

Latter-day Saint Religiousness, Well-Being, and Retention in the United States

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**WORKING PAPER**

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## Executive Summary

This report comes at a time of growth for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as high levels of engagement in the Church Educational System. This is true even as broad trends of religious disengagement have negatively impacted overall Church retention rates. Recent decades have seen more and more individuals disengaging with institutions across the board and religious institutions have not been spared (though disengagement appears to be leveling off). For this report we draw on multiple large data sets to explore religiousness, well-being, and retention of Latter-day Saints within this overall context. Data show Latter-day Saints have relatively high levels in these areas even as the United States has experienced a general decline in religious activity. According to the Pew Religious Landscape Survey (2024), Latter-day Saints have the highest rate of church attendance of any religion and the highest rate of personal scripture reading and parents praying or reading scripture with their children. Latter-day Saints are also amongst the highest in their well-being, indicating high levels of feeling “a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being” and being “very happy with life.” These trends also hold for Latter-day Saint Millennial+ (combining Millennials and Gen Z) who are highly involved in their religion.

The Pew Religious Landscape Survey (2024) and the Spiritual Seismology Survey (2025) were used to examine national trends of Latter-day Saint retention. In these surveys, “retention” was defined as the percentage of those raised Latter-day Saint who continue to identify as Latter-day Saint in adulthood. Based on these two surveys, the retention rate today is approximately 50%. This rate is higher than all other Christian denominations, except Catholics who have a slightly higher rate. However, when examining those who were raised in a religion and actively participate in that religion as adults (attending religious services at least monthly) Latter-day Saints had the highest percentage of “active” retention of all religions at 42%. Relative to other faiths, very few Latter-day Saints attend less than monthly and still continue to identify with their faith—that is, Latter-day Saints are less likely to be “nominal” members of their faith. Latter-day Saints today are also much less likely to be “nominal” members than in the past—that is, they typically do not identify with the Church if they do not attend church, which impacts trends of deidentification.

In the 1980s the identification rate was 82% but dropped to 58% by the 2000s. It has been at 46% in the years since. Millennial+ had the greatest drop from just over 60% in the 2000s to just above 40% in the 2010s. Although retention may have decreased, given high conversion and births rates, it is unsurprising that overall membership is growing. Further, Latter-day Saints are one of the least likely religious groups to lose Millennial+ members. In terms of identifying as a Latter-day Saint and also regularly attending church, Latter-day Saints are retaining active Millennial+ members at a higher rate than all other Christian denominations except Adventists.

Family Foundations of Youth Development (2016-2024) data were used to examine what factors during the mid-teen years predicted deidentifying from The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints in the later-teen years and the early 20s. The most significant predictors of deidentifying included political identification and not feeling God's presence daily. This relationship between political ideology and religious retention is consistent across religions in the United States today.

Many of those who deidentify, however, continue to be religious and some return to religion. Using the Latter-day Saint Seismology data, of those raised Latter-day Saint who no longer identified as an adult, one-third switched to another Christian denomination, another third identified as "nothing in particular," and one-fourth identified as Atheist/Agnostic. Further, statistical analyses indicated four "groups" of former Latter-day Saints based on their feelings about the importance of religion and spirituality, warmth towards Latter-day Saints, and religious beliefs. Two of the groups, "Faith Keepers" (22%) and "Faith Leaners" (32%), continued to feel religion was an important part of their lives and had relatively warm feelings towards Latter-day Saints. The other two groups, Faith Distant (36%) and Faith Rejectors (10%), indicated religion was not at all important to them.

The dramatic shift in religious identification in the United States, with historically high rates of people deidentifying from the religion they were raised in, also appears to influence members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Not feeling God's presence in one's life and political ideology appears to be an important predictor of deidentification.

Although retention is not as high as it once was, Latter-day Saints remain in a remarkably strong position across every major indicator of religious life. They lead the nation in church attendance, personal and family religious practice, and active retention, including among Millennials and Gen Z. They also report some of the highest levels of spiritual peace and well-being, and very few remain only nominally affiliated.

## Introduction

Amidst the rapidly changing religious landscape, this report examines the religiousness, well-being, and retention of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the United States, making comparisons across religions and generations. This allows us to examine Latter-day Saints relative to other faiths and the extent to which broader cultural changes in religiousness have shaped younger generations relative to older generations. We specifically address the following questions: What is going on with Latter-day Saints in their religiousness, well-being, and retention? How do they compare with those of other faiths? How do the youngest generations of Latter-day Saints (Millennials and Gen Z) compare with those of other faiths and with previous generations?

Part of the shifting religious landscape is the shifting general social landscape. In 2000, Robert Putnam noted decreased participation in nearly all institutions since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Updating this work over two decades later, Putnam found the same trends continuing to today<sup>2</sup>. As he put it, after the 1960s, “virtually all our measures show a steady, unrelenting decline in social connectedness over the last half century.”<sup>3</sup> A recent Pew Research Center study found the proportion of U.S. not identifying as religious increased from 16% in 2007 to 29% in 2024.<sup>4</sup> And yet, there are some indications that the increase in the percentages of those with no religious affiliation has leveled off and may be decreasing.<sup>5</sup> And while connections to religious institutions have been in decline, declines in spiritual beliefs have not been as dramatic. As Smith argues: “While traditional religion has declined in the United States, it has not been replaced by sheer secularism.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, while older generations are substantially more “traditionally religious” than younger generations (e.g., affiliating with a religion, attending religious services), there is a relatively small gap between generations on other measures of spirituality such as believing people have a spirit or that there is a spiritual nature to the world.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time as these societal changes, recent reports find several positive indexes of Latter-day Saint religiousness including record numbers of: convert baptisms,<sup>8</sup> branches, wards,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 1st ed. (Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Putnam and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again* (Simon & Schuster, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Putnam and Garrett, *The Upswing*, 162.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory A Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 2025, 80.

<sup>5</sup> Ryan Burge, “Have We Reached Peak None?,” March 4, 2024, <https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/have-we-reached-peak-none>; Gregory A. Smith, *Religion Holds Steady in America* (Pew Research Center, 2025), <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2025/12/08/religion-holds-steady-in-america/>.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete: The Demise of Traditional Faith in America* (Oxford University Press, 2025), 368.

<sup>7</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 18–19.

<sup>8</sup> Quentin L Cook, “The Lord Is Hastening His Work,” October 2025, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/eng/general-conference/2025/10/27cook>.

stakes, temples,<sup>9</sup> and enrollment in the Church Educational System.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of this report is to examine additional trends in Latter-day Saint religiousness, well-being, and retention across time and generations, with comparisons to those of other faiths. And by doing so, discuss Latter-day Saints today in context of previous decades as well the broader religious landscape.

This report relies on five datasets: The General Social Survey (GSS) years 1977–2022, the 2024 Pew Religious Landscape Study (PRLS), The Cooperative Elections Survey (CES), the 2025 Spiritual Seismology Survey (SSS), and the Family Foundations of Youth Development Study (FFYD) years 2016–2024. The GSS, PRLS, CES, and SSS are nationally representative data sources. However, these datasets do not follow the same people over time and are therefore unable to capture how individuals change over the years. For example, when examining those who deidentify from a religion, cross-sectional studies can only examine their characteristics *after* the deidentification. In contrast, the FFYD surveyed the same individuals every other year from 2016 to 2024 (from approximately ages 13 to 21). For those who deidentified during these years, the FFYD has pre and post deidentification data, providing some insight into their characteristics before and after they deidentified. The FFYD has approximately 2,000 youth (along with one parent from each household) who live in Utah, Arizona, and California. Drawing on all five datasets allows us to more accurately describe and understand current religious behaviors, beliefs, well-being, and belonging of Latter-day Saints.

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<sup>9</sup> Scott Taylor, “2024 Statistical Report of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,” Church News, April 5, 2025, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/general-conference/2025/04/05/april-2025-church-statistical-report-2024/>.

<sup>10</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “The Growth and Momentum of the Church Educational System,” Newsroom.Churchofjesuschrist.Org, September 25, 2023, <http://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/growth-momentum-church-educational-system>.

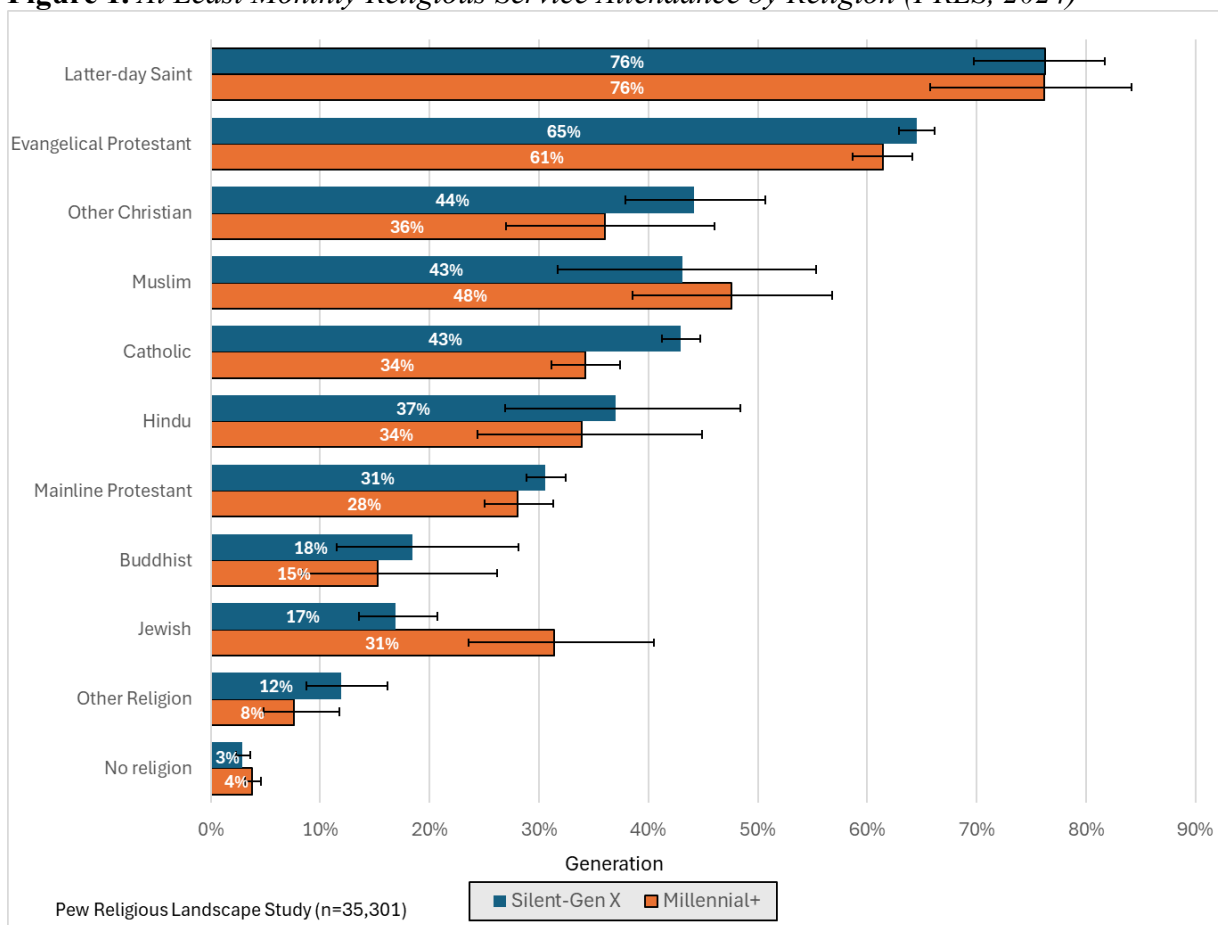
## Religiousness

### Religious Practices

#### *Religious Service Attendance*

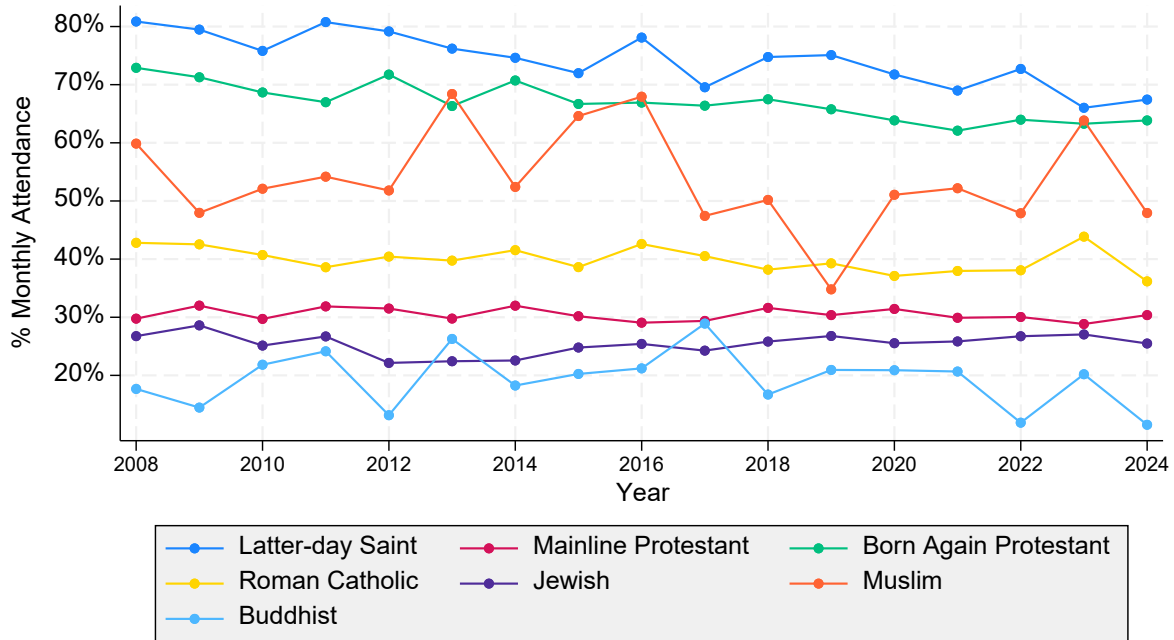
Attendance at church religious services is a key marker of religiousness. Using the PRLS, we find that 76% of Latter-day Saint Millennial+ and those of earlier generations attend religious services at least monthly, more than all other religious groups surveyed (fig. 1). The next closest are Evangelicals at 61% of Millennial+ and 65% of previous generations. Interestingly, Millennial+ Muslims and Jews have higher rates of religious service attendance than previous generations.

**Figure 1.** *At Least Monthly Religious Service Attendance by Religion (PRLS, 2024)*



CES data find that Latter-day Saints have maintained the highest rates of church attendance throughout the period of religious decline in the United States. Fig. 2 displays the percentage of those attending religious services at least monthly since 2008. While Latter-day Saints have experienced a decrease in this percentage over time (from just above 80% in 2008 to just below 70% in 2024<sup>11</sup>), they remain the highest at each timepoint. Notably, these data also indicate a downward trend in religious attendance for most religions.

**Figure 2.** *Changes in Adult Religious Attendance by Religion Over Time (CES 2008-2024)*

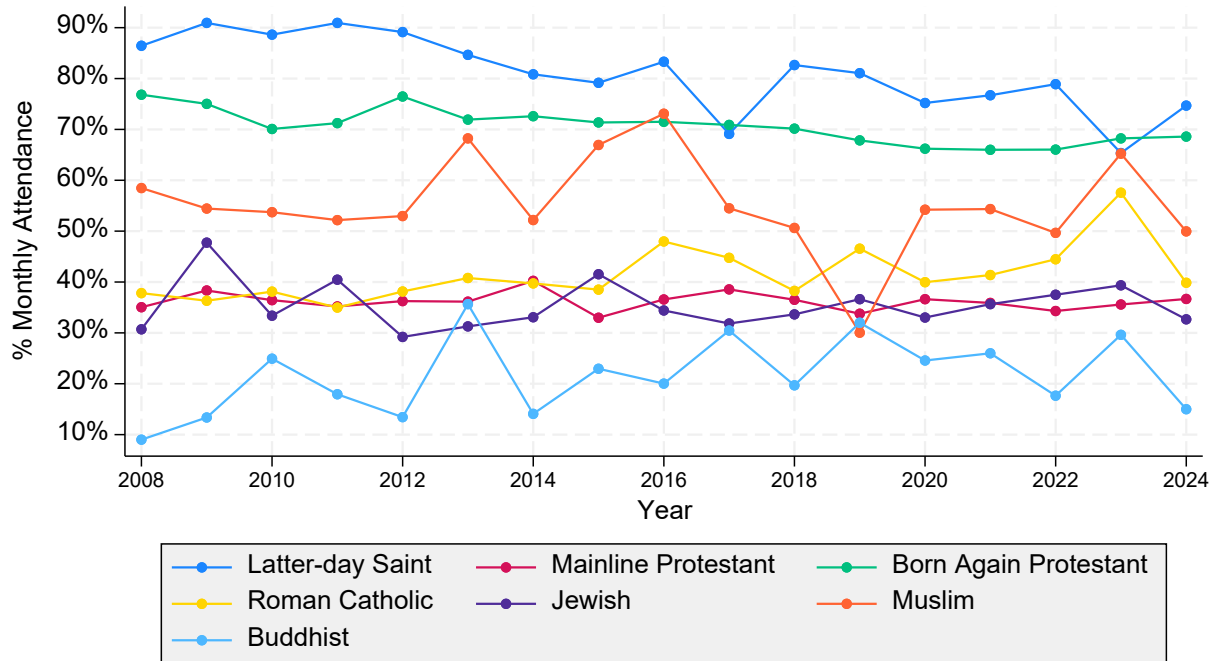


Cooperative Election Study: (n=394,801)

<sup>11</sup> Note this CES number differs from the PRLS. This may be due to several factors, though the 95% confidence interval of the PRLS data (see fig. 1) includes 70%. Thus, 70% reported by CES would not be statistically different from the PRLS number.

We also examine religious attendance over time for younger generations of Latter-day Saints, Millennial+. As indicated by CES data (fig. 3), approximately 70%-90% of Latter-day Saint Millennial+ have attended church at least monthly from 2008 to 2024, the years of greatest religious decline in the United States. Born Again Protestants<sup>12</sup> had the second highest level of religious service attendance across time.

**Figure 3.** *Changes in Millennial+ Religious Attendance by Religion Over Time (CES, 2008-2024)*



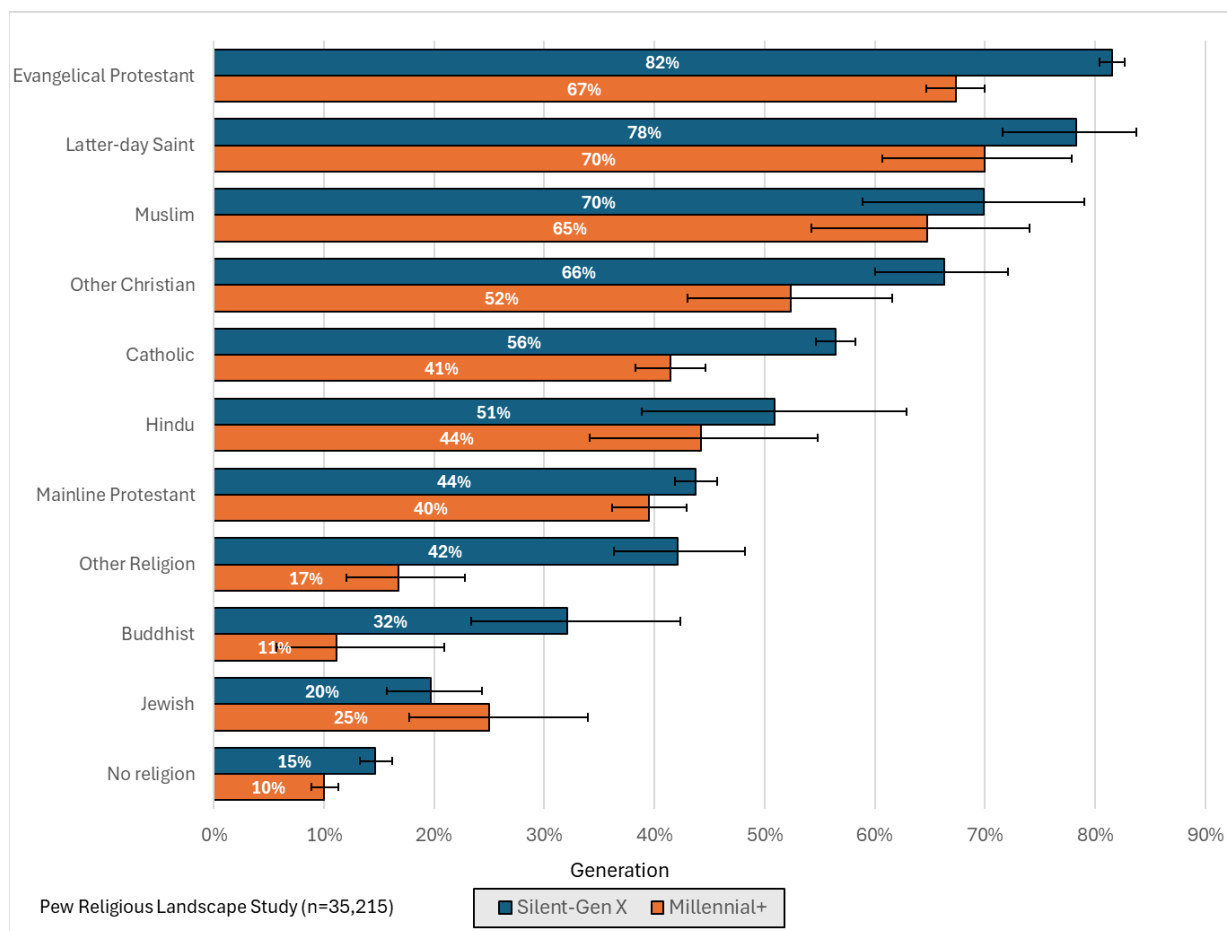
Cooperative Election Study: (n=91,231)

<sup>12</sup> PRLS and CES datasets use different terminology to refer to similar groups. “Born again” and “Evangelical” are often used synonymously. However, to be as accurate as possible, here we chose to keep each survey’s language.

## *Prayer and Scripture Reading*

Latter-day Saints have also maintained robust resilience in private religious behaviors at a time when these are becoming less widely practiced. For example, the percentage of Americans who say they pray daily has dropped significantly since 2007 but hovered around 44% since 2021.<sup>13</sup> In comparison, the most recent Pew Religious Landscape Study found that 70% of Latter-day Saint Millennial+ pray daily with 78% of those of previous generations praying daily (fig. 4).<sup>14</sup> This is statistically tied with Evangelical Protestants at 67% (Millennial+) and 82% (earlier generations).

**Figure 4.** *Daily Prayer by Religion and Generation (PRLS, 2024)*

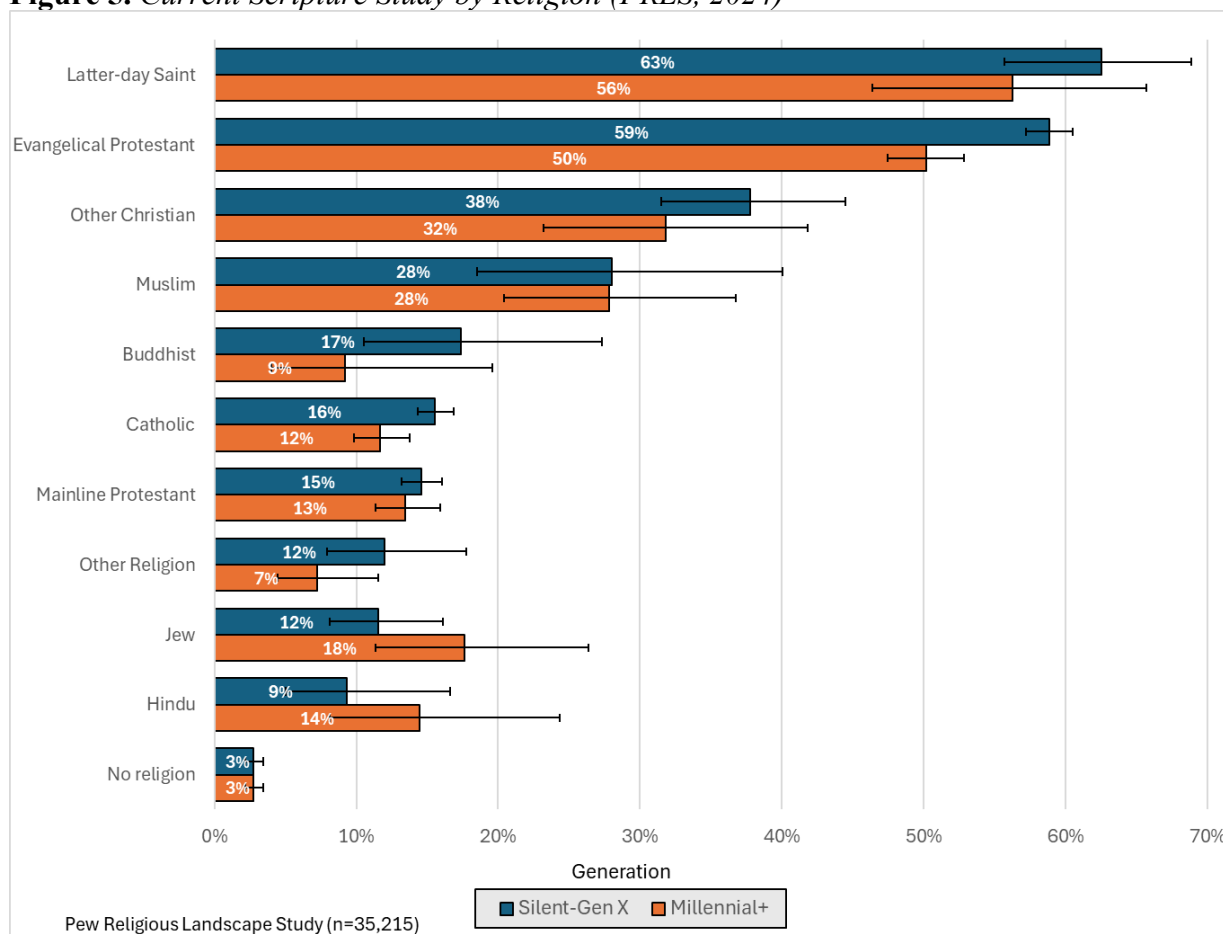


<sup>13</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 180.

<sup>14</sup> PRLS questions: “Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray?”

Latter-day Saints also have the highest rate of reading scripture at least weekly<sup>15</sup> (fig. 5. 56% Millennial+, 63% earlier generations) followed by Evangelicals (50% and 59%) and “other Christians” (32% and 38%).

**Figure 5. Current Scripture Study by Religion (PRLS, 2024)**

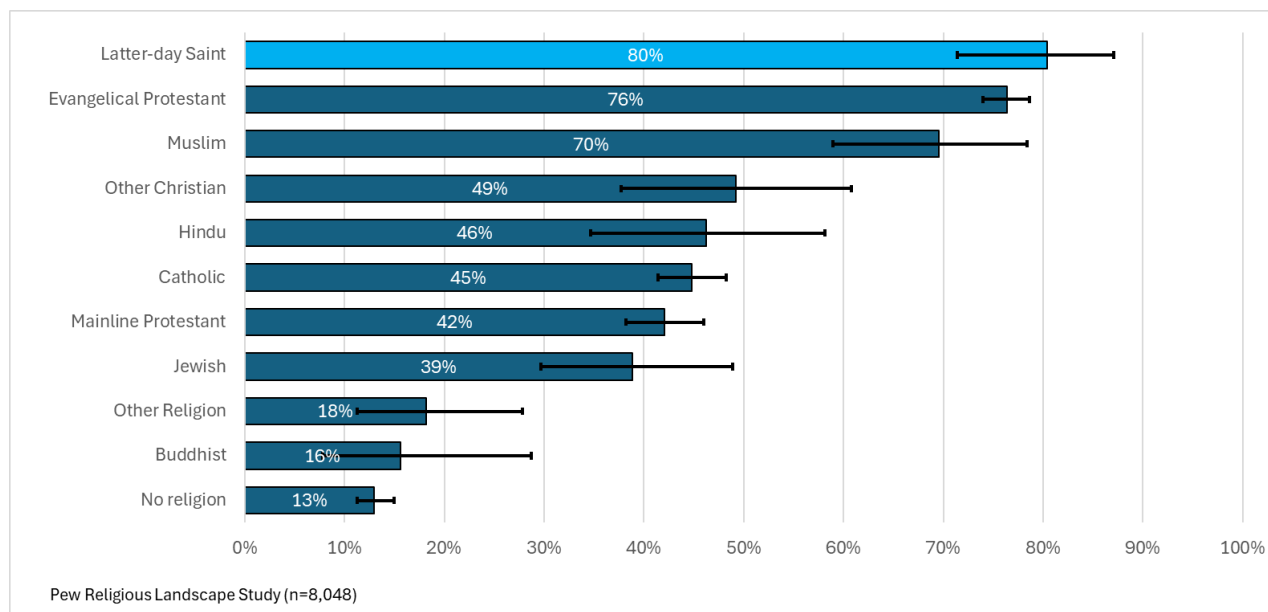


<sup>15</sup> PRLS question: “How often do you read scripture outside of religious services?”

### *Parents Praying or Reading Scripture with their Children*

A full 80% of Latter-day Saint parents pray and/or read scriptures with their children<sup>16</sup>, the highest of any religious group (fig. 6) with Evangelicals at 76% and Muslims at 70%. The next closest are “Other Christian” more than 20% lower at 49%.

**Figure 6.** *Parents Praying or Reading Scriptures with their Children by Religion (PRLS, 2024)*



<sup>16</sup> PRLS question: “Do you pray or read scripture with any of your children?” (yes/no response)

### ***Youth Religious Practices***

The above analyses include only adults. However, FFYD data allow us to examine these levels for youth (ages 12 to 18) across religion (see Table 1). Similar to findings for adults, Latter-day Saint youth have the highest rates of religious service attendance, daily prayer, and daily scripture reading than their peers of other faiths.

**Table 1.** *Youth Religious Practices Across Religions (FFYD, 2020)*

<b>Religious Behavior</b>	<b>Latter-day Saint %</b>	<b>Protestant<sup>b</sup> %</b>	<b>Catholic %</b>	<b>Other Religion %</b>	<b>Total %</b>
Monthly Religious Service Attendance <sup>a</sup>	90.3	67.6	50.3	29.5	79.2
Daily Prayer	58.6	35.8	18.4	19.7	48.5
Daily Scripture Reading	36.5	14.2	5.5	6.6	28.0
# of youth	875	176	163	61	1,275

<sup>a</sup> If COVID restrictions were in place for worship attendance, participants were asked to respond to before the restrictions.

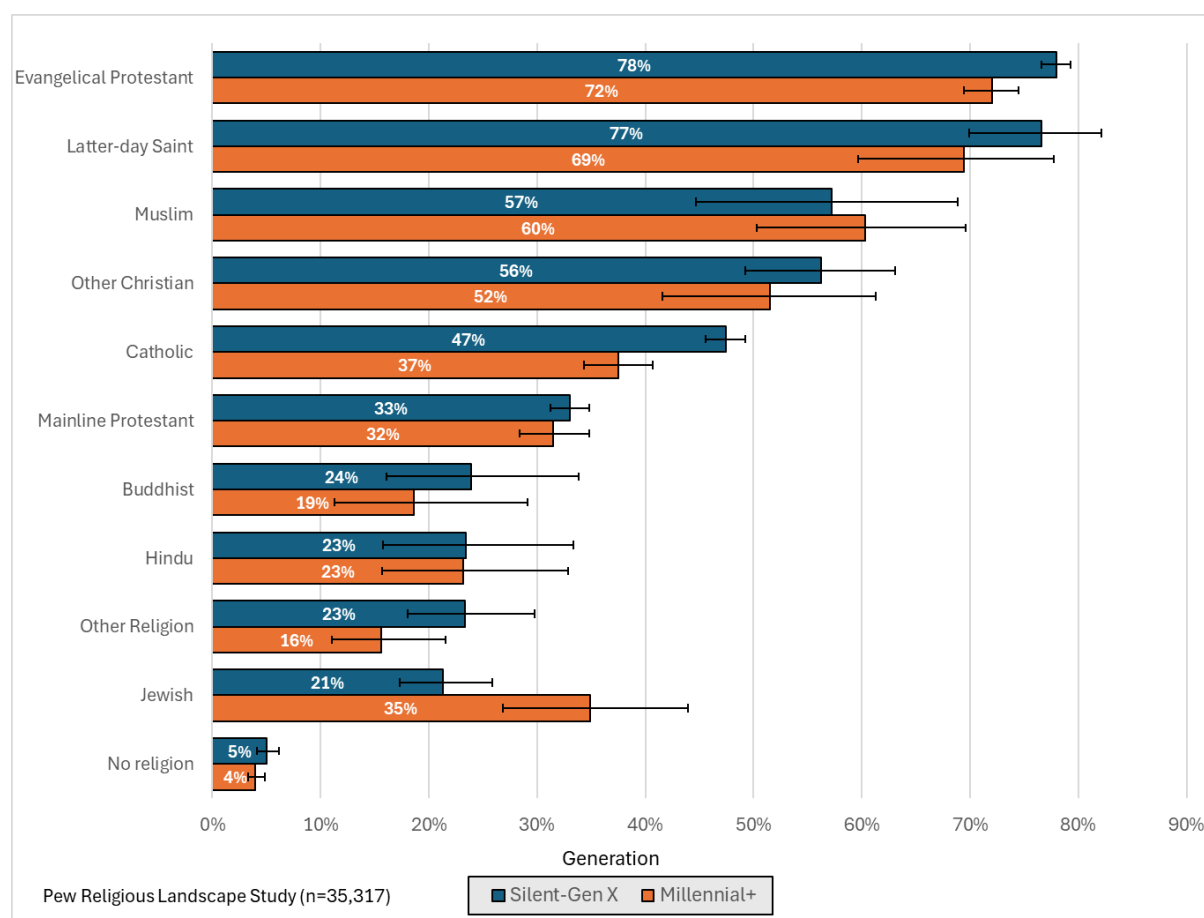
<sup>b</sup> There were too few Protestants to separate Evangelical and Mainline.

## Importance of Religion

### *Importance of Religion by Religion and Generation*

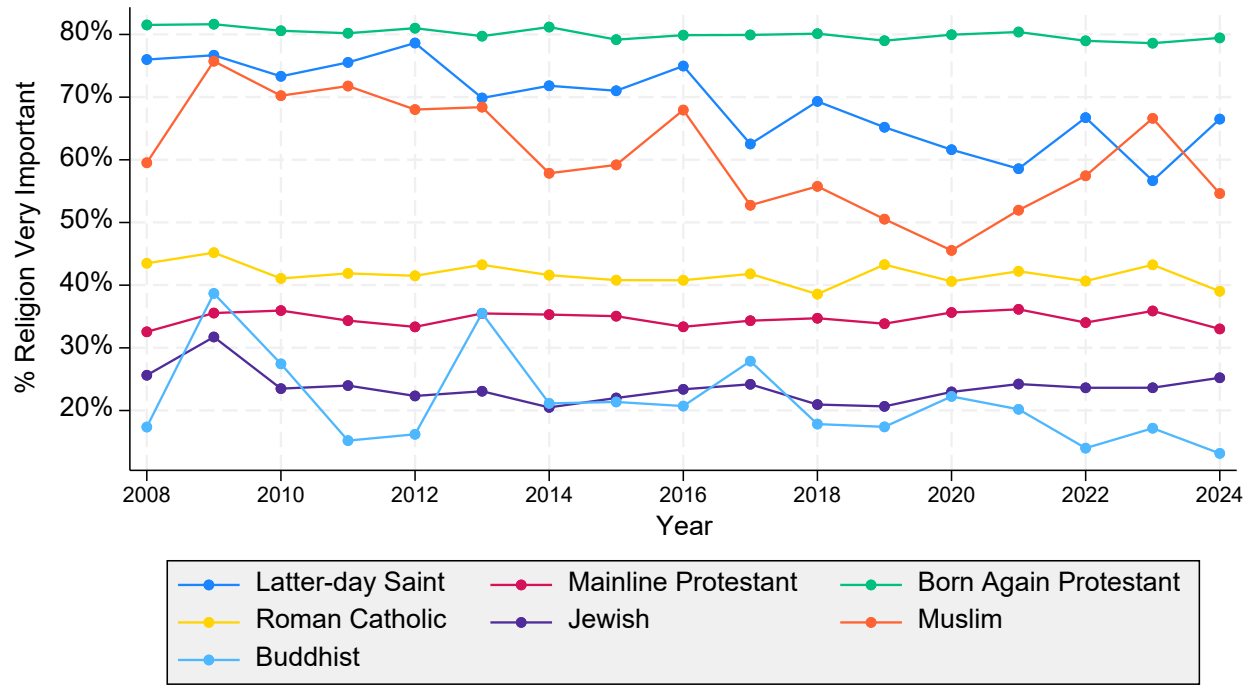
Using PRLS data we examined the percentage of Millennial+ and earlier generations who feel religion is “very important” in their lives (fig. 7). For Latter-day Saints, 69% of Millennial+ and 77% of earlier generations felt religion was “very important” to them. This is second to Evangelicals, though (given the 95% confidence intervals) not statistically different from them. Latter-day Saints and Evangelicals are substantially higher than every other religious group. Similar to religious service attendance, Millennial+ are lower than earlier generations for each religion except Muslims and Jews.

**Figure 7.** *Percentage of Those who Feel Religion is “Very Important” in Their Life (PRLS, 2024).*



Using CES data (fig. 8), we made comparisons across religious groups and time in the percentage of those who feel “religion is very important.” Born Again Protestants have the highest percentage, followed by Latter-day Saints. Although still high, it appears Latter-day Saints may be decreasing more than Born Again Protestants. Several other religious groups such as Roman Catholics and Mainline Protestants are relatively steady across time, though substantially lower than Latter-day Saints. For example, Roman Catholics remain steady in the percentage who think religion is very important to them, yet their levels are more than 20% lower than Latter-day Saints.

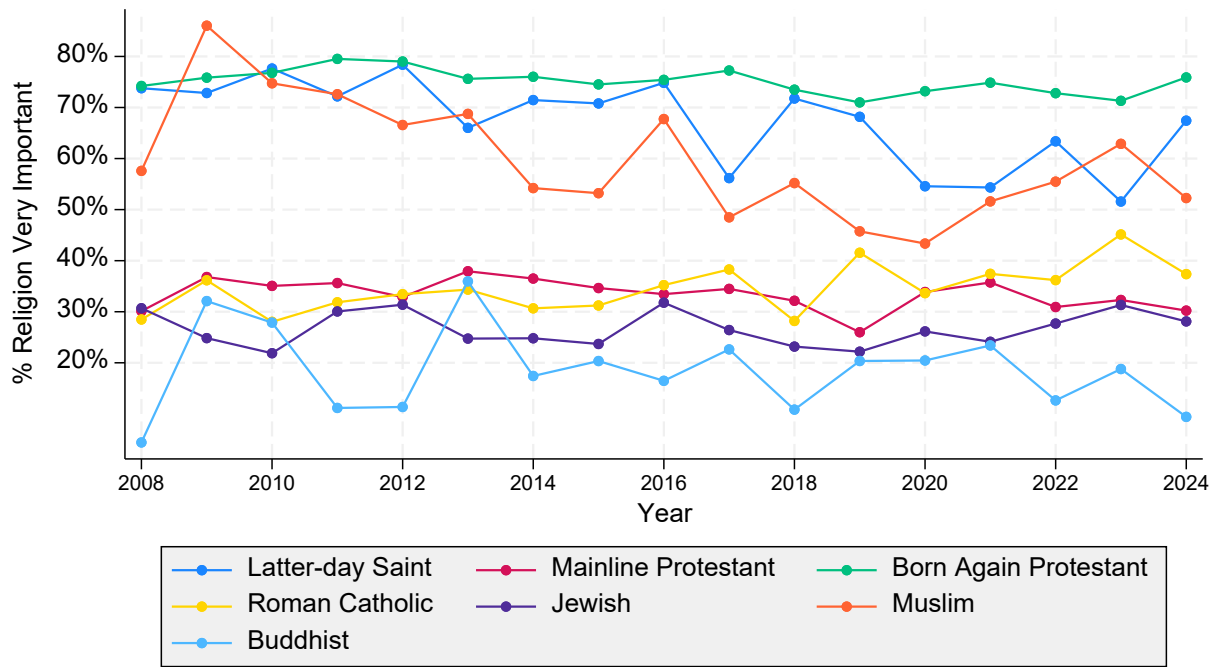
**Figure 8.** *Percentage Who Feel Religion is Very Important in their Lives (CES, 2008-2024)*



Cooperative Election Study (n=390,784)

When comparing Millennial+ across religions and years (fig. 8), Evangelical Protestants are the highest in feeling religion is very important followed by Latter-day Saints and then Muslims (though, occasionally Muslims are higher than Latter-day Saints). All others are 10% or more lower than these religious groups.

**Figure 8.** *Percentage of Millennial+ Who Feel Religion is Very Important in their Lives by Latter-day Saint and Protestant Denominations (CES, 2008-2024)*

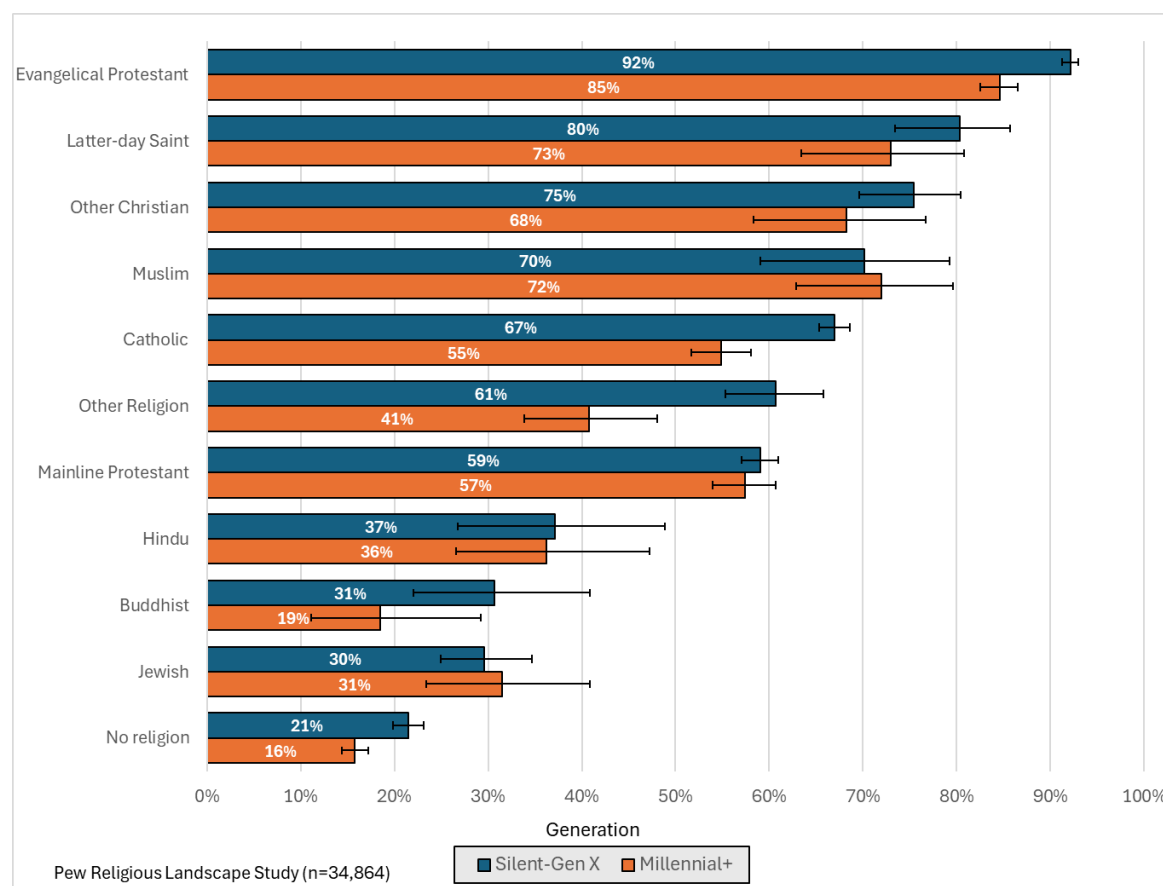


Cooperative Election Study (n=90,680)

## Religious Beliefs

PRLS was used to examine how various beliefs differed across religions and generations. For example, Evangelicals had the highest rate of being “absolutely certain” there is a God or universal spirit<sup>17</sup> follow by Latter-day Saints with 73% absolute certainty (fig. 9).

Figure 9. Percentage that are “Absolutely Certain” there is a God or Universal Spirit by Religion and Generation (PRLS, 2024).



<sup>17</sup> PRLS question was: “Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?” followed by the question “How certain are you about this belief?” Reported is the percentage that indicated they are “Absolutely Certain.”

Using the PRLS we also made comparisons in religious beliefs between Millennial+ Latter-day Saints and older generations of Latter-day Saints (Table 2). For the most part, previous generations of Latter-day Saints are higher in these beliefs than Millennial+ Latter-day Saints. The largest difference is that previous generations are 18% higher than Millennial+ in the Bible being “extremely” important in their lives. Interestingly, Millennial+ are slightly more likely to believe that people have a soul or spirit. Overall, the highest scores are beliefs in heaven, that God is good and loves them, and that Jesus died for their sins. All these are above 85%.

**Table 2.** *Latter-day Saint Religious Beliefs (PRLS, 2024; SSS, 2025)*

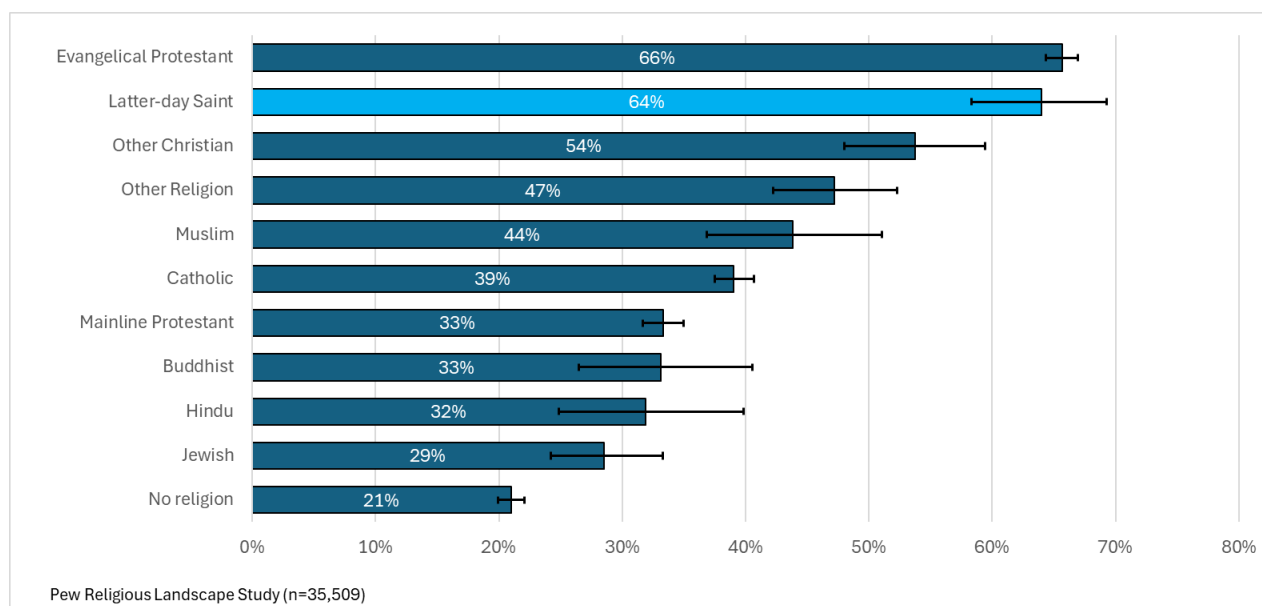
<i>Religious Beliefs</i>	<b>Latter-day Saints born pre-1980</b>	<b>Millennial+ Latter-day Saints</b>
“Absolutely certain” belief in God	80.3	73.0
Religious teachings and beliefs are extremely important in determining right and wrong	58.9	49.1
Believe in heaven	95.7	88.8
Believe in hell	59.8	51.5
Believe people have a soul or spirit	96.8	98.2
The Bible is “extremely” important in their life	57.1	39.3
God is good and loves me (somewhat agree or strongly agree)	91.1	85.0
Jesus died for my sins (somewhat agree or strongly agree)	90.2	85.8

*Note.* All from PRLS except the “God is good and loves me” and “Jesus died for my sins” which are from the SSS data.

## Well-being

The PRLS found that Evangelicals and Latter-day Saints similarly high in feeling “a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being” at least once a week<sup>18</sup> (fig. 10). They were also among the most likely to say their family life is “very good or excellent,”<sup>19</sup> surpassed only slightly by Hindus and Jews (fig. 11) though not statistically different (differences within the 95% confidence interval).

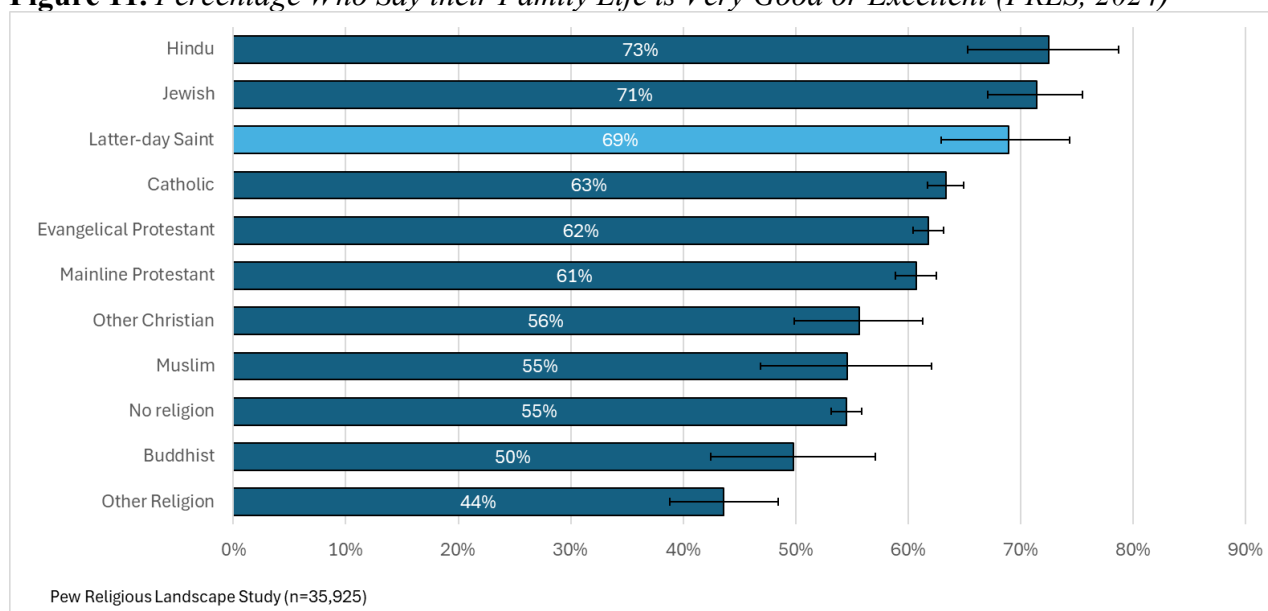
**Figure 10.** *Percentage Who Feel a Deep Sense of Spiritual Peace and Well-being at least Once a Week (PRLS, 2024)*



<sup>18</sup> PRLS question: “How often do you feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being?” with “At least once a week” as a response category.

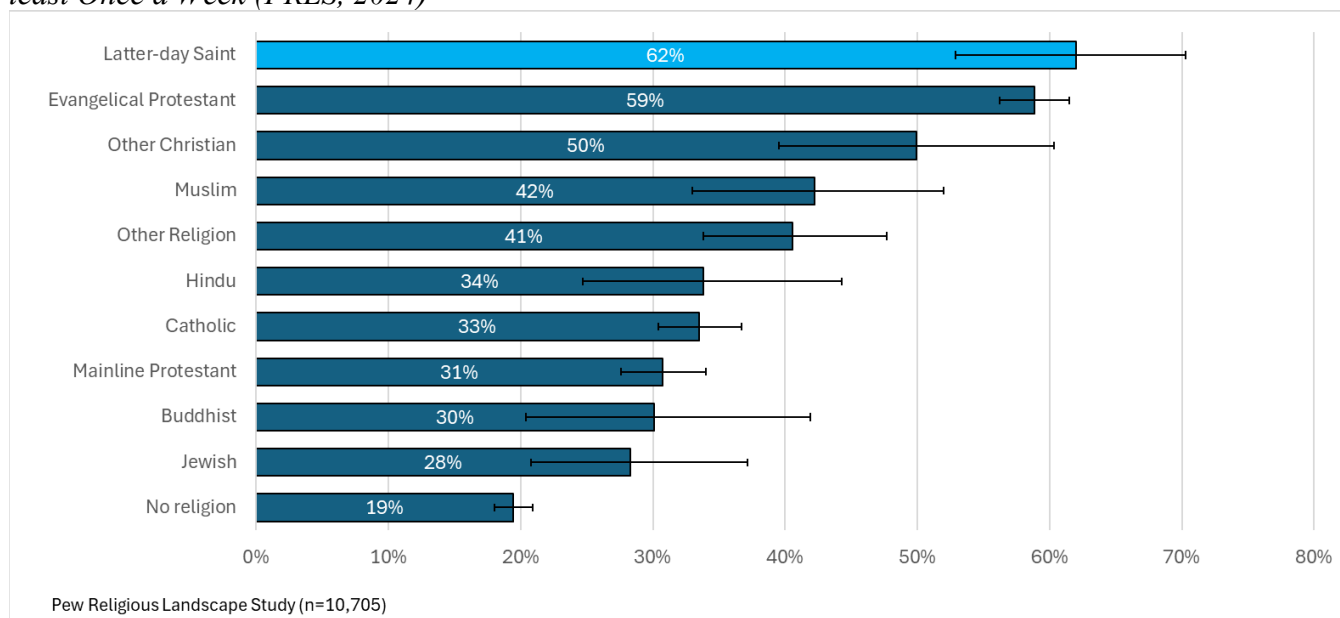
<sup>19</sup> PRLS question: “Would you say your family life is...” with “Excellent” and “Very good” as response categories.”

**Figure 11.** *Percentage Who Say their Family Life is Very Good or Excellent (PRLS, 2024)*



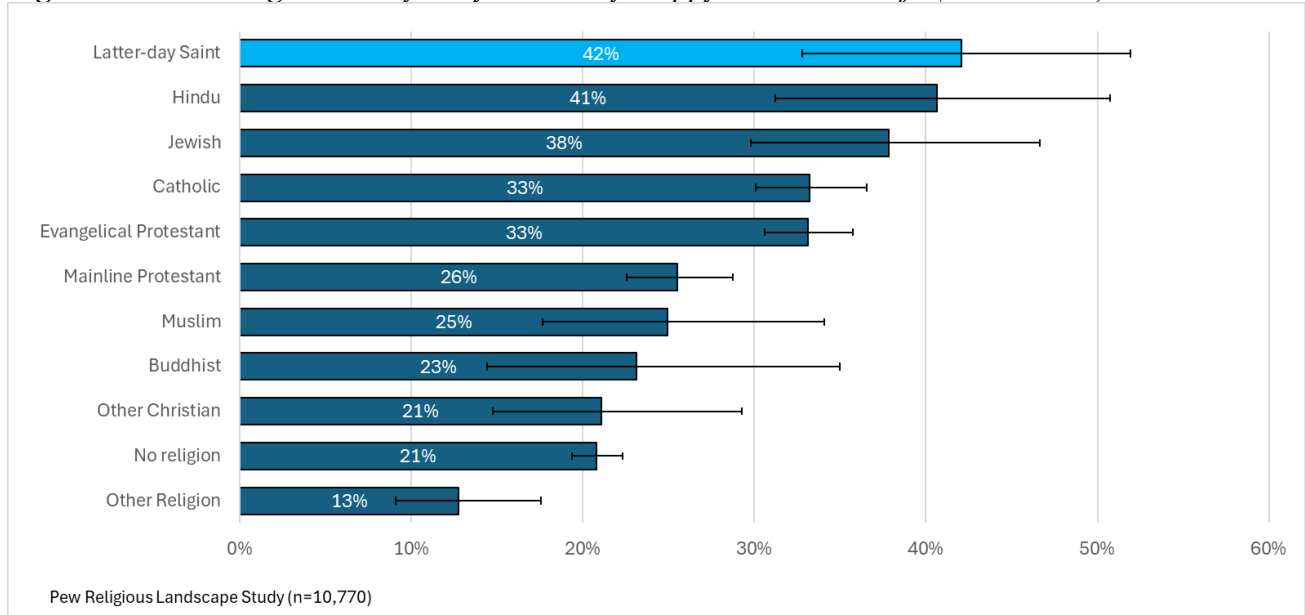
We also made comparisons of Millennial+ across religious faiths. Latter-day Saints were the most likely to say they “feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being” at least once a week (fig. 12) and that they are “very happy with life”<sup>20</sup> (fig. 13). Though Evangelicals are within the 95% confidence interval.

**Figure 12.** *Percentage Millennial+ Who Feel a Deep Sense of Spiritual Peace and Well-being at least Once a Week (PRLS, 2024)*



<sup>20</sup> PRLS question: “Generally, how happy are you with your life these days? Are you ...” with “Very Happy” as a response category.

**Figure 13.** *Percentage Who Say They are “Very Happy” with their Life (PRLS, 2024)*



## Religious Retention

Much has been written about the decrease in religious affiliation in the United States during the most recent decade. For example, Pew’s Religious Landscape Survey found that 78% of U.S. adults identified as Christians in 2007, but that the number had dropped to 71% by 2014, then continued to drop, reaching 63% in 2024.<sup>21</sup> Across the same period, those who identified as religiously unaffiliated – atheists, agnostics, or “nothing in particular,” continued to rise, from 16% in 2007 to 28% in 2024.<sup>22</sup> Religious scholars have identified the early 1990s as the crucial turning point, marking the beginning of a significant drop in religious commitment that did not turn around as people aged.<sup>23</sup>

To understand retention rates among Latter-day Saints, we used the nationally representative PRLS and the SSS, as well as the longitudinal FFYD to explore the retention rate for Latter-day Saint adults, Millennial+, and youth ages 12-18. As shown in Table 3, these surveys find that approximately half of those who were raised Latter-day Saint continued to identify as Latter-day Saint as an adult. Looking specifically at youth, around two-thirds of those who indicated they were a Latter-day Saint in 2016 (when they were between 12 and 14 years old) also indicated they were a Latter-day Saint eight years later in 2024 (when they were 20 to 22 years old).

**Table 3.** *Latter-day Saint Retention Rate Across Surveys*

	Retention Rate	Sample Size
Pew Religious Landscape Study (2024) <sup>a</sup>	49.4% (45%-54%)	727
Latter-day Saint Seismology (2025) <sup>a</sup>	53.3% (51%-56%)	1668
Family Foundations Youth Development (2024) <sup>b</sup>	75.7% (71%-80%)	329

<sup>a</sup> Retention rate represents the percentage of those who indicated they were a Latter-day Saint as a teen and still identify as a Latter-day Saint when they took the survey (GSS or Pew) as an adult.

<sup>b</sup> Retention rate represents the percentage of youth who were a Latter-day Saint in 2016 who continued to identify as a Latter-day Saint in 2024.

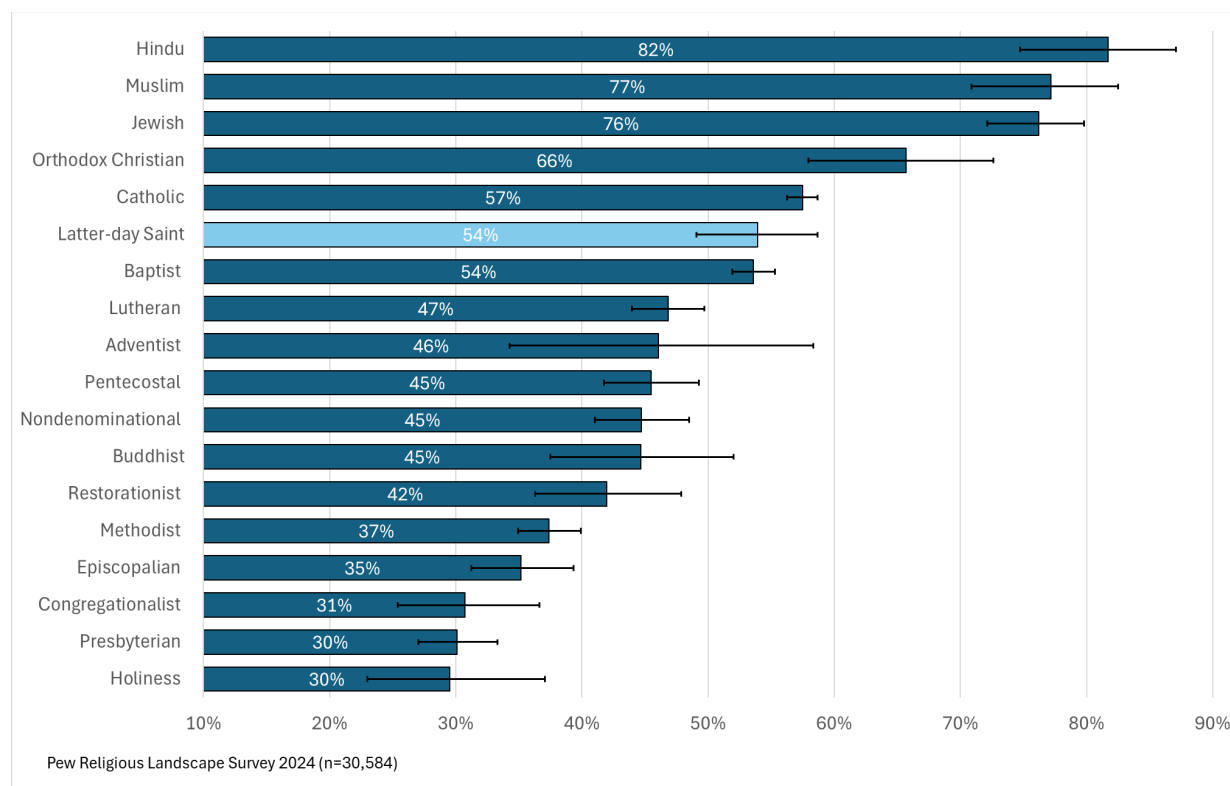
Figure 14 uses PRLS data to compare retention rates across religions in 2024. The highest retention rate is for Hindus, then Muslims, Jews, Orthodox Christians, and Catholics followed by Latter-day Saints, though the Latter-day Saint number is not significantly different from Catholics. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints have a higher retention rate than all other Christian denominations as well as Buddhists.

<sup>21</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 20.

<sup>22</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 20.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*, 13.

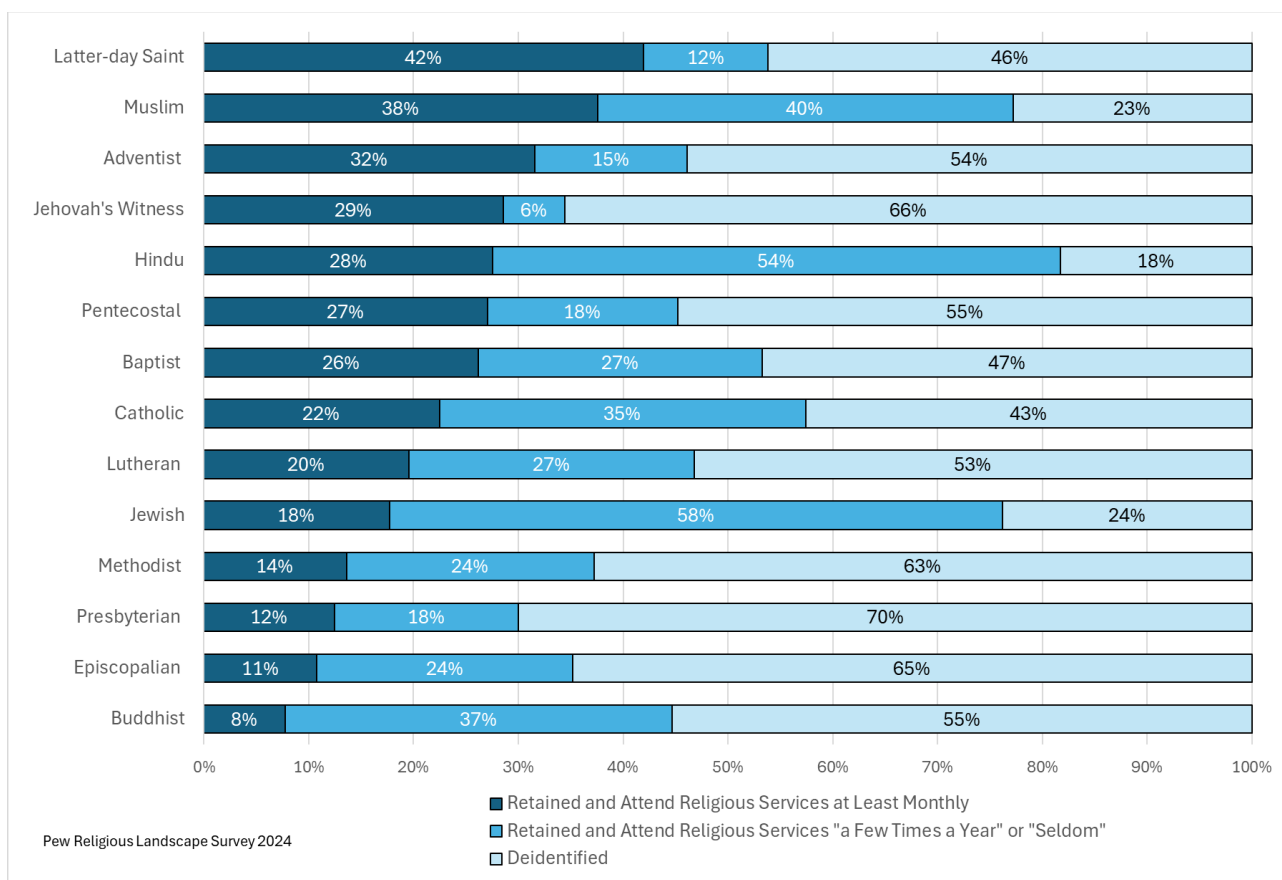
**Figure 14.** *Retention Rates across Religions (PRLS, 2024)*



To understand retention rates, it is important to not only look at the percentage of who continue to identify as a member of their childhood religion as adults, but how many are regularly participating in religious services. In Figure 15 we break down retention by frequency of religious service attendance. We divided PRLS those who were raised Latter-day Saint into three groups: 1) those who continue to identify as a Latter-day Saint as an adult and attend religious services at least monthly, 2) those who continue to identify as a Latter-day Saint as an adult but attend religious services only a few times a year or seldom, 3) those who no longer identify as a Latter-day Saint. We did the same for those raised in other religions, examining whether they continued to identify with that religion and what their frequency of religious services attendance was.

At 42%, Latter-day Saints had the highest percentage of retention plus monthly attendance of any religion. This was followed by Muslims at 38%, then Adventist at 32%. Jews who are third highest in overall retention drop to 18% who of those who are retained and attend monthly.

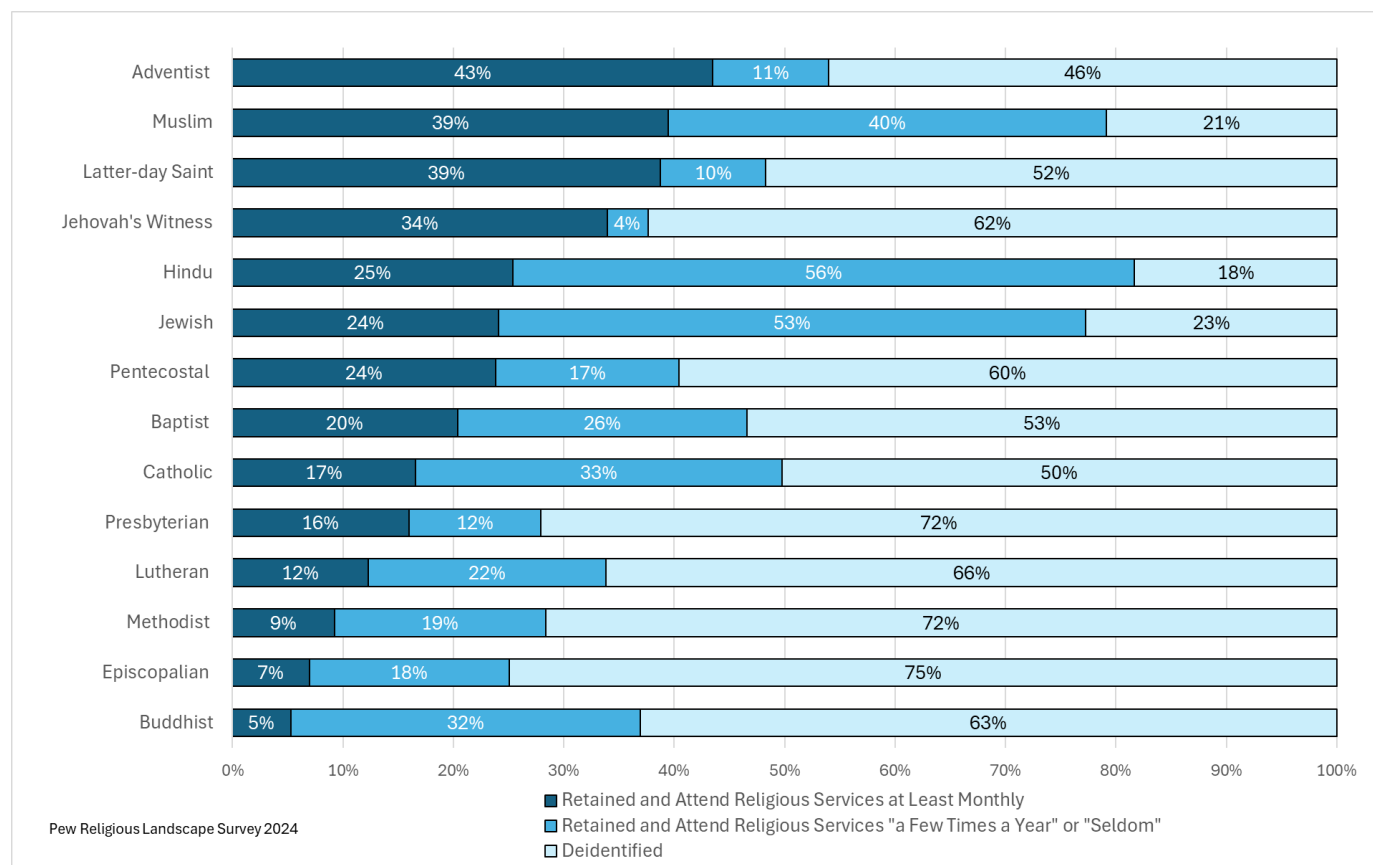
**Figure 15. Retention and religious service attendance (PRLS, 2024)**



Essentially, it is a minority of Latter-day Saints who do not attend at least monthly (12%) and still identify. In contrast, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims all have a substantial portion (around half) of those who were raised in these religions who still identify but attend religious services less than once a month. For these religions, expectations for attending religious services differ significantly from Latter-day Saints where frequent attendance is emphasized. It seems clear from these findings that attendance is an important feature of identifying as a Latter-day Saint.

We conducted the same analysis for Millennial+ (born in or after 1980) with similar trends observed. As indicated in Figure 16, Latter-day Saint Millennial+ (39%) are slightly less likely to be attending religious services monthly than Adventists (43%) and statistically even with Muslims.

**Figure 16. Millennial+ Retention and Religious Service Attendance**



### Retention Over Time

We also explored how Latter-day Saint retention rates have changed over time. We do so using GSS data. It is important to note a limitation of GSS is that it contains fewer Latter-day Saints than the other surveys, but is the only survey where retention can be estimated back to the 1980s. Thus, when estimating retention in the 2000s, the best data come from PRLS and the SSS data. But one cannot use those data to examine changes in retention across several decades.

As found in GSS data, in the 1980s, Latter-day Saint retention was at 82%. That is, 82% of those who were raised Latter-day Saint indicated they still identify as a Latter-day Saint as an adult. This identification number dropped slightly to 76% by the 1990s and then more steeply to 58% by the 2000s. In line with religious identification trends broadly, by the 2010s and beyond, the number was slightly less than half at 46%. The rate of 46% from the GSS is similar to what

was reported above from the PRLS and SSS data which put the retention rate at just over 50% in 2024 and 2025 (respectively).

For those raised Latter-day Saint, we also explored how active participation has changed over time using the GSS. In 1980, 65% of those raised Latter-day Saint attended religious services at least monthly, while 16% attended several times a year or less, and 19% no longer identified as a Latter-day day Saint. Over the following decades, the percentage of those who attended a few times a year or less but continued to identify as Latter-day Saint, decreased. By the 2010s+, only 7% of those raised Latter-day Saint continued to identify as Latter-day Saint when they attended church a few times a year or less. This suggests that today, Latter-day Saints who don't attend church are less likely to identify as Latter-day Saint than they were in the past. It may be that the increased negative perception of religion<sup>24</sup> makes it less desirable to identify as actively religious. In the past, people may have continued to identify as religious even though they were not attending church whereas today, continuing to identify may come with the perceptions of increased social costs.

### **Retention for Younger Generations**

We also explored how Latter-day Saint Millennial+ retention rates compare to retention rates of previous generations'. Retention rates across the generations decreased from the 1990s to the 2000s. Boomers stayed essentially the same from the 2000s to the 2010s while the Millennial+ had the greatest drop in retention, from just over 60% in the 2000s to just above 40% in the 2010s. We should note that many Millennial+ were still young prior to the 2000s, not having had as much time to leave religion than those of other generations. These data also don't provide insights into those who may return to religious faith later in life.

### **Retention by Gender**

We then examined whether retention rates among Latter-day Saints differed by gender. Some evidence suggests that women have shifted in their religious retention rates across religious groups in recent decades. Using the GSS, we compared the retention rates of Latter-day Saint women with Latter-day Saint men over time. The Latter-day Saint men's retention rate remained steady at just over 80% from the 1980s to the 1990s and then dropped to just under 50% in the 2000, and then declined only slightly to the 2010s+. In comparison, Latter-day Saint women's retention rate remained stable at just under 70% from the 1990s to the 2000s, with a decline from the 2000s to the 2010s+ to just under 50%.

We then explored whether rates of retention differ by gender *and* age (fig. 17). Using the 2025 SSS data, we found that Latter-day Saint men have a retention rate of just below 60% at age 18 with slightly higher rates for older men, reaching just above 60% for the oldest men. In contrast, younger Latter-day Saint women have a much lower retention rate compared to older

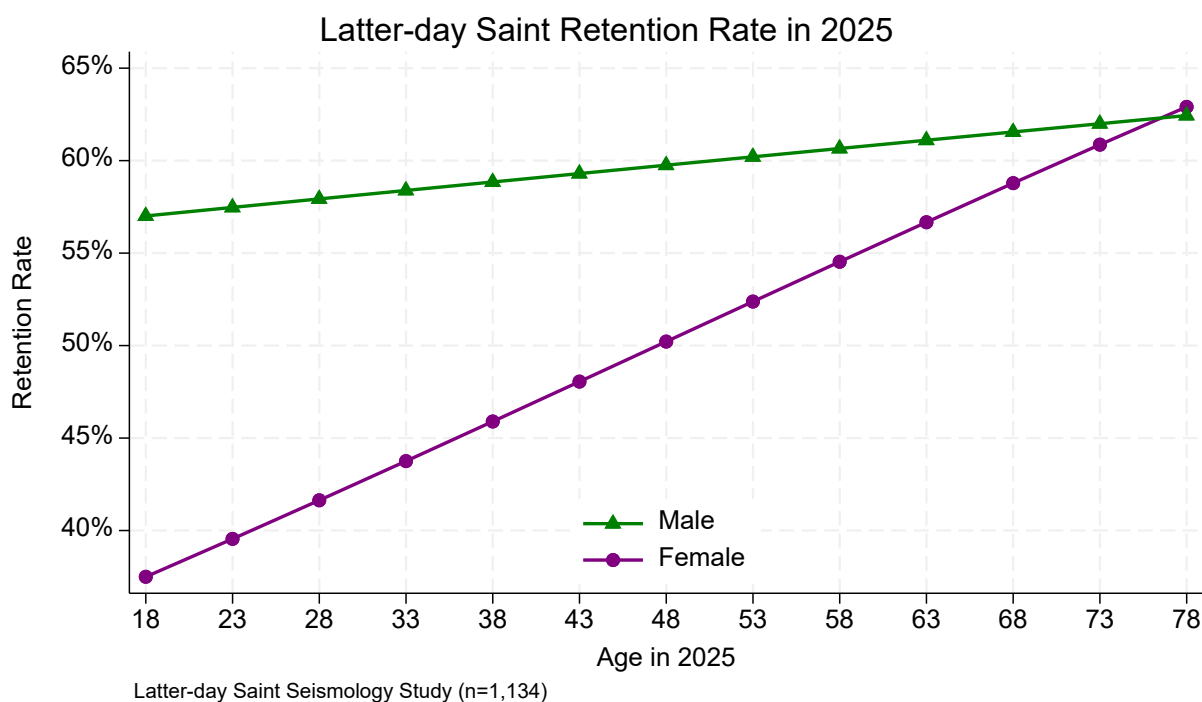
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<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Why Religion Went Obsolete*, 229.

Latter-day Saint women. For 18-year-old Latter-day Saint women, retention is just below 40% with a 60% retention rate for the oldest Latter-day Saint women.

This finding suggests a striking generational difference for women, with younger women much less likely to continue identifying as a Latter-day Saint than women of older generations. In contrast, men are nearly just as likely to stay in the faith no matter what generation they were born into. However, again, these data do not account for those who may have left and returned. It may be that women are more likely to leave at younger ages, but also more likely to come back later.

**Figure 17.** *Latter-day Saint Retention Rate in 2025 by Gender and Age*



### **Predictors of Deidentification & Groups of Deidentifiers**

FFYD data were used to examine predictors of deidentifying as a Latter-day Saint. The Using FFYD we can explore how earlier characteristics predict whether someone will deidentify later on. Using the FFYD we looked at predictors of whether youth would deidentify as they transitioned into young adulthood across a four-year period (between 2020 and 2024).

In these analyses, 709 youth identified as a Latter-day Saint in 2020 with 92 (13%) no longer identifying as such by 2024. We examined whether the following characteristics of youth in 2020 predicted deidentifying by 2024: parent education, whether the child's parent was divorced, family income, parent and adolescent political views, adolescent depression, adolescent anxiety, and adolescent personality. Numerous adolescent religious behaviors were

also included: attending Church, prayer, scripture reading, keeping the Sabbath day holy, attending seminary, temple attendance, researching ancestors, giving a talk or lesson in Church, sharing religious beliefs with someone not of their faith, and spending time performing church duties.<sup>25</sup>

We also examined more internal aspects of religion such as feeling a secure attachment to God, how often they feel God's presence, and having a testimony that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true church. And finally, we examined how support for somewhat controversial issues related to deidentification: whether the adolescent felt women should be ordained to the priesthood, whether the Church should fully accept same-sex marriage, the degree to which issues of Church history have troubled them, and the degree to which their religion's views on social or political issues have bothered them.

When all of the above were included in a logistic regression model<sup>26</sup> predicting retention after four years (between 2020 and 2024), the following significantly predicted greater likelihood of deidentifying: not feeling God's presence in daily life, agreeing that the Church should accept same-sex marriage, and feeling troubled by the Church's stance on political issues (see Table 4). For those who almost never felt God in their daily lives, 25%<sup>27</sup> deidentified. However, for those who felt God's presence every day, only 4% deidentified. For those who strongly agreed that the Church should accept same-sex marriage, 20% deidentified compared to 4% of those who strongly disagreed. And finally, for those who felt very concerned or troubled about the Church's stance on political issues, 28% deidentified compared to fewer than 10% of those who felt little or no concern.

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that 2020 was during the COVID lockdowns. Regarding religious behaviors, participants were asked to report on these behaviors before they experienced pandemic restrictions on in-person gatherings.

<sup>26</sup> Conducted in Mplus 9 with multiple imputation (50 imputations) to handle missing data.

<sup>27</sup> Marginal percentages calculated from a logistic regression conducted in Stata 19.

**Table 4.** *Statistically Significant Predictors of Deidentifying between 2020 and 2024 (marginal percentages: FFYD)*

Predictors of Deidentification	% Deidentified
The following questions deal with possible spiritual experiences. To what extent can you say you experience the following: (for example)	
I feel God’s presence.	
I ask for God’s help in the middle of daily activities.	
I find strength and comfort in my religion.	
I feel God’s love for me.	
Never or almost never	25%
Once in a while	16%
Some days	11%
Most days	7%
Every day	4%
Many times a day	3%
Thinking of the church or religious group you belong to, how much do you agree with the following statements? They should fully accept same-sex marriage.	
Strongly disagree	4%
Somewhat disagree	8%
Neither agree nor disagree	13%
Somewhat agree	11%
Strongly agree	20%
How much are you concerned or troubled by the following? Your religion’s views on social or political issues (such as homosexuality, same-sex marriage, contraception, abortion, or legalization of marijuana).	
Not at all	6%
A little	4%
Somewhat	16%
Quite a bit	19%
Very much	28%

The relationship between politics and religion is not unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Indeed, while only 17% of the religiously affiliated are liberal or very liberal, over 55% of Atheists/Agnostics are.<sup>28</sup> This religion/political divide is relatively recent. Before the 1980s the unaffiliated were just as likely to be Republican as Democrat. However, since then a wide gap has opened up such that Republicans are far more likely to be religious than Democrats.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 235.

<sup>29</sup> Michele F. Margolis, *From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and the Political Environment Shape Religious Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 2018), 24.

Many of the characteristics we used did not significantly predict deidentifying. However, this does not necessarily mean they are unrelated to religious deidentification. What these analyses suggest is that if they do have a significant role, it would be by affecting the predictors in Table 5.<sup>30</sup> For example, although scripture reading in 2020 did not have a direct relationship with disaffiliation, scripture reading may impact disaffiliation by increasing the feeling of God's presence in daily life and/or by decreasing the trouble felt from their religion's views on social or political issues. What we have identified in Table 5 as the statistically significant predictors are likely to be the most proximal influence on disaffiliation.

### **Religious Patterns after Deidentifying**

To better understand Latter-day Saints who chose to deidentify, we explored their religious beliefs and behaviors after having deidentified. Using the SSS and PRLS data we were able to see how former Latter-day Saints currently identify religiously. In SSS we found that 30% identified with another Christian denomination (such as Protestant or Catholic), 15% identified with some other religion (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, etc.), 26% identified as Atheist/Agnostic, and 29% selected "nothing in particular." In other words, almost half switched to another (primarily Christian) religion, 1 in 4 became Atheist/Agnostic, and about 1 in 3 were ambivalent. When compared to other religions, those raised Latter-day Saint become religiously unaffiliated at relatively the same rate as those raised in other Christian denominations. PRLS, reports that 28% of those raised Latter-day Saint are unaffiliated with religion later in life (given the different data and somewhat different definition, this will differ from SSS numbers). For other Christian denominations, of those raised in their tradition, between 15% (Holiness) and 31% (Episcopalian/Anglican) become unaffiliated with any religion later in life.<sup>31</sup>

### **Groups Among Latter-Day Saints who Deidentified**

In the findings we've reported thus far, we've treated former Latter-day Saints as a homogenous group, which they are not. Thus, to better understand the diversity within this group, we conducted sophisticated latent class analyses based on a variety of traits to identify various "groups." For this we used the SSS data which contains 527 individuals, ranging in age from 18-25, who were raised Latter-day Saint but did not identify as such as an adult (at least, not when they took the survey).

Distinct groups of those who deidentified as a Latter-day Saint emerged from the data based on the following: how important religion and spirituality was to them, how warm they felt towards Latter-day Saints, whether they believed that death is the end of existence, whether they believed Jesus is the Son of God, and whether they felt religion has a place in society. Participants were also able to select reasons why they no longer identified with the Church. They could select any or all of the following reasons: getting out of the habit due to COVID-19

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<sup>30</sup> This would be a "mediation model" which is beyond the scope of this report.

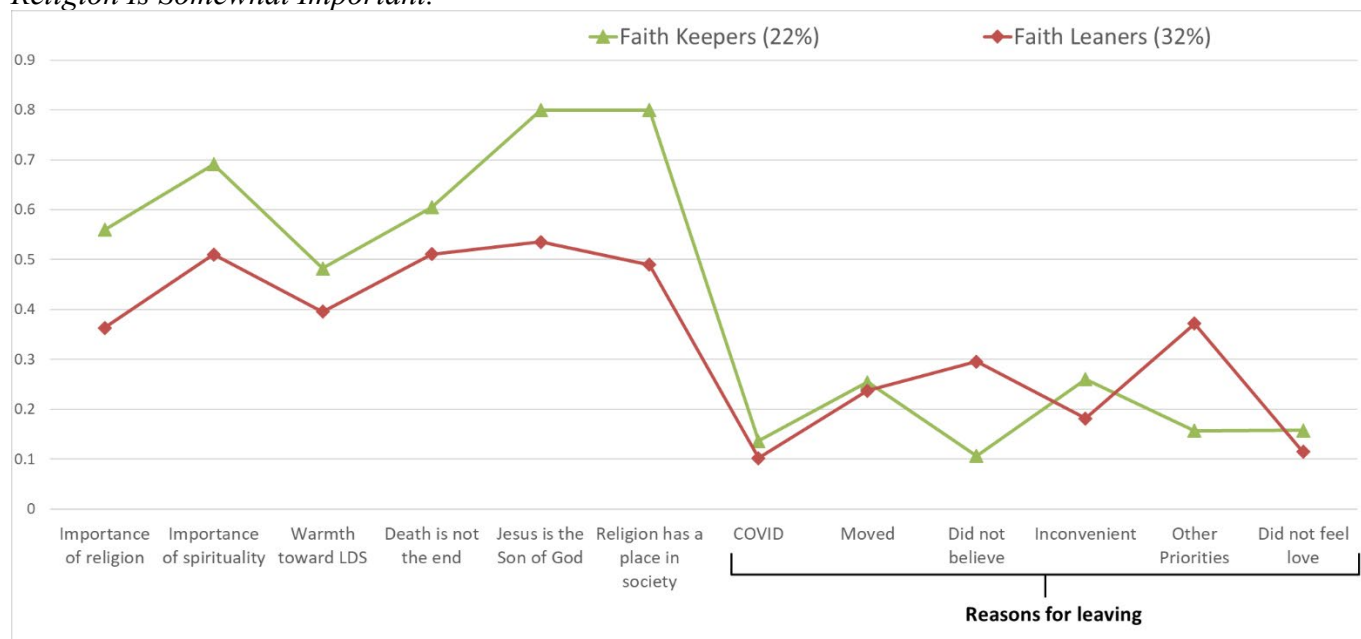
<sup>31</sup> Smith et al., *Decline of Christianity in the U.S. Has Slowed, May Have Leveled Off*, 110.

lockdowns, moving, no longer believing the tenants of the religion, inconvenience, other priorities taking precedence, and not feeling love from the members.

Our analyses identified four groups, two which felt religion was still an important part of their lives and two that did not (figs. 18 and 19). The first two groups we refer to as “Faith Keepers” (22% of the sample) and “Faith Leaners” (32% of the sample). For these groups, religion and, in particular, spirituality, were still important. For the Faith Keepers, the most common reasons for leaving were that they had moved and/or it became inconvenient. They felt relatively warm towards Latter-day Saints, believed that Jesus is the Son of God, and felt that religion should play some part in society. Of these, only 3% indicated they were Atheist or Agnostic (fig. 20). Most of them identified with another religion, primarily a Christian religion (70%). Given they felt positively about religion and Latter-day Saints and still held central beliefs, Faith Keepers may have simply “drifted away” from the Church due to various life circumstances that made it difficult to stay connected. Most seem to have begun identifying with another denomination, perhaps one more convenient to the location they had moved to.

Compared to Faith Keepers, Faith Leaners felt religion and spirituality were somewhat less important and were more likely to have left because they didn’t believe, or religion was not as high a priority to them. They were still somewhat warm toward Latter-day Saints but were less likely to have a belief that Jesus is the Son of God and seemed to have some skepticism that religion had a place in society. They were more likely to identify as Atheist or Agnostic than the Faith Keepers (9%) with 30% of them identifying as “nothing in particular.” However, 57% identified with another religion. These individuals seem to have lost connection with religious beliefs and, with other priorities emerging, they chose to no longer identify as a Latter-day Saint. At the same time, they appear to be leaning towards faith, though less connected to it than the Faith Keepers.

**Figure 18.** *Groups of Those Who No Longer Identify as a Latter-day Saint Who Still Feel Religion Is Somewhat Important.*

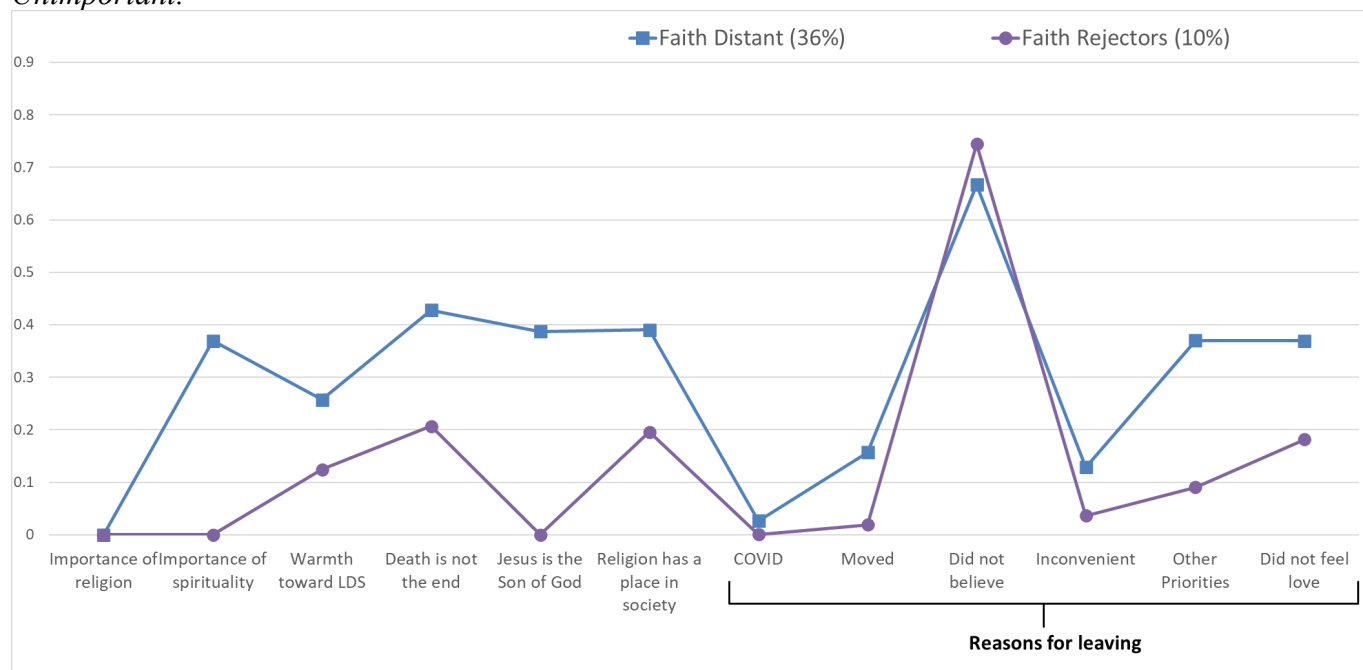


*Note:* The y-axis represents the percentage of the maximum score for each variable. For example, for the Faith Keepers, their average score on believing Jesus is the Son of God is approximately 80% of the maximum score.

The other two groups (see fig. 19), Faith Distant (36% of the sample) and Faith Rejectors (10% of the sample), both indicated religion was not at all important to them. By far the most prominent reason for these two groups no longer identifying was non-belief. Though Faith Distant still placed at least some importance on spirituality and maintained some (though seemingly tepid) beliefs such as death not being the end, and Jesus being the Son of God. They were also skeptical that religion has a place in society. Forty-one percent of them identified as Atheist/Agnostic with 40% as “nothing in particular.” These individuals seem to have lost any interest in, and are somewhat skeptical of, organized religion. However, they still place some value in “spirituality,” possibly believing in life after death. But their primary reasons for leaving were not believing. It is notable they also were the highest in selecting “did not feel love” from their religion as a reason for leaving. This may have been part of the reason for a soured relationship with religion.

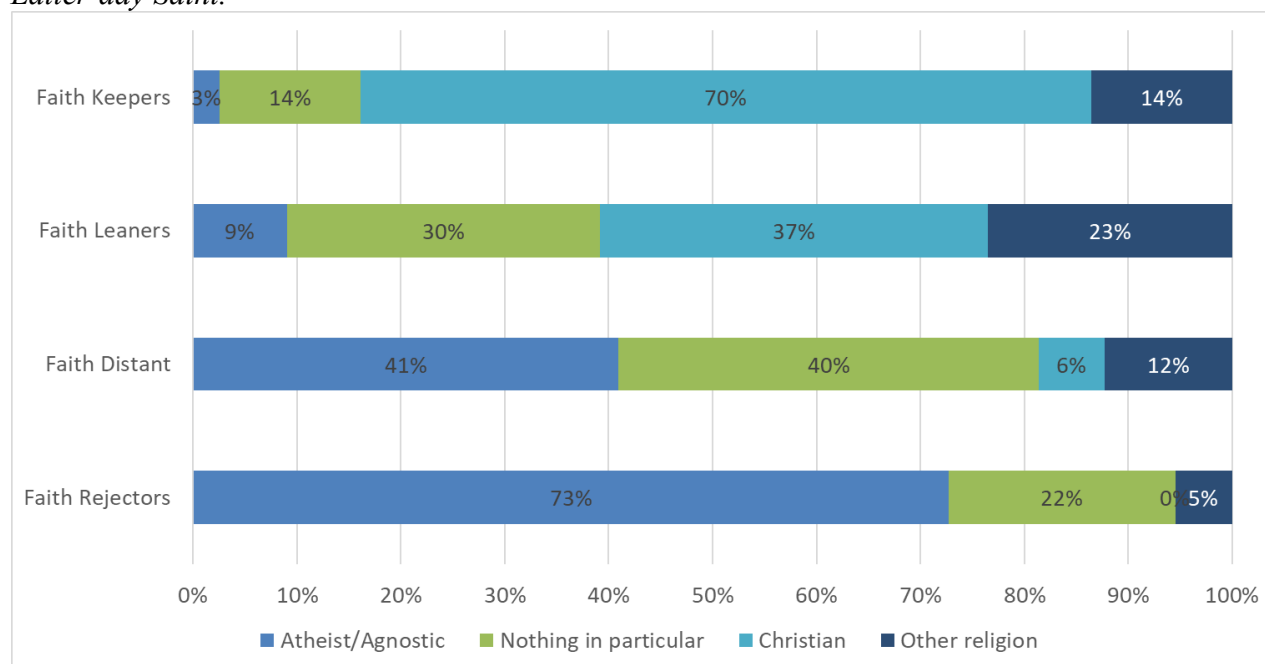
The Faith Rejectors rejected the importance of both religion and spirituality. They had the lowest warmth towards Latter-day Saints, felt that death is the end, and had no belief that Jesus is the Son of God. They were also the most likely to believe that religion has no place in society. Of this group, 73% are Atheist/Agnostic with another 22% being “nothing in particular.” None of them identified as part of a Christian religion. These are individuals who have entirely disconnected from a religious or spiritual view of the world and leave primarily due to rejection of religious beliefs.

**Figure 19.** *Groups of Those Who No Longer Identify as a Latter-day Saint Who Feel Religion Is Unimportant.*



*Note:* The y-axis represents the percentage of the total score for each variable. For example, the importance of religion for both groups was 0% of the total score, being the lowest possible value.

**Figure 20.** *Current Religious/Non-Religious Identification for Those No Longer Identifying as a Latter-day Saint.*

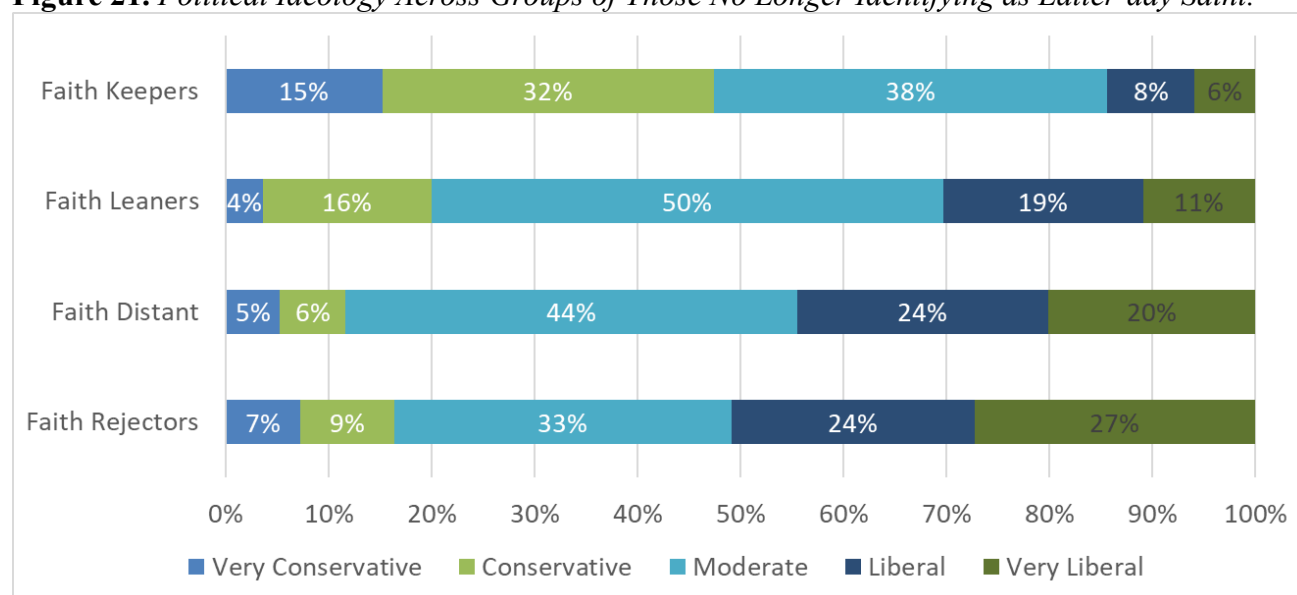


*Note.* “Christian” includes: Catholic, Non-denominational Christian, Protestant, Orthodox Christian, and Other Christian

We also explored other characteristics of these groups including: age, gender, sexual orientation, education and income, relationship status, how often they attended church as a child, where they lived, the percentage of religious adherents in their county, political ideology, and whether they had experienced abuse in a religious context (physical, psychological, or sexual). We also examined whether they had any adverse childhood experiences, defined as experiencing things such as parental divorce, abuse by someone living in the home, lived with someone who had a drug problem, lived with anyone who had gone to prison or jail, etc. When included in the same statistical model, the following significantly differentiated the four groups (i.e., Faith Keepers, Faith Leaners, Faith Distant, Faith Rejectors): political ideology, relationship status, region where they lived, adverse childhood experiences, and abuse in a religious context.

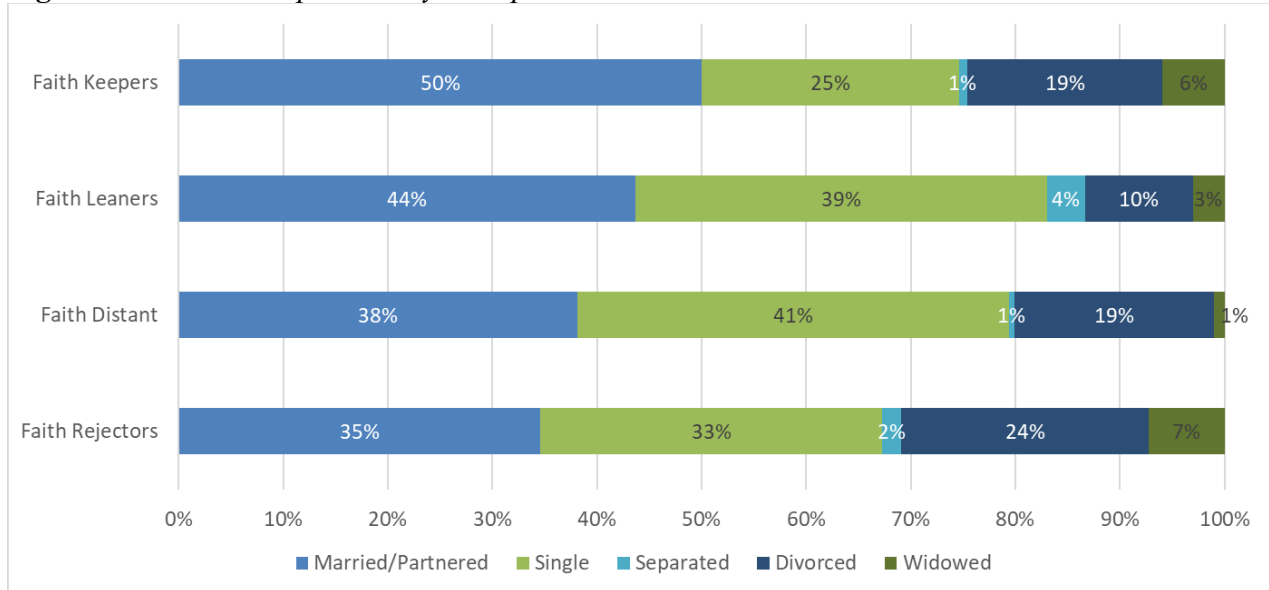
In terms of political ideology (fig. 21), Faith Keepers were the most conservative group (47% either conservative or very conservative) with only 14% liberal or very liberal. Every other group has less than half that percentage of conservatives with Faith Rejectors being 51% liberal or very liberal.

**Figure 21.** *Political Ideology Across Groups of Those No Longer Identifying as Latter-day Saint.*



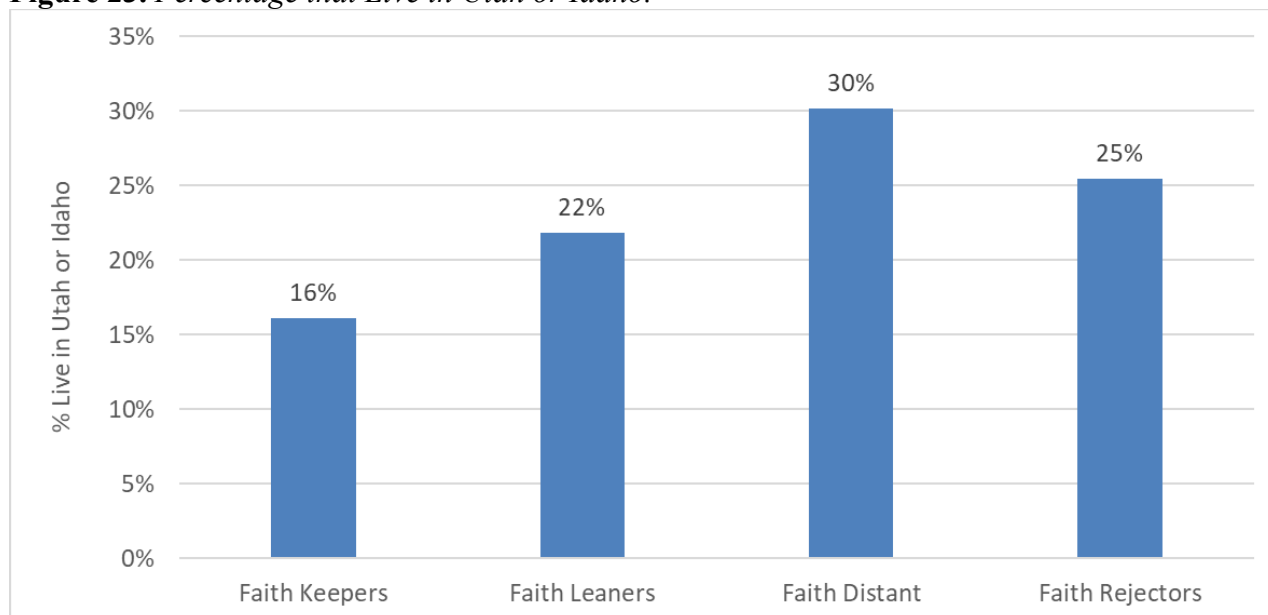
In terms of relationship status (fig. 22, Faith Keepers were the most likely to be married or partnered (50%). In contrast, Faith Rejectors were the least likely to be married or partnered at 35%.

**Figure 22.** *Relationship Status by Group*



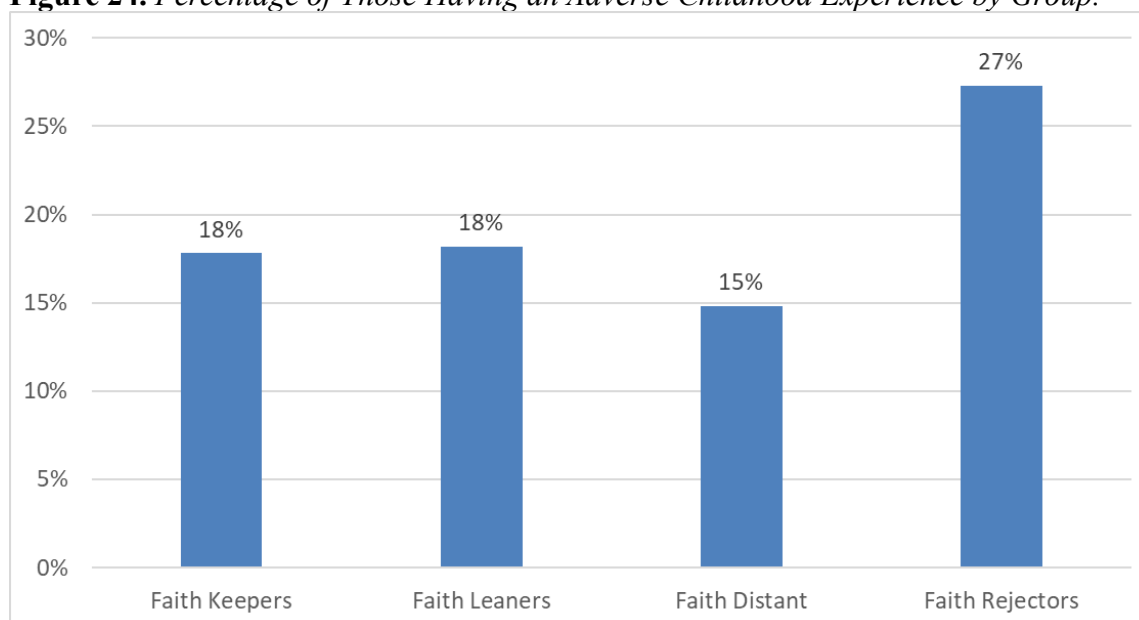
In terms of region where they lived (fig. 23), Faith Keepers were the least likely to live outside of Utah or Idaho whereas Faith Distant and Faith Rejectors were the most likely to live in those locations (30% and 25% respectively).

**Figure 23.** *Percentage that Live in Utah or Idaho.*



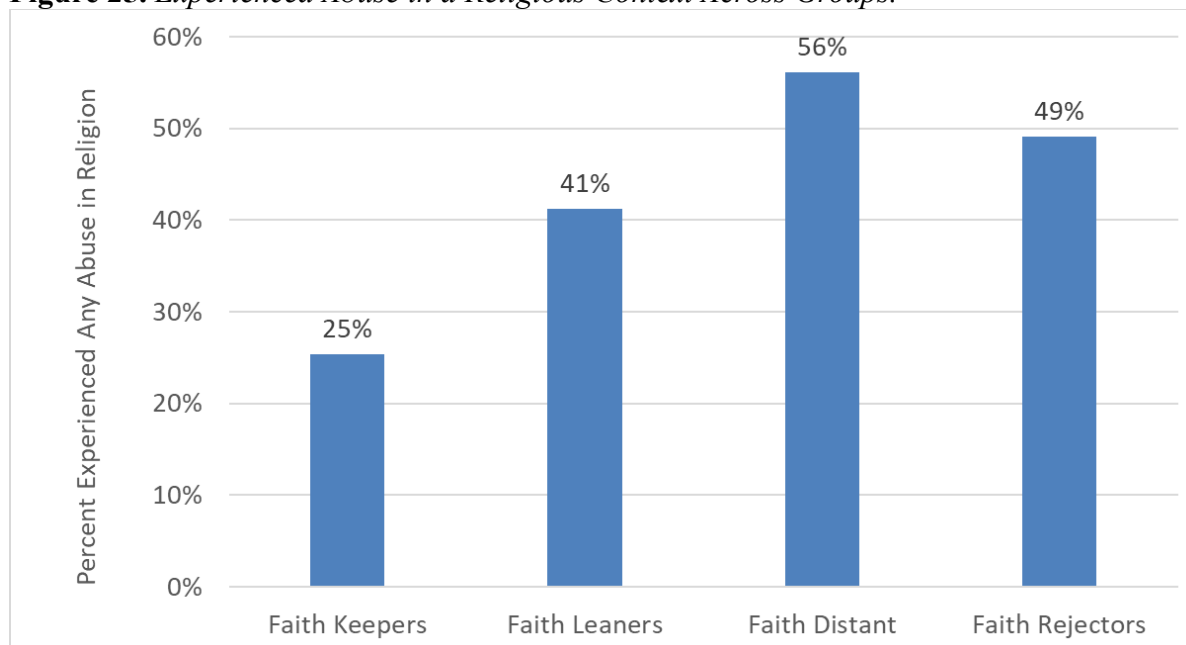
In terms of adverse childhood experiences (fig. 24), Faith Rejectors were the most likely to have had an adverse childhood experience at 27% with the other groups ranging between 15% to 18%.

**Figure 24.** *Percentage of Those Having an Adverse Childhood Experience by Group.*

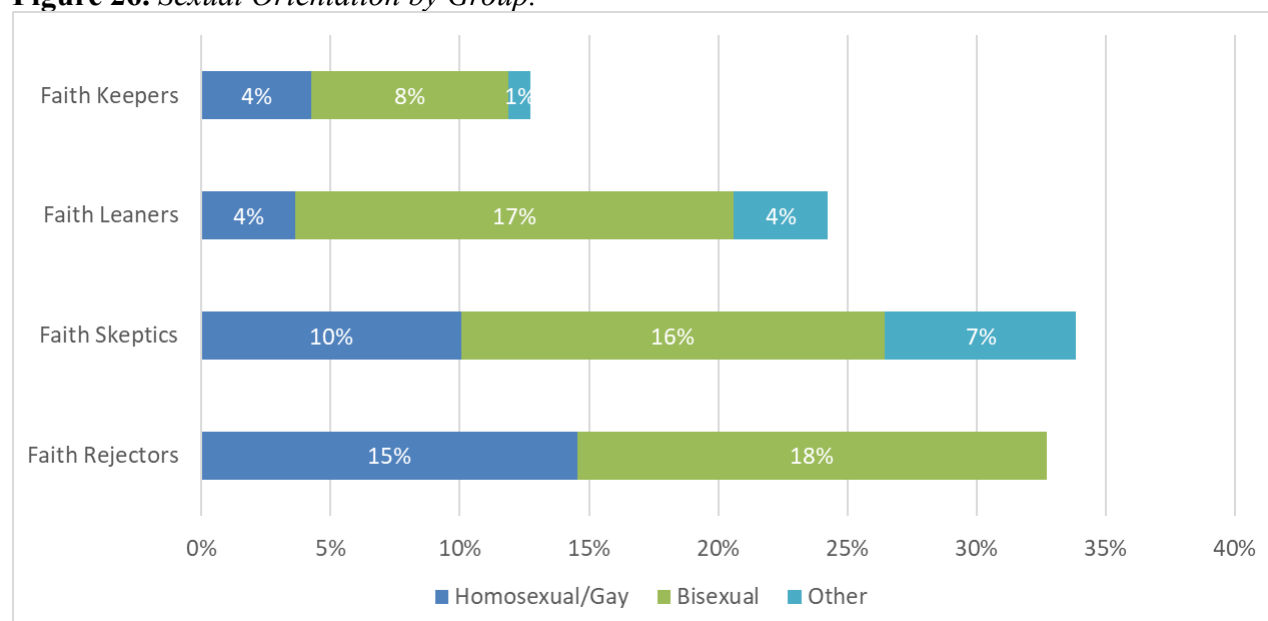


Regarding experiencing some kind of abuse in a religious context (fig. 25), Faith Keepers had a far lower percentage of those who experienced some kind of abuse at 25%, with Faith Distant at more than double that rate (56%) and Faith Rejectors being almost double (49%).

**Figure 25.** *Experienced Abuse in a Religious Context Across Groups.*



Sexual orientation was a statistically significant predictor of groups when included as an individual predictor (fig. 26). However, when political ideology was included, sexual orientation dropped from significance. This suggests that sexual orientation was not predictive of group per se, but rather it was that those who were non-heterosexual were also more likely to be politically liberal. For example, a conservative heterosexual and a conservative bisexual were just as likely to be a Faith Keeper. The difference was that, compared to heterosexual individuals, bisexual individuals were more likely to be liberal than conservative. Figure 26 has the percentage of each group that identified as homosexual/gay, bisexual, and “other.” For Faith Keepers, 13% identified as one of these with a full 34% of Faith Distant and 33% of Faith Rejectors identifying as such.

**Figure 26. Sexual Orientation by Group.**

### Returning to Religion

We also examined what may entice those not currently attending church to return (this was only asked if they reported attending church “never” or “seldom”). Several reasons were given to participants for potentially returning to church (participants could select more than one reason; see Table 5). For the Faith Keepers and Faith Leaners, a minority indicated that returning to church was “never going to happen” (19% and 25%, respectively). About 20% of Faith Keepers and Leaners said they would return if a friend invited them or if they made new friends at church. For these two groups, other prominent reasons for returning were finding a church they liked and God telling them in some significant way to return.

By comparison, 56% of the Faith Distant and 79% of the Faith Rejectors indicated they would not return for any reason. Only 6% of Faith Distant said they would return based on friendships and no Faith Rejectors said they would return based on friendship. For the Faith Distant, the most likely reasons for returning were finding a church they liked and God telling them in some significant way to return. For Faith Rejectors, the most commonly cited reason for returning were that a child wants to go and that God tells them to go back in some significant way.

**Table 5.** *Things that would entice a person not currently attending church to return.*

	<b>Faith Keepers</b>	<b>Faith Leaners</b>	<b>Faith Distant</b>	<b>Faith Rejectors</b>
New friends or friends invite	19%	22%	6%	0%
Child wants to go	13%	16%	12%	6%
Spouse wants to go	23%	23%	12%	4%
A good pastor	23%	19%	7%	0%
A good community	29%	20%	12%	0%
I find a church I like	39%	32%	17%	0%
Begin to miss church	13%	4%	1%	0%
Feel the distance from God	16%	8%	2%	2%
God tells me to go back in some significant way	58%	39%	16%	6%
I find a church who cares about justice and compassion for vulnerable people	19%	23%	13%	2%
I find a church that take both doctrine and ethics seriously	19%	13%	6%	0%
Never going to happen	19%	25%	56%	79%

In summary, the analysis of the traits of those who deidentified revealed that over 50% belong to groups that, on average, still consider religion and spirituality of some importance. Only about 10% of those no longer identifying appear to belong to a group wholly rejecting the importance of religion and spirituality in their lives (Faith Rejectors), though another 36% are in a group that places no importance on religion and very little importance on spirituality (Faith Distant). Those who keep religion and spirituality important to them are more likely to be conservative, married, live outside of Utah and Idaho, and less likely to have had adverse childhood experiences or to have experienced abuse in a religious context. Faith Rejectors, on average, experienced far more difficulties in childhood and abuse in a religious context. And finally, a substantial number of those who no longer identify indicate there is some chance they will return to religion one day. One in five of those who still feel religion is important say they would return if a friend invited them or they made new friends.

### **Conclusion**

The United States currently finds itself in the midst of shift in religiousness. And it appears Latter-day Saints are not immune to these trends. Findings in this report suggests that of all religions in the United States, Latter-day Saints are perhaps in the strongest position. Members of the Church show the highest rates of practicing their religious faith including in religious service attendance, daily prayer, and scripture reading. In addition, with Latter-day Saint parents being the most likely to pray and read scriptures with their children, faith is more likely to be passed from one generation to the next.

Indeed, Latter-day Saint Millennial+ participate more in their religion than other religions surveyed and are among the highest in believing in God and considering religion important in their lives. They are also the most likely to feel a sense of spiritual peace and well-being. Of all

Christian groups, Latter-day Saints are one of the least likely to lose Millennial+ members. The Church also has a very low rate of Millennial+ being only nominally engaged in their faith. Thus, the Church is retaining their Millennial+ at a higher rate than most other (particularly Christian) religions. As Ryan Burge stated, the Church appears to have “a bright future ahead of it.”<sup>32</sup>

In examining those raised Latter-day Saint but later no longer identifying as such, several important findings emerged. Perhaps the most important is that those who deidentify are not a monolithic group. We found four groups of those who deidentified, with two groups (comprising about 54% of the sample) still finding value in religion and spirituality and holding somewhat favorable views about Latter-day Saints. Many of these would likely return if they had a friend at church. These groups were more likely to be politically conservative and married. Of those who deidentified, only 10% were in a group that entirely rejected faith and spirituality (i.e., “Faith Rejectors”). Those in this group were more likely to have had adverse childhood experiences and some kind of abuse in a religious context (though certainly not all those in this group experienced these things,).

Further, political ideology appeared to distinguish between the four groups of deidentifiers and, for youth, predict future disaffiliation. It has been argued that an individual’s politics may drive their decisions more than their religion. Although some have assumed that a person’s religion is what drives their political views, as one scholar summarized “scholars have repeatedly shown that politics can...be in the driver’s seat when it comes to church attendance, adopting (or eschewing) religious labels, beliefs about the world around them, prayer, and membership in religious communities.”<sup>33</sup> As potential evidence for this, our analyses with the FFYD data found that youth who felt the Church did not align with their politics were significantly more likely to leave the Church a few years later.

The intent of this report is to provide some understanding of current trends in Latter-day Saint religiousness and what may be (in part) influencing those trends in the United States. This report is not a full explanation of the current religiousness of Latter-day Saints nor a full explanation as to why some may choose to deidentify. The findings do confirm the robust position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in fostering religiousness among members, while also acknowledging the challenges associated with the current cultural shift in religiousness.

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<sup>32</sup> Burge, *The American Religious Landscape*, 151.

<sup>33</sup> Michele F. Margolis, “Reversing the Causal Arrow: Politics’ Influence on Religious Choices,” *Political Psychology* 43, no. S1 (2022): 284, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12829>.