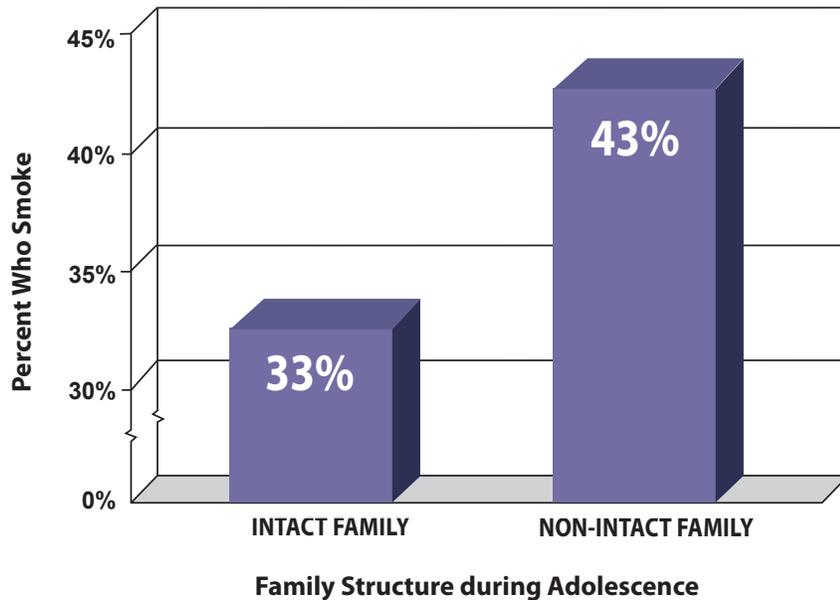




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 65

Smoking in Adulthood by Family Structure in Adolescence

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Source: General Social Surveys (GSS, 1972-2006)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who grew up living with both biological parents are less likely to smoke than those who did not.

According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 33 percent of adults who lived in an intact family during adolescence smoke, compared to 43 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.¹

Other Studies

Though little related research exists on intergenerational

links between family structure during adolescence and adult smoking, many other studies show a contemporaneous correlation between adolescent family structure and smoking.

In a study of adolescents from 11 European countries, Thoroddur Bjarnason at the State University of New York at Albany and colleagues reported that “adolescents who live with both biological parents smoke less than those living with single mothers, who in turn smoke less than those living with single fathers, mothers-stepfathers, or with neither biological parent.”²

Joan Tucker of RAND and colleagues found that “early experimenters were more likely than were nonsmokers” to live in a non-intact family.³

Tucker and colleagues also reported that male adolescent and young adult smokers who did not live in an intact nuclear family were less likely to quit smoking.⁴

Examining the smoking habits of adults in various family structures, Mark Schuster of the University of California, Los Angeles and colleagues reported that 33 percent of homes with at least two adults have regular smokers, compared to 46 percent of mother-only homes and 43 percent of father-only homes.⁵

As the data clearly show, intact families yield the lowest percentage of smokers.

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 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.
 - 2 Thoroddur Bjarnason, "Family Structure and Adolescent Cigarette Smoking in Eleven European Countries," *Addiction*, vol. 98 (2003): 815-824.
 - 3 Joan S. Tucker, et al., "Five-Year Prospective Study of Risk Factors for Daily Smoking in Adolescence among Early Nonsmokers and Experimenters," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 32 (2002): 1,588-1,603.
 - 4 Joan S. Tucker, et al., "Smoking Cessation during the Transition from Adolescence to Young Adulthood," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research*, vol. 4 (2002): 321-332.
 - 5 Mark A. Schuster, et al., "Smoking Patterns of Household Members and Visitors in Homes with Children in the United States," *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, vol. 156 (2002): 1,094-1,100.



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