

The 2006 National Congregations Study

The 2006 National Congregations Study (NCS) is now underway! Like the 1998 NCS, the 2006 study will be a major survey of a nationally representative sample of approximately 1,200 congregations from all over the United States. It will document the work, programs, and activities of America's religious congregations. It will gather this information by interviewing one knowledgeable leader from each congregation included in the study.

The 2006 NCS will examine many of the same subjects examined in the 1998 study, and it will explore stability and change in American religion since 1998. The 2006 study also will explore new subjects that were not examined in 1998.

Data for the 2006 wave of the NCS will be gathered between May and December, 2006. Look for results from this study in early 2007.

Below is additional information about the 2006 NCS.

Why are you conducting this survey?

Religious congregations are a significant part of American society. It is difficult to document, however, just how significant they are, and how they might be changing in the 21st century. The NCS will contribute to knowledge about American congregations by gathering information about a wide range of their characteristics and programs. The information collected will be used by scholars, religious leaders, policy-makers, journalists, and students to better understand religious congregations.

Who is conducting this survey?

The 2006 National Congregations Study is funded by grants from the Lilly Endowment, the Kellogg Foundation, the National Science Foundation, and the Louisville Institute. It is being conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, in collaboration with Professor Mark Chaves at the University of Arizona.

What is NORC?

NORC is a respected social survey research organization affiliated with the University of Chicago. They have conducted nationwide studies for over 60 years. NORC has earned the reputation for research that is scientifically sound and socially valuable. Many of the studies NORC has conducted have influenced decisions made by Congress and other public policy-makers.

I can see how scholars, policy-makers, and journalists might use information from the NCS, but will this study also help religious leaders to better serve their congregations?

Yes. The results from this study will allow religious leaders across the country to compare their own congregations to other congregations. They will be able to see what other congregations like theirs are doing when it comes to worship, religious education, social ministries, and other activities. They will be able to learn how their congregations compare to others on characteristics like size and staffing. And they will be able to understand better which of the issues and challenges they face also are faced by many other congregations. Religious leaders and people in congregations often find that knowing more about the ways in which their own congregation compares with others enables them to understand better their own experiences, situations, and practices. The context provided by the National Congregations Study helps congregations to better understand and assess where they are and how they are doing as a congregation.

How will I learn about this study's results?

The easiest way to learn about the results will be from the study's website. The first NCS was conducted in 1998, and it generated a tremendous amount of useful information about the state of American religious congregations and the challenges they face. You can see results from that first study at The National Congregations Study website, <http://s6.library.arizona.edu/natcong>. The website is highly user-friendly, designed so that you can explore the information on your own. That site will be updated with information from the 2006 study as soon as such information is available.

Is this the first National Congregations Study?

This is the second National Congregations Study. The first NCS was conducted in 1998, and it generated a tremendous amount of useful information about the state of American religious congregations and the challenges they face. The National Congregations Study website, <http://s6.library.arizona.edu/natcong>, contains more information about the 1998 project, including some of the results. Additional results from the 1998 study were published in the 2004 book, *Congregations in America*, written by Mark Chaves and published by Harvard University Press.

Who can I contact with questions about the study?

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