

Community Profile Builder In-Depth Guide on Religion

<http://www.thearda.com/DemographicMap/>

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This guide is designed to help you understand the religious organizations and composition of people in your neighborhood, community, or any area you select. Using recent data, you can generate maps and a report that will help you to learn more about the area you want to serve.

- What congregations, ministries, religious schools, and faith-related businesses are in your community?
- What religious groups are present in your community?
- What religious groups are growing and declining in your community?

These are just a few of the many questions that can be explored using this guide and the ARDA's Community Profile Builder.

First Steps

Using the ARDA's Community Profile Builder is easy. The following are step-by-step instructions on how to start gathering quality data on your community:

1. First, go to the following address: <http://www.thearda.com/DemographicMap/>
2. Enter your U.S. ZIP code, city and state, or complete address in the box at the top of the page and click "Go." After clicking "Go," the map will take you to your community and show you all of the congregations in the area.
3. Enter the radius (in miles) that you would like the online tool to include. One option is to think of driving distance. How far do people typically travel to come to your congregation?
4. Click on the map to set the center point for the radius you selected. A dashed circle will appear showing you the areas from which the tool will draw its data.
5. Finally, click the "Profile" button. Doing so will generate your report for the area you selected.

6. This first page will give you some introductory information about the area you selected. For more information, see “About Your Profile” at the end of this guide.

7. Investigate religion in your community by clicking on the “Religion” tab!

Religion in Your Community

This first page of religion data provides the following information about religion in your community.

Local Congregations – What congregations are near your own congregation? What denominations are they affiliated with? This list of congregations may also include ministries, religious schools, and faith-based businesses. In applying this information to your congregation, look for other congregations or ministries with which you may want to collaborate. If you notice errors in what congregations are listed or their denominational affiliations, please contact InfoGroup at: contentfeedback@infogroup.com.

Religious Change – What religious groups are present in your *county*? What groups are growing, stable, or declining? Want to learn more about a certain religious group? Click on the denomination, religious tradition, or religious family to learn more.

Exploring Religion in More Depth

Want to learn even more about religion in your community? Find the yellow box under the “Religion” tab: “click here for additional reports on this county/state/metro area.” You can now get additional reports for:

- Single counties
- Multiple counties
- Metropolitan and micropolitan areas
- States
- The United States

These reports contain information on the number of congregations and adherents over multiple decades. Adherents include all full members, their children, and others who regularly attend services. You can look at data for specific decades and also examine change over decades. To learn more about a certain religious group, click on the denomination, religious tradition, or religious family name.

How can your congregation engage in the community?

From *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*

1. Donate Goods or Money

Pros and Cons (pp. 42-53)

- Can be simple and inexpensive
- Not as relational as other models
- Does not address deeper personal and structural issues that contribute to the need

Tips to remember

- Seek information about what is needed (pp. 44-46)
- Communicate needs clearly with attenders (p. 52)
- Consider unrestricted giving for monetary donations (pp. 49-50)

2. Mobilize Volunteers

Pros and Cons (pp. 54-56)

- Supporting, not duplicating existing community efforts
- More relational
- More attainable for congregations that cannot organize their own programs
- Some attenders may be too busy

Tips to remember

- Match volunteering opportunities with attenders' strengths and interests (pp. 58-60, 62-63)
- Communicate opportunities with clear instructions and expectations (p. 62-64, 66)
- Provide training, if needed (pp. 64-65)

3. Partner with Other Organizations

Pros and Cons (pp. 68-70)

- Avoids duplicating existing community efforts
- Can maximize staff and volunteers, resources, and space
- Takes time to develop collaboration, clear expectations

Tips to Remember

- Carefully choose partners (pp. 73-74)
- Develop clear expectations and roles (pp. 69-71)
- Engage in open and frequent communication (pp. 79-80)

4. Advocate around Public Policy

Pros and Cons (pp. 82-84)

- Can result in structural change
- Contributes to in-depth knowledge of social issues
- Often involves interfaith collaboration
- May be too political for some congregations
- Does not always result in desired change

Tips to Remember

- Match area of advocacy to congregations' interests and identity (pp. 91-92)
- Partner with local, regional, national, or international policy organization (pp. 80-90)
- Develop theological rationale for advocacy (p. 91)

5. Engage in Community Organizing

Pros and Cons (pp. 96-100)

- Is more relational with a stronger focus on empowering the community
- Contributes to in-depth knowledge of social issues
- Often involves interfaith collaboration
- May be too political for some congregations
- Can result in structural change but does not always do so

Tips to Remember

- Involve and build relationships with a wide range of people (pp. 103-104)
- Identify and equip grassroots leaders (p. 104)
- Identify issue, which officials to engage, and desired change (pp. 105-107)

6. Develop a Ministry Program

Pros and Cons (pp. 111-114)

- Can tailor to interests and identity of congregation
- Can address community issues that other organizations are not focusing on
- Needs clear vision and effective implementation
- Requires more resources and expertise

Tips to Remember

- Align program goals with attendees' interests and congregational identity (p. 122)
- Develop a clear program design and specific goals (pp. 117-121)
- Ensure that the program does not duplicate other community efforts (p. 111)
- Consider whether your congregation has the resources (staffing, financial resources, facilities, etc.) to develop its own program (p. 111)

7. Create a Nonprofit

Pros and Cons (pp. 126-129)

- Engages a wider range of volunteers, funding opportunities
- Can drift from faith orientation, connection to congregation
- Often requires more financial resources
- Unattainable for many congregations

Tips to Remember

- Consider whether the congregation has the capacity to launch a nonprofit (pp. 125-126)
- Develop a board of directors and clarify its role vis-à-vis the congregation (pp. 131-136)
- Commit to long-term partnership with nonprofit and its board (pp. 137-139)

For more information, please see: Joy F. Skjogstad. 2013. *7 Creative Models for Community Ministry*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.

About Your Profile

Geographic Area

On the “Introduction” tab, the dashed circle represents the radius you designated on the previous page. The map also shows the [Census block groups](#) (areas of 600-3000 people) that are included in the report. It is important to realize that any Census block group that is touched by the radius you designate is included, even if the radius only covers a small portion of the total Census block group. The map also provides markers for each congregation on the map. In the text above the map, you can find the total number of block groups included in the report, the counties from which these results are drawn, and the total population included in the report. This information is repeated at the top of the “Religion” tab as well.

Information about the specific congregations in your community is limited to the profile area you selected. Data on the growth and decline of religious groups in your community is based on the county-level and includes all of the counties in the profile area you selected.

Data Sources

The information about specific congregations in your community comes from [InfoGroup](#). The Infogroup database powers the top 5 Internet search engines and more than 90% of in-vehicle navigation systems in North America. This database provides information on more than 350,000 houses of worship. The data are collected from yellow page directories, telephone verification, denominational directories, white pages, utility sources, and church websites. The final stage of the compilation is calling each congregation to verify their information. Infogroup makes approximately 1.5 million calls per year. The names, locations and denominational affiliation of congregations shown on the ARDA’s GIS maps and reports are based on data from Infogroup. If you want to offer additions or corrections, please notify Infogroup at: contentfeedback@infogroup.com.

The information about the growth and decline of specific religious groups comes from the 2010 U.S. Religion Census, which was collected by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies ([ASARB](#)) and includes statistics for 236 religious groups, providing information on the number of their congregations and adherents within each state and county in the United States. Clifford Grammich, Kirk Hadaway, Richard Houseal, Dale E. Jones, Alexei Krindatch, Richie Stanley and Richard H. Taylor supervised the collection. For more information, go to: http://www.thearda.com/RCMS2010/RCMS_Notes.asp.