

Family and Child Well-being

This module explores how family structure and financial resources impact indicators of child well-being.

1. Begin by going to the KIDS COUNT web site (<http://www.kidscount.org>) and click on “Kids Count Data Book Online” and look at how “percent single-parent families” varies across states.
 - Click on “map” and choose “Percent single parent families” as your indicator and click on “next step”.
 - Choose the most recent year data is available and go on to “next step”.
 - a. Eyeballing the map, which region or regions of the country have a higher percentage of single-parent families with children?
 - b. Click on “ranking” and repeating the steps of choosing an indicator and year determine which state has the highest rate of children living in poverty and record the percentage for that state. Skip the step of choosing a region since we are interested in all 50 states.
 - Record which state(s) has the lowest percentage
 - Record which state(s) has the highest percentage
 - Subtract the low from the high percentage to determine the range of variation for “Percent single parent families”.

State Ranking	Percent Single Parent
(Lowest)	
(Highest)	
Variation (High – Low Percent)	

2. Examine “Percent Single Parent” as a trend over time
 - Click on “line graphs”
 - Choose the United States, Minnesota and one other state. Consider choosing one of the worst or best-ranked states as a comparison.
 - Choose the “percent single parent” indicator

- Graph data from 1990-1999
 - a. Describe the overall national trend. Was there an increase, decrease or did it stay the same. Nationally are we experiencing more or less single parent families?
 - b. Describe the trend for Minnesota and the other state chosen. Do these state trends differ from the national trend? Describe any similarities and differences?

- 3. Single parent families have more stressors because financial resources are often limited and adults experience more role conflict (competing demands from different roles such as parenting and work). Therefore we might expect outcomes to be more negative for children living in families headed by a single parent.
 - a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between “children living in poverty” and “percent single parent”.
 - b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file “tool_us.xls”.
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be “percent single parent 1999” and y be “children living in poverty 1999.”
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
 - c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between single parenthood and children living in poverty. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient. Click on the FAQ tab to see how to interpret correlation coefficients.

- d. Are there any data points that seem to stand out—not part of the cluster of data points? These are called outliers. Click on an outlier to see which state is represented.
- e. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.

4. Families with less financial resources are more likely to live in poverty.

- a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between “percent single-parent families” and “median income of families with children.”
- b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file “tool_us.xls”.
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be “percent single parent 1999” and y be “median income families with children 1999.”
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
- c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between single parenthood and median family income. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient.

- d. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.

5. We might predict that because of fewer financial resources and role stressors, single parent families have more negative outcomes for children.

- a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between “percent single parent families” and “infant mortality.”
 - b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file “tool_us.xls”.
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be “percent single parent 1999” and y be “infant mortality1999.”
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
 - c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between single parenthood and infant mortality. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient.

 - d. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.
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6. Let’s examine another type of negative outcome, school dropouts. Because single parents often work and have limited financial resources, teens may be left unsupervised for longer periods of time and may be at risk for dropping out of school.
 - a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between “percent single parent families” and “dropouts”
 - b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file “tool_us.xls”.
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be “percent single parent 1999” and y be “dropouts 1999.”
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
 - c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between single parenthood

and school dropouts. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient.

- d. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.
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7. Because single-parent families are often blamed for social problems such as juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, and infant mortality, policy makers seek to discourage out-of-wedlock childbearing and divorce because these are perceived causes of single-parent families. Recent welfare reform legislation limiting welfare benefits for poor parents (usually women) with children and covenant marriage laws (such as in Louisiana) making it harder to divorce are recent policy trends designed to encourage two parent families. On the other side of the debate are those who argue that it is not the single parent family that is deficient per se, but the tendency for non-custodial parents to stop paying child support and or alimony.
 - a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between “percent female headed families with children receiving child support and/or alimony” and “infant mortality.”
 - b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file “tool_us.xls”.
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be “child support 1999” and y be “infant mortality1999.”
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
 - c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between the percentage receiving child support and infant mortality. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient.
 - d. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.

8. Let's repeat this analysis to see if dropping out of school is correlated with receiving child support. Ostensibly, parents with more financial resources may be able to spend more time supervising children or paying for programs that provide a structured environment like sports programs. These kids may be less at risk for dropping out of school.
 - a. Write a hypothesis stating the relationship you predict between "percent female headed families with children receiving child support and/or alimony" and "school dropouts."
 - b. To test the relationship between these variables open the Excel file "tool_us.xls".
 - Make a scatter plot by using the pull down menu
 - Let x be "child support 1999" and y be "dropouts 1999."
 - Cut and paste chart into a word file and record the correlation coefficient.
 - c. Write an interpretation of the correlation coefficient summarizing the relationship between the percent receiving child support and school dropouts. Pay attention to both the strength and direction of the coefficient.
 - d. Was your hypothesis confirmed? Explain your answer.

9. Based on your analysis, what policy recommendations might you make to combat the tendency for children living in single-parent families to be at greater risk for infant mortality, low birth rate, and other negative outcomes?