

# The Danes do not abandon church Christianity

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New research from University of Copenhagen shows that Danes are not abandoning their communal Protestant religion in favor of individualized spirituality such as meditation and mindfulness; the support for Christian faith and spirituality respectively has been stable the past 30 years. The supposed individualization of Scandinavian societies does not, in other words, apply to Danish religious practices, the researchers conclude.

"We know from numerous international studies within sociology, as well as our own research, that people tend to keep the religious values impressed on them during childhood. If we were in the midst of a spiritual revolution – as many researchers claim is the case in Northern Europe – where people replace their Christian faith with [spirituality](#), we would expect a decline in support for Christianity among young Danes in the [survey](#) data. And we would, conversely, expect to find increased support for individual spiritual practices in the same group. But this is not the case at all," sociologist of religion Peter Birkelund Andersen from University of Copenhagen says. He adds:

"On the contrary, both young and old Danes' affiliation with church Christianity as well as spiritual religiosity has been constant the past 30 years – while Danes aged 50 to 76 years have shown increased support for both Christian faith and spirituality. The belief that individualized [religious practices](#) are replacing Christianity is tied up with the hypothesis that Western societies in general have become more and more individualised the past 30-40 years. Our research shows that this does not apply to the Danes' religious practices."

The study, which has just been published in the [\*Journal of Contemporary Religion\*](#) as "A Spiritual Revolution in Denmark?", is based on an analysis of the Danish data from the European Value Study.

The European Value Study is a large-scale and cross-national survey which started in 1981. Every nine years, the survey is repeated, using standardized questionnaires. 1,507 representatively sampled Danes have thus answered the same questions about their religious values every nine years since 1981. This enables the research group to follow the development in Danish religious values over time.

## **Christianity and spirituality coexist**

When the researchers compare the individuals who support either Christian faith or spirituality in the survey, they find that the two groups overlap.

"Statistically, there is a significant correlation between the two kinds of religious practices. It is, to a very great extent, the same people who adhere to church Christianity and spirituality. The spiritual element is, in other words, strongly integrated into church Christianity in Denmark. Perhaps it would be better to speak of [church](#) Christianity with spiritual elements rather than two distinct kinds of religiosity," Professor Peter Gundelach suggests.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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