

2026

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION REPORT



A FOREWORD BY JOSH BOLDMAN

Hey there!

Before joining the incredible team at Download Youth Ministry and Coleader, I served as a youth pastor for 20 years. That's 20 years of teaching students, leading small groups, training leaders, and planning summer camps... but it was also 20 years of struggling financially, questioning whether I was being compensated fairly for the work I was doing.

It sounds like hyperbole, but over those two decades, I honestly don't think I ever saw my youth ministry budget increase, and I've lost count of the number of times a supervisor told me, "We just aren't in a financial position to offer raises this year." And the more I connect with other youth workers, the more I realize that my story isn't as unique as I would have thought (or hoped).

Dan Navarra started this survey nine years ago as a 29-year-old youth pastor who simply wanted to know if he deserved a raise. What began as a Google Form posted on Facebook became the most comprehensive annual snapshot of youth pastor compensation in the country. Over the past nine years, this report has helped thousands of youth pastors walk into conversations with supervisors and boards armed with real data. In fact, the first time I saw Dan's report was when our family was contemplating a big, out-of-state move for a role I was being offered, and I cannot overstate how helpful it was when it finally came to negotiating my starting salary. In no small part, this report helped make that move possible.

As always, this year's report shows us A LOT of information, and some of it is genuinely worth celebrating! For example, for the first time in the survey's history, the gender wage gap has narrowed to only 10%, meaning the average woman in youth ministry is only making 10% less than her male counterpart. There's still room for improvement, but considering the gap was 18.2% in 2022, this is real progress! You'll also see that the salary floor is rising faster than ever. Only 6.4% of full-time youth workers now earn below \$40,000, down from 20% just two years ago.

But there's challenging news, too. Half of youth pastors still aren't getting annual reviews. Youth pastors at smaller churches are seeing smaller raises, and the compensation gap between them and their peers at larger churches keeps growing. And while it's great that starting salaries are increasing, veteran youth pastors just aren't seeing the same gains, which may make it difficult for anyone hoping to make youth ministry a long-term career.

My hope is that this report gives you the information you need to be able to continue to thrive in your calling. Will it solve your money problems? Probably not, but it can be a powerful tool to start much-needed conversations. So, print a few copies, and highlight the parts that matter most to your situation. Bring them to your next meeting with your supervisor. And if you've never had an annual review, let this be the year you ask for one.

Youth ministry matters too much to be a revolving door. Students need leaders who stick around, and that only happens when churches invest in the people who invest in the next generation.

Blessings,



JOSH BOLDMAN

DOWNLOAD YOUTH MINISTRY & COLEADER



**YOUTH MINISTRY
MATTERS TOO
MUCH TO BE A
REVOLVING DOOR.**

INTRODUCTION

Year nine of the Youth Pastor Compensation Survey is complete! The survey is brought to you by Chemistry Staffing in association with The Youth Cartel and Download Youth Ministry. Dan Navarra has been the lead researcher and author of this report for the past nine years. Dan also has over fifteen years of youth ministry experience. Read to the end for a special note from Dan. Special thanks are well deserved for the general editing done, as always, by Mark Oestreicher of The Youth Cartel. The heart of this team remains the empowerment of youth workers to understand their compensation better and equip them to have conversations about their careers and compensation with their churches, ultimately leading to long-term health for the youth workers and the ministries they lead. We care about youth workers and want to help them win at life and ministry!

THIS YEAR'S BIG NUMBER

This year, we had 645 qualified respondents. Of those 645 responses we gathered, 571 youth pastors meet our definition of full-time. For our purposes, full-time is defined as being regularly scheduled for 30 hours or more per week, and our report will mainly address this employee classification. Also, please note that we use the term “youth pastor” synonymously with any other title that means an employed youth worker (youth director, youth minister, student pastor, nextgen director, etc). This language is not meant to indicate anything other than a person who is paid to lead a youth ministry. Now, without further ado, the real reason everyone is here...

The national average salary for a full-time youth pastor in 2025 was \$58,366.

This represents a 4.5% increase over the 2024 national average of \$55,732 and our survey's second-largest single-year jump! The chart at the end of this section illustrates the trend in our field over the past nine years we've collected data. Over those years, we've seen an overall increase in the average full-time salary of about 23.1%.

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2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

We think it's helpful to point out that more significant number in the overall landscape of time because we hear from youth pastors all the time who have gone “many years” without seeing a pay increase. We thought looking at high and low earners would help contextualize the shift we are seeing this year.

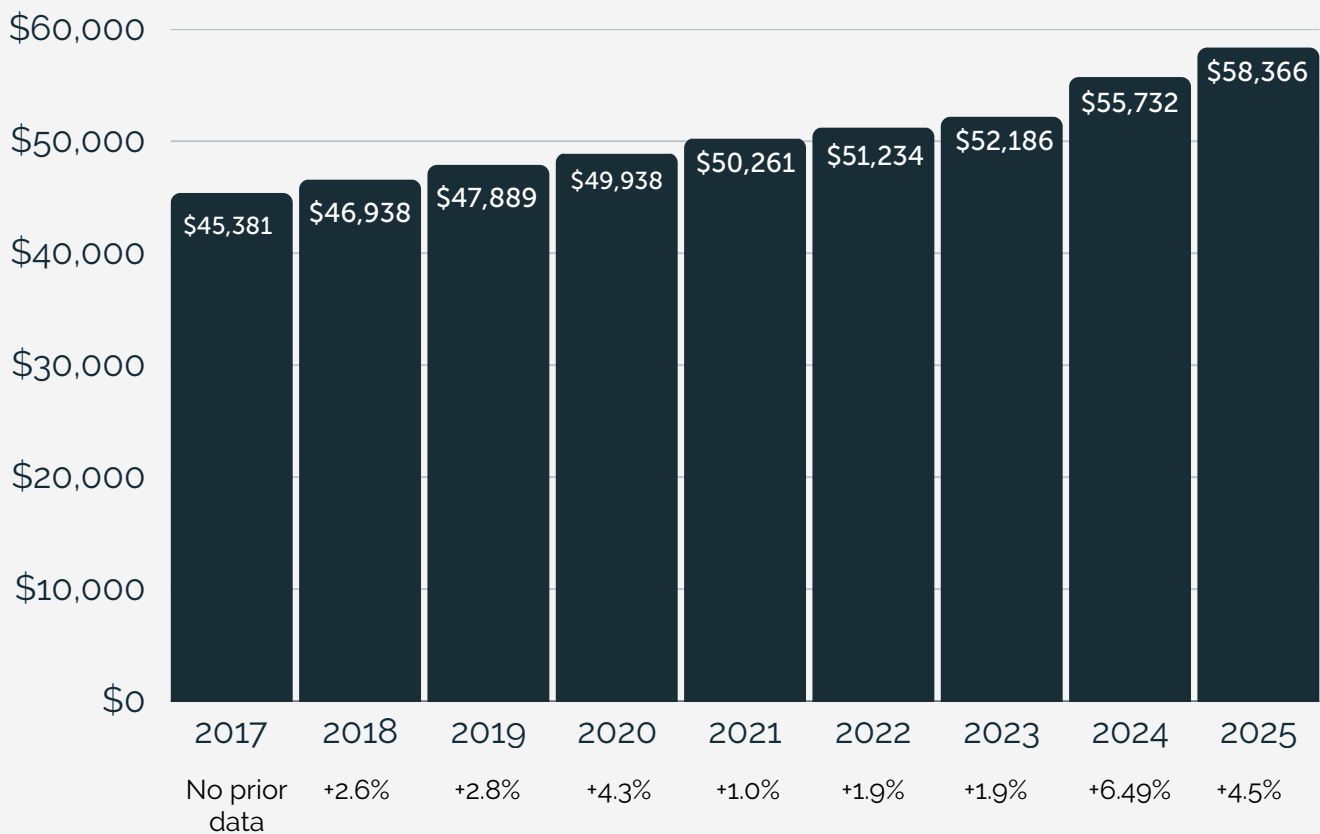
In 2024, 11% of our responders earned \$75,000 or more. For 2025, 87 out of 571 (15.2%) earned over \$75,000. So, we know the top end of the salary spectrum is continuing its growing trend. But what about the lower end? In 2024, 14.8% of full-time respondents indicated a salary of \$40,000 or below, decreasing from 20% of all full-time youth pastors the year before that. In 2025 only 6.4% of full-time youth workers are earning less than \$40,000. There is a group that is earning exactly \$40,000; if we were to include those the number goes up to 8.4%. This is, perhaps, the most exciting trend in the whole report this year: the floor is rising at a rapid rate. We are witnessing a compression of the compensation curve: entry-level wages are rising faster than mid- and higher-level wages, flattening long-term earning trajectories for experienced youth pastors. More on that later.

As an essential tool to grow your career earning potential, we try to remind our community every year that having an annual review with your supervisor is a crucial practice to give yourself a shot at increasing your compensation and being paid a higher wage. When comparing this year's data pool to the last few years, we have found over the past half-decade that on average, at least half of all full-time youth pastors do NOT receive an annual review from their supervisor where they had an opportunity to talk about compensation. Every year, we point to this as a huge factor impacting compensation. Those full-time youth pastors who had an annual review in the past year earned an average of 5% more than those who did not or were unsure. Among those respondents who reported receiving no change in compensation in 2025, the total number of those who did not have a review is more than double that of those who did. The number of self-declared “pure merit” raises received is also more than doubled for those who do have reviews compared to those who do not. Among those who had a review, there were significantly more “cost of living” raises and more “increased workload” raises earned. This is a pattern that nearly a decade of research supports: insist on having a review. I'd recommend never working for a church (or anywhere else!) where you won't have a review.

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

Part-time youth pastors, beware: two-thirds of those working 29 hours per week or less did NOT have an annual review. We've seen a consistent 18% pay gap between part-time youth pastors who don't have a review and their peers who did over multiple years. And since we are here, the average part-time youth pastor worked 16.54 hours per week and earned an average wage of \$19,374 in 2025, which represents a slight decrease from last year in nearly the exact same number of average hours worked.

What does this all point to? If you're NOT talking about compensation with your supervisor every year, odds are you'll earn less on average, and you're less likely to see increases in your salary. Not everyone gets to control if they have an annual review, but asking your supervisor or your board for a review is the first step to fixing that. We said this last year, and it continues to prove accurate every year: the squeaky wheel has a better chance of getting grease. Just be sure to squeak with humility.



THE FIRST OF THE TWO BIG FACTORS

Over the years, church attendance and total church budget have proven to be the two most significant determining factors of a youth pastor's salary. That trend continued in year nine. Therefore, you can have less experience or education than another youth pastor, but if you work at a bigger church with a bigger budget, you will likely earn more despite the possibility of having relatively lower qualifications. Attendance, first.

456 churches with an average weekend attendance of 1000 or less reported having a full-time youth pastor, and their average salary was \$56,635. This number is up nearly 11% over the past two years! This means that the floor of compensation is rising! 110 churches with an average attendance between 501-1000 reported a full-time salary of \$61,214. The 346 churches under 500 in attendance reported \$55,179, a gap of 10% from those in churches with 501-1000 in attendance. Indeed, smaller churches are struggling to keep up with the industry. Last year, churches under 500 reported an average of \$52,507. So, while that is a 5% increase year over year, it still needs to catch up even further.

OVER THE YEARS, CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND TOTAL CHURCH BUDGET HAVE PROVEN TO BE THE TWO MOST SIGNIFICANT DETERMINING FACTORS OF A YOUTH PASTOR'S SALARY.

The other 113 churches from the data with a weekly attendance of over 1000 have an average salary of \$65,748, or 14% more than the churches under 1000. This represents a similar percentage to the past three years, so we know this continues to be a trend. Below, we'll include a chart illustrating average compensation by church attendance, and we'll put these numbers next to the 2024 numbers.

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION BASED ON CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Church Attendance	2024 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Sample Size
50 or less	\$39,367	\$35,500	2
51-100	\$45,439	\$50,929	16
101-150	\$47,362	\$47,175	50
151-200	\$50,800	\$52,882	61
201-250	\$53,950	\$53,815	47
251-300	\$55,814	\$55,904	59
301-400	\$57,414	\$61,562	58
401-500	\$54,724	\$60,644	54
501-625	\$54,724	\$62,292	35
626-750	\$58,834	\$60,941	30
751-1000	\$61,940	\$60,559	45
ABOVE TOTALS	\$54,250	\$56,635	456
1000+	\$61,755	\$65,748	113

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

While it's not a hard and fast rule, for as far back as we have been able to look, there is a pattern of larger churches paying their youth pastors more. The outlier in our data set two years ago was churches with attendance between 626 and 750, which had a salary spike above \$60,000. Last year, the spike moved to churches of 751-1000, perhaps suggesting that churches at the 750 level and growing are paying more. The 501-750 group saw a slight decrease. Last year, the 626-750 churches revealed they mainly profiled as financially stable with low debt and healthy giving (most budgeting in the 1-2M range), 60% of them reporting numerical growth last year, and 40% of them having online viewership of more than 100 each week. This year, the numbers point to those churches growing into the 751-1000 class and paying in line with churches of over 1000. This is good news!

THE SECOND OF THE TWO BIG FACTORS

Historical data trends regarding annual church budgets continue to hold. Unremarkably, churches with more money pay their staff more. 247 Churches with an annual budget of \$1,000,000 or less have a youth pastor with an average salary of \$53,370, which shows a meager 3.98% increase from \$51,329 a year ago, and lags behind our national average increase for 2025 of 4.5%. Smaller budget churches continue to fall further behind industry trends. 283 churches with a budget over the \$1,000,000 mark have an average of \$62,714, up 3.6% from \$60,516 last year, which also is lagging behind the 4.5% national average. So, where did the increase come from if both churches over and under a million-dollar budget are lagging behind the national average? The only group left is the group of youth pastors who self-reported that they were “unsure” about their church’s annual budget.

Historically, this group of youth pastors who are in the dark about their church’s budget are way under the national average. But this year, this group of 41 saw their average annual salary jump from 51,052 in 2024 to \$58,592 in 2025, a 14.8% increase. For the past eight years we’ve always observed that youth pastors who don’t know their church’s budget almost always earn less than their counterparts who are more budget-aware. This year’s data is an extreme outlier in that regard.

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION BASED ON CHURCH BUDGET

Church Budget	2024 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Sample Size
1-1.5M	\$56,666	\$58,646	95
1.5-2M	\$59,410	\$62,194	59
2-2.5M	\$58,945	\$63,000	38
2.5-3M	\$66,968	\$61,503	15
3-3.5M	\$62,631	\$65,510	17
3.5-4M	\$63,256	\$68,628	12
4-4.5M	\$65,161	\$75,394	7
4.5-5M	\$70,846	\$69,838	6
5-7M	\$63,338	\$60,807	15
7-10M	\$65,031	\$54,333	3
10-15M	\$70,655	\$63,200	6
15M+	\$62,307	\$77,078	16
TOTALS	\$60,516	\$62,725	289

It's worth noting that the above chart shows an increased sample size over 2024 in nearly every category. We had 40% fewer churches with a budget of over \$1,000,000 reported this year compared to last year. Observe, below, steady increases in average salary as the church budget increases.

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION BASED ON CHURCH BUDGET (UNDER \$750K)

Church Budget	2024 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Sample Size
50k or less	\$32,500	\$92,000	1
51-100k	\$40,357	\$54,000	2
101-250k	\$39,718	\$46,375	15
251-500k	\$47,978	\$48,121	68
501-750k	\$55,955	\$53,082	85
751k-1M	\$54,841	\$59,243	76
TOTALS	\$51,329	\$53,370	247

Churches with a budget under \$750k are really having a difficult time keeping up with churches that are between \$750k-1M in annual budget. This is normally true every year, but seeing a decrease in the 500-750k range should actually cause great concern for churches with budgets in this range: the wage gap is accelerating at a higher level, and will create compounding wage problems if this trend continues in future years.

IF YOU ARE FRUSTRATED WITH WHAT YOU EARN...

Of course, there could be many reasons why your salary level is frustrating to you. Still, the quickest analytics tool is “Do I know my church’s attendance and budget numbers?” If you do, simply ask yourself if you’re surprised you’re paid what you are based on where your numbers fall in the compensation landscape. Being informed is step number one. No matter how educated or experienced you are, the biggest hurdles to higher compensation are church size and the corresponding dollars more people can give.

It's valuable to speak to a common misconception about youth pastor compensation. Youth pastors often think youth group size or growth indicates their compensation value. However, this isn't nearly as reliable of a metric for determining compensation compared to church size and church budget. This is true even though churches often say they're evaluating their youth pastors on key performance indicators like attendance. We say this in every report, but plenty of highly paid youth pastors are running relatively small youth groups relative to their church size. They are being paid well compared to smaller-church youth pastors with big youth groups relative to the size of the church. The takeaway is that a bigger youth group doesn't always mean bigger pay, but a bigger church and budget almost always mean bigger pay.

FOR NINE YEARS, CHURCH SIZE AND CHURCH BUDGET HAVE BEEN THE TWO BIGGEST DRIVERS OF LARGER SALARIES. IF YOUR CHURCH IS GROWING IN SIZE AND BUDGET, YOUR SALARY SHOULD BE GROWING TOO!

THE OTHER TWO BIG FACTORS

Education and years of experience are the “other” two significant factors that can affect compensation. 86% of all youth pastors (regardless of full-time or part-time status) who took this year's survey reported having at least completed a 4-year college degree. 34% of youth pastors have completed a master's degree or higher. Remember, the average annual salary for a full-time youth pastor this year was \$58,366. If you have a master's or higher level of education, your average salary is \$61,827, up only about 3% from \$60,151 in 2024. If you do not have a Masters degree or greater, your average was \$56,361, up 6% from \$52,936 in 2024. This continues to muddy the waters for the value of graduate studies as we've seen trends have tremendous variance over the last several years. Years ago, our data concluded that a youth pastor with a Masters degree or greater was paid an average of 14-16% more. That number has shifted to 10-12% in the past three years and stabilized. But now, for the first time the gap is less than 10%. This points to a possible emphasis on skills and experience over “on-paper” qualifications demanding higher salaries in the current market.

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

Total years of experience balanced with your current tenure can also affect compensation. 14% of full-time participants have 20+ years of total experience as youth pastors (81 out of 571). 13 out of 571 (2%) have twenty or more years of tenure at their current church. Those youth pastors earn an average of \$69,636, up 17% from the national average. The majority (67%) of youth pastors have been at their current church for 5 years or less (the exact percent, two years running), and they have an average salary of \$56,690, up 6% from 2024. If you make it to years 6-10 at the same church (23% of full-time youth pastors this year), your compensation averages \$61,050, up 7% from 2024. Years 11-15 at the same church saw a big drop in this year's data from \$62,169 in 2024 to \$56,263. But if you made a jump to another church after the ten-year mark, you saw your salary stay competitive at an average of \$62,719. This suggests that some churches that have veteran (10+ years at one church) youth pastors decrease raise rates, and those youth pastors move on to keep their wages competitive, or stay behind and settle for less.

Let's look at total tenure instead of tenure at a current church. We had 16 first-year youth pastors report an average salary of \$52,063 in 2025, up 7% from 2024. The hiring floor continues to rise every year! 160 youth pastors in years 2-5 of their full-time career earned an average of \$50,480, basically static with \$49,925 for this group in 2024. This tells us that churches are raising their minimum hiring threshold as wage increases continue to climb, but raises for youth pastors in their first five years after that are slowing as their hiring floor accelerates. The following chart reveals how total career experience affects compensation.

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION BASED ON YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Total Experience	2024 Avg. Annual Salary	2025 Avg. Annual Salary	Percent of Survey
1-5 years	\$49,756	\$50,624	30%
6-10 years	\$53,471	\$57,912	31%
11-15 years	\$57,933	\$62,719	18%
16+ years	\$65,449	\$67,423	20%

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

Youth pastors who stick it out working with students for longer than ten years are rare (less than 40%), and a wage premium is attached to this inflection point of experience. Youth pastors with more than ten years of full-time experience earn an average salary of \$64,522. At the same time, those with ten years or less earn an average of \$54,399. This represents a 16% difference.

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE GENDER WAGE GAP

Every year, we are committed to highlighting data regarding how men and women are comparatively compensated while performing the same role of a full-time youth pastor. Going back a few years, in the 2022 report, 466 male youth pastors reported earning an average of \$54,441, while 218 female youth pastors reported earning an average salary of \$44,504. That amounted to an 18.2% wage gap for 2022--the highest we've ever reported. Then, two years ago for 2023, we saw 694 male youth pastors report an average compensation of \$53,937, while their 256 female colleagues reported \$47,441. A quick comparison across years meant we saw the average salary of men decrease by \$504 from 2022 to 2023. So, while the national average for both genders combined went up 1.9% last year, the average for men was static. Women, however, jumped from \$44,504 in 2022 to \$47,441 in 2023, which is a 7.2% increase and more notably shrunk the catastrophic 18.2% wage gap from 2022 to 12%, which reflected a more similar number to prior years. Then, in 2024's data, 240 female respondents reported an average of \$48,113, representing only a 1.4% increase. Meanwhile, 729 of their male colleagues reported an average of \$58,267. This was a 7.4% increase that brought the gender wage gap for 2024 back up to 17.4%.

In 2025, 118 full-time female respondents reported an average salary of \$53,119. This represents a 10% spike in female wage averages and a new survey record, hallelujah! The survey had 459 male respondents who reported an average salary of \$58,426, which is essentially static with the 2024 average salary. Thus, the gender wage gap for 2025 has been shrunk to 10% for the first time in survey history. This survey has always served as an interdenominational and theologically diverse representation of those who minister to teenagers, and so we will always champion wages being equal (and high!) for both men and women alike.

**THE GENDER
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MAINLINE DENOMINATION IMPACT ON COMPENSATION

There are 22 denominational entities that churchsalary.com uses for their salary reports, so we've chosen to mirror their denominational breakdowns as our benchmark every year. Did you know that for the past eight years, this survey's data has been used in the salary calculator tool at churchsalary.com to help church administrators set payroll banding around the country? We know several denominations have noticeable splits and differences in recent history, but we are continuing our historical delineation to keep this report apples-to-apples.

We always get feedback in our comment section pointing out how many of you feel your denomination isn't accurately represented in our options. While we would love to list all of them, it wouldn't make for a very compelling data set. As it was this year, we had 22 denominations listed, and only 12 of them had 10 or more respondents this year. Here's the breakdown of those 12 denominations. We like doing this with a gender comparison, which helps inform everyone equitably. The table below represents 542 of 571 (95%) full-time youth pastors in our survey and has a total average salary of \$56,137, which is \$405 more than the national average.

There is a wide range of compensation factors impacting these numbers. Everything from theology to licensing and ordination requirements weighs into how different governing bodies view their youth pastors. Despite the differences, let's try and point out some useful information.

The non-denominational melting pot at \$60,475 is 3.5% greater than the national average of \$58,366. Over 80% of Methodist youth pastors do NOT receive a housing allowance, meaning their denomination hasn't given them licensing that qualifies them for this benefit that the IRS would otherwise allow. More than 70% of Presbyterian/Reformed youth pastors do not receive a housing allowance, but they still earn significantly more per year than Assemblies of God youth pastors, which are historically consistently paid the least in our surveys. However, only about a quarter of Assemblies of God youth pastors don't receive the housing allowance benefit, meaning many of these pastors have been licensed or ordained by their denominational body but still .

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

are vastly under-compensated compared to other denominations where many of their counterparts have yet to be licensed. For comparison, 25% of non-denominational youth pastors do not receive a housing allowance

The housing allowance is an excellent benefit for ministerial workers. It should be a part of every youth pastor's interview process when they talk to a church so they can best understand their overall compensation package and its tax consequences.

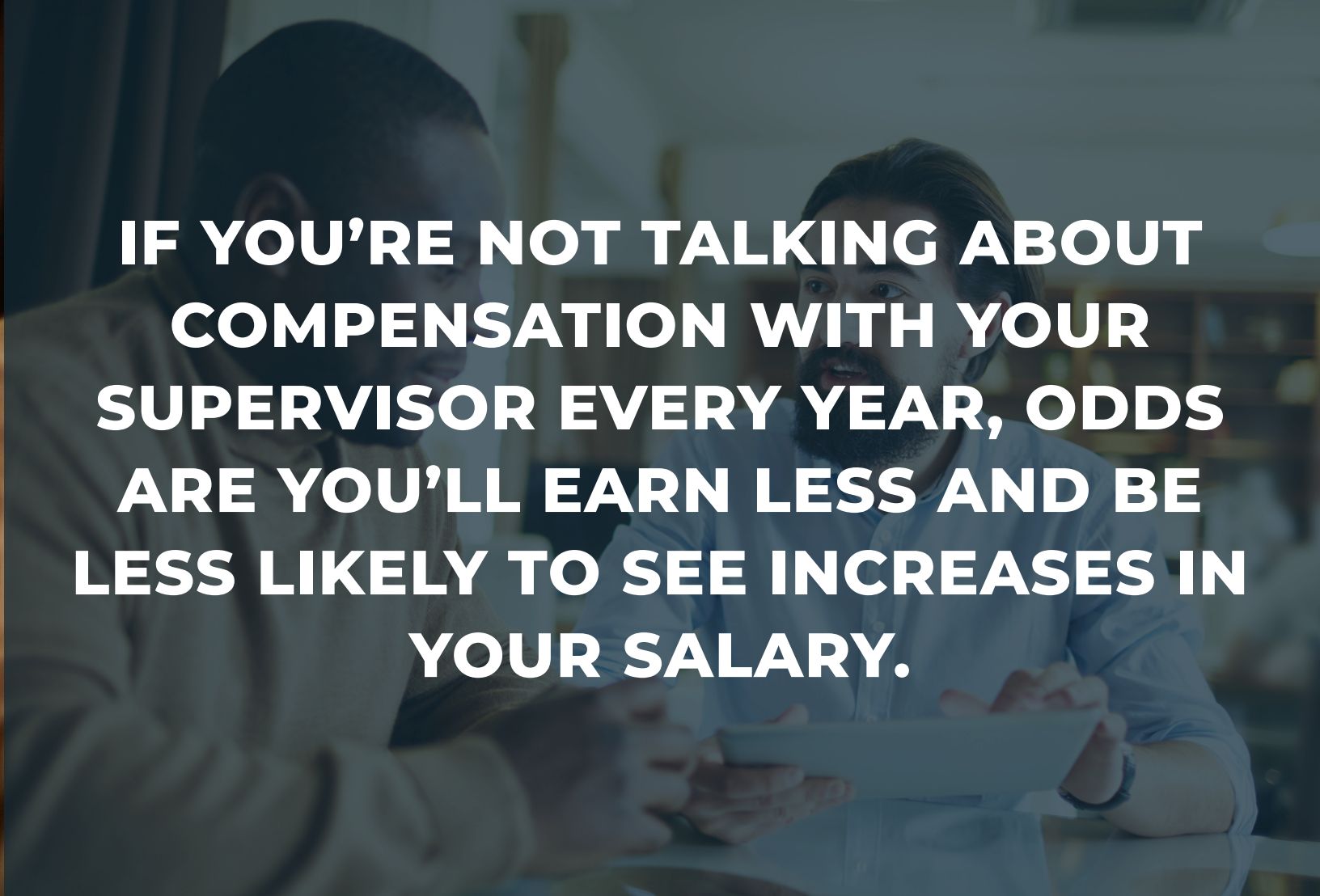
YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION BASED ON DENOMINATION

Denomination	# Male	Male Avg.	# Female	Female Avg.	Total Avg
Assemblies of God	17	\$53,665	4	\$45,250	\$52,062
Baptist	137	\$59,130	5	\$52,960	\$58,904
Christian & Missionary Alliance	10	\$58,409	1	\$51,500	\$57,781
Church of Christ	15	\$59,271	3	\$59,667	\$59,337
Evangelical Covenant	6	\$49,583	4	\$67,908	\$56,913
Evangelical Free	21	\$59,787	1	\$54,500	\$59,547
Lutheran	6	\$67,056	7	\$49,714	\$57,718
Methodist	45	\$60,667	37	\$53,641	\$57,497
Nazarene/Orthodox	10	\$52,635	5	\$55,600	\$53,623
Non-Denom.	61	\$61,245	15	\$53,079	\$60,475
Presbyterian/Reformed	29	\$63,790	24	\$54,265	\$58,595
Wesleyan	9	\$53,389	1	\$55,000	\$53,550

2026 Youth Pastor Compensation Report

Related to the gender wage gap: There were only five denominations with traditionally egalitarian theology and with at least 30% of their respondents being female that reported: Evangelical Covenant, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene/Orthodox, and Presbyterian/Reformed. Of these five denominations who affirm women in ministry the vast majority of women are still drastically underpaid compared to their male counterparts. The data once again reveals a persistent structural gap that cannot be explained by role, tenure, or performance alone.

If your church theology affirms female elders and pastors, but pays them less than their male counterparts, you're not doing anyone any favors. Kindly, put your money where you say your theology is.

A photograph of two men sitting at a table, looking at a document together. The man on the left is wearing a light-colored jacket, and the man on the right is wearing a light blue shirt. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

**IF YOU'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT
COMPENSATION WITH YOUR
SUPERVISOR EVERY YEAR, ODDS
ARE YOU'LL EARN LESS AND BE
LESS LIKELY TO SEE INCREASES IN
YOUR SALARY.**

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR & A WORD FOR YOUR BOSS

This will be my (Dan Navarra) last year leading this survey (I'm not crying, you're crying!). Many of you know I started this survey nine years ago because I was a 29-year-old youth pastor who felt like I deserved a raise, and wanted to see how my own compensation stacked up against my peers. When hundreds of youth pastors responded to a simple Google Form posted on Facebook, I knew I had struck a pain point in our community.

From there, this report took on a life of its own, and thousands of youth pastors have gone into shaping the compensation landscape of the industry since then. There are many people who have helped me along the way. Adam McLane in the early days, Mark Oestreicher from day one as my General Editor, and countless others who have lent their time, expertise, email lists, and encouragement. This is an offering from all of us. Many of you have walked into annual reviews equipped with past PDFs that are full of facts, trends, and support for your own raises and fair compensation...and emerged from those meetings with affirmation and maybe a few more bucks to boot!

Many of you have shared stories in the comments section over the years about trauma that church leaders, boards, and bosses have put you through related to your compensation. I have read through every one of these every year, and you are the reason I have kept doing this survey year after year.

Because you deserve to have someone advocate for you!

And now, with my oldest son heading into Junior High next year, I myself will be entering into the phase of my own life where I pray that my kids' youth pastor will have what it takes to stay in youth ministry long enough to see my kids graduate. And part of that equation is undoubtedly compensation.

I left youth ministry in 2020 during the pandemic, mostly because when many of you were running through walls to love teenagers in that weird season of youth ministry we'd all like to forget...and I realized that my time and passion for teenagers had shifted into other areas of ministry. But even after my personal exit from youth ministry, I always wanted to continue to do the survey. Now in 2026, it is time for new leadership to carry this survey into the future. I'm grateful for Download Youth Ministry's CEO, Josh Boldman, who has graciously agreed to carry the torch as the lead researcher into future years. I plan to stay involved, add input and analysis, and help wherever I can (#batsignal).

But this will be my last time leading the charge on what I consider a huge part of my last decade of ministry. I hope, one day, I'll meet in heaven all the students you helped lead to Christ because this survey helped give you the compensation you needed to stay in youth ministry just a little bit longer.

For the bosses (supervisors, elders, boards, senior and executive pastors, etc.) of youth pastors who read this survey every year, you have the power to make this survey unimportant in the future. It falls on you to compensate youth pastors well.

Good enough where they should never be tempted to drive Uber or Door Dash on the side, need to burn through all their vacation time when their child is born, take on more debt so they can keep loving a teenager, or fight with their spouse needing to earn more while they are out three nights in a row at volleyball games or drama performances.

Increase non-salary benefits. Help your youth pastor find a coach or mentor who is not their boss. Send them to a conference. Have them present a budget for using one of the many excellent curriculum resources available for youth ministries that saves them time each week. Ask them how their quiet time is going. Find a way to get them a few more Sundays where they can attend church without responsibilities. Give your younger staff members generous paternity/maternity policies as they start families. Pay for tuition or books if your youth pastor is pursuing higher education.

Figure out how to give your youth pastor a housing allowance and teach your youth pastor how to leverage it. Find a cabin or vacation home from somebody in the church and give it to your youth pastor for a long weekend away for free. Give a paid sabbatical to your youth pastor without them having to exhaust their PTO. If you can consider a female candidate, pay them the same as a male candidate, regardless of whether or not they are the primary breadwinner in their home. And ****please**** have annual reviews with your youth pastor where it is safe for them to talk about their performance and compensation.

Finally, give your youth pastor a raise; they probably deserve it!



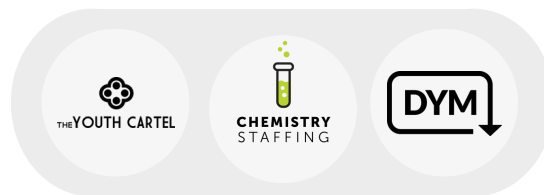
DAN NAVARRA
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA AREA DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION CALIFORNIA

2026

YOUTH PASTOR COMPENSATION REPORT

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