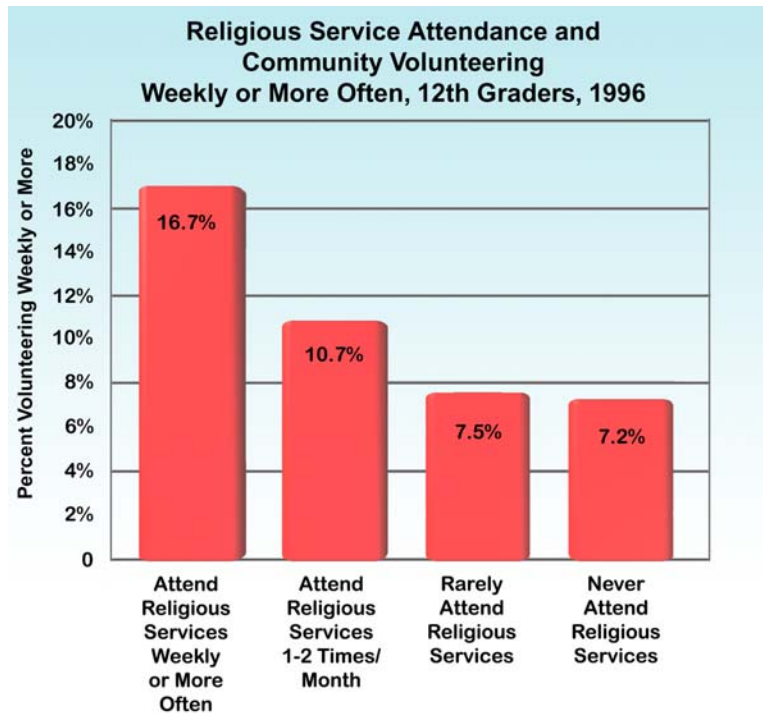


Correlation Found Between Religion and Community Service

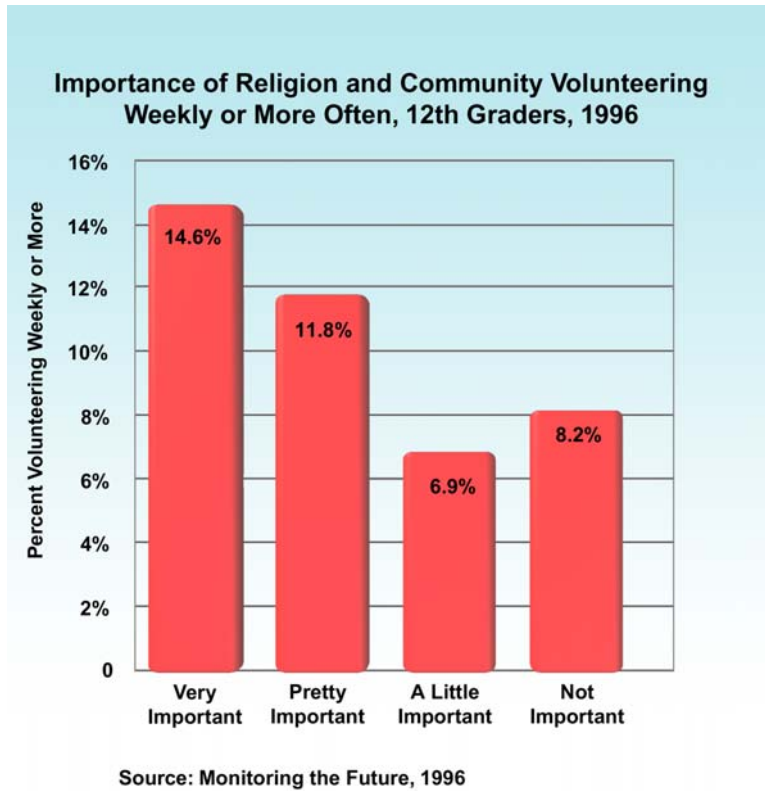
Sociologists with the National Study of Youth and Religion, based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, have found a significant positive correlation between a religious commitment and civic volunteerism among U.S. high school seniors.

In analyzing 1996 data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, a nationally representative survey of U.S. high school students, researchers found that nearly 17 percent of 12th graders who attend religious services weekly or more also volunteer their time in their communities weekly or more often. Only 7 percent of those who never attend church volunteer with the same frequency.

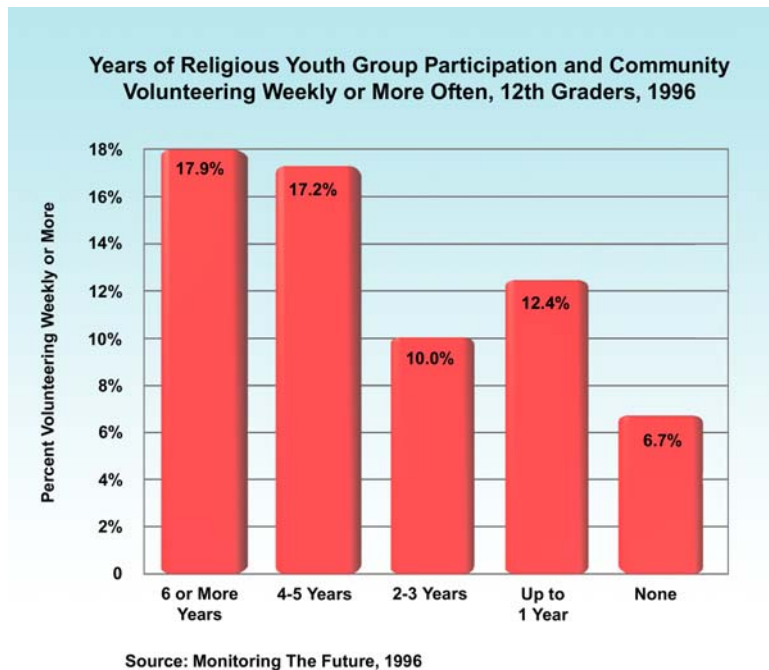


Source: Monitoring the Future, 1996

In addition, nearly 15 percent of seniors who say religion is “very important” in their lives volunteer their time in their communities weekly or more often. Among seniors who say religion is “not important,” slightly more than 8 percent volunteer with the same frequency.



Analysis focused on 12th graders' participation in religious youth groups showed that only 6.7 percent of 12th graders who have never participated in a religious youth group volunteer weekly or more. By comparison, almost 18 percent of 12th graders who have participated in a religious youth group for six years or more volunteer weekly or more.



The differences noted are statistically significant, controlling for race, age, sex, rural/urban residence, region, education of parents, number of siblings, whether the mother works, and the presence of a father/male guardian in the household.

This preliminary analysis is designed to provide baseline information that will aid in the development of a comprehensive survey of adolescents for the National Study of Youth and Religion, a four-year research project being conducted at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill under the direction of Dr. Christian Smith. Funded by Lilly Endowment, Inc., this project is designed to enhance our understanding of the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents.

Analysis of the data was completed by Christian Smith and Robert Faris. Christian Smith is professor and associate chair of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Robert Faris is a Ph.D. graduate student in sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey is a nationally representative survey of U.S. high school students administered to eighth, 10th and 12th graders since 1975. This analysis focused on 12th graders. By design, MTF data does not include school dropouts and home-schooled youth. The MTF survey includes the following question regarding community service: “How often do you participate in community affairs or volunteer work?” The three questions regarding religion analyzed here are 1) “How often do you attend religious services?” 2) “How important is religion in your life?” and 3) “How many years, if any, have you participated in religious youth groups?”

For tests of statistical significance, a regression model was run separately for each religion variable, so a model testing the influence of religious service attendance does not control for other dimensions of religion, like importance of faith. Differences among religious types are presented in the table below in cross-tabulation form. Religious variables that are statistically significantly at the $p < .05$ level when compared to the designated non-religious and low-religious comparison variables (shown in italics) have asterisks () next to them in the table. We present our findings below as percentages in cross-tabulations for ease of interpretation, but we mark differences that are statistically significant in the regression analyses.*

Bachman, Jerald G., Lloyd D. Johnston, and Patrick M. O'Malley. MONITORING THE FUTURE: A CONTINUING STUDY OF AMERICAN YOUTH (12TH-GRADE SURVEY), 1996 [Computer file]. Conducted by University of Michigan, Survey Research Center. ICPSR ed. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [producer and distributor], 1999.

**Participation in Community Affairs or Volunteer Work
12th Graders, 1996 (Percents)**

“How Often Do You Participate In Community Affairs Or Volunteer Work?”

	Never	Few Times A Year	1 – 2 Times A Month	Weekly	Nearly Daily
Overall	25.7	45.0	18.4	8.1	2.8
Attendance					
Weekly or more*	13.1	44.0	26.2	12.3	4.4
Once or twice a month*	20.4	46.3	22.6	8.5	2.2
Rarely*	28.6	49.5	14.4	5.6	1.9
Never	48.2	35.7	9.0	4.8	2.4
Importance of Religion					
Very important*	16.9	45.4	23.1	10.5	4.1
Pretty important*	19.8	45.7	22.9	9.4	2.4
A little important*	32.8	46.8	13.6	5.3	1.6
Not important	40.8	40.1	11.0	5.1	3.1
Years of Church Youth Group					
Six or more*	11.6	40.6	30.0	12.6	5.3
Four to five*	7.2	54.3	21.4	12.3	4.9
Two to three*	18.3	51.0	20.6	7.5	2.5
Up to one*	20.3	48.2	19.1	10.8	1.6
None	39.3	41.6	12.4	4.7	2.0

N = 2,423. Source: Monitoring the Future, 1996. *p<.05.