

Mapping America – Number 137

A Consolidation of Mapping Americas: Family Structure, Live and Let Live?

Many claim that an individual's family structure is a personal matter that should be of no concern to others. However, according to MARRI research, a child's family arrangement significantly influences how he/ she costs society because of bad or criminal behavior. This Mapping America highlights a number of MARRI findings that show how a family's structure impacts the legal system.

Arrested

Theft

Fighting

Assault

Marijuana

Hard Drugs



Mapping America™

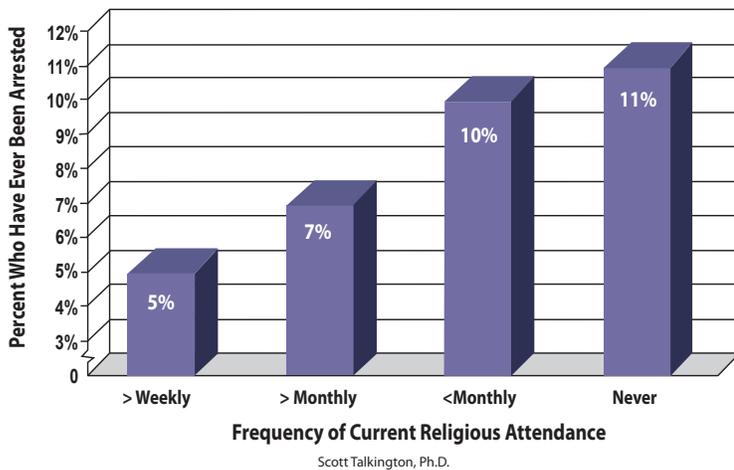
Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 102

“Ever Been Arrested” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

“Ever Been Arrested”

by Current Religious Attendance

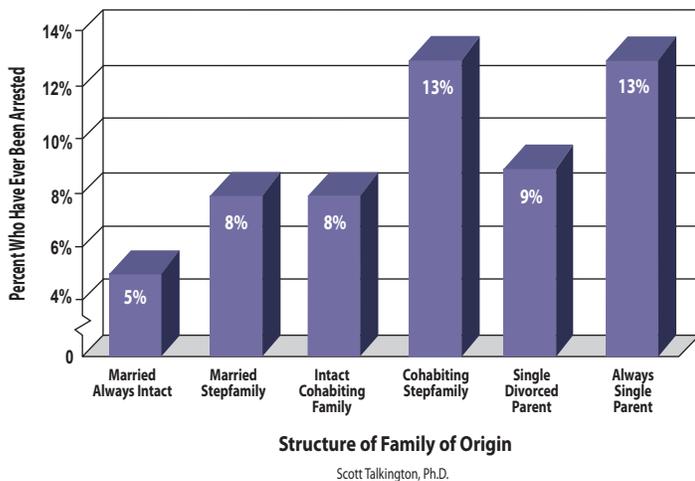
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



“Ever Been Arrested”

by Structure of Family of Origin

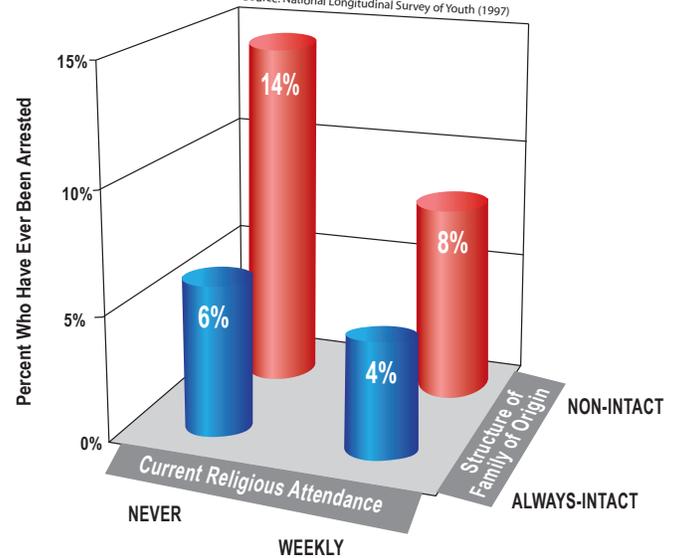
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



“Ever Been Arrested”

by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin Combined

Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

This chart looks at youths who have ever been arrested at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

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;

All other family structures* that worship weekly;

All other family structures* that never worship.

(*The non-intact group consists of individuals 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.)

“Ever Been Arrested”

by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that youths who did not grow up in always-intact married families and never attended church are most likely to have ever been arrested..

Description: Examining **structure of family of origin**, only 5 percent of youths who grew up in an intact married family had ever been arrested, followed by youths from married stepfamilies and families with intact cohabiting partners (8 percent), single divorced parent families (9 percent) and cohabiting stepfamilies and always single parent families (13 percent).

Examining only **current religious attendance**, 5 percent of youths who currently attend weekly religious services have ever been arrested, followed by those who attend one to three times a months (7 percent), those who attend less than once a month (10 percent), and those who never attend church (11 percent).

Examining **current religious attendance and structure of family of origin combined**, only 4 percent of youths who currently attend weekly religious services and who grew up in an always-intact family have ever been arrested, followed by youths who never attend church but grew up in an always intact family (6 percent), those who grew up in all other family structures but currently attend church weekly (8 percent) and those who never attend church and grew up in all other family structures (14 percent).

Related Insight from Other Studies

The effects of family structure can be seen in the Oregon Youth Study, a longitudinal survey. Compared to boys living with both biological parents, boys living in single-mother households had higher odds of being arrested by age 14 (208 percent higher) and of being arrested by age 17 (128 percent higher). This survey also showed that boys living in stepfamilies had greater odds of being arrested by age 14 (210 percent higher) and of being arrested by age 17 (139 percent higher) than did boys in households with both biological parents.¹

One study found an inverse correlation between church attendance and religious influence and the kind and rate of offenses committed.² Those who attended church frequently or who claimed considerable religious influence had considerably lower odds of being a frequent offender, compared to the individuals who attended church less frequently or not at all. Another study found that states with more religious populations tended to have fewer homicides and fewer suicides.³

Another study looked at African-American men in prison against a matched control group who were not in prison, and found that those who eventually ended up in prison typically did not go to church (or had stopped going) when they were about 10 years old.⁴

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. and Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

Dr. Fagan is senior fellow and director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) at Family Research Council.

Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

1 Coughlin, Chris and Samuel Vuchinich, "Family Experience in Preadolescence and the Development of Male Delinquency," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58(2) 1996, pp. 491-501.

2 Sloane, D.M. & Potvin, R.H. 1986, 'Religion and delinquency: Cutting through the maze', *Social Forces*, vol. 65, no. 1, pp. 87-105.

3 Lester, D. 1987, 'Religiosity and personal violence: A regional analysis of suicide and homicide rates', *The Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 127, no. 6, pp. 685-686.

4 Parson, N.M. & Mikawa, J.K. 1990, 'Incarceration and nonincarceration of African-American men raised in Black Christian churches', *The Journal of Psychology*, vol. 125, pp. 163-173.

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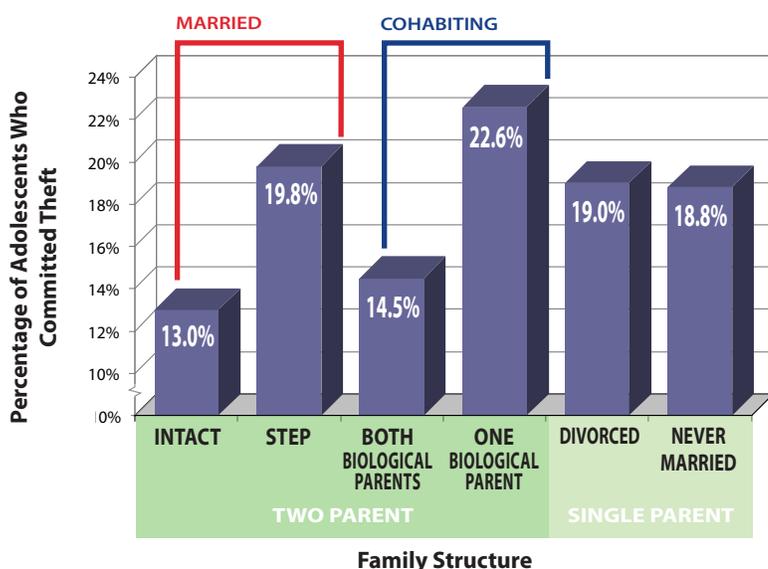


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Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 23

Family Structure and Theft

Theft by Family Structure¹



Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave I. Adolescents grade 7-12.

Adolescents who live in an intact married family are less likely to steal than those living in step-families, those whose parents are divorced, or those raised by cohabiting parents.

According to a confidential survey conducted as part of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II, 13 percent of children who live in an intact married family admit to having stolen at least \$50 worth of goods.² By comparison, 19 percent of children whose parents never married or are divorced have stolen as much, as have 20 percent of those living with a step-parent, 15 percent of those living with cohabiting biological parents, and 23 percent of those living with one cohabiting biological parent.

Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate these findings. Amy Anderson of Pennsylvania State University found that children living in one-parent households were more likely to commit property crimes than those living in two-parent households.³

George Thomas of the Research Institute on Addictions and colleagues also reported that adolescents living with both biological parents have the lowest delinquency levels.⁴

In a study of adolescents in the United Kingdom, Patrick Miller and Martin Plant of the

University of the West of England found that children living in single-parent households were more prone to vandalism and theft.⁵

When it comes to raising adolescents who don't steal, in general, married parents do the job better.

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- 1 This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
 - 2 The data indicate those adolescents who have stolen more than \$50 worth of goods.
 - 3 Amy L. Anderson, "Individual and Contextual Influences on Delinquency: The Role of the Single-Parent Family," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 30 (2002): 575-587. The four measures for property crime included: stolen or tried to steal something worth less than US\$50; stolen or tried to steal something worth more than US\$50; entered or tried to enter a building to steal something; and stolen or attempted to steal a motor vehicle.
 - 4 George Thomas, et al., "The Effects of Single-Mother Families and Nonresident Fathers on Delinquency and Substance Abuse in Black and White Adolescents," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 58 (1996): 884-894. The delinquency measures included stealing, assault, gang fighting, credit card or check forgery, breaking into a house or car, engaging in sexual relations, taking money from a family member without his or her knowledge, pushing or hitting a parent, and throwing something at a family member.
 - 5 Patrick Miller and Martin Plant, "The Family, Peer Influences and Substance Use: Findings from a Study of UK Teenagers," *Journal of Substance Use*, vol. 8 (2003): 19-26.



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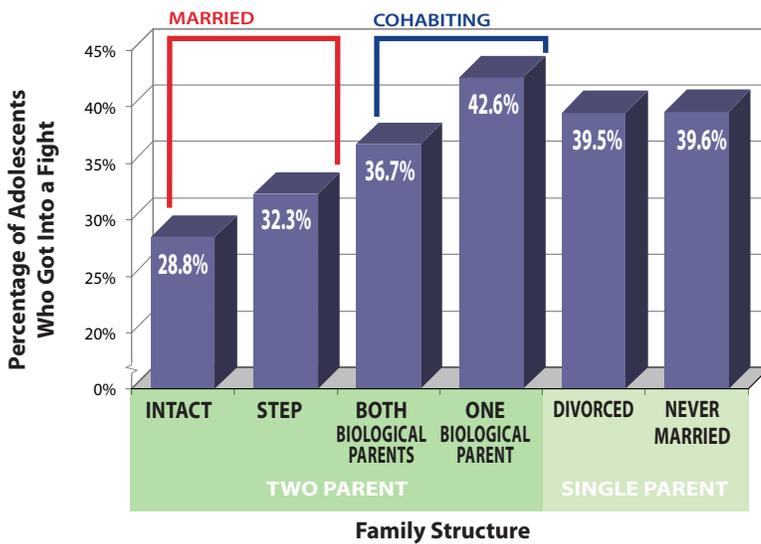
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Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 14

Family Structure and Fighting

Ever Got Into a Fight by Family Structure¹



Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave I. Adolescents grade 7-12.

¹ This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Adolescents who live in an intact married family are least likely to get into a fight.

Whereas 42.6 percent of adolescents living with one natural, cohabiting parent have been in a fight, only 28.8 percent of those with married parents have ever been in one, according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Among other family structures, 32.3 percent of adolescents living in stepfamilies, 36.7 percent of those living with cohabiting biological parents, 39.5 percent of those whose parents are divorced, and 39.6 percent of those whose parents have never married have ever been in a fight.

Other Sources

Many other studies corroborate these findings. Analyzing violence patterns among 1,642 black children and teens in an Alabama school district, Darlene Wright of Birmingham-Southern College and Kevin Fitzpatrick of the University of Arkansas reported that “family intactness had a significant negative relationship with fighting.”²

Roy Oman of the University of Oklahoma and colleagues also found that inner-city youth in two-parent households were more likely to report not fighting in the previous 12 months (67 percent) than those in one-parent households (58 percent).³

Revealing the primacy of the intact married family, Sarah Halpern-Meekin and Laura Tach of Harvard University reported that children who live with half-siblings “have significantly higher delinquency scores” than children who live solely with full siblings, “even though they are both being raised by their biological [married] parents.”⁴

Chris Knoester and Dana Hayne of Ohio State University found that family structure significantly affects youth violence at the neighborhood level. They found that “the proportion of single-parent families in the neighborhood [is] positively associated with an adolescent’s risk of committing violence.”⁵

When it comes to rearing well-adjusted children who can keep their tempers in check, there is no better coach than the intact married family.

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- 2 Darlene R. Wright and Kevin M. Fitzpatrick, “Violence and Minority Youth: The Effects of Risk and Asset Factors on Fighting among African American Children and Adolescents,” *Adolescence* 41 (2006): 251-262.
 - 3 Roy F. Oman, Sara K. Vesely, and Cheryl B. Aspy, “Youth Assets, Aggression, and Delinquency within the Context of Family Structure,” *American Journal of Health Behavior* 29.6 (2005): 557-568.
 - 4 Sarah Halpern-Meekin and Laura Tach, “Heterogeneity in Two-Parent Families and Adolescent Well-Being,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70 (2008): 435-451.
 - 5 Chris Knoester and Dana L. Haynie, “Community Context, Social Integration into Family, and Youth Violence,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 (2005): 767-780.



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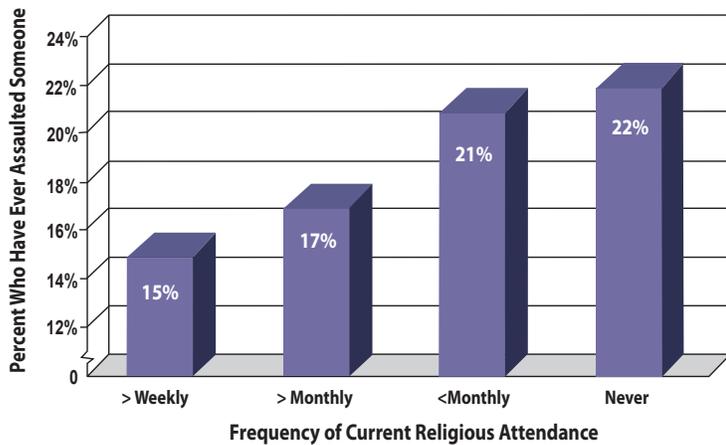
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Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 106

“Ever Assaulted Someone” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

“Ever Assaulted Someone”
by Current Religious Attendance

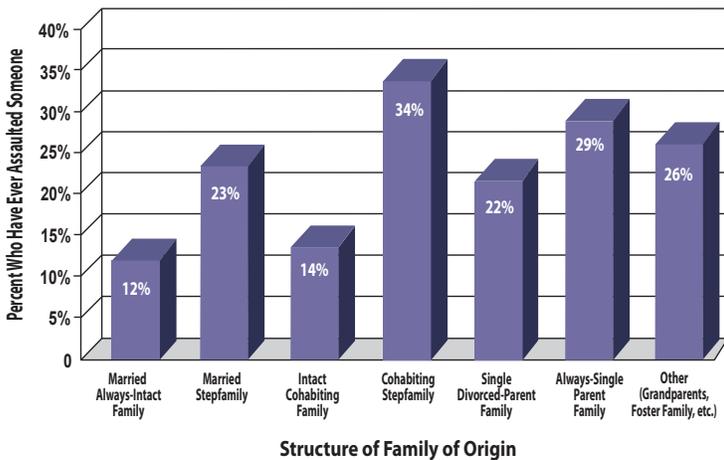
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

“Ever Assaulted Someone”
by Structure of Family of Origin

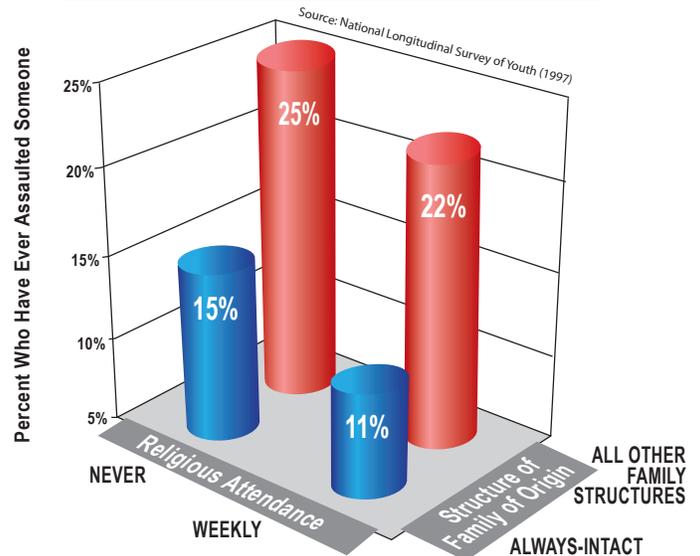
Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

“Ever Assaulted Someone”
by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin Combined

Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

This chart looks at adults who have committed assault at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

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;

All other family structures* that worship weekly;

All other family structures* that never worship.

(* This group consists of individuals 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.)

“Ever Assaulted Someone” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that adults who grew up in intact families and currently attended weekly religious services are least likely to “ever assault someone.”

Description: Examining **structure of family of origin**, 12 percent of adults who grew up with both biological parents married commit assault in their lifetime, followed by those who grew up in an intact, cohabiting family (14 percent), those who grew up in a divorced single-parent family (22 percent), those who grew up in a married stepfamily (23 percent), those who grew up in an alternate family structure [i.e. with grandparents, in foster homes, etc.] (26 percent), those who grew up with an always-single parent (29 percent), and those who grew up in a cohabiting stepfamily (34 percent).

Examining only **current religious attendance**, 15 percent of those who attend religious services at least once per week commit assault. They are followed by those who attend at least monthly (17 percent), those who attend less than monthly (21 percent), and those who never attend religious services (22 percent).

Examining **current religious attendance and structure of family of origin combined**, 11 percent of adults who worship weekly and grew up in intact families have committed assault. By contrast, 25 percent of adults who never attend religious services and come from all other family structures have at some point assaulted someone. Between these two extremes are those who never worship and grew up in intact families (15 percent) and those who attend religious services weekly but grew up in all other family structures (22 percent).

Related Insight from Other Studies

Data from the 1995 National longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health showed that adolescent children living with their parents in an intact married family were less likely to engage in serious violent delinquency than were their peers in single-parent and stepfamily households.¹

A study by Christopher G. Ellison of the University of Texas at San Antonio and colleagues found that religious practice is correlated to decreased risk of domestic violence.² Another study found that frequent religious attendance in young adolescents correlated with increased likelihood of choosing nonviolent methods to solve hypothetical conflict.³

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- 1 Demuth, Stephen and Susan L. Brown, “Family Structure, Family Processes, and Adolescent Delinquency: The Significance of Parental Absence versus Parental Gender” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 41(1) 2004, pp.58-81.
 - 2 Ellison, Christopher G., Jenny A. Trinitapoli, Kristin L. Anderson & Byron R. Johnson. “Race/Ethnicity, Religious Involvement, and Domestic Violence.” *Violence Against Women* Volume 13(11) 2007, pp. 1094-1112.
 - 3 DuRant, Robert, Frank Treiber, Elizabeth Goodman & Elizabeth R. Woods. “Intentions to Use Violence among Young Adolescents,” *Pediatrics* Volume 98(6) 1996, pp. 1104-1108.



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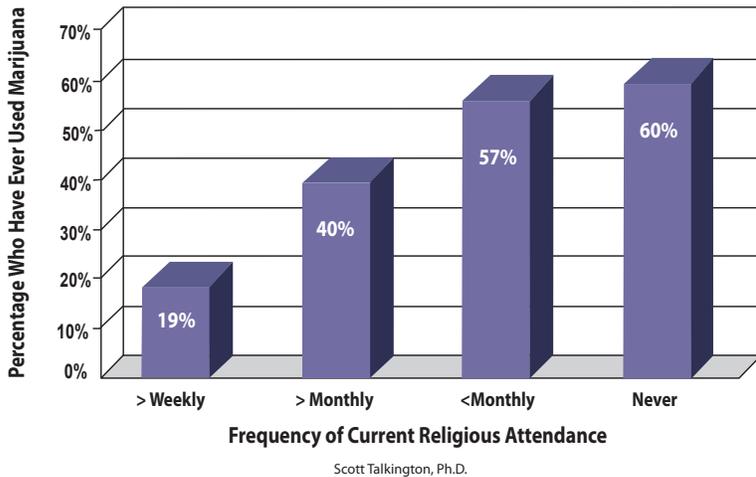
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Mapping America – Number 115

“Marijuana Use” by Current Religious Attendance and Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners

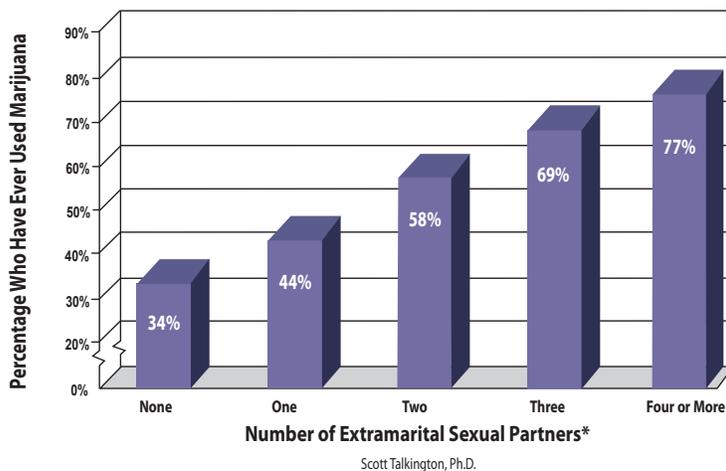
Percentage Who Have Ever Used Marijuana
by Current Religious Attendance

Source for Religious Attendance: NLSY79 Child and Young Adult Survey 1994-2008 (Age 18+)
Source for Used Marijuana: NLSY79 Child and Young Adult Survey, 2000-2008 (Age 18+)



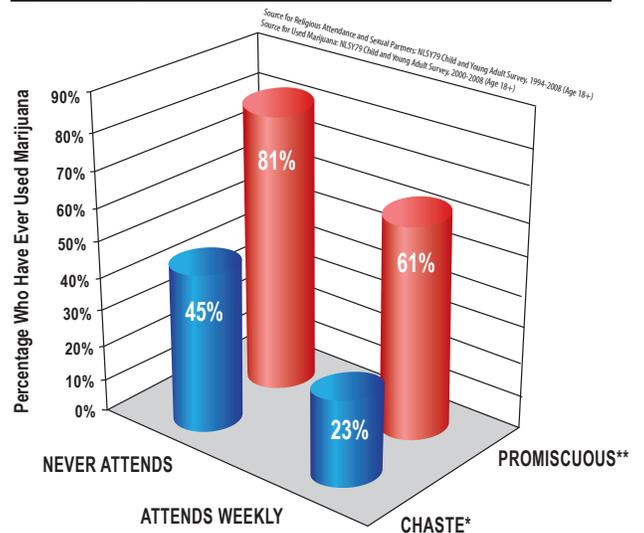
Percentage Who Have Ever Used Marijuana
by Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners

Source for Sexual Partners: NLSY79 Child and Young Adult Survey, 1994-2008 (Age 18+)
Source for Used Marijuana: NLSY79 Child and Young Adult Survey, 2000-2008 (age 18+)



*Number of non-marital sexual partners during the survey year.

Percentage Who Have Ever Used Marijuana
by Current Religious Attendance and Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners



Current Religious Attendance and Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners Combined

Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

* No non-marital sexual partners during the survey year

** Four or more non-marital sexual partners during the survey year

This chart looks at likelihood to ever use marijuana at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of sexual habits (chaste* vs. promiscuous**) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:

The chaste* person that worships weekly;

The chaste* person that never worships;

The promiscuous** person that worships weekly;

The promiscuous** person that never worships.

(*No non-marital sexual partners during the survey year.)

(**Four or more non-marital sexual partners during the survey year.)

“Marijuana Use” by Current Religious Attendance and Number of Extramarital Sexual Partners

The 1979 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth Child and Young Adult Survey shows that adults who have had no extramarital sexual partners in the survey year and currently worship at least weekly are less likely to use marijuana.

Number of extramarital sexual partners: Thirty-four percent of individuals who have no extramarital sexual partners in the survey year have ever used marijuana, compared with 44 percent of individuals who have had one extramarital sexual partner. Fifty-eight percent of individuals who have had two extramarital sexual partners have ever used marijuana, followed by 69 percent who have three extramarital sexual partners and 77 percent of those who have had four or more.

Current religious attendance: Only 19 percent of individuals who attend church at least weekly have ever used marijuana, compared to 40 percent who attend at least monthly. Fifty-seven percent of individuals who attend church less than monthly have ever used marijuana, compared with 60 percent who never attend church.

Current religious attendance and number of extramarital sexual partners combined: Those who worship at least weekly and were chaste (had no extramarital sexual partners) in the survey year were least likely to heavily use marijuana (23 percent), followed by those who were chaste but did not attend church (45 percent), those who attend church weekly but were promiscuous (had four or more extramarital sexual partners) in the survey year (61 percent), and those who were promiscuous and never attended church (81 percent).

Related Insight from Other Studies

Study of a sample of Americans reaching maturity in the late '70s and early '80s showed that “[b]oys and girls who become sexually active are much more likely than those who abstain to begin using alcohol or marijuana within a year, although the linkage is stronger for girls than for boys...the link between sexual activity and marijuana use appears stronger than the link between sexual activity and alcohol use.”¹

One study of adolescents in the Midwest found that religiosity and the importance placed on participating in church activities reduced adolescent likelihood to use marijuana. Furthermore, the difference in likelihood to use marijuana between strongly religious and weakly religious adolescents was the largest observed; strongly religious adolescents were less likely to use marijuana. (Other differences, such the likelihood to use stimulants, to steal, or to drink beer, were also examined.)²

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Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

1 Frank L. Mott and R. Jean Haurin, “Linkages Between Sexual Activity and Alcohol and Drug Use Among Adolescents,” *Family Planning Perspectives* 20, no. 3 (1988): 128.

2 John K. Cochran, “Another Look at Delinquency and Religiosity,” *Sociological Spectrum* 9 (1989): 153, 157.

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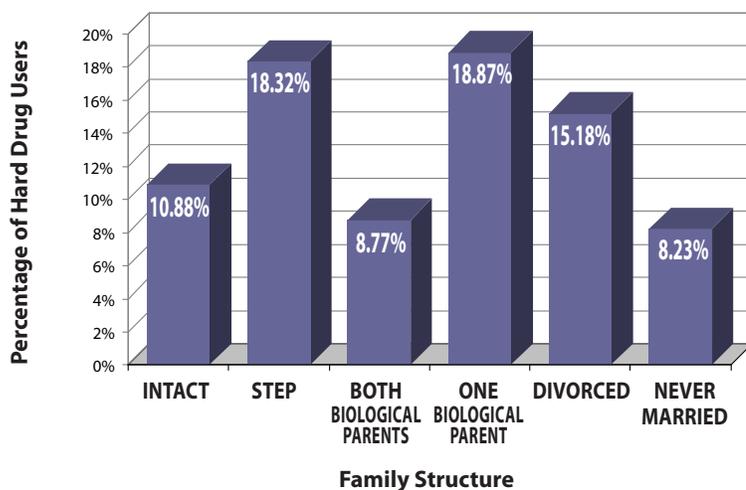


Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 8

Family Structure and Adolescent Use of Hard Drugs

Hard Drug Use by Family Structure¹



Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave I. Adolescents grade 7-12.

¹ This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Adolescents who live with both biological parents are less likely to use hard drugs than those living in step-families, those whose parents have divorced, or those raised by a cohabiting single parent.

According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II, children who live with both biological parents are less inclined to try hard drugs (nine percent of adolescents with cohabiting biological parents and 11 percent of adolescents with married parents).² More than 15 percent of adolescents whose parents are divorced have used hard drugs, and for those living with a step-parent or only one natural cohabiting parent, the percentage increases to 18 and 19, respectively. Just eight percent of adolescents whose parents never married admitted to ever using hard drugs.

Other Studies³

Shanta Dube of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that divorce and parental separation not only increase the likelihood that adolescents will try drugs, but also the amount of drug use, intravenous use, and addiction. Fourteen-year-olds whose parents divorced were nearly four times as likely to try illicit drugs and twice as likely to use them when they become adults.⁴

Several other studies confirm these findings and contradict the anomalous data point represented in the chart that shows adolescents whose parents never married with the lowest percentage of hard drug use. Rebecca Turner of Alliant International University in San Francisco and colleagues reported that adolescents with single parents are more likely to experiment with substances than those in intact families. They also found that the more emotionally detached adolescents are from one or both of their biological parents, the more substances they will try. Adolescents with single parents use an average of 2.49 substances while those in intact families use an average of 1.8 substances.⁵

Kathleen Rodgers and Hilary Rose of Washington State University found that adolescents residing with divorced parents, whether remarried or single, are more likely to use drugs, even when controlling for parenting style, community, and demographic factors.⁶

The data strongly indicate that adolescents in intact married families are least likely to use hard drugs. Family structure matters.

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2 There is no statistical difference between these two data sets.

3 The following findings are from www.familyfacts.org.

4 Shanta R. Dube, "Childhood Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction and the Risk of Illicit Drug Use: The Adverse Experiences Study," *Pediatrics* 111 (2003): 564-572.

5 Rebecca A. Turner, Charles E. Irwin Jr., and Susan G. Millstein, "Family Structure, Family Processes, and Experimenting with Substances during Adolescence," *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 1 (1991): 93-106.

6 Kathleen B. Rodgers and Hilary A. Rose, "Risk and Resiliency Factors among Adolescents Who Experience Marital Transitions," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 64 (2002): 1024-1037.



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