The Greatest Needs of Pastors

People Dynamics

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

Lifeway research
Methodology

- The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted March 30 – April 22, 2021
- The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size
- 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
- The completed sample is 1,000 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed ±3.1% This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?”

Among Protestant Pastors

- People’s apathy or lack of commitment: 75%
- People’s strong opinions about non-essentials: 48%
- Resistance to change in the church: 46%
- People’s political views: 44%
- People’s unrealistic expectations of the pastor: 35%
- Caring too much about people’s approval or criticism: 32%
- None of these: 8%

Q12: “Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor? (Select all that apply)”
47% find people’s apathy or lack of commitment the most challenging people dynamic

Among Protestant Pastors

- People’s apathy or lack of commitment: 47%
- People’s political views: 13%
- Resistance to change in the church: 12%
- People’s strong opinions about non-essentials: 8%
- Caring too much about people’s approval or criticism: 6%
- People’s unrealistic expectations of the pastor: 6%
- Not sure/None of these: 9%

Q13: “Among the people dynamics you just selected, which one are you as pastor find most challenging in your ministry today?”
Significant Differences

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

**Church**
- Region
- 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>18-44</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>No College Degree</td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Mainline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Ethnicities</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td></td>
<td></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>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-denominational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations.
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?”

People’s apathy or lack of commitment

• Male pastors are more likely to select than females (76% v. 68%)
• Pastors with a Doctoral degree are the least likely to select (62%)
• Pastors in the South (78%) are more likely to select than those in the West (70%)
• Baptists (79%), Pentecostals (77%), and Non-denominational (78%) are more likely to select than Methodists (65%)
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?” (continued)

Caring too much about people’s approval or criticism

• White pastors (33%) are more likely to select than African American pastors (19%)
• Pastors age 18-44 are the most likely to select (45%)
• Pastors with a Bachelor’s degree (34%) or a Master’s degree (36%) are more likely to select than those with no college degree (23%) or a Doctoral degree (19%)
• Lutherans (40%) and Methodists (38%) are more likely to select than Pentecostals (25%)
• Pastors of churches with attendance of 250+ (36%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (26%)
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?”  (continued)

People’s strong opinions about non-essentials

- White pastors (50%) are more likely to select than African American pastors (35%)
- Pastors age 18-44 are the most likely to select (60%)
- Pastors with a Master’s degree are the most likely to select (54%)
- Baptists (50%) and Lutherans (58%) are more likely to select than Pentecostals (39%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 100-249 (53%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (43%)
People’s political views

• White pastors are the most likely to select (47%)
• Pastors age 18-44 are the most likely to select (55%)
• Female pastors are more likely to select than males (52% v. 42%)
• Pastors with a Master’s degree (47%) are more likely to select than those with no college degree (36%)
• Pastors in the Midwest (48%) and West (50%) are more likely to select than those in the South (40%)
• Lutherans (54%), Methodists (48%), Presbyterian/Reformed (51%), and Christian/Church of Christ (51%) are more likely to select than Baptists (35%) and Pentecostals (34%)
• Pastors of churches with attendance of 250+ (49%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (38%)
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?” (continued)

Resistance to change in the church

• Pastors age 18-44 (52%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (39%)

• Methodists (53%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (50%) are more likely to select than Christian/Church of Christ (33%),
“Which of the following people dynamics do you find challenging in your ministry as a pastor?” (continued)

People’s unrealistic expectations of the pastor

• Pastors age 18-44 (46%) and 45-54 (41%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (28%) and 65+ (26%)

• Methodists (48%) and Christian/Church of Christ (41%) are more likely to select than Presbyterian/Reformed (25%) and Non-denominational (25%)

• Pastors of churches with attendance of 250+ (40%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (29%)
“Among the people dynamics you just selected, which one are you as pastor most finding challenging in your ministry today?”

- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (58%) are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than African American pastors (41%)
- African American pastors are the most likely to select “Resistance to change in the church” (22%)
- Pastors age 65+ (51%) are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than pastors age 18-44 (42%)
- Male pastors are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than females (48% v. 38%)
- Pastors with no college degree (58%) or a Bachelor’s (52%) are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than those with a Master’s degree (43%) or a Doctoral degree (39%)
- Evangelical pastors are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than Mainline pastors (51% v. 42%)
“Among the people dynamics you just selected, which one are you as pastor most finding challenging in your ministry today?”

- Pastors in the South (51%) and the Midwest (47%) are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than those in the West (35%)
- Pastors in the West (20%) are more likely to select “People’s political views than those in the Northeast (12%) and South (10%)
- Baptists (52%), Pentecostals (55%), and Non-denominational (52%) are more likely to select “People’s apathy or lack of commitment” than Methodists (30%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (34%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 (15%) are more likely to select “Resistance to change in the church” than those with attendance of 250+ (7%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 250+ (11%) are more likely to select “Caring too much about people’s approval or criticism” than those with attendance of 0-49 (4%) and 100-249 (5%)