

Survey: Porn Poisoning Christian Homes

Most pastors believe pornography has adversely impacted the lives of their church members, but almost half cannot estimate what percentage of their congregation views porn.

That is the finding of a recent survey by LifeWay Research of 1,000 American Protestant pastors.

When presented with the statement, "Pornography has adversely affected the lives of our church members," 69 percent of pastors surveyed agree. That includes 42 percent who strongly agree and 27 percent who somewhat agree. Nine percent somewhat disagree and 8 percent strongly disagree. Fourteen percent do not know or preferred not to answer.

"Most pastors know pornography's poisonous effects," LifeWay Research President Ed Stetzer said. "They've seen it destroy marriages, wreck lives and warp America's moral compass when it comes to sexuality."

When asked to estimate the percentage of men in their congregations who view pornography on a weekly basis, 43 percent are unable or unwilling to respond. Of those able and willing to estimate, a majority (62 percent) say less than 10 percent, 24 percent say 10-24 percent, 10 percent say 25-49 percent and 4 percent say 50 percent or more.

The results are similar when pastors are asked about the women in their churches. Forty-four percent are unable or unwilling to estimate the percentage of females in their congregations who view pornography on a weekly basis. Of those who are able and willing, 87 percent say less than 10 percent. Ten percent say 10-24 percent, and 3 percent say 25-49 percent. Zero percent say 50 percent or more.

Statistics from other studies, however, suggest that pastors may underestimate pornography's effect on their congregants.

According to the Education Database Online, 43 percent of people who use the Internet visit pornographic websites. Some 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites, with pornographic downloads representing 35 percent of all Internet downloads. Of the 40 million regular visitors, 33 percent are women. A full 70 percent of men age 18-24 visit porn sites monthly.

"Though pastors know generally that pornography is harmful, many may not realize that it is coming into the homes of their members," Stetzer said. "Large numbers of church attendees are included in the nearly half of all Internet users who visit porn sites. We were surprised that so many were unable or unwilling to estimate considering how pervasive pornography is inside the church. If a third think that less than 10 percent of the men are looking at porn and almost a half have aren't sure, we may very well have a lack of awareness of porn's presence. Studies show that committed Christians engage pornography less, but the issue is still a big one that the church must face."

"The church has been given all that is needed to address sexuality from a biblical perspective," Stetzer recently wrote in a blog at [www.stetzer.com](#), where he serialized an article he wrote for the Assemblies of God *Enrichment Journal*. In that series, called "pornification," Stetzer called for more awareness and clear biblical teaching on the issue. "Scripture clearly teaches God's plan for sex. Yet we stumble awkwardly past the issues. If the church refuses to address the issues not only do we become irrelevant, but we leave the conversation open to others who feel more free to do so."