



Christians Struggled with Relational Health Prior to the Crisis — So What Has Changed?

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It's no surprise that relationships drastically impact our lives. Whether talking about connections to our spouse, family, or friends, our ties with others carry weight in our daily lives and inform who we are. Healthy relationships are supportive and life-giving, contributing to our resilience during challenging times (**especially among young people**), spurring us to **grow in faith together** and even **allowing us to be better parents**. Unhealthy relationships—or even a lack of relationships—can leave us feeling drained, lonely, and dissatisfied. During the COVID-19 crisis, these negative impacts have been even more **prominently** felt.

In a recent study on relationships within the Church, Barna® partnered with the *Boone Center for the Family* at Pepperdine University to learn more about where practicing Christians feel pressure in their close connections, and where they can turn to for healing and help. The findings from this study are outlined in *Restoring Relationships: How Churches Can Help People Heal & Develop Healthy Connections*. This new report sheds light on some well-known relational pressure points, including how practicing Christians navigate their nearest relationships, how they stay connected with others, and how relational well-being can affect mental health—all topics we'll take a look at on the following page, with an eye for how the pandemic has amplified relational health stressors in the Church, including to its pastors.



Half of All U.S. Adults and Practicing Christians Report At Least One Issue Affecting Their Relationships

The relational well-being of Americans was already strained prior to the pandemic. According to data collected for *Restoring Relationships*, more than half of all U.S. adults (58%) and practicing Christians (54%) say they have at least one relational or emotional/mental health issue that impacts their relationships. Younger generations were also already reporting higher levels of loneliness and a longing for connection. Now, a new layer of complexity and challenge has been added as couples are quarantining and working at home, singles are isolating alone, and friends are thinking twice about meeting for coffee. Relational strain has had much more potential to increase in recent months, perhaps exponentially.

