Pastors’ Views on Conspiracy Theories

A SURVEY OF AMERICANS PROTESTANT PASTORS
Methodology

- The mixed mode survey of 1,007 Protestant pastors was conducted September 2–October 1, 2020 using both phone and online interviews

- Phone: The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size

- Online: Invitations were emailed to the LifeWay Research Pastor Panel followed by three reminders. This probability sample of Protestant churches was created by phone recruiting by LifeWay Research using random samples selected from all Protestant churches. Pastors who agree to be contacted by email for future surveys make up this LifeWay Research Pastor Panel.

- Each survey was completed by the senior or sole pastor or a minister at the church

- Responses were weighted by region and church size to more accurately reflect the population
Methodology

- The completed sample is 1,007 surveys (502 by phone, 505 online)
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed ±3.4%. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting.
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups.
Q “I frequently hear members of my congregation repeating conspiracy theories they have heard about why something is happening in our country.”

49% of pastors frequently hear members of their congregation repeating conspiracy theories they have heard

Among Protestant Pastors
Significant Differences

Pastor
Ethnicity
Age
Gender
Education Level
Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church
Religion
Denomination
Average Attendance
Significant Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the pastor’s ethnicity, age, gender, education, self-identified Evangelical or Mainline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>Self-Identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>No College Degree</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Mainline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Ethnicities</td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the church’s region, denomination, and attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>DENOMINATION GROUP</th>
<th>ATTENDANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>0-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>50-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>100-249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>250+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presbyterian/Reformed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian/Church of Christ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations
“I frequently hear members of my congregation repeating conspiracy theories they have heard about why something is happening in our country.”

- White pastors (50%) are more likely to Agree than African American pastors (36%)
- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to Disagree (59%) and least likely to Agree (34%)
- Male pastors are more likely to Agree than females (50% v. 35%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (61%)
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