

GAMMON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON UNITED METHODIST CLERGY OF COLOR

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FINAL REPORT

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Executive Summary

Background

Gammon Theological Seminary collaborated with Black Clergywomen of the UMC, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, MARCHA, National Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministries, Native American Comprehensive Plan, Asian American and Pacific Islander Leaders of the Western Jurisdiction, Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century, and Convocation for Black Pastors in the UMC to understand the impact COVID-19 has had on United Methodist clergy of color. This report provides insight into the experiences of United Methodist clergy of color throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and how national constituent groups, United Methodist general agencies, clergy, and laypersons can provide collective support.

In July 2022, Gammon Theological Seminary partnered with Wespath Benefits and Investments on the Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative to support underserved/underrepresented clergy and those experiencing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. In addition to the creation of resources to support clergy of color, Gammon Theological Seminary and Wespath Benefits and Investments launched a survey to collect data on the impact of the pandemic on clergy of color.

Methodology

Gammon Theological Seminary and UMC partners designed and disseminated a 23-question online survey in July 2022 and collected responses through mid-April 2023. We received 381 survey responses from United Methodist clergy representing every region, tenure, role, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

Key Findings

1. The domain most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic was relational health. The widespread impact of the pandemic created a ripple effect of grief, loss, and an increased need for support for many members of the Black UMC clergy community.
2. Emotional wellbeing and the professional domain were also heavily impacted by the pandemic, with many respondents reporting an increase in caring duties and anxiety with rapid changes in congregational life.
3. Smaller minority ethnic groups including Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and Multi-Racial respondents reported a larger negative impact in many domains, most prominently physical health, relational wellbeing, and environmental changes.

Recommendations

- Clergy should be provided with support to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, specifically in the areas of relational, emotional, and professional wellness. Resources may be needed to fully process the grief and loss experienced during the pandemic, as well as the subsequent emotional challenges.
- The reported financial impact from the pandemic was fairly minimal within the study sample; however, financial assistance may still be a critical factor for members of groups that were under-represented in this survey, including those with a longer service tenure and those under the age of 40.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON UNITED METHODIST CLERGY OF COLOR

Introduction

This study aims to assess the ways in which United Methodist clergy of color were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Financial insecurity and loss of income
- Emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, and fatigue
- Medical issues or illnesses, including COVID-19-related illnesses
- Questions of faith, hopelessness, or isolation from the spiritual community
- Social isolation and changes in close relationships

Background

In July 2022, Gammon Theological Seminary partnered with Wespath Benefits and Investments on the Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative to support underserved/underrepresented clergy and those experiencing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. In addition to the creation of resources to support clergy of color, Gammon Theological Seminary and Wespath Benefits and Investments launched a survey to collect data on the impact of the pandemic on clergy of color.

Methodology

Gammon Theological Seminary and UMC partners designed and disseminated a 23-question online survey in July 2022 and collected responses through mid-April 2023. We received 381 survey responses from United Methodist clergy representing every region, tenure, role, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity.

Respondent Demographics

The majority of the respondents identified as African-Americans (35.4%, n=135), with the next largest group identifying as Asian (27.6%, n=105). Other ethnicities measured include Hispanic/Latino (11%, n=42), Korean (9.4%, n=36), Native American (6.3%, n=24), Pacific Islander (5.2%, n=20), White (1.8%, n=7), Other (2.1%, n=8), and Multi-Racial (1%, n=4).

The most represented role held by respondents in the United Methodist Church was Elder (48.6%, n=185), with Local Pastor (28.9%, n=110) being the second most common role reported. Other roles include District superintendent (6%, n=23), Supply pastor (0.8%, n=3), Lay pastor (1.6%, n=6), Retired pastor (5.2%, n=20), Bishop (.3%, n=1), Layperson (1.6%, n=6), and other (7.1%, n=27).

Figure 1. Ethnicity
n=381

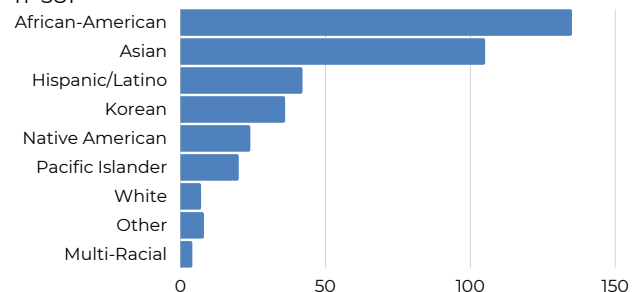
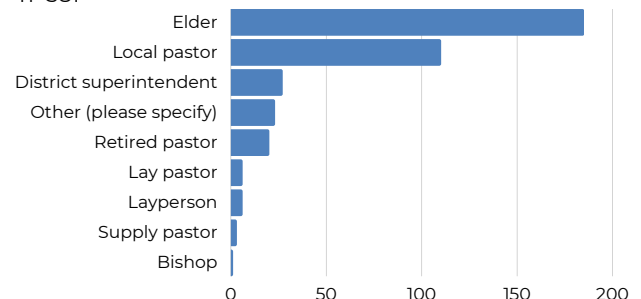


Figure 2. Role in the UMC
n=381



This survey captured responses from clergy with a wide range of lengths of service within the United Methodist Church. The majority of the respondents have held positions within the UMC for 11 to 20 years (31%, n=93). 13.4% of respondents (n=51) had service tenures of 0 to 5 years, about 19% (n=118) with 6 to 10 years, 24.4% (n=72) with 21 to 30 years, 10.2% (n=39) with 31 to 40 years, and just over 2% (n=8) with over 40 years of service.

The majority of respondents (22.3%, n=84) reported making less than \$30,000 in salary at the time of this survey. This is followed by clergy that make \$41,000-\$50,000 (21.8%, n=82), \$51,000-\$60,000 (19.7%, n=74), over \$91,000 (11.2%, n=42), \$31,000-\$40,000 (7.7%, n=29), \$71,000-\$80,000 (6.6%, n=25), \$81,000-\$90,000 (4.5%, n=17), and \$61,000-\$70,000 (6.1%, n=23).

Figure 3. Service Tenure in the UMC
n=381

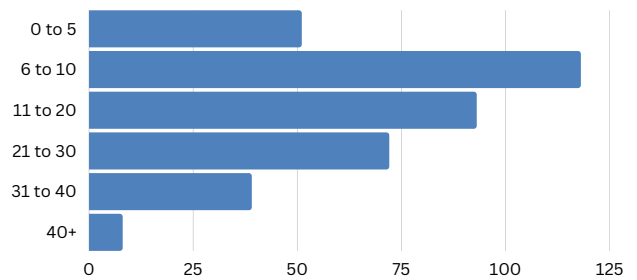


Figure 4. Respondent Salary Range (in USD)
n=381

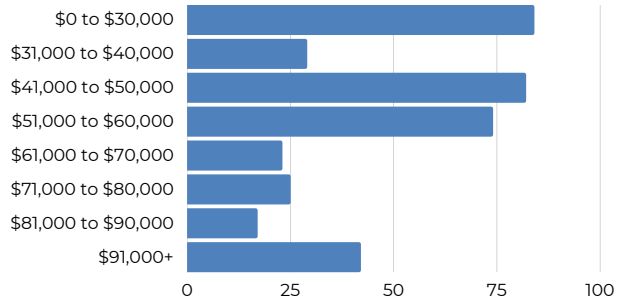
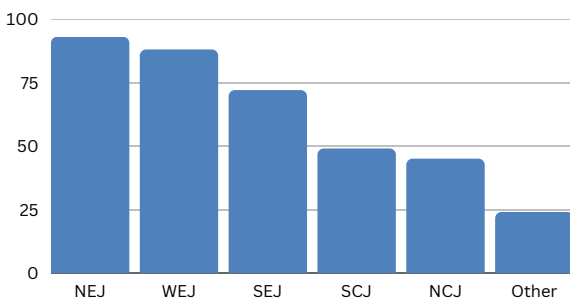
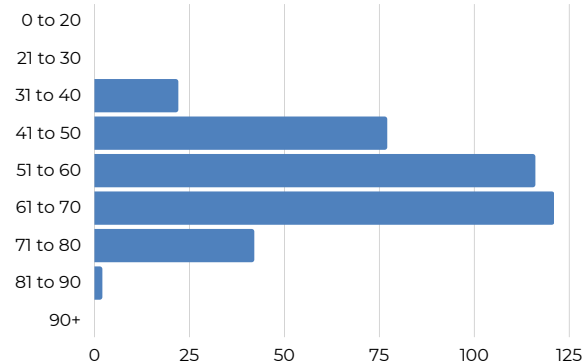


Figure 5. Jurisdiction in the UMC
n=381



The majority of respondents serve in the NEJ (25.1%, n=93), followed closely by WEJ (22.3%, n=88) of the UMC, and 19.4% (n=72) that serve in the SEJ. Other respondents serve in the SCJ (13.2%, n=49) and the NCJ (12.1%, n=45), or "other" (6.5%, n=24).

Figure 6. Respondent Age
n=381



The most common age of respondents is 61 to 70 (31.8%, n=121). This is followed by ages 51 to 60 (30.5%, n=116), 41 to 50 (20.3%, n=77), 71 to 80 (11.1%, n=42), 31 to 40 (5.8%, n=22), and 81 to 90 (.5%, n=2). There were no respondents in this study for ages ranged 0 to 30 and over 90 years.

This study was represented by 55.7% (n=211) of respondents that identified as male, 43.5% (n=165) that identified as female, with less than 1% (n=3) identifying as "other". Clergy identifying as transgender and omnigender were not represented in this sample.

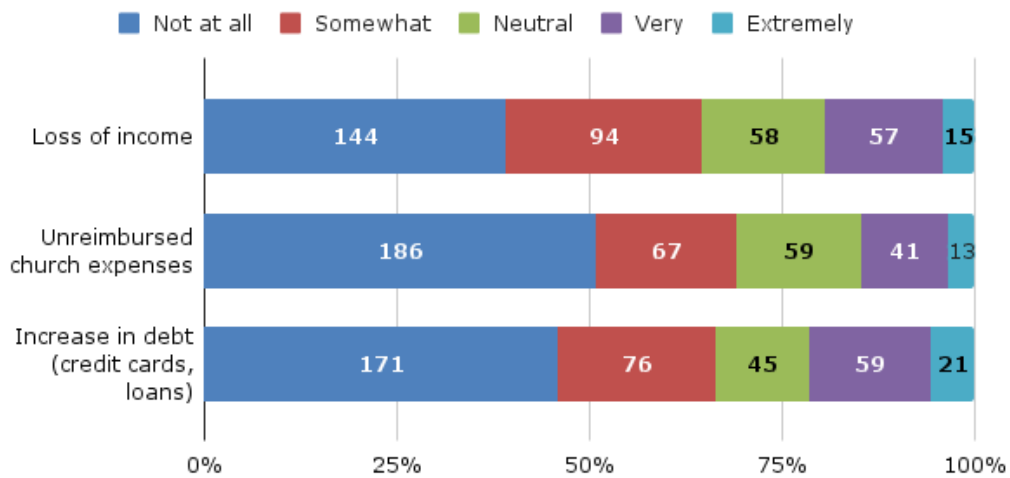
Financial Impact

The pandemic created many challenges for our communities, particularly regarding financial well-being. Clergy of color within the UMC experienced financial difficulties similar to the rest of the world at the time, such as loss of income, increased debt, and the rising costs of basic goods. Several respondents report their spouses losing or being forced to quit their jobs, a decrease in tithes and regular offerings, and family members becoming caregivers for loved ones resulting in decreased income.

When asked if they experienced a loss of income due to the pandemic, the most common response (39.1%, n=144) was that it had no impact at all. On average, respondents reported that the pandemic only “somewhat” negatively impacted their income (weighted average = 2.19). Pacific Islander respondents reported the highest level of negative financial impact through loss of income; however, the average rating for these respondents of 2.20 still fell within the “Neutral” response category on a scale of 1-5. White respondents reported the lowest level of loss of income at 1.97.

Financial Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



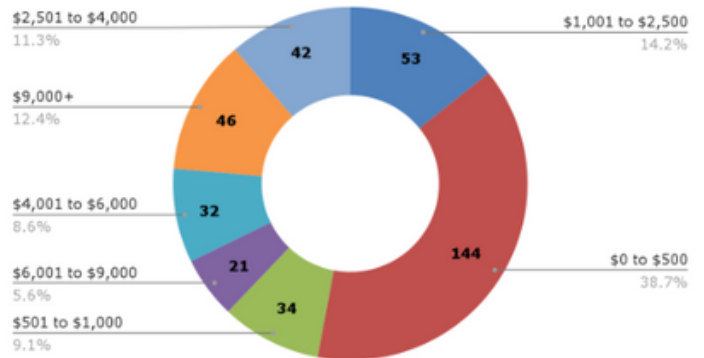
Over 186 respondents (50.8%), experienced no negative financial impact related to unreimbursed church expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, matching the average response of 1.98, or “not at all”, on a scale of 1-5.

Financial Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)				
Ethnicity	Loss of income	Unreimbursed church expenses	Increase in debt (credit cards, loans)	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	2.08	1.89	2.04	2.00
Asian (n=105)	2.17	1.95	2.12	2.08
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.18	1.93	1.93	2.01
Korean (n=36)	2.03	1.83	1.92	1.93
Native American (n=24)	2.61	2.32	2.22	2.38
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.05	2.89	3.45	3.13
Other (n=8)	2.38	2.38	2.38	2.38
White (n=7)	1.86	1.33	2.71	1.97
Multi-Racial (n=4)	2.00	1.75	2.50	2.08
Total Weighted Average	2.20	1.98	2.15	2.11

Similarly to the reported loss of income and unreimbursed church expenses, most respondents experienced no increase in financial debt (46%, n=171). Some respondents even reported spending less money since they were staying home more often. Others reported the burden of student loans and increased debt due to loss of a spouses' job.

Participants were also asked to quantify the financial impact of the pandemic by selecting the approximate amount of money lost during 2021, on average. The most common response among clergy surveyed was an average of \$0-\$500 lost (38.7%, n=144); however, some respondents (12.4%, n=46) experienced severe financial impacts amounting to over \$9,000 lost during 2021, and 48.8% (n=182) losing anywhere from \$501-\$9000 due to the pandemic.

Self-reported Financial Impact of COVID-19



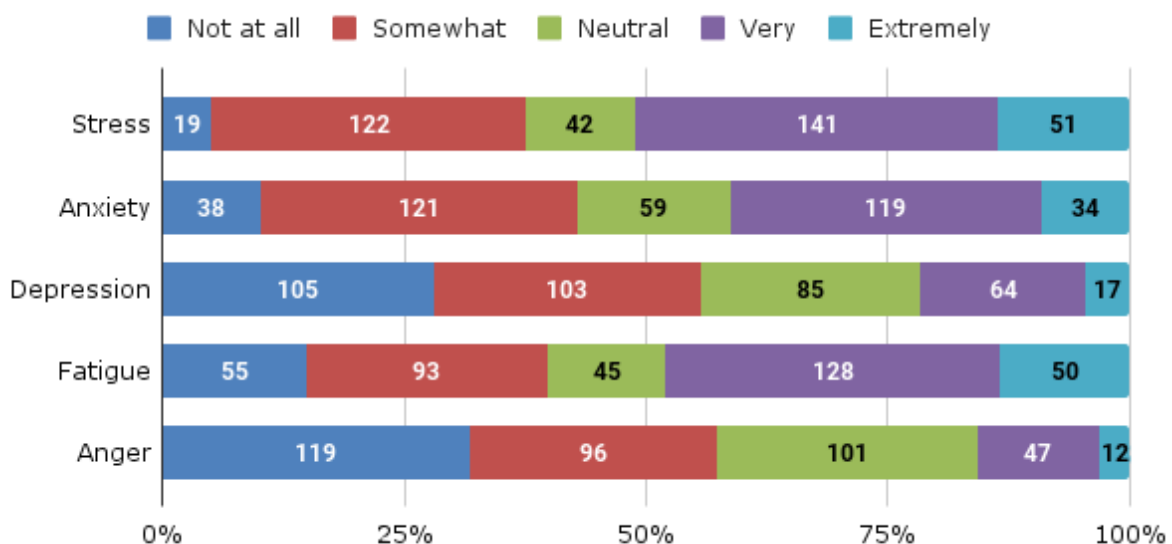
Emotional Impact

Participants were surveyed about the emotional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and were asked to rate the impact on a likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all” impacted and 5 being “extremely” impacted. The overall emotional impact across all areas, including stress, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and anger, was rated at 2.79 on average. Stress was the strongest negative emotional impact of the pandemic for the majority of participants (weighted average of 3.22) with almost 15% indicating that the pandemic had an extreme impact on stress levels. Just over 50% of respondents (n=192) indicated a strong negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stress levels, while another 45% (n=164) of respondents’ stress levels remained “neutral” or “somewhat” impacted. Only 5% (n=19) of respondents experienced no negative impact on their level of stress.

Increased fatigue was the second most common adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for respondents on average (weighted average of 3.07). Most respondents experienced increased fatigue, with some reporting that they were “socially drained,” especially with the switch to online church services. Only 14% (n=55) of respondents reported no negative impact on their level of fatigue as a result of the pandemic.

Emotional Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



Anxiety levels increased for approximately 90% (n=333) of respondents throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the third most common negative emotional impact of the pandemic reported by survey participants. 9% of respondents indicated an extreme impact on anxiety levels, while the most common response among participants (n=121) was that their anxiety was “somewhat” negatively impacted. On average, impact on anxiety levels was rated at 2.97 on a scale of 1-5. Some respondents reported having trouble dealing with “fear” and that they were “concerned more about the church members” than themselves.

The majority of survey participants responded that COVID-19 had a marginal negative impact on their depression and anger levels, with the weighted average for these emotional impact areas being 2.42 and 2.29 respectively on a scale of 1-5. Several respondents cited frustration with government mandates that prevented in-person services, while others reported being the target of the anger of others as the number of hate crimes increased throughout the pandemic. Over a quarter of respondents experienced no negative impact on their level of depression or anger throughout the pandemic.

Emotional Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)						
Ethnicity	Stress	Anxiety	Depression	Fatigue	Anger	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	3.03	2.79	2.16	2.86	2.15	2.60
Asian (n=105)	3.44	3.18	2.60	3.31	2.42	2.99
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	3.36	3.05	2.29	2.90	2.31	2.78
Korean (n=36)	3.19	2.91	2.56	3.17	2.23	2.81
Native American (n=24)	2.92	2.75	2.42	2.83	2.08	2.60
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.50	3.32	2.90	3.45	2.85	3.20
Other (n=8)	3.13	2.88	3.00	3.13	2.38	2.90
White (n=7)	3.43	3.33	2.29	3.50	2.71	3.05
Multi-Racial (n=4)	3.00	3.00	3.50	3.00	2.25	2.95
Total Weighted Average	3.22	2.97	2.43	3.07	2.30	2.80

Physical Impact

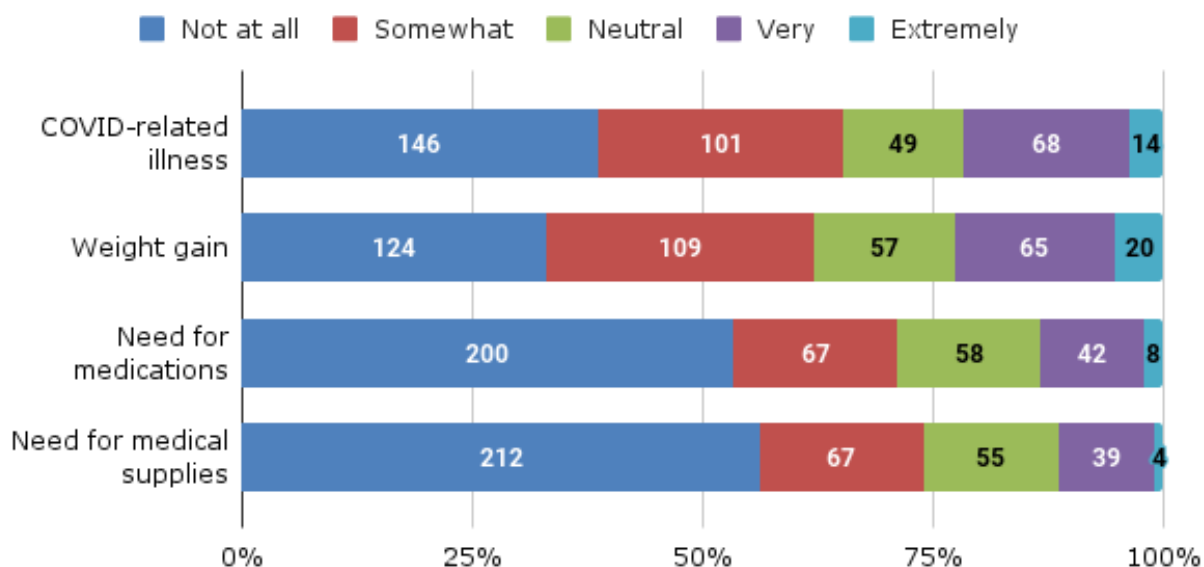
Participants were surveyed about the physical impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and were asked to rate the impact on a likert scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not at all” impacted and 5 being “extremely” impacted. The overall emotional impact across all areas, including COVID-related illness, weight gain, and the need for medications or medical supplies, was rated at 2.07 on average.

The most common negative physical impact of COVID-19 among clergy respondents was weight gain, though the majority of respondents reported that the impact of the pandemic was not “extreme.” One respondent discussed the missed opportunities for physical activity in a group setting due to the gathering restrictions during the pandemic. Several respondents reported the impact of a COVID-related illness (61%, n=232), with some stating the need for hospitalization and the long-term effects they continue to experience.

The need for medical supplies and medication were the least impacted by the pandemic on average, according to survey respondents, with over 50% responding “not at all” for both areas. Some respondents reported an increased need for medication due to weight gained as a result of the pandemic, treatments for a non-COVID-related illness, and a slight increase in the need for over-the-counter medications. Others cited the need for COVID-19 test kits, gloves, masks, and cleaning products.

Physical Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



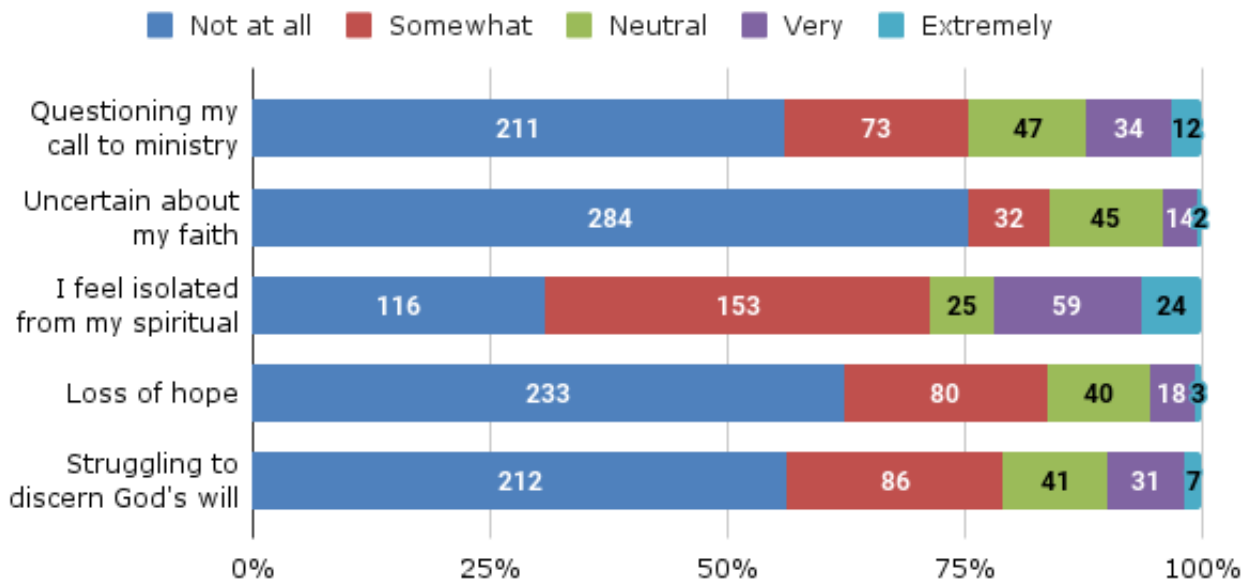
Physical Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)					
Ethnicity	COVID-related illness	Weight gain	Need for medications	Need for medical supplies	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	1.96	2.17	1.78	1.59	1.88
Asian (n=105)	2.39	2.36	1.84	1.91	2.13
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.14	2.38	1.93	1.88	2.08
Korean (n=36)	2.17	2.06	1.69	1.61	1.88
Native American (n=24)	2.42	2.63	2.25	2.21	2.38
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.45	3.00	2.95	2.90	3.08
Other (n=8)	2.00	3.00	2.25	1.63	2.22
White (n=7)	1.43	2.50	1.83	1.43	1.80
Multi-Racial (n=4)	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75
Total Weighted Average	2.21	2.33	1.91	1.82	2.07

Spiritual Impact

With a weighted average of 1.79 on a scale of 1-5, spirituality was the least impacted domain for survey respondents on average. Although many clergy experienced uncertainty, isolation, and grief throughout the pandemic, over 75% of respondents (n=284) reported no feelings of uncertainty regarding their faith. One clergy member stated “My faith was what kept me going!”

Spiritual Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



Similarly, only 12% of respondents (n=46) reported seriously questioning their call to ministry due to the pandemic. While many clergy leaned into their spiritual community and practices as a source of hope, many respondents also reported feelings of isolation and “struggling to discern God’s will” for their lives. Almost 70% of respondents (n=261) felt isolated during the pandemic, particularly when large gatherings were not allowed.

Spiritual Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)						
Ethnicity	Questioning my call to ministry	Uncertain about my faith	I feel isolated from my spiritual community	Loss of hope	Struggling to discern God’s will for my life	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	1.62	1.25	2.10	1.38	1.70	1.61
Asian (n=105)	1.89	1.50	2.24	1.71	1.77	1.82
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.05	1.50	2.48	1.78	1.83	1.93
Korean (n=36)	1.92	1.72	2.25	1.75	1.86	1.90
Native American (n=24)	1.67	1.57	2.21	1.38	1.43	1.65
Pacific Islander (n=20)	2.60	2.00	2.90	2.20	2.15	2.37
Other (n=8)	1.88	1.25	2.25	1.63	1.63	1.73
White (n=7)	2.00	1.43	2.29	1.71	1.71	1.83
Multi-Racial (n=4)	1.75	1.25	3.25	1.50	2.75	2.10
Total Weighted Average	1.84	1.46	2.26	1.60	1.77	1.79

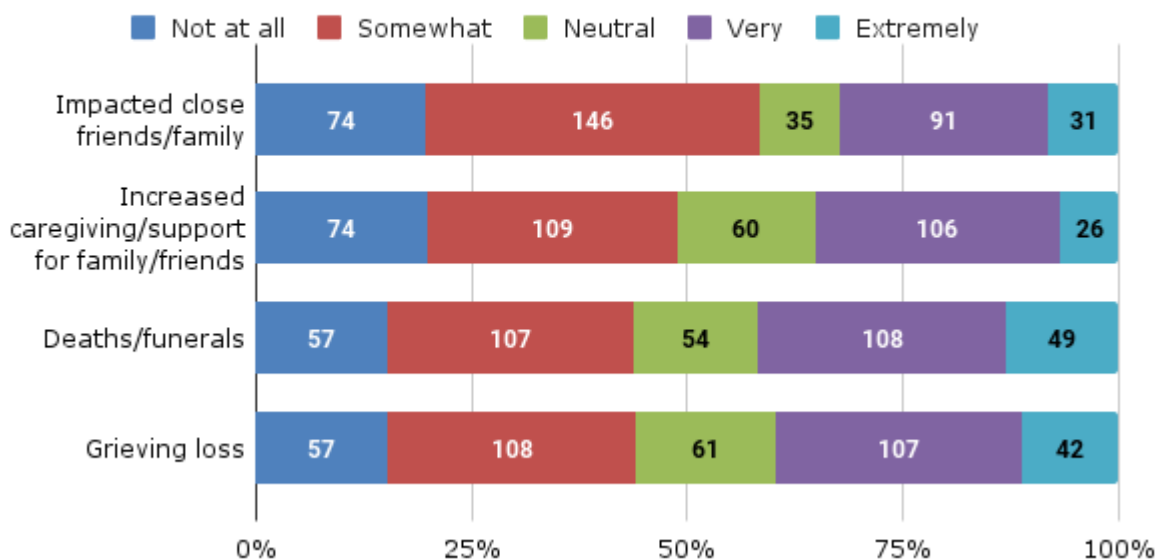
Relational Impact

Relational wellness was the most impacted domain for respondents on average (weighted average=2.81), with over 80% of respondents reporting at least some level of impact on each area.

The widespread impact of the pandemic created a ripple effect of grief, loss, and an increased need for support for many members of the Black UMC clergy community.

Relational Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



Less than 20% of respondents (n=74), indicated that their friends and close family were not impacted at all by the pandemic. Others experienced a major loss, such as the death of a loved one, loved ones dealing with mental health challenges, and coping with changes in routines, including online school for children. About 85% of respondents report grieving loss and attending funerals for loved ones as a result of the pandemic.

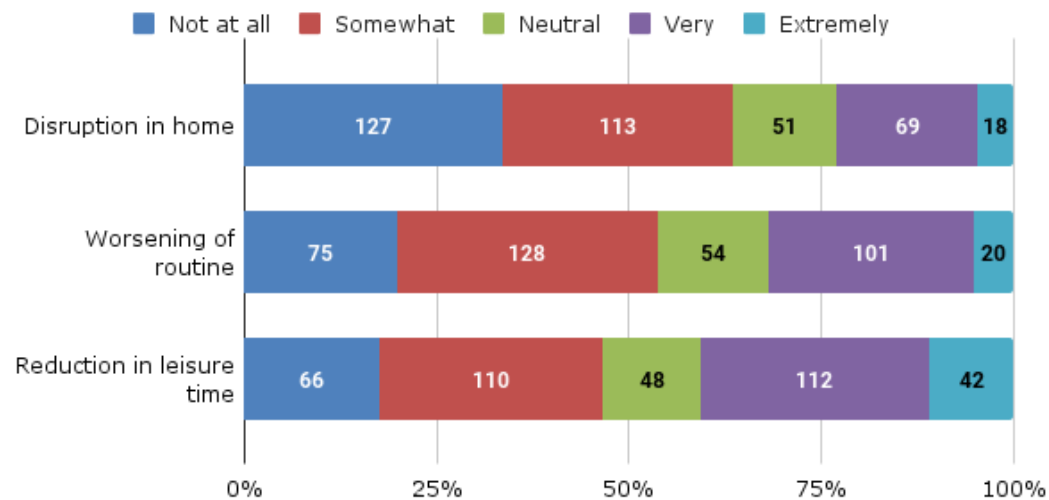
Relational Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)					
Ethnicity	Impacted close friends/ family	Increased caregiving/ support for family/ friends	Deaths/ funerals	Grieving loss	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	2.43	2.55	3.07	3.06	2.78
Asian (n=105)	2.69	2.87	2.73	2.71	2.75
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.71	2.95	2.88	2.80	2.84
Korean (n=36)	2.75	2.89	3.00	2.94	2.90
Native American (n=24)	2.42	2.67	3.17	3.00	2.81
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.50	3.45	3.85	3.75	3.64
Other (n=8)	2.25	1.75	2.00	1.88	1.97
White (n=7)	2.71	2.00	2.71	2.14	2.39
Multi-Racial (n=4)	3.00	2.00	2.50	3.25	2.69
Total Weighted Average	2.63	2.74	2.96	2.92	2.81

Environmental Impact

During the pandemic, respondents experienced negative environmental impacts with a weighted average of 2.61 on a scale of 1-5. Similarly to most of the world at the time, respondents' homes, routines, and leisure time was disrupted with many working from home, helping young children with online school, and being limited to the home in the early days of the pandemic.

Environmental Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



Just over 2/3 of respondents experienced a disruption in the home as a result of the pandemic (n=251), with a rating of 2.31 on a scale of 1-5, on average. This was rated at the environmental area least impacted by the pandemic.

The worsening of routine due to the pandemic was experienced by 80% of survey participants (n=303), with the majority of respondents only being “somewhat” impacted in this area. The weighted average for this area was 2.64. Many participants reported blurred lines between work and home life, while others stated that it encouraged more time with family.

Respondents were impacted most negatively in their leisure time. Over 80% of respondents saw reduced leisure time on some level, but the most common response rated the negative impact on leisure time at a 4 on a 5-point scale. The weighted average for this area was 2.88. Although some respondents were grateful for the reduced time spent on commuting to work and the flexibility in their day, others were overwhelmed by caring for family members and coping with COVID-related restrictions.

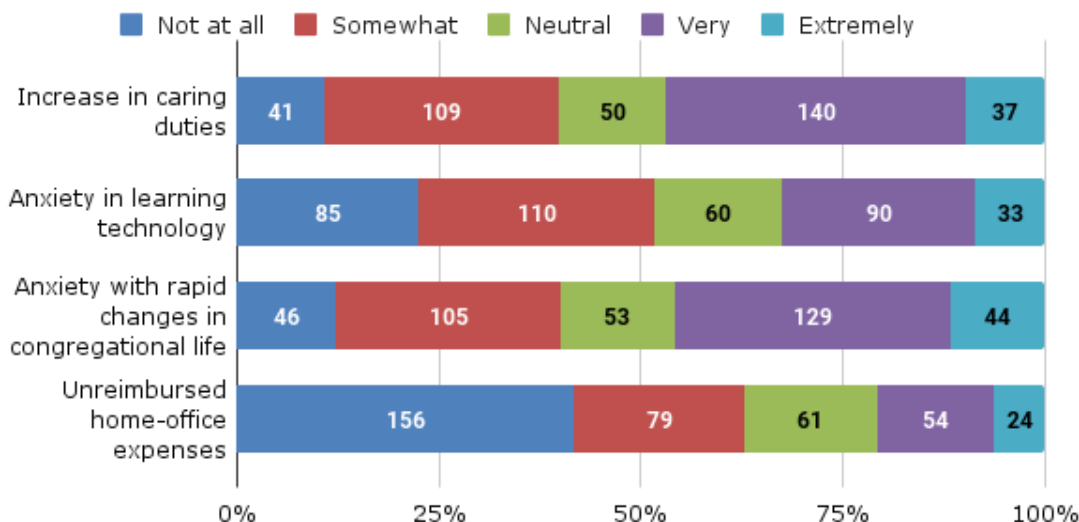
Environmental Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)				
Ethnicity	Disruption in home	Worsening of routine	Reduction in leisure time	Total Avg Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	1.96	2.37	2.60	2.31
Asian (n=105)	2.57	2.86	3.16	2.86
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.21	2.60	2.83	2.55
Korean (n=36)	2.28	2.58	2.92	2.59
Native American (n=24)	2.04	2.54	2.58	2.39
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.50	3.40	3.60	3.50
Other (n=8)	2.38	2.75	2.50	2.54
White (n=7)	3.00	3.14	3.14	3.10
Multi-Racial (n=4)	2.50	2.50	3.50	2.83
Total Weighted Average	2.31	2.64	2.88	2.61

Professional Impact

On average, respondents rated the impact of COVID-19 on their professional lives at a 2.75 on a scale of 1-5. Almost 90% of respondents saw an increase in caring duties during the pandemic, with approximately 10% of these people experiencing an extreme impact in this area. This professional area had a weighted average of 3.06 on a scale of 1-5.

Professional Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On United Methodist Clergy of Color



Some clergy experienced anxiety in learning new technologies throughout the pandemic as congregations moved to virtual and hybrid services. Approximately 75% of respondents were at least somewhat impacted in this area (weighted average = 2.67).

About 88% of participants experienced at least some level of anxiety with the changes in congregational life that came along with the pandemic. This professional area had a weighted average of 3.05 on a scale of 1-5.

Over 40% of respondents were not impacted at all by unreimbursed home-office expenses throughout the pandemic. With a weighted average of 2.23 on a scale of 1-5, the impact in this area was relatively small.

Professional Impact of COVID-19 by Respondent Ethnicity (Scale of 1-5)					
Ethnicity	Increase in caring duties	Anxiety in learning technology	Anxiety with rapid changes in congregational life	Unreimbursed home-office expenses	Total of Weighted Averages Across Ethnicities
African-American (n=135)	2.89	2.55	2.86	2.11	2.60
Asian (n=105)	3.30	2.76	3.25	2.33	2.91
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	3.22	2.36	2.95	2.52	2.76
Korean (n=36)	2.89	2.94	2.94	2.08	2.72
Native American (n=24)	2.71	2.38	2.79	1.64	2.38
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.70	3.55	4.00	3.10	3.59
Other (n=8)	2.63	2.38	3.00	2.13	2.53
White (n=7)	2.71	3.00	3.33	1.57	2.65
Multi-Racial (n=4)	3.00	2.75	3.00	2.00	2.69
Total Weighted Average	3.06	2.67	3.05	2.23	2.75

Key Findings

Overall, respondents reported varying levels of impact within each of the seven domains of wellness: financial, emotional, physical, relational, spiritual, environmental, and professional. The relational domain remained at the forefront across most ethnic groups and other demographic characteristics, with a large portion of respondents reporting an impact on close friends and family, and grieving the loss of loved ones. As mentioned above, many respondents leaned into their spiritual practice and community during the challenges of the pandemic and few reported a negative impact on their spirituality as a result of the pandemic.

Domain of Wellness	Reported Impact on a 1-5 Scale
Relational	2.81
Professional	2.75
Emotional	2.80
Environmental	2.61
Financial	2.11
Physical	2.07
Spiritual	1.79
Total Weighted Average	2.48

Ethnicity	Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic across all domains
Pacific Islander (n=20)	3.21
Asian (n=105)	2.51
Multi-Racial (n=4)	2.44
Hispanic/Latino (n=42)	2.42
White (n=7)	2.40
Korean (n=36)	2.39
Native American (n=24)	2.37
Other (n=8)	2.32
African-American (n=135)	2.25
Total Weighted Average	2.42

Pacific Islanders (n=20) reported the highest level of impact in 21 of the 28 areas of impact, with the highest average level of impact in anxiety with rapid changes in congregational life reported at a 4 out of 5. In total, respondents that identified as Pacific Islanders reported negative impacts across all areas at a weighted average of 3.21 out of 5.

Asian respondents (n=105) reported the second highest level of impact across all domains on average at 2.51 on a 5-point scale, with the environmental and emotional domains being most impacted.

Multi-Racial (n=4) respondents rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.44 on a 5-point scale. The highest domains of impact for respondents that identified as Multi-Racial include environmental changes and emotional wellness.

Hispanic/Latino respondents (n=42) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.42 on a 5-point scale. Relational and emotional wellness were the most impacted by the pandemic for this group.

White respondents (n=7) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.40 on a 5-point scale. Environmental and emotional domains were the most impacted by the pandemic for this group.

Korean respondents (n=36) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.39 on a 5-point scale. Relational and emotional wellness were the most impacted by the pandemic for this group.

Native Americans (n=24) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.37 on a 5-point scale. Emotional wellness was the highest domain of impact for respondents that identified as Native American.

Respondents that identified with the ethnicity category of “Other” (n=8) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.32 on a 5-point scale. These respondents reported the highest impact in the domains of emotional and professional wellbeing.

African-American respondents (n=135) rated the negative impact of the pandemic at 2.25 on a 5-point scale, the lowest rating across all ethnicities surveyed. The domains of relational, emotional, and professional wellness were the most impacted by the pandemic for African-American clergy respondents.

Recommendations

- Clergy should be provided with support to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, specifically in the areas of relational, emotional, and professional wellness. Resources may be needed to fully process the grief and loss experienced during the pandemic, as well as the subsequent emotional challenges.
- The reported financial impact from the pandemic was fairly minimal within the study sample; however, financial assistance may still be a critical factor for members of groups that were under-represented in this survey, including those with a longer service tenure and those under the age of 40.

Research Limitations

Due to the small sample size of this survey, additional research is required to fully assess the impact of the pandemic on specific demographic groups including Multi-Racial, Native American, Pacific Islander, and “Other” respondents. In future research, defining the various ethnicities, as well as providing a multi-select option for multi-racial respondents, can help respondents choose the most appropriate option and accurately reflect the diversity of the sample.

Conclusion

In conclusion, clergy within the United Methodist Church faced many challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges varied across ethnicity with some ethnicities report being more negatively impacted than others. Regardless of the comparison between ethnic backgrounds, the large majority of clergy were impacted by grief, isolation, and anxiety related to the ongoing uncertainty related to the pandemic in their personal and professional lives.