

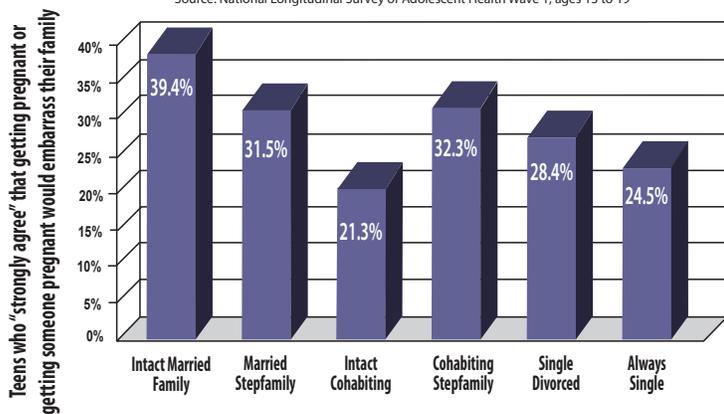
Mapping America – Number 144

Teen Pregnancy and Family Response: Analysis by Family Structure and Religious Worship

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Analysis by Family Structure

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health Wave 1, ages 13 to 19

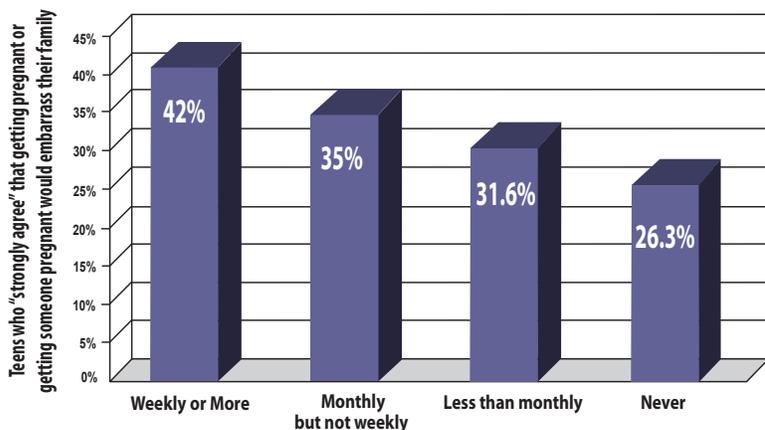


Paul Sullins and Patrick F. Fagan

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Analysis by Religious Worship

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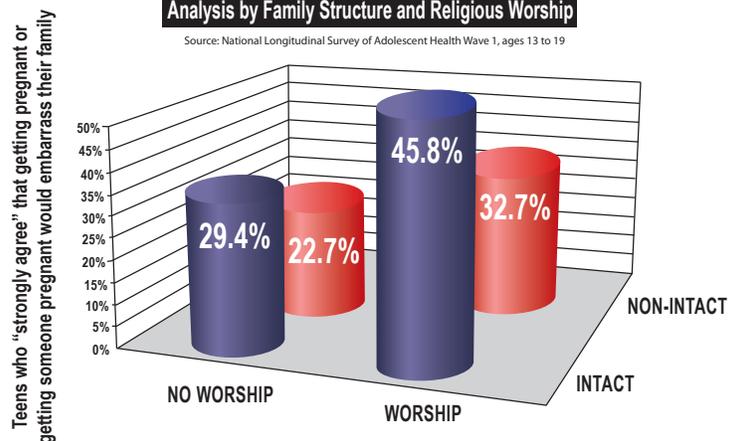
Frequency of Current Religious Attendance

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Family Structure and Religious Worship Combined

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This chart looks at the number of children who strongly agree that getting pregnant or getting someone else pregnant would embarrass their family at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of marital statuses (intact versus non-intact)* and two sets of religious attendance (worship vs. no worship).**

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

The children from intact families that worship.

The children from intact families that do not worship.

The children from non-intact families that worship.

The children from non-intact families that do not worship.

*The intact married family consists of children who live with their two biological parents who are married. Non-intact includes all other family types.

**Those who worship report attending religious services once a week or more often in the past year. Those who do not worship never attended religious services in the past year.

Teen Pregnancy and Family Response: Analysis by Family Structure and Religious Worship

Wave 1 of the *National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health)*¹ found that adolescents aged 13 to 19 in intact families that worshipped weekly or more were most likely to strongly agree that a pregnancy would embarrass their family.²

Family Structure: Teens in intact married families were most likely to report that getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant) would embarrass their family (39.4%). They were followed by adolescents in cohabiting stepfamilies (32.3%), married stepfamilies (31.5%), single divorced parent families (28.4%), always-single-parent families (24.5%), and intact cohabiting families (21.3%).

Religious Worship: Teens who frequently worshipped were more likely to strongly agree that getting pregnant (or getting someone pregnant) would embarrass their family. Thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds who attended religious services weekly or more often within the past year were more likely to believe that a pregnancy would embarrass their family (42.0%) than those who attended monthly but not weekly (35.0%), less than monthly (31.6%), or never (26.3%).

Family Structure and Religious Worship Combined: Thirteen- to nineteen-year-olds in intact worshipping families were most likely to strongly agree that getting pregnant or getting someone pregnant would embarrass their family (45.8%). Teens in intact non-worshipping families (29.4%) and non-intact worshipping families (32.7%) were less likely to believe that a pregnancy would embarrass their family. Teens in non-intact families that did not worship were least likely to think a pregnancy would bring embarrassment (22.7%).

Related Insights from Other Studies: Family disapproval and embarrassment is an important sanction to discourage people from violating social norms.³ Research shows that both family structure and religious attendance form these norms. For instance, Les B. Whitbeck, Ronald L Simons, and Meei-Ying Kao found that sexual permissiveness of divorced parents significantly increases permissive attitudes in their children.⁴ On the other hand, family rules and parental supervision of dating are associated with teens not having sexual intercourse, a later sexual debut, and fewer sexual partners.⁵

Likewise, religiosity establishes stricter sexual norms. Amy Burdette and Terrence Hill found that an increase in private religiosity is associated with a 93% reduction in the odds of sexual intercourse among 13-year-olds, and a 97% reduction in the odds of sexual debut for 17-year-olds.⁶

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1 The National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is a congressionally-mandated longitudinal survey of American adolescents. Add Health drew a random sample of adolescents aged 13-19 in 1995 from junior high and high schools (Wave I) and has followed them in successive waves in 2001 (Wave III) and 2009 (Wave IV).

2 Respondents were asked to react to the statement "If you got pregnant [males: if you got someone pregnant], it would be embarrassing for your family." Their options included: "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," "refused," "don't know," or "not applicable."

3 Alexander Staller and Paolo Petta, "Introducing Emotions into the Computational Study of Social Norms: A First Evaluation," *Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulations* 4 (2001).

4 Les B. Whitbeck, Ronald L Simons, and Meei-Ying Kao, "The Effects of Divorced Mother's Dating Behaviors and Sexual Attitudes on the Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors of Their Adolescent Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 56 (1994): 615-621.

5 Brent C. Miller, "Family influences on adolescent sexual and contraceptive behavior," *The Journal of Sex Research* (2002): 22-26.

6 Amy M. Burdette and Terrence D. Hill, "Religious Involvement and Transitions into Adolescent Sexual Activities," (2009): 16.



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