



The Presbyterian Panel

Listening to Presbyterians



SUMMARY

Disabilities Issues The May 2004 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 most analyses, ministers are split into two groups based on current call: *pastors*, serving congregations, and *specialized clergy*, serving elsewhere. New samples are drawn every three years. These pages summarize major findings from the eighth survey completed by the 2003-2005 Panel, initially sampled in the fall of 2002.

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ACCESSIBILITY OF FACILITIES

Sanctuary

- ✓ Most panelists report that in “the main seating area” of their sanctuary *all is accessible* “to people who have difficulty walking or who use a wheelchair” (members, 75%; elders, 72%; pastors, 77%).
- ✓ A third of laity and a quarter of pastors report that *all* of their chancel *is accessible*. Even fewer report that *all* of the “choir loft/choir seating area” *is accessible* (members, 13%; elders, 12%; pastors, 16%).

Other Facilities

- ✓ Majorities respond *all is accessible* in the “fellowship hall” (members, 84%; elders, 81%; pastors, 84%), “kitchen” (77%; 73%; 78%), “church offices” (71%; 71%; 72%), and “church school/Christian education classrooms” (60%; 56%; 55%).
- ✓ Other facilities where *all is accessible* according to a majority in one or more samples include “restrooms” (members, 61%; elders, 58%; pastors, 47%) and “youth room/youth house” (45%; 51%; 41%).

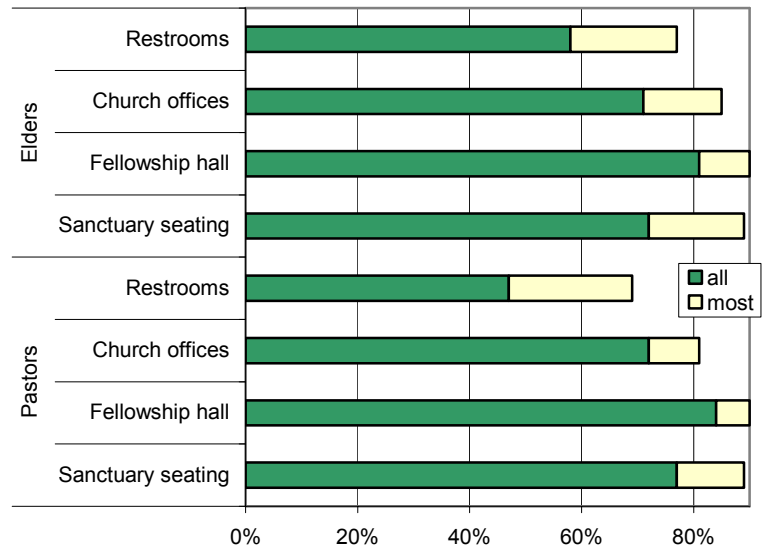
Recent Changes

- ✓ Majorities (elders, 60%; pastors, 55%) respond *yes* when asked whether their congregation has “taken any action in the last three years that resulted in making any part of the physical facilities more accessible to persons who have difficulty walking or who use a wheelchair.”

Specific Features

- ✓ Majorities of pastors report their congregations have:
 - Designated “handicapped” parking spaces (88%)
 - Curb cuts for wheelchairs (78%)
 - Tape recordings of services for persons whose disabilities prevent them from attending (73%)
 - A sound system for the hearing impaired (67%)
 - Large print hymnals (63%)
- ✓ At the other extreme, few pastors report having:
 - Braille Bibles, resources, or hymnals (3%)
 - Gluten-free bread for the Lord’s Supper (7%)
 - Automatic doors on entrances and exits (9%)

Figure 1. Accessibility of Church Facilities



Programs Involving Persons with Disabilities

- ✓ In the prior year, about half of congregations had “provided transportation to worship services for people with disabilities” (elders, 46%; pastors, 46%). Somewhat fewer had provided transportation to “other church activities” (31%; 38%).
- ✓ One in five congregations (elders, 19%; pastors, 22%) had in the prior year provided “respite care for those who care for persons with disabilities through a formal, church-sponsored program.”
- ✓ Very few congregations have “held a worship service designed specifically to recognize and involve persons with disabilities” (elders, 5%; pastors, 8%).

Facilities and Programs: Effects on Participation

- ✓ A third of pastors (31%) can think of persons in their congregation “who do *not* participate in worship, educational programs, or another church activity as often as they might because the facilities for this program are not easily accessible.” Most, however, can think of only *a few* such persons (26%), as opposed to *several* (4%) or *many* (1%).
- ✓ Somewhat fewer pastors (7%) can recall one or more persons in their congregation who attend events less often than they might because they “have been made to feel unwelcome because of their disability.”
- ✓ A third of pastors (36%) can recall one or more “persons with disabilities in your congregation who started coming *because of* the efforts the church has taken to include persons with disabilities . . .”.

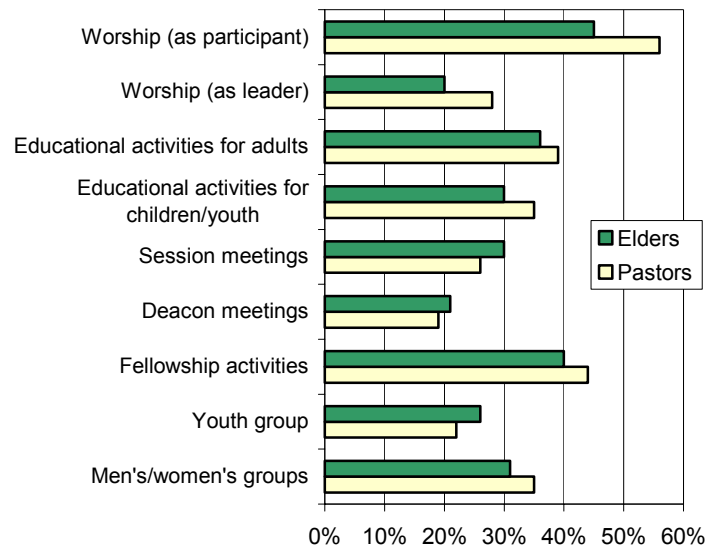
Ministries with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- ✓ Few panelists report having sign language interpreters in worship at their congregations for the “deaf or hard of hearing” (members, 4%; elders, 10%; pastors, 5%).
- ✓ Of those with interpreters, only a minority report having had them *every week* during the previous year (members, 40%; elders, 18%; pastors, 39%).
- ✓ Fewer than one in ten panelists report non-worship ministries with persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, such as *church school classes* (elders, 5%; pastors, 6%) and *Bible study groups* (5%; 6%).

Making Programs More Welcoming

- ✓ Worship is the only congregational activity (from a list of nine) that a majority of pastors (56%) indicate their congregation has made “more welcoming to persons with disabilities” in the prior three years.
- ✓ More than one-third of pastors report that their congregations have made the following programs more welcoming: fellowship activities (44%); educational activities for adults (39%) and for children/youth (35%); men’s/women’s groups (35%).

Figure 2. Percent Reporting Congregational Changes in Prior Three Years to Make Programs More Welcoming to Persons with Disabilities



Members, Staff, and Lay Leaders with Disabilities

- ✓ Most pastors know one or more persons in their congregation with disabilities, in particular someone with a mobility impairment (93%), a hearing loss (88%), a serious chronic illness such as cancer (84%), or a learning disability (75%). (See Figure 4, p. 4.)
- ✓ In the prior three years, 5% of elders and 6% percent of pastors report that a person with disabilities served as a pastor or associate pastor of their congregation. In addition, 9% and 11%, respectively, report that a person with disabilities served in another staff position.
- ✓ A third of elders and 45% of pastors report at least one elder on session who has a disability. Fewer (22%; 34%) report one or more deacons with a disability.

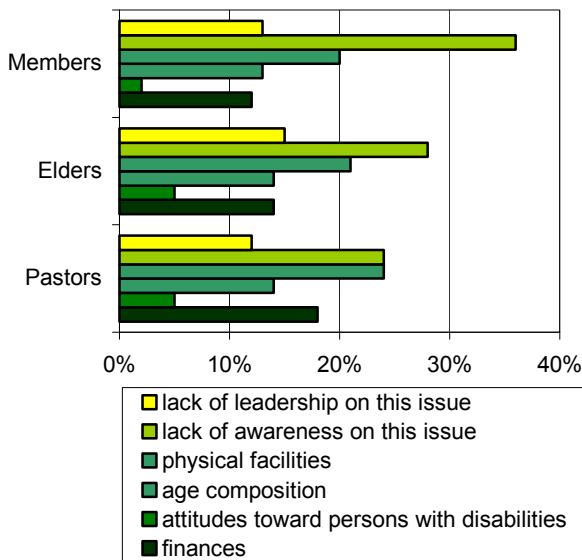
Evaluating Congregational Efforts

- ✓ Majorities *strongly agree* or *agree* that their congregation “has done a good job of making the sanctuary accessible to persons with disabilities” (elders, 87%; pastors, 85%).
- ✓ Majorities of elders (57%) and pastors (61%) also *strongly agree/agree* that their congregation “has done a better job of making *facilities accessible* to persons with disabilities than it has making *programs inclusive* of persons with disabilities.”

Extent of Inclusion

- ✓ Majorities believe persons with disabilities are included to the *full extent* (members, 20%; elders, 21%; pastors, 15%) or to a *great extent* (36%; 38%; 54%) “in the life of your congregation.”
- ✓ When asked to choose, from a list of eight, the one item “*most responsible* for why persons with disabilities are not full participants in your congregation,” the most chosen options are *lack of awareness on this issue* (members, 36%; pastors, 24%) and *the church’s physical facilities* (20%; 24%).

Figure 3. Most Important Factor Why Persons with Disabilities are Not Full Participants in One’s Congregation



Facilities and Programs as Impediments

- ✓ Less than one in ten members (7%), elders (8%), and pastors (9%) believe their “congregation’s facilities” are either a *very great impediment* or a *great*

impediment to “the participation of persons with disabilities.” Four in ten respond *not an impediment*.

- ✓ Fewer see “the attitudes and understanding of your congregation” as a *very great impediment* or a *great impediment* to “the participation of persons with disabilities” (members, 5%; elders, 5%; pastors, 3%). Most respond *not an impediment* (68%; 68%; 57%).

Personal Views

- ✓ Almost half of laity (members, 45%; elders, 47%) and most ministers (pastors, 57%; specialized clergy, 67%) respond *very important* when asked “How important to you, personally, is full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church?”
- ✓ Most of the rest respond *generally important* (40%; 42%; 35%; 28%). No pastors, and 3% or fewer in the other groups, respond *not important*.

Presbyteries and Disabilities

- ✓ A third of elders (35%) and a fifth of pastors (21%) believe persons with disabilities are welcome to the *full extent* in the life of their presbytery. Most of the rest respond *great extent* (30%; 48%)
- ✓ Two-thirds of elders (68%) and pastors (65%) believe that “presbyteries should require that their stated meetings be held only in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.” Even more (78%; 74%) believe stated meetings should be “fully inclusive of the participation of persons with disabilities.”

National PC(USA) Issues

- ✓ Around half of laity (members, 46%; elders, 53%) and two-thirds of ministers *strongly agree/agree* that the PC(USA) “is a stronger advocate for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the church than it was 10 years ago.” Most of the rest are *not sure*.
- ✓ Most laity (members, 52%; elders, 56%) and specialized clergy (56%), and four in ten pastors (41%) *strongly agree/agree* that “the national entities of the PC(USA) should be doing more to encourage congregations to be inclusive of persons with disabilities.”
- ✓ A third of pastors (35%) but only 3% of members and 5% of elders are *very familiar* or *familiar* with *That All May Freely Enter*, the 1977 General Assembly policy statement on disabilities issues.

DISABILITIES AMONG PANELISTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

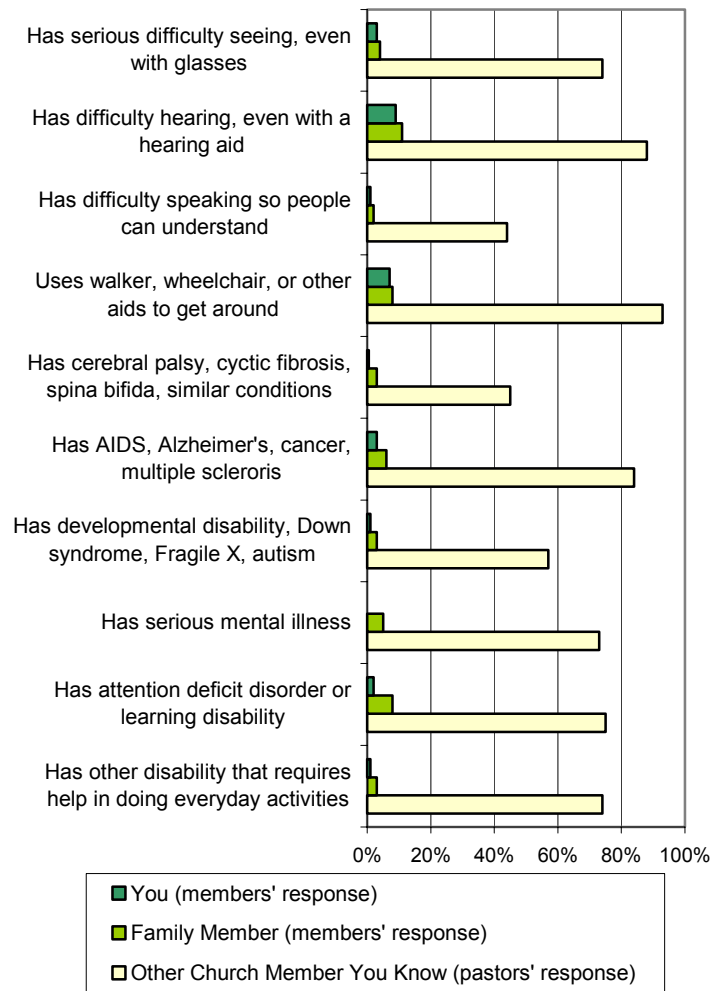
Panelists with Disabilities

- ✓ 17% of members, 10% of elders, 9% of pastors, and 11% of specialized clergy report that they have at least one disability.
- ✓ The most frequent types of disabilities among laity involve hearing (members, 9%; elders, 4%) and mobility (7%; 4%). Among pastors, the most common are learning disabilities (3%), hearing impairments (2%), and serious mental illness (2%).

Family Members with Disabilities

- ✓ 30% of members, 32% of elders, 43% of pastors, and 41% of specialized clergy report having a *family member* with one or more disabilities.
- ✓ The most frequent types of disabilities among family members of laity are hearing impairments (members, 11%; elders, 13%), mobility impairments (8%; 9%), learning disabilities (8%; 7%), and serious chronic illnesses such as cancer (6%; 7%).
- ✓ The most prevalent types of disability among ministers' families are hearing impairments (pastors, 13%; specialized clergy, 17%), mobility impairments (14%; 15%), serious chronic illnesses (13%; 11%), serious mental illnesses (12%; 12%), and learning disabilities (14%; 10%).

Figure 4. Prevalence of Disabilities by Type



	Members	Elders	Ordained Ministers
Number of surveys mailed.....	981	1,237	1,373
Number returned.....	399	634	774‡
Response rate.....	40%	51%	56%

‡Of the 774 returned surveys, 514 came from pastors and 260 from specialized clergy.

This survey was initially mailed in May 2004, and returns were accepted through July 2004. 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 May 2004 Presbyterian Panel results, a longer report with additional charts is available for free on the Web (www.pcusa.org/research/panel/index) or for \$10 from PDS (1-800-524-2612; order PDS# 65100-04283). It includes tables showing percentage responses to each survey question separately for members, elders, pastors, and specialized clergy.

For more information on disabilities issues in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), contact Nancy Troy (888-728-7228 ext. 5794; ntroy@ctr.pcusa.org).

LISTENING TO PRESBYTERIANS SINCE 1973

The Presbyterian Panel
 A Ministry of the General Assembly Council
 Research Services, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
 100 Witherspoon Street
 Louisville KY 40202-1396
<http://www.pcusa.org/research>