



2023 Clergy Well-Being Survey Highlights

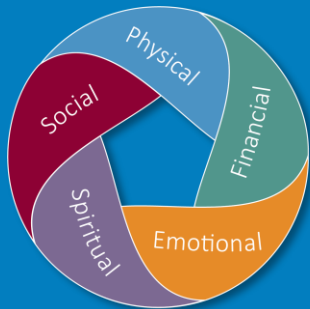


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Overview

- 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



PHYSICAL



FINANCIAL



EMOTIONAL



SPIRITUAL



SOCIAL

To ensure our programs are tailored to the needs of our participants and to keep a pulse on their overall well-being, Wespath conducted its seventh Clergy Well-Being Survey in 2023



Overview

LAUNCHED IN 2012

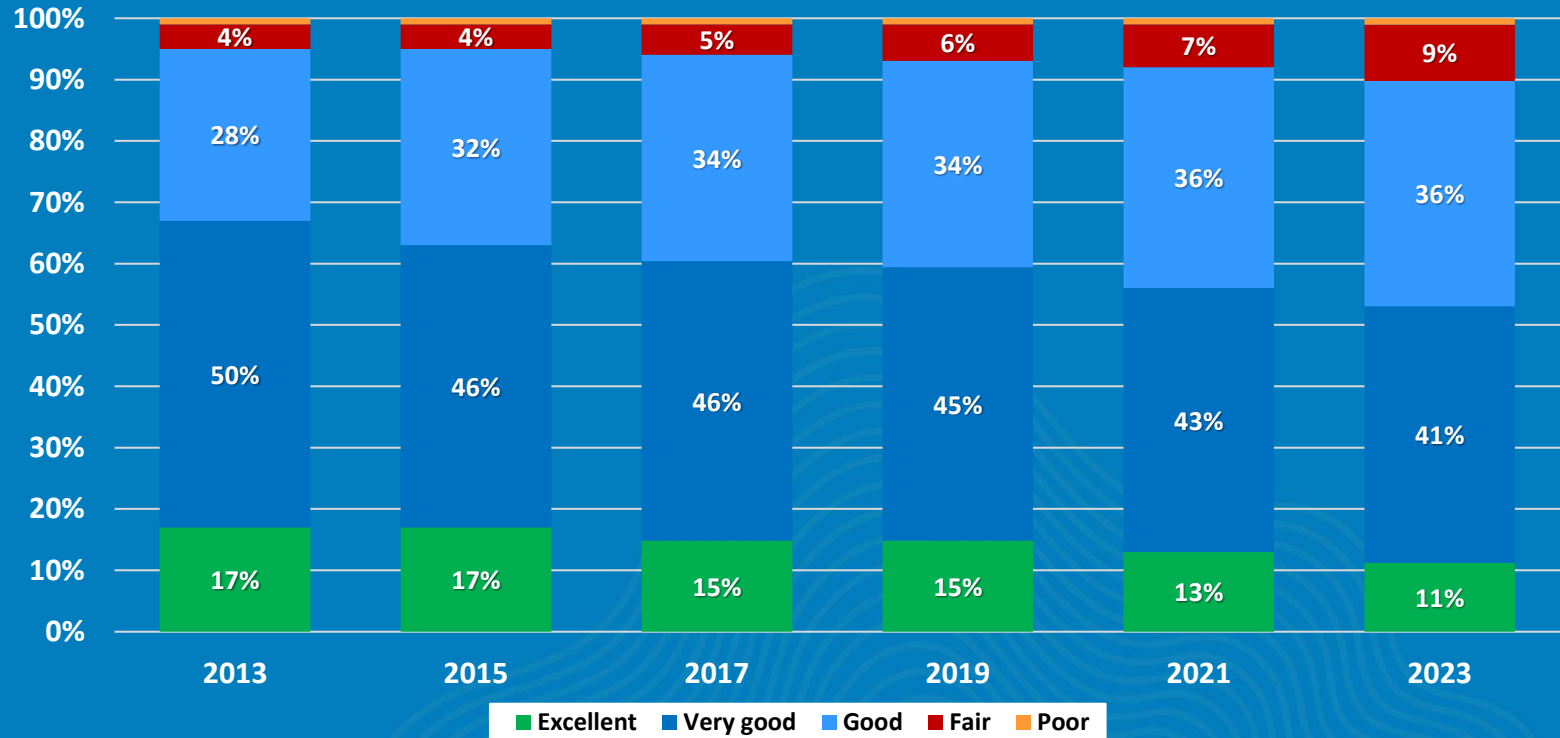
This biennial survey provides meaningful feedback on the current state of clergy well-being across all dimensions

NOW WITH 10 YEARS OF DATA

We are able to identify a significant decline in overall clergy well-being within The United Methodist Church since the survey first originated

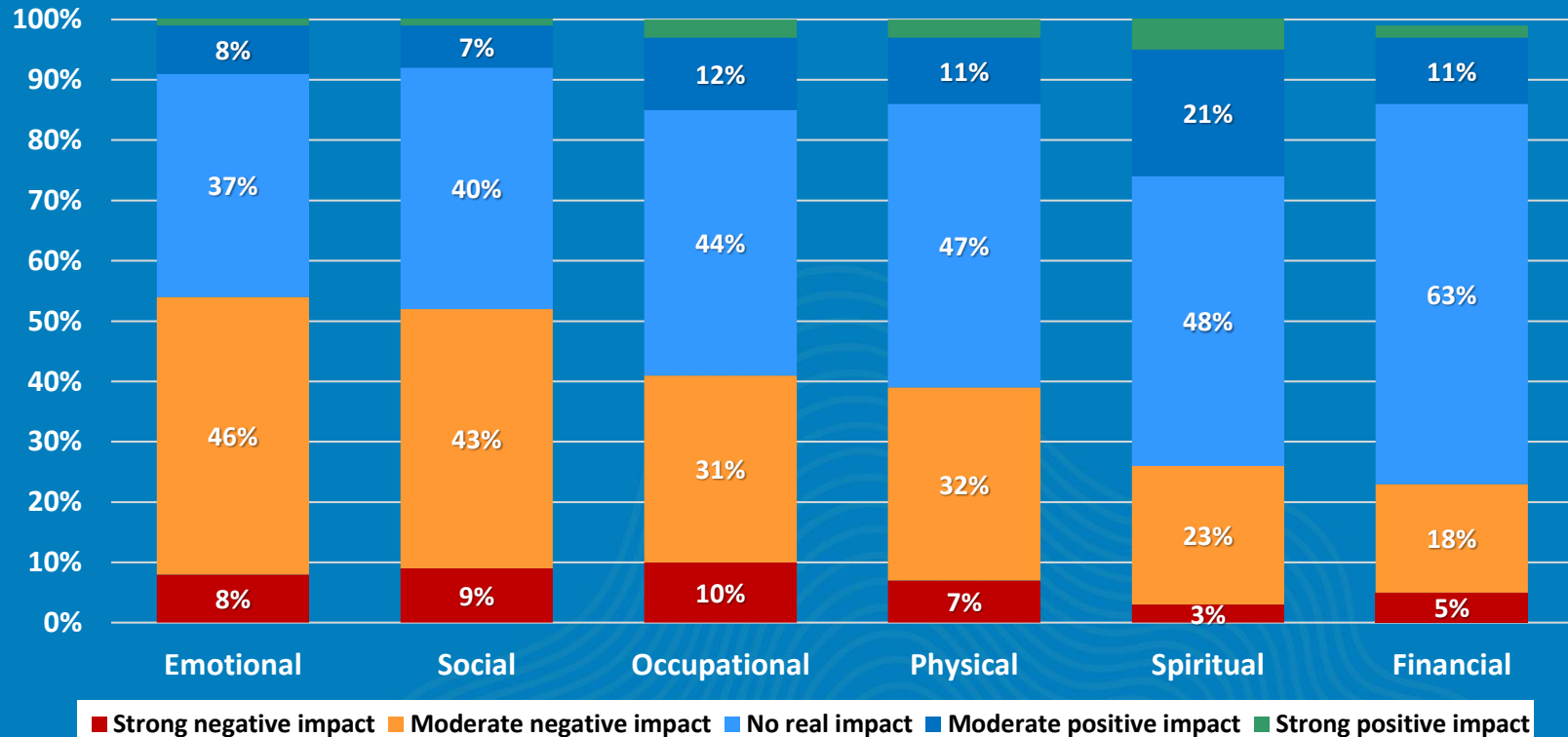
Decline in Overall Perceived Well-Being—10-Year Trends

The number of clergy reporting “very good” or “excellent” health has had a steady decline



Impact of the Pandemic on Well-Being

More than half of clergy reported the pandemic negatively affected their social and emotional well-being



Spiritual Dimension—2023

Spiritual vitality and well-being have improved



Spiritual Vitality

Feel the presence of God
in ministry

73%



When conducting
pastoral visitations

68%



When participating in
Church-related events

Spiritual Vitality

Feel the presence of God
in daily life

78%



Have a vital relationship
with God

70%



Feel God's grace and God's
love as they are, apart
from any accomplishments
or good works



Indicates improvement from 2021 results

Spiritual Dimension— 10-Year Lookback



- Less dramatic decline than other dimensions of well-being
- Over the past 10 years, greatest decline in:
 - “I feel sense of harmony in myself”
 - “I feel peaceful”

Physical Dimension—2023

Obesity, diabetes and hypertension continue to rise



49%



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

28%



With diabetes or pre-diabetes

34%



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.



Result has worsened since 2021

Physical Dimension— 10-Year Lookback



- Physical well-being (obesity, diabetes, pre-diabetes) has worsened since 2013
- The percentage of UMC clergy who are obese has consistently been over 10 percentage points worse than a matched National Health Interview Survey benchmark

	2013	2023
Obesity	40%	49%
Diabetes	12%	14%
Pre-diabetes	9%	14%

Emotional Dimension—2023

Stress and depressive symptoms continue to be a serious problem



10%

Report suffering from depression

35%

Report functional difficulties from depressive symptoms

Emotional Dimension—2023



Most measures of perceived stress remain at concerning levels similar to 2021:


- 42%** Feel things were not going their way
- 39%** Not able to control irritations in their life
- 35%** Don't feel "on top of things"
- 25%** Feel nervous and stressed

Two measures of depressive symptoms are worse than 2021 and the rest remain at concerning levels similar to 2021:

- 69%** Feel tired or have little energy (*worse than 2021*)
- 44%** Poor appetite or overeating (*worse than 2021*)
- 52%** Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- 35%** Have little interest or pleasure in doing things

Emotional Dimension— 10-Year Lookback

Difficulty functioning due to depressive symptoms is much worse than in 2013



	2013	2023
Feeling tired or without energy	59%	69%
Trouble sleeping	40%	52%
Poor appetite/overeating	36%	44%
Little interest/pleasure in doing things	23%	35%
Feeling down, depressed or have trouble concentrating	19%	32%

- The percent of clergy experiencing functional difficulty from depressive symptoms has been more than twice the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) benchmark since 2013
- The number of clergy actually being treated for depression is only up a small amount, suggesting many continue to go untreated

Social Dimension—2023

Social connection is significantly worse than 2021



28%



Reported not feeling understood by family and friends



Result has worsened since 2021



Social Dimension— 10-Year Lookback

Social connection has worsened
over 10 years

	2013	2023
Feel understood most of time	81%	72%
Feel understood hardly ever	1%	4%

Work-Related Stress—2023



Clergy feel less isolated, but still carry a heavy load

33%



Feel lonely and isolated at work

27%



Fewer full-time clergy are working 51+ hours per week

33%



Feel too many demands from the congregation



Indicates improvement from 2021 results



Result has worsened since 2021

Work-Related Stress— 10-Year Lookback

Work-related stress has worsened over 10 years, but percentage of clergy working excessive hours has decreased



	2013	2023
Experiencing stress because of challenges in the organization or congregation	46%	52%
Feel lonely and isolated at work	25%	33%
Full-time clergy working 51+ hours/week	42%	27%
Part-time clergy working 41+ hours/week	21%	16%

Financial Dimension—2023



Financial well-being declined to pre-pandemic levels

73%



Think their financial situation is at least slightly stressful

49%



Not confident they are on track for a comfortable retirement

 *Result has worsened since 2021*



Financial Dimension— 10-Year Lookback

- Financial stress has remained relatively stable
- Wespath began measuring financial knowledge and retirement readiness in 2017, so only six years of data to report on

Executive Summary— Key Demographic Differences



Men have higher rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes and report lower spiritual vitality; **women** have higher rates of asthma and autoimmune conditions, and experience more stress

Older clergy suffer from more physical ailments; **younger** clergy struggle more with stress, depression and spiritual health

White/non-Hispanic clergy have higher rates of depression, score lower on spiritual health and struggle more in their ministry and occupational settings

Black clergy have higher rates of diabetes and hypertension, but report better spiritual well-being, lower levels of stress and depression

Asian clergy have lower rates of obesity, diabetes, and autoimmune conditions, and experience less stress

Hispanic clergy report more occupational stress and conflict over disaffiliation

Rural clergy suffer from more physical ailments; **urban clergy** struggle more with spiritual health

Executive Summary— Key Vocational Differences



Part-time local pastors report less depression, better spiritual well-being and less stress

Full-time clergy experience lower spiritual vitality, lower well-being and more stress

Associate pastors have fewer physical ailments and sleep more each night than sole or lead pastors

Clergy at **smaller churches** have more ailments and take fewer vacation days; those at **larger churches** experience more occupational stress and lower spiritual well-being

Church planters report better overall health, better spiritual and social health and more physical activity

Clergy who **frequently change appointments** experience lower overall health, more depression, more stress and lower spiritual health

Those in **cross-racial or cross-cultural** appointments experience less depression, better spiritual health and more positive ministry settings

Impact of Disaffiliation



- 37% of clergy reported dealing with conflict or difficulty with disaffiliation in their ministry
- Disaffiliation conflict within The United Methodist Church impacts all dimensions of well-being
- Clergy who reported **some or a lot** of disaffiliation conflict or difficulty had higher risk of arthritis*, functional difficulty from depressive symptoms, social connection, occupational stressors and financial stress than clergy who reported **little or no** conflict

* *Arthritis is associated with inflammation, which can increase as stress levels increase*

What's Next



- In line with our mission of Caring For Those Who Serve, Wespath takes the results of this survey seriously
- We are taking action to stem these downward trends and better support clergy's overall well-being. Our efforts are concentrated in several areas:
 - Continuing to cultivate our well-being programs to ensure they are meeting the areas of need for clergy
 - Encouraging utilization of well-being programs that help bolster areas of well-being
 - Fostering and encouraging conversations about clergy well-being with leaders and members across the UMC connection
 - Facilitating listening sessions across the UMC to better understand the decline in clergy's well-being
 - Working across the denomination to combine energy, efforts and focus on improving clergy well-being



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