



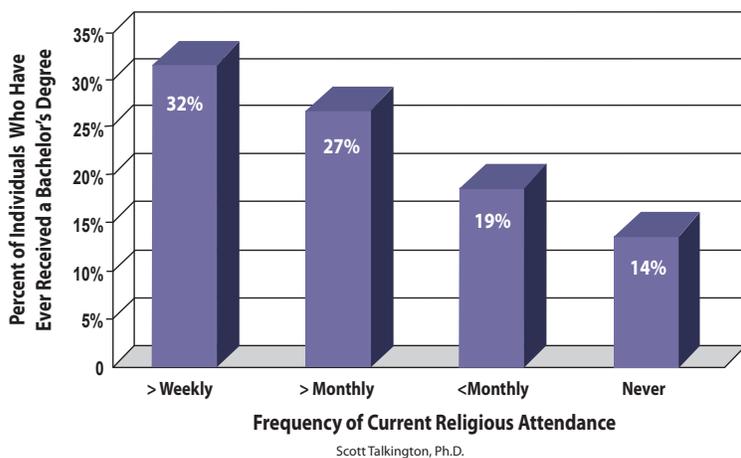
Mapping America™

Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 105

“Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

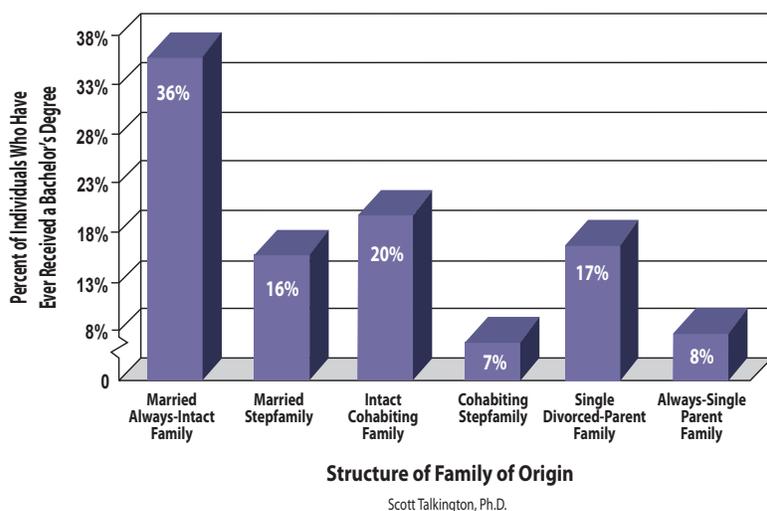
“Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree”
by Current Religious Attendance

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)

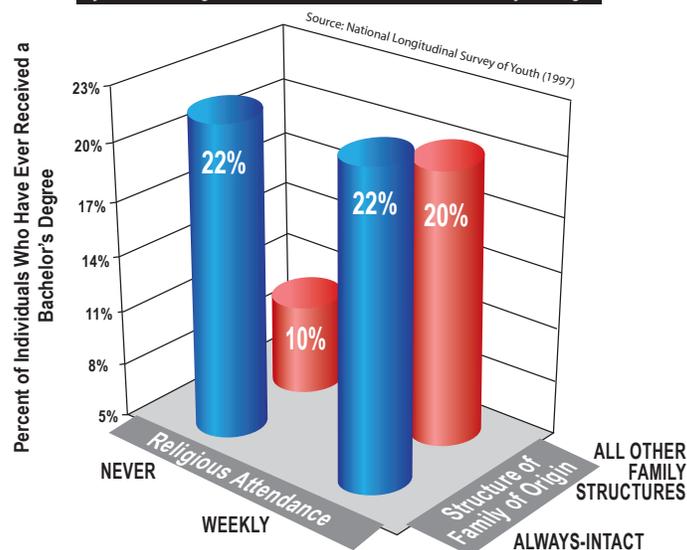


“Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree”
by Structure of Family of Origin

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1997)



“Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree”
by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin



Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin Combined
Scott Talkington, Ph.D.

This chart looks at individuals who have received a Bachelor's degree at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of family structures (always-intact vs. all other family structures*) and two sets of religious attendance (weekly vs. never).

The families occupying the four corners (or four extremes) of these quadrants are:

The always-intact married family that worships weekly;

The always-intact married family that never worships;

All other family structures* that worship weekly;

All other family structures* that never worship.

(*This group consists of individuals in the following categories: married stepfamily, cohabiting stepfamily, single divorced parent, and always-single parent. In all these structures, there has been rejection between the biological father and mother, and thus the original pairing is no longer intact.)

“Ever Received a Bachelor’s Degree” by Current Religious Attendance and Structure of Family of Origin

The 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth shows that students who grew up in intact married families and now attend weekly religious services are more likely to receive a Bachelor’s degree.

Description: Examining **structure of family of origin**, 36 percent of individuals who came from intact, married families received a Bachelor’s degree, followed by those from intact, cohabiting families (20 percent), single divorced-parent families (17 percent), married stepfamilies (16 percent), always-single parent families (8 percent), and cohabiting stepfamilies (7 percent).

Examining only **current religious attendance**, 32 percent of individuals who attend weekly religious services have received a Bachelor’s degree, compared with those who attend religious services at least monthly (27 percent), those who attend less than once a month (19 percent), and those who never attend (14 percent).

Examining **current religious attendance and structure of family of origin combined**, 22 percent of individuals who grew up in intact married families and attend weekly religious services are likely to receive a Bachelor’s degree. It is clear that family structure plays a significant role in educational attainment, because individuals who grew up in intact married families that never attend church are equally likely to receive a Bachelor’s degree (22 percent). They are followed closely by non-intact families that attend weekly religious services (20 percent) and individuals from non-intact families that have no religious attendance (10 percent).

Related Insight from Other Studies

Religious attendance and education are related in many ways. Studies also show that educational attainment is related to the religious commitment of an individual’s community, as measured by church attendance. Individuals who lived in communities with high religious densities had, on average, more years of education than those who lived in less religiously dense communities.¹ Additionally, another study shows that compared to students enrolled in four-year colleges, those who did not attend college were more likely to report a decrease in religious service attendance, a decline in the importance of religion in their lives, or a change to no religious affiliation.²

Individuals from intact families completed, on average, more years of schooling and were more likely to graduate from high school and college than were their peers raised in non-intact families.³

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Scott Talkington has been Research Director for the National Association of Scholars and Senior Research Fellow at George Mason University School of Public Policy since 1998.

1 Gruber, Jonathan. “Religious Market Structure, Religious Participation, and Outcomes: Is Religion Good for You.” *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Vol. No. 11377 (2005).

2 Uecker, Jeremy E. “Losing My Religion: The Social Sources of Religious Decline in Early Adulthood.” *Social Forces* Vol. 85 (4) (2007) pp. 1667-1692.

3 Ginther, Donna K., “Family Structure and Children’s Educational Outcomes: Blended Families, Stylized Facts, and Descriptive Regressions.” *Demography* Vol. 41(4) (2004) pp. 671-696.

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