



PC(USA) MINISTER SURVEY

Wellbeing Report

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**RESEARCH
SERVICES**

Why conduct a survey of all PC(USA) ministers? Why now?

Research Services regularly receives questions from members, congregational staff, mid councils, and PC(USA) leaders about ministers that cannot be answered with the data that available to us. As data was not available, I decided that a survey should be developed to answer many of these questions and asked Perry Chang, PhD to lead this work. This report is one portion of what has been learned, yet many new questions have been formed. New surveys will follow focusing on clergy of color, retirement, bi-vocational ministry, commissioned ruling elders, and “part-time” ministers.

The success of this first ever survey of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) minister would have been far less if not for the support our many partners. Here are just a few of them.

- Call to Health, the Board of Pensions’ wellness program that offered points toward the minister’s wellness goal for participation
- Presbyterian Publishing Company offered a discount for a future purchase for all who completed the survey
- Communication’s staff from the Office of the General Assembly, Mission Agency, and Presbyterian Foundation who wrote several stories that included the survey link
- Office of the General Assembly Mid Council relations staff that regularly promoted the survey in its newsletters
- Several denomination-wide committees that shared the link with their constituencies
- Members of the all-agency data group who regularly meet to discuss and improve data and data reporting for PC(USA) and open doors for new partnerships

Why now? Because the church is waiting for the answers.

Susan Barnett, PhD

Director, Research Services
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Overview

The PC(USA) Minister Survey was a massive 110-question survey which fielded from September to November of 2019. Invitations were sent by postcard to all ministers for whom we had an address. The survey was also one of the Board of Pensions' Call to Health challenges. This partnership contributed to nearly half of all responses.

23% of the denomination's 19,243 ministers (n=4,495) responded to the survey.

This report provides an overview of minister wellbeing. It examines the wellbeing of pastors, specialized ministers, and the Honorably Retired.

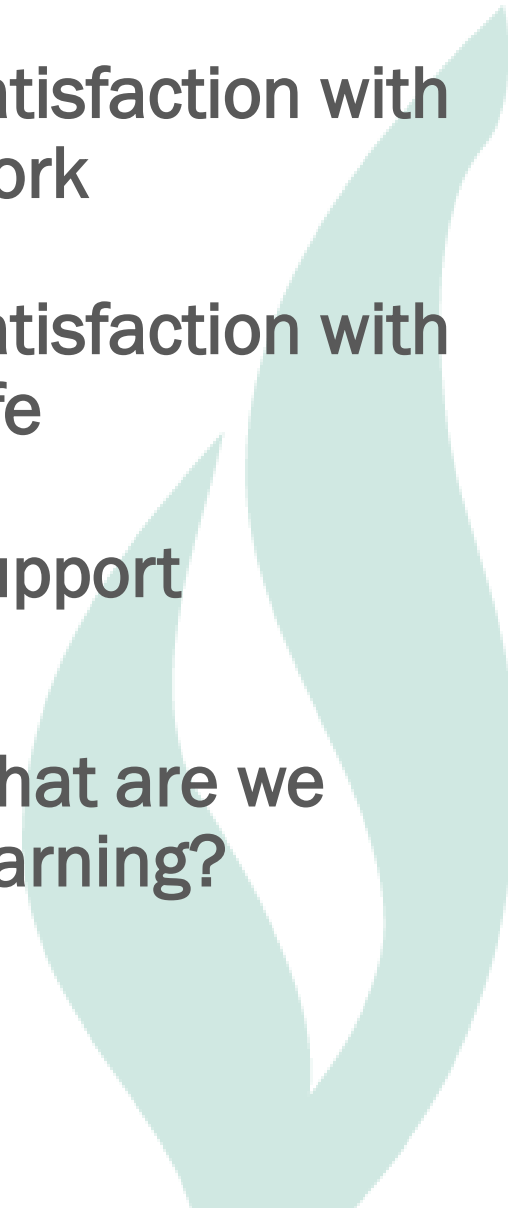
Topics include satisfaction with work, satisfaction with life, and support.

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Definitions

The minister of Word and Sacrament is ordained and may work in many places of work.

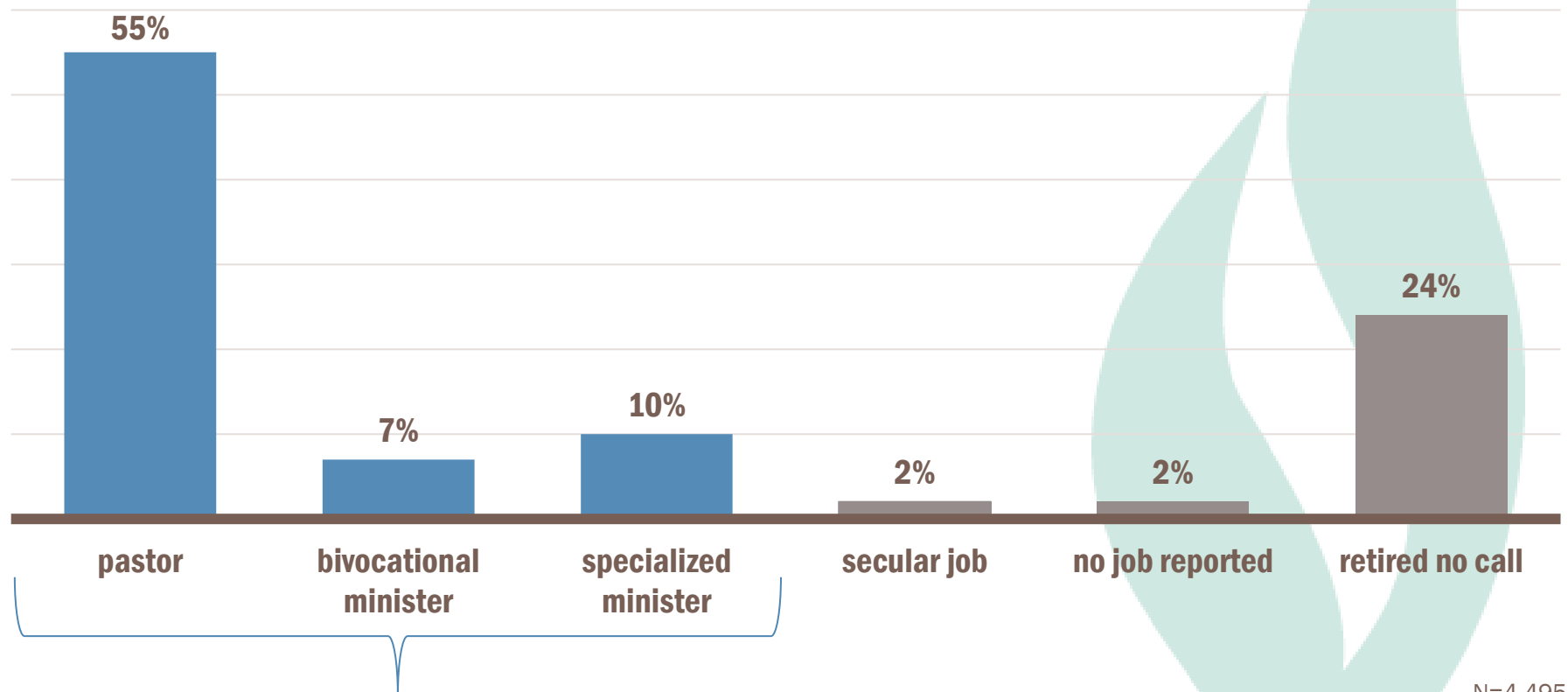
These positions include pastors, but ministers are also ordained into other forms of specialized ministry such as mid council leadership, national agency leadership, chaplaincy, faculty/educators, or staff at a religious non-profit. In this report, we will be using these categories to examine differences in minister wellbeing. This report examines results by the following calls and employment status:

- **Pastors** – installed pastors and co-pastors, as well as associate, interim, supply, and organizing pastors
- **Specialized ministers** – ordained into a form of ministry other than leading a congregation, such as chaplaincy or pastoral counseling
- **Bi-vocational ministers** – those who are in a call while also holding a secular job
- **Honorably Retired** – those who report being an Honorably Retired member of their presbytery (and may or may not still be in a call)
- **Secular job** – those who are ordained to ministry but not currently in a call

The many roles of ministers

A minister of Word and Sacrament is ordained into a ministry position.

This chart shows the percentage of individuals who are exclusively in each role. About half of respondents are pastors. The second most common status is retired, not in a call. Although 30% of our respondents are honorably retired, only 24% of respondents are actively retired (i.e., not in a call or working). The percentages of respondents in each call and job include these honorably retired individuals.



72% of respondents are in a call.

N=4,495

Satisfaction with Work

This section examines minister* satisfaction with work, including their current position, continuing education opportunities, relationships with other ministers, relationships with lay leaders, salary, and their overall work as a religious leader.

In addition, we examine how minister's work leaves them feeling. Drained? Accomplished? Cynical? Appreciated? Finally, we examine minister concerns related to their work.

*In this section, unless otherwise specified, "minister" refers specifically to the 3,177 respondents (71%) who are working as a pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized minister.

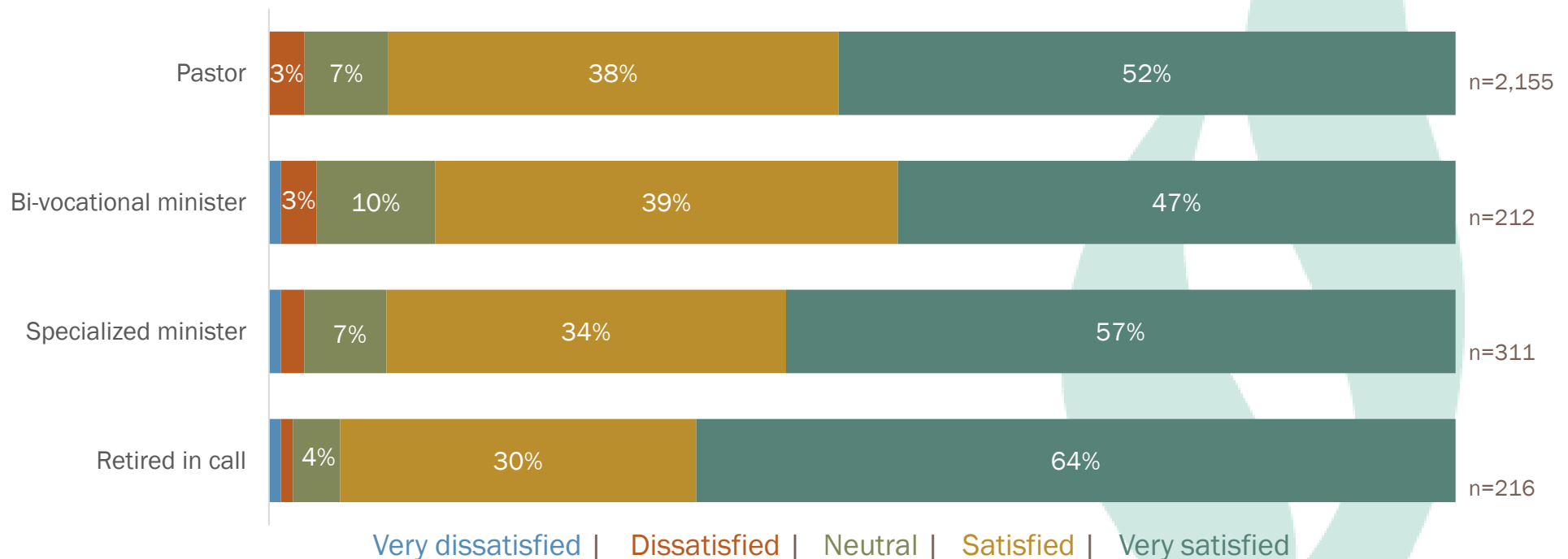


Satisfaction with Work

88% of ministers are satisfied with their work as a religious leader as a whole

Those who are retired but still in a call are the most likely to be satisfied.

The vast majority of ministers are satisfied with their work as a religious leader, and only 4% are dissatisfied. Retired ministers who are still working express the greatest satisfaction. This is likely because retired individuals have greater freedom to choose which call, they accept (should they accept a call at all). Also, unsurprisingly, bi-vocational ministers are least likely to be satisfied with their work as a religious leader. Although we would need further research to know for sure, one might imagine that they would be much more satisfied with their religious work if they were able to do it full-time. What might be more surprising is that, among the non-retired ministers, those in specialized ministry are more satisfied with their work as a religious leader than are pastors.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Work

Ministers are satisfied with their work, but some would like more continuing ed opportunities

Among those who are not retired, specialized ministers express the greatest satisfaction overall.

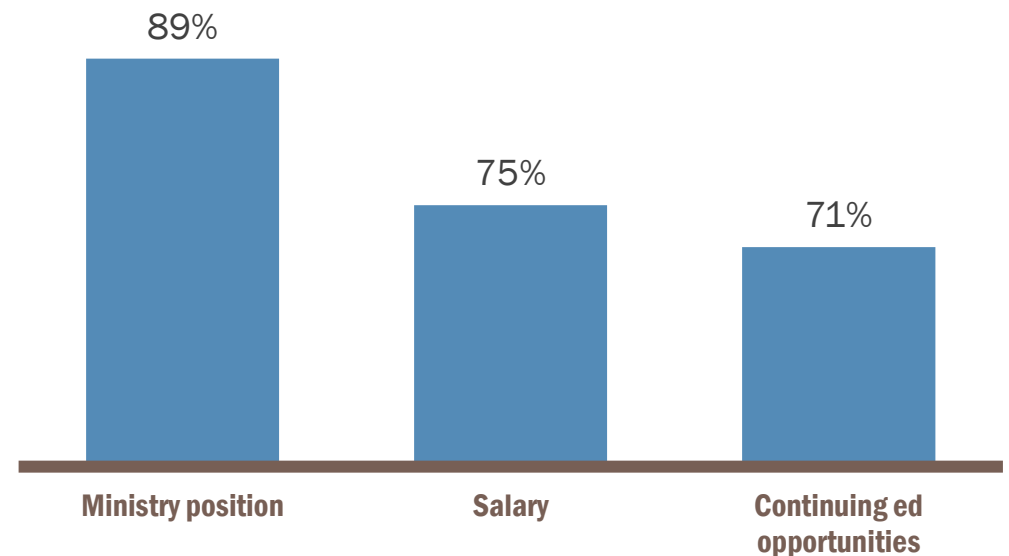
Ministers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following aspects of their work. Their:

- work as a religious leader as a whole
- current ministry position
- salary and benefits
- opportunities for continuing education such as part-time or short-term classes or training to bolster knowledge or skills they could use in their ministry
- relationships with other ministers
- relationships with lay leaders within their congregation(s)

Ministers are most satisfied with their ministry position and are least satisfied with their continuing education opportunities. The final two questions about satisfaction with relationships are covered in the support section of this report.

See the following pages for more details about each of these findings.

Overall percentage of ministers that report being 'very satisfied' with the following aspects of their work:

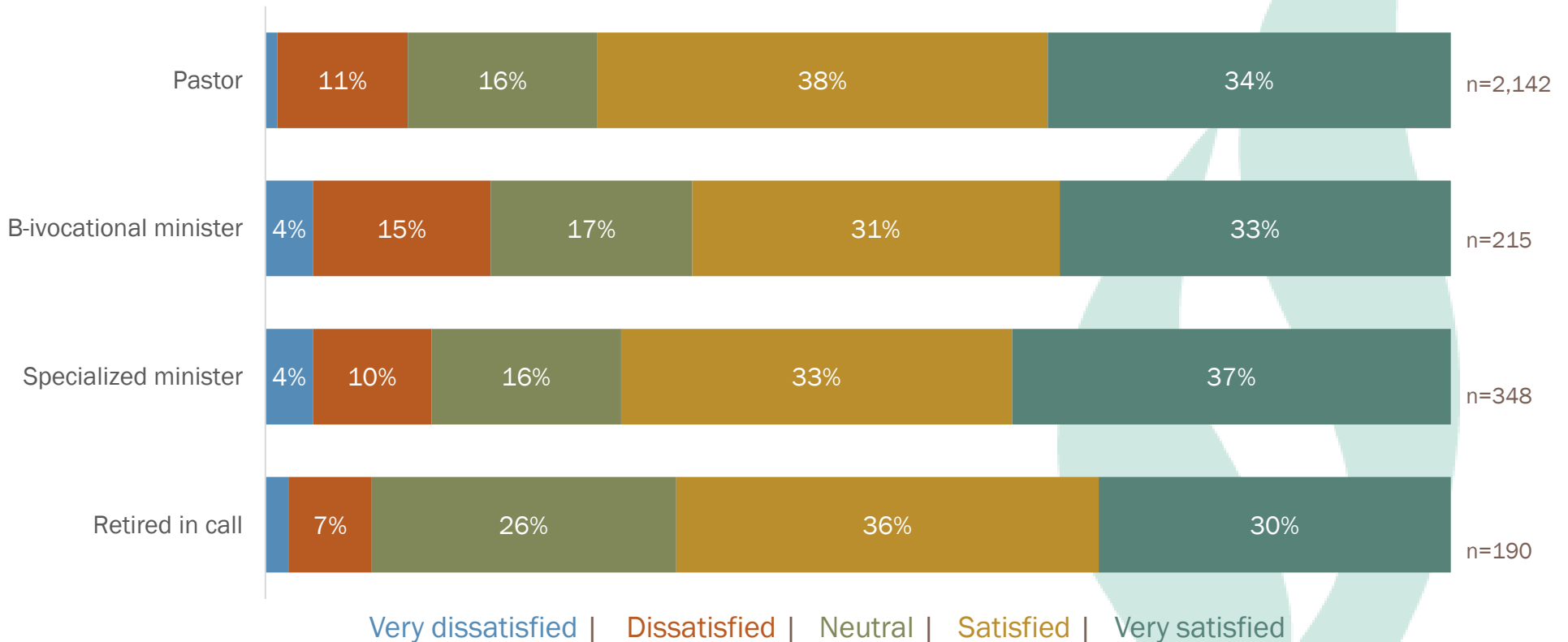


Satisfaction with Work

71% of ministers are satisfied with their continuing education opportunities

Specialized ministers are most likely to be satisfied.

Although most ministers are satisfied with their continuing education opportunities, such as part-time or short-term classes or training to bolster knowledge or skills they could use in their ministry, a notable 13% are not. In addition, there are differences by call. Specialized ministers are most likely to be satisfied with their continuing education opportunities, whereas bi-vocational ministers are least satisfied, and those who are retired are most likely to be neutral on the matter.



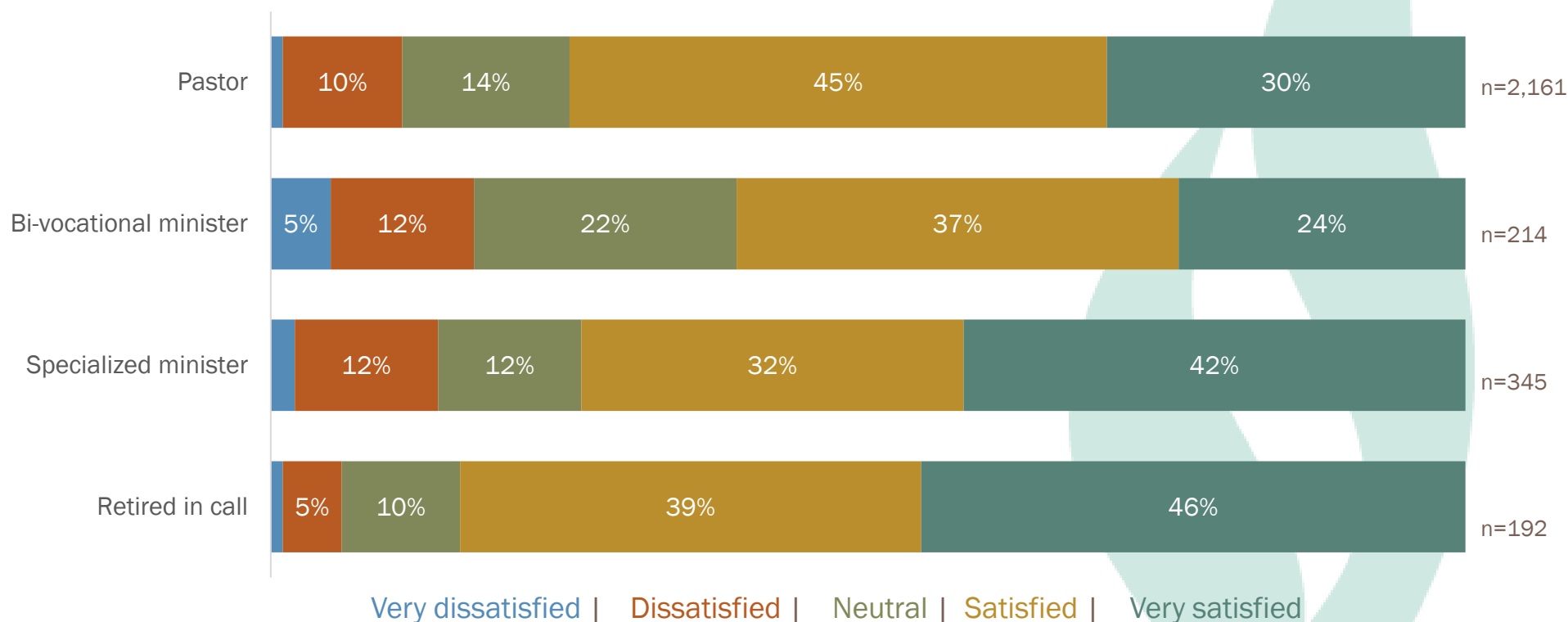
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Work

75% of ministers are satisfied with their salary and benefits

Bi-vocational ministers are the least likely to be satisfied.

Although most ministers are satisfied with their salary and benefits, a notable 12% are not. In addition, there are differences by call. Those who are retired but still in a call are most likely to be satisfied with their salary and benefits. Also, unsurprisingly, bi-vocational ministers are least likely to be satisfied with their salary and benefits. This is likely why they are bi-vocational in the first place – to supplement insufficient pay from their ministry job. Once again, specialized ministers are the most satisfied among the non-retired.



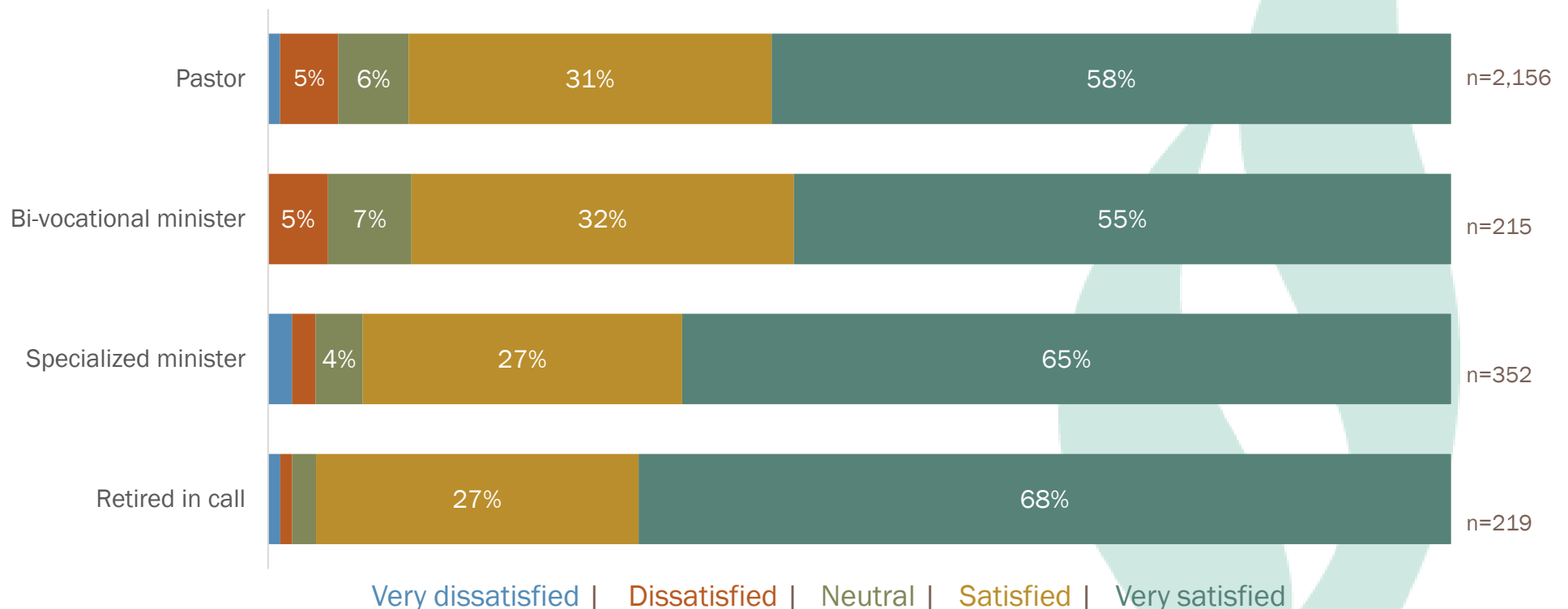
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Work

89% of ministers are satisfied with their current ministry position

Those who are retired but still in a call are the most likely to be satisfied.

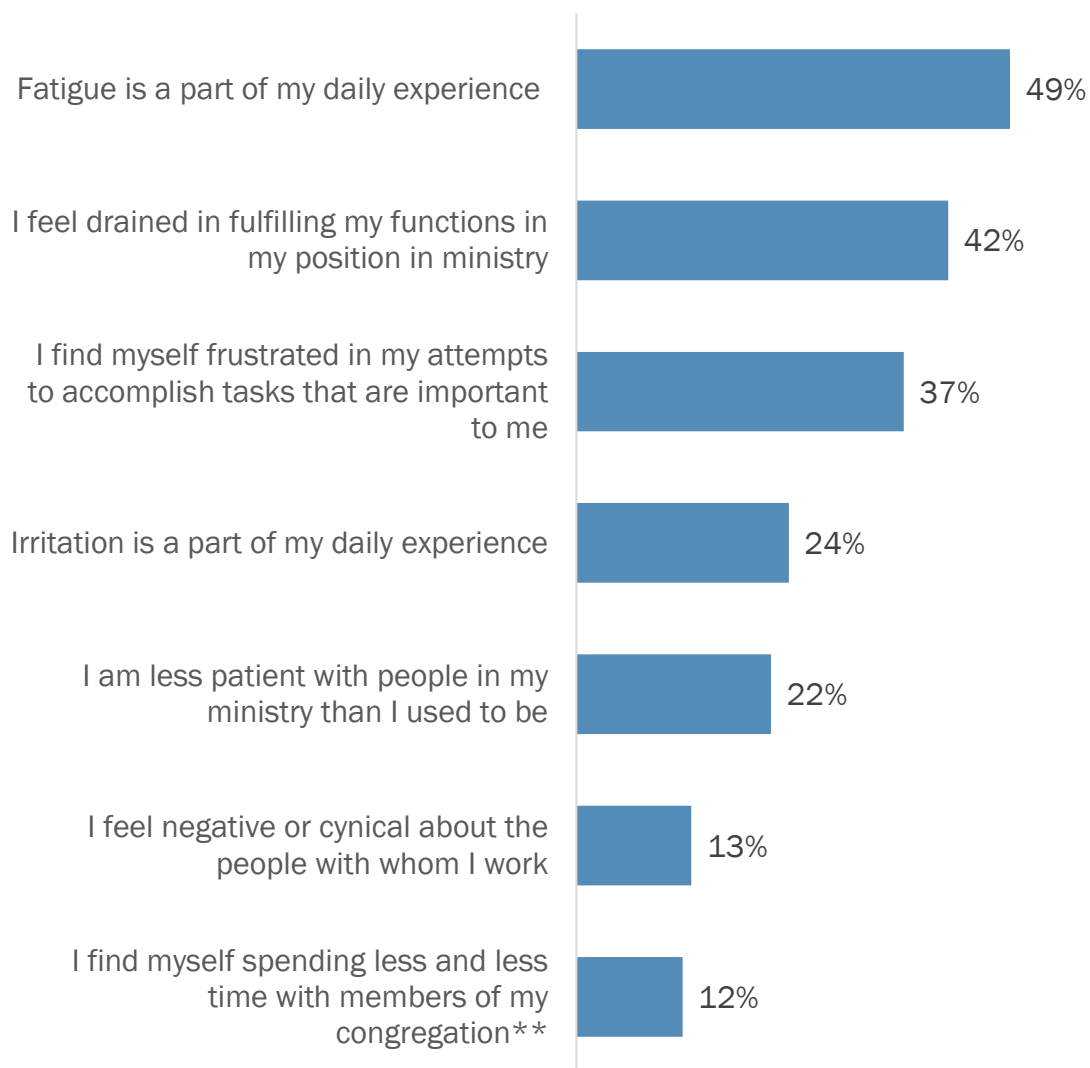
Most ministers are satisfied with their current ministry position, with only 6% expressing dissatisfaction. Those who are retired but continue to work in a call are the most likely to be very satisfied with their ministry position. Bi-vocational ministers, on the other hand, are least likely to be very satisfied with their ministry position. What is particularly interesting about these results, however, is that specialized ministers are more satisfied with their ministry position than are pastors. Answering the question as to why would make for a very interesting follow-up study.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Ministers are tired

Nearly half of ministers (49%) report fatigue as a part of their daily experience.*



Ministers were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with a variety of negative statements about their experiences of their ministry. The negative statement that garnered the most agreement was “fatigue is a part of my daily experience.” The one that garnered the least agreement was “I find myself spending less and less time with members of my congregation.” Coincidence? Well, not exactly. In fact, **the *more* fatigued pastors feel, the *less* time they are spending with their congregation.**

Some of these results differ by type of call:

- Specialized ministers are more likely than pastors to feel positive about their ministry.
- Specialized ministers are more likely than pastors to say their ministry gives real purpose and meaning to their life.
- Bi-vocational ministers are the most likely to say that fatigue is a part of their daily experience.
- Bi-vocational pastors are more likely than other pastors to say they find themselves spending less and less time with members of their congregation.

*The analyses on this page are specific to non-retired ministers in a call.

**This question was only asked of pastors

35% of ministers are concerned about burnout

Although ministers are not generally very concerned about many of the things of which we asked, they expressed the greatest concern for isolation and burnout.

Some results differ by type of call. Bi-vocational ministers are more concerned than pastors or specialized ministers about burnout. Specialized ministers are the least likely to be concerned about their leadership abilities, administrative skills, or financial management skills (possibly because their calls are less likely to require these skills in their work). Below are the charts for ministers:

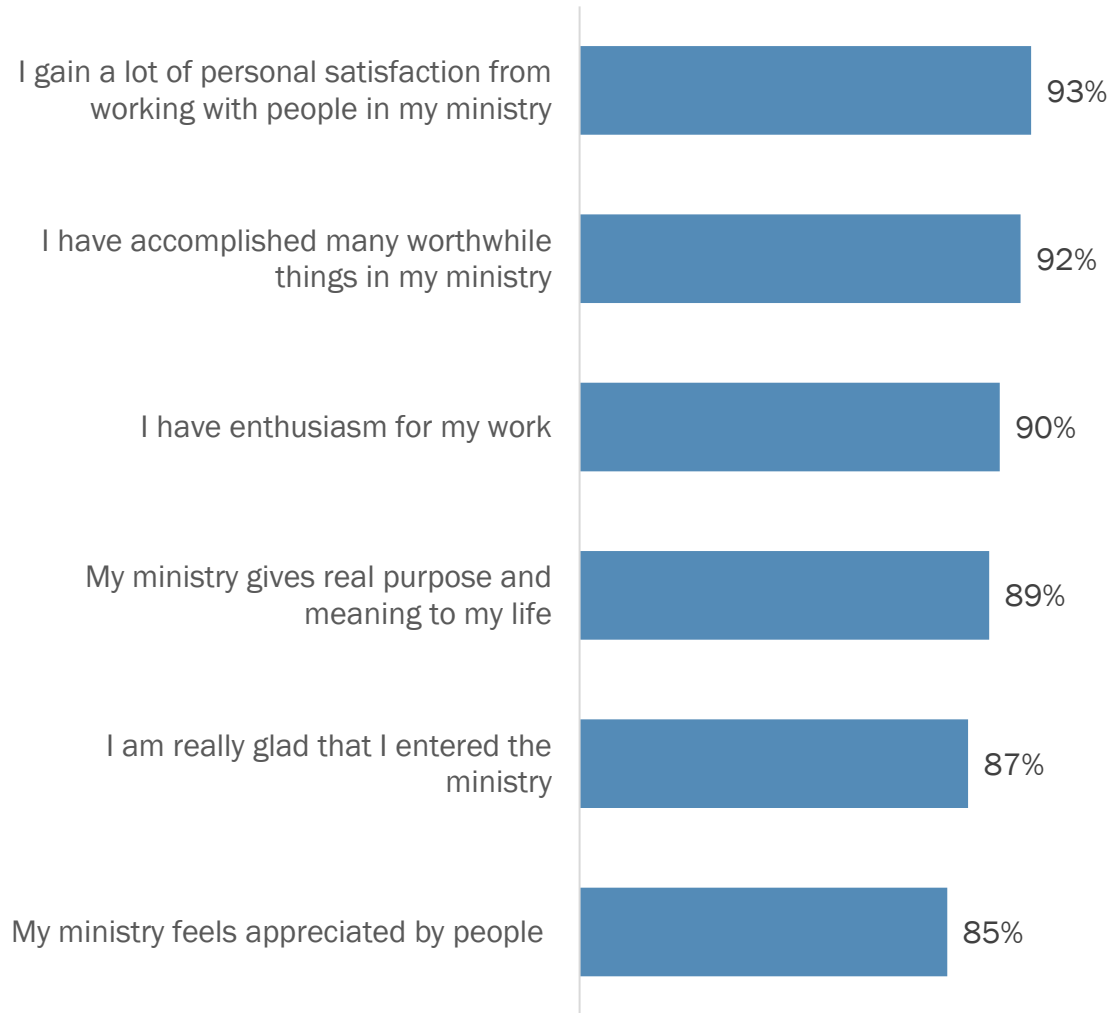


Not at all concerned | Slightly concerned | Concerned | Very concerned | Not applicable

Percentages of 5% or less are shown but not labeled in the charts.

Ministers feel their call is rewarding

Most ministers gain satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment from their ministry.*



Ministers are tired, and just over 1 in 3 are concerned about burnout. However, they do feel their call is rewarding.

Ministers were asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with a variety of positive statements about their experiences of their ministry. The positive statement that garnered the most agreement was “I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in my ministry.” The one that garnered the least agreement was “My ministry feels appreciated by people.” **As one might imagine, satisfaction increases with the extent to which a minister feels appreciated.**

These results do not differ by ministry.

*The analyses on this page are specific to non-retired ministers in a call.

Minister Satisfaction with Work

Ministers are generally satisfied with, and find fulfillment in, their call.

That said, minister fatigue, burnout, and isolation are widespread within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These concerns are greater for bi-vocational ministers. Additionally, specialized ministers tend to report greater satisfaction than pastors, while also reporting less burnout.

Some areas of concern include the following:

- Nearly half of ministers (49%) report fatigue as a part of their daily experience
- 38% of bi-vocational ministers are not satisfied with their ministry salary and benefits
- 35% of ministers are concerned about burnout
- 32% of ministers are concerned about isolation
- 29% are not satisfied with their continuing education opportunities
- 13% feel negative or cynical about the people with whom they work

Satisfaction with Life

This section examines minister* satisfaction with their personal life, including housing, spiritual life, family life, health, relationships with family and friends, and life. We also examine what they do in their personal time.

In addition, we examine minister concerns as they relate to their personal life, and to their self-reported mental, physical, and spiritual health.

*In this section, unless otherwise specified, “minister” refers specifically to the 3,177 respondents (71%) who are working as a pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized minister.

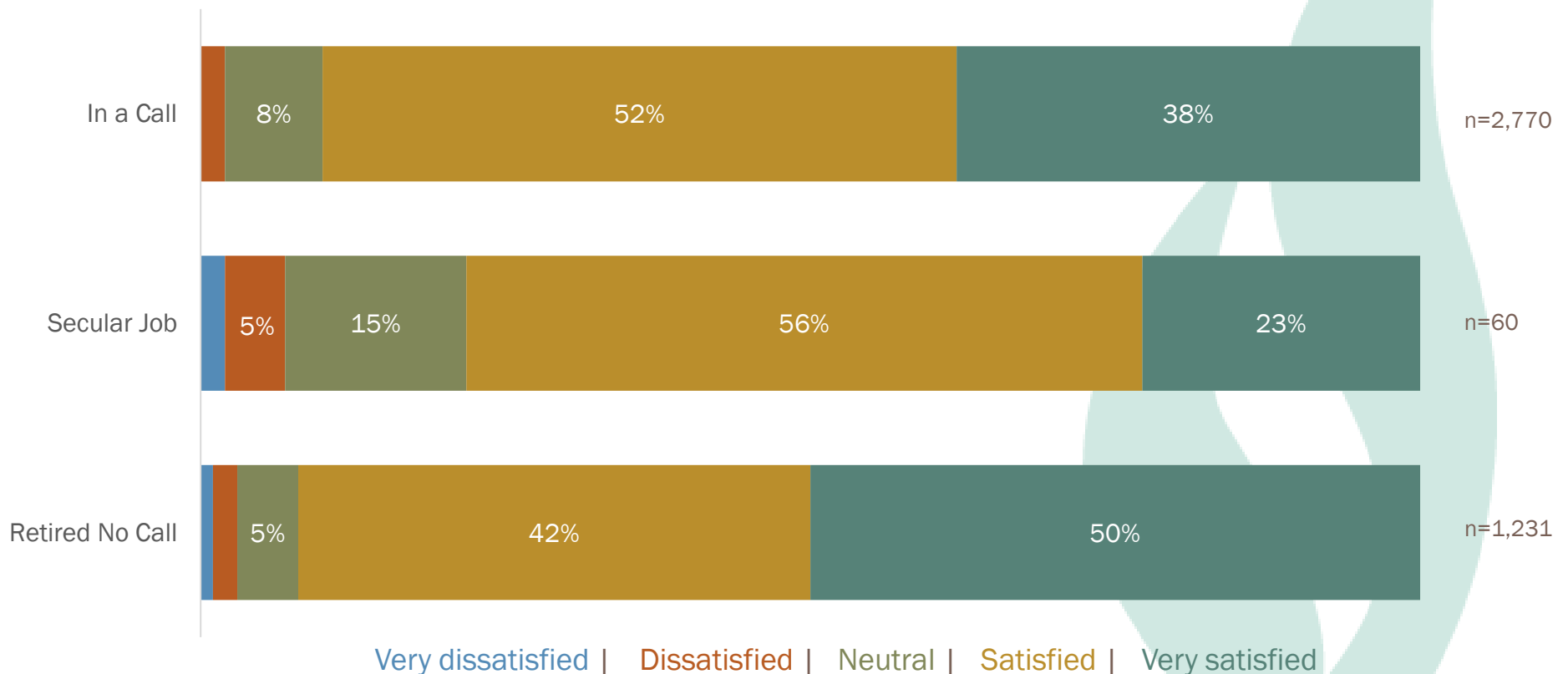


Satisfaction with Life

90% of ministers are satisfied with their life as a whole

Those working in a secular job are least likely to be satisfied.

Although 9 in 10 ministers are satisfied with their life, only 41% are 'very satisfied.' As might be expected, the Honorably Retired express the greatest life satisfaction. Also, although satisfaction with life does not differ significantly among those in a call (pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized ministry), there is a difference between those in ministry and those on the roll as a minister of Word and Sacrament who currently are working only at a secular job. The difference is that non-retired ministers of Word and Sacrament who are not in a call report significantly lower life satisfaction.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Life

Life satisfaction is lowest in the areas of health and spiritual life

Although 41% of ministers report being 'very satisfied' with their life as a whole, satisfaction is not as high in some aspects of life.

Ministers were asked to rate their satisfaction with the following aspects of their personal life. Their:

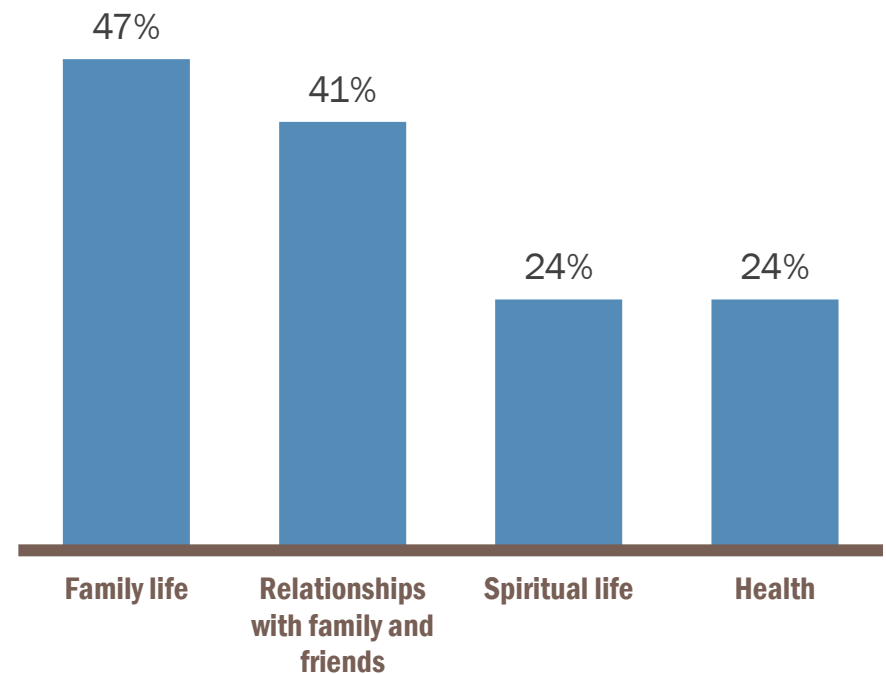
- Family life
- Relationships with family and friends
- Spiritual life
- Health

Ministers are most satisfied with their family life, and least satisfied with their spiritual life and health. We find it particularly troubling that so few ministers are 'very satisfied' with their spiritual life and their health.

Next, we examine these specific findings more deeply by comparing three groups:

1. In a call (pastors, bi-vocational ministers, and specialized ministers)
2. Those on the roll as a minister of Word and Sacrament but do not presently have a call
3. Honorably Retired (whether in a call or not)

Overall percentage of ministers that report being *very satisfied* with the following aspects of their life:



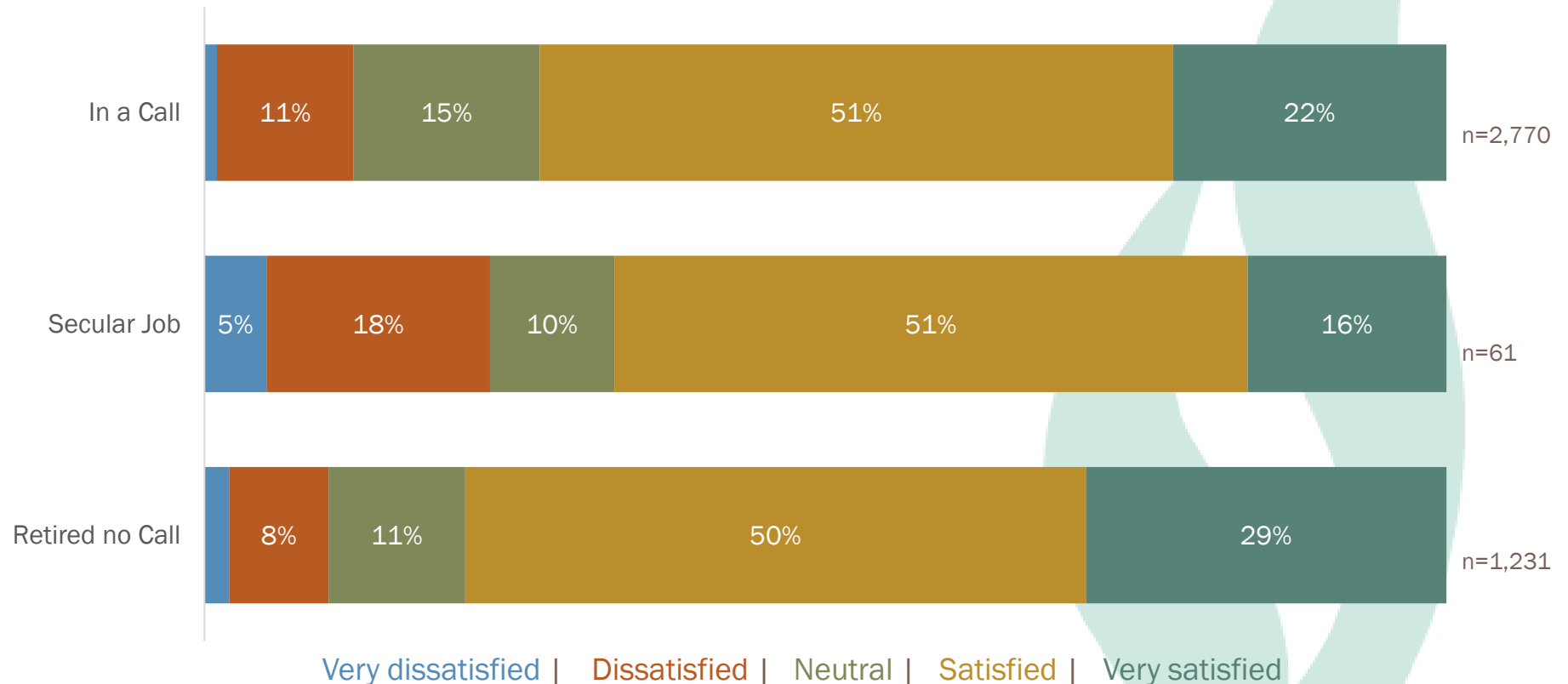
Satisfaction with Life

75% of ministers are satisfied with their health

The Honorably Retired are the most satisfied.

Interestingly, the Honorably Retired report the greatest satisfaction with their health. It could be that the stress of a job impacts health negatively. It could also be that our standards regarding satisfaction with our health lower as we age. For reference, the average age of the Honorably Retired is 75, whereas the age of the non-retired is 54.

Also, although this is not shown in the chart below, bi-vocational pastors report less satisfaction with their health than pastors or specialized ministers.

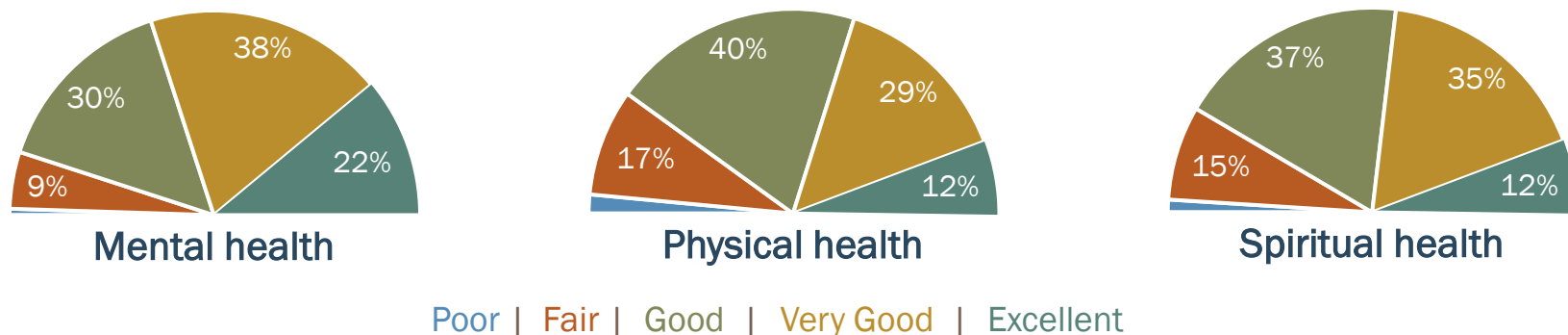


Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Life

Only 28% of ministers rate their mental, physical, and spiritual health as very good or excellent

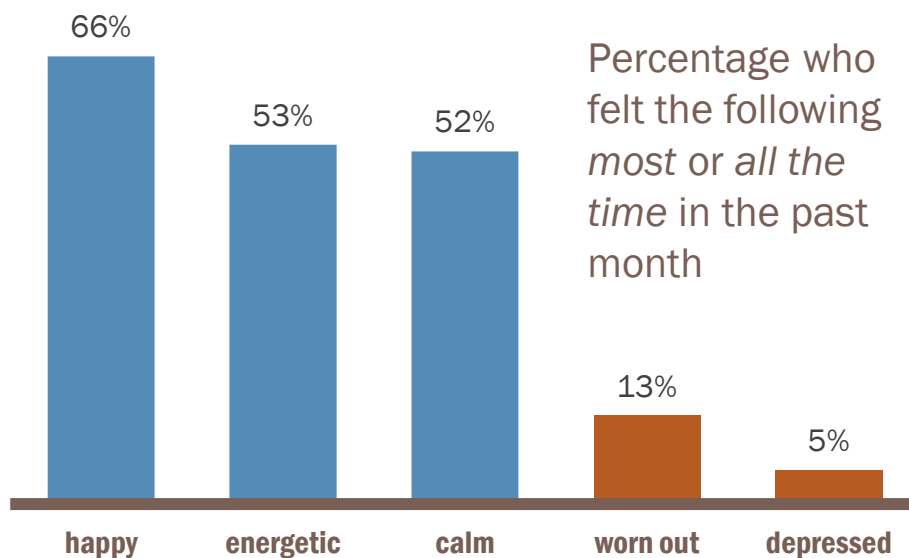
Physical health is the most likely to be less than good.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Overall, ministers* report their health as “good.” We say this because if you average minister ratings on their mental, physical, and spiritual health, you get an overall health score of 3.5/5, which fits squarely into the “good” category (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, and 5=excellent). Ministers are most likely to rate their mental health as “very good” or “excellent,” and least likely to do the same with their physical health.

In addition, we ask specific questions about how often ministers have felt certain ways in the past month. Two thirds feel happy, and about half feel energetic and/or calm, most or all the time.



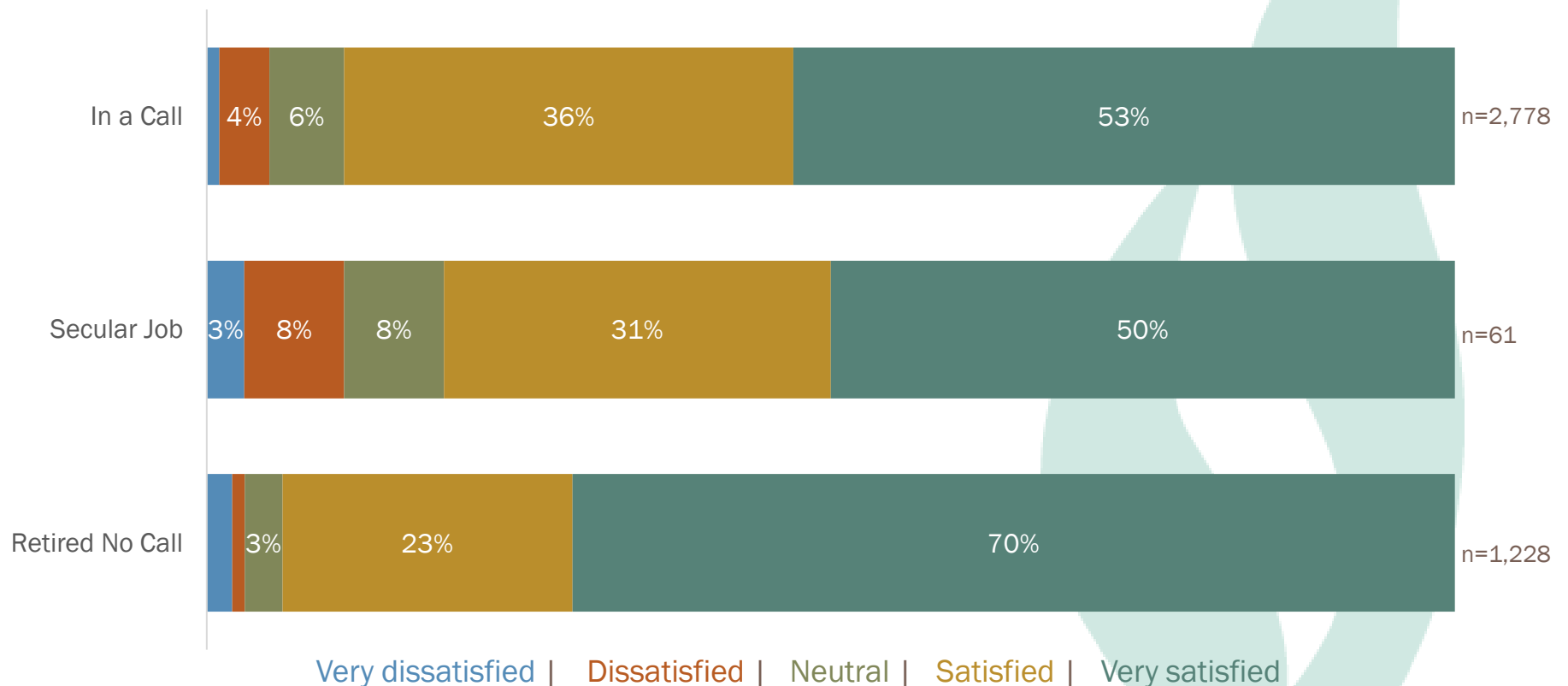
*The analyses on this page are specific to non-retired ministers in a call.

Satisfaction with Life

79% of ministers are satisfied with their spiritual life

The Honorably Retired are the most satisfied.

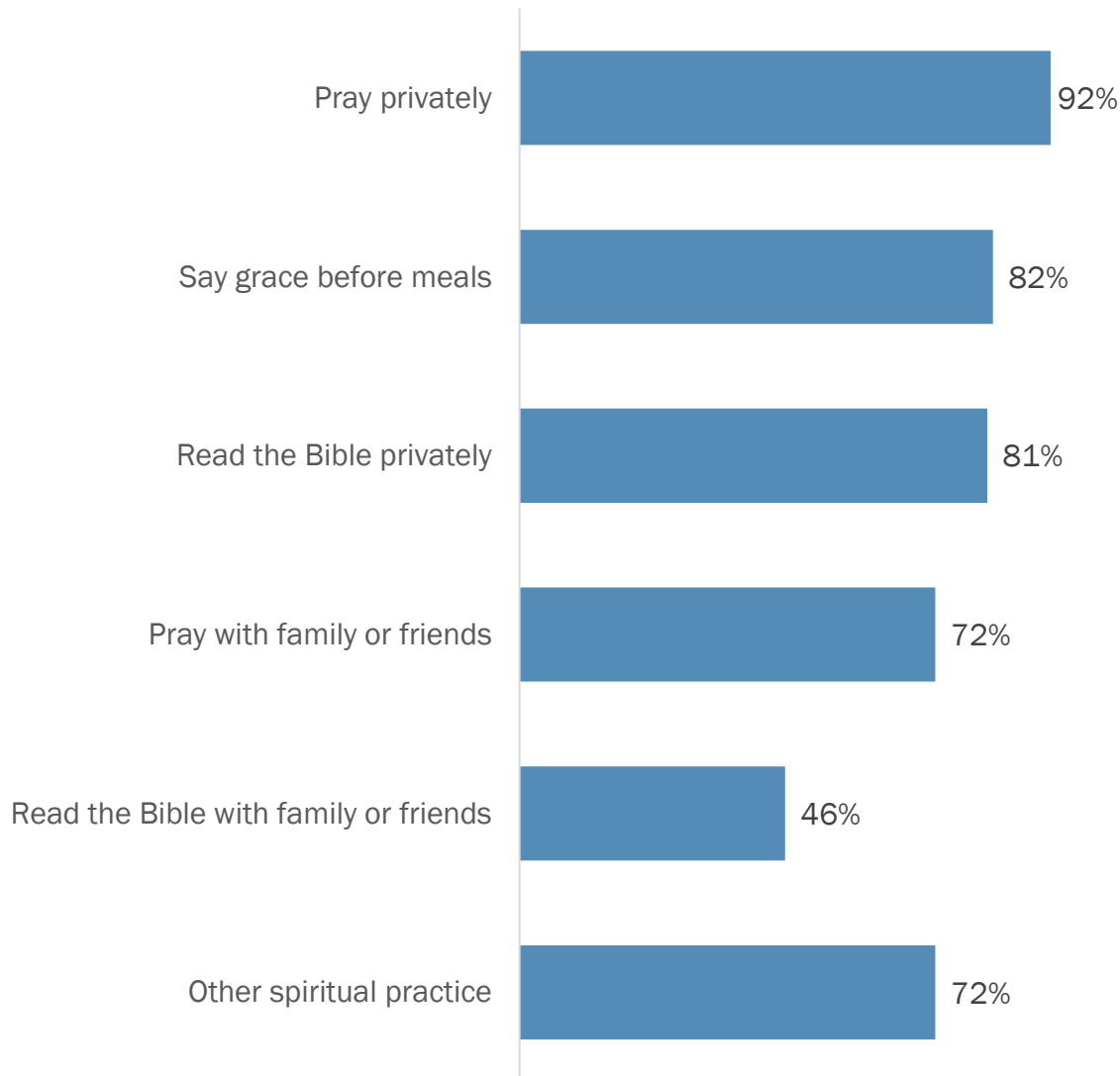
Although satisfaction does not differ significantly among those in a call (pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized ministry), those in secular jobs are less likely to be satisfied with their spiritual life than those who are in ministry. Although this difference is not surprising, it is encouraging that it is still relatively small, indicating that although those in secular jobs may not have quite the levels of satisfaction as those in ministry, they are not very far behind. As with other measures of life satisfaction, the Honorably Retired report the greatest satisfaction with their spiritual life.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Ministers engage in spiritual practices

This chart shows the percentage of ministers who engage each practice weekly or more.



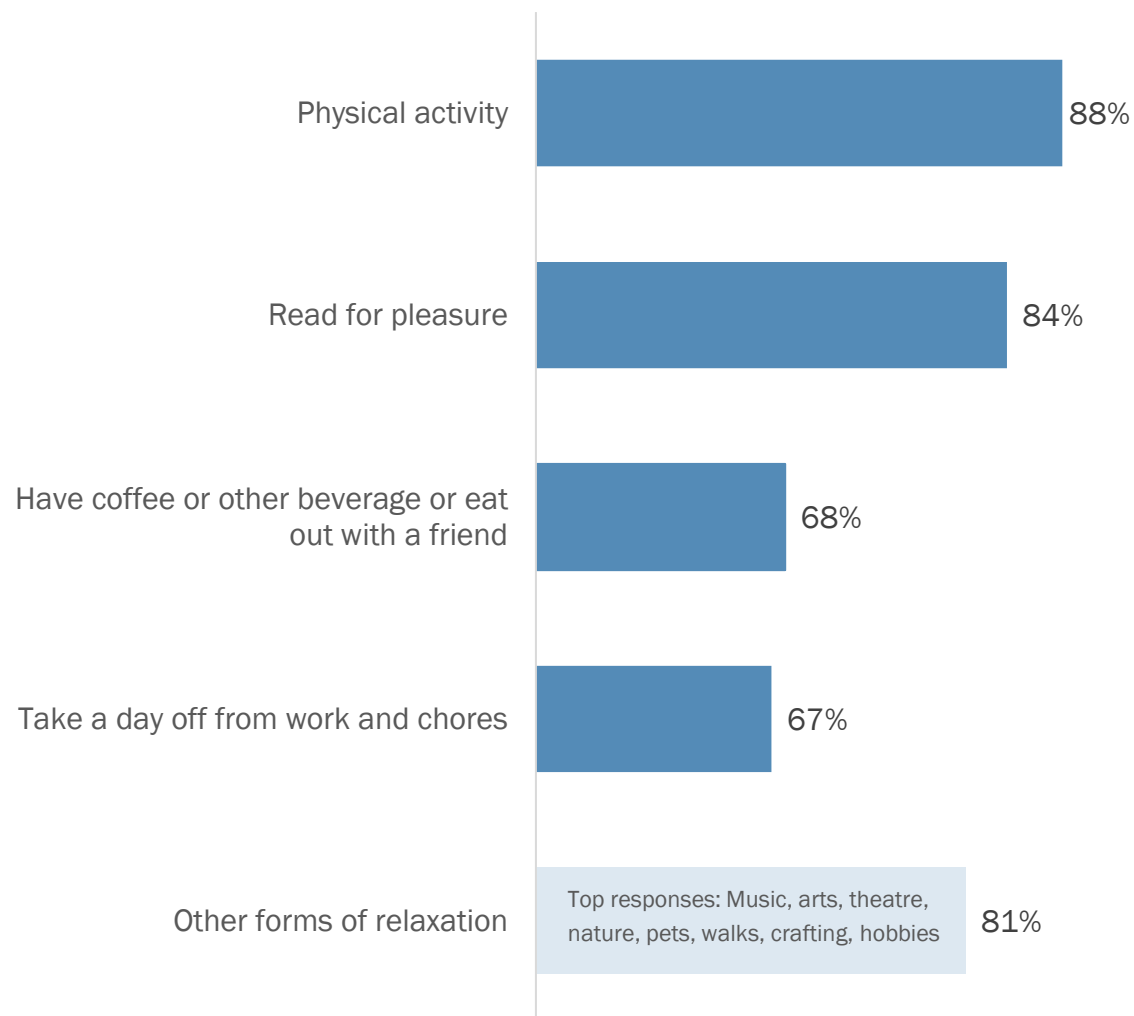
Ministers were asked how frequently they engage in a few spiritual practices. Ministers are most likely to pray privately, and least likely to pray with family or friends.

The difference in responses between the active ministers and the Honorably Retired is interesting. There are seven response options for this question: (1) never, (2) less than once a month, (3) once a month, (4) several times a month, (5) weekly, (6) several times a week, and (7) daily or more often. So even though this data is not *actually* linear, it can reasonably be treated as such. If you compare the mean response for active vs retired ministers, the results show that, on average, active ministers engage much more frequently in spiritual practices. However, this analysis hides an interesting feature.

Retired ministers are more likely to say they engage in spiritual practices daily or more AND are more likely to say they don't do these things at all. It is unclear whether this is an effect of retirement, or it is a generational difference.

67% of ministers take a day away from work each week

Most ministers engage in activity, pleasure reading, and relaxation weekly.



Ministers* were asked whether they engaged in various forms of relaxation at least once per week. The most common is physical activity. The least common is taking a day off from work and chores. One third of ministers are not taking a day away from work and chores each week.

The only result that differs by ministry is the percentage of ministers who take a day off from work and chores. The results by ministry are as follows:

- 70% of pastors
- 66% of specialized ministers
- 60% of bi-vocational ministers

Bi-vocational ministers are the least likely to take a day off from work and chores. Also, the Honorably Retired are significantly more likely to report doing all these forms of relaxation.

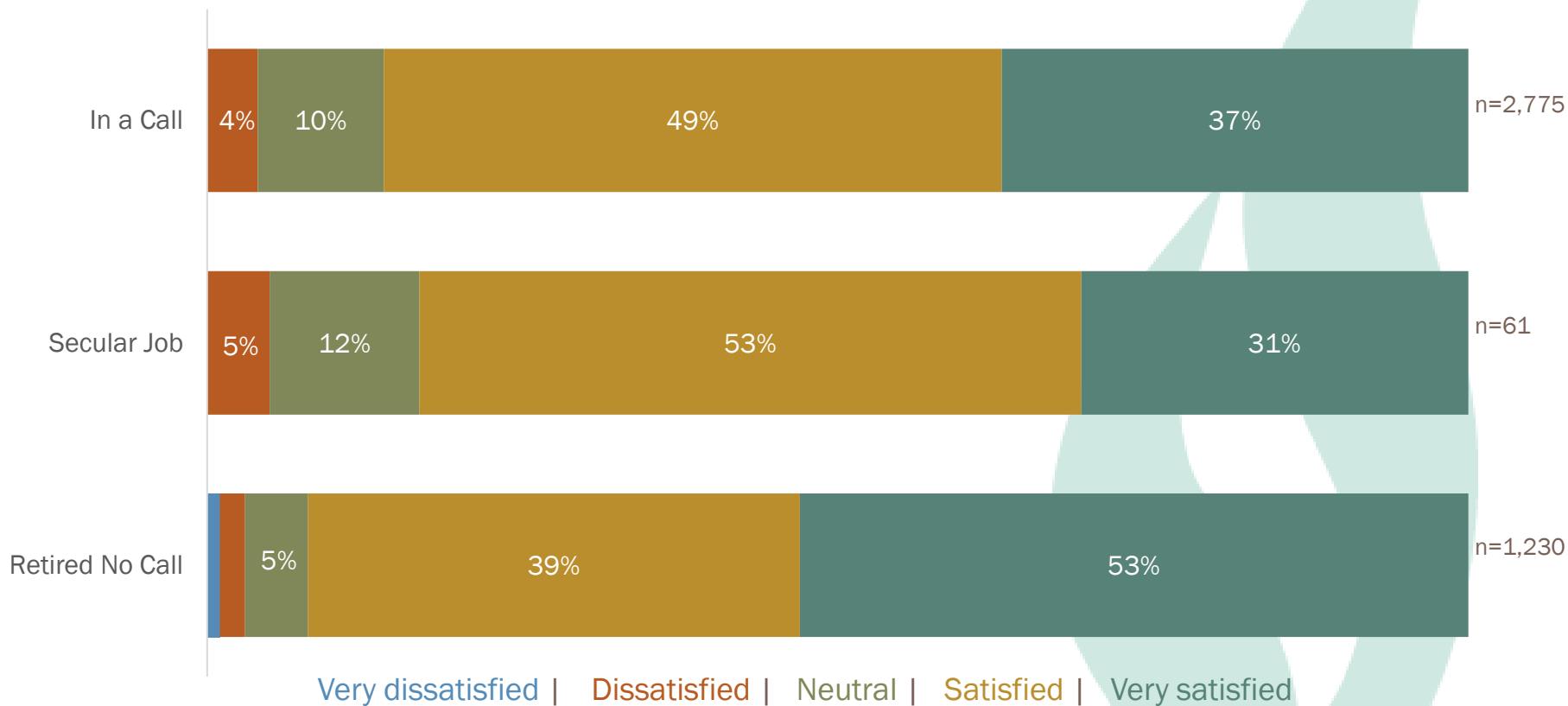
*The analyses on this page are specific to non-retired ministers in a call.

Satisfaction with Life

87% of ministers are satisfied with their relationships with family and friends

The Honorably Retired are the most satisfied.

Although satisfaction does not differ significantly among those in a call (pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized ministry), those in secular jobs are less satisfied with their relationships than those who are in ministry. As with other measures of life satisfaction, the Honorably Retired report the greatest satisfaction with their relationships.



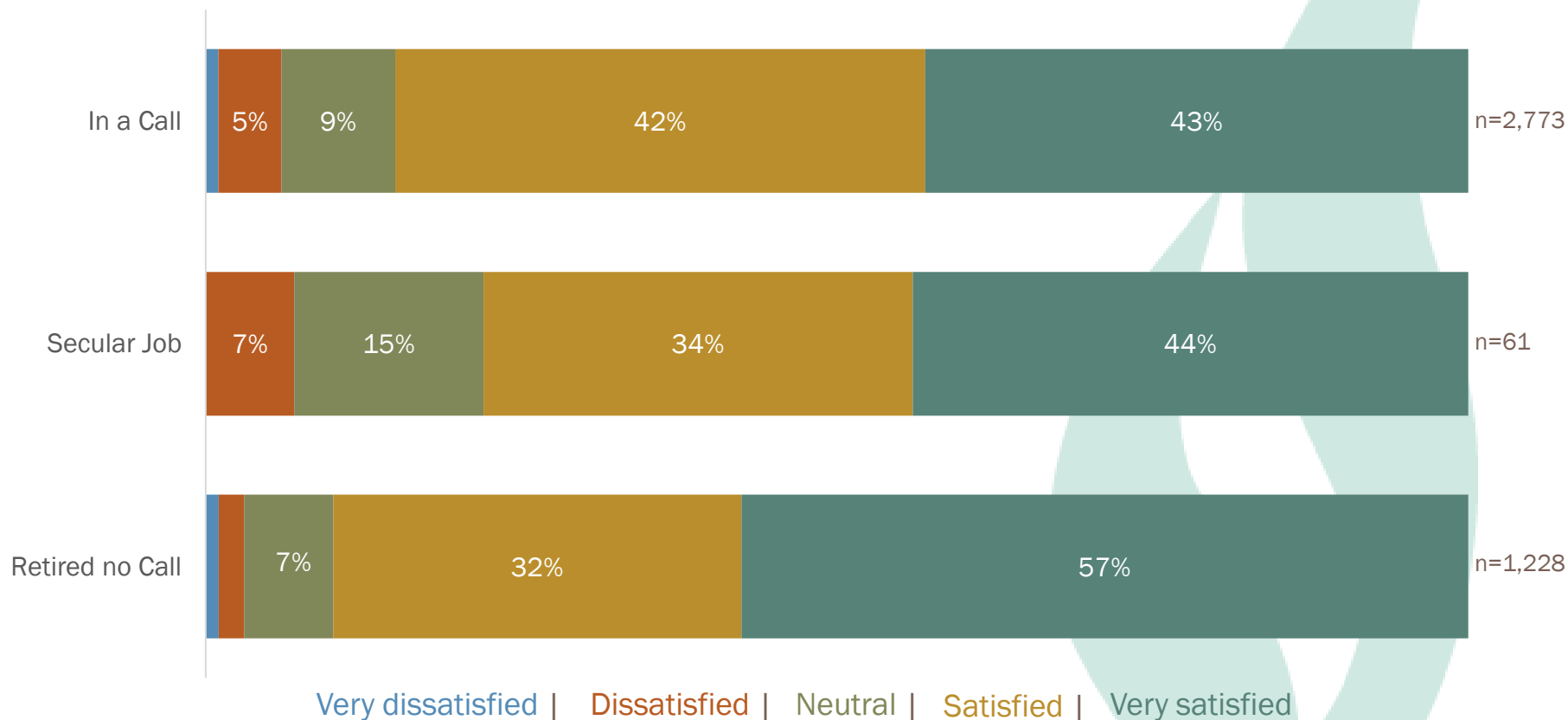
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Satisfaction with Life

87% of ministers are satisfied with their family life

The Honorably Retired are the most satisfied.

Although satisfaction does not differ significantly among those in a call (pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized ministry), those in secular jobs are report greater dissatisfaction with their family life than those who are in ministry. Additionally, the Honorably Retired report the greatest satisfaction with their family life.

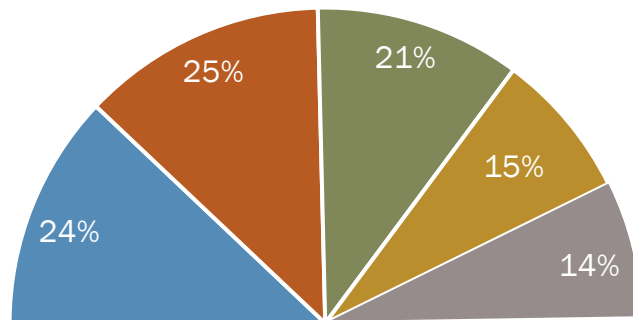


Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

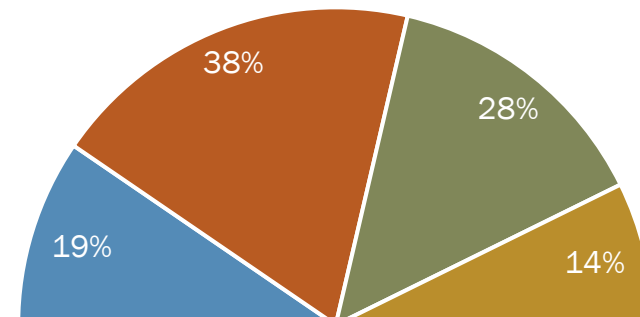
29% of ministers are concerned about caring for aging parents

Although only about 15% or less of ministers are very concerned about many of the aspects of personal life of which we asked, they expressed the greatest concern for caring for aging parents and having enough time with their family.

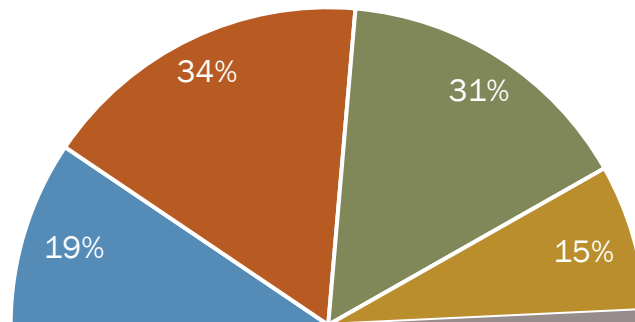
Results are for the non-retired ministers who are currently in a call. Results do not differ by type of call.



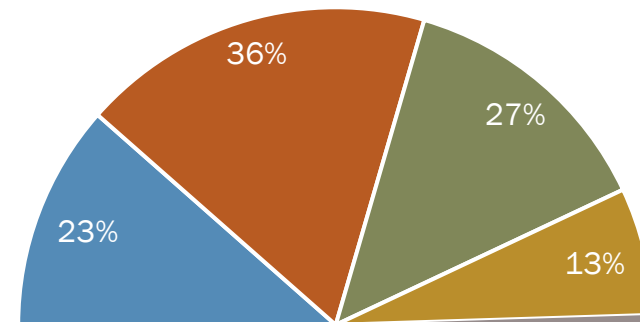
Caring for aging parents



Need for spiritual renewal



Time with family



Finding time for relationships

Not at all concerned | Slightly concerned | Concerned | Very concerned | Not applicable

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Values of 2% or less are shown but not labeled in the chart.

Summary of Findings on Minister Satisfaction with Life

Ministers are generally satisfied with their life .

This section of the minister wellbeing report is, in many ways, a treatise on the benefits of retirement –and the benefits of working within your call. On every measure of life satisfaction, the retired come out on top. Those who are without a call, only working secular jobs, on the other hand, are fairing much more poorly.

Minister health and spiritual life warrant particular attention. Minister health is covered in a separate report. Regarding minister spiritual health, 42% are concerned about their own need for spiritual renewal.

9 out of 10 ministers are generally satisfied with their lives. Among all ministers, those retired and not in a call are the most satisfied.

Following are some areas of concern for ministers who are not retired and are in a call:

- Only 28% of ministers rate their mental, physical, and spiritual health as *very good or excellent*.
- 13% of ministers report being worn out *most or all* the time.
- One third of ministers are not taking a day away from work each week.
- 29% of ministers are concerned about caring for aging parents.

Support

This section examines minister* support. Specifically, we examine the level of support ministers feel they receive from their presbytery, the extent to which they have a network of support within the Christian community, and whether and how often they have taken sabbaticals.

*In this section, unless otherwise specified, “minister” refers specifically to the 3,177 respondents (71%) who are working as a pastor, bi-vocational minister, or specialized minister.



Support

What ministers get most from their presbytery is a sense of belonging

Among those who are not retired, specialized ministers express the greatest satisfaction overall.

Ministers were asked to rate how much they have received or experienced of the following things from others in their presbytery:

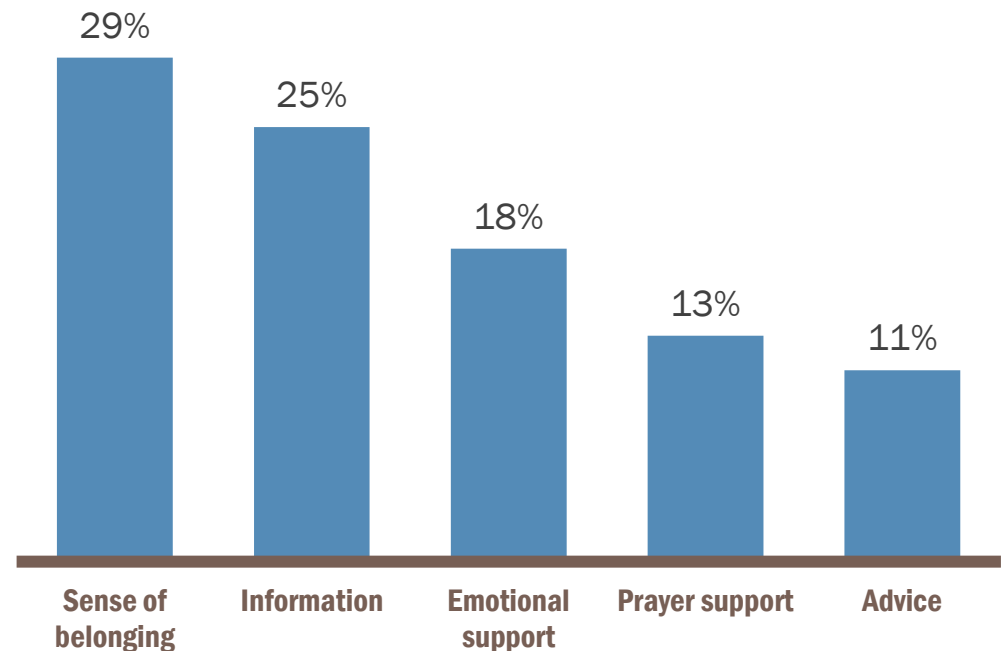
- Sense of belonging
- Information
- Emotional support
- Prayer support
- Advice

Ministers are most likely to receive a sense of belonging, and least likely to report receiving a great deal of advice. Ministers were also given the opportunity to write in comments. Although some used the space to vent frustrations with their presbytery, many wrote about the affirmation, mentoring, and respect they receive.

“It’s like family... Sometimes great, sometimes not-so-great; but it’s always wonderful to belong.”

See the following pages for more details about each of these findings.

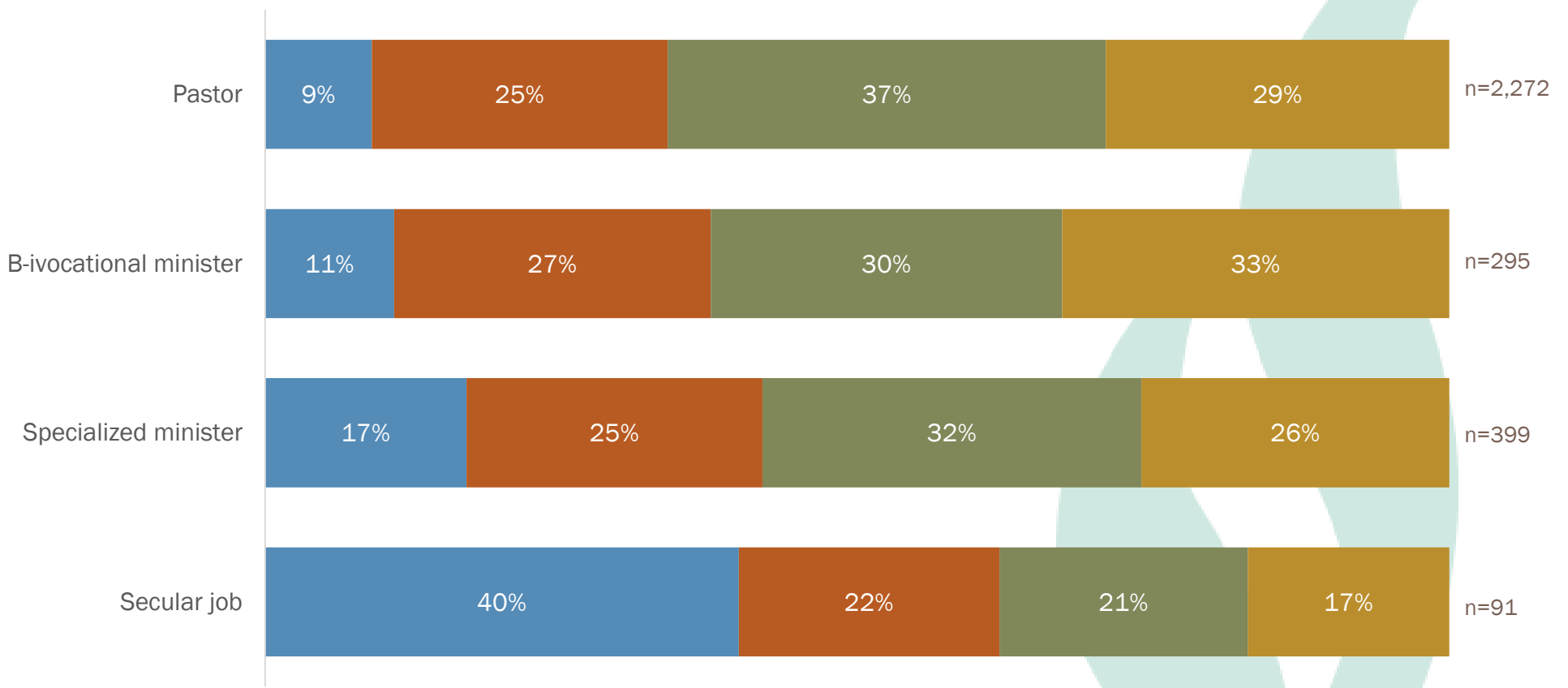
Overall percentage of ministers in a call or working that receive ‘a great deal’ of support from others in their presbytery:



Sense of belonging is highest for those in a call

Those in a secular job experience least the sense of belonging from others in their presbytery.

Ministers were asked how much of a sense of belonging they experience within their presbytery. The following results compare those who are exclusively in the role of pastor, bi-vocational minister, specialized minister, or in a secular job. These roles also include those who have the status of Honorably Retired but also still serve or work.



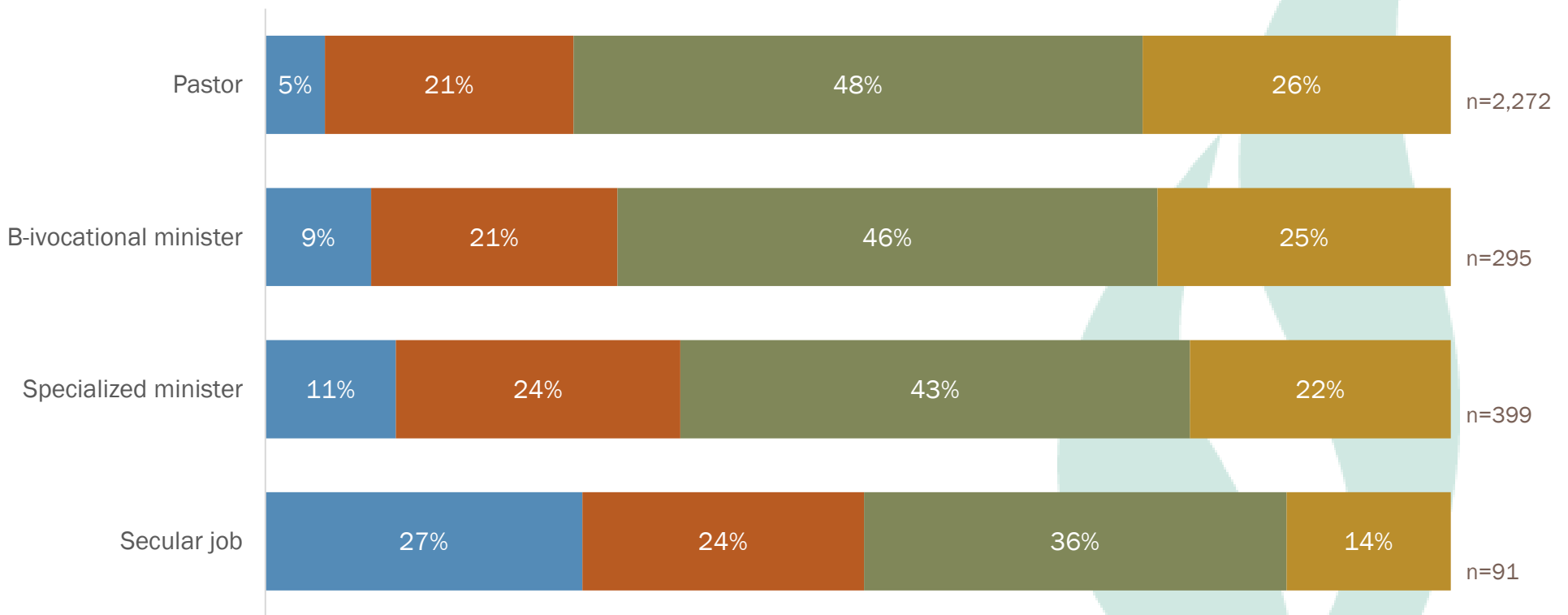
None | A little | Some | A great deal

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Those in secular jobs are least likely to receive information from their presbytery

Among those in a call, specialized ministers receive slightly less information from others in their presbytery than pastors and bi-vocational ministers.

Ministers were asked how much information they receive from others in their presbytery. These results compare those who are exclusively in the role of pastor, bi-vocational minister, specialized minister, or in a secular job. These roles also include those who have the status of Honorably Retired but also still serve or work.



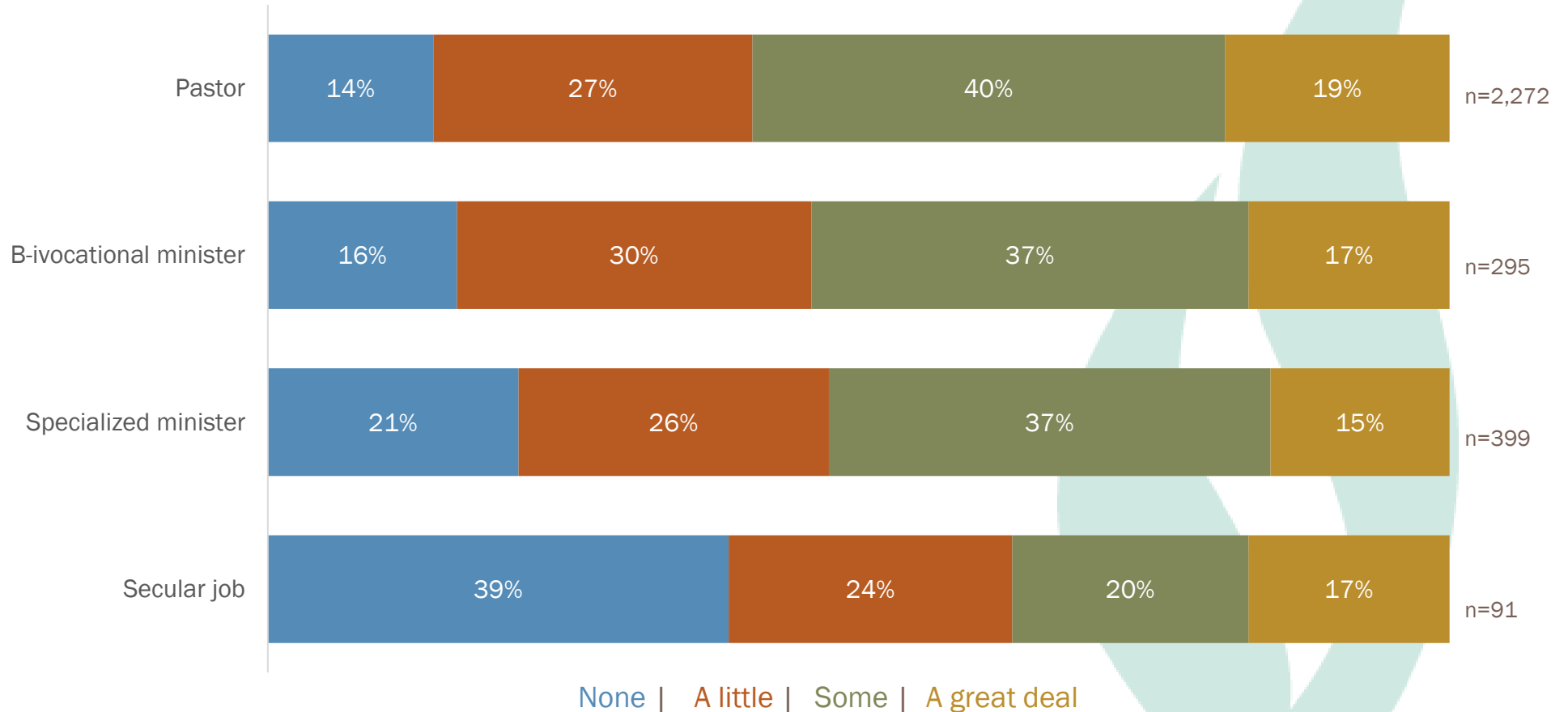
None | A little | Some | A great deal

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Emotional support is highest for those in a call

Those in a secular job receive the least emotional support from others in their presbytery.

Ministers were asked how much emotional support they receive from others in their presbytery. These results compare those who are exclusively in the role of pastor, bi-vocational minister, specialized minister, or in a secular job. These roles also include those who have the status of Honorably Retired but also still serve or work.



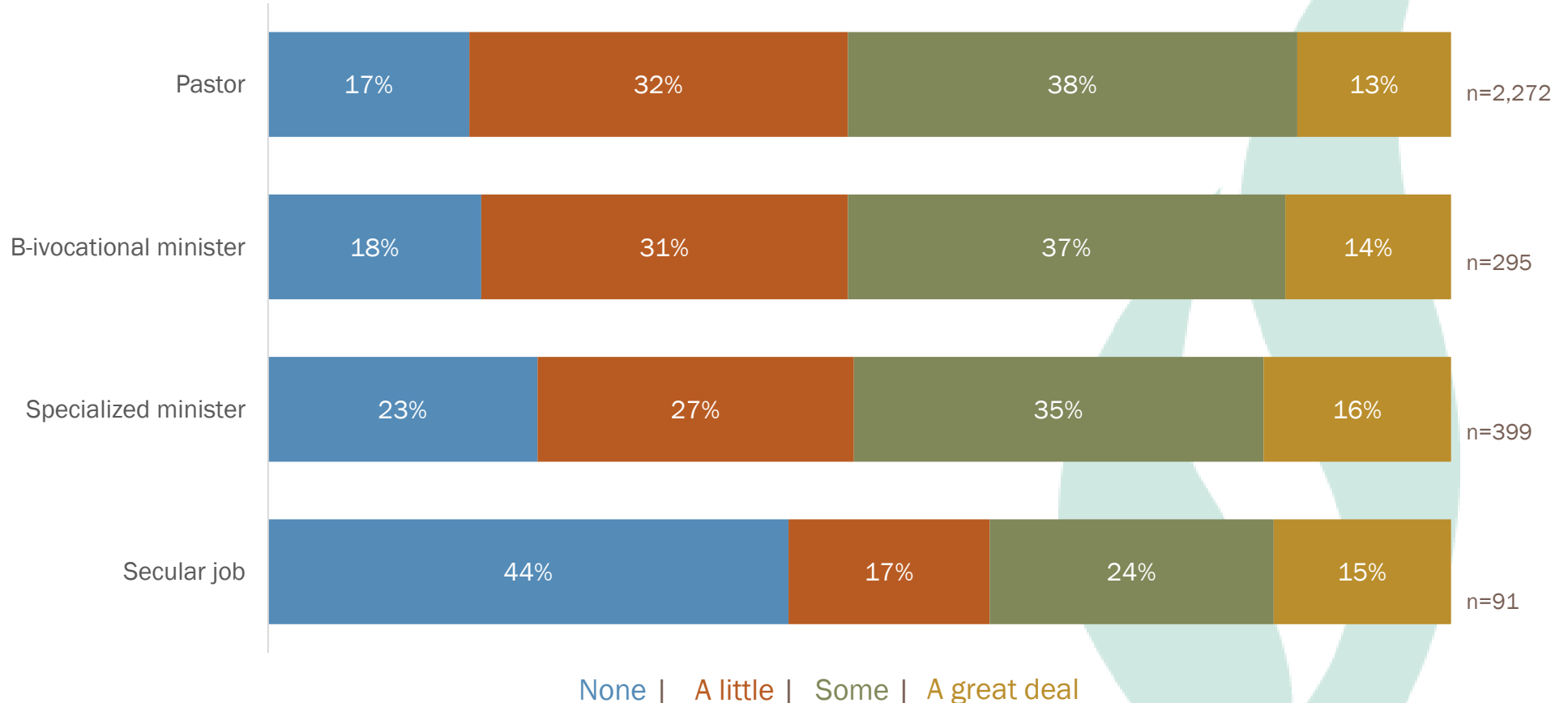
None | A little | Some | A great deal

Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Prayer support is highest for those in a call

Those in a secular job receive the least prayer support from others in their presbytery.

Ministers were asked how much prayer support they receive from others in their presbytery. These results compare those who are exclusively in the role of pastor, bi-vocational minister, specialized minister, or in a secular job. These roles also include those who have the status of Honorably Retired but also still serve or work.

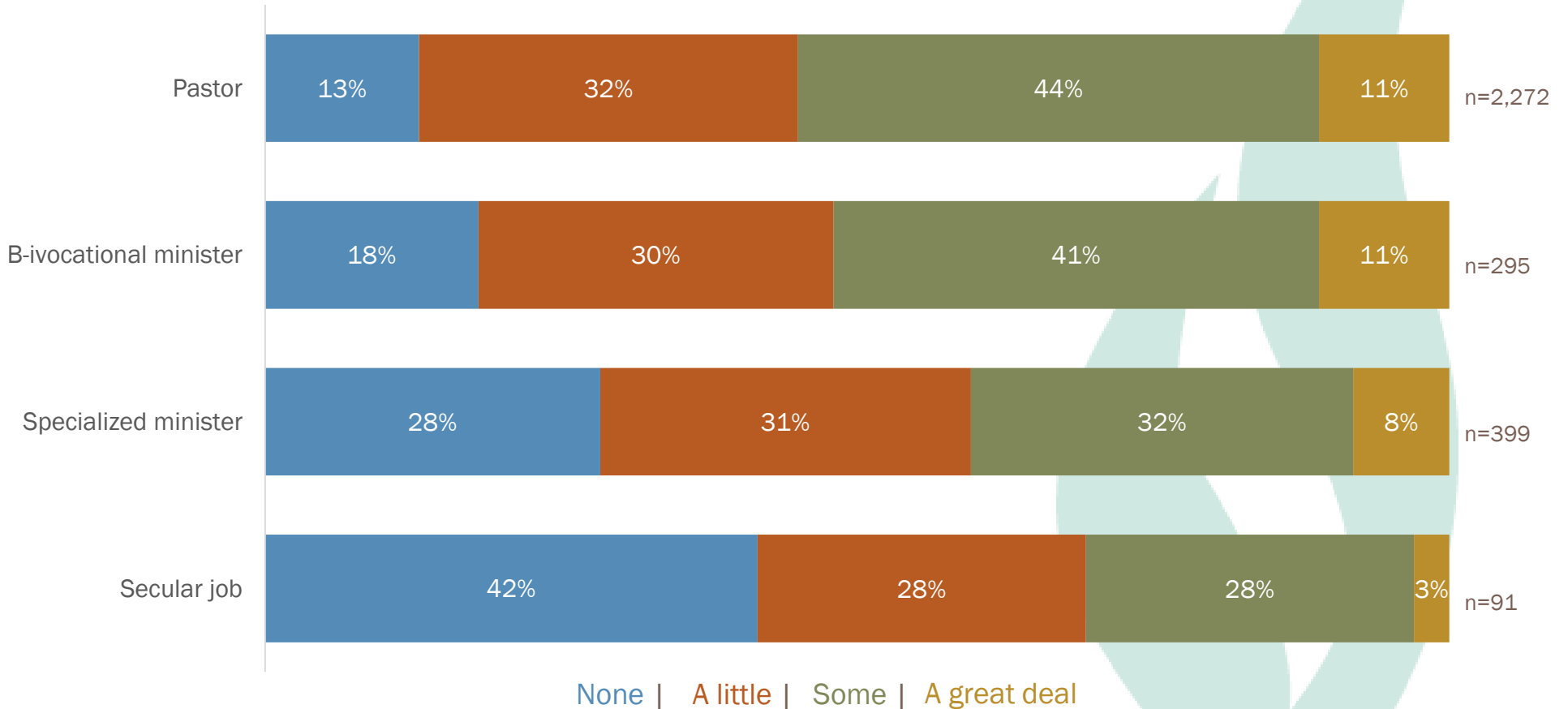


Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Pastors are the most likely to receive advice from others in their presbytery

Those in a secular job are the least likely to receive advice.

Ministers were asked how much advice they receive from others in their presbytery. These results compare those who are exclusively in the role of pastor, bi-vocational minister, specialized minister, or in a secular job. These roles also include those who have the status of Honorably Retired but also still serve or work.



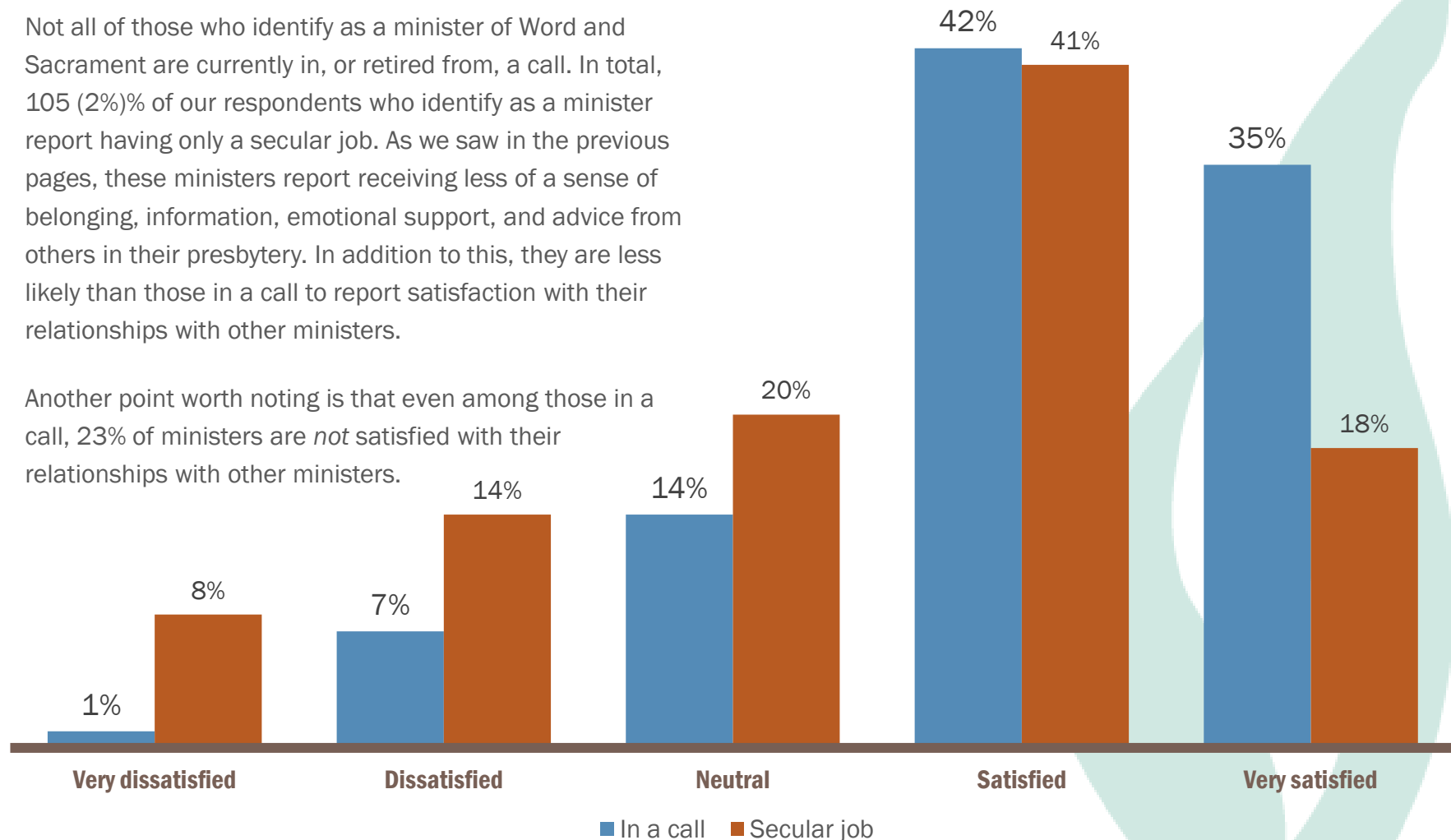
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Those in a secular job are more isolated

These ministers report receiving less support from others in their presbytery and are less satisfied with their relationships with other ministers.

Not all of those who identify as a minister of Word and Sacrament are currently in, or retired from, a call. In total, 105 (2%)% of our respondents who identify as a minister report having only a secular job. As we saw in the previous pages, these ministers report receiving less of a sense of belonging, information, emotional support, and advice from others in their presbytery. In addition to this, they are less likely than those in a call to report satisfaction with their relationships with other ministers.

Another point worth noting is that even among those in a call, 23% of ministers are *not* satisfied with their relationships with other ministers.



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Support

88% of specialized ministers are regular participants in a worshiping community

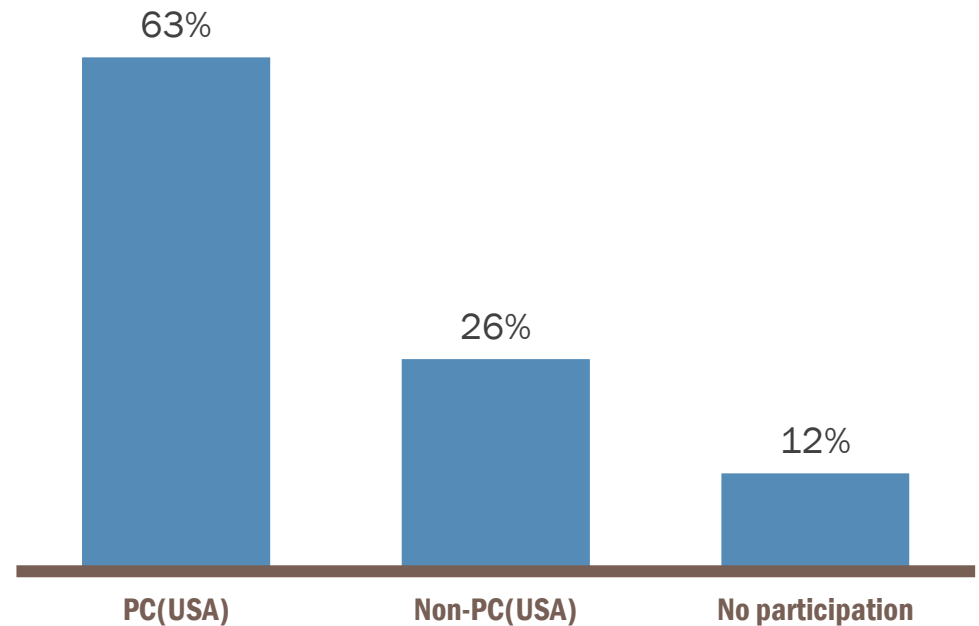
Most ministers who are not currently in a call regularly attend worship or participate in activities at a particular congregation or other type of worshiping community.

63% of ministers serving in specialized ministry other than that of a pastor attend a PC(USA) worshiping community. However, if you restrict the analysis to only those who *regularly* participate in a worshiping community, the percentage attending a PC(USA) congregation or worshiping community increases to 71%.

Among those who hold the status of Honorably Retired, participation in a worshiping community is higher for those who are *actually* retired; i.e., are not currently in a call or employed in any way than for those Honorably Retired that are still in a call or working.

However, it should be noted that only 1,117 respondents answered this question, with only 134 (12%) responding “no.” This means that the confidence interval for this finding is much smaller, and it is more difficult to generate statistically sound analyses by category.

Overall percentage of ministers that report regular participation in any worshiping community:

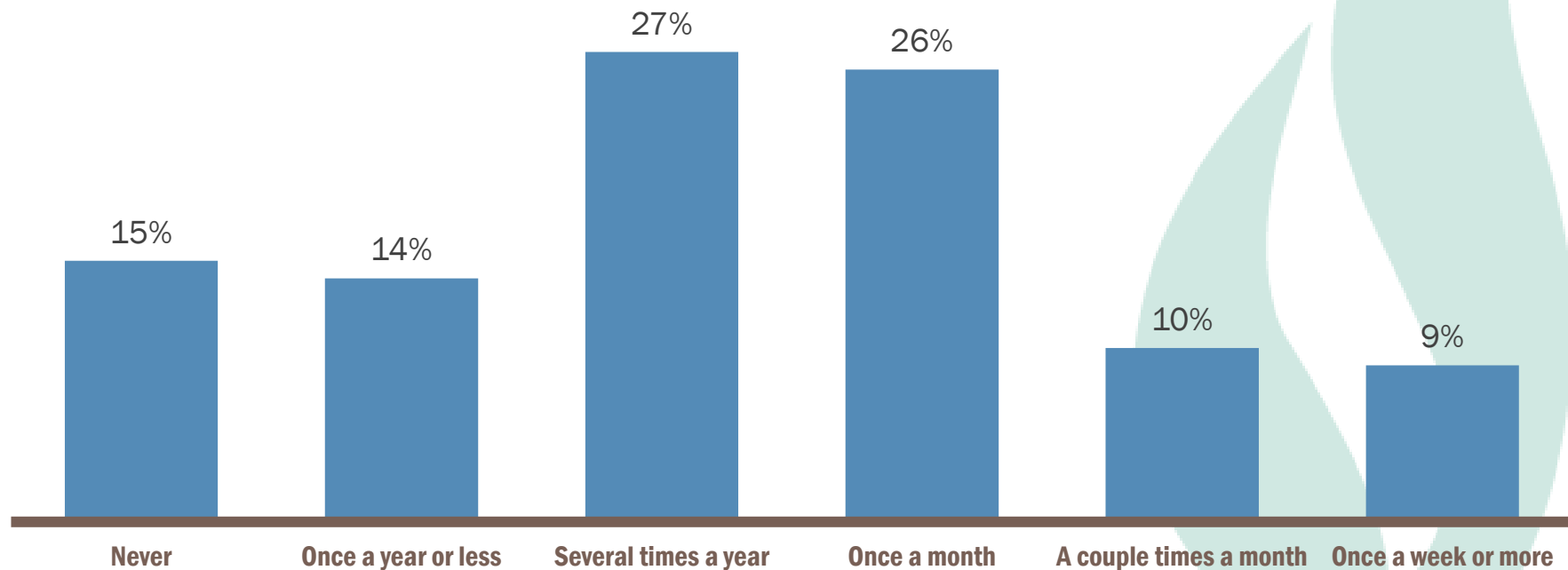


Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

85% of active ministers meet with other ministers for reflection, study, or sharing

Just under one half (45%) of ministers currently in a call as a pastor or specialized minister (or both) are meeting with other groups of ministers monthly or more frequently.

Pastors meet with other groups of ministers for reflection, study, or sharing more frequently than bivocational or specialized ministers. In addition, among those currently in a call, those who also hold the status of Honorably Retired meet with other ministers less frequently than those who are not yet retired. Whereas 45% of non-retired ministers in a call meet with a mentor, spiritual director, or coach monthly or more, only 31% of retired ministers in a call, and 22% of retired ministers not in a call, do the same.



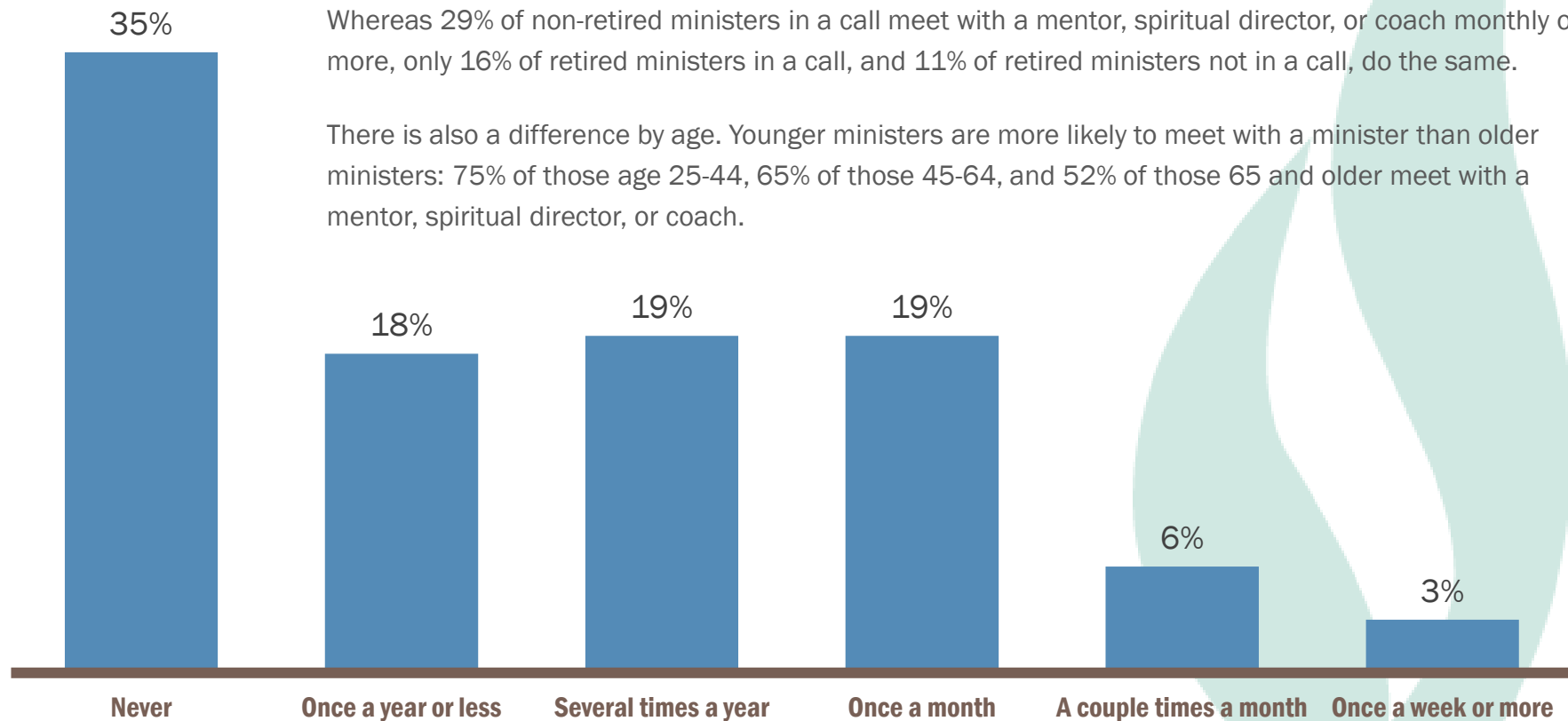
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

65% of active ministers meet with a mentor, spiritual director, or coach

Just over one fourth (28%) of ministers currently in a call as a pastor or specialized minister (or both) are **receiving guidance** monthly or more frequently.

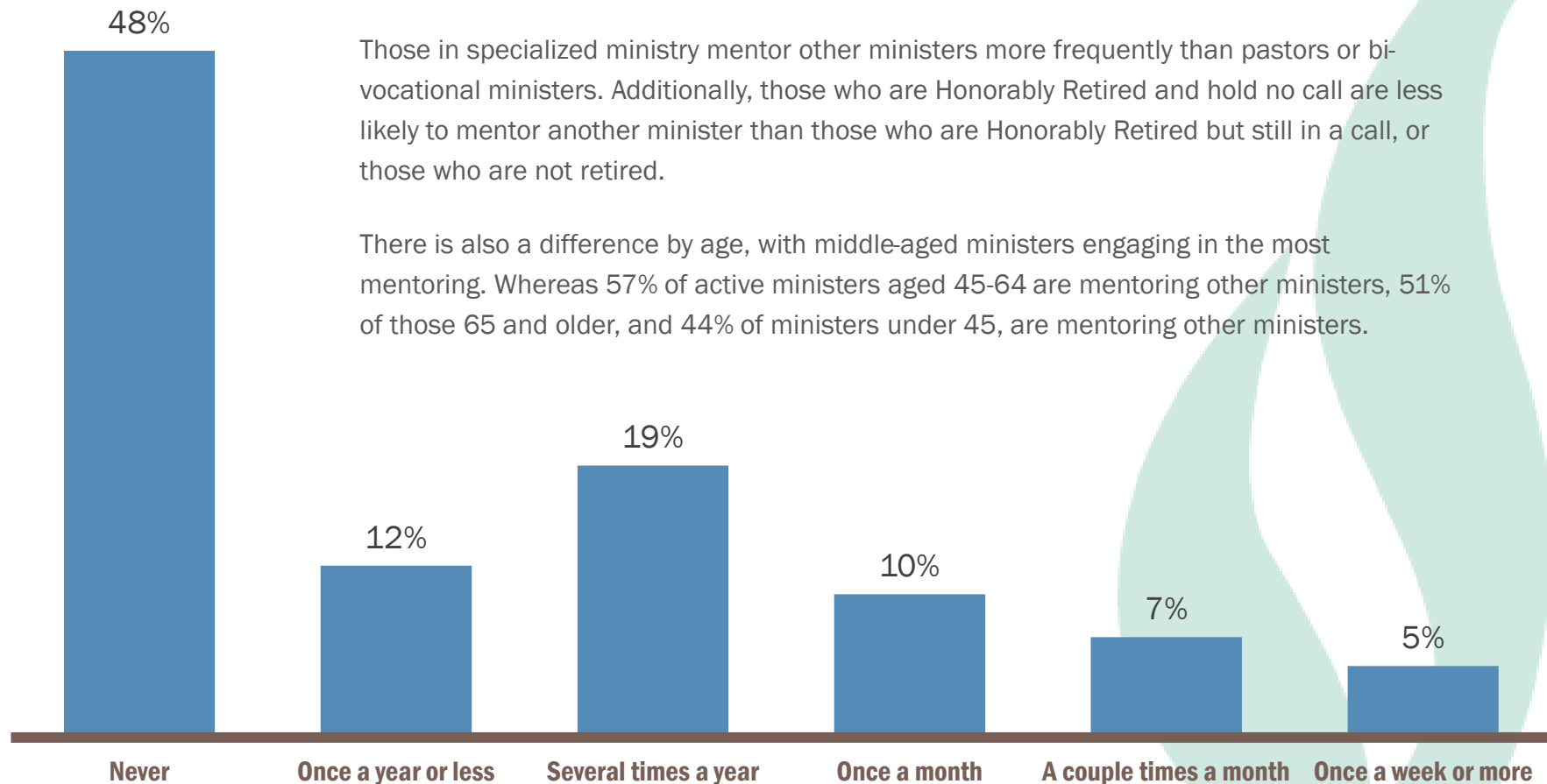
Pastors seek the direction of a mentor, spiritual director, or coach slightly less frequently than bi-vocational or specialized ministers. In addition, among those currently in a call, those who also hold the status of Honorably Retired are less frequent users of such services than those who are not yet retired. Whereas 29% of non-retired ministers in a call meet with a mentor, spiritual director, or coach monthly or more, only 16% of retired ministers in a call, and 11% of retired ministers not in a call, do the same.

There is also a difference by age. Younger ministers are more likely to meet with a minister than older ministers: 75% of those age 25-44, 65% of those 45-64, and 52% of those 65 and older meet with a mentor, spiritual director, or coach.



52% of active ministers provide mentoring to another minister

Just over one fifth (22%) of ministers currently in a call as a pastor or specialized minister (or both) are **providing mentoring** monthly or more frequently.



Those in specialized ministry mentor other ministers more frequently than pastors or bi-vocational ministers. Additionally, those who are Honorably Retired and hold no call are less likely to mentor another minister than those who are Honorably Retired but still in a call, or those who are not retired.

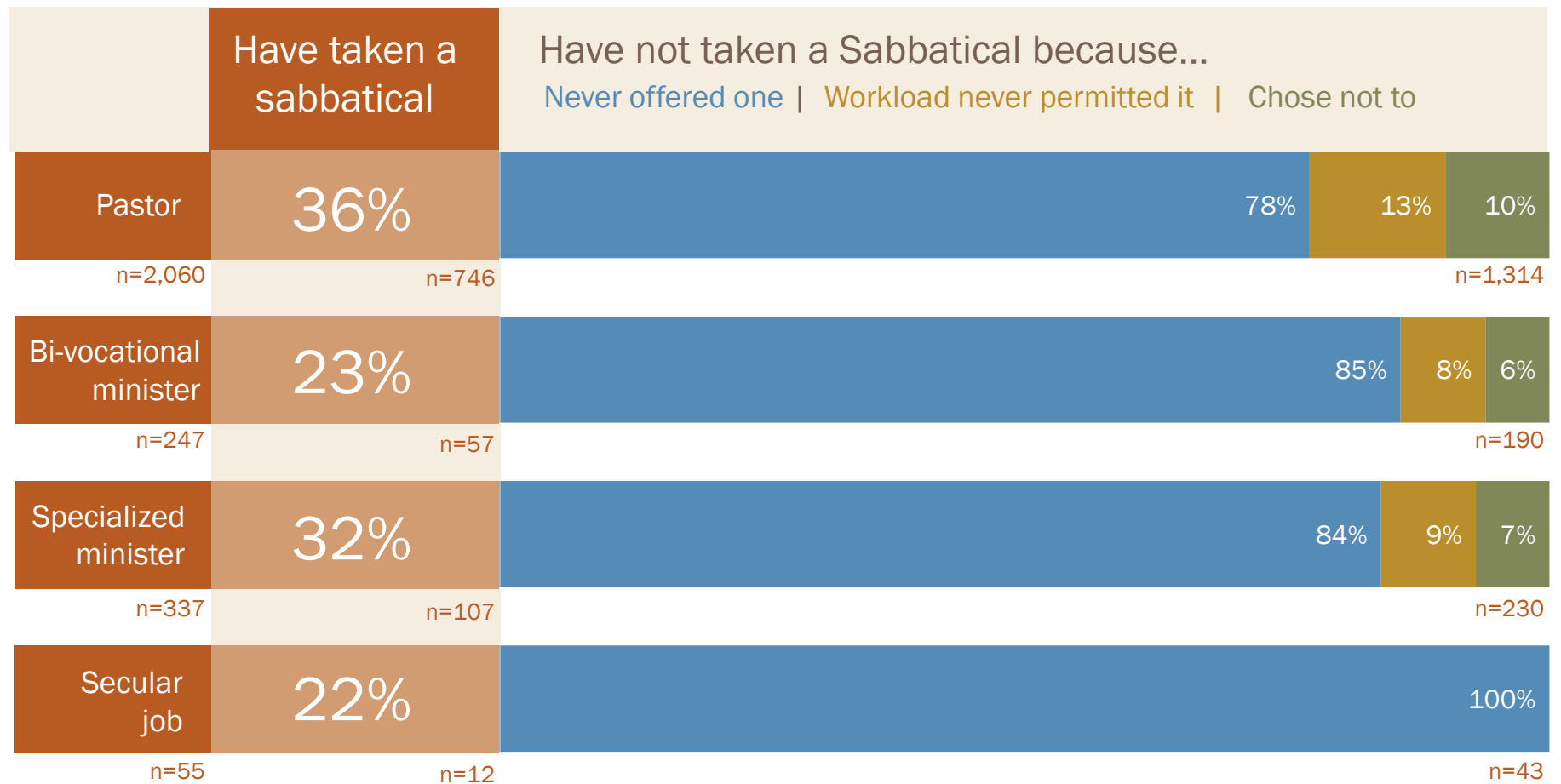
There is also a difference by age, with middle-aged ministers engaging in the most mentoring. Whereas 57% of active ministers aged 45-64 are mentoring other ministers, 51% of those 65 and older, and 44% of ministers under 45, are mentoring other ministers.

*Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

34% of ministers have taken a sabbatical

Most active, in call ministers do not take a sabbatical because they have never been offered one.

Of those ministers who have never taken a sabbatical, 80% say that it is because none of their employers have ever offered one. However, this differs by current role. Although among active ministers, pastors are the most likely ministers to have taken a sabbatical, they are also the most likely to turn down a sabbatical opportunity, either because they felt their workload did not permit it, or they simply chose not to.



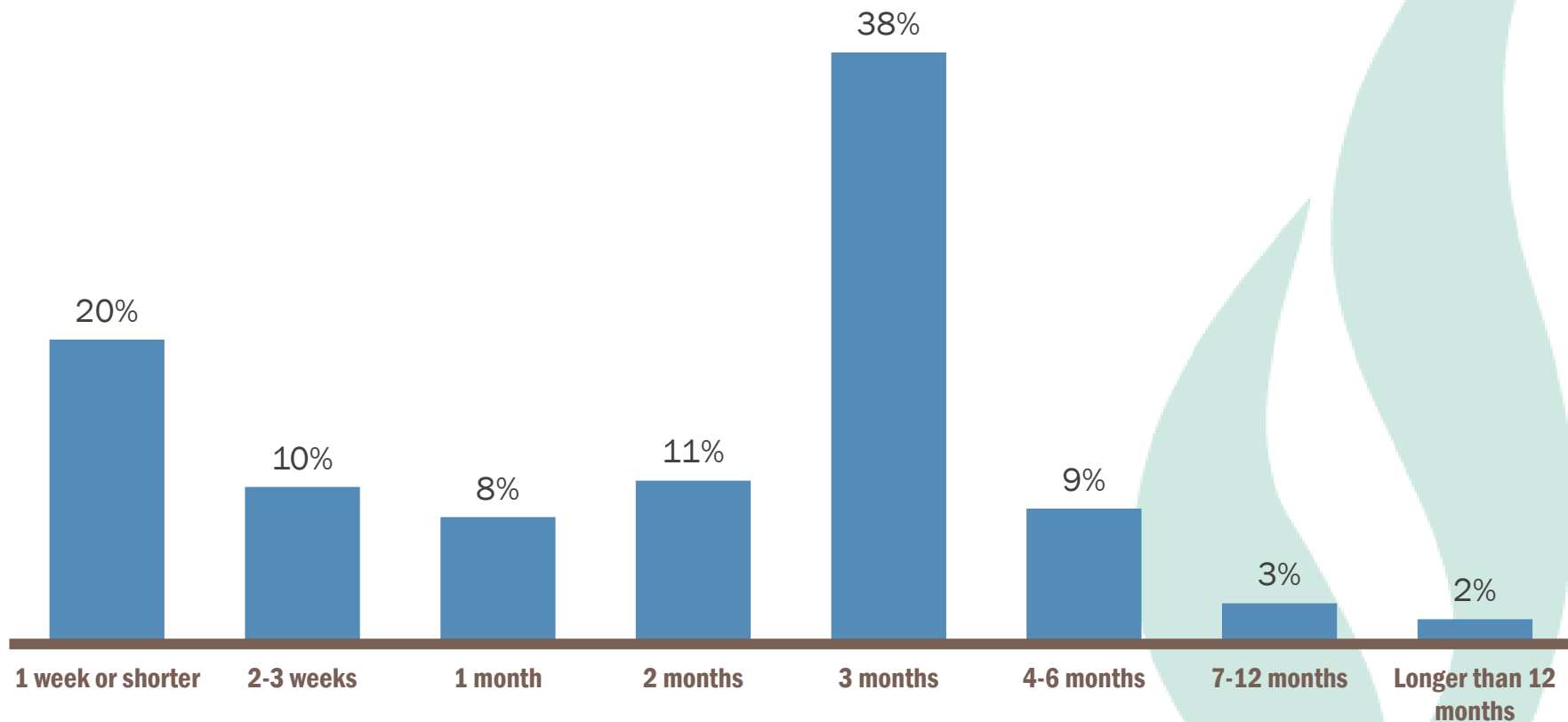
Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Support

The most common length for a sabbatical is three months

38% of respondents who have taken a sabbatical report that their most recent one lasted for three months.

A few, 2% (n=23), have taken sabbaticals for longer than 12 months. The survey question to which they were responding defined a sabbatical as “[continuing] to receive pay for a time when you were to study, reflect, or relax other than through conventional vacation or continuing education.”



Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Findings on Minister Support

Pastors receive the greatest support overall.

This section of the minister wellbeing report is, in many ways, a treatise on the lack of support that non-retired ministers without a call feel. On every measure support, ministers working secular jobs rate more poorly than ministers in a call.

What presbyteries provide more than anything is a sense of belonging – and this is greatest for pastors. What they provide least is advice.

The findings on sabbaticals are also worth noting. Only 38% of ministers have taken a sabbatical.

Following are some areas of concern regarding ministers:

- 64% of pastors have never taken a sabbatical
- 55% of ministers in a call do not meet monthly or more with other ministers for reflection, study, or sharing
- 34% of pastors feel little to no sense of belonging from their presbytery
- 23% of ministers are not satisfied with their relationships with other ministers
- 12% of specialized ministers do not regularly participate in a worshipping community

What are we learning?

This report has three distinct sections that examine the wellbeing of pastors, specialized ministers, and the Honorably Retired. Each of these can stand alone as independent reports: Satisfaction with Work, Satisfaction with Life, and Minister Support.

Minister health is the subject of a separate report. Not every aspect of wellbeing was addressed in this survey. There is never enough space. Had this survey been an in-person interview, questions unique to that individual could have been asked and perhaps offered us additional insights.

Some of the questions related to the intersection and influence of age, gender, and years of service on wellbeing cannot be answered because there were insufficient responses to make any meaningful interpretation of the data.



What we are learning by minister groups

Most ministers are satisfied with their work, lives, and support systems.

RETIRED MINISTERS

Those who are retired, yet have accepted a call, are the most satisfied and less fatigued of all ministers. It seems rather obvious that those who are working from a position of choice rather than necessity may experience greater freedom in their work. One reason for the reduced stress levels could be not having family obligations that go with having a young family.

BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTERS

The bi-vocational ministers are least satisfied with the minister portion of their salary and report having fewer continuing education opportunities. These ministers report greater fatigue and stress than others yet have the highest sense of call and belonging of all ministers. We want to know more about the life and work of the bi-vocational minister. To answer these additional questions, a survey specific to bi-vocational ministers will be released in September 2021.

PASTORS

Most pastors are satisfied or very satisfied with their personal lives and their call. Several mentor those who are newer to ministry.

SPECIALIZED MINISTERS

Those in specialized ministry seem to be the happiest and the most satisfied with the multiple aspects of their careers and lives.

SECULAR JOBS

Those working in jobs outside of a call report a greater sense of isolation with the least support from their presbytery. More than 40% report little to no prayer or emotional support. Fewer than 100 respondents identified themselves being in this group.

Ministers are tired and want more continuing education. At the same time, they are supported by their presbyteries.

FATIGUE

Nearly half of the ministers report that they are tired. Most take a day off each week but nearly one third have not taken an extended time to refresh, replenish, and spend time in spiritual reflection. Fatigue is often associated with distancing oneself from constituents and family. If not attended, fatigue can lead to burnout.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Ministers would like more continuing education. There is interest in continuing education that addresses mental health and engaging those with mental health concerns. This was noted in the Mental Health Minister Survey Report (March 2021). The world and society are constantly changing. Yet continuing education opportunities for pastors (those serving a local congregation) seem to lag what is available for those who are in specialized ministries such as chaplaincy or denominational leadership. Living and working through the pandemic has taught us that people can meaningfully engaged in online experiences. This seems to address the requirement of physically traveling to an education site. However, there is something to be said about removing oneself from your everyday environ to learn new skills and refresh.

Continuing education frequently comes with a cost. Who pays for it? Is it cost-sharing between pastor, congregation, and presbytery or the responsibility pastor individually? What, if any, continuing education requirements need to be in place for ministers?

SUPPORT

Those in a call seem to have the most support from their presbytery. Ministers demonstrate mutual support in their mentor/mentee relationships.

Research Services helps the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) make data-informed decisions using surveys, focus groups and interviews, demographic analysis, and program evaluations.

We are social scientists with backgrounds in sociology, public policy, and economics. We serve congregations, presbyteries and synods, PC(USA) national agencies, and other PC(USA)-related organizations. Research Services is a ministry of the Administrative Services Group.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of this report, contact us at 502-569-5077 or research@pcusa.org.



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