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For: Sex Improves Dramatically After Leaving Religion

Sex and Secularism: What Happens When You Leave Religion, A survey of over 14,500 American Secularists. A ground-breaking study of sexuality among the non-religious.

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Key findings:

1. Sex improves dramatically after leaving religion.
2. Sexual guilt has little staying power after leaving religion.
3. Those raised most religious show no difference from those raised least religious in their sexual behavior.
4. Those raised most religious experience far more guilt but have just as much sex.
5. Religious parents are far worse at educating their children on matters of sex.
6. Religious guilt differs in measurable amounts according to denomination.

This ground-breaking study surveyed over 14,500 secularists about their sex lives. This first of its kind survey looks at attitudes and behavior related to sexuality and religion including religious sexual guilt, parenting behavior, sex education and sexual satisfaction before and after leaving religion.

The most important finding shows dramatic improvement in sexual satisfaction and a decrease in guilt after people left religion. Approximately 55%% of respondents said their sex life greatly improved to an 8, 9 or 10 (on a 10 pt. scale) after leaving religion while only 2.2% said it became worse.

The primary findings show that people who are religious have a good deal of guilt about sex and sexuality but their behavior is about the same as the non-religious. Guilt is a key component of religious attitudes about sex but actual behavior, whether first masturbation, first oral sex, first intercourse, etc. do not change appreciably with religiosity.

The US government has been deeply involved in abstinence only education for almost 10 years. The government's own research shows that such programs do not work or at best, delay the onset of sexual behavior by months. Results of this survey closely mirror those of abstinence only programs. Children from religious homes don't delay sexual activities appreciably but they feel guilty about doing it and probably know less about sex and protecting themselves, than their secular counterparts.

One key finding was a clear pattern of improvement in sexual satisfaction depending on former religious affiliation. (See chart below) Those leaving high guilt religions showed the most improvement in their sex life.

The study found guilt to be measurably different depending on the denomination. This may sound obvious, but no one has actually tried to measure this before. The study concluded that Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventists, and Baptists are among the most guilt driven of religions with Unitarians, Atheists and Episcopalians being among the least.

In the US, many religious leaders are against sex education in schools and insist that parents and churches should be primarily responsible. Results of this survey show parents, whether religious or not, are not particularly good at talking to their children. More secular parents do talk to their children 38% of the time to a mere 13% of religious parents. People from religious homes felt that their education in sex was poor compared to those from less religious homes.

Most religions preach strongly against pornography so it is reasonable to think that porn use would be less among the more religious. This survey found that porn use is quite high in all groups and is a key source of sex education for religious teens. The most religious teens said they got their sex education from porn 33% of the time, the less religious 25.2% of the time. The survey found that 90% of men were using

pornography by age 21 with no significant difference between those most and least religious. For women, over 50% were using porn by age 21 and 70% at age 30, with little difference between most and least religious.

Religions teach against sex before marriage, but the survey found that differences between the most and least religious was negligible. Most important, religious teens said they got their sexual education from personal experience 50.2% compared to 42.4% for the less religious. In other words, children raised most religious are experimenting with sex more than those raised non-religious.

Women and men saw equal improvement after religion. Those who felt their sex life was worse gave revealing comments like:

"Since leaving religion, I have not had a physical or emotional relationship with my wife."

"Since becoming an atheist I have not met anyone who does not have some religious or 'spiritual' belief system. As a result, life is very lonely. I am proactively meeting new single members of the opposite sex, in an effort to find someone who does not believe in the supernatural."

Some said that religion contributed to marital problems. Those married to very religious people had the least satisfying sex lives and reported many restrictions on what was allowed, even if they had been married many years.

"Once, my wife came home from Church and announced that there will be no more oral sex because the priest said oral sex was a sodomy and she should not practice it."

"His religiosity prevents us from having honest discussion. I feel like there is an unseen wall between us now.

The researchers expected to find those who left religion with residual effects of guilt for years after. Surprisingly, those who had been out of religion for several years reported few residual effects with great sexual satisfaction. Many indicated that leaving religion had a strong positive impact on their sexual satisfaction.

The study concludes that "biology happens" and people will have sex regardless of religious training. Religious parents do a poor job of educating their children leaving them without the tools to make good decisions. That religious people have more guilt about sex but do it just as much. That the effects of religion wear off fairly quickly for most people once they leave religion entirely. Finally, leaving religion improves sexual satisfaction dramatically for most people.

The full report can be downloaded at www.IPCpress.com on or after May 15, 2011. Dr. Ray is available for comment, discussion or interviews.

About the principal researchers:

Dr. Darrel W. Ray, is a psychologist, director of The Institute for Performance Culture and author of the best selling book The God Virus: How Religion Infects Our Lives and Culture and author of two books on organizational psychology. In his career he has been interviewed for the Wall Street Journal, ABC News Nightline, and many other media sources. He has spoken throughout North America as well as Ireland and the UK. His new book, Sex and God: How Religion Distorts Sexuality will be released in late 2011. Amanda Brown is an undergraduate at Kansas University studying sex and sexuality.

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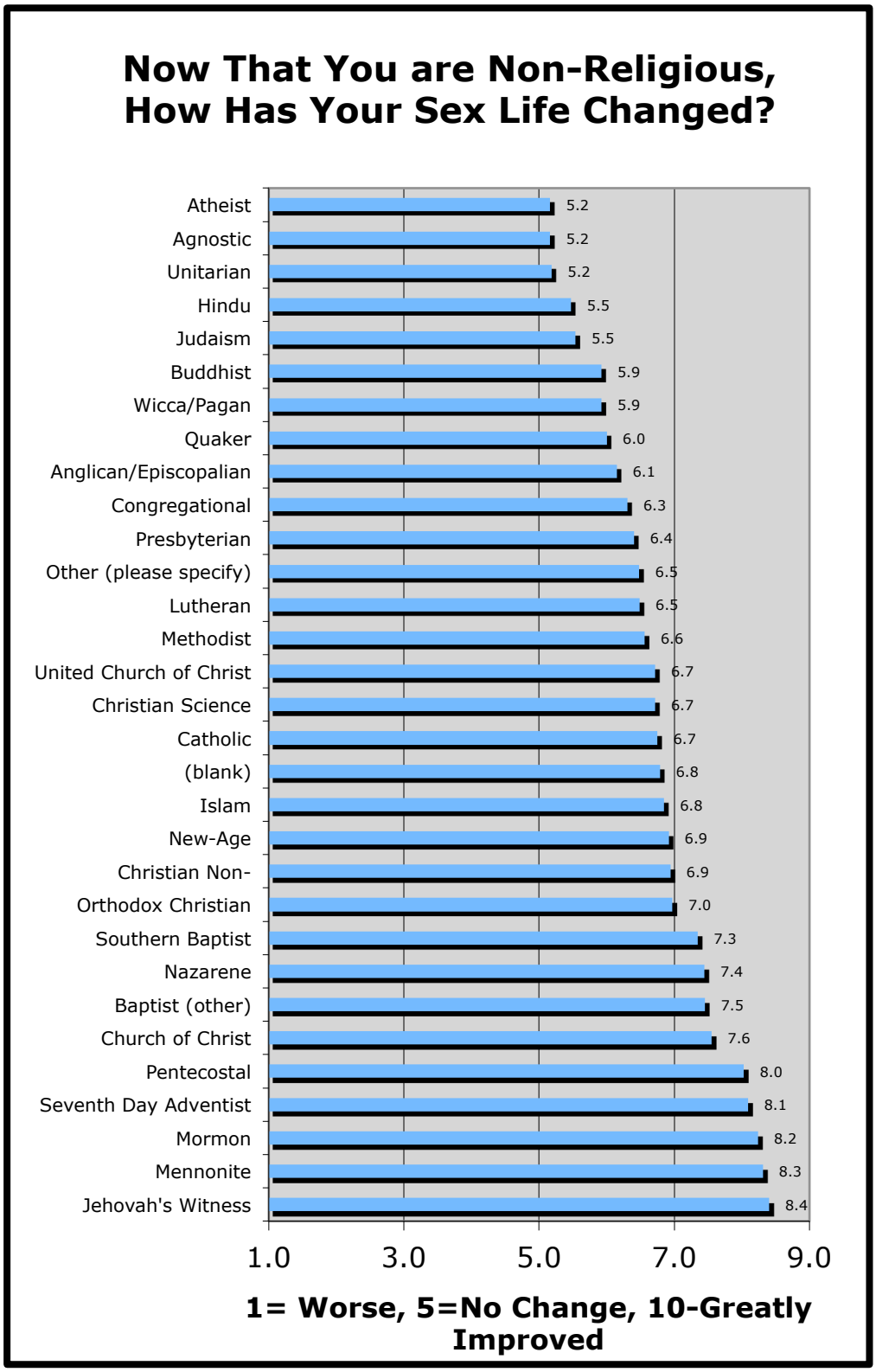
Now That You are Non-Religious, How Has Your Sex Life Changed?
Atheist 5.2
Agnostic 5.2
Unitarian 5.2
Hindu 5.5
Judaism 5.5
Buddhist 5.9
Wicca/Pagan 5.9
Quaker 6.0
Anglican/Episcopalian 6.1
Congregational 6.3
Presbyterian 6.4
Other (please specify) 6.5
Lutheran 6.5
Methodist 6.6
United Church of Christ 6.7
Christian Science 6.7
Catholic 6.7
(blank) 6.8
Islam 6.8
New-Age 6.9
Christian Non- 6.9
Orthodox Christian 7.0
Southern Baptist 7.3
Nazarene 7.4
Baptist (other) 7.5
Church of Christ 7.6
Pentecostal 8.0
Seventh Day Adventist 8.1
Mormon 8.2
Mennonite 8.3
Jehovah's Witness 8.4
1.0
3.0
5.0
7.0
9.0
1= Worse, 5=No Change, 10-Greatly Improved