Finding Faith Today

www.bu.edu/cpt/fft

Bryan Stone, Principal Investigator
The Finding Faith Today (FFT) Project is a nationwide research project that surveys and interviews adults age 18 and over who, in the past 3 years (since Jan 1, 2011), have made a new declaration of faith or otherwise signaled that they adopted a religious faith as their own (or “converted,” or “become a member,” depending on the appropriate language), even if that happens to be a “return” to faith from an earlier commitment in their lives.

An initial study was conducted on Christian populations in the United Kingdom over twenty years ago by Bishop John Finney, but surprisingly little research has been done since then. Finding Faith Today is an expansion and follow-up of that study and it will also have a comparative interfaith component that will look at those who become adherents of other major religious traditions in the U.S.

The study asks about how persons come to faith, what they understand to be the most important factors during the process, and how they understand faith, including any changes in values, practices, and lifestyles that might have accompanied this process.
Christian Population by Theological Family

- **Evangelical**
  - Respondents: 32%
  - U.S. Adherents: 32%

- **Mainline**
  - Respondents: 37%
  - U.S. Adherents: 22%

- **Catholic/Orthodox**
  - Respondents: 22%
  - U.S. Adherents: 30%

- **Christian but unknown**
  - Respondents: 9%
Finding Faith Today

Respondents

Race/Ethnicity

- White: 89%
- Black/African American: 4%
- Asian: 3%
- Other: 4%

Hispanic/Latino Respondents = 5.7%

U.S. Population (2011)

Race/Ethnicity

- White: 78%
- Black/African American: 13%
- Asian: 5%
- Other: 4%
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Gender

- Male: 40%
- Female: 60%
Ways of Signaling New Faith Commitment

**Mainline Protestant**
- Membership: 50%
- Baptism: 20%
- Confirmation: 15%
- Other: 15%

**Evangelical/Black Protestants**
- Membership: 31%
- Baptism: 46%
- Confirmation: 4%
- Other: 19%

**Catholic**
- Membership: 11%
- Baptism: 13%
- Confirmation: 25%
- Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA): 42%
- Other: 9%
Instructional Classes?

95% of those who took classes found them helpful. This did not vary at all from tradition to tradition.
68% claimed to have a positive background (compared to 52% in the UK study 20 years ago).

7% claimed to have a negative background (compared to 7% in the UK).

Those who claimed a “neutral” family attitude was considerably smaller (19%) than the 36% in the UK study.

No appreciable differences among denominational families.
Involvement in any organizations attached to a church during your youth?

- Catholic/Orthodox
- Mainline Protestant
- Evangelical/Black Protestants
Had you ever made a profession of faith prior to this?

- Evangelical: 56% Yes, 44% No
- Mainline: 74% Yes, 26% No
- Catholic: 58% Yes, 42% No
Evangelicals

- Not Always Christian (57%)
  - Always Christian (43%)
  - Been less committed (89%)
    - Constant Commitment (11%)
  - First-Timers (60%)
  - Returnees (40%)

Mainline

- Not Always Christian (36%)
  - Always Christian (64%)
  - Been less committed (71%)
    - Constant Commitment (29%)
  - First-Timers (42%)
  - Returnees (58%)

Catholic

- Not Always Christian (35%)
  - Always Christian (65%)
  - Been less committed (91%)
    - Constant Commitment (9%)
  - First-Timers (64%)
  - Returnees (36%)
When you re-committed or committed to faith, was it sudden or gradual?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evangelical</th>
<th>Non-Evangelical</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gradual</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudden</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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Of those who did not consider themselves as always Christian:
• 65% described it as gradual
• 35% described it as sudden

Of those who considered themselves as always Christian:
• 80% described it as gradual
• 20% described it as sudden
Main factor (other than God) in your faith commitment?

**Mainline**

- Religious activities: 2%, 7%
- A particular person (not clergy): 2%, 4%
- An evangelistic event: 1%
- A minister: 2%, 19%
- Literature, drama, music: 1%, 2%
- Friends: 3%, 3%
- Other family: 2%
- Television/Radio: 2%, 33%
- A particular congregation: 20%, 13%
- Your own children: 4%, 13%
- A dream or vision: 1%, 3%
- Parents: 4%, 3%
- Scripture: 2%
- Spouse/partner: 15%, 37%

**Catholic/Orthodox**

- Religious activities: 1%, 5%
- A particular person (not clergy): 1%, 1%
- An evangelistic event: 1%
- A minister: 4%
- Literature, drama, music: 6%
- Friends: 6%
- Other family: 5%, 2%
- Television/Radio: 1%, 18%
- A particular congregation: 10%, 15%
- Your own children: 12%, 12%
- A dream or vision: 4%
- Parents: 3%
- Scripture: 1%
- Spouse/partner: 25%, 25%

**Evangelical**

- Religious activities: 1%, 4%
- A particular person (not clergy): 5%, 8%
- An evangelistic event: 1%
- A minister: 1%
- Literature, drama, music: 3%
- Friends: 10%
- Other family: 11%
- Television/Radio: 18%
- A particular congregation: 11%, 14%
- Your own children: 8%, 14%
- A dream or vision: 2%
- Parents: 7%
- Scripture: 6%
- Spouse/partner: 14%, 22%
Other main factors in your faith commitment?

Mainline

- Religious activities: Female 5%, Male 9%  
- A particular person (not clergy): Female 2%, Male 4%  
- An evangelistic event: Female 0%, Male 1%  
- A minister: Female 15%, Male 15%  
- Literature, drama, music: Female 5%, Male 6%  
- Friends: Female 5%, Male 9%  
- Other family: Female 4%, Male 4%  
- Television/Radio: Female 1%, Male 1%  
- A particular congregation: Female 15%, Male 15%  
- Your own children: Female 8%, Male 9%  
- A dream or vision: Female 3%, Male 5%  
- Parents: Female 5%, Male 6%  
- Scripture: Female 12%, Male 14%  
- Spouse/partner: Female 10%, Male 10%

Catholic/Orthodox

- Religious activities: Female 8%, Male 11%  
- A particular person (not clergy): Female 5%, Male 5%  
- An evangelistic event: Female 1%, Male 2%  
- A minister: Female 13%, Male 14%  
- Literature, drama, music: Female 5%, Male 5%  
- Friends: Female 8%, Male 10%  
- Other family: Female 4%, Male 4%  
- Television/Radio: Female 3%, Male 2%  
- A particular congregation: Female 10%, Male 13%  
- Your own children: Female 6%, Male 7%  
- A dream or vision: Female 3%, Male 5%  
- Parents: Female 6%, Male 6%  
- Scripture: Female 4%, Male 5%  
- Spouse/partner: Female 14%, Male 16%

Evangelical

- Religious activities: Female 5%, Male 8%  
- A particular person (not clergy): Female 4%, Male 3%  
- An evangelistic event: Female 2%, Male 2%  
- A minister: Female 13%, Male 12%  
- Literature, drama, music: Female 5%, Male 5%  
- Friends: Female 8%, Male 10%  
- Other family: Female 4%, Male 4%  
- Television/Radio: Female 2%, Male 2%  
- A particular congregation: Female 10%, Male 11%  
- Your own children: Female 6%, Male 11%  
- A dream or vision: Female 3%, Male 5%  
- Parents: Female 6%, Male 7%  
- Scripture: Female 5%, Male 7%  
- Spouse/partner: Female 9%, Male 10%
Most important feature of the congregation

![Graph showing the percentage of different features valued by Catholics, Mainline, and Evangelicals.]

- **Catholic**: Welcome 33%, Preaching 26%, Worship 35%, Social Outreach 4%
- **Mainline**: Welcome 33%, Preaching 30%, Worship 23%, Social Outreach 5%
- **Evangelicals**: Welcome 23%, Preaching 54%, Worship 18%, Social Outreach 5%

Legend:
- Welcome
- Preaching
- Worship
- Education/small groups
- Social Outreach
Were you drawn in or an active seeker?

Active Seeker?

- Catholic/Orthodox: 84% (Somewhat or Very Much), 11% (Not at all or not so much)
- Mainline Protestant: 84% (Somewhat or Very Much), 11% (Not at all or not so much)
- Evangelical: 72% (Somewhat or Very Much), 20% (Not at all or not so much)

Drawn in by Others Without Actively Seeking

- Catholic/Orthodox: 48% (Somewhat or Very Much), 43% (Not at all or not so much)
- Mainline Protestant: 52% (Somewhat or Very Much), 43% (Not at all or not so much)
- Evangelical: 59% (Somewhat or Very Much), 35% (Not at all or not so much)
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Right to Abortion

- Catholic
  - Became More Opposed: 20%
  - Already opposed: 27%
  - Became Opposed: 15%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 19%
  - Became Supportive: 2%
  - Already supportive: 16%
  - Became More Supportive: 1%

- Mainline
  - Became More Opposed: 3%
  - Already opposed: 18%
  - Became Opposed: 5%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 20%
  - Became Supportive: 2%
  - Already supportive: 49%
  - Became More Supportive: 3%

- Evangelicals
  - Became More Opposed: 22%
  - Already opposed: 36%
  - Became Opposed: 15%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 14%
  - Became Supportive: 1%
  - Already supportive: 11%
  - Became More Supportive: 1%
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Gay Marriage

- **Became More Opposed**
- **Already opposed**
- **Became Opposed**
- **No opinion/Don’t know**
- **Became Supportive**
- **Already supportive**
- **Became More Supportive**

<table>
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<th>Religion</th>
<th>Became More Opposed</th>
<th>Already Opposed</th>
<th>Became Opposed</th>
<th>No opinion/Don’t know</th>
<th>Became Supportive</th>
<th>Already Supportive</th>
<th>Became More Supportive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelicals</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Gun Control

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<th>Became Opposed</th>
<th>Already supportive</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelicals</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues

War

- **Catholic**
  - Became More Opposed: 15%
  - Already opposed: 38%
  - Became Opposed: 6%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 30%
  - Became More Supportive: 1%
  - Already supportive: 10%
  - Became Supportive: 1%

- **Mainline**
  - Became More Opposed: 11%
  - Already opposed: 41%
  - Became Opposed: 5%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 27%
  - Became More Supportive: 1%
  - Already supportive: 13%
  - Became Supportive: 2%

- **Evangelicals**
  - Became More Opposed: 9%
  - Already opposed: 21%
  - Became Opposed: 7%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 40%
  - Became More Supportive: 2%
  - Already supportive: 21%
  - Became Supportive: 1%
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Women’s Equality

- **Catholic**
  - Became More Opposed: 13%
  - Already Opposed: 4%
  - Became Opposed: 66%
  - Became More Supportive: 14%

- **Mainline**
  - Became More Opposed: 7%
  - Already Opposed: 3%
  - Became Opposed: 67%
  - Became More Supportive: 23%

- **Evangelicals**
  - Became More Opposed: 21%
  - Already Opposed: 3%
  - Became Opposed: 56%
  - Became More Supportive: 13%
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Racial Justice

Evangelicals
Mainline
Catholic

- Became More Opposed
- Already opposed
- Became Opposed
- No opinion/Don’t know
- Became Supportive
- Already supportive
- Became More Supportive

Catholic: 2% Became More Opposed, 10% Already opposed, 3% Became Opposed, 67% Became More Supportive, 15% No opinion/Don’t know
Mainline: 1% Became More Opposed, 9% Already opposed, 3% Became Opposed, 60% Became More Supportive, 25% No opinion/Don’t know
Evangelicals: 5% Became More Opposed, 17% Already opposed, 5% Became Opposed, 56% Became More Supportive, 15% No opinion/Don’t know
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Economic Justice for the Poor

- Catholic:
  - Became More Opposed: 17%
  - Already opposed: 6%
  - Became Opposed: 45%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 29%

- Mainline:
  - Became More Opposed: 11%
  - Already opposed: 6%
  - Became Opposed: 44%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 36%

- Evangelicals:
  - Became More Opposed: 5%
  - Already opposed: 24%
  - Became Opposed: 10%
  - No opinion/Don't know: 41%
  - Became More Supportive: 17%
Changes in attitudes toward Social Issues
Care for the Natural Environment

- Became More Opposed
- Already opposed
- Became Opposed
- No opinion/Don’t know
- Became Supportive
- Already supportive
- Became More Supportive

Catholic
- 16% Became More Opposed
- 6% Already opposed
- 55% Became Opposed
- 21% No opinion/Don’t know

Mainline
- 12% Became More Opposed
- 4% Already opposed
- 59% Became Opposed
- 25% No opinion/Don’t know

Evangelicals
- 20% Became More Opposed
- 9% Already opposed
- 50% Became Opposed
- 15% No opinion/Don’t know
Changes claimed by new Christians (5=Very Significant)

- Beliefs
- Actions/Lifestyle
- Spiritual Practices
- Relations with Others
- Happier than before
- More hopeful than before
- Total

Legend:
- Evangelicals
- Mainline
- Catholic
Do you participate in any other religious services or activities from other religions?

3% of Evangelical Protestants
9% of Mainline Protestants
5% of Roman Catholics
**Spiritual or Religious?**

- **Religious**
  - Evangelical Protestant: 16%
  - Mainline Protestant: 14%
  - Catholic-Orthodox: 25%

- **Spiritual but not Religious**
  - Evangelical Protestant: 7%
  - Mainline Protestant: 15%
  - Catholic-Orthodox: 26%

- **Both Spiritual and Religious**
  - Evangelical Protestant: 48%
  - Mainline Protestant: 63%
  - Catholic-Orthodox: 61%

- **Neither spiritual nor religious**
  - Evangelical Protestant: 2%
  - Mainline Protestant: 0%
  - Catholic-Orthodox: 2%

- **Don't know**
  - Evangelical Protestant: 8%
  - Mainline Protestant: 8%
  - Catholic-Orthodox: 5%