

Most Protestant ministers tell pollsters they like NIV above all other Bibles_51704

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PHOENIX, Ariz.-A newly released study shows the New International Version of the Bible is the translation most likely to be used by Protestant ministers in their work

Thirty-one percent preferred NIV, followed by the King James Version at 23 percent, the New Revised Standard at 14 percent, the New King James at 13 percent and the New American Standard at 10 percent.

Together, these five Bible versions represent nine out of 10 Bibles ministers rely on most, even though there are dozens of other versions available.

The study was conducted for Facts & Trends magazine-a publication of LifeWay Christian Resources-by Ellison Research, a full-service marketing research firm in Phoenix, Ariz.

The research was conducted among a representative sample of 700 senior pastors of Protestant churches throughout the United States.

Preferences vary considerably among different types of churches. Pastors of smaller churches, and pastors who are 60 or older, more often lean toward the traditional King James Version. The King James Version is also the favorite of ministers in the southern United States.

The New International Version is strongest in the Midwest and the western United States, while the New Revised Standard has its greatest popularity in the Northeast.

Much of the geographic difference is due to differing strengths of certain denominations in various regions of the country, and the fact Bible preference differs strongly by denomination.

Methodists tend to rely either on the NIV (45 percent) or the NRSV (38 percent).

Those two versions also are dominant among Lutheran ministers, but in reverse order (48 percent NRSV, 23 percent NIV).

Southern Baptist ministers are split almost equally among four versions: 26 percent NIV, 25 percent New King James, 23 percent King James and 22 percent NASB.

Other Baptist ministers (American Baptist, Conservative Baptist, General Baptist, etc.) are strongly on the side of the King James (51 percent), with the NIV a second-place finisher (24 percent).

Pentecostal and charismatic ministers are similar; 45 percent rely most on the King James, while 23 percent prefer the NIV.

Ministers tend to select their top Bible versions based on the perceived accuracy of the translation (40 percent), its readability (16 percent), their preference for its language style (14 percent), and its solid reputation (13 percent).

Very few said the main reason they rely on a specific version is because their congregation prefers it or their denomination requires it.

The top reasons for using the NIV are readability and preference for the language style.

The New King James is preferred for a variety of reasons, the most common of which is accuracy, the survey revealed.

Those who prefer the KJV like it for its accuracy and its solid reputation.

The NASB is preferred primarily due to its accuracy.

In the study, ministers were also asked to rate 12 different Bible versions for members of their congregation to use. They used a five-point scale, from poor to excellent. Versions rated included the Contemporary English Version, Holman Christian Standard Bible, King James Version, Living Bible, The Message, New American Standard Bible, New Century Version, New International Version, New King James Version, New Living Translation, New Revised Standard Version, and Today's New International Version.

Among all Protestant pastors, the version most likely to be rated as excellent by pastors is the NIV (rated as excellent by 42 percent of ministers), followed by the New King James (33 percent), the NASB (32 percent), the King James (31 percent), and the NRSV (23 percent).

The Bible versions ministers are most likely to recommend against for their congregation include the Living Bible (26 percent), Today's New International Version (which is not the same as the NIV 18 percent), The Message (15 percent), and the King James Version (15 percent). The King James is the only one among the 12 included in the study to be listed as one of the most recommended and least recommended.

The research also points out that many ministers lack familiarity with the broad range of Bible versions available today. Versions which are unfamiliar to at least one out of every four ministers include the brand-new Holman Christian Standard Bible (65 percent), the New Century Version (55 percent), Today's New International Version (37 percent), the Contemporary English Version (31 percent), the New Living Translation (30 percent), and The Message (28 percent).

Which versions ministers would recommend differ strongly by denomination. For instance, the New Revised Standard is considered excellent by 60 percent of Methodists, but only 5 percent of Pentecostals; the Holman Christian Standard Bible would be strongly recommended by 20 percent of Southern Baptists, but virtually no Lutherans.

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