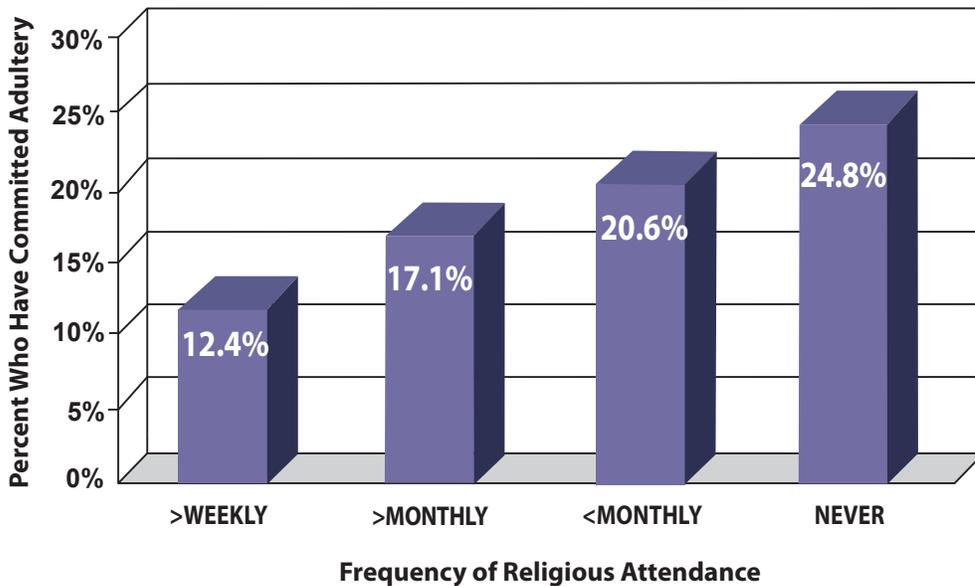




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 73

Adultery by Religious Attendance

Rate of Adultery by Religious Attendance



Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

Of adults currently or previously married, those who attend religious services once a week or more are the least likely to have committed adultery.

Description: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), among adults currently or previously married, 12.4 percent who worship once a week or more had had sexual relations with someone other than their spouse, followed by 17.1 percent of those who worship between one and three times a month, 20.6 percent of those who worship less than once a month, and 24.8 percent of those who never attend religious services.¹

Related Insights from Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Amy Burdette of the University of North Carolina and colleagues reported that “frequency of religious attendance is inversely associated with the likelihood of having engaged in infidelity.”²

Vaughan Call and Tim Heaton of Brigham Young University found that “of the dimensions of religious experience, attendance has the greatest impact on marital stability.”³

Judith Treas of the University of California and Irvine and Deirdre Giesen of Utrecht University also

reported that “those who often attended religious services were less likely to have had multiple sex partners in the previous year.”⁴

As the data indicate, the more frequently married adults attend religious services, the less likely they are to be unfaithful to their spouses.

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

Dr. Fagan is senior fellow and director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute (MARRI) at Family Research Council.

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

-
- 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 Amy M. Burdette, Christopher G. Ellison, Darren E. Sherkat, and Kurt A. Gore, “Are There Religious Variations in Marital Infidelity?” *Journal of Family Issues* 28 (2007): 1553-81.
 - 3 Vaughn R. A. Call and Tim B. Heaton, “Religious Influence on Marital Stability,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36 (1997): 382-92.
 - 4 Judith Treas and Deirdre Giesen, “Sexual Infidelity among Married and Cohabiting Americans,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (2000): 48-60.



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

Please feel free to make additional copies of this resource. We only ask that you comply with standard norms of attribution to the Family Research Council and to Mapping America.

WWW.MAPPINGAMERICAPROJECT.ORG