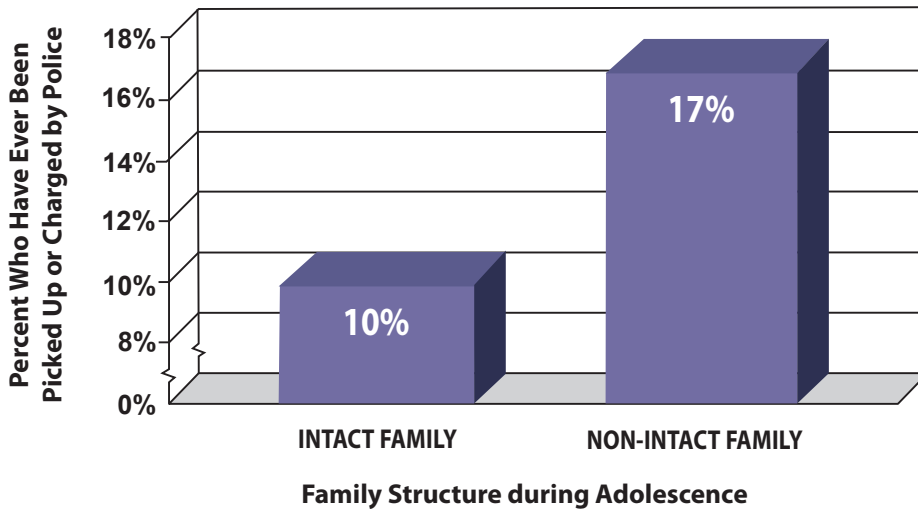




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 56

Intergenerational Links to Being Picked Up or Charged by Police: Family Structure

Percent Who Have Ever Been Picked Up or Charged by Police by Their Family Structure during Adolescence



Source: General Social Surveys (GSS, 1972-1987)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who grew up living with both biological parents are less likely to have ever been picked up or charged by police than those who did not.

According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 10 percent of adults who lived in an intact family as adolescents have ever been picked up or charged by police, compared to 17 percent of those who lived in a non-intact family.¹

Other Studies

Several other studies on crime corroborate the direction of these findings. Jennifer Schulenberg of the University of Waterloo found that a high rate of single-parent families is strongly associated with a higher crime rate.²

Amy Anderson of Pennsylvania State University also found that children living with two parents were less likely to commit property crimes than those living with a single parent.³

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services reported that over 80 percent of juvenile delinquents in Wisconsin state custody came from single-parent families.⁴

Jacinta Bronke-Tinkew of Child Trends and colleagues also reported that paternal involvement with children significantly decreases the likelihood that children will engage in risky behavior, even controlling for such variables as maternal involvement and socioeconomic status. This paternal involvement effect is even greater, particularly in the area of children's substance use, when the father is living with his children and their mother.⁵

As the data indicate, the safety net of an intact family proves effective at keeping both adolescents, and later adults, out of jail.

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-1987. The sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979 or 1981.
 - 2 Jennifer L. Schulenberg, "The Social Context of Police Discretion with Young Offenders: An Ecological Analysis," *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, vol. 45 (2003): 127-157.
 - 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 \$50; stolen or tried to steal something worth more than \$50; entered or tried to enter a building to steal something; and stolen or attempted to steal a motor vehicle.
 - 4 *Family Status of Delinquents in Juvenile Correctional Facilities in Wisconsin*, Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Youth Services, 1994.
 - 5 Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, et al., "The Influence of Father Involvement on Youth Risk Behaviors among Adolescents: A Comparison of Native-Born and Immigrant Families," *Social Science Research*, vol. 35 (2006): 181-209.



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