



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN AND OTHER TOPICS The August 2001 Survey

The Presbyterian Panel consists of three nationally representative samples of groups affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): members, elders (lay leaders), and ordained ministers. For most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving in a congregation, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the eighth survey completed by the 2000-2002 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 1999. *Note: In this summary, "PW" refers to "Presbyterian Women."*

✓ In this Summary	
<i>Circles in Congregations</i>	<i>p. 2</i>
<i>Opinions on PW</i>	<i>p. 3</i>
<i>Post-Viability Abortions</i>	<i>p. 4</i>
<i>Amendment 01-A</i>	<i>p. 4</i>

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN OVERVIEW

Familiarity

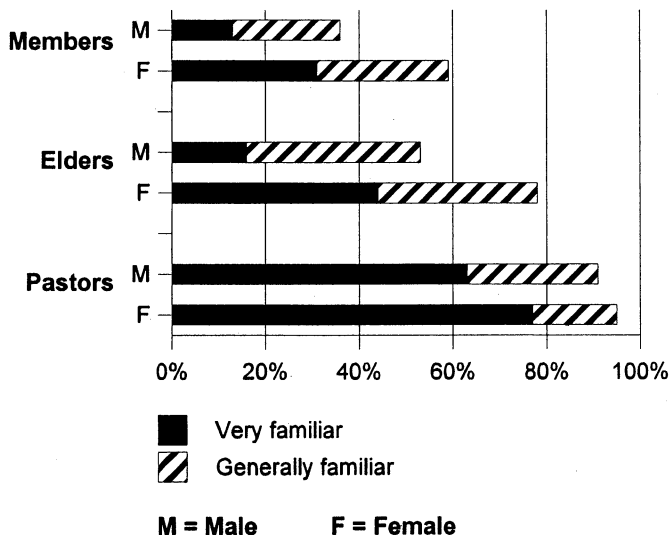
- ✓ 18% of pastors, 12% of elders, and 9% of members report that PW is not active in their congregations. Of the rest, 91% of pastors, 65% of elders, and 51% of members are *very familiar* or *generally familiar* with PW in their congregations.
- ✓ Familiarity with PW is greater among women than among men, especially among laity.

- ✓ 61% of pastors and 31% of elders are *very familiar* or *generally familiar* with PW in the presbytery, while 43% of pastors and 17% of elders are *very familiar* or *generally familiar* with PW nationally.

Who Participates

- ✓ Pastors estimate (median) that in their own congregation 60% of members are women and, of those, 10% are involved in PW.
- ✓ Among female members, 12% have attended a presbytery PW gathering and 2% a national PW gathering in the last two years.

Figure 1
Familiarity with Presbyterian Women
in their Congregations, by Gender



Publications and Offerings

- ✓ 9% of members have recently read *Horizons* (PW's official magazine), including 6% whose households subscribe.
- ✓ One in four members and one in three elders are familiar with the PW/*Horizons* Bible study, including 17% and 19%, respectively, who have used it.
- ✓ In congregations with Presbyterian Women, according to pastors, PW collects the Birthday Offering in 68%, the Thank Offering in 65%, and the Least Coin Offering in 61%.

PW CIRCLES IN CONGREGATIONS

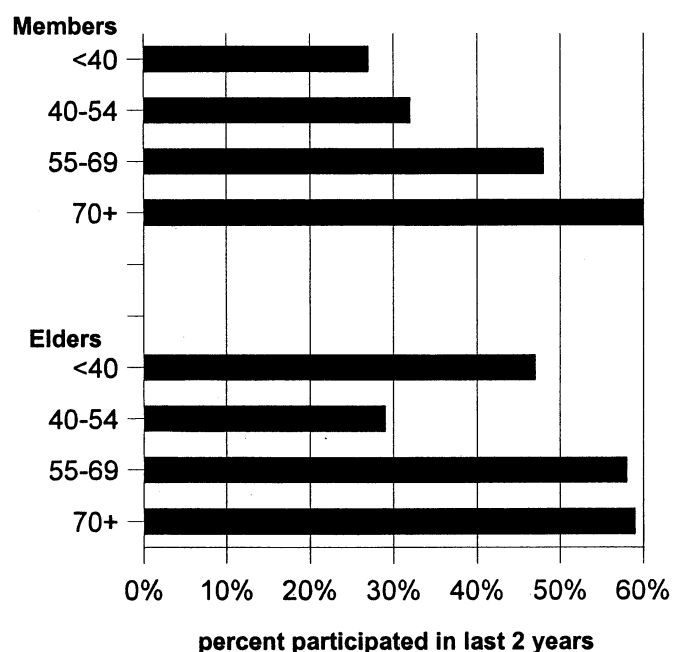
Numbers

- ✓ 85% of pastors report at least one women's circle (or group) in their congregation. In half of these congregations, *all* of the circles are linked to PW.
- ✓ On average (median), participating congregations have three women's circles (or groups) overall. Two of these, on average, are part of PW.
- ✓ Half of female elders (50%) and pastors (52%), 43% of female members, and 38% of female specialized clergy have participated in a PW circle during the past two years.

Participant Characteristics

- ✓ The average (median) size of circles, according to both members and elders who participate, is 15.
- ✓ Members and elders estimate the age of women in their circles as 60 years, on average.
- ✓ The percentage of female members over age 70 who belong to a circle is twice that of members under 40, a pattern less apparent among elders.

Figure 2
Recent Lay Participation
in PW Circles, by Age



Circle Meetings

- ✓ Circles typically meet monthly (86% of participating members so report), and 59% meet during the daytime on a weekday.
- ✓ Majorities of members (55%) and elders (63%) in circles attend meetings *always/almost always*.
- ✓ Typical meeting activities, and the percentage of participating members and elders who report each one, include:
 - social time (86%, 86%)
 - Bible study (80%, 84%)
 - group discussion (70%, 81%)
 - mission activity (52%, 62%)
 - service to congregation (47%, 53%)
- ✓ A majority of circles, according to participating members (55%) and elders (65%), use the *PW/Horizons* Bible study.

"Whys" and "Why Not's" of Participation

- ✓ Most members in circles choose *like the fellowship* (81%) or *like the Bible study* (63%) as reasons for participating. Fewer choose *like the opportunity for service* (36%) or *friends participate* (19%).
- ✓ Of female members who don't belong to PW circles (in congregations that have them), the major reason given is *too busy in other things* (71%). Another reason cited by a sizable minority is *meets at an inconvenient time* (29%).

Outreach

- ✓ Majorities of participating members (63%) and elders (71%) report that their circles are trying to recruit new members. Somewhat fewer (44% and 62%) report that circles are aiming recruitment efforts at younger women.
- ✓ In the last two years, according to pastors, a third of congregations have tried to start a new circle "at a time more convenient for employed women."

OPINIONS ON PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

General Issues

- ✓ Majorities in all samples *disagree* that “women’s-only organizations are outdated” (e.g., 67% of members and 73% of specialized clergy).
- ✓ Half of members and most elders (56%) *disagree* that “PW is mainly an organization for older women,” while ministers are more divided: 41% of pastors *disagree*, 47% *agree*, and 12% are *uncertain*.
- ✓ Majorities in all samples, ranging from 58% of members to 67% of specialized clergy, *agree* that “PW empowers women to take leadership roles elsewhere in the church.” Most of the rest are *uncertain*.

National Issues

- ✓ More than three in four members (and 72% of elders) respond *uncertain* to the statement, “The stances taken by PW at the national level are too extreme.” Other opinions are evenly divided between *agree* and *disagree*.
- ✓ To the same statement, a third of pastors *disagree*, a third are *uncertain*, and three in ten *agree*.
- ✓ In both lay samples, most panelists respond *uncertain* (members, 70%; elders, 65%) to the statement, “The national leadership of PW is more liberal than most women in my congregation.” Among those with opinions, more *agree* (members, 21%; elders, 25%) than *disagree* (9%; 10%).
- ✓ To the same statement, 51% of pastors *agree*, 31% are *uncertain*, and 17% *disagree*.
- ✓ To the statement “Women in PW in our congregation aren’t much interested in PW at the presbytery, synod, or GA level,” 49% of pastors respond *agree*; 34% *disagree*, and 17% *uncertain*.

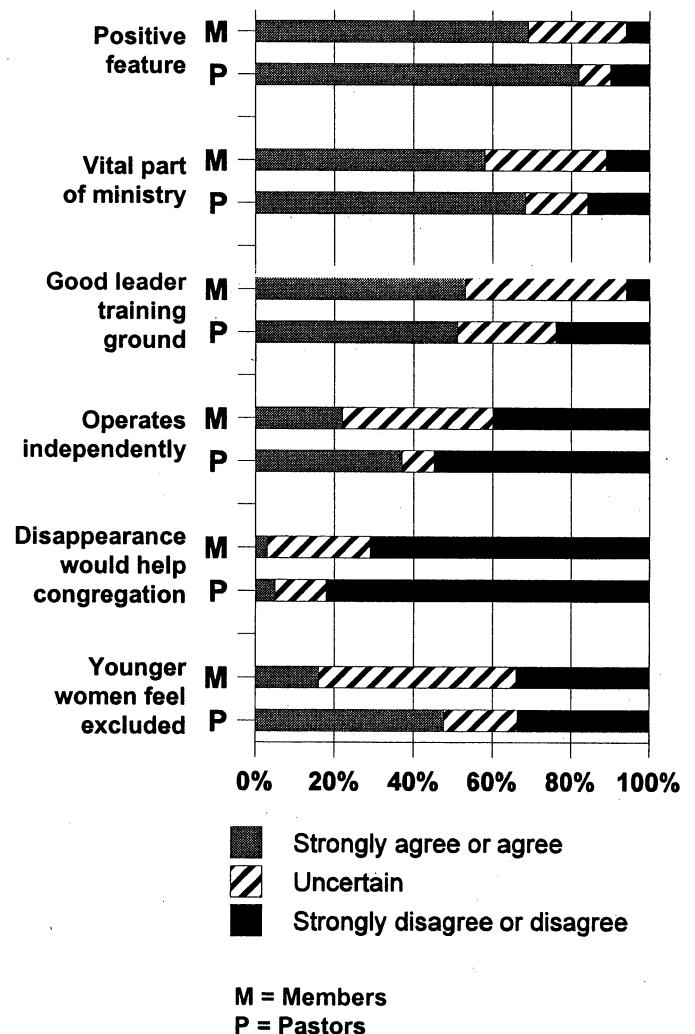
Pastor Support

- ✓ A third of female members and elders report that their pastor is *very supportive* of PW, and another third, *supportive*. Most of the rest respond *don’t know*; only 3% and 5% describe the pastor as *not supportive*.

Evaluating PW in the Congregation

- ✓ In every sample, majorities *agree* that
 - PW is a positive feature of my congregation
 - PW is a vital part of the overall ministry of our congregation
 - PW is a good training ground for leaders in our congregation.
- ✓ At the same time, large majorities *disagree* that “the overall health of our congregation would improve if PW were to disappear tomorrow.”
- ✓ Half of elders and a small majority of pastors (55%) *disagree* that “PW operates independently from the rest of the congregation.”

Figure 3
Opinions on PW in One’s Congregation



OTHER TOPICS

Post-Viability Abortion

- ✓ Few panelists oppose post-viability abortions (abortions after the fetus has developed to where it could, with medical help, live outside the womb) under all circumstances, ranging from 25% of elders to 16% of specialized clergy.
- ✓ Circumstances in which the most panelists would permit post-viability abortions include:
 - to save the mother's life (elders, 96%; pastors, 98%)
 - incest or rape (69%; 61%)
 - to protect the mother's health (63%; 60%)
 - if the child would have a severe defect (56%; 39%)
 - physician so advises (46%; 50%)

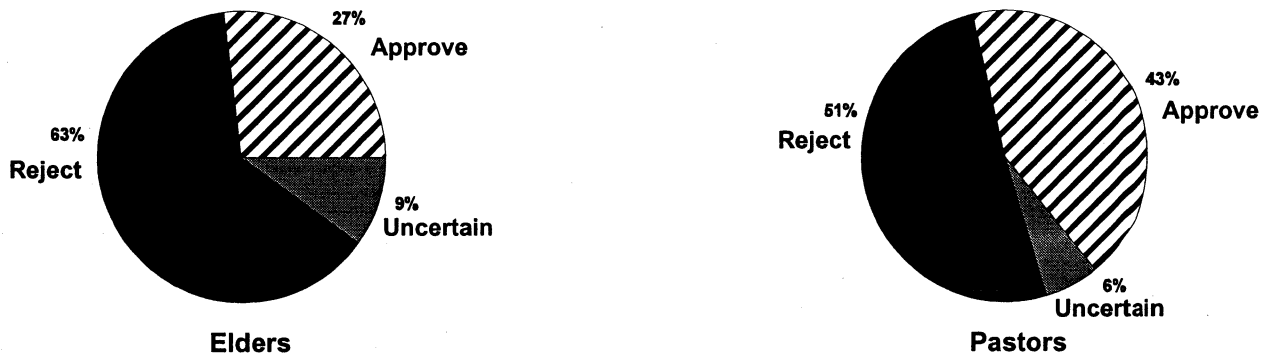
Internet and E-Mail

- ✓ Three in four members, four in five elders, and one in five ministers access the Internet occasionally or more often. A third of members, 45% of elders, and six in ten ministers do so *daily/more often*.
- ✓ Majorities send or receive e-mail several times a week or more often.

Amendment 01-A

- ✓ Majorities of members (62%), elders (63%), and pastors (51%) favor *rejection* of an "amendment to the PC(USA) constitution that would permit each presbytery to ordain, at its discretion, sexually-active gays and lesbians as ministers." A majority of specialized clergy (65%) favor *approval*.

Figure 4
Views on Amendment 01-A



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed	1,120	1,069	1,443
Number returned	551	554	869*
Response rate	49%	51%	60%

*Of the 869 returned surveys, 689 came from pastors and 180 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in August 2001, and returns were accepted through early November 2001. 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 the August 2001 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for \$6. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS# 65100-01270. It includes an appendix with percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

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 The Presbyterian Panel
A Ministry of the General Assembly Council
 Research Services
 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
 100 Witherspoon Street
 Louisville KY 40202-1396
<http://www.pcusa.org/rs/rshtml.htm>