

Barna Research Reveals Alarming Study About American Pastors

Barna Group today released its latest survey on the well-being of pastors, finding that nearly two-fifths of pastors (38%) are “seriously considering” leaving full-time ministry. This shows a significant increase compared to the 29% found earlier this January. Pastors who are considering leaving full-time ministry rated their overall well-being lower when compared to their peers.

This finding comes amid “The Great Resignation”, when a record number of Americans are quitting their jobs. According to a Prudential study, 48% of U.S. adults are rethinking the type of job they want post-pandemic.

“We’ve seen the negative effects of the pandemic on mental health across the nation over the past 18 months. Pastors were not immune from this,” said David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group. “The pandemic along with intense congregational divisions and financial strain has caused significant burnout on pastors, driving them to the point to seriously consider leaving ministry.”

Compared to non-mainline pastors (34%), fully half of mainline pastors (51%) reported that they are “seriously considering” leaving full-time ministry.

“This rising number further shows the vital need to support and care for the well-being of our pastors,” said Joe Jensen, vice president of church engagement of Barna Group and former pastor. “As dedicated leaders of the church, many pastors are feeling isolated and burnt out—especially during this time of high emotional turmoil and deep division. Congregations may need to better support their pastors, so that they may then

lead and shepherd the church well.”

For this study, 507 Protestant senior pastors—all members of Barna Group’s Church Panel—were surveyed from Oct. 12–Oct. 28, 2021. Minimal weighting was used to ensure the sample is representative of denomination, region and church size. The margin of error is 2.3%. {eoa}

To read more about this study, visit

About Barna Group

*In its 35-year history, **Barna Group** has conducted more than 2 million interviews over the course of hundreds of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership and vocation and generations. Barna Group has worked with thousands of businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world. Barna is an independent, privately held, nonpartisan organization based in Ventura, California, with offices in Atlanta, Georgia and Nashville, Tennessee.*

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