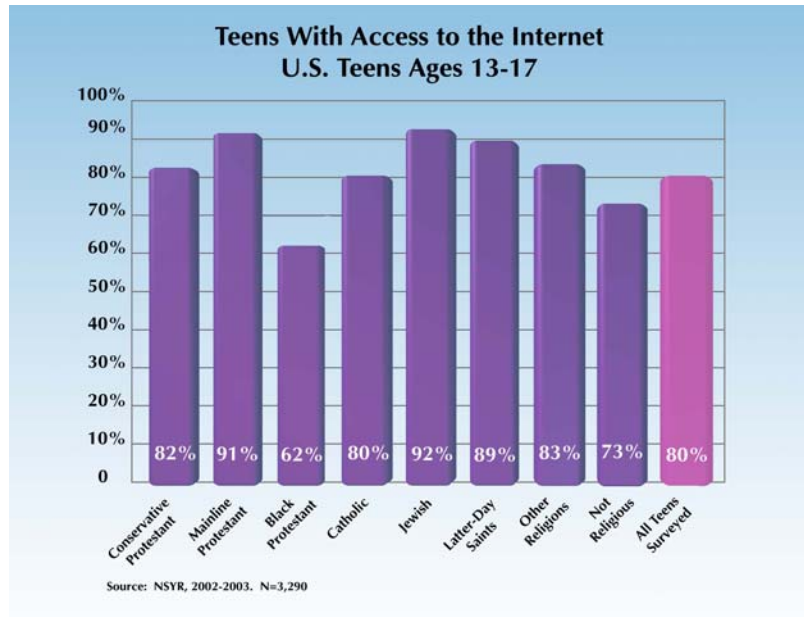
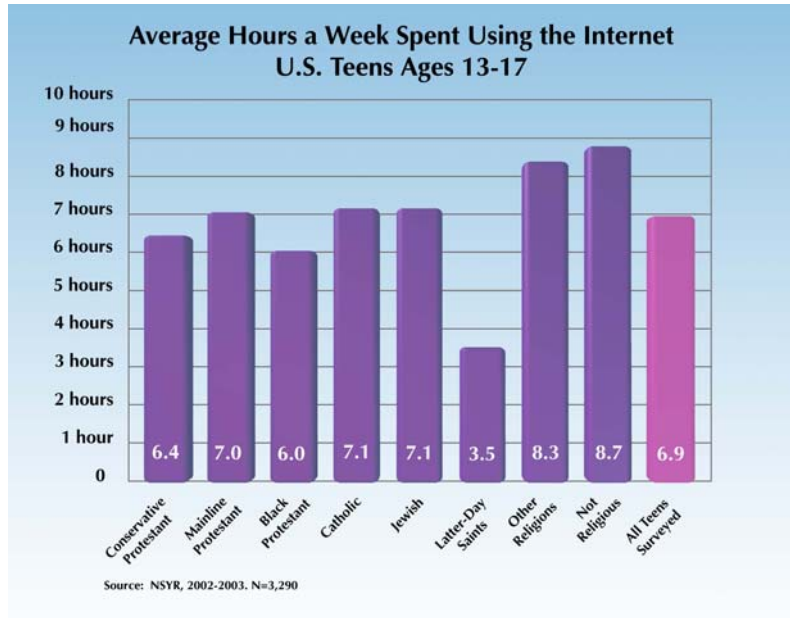


The Internet: More Popular than God?

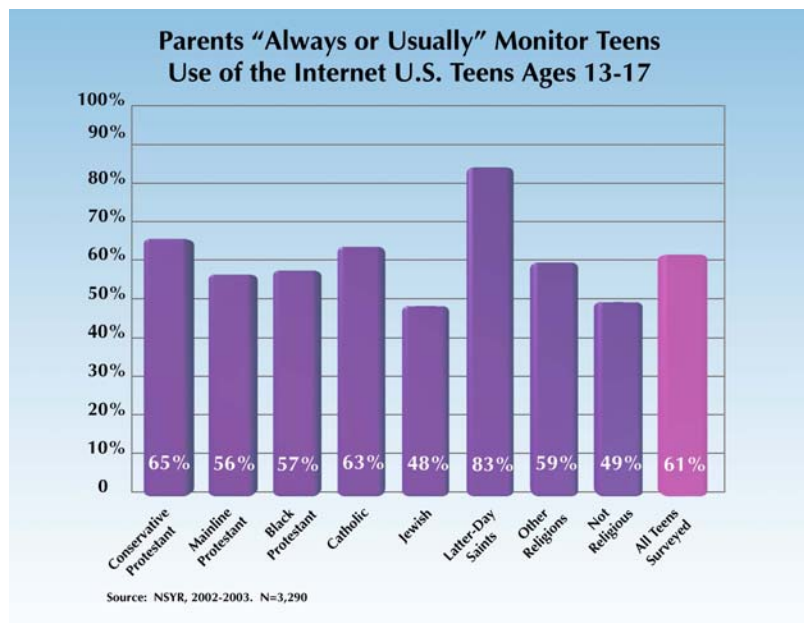
According to researchers with the National Study of Youth and Religion, the vast majority of U.S. teens, ages 13 to 17, have access to the Internet and spend on average nearly 7 hours a week surfing the web. From what we know about religious time use, this means, among other things, that the average teen is probably spending more time on the Internet each week than participating in religious activities.

Among teens surveyed, religious teens seem to have broader access to the Internet than non-religious teens, although these are most certainly more social class than religious differences. Those who self-identified as Jewish or mainline Protestant had the highest percentage of Internet access at 92 and 91 percent, respectively. Black Protestant teens have less access to the Internet than the national average of all teens (62 percent compared to 80 percent). Catholic teens were identical to the national average (80 percent). Among non-religious teens, 73 percent reported Internet access. These findings come from the NSYR survey data of 3,290 teens who, along with one of their parents, participated in the random-digit-dial telephone study of U.S. parent-teen pairs.





In other findings, only 60 percent of parents closely monitor teens’ internet activity. Among teens with Internet access, Latter Day Saints reported the most parental monitoring (83 percent of Mormon teens surveyed said that their parents always or usually monitored their use of the Internet, compared to 61 percent of all teens). LDS teens also reported the fewest hours spent surfing the web (3.5 hours per week, compared to the national average of 6.9 hours per week for all teens). Jewish teens reported the least parental monitoring (48 percent). They also spend an average of 7.1 hours per week using the Internet.



“It is interesting to see that non-religious teens have relatively low access to the Internet and parental monitoring yet, for those with access, the highest average time spent on the Internet of all the groups compared,” stated Dr. Christian Smith. Smith, the Stuart Chapin Distinguished Professor and associate chair of sociology at UNC-CH, is the principal investigator of the study.

“There are not consistent parent and teen practices with regard to the Internet across the religious traditions analyzed,” Smith added. “Mormon teens, for instance, have very high access to Internet but also high parental monitoring and low hourly use per week. But teens from other groups with relatively high parental monitoring also spend about the national average of time on the Internet.”

These are the first of its own survey findings released by the NSYR, which is based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to analyses of general Internet use, project analysts are currently examining the amount of time teens spend on the Internet for homework, visiting religious websites and viewing pornography. These findings will be reported in a second release, later in November. Overall, the project hopes to better understand how religion and other factors may influence teen Internet use, a relatively unstudied activity.

The National Study of Youth and Religion is a four-year research project funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. It began in August 2001 and will continue until August 2005. The purpose of the project is to research the shape and influence of religion and spirituality in the lives of U.S. adolescents; to identify effective practices in the religious, moral and social formation of the lives of youth; to describe the extent to which youth participate in and benefit from the programs and opportunities that religious communities are offering to their youth; and to foster an informed national discussion about the influence of religion in youth's lives to encourage sustained reflection about and rethinking of our cultural and institutional practices with regard to youth and religion.