Mapping America

Health

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MARRIAGE AND RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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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.

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Well-Being and Development

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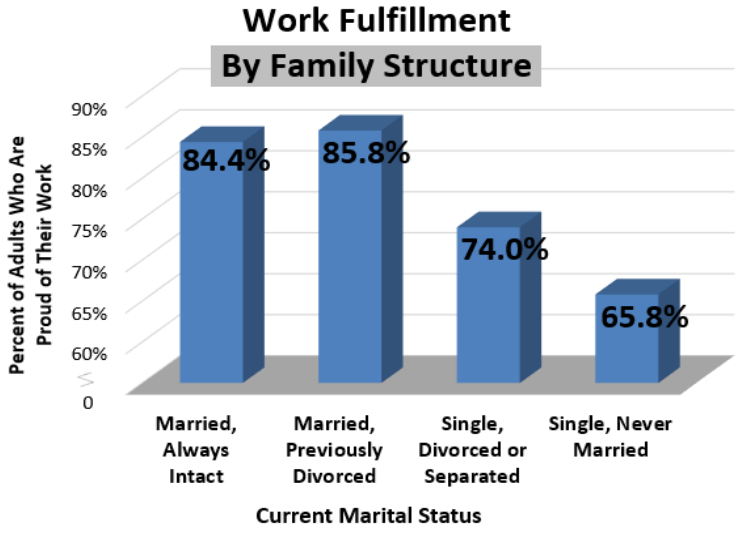
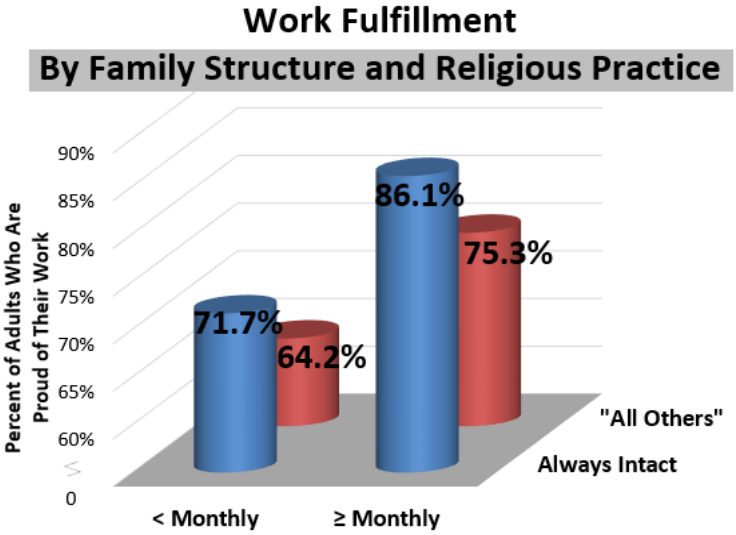
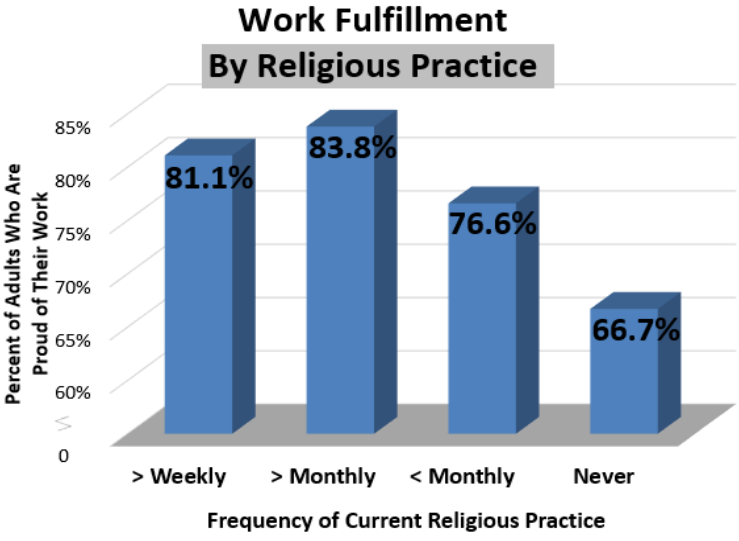
Work Fulfillment
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006

These charts group the data in four categories, with two different subsets for each of two major variables, frequency of religious attendance (weekly vs. never) and marital status (always intact vs. "all others").

The always intact subset consists of adults in always-intact marriages.

The resultant four categories are 1) always intact marital status with weekly religious attendance; 2) always intact marital status with no religious attendance; 3) "all others" marital status with weekly religious attendance; and 4) "all others" marital status with no religious attendance.

These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Work Fulfillment by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the 1972-2006 General Social Surveys, [1] 85.9 percent of married, previously-divorced adults were proud of the type of work they do, followed by 84.4 percent of always-intact married adults; however, the difference is only one and one-half percentage points.

There is a significant gap between these two groups and single adults. Of the latter, 74 percent of divorced or separated single adults and 65.8 percent of never-married single adults are proud of the type of work they do.

The typical pattern is for those in intact marriages to score highest on outcomes. Here they score second highest, the difference being a statistically non-significant one and one-half percentage points.

However, as the evidence indicates, adults who are married (always-intact and remarried) tend to take greater pride than singles in the type of work they do.

Religious Practice: The 1972-2006 General Social Surveys shows that 83.8 percent of adults who worshipped between one and three times a month took the greatest pride in the work they do, compared to 81.1 percent of those who worshipped at least weekly, 76.6 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month, and 66.7 percent of those who never attended religious services.

The typical pattern regarding the impact of religious observance on positive outcomes is that those who worship most frequently do best. In this case, those in the second group (one to three times a month) do better, though by only two percentage points, than those who worshipped weekly or more. It is worth looking at the third chart in this series, religious attendance and marriage combined, to note that those in intact families who worshipped weekly took the most pride in their work.

As these data show, adults who worship at least monthly are more likely to be proud of the type of work they do.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: The adults who took the greatest pride in the work they do were those in always-intact marriages who also worshipped at least weekly (86.1 percent). The next largest percentage was all other adults who worshipped at least weekly (75.3 percent), followed by adults in always-intact marriages who never attended

[1] These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

worship services (71.7 percent) and all other adults who never attended religious services (64.2 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Louis Levy-Garboua of the University of Paris and Claude Montmarquette of the University of Montreal reported that religion has a positive influence on job satisfaction among Canadian workers.[2]

In a study of nurse administrators, Vickie Lee of Troy State University and Melinda Henderson of Florida State University found that "highly committed respondents reported strong religiosity."[3]

Stacy Rogers and Dee May of the Pennsylvania State University found "increases in marital satisfaction contributing significantly to increases in job satisfaction over time" and, conversely, "increases in marital discord significantly relating to declines in job satisfaction over time."[4]

Michael Shields of the University of Liecester and Melanie Ward of the Institute for the Study of Labor also reported that, among English nurses, being married has a positive effect "on overall job satisfaction."[5]

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Lilia Meltzer and Loucine Huckabay of the California State University, Long Beach found in a study of critical care nurses that 70 percent of their sample was married and 68.3 percent of their sample "indicated that religion was very important in their lives." Their results also "suggest that nurses who viewed religion as important in their lives experienced fewer feelings of emotional exhaustion when confronted with ethical dilemmas than did nurses for whom religion was not so important."[6]

Louis Lévy-Garboua of the University of Paris and Claude Montmarquette of the University of Montreal found that religion has a positive influence on job satisfaction and that marital status also affects job satisfaction among Canadian workers.[7]

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

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[2] Louis Levy-Garboua and Claude Montmarquette, "Reported Job Satisfaction: What Does It Mean?" *Journal of Socio-Economics* 33 (2004): 135-51.

[3] Vickie Lee and Melinda Henderson, "Occupational Stress and Organizational Commitment in Nurse Administrators," *The Journal of Nursing Administration* 26 (1996): 21-28.

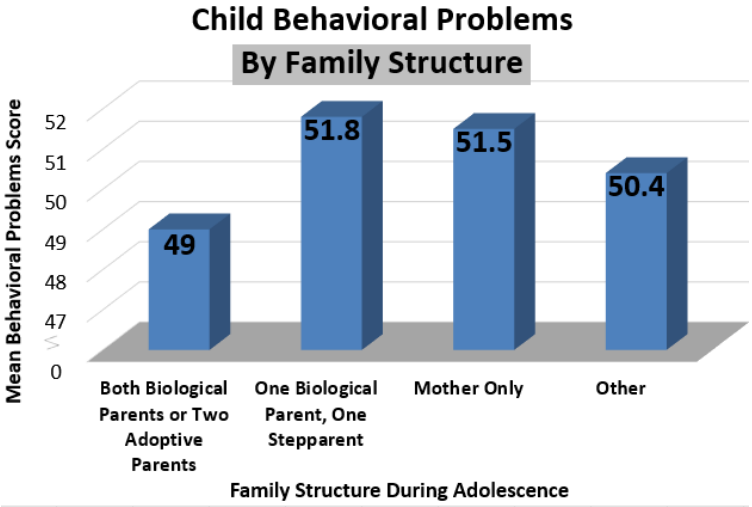
[4] Stacy J. Rogers and Dee C. May, "Spillover between Marital Quality and Job Satisfaction: Long-Term Patterns and Gender Differences," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 482-95.

[5] Michael A. Shields and Melanie Ward, "Improving Nurse Retention in the National Health Service in England : The Impact of Job Satisfaction on Intentions to Quit," *Journal of Health Economics* 20 (2001): 677-701.

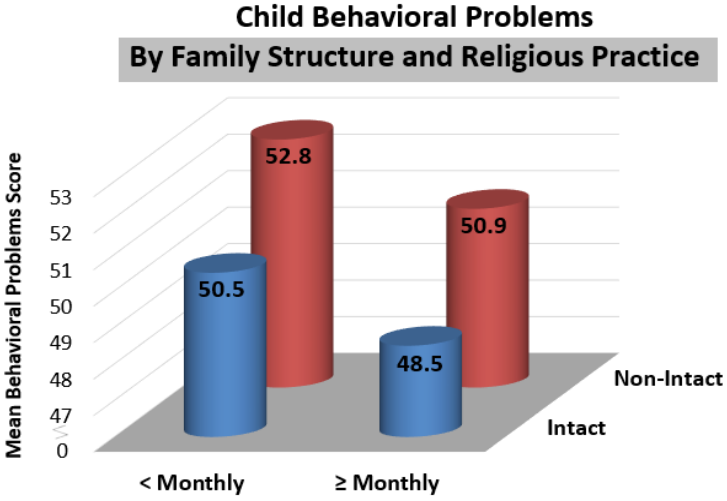
[6] Lilia Susana Meltzer and Loucine Missak Huckabay, "Critical Care Nurses' Perceptions of Futile Care and Its Effects on Burnout," *American Journal of Critical Care* 13 (2004): 202-8.

[7] Louis Levy-Garboua and Claude Montmarquette, "Reported Job Satisfaction: What Does It Mean?" *Journal of Socio-Economics* 33 (2004): 135-51.

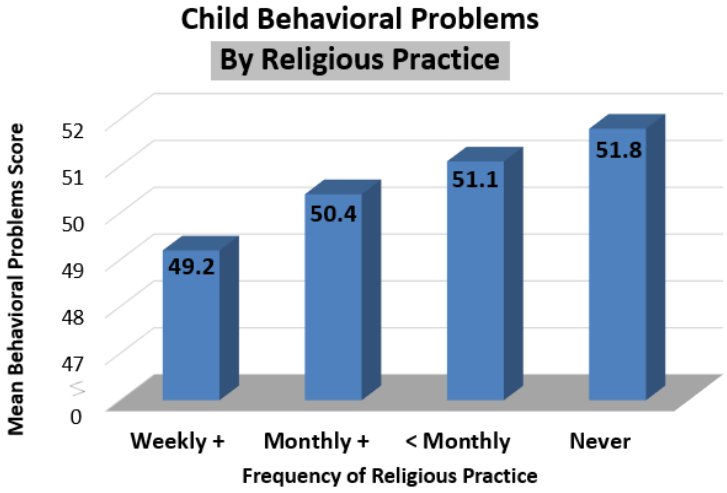
Child Behavioral Problems
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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)[1] than those who lived with a biological parent and a stepparent (51.8).[2] In between were those who only lived with their biological mother (51.5) or those who lived within another family structure (50.4).[3] Items measured on the behavior problems scale included bullying, disobedience, and acting depressed.[4]

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).[5] 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."[6]

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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[1] A small sample of "two adoptive parents" is also included in this score.

[2] Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

[3] Categories covered under "other" include children with father only, foster parent, and children living with grandparent or other relatives.

[4] The behavior problems scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of ten.

[5] The behavior problems scale has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of ten.

[6] 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."[7]

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.[8]

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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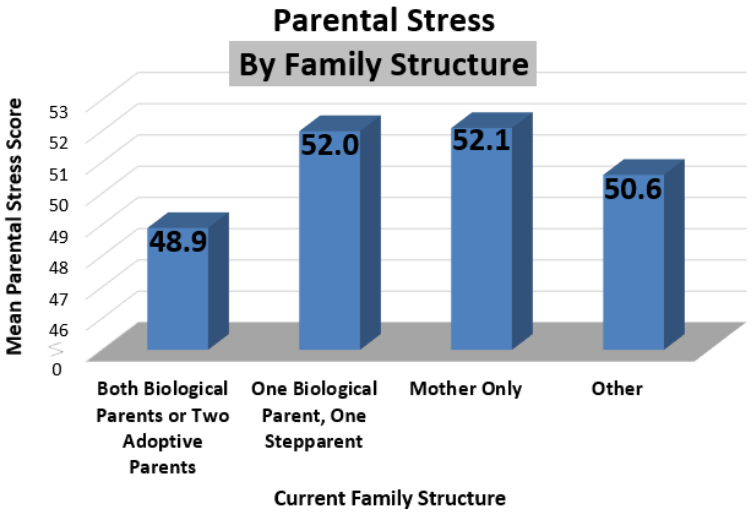
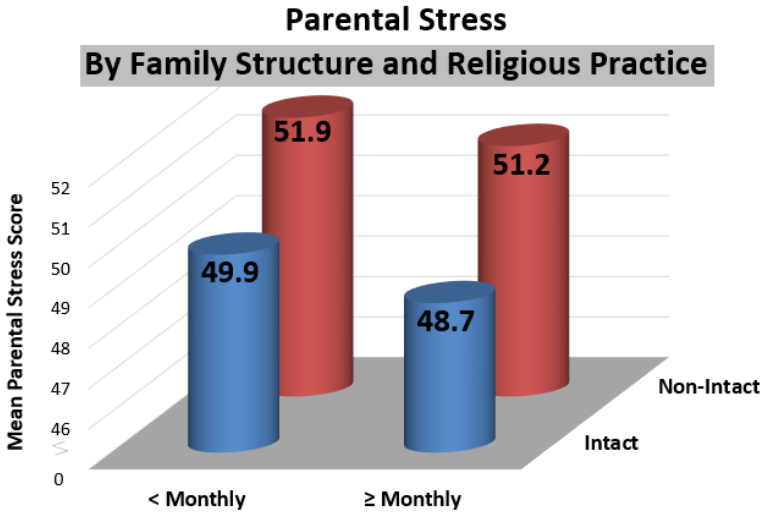
[7] John P. Bartowski, et al., "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research* 37 (2008): 18-36.
[8] Jerry Trusty and Richard E. Watts, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values* 44 (1999): 30-40. This finding is from www.familyfacts.org.

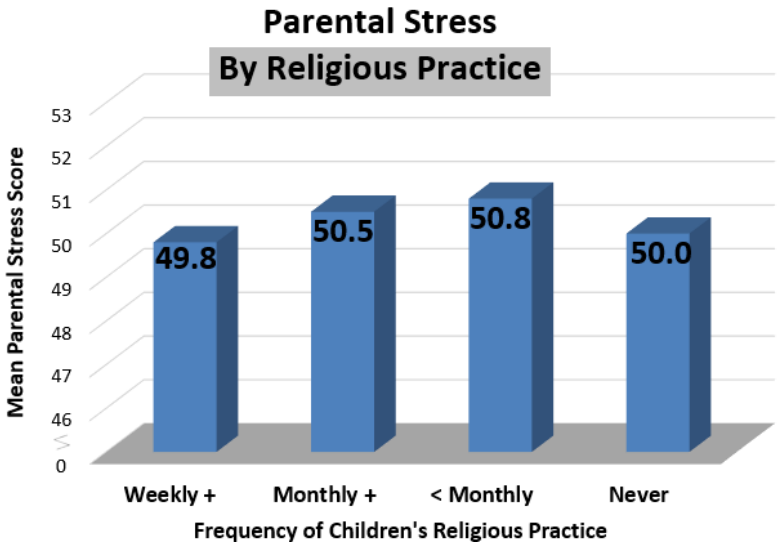
Parental Stress
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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 parental stress scores of parents with children aged 6 to 17, correlated with children's religious attendance and family structure.

Parental Stress by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the National Survey of Children's Health, biological parents and adoptive parents who lived together reported less parenting stress (48.9) than single mothers (52.1). In between were parents who lived within another family structure (50.6)[1] and stepfamilies (52.0).[2]

Religious Practice: Based on the National Survey of Children's Health, parents whose children attended religious services at least weekly scored lower on the parenting stress scale (49.8) than those who worshipped less than once a month (50.8). In between were those who worshipped one to three times a month (50.5) and those who never attended religious services (50).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Parents in intact families or adoptive families whose children worshipped at least monthly had a lower parenting stress score (48.7) than those who were single parents or part of a reconstituted family and whose children worshipped less than monthly (51.9). In between were those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (49.9) and those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (51.2). 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. Paul Amato of the Pennsylvania State University reported that "adults and children from divorced families, as a group, score lower than their counterparts in married-couple families on a variety of indicators of well-being," including happiness, self-conceptions, and psychological distress.[3]

John Cairney of the University of Toronto and colleagues also found that single mothers reported "higher levels of chronic stress" than married mothers did.[4]

Rukmalie Jayakody and Dawn Stauffer of the Pennsylvania State University found that, compared to married mothers, single mothers exhibit a significantly higher rate of psychiatric disorders, the most common being depression.[5]

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[1] Categories covered under "other" include children with father only, foster parent, and children living with grandparent or other relatives.

[2] Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.

[3] Paul R. Amato, "The Consequence of Divorce for Adults and Children," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 62 (2000): 1269-1287.

[4] John Cairney, et al., "Stress, Social Support, and Depression in Single and Married Mothers," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol. 38 (2003): 442-449.

[5] Rukmalie Jayakody and Dawn Stauffer, "Mental Health Problems among Single Mothers: Implications for Work and Welfare Reform," *Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 56 (2000): 617-634.

As the evidence shows, biological parents who live together are less stressed and much healthier than their single and divorced counterparts.

Though little work has been done on the connection between children's religious attendance and parenting stress, several other studies support a positive correlation between religious attendance and stress relief. David Schlundt of Vanderbilt University and colleagues reported a significant correlation between religious attendance and better mental health.[6]

In an analysis of the Canadian Community Health Survey, Marilyn Baetz of the University of Saskatchewan and colleagues found that frequent religious attendance is associated with lower lifetime depression and fewer psychiatric disorders.[7]

Alexander Moreira-Almeida of the University of São Paulo in Brazil and colleagues also reported that religiousness "usually has a positive association with good mental health."[8]

Marc Musick of the University of Texas at Austin and colleagues found a significant "protective effect of service attendance on mortality."[9]

As the data indicate, parents of families that frequently attend religious services are least likely to be stressed.

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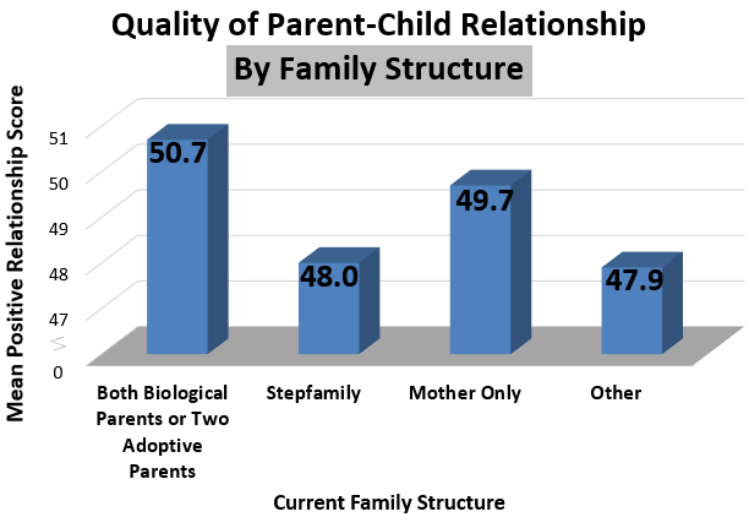
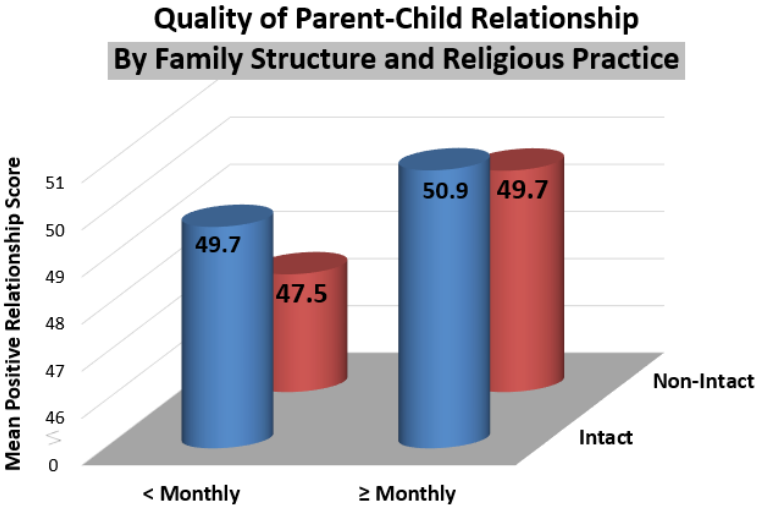
[6] David Schlundt, et al., "Religious Affiliation, Health Behaviors and Outcomes: Nashville REACH 2010," *America Journal of Health Behavior*, vol. 32 (2008): 714-724.
[7] Marilyn Baetz, et al., "How Spiritual Values and Worship Attendance Relate to Psychiatric Disorders in the Canadian Population," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 51 (2006): 654-661.
[8] Alexander Moreira-Almeida, et al., "Religiousness and Mental Health: A Review," *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria*, vol. 28 (2006): 242-250.
[9] Marc A. Musick, et al., "Attendance at Religious Services and Mortality in a National Sample," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 45 (2004): 198-213.

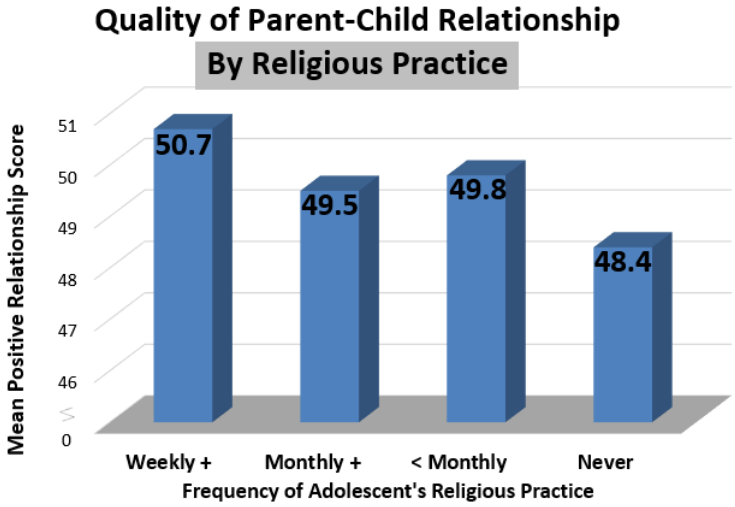
Quality of Parent-Child Relationship
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (2003)



Source: National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (2003)



Source: National Center for Health Statistics in the 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.

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: The 2003 National Survey of Children's Health shows that children who lived with both biological parents or two adoptive parents scored higher on the positive parental relationship scale (50.7) than children who lived within other family configurations (47.9), such as with their father only or foster parents.[1] In between were those who lived with a biological parent and a stepparent (48.0) and those who lived with single mothers (49.7).[2]

Religious Practice: Children who attended religious services at least weekly scored higher on the positive parental relationship scale (50.7) than children who never attended religious services (48.4). In between were children who worshipped one to three times a month (49.5) and children who attended religious services less than once a month (49.8).

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 (50.9) than those who worshipped less than monthly and lived in single-parent or reconstituted families (47.5). In between were those who lived in intact families and worshipped less than monthly (49.7) and those who lived in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (49.7). The data were taken from the National Survey of Children's Health.

The stress of marital conflict and separation, and the strains of maintaining a household and rearing children as a single parent, often interfere with the task of interacting with children in a calm, positive, yet firm and authoritative manner.[3]

On the other hand, when parents and children are involved in a religious community, other members of the community and their children provide emotional support and practical assistance to the family and make it easier for parents to raise their children. Members of a religious community also reinforce the moral and spiritual lessons that parents try to impart to their children.[4]

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other sources corroborate the direction of these findings. John Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and W. Bradford Wilcox of Princeton University reported that single parents "are more likely to yell" at their children and that conservative Protestant parents are less likely to do so.[5]

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[1] "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.
[2] Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.
[3] Paul R. Amato, "The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children," vol. 62 (2000): 1,269-1,287.
[4] E. Mavis Hetherington and John Kelly, *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2002): 75-76.
[5] John P. Bartkowski and W. Bradford Wilcox, "Conservative Protestant Child Discipline: The Case of Parental Yelling," *Social Forces*, vol. 79 (2000): 265-290.

W. Jean Yeung of the University of Michigan and colleagues also found that fathers in intact families devote more time to their children and that most of the "social activity" time fathers spend with their children consists of religious activities.[6]

As the data indicate, religious attendance, religiosity, and intact families are building blocks of healthy parent-child relationships.

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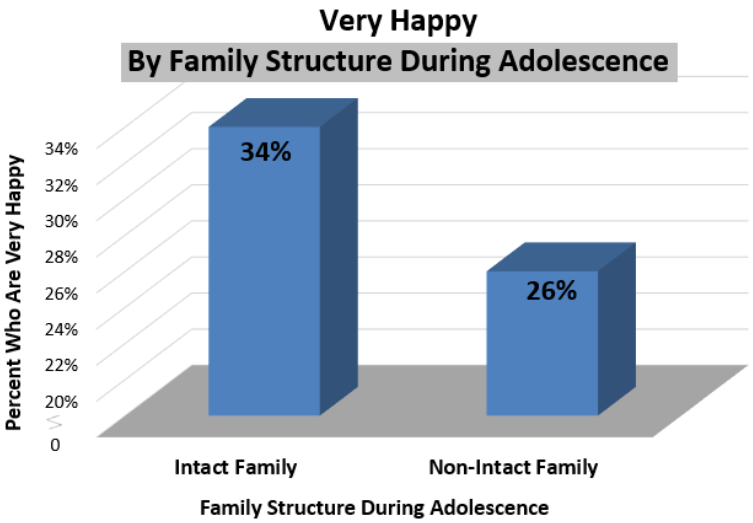
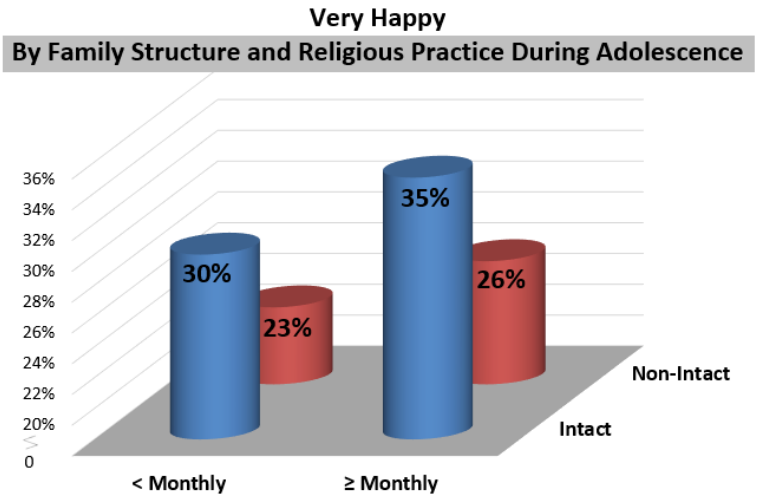
[6] W. Jean Yeung, et al., "Children's Time with Fathers in Intact Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 63 (2001): 136-154.

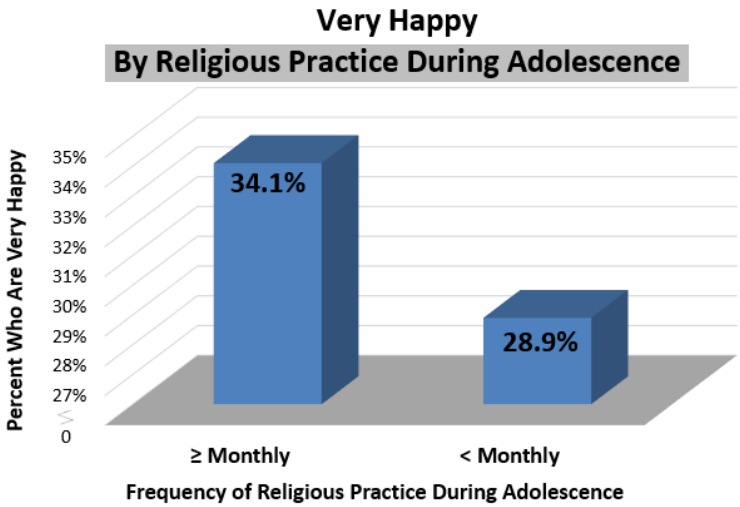
Happiness
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006.



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006.



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006.

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 General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Happiness by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the General Social Survey, 34 percent of adults who lived in an intact family as adolescents considered themselves very happy, compared to 26 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.

Religious Practice: The 1972-2006 General Social Survey shows that 34.1 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents considered themselves very happy, compared to 28.9 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: About 35 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family through adolescence considered themselves very happy, compared to 23 percent of adults who attended religious services less than monthly and lived in a non-intact family as adolescents. In between were those who had attended religious services at least monthly but lived in a non-intact family (26 percent) and those who lived in an intact family but attended religious services less than monthly (30 percent).

The combination of frequent religious attendance during adolescence and an intact family background clearly increases the likelihood of being very happy in adulthood. The data indicate, however, that family structure may have a more pronounced effect than religious attendance.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Very few studies have examined contemporaneous effects of both religious attendance and family structure on happiness, let alone intergenerational effects, but these studies generally support the direction of these findings. Arthur Brooks of Syracuse University reported that while "practicing a religion makes people very happy, on average," married people are "nearly twice as likely as singles" to report being very happy.[1]

In a study of Caribbean adolescents, Robert Blum of the University of Minnesota and colleagues found that adolescents who report having religious beliefs and connectedness with their parents are less likely to experience rage.[2]

Though the evidence demonstrates that an intact family may have a greater influence than religiosity on the likelihood of being very happy, the combination of frequent religious attendance and an intact family yields the highest proportion of very happy people, as adolescents and adults.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

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[1] Arthur Brooks, *Gross National Happiness* (New York: Basic Books, 2008): 28, 30, 217, 227.

[2] Robert Blum, et al., "Adolescent Health in the Caribbean: Risk and Protective Factors," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 93 (2003): 456-460.

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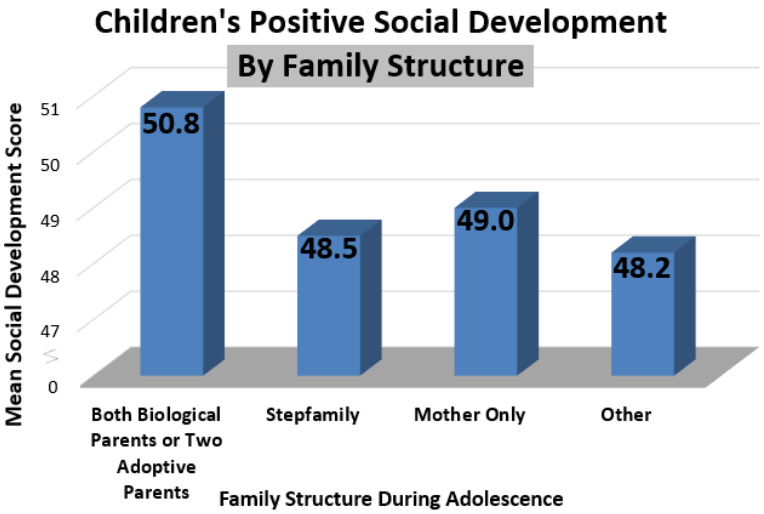
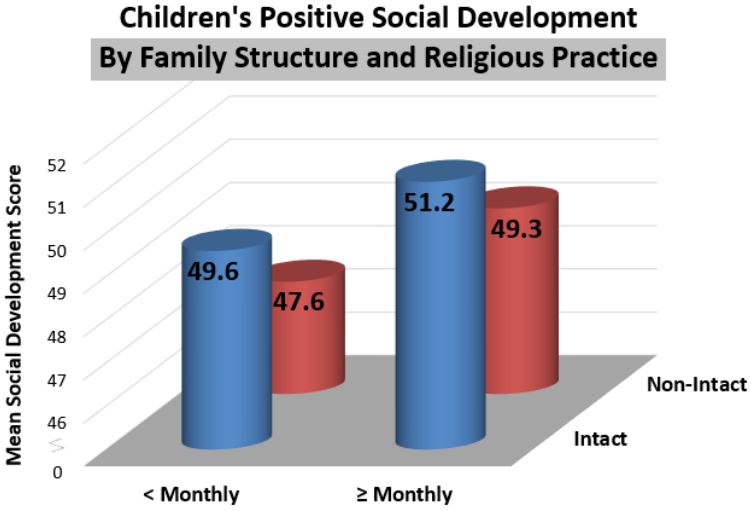
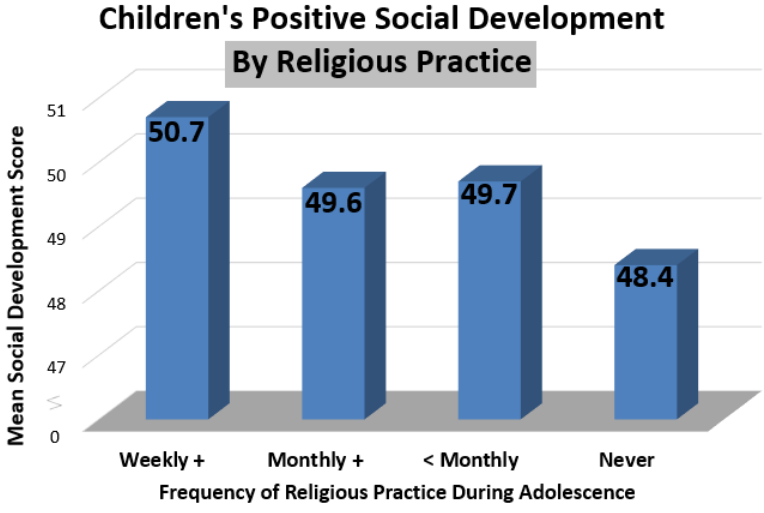
Children's Positive Social Development By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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.[2] In between were those who lived in a stepfamily (48.5) and those who lived with single mothers (49.0).[3]

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.[4]

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.[5] 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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[2] "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.
[3] Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.
[4] 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.
[5] John P. Bartkowski, et al., "Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study," *Social Science Research*, vol. 37 (2008): 18-36.

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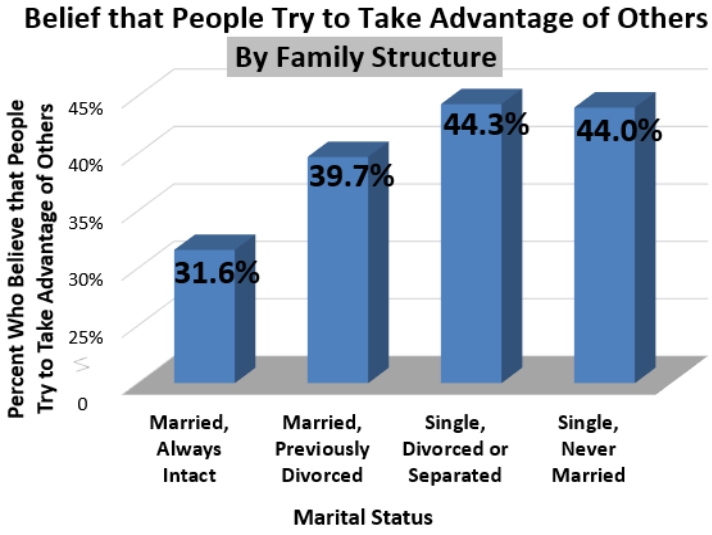
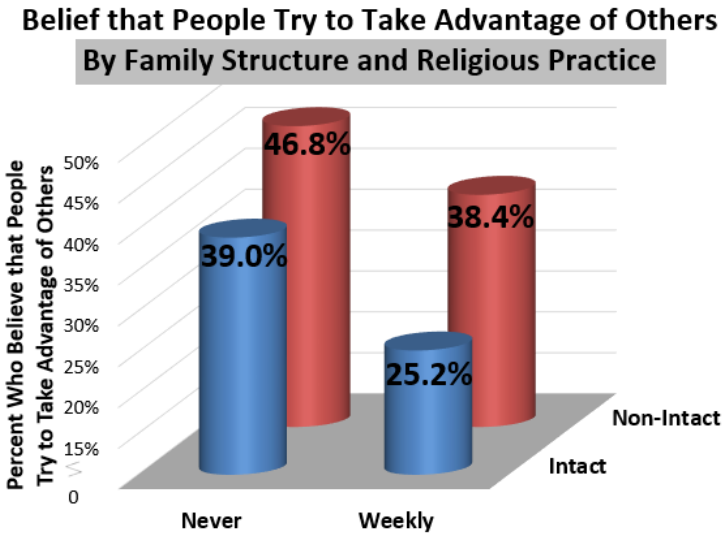
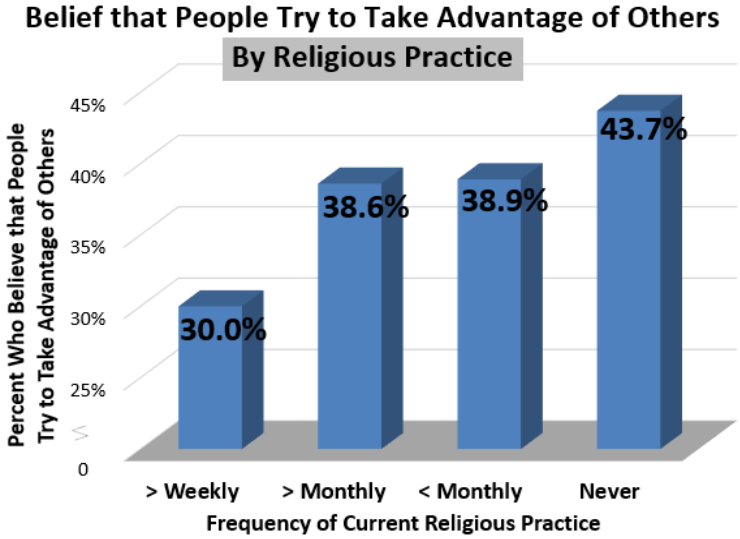
"Belief that People Try to Take Advantage of Others" By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

These charts take the national data on the "belief that people try to take advantage of others" and splits it into four quadrants. It then illustrates the poles of each quadrant to highlight the difference in outcomes that correlate with the different poles of marital status and religious attendance.

The starting points are demographics that mark two major social institutions: marital status and religious attendance. Marital status is divided further into two groups: always-intact marriages and all other marital status categories. Religious attendance is also divided into two groups: high and low worship of which the two poles "weekly attendance" and "never attends" are subcategories used in this chart.*

The resultant four poles are 1) Americans in always-intact marriages who worship weekly; 2) Americans in always-intact marriages who never worship; 3) Americans in all other marital status categories who worship weekly; and 4) Americans in all other marital status categories who never worship.

** The "all other marital status categories" group consists of adults who are "married, previously divorced," "single, divorced or separated," and "single, never married."*

"Belief that People Try to Take Advantage of Others" by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 31.6 percent of always-intact married adults believed that, given the opportunity, most people would try to take advantage of others, followed by 39.7 percent of married, previously-divorced adults, 44 percent of single, never-married adults, and 44.3 percent of single, divorced or separated adults.[1]

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 43.7 percent of adults who never attended religious services believed that, given the opportunity, most people would try to take advantage of others, followed by 38.9 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month, 38.6 percent of those who worshiped between one and three times a month, and 30 percent of those who worshiped at least weekly.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 25.2 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who attended religious services at least weekly believed that, given the opportunity, most people try to take advantage of others, followed by 38.4 percent of all other adults who worshiped at least weekly, 39 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who never attended worship, and 46.8 percent of all other adults who never attended religious services.

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[1]These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

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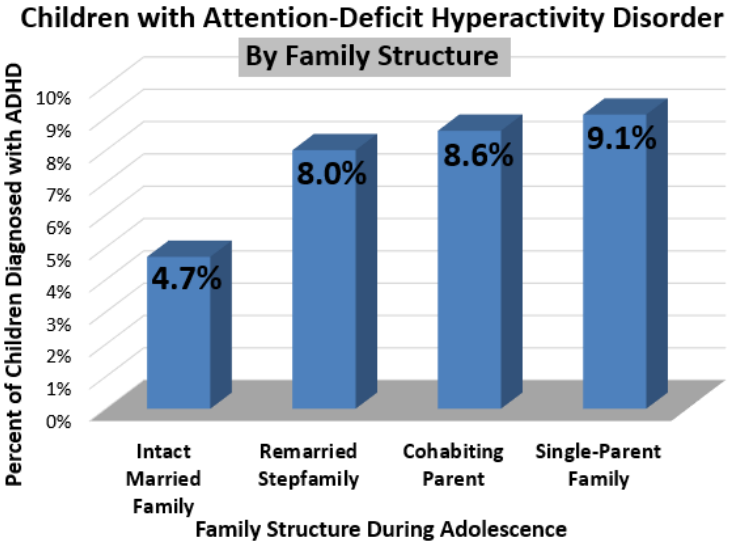
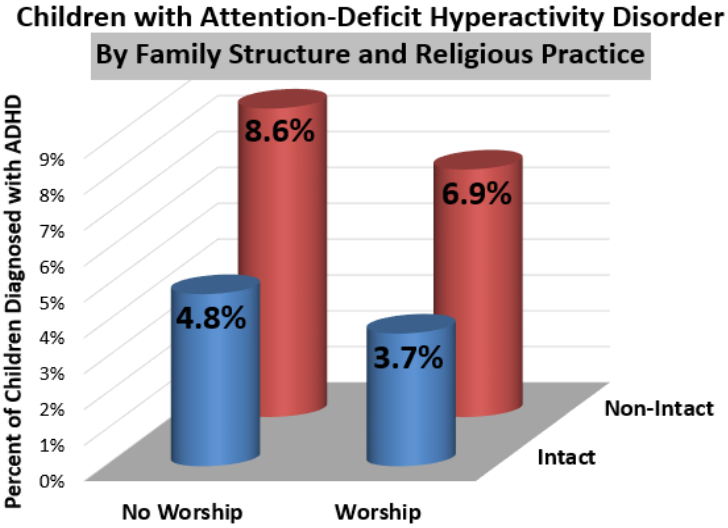
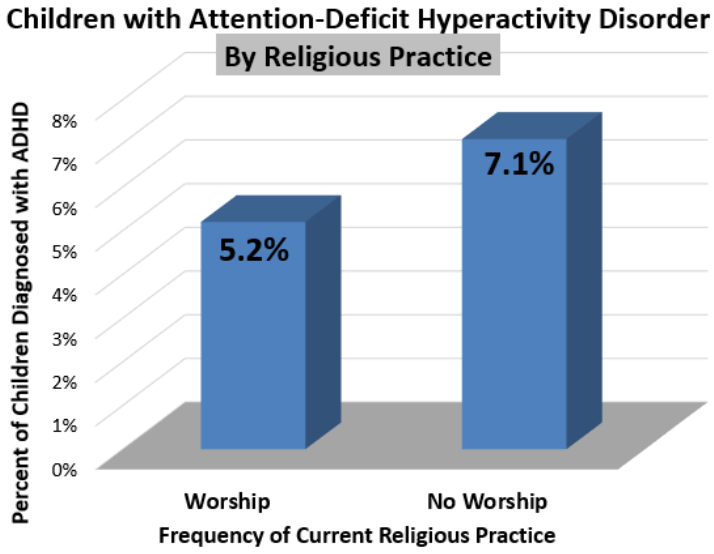
Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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[1] 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). [2] 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.[3] 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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[1] A worshipping family has attended at least one worship service in the past two weeks.

[2] 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.

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

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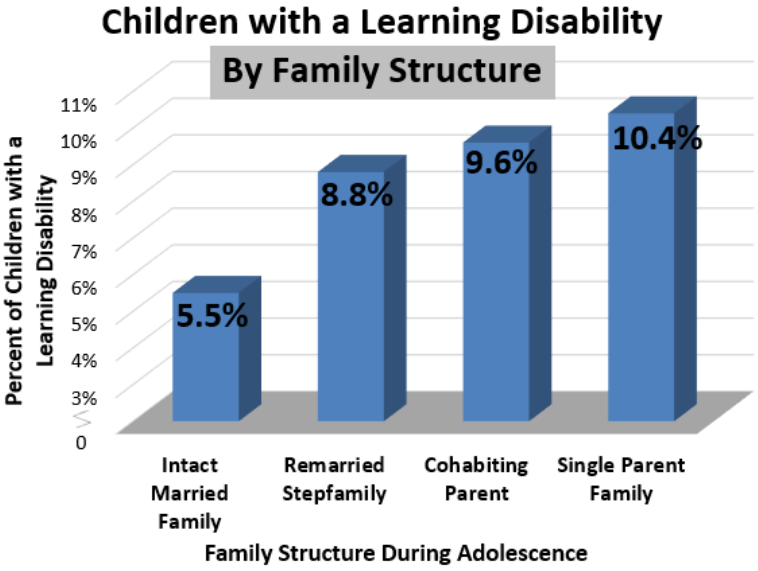
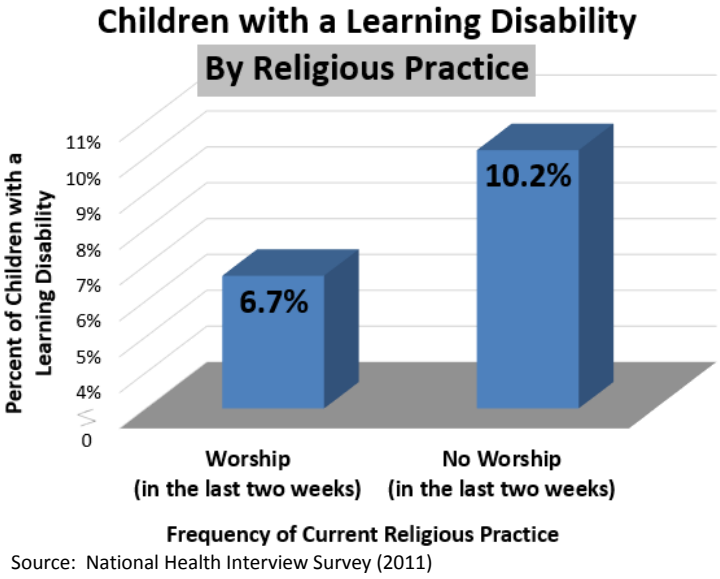
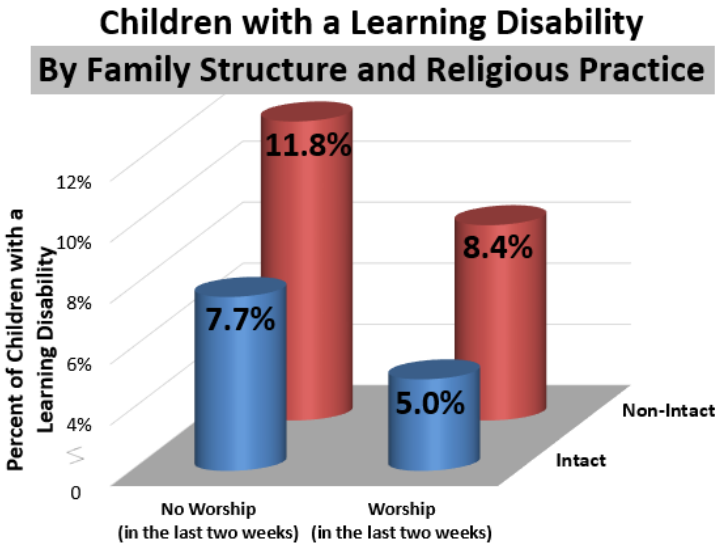
Children with a Learning Disability
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)



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

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.[4]

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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[1] 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.

[2] A worshipping family has attended at least one worship service in the past two weeks.

[3] 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."

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

Healthy Behavior

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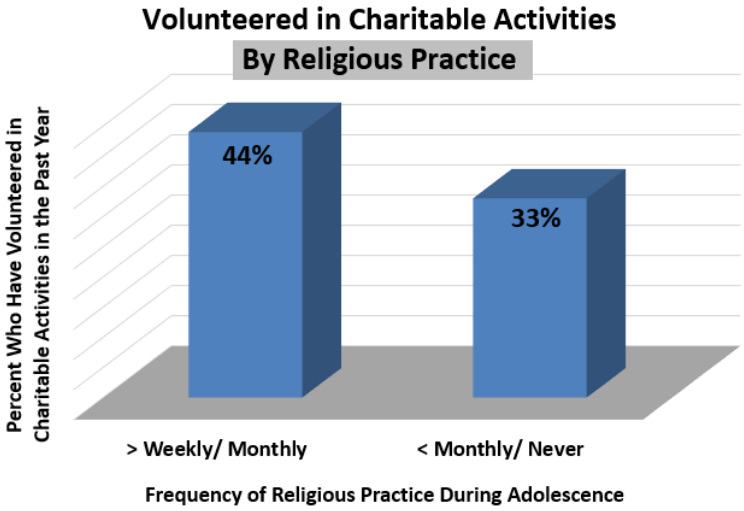
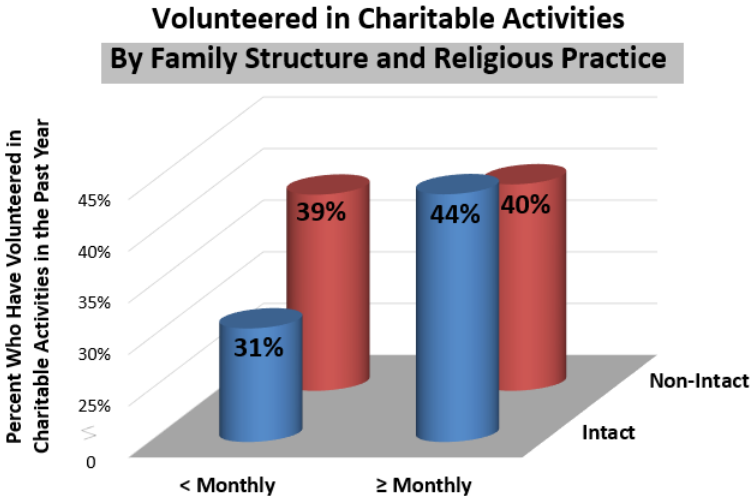
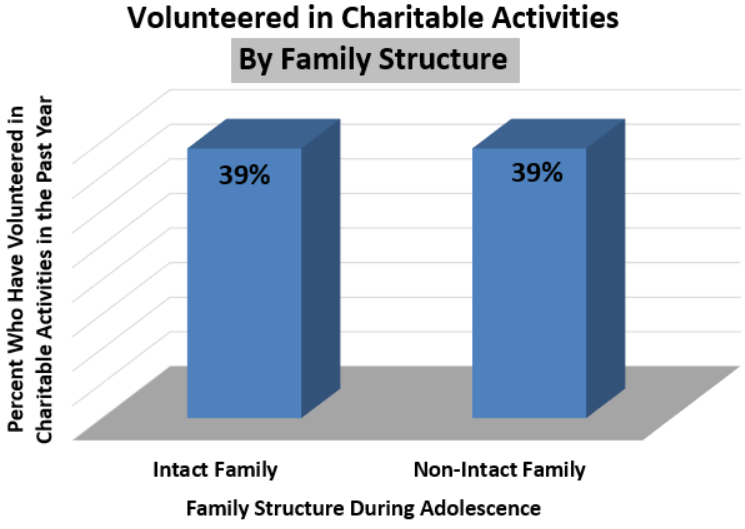
Volunteered in Charitable Activities
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey (1998)



Source: General Social Survey (1998)



Source: General Social Survey (1998)

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 General Social Survey in 1998. Two samples totaling approximately 3,000 people were used.

Volunteered in Charitable Activities by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Religious Practice: According to the 1998 General Social Survey, 44 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents had volunteered in a charitable activity in the last year, compared to 33 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.

Family Structure: Adolescent family structure background makes little statistical difference in levels of adult volunteering for charitable activities. According to the General Social Survey, 39 percent of people from both intact and non-intact families volunteered in charitable activities in the past year.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Based on the General Social Survey 44 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family as adolescents had volunteered in a charitable activity in the last year, compared to 31 percent of adults who attended religious services less than monthly and lived in an intact family as adolescents. In between were those who lived in a non-intact family and attended religious services less than monthly (39 percent) and those who had attended religious services at least monthly but lived in a non-intact family (40 percent). As the findings show, family structure during adolescence has no effect on adult volunteerism, but when combined with adolescent religious attendance, large differences emerge in the patterns of volunteering in charitable activities as adults.

Related Insights from Other Studies: To the best of our knowledge, no other studies have correlated adolescent religious attendance and family structure with adult volunteerism in charitable activities, but some studies have correlated adolescent religious attendance and family structure with contemporaneous volunteerism.

Daniel Lichter of the Ohio State University and colleagues found that "religious attendance increases the likelihood of volunteerism" for males and females in late adolescence and that single-parent families "are negatively associated with later prosocial behaviors," especially for boys.[1]

Judith Smetana and Aaron Metzger of the University of Rochester also reported that "middle class African American adolescents' spirituality and religiosity had a significant influence on their civic involvement" and that their intended involvement in future civic activities was predicted by positive communication with their mothers and fathers.[2]

As the evidence indicates, adolescents who frequently attend religious services and live in intact families are most likely to volunteer in charitable activities, both now and in the future, while their less religious counterparts are least likely.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

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[1] Daniel T. Lichter, et al., "Helping Others?: The Effects of Childhood Poverty and Family Instability on Prosocial Behavior," *Youth Society*, vol. 34 (2002): 89-119.

[2] Judith G. Smetana and Aaron Metzger, "Family and Religious Antecedents of Civic Involvement in Middle Class African American Late Adolescents," *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, vol. 15 (2005): 325-352.

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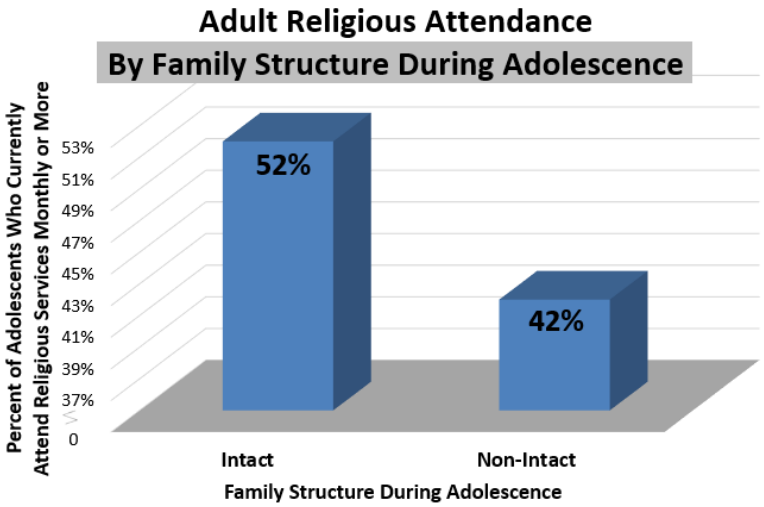
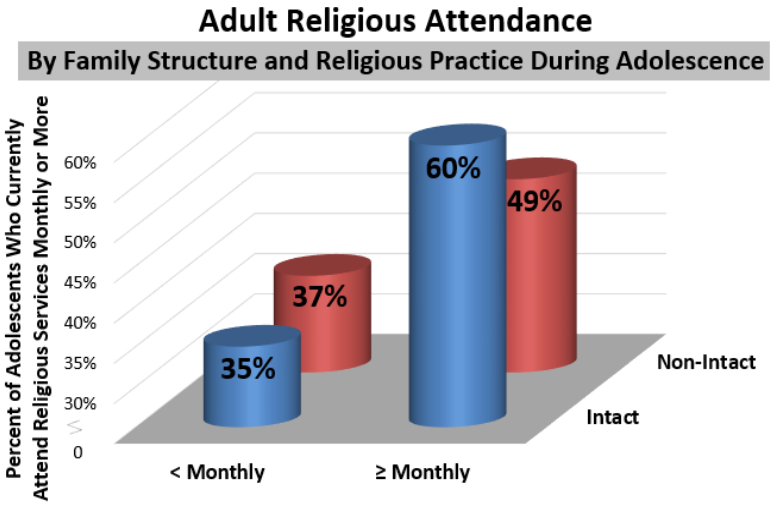
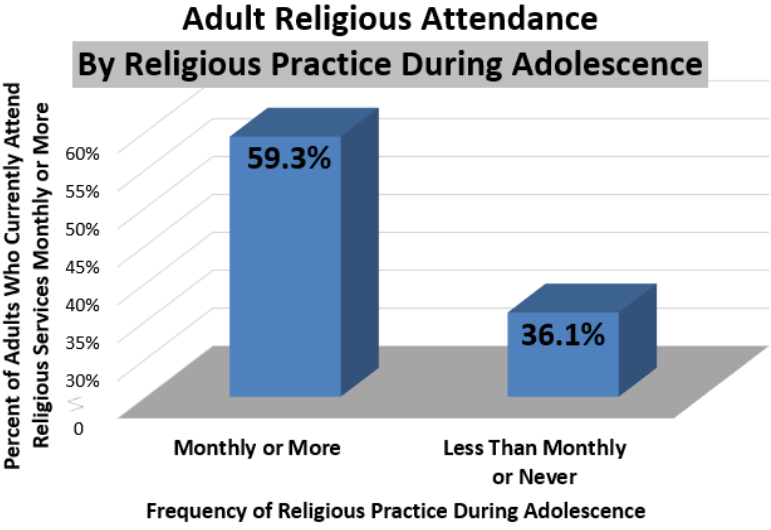
Adult Religious Attendance
By Family Structure and Religious Practice During Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

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, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category is composed of 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 General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Adult Religious Attendance by Family Structure and Religious Practice During Adolescence

Family Structure: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 52 percent of adults who grew up in an intact family as adolescents (i.e., lived with both biological parents) now attend religious services at least monthly, compared to 42 percent of adults who grew up in a non-intact family.[1]

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 59.3 percent of adults who worshiped at least monthly as adolescents now worship at least monthly as adults. In contrast, 36.1 percent of adults who worshiped less than monthly as adolescents now worship monthly or more frequently as adults.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 60 percent of adults who grew up attending religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family (i.e., lived with two biological parents) attend religious services once a month or more as adults; 49 percent of adults who grew up in a non-intact family but attended religious services at least monthly also attend religious services at least monthly as adults; 37 percent of adults who lived in a non-intact family and attended religious services less than monthly attend religious services at least monthly as adults; and, 35 percent of adults who grew up in an intact family but worshiped less than monthly as adolescents attend religious services at least monthly as adults.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies both corroborate and contradict the direction of these findings. Marjorie Gunnoe of Calvin College and Kristin Moore of Child Trends reported that church attendance during childhood was a significant predictor of religiosity in young adulthood.[2] Michael McCullough of the University of Miami and colleagues also found a correlation between religious upbringing and "religiousness in early to mid-adulthood."[3]

Jeffrey Arnett of the University of Maryland and Lene Jensen of the Catholic University of America, however, found "little relationship between childhood religious socialization and religious beliefs in emerging adulthood." They conclude, based on Arnett's earlier research, that

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[1] These statistics draw on data from the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 per year. No survey was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS was conducted only in even-numbered years, with two samples per survey, totaling approximately 3,000 respondents. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

[2] Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe and Kristin A. Moore, "Predictors of Religiosity among Youth Aged 17-22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002): 613-22.

[3] Michael E. McCullough, Jo-Ann Tsang, and Sharon Brion, "Personality Traits in Adolescence as Predictors of Religiousness in Early Adulthood: Findings from the Terman Longitudinal Study," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29 (2003): 980-91.

"young people view it as both their right and responsibility to form their beliefs and values independently of their parents."[4]

Despite Arnett and Jensen's findings, the GSS data seem to indicate that parental and family patterns of religious attendance in childhood have a significant correlation with adult practice.

Though little additional research has correlated family structure in adolescence with adult religious attendance, several other studies indicate the value of family structure in transferring religious beliefs and practices from one generation to the next. Scott Myers of the Pennsylvania State University reported that adults "raised in households characterized by high marital happiness and with both biological parents present are more likely to resemble their parents in religious beliefs."[5]

Reed Larson of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and colleagues also found that children whose parents had divorced spent less time in religious activities in the three years following the divorce.[6] As these available data indicate, adolescent family structure has a significant effect on religious practice, both in adolescence and adulthood.

A number of studies have also considered the effect of religious practice and family structure combined. Scott Myers of the Pennsylvania State University reported that “parents’ religiosity is the primary influence on the religiosity of their adult offspring” and that adults “raised in households characterized by high marital happiness and with both biological parents present are more likely to resemble their parents in religious beliefs.”[7]

Darren Sherkat of Vanderbilt University also found that childhood religious participation along with strong parental religious participation helps sustain religious adherence in adults and counteracts secularizing influences.[8] As the evidence shows, children who grow up in intact families that attend religious services frequently are more likely to worship frequently as adults.

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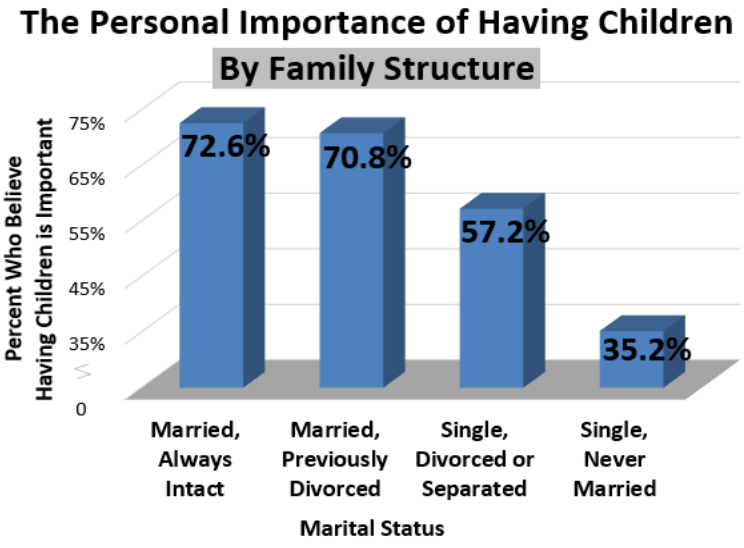
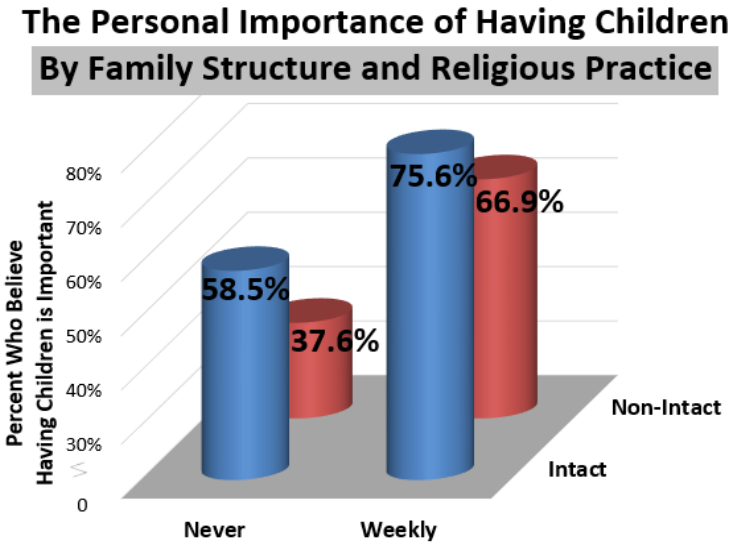
[4] Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Lene Arnett Jensen, "A Congregation of One: Individualized Religious Beliefs among Emerging Adults," *Journal of Adolescent Research* 17 (2002): 451-67.
[5] Scott M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.
[6] Reed Larson, Jodi Dworkin, and Sally Gillman, "Facilitating Adolescents' Constructive Use of Time in One-Parent Families," *Applied Developmental Science* 5 (2001): 143-57.
[7] Scott M. Myers, “An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context,” *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.
[8] Darren E. Sherkat, “Counterculture or Continuity? Competing Influences on Baby Boomers’ Religious Orientations and Participation,” *Social Forces* 76 (1998): 1087-1115.

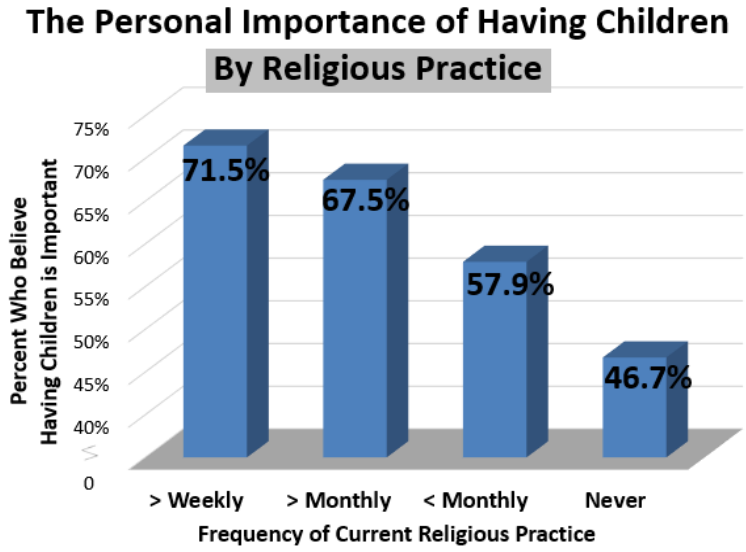
The Personal Importance of Having Children
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

These charts group the data in four categories, with two different subsets for each of two major variables, frequency of religious attendance (weekly vs. never) and marital status (always intact vs. "all others").

The always intact subset consists of adults in always-intact marriages.

The resultant four categories are 1) always intact marital status with weekly religious attendance; 2) always intact marital status with no religious attendance; 3) "all others" marital status with weekly religious attendance; and 4) "all others" marital status with no religious attendance.

These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

The Personal Importance of Having Children by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 72.6 percent of always-intact married adults believed in the importance of having their own children, followed by 70.8 percent of married, previously-divorced adults, 57.2 percent of single, divorced or separated adults and 35.2 percent of single, never-married adults. [1]

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 71.5 percent of adults who worshiped at least weekly believed in the importance of having their own children, followed by 67.5 percent of those who worshiped between one and three times a month, 57.9 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month, and 46.7 percent of those who never attended religious services.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 75.6 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who attended religious services at least weekly believed in the importance of having their own children, followed by 66.9 percent of all other adults who worshiped at least weekly, 58.5 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who never attended worship, and 37.6 percent of all other adults who never attended religious services.

It is worth noting that the frequency of religious worship seems to have greater influence in shaping this attitude than marital experience does.

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[1] These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

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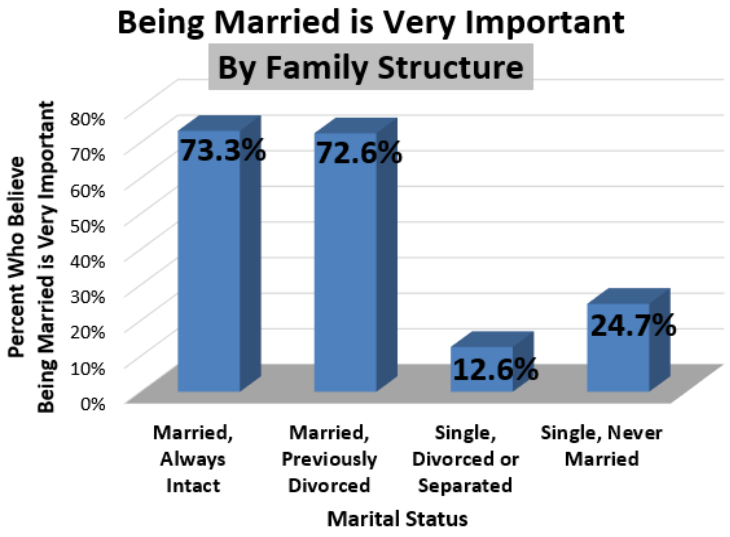
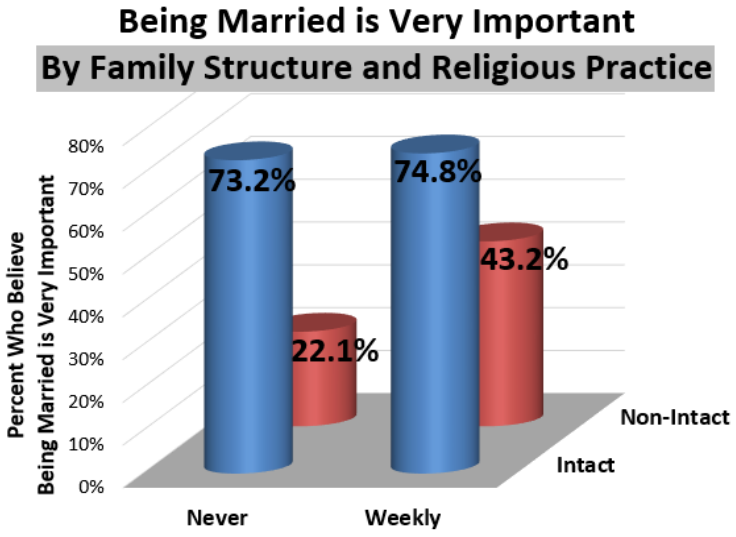
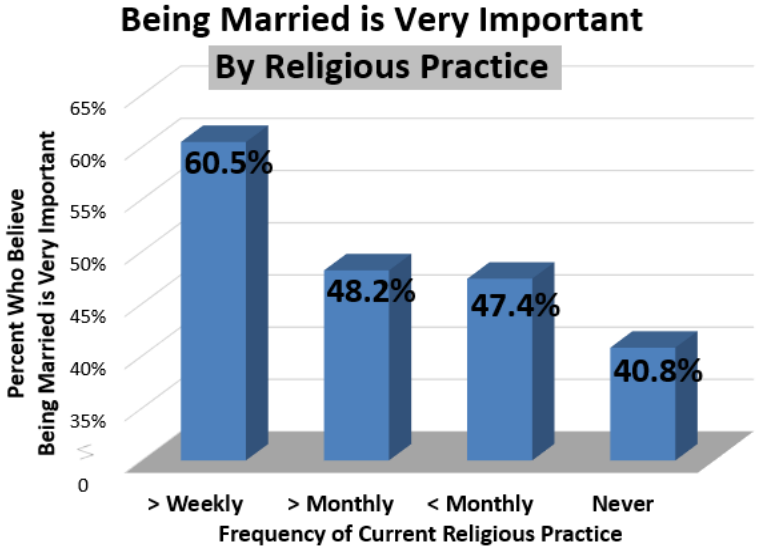
The Importance of Marriage
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006

These charts take the national data on "the personal importance of being married" and splits it into four quadrants. It then illustrates the poles of each quadrant to highlight the difference in outcomes that correlate with the different poles of marital status and religious attendance.

The starting points are demographics that mark two major social institutions: marital status and religious attendance. Marital status is divided further into two groups: always-intact marriages and all other marital status categories. Religious attendance is also divided into two groups: high and low worship of which the two poles "weekly attendance" and "never attends" are subcategories used in this chart.*

The resultant four poles are 1) Americans in always-intact marriages who worship weekly; 2) Americans in always-intact marriages who never worship; 3) Americans in all other marital status categories who worship weekly; and 4) Americans in all other marital status categories who never worship.

** The "all other marital status categories" group consists of adults who are "married, previously divorced," "single, divorced or separated," and "single, never married."*

The Importance of Marriage by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 73.3 percent of always-intact married adults reported that being married was either very important to them or one of the most important values they held, followed by 72.6 percent of married, previously-divorced adults, 24.7 percent of single, never-married adults, and 12.6 percent of single, divorced or separated adults. [1]

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 60.5 percent of adults who worshiped at least weekly reported that being married was either very important to them or one of the most important values they held, followed by 48.2 percent of those who worshiped between one and three times a month, 47.4 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month, and 40.8 percent of those who never attended religious services.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 74.8 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who attended religious services at least weekly reported that being married was either very important to them or one of the most important values they held, followed by 73.2 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who never attended worship, 43.2 percent of all other adults who worshiped at least weekly, and 22.1 percent of all other adults who never attended religious services.

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[1] These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Risky Behavior

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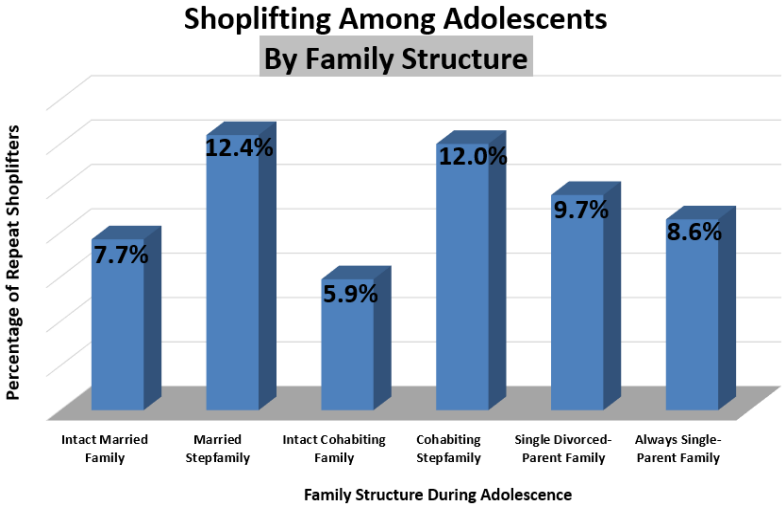
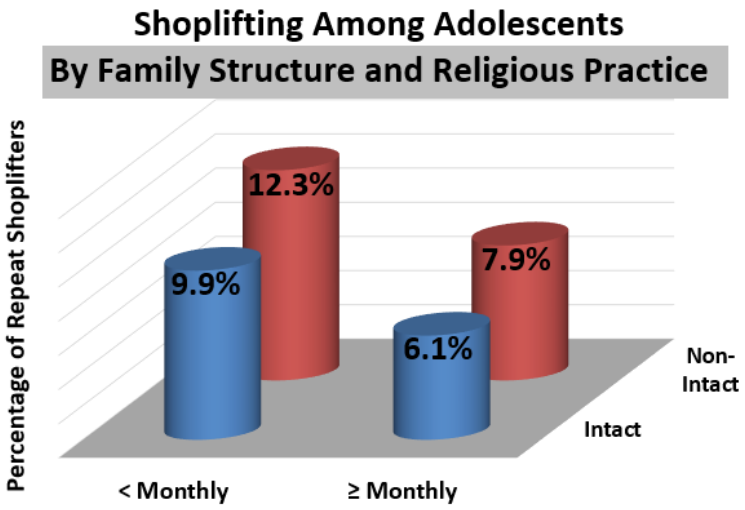
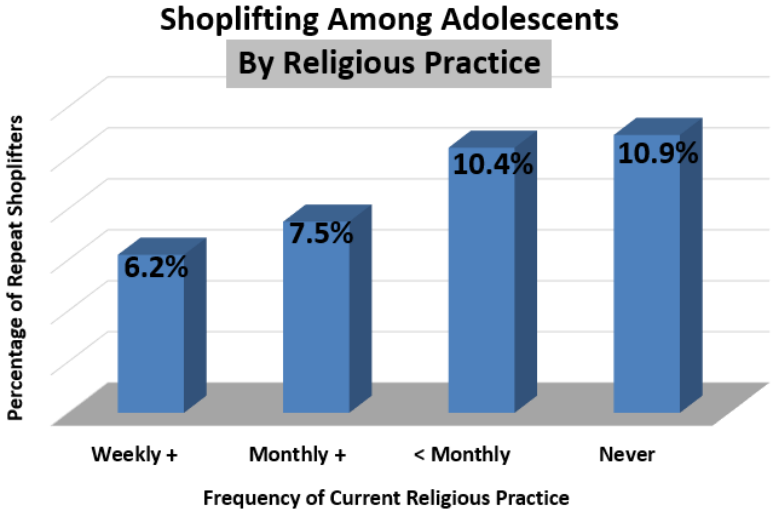
Shoplifting Among Adolescents
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Adolescents Grades 7-12.



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Adolescents Grades 7-12.



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. 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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have repeatedly shoplifted (3+ times) when correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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

Shoplifting Among Adolescents by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Waves I and II, only 7.7 percent of adolescents living with married parents and 5.9 percent of adolescents living with cohabiting biological parents were repeat shoplifters (3+ times).[1] Almost 9 percent of adolescents living with a single never-married parent and almost 10 percent of adolescents living with a divorced parent had shoplifted repeatedly. This percentage jumps to 12.4 percent for adolescents living with a stepparent or with one natural cohabiting parent (12 percent).

Religious Practice: Whereas only 6.2 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who worshipped at least weekly had shoplifted three or more times, 10.9 percent of those who never worshipped were repeat shoplifters. In between were those who attended one to three times a month (7.5 percent) and less than once a month (10.4 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 6.1 percent of adolescent students who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had repeatedly shoplifted. By contrast, over 12 percent of adolescent students who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had shoplifted repeatedly. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (7.9 percent) and those who lived in intact families but worshipped less than monthly (9.9 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: [2] Several studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Byron Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues found that while religiosity in adolescents has a negative impact on delinquency, adolescents who live with both biological parents are also less likely to associate with delinquent friends.[3]

Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin reported that adolescents with higher family satisfaction and a greater degree of parent religiosity are less likely to be delinquent.[4]

In another study, Regnerus and Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that the more important religion is to adolescents and the more satisfied adolescents are with their family, the less likely they are to engage in delinquent behavior.[5]

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[1] Given the variance in both instances there is no significant difference between these two structures.
[2] The last two findings are from www.familyfacts.org.
[3] 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* 38 (2001): 22-40.
[4] Mark D. Regnerus, "Linked Lives, Faith and Behavior: Intergenerational Religious Influence on Adolescent Delinquency," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42 (2003): 189-203.
[5] Mark. D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder, "Religion and Vulnerability among Low-Risk Adolescents," *Social Science Research* 32 (2003): 633-658.

Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University also reported that the greater the import adolescents place on religion and the more often they attend religious activities, the more likely they are to have involved parents and the less likely they are to be delinquent.[6]

The moral beliefs and values developed through frequent religious worship and an intact family powerfully counteract the temptations of shoplifting and other delinquent acts. Through attendance at religious service and the influence of married parents, adolescents are more likely to respect others' property.

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[6] Jerry Trusty, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values* 44 (1999): 30-40.

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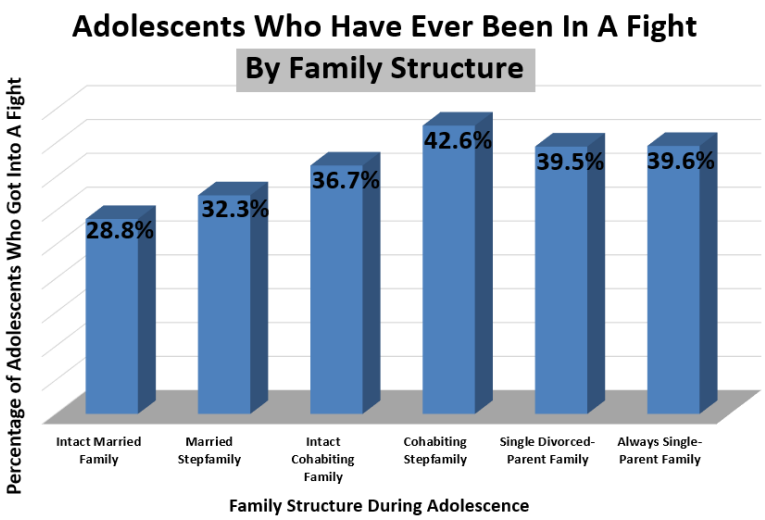
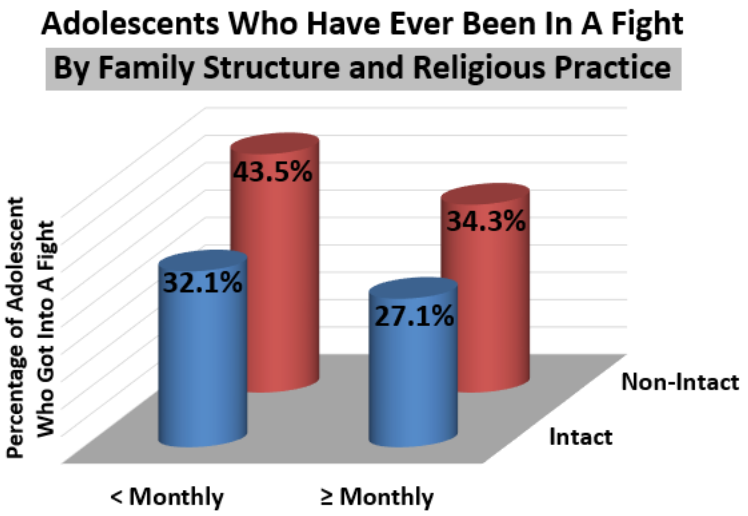
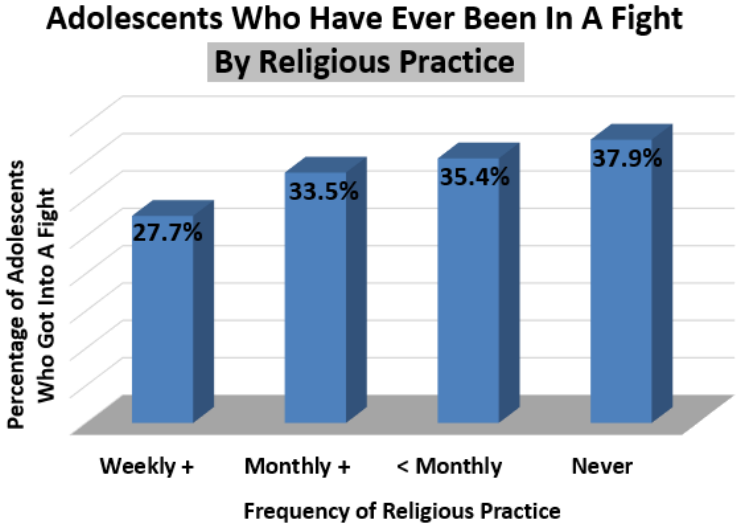
Adolescents Who Have Ever Been In A Fight
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Adolescents Grades 7-12.



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Adolescents Grades 7-12.



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. 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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have ever been in a fight, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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, Washington, D.C.

Adolescents Who Have Ever Been In a Fight by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Waves I and II, 42.6 percent of adolescents living in a cohabiting stepfamily had been in a fight, whereas only 28.8 percent of children with married parents had ever been in a fight. Among other family structures, 32.3 percent of adolescents living in stepfamilies, 36.7 percent of those living with cohabiting biological parents, 39.5 percent of those with divorced parents, and 39.6 percent of those with never married parents had ever been in a fight.

Religious Practice: Waves I and II of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health showed that 37.9 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who never worshipped had been in a fight, whereas only 27.7 percent of adolescents who worshipped at least weekly had been in a fight. Of those who attended religious services between one and three times a month, 33.5 percent had been in a fight, and of those who worship less than once a month, 35.4 percent had been in a fight.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 27.1 percent of adolescents who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had ever been in a fight. By contrast, 43.5 percent of adolescent students who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had ever been in a fight. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (34.3 percent) and those who lived with both biological parents and worshipped less than monthly (32.1 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Many other studies confirm the direction of these findings. Wendy Manning and Kathleen Lamb of Bowling Green State University reported that teens who were more religious had less behavioral problems than other teens. They also found that adolescents living with married biological parents were less delinquent than those living within any other family structure.[1]

Michelle Pearce of Yale University and colleagues found that "a greater level of parent involvement and private religious practices were associated with a decrease in conduct problems over a 1-year period."[2]

Lela McKnight and Ann Loper of the University of Virginia also reported that residing in a single-parent household was one of only two significant risk factors associated with delinquency in female adolescents. Degree of religious belief was one of five significant resilience factors.[3]

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[1] Wendy D. Manning and Kathleen A. Lamb, "Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 876-893.

[2] Michelle J. Pearce, Stephanie M. Jones, Mary E. Schwab-Stone, and Vladislav Ruchkin, "The Protective Effects of Religiousness and Parent Involvement on the Development of Conduct Problems among Youth Exposed to Violence," *Child Development* 74.6 (2003): 1682-1696.

Christian Smith of the University of Notre Dame found that adolescent children whose parents attended church regularly were more likely to expect their parents to be upset if they discovered their children had been fighting.[4]

When it comes to keeping children from getting into fights, the intact married family that worships regularly is the most effective peacekeeping force.

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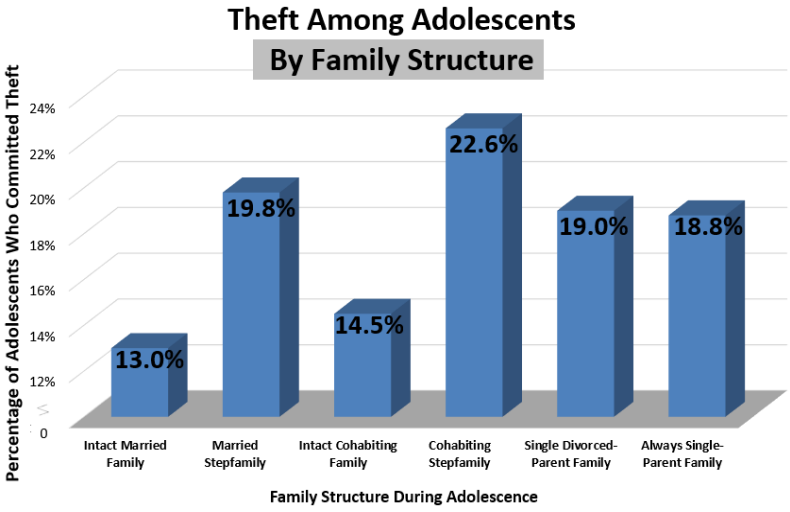
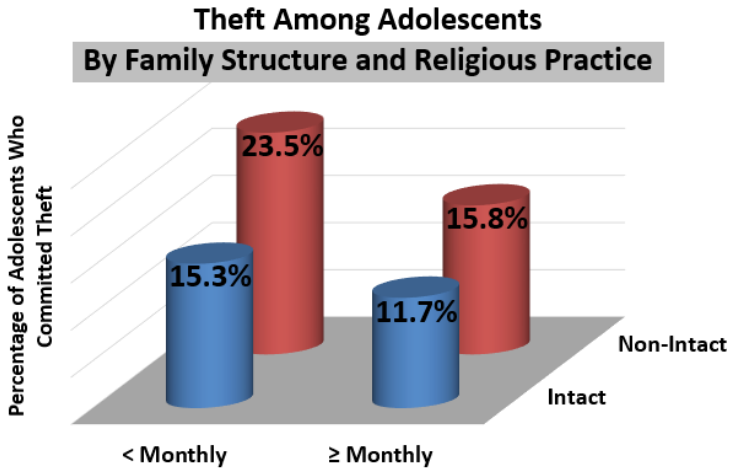
[3] Lela Renee McKnight and Ann Booker Loper, "The Effect of Risk and Resilience Factors on the Prediction of Delinquency in Adolescent Girls," *Social Psychology International* 23.2 (2002): 186-198.
[4] Christian Smith, "Religious Participation and Parental Moral Expectations and Supervision of American Youth," *Reviews of Religious Research* 44.4 (2003): 414-424. This finding is from www.familyfacts.org.

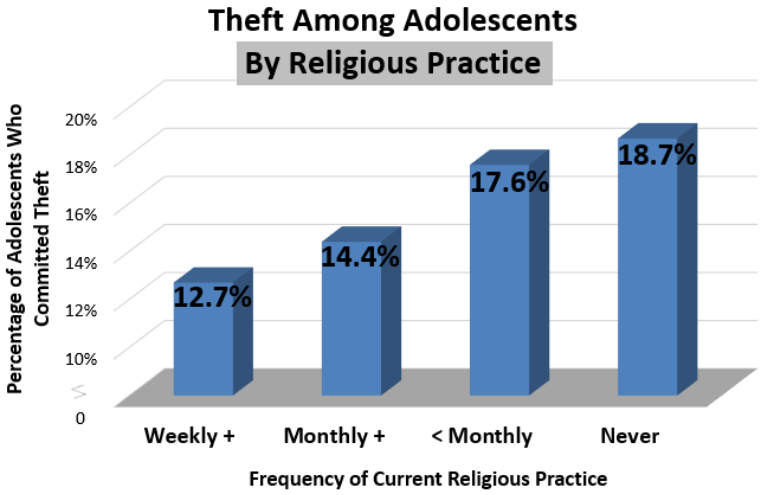
Theft Among Adolescents
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have ever stolen more than $50 worth of goods, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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.

Theft Among Adolescents by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to a confidential survey conducted as part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 13 percent of children who lived in intact married families admitted to having stolen at least $50 worth of goods. By comparison, 18.8 percent of children whose parents never married, 19 percent of those whose parents were divorced, 19.8 percent of those living with a step-parent, 14.5 percent of those living with cohabiting biological parents, and 22.6 percent of those living in cohabiting stepfamilies had stolen at least $50 worth.

Religious Practice: The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health showed that 12.7 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who attended religious services at least weekly admitted to having stolen at least $50 worth of goods. By comparison, 18.7 percent of those who never worshipped, 14.4 percent of those who worshipped one to three times a month, and 17.6 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month had committed similar thefts.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 11.7 percent of adolescents who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had ever stolen at least $50 worth of goods. By contrast, 23.5 percent of adolescents who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had stolen similar amounts. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (15.8 percent) and those who lived with both biological parents and worshipped less than monthly (15.3 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Though little additional research has been done that correlates these three measures, what studies exist 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 delinquent, as were adolescents who lived with their married parents.[2]

Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin and Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that adolescents who attended religious services at least weekly and adolescents who are satisfied with their family were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.[3]

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[2] 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. The delinquency measures included stealing something worth more than $50 and stealing something worth less than $50.

[3] Mark D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder, "Religion and Vulnerability among Low-Risk Adolescents," *Social Science Research*, vol. 32 (2003): 633-658. The delinquency measures included stealing something worth more than $50 and stealing something worth less than $50.

In another study, Regnerus reported that family satisfaction and religiosity were strong protective factors against adolescent delinquency, although religiosity affected adolescent boys only indirectly through higher levels of family satisfaction.[4]

The available evidence indicates that the dual influence of religious attendance and an intact married family prove to be effective in reducing theft by adolescents.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.
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[4] Mark D. Regnerus, "Linked Lives, Faith, and Behavior: Intergenerational Religious Influence on Adolescent Delinquency," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 42 (2003): 189-203. The delinquency measures included stealing something worth more than $50 and stealing something worth less than $50.

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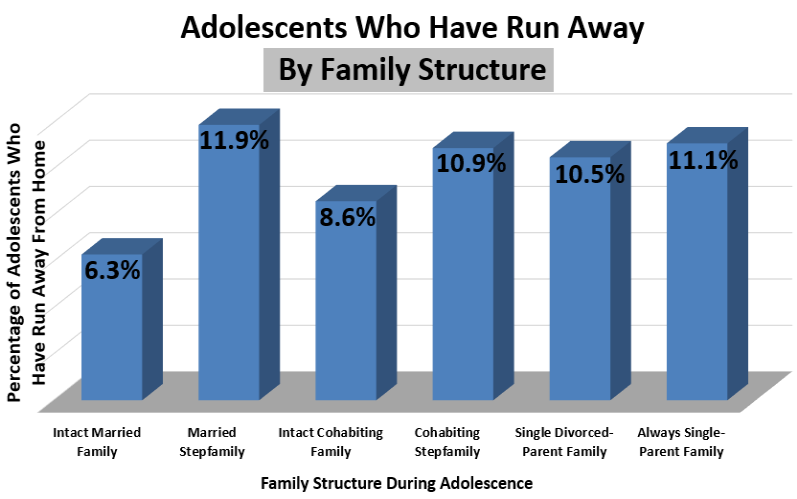
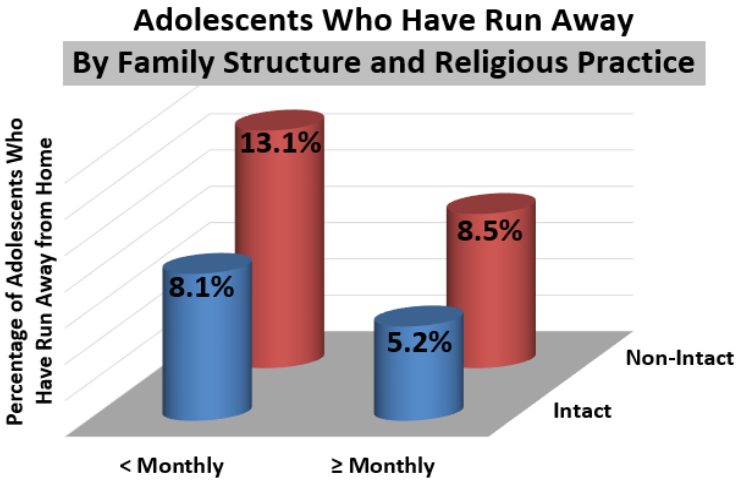
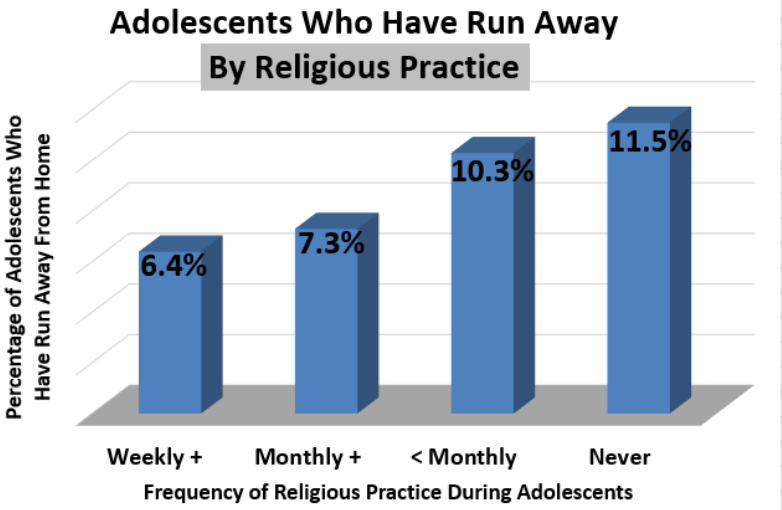
Adolescents Who Have Run Away
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have ever run away, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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.

Adolescents Who Have Run Away by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: Based on National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 6.3 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who lived with their married, biological parents had run away from home before. By contrast, 11.9 percent of adolescents who lived with a stepparent havd run away from home. In between were those who lived with two biological cohabiting parents (8.6 percent), those whose parents were divorced (10.5 percent), those who lived in a cohabiting stepfamily (10.9 percent), and those who lived with a single, never-married parent (11.1 percent).

Religious Practice: According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, 6.4 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who worshipped at least weekly had run away from home. By contrast, 11.5 percent of students who never worshipped had run away from home. In between were those who worshipped one to three times a month (7.3 percent) and those who worshipped less than once a month (10.3 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 5.2 percent of adolescents who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had ever run away from home. By contrast, more than 13.1 percent of adolescents who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had run away. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (8.5 percent) and those who lived with both biological parents and worshipped less than monthly (8.1 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Having analyzed delinquency data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Lela McKnight and Ann Loper of the University of Virginia reported that single-parent status was a significant risk factor for adolescent female delinquency while religious belief was a significant resiliency factor.[2]

Wendy Manning and Kathleen Lamb of Bowling Green State University also found that adolescents who lived with both biological parents and were more religious were less likely to be delinquent.[3]As the evidence indicates, religious attendance and the intact married family are a powerful tandem of effective guardians against runaway adolescents.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.
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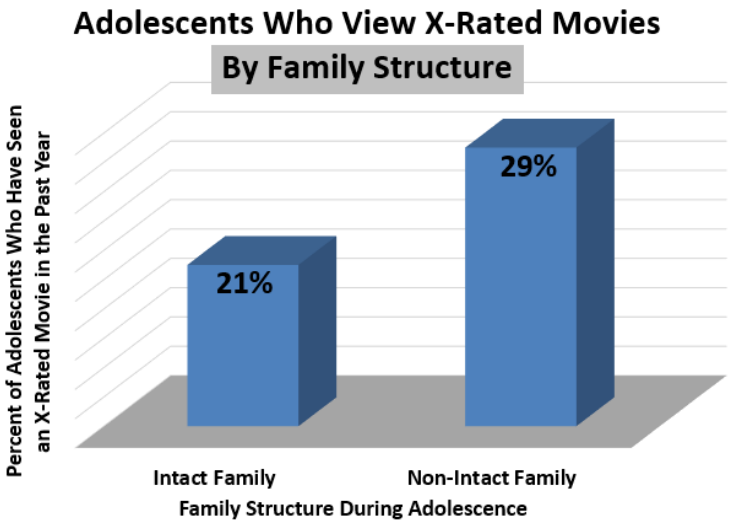
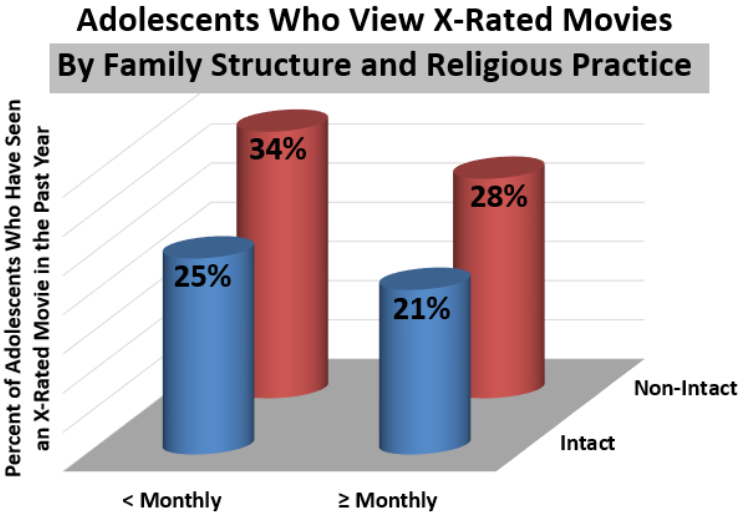
[2] Lela Renee' McKnight and Ann Booker Loper, "The Effect of Risk and Resilience Factors on the Prediction of Delinquency in Adolescent Girls," *School Psychology International*, vol. 23 (2002): 186-198. The delinquency measures included running away from home.

[3] 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. The delinquency measures included running away from home.

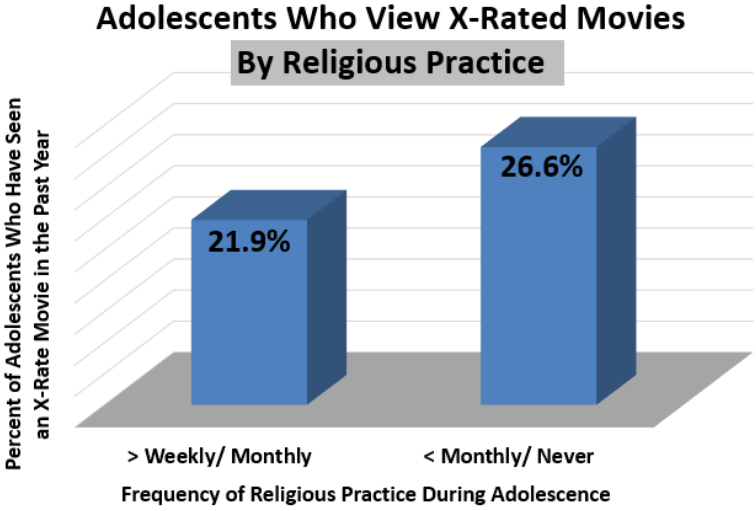
Adolescents Who Viewed X-Rated Films By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

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 General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Adolescents Who Viewed X-Rated Films by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: Based on the 1972-2006 General Social Survey, 21 percent of adults who lived in an intact family as adolescents had viewed an X-rated movie in the last year, compared to 29 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Survey 21.9 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents had viewed an X-rated movie in the last year, compared to 26.6 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: About 21 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family as adolescents had viewed an X-rated film in the last year, compared to 34 percent of adults who attended religious services less than monthly and lived in a non-intact family as adolescents. In between were those who lived in an intact family but attended religious services less than monthly (25 percent) and those who had attended religious services at least monthly but lived in a non-intact family (28 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Gina Wingood of the Rollins School of Public Health and colleagues found that, among black female adolescents, "[e]xposure to X-rated movies was associated with residing in a single-parent family and being monitored by someone other than one's mother."[1]

Jay Grosfeld of the Indiana University School of Medicine also found that children living in "single parent and broken homes" were more likely to be exposed to pornography.[2]

Elissa Benedek of the University of Michigan and Catherine Brown, executive editor of *Psychiatric News*, reported that children from single-parent homes are most at risk from exposure to televised pornography.[3]

In terms of religion, Stephen Tibbetts and Michael Blankenship of East Tennessee State University found that those with no religious affiliation were more tolerant of X-rated video stores, even more so when these stores were present in their own neighborhood.[4]

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[1] Gina M. Wingood, et al., "Exposure to X-rated Movies and Adolescents' Sexual and Contraceptive-Related Attitudes and Behaviors," *Pediatrics*, vol. 107 (2001): 1116-1119.
[2] Jay Grosfeld, "The Plight of Children," *Annals of Surgery*, vol. 246 (2007): 343-350.
[3] Elissa P. Benedek and Catherine F. Brown, "No Excuses: Televised Pornography Harms Children," *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, vol. 7 (1999): 236-240.
[4] Stephen G. Tibbetts and Michael B. Blankenship, "Explaining Citizens' Attitudes Toward Pornography: Differential Effects of Predictors Across Levels of Geographic Proximity to Other Sources," *Justice Quarterly*, vol. 16 (1999): 735-763.

In an examination of Australian adolescents, Joan Abbott-Chapman and Carey Denholm of the University of Tasmania also reported a correlation between high levels of religiosity and avoidance of X-rated films. They found that religious beliefs, in and of themselves, are only weakly associated with avoiding X-rated films. "The positive, normative reinforcement of belonging to a church, school and/or community group of shared values is also needed."[5]

As the data indicate, growing up in an intact family that worships frequently proves to be an effective protector against X-rated movie viewing in adolescence and in adulthood.

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Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

[5] Joan Abbott-Chapman and Carey Denholm, "Adolescents' Risk Activities, Risk Hierarchies and the Influence of Religiosity," *Journal of Youth Studies*, vol. 4 (2001): 279-297.

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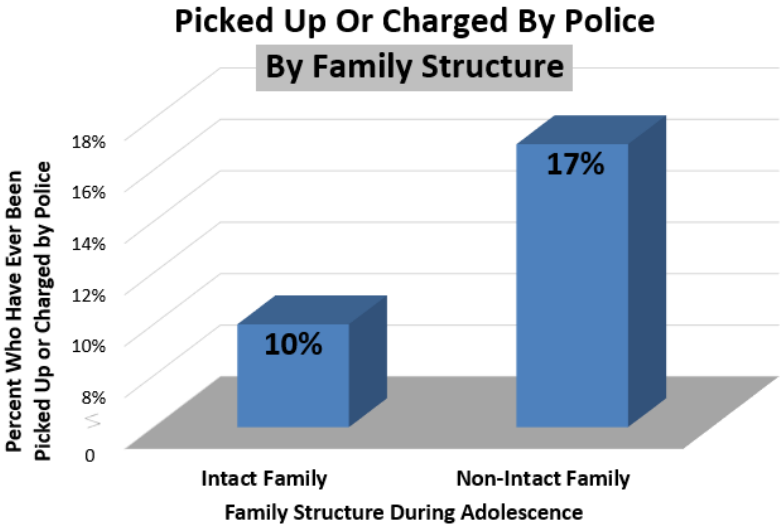
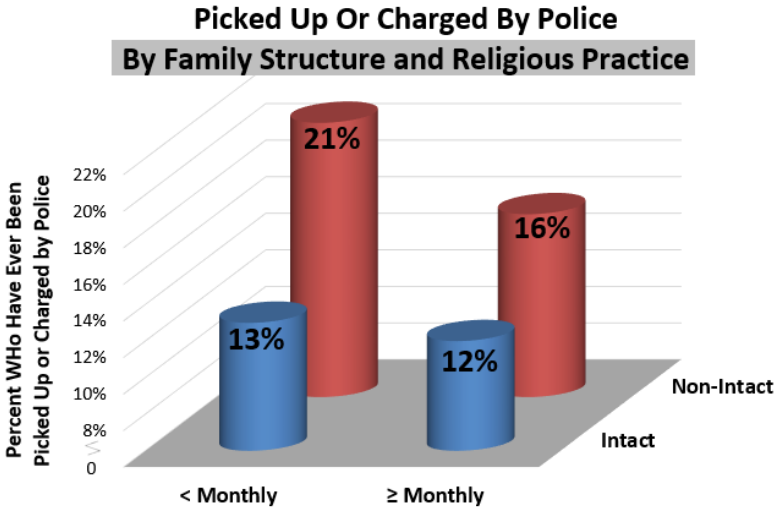
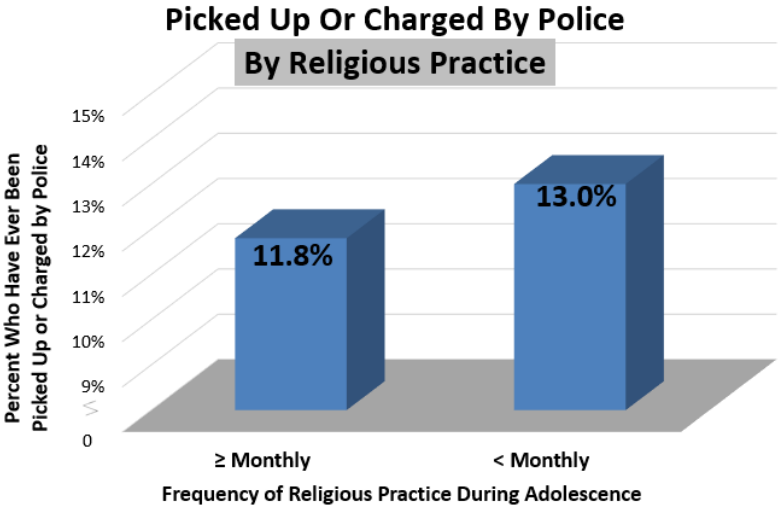
Picked Up or Charged By Police
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-1987



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-1987



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-1987

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 General Social Surveys, 1972-1987. The sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979 or 1981.

Picked Up or Charged by Police By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the 1972-1987 General Social Survey, 10 percent of adults who lived in an intact family as adolescents have ever been picked up or charged by police, compared to 17 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.

Religious Practice: Based on the General Social Survey 11.8 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents have ever been picked up or charged by police, compared to 13 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: About 12 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family through adolescence have ever been picked up or charged by police, compared to 21 percent of adults who attended religious services less than monthly and lived in a non-intact family as adolescents. In between were those who lived in an intact family but attended religious services less than monthly (13 percent) and those who had attended religious services at least monthly but lived in a non-intact family (16 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several contemporaneous studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin reported that adolescents with more religious parents and higher family satisfaction are less likely to exhibit delinquent behavior.[1]

Wendy Manning of Bowling Green State University and Kathleen Lamb of the University of Wisconsin also found that adolescents who were more religious and adolescents who lived with their married parents were less likely to paint graffiti or signs on someone else's property or in a public place, deliberately damage someone else's property, take something from a store without paying for it, drive a car without the owner's permission, use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone, and sell marijuana or other drugs.[2]

As the evidence shows, religious attendance and an intact family weave a powerful safety net that keeps both adolescents, and later adults, from being picked up or charged by police.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai

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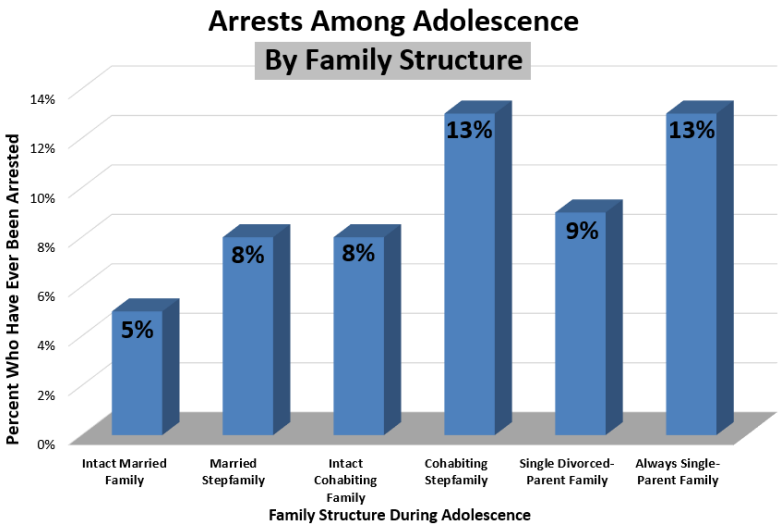
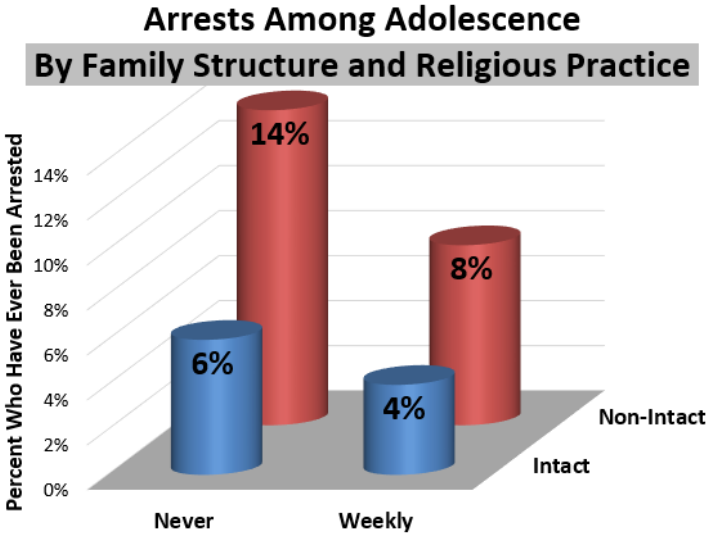
[1] Mark D. Regnerus, "Linked Lives, Faith and Behavior: Intergenerational Religious Influence on Adolescent Delinquency," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 42 (2003): 189-203.

[2] 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.

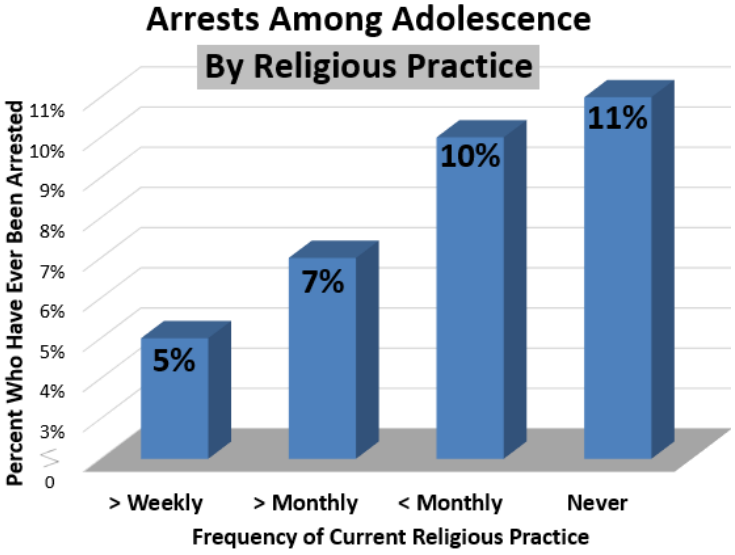
Arrests Among Adolescents
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth

This chart looks at youths who have ever been arrested 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.)*

Arrests Among Adolescents by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that youths who did not grow up in always-intact married families and never attended church were most likely to have "ever been arrested".

Family Structure: Only 5 percent of youths who grew up in an intact married family had ever been arrested, followed by youths from married stepfamilies and families with intact cohabiting partners (8 percent), single divorced parent families (9 percent) and cohabiting stepfamilies and always single parent families (13 percent).

Religious Practice: Five percent of youths who attended weekly religious services at the time of the survey had ever been arrested, followed by those who attended one to three times a month (7 percent), those who attended less than once a month (10 percent), and those who never attended church (11 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 4 percent of youths who attended weekly religious services at the time of the survey and who grew up in an always-intact family had ever been arrested, followed by youths who never attended church but grew up in an always intact family (6 percent), those who grew up in all other family structures but attended church weekly (8 percent) and those who never attended church and grew up in all other family structures (14 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: The effects of family structure can be seen in the Oregon Youth Study, a longitudinal survey. Compared to boys living with both biological parents, boys living in single-mother households had higher odds of being arrested by age 14 (208 percent higher) and of being arrested by age 17 (128 percent higher). This survey also showed that boys living in stepfamilies had greater odds of being arrested by age 14 (210 percent higher) and of being arrested by age 17 (139 percent higher) than did boys in households with both biological parents.[1]

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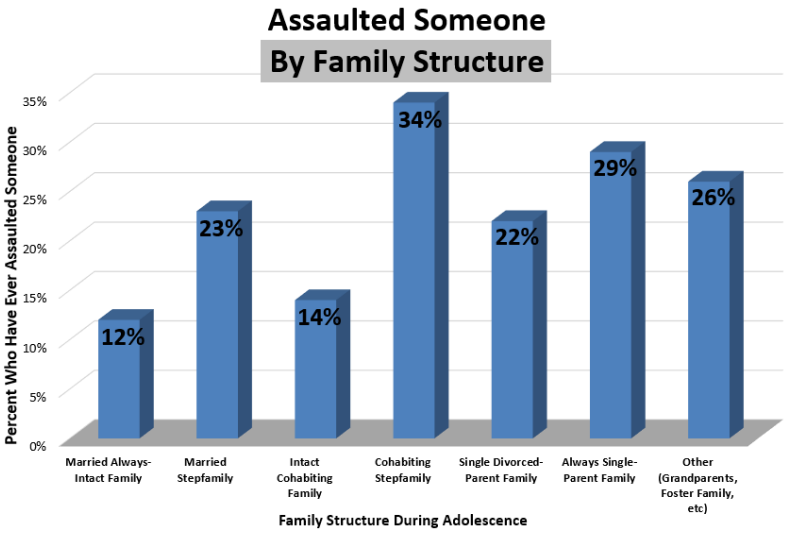
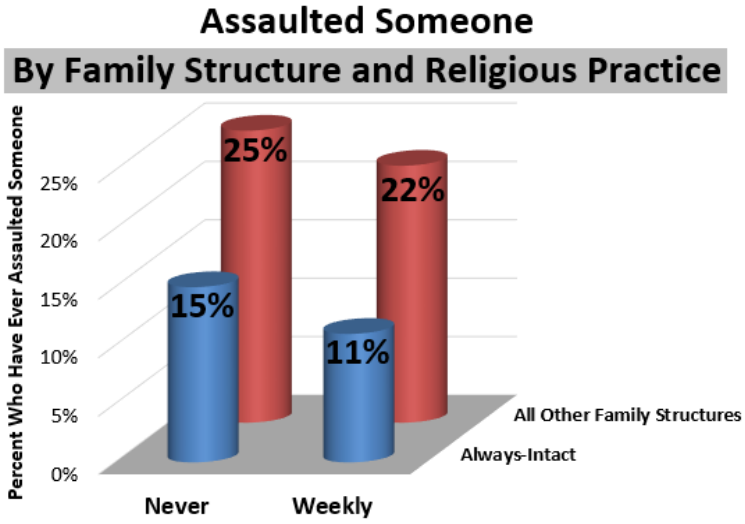
Scott Talkington, Ph.D.
Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

[1] Coughlin, Chris and Samuel Vuchinich, "Family Experience in Preadolescence and the Development of Male Delinquency," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58*(2)* 1996, pp. 491-501.

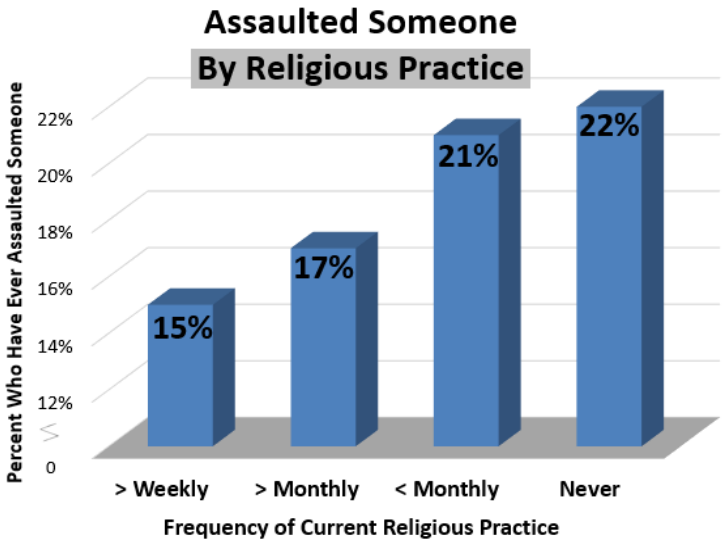
Assaulted Someone
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at adults who have committed assault 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.*

("All other family structures" includes adults 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.)*

Assaulted Someone by Family Structure and Religious Practice

According to the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, adults who grew up in intact families who frequently attended religious services at the time of the survey were least likely to have ever assaulted someone.

Family Structure: According to the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 12 percent of adults who grew up with both biological married parents committed assault in their lifetime. After those who grew up in intact families, those who grew up in an intact, cohabiting family were least likely to commit assault (14 percent), followed by those who grew up in a divorced single-parent family (22 percent), those who grew up in a married stepfamily (23 percent), those who grew up in an alternate family structure [i.e. with grandparents, in foster homes, etc.] (26 percent), and those who grew up with an always single parent (29 percent). Those who grew up in a cohabiting stepfamily were most likely to commit assault (34 percent).

Religious Practice: The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that 15 percent of those who attended religious services at least once per week at the time of the survey committed assault. They were followed by those who attended services at least monthly (17 percent) and those who attended less than monthly (21 percent). Adults who never attended religious services were most likely (22 percent) to ever have assaulted someone.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Based on the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 11 percent of adults who worshipped weekly and grew up in intact families had committed assault. By contrast, 25 percent of adults who never attended religious services and came from "other family structures" had assaulted someone. Between these two extremes were those who never worshipped and grew up in intact families (15 percent) and those who attended religious services weekly but grew up in "other" family structures (22 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Research by Cary Heck and Anthony Walsh found that "delinquents from homes broken by desertion…committed more frequent and/or more serious acts in each offense category than did delinquents from the other family structure conditions."[1] Robert DuRant found that frequent religious attendance in young adolescents correlated with increased likelihood of choosing nonviolent methods to solve hypothetical conflict.[2] Also, Christopher G. Ellison found that religious practice is correlated to decreased risk of domestic violence.[3]

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

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[1] Heck, Cary & Walsh, Anthony. "The Effects of Maltreatment and Family Structure on Minor and Serious Delinquency." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 44(2), (2000) pp. 178-193.

[2] DuRant, Robert, Frank Treiber, Elizabeth Goodman & Elizabeth R. Woods. "Intentions to Use Violence among Young Adolescents," *Pediatrics* Volume 98(6), (1996) pp. 1104-1108.

[3] Ellison, Christopher G,.Jenny A. Trinitapoli, Kristin L. Anderson & Byron R. Johnson. "Race/Ethnicity, Religious Involvement, and Domestic Violence." *Violence Against Women* Volume 13(11), (2007) pp. 1094-1112.

Substance Abuse

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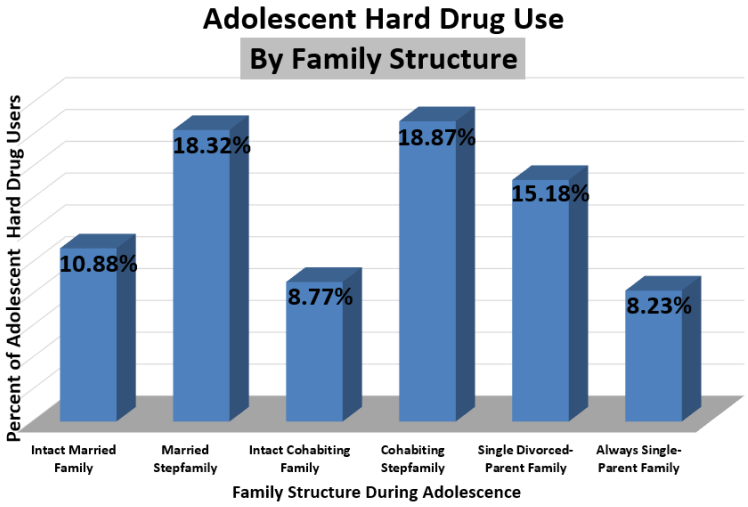
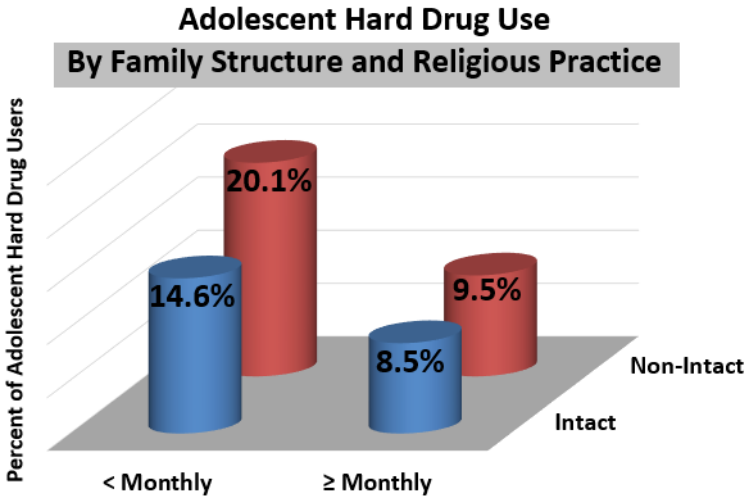
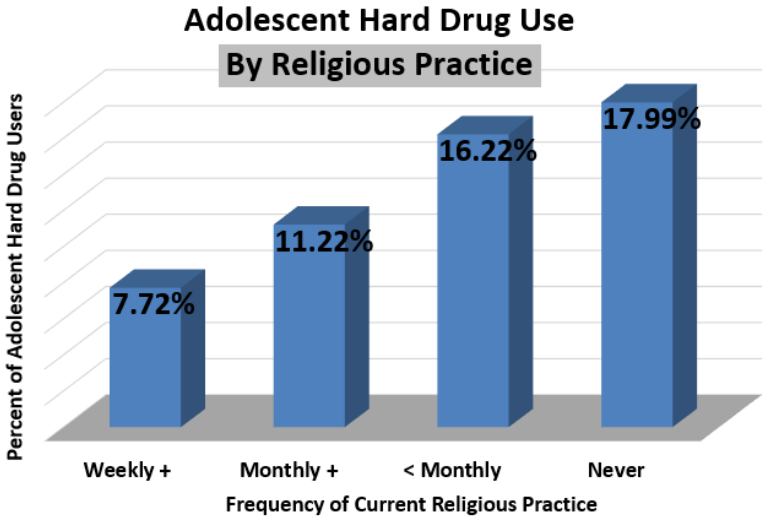
Adolescent Hard Drug Use
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Wave I. 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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who have ever tried hard drugs when correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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, Washington, D.C.

Adolescent Hard Drug Use by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Wave I, children who lived with both biological parents were less inclined to try hard drugs (8.77 percent of adolescents with cohabiting biological parents and 10.88 percent of adolescents with married parents).[1] More than 15 percent of adolescents whose parents were divorced had used hard drugs. Just 8.23 percent of adolescents whose parents never married admitted to ever using hard drugs.

Religious Practice: Only 7.72 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who worshipped at least weekly had ever used hard drugs, whereas 17.99 percent of those who never worshipped admitted to using hard drugs. In between were those who attended worship service one to three times a month (11.22 percent) and less than once a month (16.22 percent). The data were taken from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 8.5 percent of adolescent students who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had ever tried hard drugs. By contrast, over 20 percent of adolescent students who worshipped less than monthly and came from broken or reconstituted families had used hard drugs. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (9.5 percent) and those who lived in intact families but worshipped less than monthly (14.6 percent). The data were taken from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University found that students who attend religious activities are more likely to have involved parents and less likely to use drugs.[2]

Jo Anne Grunbaum of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and colleagues found that increased church attendance and family involvement are significantly associated with decreased cocaine use among students in high school recovery/dropout prevention programs.[3]

Analyzing data from a random set of 13,250 adolescents in Utah in 1994, Stephen Bahr of Brigham Young University and colleagues reported that while good father-adolescent relationships, as well as good mother-adolescent relationships, have an effect on deterring drug use, a much more significant deterrent to drug use is a student's religiosity.[4]

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[1] There is no statistical difference between these two data sets.

[2] Jerry Trusty, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values* 44.1 (1999): 30-40. This finding is from www.familyfacts.org.

[3] J. A. Grunbaum, S. Tortolero, N. Weller, and P. Gingiss, "Cultural, Social, and Intrapersonal Factors Associated with Substance Use among Alternative High Schools," *Addictive Behaviors* 25 (2000): 145-151.

[4] Stephen J. Bahr, Suzanne L. Maughan, Anastasios C. Marcos, and Bingdao Li, "Family, Religiosity, and the Risk of Adolescent Drug Use," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60 (1998): 979-992.

Ray Merrill of Brigham Young University and colleagues found that students at Brigham Young University were less likely to have used drugs if their parents were involved in church and had frequent discussions with their children about appropriate conduct. By contrast, those students whose parents had a neutral or dismissive attitude toward religion were more likely to have used drugs.[5]

While religious attendance appears to be even more protective than intact marriage, the intact married family that worships frequently is the most protective. The two great loves, of spouse and of God, make a difference to adolescents.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.
Patrick Fagan is the Director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute

[5] R. M. Merrill, R. D. Salazar, and N. W. Gardner, "Relationship between Family Religiosity and Drug Use Behavior among Youth," *Social Behavior and Personality* 29 (2001): 347-357.

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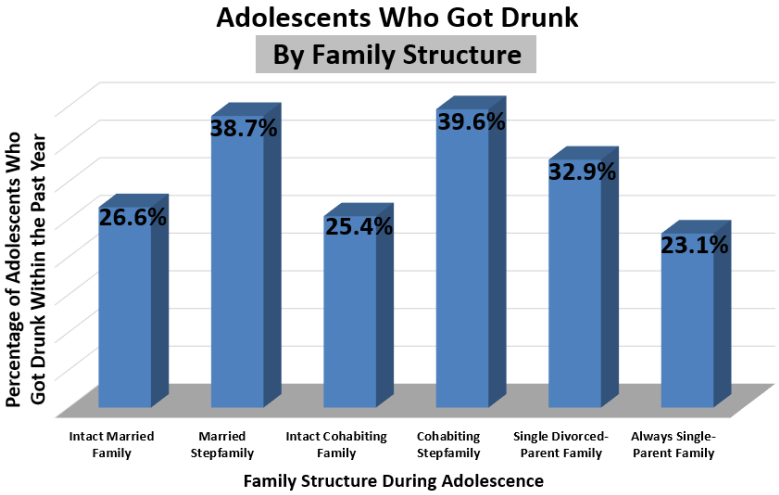
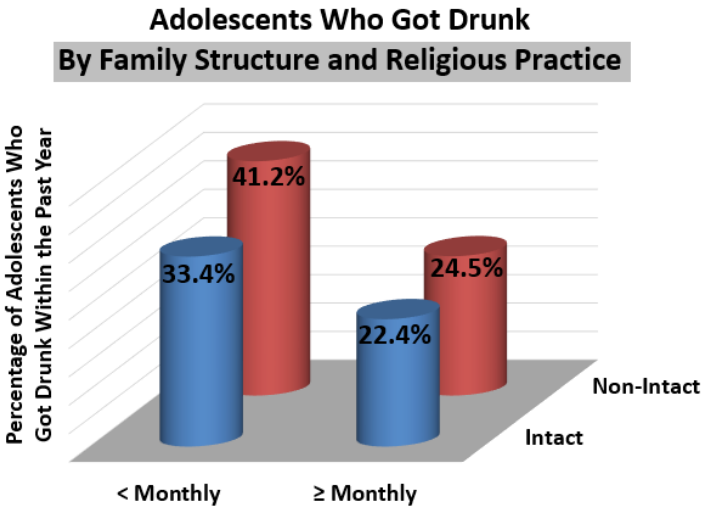
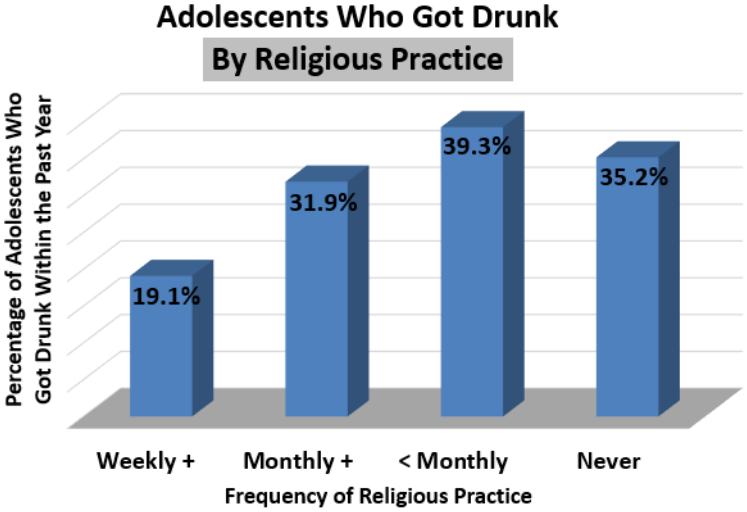
Adolescents Who Got Drunk
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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



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



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I. 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.

These charts depict the percentage of adolescents in Grades 7-12 who admitted to getting drunk in the year prior to being asked, correlated with religious attendance and family structure.

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.

Adolescents Who Got Drunk by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: Children who lived with both biological parents were less likely to get drunk (25.4 percent of those living with cohabiting biological parents and 26.6 percent of those living with married parents).[1] Nearly 33 percent of adolescents whose parents were divorced got drunk in the year prior to being surveyed, and for those living with a step-parent or only one biological cohabiting parent, the percentage increased to 38.7 and 39.6, respectively. Just 23.1 percent of adolescents whose parents never married admitted to getting drunk within that timeframe.

Religious Practice: 19.1 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who attended religious services at least weekly got drunk in the year prior to being asked. By contrast, 35.2 percent of adolescents who never worshipped, 31.9 percent of those who worshipped one to three times a month, and 39.3 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month admitted to getting drunk within that timeframe.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Only 22.4 percent of adolescents who lived with both biological parents and worshipped at least monthly had abused alcohol. By contrast, 41.2 percent of adolescents who worshipped less than monthly and came from single-parent or reconstituted families had abused alcohol. In between were those in non-intact families who worshipped at least monthly (24.5 percent) and those who lived with both biological parents and worshipped less than monthly (33.4 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Roy Oman of the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center and colleagues found "a positive, significant relationship between [participation in church or religious activities] and the nonuse of alcohol" and also that "[y]ouths from 2-parent households were significantly more likely than those from 1-parent households to report nonuse of alcohol."[2]

W. Alex Mason and Michael Windle of the University of Alabama at Birmingham reported that adolescents who had close familial bonds "were more likely to be religiously committed and involved" and that this religious commitment and familial support were both directly related to less alcohol consumption over time.[3]

In a study of adolescent students in British schools, Ian Sutherland and Jonathan Shepherd of the University of Wales College of Medicine found that 31.4 percent of students who frequently attended religious services regularly used alcohol regularly, compared to 68.3 percent of students who did not attend religious services, and that "[a]dolescents without religious

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[1] There is no statistical difference between these two data sets.

[2] Roy F. Oman, et al., "The Potential Protective Effect of Youth Assets on Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Use," *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 94 (2004): 1425-1430.

[3] W. Alex Mason and Michael Windle, "Family, Religious, School and Peer Influences on Adolescent Alcohol Use: A Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, vol. 62 (2001): 44-53.

convictions were…2.8 times as likely to drink alcohol." They also noted that 59.4 percent of students from intact families regularly used alcohol, compared to 65.9 percent of those from non-intact families.[4]

The data indicate that the intact family that worships frequently is most protective against the abuse of alcohol among minors.

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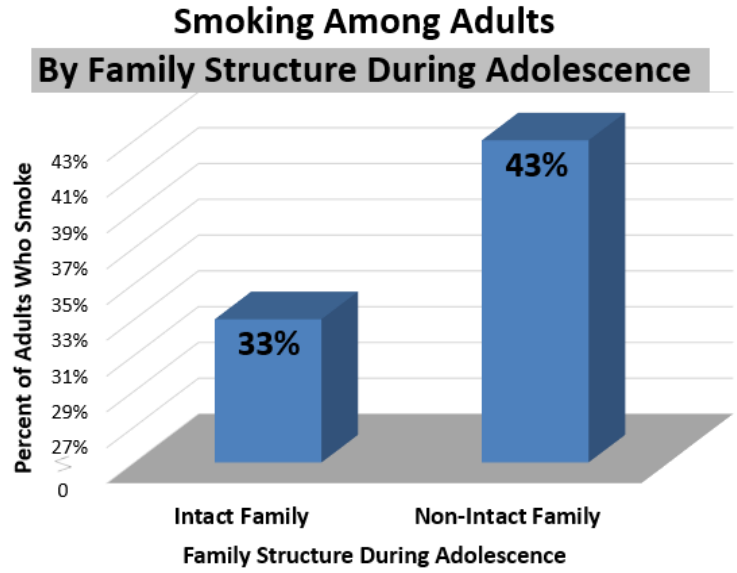
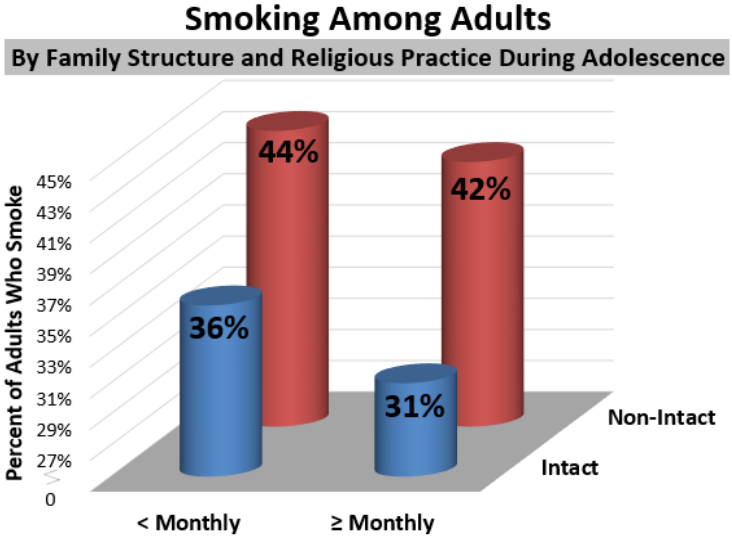
[4] I. Sutherland and J. P. Shepherd, "Social Dimensions of Adolescent Substance Use," *Addiction*, vol. 96 (2001): 445-458. This finding is from www.familyfacts.org.

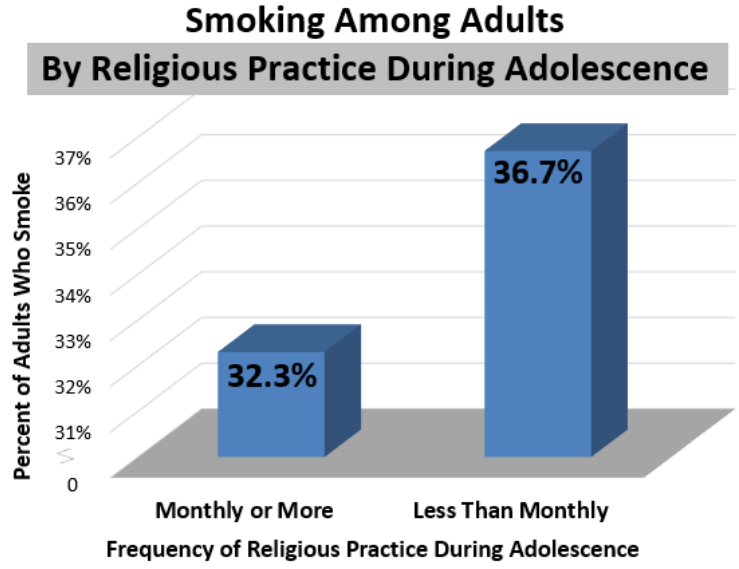
Smoking Among Adults
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Surveys, 1972-2006

This chart groups 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, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category is composed of 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.

This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Smoking Among Adults by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: Adults who grew up living with both biological parents are less likely to smoke than those who did not. According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 33 percent of adults who lived in an intact family during adolescence smoke, compared to 43 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.

Religious Practice: Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are less likely to smoke than those who did not. According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 32.3 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents smoke, compared to 36.7 percent of those who worshiped less frequently.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents and grew up living with both biological parents are least likely to smoke. According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 31 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly and lived in an intact family through adolescence currently smoke, compared to 44 percent of those who attended religious services less than monthly and grew up in a non-intact family. In between were those who attended religious services at least monthly but lived in a non-intact family (42 percent) and those who grew up in an intact family but worshiped less than monthly (36 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Though a paucity of research exists on the correlation between adolescent religious attendance and adult smoking, many other studies demonstrate a contemporaneous association between religious attendance and smoking.

Analyzing the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) study, Mary Whooley of the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center and colleagues found that "greater frequency of attendance at religious services was associated with less current smoking." Only 17 percent of young adults who attend church at least weekly smoke, compared to 23 percent of those who attend at least once a month and 34 percent of those who attend less than once a month or never. Among smokers, those who attend church more frequently smoke fewer cigarettes per day than those who attend less frequently.[1]

Nancy Kaufman of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and colleagues also reported a significant association between "lack of attendance in religious activities" and regular smoking.[2]

In a study of Australians, Andrew Heath of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis found that "low religious involvement" predicted the initiation of smoking in both men and women.[3]

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[1] Mary A. Whooley, et al., "Religious Involvement and Cigarette Smoking in Young Adults," *Archives of Internal Medicine*, vol. 162 (2002): 1,604-1,610.

[2] Nancy J. Kaufman, et al., "Predictors of Change on the Smoking Uptake Continuum among Adolescents," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, vol. 156 (2002): 581-587.

Kenneth Kendler of the Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Medical Genetics reported an association between personal religious devotion and a lesser chance of lifetime regular smoking.[4]

And John Tauras of the University of Illinois at Chicago found that among young adults who smoke, those who frequently attend religious services "are much more likely to quit smoking."[5]

As the evidence demonstrates, frequent religious attendance reduces rates of smoking.

Though little related research exists on intergenerational links between family structure during adolescence and adult smoking, many other studies show a contemporaneous correlation between adolescent family structure and smoking.

In a study of adolescents from 11 European countries, Thoroddur Bjarnason at the State University of New York at Albany and colleagues reported that "adolescents who live with both biological parents smoke less than those living with single mothers, who in turn smoke less than those living with single fathers, mothers-stepfathers, or with neither biological parent."[6]

Joan Tucker of RAND and colleagues found that "early experimenters were more likely than were nonsmokers" to live in a non-intact family.[7]

Tucker and colleagues also reported that male adolescent and young adult smokers who did not live in an intact nuclear family were less likely to quit smoking.[8]

Examining the smoking habits of adults in various family structures, Mark Schuster of the University of California, Los Angeles and colleagues reported that 33 percent of homes with at least two adults have regular smokers, compared to 46 percent of mother-only homes and 43 percent of father-only homes.[9]

As the data clearly show, intact families yield the lowest percentage of smokers.

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[3] Andrew C. Heath, et al., "Personality and the Inheritance of Smoking Behavior: A Genetic Perspective," *Behavior Genetics*, vol. 25 (1995): 103-117.
[4] Kenneth S. Kendler, et al., "Religion, Psychopathology, and Substance Use and Abuse: A Multimeasure, Genetic-Epidemiologic Study," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 154 (1997): 322-329.
[5] John A. Tauras, "Public Policy and Smoking Cessation among Young Adults in the United States," *Health Policy*, vol. 68 (2004): 321-332.
[6] Thoroddur Bjarnason, "Family Structure and Adolescent Cigarette Smoking in Eleven European Countries," *Addiction*, vol. 98 (2003): 815-824.
[7] Joan S. Tucker, et al., "Five-Year Prospective Study of Risk Factors for Daily Smoking in Adolescence among Early Nonsmokers and Experimenters," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 32 (2002): 1,588-1,603.
[8] Joan S. Tucker, et al., "Smoking Cessation during the Transition from Adolescence to Young Adulthood," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, vol. 4 (2002): 321-332.
[9] Mark A. Schuster, et al., "Smoking Patterns of Household Members and Visitors in Homes with Children in the United States ," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, vol. 156 (2002): 1,094-1,100.

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. In a study of Australian twins, Arpana Agrawal of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and colleagues found that infrequent religious attendance correlated with frequent cigarette smoking and that "children separated from a biological parent were...more likely to report regular cigarette smoking as adults."[10]

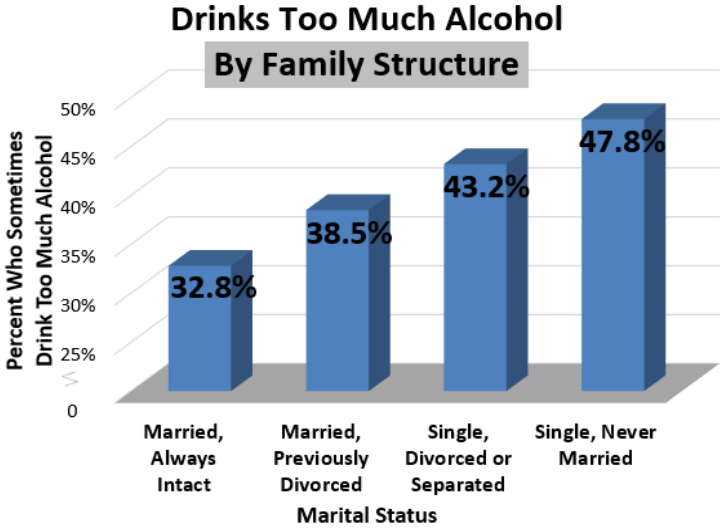
Analyzing various degrees of smoking in adolescents, Stephen Soldz and Xingjia Cui of Health and Addictions Research reported that nonsmokers attended religious services most frequently, whereas early escalator smokers attended less frequently and continuous smokers least frequently. They also found that at the sixth grade in school, "quitters and experimenters were more likely to be living with both parents, whereas late escalators and continuous smokers were more likely to be living with a single parent or an extended family."[11]

Thomas Wills of Yeshiva University and colleagues also found that adolescents' religiosity was inversely correlated with tobacco use and that adolescents from intact families were less likely to use tobacco than those from blended and single-parent families.[12]

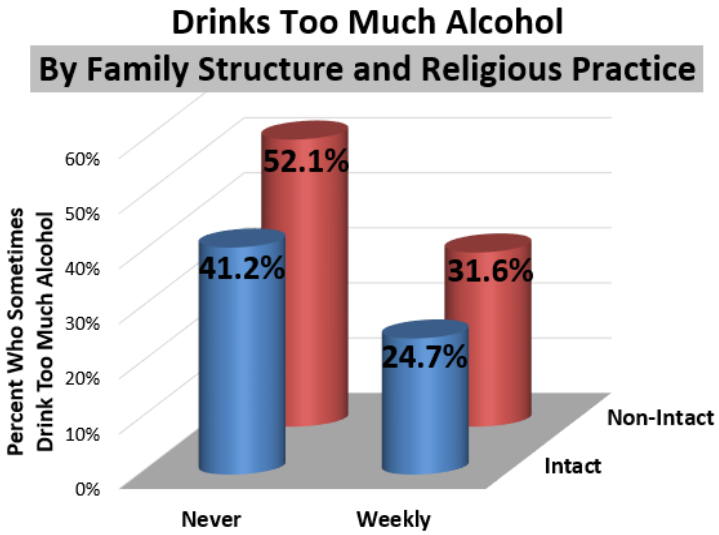
Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

[10] Arpana Agrawal, et al., "Correlates of Regular Cigarette Smoking in a Population-based Sample of Australian Twins," *Addiction*, vol. 100 (2005): 1,709-1,719.
[11] Stephen Soldz and Xingjia Cui, "Pathways through Adolescent Smoking: A 7-Year Longitudinal Grouping Analysis," *Health Psychology*, vol. 21 (2002): 495-504.
[12] Thomas Ashby Wills, et al., "Buffering Effect of Religiosity for Adolescent Substance Use," *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, vol. 17 (2003): 24-31.

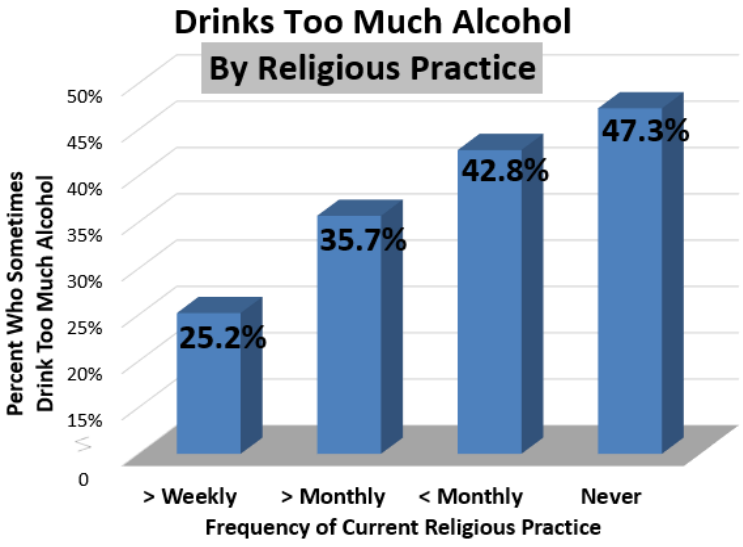
Drinks Too Much Alcohol
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

This chart takes the national data on "sometimes drinks too much alcohol" and splits it into four quadrants. It then illustrates the poles of each quadrant to highlight the difference in outcomes that correlate with the different poles of marital status and religious attendance.

The starting points are demographics that mark two major social institutions: marital status and religious attendance. Marital status is divided further into two groups: always-intact marriages and all other marital status categories. Religious attendance is also divided into two groups: high and low worship of which the two poles "weekly attendance" and "never attends" are subcategories used in this chart.*

The resultant four poles are 1) Americans in always-intact marriages who worship weekly; 2) Americans in always-intact marriages who never worship; 3) Americans in all other marital status categories who worship weekly; and 4) Americans in all other marital status categories who never worship.

These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

Drinks Too Much Alcohol by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 32.8 percent of always-intact married adults reported that they sometimes drink too much alcohol, followed by 38.5 percent of married, previously-divorced adults, 43.2 percent of single, divorced or separated adults, and 47.8 percent of single, never-married adults. [1]

Religious Practice: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 25.2 percent of adults who worshiped at least weekly reported that they sometimes drink too much alcohol, followed by 35.7 percent of those who worshiped between one and three times a month, 42.8 percent of those who attended religious services less than once a month, and 47.3 percent of those who never attended religious services.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 24.7 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who attended religious services at least weekly reported that they sometimes drink too much alcohol, followed by 31.6 percent of all other adults who worshiped at least weekly, 41.2 percent of adults in always-intact marriages who never attended worship, and 52.1 percent of all other adults who never attended religious services.

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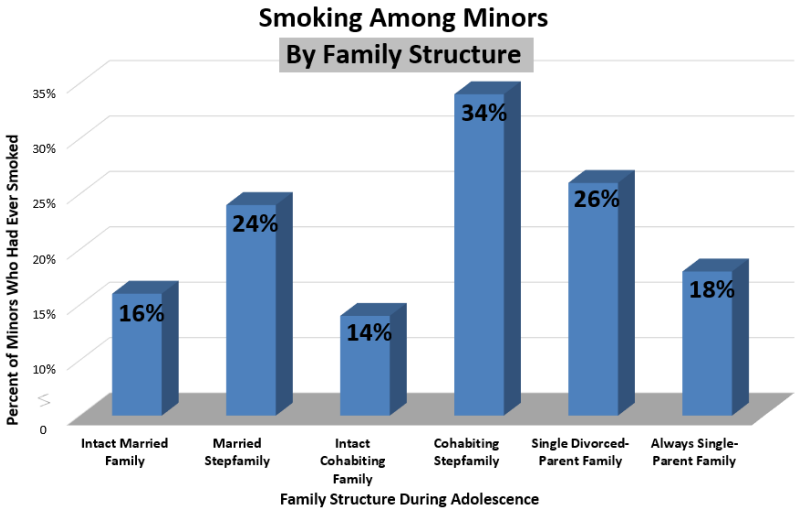
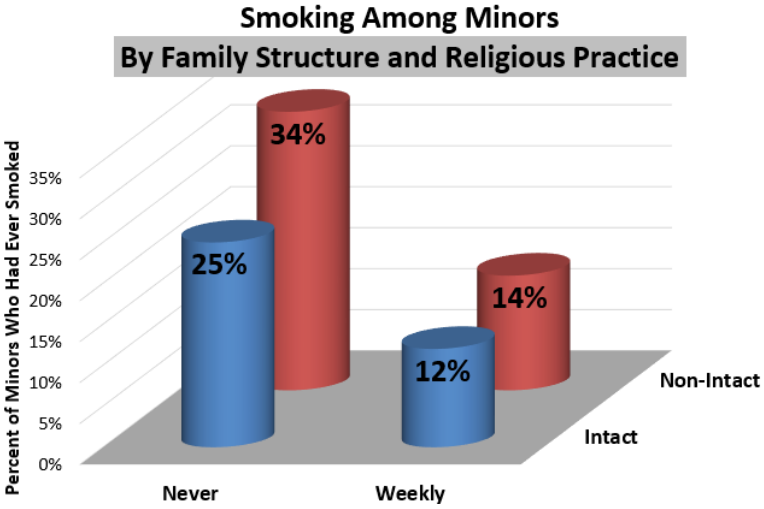
[1] These charts draw on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.

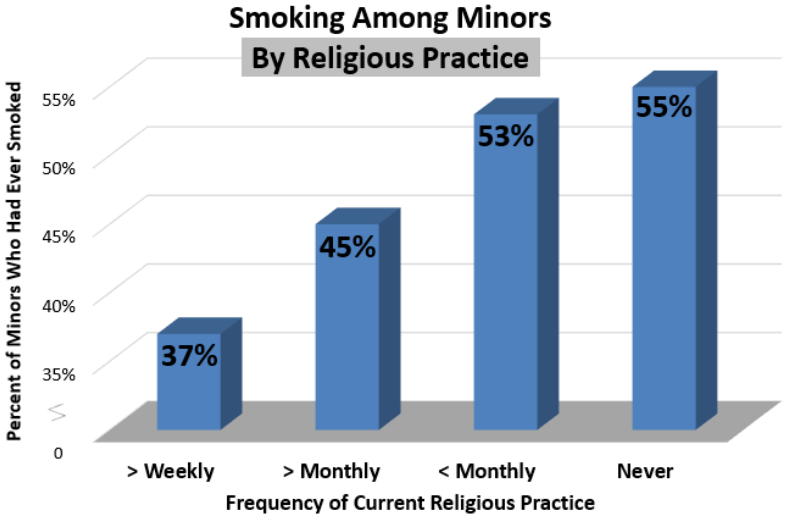
Smoking Among Minors
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at teenagers who have ever smoked 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.)*

Smoking Among Minors by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that children under 17 who grew up in an intact married family and worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey were less likely to smoke than were their peers from other family backgrounds.

Family Structure: 14 percent of children under the age of 17 who grew up in an intact, cohabiting stepfamily had ever smoked, followed by 16 percent of children from always-intact married families. Eighteen percent of children from always-single parent households had smoked, followed by 24 percent of children from married stepfamilies, 26 percent of children from single, divorced-parent families, and 34 percent of children from cohabiting stepfamilies.

Religious Practice: 37 percent of children who attended religious services weekly had smoked, compared with those who attended between one and three times a month (45 percent), those who attended less than once a month (53 percent), and those who never attended religious services (55 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: 12 percent of children who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey had ever smoked. Only 14 percent who grew up in all other family structures but attended weekly religious services ever smoked, compared with 25 percent of those who grew up in always-intact families, but never attended church, and 34 percent of those who grew up in all other family structures and never attended church.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Family relationships play a significant role in determining the behavior of children, according to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University's "Back to School" survey. The survey found that frequent family dinners (five nights or more a week) were associated with lower rates of teen smoking, drinking, and drug use. Teens who had dinner with their families only twice a week or less were 2.5 times as likely to smoke cigarettes, more than 1.5 times as likely to drink alcohol, and nearly 3 times as likely to try marijuana.[1]

The effects of family structure were seen in a British longitudinal study which found that youths living in single-parent households were 1.5 times more likely to smoke.[2] The National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health agreed with the British study, showing that compared to their peers in single-parent families, middle school and high school students in two-parent families reported, on average, lower levels of smoking.[3]

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[1] The National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "The Importance of Family Dinners II" (2005).

[2] Ely, Margaret, Patrick West, Helen Sweeting and Martin Richards, "Teenage Family Life, Life Chances, Lifestyles and Health: A Comparison of Two Contemporary Cohorts" *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family (14)*1 (2000) pp. 1-30.

[3] Blum, Robert W. and Trisha Beuhrign, "The Effects of Race/Ethnicity, Income, and Family Structure on Adolescent Risk Behaviors," *American Journal of Public Health* (90)*12* (2000) pp. 1879-1884.

Religious practice also affects teenagers' habits. One survey showed that, compared with their peers, youths who said religion was important in their lives and/or attended religious services frequently were less likely to smoke. They were also less likely to use other substances or be sexually active.[4] Another study of adolescents and young women showed that women who said religion and spirituality were important in their lives were less likely than their peers to smoke or binge drink.[5]

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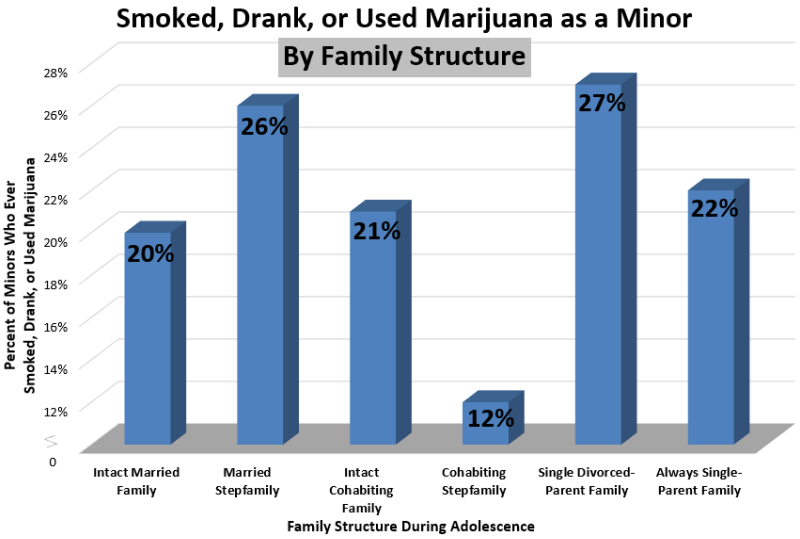
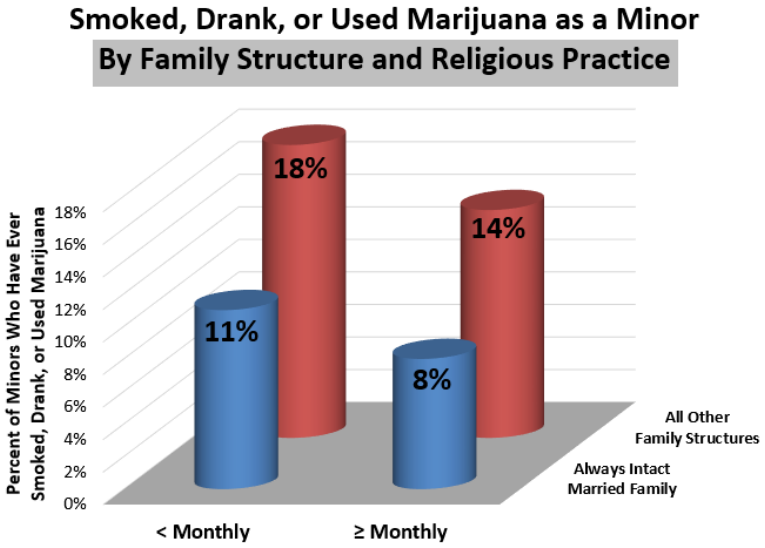
Scott Talkington, Ph.D.
Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

[4] Sinha, J. W., R. Cnaan and R.J. Gelles, "Adolescent risk behaviors and religion: Findings from a national study," *Journal of Adolescence* (30) (2007) pp. 231-249.
[5] Pirkle, Erin C. and Linda Richter,"Personality, attitudinal and behavioral risk profiles of young female binge drinkers and smokers," *Journal of Adolescent Health* (38) (2006) pp. 44-54.

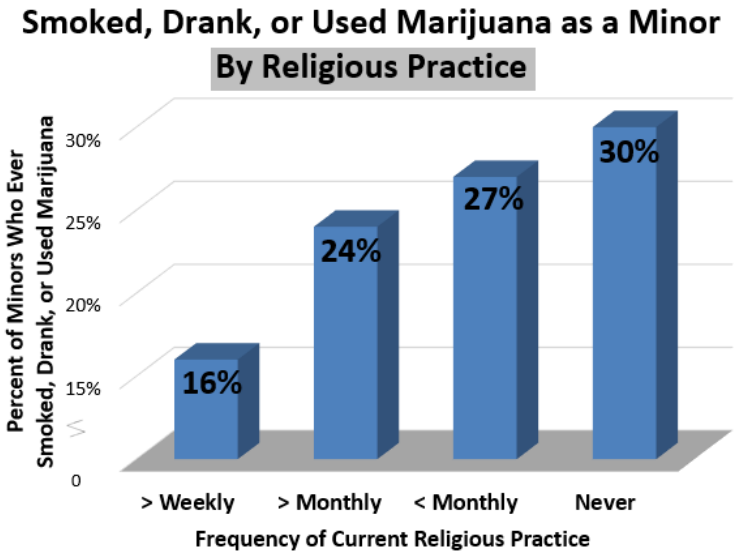
Smoked, Drank, or Used Marijuana as a Minor
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at minors who smoked, drank or used marijuana 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 (less than monthly vs. monthly or more).*

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.)*

Smoked, Drank, or Used Marijuana as a Minor by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that minors who grew up in always-married families and who attend religious services weekly at the time of the survey were least likely to have used tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana.

Family Structure: 12 percent of adolescents who grew up in a cohabiting stepfamily smoked, drank, or used marijuana as minors, followed by adolescents from intact married families (20 percent), intact cohabiting families (21 percent), always-single parent families (22 percent), married stepfamilies (26 percent), and divorced single-parent families (27 percent).

Religious Practice: 16 percent of adolescents who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey smoked, drank, or used marijuana under age, followed by those who attended religious services at least once a month (24 percent), those who attended less than once monthly (27 percent), and those who never attended religious services (30 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: 8 percent of adolescents who worshipped weekly and grew up in always-married families smoked, drank, or used marijuana as minors. By contrast, 18 percent of adolescents who never attended religious services and came from non-intact family backgrounds used substances under age. Between these two extremes were those who never worshipped and grew up in always-married families (11 percent) and those who attended religious services weekly but grew up in non-intact families (14 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: A study of 1,760 young adults found that those from two-parent families were at a lower risk for substance use. Even after controlling for race, "respondents from such families report lower levels of problematic substance use than their peers from single-parent families." [1] Similarly, a large sample of almost 15,000 youths revealed that those from two-parent families were far less likely to ever have used marijuana or to have friends who use marijuana. Youths from two-parent families, even from families with high levels of tension, have lower levels of marijuana usage than youths from low- or high-conflict homes in which one or both of the biological parents are gone. [2]

Religion also influences substance abuse by minors. One study examined 1,760 young adult women recovering from drug use. Those women who participated in religious rituals,

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[1] Anne E. Barrett and R. Jay Turner, "Family Structure and Substance Use Problems in Adolescence and Early Adulthood: Examining Explanations for the Relationship," *Addiction* 101 (2006): 118.

[2] Dusten R. Hollist and William H. McBroom, "Family Structure, Family Tension, and Self-Reported Marijuana Use: A Research Finding of Risky Behavior Among Youths," *The Journal of Drug Issues* (2006): 975.

particularly church attendance with their families, were significantly less likely to use drugs.[3] There was a strong negative correlation between frequency of church attendance and drug use.

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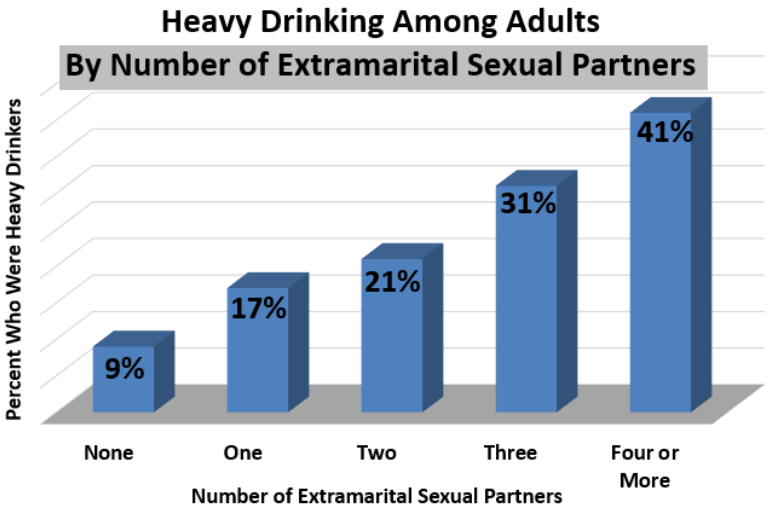
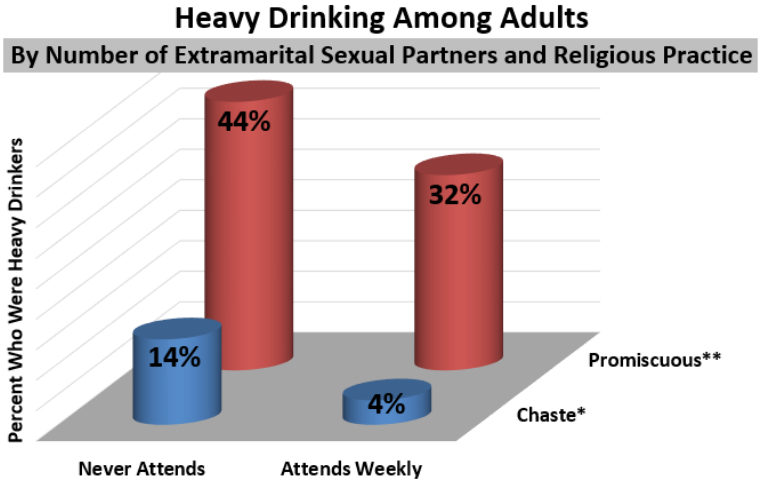
[3] John E. Fife, Micah McCreary, Tashia Brewer, and Adekunle A. Adegoke, "Family Rituals, Religious Involvement, and Drug Attitudes among Recovering Substance Abusers," *North American Journal of Psychology* 13, no. 1 (2011): 87-98.

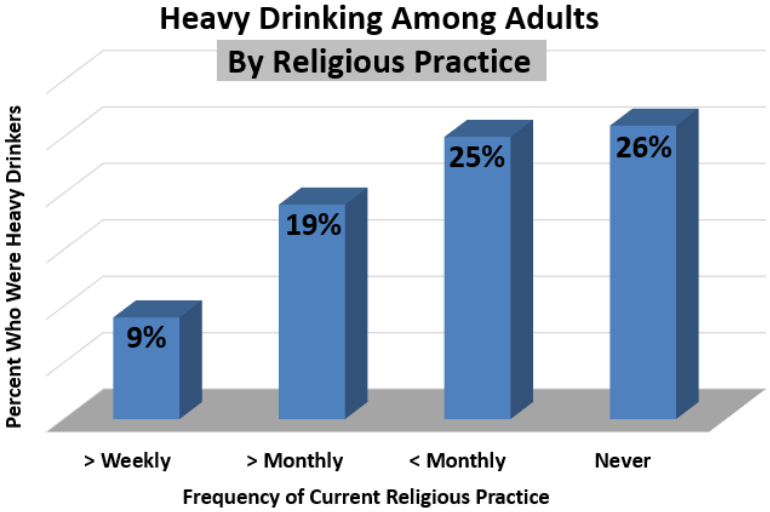
Heavy Drinking Among Adults
By Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 and Child and Young Adult Survey 1994-2008 (Ages 18+)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 and Child and Young Adult Survey 1994-2008 (Ages 18+)



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 and Child and Young Adult Survey 1994-2008 (Ages 18+)

This chart looks at likelihood to drink heavily 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.)*

Heavy Drinking Among Adults by Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice

Heavy drinking, multiple sexual partners and avoidance of worship tend to go together: the 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that adults who have had no extramarital sexual partners in the previous year and worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey were less likely to be heavy drinkers.

Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners: Only 9 percent of adults who had no extramarital sexual partners (were chaste) were heavy drinkers, compared with 17 percent of adults who had one extramarital sexual partner. These adults were followed by 21 percent of adults who had 2 extramarital sexual partners, 31 percent who had three extramarital sexual partners, and 41 percent of adults who had four or more extramarital sexual partners.

Religious Practice: Only 9 percent of adults who attended weekly religious services were heavy drinkers, compared with 19 percent of adults who attended church at least monthly. Among adults who attended church less than once a month, 25 percent were heavy drinkers, followed by adults who had no religious attendance (26 percent).

Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice Combined: Only 4 percent of chaste adults who worshipped weekly were heavy drinkers, followed by 14 percent of individuals who never attended church, but had no extramarital sexual partners. Thirty-two percent of adults who attended church but were promiscuous were heavy drinkers, followed by adults who were not chaste and who never attended church (44 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Other studies show relationships between sexual activity and drinking. A 1990 random digit-dial telephone survey done of 16- to 19-year-olds in Massachusetts found that 64 percent of teenagers who reported having sexual intercourse did so after drinking and 15 percent did so after other drug use. Forty-nine percent of teenagers were more likely to have sex if they and their partner had been drinking.[1]

Additionally, another study found that drinking at an early age was associated with alcohol and sexual risks through mid-adolescence; early drinkers were more likely to report later alcohol problems, as well as multiple sexual partners and being drunk or high during sexual intercourse. Among females, early drinking was also related to sexual initiation and recent sexual intercourse.[2]

Religious practice also affects alcohol use. One study found that among college students those, who were from “Gentile” religious traditions (as opposed to “Jewish” religious traditions), those

[1]Lee Strunin and Ralph Hingson, “Alcohol, Drugs, and Adolescent Sexual Behavior,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 27, no. 2 (1992): 129-146.

[2] Ann Stueve and Lydia N. O’Donnell, “Early Alcohol Initiation and Subsequent Sexual and Alcohol Risk Behaviors Among Urban Youths,” *American Journal of Public Health* 95, no. 5 (May 2005): 887-893.

who were not strongly attached to a particular faith, and those who had parents who were alcohol abusers were more likely to abuse alcohol. This same study found that parental religious affiliation influenced the alcohol choices made by their children, with greater parental religiosity leading to less alcohol abuse by the children.[3] Another study of college students also found that students with no religious affiliation drank significantly more and more frequently, got drunk more, drank more for celebration purposes, and had greater perceived drinking norms.[4]

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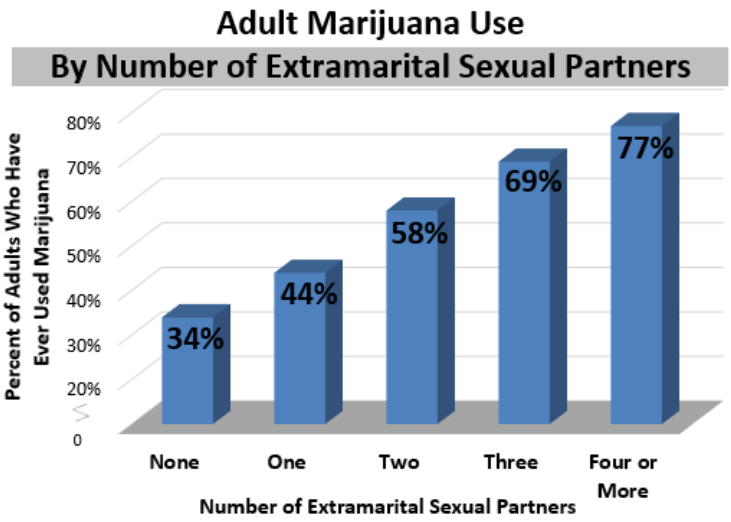
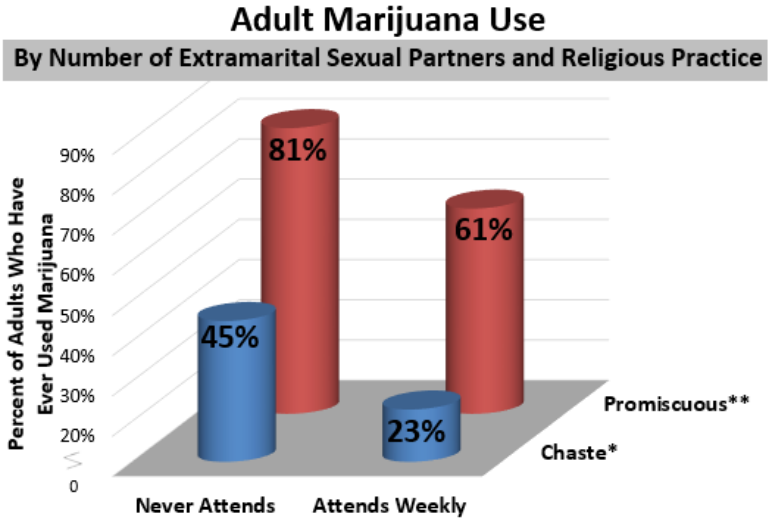
[3] H. Wesley Perkins, "Parental Religion and Alcohol Use Problems as Intergenerational Predictors of Problem Drinking among College Youth," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 26, no. 3 (September 1987): 340-357.
4 Julie A. Patock-Peckham, Geoffrey T. Hutchinson, Jeewon Cheong, and Craig T. Nagoshi, "Effect of religion and religiosity on alcohol use in a college student sample," *Journal of Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 49, no. 2 (January 1998): 81–88.

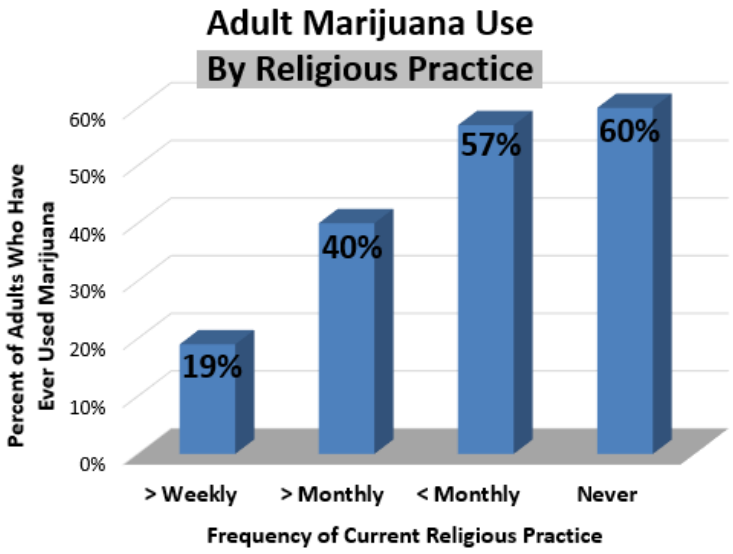
Adult Marijuana Use
By Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice



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



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



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

This chart looks at likelihood to ever use marijuana 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.)*

Marijuana Use 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 in the survey year were less likely to use marijuana.

Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners: Thirty-four percent of individuals who had no extramarital sexual partners in the survey year had ever used marijuana, compared with 44 percent of individuals who had one extramarital sexual partner. Fifty-eight percent of individuals who had two extramarital sexual partners had ever used marijuana, followed by 69 percent who had three extramarital sexual partners, and 77 percent who had four or more extramarital sexual partners.

Religious Practice: Only 19 percent of individuals who attended church at least weekly at the time of the survey had ever used marijuana, compared to 40 percent who attended at least monthly. Fifty-seven percent of individuals who attended church less than monthly had ever used marijuana, compared with 60 percent who never attended church.

Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners and Religious Practice Combined: Those who worshipped at least weekly and were chaste (had no extramarital sexual partners) in the survey year were least likely to heavily use marijuana (23 percent), followed by those who were chaste but did not attend church (45 percent), those who attended church weekly but were promiscuous (had four or more extramarital sexual partners) in the survey year (61 percent), and those who were promiscuous and never attended church (81 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: A study of a sample of Americans reaching maturity in the late '70s and early '80s showed that "[b]oys and girls who become sexually active are much more likely than those who abstain to begin using alcohol or marijuana within a year, although the linkage is stronger for girls than for boys…the link between sexual activity and marijuana use appears stronger than the link between sexual activity and alcohol use."[1]

One study of adolescents in the Midwest found that religiosity and the importance placed on participating in church activities reduced adolescent likelihood to use marijuana. Furthermore, the difference in likelihood to use marijuana between strongly religious and weakly religious adolescents was the largest observed; strongly religious adolescents were less likely to use marijuana. (Other differences, such the likelihood to use stimulants, to steal, or to drink beer, were also examined.)[2]

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[1] Frank L. Mott and R. Jean Haurin, "Linkages Between Sexual Activity and Alcohol and Drug Use Among Adolescents," *Family Planning Perspectives* 20, no. 3 (1988): 128.

[2] John K. Cochran, "Another Look at Delinquency and Religiosity," *Sociological Spectrum* 9 (1989): 153, 157.