



RELIGION MATTERS.

Toolkit for Sharing 2015 Religiosity Data

Editable Paragraphs, Bullets, and Talking Points - Volume 1

In an effort to spark ideas and make your job a little easier, we created a few talking points and blurbs that your organization can use as you see fit! We have included paragraphs, bullet points, and graphs within this toolkit resource. We will continue to add additional resources to our toolkit website as they are imagined or requested! We encourage you to edit and personalize these ideas in ways that will resonate with your audience.

Be encouraged: most youth participate in religion because they *want to!* Of youth surveyed for the 2014 Erie County Youth Religiosity Survey who said that they already participate in organized religion one or more hour a week, 73% said they go because they want to go. The other 27% said that they are told/expected to go. Within that same group, 92% said they like it enough that they would invite a friend. That means that 19% of kids who are told or expected to go still like it enough to invite a friend! Great job youth and children's volunteers!

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Who would have guessed? When asked what they like *most* about participating in organized religion, 31% said learning about god and another 26% said relationships. When a follow up question was asked about why they keep going, 20% said to learn more about god and another 19% said because its fun/I want to go. That means that in both questions, students chose learning as the number one reason they like going and they keep going, and the number two reason after that was the fun and relationships they get out of going.

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Window of opportunity: Of youth surveyed for the 2014 Erie County Youth Religiosity Survey, 14% said that they never participate in religion, *but they used to*. The majority of these youth said they stopped attending between the ages of 9 and 14, with a significant number leaving between the ages of 10 and 12. That means efforts to engage both parents of youth and youth themselves need to exist within that window of opportunity.

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Completely unfamiliar: Of youth surveyed for the 2014 Erie County Youth Religiosity Survey, 20% indicate that not only do they currently never participate in organized religion, but they have never gone at any time. That means one in every five youth in Erie County has no first-hand experience with religion at all.

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Did you know?

- Research looking at the relationship between youths' religious participation and youths' alcohol use, drug use, and antisocial behavior indicates that religion plays a significant role in buffering youth against problem behaviors.
- In Erie County, religiosity among youth has been falling in the Pennsylvania Youth Survey, plummeting from a score of 49 in 2005 all the way to 39 in 2011. This is significantly below the state and national average. Help increase Religiosity amongst youth, and bring a child or teen next time you attend!
- Of the youth in Erie County who were surveyed, 90% who participate in religious activities once a week or more have not smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days, compared with only 74% of students who never participate in religious activities reporting the same- a difference of 16 percentage points.
- Of the youth in Erie County who were surveyed, 97% who participate in religious activities one or more times per week have not been suspended from school in the past year, while that is true of only 89% of respondents who never participate in organized religion.
- 93% of students surveyed who participate in religious activities one or more times per week have not attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them, while that is true of only 85% of respondents who never participate in organized religion.

- 67% of students who participate in religious activities weekly do not think it is acceptable to beat up another person if they start the fight, compared with 48% of students who never participate in religious activities.
- 66% of students that attend religious activities one time per month or more said that their parents tell them on a frequent basis they are proud of them for something they have done, compared with 52% of students who never attend religious activities.

Talking Points

- Since according to research, participating in organized religion plays a role in protecting youth from problem behaviors, it is important for our religious organization to not only maintain but even to possibly increase our youth programs, our efforts to grow youth participation within the organization, and helping parents to increase their children's participation within the organization.
- Research has shown that the relationship between youths' religious participation and youths' alcohol use, drug use, and antisocial behavior indicates that religion plays a role in buffering youth against problem behaviors.
- In 2005, Erie County scored just one point below the normative average for youth participation in religion on the PAYS. In the years following, Erie County has seen that score fall each year, dropping all the way to 11 points below the normative average in 2011. Our congregation can make a huge difference by educating our members and assisting with getting youth to come in and participate, but not if we do not have the funding or staffing.
- From the 2011 PAYS data, sixty-seven percent (67%) of students who participate in religious activities weekly do not think it is acceptable to beat up another person if they start the fight, compared with 48% of students who never participate in religious activities- a difference of 19 percentage points.
- A teenager is 14.4% more likely to get mostly A's in school if they participate in organized religion once or more a week versus if they never participate in organized religion.
- According to the 2011 PAYS data, students indicating a higher level of religiosity were less likely to feel depressed or sad most days, to think they are no good at all, to sometimes think life is not worth it, and to be inclined to think that they are a failure.