

# The Religiosity Profile of European Catholicism

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The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) constituted a major turn toward a cosmopolitan and contemporary Christianity. The Council broke with a strategy that had been in place since the 19th century—a strategy of demarcating and separating the Catholic Church from modern society to immunize it from the continually accelerating forces of transformation underway. In responding to this pre-council set of problems, which were understood as indicative of the Church’s noncontemporaneity with the world, Pope John XXIII invoked the concept of “aggiornamento,” literally meaning “bringing up to date.” He instinctively seized upon the urgent need to lead the Church out of an historical period with no viable future.

The Council addressed the challenges of its time with remarkable openness, seeking contemporary answers for faith and ecclesiastical practice under modern living conditions. The image of the Church as a hierarchically organized force of God within a hostile world that predated the Council was replaced by a new understanding of the Church as a participant in the worries, struggles and joys of this world charged with the task of communicating Christ’s joyous and liberating message. “The joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (*Gaudium et spes*, 1). The Church was to render visible the fact that being a Christian meant participating in the world, not observing it from the sidelines. Eschewing isolation, the Church sought to open up itself up to the world.

The Council elders were presumably in no position to fully comprehend what changes this openness to the throes of modernity would entail for the Church. Indeed, several empirical studies conducted since the 1960s have shown the enduring impact of societal modernization on the religious self-understanding of Catholics.

The Church does not represent some ahistorical space for pure spirits. The Church must be understood as a work of man for man, in which social communication and action take place in dialectic with the cultural and social contexts of

an era—and as part of a societal whole that is limited by the constitutive conditions of society and the autarky of an epoch.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Religion Monitor provides a comprehensive overview of the state of the Catholic Church in Europe. The populations of the countries surveyed here have very different religious and cultural traditions. These countries are also heterogeneous in terms of the various forces and features within each shaping the current state of the Catholic Church, including: church-state relations, church tax systems, state privileging of churches, confessional influences, conflicts between worldviews, the rootedness of churches in popular culture, confessional-political interdependencies, migration backgrounds, interweaving of religion in national discourses, and official ecclesiastical leadership strategies. Without knowledge of the specific situation in each country surveyed by the Religion Monitor, the current state of the Catholic Church in the European states cannot be adequately understood.

It is not entirely clear what moved respondents to answer the question about their Christian confessional identity with "Catholic." In countries such as Germany, Austria and the German-speaking regions of Switzerland, where the Catholic Church is recognized under public law and able to levy taxes, we can assume that respondents knew how to unambiguously differentiate between membership and non-membership. In these countries, church members are normally those who are prepared to pay church taxes.

In those cases where the Church enjoys special status as a state church, or where the separation of church and state prevails, or if churches are financed by a mandatory tax (as is the case in Italy and Spain) or via voluntary contributions from private sources, an obvious criterion of everyday membership is lacking. Personal as well as cultural views and dispositions regarding church membership feed into the responses given to the question regarding confessional affiliation. Depending on the country, the question may have been answered more in terms of subjective solidarity or formal membership.

The Religion Monitor marks the parameters of the effects of societal change on the religious experience and practices of the Catholic population in eight European states (Table 1).

The religiosity profiles of the eight countries in Table 1 shed some light on how the societal processes of change have affected the Catholic population's religious self-understanding, 43 years after the Second Vatican Council. Differences and similarities between the countries are extrapolated in the form of religiosity profiles, and observable transformation processes are situated within temporal and sociologically defined parameters of meaning.

**Table 1: Christians and Catholics by Country**

	Christians (percent)	Catholics (percent)	Number of Catholics
Germany	69	31	309
Austria	83	75	751
Switzerland	81	41	410
France	61	58	580
Spain	80	78	781
Italy	90	87	870
Poland	97	95	950
Great Britain	60	12	133

### Intensities of everyday religiosity

The Religion Monitor's centrality scale measures the degree of significance that religiosity has in a person's life. Religion is very important to 50 percent of Catholics in Italy, a figure almost twice as high as that found in the Central European countries of Austria (24 %), Switzerland (26 %) and Germany (27 %). These figures are also high in Poland (45 %), where the Catholic Church fought for a liberated Poland against National Socialism and later communism. To this day, the Catholic Church plays a key role in Polish identity. It is therefore not surprising that two sites of pilgrimage in Poland are imbued with a sense of mythic patriotism that serve to reify national identity: the monastery Jasna Gora with the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, an icon of the Virgin Mary to which several miracles have been attributed, and Vilnius (Wilno), which also has an icon of the Virgin Mary believed to perform miracles.

With Italy, France and Spain, the Religion Monitor survey included three homogeneously Catholic countries in which Romanic languages are spoken. Italy, which is characterized by a lively religious culture of piety and a population easily mobilized through Catholic action, ranks high in terms of the centrality scale. France, marked as it is by protracted conflicts between the "deux Frances," (i.e., republican secularists and traditional Catholic royalists), ranks at the lower end of the centrality scale with the highest percentage of non-religious (25 %) and only 18 percent of the population being highly religious.

Spain ranks in the middle of the centrality scale (33 % highly religious). For half a millennium, until the dictatorship of Franco made Catholicism the state

religion, Spain served as an unassailable bastion of Catholicism. In fact, it was this close involvement of the Catholic Church with the Franco regime that led many Spaniards to turn their backs on the Church after the introduction of democracy.

British Catholics also report values similar to those of the Spanish population (36 % highly religious). Until the early 19th century, the Catholic population in Great Britain suffered profound state discrimination. Only in the last two centuries—and thanks in large part to increased membership as a result of immigration—has the Catholic Church managed to step out of the shadow of the Anglican state church. In Scotland, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland has achieved the status of a national church.

In their past efforts to secure and strengthen their influence, Europe's Catholic churches have pursued various strategies. While some churches sought to establish an alliance or symbiosis between the state, church and nation, others relied on their own strengths. At the beginning of early modern state-building, Europe's Catholic churches developed into a strictly organized and extremely successful mass organization led by Rome.

For the first time in history, the lives of common Catholics were determined in detail and steered comprehensively. Exceptionally well organized, the churches were equipped with a great number of priests capable of binding together the faithful—from the cradle to the grave—in a close-knit network of clubs, schools, political parties and social institutions. In other words, the Church had a congregation that had been deeply socialized by Catholicism and could therefore be mobilized. The Catholic population developed a strong sense of belonging in opposition to the surrounding modernizing environs, a feeling that found its identity in the figurehead of the pope (ultramontanism). This firmly anchored an ecclesiastical interpretation and exegesis of life in the everyday consciousness of Catholics.

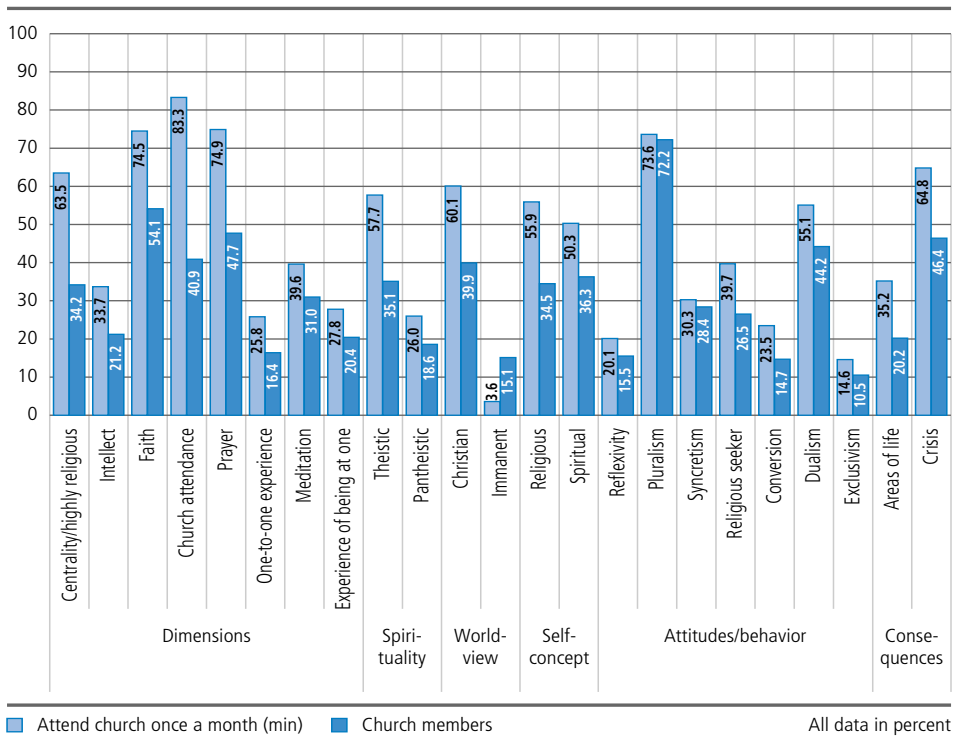
In the confessionally divided contexts of Germany and Switzerland, special Catholic societies, notable for their self-sufficient, self-contained and isolated nature, were organized as bulwarks in the confrontation with urban liberal Protestantism. Similar groups in Austria organized against the socialist movement there, and in France against the secular state elites. The societal stimuli of modernization after World War II toppled the social form of "milieu Catholicism" and led to the functional differentiation of society, educational expansion, higher living standards, mobility, a multiplication of lifestyle choices, cultural diversification and the spread of mass media. Modernization also entails the destructuring of relationships and all of the attendant effects on how individuals conduct

their lives, such as liberating themselves from tenacious social conditions, the desire to lead an independent life, a subject-centered worldview, autonomy and freedom as key sources of meaning and value, and self-affirmation as the basis of human self-understanding.

### Contours of Catholic religiosity

Religiosity profiles render the contours of Catholic religiosity in Europe visible. They give shape to the typical features of a core dimension and religious mindset by delineating the extent to which they deviate from the average of the surveyed characteristics for all of the European countries assessed by the Religion Monitor. The values for the entire Catholic population are then contrasted with the religious paradigms and behavior patterns of regular Sunday churchgoers. In this way, religiosity among active church members can be compared with the religiosity of average Catholics.

Figure 1: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Europe



The Religion Monitor attests to the high degree of willingness—in international comparison—among the active core of Germany’s Catholic to contemplate religious issues more often and to explore them further (44%). This group is also willing to rethink specific aspects of their religious views, to think critically about religious teachings with which one fundamentally agrees, and to explore religious issues from various perspectives (29%). Practicing tolerance toward people who believe otherwise (82%) and recognizing to an above-average degree that other worldviews are of equal value (85%) does not necessarily mean that elements of other religious convictions are integrated into one’s own religiosity, or that one is engaging in religious bricolage (29%).

Alternative pantheistic and modern religious-spiritual interpretive paradigms find comparatively little resonance among the population. The strong involvement of major churches in public discourse nurtures religious open-mindedness and tolerance, particularly among those who are closely affiliated with the Church and express a positive or optimistic view toward the achievements of modern society. Ninety-five percent of Germany’s Catholics live in western Germany.

To a greater degree than in Germany, and to a lesser degree than France, Austria’s Catholic Church considers itself subject to societal secularization. The con-

Figure 2: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Germany

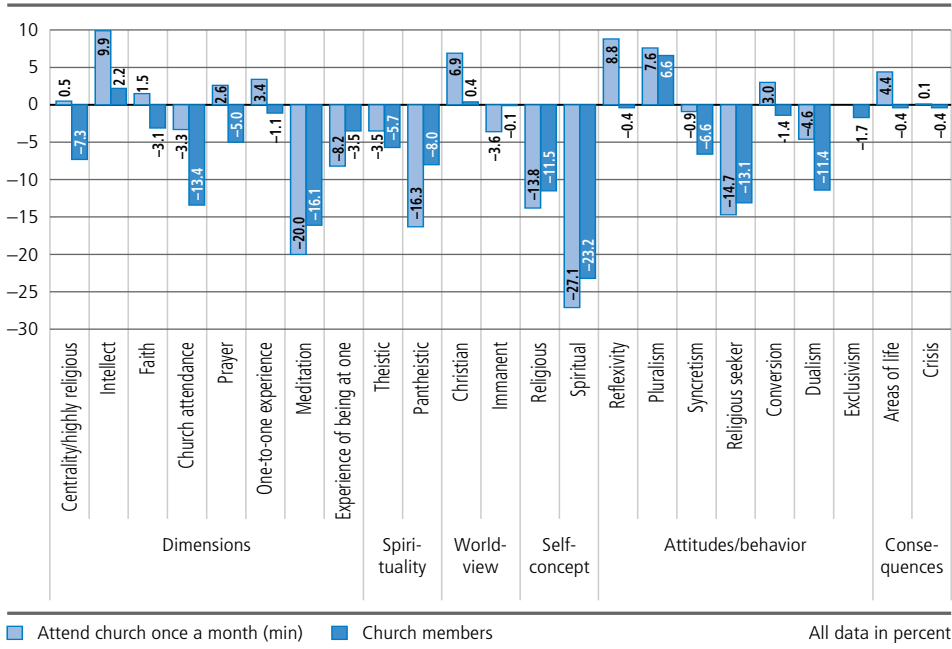
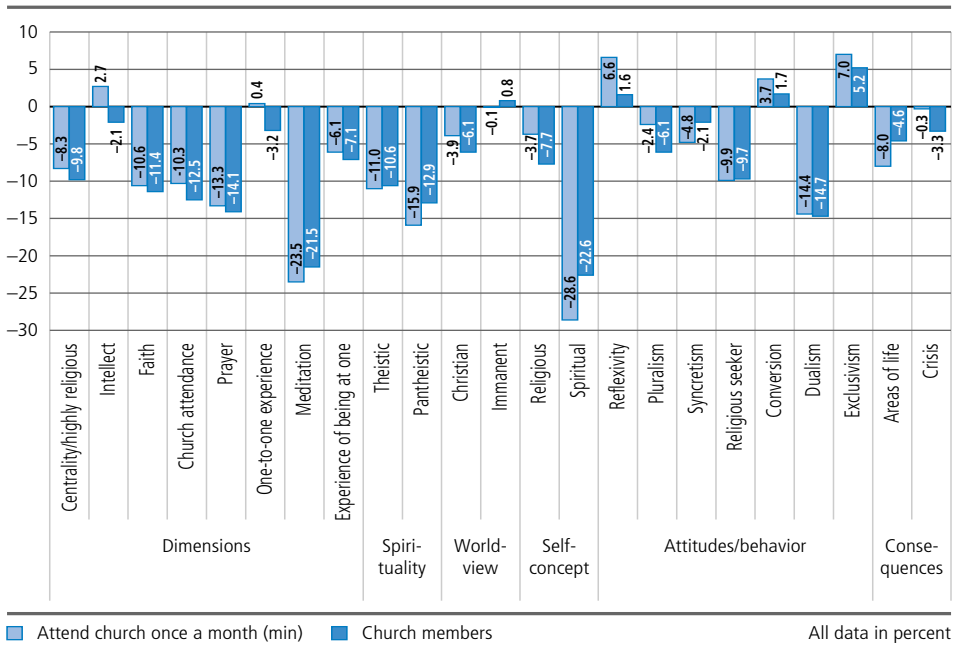


Figure 3: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Austria



cept of the unchurched implies not only a distance to organized religion but emphasizes the likelihood of living one’s life without experiencing transcendence. Of those who rarely or never attend church, 47 percent sympathize with a non-religious lifestyle (51 % in France), 42 percent renounce spiritual self-discovery (36 % in France) and 39 percent believe either “not at all” or “not very much” in an after-life (49 % in France). To a lesser degree than in other countries, the unchurched in Austria (56 %) and in France (53 %) feel compelled to rethink their own attitudes.

In Austria, meditative pantheistic religiosity does not represent a true alternative to traditional ecclesiastical religion, which renders it incapable of compensating for the traditional churches’ losses. Without more data, it is difficult to establish a causal link between diminishing membership in institutionalized social forms of religion and the growth of non-institutional forms of religion. The process of secularization in society appears to affect all of the core dimensions of religiosity, with the exception of “interest in religious questions.” Furthermore, if one considers that only very modest segments of the population are turning to new forms of alternative religiosity, there is no empirical evidence in support of the hypothesis that the unchurching and individualization of religion are balancing each other out—at least not in the case of Austria.

**Table 2: Spirituality by country**

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	France	Spain	Italy	Poland	Great Britain
Non-spiritual	25	28	22	27	11	4	10	23
Purely theistic spirituality	37	32	20	12	6	8	44	43
Purely pantheistic spirituality	5	5	9	12	20	6	3	2
Syncretic spirituality	14	18	18	26	22	25	17	9
Strongly syncretic spirituality	19	16	31	23	41	58	26	23

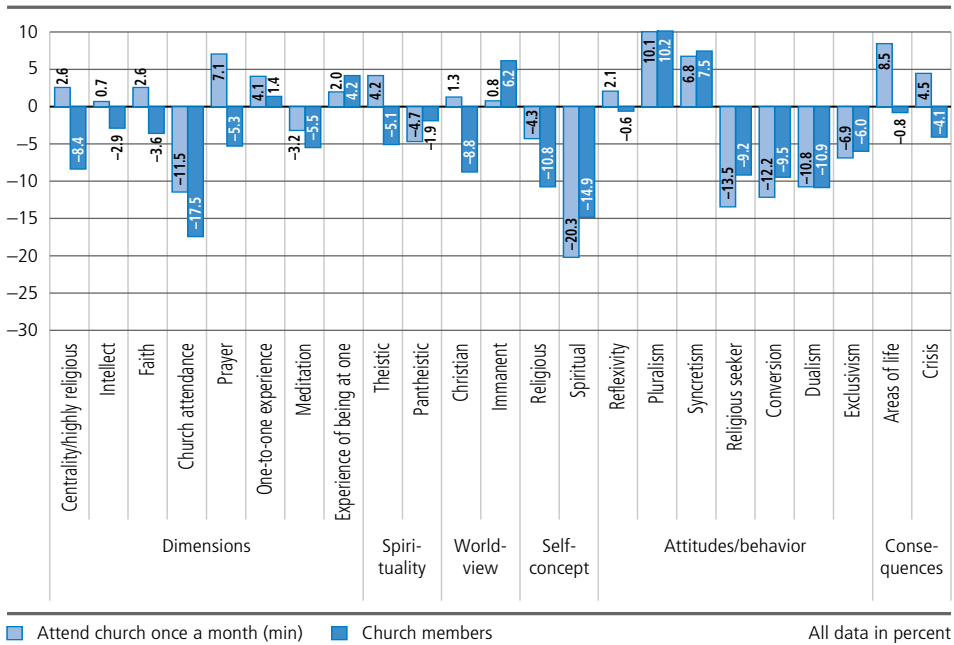
All data in percent with rounding discrepancies.

In accordance with their rather pragmatic character, the Swiss maintain a well-tempered religiosity. They find neither religious enthusiasts nor non-religious people to be odd. As in no other country, the Swiss are classified in the middle of the centrality scale for religiosity (68 %).

Comparatively speaking, the grounding force of religion in Switzerland is based less on validation through regular contacts with like-minded people in one’s church. Rather, it is simply part of Helvetian culture. A minority clearly differentiates itself from “normal” church members through its religious experience and action.

The churchd as well as the unchurchd in Switzerland generally agree that an attitude of exclusivity is inappropriate (69 % and 85 %), and that it is improper to attempt to convert as many people as possible to one’s own religion (81 % and 94 %). In terms of seeking something in their religious beliefs, both groups are not particularly active here (only 26 % and 13 %). Being open to other religions leads both groups—in near equal terms—to construct their own religiosity by relying on the teachings of other religions (37 % and 35 %). On this point, the Swiss are most similar to France’s Catholic population. This syncretic approach to spirituality, which is characteristic of the Romanic countries (particularly in comparison to Germany and Austria), may be attributable to the fact that over one quarter of Switzerland’s population live in the Romanic cultural space. A little more than one-fifth of the country’s Catholics come from Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Figure 4: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Switzerland



Catholics in Germany, Austria and Switzerland consider themselves less connected through the communicative network of the Church’s Sunday worship services than do their counterparts in Poland, Italy, Spain and Great Britain. Voluntary self-involvement among Catholics in the three countries is therefore not above-average when compared to the latter group. Attending services represents a central—but certainly not the only—form of relationship with the Church. Indeed, this relationship assumes diverse forms in contemporary society. Normative social ties to the Church are increasingly being replaced by utilitarian-motivated ties that have emerged from the perception of the Church as a religious “service provider.” The demand for official church services at critical moments in life denotes an uncommitted concept of church membership. At turning points in one’s life, one seeks the companionship of the Church; at difficult and threatening moments, one expects the Church to provide ritual guidance, support and strength.

The Church’s financial means allow churches in Germany, Austria and Switzerland to offer their members a broad range of services. As the benefactors of such services, members are inclined to maintain their church membership. As churches grow increasingly systematic in their organization, the relationships

that people have with them draw less on commonly shared convictions and inner solidarity and become based rather on the logic of quid pro quo.

The effects of secularization on the Catholic Church in France are even stronger than those in Austria. Fewer and fewer of France's Catholics believe that they will find direction in their lives within the Church. In the practical, daily lives of ever more Catholics, the Church plays an increasingly more limited role—or even none at all. No other country receives the Church's claim to provide a fixed, engaging and obligatory meaning to life in its totality as poorly.

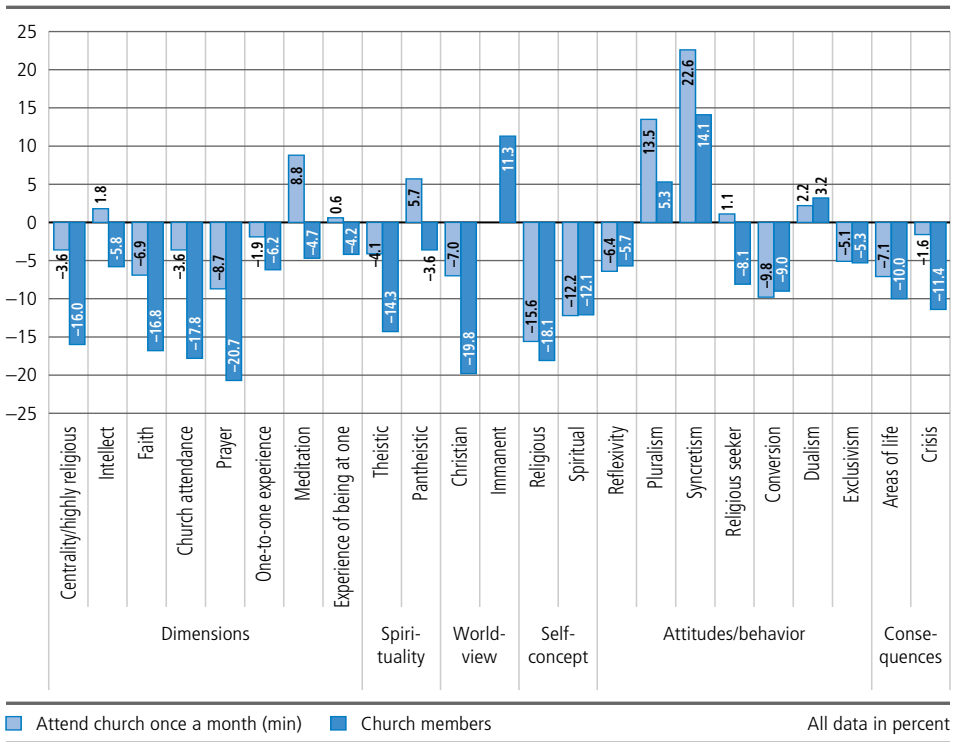
The degree to which people avoid church corresponds, on the one hand, to the distance from a vision of life that is open to experiences of transcendence, and, on the other hand, to the search for meaning in a purely pantheistic or mixed pantheistic-theistic spirituality. A comparatively high proportion (24 %) of the population agrees with statements that represent an immanent worldview and a simultaneous refusal of the Christian interpretation of the world. In comparison to churchgoing Christians in other countries, active church members in France appear to be more open to mixed forms of religion (43 %).

According to the Catholic Church itself, France has the highest number of non-religious within the ranks of the Catholic Church. People belong to the Church out of tradition or believe that it is primarily there to provide help and support to those in need. Although they may not see the Church as relevant to their own lives, they do consider it to be helpful and important for others. Their major motivation for not terminating their church membership lies in the services that the Church provides in the social life of the community.

In no other country in Europe is the religiosity of the population as governed by a heavily experiential, meditative and pantheistic spirituality—borne out through and motivated by personal experience—as in Spain. In international comparison, Spaniards report an above-average rate of frequent meditation (63 %). A significant proportion considers meditation “very important” (46 %), and just over one-fourth report often experiencing situations in which one feels “at one with all” (26 %). The Spanish preference for meditative spirituality does not indicate that they view themselves as more spiritual or more religious than others. Instead, they live their special type of religiosity in a self-confident manner, convinced that others can learn from their example. They are not so much distinguished by their loyalty to established forms of religiosity in their church as they are by their religiosity, which is styled upon their own inner life.

Ecclesiastical-institutional forms create a space for a religious style that is commonly referred to in societal discourse by the term “spirituality,” which moves the basis of faith to the individual subject and makes personal experience

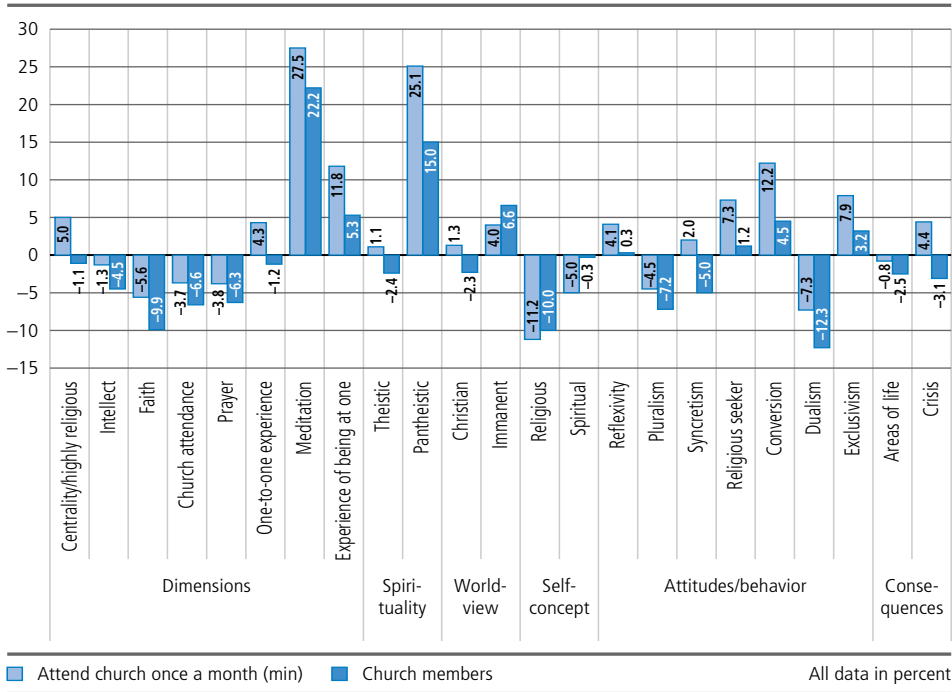
Figure 5: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in France



the criterion for religious truth. Moreover, an individualized understanding of transcendence constitutes the core of personal spirituality. Indeed, if the weakening of church-based religiosity in Austria and France has contributed to the increasing loss of relevance for religion, in Spain this process is combined with a distinctive sensibility for spiritual forms of expression. A differentiation between subject-oriented religious styles and an institutional, Church-determined religiosity is currently underway.

In addition to Spain, Italy and Poland constitute the bulwarks of European Catholicism. A quick glance at the religiosity profile of the Italian population is enough to see the uniqueness of its religiosity—in all of its aspects and dimensions—among the countries surveyed. Loyalty and solidarity with the Church are not limited to a modest core of believers. Rather, the conceptual world of the Christian church is deeply anchored in broad segments of the population. Indeed, even 75 percent of the unchurched described themselves as religious or highly religious (11 %), reporting that they meditate (55 %) and pray (40 %) daily or at least once a week, and only a few stated that they do not believe (or not very

Figure 6: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Spain

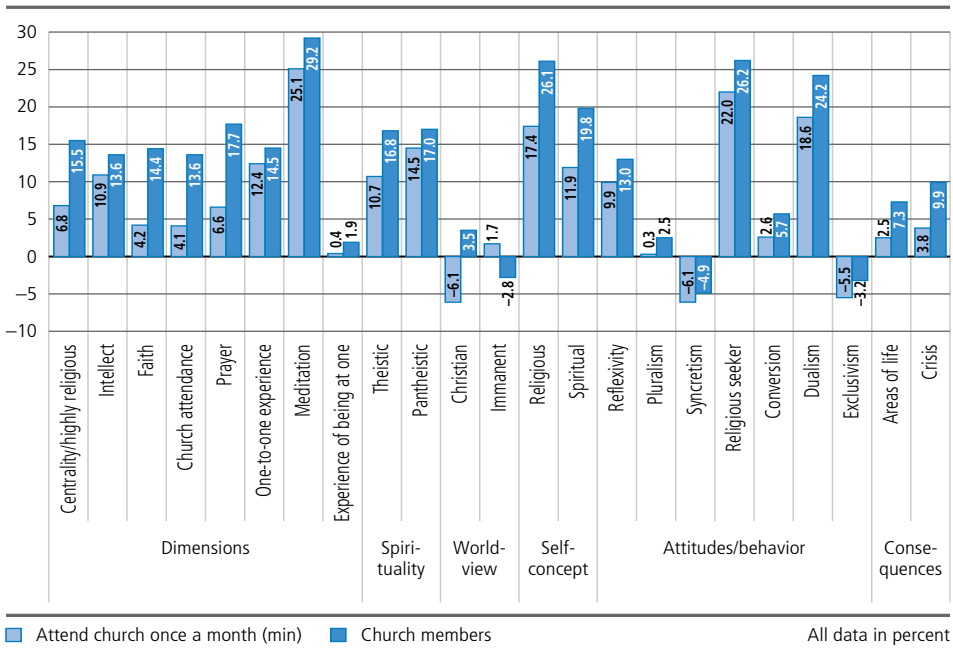


much) in “God or something divine” (16%). Italian Catholicism is not characterized by a doctrinal syncretism but, rather, by a syncretic style of piety that is open and accessible for all types and forms of religiosity and is self-critical enough to constantly evaluate its own behavior.

Italians live a religiosity that exists within the overarching paradigm of Christianity, and they seem to have strongly internalized Catholicism’s tendency to regard contemporary society with a strong dose of pessimism. The Italians share the same emotionally grounded version of religiosity as the Spanish, but without Spain’s doctrinal and ritual distance to the institutional Church. They have a private meditative, piety that indicates an awareness of belonging to a community of fellow believers.

The strengths of Polish Catholicism do not include an interest in religious questions, the willingness to critically confront specific religious teachings with which one fundamentally agrees, observing religious questions from multiple perspectives, or reflecting on individual tenets of one’s own religious attitude. Rather, Catholics in Poland perceive themselves as being comparatively less in search of something through their religiosity. Religiosity in daily life relies less

Figure 7: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Italy

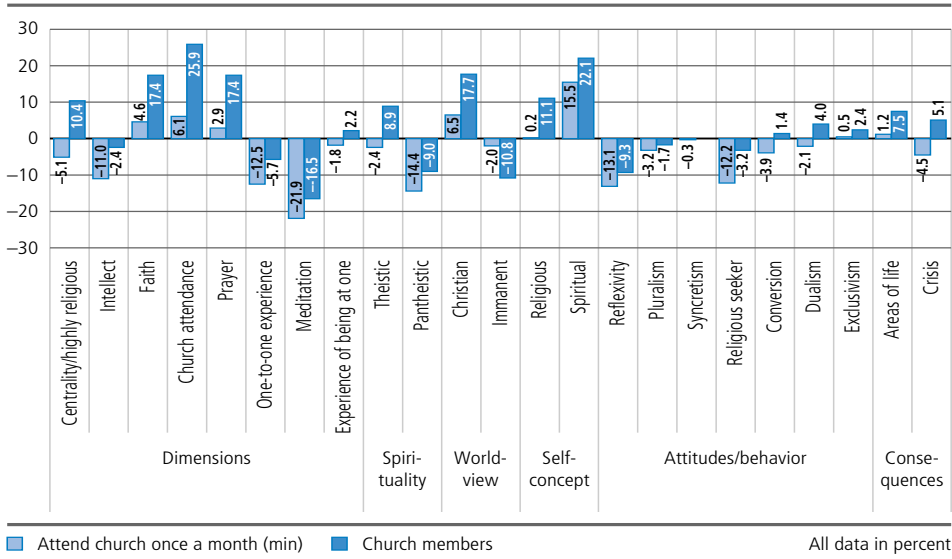


on personal experiences and is conducted along lines established by the Church. It is embedded and anchored in a resolute worldview and order that brings a sense of security to thinking and acting and relieves individuals of the burden of having to constantly analyze their own behavior.

To a large extent, the Catholic understanding of existence shapes the habitus—as understood in the context of Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of habitus—of the Poles and Italians. Bourdieu describes habitus as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions that regulate thought and behavior, a pre-reflexive disposition and attitude according to which the manifold expressions of a person’s life coalesce into a unifying principle. In this sense, one could describe habitus as the “software” for conducting one’s life, as a kind of second nature in which one’s ideas about the world and one’s place in it are crystallized and thus shape one’s subjective construction of reality. Habitus is a highly concentrated quintessence of all the ideas about normality that people use to navigate their environment and thereby arrive at a consciousness of who they actually are.

In contrast to Poland and Italy, only a minority of Britain’s population belongs to the Catholic Church. In fact, according to the Vatican’s *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* (2005), 5.1 million people (excluding those in Northern Ireland)

Figure 8: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Poland

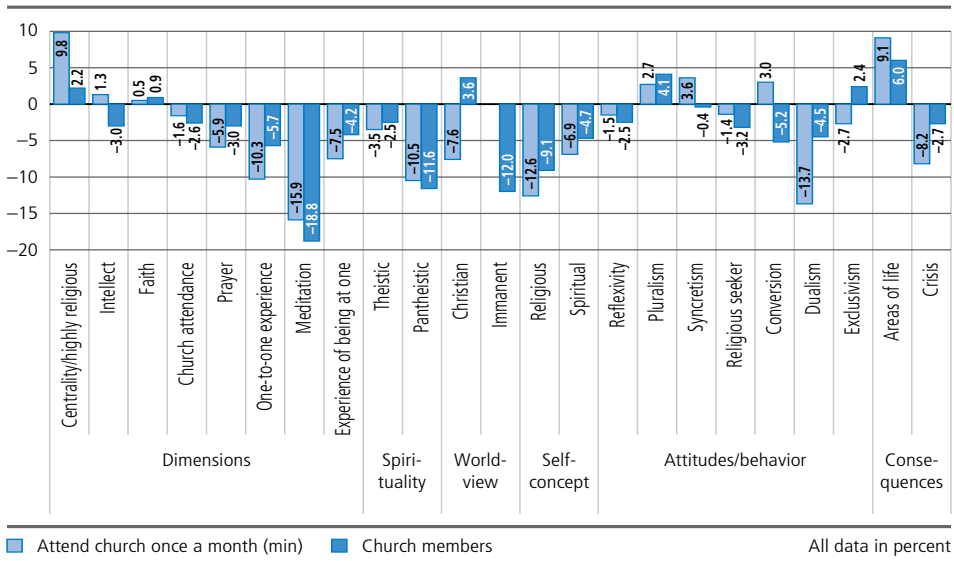


of a total population of 60.9 million (2008) belong to the Catholic Church. Over the last 200 years—and thanks to immigration from Ireland, Poland and the Caribbean—the number of members has multiplied. While some of these immigrants conform to the secular daily life of Britain, others find that confessional affiliation provides an important touchstone for identity in their new world. The Religion Monitor provides results confirming the presence of both types of behavior with regard to the religiosity of the Catholic population in Great Britain.

No other country similarly distinguished by generally average levels of religiosity values has as many active Catholics who describe themselves as “very religious” as Great Britain does. Moreover, British Catholics practice a purely theistic spirituality more than any other European church. At the same time, however, a remarkable 23 percent of respondents in Britain described themselves as being non-spiritual. In addition, there is a duality between theistic (45 %) and strongly syncretic spirituality (38 %) among those who are affiliated with the Church. A similar dichotomy exists among those who are unchurched, with respondents identifying themselves as either non-spiritual (39 %) or theistic spiritual (41 %) practitioners. In fact, the number of British Catholics practicing pure pantheistic spirituality was the lowest among all Catholics surveyed by the Religion Monitor.

The sociologist Grace Davie has perhaps described British religiosity best as one of “believing without belonging.” Indeed, for most British people, going to

Figure 9: Religiosity profile of the Catholic Church in Great Britain



church is not a priority. At the same time, however, according to a report aired by Radio Vatican in 2008, the number of practicing members in the Catholic Church has for the first time surpassed the same figure for those belonging to the far larger Anglican Church. Moreover, according to the Religion Monitor, British Catholics have the highest rate of church attendance after Italy and Poland. This can be attributed in part to the fact that one is usually only considered a member of a church in Great Britain when one regularly participates in the life of the congregation rather than just attending the occasional religious service, and also to the fact that around 400,000 Poles emigrated to England between 2004 and spring 2007.

Like their counterparts in Switzerland, Great Britain’s active church members attribute an above-average degree of relevance to religiosity in the context of their social lives. This opinion is also generally held among the populations of Switzerland, Poland and Italy. Against this background, the attitudes of Britain’s practicing Catholics cannot be accounted for by the hypothesis that the puritanical tenor prevalent in British society—which values strict self-discipline and good conduct as an unmistakable sign of God’s grace—leads them to more seriously align their daily activities with their religious convictions. Working against the acceptance of this hypothesis, however, is the fact that in all other countries in which high religious values can be seen, people attribute an above-average significance in their daily lives to religion.

This correlation should not distract us from the fact that the survey elicited attitudes and opinions, rather than facts about actual behavior. The findings of the Religion Monitor do not permit any reliable statements about the actual relevance of religion in daily life in a given country. Instead, the results give expression to the acceptance of the normative idea that religion should be a guiding force in daily life. In other words: The higher the value someone attributes to religion, the less likely it is that their own logic will diverge much from the logic of the system of symbols that constitute their religion when it comes to perceiving their daily lifeworld.

### **Institutionally supported religiosity**

Multiple regression analyses can be used to help answer the question of how much influence each core dimension has on the importance of religiosity in the life of an individual. Such analyses appraise the centrality of religiosity for a particular personality in terms of the effects of explanatory characteristics, while at the same time inhibiting the influence of all other factors. On the one hand, these analyses can help determine whether the effect of a specific explanatory characteristic is significant or whether it is random. On the other hand, the beta-value can be used to derive the relative effect of the characteristic on the centrality scale.

An analysis of all the Catholics in the eight countries suggests that regular attendance of Sunday religious services, followed by personal prayer, are not just significant, but key influences on how religious a person is. Indeed, these two factors exert the strongest effect on an individual's religiosity. They are followed—though at a significant distance—by a belief in “God or something divine,” a belief in life after death and intellectual engagement with religious themes. On average, however, a one-to-one experience with God or something divine or the experience of being at one have the lowest levels of significance to the religious life of Catholics in these eight countries.

Whereas respondents in most countries ranked church attendance and then personal prayer highest in terms of influencing their subjective understanding of religiosity, Spanish Catholics ranked meditation (as an inward-directed form of religiosity) second to church attendance. In Italy, Poland and Great Britain, the one-to-one experience ranks among the four most important influences here, as does meditation in France. In Spain the experience of being at one with all as well as meditation number among the top four most important influences.

The more pronounced a person's religiosity is, the more apparent the need for social support through regular church attendance becomes. Moreover, the more important one considers religion to be, the greater the need for ritual communication.

**Table 3: Influence of the core dimensions on the centrality scale\***

Germany	beta	Austria	beta	Switzerland	beta	France	beta
Prayer	.309	Prayer	.293	Church attendance	.255	Church attendance	.266
Church attendance	.250	Church attendance	.263	Prayer	.221	Prayer	.204
Belief	.223	Intellectual	.181	Belief	.204	Meditation	.204
Intellectual	.173	Belief	.176	Intellectual	.180	Intellectual	.155
One-to-one experience	.142	One-to-one experience	.149	One-to-one experience	.167	Belief	.152
Experience of being at one	.088	Meditation	.070	Experience of being at one	.156	One-to-one experience	.129
Meditation	.048	Experience of being at one	.063	Meditation	.139	Experience of being at one	.103
Spain	beta	Italy	beta	Poland	beta	Great Britain	beta
Church attendance	.305	Church attendance	.287	Church attendance	.284	Church attendance	.308
Meditation	.225	Prayer	.257	Prayer	.264	Prayer	.259
Faith	.180	Intellectual	.201	One-to-one experience	.242	Faith	.236
Experience of being at one	.158	One-to-one experience	.189	Faith	.192	One-to-one experience	.182
Intellectual	.157	Meditation	.139	Intellectual	.188	Intellectual	.164
Prayer	.154	Experience of being at one	.119	Meditation	.069	Experience of being at one	.067
One-to-one experience	.071	Faith	.093	Experience of being at one	.041	Meditation	.016

\* Multiple linear regression analysis was used to explore the simultaneous linear influence of several predicate variables (here, the core dimensions of religiosity) against a target variable (here the centrality scale for religiosity). This provides an estimate of how large the (net) influence of a single predicate is if the other predicate variables are held constant. The standardized beta-values indicate the extent to which the target variable changes when the affected predicate variable increases by a standard deviation when all predicates are compared against each other.

In this factor analysis, the theoretical components of the centrality scale for religiosity are linked together in a one-dimensional model of religiosity as it is lived and practiced in daily life. This basic model summarizes the various facets of religiosity between the poles of "personal prayer" and "meditation." This produces a close correlation between church attendance on Sundays and personal prayer ( $r = .65$ ), on the one hand, and belief in God or something divine ( $r = .51$ ), on the other. In general, people who pray often feel privately compelled to partic-

ipate in common prayer with others at Sunday religious services, and whoever regularly attends Sunday religious services prays more often at home. As a result, piety in secret—or “invisible religion,” as Thomas Luckmann calls it—becomes visible in the collective worship of God on Sundays.

In contrast to the 11 percent of respondents from all eight countries who were identified by the religiosity index as being non-religious, 17 percent had no interest in pantheistic or theistic spirituality. A belief in the existence of a higher reality that symbolizes the unknowable meaning of the human condition, as well as a general interest in religious issues accompanied by occasional attendance at religious services yields a higher religiosity value than does a spiritual grounding of everyday life.

The stronger the social support that personal spirituality finds in regular religious services, the more likely it is that this spirituality will be marked by a purely theistic (26 %), syncretist (21 %) or strongly syncretist (50 %) leaning. Spirituality, however, is much more differentiated among the unchurched. In fact, one encounters non-spiritual people (29 %) and pure pantheistic spirituality (14 %) almost exclusively among people who do not attend church. Moreover, one encounters in this group fewer people with a purely theistic (19 %) and strongly syncretist spirituality (17 %) than one does among the core segment of those with church affiliation.

The religiosity of Catholics is primarily based on their close connection to the Church by means of regular participation in Sunday religious services. Spirituality depends heavily on a network of supporting social relationships in a complex, diffuse, ephemeral and barely structured world that is by and large confusing. During the communal experience of Sunday services, religious people experience a confirmation of their perspective on reality among like-minded people. The ritual of the Sunday religious service unites everyone present; it gives content and form to privately lived religiosity, and it ensures secure orientation.

It is through the ritual symbolism and gestures of the religious services that those attending them transcend the threshold of daily life into a reality beyond. Through the act of participating in the ritual, those attending the service are able to re-present to themselves the inscrutable, the incomprehensible and the inaccessible, indeed the numinous and saints that exist beyond the realm of everyday experience. As the performance of symbolism, ritual re-presents transcendence, allowing it to be experienced—through the ritual process—as something evident and immediate. Moreover, the degree to which people involve themselves in the ritual helps determine the degree to which they participate in the vitalized relationship to transcendence. In this way, religious services serve as something sim-

ilar to corridors from one reality into another—or bridges into foreign territory. The ritual elements of these services help express that which cannot be articulated with words.

To a significant degree, church attendance determines what is measured by the centrality of religiosity scale and, in particular, it provides information about how members share ecclesiastical convictions of faith and value systems. Religious services can suggest to what degree societal modernization processes and the accompanying shift in mentality have affected the Church in various countries as well as to what degree this has led to a decrease in the authority of formally organized religiosity. Like changes in many other social areas, such as marriage and family, these processes of de-institutionalization have included the Church. For the churches, de-institutionalization means the loss of their religious monopoly, the collapse of mechanisms of social control and the population's lack of a motivational foundation.

To a different extent in each country, the subjectivization of religiosity is connected with the decline of formal ecclesiastical involvement and an increasing relocation of religious experience and action in the subject. Indeed, subjectivization describes the tendency of a growing number of church members to view their personal development as providing both the evidence of and the criteria for the worth of their religiosity. Reflecting upon themselves, individuals inquire about the meaning of life. And it is here that they find their basic orientation.

### **Socio-structural explanation of the religious shift**

Religiosity's relationship to both the formative principles and the manifestations of the modern development of society can in part be seen in the socio-structural positions held by an individual person in that society. Can we observe in the data of the Religion Monitor differing degrees of intensity depending on the social position of an individual? Are certain social groups more religious? People with different positions in the modernization process can be compared in terms of their religiosity. How, then, do these differences manifest themselves in religious behavior—differences such as the degree to which individuals depend upon the societal changes underway or has access to adequate social, cultural and financial resources to take advantage of a plurality of options in conducting their own lives? Observable effects might indicate whether we should expect religious authority to erode further and more quickly, or whether this trend will abate over time.

Those characteristics of a person that underscore the different ways in which they are implicated in the modernization process are our focus here. The more strongly and essentially an individual is a part of the process of modernization, the greater the possibility that organized church-based religion becomes less relevant to that individual's life. Among the characteristics that suggest increased or decreased exposure to modernization processes are age, education, career, gender, partner relationships and the number of children and the place where one lives. But when it comes to such information at this individual level, the Religion Monitor does not provide further details.

The younger cohorts—that is, younger people today—are growing up in a time that is more strongly marked by social change than ever before. Improved education brings these individuals to rethink accepted traditions and ways of thinking. They are introduced to a plurality of alternative lifestyles while being confronted with a high-tech, highly rationalized employment market. Partnership, children and the role of housewife create more distance between individuals and the world beyond the front door. In contrast to the purposive-rational, functional communication found in our faceless society, the intimacy found within the family proves to be the place where everything affecting a person can be communicated. Modern forms and styles of living are leaving their indelible marks on urban centers.

It can be established that the aforementioned socio-structural characteristics have a generally loose relationship with the centrality of religiosity and that this explains the 11 percent variance in the centrality scale. This means that religiosity only depends to a small degree on the personal characteristics captured by the Religion Monitor about the positions of individuals in the social structure. A person's socio-structural features influence the individual core dimensions of religiosity to differing degrees. The greatest difference can be observed between pantheistic and theistic spirituality. Social positions exercise much greater influence on theistic spirituality than they do on pantheistic spirituality.

The more individuals view themselves as subjected to the modern forces of change in their everyday life-worlds, the less they are inclined toward having a theistic Christian faith. A preference for a theistic-Christian spirituality and private prayer is more pronounced among women than it is among men and gender exerts a stronger influence on both core dimensions than age does.

In Austria and Germany, the influence of socio-structural characteristics on religiosity values is almost twice as strong as the European average. This influence is somewhat smaller in Spain, smaller still in France and Poland, almost irrelevant in Great Britain, where employment appears to exercise a significant

effect on individual religiosity. The higher degree of religiosity traditionally held among women holds particularly true in today's Italy.

Then there is the issue of age. In Spain and Austria, on the one hand, age played a much larger role than it did in all of the other countries. The differences between age groups, on the other hand, exerted the strongest effect on the centrality scale of religiosity. Even if such a finding is ambiguous in terms of cross-sectional data, long-term studies support an interpretation along generational or cohort differences. Younger people have experienced advanced modernization in their childhoods. According to younger people, the lower degree of religiosity among their generation cannot be attributed to age alone—or can be attributed only somewhat to age. Moreover, it cannot be expected that younger people today will reach the level of religiosity at some point in life that is found in today's older respondents.

Women in all age categories are more inclined to follow a religious lifestyle than men are. At the same time, however, the differences between genders decreased the younger the age group, which can perhaps be explained by the fact that religious upbringing for both men and women has become more and more similar in the last few decades. For example, before the 1960s, girls were raised in a fundamentally different way than boys were, and feminine religiosity was more encouraged and nurtured. Then, the drive for the emancipation of women began in the 1960s, and it affected upbringing, education and employment opportunities. In a comparison of housewives and women working inside and outside the household, 47 percent of the former and 34 percent of the latter reported that they were highly religious. These figures can be compared with the overall average numbers, according to which 41 percent of women and 27 percent of men reported the highest degree of religiosity. Such numbers are significantly higher in Italy, where 60 percent of women and 38 percent of men describe themselves as being highly religious.

On average, 56 percent of women in the surveyed countries with three or more children describe themselves as being very religious. In Italy, where the responsibility for religiosity is borne by women more than it is in any other European country, this number rises to 62 percent. At 52 percent, Polish women come in right behind Italian women. The traditionally close correlation between women and religiosity finds the least expression in the two most secular countries in the survey, France (24 %) and Austria (28 %). Both countries, also showed the smallest degree of difference in religiosity between men and women: Austria had an 8-percent difference, whereas France had a 13-percent difference. The highest degree of difference—23 percent—was found in Italy.

In addition to the factors of age and gender, one's partnership status and number of children had a significant effect on the degree of religiosity. However, the size of the city individuals lived in or their employment and education level did not.

Wherever radicalized modernity begins to be harmful to people's lives, churches are no longer able to bring religious orientation, feelings and modes of behavior within the folds of an institutionally established, prevailing paradigm. If we compare two extreme cases of groups that view themselves as being subjected to the forces of modernization in two very different ways (as indicated by their socio-structural characteristics), the differences between religious experience and activity could not be greater. These examples provide a sense of the maelstrom of modernization into which the churches have fallen since the middle of the 20th century.

Religious upbringing at home plays a more significant role in explaining these differences in individual religiosity than do the socio-structural characteristics of age and gender. If religious upbringing is calculated together with the socio-structural variables as a factor of influence on the centrality of religiosity, the explanatory power of the centrality scale increases to a variance of 17 percent. Religious upbringing in childhood leads to a heightened sense of religiosity as adults. In fact, sociological research shows across the board that the parents' household has a decisive effect on the principles guiding an individual's life. Moreover, it would appear that attitudes and behaviors nurtured within the family have largely usurped the value-shaping function of religious communities and groups.

The findings of the Religion Monitor suggest that bodies representing the Catholic Church in different European countries are in the middle of an epochal transformation process, the third in the last 500 years. After the Reformation, these bodies committed themselves to a conservative, anti-reform project. This Counter-Reformation lasted until the French Revolution. Then, in reaction to the Enlightenment and early industrial modernity, these Church bodies mustered themselves under the banner of anti-modernity and transformed themselves into a closed, confessional and bureaucratically centralized mass organization with state-like structures. Since the middle of the 20th century, the national bodies of the Catholic Church in Europe have encountered the third major challenge to transform themselves into a new social form that can meet the challenges of prevailing societal conditions that are changing rapidly.

**Table 4: Socio-structural characteristics according to aspects of religiosity**

	High	Moderate	Low
Catholic, 60 years or older, female, not employed, with three or more children			
Centrality of religiosity	66	32	3
Intellectual	39	47	13
Ideology (belief)	68	22	10
Public practice of religion	69	21	11
Prayer	77	17	7
Theistic spirituality	66	27	8
Pantheistic spirituality	33	45	23
Religious reflexivity	21	65	15
Religious pluralism	76	21	4
Importance of religion	73	20	7
Religious self-assessment	51	39	10
Spiritual self-assessment	43	37	20
Syncretism	32	29	40
Religious search	36	29	35
Catholic, under 30 years old, male, without partner			
Centrality of religiosity	17	65	18
Intellectual	14	43	43
Ideology (Belief)	41	33	26
Public practice of religion	22	37	41
Prayer	22	40	38
Theistic spirituality	17	40	43
Pantheistic spirituality	13	38	48
Religious reflexivity	16	55	29
Religious pluralism	67	27	6
Importance of religion	35	22	43
Religious self-assessment	23	34	43
Spiritual self-assessment	30	30	41
Syncretism	22	19	58
Religious search	23	22	56

All data in percent

