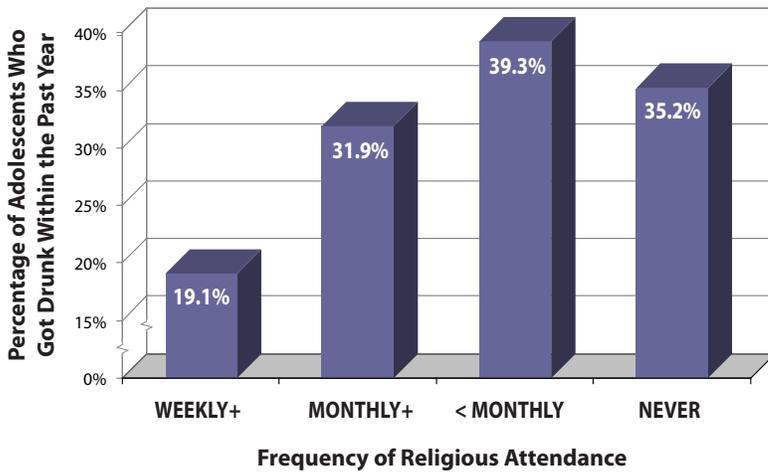




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 16

## Religious Attendance and Drinking

Getting Drunk by Religious Attendance <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 worship at least weekly are far less likely to get drunk than those who worship less frequently.

Nineteen percent of students in Grades 7-12 who attend religious services at least weekly got drunk in the year prior to being asked, according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II. By contrast, 35 percent of adolescents who never worship, 32 percent of those who worship one to three times a month, and 39 percent of those who attend religious services less than once a month admitted to getting drunk within that timeframe.

### Other Studies

Many other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Lisa Pullen of the University of Tennessee and colleagues found that, of adolescents who attended religious services at least weekly, only 12.1 percent reported abusing alcohol compared to 40.2 percent of adolescents who attended services monthly or less.<sup>2</sup>

Jill Sinha of Princeton University and colleagues noted that adolescents who attended religious services even once in a month were less likely to drink alcohol than those who worshiped less often, if at all.<sup>3</sup>

Tamara Brown of the University of Kentucky and colleagues reported that religious attendance was significantly inversely associated with abusive drinking among white adolescents.<sup>4</sup>

Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin and Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill also found that, even among low-risk adolescents (those who “come from families of privilege, or enjoy the security of two-parent families, or exhibit other low-risk traits”), “[c]hurch attendance and the personal importance of religion are inversely and significantly related to vulnerability to alcohol use.”<sup>5</sup>

When it comes to protecting against the dangers of alcohol, religious attendance is powerfully protective.

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- 2 L. Pullen, M.A. Modcrin-Talbott, W.R. West, and R. Muenchen, “Spiritual High Versus High on Spirits: Is Religiosity Related to Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Abuse,” *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, vol. 6 (1999): 3-8.
  - 3 Jill W. Sinha, Ram A. Cnaan, and Richard J. Gelles, “Adolescent Risk Behaviors and Religion: Findings from a National Study,” *Journal of Adolescence*, vol. 30 (2007): 231-249.
  - 4 Tamara L. Brown, Gregory S. Parks, Rick S. Zimmerman, and Clarendia M. Phillips, “The Role of Religion in Predicting Adolescent Alcohol Use and Problem Drinking,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, vol. 62.5 (2001): 696-705.
  - 5 Mark D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder Jr., “Religion and Vulnerability among Low-Risk Adolescents,” *Social Science Research*, vol. 32 (2003): 633-658.



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