

## RELIGIOSITY OF LDS YOUNG PEOPLE

Latter-day Saints are known to be an industrious and hardworking people, particularly when it comes to their spiritual development. This strong “religious work ethic” is what sociologist Rodney Stark (1998) observed to be the key to Mormonism’s success in a competitive religious economy. He explained:

LDS theology maintains that each person is expected to achieve sinlessness. The process may take several million years of posthumous effort, but there is no reason not to get started on the job now. If Christians feel guilt when they sin, Latter-day Saints often seem to feel disappointed and impatient. This seems to be the psychological basis for the very optimistic, “can-do” spirit so many have noticed among Latter-day Saints. (p. 58)

Such a “can-do” attitude is driven by a powerful belief that life is not just about being saved; it is far more profound than that. It’s about achieving the highest status of all—godhood. Latter-day Saints see spiritual improvement as a daily pursuit

of becoming like their Maker. Elder Dallin H. Oaks (2000) said:

The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have *done*. It is an acknowledgement of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have *become*. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become. (p. 32; emphasis in original)

So how are Latter-day Saints doing at “becoming”? How are they doing in regard to living their religion? In Chapter 1, we discussed several dimensions of religiosity that we examined in our research, including such factors as professed religious beliefs, spiritual feelings and experiences, public and private religious behaviors, social acceptance within a congregation, family religious activities, and future religious plans. We will now look at our findings in each of these categories for both LDS teenagers and LDS college-aged young adults and compare them to national surveys of young people who are not LDS.

#### RELIGIOSITY OF AMERICAN NON-LDS YOUTH

Not until recently has there been any serious in-depth tracking of the religiosity of adolescents across the United States. However, in 2001 a group of researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill began an ambitious project. Their study, known as the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) documents the current state of religiosity among America’s youth (Denton & Smith, 2001; Smith & Faris, 2002; Smith & Faris, 2002a; Regnerus, Smith, & Fritsch, 2003; Smith & Kim, 2003; Smith & Kim, 2003a; Smith, Faris, & Denton; 2004).

A review of this work, as well as research conducted by Gallup International Institute, shows first that the majority of U.S. teens are not alienated from religion at all. For example, one Gallup poll found that around 95% of youth across the United States believe in God or a higher power (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999, p. 159); and another poll found that 74% pray on at least an occasional basis (Gallup & Bezilla, 1992). The NSYR found about half of U.S. adolescents attend church at least once a month, with 31% attending once a week or more. Sixty percent feel that religion is either “very important” or “pretty important” (Smith & Faris, 2002, p. 11). In addition, 65% of these youth belong to a family that does something religious at least one day in the week (Smith & Kim, 2003, p. 15). All of this provides support for the claim that religion continues to be a vibrant part of the adolescent culture in the United States.

Second, religion has a powerful positive influence on American teenagers. Youth who have higher rates of religious involvement or beliefs have better physical and emotional health, including better habits of eating, sleeping, and exercising; higher self-esteem, self-adjustment, and pro-social development; and lower distress and thoughts of suicide. Adolescent religiosity is also positively correlated with academic achievement, moral development, and community volunteerism and negatively linked to social delinquency, alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, as well as illicit sexual activity (Regnerus, Smith, & Fritsch, 2003).

Third, the NSYR found that LDS teens, although the sample was relatively small, are consistently higher in their religiosity than youth of other religious affiliations, such as Catholics, Protestants, Jews, other religions, and those who have no religious affiliation (Smith, Faris, & Denton, 2004). This information provides the impetus for us to now turn to our findings on the religiosity of LDS teens and see how they measure up to the current trend of religiosity of teens across the United States.

*Religiosity of LDS youth.* To compare LDS high school teenagers and LDS college-age young adults with non-LDS students

of the same ages, we conducted surveys in various parts of the United States and in two foreign countries. Over a period of years, studies were made of LDS youth living in four places in the United States—Utah County and Castle Dale, Utah, the East Coast, and the Pacific Northwest. We also surveyed LDS teens and young adults in Mexico and Great Britain.

In addition, we studied returned missionaries and unwed mothers in various regions of the United States. We wanted to compare their religiosity and behaviors with other LDS youth and non-LDS youth of the same ages. To learn more about the studies and how they were conducted, see Appendix A.

*Religious belief.* The first measure of religiosity we assessed was religious belief. Religious belief was measured by seven statements about traditional Christian beliefs, as well as beliefs unique to Latter-day Saint theology. We asked to what degree the teens accepted the following statements: God lives and is real; Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God; Joseph Smith actually saw God the Father and Jesus Christ; the Book of Mormon is the word of God; the Bible is the word of God; the President of the LDS Church is a prophet of God; and God answers prayers. All of the measurement scales can be seen in Appendix B.

As can be seen in Table 1, the vast majority of LDS youth in every geographical region we studied have very strong religious beliefs. Mexico's youth ranked the highest for each specific measure of belief, with 99% of them indicating they "agree" or "strongly agree" that God lives and that Jesus is the Christ, and no lower than 96% of them believe that Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ and that God answers their prayers. Among youth in Great Britain, agreement with these statements, although still relatively high (ranging from 71% to 89%), is the lowest of the six groups.

A belief that God lives and is real is accepted by the majority of LDS teens, regardless of what region of the world we studied. Percentages ranged from an average of 84% in Great Britain to 99% in Mexico. The Pacific Northwest was the

highest in the United States, at 97%. Contrasting these figures to what we mentioned earlier, that 95% of the young people across the United States believe in God or a higher being, we see a slightly higher percentage of LDS youth who believe in God compared to their non-LDS U.S. peers. It is encouraging to see such a high number of both LDS and non-LDS youth who say they believe in God.

Belief in Christ as the divine Son of God is clearly the strongest belief measure among LDS teens across all regions. Most regions report percentages in the high 90s. This comes as no surprise, because the central tenet of Latter-day Saint theology, a belief in Jesus Christ, is consistently taught to children at a very young age. Gallup and Lindsay (1999) report that 84% of U.S. adults believe that Jesus is God or the Son of God. This gives us some idea of the high percentage of people, LDS or not, who have a belief in Jesus Christ.

LDS teens are less sure when it comes to knowing whether or not God actually answers their prayers. Regional percentages drop to an average of less than 90% in this category. We suspect that recognizing answers to prayer requires more time and life experience than does attaining a fundamental belief in Christ, especially for teenagers.

Female teenagers generally ranked higher in religious beliefs than their male peers, although girls in Great Britain appear to be an exception. One explanation for this may be related to the fact that Great Britain has a higher rate of converts than the United States, especially among girls. Thirty-two percent of the LDS girls in Great Britain are converts, compared to 23% of the boys. Converts as a whole tend to score lower on measures of religiosity.

*Religious feelings and experiences.* LDS youth report a moderately high level of agreement when identifying whether they know what it feels like to repent, whether they have felt the Holy Ghost, or whether they have a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel (see Table 2). Mexico's youth, who rank the

Table 1. Religious Beliefs of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah Country (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>God lives and is real</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	95	96	94	94	97	97	95	97	86	82	99	99
Mixed feelings	5	3	5	5	3	3	5	3	12	16	1	1
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
<b>Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	97	98	95	96	97	99	95	98	89	86	99	99
Mixed feelings	3	2	5	3	3	1	4	2	10	12	1	0
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	1
<b>Joseph Smith actually saw God the Father and Jesus Christ</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	95	96	91	91	96	95	91	94	75	73	96	96
Mixed feelings	5	4	7	8	4	4	8	6	20	21	4	4
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	1	5	6	0	1
<b>The Book of Mormon is the word of God</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	94	95	94	90	96	95	93	94	80	76	97	97
Mixed feelings	5	5	4	9	4	5	6	5	16	16	2	3
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	1	4	8	1	1

Table 1 (continued)

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>The Bible is the word of God</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	92	94	92	91	93	94	93	97	81	79	97	98
Mixed feelings	8	6	6	9	7	6	7	3	15	16	3	2
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	5	5	1	1
<b>The President of the LDS Church is a prophet of God</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	96	97	94	94	96	97	95	95	83	75	97	97
Mixed feelings	3	2	4	5	4	3	4	4	12	20	2	2
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	1	5	5	1	1
<b>God answers prayers</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	90	90	91	88	90	92	88	88	73	71	97	96
Mixed feelings	9	9	6	10	10	7	11	11	19	21	2	3
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	3	3	0	0	1	1	8	9	1	0

Table 2. Religious Feelings and Experiences of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>My relationship with God is an important part of my life</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	81	82	81	82	81	84	78	84	61	65	95	94
Mixed feelings	13	11	16	12	16	13	18	13	25	22	4	3
Disagree/strongly disagree	6	7	3	6	3	3	4	3	14	14	1	3
<b>I have a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	75	81	76	76	77	76	73	75	59	59	87	87
Mixed feelings	20	15	19	18	16	16	21	19	26	18	11	10
Disagree/strongly disagree	6	4	6	6	7	6	6	5	15	23	3	3
<b>I know what it feels like to repent and to be forgiven</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	71	70	70	61	60	65	67	68	56	56	90	88
Mixed feelings	21	23	19	25	28	25	26	24	29	25	7	7
Disagree/strongly disagree	7	7	11	13	12	11	8	9	15	19	3	5



Table 2 (continued)

	Utah County		Castle Dale, UT		Pacific Northwest		East Coast		Great Britain		Mexico	
	Males (n = 423)	Females (n = 554)	Males (n = 157)	Females (n = 197)	Males (n = 234)	Females (n = 342)	Males (n = 612)	Females (n = 720)	Males (n = 177)	Females (n = 241)	Males (n = 620)	Females (n = 683)
<b>I have been guided by the Spirit with some of my problems or decisions</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	75	82	79	73	76	78	74	77	59	62	90	92
Mixed feelings	19	14	14	18	18	17	20	18	27	20	8	6
Disagree/strongly disagree	6	4	7	9	6	4	6	6	15	19	2	3
<b>There have been times in my life when I felt the Holy Ghost</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	86	88	87	82	84	86	81	82	67	72	90	90
Mixed feelings	10	9	9	13	11	11	14	13	22	15	7	5
Disagree/strongly disagree	5	3	4	5	5	3	5	5	12	13	3	5

highest in religious beliefs, appear to have the highest level of religious feelings and experiences. About nine out of ten of the Mexican teens “agree” or “strongly agree” that they have had each of these experiences. Around 75% of the youth in the United States have felt similar feelings. Youth in Great Britain reported the lowest percentages.

Girls report higher levels of religious feelings and experiences than do the boys. Girls in Castle Dale, Utah, are an exception to this, as they are lower than the boys in three out of the five indicators. There does not seem to be any explanation for this, since these girls have higher rates than the boys in their private religious behavior. It is true that their church attendance is lower than the boys’, but so are several of the girls in the other regions who, as we said, have higher rates of feelings and experiences than the boys in their respective regions.

*Public religious behavior.* We found a high level of commitment to public religiosity among LDS youth (see Table 3). About 90% of young people across all regions report attending sacrament meetings “often” or “very often,” with the exception of teens in Castle Dale and Great Britain. Around 83% of youth in Castle Dale and 70% in Great Britain reported attending church “often” or “very often.” In the U.S., LDS youth in the Pacific Northwest have the highest reported attendance, while youth in Castle Dale have the lowest. With only about 30% of general U.S. teens attending church weekly or more, we can see that LDS youth have a much higher rate than their peers (Denton, Pearce, & Smith, 2008).

Sunday School attendance is relatively low among teens in Castle Dale, with only 65% reporting regular attendance. This lower rate for Sunday School is startling, since we find about 83% of the same teens attending sacrament meeting and around 77% going to priesthood or young women meetings. In other words, between 12% and 17% of Castle Dale youth leave, stay outside, or stay in the halls or foyer during the middle meeting of the three-hour Church block. Contrast this to only about

1 to 10% loss in the other regions of the study. The tradition of skipping Sunday School seems more prevalent among teens in Castle Dale than among teens in the other regions.

Another surprise in our findings is that in most regions, boys attend church meetings more than girls. This is counter to what we normally find in the general population. One explanation may come from the difference in how parents and Church supervisors approach gender when it comes to church truancy. Boys, for example, generally gather in larger groups on Church premises and are more assertively corralled by teachers to get to class. Girls, on the other hand, tend to gather in pairs and may more often leave to change their clothes or adjust their makeup. Teachers or parents may be less assertive with the girls because they see their excuses for leaving as more legitimate.

Although girls have lower church attendance, they are more likely to bear their testimonies than boys are. This makes sense, given that in Western cultures girls are often socialized to share their feelings in public settings, especially in their teenage years.

Besides the law of chastity, the Word of Wisdom is perhaps the second-most emphasized principle to youth in the Church. Our findings show that this emphasis has a positive impact on the youth. We found that in the U.S., 75% to 91% of LDS young people living in the various regions report having never smoked. These percentages drop slightly when it comes to drinking alcohol, with a range of 70% in Castle Dale to 88% (girls) in the Pacific Northwest who have never drunk alcohol. Great Britain, on the other hand, with its more open cultural attitudes towards smoking and drinking, shows that only 30% of LDS boys and 43% of LDS girls have never smoked, and only 36% of the boys and 51% of the girls have completely avoided alcohol.

According to our data, boys in all regions appear more likely to smoke than girls. Results are mixed when it comes to drinking, as rates reported between males and females are generally about the same. Girls in the Pacific Northwest, however,

Table 3. Public Behavior of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>Attend sacrament meeting</b>												
Very often/often	92	91	87	80	98	95	95	95	73	69	95	92
Sometimes	5	4	6	5	1	3	3	3	6	5	4	5
Rarely/never	3	4	7	15	0	2	2	2	20	28	1	3
<b>Attend Sunday School</b>												
Very often/often	86	82	66	65	95	91	95	92	70	65	88	87
Sometimes	7	8	11	16	3	4	3	3	6	6	7	6
Rarely/never	7	10	24	19	2	5	3	4	25	29	5	7
<b>Attend priesthood or young women meeting</b>												
Very often/often	88	88	79	75	98	94	93	93	72	64	85	88
Sometimes	6	5	8	5	1	3	4	4	5	6	9	7
Rarely/never	6	7	13	21	1	4	3	3	24	30	6	5
<b>Give testimony in meeting</b>												
Very often/often	7	13	8	19	11	14	10	19	17	16	34	32
Sometimes	16	24	22	18	19	20	21	26	20	19	24	24
Rarely/never	77	64	70	62	70	66	69	55	63	65	42	44

Table 3 (continued)

	Utah County		Castle Dale, UT		Pacific Northwest		East Coast		Great Britain		Mexico	
	Males (n = 423)	Females (n = 554)	Males (n = 157)	Females (n = 197)	Males (n = 234)	Females (n = 342)	Males (n = 612)	Females (n = 720)	Males (n = 177)	Females (n = 241)	Males (n = 620)	Females (n = 683)
<b>Frequency of smoking cigarettes</b>												
Never	90	95	37	22	45	36	79	79	22	18	4	3
Once	4	3	16	52	32	22	5	6	30	27	21	34
2 to 5 times	3	1	47	26	23	41	7	6	49	55	46	43
6 or more times	3	1	0	0	0	0	9	10	0	0	29	20
<b>Frequency of drinking alcohol</b>												
Never	90	92	17	32	30	27	79	75	21	17	5	3
Once	5	4	41	43	55	51	4	4	32	45	20	37
2 to 5 times	3	4	41	24	15	22	9	12	47	39	51	42
6 or more times	3	1	0	0	0	0	9	9	0	0	23	18

do exceed the boys in the number of instances reported for drinking alcohol. It is difficult to say what accounts for this. It may be a cultural phenomenon, or it may just be an anomaly, where the group of girls in our study just happened to be a rowdier sample than the overall population.

*Private religious behavior.* Table 4 presents several indicators of private religiosity. About seven out of ten LDS youth in the United States claim to pray “often” or “very often” each week. When we include those who are in the “sometimes” category, that ratio increases to 85%. As we mentioned earlier, Gallup and Bezilla (1992) report that 74% of adolescents in the United States pray at least on an occasional basis. This comparison shows that LDS teens are about 11% higher in their private prayer practices than their non-LDS peers.

LDS teens in Great Britain and Mexico do not appear to pray as frequently as youth in other regions; only five or six out of ten youth in Great Britain and Mexico report privately praying frequently. More females report praying than males. Utah County ranks the highest in frequency for both males and females.

Anywhere from 41% to 59% of LDS young people from regions in the United States participate in personal scripture study “often” or “very often.” Gallup and Lindsay (1999) show that 36% of youth across the United States read the Bible at least weekly. A more recent report from the National Study of Youth and Religion (2004) revealed that only 26% of all teens read the scriptures at least once a week. They found considerable variation between different denominations. Nearly half (48%) of the youth whose families belong to the Church of God in Christ read the Bible this frequently, while only 8% of teens in Episcopalian families regularly read the scriptures. The results are not precisely reflective of those we obtained in the LDS surveys, as we asked the question a little differently, but the results indicate that LDS teens read the scriptures more often than their peers. This general comparison indicates that Latter-day

Table 4. Private Behavior of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>Pray privately</b>												
Very often/often	68	79	60	73	66	73	60	70	45	58	56	65
Sometimes	16	10	20	13	18	13	21	20	25	19	20	17
Rarely/never	16	10	20	15	16	14	19	10	29	23	24	18
<b>Read scriptures on my own</b>												
Very often/often	47	59	50	58	46	58	41	45	33	41	35	39
Sometimes	27	21	20	20	27	22	28	28	28	17	32	30
Rarely/never	27	20	31	21	28	20	31	27	40	42	34	32
<b>Pay full tithing</b>												
Very often/often	73	74	58	52	74	75	74	73	48	45	27	24
Sometimes	11	13	15	15	15	12	12	12	13	16	19	14
Rarely/never	15	13	27	34	11	13	14	15	39	39	54	62
<b>Fast on fast Sunday</b>												
Very often/often	58	61	42	40	59	60	54	56	39	34	29	26
Sometimes	20	18	22	23	18	18	18	20	17	16	26	24
Rarely/never	22	22	36	38	23	22	28	24	44	50	45	50

Saint youth have a higher commitment in this area, albeit their scripture study includes a wider canon, including the Book of Mormon and other LDS scripture as well as the Bible.

As with private prayer, youth in Great Britain and Mexico appear much less likely to study their scriptures as often as those in the United States. Castle Dale boys rank the highest among males, and Utah County girls rank the highest among females. The fact that teens in Utah are higher in both private prayer and scripture study may be attributed to the extensiveness of the state's released-time seminary program. When compared to early morning seminary or home-study, which is more common in outlying regions, released-time seminary has a significantly higher attendance rate and tends to be more effective in promoting private religious behavior.

At first glance, it may be a bit surprising to see that both scripture study and prayer are comparatively low in Mexico, given our previous data showing youth there to have extremely strong religious beliefs and feelings. The religious culture in Mexico, however, with its strong Catholic traditions, fits this outcome, as the Latin culture promotes the ideals of religious belief and faith to a greater extent than the U.S. culture does, thus encouraging religious beliefs, though not necessarily increasing private religious behavior.

Another indicator of private religiosity is the paying of tithing. About 70% of LDS youth in the United States report paying tithing "often" or "very often." Tithing payment among Castle Dale youth drops to a little above 50%, whereas those in Great Britain are just under 50%, and only about one in four teens in Mexico say they pay tithing "often" or "very often." Socio-economic status of the communities as well as the availability of employment for teenagers in Castle Dale, Great Britain, and Mexico may partially account for lower scores in this category. Lack of family support and a higher percentage of converts may also be factors in this pattern. We found no systematic differences between boys and girls in the payment of tithing.



A little more than half the LDS teens in the United States claim they fast “often” or “very often.” Specifically, youth living in Utah County, the Pacific Northwest, and the East Coast fast more often than do those in Mexico and Great Britain. The percentages in these groups range from 26% to 39%.

Overall, Utah County girls rank first in every indicator except for one. This bespeaks something of the apparent unique spiritual strength that is being generated in that area. In saying this, however, we do not minimize the fact that the rates of those in the other regions are also relatively high and are, in most cases, only slightly behind those of Utah County girls.

*Family religious behavior.* Latter-day Saint parents are responsible to teach and guide their children in the gospel. Elder Russell M. Nelson (1999) counseled, “Happiness at home is most likely to be achieved when practices there are founded upon the teachings of Jesus Christ. Ours is the responsibility to ensure that we have family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening” (pp. 39–40).

As shown in Table 5, family prayer happens more often than not in families of LDS teens in the United States. About one in three LDS youth in the U.S. report having family scripture study at home “often” or “very often.” Great Britain and Mexico rank lower, with about one in four reporting family scripture study “often” or “very often.”

About 40% of youth across all groups say they hold family home evening at least “often.” The lower rate for girls in Great Britain may in part be attributed to the higher rate of female converts in the region. Also, it is possible that family home evening rates from Mexico are lower than they should be; some of the Mexican data was collected from youth who lived at a boarding school. Their reporting of family religious activities may be skewed, since they were not living at home at the time.

*Religious social acceptance.* How much acceptance a young person feels within his or her peer group at church is very important for self-worth and participation in church activities.

Table 5. Family Religious Behavior of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>Family has family prayer</b>												
Very often/often	65	58	57	42	71	58	57	54	51	37	42	37
Sometimes	14	12	15	12	9	15	15	14	15	17	18	15
Rarely/never	22	31	28	46	20	28	28	32	35	47	40	49
<b>Family reads scriptures together</b>												
Very often/often	38	32	38	28	34	26	28	25	29	20	25	20
Sometimes	21	17	12	14	17	21	19	16	23	17	19	17
Rarely/never	42	51	50	58	49	54	52	59	48	63	57	62
<b>Family holds family home evening</b>												
Very often/often	45	40	41	30	51	42	47	41	41	29	39	33
Sometimes	21	21	17	21	13	18	18	19	22	13	18	16
Rarely/never	34	39	43	49	36	40	36	40	37	58	43	52

We asked three questions that measured this issue (see Table 6). About two-thirds of LDS teens agree that they feel liked by their ward members. About one-third agree that they sometimes feel like an outsider at church. Fewer girls than boys appear to feel accepted in church, although Mexico is an exception to this pattern. Economic status may play a prominent part in how much attention girls place on being accepted at church. For example, teens who have more wealth may think that acceptance by their peers is based on what type of clothes they can afford to wear. Girls in the lower economic regions may be less inclined to feel like an outsider at church because of these reasons. There are, no doubt, other reasons why girls (and boys) do not feel accepted at church.

*Religious plans.* The final indicator we analyzed among teens was the religious plans they have for the future. From Table 7, we see that around 75% of the boys agree that they plan on serving a mission. Boys in Great Britain are much lower, with only 55% reporting plans to serve a mission. More than half of the girls in Mexico and slightly less than half in Utah county agree that they want to serve a mission. The vast majority of all youth have plans to marry in the temple and to stay active in the Church. Again, teens in Great Britain generally appear less committed to these plans than those in the other regions.

## RELIGIOSITY AMONG LDS YOUNG ADULTS

Religiosity among adults in the United States continues to remain strong, despite numerous predictions by social scientists and theorists over past decades that religion would decline as modernization and scientific enlightenment flourished. In their recent book *Surveying the Religious Landscape*, Gallup and Lindsay (1999) show that the vast majority of Americans continue to believe in God or a higher power, most are members of a church and pray daily, nearly half read the Bible weekly, and two out of five attend church on a weekly basis. These figures, of course, represent adults of all

Table 6. Acceptance of LDS Youth in Church Settings, by Percentage

	Utah County		Castle Dale, UT		Pacific Northwest		East Coast		Great Britain		Mexico	
	Males (n = 423)	Females (n = 554)	Males (n = 157)	Females (n = 197)	Males (n = 234)	Females (n = 342)	Males (n = 612)	Females (n = 720)	Males (n = 177)	Females (n = 241)	Males (n = 620)	Females (n = 683)
<b>I seem to fit in very well with the people in my ward</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	61	58	68	47	70	58	63	63	59	49	85	77
Mixed feelings	17	23	14	28	15	22	24	26	22	22	9	13
Disagree/strongly disagree	22	19	18	25	14	20	13	11	19	29	7	10
<b>I am well liked by members of my ward</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	66	65	62	51	80	69	74	77	68	60	77	71
Mixed feelings	23	26	31	32	16	24	21	20	22	25	17	19
Disagree/strongly disagree	10	9	7	17	5	7	6	4	11	15	7	10
<b>I sometimes feel like an outsider in the Church</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	25	31	35	37	24	32	27	32	38	47	36	33
Mixed feelings	15	17	17	21	18	21	16	19	17	18	12	14
Disagree/strongly disagree	60	52	48	42	59	47	57	49	45	36	52	53

Table 7. Religious Plans of LDS Youth, by Percentage

	Utah County (n = 423)		Castle Dale, UT (n = 157)		Pacific Northwest (n = 234)		East Coast (n = 612)		Great Britain (n = 177)		Mexico (n = 683)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
<b>I plan to serve a mission</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	76	46	77	21	82	37	75	29	55	18	89	56
Mixed feelings	13	40	16	47	14	45	18	51	23	39	10	30
Disagree/strongly disagree	3	14	8	32	4	18	7	20	22	43	2	15
<b>I plan to marry in the temple</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	91	92	87	82	92	91	88	88	63	61	93	93
Mixed feelings	7	6	11	15	8	8	10	9	23	21	6	5
Disagree/strongly disagree	2	1	3	4	1	1	3	3	14	18	2	2
<b>I plan to be active in the Church</b>												
Strongly agree/agree	92	93	82	85	94	92	90	89	68	62	95	95
Mixed feelings	7	7	13	11	5	7	8	9	20	23	4	4
Disagree/strongly disagree	2	1	5	5	2	2	2	2	12	15	1	1

ages across the United States. But what about young adults specifically?

A 2001 Gallup Poll shows that U.S. young adults are moderately strong in religiosity but are lower in almost every measure compared to older adults. For example, church attendance for those ages 18 to 29 is about 15% lower (32%) than the national average of all ages combined. Only 47% of these young adults feel that religion is “very important,” compared to 60% of those ages 50 to 64. About 60% of 18- to 29-year-olds say they are members of a church. This is lower than the older age groups, including 50- to 64-year-olds and 65- to 74-year-olds, who are at 72% and 70%, respectively. A very high percentage (96%) of those aged 18 to 29 believe in God or a universal spirit. This is around the same level as the older age groups (Gallup, 2002).

With these national figures in mind, we now turn to our research on the religiosity of Latter-day Saint young adults. Generally we find that young adults in the Church, whether attending BYU or not, are much higher in their religiosity than their non-LDS peers of similar age across the United States. Religiosity levels for students attending BYU are particularly high, and we recognize this may represent something of a selection bias, since BYU’s honor code requires students attending the university to maintain strict religious standards. Nonetheless, additional analysis from our second young adult study (the returned-missionary/non-returned-missionary study) substantiates that high religiosity is not specific to attendance at an LDS college, but that LDS young adults, no matter where they are, generally hold relatively strong religious values and convictions. Let’s take a look at these outcomes more specifically.

*Religious belief.* The religiosity of college-aged LDS young adults is extremely high. Table 8 shows several religious belief measures of those who attend BYU in Provo, Idaho, or Hawaii. There is practically no variance in any of these measures, with no less than 96% of students who either “agree” or “strongly

Table 8. Religious Beliefs of LDS BYU Students, by Percentage

	BYU		BYU–Idaho		BYU–Hawaii	
	Males (n = 495)	Females (n = 576)	Males (n = 436)	Females (n = 751)	Males (n = 298)	Females (n = 521)
<b>God lives and is real</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	100	99	100	100	99	100
Mixed feelings	0	1	0	0	1	0
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	99	99	100	100	99	100
Mixed feelings	1	1	0	0	1	0
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Joseph Smith saw God and Jesus Christ</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	98	98	100	100	96	98
Mixed feelings	1	1	1	0	3	2
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>The Book of Mormon is the word of God</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	98	99	100	100	97	99
Mixed feelings	1	1	1	0	2	1
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>The Bible is the word of God</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	98	98	99	100	96	98
Mixed feelings	1	2	1	0	3	2
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>The President of the Church is a prophet</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	99	99	100	100	98	100
Mixed feelings	1	1	1	0	1	0
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	0

agree” that God lives, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Joseph Smith saw God, the Book of Mormon is true, the Bible is the word of God, and the President of the Church is a prophet. As mentioned earlier, the Gallup poll found around 96% of young adults across the United States of similar age (ages 18 to 29) believe in a God or a universal spirit. This provides some idea that LDS and non-LDS young adults alike are extremely high in their belief in God.

*Table 9. Religious Feelings of LDS BYU Students, by Percentage*

	BYU		BYU-Idaho		BYU-Hawaii	
	Males (n = 495)	Females (n = 576)	Males (n = 436)	Females (n = 751)	Males (n = 298)	Females (n = 521)
<b>My relationship with God is important</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	96	98	97	98	93	96
Mixed feelings	2	1	3	2	5	3
Disagree/strongly disagree	2	1	1	0	2	1
<b>I have a strong testimony</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	96	98	97	98	93	95
Mixed feelings	2	1	2	2	4	4
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	1	1	3	1
<b>I have felt repentance</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	94	92	93	93	90	92
Mixed feelings	5	7	5	7	8	7
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	2	1	2	1
<b>I have been guided by the Spirit</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	96	97	95	97	93	96
Mixed feelings	3	3	5	3	5	4
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	2	0
<b>I have felt the Holy Ghost</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	98	99	98	99	98	98
Mixed feelings	2	1	1	1	2	2
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	1	0	0	1



*Religious feeling and experiences.* Religious feelings of BYU students (Table 9) are also relatively strong, indicating a high level of agreement across all measures. Ninety-three to 98% say that their relationship with God is important and that they have a strong testimony (of the Church).

Between 93% and 99% of the LDS men and women from these schools said they have felt the Holy Ghost or have been guided by the Spirit in their lives. Knowing what it feels like to repent and be forgiven ranked as the lowest of the five indicators, ranging from 90% of the men at BYU–Hawaii to 94% of the men at BYU in Provo.

*Public religious behavior.* Table 10 shows that most LDS students on the Provo, Rexburg, and Laie campuses attend sacrament meeting almost every week. Women appear slightly more likely than men to attend. With student wards established on campus for both single and married students, Church attendance is easily facilitated.

One of the requirements of the honor code at BYU campuses is to keep the Word of Wisdom. There seems to be very little problem with students holding to this requirement, as 92% to 98% of the student body claim to obey the Word of Wisdom completely. Around half of the students claim they bear their testimonies at least sometimes at Church. The other half rarely or never share their testimonies. About one in five say they bear their testimony “very often” or “often.” Men at Rexburg and Laie appear slightly more likely to bear their testimonies than the women, but the reverse is true at the Provo campus.

*Private religious behavior.* Private religious behavior at BYU campuses is relatively high, although students at BYU–Hawaii have lower levels in all of the indicators when compared to the other two institutions (see Table 11). Aside from the men at BYU–Hawaii, over 90% of students report praying at least a few times a week, and anywhere from 68% to 86% report studying their scriptures several times a week. Students at the Provo campus show higher rates of these two practices than

Table 10. Religious Feelings of LDS BYU Students, by Percentage

	BYU		BYU–Idaho		BYU–Hawaii	
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 576)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 436)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 751)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 298)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 521)
<b>I attend sacrament meeting</b>						
Almost every week/2 or 3 times a month	99	99	98	99	96	98
Once a month	1	0	1	0	2	1
A few times a semester/never	1	1	1	1	2	1
<b>I attend Sunday School</b>						
Almost every week/2 or 3 times a month	96	98	96	98	93	96
Once a month	2	1	2	1	4	2
A few times a semester/never	2	1	2	2	4	3
<b>I attend priesthood or Relief Society</b>						
Almost every week/2 or 3 times a month	96	98	96	98	92	96
Once a month	3	2	2	1	3	1
A few times a semester/never	1	1	2	2	5	3
<b>I obey the Word of Wisdom</b>						
Yes—completely	98	98	97	98	92	95
Most of the time	2	2	2	2	6	5
No	1	0	1	0	2	0
<b>I bear my testimony in sacrament meeting</b>						
Very often/often	17	20	21	19	19	19
Sometimes	35	36	35	35	34	31
Rarely/never	48	45	44	47	47	50

students in Rexburg or Laie. This may be a result of the difference in concentration of returned missionaries between the Provo campus and the other two schools. The Gallup Poll (Winseman, 2002) shows that about 65% of Americans say they “agree” or “strongly agree” that they spend time in worship or prayer every day. There are no numbers from Gallup specifically for young adults.

Table 11. Private Behavior of LDS BYU Students, by Percentage

	BYU		BYU–Idaho		BYU–Hawaii	
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 576)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 436)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 751)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 298)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 521)
<b>I pray privately</b>						
Every day/a few times a week	94	96	92	96	83	90
About once a week/about once a month	5	4	5	6	12	7
Less than once a month/not at all	1	1	2	1	5	3
<b>I read scriptures privately</b>						
Every day/a few times a week	82	86	77	82	69	68
About once a week/about once a month	14	12	19	14	29	25
Less than once a month/not at all	4	2	4	2	11	7
<b>I fast on fast Sunday</b>						
Very often/often	75	84	71	80	56	67
Sometimes	15	9	15	11	22	17
Rarely/never	11	7	14	9	22	16
<b>Payment of tithing</b>						
Full-tithe payer	96	96	96	96	90	88
Partial-tithe payer	3	3	3	3	6	9
Non-tithe payer	1	1	2	2	4	2

The reported percentage of full-tithe payers at the Provo and Rexburg campuses are exactly the same, at 96%. Lower rates are found at BYU–Hawaii, but these are still relatively high. A high frequency of fasting on fast Sunday is found among about seven in ten of the LDS students. Students at BYU in Provo have a higher rate in this category, followed by students at BYU–Idaho and then BYU–Hawaii.

*Religious social acceptance and plans.* Like LDS teens, LDS young adults also find social acceptance by others important. Campus wards are a unique place for students to enjoy social interaction. Most students say they get along with members of their ward, and about three-fourths of them see themselves as well liked in their ward (see Table 12). We found about one in six students say they feel like an outsider at church. About

Table 12. *Feelings of Acceptance in Church, by Percentage*

	BYU		BYU–Idaho		BYU–Hawaii	
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 576)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 436)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 751)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 298)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 521)
<b>I feel like an outsider</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	18	13	13	12	28	17
Mixed feelings	11	16	17	13	16	20
Disagree/strongly disagree	71	72	70	75	56	66
<b>I get along with ward members</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	63	66	69	71	64	61
Mixed feelings	27	24	24	22	23	29
Disagree/strongly disagree	10	10	7	7	13	10
<b>I am well liked by members of my ward</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	77	78	81	77	70	71
Mixed feelings	20	21	17	22	26	25
Disagree/strongly disagree	3	1	2	1	5	4

Table 13. *Religious Plans of LDS BYU Students, by Percentage*

	BYU		BYU–Idaho		BYU–Hawaii	
	Males ( <i>n</i> = 495)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 576)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 436)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 751)	Males ( <i>n</i> = 298)	Females ( <i>n</i> = 521)
<b>I plan to marry in the temple</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	98	98	99	99	92	92
Mixed feelings	2	1	1	1	4	6
Disagree/strongly disagree	0	1	0	1	3	3
<b>I plan to stay active all my life</b>						
Strongly agree/agree	97	98	99	99	90	94
Mixed feelings	2	1	1	1	6	4
Disagree/strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	4	2

one in four BYU–Hawaii men identify themselves as an outsider at church.

Given a lifetime of strong socialization surrounding temple worship and Church activity, it is not surprising that we found a solid commitment by almost all LDS students on BYU

campuses to marry in the temple and stay active in the Church throughout their lives (see Table 13). Ninety-seven to 99% of the LDS students at Provo and Rexburg plan to marry in the temple and to stay active in the Church all their lives. Although still relatively high, the percentage of students at BYU–Hawaii was lower in these areas when compared to those at the other two campuses.

#### RELIGIOSITY OF LDS RETURNED MISSIONARIES

In addition to data from LDS college students attending Church universities, data from our studies of returned missionaries and those who did not serve missions help us assess young adult religiosity in the Church. As we look at outcomes, our primary focus is not to highlight the differences between returned missionaries and non-returned missionaries, since these differences are probably linked to factors that occur much earlier than the mission field. Instead, we look to provide further information and corroborate what has already been discovered: That religiosity among LDS young adults remains relatively high, regardless of post–high school activity.

*Religious feelings and experiences.* As can be seen in Table 14, the vast majority of returned missionaries, both men and women, claim that their relationship with God is important to them and that the Holy Ghost is an important part of their lives. Around one in five indicate having felt spiritual experiences on a weekly basis. Returned missionaries in their 20s appear more likely to have stronger feelings about their relationship with God than those who are older. However, there is a difference in this pattern between men and women. Women report their lowest religiosity in their 40s, whereas men report their lowest religiosity in their 30s. Across all but one of the indicators, women score higher than men in their religious feelings and experiences.

As for those who did not serve a mission, about three-fourths of the men say they feel strongly about their relationship

Table 14. Religious Feelings and Experiences of LDS Young Adults, by Percentage

	Returned Missionaries (Age)				Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)																			
	Males		Females		Males		Females																	
	20	30	40	20	30	40	20	30	40															
	(n = 1007)		(n = 594)		(n = 466)		(n = 644)		(n = 520)		(n = 369)		(n = 198)		(n = 95)		(n = 87)		(n = 307)		(n = 171)		(n = 142)	
<b>My relationship with God is an important part of my life</b>																								
Exactly/very much	96	94	94	99	98	98	98	98	73	73	80	92	96	96										
Somewhat	3	5	5	1	2	2	2	20	19	14	7	4	4											
Not very much/not at all	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	7	8	6	1	0	1											
<b>The Holy Ghost is an important part of my life</b>																								
Exactly/very much	84	77	80	95	92	90	90	51	51	62	82	82	89											
Somewhat	12	15	17	4	7	7	7	25	27	18	12	14	5											
Not very much/not at all	4	7	3	1	1	3	3	25	23	20	6	4	6											
<b>I know what it feels like to repent and to be forgiven</b>																								
Exactly/very much	83	76	79	86	81	78	78	54	60	60	72	69	79											
Somewhat	14	17	18	13	18	16	16	17	22	25	17	23	12											
Not very much/not at all	3	7	3	1	1	6	6	30	18	15	11	8	9											

Table 14 (continued)

	Returned Missionaries (Age)		Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)			
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	20	30	40	20	30	40
	(n = 1007)	(n = 594)	(n = 466)	(n = 644)	(n = 198)	(n = 369)
				(n = 520)	(n = 87)	(n = 142)
<b>I have been guided by the Spirit with some of my problems or decisions</b>						
Exactly/very much	77	73	77	93	42	51
					61	75
Somewhat	19	20	20	6	29	16
					26	19
Not very much/not at all	4	7	4	1	29	8
					20	4
					13	5
<b>I have felt the Spirit of God in sacrament meeting</b>						
Exactly/very much	84	77	82	91	54	58
					65	81
Somewhat	11	16	14	7	16	19
					11	12
Not very much/not at all	5	7	5	2	30	23
					25	7
					5	5
					6	6

Table 15. Public Behavior of LDS Young Adults, by Percentage

	Returned Missionaries (Age)				Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)							
	Males		Females		Males		Females					
	20	30	40	20	30	40	20	30	40			
	(n = 1007) (n = 594) (n = 466)		(n = 644) (n = 520) (n = 369)		(n = 198) (n = 95) (n = 87)		(n = 307) (n = 171) (n = 142)					
<b>Attend sacrament meeting</b>												
Almost every week/2 or 3 times a month	95	93	95	98	95	94	47	62	60	76	84	86
Once a month	2	2	2	1	1	1	6	38	3	4	1	1
Every other month/a few times a year/never	3	5	4	1	4	5	47	0	37	20	15	14
<b>Attend Sunday School</b>												
Almost every week/2 or 3 times a month	91	87	91	96	91	91	44	58	52	68	77	83
Once a month	4	5	3	2	2	1	6	1	5	5	4	1
Every other month/a few times a year/never	5	9	7	2	6	8	50	41	43	27	19	16
<b>I obey the Word of Wisdom</b>												
Yes—completely	96	93	95	98	97	97	53	66	64	81	84	86
Most of the time	2	4	4	1	2	1	14	11	16	12	10	7
No	2	3	2	1	1	2	34	23	20	7	6	7
<b>Priesthood status</b>												
High priest	1	11	32	NA	NA	NA	1	2	13	NA	NA	NA
Elder	99	89	68	NA	NA	NA	52	68	64	NA	NA	NA
Aaronic priesthood office	0	0	0	NA	NA	NA	28	20	14	NA	NA	NA
No priesthood	1	1	0	NA	NA	NA	19	10	8	NA	NA	NA



with God, yet only around half claim that the Holy Ghost is an important part of their lives. The older the men are, the more they appear to increase in their religious feelings and experiences. Women who did not serve full-time missions show relatively high ratings for religious feelings and experiences, although generally not as high as the returned-missionary women.

*Public religious behavior.* The vast majority of returned missionaries attend sacrament meeting on a weekly basis (see Table 15). About 94% of males attend sacrament meeting at least two to three times a month, with about 96% of females in the same category. Sunday School attendance is around 90% for males who served full-time missions and 93% for females who served full-time missions. As for Word of Wisdom observance, around 95% of the returned-missionary males indicate that they keep it completely, while 97% of females in that category do the same. Priesthood status among the returned-missionary males in their 40s shows that 32% are high priests and 68% are elders.

Public religious behavior for returned-missionary males in their 20s starts at an extremely high rate, which then makes a slight decrease as they move into their 30s. It then appears to shift back up in their 40s. Returned-missionary females in their 30s and 40s have a modest drop in their public religious behavior as compared to those in their 20s. The numbers for keeping the Word of Wisdom showed little variation across these age groups for both men and women.

Public religiosity among non-returned missionaries is much lower when compared to returned missionaries. Of LDS males in their 20s who have not served full-time missions, under half attend sacrament meeting two or three times a month or more. Females in this category report higher rates, with around 76% reporting attending two to three times a month or more. This percentage is substantially higher than the 32% of Americans aged 18 to 29 who claim they attended church in the last seven days (Gallup, 2002).

Among non-returned missionaries, Sunday School rates are slightly lower than that of sacrament meeting attendance. About three out of five males in this category say they obey the Word of Wisdom completely. More than 80% of the females claim the same. As for the priesthood status among non-returned-missionary males in their 40s, 13% are ordained high priests, 64% are elders, 14% hold the Aaronic Priesthood, and 8% do not hold the priesthood.

The pattern across the three age-groups indicates that women increase in their public religious behavior as they get older. Non-returned-missionary males appear especially low in public religiosity in their 20s, but report an increase in these indicators among those in their 30s and 40s.

*Private religious behavior.* Table 16 shows the rate of private religious behavior among both samples. Private prayer continues to be significantly practiced among returned missionaries throughout their lives. About nine out of ten of those in their 20s pray at least several times a week. This rate drops as they get into their 30s, but begins to pick up again in their 40s.

This pattern is different for non-returned missionaries. For the women, private prayer actually appears to increase for every decade of age. For the males, only about 34% pray several times a week while they are in their 20s, as compared to 70% of the females. For males this rate increases by almost 50% as they move into their 30s and holds near that rate once they are in their 40s.

When it comes to scripture study, around 40% of males who served full-time missions read their scriptures several times a week. This rate is slightly higher for the females in the same category. Those in their 20s who have served full-time missions appear to maintain higher rates than those who are older. About one out of five males who did not serve a mission make a consistent habit of studying the scriptures several times a week and about one out of every three of the females in this category do the same. A remarkable difference from the returned-missionary sample, older non-returned missionaries

Table 16. Private Behavior of LDS Young Adults, by Percentage

	Returned Missionaries (Age)		Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)									
	Males	Females	Males	Females								
	20	30	40	40	20	30	40	40				
	<i>(n = 1007) (n = 594) (n = 466)</i>		<i>(n = 644) (n = 520) (n = 369)</i>		<i>(n = 198) (n = 95) (n = 87)</i>		<i>(n = 307) (n = 171) (n = 142)</i>					
<b>I pray privately</b>												
Every day/a few times a week	91	70	75	88	79	85	34	55	52	70	79	82
About once a week/2 to 3 times a month/ about once a month	4	20	16	10	17	12	28	23	24	21	17	14
Less than once a month/not at all	5	11	9	2	5	3	39	21	23	10	4	4
<b>I read scriptures on my own</b>												
Every day/a few times a week	48	32	43	63	49	49	19	20	29	36	31	51
About once a week/2 to 3 times a month/ about once a month	39	46	39	31	36	35	29	35	34	36	40	31
Less than once a month/not at all	13	22	18	6	16	16	53	45	37	28	29	18
<b>Payment of Tithing</b>												
Full-tithe payer	89	83	88	94	90	94	35	46	54	66	71	77
Partial-tithe payer	6	10	6	4	5	1	6	16	8	10	13	9
Non-tithe payer	5	7	7	2	5	5	47	38	38	25	16	15
<b>Temple recommend</b>												
Yes	91	87	91	96	91	91	44	58	52	68	77	83
No	4	5	3	2	2	1	6	1	5	5	4	1

Table 17. Family Religious Behavior among Married LDS Young Adults, by Percentage

	Returned Missionaries (Age)		Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)			
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
	20	30	40	20	30	40
	(n = 639) (n = 539) (n = 443)		(n = 116) (n = 75) (n = 70)		(n = 247) (n = 153) (n = 129)	
<b>Family prayer</b>						
Every day/a few times a week	76	72	75	81	79	77
About once a week/2 to 3 times a month/ about once a month	14	16	16	14	13	14
Less than once a month/not at all	7	12	10	4	8	9
<b>Family scripture study</b>						
Every day/a few times a week	40	29	41	45	46	48
About once a week/2 to 3 times a month/ about once a month	35	38	25	36	28	31
Less than once a month/not at all	23	33	24	17	26	20
<b>Family home evening</b>						
Full-tithe payer	44	57	68	52	67	72
Partial-tithe payer	15	17	13	14	11	11
Non-tithe payer	38	25	19	31	22	17
				60	51	57
				40	31	33
				44	54	54
				16	15	13
				40	31	33

appear much more likely to read their scriptures consistently than those who are younger.

The payment of tithing and temple recommend status appear at high levels among returned-missionaries. For males who did not serve missions, about half pay a full tithe. About half also hold a current temple recommend. The overall rate appears to increase with age. This is also true for the non-returned-missionary females, but the females' rates are consistently higher than the males'.

*Family religious behavior.* Family religious behavior is also different between men and women and returned missionaries and non-returned missionaries (see Table 17). About three-fourths of those who served missions report holding family prayer more than once a week. No significant differences appear across each age-group. About 40% of non-returned-missionary males hold family prayer several times a week. This is also true of around 60% of females in the same category. The overall rate generally increases as they move into their 30s and then drops once they enter their 40s.

Family scripture study rates are lower than family prayer. Between 45% and 48% of returned-missionary females report holding family scripture study more than once a week. Returned-missionary males are next, with just above one-third reporting the same. One-third of non-returned-missionary females report this, and only about 17% of the non-returned-missionary men have family scripture study several times a week.

More than half of returned missionaries hold regular family home evening. The overall rate increases with age. For females who did not serve a full-time mission, the rate is about 50%. About 30% of males in this category have regular home evening activities with their families.

*Religious marriage status.* We included in our study two categories that we predict will measure the religious status of one's marriage (see Table 18). An overwhelming 98% of returned missionaries who are married have a spouse who is

Table 18. Religious Marriage Status among Married LDS Adults, by Percentage

	Returned Missionaries (Age)		Non-Returned Missionaries (Age)			
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
	20	30	40	20	30	40
	(n = 656) (n = 540) (n = 444)		(n = 117) (n = 75) (n = 70)		(n = 250) (n = 155) (n = 131)	
<b>Spouse is a member of the LDS Church</b>						
Yes	99	99	99	81	87	83
No	1	2	1	18	13	17
<b>Type of wedding ceremony</b>						
Temple sealing	93	87	90	32	25	26
Civil ceremony	3	4	5	41	35	33
Civil ceremony followed by temple sealing	4	9	6	27	40	41
				63	70	60
				26	20	19
				11	10	21

LDS. The vast majority of these men and women also married in the temple.

The story is different for non-returned missionaries. While the large majority of females (92%) have a spouse who is LDS, only about 80% have been sealed in an LDS temple. Around 83% of the males in this category have an LDS spouse, and about two-thirds of these have temple sealings. A significant number of these temple marriages came as a temple sealing after being civilly married. This statistic indicates the probable impact that family members, friends, and Church leaders have on motivating these men in furthering their religious commitment.

## CONCLUSION

Many members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints take their religion seriously. Findings from our study show that most LDS teens, like many of their peers across the United States, do not feel alienated from religion at all. Almost all of them believe in God and Jesus Christ. The vast majority say they feel a close relationship with God and have been guided by the Spirit in their decisions. Youth in Mexico appear to be the strongest in their religious beliefs and feelings, while teens in Great Britain report more struggles. Very few LDS teens miss their Church meetings. Most stay away from tobacco and alcohol, although the majority of youth in Great Britain report having used these substances at least once.

About two out of every three LDS youth say that they pray “often” or “very often,” and a little less than half of them read their scriptures at the same rate. Youth in the United States generally have higher rates of private prayer and scripture study than teens outside the country. Utah County teens report the highest rates in the United States for these two religious practices. The majority of the families of LDS youth appear to hold family prayer quite regularly. Only around three in ten families have consistent family scripture study, and the rate of those who hold regular family home evening is about four in ten.

The majority of LDS teens feel they are accepted at church, although about one-third say they often do not. Girls in Castle Dale and in Great Britain report having the hardest time feeling like they fit in well with their Church peers.

The vast majority of LDS male teens are planning to serve a mission, although only about half the boys in Great Britain report having such a goal. Almost nine out of ten LDS teens have plans to marry in the temple and slightly more report planning to be active in the Church the rest of their lives. Again, youth in Great Britain are the exception to this pattern.

Our findings on the religiosity of LDS young adults of college age, particularly those who either attend BYU or serve missions, are extremely impressive. Non-returned missionaries appear much less inclined toward religiosity, however. For example, no LDS student we polled at Church colleges disagreed that he or she believed in God, and almost all of them, including returned missionaries, claim they have felt the Spirit in their lives.

Church attendance, private prayer, observance of the Word of Wisdom, and the payment of tithing are all relatively high among young adults who attend BYU as well as among those who served a mission. Rates among non-returned missionaries tend to be much lower in each of these categories. This same pattern occurs for family religious behavior as well, with returned-missionary males' families holding family prayer, scripture study, and family home evening nearly twice as much as non-returned-missionary males' families, and returned-missionary females' families report about 20% higher statistics in these family religiosity indicators than non-returned-missionary females' families.

When it comes to marriage, almost every married, returned-missionary young adult has an LDS spouse and a temple sealing. About 84% of the married males and 92% of the married females who did not serve a full-time mission have an LDS spouse. About 70% of people in this category have a temple sealing.



With this descriptive data in mind, we now turn to see how religiosity influences various aspects of Latter-day Saint lives. We will start by assessing religion's impact on delinquency and antisocial behavior among LDS teens.

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