



# 2015 NATIONAL SURVEY OF CONGREGATIONS

Your congregation has been randomly selected to participate in a national survey of American congregations. It is the fifth such survey in the Faith Communities Today (FACT) series, begun in the year 2000. The surveys offer religious leaders of all traditions critical planning information about the changing nature of congregational life and how to effectively respond. The findings from the FACT surveys are freely provided online at [www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org](http://www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org). Your responses about your individual congregation are completely confidential. **In order to provide a complete picture of the full variety of religious congregations in America we need to hear from you.**

This survey can be completed by the leader of the congregation (pastor, priest, etc.), a staff member, or a well-informed lay leader. If any of the questions do not apply to your religious tradition or your congregation, please feel free to skip them.

The survey may be completed online at [www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org/2015survey](http://www.FaithCommunitiesToday.org/2015survey) using the code number printed at the top right corner of this page, or complete this paper copy and mail it in the prepaid envelope.

**Thank you for your willingness to be included in this important national study!**

## Worship

1. Please estimate the **average attendance at your regular weekend worship services (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) for the last several years**. If you have more than one weekend worship service, estimate the attendance for all weekend services combined. Do not include special services such as weddings or funerals.

**Average Attendance**    Median

2014   80      2012   88      2010   85  

2013   80      2011   85      2009   85  

2. Do you have more than one weekend worship service?

59.2 No    40.8 Yes

a. **If Yes**, are all the services of the same type or style, or do they vary? 56.0 All the same    44.0 Vary

b. **If They Vary**, please list the different types and styles:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **During the past 5 years**, has your congregation changed the style of any of its weekend worship services or added a new service with a different style of worship?

52.7 No change in style

25.4 Changed style a little

13.5 Changed style somewhat

4.1 Changed style a lot

4.3 Added a new service with a different style of worship

4. How often are the following a part of your congregation's **regular weekend worship services?** (✓one on each line.)

	Never	Seldom	Some- times	Often	Always
Organ .....	42.5	7.4	7.0	9.5	33.6
Drums or other percussion instruments .....	42.8	10.6	9.7	8.4	28.5
Electric guitar or bass.....	40.8	11.7	12.7	10.3	24.5
Visual projection equipment.....	31.1	10.0	6.1	8.9	44.0
Reading or performing by children or youth	12.9	27.2	39.8	15.0	5.2

5. How well do the following describe your congregation's **largest regular** weekend worship service? (✓one on each line.)

	Not at All	Slightly	Some- what	Quite Well	Very Well
Reverent .....	0.1	5.9	24.2	45.6	24.2
Filled with a sense of God's presence ...	0.1	2.8	14.3	41.9	40.9
Thought-provoking ....	0.4	1.6	17.1	46.8	34.1
Nurturing of people's faith .....	0.3	1.7	9.6	50.8	37.6
Innovative .....	6.9	20.3	41.2	20.3	11.3
Inspirational .....	0.1	1.3	17.3	46.2	35.0
Joyful .....	1.5	3.4	11.1	47.1	36.8

## Programs

1. Does your congregation have any of the following selected programs or activities? **If Yes**, how much emphasis is given to the activity? (✓one on each line.)

	No	Yes		
		Some Emphasis	A Lot of Emphasis	Specialty of Ours
Prayer or meditation groups or spiritual retreats .....	28.8	37.0	28.2	6.1
Bible, scripture or theological studies (other than Sunday school) .....	12.2	30.2	42.0	15.6
Fellowships or other social activities.....	3.3	32.6	46.5	17.6
Music program .....	16.9	30.3	36.9	16.0
Community service activities or helping those in need .....	3.1	35.2	38.6	23.1
Young adult (18-34) activities or programs .....	34.3	43.8	18.4	3.5
Youth (13-17) activities or programs .....	21.1	27.4	37.8	13.7

2. Did your congregation begin serving any new (for you) community needs or tackle any new social advocacy issues in the last two years? 59.4 No 40.6 Yes

a. If Yes, please list what they are: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. Who has primary responsibility for organizing the educational ministries of the congregation?

55.2 Pastor, Rabbi, Imam, Priest, etc.  
 13.6 Other paid staff  
 22.0 Lay volunteer  
 9.3 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Approximately how many persons (including children) regularly participate in a "Sunday School" religious education program/classes?

Number: Median 40 Mean 102 Or, if you do not have such a program, check here  and skip to question 5.

a. Of your regular Sunday School/religious education participants (the figure from above), please estimate the PERCENT who are: Mean shown

\_\_24.7% Senior adults, age 65 or older  
 \_\_17.5% Adults, age 50-64  
 \_\_12.3% Adults, age 35-49  
 \_\_9.1% Young adults, age 18-34  
 \_\_11.7% Youth, age 13-17  
 \_\_24.8% Children and preteen (0 – 12)  
**100% Total**

b. In your judgment how high or low a priority is each of the following for your Religious Education program for all members in this congregation?

	No Priority	Low Priority	Moderate Priority	High Priority	Highest Priority
To acquire knowledge of Scripture.....	3.0	6.4	16.3	42.5	31.8
To teach about love and justice toward others.....	1.0	5.8	26.8	46.3	20.2
To develop congregational loyalty.....	9.3	27.1	34.1	20.4	9.0
To develop denominational loyalty.....	19.0	32.7	27.7	15.8	4.8
To relate your faith's beliefs and practices to each age-level .	1.4	4.6	21.5	45.1	27.4
To engage members in nurture and fellowship .....	3.1	6.5	22.8	45.0	22.6
To inspire members to express their faith in life .....	2.3	7.0	12.1	43.9	34.8
If Christian, to nurture belief and trust in Jesus Christ .....	3.2	5.1	5.9	23.1	62.7

5. How much does your congregation emphasize the following personal and family religious practices? (✓one on each line.)

	Not at All	A Little	Quite a Bit	A Lot
Personal prayer, meditation, scripture study, devotions or other spiritual practices.....	0.2	5.2	17.0	33.4 44.3
Talking with friends and other members of the congregation about one's faith (that is, about religious beliefs, values and commitments) .....	2.3	7.9	26.0	38.1 25.7
Fasting .....	27.6	33.3	23.6	8.9 6.5
Keeping the Sabbath day holy.	15.0	23.3	25.9	20.9 14.9
Parents talking with children about faith .....	2.9	9.3	24.3	35.7 27.8
Living out one's faith in all aspects of one's daily life—work, family, civic engagement, etc. ....	0.8	1.3	9.5	29.8 58.7

6. During the past 12 months, has your congregation been involved in any of the following ecumenical or interfaith activities? (✓all that apply on each line.)

	No	Yes	
		With Other Christian Groups	With Other Faith Traditions
Worship services .....	43.7	50.2	7.5
Educational or fellowship activities.....	46.3	46.6	8.5
Community service activities ...	31.0	55.7	15.0

**Mission and Identity**

1. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (✓one on each line.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our congregation: Has a clear mission and purpose .....	0.5	3.6	8.8	45.3	41.6
Is quite different from other congregations in our community.....	2.9	17.2	24.1	35.0	20.8
Is good at incorporating newcomers into congregation.....	2.8	8.0	18.8	49.9	20.5
Is spiritually vital and alive .....	0.5	5.2	11.2	56.4	26.6
Is working for social justice .....	5.3	16.7	34.5	34.3	9.2
Is caring and supportive of members who have health, financial or personal needs ...	0.1	4.1	6.4	47.9	41.6
Is willing to change to meet new challenges .....	1.2	8.7	28.4	46.0	15.6
Is intentional about maximizing the number and variety of small groups we offer .....	5.5	24.0	27.3	32.5	10.7
Uses Internet and social media tools effectively .....	6.9	14.9	24.4	42.1	11.7

2. What is/are your congregation's specific denomination(s) or faith group(s)? (e.g., Church of Christ, Roman Catholic, independent evangelical, United Methodist, Reform Judaism, etc.)

22% Mainline 68.7% Evang-Black 5.4% Cath-Orth 3.9% World

3. Has your congregation seriously considered changing denominations or becoming independent in the last 10 years?

- 93.4 No
- 2.0 Seriously considered but did not switch denomination
- 1.2 Changed denomination affiliation
- 0.5 Seriously considered but did not go independent
- 2.3 Went independent
- 0.6 Became dually affiliated

## Participants

1. How many persons (including children) *regularly participate* in worship or other religious activities in your congregation?

Number 180 mean ←

a. Of your participants (the figure given above), please estimate the **PERCENT** who are: mean figures

- 29.3% Senior adults, age 65 or older
- 21.6% Adults, age 50-64
- 15.8% Adults, age 35-49
- 11.3% Young adults, age 18-34
- 9.7% Youth, age 13-17
- 12.2% Children and preteen (0 – 12)

100 % Total

b. Of your participants (the figure given above), please estimate the **NUMBER** who are: racial/ethnic majority 24.2%

- 1.7 American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 5.2 Asian
- 2.4 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- 32.6 Black or African American
- 21.2 Hispanic or Latino/a
- 98.9 White
- 4.8 Biracial/multiracial

167 mean **Total** (should be the same as above) ←

2. Which of the following best describes your congregation's approach to how members hold each other accountable for active participation and faithful living?

- 11.0 This is not really something we emphasize.
- 27.3 We have no formal way of monitoring and doing this, but members *occasionally* do it informally.
- 30.4 We have no formal way of monitoring and doing this, but it *regularly* happens informally.
- 14.8 This is something we say is important and we have mechanisms in place for it, but we are really rather passive about doing it.
- 16.5 It is an important and regular practice of our congregation.

3. Overall, please estimate the number of your congregation's participants who are daily Internet or social media users in their everyday lives?

- 1.8 None/Very few
- 5.8 A few
- 21.8 Some
- 43.5 Many
- 27.0 Most or all

4. Overall, to what extent are your participants involved in the congregation's programs, committees and service projects outside of worship?

- 3.2 Not at all
- 11.3 A little
- 33.1 Some
- 40.3 Quite a bit
- 12.2 A lot

5. Overall, to what extent are your congregation's regularly participating adults involved in recruiting new people?

- 4.9 Not at all
- 38.0 A little
- 43.5 Some
- 11.1 Quite a bit
- 2.4 A lot

6. How would you describe the *theological outlook* of the majority of your regularly participating adults?

- 2.3 Very liberal
- 5.4 Somewhat liberal
- 22.2 Moderate
- 36.7 Somewhat conservative
- 33.4 Very conservative

## Young Adult Ministries (Ages 18-34)

1. How high of a priority is it to engage **young adults** in your congregation?

- 21.5 It is one of our top priorities.
- 27.7 It is a main priority, along with a few other main priorities.
- 34.4 It is a priority, but other priorities are more immediate.
- 16.4 It is not really a priority.

2. Which of the following best describes your congregation's strategy for engaging **young adults** (18-34)?

- 37.6 We don't really have an intentional strategy.
- 6.9 Strategy is *totally* geared to involving young adults in the general life and worship of the congregation.
- 22.8 Strategy is *more* geared to involving young adults in the general life and worship of the congregation.
- 8.0 Strategy is *more* geared to creating special opportunities and programs specifically for young adults.
- 2.6 Strategy is *totally* geared to creating special opportunities and programs specifically for young adults.
- 22.0 Strategy is a pretty even balance of both general involvement and special opportunities/programs.

3. Of the **young adults** who participate in your congregation, please estimate the **PERCENT** who:

- 69.2 mean 80 median % Attend worship
- 46.4 mean 50 median % Participate in programs/activities other than worship

4. Of the **young adults** who participate in your congregation, please estimate the **PERCENT** who are:

- 35.3 mean 25 median % Single and not partnered
- 7.8 mean 0 median % Partnered but not married
- 13.3 mean 10 median % Married without children
- 43.6 mean 40 median % Married with children

100 % Total

5. Has the number of **young adults** participating in your congregation increased or decreased in the past 3 years? ( the appropriate box and then fill in the estimated number.)

- 36.1 Increased by about \_\_\_ number
- 49.0 Stayed about the same
- 14.3 Decreased by about \_\_\_ number

6. Does your congregation have a leader(s) whose specific responsibility includes programming or engaging **young adults**?

- 64.1 No
- 24.5 Yes, one or more volunteer(s)
- 3.5 Yes, one or more part-time paid professional(s)
- 5.3 Yes, one or more full-time paid professional(s)
- 2.6 Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

a. *If Yes*, how many hours of the primary leader's week are dedicated to ministries that involve young adults?

8.7 mean 5.0 median hours

b. *If Yes*, are any of the leaders young adults themselves?

- 38.0 No
- 62.0 Yes

7. Of the **young adults** who participate in your congregation, please estimate the **PERCENT** who come from: mean shown

- 70.9 % Families in the congregation
- 21.5 % Non-family from nearby companies/places of employment
- 1.0 % Non-family from nearby military bases
- 6.6 % Non-family from nearby colleges or universities

8. Which of the following best describes your congregation's **young adult** ministry?

- 6.5 It is thriving.
- 11.5 We're doing okay, which is pretty good these days.
- 32.2 We've made some progress, but have a long way to go.
- 12.3 We've tried a few things, but with relatively little success.
- 19.2 We know we need to get something going, but haven't really figured out what or how.
- 10.9 Not much, if anything, going on and there is little urgency or interest to do more.
- 7.4 Not much, if anything, is going on and given how few young adults are in our area there is little or nothing we could realistically do.

9. Does your congregation have any of the following groups, programs or activities that are specifically intended for **young adults**? *If YES*, how much emphasis is given to each? ( one on each line.)

	No	Yes		
		Some Emphasis	A Lot of Emphasis	Specialty of Ours
Worship service(s) specifically for young adults .....	76.8	11.7	8.3	3.1
Prayer/meditation groups or spiritual retreats .....	65.7	22.8	11.1	0.3
Scripture study groups/classes .....	45.6	32.8	15.8	5.8
Theology or contemporary issue study groups/classes .....	64.8	21.4	12.5	1.3
Fellowship groups .....	46.5	31.5	16.8	5.2
Singles groups .....	78.6	16.3	4.1	1.0
Pre-engagement dating groups/classes .....	80.5	12.9	5.8	0.8
Engagement/pre-marital groups/classes .....	66.7	22.2	9.2	1.8
Marriage groups/classes .....	70.7	19.3	8.8	1.2
Parenting groups/classes .....	69.4	21.6	8.3	0.7
Recreational, sports or other physical activity groups .....	63.0	25.2	10.6	2.2
Community service activities .....	52.5	28.6	14.8	4.0
Mission trips/travel groups .....	62.5	24.7	10.6	2.2
Social justice engagement .....	74.8	18.4	5.9	0.8
Web or social media sites .....	62.1	23.9	10.1	3.9
Other (explain below): .....	88.1	1.9	1.1	8.9

10. How important do you believe each of the following would be for helping your congregation improve its ministry with young adults? ( one on each line.)

	Not at All	A Little	Some	Very	Essential
More desire or passion to reach out to this age group .....	2.6	7.9	23.8	39.5	26.2
Better contact with young adults in the community .....	2.8	6.3	21.3	45.2	24.4
Ideas or strategies about how to engage young adults .....	4.4	10.5	18.9	41.4	24.9
More financial or other resources .....	7.6	16.7	33.0	25.1	17.5
More interest on the part of young adults .....	3.2	6.0	23.4	37.7	29.7
Other (explain below): .....	42.0	0.6	3.0	14.1	40.3

## Leadership

- Our congregation has:
  - 45.0 A senior clergy leader with one or more assistants or associates.
  - 46.7 One clergy leader (no assistant or associate pastors).
  - 4.0 Co-clergy leaders (two or more persons sharing the role equally).
  - 4.2 No clergy leader at present.

**If you have no clergy leader at present, skip to Member Issues section below.**

Please describe the **senior or sole clergy leader** of your congregation (if co-leaders, answer only about your oldest co-leader).

- Age: 56.1 mean 58 median years old
- Gender: 91.4 Male 8.6 Female
- How many congregations does he/she serve?
  - 83.9 Only ours
  - 10.6 Two
  - 2.5 Three
  - 3.0 Four or more
- Employment status by the congregation of the clergy leader:
  - 64.7 Full-time paid
  - 8.8 Full-time unpaid
  - 17.9 Part-time paid
  - 8.7 Part-time unpaid
- Does your clergy leader use electronic technology and social media?
  - 50.4 Yes, a very frequent user
  - 25.7 Yes, a moderately frequent user
  - 13.1 Yes, but an infrequent user
  - 10.7 No

## Member Issues

- How easy or difficult is it for your congregation to recruit people for volunteer leadership roles (for example, serving on governing boards or committees, or teaching Sunday School)?
  - 29.3 We have no problem recruiting volunteer leaders.
  - 55.5 Recruiting volunteer leaders is a continual challenge, but we eventually find enough people to serve.
  - 15.2 We often can't find enough people who are willing to serve.
- During the past 5 years has your congregation experienced any disagreements or conflicts? (*✓all that apply.*)
  - 38.0 No
  - 30.2 Yes, but it/they were not serious
  - 29.3 Yes, and in at least one instance some people left
  - 6.0 Yes, and in at least one instance some people withheld donations
  - 4.9 Yes, and in at least one instance, a clergy leader or staff member left
- How important is your denominational identity and affiliation to the majority of your members?
  - 11.8 We do not have a denominational affiliation
  - 15.3 Not very important
  - 36.5 Relatively important
  - 36.3 Very important

## Vitality and Change

- Which of the following best describes your congregation?
  - 4.0 We are where we need to be and do not need to change.
  - 20.9 We need to change to increase our vitality and viability, but the congregation does not seem to realize it and/or doesn't want to make the necessary changes.
  - 31.9 We are slowly changing, but not fast enough nor significantly enough.
  - 12.9 We are fortunate enough to be doing pretty well without having to think about significant changes.
  - 20.4 We are doing pretty well making the necessary changes.
  - 9.9 We pride ourselves on our embrace of—and success in—constantly changing to improve and adapt.

**a. If your congregation is having or had difficulty changing, to what extent has each of the following made it *more difficult* for your congregation to change? (*✓one on each line.*)**

	Not at All	A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Lot
Leaders not wanting to be too far ahead of the congregation .....	42.5	20.6	24.5	10.5	1.9
Lack of unifying and energizing vision or direction .....	25.7	23.4	26.8	16.8	7.3
Lack of workable, concrete models that provide realistic, but vitalizing alternatives to the status quo .....	24.7	21.9	30.2	18.1	5.2
Lack of resources—particularly of energy and finances .....	20.2	18.7	22.3	26.7	12.1
The strong resistance from some members .....	31.5	28.9	19.9	13.0	6.7
Other (explain below): .....	29.8	9.2	6.4	10.6	44.0

**b. How important were/are each of the following in *helping* your congregation change?**

( <i>✓one on each line.</i> )	Did Not Try or Use	Not at All	A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Lot
Assistance from the denomination (advice, money, etc.) .....	48.2	18.2	18.4	9.1	5.7	0.4
Assistance of an outside consultant or program .....	70.2	12.9	9.8	4.3	2.4	0.3
Leadership with training and expertise in leading change .....	34.4	18.1	21.6	17.2	8.1	0.6
Familiarity with concrete models that provided realistic, vitalizing alternatives to the status quo .....	38.1	18.2	27.2	10.9	5.2	0.4
Rigorous assessment and planning study of the congregation and its community .....	43.7	17.6	21.6	12.7	4.1	0.4
A crisis or opportunity that left no choice but to change .....	58.6	16.5	9.3	9.2	5.9	0.4
Other (explain below): .....	66.4	0.5	6.4	3.2	23.4	0.0

## Electronic Technology

1. Does your congregation use any of the following? *If YES, how much emphasis is given to each? (✓one on each line.)*

	No	Yes			
		A Little	Some	Quite a Bit	A Lot
Email Communication.....	9.2	9.5	19.7	27.8	33.8
Website.....	20.7	10.5	24.1	18.7	26.0
Facebook.....	25.2	10.3	21.4	21.6	21.5
E-newsletter(s).....	53.6	7.0	13.8	12.1	13.5
Texting .....	23.6	15.8	23.9	21.0	15.7
Automated prayer requests or phone contact.....	51.6	12.1	12.7	12.2	11.4
Live streaming of sermon ....	81.4	5.1	3.3	2.4	7.7
Blog(s) .....	83.4	8.4	4.7	1.7	1.8
Twitter.....	77.8	10.9	7.7	2.2	1.4
Other social media (Yelp, Tumblr, Pinterest, etc.) ...	81.8	11.5	3.4	1.8	1.4
Online giving .....	69.1	8.6	9.4	4.6	8.3
Online meetings (Skype, Go to Meeting, etc) .....	78.3	9.7	7.3	2.0	2.8
WiFi access in your building.	29.0	5.2	15.8	15.6	34.5
Other (explain below):.....	76.8	0.3	3.6	10.9	8.5

2. Are your congregation's web efforts geared more to members of the congregation or more to people not related to your congregation? (✓one.)

- 20.6 We do not have a web site
- 18.3 Primarily members and participants
- 46.4 A good blend of both
- 10.1 Primarily external audiences
- 4.6 I don't know

3. Which of the following best expresses your opinion about the use of Internet technologies (email, social media, texting, etc.) in congregational life? (✓one.)

- 1.8 They have no place in congregational life.
- 1.0 If used, they are likely to do more harm than good.
- 8.3 Difficult to tell / mixed feelings.
- 30.3 They can be quite helpful, but aren't really crucial for the congregation's vitality or success.
- 58.6 In today's world, congregations must use modern communication technologies as widely and as well as possible.

## Finances

1. What was the approximate dollar amount of your congregation's total budget for 2014? (Do not count funds for capital improvements or primary/secondary schools.)

\$311,782 mean \$125,000 median

2. How would you describe your congregation's financial health today and in 2010, if applicable? (✓one in each column.)

Today	2010 (if applicable)
5.5 In serious difficulty	8.4 In serious difficulty
9.3 In some difficulty	12.5 In some difficulty
35.9 Tight, but we manage	34.6 Tight, but we manage
28.1 Good	31.5 Good
21.2 Excellent	12.9 Excellent

## History, Location, Building and Affiliation

1. In what year was your congregation officially founded?

1935 mean 1951 median

2. In what ZIP code is your congregation's place of worship physically located?

3. How would you describe the location of your place of worship? (✓one.)

- 25.5 Rural area or open country
- 18.8 Village or town with a population of less than 10,000
- 20.8 Small city or large town with a population of 10,000 to 50,000
- 9.2 Downtown or central area of a large city with a population of 50,000 or more
- 10.1 Older residential area of a large city with a population of 50,000 or more
- 9.4 Older suburb around a large city with a population of 50,000 or more
- 6.2 Newer suburb around a large city with a population of 50,000 or more

4. Does another congregation worship in your building?

78.2 No  
21.8 Yes

a. *IF YES*, how many other congregations?

- 64.9 One
- 22.7 Two
- 5.8 Three
- 6.7 Four or more

b. *IF YES*, for *the* largest one:

- i) Is its dominant racial/ethnic/nationality group different than your congregation's?
  - 48.9 No
  - 51.1 Yes
- ii) Does it have the same denominational affiliation as yours?
  - 32.3 No
  - 67.7 Yes
- iii) Does it pay rent?
  - 61.6 No
  - 38.4 Yes

5. In closing: Which of the following best describes your sense of this congregation's future?

- 29.9 We are thriving and this should continue.
- 32.4 We are doing okay and this should continue.
- 11.3 We are doing okay now, but the future is very uncertain.
- 12.8 We are struggling, but the future clearly looks better.
- 11.2 We are struggling, and that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.
- 2.4 Not sure this congregation will survive much longer.

## Thank you very much!

If you are open to talking with someone in more detail about your congregation, ministry, or any of your answers, please give us your name and contact information: