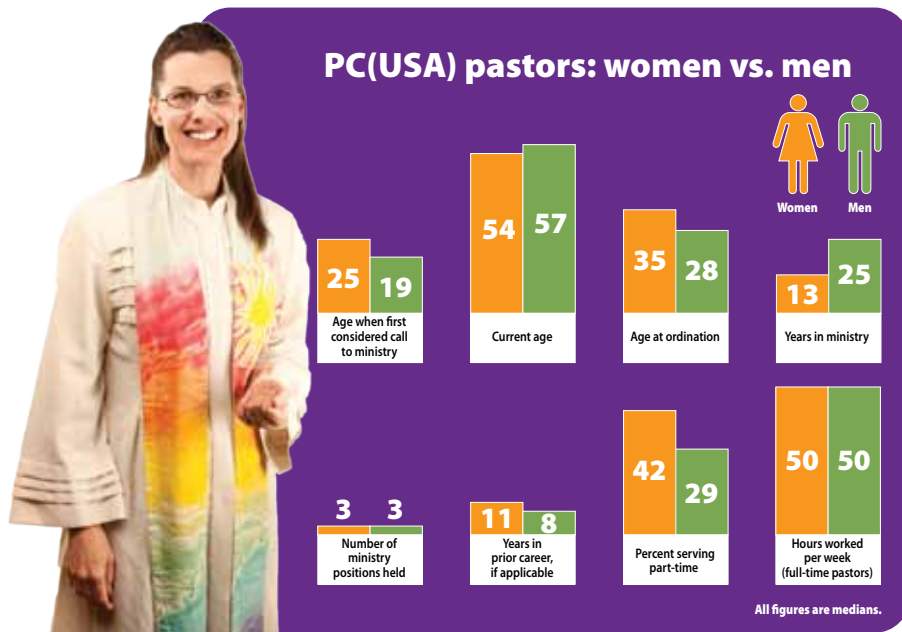


Female pastors: Different path, same destination



The number of women ministers of the Word and Sacrament continues to increase. Today two in 10 pastors or co-pastors are women. A recent survey of pastors in PC(USA) congregations provides details about these women. Women as a group differ from their male counterparts in various ways:

- **Women were older when they first considered a call to ministry** (women, median age 25; men, age 19).
- **Women are slightly younger than men** (women, age 54; men, age 57), but were older when they were ordained (age 35; age 28).
- **Women have been in ministry for fewer years** (13 years; 25 years), but have had the same number of calls (3; 3).
- **Relatively more women worked full-time in another field before entering ministry** (78 percent; 56 percent), and those who did spent longer in their prior careers (11 years; 8 years).
- **Relatively more women are serving as solo pastor** (68 percent; 55 percent) than as head of staff of a congregation with multiple pastors (6 percent; 27 percent).
- **Relatively more women are serving part-time** (fewer than 35 paid hours per week: 42 percent; 29 percent).
- **Among full-time pastors, women work the same number of hours per week** in their current ministry position (50 hours; 50 hours).
- **Relatively fewer women are married** (71 percent; 90 percent), but similar proportions have children living at home (37 percent; 39 percent).

What the research shows

For many women the path to ministry has been different from that of men. More women have entered ministry after another career, many because—until somewhat recently—ministry was not widely seen as a career option for women. Thus, it is not surprising that women as a group were older when they were ordained and have been in ministry for fewer years.

But once in ministry, women experience it much the same as men. Nearly nine in 10 women and men “strongly agree” or “agree” that there is a good match between the congregation and their leadership (women, 87 percent; men, 87 percent). Large majorities are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their work in ministry (women, 97 percent; men, 90 percent), their relationships with lay leaders (97 percent; 96 percent) and their effectiveness in their current congregation (89 percent; 89 percent).

Despite differences in the path to ministry, current call and demographic characteristics, most male and female pastors evaluate their ministry in a similar—and very positive—manner.

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» Other findings

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