

# Catholics more committed to workplace than evangelicals are, study finds

December 12 2016

---

Catholics are more emotionally committed to their workplaces than are Evangelicals—and people with strong attachments to God, regardless of their faith group, are more committed to their jobs when they work for smaller companies, according to a Baylor University study.

Meanwhile, people who are not affiliated with a particular faith tradition are the least likely to be attached to God—and also the least likely to be committed to their workplaces. They scored 6 percent lower than Evangelicals and 9 percent lower than Catholics on a scale that measures how much an employee feels emotionally connected to their employer and fellow employees. "We're not sure about the reasons for these modest differences," said Blake V. Kent, a sociologist in Baylor's College of Arts & Sciences. "But for religious believers, being committed to [work](#) may be a way of 'doing' a religious commitment—not just earning a paycheck, but rather, cooperating with God for a larger purpose."

Kent's study—"Attachment to God, religious tradition and firm attributes in workplace commitment" is published in *The Journal of Social Psychology*.

The findings build upon a previous study by Kent, which found that people who see God as a "secure base" for intimacy and attachment are more likely to be emotionally committed to their workplace, satisfied with their jobs and see their work as a calling from God.

From an employer's view, having emotionally committed

employees—those who want to stay in a job rather than because they simply need to or feel obligated to—is a plus. Higher levels of commitment have been linked to lower absenteeism and conflict, lower turnover and higher job performance and productivity, according to research.

For his latest study, Kent analyzed data from Baylor Religion Survey Wave 3, a nationwide random sample of U.S. adults completed in 2010 by the Gallup Organization. Respondents included 739 working adults who believe in God or a higher power and are from one of four religious groups: Catholic, Evangelical, Mainline Protestants and those not affiliated with a particular faith tradition. (Jews and Black Protestants were among those in the sample, but there were too few for significant findings about their work commitments.)

Kent said he focused primarily on Catholics and Evangelicals as he saw differences emerge during data analysis—and because those faith groups have distinctive views about work.

For Catholics, the religious vocations, such as priesthood, are no longer associated with a superior state of holiness. Those "non-religious vocations" also can pursue holiness through work, according to the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which changed the Catholic Church's teachings on the purpose and value of work.

Meanwhile, for many Evangelicals, "work is necessitated by the fallen human condition, but it can be pursued in partnership with God as a restorative act," Kent said. "They 'bring the Bible' to work with them more so than other religious traditions, including sharing their faith and seeing their work as having spiritual meaning."

While study findings do not indicate a cause for differences in workplace commitment between the two groups, Kent said he has ideas

that may explain the differences.

"Catholics by and large are committed to one large institution, while Evangelicals tend to shop for whatever church suits their tastes," he said. "Evangelicals sometimes don't even know the denomination their church belongs to, if it belongs to one at all. Lower levels of congregational commitment may subtly translate to decreased commitments in the workplace."

"In theory, attachment to God occurs before organizational commitment, but it's possible it might also work the other way around," he said. "When work is meaningful, creative and well compensated, those benefits may influence a believer to perceive God as caring. But if the believer has a bad work experience or faces layoffs or chronic unemployment, what then? That might be seen as a failure on God's part or a sign of disfavor and result in decreased attachment."

The views of non-affiliated individuals, who have lower levels of attachment to God and less commitment to the workplace, also might be a topic for further study, Kent said. Attachments in one area are conceptually associated with attachments in other areas, and it would be important to know if decreased attachment to God or work are related to other attachments like family or romantic partners.

He stressed that findings do not imply that employers should preferentially hire Catholics.

"That would not be desirable or possible—but the findings do suggest holistic strategies for engaging workers are in order," Kent said.

"Workplace spirituality scholars already have shown that meditation and spiritual practice boost employee commitment and morale."

Summary of study findings:

- Catholics generally work for larger companies than Evangelicals but do not differ significantly on levels of attachment to God.
- Catholics report higher levels of emotional commitment to their jobs than Evangelicals and non-affiliated believers.
- Evangelicals report [higher levels](#) of attachment to God than Mainline Protestants and non-affiliates.
- All believers with secure attachments to God are more likely to be emotionally committed to their workplaces, but especially when they work for smaller firms. When they work for companies with 2,000 or more employees, the emotional commitment to the workplace is similar to that of individuals with lower attachments to God.
- Believers who were not affiliated with any particular religion or denomination were the least likely to be attached to God and the least likely to be committed to their workplaces.

Provided by Baylor University

Citation: Catholics more committed to workplace than evangelicals are, study finds (2016, December 12) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-12-catholics-committed-workplace-evangelicals.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.