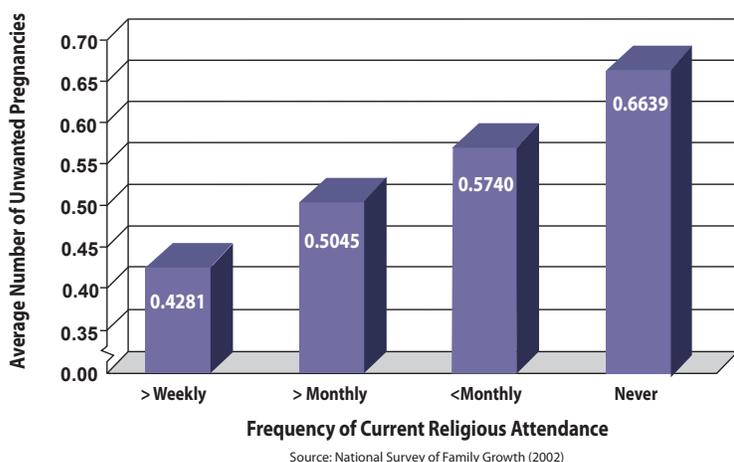




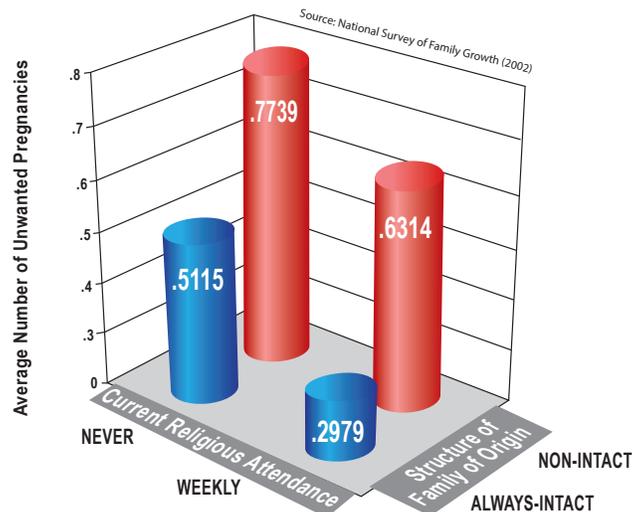
Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 98

“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
by Current Religious Attendance



“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin



Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin Combined

This chart looks at women who have had an unwanted pregnancy in their lifetime at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. non-intact*) and two sets of religious attendance (high vs. low).

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

Women who grew up in an always-intact married family and who now worship weekly;

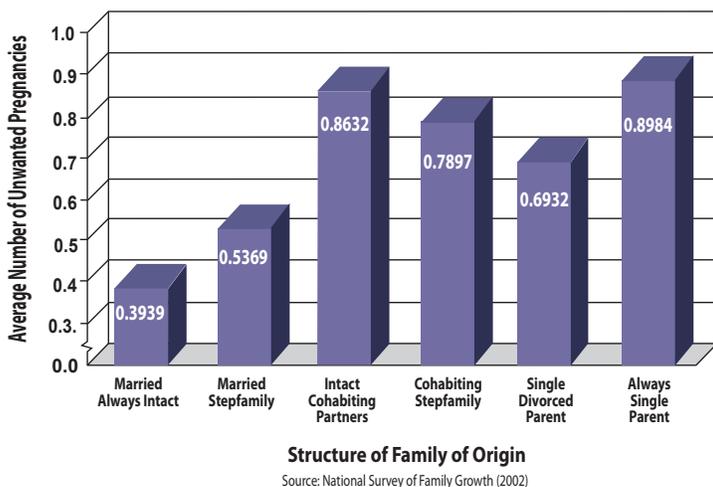
Women who grew up in an always-intact married family and who now never worship;

Women who grew up in a non-intact family* and who now worship weekly;

Women who grew up in a non-intact family* and who now never worship.

(* The non-intact group consists of women who grew up 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.)

“Average Number of Unwanted Pregnancies”
by Structure of Family of Origin



Women with Fewer Unwanted Pregnancies Are More Likely to Worship Weekly and to Have Grown Up in Intact Families

The number of unwanted pregnancies is lowest for women who grew up in an intact married family and who now worship at least weekly. According to the National Survey of Family Growth, women who grew up in an intact married family and now worship at least weekly have an average of 0.3 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetimes, followed by women who grew up in an intact married family and now never worship (0.51), those who grew up in other family structures and now worship at least weekly (0.63), and those who grew up in other family structures and now never worship (0.77).

Examining structure of family of origin only, women who grew up in an intact married family have an average of 0.39 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetime, followed by women from married stepfamilies (0.54), single divorced parent families (0.69), cohabiting stepfamilies (0.79), intact cohabiting families (0.86), and always single parent families (0.9).

Examining current religious attendance only, women who worship at least weekly have an average of 0.43 unwanted pregnancies in their lifetime, followed by women who attend religious services between one and three times a month (0.50), those who attend religious services less than once a month (0.57), and those who never attend religious services (0.66).¹

Related Insights from Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. James Nonnemaker of Research Triangle Institute and colleagues found a positive association between adolescent public religiosity and a lower likelihood of pregnancy.²

Scott South of the State University of New York at Albany also found that “growing up in a family headed by a single mother increases the risk of a premarital birth.”³

In a study of black adolescent females in high-poverty neighborhoods, Mignon Moore of Columbia University and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale of Northwestern University reported that “[l]iving in married households is associated with a reduced risk of pregnancy” and that “teenagers in single-mother families have higher odds of experiencing” pregnancy, though “adolescents in cohabiting households were not found to have...significantly higher odds of pregnancy.”⁴

As the evidence shows, women who grew up in an intact married family and who now worship weekly are likely to have fewer unwanted pregnancies in their lifetimes.

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- 1 These charts draw on data collected by the National Survey of Family Growth, Cycle 6 (2002). The sample consists of women between the ages of 14 and 44 and numbers 7,643.
 - 2 James M. Nonnemaker, Clea A. McNeely, and Robert Wm. Blum, “Public and Private Domains of Religiosity and Adolescent Health Risk Behaviors: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health,” *Social Science & Medicine* 57 (2003): 2049-54.
 - 3 Scott J. South, “Historical Changes and Life Course Variation in the Determinants of Premarital Childbearing,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 61 (1999): 752-63.
 - 4 Mignon R. Moore and P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, “Sexual Intercourse and Pregnancy among African American Girls in High-Poverty Neighborhoods: The Role of Family and Perceived Community Environment,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001): 1146-57.



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