



PC(USA) MINISTER SURVEY

Demographic Report

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**RESEARCH
SERVICES**

Why conduct a survey of all PC(USA) ministers? Why now?

Research Services regularly receives questions from members, congregational staff, mid councils, and PC(USA) leaders about ministers that cannot be answered with the data that available to us. As data was not available, I decided that a survey should be developed to answer many of these questions and asked Perry Chang, PhD to lead this work. This report is one portion of what has been learned, yet many new questions have been formed. New surveys will follow focusing on clergy of color, retirement, bi-vocational ministry, commissioned ruling elders, and “part-time” ministers.

The success of this first ever survey of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister would have been far less if not for the support our many partners. Here are just a few of them.

- Call to Health, the Board of Pensions’ wellness program that offered points toward the minister’s wellness goal for participation
- Presbyterian Publishing Company offered a discount for a future purchase for all who completed the survey.
- Communication’s staff from the Office of the General Assembly, Mission Agency, and Presbyterian Foundation who wrote several stories that included the survey link.
- Office of the General Assembly Mid Council relations staff that regularly promoted the survey in its newsletters
- Several denomination-wide committees that shared the link with their constituencies.
- Members of the all-agency data group who regularly meet to discuss and improve data and data reporting for PC(USA) and open doors for new partnerships.

Why now? Because the church is waiting for the answers.

Susan Barnett, PhD

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Overview

The PC(USA) Minister Survey was a massive 110-question survey which fielded from September to November of 2019. Invitations were sent by postcard to all ministers for whom we had an address. The survey was also one of the Board of Pensions' Call to Health challenges. This partnership contributed to nearly half of all responses.

23% of the denomination's 19,243 ministers (n=4,507) responded to the survey.

This report provides an overview of who took the survey, including what roles and positions they hold, where and how pastors serve, family life, and demographics.

01

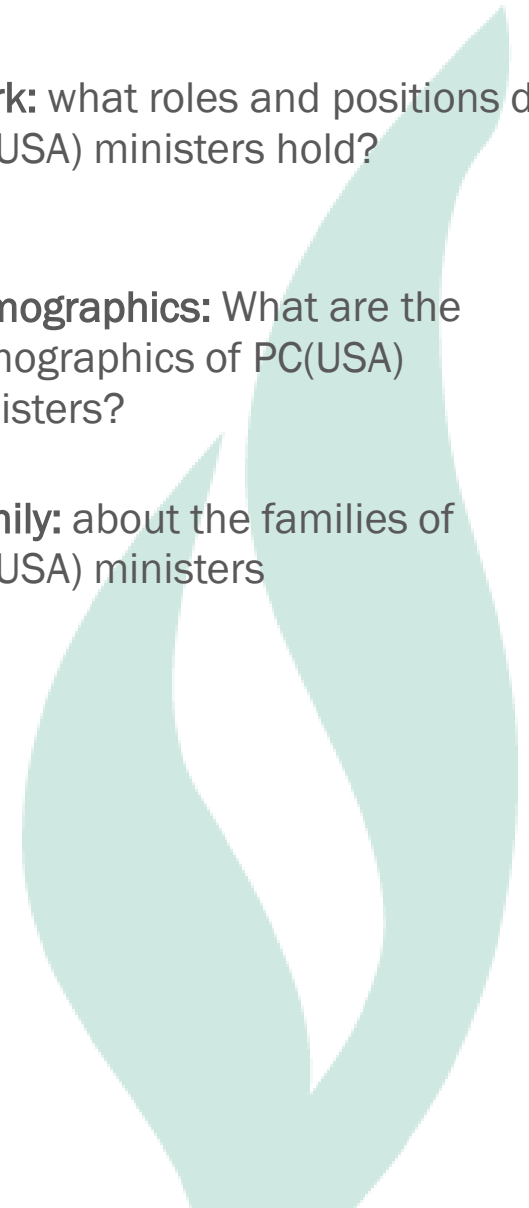
Work: what roles and positions do PC(USA) ministers hold?

02

Demographics: What are the demographics of PC(USA) ministers?

03

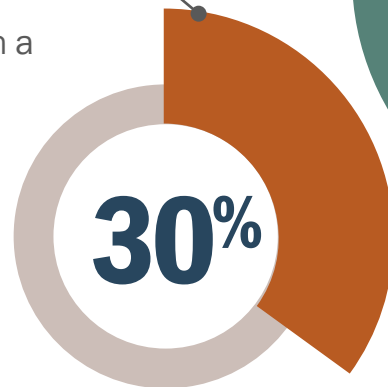
Family: about the families of PC(USA) ministers



Most respondents are pastors

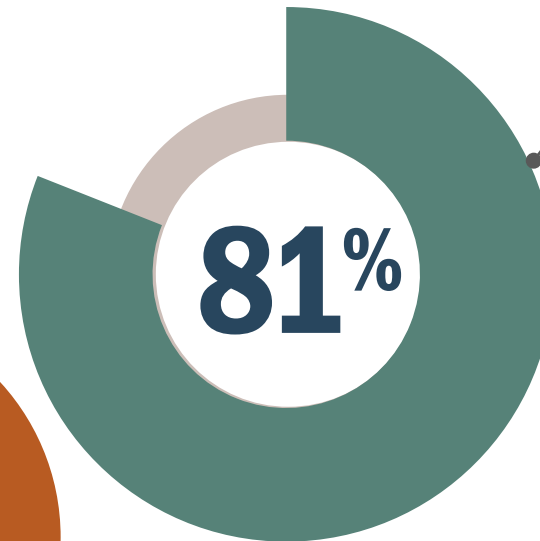
30% are honorably retired

21% of these “retired” individuals are currently in a call. In addition, 4% of the working retired hold more than one position.



81% of employed ministers are pastors

This includes installed pastors, co-pastors, supply pastors, associate pastors, interim pastors serving PC(USA) or another denomination. This does not include the non-working retired.



10% of ministers in a call have more than one type of position

This statistic does not include those who hold multiple calls with the same position (for example, a pastor serving at two churches).



Distinguishing between *minister* and *pastor*

Although the terms *minister* and *pastor* are often used interchangeably, there is a difference. In PC(USA), *minister* is short for *minister of Word and Sacrament*. These are people ordained to serve in any number of positions, like pastor or chaplain. A *pastor*, on the other hand, is ordained to a congregation, and can include ministers of Word and Sacrament (otherwise known as Teaching Elders) or commissioned lay pastors (otherwise known as Commissioned Ruling Elders).

90% of active ministers have a single type of position

8% of ministers have two types of positions, and 2% have three or more.*

The most common position held by ministers is that of pastor.

Of the 81% who are pastors:

- 61% are installed pastors
- 17% are supply pastors
- 10% are installed associate pastors
- 10% are interim pastors
- 3% are with non-PC(USA) congregations
- 1% are organizing pastors or evangelists employed by a presbytery or synod

In addition:

- 24% of respondents are retired and not working
- 3% are working (minister, secular job, or own a business) but not engaged in validated ministry

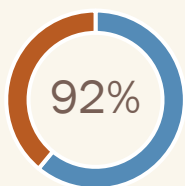
Position (n=4843)	% Survey	% PCUSA
Installed pastor or co-pastor of a PC(USA) congregation (101 or 191)	36%	22%
Honorably retired member of a presbytery (299)	30%	41%
Supply pastor (108)	10%	4%
Installed associate pastor of a PC(USA) congregation (103 or 193)	6%	6%
Interim pastor or associate pastor of a PC(USA) congregation (105)	6%	3%
Chaplain (641, 701, 741, 751, 761, or 771)	5%	4%
Member at large of a presbytery (797)	4%	11%
Minister in another type of validated ministry (791)	3%	3%
Other presbytery or synod staff (302, 303, 304, 305, or 306)	3%	1%
Faculty, staff (including chaplain), or student at a school, college, seminary, or university (642, 643, or 644)	3%	2%
Paid to do secular work for either a religious or secular organization	2%	--
Own my own business	2%	--
Pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, or pastor in a temporary relationship with a non-PC(USA) congregation (501, 503, or 505)	2%	1%
Minister not engaged in a validated ministry (795)	1%	0%
Staff of a General Assembly agency (including PC(USA) international mission co-workers) (402, 403, 404, or 405)	1%	1%
Organizing pastor or evangelist (typically of a new church development, fellowship, or new worshiping community) employed by a presbytery or synod (301)	1%	1%
Staff of another type of religious organization (702 or 703)	1%	<1%
Staff of an agency of a non-PC(USA) denomination, ecumenical agency, or non-denominational agency (562 or 565)	1%	<1%

*This statistic does not include those who hold multiple calls with the same position (for example, a pastor serving at two churches).

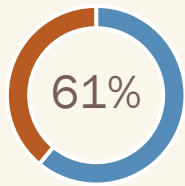
PC(USA) data is from December 2019.

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding or the ability to select more than one option.

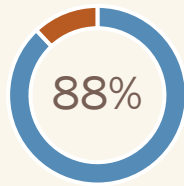
Demographics of Survey Respondents



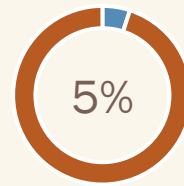
White



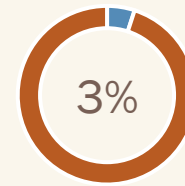
Male



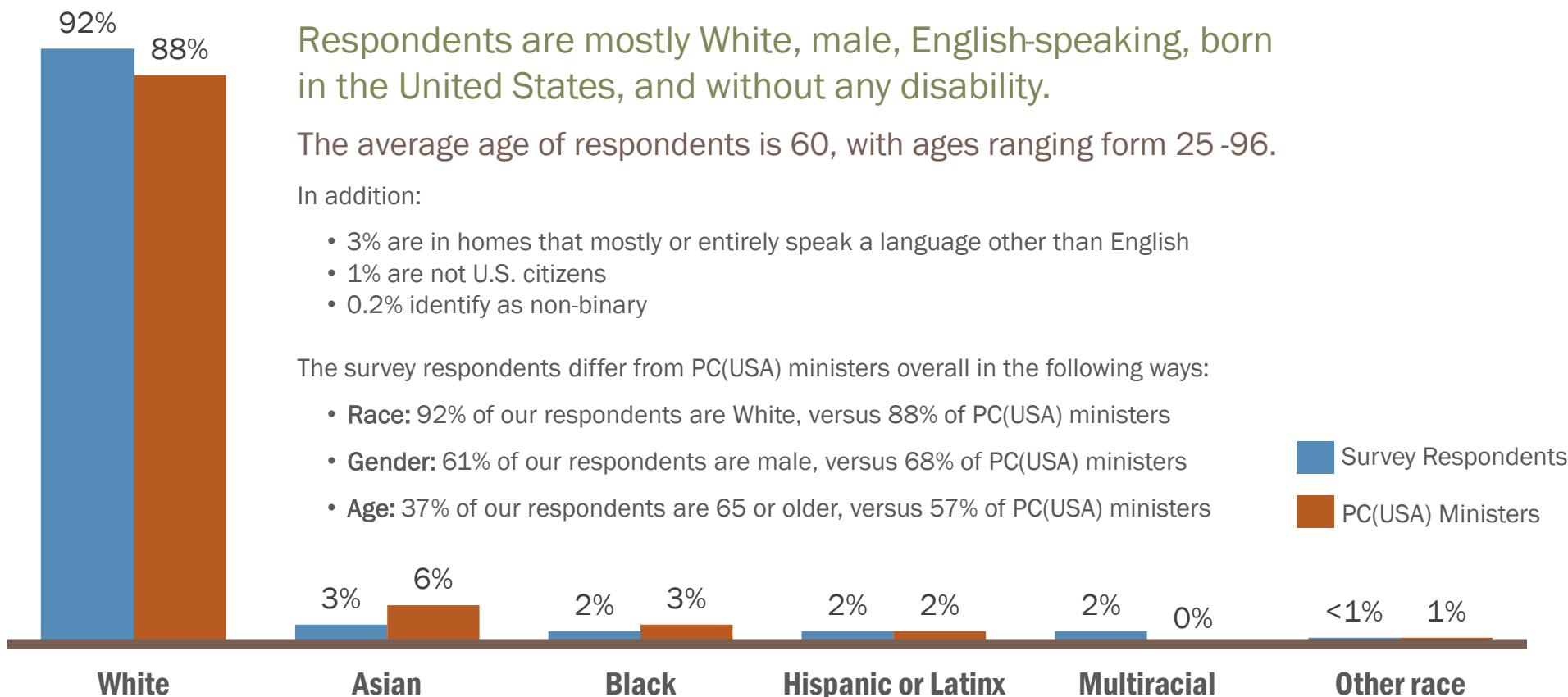
English only in home



Immigrant



Disability requiring accommodation



Respondents are mostly White, male, English-speaking, born in the United States, and without any disability.

The average age of respondents is 60, with ages ranging from 25 -96.

In addition:

- 3% are in homes that mostly or entirely speak a language other than English
- 1% are not U.S. citizens
- 0.2% identify as non-binary

The survey respondents differ from PC(USA) ministers overall in the following ways:

- **Race:** 92% of our respondents are White, versus 88% of PC(USA) ministers
- **Gender:** 61% of our respondents are male, versus 68% of PC(USA) ministers
- **Age:** 37% of our respondents are 65 or older, versus 57% of PC(USA) ministers

■ Survey Respondents
■ PC(USA) Ministers

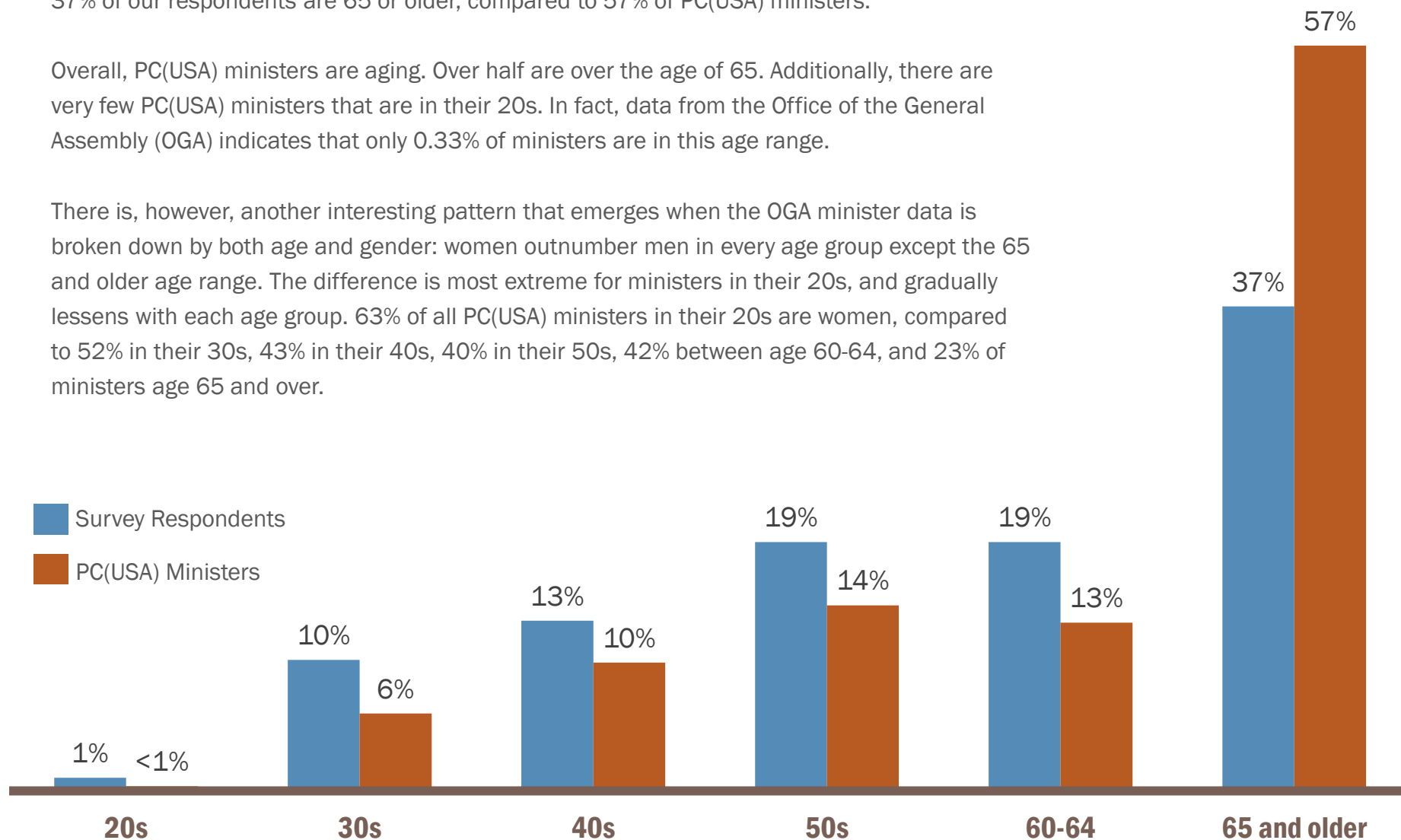
Age and Gender of Survey Respondents

Survey respondents trend younger than PC(USA) ministers in general.

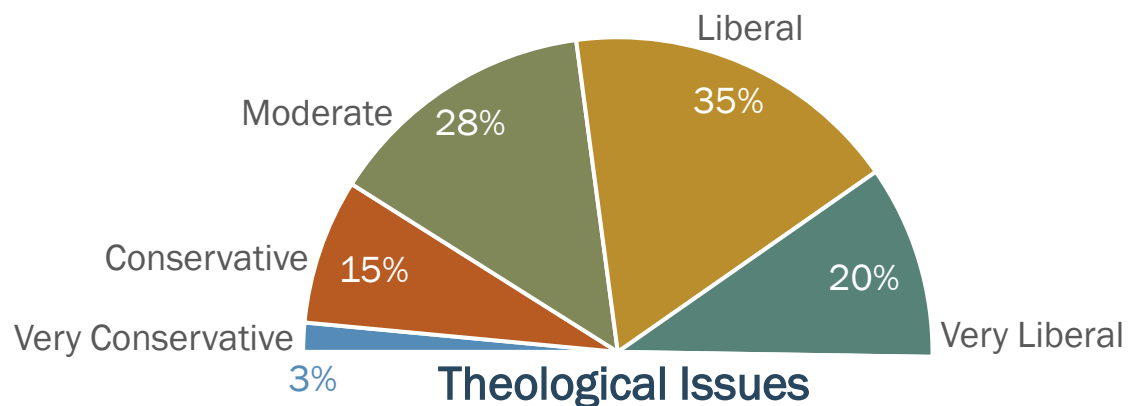
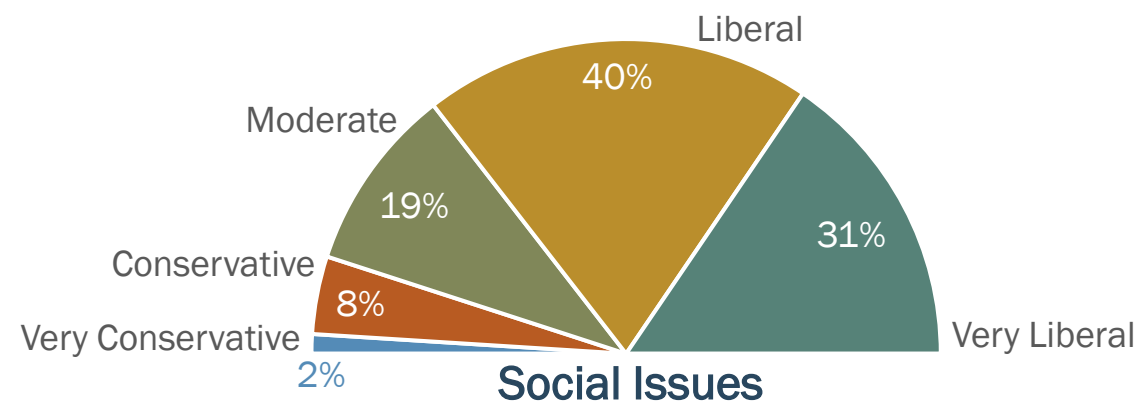
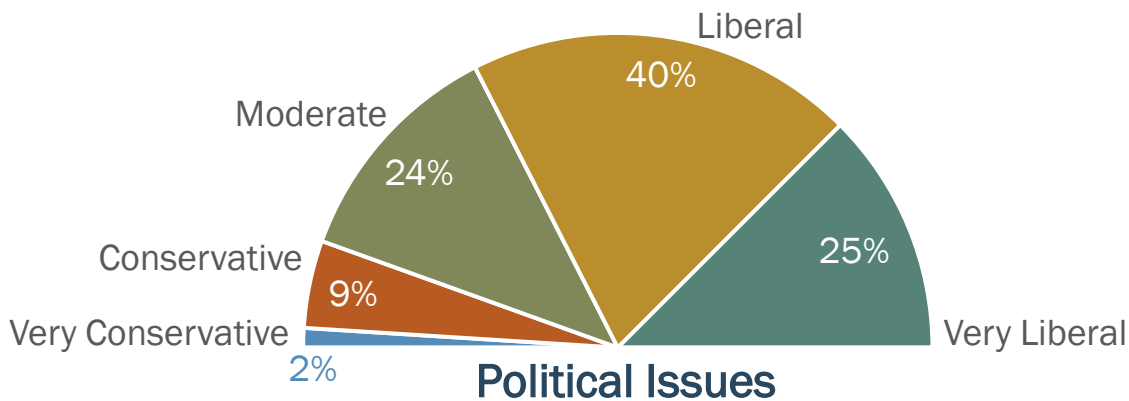
37% of our respondents are 65 or older, compared to 57% of PC(USA) ministers.

Overall, PC(USA) ministers are aging. Over half are over the age of 65. Additionally, there are very few PC(USA) ministers that are in their 20s. In fact, data from the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) indicates that only 0.33% of ministers are in this age range.

There is, however, another interesting pattern that emerges when the OGA minister data is broken down by both age and gender: women outnumber men in every age group except the 65 and older age range. The difference is most extreme for ministers in their 20s, and gradually lessens with each age group. 63% of all PC(USA) ministers in their 20s are women, compared to 52% in their 30s, 43% in their 40s, 40% in their 50s, 42% between age 60-64, and 23% of ministers age 65 and over.



Where do PC(USA) ministers stand?



PC(USA) ministers in this survey lean liberal. However, they are more likely to have liberal beliefs regarding social and political issues than theological issues.

Only 11% of ministers identify as politically conservative, and 10% as social conservative. However, 18% identify as theologically conservative.

In addition,

- 63% are Democrats
- 11% are Republicans
- 12% are independent
- 11% do not identify with a political party
- 1% identify with another party

Of the 38 selecting another party, 10 wrote in some variant of “used to be a Republican but not now,” “old school Republican,” or “not Trump.”

In addition, there are:

- 10 Green
- 7 Democratic Socialist
- 5 Libertarian
- 2 Working Families

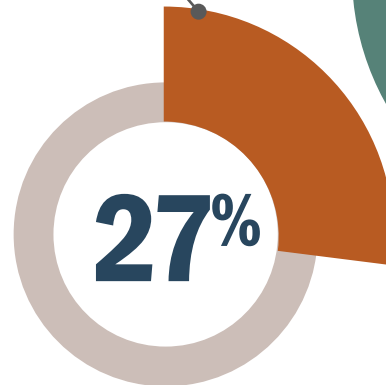
This data might differ from PC(USA) ministers overall since our dataset skews young, male, and White. We can't really predict how that would affect the difference, since youth tend to more liberal, but males and Whites tend to be more conservative.

Ministers and their families

27% have children under 18 at home

In addition:

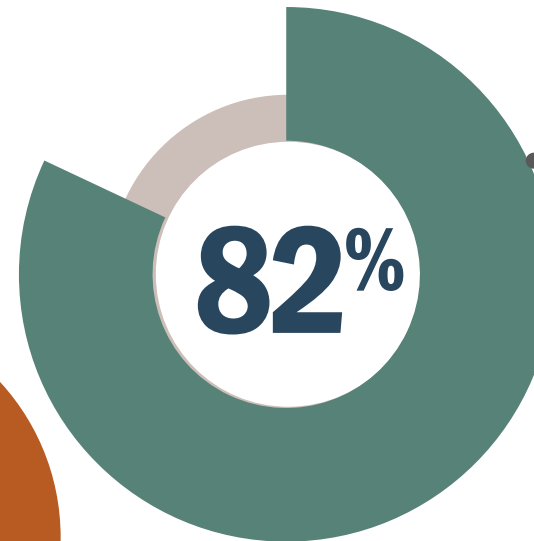
- 14% have children 18 or older living at home
- 61% have children 18 or older *not* living at home
- 12% have children in high school
- 20% have children in college, seminary, or graduate school



82% of ministers are married

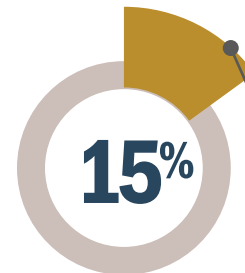
In addition:

- 9% are single
- 6% are divorced
- 2% are widowed
- 1% are living in a committed relationship



15% of spouses and partners are also PC(USA) ministers

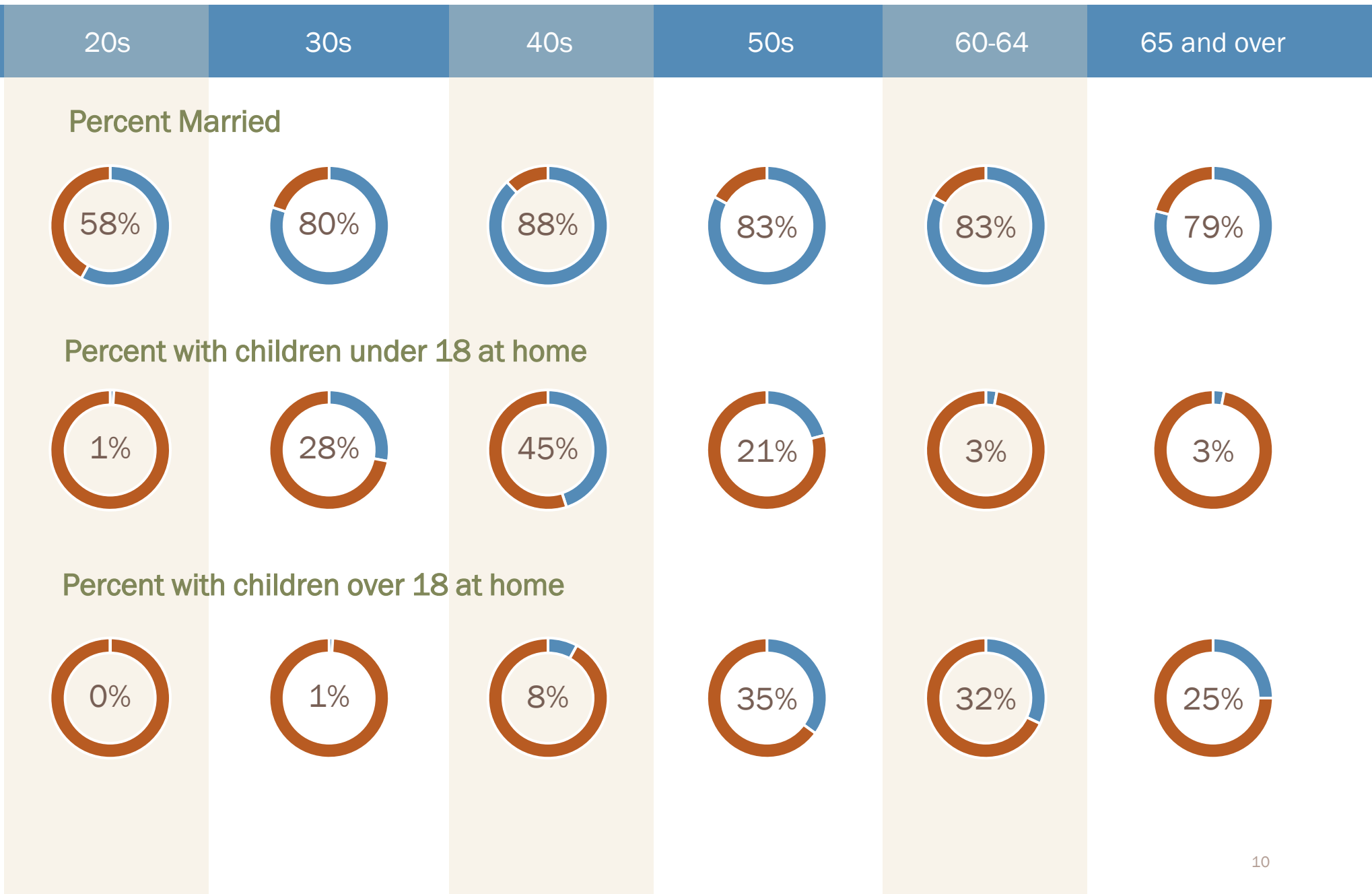
In addition, 4% of pastors married to PC(USA) ministers serve as co-pastors together



Children at home

The average minister has 1.5 children younger than 18 and 1.2 children over 18 living at home. The median number of children living at home is 1.

Minister Families by Age Group

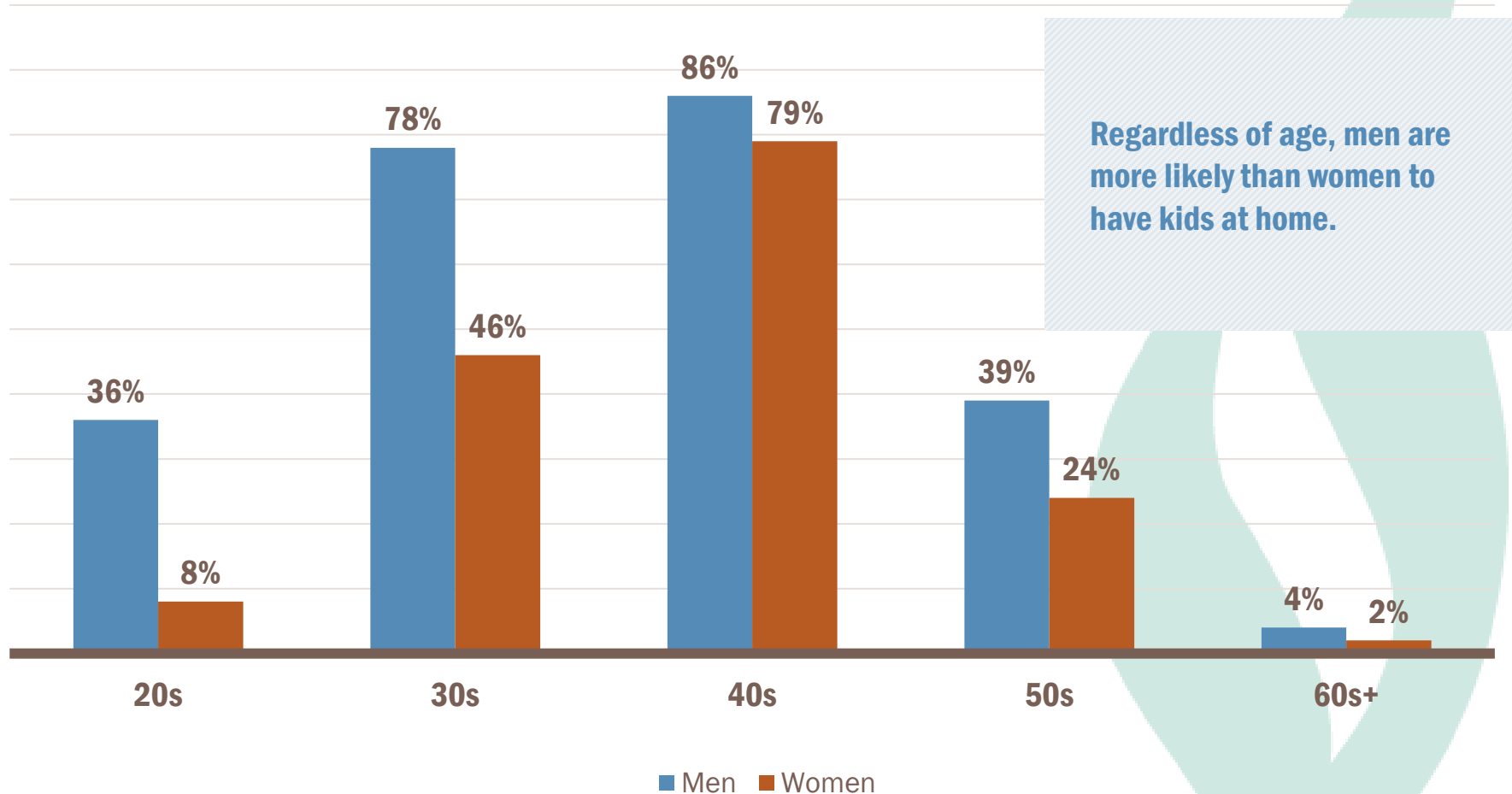


Minister Families by Gender

Men in a call are more likely than women to be married and have children.

Whereas 90% of male ministers are married, only 68% of female ministers are. This difference is true at every age level. The largest marriage gap is for ministers in their 30s, where 94% of men and 68% of women are married.

Additionally, men are more likely than women to have children under 18 at home.



Research Services helps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) make data-informed decisions using surveys, focus groups and interviews, demographic analysis, and program evaluations.

We are social scientists with backgrounds in sociology, public policy, and economics. We serve congregations, presbyteries and synods, PC(USA) national agencies, and other PC(USA)-related organizations. Research Services is a ministry of the Administrative Services Group.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of this report, contact us at 502-569-5077 or research@pcusa.org.



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