

Exploring the Religious Landscape of the United States

The website of the Association of Religion Data Archives (www.thearda.com) allows you to explore data on the religious composition of the United States. This module introduces you to this religious diversity

If you find yourself lost at any point, look to the instructions on the right.

Open your web browser and go to the homepage for the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA).

Let's first get an idea of the religious environment of your hometown.

1. What is the name of the county and state that you grew up in?

Let's look at the church membership reports from your hometown county.

2. Which religious category (i.e. Evangelical, Mainline, Orthodox, Catholic, Other) had the most members in your home county? **Do not count the "Unclaimed" population.**

3. In 2000, which group claimed the most members? Hint: look in the "Adherents column" in the 2000 section of the report below the bar graphs.

Open your web browser.

Go to www.thearda.com

Click on the "Maps & Reports" tab in the toolbar.

Select "Counties" under the "Membership Reports" tab.

Select your home state and county.

4. What theological category does this group fall into?

5. In percent change, what group saw the largest growth in membership from 1990 to 2000?

6. In percent change, how much did this group grow from 1990 to 2000?

7. What theological category does this group fall into?

8. In percent change, what group saw the largest decline in membership from 1990 to 2000?

9. In percent change, how much did this group decline from 1990 to 2000?

Under the bar graph, click the “1990-2000 Change” tab.

Hint: You may have to go back to the 1990 or 2000 report.

10. What religious category does this group fall into?

Ok, now that you have an idea of what the religious environment in your hometown is, let's take a look at the national religious environment.

11. First, what region of the country has the highest **rate of adherence** to **Mainline** Protestant denominations? In other words, which region has the most people per 1000 individuals that belong to Mainline Protestant denominations?

12. What state has the highest mainline adherence rates? (Hint: Look in the "Rank table" below the map.)

13. What region has the highest **rate of adherence** to **Evangelical** Protestant denominations?

14. What state has the highest rate of adherence to Evangelical denominations?

Click on the "Maps & Reports" in the toolbar on top

Click on the "Maps" tab.

Click on "U.S. Maps."

Select "Mainline Denominations."

Click on the "Rate of Adherence" tab.

Click on the "Maps & Reports" in the toolbar on top.

Click on the "Maps" tab.

Click on "U.S. Maps."

Select "Evangelical Denominations."

Click on the "Rate of Adherence" tab.

15. Finally, what three states have the highest Catholic *rates* of adherence?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

You now have an idea of the religious environment in the United States and where types of religious groups have their strongest support among the population. The ARDA also contains survey data that allow you to see how responses to various questions differ by the religion of the respondent.

For example, how do opinions about abortion differ by the religion of the respondent?

To answer this question, we can use data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a common dataset that sociologists use to explore the views of Americans on many different topics. Because the GSS is a probability sample of the population, the responses of the sample are very similar to those in the population as a whole.

The GSS has a number of questions about individuals' views on abortion. Search for these questions by clicking on the "Search" tab and typing in "abortion."

Find the question that asks if it is OK for a woman to have an abortion "for any reason."

16. What percent of people said "Yes" to this question?

Click on the "Maps" tab.

Click on "U.S. Maps."

Select "Catholic Church"

Click on the "Rate of Adherence" tab.

Click on the "Data Archive" tab in the toolbar on top.

Select "General Social Surveys" under the "U.S. Surveys" section.

Scroll down and select "General Social Survey, 2004"

Click on the "Search" tab.

Click on name of the variable.

Let's get some more detailed analysis of this question.

Click on "Analyze results" below the table

17. Fill in the following table for the percent of those saying "Yes" to the statement that women should be able to have an abortion for any reason by religious affiliation:

Protestant	Catholic	None	Other
_____	_____	_____	_____

18. Fill in the following table for the percent of those saying "Yes" to the statement that women should be able to have an abortion for any reason by church attendance:

Never	Less than Once a Month	Less than Once a Week	Once a Week or More
_____	_____	_____	_____

You should now have a feel for how to look at these tables and how to find interesting questions. Now it is your turn to find your own table. Using the General Social Survey of 2004, find a different question that shows an effect of religion on the responses. You can use the search feature to find topics that interest you. **Explain what the table shows about the effect of religion below and print out and attach the table to this assignment.**

19. What is the question you are looking at?

20. What does the table show about the effect of religious affiliation or church attendance on this question?
