

## Women and Religion in the United States

Do the religious beliefs and behaviors of women differ from men? What religions are women more likely to join? In this learning module, we use the *Religion and Public Life Survey, 2010* to explore these and other questions.

Open your web browser and go to the homepage for the Association of Religion Data Archives ([www.theARDA.com](http://www.theARDA.com)).

To start off, locate the *Religion and Public Life Survey, 2010* in the data archive of the ARDA website and click on the title. For assistance locating data files on the ARDA, click [here](#).

We'll start by looking at some of the ways that the religious beliefs and behaviors of women differ from those of men.

Once you've found the survey's summary page, click on the "Codebook" tab and begin scrolling down the page. You'll probably see a number of questions about religion, gender, and political beliefs.

Locate the question labeled IMPRELIG (Question 78).

1. This question asked those who took the survey how important religion was in their lives. What **percent** of people answered in the following ways?

Very important: \_\_\_\_\_

Somewhat important: \_\_\_\_\_

Not too important: \_\_\_\_\_

Not at all important: \_\_\_\_\_

Next, let us examine how male and female respondents answered the question differently. Click on the "Analyze results" link located below the responses. For assistance using the "Analyze results" feature, click [here](#).

2. Scroll down to the table titled "Sex (I-SEX)." Are men or women more likely to say that religion is "Very important" in their lives? Which gender is more likely to report that religion is "Not at all important" in their lives?

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Asking people how important religion is to them is one way of measuring a person's overall level of religiosity, but another way is to observe their behavior. Let us look at how often people attend religious services. Find the variable named ATTEND just above the question on religious importance.

3. What was the question asked in ATTEND?

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4. Use the "Analyze results" link and scroll down to the table titled "Sex (I-SEX)." Looking at the table as a whole, are men or women more likely to attend church regularly?

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Now that we have looked at how the religious beliefs and behaviors of women differ from men, let's look at some of the patterns of belief and belonging among women in the United States.

5. Locate the variable labeled LITERAL and fill in the **percent** of women who fall into each category:

(Holy Book) is to be taken literally, word for word:	_____
Not everything in (holy book) should be taken literally, word for word:	_____
Other:	_____

Next we will look at two possible forms of religious identification in the United States. The first is Christian, and the second is Evangelical Christian.

6. Locate the variables labeled BORN and CHR and fill in the following table with the percent of women who report that they belong to each category.

	Christian	Evangelical Christian
Women who report belonging to this category	_____	_____

7. Overall, are women more likely to identify themselves as Christians, or Born-again/Evangelical Christians?

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In this module we have looked at how religious beliefs and practices differ by gender, and also at some of the general patterns of religious belief and belonging among women in the United States, all on an individual level. Let's look at gender differences on a congregational level now.

Access the QuickStats on U.S. Congregations by going to 'Quickstats/Quicklists' on the main menu bar on [www.theARDA.com](http://www.theARDA.com) then going to the U.S. Congregations tab. Find the topics under Clergy and select 'Can Women be Religious Leaders?' This question looks at whether or not congregations believe that women may serve as a head clergy person or primary religious leader in that congregation. Now scroll down to look at the responses broken down by demographic patterns.

8. Look at the table that shows the results split up by Religious Tradition, and fill out the below frequency table:

Can women be religious leaders?	Roman Catholic	White conservative, evangelical, or fundamentalist	Black Protestant	White liberal or moderate	Non-Christian
Yes (%)					
No (%)					

9. According to the data, congregations with which political ideology are more likely to have answered “Yes” to the question, and believe that women can hold religious leadership positions?

- a. Conservatives
- b. Moderates
- c. Liberals

10. How has the percentage of congregations who believe women can hold religious leadership positions changed over time? (Hint: Look at the results by year of survey). Did more or fewer congregations answer “Yes” in 2012 than in 2006/2007? Why do you think this change may have occurred?

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Lastly, go back to Quickstats/Quicklists > U.S. Congregations and find “Percent Female” under Basic Characteristics > Membership.

11. Fill out the table below with the information from the table with results split up by Religious Tradition:

Percent of congregation that is female	Roman Catholic	White conservative, evangelical, or fundamentalist	Black Protestant	White liberal or moderate	Non-Christian
Less than 50%					
70% or more					

12. Based on the results from this table and the table from question 8 above (Can women be religious leaders?), do you see a relationship between percent female congregation and belief that women can be religious leaders? Why do you think that is?

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