

Survey says clergy have highest job satisfaction: Making a difference but not getting rich

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If you want to be rich, get an MBA. If you want to be happy, go for an M.Div.

Members of the clergy rank highest in job satisfaction, according to a report released April 17 by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. More than 87 percent of clergy said they were satisfied with their jobs, followed by firefighters (80 percent) and physical therapists (78 percent).

Cynthia Lindner, director of ministry studies at the university's divinity school, said that in her opinion the findings rang true. People come to the ministerial field with no expectation of getting rich and every expectation of being able to make some difference in the world, she said.

"People are not going into the profession out of some sense of 'I want a lot of power and prestige,'" she said. "Most of all my students would say, 'We want to help heal the world.'"

Because work plays such an important role in people's lives, workers who are more satisfied also tend to be happier. So clergy also topped the list as happiest, with 67 percent of them describing themselves as generally happy.

Tom W. Smith, director of the General Social Survey at the research center, said he was surprised that clergy led the list. People in many "helping" occupations, such as doctors and nurses, also experience stress, which can affect their overall happiness, he said. "Apparently the rewards of spiritual guidance and leadership outweigh the burdens of being a religious leader," he said.

At the bottom of the job satisfaction scale were roofers, followed by waiters. Roofers were also the second unhappiest workers; garage and service station workers ranked as unhappiest.

Researchers noted that the jobs people were most satisfied by tend to involve helping others or expressing creativity. Education administrators and teachers, psychologists, authors, painters and sculptors all expressed high degrees of satisfaction. The least satisfying jobs were low-skill or customer-service ones. Cashiers, laborers, and clothing and furniture salespeople were among the least satisfied with their jobs.

The rankings are based on information collected in the research center's General Social Survey over almost two decades from more than 27,000 people. -*Religion News Service*