



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### IMMIGRANT MINISTRIES AND IMMIGRATION ISSUES FINDINGS FROM THE AUGUST 2011 SURVEY

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders serving on session (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the twelfth survey completed by the 2009-2011 Panel, sampled in the fall of 2008.

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### IMMIGRANT STATUS AND LINKS WITH IMMIGRANTS

#### **Citizenship and Language**

- ✓ A small number of panelists in each group (members, 2%; elders, 1%; pastors, 3%; specialized clergy, 4%) are immigrants who have become U.S. citizens.
- ✓ Very few panelists (members, 1%; elders, 1%; pastors, 1%; specialized clergy, 1%) are not U.S. citizens.
- ✓ About one in twelve ministers (pastors, 6%; specialized clergy, 8%)—but fewer members (4%) and elders (3%)—speak a language other than English at home at least some of the time.

#### **Family and Friends**

- ✓ About one in six members (14%) and elders (16%) and almost one-quarter of ministers (pastors, 22%; specialized clergy, 23%) report that a member of their immediate or extended family is a refugee or other immigrant.
- ✓ Only a few panelists have a close family member who is an immigrant. About one in 20 of each of the following are immigrants:
  - The panelist’s mother (members, 6%; elders, 5%; pastors, 4%; specialized clergy, 3%).
  - The panelist’s father (6%; 4%; 4%; 4%).
  - The panelist’s spouse (3%; 4%; 6%; 6%).
- ✓ One in six members (17%), one-quarter of elders (23%), and three in ten ministers (pastors, 28%; specialized clergy, 30%) have a refugee or other immigrant among their closest friends.

#### **Immigrants, Refugees, and Others**

*Immigrants* are people residing in the United States or one of its territories (including Puerto Rico) who were born abroad to parents who were not U.S. citizens. Immigrants may be citizens (naturalized) or non-citizens (including both legal residents with a “green card” and undocumented immigrants).

Immigrants include *refugees* (those allowed legal residence because they faced political, racial-ethnic, religious, or social persecution), but exclude people who have permission to reside here only temporarily (such as students, tourists, or temporary workers).

#### **Other Connections with Immigrants**

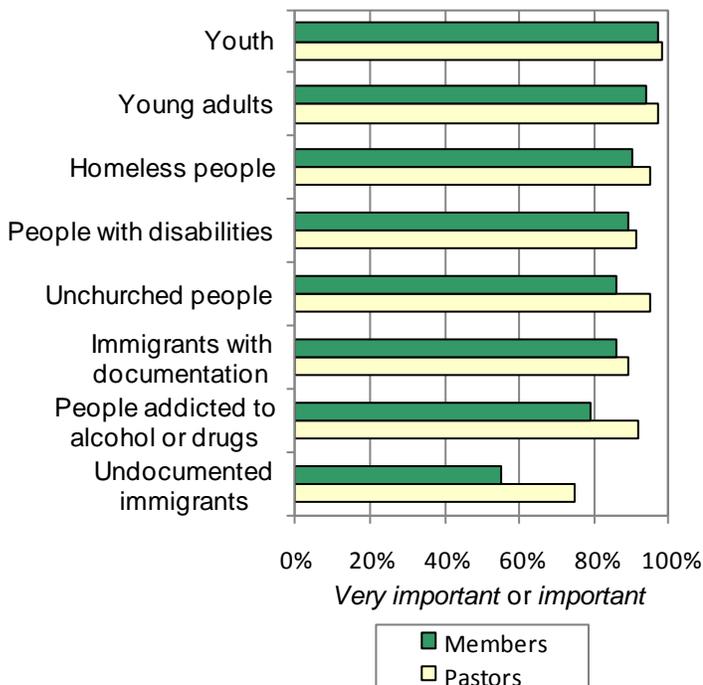
- ✓ Half or more of ministers—but fewer members and elders—report that they have two particular connections with refugees or other immigrants. A refugee or other immigrant:
  - Owns and operates a business that the panelist patronizes (members, 36%; elders, 40%; pastors, 60%; specialized clergy, 68%).
  - Lives in the panelist’s neighborhood (28%; 33%; 50%; 55%).
- ✓ Among panelists who are employed, four in nine specialized clergy (45%)—but fewer members (24%), elders (29%), and pastors (20%)—say that a refugee or other immigrant is employed at their workplace.

# PRIORITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

## Priorities for PC(USA) Ministries

- ✓ Among eight ministries listed in the questionnaire, six are rated as *very important* or *important* for the denomination by more than four in five panelists in each group. Ministry with immigrants with documentation is one of those six, while ministry with undocumented immigrants is not. The six *very important* or *important* ministries are (see Figure 1 also):
  - Youth (members, 97%; elders, 97%; pastors, 98%; specialized clergy, 98%).
  - Young adults (94%; 97%; 97%; 98%).
  - Homeless people (90%; 93%; 95%; 92%).
  - People with disabilities (89%; 92%; 91%; 94%).
  - Unchurched people (86%; 93%; 95%; 88%).
  - Immigrants with documentation (86%; 86%; 89%; 91%).
- ✓ Seven in ten members (69%), four in five elders (82%), and nine in ten ministers (pastors, 92%; specialized clergy, 88%) believe ministry with people addicted to alcohol or drugs is *very important* or *important*.
- ✓ Three-quarters or more of ministers (pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 83%) rate ministry with undocumented immigrants as *very important* or *important* for the denomination. Five in nine members (55%) and elders (54%) rate it as such.

**Figure 1. Importance for the PC(USA) of Ministries Among Various Constituencies**



## Congregational Characteristics

- ✓ One in six elders (15%) report that some of the people in their congregation or other Presbyterian worshiping community are immigrants. (The survey used the term “congregation or other local Presbyterian worshiping community.” Through the rest of this summary we use “congregation” as shorthand.)
- ✓ Only 5% of elders report that a language other than English is used in some activities of their congregation. Three in five of these elders (62%) report that Spanish is used.

## Congregational Partnerships

- ✓ One in six elders (17%) report that their congregation is involved in a formal partnership with another local Presbyterian congregation.
- ✓ A small majority of elders whose congregation is involved in a formal partnership with another local Presbyterian congregation (52%) report that some of the participants in at least one of the congregations are immigrants.

## Partnership Dynamics

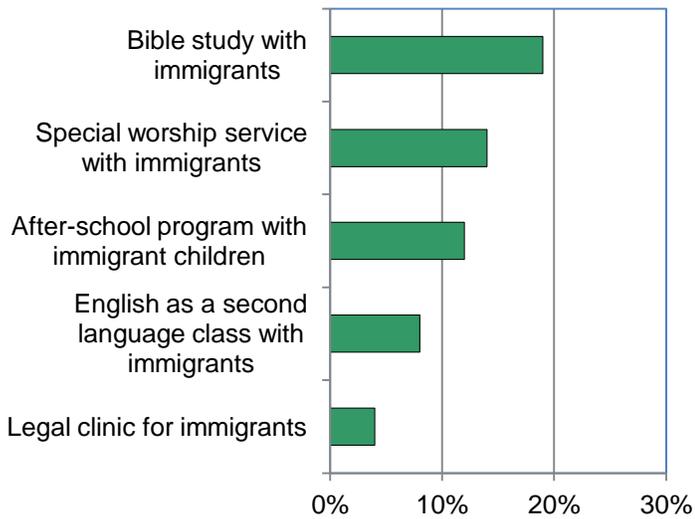
- ✓ Among elders whose congregation is in a formal partnership with another local Presbyterian congregation whose participants include immigrants, a small majority (52%) report that the two congregations have shared activities.
- ✓ Fewer than in one in eight elders whose congregation is partnered with another local Presbyterian congregation that includes some immigrants indicate that the two congregations cooperate in three other ways:
  - Participants are members of the same PC(USA) congregation (12%).
  - People from the same pastoral staff lead each congregation (8%).
  - Money received in offerings from each goes into the same budget (4%).
- ✓ Of elders from congregations in a partnership with another local Presbyterian congregation whose participants include immigrants, two in five (41%) report that their congregation is the leading partner. Another one-quarter (23%) report that the partner congregations share equally in decision making. One in ten (9%) indicate that the other congregation is the leading partner.

## OTHER ENGAGEMENT WITH IMMIGRANTS

### Congregational Ministries with Immigrants

- ✓ Among five types of outreach ministries among immigrants listed in the questionnaire, more elders report that their congregation is involved in a Bible study that includes immigrants than in any other type of outreach ministry. One in five elders (19%) report that their congregation is involved in such a Bible study (see Figure 2 also).
- ✓ Special worship services and after-school programs that include immigrants are two forms of immigrant outreach ministry that one in eight elders state that their congregation is engaged in:
  - Special worship service that includes immigrants (14%).
  - After-school program that includes immigrant children (12%).
- ✓ Fewer than one in ten elders report that their congregation is involved in two other forms of immigrant outreach:
  - English as a second language class that includes immigrants (8%).
  - Legal clinic for immigrants (4%).
- ✓ A similarly small percentage of elders (5%) are part of a congregation that is engaged in a form of outreach ministry among immigrants not listed in the Panel questionnaire. These forms of ministry include preschools that serve immigrant children and sponsoring refugee families.

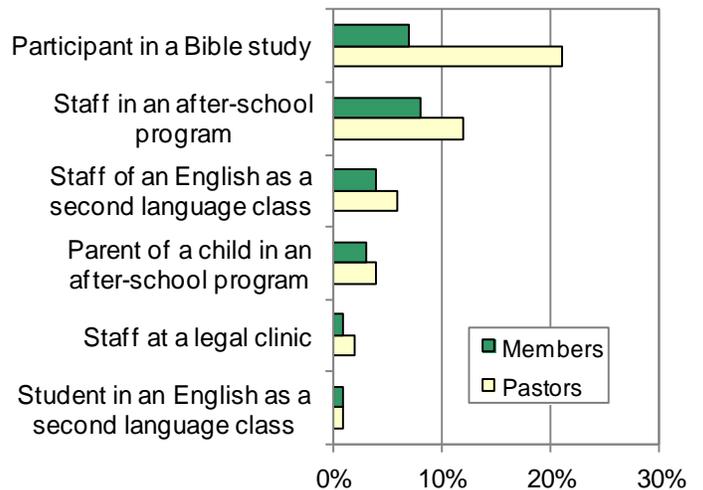
**Figure 2. Congregations' Immigrant Ministries (Elders' Responses)**



### Personal Involvement with Immigrants

- ✓ Of six ways they could be personally involved with immigrants, the most ministers report participating in a Bible study that includes immigrants. One in five pastors (21%) and one in eight specialized clergy (14%) report that they currently participate in such a Bible study. Only 7% of members and elders do so (see Figure 3 also).
- ✓ One in eight pastors (12%) are currently involved as teachers, other staff, or volunteers in an after-school program that includes immigrant children. Only 8% of members, elders, and specialized clergy help staff such a program.
- ✓ Fewer than one in ten panelists in each group are currently engaged with immigrants in four other ways:
  - Teacher, other staff, or volunteer in an English as a second language class (members, 4%; elders, 2%; pastors, 6%; specialized clergy, 5%).
  - Parent of a child in an after-school program that includes immigrant children (3%; 3%; 4%; 6%).
  - Staff or volunteer at a legal clinic for immigrants (1%; 2%; 2%; 2%).
  - Student in an English as a second language class (1%; 1%; 1%; 1%).

**Figure 3. Personal Involvement in Programs that Include Immigrants**



- ✓ Panelists were asked if they are involved with immigrants in ways not listed on the questionnaire. One in 16 members (6%) and elders (7%) and one in eight ministers (pastors, 12%; specialized clergy, 12%) are. Among the other types of settings in which panelists work are food pantries and homeless shelters that serve immigrants.

## PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION

### **Biblical Perspectives**

- ✓ Of seven biblical passages, the most panelists in each group (members, 79%; elders, 83%; pastors, 92%; specialized clergy, 93%) report that Genesis 1:26-27 (God created people in God's image) is *very important* or *important* for their understanding of contemporary immigration and refugee issues.

### **Impact of Immigration**

- ✓ Half or more of members and elders—but many fewer ministers—believe that the presence of undocumented immigrants in the United States is responsible *a great deal* or *some* for:
  - High cost of public schools (members, 65%; elders, 60%; pastors, 35%; specialized clergy, 31%).
  - Disrespect for the law (59%; 54%; 29%; 23%).
  - Low wages (57%; 50%; 36%; 37%).
- ✓ Sizable minorities of panelists believe that the presence of undocumented immigrants is responsible *a great deal* or *some* for three other phenomena in U.S. society:
  - Violent crime (members, 49%; elders, 48%; pastors, 29%; specialized clergy, 20%).
  - Unemployment (49%; 45%; 26%; 25%).
  - Meeting U.S. needs for highly skilled workers (37%; 33%; 34%; 38%).
- ✓ One-third of members (34%) and elders (32%)—but only about one in ten ministers (pastors, 12%; specialized clergy, 7%)—believe that the presence of undocumented immigrants is responsible *a great deal* or *some* for terrorism in the United States.

- ✓ Three in five members (61%) and elders (61%), four in five pastors (79%), and seven in eight specialized clergy (86%) believe that the overall impact of the cultural diversification of the United States that has been caused by the flow of people from elsewhere into this country in recent decades has been *positive* or *somewhat positive*.

### **Immigration Policies**

- ✓ Small majorities of members (57%) and elders (51%) and three-quarters or more of ministers (pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 80%) would approve of the federal government creating a way to legalize the status of undocumented immigrants who first came to the United States as children.
- ✓ About three in five members and elders—but only about two in five ministers—would approve of the following two measures intended to control immigration:
  - Encouraging state and local law enforcement officers to enforce federal immigration laws (members, 65%; elders, 61%; pastors, 46%; specialized clergy, 36%).
  - Punishing businesses that employ undocumented immigrants (54%; 61%; 42%; 36%).
- ✓ Only one-third of members (34%) and elders (35%) and less than half as many ministers (pastors, 15%; specialized clergy, 10%) would approve of punishing people who provide assistance to undocumented immigrants.

	Members	Elders	Ministers
Number of surveys sent .....	601	867	1,217
Number of undeliverable surveys and ineligible respondents .....	2	2	7
Number of surveys completed .....	255	375	570‡
Response rate .....	42%	43%	47%

‡Of the 570 returned surveys, 374 came from pastors and 194 from specialized clergy; 2 could not be classified.

**The survey was mailed on August 8, 2011**, with returns accepted through November 21, 2011. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. In general, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of these results, a report will be available on the web or for \$15 from Presbyterian Distribution Service (800-524-2612; order PDS# 20056-11313). It will include tables with percentage responses to each survey question.

**For more information about support for new immigrants**, go to [www.pcusa.org/immigrant](http://www.pcusa.org/immigrant). For information about the PC(USA) Office of Immigration Issues, go to [www.pcusa.org/immigration](http://www.pcusa.org/immigration).

**LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**  
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