ASPE
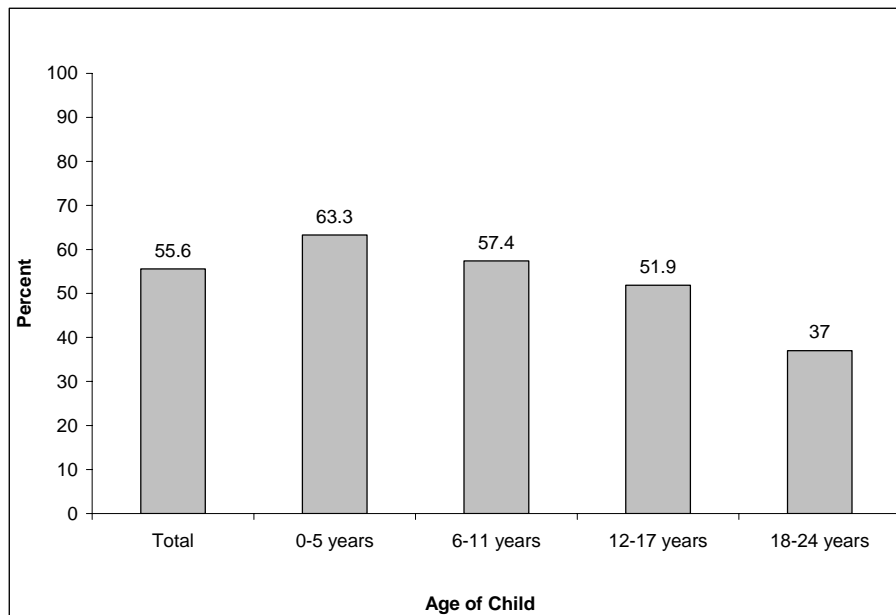# RESEARCH IN BRIEF

INDICATORS OF CHILD, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The set of indicators currently used to describe families typically includes measures such as family structure, employment and poverty status, and benefit receipt. However, these indicators do not fully portray how families function as a unit and as part of society. To lay the groundwork for addressing this issue, ASPE contracted with Mathematica Policy Research Inc. and Child Trends to produce a chart book of *Indicators of Child, Family, and Community Connections,* using currently available data to produce measures that characterize both the situation within families and how families relate to the community at large.
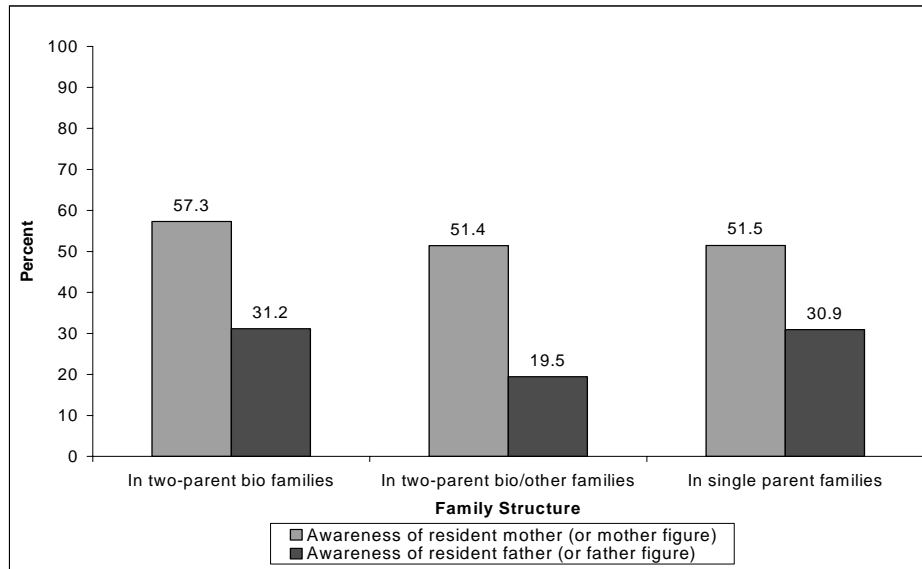
The chart book presents examples of indicators of the social context of families, not seeking to provide a comprehensive list of all available indicators, or a selection of the most critical indicators to describe the family, but serving as an exploratory effort to assess the potential of current data and the need for additional data and measures on social context of families.

Figure 1. Families With Grandparents Who Live Nearby

For example, one of the indicators examines the extent to which families with children live near a grandparent. Families with younger children were more likely than families with older children to live within 50 miles of a grandparent (63 percent for families with children 0-5 compared to 37 percent for families with youth aged 18-24).

Source: Child Trends' analyses of the National Survey of Families and Households, 1992-93.

Figure 2. Parental Awareness of Adolescents' Friends and Activities

Another indicator in the chart book is a measure of parental awareness of adolescents' friends and activities, showing that mothers are more likely than fathers to be aware of their adolescents' close friends, as well as their activities, regardless of family structure.

Source: Child Trends' analyses of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth - 1997, Rounds 1 and 4.

In total, 25 examples of indicators were selected, in consultation with a panel of experts, with an effort to include an illustrative set of indicators for the following six domains:

- Family Structure
- Family Functioning
- Family, Work, and Child Care
- School Involvement and Civic Engagement
- Religiosity
- Social Connections

While the indicators in this chart book make important strides in describing the social context of families, gaps remain in our ability to measure and report on the domains listed above. In an effort to identify future directions for measuring and monitoring some of these dimensions, a series of papers was commissioned. These papers are available in a separate volume and include: *The New Chronology of Union Formation: Strategies for Measuring Changing Pathways,* by Steven Nock; *Family Time*, by Lina Guzman and Susan Jekielek; *The Measurement of Family Religiosity and Spirituality*, by Erik Michelson, Laura Lippman, and Gene Roehlkepartain; and *Longitudinal Indicators of the Social Context of Families: Beyond the Snapshot,* by Kristin Anderson Moore and Sharon Vandivere.

The chart book and the companion volume of papers also can be accessed via the internet at:
http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/connections-charts04/ (Chartbook) and
http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/connections-papers04/ (Companion papers)

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