



## Coalition for Divorce Reform

# THE IMPACT OF DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

From: *The Longevity Project*  
Drs. Howard S. Friedman and Leslie R. Martin  
<http://www.howardsfriedman.com/longevityproject>

1. Children from divorced families **died** almost **five years** earlier than those from intact families.
2. Facing parental divorce during childhood was the single strongest social predictor of **early death**, many years into the future.
3. Having one's parents divorce during childhood was a much stronger predictor of **mortality risk** than was parental death.
4. The experience of parental divorce was strongly linked to **earlier mortality** from all causes, including accidents, cancers, and cardiovascular disease.
5. For **boys** whose parents divorce, the risk of dying from **accidents and violence** was particularly robust, as they grew up to be more reckless.
6. Children's **standards of living decreased**, on average, when their parents divorced, but the **psychological effects** went beyond the economic changes.
7. Girls and boys from divorced homes tended to **end their education** earlier than those from intact families, with the expected problems that then ensued.
8. Boys and girls from divorced homes were more likely to **smoke and drink** when they got older, as compared to their peers from intact families.
9. Girls from divorced families were than **100%** more likely to become heavy **smokers**.
10. Those who had lived through their parents' divorce when they were children were more likely to have their own **marriages end in divorce**, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle.
11. A positive family environment—having positive feelings about one's family—did not ameliorate the detrimental effects of divorce. Boys with positive family feelings **lived shorter lives**, as it was especially traumatic to have a seemingly positive, functional home torn apart.
12. Men who divorced were at much **higher mortality risk** than those who remained married. Even remarried men didn't live as long as those who stayed steadily married.

This unique life-span study dramatically extended and confirmed similar (but shorter-term or less intensive) findings in this area by researchers such as Drs. Rena Repetti, Paul Amato, Judith Wallerstein, Andrew Cherlin, Jennifer Lansford, Robert Anda and others. See Howard S. Friedman & Leslie R. Martin (2011). *The Longevity Project: Surprising Discoveries for Health and Long Life from the Landmark Eight-Decade Study*. NY: Hudson Street Press. Information being distributed by Coalition for Divorce Reform © 2011. <http://www.divorcereform.info/>