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## Beyond denomination: The relationship between religion and family planning in rural Malawi

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### Abstract

Despite the centrality of religion and fertility to life in rural Africa, the relationship between the two remains poorly understood. The study presented here uses unique integrated individual- and congregational-level data from rural Malawi to examine religious influences on contraceptive use. In this religiously diverse population, we find evidence that the particular characteristics of a congregation—leader's positive attitudes toward family planning and discussion of sexual morality, which do not fall along broad denominational lines—are more relevant than denominational categories for predicting women's contraceptive use. We further find evidence for a relationship between religious socialization and contraceptive behavior.

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