

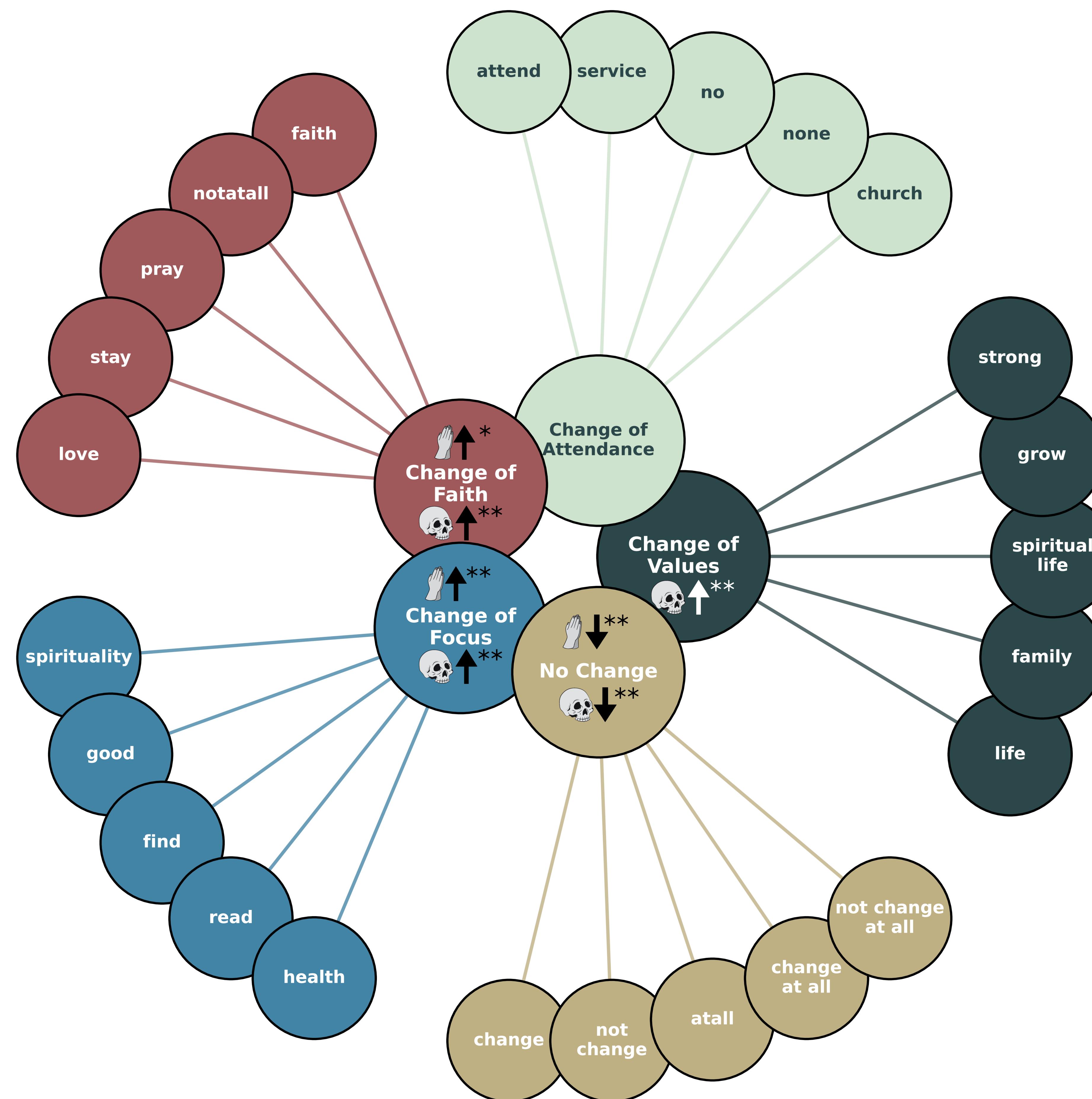
## Introduction

To further understand the changes in the religious and spiritual landscape of the US since the COVID 19 pandemic, this study involved the analysis of short answer text responses from a nationally representative survey collected by NORC on behalf of the Fetzer Institute in 2022. The analytic sample was  $n = 2,503$ . The two research questions were: **1) What changes in religiousness and spirituality are reported as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2) How are reported changes in spirituality associated with life stressors and mental health?**

## Methods

The first question was addressed by analyzing text responses with **Structural Topic Modeling (STM)**. STM employs a **machine learning** method to estimate topics and their relationships, and allows topics to be influenced by covariates/metadata. The second question was addressed using a MANOVA to see if the experience of stressors or self-reported spiritual growth had an effect on endorsement rate of the identified topics.

## Results



STM identified five topics describing changes in spirituality: **1) Change of Values, 2) Change of Attendance, 3) Change of Faith, 4) Change of Focus, and 5) No Change.** Select covariates provided deeper understanding of the respondents associated with each topic. MANOVA results found that **those reporting spiritual growth were significantly less likely to be associated with the No Change topic, and those reporting experiencing loss were significantly more likely to be associated with the Change of Focus, Change of Faith, or Change of Values topics.** There was no effect of either loss or spiritual growth within the Change of Attendance topic.

## Discussion

These results suggest that changes in individuals' spiritual perspectives and behaviors were not uncommon as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that **stressors and spiritual growth were associated with reported change.** MANOVA agreement with topic names suggests convergent validity. These findings offer more nuanced insight into the nature of observed changes in religiousness and spirituality in the wake of COVID-19, and point toward specific narratives that people use to express their lived experiences of these changes.

\*  $p < .01$     ↑ increased topic endorsement    🙏 reported spiritual growth  
 \*\*  $p < .001$     ↓ decreased topic endorsement    💀 reported loss of income, a loved one, or both

