



The Dads Behind the NUMBERS

How involved are you in your kids' lives?

That's the question the government asked dads recently, and it released the results in the Center for Disease Control's National Health Statistics Report "Fathers' Involvement With Their Children." Read the report [here](#).

The good news is that they found that dads who have children living in their homes are, in fact, very active. More than 90 percent of dads, with kids between ages 5 and 18, eat meals with them several times a week and talk with them about what's happening during their day. And two-thirds help with homework. Another impressive statistic is that African-American fathers consistently outpaced the norms of other active fathers. For instance, while 72% of all dads who lived with their children under 5-year-old fed or ate meals with them daily, 78% of African American fathers reported that they did.

But the study is troubling when it comes to fathers who don't have children living under the same roof. Based on the previous four weeks, more than half of those dads reported that they didn't read to them or eat meals with them... at all. And more than 2/3's didn't do homework or take their kids to activities.

The difference between dads with children in their homes and those without may not exactly be surprising, but it's still striking.

"It's a tough situation," says Lamont Jones, a father of five who wasn't involved in the study, but who knows the truth behind those numbers. Jones was honored by NYC DADS at the Dads Matter ceremony in 2013. [That's him, below, with Mayor Bloomberg.] Jones helped start an organization called Furthering Fathering, and he's seen those dads who are alienated from their children. "When there is no harmony with the mother, it's hard. And it's the children who will suffer. But many of those dads were never given an image of what to do, or how to do it."

Jones knows of what he speaks. It was only after his oldest son came of age that he realized that he "blew it" by not being active. So when he hears about the survey, he makes the point that it's not just about being present, "you have to guide them and talk to them and speak to them on their terms," he says. With his younger children, he is far more engaged, and he benefits from the interactions. "You get so much more back," he says.

The government survey is food for thought. Jones could stand in for many of those dads who, without having a father active in how own life "didn't know how important it was," he says. Before, he took his son to basketball games but didn't really engage with him.

But he's learned from his mistakes. In February, he'll start taking his 13-year-old daughter to dance class, and "I'll be looking for that teachable moment," he says. "So she can tell me what's in her heart."