Association of Religion Data Archives provides free access to data, resources

By Andrew Whitehead
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The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) is committed to providing free access to trustworthy data and resources that will allow you to find answers to the tough but essential questions you are asking about your congregation and community. COVID-19 fundamentally reshaped the organization of American religion and there really is no going back. Leaders need good information to continue adjusting and making decisions.

ARDA currently offer dozens of free online and interactive resources on a significantly updated website. Consider using these data tools with your students to support their leadership in ministry—some will help you look to the future, while others will help you better understand the past. To follow are brief introductions to five of our most popular tools.
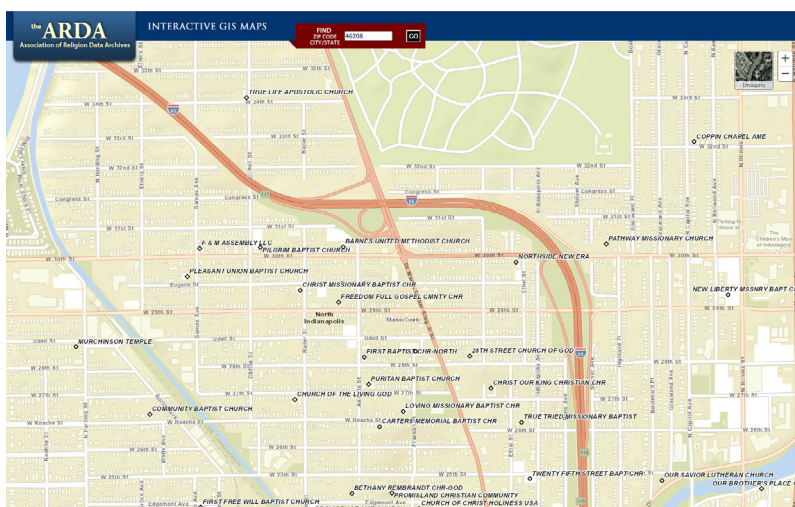

1. Community Profile Builder and Guides

The Community Profile Builder provides free online information about any community in the United States. The initial map shows the locations of other congregations in a chosen area using any zip code, city and state, or complete address. The Profile Builder then gathers and displays the social, economic, and religious information about the selected community or neighborhood.

Congregational leaders and pastors use this resource to gain a data-driven sense of a given congregation's context. This information helps them to know how best to serve their communities, as well as what types of ministries their congregations might consider starting. For instance, you can answer questions like, "Does our congregation match the demographics of our surrounding community?" "Are there a lot of families with young children around my congregation or primarily older adults?" or "Are there areas near my congregation where the poverty rate is high?"

The Profile Builder draws these data from several sources including the US Census and the

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Religious Congregations and Membership Study. The ARDA also offers nine free Community Profile Builder Guides that assist users with detailed directions and thoughts on how to interpret and best use the Community Profile. Prior users share how the Community Profile Builder helped them better understand the needs of their neighbors, figure out where to start a new ministry, and decide how their faith communities could best reach out to their physical communities.

2. *Religious Group Profiles*

For easy use, our Religious Group Profiles gather nearly all the ARDA's information about more than 1,000 religious groups in the US on one page. Want to know how many Southern Baptists adherents there are in the US over the decades, which US counties have the most Catholics, or where the United Methodist Church congregations are in your community? Simply choose "Groups" in the "Group Profiles" megamenu under the "US Religion" tab on the homepage. Select the religious group of interest in the drop-down menu and click "View Group." Users are also able to view membership maps by state. Find all this and more with just the click of a button.

3. *Congregations tab*

The Congregations tab in the main menu on the ARDA homepage is a one-stop shop for resources useful to congregations. The Congregations megamenu includes Community Profiles where users can map their chosen community and explore census and religion data. The Religion Census option provides membership reports for metro areas, cities, or states over time or in present-day maps. Group profiles and maps are also available, as well as a page of reference links.

4. *Family Trees and History Timelines*

Our newly redesigned Family Trees resource provides a treasure trove of rich history for dozens of major religious families in the United States. These diagrams chart the lineage of each religion family.

The ARDA offers a static image or a dynamic image the user can manipulate at will to highlight a particular branch of each family tree. Users can also hover over each entry on the dynamic family tree to read group descriptions for more than 1,000 entries. Color-coding helps identify which groups are still active and which are defunct. Static or dynamic images can be downloaded for later use.

Church history professors and students, for example, can interactively explore hundreds of historical events, contexts, and people on the ARDA's nine American Religion Timelines. Each timeline provides in-depth historical information on the most significant events and people in the history of American religion. Dedicated timelines exist for Social Movements, Religious Minorities (non-Christians), Race/Ethnicity, Women and Religion, as well as Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, and Presbyterian Events and People.

5. *National Profiles*

Our National Profiles bring together mounds of information and data for more than 250 nations of the world. Users can find indices that measure the religious regulation, religious minority discrimination, state funding of religions, and society discrimination of minority religions. Scrolling through the page brings you to charts demonstrating changes to religious composition in the nation over time. A short history of the country and a map are also available.

National / Regional Profiles
Included Nations/Regions: Afghanistan [x], South-Central Asia [x], The World [x]

Religion and State (RAS) Indexes[1]
Religion Indexes (Afghanistan)

State Funding of Religion	Societal Discrimination of Minority Religions	State Regulation of Majority or All Religions	State Discrimination of Minority Religions
3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Summary categories: None (0/3), Low (1/3), Medium (2/3), High (3/3)	Summary categories: None (0/3), Low (1/3), Medium (2/3), High (3/3)	Summary categories: None (0/3), Low (1/3), Medium (2/3), High (3/3)	Summary categories: None (0/3), Low (1/3), Medium (2/3), High (3/3)
Ranking: 13/253	Ranking: 20/253	Ranking: 30/253	Ranking: 26/253

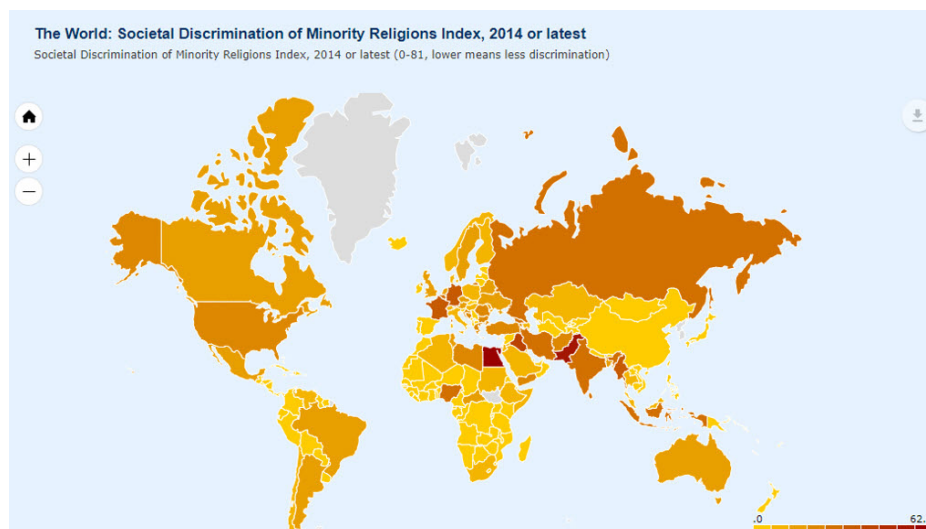For details on how these indexes were constructed, click here.

Afghanistan: Major World Religions (1900 - 2050) (World Religion Database, 2020)[2]

Digging deeper, you will find breakdowns of the number of adherents to various major world religions over time for each nation. We also offer numerous socioeconomic measures that provide a robust overview of each nation and compare it to the world at large, as well as its particular region of the world. Constitutional clauses, survey findings, and multiple social and political measures are also available for each nation.

You can also create and explore international maps using dozens of variables and indices. Focus on particular regions of the world or view every country around the globe at once. Possible choices include a host of different religions, religious freedom and regulation indices, and many socioeconomic measures.

Finding trustworthy sources of information and data continues to be important as we make sense of where the pandemic has taken us and what we must try to do next. These handful of resources will prove useful and serve as a jumping-off point to exploring everything else the ARDA has to offer. We, at the ARDA, strive to find out how the data we archive can best serve your needs. Reach out to us with your questions (support@thearda.com) and follow us on Twitter (@ReligionData).

The World: Societal Discrimination of Minority Religions Index, 2014 or latest
Societal Discrimination of Minority Religions Index, 2014 or latest (0-81, lower means less discrimination)

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