ARDA Tutorial:

Finding Information on Religious Beliefs and Behaviors

Religious preferences, behaviors, and experiences vary greatly both between and within religious denominations. For example, while some believe in a Supreme Being, others believe in a Supreme Essence or cosmic force. Still others believe in more than one god, and others believe in none at all.

While it would be nearly impossible to ask every single American about their religious experiences and beliefs, there have been some organizations that have used careful scientific methods to select samples of Americans who come from every race, religion and background, and who represent the American public as a whole. The information collected from these surveys is entered into large, electronic data files that can be hard to read for those who are unfamiliar with them. Because of this, we have created brief, easily accessible charts, tables and statistics in the QuickStats section of the ARDA website. Website users can come here and find high-quality information on American religion without having to decipher complicated data files.

The QuickStats Section has four main features:

1. **U.S. Surveys and Classic Topics**
   
   This section provides quick summary information about a number of different aspects of religious life including religious beliefs, preferences, attitudes, and experiences. Each link takes you to a chart or table summarizing a different aspect of religious experience in the United States.

2. **U.S. Congregations**
   
   This tab takes you to the U.S. Congregations QuickStats, which contain information on American congregations’ characteristics, activities, and services.

3. **U.S. Denominations**
   
   This tab takes you to the U.S. Denominations section of the website, which is covered in more detail in the tutorial on exploring denominational data.

4. **Search QuickStats**
   
   If you still haven’t been able to find what you’re looking for, use the search feature to search the ARDA’s QuickStats.

Below we provide you with a more in-depth guide to each of the sections mentioned above:
U.S. Surveys:

1) Go to the ARDA homepage: www.theARDA.com.
2) Move your mouse over “QuickStats.”
3) A drop-down menu will appear under “QuickStats.”
4) Click on “U.S. Surveys.” (Also, feel free to examine the popular but older Classic Topics).
5) Look over the various topics related to religious life, and click on one that interests you.
6) Most links will take you to a page with a pie chart and percentages showing how people feel about different religious topics. A few of the links will show you a drop-down menu that contains more specific questions about religion.
7) Click on one of the questions, and you will be taken to a page with a pie chart and figures summarizing how people feel about that specific issue.

a. At the top of the screen will be a title describing the topic you selected.
b. Further down are different opinions that Americans have about the topic, followed by the percent who feel each way.
c. To the left is a pie chart illustrating the information that is shown as percentages on the right.
U.S. Congregations:

1) Go to the ARDA homepage: [www.theARDA.com](http://www.theARDA.com).
2) Move your mouse over “QuickStats.”
3) A drop-down menu will appear under “QuickStats.”
4) Click on “U.S. Congregations.”
5) Look over the various topics related to congregational life, and click on one that interests you.
6) Most links will take you to a page with a pie chart and percentages showing how people feel about different religious topics. A few of the links will show you a drop-down menu that contains more specific questions about religion.
7) Click on one of the questions, and you will be taken to a page with a pie chart and figures summarizing how people feel about that specific issue.

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a. At the top of the screen will be a title describing the topic you selected.
b. Further down left is a pie chart illustrating the information
c. Below are crosstabs which examine how the congregational characteristic chosen relates to other aspects of congregational life.
U.S. Denominations:

The U.S. Denominations bar takes you to the U.S. Denominations Section of the ARDA website, which is described in more detail in the tutorial on exploring denominational data.
Search QuickStats:

1) If you still haven’t found what you’re looking for, the next step would be to use the ARDA’s search feature.
2) Go to the ARDA homepage: www.theARDA.com.
3) Move your mouse over “QuickStats.”
4) A menu will appear under “QuickStats.”
5) Click on “Search QuickStats.”
6) Towards the top of the screen is the search field where you can search for information on religious beliefs and practices. (Note: this search feature returns results from the entire website, and not just from the Quick Stats section.)
7) Once you have entered a topic that interests you, click on “Go!”

a. After you click on “Go!”, the results of your search will appear below on the page.
b. Each result is a link to a QuickStat.