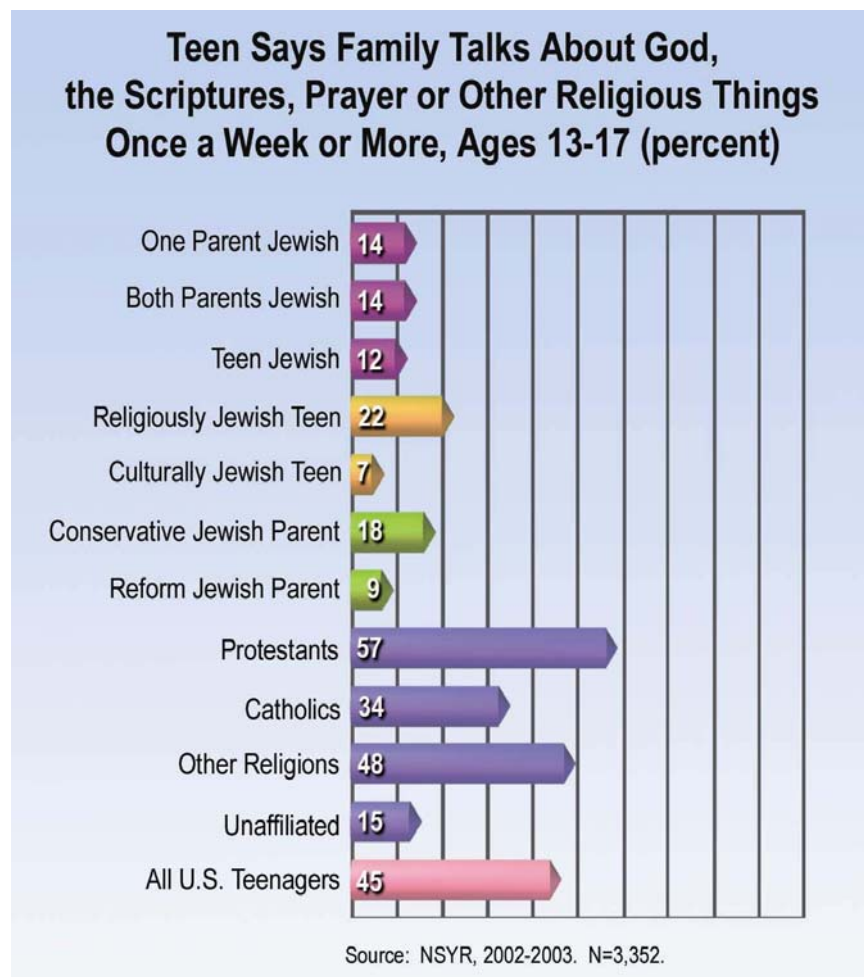


Few Jewish Families with Teenagers Regularly Talk Together About Religious or Spiritual Matters

Only small minorities of U.S. Jewish families with teenagers regularly talk together about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things, according to researchers with the National Study of Youth and Religion. Among self-identified Jewish teenagers, 12 percent say that their families talk about such religious matters once a week or more often. In only 14 percent of U.S. households with teens in which both parents are Jewish does the family talk about religious and spiritual matters once a week or more often, according to surveyed teens living in those households. That number is identical for U.S. teen households in which only one of the teenager's parents is Jewish. The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) is based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The exact NSYR survey question wording for this item as asked of Jewish teenagers was: *"How often, if ever, does your family talk about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual things together?"*



“Jewish teenagers who in the survey identified themselves as ‘religiously Jewish’ were more likely — at 22 percent — than those identifying as ‘culturally Jewish’ — at 7 percent — to report regular family discussions about religious and spiritual matters,” stated Dr. Christian Smith, principal investigator of the NSYR. “Families that belong to Conservative congregations were also — at 18 percent — more likely than those who belong to Reform congregations — at 9 percent — to talk together about religious and spiritual matters weekly or more often.” Still, Smith noted, no matter how measured, the vast majority of Jewish families do not appear to talk regularly together about God, the Scriptures, prayer, or other religious or spiritual matters. Smith is Stuart Chapin Distinguished Professor and associate chair of sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Compared across major U.S. religious traditions, teenagers whose parents are Protestant, Catholic, and even religiously unaffiliated report family discussions about religious and spiritual things at higher rates than do U.S. Jewish teenagers. Among all U.S. teens, 45 percent report that their families talk about religious and spiritual matters. Smith urged caution in interpreting these numbers comparatively, however: “Different religious traditions place importance on different aspects of faith and practice; there is no one single metric of comparison that works equally well across U.S. religious traditions.” Interested Jewish leaders and parents ought therefore to consider the meaning and implication of these findings in light of their own expectations and values, Smith noted.

These findings regarding Jewish family discussions about religious and spiritual matters are one small preview sample of a much larger body of findings about the religious and moral lives of U.S. Jewish teenagers that the NSYR will publish in the future. Interested readers can sign up at the NSYR website <www.youthandreligion.org> to receive notification of that eventual publication.

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.