

Contact: Kevin Conway
Associate Director of University Communication
(414) 288-4745 – office
(414) 202-9329 – mobile
kevin.m.conway@marquette.edu

July 9, 2026

This release is also available online.

New Marquette Law School Poll finds large percentages of older adults nationwide are connected closely to grown children and grandchildren

Also:

- By age 40, three-quarters of adults have children
- Trust across generations in families is generally strong
- About half of adults say their standard of living is better than their parents' was
- 7 in 10 say they are adherents to an organized religion
- 60% say religion is important in their lives

MILWAUKEE – American family life doesn't end when the kids leave home. A new Marquette Law School Poll national survey provides in-depth insights into the way the lives of individuals and extended families evolve beyond many people's child-raising years.

Most government statistics focus on fertility and child-rearing but pay little attention to family life after children reach age 18. This Marquette survey examined aspects of family life among parents of adult offspring, including the role of grandparents. This provides glimpses of family relationships across the second half of life.

The survey finds that large numbers of families have active multigenerational lives, including grandparents who frequently care for grandchildren and families in which all the grandparents, parents, and grandchildren live within 50 miles of each other. Relatively few of those in later life, including after 70, are isolated from their children.

The survey also examined important aspects of American religious life, including how frequently people attend religious services, how often they pray, and how their religious lives as adults compare to their religious involvement as teenagers.

The Marquette Law School Poll survey was conducted June 9-15, 2026, interviewing 1,514 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of +/-2.7 percentage points. This is the fourth of four news releases announcing results of the survey, which looked at an array of aspects of the lives and attitudes of American adults as the nation marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

From school-age to post-school-age families

Among American adults, aged 18 and older, 38% don't have children of any age. Making up the 62% of adults with children, 20% have only children younger than 18, 8% have children both younger than 18 and children 18 or older, and 34% have children only 18 or older.

There are transitions in family composition as parents age. The youngest age groups can only have younger children, and eventually the oldest groups are very unlikely to have children under 18.

Just 25% of adults under age 30 reported having children, with 100% of those parents having children under 18. That increased to 56% with children for adults in their 30s. This age cohort reported 48% having only young children, 5% of adults having both young children and adult offspring, and 3% with only adult children.

The 40s mark the transition from younger children to adult children, among the 75% of these adults having children. These families have almost as many young and old children (26% of these families) as only young (30%), with a sharp increase over those in their 30s in respect to having only adult children (19%). This also marks the point at which most childbearing ceases. Only 25% of those in their 40s have no children.

In the 50s and beyond, the percentage with only adult children grows with each decade of age, and very few have younger children. The percentage with no children also levels off in these years after the end of childbearing. There is only a small decrease in childlessness among those 70 or older. (All results in the tables are stated as percentages.)

These transitions are shown by age in Table 1.

Table 1: Young and adult children, by parental age

Among adults

Age	Young and old children			
	Young kids only	Young and adult kids	Adult kids only	No children
18-29	25	0	0	75
30-39	48	5	3	44
40-49	30	26	19	25
50-59	4	16	51	29
60-69	1	2	69	29
70+	1	2	78	18

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How many children do you have who are 18 years old or older? How many children do you have who are 17 years old or younger?

Most government surveys report on number of children per household rather than the number of children an individual has, as is done in this survey. An exception is the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Center for Health Statistics. That study measures the number children ever born to women of childbearing age and children ever fathered by men, in both cases for those between 15 and 49 years old. The Marquette Law School Poll can construct a similar measure for those 18-49, and by gender. This comparison shows that the Marquette data closely match the estimates from NSFG, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of children of any age

Among those 18-49 (Marquette Law Poll) or 15-49 (NSFG)

Response	Number of children			
	Marquette Law Poll percent, among women 18-49	NSFG percent, among women 15-49	Marquette Law Poll percent among men 18-49	NSFG percent, among men 15-49
None	42	45	55	56
One	17	16	15	14
Two	20	21	17	18
Three	10	12	7	12
Four+	11	6	6	NA

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026 / National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), CDC/NCHS, 2017-2019

Question (Marquette Law Poll): How many children do you have who are 18 years old or older? How many children do you have who are 17 years old or younger?

Question (NSFG): Number of children ever born, number of children ever fathered. For NSFG men, the entry for 3 children is for 3 or more

Adults are likely to enter their 40s with children, and usually multiple children, though under 30% have no children. For such older adults, the percentage who have children is larger than it would appear from the previous table because the previous table includes those in the childbearing years who have not yet had children but will.

To get a clearer picture, which includes all children and a look at later adulthood, the total number of offspring by parental age is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Total number of children, by parental age

Among adults

Age	Number of children				
	None	One	Two	Three	Four+
18-29	75	14	6	2	3
30-39	44	19	21	8	8
40-49	25	16	29	15	16
50-59	29	13	26	17	15
60-69	29	17	27	17	11
70+	18	13	36	19	14

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How many children do you have who are 18 years old or older? How many children do you have who are 17 years old or younger?

For people in their 40s and beyond, more than half have two or more children. Barring untimely death, these adult children will define and extend family for their parents though the end of the parents’ lives.

Adult children extend their parents’ family by creating grandchildren. In this survey, 43% of parents have at least one grandchild, but that figure includes those too young to have grandchildren yet. The number of grandchildren by age is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Number of grandchildren, by age

Among those with children

Age	Number of grandchildren						
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six+
18-29	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
30-39	97	2	1	0	0	0	0
40-49	75	12	6	4	1	1	1
50-59	57	9	10	6	5	4	8
60-69	30	14	11	12	11	4	19
70+	10	8	22	8	12	10	30

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How many grandchildren do you have?

While the number of children becomes stable in the 40s, the presence of grandchildren, and their number, grow throughout the later years among those who have children. Grandchildren are a prominent part of family life for older Americans, and many have four or more.

Grandparents engage with their grandchildren in many ways, but a prominent one is through providing childcare of one sort or another. Among grandparents, 50% say they

take care of a grandchild at least once a month, with 31% doing so a few times a year and 20% who never take care of a grandchild.

Another window into this is parents who say they have one or more of their parents take care of a child. Among these middle-generation parents, 38% say a parent cares for a grandchild at least monthly, with 28% reporting this happens a few times a year and 34% saying that they don't have a grandparent take care of a child.

Adulthood is generally marked by children leaving home and starting homes of their own, but for most parents this doesn't mean an end to proximity to their children. For those with adult children, 45% have all of their adult children within 50 miles of the parents. Another 37% have some children near and others far, while 18% have all of their children living more than 50 miles away.

As parents age, their adult children's lives also change, and this may include relocation for a variety of reasons. Despite this potential, a large majority of parents with adult children continue to live within 50 miles of at least one grown child. For most parents of adult children, at least some children live nearby, regardless of the age of parents. For those younger than 60, only about 15% have all their adult children more than 50 miles away, though this percentage rises to about 20% for those in their 60s or older. Thus, upwards of 80% of parents have at least some adult children living within an hour's drive. This is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Distance to adult children

Among those with adult children

Age	Near or far		
	Both near and far	Near only	Far only
40-49	35	50	15
50-59	37	48	15
60-69	34	46	20
70+	42	36	22

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How many of your adult children 18 or over live within 50 miles of your home?

Question: How many of your adult children 18 or over live more than 50 miles from your home?

Proximity fosters interaction with grandchildren as well. For those with adult children within 50 miles of their home and at least one grandchild, 56% say they take care of the grandchild at least once a month, while among those whose adult children all live beyond 50 miles, this rate drops to 18% and care only a few times a year rises to 46%, representing in part the occasional family visit. For those with only distant grandchildren, more than a third say they never provide childcare (36%), though this does not rule out visits. This is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Take care of grandchild, by distance of adult children

Among those with grandchildren

Distance of adult children	Care for grandchild		
	More than once a month	A few times a year	Never
Has adult kids w/in 50 mi	56	27	17
No adult kids w/in 50mi	18	46	36

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Take care of a grandchild] How often do you do the following things?

Question: How many of your adult children 18 or over live (within/more than) 50 miles from your home?

Caring for grandchildren seems to peak for grandparents in their 50s, a time when both their children and grandchildren are relatively young, and then declines with age, though taking care of grandchildren remains common into the 70s, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Take care of grandchild, by age of grandparent

Among those with grandchildren

Age	Care for grandchild		
	More than once a month	A few times a year	Never
40-49	47	30	24
50-59	61	33	6
60-69	56	28	16
70+	41	32	28

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Take care of a grandchild] How often do you do the following things?

Note: There are too few grandparents in their 30s for analysis, so they are omitted from the table.

This picture of families with adult children and grandchildren shows there is considerable interaction throughout life, with most families remaining, at least in part, in geographic proximity, and connections with grandchildren playing a prominent role in the lives of older Americans. Relatively few of those in later life, including after 70, are isolated from their children. It should be noted that this analysis has focused exclusively on those with children and has not considered the later lives of those who do not have children, an important topic to be explored another time.

Trust in your family

To shift focus, not all families are happy families. Looking at trust of immediate family, 62% say they can trust their immediate family a great deal, 30% trust their family a fair amount, 6% say they trust family not very much, and 2% trust them not at all. (In subsequent analysis, the last two categories are combined.)

Marital status is associated with trust in the family, with married people expressing the greatest level of trust, while those who have never married are the least trusting, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Trust in family, by marital status

Among adults

Marital status	Trust in immediate family		
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much/not at all
Married	71	25	3
Widowed	60	31	9
Single, living with a partner	56	33	10
Divorced/Separated	55	37	8
Single, that is, never married	50	36	15

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Your immediate family] How much can you trust the following people?

Having children boosts family trust regardless of marital status, but by just four percentage points among married people and by six points among those not currently married.

While those who are currently divorced or separated are less trusting, among those currently married, a previous divorce has little effect on trust in the family. Among those married with a previous divorce, 68% say they trust family a great deal, while for those without a previous divorce, 72% trust family a great deal, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Trust in family, by prior divorce

Among currently married adults

Prior divorce	Trust in immediate family		
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much/not at all
Yes	68	27	4
No	72	25	3

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Your immediate family] How much can you trust the following people?

Question: Have you ever been divorced?

Trust in family members is lowest for the youngest age group and highest for the oldest, but varies little for those between 30 and 69, as seen in Table 10.

Table 10: Trust in family, by age

Among adults

Age	Trust in immediate family		
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much/not at all
18-29	47	37	15
30-39	63	29	9
40-49	60	32	8
50-59	66	28	5
60-69	64	32	4
70+	78	19	3

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Your immediate family] How much can you trust the following people?

Financial stress plays a substantial role in reducing trust in family. Among those who say they are struggling financially, 42% say they trust their family a great deal, compared to 61% among those who are just getting by and 70% among those who say they are living comfortably. Similarly, trust in family is related to income levels, as seen in Table 11.

Table 12: Trust in family, by income

Among adults

Income	Trust in immediate family		
	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much/not at all
Less than \$50k	51	37	12
\$50k-\$100k	64	31	5
More than \$100k	76	20	4

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: [Your immediate family] How much can you trust the following people?

Intergenerational standard of living

Intergenerational economic mobility is an important aspect of family life. Compared to the standard of living they experienced growing up, about half say they are now better off. That includes 21% who say they are much better off and 31% who are somewhat better off, while 20% are somewhat worse off and 9% are much worse off. Twenty percent say their standard of living is about the same as when they were young.

An improved standard of living is somewhat related to education, especially for those with more than a bachelor's degree. Substantially reduced standards of living are more common with those who finished high school or less, as seen in Table 12.

Table 12: Change in standard of living, by education

Among adults

Education	Change in standard of living since childhood				
	Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Less than HS	14	34	16	19	16
HS graduate	19	29	23	17	12
Vocational/tech school/some college/ associates	20	30	17	24	8
Bachelor's degree	20	33	21	22	5
Post grad study/professional degree	31	30	18	16	5

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Compared to your parents when you were growing up, do you think your own standard of living now is better or worse than theirs was?

Current financial strain also affects how people see their standard of living compared to that during their childhood. Those who are most comfortable are much more likely to say they are better off, while those who are struggling remember things being better when they were young, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Change in standard of living, by current financial situation

Among adults

Current financial situation	Change in standard of living since childhood				
	Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Living comfortably	35	37	18	9	1
Just getting by	11	29	23	28	10
Struggling	7	17	16	31	28

Marquette Law School Poll, national, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Compared to your parents when you were growing up, do you think your own standard of living now is better or worse than theirs was?

Similarly, present income is substantially related to the sense of improving or worsening standard of living, as Table 14 shows.

Table 14: Change in standard of living, by income

Among adults

Income	Change in standard of living since childhood				
	Much better	Somewhat better	About the same	Somewhat worse	Much worse
Less than \$50k	13	24	24	25	14
\$50k-\$100k	20	33	20	20	7
More than \$100k	31	38	14	14	4

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Compared to your parents when you were growing up, do you think your own standard of living now is better or worse than theirs was?

Income is related to marital status, but within income levels, more of those who are married say their standard of living has improved since childhood than those who are not married. This is especially true of lower and higher income groups, with only a small difference for those in the middle range of income, shown in Table 15.

Table 35: Change in standard of living, by income and marital status

Among adults

Married or not	Change in standard of living since childhood		
	Better	Same	Worse
Less than \$50k			
Married	51	21	28
Not married	31	25	43
\$50k-\$100k			
Married	54	21	25
Not married	53	18	29
More than \$100k			
Married	72	13	15
Not married	56	16	28

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Compared to your parents when you were growing up, do you think your own standard of living now is better or worse than theirs was?

Faith and family

Most Americans say they identify as adherents to a religious group, though the percentage not affiliated has grown in recent years. In this survey, 28% say they are not adherents, while more than 70% identify themselves with a religious tradition. Table 16 shows the size of each group.

Table 16: Religious affiliation

Among adults

Religion	
	Percent
Born-again Protestant	23
Mainline Protestant	18
Roman Catholic	19
No religion	28
Other religion	11

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: What is your present religion, if any?

While fewer than a third of Americans say they are not affiliated with a religion, more than half say they seldom or never attend worship services. The rate of attendance is shown in Table 17.

Table 47: Attendance at religious services

Among adults

Attendance	
	Percent
More than once a week	6
Once a week	15
Once or twice a month	9
A few times a year	14
Seldom	22
Never	34

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Each religious group has a substantial number of adherents who seldom or never attend services. The highest attendance is among born-again Protestants, followed at some distance by Roman Catholics, by those of other religions (which is a heterogeneous mixture of faiths), and by mainline Protestants with the least regular attendance. Those who say they have no religion are very unlikely to attend, though a few do, at least occasionally. This is shown in Table 18.

Table 18: Religious attendance, by affiliation

Among adults

Religion	Attendance			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
Born-again Protestant	57	14	19	11
Mainline Protestant	24	24	30	22
Roman Catholic	39	15	25	21
No religion	4	6	18	71
Other religion	32	19	22	27

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: What is your present religion, if any?

Family plays an important role in attendance. Of married couples who say they affiliate with a religion, those whose spouse shares their faith are more than twice as likely to regularly attend worship services than if the spouse does not share their faith. Likewise, when faiths do not match, more seldom or never attend, as shown in Table 19. Among married couples, 79% say they are of the same faith.

Table 19: Religious attendance, by spouse shares faith

Among married adults affiliated with a religion

Does spouse share faith?	Attendance			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
Yes	49	17	21	13
No	21	16	34	30

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: Do you and your spouse share the same religious faith?

Reported rates of church attendance for the respondents and for their spouse (among married couples) are closely aligned, as shown in Table 20.

Table 20: Attendance by self and by spouse

Among married adults

Self or spouse	Attendance			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
Self	34	14	22	30
Spouse	34	12	16	39

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How often does your spouse attend religious services?

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Attendance for self and spouse is very strongly correlated for those who share a faith, as seen in Table 21.

Table 25: Attendance for spouse, by self-attendance

Among married adults who share same faith

Self-attendance	Spouse attendance			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
Regularly (monthly or more)	92	4	3	1
A few times a year	12	64	15	10
Seldom	10	4	56	30
Never	2	2	4	92

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: How often does your spouse attend religious services?

Beyond affiliation and attendance, religious practice includes prayer and reading sacred texts. Given relatively low attendance rates of respondents, a surprisingly large number of people (55%) say they pray at least a few times a week. This contrasts with just 21% who attend religious services weekly. Furthermore, prayer is frequent even among those who attend services only rarely, including those who never attend, as shown in Table 22.

Table 22: Prayer, by attendance

Among adults

Attendance	Prayer frequency			
	A few times a week or more	A few times a month	Seldom	Never
Regularly (monthly or more)	88	5	4	3
A few times a year	69	15	12	5
Seldom	48	10	34	8
Never	24	7	23	46

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: Outside of religious services, how often do you pray?

A more demanding practice, reading religious texts or scripture, does not produce a similarly high reported rate, as 23% say they read scripture often, a number more in line with those who attend weekly services. There is also a sharp decline in reported scripture-reading as attendance declines, unlike the case for prayer.

Table 23: Scripture reading, by attendance

Among adults

Attendance	Scripture reading frequency			
	A few times a week or more	A few times a month	Seldom	Never
Regularly (monthly or more)	53	19	21	7
A few times a year	27	16	37	19
Seldom	9	6	50	36
Never	5	4	16	75

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: Outside of religious services, how often do you read scripture?

Faith across generations

To measure how religious attachment flows through life, respondents were asked about their attendance and the importance of religion during their teenage years. This is, of course, a recollection of the past, and not a direct measure from adolescence. Nonetheless, it gives us a look at how religion persists and changes, at least from the respondent's subjective report.

Religious attendance during adolescence is recalled as being much higher than reported attendance as an adult. While 30% of today's adults say they attend monthly or more, more than double that, 62%, say they attended at least monthly when 12-17 years old. Likewise, about half as many say they never attended in youth as never attend today. The comparison is shown in Table 24.

Table 24: Attendance as an adolescent and as an adult

Among adults

As adolescent and adult	Attendance			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
As adolescent	62	13	9	16
As adult	30	14	22	34

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: When you were 12-17 years old, how often did you attend religious services?

Early participation in religious services is correlated with adult attendance, if weakly; and more move from regular attendance in youth to seldom or never as adults, than move from seldom or never attending as adolescents to regular attendance as adults, as shown in Table 25.

Table 25: Attendance as an adult, by attendance as an adolescent

Among adults

Attendance as an adolescent	Attendance as an adult			
	Regularly (monthly or more)	A few times a year	Seldom	Never
Regularly (monthly or more)	37	15	23	24
A few times a year	22	21	25	33
Seldom	18	12	27	42
Never	14	5	14	66

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

Question: When you were 12-17 years old, how often did you attend religious services?

There is a small increase in the percentage of adults who say religion is important in their lives now, compared to whether they say that was the case when they were teenagers. But there are also a few more for whom religion is not at all important as an adult. See Table 26.

Table 26: Importance of religion as an adolescent and as an adult

Among adults

As adolescent and adult	Importance of religion			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
As adolescent	29	29	21	21
As adult	36	24	16	24

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How important is religion in your life now?

Question: How important was religion in your life when you were 12-17 years old?

Unlike with attendance, the subjective importance of religion as a youth and as an adult is rather strongly correlated. Those who recall religion as very important in the past are quite likely to say it is important now. Those who didn't think religion was important as a young person are very likely to say it is not important in adulthood. This is shown in Table 27.

Table 27: Importance of religion as an adult, by importance in youth

Among adults

Importance as an adolescent	Importance as an adult			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Very important	65	20	10	5
Somewhat important	35	36	18	12
Not too important	22	24	30	24
Not at all important	10	11	10	69

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How important is religion in your life now?

Question: How important was religion in your life when you were 12-17 years old?

Those who think religion is important to them now are also especially likely to think it is important for children to attend religious services, shown in Table 28.

Table 28: Important for children to attend worship, by importance of religion

Among adults

Importance of religion	Important for youth to attend			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Very important	74	22	2	2
Somewhat important	19	61	15	5
Not too important	8	40	43	9
Not at all important	1	10	25	64

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How important is it for children to attend religious services when they are 12-17 years old?

Question: How important is religion in your life now?

People think it is important for children to learn moral values through religion, but substantially more think it is important that children learn moral values apart from religious instruction. The two are not in competition—those who stress moral instruction apart from religion also give more importance to learning values through religion. The comparison is in Table 29.

Table 29: Importance of moral values through and apart from religion

Among adults

Religion or apart from religion	Importance learning moral values			
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not too important	Not at all important
Through religion	44	28	12	16
Apart from religion	71	19	5	4

Marquette Law School Poll, national survey, June 9-15, 2026

Question: How important is it for children to learn moral values through religion?

Question: How important is it for children to learn moral values apart from religion?

About the Marquette Law School Poll

The survey was conducted June 9-15, 2026, interviewing 1,514 adults nationwide, with a margin of error of +/-2.7 percentage points. For the analysis of married persons, the sample size is 761, with a margin of error of +/-3.8.

Interviews were conducted using the SSRS Opinion Panel, a national probability sample with interviews conducted online. Certain other data from this survey were previously released on [June 24](#), [June 25](#), and [July 7](#). The detailed methodology statement, survey instrument, topline results, and crosstabs for this release are available on the [Marquette Law Poll website](#).

#

For more Marquette news, visit [Marquette Today](#)