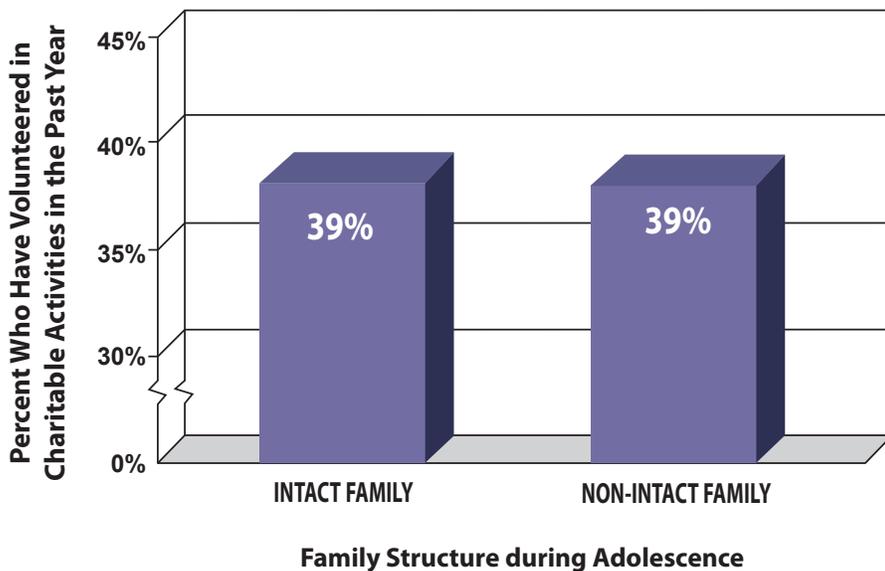




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 44

Intergenerational Links to Volunteering in Charitable Activities: Family Structure

Percent Who Have Volunteered in Charitable Activities in the Past Year by Their Family Structure during Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey (GSS)

This chart is taken from a study conducted by Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai for Family Research Council.

Adults who grew up living with both biological parents and those who grew up without both biological parents are equally likely to have volunteered in a charitable activity in the past year.

According to the General Social Survey (GSS), adolescent family structure background makes no difference in levels of adult volunteering for charitable activities.¹

Other Studies

To the best of our knowledge, what little research has been done regarding family structure and volunteerism in charitable activities has not dealt with the intergenerational effects of family structure. Several other studies, however, do suggest some connection between present family structure and volunteerism in charitable activities. For instance, Eleanor Brown of Pomona College reported that those who are single parents only volunteer at a rate of 40 percent, compared to 48 percent of the total population in a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for Independent Sector.²

Penny Becker of Cornell University and Pawan Dhingra of Bucknell University, examining a survey of congregations and individuals in four upstate New York communities, found that present

marriage with children corresponds “to a higher likelihood of volunteering.”³

As the data indicate, some evidence exists for a connection between family structure and volunteerism in charitable activities. To the best of our knowledge, though, there are currently no findings which show that family structure during adolescence has any effect on volunteerism in charitable activities during adulthood.

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey in 1998. Two samples totaling approximately 3,000 people were used.
 - 2 Eleanor Brown, “The Scope of Volunteer Activity and Public Service,” *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol. 62 (2000): 17-42.
 - 3 Penny Becker and Pawan Dhingra, “Religious Involvement and Volunteering: Implications for Civil Society,” *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 62 (2001): 315-335.



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