

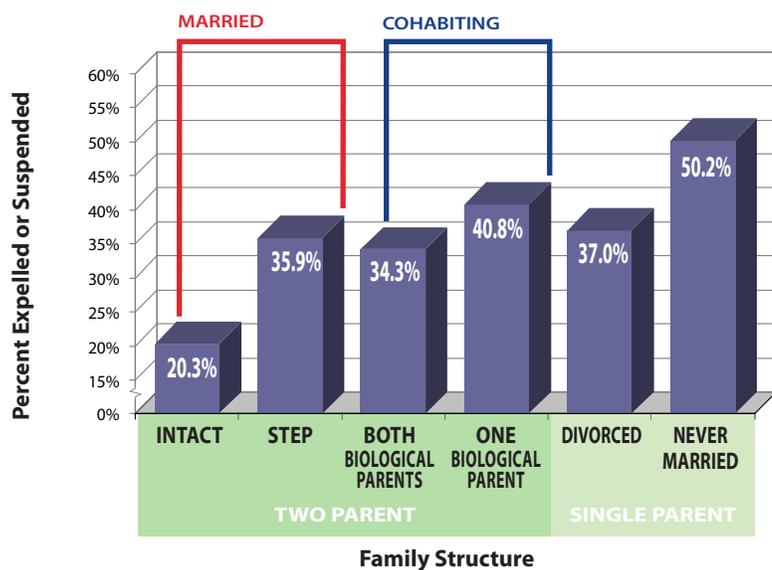


Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 20

Family Structure and Expulsion or Suspension from School

Expelled or Suspended from School 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 be expelled or suspended from school.

According to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II, 20 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who live with their married, biological parents have ever been suspended or expelled from school. By contrast, more than 50 percent of adolescents who live with a single, never-married parent have ever been suspended or expelled. In between are those who live with two biological cohabiting parents (34.3 percent), those living with a step-parent (35.9 percent), those whose parents are divorced (37 percent), and those who live with one biological cohabiting parent (40.8 percent).

Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Christine Winqvist Nord of Westat and Jerry West of the National Center for Education Statistics reported that students living with both biological parents “are less likely to have behavior problems at school that result in their being suspended or expelled.”²

John Hoffman of Brigham Young University also found that the incidence of problem behaviors, including fighting, being arrested, and getting expelled or suspended, was much lower among adolescents living with both biological parents than within any other family structure.³

Cesar Rebellon of the University of New Hampshire examined five measures of delinquency data from the National Youth Survey, including truancy and interpersonal aggression, and found that adolescent boys (and to a lesser extent, adolescent girls) living with divorced parents had higher delinquency scores than adolescents from intact married families.⁴

In a study of youth in Edinburgh, Scotland, David Smith and Susan McVie of the University of Edinburgh found that adolescents living with a mother and stepfather or in single-parent homes were more delinquent⁵ than those living with both biological parents.⁶

The data clearly indicate that adolescents who live with both parents are more likely to be in school and less likely to be suspended or expelled.

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- 2 Christine Winqvist Nord and Jerry West, "Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools by Family Type and Resident Status," *National Household Education Survey* (May 2001): 31-32.
 - 3 John P. Hoffman, "Family Structure, Community Context, and Adolescent Problem Behaviors," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 35 (2006): 867-880.
 - 4 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.
 - 5 Two of the fifteen delinquency measures used included theft at school and truancy.
 - 6 David J. Smith and Susan McVie, "Theory and Method in the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime," *British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 42 (2003): 169-195.



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