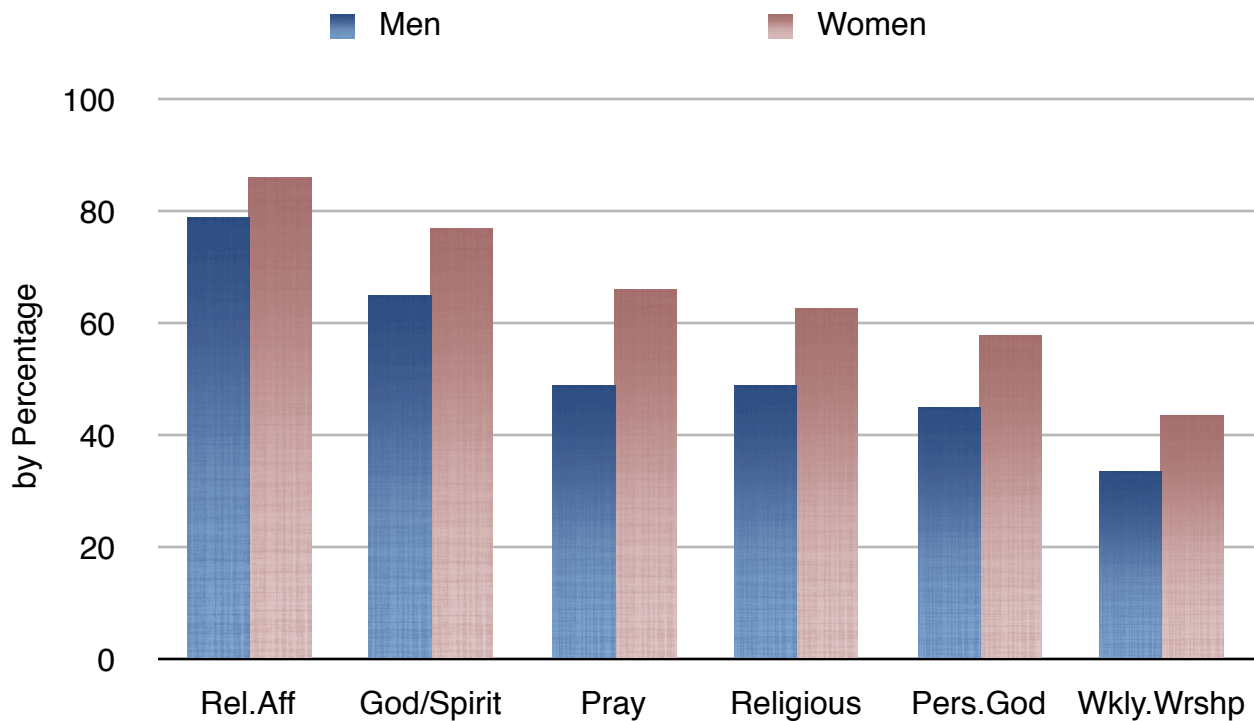




### Women Are the (Spiritually) Stronger Sex

A new analysis of data from the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey found that women are more religious than men on a variety of measures—from religious affiliation and daily prayer—to attending weekly worship services. An older survey by the Barna Group found similar tendencies in 2000.

**Figure 1**  
**Comparison of Male and Female Religious Beliefs and Practices from the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey**



The Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, which conducted the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, found that women ranked higher than men on six different measures of religiosity. More women than men reported they are affiliated with a religion (86% versus 79%); have an absolute belief in God or a universal Spirit (77% versus 65%); pray at least daily (66% versus 49%); acknowledge that religion is very important in their lives (63% versus 49%); have an absolute belief in a *personal* God (58% versus 45%); and attend worship services at least weekly (44% versus 34%). See Figure 1 above.

### **Women are the Backbone of Christian Congregations in America**

Barna's survey suggested that women shouldered most of the responsibility for "the health and vitality of the Christian faith in the country." They constitute nearly 60% of the adherents to the Christian faith. Nearly half of women have beliefs which classify them as "born again" (46%), compared to 36% of men. When asked what conditions would create a desirable life, 75% of women said having a close personal relationship with God was very desirable. Among men the figure was 65%. Women were also more inclined to say they were "absolutely committed" to the Christian faith than men (46% to 32%).

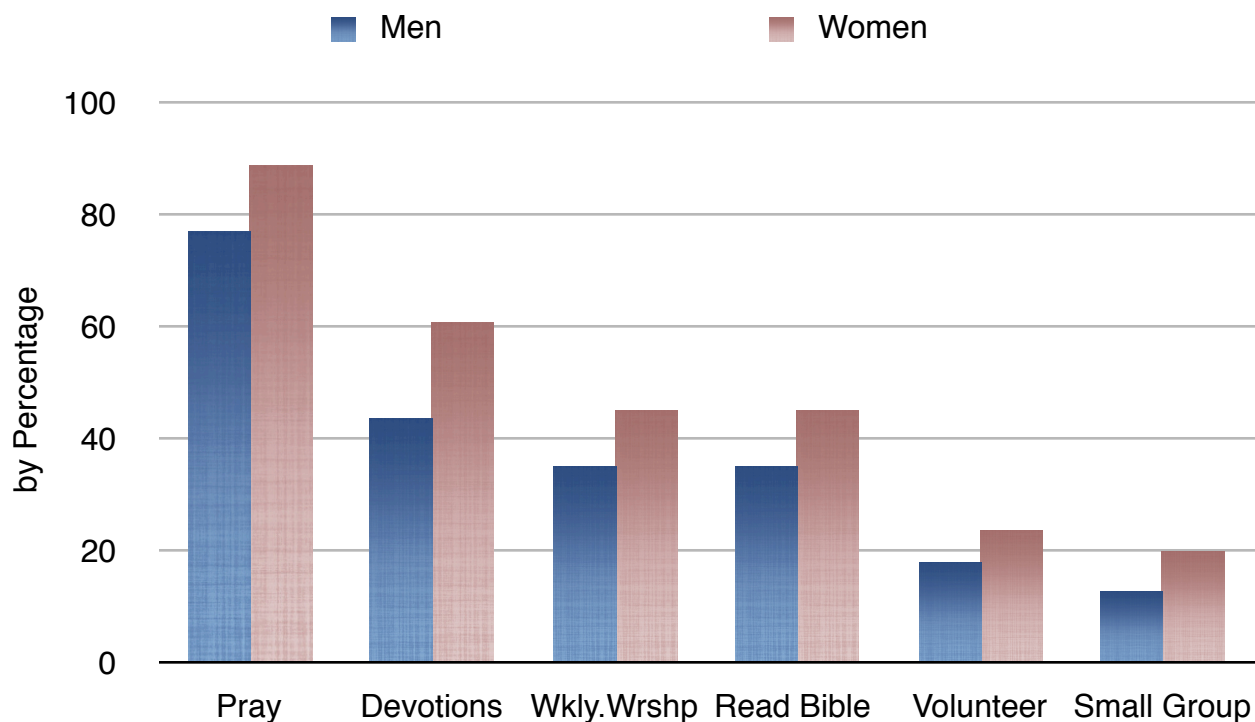
Women, more often than not, become the spiritual leaders of the family. "Women typically emerge as the primary—or only—spiritual mentor and role model for family members. And that puts a tremendous burden on wives and mothers." One of the concerns Barna raised is whether or not women are burning out from their intense levels of involvement. Between 1991 and 2000, there was a decline in church attendance (55% to 45%) and volunteering to help a church (29% to 24%) among women. "Churches need to consider whether or not they they are providing sufficient opportunities for women to receive ministry and not just provide ministry to others." He warned that tens of thousands of women could leave the church without a widespread, aggressive, thoughtful approach to recognize and appreciate women. At the same time, men have to realize the importance for them to model spiritual maturity and participate more actively in the life of the church.

If the church is to stem the tide of biblical illiteracy and waning commitment to the Christian faith, men will have to reestablish themselves as partners and leaders of the spiritual functions of families. The family unit is the key for spiritual growth and maturation in our decentralized, relationally isolated

culture. the apparent lack of spiritual leadership exhibited by millions of Christian men has significantly hampered the spiritual growth of tens of thousands of well-meaning but spiritually inert families.

The religiosity practices assessed by the Barna Group were sometimes different than those reported by The Pew Research Forum, but the spiritual strength of women and their consistently greater rates of participation in religious matters continued to be evident. In twelve of thirteen religious activities examined by Barna, women's participation levels outdistanced men. See Figure 2 and the discussion below for six of these religious practices. Barna found that more women (75%) than men (60%) said that religious faith was very important in their life. Compare that to the 63% for women and 49% for men who answered a similarly worded question by the Pew Research forum. While we cannot put too much emphasis upon the results because they are from different surveys, it does seem that there has been a decreased commitment to religious faith in the past nine years.

**Figure 2**  
**Comparison of Male and Female Religious Practices from**  
**a Survey by the Barna Group in 2000**



Barna found that women were more likely to have prayed in the past seven days than men (89% versus 77%). Women were more likely to have a devotional or quiet time in the past seven days, where they read the Bible, devotional materials or prayed than men (61% versus 44%). Women were more likely to have attended church in the past week than men (45% versus 35%). They were also more likely to have read the Bible in the past seven days (45% for women versus 35% for men). Women were more likely to volunteer some of their time during the past week to help a church than men (24% versus 18%). Women were more likely than men to participate in a small group for Bible study, prayer, or fellowship (20% versus 13%). The Barna Group survey has a much more extensive report on their findings than that which was discussed here. See the original article for more information.

For the original articles and data go to:

The Barna Update for: “[Women Are the Backbone of the Christian Congregations in America.](#)”

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life: “[The Stronger Sex--Spiritually Speaking.](#)”