

PC(USA) MINISTER SURVEY

Discrimination, Opportunity, and
Struggles of Leadership 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

Director, Research Services
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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=4,495) responded to the survey.

This report provides an overview of experiences of discrimination and inequality by ministers in PC(USA). It examines discrimination on the basis of age, gender, race or ethnicity, and other factors.

Topics include discrimination, leadership, promotion, and others struggles faced as leaders within PC(USA).

04

Discrimination and Harassment: how have ministers in the PCUSA experienced discrimination?

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Opportunity and Promotion: how have ministers opportunities within the PC(USA) been affected by demographic and other factors?

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Leadership Struggles: what issues have respondents struggled with as leaders and how have demographic factors impacted those struggles?

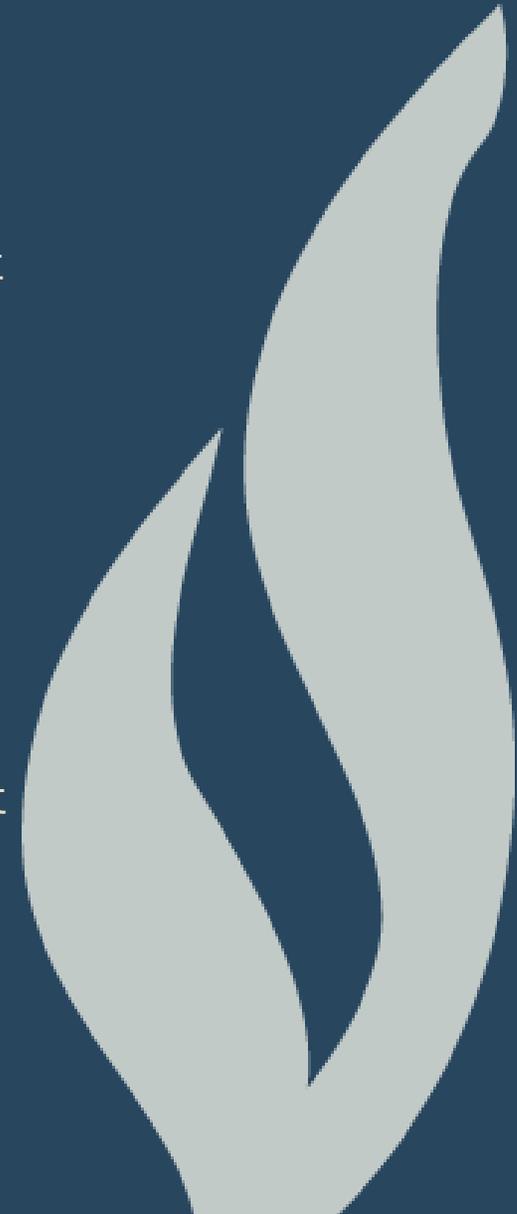
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What are we learning?

Discrimination and Harassment

Respondents to the minister survey were asked about their experiences of discrimination and harassment within the PC(USA) and to identify the basis of that discrimination. Overall, 37% of respondents reported some kind of discrimination or harassment, but there are large differences in responses based on the age, gender, and race of the respondent.

This section examines discrimination and harassment responses. These are broken down by age, gender, race and ethnicity, and other factors.



Discrimination

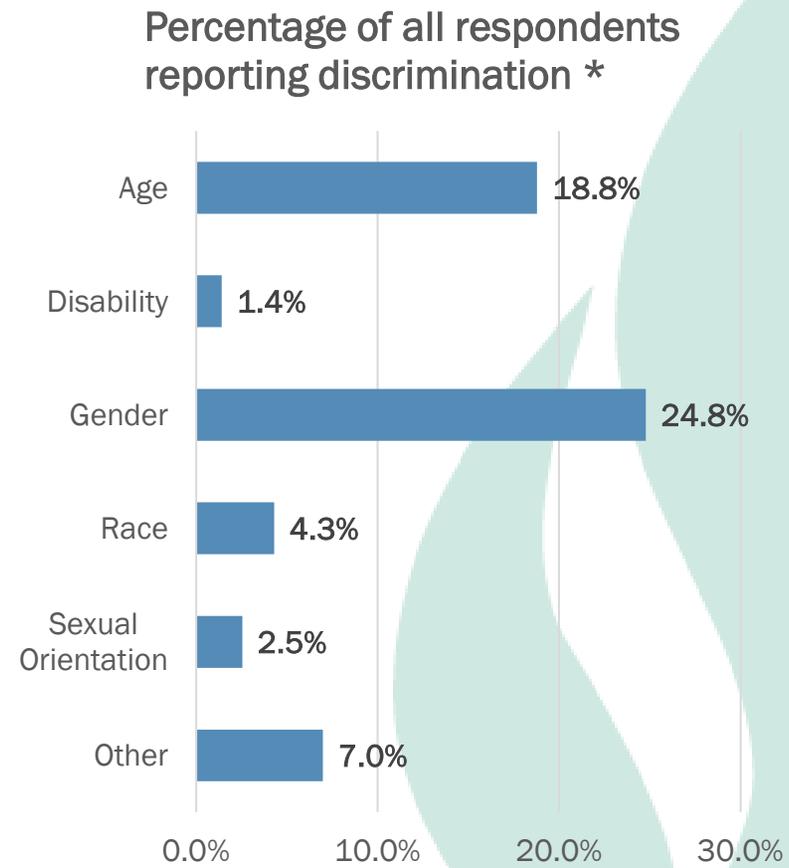
37% of respondents report some form of discrimination or harassment

Gender discrimination and harassment are the most reported forms of discrimination.

Respondents were asked if they had ever faced discrimination, harassment, or prejudicial statements in the PC(USA) for the following reasons:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race, culture, or ethnicity
- Sexual Orientation
- Other reasons

There were large and significant differences in responses based on the age, gender, and race of the respondent, which is expected. Because the respondents skewed older, male, and white, the overall percentages do not show the extent of experiences of discrimination.



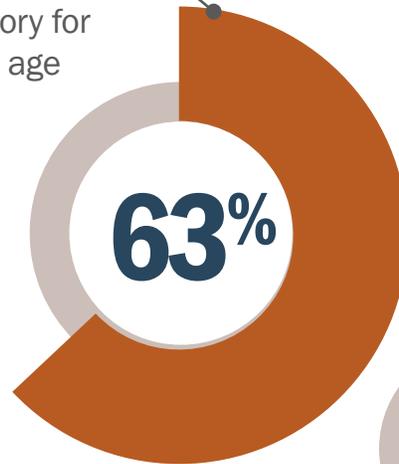
N = 3689

* Respondents were able to select more than one category of discrimination, therefore the percentages in this table do not add up to 37%.

Women experience more discrimination in the PC(USA)

63% of women reported any form of discrimination

The most common category for women after gender was age (30.4%)



58% of women report gender-based discrimination

Only 4% of men reported gender-based discrimination



21% of men reported any form of discrimination

The most common categories reported by men were Age (11.5%) followed by Other (7.1%)



Distinguishing Gender

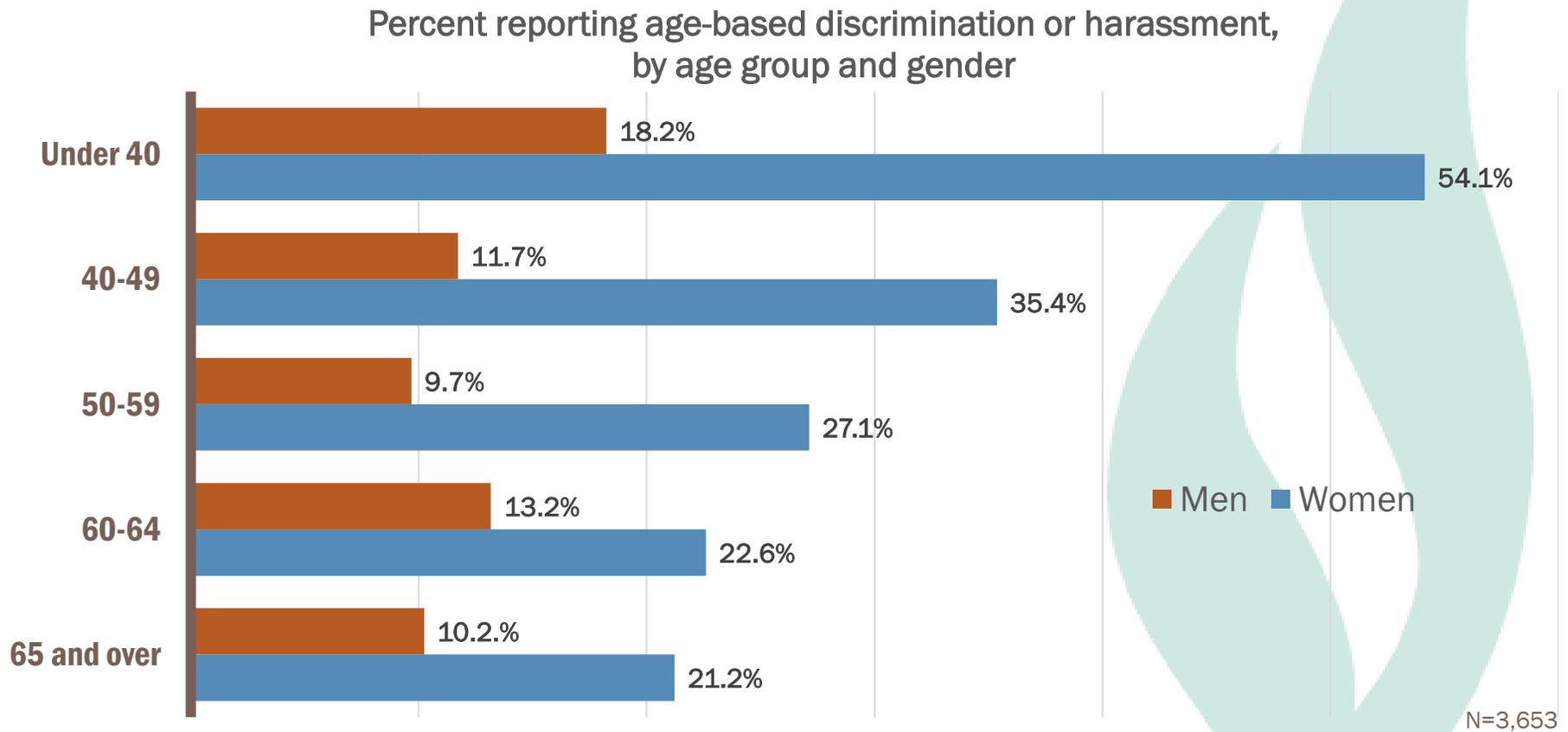
Respondents were given the option to choose Male, Female, or Nonbinary as their gender. There were very few non-binary respondents, so they are not reported in the charts included here. Of the 6 nonbinary respondents, 5 reported discrimination based on age, gender, or sexual orientation.

N=3,683

Younger respondents report more age-based discrimination

Younger respondents more often report more age-based discrimination or harassment than older respondents. Women in every age grouping report more age-based discrimination than men. Usually, we expect older respondents to report age-based discrimination, but in PC(USA), that relationship is reversed.

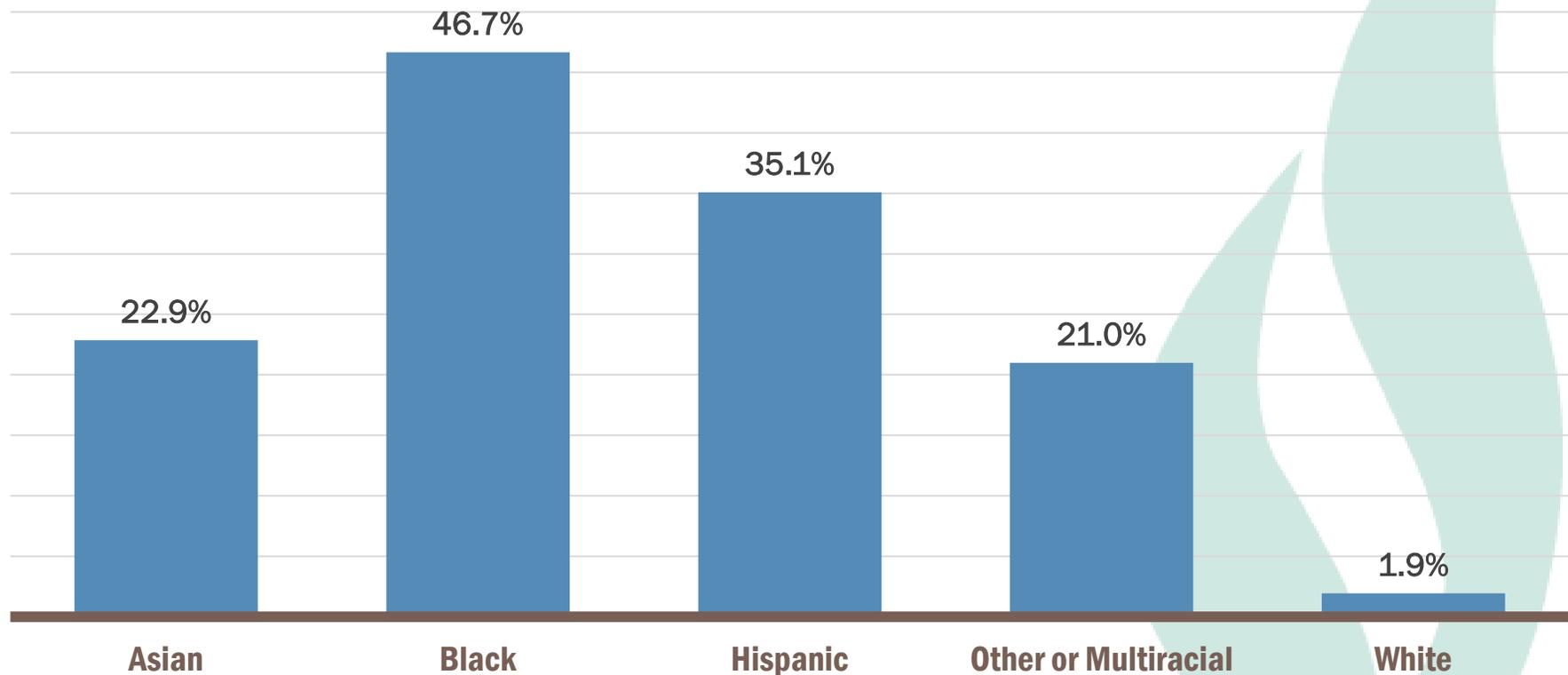
Younger respondents often feel that they have difficulty being accepted as leaders and authorities within the church. Younger women especially find their age to be a barrier to leadership.



Racial and ethnic discrimination is a common experience for people of color

Black respondents most frequently reported discrimination, followed by Hispanic and Asian respondents.

Percent reporting race or ethnicity-based discrimination or harassment, by race or ethnicity

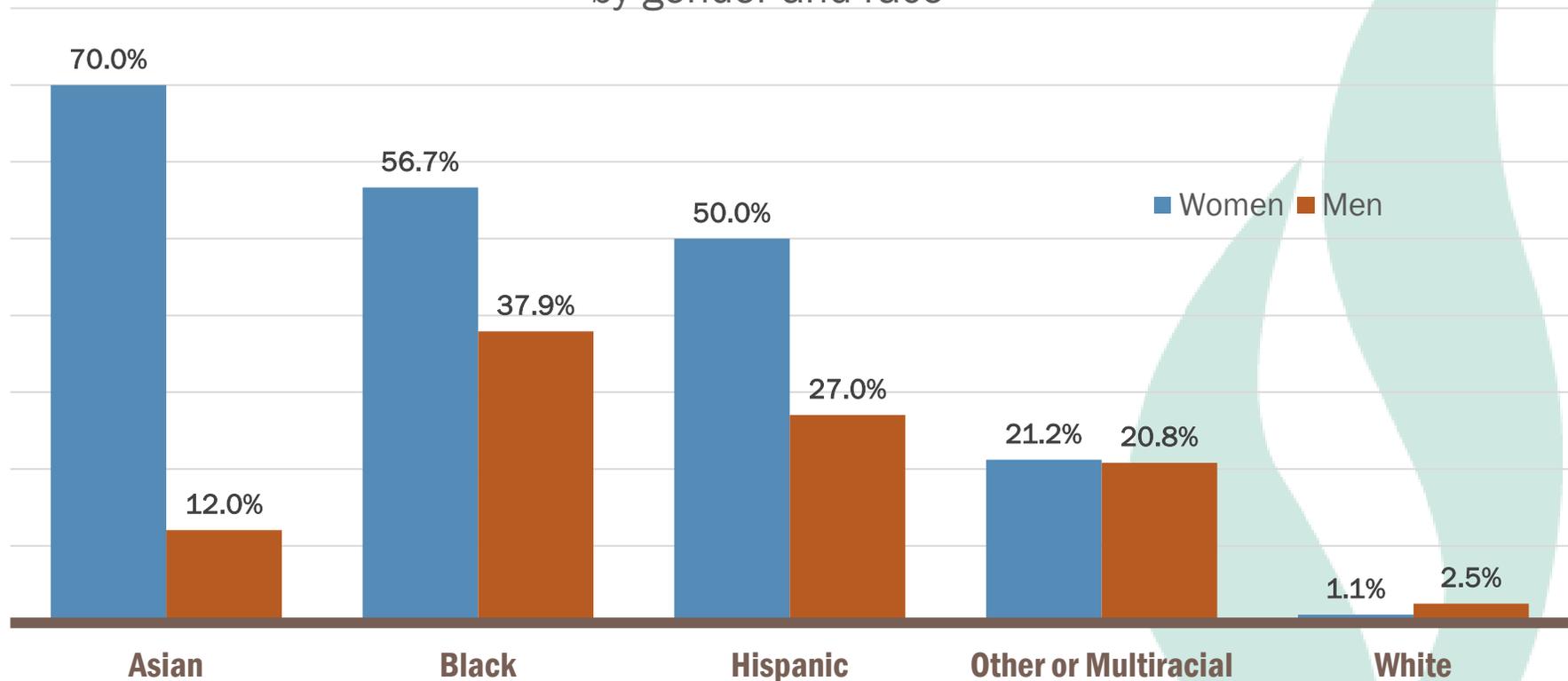


N=3,664

Women report more racial and ethnic discrimination than men

In every ethnic category except white, women reported significantly more race or ethnic-based discrimination than men in the same group.

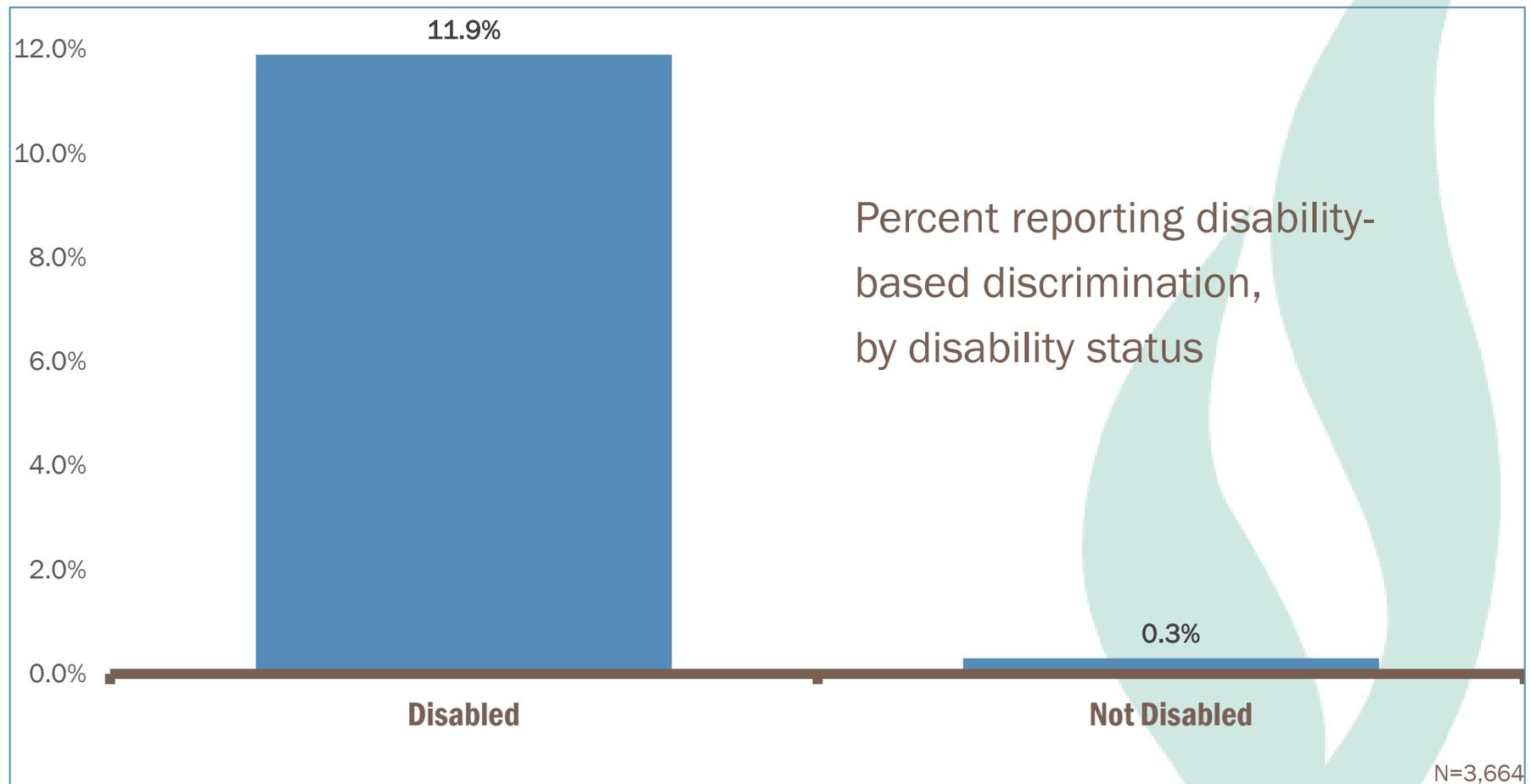
Percent reporting racial or ethnic discrimination or harassment, by gender and race



N=3,664

Reports of disability-based discrimination are low

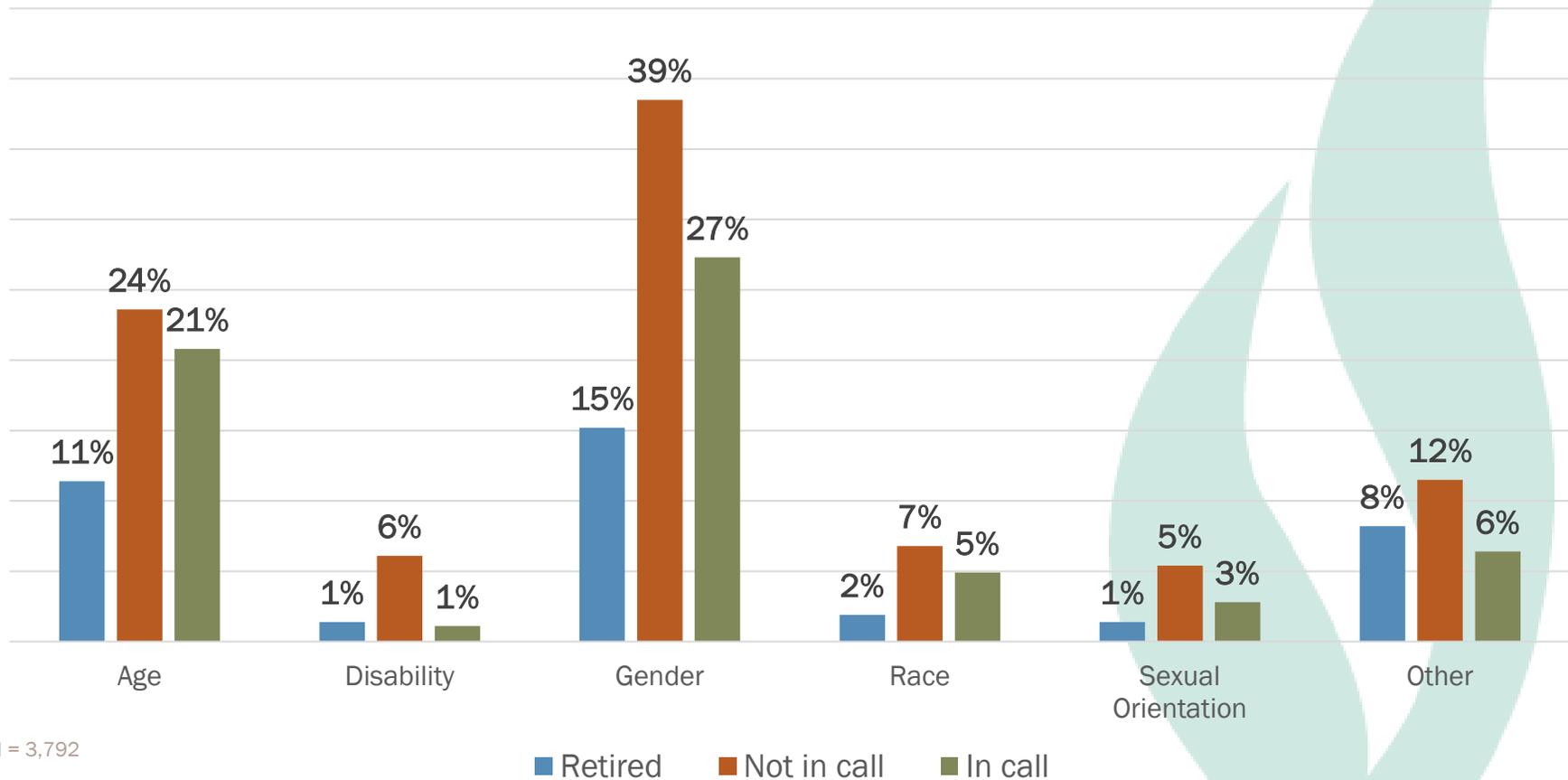
Only 12% of people with a disability reported discrimination based on that disability.



Respondents not in a call report more discrimination and harassment

Those not in a call report more discrimination than in call or retired respondents. Retired respondents, who are by a large majority white and male, report the least discrimination.

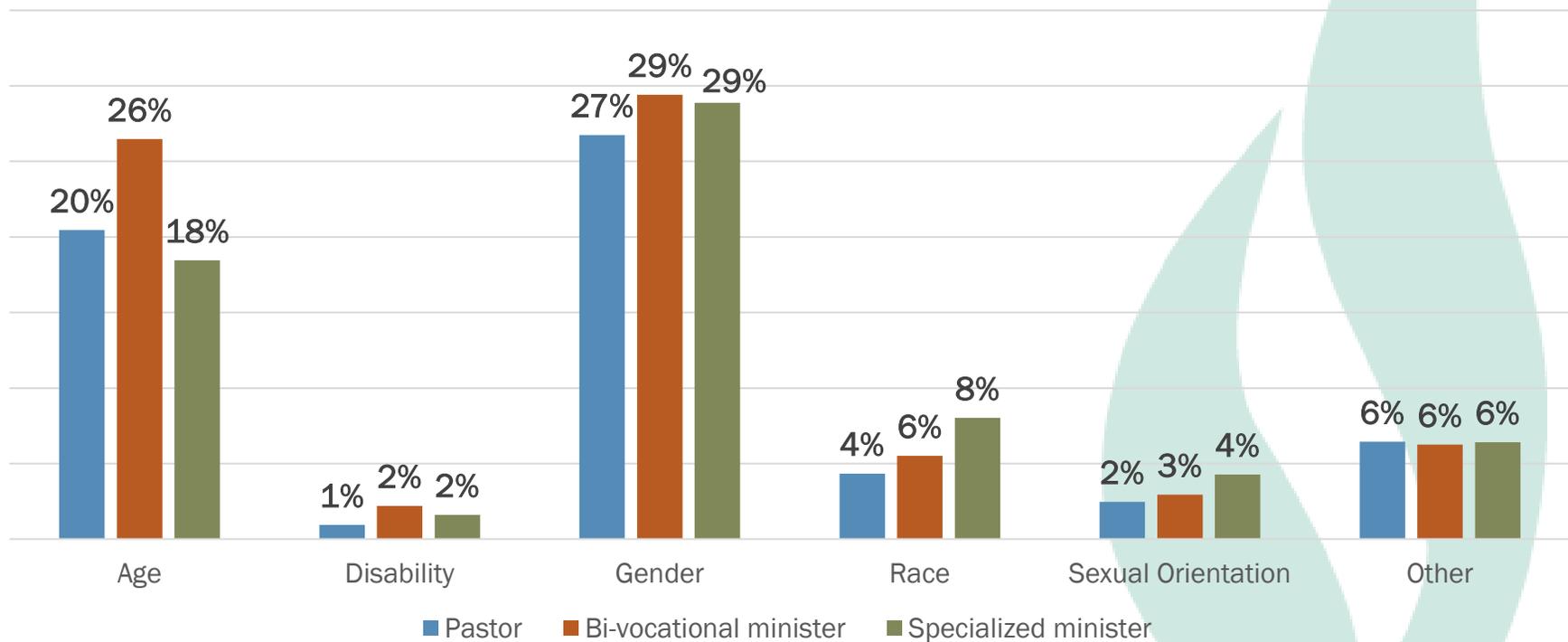
Percent reporting discrimination or harassment by call status



Ministers experience similar levels of discrimination across position types

Bi-vocational ministers report a little more age-based discrimination despite having a similar mean age as Pastors and Specialized ministers.

Percent of ministers in a call reporting discrimination or harassment by position

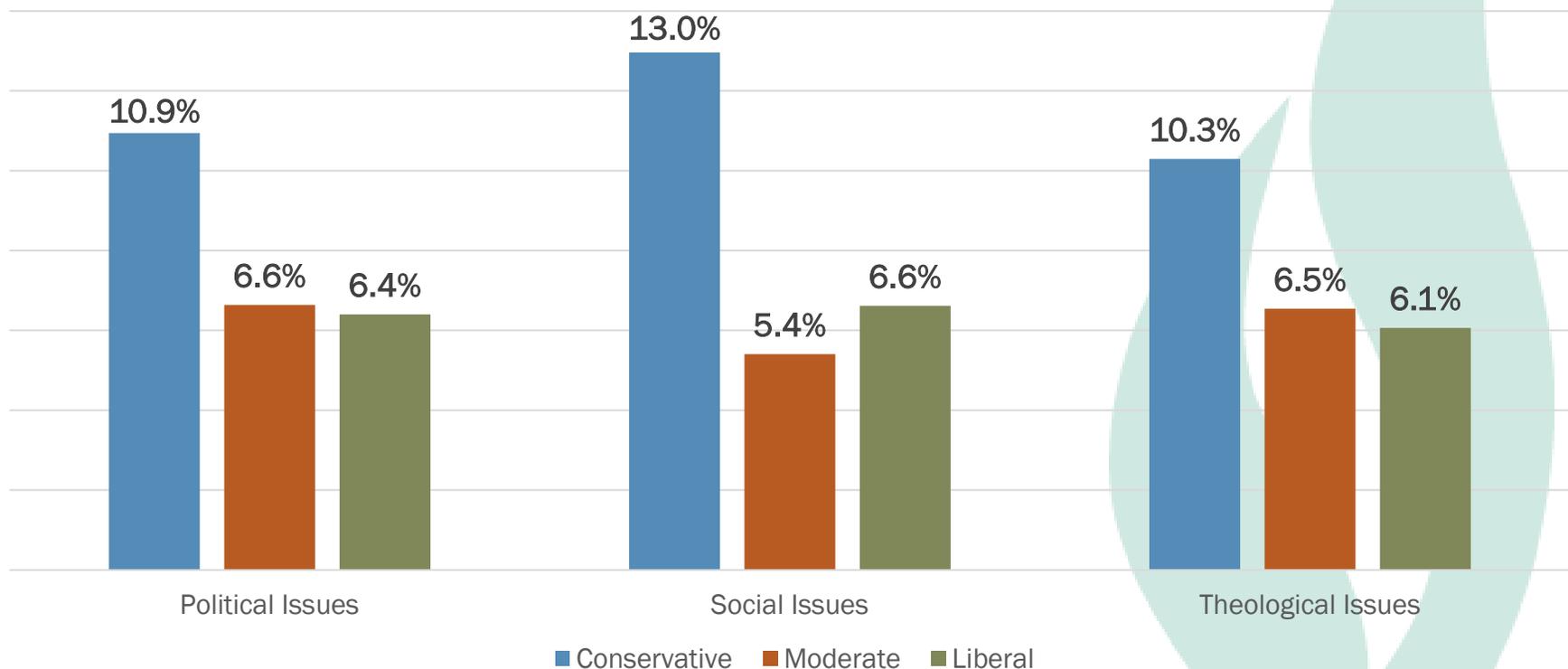


N = 3,792

Conservative respondents report more “other” discrimination

Respondents who self-identified as conservative on politics, social issues, and theology reported more “other” category discrimination or harassment than moderates or liberals. Overall levels for the other category of discrimination were relatively low.

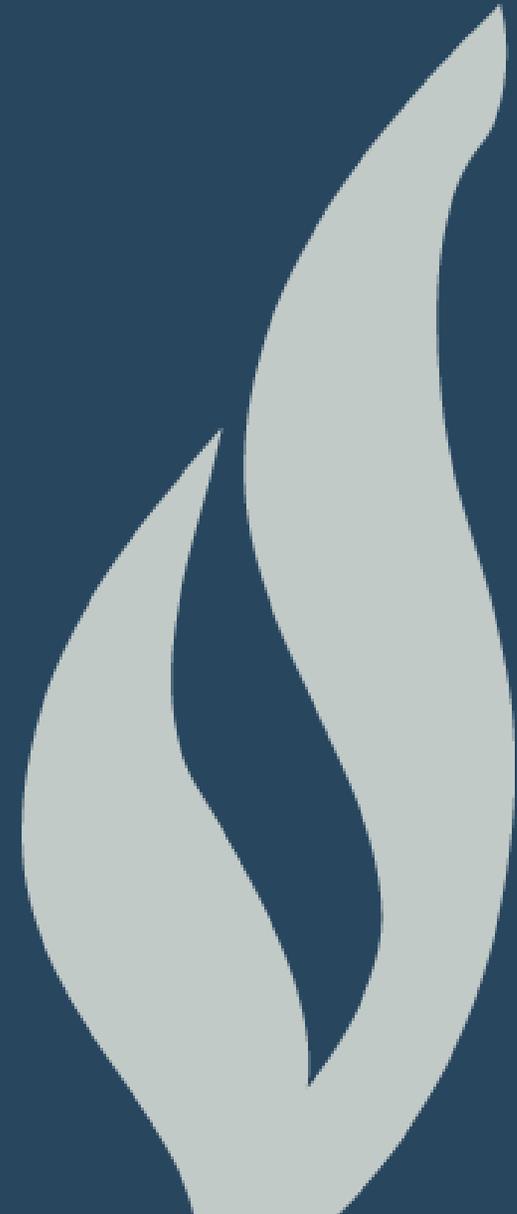
Percent reporting other discrimination by political stances



Opportunity and Promotion

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to leadership, promotion and dismissal. Specifically, they were asked if they had struggled to be accepted as a leader, if they felt overlooked for a promotion or position, or if they felt targeted for demotion or dismissal and why.

This section examines respondents' answers to these questions and breaks the data out by demographic and other factors. Women, people of color, and younger respondents report experiencing more barriers.

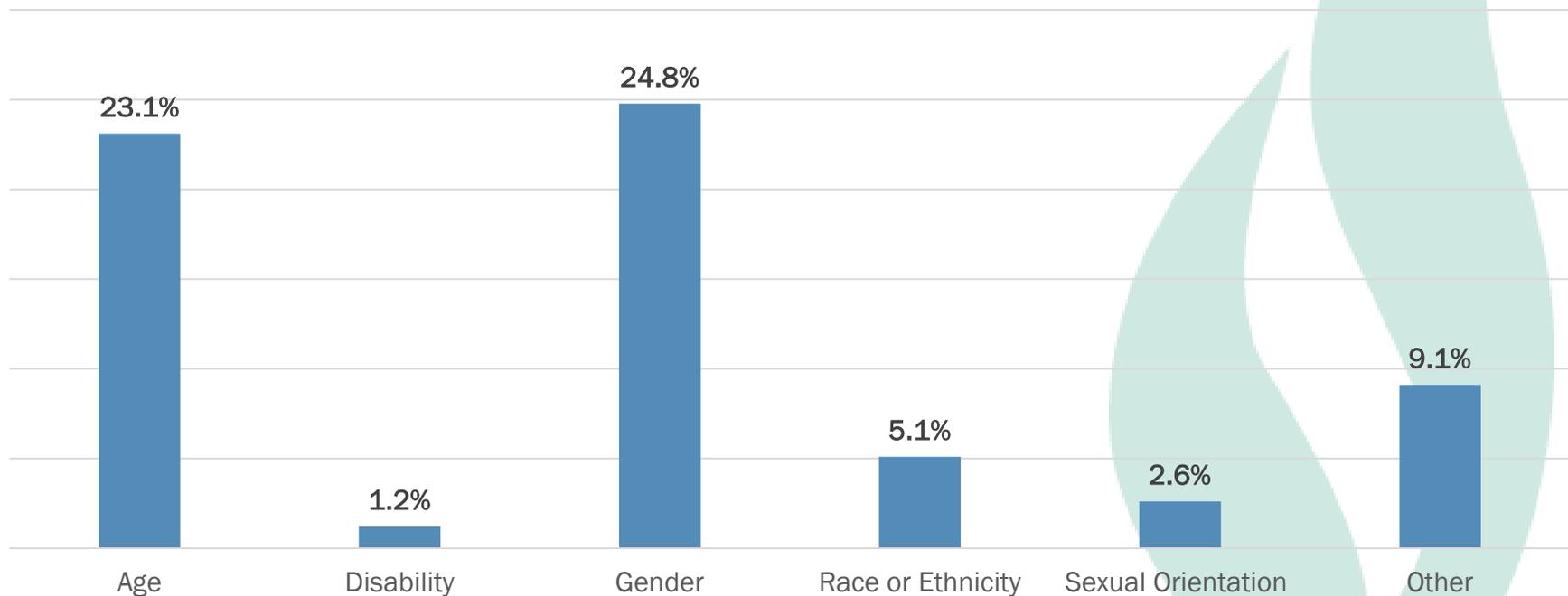


40% of respondents report having trouble being accepted as a leader in PC(USA)

The most common reasons were for difficulty were gender and age. Disability and sexual orientation were the least common reasons.

Race or ethnicity appears low as a reason in this chart because most respondents were white and there are large disparities on this question between responses of white people and people of color.

Percent reporting difficulty in being accepted as a leader by causes*



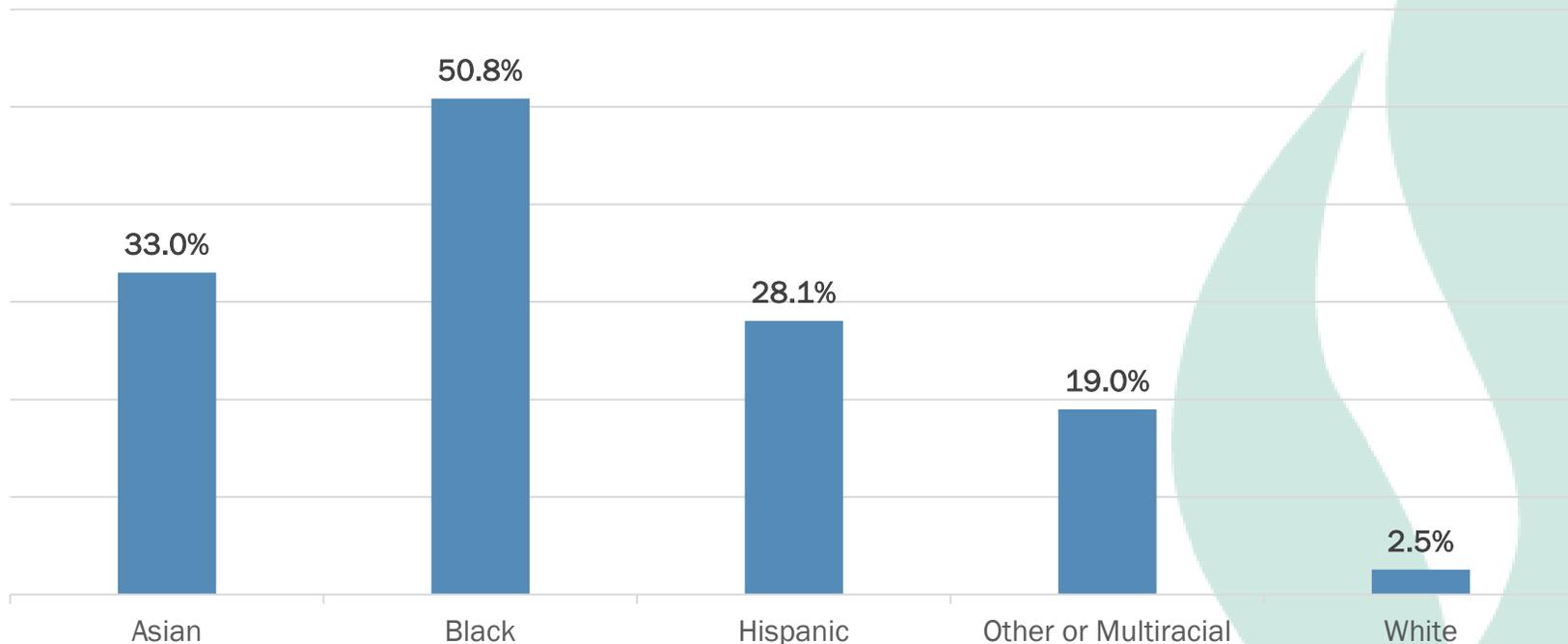
N = 3,639

* Respondents were able to select more than one category of discrimination, therefore the percentages in this table do not add up to 40%.

People of color report difficulty in being accepted as leaders because of their race or ethnicity

Like the questions on discrimination and harassment, black respondents most frequently report race or ethnicity as difficulty in being accepted as a leader.

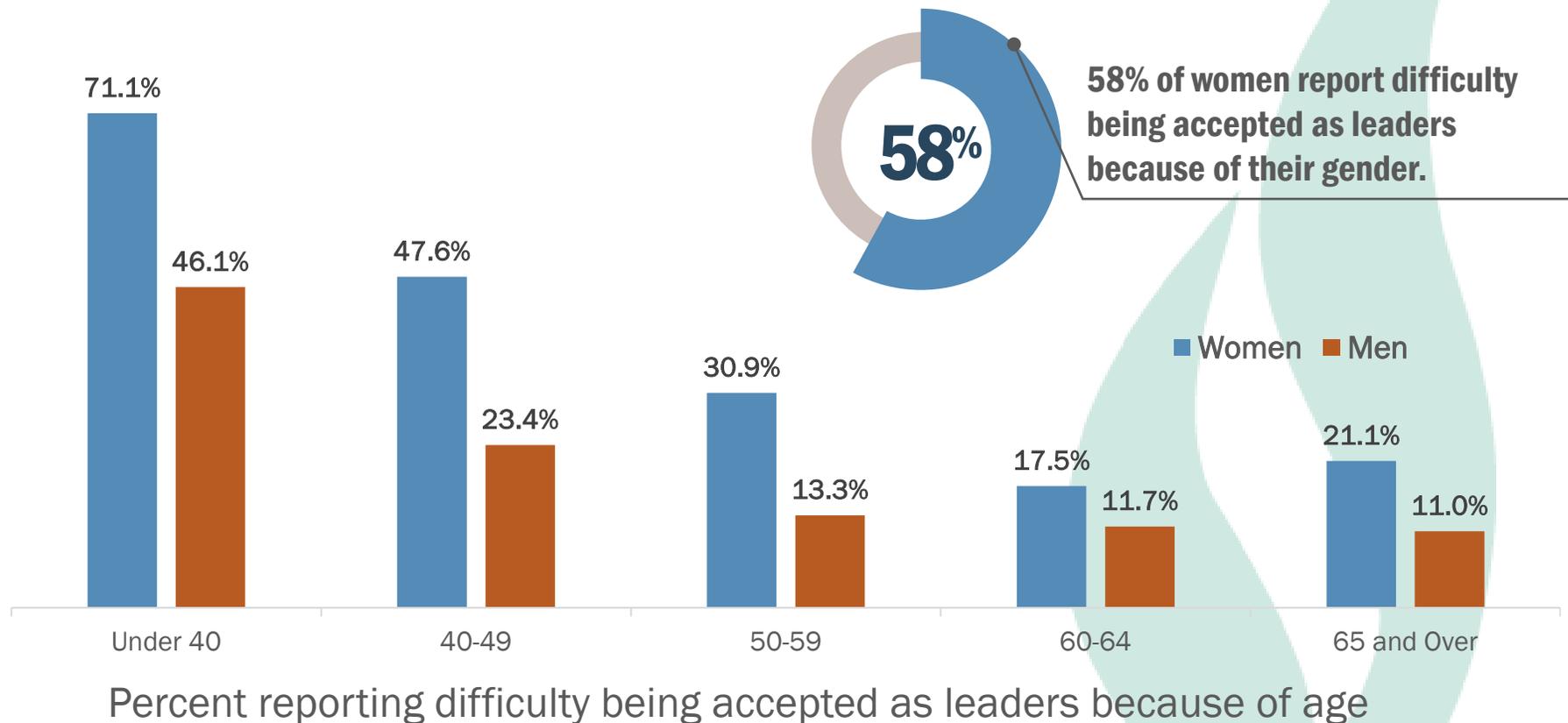
Percent reporting difficulty in being accepted as leader because of their race or ethnicity by race



N=3523

Women and young respondents report the most difficulty in being accepted as leaders

Younger women report the most difficulty with acceptance as a leader, and frequently report gender and age as the main factors.

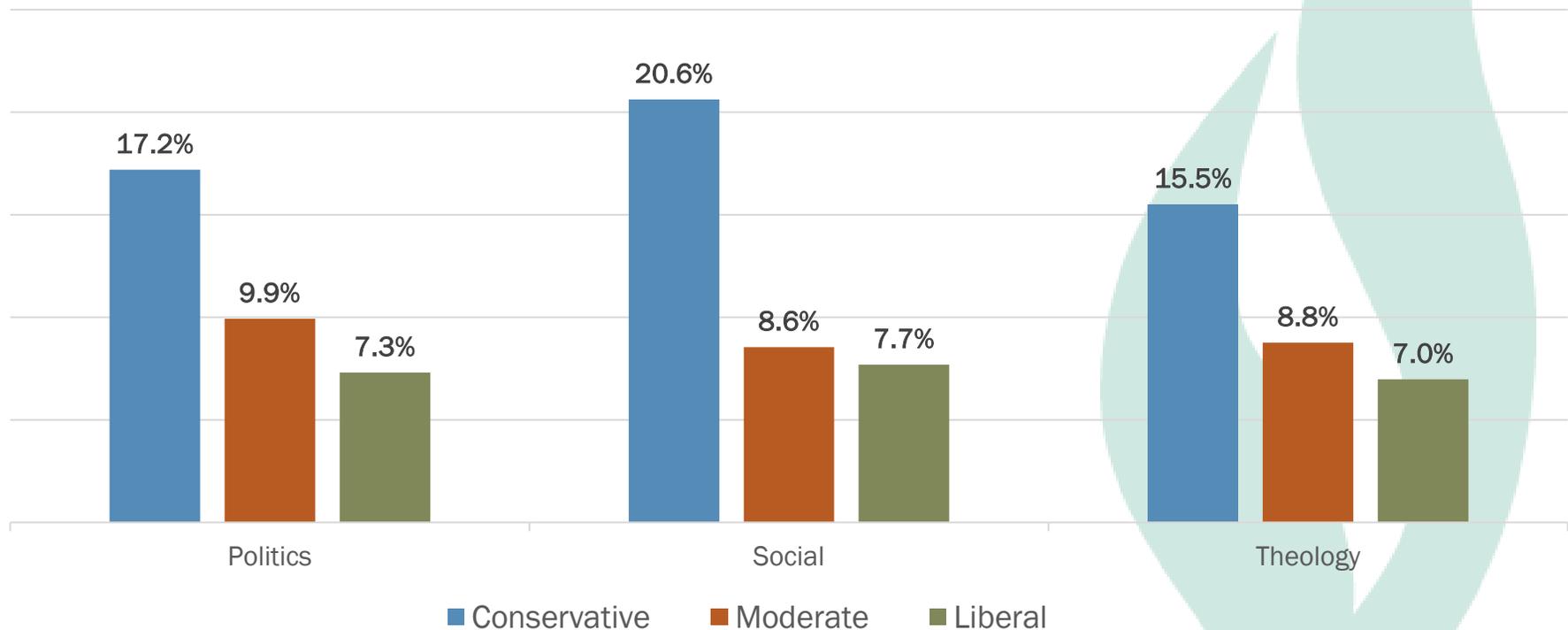


N = 3573

Conservative respondents report more difficulty in being accepted as leaders for “other” reasons

Respondents who self-identified as conservative on political, social, and theological issues were more than twice as likely to report difficulty in being accepted as leaders for other reasons than liberal respondents.

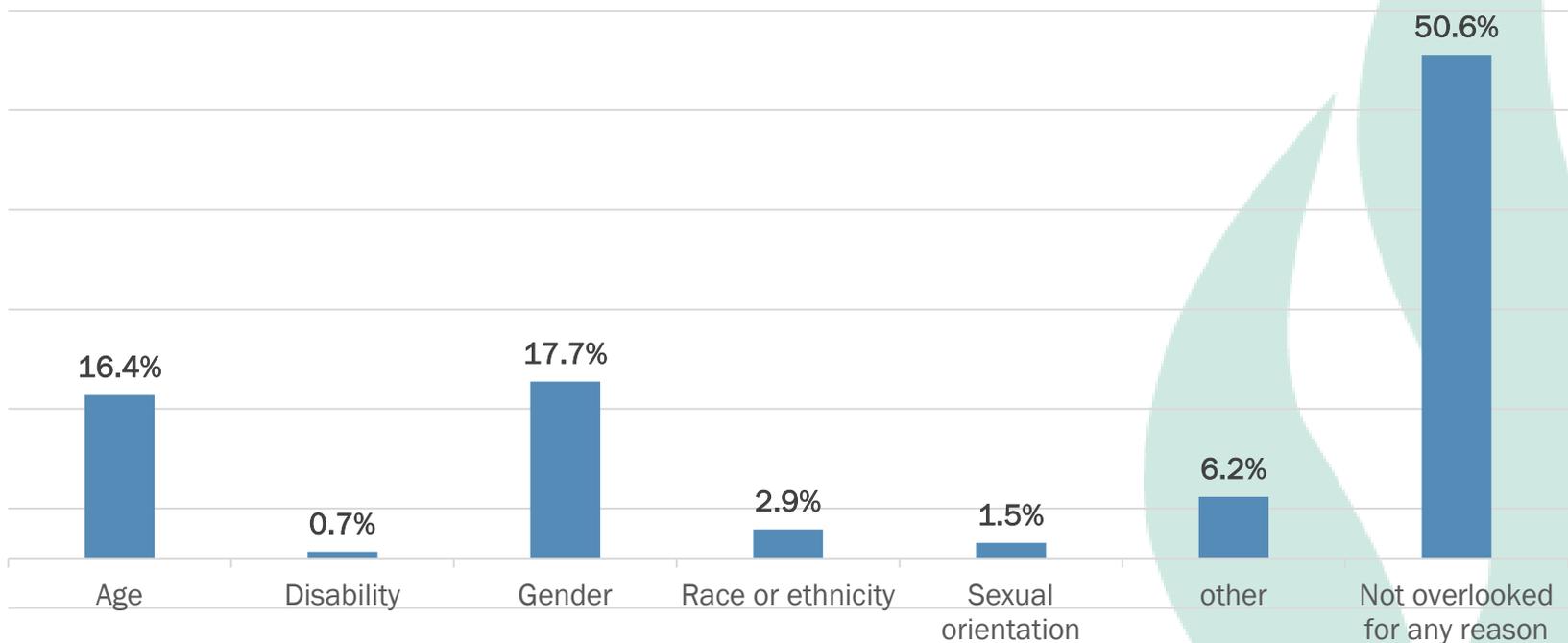
Percent reporting difficulty being accepted as leader for other reasons



Most respondents did not feel they were overlooked for promotion for any reason

Gender and age were the most common factors reported for respondents who felt they were overlooked for promotion. Disability and sexual orientation were the least reported.

Percent reporting overlooked for promotion by reason

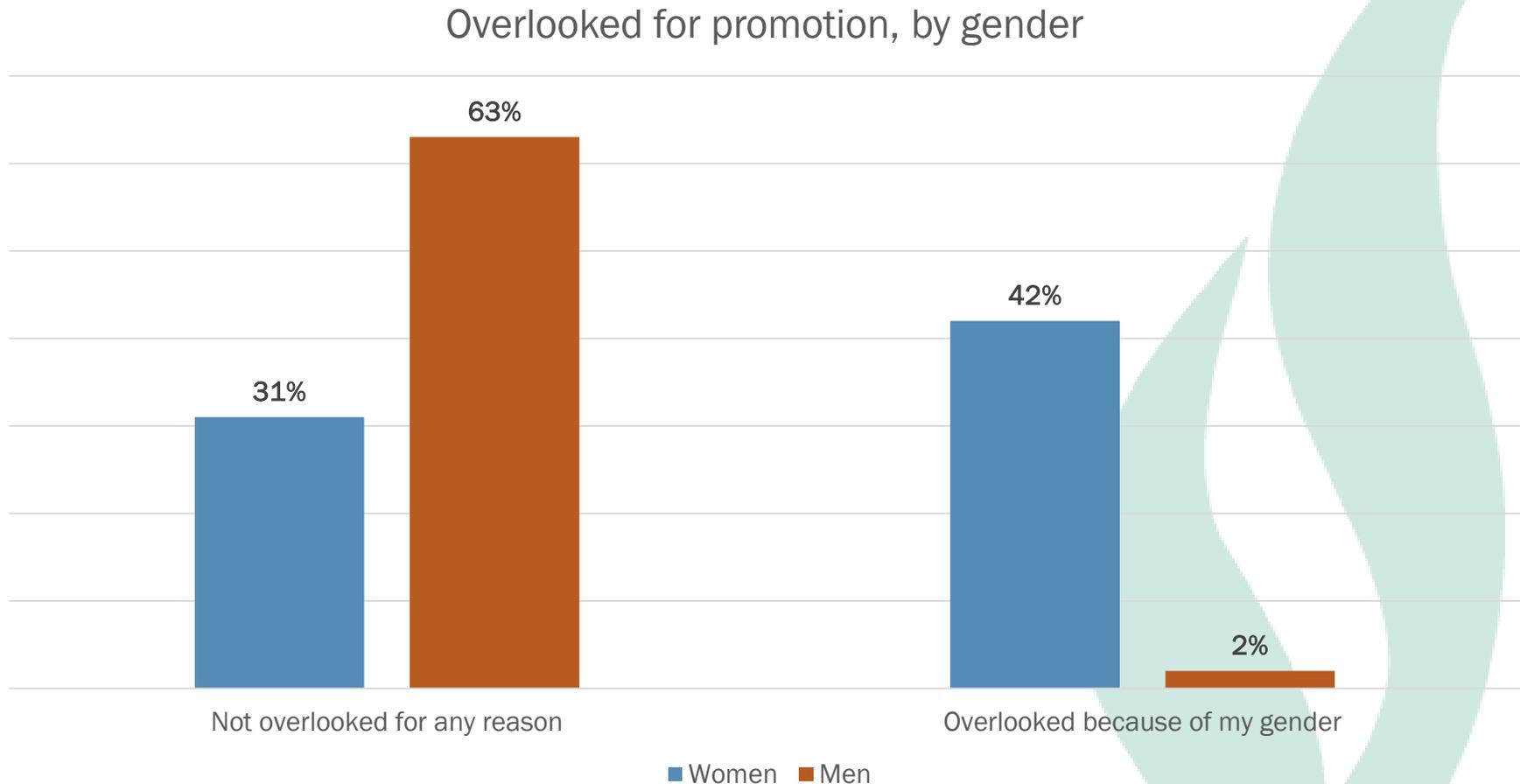


N = 3573

Opportunity and Promotion

42% of women report being overlooked for promotion because of their gender

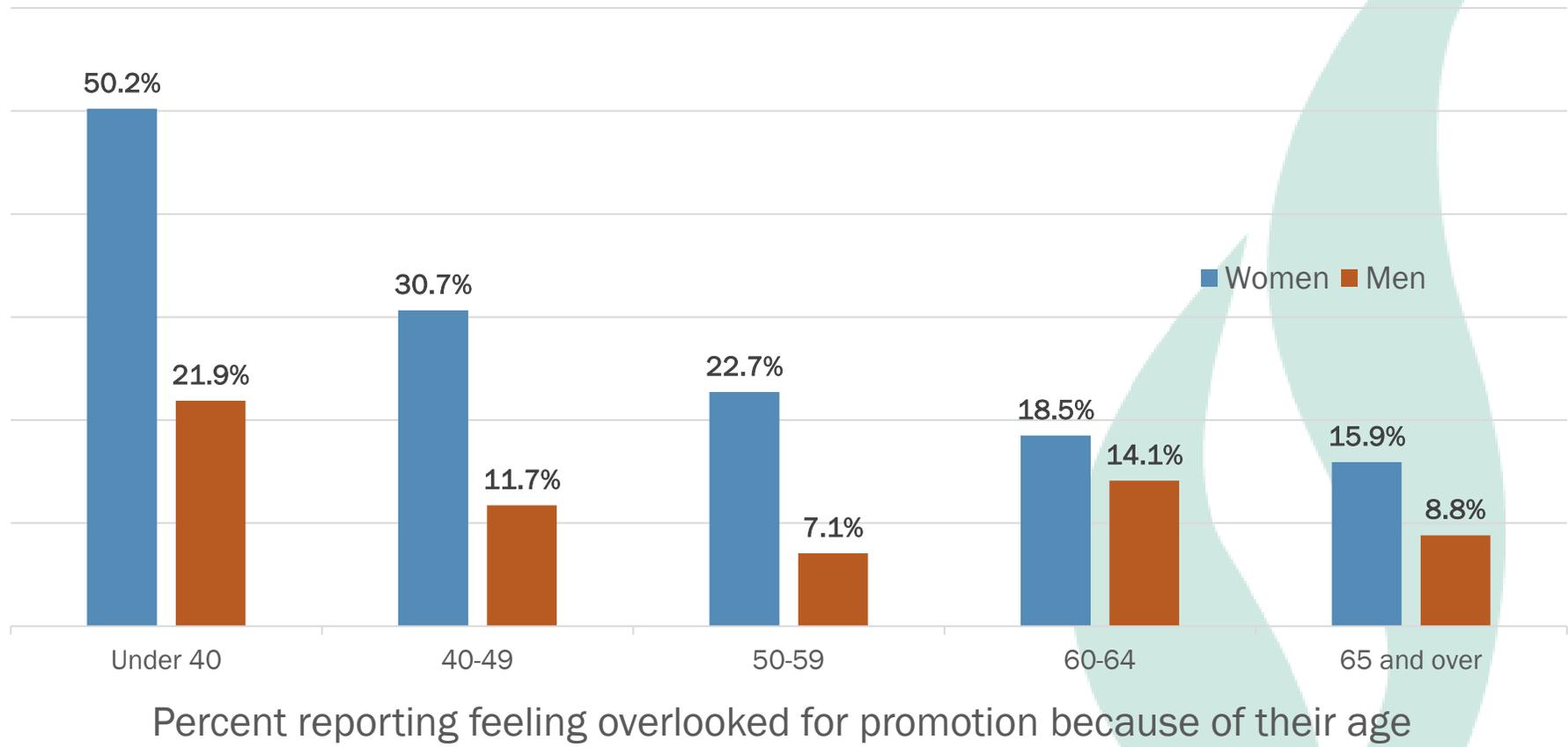
Men were twice as likely than women to report “not overlooked for any reason”.



N = 3673

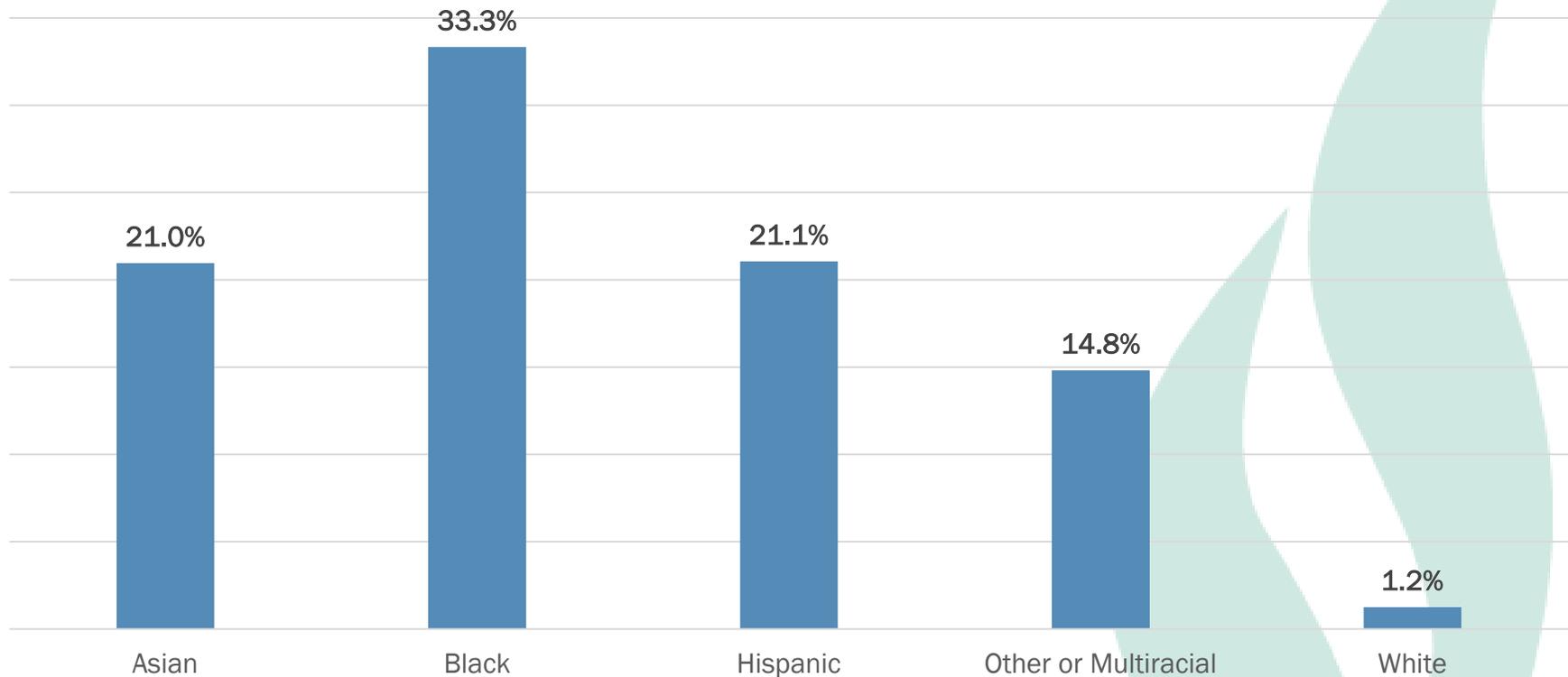
Younger people feel overlooked for promotion because of age

Younger women respondents most commonly felt overlooked because of age. In every age category, women also more commonly reported feeling overlooked for age than men.



N = 3573

Some people of color report being overlooked for promotion because of race or ethnicity

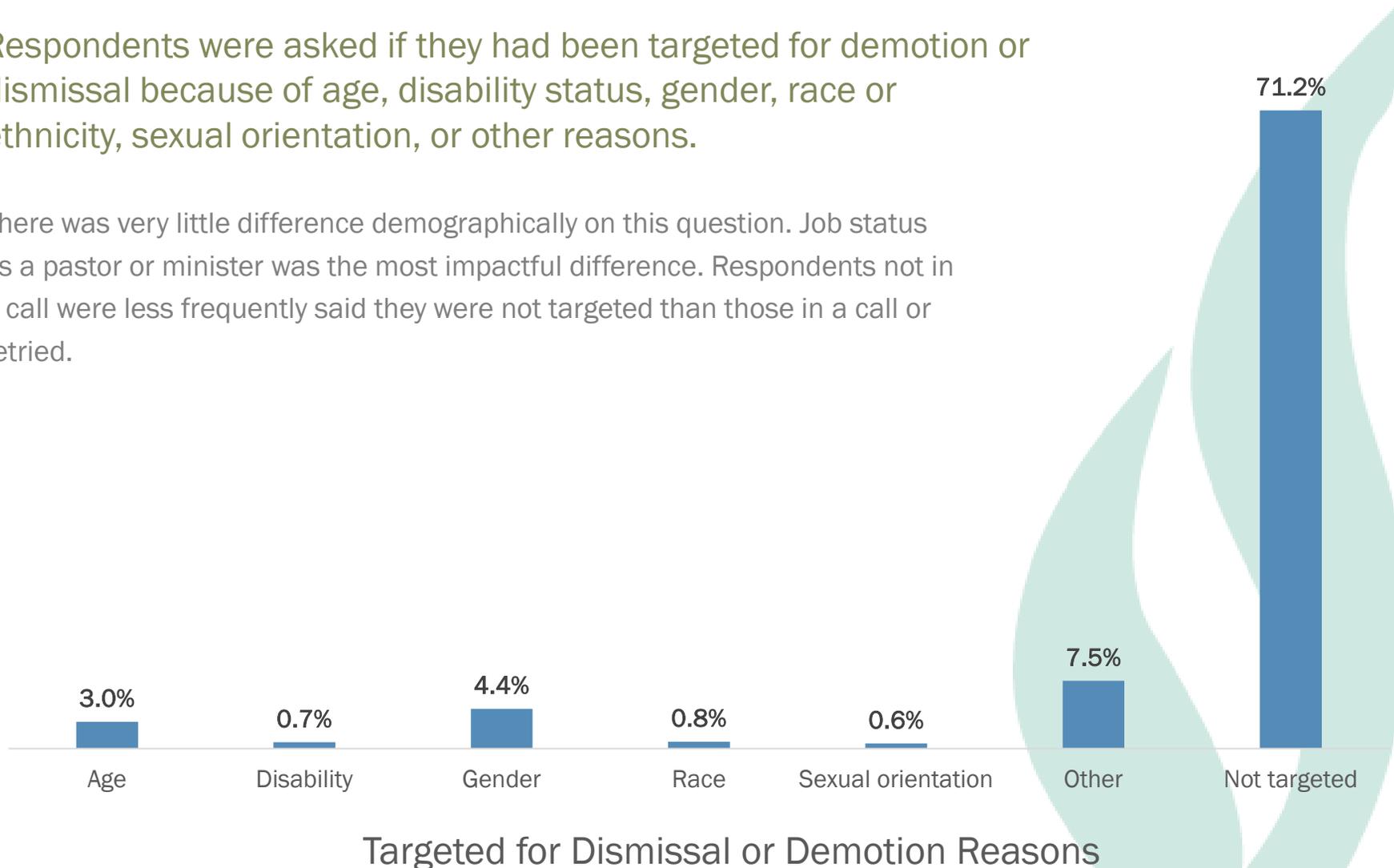


Percent reporting feeling overlooked because of race or ethnicity by race or ethnicity

Most respondents do not feel targeted for demotion or dismissal

Respondents were asked if they had been targeted for demotion or dismissal because of age, disability status, gender, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other reasons.

There was very little difference demographically on this question. Job status as a pastor or minister was the most impactful difference. Respondents not in a call were less frequently said they were not targeted than those in a call or retired.



Leadership Struggles

Respondents were asked about what issues they struggled with as leaders in PC(USA). These included questions directly related to their relationship to other leaders, their roles as authority figures, and pay among other issues.

This section examines respondents' answers to these questions and breaks the data out by demographic and other factors. The patterns established in the earlier sections of the report hold here as well. Namely that women, people of color, and younger respondents face more barriers and struggles as leaders in the church.



Leadership Struggles

Most ministers have struggled with some aspect of leadership in PC(USA)

On a scale of 1-7, the largest portion of respondents answered “not at all” on questions of leadership struggles. Questions of authority, inclusion, recognition, and validation all had a very similar range of answers.

Have you personally struggled with the following as a leader in PC(USA):	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	A Great Deal (7)	N
Being accepted as an authority figure	36%	19%	11%	11%	12%	8%	4%	3189
Being included by other leaders	38%	21%	12%	10%	10%	6%	3%	3220
Being recognized for my leadership abilities	39%	21%	12%	10%	10%	6%	4%	3257
Not having my work validated by others	40%	21%	11%	10%	8%	6%	4%	3249

Leadership Struggles

Most ministers have struggled with some aspect of leadership in PC(USA)

On a scale of 1-7, low pay and loneliness were the most common struggles faced as a leader. Distrust due to marital status was the least commonly identified struggle.

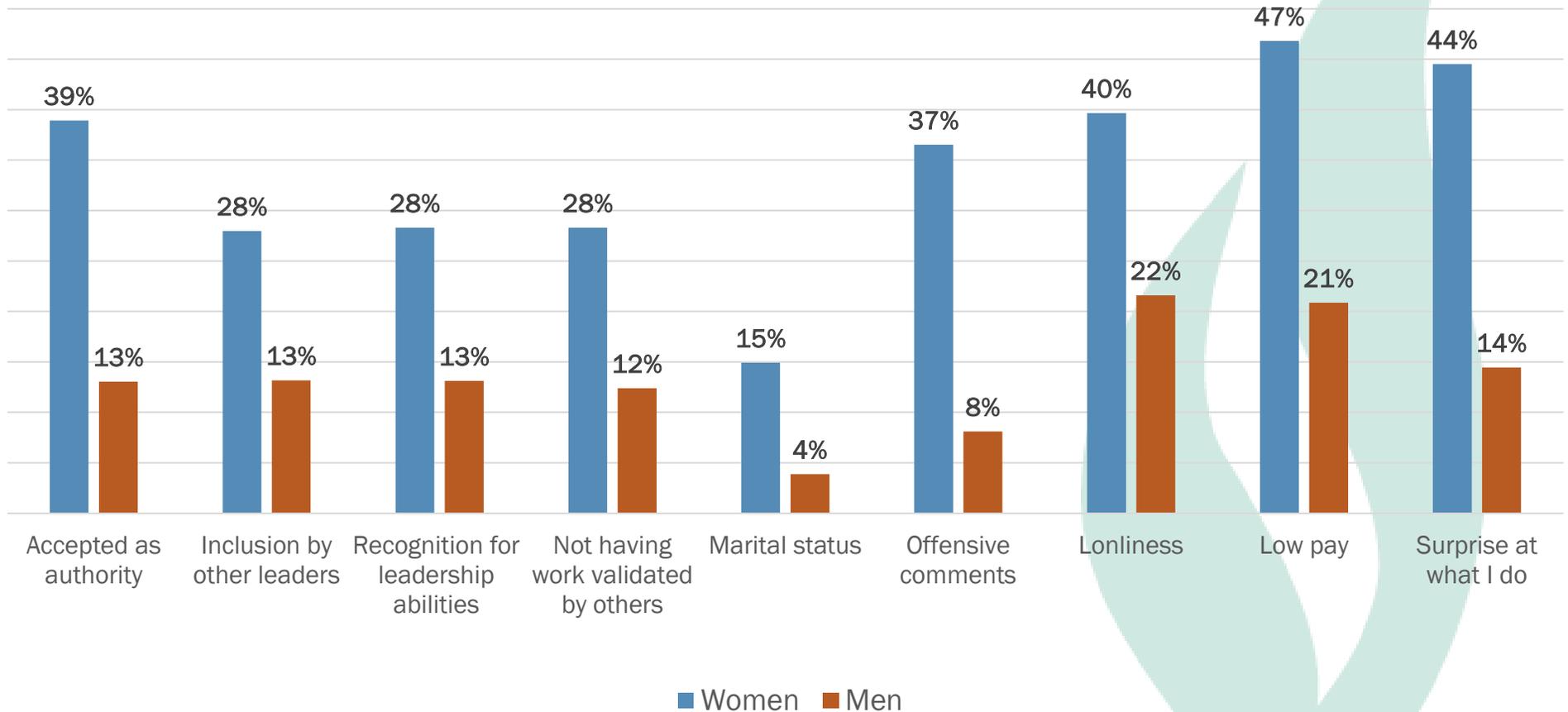
Have you personally struggled with the following as a leader in PC(USA):	Not at all (1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	A Great Deal (7)	N
Distrust due to marital status	76%	9%	4%	4%	4%	2%	2%	3126
Inappropriate comments or questions	49%	15%	9%	9%	8%	7%	4%	3205
Loneliness	34%	15%	12%	11%	12%	10%	7%	3255
Low pay	30%	15%	12%	12%	10%	11%	9.5%	3238
Surprise or disbelief when I tell people what I do	36%	17%	10%	11%	9%	9%	9%	3239

Women face more struggles as leaders

On every category, women responded two to three times as often as men that they personally struggled with that aspect of leadership.

Responses were categorized as “high” if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

Percent responding high on leadership struggle questions



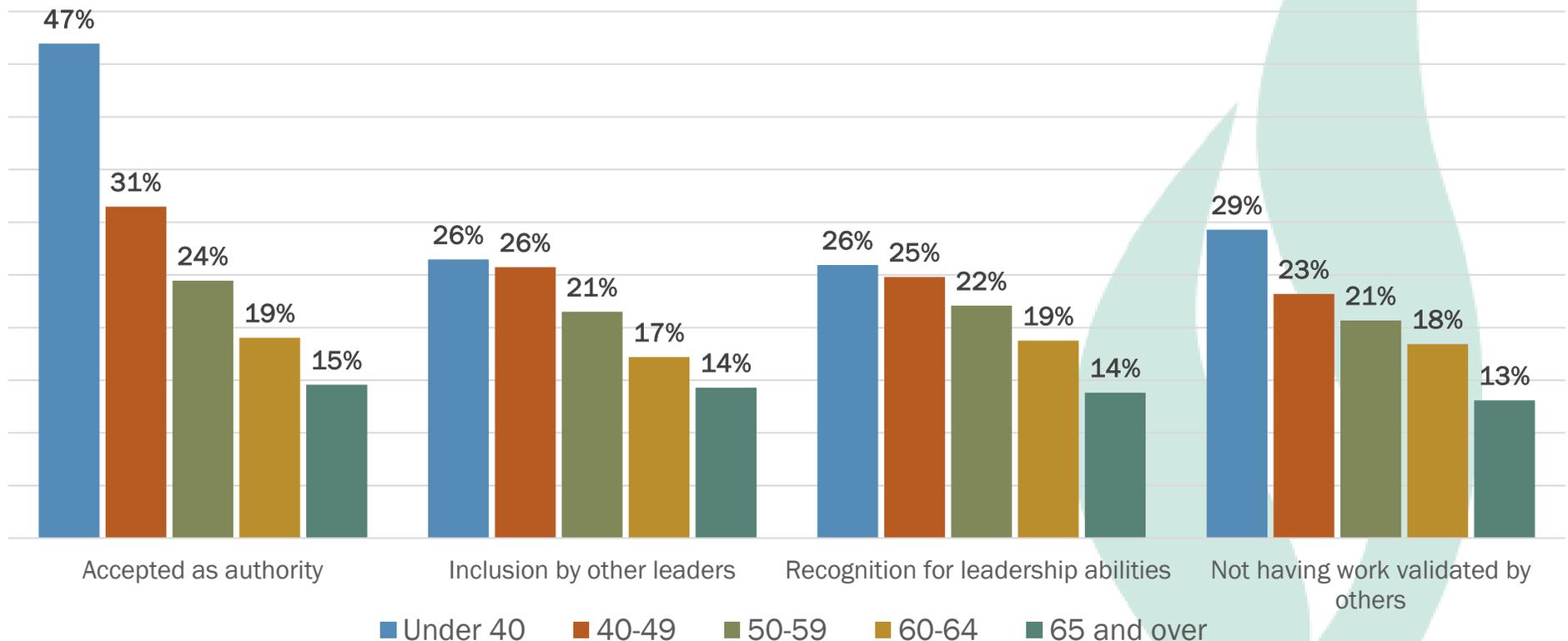
Leadership Struggles

Young ministers struggle with being accepted as an authority

Older respondents reported lower levels of struggle on every category.

Responses were categorized as “high” if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

Percent responding high on leadership struggle questions by age

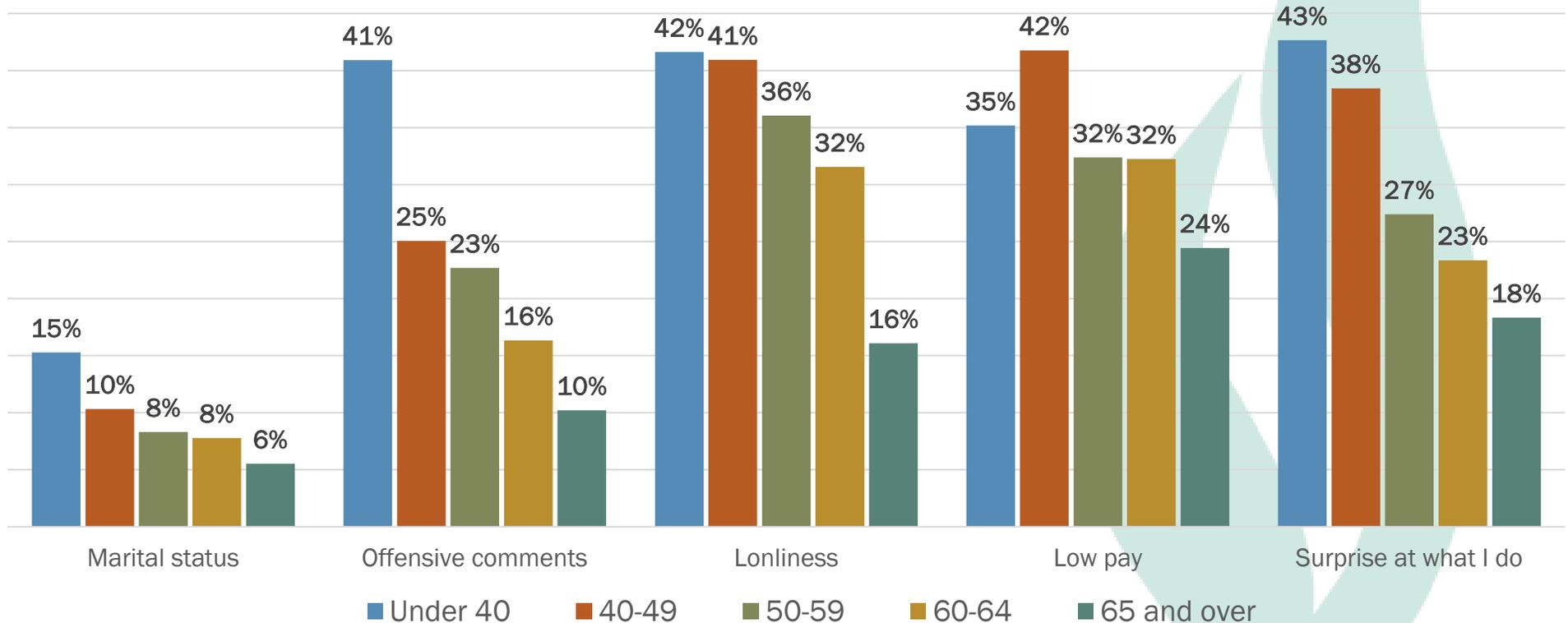


Struggle with loneliness and low pay as a leader is common in all age groups

65 and older respondents struggled the least with loneliness. Younger respondents are more likely to struggle with offensive comments.

Responses were categorized as “high” if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

Percent responding high on leadership struggle questions by age



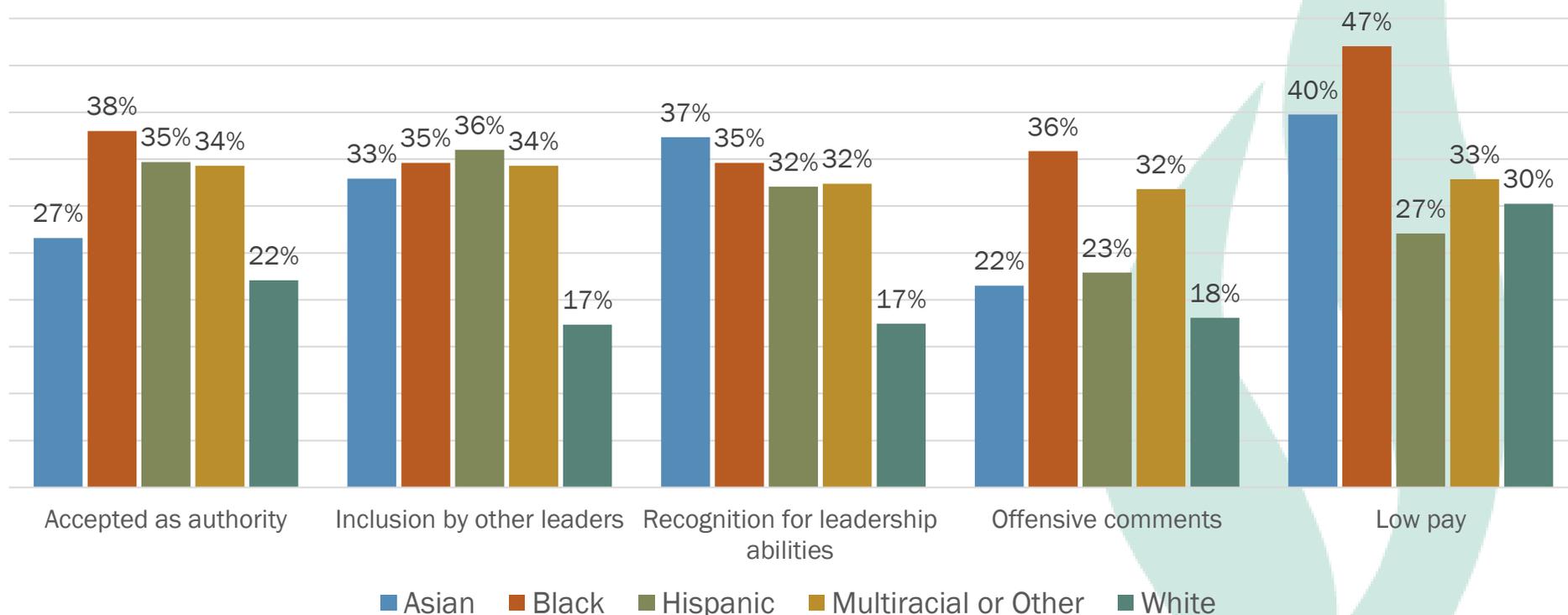
Leadership Struggles

Ministers of color report more leadership struggles

The percent of respondents that responded high on the leadership struggle questions varied by race or ethnicity, though people of color answered higher on almost every question.

Race and ethnicity made no significant difference on struggles to be validated, marital status, loneliness, or “surprise at what I do”, so those categories are not represented in the chart below. Responses were categorized as “high” if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

High response on leadership struggle categories



Leadership Struggles

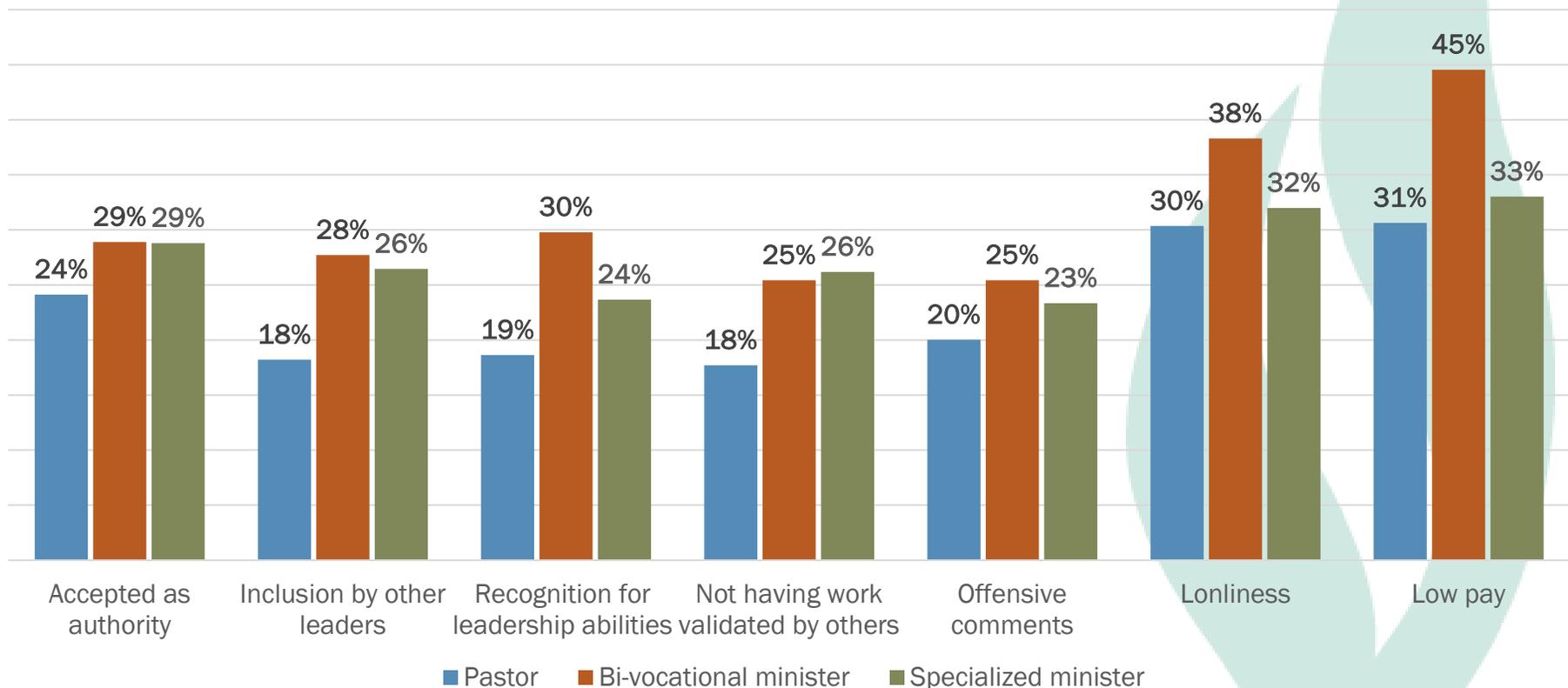
Bi-vocational & specialized ministers report higher levels of struggle with leadership

Pastors report the lowest levels of struggle, but differences are relatively small for most categories.

The differences between responses was largest on the inclusion, recognition, and low pay categories. The type of ministry made no significant difference on struggles with marital status or “surprise at what I do”.

Responses were categorized as “high” if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

High response on leadership struggle categories

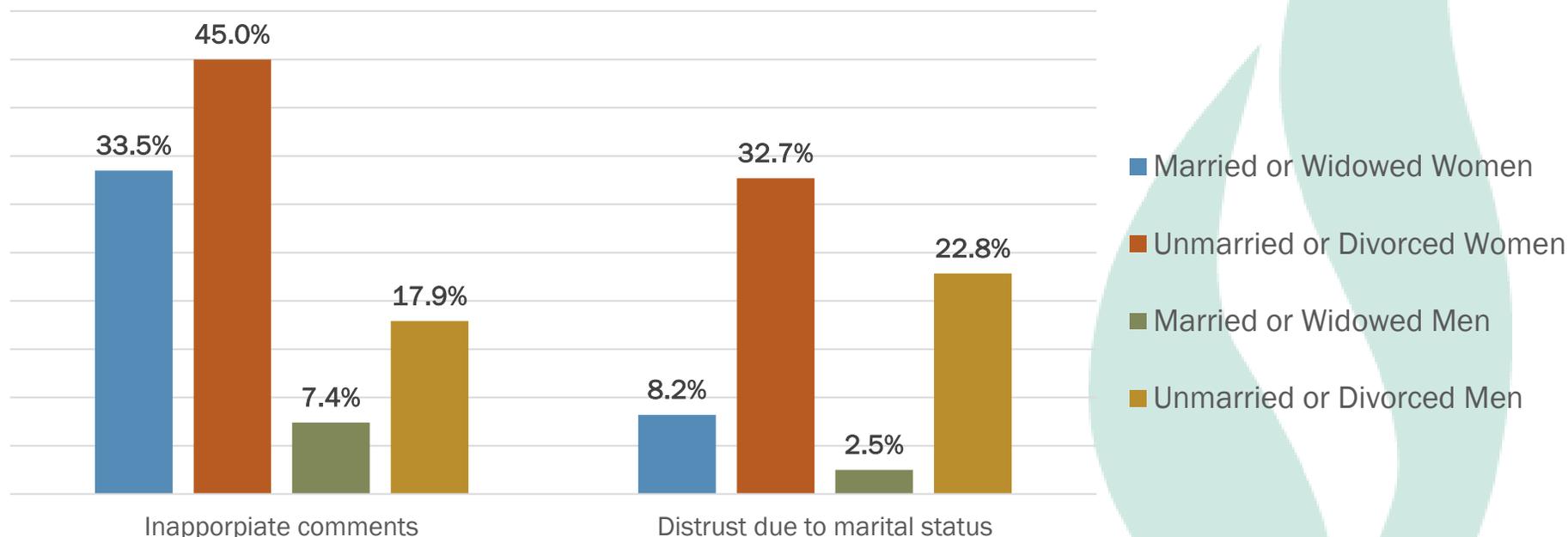


Unmarried respondents face more distrust and inappropriate comments

Unmarried women report the highest levels of struggle with distrust and inappropriate comments. 12% of respondents were unmarried or divorced.

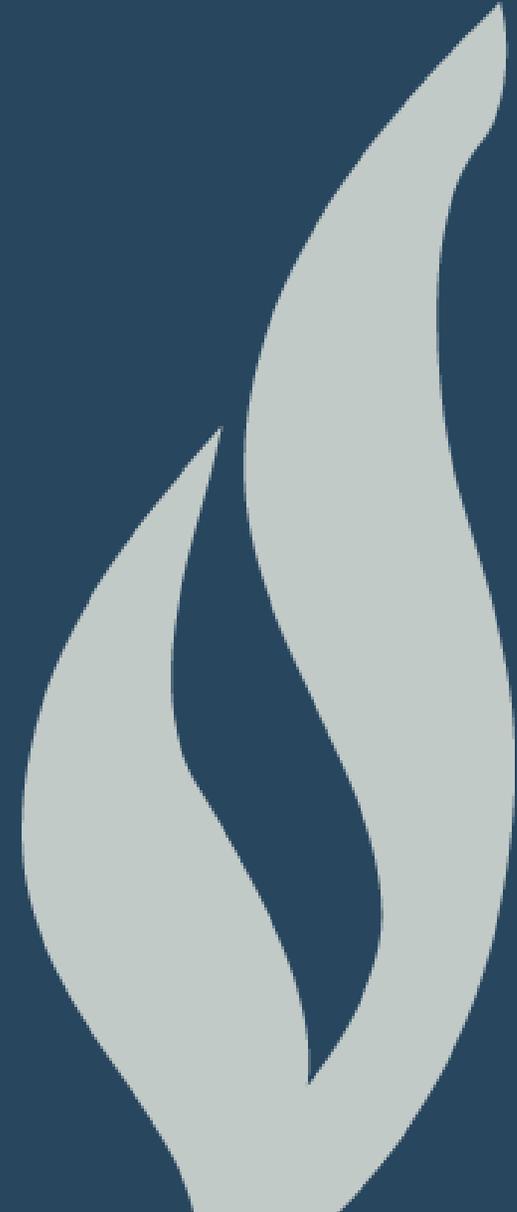
Responses were categorized as "high" if respondents gave a 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point sliding scale.

Percent responding high on leadership struggles, by gender and marital status



N = 3120

What are we learning?



What are we learning?

Each report from the 2019 Presbyterian Minister Survey is written as an independent, stand-alone work. In other reports, the data is frequently presented in ministerial groups: pastor, specialized, bi-vocational, retired, or not in a call. In this report, those groups are hardly mentioned. Why? Because there is very little difference among these groups. That is, the discrimination that is reported concerning gender, race, and all areas presented in this report are found to be at or near the same in each of the ministerial groups. The degree and type of discrimination is consistent from group to group: pastor to specialized to bi-vocational to not in a call.

Survey designers, researchers look back at their work and frequently ask, “Why didn’t we ask...?” The same is true for this survey. We did not ask the source(s) of the discrimination. Did it come from congregants? Other ministers? Seminary professors? Community? Or a combination of these? Without knowing the sources of discrimination, we are less able to suggest approaches to address it. But what can be said is all forms of discrimination continue. Women are more likely to be targets than men, and people of color more than white people.

So, how does PC(USA) address discrimination?

The role of Research Services is to assist the church making data-informed decisions. The role is not to outline the solutions. These survey results serve to inform PC(USA) that discrimination continues.

What are we learning? *(continued)*

Struggling to lead and move forward

Low pay and loneliness are two struggles that most ministers are experiencing or have experienced. Much has been written about finances and financial concerns in two other PC(USA) minister survey reports (Financial Debt, Educational Debt). In those reports, ministers reported that they did not accept positions that they wanted due to low pay. Among ministers of color, nearly half of all responding black ministers report struggling with low pay.

Loneliness. 66% of ministers report some struggle with loneliness with 29% reporting a high degree of loneliness. Most ministers are solo pastors without additional staff support. Positions of leadership can come with isolation. The question is how do ministers address the loneliness?

Several of the struggles included in this survey are not unique to ministers but they mirror the struggles faced by women, people of color, and younger professionals in our society.

Ministers of colors report high degree of struggles with acceptance, inclusion, recognition of abilities, and offensive comments.

While much work has been done to address discrimination, to promote women and people of color, there is much more to be done.

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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