NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago is an independent, not for profit research organization that has been affiliated with the University for more than fifty years. NORC delivers objective data and meaningful analysis to help decision-makers and leading organizations make informed choices and identify new opportunities. Since 1941, NORC has applied sophisticated methods and tools, innovative and cost-effective solutions, and the highest standards of scientific integrity and quality to conduct and advance research on critical issues. Today, NORC expands on this tradition by partnering with government, business, and nonprofit clients to create deep insight across a broad range of topics and to disseminate useful knowledge throughout society. Headquartered in downtown Chicago, NORC works in over 40 countries around the world, with additional offices on the University of Chicago campus, the DC metro area, Atlanta, Boston, and San Francisco.

NORC has pioneered methodological investigations which advance the science of survey research and maintains an active presence in the research and teaching life of the Divisions of the Social Sciences and Biological Sciences, as well as the Pritzker School of Medicine, the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies, and the School of Social Service Administration.

NORC conducts nationwide surveys that are used as data resources for social scientists and policy analysts throughout the world. It employs a field staff of over 1,000 trained interviewers and conducts more than 30 surveys each year on such topics as the costs and practices of health care, environmental studies, substance abuse, education, labor, family, and the attitudes of Americans. NORC has been conducting the General Social Survey (GSS) since 1972; the GSS is the most frequently used dataset in sociology aside from the U.S. Census.

In addition to its core research areas (Economics, Markets, and the Workforce; Education, Training, and Learning; Global Development; Health and Well-Being; and Society, Media, and Public Affairs) NORC is also the home to seven academic research centers. The Academic Research Centers occupy two floors of recently renovated, green offices in the Harris School building on the University campus. The Centers provide a collegial, interdisciplinary environment in which University of Chicago faculty can conduct social science research. The seven centers are:

The Population Research Center, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, facilitates interdisciplinary population research by economists, sociologists, and other population sciences from the University.

The Cultural Policy Center (CPC) is a nationally recognized, joint initiative of the Harris School of Public Policy Studies and NORC and is dedicated to researching and understanding the most significant issues affecting arts and culture from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives.

The Center on Demography and Economics of Aging is funded by the National Institute on Aging. Like the Population Research Center, faculty Research Associates come from across the University community, with members housed in the
Division of Social Sciences, the Harris School of Public Policy, the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and the Pritzker Medical School, as well as other University units.

The Ogburn-Stouffer Center for the Study of Social Organizations promotes innovative, theoretically-informed, empirical research on population, political attitudes and decision making, community, health, social inequality, and social structure. A core mission is to promote the training of graduate students in the social sciences through involvement in all phases of large-scale survey research from development to execution and analysis.

Two other centers are the Center for the Study of Politics and Society, which houses the GSS, and the Joint Center for Education Research. The Joint Center coordinates research activities with the University of Chicago faculty from the Committee on Education and other academic units as well as with education researchers at research institutes affiliated with the University of Chicago.

The Center for Advancing Research and Communication (ARC) in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) is a National Science Foundation funded initiative that supports education research focusing on core scientific questions about learning in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. ARC investigators conduct research and provide technical assistance in support of over 300 STEM investigators across the U.S. funded by NSF’s Research and Evaluation on Education in Science and Engineering (REESE) program as they work to improve education policy, instruction, and learning, in and outside of formal classroom settings.

University students participate in NORC’s activities in several ways. NORC offers a summer intern program open to graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, some students are hired by faculty members as research assistants; some are provided support through NORC for their own research in the writing of dissertations; many attend conferences and weekly workshops that are sponsored by and held at NORC. NORC employs many University graduates at professional career levels.