

2021

Pastoral Mental Health Report



About Faithlife

Since 1992, Faithlife Corporation has grown from a couple of programmers in a basement into the largest developer of Bible study software and a worldwide leader in multilingual electronic publishing. We partner with more than 500 publishers to make more than 120,000 Bible study resources available to customers around the world.

Today, Faithlife is proud to have built the world's first integrated ministry platform, which houses everything church leaders need to engage and disciple their communities online. Whether you're a small group leader looking to host a video chat discussion with your small group, a communications director looking to ship your latest newsletter, or a bookkeeper keeping track of your church's giving, Faithlife's integrated ministry platform is the robust tech stack you need to do the critical work of the church.

Best of all, as the makers of Logos Bible Software, we built the entire platform around Scripture, so you can always keep the main thing the main thing.

One platform. One login. Infinite possibilities.

About Church Communications

Katie Allred and Kenny Jahng lead the Church Communications community and Facebook Group. And they want to help you become a church communication expert.

In order to do that, you need a peer network that helps you become better at your job. The problem: you are swamped and the expectations on you are incredibly high—this makes you feel overwhelmed and overlooked. Katie and Kenny believe you shouldn't have to do ministry alone.

They understand because they've worked in the church too, which is why Church Communications is now a community with over 29,000 members who are ready to support and cheer you on.

Join in and start learning.

1. Connect and subscribe to get resources.
2. Engage in the community.
3. Lead with confidence.

So, join the community. So you can stop working without a plan and instead communicate better, tell your church's best story, and see your church grow. Learn more at <http://www.churchcommunications.com/group>

About the Report

Being a Christian has never been easy. Jesus told his disciples about the difficult road that leads to life (Mt 7:14), and he wasn't kidding. Being a pastor is even more challenging—shepherding God's people amidst your own struggles isn't for the faint of heart.

In the past year, however, pastors have faced new and deepening difficulties, from the spread of COVID-19, moving online to stop the virus' spread, social and political unrest, and more. We knew it would take a toll on pastors, but we weren't sure how it would look.

Here at Faithlife, makers of Logos Bible Software, we've served pastors for nearly 30 years, and we wanted to find out how pastors are doing and how they feel about the future. So we partnered with Church Communications to find out.

We surveyed 345 pastors in 27 countries (74% US, 9% Canada, 5% Australia and New Zealand, and 12% international). These pastors represented a wide range of church sizes, denominations, and roles within the church. Keep reading to learn what we discovered.

About the Respondents

Title

| | |
|--|-----|
| - Teaching pastor | 45% |
| - Executive pastor | 26% |
| - Family/youth/discipleship pastor or minister | 18% |
| - Worship pastor | 4% |
| - Counseling pastor or minister | 2% |

Church Size

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| - 1-49 | 23% |
| - 50-149 | 32% |
| - 150-349 | 23% |
| - 350-749 | 11% |
| - 750-1,499 | 4% |
| - 1,500+ | 4% |
| - Did not specify | 3% |

Time in current role

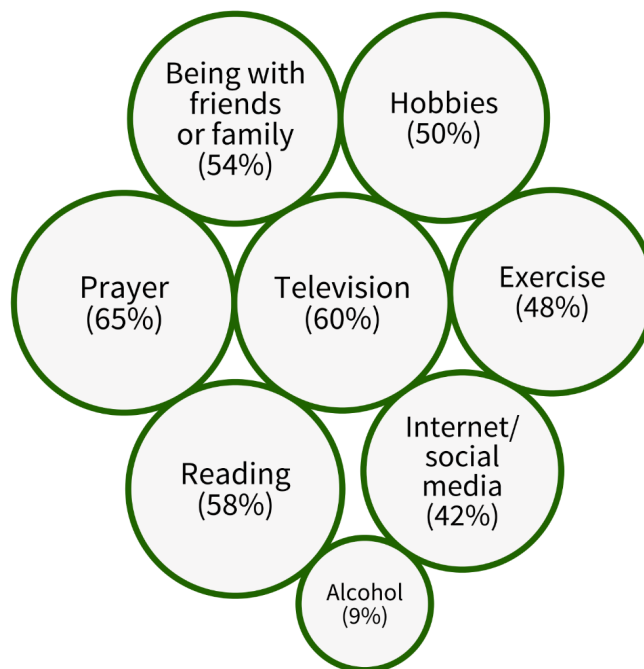
| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| - Less than a year | 9% |
| - 1-3 years | 24% |
| - 4-6 years | 28% |
| - 7-10 years | 9% |
| - More than 10 years | 31% |

Pastors and Stress Management

Being a pastor is already stressful, but with so many compounding elements in the past year, we wanted to learn how they deal with stress.

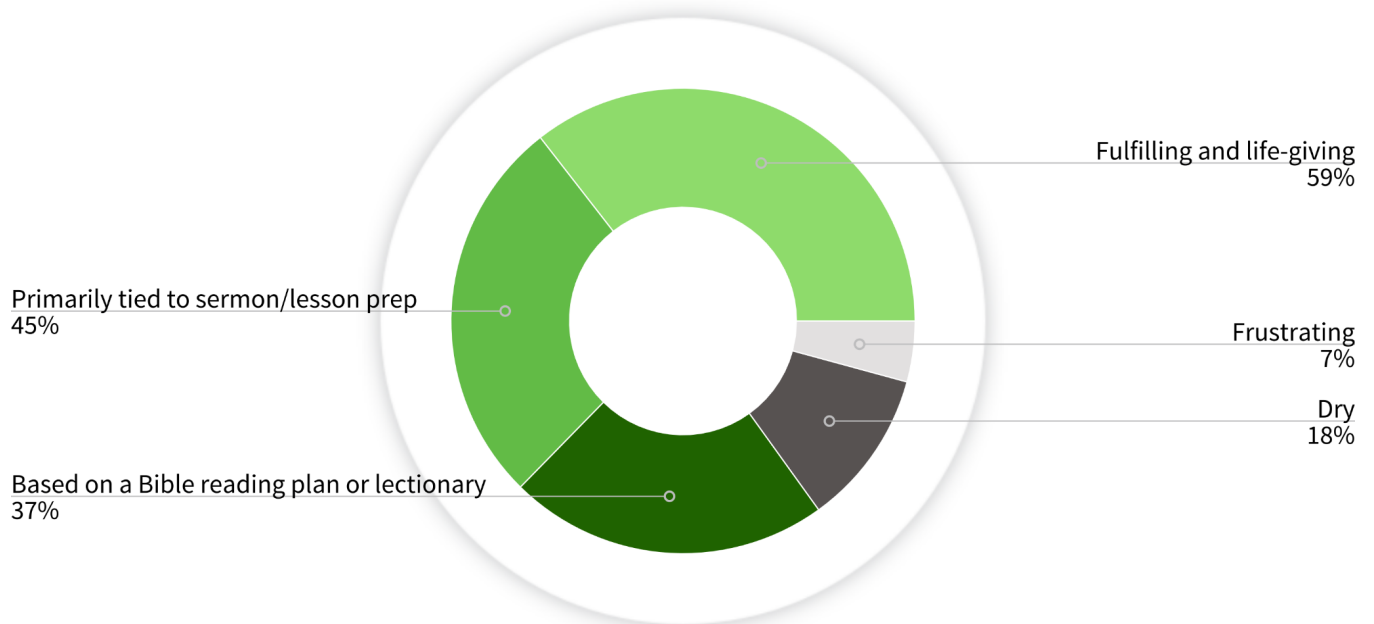
When things get stressful, how do you unwind?

The top four stress-relievers for pastors are prayer (65%), television (60%), reading (58%), being with friends or family (54%), and hobbies (50%).



What is your time in Scripture like?

Just under half (45%) of pastors reported their time in Scripture and prayer is primarily tied to their sermon or lesson preparation. Nearly 1 in 5 pastors (18%) report that their time in Scripture is dry, while over half say it's fulfilling and life-giving (59%).

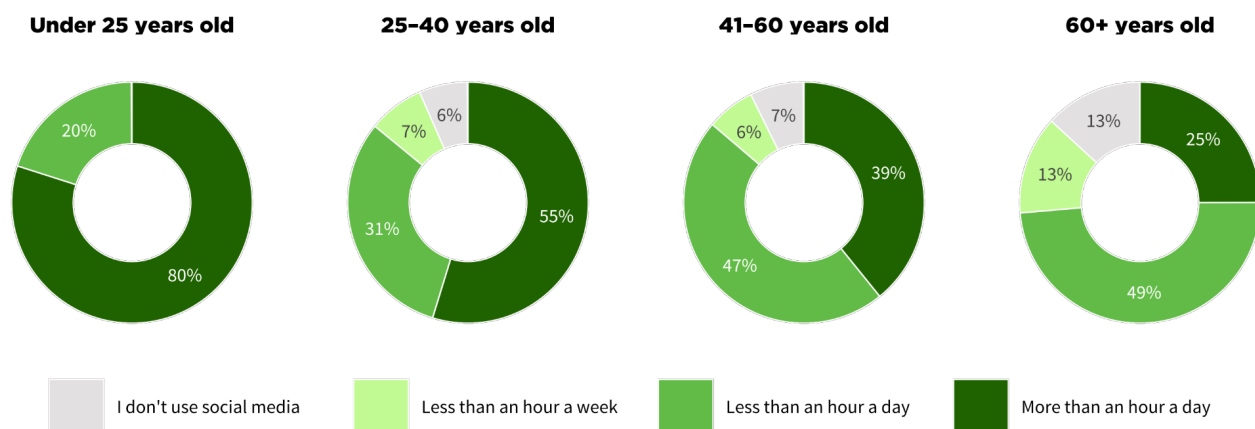


How much time do you spend on social media?

In a chart above, 42% of pastors said they go to the internet or social media for stress relief. Here, 2/5 of pastors (41%) reported spending more than an hour a day on social media sites. Only 8% of pastors don't use social media at all.

The amount of time pastors spend on social media is highly correlated with their age, as demonstrated in the following graph.

Time spent on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram by age

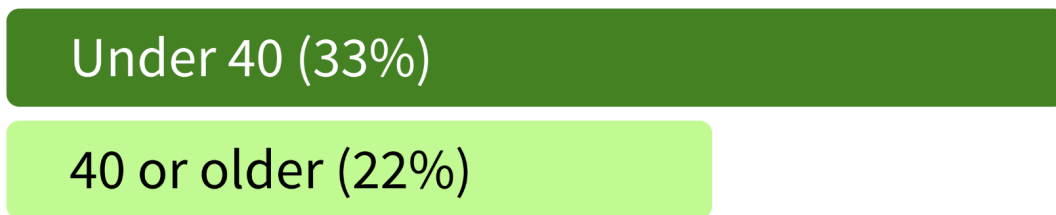


Young pastors engage more on social media sites, with 80% of pastors under 25 spending over an hour each day on social media. While that number drops with each subsequent age bracket, pastors of all ages still use social media regularly. Interestingly, 25% of pastors over 60 spend more than an hour daily on social media, and another 49% report regular usage (less than an hour a day but more than an hour a week).

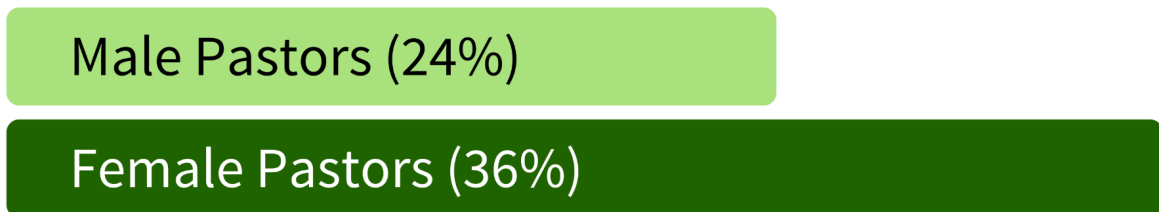
Did you see a counselor in the last year?

Just over 1 in 4 pastors saw a counselor in the past year (27%). Pastors under 40 were 11% more likely to have seen a counselor, and 12% more female pastors reported seeing a counselor than male.

Age



Gender



0% 10% 20% 30%

12% of pastors considered suicide in the past year

In a staggering statistic, more than 1 in 10 pastors admitted to contemplating suicide in the past year. Eighty-six percent of pastors reported no suicidal thoughts recently, and 2% chose not to respond.

Pastors and Their Relationships

Pastoring is relational work. Not only do pastors spend all day caring for people in their congregations (whether it's through planning, meetings, or sermon prep), but they also have essential relationships to maintain among family and friends. Pastors pour out a lot—but who is pouring into them?

What is your largest unmet need?

On this open-ended question, the pastors surveyed answered remarkably similarly. Over 45% of responses fell into the top 5 needs listed below.

1. Volunteer/Staff/Elder Support
2. Friendship
3. Time
4. Appreciation & Encouragement
5. Rest & Vacation

These responses are illuminating. In the graph above, 19% of pastors noted that their greatest unmet need is sharing responsibilities with elders or staff, and another 17% said friendship is their greatest need.

But compare this to the graphs below, in which 80% of pastors reported having friends they can confide in, and yet, friendship is the second largest unmet need. Many responses described the need for nonjudgmental and safe people to talk with.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

I have a network of other pastors/ministers in my region or denomination I can ask for advice or support.



Additionally, well over half of pastors (62%) affirm that they have a network of pastors they can ask for advice or support, and 82% agree that they have friends they can confide in when times are tough. It appears that, for some pastors, their relational needs are greater than their support systems.

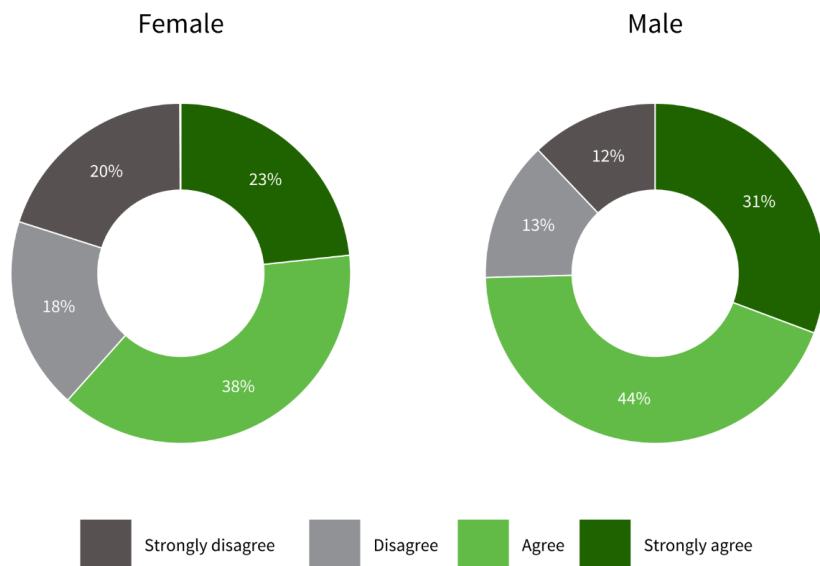
Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

I have friends I can confide in when things get difficult.



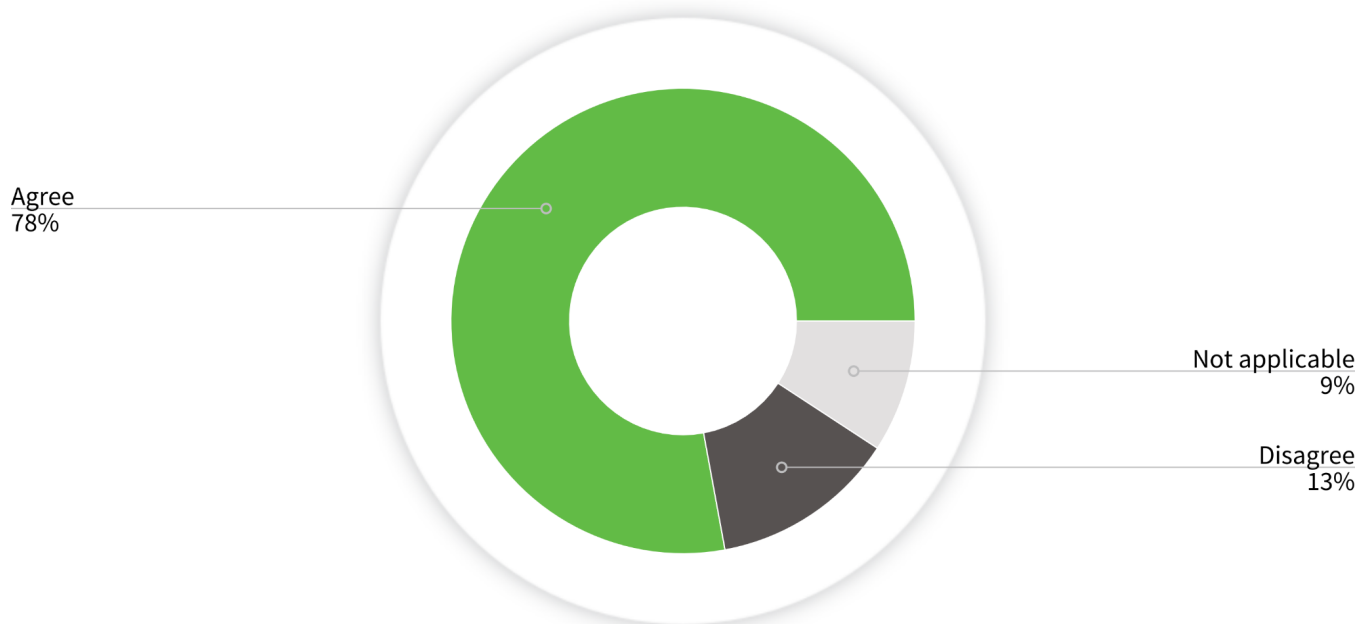
Women are slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree that they have trusted friends (85% of women to 80% of men, results not shown), yet significantly more women (38%) said they don't have a network of supportive pastors or ministers compared to 25% of men.

I have a network of other pastors/ministers in my region or denomination I can ask for advice or support.



Is your marriage healthy and thriving?

Over 3/4 of pastors (78%) reported having a healthy marriage, while just over 1 in 10 pastors reported marital struggles.



Pastors and Their Work

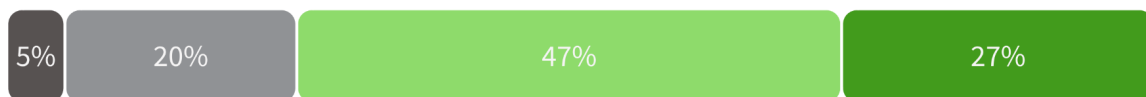
Pastors get a lot of feedback about their work, whether people are asking theological questions, disagreeing with how the church handled an issue, or encouraging their leaders. (There's a reason pastors joke so much in their sermons about expecting emails later in the week!) While encouraging or discouraging words can contribute to a pastor's job satisfaction, that's not the only thing that makes them feel optimistic (or pessimistic) about their coming year in ministry.

Do pastors feel appreciated or criticized by their congregations?

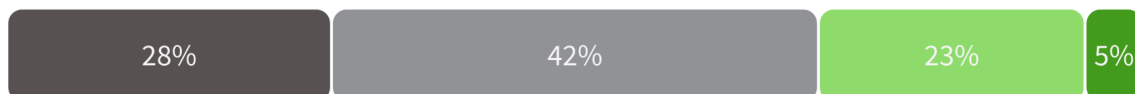
Nearly 3/4 of pastors feel appreciated by their congregations, and just over 1/4 feel criticized. However, some pastors agreed or strongly agreed with both—they feel appreciated and criticized.

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

I feel appreciated by my congregation.



I feel criticized by my congregation.



Are pastors burned out?

Around 35% of pastors reported feeling burned out. Additionally, pastors aged 25–40 reported the highest levels of burnout, with 40% saying they agree or strongly agree to feeling constantly burned out. This is nearly double the rate at which pastors aged 60+ reported feeling burned out (21%). Further, 31% of male pastors reported burnout, compared to 40% of female pastors.

I almost always feel burned out

Strongly disagree Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Age: Under 25



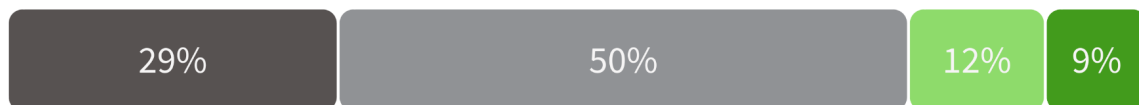
Age: 25–40



Age: 41–60

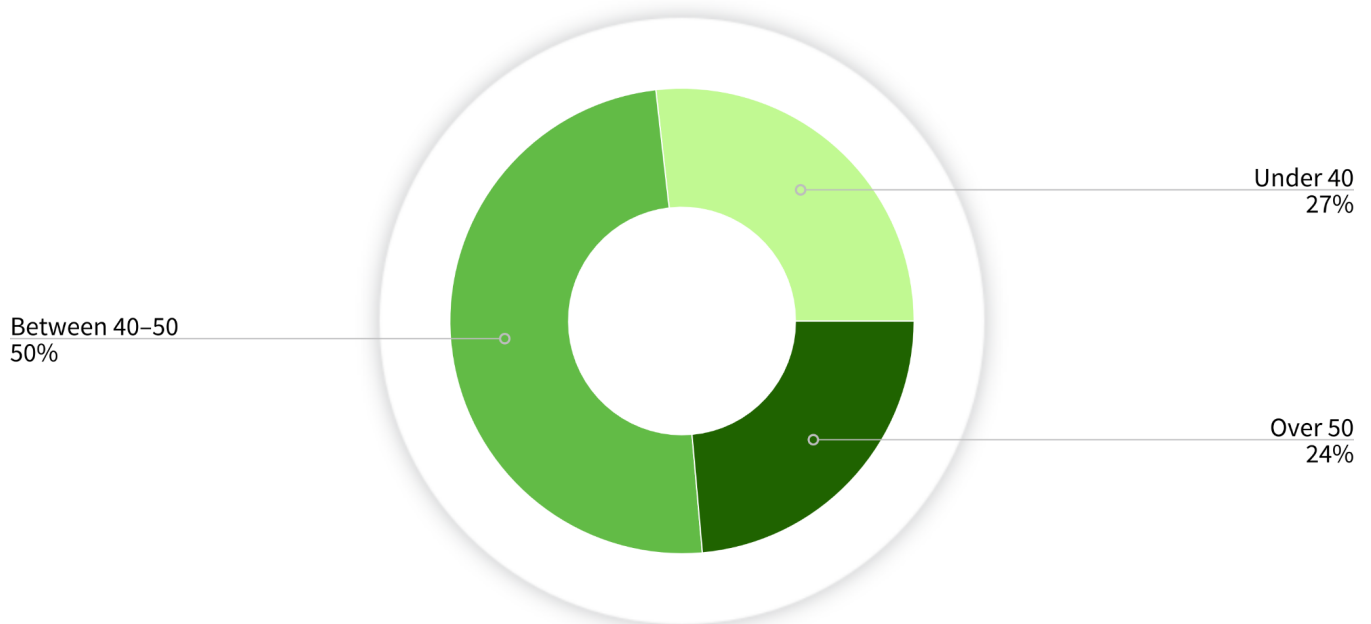


Age: 60+



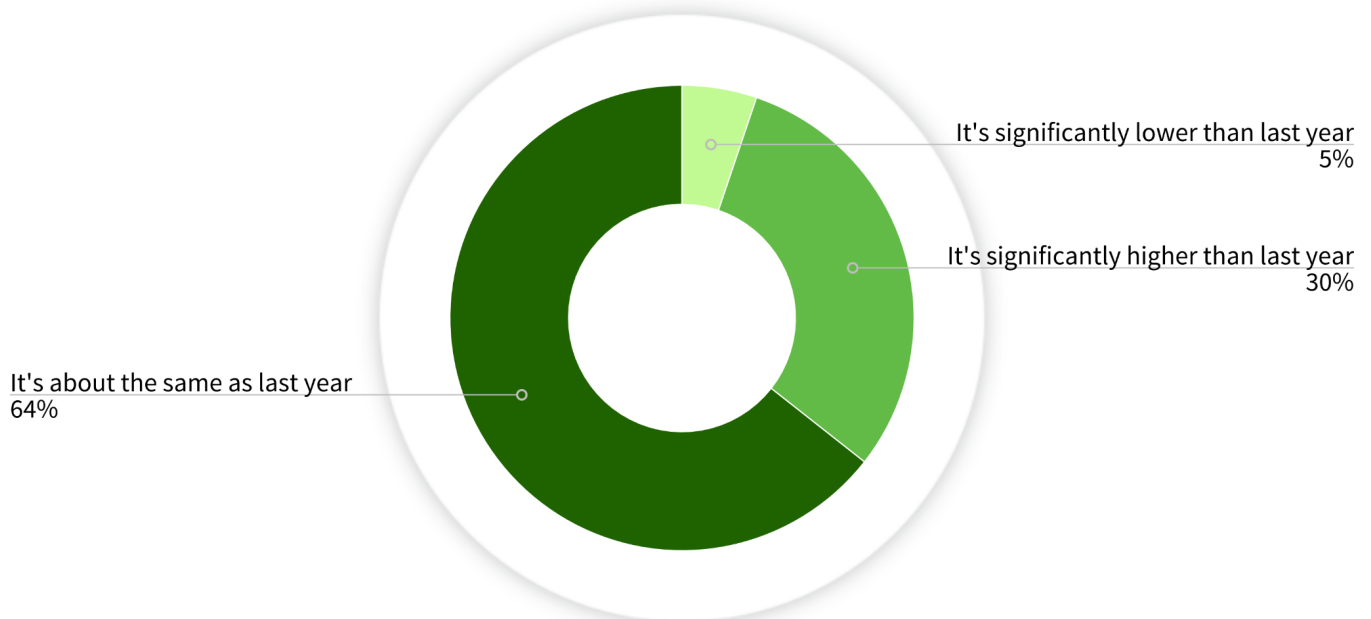
How many hours do you spend on church work per week?

Nearly 75% of pastors spend 40 or more hours per week on church work. Teaching pastors were most likely to report working over 50 hours a week (28%) while worship pastors were the least likely (13%). Executive and counseling pastors were the most likely to report working between 40–50 hours per week (55% compared to the overall average of 50% shown above).



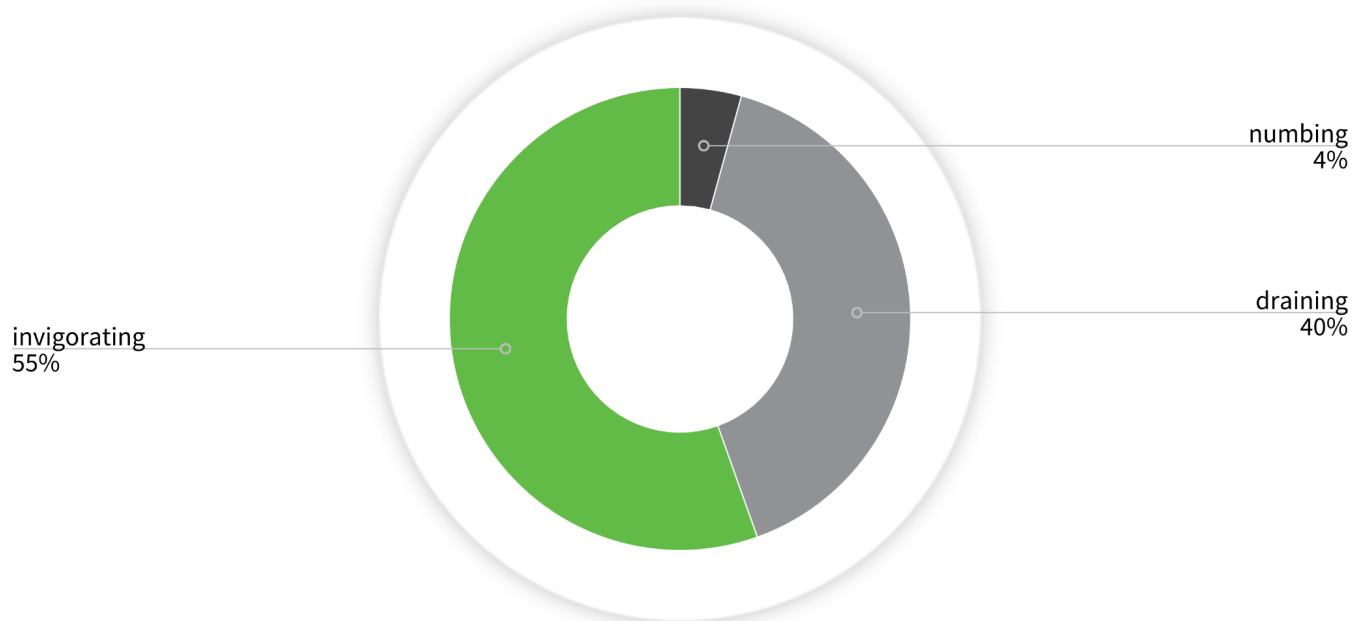
How does the total of your average working hours compare to last year?

Around one-third (30%) of pastors reported working more hours in the past year, while well over half (64%) report no significant change to the amount of time they work each week.



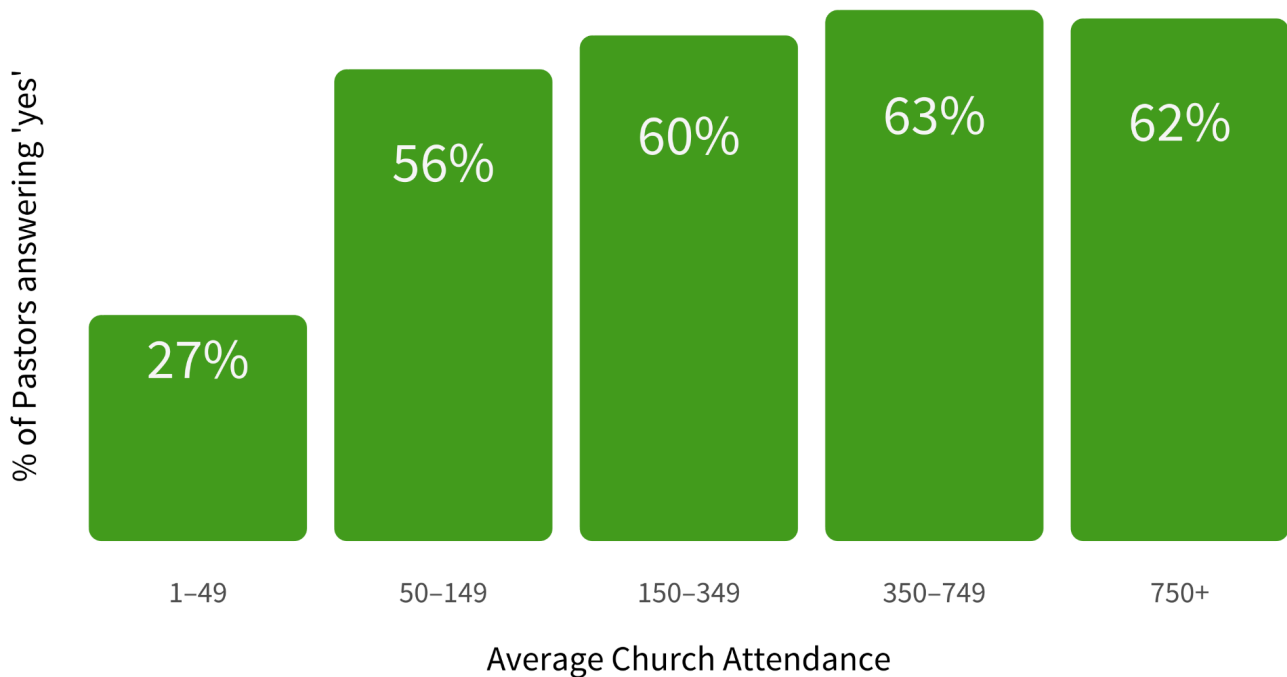
Do you find offering pastoral care invigorating or draining?

Giving pastoral care for those who need spiritual or emotional support is a heavy endeavor. In their responses, many people noted how pastoral care is a mix of highs and lows, though the majority find it more invigorating (55%) than draining (45%).



Do you have people you can rely on in your work?

Ministry can be solitary work, especially in small churches. Only 1 in 4 pastors in churches with attendance under 50 have paid staff or trusted volunteers they can rely on so they don't have to do everything themselves. Pastors in medium (50–349) or larger (350+) churches have greater support from staff and volunteers.

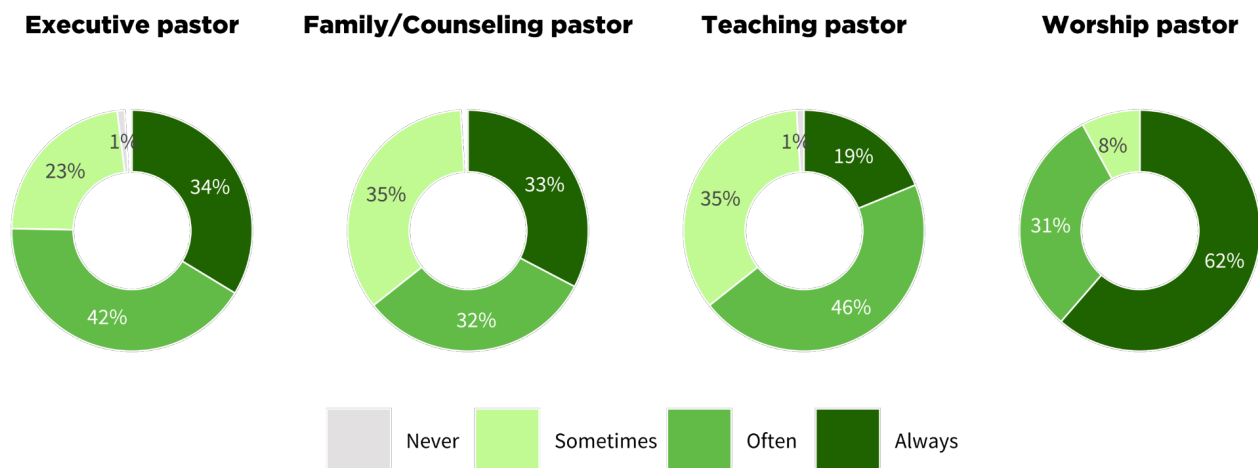


Do you rely on technology or software to accomplish the majority of your church-related work?

Worship pastors rely most on technology for church-related work (62% report always using technology). This makes sense, since they are often responsible for using software like [Faithlife Proclaim](#) for weekend slides, song arrangements, and other related tasks.

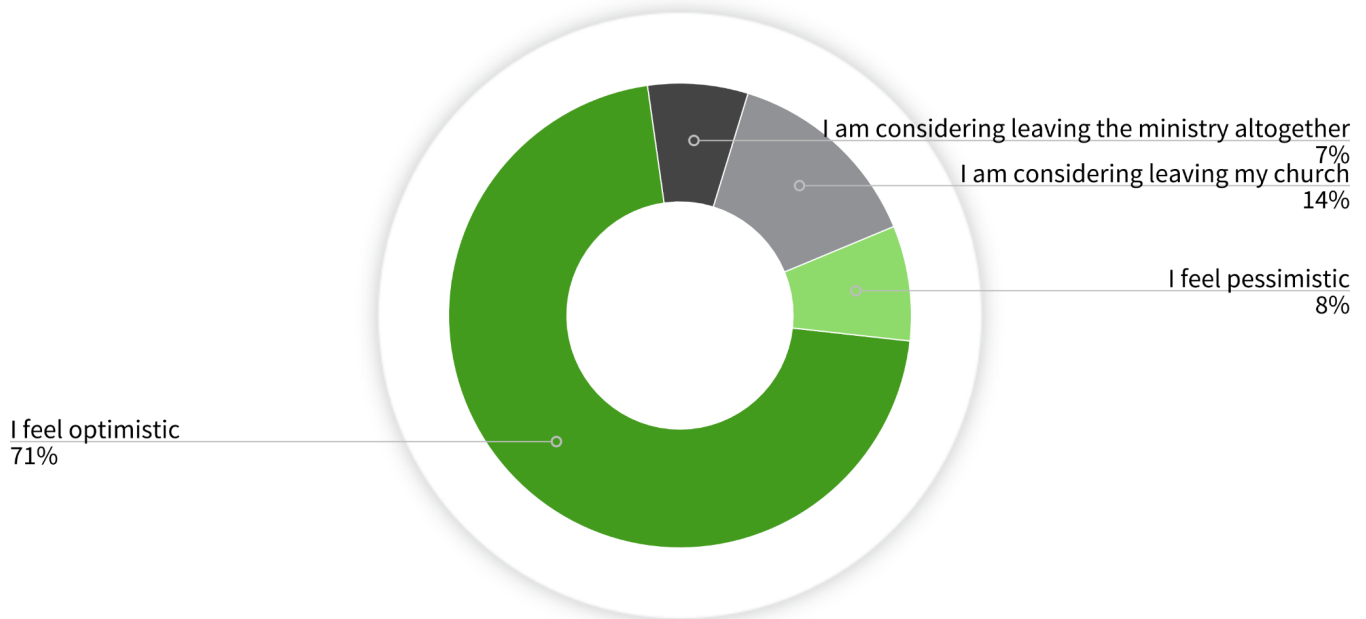
Teaching pastors report the lowest use of technology for ministry work, with only 19% saying they always use it.

However, less than 1% of pastors report never using technology for their ministry work.



How do pastors feel about the upcoming year in ministry?

The overwhelming majority of pastors feel optimistic about their next year in ministry. However, 29% expressed concerns. Of those, 14% are considering leaving their church, 7% are considering leaving ministry altogether, and 8% reported general pessimism about the upcoming year.



While some of the numbers above seem dire, God is still working in the Church and the hearts of his people. Initiatives like the [Thrive and Cultivate Summit](#) by Church Communications are shedding light on how pastors can care for hurting people in their congregations while also paying attention to their own needs.

If the report above shows us anything, it's that pastors need more support than they realize. More staff and volunteers, more friends, more time, and more

encouragement. (Thank a pastor the next time you see them.)

That's why we at Faithlife have been building the world's first integrated ministry platform, software that has all the apps and discipleship resources churches need. Faithlife Equip gives pastors a break from the busywork they can too easily sink time into. From following up with guests or people who need care to managing the website and events, Equip automates everyday work so pastors can focus on what matters.

Faithlife Equip comes with [Logos Bible Software](#), which gives pastors tools to make sermon planning, prep, presentations, and preaching simpler. Logos has built-in Workflows that help pastors research and write their sermons—while inviting them to slow down and digest the truths they're studying. Logos also includes the Sermon Manager (a tool to plan sermons in advance and review past sermons), Sermon Builder (which puts sermon writing and research in the same place, and then creates slides to send to Faithlife Proclaim), and Preaching Mode (which lets you preach from your notes without printing them off).

We've helped thousands of churches of all sizes, and we're here to help you care for yourself and your congregation.

[See how Faithlife Equip can help you make time for what matters.](#)

And don't forget to join the [churchcommunications.com](#) community of 29,000+ church leaders—a place where you can find connection, encouragement, and inspiration.

