

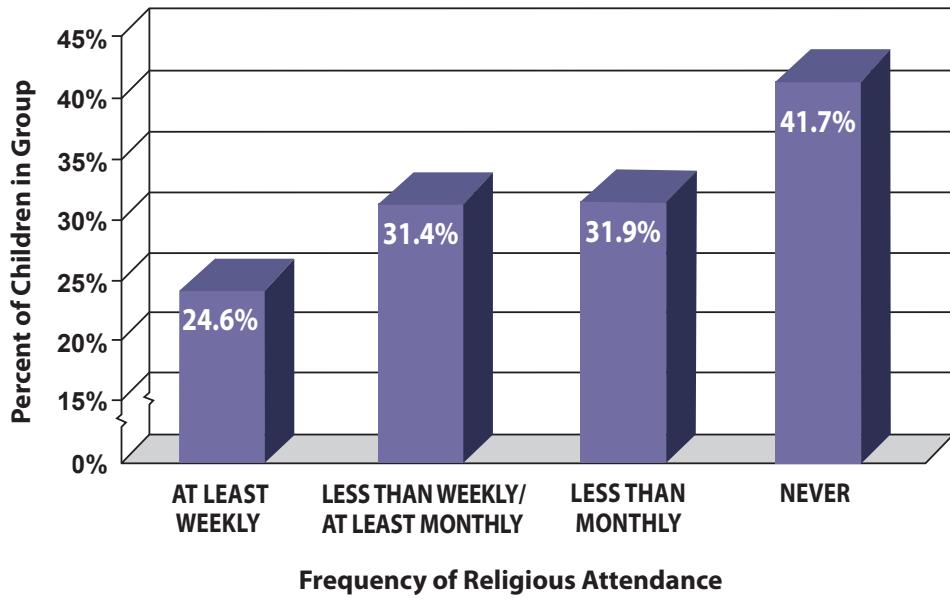


Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 52

Parents Contacted by School about Their Children's Behavior Problems and Religious Attendance

Percent of Children Whose Parents Were Contacted by School about Children's Behavior Problems by Religious Attendance



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

Parents whose children attend worship at least weekly are less likely to be contacted by their children's school about behavior problems than parents whose children worship less frequently.

According to the National Survey of Children's Health, only 24.6 percent of children who worship at least weekly

are the object of their school reporting behavior problems to parents, whereas 41.7 percent of children who never worship are the object of their school reporting behavior problems to parents. In between are children who worship one to three times a month (31.4 percent) and children who attend religious services less than once a month (31.9 percent).

Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Christian Smith and Robert Faris of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported that 77 percent of 12th grade students who attended religious services weekly or more had never been sent to the principal's office or been detained after school for misbehavior in the year prior to being asked, compared to 67 percent of 12th grade students who never attended religious services.³

Smith and Faris also found that high school seniors who attended religious services weekly or

more were less likely to have hit a teacher or been involved in a fight in the year prior to being asked.⁴

Examining religion and delinquency data in the National Education Longitudinal Study,⁵ Jerry Trusty of Texas A&M University and Richard Watts of Baylor University found that 12th grade students who frequently attended religious activities were less likely to exhibit delinquent behavior than those who did not attend religious activities frequently.⁶

As the evidence indicates, children who frequently attend religious services or activities are less likely to exhibit behavior problems at school that cause teachers or administrators to contact their parents.

Nicholas Zill, Ph.D.

Research Psychologist

Former Vice President of Westat

Founding President of Child Trends

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 Christian Smith and Robert Faris, *Religion and American Adolescent Delinquency, Risk Behaviors and Constructive Social Activities* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: National Study of Youth and Religion, 2002): 38-39.

4 Ibid., 30-31.

5 The delinquency data included school suspensions, arrests, and time spent in juvenile centers.

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



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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