

# Recession May Have Longer-Term Effects on Low-Income Families, Researcher Says

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The recession may be having some longer-term effects on families and children, including lower test scores and more single-parent homes, according to a Duke University professor whose research focuses on low-income families.

One possible outcome of the [recession](#) may be that fewer pregnant women marry, said Christina Gibson-Davis, assistant professor at the Sanford School of [Public Policy](#) at Duke. Gibson-Davis has examined low-income couples' perceptions of financial prerequisites for marriage and parenthood, and found that people believe that marriage, but not [children](#), requires money.

"This may seem inconsistent, because it can be expensive to raise children. But we find that people believe they need money before they get married, but they don't necessarily need money before they have a child," she said.

Her research also suggests that an economic recession will not deter women from having an out-of-wedlock birth, because when jobs are scarce women have less to forgo by having a child.

Other research, now in review for publication, shows that children's test scores decline when [parents](#) lose their jobs. This negative effect occurs in families in which parents' [education](#) stopped at high school, but not in families where parents are more highly educated, Gibson-Davis said.

“We don’t know why this difference exists, but we speculate that lower-education, lower-income families have fewer resources to deal with the stress that losing a job places on the family.”

The study looked at North Carolina end-of grade (EOG) reading and math tests for eighth-graders among families where job losses had occurred within a few months of the test.

“Although research suggests that the poorest children are likely to be the most vulnerable during the recession, our work shows there are likely to be negative effects even on working-class families whose parents lose jobs,” Gibson-Davis said.

Provided by Duke University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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