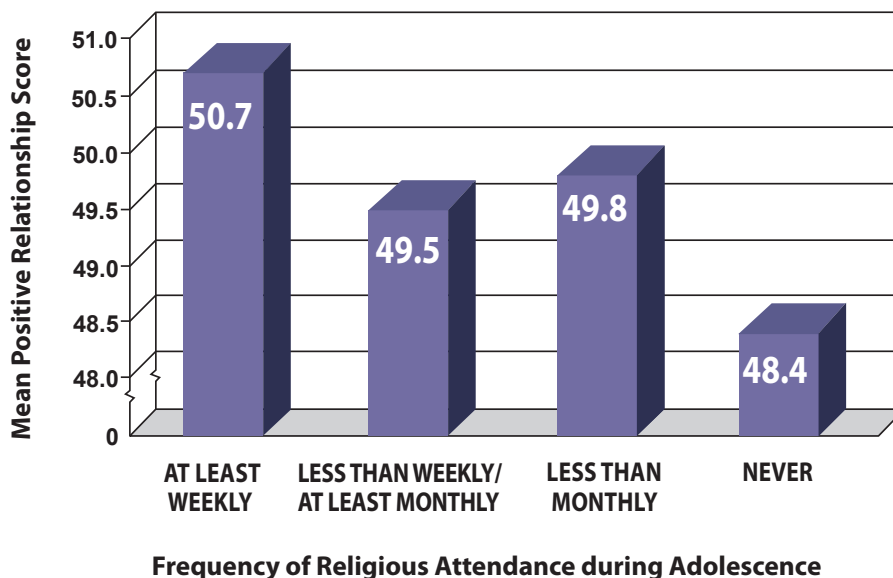




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 46

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship and Religious Attendance

Quality of Parent-Child Relationship by Religious Attendance



Source: National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)

This chart is taken from a study conducted by Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.¹ for Family Research Council.²

Children who attend worship at least weekly have a higher-quality relationship with their parents than those who worship less frequently.

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, children who attend religious services at least weekly score higher on the positive parental

relationship scale (50.7) than children who never attend religious services (48.4). In between are children who worship one to three times a month (49.5) and children who attend religious services less than once a month (49.8).

Other Studies

Though the results of some related studies are mixed and inconclusive, several other studies corroborate the small, but statistically significant, direction of these findings. Lisa Pearce of the Pennsylvania State University and William Axinn of the University of Michigan found that religiosity "has significant positive effects on mothers' and children's reports of the quality of their relationships."³

In a study of 203 students at Uppsala University in Sweden, Pehr Granqvist of Uppsala University reported that students with a secure parental relationship scored higher on such variables as

“Level of Religiousness” and “Relationship with God” than those who had insecure parental relationships.⁴

Though further research might prove more illuminating, available data indicate that religiosity and frequent religious attendance correlate, albeit slightly, with higher-quality parent-child relationships.

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.

Research Psychologist

Former Vice President of Westat

Founding President of Child Trends

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- 1 Nicholas Zill is a research psychologist and consultant. Until his recent retirement, he was a vice president of Westat Inc. He was the founder of Child Trends and its executive director for 13 years.
 - 2 This chart draws on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) in 2003. The data sample consisted of parents of 102,353 children and teens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. 68,996 of these children and teens were between six and 17 years old, the age group that was the focus of the study. The survey sample in this age range represented a population of nearly 49 million young people nationwide.
 - 3 Lisa D. Pearce and William G. Axinn, “The Impact of Family Religious Life on the Quality of Mother-Child Relations,” *American Sociological Review*, vol. 63 (1998): 810-828.
 - 4 Pehr Granqvist, “Religiousness and Perceived Childhood Attachment—On the Question of Compensation or Correspondence,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 37 (1998): 350-367.



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