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## **Religious Affiliation and Family Formation in Post-Soviet Central Asia**

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### **Abstract**

The breakup of the former Soviet Union and independence in the Central Asian states created a natural experiment on the impact of market reform on economic, social, and political development. It also created a natural experiment on the impact of religious freedom on social and economic behavior. Under the Soviet system, religion was not openly practiced, and within schools atheism was the philosophical slant of the curriculum. Today religion is openly practiced in all countries but with restrictions. An interesting and policy relevant question is whether the open practice of religion has motivated change within the family. In this paper we explore one broad dimension of behavior - family formation - and try to determine whether the influence of religion on marital status, fertility, and contraceptive use has evolved over time in the region.