

# Pastors' Views on Economic Impact

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

Lifeway research

# Methodology

- The phone survey of 1,004 Protestant pastors was conducted August 29, 2023 - September 20, 2023
- The calling list was a stratified random sample, drawn from a list of all Protestant churches. Quotas were used for church size
- Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest at the church
- Responses were weighted by region and church size to more accurately reflect the population
- The completed sample is 1,004 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

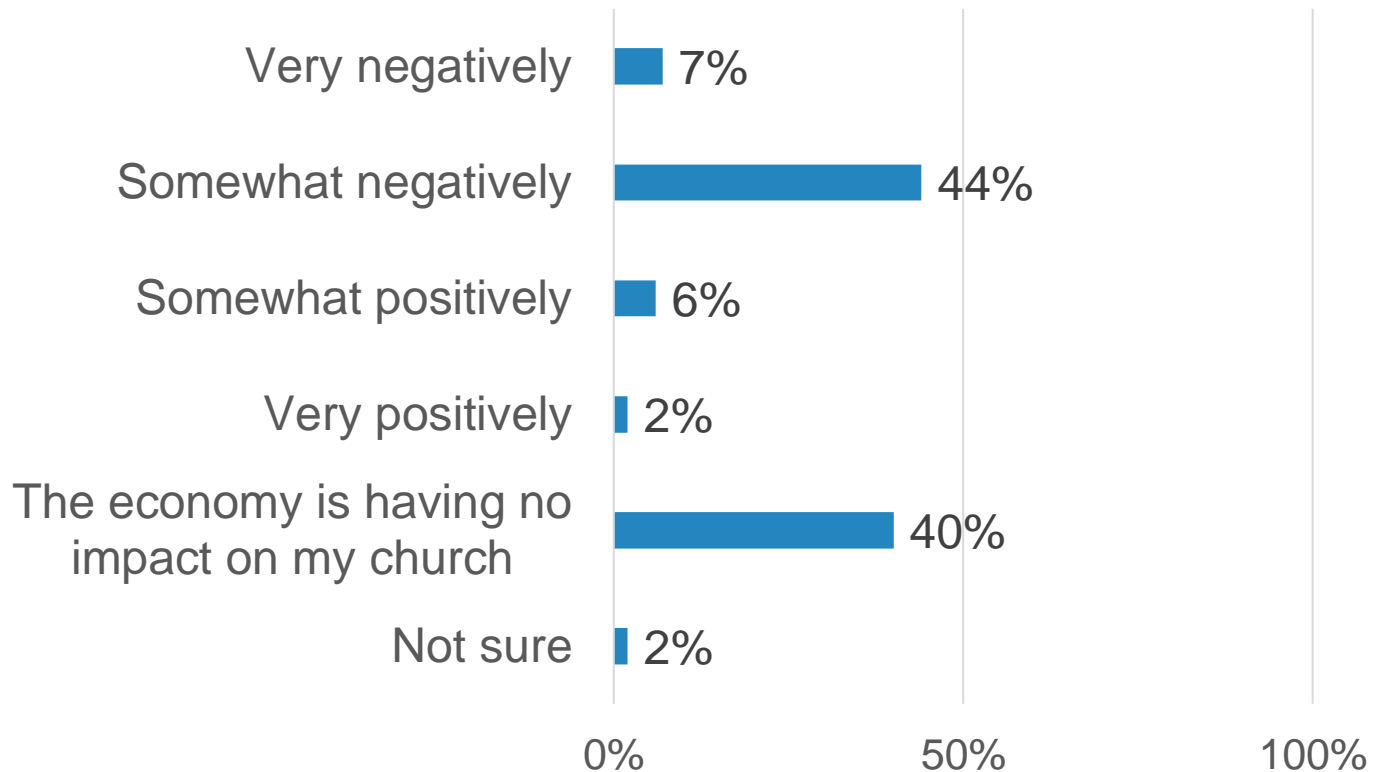
# Methodology

- Comparisons are also made to the following telephone surveys using probability sampling:
  - 1,002 pastors conducted November 5-12, 2009
  - 1,000 pastors conducted March 1-9, 2010
  - 1,000 pastors conducted October 7-14, 2010
  - 1,002 pastors conducted January 17-27, 2011
  - 1,000 pastors conducted May 18-25, 2011
  - 1,000 pastors conducted May 23-31, 2012
  - 1,000 pastors conducted September 11-18, 2014
  - 1,000 pastors conducted January 8-22, 2016
  - 1,000 pastors conducted August 30 – September 18, 2017
  - 1,000 pastors conducted August 29 – September 11, 2018
  - 1,000 pastors conducted August 30 – September 24, 2019
  - 1,007 pastors conducted September 2 – October 2, 2020\*
  - 1,000 pastors conducted September 1-29, 2021
  - 1,000 pastors conducted September 6-30, 2022

\*Mixed-mode telephone and online

# 50% say that the current economy is having a negative impact on their church

Among Protestant Pastors



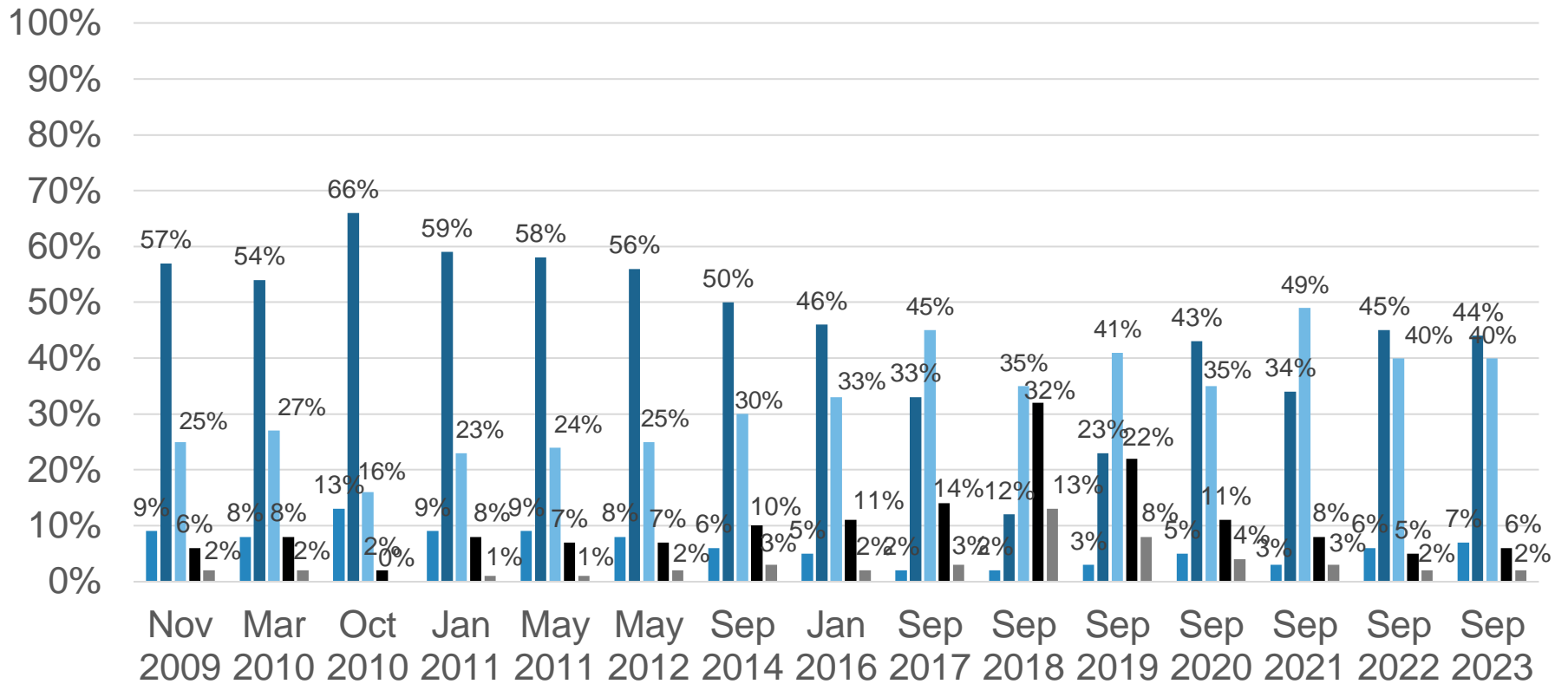
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Q: "How is the current economy impacting your church?" n=1,004

# Pastors have similar perceptions of negative economic negative impact as 2022

Among Protestant Pastors

Very negatively Somewhat negatively No impact Somewhat positively Very positively

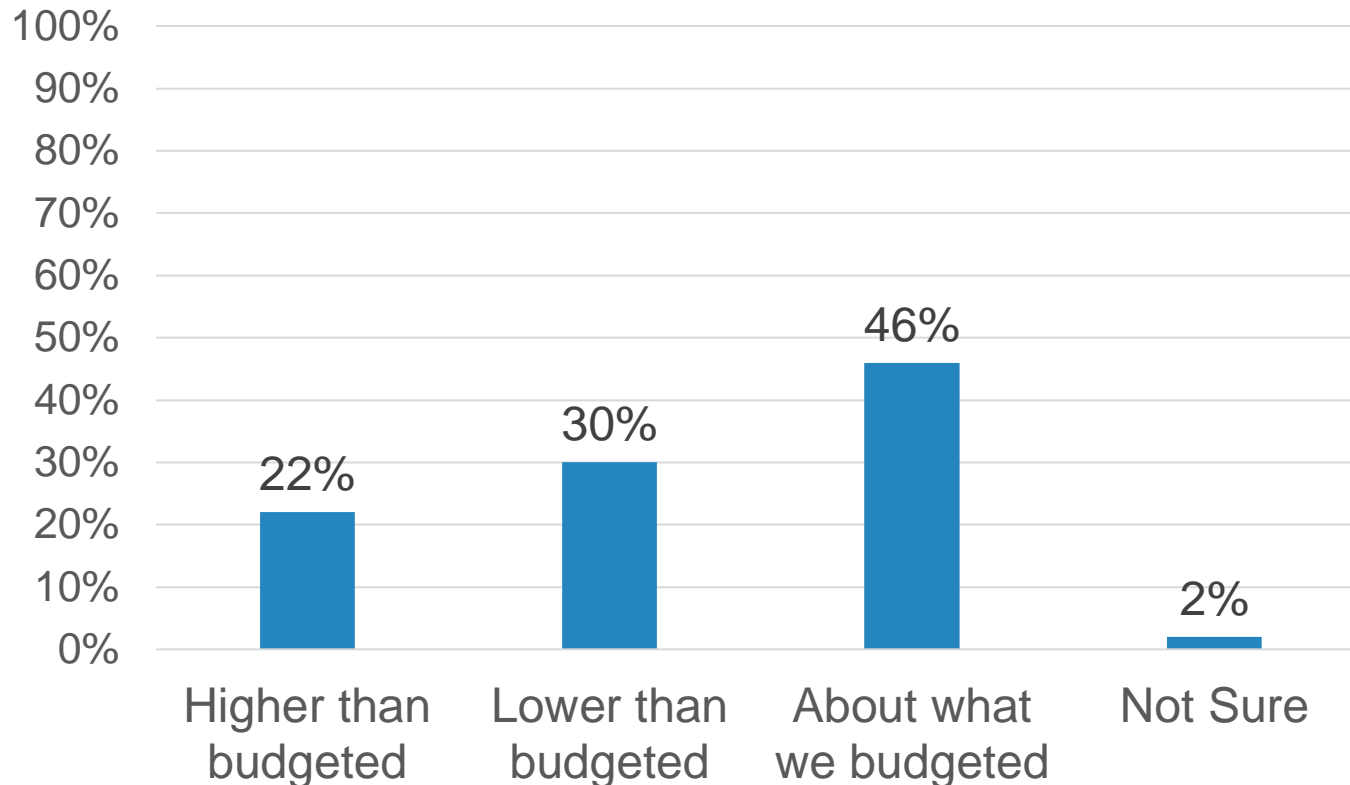


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Q: "How is the current economy impacting your church?"

# 46% say that giving for 2023 is about what was budgeted; 30% say it is lower than budgeted

Among Protestant Pastors

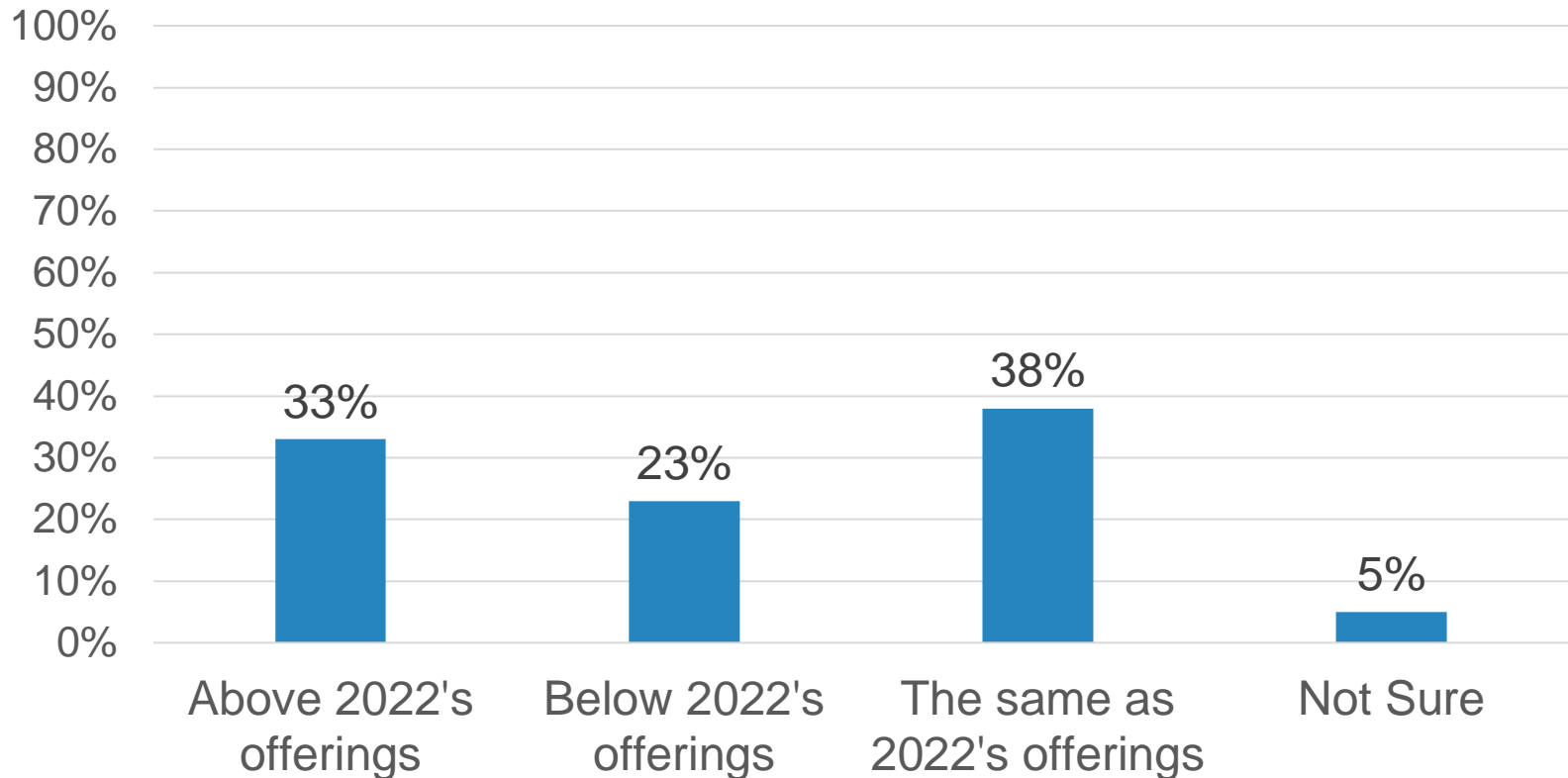


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Q: "Since the beginning of 2023, have your offerings been ..." n=1,004

# 33% say that giving for 2023 is higher than 2022

Among Protestant Pastors

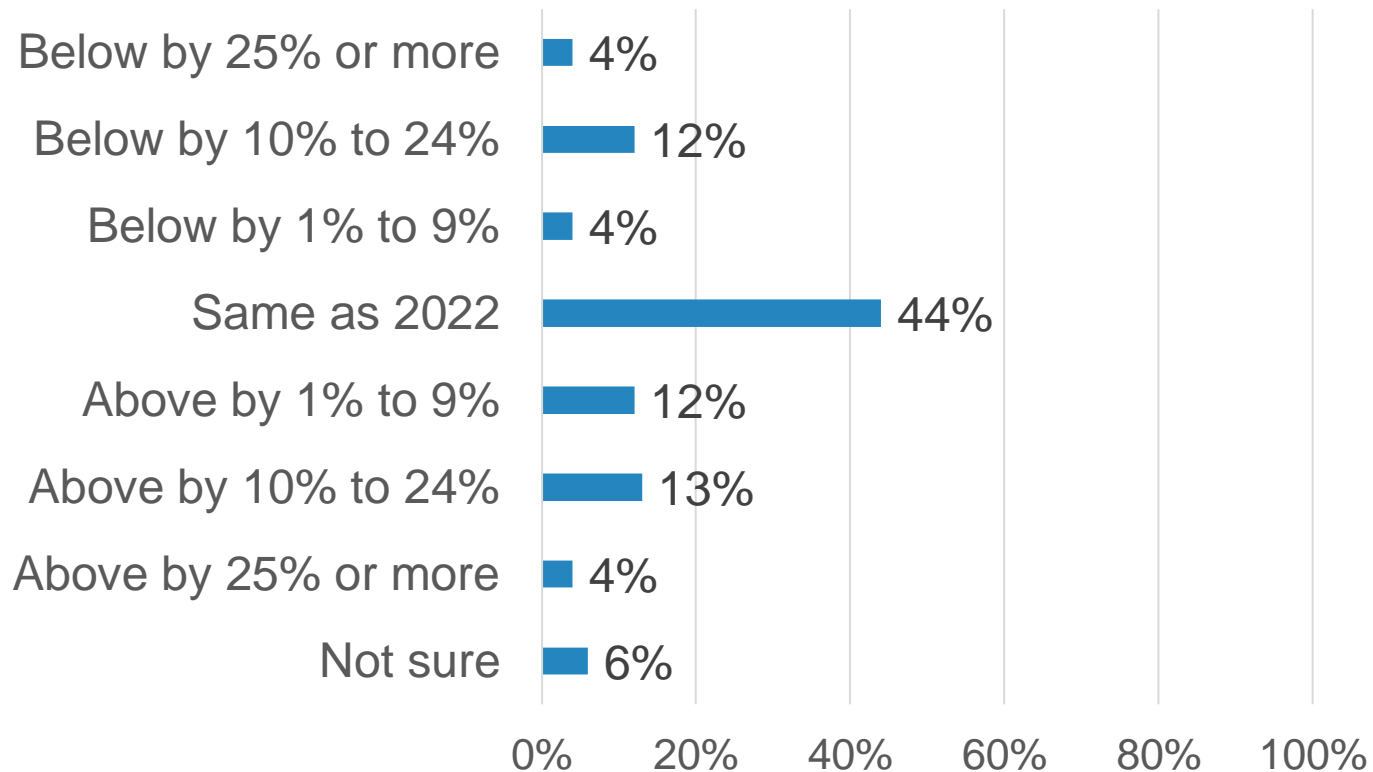


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Q: "Compared to your calendar year 2022 offerings, have your total offerings so far for 2023 been ..." n=1,004

# Percentage offerings are below or above 2022

Among Protestant Pastors



Mean change: +0.79%

Median change: 0%

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Q: "Approximately what percentage are your calendar year 2023 offerings above 2022's offerings?"  
Q: "Approximately what percentage are your calendar year 2023 offerings below 2022's offerings?" n=891



# Significant Differences

Pastor

Ethnicity

Age

Gender

Education Level

Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church

Region

Denomination

Average Attendance

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# 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+			Doctoral Degree	

# Significant Statistical Differences

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

## **“How is the current economy impacting your church?”**

- Female pastors are more likely to select “Very or somewhat positively” than males (11% v. 7%)
- White pastors (42%) are more likely to select “The economy is having no impact on my church” than African American pastors (22%)
- African American pastors are the most likely to select “Very or somewhat positively” (25%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to select “Very or somewhat positively” (15%)
- Methodists (56%) are more likely to select “Very or somewhat negatively” than Lutherans (40%) and Pentecostals (37%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the least likely to select “Very or somewhat negatively” (34%)

## **“Since the beginning of 2023, have your offerings been?”**

- Pastors age 65+ (35%) are more likely to select “Lower than budgeted” than pastors age 18-44 (27%)
- Female pastors are more likely to select “Lower than budgeted” than males (38% v. 28%)
- White pastors (47%) are more likely to select “About what we budgeted” than African American pastors (32%)
- African American pastors (47%) are more likely to select “Lower than budgeted” than White pastors (29%)
- Lutherans (53%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (53%) are more likely to select “About what we budgeted” than Baptists (41%)
- Methodists (39%) and Non-denominational (40%) are more likely to select “Lower than budgeted” than Pentecostals (23%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (23%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 (35%) and 50-99 (32%) are more likely to select “Lower than budgeted” than those at churches with attendance of 250+ (18%)

## **“Compared to your calendar year 2022 offerings, have your total offerings so far for 2023 been ...”**

- Pastors age 65+ (44%) are more likely to select “The same as 2022’s offerings” than pastors age 18-44 (34%)
- Male pastors are more likely to select “Above 2022’s offerings” than females (35% v. 26%)
- Pastors with no college degree (30%) are more likely to select “Below 2022’s offerings” than those with a Master’s Degree (20%)
- Pastors in the Midwest (43%) are more likely to select “The same as 2022’s offerings” than those in the South (34%)
- Methodists (28%) and Christian/Church of Christ (33%) are more likely to select “Below 2022’s offerings” than Presbyterian/Reformed (16%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 (27%) and 50-99 (24%) are more likely to select “Below 2022’s offerings” than those at churches with attendance of 250+ (11%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select “Above 2022’s offerings” (57%)

## **“Approximately what percentage are your calendar year 2023 offerings above/below 2022’s offerings?”**

- Pastors age 65+ (51%) are more likely to answer “Same as 2022” than pastors age 18-44 (38%) and 45-54 (41%)
- Male pastors are more likely to answer “Above by 1-9%” than females (13% v. 6%)
- White pastors are the most likely to answer “Above by 1-9%” (14%)
- Pastors with no college degree (16%) and a Bachelor’s Degree (14%) are more likely to answer “Below by 10-24%” than those with a Master’s Degree (9%)
- Pastors in the South (6%) are more likely to answer “Above by 25% or more” than those in the Midwest (3%)
- Lutherans (52%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (56%) are more likely to answer “Same as 2022” than Pentecostals (34%) and Christian/Church of Christ (32%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 100-249 (17%) and 250+ (20%) are more likely to answer “Above by 10-24%” than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (9%)

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