

Wallace, J. M., & Forman, T. A. (1998). Religion's role in promoting health and reducing risk among American youth. *Health Education and Behavior*, 25(6), 721-741.

Abstract

Although past research has long documented religion's salutary impact on adult health-related behaviors and outcomes, relatively little research has examined the relationship between religion and adolescent health. This study uses large, nationally representative samples of high school seniors to examine the relationship between religion and behavioral predictors of adolescent morbidity and mortality. Relative to their peers, religious youth are less likely to engage in behaviors that compromise their health (e.g., carrying weapons, getting into fights, drinking and driving) and are more likely to behave in ways that enhance their health (e.g., proper nutrition, exercise, and rest). Multivariate analyses suggest that these relationships persist even after controlling for demographic factors, and trend analyses reveal that they have existed over time. Particularly important is the finding that religious seniors have been relatively unaffected by past and recent increases in marijuana use.