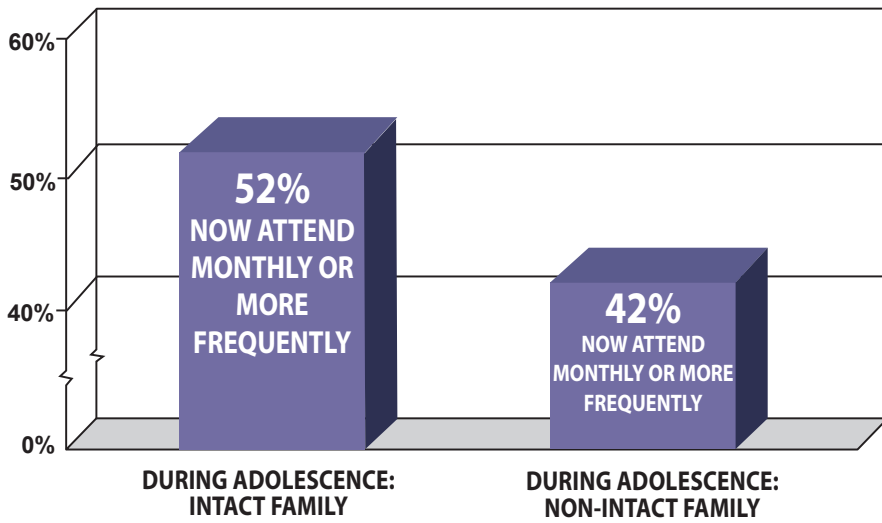




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 71

Adult Religious Attendance by Family Structure in Adolescence

Attending Religious Services Monthly or More Frequently in Adulthood by Family Structure in Adolescence



Family Structure during Adolescence

Source: General Social Surveys (GSS)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who grew up in an intact family during adolescence are more likely to attend religious services at least monthly than are those who did not.

Description: 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.¹

Related Insights from Other Studies

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.”²

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.³

As these available data indicate, adolescent family structure has a significant effect on religious practice, both in adolescence and adulthood.

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- 1 The statistics in this chart 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.
 - 2 Scott M. Myers, "An Interactive Model of Religiosity Inheritance: The Importance of Family Context," *American Sociological Review* 61 (1996): 858-66.
 - 3 Reed Larson, Jodi Dworkin, and Sally Gillman, "Facilitating Adolescents' Constructive Use of Time in One-Parent Families," *Applied Developmental Science* 5 (2001): 143-57.



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