

Largest Religious Groups in the United States of America

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Many people have written to us at Adherents.com asking what are the major religions or churches in just the United States. All of our data is, of course, available on this web site in the main Adherents.com listings (listed by **name** and by **location**). For most places it is fairly simple to look up an individual country, state or province in the Location Index. There the user will usually find between 15 to 100 adherent statistics, which provide a good idea of what the major religions are for that place.

But the United States has a greater number of religious groups than any other country in the world, and Adherents.com has literally thousands of adherent statistics for the U.S. This page provides some **summary** lists of the largest religious groups in the United States. Most of the tables on this page are based on self-identification data (which religious groups people actually say they belong to when surveyed), but some lists based on organizational reporting (membership figures from individual denominations) are shown as well:

- [Twenty Largest Religions in the U.S.](#)
- [Largest Branches of Christianity in the U.S.](#)
- [Ten Largest Denominational Families in the U.S.](#)
- [Largest Denominational Families, based on church attendance](#)
- [Top 10 Largest Religious Bodies in the U.S.](#)
- [Gallup Polling Data over the Last Ten Years](#)
- [Top 10 Religious Bodies with Most Churches](#)
- [Most Ubiquitous Churches in the U.S.](#)
- [Religious Bodies which are the Largest Church in One or More States](#)
- Washington Post report on extensive year 2000 study: [Faith Communities in the United States Today](#)
- [Barna Poll on actual religious beliefs](#) - shows diversity in belief among American Christians: mainline Protestants, Catholics, Baptists, Evangelicals, Latter-day Saints, Pentecostals, etc.

[Denominations Comparison](#)

Free comparison chart of Baptists Catholics, Methodists [Download](#). [Rose Publishing.com](#)

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Note that this page uses the terms "**religion**", "**branch**", "**denominational family**" and "**religious body**" according to the [taxonomic classification of religious groups methodology](#).

Largest Religions in the United States

Unlike some countries, the United States does **not** include a question about religion in its census, and has not done so for over fifty years. Religious adherent statistics in the U.S. are obtained from surveys and organizational reporting.

U.S. Religious Affiliation, 2002 (self-identification, Pew Research Council)

In February and March 2002 the Pew Research Council conducted a survey of 2,002 adults. Questions about religious preference were included. The results are below:

Religious Preference	% June 1996	% March 2001	March 2002
Christian	84	82	82
Jewish	1	1	1
Muslim	*	1	*
Other non-Christian	3	2	1
Atheist	*	1	1
Agnostic	*	2	2
Something else (SPECIFY)	*	1	2

No preference	11	8	10
Don't know/Refused	1	2	1
TOTAL	100	100	100

This table was published in a study titled "[Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad](#)", released on March 20, 2002.

The authors listed are:

Andrew Kohut, director of The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press
 Melissa Rogers, executive director of The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

Methodology:

"The nationwide survey of 2,002 adults, conducted Feb. 25 - March 10 by the Pew Research Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life..."

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Now, a few questions about your religious affiliation.

Q.18 What is your religious preference – do you consider yourself Christian, Jewish, Muslim, other non-Christian such as Buddhist or Hindu, atheist, agnostic, something else, or don't you have a religious preference?

Christian includes Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox, and other, including non-denominational. Christian respondents were further broken down into branches. See [below](#).

The largest, most comprehensive surveys on religious identification were done in sociologists Barry A. Kosmin, Seymour P. Lachman and associates at the Graduate School of the City University of New York. Their first major study was done in 1990: the National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI). This scientific **nationwide survey of 113,000 Americans** asked about religious preference, along with other questions. They followed this up, with even more sophisticated methodology and more questions, with the American Religious Identity Survey (ARIS) **conducted in 2001, with a sample size of 50,000 Americans**.

The ARIS data is published online at: http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_briefs/aris/aris_index.htm

The following three tables comes from the NSRI and ARIS data:

Top Twenty Religions in the United States, 2001 (self-identification, ARIS)

Religion	1990 Est. Adult Pop.	2001 Est. ADULT Pop.	2004 Est. Total Pop.	% of U.S. Pop., 2000	% Change 1990 - 2000
Christianity	151,225,000	159,030,000	224,437,959	76.5%	+5%
Nonreligious/Secular	13,116,000	27,539,000	38,865,604	13.2%	+110%
Judaism	3,137,000	2,831,000	3,995,371	1.3%	-10%
Islam	527,000	1,104,000	1,558,068	0.5%	+109%
Buddhism	401,000	1,082,000	1,527,019	0.5%	+170%
Agnostic	1,186,000	991,000	1,398,592	0.5%	-16%
Atheist		902,000	1,272,986	0.4%	
Hinduism	227,000	766,000	1,081,051	0.4%	+237%
Unitarian Universalist	502,000	629,000	887,703	0.3%	+25%
Wiccan/Pagan/Druid		307,000	433,267	0.1%	
Spiritualist		116,000	163,710	0.05%	
Native American Religion	47,000	103,000	145,363	0.05%	+119%
Baha'i	28,000	84,000	118,549	0.04%	+200%
New Age	20,000	68,000	95,968	0.03%	+240%
Sikhism	13,000	57,000	80,444	0.03%	+338%
Scientology	45,000	55,000	77,621	0.02%	+22%
Humanist	29,000	49,000	69,153	0.02%	+69%
Deity (Deist)	6,000	49,000	69,153	0.02%	+717%
Taoist	23,000	40,000	56,452	0.02%	+74%
Eckankar	18,000	26,000	36,694	0.01%	+44%

Top Ten ORGANIZED Religions in the United States, 2001 (self-identification, ARIS)

[Nonreligious, Atheist, Agnostic have been dropped from this list.]

Religion	2001 Est. Adult Pop.	2004 Est. Total Pop.	% of U.S. Pop., 2001
Christianity	159,030,000	224,437,959	76.5%
Judaism	2,831,000	3,995,371	1.3%
Islam	1,104,000	1,558,068	0.5%
Buddhism	1,082,000	1,527,019	0.5%
Hinduism	766,000	1,081,051	0.4%
Unitarian Universalist	629,000	887,703	0.3%
Wiccan/Pagan/Druid	307,000	433,267	0.1%
Spiritualist	116,000	163,710	0.05%
Native American Religion	103,000	145,363	0.05%
Baha'i	84,000	118,549	0.04%

Top Ten Largest Religions in the United States, 1990 (self-identification, NSRI)

Religion	Estimated Adult Pop.	Estimated % of Adult Pop.
Christianity	151,225,000	86.2%
Nonreligious	13,116,000	7.5%
Judaism	3,137,000	1.8%
Agnostic	1,186,000	0.7%
Islam	527,000	* 0.5%
Unitarian Universalist	502,000	0.3%
Buddhism	401,000	* 0.4%
Hinduism	227,000	* 0.2%
Native American Religion	47,000	0.03%
Scientologist	45,000	0.03%

* Islam, Buddhist, Hindu figures in table have been adjusted upwards by Kosmin to account for possible undercount.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

Christianity. Note that in the NSRI and ARIS studies, based on self-identification, Christianity includes: Catholic, Baptist, Protestant, Methodist/Wesleyan, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal/Charismatic, Episcopalian/Anglican, Mormon/Latter-day Saints/LDS, Churches of Christ, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-Day Adventist, Assemblies of God, Holiness/Holy, Congregational/United Church of Christ, Church of the Nazarine, Church of God, Eastern Orthodox, Evangelical, Mennonite, Christian Science, Church of the Brethren, Born Again, Nondenominational Christians, Disciples of Christ, Reformed/Dutch Reformed, Apostolic/New Apostolic, Quaker, Full Gospel, Christian Reform, Foursquare Gospel, Fundamentalist, Salvation Army, Independent Christian Church, Covenant Church, Jewish Christians, plus 240,000 adults classified as "other" (who did not fall into the preceding groups).

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Islam. In recent years Muslim leaders in the United States have optimistically estimated that there were approximately 6.5 million Muslims in the country (Aly Abuzaakouk, American Muslim Council, 1999). In 1998 a Pakistani newspaper even reported that there were 12 million Muslims in the United States (4.2% of the

total population)! After the events of September 11, 2001, many newspaper accounts included an estimate of 8 million American Muslims. This would equate to 3% of the U.S. population, or roughly 1 in every 33 people in the country. **No comparable figure has ever been confirmed by independent research** similar to the Kosmin or Glenmary studies, or the Gallup, Harris, Pew, Barna polls. Currently, surveys consistently report less than 1% of people surveyed identify themselves as Muslims. Muslim community leaders say that many American Muslims are relatively recent immigrants who either do not have telephone service, do not participate in surveys or are afraid to identify themselves as Muslims for fear of anti-Muslim discrimination. Researchers generally agree that the estimate of 300,000 Muslims in the Kosmin study (1990) and Kosmin's adjusted estimate (to 500,000) are too small to reflect current (year 2005) numbers of American Muslims. In 2004 the National Study of Youth and Religion conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (sample size: 3,370 teens nationwide) found that less than one half of one percent (0.5%) of American teens were Muslim, a proportion right in line with the adult Muslim population, based on other studies. Tom W. Smith of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago is a nationally recognized expert in survey research specializing in the study of social change and survey methodology. Smith published "Estimating the Muslim Population in the United States" in 2001. This is probably the most thorough academic study of this topic in recent years. This study concluded: **"The best, adjusted, survey-based estimates put the adult Muslim population in 2000 at 0.67 percent or 1,401,000, and the total Muslim population at 1,886,000. Even if high-side estimates based on local surveys, figures from mosques, and ancestry and immigration statistics are given more weight than the survey-based numbers, it is hard to accept estimates that Muslims are greater than 1 percent of the population (2,090,000 adults or 2,814,000 total)."** Additional articles and links are here: [Number of Muslims in the United States](#).

Jews and Judaism. The American Jewish Identity Survey of 2000, conducted by Barry Kosmin, Egon Mayer, and Ariela Keysar at the Center for Jewish Studies at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, concluded that there were 5.5 million Jews in the United States. Of these, 1.4 million were aligned with a religion other than Judaism, 1.4 million were secular or non-religious, leaving 51% of American Jews (just over 3 million people) whose religion was Judaism. The study surveyed 50,000 randomly selected adult Americans. [More](#).

Baha'i. Some representatives of the Baha'i Faith have questioned their omission from the 1990 NSRI "Top 10" list. The NSRI study indicated there were 28,000 self-identified Baha'is in the United States in 1990, making them the **11th largest religion** in the country. If one excludes the "nonreligious" and "agnostic" categories from this list, then the Kosmin study would place Baha'is as the 9th largest religion in the U.S.

Although the Kosmin study is well-respected, it should be noted that even with a random sample of such unprecedented size (113,000 respondents), the practical margin of error for this study was high for relatively smaller groups – those with less than 300,000 individuals. In this study, there were a few more respondents who said they were Scientologists or Native American religionists than said they were Baha'is. But given the margin of error, it is possible that in 1990 there were actually more Baha'is. This would be the case especially if, as some Baha'is suggested in response to these findings, there were a high proportion of Baha'is who lived communally and did not have phones for each family, or were recent Iranian immigrants reluctant to identify their Baha'i affiliation over the phone because of past persecution. In 1990 the Baha'i world faith itself claimed 110,000 adherents in the United States. If there were 110,000 self-identified Baha'is in 1990 they would have ranked as the 9th largest U.S. religion (assuming that the other Kosmin figures are accurate).

It is quite possible that growth within this group during this last 9 years has outpaced growth of some other groups, and that Baha'is are now among America's ten largest religions. But this proposition has not been verified empirically and similar claims of recent growth have also been made by the other groups. Current official estimates from the Baha'i National Spiritual Assembly for the U.S. Baha'i population are about 113,000, or about 0.05% of the U.S. population. On 31 March 2000 received information from the U.S. National Spiritual Assembly listing the number of U.S. Baha'is at 133,709. A non-Baha'i historian from the University of Michigan who has scrutinized American Baha'i statistical practices has estimated a current (1999) figure of about 60,000 self-identified Baha'is in the U.S. But, with the ARIS survey now estimating 84,000 *adult* self-identified Baha'is in the U.S. in the year 2001, it appears that that historian's estimate is too low. If children are included and a slight undercount assumed, it is quite possible that there were closer to 100,000 (perhaps more) Baha'is in the U.S. in 2001.

It may also be noted that Baha'is are ranked as one of the world's ten largest [international religious bodies](#) and are among the top ten largest organized [religions in the world](#), based on their current reported estimated membership.

Neo-pagan/Wiccan: There were 768,400 Neo-pagans (largest subset were Wiccans) in the U.S. in the year 2000, according to the Wiccan/Pagan Poll, conducted by the Covenant of the Goddess (CoG) beginning in late July, 1999. [Online source: http://www.cog.org/cogpoll_final.html] The Covenant of the Goddess (CoG) poll methodology is not comparable to methodology used in the Kosmin NSRI/ARIS studies, Harris Poll, Gallup polls, or Glenmary study. In 2004 the National Study of Youth and Religion conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (sample size: 3,370 teens nationwide) found that fewer than one-third of 1 percent of U.S. teens identified themselves as adherents of paganism (including Wicca). This indicates that the Wiccan/pagan population in the U.S. skews young; the proportion of teens identifying themselves as adherents is up to 3 times the proportion of the total population (0.3%, according to ARIS, 2001).

Another source, published before ARIS data was available:

According to the 2001 edition of David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*, the largest non-Christian organized religions in the U.S. are:

- Jews: 5.6 million
- Muslims: 4.1 million
- Buddhists: 2.4 million
- Hindus: 1 million

Largest Branches of Christianity in the U.S. (self-identification, Pew Research Council)

In February and March 2002 the Pew Research Council conducted a survey of 2,002 adults. Questions about religious preference were included. People who identified their religious preference as Christian were asked about which branch of Christianity they belonged to.

The table below was published on page 49 of the Pew report at <http://pewforum.org/publications/reports/poll2002.pdf>:

Survey Response	%, June 1996	%, March 2001	%, March 2002
Protestant	53	53	52
Catholic	23	23	24
Mormon (Latter-day Saints)	2	2	2
Orthodox	1	1	*
Non-denominational	1	0	0

Something else (Specify)	1	*	2
Not practicing any religion	1	0	0
Don't know/Refused	2	3	2
TOTAL CHRISTIAN	84%	82%	82%

The percentages shown in this table reflect the number of members of each branch as a proportion of the total U.S. population, not just the Christian population. So the Catholic percentage of 24% for 2002 means that 24% of Americans identified themselves as Catholic in 2002.

This table matches data from Gallup, Barna, and other polling organizations, which all show that Protestants are clearly the largest branch of Christianity in the United States, followed by Catholics, who have about half as many members. Latter-day Saints (Mormons) are the 3rd largest branch, comprising about 2% of the U.S. population. Catholics, Latter-day Saints, and Orthodox Christians are all **branches as well as denominational families**, but the Protestant branch of Christianity comprises multiple denominational families. More detailed denominational family statistics are shown [below](#).

This table was published in a study titled "[Americans Struggle with Religion's Role at Home and Abroad](#)", released on March 20, 2002.

The authors listed are:
 Andrew Kohut, director of The Pew Research Center For The People & The Press
 Melissa Rogers, executive director of The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

Methodology:
 "The nationwide survey of 2,002 adults, conducted Feb. 25 - March 10 by the Pew Research Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life..."

People who identified their religious preference as Christian were asked about which branch of Christianity they belonged to:
 "Q.19 Are you Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Orthodox--such as Greek or Russian Orthodox--or something else?" (page 49)

Largest denominations/denominational families in U.S.

The ARIS and NSRI identified broad denominational loyalty as well, as shown in the tables below. Except for Judaism, which is aggregated here as a single denominational family, all of the largest denominational families in the United States are Christian. In the United States, all of the largest religious bodies (distinct "denominations") are Christian. According to the NSRI, America's third largest major religion -- Islam -- is smaller than about fifteen of the country's largest Christian denominations.

Please note that in this list, the estimated number is only of the adult population. The figures for total "adherents" given in the "Largest Religious Bodies" list which follows is not limited to adults.

Also note that the ARIS and NSRI data are based on a self-identification surveys, while the "Largest Religious Bodies" list presents the most recent available data and is based on organizational reporting. The sample size for NSRI was over 130,000 American adults. The sample size for ARIS was 50,000.

This table includes denominational families regardless of what religion they belong to. Judaism and Islam, for example, are typically thought of as religions, but may also be described as "denominational families" in this context.

Largest denominational families in U.S., 2001 (self-identification, ARIS)

Denomination	1990 Est. Adult Pop.	2001 Est. Adult Pop.	2004 Est. Total Pop.	Est. % of U.S. Pop., 2001	% Change 1990 - 2001
Catholic	46,004,000	50,873,000	71,796,719	24.5%	+11%
Baptist	33,964,000	33,830,000	47,744,049	16.3%	0%
Methodist/Wesleyan	14,174,000	14,150,000	19,969,799	6.8%	0%
Lutheran	9,110,000	9,580,000	13,520,189	4.6%	+5%
Presbyterian	4,985,000	5,596,000	7,897,597	2.7%	+12%
Pentecostal/Charismatic	3,191,000	4,407,000	6,219,569	2.1%	+38%
Episcopalian/Anglican	3,042,000	3,451,000	4,870,373	1.7%	+13%
Judaism	3,137,000	2,831,000	3,995,371	1.3%	-10%
Latter-day Saints/Mormon	2,487,000	2,697,000	3,806,258	1.3%	+8%
Churches of Christ	1,769,000	2,593,000	3,659,483	1.2%	+47%
Congregational/ United Church of Christ	599,000	1,378,000	1,944,762	0.7%	
Jehovah's Witnesses	1,381,000	1,331,000	1,878,431	0.6%	-4%

In looking at the table above, keep in mind that the "2004 Est. Total Pop." column is based on a direct extrapolation based on 2001 survey estimates of the *adult* population of each group, and the 2004 figure has *not* been adjusted for each religious group's different average numbers of children per adult. Some groups (e.g., Episcopal, Congregational, Judaism) have fewer children proportionate to their total population, and some groups (e.g., Catholic, Pentecostal, Latter-day Saints) have higher proportionate numbers of children, in which case the un-modified extrapolation to the total population would yield an undercount. For example, in 2004, 2.5% of American *teenagers* said they were Latter-day Saints (National Study of Youth and Religion, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; sample size: 3,370 nationwide), a figure higher than the 1.3% of American *adults* who identified themselves as Latter-day Saints in 2001. If this 2.5% figure were extrapolated to the total population, it would yield a figure of 7,334,574 total Latter-day Saints (children, teens and adults) in the U.S. for 2004 - a number nearly 2 million higher than counted in official membership records. This difference in survey results between adult and teen populations indicates that this group's U.S. membership skews young. Similar differences (pushing a group's actual numbers higher than extrapolated if it skews young and lower than extrapolated if it skews old) would be expected for all groups.

Largest denominational families in U.S., 1990 (self-identification, NSRI)

Religious Denomination	Estimated Adult Pop.	Estimated % of Adult Pop.
Catholic	46,004,000	26.2%
Baptist	33,964,000	19.4%
Methodist	14,116,000	8.0%
Lutheran	9,110,000	5.2%
Presbyterian	4,985,000	2.8%
Jewish	3,137,000	1.8%
Pentecostal	3,116,000	1.8%
Episcopalian	3,042,000	1.7%
Latter-day Saints	2,487,000	1.4%
Churches of Christ	1,568,000	1.0%
Jehovah's Witnesses	1,381,000	0.8%

Largest Denominational Families in the U.S., 2001 (based on church attendance, ARIS/Barna)

Religious identification is only one component of religious statistics, and identification with a particular religious group may or may not be sociologically meaningful for a particular meaningful. As Kosmin notes in the ARIS report:

For some, religious identification may well be a social marker as much as a marker designating a specific set of beliefs. For others, it may be a reflection of a community or family anchor point to one's sense of self. For other still, it may simply be the "gut response" evoked by the question, "What is your religion, if any?" without any wider emotional, social or philosophical ramifications. This survey made no attempt to define for people what the meaning of any religious identification might be.

The following table combines self-identification statistics from the ARIS report (2001) with church attendance figures obtained from the [Barna survey](#). The Barna survey was conducted from January 2000 through June 2001, and had a sample size of 6,038 adults. The survey asked people if they attended a church service, other than a special event such as a wedding or funeral, in the past 7 days. The proportion responding affirmatively can be thought of as the highly active segment of a particular denominational community.

ARIS: Total number of adults, U.S., 2001: 207,980,000

Denomination/ Denominational Family	# of Adults self-identification 2001	% of U.S. pop. self-identification 2001	% weekly church attendance this denom. 2001	% of U.S. pop. in attendance at this denom. during a given week
Catholic	50,873,000	24.5%	48%	11.74%
Baptist	33,830,000	16.3%	50%	8.13%
Methodist	14,150,000	6.8%	49%	3.33%
Lutheran	9,580,000	4.6%	43%	1.98%
Pentecostal/Charismatic/Foursquare	4,407,000	2.1%	66%	1.40%

Presbyterian	5,596,000	2.7%	49%	1.32%
Mormon/ Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	2,697,000	1.3%	71%	0.92%
Non-denominational Christians	2,489,000	1.2%	61%	0.73%
Church of Christ	2,593,000	1.2%	58%	0.72%
Episcopal/Anglican	3,451,000	1.7%	30%	0.50%
Assemblies of God	1,106,000	0.5%	69%	0.37%
Congregational/ United Church of Christ	1,378,000	0.7%	* 30%	0.20%
Seventh-Day Adventist	724,000	0.3%	47%	0.16%

* The Barna poll did not report attendance figures for the United Church of Christ/Congregationalists. Figure used here is from the sociologically similar Episcopalians.

All of these figures are collected from independent surveys with large sample sizes, and do not come from any religious organization. Thus, they constitute a set of numbers which are highly uniform in methodology, and are not subject to internal institutional variations in the way that membership and activity is counted or estimated.

The resulting figures in the last column are estimates of the total adult U.S. population attending church services of a given denominational group during a given week. So, while 24.5% of American adults identified themselves as Catholics in 2001, in any given week, 11.74% of all Americans attend Catholic church services. However, this does not necessarily suggest that only 11.74% of Americans are "active Catholics": religious groups generally consider a member "active" or "practicing" who practices less than weekly church attendance.

Different religious groups exhibit wide variation in the proportion of their adherents who are active members. But for the most part, this table's estimation of regularly attending adherents does not change the relative size of the denominational groups. When counting only active members, the changes in relative order among denominational groups are: Episcopalians drop below both Latter-day Saints and Church of Christ members, and there are more active Assemblies of God members than Congregationalists/United Church of Christ members.

Finally, note that the Barna survey data report the proportion of self-identified adherents who reported church attendance. This is not necessarily the same as the attendance rate as a proportion of official church membership. A religious body's membership estimate may be more or less than the number of people who actually identify themselves as members. For example, in 2001, 3.5 million American adults said they were Episcopalians. But in 2000 the Episcopal Church reported a total constituency of 2,317,794 people, including fully-committed members and inclusive adherents. This signifies a gap between those who are *affiliated* with the church (on membership rolls), versus those who self-identify with a particular denominational label but in most cases have no practical connection to the denomination and do not attend services.

Religious Affiliation Year 2000 (Harris poll)

The Harris Interactive Election 2000 poll was conducted from April 4th to April 10th among 13,224 registered voters selected at random from the Harris Interactive Internet panel of more than 5.6 million respondents. The sample size, although only 10% of the size used by the 1990 NSRI survey, are certainly large enough for statistical accuracy. **However, it should be noted that the sample population consisted of Internet users, and not all Americans have Internet access.** It may also be noted that the purpose of this Harris survey and the accompanying report was to determine how religious affiliation will affect the upcoming presidential election. The express purpose was not to determine religious affiliation.

The full Business Wire report on this year 2000 Harris poll is available [here](#).

Affiliation	Number of Respondents	% of U.S. Registered Voters
Christianity	9,478	71.7%
All Protestants	6,544	49.5
Baptist	1,700	12.9
<i>Southern Baptist</i>	933	7.1
<i>Other Baptist</i>	767	5.8
Methodist	1,081	8.2
Lutheran	515	3.9
Presbyterian	336	2.5
Episcopalian	221	1.7
Other Denominations	1,674	12.7

Non-Denominational	1,016	7.7
Catholic	2,629	19.9
Latter-day Saints	186	1.4
Jewish	305	2.3
Agnostic or Atheist	944	7.1
Other		10.0
Nonreligious/No answer		10.0
Total (All Registered Voters)	13,224	100.0%

**Largest denominations/denominational families in U.S.
(Harris poll, self-identification, 2000)**

Religious Denomination	Percentage of registered voters in survey
Catholic	19.9%
Baptist	12.9%
Methodist	8.2%
Lutheran	3.9%
Presbyterian	2.5%
Jewish	2.3%
Episcopalian	1.7%
Latter-day Saints	1.4%

Spencer v. World Vision, Inc. No. 08-35532 archived on September 3, 2010

Keeping in mind that these the Harris poll used different methodologies and sample sizes than the NSRI/ARIS surveys, some observations may be made tentatively. Many figures are similar between the 1990 and 2000 surveys (Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Latter-day Saints). The survey indicates a significantly larger number of agnostics (and atheists), but current Gallup polls show that the overall percentage of Americans who profess a belief in God is essentially unchanged between 1990 and 2000. The higher number of agnostics in this Harris poll indicates that a higher proportion of Internet users are agnostic than in the general population. Note that the Harris data shows a much higher figure for Jews in 2000 than the ARIS survey does. This may be because the ARIS includes only Jews who said that Judaism is their religion, while the Harris probably includes ethnic-only Jews. Also, the difference may also be attributed to the higher socioeconomic status of Jews and associated higher proportion of Internet users.

The proportional decrease in the number of Baptists make sense given data and trends indicated by other sources. Many congregations and individuals who formerly called themselves Baptist have become non-denominational, especially in the last five years. But the drop from nearly 20% to less than 13% is probably also attributable partially to the lower proportion of Internet users who are Baptists. Note that in the NSRI and ARIS surveys, both done by Kosmin and both using similar methodology, the biggest decline in percentage of the population ("market share") was exhibited by Baptists: from 19.4% in 1990 to 16.3% in 2001. [See [related articles](#).]

Each year the annual *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* publishes information on North America's largest religious bodies. The Yearbook is a publication of the National Council of Churches (NCC). The membership counts published in this work are primarily based on organizational reporting. The Yearbook's data are used in U.S. Government publications and various almanacs. Below are the largest U.S. religious bodies (distinct churches) according the [2004 Yearbook](#) or more recent organizational reports:

Top Ten Largest Religious Bodies in the United States

(Figures reflect U.S. membership only. A few of these religious bodies have significant numbers of members in other countries as well.)

Rank	Religious Body	Year	Membership
1	Catholic Church	2002	66,407,105
2	Southern Baptist Convention	2003	16,400,000
3	United Methodist Church	2002	8,251,042

4	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	2004	5,599,177
5	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	2003	4,984,925
6	Church of God in Christ	1991	* 4,500,000
7	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	2001	3,595,259
8	National Baptist Convention of America	1987	3,500,000
9	Assemblies of God	2002	2,687,366
10	Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod	2003	2,512,714

The *2005 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* reported the following figures, based primarily on 2003 denominational reporting data:

1. Roman Catholic Church: 67.2 million.
2. Southern Baptist Convention: 16.4 million.
3. United Methodist Church: 8.2 million.
4. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: 5.5 million.
5. Church of God in Christ: 5.4 million.
6. National Baptist Convention USA: 5 million.
7. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 4.9 million.
8. National Baptist Convention of America: 3.5 million.
9. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): 3.2 million.
10. Assemblies of God: 2.7 million.

[See example news article: *Religion News Service, Charlotte Observer*; URL: <http://www.charlotte.com/mld/observer/living/religion/10997090.htm>]

NOTES

U.S. **Catholics** represent about 6% of the church's total world membership of approximately 1 billion.

The **Southern Baptist Convention** was formed in 1845 when it split from Northern Baptists because of Northern Baptists' anti-slavery stance.

Since 1979 the SBC has been split internally between Moderate and Conservative (also called "Fundamentalist" or "Inerrant") parties. With a slightly higher number of delegates and, more importantly, greater political unity amongst themselves, the Conservatives have maintained control of the convention. In response, moderates have formed multiple sub-groups. [\[More on this subject.\]](#)

For 1998 the SBC reported a decline of 1.02%, or 162,158 members, giving the denomination a world total of 15,729,356 members (almost all in the U.S.). The SBC reported weekly attendance averaging 5,398,692 for 1998. The actual number of resident members in 1998 was 10.7 million. (Source: ["Any way you count it, fewer Southern Baptists"](#) by Cary McMullen, *Palatka Daily News*, Florida.) The SBC reported a slight membership gain for 1999, but total membership (15,851,756) was still lower than previous levels. [Source: Associated Press, "Southern Baptists tallied a membership gain in 1999", 15 April 2000; URL: <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,160007426,00.html?>]

The **United Methodist Church** was formed in 1968 by a merger of the Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church. (The Methodist Church had been formed in 1939 by a merger of the Methodist Protestant Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Evangelical United Brethren Church had been formed in 1946 by a merger of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Church, which had previously been known as the Evangelical Association prior to an 1891 split and 1922 re-merger.)

* **The Church of God in Christ** is a Pentecostal body and perhaps the nation's largest black denomination. It was formed in 1897 by C. H. Mason, who severed ties with Baptists. [\[The 2004 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches cites a membership figure of 5,499,875 members for the Church of God in Christ. This figure is from 1991, and has not been changed or updated for many years. Experts believe the organization has less than 5 million members today. Unlike most other denominations on this list, the national membership figures for this group come *only* from organizational reporting and HAVE NOT BEEN verified or correlated with self-identification survey data or Glenmary county-by-county data. Note that in the 2001 ARIS study \(sample size: 50,000 people\), 944,000 adults identified their religion as "Church of God"; most of these were probably referring to the "Church of God" denomination based in Cleveland, Tenn. or the "Church of God" denomination based in Anderson, Indiana, rather than to the "Church of God in Christ." The same ARIS survey also estimated a total of 4,407,000 adults who identified their religion as Pentecostal or Charismatic, which is the category that Church of God of Christ members would be most expected to be classified under. But this grouping includes *all* Pentecostal denominations, not just the Church of God in Christ.\]](#)

The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America** was formed in Columbus, Ohio, April 30-May 3, 1987 by a merger of three Lutheran bodies: the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and The American Lutheran Church (ALC). These bodies had been formed by previous mergers during the 1960s and 70s.

The **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** was organized in 1830. Their reported U.S. membership as of December 31, 2003 was 5,503,192, which is 1.93% of the total U.S. population. The figures provided by this church have been confirmed to be

accurate by the Kosmin NSRI poll, which surveyed 113,000 people nationwide. In 50% of U.S. states, survey results indicated slightly *more* Latter-day Saints in the population than official Church figures reported. In the other 50% of U.S. states, survey figures were slightly below official Church figures. Correlation between the two sets of data (official and independent survey) was higher than for any other denomination, indicating a high level of correlation between the number of Americans who self-identify as Latter-day Saints, and the number counted on membership roles. A Gallup poll conducted Nov. 10 to 12, 2003, sample size 1,004 adults (Jennifer Harper, "Religion leads to a merrier Christmas," 11 December 2003, *The Washington Times*) reported that 2% of Americans identify themselves as Latter-day Saints. The National Study of Youth and Religion conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that 2.5% of U.S. teens identify themselves as Latter-day Saints. The project involved a telephone survey of 3,370 randomly selected English- and Spanish-speaking Americans, ages 13-17. This 2.5% figure (reported in the [Los Angeles Times](#): "U.S. Teens Share Parents' Religion, Survey Finds," by Veronica Torrejon, 26 February 2005) is significantly higher than the proportion of Americans claimed by the Church as members, indicating two things: 1) Church membership skews young, with a higher proportion of teenagers claiming membership than older adults; and 2) nearly all teens counted as members on denominational records also identify themselves as Latter-day Saints.

The **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** was "formed in 1983 as a result of reunion between the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (PCUS), the so-called 'southern branch,' and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA), the so-called 'northern branch.'" [Source: PCUSA official web site] As done with other groups where possible, figure shown in table above refers to inclusive adherents, not just full members.

The **National Baptist Convention of America** is a different group from the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc., and is sometimes referred to as the "unincorporated" National Baptist Convention. It formed in 1915 when it split off from the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. over a disagreement about ownership of the convention's publishing house. **[NOTE: The national membership figures for this group come from organizational reporting and have not been verified or correlated with self-identification survey data or Glenmary county-by-county data.]**

The **Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod** was recognized in 1847 under the name German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.

The **Assemblies of God** is the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. It was organized in 1914, and traces its roots to the beginnings of Pentecostalism in 1901.

America's Top 10 Religious Bodies Listed by Year Organized

Order	Religious Body	Year Organized
1	Catholic Church	
2	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	1830
3	Southern Baptist Convention	1845
4	Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod	1847
5	Church of God in Christ	1897
6	Assemblies of God	1914
7	National Baptist Convention of America	1915
8	United Methodist Church	1968
9	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	1983
10	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	1987

Some of America's largest religious bodies are fairly new, some of them representing recent schisms or mergers.

Notes about some groups *not* among America's ten largest religious bodies:

National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.: The *1999 Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* reports a membership of 8,200,000, from the year **1992** (figures for most other churches are recent - from 1996 to 1998). Many books have published membership totals for the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. which indicate a membership of 8.5 million, which would make it one of the largest religious bodies in the country. However, during the 1999 trial of now-jailed church convention president Henry J. Lyons, prosecutors revealed that these figures were fabricated and the convention actually has closer to one million members, many of whom left during the Lyons fraud trial. Rev. H.L. Harvey, the convention's statistician, admitted that the figure of eight million was simply an estimate. It is important to note that Lyons took sole responsibility for fraud charges. Lyons' misuse of church funds and subsequent fraud conviction are **not** a reflection of the leaders and members of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. as a whole.

Ethics & Religion reporter recounted a researcher's experience in trying to find accurate National Baptist Convention (NBC) numbers (<http://www.marriagesavers.org/Columns/C933.htm>):

Dr. Nancy Ammerman, a researcher with Hartford Seminary, recently went to NBC's new Nashville headquarters, built by Lyon. She was shocked to discover, "There is no denominational headquarters. There is a building, but there is no national staff. I found an empty building. I rang a doorbell, and the only person who was answering the phone by herself, would not open the door." Indeed, when I called, I only got a recording, referring me to other numbers if I wanted to come to the NBC convention. No one is counting church membership.

Episcopalians: Observant readers of these lists may notice that the Episcopalians appear on the list of largest denominational families, yet the **Episcopal Church** (the only Episcopalian/Anglican body of a statistically appreciably size in the U.S.) is **not listed** as one of the largest religious bodies.

One reason for this discrepancy is the difference in years between the two lists. Between 1990 (when the NSRI study was conducted) and 1997 (list of religious bodies) there was some decline in the size of the Episcopal Church, and growth on the part of some other religious bodies. But much more importantly than this is the fact that a large number of Americans who call themselves Episcopalian (the basis for the NSRI **self-identification** list) are **not affiliated** officially with the Episcopal Church and not included in Episcopal Church membership counts. Kosmin reports that "The Episcopal church, which has 1.7 million fully confirmed members on its current roll, had nearly twice as many, over 3 million, appear on the NSRI" (Kosmin; *One Nation Under God*; 1991). The year 2000 edition of the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* ranks the Episcopal Church as the 15th largest denomination in the U.S.

African Methodist Episcopal Church: Some sources show a membership estimate of 3.5 million for the AME Church. This is the figure the AME Church provided the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* in 1991. The independent Glenmary and Kosmin NSRI studies, however, did not corroborate that figure. The version of the *Yearbook* published in 2000 shows a 1999 membership estimate for the AME of 2,500,000, which may be an inclusive/adherent figure. That *Yearbook* ranked the AME Church as the 12th largest U.S. denomination. The current figure from the AME's [official web site](#) is 1,200,000 members.

Other studies: Glenmary and Kosmin NSRI:

In the 1990 Glenmary study, which published denominational statistics for every county and every state in the United States, the **National Baptist Convention (U.S.A.)**, the **National Baptist Convention of America**, the **Church of God in Christ**, and the **African Methodist Episcopal Church** were *not* among the 133 denominations data was collected for individually. (The figures for these religious bodies are probably part of the aggregate figure in this study's "Black Baptists Estimate" category.) The other religious bodies in this "Top 10 Religious Bodies" list (from Kosmin) *were* also detailed in the Glenmary study. (The entire Glenmary data set is available at [American Religion Data Archive](#), and in parsed-out HTML table form as part of the [Adherents.com](#) main data set.) The existence of two extensive studies: Glenmary (based on organizational reporting) and Kosmin/NSRI (based on statistical sampling of self-identification), *both* for 1990, provides a high degree of reliability and an interesting opportunity to correlate self-identification figures with organizational reporting figures.

Gallup Polling Data over Last Ten Years

Gallup is one of the nation's leading polling organizations. Along with many other questions, it has asked questions about religious preference for many years.

The data in the table below is from a [summary article](#) released by Gallup on 13 April 2001. The figures for 2001 are from a poll conducted in February 2001. The other figures represent aggregate figures from more than one poll conducted during the year shown.

The article describes the methodology for the February 2001 poll:

The results reported here are based on telephone interviews with a randomly selected national sample of 1,016 adults, 18 years and older, conducted February 19-21, 2001. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

These figures are the results of responses to two questions. The first determined people's general religion: *What is your religious preference – Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish or an Orthodox religion such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?*

Then, if the respondent said they were a Protestant, a follow up question was asked: *What specific denomination is that?*

Year	% Catholic	% Southern Baptist	% other Baptist	% Methodist	% Presbyterian	% Episcopal	% Lutheran	% Pentecostal	% other Protestant	% Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	% Eastern Orthodox	% Jewish	% Other specific	% None	% Undesignated
2001	25	6	10	9	3	2	6	3	12	1	*	2	3	8	5
2000	27	8	10	9	5	3	7	2	12	1	1	2	5	6	2
1999	28	9	9	8	4	2	6	3	13	2	1	2	2	9	1
1998	27	8	11	9	3	2	5	4	17	1	2	2	4	6	2
1997	26	8	11	9	4	2	6	3	14	1	1	2	4	6	2
1996	25	8	10	9	4	2	6	3	16	1	1	3	3	7	2
1995	27	10	9	9	4	2	6	3	15	1	1	2	5	6	2
1994	24	10	10	10	4	2	7	3	18	1	1	2	4	6	2
1993	26	10	10	10	3	2	6	2	18	1	2	1	5	6	2
1992	26	9	10	10	5	2	7	1	17	1	1	2	5	7	2

* Indicates a result less than 0.5%

Observations

Some observations can be made about the Gallup polling data. One important point is that the Gallup polls are based on smaller sample sizes, and thus have a higher margin of error, the Kosmin/NSRI study. The sample size for years previous to 2001 are not indicated in the report and may be smaller than the approximately 1,000 people surveyed in 2001.

In asking about religious preference, the Gallup poll specifically offers four choices: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Orthodox. Prior to 1977, the question excluded Orthodox and simply asked: *What is your religious preference – is it Protestant, Roman Catholic or Jewish?*

It is possible that the wording of this question leads to an undercount of groups not specifically mentioned in the question.

Muslims are another group which is not specifically mentioned in the question. Gallup and other polls clearly indicate that Muslims do not comprise 3% of the U.S. population (as many Muslim organizations currently claim), but it is difficult to make a fair assessment based on these data for a variety of reasons. For one, "Muslim" isn't a choice offered in the questioning. Also, many American Muslims are new immigrants and do not have phones, or are reluctant to participate in phone interviews, due to their alternative legal immigration status. Also, the Gallup reports do not indicate how many of the respondents included in "Other specific" are Muslims.

It should also be noted that because of the limited sample size and subsequent 3% margin of error, minor fluctuations in the percentages shown are not likely to represent actual changes. For example, the polling data shows that about 2% of Americans said they were Episcopalians throughout the ten year period, except in 2000, when the figure was 3%. It would be illogical to conclude that in the year 2000 1% of Americans suddenly joined the Episcopal Church, and then left it again by February 2001. Indeed, the official records of the Episcopal Church indicate that there were no such dramatic changes. Minor changes such as that are only a result of statistical sampling error.

In fact, the only really dramatic, significant change in the Gallup data is a decline in the proportion of Americans who identified themselves as Southern Baptists. From 10% in 1993, the figure declined steadily to 6% in 2001, a change greater than the margin of error, and a change verified by data from other sources. In fact, the Southern Baptist Convention itself, reported a membership decline in 1998, and for other years, in which it has reported growth, the reported growth has been far smaller than the national population growth.

Top 10 Religious Bodies with Most Churches in the U.S., 1990

Religious Body	Churches	Adherents	Adherents per Church
Southern Baptist Convention	37,893	18,923,085	499
United Methodist Church	37,203	11,072,711	298
Catholic	22,400	53,308,466	2,380
Churches of Christ	13,092	1,680,041	128
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	11,416	3,543,706	310
Assemblies of God	11,144	2,160,839	194
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	10,899	5,222,445	479
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	9,207	3,540,484	385
Jehovah's Witnesses	8,547	1,381,000	161
Episcopal Church	7,299	2,429,013	333

Sources: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990*, published by the Glenmary Research Center, P.O. Box 507, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Principle investigator: Church Growth Research Center, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, MO. This data source was obtained from the American Religion Data Archive; **Figure for Jehovah's Witnesses churches ("Kingdom Halls"):** Mead, Frank S. (revised by Samuel S. Hill), *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (New Ninth Edition), Abingdon Press: Nashville, Tennessee (1990), pg. 123; **Figure for Jehovah's Witnesses adherents:** Kosmin, Barry A. and Seymour P. Lachman. *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*, Harmony Books: New York (1993), pg. 15-17, (National Survey of Religious Identification: survey of 113,000 Americans).

These figures probably represent congregations, not actual buildings. Some congregations meet in rented or shared facilities, but for the most part each "church" in the figures above also represents a physical building.

Most Ubiquitous Churches in the U.S., 1990

Below is a list of churches (religious bodies) which are fairly ubiquitous throughout the United States. Each of these churches is one of the "Top Twenty" largest religious bodies in a large number of U.S. states. This list does *not* include every religious body which was among the top 20 largest in any U.S. state, only those that were in the top 20 in *many* U.S. states.

Church	Number of States in which the church is among the Top 20 largest churches in the state
Catholic Church	50
United Methodist Church	50
Episcopal Church	50
Assemblies of God	50
Southern Baptist Convention	49
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	48
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	47
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	46
Black Baptists Estimate *	42
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod	40
Seventh-Day Adventists	39
Jewish Estimate *	38
Church of The Nazarene	38
American Baptist Churches in The U.S.A.	36
Churches of Christ	31
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	31
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	26
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)	22

* **Jews** and **Black Baptists**, of course, are classifications of religious groups and not actual religious bodies. This is how these groups were counted in the tabulation of data in this study.

Religious Bodies Among the Top 10 Largest Denominations in Individual U.S. States, 1990

This list includes every religious body from the Glenmary data set that was among the top 10 denominations in one or more U.S. states.

Church	Number of States in which the church is among the Top 10 largest churches in the state
Catholic	50
United Methodist Church	50
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	45
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	42
Southern Baptist Convention	36
Episcopal Church	36
Assemblies of God	36
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod	29
American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.	28
United Church of Christ	21
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	20
Churches of Christ	13

Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	13
Church of the Nazarene	9
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	9
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)	8
Seventh-day Adventists	6
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	6
Unitarian Universalist Association	5
Reformed Church in America	5
Free Will Baptist, National Association of	4
Baptist Missionary Association of America	4
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	3
Presbyterian Church in America	3
International Church of the Foursquare Gospel	2
Armenian Apostolic Church	2
Wesleyan Church	1
United Baptists	1
Pentecostal Holiness Church, Inc.	1
North American Baptist Conference	1
Moravian Church	1
Mennonite Church	1
Cumberland Presbyterian Church	1
Church of the Brethren	1
Christian Reformed Church	1
Christian and Missionary Alliance	1
Baptist General Conference	1
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations	1

Click [here](#) to see table with states listed.

Religious Bodies Among the Top 4 Largest Denominations in Individual U.S. States, 1990

This list includes every religious body from the Glenmary data set that was among the top 4 denominations in one or more U.S. states.

Church	Number of States in which the church is among the Top 4 largest churches in the state
Catholic	48
United Methodist Church	44
Southern Baptist Convention	27
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	15
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	13
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	10
Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod	9
American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.	7
Episcopal Church	7
United Church of Christ	7

Churches of Christ	4
Assemblies of God	3
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	2
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	2
Baptist Missionary Association of America	1
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	1

Click [here](#) to see table with states listed.

Source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990*, published by the Glenmary Research Center, P.O. Box 507, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Principle investigator: Church Growth Research Center, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, MO. This data source was obtained from the **American Religion Data Archive**.

Note: For the "Top 10" and "Top 4" ubiquitous lists above, the Glenmary categories: "Black Baptists (estimate)", "Jewish (estimate)", "Independent - Charismatic" and "Independent - Non-charismatic" were left out of the calculations, as these are categories, and do not represent actual religious bodies.

Note: Jehovah's Witnesses were not included in this study. But they would probably be on this list if comparable data were available for them.

Religious Bodies which are *the Largest Church* in One or More U.S. States, 1990

Below is a list of religious bodies which are the **largest** church in one or more U.S. states:

Denomination	Number of States in which this Church is <i>the Largest Denomination</i>	States
Catholic	36	Rhode Island (63%), Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota, Michigan, California, Maine, Nebraska, Texas, Hawaii, South Dakota, Ohio, Iowa, Arizona, Delaware, Maryland, Montana, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Nevada, Indiana, Florida, Washington, Oregon, Alaska (8%)
Southern Baptist Convention	10	Mississippi (33%), Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky, South Carolina, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia (12%)
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	2	Utah (71%), Idaho (27%)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	1	North Dakota (28%)
United Methodist Church	1	West Virginia (10%)

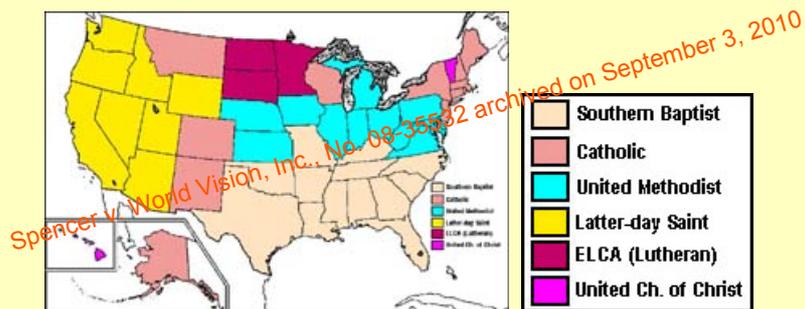
Click [here](#) for a map illustrating this list.

It may be noted that churches which are numerically the largest in a particular state vary widely in what percentage of the state's residents belong to the church. The Catholic Church is the largest religious body in many states, from Rhode Island, where 63% of the state's residents are Catholic, to Alaska, where only 8% of the residents are Catholic. As with many Western states, Alaska is a less-recently settled part of the United States and its religious makeup is more heterogeneous. In many states, no single Protestant denomination has more members than the unified Catholics, even though the state may not traditionally be thought of as a "heavily Catholic state."

Religious Bodies which have the

Most Congregations of any Denomination in One or More States, 1990

Denomination	Number of States in which this Church has the most congregations	States
Southern Baptist Convention	13	Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas
Catholic Church	12	Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, Wisconsin
United Methodist Church	12	Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	8	Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	3	Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota
United Church of Christ	2	Hawaii, Vermont



(Click on map to see a larger version.)



(Other map: [Largest non-Catholic Religious Body in Each State](#), by number of adherents.)

In terms of raw membership, the Catholics are clearly the largest church in more states than any other religious body. However, if one counts as the "Top Church" the church with the most congregations, Southern Baptists are the "Top Church" in the most states: 13 compared to 12 for either the Catholics or United Methodists.

From a practical standpoint, however, the Catholic Church in the U.S. is a more cohesive, unified organization. The Southern Baptists' extreme congregational polity and current internal schism (often referred to as "The Controversy") makes them more of a convention than a denomination (religious body) in the traditional sense. (Their name accurately reflects this fact.)

If one counts all denominations which are among the "Top 3 Churches with the Most Congregations in One or More U.S. States" then the following religious bodies would be added to the above list: American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A., Assemblies of God, Churches of Christ, Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, Orthodox Church in America (in Alaska), Christian Churches and Churches of Christ (in Indiana), Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) (in Georgia) and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990*, published by the Glenmary Research Center, P.O. Box 507, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Principle investigator: Church Growth Research Center, Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City, MO. This data source was obtained from the **American Religion Data Archive**.

* **2004 total population numbers** were calculated by multiplying each group's percent of the total adult 2001 population (207,882,353) by the 2004 total population (using the June 1, 2004 U.S. Census Bureau extrapolated estimate of 293,382,953 total Americans). The U.S. Census Bureau total U.S. population estimate for 2000, based on the actual 2000 Census, was: 281,421,906. The U.S. Census Bureau total U.S. population estimate for July 1, 2001 was: 293,655,404. The adult (ages 18 and over) population estimate for July 1, 2001 was: 220,377,406. The total adult population for 2001 used in the 2001 ARIS study (apparently counting only adults aged 21 and over) was: 207,882,353. For 2001 figures, see: 293655404<http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/SC-est2004-01.html>. *This method of extrapolating the 2004 total population of each religious group from the 2001 adult population of each group does not factor in differences in the average number of children per adult for each religious group.*

Please feel free to send comments, questions, adherent statistics, spelling corrections, etc. to webmaster@adherents.com.

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