The well-being of United Methodist clergy affects the entire connection, including the families, congregations and communities they serve.

Wespath supports well-being with a focus on five dimensions of physical, emotional, spiritual, social and financial well-being. To ensure we deliver programs tailored to the needs of our participants, Wespath recently conducted its sixth Clergy Well-Being Survey. Launched in 2012, this biennial survey provides meaningful feedback on the current state of clergy well-being across all dimensions.
Past decade shows decline in well-being for UM clergy

Since the 2012 survey, there has been a steady decline across almost all dimensions of well-being of UM clergy. The 2021 survey continues this negative trend with an even steeper decline compared to 2019, showing the dramatic impact COVID-19, social/racial injustice and the ongoing uncertainty within the UMC has had on clergy well-being.

To see survey results broken down by the FIVE DIMENSIONS, click on each dimension.

See Demographic Differences—click here
See What’s Next—click here
Physical Dimension—
Obesity, diabetes and hypertension on the rise

47% Have a body mass index (BMI) > 30 kg/m²*

26% With diabetes or pre-diabetes

33% With hypertension or pre-hypertension

* According to the CDC, adult BMI greater than or equal to 30 kg/m²* is considered obese and increases risk for a number of health conditions.
Emotional Dimension—Increase in depression and stress is alarming

14% Report suffering from depression
34% Are experiencing functional difficulty from depressive symptoms

Top 4 functional depressive symptoms
1) Sleep troubles
2) Feeling down or hopeless
3) Little interest or pleasure in activities
4) Trouble concentrating

Almost half (45%) report feeling stress in the past month
Top measures include:
45% feeling like things were not going their way
36% not feeling “on top of things”
27% feeling more nervous and stressed
Social Dimension—Work/life balance and social stressors increasing

- 25% Report not feeling understood by family and friends
- 52% Report work-related stress
- 42% Report work isolation

Go to Spiritual Results
Back to Emotional Results
Spiritual Dimension—Spiritual vitality and well-being are diminishing

Fewer feel the presence of God in their daily life

- 61% ↓ 5 percentage points: Feel the presence and power of God in the ordinary
- 51% ↓ 6 percentage points: Feel that events are unfolding according to God’s plan

Fewer feel the presence of God in ministry

- 70% ↓ 6 percentage points: In planning and leading worship
- 79% ↓ 5 percentage points: When sharing in the sacraments

And, while overall spiritual well-being is declining, more than 85% still find strength and comfort in their faith and more than 80% feel a sense of purpose in life and that their life has been productive.
Financial Dimension—Financial well-being is improving

35% Are not stressed about finances—the lowest result in 10 years!

59% Feel on track for a comfortable retirement—also improving!
Demographic differences highlight disparities in age, race, gender and other areas

At higher risk for PHYSICAL well-being issues
- Men
- Older clergy
- Black clergy
- Clergy working in a smaller church

At higher risk for EMOTIONAL well-being issues
- Women
- Younger clergy (especially those with children)
- White clergy

Lower income clergy at higher risk for both PHYSICAL and SOCIAL well-being issues

Cabinet-level Church leaders (bishops and district superintendents) report better emotional, social and spiritual well-being
What’s Next?

In line with our mission of *Caring For Those Who Serve*, Wespath takes your feedback seriously and is taking action to stem these downward trends and better support your overall well-being. We’re concentrating our efforts in several areas:

- Enhancing our mental/emotional health programs by improving access to one-on-one counseling. For example, HealthFlex participants now have access to online therapy via *Talkspace* through the EAP.
- Facilitating listening sessions with clergy and Church leaders to better understand the systemic issues causing the decline in clergy’s well-being and how to address them
- Working across the denomination to create partnerships to combine energy, efforts and focus on improving clergy well-being

**YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS:** Tell us what more we can do to help you with your overall well-being at *wellnessteam@wespath.org*.

**Click to discover well-being tools and resources:**

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual
- Financial