

**Hispanic Members of the  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Survey Results**

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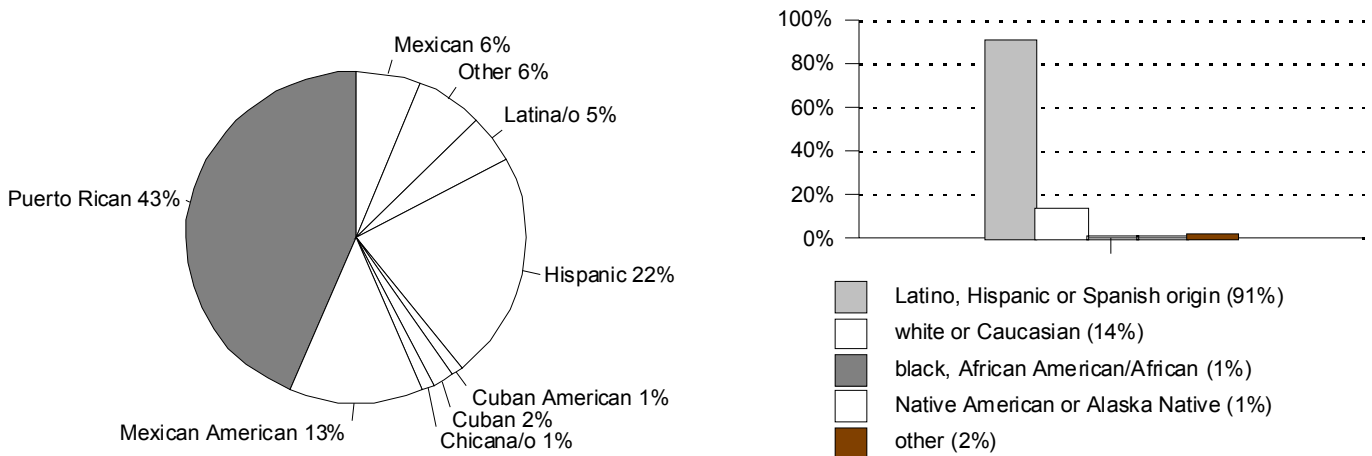
# Hispanic Members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Survey Results

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## Who are Hispanic Presbyterians?

The ethnic makeup of Hispanic Presbyterians reflects historic mission efforts that resulted in a strong Presbyterian presence in Puerto Rico and the Texas/New Mexico region of the Southwest. When asked to identify themselves by ethnicity, the single largest group identified themselves as Puerto Rican, followed by Mexican/Mexican American/Chicana/o. Cuban/Cuban Americans represent a much smaller percentage. More than a fourth of the respondents identified themselves as Hispanic or Latina/o. Respondents were also asked to identify themselves by race or origin (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**How Hispanic Presbyterians Identify Themselves**

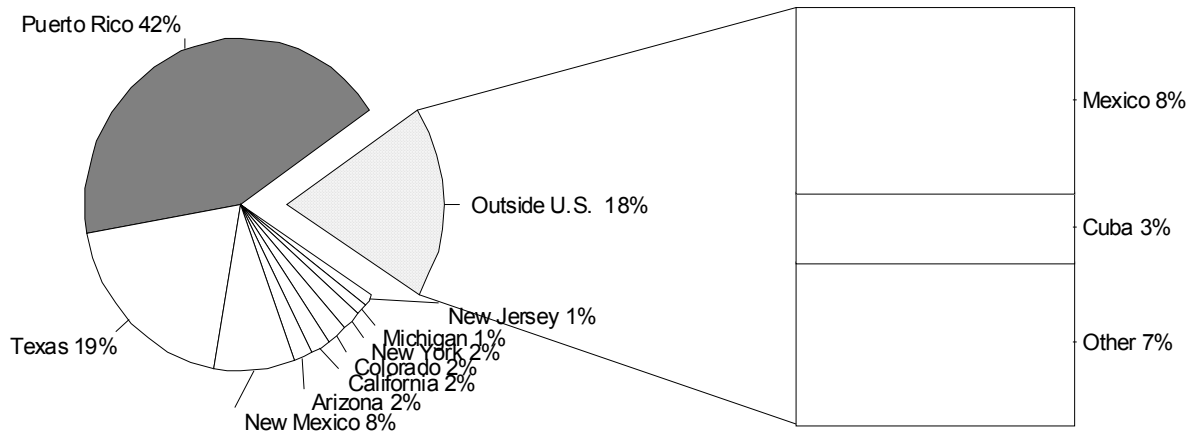


## Ethnic Identity [Q-58]

## Racial Identity [Q-57]

Ethnic identity also reflects the geographic origins of members responding to the survey. The largest group of Hispanic Presbyterians (42%) were born in Puerto Rico, more than one-fourth were born in Texas and New Mexico. Less than one-fifth were born outside the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

**Figure 2**  
**Place of Birth [Q-52]**



The presence of a substantial minority of immigrant members distinguishes Hispanic Presbyterians from Korean Presbyterians, 99% of whom were born outside the U.S., and African-American Presbyterians, who report a much smaller percentage (5%) born outside the U.S. (similar to the percentage for the denomination as a whole). Just 3% of the African-American respondents were born in Latin America and the Caribbean and those born in the U.S. came from every state *except* Idaho, Montana and New Mexico. Hispanic Presbyterians are more likely to come from either the Southwest or Northeast.

Spanish is the primary language in the homes of a majority of Hispanic Presbyterians (61%), but the data also reflect families in transition. In 16% of homes, Spanish is spoken by adults while children speak primarily English; 1% report speaking mostly Spanish and some English in the home; and 5% speak both Spanish and English in the home.

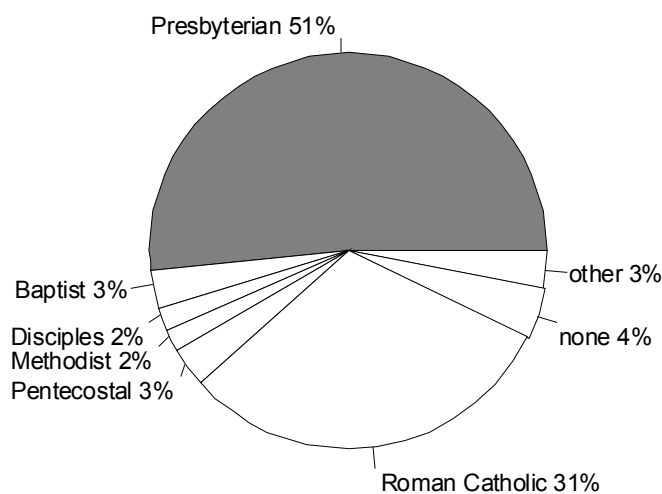
62% of Hispanic Presbyterians are female; 38% are male.

12% are under 30 years of age, 58% are in the middle age range (30-59 yrs.), and 30% are 60 and older.

### Religious Background

Hispanic Presbyterians are more likely to have been raised Presbyterian (51% were) than African Americans (37%), Koreans (44%), or members and elders in the denomination as a whole (44%).

**Figure 3**  
**Religious Background of Hispanic Presbyterians [Q-15]**



31% were raised Roman Catholic, and 3% were raised Pentecostal. Here again, Hispanic Presbyterians differ from the rest of the denomination. Most members, if not raised Presbyterian, were more likely to have grown up in another Protestant tradition.

61% report that they have belonged to the Roman Catholic church at some time, indicating a small percentage who have moved back and forth, or who were not raised Catholic or Presbyterian, but have moved through the Catholic church before becoming Presbyterian. Half (54%) report the Presbyterian church has been their only religious affiliation.

Respondents reported that as teenagers, 39% of their fathers and 53% of their mothers attended church every week or nearly every week.

27% of Hispanic Presbyterians attend the same congregation they grew up in.

Only 12% have been Presbyterian less than six years.

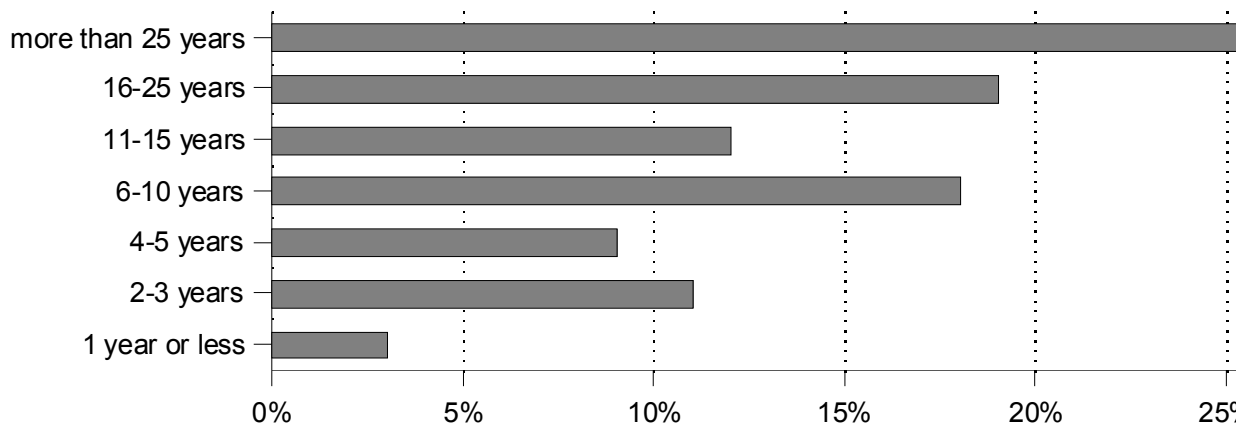
### A RELIGIOUS MINORITY

As Protestants, Hispanic Presbyterians are a religious minority in a predominantly Roman Catholic culture. This is reflected in the nearly one-third of the respondents who were raised Catholic. It is also evident in the data for married respondents regarding the religious background and current affiliation of their spouses. Of those who are currently married, 54% report that their husband or wife was raised Roman Catholic, while only 24% married someone who had been raised Presbyterian. Despite differences in religious background, most couples choose to worship together—75% report that their husband or wife currently attends a Presbyterian church. Only 9% of spouses remain Roman Catholic. Two-thirds report that their spouses attend church every week or nearly every week.

### Church Activities And Involvement

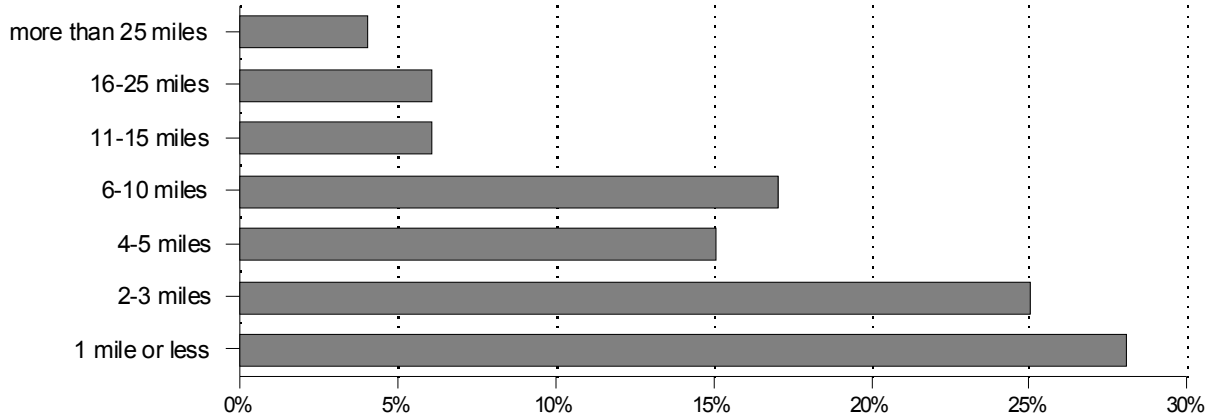
Nearly two-thirds of Hispanic Presbyterians (58%) have been a member of their present congregation for more than ten years (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**  
**Length of Membership in Current Congregation [Q-1]**



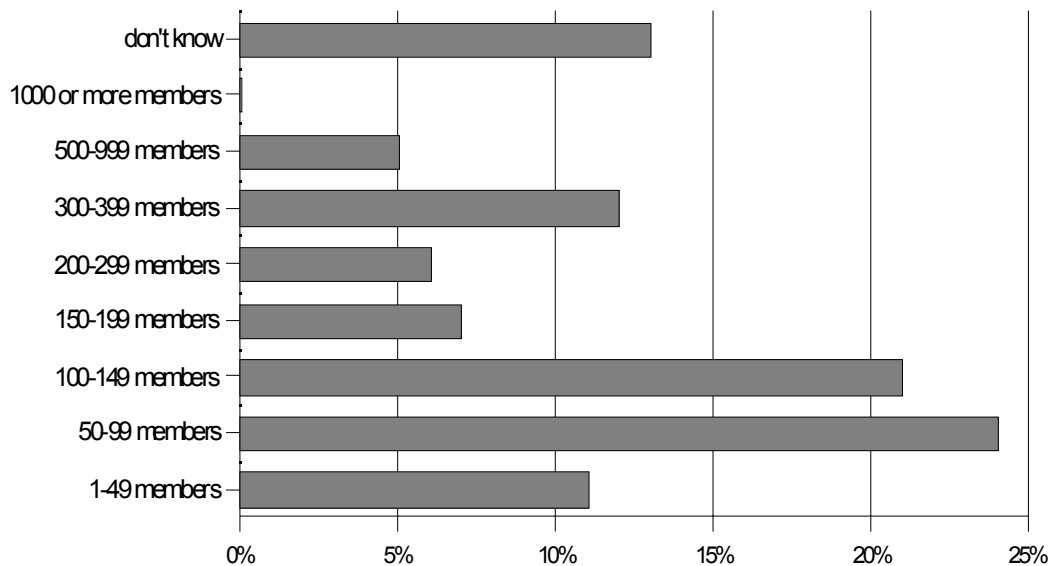
Most Hispanic Presbyterians attend small neighborhood churches. More than half (53%) live within three miles of their congregation. Nearly a third (32%) live between four and ten miles from their congregation, and only 4% travel more than 25 miles to attend church.

**Figure 5**  
**Distance from Home to Church [Q-2]**



More than a third (34%) attend churches with less than 100 members. Another 21% attend churches with between 100 and 149 members. Only 5% attend churches with 500 or more members.

**Figure 6**  
**Size of Congregation [Q-6]**

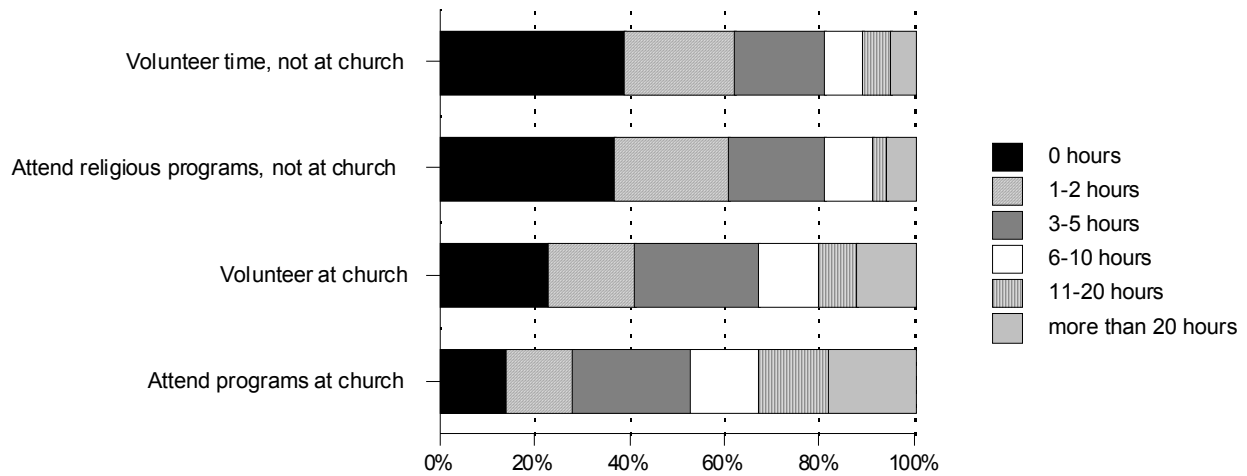


Most Hispanic Presbyterians attend church regularly: 83% report that they attend every week or nearly every week. Another 10% attend 2-3 times a month.

The reasons for missing church on Sunday mentioned most frequently were illness (54%) and vacation (46%). Another 28% reported missing worship on Sunday because they had to work or travel on business. 25% reported that other family responsibilities (e.g., caring for an ill or disabled child or parent) caused them to miss worship.

Typical of members of small churches, the majority of Hispanic Presbyterians are active in the life and leadership of their congregation beyond attending worship on Sunday. More than half (56%) are ordained elders, with 26% currently serving on session. One in four are ordained deacons, half of whom are currently serving on a board of deacons. One in ten are currently serving as the chair of a congregational committee or task force. Nearly a third (29%) are church school teachers.

**Figure 7**  
**Church Involvement [Q-4]**

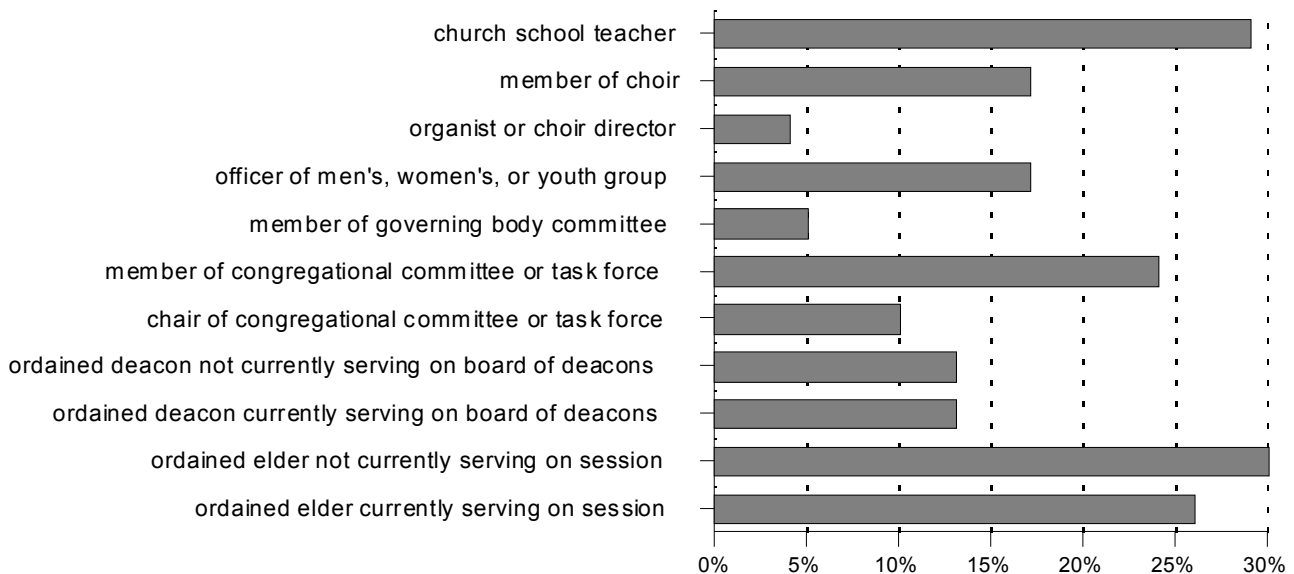


Participation by Hispanic Presbyterians in church activities beyond worship reflects the pattern found in denominational studies showing a strong correlation between frequency of attendance at worship and participation in other church activities. Three out of four survey respondents spent at least three hours in the prior month at church events other than worship (including church school). One third of the respondents spent more than 10 hours in the prior month at church activities (see Figure 8).

Nearly two thirds (60%) volunteered at least three hours in the prior month—to teach, lead, serve on a committee, or help with a program or event. 20% volunteered more than 11 hours in the prior month.

Participation at religious events held away from their congregation and volunteering through churches or community organizations other than the local congregation are significantly lower, but still include a substantial portion of the membership. 39% spent three hours or more in the prior month attending some kind of religious activity or event away from their own church. 38% gave three hours or more in volunteer time, apart from the church, to help their community and the less fortunate.

**Figure 8**  
**Program Participation and Volunteering**



Three-fourths of Hispanic Presbyterians (74%) reported the same or greater levels of church participation compared to two years ago, and 81% indicated they expect to continue to be a part of their current congregation five years from now.

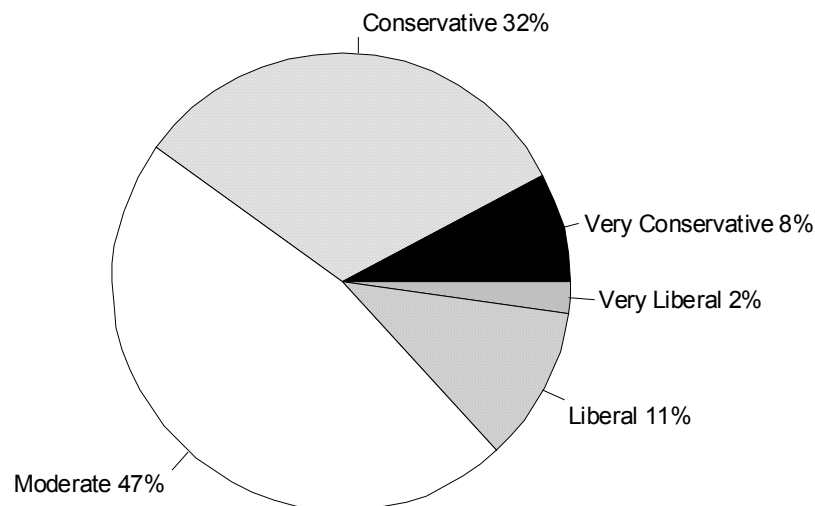
Few respondents do not expect to be at the same congregation five years from now (35 people). Of these, 68% indicated that they anticipate moving away from the community, 58% indicated that they have been drifting away from the church, and 53% cited conflict in the congregation as a factor in their expected departure.

## Faith and Belief

Most Hispanic Presbyterians see themselves as conservative to moderate on theological issues.

80% of Hispanic Presbyterians report having had a conversion experience. 65% consider themselves “born again” Christians.

**Figure 9**  
**Where Do You Stand on Theological Issues? [Q-17]**



88% of the survey respondents reported that they have encouraged someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Him as a personal savior. 87% believe that evangelism, that is, inviting the unchurched to attend, should be a priority for their congregation.

An overwhelming majority of Hispanic Presbyterians (91%) believe there is life beyond death. 85% believe “there is a heaven and eternal reward for those who have led good lives.” Only 6% were “not sure” and 9% said “no.” 72% believe “there is a hell and eternal damnation for those who have led bad lives and who do not repent.” 17% of the respondents were “not sure” and 11% said “no.”



## VIEW OF THE BIBLE

When asked about their beliefs about the Bible, three out of four Hispanic Presbyterians chose statements that put them in the middle range theologically, between a highly secular view of the Bible on one extreme, and a highly conservative view of the Bible as inspired and without any error of any kind, on the other. However, survey responses do indicate a tendency towards a more conservative stance among Hispanic Presbyterians in comparison to the denomination as a whole. One in four Hispanic Presbyterians chose the most conservative statement, compared with only 10% of members in the denomination as a whole.

The Bible is:	All Members	All Elders	African American Members	Korean Members	Hispanic Members
an important piece of literature, but is largely irrelevant to our lives today .....	*	*	1%	—	1%
the record of many people's experience with God and is a useful guide for individual Christians in their search for basic moral and religious teachings .....	28%	18%	24%	13%	13%
the Word of God and its stories and teachings provide a powerful motivation as we work toward God's reign in the world.....	42%	45%	44%	41%	38%
the inspired, authoritative Word of God that is without error in all that it says about faith and morals.....	18%	25%	18%	18%	24%
the inspired Word of God, without error not only in matters of faith, but also in historical, scientific, geographic and other secular matters.....	10%	11%	13%	26%	24%
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero  
 — = zero (0.0); no cases in this category

Nearly all Hispanic Presbyterians (95%) believe “Jesus was born of a virgin,” and agree with the statement that “the only absolute Truth for humankind is in Jesus Christ.” 95% also believe that “Jesus will return to the earth some day,” and 74% agree or strongly agree with the statement that “only followers of Jesus Christ can be saved.” 87% agree with the statement that “the Devil (Satan) really exists.” In each case, the percentage of Hispanic Presbyterians who agree with these statements is significantly higher than for members and elders in the denomination as a whole.

Just as Hispanic Presbyterians evidence a strong belief in the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, they also hold a strong belief in the role of the church. A relatively small minority of respondents agree with statements that minimize the role of the church: 48% agree that “in the realm of values, the final authority about good and bad is the individual.” 43% agree that Jesus Christ is “only one of many ways to salvation.” Only one in three (35%) agree that “individuals should seek out religious truth for themselves and not conform to any church’s doctrine.” Less than one in five (16%) agree that “all the great religions of the world are equally true and good.” Here again, Hispanic Presbyterians differ from members across the denomination, who appear to be following a trend among Mainline Protestants toward placing more emphasis on “right behavior” than “right belief.”

Nearly half (49%) agree or strongly agree that an “individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs” independent of any church, but only one third (32%) agree or strongly that *all* the different religions are “equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.”

## The Christian Life

When asked about the qualities of a good Christian life, 95% of Hispanic Presbyterians say practicing Christian values in work, home and school is essential or very important. Nearly as many (93%) also believe spending time in meditation and prayer is essential or very important.

Nine out of ten (89%) say attending church regularly is essential or very important to the Christian life. 88% believe reading and studying the Bible regularly is essential or very important to the Christian life. The same percentage also say seeking to bring others to faith in Christ is also an essential or very important quality.

Taking care of the sick or needy is an essential or very important aspect of Christian life for 84%; it is somewhat important for 15% of the respondents.

Two out of three believe that actively seeking social and economic justice is an important quality of the Christian life. Nearly one in three (30%) say it is somewhat important.

### Judging Behavior

Survey respondents were asked about a series of behaviors or attitudes that reflect the diversity of our culture and are sometimes at odds with Christian values. **Someone who thinks s/he is better than others** drew the highest rate of disapproval (76%) from Hispanic Presbyterians. Other characteristics that were *strongly disapproved* of include:

*cheating on one’s income taxes (72% highly disapprove)*  
*is openly, actively gay or lesbian as part of a committed couple (72%)*  
*is openly, actively gay or lesbian (71%)*  
*living together in a heterosexual relationship outside of marriage (61%)*

Hispanic Presbyterians are more divided on the question of drinking alcohol in moderation: 27% think it is all right, but 41% highly disapprove. Being very ambitious also drew a generally negative response. While 11% admired this characteristic, 33% highly disapproved and 28% mildly disapproved.

Two characteristics were **rated positively**: one-fourth (25%) said they admire someone who lives her/his faith quietly, and 28% admire someone who is satisfied with her/his lot in life.

## **Congregational Life**

56% of Hispanic Presbyterians attend worship services conducted in Spanish. 11% attend services conducted part in Spanish and part in English. 6% attend congregations that offer an English service and a Spanish service. 3% have worship in Spanish with English translation available. One in four Hispanic Presbyterians (23%) attend congregations that worship in English.

In church school classes, English is more prevalent. 50% attend congregations that have church school classes in Spanish for both adults and children. 30% have classes in English for both adults and children. 14% have classes in Spanish for adults and English for children.

When asked to rate the priorities for their congregation's activities in the community, the responses parallel what Hispanic Presbyterians value in the life of the individual Christian and reflect the large percentage of those who commit volunteer time to their church. These findings suggest a concept of ministry that is very personal and focused on service through the local congregation. For example, providing aid and services to people in need is seen as an essential or very important priority by nine out of ten respondents (88%). Seven out of ten (68%) say supporting social action groups and ministries should be a high priority. 87% say encouraging members to share their faith and having an active evangelism program is an essential or very important priority for their congregation.

78% say helping members to resist the temptations of the world is a priority. 72% say preparing people for a world to come, where the cares of this world will be absent, is a priority.

## **Social and Demographic Characteristics**

Two out of five Hispanic Presbyterians (43%) live in rural areas or small towns (under 50,000). One-fourth (26%) live in a medium-size city (50,000-250,000) or suburb of a medium-size city. One third (32%) live in a large city (over 250,000) or suburb of a large city.

One in ten Hispanic members (9%) live alone. Three-fourths (76%) live in households of 2-4 members (not counting students who live elsewhere).

Just 9% are single parents with one or more children at home. 45% are married with one or more children at home.

The large majority (82%) own their own home. More than half (46%) are still paying the mortgage.

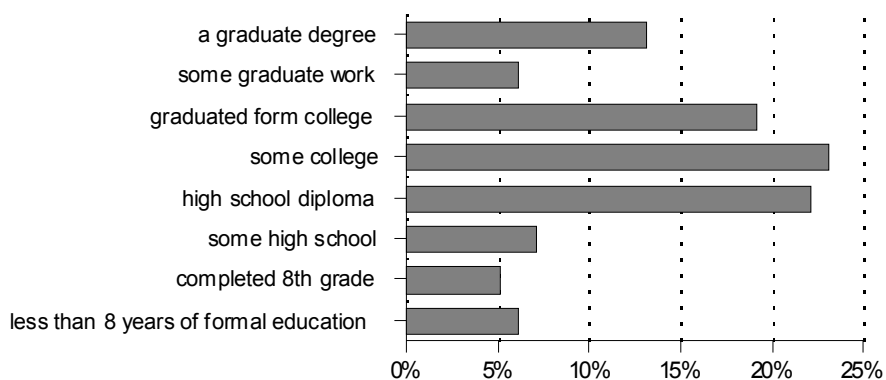
56% of Hispanic Presbyterian identify themselves as Democrat, 25% as Republican, and 12% as Independent.

Six in ten Hispanic members (62%) are employed, most full time. 68% of these respondents report that in the previous year they worked, on average, 40 hours or more per week. 66% of married respondents report working spouses, most full time also. Three-fourths of working spouses (76%) worked 40 hours or more per week in the previous year. One-fourth of respondents (25%) and 24% of all spouses are retired.

Of those respondents who immigrated to the U.S., nearly two thirds have lived in the U.S. for 20 years or more. 14% have lived in the U.S. less than 5 years.

38% of Hispanic Presbyterians have at least a college degree. Spouses of married respondents are similarly well-educated.

**Figure 10**  
**Education [Q-31]**

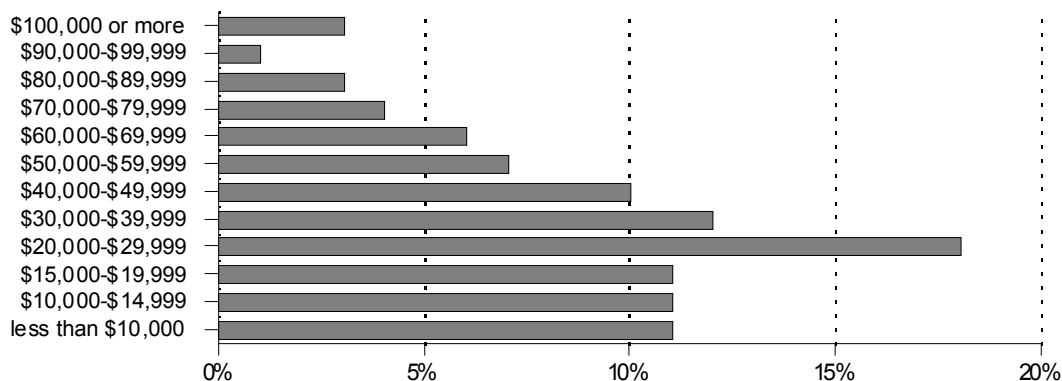


On average, Hispanic Presbyterians receive less income than does the average white member. More than half (55%) report a total family income in the previous year (1996) of less than \$50,000. Nearly one-fourth report family incomes of less than \$15,000 in 1996. Only 4% reported family incomes of \$90,000 or more. The median family income for members throughout the denomination as a whole is \$50,000 - \$59,999. Elders have a median family income of \$60,000 - \$69,999. One fourth of members and one fifth of elders reported total family incomes of \$100,000 or more in 1995. Only 2% in the denomination-wide survey reported total family incomes of less than \$20,000 in 1995.

42% of the respondents reported that two members of their household earned income through employment in the previous year. 16% reported that three or more persons in the household contributed employment earnings.

61% reported that *all* of their family income in 1996 came from employment related earnings.

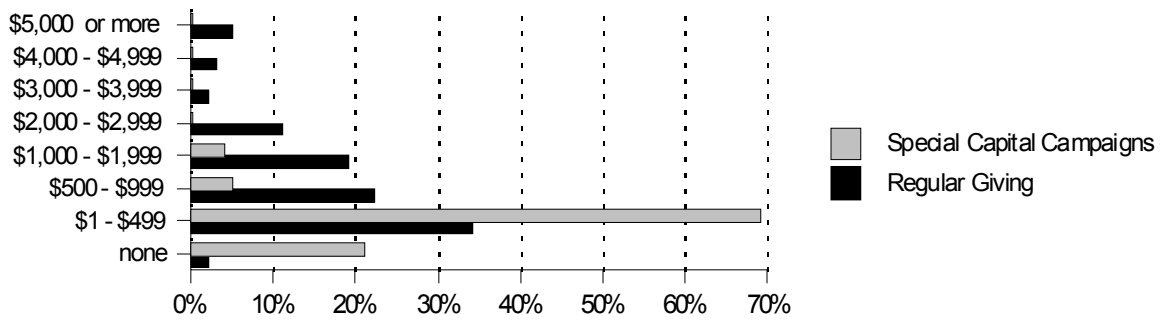
**Figure 11**  
**Family Income in Previous Year**  
*From All Sources, Before Taxes [Q-63]*



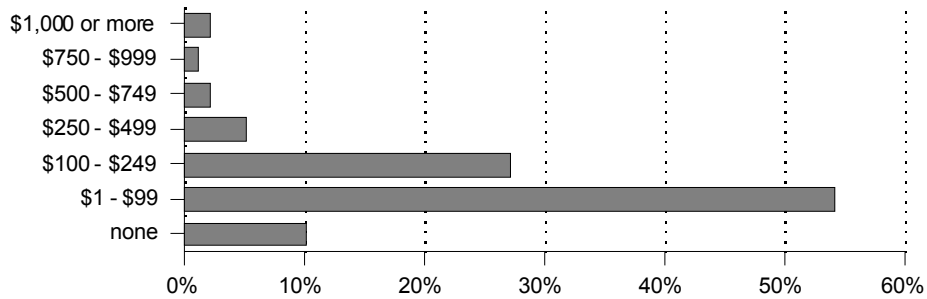
## Financial Stewardship

Denominational studies have shown a connection between attendance at worship and other church activities and higher rates of giving. Hispanic Presbyterians reflect similar patterns in their giving to the church. They are much more likely to give to the church through regular giving or special offerings than to other religious organizations or non-religious charities, organizations or social causes. While 21% gave \$2,000 or more in regular offerings, only 2% gave \$2,000 or more to other religious organizations, and only 1% gave \$2,000 or more to non-religious organizations or causes.

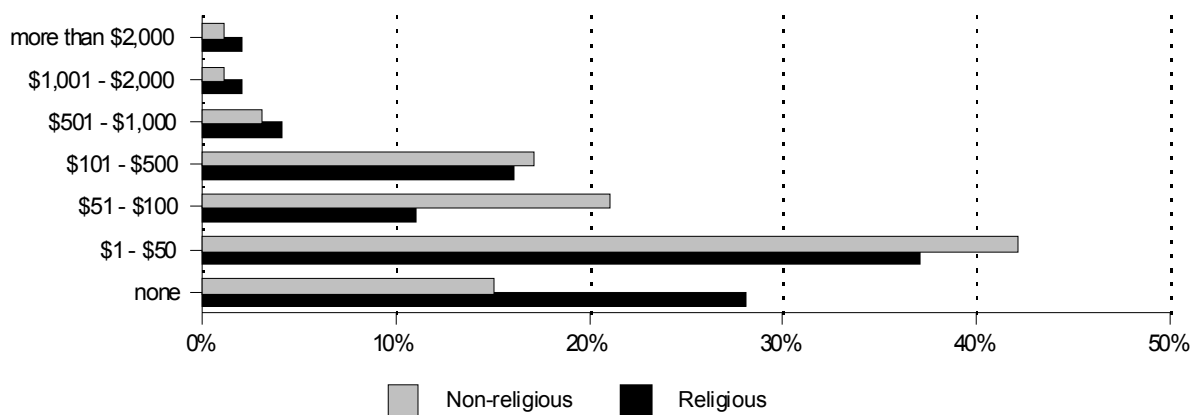
**Figure 12**  
**How Much Did You and Your Family Contribute to Your Congregation Last Year?**  
 Local Congregation [Q-65]



**Figure 13**  
**How Much Did Your Family Contribute to Special Offerings Last Year?**  
*for congregation, presbytery or PCUSA, including One Great Hour of Sharing, Witness, Peacemaking, and Christmas Joy [Q-65]*



**Figure 14**  
**How Much Did Your Family Contribute to Charities, Organizations, Groups or Causes Last Year?**  
*outside the PCUSA [Q-66 & 67]*



## **Marriage And Family**

Three-fourths of Hispanic Presbyterians (72%) are currently married. 53% of those not currently married are widowed or divorced.

Most Hispanic Presbyterians (50% *of those ever married*) married for the first time between the ages of 20 and 24. 22% married under the age of 20. Nearly one in five of those currently married (19%) have been previously married or divorced.

85% of the respondents have given birth to or fathered one or more children. 52% have two or three children. 6% have legally adopted one or more children. 14% have one or more step-children. Of those who have given birth to or fathered a child, 70% were in their twenties when their first child was born.

Six in ten households currently include children. Most are two parent homes. Only 14% of the total households have children under the age of 6 years. 15% of the total households have three or more adults aged 25 or more.