

Religious Affiliation of the Founding Fathers

The three major foundational documents of the United States of America are the Declaration of Independence (July 1776), the Articles of Confederation (drafted 1777, ratified 1781) and the Constitution of the United States of America (1789). There are a total of 143 signatures on these documents, representing 118 different signers. (Some individuals signed more than one document.)

There were 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence.

There were 48 signers of the Articles of Confederation.

All 55 delegates who participated in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 are regarded as Founding Fathers, in fact, they are often regarded as the Founding Fathers because it is this group that actually debated, drafted and signed the U.S. Constitution, which is the basis for the country's political and legal system. Only 39 delegates actually signed the document, however, meaning there were 16 non-signing delegates - individuals who were Constitutional Convention delegates but were not signers of the Constitution.

The religious affiliations of these individuals are summarized below. Obviously this is a very restrictive set of names, and does not include everyone who could be considered an "American Founding Father." But most of the major figures that people generally think of in this context are included using these criteria, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, John Hancock, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and more.

Religious Affiliation of U.S. Founding Fathers	# of Founding Fathers	% of Founding Fathers
Episcopalian/Anglican	88	54.7%
Presbyterian	30	18.6%
Congregationalist	27	16.8%
Quaker	7	4.3%
Dutch Reformed/German Reformed	6	3.7%
Lutheran	5	3.1%
Catholic	3	1.9%
Huguenot	3	1.9%
Unitarian	3	1.9%
Methodist	2	1.2%
Calvinist	1	0.6%
TOTAL	204	

Religious Affiliation of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence

Religious Affiliation	# of signers	% of signers	Name of Signer	State	Religious Affiliation
Episcopalian/Anglican	32	57.1%	Charles Carroll	Maryland	Catholic
Congregationalist	13	23.2%	Samuel Huntington	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Presbyterian	12	21.4%	Roger Sherman	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Quaker	2	3.6%	William Williams	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Unitarian or Universalist	2	3.6%	Oliver Wolcott	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Catholic	1	1.8%	Lyman Hall	Georgia	Congregationalist
TOTAL	56	100%	Samuel Adams	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
			John Hancock	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
			Josiah Bartlett	New Hampshire	Congregationalist
			William Whipple	New Hampshire	Congregationalist
			William Ellery	Rhode Island	Congregationalist
			John Adams	Massachusetts	Congregationalist; Unitarian
			Robert Treat Paine	Massachusetts	Congregationalist; Unitarian
			George Walton	Georgia	Episcopalian
			John Penn	North Carolina	Episcopalian
			George Ross	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
			Thomas Heyward Jr.	South Carolina	Episcopalian
			Thomas Lynch Jr.	South Carolina	Episcopalian
			Arthur Middleton	South Carolina	Episcopalian
			Edward Rutledge	South Carolina	Episcopalian
			Francis Lightfoot Lee	Virginia	Episcopalian
			Richard Henry Lee	Virginia	Episcopalian
			George Read	Delaware	Episcopalian
			Caesar Rodney	Delaware	Episcopalian
			Samuel Chase	Maryland	Episcopalian
			William Paca	Maryland	Episcopalian
			Thomas Stone	Maryland	Episcopalian
			Elbridge Gerry	Massachusetts	Episcopalian
			Francis Hopkinson	New Jersey	Episcopalian
			Francis Lewis	New York	Episcopalian

Lewis Morris	New York	Episcopalian
William Hooper	North Carolina	Episcopalian
Robert Morris	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
John Morton	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
Stephen Hopkins	Rhode Island	Episcopalian
Carter Braxton	Virginia	Episcopalian
Benjamin Harrison	Virginia	Episcopalian
Thomas Nelson Jr.	Virginia	Episcopalian
George Wythe	Virginia	Episcopalian
Thomas Jefferson	Virginia	Episcopalian (Deist)
Benjamin Franklin	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian (Deist)
Button Gwinnett	Georgia	Episcopalian; Congregationalist
James Wilson	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian; Presbyterian
Joseph Hewes	North Carolina	Quaker, Episcopalian
George Clymer	Pennsylvania	Quaker, Episcopalian
Thomas McKean	Delaware	Presbyterian
Matthew Thornton	New Hampshire	Presbyterian
Abraham Clark	New Jersey	Presbyterian
John Hart	New Jersey	Presbyterian
Richard Stockton	New Jersey	Presbyterian
John Witherspoon	New Jersey	Presbyterian
William Floyd	New York	Presbyterian
Philip Livingston	New York	Presbyterian
James Smith	Pennsylvania	Presbyterian
George Taylor	Pennsylvania	Presbyterian
Benjamin Rush	Pennsylvania	Presbyterian

The signers of the Declaration of Independence were a profoundly intelligent, religious and ethically-minded group. Four of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were current or former full-time preachers, and many more were the sons of clergymen. Other professions held by signers include lawyers, merchants, doctors and educators. These individuals, too, were for the most part active churchgoers and many contributed significantly to their churches both with contributions as well as their service as lay leaders. The signers were members of religious denominations at a rate that was significantly higher than average for the American Colonies during the late 1700s.

These signers have long inspired deep admiration among both secularists (who appreciate the non-denominational nature of the Declaration) and by traditional religionists (who appreciate the Declaration's recognition of God as the source of the rights enumerated by the document). Lossing's seminal 1848 collection of biographies of the signers of the Declaration of Independence echoed widely held sentiments held then and now that there was divine intent or inspiration behind the Declaration of Independence. Lossing matter-of-factly identified the signers as "instruments of Providence" who have "gone to receive their reward in the Spirit Land."

From: B. J. Lossing, Signers of the Declaration of Independence, George F. Cooleage & Brother: New York (1848) [reprinted in Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, WallBuilder Press: Aledo, Texas (1995)], pages 7-12:

From no point of view can the Declaration of American Independence, the causes which led to its adoption, and the events which marked its maintenance, be observed without exciting sentiments of profound veneration for the men who were the prominent actors in that remarkable scene in the drama of the world's history...

The signing of that instrument was a solemn act, and required great firmness and patriotism in those who committed it... neither firmness nor patriotism was wanting in that august body...

Such were the men unto whose keeping, as instruments of Providence, the destinies of America were for the time intrusted; and it has been well remarked, that men, other than such as these,--an ignorant, untaught mass, like those who have formed the physical elements of other revolutionary movements, without sufficient intellect to guide and control them--could not have conceived, planned, and carried into execution, such a mighty movement, one so fraught with tangible marks of political wisdom, as the American Revolution...

Their bodies now have all returned to their kindred dust in the grave, and their souls have gone to receive their reward in the Spirit Land.

From: Robert G. Ferris (editor), Signers of the Declaration: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Declaration of Independence, published by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service: Washington, D.C. (revised edition 1975), pages 27-28:

Liberally endowed as a whole with courage and sense of purpose, the signers [of the Declaration of Independence] consisted of a distinguished group of individuals. Although heterogeneous in background, education, experience, and accomplishments, at the time of the signing they were practically all men of means and represented an elite cross section of 18th-century American leadership. Everyone one of them had achieved prominence in his colony, but only a few enjoyed a national reputation.

The signers were those individuals who happened to be Delegates to Congress at the time... The signers possessed many basic similarities. Most were American-born and of Anglo-Saxon origin. The eight foreign-born... were all natives of the British Isles. Except for Charles Carroll, a Roman Catholic, and a few Deists, every one subscribed to Protestantism. For the most part basically political nonextremists, many at first had hesitated at separation let alone rebellion.

Religious Affiliation of the Signers of the Articles of Confederation

Religious Affiliation	# of signers	% of signers	Name of Signer	State	Religious Affiliation
Episcopalian/Anglican	14	29%	Daniel Carroll	Maryland	Catholic
Congregationalist	9	19%	Andrew Adams	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Presbyterian	4	8%	Richard Hutson	South Carolina	Congregationalist
Catholic	1	2%	Samuel Adams	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
Quaker	1	2%	Josiah Bartlett	New Hampshire	Congregationalist
Huguenot	1	2%	William Ellery	Rhode Island	Congregationalist
Lutheran	1	2%	John Hancock	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
Protestant, denomination unknown	18	38%	Samuel Huntington	Connecticut	Congregationalist
			Roger Sherman	Connecticut	Congregationalist
TOTAL	48	100%	Oliver Wolcott	Connecticut	Congregationalist
			Thomas Heyward Jr.	South Carolina	Episcopalian
			John Penn	North Carolina	Episcopalian

Francis Lightfoot Lee	Virginia	Episcopalian
Richard Henry Lee	Virginia	Episcopalian
Francis Lewis	New York	Episcopalian
Elbridge Gerry	Massachusetts	Episcopalian
John Banister	Virginia	Episcopalian
James Duane	New York	Episcopalian
Edward Langworthy	Georgia	Episcopalian
Gouverneur Morris	New York	Episcopalian
Nicholas Van Dyke	Delaware	Episcopalian
Robert Morris	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
Cornelius Harnett	North Carolina	Episcopalian (Deist)
John Dickinson	Delaware	Quaker; Episcopalian
Henry Laurens	South Carolina	Huguenot
John Hanson	Maryland	Lutheran
Thomas McKean	Delaware	Presbyterian
John Witherspoon	New Jersey	Presbyterian
John Walton	Georgia	Presbyterian
Nathaniel Scudder	New Jersey	Presbyterian
William Clingan	Pennsylvania	Protestant, denomination unknown
Joseph Reed	Pennsylvania	Protestant, denomination unknown
Daniel Roberdeau	Pennsylvania	Protestant, denomination unknown
Jonathan Bayard Smith	Pennsylvania	Protestant, denomination unknown
Francis Dana	Massachusetts	Protestant, denomination unknown
Samuel Holten	Massachusetts	Protestant, denomination unknown
James Lovell	Massachusetts	Protestant, denomination unknown
Henry Marchant	Rhode Island	Protestant, denomination unknown
John Collins	Rhode Island	Protestant, denomination unknown
Thomas Adams	Virginia	Protestant, denomination unknown
John Harvie	Virginia	Protestant, denomination unknown

John Mathews	South Carolina	Protestant, denomination unknown
William Henry Drayton	South Carolina	Protestant, denomination unknown
William Duer	New York	Protestant, denomination unknown
Titus Hosmer	Connecticut	Protestant, denomination unknown
Edward Telfair	Georgia	Protestant, denomination unknown
John Wentworth Jr.	New Hampshire	Protestant, denomination unknown
John Williams	North Carolina	Protestant, denomination unknown

Religious Affiliation of the Delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787,

including the Signers of the Constitution of the United States of America

There were 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 at which the U.S. Constitution was drafted and signed. All participated in the proceedings which resulted in the Constitution, but only 39 of these delegates were actually signers of the document.

From: Robert G. Ferris (editor), Signers of the Constitution: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Constitution, published by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service: Washington, D.C. (revised edition 1976), page 138:

Most of the [signers of the Constitution] married and fathered children. Sherman sired the largest family, numbering 15 by two wives... Three (Baldwin, Gilman, and Jenifer) were lifetime bachelors. In terms of religious affiliation, the men mirrored the overwhelmingly Protestant character of American religious life at the time and were members of various denominations. Only two, Carroll and Fitzsimons, were Roman Catholics.

Religious Affiliation	# of delegates	% of delegates	Name of Signer	State	Religious Affiliation
Episcopalian/Anglican	31	56.4%	Daniel Carroll	Maryland	Catholic
Presbyterian	16	29.1%	Thomas Fitzsimons	Pennsylvania	Catholic
Congregationalist	8	14.5%	Roger Sherman	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Quaker	3	5.5%	Nathaniel Gorham	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
Catholic	2	3.6%	John Langdon	New Hampshire	Congregationalist
Methodist	2	3.6%			
Lutheran	2	3.6%	Nicholas Gilman	New Hampshire	Congregationalist
Dutch Reformed	2	3.6%			
TOTAL	55	100%	Abraham Baldwin	Georgia	Congregationalist; Episcopalian
			William Samuel Johnson	Connecticut	Episcopalian; Presbyterian
			James Madison Jr.	Virginia	Episcopalian

George Read	Delaware	Episcopalian
Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer	Maryland	Episcopalian
David Brearly	New Jersey	Episcopalian
Richard Dobbs Spaight, Sr.	North Carolina	Episcopalian
Robert Morris	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
Gouverneur Morris	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian
John Rutledge	South Carolina	Episcopalian
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney	South Carolina	Episcopalian
Charles Pinckney	South Carolina	Episcopalian
Pierce Butler	South Carolina	Episcopalian
George Washington	Virginia	Episcopalian
Benjamin Franklin	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian (Deist)
William Blount	North Carolina	Episcopalian; Presbyterian
James Wilson	Pennsylvania	Episcopalian; Presbyterian
Rufus King	Massachusetts	Episcopalian; Congregationalist
Jacob Broom	Delaware	Lutheran
William Few	Georgia	Methodist
Richard Bassett	Delaware	Methodist
Gunning Bedford Jr.	Delaware	Presbyterian
James McHenry	Maryland	Presbyterian
William Livingston	New Jersey	Presbyterian
William Paterson	New Jersey	Presbyterian
Hugh Williamson	North Carolina	Presbyterian
Jared Ingersoll	Pennsylvania	Presbyterian
Alexander Hamilton	New York	Huguenot; Presbyterian; Episcopalian
Jonathan Dayton	New Jersey	Presbyterian; Episcopalian
John Blair	Virginia	Presbyterian; Episcopalian
John Dickinson	Delaware	Quaker; Episcopalian
George Clymer	Pennsylvania	Quaker; Episcopalian
Thomas Mifflin	Pennsylvania	Quaker; Lutheran

Name of Non-Signing	State	Religious Affiliation
----------------------------	--------------	----------------------------------

Delegate

Oliver Ellsworth	Connecticut	Congregationalist
Caleb Strong	Massachusetts	Congregationalist
John Lansing, Jr.	New York	Dutch Reformed
Robert Yates	New York	Dutch Reformed
William Houstoun	Georgia	Episcopalian
William Leigh Pierce	Georgia	Episcopalian
Luther Martin	Maryland	Episcopalian
John F. Mercer	Maryland	Episcopalian
Elbridge Gerry	Massachusetts	Episcopalian
George Mason	Virginia	Episcopalian
Edmund J. Randolph	Virginia	Episcopalian
George Wythe	Virginia	Episcopalian
James McClurg	Virginia	Presbyterian
William C. Houston	New Jersey	Presbyterian
William R. Davie	North Carolina	Presbyterian
Alexander Martin	North Carolina	Presbyterian

Multiple Roles

Of course, virtually all of the "Founding Fathers" had multiple roles in the formation of the country, in the broad sense that takes into account military leadership, financial sponsorship, various miscellaneous state and federal positions, etc. But there were many individuals who had multiple roles among categories of Founding Fathers enumerated on this page. That is, they signed more than one of the foundational documents (the Declaration, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution) or they signed one (or more) of these documents and also served in the First Federal Congress. These individuals with "multiple roles" were: Abraham Baldwin; Benjamin Franklin; Charles Carroll; Daniel Carroll; Elbridge Gerry; Francis Lewis; Francis Lightfoot Lee; George Clymer; George Read; Gouverneur Morris; Hugh Williamson; James Wilson; John Dickinson; John Hancock; John Penn; John Witherspoon; Josiah Bartlett; Nicholas Gilman; Oliver Wolcott; Pierce Butler; Richard Bassett; Richard Henry Lee; Robert Morris; Roger Sherman; Rufus King; Samuel Adams; Samuel Huntington; Thomas Fitzsimons; Thomas Heyward Jr.; Thomas McKean; William Ellery; William Few; William Floyd; William Paterson; William Samuel Johnson; James Madison Jr.; John Langdon; Caleb Strong; Oliver Ellsworth; George Wythe.
