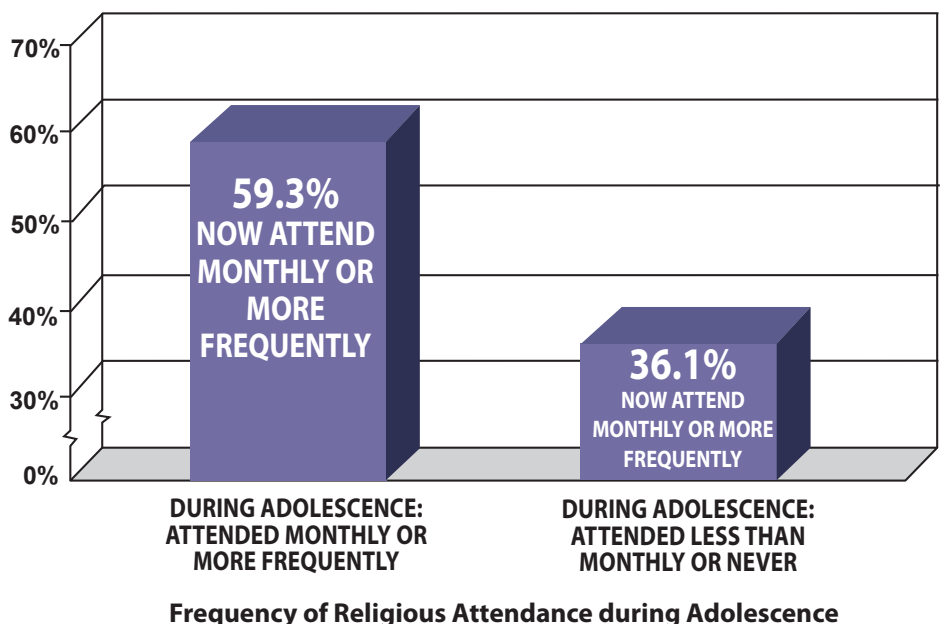




Marriage, Religion, and the Common Good – Number 70

Adult Religious Attendance by Adolescent Religious Attendance

Attending Religious Services Monthly or More Frequently in Adulthood by Frequency of Religious Attendance during Adolescence



Source: General Social Surveys (GSS)

Visiting Fellow Althea Nagai provided the data for this chart.

Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are more likely to attend religious services frequently as adults.

Description: According to the General Social Surveys (GSS), 59.3 percent of adults who worshiped at least monthly as adolescents now worship at least monthly as adults. In contrast, 36.1 percent of adults who worshiped less than monthly as adolescents now worship monthly or more frequently as adults.¹

Related Insights from Other Studies

Several other studies both corroborate and contradict the direction of these findings. Marjorie Gunnoe of Calvin College and Kristin Moore of Child Trends reported that church attendance during childhood was a significant predictor of religiosity in young adulthood.²

Michael McCullough of the University of Miami and colleagues also found a correlation between religious upbringing and “religiousness in early to mid-adulthood.”³

Jeffrey Arnett of the University of Maryland and Lene Jensen of the Catholic University of America, however, found “little relationship between childhood religious socialization and religious beliefs in

emerging adulthood.” They conclude, based on Arnett’s earlier research, that “young people view it as both their right and responsibility to form their beliefs and values independently of their parents.”⁴

Despite Arnett and Jensen’s findings, the GSS data seem to indicate that parental and family patterns of religious attendance in childhood have a significant correlation with adult practice.

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

Dr. Fagan is senior fellow and director of the Center for Family and Religion at Family Research Council.

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

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- 1 The statistics in this chart draw on data from the General Social Surveys, 1972-2006. From 1972 to 1993, the sample size averaged 1,500 per year. No survey was conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. Since 1994, the GSS was conducted only in even-numbered years, with two samples per survey, totaling approximately 3,000 respondents. In 2006, a third sample was added for a total sample size of 4,510.
 - 2 Marjorie Lindner Gunnoe and Kristin A. Moore, “Predictors of Religiosity among Youth Aged 17-22: A Longitudinal Study of the National Survey of Children,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (2002): 613-22.
 - 3 Michael E. McCullough, Jo-Ann Tsang, and Sharon Brion, “Personality Traits in Adolescence as Predictors of Religiousness in Early Adulthood: Findings from the Terman Longitudinal Study,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29 (2003): 980-91.
 - 4 Jeffrey Jensen Arnett and Lene Arnett Jensen, “A Congregation of One: Individualized Religious Beliefs among Emerging Adults,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 17 (2002): 451-67.



FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL
801 G STREET NW
WASHINGTON DC 20001
800-225-4008
WWW.FRC.ORG

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Editor: Patrick F. Fagan, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: Michael Leaser

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