



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

BACKGROUND SURVEY FOR THE 1997-1999 PRESBYTERIAN PANEL

Overview

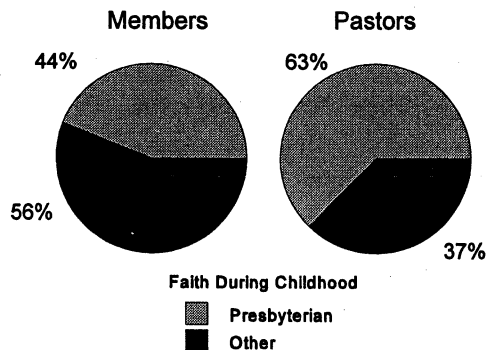
The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally-representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers (for analysis, split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving in a parish, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere). New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the first survey sent to all panelists asked to serve from 1997 to 1999. The survey was initially mailed in November 1996, and returns were accepted until February 1997.

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	2,135	1,707	2,441
Number returned	1,365	1,318	1,890
Response rate	64%	77%	77%

CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

Church Background

- ✓ About one in every six members and elders were raised Methodist, and one in 10, Baptist. Among pastors, 9% were raised in a Baptist church, and 7% in a Methodist church.



- ✓ On average, members joined their current church 14 years ago; elders, 16 years ago.
- ✓ Over one-half of members and elders live within three miles of their church.

Church Attendance and Participation

- ✓ Around two-thirds of members (65%) and nine in 10 elders (89%) reported that they attend worship services "every week" or "nearly every week."

- ✓ Frequently cited reasons for missing worship at least once during the previous year are vacations (reported by 76% of members and 88% of elders) and illness (48% and 44%).
- ✓ A majority of members participate three or more hours per week in other programs and activities of their congregations (e.g., church school); a majority of elders participate six or more hours.
- ✓ Six in ten members report spending no more than two hours per week in various *volunteer activities* at their churches

Church Leadership

- ✓ Almost one-half of members have previously been ordained as elders, deacons, or both.
- ✓ Over one-half of elders, and 15% of members, currently chair a congregational committee.
- ✓ One-fourth of members and one-fifth of elders serve as officers for a men's, women's, youth, or other group in their congregation.

Financial Stewardship

- ✓ Median giving to congregations on a per person basis averages \$788 for members, \$1,200 for elders, \$1,429 for pastors, and \$1,395 for specialized clergy.

FAITH AND BELIEF

View of the Bible

- ✓ Majorities of pastors (51%) and specialized clergy (53%), 42% of members, and 45% of elders chose this statement (from a list of five) as the one that best describes their view of the Bible: “It is the Word of God and its stories and teaching provide a powerful motivation as we work toward God’s reign in the world.”

Conversion Experience

- ✓ Just under one-half of members (46%) and elders (47%) report having had a conversion experience.
- ✓ About one-third of members (30%) and elders (34%), one-half of specialized clergy (49%), and six in ten pastors (62%) consider themselves “born-again” Christians.

Qualities of a Good Christian Life

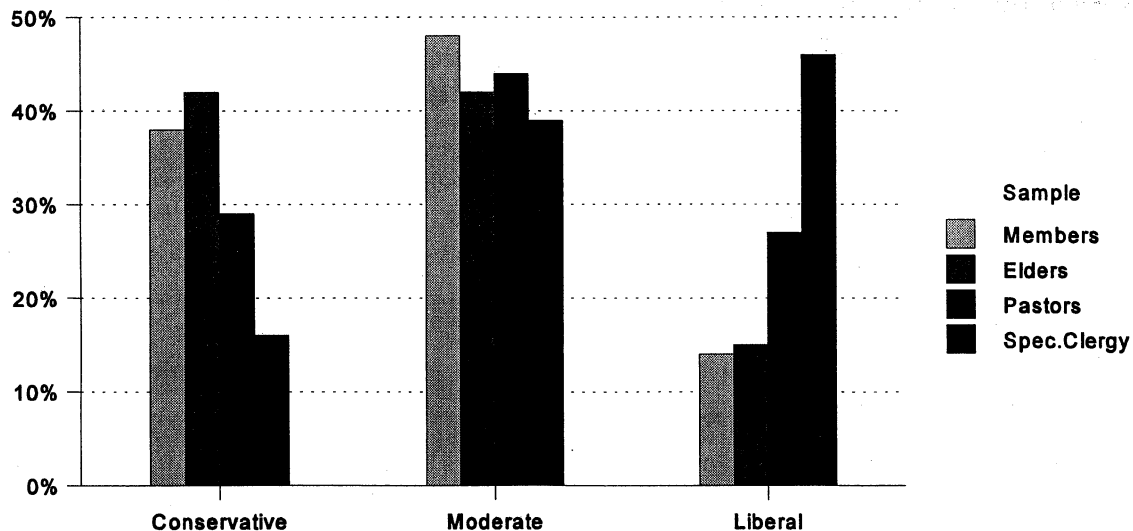
- ✓ In all samples, a majority rate each of seven qualities as either “essential” or “very important” for living a “good Christian life.” Among members, practicing Christian values (96%), taking care of the sick and needy (87%), and prayer (80%) are rated highest; seeking social justice (52%) is rated lowest.
- ✓ Among pastors, practicing Christian values (99%), taking care of the sick and needy (95%), prayer (94%), and Bible reading (94%) are rated highest; bringing others to Christ (78%) is rated lowest.

Congregational Priorities

- ✓ “Providing aid and services to people in need” is rated as either an “essential” or a “very important” congregational priority by 92% of members, 94% of elders, 93% of pastors, and 95% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ “Encouraging members to share their faith” is rated essential or very important by 66% of members, 77% of elders, 89% of pastors, and 83% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ “Supporting social action groups and ministries” is rated essential or very important by 59% of members, 58% of elders, 75% of pastors, and 81% of specialized clergy.

Other Dimensions of Belief

- ✓ Three-quarters of members (78%) believe in the existence of heaven; 51% believe in the existence of hell.
- ✓ 58% of pastors and 41% of specialized clergy believe in the existence of Satan.
- ✓ 72% of members, 77% of elders, 73% of pastors, and 51% of specialized clergy agree that “the only absolute Truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ.”
- ✓ 46% of members, 47% of elders, 37% of pastors, and 23% of specialized clergy agree that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.”



Theological Perspective by Sample

PASTORS AND OTHER CLERGY: CHARACTERISTICS OF CAREER AND CALL

Current Call

- ✓ Two-thirds of active (i.e., not retired) PCUSA clergy serve as pastors in one or more congregations. Half serve as solo pastors, one-fourth as senior pastors, and one-sixth as associate pastors.
- ✓ 6% of pastors report serving more than one congregation, one-half of them in a yoked parish.
- ✓ Over one in ten pastors consider their current call as part-time.
- ✓ Among specialized clergy, one-fourth serve as faculty or staff at a seminary or other educational institution; one-fifth as chaplains; one-sixth as staff of a PCUSA body; and 12% as pastoral counselors.
- ✓ Six in ten chaplains serve in hospitals.
- ✓ 38% of specialized clergy are employed by an organization affiliated with the PCUSA, including 16% who serve as denominational staff.

Education

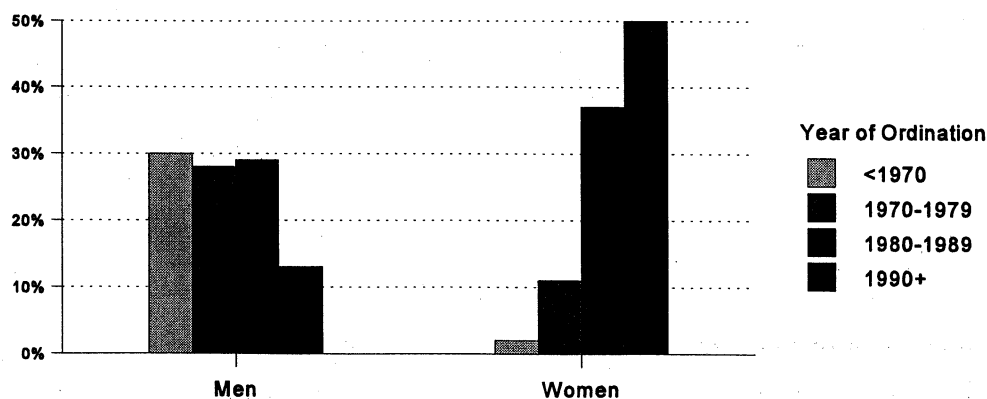
- ✓ 98% of pastors and specialized clergy have either a B.D. or M.Div. degree.
- ✓ 70% of PCUSA pastors and 67% of specialized clergy received their B.D. or M.Div. degree from a PCUSA-affiliated theological school. Overall, one in six clergy graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary, and 4% to 8% received the B.D./M.Div. from each of the ten other PCUSA seminaries (with the exception of Johnson C. Smith, where less than 1% of denominational clergy graduated). Of clergy

who graduated from non-PCUSA institutions, the largest proportions went to Fuller (6% of all clergy), Gordon Conwell (3%), Union (New York) (3%), and Yale University (2%).

- ✓ Around four in ten pastors and other clergy have at least one graduate degree in addition to the B.D./M.Div., including over one-fourth who have a doctoral degree (typically the D.Min.—23% of pastors and 15% of specialized clergy have this degree). Overall, 71% of clergy with the D.Min. degree received it from a PCUSA-affiliated school; one-quarter received it from McCormick Seminary.
- ✓ 11% of pastors and 7% of specialized clergy are currently enrolled in a graduate school, seminary, or theological school. Among these students, nine in ten pastors and seven in ten specialized clergy are pursuing a doctoral degree, typically the D.Min.

Career Background

- ✓ Just under one-third of all clergy label themselves as “second-career ministers,” having worked a median of six (specialized clergy) to eight (pastors) years in their previous careers.
- ✓ Nine in ten ministers of the Word and Sacrament were ordained for that office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or one of its predecessor denominations. Of the remainder, over 40% (about 4% of all clergy) were ordained in another Presbyterian or Reformed denomination.
- ✓ Exactly one-half of pastors were ordained in either the 1980s or 1990s. Just over one-third of specialized clergy (35%) were ordained in that same time period.



Gender Differences in Year of Ordination: Pastors

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Age, Sex, and Race-Ethnicity

- ✓ The median age for both members and elders is 55 years. For pastors it is 48 years and for specialized clergy, 53 years.
- ✓ 61% of members are female, as are 47% of elders, 18% of pastors, and 24% of other clergy.
- ✓ 98% of members, 97% of elders, 94% of pastors, and 92% of specialized clergy list their race-ethnicity as white.

Marriage and Households

- ✓ Large majorities of members (77%), elders (87%), pastors (89%), and specialized clergy (83%) are currently married. Overall, 11% of members and 5% of pastors have never married. Among the ever-married, 18% of members, 17% of elders, 20% of pastors, and 30% of specialized clergy have ever been divorced.
- ✓ Nine in ten married members and elders report that their spouses belong to the same congregation as they do.

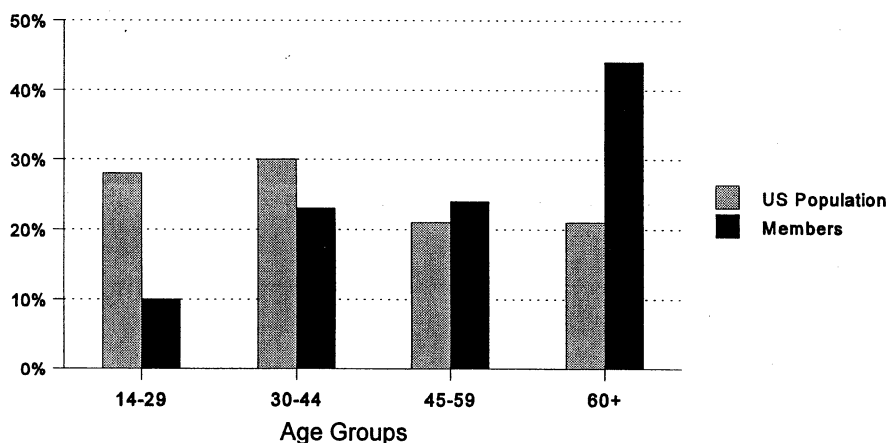
- ✓ One in seven members, one in ten elders and pastors, and one in eight specialized clergy live alone. The average household size overall is 2.6 persons for members and elders, 3.0 for pastors, and 2.5 for specialized clergy.

Employment Status and Income

- ✓ Six in ten members and elders are currently employed, most full time. Around one-third of members and elders are retired, and another one in ten classify themselves as homemakers.
- ✓ Median family income for members and pastors is between \$50,000 and \$59,999, and for elders and specialized clergy, between \$60,000 and \$69,999.

Political Preference

- ✓ 55% of members and 57% of elders describe themselves as Republicans. A majority of pastors (53%) and over two-thirds of specialized clergy (69%) label themselves as Democrats.



Age Distribution: U.S. Population (age 14+) and PCUSA Members

These results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a rule of thumb, differences of less than 6% between samples are not statistically meaningful. For more on Panel sampling and methods, a technical appendix is available for \$2 from Research Services.

Want more numbers or interpretation? The *Background Report for the 1997-1999 Presbyterian Panel*, containing numerous charts and graphs, is available for \$5 from PDS (call 1-800-524-2612 and order PDS # 70360-97250). It includes a data appendix that presents the percentage responses to each survey question for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.