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## County sees increase in single-father families

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FAIRFIELD COUNTY - Byram Fager said it's hard sometimes to be a single dad. But he'd never trade it for the world.

Fager, of Lancaster, is one of the 12.9 million one-parent families as counted in 2006.

Fager's in the minority-2.5 million of those that are single-father families.

"I probably treat him different than a mother might when it comes to scrapes and bruises, Fager said of his son, Robert.

Fager thinks society may be to blame for such a low number of single-father households.

Society seems to assume a mother should get custody.

Fager adopted his son in 2003.

He's never had to deal with a custody battle or leaving a custody decision up to the court.

"If I ever had to, I'd fight just as hard as any mother would," he said.

Most of the other single parents Fager knows are mothers.

It's important to Fager that Robert has role models comparable to a mother.

Fager's family lives in Illinois. He counts on friends to help like family members.

"This would be a lot harder without them," he said.

The number of single-parent households has changed little since 1994, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The number only has increased 4 percent.

The number of single-father households for 2006 was released in March.

Corey Clark, director of Children Services at Fairfield County Job & Family Services, expects single-father households to increase by the next time the Census Bureau releases information.

"We've been seeing an increase here in the county," Clark said.

Fairfield County's cases of mothers receiving child support outweighs the number of fathers, Clark said.

"Traditionally and historically, the majority have always been female custodial parents," Clark said

about Fairfield County's makeup of single parents.

Judges decide who the custodial parent should be.

Some of the things a judge considers when making the decision include finances, stability and easy transition, Clark said.

In most cases where mothers and fathers are unmarried and have never lived together, mothers are custodial parent.

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