

# Reference Document

"They Didn't End Door-to-Door. They Did Something Quieter."

## Every Claim, Source, and Verification Status

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### How to Use This Document

Each entry identifies a specific factual claim made in the video, the source it is based on, where to verify it, and any notes on confidence level. Claims are organized in the order they appear in the video.

Verification levels:

- **PRIMARY** — Sourced from court rulings, official Jehovah's Witnesses publications (*The Watchtower*, brochures, official service-year reports), or government/regulatory records. Primary sources can stand on their own.
- **SECONDARY** — Sourced from established advocacy or legal-resource sites, academic analysis, or reputable journalism (Associated Press, NBC News). Secondary sources support claims and are strongest when paired with a primary source.

## SECTION 1: What Changed in 2023

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**Claim: For 103 years — since 1920 — every Jehovah's Witness was required to turn in a monthly field-service report (hours, placements, return visits, video showings).**

- **Source:** Associated Press (Peter Smith), via *The Hill*
- **URL:** <https://thehill.com/homenews/ap/ap-u-s-news/ap-timekeepers-no-more-rank-and-file-jehovahs-witnesses-say-goodbye-to-tracking-proselytizing-hours/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — national wire reporting that independently confirms the 1920 origin and the scope of the requirement.

**Claim: At the October 2023 annual meeting, Governing Body member Samuel Herd announced that, effective November 1, 2023, congregation publishers would no longer report time, placements, return visits, or videos — only a single box indicating they shared in the ministry. Pioneers and traveling overseers still report hours.**

- **Source:** Associated Press / NBC News coverage of the 2023 annual meeting; announcement archived at AvoidJW.org
- **URL:** <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/religion/timekeepers-no-rank-file-jehovahs-witnesses-say-goodbye-tracking-prose-rcna126582>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — reputable journalism reporting the announcement; corroborated by the organization's own revised report form.
- **Key quote:** "Our ministry involves much more than counting time."

**Claim: The same 2023 annual meeting introduced the brochure *Love People—Make Disciples*, which replaced memorized presentations and literature placement with the instruction to converse naturally.**

- **Source:** *Love People—Make Disciples*, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/brochures/love-people-make-disciples/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organization's own published brochure.

## SECTION 2: The Organization's Own Response

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**Claim:** Six months after the change, the May 2024 study edition of *The Watchtower* directly raised the question of whether dropping the reporting requirement made the ministry less important or urgent, and answered emphatically that it did not — urging members to keep preaching with eagerness, urgency, and zeal.

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, Study Edition, May 2024, “Let Love Motivate You to Keep Preaching!”
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-may-2024/Let-Love-Motivate-You-to-Keep-Preaching/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower study article.
- **Key quote:** “Absolutely not!”

## SECTION 3: Growth, Conversions, and the Numbers

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**Claim:** Annual baptisms peaked at 375,963 in 1997.

- **Source:** JWfacts.com statistical analysis of official Watch Tower service-year reports
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — established reference site compiling the organization's own published figures.

**Claim:** In the 2025 service year the organization reported 304,643 baptisms.

- **Source:** 2025 Service Year Report of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide — Grand Totals
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2025-Service-Year-Report-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Worldwide/2025-Grand-Totals/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organization's own official report.

**Claim:** Over the decades the number of reported Bible studies roughly doubled even as baptisms fell, and the share of Bible studies that lead to baptism dropped from about one in five before the mid-1970s to under one in thirty-three in the last decade.

- **Source:** JWfacts.com statistical analysis of official Watch Tower service-year reports
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — comparative analysis built from the organization's published study and baptism figures.

**Claim:** The reported Bible-study figure includes studies parents conduct with their own unbaptized children — which may be counted as one study per child, per month.

- **Source:** Watch Tower “Question Box,” Watchtower Online Library
- **URL:** <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/202003406>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organization's own instructions on what counts as a reportable study.

**Claim:** The annual percentage growth rate fell from over 5% in the 1980s and early 1990s to about 1.3% by 2019 — close to the rate of world population growth — and in developed countries the ratio of Witnesses to population has declined (in Australia, from 1 in 294 in 1998 to 1 in 384 by 2024).

- **Source:** JWfacts.com statistical analysis of official Watch Tower service-year reports
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — long-run trend analysis derived from official figures.

**Claim: In the 2024 and 2025 service years the organization reported about a 2.5% increase in publishers, with peak publishers crossing nine million (9,043,460 in 2024; 9,205,326 in 2025).**

- **Source:** 2024 and 2025 Service Year Reports of Jehovah's Witnesses Worldwide — Grand Totals
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2025-Service-Year-Report-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Worldwide/2025-Grand-Totals/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organization's own official reports.

## SECTION 4: On-the-Ground Reports

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The video includes firsthand accounts from current and former members describing field-service participation in their own congregations. These are presented as anonymized, illustrative testimony reflecting personal experience — not as statistical evidence — and no individuals are identified. They are offered to show what the documented policy changes look like at the local level; the case in the video rests on the primary and secondary sources catalogued in the other sections.

## SECTION 5: What the Leadership Is Signaling

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**Claim: Jehovah's Witnesses continue to publicly promote and defend the door-to-door ministry, including on their official website.**

- **Source:** "Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses Go From Door to Door?", jw.org
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/door-to-door/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — the organization's own current public statement.

**Claim: At the 2025 annual meeting, Governing Body member Jeffrey Winder told the audience there would be more adjustments in time.**

- **Source:** Report of the 2025 annual meeting, AvoidJW.org
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/annual-meeting-jehovahs-witnesses-2025/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — contemporaneous account of the annual-meeting program.
- **Key quote:** "will be more adjustments in time"

**Claim: A 2026 study edition of *The Watchtower* names, in its own words, a coming "change in the way that the disciple-making work is organized," and frames members' reaction to such a change as a test of loyalty.**

- **Source:** *The Watchtower*, Study Edition, June 2026, "How to Remain Loyal When We Face Tests of Faith," paragraph 4
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/magazines/watchtower-study-june-2026/How-to-Remain-Loyal-When-We-Face-Tests-of-Faith/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official Watchtower study article.
- **Key quote:** "a change in the way that the disciple-making work is organized"

## SECTION 6: The Statistical Counterarguments, Examined

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**Claim:** Since November 2023, an individual counts as a “publisher” by checking a single box indicating any share in the ministry in any amount — a substantially lower threshold than the previous requirement to report measurable activity.

- **Source:** Associated Press / NBC News coverage of the 2023 annual meeting; announcement archived at AvoidJW.org
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/requirement-to-report-ministry-hours-no-more/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — reporting on the revised counting method.

**Claim:** Rank-and-file publishers no longer report hours at all; only pioneers and traveling overseers do. Even before 2023, the published worldwide hours total combined rank-and-file publishers with full-time pioneers and overseers on fixed monthly rates, which obscured ordinary-publisher activity.

- **Source:** AvoidJW.org analysis of the reporting change
- **URL:** <https://avoidjw.org/news/the-decline-of-jehovahs-witnesses-no-more-hours/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — analysis of how the published totals are composed.

## SECTION 7: Data Privacy and Door-to-Door

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**Claim:** In 2018, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that note-taking by Jehovah’s Witnesses during door-to-door preaching falls under EU data-protection law and that the religious community is a joint controller of that data, with no general religious exemption.

- **Source:** Court of Justice of the European Union, *Tietosuojavaltutettu* (Jehovan todistajat), Case C-25/17, judgment of 10 July 2018
- **URL:** [https://www.gdprhub.eu/index.php?title=CJEU\\_-\\_C-25/17\\_-\\_Jehovan\\_todistajat](https://www.gdprhub.eu/index.php?title=CJEU_-_C-25/17_-_Jehovan_todistajat)
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — ruling of the EU’s highest court (summarized at the linked legal database; full judgment available via curia.europa.eu).

**Claim:** The community challenged the consent requirement and, as recently as 2023, the European Court of Human Rights upheld it — finding no violation of religious freedom. The data-collection forms had already been discontinued.

- **Source:** European Court of Human Rights, *Jehovah’s Witnesses v. Finland*, no. 31172/19, [2023] ECHR 388, judgment of 9 May 2023
- **URL:** <https://www.echr.coe.int/w/judgment-concerning-finland>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — ruling of the European Court of Human Rights.

## SECTION 8: Additional Supporting Sources

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**Associated Press — reporting on the field-service reporting change**

- **Source:** Associated Press (Peter Smith)
- **URL:** <https://thehill.com/homenews/ap/ap-u-s-news/ap-timekeepers-no-more-rank-and-file-jehovahs-witnesses-say-goodbye-to-tracking-proselytizing-hours/>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — national wire service.
- **Contains:** Background on the history and significance of the hours-reporting requirement and reactions to its removal.

**JWfacts.com — Watch Tower statistics**

- **Source:** JWfacts.com
- **URL:** <https://www.jwfacts.com/watchtower/statistics.php>
- **Verification:** SECONDARY — established reference site compiling official figures.
- **Contains:** Long-run tables and analysis of publishers, baptisms, Bible studies, and growth rates drawn from official service-year reports.

### **2025 Service Year Report — Grand Totals**

- **Source:** Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
- **URL:** <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2025-Service-Year-Report-of-Jehovahs-Witnesses-Worldwide/2025-Grand-Totals/>
- **Verification:** PRIMARY — official worldwide report.
- **Contains:** Country-by-country and worldwide totals for publishers, baptisms, congregations, Bible studies, and Memorial attendance.

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All sources were accessible at the time of publication. Where a Watchtower publication is cited, the link points to the organization's own library so the wording can be read in full context.