

Executive Summary

This report draws on multiple large datasets to explore the religiousness, well-being, and retention of Latter-day Saints. Despite broader trends of religious disengagement that have lowered overall church retention over the past forty years, this report arrives at a time of growth for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and strong engagement in the Church Educational System. With more and more individuals disengaging with institutions across the board, religious institutions have not been spared (though disengagement has recently leveled off). Yet data show Latter-day Saints have relatively high levels of religiousness, well-being, and retention even as the United States has experienced a general decline in religious activity. According to the Pew Religious Landscape Study (2024; survey of the United States), Latter-day Saints have the highest rate of church attendance of any major religious group and the highest rates of personal scripture reading and parents praying and/or reading scriptures with their children. Latter-day Saints are also among the highest in their sense of well-being, indicating high levels of feeling “a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being” and being “very happy with life.” These trends hold for Latter-day Saint Millennial+ (combining Millennials and Gen Z) who are also highly involved in their religion.

The Pew Religious Landscape Study (2024) and the Spiritual Seismology Survey (2025) were used to examine trends of Latter-day Saint retention in the United States. 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 and Orthodox Christians, 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 have the highest percentage of “active”

retention of all religions at 42%. Compared with other faiths, few Latter-day Saints are “nominal” members—that is, members who identify as a Latter-day Saint but rarely attend religious services. Latter-day Saints today are also much less likely to be nominal members than in the past, which likely impacts trends of deidentification over the last several decades.

Some data suggest that in the 1980s, Latter-day Saint retention rate was 82%, but it dropped to 58% by the 2000s (General Social Survey data). From the 2010s to the present, the rate is 46%. Millennial+ had the greatest drop from just over 60% retention in the 2000s to just above 40% retention in the 2010s to today. Although retention may have decreased, given high conversion and birth rates, it is not unexpected that overall membership continues to grow. Further, even with the decline in retention, 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.

The 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 twenties. 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. Digital media use, youth cellphone ownership, and time spent watching video clips also related to lower retention for Latter-day Saints.

Many of those who deidentify, however, continue to be religious, and some return to religion. Using the Spiritual Seismology Survey data, of those raised Latter-day Saint

who no longer identified as Latter-day Saint in adulthood, 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, their warmth toward Latter-day Saints, and their religious beliefs. Two of the groups, “Faith Staying” (22%) and “Faith Bordering” (32%), continued to feel religion was an important part of their lives and had relatively warm feelings toward Latter-day Saints. The other two groups, “Faith Distancing” (36%) and “Faith Leaving” (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 appear to be important predictors 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.

About the Authors

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