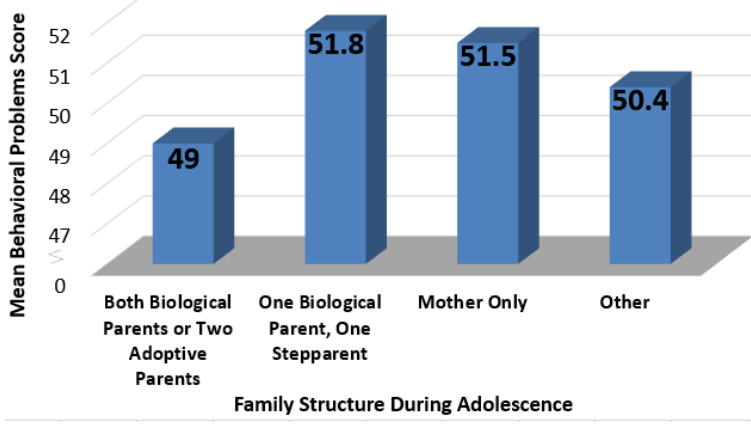


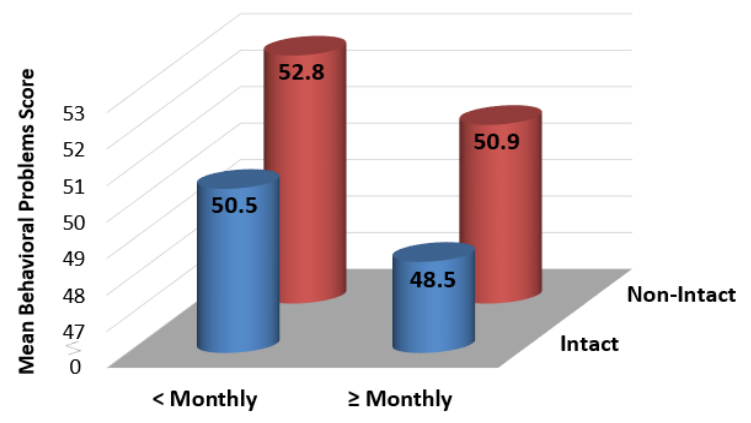
Child Behavioral Problems By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Child Behavioral Problems
By Family Structure



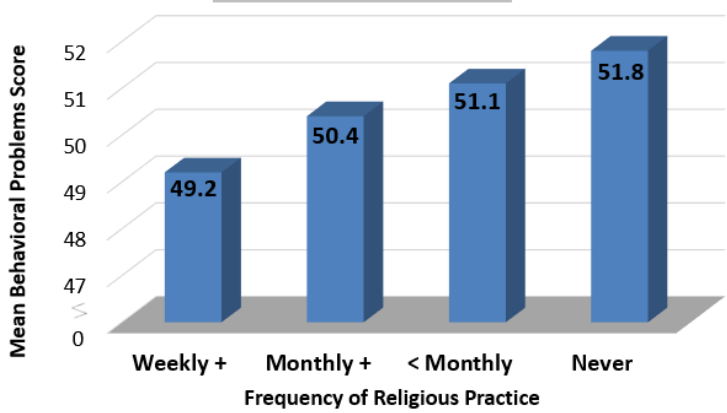
Source: National Survey of Children's Health, Adolescents Aged 6-17.

Child Behavioral Problems
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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

Child Behavioral Problems
By Religious Practice



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

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,"

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.