



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### Hunger Issues The February 2003 Survey

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 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 second survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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## DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM

### Hunger in the United States

- ✓ When asked to select one of five words or phrases to “best describe . . . the hunger problem here in the U.S.,” panelists are divided in their opinions, with a sizable *don’t know* response:

**Table 1. Best Word/Phrase to Describe Hunger Situation in the United States**

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Child hunger .....	19%	17%	15%
Chronic hunger .....	18%	22%	19%
Food insecurity .....	16%	18%	31%
Malnutrition .....	20%	25%	24%
Starvation.....	1%	1%	<1%
Don’t know .....	25%	16%	11%

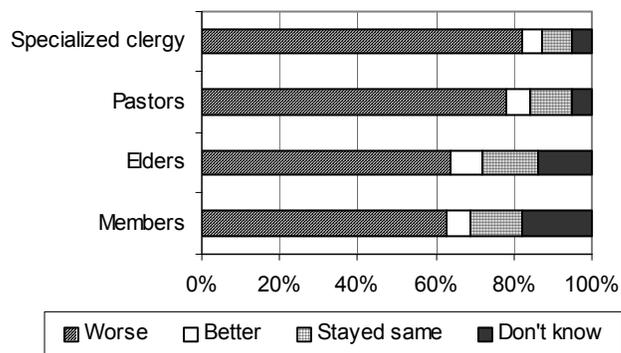
- ✓ Panelists also split on which one of four groups needs the most hunger assistance:

**Table 2. The U.S. Group Most in Need of Hunger Assistance**

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Children .....	41%	38%	38%
Poor families .....	42%	49%	51%
Senior citizens .....	8%	7%	4%
Women .....	1%	<1%	1%
Don’t know .....	8%	7%	6%

### Trends

- ✓ More members believe that “the hunger problem . . . in the U.S.” has *gotten worse* (39%) than *gotten better* (19%), but many think it has *remained about the same* (24%) or *don’t know* (18%). Among pastors, 55% believe it has *gotten worse*; 14%, *gotten better*; 25%, *remained the same*; and 5%, *don’t know*.
- ✓ Majorities in all Panel groups believe the “hunger problem . . . in the world” has *gotten worse*, ranging from 63% of members to 81% of specialized clergy. Only a small share—elders, 8%; specialized clergy, 5%—believe it has *gotten better*.



**Figure 1. Opinions on Change in the World Hunger Problem over the Last Ten Years**

**Individual Responsibility**

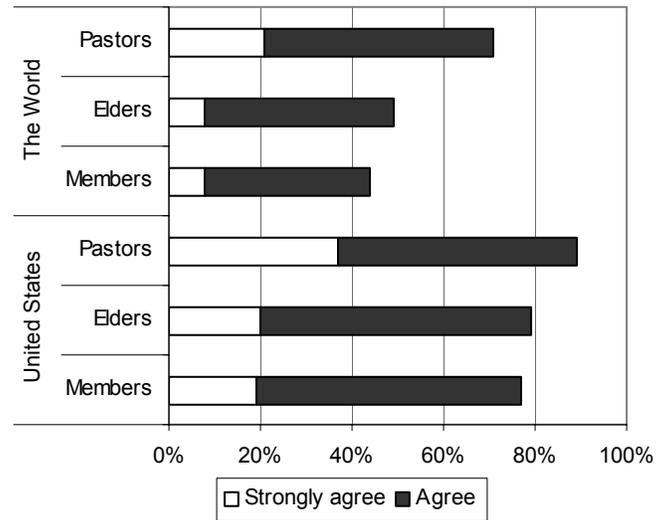
- ✓ Few panelists believe that when people are hungry it's *their own fault*: only 7% of members, 6% of elders, and 2% of ministers hold this view. In contrast, 77%, 81%, 89%, and 93% believe *other reasons* are responsible.
- ✓ Only a quarter or less (members, 25%; pastors, 14%) believe that *children are hungry because of parents who fail to take responsibility* for them. Most (66%; 79%) believe instead that parents need help with their own hunger and other problems before they can be expected to care for their children properly.
- ✓ More than eight in ten believe that *people who are chronically hungry need help first before they can take responsibility for their own lives*.

**Fighting Hunger in the U.S.**

- ✓ Large majorities *agree* or *strongly agree* that “the problem of widespread hunger can be solved in the United States,” but more choose *agree* (members, 58%) than *strongly agree* (19%).
- ✓ From a list of 13 choices, including *don't know*, four in ten lay panelists and one in three ministers choose *a strong economy and creating more jobs* as the one “most effective in fighting hunger” in the U.S. The next most frequent choice in all samples is *don't know* (members, 18%; elders, 17%; ministers, 16%).
- ✓ After *a strong economy and creating more jobs*, the solution chosen by the most laity is *food pantries and soup kitchens* (members, 8%; elders, 9%). Among ministers, it's *raising the minimum wage* (pastors, 10%; specialized clergy, 14%).
- ✓ When asked to indicate which one of two statements describes “the best way to fight hunger in the U.S.,” more than eight in ten choose *help poor people to get better jobs that pay enough so they can feed their families*. Fewer than one in eight choose *through programs that provide food to poor families*.
- ✓ Large majorities (members, 74%; elders, 78%; pastors, 77%) *strongly agree* or *agree* that “there should be major new efforts, led by charitable and religious groups, with some taxpayer support, to make sure that every child in America has enough to eat.”

**Fighting Hunger Globally**

- ✓ More panelists *strongly agree* or *agree* than *strongly disagree* or *disagree* that “the problem of widespread hunger can be solved throughout the world.” Members are the least optimistic (44% *strongly agree/agree*), pastors (71%) and specialized clergy (72%) are the most optimistic.



**Figure 2. Percent Agreeing that “the Problem of Widespread Hunger Can Be Solved” in the World and in the United States**

- ✓ The largest share in each group selects *helping farmers in Africa grow more food* when asked “the best way to help fight the hunger problem in Africa (elders, 45%; specialized clergy, 46%). Most of the rest choose *supporting programs in Africa that promote free markets and economic development* (38%; 35%).
- ✓ Majorities *strongly agree* or *agree* that “promoting trade throughout the world helps reduce hunger” (members, 57%; elders, 63%; pastors, 56%; specialized clergy, 60%).
- ✓ Panelists are split on whether or not “reducing farm subsidies on U.S. agriculture would give farmers in poor countries a chance to compete.” The largest share of members (43%) responds *don't know*, with more of the rest responding *strongly disagree* or *disagree* (39%) than *strongly agree* or *agree* (17%). The corresponding responses among pastors are 45%, 31%, and 23%.

**Money Spent on Hunger**

- ✓ A majority of ministers *strongly disagrees* or *disagrees* that “enough money is being spent on the hunger problem” (pastors, 63%; specialized clergy, 74%). Laity are evenly split, with one-third each agreeing, disagreeing, and responding *don’t know*.
- ✓ From a list of three statements, two-thirds of members (67%) and elders (63%) choose *we spend enough money on programs for hungry children, but we need to reform programs to make them more effective*. Of the rest, few choose *we spend too much money on hunger programs, and in the end most of the money is wasted* (4%; 2%) or that *we spend too little money, which is why we have too many hungry children* (10%; 15%). The rest (19%) *don’t know*.
- ✓ For the same three sets of choices, pastors and specialized clergy are more evenly divided between *we spend enough money* (46%; 38%) and *we spend too little money* (38%; 48%).

**Evaluating Aid to Poor Countries**

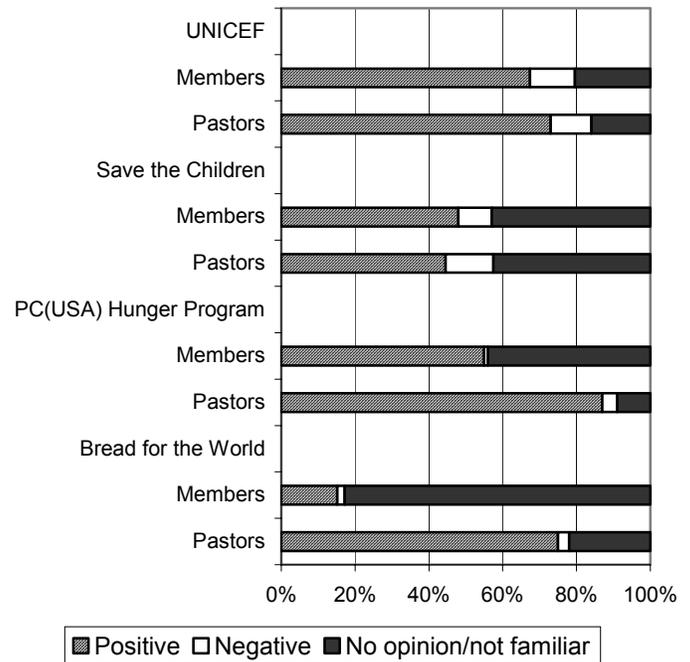
- ✓ In rating the success of “humanitarian aid and development assistance programs to poor countries,” most panelists indicate that these programs have been *somewhat successful* (members, 43%; elders, 48%; pastors, 55%; specialized clergy, 54%) or *not very successful* (33%; 35%; 33%; 34%). Most of the rest respond *don’t know*; only 1% in every sample responds *very successful*, and no more than 3%, *not at all successful*. The rest *don’t know*.
- ✓ Panelists rating “humanitarian aid and development assistance programs to poor countries” as *not very successful* or *not at all successful* were asked the most important reason for the lack of success. Their top responses:

**Table 3. Most Important Reason Aid to Poor Countries Has Not Been a Success**

	Members	Elders	Pastors
Corruption .....	37%	31%	38%
Waste, inefficiency ...	27%	31%	22%
Politics .....	13%	19%	25%
Failure of poor to use aid properly .....	9%	9%	9%
Not enough aid .....	4%	4%	6%

**Rating Anti-Hunger Organizations**

- ✓ Among panelists familiar with particular anti-hunger organizations, many more rate them positively than negatively. The highest ratio of positive to negative responses is found for Habitat for Humanity (members, 95% positive to <1% negative; pastors, 98% to <1%) and the Presbyterian Hunger Program (55% to 1%; 87% to 4%).



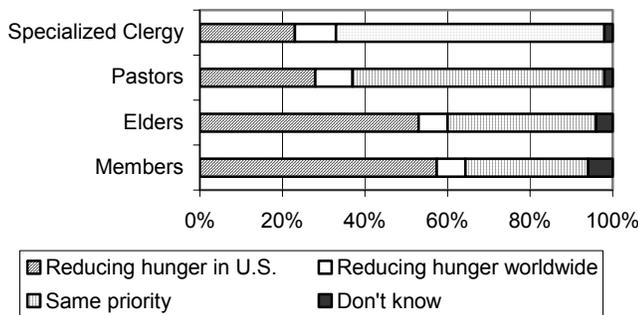
**Figure 3. Impressions of Organizations that Fight Hunger**

**Rating Arguments for Doing More to Fight Hunger**

- ✓ Asked to rate how convincing three statements are as arguments for “doing more to solve the hunger problem,” the highest combined *very convincing* and *somewhat convincing* response total in all four groups is for “improving nutrition programs for low-income Americans will help children learn in school” (members, 85%; pastors, 91%).
- ✓ Large majorities also respond *very convincing* or *somewhat convincing* to the argument, “six million children die each year in poor countries from hunger-related causes, and America has a moral obligation to try and fight hunger throughout the world” (members, 65%; pastors, 89%).

**Government Funding**

- ✓ Estimates of the percentage of U.S. government spending that goes for “humanitarian aid and development assistance to help poor people in other countries” range from 2% (ministers) to 3% (laity).
- ✓ Large majorities *strongly agree* or *agree* (members, 84%; pastors, 82%) that “government programs haven’t solved the problem of hungry children, so we need to reform these programs . . .”
- ✓ More laity believe that *reducing hunger in the U.S.* is a higher priority for Congress than *reducing hunger throughout the world*, while most ministers believe *both should have the same priority*.



**Figure 4**  
**Priority Preferences for Reducing Hunger**

**Political Considerations**

- ✓ When asked “which candidates would you be more likely to vote for,” by large majorities panelists choose “a candidate for Congress who says s/he will make fighting hunger a higher priority (members, 86%; pastors, 91%) over one who says there is currently enough being done to fight the hunger problem (14%; 9%).”
- ✓ Panelists split on whether *President George Bush and the Republicans in Congress or the Democrats in Congress* are “better able to fight the hunger problem.” By small margins, laity pick *Republicans* (members, 19%) over *Democrats* (15%), but more select *both equally* (31%).
- ✓ Ministers are more likely than laity to choose *the Democrats*, and less likely to choose *don’t know*:

**Table 4. Responses to “Who Is Better Able to Fight the Hunger Problem?”**

	Members	Elders	Pastors
President Bush and Republicans .....	19%	21%	14%
Democrats .....	15%	17%	32%
Both equally .....	31%	32%	26%
Neither .....	16%	16%	19%
Don’t know .....	18%	15%	9%

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed .....	1,106	1,310	1,430
Number returned .....	654	873	1,015 ‡
Response rate .....	59%	66%	58%

‡Of the 1,015 returned surveys, 671 came from pastors and 344 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in February 2003, and returns were accepted through April 2003. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a general rule, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful.

**For more numbers and interpretation** of the February 2003 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$10. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-03276. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**

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