

Church Health Indicators in Protestant Churches

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

Lifeway research

Methodology

- The phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors was conducted September 6-30, 2022
- The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size
- Each interviews was completed by the senior or sole pastor or a minister at the church
- Responses were weighted by region and church size to more accurately reflect the population
- The completed sample is 1,000 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 3.2\%$ This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

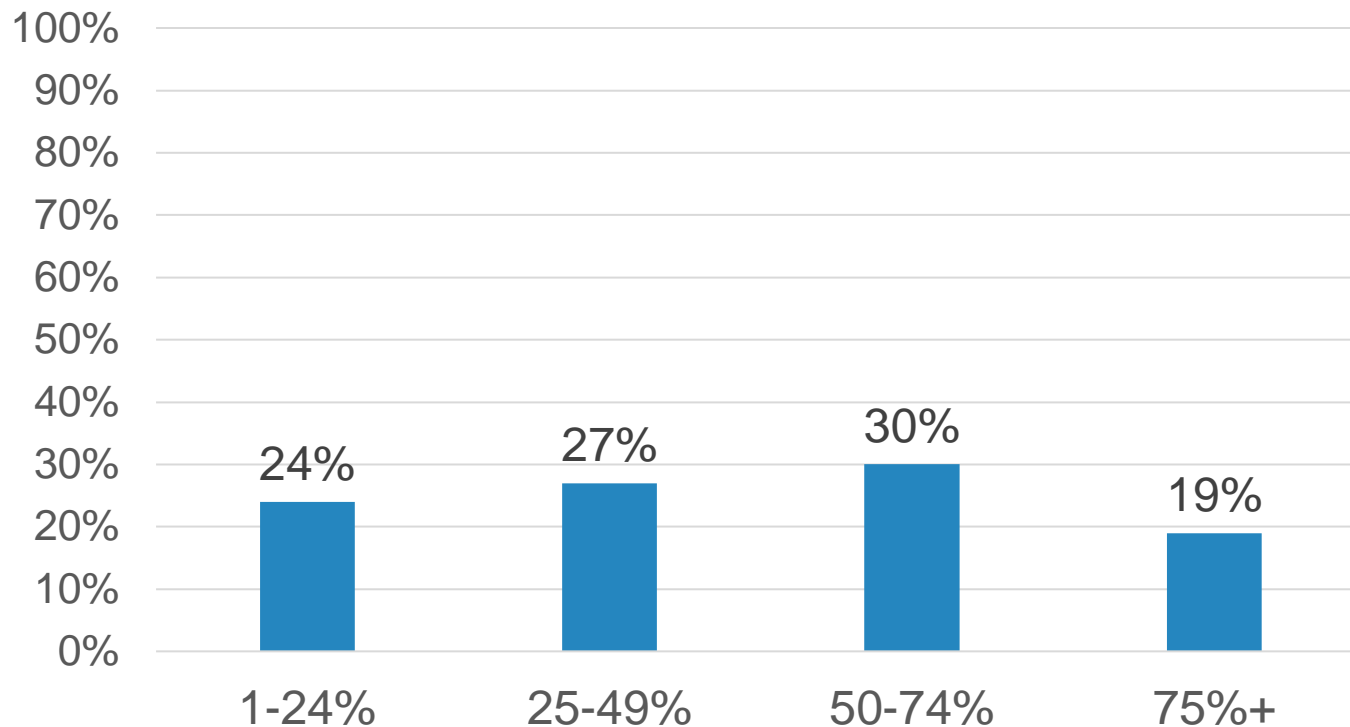
Methodology

Comparisons are made to the following phone surveys conducted by Lifeway Research

- A phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors conducted August 29 – September 11, 2018 sponsored by the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College
- A phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors conducted March 1-9, 2010 as part of Transformational Church research
- A phone survey of 1,002 Protestant pastors conducted October 13-29, 2008 as part of Transformational Church research

Percentage of current worship attendees involved in a small group or Sunday School class

Among Protestant Pastors



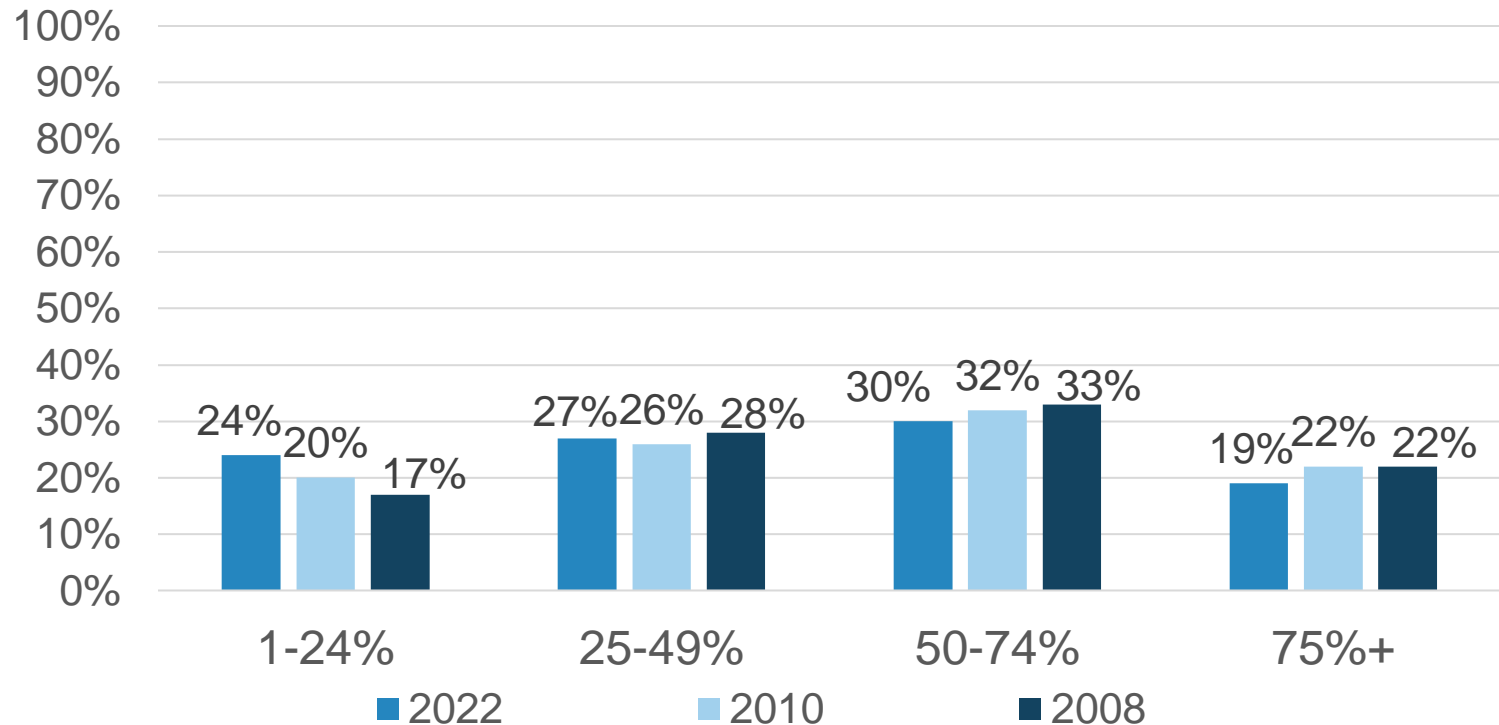
Mean percentage: 44%

Median percentage: 45%

Lifeway research

More pastors report less than 25% of current worship attendees involved in a small group or Sunday School class than in 2008 (24% v. 17%)

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The mean percentage of worship attendance involved in a small group or Sunday School class has declined since 2010

Among Protestant Pastors

Mean percentage of worship attendance involved in small group/Sunday School class:

2022: 44%

2010: 49%

2008: 50%

Median percentage of worship attendance involved in small group/Sunday School class :

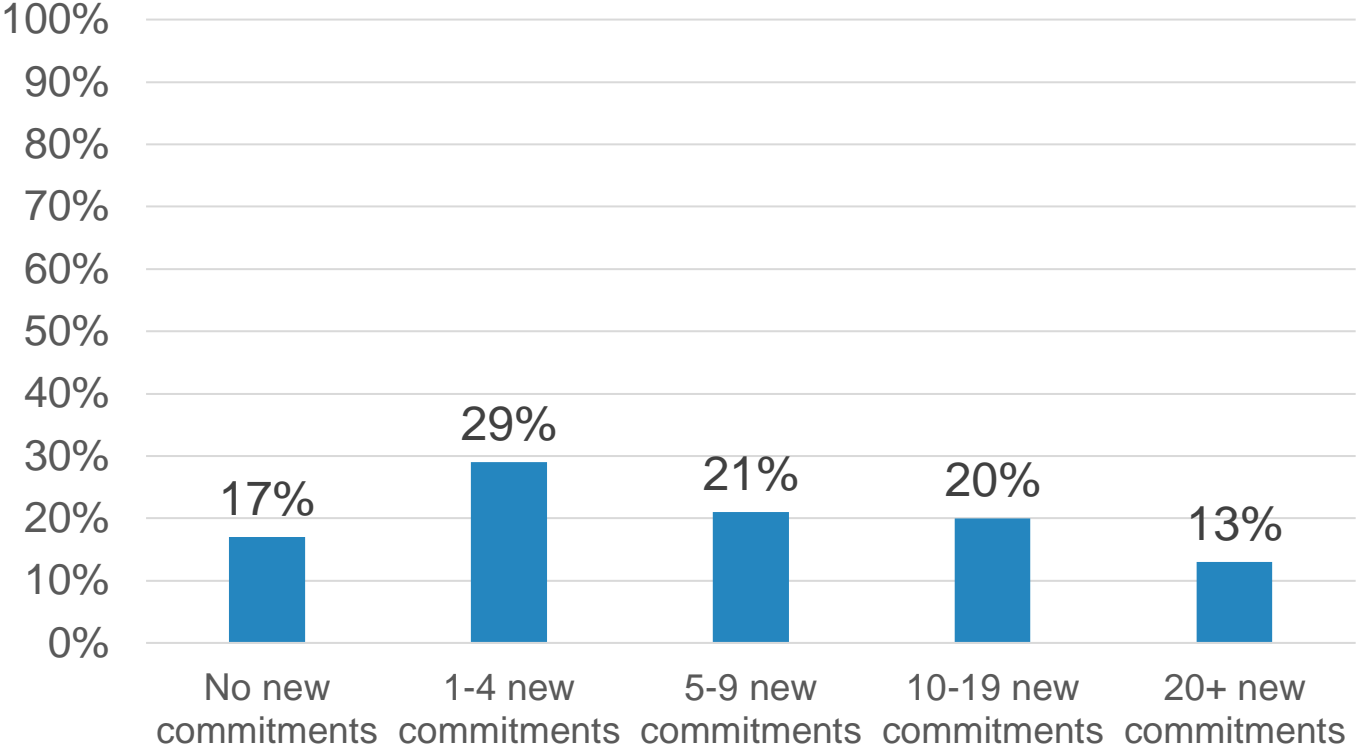
2022: 45%

2010: 50%

2008: 50%

In the past 12 months, Protestant churches have had an average of 15 new commitments to Christ; median of 5

Among Protestant Pastors



Mean new commitments in the last 12 months: 15

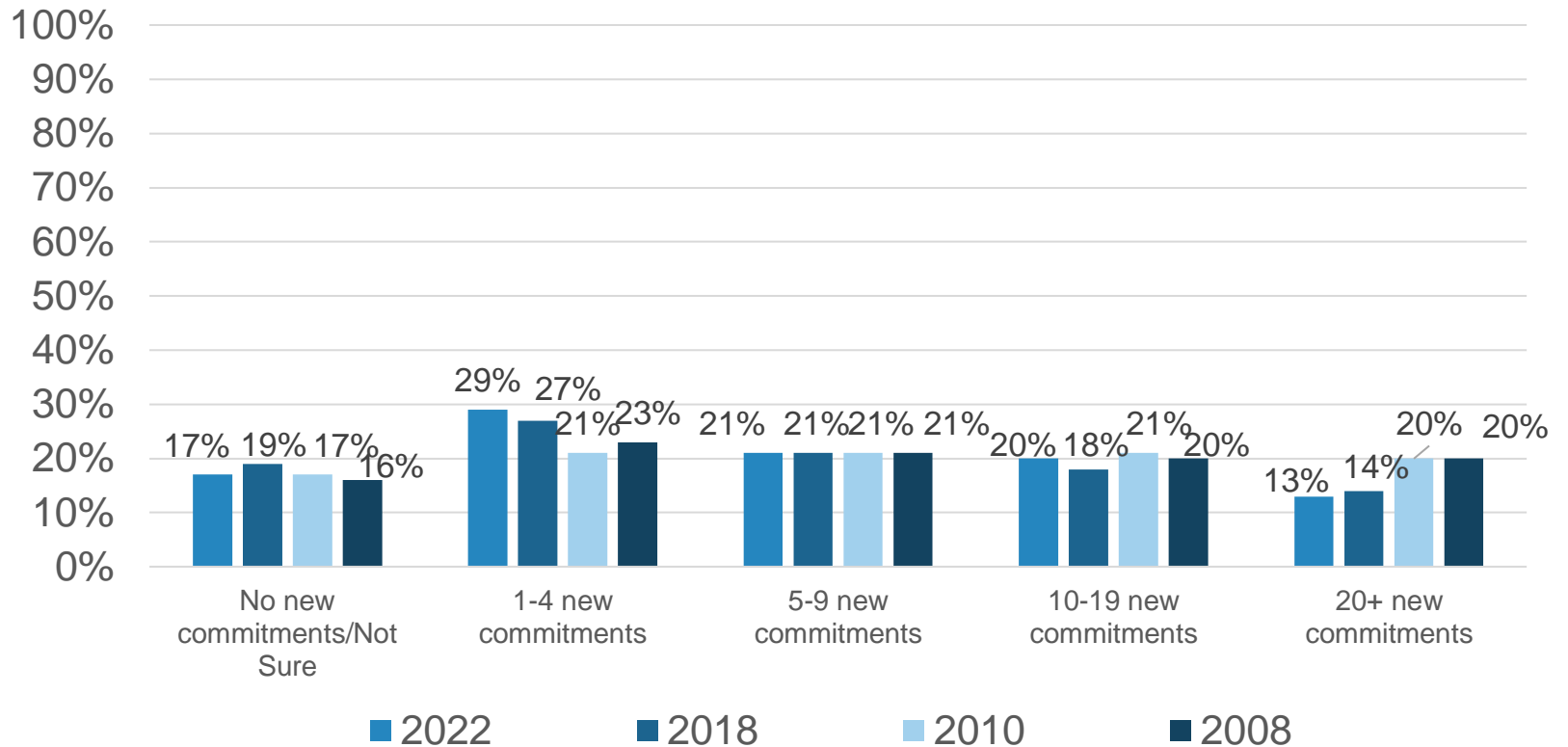
Median new commitments in the last 12 months: 5



Q13: "In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?" n=1,000

Large numbers of new commitments have grown less common since 2010

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The mean and median number of new commitments to Christ has been relatively stable for the past 14 years

Among Protestant Pastors

Mean new commitments in the last 12 months:

2022: 15

2018: 12

2010: 15

2008: 14

Median new commitments in the last 12 months:

2022: 5

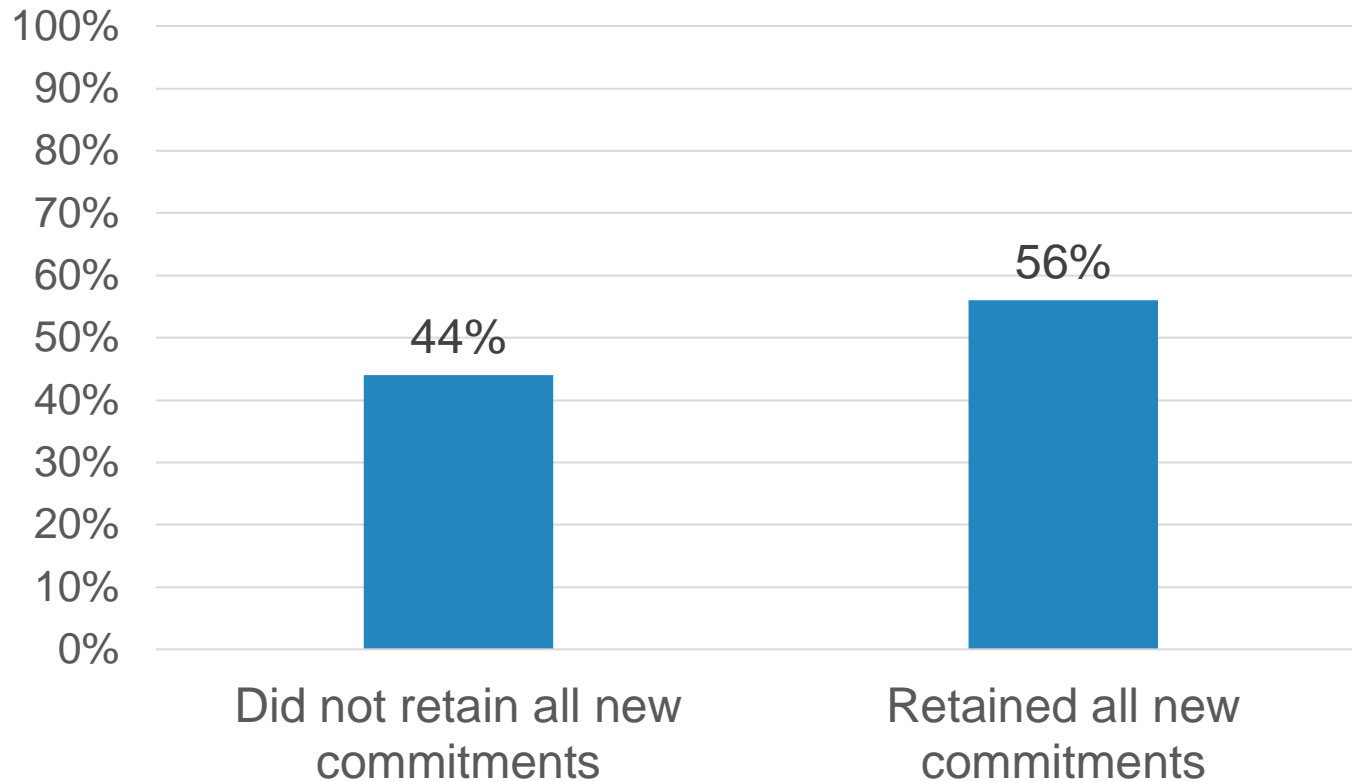
2018: 6

2010: 6

2008: 6

On average, 79% of new commitments were retained

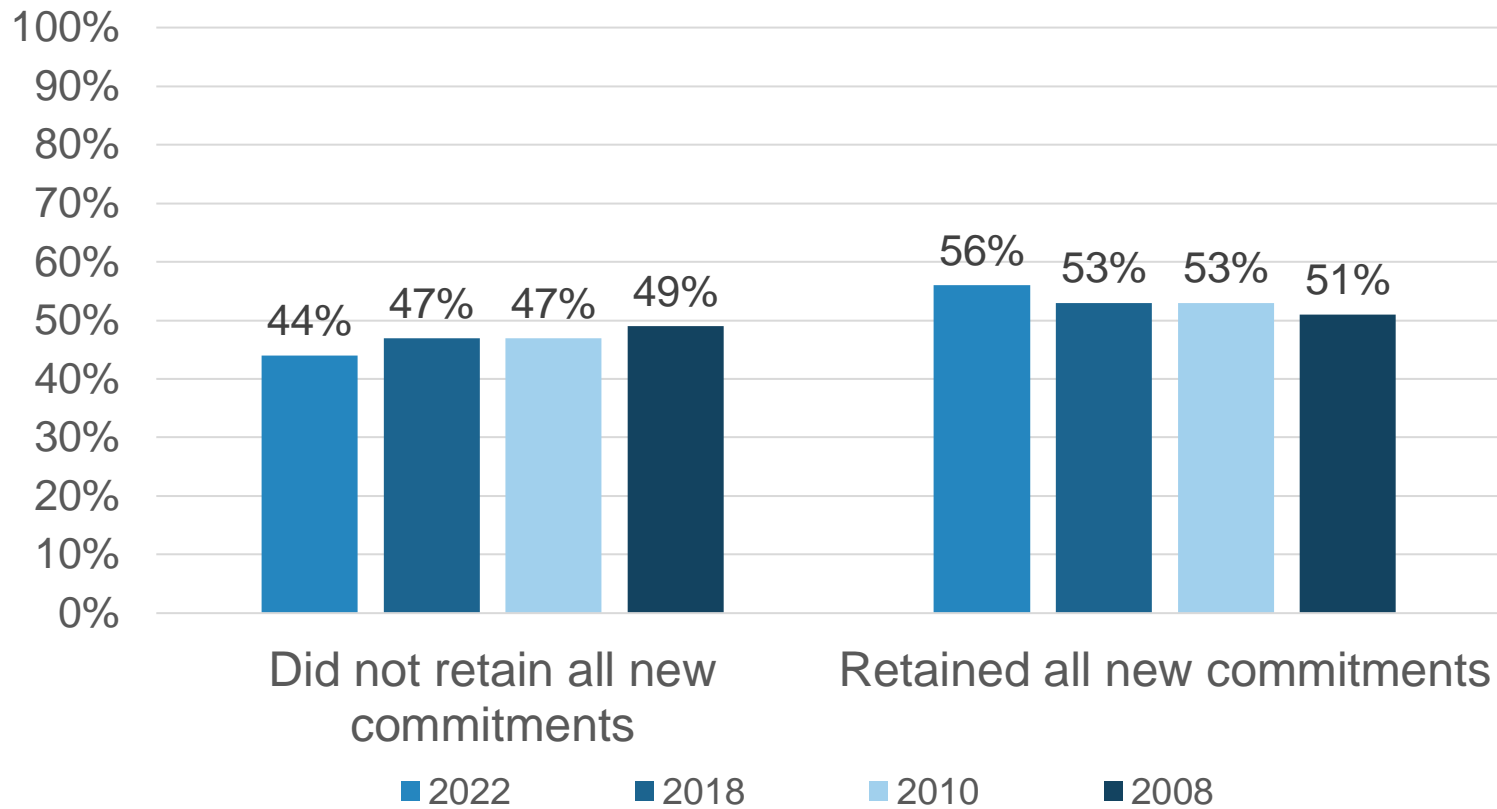
Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Slightly more churches retain all their new commitments today compared to 2008

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The mean and median percentage of new commitments to Christ that became active in the church has been relatively stable for the past 14 years

Among Protestant Pastors

Mean percentage of new commitments who became active in the church:

2022: 79%
2018: 80%
2010: 79%
2008: 78%

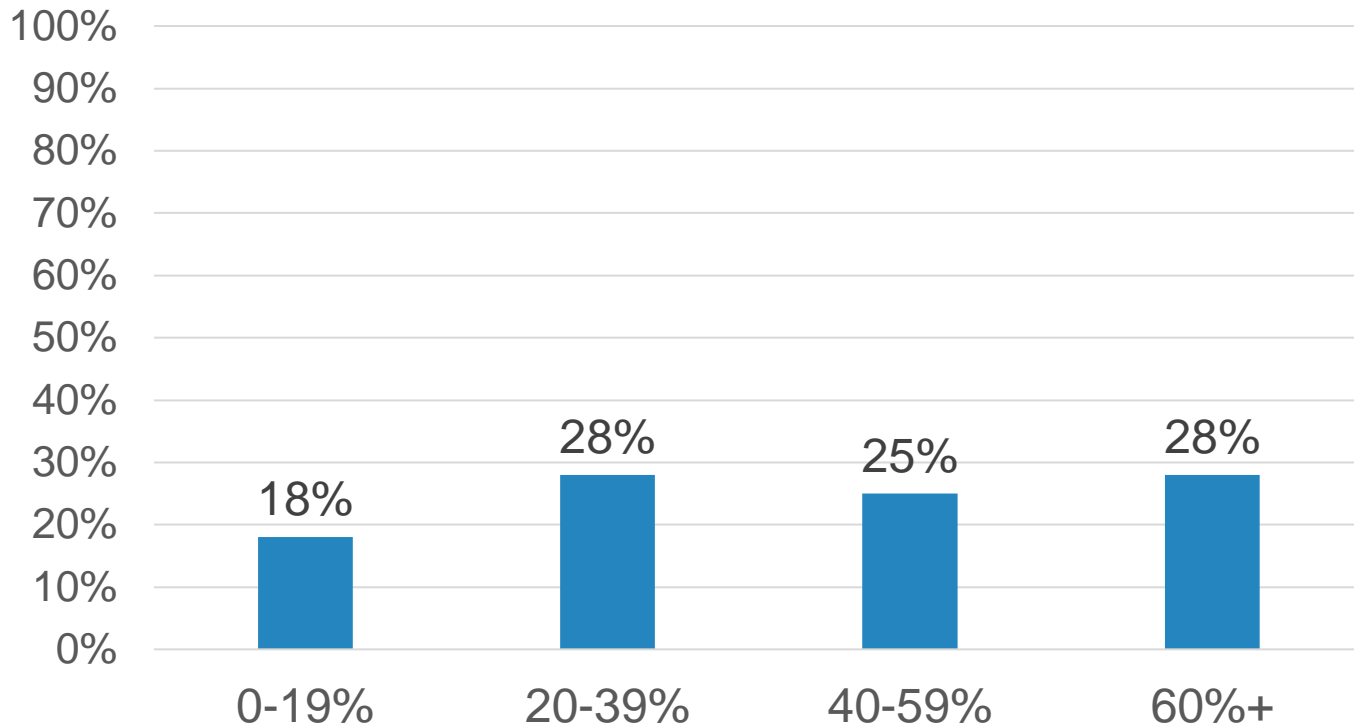
Median percentage of new commitments who became active in the church :

2022: 100%
2018: 100%
2010: 100%
2008: 100%

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Percentage of adults who volunteer varies widely

Among Protestant Pastors



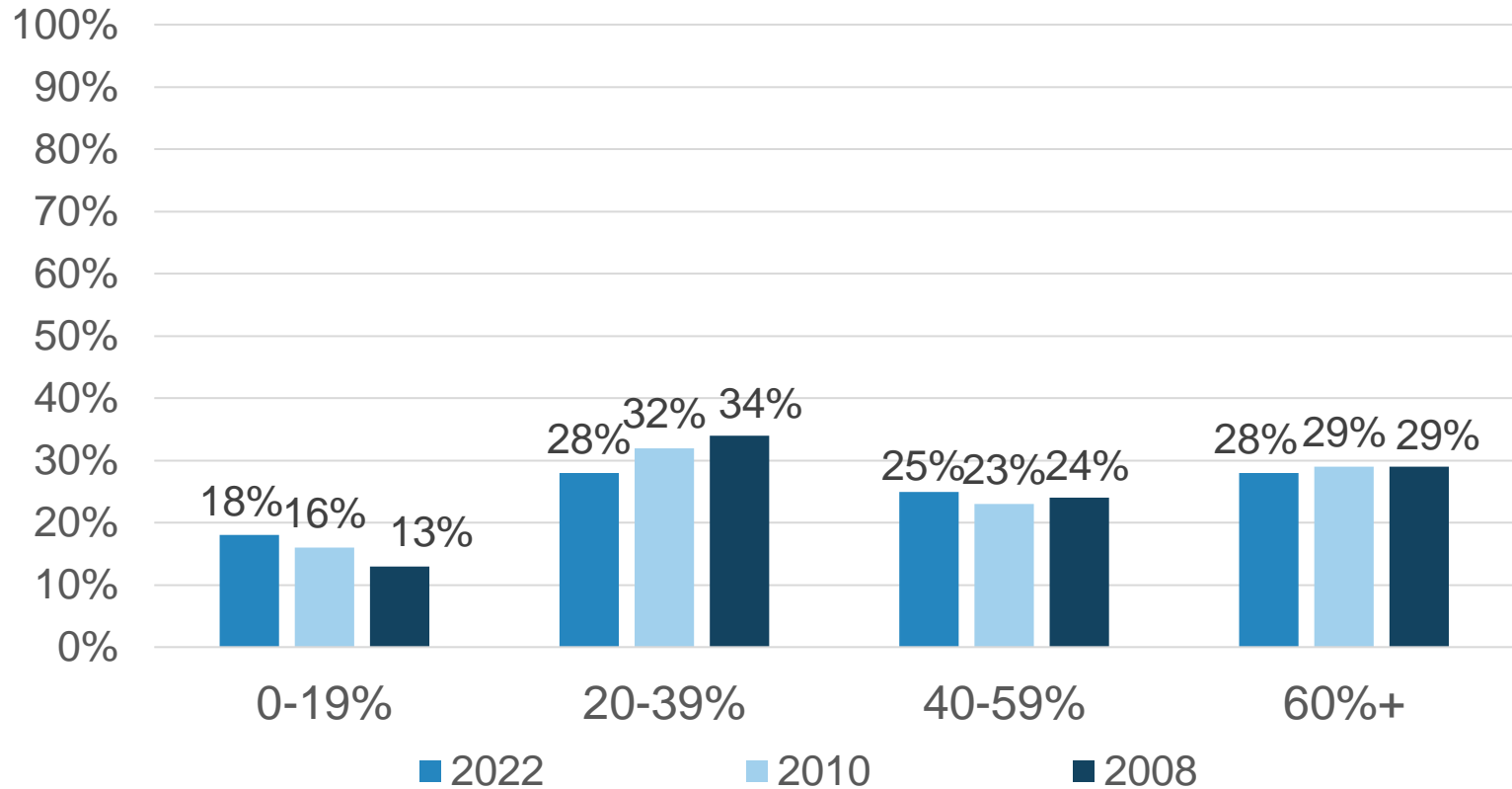
Mean percentage: 42%

Median percentage: 40%

Lifeway research

More churches have less than 20% of their adult attendees volunteering than in 2008 (18% v. 13%)

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The mean and median percentage of adult attendees who have regular responsibilities at their church has been relatively stable for the past 14 years

Among Protestant Pastors

Mean percentage of adults with regular responsibilities at your church:

2022: 42%

2010: 42%

2008: 43%

Median adults with regular responsibilities at your church :

2022: 40%

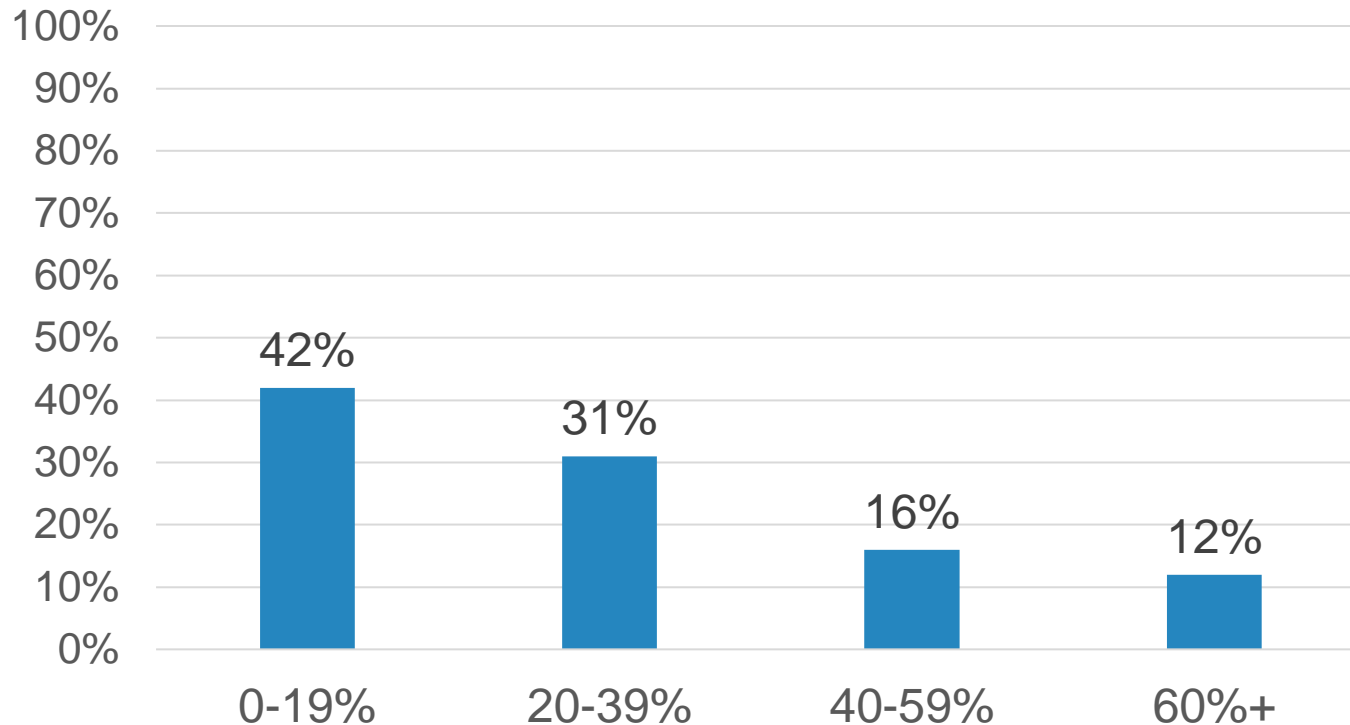
2010: 40%

2008: 40%

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Percentage of adults who serve in their community is lower

Among Protestant Pastors



Mean percentage: 27%

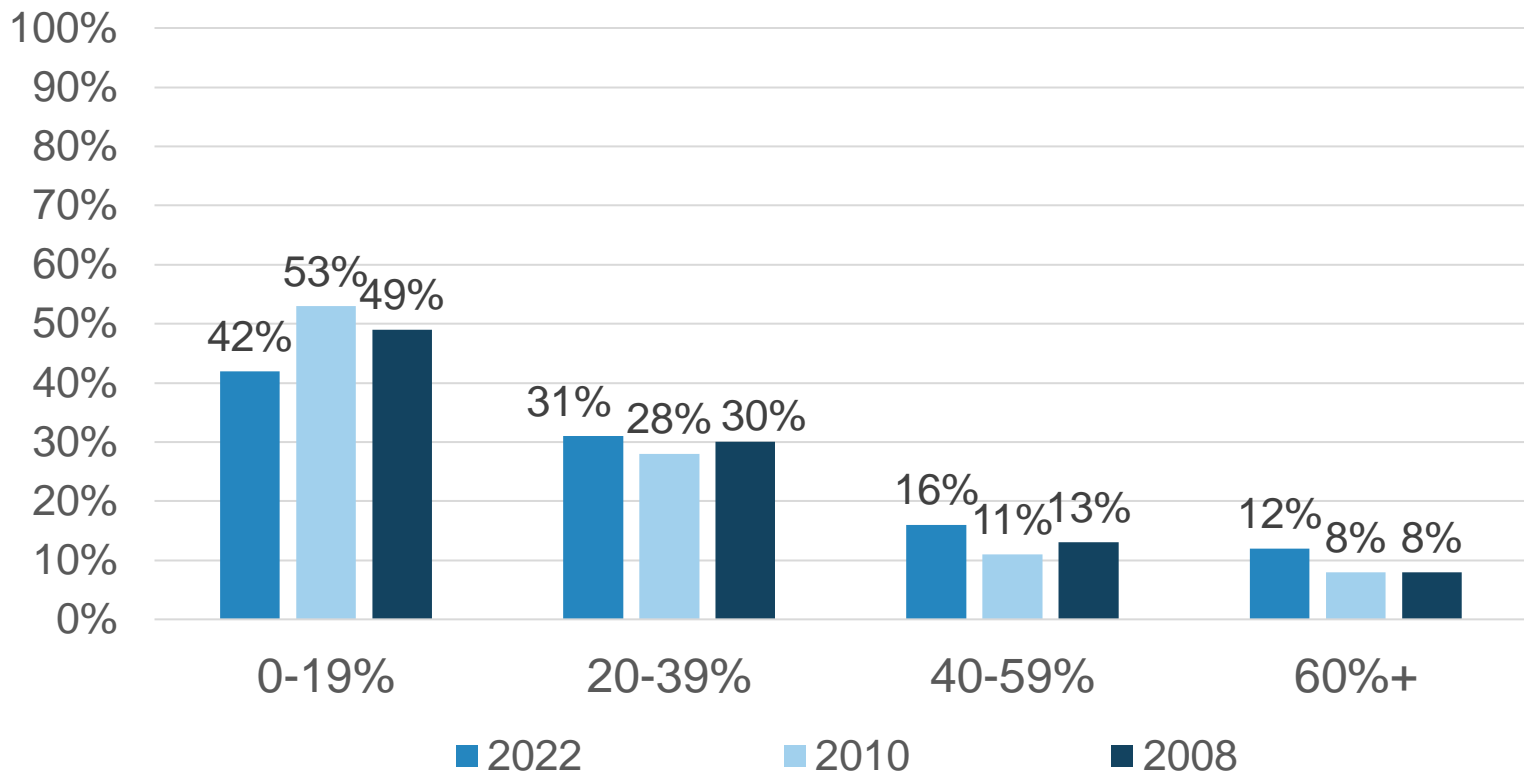
Median percentage: 20%

Lifewayresearch

Q16: "What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church?" n=1,000

More churches have at least 40% of their congregation serving in their community than in 2008 (28% v. 21%)

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Q16: "What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church?"

The mean percentage of adult attendees involved in serving people outside the church has increased since 2010

Among Protestant Pastors

Mean percentage of adults serving in your community:

2022: 27%

2010: 22%

2008: 23%

Median percentage of adults serving in your community :

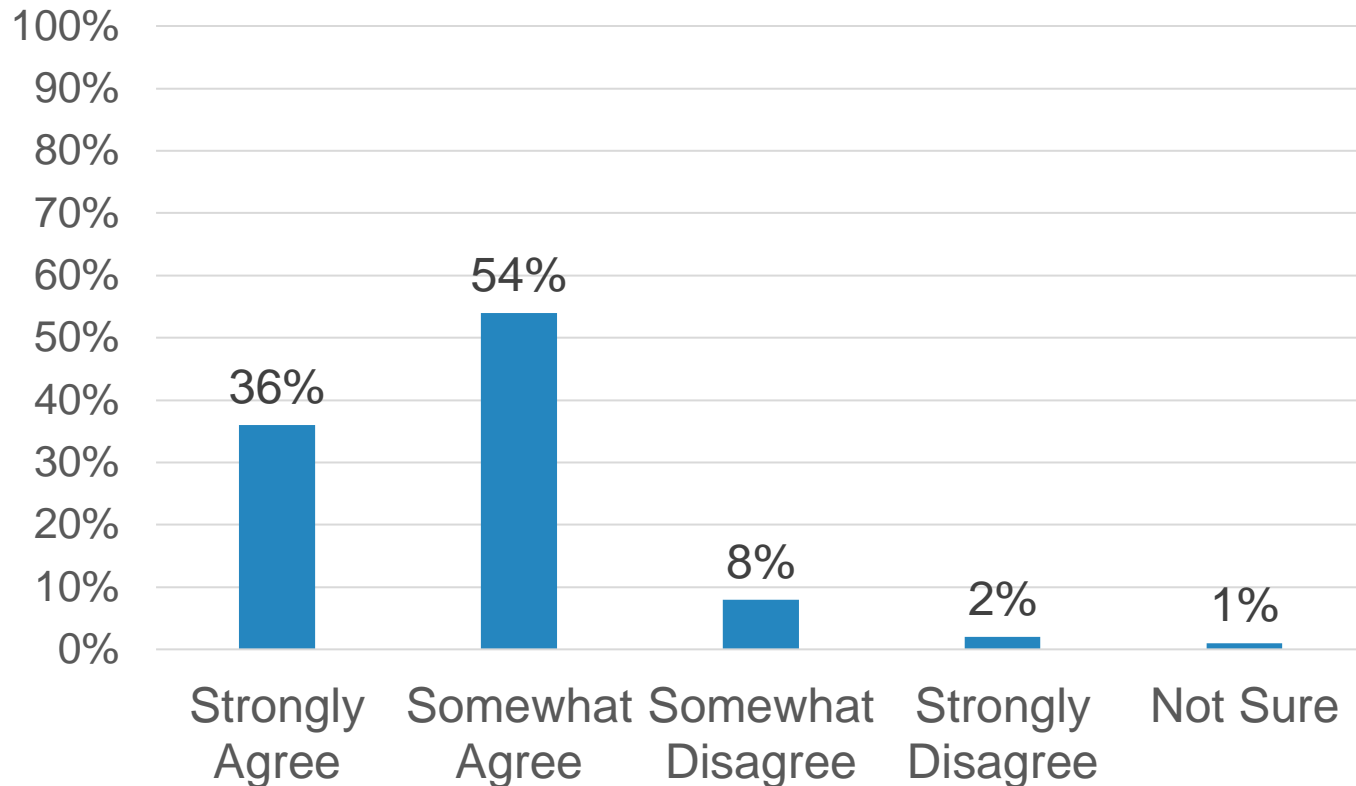
2022: 20%

2010: 15%

2008: 20%

“We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church.”

Among Protestant Pastors

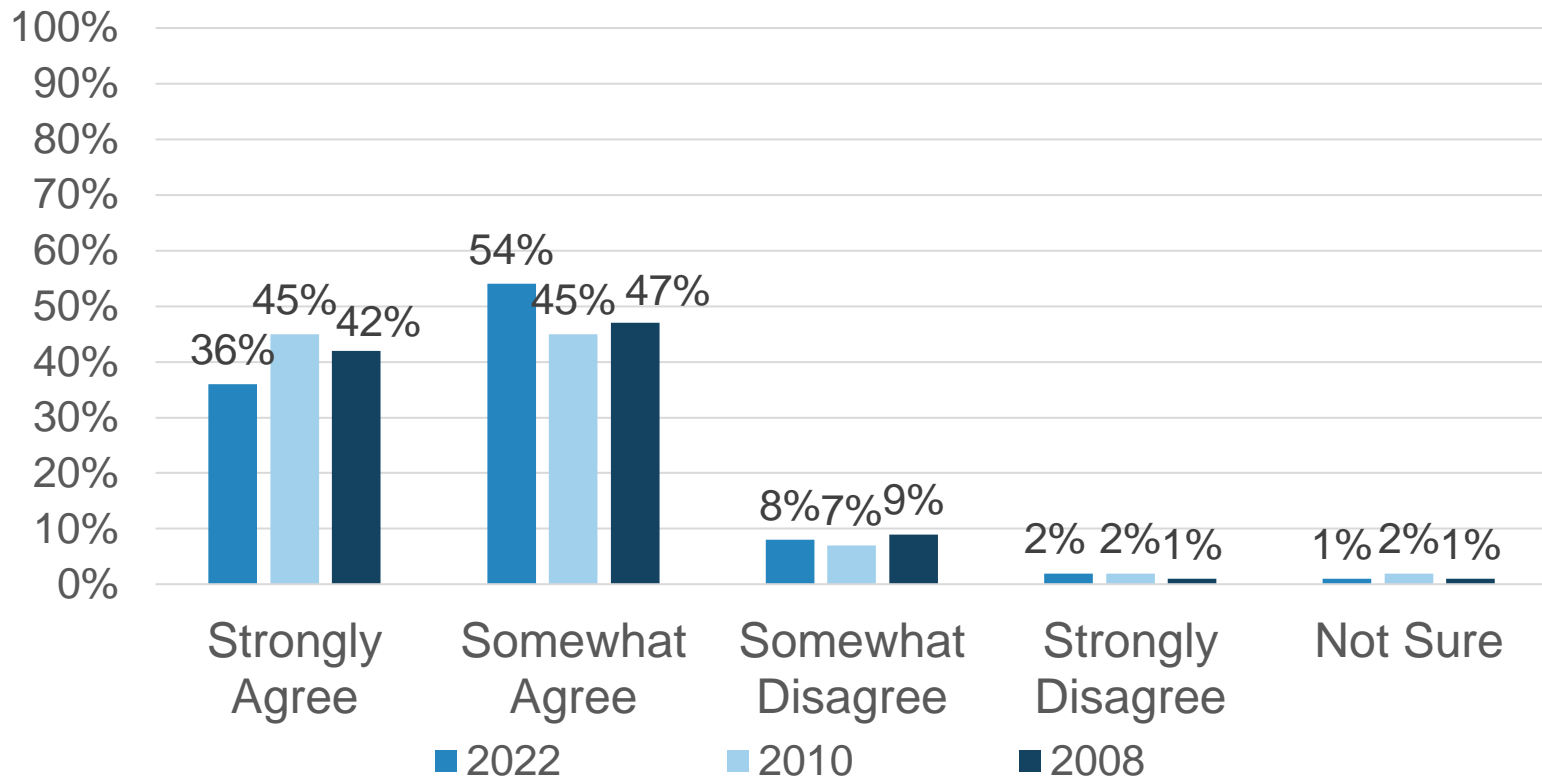


Lifewayresearch

Q17: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.
“We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church.” n=1,000

Today, fewer pastors strongly agree they are consistently hearing reports of changed lives than in 2010 or 2008

Among Protestant Pastors

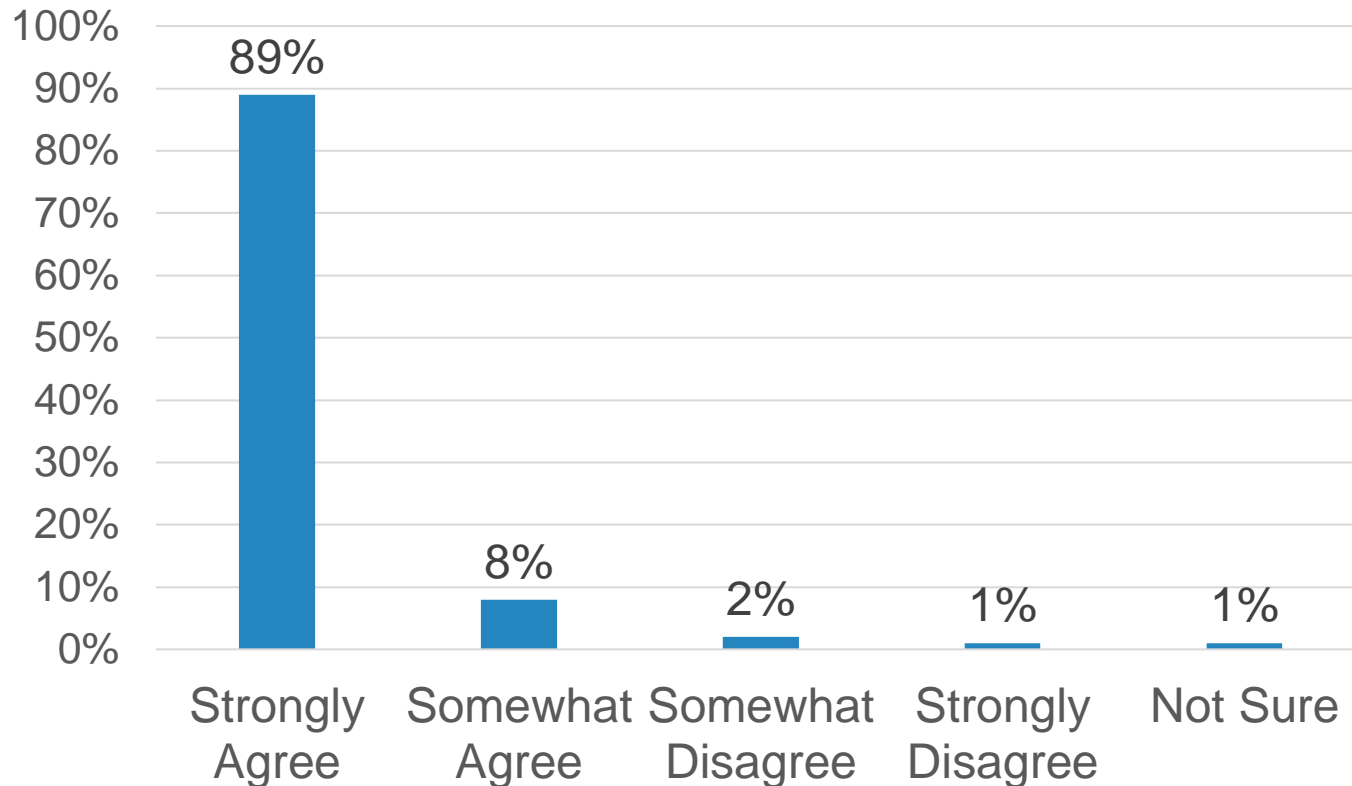


Lifeway research

Q17: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.
"We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church."

“Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives.”

Among Protestant Pastors

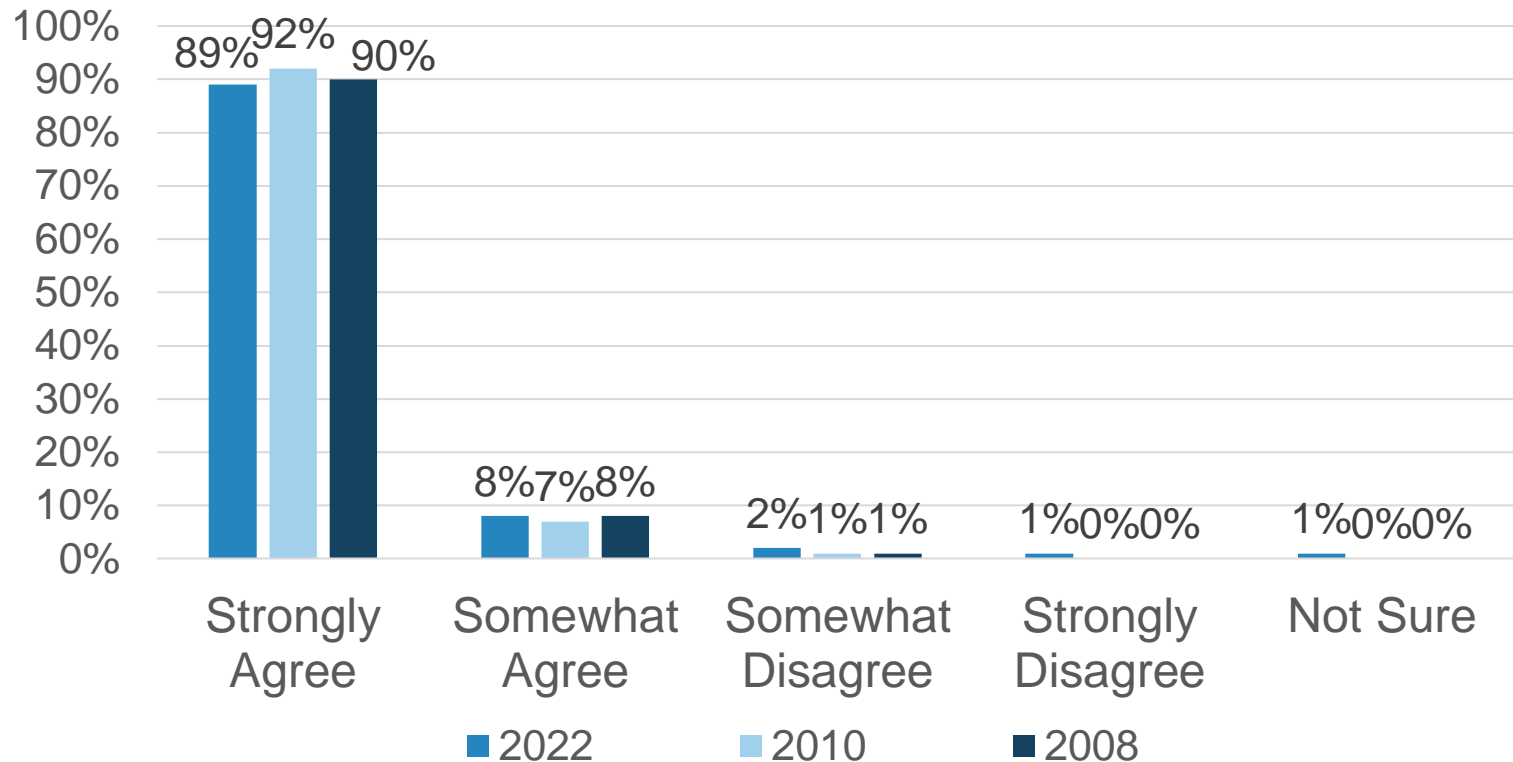


Lifewayresearch

Q18: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.
“Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives.” n=1,000

Protestant pastors consistently consider Scripture to be the authority for their church and their lives

Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Q18: For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.
"Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives."

4 Predictors of higher percent change in worship attendance over a 5-year period

A church's level of participation in small groups, evangelism, assimilation, and the size of the church all predict the level of growth in average worship attendance

Pastors provided their church's average worship attendance for Fall 2017 and 2022. The percentage change in average worship attendance was used as the dependent variable in multi-regression analysis.

The following variables are predictive* of a church's 5-year change in average worship attendance:

- Church size (Fall 2022 average worship attendance)**
- What percentage of your current weekend worship attendance is involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group?
- Among these commitments in the past 12 months, what PERCENTAGE have also become active in the life of your church?
- In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?

*All four of these variables are significant at the 0.15 level

**Forced in the model to control for church size

Significant Differences

Pastor

Ethnicity

Age

Gender

Education Level

Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church

Region

Denomination

Average Attendance

Lifeway research

Significant Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the pastor's ethnicity, age, gender, education, self-identified Evangelical or Mainline.

AGE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	EDUCATION	Self-Identified
18-44	Male	White	No College Degree	Evangelical
45-54	Female	African American	Bachelor's Degree	Mainline
55-64		Hispanic	Graduate Degree	
65+		Other Ethnicities	Doctoral Degree	

Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the church's region, denomination, and attendance.

REGION	DENOMINATION GROUP	ATTENDANCE
Northeast	Baptist	0-49
South	Lutheran	50-99
Midwest	Methodist	100-249
West	Pentecostal	250+
	Presbyterian/Reformed	
	Christian/Church of Christ	
	Non-Denominational	

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations

“What percentage of your current weekend worship attendance is involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group?”

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to report “1-24%” (35%)
- Female pastors are more likely to report “1-24%” than males (33% v. 22%)
- Male pastors are more likely to report “50-74%” than females (33% v. 21%)
- White pastors (32%) and Hispanic pastors (27%) are likely to report “50-74%” than African American pastors (12%)
- Evangelical pastors are more likely to report “50-74%” than Mainline pastors (34% v. 26%)
- Mainline pastors are more likely to report “1-24%” than Evangelical pastors (28% v. 21%)
- Lutherans (34%), Methodists (36%), Presbyterian/Reformed (35%), Christian/Church of Christ (30%), and Nondenominational (33%) are more likely to report “1-24%” than Baptists (13%) and Pentecostals (16%)
- Baptists (29%) are more likely to report “75+%” than Lutherans (8%), Methodists (10%), Presbyterian/Reformed (15%), Christian/Church of Christ (10%), and Nondenominational (9%)

“What percentage of your current weekend worship attendance is involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group?” *Continued*

- Pastors in the South (22%) are more likely to report “75+%” than those in the Northeast (13%) and Midwest (15%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (31%) are more likely to report “1-24%” than those in the South (20%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to report “1-24%” (39%) and the least likely to report “50-74%” (21%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to report “50-74%” (52%)

“In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?”

- Pastors age 55-64 (19%) are the most likely to report “No new commitments” than those age 18-44 (13%)
- Female pastors are more likely to report “No new commitments” than males (26% v. 15%)
- Male pastors are more likely to report “1-4 new commitments” than females (30% v. 22%)
- African American pastors (30%) and Hispanic pastors (30%) are likely to report “20+ new commitments” than White pastors (10%)
- Pastors with no college degree (18%) and a Bachelor’s Degree (17%) are more likely to report “20+ new commitments” than those with a Master’s Degree (10%)
- Mainline pastors are more likely to report “No new commitments” than Evangelical pastors (23% v. 15%)

“In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?”

Continued

- Lutherans (31%), Methodists (21%), and Presbyterian/Reformed (33%) are more likely to report “No new commitments” than Baptists (13%) and Pentecostals (7%)
- Pentecostals are the more likely to report “20+ new commitments” (30%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (24%) and Midwest (21%) are more likely to report “No new commitments” than those in the South (14%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to report “No new commitments” (32%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to report “20+ new commitments” (57%)

“Among these commitments in the past 12 months, how many have ALSO become active in the life of your church?”

- White pastors (59%) are likely to have Retained all new commitments than African American pastors (38%)
- Pastors with a Master’s Degree (62%) and a Doctoral Degree (61%) are more likely to have Retained all new commitments than those with no college degree (47%) and a Bachelor’s Degree (46%)
- Methodists (64%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (77%) are more likely to have Retained all new commitments than Baptists (52%) and Pentecostals (38%) and Non-denominational (45%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+are the least likely to have Retained all new commitments (35%)

“What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month have regular responsibilities at your church (for example, greeter, teacher, childcare, etc.)?”

- Pastors age 55-64 (22%) are more likely to report “0-19%” than those age 18-44 (14%)
- Female pastors are more likely to report “0-19%” than males (23% v. 17%)
- Male pastors are more likely to report “20-39%” than females (30% v. 22%)
- White pastors (29%) are more likely to report “60+%” than African American pastors (15%)
- Pastors with a Doctoral Degree are the most likely to report “60+%” (40%)
- Pastors with no college degree (29%) and a Bachelor’s Degree (24%) are more likely to report “0-19%” than those with a Master’s Degree (15%) and a Doctoral Degree (12%)
- Pentecostals (28%) are more likely to report “0-19%” than Baptists (17%), Methodists (17%), and Presbyterian/Reformed (15%)
- Methodists (29%), Pentecostals (29%), Presbyterian/Reformed (42%), and Christian/Church of Christ (30%), are more likely to report “60+%” than Lutherans (16%)

“What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month have regular responsibilities at your church (for example, greeter, teacher, childcare, etc.)?” Continued

- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to report “0-19%” (24%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to report “40-59%” (37%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 (35%) are more likely to report “60+%” than those with attendance of 50-99 (26%) and 100-249 (25%)

“What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church?”

- Pastors age 18-44 are the least likely to report “0-19%” (33%)
- Pastors age 18-44 (16%) are more likely to report “60+%” than pastors age 55-64 (10%)
- Female pastors are more likely to report “60+%” than males (19% v. 10%)
- Pastors with no college degree (51%) and a Bachelor’s Degree (50%) are more likely to report “0-19%” than those with a Master’s Degree (37%) and a Doctoral Degree (37%)
- Mainline pastors are more likely to report “60+%” than Evangelical pastors (15% v. 9%)
- Baptists (47%), Pentecostals (49%), Christian/Church of Christ (46%), and Non-denominational (46%) are more likely to report “0-19%” than Methodists (31%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 100-249 (37%) are more likely to report “20-39%” than those with attendance of 0-49 (26%)

“We are consistently hearing reports of changed lives at our church.”

- Pastors age 18-44 (92%) are more likely to Agree than pastors age 65+ (86%)
- Pastors with no college degree (96%) and with a Bachelor’s Degree (93%) are more likely to Agree than those with a Master’s Degree (87%)
- Pastors in the South (91%) and West (94%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Midwest (86%)
- Baptists (93%) and Pentecostals (97%) are more likely to Agree than Lutherans (78%), Methodists (84%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (85%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 100-249 (96%) and 250+ (99%) are more likely to Agree than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (82%) and 50-99 (90%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to Disagree (17%)

“Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives.”

- Male pastors are more likely to Agree than females (98% v. 95%)
- Evangelical pastors are more likely to Agree than Mainline pastors (99% v. 95%)
- Pastors in the South (98%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Northeast (95%)
- Baptists (100%) and Pentecostals (100%) are more likely to Agree than Lutherans (96%) and Christian/Church of Christ (96%)

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