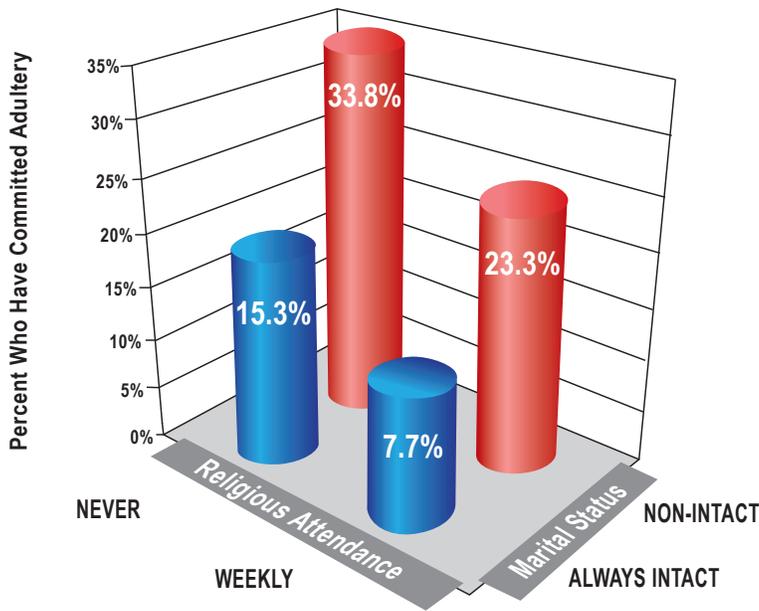




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 75

Adultery by Religious Attendance and Marital Status

Rate of Adultery by Religious Attendance and Marital Status



Religious Attendance and Marital Status Combined

Source: General Social Surveys (1972-2006)

This chart groups the data in four categories, with two different subsets for each of two major variables, frequency of religious attendance (weekly vs. never) and marital status (always intact vs. non-intact).

The always intact subset consists of adults in always-intact marriages. The non-intact subset for this question on adultery is composed of married, previously-divorced adults and divorced or separated adults.

The resultant four categories are 1) always-intact marital status with weekly religious attendance; 2) always-intact marital status with no religious attendance; 3) non-intact marital status with weekly religious attendance; and 4) non-intact marital status with no religious attendance.

Adults in always-intact marriages who worship at least weekly are the least likely of all to have had adulterous sexual relations.

Description: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), adults in always-intact marriages who attend religious services at least weekly are the most likely to be faithful to their spouses, with an adultery rate of 7.7 percent. Adults in always-intact marriages who never attend worship have a 15.3 percent rate of adultery, while among divorced or separated adults and married, previously-divorced adults, the rate is 23.3 percent for those who worship weekly and 33.8 percent for those who never worship.¹

Related Insights from Other Studies

Several other studies corroborate the direction of these findings. Mark Whisman of the University of Colorado at Boulder and colleagues reported that infidelity was “negatively associated with” religiosity and “was predicted by greater marital dissatisfaction.”²

Paul Amato and Stacy Rogers of the Pennsylvania State University also found that “frequent church attendance appears to lower the likelihood of divorce” and that infidelity was one of the “most consistent predictors of divorce,” along with jealousy, drug use, drinking, and spending money foolishly.³

As the data indicate, always-intact married adults who attend religious services at least weekly are the least likely to have committed adultery.

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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 Mark A. Whisman, Kristina Koop Gordon, and Yael Chatav, “Predicting Sexual Infidelity in a Population-Based Sample of Married Individuals,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 21 (2007): 320-24.
 - 3 Paul R. Amato and Stacy J. Rogers, “A Longitudinal Study of Marital Problems and Subsequent Divorce,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 59 (1997): 612-24.



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