



# The Presbyterian Panel

*Listening to Presbyterians*



## SUMMARY

### EDUCATION AND OTHER TOPICS FINDINGS FROM THE NOVEMBER 2009 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 fourth survey completed by the 2009-2011 Panel, sampled in the fall of 2008.

#### IN THIS SUMMARY

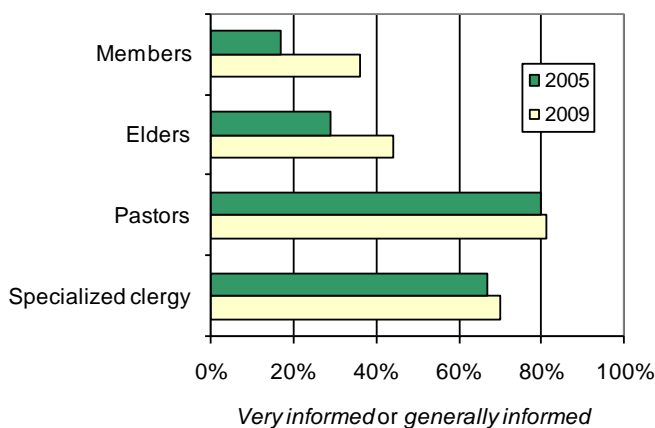
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### AWARENESS OF PC(USA) MISSION AND MINISTRIES

#### **Information about PC(USA) Mission**

- ✓ Four in five pastors (81%) and seven in ten specialized clergy (70%)—but only about two in five elders (44%) and members (36%)—are *very informed* or *generally informed* about the range and scope of PC(USA) mission.
- ✓ In 2005, only half as many members (17%) and two-thirds as many elders (29%) were as informed about PC(USA) mission as in 2009. Similar proportions of ministers were as informed in 2005 as in 2009.

**Figure 1. Level of Awareness about the Range and Scope of PC(USA) Mission, by Year**



- ✓ Three in five pastors (59%) and 47% of specialized clergy—but only one-quarter of members (26%) and one-third of elders (36%)—have learned *a great deal* or *a fair amount* about PC(USA) mission in the previous two years.

#### **Awareness about Selected Ministries**

- ✓ The survey asked panelists how well informed they are about nine selected ministries of the PC(USA)'s mission agency, the General Assembly Mission Council (formerly the General Assembly Council). Panelists are better informed about Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) than they are about other selected ministries. Majorities of elders (52%), pastors (87%), and specialized clergy (72%)—but only one-third of members (36%)—are *very informed* or *generally informed* about PDA.
- ✓ Majorities of ministers—but fewer members and elders—are informed about the Presbyterian Hunger Program, *Presbyterians Today* magazine, PC(USA) long-term international mission workers, and the Presbyterian Youth Triennium:
  - Presbyterian Hunger Program (members, 33%; elders, 42%; pastors, 73%; specialized clergy, 65%).
  - *Presbyterians Today* (27%; 35%; 74%; 54%).
  - International mission workers (25%; 29%; 64%; 54%).
  - Youth Triennium (16%; 26%; 69%; 53%).
- ✓ Fewer panelists are informed about other ministries:
  - Racial-ethnic congregational development (supporting racial-ethnic congregations) (members, 17%; elders, 19%; pastors, 37%; specialized clergy, 39%).
  - *We Believe* curriculum (12%; 17%; 44%; 31%).
  - PresbyTel, the PC(USA) information service (7%; 9%; 28%; 27%).
  - PC(USA) Washington Office (6%; 9%; 39%; 29%).

# EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOLS

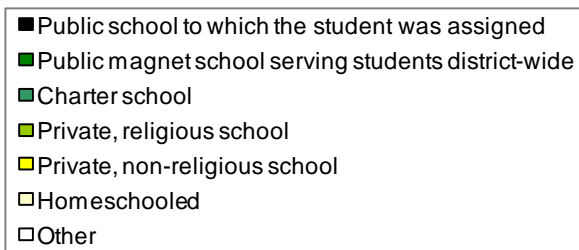
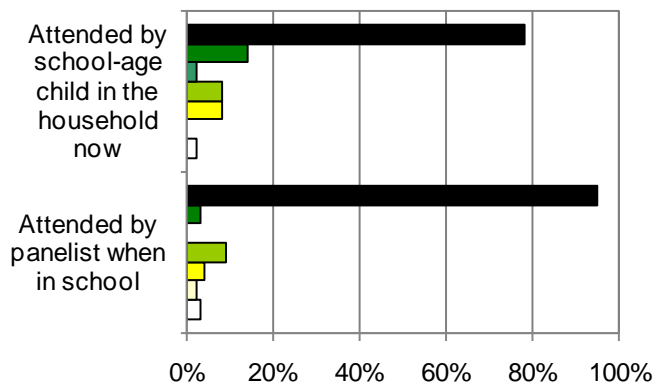
## School-Age Children at Home

- ✓ Three in ten pastors (30%), one in five elders (19%) and specialized clergy (22%), and one in six members (16%) have at least one school-age (kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade) child living with them.
- ✓ Only 1% of member and elder panelists are themselves school-age children.

## School Attendance

- ✓ In more than three in five households with school-age children, at least one child attends the school assigned by the local public school district (members, 78%; elders, 85%; pastors, 76%; specialized clergy, 62%).

**Figure 2. Types of Schools in Which Members Are or Have Been Involved**



Note: Percentages total to more than 100% because panelists could choose more than one response.

- ✓ Almost all panelists (members, 95%; elders, 96%; pastors, 97%; specialized clergy, 96%) themselves attend or attended public schools to which the public school district in their community assigned them.
- ✓ In addition to or instead of a public school, about 1 in 12 panelists (9%; 7%; 8%; 9%) attend or attended a private, religious school.

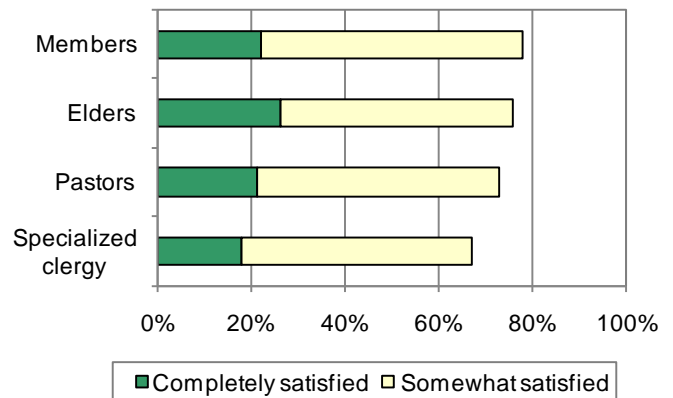
## Ways Congregations Help Children Learn

- ✓ Half of pastors' congregations (50%) run or host a scouting program such as a Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop.
- ✓ About two in five pastors' congregations run or host a preschool (40%) or work directly with one particular public school to provide volunteers or other resources to enhance the educational experience for children attending that school (37%).
- ✓ One in five pastors' congregations run or host an after-school program (22%) or a mentoring or tutoring program (22%) for students.
- ✓ A few pastors' congregations (5%) run or host a private school with some or all of kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Satisfaction with Local Schools

- ✓ At least two-thirds of panelists in each group are *completely satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the training of local public school teachers in their teaching areas (members, 72%; elders, 73%; pastors, 75%; specialized clergy, 68%) and the quality of education at public schools in their community in general (77%; 76%; 73%; 67%).

**Figure 3. Satisfaction with the Quality of Education at Public Schools in the Community in General**



- ✓ At least three in five panelists in each group (members, 68%; elders, 69%; pastors, 66%; specialized clergy, 60%) are *completely satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the ability of the public schools in their community to teach students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

# PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOLING

## Views on K-12 Schooling

- ✓ Nine in ten panelists *strongly agree* that parent and family involvement is a key to student success (members, 93%; elders, 95%; pastors, 94%; specialized clergy, 92%) and three-quarters *strongly agree* that teaching critical thinking skills is a key responsibility of public schools (75%; 78%; 78%; 85%).
- ✓ Small majorities of panelists in each group *strongly agree* that:
  - Supporting the right of every child to have access to an affordable and high-quality public education should be a strong PC(USA) priority (members, 56%; elders, 54%; pastors, 53%; specialized clergy, 56%).
  - Children who attend school with other children of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds will be better prepared to succeed in our globalizing society (53%; 52%; 50%; 64%).
  - Community involvement is a key to student success (52%; 57%; 55%; 57%).
- ✓ Half of members (49%) and elders (51%)—but fewer pastors (29%) and specialized clergy (35%)—*strongly agree* that giving students skills that will help them in the job market is a key responsibility of public schools.
- ✓ Half of specialized clergy (53%)—but fewer members (43%), elders (44%), and pastors (44%)—*strongly agree* that children who attend schools with other children of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds will be better prepared to succeed in our globalizing society.

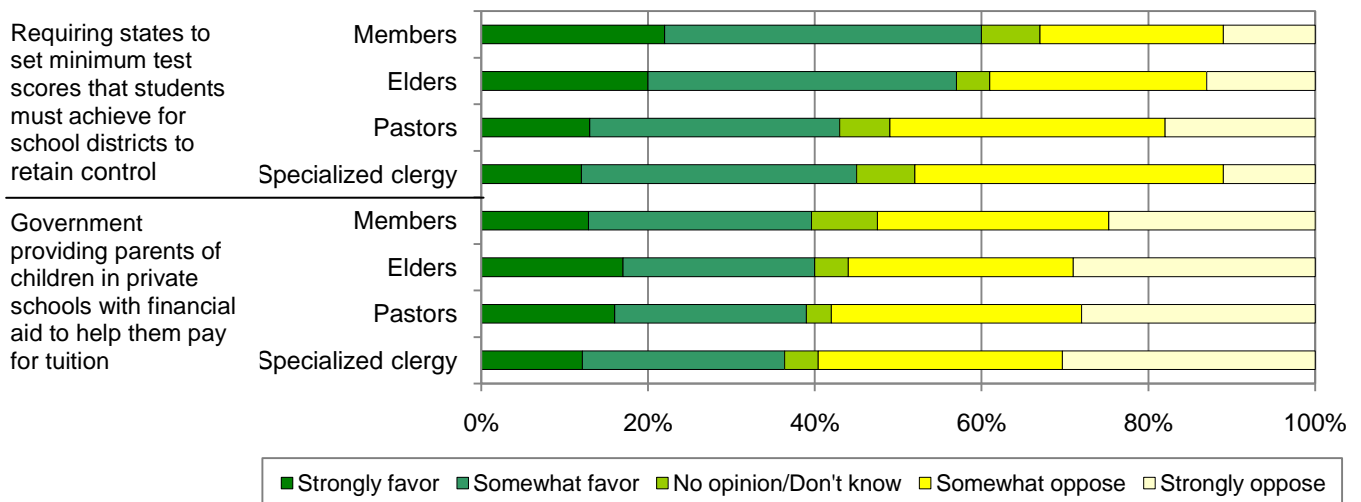
- ✓ Fewer panelists *strongly agree* that:
  - Having a range of types of public and private schools available is good for children and their families (members, 43%; elders, 46%; pastors, 38%; specialized clergy, 39%).
  - Public schools are flawed because of limits on what teachers and students can say about God and religion (22%; 28%; 15%; 8%).
  - Too much government money—U.S., state, and local government money—is spent on public schools in their community (6%; 7%; 4%; 2%).

## Educational Policy Opinions

- ✓ Three in five members (60%) and elders (57%) *strongly favor* or *somewhat favor* requiring states to set minimum standardized test scores that students in various racial-ethnic, language, and ability groups must achieve if local public school districts are to retain control of schools in their districts (a provision of the No Child Left Behind law).
- ✓ Slightly more ministers (pastors, 51%; specialized clergy, 48%) *somewhat oppose* or *strongly oppose* the No Child Left Behind testing requirement than *strongly favor* or *somewhat favor* it (43%; 45%).
- ✓ Majorities of panelists in each group (members, 53%; elders, 56%; pastors, 58%; specialized clergy, 59%) *somewhat oppose* or *strongly oppose* state or local governments providing parents who enroll their children in private schools with education tax credits or other financial aid to help pay their children’s tuition.

**Figure 4. Opinions About Requiring States to Use Tests and Offering Aid for Private School Tuition**

Q: How much do you favor or oppose:



## STUDY RESOURCES

### **Use and Purchase of Presbyterian Publishing Corporation Products**

- ✓ Strong majorities of ministers (pastors, 81%; specialized clergy, 69%)—but fewer members (29%) or elders (44%)—*used* a Presbyterian Publishing Corporation (PPC) book or resource during the previous 12 months.
- ✓ Seven in ten pastors (70%), two in five specialized clergy (43%), and fewer members (12%) or elders (17%) *purchased* a PPC item in the same period.

### **Preferred Sources for Books and Resources**

- ✓ Majorities of panelists in each group (members, 59%; elders, 63%; pastors, 72%; specialized clergy, 72%) would be *extremely likely, very likely, or somewhat likely* to purchase an individual PPC book or resource on the Amazon Web site (at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) if they wanted to purchase it in the 12 months after the survey.
- ✓ Majorities of ministers—but fewer members and elders—would be likely to buy a PPC item through:
  - A Cokesbury bookstore (members, 14%; elders, 27%; pastors, 56%; specialized clergy, 52%).
  - The Cokesbury Web site (at [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)) (16%; 27%; 71%; 50%).
  - Presbyterian Distribution Service by phone (16%; 23%; 62%; 50%).
  - The PPC Web site (at [www.ppcbooks.com](http://www.ppcbooks.com)) if such an option existed (27%; 37%; 62%; 58%).
- ✓ Majorities of members (63%) and elders (60%)—but fewer pastors (38%) and specialized clergy (45%)—would buy a PPC item at a Barnes & Noble bookstore.

- ✓ Two in five members (41%), elders (42%), and specialized clergy (39%)—but only one-third of pastors (32%)—would buy a PPC product at a Borders bookstore.
- ✓ Half or more of pastors—but fewer panelists in other groups—would be likely to buy a PPC item through Cokesbury by phone (members, 12%; elders, 21%; pastors, 57%; specialized clergy, 39%) or through the Presbyterian Marketplace Web site (at [www.pcusa.org/marketplace](http://www.pcusa.org/marketplace)) (23%; 31%; 51%; 44%).
- ✓ About two in five ministers (pastors, 46%; specialized clergy, 38%)—but few members (17%) and elders (20%)—would buy a PPC item by phone from PPC if such an option existed.

### **Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions**

- ✓ If they wanted to purchase an individual PPC book or resource in the 12 months after the survey, at least seven in ten panelists in each group (members, 74%; elders, 79%; pastors, 70%; specialized clergy, 80%) would base their decision on where to make the purchase *to a very great extent* or *to a great extent* on the most convenient source or location.
- ✓ Seven in ten ministers (pastors, 74%; specialized clergy, 72%)—but only three in five members (62%) and elders (64%)—would base their purchase decision on the best price.
- ✓ Three in five ministers (pastors, 57%; specialized clergy, 60%), five in nine elders (55%), and 46% of members would base their buying decision on the best service.

	Members	Elders	Ministers
Number of surveys sent.....	873	1,073	1,443
Number of undeliverable surveys and ineligible respondents .....	8	7	19
Number of surveys completed .....	338	514	718‡
Response rate .....	39%	48%	50%

‡Of the 718 returned surveys, 475 came from pastors and 240 from specialized clergy; 3 ministers could not be classified.

**The survey was mailed on November 24, 2009**, with returns accepted through early February 2010. Results are subject to sampling and other errors. Small differences should be interpreted cautiously. In general, 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 will be available for free on the Web ([www.pcusa.org/research/panel](http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel)) or for \$15 from PDS (800-524-2612; order PDS# 02056-09305). It will include tables with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

**LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973**  
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