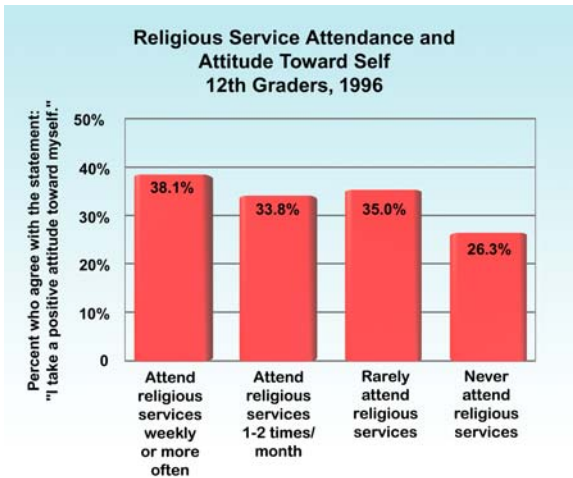


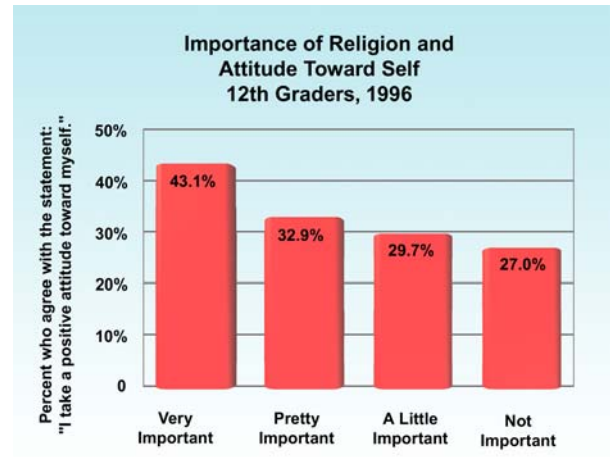
### Religious 12<sup>th</sup> Graders More Likely to Have Positive Self-Attitudes

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 religion and self-esteem among U.S. 12<sup>th</sup> graders. High school seniors who attend religious services — no matter how often — are more likely to have positive attitudes toward themselves than seniors who never attend religious services.

Among those who attend religious services weekly or more, 38 percent agree with the statement, “I take a positive attitude toward myself.” The number is also significant — 34 percent — for those who attend religious services one to two times per month. Thirty-five percent of those who rarely attend agree with the statement. This compares with 26 percent of those 12<sup>th</sup> graders who never attend religious services.



Source: Monitoring the Future, 1996



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High school seniors who say religion is very important are also significantly more likely to hold positive attitudes about themselves than 12<sup>th</sup> graders who say religion is not important. More than 43 percent of seniors who say religion is very important agree with the statement, “I take a positive attitude toward myself.” This compares with 27 percent of those 12<sup>th</sup> graders who say religion is not important. These analyses are based on 1996 data from the Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey. MTF is a nationally representative survey of U.S. high school students.

These relationships 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 U.S. 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 statement: ‘I take a positive attitude toward myself?’” Question answer categories were agree, mostly agree, neither, mostly disagree and disagree. The two questions regarding religion analyzed here are 1) “How often do you attend religious services?” and 2) “How important is religion in your life?”*

*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. The original collector of the data, ICPSR, and the relevant funding agency bear no responsibility for use of the data or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.*