



## StatsCan distances itself from study findings

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By Doug Hempstead

Statistics Canada is distancing itself from a new study by a Christian think tank that shows — among other things — how often teens drink may have an effect on their sexual activity.

The study, released Tuesday by the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, used Statistics Canada data to draw links between drug use, drunkenness, time spent with a boyfriend or girlfriend and teen decisions about sexual activity.

Among the findings: Teen girls who smoke pot are “much more likely to be sexually active” and “getting drunk more often correlates with an increased likelihood of sexual activity.” The study also found “strong associations” between attempted suicide and sexual activity in teen girls.

The study researcher, Peter Jon Mitchell said the findings were gathered by Dr. Frank Jones, who was an analyst at Statistics Canada for 35 years. Because of this, Jones has special access to data not readily available to the public. His research is based on data from 2002-2003.

Statistics Canada is distancing itself from these correlations, though a spokesperson said Jones does have access to their database because he is a social sciences and humanities researcher.

“While Statistics Canada strictly ensures the confidentiality of data and provides advice for its proper use, papers and reports resulting from this research do not represent the views of Statistics Canada,” StatsCan spokesman Peter Frayne said.

Mitchell said the study probably underscores what many parents already suspect is true.

“This study reveals a risk factor that may help parents as they nurture their teens through to adulthood,” he said

Last year Mitchell, once associated with conservative Christian group Focus on the Family, used data from the same Statistics Canada survey — the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth — to draw less secular conclusions.

Mitchell wrote last year that he and Jones found the data revealed going to church brought about positive behaviour and attitude in teens. Specifically, youth whose parents go to church are less likely to do drugs or have friends who do drugs. Teens who went to church when they were kids were found to be less likely to have sex, get drunk, sell drugs, damage things or have run-ins with police.

That study also suggested children of married parents, rather than common-law parents, were less likely to smoke, sell drugs and have sex.