



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND SURVEY FOR THE 2003-2005 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, ministers are 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 2003 to 2005. The survey was initially mailed in October 2002, and returns were accepted through January 2003.

#### ✓ In this *Summary*

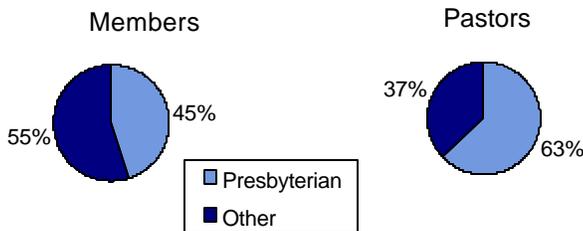
- ✓ Church participation ..... p. 1
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### CHURCH ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT

#### Church Background

- ✓ About one in every seven members and elders were raised Methodist, and one in ten, Baptist. Among pastors, 7% were raised in a Methodist church, and another 8%, in a Baptist church.

**Figure 1**  
Church of Childhood



- ✓ On average, members joined their current congregation 13 years ago; elders, 17 years ago.

#### Church Attendance and Participation

- ✓ Over one-half of members (53%) and elders (51%) live within three miles of their church.
- ✓ More than six in ten members (62%) and nine in ten elders (90%) report that they usually attend worship services *every week* or *nearly every week*.
- ✓ Half of members (49%) and most elders (83%) take part three or more hours per month in other programs and activities of their congregations.

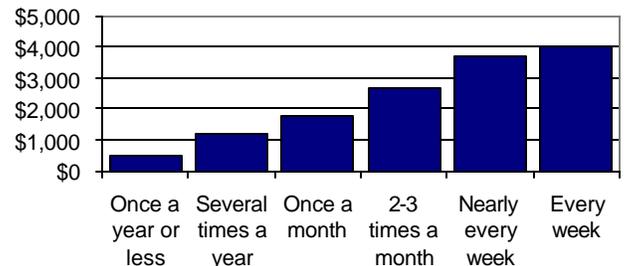
#### Church Leadership

- ✓ Almost half of members (45%) have previously been ordained as elders, deacons, or both.
- ✓ Four in ten elders (45%) and 5% of members currently chair a congregational committee.
- ✓ Most members (60%) and elders (97%) volunteer time each month to teach or lead activities in their congregation.

#### Financial Stewardship

- ✓ Three-fourths of members (75%) and 86% of elders report that they or another family member completed a pledge card last year.
- ✓ Median giving to congregations *per person* is \$755 for members, \$1,450 for elders, \$1,575 for pastors, and \$1,200 for specialized clergy.

**Figure 2**  
Median 2001 Church Giving in Member Households, by Frequency of Attendance



**The Bible**

- ✓ Majorities of members (54%), elders (64%), and pastors (59%), and 42% of specialized clergy, believe that “the account of Creation presented in Genesis is a true account of how God created the world,” but only 8%, 7%, 2%, and 1%, respectively, believe that that account “is literally true, exactly as we find it in the Bible.”
- ✓ A third of members (35%) and a majority of elders (53%) read the Bible privately at least *weekly*. More than one-half of pastors (56%) and one-third of specialized clergy (36%) read the Bible privately *daily* or *almost daily*.
- ✓ One in three members (32%) and one in two elders (49%) participate in a Bible study group *at least monthly*, including 20% and 31%, respectively, who participate *weekly or more often*.

**Prayer**

- ✓ Panelists who report that they pray privately *daily* or *almost daily* range from 64% of members and 73% of elders to 88% of pastors and 82% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ An overlapping 22%, 26%, 45%, and 41%, respectively, pray with friends or family members *daily* or *almost daily*.
- ✓ One in ten members (7%) and one in eight elders (12%) attend a prayer group *weekly or more often*.

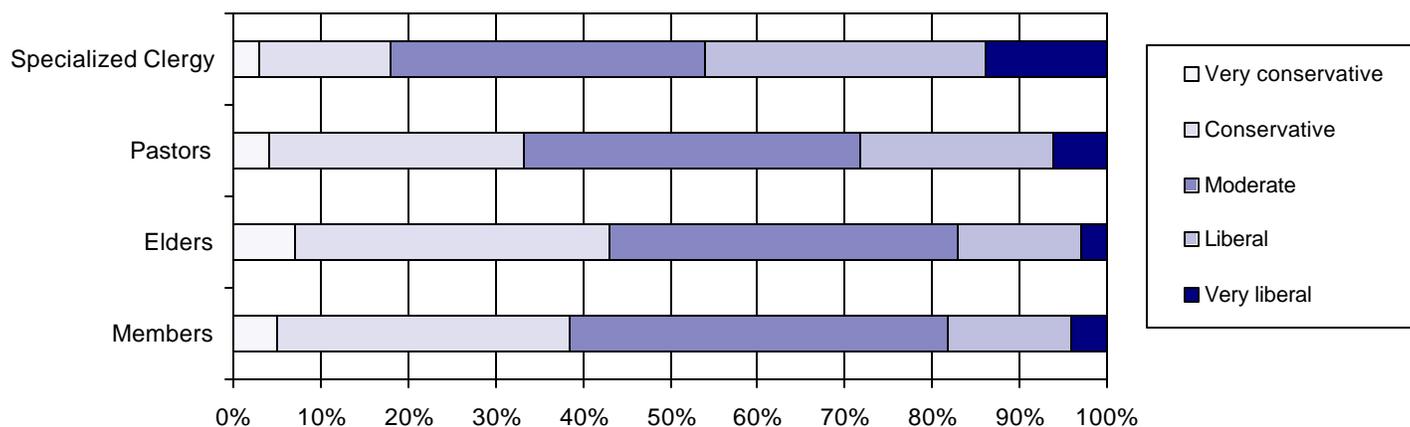
**Conversion Experience**

- ✓ 43% of members and 52% of elders report having had a conversion experience.
- ✓ Majorities of members (57%) and elders (73%) have “tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or accept Him as a personal savior.”

**Dimensions of Belief**

- ✓ 70% of members, 75% of elders, 71% of pastors, and 55% of specialized clergy *strongly agree* or *agree* that “the only absolute Truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ.”
- ✓ 43% of members, 50% of elders, 39% of pastors, and 24% of other clergy *strongly agree* or *agree* that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.”
- ✓ Two-thirds of members (66%) and specialized clergy (66%), and eight in ten elders (78%) and pastors (80%) *strongly agree* or *agree* that “Jesus will return to earth some day.”
- ✓ 86% of members, 91% of specialized clergy, 92% of elders, and 96% of pastors *strongly agree* or *agree* that “there is life after death.”
- ✓ Fewer lay panelists believe in hell than in heaven (e.g., 93% of elders *strongly agree/agree* “there is a heaven,” compared to 78% for “there is a hell”).
- ✓ More ministers (pastors, 29%) than laity (elders, 17%) consider their current stand on theological issues to be *very liberal* or *liberal*.

**Figure 3**  
**Theological Perspective by Sample**



**Current Call**

- ✓ Two in three ministers in the Panel serve primarily as pastors. Of these, 54% serve as solo pastors, 27% as senior pastors, and 18% as associate pastors.
- ✓ 5% of pastors serve more than one congregation, two-thirds of them in yoked parishes.
- ✓ Among specialized clergy, 23% serve as faculty or staff at a seminary or other educational institution; 26% as chaplains; 16% as staff of a PC(USA) body; 5% as staff of ecumenical or non-denominational agencies; and 5% as counselors.
- ✓ More than half (54%) of chaplains serve in hospitals.
- ✓ 37% of specialized clergy are employed by an organization affiliated with the PC(USA), including the 16% who serve as denominational staff.

**Education**

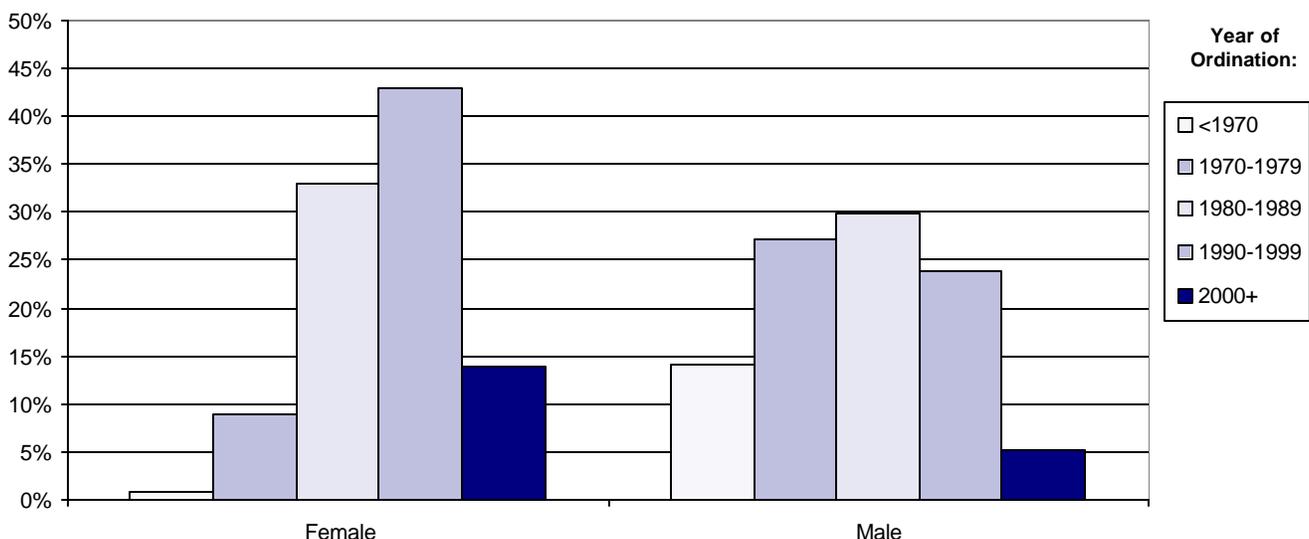
- ✓ More than 99% of pastors and specialized clergy have either a B.D. or M.Div. degree.
- ✓ Two of every three PC(USA) ministers (68%) received their B.D. or M.Div. degree from a PC(USA)-affiliated theological school. Overall, one in six ministers graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary (16%), and 3% to 9% received the B.D./M.Div. from each of the ten other PC(USA) seminaries (with the exception of Johnson C. Smith, where fewer than 1% graduated).

- ✓ Of ministers who graduated from non-PC(USA) institutions, the largest proportions went to Fuller (6% of all clergy), Gordon Conwell (4%), Union (New York) (2%), Yale (1%), and Duke (1%).
- ✓ Almost four in ten pastors and other clergy have at least one graduate degree in theology in addition to the B.D./M.Div. One-fourth have a doctoral degree, typically the D.Min.—24% of pastors and 16% of specialized clergy have this degree. Overall, two-thirds of clergy with the D.Min. degree (67%) received it from a PC(USA)-affiliated school; one-fifth (20%) received it from McCormick Seminary.
- ✓ 9% of both pastors and specialized clergy are currently enrolled in a graduate school, seminary, or theological school. Among these students, more than nine in ten pastors (92%) and specialized clergy (93%) are pursuing a doctoral degree, typically the D.Min.

**Career Background**

- ✓ More than one-third of all ministers (36%) had a long-term secular job or career prior to entering the ministry. These ministers spent an average (median) of eight years in their previous career.
- ✓ 95% of 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, one-fourth (about 1.5% of all ministers) were ordained in a Baptist church.
- ✓ 62% of ministers had been ordained since 1980, half of them (31% overall) since 1989.

**Figure 4  
Gender Differences in Year of Ordination: Pastors**



**Age, Sex, and Race-Ethnicity**

- ✓ The median age is 55 years for members and for elders, 51 years for pastors, and 54 years for specialized clergy.
- ✓ 61% of members are female, as are 50% of elders, 23% of pastors, and 34% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ 97% of members, 96% of elders, 93% of pastors, and 91% of specialized clergy list their race-ethnicity as white.

**Marriage and Households**

- ✓ Large majorities of members (77%), elders (84%), pastors (87%), and specialized clergy (83%) are currently married. Overall, 9% of members, 5% of elders, and 6% of ministers have never married. Among the ever-married, 19% of members and elders, 20% of pastors, and 23% of specialized clergy have been divorced.

- ✓ One in eight members and elders, and one in ten pastors and specialized clergy, live alone. The average household size overall is 2.6 persons for members, elders, and specialized clergy, and 2.8 for pastors.

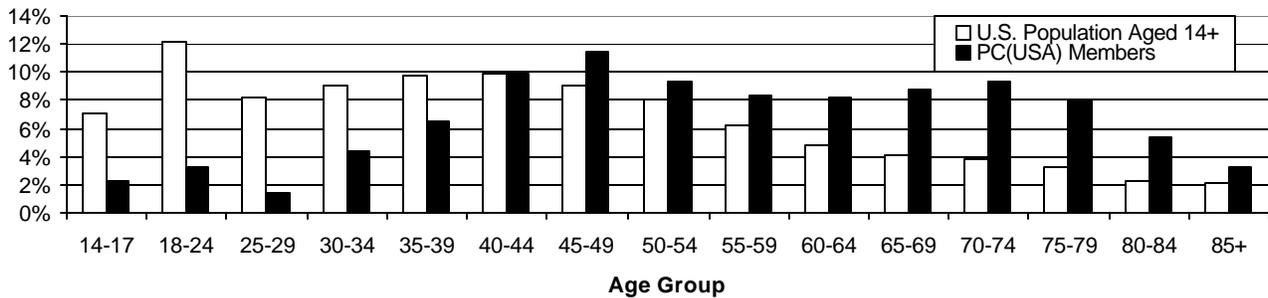
**Employment Status and Income**

- ✓ More than half of members (52%) and two-thirds of elders (64%) are employed, most full time. Three in ten members and elders are retired.
- ✓ Median annual family income is \$72,000 for members, \$72,600 for elders, \$65,200 for pastors, and \$75,800 for specialized clergy.

**Political Preference**

- ✓ 57% of members and 55% of elders describe themselves as Republicans, while 48% of pastors and 64% of specialized clergy label themselves as Democrats.

**Figure 5**  
**Age Distribution: U.S. Population (age 14+) and PC(USA) Members**



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed .....	1,994	1,701	2,197
Number returned.....	1,102	1,145	1,435*
Response rate .....	56%	76%	65%

\*Of 1,435 returned surveys, 948 were from pastors and 487 from specialized clergy.

These results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. As a rule of thumb, differences of less than 8% between samples are not statistically meaningful. For more details, see the “Technical Appendix” in *The Background Report for the 2003-2005 Presbyterian Panel*. This Report includes numerous charts and graphs, and a data appendix displaying percentage responses to each survey question for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy. Cost: \$10. Call PDS at 1-800-524-2612 and order PDS # 65100-02276.

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