

Effects of Marriage on Society

Marriage is the foundational relationship for all of society. All other relationships in society stem from the father-mother relationship, and these other relationships thrive most if that father-mother relationship is simultaneously a close and closed husband- wife relationship. Good marriages are the bedrock of strong societies, for they are the foundations of strong families. In marriage are contained the five basic institutions, all the basic tasks, of society: 1) family, 2) church, 3) school, 4) marketplace and 5) government. These fundamental tasks, well done, in unity between father and mother, make for a very good marriage. Within a family built on such a marriage, the child gradually learns to value and perform these five fundamental tasks of every competent adult and of every functional society.

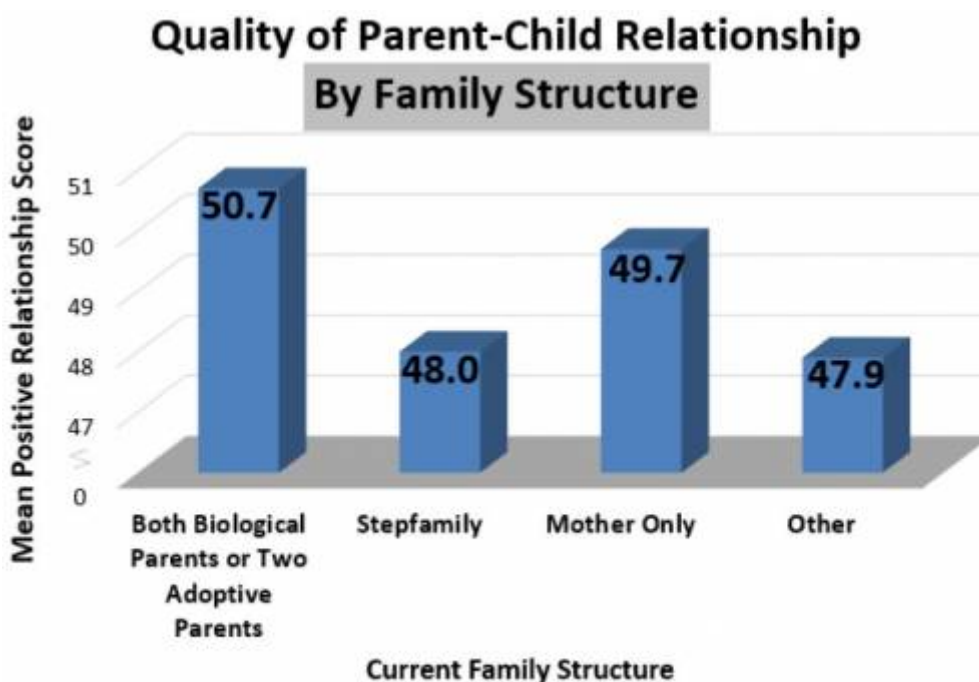
1. Family

(See [Effects of Divorce on Family Relationships](#))

Marriage enhances an adult’s ability to parent.¹⁾ Married people are more likely to give and receive support from their parents and are more likely to consider their parents as means for possible support in case of an emergency.²⁾

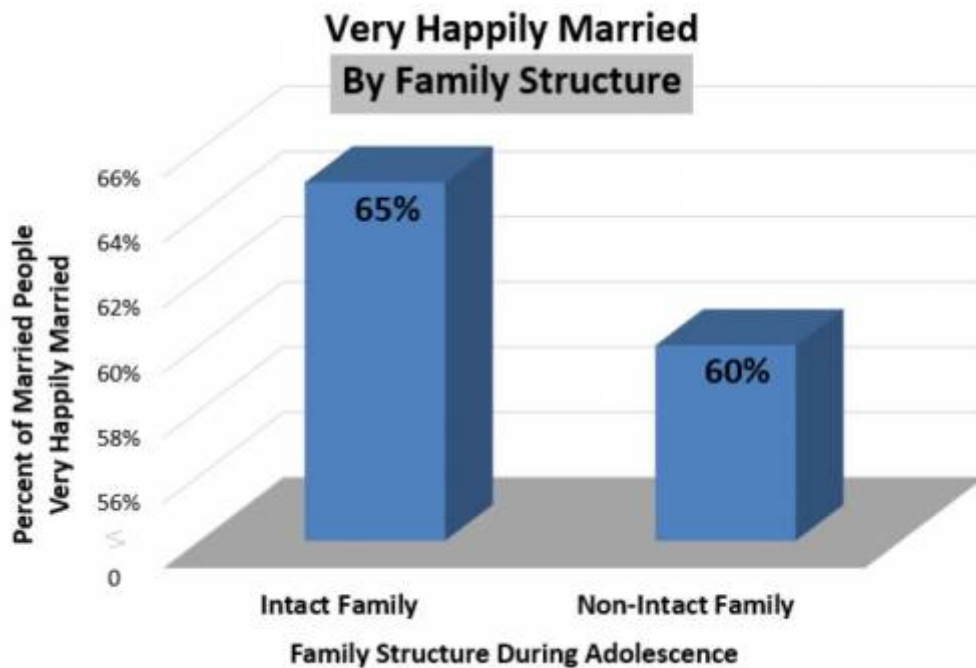
1.1 Related American Demographics

The National Survey of Children's Health showed that families with both biological or (adoptive) parents present have the highest quality of parent-child relationships.³⁾ (See [Chart](#))



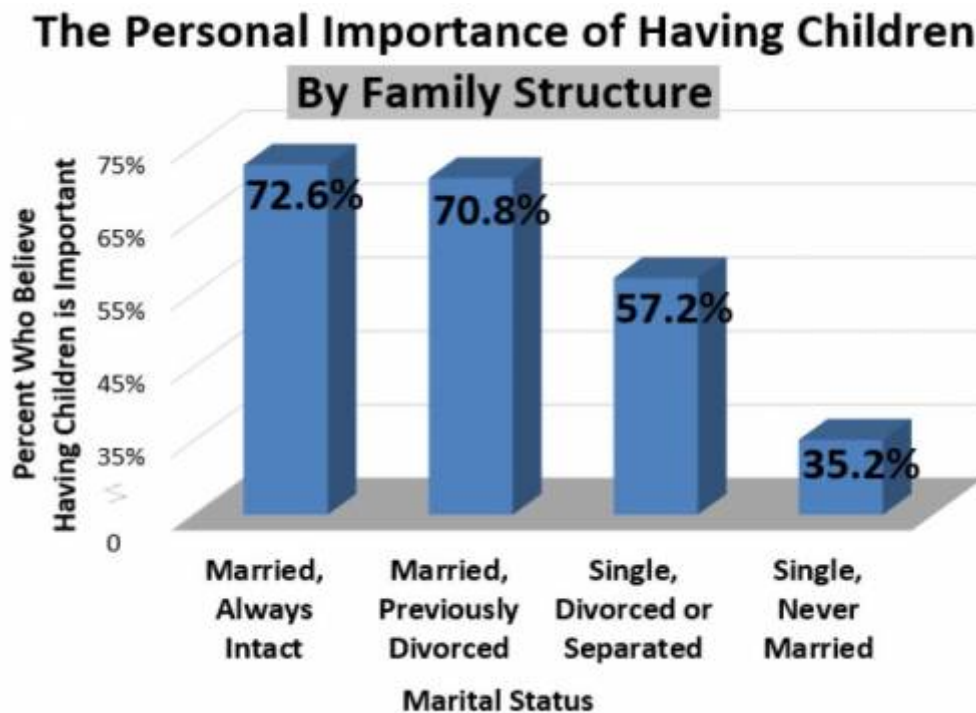
Source: National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children’s Health (2003)

The General Social Survey showed that adults who grew up living with both biological parents experience higher levels of [marital happiness](#).⁴⁾ (See [Chart](#) Below)



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 72.6 percent of always-intact married adults believe in the [importance of having their own children](#), followed by 70.8 percent of married, previously-divorced adults, 57.2 percent of single, divorced or separated adults and 35.2 percent of single, never-married adults.⁵⁾ (See [Chart](#) Below)



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

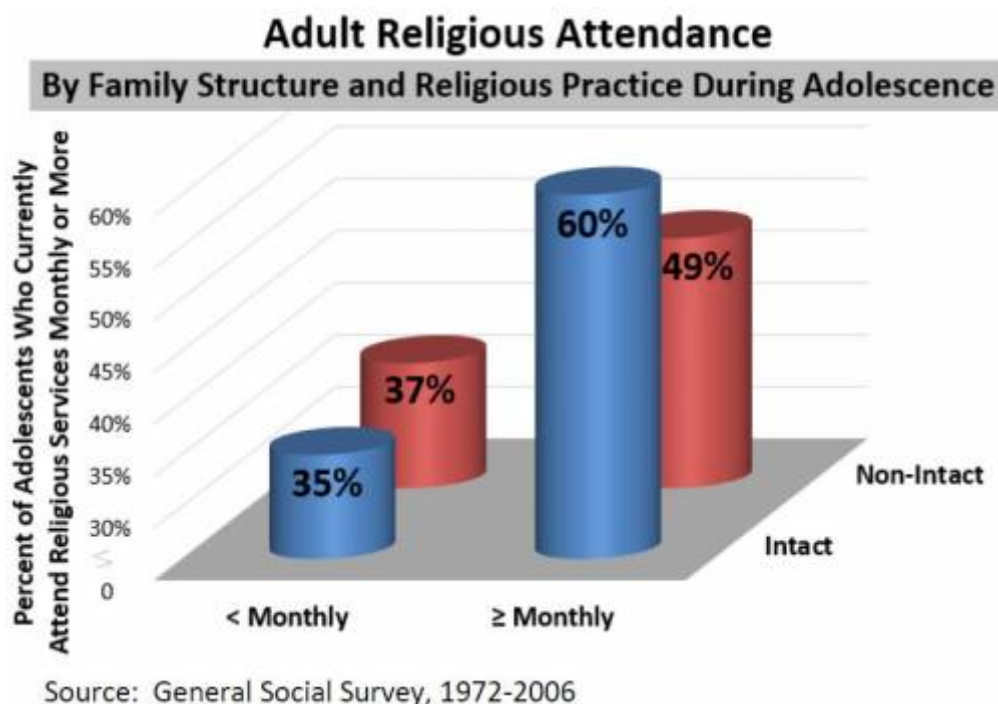
2. Church

(See [Effects of Religious Practice on Marriage](#) and [Effects of Religious Practice on Family Relationships](#))

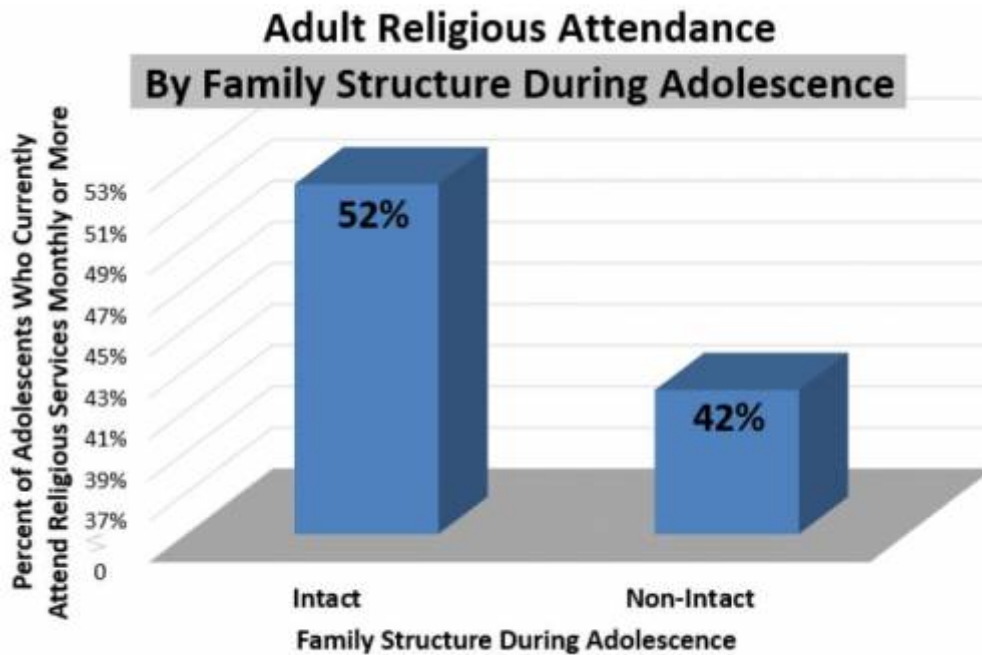
Social science shows that marriage has important implications for religious practice. Direct marriage (rather than cohabitation prior to marriage) has a positive effect on religious participation in young adults.⁶⁾ Young adults raised in happily married families are more religious than young adults raised in stepfamilies,⁷⁾ and attend religious services more frequently than those raised in divorced families.⁸⁾ Young adults whose parents divorced prior to age 15 are much more likely than others to identify as “spiritual but not religious.”⁹⁾ Those from married families are less likely to see religion decline in importance in their lives, less likely to begin attending church less frequently, and less likely to disassociate themselves from their religious affiliation.¹⁰⁾

2.1 Related American Demographics

The General Social Survey shows that adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents and grew up in an intact family are significantly more likely to attend religious services monthly or more frequently, as adults, than are those who attended less frequently and whose family of origin was non-intact. Additionally, those who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents were substantially more likely to attend religious services as adults, regardless of whether they came from an intact or non-intact family. In other words, with regard to adult religious worship, frequent worship in adolescence significantly mitigates the negative effects of growing up in a non-intact family.¹¹⁾ (See [Chart](#))



Looking at family structure alone shows that a larger fraction of adults who grew up in an intact married family than non-intact family attend religious services at least monthly.¹²⁾ (See [Chart Below](#))



Source: General Social Survey, 1972-2006

3. School

(See [Effects of Marriage on Children's Education](#), [Effects Divorce on Children's Education](#), and [Effects of Family Structure on Children's Education](#))

A greater fraction of children from intact married families earn mostly A's in school,¹³⁾ and children in intact married families have the highest combined English and math grade point averages (GPAs).¹⁴⁾ Children from intact married families have the highest high school graduation rate,¹⁵⁾ and are more likely to gain more education after graduating from high school than those from other family structures.¹⁶⁾ Moreover, children of married parents are more engaged in school than children from all other family structures.¹⁷⁾ Adolescents from intact married families are less frequently suspended, expelled, or delinquent, and less frequently experience school problems than children from other family structures.¹⁸⁾

4. Marketplace

(See [Effects of Family Structure on the Economy](#))

Government and survey data overwhelmingly document that married-parent households [work, earn, and save](#) at significantly higher rates than other family households as well as pay most of all income taxes collected by the government. They also contribute to charity and volunteer at significantly higher rates, even when controlling for income, than do single or divorced households, leading Arthur Brooks of the American Enterprise Institute to write that "single parenthood is a disaster for charity."¹⁹⁾

Married men are more likely to work than [cohabiting men](#),²⁰⁾ and married fathers work more hours than cohabiting fathers.²¹⁾ Children living with their two biological cohabiting parents are 263 percent more likely to experience poverty than children living with their two biological married parents. Likewise, children living with their married stepparents have significantly better economic outcomes

than those living with cohabiting stepparents.²²⁾

Additionally, **married men earn more** than single men.²³⁾ Men's productivity increases by 26 percent as a result of marrying.²⁴⁾ Correspondingly, married families have larger incomes.²⁵⁾ Intact married families have the largest annual income of all **family structures** with children under 18.²⁶⁾ Married households have larger incomes than male and female householders.²⁷⁾ Married couples **save more** than unmarried couples,²⁸⁾ and married households have larger average net worth at retirement than other family structures.²⁹⁾ Young married couples tend to have goals for retirement and to save more for retirement than cohabiting couples or single people.³⁰⁾ Intact married families have the highest net worth of all families with children (widowed families excepted).³¹⁾

5. Government

5.1 Health Care

(See [Effects of Marriage on Physical Health](#) and [Effects of Marriage on Mental Health](#))

Family intactness has a negative influence on, or reduces, an area's fraction of 25- to 54-year-olds and minors receiving **public healthcare**,³²⁾ and a positive influence on an area's fraction of 25- to 54-year-olds and minors with **private healthcare** coverage.³³⁾ Married men and women are also more likely to have health insurance.³⁴⁾ Furthermore, married individuals occupy hospitals and health institutions less often than others,³⁵⁾ are released from hospitals sooner, on average, than unmarried individuals,³⁶⁾ and spend half as much time in hospitals as single individuals.³⁷⁾ Married individuals are also less likely to go to a nursing home from the hospital.³⁸⁾

5.2 Crime

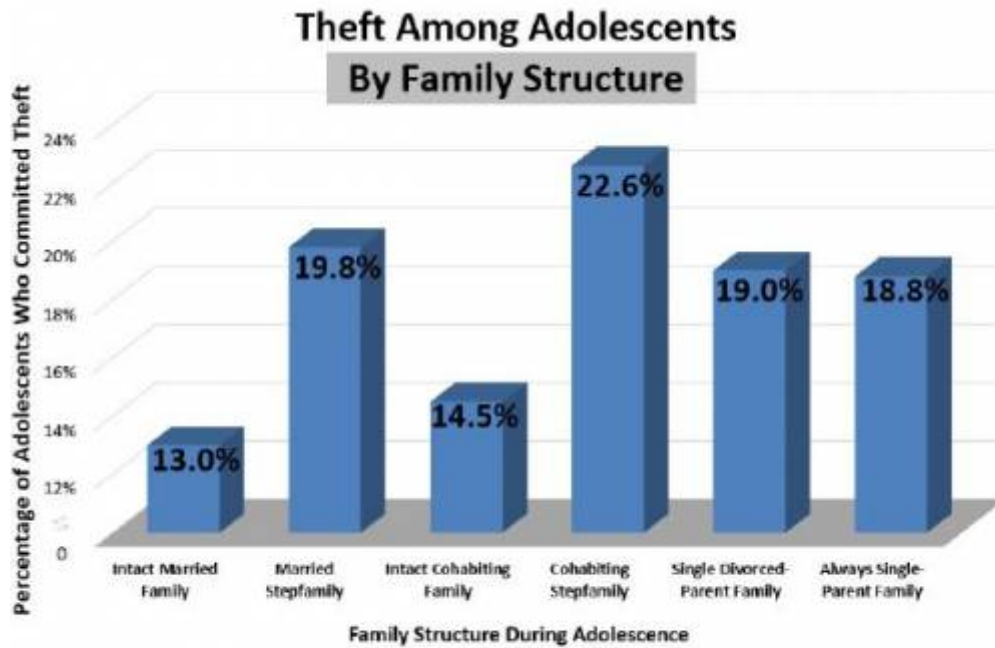
(See [Effects of Family Structure on Crime](#))

Marriage may diminish individual propensity to commit crime.³⁹⁾ For example, married men are less likely to commit crimes.⁴⁰⁾

For children, living in a **non-intact family** is associated with an increased likelihood of committing violent and non-violent crime and the likelihood of drunk driving.⁴¹⁾ Adolescents from **intact families** are less delinquent and commit fewer violent acts of delinquency.⁴²⁾ Correspondingly, a lower fraction of adults and youth raised in intact families are picked up by police than those from non-intact families.⁴³⁾

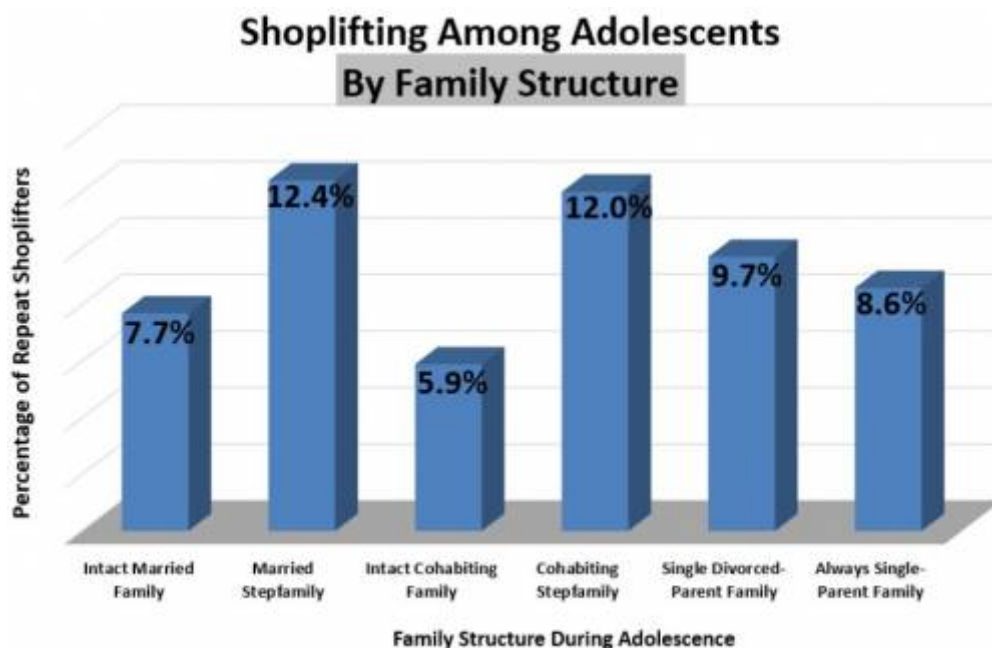
5.2.1 Related American Demographics

The Adolescent Health Survey showed that adolescents living in an intact married family steal less frequently than adolescents living in any other family structure.⁴⁴⁾ (See [Chart](#))



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Adolescents Grades 7-12.

Similarly, only eight percent of adolescents living with married parents and six percent of adolescents living with cohabiting biological parents are repeat shoplifters (3+ times), according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II.⁴⁵⁾ (See [Chart Below](#))



Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Adolescents Grades 7-12.

5.3 Abuse

(See [Effects of Family Structure on Child Abuse](#))

Marriage is associated with lower rates of domestic violence and abuse, in comparison to cohabitation.⁴⁶⁾ Domestic violence against ever-married mothers is lower than domestic violence

against always-single mothers.⁴⁷⁾ In arguments, married couples are less likely to react physically (to hit, shove, or throw items) than cohabiting couples are.⁴⁸⁾

Married women are murdered by their spouses at a far lower rate than cohabiting women are murdered by their partners,⁴⁹⁾ and in Canada, when couples of similar age are compared, murder is rarer among married than cohabiting couples. Similar results have been found in the U.S. Cohabiting women are 8.9 times more likely to be murdered by their partner than married women.⁵⁰⁾ Married women are less likely to have been forced to perform a sexual act (9 percent) than unmarried women (46 percent).⁵¹⁾ Pregnant, married, non-Hispanic white and black women are less likely to be physically abused than those who are divorced or separated.⁵²⁾

Compared to teenagers from intact families, teenagers from divorced families are more verbally aggressive and violent toward their romantic partners,⁵³⁾ and are more likely to have volatile and violent relationships in adulthood.⁵⁴⁾ Men raised in stepparent households are also more likely to have physical conflict in their romantic relationships.⁵⁵⁾

Married parents are **less likely to neglect their children** than are divorced parents.⁵⁶⁾ Children in intact married families suffer less child abuse than children from any other family structure.⁵⁷⁾ British children were found to be less likely to be injured or killed by abuse in the intact married family than in all other family structures.⁵⁸⁾

¹⁾ Ronald Angel and Jacqueline Angel, *Painful Inheritance: Health and the New Generation of Fatherless Families* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993): 139, 148. As cited in Glenn T. Stanton, "Why Marriage Matters." Available at <http://www.ampartnership.org/resourcecenter/news/89-why-marriage-matters.html>. Accessed 27 July 2011.

²⁾ David Eggenbeen, "Cohabitation and Exchanges of Support," *Social Forces* 83, no. 3 (2005): 1105.

³⁾ 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.

Nicholas Zill, "Quality of Parent-Child Relationship and Family Structure." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-46-48-164.pdf>. Accessed 1 September 2011.

⁴⁾ This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510. Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Intergenerational Links to Marital Happiness: Family Structure," Mapping America Project. Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-31-33-159.pdf>

⁵⁾ This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510. Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "The Personal Importance of Having Children by Marital Status." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-79-81-175.pdf>. Accessed 1 September 2011.

⁶⁾ Arland Thornton, William G. Axinn, and Daniel H. Hill, "Reciprocal Effects of Religiosity, Cohabitation, and Marriage," *The American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 3 (1992): 643.

Jiexia Elisa Zhai, et al, "Spiritual, But Not Religious: The Impact of Parental Divorce on the Religious and Spiritual Identities of Young Adults in the United States," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 4 (June 2008): 390, 391.

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- ⁸⁾ Jiexia Elisa Zhai, et al, "Parental Divorce and Religious Involvement Among Young Adults," *Sociology of Religion* 68, no. 2 (2007).
- ⁹⁾ Jiexia Elisa Zhai, et al, "Spiritual, But Not Religious: The Impact of Parental Divorce on the Religious and Spiritual Identities of Young Adults in the United States," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 4 (June 2008): 390, 391.
- ¹⁰⁾ Jeremy E. Uecker, "Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood," *Social Forces* 85, no. 4 (June 2007): 1667-1692. As cited by The Heritage Foundation: Family Facts. Available at <http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/22/navigating-the-winding-road-how-family-and-religion-influence-te-en-and-young-adult-outcomes>. Accessed 20 July 2011.
- ¹¹⁾ The statistics in this chart draw on data from the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 per year. No survey was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS was conducted only in even-numbered years, with two samples per survey, totaling approximately 3,000 respondents. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.
- Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Adult Religious Attendance by Religious Attendance and Family Structure in Adolescence," Mapping America Project. Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-70-72-172.pdf>
- ¹²⁾ The statistics in this chart draw on data from the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 per year. No survey was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS was conducted only in even-numbered years, with two samples per survey, totaling approximately 3,000 respondents. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.
- Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Adult Religious Attendance by Family Structure in Adolescence." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-70-72-172.pdf>. Accessed 26 August 2011.
- ¹³⁾ Patrick F. Fagan and Scott Talkington, "'Likely to Receive Mostly A's' by Structure of Family of Origin and by Current Religious Attendance." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-100.pdf>. Accessed 13 September 2011.
- ¹⁴⁾ Patrick F. Fagan, "Family Structure and School Performance of U.S. High School Students." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-1-3-149.pdf>. Accessed 29 August 2011.
- ¹⁵⁾ Patrick F. Fagan and Scott Talkington, "'Ever Received a High School Degree' by Structure of Family of Origin and Current Religious Attendance." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-99.pdf>. Accessed 30 August 2011.
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¹⁹⁾ Arthur Brooks, *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth about Compassionate Conservatism* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 104–05.

²⁰⁾ Wendy Manning and Daniel Lichter, “Parental Cohabitation and Children’s Economic Well-Being,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58, no. 4 (1996): 1003.

²¹⁾ U.S. Census Bureau, “Evidence From Census 2000 About Earnings by Detailed Occupation for Men and Women,” Census 2000 Special Reports, U.S. Department of Commerce, (Washington, D.C. 2004).

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²²⁾ W. D. Manning, and S. Brown, “Children’s Economic Well-Being in Married and Cohabiting Parent Families,” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68 (2006): 354.

²³⁾ Linda J. Waite, and Evelyn L. Lehrer, “The Benefits from Marriage and Religion in the United States: A Comparative Analysis,” *Population and Development Review* (2003): 258.

²⁴⁾ Kate Antonovics and Robert Town, “Are All the Good Men Married? Uncovering Sources of the Marital Wage Premium,” *American Economic Review* 9, (May 2004): 317-321. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, “The Family GDP: How Marriage and Fertility Drive the Economy,” *The Family in America* 24, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 141.

²⁵⁾ Joseph Lupton and James P. Smith, “Marriage, Assets, and Savings,” *Labor and Population Program*, Working Paper Series 99-12 (November 1999): 16-17. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, Andrew J. Kidd, and Henry Potrykus, “Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage,” (May 2011). Available at

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²⁶⁾ Survey of Consumer Finance, 2007. As cited in Patrick F. Fagan, Andrew J. Kidd, and Henry Potrykus, “Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage,” (May 2011). Available at

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²⁷⁾ *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2010*. U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, P60-235 (published August 2008): “Table 683, Median Income of Families by Type of Family in Current and Constant (2007) Dollars.” Available at

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³²⁾ Specifically, family intactness has a very *precisely determinable, negative* influence on an area's fraction of 25- to 54-year-olds and minors receiving public healthcare.

Precision has no formal meaning. It indicates how clearly determinable (distinguishable from zero) an influence on an outcome is. Precision is comparable to standard deviation. Low/ no precision indicates a high standard of deviation in which data points spread over a large range of value, signifying that the influence of one variable over another is relatively uncertain. High precision indicates a low standard of deviation in which data points hover around the mean, signifying that the influence of one variable over another is relatively certain. For further elaboration see "[Marriage and Economic Well-Being: The Economy of the Family Rises or Falls with Marriage](#)"

Henry Potrykus and Patrick Fagan, *U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family, Derived from the Index of Belonging*, (Washington, D.C.: Marriage and Religion Research Institute, 2013), 45-46.

Available at <http://marri.us/research/research-papers/u-s-social-policy-dependence-on-the-family/>

³³⁾ Specifically, family intactness has a very *precisely determinable, positive* influence on an area's fraction of 25- to 54-year-olds and minors with private healthcare coverage.

Henry Potrykus and Patrick Fagan, "U.S. Social Policy Dependence on the Family, Derived from the Index of Belonging," (2013). Available at

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- W. Forrest, "Cohabitation, Relationship Quality, and Desistance From Crime," *Journal of Marriage and Family* no. 76 (2014): 547-549.
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- ⁴³⁾ Anu Sauvola, "The Association Between Single-Parent Family Background and Physical Morbidity, Mortality, and Criminal Behaviour in Adulthood," PhD dissertation, University of Oulu (Oulu, Finland: Acta Universitatis Ouluensis Medica D.) 629, 47-52.
- ⁴⁴⁾ This chart draws on a large national sample (16,000) from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. This work was done by the author in cooperation with former colleagues at The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C.
- Patrick F. Fagan, "Family Structure and Theft." Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-22-24-156.pdf>. Accessed 29 August 2011.
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