

Study: Gen Z doubles down on combining tarot and traditional faith

by [Heather Greene](#) in the [September 8, 2021](#) issue



(Photo by Jen Theodore on Unsplash)

A new survey released by Springtide Research Institute confirms what metaphysical store owners and veteran tarot readers have known since the term Gen Z was invented: younger Americans, known for fashioning their own spirituality the way they curate their social media feeds, are doing so using well-established alternative practices.

Springtide's survey showed that 51 percent of its sample population, age 13-25, engage in tarot cards or fortune-telling. Of that percentage, 17 percent practice daily, 25 percent once a week, 27 percent once a month, and 31 percent less than once a month.

Interest in tarot and other forms of divination doesn't necessarily correspond with a rejection of traditional religion. Many young tarot readers continue to identify with a traditional faith, while looking beyond established structures for spiritual growth.

A cohort of young adults selected to work with Springtide supplied anecdotal explanations for the survey findings.

"The main three Abrahamic religions leave little to our own interpretation of Scripture," wrote Zaina Qureshi, a 16-year-old who identifies as both Muslim and "spiritual."

With tarot and similar practices, Qureshi said, "we're open to interpret what we want to think ourselves and make our own guidelines when it comes to spirituality, which is why I think a lot of young people resonate with it."

According to Springtide's report, divination practices are most popular among young people who identify as Russian or Greek Orthodox (78.1 percent), Mormon (69.4 percent), or Jewish (62.1 percent). Atheists had the lowest interest in metaphysical-adjacent practices at 34.4 percent, followed closely by those identifying with no particular faith tradition.

The popularity of alternative spiritual practices among Orthodox youth is cultural, explained Jenny Haddad Mosher, director of the Telos Project, an effort by the Greek Orthodox Church in America to foster the faith among young people.

"Fortune-telling practices are extremely widespread amongst people of all religions in Greece, Turkey, and the Middle East," she said. Orthodox youth who are used to seeing their grandparents reading fortunes in coffee grounds, she suggested, see little to no religious stigma in other incarnations of this tradition.

Springtide's research did not break out smaller religious groups in which divination is considered central to religious practice, such as paganism, druidism, heathenism, Wicca, or African traditional religions. A "something else" category, however, captured 61 percent of respondents who affirmed their use of tarot cards and fortune-telling.

Mathew Blasio, a 22-year-old who is religiously unaffiliated and who works with crystals, told Springtide: "I think crystals are like 'saints' for young people and spirituals. Sometimes you just need something or someone that is rooted in

courage.”

Springtide Research Institute conducts a survey annually in order to evaluate the religious views of the youngest generations, but it has not asked previously about tarot.

Members of Gen Z, whom Josh Packard, Springtide’s executive director, describes as “spiritual explorers,” are seeking to enrich and personalize their religious experience through various metaphysical practices.

“Gen Z is very curious and engaged with the world around them. Increasingly, their interests in spiritual and religious concerns explore spaces outside of traditional institutional boundaries,” Packard said. “While the findings about tarot might be new, they are not surprising in this larger context of ‘unbundled faith’ that we use to characterize Gen Z.”

This unbundling refers to the unpacking, merging, and embracing of various elements from different religious and spiritual practices.

In his response to the survey, Blasio wrote: “Whether a stone in your pocket or a pendant in your hand, there is something that gives you energy from within. If you believe that and you put your faith in whatever it is, it will get you where you want to go.” —Religion News Service