

The Political Mobilization of America's Congregations

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Abstract

We use data from the National Congregations Study (NCS), including data from the fourth wave, to describe congregations' political activity in 2018-19, and to examine change in that activity since 1998. Congregations have become more politically mobilized since 1998, with the majority of congregations (56 percent) engaged in at least one of the political activities asked about in 2018-19. Black Protestant congregations in particular experienced a surge in political activity since 2012, and congregations with politically liberal convictions or in traditions with more immigrant members have substantially increased their advocacy on behalf of immigrants in recent years. Overall, since 2012 and possibly since 1998, the political mobilization of congregations on the left has increased more than political mobilization of congregations on the right. We also find that four percent of (mainly Catholic) congregations have declared themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants, and a surprisingly large minority (17 percent) of congregations would publicly endorse or oppose political candidates if doing so would not put their tax status at risk. Ironically, in light of the support for this tax law change among conservative leaders, African American and politically liberal congregations are by far most likely to publicly endorse a candidate if they could.

Keywords: politics, congregations, sanctuary, immigration, social movements, National Congregations Study, religious trends

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INTRODUCTION

Congregations in the United States can be significant sites of activism and politics, and understanding the political mobilization of congregations, and of people through them, is a longstanding agenda for social scientists. Studies of particular U.S.-based social movements—to promote racial justice in the South (Morris 1984), protect immigrants and refugees (Davis, Martinez and Warner 2010; Nepstad 2004; Smith 1996; Yukich 2013), overturn *Roe vs. Wade* (Jaffe, Lindheim, and Lee 1981; Munson 2008), encourage community organizing (Wood 2002; Wood and Fulton 2015), advance nativist policies (McVeigh 2009), and further gender equality (Beyerlein and Ryan 2018)—have informed us about congregation-based mobilizing in those arenas. Congregational case studies and surveys of clergy also have documented religious leaders' efforts to politically mobilize their congregations in various ways (see, for example, Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Guth et al. 1997; Quinley 1974; Smidt 2016). Meanwhile, surveys of individuals have explored the extent to which people in the pews are exposed to political messages and opportunities offered in congregations and how this affects their political activism (see, for example, Beyerlein, Sikkink, and Hernandez 2019; Brown and Brown 2003; Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Harris 1999; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Since its 1998 inception, the National Congregations Study (NCS) has advanced the study of congregations and politics by enabling scholars to study the nature and extent of congregations' political activities with a nationally representative sample of congregations (Chaves et al. 1999). Analyzing the 1998 NCS, for example, Beyerlein and Chaves (2003) observed that a large minority (41 percent) of all congregations reported engaging in at least one

of the seven political activities asked about in the initial wave of the NCS. They also showed that different religious groups tended to specialize in different types of activism. Others have used NCS data to examine race differences in congregation-based mobilizing (Brown 2006), the relationship between government funding and political activity (Chaves, Stephens, and Galaskiewicz 2004), and change in some types of political activities between 1998 and 2012 (Baker and Martí 2020).

We use data from all four NCS waves, notably including the fourth wave, gathered in 2018-19, to offer two sets of results. First, we report the extent and nature of congregations' political activities in 2018-19, highlighting in particular two kinds of activities that were not asked about in earlier NCS surveys but whose importance had grown by 2018: (1) whether or not congregations declared themselves to be sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants (and, if not, whether they discussed doing so), and (2) whether or not congregations have within the last two years publicly supported or opposed a candidate for public office (and, if not, whether they would do so if it did not put their tax status at risk).

The sanctuary questions were added to the NCS-IV because the Trump administration's hard line policies against immigrants and immigration placed immigration even more prominently in the national spotlight after 2016. We know that, in response, some congregations mobilized in support of immigrants, as they have in the past (Beyerlein, Sikkink, and Hernandez 2019; Davis, Martinez, and Warner 2010; Nepstad 2004; Smith 1996; Yukich 2013), including declaring themselves as sanctuaries and building a national social movement around this action (Orozco and Andersen 2018). But we also know that some kinds of religion can breed anti-immigrant sentiment (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011). And, even among congregations sympathetic to immigrants, the costs and risks of becoming sanctuaries may be too high (c.f.

McAdam 1986). Offering sanctuary involves significant commitments of time and resources from congregations and their leaders, and it also raises legitimate concerns about government repression given what happened during the 1980s Sanctuary movement (Smith 1996:Chapter Ten). In this context, we fill basic gaps in our knowledge about the nature and extent of congregations' involvement in this activity. How many congregations in the United States declared themselves sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants, or discussed becoming one? How does this activity vary across religious groups? We answer these questions here.

The Trump administration also made congregations endorsing political candidates a more salient issue by 2018. Surveys of clergy in some denominations have shown that only a very small minority publicly endorse political candidates from the pulpit (Smidt 2016:156), but the Trump administration prominently floated the possibility of changing tax law so that congregations (and other nonprofit organizations) could do this without jeopardizing the deductibility of individuals' donations to them. A major rationale for this proposed change is the claim that current tax regulations constrain many congregations from expressing their voices in the public sphere as fully as they would like. The major concern expressed by opponents of loosening these rules is that doing so would turn congregations (and other non-profits) into conduits for political money, and would further politicize American religion (Rizzo 2019). The proposal to change these regulations was eventually dropped, but such proposals surface periodically, so the debate's empirical assumptions remain worth assessing. How many congregations now risk their tax status by endorsing candidates? Perhaps more importantly, how much more such activity would occur if these regulations were changed? Concretely, how many congregations would politicize themselves in this way if they could? How does the desire to endorse candidates vary across religious groups? Would evangelical Protestants—an important

part of Trump’s political base (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018) to whom the change in regulations was aimed—lead the way? We answer these questions here, providing insight into the extent and contours of the explicitly partisan congregation-based political activity such a policy change would unleash.

The second set of results we emphasize concern change in congregations’ political activities since 1998. Although Baker and Martí (2020) report more lobbying and marching among politically liberal congregations in 2012 than in 1998, overall levels and patterns of congregations’ political activity apparently remained constant between 1998 and 2012 (Chaves and Anderson 2014:43). Surveys of clergy similarly show no overall increase in clergy efforts to politically mobilize their congregations between 1989 and 2009 (Smidt 2016:Chapter 7). The 2018-19 NCS data allow us to assess whether the prevalence of politically active congregations remains stable. To anticipate two of our key results, congregations were in fact more politically active in 2018-19 than they were before, and this was particularly true for black Protestants relative to other religious traditions. We examine whether these shifts reflect congregations’ increased political mobilization just since 2012 or a longer-term increase that was too slow to discern with only three waves of NCS data.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data

We use all four waves of the National Congregations Study (Chaves et al. 2020a). Data collection occurred in 1998, 2006-2007, 2012, and 2018-2019. At each time period, the General Social Survey (GSS) – an in-person survey of a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalized, English- or Spanish-speaking adults conducted by NORC at the University of

Chicago – asked respondents who said they attend religious services at least once a year where they attend (Smith et al. 2019). The congregations named by GSS participants constitute a nationally representative sample of U.S. congregations. NCS staff contacted those congregations and interviewed a key informant, usually a clergy person or other leader, about the congregation's people, programs, and characteristics. The cooperation rates of the four NCS surveys range from 74% to 87%. Response rates, calculated in line with the RR3 response rate developed by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (2016:62), but not taking account of the GSS's own response rate, range from 69% to 80%. Sample sizes are 1,234 in 1998, 1,506 in 2006-2007, 1,331 in 2012, and 1,262 in 2018-2019. The probability that a congregation appears in the NCS is proportional to its size: larger congregations are more likely to be in the sample than smaller congregations. Using weights to retain or undo this over-representation of larger congregations corresponds to viewing the data either from the perspective of attendees at the average congregation or from the perspective of the average congregation, without respect to its size. Unless otherwise noted, results presented here use data weighted from the perspective of the average congregation. See Chaves et al. (2020b) and the online NCS codebook for more detailed methodological information about the NCS.

Measures

The first set of results, focusing on congregations' political activities in 2018-19, uses NCS items asking: (1) whether people at worship services were told, within the past 12 months, about opportunities for political activity, including petitioning campaigns, lobbying, or demonstrating; whether congregations had a group, meeting, class, or event, within the past 12 months, to (2) discuss politics; (3) get people registered to vote; (4) get out the vote during an

election; (5) organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials of any sort; or (6) organize or participate in a demonstration or march to support or oppose a public issue or policy; (7) whether, within the past 12 months, congregations had anyone running for office as a visiting speaker; whether, in the last two years, congregations had (8) distributed voter guides¹ or (9) publicly supported or opposed any candidate for public office; and whether (10) congregations had declared themselves as sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants, and if not, (11) whether they had discussed doing so in the last year. We also report results from a follow-up question asking key informants in congregations that have not publicly supported or opposed a political candidate whether he or she thought the congregation would do so if it did not place the congregation's tax status at risk.

The second set of results, focusing on change over time, examines change in the eight items from the above list that were included in at least three NCS waves. We also examine change in four additional items that were asked only in 2012 and 2018-19. Congregations that reported having lobbied elected officials or participated in a march within the last year were asked whether any of this activity was related to (1) immigration, (2) abortion, (3) economic inequality/poverty, or (4) issues concerning gay, lesbian, or transgender people.² In 2018-19,

¹ In 1998, congregations were asked if they ever distributed voter guides; in subsequent waves they were asked if they distributed voter guides in the last two years.

² The 2006 NCS asked congregations in an open-ended way about the issues for which they lobbied or marched. The 2012 and 2018-19 surveys asked explicitly about the issues mentioned most frequently in 2006, with two wording changes between 2012 and 2018-19. In 2012, congregations were asked if any of their lobbying or marching addressed "poverty"; in 2018-19

congregations also were asked what side of the issue they were on.³

Finally, in addition to year, we use two religious variables to examine variation in congregations' political activity. We use the TRAD3 variable in the NCS dataset to compare congregations in different religious traditions. Traditions are defined in a way that is similar to the Steensland et al. (2000) categorization. We also use an item that asked congregations whether, politically speaking, they are more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle.

RESULTS

Congregations' Political Activities in 2018-19

Figure 1 provides a profile of congregations' political activity in 2018-19. We will not recite every number in the figure, but rather emphasize and elaborate on several key results.

they were asked if it addressed "poverty or economic inequality." In 2012, congregations were asked if any of their lobbying or marching addressed "same-sex marriage," while in 2018-19 they were asked if it addressed "issues concerning gay, lesbian, or transgender people." The 2018-19, but not the 2012, NCS also asked if any lobbying or marching was about environmental issues.

³ In 2018-19, congregations that said they lobbied or marched about issues related to poverty or economic inequality were asked in an open-ended way about the specific economic or poverty-related issues they addressed. All lobbying or marching congregations also were asked if there were other issues for which they mobilized. Racial justice and gun control were the two issues mentioned most frequently in these open-ended responses.

First, while only a minority of congregations engaged in any one of these activities, a majority (56 percent) engaged in at least one of them. This represents a substantial level of political engagement by American congregations, with the most common activities involving electoral mobilization. Approximately one quarter of congregations recently engaged in efforts to get out the vote, distribute voter guides, or register voters. Broadly speaking, the NCS-IV data also display the same religious differences in political style observed in 1998 and described in Beyerlein and Chaves (2003).⁴

* * * * * FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE * * * * *

Second, 13 percent of congregations at least discussed becoming a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants, with 4 percent taking the step of declaring themselves as one. Sanctuary congregations are overwhelmingly Catholic. Almost a third (32 percent) of Catholic parishes reported declaring themselves as sanctuaries. No more than 5 percent of the congregations within any other religious group had done so. These large differences all are statistically significant ($p < .01$). About one fifth (22 percent) of predominantly white mainline Protestant churches have discussed becoming sanctuaries for undocumented immigrants, but only 4 percent have declared themselves as such. Of course, declaring oneself a sanctuary does not necessarily mean that a congregation is actively sheltering undocumented immigrants. The NCS did not ask congregations if they were doing that, but a recent effort to track this activity

⁴ Analyses documenting religious differences in political activities in the 2018-19 data are available in the online supplement accompanying this article. That supplement is included in this document as an Appendix.

found approximately 60 congregations that have housed undocumented immigrants since 2015 (Holleman 2020).

A third result from the fourth NCS wave we highlight is the 4 percent of congregations that have taken the risky step of outright endorsing political candidates even though doing so puts their non-profit tax status at risk. This is consistent with a 2009 survey of clergy in seven denominations in which only 2 percent of clergy reported having endorsed a candidate from the pulpit (Smidt 2016:156). These results probably under-estimate the true prevalence, since we suspect that some congregations and clergy endorsing candidates were not comfortable saying they did so when asked about it. Still, it seems that only a small minority of American clergy and congregations have risked IRS sanctions to engage in this sort of explicitly partisan political activity.

Perhaps more interesting than documenting the very small minority of congregations that defy IRS rules to endorse candidates is assessing how many congregations would do this if those rules changed. The NCS-IV addressed this by asking congregations that had not publicly endorsed political candidates if they would do so if this action would not put their tax status at risk. Seventeen percent of congregations that had not already publicly endorsed candidates said yes, they would. Combining congregations that already endorse candidates with those that would if they could, means that one in five congregations (21 percent) would endorse a political candidate publicly if relevant tax laws were changed. While a large majority of congregations (79 percent) have not publicly endorsed a candidate and would not even if they legally could, a nontrivial minority would act in this explicitly partisan way if tax rules constraining this activity were relaxed.

Ironically, though, the congregations most likely to publicly endorse or oppose political candidates are not the ones Trump administration advocates for tax law changes likely envisioned freeing to engage in this partisan activity. Among Christian churches, black congregations are, by far, the most likely currently to endorse candidates. Thirteen percent say they have done so, compared to not more than 4 percent within any other Christian group. Moreover, black churches that have not endorsed candidates are again, by far, the most likely to say that they would endorse a candidate if they could, with 28 percent of those not endorsing saying they would if they could. Putting together already endorsing congregations with those that would if they could, 37 percent of black Protestant congregations would endorse political candidates if tax laws changed.⁵

The white conservative Protestant congregations that constitute an important part of Donald Trump's political base are, in fact, the least likely to say that they would endorse political candidates if tax law was changed, with only 11 percent of those not endorsing saying they would if they could. Catholic and mainline Protestant levels of interest in endorsing candidates if they could (about 15 percent within each group) are somewhat higher than the level of interest expressed by predominantly white conservative Protestant churches, but these are not statistically

⁵ This 37 percent is less than 13 + 28 because some congregations did not say whether or not they have endorsed a candidate and therefore are not included in the denominator of the 28 percent that said that they would if they could. The endorsing differences between black Protestant congregations and predominantly white Protestant congregations are significant at least at the .05 alpha-level. The difference between black Protestants and Catholics is close to significant at that level ($p = .068$).

significant differences, and all of these groups are well below black churches' interest level. Interestingly, a large minority (34 percent) of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other non-Christian congregations, taken as an aggregate, say they would endorse candidates if they could.⁶ From another perspective, a remarkable 45 percent of key informants who described their congregations as politically liberal also said they thought their congregations would publicly support or oppose political candidates if doing so would not put their tax status at risk. Only 11 percent of politically conservative congregations and 15 percent of congregations described as politically right in the middle said this, differences that are substantial and statistically significant ($p < .001$).

These results are reminiscent of a similarly ironic pattern that emerged during the debate about the second Bush administration's Faith Based Initiative: black and predominantly white liberal churches would have been much more likely than predominantly white conservative churches to take advantage of policy changes that would have made it easier for congregations to receive public money to support their social service activities (Chaves 1999). Similarly, the tax law changes that the Trump administration promoted would indeed generate more public partisan political activity by congregations, but that increased partisan activity may not on balance benefit Republicans.

⁶ There are not enough Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist congregations in the 2018-19 NCS to examine separately in a meaningful way. And the small number of congregations even in this combined category prevents the high percentage of these congregations that say they would endorse if they could from being statistically significantly higher than the percentage saying that in other groups.

Increasing Politicization of American Congregations

We turn now to change over time. Interpreting change over time in congregations' political activities requires grappling with several complexities. One complexity is that each NCS survey occurred during a specific political cycle, and each political cycle has its own mobilization dynamics. Moreover, since some NCS political questions ask about activities that occurred within the last year while others ask about activities occurring within the last two years, congregations are reporting a mix of activities that probably spanned two election cycles. The 1998 NCS, for example, gathered data in the months preceding the midterm elections of Bill Clinton's second term, with congregations probably also reporting activities that occurred during the 1996 election that re-elected Clinton to a second term. The 2006 NCS occurred during the midterm elections of George W. Bush's second term, and probably reflects activities that occurred during the 2004 election in which he was elected to a second term. And so on. The point here is that congregations may be mobilized at different levels in different election cycles, in which case congregations' political involvement may rise and fall with the specifics of each political season, rather than trending in one direction over a longer period.

Another complexity is that congregations' political involvement is of at least two types. Some activities, such as registering voters, having candidates as speakers, or getting out the vote, are directly connected to electoral politics, and probably are driven by the specific dynamics of particular election cycles. Other activities, like lobbying electoral officials or participating in demonstrations or marches, are less directly connected to specific elections, and probably are more driven by the social issues, movements, and conflicts of the day. Prominent social issues of course are related to elections and election outcomes. Immigration probably would not have been

such a prominent social issue after 2016 had Donald Trump not been president. Still, it seems likely that congregational participation in electoral politics may wax and wane on a different clock than congregational participation in social movements and policy advocacy.

A third complexity is that, as Beyerlein and Chaves (2003) documented, there are large differences across religious groups in the extent to which congregations participate in particular activities. Black churches, for example, are much more likely to have candidates as speakers than any other type of congregation. So the pattern of change over time might be very different for congregations in one religious group than it is for congregations in another group.

We do not have space to unpack all of these complexities, but we highlight three changes over time that stand out even in the midst of these complexities. The first is that, overall, congregations were more politically active in 2018-19 than they had been before. Figure 2 displays change over time in the percentages of congregations engaging in the eight political activities measured in at least three NCS waves. There are year-to-year fluctuations, but overall congregations' political activity appears to have increased since 1998. In 1998, 41 percent of congregations engaged in at least one of the seven activities measured in all four NCS waves. In 2018-19, 49 percent engaged in at least one of these activities, a statistically significant difference ($p = .024$). Moreover, significantly more congregations reported engaging in each of these activities in 2018-19 than in 1998 except offering political opportunities during worship and having a candidate as a visiting speaker.

* * * * * FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE * * * * *

Logistic regressions in which each of the nine variables displayed in Figure 2 is regressed on survey year show that the increases in political activity evident in this figure are statistically significant at least at the .05 alpha-level in four of these equations, and the positive year

coefficient in the equation predicting distributing voter guides is close to statistical significance at that level ($p = .090$). The year coefficient is significantly negative only for offering political opportunities in worship. Overall, there is a strong signal of increased political activity since 1998.

Have congregations become more politically mobilized just since 2012, or have they become increasingly mobilized since 1998, but too slowly to discern until now? The second change we want to highlight is that there is strong evidence of a post-2012 surge in political activity among black Protestant congregations in particular. We estimated spline regressions testing whether the slope of the trend for each activity in Figure 2 became significantly more positive after 2012. In four of these nine regressions, the year coefficient becomes significantly more positive after 2012. However, estimating spline regressions separately for each major religious group shows that this post-2012 surge in political activity is concentrated among black Protestant congregations. For black congregations, there is a statistically significant surge in political activity after 2012 on these same four items. For no other religious group is there a statistically significant post-2012 surge on more than two of them. Additional analyses examining change from 2012 to 2018-19 show that black Protestants increased significantly on six of these activities. No other group increased on more than two of them.⁷

This evidence suggests a gradual increase in congregations' political mobilization since 1998, with a surge since 2012 for black Protestant congregations in particular, perhaps because of mobilizing to end police violence against black people. In the fourth wave of the NCS, nearly half (46 percent) of black Protestant congregations had a group that met to discuss race and

⁷ The details of these spline regressions and other analyses are available from the authors.

policing in the last year. Earlier NCS surveys did not ask this question, so we do not know if this represents increased attention to this issue, but black Protestant congregations focused on this issue in 2018-19 at a much higher rate than congregations within other religious traditions.⁸

The third change we highlight is that congregations clearly have become more actively involved on one issue in particular since 2012: immigration. Figure 3 shows the prevalence of lobbying or marching about immigration in 2012 and 2018-19 for all congregations, and then separately by religious tradition and by political leaning. Four times more congregations (8 percent vs. 2 percent) lobbied or marched about immigration in 2018-19 than in 2012. Catholic parishes already were actively involved on this issue in 2012, and they stayed actively involved more recently. Predominantly white mainline Protestant and non-Christian congregations dramatically increased their involvement, to 15 percent and 25 percent of congregations, respectively. Black Protestant congregations remain relatively uninvolved on this issue, but more involved than they were in 2012, while only a negligible proportion of predominantly white conservative Protestants lobbied or marched about immigration in either 2012 or 2018-19. A remarkable 40 percent of congregations whose key informants described them as politically

⁸ Seventeen percent of Catholic and of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other non-Christian congregations reported a having a group to discuss race and policing. Fourteen percent of predominantly white mainline Protestant congregations and eight percent of predominantly white evangelical Protestant congregations reported having such a group. These are all significantly lower than the black Protestant percentage ($p < .05$).

liberal lobbied or marched about immigration in 2018-19, up from 5 percent in 2012. Consistent with this pattern, virtually all of this activity was pro-immigrant.⁹

* * * * * FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE * * * * *

Congregations clearly mobilized more to defend immigrants in 2018-19 than they did before. This activity was concentrated among Catholics, predominantly white mainline Protestants, and Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and other non-Christian congregations, and it was especially concentrated among politically liberal congregations. Recent congregational mobilization on this issue seems driven by a mix of congregations in traditions with more immigrant members and congregations with politically liberal convictions. It seems likely that this increased congregational mobilization on immigration is a post-2016 response to the Trump administrations' hard line policies on this issue.¹⁰

CONCLUSION

We have used data from the NCS, including the recently collected 2018-19 wave, to describe certain features of congregations' political activity in 2018-19, and to examine change

⁹ Only 3 of the 118 congregations in the NCS-IV dataset that lobbied or marched about immigration in 2018-19 did so to encourage stricter immigration enforcement.

¹⁰ Congregations also reported somewhat more lobbying and marching about poverty and economic inequality in 2018-19 than they did in 2012, an increase almost entirely concentrated among black Protestant congregations, and one that we hesitate to emphasize because of the wording change described in note 2. There was no change in levels of lobbying or marching concerning abortion or gay rights.

in that activity since 1998. We have highlighted, among other things, the concentration among Catholics of participation in activity associated with the new sanctuary movement for undocumented immigrants, activity that continues a longstanding Catholic focus on immigrant rights (for example, see Nepstad 2019). We also highlighted the nontrivial minority of congregations that would publicly endorse or oppose political candidates if doing so would not put their tax status at risk, and the perhaps surprising fact that African American and politically liberal congregations are by far the ones most likely to publicly endorse a candidate if they could.¹¹

We also have shown that congregations have become more politically mobilized since 1998. Black Protestant congregations in particular have become more active just since 2012, perhaps because of mobilizing to end police violence against black people, and congregations that are politically liberal or in traditions with more immigrant members have substantially increased their advocacy on behalf of immigrants, perhaps in response to the Trump administration's hardline immigration policies. Future research should examine these and other sources of variation in congregation's political activities.

Overall, it seems that, since 2012 and possibly since 1998, the political mobilization of congregations on the left has increased more than the political mobilization of congregations on the right. There are many more politically conservative than liberal congregations in the United

¹¹ See the online supplement, included in this document as an appendix, for additional documentation of generally higher rates of political activity among congregations on the left than among congregations on the right.

States,¹² so increased mobilization of a relatively small number of left-leaning congregations probably does not amount to more congregation-based political activism on the left than the right in an absolute sense. Still, our results reinforce calls by some (for example, the contributors to Braunstein, Fuist, and Williams 2017) to pay more attention to the largely neglected religiously-based political action on the progressive side.

We have only scratched the surface of NCS data on congregations' political activities. Much more could be learned by examining religious and other sources of variation in the extent to which congregations engage in political activities, the issues they address, the sides they take, and change over time on all of this. We hope others will use these rich data to advance still further our knowledge about the political mobilization of American congregations.

¹² In 2018-19, only 15 percent of congregations said they were politically more on the liberal side, compared to 46 percent that said they were more on the conservative side and 39 percent that said they were right in the middle. At the same time, there is a small but statistically significant increase in the percentage of liberal congregation from 7 percent in 1998 and 2006, to 12 percent in 2012, to 15 percent in 2018-19.

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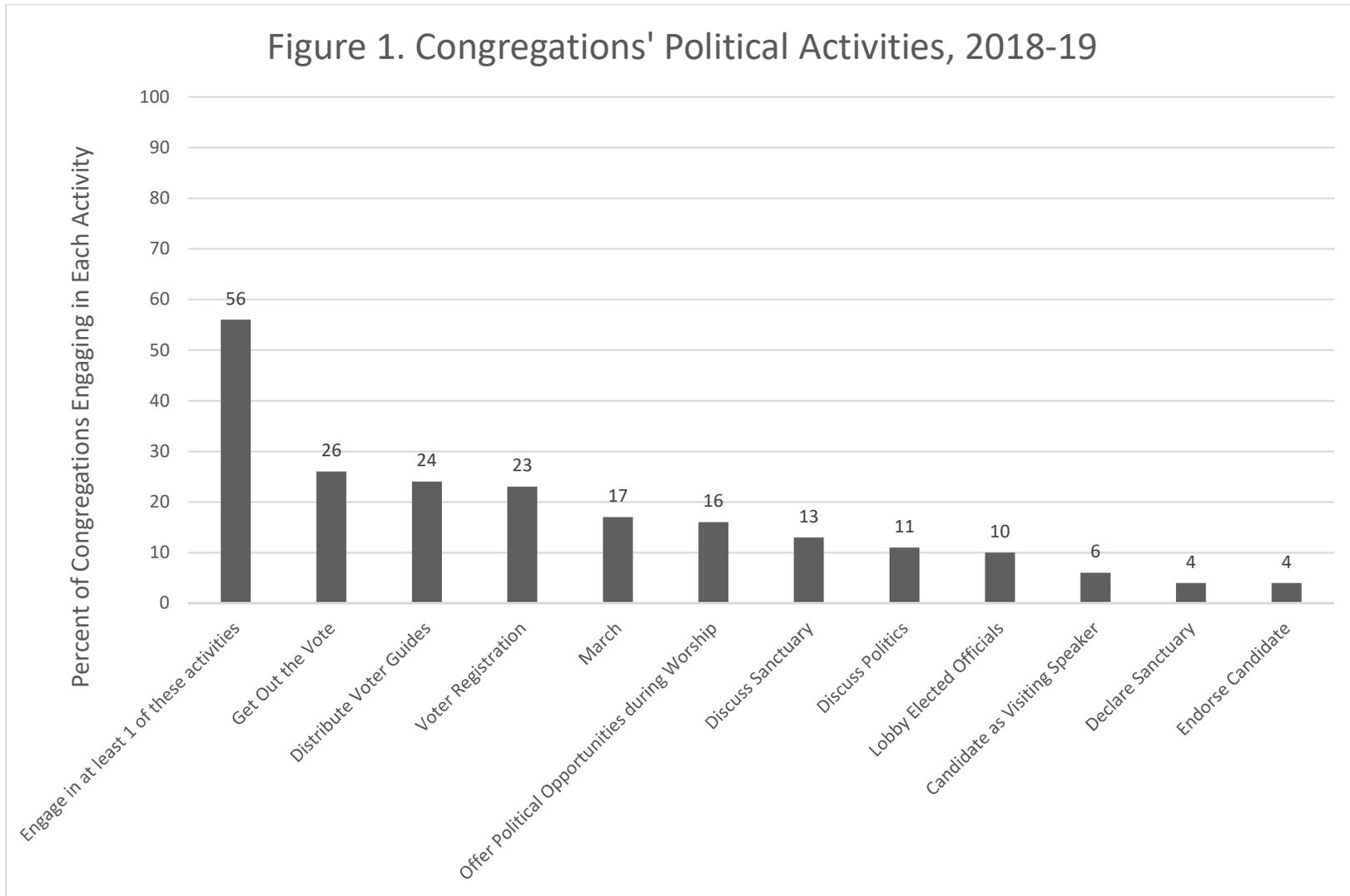
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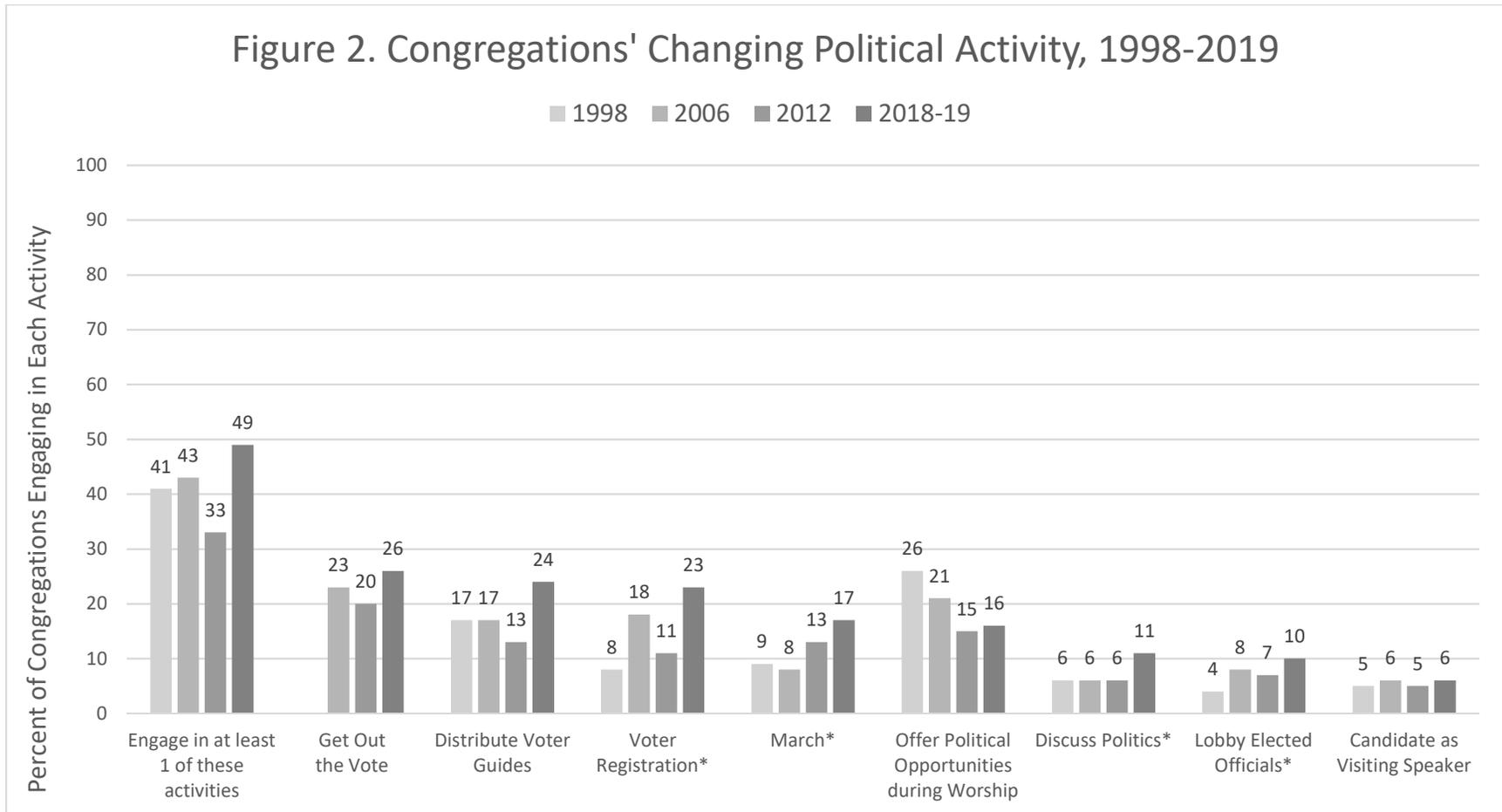
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Figure 1. Congregations' Political Activities, 2018-19



Source: National Congregations Study, 2018-19.

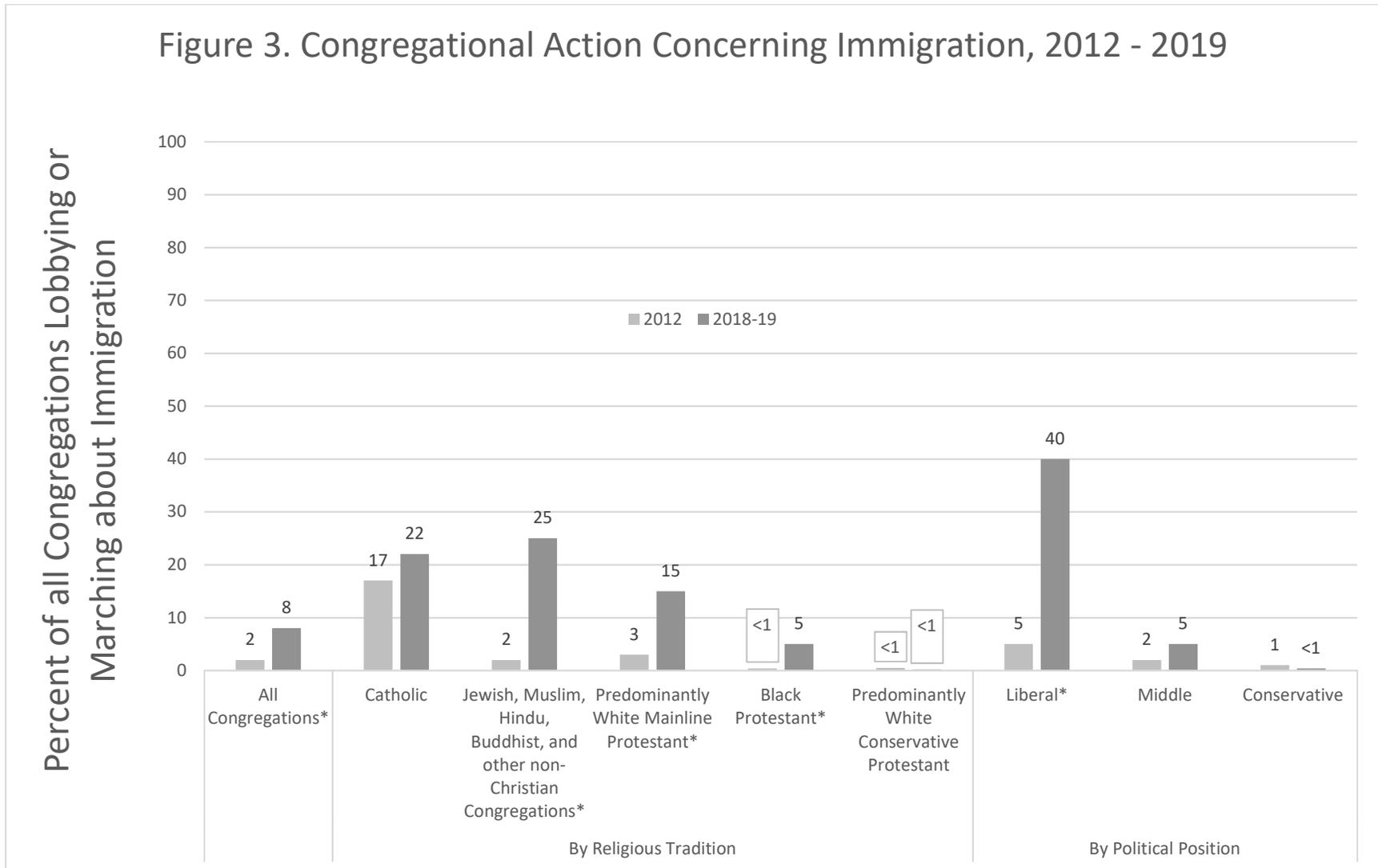
Figure 2. Congregations' Changing Political Activity, 1998-2019



Source: National Congregations Study, 1998-2019.

Note: The calculation for engaging in at least one of these activities does not include getting out the vote, which was not asked in 1998. An asterisk (*) indicates that the year coefficient is significantly positive at least at the .05 alpha-level in a logistic regression in which the political activity variable is regressed on survey year. The positive year coefficient in the equation predicting distributing voter guides is close to statistical significance at that level ($p = .090$). The year coefficient is significantly negative for offering political opportunities in worship.

Figure 3. Congregational Action Concerning Immigration, 2012 - 2019



Source: National Congregations Study, 2012-19.

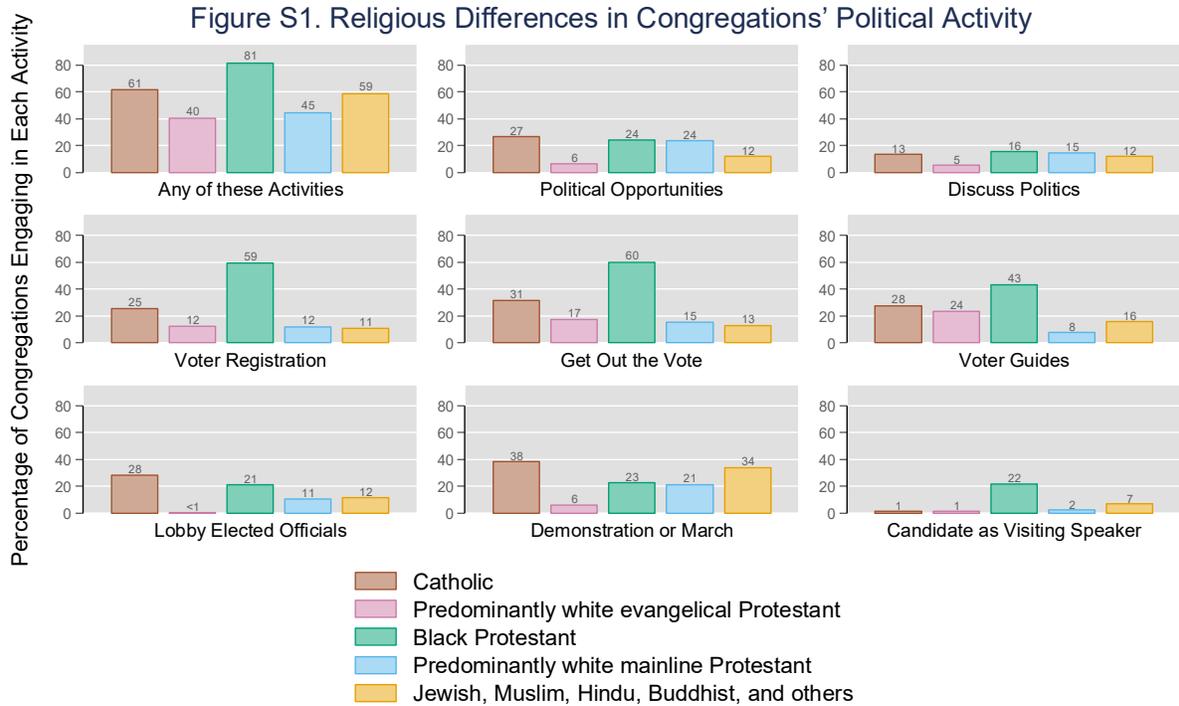
Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that the difference between 2012 and 2018-19 is statistically significant at least at the .05 alpha-level.

APPENDIX

Online Supplement for

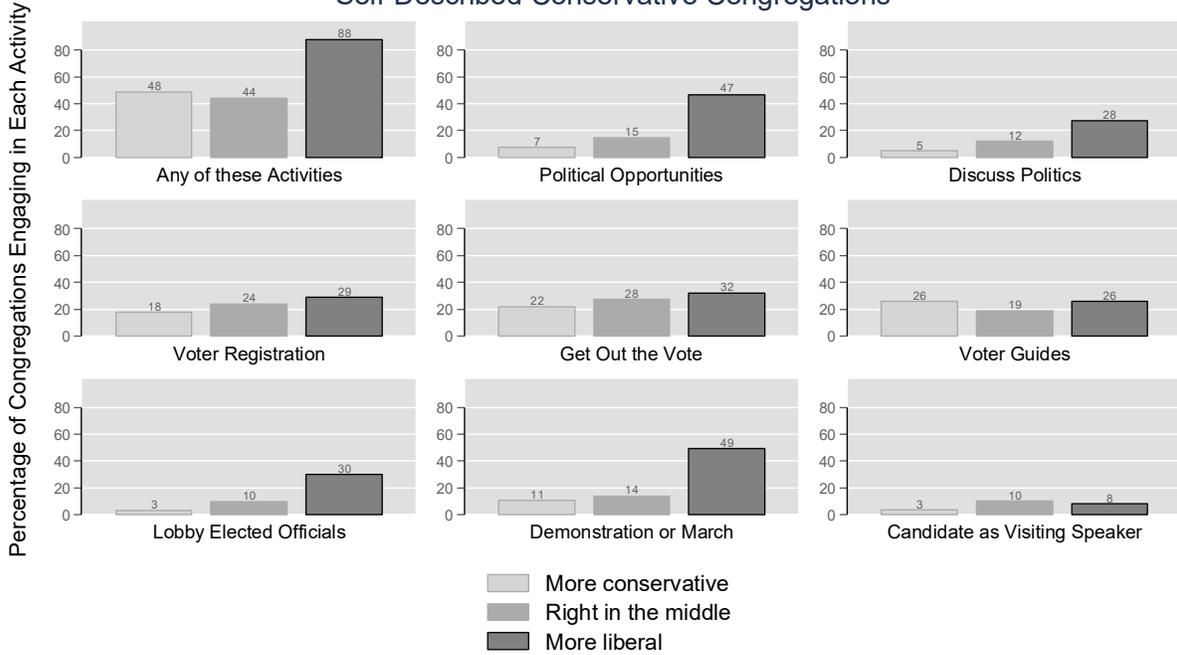
The Political Mobilization of America's Congregations

Kraig Beyerlein, University of Notre Dame
 Mark Chaves, Duke University



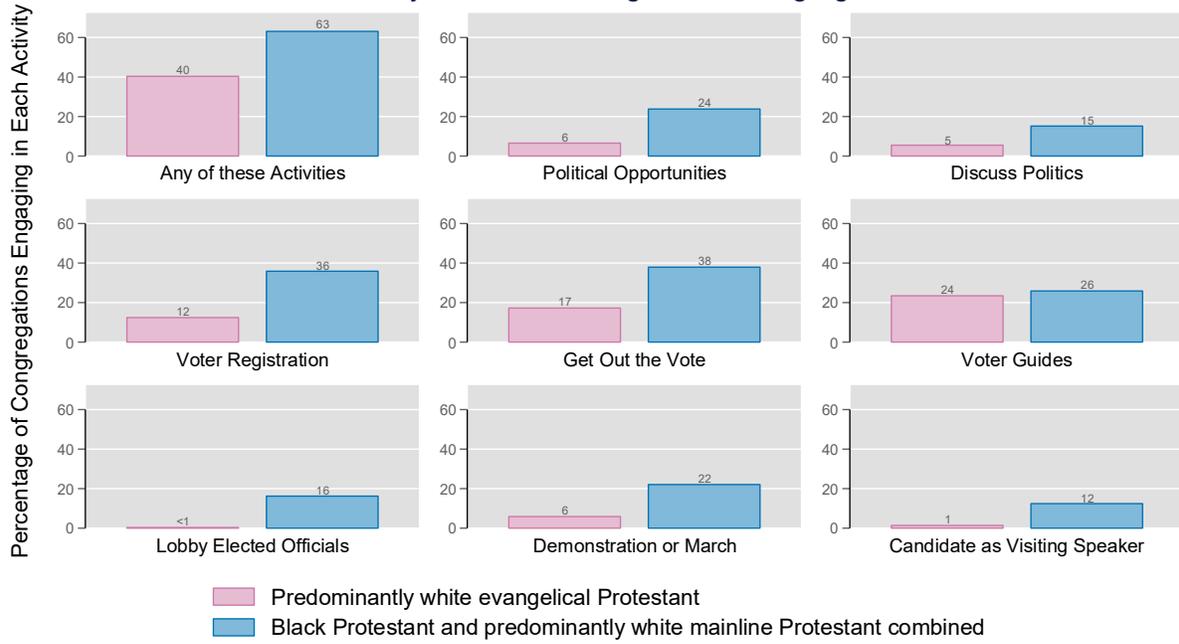
Note: Many but not all of the differences between religious traditions are statistically significant at least at the $p < .05$ level. It would create too much clutter to indicate all the significant differences on this figure. Details about statistical tests are available from the authors upon request.
 Source: National Congregations Study, 2018-19

Figure S2. Self-Described Liberal Congregations More Politically Active than Self-Described Conservative Congregations



Note: All but four of the differences between self-described liberal and self-described conservative congregations are statistically significant at least at the $p < .05$ level. Voter registration, get out the vote, voter guides, and candidate as visiting speaker are the four insignificant ones.
 Source: National Congregations Study, 2018-19

Figure S3. Evangelical Congregations Less Politically Active than Progressive Congregations



Note: With the exception of voter guides, all the differences between progressive congregations and predominantly white evangelical Protestant congregations are statistically significant at least at the $p < .05$ level.
 Source: National Congregations Study, 2018-19