

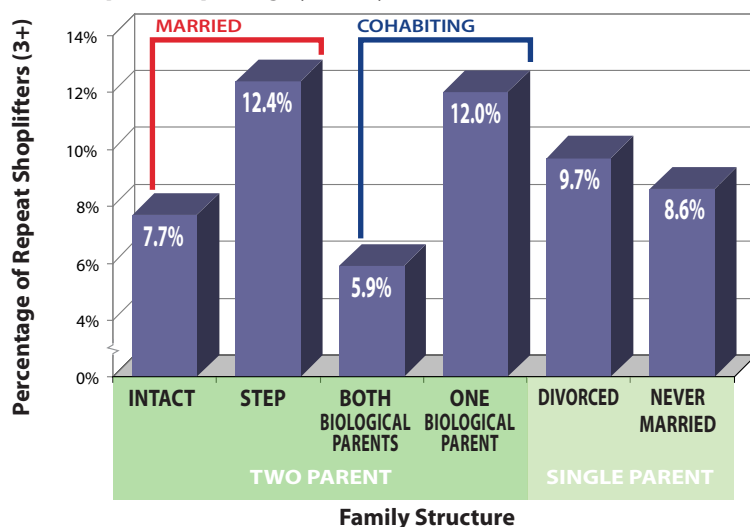


# Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 11

## Family Structure and Shoplifting

Repeat Shoplifting by Family Structure<sup>1</sup>



Source: Adolescent Health Survey, Wave I. Adolescents grade 7-12.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

Adolescents who live with both biological parents are least likely to shoplift repeatedly.

Only eight percent of adolescents living with married parents and seven percent of adolescents living with cohabiting biological parents are repeat shoplifters (3+ times),<sup>2</sup> according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. Almost nine percent of adolescents living with a single, never married parent and ten percent of adolescents living with a divorced parent have shoplifted repeatedly. This percentage jumps to twelve percent each for adolescents living with a stepparent or with one natural cohabiting parent.

### Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate these findings.<sup>3</sup> Wendy Manning of Bowling Green State University and Kathleen Lamb of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point reported that adolescents are less likely to be delinquent if they live with married parents than if they live with a single mother, stepfamily, or with a cohabiting mother. They also found, however, that adolescents living with just their mother are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior than those living with married stepfathers. Those living with their mother and her cohabiting boyfriend, though, are more likely to be delinquent than those living with just their mother.<sup>4</sup>

Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew of Child Trends and colleagues found that a father's involvement with his children substantially decreases their risk of being delinquent, even controlling for

variables such as socioeconomic status and mother involvement. They found, however, that the factor that exerted the greatest independent effect on delinquency was the intact family.<sup>5</sup>

Stephen Demuth and Susan Brown of Bowling Green State University also found that delinquency levels are lowest among adolescents living with married biological parents and that family income is not a significant determinant of adolescent delinquency.<sup>6</sup>

Cesar J. Rebellon of the University of New Hampshire reported that compared to adolescents from intact married families, adolescent boys (and to a lesser extent, adolescent girls) living with divorced parents are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior.<sup>7</sup>

In an examination of students in Edinburgh, Scotland, David Smith and Susan McVie of the University of Edinburgh found that adolescents living with both biological parents are less delinquent than their peers in single-parent homes or homes with a mother and stepfather.<sup>8</sup>

Though the data vary slightly among other family types, they repeatedly find that an intact married family is always the form of the family with the lowest level of delinquency.

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2 Given the variance in both instances there is no significant difference between these two structures.

3 The first and last findings listed are from [www.familyfacts.org](http://www.familyfacts.org).

4 Wendy D. Manning and Kathleen A. Lamb, "Adolescent Well-Being in Cohabiting, Married, and Single-Parent Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65 (2003): 876-893.

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* 35 (2006): 181-209.

6 Stephen Demuth and Susan L. Brown, "Family Structure, Family Processes, and Adolescent Delinquency: The Significance of Parental Absence Versus Parental Gender," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 41 (2004): 58-81.

7 Cesar J. Rebellon, "Do Adolescents Engage in Delinquency to Attract the Social Attention of Peers? An Extension and Longitudinal Test of the Social Reinforcement Hypothesis," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43 (2006): 387-411.

8 David J. Smith and Susan McVie, "Theory and Method in the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime," *British Journal of Criminology* 42 (2003): 169-195.



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