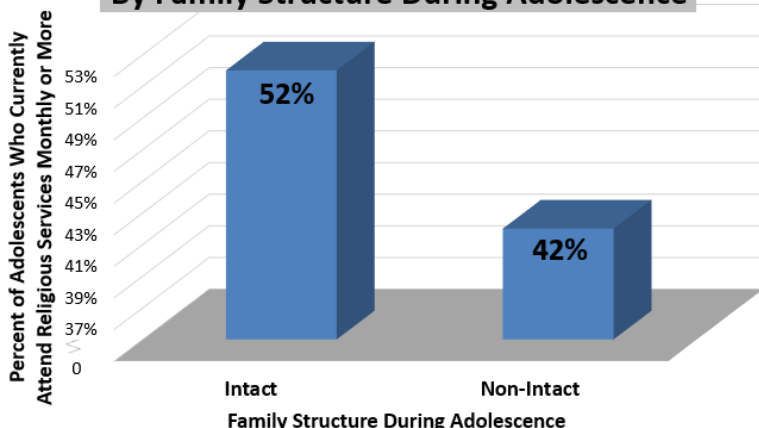


## Adult Religious Attendance By Family Structure and Religious Practice During Adolescence

Adult Religious Attendance

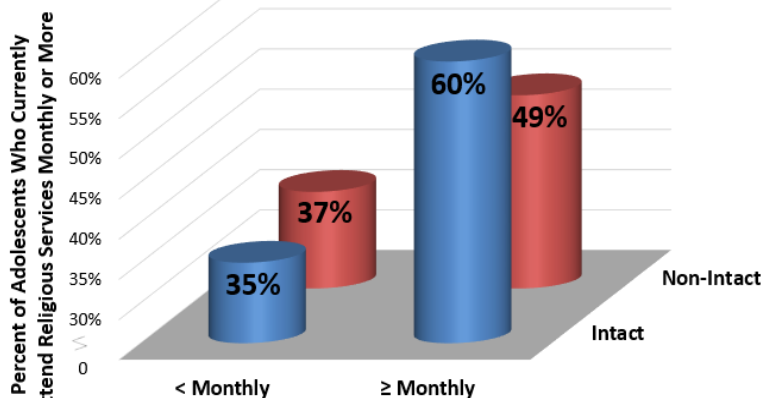
By Family Structure During Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

Adult Religious Attendance

By Family Structure and Religious Practice During Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

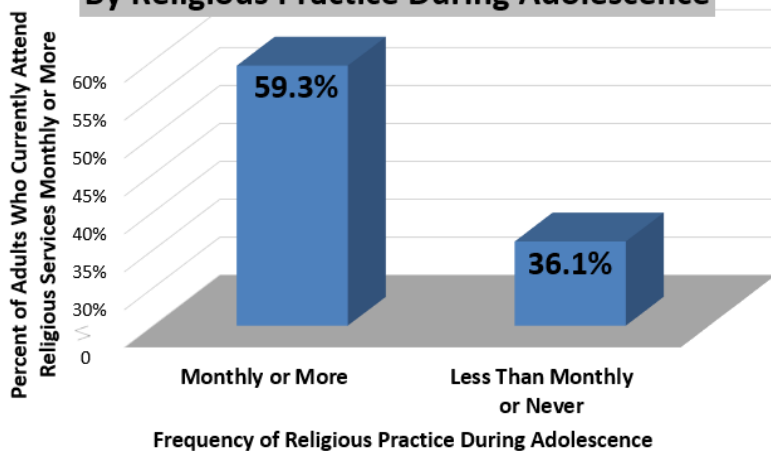
*These charts group the data in four categories, with two different configurations for each of two major indicators, frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more frequently vs. less than monthly or never) and family structure (intact vs. non-intact).*

*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.*

Adult Religious Attendance

By Religious Practice During Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

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.<sup>1</sup>

**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.<sup>2</sup> Michael McCullough of the University of Miami and colleagues also found a correlation between religious upbringing and "religiousness in early to mid-adulthood."<sup>3</sup>

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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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup>

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."<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Scott M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.

<sup>6</sup> Reed Larson, Jodi Dworkin, and Sally Gillman, "Facilitating Adolescents' Constructive Use of Time in One-Parent Families," *Applied Developmental Science* 5 (2001): 143-57.

<sup>7</sup> Scott M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.

<sup>8</sup> Darren E. Sherkat, "Counterculture or Continuity? Competing Influences on Baby Boomers' Religious Orientations and Participation," *Social Forces* 76 (1998): 1087-1115.