

# “How Many Teens Grow Up In Stable Married Families?”

Finding An Answer in the American  
Community Survey.

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# OBJECTIVES

- To develop an estimate of the proportion of U.S. teenagers who have grown up with both biological parents from the Public Use Micro-data files of the American Community Survey.
- To examine geopolitical and racial-ethnic variation in this index.
- To relate the index to measures of youth, family, and community well-being.

# ADVANTAGES OF ACS

- Very large sample survey (3 million plus persons) conducted annually.
- High cooperation rate because conducted by the Census Bureau and legally mandated.
- Since 2008, ACS has been obtaining marital status, marital history, and detailed relationship information for all persons in household.
- Annual samples aggregated over 3 & 5 years.

# LIMITATIONS OF ACS

- Relationships only defined with respect to one Reference Person in Household, not others.
- Only date of latest marriage is obtained.
- ACS is cross-sectional survey, not panel study.
- In order to obtain estimates for smaller geographical units, samples must be aggregated over multiple-year periods.

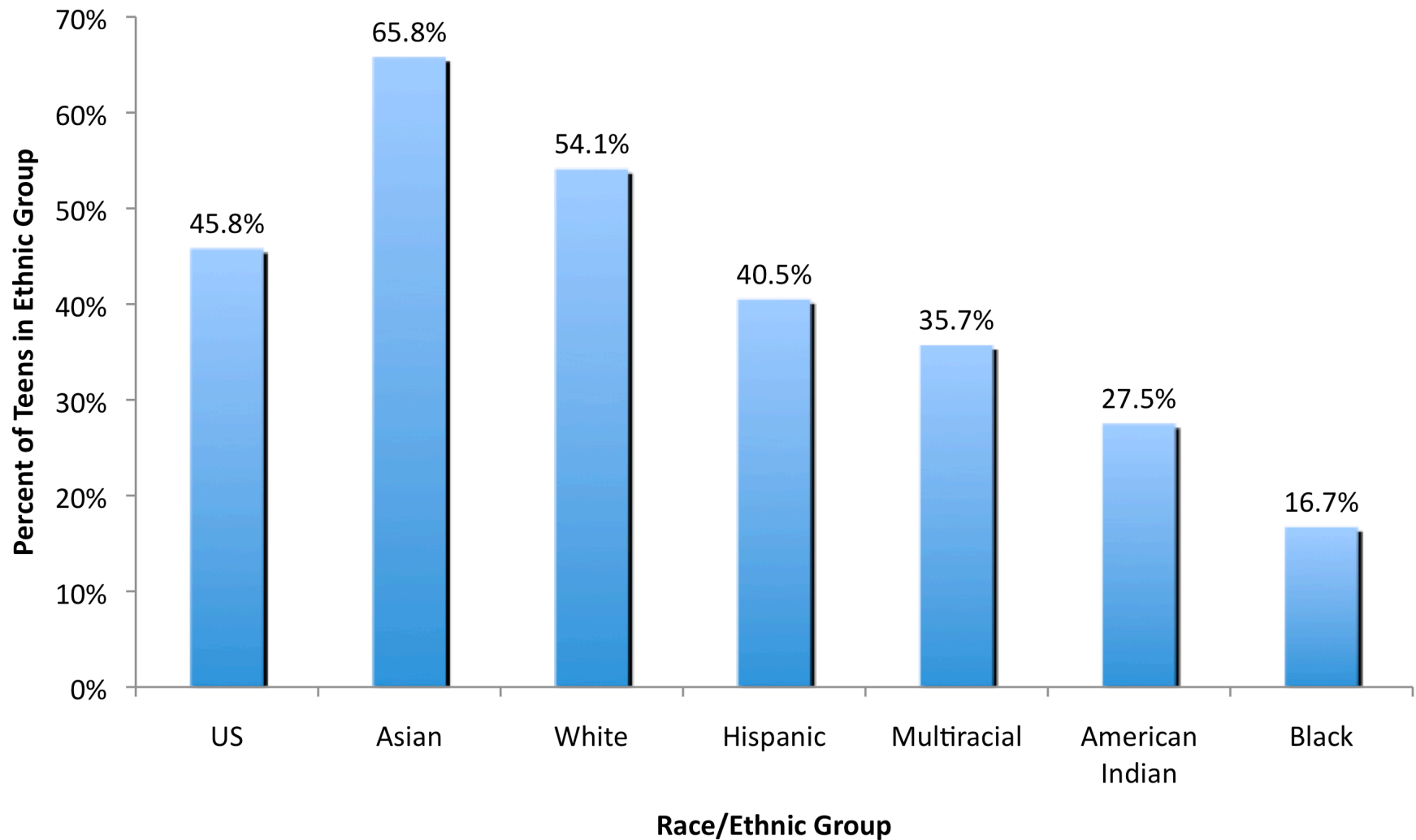
# METHOD

- Locate all sample teens aged 15-17 in ACS.
- Identify those who are biological sons or daughters (not step-, foster, or adopted) of Reference Person.
- If so, find out whether parent is currently married and date of latest marriage predates or within two years of birth of teenaged child.
- If so, teen is said to have grown up with both married parents.

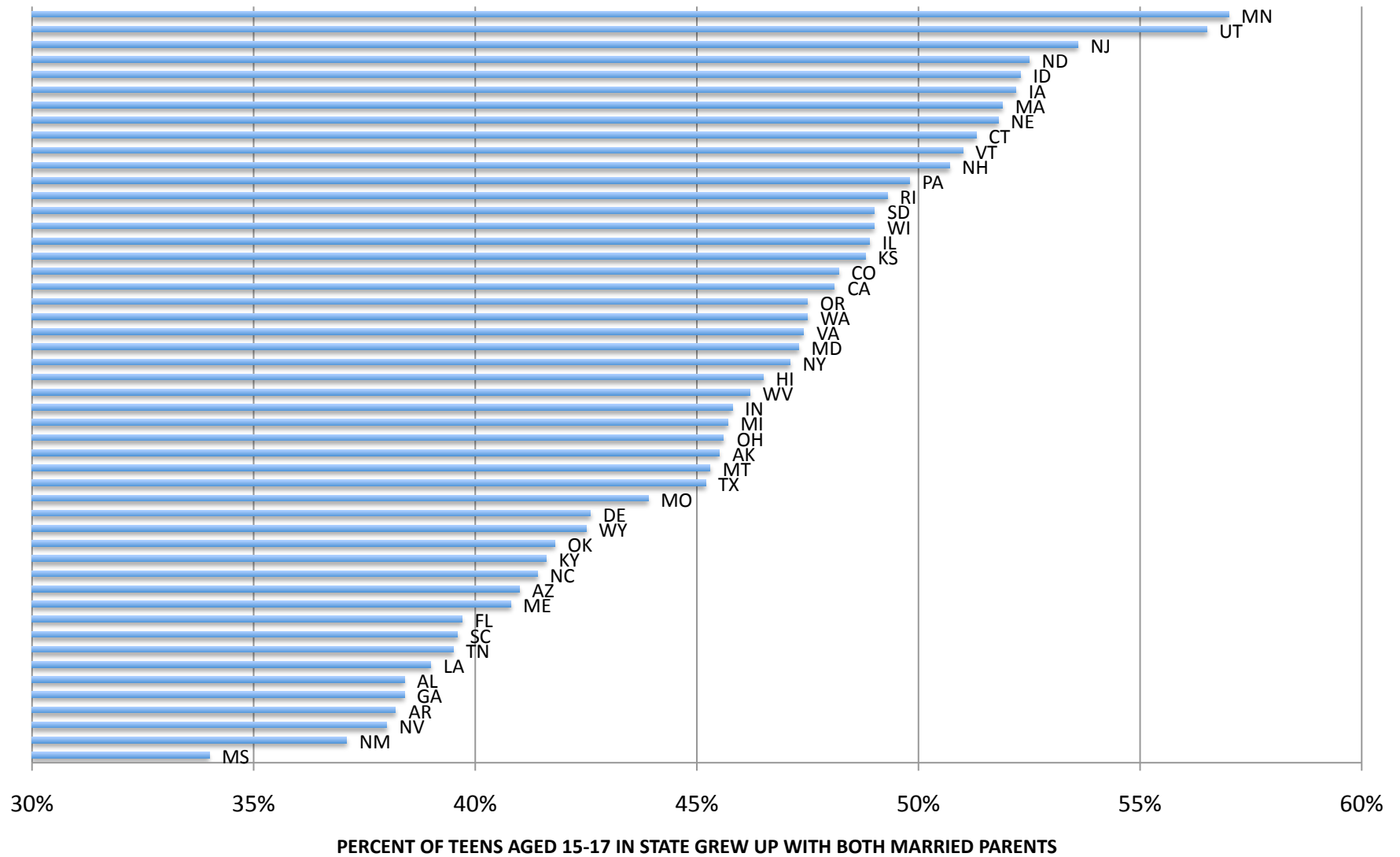
# RESULTS

- In 2009, some 5.8 million of 12.6 million US teens aged 15-17 -- 45.8% -- had grown up with both married parents.
- Index shows substantial variation across racial/ethnic groups, states and counties.
- Index significantly related to child poverty rates, achievement test scores, teen birth and death rates, crime and imprisonment rates

# Proportion of US Teens Aged 15-17 Who Have Grown Up With Both Married Parents, by Race/Ethnicity: 2009

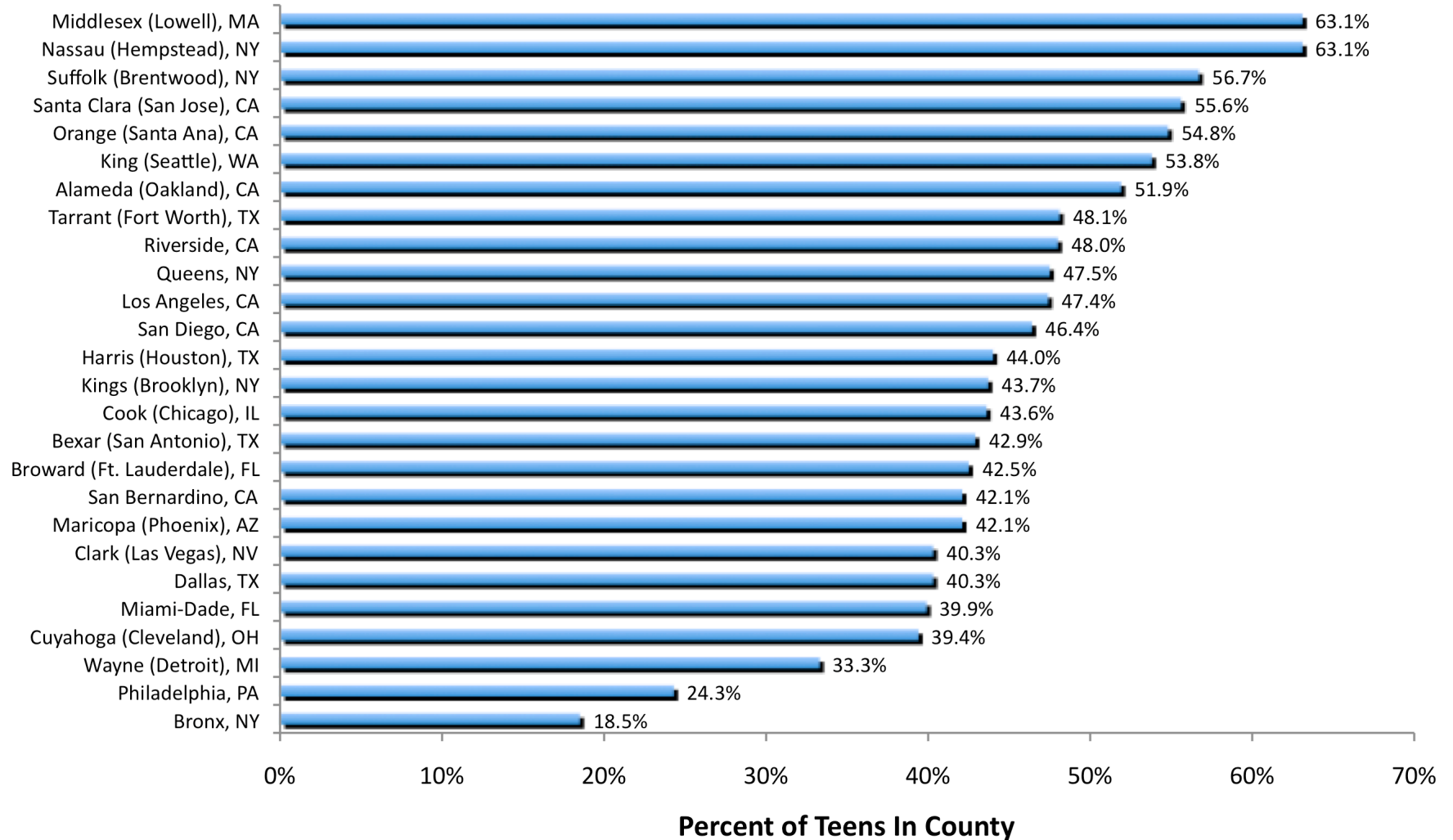


## STATES IN RANK ORDER ON FAMILY STABILITY INDEX, 2009

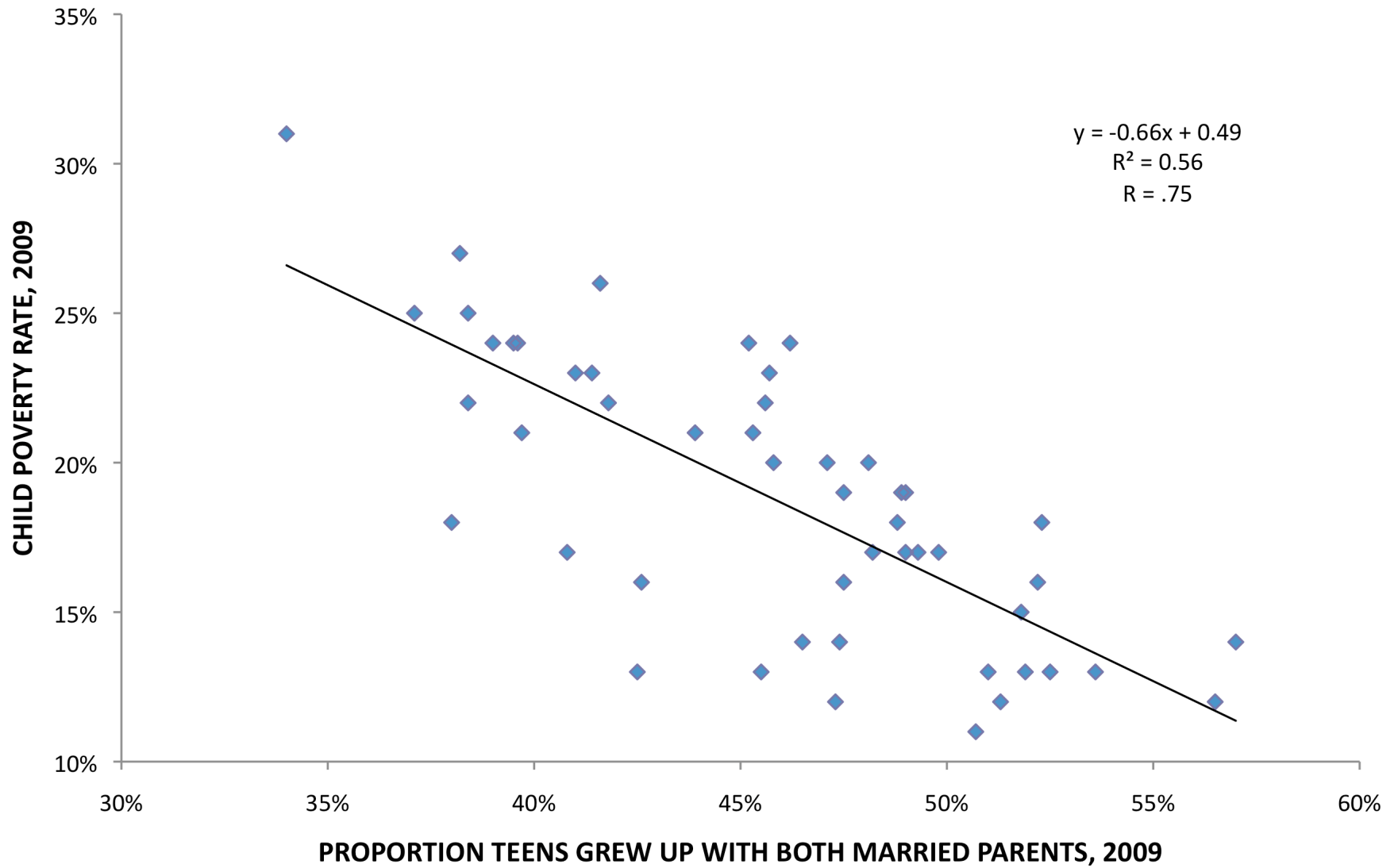




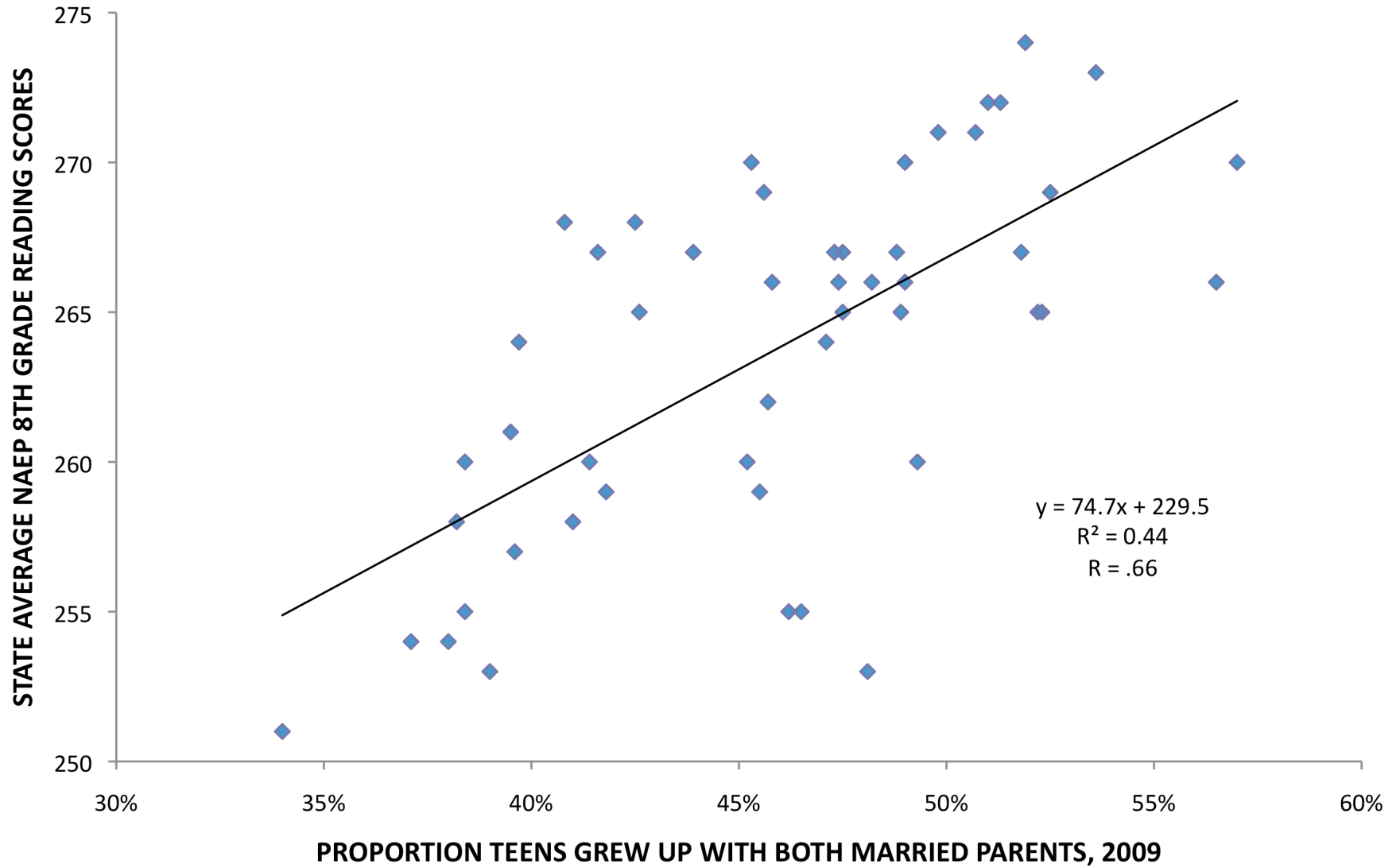
## Percent of Teens Aged 15-17 Who Have Grown Up With Both Married Parents in Largest Counties of U.S.: 2009



## FAMILY STABILITY AND CHILD POVERTY FOR US STATES: 2009



## FAMILY STABILITY AND READING ACHIEVEMENT FOR US STATES



# Next Steps/Acknowledgements

- Developing multilevel regression models predicting teen achievement and behavior from family stability and contextual variables.
- Will produce index estimates for smaller counties and cities when 3-year files available.
- Statistical and programming support from Dr. Philip Fletcher of Westat (now at Pearson).
- Work done in collaboration with and with partial support from Dr. Pat Fagan.