

Clergy Wellbeing in the United Church of Christ

Findings from the Flourishing in Ministry Project

Overview

In February 2017, the UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Data (CARD) collaborated with the University of Notre Dame's Wellbeing at Work research initiative for clergy called "Flourishing in Ministry." Over a 10-day period, surveys were distributed to all UCC Authorized Ministers and Members in Discernment. In total, 1,200 Authorized Ministers/MIDs completed the survey. The following presents a summary of the key findings from survey responses. The full report can be found at www.ucc.org/research within the "Statistics and Reports" menu section.

Key Findings

- ✚ Ministers spend an average of about **48 hours per week** engaging in ministry-related work. Over two-thirds of these hours are spent in the following four areas: preaching and worship, congregant care and other caring activities, leadership and coordination, and administrative tasks and church activities.
- ✚ On various measures of wellbeing, UCC Authorized Ministers/MIDs are **flourishing most** in the areas of *fit with their work role, job satisfaction, resilience, and thriving (self-perceived success)*.
- ✚ On these same measures, ministers/MIDs are **more challenged** in the areas of *satisfaction with both their work life and life in general, burnout, and support in personal relationships*, though they are still doing moderately well in these areas.
- ✚ In general, UCC Authorized Ministers/MIDs show levels of wellbeing that are **similar or identical to all clergy surveyed**, regardless of denomination.
- ✚ Despite these positive findings regarding wellbeing, in the past year **over half (53%) of UCC ministers/ MIDs have seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry** at least once or twice, sometimes more often.
- ✚ This may be due, in part, to the amount of stress ministers experience in their work—85% report at least a **moderate amount of stress** in their ministry work, with some reporting a lot of stress.
- ✚ In terms of gender differences, **females report being more overwhelmed** and having more difficulty in managing all of their work tasks when compared to men. (In part, this may be due to women being more likely to have more than one role and more part-time or bi-vocational roles.)

WELLBEING MEASURE AVERAGES

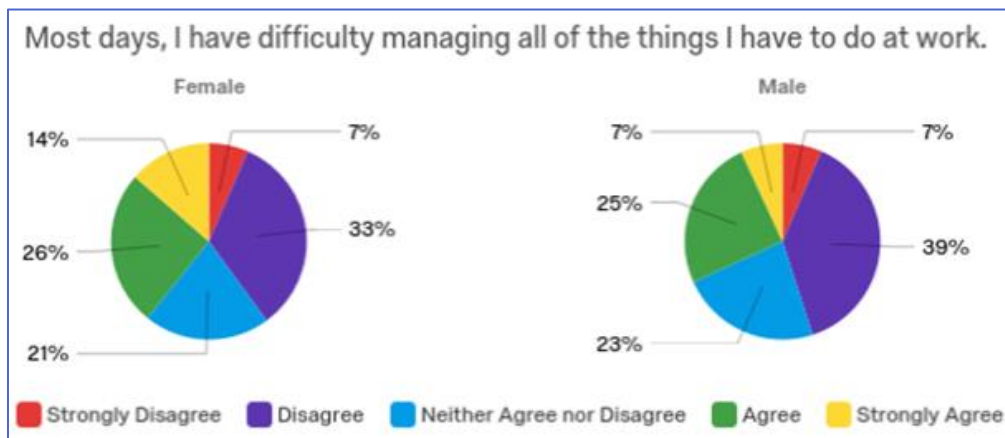
Wellbeing Measure	Averages for UCC	Average for all (PASTORS)
FIT	4.08	4.08
Satisfaction with Work Life	3.23	3.60
Job Satisfaction	4.05	4.04
Burnout	3.41	3.41
Resilience	4.14	4.14
Satisfaction with Life	3.69	3.68
General Happiness	3.99	3.98
Job Engagement	3.91	3.90
Thriving	4.19	4.20
Relationships	3.70	3.90

A score 3 or lower is of concern – action should be considered.

A score above 3 – 4 is moderate.

A score above 4 is good and considered flourishing

OVER →



- ✦ However, **females also report finding more meaning** in their calling, more general satisfaction with their vocation(s), and are guided more by their religious/spiritual beliefs to give their life meaning and inform their ministry.
- ✦ As a whole, over one-third of those surveyed reported that **the income from their ministry** work alone was not sufficient to meet their family needs.
- ✦ Eight major themes were present in the survey comments:
 - ✦ Financial strains
 - ✦ Family/personal relationships
 - ✦ Calling
 - ✦ Congregational relationship(s)
 - ✦ Retirement or transition
 - ✦ Part-time and bi-vocational strains
 - ✦ Stress and mental health
 - ✦ Restorative niches

Additional information about each of these themes, as well as detailed statistics about the findings, is available in the full report at www.ucc.org/research (in the “Statistics and Report” menu tab).

Reflection Questions for Congregations

1. How many hours a week do you think your pastor works? How many hours do they actually work, and do you believe that they are compensated fairly for their service?
2. In what ways do you observe your pastor both thriving and being challenged? Are they similar to, or different than, the ways that the majority of UCC ministers reported thriving and being challenged?
3. How might you as a congregation support your minister in faith-filled ways in order to alleviate stress and avoid burnout? And, if your pastor identifies with one or more historically underrepresented or oppressed groups (by gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, etc.), how might you offer additional support to them? (Hint: You may want to ask them!)

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