



Who Are Worshipers' Friends?

Findings from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Worshippers are involved in their communities in many ways (link to community report). What can we learn from their personal connections with others in the community—that is, their friendship ties? What did worshippers from over 2,000 congregations that participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey¹ tell us about their friends and whether their friends attend a congregation?

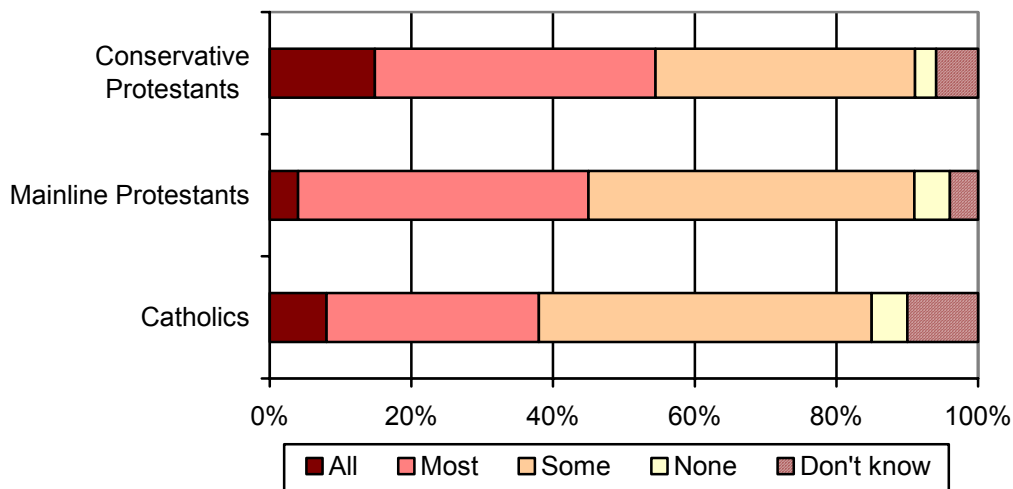
Do Worshipers' Friends Know One Another?

- Do the many friends of worshippers know one another? About half of worshippers (53%) say “most know each other.” Another 31% report that “only a few know each other,” and 4% say “none of my close friends know each other.” At the other extreme, 8% have friends who “all know each other.”
- Younger worshippers appear to have tighter friendship circles—almost one-quarter of those under the age of 25 (24%) say all of their close friends know one another. Among those 25 and older, there is little difference (about 6% have close friends who all know one another).

Do the Friends of Worshipers Also Attend Worship Services Somewhere?

- Given that most of worshippers' close friends know each other, is it a safe assumption that most also attend worship services somewhere? No. In fact, only 8% of worshippers say that *all* of their friends attend worship regularly. Instead, the majority (80%) report that most (34%) or some (46%) are regular attendees at a congregation somewhere. Older worshippers (65 and older; 13%), women (10%), and people without children at home (10%) are more likely to say *all* of their friends attend worship services.
- Worshipers in small congregations with less than 100 in worship are more likely than those in larger congregations to say *all* of the close friends attend worship services (14%). Similarly, those in conservative Protestant churches (15%) are more likely to say *all* of their close friends attend worship somewhere.² In fact, 55% of conservative Protestants say all or most of the friends are involved in some congregation (see Figure 1).

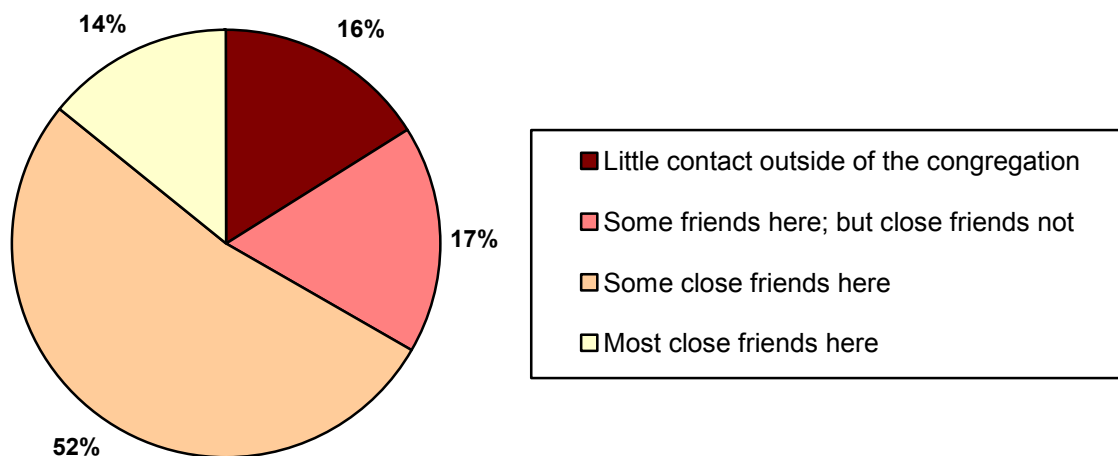
Figure 1: Do Close Friends Attend Worship Somewhere?



Do Worshipers Have Close Friends Within Their Own Congregation?

- Most worshipers (53%) have some close friends in their congregation as well as others who are not part of their congregation. Another 14% say “most of my close friends are part of this congregation.” Yet 16% have little contact with others from their congregation outside of congregational activities, and 17% have some friends in their congregation, but report their closest friends are not involved there.

Figure 2: Do Close Friends Attend Your Congregation?



Data Sources

U.S. Congregational Life Survey (2001). Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce. Louisville, Kentucky: U.S. Congregations and Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

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¹ Over 300,000 worshipers in over 2,000 congregations took part in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey in April 2001. Congregations were selected to be representative of all congregations across the country. For more information: www.USCongregations.org

² Congregations were grouped into five categories based on their denomination or faith group: (1) Catholic, (2) mainline Protestant, (3) conservative Protestant, (4) congregations in historically Black denominations, and (5) others (non-Christian congregations). Most of the items on community included here were answered by a sample of respondents only (n=1,156), which results in sample sizes for historically Black denomination churches and non-Christian congregations that are too small for analysis. Thus, differences by faith group presented here include only the first three denominational families.