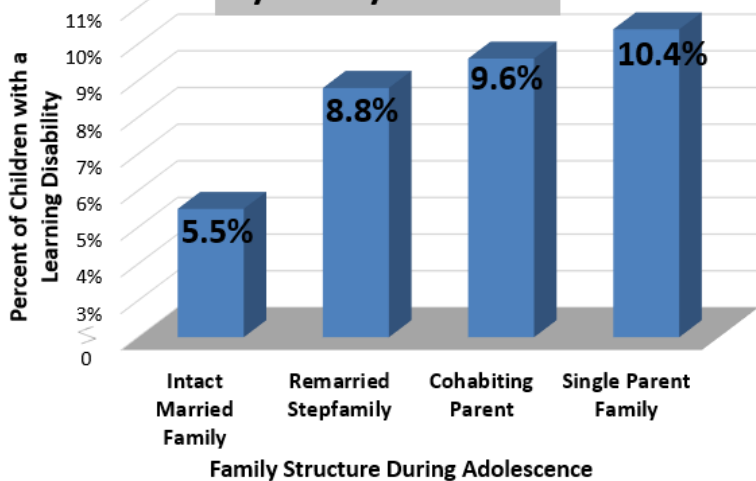


Children with a Learning Disability By Family Structure and Religious Practice

Children with a Learning Disability

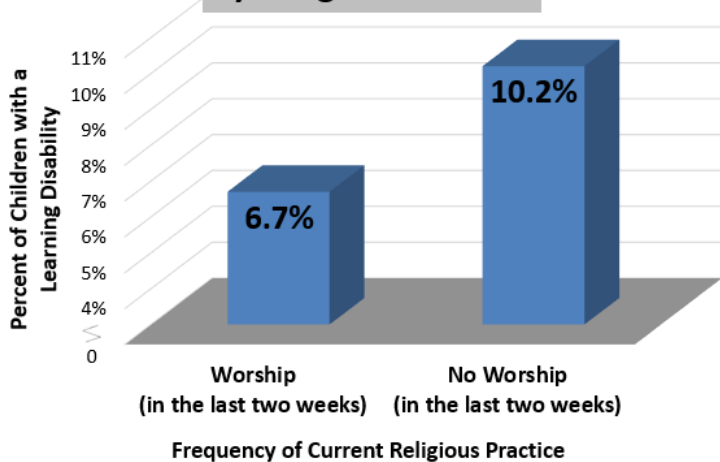
By Family Structure



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

Children with a Learning Disability

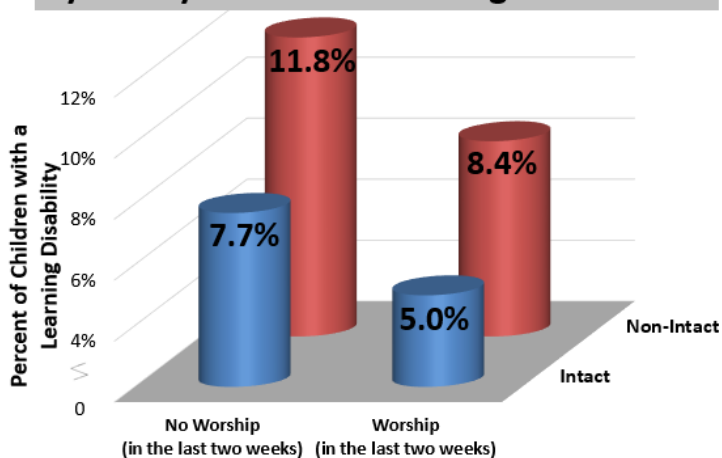
By Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

Children with a Learning Disability

By Family Structure and Religious Practice



Source: National Health Interview Survey (2011)

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

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

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

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

** 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."*

***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 a Learning Disability by Family Structure and Religious Practice

The 2001 cycle¹ of the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) found that children in intact families that worshipped² 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.

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.