

Ground-Breaking Study Regarding Retired Ministers

The first ever in-depth study of retired ministers across denominations of the Christian faith was conducted in 2019. Shepherd's Fold Ministries (shepherdsfoldministries.com) commissioned Lifeway Research to conduct this project examining the life condition of retired ministers in four areas: social, financial, physical, and spiritual. Special attention was given to specific ways in which a retired minister's life condition could improve as well as the forms in which retired ministers would prefer to receive encouragement and help to find life condition improvements.

The goal was to have 500 participants and 2,451 retired ministers participated! Respondents met the following qualifications: either officially retired or of retirement age (67+) and have served as a pastor, minister in a church, or missionary. Respondents identified themselves with the following denominations or missionary organizations: Assemblies of God, Lutheran / ELCA, Church of the Nazarene, Wesleyan, Non-denominational / Independent, Church of the Brethren, Methodist, Pentecostal / Charismatic / Full Gospel, Lutheran / LCMS, Baptist / Other, Presbyterian / PCA, Baptist Missionary Association of America, OMS / One Mission Society, WEC / Worldwide Evangelization for Christ, OM / Operation Mobilization, Wycliffe, OMF, "Other" / Independent Missionary work.

The research results include 433 pages of information: a 194 page powerpoint presentation and 239 pages of responses from the two open-ended questions. This study is available in the Membership section of shepherdsfoldministries.com. Shepherd's Fold Ministries would like to thank the Research Team at Lifeway Research including the survey writers, distributors of the study, and statisticians – it was a joy to work with you and see your professionalism at work in this important study.

Shepherd's Fold Ministries encourages scholars to consider additional study among the retired minister population. Our desire is that we not only help ministers who have reached retirement status, but to also help ministers transition to their retirement years in ways that bring meaning, fulfillment, and purpose.

The membership level of Shepherd's Fold Ministries includes an ever-growing collection of resources to help ministers transition to and experience meaningful retirement years. These resources match the issues identified in the study that most contribute to healthy well-being. Keep up to date with these resources at shepherdsfoldministries.com

Summary of Findings

Participants answered the following 3-part question (question #9 on the survey).

The following questions ask you to step back and think about your overall life today, including relationships, spiritual life, finances, and physical health. Please select one response for each row.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The conditions of my life are excellent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A total score was calculated for each participant based on the following scoring method:

- Strongly Disagree: 1 point
- Disagree: 2 points
- Neither Agree nor Disagree: 3 points
- Agree: 4 points
- Strongly Agree: 5 points

Therefore the lowest possible score of life condition would be a 3 (if they rated themselves “strongly disagree” for all 3 parts of question #9) and the highest would be 15 (if they answered “strongly agree” for all 3 parts of question number 9).

Following question #9, which determined a well-being score for each participant, a series of 161 questions / statements was offered to which participants responded. These statements related to specific issues within the categories of one’s social, financial, physical, and spiritual lives. The answers were gathered for each specific question and the average well-being score calculated among the participants of each possible answer. Among all the statements from the entire survey, there were nine statements showing the greatest differential of well-being scoring in the lives of retired ministers.

These 9 statements are listed below in order of greatest impact on life wellness and the scores have been translated to a 100 point scale.

1. I often feel lonely or isolated.

Strongly disagree: 80.83

Strongly agree: 54.17

Difference = up to 26.66

2. Confidence that you and your spouse will have enough money to live comfortably throughout your retirement years.

Very Confident: 80.00

Not at all confident: 56.67

Difference: up to 23.33

3. Satisfaction with your ministry efforts before retirement.

Very satisfied: 78.33

Very dissatisfied: 57.50

Difference: up to 20.83

4. I have continued to make friends in recent years.

Strongly agree: 78.33

Strongly disagree: 60.00

Difference: up to 18.33

5. I have physical disabilities that limit my ability to get out and interact with others.

No: 76.67

Yes: 60.83

Difference: 15.84

6. Would help with finances improve your overall well-being?

Would not help at all: 80.00

Would help a lot: 65.83

Difference: up to 14.17

7. I am active and healthy.

Yes 77.50

No 65.83

Difference : 11.67

8. Feelings toward church / mission field where you served: Betrayed.

Did not choose "betrayed" 75.83

Chose the word "betrayed" 64.17

Difference: 11.66

9. Feelings toward church / mission field where you served: Rewarded.

Chose the word "rewarded" 78.33

Did not choose "rewarded" 70.00

Difference: 8.33