

# Study reveals some crimes go up when it rains on Sundays

December 8, 2021

WASHINGTON (RNS)—A study from the *Review of Economics and Statistics* found the more it rains on Sunday mornings, the more white-collar, drug- and alcohol-related crimes there are.

More rain means fewer people go to church, said the study's author, Jonathan Moreno-Medina, assistant professor of economics at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

The decline in church attendance is correlated with an increase in yearly rates of arrests for certain kinds of crime, including embezzlement, fraud, drug possession and driving under the influence.

"The results suggest that church attendance reduces the prevalence of substance-related crimes and white-collar crimes," the study found. "At the same time, there is a lack of evidence supporting the notion that church attendance alleviates serious crimes, such as murder, robbery or rape."

Moreno-Medina said he long has been interested in discussions about the impact religion has on the broader culture. Some people argue religion can solve all of society's problems, he said. Others argue religion is irrelevant.

For this new study, titled "Sinning in the Rain," he was hoping new data sources, such as Google's Popular Times, would allow him to measure changes in religious behavior and to see what effects those changes had.

He also relied on the American Time Use Survey, which helped him identify when people are at church, usually on Sunday mornings. He then looked at rainfall during those times as well as arrest rates overall, curious to see

what he would find.

“I didn’t know what exactly I should expect,” he said.

## **Multiple factors affect crime rates**

Moreno-Medina said a number of factors, including weather, have been shown to affect crime rates. For example, he said, hotter weather sometimes is correlated with more violent crimes. The calendar also plays a role: Other studies have found that fewer crimes occur on Sundays than on other days of the week.

“It can readily be corroborated that Sundays are the days when fewest crimes are committed and that there is no jump in crime right after the time of church,” Moreno-Medina argues in the study.

A number of previous studies have found a connection between crime and religious behavior. In 2018, a group of sociologists looked at 40 years of studies about the impact of religion on crime and found “certain aspects of religion reduce participation in criminal activity.”

“In addition,” the study concluded, “the specific ways in which these factors are associated with crime reduction have not been comprehensively identified.”

A 2008 study in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* found the repeal of so-called blue laws—which limited commercial activity on Sundays—led to increased drug and alcohol use. And a 2006 study in the *Journal of Law and Economics* found crime rates go up slightly after Easter, at a time when people are most likely to go to church.

Growing up religious also has been associated with better health outcomes, as has regular participation in religious services.

Moreno-Medina takes a middle road when it comes to the relationship between religion and crime. At least in his study, he noted, less church attendance seemed to have no impact on more violent kinds of crime. And while religion is important, he said, it's not a cure-all.

"I don't want to push it to say that this study is showing that religion is required for our community to be able to live in harmony," he said.