



SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH FINDINGS FROM THE JANUARY 2007 SURVEY

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders serving on session (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 fifth survey completed by the 2006-2008 Panel, sampled in the fall of 2005.

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HEALTH ISSUES IN CONGREGATIONS

Health Promotion

- ✓ Half or more of pastors but fewer laity report various health-related actions in their congregation over the prior year:
 - A sermon on health or health-related activities (members, 23%; elders, 23%; pastors, 50%)
 - Classes or informal groups on health issues (39%; 34%; 58%)
 - Distribution of printed material related to health issues (35%; 34%; 69%)
 - Sponsored programs or services related to health care (45%; 44%; 61%)
- ✓ Most panelists indicate that at least “once in a while” someone in their congregation (besides the pastor) has encouraged them “to exercise, avoid cigarettes and alcohol, or eat healthy foods” (members, 59%; elders, 61%; pastors, 88%), but fewer indicate that someone has actually “changed the way you live” by helping them with such actions (9%; 11%; 23%).

Informal Discussions of Health

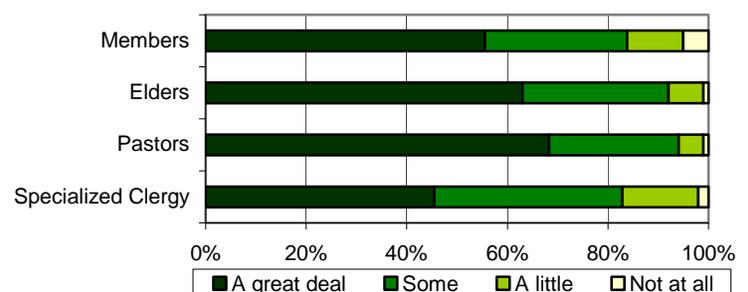
- ✓ Large majorities of panelists have discussed their own health-related problems with another person at church in the prior year (members, 71%; elders, 78%; pastors, 92%), with relatively few doing so “often” (8%; 8%; 10%).
- ✓ Even more panelists have discussed someone else’s health-related problems with someone in their congregation (members, 85%; elders, 90%; pastors, 97%), with many fewer doing so “often” (18%; 18%; 47%).

Demands and Support

- ✓ A majority of panelists report that at least occasionally people in their congregation make too many demands on them, with the share smaller among members (67%) than elders (86%) or, especially, pastors (98%). A similar pattern is found in response to the question, “How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?” (47%; 65%; 96%).
- ✓ Were they “faced with a difficult situation,” majorities expect that fellow congregants would provide “a great deal” of comfort to them (members, 60%; elders, 69%; pastors, 70%), with most of the rest responding “some” (29%; 25%; 23%).
- ✓ A similar pattern is found when panelists are asked about congregational support during an illness (“a great deal”: members, 55%; elders, 63%; pastors, 69%).

Figure 1. Congregational Support During Illness

Q. If you were ill, how much would the people in your congregation help you out?

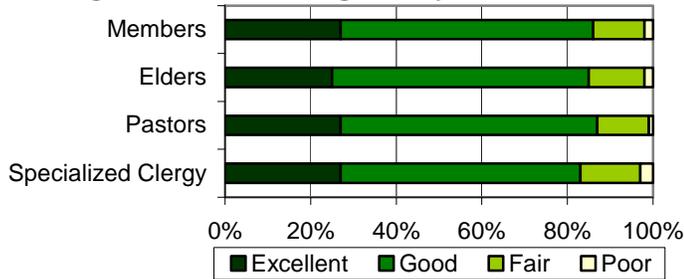


HEALTH-RELATED ASSESSMENTS AND BEHAVIORS

Self-Rating of Physical Health

- ✓ Large majorities rate their current physical health as either “excellent” (members, 27%; elders, 25%; pastors, 27%; specialized clergy, 27%) or “good” (59%; 60%; 60%; 56%). Most of the rest respond “fair” (12%; 13%; 12%; 14%); almost no one responds “poor” (2%; 2%; 1%; 3%).

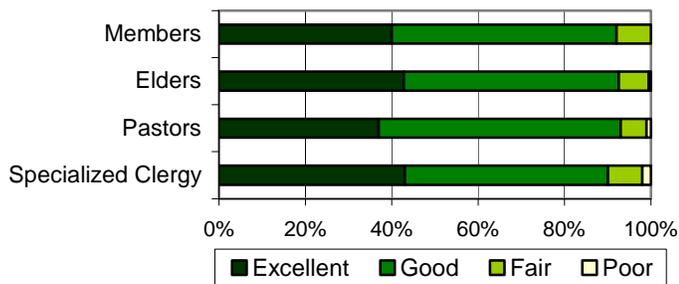
Figure 2. Self-Rating of Physical Health



Self-Rating of Mental Health

- ✓ Very large majorities rate their current mental health as “excellent” (members, 40%; elders, 43%; pastors, 37%; specialized clergy, 43%) or “good” (52%; 50%; 56%; 47%). Very few respond “fair” (8%; 7%; 6%; 8%), and almost none, “poor” (0%; <0.5%; 1%; 2%).

Figure 3. Self-Rating of Mental Health



- ✓ Consistently, few panelists report having had certain mental-health related symptoms “all of the time” or “most of the time” in the prior month:
 - So sad nothing could cheer you up (members, 2%; elders, 1%; pastors, 1%; specialized clergy, 3%)
 - Feeling hopeless (1%; 1%; <0.5%; 2%)
 - Feeling everything was an effort (5%; 4%; 3%; 7%)
 - Feeling restless or fidgety (3%; 3%; 2%; 3%)

Diet

- ✓ Few panelists rate their “overall diet quality” as either “excellent” (members, 16%; elders, 15%; pastors, 15%; specialized clergy, 19%) or “poor” (2%; 4%; 3%; 5%); majorities choose “good” (61%; 55%; 51%; 51%).

- ✓ Two-thirds or more report regularly taking “vitamins or other dietary supplements” (members, 76%; elders, 72%; pastors, 67%; specialized clergy, 73%).

Exercise

- ✓ Majorities report taking part at least once a week in “strenuous activities” (e.g., running, swimming, bicycling, doing aerobics) (members, 62%; elders, 59%; pastors, 68%; specialized clergy, 63%), with a total of 38%, 34%, 38%, and 40%, respectively, reporting strenuous activity three or more times per week.
- ✓ In contrast, almost all panelists engage at least weekly in moderate exercise (e.g., bowling, dancing, walking, gardening) (members, 90%; elders, 92%; pastors, 93%; specialized clergy, 87%), with 61%, 59%, 50%, and 53% doing such exercise three or more days per week.

Smoking, Drinking, and Seatbelt Use

- ✓ Most panelists have never smoked (members, 61%; elders, 60%; pastors, 71%; specialized clergy, 65%). Of the rest, almost all are former smokers; only 4%, 3%, 4%, and 5%, respectively, are current smokers.
- ✓ Majorities have had an alcoholic drink in the prior month, but overall relatively few had more than two drinks in a single day over that period (members, 23%; elders, 24%; pastors, 23%; specialized clergy, 23%).
- ✓ More than nine in ten “always wear a seatbelt when driving or riding in the front passenger seat of a car.”

Preventive Health Measures

- ✓ In the past year, large majorities have had a general physical exam (members, 83%; elders, 83%; pastors, 81%; specialized clergy, 81%) and a routine dental cleaning or exam (89%; 86%; 81%; 83%).
- ✓ At least one-half or more have taken various other preventive measures in the prior year:
 - Had blood tested for cholesterol (members, 76%; elders, 78%; pastors, 74%; specialized clergy, 76%)
 - Had a flu shot (67%; 65%; 50%; 64%)
 - Had a Pap smear (women: 62%; 59%; 78%; 67%)
 - Checked breasts for lumps (women: 88%; 89%; 90%; 90%)
 - Had a prostate exam (men: 62%; 65%; 61%; 66%)
- ✓ Large majorities believe that they can control the general state of their health through their own actions either a “great deal” or “quite a bit” (members, 86%; elders, 85%; pastors, 83%; specialized clergy, 80%).

OTHER HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES

Sleep

- ✓ Large majorities rate their overall sleep quality for the prior month as either “very good” (members, 29%; elders, 30%; pastors, 26%; specialized clergy, 30%) or “fairly good” (58%; 59%; 62%; 58%).
- ✓ From a list of nine things that can affect sleep, more panelists select these five as ones that gave them trouble with sleeping in the previous month (happened at least three times per week):
 - Having to get up to use the bathroom (members, 53%; elders, 49%; pastors, 39%; specialized clergy, 44%)
 - Waking up in the middle of the night or early morning (38%; 39%; 30%; 32%)
 - Coughing or snoring loudly (12%; 11%; 14%; 13%)
 - Having pain (10%; 15%; 9%; 8%)
 - Cannot get to sleep within 30 minutes (10%; 9%; 6%; 9%)
- ✓ Very few panelists (1% or 2%) report that they often (three or more times per week) had trouble “staying awake while driving, eating meals, or engaging in social activities” in the prior month.
- ✓ One in ten panelists report using sleep medication (whether prescribed or over-the-counter) at least three times per week in the previous month (members, 12%; elders, 9%; pastors, 9%; specialized clergy, 13%).

Health-Care Providers

- ✓ Around three in ten panelists have at least one nurse or physician in their immediate family (members, 33%; elders, 31%; pastors, 28%; specialized clergy, 29%). Around half have a nurse or physician in their extended family (48%; 53%; 54%; 55%).
- ✓ At least two-thirds have a nurse or physician in their “close circle of friends” (members, 67%; elders, 69%; pastors, 74%; specialized clergy, 71%).
- ✓ Relatively few panelists have “avoided or postponed going to the doctor or obtaining medical care” in the last three years due to a lack of health insurance, with more having done so “once or twice” (members, 11%; elders, 10%; pastors, 19%; specialized clergy, 19%) than “most or all of the time” (2%; 4%; 4%; 8%).
- ✓ To the statement “I have complete trust in my doctor,” at least six in ten panelists either “agree” (members, 52%; elders, 57%; pastors, 50%; specialized clergy, 51%) or “strongly agree” (12%; 12%; 8%; 10%).

Major Life Problems

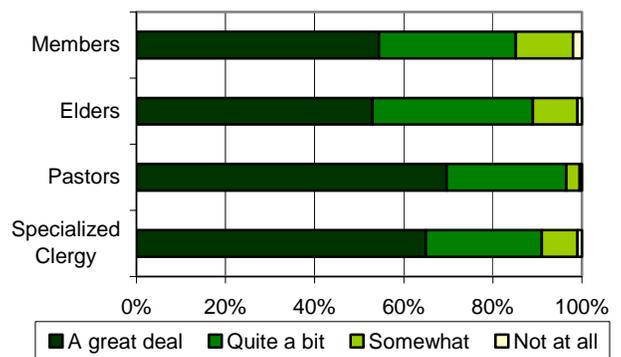
- ✓ One in ten report the death of a spouse, child, parent, grandparent, or grandchild in the prior year (members, 10%; elders, 10%; pastors, 10%; specialized clergy, 8%). Twice as many report a serious illness or accident among the same set of relatives (20%; 20%; 19%; 26%).
- ✓ Asked the most recent major problem in their life, many responses fall into three broad categories: health (members, 27%; elders, 26%; pastors, 16%; specialized clergy, 28%); family (22%; 22%; 20%; 16%); and, especially for pastors, church- or faith-related (2%; 4%; 17%; 5%). (Three in ten laity and one in five ministers did not respond.)

Coping with Major Problems

- ✓ To understand and deal with “major problems in your life,” large majorities “look to God for strength, support, and guidance” either “a great deal” (members, 55%; elders, 53%; pastors, 70%; specialized clergy, 65%) or “quite a bit” (31%; 36%; 27%; 26%).

Figure 4. Looking to God When Problems Come

Q. To what extent do you look to God for strength, support, and guidance to deal with major problems in your life?



- ✓ Majorities also try to understand and deal with major problems by “working together with God as partners” either “a great deal” (members, 21%; elders, 18%; pastors, 35%; specialized clergy, 28%) or “quite a bit” (40%; 43%; 45%; 41%), or by “thinking about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force” (combined “a great deal” or “quite a bit”: 53%; 55%; 63%; 63%).
- ✓ Almost no one, however, tries to understand or deal with major problems “a great deal” or “quite a bit” by “feeling that God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality” (totals are members, 4%; elders, 3%; pastors, 2%; specialized clergy, 1%), or by “wondering whether God has abandoned me” (2%; 2%; 1%; 1%).

FAITH AND HEALTH

God's Role in Health

- ✓ Majorities of panelists disagree (combined “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” and “tend to disagree”) with five of six statements regarding God’s role regarding individual health:
 - Most things that affect my health happen because of God (members, 83%; elders, 81%; pastors, 87%)
 - God is directly responsible for my health getting better or worse (74%; 71%; 78%)
 - If my health worsens, it is up to God to determine whether I will feel better again (61%; 62%; 71%)
 - Whatever happens to my health is God’s will (57%; 55%; 70%)
 - Whether or not my health improves is up to God (57%; 56%; 66%)
 The exception is “God is in control of my health” (48%; 46%; 49%).

Relationship with God

- ✓ Majorities of 70% or more report an intimate connection with God, based on responses at or near the “very true” end of the continuum (choose 5, 6, or 7, where 1 is “not true,” 3 is “somewhat true,” and 7 is “very true”) to these statements:
 - I have a warm relationship with God
 - God knows when I need support
 - I feel that God is generally responsive to me
 Majorities are at the “not true” end of the continuum (choose 1, 2, or 3 on the same scale) for these:
 - God seems to have little or no interest in my personal problems
 - God seems impersonal to me
 - God’s reactions to me seem to be inconsistent

Doubts about Faith

- ✓ “Evil in the world” has caused “doubts about your religious faith” for minorities of laity (members, 41%; elders, 39%) and small majorities of ministers (pastors, 52%), but for most of these, evil has caused doubts “sometimes” (elders, 35%) rather than “often” (4%).
- ✓ Two other issues have caused doubts about faith in somewhat smaller shares of each Panel group:
 - Conflict of faith and science (members, 31%; elders, 25%; pastors, 20%; specialized clergy, 15%)
 - Feeling that life really has no meaning (15%; 17%; 28%; 28%)

God and the Body

- ✓ Large majorities agree that “my body is a temple of God” (combined “strongly agree,” “agree,” and “tend to agree”: members, 80%; elders, 83%; pastors, 94%). Most of the rest respond “neutral or not sure.”
- ✓ Similar results are found for the statements “God uses my body to do God’s will,” “my body is a gift from God,” and “my body is created in God’s image.”

Characteristics of God

- ✓ Most agree that God is “loving” (e.g., elders, 97% combined “strongly agree,” “agree,” and “tend to agree”), “approving” (77%), and “forgiving” (93%).
- ✓ Few, however, view God as “remote”: combined “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” and “tend to disagree” is 70% or more (e.g., elders, 76%; pastors, 92%).

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,037	1,135	1,437
Number returned	557	693	954‡
Response rate	53%	61%	66%

‡Of the 954 returned surveys, 635 came from pastors and 312 from specialized clergy; 7 were not classifiable.

The survey was mailed on January 11, 2007, with returns accepted through early May 2007. 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 these results, a longer report with more charts is available for free on the Web (www.pcusa.org/research/panel) or for \$15 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 02056-07294). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on Health Ministries in the PC(USA), go to <http://www.pcusa.org/nationalhealth>.

For more information on spirituality/spiritual formation in the PC(USA), go to <http://www.pcusa.org/spiritualformation>.

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