

Index of Belonging

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The American family has been in trouble for some time, but it is often difficult to provide a clear statistical picture of what is happening. Dr. Patrick Fagan at the Family Research Council has put together an Index of Belonging and Rejection that might be the best tool yet to help us understand what is happening to children in these families.

Only 45 percent of American children have spent their childhood in an intact family. The study defines an intact family as one in which a biological mother and father remain legally married to one another since before or around the time of their child's birth.

Let's look at the other part of the index. The first part is belonging. The second part is rejection. When we look at American teenagers and their parents we see that 55 percent of the teenagers' parents have rejected each other, either through divorce, separation, or choosing not to marry.

Patrick Fagan warns that "American society is dysfunctional, characterized by a faulty understanding of the male-female relationship." He goes on to explain the individual children, as well as communities, suffer the consequences of a "culture of rejection in American homes."

There are some ethnic and regional differences. Asian-American children are most likely to live in intact families. African-American children are least likely. And children living in the South are more likely to live in intact families.

Broken homes lead to broken hearts and a disturbing increase in social problems. These include higher levels of poverty, unemployment, welfare dependency, domestic abuse, child neglect, delinquency, crime, drug abuse, academic failure, and

unmarried teen pregnancy and childbearing.

A nation's strength depends upon the strength of its families. This new index illustrates once again in a very powerful way that the strength of the American family is waning. Churches and Christian organizations need to do what they can to strengthen families through preaching, teaching, and programs. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.