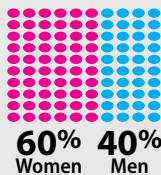


Pursuing the call: A demographic profile

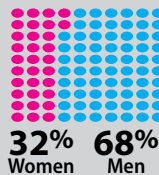
Comparing candidates for ministry and active ministers

Gender

Candidates for ministry

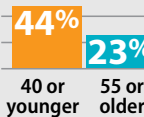


Active ministers

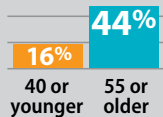


Age

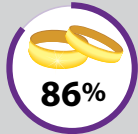
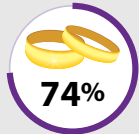
Median age: 43



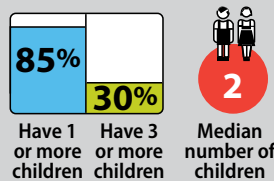
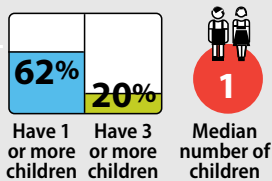
Median age: 54



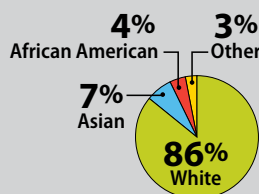
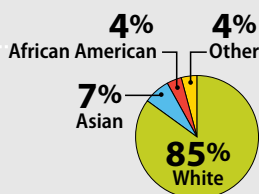
Married



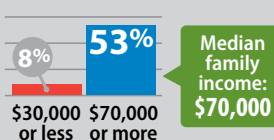
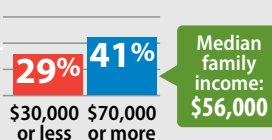
Children



Race



Income



What the research shows

Not surprisingly, many demographic differences between candidates and ministers are life-stage related. Candidates are younger on average by more than a decade and, not coincidentally, fewer of them are married or have children. Many are still students, so their income is lower.

More surprising may be the contrasting gender profiles. Women make up more than half of all candidates but only about a third of ministers. This gap reflects the church's changing understanding of the role of women. Not only are many younger women pursuing ordained ministry, but so are many women in their 40s or older who may not have been encouraged to seek calls (or pursue those they felt) when they were younger.

However different the two groups, the flow of candidates into ministry will have few short-term effects on the demographic makeup of ministers. Turnover is low: only around 350, or 2.5 percent, of active ministers retire and are replaced by the newly ordained in a typical year.

The actual effects will also depend on selectivity: candidates who are ordained aren't a random sample of all candidates. Among other things, the newly ordained tend to be younger (40 is the median age of those ordained in the past five years) and fewer of them are women (49 percent).

In the next issue we will look at faith-related characteristics of candidates for ministry.

Jack Marcum is coordinator of Research Services of the General Assembly Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

» Other findings www.pcusa.org/research