

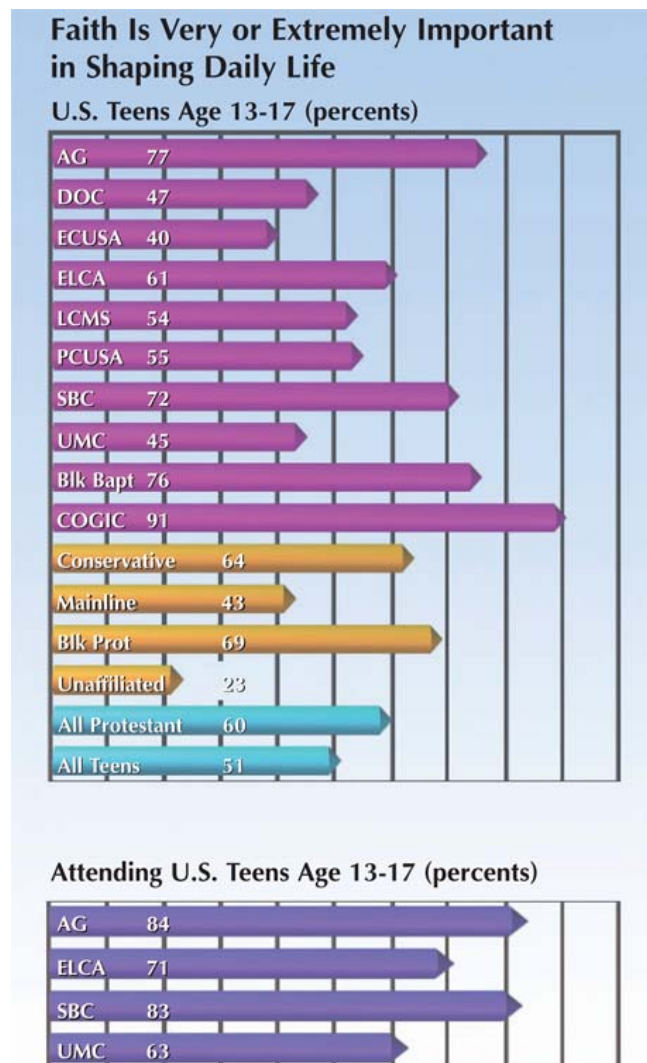
NSYR Releases Major Report on Protestant Teens

The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) is pleased to announce the publication of a new report on Protestant adolescents in the United States based on the NSYR survey data. The report, entitled “Portraits of Protestant Teens: A Report on Teenagers in Major U.S. Denominations,” was published this month by the NSYR. The report is authored by Phil Schwadel, Postdoctoral Researcher with the NSYR, and Christian Smith, Principal Investigator of the NSYR and Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill. “This report is intended to be a companion to Dr. Smith’s recent book, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*,” says Dr. Schwadel. “While *Soul Searching* provides an overview of American teenagers’ religious beliefs and activities, ‘Portraits of Protestant Teens’ focuses specifically on Protestant adolescents, clarifying how teens from various denominations approach religion.”

“Portraits of Protestant Teens” provides a numerical description of the role of religion in the lives of Protestant teens. The report lays out denominational differences in religious beliefs, religious activities, religious faith and practices, evaluations of church, moral views, risk behaviors and civic activities. In addition to providing statistics about all Protestant teens, the report looks specifically at teens whose parents are affiliated with the Assemblies of God (AG), the Disciples of Christ (DOC), the Episcopal Church in the USA (ECUSA), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). Other groupings examined include teens from black Baptist homes (National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., National Baptist Convention of America and National Missionary Baptist), unaffiliated teens and the broad categories of conservative Protestants, mainline Protestants and black Protestants. The effects of church attendance on religious belief and activity are explored for four denominations that have large sample sizes (Assemblies of God, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Southern Baptist Convention and United Methodist Church).

The report shows that teens whose parents are affiliated with conservative Protestant denominations are generally more likely than those whose parents are affiliated with mainline Protestant denominations to hold religious beliefs and to participate in religious activities, though this is not always the case. Mainline teens, on the other hand, are usually more civically active than conservative teens, and the mainline teens who attend church on a regular basis often resemble conservative teens in their religious beliefs and activities. Teens whose parents are affiliated with black Protestant denominations are likely to espouse traditional religious beliefs but not particularly likely to participate in most religious activities.

The importance of religious faith in daily life is only one of the almost 50 indicators of religious belief and activity in the report. Adolescents' views of the importance of faith in their lives exemplifies the differences between conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant and black Protestant teens as well as the differences between teens whose parents are affiliated with specific denominations. As the graph shows, black Protestant and conservative Protestant teens are considerably more likely than mainline Protestant teens to say that religious faith is very or extremely important in shaping their daily lives. There is, however, substantial variation within these categories. For instance, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America teens are far more likely than Episcopalian teens and United Methodist teens to say that religious faith is important in shaping their daily lives, and all three of these denominations are considered mainline denominations. Additionally, mainline teens who regularly attend church more closely resemble conservative and black Protestant teens in their views of the importance of faith in daily life.



Source: National Survey of Youth and Religion 2002-2003, N=3,290.

“Portraits of Protestant Teens” is intended to help Protestant leaders and parents better understand the role religion plays in the lives of their youth. The report’s numerical description of the religious activities and beliefs of today’s Protestant teens will be beneficial to religious practitioners and researchers alike. The report is available for free download as a PDF at www.youthandreligion.org/publications/reports.html. Print copies of the report are available by mail. To order a print copy, please send a \$7 check, payable to the Odum Institute, to National Study of Youth and Religion, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, CB#3057, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3057.

The National Study of Youth and Religion is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. More than 3,350 teens along with one of their parents participated in the random-digit-dial telephone study of U.S. parent-teen pairs. 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.