Pastors’ Views on Church Finances

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

Lifeway research
Methodology

• The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted September 6-30, 2022

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

• Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest 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 ±3.2% This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting

• Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

• Comparisons are made to a telephone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors conducted August 22 – September 16, 2016
20% say that their church has cash reserves to last 7 weeks or less

Among Protestant Pastors Who Can Estimate Their Reserves

- Between 0 and 7 weeks: 20%
- Between 8 and 15 weeks: 23%
- Between 16 and 25 weeks: 17%
- Between 26 and 51 weeks: 15%
- 52 weeks or more: 24%

31% of pastors are not sure how many weeks of cash reserves their church has.

Q: “How many weeks of cash reserves does your church currently have? (If needed: If giving to your church stopped tomorrow, how many weeks could your church continue paying bills and payroll?)” n=1,000  (n=696 can estimate their reserves)
Fewer churches have 7 weeks or less of cash reserves than in 2016 (20% v. 26%)

Among Protestant Pastors Who Can Estimate Their Reserves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 0 and 7 weeks</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 8 and 15 weeks</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 16 and 25 weeks</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 26 and 51 weeks</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 weeks or more</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both 2016 and 2022, 31% of pastors were not sure how many weeks of cash reserves their church had.

Q: “How many weeks of cash reserves does your church currently have? (If needed: If giving to your church stopped tomorrow, how many weeks could your church continue paying bills and payroll?)”
8% say that someone has embezzled funds from their current church

Among Protestant Pastors

Q: "Has anyone ever embezzled funds from your current church, taking church money for personal use – either before you were pastor or since you arrived?" n=1,000
The rate of church embezzlement is the unchanged since 2016

Among Protestant Pastors

Q: “Has anyone ever embezzled funds from your current church, taking church money for personal use – either before you were pastor or since you arrived?”
58% say that their church has had a complete financial audit within the last two years

Among Protestant Pastors

- Within the last year: 47%
- 1 - 2 years ago: 11%
- 3 - 4 years ago: 7%
- 5 or more years ago: 12%
- Never: 10%
- Not sure: 12%

Q: “When was the last time your church had a complete audit of its finances?” n=1,000
Similar percentages of pastors say their church has had a complete financial audit as did in 2016

Among Protestant Pastors

- Within the last year: 47%
- 1 - 2 years ago: 12%
- 3 - 4 years ago: 7%
- 5 or more years ago: 12%
- Never: 10%
- Not sure: 14%

Q: “When was the last time your church had a complete audit of its finances?”
Significant Differences

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

- Church
- Region
- Denomination
- Average Attendance

Lifeway research
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>Hispanic</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
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</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>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Denominational</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations
Among Protestant Pastors Who Can Estimate Their Reserves

- Pastors age 55-64 (26%) and 65+ (24%) are more likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” than pastors age 18-44 (15%) and 45-54 (15%)
- African American pastors (52%) and Hispanic pastors (35%) are more likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” than White pastors (17%)
- Pastors with a Bachelor’s Degree are the least likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” (12%)
- Pastors with a Master’s Degree (17%) are more likely to answer “Between 26 and 51 weeks” than those with a Bachelor’s Degree (9%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (28%) are more likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” than those in the Midwest (16%) and West (15%)
- Pastors in the South (26%) and Midwest (25%) are more likely to answer “Between 8 and 15 weeks” than those in the Northeast (13%)
“How many weeks of cash reserves does your church currently have? (If needed: If giving to your church stopped tomorrow, how many weeks could your church continue paying bills and payroll?)” Among Protestant Pastors Who Can Estimate Their Reserves

- Baptists (23%), Methodists (30%), and Pentecostals (25%) are more likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” than Lutherans (9%)
- Christian/Church of Christ (34%) and Non-denominational (34%) are more likely to answer “52 weeks or more” than Baptists (20%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 (24%) and 50-99 (21%) are more likely to answer “Between 0 and 7 weeks” than those at churches with attendance of 100-249 (14%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 (31%) are more likely to answer “Between 8 and 15 weeks” than those at churches with attendance of 50-99 (17%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 100-249 (20%) and 250+ (25%) are more likely to answer “Between 16 and 25 weeks” than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (12%)
“Has anyone ever embezzled funds from your current church, taking church money for personal use – either before you were pastor or since you arrived?”

- Pastors with a Master’s Degree (10%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Bachelor’s Degree (4%)
- Presbyterian/Reformed (14%) and Christian/Church of Christ (16%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than Baptists (7%) and Pentecostals (4%)
“When was the last time your church had a complete audit of its finances?”

- Pastors age 65+ (54%) are more likely to answer “Within the last year” than pastors age 18-44 (42%)
- Pastors age 18-44 are the most likely to answer “Not sure” (16%)
- Female pastors are more likely to answer “Within the last year” than males (56% v. 45%)
- Male pastors are more likely to answer “Never” than females (12% v. 3%)
- Pastors with a Bachelor’s Degree (14%) or a Master’s Degree (12%) are more likely to answer “1-2 years ago” than those with no college degree (5%) or a Doctoral Degree (6%)
- Mainline pastors are more likely to answer “Within the last year” than Evangelical pastors (55% v. 45%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (57%) are more likely to answer “Within the last year” than those in the South (44%)
- Pastors in the South (13%) and West (14%) are more likely to answer “Never” than those in the Northeast (5%) and Midwest (7%)
- Methodists are the most likely to answer “Within the last year” (75%)