



Findings of the Flourishing in Ministry Study: Ministry Personnel Wellbeing in The United Church of Canada



Overview

The Flourishing in Ministry study was designed and implemented by the Wellbeing at Work research group under the leadership of Dr. Matthew Bloom of the University of Notre Dame (see wellbeing.nd.edu/flourishing-in-ministry). It examines leaders from across the ecumenical spectrum. United Church ministry personnel were invited to participate in the Flourishing in Ministry survey in February 2018. There were 520 completed responses received. The margin of error is 4.25% (with a 95% confidence level).

We hope the results will allow us to gain greater insights into the vitality of our ministry personnel. The results will be helpful in guiding the development of policies and programs for flourishing ministry personnel in our church.

The researchers of the Flourishing in Ministry project break wellbeing into four key dimensions:

A. Everyday Happiness B. Resilience C. Self-integrity D. Thriving

You can find the full report from the Wellbeing at Work research group on the United Church Commons (<https://commons.united-church.ca>) in the Governance > PC-MEPS folder.

Positive Insights

Everyday Happiness

Job satisfaction

85% find enjoyment in ministry work
80% are enthusiastic about ministry work

General happiness

94% are as happy or happier than peers

Resilience

Resilience

89% bounce back after hardship
90% achieve goals despite obstacles

Burnout

No significant signs

Self-integrity

Fit

83% report that values are a good match
85% don't have a lot of disagreement with the congregation about best way to do things

Authenticity at work

93% say ministry is what they are meant to do

Job Engagement

97% have grown and developed in ministry

Work as calling

88% agree that work feels like calling in life

Thriving

Thriving

95% find ministry deeply meaningful

Social support

Strong support from partners, family, friends (clergy and non-clergy), and congregations

Spiritual wellbeing

96% find their religious beliefs give meaning
75% participate in private spiritual practice two or more times a week
96% experience the presence of God

Concerns

Everyday Happiness

Job satisfaction & work engagement

54% considered leaving pastoral ministry in past year

Females are less likely to be satisfied with their role in ministry

Satisfaction with life

Females less likely to agree that life is close to ideal and that life conditions are excellent

Work stress

86% experience stress in ministry work

Financial worries

61% find ministry income insufficient to meet family needs

37% find it difficult to live on total household income

68% worry about personal finances

Thriving

Thriving

62% are optimistic about their future in ministry

Social support

41% feel little or no support from denominational leaders

Meaning in life

Females less likely to have a clear sense of purpose in ministry work

(NB: A mandatory survey question was on the respondent's gender – with only binary options. If we had designed the survey ourselves, we would not have used a binary option to report one's gender. Thus, gendered results are differentiated between those who identified on the survey as female and those who identified on the survey as male.)

Self-integrity

Core self-evaluation

Half do not feel in control of their work

Resilience

Work family balance

55% work 41 hours or more per week

16% work 51 hours or more per week

Females more likely to say ministry work reduces effort to home activities every day

Major Themes from Survey Comments

The researchers asked one open-ended question at the end of the survey: "Is there anything you would like to share about your current situation or wellbeing?" They coded these qualitative responses into five significant theme areas:

- financial strains
- making time away from work
- changing church culture
- part-time or bi-vocational
- stress and health issues

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways do you observe your minister thriving and/or being challenged? Are they similar or different to the majority of United Church ministers in this study?
2. How might you support your minister in faith-filled ways to alleviate stress and flourish in ministry?
3. How many hours a week do you think your minister works? Do you believe that they are compensated fairly for their service?



For more information

Contact the Rev. Adam Hanley, Program Coordinator for Ministry Personnel Vitality, at the General Council Office: ahanley@united-church.ca or 416-231-7680 / 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3147.

