

The Impact of Religion on Abortion Practice

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Ways religion can affect abortion utilization

- Religious structures and leaders can influence abortion legislation and policy
- Religious doctrine can affect individual behavior
- Religiosity itself can affect individual behavior independently of the beliefs of the particular religion

Ways religion can affect abortion through individual behavior

Religious beliefs/religiosity can affect:

- Sexual activity before marriage
- Use of contraception
- Choice of abortion to resolve unintended pregnancy

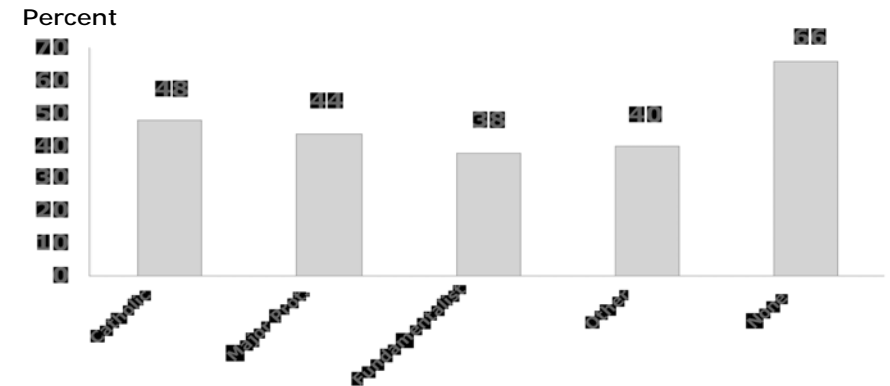
Comparison of Catholics and Protestants in the U.S. provides a test of the influence of religious doctrine

- White non-Hispanic Catholics and Protestants are similar demographically and culturally
- Catholic teaching strictly opposes premarital sexual activity, use of contraception, and abortion
- Protestant churches are somewhat more liberal on these issues

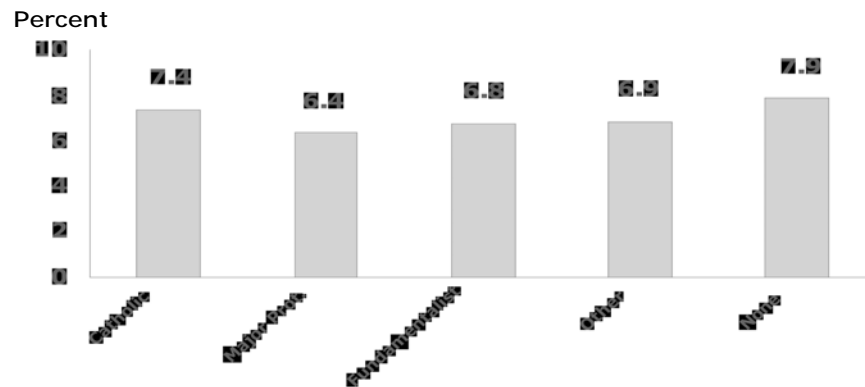
Data sources

- U.S. National Survey of Family Growth, 1995: N = 6483 white non-Hispanic women
- U.S surveys of abortion patients, 2001 (N=10,863) and 1995 (N=9985)

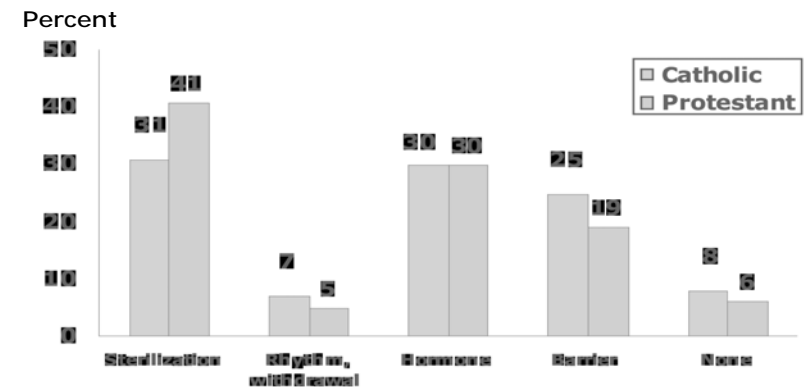
Percent of unmarried white non-Hispanic women aged 15-19 who have ever had sexual intercourse, United States, 1995



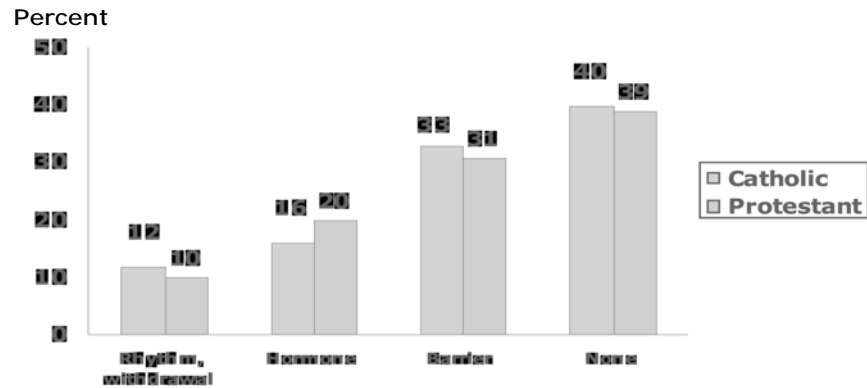
Of white non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy, percent not using any contraceptive method, United States, 1995



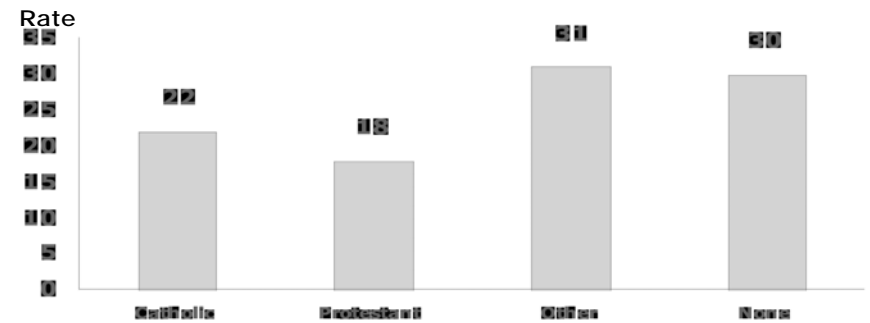
Of white non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy, percent using each method, United States, 1995



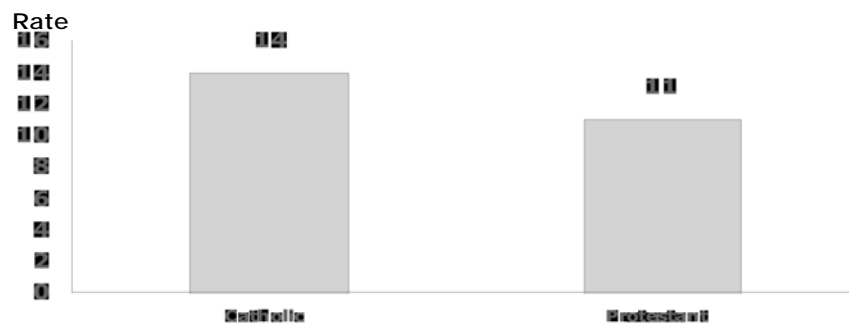
Of white non-Hispanic women having abortions, percent who used each method during month they became pregnant, United States, 2000



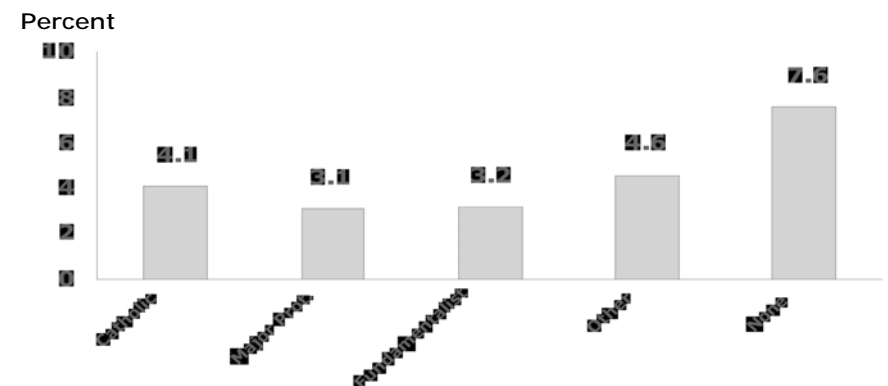
Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44, by religion, United States, 2000



Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44 among white non-Hispanic women, United States, 1995



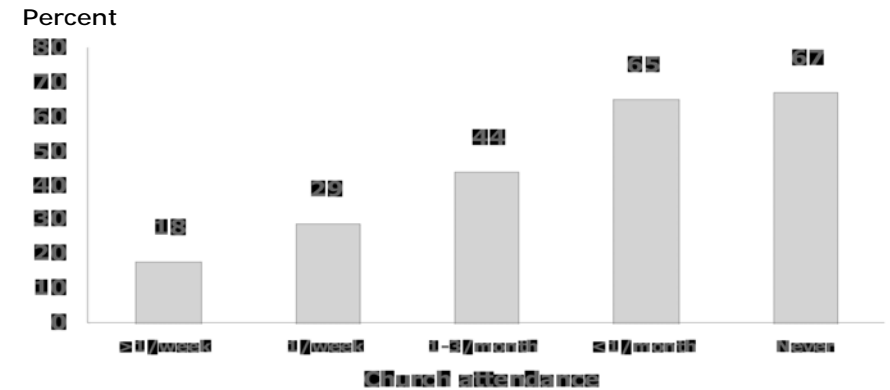
Of white non-Hispanic women, percent who reported having had an abortion within the past 5 years, United States, 1995



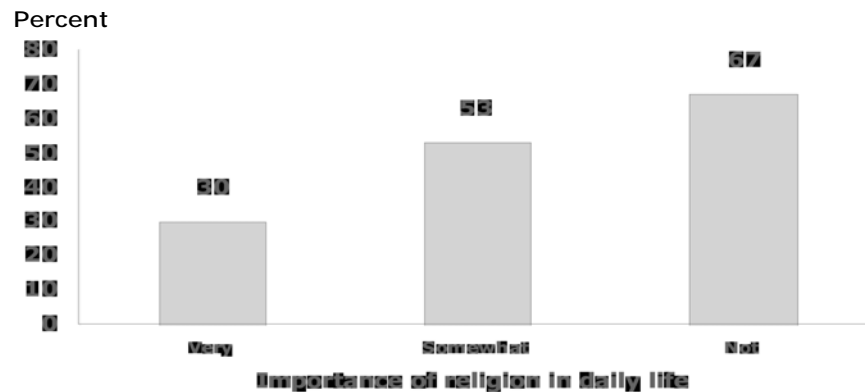
Indicators of religiosity

- Frequency of attendance at religion services
- Importance of religion in your life
- Self-identification as a “born-again” Christian

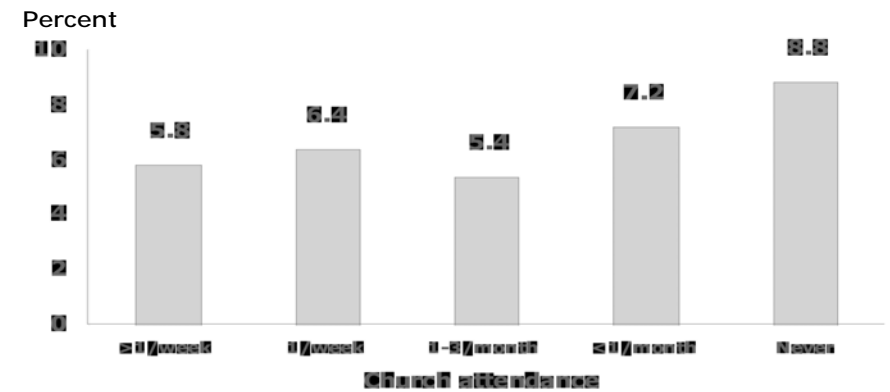
Percent of unmarried white, non-Hispanic women aged 15-19 who have ever had sexual intercourse, United States, 1995



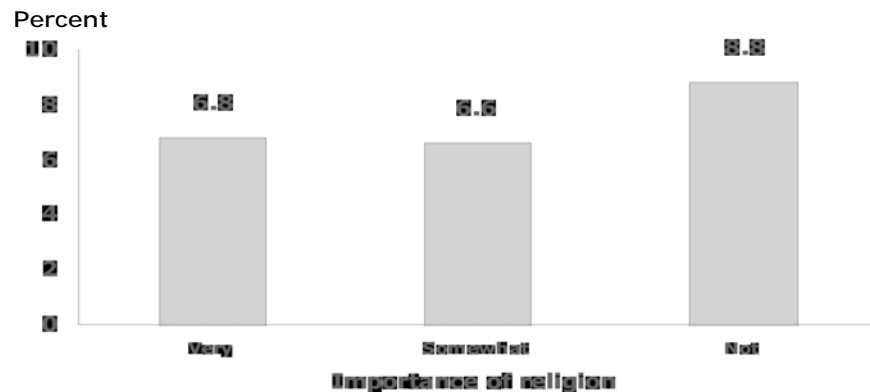
Percent of unmarried white, non-Hispanic women aged 15-19 who have ever had sexual intercourse, United States, 1995



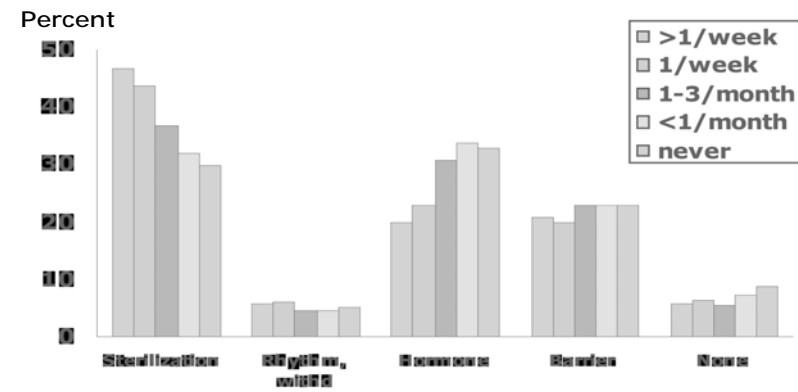
Percent of white, non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy using no method, United States, 1995



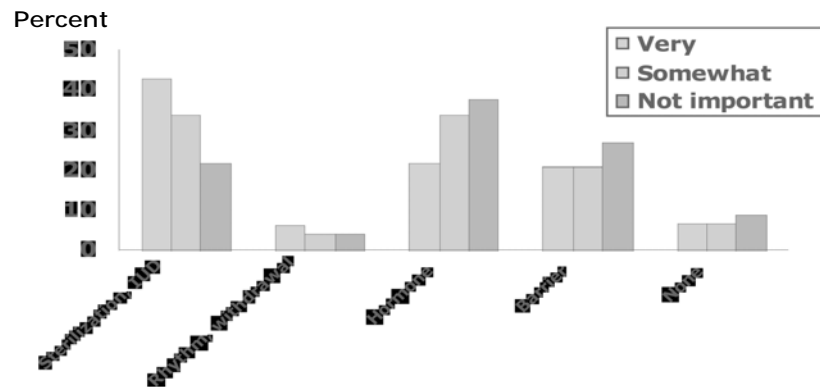
Percent of white, non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy using no method, United States, 1995



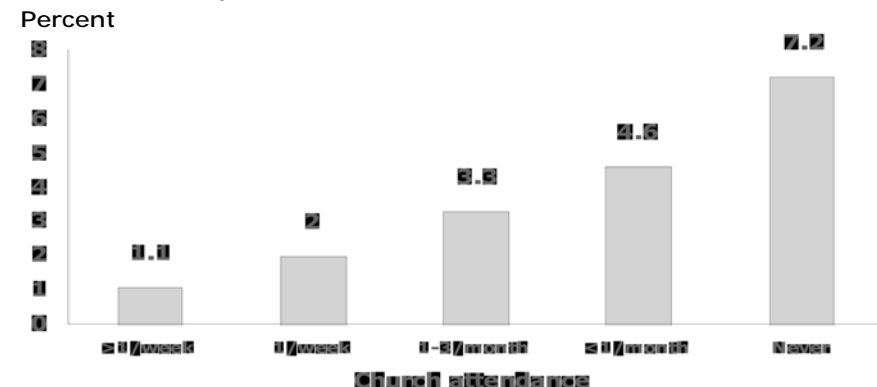
White non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy: contraceptive use by frequency of church attendance, United States, 1995



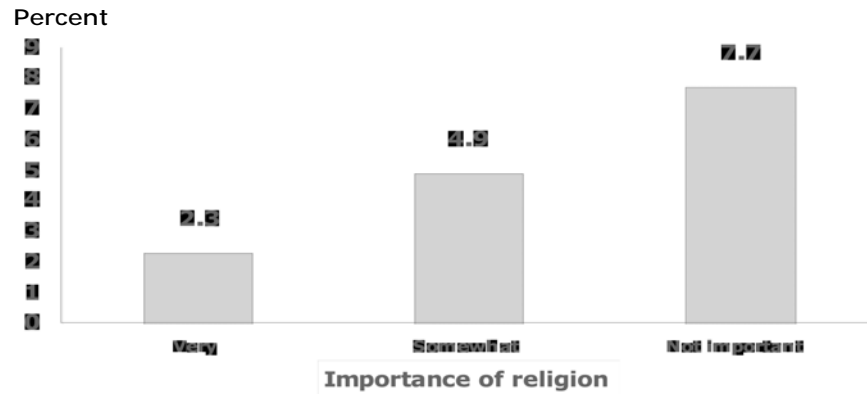
White non-Hispanic women at risk of unintended pregnancy: contraceptive use by importance of religion, United States, 1995



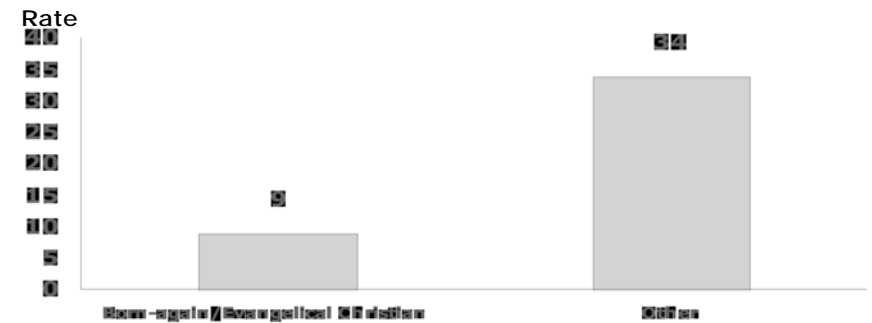
Percent of white non-Hispanic women or reproductive age who reported having had an abortion within the past 5 years, United States, 1995



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Abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44, United States, 1995



Conclusions

- Religious doctrines have little impact on abortion-related behavior
- Religiosity is highly correlated with sexual activity and abortion rates
- The causal relationship between religiosity and abortion behavior is unclear