

# Gender & Leadership in the PC(USA)

## Summary of Findings

Based on Summer 2016 Full Report

There are two main findings from this research. First, gender discrimination is still pervasive within the PC(USA). And second, almost half of members are not particularly aware of it.

Eight out of ten female teaching elders have experienced discrimination, harassment, and/or prejudicial comments due to their gender, and four out of ten feel that they have experienced gender bias in hiring, promotion, or selection for an official position within the PC(USA).



**HOWEVER,**  
among members only



think gender inequality is still a **PROBLEM** in the PC(USA)

However, almost half of members disagree with the statement that "gender inequality is still a problem in the PC(USA)." This is likely because, among members, the problem is less pervasive: only 30% of women and 13% of men report experiencing gender discrimination, harassment, or prejudice.

Gender inequality does still exist among members, and can be seen in the fact that female members are less likely than male members to hold official leadership positions. Gender parity in leadership is only evident once unofficial leadership positions held in a volunteer capacity are entered into the equation. And then once that leadership position is attained, women tend to struggle more than men with various issues related to being in leadership.

## *Where are women doing the work of leadership?*

- Although male and female members are equally likely to be asked to serve in a leadership role, the nature of that role varies by gender. Men are more likely to hold an **official** leadership role, in which they have an official title and/or receive a paycheck; and women are more likely to hold a **voluntary** leadership role.
- Women still comprise only about **38%** of all active PC(USA) teaching elders, and only **29%** of teaching elders overall. These percentages are slowly increasing. If the rate remains the same, we won't achieve gender parity among active teaching elders until **2027**.
- More is expected of women than of men in similar roles. For example, female teaching elders are asked more often than male teaching elders to lead workshops, programs, or other activities, and are more often asked to serve in childcare and kitchen roles.

## *To what extent are women accepted as leaders in the PC(USA)?*

- Although **89%** of men and **93%** of women agree that men and women should have equal opportunities to be a pastor, only **73%** also feel that same way about *their* pastor. Those with a preference tend to prefer a pastor who matches their own gender identity.
- Most Presbyterians feel that men still have a better chance than women of being called to the position of head pastor, which suggests that while most Presbyterians think women and men *should* have equal opportunities for leadership, they recognize that this is not the reality.
- When presented with a list of essential pastoral traits and asked if they are a greater strength of men or women, slightly less than half decline to apply a gender stereotype. Of the small majority who feel that these pastoral traits are gendered, women tended to think of the traits as greater strengths of women, and men tended to think of them as greater strengths of men.

## *How are women in leadership positions treated compared to men?*

- Eight out of ten female teaching elders in the denomination have experienced gender bias in the form of discrimination, sexual harassment, and/or prejudicial statements.
- Almost three out of four female teaching elders have had a harder time in being accepted in leadership roles within the denomination due to their gender.
- Four out of ten female teaching elders feel that their gender has contributed to their being overlooked for a promotion to a higher-status position within the PC(USA).
- Men are not completely free from experiences of gender bias: 32% of male teaching elders and 13% of male members report experiencing some form of gender bias against them.