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PROPONENT TESTIMONY - HB508

TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH MCNEESE

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CIVIL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 134TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chair Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on HB508.

I'm Elizabeth McNeese, Co-Chair of National Parents Organization Ohio. NPO is a 501(c)3 organization that advocates for children's true best interests after parental separation or divorce. NPO is child-focused and research-based--and we seek to promote children's interests based on the best scientific research available.

Ohio's statutes regarding the allocation of parental rights and responsibilities is decades old and no longer represents the structure or ideals of our families here in our state. Parents enter into divorce or separation emotional and grieving, and are then thrust into a system that incentivizes and enables conflict, instead of promoting and supporting collaboration for the sake of the children. The stakes couldn't be higher and the trauma on the entire family--especially the children-- is palpable.

HB508 still allows for parents to jointly submit a plan that makes sense for them, and even encourages them to do so, but they will also have the assurance that if they *cannot* agree on a plan, that the playing field is leveled.

This bill will establish rebuttable presumptions that equal decision-making and parenting time are in the best interest of children— and it finally gives courts the guidance on what *is* best for most children. There are times that 50/50 isn't appropriate, such as with domestic violence and abuse, so these presumptions are rebuttable with clear and convincing evidence that the equal arrangement is detrimental to the child.

Some will claim that clear and convincing evidence is too high of a standard. The fact is, the current preponderance standard has made it irresistibly easy and even incentivises parents to strip the other parent of their rights, with nothing more than a false accusation or a simple refusal to cooperate with the other parent. These behaviors are permitted and sabotage the chance to even *try* for the sake of the children, and courts are forced to assign one parent as a visitor from now on. That is not in the child's best interest. And it's still happening in 50/50 counties, too, because the equal default is so easily overcome.

Clear and Convincing matters. It's not the lowest standard of preponderance, but it's also not the highest standard of beyond a reasonable doubt. It's right in the middle. By raising the standard, it will clear the courts dockets by discouraging petty litigation, and will allow courts to really focus on the difficult and complex cases. That's a huge win for victims of abuse who express concerns about the court's inability to attend to their cases properly.

It also adds a measure of protection for victims of abuse. It's common knowledge that abusive parents will use bitter custody litigation as a means to control and continue abusing their ex. They will take advantage of the combative nature of the system, and force the safe parent to spend years and thousands of dollars to prove their innocence rather than put the burden of proof, with actual evidence, on the accuser. We have to put a stop to the low standards of evidence that perpetuate abuse and trauma on families.

Some will assert that divorcing parents should have to prove they're safe and fit first. But that assertion is actually a presumption in itself, and typically presumes that fathers are dangerous and must prove otherwise, and that mothers should be presumed safe. But the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services has been tracking child abuse cases and the perpetrators of abuse, and have consistently shown year-over-year that women are responsible for child abuse just as often, if not slightly more often than men in Ohio. Similarly, mothers are more responsible for abuse and child fatalities than fathers are, by a large margin. The point I'm trying to make is NOT that women are more dangerous, I don't believe they are—they just get more access to children with our biased custody outcomes. But BOTH mothers and fathers are capable of abusing children and there's no reason that we should have biased presumptions.

Quoting from an article in Kentucky's *The Daily Independent*, written by two domestic violence survivors one year after their law went into effect:

"When the complete Shared Parenting Law took effect in the last 12 months, new cases plummeted.. The highest conflict cases, those with domestic violence claims, showed a similar decline. Debbie Sivis, Director of the Shelter of Hope [a domestic violence shelter] said, "There has been a drop off in the

*percentage of new guests with a domestic violence history who have children. The percentage with children has reduced from a majority in 2016 and 2017 to less than a third so far this year...*¹

We now have many decades of the “custodial/non-custodial” arrangement being the norm and the results aren’t good. Ohio cities lead the nation in the number of single parent households and the majority of single households are single mothers— and children raised in

40 years of research shows that what is best for most children is for parents to share equally in the responsibility and time of raising their children.. Some will say that presumptions are dangerous. But modern research says otherwise, even when parents can’t agree or are in conflict and even with young children.²

Dr. Linda Neilsen, Professor of Adolescent & Educational Psychology at Wake Forest University found through her research that, *“Parents with joint physical custody do not generally have significantly less conflict or more cooperative relationships than parents with sole physical custody. Conflict and poor coparenting are not linked to worse outcomes for children in joint physical custody than in sole physical custody.”*³

Dr. Richard Warshak at the University of Texas published recent research that states: *“The fact that joint physical custody had better outcomes even when a parent initially opposed the plan and even when conflict was high suggests that parental conflict has been oversold as the main factor linked to children's post divorce adjustment.”*⁴

Recent research by Dr. William Fabricius states, *“I conclude that the overall pattern of evidence indicates that legal presumptions of equal parenting time would help protect children’s emotional security with each of their divorced parents, and consequently would have a positive effect on public health in the form of reduced long-term stress-related mental and physical health problems among children of divorce.”*⁵

To quote a Judge from Kentucky, who enacted their equal presumptions in 2018, *“I can tell you that all of us as judges were hesitant about 50/50... I can honestly say I love it! ... Going in bias to one side or the other and making it a zero sum game just isn’t fair to the kids”*⁶

As a mother of three, having been through a traumatic high-conflict divorce and being on the other side, 50/50 parenting was the much needed balance and structure my children needed during that difficult time and thereafter. When my marriage of 15 years ended, I was unemployed and the main caretaker of

¹ Beckman and Sprinkle, *“Shared parenting law having a positive effect on domestic violence.”* The Ashland Daily Independent, 2019 (copy attached in supplementary documents)

² Warshak, Richard (2014) “Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children: A Consensus Report,” *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 20:1, 46-77, (<http://10.1037/law0000005>). (full article available upon request)

³ Neilsen, Linda (2017) “Re-examining the Research on Parental Conflict, Coparenting, and Custody Arrangements,” *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23:2, 211-231 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/law0000109>). (full article available upon request)

⁴Warshak, R. A. (2017). Stemming the tide of misinformation: International consensus on shared parenting and overnighting. *Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers*, 30(1),177–217. (full article available upon request)

⁵ Fabricius, William (2020) “Equal Parenting Time: The Case for a Legal Presumption,” *Oxford Handbook of Children and the Law*, ed. by J. G. Dwyer, Oxford University Press, 453-476 (<http://10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190694395.001.0001>). (full article available upon request)

⁶ Contact information for the Kentucky Judge is available upon request.

our three children, one of whom has multiple disabilities. Being away from my children half the time was unbelievably difficult for me and I spent weeks lying in bed crying with grief when my children weren't with me. But they were doing ok. They were safe. They missed me but they loved both me and their dad, and they never had to deal with feeling abandoned by either of us. I quickly learned that the copious amount of kid-free time that 50/50 gave me allowed me to focus on building a new life with my children and even allowed me to pursue my own passions and chase a career that has made me completely self-sufficient today. I am better off because of 50/50 and so are my children.

I'll leave you with one last thought: as Representative West mentioned in his sponsor testimony: 87% of Ohioans, *"feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation."* But Ohioans also told us something else in that poll: 77% of Ohioans said they would support a change in Ohio law to award parents equal parenting time.

Ohioans overwhelmingly support equal parenting. It's time for the laws to catch up.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you again for allowing me to provide testimony on HB 508. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Elizabeth McNeese

Attachments:

NPO Handout, *"Family Court Reform"*

Nielsen, Linda, Ph.D., 2013, *"Parenting Time & Shared Residential Custody: Ten Common Myths"*

Ohio Polling on Equal Parenting (2018)

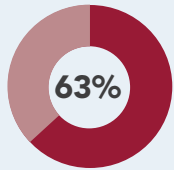
FAMILY COURT REFORM

National Parents Organization backs equal shared parenting legislation in Ohio, and agrees with opponents that child custody reform should focus on the best interest of children.

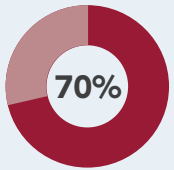
In doing so, the organization draws attention to the overwhelming amount of research showing equal shared parenting after divorce is in the best interest of children.



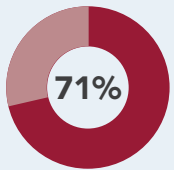
CHILDREN RAISED BY SINGLE PARENTS ACCOUNT FOR:



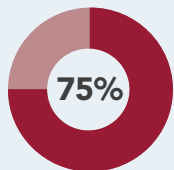
63% OF TEEN SUICIDES



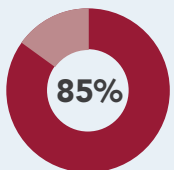
70% OF JUVENILES IN STATE-OPERATED INSTITUTIONS



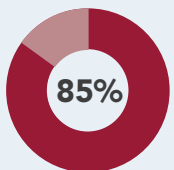
71% OF HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS



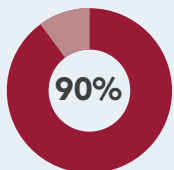
75% OF CHILDREN IN CHEMICAL ABUSE CENTERS



85% OF THOSE IN PRISON



85% OF CHILDREN WHO EXHIBIT BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS



90% OF HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY CHILDREN

— The U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Census Bureau

THE MOST RECENT RESEARCH INCLUDES:

- The Oxford Handbook of Children and the Law published "Equal Parenting Time: The Case for Legal Presumption (2020)." The paper demonstrates the benefits of a legal presumption of equal shared parenting: *“legal presumptions of equal parenting time would help protect children’s emotional security with each of their divorced parents, and consequently would have a positive effect on public health in the form of reduced long-term stress-related mental and physical health problems among children of divorce.”*
- The Journal of Child Custody published "Joint Versus Sole Physical Custody: Outcomes for Children Independent of Family Income or Parental Conflict" (2018), in which Dr. Linda Nielson concluded, *“independent of family income or parental conflict, joint physical custody (JPC) is generally linked to better outcomes for children,”* and JPC is described as children living with each parent at least 35% of the time.
- The Journal of Divorce & Remarriage published a study entitled "Child Adjustment in Joint Physical Custody Versus Sole Custody: A Meta-Analytic Review" in 2016 which concluded that children had better outcomes in joint custody than children in sole custody, and the association was moderated by the amount of time children spent with each parent. The more time each child had with each parent, the better the outcome for the child.
- The Journal of the American Psychological Association published a paper titled “Social Science and Parenting Plans for Young Children: A Consensus Report” in 2014, and the conclusions have been endorsed by 110 eminent authorities around the world. Authored by Dr. Richard Warshak at the University of Texas, the paper concluded, *“... shared parenting should be the norm for parenting plans for children of all ages, including very young children ... In general the results of the studies reviewed in this document are favorable to parenting plans that more evenly balance young children's time between two homes.”*

THE EVIDENCE IS CLEAR:

Children want and need equal or near equal shared parenting after divorce. Given this reality, Ohio must move forward as soon as possible in order to honor the best interest of Ohio children.

Parenting Time & Shared Residential Custody: Ten Common Myths

by Dr. Linda Nielsen

What is the best parenting plan for most children of divorce? Should infants and toddlers spend overnight time with their nonresidential parent? If not, why not? If so, how much time? Is shared residential custody better for children than living with one parent and varying amounts of time living with their other parent – mainly on weekends? Isn't shared residential custody only successful for a small group of well educated, higher income parents who have very cooperative, conflict free relationships – and who mutually agree to share without mediation, litigation or lawyers' negotiations? Since most married mothers do 80% of the childcare, after a divorce shouldn't the children live that same proportion of time with her?

Dr. Linda Nielsen



Dr. Linda Nielsen has been a Professor of Adolescent & Educational Psychology at Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, NC for 36 years. She is the author of five books and dozens of peer reviewed journal articles. Her areas of expertise are shared residential parenting for children of divorce and father-daughter relationships. Her reviews of 30 years of research on shared residential custody have been presented at the Association of Conciliation and Family Courts national conference and the Midwestern Family Law Conference, and published in the American Journal of Family Law and the Journal of Divorce and Remarriage. She is frequently called upon to provide summaries of this research to legislators in America and abroad.

Questions such as these generate a great deal of debate among the judiciary, policy makers and mental health professionals. Unfortunately they also generate myths and misconceptions that are frequently presented as “the research” at conferences and seminars, on the web, or in non-academic articles. At best, these myths far over-reach and exaggerate the findings from only a few of the existing studies. At worst, they have virtually no grounding whatsoever in current research. Either way, misconceptions that are not grounded on a broad spectrum of recent, methodologically sound, statistically significant empirical data have an impact on custody decisions and custody laws. By empirical data I mean research studies where quantitative data has been statistically analyzed and published in peer reviewed academic journals – in contrast to articles where opinions or theories are being presented, often without benefit of peer review. Regrettably we social scientists have done a poor job sharing the empirical research with other professionals or with divorcing parents. As a result, a handful of studies – often outdated or seriously flawed methodologically – are widely disseminated as “the research”. In that spirit, this abbreviated overview presents recent research that refutes ten of the most common beliefs related to child custody.

It is better for the children if parenting time is allocated according to the amount of time each parent spent in childcare during the marriage. Since most married mothers do at least 80% of the childcare, the parenting time should be allocated accordingly. This perspective, referred to as the approximation rule, is not based on empirical research. This is a debatable opinion - a controversial point of view that has been widely discussed in peer reviewed journals. A full discussion of this debate is provided in Richard Warshak's article in the Baltimore Law Review ¹. Several facts must be kept in regard

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to the approximation proposal. First, most married couples are more equally sharing the parenting time. Employed fathers spend roughly 60 minutes on weekdays with the children while employed moms spend 90 minutes. This would be the equivalent of 120 overnights with a father after divorce.² Fathers under the age of 30 do only 45 minutes less childcare on workdays than mothers do. In two national surveys with 2000 parents, dads spent 33 hours a week with the children and mothers spent 50. Children under the age of 6 require 3 times as much parenting time as older children. And whichever parent gets home from work first or works the fewest hours generally does more of the childcare. The more time the mother works outside the home, the more time the father spends with the children. But the mothers who are most likely to stay home full time with preschoolers are the most poorly educated women who could not earn enough, if working, to pay for child care. Second, married parents' arrangements for their young children are *temporary* – they are not intended, as are custody orders, to remain in place until the children turn 18. Third, childcare hours are not synonymous with parenting. The fact that one parent spends more time with the children does not mean that the other parent is doing less parenting or that his or her daily presence is any less beneficial and essential.

Infants and toddlers have one primary “attachment figure” to whom they bond more strongly and at an earlier age than they do with their other parent. Given this, they should not be separated from their primary parent for long periods of time – especially not to spend overnight time with their father, except on rare occasion for short periods of time.

The prevailing view among most contemporary attachment researchers and child development experts is that there is not one “primary” attachment figure. Instead, infants form strong attachments to both parents and at roughly the same time. Whatever initial preferences infants might have for one parent disappears by 18 months of age. This is not to say that all researchers agree on this point. Nevertheless, recent empirical research is undermining the traditional beliefs about primary and secondary parents – the belief that an infant’s relationship with the mother is more vital than with the fathers.^{3, 4}

Most infants and toddlers become more irritable or show other signs of maladjustment when they spend overnight time with their fathers. Given this, there should be little or no overnighting for infants and toddlers. There are only seven studies that have assessed overnighting and non-overnighting infants and preschoolers. None of them found *statistically significant* differences in irritability or other measures of maladjustment related to overnighting per se. Given the confusion and debate on this issue, it is worth providing more details of these studies.

Four studies were conducted 15 to 21 years ago. The first assessed 25 one to five year olds who lived half time with

each parent. At the end of one year, those children whose behavior and developmental progress had gotten worse were the ones who had violent, alcoholic, inattentive, or otherwise very dysfunctional parents. The researchers also noted: “The most surprising find was that children below the age of three were able to handle the many transitions in their overnight joint custody arrangements.”⁵ The second study included 25 children under the age of two and 120 ages two to five when their parents separated. Four years later, those who had lived 30% time with their fathers were better off on all measures of emotional, psychological and behavioral well-being. Moreover 40% of those who had not spent overnight time before the age of three with their fathers no longer had any contact with him – a loss that occurred for only 1.5% of the overnighting children.⁶ The third study compared infants 12 to 20 months old: those who spent any overnight time with their fathers, those who spent none, and those who lived with married parents. The infants were classified as having a secure, avoidant, ambivalent or disorganized attachment to their mother. A year later 85% of them were assessed again. Regardless of family type, the less securely attached infants had mothers who were unresponsive to their needs. And there were no significant differences in attachment classifications between those who overnighted and those who did not.⁷ The fourth study included 18 three to five year olds. At the end of two years, those who had lived with their fathers ten days a month were more well adjusted emotionally and no different on social or behavioral adjustment. Moreover, the number living this often with their fathers increased from 25% to 38% over the two years.⁸

Two studies have been conducted more recently. Interestingly, the one that was not peer reviewed or published in an academic journal before being released by the Australian government has generated considerable attention among mental health practitioners, the legal profession and policy makers. Indeed, it is widely cited as evidence that overnighting is bad for young children.⁹ The limitations of this report have been enumerated by a number of internationally renowned researchers.¹⁰ For example, the sample sizes in several groups were very small and the vast majority of parents had never been married to each other. Leaving aside its limitations, for children from infancy to age five, there were very few differences between those who never overnighted and those who overnighted. The mean scores were similar on measures of irritability, global health, monitoring their mother, negative response to strangers, developmental concerns, behavioral problems, emotional functioning and persistence. The four to five year olds who overnighted more than nine nights a month had more attention deficit disorders according to their mothers. But this may very well be linked more to gender than to overnighting. That is, boys were more likely than girls to be overnighting frequently – and boys in the general population are more likely than girls to have attention deficit disorders.¹¹

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The most methodologically sound study at Yale University is part of an ongoing project. This study assessed 132 children ages two to six whose divorced and never married parents had separated. Of these, 31% spent one overnight a week with their fathers, 44% more than one and 25% none. For the two to four years olds, the overnights were no different from non-overnights in respect to sleep problems, anxiety, aggression or social withdrawal. They were, however, less persistent in completing tasks. According to their fathers, but not their mothers, the overnights were more irritable. Overall then, the differences were small. For the four to six year olds, however, the overnights had fewer problems than the other children – especially the girls. As the researchers conclude “Overnights did not benefit or cause distress to the toddlers and benefited the 4 to 6 year olds” (p. 135).¹²

The final study assessed 24 children ages one to six who overnights an average of eight nights a month. Almost 55% were classified as having an insecure attachment to their mother, which is higher than the average of 33% in the general population. Age when the overnights began and parent conflict were not related to the classifications, but mothers’ attentiveness or inattentiveness were.¹³ Taken together, these seven studies do not support the assertion that overnighting has a negative impact on infants or preschoolers.

Most children want to live with only one parent and to have only one home. Shared residential parenting is not worth the hassle, according to most children. The vast majority of children who lived with their mothers after their parents’ divorce disliked having so little time with their fathers.¹⁴ In contrast, the vast majority who have lived in shared residential parenting families say the inconvenience of living in two homes was worth it – primarily because they were able to maintain strong relationships with both parents.¹⁵

When there is high verbal conflict between the parents, children do better when their time with their father is limited. Because more time with their father increases parents’ conflicts, children in shared residential custody are more often caught in the middle of conflicts. With the exception of an ongoing pattern of physical conflict or violence, the vast majority of studies do not support these beliefs.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ In married and in divorced families, parent conflict is generally related to worse outcomes for the children. However, in regard to custody and conflict, three findings stand out. First, conflict generally remains higher in sole than in shared custody families – especially if the residential parenting time is not shared. Second, most children are not exposed to more conflict or put in the middle more often in shared parenting families. Third, most children in shared residential custody and those who see their fathers frequently are better off on measures of well-being even when their parents have ongoing conflict. In other words, maintaining strong relationships with both parents helps


diminish the negative impact of the parents’ conflicts.

The amount of conflict should be a primary factor when deciding how to allocate the parenting time. Unless there is a history of physical abuse or violence, for the reasons just presented, high verbal conflict should not be used as a reason to limit parenting time. Not only can much of this conflict be reduced through parenting programs, but the conflict generally declines by the end of the first year or so after separation. Especially during custody negotiations, conflict is not a reliable predictor of future conflict. Moreover, verbal conflict is associated with fewer negative outcomes for children than having too little fathering time.^{19, 20}

Both parents have to mutually agree to share the residential parenting, otherwise these families will fail. Shared parenting agreements fail if they result from mediation, litigation or legal negotiations. It only succeeds for a small, self-selected group who are very cooperative and have little or no conflict. In the studies that have examined how parents arrived at their shared residential parenting plan, from 20% - 85% of the parents had not initially wanted to share. For many families where the children were successfully living in two homes, the shared parenting plan was a compromise brought about through mediation, litigation, or lawyers’ negotiations.²¹

Most shared residential families fail. The children end up living with one parent anyway. Measured anywhere from 2 to 4 years after divorce, 65%-90% of these families were still sharing the residential custody.²²

The quality of children’s relationships with their fathers is not related to how much time they spend together after the divorce. Fathering time, especially time that is not limited mainly to weekends or to other small parcels of time, is closely associated with the quality and the endurance of the father-child relationship. This kind of fathering time is highly correlated with positive outcomes for children of divorce.^{23, 24}

In considering the large body of recent empirical research that refutes these ten myths, it is worth remembering that people can always find some study that will support each of these beliefs. Some may be based on very old data. Others are methodologically unsound. Sometimes differences that are not statistically significant are reported as “a trend”, or “a difference” or “suggestive of”. To be sure, all studies have certain limitations, including those cited in this review. But by using the social science search engines at university libraries to find the recent peer reviewed articles in academic journals, we maximize our chances of finding the general consensus among the most respected researchers. By sharing more of this research with legislators, mental health workers, judges and lawyers, children and their divorced parents will be better served. 

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* This article is based on 64 articles published in peer reviewed journals. Given the constraints of space, fewer than a third of these references are listed in this article. Please email me for the complete list of references. Linda Nielsen, Wake Forest University, nielsen@wfu.edu, www.wfu.edu/~nielsen

Endnotes

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If you are aware of anyone within the Nebraska legal community (lawyers, law office personnel, judges, courthouse employees or law students) who suffers a sudden, catastrophic loss due to an unexpected event, illness or injury, the NSBA's SOLACE Program can likely assist that person in some meaningful way.

Contact Mike Kinney at mkinney@ctagd.com and/or Jane Schoenike at jschoenike@nebar.com.

We have a statewide and beyond network of generous Nebraska attorneys willing to get involved. We do not solicit cash, but can assist with contributions of clothing, housing, transportation, medical community contacts, and a myriad of other possible solutions through the thousands of contacts available to us through the NSBA and its membership.



Ohio Survey Results

Q1 Do you believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce?

Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce 82%

Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce..... 6%

Not sure 12%

Q2 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Both parents, whether living together or living apart, should have equal access to their children and should share the responsibility for raising their children?

Agree 79%

Disagree 10%

Not sure 12%

Q3 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: A child would benefit from having equal time with both fit and willing parents following divorce?

Agree 83%

Disagree 8%

Not sure 10%

Q4 In general, who do you think should have more parental rights — the mother, the father, or do you think their rights should be equal?

Think that the mother should have more parental rights 15%

Think the father should have more parental rights..... 5%

Think that separating parents should have equal rights 72%

Not sure 8%

Q5 Do you feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both parents, if they are deemed fit and willing, following a divorce or separation, or not?

Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation 87%

Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation..... 6%

Not sure 7%

Q6 Do you feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation, or not?

Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation..... 13%

Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation..... 61%

Not sure 25%

Q7 Do you feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children whether they are married or divorced, or not?

Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whether they are married or divorced..... 89%

Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whether they are married or divorced 4%

Not sure 7%





Q8 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: A child's health and well-being is better met when both fit and willing parents are equally involved in the child's life, and share responsibility for the child, rather than one parent?

Agree 88%
 Disagree 6%
 Not sure 6%

Q9 Would you support or oppose a change in Ohio Family Law that would award children equal time with both fit and willing parents in instances of divorce?

Support 77%
 Oppose 8%
 Not sure 15%

Q10 In the election for President, did you vote for Republican Donald Trump, Democrat Hillary Clinton, someone else, or did you not vote in the election?

Donald Trump 49%
 Hillary Clinton 43%
 Someone else / Did not vote 8%

Q11 If you are a woman, press 1. If a man, press 2.

Woman 53%
 Man 47%

Q12 If you are a Democrat, press 1. If a Republican, press 2. If an independent, press 3.

Democrat 38%
 Republican 38%
 Independent 24%

Q13 If you are white, press 1. If African-American, press 2. If other, press 3.

White 85%
 African-American 11%
 Other 5%

Q14 If you are 18-29 years old, press 1. If 30-45, press 2. If 46-65, press 3. If older than 65, press 4.

18 to 45 22%
 46 to 65 47%
 Older than 65 31%





	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
In Best Interests of Child to Have Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	82%	80%	84%	82%
Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	6%	6%	8%	6%
Not sure	12%	14%	9%	12%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Both Parents Should Have Equal Access to Children Agree/Disagree				
Agree	79%	76%	81%	83%
Disagree	10%	12%	8%	7%
Not sure	12%	12%	11%	11%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Child Would Benefit from Equal Time With Parents Agree/Disagree				
Agree	83%	81%	84%	87%
Disagree	8%	8%	8%	6%
Not sure	10%	12%	8%	7%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Who Should Have More Parental Rights				
Think that the mother should have more parental rights	15%	15%	13%	22%
Think the father should have more parental rights	5%	3%	7%	1%
Think that separating parents should have equal rights	72%	73%	72%	67%
Not sure	8%	8%	8%	10%





	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Children Have Right to Spend Equal Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation	87%	88%	86%	88%
Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or s...	6%	5%	8%	3%
Not sure	7%	7%	7%	9%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Family Courts Treat Parents Equally Yes/No				
Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	13%	10%	16%	18%
Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	61%	66%	57%	52%
Not sure	25%	24%	27%	30%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Parents Should Share Responsibility Yes/No				
Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whethe...	89%	91%	86%	89%
Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing f- or children despite ...	4%	2%	7%	5%
Not sure	7%	7%	7%	7%

	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Better for Child When Both Parents are Equally Involved Agree/Disagree				
Agree	88%	91%	84%	86%
Disagree	6%	4%	8%	9%
Not sure	6%	5%	7%	5%





	Base	2016 Vote		
		Donal- d Tru...	Hillary Clint...	Someone els- e / Did not v...
Change in OH Law to Award Children Equal Time With Parents Support/Oppose				
Support	77%	78%	76%	76%
Oppose	8%	7%	9%	6%
Not sure	15%	14%	15%	18%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
In Best Interests of Child to Have Time With Both Parents Yes/No			
Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	82%	86%	77%
Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	6%	4%	9%
Not sure	12%	10%	14%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Both Parents Should Have Equal Access to Children Agree/Disagree			
Agree	79%	82%	75%
Disagree	10%	8%	12%
Not sure	12%	11%	13%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Child Would Benefit from Equal Time With Parents Agree/Disagree			
Agree	83%	88%	77%
Disagree	8%	5%	10%
Not sure	10%	7%	13%





	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Who Should Have More Parental Rights			
Think that the mother should have more parental rights	15%	17%	13%
Think the father should have more parental rights	5%	2%	8%
Think that separating parents should have equal rights	72%	71%	73%
Not sure	8%	9%	7%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Children Have Right to Spend Equal Time With Both Parents Yes/No			
Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation	87%	89%	85%
Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or s...	6%	4%	8%
Not sure	7%	7%	7%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Family Courts Treat Parents Equally Yes/No			
Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	13%	17%	9%
Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	61%	53%	70%
Not sure	25%	29%	21%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Parents Should Share Responsibility Yes/No			
Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whethe...	89%	92%	86%
Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite ...	4%	3%	5%
Not sure	7%	5%	9%





	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Better for Child When Both Parents are Equally Involved Agree/Disagree			
Agree	88%	91%	84%
Disagree	6%	5%	8%
Not sure	6%	4%	8%

	Base	Gender	
		Wom...	Man
Change in OH Law to Award Children Equal Time With Parents Support/Oppose			
Support	77%	76%	79%
Oppose	8%	6%	10%
Not sure	15%	18%	11%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
In Best Interests of Child to Have Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	82%	90%	73%	82%
Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	6%	4%	10%	4%
Not sure	12%	5%	17%	14%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Both Parents Should Have Equal Access to Children Agree/Disagree				
Agree	79%	85%	71%	81%
Disagree	10%	4%	17%	8%
Not sure	12%	12%	12%	11%





	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Child Would Benefit from Equal Time With Parents Agree/Disagree				
Agree	83%	84%	79%	86%
Disagree	8%	5%	12%	4%
Not sure	10%	10%	10%	9%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Who Should Have More Parental Rights				
Think that the mother should have more parental rights	15%	17%	14%	14%
Think the father should have more parental rights	5%	4%	7%	1%
Think that separating parents should have equal rights	72%	70%	72%	76%
Not sure	8%	9%	7%	10%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Children Have Right to Spend Equal Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation	87%	89%	81%	93%
Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or s...	6%	5%	9%	3%
Not sure	7%	6%	9%	4%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Family Courts Treat Parents Equally Yes/No				
Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	13%	19%	12%	8%
Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	61%	56%	64%	65%
Not sure	25%	25%	24%	28%





	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Parents Should Share Responsibility Yes/No				
Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whether...	89%	90%	84%	95%
Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite ...	4%	5%	5%	2%
Not sure	7%	5%	11%	3%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Better for Child When Both Parents are Equally Involved Agree/Disagree				
Agree	88%	87%	84%	95%
Disagree	6%	6%	8%	3%
Not sure	6%	7%	8%	2%

	Base	Party		
		Democr...	Republic...	Independe...
Change in OH Law to Award Children Equal Time With Parents Support/Oppose				
Support	77%	76%	76%	80%
Oppose	8%	6%	12%	4%
Not sure	15%	17%	12%	16%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
In Best Interests of Child to Have Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	82%	81%	82%	87%
Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	6%	5%	14%	10%
Not sure	12%	13%	4%	3%





	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Both Parents Should Have Equal Access to Children Agree/Disagree				
Agree	79%	78%	79%	80%
Disagree	10%	9%	15%	17%
Not sure	12%	13%	6%	3%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Child Would Benefit from Equal Time With Parents Agree/Disagree				
Agree	83%	83%	79%	85%
Disagree	8%	6%	18%	12%
Not sure	10%	11%	3%	3%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Who Should Have More Parental Rights				
Think that the mother should have more parental rights	15%	16%	13%	7%
Think the father should have more parental rights	5%	3%	16%	1%
Think that separating parents should have equal rights	72%	72%	65%	88%
Not sure	8%	9%	7%	3%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Children Have Right to Spend Equal Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation	87%	89%	74%	89%
Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or s...	6%	5%	13%	4%
Not sure	7%	6%	13%	7%





	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Family Courts Treat Parents Equally Yes/No				
Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	13%	12%	24%	15%
Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	61%	60%	67%	63%
Not sure	25%	28%	8%	22%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Parents Should Share Responsibility Yes/No				
Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whethe...	89%	90%	78%	85%
Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite ...	4%	3%	15%	9%
Not sure	7%	7%	8%	6%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Better for Child When Both Parents are Equally Involved Agree/Disagree				
Agree	88%	90%	73%	92%
Disagree	6%	5%	15%	6%
Not sure	6%	5%	13%	2%

	Base	Race		
		White	African-American...	Other
Change in OH Law to Award Children Equal Time With Parents Support/Oppose				
Support	77%	76%	81%	83%
Oppose	8%	6%	19%	9%
Not sure	15%	17%	-	8%





	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
In Best Interests of Child to Have Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	82%	76%	82%	85%
Do not believe it is in the best interests of the child to have as much time as possible with both fit parents in instances of divorce	6%	9%	7%	5%
Not sure	12%	15%	11%	10%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Both Parents Should Have Equal Access to Children Agree/Disagree				
Agree	79%	75%	76%	85%
Disagree	10%	15%	10%	5%
Not sure	12%	10%	13%	10%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Child Would Benefit from Equal Time With Parents Agree/Disagree				
Agree	83%	69%	87%	85%
Disagree	8%	18%	4%	6%
Not sure	10%	13%	9%	9%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Who Should Have More Parental Rights				
Think that the mother should have more parental rights	15%	14%	15%	15%
Think the father should have more parental rights	5%	13%	2%	2%
Think that separating parents should have equal rights	72%	70%	72%	73%
Not sure	8%	3%	10%	9%





	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Children Have Right to Spend Equal Time With Both Parents Yes/No				
Feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or separation	87%	73%	89%	93%
Do not feel that children have the right to spend equal time or near equal time with both of their parents following a divorce or s...	6%	17%	3%	3%
Not sure	7%	10%	7%	4%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Family Courts Treat Parents Equally Yes/No				
Feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	13%	5%	14%	19%
Do not feel that the family courts currently treat parents equally in instances of divorce or separation	61%	78%	60%	50%
Not sure	25%	17%	26%	31%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Parents Should Share Responsibility Yes/No				
Feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite whethe...	89%	70%	95%	93%
Do not feel that fit and willing mothers and fathers should share in the responsibility of raising and providing for children despite ...	4%	15%	1%	3%
Not sure	7%	15%	4%	5%

	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Better for Child When Both Parents are Equally Involved Agree/Disagree				
Agree	88%	70%	94%	91%
Disagree	6%	20%	1%	4%
Not sure	6%	11%	5%	5%





	Base	Age		
		18 to 45	46 to 65	Older than ...
Change in OH Law to Award Children Equal Time With Parents				
Support	77%	73%	78%	79%
Oppose	8%	15%	7%	5%
Not sure	15%	13%	15%	17%

