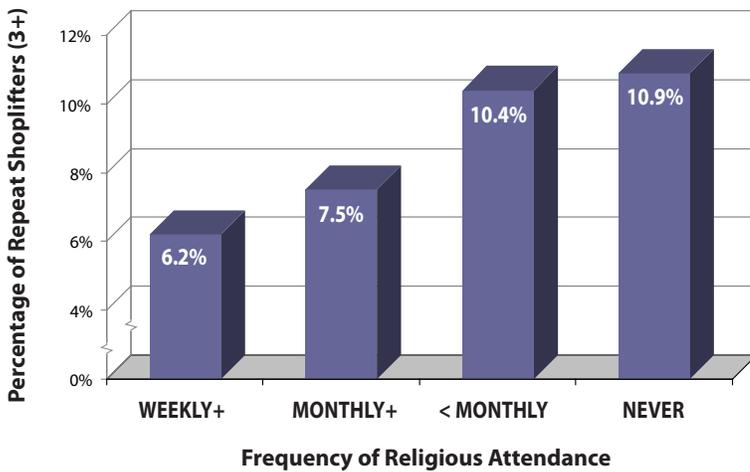




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 10

## Religious Attendance and Shoplifting

Repeat Shoplifting 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 less likely to be repeat shoplifters than those who worship less frequently.

Whereas only 6.2 percent of students in Grades 7-12 who worship at least weekly have shoplifted three or more times, 10.9 percent of those who never worship are repeat shoplifters. In between are those who attend one to three times a month (7.5 percent) and less than once a month (10.4 percent). The data are taken from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves I and II.

### Other Studies

Several other studies on juvenile delinquency corroborate the direction of these findings.<sup>2</sup> Examining the same set of data, Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas at Austin and Glen Elder of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported that students who worship weekly are less likely to engage in delinquent behavior than those who worship less than once a month.<sup>3</sup>

Researching the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University and Richard Watts of Baylor University found that high school seniors who frequently attend religious activities and hold a high view of religion are less likely to be delinquent than those who do not attend church frequently.<sup>4</sup>

Byron Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues studied the effects on juvenile delinquency of attending religious services, weekend religious community-oriented activities, and the individual importance placed on religion and such activities. They found that these religious activities are consistently associated with lower rates of delinquency, even when controlling for intervention factors (delinquent association and beliefs) and socio-demographic factors (household income and race).<sup>5</sup>

Johnson also found that the greater involvement adolescents have in religious activities, the less likely they are to commit a serious crime.<sup>6</sup>

In combating delinquent behavior such as shoplifting, frequent religious attendance proves to be significantly protective of youth and society.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.  
Senior Fellow  
Director of the Center for Family and Religion  
Family Research Council

---

2 The following findings are from [www.familyfacts.org](http://www.familyfacts.org).

3 Mark D. Regnerus and Glen H. Elder Jr., "Religion and Vulnerability among Low-Risk Adolescents," *Social Science Research* 32 (2003): 633-658.

4 Jerry Trusty and Richard E. Watts, "Relationship of High School Seniors' Religious Perceptions and Behavior to Educational, Career, and Leisure Variables," *Counseling and Values* 44 (1999): 30-40.

5 Bryon R. Johnson, Sung Joon Jang, David B. Larson, and Spencer De Li, "Does Adolescent Religious Commitment Matter? A Reexamination of the Effects of Religiosity on Delinquency," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38 (2001): 22-44.

6 Byron R. Johnson, "The Invisible Institution and Black Youth Crime," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29 (2000): 489.



FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL  
801 G STREET NW  
WASHINGTON DC 20001  
800-225-4008  
WWW.FRC.ORG

Mapping America  
Editor: Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.  
Managing Editor: Michael Leaser

Please feel free to make additional copies of this resource. We only ask that you comply with standard norms of attribution to the Family Research Council and to Mapping America.

---

WWW.MAPPINGAMERICAPROJECT.ORG