

Conclusion

In a time of upheaval in nearly every aspect of society, it should not be surprising that religious institutions are also facing significant challenges. When people encounter increasing demands, uncertainties, anxieties, and challenges across various domains of their lives and find themselves in an age of widespread mistrust of nearly all institutions, we might expect religious disruptions as well.

At the same time, with such disruptions and confusions, it is also understandable that many would turn—or return—to the peace and purpose found within a faith community. Latter-day Saints have a distinctive set of beliefs and practices that have been of interest to religious scholars and social scientists for decades.⁷⁴ A good deal of published social science scholarship⁷⁵ has addressed Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices, including mar-

riage;⁷⁶ parenting;⁷⁷ and family-based rituals, such as family prayer and family home evening.⁷⁸ Many studies have been done that demonstrate the efficacy of core principles and practices in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”⁷⁹ Committed Latter-day Saints tend to have a set of resources available to them that can provide direction, purpose, and friendship and help them deal with a wide range of challenges. Thus, we should not be surprised by the high levels of activity among members nor by the documented well-being this encourages.⁸⁰

Findings in this report suggest that of all religions surveyed in the United States, Latter-day Saints are in a strong

74. Nathan D. Leonhardt, Emily R. Kirchner, Thomas M. Phillips, Antonius D. Skipper, David C. Dollahite, and Loren D. Marks, “Together Forever: Eternal Perspective and Sacred Practices in American Latter-day Saint Families,” *Marriage & Family Review* 54, no. 7 (2018): 719–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2018.1469575>; David C. Dollahite and Loren D. Marks, “The Mormon American Family,” in *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations*, 5th ed., ed. Robert Wright, Charles H. Mindel, Robert W. Habenstein, and Thanh Van Tran (Prentice Hall, 2012), 461–86; David C. Dollahite, “Latter-day Saint Children and Youth in America,” in *Children and Childhood in American Religions*, ed. Don S. Browning and Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Rutgers University Press, 2009), 102–18; Rachel W. Loser, Shirley R. Klein, E. Jeffrey Hill, and David C. Dollahite, “Religion and the Daily Lives of LDS Families: An Ecological Perspective,” *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 37, no. 1 (2008): 52–70; David C. Dollahite, “Latter-day Saint Marriage and Family Life in Modern America,” in *American Religions and the Family: How Faith Traditions Cope with Modernization*, ed. Don S. Browning and David A. Clairmont (Columbia University Press, 2007), 124–50; David C. Dollahite and Loren D. Marks, “Teaching Correct Principles: Promoting Spiritual Strength in Latter-day Saint Young People,” in *Nurturing Childhood and Adolescent Spirituality: Perspectives from the World’s Religious Traditions*, ed. Karen Marie Yust, Aostre N. Johnson, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 394–408.

75. David C. Dollahite, Loren D. Marks, and Heather Howell Kelley, “Mormon Scholars and Mormon Families in Family Studies: A Brief Retrospective,” *Mormon Studies Review* 4 (2017): 16–40, <https://doi.org/10.18809/msr.2017.0102>.

76. Dean M. Busby and David C. Dollahite, “The Strengths and Challenges of Contemporary Marriages of Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (2020): 129–56; Michael A. Goodman, Loren D. Marks, and David C. Dollahite, “Transformational Processes and Meaning in Latter-day Saint Marriage,” *Marriage & Family Review* 48 (2012): 555–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2012.691081>.

77. David C. Dollahite, “Fathering for Eternity: Generative Spirituality in Latter-day Saint Fathers of Children with Special Needs,” *Review of Religious Research* 44 (2003): 237–51; Mark D. Ogletree, W. Justin Dyer, Michael A. Goodman, Courtney Kinneard, and Bradley W. McCormick, “Depression, Religiosity, and Parenting Styles Among Latter-day Saint Adolescents,” *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 227, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030227>; Michael A. Goodman and W. Justin Dyer, “From Parent to Child: Family Factors That Influence Faith Transmission,” *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 12, no. 2 (2020): 178–190, <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000283>.

78. Loren D. Marks, David C. Dollahite, Trevan G. Hatch, Matthew A. Goodman, Thomas M. Phillips, and Heather H. Kelley, “The Real Book of Mormon Musical: Latter-day Saint Family Home Evening as a Weekly Ritual,” *Marriage & Family Review* 56, no. 5 (2020): 425–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2020.1726852>; Rachel W. Loser, E. Jeffrey Hill, Shirley R. Klein, and David C. Dollahite, “Perceived Benefits of Religious Rituals in the Latter-day Saint Home,” *Review of Religious Research* 50, no. 3 (2009): 345–62.

79. See American Families of Faith Project, Brigham Young University, <https://americanfamiliesoffaith.byu.edu/aff-and-the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world>.

80. William Justin Dyer, Daniel K. Judd, Megan Gale, and Hunter Gibson Finlinson, “Religion, Mental Health, and the Latter-day Saints: A Review of Literature 2005–2022,” *Religions* 14, no. 6 (2023): 6, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060701>.

position. Latter-day Saints who stay show the highest rates of practicing their religious faith, including attending religious services, praying daily, and reading scriptures. 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.

Latter-day Saint Millennial+ members participate more in their religion than members of other religions surveyed and are among the highest in believing in God and considering religion to be important in their lives. They are also the most likely to feel a sense of spiritual peace and well-being. Of all the surveyed Christian groups, Latter-day Saints are one of the least likely to lose Millennial+ members. The Church also has a low rate of Millennial+ members being only nominally engaged in their faith. Thus, the Church is retaining its Millennial+ members at a higher rate than most other (particularly Christian) religions. And this retention is not simply in name only. Latter-day Saints have one of the highest rates of active retention, where those raised in the faith attend church frequently as adults. This coupled with the high birth rate of Latter-day Saints indicates that the Church appears to have, as Ryan Burge notes, “a bright future ahead of it.”⁸¹

In examining those raised Latter-day Saint but no longer identifying as such in adulthood, several important findings emerged. Perhaps the most important finding is that deidentified individuals are not a monolithic group. We found four groups of deidentified individuals, with two groups (comprising about 54% of the sample) who still find value in religion and spirituality and hold somewhat favorable views about Latter-day Saints. Many of these individuals will likely return if they have a friend at church. These groups are more likely to be politically conservative and married. Only 10% of deidentified individuals belong to a group that entirely rejects religion and spirituality (Faith Leaving). These individuals are more likely to have had adverse childhood experiences

and some kind of abuse in a religious context (though certainly not all the members of this group experienced these things).

Further, political ideology appears to distinguish between the four groups of deidentifiers and, for youth, predict future deidentification. It has been argued that an individual’s political leanings may drive his or her decisions more than his or her religion.⁸² As one researcher summarizes, “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.”⁸³ Our analyses of the FFYD data found that youth who feel The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not align with their politics are significantly more likely to leave the Church a few years later.

It is important to note that this report deals with general statistical associations and trends. Of course, there are always exceptions and counterexamples: There are many nonreligious and non-Latter-day Saint families with exceptional marriages and parent-child relationships just as there are highly religious Latter-day Saint families with unhappy or unsuccessful marriages and parent-child relationships. Further, this report does not provide a full explanation of the current religiousness of Latter-day Saints nor a full explanation as to why some may choose to deidentify. Much work is yet to be done in this area, and this report reflects only an initial effort.

The intent of this report is to provide some understanding of current US trends in Latter-day Saint religiousness and what may be (in part) influencing those trends. Our analyses suggest 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.

81. Ryan P. Burge, *The American Religious Landscape: Facts, Trends, and the Future* (Oxford University Press, 2025), 151.

82. Margolis, *From Politics to the Pews*, 3.

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