

# **NJPS 2000-01 Methodology Series**

## **UJC Research Department**

Report #1

### **Religion in America: Comparing Data from NSRE/NJPS, GSS and ARIS**

The National Survey on Religion and Ethnicity (NSRE) was conducted in conjunction with NJPS 2000-01. This survey was administered to people who qualified as non-Jews based on their answers to initial screening questions. NSRE participants were asked a variety of questions on basic demographic characteristics, religious affiliation, economic activity and other topics.

To assess the validity of data on religious identification in NSRE/NJPS, this document compares NSRE and NJPS data to data from the General Social Survey (GSS) 2000 and the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2001. The GSS, administered by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), is generally considered one of the most reliable and accurate national surveys of American opinions. The ARIS was sponsored by the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and is a follow-up study to the 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification.

Table 1 below compares data from the three surveys on religious group identification. It is important to note that discrepancies between the surveys may be due to sampling variability or small non-sampling errors. In general, the NSRE data on religion align very closely with GSS and ARIS data. The total Christian, Catholic, Jewish and No Religion categories are very similar across the three surveys, and major Protestant denominations such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran are nearly identical. Overall, the convergence of religious affiliations across the three surveys, especially in light of sampling variability and differences in coding, provides confidence that the NSRE and NJPS accurately measured the religious identification of Americans.

**Table 1. Religious Identification in NSRE/NJPS, GSS and ARIS**

| <b>Category</b>               | <b>NSRE/NJPS<br/>2000-01</b> | <b>GSS 2000</b> | <b>ARIS 2001</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Christian</b>              | <b>78%</b>                   | <b>81%</b>      | <b>81%</b>       |
| Catholic                      | 26                           | 24              | 26               |
| Selected Protestant           | 33                           | 37              | 32               |
| Baptist                       | 18                           | 20              | 17               |
| Methodist                     | 7                            | 9               | 7                |
| Presbyterian                  | 3                            | 3               | 3                |
| Lutheran                      | 5                            | 5               | 5                |
| Other Protestant or Christian | 19                           | 17              | 23               |
| <b>Jewish</b>                 | <b>2</b>                     | <b>2</b>        | <b>1</b>         |
| <b>Other Religions</b>        | <b>7</b>                     | <b>3</b>        | <b>3</b>         |
| <b>No Religion</b>            | <b>13</b>                    | <b>14</b>       | <b>15</b>        |