

# FINDINGS FROM THE AUGUST 2007 INMATE FAITH PREFERENCE SURVEY

Prepared by Adult Research Branch  
November 2007

## INTRODUCTION

In June of 2007, the Division of Community Partnerships requested assistance from the Adult Research Branch (ARB) in determining inmates' religious preferences. In response, the ARB agreed to conduct a survey. This report summarizes the findings of that survey.

## BACKGROUND

Under Section 5009 of the California Penal Code the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) is responsible for making reasonable efforts to ensure that the religious and spiritual needs of the inmate population are met. To provide religious services to the approximately 170,000 inmates housed in its 33 adult institutions, the CDCR employs 145 full- and part-time chaplains of the Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish faiths as well as Native American Spiritual Leaders. Services to other faith groups such as Seventh Day Adventist, Buddhist, etc., are provided by volunteers.

In an April 2006 report to the Legislature<sup>1</sup> on religious programs in the prison system, a concern was raised that the department's current staffing does not meet national standards. The American Correctional Association (ACA) recommends a chaplain-to-inmate ratio of 1:500 for correctional institutions. California's chaplain-to-inmate ratio is approximately 1:1,700, which would suggest another 600 plus chaplains would be needed if the ACA recommendation were adopted. As part of an effort to better quantify the gaps in religious programming and determine appropriate chaplaincy staffing levels, the department committed to conducting a faith preference survey of inmates.

## MAJOR PROJECT GOALS

The major project goal was to identify inmate faith preferences so that the Division of Community Partnerships can determine unmet chaplaincy need by religious group. This was to be accomplished in two steps. The short-term plan

---

<sup>1</sup> Religious Programs in State Prisons, Legislative Report, April 2005, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

called for a survey of inmate faith preference using the five State Personal Board recognized categories of chaplains (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Native American) to be completed by September 2007. The longer term plan called for developing a periodic process for determining inmates' religions preference's using more detailed faith categories. The expected time frame for completing the second portion of the project is December 2007. The following findings are from the first phase of this effort.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

What percentage of the inmate population identifies with each of the five major religious groups?

## REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Since 1982 there have been five religious preference studies; the last one was completed 16 years ago in March 1991. In December of 1982 / January of 1983 and again in January / February of 1988, religious preference information was collected from 1,568 and 1,344 inmate identification sheets of all inmates processed through the California Department of Corrections Northern Reception Center. In April of 1988 and additional 459 files from the Northern Reception Center were reviewed. In August of 1990 a survey was conducted in the conservation camps supervised by the Sierra Conservation Center. In this study of 3,750 inmates, religious preference was based on an in person declaration. Finally, in March of 1991 staff reviewed approximately 4,800 C-Files of inmates in 20 institutions. The results of these studies are show in Table 1 below along with the results of the current study.

## METHODOLOGY

The study included: (1) randomly sampling a sufficient number of inmates in the 33 institutions; (2) weighting the sample responses by race/ethnicity and gender to represent the total inmate population; and (3) using the sample data to infer the proportions of religious preferences among the entire prison population of approximately 177,000 inmates.

A computer generated random sample of 500 inmates was drawn from the Offender Based Information System (OBIS) on July 30, 2007. This sample was sufficiently large enough to ensure a 97% certainty rate that the religious preferences of the sample population were representative of the religious preferences of the total inmate population. Each of the 33 institutions was sent a

data collection form populated with the names and CDC numbers of the randomly selected inmates residing in their facility. The institutions were given a deadline of August 20, 2007 to complete and return their data collection forms.

The institutions were instructed to pull the Social Factors sheet from the inmate's C-file and record word for word the contents of the "religion box" on the appropriate line of the data collection sheet. The data collection sheets were then forwarded to the ARB where staff reviewed the data and re-coded the religion field into one of the following categories: Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Other None, or Unknown. The raw data was then weighted by race/ethnicity and gender to make the sample population representative of the total population.

### LIMITATIONS

This survey captured only inmate religious preference at the time of incarceration. The information on religious preference was collected from the Social Factors Sheet that is completed upon entry into the prison system. Should an inmate's religious preference change from one religion to another during incarceration, the survey would not capture the new religious preference.

### ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Of the 500 randomly selected inmates, 40 C-files could not be located, and four C-files were missing Social Factors Sheets. In most of the instances where the C-file could not be located the reason given was the inmate had been released on parole or transferred to another institution. This was not unexpected since the sample is drawn at a point in time and the inmate population is dynamic.

The results of the survey are shown in last column of Table 1 along with the results from previous surveys.

**Table 1 – Comparison of Previous Faith Preference Surveys**

	DEC/JAN 82-83 <sup>(1)</sup>	JAN/FEB 88 <sup>(1)</sup>	APR 88 <sup>(1)</sup>	AUG 90 <sup>(2)</sup>	MAR 91 <sup>(3)</sup>	JUL 07
Catholic	29.3%	34.0%	31.0%	30.0%	31.0%	26.3%
Islam	2.0%	1.6%	1.9%	3.0%	1.5%	2.4%
Jewish	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	1.0%	0.4%	0.0%
Native American	0.5%	0.0%	0.4%	1.0%	0.2%	0.9%
Protestant	43.2%	43.0%	43.0%	42.0%	42.4%	49.3%
Buddhist			0.7%			
None/Unknown/Misc.	25.2%	21.0%	22.5%			
None				21.0%	10.4%	13.4%
Other				2%	3.5%	2.9%
Unknown					10.7%	4.7%
N	1,568	1,344	459	3,750	4,798	455

(1) unpublished surveys

(2) A Survey of Religious Programming in the Conservation Camps Supervised by Sierra Conservation Center as of August 1, 1990

(3) Chaplain Staffing Study, July 1991

- As in previous surveys, those inmates identifying as Protestant represent the largest faith group. The current survey results are slightly higher at 49.3 percent compared to a range of 42.0 to 43.2 percent in previous surveys.
- The Catholic faith group, which makes up the second most populous group in all surveys, represents a slightly lower percentage of inmates, 26.3 percent in the current survey compared to a range of 29.3 to 34.0 percent in previous surveys.
- The Islam faith represents 2.4 percent of inmates in the current survey compared to a range of 1.6 to 3.0 percent in previous surveys.
- Those inmates identifying with the Native American faith represent 0.9 percent of inmates in the current survey compared to a range of 0.0 to 0.5 percent in previous surveys.
- The current survey had no inmates identifying with the Jewish faith. Previous surveys reported a range of 0.4 to 1.0 percent of inmates identifying with this faith.

- Comparing the None, Other and Unknown groups across all surveys is more problematic, since the categories are not standard. Comparisons with the March 1991 survey for the None category indicate a higher percentage of inmates without religious affiliation in August 2007, at 13.4 percent compared to 10.4 percent in March 1991. The Other category is lower in August 2007, at 2.9 percent, compared to 3.5 percent in March 1991.

## SUMMARY

The study captured religious preference of inmates at the time they enter the California correctional system. The majority of inmates (75 percent) self-identified with the Protestant and Catholic faiths. However, it appears that the percentage of inmates identifying as Protestant has grown slightly while the percentage identifying as Catholic has decreased slightly. This may be due to shifts in other demographics of the inmate population such as ethnicity.

# APPENDIX 1

State of California

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

## Memorandum

Date : July 31, 2007  
To : Wardens  
Subject: **INMATE FAITH PREFERENCE SURVEY**

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is committed to quantifying the gaps in religious programming and determine appropriate staffing levels. To support this goal, we are conducting an inmate faith preference survey to assist us in determining additional chaplaincy needs.

Enclosed are (1) the list of randomly selected inmates to be surveyed at your institution, (2) instructions for completing the survey, and (3) a copy of the Social Factors sheet from which the inmate's religious preferences will be determined.

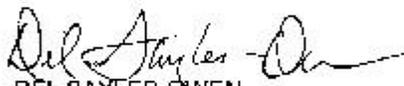
In order to facilitate this survey, it is crucial that all data collection forms are filled out. They must be submitted no later than August 20, 2007, to:

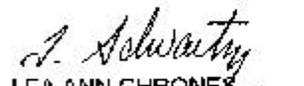
Leslie Raderman  
Research Program Specialist  
Office of Adult Research  
1515 S Street Room 508-S  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Email: [Leslie.Raderman@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:Leslie.Raderman@cdcr.ca.gov)  
Phone: (916) 341-6281

If you have additional questions, or require further information, please contact Barry J. Smith, Community Resources Manager, Division of Community Partnerships, at (916) 324-1441.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

  
DEL SAYLES-OWEN  
Director  
Division of Community Partnerships

  
LEA ANN CHRONES  
Director (A)  
Division of Adult Institutions

Enclosures

cc: Associate Directors, Division of Adult Institutions  
Barry Smith

## The Inmate Faith Preference Survey

### Instructions for Completing the Survey

1. Locate the C-File by the CDC number.
2. If you cannot find the C-File put an "X" in the box "CAN'T LOCATE C-FILE."
3. If the name in the C-File does not match (or is not close to) the name on the form, put an "X" in the box "NOT THE SAME PERSON."
4. Locate the Social Factors Form (sample attached).
5. If the Social Factors Form is missing, put an "X" in the "FORM MISSING" box.
6. If the religion box on the Social Factors sheet is blank, put an "X" in the box "RELIGION FIELD BLANK."
7. If the religion box on the Social Factors sheet is **NOT** blank, write down exactly what is recorded on the Social Factors sheet in the box titled "RELIGION."
8. If the religion box on the Social Factors sheet contains "None," "No Religion," or "Decline to State" record exactly as written.
9. Please write legibly.

Please return the form(s) by **secure** mail such as FedEx or U.S. registered mail by **August 20, 2007** to:

Leslie Raderman  
Research Program Specialist  
Office of Adult Research  
1515 S. Street, Room 508-S  
Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 341-6281  
[Leslie.Raderman@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:Leslie.Raderman@cdcr.ca.gov)



**SOCIAL FACTORS**

PARENT'S NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS & PHONE

SIBLING'S NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS & PHONE

**MARRIAGE HISTORY**

MARRIAGES	DATE	STATUS	ADDRESS & PHONE

NOT LEGALIZED	DATE	STATUS	ADDRESS & PHONE

**CHILDREN**

CHILDREN: NAME	AGE	SUPPORTED BY	LIVING WITH	ADDRESS & PHONE

**ANY FAMILY ARREST HISTORY**

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	OFFENSE(S)	DISPOSITION

RELIGION	DRIVER'S LICENSE #	STATUS	SOCIAL SECURITY #

USUAL OCCUPATION	LAST EMPLOYER	ADDRESS & PHONE

HOME ADDRESS	CITY	PHONE	NAME	RELATION

Number:

Name:

Do not write below this line

Number:

Name:

Date:

## Appendix 2

### CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS INTO MAJOR GROUPS

**Protestant** (Christian, Protestant, Baptist, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist, Presbyterian)

**Native American**

**Catholic**

**Muslim**

**Other** (Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, Pagan, Mormon)

**None** (None, No Religion, No preference, N/A)

**Unknown** (Blank, "Unknown")

#### Raw- Un-weighted Responses

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Baptist	30	6.59
Blank	16	3.52
Buddhist	7	1.54
Catholic	124	27.25
Christian	161	35.38
Jehovah Witness	2	0.44
Lutheran	1	0.22
Mormon	2	0.44
Muslim	11	2.42
Native American	4	0.88
None/No Religion/NA	61	13.41
Other	1	0.22
Pagan	2	0.44
Presbyterian	1	0.22
Protestant	26	5.71
Seventh Day of Adventist	1	0.22
Unknown	5	1.10
<b>Total</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Missing = 45