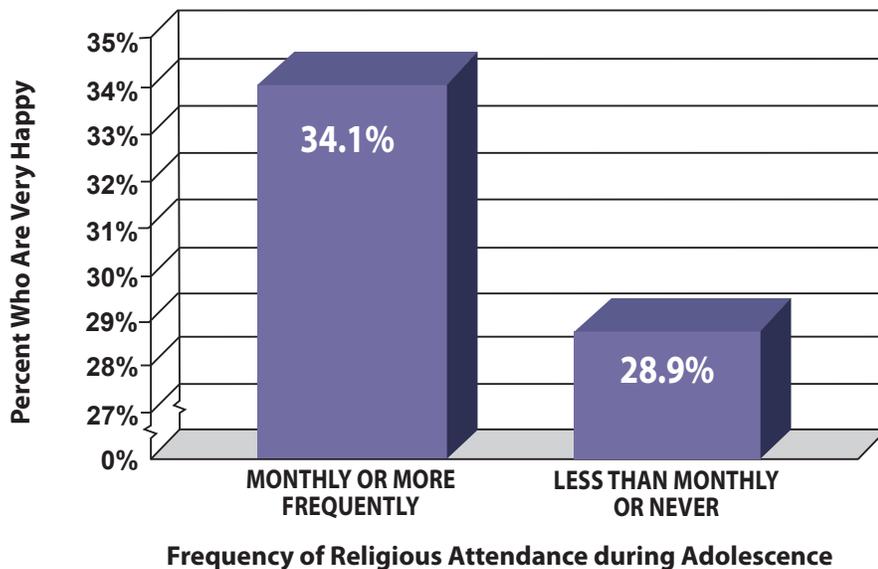




## Intergenerational Links to Happiness: Religious Attendance

### Percent Who Are Very Happy by Frequency of Their Religious Attendance during Adolescence



Source: General Social Survey (GSS)

*This chart is taken from a study conducted by Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai for Family Research Council.*

Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are more likely to be very happy than those who did not.

According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 34.1 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents

considered themselves very happy, compared to 28.9 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.<sup>1</sup>

### Other Studies

Though no related studies, to the best of our knowledge, have been conducted on intergenerational links between adolescent religious attendance and adult happiness, there are several studies that demonstrate a contemporaneous connection between religious attendance and happiness. Rajeev Dehejia of Tufts University and colleagues reported that religious attendance provides happiness insurance against a sudden loss in income. Specifically, "active religious participation buffers about two thirds of the reduction in happiness from a negative income shock."<sup>2</sup>

In an examination of 101 undergraduate students, Sarah French and Stephen Joseph of the

University of Essex also found evidence that “religiosity is associated with happiness.”<sup>3</sup>

Though few studies have been conducted in this area, the available evidence indicates a significant association between religious attendance and happiness.

Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D. & Althea Nagai, Ph.D.

*Dr. Fagan is senior fellow and director of the Center for Family and Religion at Family Research Council.*

*Dr. Nagai is a visiting fellow at Family Research Council.*

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. From 1994 to 2005, two samples of approximately 1,500 per sample have been conducted. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.
  - 2 Rajeev Dehejia, et al., “Insuring Consumption and Happiness through Religious Organizations,” *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 91 (2007): 259-279.
  - 3 Sarah French and Stephen Joseph, “Religiosity and Its Association with Happiness, Purpose in Life, and Self-Actualization,” *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, vol. 2 (1999): 117-120.



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

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