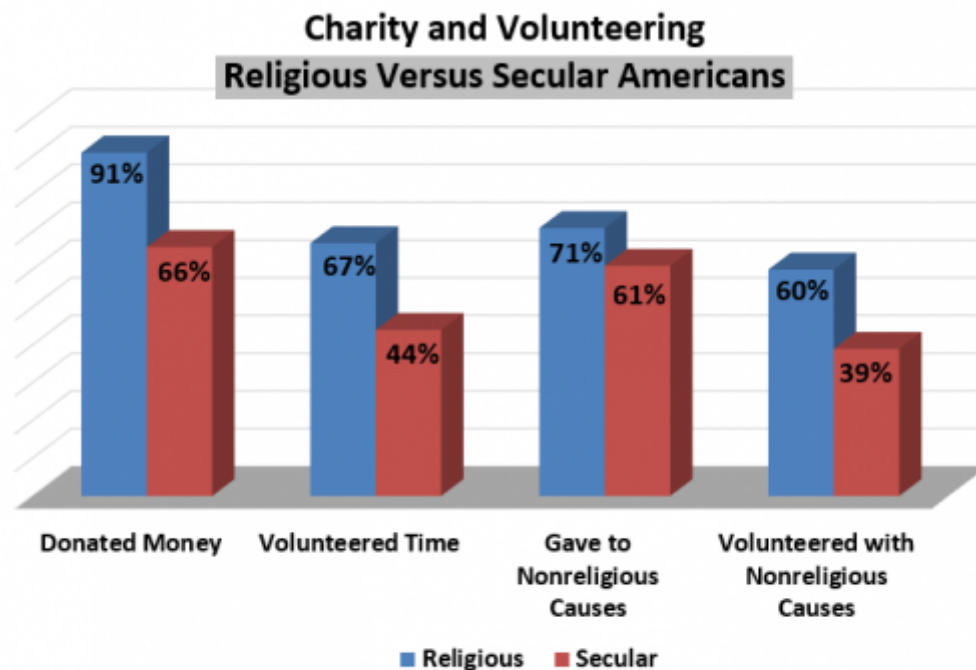


Effects of Religious Practice on Charity

1. Charitable Giving

Religious practice is linked to greater generosity in charitable giving and volunteering. In extensive research documenting the relationship between religion and philanthropy, Arthur Brooks of the American Enterprise Institute found that religious people were 25 percent more likely than their secular counterparts to donate money and 23 percent more likely to volunteer time. Even when it came to nonreligious causes, religious people were more generous.¹⁾ A 2017 report published by Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy also found that those who attend at least monthly worship services tend to give more frequently and in larger amounts.²⁾ According to Pew Research Center, 45 percent of adults who pray daily and go to church weekly volunteered in the past 7 days, and 65 percent donated money to the poor in the last week (compared to 23 percent of non-highly religious who volunteered, and 41 percent of non-highly religious who have to the poor).³⁾



Source: Arthur C. Brooks, "Religious Faith and Charitable Giving," *Policy Review* 121 (2003): 39.

* "Religious" people reported attending religious services weekly or more; "Secular" people reported attending religious services less than a few times per year.

Brooks also demonstrated that religious practice correlates with a higher rate of care and concern for others. Compared with peers with no religious affiliation, religious respondents were 15 percent more likely to report having tender, concerned feelings for the disadvantaged. This gap was reduced by only 2 percent when the effects of education, income, marital status, sex, race, and age were taken into account.⁴⁾

The correlation between religion and increased charitable giving crosses ideological boundaries. When Brooks divided the survey population into quadrants of politically conservative, liberal, secular, and religious respondents, he found that the impact of religion on compassion applied regardless of the political perspective. Religious conservatives were 6 percent more likely to be concerned about the disadvantaged than were secular liberals, while religious liberals were 24 percentage points more

likely to express such feelings of compassion than were secular conservatives.

Among the general survey population, religious individuals were 40 percent more likely than their secular counterparts to give money to charities and more than twice as likely to volunteer. Among those who felt compassion for the disadvantaged, religious respondents were 23 percentage points more likely to donate to charities at least yearly and 32 percentage points more likely to donate monthly than were their secular counterparts. They were 34 percentage points more likely to volunteer at least yearly and 22 percentage points more likely to volunteer monthly.⁵⁾

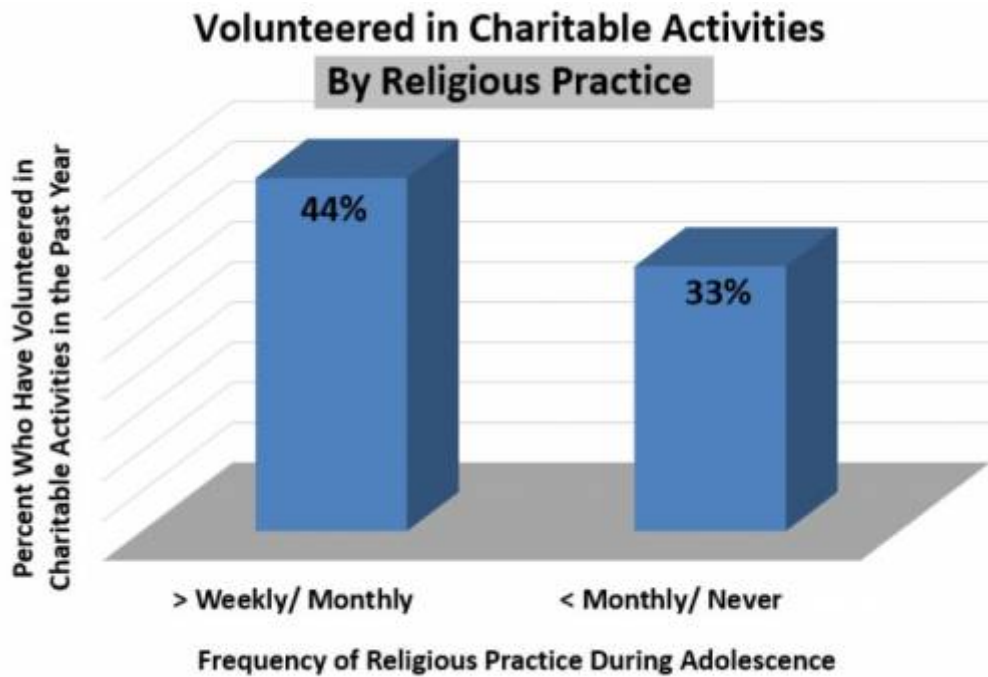
Regnerus and his colleagues found similar correlations between religious adherents and charitable giving in an analysis of the 1996 Pew survey on religious identity and influence. Individuals with a religious affiliation were 30 percent more likely to donate to organizations assisting the poor when compared with their secular counterparts.⁶⁾

The impact of religious practice on formal charity had additional significance for community cohesion. Individuals who gave to charitable organizations were 21 percentage points more likely to give informally (e.g., to family and friends).⁷⁾

Ram Cnaan of the University of Pennsylvania found that congregations as communities were almost universally involved in collective charitable outreach. In an extensive survey of religious institutions in Philadelphia, Cnaan found that 91 percent of the congregations surveyed had at least one community program that supplied goods and services to those in need, including food pantries, [prison ministries](#), summer camps, and [substance abuse](#) prevention programs. He estimated the replacement value of the services provided by congregations in Philadelphia to be \$228 million a year in the late 1990s.⁸⁾

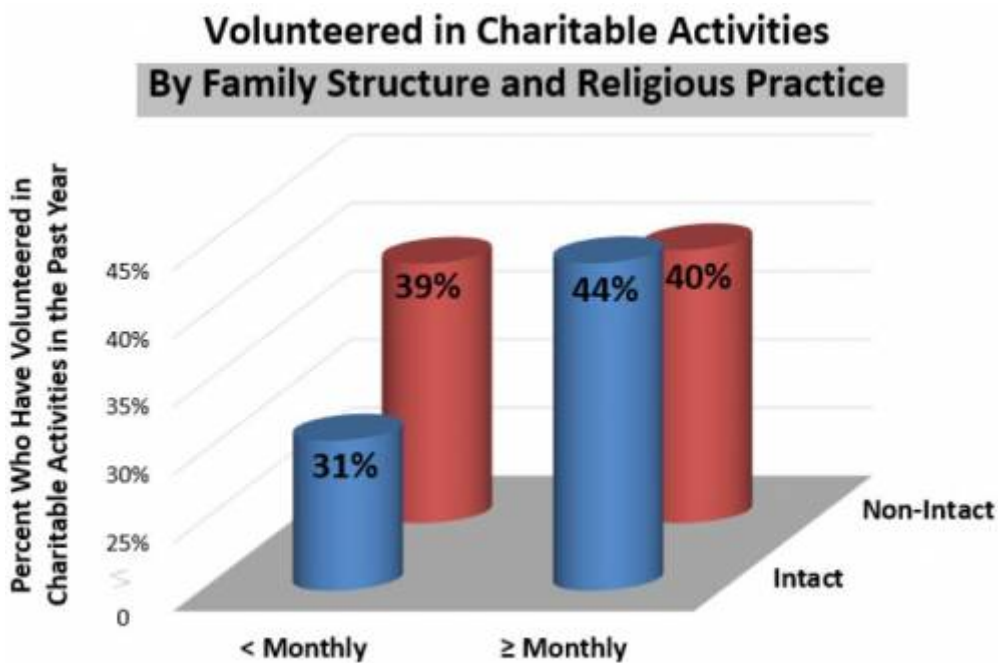
1.1 Related American Demographics

Adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents are more likely to have volunteered in a charitable activity in the past year. According to the General Social Survey (GSS), 44 percent of adults who attended religious services at least monthly as adolescents had volunteered in a charitable activity in the last year, compared to 33 percent of adults who attended worship less than monthly as adolescents.⁹⁾ (See [Chart](#))



Source: General Social Survey (1998)

Adults raised in intact, married families are even more likely to volunteer. The General Social Survey showed that adults who frequently attended religious services as adolescents and grew up living with both biological parents were the most likely to have volunteered in a charitable activity in the past year. ¹⁰⁾ (See [Chart](#) Below)



Source: General Social Survey (1998)

2. Faith-Based Charity Organizations

Faith-based charities are effective in serving social needs and saving taxpayer money. Of the fifty largest U.S. charities cited by Forbes magazine in 2014, twenty were faith-based. On the aggregate, the annual revenue of these twenty charities totaled \$45.3 billion, reported Brian and Melissa Grim. ¹¹⁾

A Baylor University study examining the role of faith-based organizations in alleviating homelessness reported that faith-based organizations create \$9.42 in taxpayer savings for every \$1 invested by the government. Over the three years and 11 cities studied, faith-based Residential Recovery and Job Readiness programs saved roughly \$119 million in tax savings.¹²⁾

¹⁾ Archur C. Brooks, "Religious Faith and Charitable Giving," *Policy Review* 121 (2003): 39. Available at <http://www.hoover.org/research/religious-faith-and-charitable-giving>.

²⁾ "Giving USA 2017: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2016," The Giving Institute (Fall 2017).

³⁾ Michael Lipka, "How Highly Religious Americans' Lives Are Different from Others," Pew Research Center (April 2016), available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/12/how-highly-religious-americans-lives-are-different-from-others/>.

⁴⁾, ⁵⁾, ⁷⁾ Arthur C. Brooks, "Compassion, Religion, and Politics," *Public Interest* (September 22, 2004): 57-66.

⁶⁾ Mark D. Regnerus, Christian Smith, and David Sikkink, "Who Gives to the Poor? The Influence of Religious Tradition and Political Location on the Personal Generosity of Americans Toward the Poor," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 3 (September 1998): 481-493.

⁸⁾ Ram A. Cnaan, "The Philadelphia Story: Preliminary Findings from the Philadelphia Census," *Hartford Institute for Religious Research*. Available at http://www.hirr.hartsem.edu/cong/research_phillycensus.html Accessed December 7, 2006; Ram A. Cnaan and Stephanie C. Boddie, "Philadelphia Census of Congregations and Their Involvement in Social Service Delivery," *Social Service Review* 75, no. 4 (December 2001): 559-589.

⁹⁾ This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey in 1998. Two samples totaling approximately 3,000 people were used.

Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Intergenerational Links to Volunteering in Charitable Activities: Religious Attendance," Mapping America Project. Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-43-45-163.pdf>

¹⁰⁾ This chart groups the data in four categories, with two different configurations for each of two major indicators, frequency of religious attendance (monthly or more/less than monthly) and family structure (intact/non-intact). The intact category consists of families with both biological parents, married or unmarried, raising their children. The non-intact category is composed of families without both biological parents, including married stepfamilies, cohabiting stepfamilies, divorced single-parent families, and always single-parent families. The resultant four categories are 1) intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; 2) intact family with less than monthly religious attendance; 3) non-intact family with monthly or more religious attendance; and 4) non-intact family with less than monthly religious attendance. This chart draws on data collected by the General Social Survey in 1998. Two samples totaling approximately 3,000 people were used.

Patrick F. Fagan and Althea Nagai, "Intergenerational Links to Volunteering in Charitable Activities: Religious Attendance and Family Structure," Mapping America Project. Available at <http://marri.us/wp-content/uploads/MA-43-45-163.pdf>.

¹¹⁾ Grim, Brian J., and Melissa E. Grim, "The Socio-economic Contribution of Religion to American Society: An Empirical Analysis," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 12 (2016).

¹²⁾ Byron R. Johnson and William Wubbenhorst, "Assessing the Faith-Based Response to Homelessness in America: Findings from Eleven Cities," Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University (February 2017).

This entry draws heavily from [95 Social Science Reasons for Religious Worship and Practice](#) and [Why Religion Matters Even More: The Impact of Religious Practice on Social Stability](#).

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