

## Examining the Social, Political, and Economic Impact of Religious Organizations

### Abstract

Religious congregations and faith-based organizations play significant role in the lives of their participants and the communities they serve. Understanding the impact of religious organizations requires examining their service provision, political participation, and economic practices. Most congregations participate in some type of service-related activity, and the most common activities involve meeting people's immediate needs for food, healthcare, clothing, and shelter. Although a smaller percentage of congregations participate in political activity than in service-related activity, the political participation rates are nonetheless sizable, and congregations are involved in a wide variety of political activities. At the same time, most faith-based organizations engage in some type of service provision or political participation. Finally, while nearly one third of all charitable giving goes to religious organizations, little is known about how they receive, manage, and spend their financial resources and the scale of their social service provision and political activity. Analyzing the economic practices and external impact of religious organizations will provide a better understanding the role of religion in U.S. society.

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