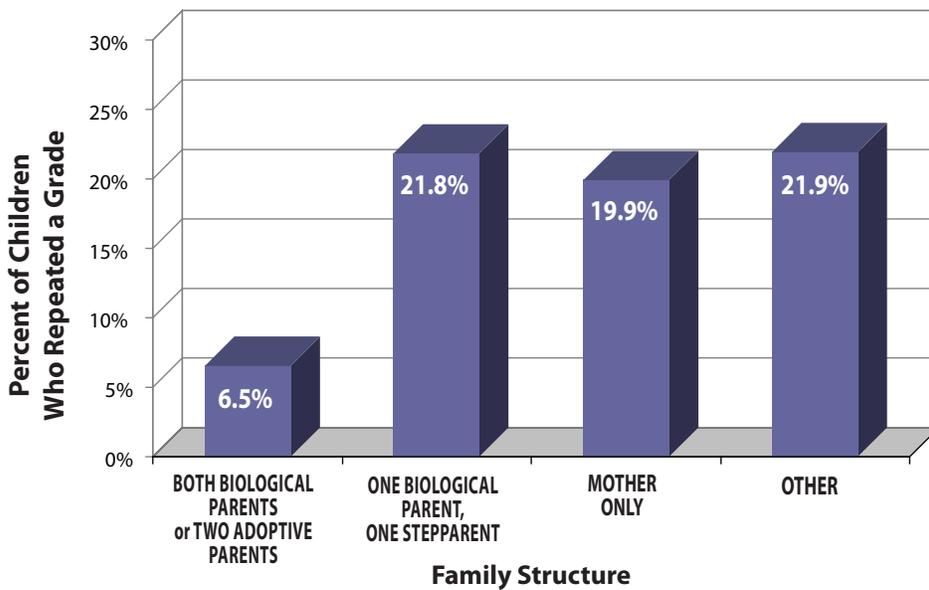




Repeating a Grade and Family Structure

Repeating a Grade by Family Structure



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)

This chart is taken from a study conducted by Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.¹ for Family Research Council.²

Children who live with both biological parents or two adoptive parents are less likely to repeat a grade than those who do not.

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who live with both biological parents or two adoptive parents are only one third as likely to have ever repeated a grade in school as those who living with their mother only, with one

biological parent and a stepparent,³ or in other family configurations, such as with their father only or with foster parents.⁴ The respective rates of grade repetition found in the survey were 6.5 percent for those living with both parents, 19.9 percent for those living with mother only, 21.8 percent for those living with a parent and stepparent, and 21.9 percent for those living in other family configurations.

The difference in grade repetition rates between those living with mother only and those living with a birth parent and stepparent, while statistically significant, was relatively minor.

Other Studies

Nicholas Zill found similar differences in grade repetition rates between children of ages 7-17 living with their mother and father and those living with their mother only or with mother and stepfather in an analysis of data from the 1988 National Health Interview Survey on Child Health.⁵

Several other studies corroborate these findings. Robert Byrd of the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry and colleagues reported that students in two-parent households are less likely to repeat a grade than those in one-parent households.⁶

Hak-Ju Kim of Washington University in St. Louis also found that children living with two biological parents are less likely to repeat a grade than those living with single parents or stepparents. Children living with single parents, though, are slightly more likely to repeat a grade than those living with a stepparent.⁷

Examining the National Study of Adolescent Health, Paul Amato of Pennsylvania State University reported that 30 percent of adolescents living with single parents have repeated a grade, compared to 19 percent of adolescents living with married parents.⁸

When it comes to keeping children on schedule academically, the intact family proves to be the most effective family structure.

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.
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Former Vice President of Westat
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- 1 Nicholas Zill is a research psychologist and consultant. Until his recent retirement, he was a vice president of Westat Inc. He was the founder of Child Trends and its executive director for 13 years.
 - 2 This chart draws on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.
 - 3 Most of the parents in the "biological parent and a stepparent" category are married.
 - 4 "Other family configurations" also include children living with grandparent or other relatives.
 - 5 Nicholas Zill, "Family Change and Student Achievement: What We Have Learned, What It Means for Schools," in *Family-School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes*, eds. Alan Booth and Judith F. Dunn (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996): 139-174.
 - 6 Robert S. Byrd, Michael Weitzman, and Peggy Auinger, "Increased Behavior Problems Associated with Delayed School Entry and Delayed School Progress," *Pediatrics*, vol. 100 (1997): 654-661.
 - 7 Hak-Ju Kim, "Family Resources and Children's Academic Performance," *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 26 (2004): 529-536.
 - 8 Paul R. Amato, "The Impact of Family Formation Change on the Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Well-Being of the Next Generation," *The Future of Children*, vol. 15 (2005): 75-96.



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