

Religion and Politics

What is the relationship between religion and politics? How is religion related to political attitudes, such as abortion and the war in Iraq?

This learning module explores these and other relationships using the Religion and Politics Survey 2011. Research has found important links between religion and a variety of political attitudes and behaviors; this module will allow you to learn more about these important relationships.

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

The ARDA's large database of surveys includes a number of surveys conducted by Pew Research Center on various subjects related to religion. One of these, the *Religion and Politics Survey, November 2011*, will be used in this module.

This poll includes questions about political affiliation, political attitudes, and voting behavior.

Find this survey on the ARDA and open it. For assistance locating a data file on the ARDA, click [here](#).

You should now see a description of the study. Read through the description and answer the following questions:

1. When was the survey conducted?

2. What kinds of questions were asked?

You can look at the questions that were asked in the Religion and Politics Survey, as well as the responses given for each question, by opening the codebook for the dataset.



Open the codebook and browse through the questions.

3. Find the variable SEX (Question 129). This variable describes whether the respondent is male or female. What percentage of the people interviewed in the poll were male?

4. What percentage of the people interviewed were female?

The ARDA can also be used to perform simple analyses of the variables that are included in the datasets. By using the “Analyze results” tool, you can compare the responses to each question for different types of people.

5. Find question 141, with the variable PARTY. What is the question that is being asked in this variable?

6. List the **percentage** of respondents who reported that they considered themselves a Republican, Democrat, or Independent:

Republican: _____

Democrat: _____

Independent: _____

7. Using “Analyze Results”, find the **percentage** of respondents in each of these religious groups who reported that they were Democrats?

Protestant: _____

Roman Catholic: _____

None: _____

8. What percentage of respondents with an educational attainment level less than high school reported that they considered themselves a Democrat? How do these results compare with Republicans and Independents under the same education level?

Because this survey includes a question about political ideology, you can compare the characteristics of people who are more likely to belong to each party.

Find the variable that asks which political ideology they lean more towards. (Hint: use question 143, variable IDEO) Use the “Analyze” feature to find out more about the characteristics of people who reported ascribing to each political ideology.

9. What religious affiliation (Protestant, Catholic, or None) is most strongly associated with being Very Conservative, Very liberal, and Moderate?

10. What is the relationship between church attendance and political ideology? (Hint: find the church attendance question, variable ATTEND).

11. Based on your answers to the questions above, what relationship seems to exist between political ideology and religion?

You can also use this dataset to learn about the relationship between religion and other political attitudes, such as attitudes about abortion or the war in Iraq. Answer each of the following questions about how these attitudes are related to religion and other demographic characteristics.

12. Many Americans have very strong attitudes about abortion. What relationship seems to exist between abortion attitudes (112, Q71) and religion? Are abortion attitudes related to religious affiliation and political ideology?

13. The war in Iraq has also evoked strong opinions. Find two variables in the dataset, which ask about opinions regarding the war; list the variable names and numbers below. How are attitudes about the war related to religion? What do these variables tell you about the relationship between religion and attitudes about the war in Iraq?

14. What have you learned from these exercises about the relationship between religion and politics? What political beliefs seem to be characteristic of each of the major religious groups included in the sample? Were the relationships that you found here surprising, or what you expected? Do any other demographic characteristics seem to be particularly important for explaining political beliefs?
