



Religiosity of Finns in transition

Religion in Daily Life and in Celebration is a research report. It is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church's four-year report, 2016–2019. The research report uses numerous survey materials and church statistics. It has been written by the director and researchers of the Church Research Institute. The report's findings can be summarised in the following six sections:

A change in values is reflected in religion. Recent studies of values have shown the increasing importance of individuality and equality in the Finnish values world. For example, the importance of work, friends, and leisure among younger generations has changed: while work has declined in importance, the importance of leisure and friends has increased. Family values have also seen a huge shift. The importance of the family has been maintained among all generations. However, perceptions of what constitutes a good relationship emphasise gender equality and the opportunity for individual self-realisation in one's own friends and leisure activities. These changes also influence the religious sphere. Attitudes towards gender equality were a factor that either brought Finns closer to religious identity or distanced them from it. A willingness to accept same-sex families also differentiated the survey's respondents: a more unwelcoming attitude was a predictor of religious identification.

Cultural Christianity is breaking down. Cultural Christianity entails identifying as Christian more for cultural than religious reasons. Based on the findings presented in the research report, the cultural Christian identity is undergoing a profound transformation. In particular, the millennial generation (those born in the 1980s, aged between 30 and 39) shows a decline in cultural Christianity and a corresponding increase in humanistic and agnostic seeking, as well as non-religiosity. Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the church ceremonies seemed quite self-evident choices for Finns to mark their life-cycle events. The report reveals the strong change that has occurred in the twenty-first century. For example, in 2019 only two fifths of children born in the Diocese of Helsinki were baptised. Identification with a religious community is more clearly linked to a personal experience of meaning. This thinking is also reflected in the reluctance to make a decision about baptism on behalf of a child, for example.

The nature of attachment to communities is changing. Although the processes of modernisation are changing cultural values systems, even in postmodern society religion can continue to be a source of meaning, and belonging to communities can be seen as important. While participation in worship in Lutheran parishes has been declining, the number of new worshipping communities of various kinds and those attending them has increased. Total attendance in worshipping communities numbers several hundred thousand a year – a demonstration of the need for communities and the importance of freedom of choice. The perceived rejection or reluctance of the social environment concerning religious orientation and the practice of religion may result in a growing need among religiously committed for communities that support Christian socialisation and the formation of identity.

Experiential orientation and helping people play an increasingly important role in spirituality. The changes are also evident in the area of spiritual life. The experiential interface

with Christianity or the church is less associated with the church ceremonies, devotional life, or traditions, whereas everyday or tangible activity such as being in nature, silent retreats, or helping people has become relevant for spirituality. More than a tenth of Finns regularly practise meditation. In particular, holding nature as sacred and the experience of being in nature as a place of encounter with God or a higher power are common phenomena in Finns' personal spirituality. People's willingness to help others also appears significant, and the motivation to help is usually compassion or support for justice, or quite often arises from a sense of vocation. The motivational factors for offering help are usually quite strongly associated with nature and support for the church's active work in the areas of the environment and equality.

The importance of dialogue about religion and convictions is growing. The diversity of religions and beliefs has increased in Finland in many different ways. The widening religious spectrum is in part related to the increase in the number of immigrants and the religious communities they establish. This is most tangibly manifested in growing centres. However, the media and internet alone expose people all over Finland to remarkable diversity. Furthermore, a strongly individualistic and eclectic new spirituality is a significant religious-cultural current that is increasingly influencing people's views of religion and the church. Widespread perceptions of the relationship between religion and science also influence perceptions of the Christian faith. When Finns were asked to mention books that were spiritually or philosophically important for them in the survey, works of well-known scholars critical of religion were to the fore.

The passing on of the Christian tradition in the home is in decline. Together, many of the factors described above are leading to an increasing failure to pass on Christian traditions to children and young people. Finnish childhood homes are divided quite evenly into two camps: in one, religion is discussed; in the other, it does not feature. The childhood homes of the younger age cohorts belong increasingly to the latter group. During the past years teaching children to pray in the evening, attending Sunday school, a parish club, or church at Christmas, and speaking about religion in the childhood home have all markedly declined. Mothers in Generation Z, the youngest, are the least likely to pass on Christian traditions to their children.

[Religion in Daily Life and in Celebration. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 2016-2019. Publications, the Church Research Institute 65.](#)