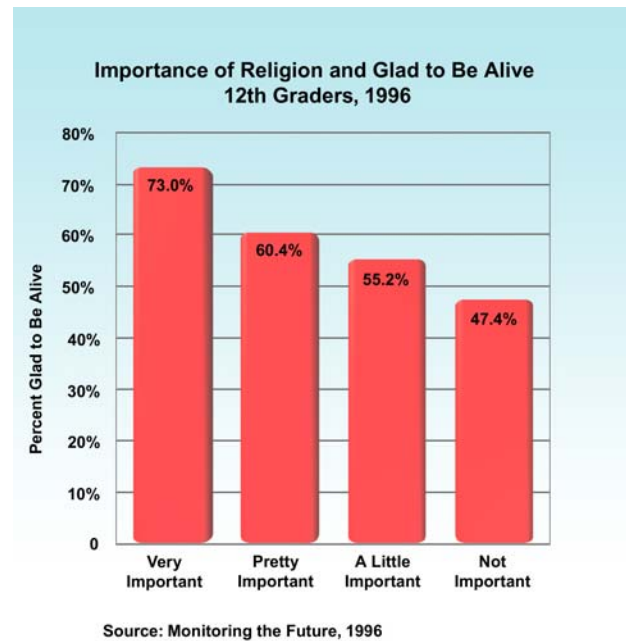
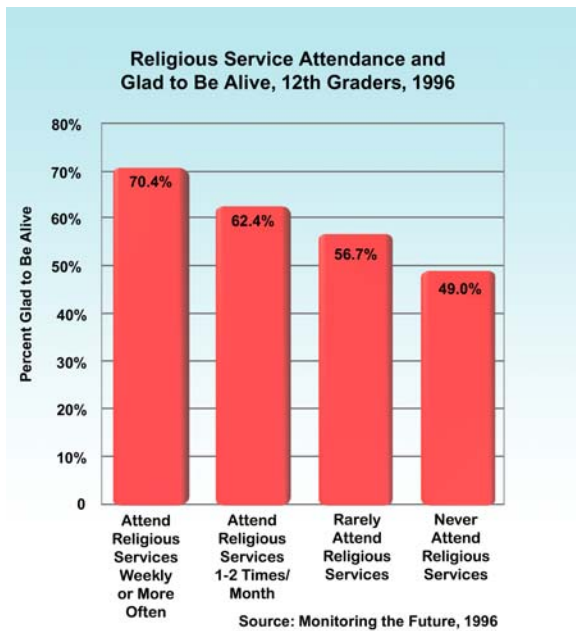


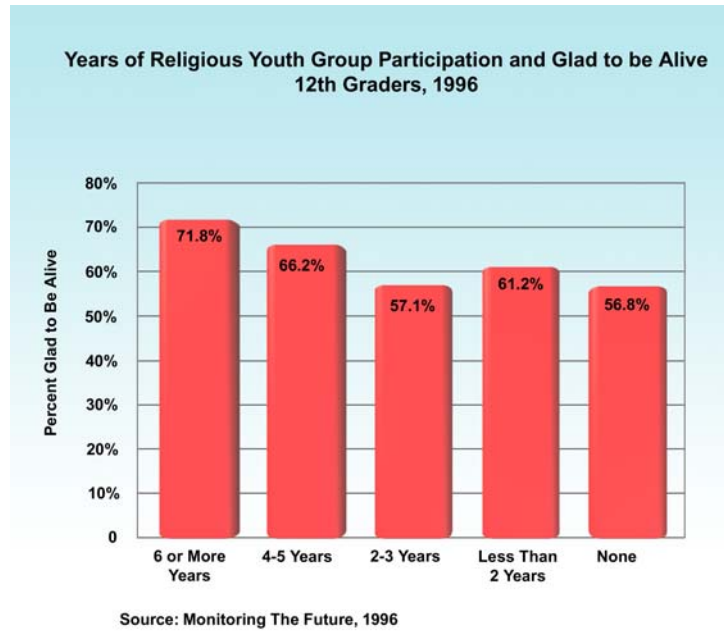
### Religious 12<sup>th</sup> Graders More Likely to Be Glad to Be Alive

More than 70 percent of U.S. high school seniors who attend religious services weekly or more agree with the statement, “It feels good to be alive.” Among seniors who attend religious services one to two times a month, more than 62 percent agree. In comparison, 49 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who never attend religious services say it feels good to be alive, 21 percent less than weekly attenders.



In addition, among those who say religion is very important, 73 percent — and more than 60 percent of those who say religion is pretty important — are glad to be alive. This compares to slightly more than 47 percent of those who say religion is not important in their lives.

Nearly 72 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who have participated in religious youth groups for six or more years say they are glad to be alive. Among those who have participated four to five years, more than 66 percent agree, compared to about 57 percent of 12<sup>th</sup> graders who have never participated in religious youth groups agree.



Sociologists with the National Study of Youth and Religion, based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, found these and other significant positive correlations in analyzing 1996 data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. MTF is a nationally representative survey of U.S. high school students.

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, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders since 1975. This analysis focused on 12<sup>th</sup> graders. By design, MTF data does not include school dropouts and home-schooled youth. The MTF survey includes the following question: “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? It feels good to be alive.” 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.*

### Good to Be Alive, 12th Graders, 1996 (Percents)

“How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: It feels good to be alive?”

	Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Neither	Mostly Agree	Agree
<i>Overall</i>	2.6	2.6	11.2	22.8	60.9
<b>Attendance</b>					
Weekly or more*	1.9	0.7	7.2	19.9	70.4
1-2 times/month*	2.3	3.4	9.1	22.9	62.4
Rarely*	1.6	3.1	13.6	25.0	56.7
<i>Never</i>	6.8	4.5	16.4	23.3	49.0
<b>Importance of Religion</b>					
Very important*	2.0	1.2	6.8	17.1	73.0
Pretty important*	2.8	2.8	10.2	23.8	60.4
A little important*	1.4	4.0	14.3	25.1	55.2
<i>Not important</i>	6.0	2.3	16.7	27.6	47.4
<b>Years of Religious Youth Group</b>					
Six or more*	1.9	1.2	6.1	19.1	71.8
Four to five*	1.0	0.5	10.1	22.3	66.2
Two to three	3.3	4.7	10.9	24.0	57.1
Less than 2 *	2.5	2.7	9.5	24.1	61.2
<i>None</i>	3.2	3.3	13.6	23.2	56.8

N = 2,423; Source: Monitoring the Future, 1996. An \* means a statistically significant difference ( $p < .05$ ) between this variable category and the reference category (which is marked by italics) in a regression analysis, 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.