



We facilitate lifesaving research and apply the findings to
create messaging strategies to share
with others so together, we can
build a future where abortion is unthinkable.

National Office | 1731 Southridge Drive, Suite D
Jefferson City, MO 65109 | 573.634.4316
info@vitae.foundation.org | vitaefoundation.org

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Men's Research Study

Addendum to the Pro-Woman Policy Guide

Reaching Men for Life

While the pro-abortion lobby believes abortion is primarily a woman's issue, we know from our engagement with pregnancy centers that men play a significant role in pregnancy decision-making. The numbers back this up. A 2015 Care Net Lifeway survey¹ of 1038 women asked who the most influential person was in their abortion/pregnancy decision: 38% said the father of the baby, followed by medical professionals (26%) and their own mother (14%). Statistics like this confirm what we already knew to be true—the father of the baby has a major role to play in the woman's decision to choose or reject abortion. And it makes sense. The driving forces behind abortion involve isolation, shame, and a lack of support. How many of those issues could be resolved if the father of the baby was present and motivated to empower her to choose life?

Ready for Responsibility?



As part of Vitae Foundation's 2025 study titled *A Few Good Men: Increasing the Masculine Presence* interviews were conducted with three different groups of men: those who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and strongly leaned one way (to choose life or have an abortion), men who experienced an unexpected pregnancy and said "I'll support you whatever you choose," and men who had no direct experience with an unexpected pregnancy or abortion.



The study identified three prominent responses to an unexpected pregnancy: fear, shock and excitement/happiness. These emotions are primarily tied to how men perceive the impact of the pregnancy on their lives. News of the pregnancy confronts men with a variety of issues, such as their relationship with their girlfriend/wife, their desire to have a baby, their self-identity, and their readiness/ability to have a baby. The pregnancy situation, whether intended or not, becomes a serious moment of reflection on what they want the present and the future to look like. This oftentimes leads to an inner dialogue about what needs to be done. For some, it means getting an abortion. For others, it means preparing for the responsibilities of being a father—“growing up.” Most men, however, acknowledge that pregnancy presents new obligations that require a response.

Perceived readiness significantly affects a man's desire to choose life. Many men do not feel adequately ready or confident to take on the responsibilities of caring for a child. Reasons men gave for not feeling ready include immaturity, selfishness, age, financial insecurity, life-stage, relationship health, partner readiness, lifestyle convenience and the opportunity costs having a child. For these reasons, many men decide to advocate or agree to have an abortion. Many men, however, don't perceive these obstacles as insurmountable and instead believe they present an opportunity to take responsibility.

Relationship health plays a significant role in perceived readiness. Unhealthy relationship dynamics are a large reason why many men either:

- 1) don't know how to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife
- 2) don't want to support her
- 3) don't feel ready for the responsibility of having a baby
- 4) feel unable to have a conversation about the pregnancy/feel like they have no say
- 5) and in some cases, desire to have an abortion.

While most men acknowledge the humanity of the preborn child, the baby is rarely the deciding factor. Men's attention is mainly tied to the emotional dynamics evoked by the unexpected pregnancy. Their view of the pregnancy

The Impact of Fatherhood

Men perceive fatherhood as a meaningful role. Their experience with father figures influences how they perceive their own roles as fathers. Fathers are seen as men who should be providers/protectors for their children, supportive of their girlfriend/wife, one who offers safety and presence, teaches valuable skills, etc. Men with children express a variety of emotions related to fatherhood including pride, joy, happiness, a sense of purpose and a sense of duty. Men with no father in their life had negative feelings about his lack of presence and viewed absent father figures with anger and disappointment. Men with no father figure at all express a desire to parent their children opposite to the model they were given.

Considerations for Policymakers

- Most men acknowledge that it is their responsibility to support their pregnant girlfriend/wife but struggle to reconcile this knowledge with a decision for life. Attempts to help men fulfill their responsibilities should take into consideration that while most men know they should be responsible; they struggle with what this means (abortion or something else?). What many men need is to reorient their view of the pregnancy from a burden to a privilege. They should *want* to help their girlfriend/wife choose life. Policymakers have a unique opportunity to help men realize this shift in perspective by promoting and developing policies that support women. Any pro-woman program or policy should be advertised to both women *and* men. In your messaging, assume that men desire to be involved. Frame these resources as an opportunity for men to “step up” and be a good boyfriend/husband.
- When speaking to men, talk about your policies as an opportunity to empower initiative and support their girlfriend/wife. Men need to feel more like they are active agents rather than passive recipients as they support their pregnant girlfriend/wife. Most men desire to be providers/protectors and/or already identify as one. Any public policy messaging should aim to bolster this identity, rather than paternalistically replace it. Policymakers should help men see how taking advantage of the many local, regional and state resources related to pregnancy, healthcare and childcare can be a pathway to maturity, a

more responsible and fulfilled self, a better boyfriend/husband, and a good dad. Men need to see how the process of *becoming something good* is worth overcoming the emotional/material barriers that might prevent them from choosing life.



- Address the economic/financial obstacles which are common, significant factors in a man's readiness to have a child. Advocate for and promote policies that make having a family more affordable, whether in the form of tax credits, subsidies for pro-family nonprofit work, proposals to make birth more affordable/free, etc. There is a wide array of reasonable and popular pro-life policies that can address the readiness issue.
- Policymakers should speak encouragingly about fatherhood and responsibility. Frame fatherhood as something that is aspirational – be positive and relatable. The joy, benefit, fulfillment and goodness of fatherhood is nearly universally mentioned in *A Few Good Men* and can be a winning policy issue, as it relates to helping men take responsibility in unexpected pregnancy situations. Help men understand that they have agency to support their girlfriend/wife.
- Despite believing they should have some kind of say in the pregnancy decision, men do not want to be seen as “forcing” women to do anything. This perception inevitably will impact men's support for abortion restrictions. Policymakers should develop messaging on pro-life policy that avoids the language of “bans,” and instead frame restrictions with positive language that appropriately shifts the goalposts toward parenthood, mutual responsibility, love, respect for human rights, etc.

- Similarly, men's discomfort with "forcing" women to carry to term offers fertile ground for policies that restrict forced or coerced abortions. Identify gaps in state law that allow, or sanction forced abortions under the guise of "choice."

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fluctuates between perceiving the preborn child as a burden or a blessing. Men who consider the unexpected pregnancy a "mistake" or feel incapable of being a father are more likely to view the baby as a burden. Men who welcome the emerging obligations of fatherhood, on the other hand, see the baby as a blessing. Many fall in between these two poles. Some who accept fatherhood expressed more concern over the responsibilities of being a father than excitement over the emerging life.



Key: The Pregnancy Conversation

Most men feel that abortion is primarily a woman's choice and it is not their "right" to make the final decision. They perceive that the woman is the one carrying the burden of the pregnancy and therefore, *she* has the right to determine what to do with the preborn life. Most men perceive abortion as a decision where they have minimal or no say, though many men believe they *can* and *should* have some influence on her decision.

What happens during the conversation is important. When approached with news about an unexpected pregnancy, many men who desire to support their girlfriend/wife perceive that "I'll support you whatever you choose" is the most supportive thing to say. They believe it respects her autonomy, is non-confrontational, and in some cases, communicates an indirect openness to abortion (even if they recognize that the burden of the decision-making then falls on the woman). Some men disagree with this approach, believing it places an unfair burden on the woman. They feel that communicating their preference for or against choosing life is either a more honest way of approaching the conversation, a more effective way of convincing the woman toward their preference, and/or a better way of supporting the woman in the decision-making process. Many of these men expressed a belief that they could influence her decision.