

Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering 2005 Attendee Survey
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Overview

Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering was held in San Antonio July 5-10, 2005. A short evaluation form was given to all attendees, and most were completed at the event. A total of 2,554 people attended the gathering, and 973 surveys were completed. This resulted in a 38 percent response rate. We will first examine the results of the evaluation and then discuss differences in responses based on geographical region, age and marital status.

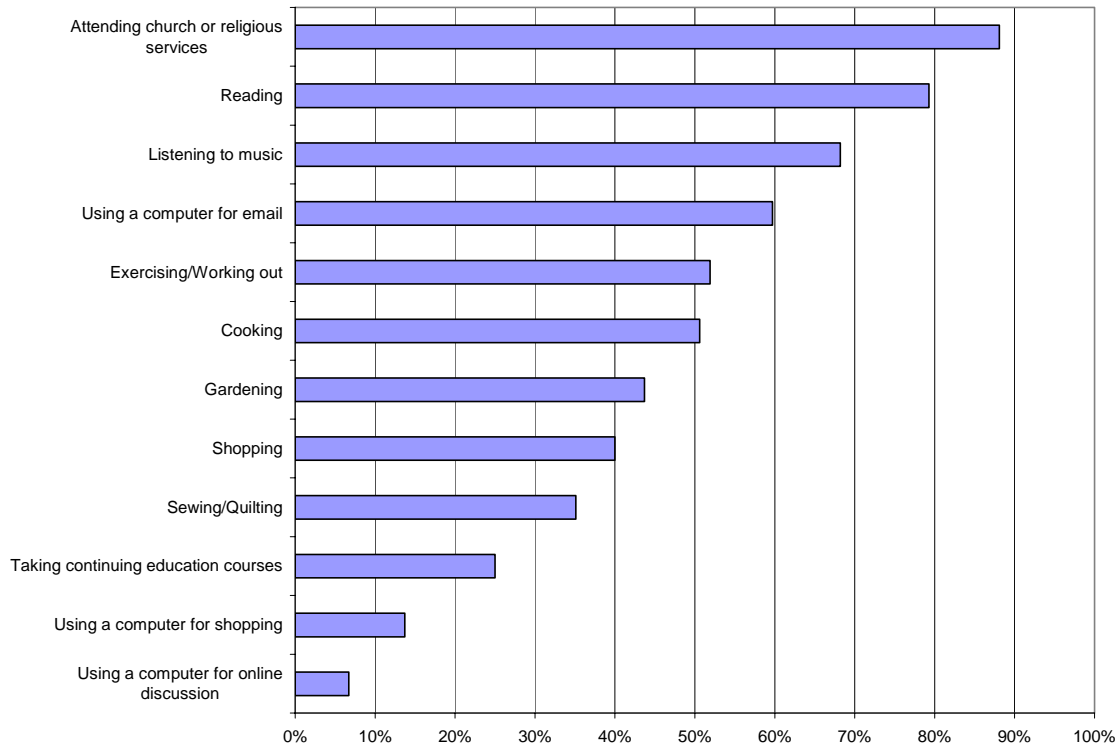
Attendee Characteristics

Several background questions were asked to give us a general picture of the attendees at the gathering. (See Appendix A for a complete list of frequencies.) Most of the respondents live in the Midwest (63%), with almost one-fourth from the East (23%). Fewer respondents came from the Pacific (9%) and Mountain regions (4%), the Caribbean or Puerto Rico (1%) and outside the United States (0.3%).

The large majority of respondents are 55 or older (71%), with the next-largest age group 45 to 54 years old (18%). Fewer respondents are between 35 and 44 years old (6%), 25 to 34 (3%), 18 to 24 (1%) and under 18 (0.2%). Most of the respondents are married (70%), followed by widowed (15%), single (8%) and never married (7%).

Almost all of the respondents are actively involved in their congregation's women's group (92%), and most subscribe to *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine (80%). The large majority indicated they have a personal computer (84%). Figure 1 shows the activities respondents enjoy on a regular basis. The most popular activities were attending church or religious services, reading and listening to music. Least popular activities were using a computer for shopping or online discussion.

Figure 1
Activities Enjoyed on a Regular Basis



Evaluation of the Gathering

The rest of the survey questions focused on the gathering itself. First, attendees were asked how they heard about Women of the ELCA’s gathering. Church was the most common response (52%), followed by the magazine (44%) and word-of-mouth (42%). Many respondents heard about it through the mailing (40%) and the website (22%). About one-fourth of the respondents heard about the gathering in other ways.

Slightly over three-fourths of the respondents registered by mail (76%), and only about one-fourth registered online (24%). Respondents were asked to rate their registration process experience on a five-point rating scale from 1 = “poor” to 5 = “excellent.” Overall, the ratings were high with 72 percent of respondents choosing “very good” (4) or “excellent” on the five-point scale, for a mean rating of 3.97.

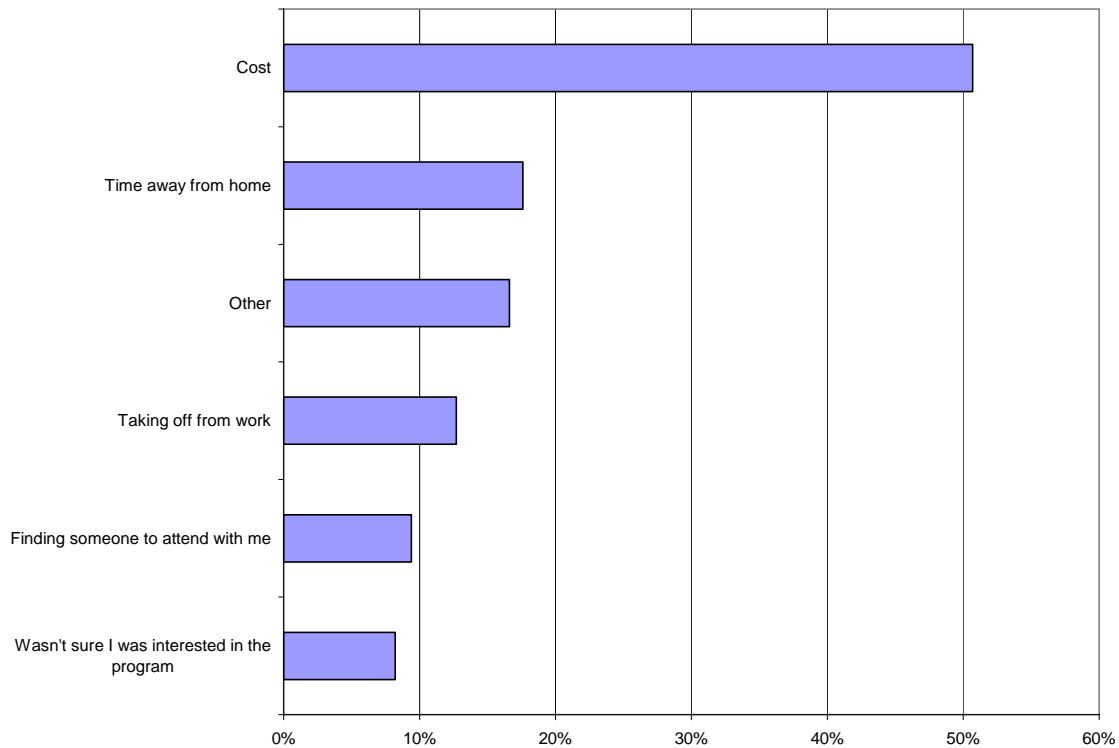
About two-thirds of the respondents had attended a Women of the ELCA gathering before (67%), with only one-third attending for the first time. Almost one-third of the respondents were delegates (32%). There were relatively few day registrants (3%), with Friday as the most popular day, followed by Thursday, Saturday and Wednesday.

The same five-point rating scale described above was used to rate the speakers. Overall, ratings for the speakers were high with 79 percent of respondents choosing “very good”

(4) or “excellent” (5) on the scale, for a mean rating of 4.09.¹ Over half of the respondents attended The Great Banquet (58%), but the ratings were slightly lower. Sixty-two percent of respondents rated it “very good” or “excellent,” for a mean rating of 3.60. Many respondents commented that the food was very good but they were disappointed in the speakers, which may be reflected in the lower ratings.

The large majority of respondents felt they would attend another Women of the ELCA gathering (84%), with 15 percent “not sure” and only two percent indicating “no.” Several possible obstacles in attending the gathering were listed, and respondents were asked to choose no more than two. (See Figure 2.) By far, the biggest obstacle was cost, followed by the time away from home and other obstacles.

Figure 2
Biggest Obstacles in Attending the Gathering



Two open-ended questions asked both about the highlight of the gathering and what needed improvement. We coded the responses for a random sample of half the surveys, and the list of comments with percentages is presented in Appendix B. As for the positive aspects of the gathering, about half of the respondents mentioned the speakers (international guests, Barbara Ehrenreich) and the programming (workshops, volunteering, etc.). About one-third of the respondents listed the worship services as a highlight, as well as opportunities for networking (fellowship, seeing old friends, etc.).

¹ Responses to the question “How would you rate the special guest?” were not included in the report due to the ambiguity of the question.

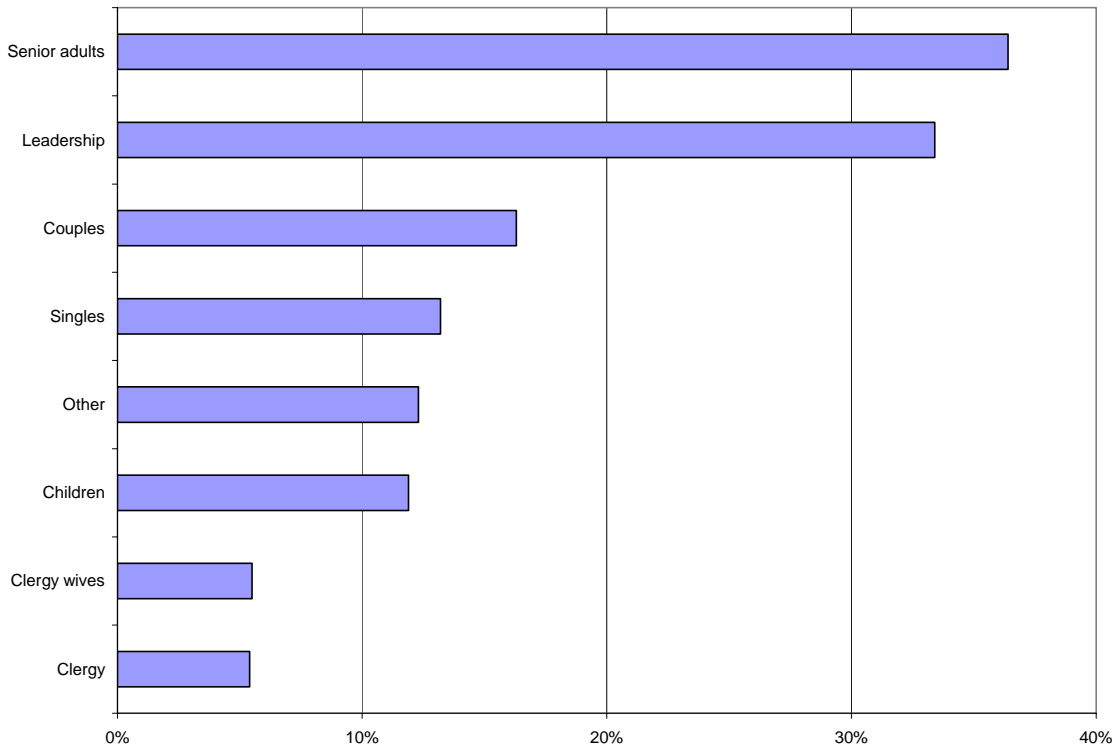
One-fourth of respondents mentioned the banquet as a highlight (food, program, etc.), and several respondents (8%) had positive comments about the gathering overall.

As for areas that needed improvement, 37 percent of the respondents listed communication (registration, information, notification). About one-third of the respondents were dissatisfied with the food (vouchers, wait times, logistics) and the mother/daughter Rodales speakers. About one-third of the respondents also listed scheduling and programming as areas in need of improvement, as well as the banquet (excluding the speakers). Many respondents (16%) had concerns about the physical plant (walking, climate, etc.) and the speaker Barbara Ehrenreich (15%). Finally, several respondents listed problems with inclusivity (wheelchair accommodations, visually impaired material, etc.) and the location of San Antonio (both 6%).

Future Events

The final question asked respondents to indicate what future event ideas would be of interest to them. (See Figure 3.) The most popular topics were senior adults and leadership. Least popular topics were clergy and clergy wives.

Figure 3
Future Event Ideas



Differences by Region

We first examined differences in responses based on geographical region. We combined Pacific and Mountain into “West,” and Eastern and Caribbean/Puerto Rico were combined to create the category “East.” The Midwest was the third geographical region. Several significant differences² in responses were found based on region. (See Table 1.)

Table 1
Differences by Region

	West	Midwest	East
First time attending WELCA gathering	40.5%	32.8%	25.7%
Delegate	35.0%	29.9%	39.0%
Attended banquet	62.9%	53.0%	67.0%
Would attend another gathering	80.5%	82.2%	90.6%
Married	65.0%	70.0%	72.2%
Use a computer for online discussion	6.5%	5.0%	11.6%

Respondents attending a Women of the ELCA (WELCA) gathering for the first time were more likely to be from the West, followed by the Midwest and the East. On the other hand, delegates were more often from the East, followed by the West and Midwest. Similarly, respondents who attended the banquet were more likely to be from the East, followed by the West and Midwest. Respondents from the East more often felt they would attend another gathering, followed by the Midwest and West. Respondents from the East were also more likely to be married, followed by those from the Midwest and West. Finally, Easterners were more likely to report using a computer for online discussion compared to respondents from the West and Midwest.

Differences by Age

We next looked for potential differences by age. Three age categories were created: 34 or under, 35 to 54, and 55 or older. We will first discuss differences by age for the items directly related to the gathering, and then differences found in the background characteristics of the respondents.

Table 2 shows differences by age for items related to the gathering. Respondents who are 55 or older were more likely to hear about the gathering through the magazine and the mailing compared to younger respondents. In contrast, respondents who are 34 or under were more likely to register online and to be attending their first WELCA gathering. Respondents 35 or older more often served as delegates, while respondents 54 or younger more often expressed difficulties in taking time off from work to attend the gathering. As for future event topics, younger respondents were more interested in children, couples and singles, while older respondents were more interested in the topic of senior adults.

² All reported differences are significant at the .05 level.

Table 2
Differences by Age—Items Related to the Gathering

	34 or under	35-54	55 or older
Heard about the gathering through the magazine	28.2%	30.3%	49.6%
Heard about the gathering through the mailing	20.5%	32.5%	44.8%
Registered online	40.5%	27.4%	21.9%
First time attending WELCA gathering	66.7%	37.3%	29.2%
Delegate	10.3%	32.5%	33.3%
Taking off work was an obstacle to attending	23.1%	19.2%	10.2%
Children—future event topic	33.3%	19.2%	8.3%
Couples—future event topic	35.9%	26.1%	12.2%
Singles—future event topic	28.2%	17.1%	11.3%
Senior adults—future event topic	5.1%	7.3%	49.0%

Differences by age were also found for two rating-scale questions. (See Table 3.) Overall, older respondents gave higher ratings for the registration process and the speakers compared to younger respondents.

Table 3
Differences by Age—Mean Ratings³

	34 or under	35-54	55 or older
Registration process experience	3.38	3.94	4.02
Speakers	3.87	3.93	4.16

Several of the background characteristics of respondents also differed by age. (See Table 4.) Respondents 35 or older were more likely to be married and involved in their congregation’s women’s group compared to younger respondents. Older respondents were also more likely to subscribe to *Lutheran Woman Today*. On the other hand, younger respondents were more likely to have a personal computer and to report using a computer for email and shopping. Older respondents were more likely to enjoy sewing or quilting and attending church or religious services, while younger respondents more often enjoy taking continuing educational courses on a regular basis.

³ Mean ratings are based on a five-point rating scale where 1 = “poor” and 5 = “excellent.”

Table 4
Differences by Age—Attendee Characteristics

	34 or under	35-54	55 or older
Married	41.0%	79.4%	68.3%
Involved in congregation's women's group	54.1%	87.5%	95.3%
Subscribe to <i>Lutheran Woman Today</i>	46.2%	69.9%	85.5%
Have a personal computer	94.9%	91.4%	80.1%
Sew/quilt	7.7%	24.8%	40.8%
Take continuing educational courses	35.9%	32.1%	22.4%
Attend church or religious services	74.4%	86.3%	90.0%
Use a computer for email	74.4%	66.2%	57.5%
Use a computer for shopping	25.6%	21.8%	10.5%

Differences by Marital Status

The final comparison was made by marital status. We combined the categories “never married,” “single” and “widowed” into one category, “single.” Several differences were found in the responses of single and married respondents. (See Table 5.) Married respondents were more likely to have heard about the gathering through the website, served as a delegate, and felt that time away from home was an obstacle to attending the gathering. Married respondents were also more likely to be interested in couples as a future event topic, while single respondents were more interested in the topics of singles and senior adults. Married respondents were more likely to report they have a personal computer, enjoy cooking, and use a computer for email. Single respondents were more likely to report they enjoy listening to music on a regular basis compared to married respondents.

Table 5
Differences by Marital Status

	Single	Married
Heard about the gathering through the website	17.9%	24.7%
Delegate	26.5%	34.5%
Time away from home was an obstacle to attending	9.3%	21.4%
Couples—future event topic	2.8%	22.6%
Singles—future event topic	35.5%	3.6%
Senior adults—future event topic	48.3%	31.8%
Have a personal computer	69.8%	89.3%
Enjoy cooking	44.8%	54.0%
Enjoy listening to music	74.5%	66.5%
Use a computer for email	54.8%	62.9%

There were also significant differences found between single and married respondents for two rating-scale items. (See Table 6.) Married respondents gave higher ratings for the registration process experience, while single respondents rated the speakers higher.

Table 6
Differences by Marital Status—Mean Ratings

	Single	Married
Registration process experience	3.84	4.03
Speakers	4.21	4.04

Summary and Conclusions

Overall, the evaluations of the Women of the ELCA’s Sixth Triennial Gathering were positive. The registration process and speakers received high ratings, and the large majority of respondents felt they would attend another gathering. The Great Banquet received slightly lower ratings, with some respondents expressing disappointment with the speakers. The cost of attending the gathering appeared to be the biggest obstacle, along with the time away from home. The most common highlights of the gathering were the speakers and programming, and areas for improvement listed most often were communication and food logistics. As for future event ideas, the most popular topics were senior adults and leadership.

We also found many differences in responses based on age. The large majority of respondents are 55 or older, with few in the young adult category (34 or under). Older respondents were more likely to have attended a previous gathering, to serve as delegates, and to be involved in their congregation’s women’s group. Targeting younger women and encouraging them to attend the gathering and to get involved as leaders will be a challenge in the future. Younger women were less likely to have heard about the gathering through the magazine or mailing, and fewer young women subscribe to *Lutheran Woman Today*. Since younger women more often registered online, e-mail contacts or use of the website might be more effective techniques for reaching this group.

Appendix A
Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering
2005 Attendee Survey
Frequencies (N = 973)

Please fill in the circles completely to indicate your answers (●). Thank you!

1. How did you hear about Women of the ELCA's gathering? (Please fill in **all** that apply.)

43.5 Magazine	42.0 Word-of-mouth
22.4 Website	40.3 Mailing
52.4 Church	25.2 Other: _____

2. How did you register? 76.0 By mail 24.0 Online

3. How would you rate your registration process experience?

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	<u>Mean</u>
5	4	3	2	1	
34.6	37.7	19.5	6.5	1.7	3.97

4. Is this your first time attending a Women of the ELCA gathering?

67.3 No 32.7 Yes

5. Are you a delegate? 68.0 No 32.0 Yes

6. Were you a day registrant?

91.4 No 3.0 Yes → If yes, which day(s)? (Please fill in **all** that apply.)

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2.2	3.7	4.5	3.2

7. Overall, how would you rate the speakers?

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	<u>Mean</u>
5	4	3	2	1	
40.7	38.4	13.9	3.7	3.4	4.09

8. How would you rate the special guest?

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	<u>Mean</u>
5	4	3	2	1	
42.7	31.3	12.0	6.0	8.0	3.95

9. Did you attend The Great Banquet?

42.3 No 57.7 Yes → If yes, how would you rate it?

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	<u>Mean</u>
5	4	3	2	1	
27.2	34.5	18.1	11.1	9.1	3.60

10. Would you attend another Women of the ELCA gathering?

1.6 No 83.5 Yes 15.0 Not sure

11. What was the biggest obstacle you faced in attending this gathering? (Please fill in **no more than two**.)

50.7 The cost	9.4 Finding someone to attend with me
17.6 The time away from home	8.2 Wasn't sure I was interested in the program for the gathering
12.7 Taking off from work	
	16.6 Other: _____

12. What was the highlight of the gathering for you?
13. What about the gathering needed the most improvement?
14. Which future event ideas would be of interest to you? (Please fill in **all** that apply.)
- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 11.9 Children | 5.4 Clergy |
| 16.3 Couples | 5.5 Clergy wives |
| 13.2 Singles | 33.4 Leadership |
| 36.4 Senior adults | 12.3 Other: _____ |
15. In what region do you live?
- | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| 9.1 Pacific | 22.5 Eastern |
| 4.2 Mountain | 1.0 Caribbean/ Puerto Rico |
| 62.9 Midwest | 0.3 Outside the U.S. |
16. Please indicate your age:
- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 0.2 Under 18 | 6.3 35-44 |
| 0.9 18-24 | 18.2 45-54 |
| 2.9 25-34 | 71.4 55 or older |
17. Please indicate your marital status:
- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 7.0 Never married | 69.8 Married | 8.2 Single | 15.0 Widowed |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
18. Are you actively involved in your congregation's women's group?
- | | |
|--------|----------|
| 8.4 No | 91.6 Yes |
|--------|----------|
19. Do you subscribe to *Lutheran Woman Today* magazine?
- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 20.2 No | 79.8 Yes |
|---------|----------|
20. Do you have a personal computer?
- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 16.5 No | 83.5 Yes |
|---------|----------|
21. Which activities do you enjoy on a regular basis? (Please fill in **all** that apply.)
- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 51.9 Exercising/ working out | 79.3 Reading |
| 43.7 Gardening | 25.0 Taking continuing educational courses |
| 35.1 Sewing/ Quilting | 88.1 Attending church or religious services |
| 50.6 Cooking | 59.7 Using a computer for email |
| 40.0 Shopping | 13.7 Using a computer for shopping |
| 68.2 Listening to music | 6.7 Using a computer for online discussion |

Thank you for attending Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering. We pray that this gathering was a blessing to you in many ways and that we continue to meet your needs in Christ.

Please complete the form below to be added to the Women of the ELCA mailing list. We'll keep you informed of upcoming events and activities.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State/Province: _____
 Zip/Postal Code: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email address: _____

Appendix B

Comments from Women of the ELCA's Sixth Triennial Gathering 2005 Attendee Survey
Frequencies (N = 450)

Highlights of the Gathering

Category	Percent
Speakers (international guests, Barbara Ehrenreich)	51.3%
Programming (workshops, volunteering, etc.)	49.1%
Worship services	32.0%
Networking (fellowship, seeing old friends, etc.)	27.6%
Banquet (food, program, etc.)	25.3%
Gathering overall	8.0%
Other	5.6%

Areas for Improvement

Category	Percent
Communication (registration, information, notification)	37.3%
Food (vouchers, wait times, logistics)	31.6%
Rodales speakers	31.1%
Scheduling/programming	28.9%
Banquet (excluding speakers)	27.3%
Physical plant (walking, climate, etc.)	16.0%
Barbara Ehrenreich	15.3%
Inclusivity (wheelchair accommodations, visually impaired material, etc.)	6.4%
Location of San Antonio	5.8%
Other	5.6%