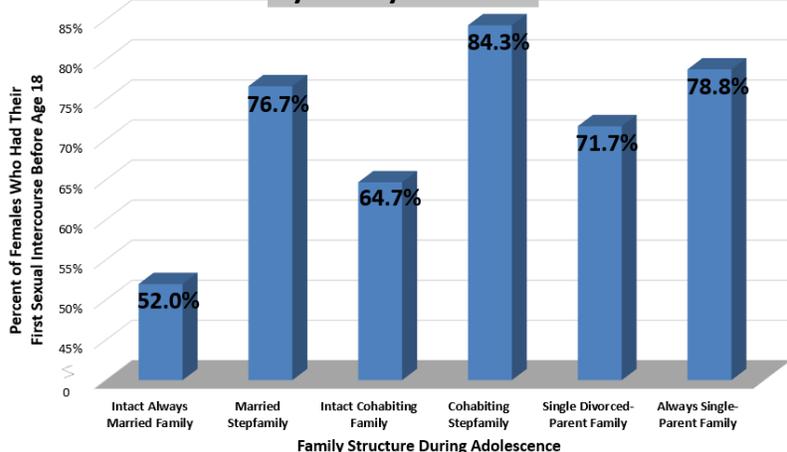


First Sexual Intercourse Before Age 18 (Females) By Family Structure and Religious Practice

First Sexual Intercourse Before Age 18 (Females)

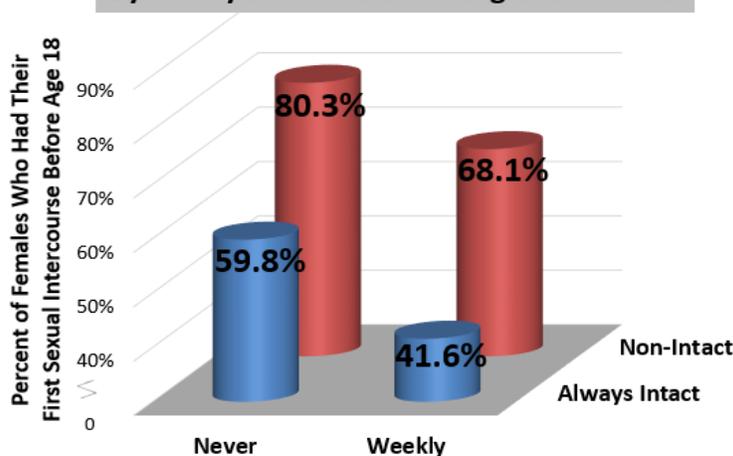
By Family Structure



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

First Sexual Intercourse Before Age 18 (Females)

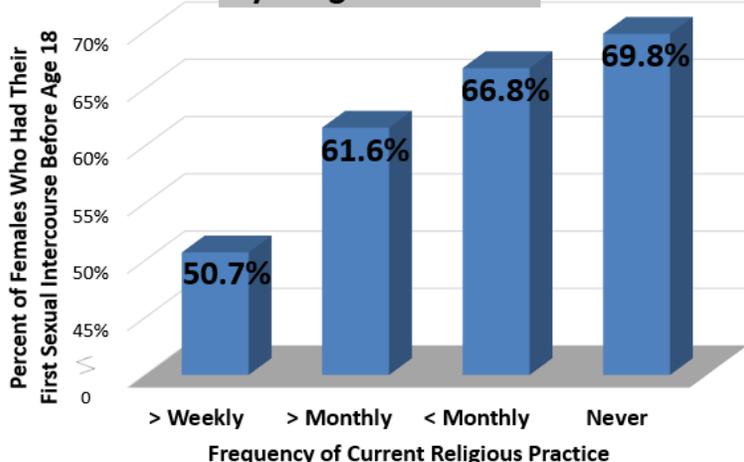
By Family Structure and Religious Practice



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

First Sexual Intercourse Before Age 18 (Females)

By Religious Practice



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

This chart looks at women who had sexual intercourse before age 18 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.)

Females Who Had Their First Sexual Intercourse Before Age 18 (Females) by Family Structure and Religious Practice

According to the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002),¹ women who grew up in an intact married family and who worshipped weekly at the time of the survey were the least likely to have had sexual intercourse before age 18, when viewed from the perspective of family structure and religious attendance.

Family Structure: 52 percent of women who grew up in intact married families had sexual intercourse before turning 18, followed by women from intact cohabiting families (64.7 percent), single divorced parent families (71.7 percent), married stepfamilies (76.7 percent), always single parent families (78.8 percent), and cohabiting stepfamilies (84.3 percent).

Religious Practice: 50.7 percent of women who worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey had sexual intercourse before turning 18, followed by those who attended religious services between one and three times a month (61.6 percent), those who attended religious services less than once a month (66.8 percent), and those who never attended religious services (69.8 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: According to the National Survey of Family Growth, 41.6 percent of women who grew up in intact married families and worshipped at least weekly at the time of the survey had sexual intercourse before turning 18, followed by women who grew up in intact married families and who never worshipped (59.8 percent), those who grew up in other family structures and worshipped at least weekly (68.1 percent), and those who grew up in other family structures and never worshipped (80.3 percent).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Sam Hardy and Marcela Raffaelli of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln reported that “higher religiosity at 15-16 years was significantly associated with still being a virgin 2 years later.”²

Jill Sinha of Princeton University and colleagues also found that “[b]oth attendance in worship services and participation in a religious youth group were negatively correlated with sexual activity.”³

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 Sam A. Hardy and Marcela Raffaelli, “Adolescent Religiosity and Sexuality: An Investigation of Reciprocal Influences,” *Journal of Adolescence* 26 (2003): 731-9.

³ Jill W. Sinha, Ram A. Cnaan, and Richard W. Gelles, “Adolescent Risk Behaviors and Religion: Findings from a National Study,” *Journal of Adolescence* 30 (2007): 231-49.

Cristina Lammers of the University of Uruguay and colleagues reported that adolescents under “17 years of age, from two-parent families, were more likely than peers from single-parent families to delay sexual intercourse.”⁴

Mignon Moore of Columbia University and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale also found that teenagers living in single mother families have a greater chance of sexual debut than those living in married families.⁵

Dawn Upchurch of the University of California, Los Angeles and colleagues reported that “[t]eenagers living with a single parent or in a stepfamily had significantly higher rates of transition to first sex than did those living with both biological parents.”⁶

As the evidence indicates, women who grew up in an intact family and who worship weekly are less likely to have had sexual intercourse before turning 18.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.

Patrick Fagan is the Director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute

D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

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

⁴ Cristina Lammers, Marjorie Ireland, Michael Resnick, and Robert Blum, “Influences on Adolescents’ Decision to Postpone Onset of Sexual Intercourse: A Survival Analysis of Virginity among Youths Aged 13 to 18 Years,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 26 (2000): 42-8.

⁵ 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.

⁶ Dawn M. Upchurch, Lené Levy-Storms, Clea A. Sucoff, and Carol S. Aneshensel, “Gender and Ethnic Differences in the Timing of First Sexual Intercourse,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 30 (1998): 121-7.