

Fewer 'Middle Americans' marry or attend worship

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [January 11, 2011](#) issue

Marriage among Americans who have graduated from high school but not college is on the decline, and their religious attendance has dropped at the same time, a new report shows.

"Middle Americans" ages 25 to 60 who were in their first marriages dropped from 73 percent in the 1970s to 45 percent in the 2000s, according to "The State of Our Unions," an annual report from the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia.

The group described as "Middle Americans" constitute 58 percent of the U.S. adult population. Its members have a high school diploma and may have some postsecondary education but have not obtained a four-year college degree.

Members of this group have seen a similar drop in religious attendance, from 40 percent attending nearly every week or more in the 1970s to 28 percent in the 2000s.

"In a striking turn of events, highly educated America is now both more marriage-minded and religious than are moderately educated Americans," the report states. "Accordingly, Middle Americans are now markedly less likely than they used to be to benefit from the social solidarity, the religious and normative messages about marriage and family life, and the social control associated with regular churchgoing."

The report is also the result of the work of the Center for Marriage and Families at the New York-based Institute for American Values. -RNS