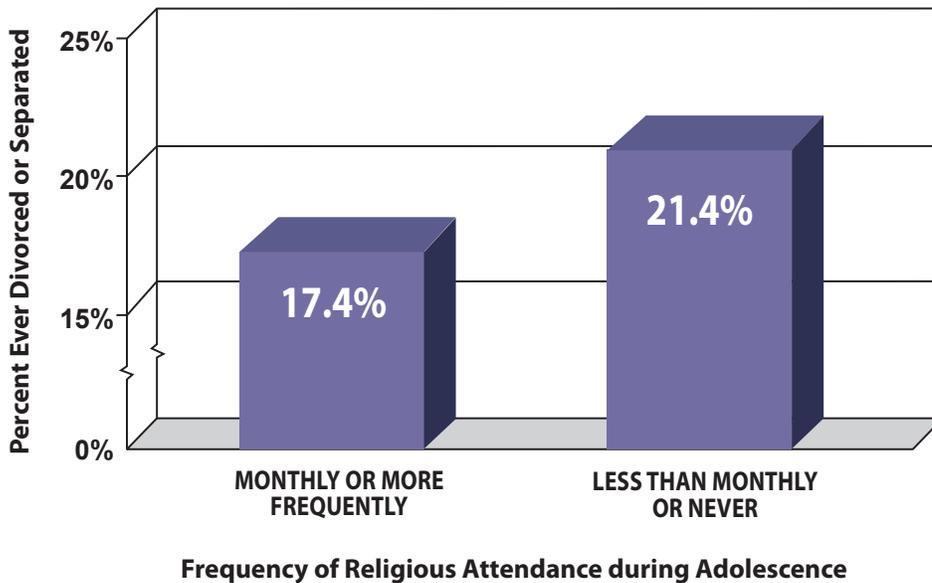




## Divorce or Separation: Religious Attendance in Adolescence

### Divorce or Separation in Adulthood by Frequency of Religious Attendance in Adolescence



Source: General Social Surveys (GSS, 1972-2006)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are less likely ever to be divorced or separated than those who did not.

According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 17.4 percent of adults who worshiped at least monthly as adolescents have been divorced or separated, compared to 21.4 percent of adults who worshiped less frequently.<sup>1</sup>

### Other Studies

Several other studies analyzing the association of contemporaneous religious attendance with marital stability corroborate the direction of these findings. Vaughn Call and Tim Heaton of Brigham Young University reported that compared to other religious elements such as affiliation or strength of beliefs, “attendance has the greatest impact on marital stability.” Couples who attend church together weekly have a lower risk of divorce than those who worship less frequently.<sup>2</sup>

John Wilson and Marc Musick of Duke University also found that “the higher the level of involvement in the social life of the church, the more [a couple’s] marriage is valued.”<sup>3</sup>

And Timothy Clydesdale of the College of New Jersey reported that “nonparticipation in a religious

worship community was associated significantly with...an increased likelihood of having been divorced."<sup>4</sup>

As the evidence indicates, frequent religious attendance, in adolescence and adulthood, reduces the odds of divorce or separation.

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- 1 This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 each year. No GSS was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS has been conducted only in even-numbered years and uses two samples per GSS that total approximately 3,000. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.
  - 2 Vaughn R. A. Call and Tim B. Heaton, "Religious Influence on Marital Stability," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 36 (1997): 382-392.
  - 3 John Wilson and Marc Musick, "Religion and Marital Dependency," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 35 (1996): 30-40.
  - 4 Timothy T. Clydesdale, "Family Behaviors among Early U.S. Baby Boomers: Exploring the Effects of Religion and Income Change, 1965-1982," *Social Forces*, vol. 76 (1997): 605-635.



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