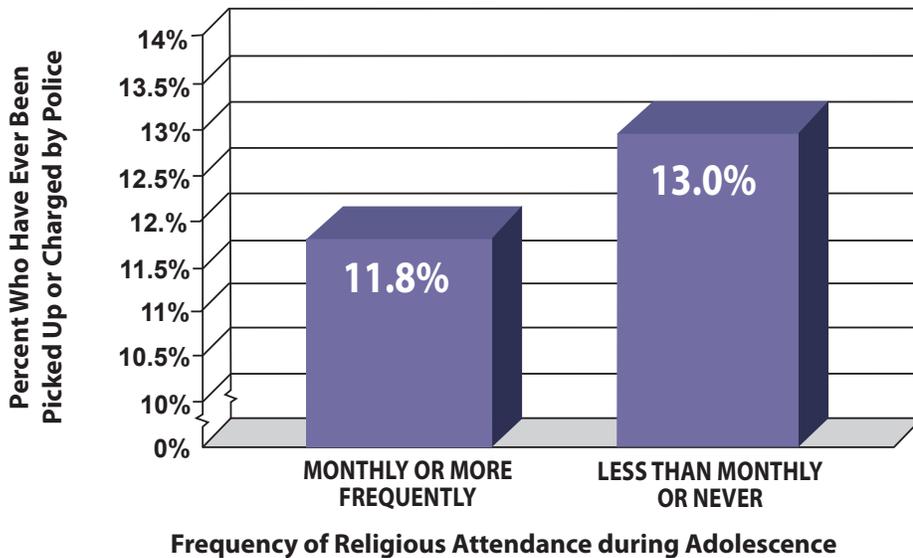




## Intergenerational Links to Being Picked Up or Charged by Police: Religious Attendance

### Percent Who Have Ever Been Picked Up or Charged by Police by Their Religious Attendance during Adolescence



Source: General Social Surveys (GSS, 1972-1987)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are less likely to have ever been picked up or charged by police than those who did not.

According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 11.8 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents have ever been picked up or charged by police, compared

to 13 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.<sup>1</sup>

### Other Studies

To the best of our knowledge, there are no other studies that directly examine the effects of adolescent religious attendance on adult arrests.<sup>2</sup> Several studies, however, do analyze the contemporaneous effects of religious attendance on crime. Byron Johnson of Baylor University and colleagues examined data from the National Youth Survey and found that the greater the religious involvement of black youth, the lower the occurrence of “serious crime,” which included felony assault, robbery, felony theft, prostitution, and selling drugs.<sup>3</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 students who worship weekly are less likely than students who worship less frequently to paint graffiti on someone else’s property or in a public place, deliberately damage

someone else's property, take something from a store without paying for it, drive a car without its owner's permission, use or threaten to use a weapon to get something from someone, and sell marijuana or other drugs.<sup>4</sup>

As the evidence shows, instilling the fear of God at an early age proves effective in keeping both adolescents and adults out of jail.

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-1987. The sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979 or 1981.
  - 2 However, John Laub and Robert Sampson do investigate the relationship, but not in a highly quantitative manner, in their book, *Shared Beginnings, Divergent Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).
  - 3 Byron R. Johnson, et al., "The 'Invisible Institution' and Black Youth Crime: The Church as an Agency of Local Social Control," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 29 (2000): 479-498.
  - 4 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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