Person in the Pew: Mental Health

The report has been prepared for:

Donna Miller, PsychD
Associate for Mental Health Ministries
Compassion, Peace and Justice

Susan Barnett, PhD
Jashalund Royston, MA
Research Services

January 2020

Process

Research Services works with clients to determine the purpose of the work, who should be surveyed, and timeline.

- Preliminary meetings were held with Mental Health Initiative (MHI) staff leadership to discuss the work

- Five surveys were designed

- Research Services supplied mid council, church leaders, and members contacts

- MHI provided the seminary contacts

- Surveys were approved by MHI leadership

- Surveys were sent to ministers in September

- Surveys were sent to mid council leaders, church leaders, seminaries, and church members in October

- Links to all surveys were on the MHI website

- The survey process included an invitation to participate, two reminders, and an immediate thank you upon completion of the survey

- Surveys closed on November 1 for mid council leaders, church leaders, church members, and seminaries

- The ministers survey closed on November 15

Key Findings

Half of members (54%) do not identify any listed mental health information, services, or resources as being available at their church. **Almost all** members identify services available in the town or community in which their church is located.

Nearly half (49%) of members would say that their church is *"not"* or *"probably not"* equipped to welcome individuals with significant mental health issues into the daily life of the church and only 4% say that their church is "*very well equipped*" to respond to its ministers who are facing mental health challenges.

Almost all members (97%) know or have known someone with mental illness or mental health concerns. Members also have an abundant understanding of the warning signs of mental illness, and can identify myths about mental illness as false.

Most members (90%) are not aware of funds, information or resources available to churches for mental health ministries. Half of members (43%) are not aware of any information or directories maintained by their church. Almost half of members are not aware of their church's minister(s) or staff expressing the need for additional mental health training to aid the church or community.

Person
in the
Pew

Think about the various activities in this church over the last 12 to 18 months. This church…

60% — Provides space to a community support group such as AA or Compassionate Friends

43% — Provides support or prayer groups for individuals or loved ones facing mental health concerns

43% — Engages in ministry with individuals who are both homeless and who have a mental illness

40% — Provides support following a traumatic event (natural disaster, mass shooting, hate crime)

31% — Advocates for and with people with mental illness and their families

30% — Had a sermon or worship service that either focused on or included issues of mental health/mental illness

27% — Provides opportunities to learn about mental health/mental illness

24% — Advocates on issues related to mental health in the community

Person in the Pew

The following statements focus on the interest, ability, and engagement in current mental health ministries of congregations in this church.

N=895

My church is:

	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Interested in learning more about mental health	5%	7%	**38%**	**38%**	12%
Equipped to engage in a mental health ministry	15%	**28%**	**28%**	24%	5%
Engaged in some form of a mental health ministry	17%	21%	25%	**29%**	8%

Person in the Pew

My church has…

54% of members report **"None of these"** services being available at their church

%	Service
18%	Members trained in Mental Health First Aid
16%	A counseling ministry
15%	Members who are trained to offer companionship to people with serious mental illness
	Information about mental health and mental illness displayed in prominent locations around their church
10%	Includes those who are impacted by mental health conditions in the planning of mental health activities
5%	An observance for Mental Health Month in May
	An independent counseling service located on our campus
2%	An observance for Serious Mental Health Week in October

Person in the Pew

Rank the barriers to mental health ministries in your church

 # 1 *Not knowing how to respond to an individual who is showing signs of a mental health condition*

followed by …

 # 2 Lack of knowledge about mental health issues

 # 3 Lack of time

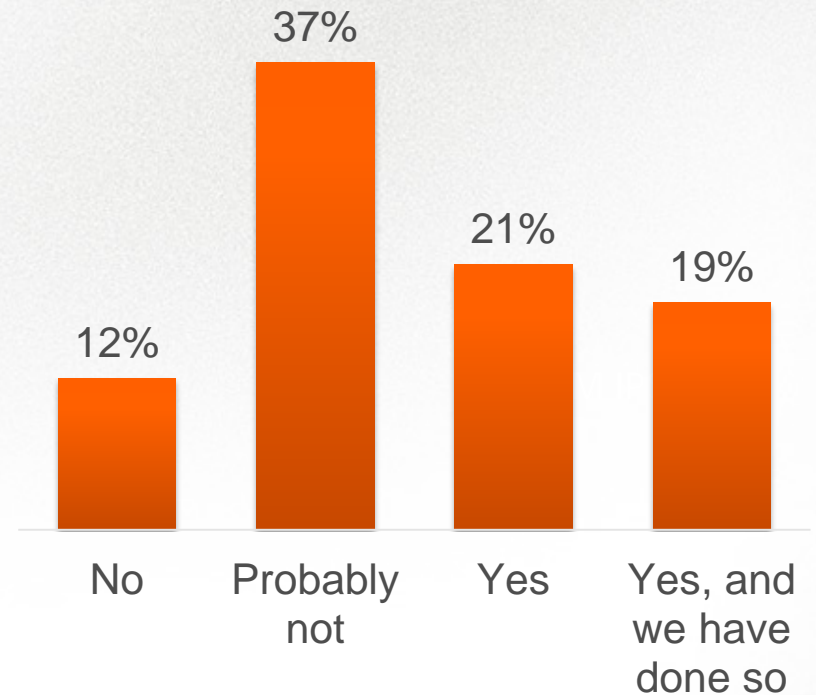**# 4** Myths, misunderstandings, or stereotypes about mental illness

 # 5 Fear of mental illness

 # 6 Lack of interest

Person
in the
Pew

Would you say that your church is equipped to welcome individuals with significant mental health issues into the daily life of the church?

442 (49%) of members would say "*no*" or "*probably not*"

37%
12%
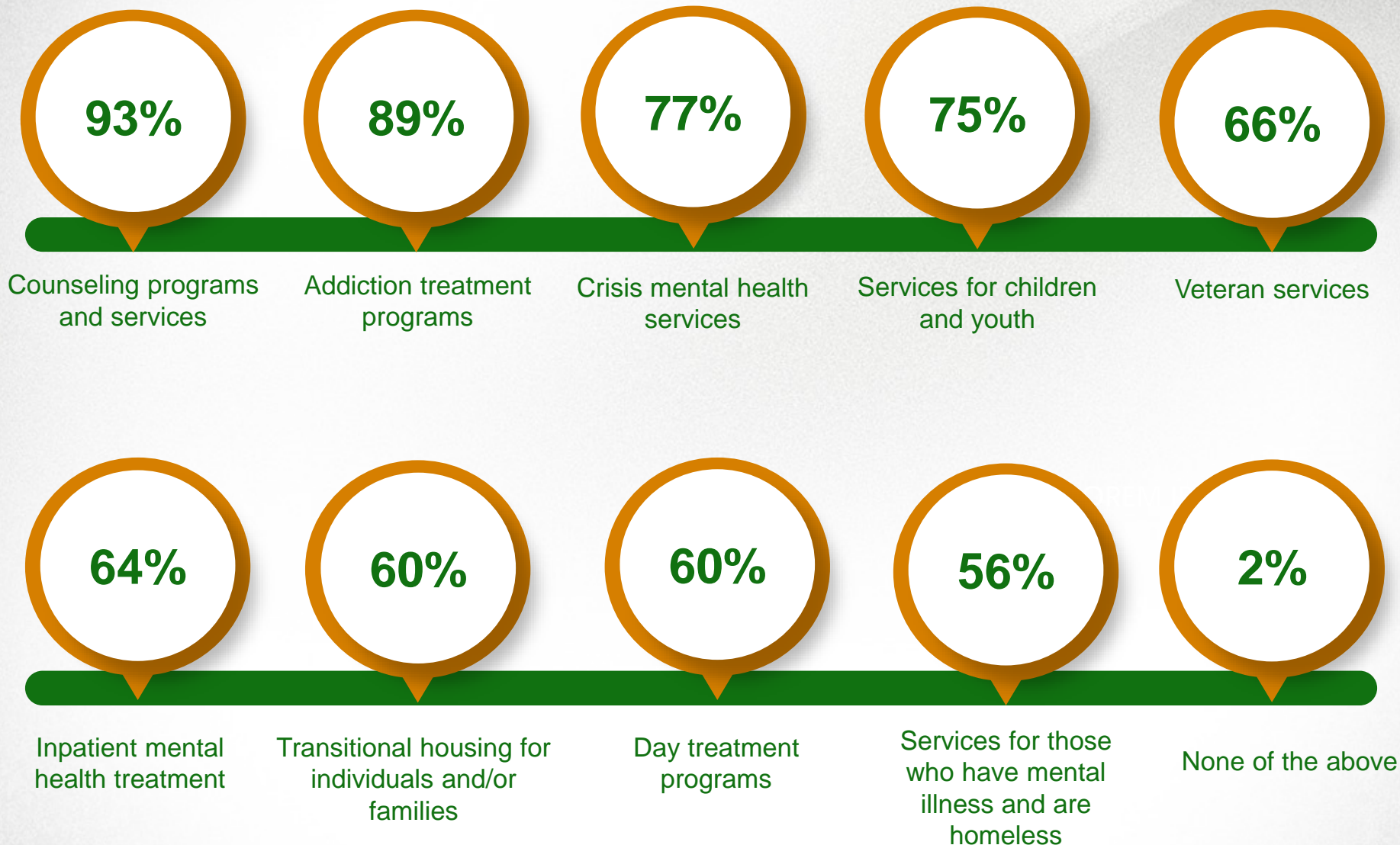21%
19%

No | Probably not | Yes | Yes, and we have done so

Only two church leaders responded to this question on Church on the Corner survey, not giving enough information for comparison or reporting.

Person in the Pew

What services are available in the city or county where this church is located?

N=886

93%

Counseling programs and services

89%

Addiction treatment programs

77%

Crisis mental health services

75%

Services for children and youth

66%

Veteran services

64%

Inpatient mental health treatment

60%

Transitional housing for individuals and/or families

60%

Day treatment programs

56%

Services for those who have mental illness and are homeless

2%

None of the above

Almost all members report having some type of mental health services in the town or county in which they live.

Person
in the
Pew

Members ranked seven barriers to adequate community-based mental health treatment and services.

N=701

 # 1   Information about services is not widely shared

followed by ...

 # 2   Individuals may not know that they are eligible for services

 # 3   Limited access to resources

 # 4   Inadequate transportation systems to get to a from services

 # 5   Lack of mental health professionals

 # 6   No free or low-cost treatment

#7   Limited treatment options

Person
in the
Pew

89%

correctly identified all the listed indicators as forms of mental illness

99%
- Delusions, paranoia, hallucinations
- Excessive anger, hostility, violence
- Unrelenting sadness or low mood
- Inability to cope with daily problems

98%
- Confused thinking
- Excessive fears or worries, extreme feelings of guilt
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Suicidal thinking
- Feeling insignificant or worthless
- Trouble understanding and relating to situations or people

96% Major changes in eating habits

95%
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Significant tiredness, low energy, problems sleeping

93% Sex drive change

Person
in the
Pew

Almost everyone knows someone with mental illness or mental health concerns.

82% Been depressed for an extended period of time

81% Been addicted to drugs or alcohol

75% Lived with chronic or ongoing mental health conditions that affects their daily life

68% Had a difficult time recovering from a loss

64% Contemplated suicide

52% Been diagnosed with PTSD

48% Died by suicide

41% Had a psychotic break

Person in the Pew

Have you or your community experienced a large-scale violent act?

35%

A violent act occurred
in this community

16%

I know people who
were harmed

3%

Members of
my family were harmed

1%

I was harmed

59%

None of the above

Person
in the
Pew

What do members say about the stigmas surrounding mental health and mental illness concern?

*Agree
or
Disagree*

99% Disagree that mental illness is a moral failing, a sign of weakness, or that it improves on its own.
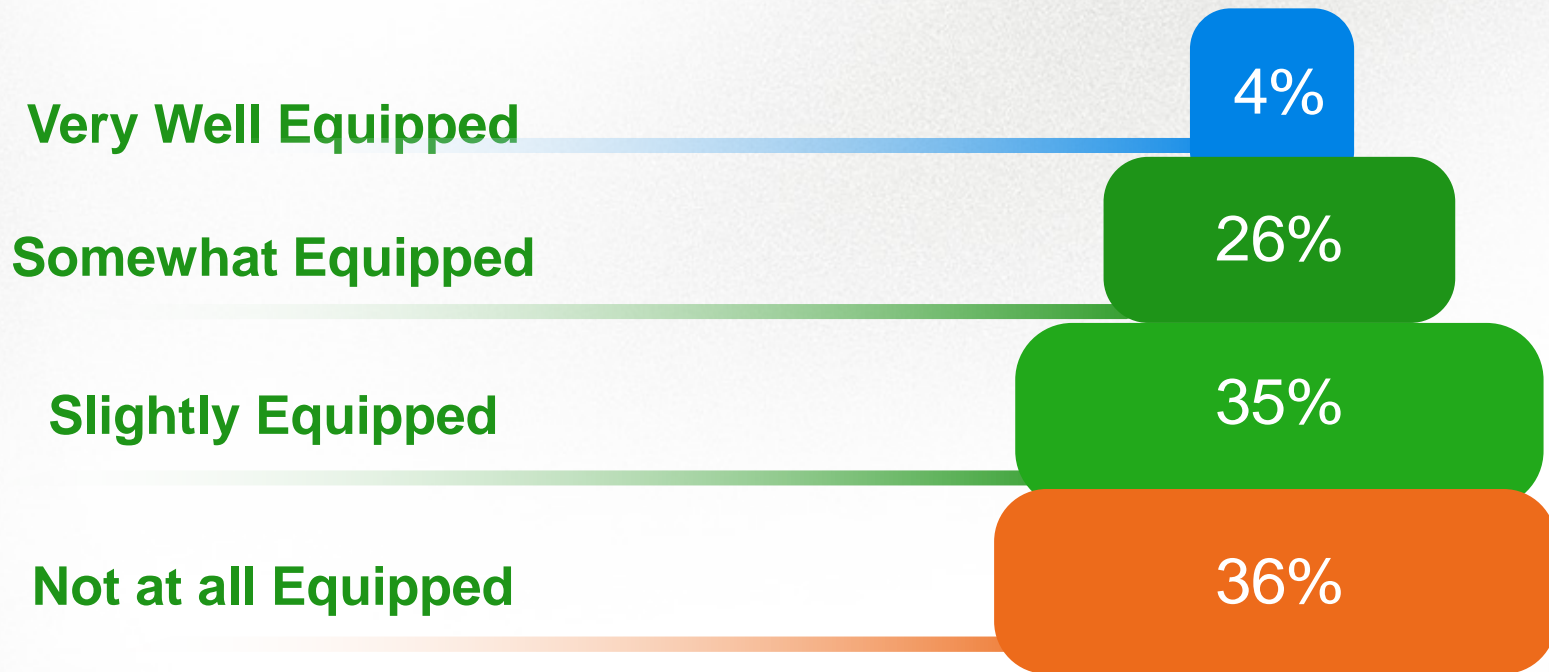
96% Agree that mental illness can happen to anyone.

86% Disagree that mental illness can be cured through prayer.

Person
in the
Pew

How well equipped is your church…
to respond to its ministers who are facing mental health challenges?

Very Well Equipped — 4%

Somewhat Equipped — 26%

Slightly Equipped — 35%

Not at all Equipped — 36%

Person
in the
Pew

How true each of the statements are for your church?

My church…	Not at all True	Slightly True	Somewhat True	Very True
Is open to calling ministers who have a history of mental illness	36%	**39%**	19%	6%
Has a process in place to assist ministers who are facing mental health challenges	**60%**	25%	11%	4%
Provides access to confidential counseling for its ministers	**40%**	22%	20%	18%
Provides access to confidential counseling for its ministers' families	**45%**	22%	19%	14%
Takes preventive measures to help maintain the mental health of its ministers	31%	**35%**	24%	10%

Person in the Pew

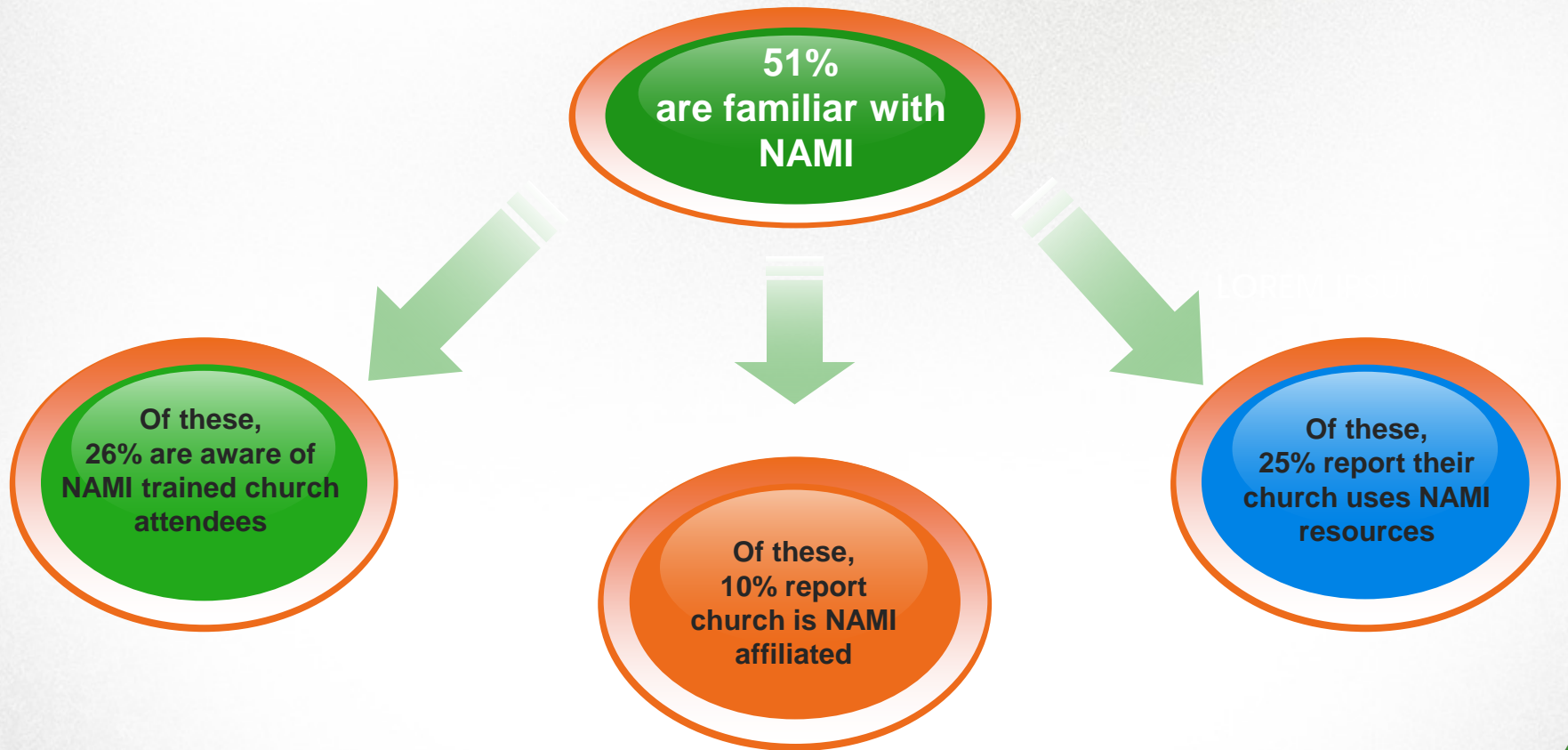# Does your church's medical insurance provide mental health and mental illness coverage for its staff?

A majority of members do not know if their church's medical insurance provides mental health and mental illness coverage for its staff. 19% of members say their church either does not provide medical insurance for staff or that mental health coverage is not included.

53%

29%

14%

5%
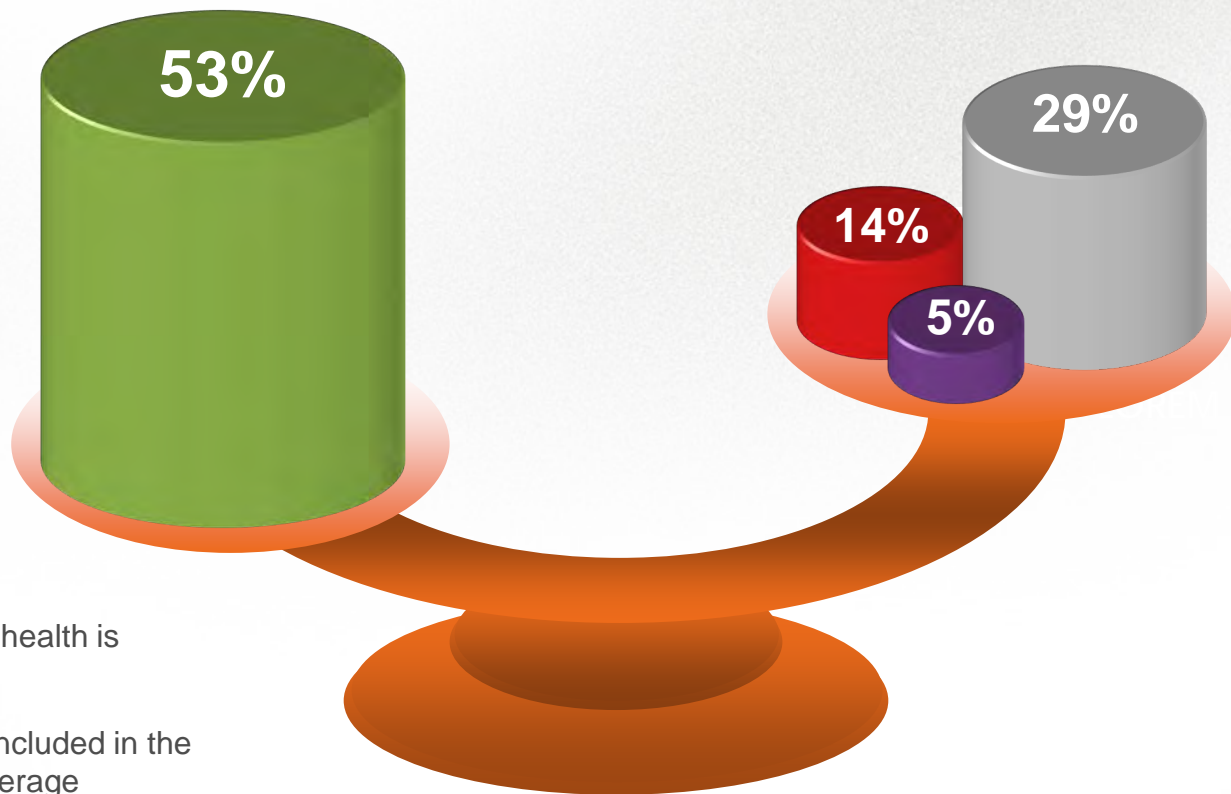
Yes, mental health is covered

No, it is not included in the provided coverage

The church does not provide medical insurance for staff

Do not know about insurance coverage

Person in the Pew

51% (436) of members report being familiar with NAMI. Of those, 26% (113) are aware of individuals within their church who have been trained by NAMI. 10% (44) report that their church is affiliated with NAMI and 25% (109) report their church uses NAMI resources.

51%
are familiar with
NAMI

Of these,
26% are aware of
NAMI trained church
attendees

Of these,
10% report
church is NAMI
affiliated

Of these,
25% report their
church uses NAMI
resources

Person
in the
Pew

Have ministers or other staff expressed the need for additional training so that they can ....

N=845

	No	Yes	Do Not Know
Better recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness	39%	15%	**46%**
Make better referrals to mental health professionals	37%	19%	**44%**
Know how to use mental health first aid when someone is expressing suicide feelings, showing signs of serious mental illness, or misusing substances	35%	19%	**46%**
Are better equipped to respond pastorally to traumatic events in the church or community	33%	23%	**44%**

Person in the Pew

Does your church maintain a directory of mental health resources?

43% of members do not know if their church maintains a directory of local or regional mental health resources. Of the 26% that are aware of a directory, most do not know details about it.

N=857

26% Yes

32% No
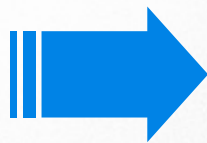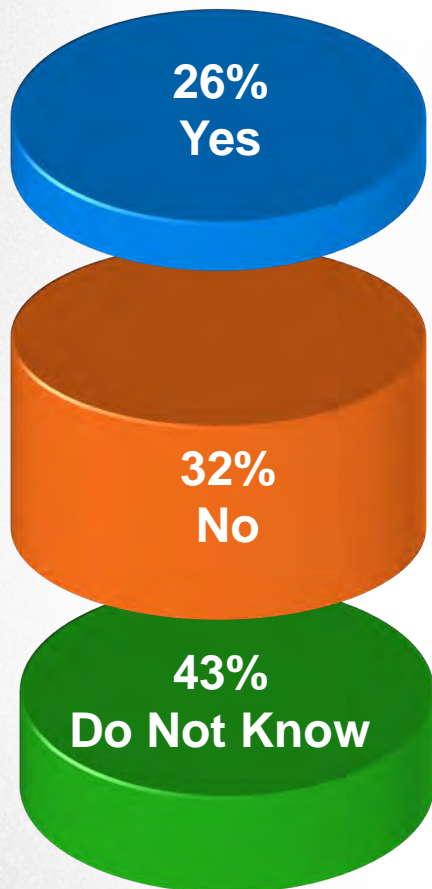
43% Do Not Know

Of those who state that their church maintains a directory…	Yes	No	Do Not Know
Updated annually	30%	24%	**47%**
Not at the church, but there is one on the presbytery or synod website	13%	34%	**53%**
Available to all members of this congregation	**52%**	19%	29%

Person in the Pew

Few respondents are aware of the mental health resources that are available to their church.

10% The 223rd General Assembly has set aside $250,000 for the purpose of funding grants that empower congregations, mid councils, and seminaries to expand or initiate mental health ministries

11% PC(USA) resource, *Comfort My People Policy Paper on Serious Mental Illness and Study Guide*

10% PC(USA) resource, Mental Health Ministry website: www.pcusa.org/mental health

Person in the Pew

The average respondent is white, 56 - 75 years old, and is politically, socially, and theologically moderate.

Race
93% White
2% Black
5% Other

Age
24% 18-55
30% 56-65
32% 66-75
14% Over 75

Political Issues
4% Very Conservative
22% Conservative
32% MODERATE
29% Liberal
11% Very Liberal

Social Issues
2% Very Conservative
14% Conservative
33% MODERATE
30% Liberal
20% Very Liberal

Theological Issues
3% Very Conservative
18% Conservative
38% MODERATE
28% Liberal
11% Very Liberal

Person in the Pew