



**EXPLORING THE  
PANDEMIC IMPACT  
ON CONGREGATIONS**

**Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations**

**Fall 2023**

**Clergy Health and Well-Being**

**Screening question**

1. Are you the senior, co-senior, interim, or solo clergy leader of this congregation?  
Yes 100%
  
2. Which statement best describes the (religious) leadership of this congregation?  
1% I am the interim.  
60% I am the solo clergy leader (no assistant or associate clergy).  
5% I am one of the co-leaders (two or more clergy sharing leadership equally).  
31% I am the senior clergy leader with one or more assistant or associate clergy.  
3% None of the above descriptions apply to our situation.

**Church Characteristics**

**First, we want to ask some questions about the church you are currently serving.**

3. Is your congregation a part of a denomination or religious group?  
Yes 80%      No 20%
  
4. (if yes) What is the name of this denomination or religious group?  
28% Mainline Protestant  
67% Conservative Protestant  
5% Catholic/Orthodox

5. In what ZIP code is this congregation's primary place of worship physically located?
- |              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Northeast    | 15% |
| South        | 44% |
| Northcentral | 24% |
| West         | 17% |

6. Please estimate the total average **in-person** attendance **currently** at all of your regular weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) worship service(s), including children.

Mean - 139 **Median - 55**

50 or less	39%
51-100	27%
101-250	21%
Over 250	14%

7. Please estimate the total average **online/virtual** attendance **currently** at all of your regular weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) worship service(s), including children.

Mean - 44 **Median - 10**

Please estimate the total average attendance (**BOTH in person and virtual**) at all of your regular weekend (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) worship service(s) **in 2018**

Mean - 167 **Median - 70**

**How many** people (including children) **currently regularly participate** (once a month or more including in-person and virtual) in worship or other religious activities in your congregation? Mean - 177 **Median - 70**

Attendance Change pre-pandemic to present

-25% or more	16%
-5% to -24.9%	25%
-4.9% to 4.9%	26%
5% to 24.9%	15%
25% or more	19%

8. Of the current regular participants, **what number** are in each of the following age groups?

Children (ages 0-12):.....	Mean - 11%
Youth (ages 13-17):.....	Mean - 7%
Young adults (ages 18-34).....	Mean - 12%
Middle adults (ages 35-64).....	Mean - 32%
Senior adults (ages 65 and older):.....	Mean - 38%
Total (this should add up to the <b>regularly participate</b> total)	

9. Of the current regular participants, **what number** are in each of the following categories?

American Indian/Alaska Native (non-Hispanic)..... Mean - 0.5%

Asian (non-Hispanic).....	Mean - 4%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic).....	Mean - 15%
Hispanic or Latino(a).....	Mean - 6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic).....	Mean - 0.3%
White (non-Hispanic).....	Mean - 71%
Multiracial.....	Mean - d4%
Total (this should add up to the <i>regularly participate</i> total)	

10. Of all **current regularly participating adults** (age 18 and over), what **percent** would you estimate:

Are female? ..... 59% mean 60% median

Are new to this congregation since 2020?..... 20% mean 12% median

Volunteer regularly at the congregation? .....39%mean 35% median

11. How many full-time paid staff (in any capacity) does the congregation employ?

2 mean 1 median

12. How many part-time paid staff does the congregation employ? 3 mean 2 median

### Your Demographic Characteristics

Next, we have some questions about you as the leader.

13. What is your age and gender?

Age: mean - 57 median - 59

Gender: Male 80% Female 20% Other designations 0.2%

14. What is your race?

0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native (non-Hispanic)

2.9% Asian (non-Hispanic)

10% Black or African American (non-Hispanic)

3% Hispanic or Latino(a)

0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (non-Hispanic)

80% White (non-Hispanic)

2% Multiracial

1% Other

15. In what year did you start serving this congregation? 2012 mean 2016 median

16. Which best describes your employment status?

75% Full-time

25% Part-time

17. To what extent is there a good "fit" between you and the members?

0.2% Not good

5% Just okay

23% Good

72% Very good

18. Which of the following characteristics apply to you as the leader of this congregation?  
*(Select a response for each line.)*

	Yes	No
Serves another congregation(s)	15%	85%
Serves as a chaplain	12%	88%
Has other paid employment outside of this congregation	28%	72%
Has an MDiv degree	55%	45%
Has had a sabbatical within the last 10 years	17%	83%
Regularly schedules and takes a day off each week (from all paid employment)	74%	26%
Participates in a clergy peer group?	69%	31%
Sought guidance from a spiritual director, counselor, or therapist in last 3 years.	57.5%	42.5%
Takes advantage of resources from denomination, judicatory, or region for your care and well-being?	53%	47%

19. Since the start of 2020, how often have you...  
*(Select a response for each line.)*

	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Fairly often	Very often
Doubted that you are called by God to ministry	65%	15%	16%	3%	1%
Seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry	47%	19%	21%	8%	5%
Seriously considered leaving this congregation for another one	56%	20%	15%	8%	2%

20. In general, how would you rate your...

	0 Poor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Excellent	mean
physical health?	0%	0.10%	0.20%	1%	2%	3%	11%	20%	23%	25%	14%	7.2
mental health?	0.10%	0.20%	1%	4%	5%	9%	12%	21%	20%	18%	11%	7.8
spiritual health?	0.2%	0%	2%	1%	2%	6%	10%	19%	20%	22%	18%	7.9
your relational health? (i.e. your relationships with other people)	0.1%	1%	0.4%	1%	3%	5%	8%	14%	26%	28%	13%	7.8
financial health?	1%	0.3%	3%	5%	3%	7%	16%	19%	15%	19%	12%	7.1

21. How true are the following statements of you?

	0 Not true of me										10 Completely True of me	mean
Overall, I am satisfied with life as a whole these days	0.4%	0.1%	1%	3%	5%	4%	7%	20%	22%	18%	18%	7.6
In general, I usually feel happy.	0.4%	0.1%	1%	5%	6%	4%	8%	13%	27%	21%	14%	7.5
Overall, I feel the things I do in my life are worthwhile.	0.2%	0.1%	0%	2%	2%	3%	7%	13%	22%	25%	26%	8.2
I understand my purpose in life.	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	10%	19%	31%	33%	8.6
I always act to promote good in all circumstances, even in difficult and challenging situations.	0.2%	0.4%	0%	1%	2%	3%	7%	11%	21%	29%	27%	8.4
I am always able to give up some happiness now for greater happiness later.	1%	0%	1%	0.4%	3%	8%	13%	17%	21%	24%	13%	7.6
I am content with my friendships and relationships.	1%	1%	5%	3%	3%	7%	11%	12%	17%	22%	18%	7.4
My relationships are as satisfying as I would want them to be.	1%	2%	6%	7%	3%	12%	7%	13%	24%	17%	10%	6.7
I often feel lonely.	17%	12%	17%	5%	8%	6%	7%	11%	10%	5%	4%	4.0
I feel connected to the broader community around me.	1%	3%	2%	10%	6%	10%	10%	16%	15%	17%	9%	6.6
I have enough people I feel comfortable with to ask for help at any time.	1%	2%	7%	3%	6%	6%	7%	15%	18%	17%	19%	7.1
This congregation is a good match for my gifts and talents.	0.2%	1%	3%	2%	2%	3%	6%	11%	17%	24%	33%	8.2

0 Overall, how have the following changed (if at all) since the COVID-19 pandemic started?

(Select a response for each line.)

	Decreased since the pandemic	The same as before the pandemic	Increased since the pandemic
How often you pray or meditate	11%	49%	40%
How often you read the scripture	5%	64%	31%
How often you participate in or watch religious services besides your own church	16%	58%	26%
How important your religious faith is to you in your everyday life	2%	55%	43%
The sense of connection or closeness you feel towards your congregational members	14%	42%	44%

### Church Dynamics

We have a few more questions about the congregation you are serving.

1 All things considered, how would you compare the overall vitality and strength of your congregation before the pandemic and now?

21% Much stronger now than before the pandemic

30% Somewhat stronger now

21% About the same

21% Somewhat weaker now

7% Much weaker now than before the pandemic



2 Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Our congregation...	Our congregation...				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Has a clear mission and purpose	2%	14%	17%	49%	19%
Is spiritually vital and alive	1%	7%	18%	58%	16%
Is willing to change to meet new challenges	5%	10%	20%	46%	20%
Is actively involved in our local community	4%	12%	23%	34%	27%

3 What was the total amount of money your congregation received from all sources in your most recent fiscal year? (in dollars) \$175,000 median

4 How would you describe your congregation's financial health today and in 2018?  
(Select a response for each line.)

	In serious difficulty	In some difficulty	Tight, but we manage	Good	Excellent	Not applicable
Today	4%	12%	23%	34%	27%	%
In 2018	4%	8%	25%	47%	17%	%

Financial Health Change  
 27% Worse now  
 42% The same  
 31% Better now

5 Since 2020, had your congregation experienced any disagreements or conflicts?  
(Check all that apply.)

28% No 72% Some conflict

33% Yes, but it/they were not serious

35% Yes, and in at least one instance some people left

13% Yes, and in at least one instance some people withheld donations

12% Yes, and in at least one instance, a clergy leader or staff member left

6 Please rate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your congregation:

(Select a response for each line.)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Our church is emerging from the pandemic stronger than before.	3%	12%	8%	19%	27%	20%	12%
As a result of the pandemic, we are thinking in new ways about our future mission and direction.	3%	13%	4%	19%	30%	25%	8%
This church has identified and embraced new opportunities for ministry since the pandemic.	4%	7%	7%	13%	31%	28%	11%

7 Which of the following best describes your sense of this congregation's future?

28% We are thriving and this should continue.

30% We are doing okay and this should continue.

23% We are doing okay now, but the future is very uncertain.

7% We are struggling, but the future clearly looks better.

9% We are struggling, and that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

3% Not sure this congregation will survive much longer.

Finally, two open-ended questions for you to share your experiences.

- 8 What about your current ministry challenges you the most?
- 9 What aspects of your current ministry are the most enlivening and spiritually rewarding?

**Optional**

- 10 Would you like to receive a copy (PDF) of the National Summary Report? Yes 78%
- 11 May we contact you if we have questions about your responses or if we would like to know more about your congregation and/or ministry? Yes 81%
- 12 If you said yes to either of the above questions, please provide your name and email address below (we will not use your information for any other purpose):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_