



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

Presbyterians Today The August 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 fourth survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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Note: All panelists were sent a copy of the July/August 2003 issue of Presbyterians Today and asked to read it before responding to the questionnaire.

AWARENESS AND EVALUATION

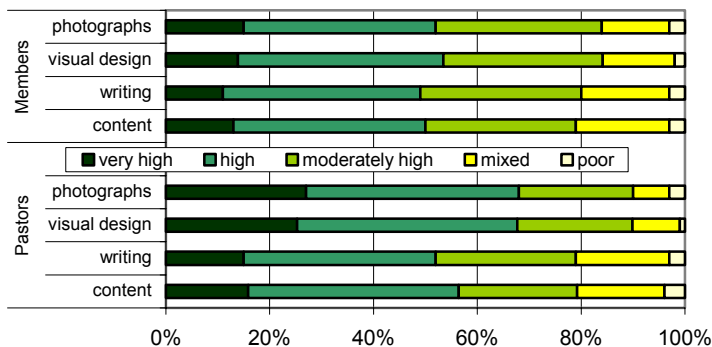
Familiarity with Presbyterians Today (PT)

- ✓ One in ten members, one in four elders, and 55% of pastors subscribe to *Presbyterians Today*. Another 15%, 11%, and 25% subscribed in the past.
- ✓ 96% of pastors but only 28% of members and 44% of elders are either *very familiar* or *generally familiar* with *Presbyterians Today*.

Rating the July/August 2003 Issue

- ✓ Large majorities in every group rated the “overall quality” of the *content*, *writing*, *visual design*, and *photographs* in the July/August 2003 issue as *moderately high*, *high*, or *very high*. Almost no one rated any of these aspects as *poor* (3% or less).

Figure 1. Evaluation of Content and Design



Choosing Adjectives to Describe the Magazine

- ✓ When given pairs of words that might describe *PT*, more elders chose:
 - *Interesting* (65%) than *bland* (10%)
 - *Inspiring* (43%) than *uninspiring* (21%)
 - *Attractive* (68%) than *unattractive* (5%)
 - *Liberal* (28%) than *conservative* (21%)
 - *Contemporary* (46%) than *traditional* (9%)

Interest in Articles and Features

- ✓ Majorities in at least one group express *very high* or *high* personal interest in these items in the July/August 2003 issue:
 - “General Assembly report” (members, 62%; pastors, 73%)
 - “Biblical Explorations” (52%; 53%)
 - “Q&A” (52%; 53%)
 - “Church in Society” (55%; 51%)
 - “Spiritual Fitness” (50%; 56%)
 - “UpFront” (50%; 44%)
 - “Cover story on church architecture” (41%; 51%)
 - “SpotLight” (45%; 52%)

PT Web Visits

- ✓ One in 12 members, one in eight elders, and one in four pastors have visited “the *Presbyterians Today* Web page in the past year.”

Likelihood of Subscribing

- ✓ A quarter of members, a third of elders, 64% of pastors and 57% of specialized clergy are *very likely* or *likely* to subscribe to *PT* (or renew, if already a subscriber) at the current annual rate of \$15.95.
- ✓ Changes that would make sizable numbers of members *more likely* to subscribe include:
 - More articles about Presbyterian beliefs (57%)
 - More articles on “hot-button” issues (50%)
 - More successful church program ideas (49%)
 - More articles on everyday living (47%)
- ✓ If given a free subscription, 28% of elders would read *all* of every issue, 35% would read *more than half*, and 20% would read *about half*.

Future of Presbyterians Today

- ✓ Majorities *strongly agree* or *agree* that “by informing Presbyterians about other parts of the church and our shared mission, *Presbyterians Today* does a good job of binding the church together” (members, 58%; elders, 56%; pastors, 66%).
- ✓ Most pastors (58%) and specialized clergy (61%) and sizable minorities of members (37%) and elders (43%) indicate that it’s *very important* that “the PC(USA) continue to publish *Presbyterians Today*.”

PT and the PC(USA)

- ✓ A third of members and 44% of pastors would like *Presbyterians Today* to put *more emphasis* on “PC(USA) programs and ministries,” while fewer than one in ten want *less emphasis*.
- ✓ Large majorities in every group (elders, 63%; pastors, 71%) report that “the fact that *PT* is published by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) makes them *more likely* “to want to read it.”

Future Communications from the PC(USA)

- ✓ When asked to select their “most preferred” way of “receiving information about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” choices included:
 - In a magazine (members, 43%; pastors, 47%)
 - Through bulletin/newsletter inserts (25%; 3%)
 - In a print newsletter or newspaper (12%; 12%)
 - Through an e-mail newsletter (6%; 20%)
- ✓ A third of laity and most ministers are “interested in subscribing to a monthly online publication that presents information about the PC(USA).” But less than half would subscribe if there were a fee.
- ✓ Among the subset willing to pay for an e-mail subscription, the median amount they would be willing to pay per year is \$10.

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,076	1,296	1,407
Number returned	408	581	720‡
Response rate	37%	44%	51%

‡Of the 720 returned surveys, 474 came from pastors and 246 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in August 2003, and returns were accepted through mid-November 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 August 2003 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$10. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-03279. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on Presbyterians Today, contact Eva Stimson (888-728-7228 ext. 5635; estimson@ctr.pcusa.org).

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