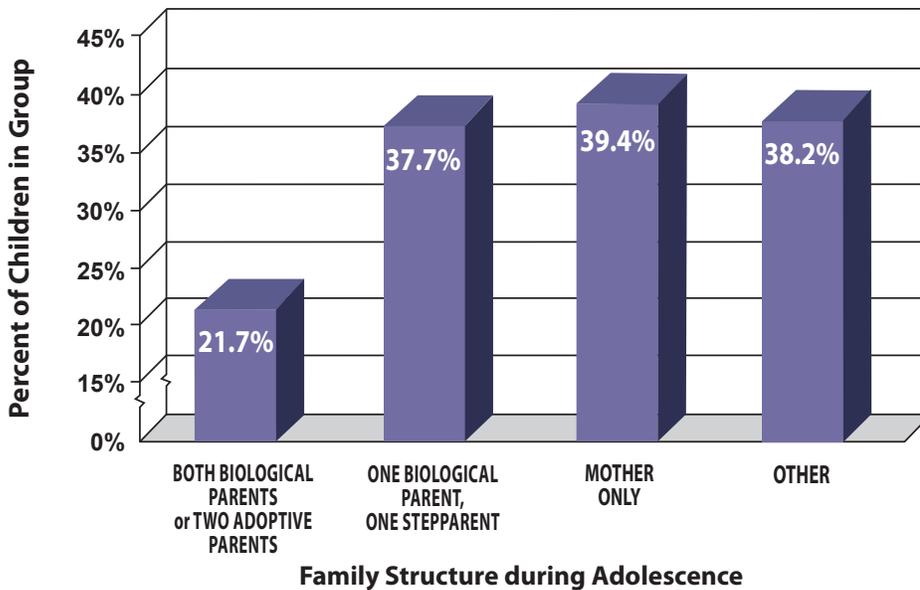




Parents Contacted by School about Their Children’s Behavior Problems and Family Structure

Percent of Children Whose Parents Were Contacted by School about Children’s Behavior Problems 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 with two adoptive parents are less likely to have their school report behavior problems to their parents than are children who live in households that do not include both parents.

According to the National Survey of Children’s Health, only 21.7 percent of children who live with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents

are the object of their school reporting behavior problems to parents, compared to 39.4 percent of children who live with single mothers. In between are those who live with a biological parent and a stepparent (37.7 percent)³ and those who live within other family configurations (38.2 percent), such as with their father only or foster parents.⁴

Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. John Hoffman of Brigham Young University found that adolescents living with both biological parents exhibit fewer behavior problems, such as being arrested, fighting, or being suspended or expelled, than adolescents living within other family structures.⁵

Cesar Rebellon of the University of New Hampshire examined delinquency data from the National

Youth Survey, including interpersonal aggression and truancy measures, and reported that adolescent boys (and adolescent girls, to a slightly lesser extent) from intact married families had lower delinquency scores than those from divorced families.⁶

As the data indicate, students who live with both biological parents are less likely to exhibit behavior problems that would compel school administrators or teachers to contact a student's parents.

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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 John P. Hoffman, "Family Structure, Community Context, and Adolescent Problem Behaviors," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 35 (2006): 867-880.

6 Cesar J. Rebellon, "Do Adolescents Engage in Delinquency to Attract the Social Attention of Peers? An Extension and Longitudinal Test of the Social Reinforcement Hypothesis," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 43 (2006): 387-411.



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