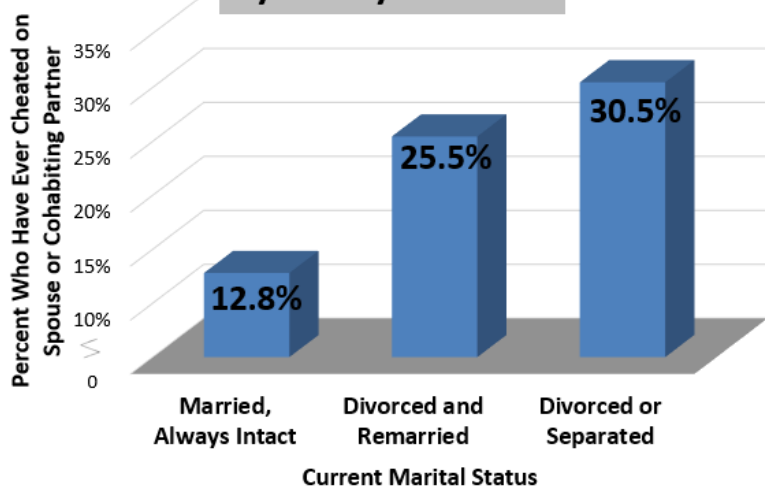


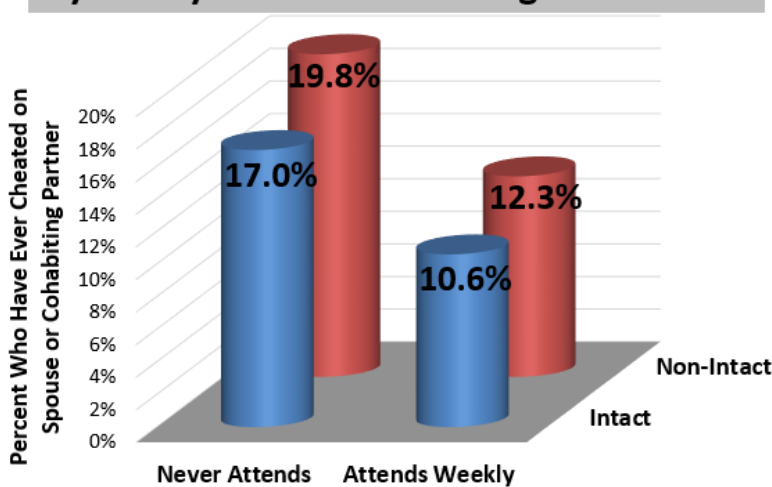
Ever Cheated on Spouse or Cohabiting Partner By Family Structure and Religious Practice

**Cheated on Spouse or Partner
By Family Structure**



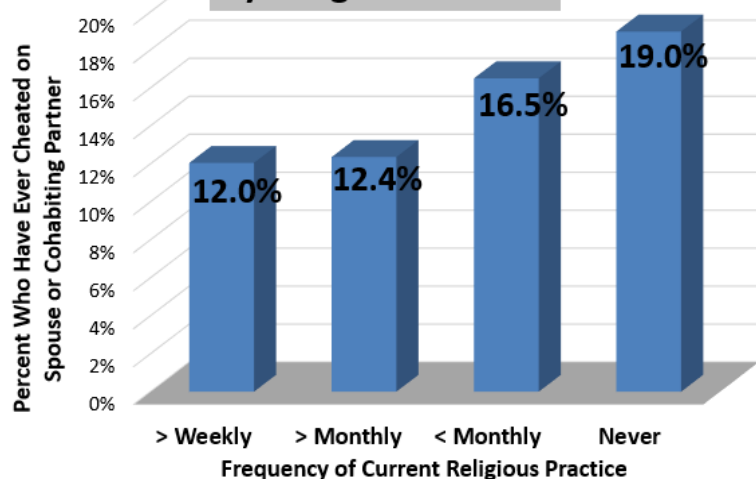
Source: National Health and Social Life Survey, 1992

**Cheated on Spouse or Partner
By Family Structure and Religious Practice**



Source: National Health and Social Life Survey, 1992

**Cheated on Spouse or Partner
By Religious Practice**



Source: National Health and Social Life Survey, 1992

This chart looks at the number of adults who have ever cheated on a spouse or cohabiting partner at the extremes of four demographic quadrants.

These four quadrants are derived from combining two sets of marital statuses (always-intact vs. non-intact and singles) and two sets of religious attendance (high vs. low).*

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

- The always-intact married individual that worships weekly;*
- The always-intact married individual that never worships;*
- The non-intact* or single individual that worships weekly;*
- The non-intact* or single individual that never worships.*

(The non-intact group consists of divorced or separated and divorced and remarried individuals.)*

Ever Cheated on Spouse or Cohabiting Partner by Family Structure and Religious Practice

Adults aged 18 to 59 in intact marriages who worshiped weekly were least likely to have ever cheated on their spouse or cohabiting partner, according to the National Health and Social Life Survey (1992), the most detailed analysis of sexual behavior in America.

Family Structure: Those in always-intact marriages were least likely to have ever cheated on their spouse or cohabiting partner (12.8 percent). A history of infidelity was more prevalent among those in non-intact family structures and among singles: 25.5 percent of those who were divorced and remarried ever cheated on their spouse or cohabiting partner, and 30.5 percent of those who were divorced or separated had ever been unfaithful.

Religious Practice: Religious attendance was inversely related to cheating on one's spouse or cohabiting partner. Those who worshiped weekly were least likely to have ever been unfaithful (12 percent), followed by those who worshiped less than weekly but at least monthly (12.4 percent), those who worshiped less than monthly (16.5 percent), and those who never worshiped (19 percent).

Family Structure and Religious Practice Combined: Those in intact marriages who worshiped weekly were the least likely to have ever cheated on a spouse or cohabiting partner (10.6 percent), followed by those in non-intact family structures or who were single and worshiped weekly (12.3 percent). Those in intact marriages who never worshiped (17 percent) and those in non-intact family structures or who were single and never worshiped (19.8 percent) were more likely to have cheated on their spouse or cohabiting partner.

Related Insights from Other Studies: Data from the 1991- 2004 General Social Survey found that both attending church and holding to Biblical beliefs were associated with lower odds of marital infidelity,¹ and another study found that individuals who said they were in "very happy" marriages exhibited strong religious behavior.²

A different analysis of nationally representative survey data found higher likelihood of sexual infidelity among married or cohabiting couples with "stronger sexual interests, more permissive sexual values, lower subjective satisfaction with their union, weaker network ties to partner, and greater sexual opportunities."³

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

¹ Amy Burdette, Christopher Ellison, Darren Sherkat and Kurt Gore, "Are There Religious Variations in Marital Infidelity?" *Journal of Family Issues* 28, no. 12 (December 2007): 1553-1581.

² David Atkins, Donald Baucom, and Neil Jacobson, "Understanding Infidelity: Correlates in a National Sample," *Journal of Family Psychology* 15, no. 4 (December 2001): 742.

³ Judith Treas and Deirdre Giesen, "Sexual Infidelity Among Married and Cohabiting Americans," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62, no.1 (February 2000): 48-60.