

Section H

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY OF PARENTS WHO REPORT AN UNPLANNED PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

HIGHLIGHTS

- ▲ Among couples who remained together after the birth, both mothers and fathers reported significantly lower relationship happiness if at least one member of the couple did not plan the pregnancy compared to those couples who both agreed that the pregnancy was planned, net of other background characteristics.
- ▲ Relationship conflict, reported by both mothers and fathers, was also significantly higher if at least one member of the couple reported that the birth followed an unplanned pregnancy compared to those couples who agree that the pregnancy was planned, net of other background characteristics.

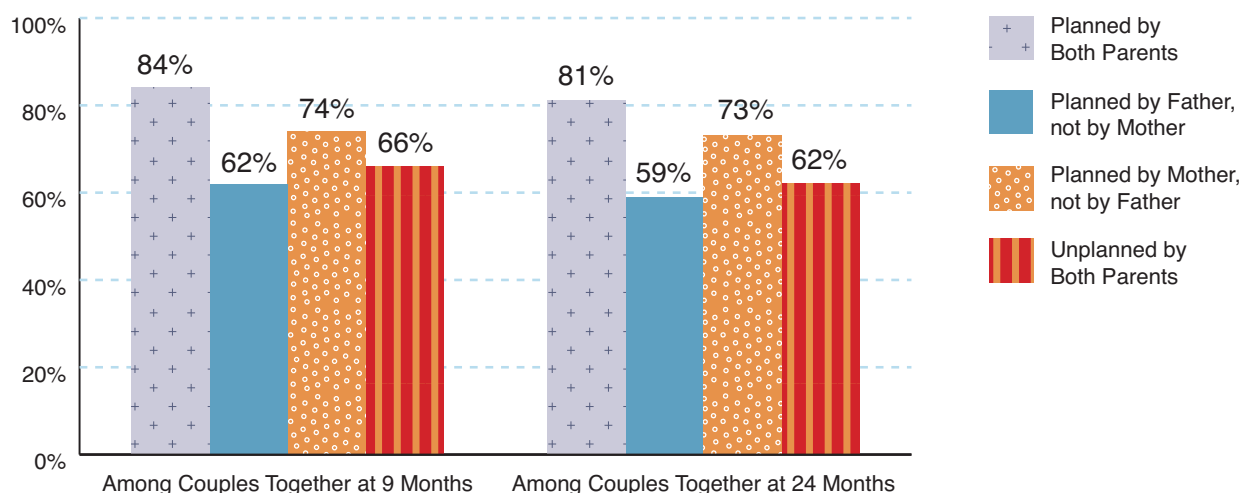
This section turns to the quality of the relationship between the parents who have a child following an unplanned pregnancy and how the quality changes over time. The findings in these charts are based on analyses conducted by Child Trends Inc. using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort.

The findings pertaining to measures of relationship quality are limited to those parents who remain a couple, and reflect pregnancy intentions of both the mother and the father of each child. Thus, results for several of the charts and tables are presented for four possible intentional categories—both parents planned the pregnancy, neither parent planned the pregnancy, mother planned but not father, and father planned but not mother. Note that all of these findings refer to pregnancies that resulted in a live birth.

In addition to presenting the overall reports of relationship quality among parents having an unplanned or planned pregnancy and birth, estimates of the predictive probabilities from multivariate models are presented as well in order to provide more information about how much of the difference between the two groups is attributable to pregnancy planning status versus other differences between parents who have planned and unplanned pregnancies.

H-1. Relationship Quality Among Couples Together at 9 Months and Among Couples Together at 24 Months: Percent of Mothers Reporting Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions¹

- ▲ For parents living together (either married or cohabiting) nine months after the birth, the percentage of mothers reporting their relationship was “very happy” was higher among couples who agreed that the pregnancy was planned, compared to couples who disagreed on pregnancy intentions or who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned.
- ▲ Mothers were least likely to report “very happy” relationships if they did not plan the pregnancy, but their partner did (among couples living together nine months after the birth).
- ▲ Even among couples who remained living together 24 months after the birth, mother’s relationship happiness was lower for couples in which at least one partner reported that the pregnancy was unplanned, and was particularly low among mothers who reported that they didn’t plan the pregnancy, but their partners did.



Percentage of Mothers Who Report that Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions— Without Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	84%	62%*	74%*	66%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	81%	59%*	73%*	62%*

*Note that mother-reported happiness was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who disagreed on pregnancy intention or who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned.

1. Child Trends Inc., analysis of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort, 2008.

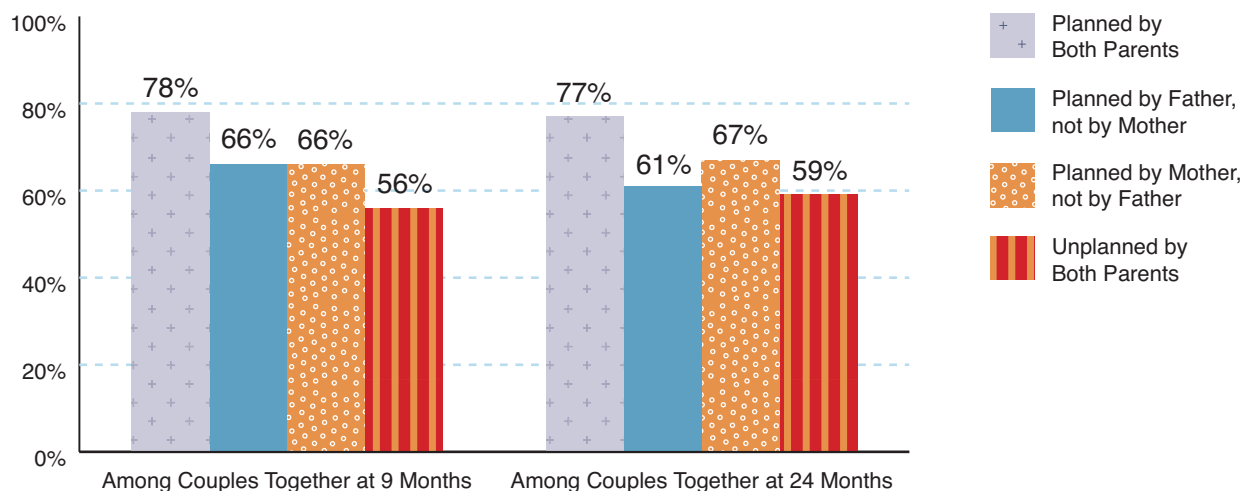
- ▲ In addition, the results below are based on predicted probabilities from multivariate models that control for a number of background characteristics related to the child, mother, father, and couple. These estimates suggest how much of the difference between outcomes following planned versus unplanned pregnancies would remain even among families who are otherwise quite similar. The characteristics controlled for include child’s age at baseline, child’s race/ethnicity, child’s birth order, child’s gender, mother’s age at the child’s birth, mother’s previous marital status, mother’s work history, whether or not the mother lived with both of her parents until age 16, father’s age at birth, father’s work status, the highest education level of either member of the couple, the couple’s income, the couple’s marital status at birth, and language spoken at home by the couple.
- ▲ These results indicate that all of the differences in the percentage of mothers reporting that the relationship is “very happy” by parental agreement on pregnancy intention remain statistically significant net of controls.

Percentage of Mothers Who Report that Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions—Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	83%	63%*	74%*	68%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	80%	58%*	73%*	62%*

* Note that mother-reported happiness was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who disagreed on pregnancy intention or who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned.

H-2. Relationship Quality among Couples Together at 9 Months and Among Couples Together at 24 Months: Father Reports Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions²

- ▲ Among couples living together nine months after the child’s birth, the percentage of fathers who reported their relationship was “very happy” was highest within couples who agreed that the pregnancy was planned.
- ▲ Moreover, fathers who agreed with their partners that the pregnancy was unplanned were the least likely to report that they were “very happy” with the relationship among couples together at nine months.
- ▲ Even among couples who were still together 24 months after the baby’s birth, the association between pregnancy planning and father’s relationship quality remained significant, and was similar to reports from couples together nine months after the baby’s birth.



Percentage of Fathers who Report that Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Without Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	78%	66%*	66%*	56%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	77%	61%*	67%*	59%*

*Note that father-reported happiness was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who disagreed on pregnancy intention or agreed the pregnancy was unplanned.

2. Child Trends Inc., analysis of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort, 2008.

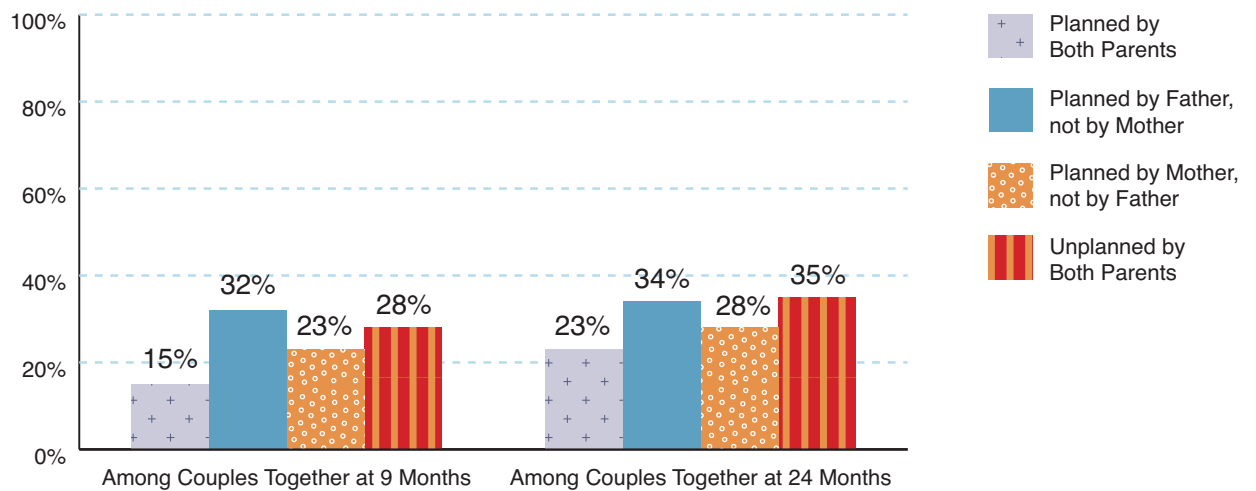
- ▲ In addition, the results below are based on predicted probabilities from multivariate models that control for a number of background characteristics related to the child, mother, father, and couple. These estimates suggest how much of the difference between outcomes following planned versus unplanned pregnancies would remain even among families who are otherwise quite similar. The characteristics controlled for include child’s age at baseline, child’s race/ethnicity, child’s birth order, child’s gender, mother’s age at the child’s birth, mother’s previous marital status, mother’s work history, whether or not the mother lived with both of her parents until age 16, father’s age at birth, father’s work status, the highest education level of either member of the couple, the couple’s income, the couple’s marital status at birth, and language spoken at home by the couple.
- ▲ All of the differences in the percentage of fathers reporting that the relationship is “very happy” by parental agreement on pregnancy intention remain statistically significant net of controls.

Percentage of Fathers who Report that Relationship is “Very Happy” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	77%	67%*	67%*	58%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	75%	59%*	65%*	59%*

*Note that father-reported happiness was significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who disagreed on pregnancy intention or who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned.

H-3. Relationship Quality Among Couples Together at 9 Months and Among Couples Together at 24 Months: Mother Reports Arguing “Very Often” with Partner, by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions³

- ▲ Mothers living with the biological father nine months after the baby’s birth were least likely to report relationship conflict if they and their partner agreed that the pregnancy was planned.
- ▲ Mothers who said that the pregnancy was unplanned (regardless of fathers’ pregnancy intentions) were more likely than mothers who said the pregnancy was planned to report arguing very often with their partner.
- ▲ This association between pregnancy planning and relationship conflict persisted even among couples still together at 24 months after the baby’s birth.



Percentage of Mothers who Report that they Argue with Partner “Very Often” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Without Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	15%	32%*	23%*	28%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	23%	34%*	28%*	35%*

* Note that mother-reported conflict was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned or compared to couples who disagreed on the planning intentions.

3. Child Trends Inc., analysis of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort, 2008.

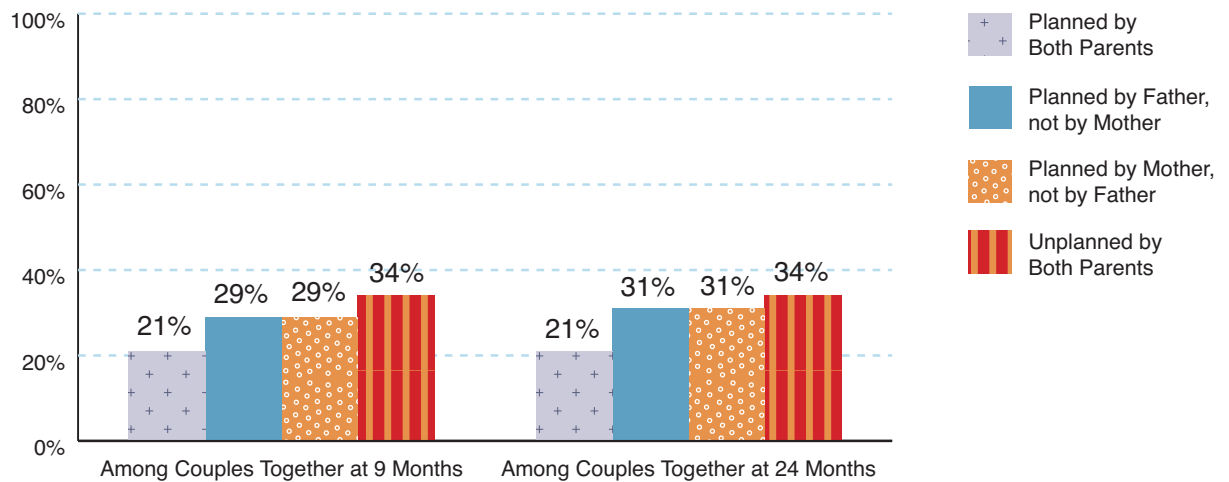
- ▲ In addition, the results below are based on predicted probabilities from multivariate models that control for a number of background characteristics related to the child, mother, father, and couple. These estimates suggest how much of the difference between outcomes following planned versus unplanned pregnancies would remain even among families who are otherwise quite similar. The characteristics controlled for include child’s age at baseline, child’s race/ethnicity, child’s birth order, child’s gender, mother’s age at the child’s birth, mother’s previous marital status, mother’s work history, whether or not the mother lived with both of her parents until age 16, father’s age at birth, father’s work status, the highest education level of either member of the couple, the couple’s income, the couple’s marital status at birth, and language spoken at home by the couple.
- ▲ Among couples together at nine months, all of the differences in the percentage of mothers reporting that they argue “very often” with their partner remain statistically significant net of controls. Among those couples together at 24 months, only the differences between couples who agree that the pregnancy was unplanned and those who agree that the pregnancy was planned remain statistically significant net of controls.

Percentage of Mothers who Report that they Argue with Partner “Very Often” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	17%	31%*	23%*	26%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	24%	30%	27%	32%*

* Note that mother-reported conflict was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned or (among couples together at nine months) compared to couples who disagreed on the planning intentions.

H-4. Relationship Quality Among Couples Together at 9 Months and Among Couples Together at 24 Months: Father Reports Arguing “Very Often” with Partner, by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intentions⁴

- ▲ Similar to mothers’ reports, fathers who agreed with their partner that the pregnancy and subsequent birth were planned were least likely to report arguing very often with their partner. This is true among couples together at nine months and among couples together 24 months after the baby’s birth.
- ▲ Fathers were most likely to report relationship conflict when both the father and mother report that the pregnancy and subsequent birth were unplanned (at both nine and 24 months).



Percentage of Fathers who Report that they Argue with Partner “Very Often” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Without Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	21%	29%*	29%*	34%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	21%	31%*	31%*	34%*

* Note that father-reported conflict was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned or compared to couples who disagreed on the planning intentions.

4. Child Trends Inc., analysis of data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort, 2008.

- ▲ In addition, the results below are based on predicted probabilities from multivariate models that control for a number of background characteristics related to the child, mother, father, and couple. These estimates suggest how much of the difference between outcomes following planned versus unplanned pregnancies would remain even among families who are otherwise quite similar. The characteristics controlled for include child’s age at baseline, child’s race/ethnicity, child’s birth order, child’s gender, mother’s age at the child’s birth, mother’s previous marital status, mother’s work history, whether or not the mother lived with both of her parents until age 16, father’s age at birth, father’s work status, the highest education level of either member of the couple, the couple’s income, the couple’s marital status at birth, and language spoken at home by the couple.
- ▲ Nearly all of the differences in the percentage of fathers reporting that they argue “very often” with their partner remain statistically significant net of controls among couples together at nine months and couples together at 24 months.

Percentage of Fathers who Report that they Argue with Partner “Very Often” by Parental Agreement on Pregnancy Intention—Controlling for Background Characteristics				
	Planned by Both Parents	Planned by Father, not by Mother	Planned by Mother, not by Father	Unplanned by Both Parents
Among Couples Together at 9 Months	23%	27%	29%*	32%*
Among Couples Together at 24 Months	22%	27%	30%*	31%*

* Note that father-reported conflict was significantly lower ($p < 0.05$) within couples who agreed the pregnancy was planned compared to couples who agreed the pregnancy was unplanned or compared to couples with the mother reporting the pregnancy was planned but the father reporting it was unplanned.