

# Associate Pastors

Prepared by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce in partial fulfillment of Grant Number 2008021 from the Louisville Institute to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for *A National Study of Associate Pastors and Their Ministry*.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The report compares survey responses from 322 full-time, paid associate pastors with the responses of 693 senior/solo pastors serving in local congregations.
- Associate leaders serving in congregations that participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (second wave) completed a leader survey in the fall of 2008 and the spring of 2008.

### ***Where do associate pastors serve?***

- Associate pastors typically serve in larger congregations—the median worship attendance in congregations with associate pastors is 289 (compared to a median worship attendance of 95 across all congregations). About half of congregations that employ one or more associate pastors, employ just one associate leader.

### ***What is the demographic profile of associate pastors?***

- Slightly more than half of associate pastors are men (57%). Even more *ordained* associate staff leaders are men (100% of Catholic associates, 57% of mainline Protestant associates, and 94% of conservative Protestant associates).
- Most associate leaders are white (88%). They are slightly more racially/ethnically diverse as a group than are senior/solo pastors (94% are white).
- The median age of associate pastors is 46 years of age, nine years younger than that of senior/solo pastors. Female associates are eight years older than male associate pastors.
- The majority of Protestant associate pastors are in their first marriage. About half of Catholic associates have never married.
- Two out of three associate leaders worked in one or more occupations before entering ministry. More female than male associates had worked in another occupation prior to serving in a local church.
- Fewer associate pastors are ordained than senior/solo pastors (just 55% are ordained compared to 94% of senior/solo leaders). Mainline Protestant associate pastors are the most likely to be ordained (two out of three).

### ***How theologically educated are associate pastors?***

- More mainline Protestant associate pastors have at least a theological master's degree (77%) than associate pastors in any other group. About half of Catholic associates hold a master's degree or more. Conservative Protestant associates serve with the least theological education—only 16% have a master's degree or more.
- Many associate leaders carry education debt, especially mainline Protestant associate pastors (52%).

### ***What is the average compensation for associate pastors?***

- Total median compensation for associate pastors (including housing assistance) is \$43,591 per year.
- Six in ten associates receive housing assistance in the form of either a manse/parsonage or housing allowance (compared to nine in ten senior/solo pastors). Few Catholic associates (30%) receive housing assistance.
- At least two out of three associate leaders receive health insurance provided by their congregation or denomination. About half receive health insurance for their spouse as well.

### ***What does the typical workweek look like for an associate pastor?***

- Associate pastors typically work fewer hours per week performing various ministry tasks than senior/solo pastors (median of 45 hours compared to 50 hours for senior/solo pastors). More of them take a day off each week (92% do so, compared to 82% of senior/solo pastors).
- Associate pastors as well as senior/solo pastors report spending a median of eight hours per week in church administration, including staff supervision and attending congregational board and committee meetings. Associate pastors spend less time on sermon preparation but more time on youth ministry than senior/solo pastors.
- The majority of associate leaders participate in some type of peer group for continuing education and support. Many also report participating in some form of continuing theological education on an annual basis (lasting one full day or more).

### ***What about the physical and mental health of associate pastors?***

- Compared to the U.S. population, more male associate pastors are overweight or obese (85% have BMI scores of 30 or higher, compared to 72% of American males). More female associate pastors fall in the BMI overweight category than American women overall (41% compared to 28%). Associate pastors indicate that they spend two hours per week (median) getting physical exercise.
- More associate pastors report that they experience stress because of the challenges the congregation faces than report stress from other sources—lack of interest or concern from people in the congregation, loneliness or isolation, or dealing with critical members. In addition, one in five mainline Protestant associate pastors say they have experienced stress as a result of dealing with their senior pastor.

### ***How do associate pastors feel about their ministry in the congregation?***

- Most associate pastors believe their leadership is a good match for the congregation. However, conservative Protestant associate pastors were less positive about their fit than other associates and less positive than conservative Protestant senior/solo pastors.
- About half of all associate pastors are satisfied with what they have accomplished in their congregational ministry.

## ASSOCIATE PASTORS

This report focuses on pastoral leaders—those pastors, priests, rabbis, and other leaders who serve in local congregations. Clergy also occupy other ministry roles (such as seminary faculty, denominational executive, and hospital or military chaplain), but this research profiles only those serving in local churches. We identify the many differences between associate pastors, on the one hand, and senior or solo pastors, on the other, in areas such as their ordination status, gender, average age, age when they were ordained, compensation, ministry tasks, job satisfaction, and sources of support and stress.

### THE NATIONAL SAMPLES OF SENIOR/SOLO PASTORS AND ASSOCIATE PASTORS

Lilly Endowment, Inc., funded a second wave of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, conducted in 2008 and 2009. We asked one key pastoral leader in each participating congregation to complete a survey. We used a paper survey (part of the package that went out to participating congregations) and supplied a separate envelope for leaders to mail back the survey to maintain confidentiality. Key leaders could also complete the survey online. In addition, we also contacted one key leader in each congregation nominated for the survey but whose congregation did not participate in the worshiper portion of the study and asked the leader to complete the same survey. We received 693 completed key leader surveys from the 1,330 nominated congregations—a response rate of 52%.

In the second wave, we received a generous grant from the Louisville Institute to include associate leaders in the study. When congregations were recruited to participate in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, they reported how many *full-time paid* leaders, clergy, and program staff (regardless of ordination status, but not including secretarial, clerical, or custodial staff) serve in the congregation. With the assumption that one of those staff members was the senior leader (who would complete the key leader survey described above), we sent the appropriate number of associate leader surveys to each congregation, along with return envelopes to maintain confidentiality. We also did a subsequent mailing to congregations that did not participate in the worship attendee survey and asked them to complete leader and associate leader surveys. Associate leader surveys were mailed to 407 congregations, and we received completed surveys from 322 associate leaders serving in 163 congregations (40% of congregations with associates responded).<sup>1</sup> Appendix A shows the percentage distribution of response to each question on the survey.

In this report, we compare these 322 full-time, paid associate leaders (hereafter called associate leaders or associate pastors) to the 693 key leaders (hereafter called senior/solo pastors) from the 1,330 nominated congregations. Unfortunately, comparisons of the 2008/2009 profile of associate pastors to previous statistics are not possible because funds were not available to include them in 2001, and no prior research has focused on this group.

Responding associate leaders come from a wide variety of denominations and faith groups. In analyses presented here they are described in three faith groups based on the congregation they serve: Catholic parishes, mainline Protestant churches, and conservative Protestant churches. (Associate leaders in Unitarian churches are included with mainline Protestants. No associate leaders from non-Christian

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<sup>1</sup> Because we did not have the name of each associate pastor and relied on the assistance of congregational staff both in providing accurate information about the number of associate pastors and in delivering surveys to associate pastors, the true number of associate pastors who received an associate leader survey is unknown. Thus, the response rate is an estimate only.

congregations participated.) Similar categories are used for senior/solo leaders. A number of senior/solo leaders from non-Christian congregations participated. Their responses are included in overall results for senior/solo pastors presented here, but excluded when results are presented by faith group.

## WHERE DO ASSOCIATE PASTORS SERVE

Larger congregations are more likely to have more than one full-time pastoral leader (see Table 1). The median size of congregations with one or more associate leaders is 289 worshipers (compared to a median of 95 for all congregations).<sup>2</sup> In Catholic parishes, associate leaders were typically present in parishes with more than 400 worshipers (median size of parishes with associates is 953). In mainline Protestant churches, associate leaders were typically present in mid-size congregations with 101 to 350 worshipers (median size of 245 worshipers). In conservative Protestant churches, associate pastors were also typically present in congregations with more than 100 in worship (median worship attendance of 213).

**Table 1**  
**Median Worship Attendance in Congregations**

	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	<b>Conservative Protestant</b>	<b>Total</b>
With one or more associates	953	245	213	289
All congregations	650	82	90	95

Three-quarters of congregations do not have associate pastors (see Table 2). Protestant churches, which tend to be smaller than Catholic parishes, are less likely than Catholic parishes to have more than one associate. Almost one in five Catholic parishes has two or more full-time associate pastors. About half of congregations (56%) that employ one or more associate pastors have just one associate; one in five congregations have two associate leaders; only 12% have three associates; and 13% of congregations with associates have four or more such leaders. In the US CLS national sample of associate pastors, 49% are mainline Protestant associate pastors, 34% are conservative Protestant associate pastors, and 17% are Catholic associate pastors.

**Table 2**  
**Number of Associate Pastors in Congregations**

	<b>Catholic</b>	<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	<b>Conservative Protestant</b>	<b>Total</b>
No associate pastor(s)	70%	79%	77%	76%
1 associate pastor	12%	14%	14%	13%
2 associate pastors	11%	2%	2%	5%
3 or more associate pastors	7%	5%	7%	6%

<sup>2</sup> Because the sample of congregations was generated through hyper-network sampling, larger congregations were more likely to be nominated for the study. To compensate for this bias, all of the results presented here are weighted by congregational size (see Appendix B for additional information about the methodology and sample).

## ORDINATION STATUS OF PASTORS

One of the biggest differences between associate and senior/solo pastors is their ordination status (see Table 3). Almost all senior/solo leaders are ordained (94%), and another 4% are working toward ordination. Among associate leaders, only 55% are ordained, and another 12% are working toward ordination. Ordination rates for associates differ by faith tradition as well. Two out of three mainline Protestant associate leaders are ordained, but only one-third of Catholic associates leaders (35%) and less than half of conservative Protestant associate leaders (47%) are ordained.

**Table 3**  
**Ordination Status of Associate and Senior/Solo Pastors**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Ordained	35%	67%	47%	55%
Working toward ordination	4%	12%	15%	12%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Ordained	98%	92%	97%	94%
Working toward ordination	1%	7%	0%	4%

## GENDER OF PASTORS

The gender profile of associate pastors differs significantly from that of senior/solo pastors. Slightly more than half of associate leaders (57%) are men. The exception to this pattern occurs in mainline Protestant churches where 61% of associate leaders are women (see Table 4). Nine in ten senior/solo pastors are ordained.

**Table 4**  
**Gender of Clergy: All Associate and Senior/Solo Pastors**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Male	52%	39%	84%	57%
Female	48%	61%	16%	43%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Male	98%	72%	100%	82%
Female	2%	28%	0%	18%

In contrast, Table 5 illustrates clearly that males constitute the majority of *ordained* associate staff leadership (100% of Catholic associate leaders; 57% of mainline Protestant associate leaders; 94% of conservative Protestant associate leaders).

**Table 5**  
**Gender of Clergy: Ordained Associate and Senior/Solo Pastors**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Male	100%	57%	94%	57%
Female	0%	43%	6%	43%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Male	100%	72%	100%	82%
Female	0%	28%	0%	18%

Female associate pastors serve in substantial numbers only in mainline Protestant congregations. About four out of 10 *ordained* associate leaders in mainline Protestant churches are women. The percentages for senior/solo clergy are at the bottom of Table 5 for easy comparison. Ordained women are much more likely to be serving in associate clergy roles than in senior/solo positions in mainline Protestant churches.

While associate leader figures are not available from 2001 to assess whether there has been a change in the gender distribution, we made comparisons that might shed light on this issue by examining the gender of senior/solo pastors. In 2008/2009, 98% of Catholic senior/solo leaders were male, and 2% of Catholic parishes are served by a woman in the senior leader positions. All conservative Protestant senior/solo pastors were male. But almost three out of 10 mainline Protestant ordained senior/solo clergy were females. Table 6 compares these results with the gender profile in 2001.<sup>3</sup> Nothing has changed in terms of the gender profile for Catholic parishes and conservative Protestant churches. However, the percentage of women serving as senior or solo pastors in mainline Protestant churches has risen a substantial amount in the past eight years—from 20% to 28%.

**Table 6**  
**Gender of Clergy: All Senior/Solo Pastors in 2008/2009 vs. 2001**

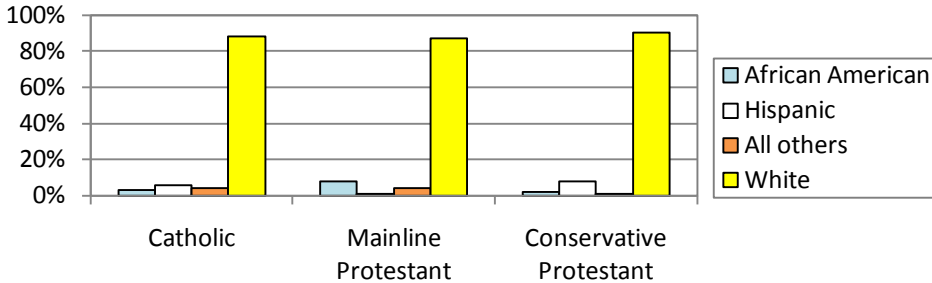
	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>2008</b>				
Male	98%	72%	100%	82%
Female	2%	28%	0%	18%
<b>2001</b>				
Male	100%	80%	99%	93%
Female	0%	20%	1%	7%

<sup>3</sup> As part of the omnibus Pulpit & Pew project, Jack Carroll conducted the clergy portion of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey in 2001. Dr. Carroll and his team contracted with NORC to survey one key leader in each congregation nominated to participate in the US CLS. Some of these congregations did not participate in the worshiper survey portion but their leaders were interviewed nonetheless. In all, 883 leaders completed the telephone interview in 2001. The results of this research are in Carroll’s book, *God’s Potters* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006).

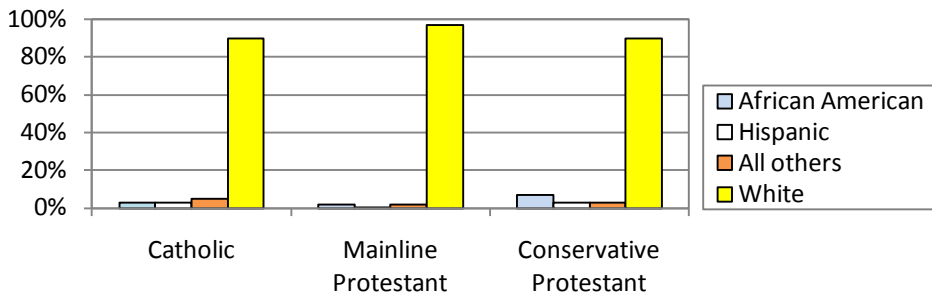
## RACIAL/ETHNIC PROFILE OF PASTORS

Most associate leaders are white (88%). There is slightly more racial-ethnic diversity among associate leaders than among key leaders (where 94% are white). (See Figures 1 and 2.) It appears that some congregations increase the racial-ethnic diversity of their staff by hiring a person of color to serve in ministry with a white senior pastor. In conservative Protestant churches and Catholic parishes, the associate minority staff member is most likely to be Hispanic. In contrast, mainline Protestant churches have a higher proportion of African-American associate leaders. Few Asian or Native American pastors serve as associate leaders (less than 1%).<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1**  
**Associate Pastors' Race-Ethnicity**



**Figure 2**  
**Senior/Solo Pastors' Race-Ethnicity**



## AGE OF CLERGY: ASSOCIATE PASTORS

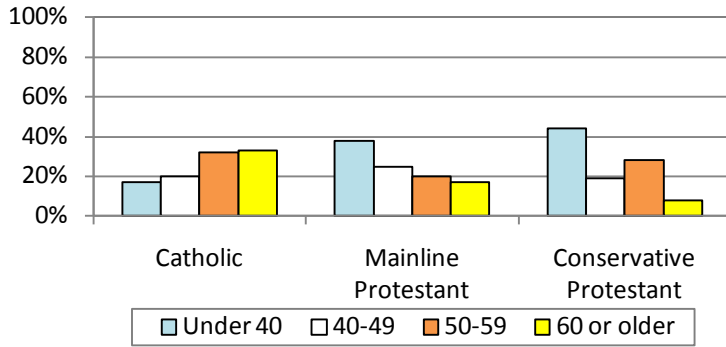
The median age of associate pastors (ordained and non-ordained) is 46 years of age. Catholic associate leaders are a decade older on average (median of 55 years of age) than mainline and conservative Protestant associate leaders (median of 44 years of age). Protestant associate leaders are 11 years younger, on average, than Protestant senior/solo pastors.

Another way to look at the age profile of pastors is by age groups—the percentages who are younger than 40 years of age, between 40 and 49, between 50 and 59, and 60 years of age and older (see Figure 3). The age profiles of the three faith groups look very different. The largest age group among Protestant associate pastors is pastors less than 40 years of age. In contrast, the largest age groups for Catholic associate pastors are those between 50 and 59 and those 60 years of age or older.

<sup>4</sup> The large percentages of white leaders and associate leaders may be due in part to lower survey response rates from racial-ethnic minorities to most surveys.



**Figure 3**  
**Age Distribution of Associate Pastors**



Female associate leaders are eight years older, on average, than male associate pastors (see Table 7). This pattern of older female associates holds across faith traditions. However, the largest average age gap between male and female associate leaders is found among conservative Protestant pastors (men average 40 years of age; women average 52 years of age).

**Table 7**  
**Average Age of Associate Pastors by Gender**

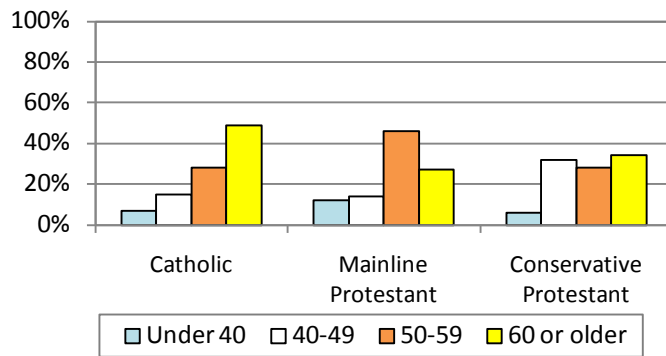
	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Male	50	40	40	42
Female	57	48	52	50

**AGE OF CLERGY: SENIOR OR SOLO PASTORS**

Senior/solo pastors are typically older than associate leaders and are on average older today than senior/solo pastors were in 2001. The average age of ordained senior/solo pastors in 2008/2009 is 55 years of age (median); in 2001, the average age was 51. Thus, the average age has climbed four years in the past eight years. The average age of senior/solo pastors differs by denomination or faith group. Catholic senior priests are the oldest group (median age of 59 now), and they were the oldest group in 2001 (median age of 56). Mainline and conservative Protestant senior/solo pastors are also older today (median age of 55 and 54, respectively) compared to 2001 when their average (median) ages were 51 and 50, respectively. They have aged at about the same rate as Catholic priests.

Catholic priests are concentrated in the 50 and older age groups—especially the 60 and older age group (half of all the priests in the sample). Mainline Protestant senior/solo clergy are more likely to fall in the 50 to 59 age group. Conservative Protestant churches have more senior/solo clergy in the 40 to 49 age group than mainline churches or Catholic parishes. Overall, fewer than one in ten senior/solo pastors today are under 40 today (see Figure 4.)

**Figure 4**  
**Age Distribution of Senior/Solo Pastors**



**YEARS IN MINISTRY**

Another key difference between associate leaders and senior/solo pastors is the number of years they have served in full- or part-time ministry as ordained clergy earning a salary. On average, ordained associate leaders have served just six years in ministry. In contrast, ordained senior/solo pastors average more than 20 years in ministry (see Table 8). This finding points to a career pattern for some pastors that finds them beginning ministry as associate pastors before taking on the responsibilities of a senior or solo pastor.

**Table 8**  
**Median Years in Ministry Since Ordination**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Ordained	5.9	5.5	11.3	6.0
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Ordained	31.3	22.5	24.0	23.2

**MINISTRY AS A SECOND CAREER**

Two out of three associate leaders worked in one or more other occupations before entering the ministry (see Table 9). Overall, similar numbers of Protestant senior/solo pastors had a previous career. However, solo/senior pastors in Catholic parishes were significantly less likely to have worked in another occupation prior to entering ministry (only 30% did so). This partially explains the higher average number of years in ministry among Catholic senior/solo pastors seen in Table 8.

Female Protestant associate pastors are more likely than their male counterparts to have worked in another occupation before entering ministry. Overall, 57% of men had a prior occupation, while 76% of women worked in another occupation prior to ministry.

**Table 9**  
**Worked in Another Occupation Before Entering Ministry**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
All	65%	66%	66%	66%
Males	61%	46%	63%	57%
Females	68%	77%	82%	76%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
All	30%	62%	69%	62%

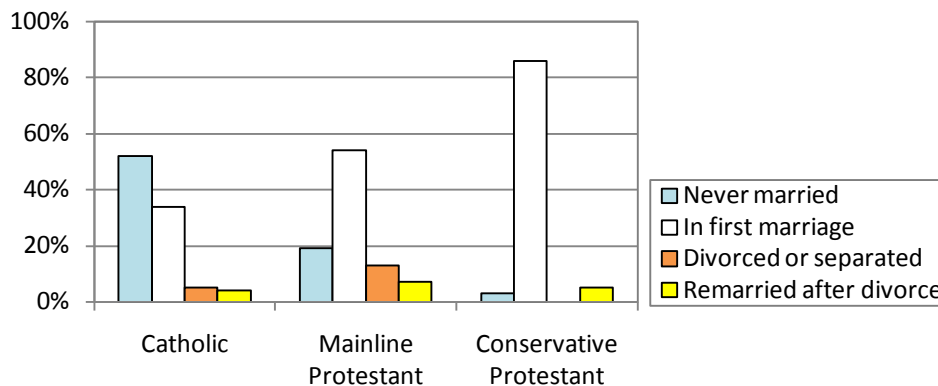
**MARITAL STATUS**

The majority of Protestant associate leaders are in their first marriage—54% of mainline pastors and 86% of conservative pastors are (see Figure 5). Very few conservative Protestant associate leaders are divorced, separated, or remarried (10%). However, one in five mainline Protestant associate leaders is divorced, separated, or remarried after divorce, and the same percentage—one in five—has never married. A few Protestant associate pastors say they are in a committed relationship (4% of mainline pastors and 2% of conservative pastors).<sup>5</sup>

About half of Catholic associate leaders have never been married. Another third of these leaders are in their first marriage. Few Catholic associate pastors are divorced (5%), remarried after divorce (4%), widowed (3%), or remarried after the death of a spouse (1%).

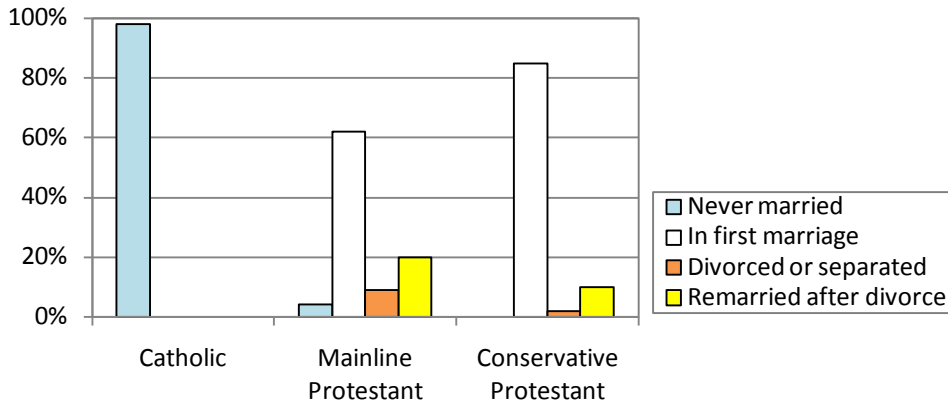
The marital status of senior/solo leaders is strikingly different. Not surprisingly, almost no Catholic senior priests have ever been married. A large majority of conservative Protestant senior/solo leaders are in their first marriage (85%), and the majority of mainline Protestant key leaders are as well (62%). The greatest percentage of divorced, separated, or remarried after divorce senior/solo pastors is among mainline Protestants (29%).

**Figure 5**  
**Marital Status of Associate Pastors**



<sup>5</sup> Very few associate leaders reported other marital status (e.g., remarried after being widowed). These are not reported here, but can be seen in Appendix A.

**Figure 6**  
**Marital Status of Senior/Solo Pastors**



**Summary of demographic findings.** Half of all Catholic associate leaders are women. However, only one in three Catholic associates are ordained. Catholic associates are typically older than other associate pastors (a median of 55 years of age). More than half of mainline Protestant associate leaders are women. The majority of mainline Protestant associates are ordained. Mainline Protestant associates are almost a decade younger, on average, than Catholic associate leaders. Most conservative Protestant associate leaders are male (84%). Only about half of conservative Protestant associates are ordained. The average conservative Protestant associate leader is about 44 years of age and has served approximately ten years in ministry. (See also Appendix C.)

**THEOLOGICAL TRAINING**

Three out of four mainline Protestant associate leaders say their highest *theological* degree is a master’s degree or higher (68% hold a Master of Divinity; 5% hold other types of master’s degrees; 4% have a doctorate). Only half of Catholic associate leaders have a master’s or more theological education. Conservative Protestant associate leaders serve with the least advanced theological education—only 16% have a master’s degree or more. Four out of ten of conservative Protestant associate pastors have no theological education. The most common theological education for conservative Protestant associates is a Bible college degree (one in three overall received this degree). Mainline Protestant pastors—whether serving as associates or senior/solo pastors—have the most advanced theological education (see Table 10).

**Table 10**  
**Highest Level of Theological Education**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Master of Divinity <sup>1</sup>				
Associate Pastors	18%	68%	11%	<b>40%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	48%	78%	28%	<b>58%</b>
Other Masters <sup>2</sup>				
Associate Pastors	35%	5%	4%	<b>10%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	35%	4%	12%	<b>10%</b>
Doctorate <sup>3</sup>				
Associate Pastors	1%	4%	1%	<b>2%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	11%	16%	13%	<b>15%</b>
<i>Total with Advanced Degrees</i>				
Associate Pastors	54%	77%	16%	<b>52%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	94%	98%	53%	<b>83%</b>
Certificate <sup>4</sup>				
Associate Pastors	18%	6%	8%	<b>9%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	2%	2%	12%	<b>6%</b>
Bible College Degree				
Associate Pastors	1%	2%	32%	<b>12%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	0%	0%	25%	<b>8%</b>
<i>Total with Certificate or Bible College</i>				
Associate Pastors	19%	8%	40%	<b>21%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	2%	2%	37%	<b>14%</b>
No Theological Education				
Associate Pastors	21%	13%	39%	<b>23%</b>
Senior/Solo Pastors	1%	1%	9%	<b>3%</b>

<sup>1</sup>Master of Divinity (M.Div.) or Bachelor of Divinity

<sup>2</sup>Other Masters includes M.A., S.T.M., Th.M., or other master's degree

<sup>3</sup>Doctorate includes Doctor of Ministry degree, Ph.D. or Th.D

<sup>4</sup>Certificate from denominational training program, Bible college, or seminary

## **CLERGY COMPENSATION AND OTHER FINANCIAL ISSUES**

**Total compensation.** In addition to an annual salary, compensation for pastors often includes housing assistance, in the form of a manse or parsonage and/or a housing allowance. The median total compensation for associate leaders is \$43,591 per year. The amount of compensation is not related to the congregation's size for Catholic parishes or mainline Protestant churches (see Figure 7). In fact, no associate leaders were serving in Catholic parishes with fewer than 100 worshippers. However, in conservative Protestant churches the congregation's size made a difference in associate pastors' compensation. In general, the larger the congregation, the higher the compensation for the associate leader. Overall, mainline Protestant associate leaders earn more, on average, than conservative Protestant associate leaders.

**Figure 7**  
**Total Compensation of Associate Pastors by Congregational Size**

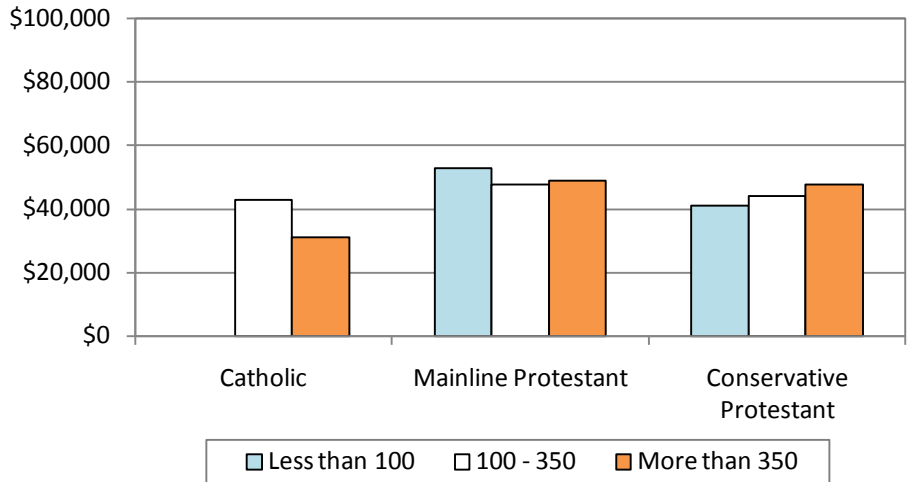
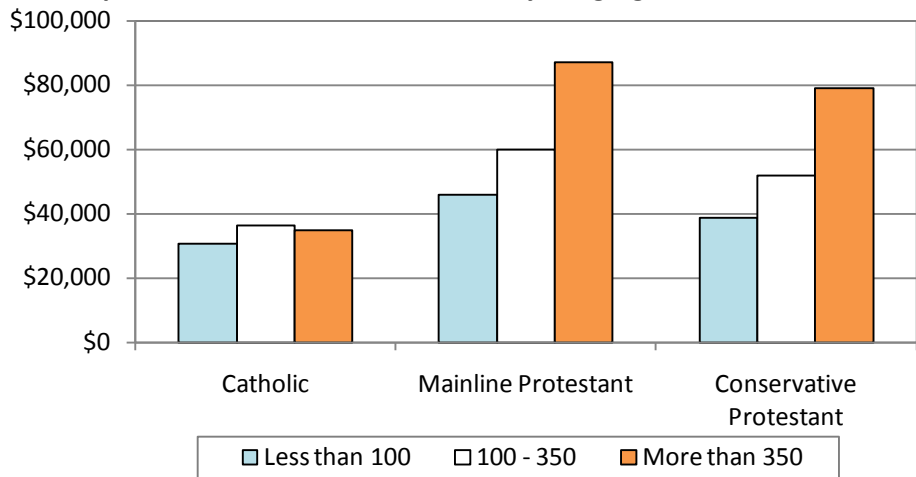


Figure 8 displays the compensation levels for senior and solo pastors. The salary structure for Catholic priests is a flat one—compensation does not vary much by the size of the parish. However, clergy compensation is more closely tied to congregational size among Protestant groups. Again, on average, mainline Protestant clergy earn more than their conservative Protestant colleagues.

**Figure 8**  
**Total Compensation of Solo/Senior Pastors by Congregational Size**



**Housing provisions.** Few associate pastors (about one in ten) are furnished with a parsonage, manse, or rectory. The practice is slightly more common among Catholic parishes where about one in four associates are provided housing. Far more common among Protestant churches is the provision of a housing allowance (about six in ten associates receive this benefit). A few associate pastors receive **both**—the congregation provides a parsonage or rectory and an additional income to cover housing expenses, such as utilities or repairs (see Table 11).

**Table 11**  
**Housing Provisions: Percentages with a Manse or Allowance**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Manse	24%	11%	7%	12%
Allowance	14%	64%	60%	54%
Neither	70%	28%	36%	38%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Manse	94%	40%	26%	38%
Allowance	30%	65%	61%	62%
Neither	2%	3%	20%	9%

Almost all Catholic senior/solo priests (94%) are furnished housing by the parish. But the practice of providing housing for the senior/solo pastor also occurs in a minority of mainline Protestant churches (40%) and conservative Protestant churches (26%). Two out of three senior/solo pastors serving in mainline Protestant churches and six in ten in conservative Protestant churches receive a housing allowance.

**Health care insurance.** Three out of four associate pastors are provided health insurance (with the congregation or denomination covering the cost). Catholic associates are the most likely to receive this benefit (81%), followed by mainline Protestant associates (77%). Conservative Protestant associates are the least likely to have health insurance provided by the congregation or denomination (only 64% receive this benefit) (see Table 12).

**Table 12**  
**Health Care Insurance Provided by Congregation or Denomination for Pastor and Spouse**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
Pastor	81%	77%	64%	73%
Spouse	17%	52%	46%	46%
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
Pastor	96%	78%	54%	71%
Spouse	—	46%	42%	41%

— = zero (no cases in this category)

Overall, senior/solo pastors are about as likely as associates to receive health insurance as a benefit of their congregational employment. The one exception is in conservative Protestant churches—only about half of senior/solo pastors receive health insurance benefits from the congregation, while six in ten associates do. Many conservative Protestant congregations are small and may not be able to supply this benefit to their solo pastor. Conservative Protestant churches with one or more associate pastors, however, are larger and more able to extend this benefit to their pastors.

About half of married mainline and conservative Protestant associates report that their spouse also receives health care coverage through the congregation or denomination. This benefit for spouses is rare

among married Catholic parish associates—only 17% say their spouse also receives health insurance coverage.

**Educational debt.** Associate leaders are much more likely to be carrying educational debt than senior/solo pastors (see Table 13). This most likely stems from the fact that associate leaders are younger, with fewer years in ministry, and are more recent seminary or college graduates. Only one out of four Catholic leaders (associate or senior/solo) have educational debt. In contrast, about half of mainline associate leaders have educational debt, perhaps because they are also the group of associate pastors most likely to have a seminary education. Two in five conservative Protestant associate leaders have some level of educational debt.

**Table 13**  
**Monthly Payments Toward Educational Debt**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<b>Associate Pastors</b>				
No debt	77%	48%	61%	57%
\$0	14%	8%	20%	13%
\$1 - \$999	8%	43%	19%	30%
\$1,000 or more	*	1%	—	1%
Median payment	\$306	\$238	\$200	\$235
<b>Senior/Solo Pastors</b>				
No debt	74%	67%	82%	73%
\$0	23%	13%	14%	14%
\$1 - \$999	3%	19%	4%	13%
\$1,000 or more	*	1%	—	*
Median payment	\$140	\$331	\$169	\$324

— = zero (no cases in this category)

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

## WORK HOURS AND MINISTRY TASKS

Associate leaders work about 45 hours per week performing various ministry tasks (all figures here are medians; see Table 14). Senior/solo pastors report spending more time in ministry—a median of 50 hours per week—in their work related to the congregation. Surprisingly, both associate leaders and senior/solo pastors say they average eight hours each week in administrating the work of the congregation, including staff supervision and attending congregational board and committee meetings. In a typical week, associate leaders spend less than half the time on preaching and worship leadership (including sermon preparation, funerals, and weddings) than do senior/solo pastors (5 hours compared to 12 hours). Associate leaders spend more time than senior pastors on youth ministry (3 hours per week compared to 1 hour). However, senior/solo pastors report investing more time in visiting members and their families, including the sick and shut-ins in a typical week (4 hours on average compared to 2 hours for associate leaders).



**Table 14**  
**Median Hours in Typical Week Devoted to Ministry Tasks**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Preaching and worship leadership				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	5	6	2	5
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	10	12	12	12
Teaching people about the faith				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	5	4	3	4
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	4	4	4	4
Training people for ministry/mission				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	1	2	2	2
Pastoral counseling/spiritual direction				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	2	2	2	2
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	5	2	2	2
Visiting members, sick, shut-ins				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	3	2	1	2
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	4	4	3	4
Visiting prospective members				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	1	1	2	1
Administration, meetings				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	8	6	8	8
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	11	10	5	8
Denominational, interfaith work				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	1	1	1	1
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	1	2	1	2
Community organizations and issues				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	2	1	1	1
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	2	1	1
Youth ministry				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	2	3	5	3
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	1	1	1
<b>Total hours per week related to congregation</b>				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	45	47	45	45
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	55	50	50	50

**OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**Non-ministry activities during a typical week.** Out of a list of nine other activities, associate leaders report spending the most time with their family—14 hours per week (all figures here are medians). Typically, they spend another 9 hours per week combined on email and text messaging (4 hours) and Internet use (5 hours). Associate leaders also expend another chunk of time watching television (7 hours per week), about the same as senior/solo pastors. Using the Internet and other new technology is negatively associated with age. Senior/solo pastors tend to be older than associate pastors and they report investing fewer hours per week on email, text messaging, and Internet use (see Table 15).

**Table 15**  
**Median Hours in Typical Week Spent in Non-Ministry Activities**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Prayer, meditation, Bible reading				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	7	4	6	5
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	8	4	7	5
Reading (not for sermons/teaching)				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	4	3	3	3
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	3	4	4	4
Using the internet				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	5	6	5	5
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	5	4	4
Email and text messaging				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	3	5	3	4
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	3	3	3
Family life (including meals)				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	8	14	15	14
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	12	10	10
Physical exercise for health				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	2	2	1	2
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	4	3	3	2
Recreation and hobbies				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	3	2	2	2
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	2	2	2	2
Watching television				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	6	7	7	7
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	6	7	6	6
Socializing or eating out with friends				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	3	3	3	3
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	3	2	2	2

**Taking a day off each week.** Almost all associate leaders (92%) take a day off each week. Fewer senior/solo pastors do so—only 82% take a day off each week (see Table 16). Of associates who take a day off each week, Friday is the most popular day to take off (50%), followed by Monday (20%). Many senior/solo pastors who take a day off each week also report taking Friday off (44%), but Monday is also popular (33%).

**Table 16**  
**Percent Who Regularly Take a Day Off Each Week**

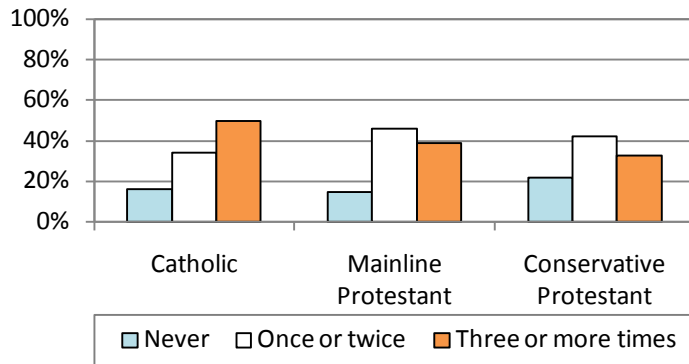
	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
<i>Associate Pastors</i>				
Take a day off	90%	92%	94%	92%
<i>Senior/Solo Pastors</i>				
Take a day off	75%	87%	70%	82%

## PEER GROUP PARTICIPATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The majority of associate pastors meet regularly with other pastoral leaders in small groups for continuing education and support (61%). Catholic and mainline Protestant associate leaders are more likely to take advantage of this form of continuing education (68% and 65% of these associates, respectively). Only about half of conservative Protestant associates (51%) participate regularly in a peer group. Senior or solo pastors are even more likely to meet regularly with other ministers—80% say they are involved in some kind of peer group.

Catholic associate pastors report participating in continuing theological education more often than Protestant associate leaders. Half of Catholic associates said they took part in full-day or longer continuing education opportunities three or more times in the past year. Mainline Protestant associates also took advantage of continuing education events, but typically less often—once or twice in the past year was most common. Conservative Protestant associate pastors were the least likely to be involved in some form of continuing education—one in five reported they had not taken part in such activities in the past year.

**Figure 9**  
**Participation in Continuing Theological Education in Past Year: Associate Pastors**



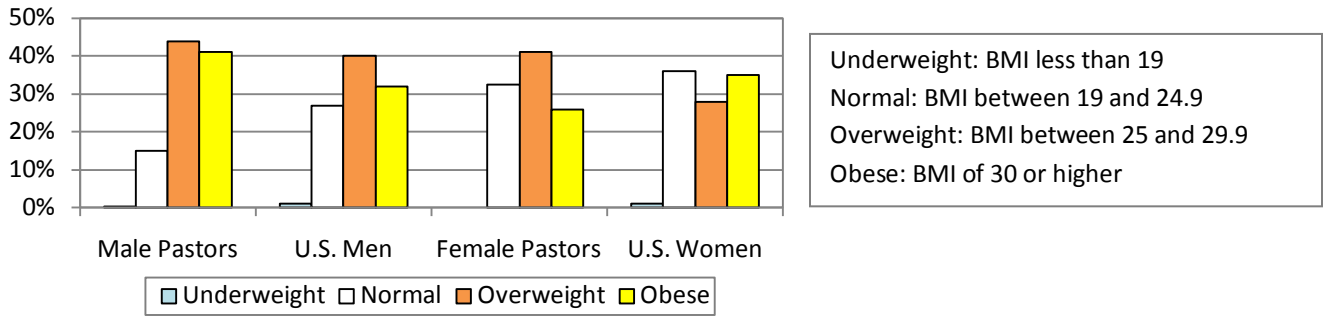
## CLERGY PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Physical health.** One indicator of general health is maintaining a body weight in appropriate proportion to height. Male associate pastors weigh a median of 200 pounds, and have a median height of 5’10”. Their median body mass index (BMI) score is 28.7. A BMI score of 25 or higher indicates that individuals are overweight for their height. Thus, the majority of male associate pastors are overweight.

Female associate pastors weigh a median of 168 pounds, and have a median height of 5’6”. Their median body mass index (BMI) score is 27.3. While most female associate pastors are also overweight, they are slightly less so than the typical male associate leader.

Figure 10 compares the distribution of male and female associate pastors based on their BMI scores with the distribution for the U.S. population in four categories: underweight (BMI scores of less than 19), normal weight (BMI scores between 19 and 24.9), overweight (BMI scores between 25 and 29.9), and obese (BMI scores of 30 or higher). While only 72% of American males are overweight or obese, 85% of male associate pastors fall into this category. Fully 41% of male associate pastors are obese according to their BMI scores (compared to 32% of the male general population).

**Figure 10**  
**Distribution of Associate Pastors Based on Body Mass Index**



Female associate pastors are about as likely to be normal weight as the typical American female (33% vs. 37% for the general population). They are less likely to be obese (26% are) than women in the general population (36% of American women). However, female associates are more likely to fall in the BMI overweight category than American women in general (41% compared to 28%).

It is not clear if individuals who struggle with maintaining a healthy body weight are more likely to enter ministry. Another possibility is that the stress and lifestyle associated with ministry service makes it difficult to find time for exercise or healthier meal preparation.

**Sources of support and stress.** Large majorities of associate and senior/solo leaders indicate that they felt loved and cared for by the people in their congregation “very often” or “fairly often” (see Tables 17 and 18). Two out of three also report that people in the congregation expressed interest and concern about their well-being frequently. Protestant associate pastors were more likely to say that people in the congregation made too many demands on them than Protestant senior/solo pastors (one in five reported they feel this way very often or fairly often compared to 15% of senior/solo leaders). Associate pastors have two “bosses” to please—the people in the congregation and the senior pastor. Some associates (one in ten) also report that the senior pastor made too many demands on them “very often” or “fairly often.”

**Table 17**  
**Sources of Support and Stress for Associate Pastors**  
 (% Responding Very or Fairly Often)

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Made you feel loved and cared for				
<i>People in congregation</i>	88%	91%	84%	88%
<i>Senior/solo pastor</i>	65%	73%	78%	74%
Expressed interest and concerns about your well-being				
<i>People in congregation</i>	64%	70%	55%	63%
<i>Senior/solo pastor</i>	58%	69%	73%	68%
Made too many demands on you				
<i>People in congregation</i>	17%	22%	22%	21%
<i>Senior/solo pastor</i>	13%	11%	13%	12%

**Table 18**  
**Sources of Support and Stress for Senior/Solo Pastors**  
**(% Responding Very or Fairly Often)**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Made you feel loved and cared for <i>People in congregation</i>	92%	85%	77%	83%
Expressed interest in and concern about your well-being <i>People in congregation</i>	70%	72%	61%	69%
Made too many demands on you <i>People in congregation</i>	23%	17%	14%	17%

We explored six areas that reflect sources of stress (such as challenges they face in the congregation, loneliness or isolation, dealing with critical members or the senior pastor) or consequences of stress (such as considering leaving the ministry) (see Table 19).

**Table 19**  
**During the Past Year, How Often Have You . . .**  
**(% Responding Very or Fairly Often)**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
Experienced stress because of challenges you face in this congregation <i>Associate pastors</i>	27%	48%	51%	50%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	39%	37%	32%	35%
Felt lonely and isolated in your work <i>Associate pastors</i>	15%	22%	20%	20%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	12%	20%	25%	21%
Seriously thought of leaving pastoral ministry to enter a secular occupation <i>Associate pastors</i>	3%	9%	7%	8%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	4%	5%	10%	6%
Experienced stress as a result of dealing with critical members <i>Associate pastors</i>	6%	11%	11%	11%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	16%	14%	12%	13%
Experienced stress as a result of dealing with senior pastor <i>Associate pastors</i>	9%	21%	8%	14%
Experienced stress because senior leader was critical of work <i>Associate pastors</i>	5%	3%	*	2%

\* = less than 0.5%; rounds to zero

About half of Protestant associate pastors said they experienced stress very or fairly often because of the challenges they face in their congregation. About one-third of senior/solo pastors experienced this as a

source of stress very or fairly often. Almost equal percentages of senior/solo pastors and associates felt lonely and isolated in their work very or fairly often (one in five). Fewer pastors experienced stress very or fairly often from dealing with critical members. One in ten reported this as a source of stress. Finally, there were few differences in how often associate and senior/solo pastors consider leaving pastoral ministry (fewer than one in ten think about it very or fairly often).

Associate pastors face many of the same stress factors as senior/solo pastors. But they face one additional potential source of stress—their relationship with the senior pastor. Most Catholic and conservative Protestant associate pastors do not report this as a frequent source of stress (fewer than one in ten). However, one in five mainline Protestant associate leaders say they have experienced stress as a result of dealing with their senior pastor. Yet very few of them report regularly experiencing stress because the senior leader criticizes their work.

### LEADERSHIP AS A “GOOD MATCH” TO THE CONGREGATION

We asked pastors if there was a good match between their congregation and their leadership. More than half of Catholic and mainline Protestant associate pastors “strongly agree” with that statement. Unfortunately, conservative Protestant associates were less positive about their fit with the congregation. Only one in three of these pastors strongly agree that they are a good match for the congregation (see Table 20).

**Table 20**  
**Good Match between Congregation and Leadership**  
**(% Responding Strongly Agree)**

	Catholic	Mainline Protestant	Conservative Protestant	Total
In general, there is a good match between this congregation and my leadership				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	57%	54%	29%	46%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	29%	53%	42%	45%
In general, there is a good match between my leadership and the senior pastor				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	65%	50%	37%	48%
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in ministry here				
<i>Associate pastors</i>	58%	51%	41%	49%
<i>Senior/solo pastors</i>	52%	32%	35%	34%

The results from senior/solo pastors to the same question are also reflected in Table 20. Compared to Catholic associate pastors, fewer Catholic priests report a good match (only 29% said strongly agree). The match was evaluated about the same by mainline Protestant associates and senior/solo pastors. Conservative Protestant senior/solo pastors are more positive about their situation (42% strongly agree that it is a good match) than conservative Protestant associates.

Associates in conservative Protestant churches were the least likely among all associate pastors to say there is a good match between their leadership and the senior pastor.

Despite stress, challenges, and leadership style differences, many pastors nonetheless feel they are able to accomplish worthwhile things in their ministry with the congregation. About half of all associate pastors strongly agree with a statement that suggests a high level of satisfaction with their ministry accomplishments (see Table 20). Again, conservative Protestant associates are the least satisfied with the situation in their congregation and what they have been able to accomplish. Among senior/solo clergy, pastors in mainline and conservative Protestant congregations are less satisfied with what they have accomplished in their ministry (only about one in three strongly agree).