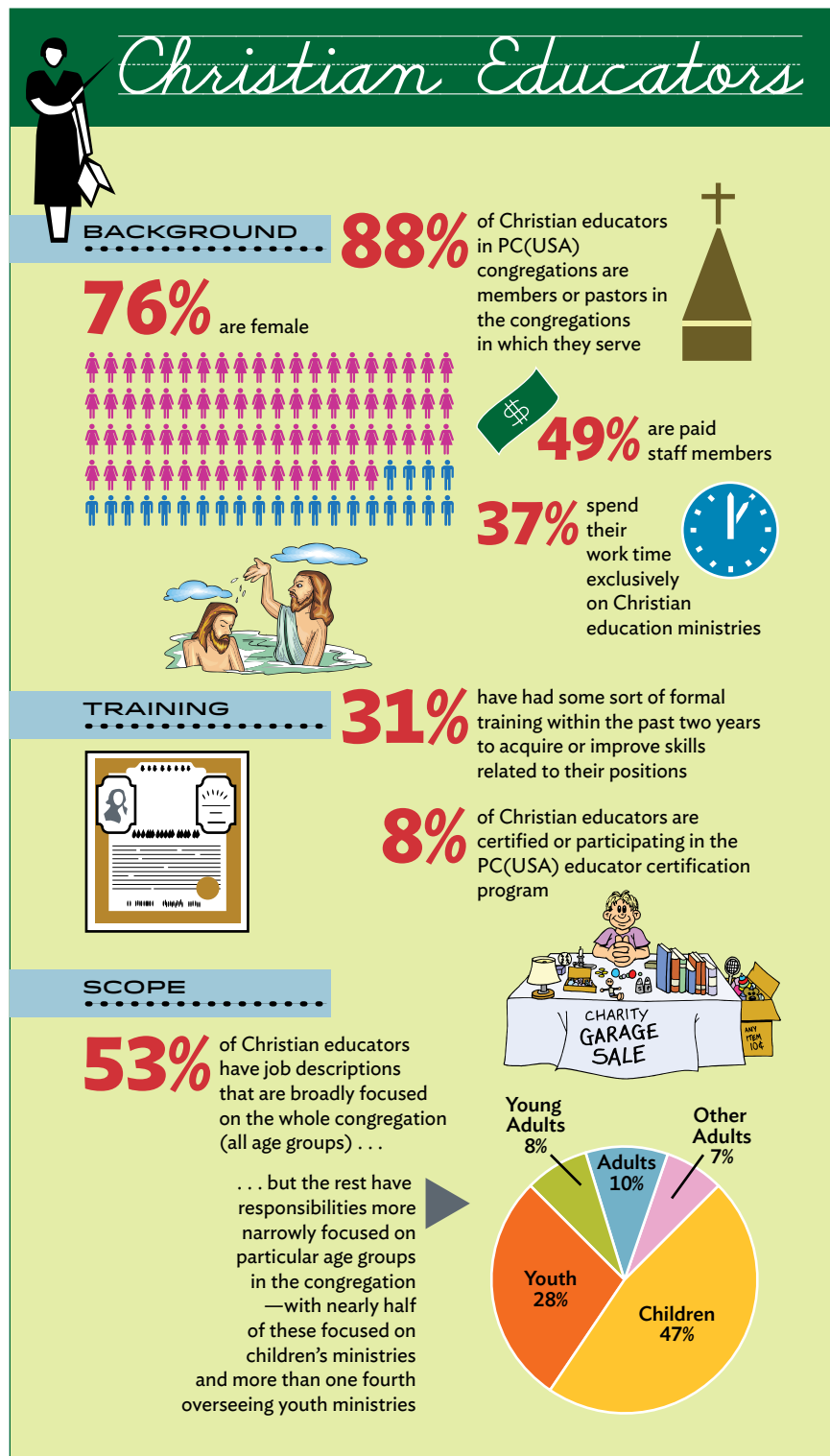


Who are Christian educators?



When you think of people who lead Christian education in congregations, what images come to mind? Do you think of full-time, paid staff persons, most of them women, who are certified as Christian educators and oversee educational ministries for children, youth, and adults? If so, you might be surprised to learn that—except for gender—this description is not at all typical. A very different picture emerges from a recent survey of over 300 PC(USA) congregations.

In fact, only about half of the individuals who lead Christian education in congregations are paid for that work, and of those who are paid, only about a fourth work full-time. Most Christian educators are women, but only a handful (fewer than 10 percent) are certified Christian educators. Only about half oversee educational ministries for all ages.

The main reason behind this last finding is that many congregations have more than one person responsible for Christian education. This is especially true in larger congregations that have multiple staff members and in smaller congregations that may have two or three volunteers coordinating education.

In some congregations, there’s a paid Christian educator, but only because it’s the pastor who is directing all or some of the educational ministries (and who is, as a result, very literally a *teaching elder*).

Use these statistics as a discussion starter for your congregation. Who is responsible for Christian education in your church? Does your congregation provide realistic support for its Christian educator(s)? How might people volunteer to help?

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