

2021 Survey of COVID Pandemic Impact on Personal/Family Finances of Pastors in the USA & Canada

Synopsis of Results

The COVID pandemic has had an impact on the personal finances of 73% of our US and Canadian Nazarene pastors, with 45% of pastors reporting a negative impact and only 18% reporting a positive impact. Despite the negative impact on 45% of the pastors, only 18% reported that the state of their personal finances was in “some” to “serious” difficulty. Yet, that is still approximately 1 out of every 5 pastors having financial difficulties, and 2 out of 5 reporting that their finances are “tight but [they are] managing.” Additionally, 20% of pastors expect their financial situations to be “a little worse” to “a lot worse” over the next 12-18 months.

Analysis of the negative impacts from the COVID pandemic, revealed three primary negative impacts. These are 1) increased financial responsibility for others, 2) increased personal/family debt, and 3) decreased income for the pastor. Nearly half of the pastors reported an increase in monthly expenses of 10% or more, and 1 out of 3 pastors had a loss of income of 20% or more. Therefore, it is not surprising that more than half of the pastors incurred additional debt during the pandemic, with 1 out of 3 pastors accruing more than \$1,000 of additional debt.

Further analysis of the survey results by racial groups revealed the same three primary negative impacts for white/Anglo pastors and the minority pastors. However, the degree of impact on minority pastors was significantly greater than the impact on the white pastors. White pastors were twice as likely to report no impact or a positive impact on their personal/family finances from the pandemic than their minority colleagues. In fact, 71% of minority pastors reported a negative impact while only 39% of white pastors reported a negative impact.

In describing their current personal/family financial situations, minority pastors were twice as likely as white pastors to say they were having “some” or “serious” difficulty, and minority pastors were half as likely to say their finances were “good” or “excellent.” Actually, none of the minority ministers described their finances as “excellent.”

Additional analyses of the survey data uncovered a significant difference in negative impacts on pastors from different sized churches. Pastors in churches with less than 50 in average worship attendance were more likely to report the negative impact of decreased income for the pastor

than those in churches of 50 or more. Interestingly, pastors in churches with average worship attendance of 50-99 were more likely than those in larger and smaller churches to experience an increased financial responsibility for others.

Differences between the ministerial role of Pastor and Associate Pastor became apparent in the negative impact of increased monthly expenses. Associate Pastors were more likely to report no increase in monthly expenses than Pastors, and Pastors were more likely to report increases of 30% or more. Also, ministers under the age of 40 were less likely to be in the role of Pastor.

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In the analysis of those who reported a positive impact on their finances from the pandemic, nearly half of the Pastors (43%) reported a decrease in personal/family debt, whereas only 9% of Associate Pastors reported a decrease. It also revealed that ministers in their 40s and 50s were less likely to have been positively impacted by the CARES Act stimulus checks than other age groups, and they were more likely to have been positively impacted by additional employment for themselves.

This survey of the impact of the COVID pandemic on the personal/family finances of our US and Canadian pastors brings to light the fact that our non-white Nazarene ministers have experienced, and are experiencing, a more significant negative impact than our white ministers. It also revealed a decrease of income and an increase in expenses for Nazarene ministers serving in churches with an average worship attendance of less than 100. These are two groups of Nazarene ministers who could benefit from financial assistance.

SURVEY DETAILS AND RESULTS

Methodology

A random sample of 1,000 pastors and 500 associates were selected to receive a survey from the COMPASS Initiative concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their personal/family finances. The survey was provided in English and Spanish. Of the 1,500 in the total sample, 1,366 were actually deliverable by email. The initial email invitation was sent August 4, 2021, and follow-up emails were sent on August 9 and August 12. A total of 173 responses were received between August 4-21, for a response rate of 12.7%.

Email Invitation

Dear Clergy,

COVID-19 and the subsequent pandemic have impacted everyone around the world in a myriad of ways. This brief, confidential survey seeks to understand the impact the pandemic has had on ministers' personal finances in the USA/Canada Region of the Church of the Nazarene.

The results of this survey will influence the work of the COMPASS Initiative's financial literacy programs and grants for pastors. The COMPASS Initiative is a ministry of the USA/Canada Regional Office. For more information about the COMPASS Initiative go to COMPASSinitiative.org.

The survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete, and your name will never be linked to your responses. There are no known risks to participating or not participating, and you may withdraw at any time. We hope you will participate by clicking the following link to the survey.

Click here to start survey

With great appreciation,

Rev. Bonnie S. Beam
Assistant Director, COMPASS Initiative
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COMPASSinitiative.org

The Survey

The following is a list of the survey questions. All respondents answered questions 1 and 7-12. Questions 2-6 were presented based on their response to question 1. The survey was conducted online and respondents were automatically directed to the appropriate questions.

1. Which of the following best describes the impact of the COVID pandemic on your personal/family finances?
 - A very negative impact *[skip to question #3]*
 - Some negative impact *[skip to question #3]*
 - No impact *[skip to question #7]*
 - Some positive impact
 - A very positive impact
2. In what way(s) were your personal/family finances positively impacted? (Check all that apply.)
 - Received Cares Act stimulus check(s)
 - Received government support (other than Cares Act)
 - Additional employment for me
 - Additional employment for my spouse
 - Decreased personal/family debt
 - Other _____

[skip to question #7]

3. In what way(s) were your personal/family finances negatively impacted? (Check all that apply.)
- Loss of employment for me
 - Loss of employment for my spouse
 - Increased financial responsibility for others
 - COVID related medical expenses
 - Decreased income for me
 - Decreased income for my spouse
 - Increased personal/family debt
 - Other _____
4. Did you experience a loss in personal/family monthly income because of the pandemic?
- No loss of income
 - Yes, between 1%-9%
 - Yes, between 10%-19%
 - Yes, between 20%-29%
 - Yes, between 30%-49%
 - Yes, 50% or more
5. Did your personal/family monthly expenses increase because of the pandemic?
- No increase in expenses
 - Yes, between 1%-9%
 - Yes, between 10%-19%
 - Yes, between 20%-29%
 - Yes, 30% or more
6. Did you add debt to your personal/family finances due to COVID related issues?
- No
 - Yes, less than \$500
 - Yes, between \$500-\$999
 - Yes, between \$1,000-\$2,499
 - Yes, between \$2,500-\$4,999
 - Yes, \$5,000 or more
7. Which of the following best describes the status of your current financial situation?
- In serious difficulty
 - In some difficulty
 - Tight, but I/we manage
 - Good
 - Excellent

8. Which of the following best describes what you anticipate about your financial situation over the next 12-18 months?
- Will be a lot worse
 - Will be a little worse
 - Will be tight, but I/we will manage
 - Will be good
 - Will be excellent
9. Which best describes your role?
- Senior pastor
 - Associate pastor
 - Other _____
10. Your church's average worship attendance:
- Less than 50
 - 50-99
 - 100-199
 - 200-299
 - 300-499
 - 500 or more
11. Your age:
- Less than 30
 - 30-39
 - 40-49
 - 50-59
 - 60-69
 - 70 or older
12. Please indicate your race/ethnicity (check all that apply):
- Asian
 - Black
 - Latino/a
 - White
 - Other

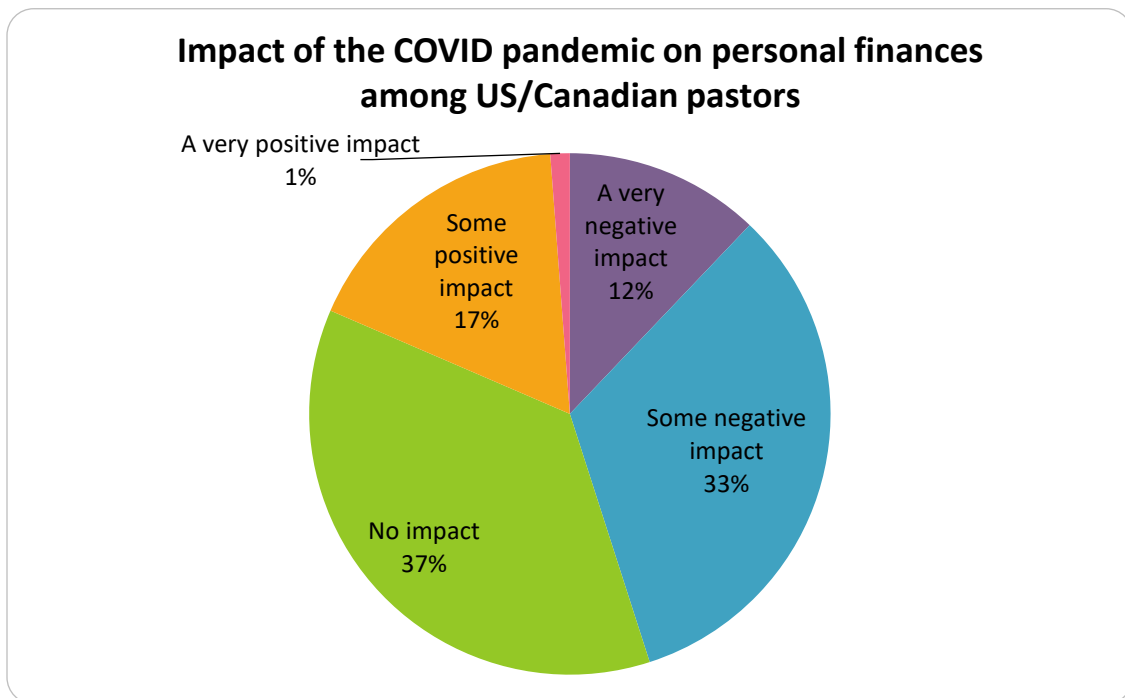
Thank you! Your response has been received.

If you are interested in learning more about receiving financial assistance and/or financial literacy training, please email the COMPASS Initiative at compass@nazarene.org.

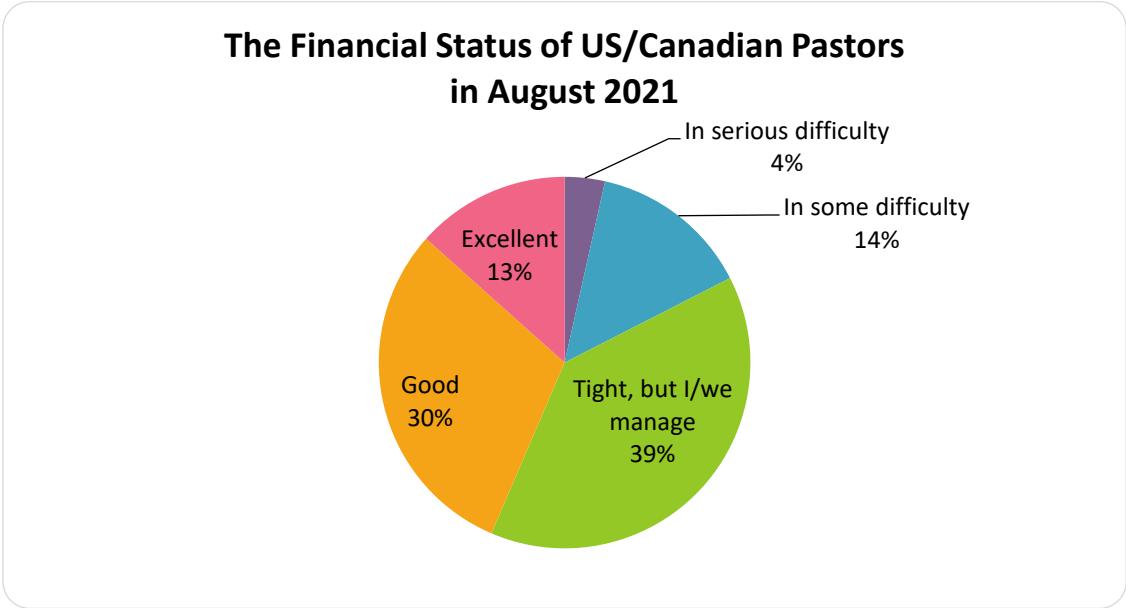
Questions or comments about this survey may also be emailed to [compass @nazarene.org](mailto:compass@nazarene.org).

General Results

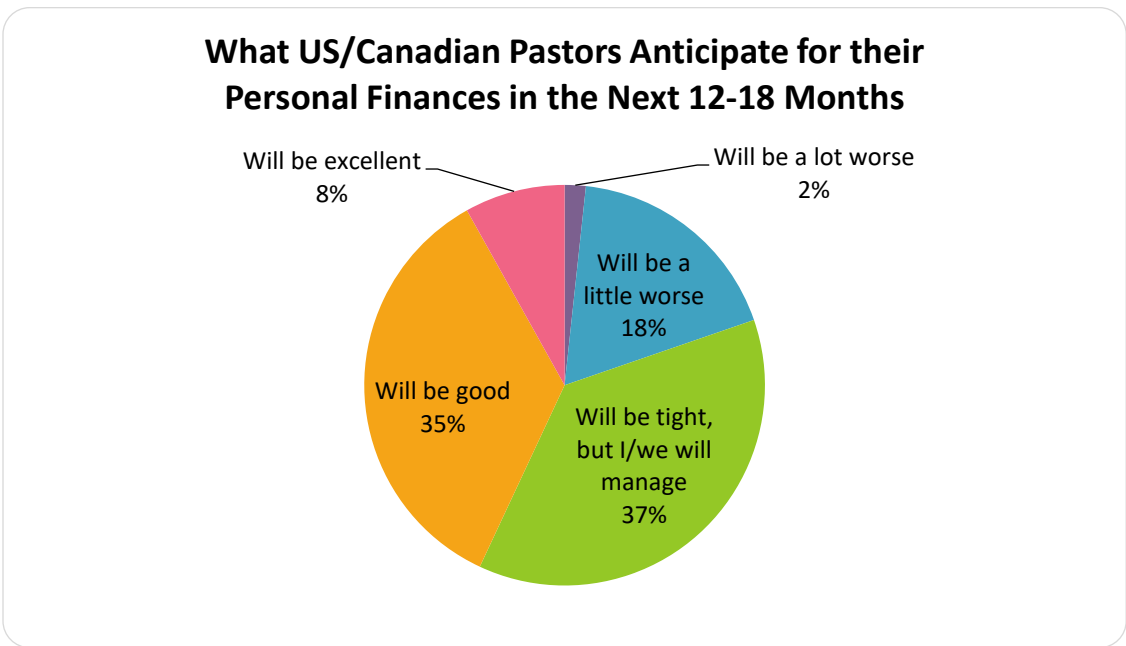
- **The demographics of the survey respondents are representative of US/Canadian clergy, in terms of church size, age, and race.**
- **Self-reported impact of COVID on personal finances among US/Canadian pastors:**
 - 18% Some to Very positive Impact (1% Very positive)
 - 37% No impact
 - 45% Some to Very negative Impact (12% Very negative)



- **Self-reported current financial situation:**
 - 18% Some to Serious difficulty (4% Serious difficulty)
 - 39% Tight, but I/we manage
 - 43% Good to Excellent (13% Excellent)

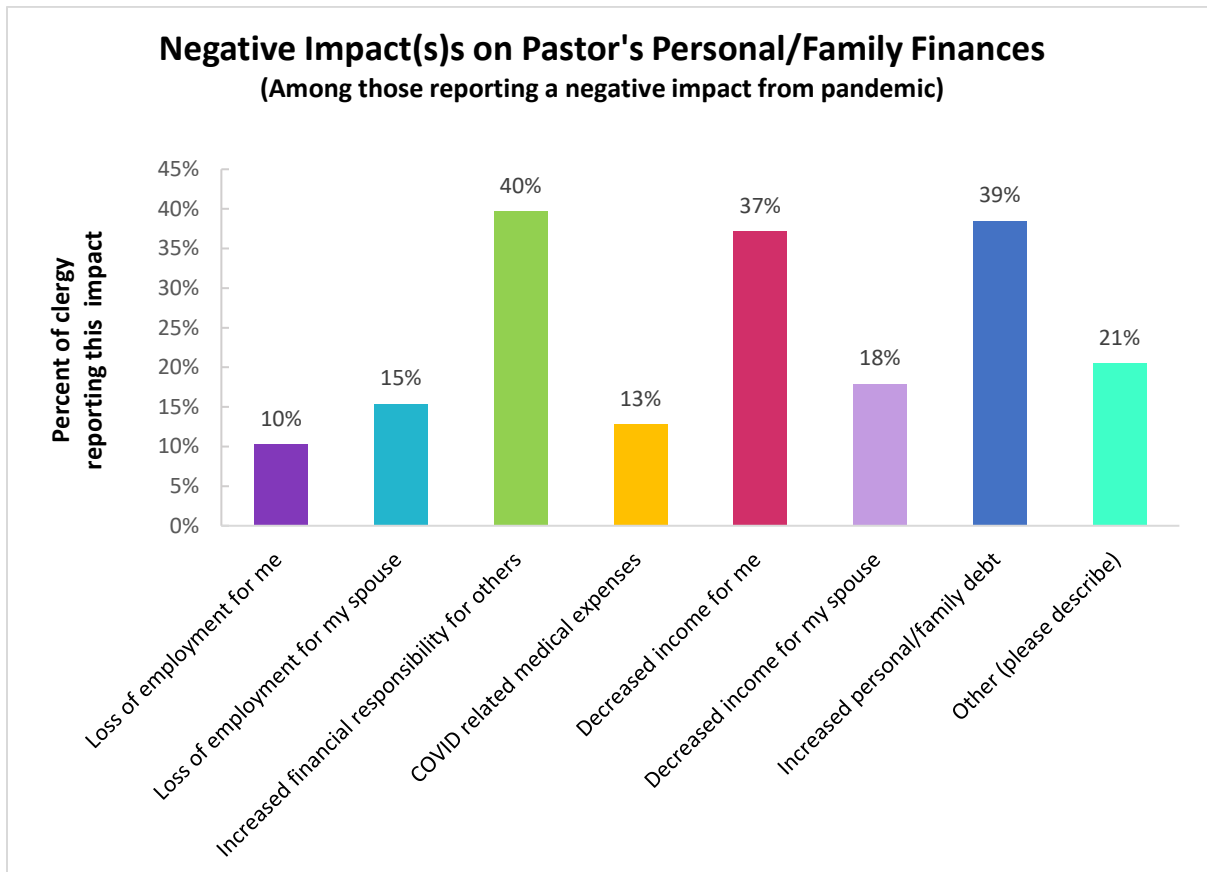


- **What pastors anticipate about their financial situations over the next 12-18 months:**
 - 20% Little to A lot worse (2% A lot worse)
 - 37% Tight, but I/we will manage
 - 43% Good to Excellent (8% Excellent)



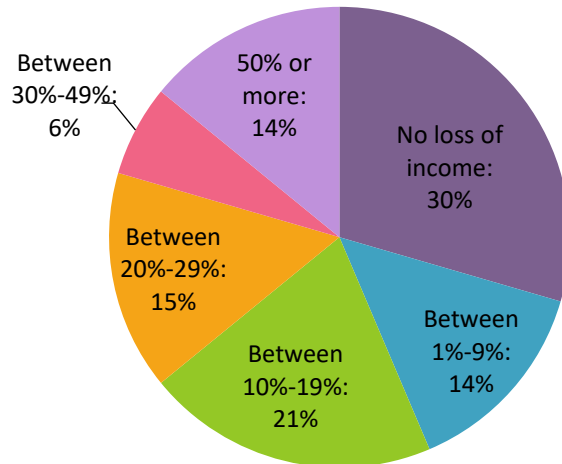
Results of those reporting a NEGATIVE impact of COVID on their finances:

- Most pastors selected one (39%) or two (36%) negative impacts.
- Very few (4%) selected more than three negative impacts.
- Of the top three impacts, 53% selected only one of the options.
- Approximately 4 out of 5 pastors (82%) selected at least one of the top three impacts.
- Common “Other” responses were: increased cost of living, staffing changes/increased ministry responsibilities, decreased opportunities for additional income, travel to care for family.



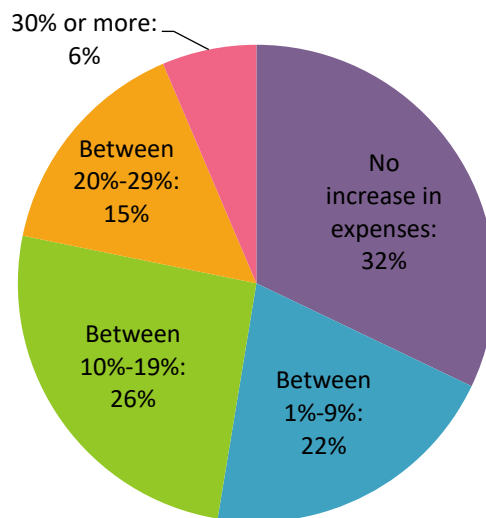
- Approximately 1 out of 3 pastors (35%) experienced a loss in family income of 20% or more.

Percent of Personal/Family Income Lost Due to COVID
(Among those reporting a negative impact from pandemic)



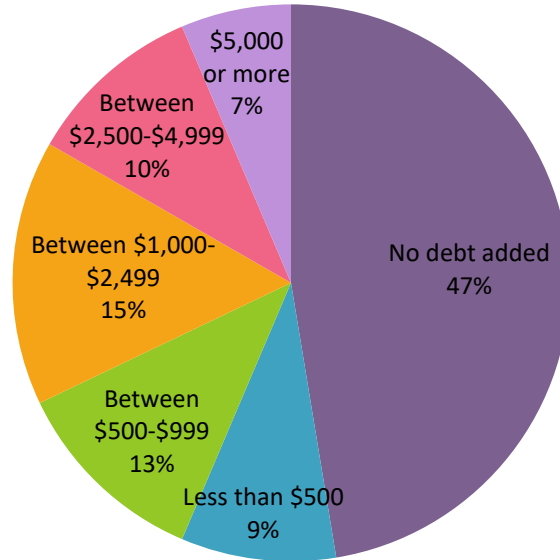
- Nearly half of the pastors (47%) had an increase in monthly expenses of 10% or more.

Percent Increase of Personal/Family Expenses Due to COVID
(Among those reporting a negative impact from pandemic)



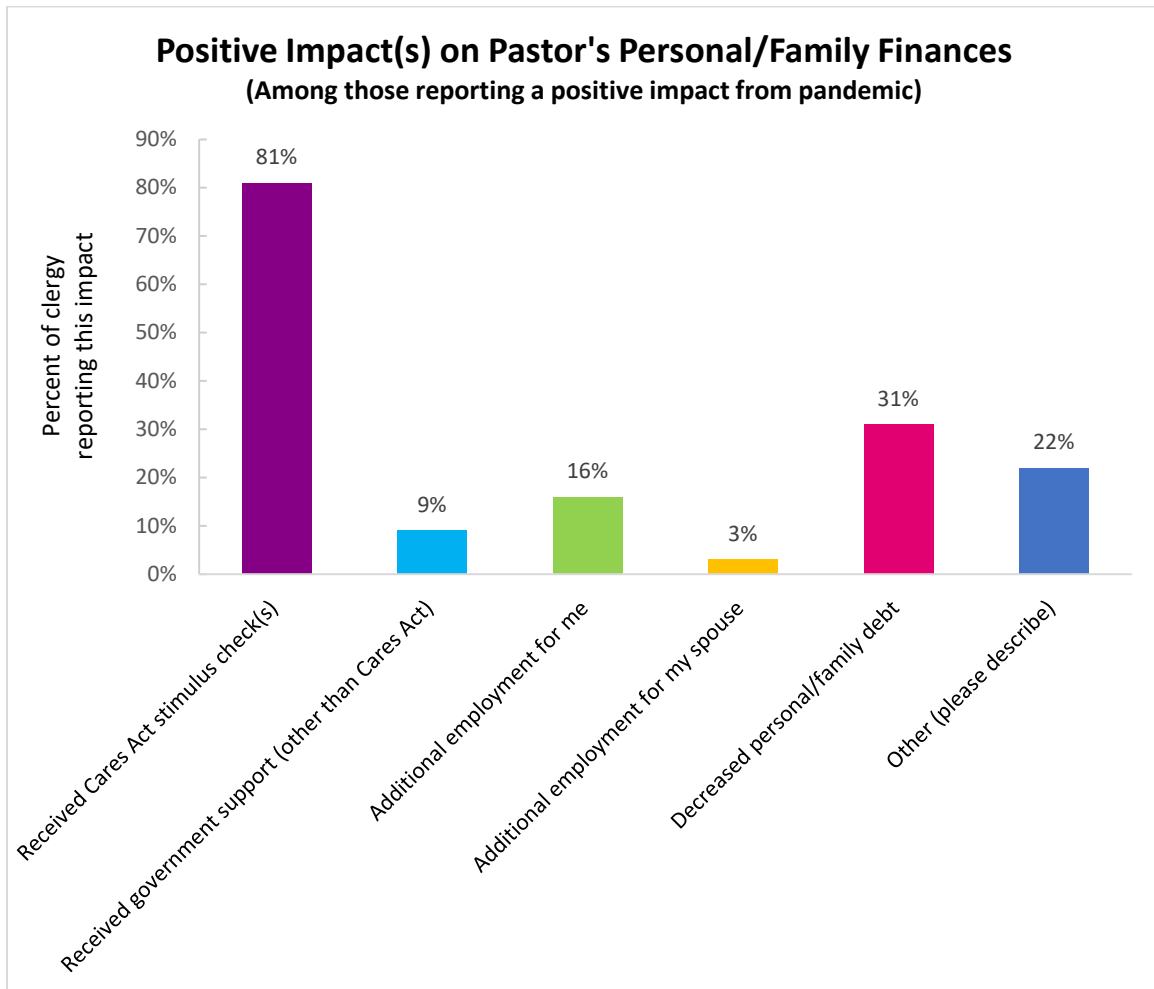
- Nearly half of the pastors (47%) reported accruing no additional debt due to the pandemic.
- Yet, approximately 1 out of 3 (32%) added at least \$1,000 in debt.

Debt Added to Pastor's Personal/Family Finances
(Among those reporting a negative impact from pandemic)



Results of those reporting a POSITIVE impact of COVID on their finances:

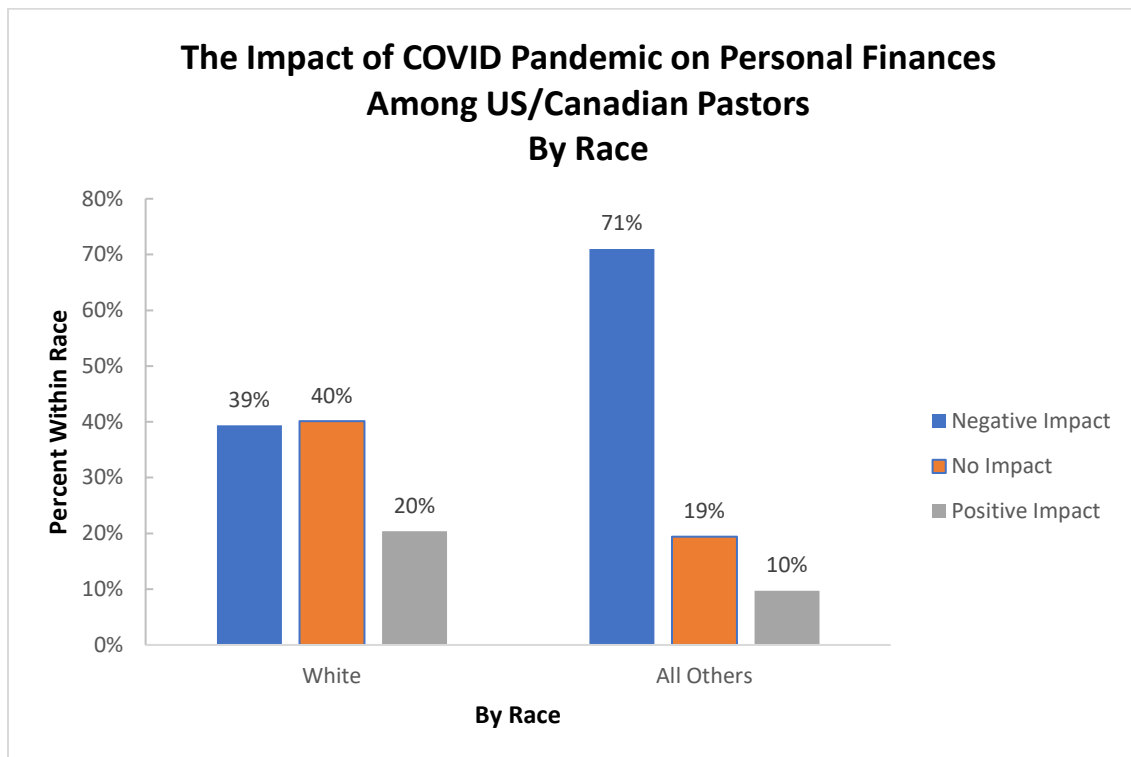
- Approximately 4 out of 5 pastors (81%) selected receiving CARES Act stimulus check(s) as a positive impact from the pandemic.
- Approximately 1 out of 3 (31%) selected decreased debt.
- Nearly 1 out of 4 (22%) selected “Other” positive impact, which included responses such as less spending, new job/bonuses for spouse, free lunch for kids, and refinancing.
- None reported an increase in income for either the pastor or the spouse.



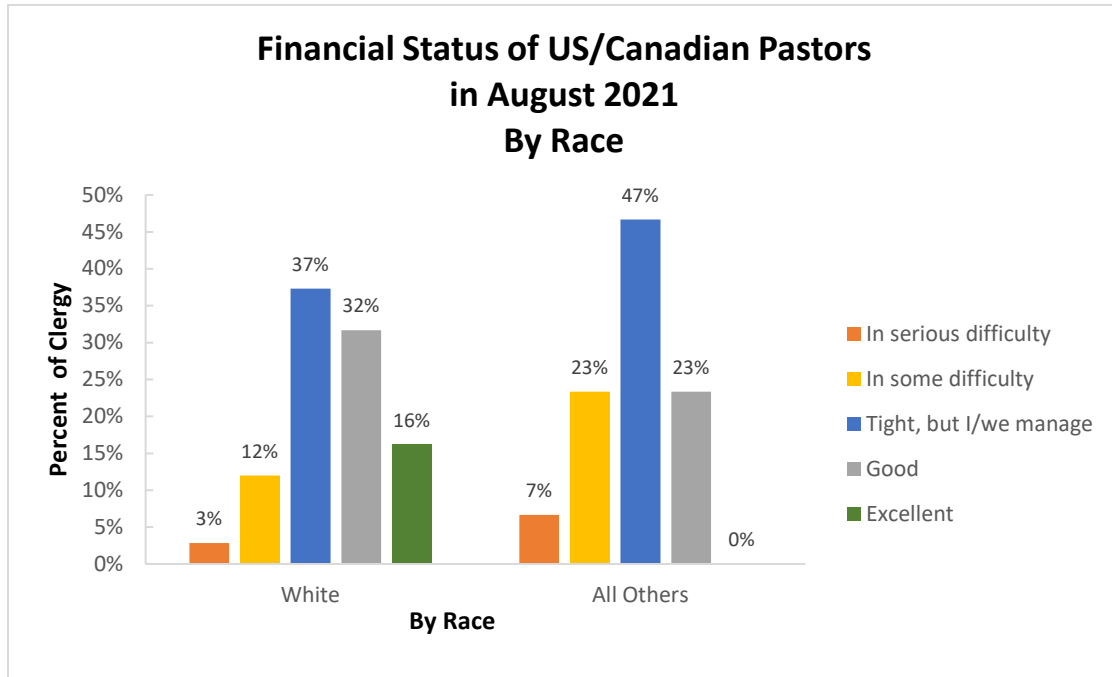
Statistically Significant Results

Race Differences

1. Minority ministers (7 out of 10) were more likely to report that COVID had a negative impact on their finances than white ministers (4 out of 10).
2. White ministers (40%) were twice as likely to report that COVID had no impact on their finances than our minority ministers (19%).
3. White ministers (20%) were twice as likely to report that COVID had a positive impact on their finances than our minority ministers (10%).

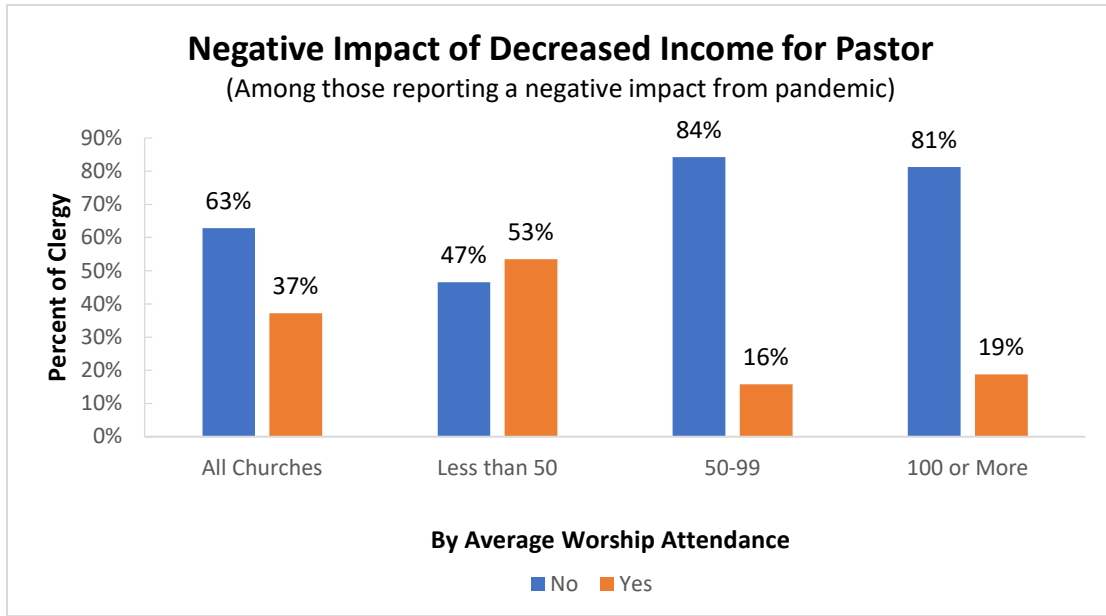


- Minority ministers (30%) are twice as likely to describe their current financial situation as “In some” or “serious difficulty” than white ministers (15%).
- White ministers (48%) are twice as likely to describe their current financial situation as “Good” or “Excellent” than minority ministers (23%).
- None of the minority ministers described their current financial situation as “Excellent.”

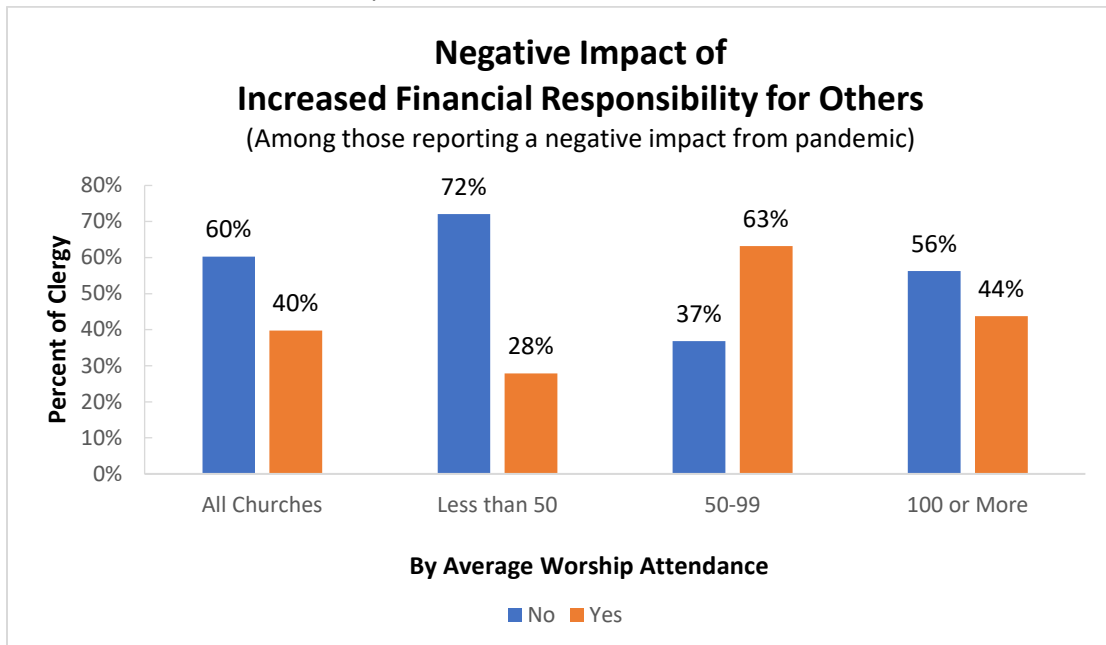


Worship Size Differences

1. Of those reporting a negative impact from COVID, ministers in church sizes of less than 50 in worship (53%) were more likely to be negatively impacted by “decreased income for the minister” than other sized churches (16% for churches of 50-99, 19% for churches of 100 or more).



2. Of those reporting a negative impact from COVID, ministers in church sizes of 50-99 in worship (63%) were more likely to be negatively impacted by an “increased financial responsibility for others” than other sized churches (28% for churches of under 50, 44% for churches of 100 or more).

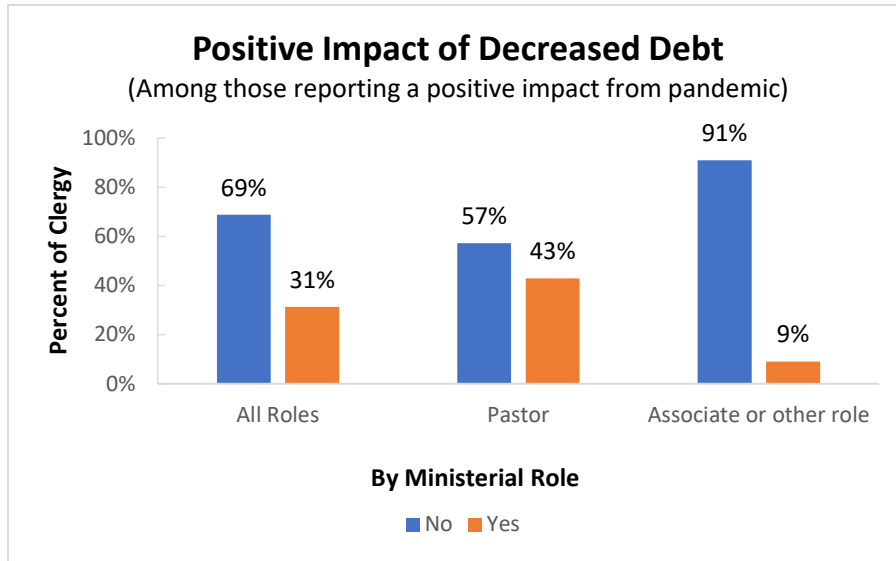


Ministerial Role Differences

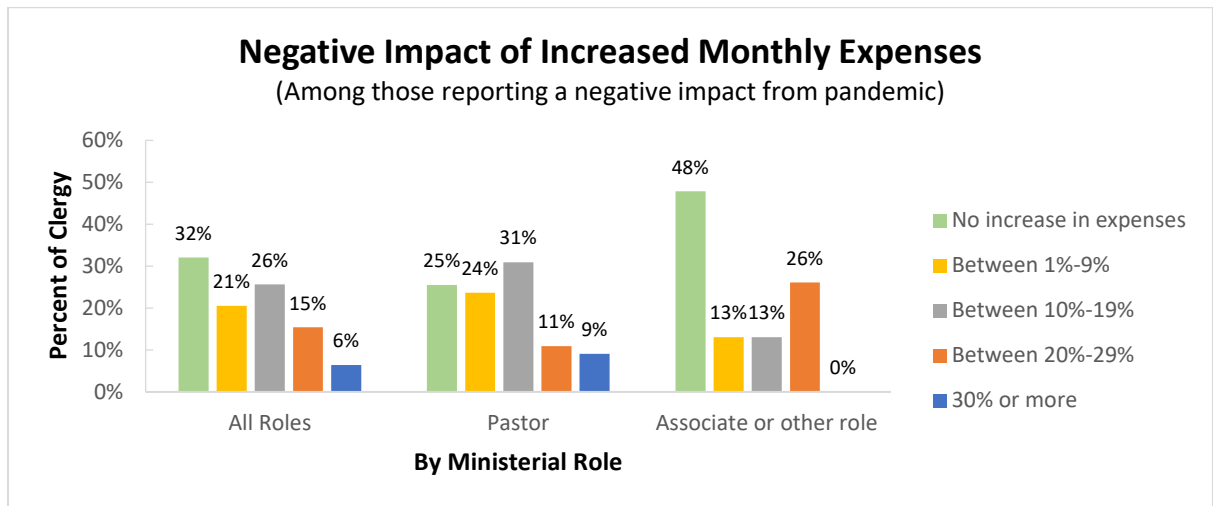
- Of those who reported a positive impact, nearly half of the Pastors (43%) reported a decrease in personal/family debt, whereas only 9% of Associate Pastors reported a decrease.

4 in 10 Pastors (43%) decreased debt

1 in 10 Associate Pastors (9%) decreased debt

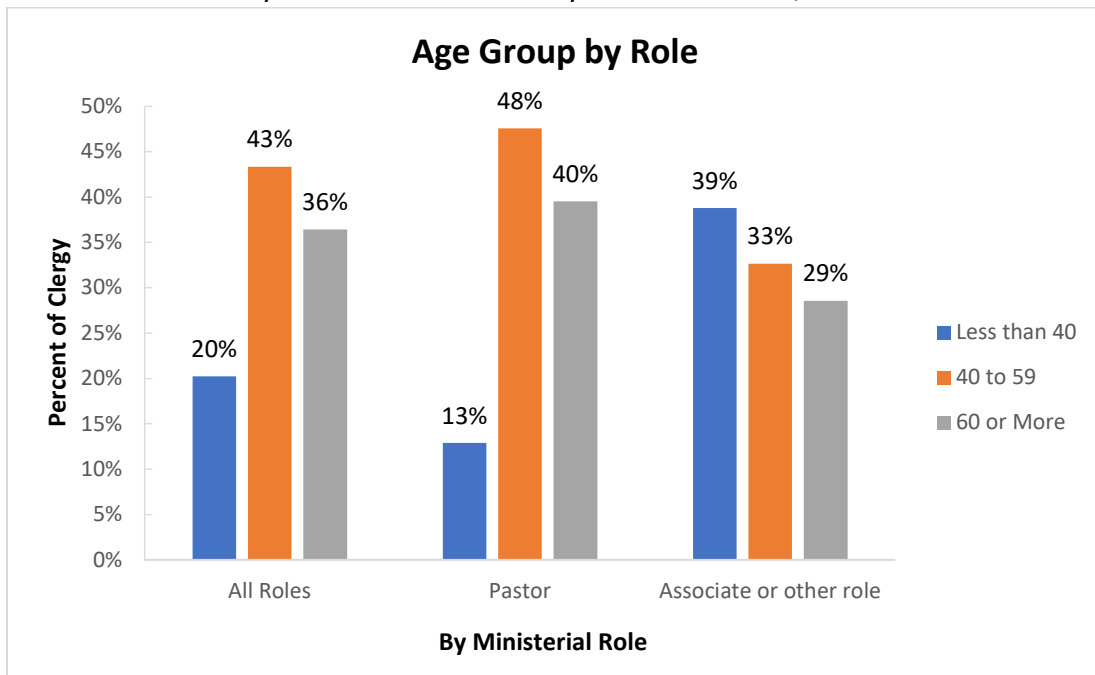


- Of those who reported a negative impact, three quarters of Pastors (75%) reported an increase of monthly expenses due to the pandemic, whereas slightly more than half of the Associate Pastors (52%) reported an increase.
- Of those who reported a negative impact, Associate Pastors (48%) were more likely to see no increases in expenses than Pastors (25%), and Pastors (9%) were more likely than Associate Pastors (0%) to see increases of 30% or more.

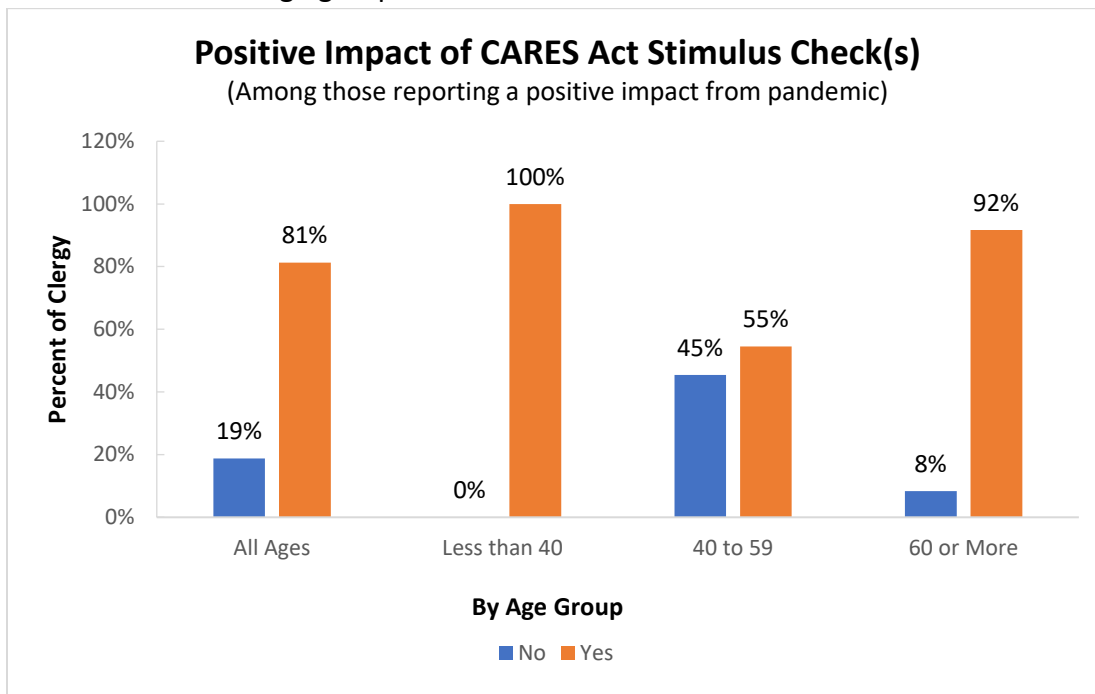


Age Differences

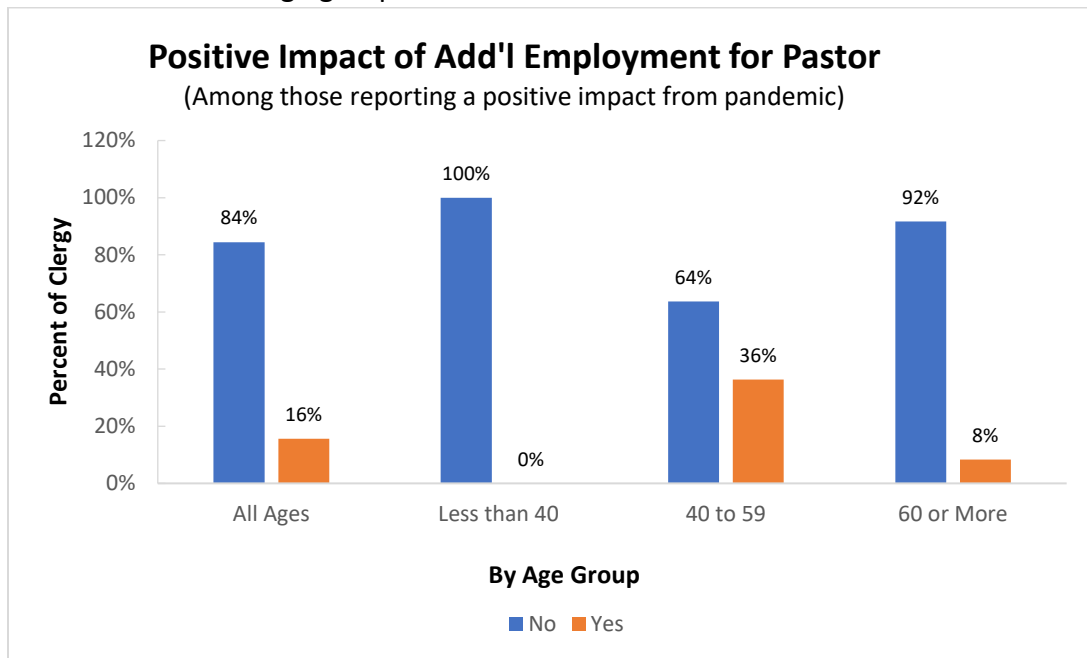
1. Ministers under 40 years old were less likely to be the senior/lead Pastor.



2. Of those reporting a positive impact from COVID, ministers in their 40s and 50s were less likely to see the CARES Act stimulus checks as positively impacting their finances than those in other age groups.



- Of those reporting a positive impact from COVID, ministers in their 40s and 50s were more likely to have been positively impacted by additional employment for themselves than those in other age groups.



Noteworthy Differences (not statistically significant)

1. Approximately 1 out of 4 minority ministers (27%) anticipate their financial situation worsening over the next 12-18 months.
2. Approximately 1 out of 6 white ministers (18%) anticipate their financial situation worsening over the next 12-18 months.

For ministers reporting a negative impact:

3. More ministers in their 40s and 50s (85%) experienced loss of income than their younger colleagues (59%) and their older colleagues (55%).
4. More than twice as many white ministers (36%) reported “No Loss” of family income than minority ministers (14%).
5. More than twice as many minority ministers (23%) reported a loss of “50% or more” of family income than white ministers (11%).
6. Twice as many white ministers (38%) reported “no increase in expenses” than minority ministers (18%).
7. Approximately 1 out of 7 minority pastors (14%) reported an increase in expenses of “30% or more” versus 1 out of 25 white ministers (4%).
8. Twice as many white ministers (55%) reported adding “no debt” versus minority ministers (27%).
9. Approximately 1 out of 7 minority pastors (14%) added debt of “\$5,000 or more” versus 1 out of 25 white ministers (4%).

For ministers reporting a positive impact:

10. More than twice as many minority ministers (33%) reported a positive impact from additional employment for themselves than white ministers (14%).

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