

## QB Pastors Wellbeing Check (June 2020)

As you probably know, we were concerned about how pastors were doing through the stress and changes of the COVID period, so we commissioned a survey by NCLS to check it out. We were hearing from our Regional Ministers that most pastors were going okay, but we needed to be sure.

Well the results are in. During June, 96 pastors completed the short wellbeing survey and their scores were compared with the scores of Australian Baptist pastors in the 2016 NCLS survey. Here are the results, with some brief comments:

	June 2020	2016	Comment
How effective have you felt in the role in the past few months?	High 24% Low 0%	High 34% Low 1%	Nothing too much to be concerned about here. No pastors indicated that they were ineffective. Fewer felt highly effective, but the COVID restrictions have made it more difficult to feel highly effective in the role.
How stressed have you felt in the role in the past few months?	Low 16% High 24%	Low 13% High 26%	While 24% felt highly stressed at some points which is a concern, this figure is actually lower than 2016.
How satisfied have you felt with aspects of your life?	High 23%	High 22%	Aspects of life included living standards, health, current achievements, relationships, safety, community, security and spirituality. Safety was rated the highest and current achievements the lowest. The overall score is close to 2016.
Issues with depression	Normal 76% Mild 13%	Normal 85% Mild 7%	This shows a significant increase in mild depression. Some pastors have found this period more depressing.
Issues with anxiety	Normal 88% Mild 8%	Normal 91% Mild 6%	Anxiety seems to be close to the 2016 results.
Issues with stress	Normal 79% Mild 14%	Normal 86% Mild 7%	While by far the majority of pastors are experiencing normal stress, mild stress has doubled. This is understandable with amount of change needed in these months.

### General Impressions

1. Our QB pastors have negotiated this challenging period reasonably well. These results are better than we expected. Clearly, most pastors have found enough support and resources to cope with all the changes being imposed on churches. NCLS says that this is not the case in other movements that have conducted this survey. We are encouraged. I believe that this is partly because there has been a strong sense of collaboration between pastors. We have supported each other through this crisis. Praise God.
2. Some QB pastors are doing it tough. Some that were already facing difficulties have found this period particularly stressful. While the survey found few pastors with high levels of stress and depression, the doubling of mild stress and depression may indicate a concerning trend that could escalate. If you are feeling overwhelmed or pressured, please seek support and let us know. Many regions now have Area Pastors in place. They would be a great place to start. Otherwise Regional Ministers and the Church Support team would be glad to help. Just make a phone call or send a message or email. You are not alone in this.
3. This survey was conducted during the lull. We had made the changes demanded by authorities and were waiting for the pathway back to normal. Well many of us now have a pathway. But it

won't be an easy pathway for many of our churches. It may involve more services, limited attendances in services, less physical fellowship, more work, streaming as well as conducting services. This will be demanding both organisationally and pastorally. For some pastors, telling people when and where they can attend services will be pastorally challenging. All I am saying is that there is further pressure to come for many of us. You might find that you have handled things okay so far, but this next season may stretch you. This would not be surprising. Again, make sure you monitor your stress and depression levels and reach out for help when you need it.

4. However, we need to remember that COVID is not some random problem that we have to endure, but a challenge allowed by God that he will use to build his kingdom in us and through us. Maybe that means growing our resilience. Or relying on God in deeper ways. Or recognising that we can't do this alone. Or holding on to God's promises in faith. Or reassessing our ministry priorities. Or recalibrating our focus in mission. Or opening our eyes to new opportunities. Or acknowledging that this is God's work not ours. We are not just trying to survive but to grow, even flourish, through the pressure and change. God is at work in us and through us. May God continue to edge us towards powerful renewal.
5. I know that filling out surveys is a pain. But they can provide us with important information as we seek to resource and support our churches and pastors. Thanks for those who took the time to provide us with this helpful snapshot of how we're going as pastors.