

Behind the stats: the real picture of fatherhood in SA

A recent report highlights the importance of father involvement irrespective of marital or residence status. Moving beyond the more popular discussions around father absence, it focuses on the involvement of non-resident biological and social fathers in parenting and caregiving, and highlights the benefits of men's involvement in children's lives.

The 2018 *State of South Africa's Fathers Report*, published by Sonke Gender Justice and the Human Sciences Research Council, notes that the 'texture' of fatherhood is rich by age, race, class, geo-type, ethnicity and family type. The report moves away from the deficit model of absent fatherhood and highlights the

importance of father involvement irrespective of marital or co-residence status.

Importantly, fatherhood is tied to the socio-economic legacy of apartheid, slavery and colonialism. These historical, as well as contemporary, social and economic forces have destabilised mainly Black and Coloured masculinities,

families, lives, relationships and communities. The hangover of these socioeconomic histories and developments is evident in the data on households and families. Co-residence with a biological father is correlated with a higher income.

Two out of every three Black children do not live with their biological fathers.

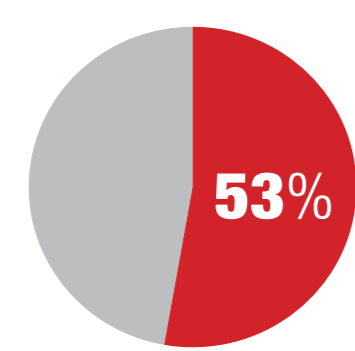
Research-led policymaking and evidence-based interventions that address the separation of children from their parents, and in particular fathers, are required. It is critical to underline that it is most likely a combination of a person's access to economic resources (money or well-paid job), social capital (the social networks and support to which a person has access), as well as cultural norms (which are influenced by history), and not of one's racial identity, that best explains the father and child relationship.

Resident, involved or absent: moving beyond the statistics of fatherhood

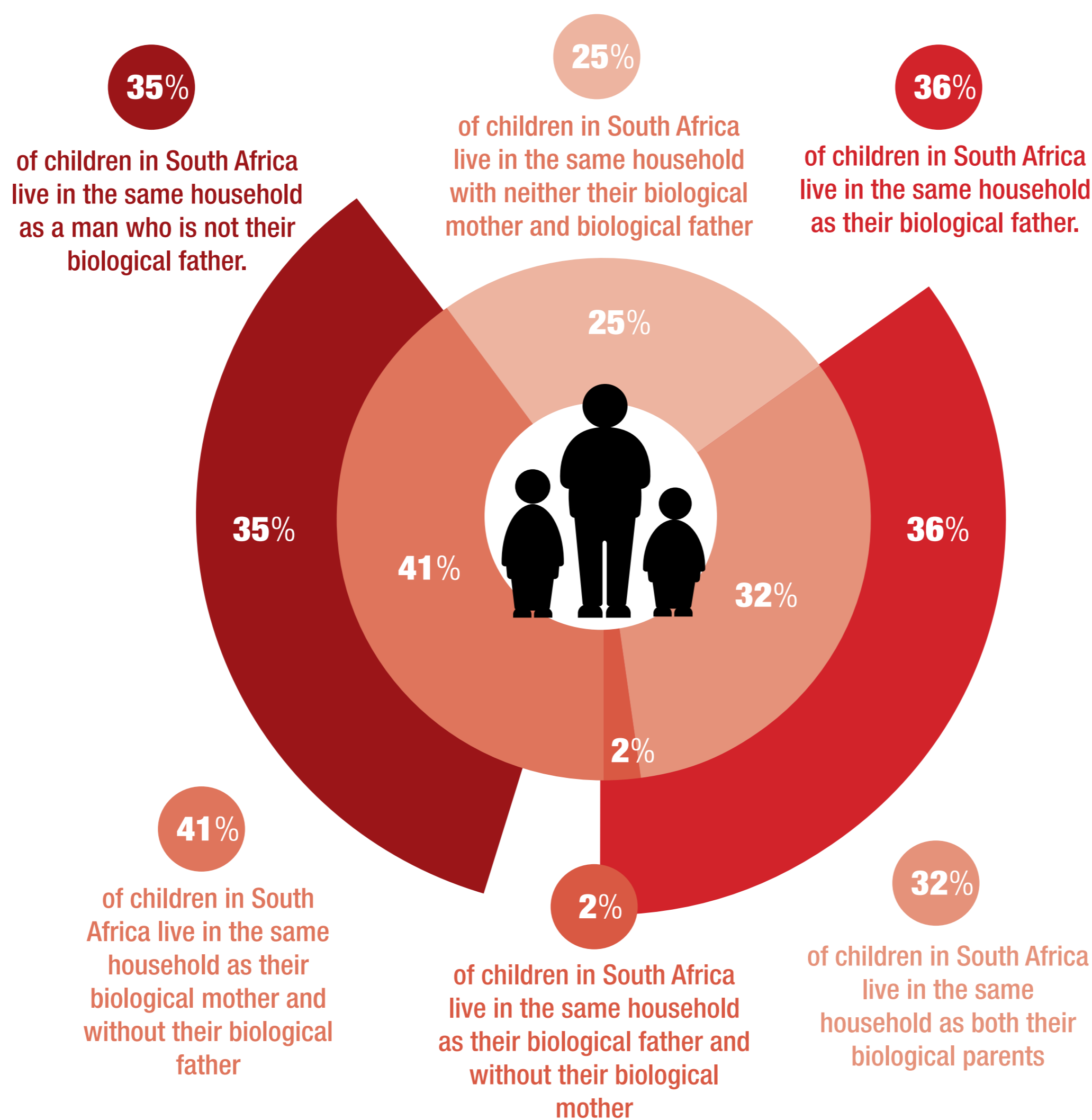
Biological father non-residency does not necessarily equate to fathers being uninvolved.

When non-resident fathers are involved, it is usually financially by paying for school fees and groceries. When fathers are the primary recipient of the Child Support Grant, they use it for the same child care expenses that mothers do.

Just over half of the number of adult men in the country are likely to be biological fathers. This amounts to 53% of the total male population in South Africa.



2018 labour Law Amendments Bill to make provisions for 10 days of parental leave.



All statistics are approximate, and are reflect results from separate research surveys undertaken in 2016 and 2018

This "State of South Africa's Fathers 2018" report is produced as a MenCare Global Fatherhood Campaign affiliated resource. The report forms part of a set of country- and region-focused reports on men's involvement as caregivers around the world, inspired by the "State of the World's Fathers" reports. The first-ever "State of the World's Fathers" report was published in 2015, and followed by the "State of the World's Fathers: Time for Action" in 2017. "State of the World's Fathers" reports available in multiple languages, and regional and country reports in the same series, are available at www.sowf.men-care.org.

Van den Berg, W. & Makusha, T. (2018). "State of South Africa's Fathers 2018", Cape Town: Sonke Gender Justice & Human Sciences Research Council



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