

A Lewis Center Report on
**Clergy Age Trends in the
United Methodist Church**
2023 Report

Elders • Deacons • Local Pastors

2023 Report

Lewis Center for Church Leadership

Wesley Theological Seminary



Lewis Center
for Church Leadership

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Highlights of the 2023 Report

Young Elders Reach New Record Low Number

The recent decline in the number of young elders (under 35) began in 2017 and followed modest gains after the low point of 2005. That decline continues; however, the scale of the decline increased dramatically beginning in 2019. Since 2019, there has been a decline of 53 percent in the number of under-35 elders. The losses were comparable for men and women based on the proportion of each among young elders. The number of young elders in 2023 is 449, a loss of 199 in the past year. This year sets a new record for the fewest young elders.

In addition to the overall number of active elders continuing to decline in 2023, young elders constitute 4 percent of active elders in 2023, down from 6 percent in 2022.

Some Increased Presence of Middle-Aged Elders

Beginning in 2000, we saw a trend of fewer elders in the middle-aged (35-54) group and more elders in the older (55-72) group. Despite a mandatory retirement age of 72, with most retiring before that age, the pool of older elders continued to grow for twenty years. In 2020, a modest turn in this trend began that continues in 2023. The middle-aged group as a proportion of all elders increased by three percent in 2023 (from 41 to 44 percent), with a one percent decrease for the older group's proportion (to 52 percent) plus the two percent decline for young elders. Keep in mind that all age groups of elders declined in raw numbers, but some declined more than others, thus the change in proportional representation.

Young Deacons Also Decrease

There was also a significant decrease in the number of young deacons in 2023, from 100 in 2022 to 74 this year. Young deacons comprise 8.2 percent of all active deacons in 2023, down from 11 percent last year. The percentage of young deacons continues to be higher than the percentage for young elders and young local pastors. Keep in mind that the number of deacons in this report is lower than their presence in the denomination. This difference is because many deacons serve in work settings other than congregations and have pension plans through those agencies rather than Wespath Benefits, from which our numbers come.

Young Local Pastors Decline as Well

There is a decrease in young local pastors in 2023 to 416 compared to 561 in 2022. There was also a decline in the percentage of young local pastors as a percentage of all local pastors to 7 percent from 8 percent last year. There are proportionately more young local pastors than young elders but fewer than young deacons. Elders and local pastors are appointed as pastors of congregations. In 1990, there were over five elders for each local pastor; today there are 1.6 elders for each local pastor. The proportions of local pastors compared to elders remained the same in 2023 after many years of local pastors showing increased representation and elders decreased representation. While elders and deacons are seeing some declines in the previous rising rates of older clergy from 55 to 72 years of age, this is not true for local pastors where 58 percent of all local pastors are in this oldest cohort.

Purpose and Description

The purpose of this ongoing research effort is to identify clergy age trends in the United Methodist Church so that denominational leaders have the data for planning and a baseline for monitoring future changes. This report builds on previous reports on clergy age trends issued by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. The first report, *Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church: 1985-2005*, documented the dramatic decline in United Methodist young clergy in both numbers and percentages over 20 years. This report presents a snapshot of where clergy age trends stand in May 2023.

This report is made possible through partnership with the denominational pension agency, Wespath Benefits (WB). The Lewis Center for Church Leadership works with WB each year to determine age trends for United Methodist clergy.

The project covers elders, deacons, and local pastors in the five jurisdictional conferences of the United Methodist Church in the United States. While not all clergy are in the denominational pension system, most are, and the percentage not in the system tends to stay the same across the years, thus making trend comparisons possible. Readers should keep in mind that the total number of deacons is significantly lower in this report than their presence in the denomination because more deacons than other clergy work in employment settings with pension plans other than through WB. For local pastors, both full-time and part-time local pastors are included. Since WB does not keep records of clergy by race, we are not able to make comparisons by racial groups.

To help the church address the dramatic loss of young clergy first reported in 2005, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership has provided resources beginning with *The Crisis of Younger Clergy* by Lovett H. Weems, Jr., and Ann A. Michel (Abingdon, 2008) and the formation of cohorts of young clergy to provide advanced leader development.

More recently, the Lewis Center developed a series of free one-page downloadable documents to assist those seeking to support younger clergy.

- [Why Young Clergy Matter](#)
- [Ways Established Church Leaders Can Work with Young Clergy](#)
- [Suggestions for Churches with a Young Pastor](#)
- [Suggestions for Churches with a Single Pastor](#)
- [Suggestions for Churches with a Clergywoman](#)

Contributors

Lovett H. Weems, Jr., senior consultant of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, was project director. Matthew Lyons, Lewis Center marketing manager, contributed to the project. Andrew Q. Hendren, general secretary of Wespath Benefits and Investments, and the Wespath staff, particularly Eloy Cerenil, provided essential cooperation and data.

Summary of Findings

Young Clergy Trends

Young Elders

- The number of under-35 elders decreased by 199 to 449, continuing a seven-year decline.
- The percentage of young elders declined from 5.8 percent last year to 4.5 percent in 2023.
- The North Texas and Texas Conferences reported the highest percentage of young elders at 8.8 percent.
- The Top Ten Conferences by percentage
 - North Texas (#1 in 2022 and 2021) and Texas (#1 in 2020, 2019, 2016, 2015, 2014, and 2012)
 - North Carolina and Pacific Northwest
 - Louisiana
 - Dakotas
 - Alabama-West Florida
 - Central Texas
 - South Carolina
 - Virginia
- The largest total number of young elders (28) is in the Virginia Conference.

Young Deacons

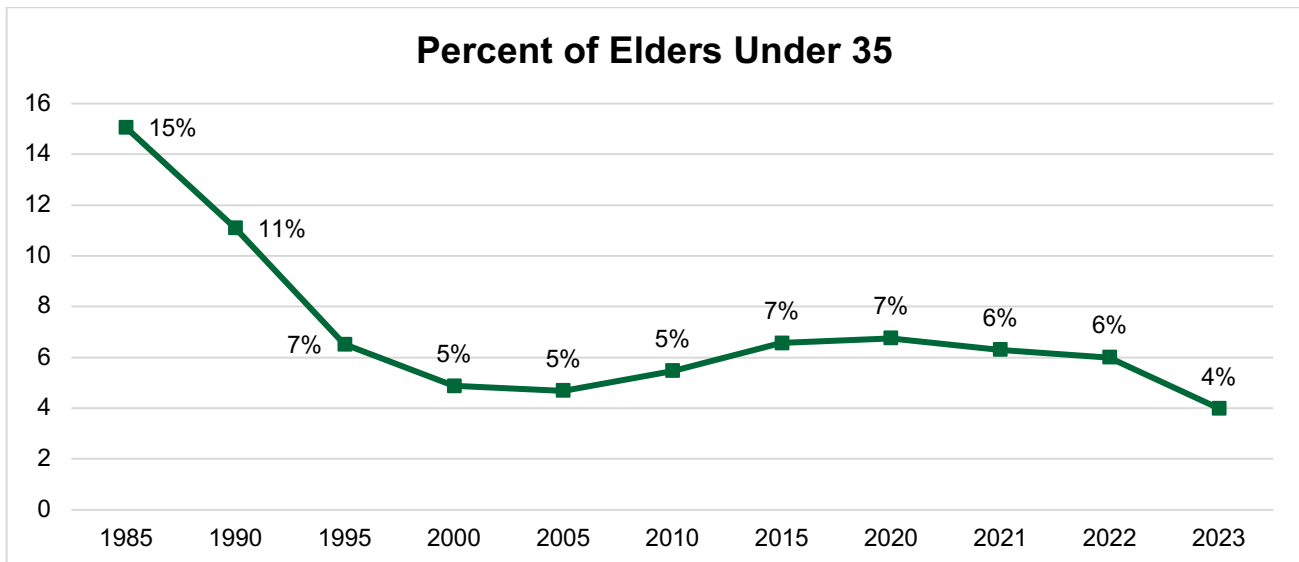
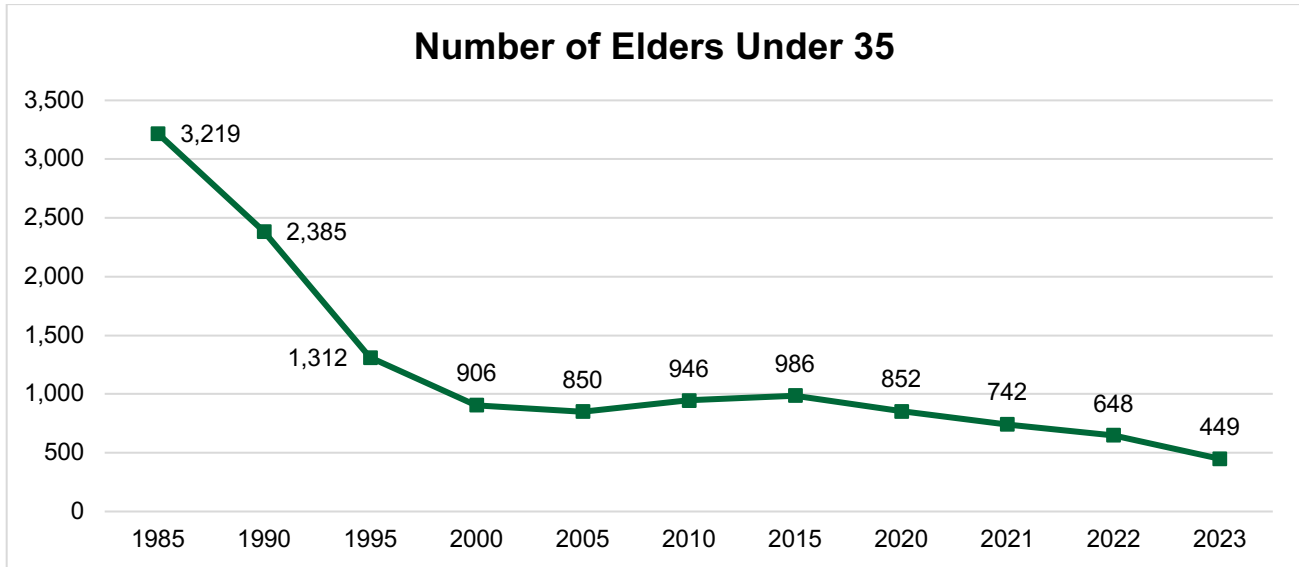
- The number of under-35 deacons decreased by 26 in 2023 to 74.
- The percentage of young deacons among all active deacons declined from 11 percent last year to 8.2 percent in 2023.
- The percentage of young deacons remains above that of elders and local pastors.

Young Local Pastors

- The number of under-35 local pastors declined by 145 in the past year to 416 in 2023.
- The percentage of young local pastors among all active local pastors declined from 8 percent last year to 7 percent in 2023.

Elders

To have comparable figures across the years for elders, the figures include *not only those ordained elder but also those commissioned on the elder track but not yet ordained.*



Trends of Elders 1985-2023

Year	No. of Elders	Elders Under 35	% <35	Elders 35-54	% 35-54	Elders 55-72	% 55-72
1985	21,378	3,219	15%	12,305	58%	5,854	27%
1990	21,507	2,385	11%	12,678	59%	6,444	30%
1995	20,117	1,312	7%	12,843	64%	5,962	30%
2000	18,576	906	5%	12,005	65%	5,665	30%
2005	18,141	850	5%	9,872	54%	7,419	41%
2010	17,293	946	5%	7,698	45%	8,649	50%
2015	15,019	986	7%	5,746	38%	8,287	55%
2020	12,610	852	7%	4,830	38%	6,928	55%
2021	11,771	742	6%	4,652	40%	6,377	54%
2022	11,168	648	6%	4,577	41%	5,321	53%
2023	10,010	449	4%	4,391	44%	5,170	52%

**Gender Breakdown within
Age Cohorts – Elders**

Year	Gender	Under 35	35-54	55-72
2020	Men	62%	67%	69%
	Women	38%	33%	31%
2021	Men	62%	67%	68%
	Women	38%	33%	32%
2022	Men	61%	66%	68%
	Women	39%	34%	32%
2023	Men	59%	65%	66%
	Women	41%	35%	34%

Median and Average Ages – Elders

Year	Median* Age	Average Age
1985	48	47
1990	47	48
1995	48	48
2000	50	50
2005	52	52
2010	55	53
2015	56	53
2020	56	53
2021	56	54
2022	56	53
2023	56	54

*Median – half older, half younger

Average and Median Ages by Conference

Median - half older, half younger

CONFERENCE	2023 Average	2023 Median
ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA	52	53
ALASKA MISSIONARY	-	-
ARKANSAS	53	54
BALTIMORE-WASHINGTON	55	57
CALIFORNIA-NEVADA	56	58
CALIFORNIA-PACIFIC	56	58
CENTRAL APPALACHIAN	-	-
CENTRAL TEXAS	52	54
DAKOTAS	52	53
DESERT SOUTHWEST	54	56
EAST OHIO	54	58
EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA	57	60
FLORIDA	53	55
GREAT PLAINS	52	52
GREATER NEW JERSEY	55	58
HOLSTON	53	54
ILLINOIS GREAT RIVERS	54	58
INDIANA	54	57
IOWA	54	57
KENTUCKY	52	54
LOUISIANA	53	55
MICHIGAN	54	55
MINNESOTA	55	57
MISSISSIPPI	54	56
MISSOURI	54	54
MOUNTAIN SKY	52	54
NEW ENGLAND	53	55

CONFERENCE	2023 Average	2023 Median
NEW MEXICO	55	57
NEW YORK	56	59
NORTH ALABAMA	52	54
NORTH CAROLINA	51	52
NORTH GEORGIA	54	54
NORTH TEXAS	52	53
NORTHERN ILLINOIS	54	56
NORTHWEST TEXAS	55	55
OKLAHOMA	54	55
OKLAHOMA INDIAN MSNY	60	62
OREGON IDAHO	55	57
PACIFIC NORTHWEST	52	53
PENINSULA-DELAWARE	57	59
RIO TEXAS	54	55
SOUTH CAROLINA	55	57
SOUTH GEORGIA	55	57
SUSQUEHANNA	55	58
TENNESSEE-WESTERN KY	52	53
TEXAS	51	51
UPPER NEW YORK	56	58
VIRGINIA	52	52
WEST OHIO	55	56
WEST VIRGINIA	56	59
WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA	53	56
WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA	55	57
WISCONSIN	55	58
All Elders	54	56

Elders

Presence of Elders under 35 by Annual Conference 2021-2023

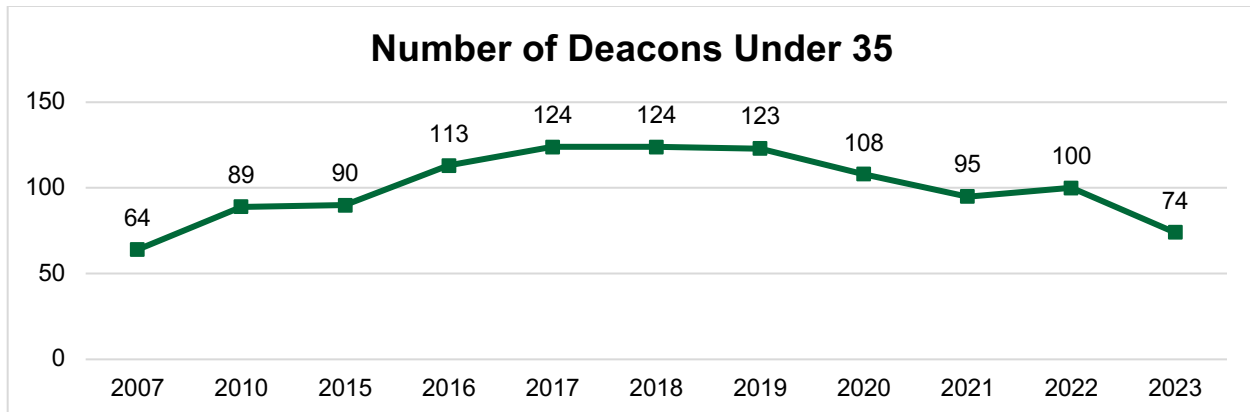
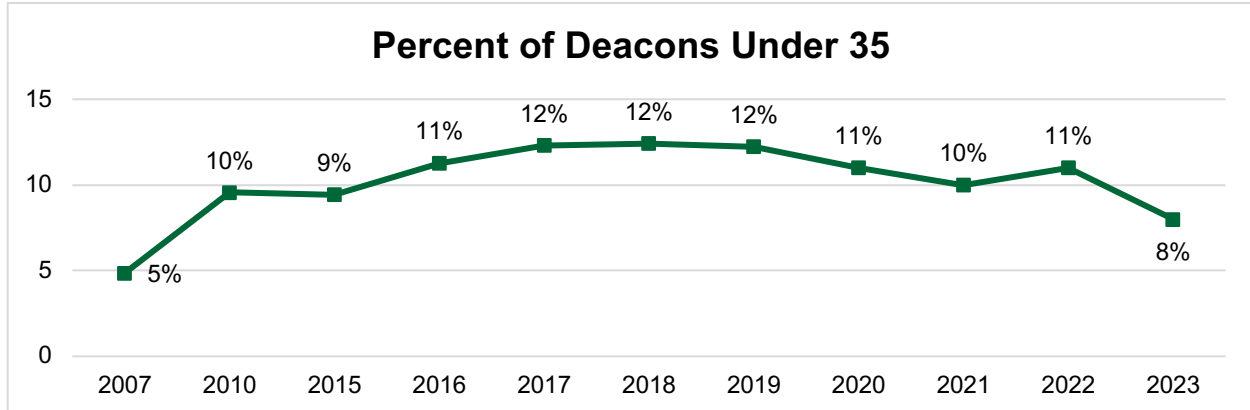
CONFERENCE	2023 Elders under 35	2023 Elders under 35	2023 Elders	2022 Elders under 35	2022 Elders under 35	2022 Elders	2021 Elders under 35	2021 Elders under 35	2021 Elders
Alabama-West Florida	11	6.9%	160	15	8.3%	180	15	8.1%	186
Alaska Missionary	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Arkansas	6	3.9%	152	11	6.3%	175	13	7.2%	180
Baltimore-Washington	13	4.2%	306	17	5.4%	316	14	4.3%	326
California-Nevada	5	2.6%	194	6	3.0%	200	8	3.9%	206
California-Pacific	3	1.1%	269	8	2.8%	285	7	2.4%	294
Central Appalachian	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Central Texas	10	6.8%	148	17	9.0%	189	15	7.9%	189
Dakotas	6	7.0%	86	7	7.6%	92	8	8.6%	93
Desert Southwest	2	2.8%	72	2	2.5%	79	1	1.2%	85
East Ohio	9	4.7%	191	11	5.1%	214	16	7.1%	226
Eastern Pennsylvania	3	1.9%	157	6	3.4%	174	7	3.8%	183
Florida	18	5.5%	330	26	7.4%	349	22	6.3%	349
Great Plains	16	5.8%	278	21	6.9%	306	22	7.0%	313
Greater New Jersey	6	2.7%	219	8	3.4%	238	14	5.5%	253
Holston	12	5.0%	242	15	5.8%	259	15	5.7%	262
Illinois Great Rivers	11	5.5%	200	12	5.7%	211	13	5.9%	220
Indiana	7	2.7%	258	18	5.7%	317	26	7.5%	346
Iowa	10	5.2%	192	12	5.6%	215	15	6.4%	235
Kentucky	9	5.5%	164	14	7.6%	184	18	9.1%	197
Louisiana	8	7.5%	107	11	8.5%	129	13	8.9%	146
Michigan	11	4.2%	260	21	7.6%	278	26	8.9%	293
Minnesota	3	2.5%	119	4	3.1%	131	6	4.2%	143
Mississippi	6	2.4%	245	14	5.3%	264	18	6.6%	271
Missouri	4	1.9%	206	7	3.2%	216	9	3.9%	229
Mountain Sky	10	5.5%	183	12	6.3%	191	13	6.5%	201
New England	5	3.2%	157	10	5.9%	169	10	5.6%	178
New Mexico	0	0.0%	55	0	0.0%	55	0	0.0%	65
New York	4	1.9%	214	5	2.1%	239	4	1.6%	243

**Presence of Elders under 35
by Annual Conference
2021-2023, continued**

CONFERENCE	2023 Elders under 35	2023 Elders under 35	2023 Elders	2022 Elders under 35	2022 Elders under 35	2022 Elders	2021 Elders under 35	2021 Elders under 35	2021 Elders
North Alabama	8	5.1%	158	10	5.1%	198	14	6.3%	221
North Carolina	20	7.8%	256	27	8.4%	323	29	8.5%	340
North Georgia	15	4.1%	368	24	5.9%	404	26	6.2%	417
North Texas	17	8.8%	194	24	11.4%	211	25	11.3%	222
Northern Illinois	6	2.6%	230	11	4.6%	239	15	6.0%	250
Northwest Texas	1	4.2%	24	2	3.0%	67	2	2.9%	70
Oklahoma	11	5.7%	192	14	6.3%	221	15	6.4%	235
OK Indian Missionary	0	0.0%	11	0	0.0%	12	0	0.0%	12
Oregon-Idaho	3	4.7%	64	4	5.3%	75	4	4.9%	82
Pacific Northwest	10	7.8%	128	11	8.0%	138	9	6.3%	143
Peninsula-Delaware	4	4.5%	89	3	3.1%	97	3	2.9%	105
Rio Texas	5	2.8%	178	7	3.6%	196	7	3.6%	195
South Carolina	20	6.7%	297	27	8.3%	326	20	5.9%	341
South Georgia	4	2.8%	143	5	2.9%	175	6	3.4%	179
Susquehanna	6	3.8%	160	14	8.5%	165	18	9.9%	181
Tennessee-Western KY	11	5.0%	218	16	6.8%	236	21	8.4%	251
Texas	20	8.8%	227	32	9.0%	356	39	10.6%	367
Upper New York	2	1.2%	170	1	0.5%	182	8	4.0%	202
Virginia	28	6.4%	436	31	6.9%	449	42	8.9%	474
West Ohio	9	2.8%	326	16	4.1%	393	22	5.2%	425
West Virginia	2	1.6%	129	4	2.8%	142	8	4.9%	162
Western North Carolina	21	4.4%	481	32	6.3%	510	36	6.5%	553
Western Pennsylvania	12	5.5%	220	15	6.4%	235	17	6.7%	252
Wisconsin	6	4.1%	147	8	4.9%	163	8	4.4%	180
Total	449	4.49%	10,010	648	5.8%	11,168	742	6.3%	11,771

Deacons

Deacon numbers include *not only those who have been ordained deacon but also those who have been commissioned* on the deacon track but not yet ordained. Readers should keep in mind that the total number of deacons is significantly lower in this report than their presence in the denomination because more deacons than other clergy work in employment settings with pension plans other than through the Wespeth Benefits.



Trends for Deacons 2005-2023

Year	No. of Deacons	Deacons Under 35	% <35	Deacons 35-54	% 35-54	Deacons 55-72	% 55-72
2005	850	46	5%				
2006	844	52	6%	438	52%	354	42%
2007	902	64	7%	457	51%	381	42%
2008	897	69	8%	441	49%	387	43%
2009	915	77	8%	438	48%	400	44%
2010	930	89	10%	419	45%	422	45%
2014	954	86	9%	382	40%	486	51%
2015	954	90	9%	398	42%	466	49%
2016	1,003	113	11%	415	41%	475	48%
2017	1,008	124	12%	404	40%	480	48%
2018	999	124	12%	399	40%	476	48%
2019	1,006	123	12%	415	41%	468	47%
2020	983	108	11%	429	44%	446	45%
2021	945	95	10%	431	46%	419	44%
2022	935	100	11%	433	46%	402	43%
2023	906	74	8%	451	50%	381	42%

Median and Average Ages - Deacons

Year	Median* Age	Average Age
2006	53	52
2007	52	51
2008	53	51
2009	53	51
2010	54	52
2015	54	52
2020	53	51
2021	52	51
2022	52	51
2023	52	51

*Median - half older, half younger.

**Gender Breakdown within Age Cohorts
Deacons**

Year	Gender	Under 35	35-54	55-72
2020	Men	26%	32%	23%
	Women	74%	68%	77%
2021	Men	28%	31%	22%
	Women	72%	69%	78%
2022	Men	30%	30%	22%
	Women	70%	70%	78%
2023	Men	28%	28%	24%
	Women	72%	72%	76%

Deacons

Presence of Deacons under 35 by Annual Conference 2021-2023

CONFERENCE	2023 Deacons under 35	2023 Deacons under 35	2023 Deacons	2022 Deacons under 35	2022 Deacons under 35	2022 Deacons	2021 Deacons under 35	2021 Deacons under 35	2021 Deacons
Alabama-West Florida	3	9.1%	33	4	12.1%	33	3	8.8%	34
Alaska Missionary	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Arkansas	1	10.0%	10	3	30.0%	10	2	20.0%	10
Baltimore-Washington	1	5.0%	20	0	0.0%	20	0	0.0%	21
California-Nevada	0	0.0%	8	0	0.0%	8	0	0.0%	5
California-Pacific	2	18.2%	11	2	14.3%	14	2	15.4%	13
Central Appalachian	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Central Texas	0	0.0%	25	1	3.7%	27	1	3.8%	26
Dakotas	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	6	0	0.0%	7
Desert Southwest	0	0.0%	5	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	4
East Ohio	2	14.3%	14	1	7.7%	13	1	7.7%	13
Eastern Pennsylvania	0	0.0%	19	0	0.0%	20	0	0.0%	18
Florida	2	9.1%	22	2	8.3%	24	2	7.7%	26
Great Plains	5	25.0%	20	6	30.0%	20	4	22.2%	18
Greater New Jersey	0	0.0%	9	0	0.0%	10	0	0.0%	12
Holston	1	7.7%	13	0	0.0%	12	1	8.3%	12
Illinois Great Rivers	1	6.3%	16	3	18.8%	16	2	13.3%	15
Indiana	0	0.0%	17	1	5.3%	19	2	10.0%	20
Iowa	0	0.0%	5	0	0.0%	6	0	0.0%	7
Kentucky	0	0.0%	13	0	0.0%	14	0	0.0%	16
Louisiana	2	11.8%	17	1	5.6%	18	2	9.5%	21
Michigan	1	3.6%	28	1	3.8%	26	1	4.0%	25
Minnesota	2	16.7%	12	2	18.2%	11	1	8.3%	12
Mississippi	2	14.3%	14	3	25.0%	12	4	23.5%	17
Missouri	3	11.5%	26	3	11.1%	27	2	8.3%	24
Mountain Sky	0	0.0%	13	0	0.0%	15	0	0.0%	16
New England	1	9.1%	11	1	9.1%	11	1	9.1%	11
New Mexico	0	0.0%	5	0	0.0%	5	0	0.0%	6
New York	1	16.7%	6	1	14.3%	7	2	25.0%	8

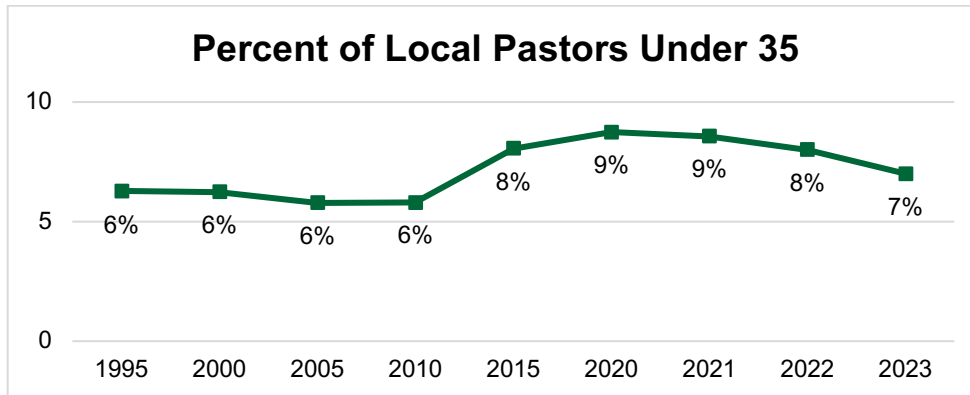
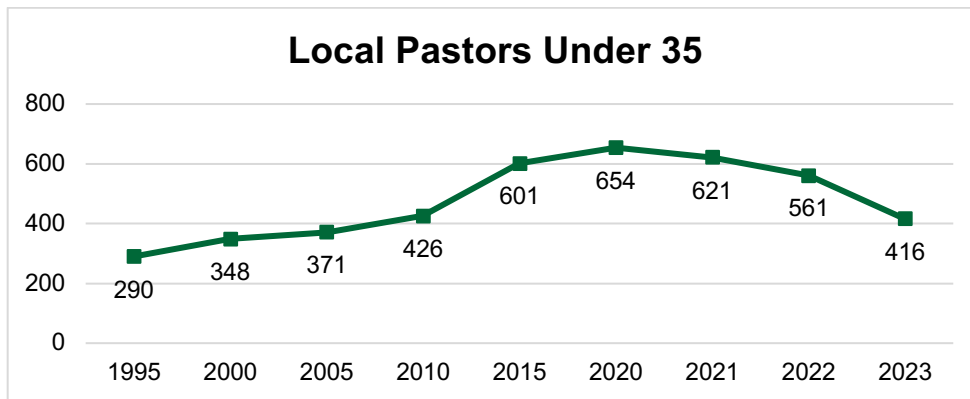
Deacons

Presence of Deacons under 35 by Annual Conference 2021-2023, continued

CONFERENCE	2023 Deacons under 35	2023 Deacons under 35	2023 Deacons	2022 Deacons under 35	2022 Deacons under 35	2022 Deacons	2021 Deacons under 35	2021 Deacons under 35	2021 Deacons
North Alabama	2	16.7%	12	2	13.3%	15	1	7.7%	13
North Carolina	4	15.4%	26	2	8.3%	24	4	17.4%	23
North Georgia	2	3.3%	60	6	9.5%	63	5	7.9%	63
North Texas	7	15.2%	46	9	17.6%	51	8	15.7%	51
Northern Illinois	0	0.0%	23	1	4.8%	21	3	13.0%	23
Northwest Texas	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Oklahoma	1	7.7%	13	0	0.0%	19	0	0.0%	19
OK Indian Missionary	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0.0%	0
Oregon-Idaho	0	0.0%	8	0	0.0%	6	0	0.0%	7
Pacific Northwest	0	0.0%	8	1	12.5%	8	1	4.1%	9
Peninsula-Delaware	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	3
Rio Texas	1	5.3%	19	0	0.0%	19	1	5.6%	18
South Carolina	2	8.7%	23	4	17.4%	23	4	17.4%	23
South Georgia	0	0.0%	12	2	14.3%	14	3	21.4%	14
Susquehanna	0	0.0%	1	0	0.0%	3	0	0.0%	3
Tenn.-Western KY	5	10.2%	49	8	17.8%	45	6	13.3%	45
Texas	0	0.0%	28	4	12.9%	31	4	12.1%	33
Upper New York	2	11.8%	17	2	11.1%	18	2	10.5%	19
Virginia	4	12.1%	33	4	12.9%	31	5	15.6%	32
West Ohio	1	3.6%	28	3	9.1%	33	3	7.9%	38
West Virginia	0	0.0%	8	0	0.0%	9	0	0.0%	10
Western NC	9	12.3%	73	9	12.7%	71	6	9.4%	64
Western Penn.	3	33.3%	9	7	58.3%	12	5	55.6%	9
Wisconsin	1	8.3%	12	1	11.1%	9	1	11.1%	9
Total	74	8.2%	906	100	10.7%	935	95	10.1%	945

Local Pastors

Local pastor numbers include both full-time and part-time local pastors. Associate members are also included in these numbers.



Trends for Local Pastors 1985-2023

Year	No. of Local Pastors	Local Pastors Under 35	% Under 35	Local Pastors 35-54	% 35-54	Local Pastors 55-72	% 55-72
1985	3,804	130	3%	2,212	58%	1,462	38%
1990	3,936	163	4%	2,244	57%	1,529	39%
1995	4,622	290	6%	2,641	57%	1,691	37%
2000	5,571	348	6%	3,109	56%	2,114	38%
2005	6,517	371	6%	3,213	49%	2,933	45%
2010	7,341	426	6%	2,932	40%	3,983	54%
2015	7,464	601	8%	2,579	35%	4,284	57%
2020	7,478	654	9%	2,546	34%	4,278	57%
2021	7,246	621	8.6%	2,440	33.7%	4,185	57.8%
2022	6,923	561	8%	2,352	34%	4,010	58%
2023	6,107	416	7%	2,155	35%	3,536	58%

Median and Average Ages – Local Pastors

Year	Median Age	Average Age
1985	51	50
1990	51	50
1995	51	50
2000	52	51
2005	53	52
2010	55	54
2015	57	54
2020	57	54
2021	57	54
2022	57	55
2023	58	55

* Median – half older, half younger

Gender Breakdown within Age Cohorts Local Pastors

Year	Gender	Under 35	35-54	55-72
2020	Men	76%	70%	64%
	Women	24%	30%	36%
2021	Men	73%	70%	63%
	Women	27%	30%	37%
2022	Men	73%	70%	62%
	Women	27%	30%	38%
2023	Men	71%	67%	60%
	Women	29%	33%	40%

Local Pastors

Presence of Local Pastors under 35 by Annual Conference 2021-2023

CONFERENCE	2023 Local Pastors under 35	2023 Local Pastors under 35	2023 Local Pastors	2022 Local Pastors under 35	2022 Local Pastors under 35	2022 Local Pastors	2021 Local Pastors under 35	2021 Local Pastors under 35	2021 Local Pastors
Alabama-West Florida	13	11.0%	118	15	10.8%	139	19	12.9%	147
Alaska Missionary	1	20.0%	5	1	20.0%	5	1	16.7%	6
Arkansas	4	6.0%	67	1	1.2%	83	3	3.4%	87
Baltimore-Washington	2	1.9%	104	7	6.4%	110	11	9.3%	118
California-Nevada	2	4.2%	48	3	6.1%	49	2	3.4%	59
California-Pacific	7	9.6%	73	9	11.1%	81	7	8.8%	80
Central Appalachian	0	0.0%	4	1	20.0%	5	1	16.7%	6
Central Texas	8	17.4%	46	9	12.5%	72	8	12.1%	66
Dakotas	7	9.6%	73	11	14.7%	75	11	14.1%	78
Desert Southwest	2	7.4%	27	1	3.4%	29	3	10.0%	30
East Ohio	6	3.6%	166	12	6.7%	178	11	5.9%	186
Eastern Pennsylvania	7	6.4%	109	8	7.0%	114	11	9.4%	117
Florida	11	6.5%	168	15	8.5%	176	19	10.2%	186
Great Plains	15	8.0%	187	16	8.0%	201	19	8.4%	226
Greater New Jersey	16	10.1%	158	18	11.4%	158	19	12.6%	151
Holston	5	4.9%	102	10	9.3%	107	9	7.4%	121
Illinois Great Rivers	10	5.8%	172	13	7.1%	183	11	5.8%	189
Indiana	11	7.3%	151	14	8.0%	175	13	6.8%	191
Iowa	3	2.5%	118	4	3.3%	123	5	3.5%	144
Kentucky	20	11.7%	171	20	9.9%	202	24	10.5%	228
Louisiana	4	4.6%	87	4	3.6%	110	5	4.4%	113
Michigan	5	3.0%	166	11	6.4%	172	12	7.2%	167
Minnesota	7	8.2%	85	11	13.1%	84	9	11.0%	82
Mississippi	8	4.1%	196	13	6.2%	209	15	6.3%	239
Missouri	11	5.8%	191	17	8.2%	207	21	9.3%	225
Mountain Sky	2	3.3%	60	5	7.4%	68	2	3.2%	62
New England	4	3.9%	102	7	6.2%	113	11	8.8%	125
New Mexico	2	10.5%	19	2	10.5%	19	2	9.5%	21
New York	3	5.8%	52	5	9.4%	53	8	12.5%	64

Local Pastors

Presence of Local Pastors under 35 by Annual Conference 2021-2023, continued

CONFERENCE	2023 Local Pastors under 35	2023 Local Pastors under 35	2023 Local Pastors	2022 Local Pastors under 35	2022 Local Pastors under 35	2022 Local Pastors	2021 Local Pastors under 35	2021 Local Pastors under 35	2021 Local Pastors
North Alabama	15	11.3%	133	26	11.9%	219	16	7.8%	205
North Carolina	29	20.4%	142	39	15.7%	248	43	17.3%	248
North Georgia	17	7.5%	226	21	8.2%	255	23	8.4%	273
North Texas	5	7.4%	68	6	7.4%	81	10	11.0%	91
Northern Illinois	2	3.9%	51	5	8.6%	58	6	10.3%	58
Northwest Texas	3	11.5%	26	8	12.7%	63	8	12.3%	65
Oklahoma	10	10.1%	99	16	13.9%	115	13	11.1%	117
OK Indian Missionary	1	10.0%	10	0	0.0%	10	0	0.0%	8
Oregon-Idaho	6	25.0%	24	4	19.0%	21	3	15.0%	20
Pacific Northwest	2	8.0%	25	2	7.4%	27	4	13.8%	29
Peninsula-Delaware	6	5.8%	104	8	7.3%	110	11	9.7%	113
Rio Texas	8	6.5%	124	1	4.0%	125	9	6.3%	142
South Carolina	7	2.9%	245	5	5.2%	252	13	5.1%	255
South Georgia	7	6.7%	104	13	5.6%	124	6	4.8%	125
Susquehanna	11	6.0%	183	7	7.4%	188	26	13.2%	197
Tennessee- Western KY	5	2.7%	186	14	4.3%	211	10	9.8%	156
Texas	10	14.3%	70	9	12.0%	158	24	15.3%	157
Upper New York	7	3.8%	186	19	3.6%	193	7	3.6%	196
Virginia	19	7.3%	262	7	8.2%	282	23	7.9%	292
West Ohio	16	6.9%	231	23	8.8%	261	27	10.0%	271
West Virginia	8	5.2%	155	23	5.7%	158	8	5.1%	157
Western North Carolina	18	10.5%	171	9	11.2%	205	23	11.0%	209
Western Pennsylvania	5	3.0%	164	23	3.0%	165	7	4.2%	166
Wisconsin	3	3.2%	93	5	6.4%	94	9	8.9%	101
Total	416	6.8%	6,107	561	8.1%	6,923	621	8.6%	7,246

Annual Conference Clergy by Age Group – Numeric – 2023

CONFERENCE	Deacons				Elders				Local Pastors			
	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total
Alabama-West Florida	3	14	16	33	11	74	75	160	10	69	69	148
Alaska Missionary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	44	36	86
Arkansas	1	4	5	10	6	78	68	152	2	32	38	72
Baltimore-Washington	1	9	10	20	13	125	168	306	9	74	108	191
California-Nevada	0	5	3	8	5	73	116	194	3	54	100	157
Central Appalachian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
California-Pacific	2	3	6	11	3	110	156	269	18	147	165	330
Central Texas	0	15	10	25	10	69	69	148	8	20	18	46
Dakotas	0	2	1	3	6	44	36	86	7	39	27	73
Desert Southwest	0	2	3	5	2	32	38	72	2	6	19	27
East Ohio	2	5	7	14	9	74	108	191	6	51	109	166
Eastern Pennsylvania	0	7	12	19	3	54	100	157	7	36	66	109
Florida	2	11	9	22	18	147	165	330	11	65	92	168
Great Plains	5	6	9	20	16	138	124	278	15	79	93	187
Greater New Jersey	0	4	5	9	6	95	118	219	16	67	75	158
Holston	1	4	8	13	12	117	113	242	5	35	62	102
Illinois Great Rivers	1	9	6	16	11	79	110	200	10	54	108	172
Indiana	0	12	5	17	7	110	141	258	11	57	83	151
Iowa	0	2	3	5	10	76	106	192	3	49	66	118
Kentucky	0	6	7	13	9	79	76	164	20	76	75	171
Louisiana	2	8	7	17	8	47	52	107	4	29	54	87
Michigan	1	17	10	28	11	116	133	260	5	65	96	166
Minnesota	2	7	3	12	3	48	68	119	7	29	49	85
Mississippi	2	8	4	14	6	113	126	245	8	66	122	196
Missouri	3	14	9	26	4	102	100	206	11	78	102	191
Mountain Sky	0	3	10	13	10	86	87	183	2	20	38	60
New England	1	7	3	11	5	73	79	157	4	30	68	102
New Mexico	0	4	1	5	0	24	31	55	2	6	11	19
New York	1	2	3	6	4	77	133	214	3	20	29	52

Annual Conference Clergy by Age Group – Numeric – 2023 (continued)

CONFERENCE	Deacons				Elders				Local Pastors			
	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Total
North Alabama	2	6	4	12	8	75	75	158	15	46	72	133
North Carolina	4	15	7	26	20	126	110	256	29	40	73	142
North Georgia	2	26	32	60	15	175	178	368	17	72	137	226
North Texas	7	23	16	46	17	90	87	194	5	29	34	68
Northern Illinois	0	14	9	23	6	99	125	230	2	19	30	51
Northwest Texas	0	0	0	0	1	11	12	24	3	10	13	26
Oklahoma	1	5	7	13	11	85	96	192	10	38	51	99
OK Indian Mission	0	0	0	0	0	3	8	11	1	3	6	10
Oregon-Idaho	0	5	3	8	3	28	33	64	6	9	9	24
Pacific Northwest	0	5	3	8	10	63	55	128	2	10	13	25
Peninsula-Delaware	0	3	0	3	4	27	58	89	6	26	72	104
Rio Texas	1	10	8	19	5	82	91	178	8	55	61	124
South Carolina	2	11	10	23	20	111	166	297	7	73	165	245
South Georgia	0	7	5	12	4	65	74	143	7	32	65	104
Susquehanna	0	0	1	1	6	60	94	160	11	76	96	183
Tenn.-Western KY	5	27	17	49	11	108	99	218	5	63	118	186
Texas	0	19	9	28	20	110	97	227	10	25	35	70
Upper New York	2	2	13	17	2	64	104	170	7	51	128	186
Virginia	4	16	13	33	28	220	188	436	19	82	161	262
West Ohio	1	18	9	28	9	136	181	326	16	94	121	231
West Virginia	0	1	7	8	2	47	80	129	8	50	97	155
West. N Carolina	9	37	27	73	21	205	255	481	18	39	114	171
West. Pennsylvania	3	4	2	9	12	85	123	220	5	53	106	164
Wisconsin	1	7	4	12	6	56	85	147	3	38	52	93
Total	74	451	381	906	449	4391	5170	10010	416	2155	3536	6107

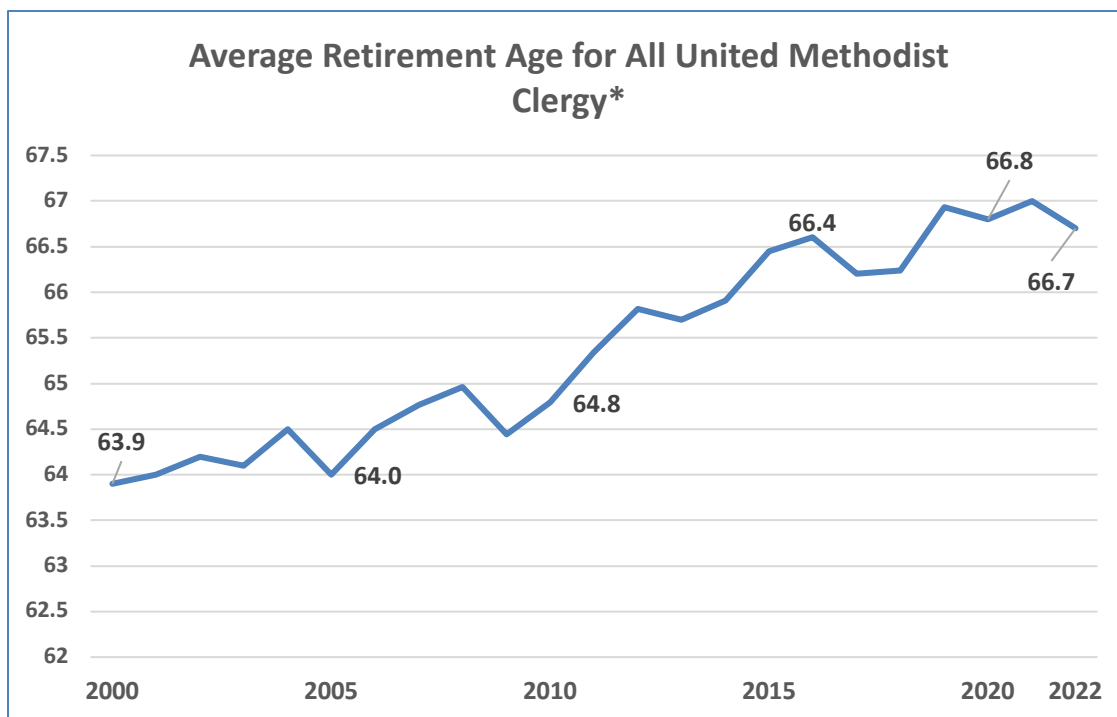
Annual Conference Clergy by Age Group – Percentage – 2023

CONFERENCE	Deacons			Elders			Local Pastors		
	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72
Alabama-West Florida	9.1%	42.4%	48.5%	6.9%	46.3%	46.9%	11.0%	33.9%	55.1%
Alaska Missionary	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%
Arkansas	10.0%	40.0%	50.0%	3.9%	51.3%	44.7%	6.0%	35.8%	58.2%
Baltimore-Washington	5.0%	45.0%	50.0%	4.2%	40.8%	54.9%	1.9%	28.8%	69.2%
California-Nevada	0.0%	62.5%	37.5%	2.6%	37.6%	59.8%	4.2%	47.9%	47.9%
California-Pacific	18.2%	27.3%	54.5%	1.1%	40.9%	58.0%	9.6%	34.2%	56.2%
Central Appalachian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Central Texas	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	6.8%	46.6%	46.6%	17.4%	43.5%	39.1%
Dakotas	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	7.0%	51.2%	41.9%	9.6%	53.4%	37.0%
Desert Southwest	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	2.8%	44.4%	52.8%	7.4%	22.2%	70.4%
East Ohio	14.3%	35.7%	50.0%	4.7%	38.7%	56.5%	3.6%	30.7%	65.7%
Eastern Pennsylvania	0.0%	36.8%	63.2%	1.9%	34.4%	63.7%	6.4%	33.0%	60.6%
Florida	9.1%	50.0%	40.9%	5.5%	44.5%	50.0%	6.5%	38.7%	54.8%
Great Plains	25.0%	30.0%	45.0%	5.8%	49.6%	44.6%	8.0%	42.2%	49.7%
Greater New Jersey	0.0%	44.4%	55.6%	2.7%	43.4%	53.9%	10.1%	42.4%	47.5%
Holston	7.7%	30.8%	61.5%	5.0%	48.3%	46.7%	4.9%	34.3%	60.8%
Illinois Great Rivers	6.3%	56.3%	37.5%	5.5%	39.5%	55.0%	5.8%	31.4%	62.8%
Indiana	0.0%	70.6%	29.4%	2.7%	42.6%	54.7%	7.3%	37.7%	55.0%
Iowa	0.0%	40.0%	60.0%	5.2%	39.6%	55.2%	2.5%	41.5%	55.9%
Kentucky	0.0%	46.2%	53.8%	5.5%	48.2%	46.3%	11.7%	44.4%	43.9%
Louisiana	11.8%	47.1%	41.2%	7.5%	43.9%	48.6%	4.6%	33.3%	62.1%
Michigan	3.6%	60.7%	35.7%	4.2%	44.6%	51.2%	3.0%	39.2%	57.8%
Minnesota	16.7%	58.3%	25.0%	2.5%	40.3%	57.1%	8.2%	34.1%	57.6%
Mississippi	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	2.4%	46.1%	51.4%	4.1%	33.7%	62.2%
Missouri	11.5%	53.8%	34.6%	1.9%	49.5%	48.5%	5.8%	40.8%	53.4%
Mountain Sky	0.0%	23.1%	76.9%	5.5%	47.0%	47.5%	3.3%	33.3%	63.3%
New England	9.1%	63.6%	27.3%	3.2%	46.5%	50.3%	3.9%	29.4%	66.7%
New Mexico	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	43.6%	56.4%	10.5%	31.6%	57.9%
New York	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%	1.9%	36.0%	62.1%	5.8%	38.5%	55.8%

Annual Conference Clergy by Age Group – Percentage – 2023 (continued)

CONFERENCE	Deacons			Elders			Local Pastors		
	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72	Under 35	35 to 54	55 to 72
North Alabama	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	5.1%	47.5%	47.5%	11.3%	34.6%	54.1%
North Carolina	15.4%	57.7%	26.9%	7.8%	49.2%	43.0%	20.4%	28.2%	51.4%
North Georgia	3.3%	43.3%	53.3%	4.1%	47.6%	48.4%	7.5%	31.9%	60.6%
North Texas	15.2%	50.0%	34.8%	8.8%	46.4%	44.8%	7.4%	42.6%	50.0%
Northern Illinois	0.0%	60.9%	39.1%	2.6%	43.0%	54.3%	3.9%	37.3%	58.8%
Northwest Texas	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	45.8%	50.0%	11.5%	38.5%	50.0%
Oklahoma	7.7%	38.5%	53.8%	5.7%	44.3%	50.0%	10.1%	38.4%	51.5%
OK Indian Mission	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	27.3%	72.7%	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%
Oregon-Idaho	0.0%	62.5%	37.5%	4.7%	43.8%	51.6%	25.0%	37.5%	37.5%
Pacific Northwest	0.0%	62.5%	37.5%	7.8%	49.2%	43.0%	8.0%	40.0%	52.0%
Peninsula-Delaware	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	4.5%	30.3%	65.2%	5.8%	25.0%	69.2%
Rio Texas	5.3%	52.6%	42.1%	2.8%	46.1%	51.1%	6.5%	44.4%	49.2%
South Carolina	8.7%	47.8%	43.5%	6.7%	37.4%	55.9%	2.9%	29.8%	67.3%
South Georgia	0.0%	58.3%	41.7%	2.8%	45.5%	51.7%	6.7%	30.8%	62.5%
Susquehanna	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	3.8%	37.5%	58.8%	6.0%	41.5%	52.5%
Tenn.-Western KY	10.2%	55.1%	34.7%	5.0%	49.5%	45.4%	2.7%	33.9%	63.4%
Texas	0.0%	67.9%	32.1%	8.8%	48.5%	42.7%	14.3%	35.7%	50.0%
Upper New York	11.8%	11.8%	76.5%	1.2%	37.6%	61.2%	3.8%	27.4%	68.8%
Virginia	12.1%	48.5%	39.4%	6.4%	50.5%	43.1%	7.3%	31.3%	61.5%
West Ohio	3.6%	64.3%	32.1%	2.8%	41.7%	55.5%	6.9%	40.7%	52.4%
West Virginia	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%	1.6%	36.4%	62.0%	5.2%	32.3%	62.6%
West. North Carolina	12.3%	50.7%	37.0%	4.4%	42.6%	53.0%	10.5%	22.8%	66.7%
West. Pennsylvania	33.3%	44.4%	22.2%	5.5%	38.6%	55.9%	3.0%	32.3%	64.6%
Wisconsin	8.3%	58.3%	33.3%	4.1%	38.1%	57.8%	3.2%	40.9%	55.9%

Retirement Age Trends



*includes Jurisdictional and Central Conferences

Average Retirement Ages

	2005	2022
Elders	64	66
Deacons	64	67
Full-Time Local Pastors**	65	68
Part-Time Local Pastors	67	69

**Includes Associate Members

Lewis Center for Church Leadership

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Established by Wesley Theological Seminary in 2003, the Lewis Center for Church Leadership helps the United Methodist Church address its current challenges. The Center is building a vision for church leadership grounded in faith, informed by knowledge, and exercised in effective action. It seeks a holistic understanding of Christian leadership that brings together theology and management, scholarship and practice, research and application.

Committed to the broad goal of helping the church reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people, the Center focuses on improving leadership effectiveness and providing actionable insights and best practices to promote effective ministry. The Center seeks to be a trusted resource for church leaders so that congregations increase in service, vitality, and growth. The Center staff of six, along with other researchers and consultants who assist with special projects, also draws on the expertise of the entire Wesley Theological Seminary faculty and a wide array of gifted practitioners.

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