

# Demography and Life Course Risks of Women and Men Who Do not Know Their Fathers

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Ulrich O Mueller, *University of Marburg*

Take home message:

1. Standardized surveys provide unambiguous documentation only about the most extreme form of paternal absenteeism, namely “father unknown” or “never knew father”, a rather rare phenomenon, perhaps at most 1 to 2% of adults in developed societies.
2. Of many established databases of this kind, seemingly only the German General Social Survey ALLBUS and the US National Longitudinal Study of Youth NLSY79 provide such information, while the US National Longitudinal Study of Youth NLSY97 comes close to it by documenting whether respondents in the first wave of the panel survey ever had had contact to their biological father. The NLSY79 even measured “mother unknown” which is even rarer, perhaps 0.2%.
3. Analyses show that such respondents do not differ in age, income, education or occupation from others, but are twice as likely to be single, less healthy and to have smaller families, if any. They are also more likely to prefer to be single (*“Happier on one's own than with a family”*), they judge their health less favorably, they may even have higher mortality. Men are not more often, but are more severely affected by fathers' absence than are women.

I.

Father's absence can take on many forms. Fathers may be physically present, but emotionally absent with only very little involvement in a child's life. Today's laws on child custody and visitation make possible a wide variety of relations between non-cohabiting fathers and their children - from a father, who has been, willingly or unwillingly, almost deleted from the life of the child to a caring father who, despite living elsewhere, nevertheless continues to be present and very much involved in the life of the child.

With the tools of a standardized social survey, therefore, only the most extreme form of paternal absenteeism can be documented unambiguously: namely when the father is so completely absent that the child has never seen him and does know close to nothing about him, and therefore, will respond in a survey like the according entry in a birth certificate “father unknown”. This extreme form of father absent, fortunately, as we shall see, is rare

– perhaps just 1-2% in the rich societies. Also, little is known, in which social groups we may encounter relatively more cases than in other groups. Thus, if we want to study demographic characteristics of affected individuals – development; education and occupation; mating, marriage and separation; reproduction; health and mortality - we either have to rely on case-control studies, with a completely unknown, but certainly great selectivity of cases, or we have to screen the largest representative datasets for case numbers sufficient for demographic analysis. These would be the cumulative general social surveys like in the Australian Survey on Social Attitudes (AuSSA), the British Social Attitudes Survey, in Germany the General Social Survey (ALLBUS) or the Socio-Economic Panel SOEP, the Japanese General Social Survey (Gakujutsu-Frontier Suishinkyoten), in the US the General Social Survey (GSS), the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID), the 1979 and the 1997 National Longitudinal Study of Youth or the large datasets of European Household Panel (EHP), or the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). The even larger datasets of national micro-census surveys, however, usually avoid such threatening items where some subjects participating under a legal obligation are to reveal that they – even as adults – know nothing about their father – or, alternatively, that the information “father unknown” in their birth certificates is wrong or at least not up-to-date.

Given the considerable advancements in most societies of fathers’ rights to visitation, information and even custody after a separation of parents, even if they were never married to each other, it comes as a true surprise that in almost all of these general purpose surveys which typically document family of origin, present family and household composition in great detail, contain no specific information on respondents’ biological father, especially in the context that he may be virtually or completely absent from a respondent’s life. The usual reason for this is that in father related items interviewers either are instructed to generously accept father substitutes in responses, or that response categories explicitly do NOT distinguish between fathers and various kinds of father substitutes.

Not only in general purpose national social surveys, but also in International Social Surveys like the general purpose national social surveys the European Household Panel Study (EHP) and its successor EU Community Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) nor the various International Social Survey Programme surveys contain the desired information.

A detailed list of “Father Unknown” related items from a wide variety of general purpose national social surveys from all over the world is documented in the appendix.

## II.

The dearth of information about cases where the father is almost or completely absent from the child’s life, is conspicuous, even curious in the case of the British Attitudes Survey which in 2006 extensively inquired respondents’ attitudes about father’s and mother’s rights and duties in separation and patchwork families.

Also, in the case of the NLS79 and the NLSY97, where the family situation including all kind of differentiation between surrogate fathers of respondents is scrutinized, the ultimate

form paternal absenteeism is not measured, since stating that you “never knew father” or that you “never had any contact with your biological father”, still leaves the possibility, that you have a name and even some biographical information. If the father is still alive, it also leaves the possibility that respondents who had had never contact with their father when they were interviewed at age 15-23 or 12-18, respectively, may develop such a contact later in life, by that, may be spared some of the negative effects of paternal absenteeism on one’s own life course.

Thus, of the databases searched, only the German General Social Survey and the US National Longitudinal Study of Youth NLSY79 explicitly allow respondents to state: “Father unknown” or “Never knew father”.

In the cumulated ALLBUS database 1980-2008 – the said item F144 was always administered - 753 out of 51416 respondents identified themselves as „father unknown“. The proportion of such respondents is independent of survey year and birth year, and seeming is slightly higher in women (1.6% vs. 1.4%). Also, in both sexes, such subjects are about one year younger than others. Remarkably, the distribution of educational status and occupational position in neither sex differs from those of all other respondents.

The NLSY79 gives the following distribution: Of 12686 (6403 males, 6283 females; born 1957-1964) respondents in round 1, 230 (120 males, 110 females) reported that they never knew their biological father, and 28 (19 males, 9 females) that they never knew their biological mother. This gives a slightly higher proportion – 1.8% – than in the German sample with no sex difference.

The slight difference in wording, “Father Unknown” - “Vater unbekannt” in the ALLBUS vs. “Never Knew Father” in the NLSY79 indeed has to be interpreted as meaningful. Specifically, “Never Knew Father” apparently was interpreted by some respondents as “I never met him in person, but I know who he is or was”. Also, some respondents who actually did not know anything about their biological father when interviewed in the first wave 1979 (when they were 15-23 years old), but will have obtained some knowledge later in life, since when asked in 2006 “Is your biological father still alive?” of those who in 1979 had stated “Never Knew Father”, now 80 reported “Dead”, 58 “Alive”, 20 “Don’t Know”. Before this question, respondents were prepared by “This next series of questions asks about your biological parent’s health” in this conventional person-to-person interview mode. Therefore, those respondents answering “Alive” may have had to expect further inquiries, therefore, most of those will indeed have known in 2006 that their biological father is alive, while among those answering “Dead” many may simply have reckoned that given his likely age, he probably will not be alive any more, or others, who might not be aware of what they had reported in 1979, may have simply wanted to prevent any further probing.

On the other hand, even among the “Father unknown” respondents in the cross sectional ALLBUS surveys, there will have been some who had some pieces of information about him. But the – possibly meaningful - difference is that the “Never knew Father” question in the NLSY was asked in the first wave 1979 to teenagers and young adults who had a real chance to obtain information about their biological father in the years to come, while this chance definitely was much smaller among the ALLBUS samples, all adults above age 18.

Thus we have to accept that in the German GSS, the ALLBUS database, we get closer to measuring the ultimate form of paternal absenteeism as in any other database checked for that purpose, with the information in the NLSY79 slightly less specific.

### III.

In the German GSS, the ALLBUS database, we consider only respondents above age 35, who are either married (cohabitating or separate), divorced, or never married (no widows or widowers), and we also use the information if an respondent who is neither cohabitating with his or her spouse nor a widow or a widower, has a (not necessarily cohabitating) partner, in order to establish if a respondent is living in any kind of partnership. Both items were not included in an identical fashion in all waves of the survey.

In the NLSY79 sample, we determine number of spouses / partners ever reported until 2006 (42-50 years old) – the reader may notice attrition & nonresponse, of initially 12686 respondents we do have data of only 7596 respondents on number of spouses / partners up to 2006; however the proportion of “never knew father” respondents in 1979 remains the same in the active sample: of the originally 230 there remain 141.

We get the following distributions in table 1a and 1b:

Table 1a

ALLBUS Family Status above age 35 by Sex, and „Father Unknown“ Statement

	Men above age 35 indicating „father unknown“ (n=179)	All other men above age 35 (n=12678)	Women above age 35 indicating „father unknown“ (n=183)	All other women above age 35 (n=11197)
Single	15.1%	9.2%	21.9%	12.9%
Has spouse or other partner (not necessarily cohabitating)	84.9%	90.8%	78.1%	87,1%

Table 1b

## NLSY79 Family Status in 2006 by Sex, and „ Never Knew Father“ Statement

NLSY79, borne 1957-1964, first interview 1979, last 2006, males	Never reported spouse/partner	First spouse/partner reported	Second and more spouses/partners reported	Proportion with two and more spouses among ever first spouse/partner reported
Others n=3642	11.2%	53.0	35.8	40.3%
Never Knew Father n=69	21.7%	42.0	36.3	46.4%

NLSY79, borne 1957-1964, first interview 1979, last 2006, females	Never reported spouse/partner	First spouse/partner reported	Second and more spouses/partners reported	Proportion with two and more spouses among ever first spouse/partner reported
Others n=3813	10.0%	54.6%	35.4%	39.0%
Never Knew Father n=72	21.9%	49.3%	28.8%	36.9%

Men and women who do not know their father, in both samples had a risk to live single twice as high as other respondents. The effect remains with age controlled.

Such subjects are not divorced more often, which might be the result of a lower likelihood to get married in the first place. Such respondents also do have smaller families, if any.

Unfortunately only in 2004, 2006 and 2008 subjective health of respondents was surveyed in the ALLBUS. Because, here, of the small number of subjects no knowing their father (60 males and 75 females), little multivariate analysis is possible about health differentials, although as a whole, subjects not knowing their father rated their health less favourably than others (Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon  $p=.009$  for both sexes, conventional significance levels of  $p<.05$  for each sex separately).

A similar situation is in the NLSY79 sample (Table 2)

Table 2

NLSY79, borne 1957-1964, first interview 1979, last 2006,	Never Knew Father, males n=82	Others, males n=4051	Never Knew Father, females n=76	Others, females n=4179
Health in 2006 excellent or very good	50%	62.6%	38.2%	56.2%
Health in 2006 good, fair, poor	50%	37.4%	61.8%	43.8%

Here, too, in the NLSY79 sample, subjects not knowing their father rated their health less favourably than others (Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon  $p=.02$  for both sexes, conventional significance levels of  $p<.05$  for each sex separately).

Social isolation as well as less than excellent health is known to come with diminished participation rates in surveys. Worth noting is the slightly younger age of subjects indicating “*father unknown*” (about one year) in the ALLBUS database. It was expected that in cohorts born 1943-1947, due to war, defeat, invading victorious armies with widespread rape and social anomy, proportion of subjects not knowing their fathers would be higher than in later cohorts. The lower age of subjects, however, may be the effect of a faster decline in health with advancing age (poor health at least among males is known to predict lower participation in general social surveys) and perhaps even a higher mortality among subjects with that characteristic.

Such a phenomenon could not be observed in the NLSY79 database, these subjects have been under observation at a younger age.

The higher proportion of social isolation of people not knowing their father is reflected in attitudes as well.

A frequently – but not in all waves - asked question is “*Do you think one needs a family to be really happy, or do you think that one can be just as happy loving on one’s own ?*” with the response categories “*Needs a family*” “*Just as happy as on one’s own*” “*Happier on one’s own*” “*Undecided*” “*No answer*”. Since for the latter two residual categories no difference could be observed, we disregard such respondents. Then we obtain the following distribution of stated attitudes by knowledge of father and sex.

Table 3  
Role of Family for Happiness, by Sex, and „*Father Unknown*“ Statement

	Men indicating „ <i>father unknown</i> “ (n=150)	All other men (n=12005)	Women indicating „ <i>father unknown</i> “ (n=209)	All other women (n=13120)
“ <i>Needs a family</i> ”	64.9%	80.3%	71.4%	78.0%
“ <i>Just as happy as on one’s own</i> ”	26.9%	18.0%	23.8%	20.4%
“ <i>Happier on one’s own</i> ”	8.2%	1.7%	4.8%	1.6%

Men not knowing their father are five times, women are three times as likely to state “*Happier on one’s own*”. They are also likelier to state “*Just as happy as on one’s own*”. Differences are significant.

The final version of the paper will comprise multivariate analyses, also of additional marriage and family related variables.

Such findings, which are most probably applicable also to other – at least the rich – countries, are relevant for demographic analysis as well as for social policy.

If we know better, how the most extreme form of father absent affects people's lives, we may better understand, what in much more frequent forms, like most frequent case: parents separate up and the father lives elsewhere, but maintains contact with child (with relevant features yet to be measured) – may be confounder generated, and what may be truly the effect of paternal absenteeism.

Despite greatly strengthened legal rights of fathers, few countries, if any, consider it the duty of the government to find out about the father of a child except for holding someone responsible for child support. Even lower is the motivation to do something about a legal fatherhood which does not reflect the true biological relationship, as long as neither the legal father, nor the mother nor the child contest it, save in cases where such a false fatherhood provides the mother and the child a better residence status with a claim to government transfer payments. Improved knowledge about the harmful lifelong consequences of being ignorant about the most basic facts of one's roots and, therefore, one's exact place in the stream of human life, may change that negligent public attitude.

“Father Unknown” related items from:

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- English Longitudinal Study of Aging
  - Health and Retirement Study (HRS)
  - Mexican Health and Aging Study Survey of Health
  - Ageing and Retirement in Europe Health
  - Work and Retirement Study New Zealand
  - The Australian Survey on Social Attitudes (AuSSA)
  - The British Social Attitudes Survey
  - The Japanese General Social Survey
  - The German General Social Survey (ALLBUS)
  - The US General Social Survey
  - The Panel Study on Income Dynamics in the US
  - The European Household Panel Study (EHP)
  - WHO`s Study on Global Ageing and Adult Health
  - NLSY79 Child/Young Adults
  - NLSY97 1997-2007
  - Cohort-Young Women Study 1968-2003
  - Original Cohort-Mature Women 1967-2003
  - Original Cohort-Young Men 1966-1981
  - Original Cohort-Older Men 1966-1990
  - Families and Children Study (FACS)
  - National Child Development Study
  - The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP)
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- A. In wave one, wave two and wave three of *English Longitudinal Study of Aging* the respondents were asked:

ADiKLiv

**Who did you live with for most of your childhood?**

1. BOTH NATURAL PARENTS
  2. NATURAL MOTHER AND STEP-FATHER
  3. NATURAL FATHER AND STEP-MOTHER
  4. NATURAL MOTHER
  5. NATURAL FATHER
  6. STEP-PARENTS
  7. FOSTER PARENTS
  8. ADOPTIVE PARENTS
  9. CHILDREN'S HOME
  95. OTHER (SPECIFY)
- IF REPORTS THAT HAS LIVED WITH OTHER

In wave 2 the respondents were asked:

**What was [^your / Name's] [^main carer's / father's / step-father's / foster father's / adoptive father's / mother's] main occupation when [^you were / he was / she was] 14?**



01. ARMED FORCES
02. MANAGER OR SENIOR OFFICIAL IN SOMEONE ELSE'S BUSINESS
03. RUNNING HIS OWN BUSINESS
04. PROFESSIONAL OR TECHNICAL
05. ADMINISTRATIVE, CLERICAL OR SECRETARIAL
06. SKILLED TRADE
07. CARING, LEISURE, TRAVEL OR PERSONAL SERVICES
08. SALES OR CUSTOMER SERVICE
09. PLANT, PROCESS OR MACHINE DRIVERS OR OPERATORS
10. OTHER JOBS
11. SOMETHING ELSE
12. CASUAL JOBS
13. RETIRED
14. UNEMPLOYED
15. SICK / DISABLED

So there is no answer like "Father unknown"

B. In the *Health and Retirement Study (HRS)* 1998 was asked:

D126-1.

**How often do you (or your [husband/wife/partner]) have contact either in person or by phone or mail with your father?**

1. DAY
2. WEEK
- 3 EVERY TWO WEEKS
- 4 MONTH 5. YEAR
6. ALMOST NEVER
7. OTHER (SPECIFY)
8. DK
9. RF

This question refers to the present and doesn't refers to the past, so it is not useful.

C. The *Mexican Health and Aging Study 2001* asks several questions about the responder's relationship to their parents:

**F. 23 With whom do (does) your (mother/father/parents) live?**

1. WITH RESPONDENT
2. ALONE/WITH CURRENT SPOUSE
- 3 .WITH OTHER CHILD
4. WITH OTHER RELATIVES
5. IN RETIREMENT HOME, CARE FACILITY
6. PART OF YEAR WITH RESPONDENT, PART OF YEAR
7. WITH OTHER SIBLINGS OF RESPONDENT
8. PART OF YEAR ALONE, PART OF YEAR WITH
9. RESPONDENT OR SIBLINGS OF RESPONDENT

10. OTHER

**F. 24 Have you always lived together with (her/him/them)?**

1. YES
2. NO
3. RF
4. DK

**F. 27 Where does (do) your (mother/father/parents) live?**

1. SAME HOUSE OR BUILDING
2. SAME LOCALITY OR NEIGHBORHOOD
3. DIFFERENT LOCALITY OR NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT SAME CITY
4. OTHER CITY IN THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC
5. OTHER COUNTRY
6. RF
7. DK

**F. 28 In the last 2 years, how often have you been in contact – either in person, by telephone, or mail – with your father?**

1. WEEKMONTH
2. YEAR
3. LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR
4. NEVER
5. RF
6. DK

But it contains no information about the most extreme form of father absent and father and mother are a union. This Health study rather refers to the biological father or mother to detect family disease.

- D. The *Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe* only provides information about the age father/mother died and in which household they lived:

**DN026 Is [your/your] [natural/natural] [mother/father] still alive?**

1. YES
5. NO

**DN030 Where does [your/your] [mother/father] live?**

1. IN THE SAME HOUSEHOLD
2. IN THE SAME BUILDING
3. LESS THAN 1 KILOMETRE AWAY

4. BETWEEN 1 AND 5 KILOMETRES AWAY
5. BETWEEN 5 AND 25 KILOMETRES AWAY
6. BETWEEN 25 AND 100 KILOMETRES AWAY
7. BETWEEN 100 AND 500 KILOMETRES AWAY
8. MORE THAN 500 KILOMETRES AWAY
9. MORE THAN 500 KILOMETRES AWAY IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Still you can find no information if the respondent's father was absent.

*E. The Health, Work and Retirement Study New Zealand doesn't give any information about family background at all.*

*F. The Australian Survey on Social Attitudes (AuSSA) in a question on present household composition puts together in response categories to just one item: "father/step-father/father-in-law".*

*G. The British Social Attitudes Survey asks:*

Q153

**Can I just check which, if any, of these types of relatives do you yourself have alive at the moment.**

**Please include adoptive and step relatives.**

**PROBE: Which others? DO NOT INCLUDE FOSTER RELATIVES. CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

**Multicoded (Maximum of 8 codes)**

- 1 FATHER
- 2 MOTHER
- 3 BROTHER
- 4 SISTER
- 5 SON
- 6 DAUGHTER
- 7 GRANDCHILD (DAUGHTER'S CHILD)
- 8 GRANDCHILD (SON'S CHILD)
- 9 NONE OF THESE
- 98 DON'T KNOW
- 99 REFUSAL

Q846

**Please tell me where your father was born.**

1. ENGLAND
2. SCOTLAND
3. WALES
4. NORTHERN IRELAND
5. REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

- 6. OTHER
- 7. DON'T KNOW

A very common question is about father's occupational position when respondent was an adolescent.

H. The Japanese GSS, for example, asks:

Q38-1

**"Which one of the categories best describes your father's job when you were about 15 years old?" with interviewer instruction: Allow the respondent to determine whether he/she is 1 (a) an executive or 5 (e) a self-employed person. Government employees should also reply to all questions in Q38)**

- 1. EXECUTIVE OF A COMPANY OR A CORPORATION
- 2. REGULAR EMPLOYEE
- 3. TEMPORARY WORKER (DAILY WORKER, PART-TIME TEMPORARY WORKER, DOING PIECE WORK AT HOME)
- 4. SELFEMPLOYED
- 5. FAMILY WORKER
- 6. HE WAS NOT WORKING
- 7. I DIDN'T HAVE A FATHER AT THAT TIME
- 8. DON'T KNOW

I. The German GSS (ALLBUS) asks:

F144:

**"When you were fifteen what was the occupational status of your father?" – here the respondent was given a long list to choose from, with the residual categories**

- 1.FATHER WAS RETIRED
- 2.FATHER WAS UNEMPLOYED
- 3.FATHER WAS AWAY AT WAR/ AS POW
- 4.FATHER WAS NO LONGER ALIVE
- 5.FATHER UNKNOWN
- 6.DON'T KNOW
- 7.NO ANSWER
- 8.REFUSED

J. The US General Social Survey asks:

VAR PAOCC16 A.

**What kind of work did your father (FATHER SUBSTITUTE) normally do while you were growing up? That is, what was his job called?" Here a list is given to chose from, with the collapsed residual categories: NOT APPLICABLE, DON'T KNOW, NO ANSWER, AND DISABLED, ETC.**

and

**VAR: FAMDIF16 A. "IF NOT LIVING WITH BOTH OWN MOTHER AND FATHER: What happened?" And gives the categories:**

1. ONE OR BOTH PARENTS DIED
2. PARENTS DIVORCED OR SEPARATED
3. FATHER ABSENT IN ARMED FORCES
4. ONE OR BOTH PARENTS IN INSTITUTION
5. OTHER (SPECIFY)
6. DON'T KNOW
7. NO ANSWER
8. NOT APPLICABLE

K. The Panel Study on Income Dynamics in the US asks:

KL2.

**"Now I have some questions about [your/your wife's/"WIFE's"/HEAD's] family and past experiences.**

**Where was [your/her/his] father born?"**

**(TWO 25-CHARACTER VARS: KL2TOWN FOR TOWN/CITY AND KL2COUNTRY FOR FOREIGN COUNTRY;  
ALSO ONE 2-DIGIT VARIABLE, KL2STATE FOR STATE IN US (USE TSTATE CODE, MINUS CODE 55))**

**With the explicit interviewer instruction:**

**"ACCEPT FATHER SUBSTITUTE"**

L. Neither the European Household Panel Study (EHP) nor the various International Social Survey Programme surveys contain any specific information.

M. WHO's Study on Global Ageing and Adult Health doesn't provide any information on the topic as well.

N. In Question DADSEE1984 in the NLSY79 Child/Young Adults 1986 was asked:

**In the last 12 months how often has child seen his father?**

0. NEVER
1. ALMOST EVERY DAY
2. 2-3 TIMES A WEEK
3. ABOUT ONCE A WEEK

4. 1-2 TIMES A MONTH
5. ONCE EVERY 2 OR 3 MONTHS
6. ONCE IN THE PAST 12 MONTH

This question gives an impression how close is the relationship to father.

One of the following questions is:

**What is the usual residence of the child?**

1. IN HOUSEHOLD OF MOTHER
2. WITH FATHER
3. WITH OTHER RELATIVE(S)
4. WITH FOSTER CARE
5. WITH ADOPTIVE PARENT(S)
6. IN LONG TERM CARE INSTITUTION
7. AWAY AT SCHOOL
8. DECEASED
9. PART TIME W/ MOTHER, PART TIME W/ FATHER
10. PART TIME W/ MOTHER, PART TIME W/ OTHER
11. OTHER

[DADDIS1985]

**How big is the distance between father and child?**

1. WITHIN 1 MILE
2. 1-10 MILES
3. 11-100 MILES
4. MORE THAN 100 MILES

[DADVIS1985]

**How long does a usual visit of father lasts (in days)?**

0. LESS THAN 1 D
1. 0
- 2 .1
- 3 .2
4. 4
5. 5
6. 6
- 7 .7
8. 13
9. 14
10. 15
11. 16+

With these questions you can make a difference between fathers who take care of their children even if they are not living in the household anymore and fathers who are almost vanished.

[DADLIV1996]

**Is absent father of child living?**

1. YES

0. NO

REFUSAL

**DON'T KNOW**

If the mother don't know if the father is still alive the child doesn't know either, so it is also an sign for "father unknown", the most extreme form of father absenteeism.

[Q2-29]

**When did you last live with your father?**

1. WHEN I LEFT MY MOTHER'S HOUSE

**2. HE LEFT BEFORE I WAS BORN**

**3. HE NEVER LIVED WITH US**

[Q12-47.1]

**When did [Name of biological child]'s natural [mother/father] leave the household?**

1. SELECT TO ENTER DATE

**2. NATURAL (MOTHER/FATHER) NEVER LIVED IN THIS HOUSEHOLD**

[Q2-31a]

**How long ago did your father leave your mother's household?**

BRANCH CONDITIONS...

This question helps to analyze when the separation began.

[CS8816621988]

**Question on memory location: Was father present? (Number of other persons)**

**0. < 1**

1. 1

2. 2

3. 3

This means that child doesn't remember father at that time. But this doesn't necessarily means that he was gone or unknown.

C05415.00 [MS860137]

Survey Year: 1986

**Does child see father (-figure) daily?**

1. YES

0. NO

Here is no difference between father and father substitute.

[MS880452]

Survey Year: 1988

**How often child spends time with father?**

1. ONCE A DAY OR MORE
2. LEAST 4 TIMES A WEEK
3. ONCE A WEEK
4. ONCE A MONTH
5. A FEW TIMES A YEAR
6. DON'T KNOW

This shows various steps of father absenteeism. But there is no sign of “father unknown”.

[MS900463]

Survey Year: 1990

**Is father biological, step or father-figure?**

1. BIOLOGICAL FATHER
2. STEP FATHER
3. FATHER-FIGURE
4. NO FATHER, STEP FATHER, OR FATHER-FIGURE

[CS942129]

Survey Year: 1994

**How close do you feel to your father?**

4. EXTREMELY CLOSE
3. QUITE CLOSE
2. FAIRLY CLOSE
1. NOT VERY CLOSE
0. DO NOT HAVE THIS PARENT

This is not the most extreme form of father absenteeism, but it comes close to it.

[Q2-37]

Survey Year: 1994

**Which of these groups describes your father? Is he...**

1. BLACK
2. WHITE (NON-HISPANIC)
3. HISPANIC
4. AMERICAN INDIAN
5. ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISLANDER
6. OTHER (SPECIFY)
7. DON'T KNOW



If you don't know the race of your father you are probably don't know him at all.

[S01Q21]

**Now we have a few questions about your family. First, where was your mother born?**

1. IN THE UNITED STATES (PROBE FOR STATE)
2. OTHER COUNTRY (PROBE FOR NAME OF COUNTRY)

**IF VOLUNTEERED: HAVE NEVER KNOWN MY MOTHER.**

[S01Q21]

**Where was your father born?**

1. IN THE UNITED STATES (PROBE FOR STATE)
2. OTHER COUNTRY (PROBE FOR NAME OF COUNTRY)

**IF VOLUNTEERED: HAVE NEVER KNOWN MY FATHER.**

0. The *NLSY97 1997-2007* (rounds 1-11) asks:

[YSAQ-056]

Survey Year: 1997

**Now I am going to ask about your biological mother. Have you ever had any contact with your biological mother?**

1. YES
0. NO

But this doesn't mean the R doesn't know anything about her. Corresponding to that question, there is one about the biological father too.

Seemingly, these two questions were never asked again in the panel survey rounds up.

[YSAQ-164]

Survey Year: 1997

**How many times have you received a card, letter, or phone call from your biological father?**

0. NEVER
1. ONCE OR TWICE
2. LESS THAN ONCE A MONTH
3. ABOUT ONCE A MONTH
4. ABOUT TWICE A MONTH
5. ABOUT ONCE A WEEK
6. SEVERAL TIMES A WEEK
7. EVERYDAY

[SH-103.01]

Survey Year: 1997

**Does [this HH member] have a "father figure" who lives here? By "father figure" we mean a man who lives with the child and is "like a father" to the child. For example, a male relative or friend who is responsible for raising the child?**

- 18. YES, RELATIVE
- 1. YES, NONRELATIVE
- 0. NO

[YSAQ-602K.04]

Survey Year: 2001

**Are you currently living with father figure?**

LOOP 1 REFERS TO BIOLOGICAL MOTHER  
LOOP 2 REFERS TO MOTHER FIGURE  
LOOP 3 REFERS TO BIOLOGICAL FATHER  
LOOP 4 REFERS TO FATHER FIGURE

- 1. YES
- 0. NO

[SH-96.01]

Survey Year: 1997

**Does [this HH member] have a "mother figure" who lives here? By "mother figure" we mean a woman who lives with the child and is "like a mother" to the child. For example, a female relative or friend who is responsible for raising the child?**

- 17. YES, RELATIVE
- 1. YES, NONRELATIVE
- 0. NO

P. The *Cohort-Young Women Study 1968-2003* contains the question:

[PAR-1B]

Survey Year: 1997

**Please think of the man who played the most important role in raising you, even if he is no longer living. Is that person your biological father, an adoptive father, a step-father, or someone else?**

- 1. BIOLOGICAL FATHER
- 2. ADOPTIVE FATHER
- 3. STEP-FATHER
- 4. SOMEONE ELSE-SPECIFY
- 5. R DOES NOT HAVE ANYONE SHE CONSIDERS A "FATHER"

This means the respondent has no father, but it doesn't necessarily mean that she doesn't know anything about him.

[PAR-72@1]

Survey Year: 2001

**How long have Father lived with you?**

1. None
2. 1 TO 13
3. 14 TO 26
4. 40 TO 48
5. 49 TO 51

Q. The *Original Cohort-Mature Women 1967-2003* asks as well:

[PAR-1B]

Survey Year: 1997

**Please think of the man who played the most important role in raising you, even if he is no longer living. Is that person your biological father, an adoptive father, a step-father, or someone else?**

1. BIOLOGICAL FATHER
2. ADOPTIVE FATHER
3. STEP-FATHER
4. SOMEONE ELSE-SPECIFY
5. R DOES NOT HAVE ANYONE SHE CONSIDERS A "FATHER"

This means the respondent has no father, but it doesn't necessarily mean that she doesn't know anything about him.

R. The *Original Cohort-Young Men 1966-1981* asks:

[CHU]

Survey year: 1966

**Where was your father living when you were 14?**

1. FATHER LIVES IN HOUSEHOLD
2. FATHER DECEASED
3. ID NOT LIVE WITH FATHER WHEN 14 YEARS OLD
4. OTHER
5. NA

There is no more information about "father unknown".

S. The *Original Cohort-Older Men 1966-1990* provides no useful information about this topic.

T. In the *Families and Children Study (FACS)* wave 2 was asks:

**Is the father/mother of [name of child] still alive?**

1. YES
2. NO
3. DON'T KNOW

If the mother don't know if the father is still alive the child doesn't know either, so it is also an sign for "father unknown", the most extreme form of father absenteeism.

In wave 3 was asked:

**How often does (Name of child) usually see his/her mother/father?**

1. AT LEAST ONCE A DAY
2. AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK
3. AT LEAST ONCE/FORTNIGHT
4. AT LEAST ONCE PER MONTH
5. AT LEAST ONCE PER YEAR
6. LESS OFTEN
7. NEVER

R111q

**I would now like to ask a few questions about the (father/mother) of (Name of eldest/next eldest child etc). Did you ever live together as a couple (for a month or more) with him/her?**

1. YES
2. NO
3. CANNOT IDENTIFY HIM/HER
4. CURRENT PARTNER IS THE PARENT

This means the mother doesn't know who is the father, this means the father is unknown.

U. The *National Child Development Study 2008-2009* asks the responders:

**How would you describe your relationship with your father? Would you say you | | are... | |**

- 1...VERY CLOSE,
- 2...CLOSE,
- 3...NOT VERY CLOSE,

4...OR, NOT AT ALL CLOSE

But there is no question which refers to "father unknown".

V. The German SOEP contains the question:

**How important is your father in your life?**

VERY IMPORTANT

IMPORTANT

LESS IMPORTANT

NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

**NO SUCH PERSON IN MY LIFE**

Corresponding to that there is the same question for the R mother.

B023:

**"Before age 16, was there a time of several months or more when your father had no job?"**

**[IWER: IF R MENTIONS NEVER LIVING WITH FATHER WHEN GROWING UP, CHOOSE CODE 7. IF R MENTIONS THAT FATHER NEVER WORKED OR WAS ALWAYS DISABLED, CHOOSE CODE 6.]**

1. YES

2. NO

3. FATHER NEVER WORKED/ALWAYS DISABLED

4. NEVER LIVED WITH FATHER/FATHER WAS NOT ALIVE

5. .DON'T KNOW

6. REFUSAL