

Survey: Half of churchgoers' lives not affected by time in pews

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(RNS) Almost half of churchgoing Americans say their life has not changed a bit due to their time in the pews, a new survey shows.

Barna Group, an evangelical company based in California, found that 46 percent reported no change. About a quarter of Americans said their life was greatly affected by church attendance and another quarter said it was somewhat influential.

Two-thirds of respondents said they had felt "a real and personal connection" with God while attending church.

Among weekly church attenders, 44 percent said they felt God's presence every week and 18 percent said they had that experience once a month.

In a finding sure to disappoint pastors, three out of five church attenders said they could not recall an important new religious insight from their last church visit. Of those who attended in the previous week, 50 percent could not recall walking away with a significant new understanding.

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, said the research shows that many churchgoers see the benefits of connecting with God and others in congregations.

"Yet, the research results are also a reminder that faith leaders cannot take these things for granted," he said. "Millions of active participants find their church experiences to be lacking."

The survey results are based on a random sample of 1,022 adults and have a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points.