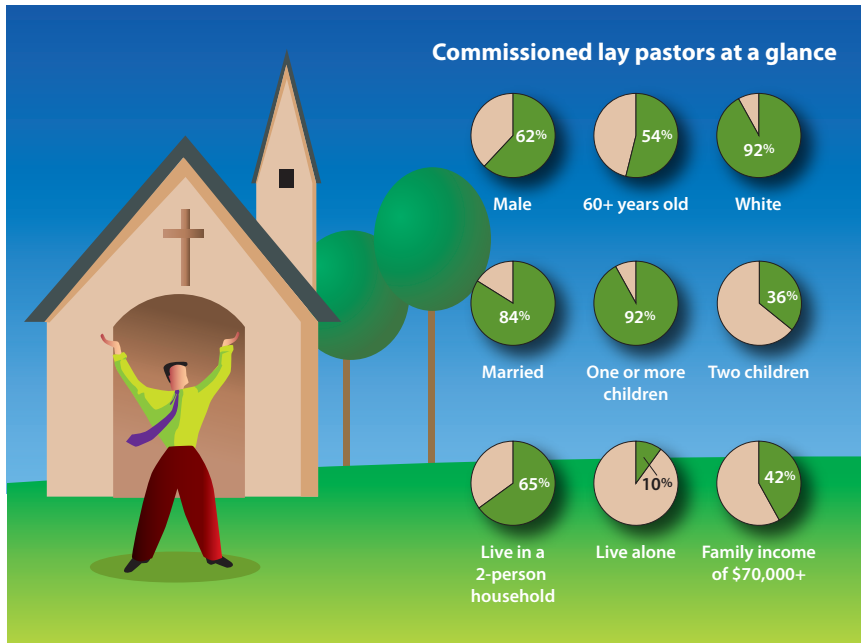


# Who are commissioned lay pastors?



## What the research shows

Commissioned lay pastors resemble no group in the church more than elders, a not-surprising finding since to become a CLP one must be an ordained elder. Elders overall are very similar to CLPs when it comes to age (the median for elders is 60 years), race (92 percent white), marital status (80 percent married), children (88 percent have one or more), family size (a median of two children) and the share living alone (15 percent).

One noticeable exception is gender: slightly more than half of all elders are women (51 percent), whereas 38 percent of CLPs are women. This gap has narrowed somewhat, however: in 1997, the last time we surveyed CLPs, 25 percent were women, while the elder share was 47 percent.

In most other ways CLPs look much like they did in 1997. Then the median age was 59; 86 percent were married; 9 percent were childless; the median number of children was two; 10 percent lived alone; and the average household had 2.5 persons.

With the striking growth in the number of CLPs over the last decade, the major compositional change has been the increasing percentage of women drawn to the role. Much like ordained ministers, 32 percent of whom are women (including 25 percent of pastors), both groups of pastoral leaders seem to be moving slowly to a more balanced gender distribution.

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In 2010, a total of 1,039 commissioned lay pastors (CLPs) were serving PC(USA) congregations, a 500 percent increase since 2000. A recent survey provides a profile of these individuals:

- **Six in 10 CLPs are men** (62 percent).
- **The median age is 60 years;** 8 percent are younger than 50, while one-third (34 percent) are 65 or older.
- **More than nine in 10 CLPs are white** (92 percent); 3 percent are Native American; and 2 percent, African American.
- **A large majority are married** (84 percent).
- **Most CLPs have children** (92 percent), but most of their families are small; the median is two children.
- **The average household size is 2.3 persons.** Only 10 percent live alone; almost two-thirds (65 percent) live in two-person households.
- **The median family income of CLPs** is between \$60,000 and \$69,999.
- **CLPs are paid to work a median of 20 hours per week,** but the median number actually worked is 26.
- **Fewer than half have another paid job** (40 percent).

» **Other findings** [www.pcusa.org/research](http://www.pcusa.org/research)