (“primary” child). Ninety-five percent of the respondents that reported that their primary child lived only with them were women.

Chart 20. With whom does your child reside the majority of the time?
(N=166)



For those respondents who do not live with the child in question, 15% said they had no contact at all with their children. Of the 68 respondents (41% of total) who said that their child did not live with them at all, 19 said that they see their child either rarely or never. In addition, 55 respondents (33% of total) said they would like to have more contact with their child. However, only nine of those 55 people (16%) had ever tried to file a case about custody or parenting time. When asked about their reluctance to file such a case, respondents gave a variety of reasons (see Appendix C). There does seem to be a common thread regarding lack of understanding of the court process and/or fear of adding to his/her own involvement with the court. For example, some of the responses to the question of “why have you not filed for a case about custody or parenting time?” were as follows:

- ✓ **Not truly understand rights.**
- ✓ **This is new; don't know how to.**
- ✓ **Payments reasonable and father doesn't want to aggravate the situation.**

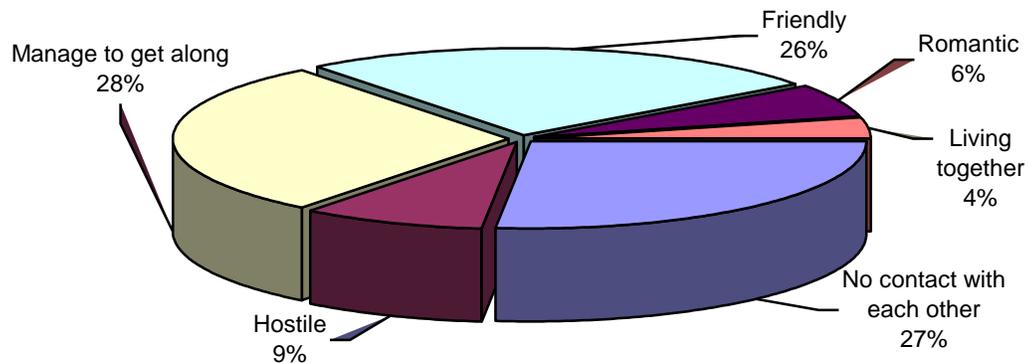
- ✓ **Afraid courts will order more child support if they look too closely at his situation.**
- ✓ **Don't want to go to court, mom's decision.**
- ✓ **I don't want to start the legal battle, don't even want to be here today but she got pregnant again.**

Finally, we asked respondents who else lives with them, aside from their children and/or romantic partner (i.e., significant other). Six people were living with siblings, four people were currently living with their parents, one with their partner's children, one with his/her partner's parents, one with stepchildren, and one with a roommate.

Relationship with Co-Parent

When respondents were asked about their relationship with their co-parent, they gave a range of responses, as shown in Chart 21 (below). Two-thirds of the respondents we surveyed reported less than a warm relationship with the co-parent of their children.

Chart 21. Relationship with Co-parent
(N=157)

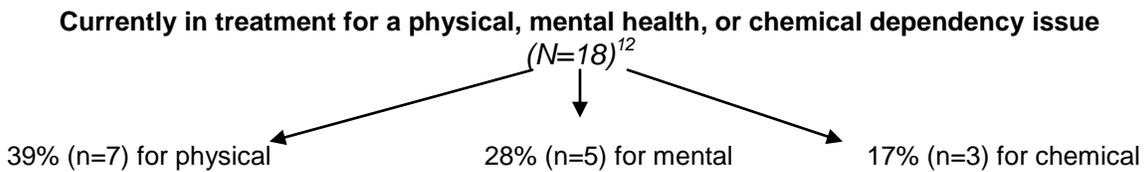


We asked whether any orders for protection had been filed in the relationship, and only 15% of respondents said that there either had been one, or there was a current order for protection on file.

Treatment

In attempting to determine struggles faced by our single parent respondents, we asked a series of questions regarding physical and mental health, as well as chemical dependency. Fourteen percent of respondents self-reported current physical or mental health problems, and 11% said they were currently in some form of treatment (i.e., physical, mental, or chemical dependency treatment). The breakdown of the reason for treatment appears below in Chart 22.

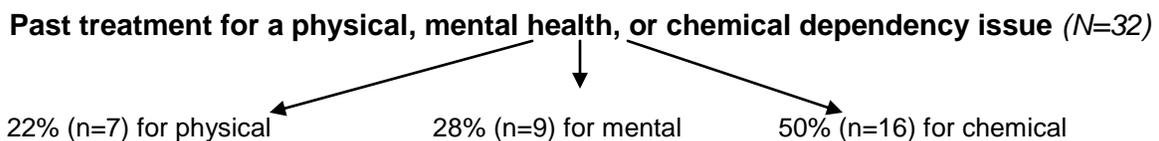
Chart 22. Current Treatment



Physical problems reported ranged from problems as minor as an eye infection to problems as serious as a brain tumor. Mental health issues included depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, as well as other unnamed psychiatric issues. Twenty-two respondents said that they were currently taking some form of prescribed medication.

We also asked whether or not respondents had undergone any treatment in the past for physical health, mental health, or chemical dependency issues, and received more positive responses as compared with the question regarding current treatment. Twenty percent of respondents reported having undergone treatment in the past, the most common type of treatment being for chemical dependency. (See Chart 23 below for a breakdown.)

Chart 23. Prior Treatment



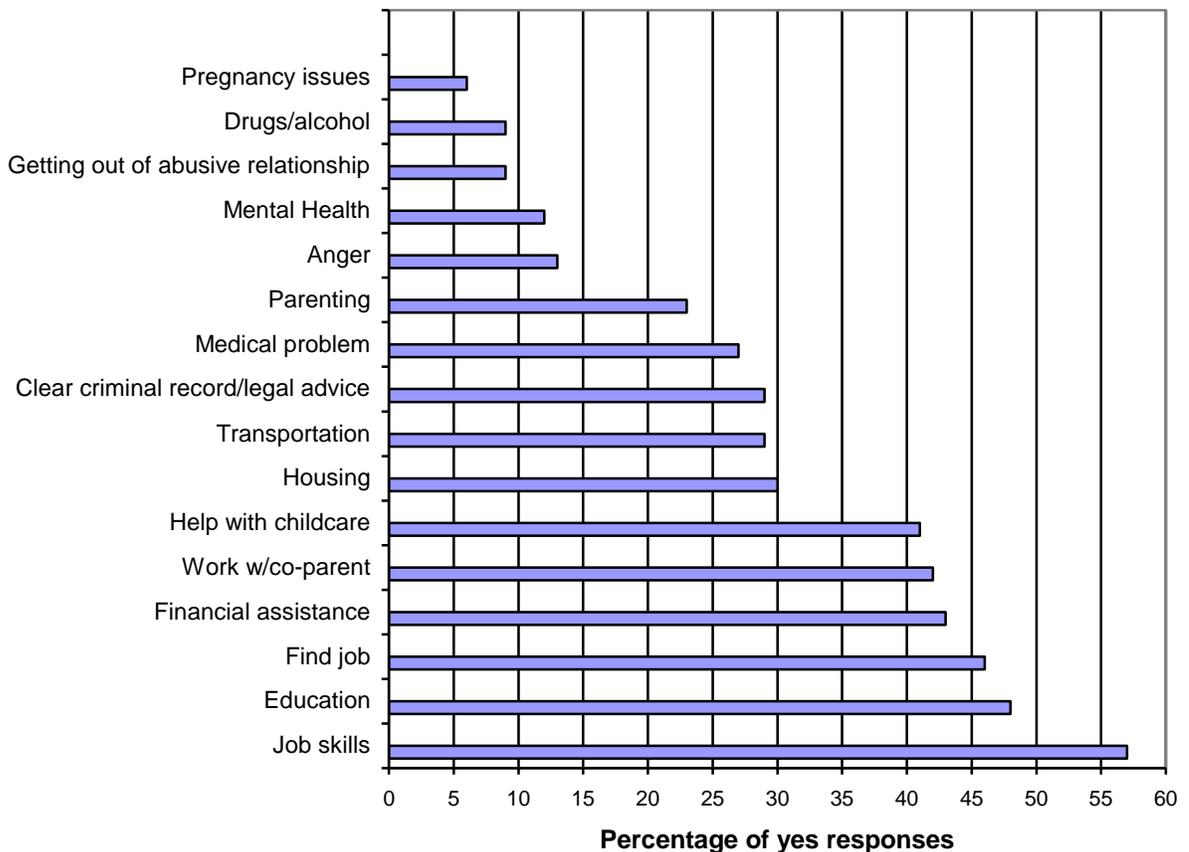
¹² The totals for the types of treatment do not add up to 18 because 3 respondents declined to give us specific treatment information.

Services Needed

The primary reason for conducting this survey was to identify the gaps in service provision to single parents in these types of cases. This section of the report details responses to questions regarding the most critical needs for service.

Chart 24 shows all the “yes” responses to needs for services. Each response is noted, even if one respondent said “yes” to 10 different services.

Chart 24. Percentage of “Yes” Responses to Services Needed
(N=166)



When asked to give their top three services needed, respondents most often chose the following:

- ✓ **Help with education or getting a GED**
 - ✓ **Help finding a job**
 - ✓ **Help with childcare**

From these top responses, it appears that help finding a job is more critical for these individuals than acquiring job skills, even though there were a high number of responses for the question regarding job skills.¹³

We also asked respondents to tell us if there were any services they needed that were not on the list we provided. Only a few people (n=12) answered this question, and of those many restated in different words items that were in fact on the list. We list here the services they named which were not on our list in any form:

- ✓ **Father's support group**
- ✓ **Getting help with custody case¹⁴**
- ✓ **Healthcare for children**
- ✓ **Help with restraining order¹⁵**
- ✓ **Mediation**
- ✓ **Safety inside the home (e.g., how to put out a fire, etc.)**

There were some responses to this question which were actually comments on frustration with the court process. For example:

- ✓ **Individualize cases, all judged and ruled upon circumstances. I'm judged as dead beat dad because kids don't live with me.**
- ✓ **(Need a) more interactive child support worker.**
- ✓ **The concept that there are two parents.**

¹³ We conclude that the order of the questions affected the responses; the first in the list of services needed was the job skills question, and the second was the finding a job question.

¹⁴ Whenever possible, we referred people who gave these types of responses to the self-help center in the lobby of the Family Justice Center.

¹⁵ Whenever possible, we referred people who gave these types of responses to the self-help center in the lobby of the Family Justice Center.

Services Needed by Demographics

We analyzed whether the services needed the most had any significant relationships with the demographic variables. In other words, logic would suggest that some of the more pressing needs of these single parents are related to gender, age, and family and financial circumstances. We found that men were significantly more likely to say they needed help finding a job; younger respondents (18-24 years old) were significantly more likely than older respondents to say they needed help finding a job, help furthering education, and help with childcare; and individuals whose children live only with them were more likely to need help with childcare.

Table 6. Significant Correlations¹⁶
(*N*=166)

<i>Respondent Characteristic</i>	Help finding job	Help furthering education	Help with childcare
Men	.178*	--	--
18-24 year olds	.220**	.157*	--
Sole custodians of children	--	--	.178*

*Significance levels¹⁷: *p<.05 **p<.01*

Conclusions

These data are useful in identifying who the single parent litigants are, and confirm our suspicions that they have more needs than we are currently addressing in the court system. They need help in their personal lives (i.e., finding jobs, furthering education, etc.), but also need help navigating the court system. Many of these individuals need help finding legal ways of gaining custody and/or parenting time, so that they can ultimately be more effective parents. We recommend that the data provided in this report be used to begin making changes in the system to help single parents with the most pressing issues they face. In doing so, we will be ensuring better long-term outcomes for the children in these relationships.

¹⁶ The smaller the sample size, the more difficult it is to find significant relationships between variables. This sample is relatively small for social science research, and we thus did not expect to find many instances of statistical significance.

¹⁷ Statistical significance levels indicate whether or not the observed relationship could have happened by chance. In other words, a $p<.05$ means that there is less than a 5% chance that the observed relationship is accidental, $p<.01$ means that there is less than a 1% chance that it is accidental, and so on. The lower the significance level (or p value) the more confidence we can have in the observed relationship.

Appendix A. Introduction to Survey

Hello, my name is _____ and I am with District Court research. We are conducting a survey of people that are involved in child support and paternity cases. We are trying to see what needs parents in these cases have that the court is not providing, trying to do a better job of serving people like yourself. Are you directly involved in a child support or paternity case today?

(if they ask what you mean by “directly involved,” clarify by asking if they are one of the two parties – not a friend or relative of someone involved in the case).

(if they are there for a different type of case – for example, domestic abuse or divorce case – thank them anyway and move on).

(If they say “yes”): Great. One other question: were you ever married to the other parent in your case?

(if they say “yes”, explain that for right now we need to talk with people who were never married. Thank them anyway and move on.)

(if they say no): Ok, good. We want to talk with unmarried parents. Would you be willing to answer some questions for me?

This survey will only take about 5 or 10 minutes and is completely anonymous. I don't want to know your name, case number or anything like that, ok?

Appendix B. Survey

1. For what type of case were you in court today? (Don't read options)

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY.

- Original paternity
- Return paternity
- Setting child support
- Reviewing or changing child support
- Don't know

2. How old are you? (Don't read options)

- Younger than 18
- 30-39 years old
- 19-24 years old
- 40-49 years old
- 25-29 years old
- 50 years old or more

3. Gender (Interviewer please observe, do not ask unless necessary)

- Male
- Female

4. With which racial group(s) do you identify yourself (check all that apply):

- White
- Black/African American
- Asian
- Native American
- Other

5. Are you Hispanic?

- Yes
- No

6. What is your primary language, the one you speak at home most often?

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY.

- English
- Spanish
- Hmong
- Somali
- Other

7. Do you speak any other languages (in addition to the primary one)?

- Yes
- No (skip next question)



*8. If yes, which ones? (check all that apply)

- English
- Spanish
- Hmong
- Somali
- Other

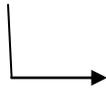
9. Where do you live? (Don't read options, wait for response)

- North Minneapolis
- South Minneapolis
- Minneapolis other

- Northern suburb Southern suburb Western suburb
- St. Paul St. Paul suburb Outside of Twin Cities but in Minnesota
- Other

10. Besides the case for which you appeared in court today, do you have any other pending cases in the Hennepin County court system (e.g., criminal, civil, family, etc.?)

- Yes No (skip next question) Unsure (skip next question)

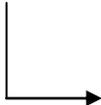


***11. If yes, what type of case? (check all that apply)**

- Criminal Civil Another family case
- Juvenile/child protection Mental health (civil commitment court) Probate court

12. Do you have a criminal record?

- Yes No Not sure



***13. If yes, please provide details here (open-ended; probe for charges or convictions, types of crimes, where crimes committed, etc.):**

Please tell us about your child/children. When we say “child” or “children,” we are talking about all the children you consider yourself to be the parent of.

14. How many children do you have?

□ □ □ □

15. How many of your children live with you?

□ □ □ □

16. How old are your children? (please list all ages):

[Empty box for listing children's ages]

17. (Ask if more than one child) Not including yourself, how many total biological parents do all of your children have?

[Empty box for number of biological parents]

18. Do any of your children have special needs?

- Yes
- No (skip next question)

*19. If yes, how many children have special needs?

[] [] [] []

20. Does your child or children have other cases pending in the Hennepin County court system?

- Yes
- No (skip next question)
- Unsure (skip next question)

*21. If yes, in what division of the court? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Criminal	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil	<input type="checkbox"/> Another family case
<input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile/Child protection	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health (civil commitment court)	<input type="checkbox"/> Probate court

For the following questions, when we say “child”, we are talking about the child about whom you are in court today.

22. Where does your child reside the majority of the time?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Only with you (skip next question) | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Only with their other biological parent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. With you and their other biological parent (skip next question) | <input type="checkbox"/> e. With the child’s other biological parent and his/her partner |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. With you and your partner who is not the child’s parent (skip next question) | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Other |



(Only ask next question if answered d, e, f to above):

***23. How much contact do you have with your child that does not live with you?**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> You see him/her every day | <input type="checkbox"/> You hardly ever see him/her |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You see him/her once or twice per week | <input type="checkbox"/> You have no contact with your child |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You see him/her once or twice per month | |

24. Please choose the answer that best describes your feelings about the amount of contact you currently have with your child:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. You are comfortable with the amount of contact you have with your child | <input type="checkbox"/> b. You would like to have less contact with your child |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. You would like to have more contact with your child | |



25. Have you ever filed or tried to file a case about custody or parenting time?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|



(Ask only if they answered 'c' for #24 and 'No' to above).

26. If not, why have you not filed for a case about custody or parenting time?

We are looking for some information about your relationship with the other parent of your child (i.e., the parent involved in the case you are in court for today):

27. Was there ever an order for protection against you or your co-parent, OR on behalf of one of your children?

- You once had an order for protection on file against him/her, but it has expired
- S/he once had an order for protection on file against you, but it has expired
- You have a current order for protection on file against him/her
- S/he has a current order for protection on file against you
- There is a pending order for protection case (no decision yet)
- No orders for protection were filed in your relationship

28. Currently your relationship with the other parent of your child can be described as follows (choose only one):

- You have no contact with each other.
- You are hostile toward each other.
- You manage to get along.
- You are friendly toward each other.
- You are involved in a romantic relationship with each other.
- You live with each other.

I am going to read a list of services that some people involved in these types of cases find helpful. For each one I read, please answer yes or no to the question, “Is this something you would find helpful?”

	Yes	No
29. Job skills/vocational training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. Help finding a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Help furthering education or getting a GED	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Help finding a place to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Help with medical problems (physical)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Help with mental health issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Help with parenting skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Help with working with the other parent of my child/children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Financial assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Help getting out of an abusive relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. Help with anger issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. Help with pregnancy issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. Help with clearing criminal record/legal advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. Help with getting off drugs or alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. Help with transportation (to work, school, court, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. Help with childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

45. Of the services you said yes to above, please tell us the top three services you feel you need the most:

46. Are there any services that you need that we forgot to list? (If no, leave blank)

47. How do you currently support yourself?

SELECT ONE ANSWER ONLY.

- a. Employment
- b. Social security (**skip next three questions**)
- c. Public assistance (**skip next three questions**)
- d. Relatives (**skip next three questions**)
- e. Veteran’s benefits (**skip next three questions**)
- f. Other

***48. (If answered “a” to last question): How many hours per week total do you work? If you work at more than one job, please add up your hours from all of your jobs.**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 20 but less than 40 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 but less than 20 hours | <input type="checkbox"/> 40 hours per week or more |

→ ***49. (If employed): What is your hourly wage? \$/hour**

→ ***50. (If employed) How long have you been at your present place of employment?**

51. What has your longest period of regular employment been? (At 1 job)

52. Are you required to pay any form of child support (whether due to a court order or some personal agreement between you and the other parent)?

- Yes No (Skip to #55)

→ ***53. If yes, is there anything preventing you from making those payments in full? (If no, leave blank).**

→ ***54. If yes, how much are you paying per month? \$/month .**

55. What is the highest grade of school you completed?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than high school | <input type="checkbox"/> Some college |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school graduate or GED | <input type="checkbox"/> College graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some vocational school | <input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational school graduate | |

56. Are you currently expecting a baby?

- Yes No (skip next question) Unsure (skip next question)

***57. (If answered "yes" to above): When is the baby's due date?**

58. Please describe your current housing situation: (Only read categories if necessary)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Currently homeless (outdoors)
(skip next two questions) | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Living with a friend or relative for more than one night (skip next two questions) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Couch hopping (skip next two questions) | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Living independently in stable housing
(Answer next two questions) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Staying in a shelter (skip next two questions) | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Other |

59. If answered "e" to above, please choose the answer that best describes your residence:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> You live in a single family house that you own. | <input type="checkbox"/> You live in an apartment. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> You live in a single family house that you rent. | <input type="checkbox"/> You live in someone else's home right now. |

60. How long have you lived at your current address?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than one month | <input type="checkbox"/> Longer than 1 year to 3 years. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-6 months | <input type="checkbox"/> Longer than 3 years to 5 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Over 6 months to 1 year | <input type="checkbox"/> Longer than 5 years |

61. Besides your children and/or significant other, does anyone else live with you right now?

- Yes (please specify who: _____) No

62. Are you suffering from any physical or mental health problems?

- Yes No

63. Are you currently undergoing any form of treatment for a physical, mental health or chem dependency issue?

- Yes No

***64. If yes, what type? (Interviewer: try to probe for what issue, in-patient, out-patient, how long, etc.)**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for a physical problem
(specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for drug or alcohol addiction
(specify: _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for a mental health issue
(specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other treatment
(specify: _____) |

65. Are you currently on any prescribed medication?

- Yes (try to probe-please specify: _____) No

66. Did you undergo any form of treatment in the past for a physical, mental health or chem dependency issue?

- Yes No (skip next question)

***67. If yes, what type? (Try to probe: inpatient, outpatient, how long, etc.)**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for a physical problem
(specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for drug or alcohol addiction
(specify: _____) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treatment for a mental health issue
(specify: _____) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other treatment
(specify: _____) |

68. Is there any other information you would like to share with me at this time?

69. If a parenting education course were to be offered by the court, is that something that you would be interested in attending?

- Yes No Maybe

Appendix C: Responses to Question about Why No Custody/Parenting Time Case Filed

Not necessary.

Established at birth- co-parent.

On probation.

We get along- working it out.

Don't know.

Just because mother and I have good relationship, can just talk to her and not go to court.

Because they live with her the majority of the time.

At the time they were getting along.

I think she's a good mother, at time I wouldn't have won case because I didn't have a job and no place to provide a home and care.

No time.

Not truly understand rights.

It was supposed to be I could pick them up whenever I want, but not now. But I don't want to take them away from her.

Just determined paternity.

Current housing situation.

This is new- don't know how to.

Waiting for this case to get resolved- next step.

Going to do it today.

Husband of ex very (unreadable), want to avoid conflict.

No reason.

Payments reasonable and father doesn't want to aggravate the situation. Afraid courts will order more child support if they look too closely at his situation.

Family thought "know the mother first"- child doesn't have his name- don't know how to approach it.

Didn't feel need to.

Have not had any problems.

Don't want to go to court, mom's decision.

Nothing preventing

I don't want to start the legal battle, don't even want to be here today but she got pregnant again.

Because I see her regularly.

Because we both get along.

Just starting case.

At the time, my life was not stable.

She would let me see him.

They'd make me pay \$200 that I don't have- filing fee.

But I'm going downstairs now about visitation rights.

Her mom's supposed to have her, but she doesn't (her grandma does). So I'm trying not to cause problems. The grandma is keeping her from me.

Set up agreement

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