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residents and immigrants in Greece are not Greek Orthodox. A survey by the Pew Research Center highlights that 55% of Greek respondents consider religion to be very important in their lives—the highest percentage among Central and Eastern European countries.³ However, Greece appears to have become less religious since the 1970s and 1980s, with many adults reporting that religion plays a less central role in their lives now compared to their upbringing.^{3A} A majority of Greeks (61%) attend religious services at least once a year, though weekly attendance is less frequent, with only 17% participating.³ In contrast, about 31% pray daily, indicating a preference for private expressions of faith over communal worship.³ Many Greeks demonstrate their devotion through personal practices. For example, most people have religious icons or imagery in their homes. Additionally, 67% report wearing or carrying religious symbols, such as necklaces with crosses.³ Overall, Greek women are generally more religiously active and engaged in faith practices than men.³ Despite the prevalence of Christianity in Greece, it is still common to hear people make jokes about God, priests and the church. There is also widespread support for secular values. Most of the population thinks the government should not support the spread of religious values, and 82% of Greeks oppose the idea of the government providing financial support to the church.³ Greek Orthodox Church Distinctions between the churches of Eastern Orthodox Christianity generally occur according to nationalities. Thus, in Greece, Eastern is often referred to as Greek . The Greek Orthodox Church has been the dominant religious institution for centuries and continues to be the most popular religion in Greece. It refers to a body of several churches within Eastern Orthodox Christianity. However, the leading figure of authority for most Greeks is the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (based in Turkey). Those on Crete typically follow a special branch of the Greek Orthodox Church. People may identify as Greek Orthodox as is a matter of personal faith, family tradition and/or national culture. Many people embrace Greek as an element of national belonging, even if they do not practise the religion regularly. The Greek Orthodox Church played a central role in the country's bid for independence from the Ottoman Empire and continues to be strongly correlated with nationalist sentiment. The Pew Research Center found that 76% of Greeks say that being Orthodox is important to being "truly Greek".³ The Greek Orthodoxy has significant social power and remains a strong cultural force in Greece. Important sacramental moments in the Orthodox tradition continue to act as significant timestamps in people's lives, such as baptism, chrismation, confession and holy communion. Matrimony (marriage), holy orders (ordination) and (anointment of the sick) are also important practices. Some Orthodox Greeks may fast in the weeks before Easter, Christmas and the Assumption of Mary. This involves a restricted diet as well as abstinence from indulgent activities.