



Mapping America Abortion

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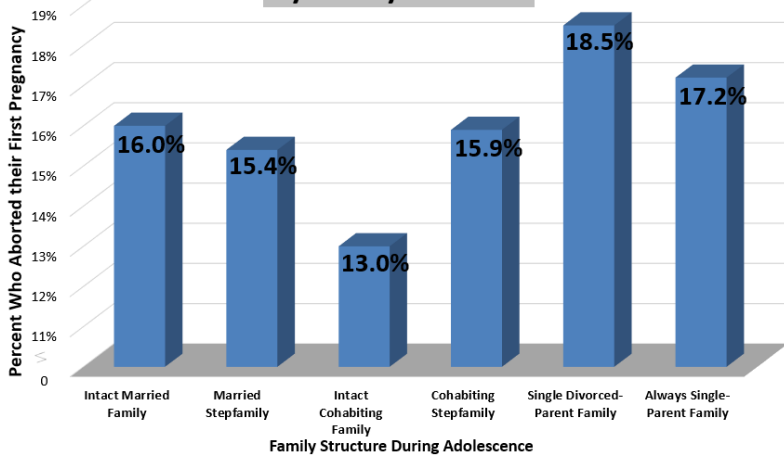
About the Mapping America Project

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.



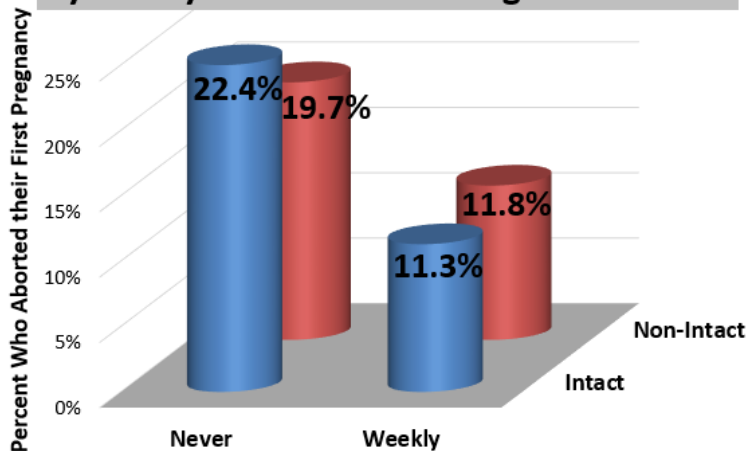
Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy
By Family Structure



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

This chart looks at women who aborted their first pregnancy at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

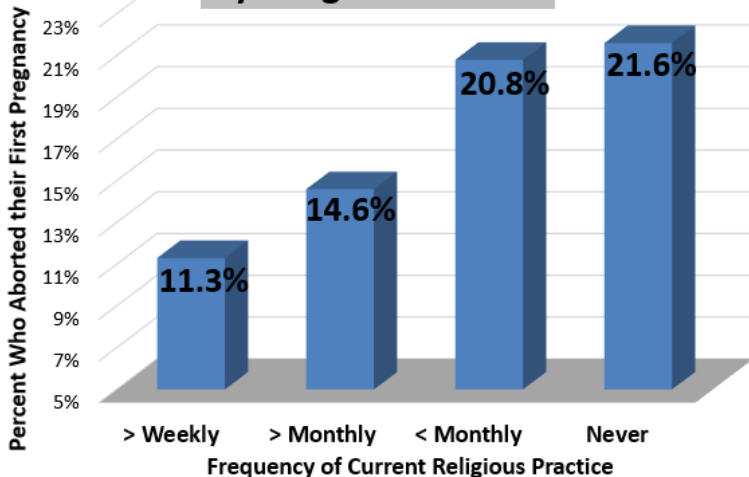
These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. non-intact) and two sets of religious attendance (high vs. low).*

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

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

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

Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy
By Religious Practice



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

Women Who Aborted First Pregnancy by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Family Structure: According to the National Survey of Family Growth Cycle 6, 13 percent of women who grew up in intact cohabiting families aborted their first pregnancy, followed by women who grew up in married stepfamilies (15.4 percent), those from cohabiting stepfamilies (15.9 percent), intact married families (16 percent), always single parent families (17.2 percent), and single divorced parent families (18.5 percent). It is to be noted that the typical pattern of the intact married family being the strongest is broken here.¹

Religious Practice: According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 11.3 percent of women who worshiped at least weekly aborted their first pregnancy, followed by those who attended religious services between one and three times a month (14.6 percent), those who attended religious services less than once a month (20.8 percent), and those who never attended religious services (21.6 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Women who worshiped at least weekly and grew up in intact married families were the least likely to abort their first baby. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 11.3 percent of women who grew up in intact married families and worshiped at least weekly at the time of the survey aborted their first pregnancy, followed by women who grew up in other family structures and worshiped at least weekly (11.8 percent), those who grew up in other family structures and never worshiped (19.7 percent), and those who grew up in intact married families and never worshiped (22.4 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Stanley Henshaw and Kathryn Kost of the Alan Guttmacher Institute reported that “being a born-again or Evangelical Christian” reduced the risk of an “unintended pregnancy leading to abortion.”²

Lisa Pearce of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Arland Thornton of the University of Michigan found that the more frequently eighteen-year-olds attend religious services, the more antiabortion they are.³

No other significant studies investigated a correlation between abortion and structure of family of origin.

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

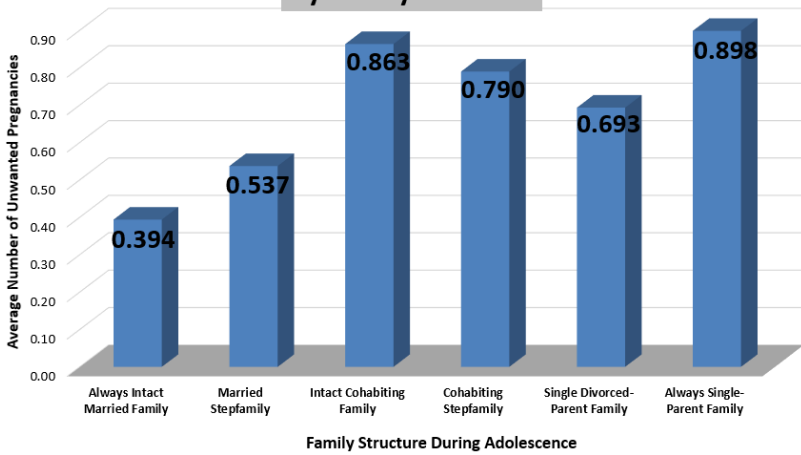
¹ These charts draw on data collected by the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002). The sample consists of women between the ages of 14 and 44 and numbers 7,643.

² Stanley K. Henshaw and Kathryn Kost, “Abortion Patients in 1994-1995: Characteristics and Contraceptive Use,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 28 (1996): 140-47, 158.

³ Lisa Pearce and Arland Thornton, “Religious Identity and Family Ideologies in the Transition to Adulthood,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (2007): 1227-43.

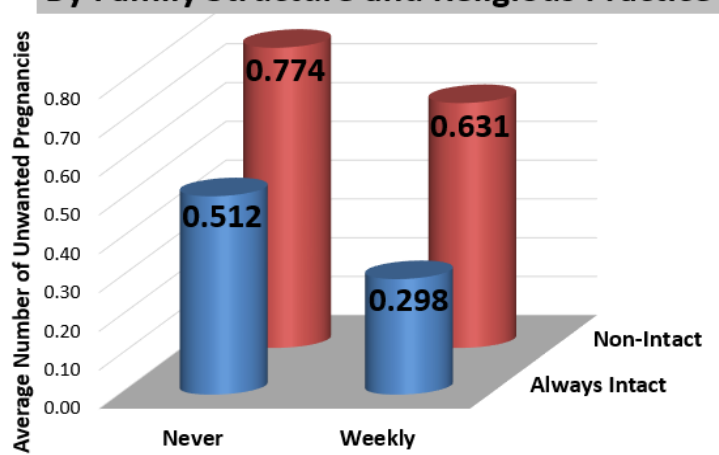
“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies” By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
By Family Structure**



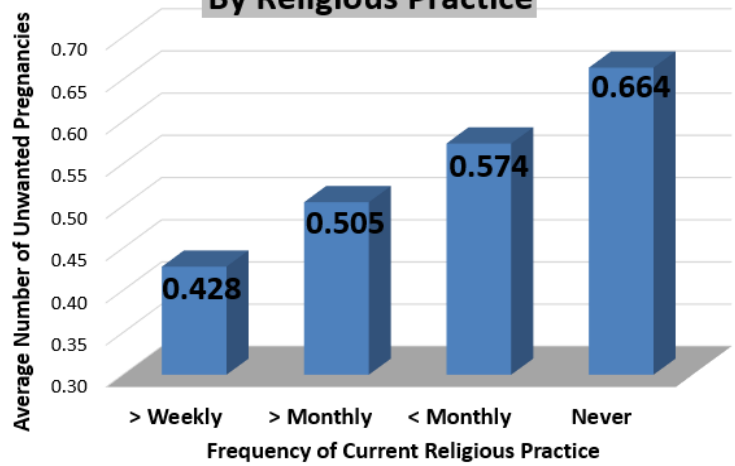
Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

**“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
By Family Structure and Religious Practice**



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

**“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002)

This chart looks at women who have had an unwanted pregnancy in their lifetime at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

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

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

- Women who grew up in an always-intact married family and who now worship weekly;*
- Women who grew up in an always-intact married family and who now never worship;*
- Women who grew up in a non-intact family* and who now worship weekly;*
- Women who grew up in a non-intact family* and who now never worship.*

(The non-intact group consists of women who grew up 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.)*

“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies” by Family Structure and Religious Practice¹

Family Structure: According to the National Survey of Family Growth, women who grew up in an intact married family had an average of 0.39 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetime, followed by women from married stepfamilies (0.54), single divorced parent families (0.69), cohabiting stepfamilies (0.79), intact cohabiting families (0.86), and always single parent families (0.9).

Religious Practice: The National Survey of Family Growth shows that women who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey had an average of 0.43 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetime, followed by women who attended religious services between one and three times a month (0.50), those who attended religious services less than once a month (0.57), and those who never attended religious services (0.66).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: The number of unwanted pregnancies was lowest for women who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, women who grew up in an intact married family and worshipped at least weekly had an average of 0.3 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetimes, followed by women who grew up in an intact married family and never worshipped (0.51), those who grew up in other family structures and worshipped at least weekly (0.63), and those who grew up in other family structures and never worshipped (0.77).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. James Nonnemaker of Research Triangle Institute and colleagues found a positive association between adolescent public religiosity and a lower likelihood of pregnancy.²

Scott South of the State University of New York at Albany also found that “growing up in a family headed by a single mother increases the risk of a premarital birth.”³

In a study of black adolescent females in high-poverty neighborhoods, Mignon Moore of Columbia University and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale of Northwestern University reported that “[l]iving in married households is associated with a reduced risk of pregnancy” and that “teenagers in single-mother families have higher odds of experiencing” pregnancy, though

¹ These charts draw on data collected by the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002). The sample consists of women between the ages of 14 and 44 and numbers 7,643.

² James M. Nonnemaker, Clea A. McNeely, and Robert Wm. Blum, “Public and Private Domains of Religiosity and Adolescent Health Risk Behaviors: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health,” *Social Science & Medicine* 57 (2003): 2049-54.

³ Scott J. South, “Historical Changes and Life Course Variation in the Determinants of Premarital Childbearing,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 752-63.

“adolescents in cohabiting households were not found to have...significantly higher odds of pregnancy.”⁴

As the evidence shows, women who grew up in an intact married family and who now worship weekly are likely to have fewer unwanted pregnancies in their lifetimes.

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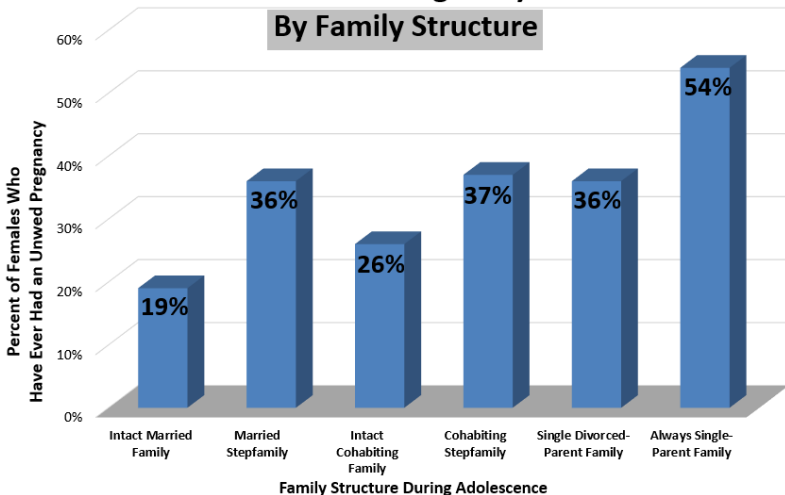
D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

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

⁴ Mignon R. Moore and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, “Sexual Intercourse and Pregnancy among African American Girls in High-Poverty Neighborhoods: The Role of Family and Perceived Community Environment,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 1146-57.

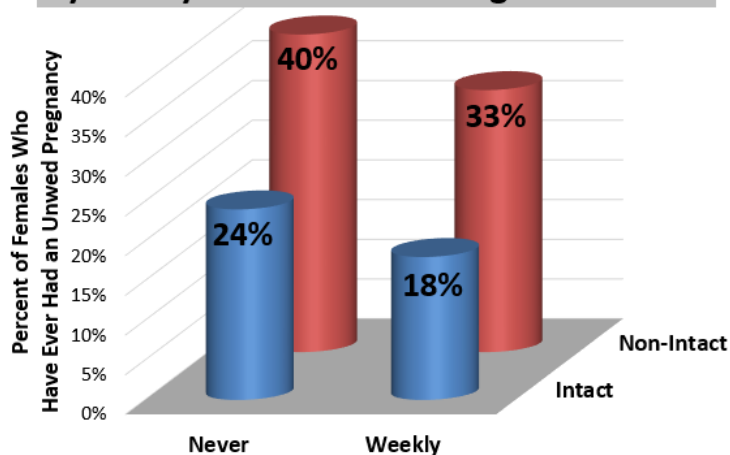
Unwed Pregnancy By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Unwed Pregnancy
By Family Structure**



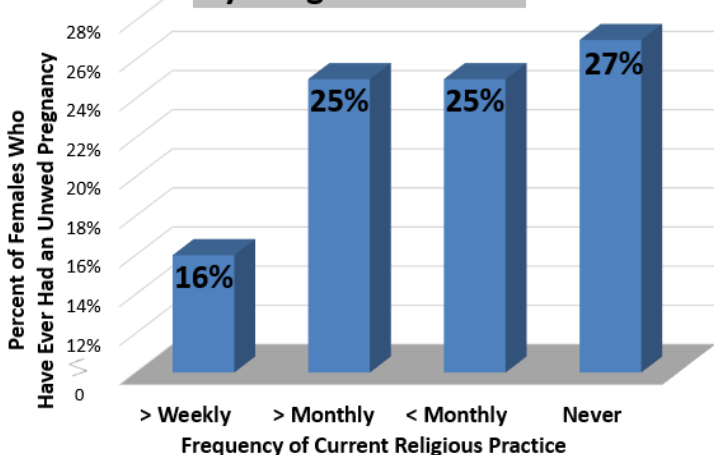
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

**Unwed Pregnancy
By Family Structure and Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

**Unwed Pregnancy
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at females who have had an unwed pregnancy at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

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

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

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

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

Unwed Pregnancy by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth showed that females who grew up in intact families who frequently attended religious services were least likely to have had an unwed pregnancy.

Family Structure: Nineteen percent of females who grew up in an intact married family have had an unwed pregnancy, followed by females from intact cohabiting families (26 percent), single divorced parent families (36 percent) and married stepfamilies (36 percent), cohabiting stepfamilies (37 percent), and always single parent families (54 percent).

Religious Practice: Sixteen percent of females who worshiped at least weekly have had unwed pregnancy, followed by those who attended religious services between one and three times a month (25 percent) and those who attended religious services less than once monthly (25 percent), and those who never attended religious services (27 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Eighteen percent of females who worshiped weekly and grew up in intact families have had an unwed pregnancy. By contrast, 40 percent of females who never attended religious services and come from non-intact family backgrounds have, at some point, become pregnant out of wedlock. Between these two extremes were those who never worshiped and grew up in intact families (24 percent) and those who attended religious services weekly but grew up in non-intact families (33 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Studies based on the 1995 General Social Survey show that family structure affects the unwed pregnancy rate. According to Valerie Martin of McGill University, when compared with peers from intact families, adolescent and young adult women who experienced parental divorce were significantly more likely to give birth out of wedlock.¹

Using this same survey, Jay Teachman of Western Washington University also found intact families to be protective in many ways: Compared with peers from other family structures, women who grew up in intact families were less likely to form high-risk marriages, to cohabit before marriage, or to have a premarital birth or conception.²

Another study demonstrated the protective nature of the family's religion: When compared with peers whose mothers had not attended religious services frequently, 18-year-olds whose mothers attended religious services often were more likely to have attitudes about premarital sex, cohabitation, abortion, and divorce.³

¹ Martin, Valerie, "The Consequences of Parental Divorce on the Life Course Outcomes of Canadian Children." *Canadian Studies in Population*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2005) pp. 29-51.

² Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." *Journal of Family Issues* Vol. 25, No. 1 (January 2004) pp. 86-111.

³ Pearce, L.D. & Thornton, A. "Religious Identity and Family Ideologies in the Transition to Adulthood" *Journal of Marriage and Family* Vol. 69 (2007) pp. 1227-1243.

The Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Survey also showed the impact of religion on urban mothers, finding that urban mothers who attend church frequently are at least 70 percent more likely to be married when they give birth or to get married within one year of a nonmarital birth than are urban mothers who do not attend church frequently. ⁴

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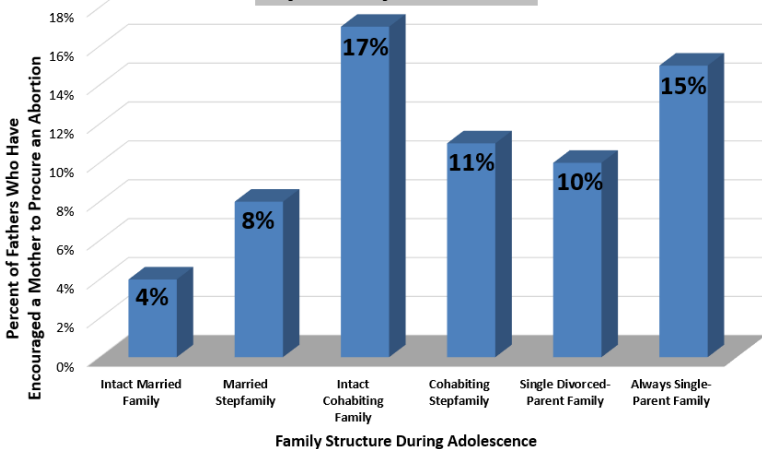
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Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

⁴ "Religion and Marriage in Urban America" Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Princeton University Social Indicators Survey Center, Columbia University, *Fragile Families Research Brief* No. 24 (June 2004) pp. 1-4.

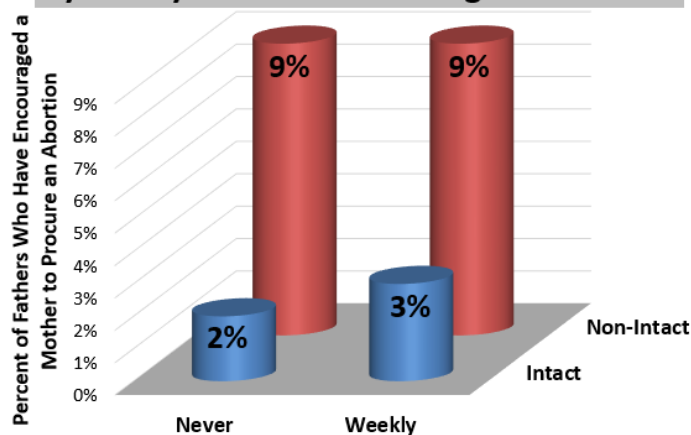
Fathers Who Have Encouraged an Abortion By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Fathers Who Have Encouraged an Abortion
By Family Structure



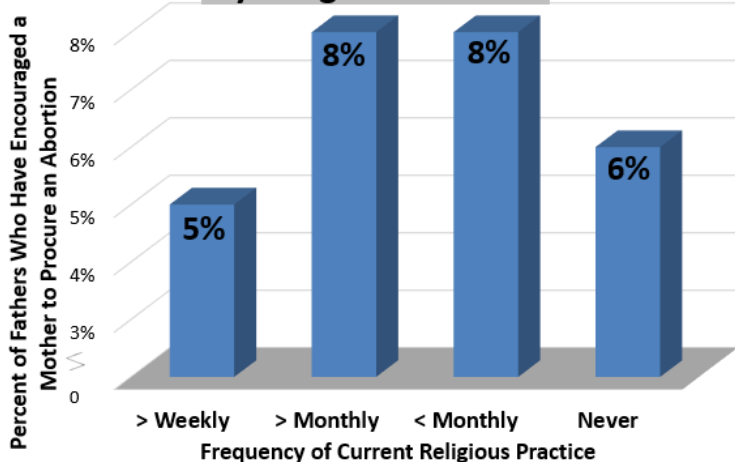
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Fathers Who Have Encouraged an Abortion
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

Fathers Who Have Encouraged an Abortion
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

This chart looks at men who have encouraged a Mother to procure an abortion 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 men 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.)

Fathers Who Have Ever Encouraged a Mother to Procure an Abortion by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that men who grew up in intact married families and attended religious services at least weekly were less likely to encourage a Mother to obtain an abortion.

Family Structure: Four percent of fathers from intact married families ever encouraged a Mother to have an abortion. They were followed by fathers from married stepfamilies, who were twice as likely to have encouraged a woman to have an abortion (8 percent), fathers from single divorced-parent families (10 percent), fathers from cohabiting stepfamilies (11 percent), and fathers from always-single parent families (15 percent). Fathers from intact cohabiting families were most likely to have encouraged a Mother to have an abortion (17 percent).

Religious Practice: Five percent of fathers who attended religious services at least weekly at the time of the survey encouraged a woman to procure an abortion. Six percent of fathers who never attended religious services, 8 percent of fathers who attended religious services at least monthly, and 8 percent of fathers who attended less than once a month encouraged a Mother to abort her child.

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Three percent of fathers who grew up in intact married families and who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey encouraged a woman to abort her child. Two percent of fathers who grew up in intact married families but never attended religious services encouraged a woman to procure an abortion, compared to fathers who grew up in all other family structures and never attended religious services (9 percent), and fathers who grew up in all other family structures but attended weekly religious services (9 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: According to the Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children, a 31-year-long study, 18-year-olds who said religion played an important role in their lives tended to be less supportive of abortion (as well as premarital sex, cohabitation, and divorce) than were their peers who said religion was less important to them.¹

Another study found the responses of men who father a child out of wedlock vary according to the characteristics of their own family of origin. Fathers who had grown up in a family that received welfare were less likely to marry their baby's mother than their peers whose families had not received welfare. White men were 39 percent less likely to marry their baby's mother and Black men were 6 percent less likely to marry their baby's mother.² Additionally, according to the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and the National Longitudinal Survey of

¹ L.D. Pearce and A. Thornton, "Religious Identity and Family Ideologies in the Transition to Adulthood," *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 69 (2007): 1227-1243.

² Madeline Zavodny, "Do Men's Characteristics Affect Whether a Nonmarital Pregnancy Results in Marriage?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 61 (August 1999): 764-773.

Youth, Black men who live in the South are more likely to marry the mother of their baby than Black men who live in other regions, in the event of a non-marital pregnancy.³ Broken families are exceptionally likely to be impoverished or rely on welfare.⁴ Additionally, the South has a lower index of belonging than any other region in the country.⁵ It may be that welfare and region are, in this case, proxies for family structure, and that broken families of origin contribute to the decreased likelihood that a father will marry the mother of his out-of-wedlock child. This finding dovetails with the fact that broken families of origin contribute to the *increased* likelihood that a father will encourage the mother of his child to abort it.

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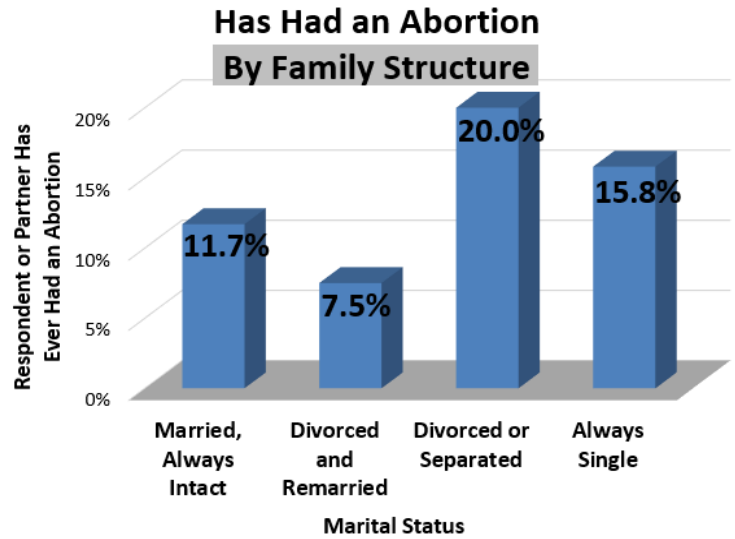
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³ Madeline Zavodny, "Do Men's Characteristics Affect Whether a Nonmarital Pregnancy Results in Marriage?" *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 61 (August 1999): 764-773.

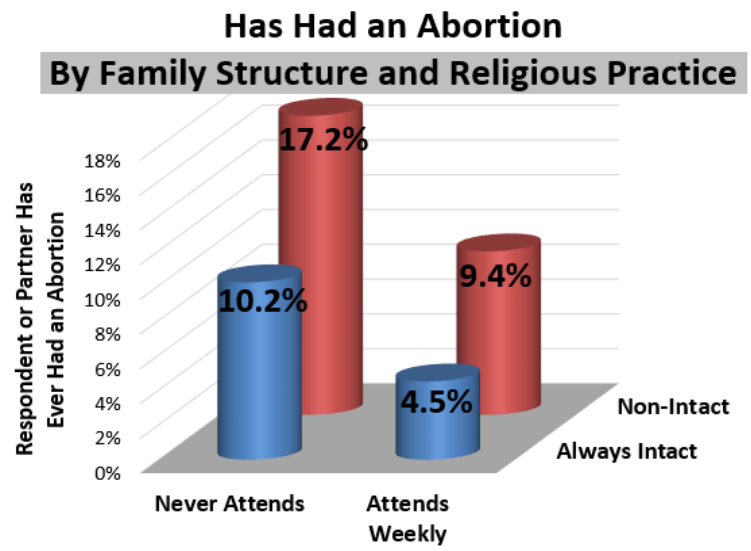
⁴ Patrick F. Fagan, Andrew J. Kidd, and Henry Potrykus, Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, a project of the Family Research Council, 2011) [database online]; available from <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11E70.pdf>: 16-20.

⁵ Patrick F. Fagan, The US Index of Belonging and Rejection (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, a project of the Family Research Council, 2010) [database online]; available from <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF10L25.pdf>: 17, Chart 4.

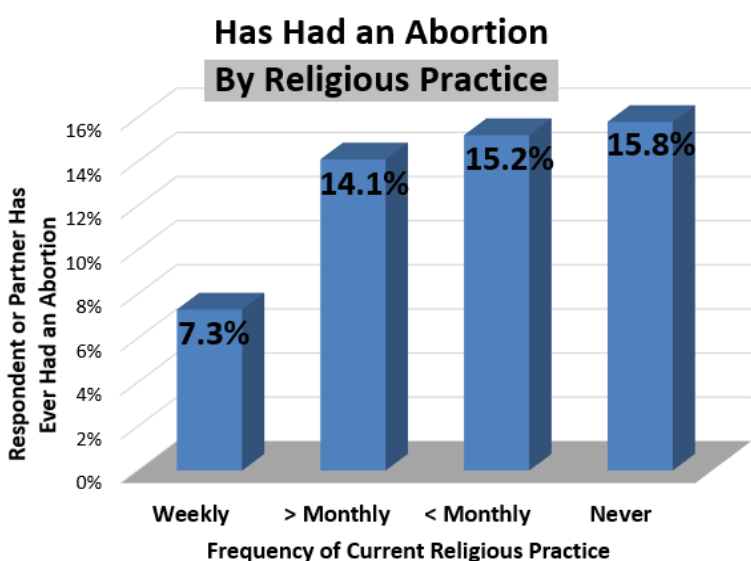
Has Ever Had an Abortion By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Health and Social Life Survey (1992)



Source: National Health and Social Life Survey (1992)



Source: National Health and Social Life Survey (1992)

This chart looks at the number of adults and their partners who have ever had an abortion at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

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

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

- The always-intact married individual that worships weekly;
- The always-intact married individual that never worships;
- The non-intact* or single individual that worships weekly;
- The non-intact* or single individual that never worships.

(* The non-intact group consists of divorced or separated and divorced and remarried individuals.)

Respondent or Partner Has Ever Had an Abortion by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Adults aged 18 to 59 in intact marriages (and their partners) who worshiped weekly were least likely to have ever had an abortion, according to the National Health and Social Life Survey (1992), the most detailed analysis of sexual behavior in America.

Family Structure: Individuals in always-intact marriages were least likely to have ever had an abortion or had a partner who had an abortion (7.5 percent). Abortion is more prevalent among non-intact family structures and among singles: 11.7 percent of those (or their partner) who were always single procured an abortion, followed by 15.8 percent of those (or their partner) who were divorced or separated, and 20 percent of those (or their partner) who were divorced and remarried.

Religious Practice: Individuals (or their partner) who worshiped weekly were least likely to have procured an abortion (7.3 percent). Of those (or their partner) who worshiped less than weekly, 14.1 percent have procured an abortion, followed by those (or their partner) who worshiped less than monthly (15.2 percent) and those (or their partner) who never worshiped (15.8 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: A smaller proportion of those in intact marriages who worshiped weekly had ever procured an abortion or had a partner who procured an abortion (4.5 percent), followed by those (or their partner) in non-intact family structures or who were single and who worshiped weekly (9.4 percent) and those (or their partner) in intact marriages who never worshiped (10.2 percent). Those in non-intact family structures or who were single who never worshiped (or their partner) were most likely to have ever had an abortion (17.2 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: A study of over 500,000 pregnancies showed that a woman's likelihood to choose abortion increases as her education increases, but this is only the case only for unmarried women. Women with a high school education or less and no prior children are least likely to abort, compared with college-educated women with no prior children, who are most likely to abort.¹

Data from the 1990 Latino National Political Survey (a sample of over 2,700 U.S. Hispanics) found that Hispanic Protestants who regularly attend church are more strongly pro-life than any other part of the Latino population and tended to support a total ban on abortion.²

¹ Katherine Trent and Eve Powell-Griner, "Differences in Race, Marital Status, and Education Among Women Obtaining Abortions," *Journal of Social Forces* 69, no. 4 (1991): 1121-1141.

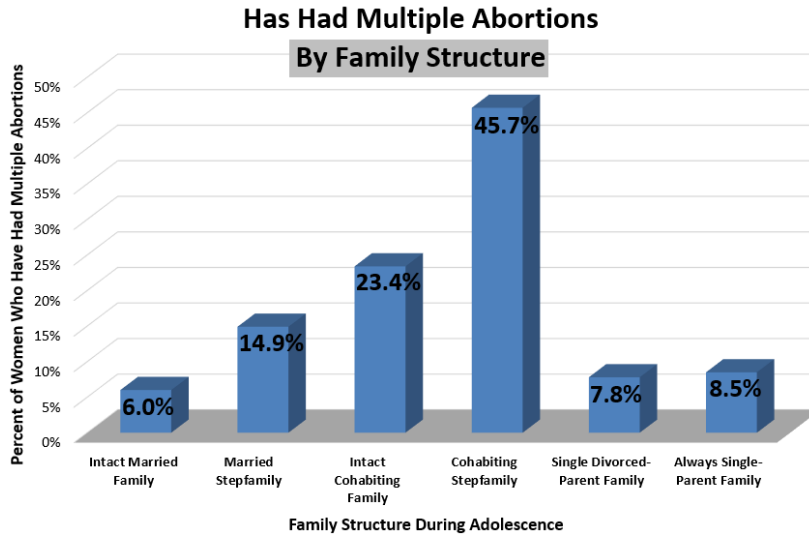
² Christopher Ellison, Samuel Echevarria, and Brad Smith, "Religion and Abortion Attitudes Among U.S. Hispanics: Findings from the 1990 Latino National Political Survey," *Social Science Quarterly* 86, no. 1 (March 2005): 192-208.

A study of Catholic Mexican-American women from Los Angeles County found that among survey respondents raised in Mexico, education had a “liberalizing effect on their attitudes” toward abortion. This trend persisted among U.S.-raised respondents, with the exception of the most devout Catholics. Among this group, education had the opposite effect: it made Catholic Mexican-American women’s attitudes toward abortion more conservative.³

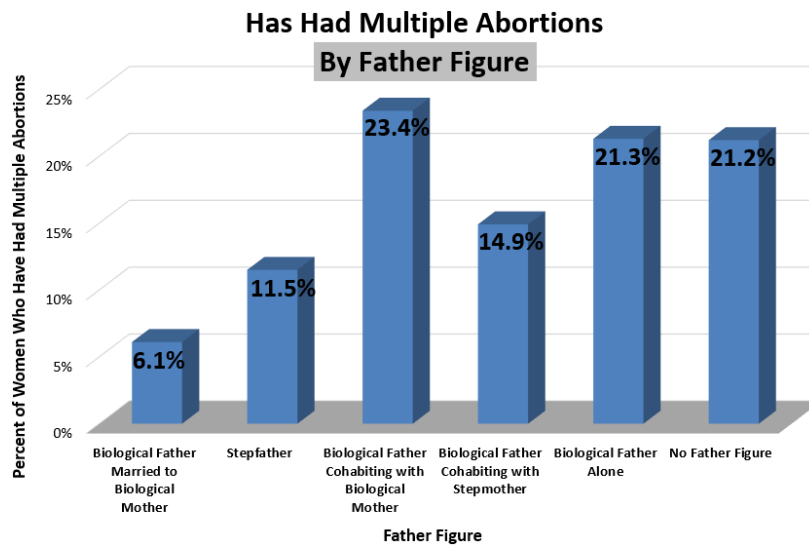
Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

³ Sandra Rosenhouse-Persson and Georges Sabagh, “Attitudes Toward Abortion Among Catholic Mexican-American Women: The Effects of Religiosity and Education,” *Journal of Demography* 20, no.1 (1983): 87-98.
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Editor: Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. / Managing Editor: Julia Kiewit, Anna Dorminey &
www.marri.us Christina Hadford

Has Had Multiple Abortions By Family Structure and Father Figure



Source: National Survey of Family Growth (2002)



Source: National Survey of Family Growth (2002)

Has Had Multiple Abortions by Family Structure and Father Figure

The 2002 cycle of the National Survey of Family Growth showed that among women aged 38 to 44,¹ having had two or more abortions was least common among those raised in an intact family with two married biological parents.

Family Structure: Fewer women raised in an intact married family had two or more abortions than those raised in a non-intact family. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 45.7 percent of women raised in a cohabiting stepfamily had had two or more abortions, followed by those raised in an intact cohabiting family (23.4 percent), those raised in a married stepfamily (14.9 percent), those raised in an always-single parent family (8.5 percent), and those raised in a single-divorced parent family (7.8 percent). Women aged 38 to 44 who were raised in an intact married family were least likely to have had two or more abortions (6.0 percent).

Father Figure: Having had multiple abortions was least common among women raised by their biological father *married* to their biological mother (6.1 percent), and most common among women raised by their biological father *cohabiting* with their biological mother (23.4 percent). Around the same number of women raised by their biological father alone and with no father figure at all had had two or more abortions (21.3 percent and 21.2 percent, respectively).

Related Insights from Other Studies: According to the National Center for Health Statistics, unmarried white women of childbearing age abort at a rate of just over 20 per thousand; unmarried Hispanic women do so at a rate of just under 40 per thousand, and unmarried black women at just over 60 per thousand. Married white women abort at a rate of around 5 per thousand, married Hispanic women abort at a rate of just under 10 per thousand, and married black women abort at a rate of around 15 per thousand.²

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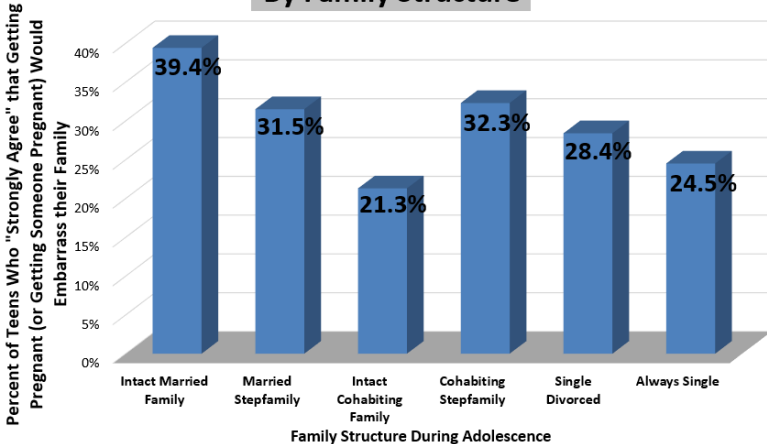
Dr. Sullins is an associate professor of sociology at The Catholic University of America.

¹ NSFG only surveys women up to age 44. The oldest group of women was selected in order to capture the most complete range of outcomes for sexual experience.

² Patrick Fagan, "Family and Social Trendlines 2014: The Behaviors of the American Family in the Five Major Institutions of Society," (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2014). Available at <http://marri.us/publications/family-trends>.

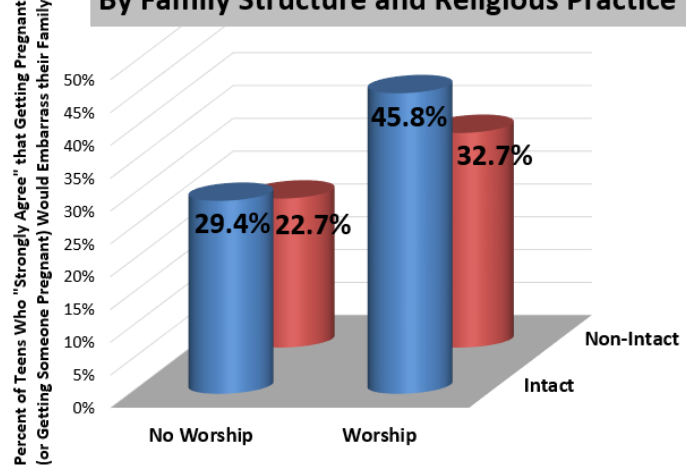
Teen Pregnancy and Family Response By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Teen Pregnancy Would Embarrass Family
By Family Structure



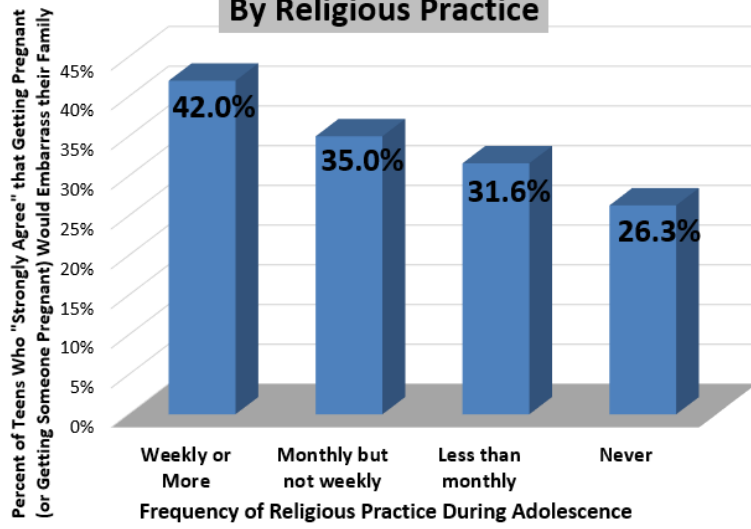
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave I

Teen Pregnancy Would Embarrass Family
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave I

Teen Pregnancy Would Embarrass Family
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave I

This chart looks at the number of children who strongly agree that getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant would embarrass their family 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.

**Those who worship report attending religious services once a week or more often in the past year. Those who do not worship never attended religious services in the past year.

Teen Pregnancy and Family Response by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Wave 1 of the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health)¹ found that adolescents aged 13 to 19 in intact families that worshipped weekly or more were most likely to strongly agree that a pregnancy would embarrass their family.²

Family Structure: Teens in intact married families were most likely to report that getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant) would embarrass their family (39.4 percent). They were followed by adolescents in cohabiting stepfamilies (32.3 percent), married stepfamilies (31.5 percent), single divorced parent families (28.4 percent), always-single-parent families (24.5 percent), and intact cohabiting families (21.3 percent).

Religious Practice: Teens who frequently worshipped were more likely to strongly agree that getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant) would embarrass their family. Thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds who attended religious services weekly or more often within the past year were more likely to believe that a pregnancy would embarrass their family (42.0 percent) than those who attended monthly but not weekly (35.0 percent), less than monthly (31.6 percent), or never (26.3 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds in intact worshipping families were most likely to strongly agree that getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant would embarrass their family (45.8 percent). Teens in intact non-worshipping families (29.4 percent) and non-intact worshipping families (32.7 percent) were less likely to believe that a pregnancy would embarrass their family. Teens in non-intact families that did not worship were least likely to think a pregnancy would bring embarrassment (22.7 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Family disapproval and embarrassment is an important sanction to discourage people from violating social norms.³ Research shows that both family structure and religious attendance form these norms. For instance, Les B. Whitbeck, Ronald L Simons, and Meei-Ying Kao found that sexual permissiveness of divorced parents significantly increases permissive attitudes in their children.⁴ On the other hand, family rules and parental

¹ The National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is a congressionally-mandated longitudinal survey of American adolescents. Add Health drew a random sample of adolescents aged 13-19 in 1995 from junior high and high schools (Wave I) and has followed them in successive waves in 2001 (Wave III) and 2009 (Wave IV).

² Respondents were asked to react to the statement "If you got pregnant [males: if you got someone pregnant], it would be embarrassing for your family." Their options included: "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "refused," "don't know," or "not applicable."

³ Alexander Staller and Paolo Petta, "Introducing Emotions into the Computational Study of Social Norms: A First Evaluation," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulations* 4 (2001).

⁴ Les B. Whitbeck, Ronald L Simons, and Meei-Ying Kao, "The Effects of Divorced Mother's Dating Behaviors and Sexual Attitudes on the Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors of Their Adolescent Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 615-621.

supervision of dating are associated with teens not having sexual intercourse, a later sexual debut, and fewer sexual partners.⁵

Likewise, religiosity establishes stricter sexual norms. Amy Burdette and Terrence Hill found that an increase in private religiosity is associated with a 93 percent reduction in the odds of sexual intercourse among 13-year-olds, and a 97 percent reduction in the odds of sexual debut for 17-year-olds.⁶

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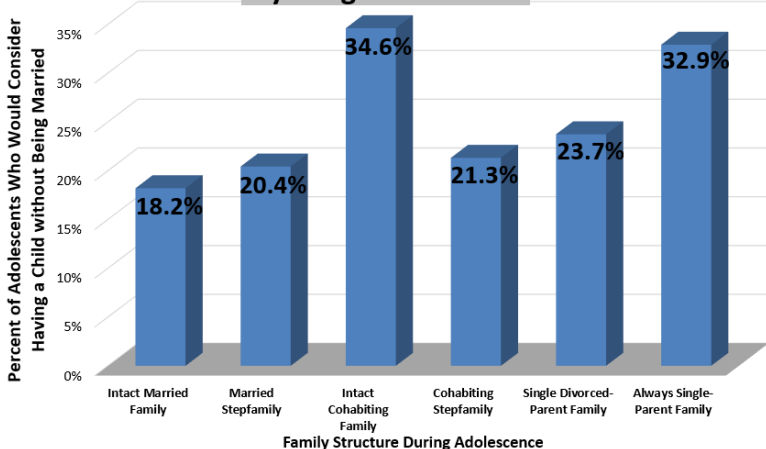
Dr. Sullins is an associate professor of sociology at The Catholic University of America.

⁵ Brent C. Miller, "Family influences on adolescent sexual and contraceptive behavior," *The Journal of Sex Research* (2002): 22-26.

⁶ Amy M. Burdette and Terrence D. Hill, "Religious Involvement and Transitions into Adolescent Sexual Activities," (2009): 16.

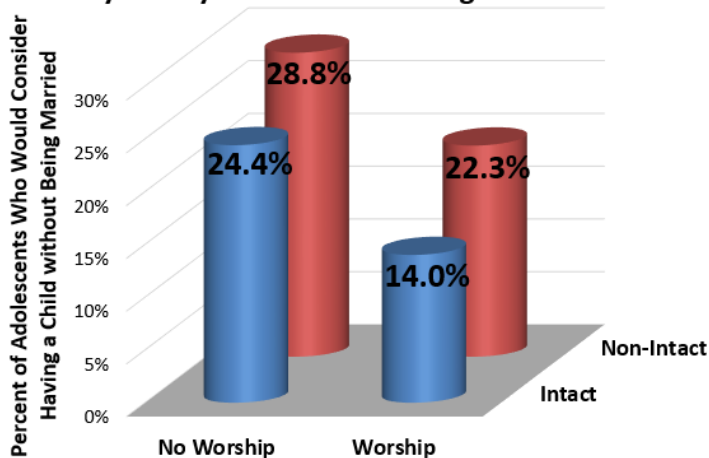
Adolescents OK with Having a Child Out-of-Wedlock By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Adolescents OK with Having a Child Out-of-Wedlock
By Religious Practice



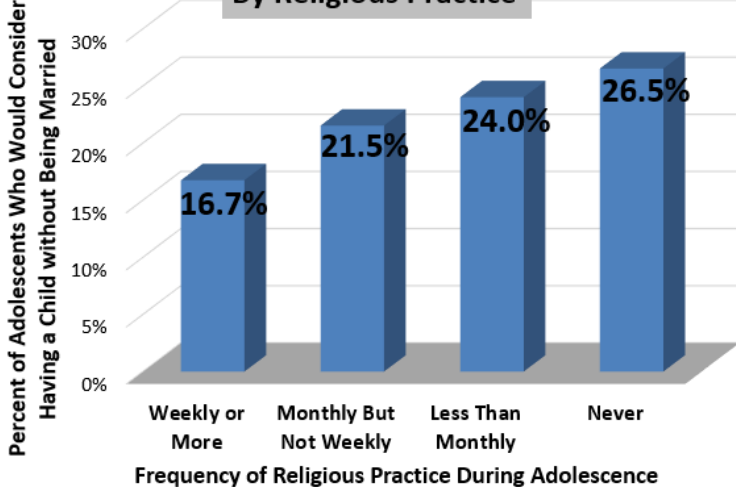
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave 1

Adolescents OK with Having a Child Out-of-Wedlock
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave 1

Adolescents OK with Having a Child Out-of-Wedlock
By Religious Practice



Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health, Wave 1

This chart looks at the number of adolescents who would consider having a child outside of marriage, 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.

**Those who worship report attending religious services once a week or more often in the past year. Those who do not worship never attended religious services in the past year.

Adolescents OK with Having a Child Out-of-Wedlock by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The percentage of adolescents (aged 13 to 19) who would consider having a child outside of marriage was lowest among those who were raised in intact families that attended religious services weekly or more.¹

Family Structure: For teenagers aged 13 to 19, the likelihood that they would consider having a child out of wedlock differed significantly from one family structure to another as the following illustrates:

- **Intact Married Family (18.2 percent): Least likely**
- **Married Step Families (20.4 percent).**
- **Cohabiting Stepfamilies (21.3 percent).**
- **Single-Divorced-Parent Families (23.7 percent).**
- **Always Single Families (32.9 percent).**
- **Biologically Intact Cohabiting Families (34.6 percent): Most likely**

Adolescents raised in biologically intact cohabiting families were almost twice as likely as those raised in intact married families to be ok with having a child out-of-wedlock (34.6 percent versus 18.2 percent, respectively).

Religious Practice: For teenagers aged 13 to 19, the likelihood that they would consider having a child out of wedlock differed significantly from one level of worship to another as the following illustrates:

- **Attend Religious Service Weekly or More (16.7 percent): Least likely**
- **Attend Religious Service Monthly but Not Weekly (21.5 percent).**
- **Attend Religious Service Less Than Monthly (24 percent).**
- **Never Attend Religious Service (26.5 percent): Most likely**

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: For teenagers aged 13 to 19, the likelihood that they would consider having a child out of wedlock differed significantly among the different combinations of family intactness and levels of religious worship as the following illustrates:

- **Intact Worshipping Families (14 percent): Least likely**
- **Non-Intact Worshipping Families (22.3 percent).**
- **Intact Non-Worshipping Families (24.4 percent).**
- **Non-intact non-worshipping families (28.8 percent): Most likely**

Those from non-intact non-worshipping families were twice as likely to consider having a child out-of-wedlock as those raised in an intact worshipping family (28.8 percent versus 14 percent respectively).

¹The data come from Wave 1 of the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health). Respondents were asked to respond to the question "Since January 1, with how many people in total have you had a sexual relationship?" Their answers choices were to give a specific number or to answer "refused," "legitimate skip," "don't know," or "not applicable."

Related Insights from Other Studies: MARRI has previously [shown](#) that females who grew up in intact families who worshiped weekly were least likely to have an unwed pregnancy (18 percent), and females from non-intact families were most likely (40 percent).²

Using the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth, Jay Teachman of Western Washington University found that women who grew up in intact families were less likely to cohabit before marriage, or to have a premarital birth or conception. Women who were most likely to have premarital conceptions were those who experienced parental divorce or remarriage.³

According to data from the Intergenerational Panel Study of Parents and Children, (which looked at white mothers and their children over a 31 year period) the more frequently 18-year-olds attended religious services, the more likely they were to disapprove of premarital sex, cohabitation, abortion, and divorce.⁴

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² "Ever had an unwed pregnancy' by current religious attendance and structure of family origin," Marriage and Religious Research, Mapping America 101 <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF11C38.pdf>.

³ Teachman, Jay D. "The Childhood Living Arrangements of Children and the Characteristics of Their Marriages." Journal of Family Issues Vol. 25, No. 1 (January 2004) pp. 86-111.

⁴ Pearce, L.D. & Thronton, A. "Religious Identity and Family Ideologies in the Transition to Adulthood." Journal of Marriage and Family Vol. 69 (2007) pp. 1227-1243.