

# Prevalence and Types of Miraculous Healings among U.S. Congregations in 2014

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## Introduction

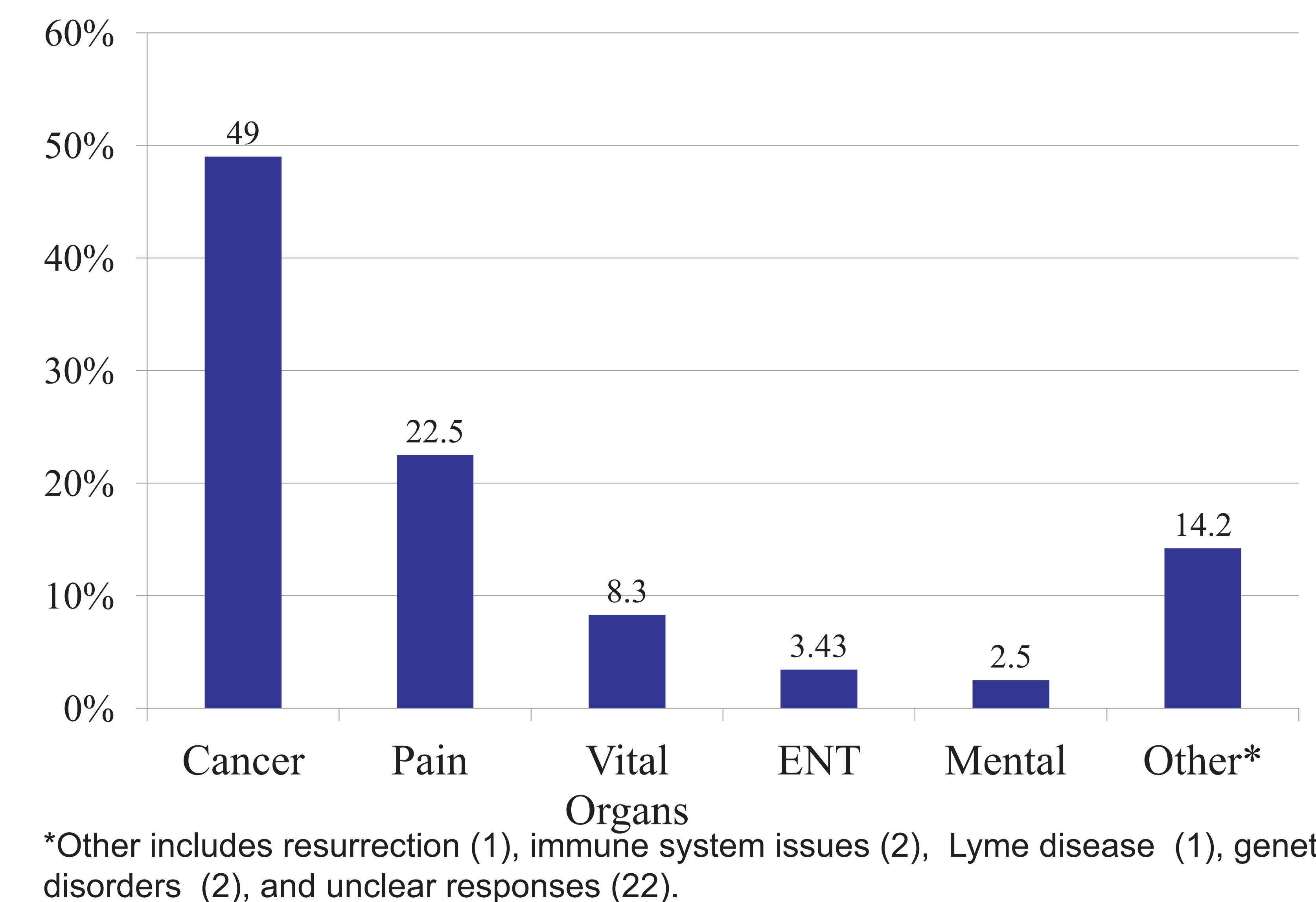
- In 2008, the General Social Survey reported that 29% of the general public agreed that they believed in “religious miracles.”
- A 2007 survey reports that 23% of Americans have personally “witnessed a miraculous, physical healing” and 16% indicated that “I received a miraculous, physical healing” (Baylor Religion Survey 2007).
- A 2007 Pew study reported that 36% have “experienced or witnessed a divine healing of an illness or injury.” The study found that Pentecostals were more likely than other Christians (62% vs. 28%) to report a prior healing encounter.
- Little data is available that investigates the prevalence and types of miraculous healing within U.S. congregations.
- The study hypothesized that the frequency of miraculous healings, attributed specifically through prayer alone, would be uncommonly endorsed by clergy, and that healings would not be severe.

## Methods

- The National Clergy Project on End-of-Life Care is a NIH-funded cross-sectional study (N=2000) of randomly-selected spiritual community leaders across the United States.
- Random selection was based on InfoGroup’s business file drawing from 368,408 congregations. Oversampling was used among Black and Latino Clergy. The survey was administered using multi-modal approaches: mail, email, telephone.
- The survey response rate is 55%: N= 965/1760 (240 congregations were ineligible because they could not be contacted (216) or were not congregations (24).
- Clergy were asked, “In 2014 was any ill person in your congregation miraculously healed through prayer alone” and were given the response options: “yes” or “no.” If “yes,” clergy reported the type of healing miracle.
- Clergy responded to the statement: “The Bible is the Word of God and is not mistaken in its statements and teachings.” A 5-Point Likert Scale was used from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.”
- Fisher’s exact test and risk ratios are used to compare clergy characteristics: race, education, median congregational income, and clergy theology.

Clergy Demographic Information,	N=965
<b>Spiritual Leader Denomination</b>	
Non-Christian Traditions	<2%
Protestant	81%
Roman Catholic	9%
Other Christian	4%
Latter Day Saints	2%
Orthodox	<2%
<b>Spiritual Leader Congregational Position</b>	
Senior/Solo	94%
Associate/Assistant	3%
<b>Christian Theological Tradition</b>	
Pentecostal	10%
Evangelical/Fundamentalist	45%
Mainline/Progressive	36%
Other	9%
<b>Spiritual Leader Race</b>	
White	82%
Black	13%
Hispanic	4%
<b>The Bible is the Word of God</b>	
Agree	80%
Unsure/Disagree	20%
<b>Median Household Income of Congregation</b>	
< \$40,000	28%
\$40,001-\$60,000	38%
\$60,001-\$75,000	22%
>\$75,001	13%

**Figure 1. Types of Miraculous Healing by Category by Percentage**



## Results

- 24.5% of clergy indicated a healing by faith alone within the congregation in 2014.
- Minority clergy were more likely than White clergy (41.3% vs. 20.2%) to indicate a miraculous healing occurrence (risk ratio = 1.37 [Confidence Interval (CI 95%), 1.20 to 1.54],  $p < .0001$ ).
- Pentecostals were more likely than Evangelical/Fundamentalists (57% vs. 25%, risk ratio = 2.3 [CI 95%],  $p < .0001$ ), and Liberal/Mainline (57% vs. 11%) to endorse a miraculous healing (risk ratio = 5.0 [CI 95%],  $p < .0001$ ).
- Clergy who agreed that the Bible was the Word of God were more likely than clergy who were unsure or disagreed (27% vs. 10%) to endorse a miraculous healing within their congregation (risk ratio = 2.8 [CI 95%, 1.75 to 4.47],  $p < .0001$ ).
- Clergy with less ministerial training were more likely than clergy with advanced degrees (MA, M.Div, D.Min, Ph.D.) (33% vs. 20.5%) to endorse a miraculous healing (risk ratio = 1.19 [CI 95%, 1.09 to 1.3],  $p < .0001$ ).
- Congregational median household income was not predictive.

## Conclusions

- Nearly 1 of 4 U.S. clergy indicated a miraculous healing through prayer alone in the year 2014.
- A majority of miracles were related to severe illnesses.
- Clergy who believed that the Bible was the Word of God were nearly three-times more likely to report a miraculous healing.
- Study limitations include potential recall bias, potential confounding, and a survey response rate in which minorities and clergy with less ministerial training were less likely to respond.
- Future steps include understanding if receipt of healing miracles was simultaneous with or separate from medical treatment.