



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

GAMBLING AND CHRISTIAN FAITH—THE FEBRUARY 2000 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 analysis, 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 second survey completed by the 2000-2002 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 1999.

GAMBLING PARTICIPATION

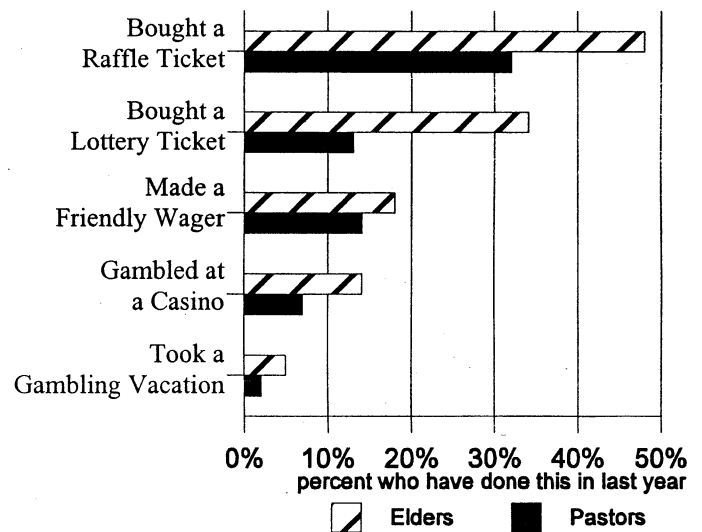
Access to Legal Gambling

- ✓ Almost all panelists live in a state with one or more forms of legal gambling. The most common types found are *state lotteries* (reported by 82% of members) and *scratch-off tickets* (74%). Majorities of members also report that their states offer *horse-racing tracks* (63%) or *bingo parlors* (61%).
- ✓ Around four in ten panelists (e.g., 43% of elders) report living in a state with *casinos* or *riverboat gambling*.
- ✓ Around one-half of panelists live near a casino on Native American lands.

Participation

- ✓ Around two in three members (64%) and elders (65%) and almost one-half of pastors (44%) and specialized clergy (49%) report participating in one or more forms of legal gambling in the year prior to the survey. The most popular activities:
 - buying a raffle ticket (48% of elders and 32% of pastors did so)
 - buying a ticket for a state lottery drawing (elders, 34%; pastors, 13%)
 - buying a state lottery scratch-off ticket (elders, 24%; pastors, 10%)
 - making a friendly wager (elders, 18%; pastors, 14%)
 - gambling at a casino (elders, 14%; pastors, 7%)
 - participating in an office pool (elders, 16%; pastors, 5%)

Figure 1
Gambling Activities Among Presbyterians



- ✓ Only small percentages of panelists report:
 - gambling over the Internet (1% or fewer)
 - placing a bet on a college or professional sporting event (3% or fewer)
 - betting on a horse or dog race (4% or fewer)
 - participating in riverboat gambling (4% or fewer)
 - playing bingo for money (6% or fewer)
 - playing a video poker machine (6% or fewer)
- ✓ Around one in twenty members and elders and around one in forty clergy report taking a vacation primarily for gambling, typically to somewhere in the U.S. (e.g., Las Vegas, Atlantic City).

OPINIONS ABOUT GAMBLING

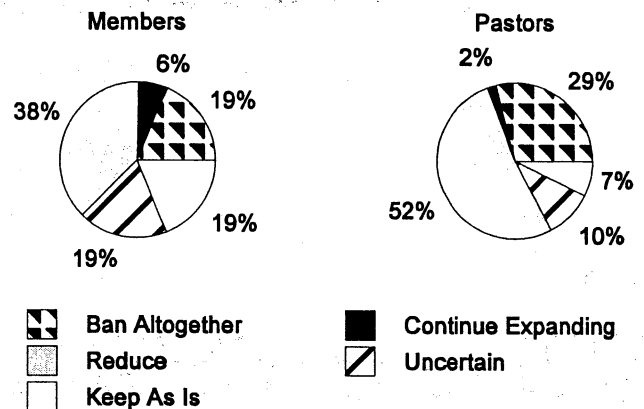
Defining Gambling

- ✓ Majorities in every Panel group think of the following activities as “gambling”:
 - buying a state lottery ticket (elders, 92%; pastors, 97%)
 - playing poker with friends for money (elders, 75%; pastors, 77%)
 - church-sponsored bingo (elders, 61%; pastors, 70%)
 - wagering a few dollars with a friend on the outcome of a golf match (elders, 61%; pastors, 66%)
 - participation in “office pools” (elders, 60%; pastors, 68%)
 - “friendly wagers” on future events (sports, election) (elders, 57%; pastors, 62%)
- ✓ Only minorities think these activities qualify as gambling:
 - raffles for charity (elders, 34%; pastors, 46%)
 - investing in the stock market (elders, 25%; pastors, 19%)
 - cakewalks and other games at school or church fund raisers (elders, 21%; pastors, 26%)

Approval and Disapproval

- ✓ In every Panel group, many more panelists *disapprove* than *approve* of legal gambling. The percentage who *disapprove* of gambling is noticeably larger among pastors (78%) and specialized clergy (72%), than among members (48%) and elders (53%).
- ✓ Major reasons why panelists *approve* of gambling include its value as entertainment and its value as a source of government revenue. Majorities of members (55%) and elders (53%), and large minorities of pastors (41%) and specialized clergy (48%), *agree* that “gambling can be a form of entertainment that, if done in moderation, is no better and no worse than other activities”
- ✓ Major reasons why panelists *disapprove* include the belief that it is addictive and the belief that it causes problems for families and less affluent individuals.
- ✓ Majorities in all groups favor banning or reducing gambling, although in each group more respond *reduce legal gambling* than respond *ban gambling altogether* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
General Recommendations for
Legal Gambling in the U.S.



Problem Gambling

- ✓ Few panelists—6% of members, pastors, and other clergy, and 4% of elders—report that gambling has been “a source of economic, marital, psychological, or other problems within your family.”
- ✓ A third of members and elders know someone personally for whom gambling has been a problem.
- ✓ A majority of pastors—60%—report that gambling has been source of problems for one or more members in their congregation.

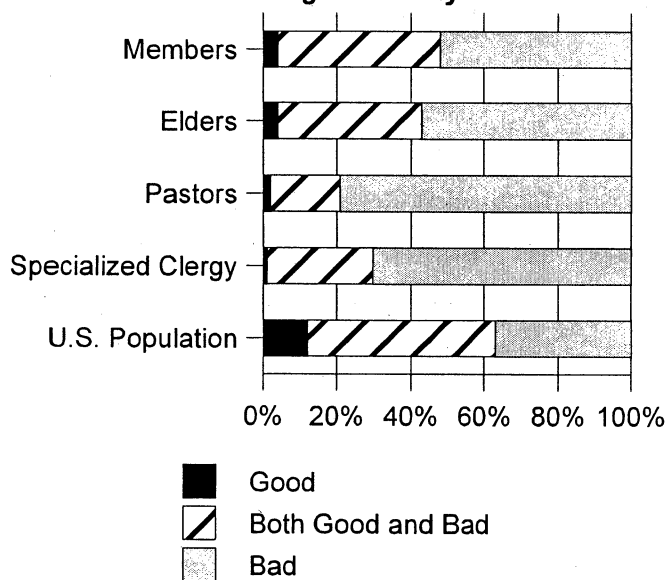
Morality

- ✓ Panelists divide along lay-clergy lines on the morality of gambling. While more members and elders *disagree* than *agree* that “all gambling is immoral,” the reverse is true among the clergy. For members, 51% *disagree* and 35% *agree* that “all gambling is immoral”; among pastors, 52% *agree* and 36% *disagree*.
- ✓ Majorities of between 63% (members) and 86% (pastors) *agree* that “lotteries mislead people to believe they can get something for nothing.”
- ✓ In all samples except pastors, opinion is evenly divided on whether or not “legalized gambling does serious harm to people’s respect for the value of hard work.” Among pastors, 63% *agree*, while 29% *disagree*.

Social Consequences

- ✓ By large majorities in every sample, more panelists view the effects of legal gambling as *bad* than view the effects as *good* for society. Nonetheless, sizeable minorities in each sample think the effects are *about equally good and bad*. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3
Opinions on the Effect of Gambling on Society



- ✓ That evaluation notwithstanding, majorities of members (53%) and elders (54%) and large minorities of pastors (45%) and other clergy (49%) *agree* that “when casinos open in a community . . . it helps . . . the local economy.”
- ✓ Negative effects are more likely to be perceived in “everyday family and community life” (majorities ranging from 59% to 68% believe legal gambling *hurts* this area) and in “the moral climate of the community” (63% to 76%).
- ✓ 55% of members and 80% of pastors *agree* that “legalized gambling is creating a compulsive gambling problem in this country.”
- ✓ Majorities of clergy and half of members and elders believe “legalized gambling often results in increases in crime.”

- ✓ Few (26% of members, 18% of pastors) *agree* that “by legalizing gambling, states limit the involvement of organized crime in the gambling industry.”
- ✓ A third of lay panelists and four in ten clergy believe “the legal gambling industry is creating serious corruption in government.”
- ✓ Large majorities in every sample *disagree* that “keeping gambling legal is necessary to preserve American freedom.”

Gambling as a Source of State Revenues

- ✓ Few panelists in any sample (ranging from 19% of members to 5% of pastors) *agree* that “gambling is a legitimate and appropriate means for government to use to solve budget needs” A few more panelists (members, 31%; pastors, 11%) support state-sponsored gambling if the purpose is to raise funds “for worthy causes such as education and scholarships.”
- ✓ Majorities of elders, pastors, and specialized clergy *disapprove* or *strongly disapprove* of states raising revenue from *any* of ten possible types of legal gambling. Members concur, with several exceptions: only 44% of members *disapprove* of “bingo for cash prizes” and “lotteries for cash prizes” as a source of state revenue, and 47% of members *disapprove* of “scratch-off tickets for cash prizes.”
- ✓ The forms of legal gambling that the largest percentages of member panelists *approve* of as a source for state revenue are:
 - lotteries for cash prizes (47% *approve* or *strongly approve*)
 - bingo for cash prizes (45%)
 - scratch-off tickets for cash prizes (44%)
 - betting on horse races at the track (37%)
 - casino or riverboat gambling (25%)
- ✓ Member panelists show little support for raising state revenues via betting on jai alai (12% of members *approve*), video poker machines (13%), betting on professional sports (13%), off-track betting on horse races (14%), or betting on dog races (19%). Rates of approval among pastors are around one-half as large.

GAMBLING, FAITH, AND THE CHURCH

Gambling and Faith Issues

- ✓ Half of members and elders, two-thirds of specialized clergy, and eight in ten pastors *agree* that “legalized gambling undermines the principles of responsible Christian stewardship.”
- ✓ Similar percentages also *agree* that “the spirit of legalized gambling is in direct opposition to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

The Congregation

- ✓ Majorities of pastors (61%) and specialized clergy (63%) believe that “sessions should act to oppose legalized gambling in their communities.” Most of the rest respond *uncertain*. Among elders, 47% *support* the appropriateness of session action on local gambling issues, 23% *oppose* such action, and 31% are *uncertain*.
- ✓ Few sessions have taken actions “to oppose, reduce, or ban gambling” locally over the last five years—9% of elders report that their sessions have done so, as do 16% of pastors. Among this subset of congregations, the most common action has been “to oppose additional legal gambling.”

- ✓ Few congregations have ministries “to help individuals and families affected by compulsive gambling.” Only 2% of members and elders, and 5% of pastors, report such ministries.

PC(USA) Issues

- ✓ Two-thirds of members and elders and more than nine in ten pastors and other clergy (92%) believe it is *appropriate* for “the General Assembly to take a stand on legalized gambling.”
- ✓ Two in three clergy but less than one third of members (26%) and elders (29%) are aware that “the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has repeatedly expressed opposition to all forms of gambling.”
- ✓ Large majorities of panelists in all samples (members, 97%; pastors, 69%) report a lack of familiarity with the 1998 PC(USA) resource *Gambling and Christian Faith*, and even fewer have heard of or seen the March/April 1999 issue of *Church & Society* magazine on the same topic.

	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers*
Number of surveys mailed	1,211	1,146	1,505
Number returned	696	704	1,028
Response rate	57%	61%	68%

*Of the 1,028 returned surveys, 812 came from pastors and 216 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in February 2000, and returns were accepted through April 2000. 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 February 2000 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts and graphs is available for \$5. Contact PDS (1-800-524-2612) and order PDS #65100-00264. Included is a data appendix that presents the percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on policy regarding gambling in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) contact Peter Sulyok of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy at 888-728-7228 ext. 5814.

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<http://www.pcusa.org/pcusa/cmd/rs/rshtml.htm>