

Religiosity in U.S. Families

Single, Cohabiting, and Married Mothers



Annette Mahoney, Esther Lamidi, & Krista K. Payne

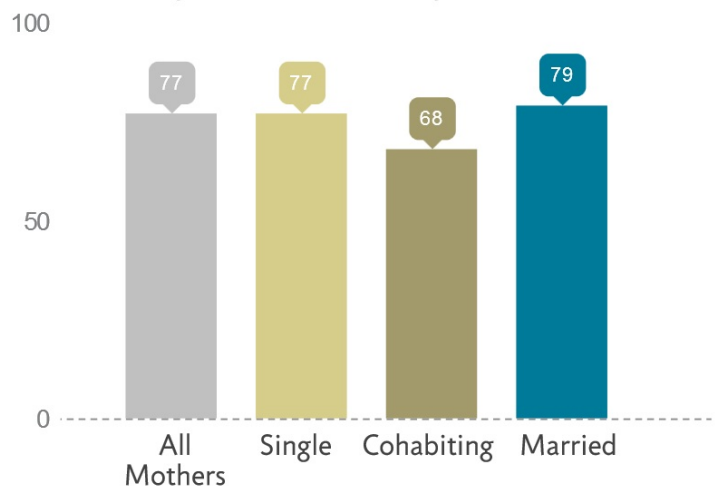
Religious participation impacts various aspects of American family life including, but not limited to, marital quality and stability, parent-child relationships, and child adjustment (Mahoney et al. 2001; Mahoney 2010). The high rates of divorce coupled with increases in cohabitation and unmarried childbearing means a growing share of mothers are unmarried (FP-12-23). Using the most recent wave (2011/13) of the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), this profile examines the similarities and differences in religiosity among single, cohabiting, and married mothers of minor children in the U.S. High percentages of U.S. mothers (77%) view religion as important in their daily lives, but their public participation in organized religion is lower (43%) and varies depending on their union status.

Importance of Religion

Religion plays an important role in the daily lives of the majority of mothers in the U.S. Three-quarters (77%) of mothers report religion is somewhat or very important and 52% indicate religion is very important.

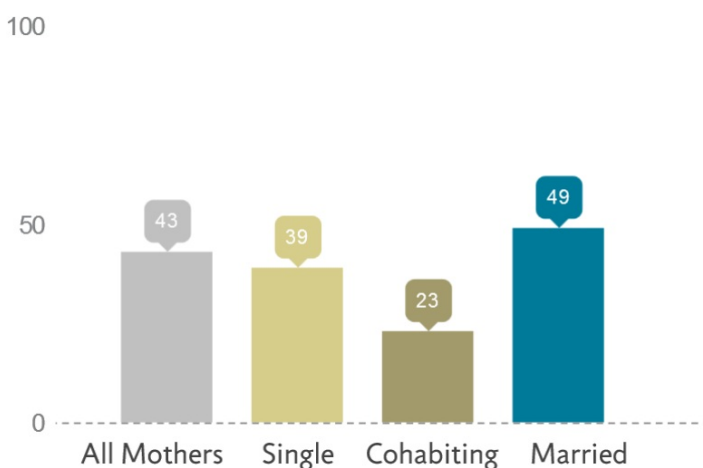
- Similar shares of single (77%) and married (79%) mothers state religion is somewhat or very important in their daily lives.
- Cohabiting mothers report lower importance of religion in their everyday life, but two-thirds (68%) believe it is somewhat or very important.

Figure 1. Proportion of Mothers Who Report that Religion is Somewhat or Very Important in Their Daily Lives



Religious Attendance

Figure 2. Proportion of Mothers Who Attend Religious Services Regularly (at least 2-3 times a month)

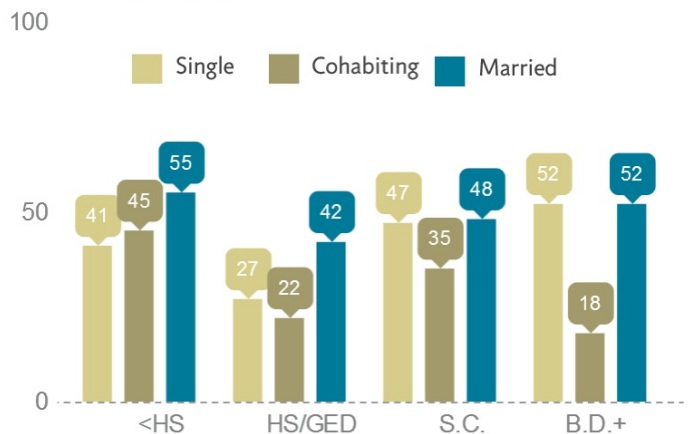


- Two out of every five (43%) mothers report attending religious services at least 2-3 times a month.
- Religious attendance is highest among married mothers with nearly half attending religious services at least 2-3 times a month.
- Among unwed mothers, a smaller share of cohabiting mothers (23%) than single mothers (39%) attend religious services 2-3 times a month or more frequently.

Religious Attendance by Educational Attainment

- Mothers with a Bachelor's Degree have the largest share reporting regular attendance (50%). Mothers with a high school diploma report the lowest (33%) (not shown).
- Overall, at every education level, a greater share of married mothers regularly attending religious services.
 - The gap in attendance between married and single mothers declines as education increases, such that no marital status differential exists among mothers with a college degree (52%).

Figure 3. Proportion of Mothers Who Attend Religious Services Regularly by Educational Attainment

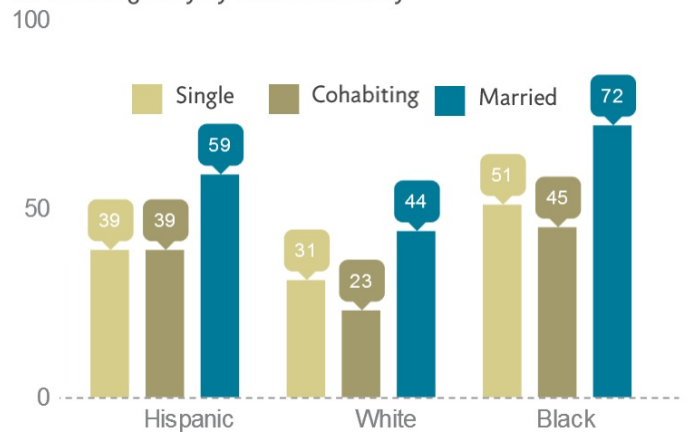


Note: S.C. = Some College; B.D.+ = Bachelor's Degree or higher

Religious Attendance by Race & Ethnicity

- Black mothers (57%) report attending religious services more often than Hispanic (48%) or White (39%) mothers. This pattern holds true for single, cohabiting, and married mothers (not shown).
- Across every racial/ethnic group married mothers more often report regularly attending religious services.

Figure 4. Proportion of Mothers Who Attend Religious Services Regularly by Race & Ethnicity



References:

Data: National Survey of Family Growth, 2011-2013

Cruz, J. (2012). Single, Cohabiting, and Married Mothers in the U.S., 2011 (FP-12-23). National Center for Family & Marriage Research. Retrieved from <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-12-23.pdf>

Mahoney, A. (2010). Religion in families 1999 to 2009: A relational spirituality framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 72(4), 805-827.

Mahoney, A., Pargament, K. I., Swank, A., & Tarakeshwar, N. (2001). Religion in the Home in the 1980s and 1990s: A Meta-Analytic Review and Conceptual Analysis of Religion, Marriage, and Parenting. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(4), 559-596.

Manning, W. D., Brown, S. L., Lamidi, E., & Payne, K. K. (2014). Trends in Births to Single and Cohabiting Mothers, 1980-2009. (FP-14-05). National Center for Family & Marriage Research. Retrieved from <http://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/college-of-arts-and-sciences/NCFMR/documents/FP/FP-14-05-TrendsInBirth.pdf>

Suggested Citation:

Mahoney, A., Lamidi, E. & Payne, K. K. & Manning, W. D. (2015). Religiosity and U.S. Single, Cohabiting and Married Mothers. (FP-15-06). National Center for Family & Marriage Research.

Retrieved from: <http://www.bgsu.edu/resources/data/family-profiles/mahoney-lamidi-payne-fp-15-06.html>



This project is supported with assistance from Bowling Green State University. From 2007 to 2013, support was also provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are solely those of the author(s) and should not be construed as representing the opinions or policy of any agency of the state or federal government.

National Center for Family & Marriage Research

Family Profiles: Original reports summarizing and analyzing nationally representative data with the goal to provide the latest analysis of U.S. families. These profiles examine topics related to the NCFMR's core research themes.

<http://www.bgsu.edu/ncfmr.html>



005 Williams Hall
Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, OH 43403

419.372.3119
ncfmr@bgsu.edu