



THE FULL-TIME YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION SURVEY 2020



THE YOUTH CARTEL

The 2019 Youth Pastor Compensation Survey Results

Meet Me & The Survey:

It was an interesting year of data for this year's Youth Pastor Compensation Survey; my third annual installment. Results were captured via a Google Form with over 50 specific fields responders were required to fill in. The largest reporting states were Texas, California and North Carolina; and we saw at least ten responses from thirty-two different states. In all, we had 1,506 Youth Pastors participate in this year's survey with 1,264 being full-time (regularly scheduled to work 30 hours or more).

If you're new to the survey, my name is Dan Navarra and I'm a Youth Pastor who genuinely cares about other Youth Pastors. I'm a 15+ year ministry veteran, a Fuller Seminary MDiv graduate, and I also am directing HR and Personnel in my current role at my church with a staff of 50, counting our pre-school. Plain and simple, my desire is for this information to help you turn your calling into a sustainable career by best understanding the landscape of pastoral compensation among our tribe. Many of you have been encouraging for me personally in this endeavor over the years, and I've enjoyed many video consults with those who have asked for help understanding an offer letter, housing allowances, opting out of Social Security, and other compensation questions. Additionally, I do some contract work with [churchsalary.com](#), which is an arm of Christianity Today, and now also, new in 2020, am working with [Chemistry Staffing](#) as a Church Coach to help churches make healthy and strategic hires of quality candidates. My role with Chemistry Staffing is a great fit for me; and they are going to provide me an even greater platform to continue to make myself available to Youth Pastors everywhere, under the umbrella of their company now. I couldn't be more excited. But enough about me. Onto the report for the 2019 Youth Pastor Compensation Survey Results.

The Big Number for 2019

Let's get right to it. The national average salary for a full-time Youth Pastor in 2019 is \$47,889. This represents a 2.8% increase from last year's number; and interestingly the rate of increase is also increasing, as we saw a 2.64% spike from 2017-18, and now a 2.8% spike from 2018-19. And if you really like good news, the federal COLA for 2020 is 1.6%, so our tribe even beat that!

2019: \$47,889 (+2.8%)

2018: \$46,581 (+2.64%)

2017: \$45,381

There's a few key factors which I believe are contributing to this increase. One reason is mandated wage increases in certain states. In these reports I regularly look at California's YP Compensation; and for good reason: 2018's leading state in average compensation (at \$55,785 for 2018) saw a noteworthy 4.25% raise in salary this year to a state average of \$58,158. And that's with two of the top five responses from 2018 not having their number in the 2019 data because #transition happens to even the highest paid Youth Pastors. All that to say; wage increase is being mandated in some places and churches are trying to do their part it seems.



I should also mention here, since there were over 100 California respondents this year, that churches in the Golden State *need* to be talking now about bringing their salaried staff to at least \$62,400 by 2022 as a result of salaries needing to be paid at the rate of *double* the state's \$15 per hour minimum wage as currently slated on California's wage escalation schedule. That means every employee who is not eligible to be paid overtime needs to be paid at a rate of at least \$30 per hour in 2022 in California. If you and your church aren't talking about an escalation schedule for your salary to stay compliant, you should consider bringing it up well in advance of your church's budgeting cycle. Now, in 2020, the absolute minimum salary for any organization of any size in California is \$49,920. If your church has more than 25 employees, the minimum salary is \$54,080. Unfortunately that means there were TWENTY Youth Pastors whose 2019 salary would now be illegal in 2020 because it is under \$49,920. You read that right. And it means if none of them got raises on January 1 that around 20% of California Youth Pastors are not being paid a wage that is legal (assuming they are actually exempt from overtime compensation as they stated in their survey responses).

I believe a secondary reason we're seeing increases is that Youth Pastors are doing great work, and with great work comes merit raises. Our year over year data comparison showed almost 5% more Youth Pastors received a raise in their compensation in 2019 compared to 2018! And the internet is built for our tribe to excel now more than ever before. Just a few years ago a Youth Pastor Network was just who you had access to in your immediate geographical area. Now there are more than a handful of great Facebook communities with thousands of youth workers participating in them designed to help Youth Pastors excel in their roles, stay encouraged, get quality training and products to enhance their ministry potential and work out their questions and concerns about ministry. My own friendship and partnership with The Youth Car-

tel is a living, breathing example of what I'm talking about. And honestly, that's where most of the people I speak with about compensation find me or tag me when a question comes up. And it's great!

Church Size and Budget: Some Signs To Understand

Whether your Senior Pastor has been featured on @preachersnsneakers or your church is a small-country-congregation of fifty, there are some trends I've found in YP compensation that are tied to church size and budget; and you may be surprised by them.

First of all, the golden number seems to be \$750,000. The pay gap really happens in churches that have a general fund annual budget under that number; it's around 6%. And then you see another large jump at the 1.5 million mark of a little over 9%. So if you're in a situation where you are undercompensated, one of the diagnostic tools you should look at is your church's budget, or the budget of a church you're interested in joining staff on. You'd be surprised how many YP's I talk to who don't know their church's budget. If that's you, I'd encourage you to gain as much understanding as possible of how your church stewards their resources. It is quite difficult to engage your boss or board in a compensation conversation without understanding the scope of what you're talking about. Get informed! Interestingly, the sweet spot of YP employment comes in the 2-3 million range for annual budget, unless you jump up to the larger churches that are running over 4 million.

Here's a chart showing average YP Compensation by church budget size.

Annual Church Budget	Youth Pastor Salary Compensation Average
Less than 250k	\$35,893
251-500k	\$41,829
501-750k	\$44,697
751k-1M	\$47,718
1-1.5M	\$47,887
1.5-2M	\$52,854
2-2.5M	\$55,504
2.5-3M	\$58,646
3-3.5M	\$54,161
3.5-4M	\$54,067
4-4.5M	\$62,358
4.5-5M	\$61,700
5M+	\$62,063

Another question I see asked often has to do with how much churches are willing to spend per student. Here's a table illustrating the median youth ministry budget number by bracket for every youth group size option we allowed in the survey.

Youth Group Size	Most Popular Budget	Number of Responses
<20	Less than \$3,000	44 of 190 (23%)
20-30	3-5k & 7-10k (tie)	Both 41 of 209 (20% each)
31-40	7-10k	37 of 181 (20%)
41-50	10-15k	33 of 144 (23%)
51-60	10-15k	23 of 101 (23%)
61-70	10-15k	15 of 56 (27%)
71-80	Tie: 10-15k, 15-20k, 20-25k, 30k+	All 11 of 56 (20% each)
81-90	20-25k	12 of 41 (29%)
91-100	30k+	9 of 45 (20%)
101-125	30k+	27 of 66 (41%)
126-150	30k+	22 of 49 (45%)
151-175	30k+	6 of 23 (26%)
176-200	30k+	7 of 17 (41%)
201-250	30k+	15 of 27 (55%)
251-300	30k+	12 of 21 (57%)
300+	30k+	29 of 38 (76%)

Here's a table illustrating the average salary of a full-time Youth Pastor, relative to the size budget for the youth ministries.

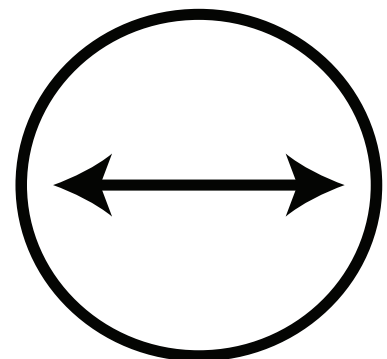
Annual Youth Budget	Average YP Salary
No Budget	\$38,079
3k or less	\$38,762
3-5k	\$42,241
5-7k	\$42,863
7-10k	\$44,430
10-15k	\$47,747
15-20k	\$50,510
20-25k	\$50,257
25-30k	\$50,712
30k+	\$61,682

And then finally, here's a table illustrating the average Youth Pastor salary by youth group size.

Youth Ave. Attendance	# of Responders	Average YP Compensation
<20	190	\$41,202
20-30	209	\$42,800
31-40	181	\$45,276
41-50	144	\$49,047
51-60	101	\$47,751
61-70	56	\$50,564
71-80	56	\$47,423
81-90	41	\$51,595
91-100	45	\$49,096
101-125	66	\$56,504
126-150	49	\$56,496
151-175	23	\$55,508
176-200	17	\$57,859
201-250	27	\$57,631
251-300	21	\$62,481
300+	38	\$58,950

Remember, these are only groups with full-time Youth Pastors. Interestingly, there's not really a clear correlation of "the bigger the youth group, the more money I should make." But given all of these tables thought of cohesively relating to each other and referencing the same data pool, you can see there's a pretty clear correlation between ministry size, budget, and salary. Some churches have a full-time staff member, and that plus maybe a few hundred bucks a month is their youth ministry budget. But then, you really do see larger salaries alongside larger youth budgets until you get to a place where you have more than 20k in the youth budget. Then it's pretty much a wash all the way up to the big players with larger than a 30k budget. Interestingly, the biggest representation of ministry budgets for every bracket above 90 students was \$30,000. Next year, I plan to expand this part of the research for more detail.

Are there any correlations between youth group size and YP compensation? I looked at the numbers and they aren't particularly revealing. Here's the trends that you can see: If you make less than 55k and are running a group of 100 or more, the numbers say you are under compensated. There is no bracket of attendance above 100 in average weekly attendance that is lower than \$55,508. Under 100, it really is uneven. The averages are all over the place with no correlation to the brackets I provided, and what that tells me is it really matters what your roles and responsibilities are at your



church. If you're at a smaller church with a strong youth group, but you're the second Pastor on staff besides the Senior Pastor, you're going to make a little less than a church with a small handful of Pastors where your only job is youth. Interestingly, churches tend to pay more for specialization. Youth Pastors who are out more nights a week make less than their counterparts who are only out one night a week for youth group. Youth pastors who can lead worship (and then typically wear that hat in some capacity) make less than those who don't. I guess the take-away here is find your lane and be great in it.

Youth Group Size	Average Youth Pastor Salary
<20	\$41,202
20-30	\$42,800
31-40	\$45,276
41-50	\$49,047
51-60	\$47,751
61-70	\$50,564
71-80	\$47,423
81-90	\$51,595
91-100	\$49,096
101-125	\$56,504
126-150	\$56,496
151-175	\$55,508
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Education

In last year's report I said that a completed theological Masters Degree was worth about 16% more in compensation than a counterpart with only a bachelors. That statistic proved to be correct again this year, with the average compensation of a YP with a Masters being \$53,125 and a YP with a Bachelor's degree coming in at \$45,117. Folks, it's getting competitive in our industry. *Over a third* of Youth Pastors have *finished* a Masters degree. I find that simply astounding. If you're new to the reports I put out, this year's data reinforces a conclusion I made last year: get your degree if you want to be paid reason-

Denomination	Gender		
	Female	Male	Grand Total
Assembly of God / Assemblies of God / AOG	\$29,894	\$42,102	\$39,922
Baptist	\$48,862	\$49,116	\$49,102
Brethren		\$52,042	\$52,042
Catholic	\$37,750	\$49,800	\$42,385
Christian & Missionary Alliance	\$42,000	\$52,995	\$52,471
Church of Christ	\$44,000	\$52,369	\$52,020
Church of God / Charismatic (COG)	\$41,000	\$36,982	\$37,317
Episcopal / Anglican	\$47,167	\$57,447	\$54,201
Evangelical Covenant	\$41,203	\$54,282	\$46,808
Evangelical Free	\$47,667	\$50,815	\$50,614
Independent / IFCA / Bible Church (Fundamental)		\$44,138	\$44,138
Interdenominational	\$32,500	\$56,000	\$48,167
Lutheran	\$47,567	\$51,725	\$50,274
Mennonite (Amish / Apostolic Christian Church)		\$51,000	\$51,000
Methodist	\$41,304	\$47,520	\$45,027
Nazarene / Orthodox	\$35,867	\$44,712	\$43,506
No denominational affiliation	\$45,911	\$48,635	\$48,362
Pentecostal (Full Gospel / Holiness / UPC)		\$38,533	\$38,533
Presbyterian / Reformed	\$45,887	\$50,989	\$48,765
United Church of Christ / UCC	\$42,720	\$45,390	\$43,610
Vineyard / Calvary Chapel		\$53,808	\$53,808
Wesleyan	\$47,250	\$52,853	\$51,535
Grand Total	\$43,475	\$48,913	\$47,889

ably. Youth Pastors without any education make a hair over \$40,000 nationally. But the second you get a bachelor's degree (or even an AA helps!) you jump up \$5k in my data. And if you're thinking about getting some sort of certificate that is non-accredited, just know that it will mean almost nothing to your compensation according to the data. I wrote at length on this in the [2018 Report](#) and the data is still true in this year's report, so go read that if you want more detailed information.

Denominational Compensation

I intended to figure out if there were any trends among denominational bodies in compensation, but quite frankly it's pretty scattered. Instead I think the best thing to do is throw up a table; and I actually broke this one out by gender. The idea is that I think it is helpful to see what denominations are closing the gender wage gap.

And before you look at the Baptist numbers and think that it's odd that the closest gender wage gap in the report is the Baptists, you should know there were 19 women out of 324 Baptist respondents, and every single one of these women had at least a college degree, and more than half of them had a Masters.

I said it a year ago and I'll say it again: the church should be leading the way in equal compensation among women and men. And this is regardless of your view of complementarian or egalitarian ministry. If your stream is going to recognize women as able to lead in a pastoral role in the church, then they should be being paid apples to apples the same as their male counterparts. The gender wage gap among women (\$43,475 average salary across 238 respondents) and men (\$48,913, 1026 respondents) is 11.8% in 2019. This represents a 1% improvement from 2018 in closing the wage gap; which is an improvement I predicted last year as a result of women being hired as first-year Youth Pastors at an equal rate. There's good news to be found here as women who are new in ministry (3 years or less) are actually out earning their male counterparts.

Total YM Experience	Female Average	Male Average	Total Average
<1 Year	\$38,700	\$36,241	\$37,009
1-3 Years	\$39,148	\$38,680	\$38,760
3-5 Years	\$37,915	\$43,848	\$42,439
5-10 Years	\$43,400	\$47,682	\$46,762
10-15 Years	\$52,826	\$53,902	\$53,745
15-20 Years	\$50,782	\$58,815	\$57,527
20+ Years	\$49,278	\$65,102	\$63,570

Side Hustles

43% of full-time Youth Pastors have a secondary source of income besides a spouse. Interestingly, half of those side hustles generate \$5,000 or less annually. So that means that 13% of all Youth Pastors are generating \$5,000 or more on the side each year. To put that number in per-

spective, these Youth Pastors are essentially adding 11% to the average compensation they are being provided by their church with their side work. I tried searching for correlations between average salary size and amount of side hustle to see if there was some sort of “golden number” that Youth Pastors try and earn; but the data was all over the place. I also found it very interesting that more Youth Pastors who are ordained have a side hustle than those who do not. And the data revealed that the most likely scenario among Youth Pastors with a side hustle is that their spouse also works full-time; with greater than a 2:1 ratio of Youth Pastors with side hustles also having a spouse pulling down full-time bread. People seemed interested in the most popular side hustles so I’ll list a few I saw come through a lot: many people (over 100) teach and coach for secondary income (and a good campus ministry strategy, to boot!) work in restaurants (several dozen), or do graphic design (two dozen) and web work (two dozen). Interestingly, I saw a surprising amount of “trade” type work: electrical work, welding, car repair, engineering and construction or handyman services. Twenty folks reported driving for Uber or Lyft or a similar company. Sixteen people reported doing some sort of sales job.

80% of all Youth Pastors who are less than full-time (meaning less than 30 hours a week) have a side hustle. And these, my friends, are the true heroes of the faith and should be commended for their dedication to their flocks above and beyond. The average compensation of a part-time Youth Pastor with a side hustle is \$15,000. The average salary of a part-time Youth Pastor without a side hustle is \$18,000. If you know a bivocational part-time YP, buy them a Starbucks and tell them thanks. Heaven will be different for many students because of these fine folks and encouragement goes a long way in the longevity department.

Takeaways

I’d say 2019 was a step forward for the world of Youth Pastor compensation. We saw the average salary increase, the gender wage gap decrease, and the amount of Youth Pastors who asked for and received raises went up from a year ago. That means green shoots of life and health are what are in front of us. If any of these observations or data points were oriented the other direction I would say we were in grave danger as a tribe. And so as I sit here prayerfully processing what this means for so many of you who are just barely hanging on; I think Eugene Peterson’s translation of Matthew 11:29-30 comes to mind. “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Find rest. Find rhythm. Find life. Many of you leave the church office and head off to a second job. But don’t forget to rest. Sabbath. Abide deeply in the love of the Father. Now, after three years, I am doing this survey and helping every single YP who asks because I genuinely believe that helping our tribe understand compensation will help eliminate one of the factors that lead YP’s to quit or burn out. Because if our source of calling and staying-power is merely our own level of determination and strength *we will all fail* at some point at running the race

God has marked out in front of us. So, the blessing I am praying for each of you is this: may 2020 be a year where you find more health, balance, and life as you minister to the students God has chosen you to lead. Amen.