



# Mapping America Education



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## About the Mapping America Project

The *Mapping America Project* of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) draws data from federal surveys to map the demographic behaviors of Americans based on their family structure, frequency of religious practice, and a combination of the two. The federal surveys used to graph these national behaviors include the General Social Survey, the Adolescent Health Survey, the National Survey of Children's Health, the National Survey of Family Growth, and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.



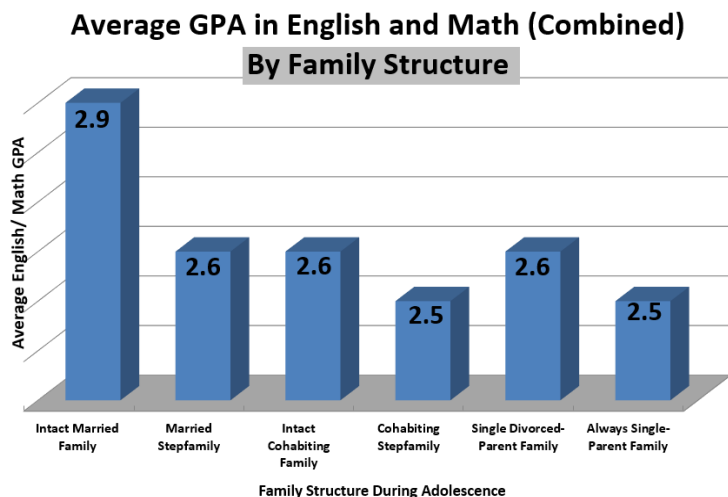


# Achievement



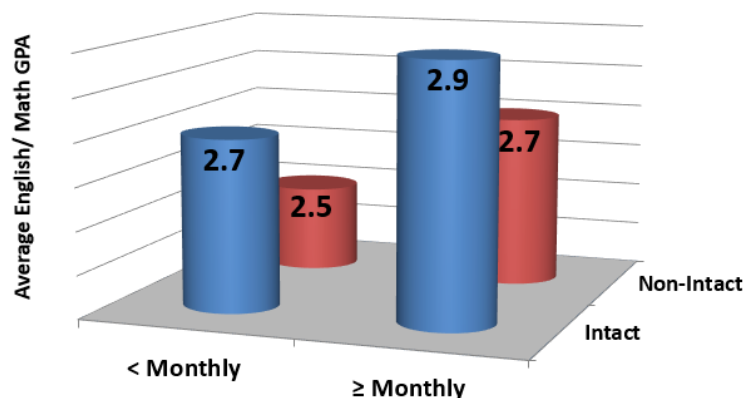


## School Performance in English and Math By Family Structure and Religious Practice



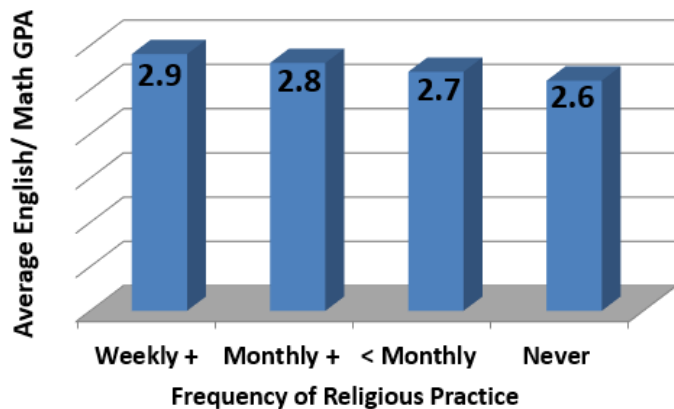
Source: Patrick Fagan, Kirk A. Johnson, and Jonathan Butcher, *A Portrait of Family and Religion in America*, The Heritage Foundation, 2006, chart 10, based on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

## Average GPA in English and Math (Combined) By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: Patrick Fagan, Kirk A. Johnson, and Jonathan Butcher, *A Portrait of Family and Religion in America*, The Heritage Foundation, 2006, chart 10, based on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

## Average GPA in English and Math (Combined) By Religious Practice



Source: Patrick Fagan, Kirk A. Johnson, and Jonathan Butcher, *A Portrait of Family and Religion in America*, The Heritage Foundation, 2006, chart 20, based on data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

*These charts illustrate the educational performance of American high school students when viewed from the perspective of religious practice, family structure, and both combined. <sup>1</sup>*

These charts draw on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation.

## School Performance in English and Math by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** Students who lived with their married biological parents carried the highest average combined grade point average (GPA) for English and Math (2.9). Those whose parents never married or who lived with cohabiting adults, only one of whom was a natural parent, had the lowest GPA (2.5). Slightly above that group were students living with stepparents, divorced parents, or both unmarried biological parents (2.6).

**Religious Practice:** Teenagers who attended religious activities weekly or more had the highest average combined GPA for English and Math (2.9). Those who never attended religious activities had the lowest (2.6). In between were those who attended a couple of times per month (2.8) and those who attended a few times a year (2.7).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Teenagers who lived in intact families that worshipped weekly scored a combined GPA of 2.9. Students who worshipped at least monthly but resided in families not headed by both biological parents scored a combined 2.7 GPA, as did students who lived in a family with both natural parents but who worshipped less than monthly. Those who were not living with both biological parents and who worshipped less than monthly had the lowest GPA (2.5).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies also reveal significant correlations among religious attendance, intact family structure, and educational performance.<sup>1</sup> Examining the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Jerry Trusty at Texas A&M University reported that the more often high school seniors participated in religious activities, the better their chances of having involved parents who recognized good grades, having a positive disposition toward academics and high expectations for their future, and spending additional time on homework.<sup>2</sup>

Chandra Muller and Christopher Ellison of the University of Texas at Austin concurred in their finding that adolescents who were religiously involved were more apt to relate that they have parents who place a high value on their education and that they are willing to talk more with their parents regarding their education.<sup>3</sup>

Having natural married parents to talk with about school made an even bigger difference, according to a study by Nan Astone of Johns Hopkins University and Sara McLanahan of Princeton University. Children living within intact families reported parents with higher

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<sup>1</sup> The following findings are from [www.familyfacts.org](http://www.familyfacts.org).

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Trusty, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values* 44 (1999): 30-40.

<sup>3</sup> Chandra Muller and Christopher G. Ellison, "Religious Involvement, Social Capital, and Adolescents' Academic Progress: Evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988," *Sociological Focus* 34 (2001): 155-183.

educational expectations that were more likely to monitor their schoolwork than children of single parents or stepparents.<sup>4</sup>

The combination, then, of an intact married family with frequent religious activity seems key to fostering superior educational outcomes. Diane Brown of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and Lawrence Gary of Howard University conducted a survey of black adults in a major Eastern city, a demographic in which broken families are quite prevalent, which indicated that although religious attendance had a greater impact than family structure on educational attainment, those who attended worship most frequently *and* lived in an intact family attained the most education.<sup>5</sup>

When the two great loves are combined, love of God and love of spouse, children thrive most.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.

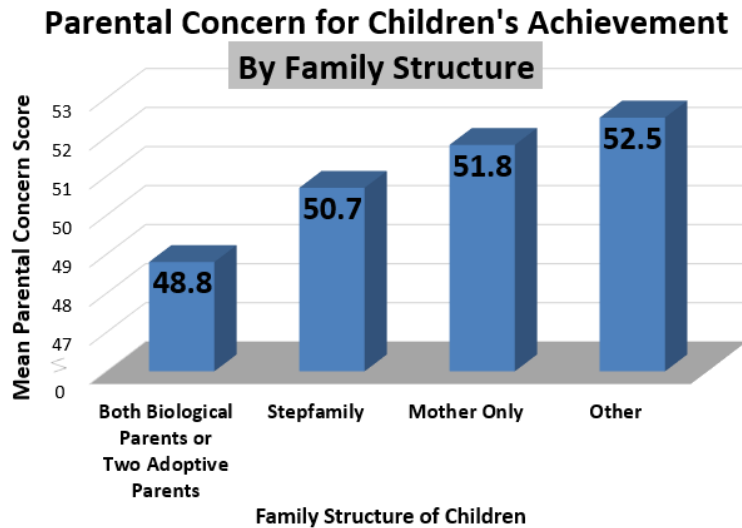
*Patrick Fagan is the Director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute*

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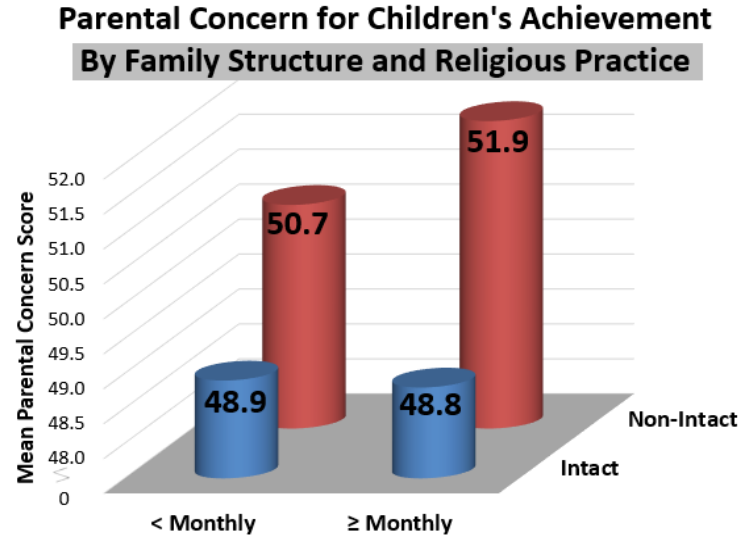
<sup>4</sup> Nan M. Astone and Sara S. McLanahan, "Family Structure, Parental Practices, and High School Completion," *American Sociological Review* 56 (1991): 309-320.

<sup>5</sup> Diane R. Brown and Lawrence E. Gary, "Religious Socialization and Educational Attainment among African Americans: An Empirical Assessment," *The Journal of Negro Education* 60 (1991): 411-426.

## Parental Concern for Children’s Achievement By Family Structure and Religious Practice

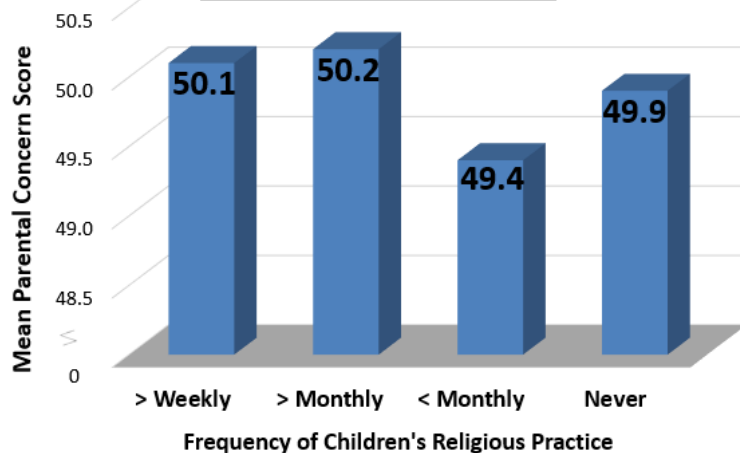


Source: National Survey of Children’s Health (2003)



Source: National Survey of Children’s Health (2003)

### Parental Concern for Children's Achievement By Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children’s Health (2003)

*These charts group the data in four categories, with two different configurations for each of two major indicators, frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more frequently vs. less than monthly or never) and family structure (intact vs. non-intact).*

*The intact category consists of families with both biological parents or two adoptive parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category is composed of families without both biological parents or two adoptive parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, always single-parent families, foster-parent families, and other-relative families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

These charts draw on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.

## Parental Concern for Children's Achievement by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** According to the National Survey of Children's Health,<sup>1</sup> children who lived with both biological parents or two adoptive parents had parents who scored lowest on the parental concerns scale (48.8); children who lived with a biological parent or stepparent had parents with a parental concerns score of 50.7;<sup>2</sup> children who lived with single mothers had parents with a parental concerns score of 51.8; and, children who lived within other family configurations, such as with their father only or with foster parents, had parents with the highest parental concerns score (52.5).<sup>3</sup>

**Religious Practice:** According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who attended religious services less than once a month had parents with the lowest parental concerns score (49.4); children who never attended religious services had parents with a parental concerns score of 49.9; children who attended religious services at least weekly had parents with a parental concerns score of 50.1; and children who worshipped one to three times a month had parents with the highest parental concerns score (50.2).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents and worshipped at least monthly had parents who scored lowest on the parental concerns scale (48.8). Children who lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents and worshipped less than monthly had parents with a parental concerns score of 48.9. Children who lived in single-parent or reconstituted families and worshipped less than monthly had parents with a parental concerns score of 50.7. Children who lived in single-parent or reconstituted families and worshipped at least monthly had the highest parental concerns score (51.9).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies in related areas add insights. William Jeynes of the California State University at Long Beach reported that black and Hispanic students "who were devoutly religious and also came from intact families" outperformed academically black and Hispanic students who did not fall into both of these categories.

Jay Teachman of Washington State University and colleagues found that children living with divorced fathers are less likely to see their fathers "involved with their schools" than children living with both biological parents. They also reported that families who "send their children to Catholic schools are also families that connect quite closely with their children's schools."

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<sup>1</sup> These charts draw on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

<sup>3</sup> "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.



Several previous issues of Mapping America<sup>4</sup> demonstrated that children who attend religious services once a month or more and live in intact families are less likely to repeat a grade and less likely to be the object of a “behavior problems” call from their school to their parents than those who worship less than monthly and live in non-intact families.

As the data indicate, children who live with both biological parents and are involved in religious programs tend to have a higher degree of academic achievement while also having parents who are more involved in their education.

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Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.

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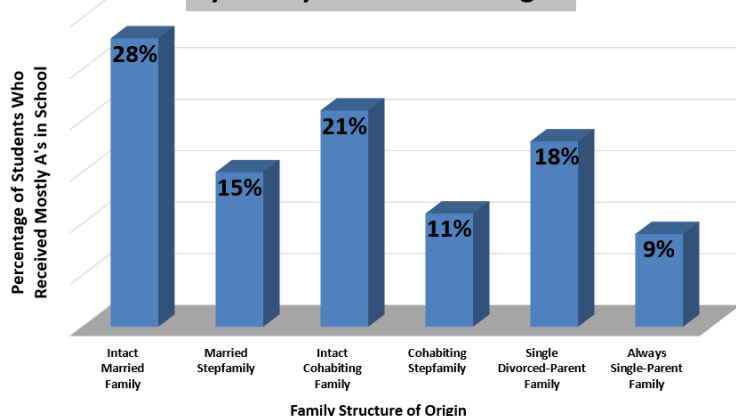
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<sup>4</sup> See “Children Repeated a Grade in School” and “Parents Contacted By School About Child’s Behavior Problems”



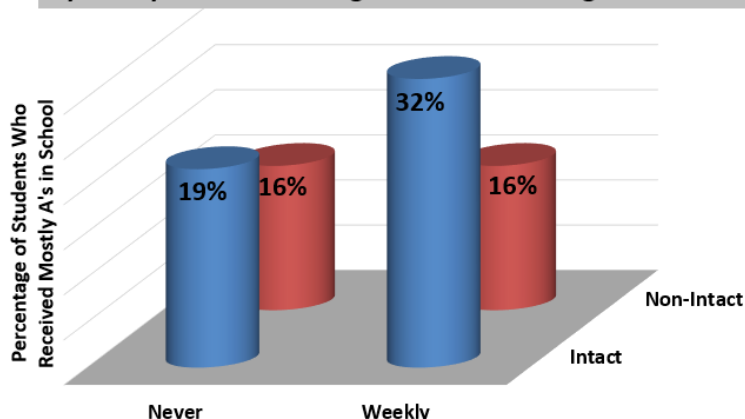
## Students Who Received Mostly A's in School By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Students Who Received Mostly A's in School  
By Family Structure of Origin



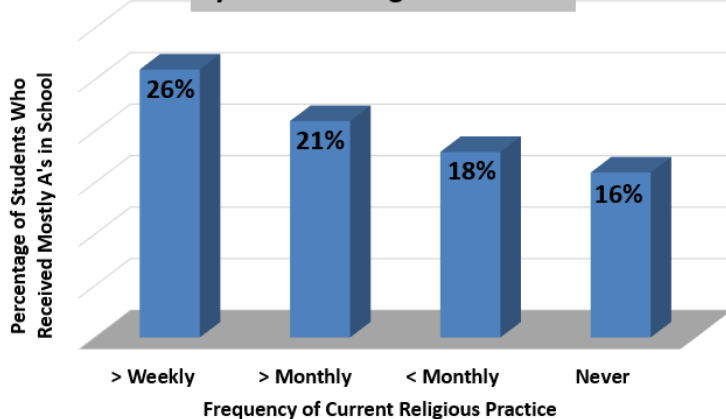
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Students Who Received Mostly A's in School  
By Family Structure of Origin and Current Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Students Who Received Mostly A's in School  
By Current Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

*This chart looks at individuals who were most likely to receive A's at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

- The always-intact married family that worships weekly;*
- The always-intact married family that never worships;*
- All other family structures\* that worship weekly;*
- All other family structures\* that never worship.*

*(\*The non-intact group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)*

## Students Who Received Mostly A's in School by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students most likely to receive A's in school were those who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped at least weekly.

**Family Structure:** According to the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 28 percent of students who grew up in an intact married family received mostly A's, followed by students from intact cohabiting families (21 percent), single divorced parent families (18 percent), married stepfamilies (15 percent), cohabiting stepfamilies (11 percent), and always single parent families (9 percent).

**Religious Practice:** The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth showed that 26 percent of students who worshipped at least weekly [at the time of the survey] received mostly A's, followed by those who attended religious services between one and three times a month (21 percent), those who attended religious services less than once a month (18 percent), and those who never attended religious services (16 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** About 32 percent of students who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey received mostly A's. Only 19 percent of students who grew up in intact married families and never worshipped received mostly A's. Only 16 percent of those who grew up in other family structures and worshipped at least weekly or grew up in other family structures and never worshipped received mostly A's.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** One study showed that students who attended religious activities weekly, or more frequently, were found to have a GPA 14.4 percent higher than students who never attended religious functions.<sup>1</sup>

Another study by Mark Regnerus, professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, found that (looking specifically at math and reading scores) students who frequently attend religious services scored 2.32 points higher on tests in these subjects than their less religiously-involved peers.<sup>2</sup>

Marital stability is a form of social capital that advances educational attainment for children. Thus, children from intact families have a greater chance at doing well in school, while divorce hinders a child's overall educational attainment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. L. Glanville, D. Sikkink, & E. I. Hernández, "Religious Involvement and Educational Outcomes: The Role of Social Capital and Extracurricular Participation," *Sociological Quarterly* 49 (2008): 105-137.

<sup>2</sup> Mark D. Regnerus, "Shaping Schooling Success: Religious Socialization and Educational Outcomes in Metropolitan Public Schools," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 3 (2000): 363-70.

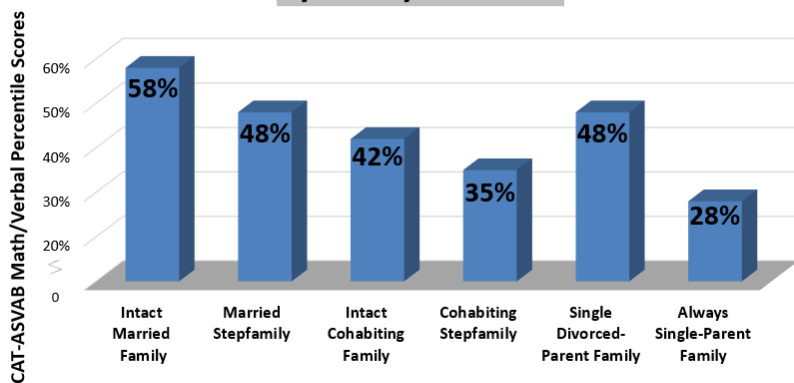
<sup>3</sup> Anguiano P. V. Ruben, "Families and Schools: The Effect of Parental Involvement on High School Completion," *Journal of Family Issues* 25, no. 1 (2004): 61-85; Timothy J. Biblarz & Greg Gottainer, "Family Structure and Children's Success: A Comparison of Widowed and Divorced Single-Mother Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, (2000): 533-48.





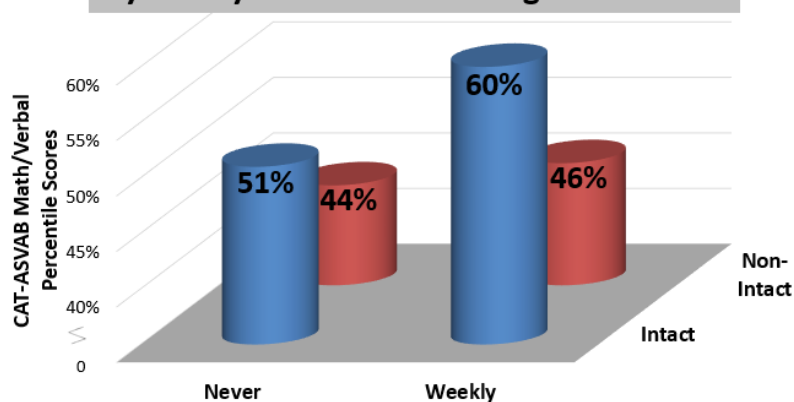
## CAT-ASVAB Math/Verbal Percentile Scores By Family Structure and Religious Practice

CAT-ASVAB Math/Verbal Percentile Scores  
By Family Structure



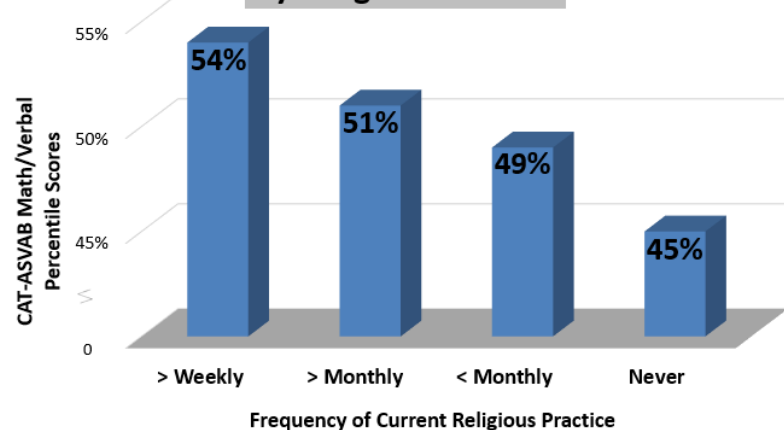
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

CAT-ASVAB Math/Verbal Percentile Scores  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

CAT-ASVAB Math/Verbal Percentile Scores  
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at the percentile rankings of those who have taken the CAT-ASVAB at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:

- The always-intact married family that worships weekly;
- The always-intact married family that never worships;
- All other family structures\* that worship weekly;
- All other family structures\* that never worship.

(\*The non-intact group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)

## CAT-ASVAB Math/Verbal Scores by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that those who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey had higher CAT-ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery computer adaptive test) math and verbal scores.

**Family Structure:** Children from married, always-intact families scored in the 58<sup>th</sup> percentile, followed by children from married stepfamilies and divorced single-parent families (48<sup>th</sup> percentile). Children from intact cohabiting families scored in the 42<sup>nd</sup> percentile, children from cohabiting stepfamilies scored in the 35<sup>th</sup> percentile, and children from always-single parent families scored in the 28<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Religious Practice:** Children who attended religious services at least weekly at the time of the survey scored in the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile, those who attended at least monthly scored in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile, those who attended less than monthly scored in the 49<sup>th</sup> percentile, and those who never attended religious services scored in the 45<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Those from always-intact families who attended religious services at least weekly scored in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile on the CAT-ASVAB. Children from always-intact families who never attended religious services scored in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile. Among those from all other family structures, the difference is less pronounced: those from all other family structures who attended religious services at least weekly scored in the 46<sup>th</sup> percentile, and those from all other family structures who never attended scored in the 44<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** A study conducted by Grace Kao of the University of Chicago found that living in a single-mother family had a particularly detrimental effect on grades for Asian youth in the United States.<sup>1</sup> The results of a study of religiosity and the academic achievements of minority students by Professor William H. Jeynes of California State University, Long Beach, “indicate that very religious Black and Hispanic students outperformed less religious students in academic achievement.”<sup>2</sup>

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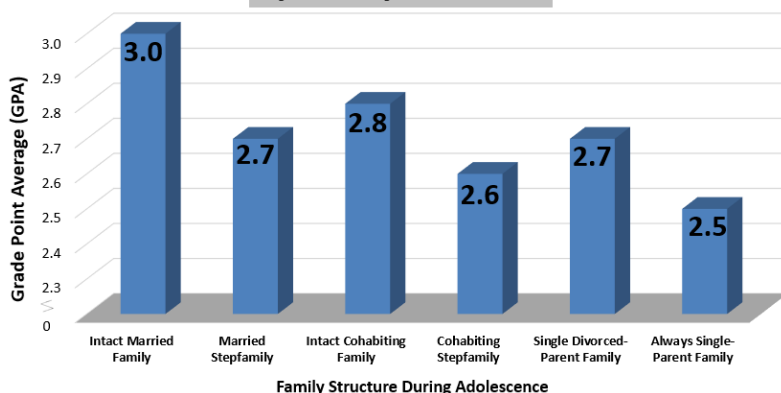
<sup>1</sup> Grace Kao, “Asian Americans as Model Minorities? A Look at Their Academic Performance,” *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 103, No. 2 (Feb. 1995): 148-149.

<sup>2</sup> William H. Jeynes, “The Effects of Religious Commitment on the Academic Achievement of Black and Hispanic Children,” *Urban Education* 34.4 (1999): 473.



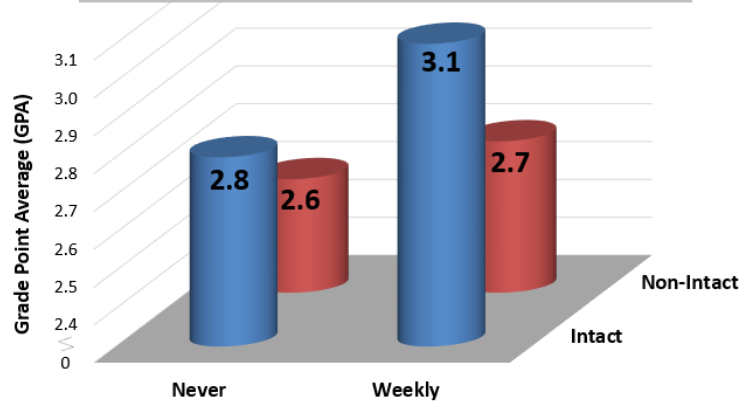
## Grade Point Average By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Grade Point Average  
By Family Structure**



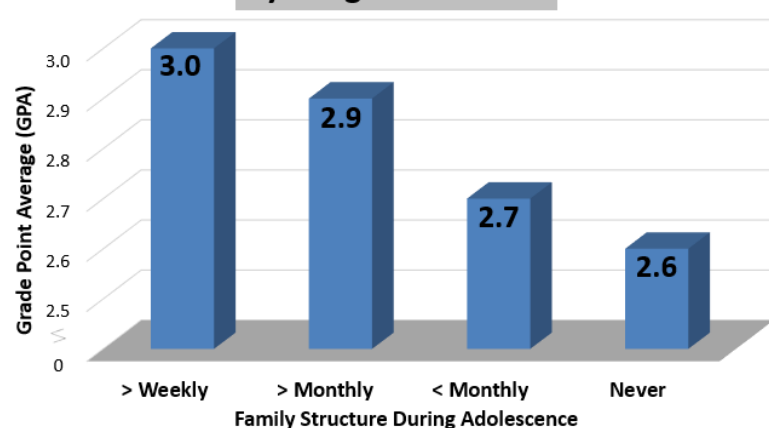
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

**Grade Point Average  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

**Grade Point Average  
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

*This chart looks at students' GPAs (grade point averages) at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

*The always-intact married family that worships weekly;  
The always-intact married family that never worships;  
All other family structures\* that worship weekly;  
All other family structures\* that never worship.*

*(\*The non-intact group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)*



## Grade Point Average by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students who grew up in an intact married family and currently worship at least weekly have higher Grade Point Averages (GPAs) than other students.

**Family Structure:** Students from married, always-intact families had an average GPA of 3.0. Students from intact cohabiting families (2.8), married stepfamilies and divorced single-parent families (2.7), cohabiting stepfamilies (2.6), and always-single parent families (2.5) had lower average GPAs than students from always-intact families.

**Religious Practice:** Students who attended religious services at least weekly had an average GPA of 3.0. Those who attended at least monthly (2.9), those who attended less than monthly (2.7), and those who never attended religious services (2.6) had lower average GPAs than students who attended at least weekly.

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Students from always-intact married families who attended religious services at least weekly had an average GPA of 3.1. Students from always-intact married families who never attended religious services had an average GPA of 2.8, and students from all other family structures who attended religious services at least weekly had an average GPA of 2.7. Students from all other family structures who never attended religious services had the lowest average GPA (2.6).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** A study by Alan R. King of the University of North Dakota found a number of correlations between family and personal religiosity and academic performance. King writes that “unexpressive and conflicted family environments which lack in cohesion and moral emphasis are particularly troublesome to high school performance.”<sup>1</sup> He also found that students whose families are very morally and religiously strong are two thirds less likely to skip class frequently in college.<sup>2</sup>

A study of students at elite U.S. colleges (including Columbia University, Princeton University, Stanford University, University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University) found after controlling for class, race, family background, and gender that religiosity influenced college achievement. Students who attended religious services at least weekly during their final year of high school had higher grades in college than students who did not attend religious services regularly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alan R. King, “Family Environment Scale Predictors of Academic Performance,” *Psychological Reports* 83 (1998): 1325.

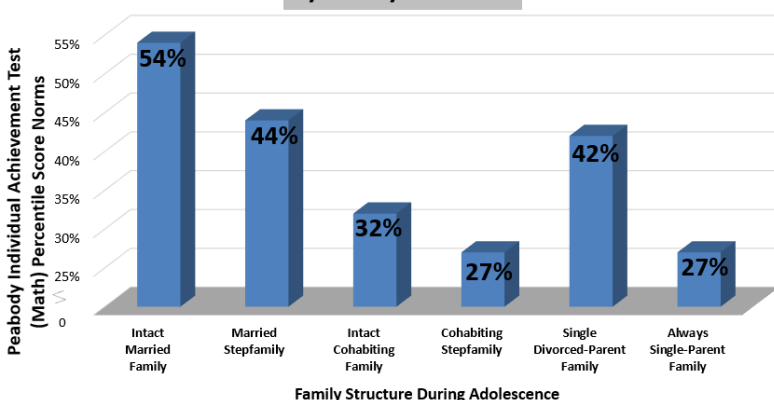
<sup>2</sup> Alan R. King, “Family Environment Scale Predictors of Academic Performance,” *Psychological Reports* 83 (1998): 1326.

<sup>3</sup> Margarita Mooney, “Religion, College Grades, and Satisfaction among Students at Elite Colleges and Universities,” *Sociology of Religion* 71.2 (2010): 210.



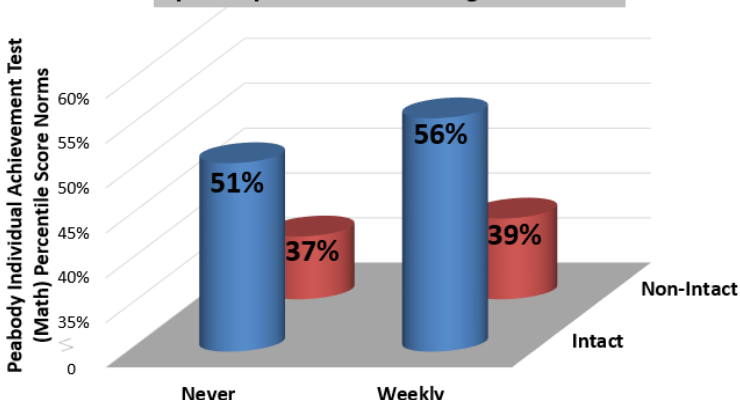
## Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Math) Percentile Score By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Math) Percentile Score Norms By Family Structure



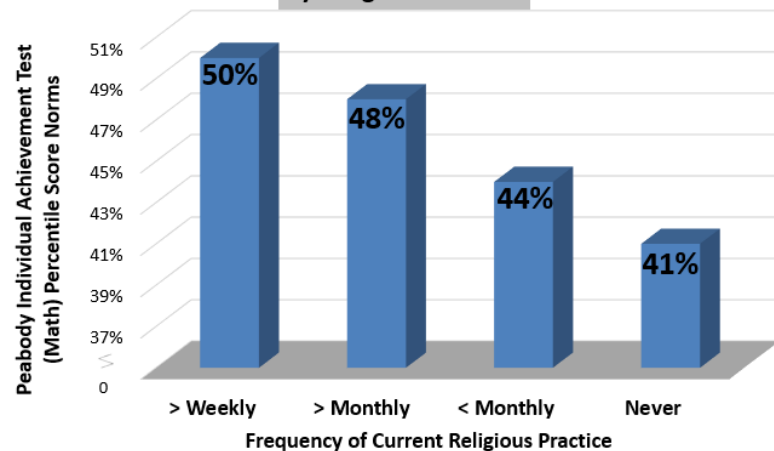
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Math) Percentile Score Norms By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Math) Percentile Score Norms By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at students' Peabody Individual Achievement Test (math) percentile score norms at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:

The always-intact married family that worships weekly;

The always-intact married family that never worships;

All other family structures\* that worship weekly;

All other family structures\* that never worship.

(\*The non-intact group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)

## Peabody Individual Achievement Test (Math) Percentile Score by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students who grew up in an intact married family and worshipped at least weekly had higher math scores on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test, an academic aptitude test administered to students in grades K-12.

**Family Structure:** Students from married, always-intact families scored in the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile on the math section of the PIAT. Students from married stepfamilies scored in the 44<sup>th</sup> percentile, and students from divorced, single-parent families scored in the 42<sup>nd</sup> percentile. Thereafter, scores experienced a steep drop-off: students in intact cohabiting families scored in the 32<sup>nd</sup> percentile, and students in cohabiting stepfamilies and in always-single parent families scored in the 27<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Religious Practice:** Students who attended religious services at least weekly scored in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the math section of the PIAT. Students who attended at least monthly scored in the 48<sup>th</sup> percentile, students who attended less than monthly scored in the 44<sup>th</sup> percentile, and students who never attended scored in the 41<sup>st</sup> percentile.

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Students from always-intact married families who attended religious services at least weekly scored in the 56<sup>th</sup> percentile on the math section of the PIAT. Students from always-intact married families who never attended religious services scored in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile. Students from all other family structures had drastically lower scores: students from all other family structures who attended religious services at least weekly scored in the 39<sup>th</sup> percentile, and students from all other family structures who never attended religious services scored in the 37<sup>th</sup> percentile.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** A study by Professor William H. Jenyes of California State University, Long Beach, found that “the influence of parental involvement overall [was] significant for secondary school children. Parental involvement as a whole affect[ed] all the academic variables under study.” The academic variables included in the study were: standardized tests, grades, teacher ratings, “academic attitudes and behaviors,” and a general measure for academic achievement. Parental involvement affected both white and minority children.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, a study of rural adolescents found that students who reported greater religious attendance had higher grades.<sup>2</sup>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Jenyes, “The Effects of Black and Hispanic 12th Graders Living in Intact Families and being Religious on their Academic Achievement,” *Urban Education* 38.1 (2003): 35.

<sup>2</sup> Alyssa S. Milot and Alison Bryant Ludden, “The Effects of Religion and Gender on Well-being, Substance use, and Academic Engagement among Rural Adolescents,” *Youth & Society* 40.3 (2009): 413.

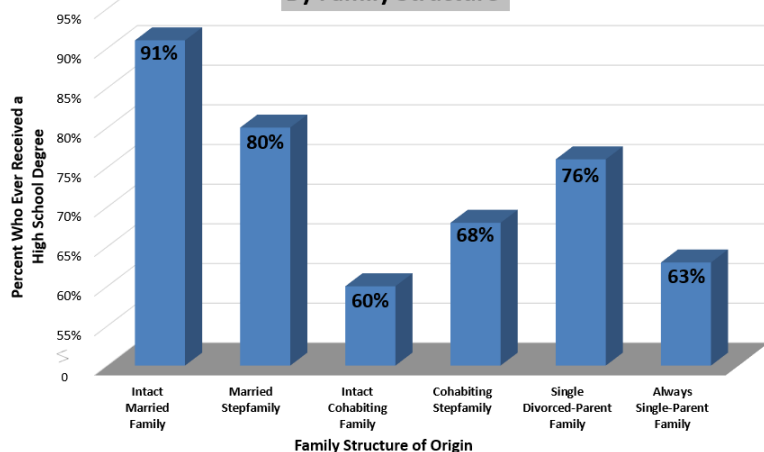




# Attainment

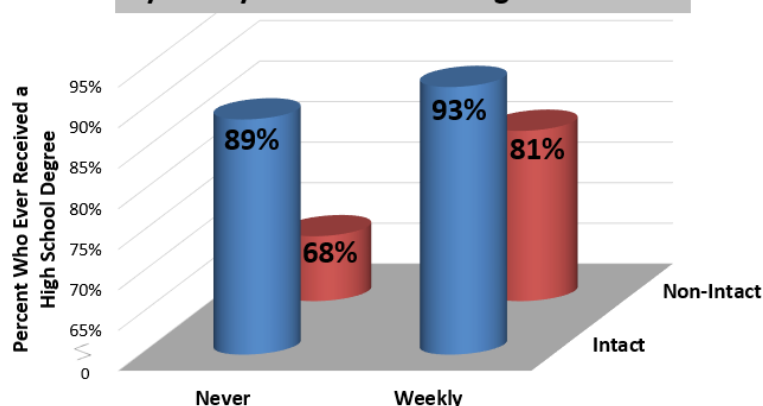
## Received a High School Degree By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Received a High School Degree  
By Family Structure



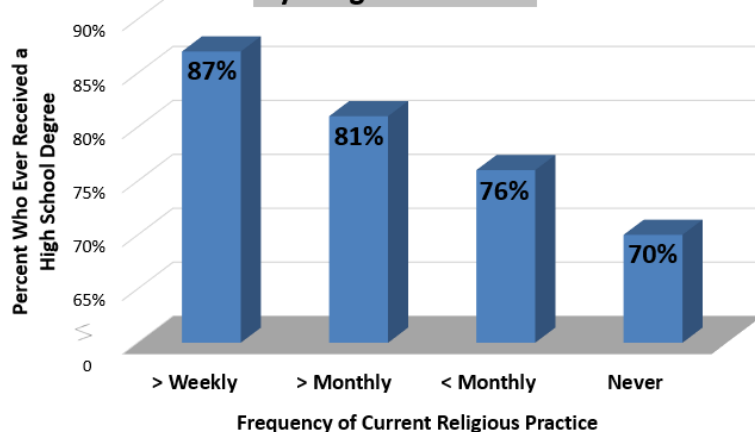
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Received a High School Degree  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Received a High School Degree  
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

*This chart looks at adults who have received a high school degree at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. non-intact\*) and two sets of religious attendance (high vs. low).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

- The always-intact married family that worships weekly;*
- The always-intact married family that never worships;*
- The non-intact family\* that worships weekly;*
- The non-intact family\* that never worships.*

*(\* The non-intact group consists of women in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)*

## Received a High School Degree by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students who worshipped at least once a week and grew up with two married parents were most likely to have received a high school degree.

**Family Structure:** Ninety one percent of individuals who grew up with married biological parents received a high school degree. They were followed by those who grew up in a married stepfamily (80 percent), those who grew up with a single, divorced parent (76 percent), those who grew up in a cohabiting stepfamily (68 percent), those who grew up with an always-single parent (63 percent), and those who grew up in an intact cohabiting family (60 percent).

**Religious Practice:** Eighty seven percent of students who attended religious services at least weekly received a high school degree. In contrast, only 70 percent of those who never worshipped received a high school degree. Between these two extremes were those who attended at least monthly (81 percent) and those who attended less than monthly (76 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Ninety three percent of students who grew up in intact married families and who attended weekly religious services had ever received a high school degree. Only 68 percent of students from all other family structures who never attended religious services received a high school degree. Eighty-nine percent of those who never worshipped but grew up in intact families and 81 percent of those who attended religious services weekly but came from other family structures received high school degrees.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Nan Marie Astone and Sarah S. McLanahan, then of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, found that children from single parents and stepfamilies completed high school at lower rates than children from intact married families.<sup>1</sup> Another study found that two-parent families were conducive to children's academic achievement.<sup>2</sup> Another study affirms the importance of religious attendance for education. One study found that the more frequently youths attended religious activities, the more likely they were to give recognition to good grades, spend more time on homework, and have a positive attitude toward academics.<sup>3</sup>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Astone, Nan Marie & Sarah S. McLanahan. "The Effects of Family Structure on High School Completion," (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Milne, Ann M. "Family Structure and the Achievement of Children," *Education and the American Family*, (1989): 32-65.

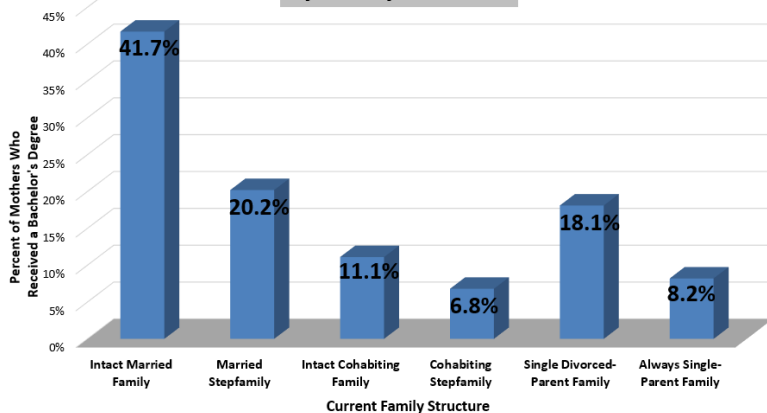
<sup>3</sup> Trusty, Jerry. "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables." *Counseling and Values* Vol 44, No. 1 (October 1999) pp. 30-40.





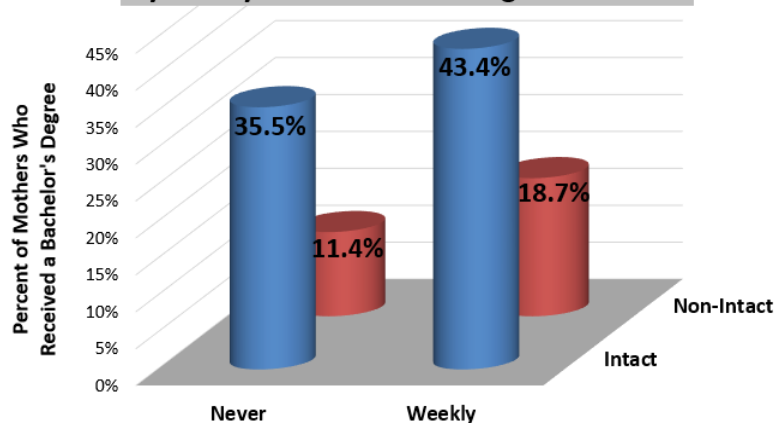
## Women Who Received a Bachelor's Degree By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Mothers Who Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Family Structure**



Source: National Survey of Family Growth (2002)

**Mothers Who Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice**



Source: National Survey of Family Growth (2002)

*This chart looks at mothers (aged 35-44) who received a bachelor's degree at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

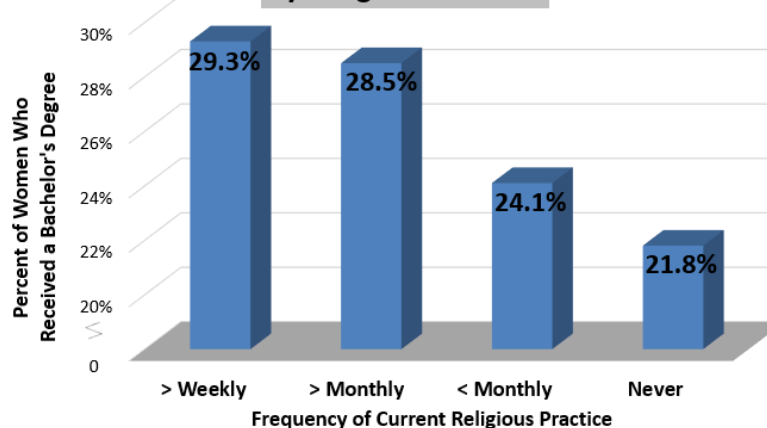
*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs non-intact\*) and two sets of religious attendance (high vs. low).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

- The always-intact married family that worships weekly;*
- The always-intact married family that never worships;*
- The non-intact family\* that worships weekly;*
- The non-intact family\* that never worships.*

*(\* The non-intact group consists of mothers in the following categories: married stepfamily, intact cohabiting partners, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always single parent.)*

**Women Who Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Survey of Family Growth (2002)

These charts draw on data collected by the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002). The sample consists of mothers/ women between the ages of 35 and 44. Please note that the family structure data and combined religious attendance/family structure data include mothers only, whereas the religious attendance data include *all* women

## Women Who Received a Bachelor's Degree by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** According to the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth, 41.7 percent of mothers aged 35-44 in always-intact marriages had earned a bachelor's degree, followed by mothers in married stepfamilies (20.2 percent), those who were divorced (18.1 percent), those in intact cohabiting relationships (11.1 percent), those who had always been single (8.2 percent), and those in cohabiting stepfamilies (6.8 percent).<sup>1</sup>

**Religious Practice:** Based on the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6, 29.3 percent of women<sup>2</sup> aged 35-44 who worshipped at least weekly attained a bachelor's degree, followed by those who attended religious services between one and three times a month (28.5 percent), those who attended religious services less than once a month (24.1 percent), and those who never attended religious services (21.8 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Mothers aged 35-44 in always-intact marriages who worshipped at least weekly were more likely to have earned a bachelor's degree than mothers in all other family structure and worship combinations. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 43.4 percent of mothers in always-intact marriages who attended religious services at least weekly attained a bachelor's degree, followed by mothers in always-intact marriages who never worshipped (35.5 percent), those in other family structures who worshipped at least weekly (18.7 percent), and those in other family structures who never worshipped (11.4 percent).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Jonathan Gruber of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology reported that those who live in a community with high levels of church attendance not only tend to attend church frequently themselves but also attain higher levels of education.<sup>3</sup>

R. Kelly Raley of the University of Texas at Austin and Larry Bumpass of the University of Wisconsin also found that "60 percent of the marriages of high school dropouts end in divorce compared to 36 percent among college graduates."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These charts draw on data collected by the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002). The sample consists of women between the ages of 35 and 44 and numbers 2,479.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas the present family structure data and combined religious attendance/family structure data include mothers only, the religious attendance data include *all* women between the ages of 35 and 44 in the sample. We realize these charts would have more value if all three charts drew from the same population set, but the difference was only noted after the data was in.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Gruber, "Religious Market Structure, Religious Participation, and Outcomes: Is Religion Good for You?" National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper 11377 (2005).

<sup>4</sup> R. Kelly Raley and Larry Bumpass, "The Topography of the Divorce Plateau: Levels and Trends in Union Stability in the United States after 1980," *Demographic Research* 8 (2003): 245-60.

Christine R. Schwartz and Robert D. Mare of the University of California, Los Angeles reported that the likelihood that those with college degrees would marry those without any college education has declined since the 1940s.<sup>5</sup>

As the data show, women in always-intact marriages who worship at least weekly are the most likely to have received a bachelor's degree.

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D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

*Dr. Sullins is an associate professor of sociology at The Catholic University of America.*

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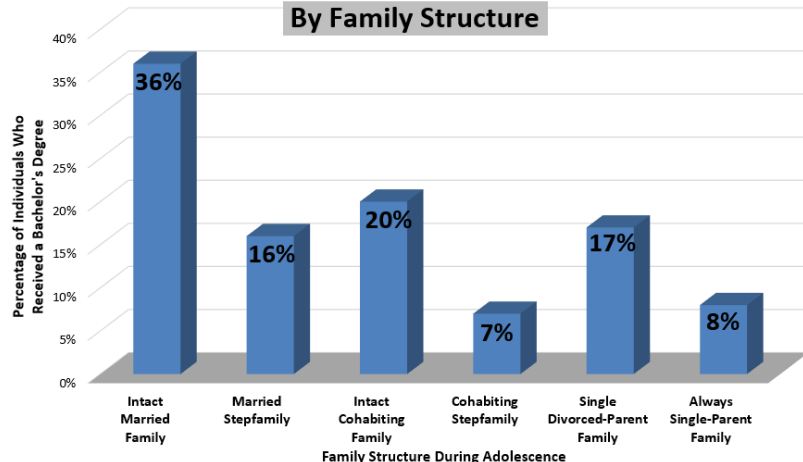
<sup>5</sup> Christine R. Schwartz and Robert D. Mare, "Trends in Educational Assortative Marriage from 1940 to 2003," *Demography* 42 (2005): 621-46.





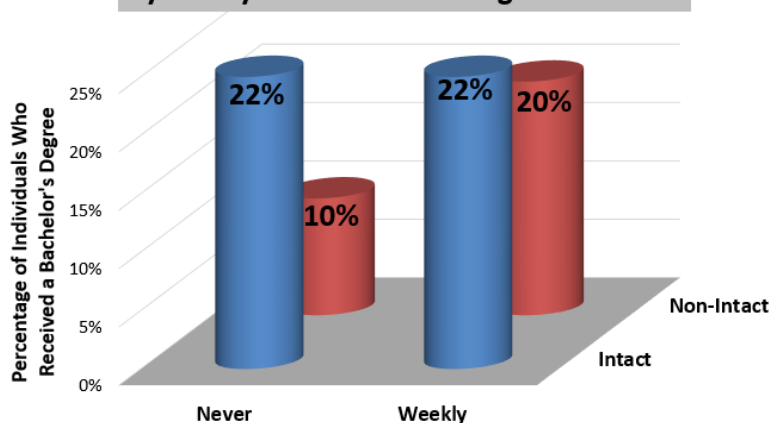
## Received a Bachelor's Degree By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Family Structure



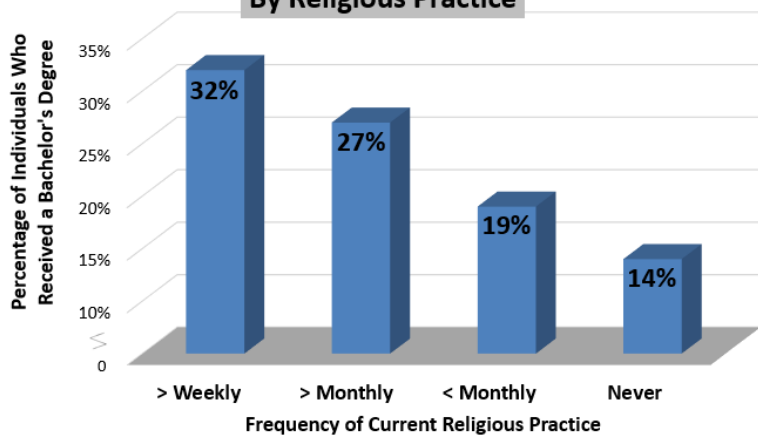
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Received a Bachelor's Degree  
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

*This chart looks at individuals who have received a Bachelor's degree at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

*The always-intact married family that worships weekly;*

*The always-intact married family that never worships;*

*All other family structures\* that worship weekly;*

*All other family structures\* that never worship.*

*(\*This group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)*

## Received a Bachelor's Degree by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students who grew up in intact married families and attended weekly religious services at the time of the survey were more likely to receive a Bachelor's degree.

**Family Structure:** Thirty six percent of individuals who came from intact, married families received a Bachelor's degree, followed by those from intact, cohabiting families (20 percent), single divorced-parent families (17 percent), married stepfamilies (16 percent), always-single parent families (8 percent), and cohabiting stepfamilies (7 percent).

**Religious Practice:** Thirty two percent of individuals who attended weekly religious services had received a Bachelor's degree, compared with those who attended religious services at least monthly (27 percent), those who attended less than once a month (19 percent), and those who never attended (14 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Twenty two percent of individuals who grew up in intact married families and attended weekly religious services received a Bachelor's degree. It is clear that family structure plays a significant role in educational attainment, because individuals who grew up in intact married families that never attended church were equally likely to receive a Bachelor's degree (22 percent). They were followed closely by individuals from non-intact families that attended weekly religious services (20 percent) and those from non-intact families that had no religious attendance (10 percent).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Religious attendance and education are related in many ways. Studies also show that educational attainment is related to the religious commitment of an individual's community, as measured by church attendance. Individuals who lived in communities with high religious densities had, on average, more years of education than those who lived in less religiously dense communities.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, another study shows that, compared to students enrolled in four-year colleges, those who did *not* attend college were more likely to report a decrease in religious service attendance, a decline in the importance of religion in their lives, or a change to no religious affiliation.<sup>2</sup> Individuals from intact families completed, on average, more years of schooling and were more likely to graduate from high school and college than were their peers raised in non-intact families.<sup>3</sup>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Gruber, Jonathan. "Religious Market Structure, Religious Participation, and Outcomes: Is Religion Good for You." *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Vol. No. 11377 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Uecker, Jeremy E. "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood." *Social Forces* Vol. 85 (4) (2007) pp. 1667-1692.

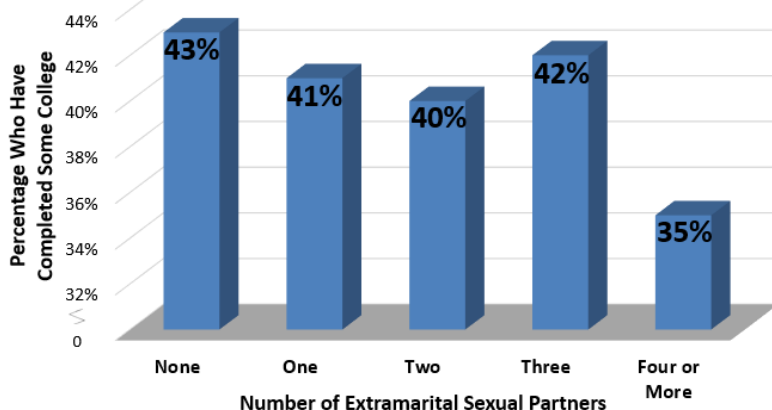
<sup>3</sup> Ginther, Donna K., "Family Structure and Childrens Educational Outcomes: Blended Families, Stylized Facts, and Descriptive Regressions. *Demography* Vol. 41(4) (2004) pp. 671-696.



## Completed Some College By Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice

### Completed Some College

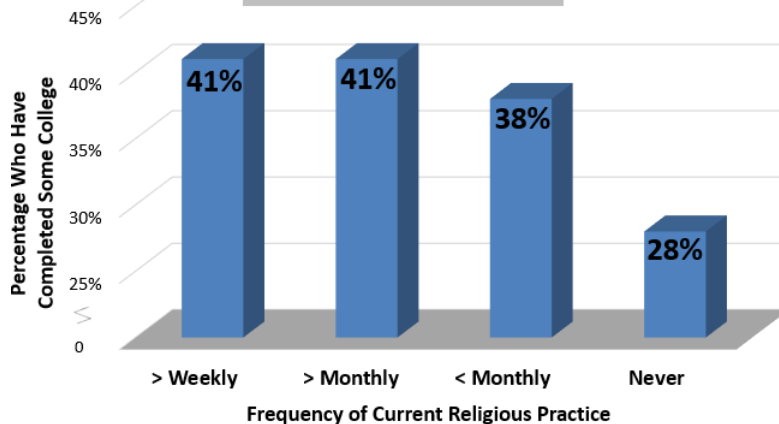
#### By Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners



Source: 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Child and Young Adult (1994-2008)

### Completed Some College

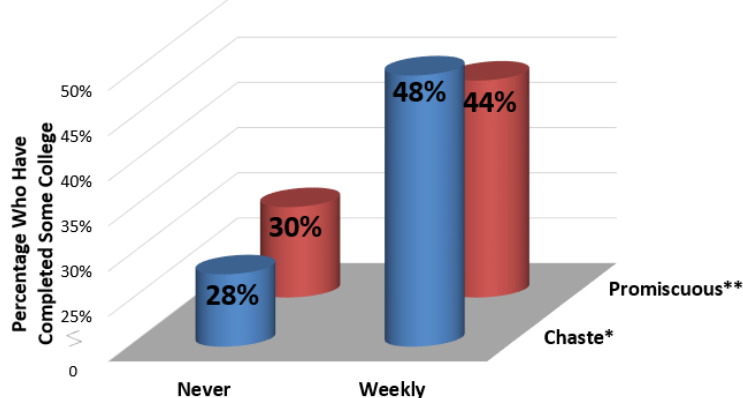
#### By Religious Practice



Source: 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Child and Young Adult (1994-2008)

### Completed Some College

#### By Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice



Source: 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Child and Young Adult (1994-2008)

*This chart looks at likelihood to complete some college at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of sexual habits (chaste\* vs. promiscuous\*\*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).*

*The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

- The chaste\* person that worships weekly;*
- The chaste\* person that never worships;*
- The promiscuous\*\* person that worships weekly;*
- The promiscuous\*\* person that never worships.*

*(\*No non-marital sexual partners during the survey year.)*

*(\*\*Four or more non-marital sexual partners during the survey year.)*



## Completed Some College by Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice

The 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, Child and Young Adult Survey shows that adults who had no extramarital sexual partners and worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey were more likely to have completed some college.

**Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners:** Forty-three percent of individuals who had no extramarital sexual partners had completed some college, compared with 41 percent of those who had one extramarital sexual partner. Forty percent of those who had two or more extramarital sexual partners had completed college, while 42 percent of those who had three or more extramarital sexual partners had completed some college. Only 35 percent of those with four or more extramarital sexual partners had completed some college.

**Religious Practice:** Forty-one percent of those who attended church weekly had completed some college, as well as 41 percent of those who attended at least once a month. Only 38 percent of those who attended church less than once a month had completed some college, followed by 28 percent of those who never attended church.

**Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice Combined:** Those who worshiped at least weekly and were chaste (had no extramarital sexual partners) were most likely to have completed some college (48 percent), compared to 44 percent of those who attended church weekly but were promiscuous (had four or more extramarital sexual partners). Thirty percent of those who were promiscuous and had never attended church had completed some college, followed by 28 percent who were chaste but who did not ever attend church.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** One study of 330 college students at a southeastern university found that students who hold core spiritual beliefs, such as a belief that having a spiritual life is important, and those who have had spiritual experiences that changed their life are likely to have more conservative, traditional views about sexual practices (e.g., the purpose of sex) and possess less sexually permissive attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

Another study of undergraduates at a small secular liberal arts college found an association between an increase in religious practice and an increase in academic performance among college-aged students: more than 75 percent of students who become more religious during their college years achieved above-average college performance.<sup>2</sup>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry D. Beckwith and Jennifer Ann Morrow, "Sexual attitudes of college students: the impact of religiosity and spirituality," *College Student Journal* 39, no.2 (June 2005).

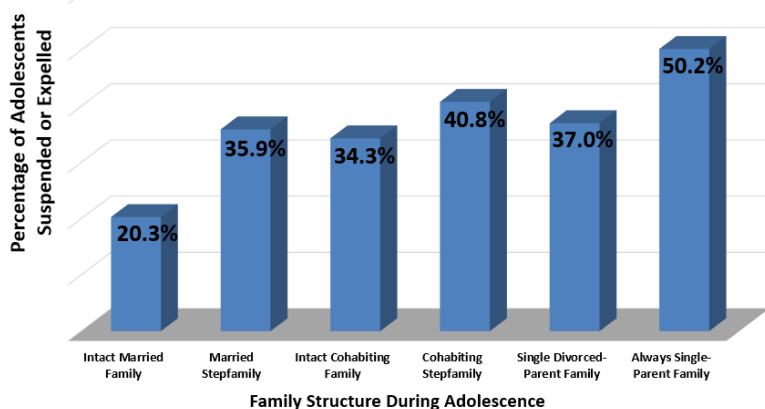
<sup>2</sup> David S. Zern, "Some Connections Between Increasing Religiousness and Academic Accomplishment in a College Population," *Adolescence* 24, no. 93 (1989): 152. This study's sample size was 251. Zern also found that neither past nor present religious practice was related to grade point average in college.



# Behavior

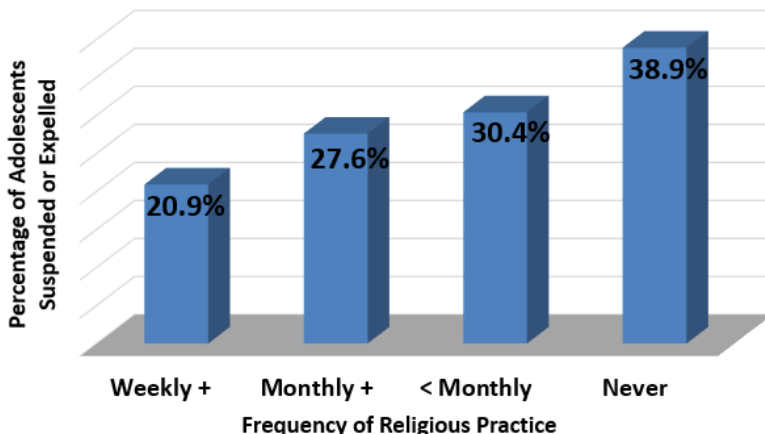
## Adolescents Suspended or Expelled From School By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Adolescents Suspended or Expelled From School  
By Family Structure**



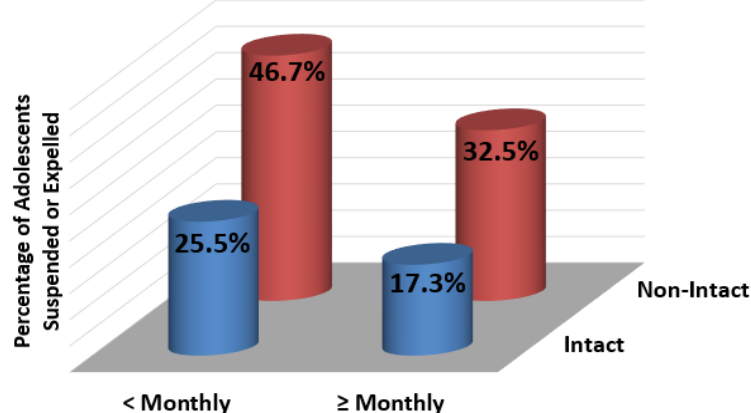
Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Adolescents Grades 7-12.

**Adolescents Suspended or Expelled From School  
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Adolescents Grades 7-12.

**Adolescents Suspended or Expelled from School  
By Family Structure or Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Adolescents Grades 7-12.

*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*



## Adolescents Suspended or Expelled From School by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** Based on the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Wave I, 20.3 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who lived with their married, biological parents had ever been suspended or expelled from school. By contrast, more than 50 percent of adolescents who lived with a single, never-married parent had ever been suspended or expelled. In between were those who lived with two biological cohabiting parents (34.3 percent), those who lived with a step-parent (35.9 percent), those whose parents were divorced (37 percent), and those who lived with one biological cohabiting parent (40.8 percent).

**Religious Practice:** The Adolescent Health Study also showed that 20.9 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who worshipped at least weekly had ever been suspended or expelled. By contrast, almost 39 percent of adolescents who never worshipped had been suspended or expelled. In between were those who attended services one to three times a month (27.6 percent) and those who attended services less than once a month (30.4 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Only 17.3 percent of adolescent students who were living with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had ever been suspended or expelled from school. By contrast, 46.7 percent who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had been expelled or suspended. In between were those who lived with both biological parents and worshipped less than monthly (25.5 percent) and those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (32.5 percent).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Though little additional research has been done on the correlation of religious attendance, family structure, and expulsion or suspension from school, several studies corroborate the direction of these findings.

Wendy Manning of Bowling Green State University and Kathleen Lamb of the University of Wisconsin reported that adolescents who were more religious were less likely to be suspended or expelled, as were adolescents who lived with their married parents.<sup>1</sup>

Bryon Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues analyzed delinquency data from the National Youth Survey, which included delinquency measures such as “damaged school property,” “hit teacher,” “hit students,” and “skipped classes.” They found that adolescent religiosity was associated with lower levels of delinquency and that adolescents who lived with both biological parents were less likely to associate with delinquent friends.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wendy D. Manning and Kathleen A. Lamb, “Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 65 (2003): 876-893.

<sup>2</sup> Byron R. Johnson, et al., “Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter? A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency,” vol. 38 (2001): 22-44.

Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University and Richard Watts of Baylor University found that the more often adolescents attended religious activities and the greater importance they gave to religion, the more likely they were to have involved parents and the less likely they were to be delinquent.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to keeping adolescents from being expelled, the intact married family that worships weekly earns the best marks.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.

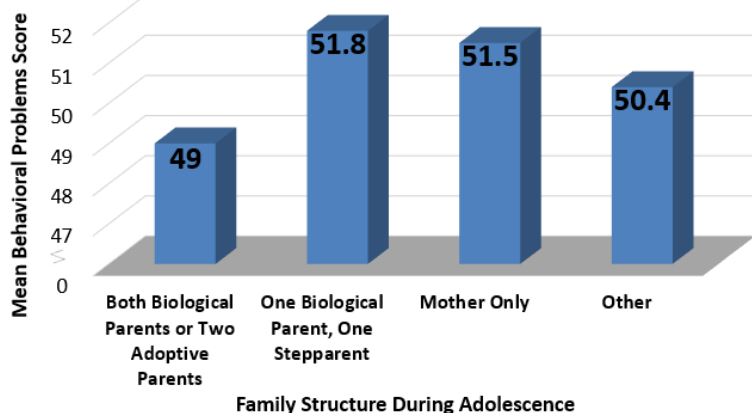
*Patrick Fagan is the Director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute*

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<sup>3</sup> Jerry Trusty and Richard E. Watts, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values*, vol. 44 (1999): 30-40. The three delinquency measures derived from the National Education Longitudinal Study included school suspensions, arrests, and time spent in juvenile centers.

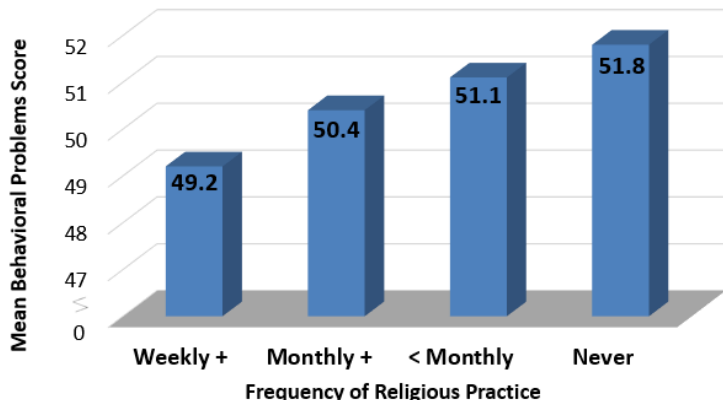
## Child Behavioral Problems By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Child Behavioral Problems  
By Family Structure



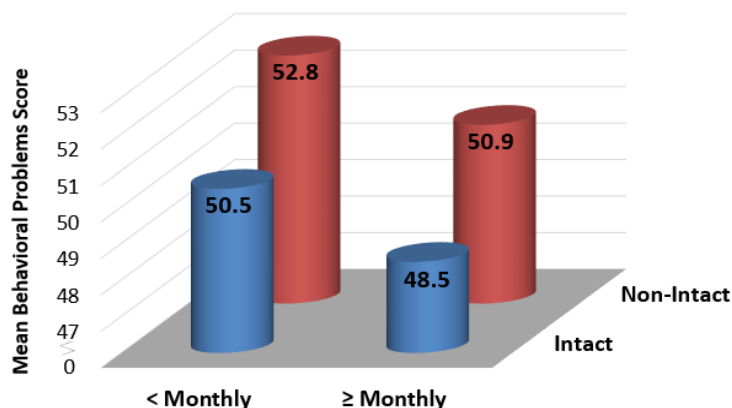
Source: National Survey of Children's Health, Adolescents Aged 6-17.

Child Behavioral Problems  
By Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health, Adolescents Aged 6-17.

Child Behavioral Problems  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health, Adolescents Aged 6-17.

*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

*These charts depict the mean behavior problems score of children aged 6 to 17, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.*

Items measured on the behavior problems scale include bullying, disobedience, and acting depressed. The behavior problems scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of ten.

## Child Behavioral Problems by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who lived with both biological parents scored lower on the behavior problems scale (49.0)<sup>1</sup> than those who lived with a biological parent and a stepparent (51.8).<sup>2</sup> In between were those who only lived with their biological mother (51.5) or those who lived within another family structure (50.4).<sup>3</sup> Items measured on the behavior problems scale included bullying, disobedience, and acting depressed.<sup>4</sup>

**Religious Practice:** According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who attended religious services at least weekly scored lower on the behavior problems scale (49.2) than those who never attended religious services (51.8).<sup>5</sup> In between were those who worshipped one to three times a month (50.4) and those who attended religious services less than once a month (51.1). Items measured on the behavior problems scale included bullying, disobedience, and acting depressed.

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Children who worshipped frequently and lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents had a lower score (48.5) than those who worshipped less than monthly and lived in single-parent or reconstituted families (52.8). In between were those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (50.9) and those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (50.5). The data were taken from the National Survey of Children's Health. Items measured on the behavior problems scale included bullying, disobedience, and acting depressed.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies support the direction of these findings. Marjorie Gunnoe of Calvin College and colleagues reported a strong association between adolescent responsibility and parental religiosity and noted how previous studies have shown "that parents play an active role in fostering adolescents' attachment to the religious community."<sup>6</sup>

John Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and colleagues found that frequent religious attendance of both parents correlated with a wide range of positive outcomes in their children, including greater self-control, greater interpersonal skills at school, greater social skills, protection against loneliness/sadness, protection "against internalizing problem behaviors,"

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<sup>1</sup> A small sample of "two adoptive parents" is also included in this score.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

<sup>3</sup> Categories covered under "other" include children with father only, foster parent, and children living with grandparent or other relatives.

<sup>4</sup> The behavior problems scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of ten.

<sup>5</sup> The behavior problems scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of ten.

<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe, et al., "Parental Religiosity, Parenting Style, and Adolescent Social Responsibility," *Journal of Early Adolescence* 19 (1999): 199-225.



protection from overactive and impulsive behaviors in the home, and a lower probability of “externalizing problem behaviors at school.”<sup>7</sup>

Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University and Richard Watts of Baylor University also found that high school seniors who frequently attended religious activities were more likely to have involved parents and less likely to be delinquent than those high school seniors who attended religious activities less frequently.<sup>8</sup>

The twin protective forces of an intact married family and religious attendance both contribute significantly to the cultivation of appropriate adolescent behavior.

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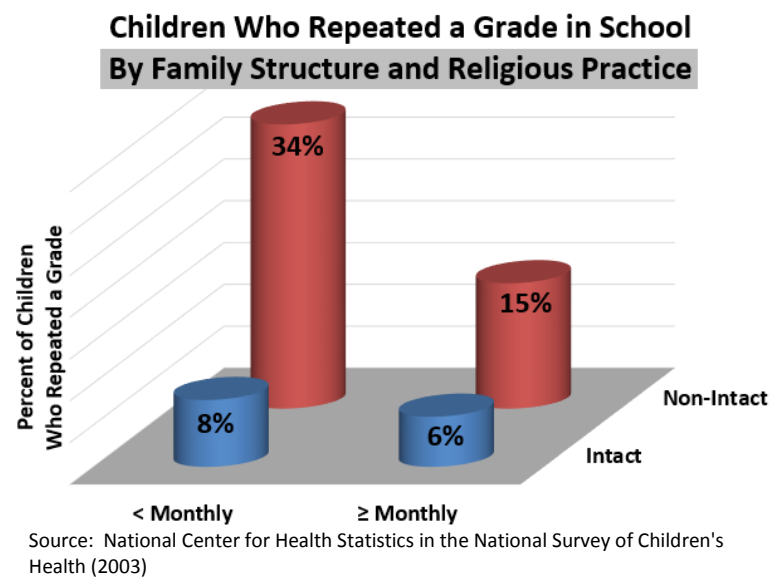
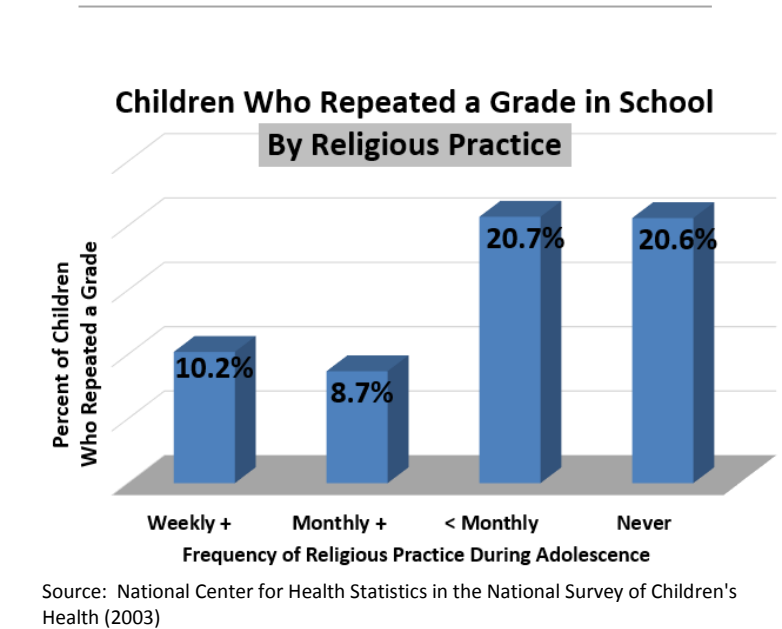
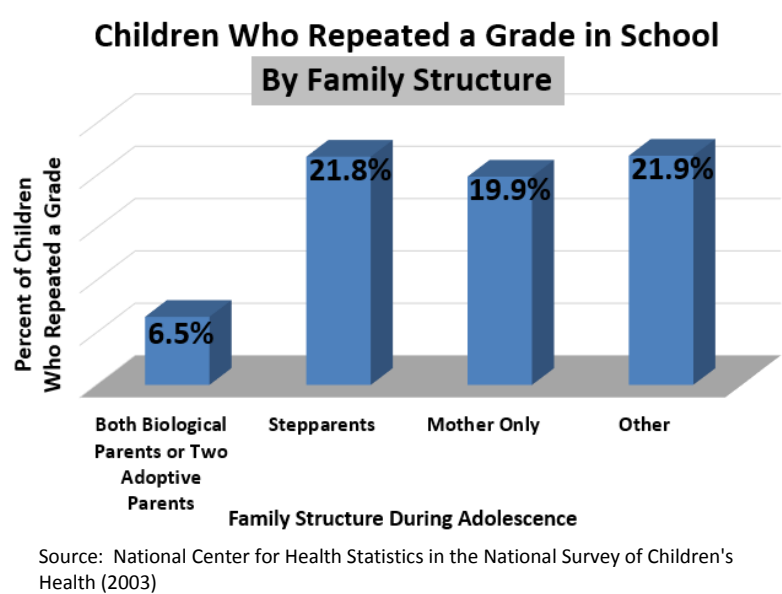
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<sup>7</sup> John P. Bartowski, et al., “Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,” *Social Science Research* 37 (2008): 18-36.

<sup>8</sup> Jerry Trusty and Richard E. Watts, “Relationship of High School Seniors’ Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables,” *Counseling and Values* 44 (1999): 30-40. This finding is from [www.familyfacts.org](http://www.familyfacts.org).

# Children Who Repeated a Grade in School By Family Structure and Religious Practice



*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

*These charts depict the percentage of children aged 6 to 17 who have repeated a grade in school, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.*

These charts draw on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.

## Children Who Repeated a Grade by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** According to the National Center for Health Statistics, children who lived with both biological parents or two adoptive parents were only one-third as likely to have ever repeated a grade in school as those who lived with their mother only, in a stepfamily,<sup>1</sup> or in other family configurations, such as with their father only or with foster parents.<sup>2</sup> The respective rates of grade repetition found in the survey were 6.5 percent for those living with both parents, 19.9 percent for those living with mother only, 21.8 percent for those living with a parent and stepparent, and 21.9 percent for those living in other family configurations.

**Religious Practice:** Children who attended religious services one to three times a month and those who attended every week were only half as likely to have ever repeated a grade in school as those who attended less than once a month or not at all. The respective rates of grade repetition found in the survey were 10.2 percent for those attending weekly, 8.7 percent for those attending at least monthly but less than weekly, 20.7 percent for those attending less than once a month, and 20.6 percent for those who did not attend at all in the last year.

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Only 6 percent of children who worshipped frequently and lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents had repeated a grade. By contrast, 34 percent of children who worshipped less than monthly and lived in single-parent or reconstituted families had repeated a grade. In between were those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (eight percent) and those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (15 percent). The data were taken from the National Survey of Children's Health.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Nicholas Zill found similar differences in grade repetition rates between children of ages 7-17 living with their mother and father and those living with their mother only or with mother and stepfather in an analysis of data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health.<sup>3</sup>

Several other studies corroborate these findings. Robert Byrd of the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and colleagues reported that students in two-parent households are less likely to repeat a grade than those in one-parent households.<sup>4</sup>

Hak-Ju Kim of Washington University in St. Louis also found that children living with two biological parents are less likely to repeat a grade than those living with single parents or

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<sup>1</sup> Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

<sup>2</sup> "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Zill, "Family Change and Student Achievement: What We Have Learned, What It Means for Schools," in *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes*, eds. Alan Booth and Judith F. Dunn (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996): 139-174.

<sup>4</sup> Robert S. Byrd, Michael Weitzman, and Peggy Auinger, "Increased Behavior Problems Associated with Delayed School Entry and Delayed School Progress," *Pediatrics*, vol. 100 (1997): 654-661.



stepparents. Children living with single parents, though, are slightly more likely to repeat a grade than those living with a stepparent.<sup>5</sup>

Examining the National Study of Adolescent Health, Paul Amato of Pennsylvania State University reported that 30 percent of adolescents living with single parents have repeated a grade, compared to 19 percent of adolescents living with married parents.<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to keeping children on schedule academically, the intact family proves to be the most effective family structure.

While at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mark Regnerus found that "youth church participation positively affects both educational aspirations and achievement."<sup>7</sup>

Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Rand Conger of Iowa State University reported that adolescents who become more religiously involved in high school tend to score higher on academic competence indicators.<sup>8</sup>

Regnerus, now at the University of Texas at Austin, and Elder also found that "church attendance exhibits a stable relationship with educational progress."<sup>9</sup>

As the data indicate, students who attend religious services at least monthly are more likely to excel academically and much less likely to repeat a grade.

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<sup>5</sup> Hak-Ju Kim, "Family Resources and Children's Academic Performance," *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 26 (2004): 529-536.

<sup>6</sup> Paul R. Amato, "The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation," *The Future of Children*, vol. 15 (2005): 75-96.

<sup>7</sup> Mark D. Regnerus, "Shaping Schooling Success: Religious Socialization and Educational Outcomes in Metropolitan Public Schools," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 39 (2000): 363-370.

<sup>8</sup> Glen H. Elder Jr. and Rand D. Conger, *Children of the Land* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 159-160.

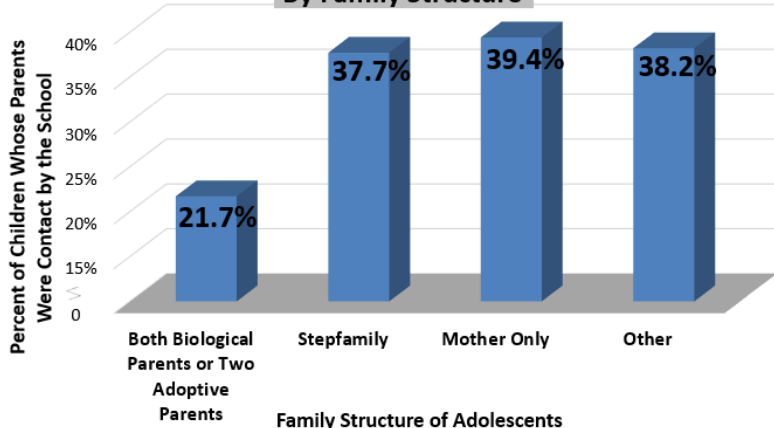
<sup>9</sup> Mark D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder Jr., "Staying on Track in School: Religious Influences in High- and Low-Risk Settings," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 42 (2003): 633-649.



## Parents Contacted By School Over Child's Behavior Problems By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Parents Contacted By School Over Child's Behavior Problems

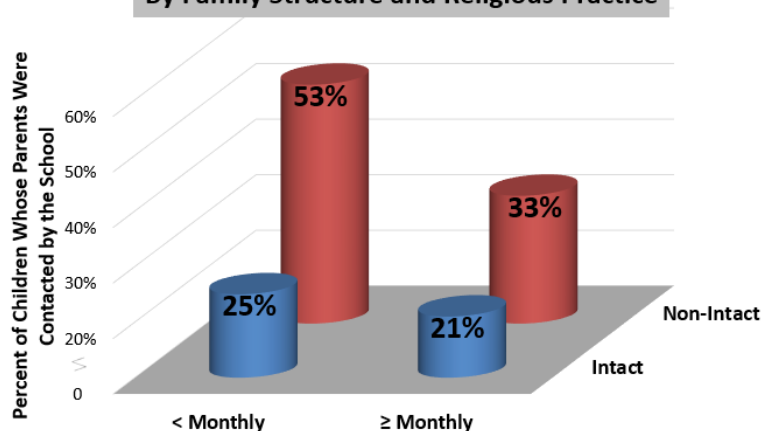
By Family Structure



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

Parents Contacted By School Over Child's Behavior Problems

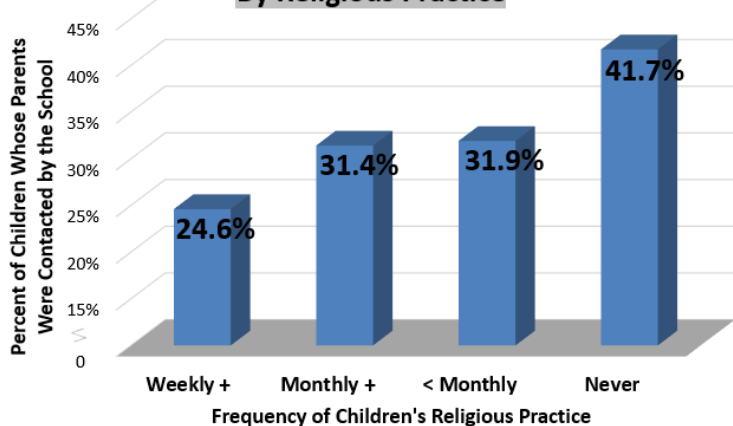
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

Parents Contacted By School Over Child's Behavior Problems

By Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

These charts draw on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.

## Parents Contacted By School Over Child's Behavior Problems by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** Only 21.7 percent of children who lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents had their parents contacted by their school to report behavior problems, compared to 39.4 percent of children who lived with single mothers. In between were those who lived with a biological parent and a stepparent (37.7 percent)<sup>2</sup> and those who lived within other family configurations (38.2 percent), such as with their father only or foster parents.<sup>3</sup>

**Religious Practice:** Only 24.6 percent of children who worshipped at least weekly had their parents contacted by their school to report behavior problems, whereas 41.7 percent of children who never worshipped had their parents contacted by their school. In between were children who worshipped one to three times a month (31.4 percent) and children who attended religious services less than once a month (31.9 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Only 21 percent of children who worshipped frequently and lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents had their parents contacted by their school to report behavior problems, compared to a much larger 53 percent for children who worshipped less than monthly and lived in single-parent or reconstituted families. In between were those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (25 percent) and those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (33 percent). The data were taken from the National Survey of Children's Health.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Byron Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues examined delinquency data from the National Youth Survey, which included measures such as "hit students," "hit teacher," "damaged school property," and "skipped classes." They reported that adolescent religiosity corresponded to fewer instances of delinquency and that adolescents who lived in intact families were less likely to acquire delinquent friends.<sup>4</sup>

John Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and colleagues also found that both parents' frequent religious attendance correlated with several positive child behavior outcomes, such as greater self-control and a reduced probability of "externalizing problem behaviors at school."<sup>5</sup>

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.

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<sup>2</sup> Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

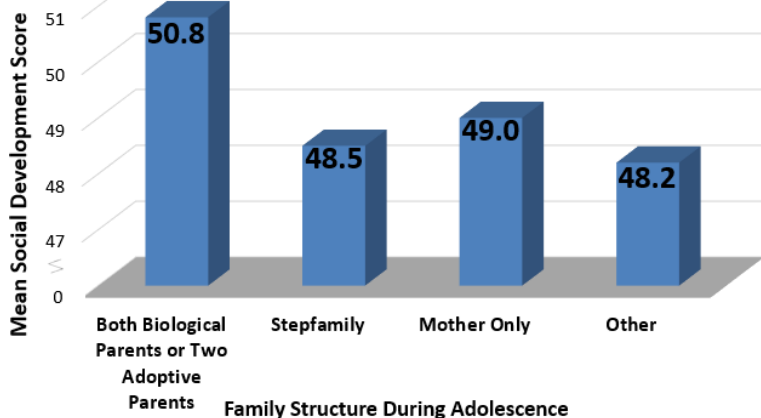
<sup>3</sup> "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.

<sup>4</sup> Byron R. Johnson, et al., "Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter? A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 38 (2001): 22-44.

<sup>5</sup> John P. Bartkowski, et al., "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research*, vol. 37 (2008): 18-36.

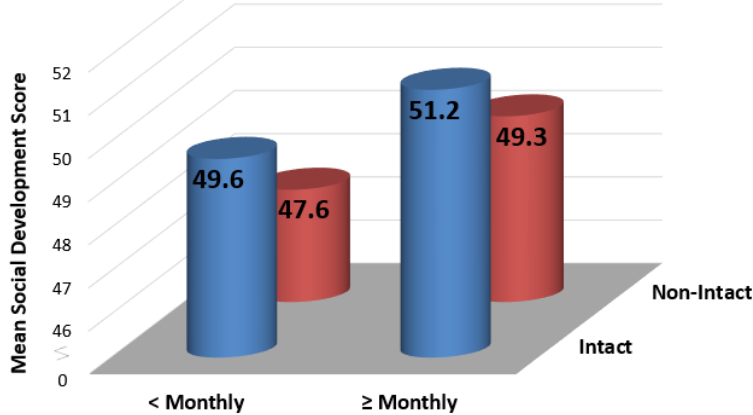
## Children's Positive Social Development By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Children's Positive Social Development  
By Family Structure



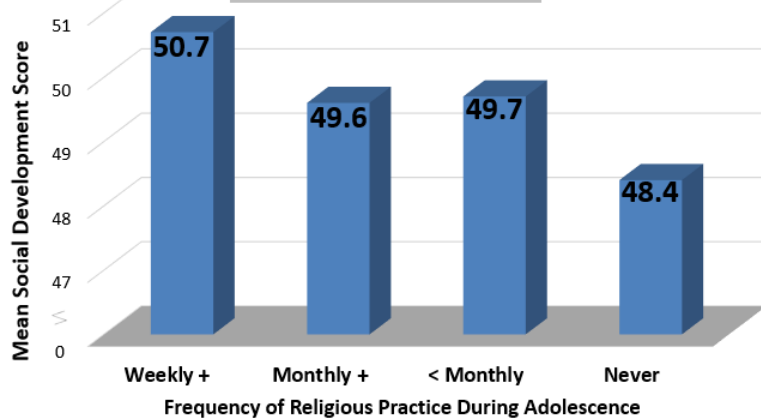
Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

Children's Positive Social Development  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

Children's Positive Social Development  
By Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (2003)

*This chart groups the data in four categories: frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact).*

*The intact category comprises families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category comprises families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families.*

*The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.*

These charts draw on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.



## Children's Social Development by Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Family Structure:** Children who lived with both biological parents or two adoptive parents scored higher on the social development scale (50.8) than children who lived within other family configurations (48.2), such as with their father only or foster parents.<sup>2</sup> In between were those who lived in a stepfamily (48.5) and those who lived with single mothers (49.0).<sup>3</sup>

**Religious Practice:** Children who attended religious services at least weekly scored higher on the social development scale (50.7) than children who never attended religious services (48.4). In between were children who worshipped one to three times a month (49.6) and children who attended religious services less than once a month (49.7).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Children who worshipped frequently and lived with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents had a higher score (51.2) than those who worshipped less than monthly and lived in single-parent or reconstituted families (47.6). In between were those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (49.6) and those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (49.3). The data were taken from the National Survey of Children's Health.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University and Richard Watts of Baylor University reported that high school seniors who frequently participated in religious activities were more likely to have involved parents and less likely to exhibit delinquent behavior.<sup>4</sup>

John Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and colleagues also found that both parents' frequent worship corresponded to several positive outcomes in their children, including greater social skills, greater interpersonal skills at school, protection "against internalizing problem behaviors," protection against loneliness/sadness, and protection from overactive and impulsive behaviors in the home.<sup>5</sup> As the evidence shows, children who live with both parents in a religiously active family are more likely to develop positive social behavior.

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<sup>2</sup> "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.

<sup>3</sup> Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

<sup>4</sup> Jerry Trusty and Richard E. Watts, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values*, vol. 44 (1999): 30-40.

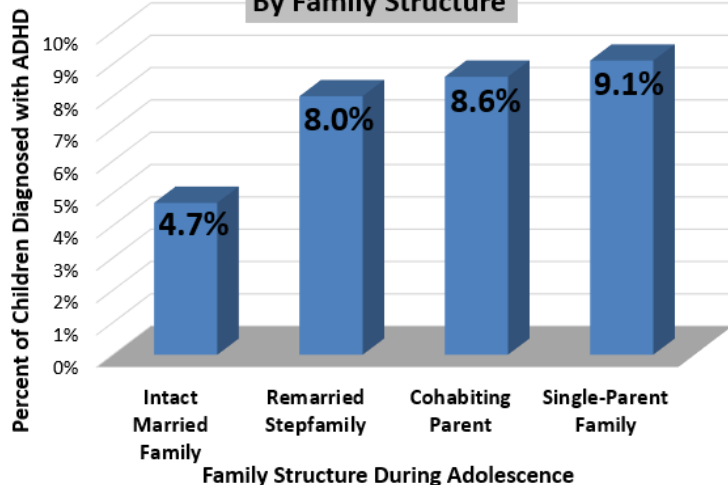
<sup>5</sup> John P. Bartkowski, et al., "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research*, vol. 37 (2008): 18-36.



## Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

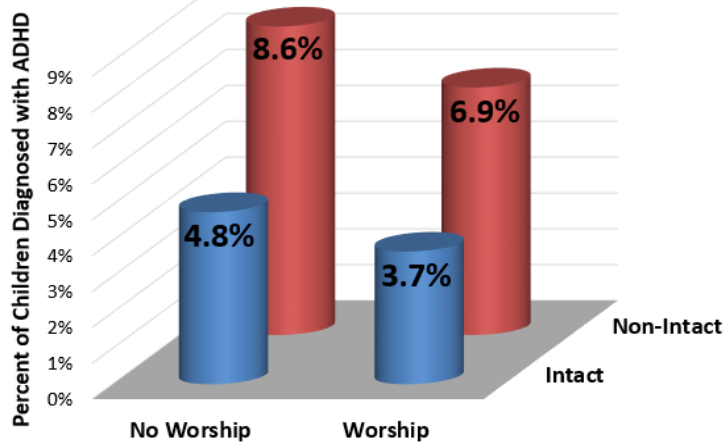
### By Family Structure



Source: National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) (2001)

Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

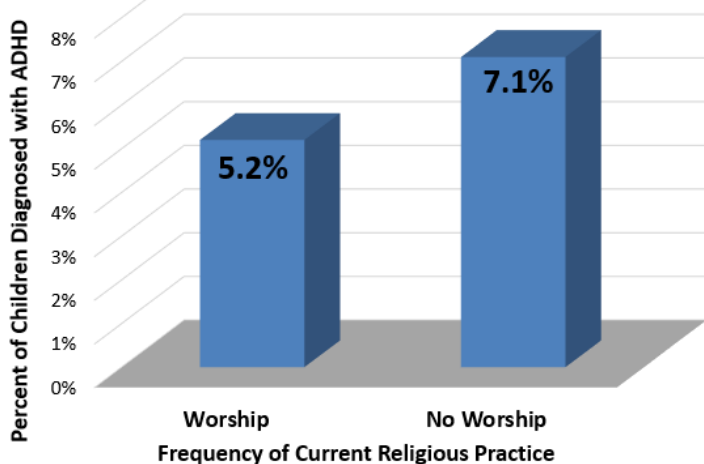
### By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) (2001)

Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

### By Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) (2001)

*This chart looks at the number of children who have been diagnosed with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of marital statuses (intact versus non-intact)\* and two sets of religious attendance (worship vs. no worship).\*\**

*The individuals occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

*The children from intact families that worship.*

*The children from intact families that do not worship.*

*The children from non-intact families that worship.*

*The children from non-intact families that do not worship.*

*\*The intact married family consists of children who live with their two biological parents who are married. Non-intact includes all other family types.*

*\*\*The worshipping consists of children who went to a church, temple, or another place of worship for services or other activities within the past two weeks.*

## Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 2001 cycle of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) showed that children in intact families that worshipped<sup>1</sup> were least likely to have been diagnosed with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

**Family Structure:** According to the 2001 cycle of the National Health Interview Survey, 4.7% of children in intact married families, 8.0% of children raised in remarried stepfamilies, and 8.6% of children living with a cohabiting parent had been told by a doctor that they had ADHD. Children living in single-parent families were most likely to have been diagnosed with ADHD (9.1%).

**Religious Practice:** The 2001 cycle of the National Health Interview Survey showed that fewer children from families who worshipped had been diagnosed with ADHD (5.2%) than children whose families did not worship (7.1%).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Children in intact families that worshipped were least likely to have been diagnosed with ADHD (3.7%), followed by children in intact non-worshipping families (4.8%) and non-intact worshipping families (6.9%). Children in non-intact non-worshipping families were most likely to have been told by a doctor that they have ADHD (8.6%)—more than double that of children in intact worshipping families.

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** A robust collection of research shows that family structure can significantly impact the mental health of children. Ann-Margret Rydell found that single parenthood and step-parenthood was associated with high levels of ADHD symptoms, and that family conflict had a strong additive effect on the level of ADHD symptoms in children (beyond the effects of demographic factors).<sup>2</sup> Using the National Survey of Children's Health, Matthew D. Bramlett and Stephen J. Blumberg found that more than two times as many children raised in blended step-families, blended adoptive families, and grandparent families were ever told their child has ADD/ ADHD than children raised in two-parent families.<sup>3</sup> These studies reiterate that children tend to be healthier in two-parent biological families.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> A worshipping family has attended at least one worship service in the past two weeks.

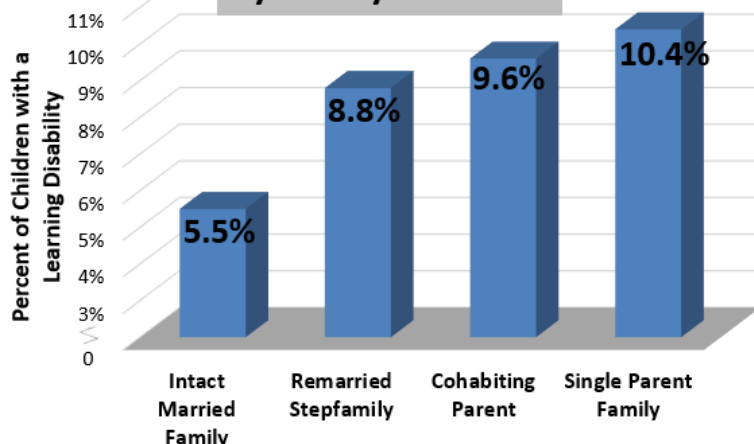
<sup>2</sup> Rydell, Ann-Margret. "Family factors and children's disruptive behavior: an investigation of links between demographic characteristics, negative life events and symptoms of ODD and ADHD." *Sociological Psychiatric Epidemiology* 45 (2010): 233-244.

<sup>3</sup> Bramlett, Matthew D. and Blumberg, Stephen J. "Family structure and children's physical and mental health." *Health Affairs* 26 (2007): 549-558.



## Children with a Learning Disability By Family Structure and Religious Practice

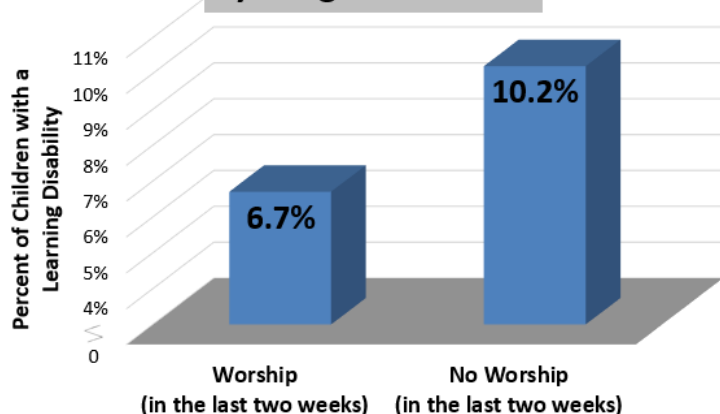
Children with a Learning Disability  
By Family Structure



Family Structure During Adolescence

Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

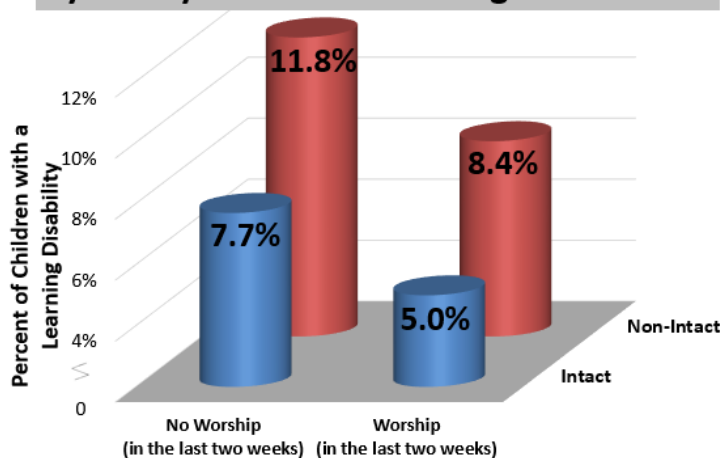
Children with a Learning Disability  
By Religious Practice



Frequency of Current Religious Practice

Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

Children with a Learning Disability  
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

*This chart looks at the number of children who have been diagnosed with a learning disability\* at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.*

*These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of marital statuses (intact versus non-intact)\*\* and two sets of religious attendance (worship vs. no worship).\*\*\**

*The individuals occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:*

*The children from intact families that worship.*

*The children from intact families that do not worship.*

*The children from non-intact families that worship.*

*The children from non-intact families that do not worship.*

*\*\*The intact married family consists of children who live with their two biological parents who are married. Non-intact includes all other family types.*

*\*\*\*The worshipping consists of children who went to a church, temple, or another place of worship for services or other activities within the past two weeks*

\* According to the 2000 NHIS Field Representative's Manual, "learning disability" for this question was defined as: "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written. It may be evident by an inability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations."



## Children with a Learning Disability by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 2001 cycle<sup>1</sup> of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) found that children in intact families that worshipped<sup>2</sup> were least likely to have been told by a school representative or health professional that they had a learning disability.<sup>3</sup>

**Family Structure:** At the time of the survey, fewer children in intact married families had ever been told they had a learning disability (5.5 percent) than children in remarried stepfamilies (8.8 percent), cohabiting families (9.6 percent) or single parent families (10.4 percent).

**Religious Practice:** Families that worshipped every other week (or more) were less likely to have been told that their child had a learning disability (6.7 percent) than were families that did not worship (10.2 percent).

**Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined:** Children in intact worshipping families were least likely to have been told by a school representative or health professional that they had a learning disability (5.0 percent). Children in intact non-worshipping families and non-intact worshipping families were more likely to have been told that they had a disability (7.7 percent and 8.4 percent, respectively). Children in non-intact families that did not worship were most likely to have ever been told that they had a learning disability (11.8 percent).

**Related Insights from Other Studies:** A growing body of research confirms that family structure profoundly impacts adolescents' learning trajectories. Using the *National Survey of Children's Health*, Maja Altarac and Ekta Saroha found that children from two-parent families (other than stepfamilies) were less likely to have learning disabilities than children in alternative family structures.<sup>4</sup>

Religious worship also bolsters learning development. John Bartkowski, Xiaohne Xu, and Martin Levin examined the *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study* to determine that the religious attendance of fathers and mothers positively predicts children's self-control, greater interpersonal skills, and better cognitive development. Worship also provides protective effects against children's sadness/ loneliness and children's impulsiveness/ overactiveness.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2001 cycle of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) was chosen because that year had a measure of religious attendance, permitting our regular Mapping America analysis.

<sup>2</sup> A worshipping family has attended at least one worship service in the past two weeks.

<sup>3</sup> According to the 2000 NHIS Field Representative's Manual, "learning disability" for this question was defined as: "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language, spoken or written. It may be evident by an inability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations."

<sup>4</sup> Altarac, Maja and Saroha, Ekta. "Lifetime prevalence of learning disability among US children." *Pediatrics* 119 (2007) S77-S83.