

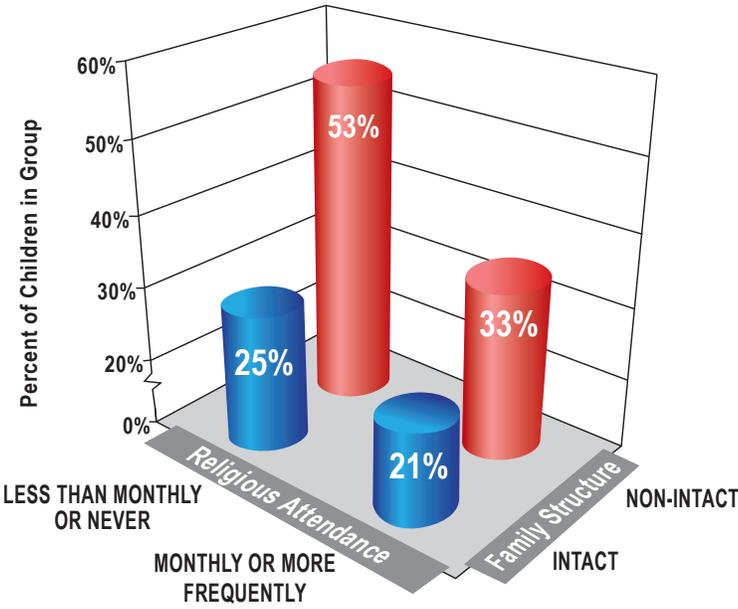


Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 54

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

Percent of Children Whose Parents Were Contacted by School about Children’s Behavior Problems by Religious Attendance and Family Structure



Religious Attendance and Family Structure Combined

Source: National Survey of Children’s Health (NSCH, 2003)

This chart groups the data in four categories, with two different configurations for each of two major indicators, frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more frequently/less than monthly or never) and family structure (intact/non-intact).

The intact category consists of families with both biological parents or two adoptive parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category is composed of families without both biological parents or two adoptive parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, always single-parent families, foster-parent families, and other-relative families.

The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance.

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.¹ provided the data for this chart.²

Parents of children who attend worship frequently and live in intact families are the least likely to be contacted by their children’s school about behavior problems.

This chart depicts the percentage of children aged 6 to 17 whose parents have been contacted by their children’s school concerning behavior problems, correlated with religious attendance and family structure. Only 21 percent of children who worship frequently and live with both biological parents or with two adoptive parents are the object of their school reporting behavior problems to parents, compared to a much larger 53 percent of children who worship less than monthly and live in single-parent or reconstituted families. In between are those who live in intact families and worship less than monthly (25 percent) and those who live in non-intact families who worship at least monthly (33 percent). The data are taken from the National Survey of Children’s Health.

Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Byron Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues examined delinquency data from the National Youth Survey, which included measures such as “hit students,” “hit teacher,” “damaged school property,” and “skipped classes.” They reported that adolescent religiosity corresponded to fewer instances of delinquency and that adolescents who lived in intact families were less likely to acquire delinquent friends.³

John Bartkowski of Mississippi State University and colleagues also found that both parents’ frequent religious attendance correlated with several positive child behavior outcomes, such as greater self-control and a reduced probability of “externalizing problem behaviors at school.”⁴

When it comes to having well-behaved children at school, the intact family that worships frequently proves to be the leader.

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Former Vice President of Westat

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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 Byron R. Johnson, et al., “Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter? A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 38 (2001): 22-44.
 - 4 John P. Bartkowski, et al., “Religion and Child Development: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,” *Social Science Research*, vol. 37 (2008): 18-36.



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