

Church Switcher Study 2023

Reasons for Switching Churches Report

A SURVEY OF 1,001 AMERICAN PROTESTANT CHURCH SWITCHERS

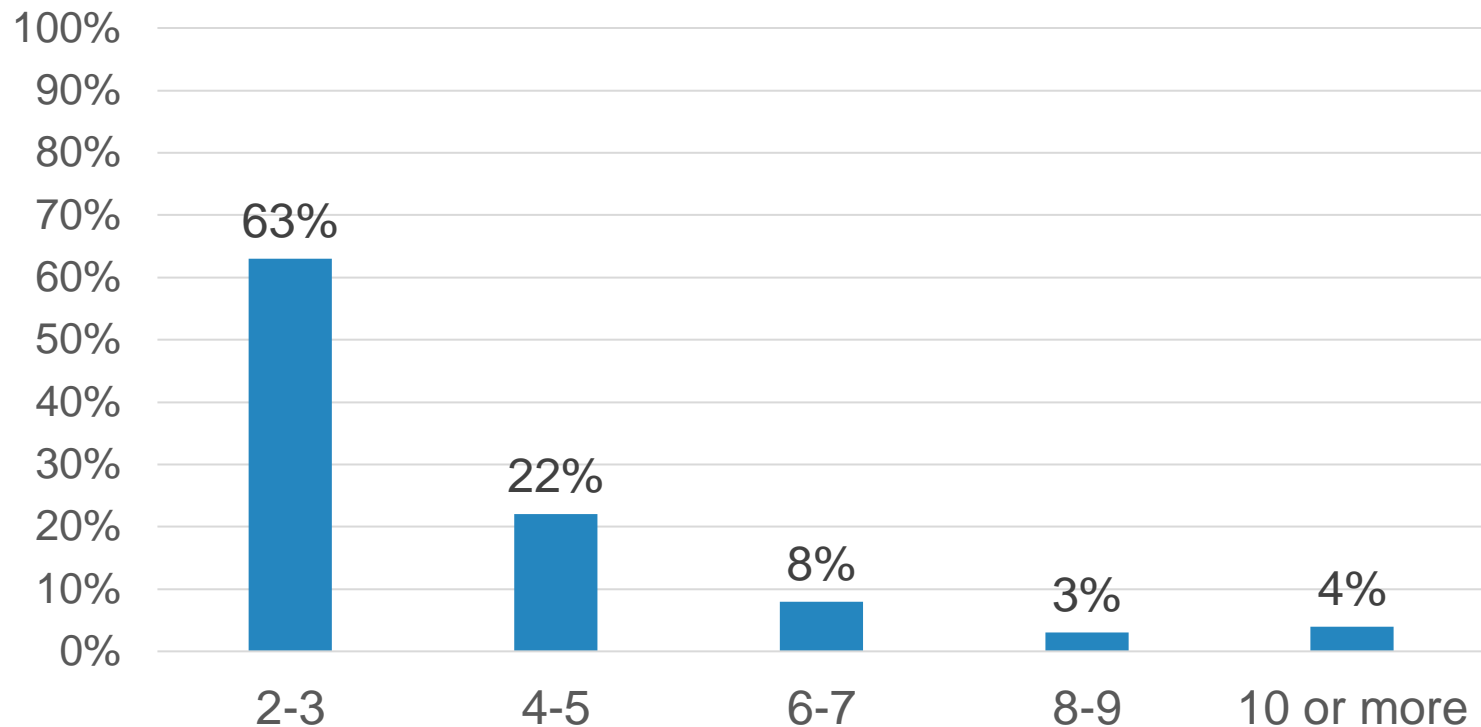
Lifewayresearch

Methodology

- The online survey of 1,001 American Protestant churchgoers was conducted July 26-August 4, 2023, using a national pre-recruited panel
- Respondents were screened to include those who identified as Protestant/non-denominational who attend church worship services at least twice a month and have attended more than one church as an adult
- Note: During the screening, it was determined that 47% of Protestants who attend church worship services at least twice a month have only attended one church as an adult
- Quotas were used to balance gender, age, region, ethnicity, education, and religion to more accurately reflect the population
- The completed sample is 1,001 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the panel does not exceed $\pm 3.1\%$. This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

Among Protestant churchgoers who have regularly attended more than one church as an adult, 85% have regularly attended less than six

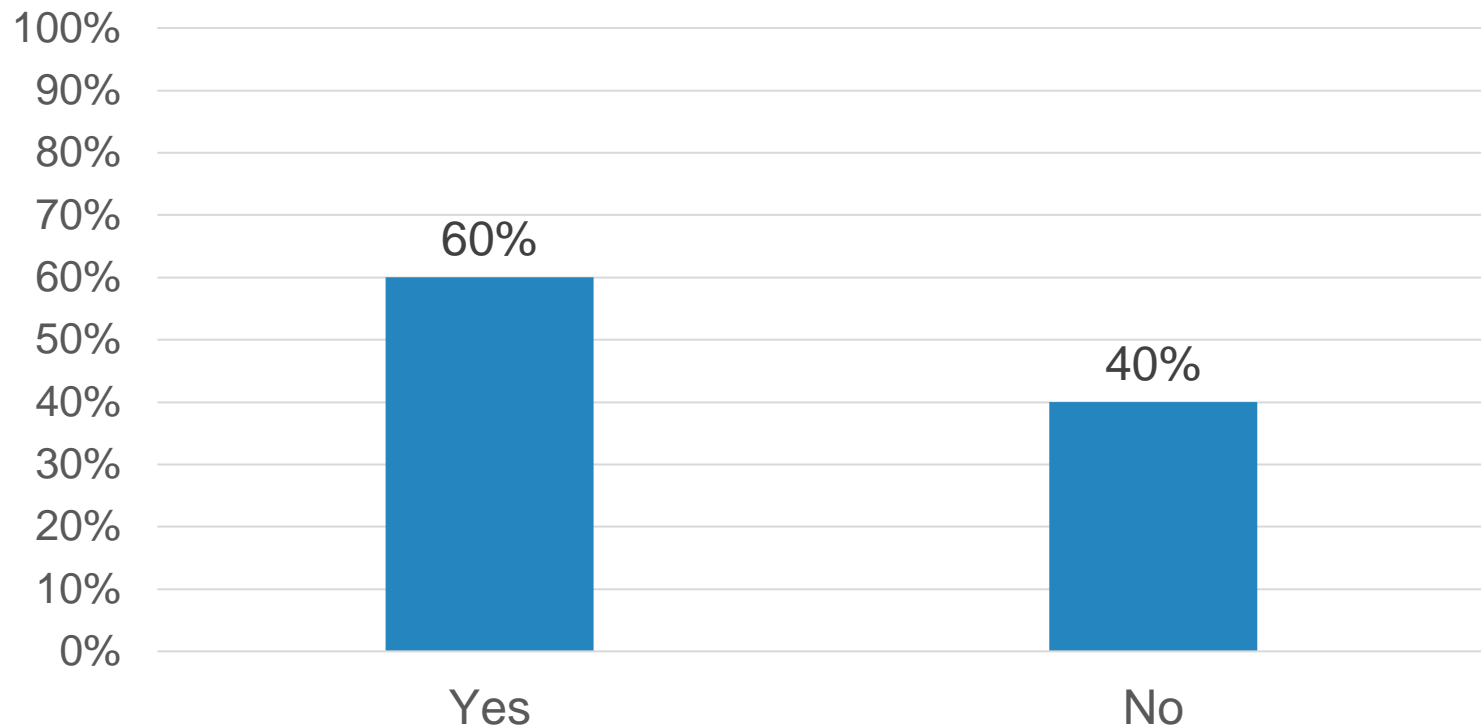
Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



Lifeway research

60% decided to attend their current church due to a residential move

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



Lifeway research

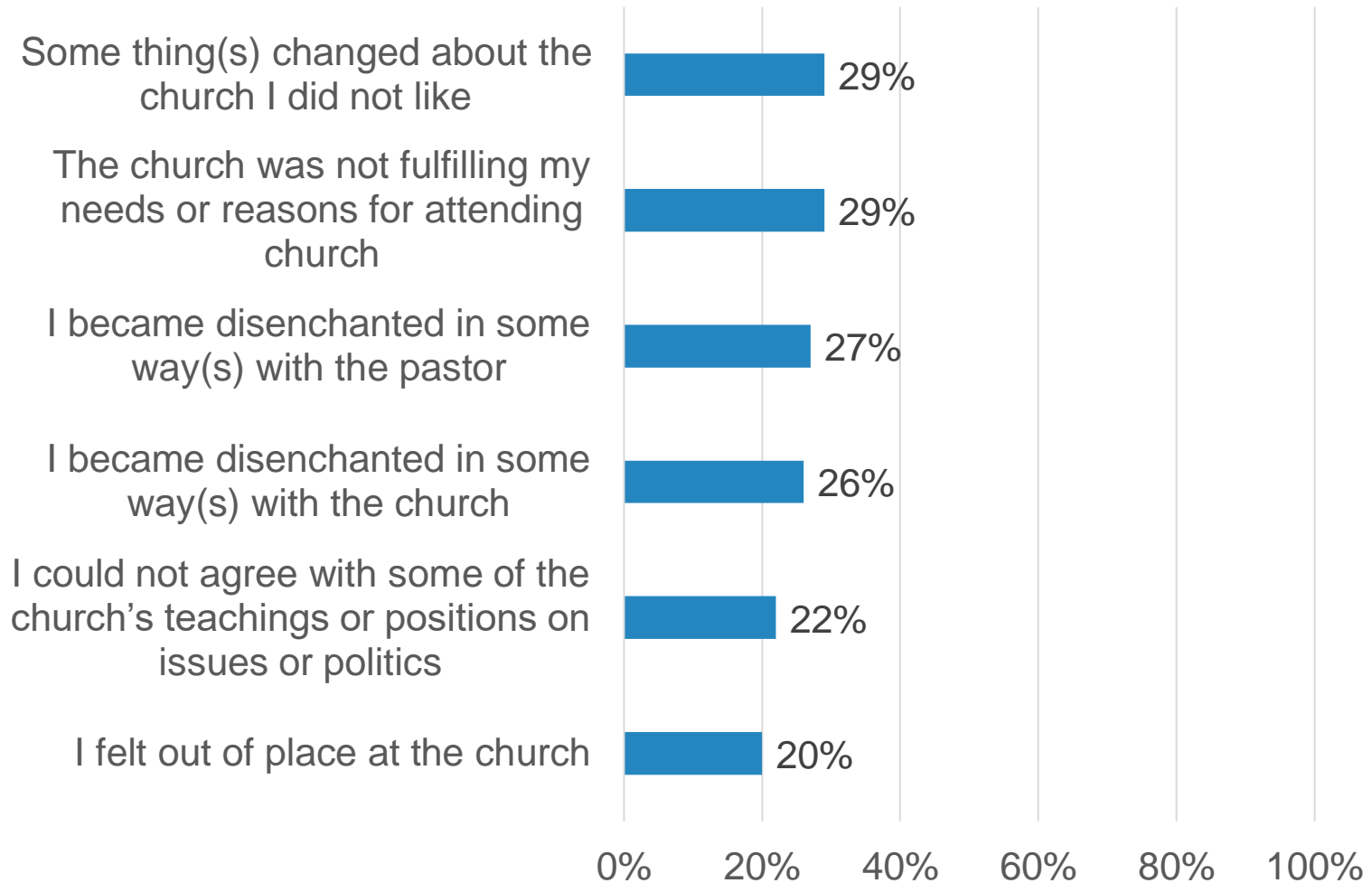
QS10: "Is your decision to attend your current church at all related to a **residential move**? (Select one)
(Whether or not it is the first church you've attended since you moved)" n=1,001

Factors influencing adults to switch churches (other than a residential move)

Lifeway research

“What are ALL the reasons that you no longer attend your previous church?”

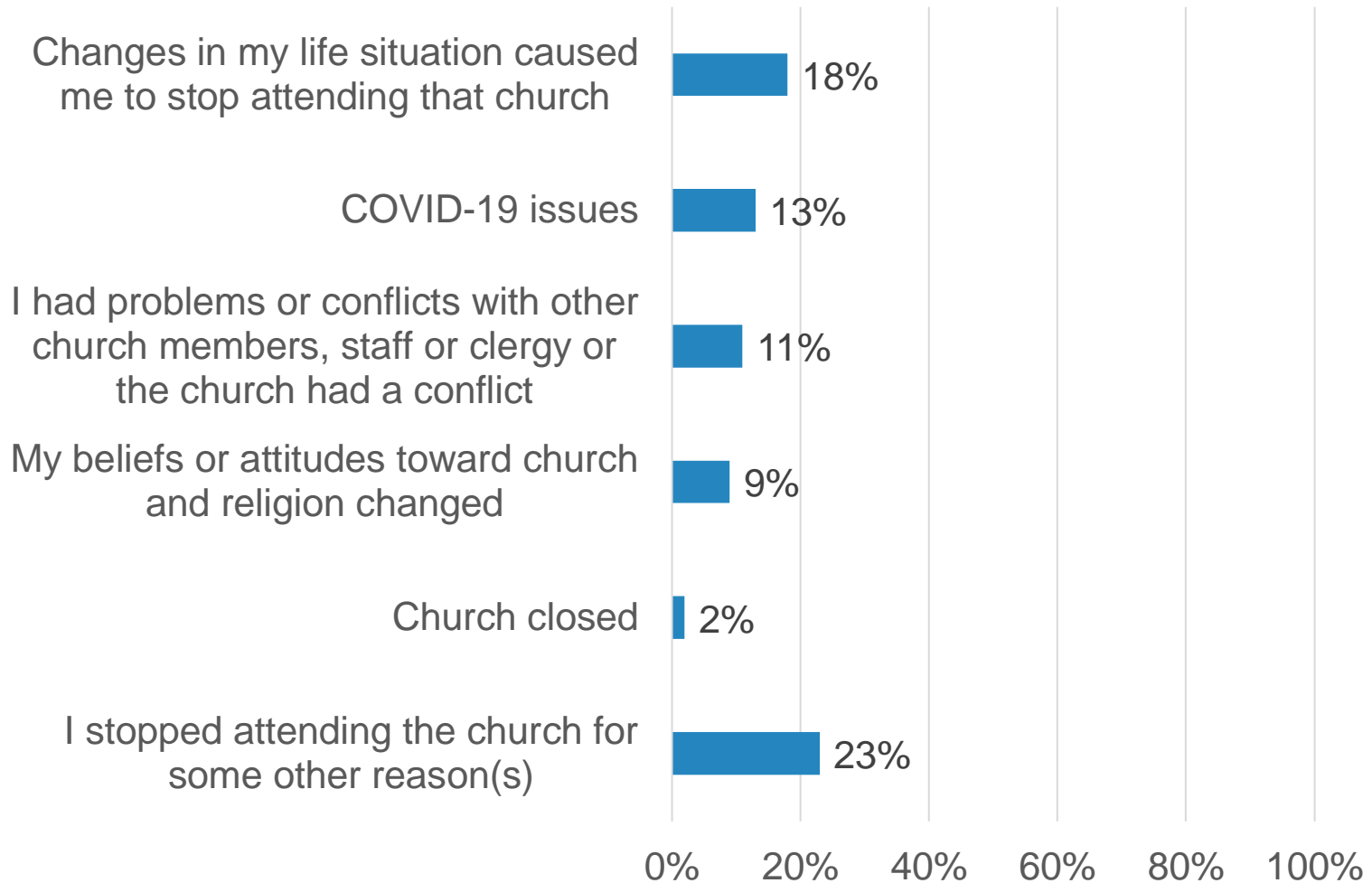
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifeway research

“What are ALL the reasons that you no longer attend your previous church?” *Continued*

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



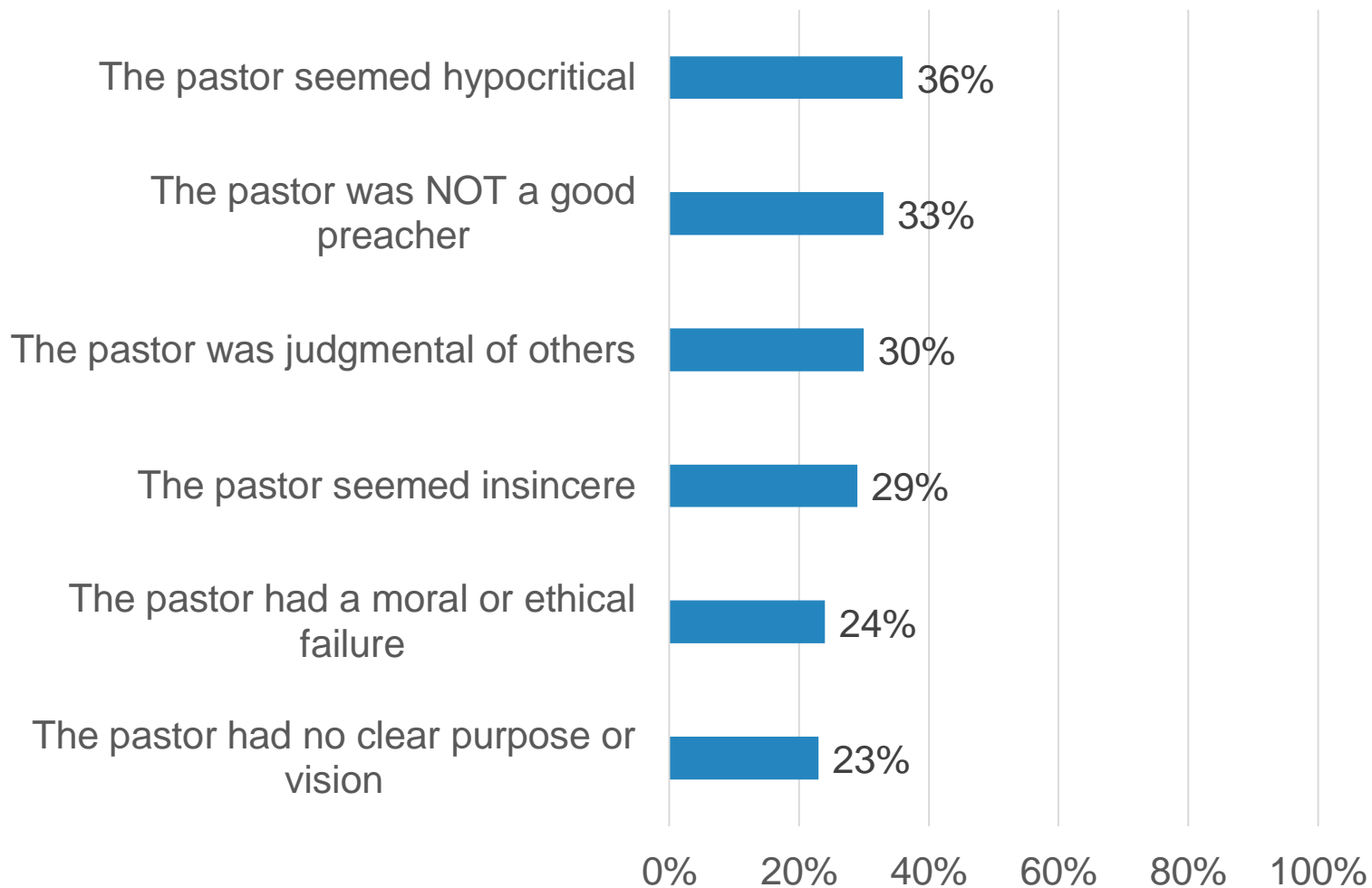
Lifewayresearch

Non-Movers: “What are ALL the reasons that you no longer attend your previous church?”

	2023	2006
Some thing(s) changed about the church I did not like	29%	33%
The church was not fulfilling my needs or reasons for attending church	29%	44%
I became disenchanted in some way(s) with the pastor	27%	Not asked
I became disenchanted in some way(s) with the church	26%	Not asked
I became disenchanted in some way(s) with the Pastor or church as whole (2023 = percentage selecting either two options above)	33%	51%
I could not agree with some of the church’s teachings or positions on issues or politics	22%	27%
I felt out of place at the church	20%	31%
Changes in my life situation caused me to stop attending that church	18%	21%
COVID-19 issues	13%	Not asked
I had problems or conflicts with other church members, staff or clergy or the church had a conflict	11%	17%
My beliefs or attitudes toward church and religion changed	9%	7%
I stopped attending the church for some other reason(s) (including church closed)	26%	21%

“Why did you become disenchanted with the pastor?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

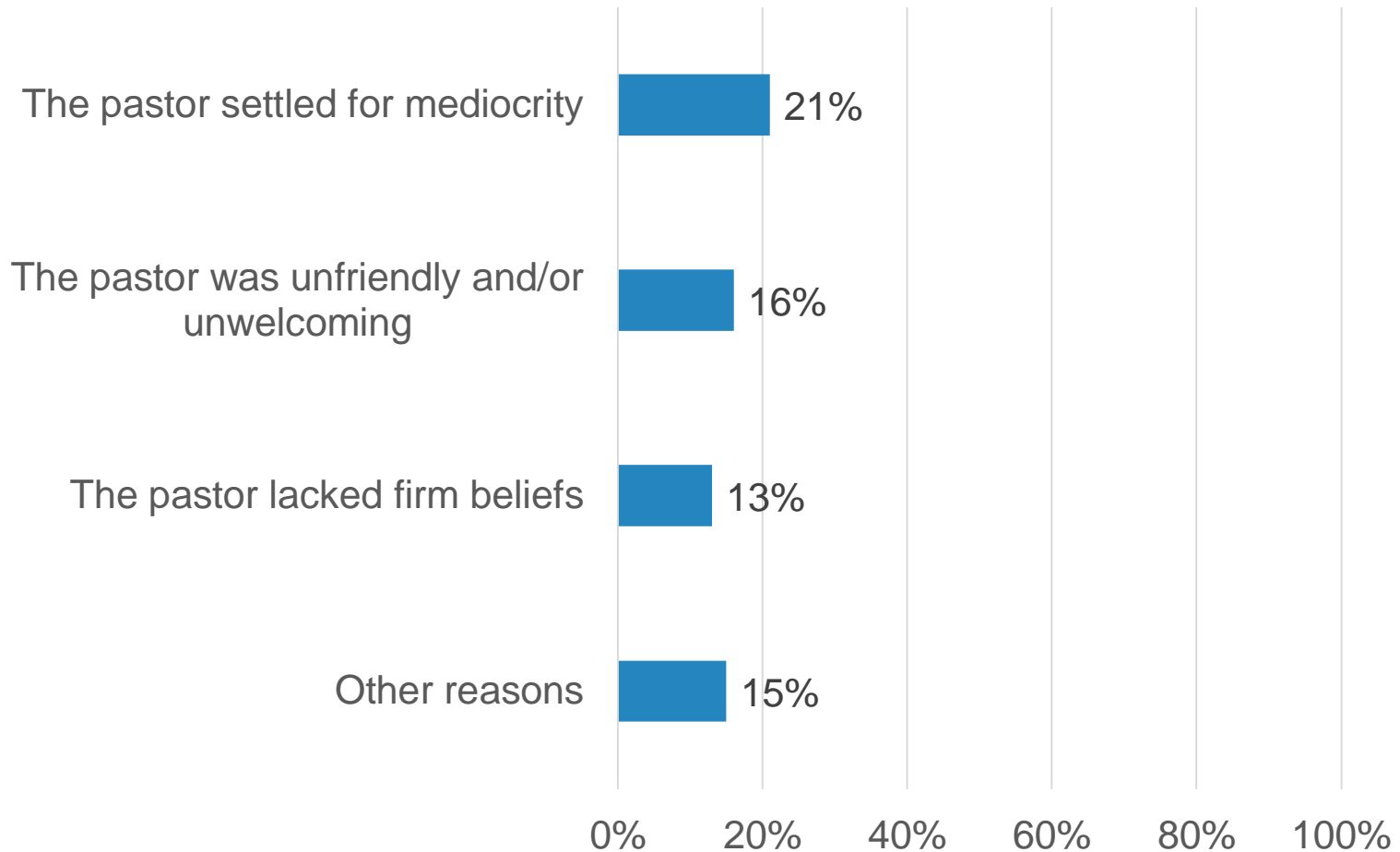


Lifewayresearch

Q11a: “Why did you become disenchanted with the pastor? (Select all that apply)” n=111

“Why did you become disenchanted with the pastor?” *Continued*

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

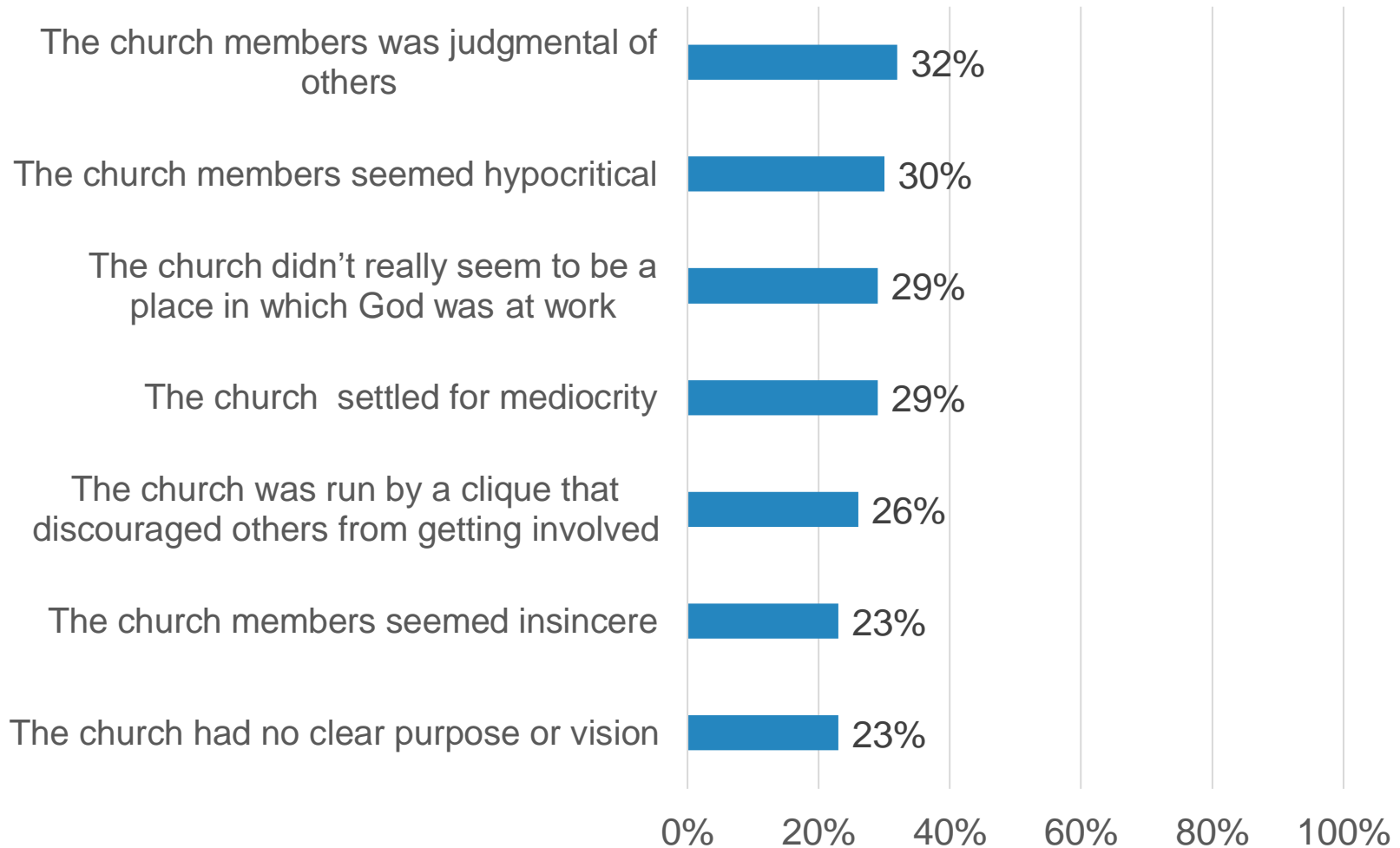


Lifeway research

Q11a: “Why did you become disenchanted with the pastor? (Select all that apply)” n=111

“Why did you become disenchanted with the church?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

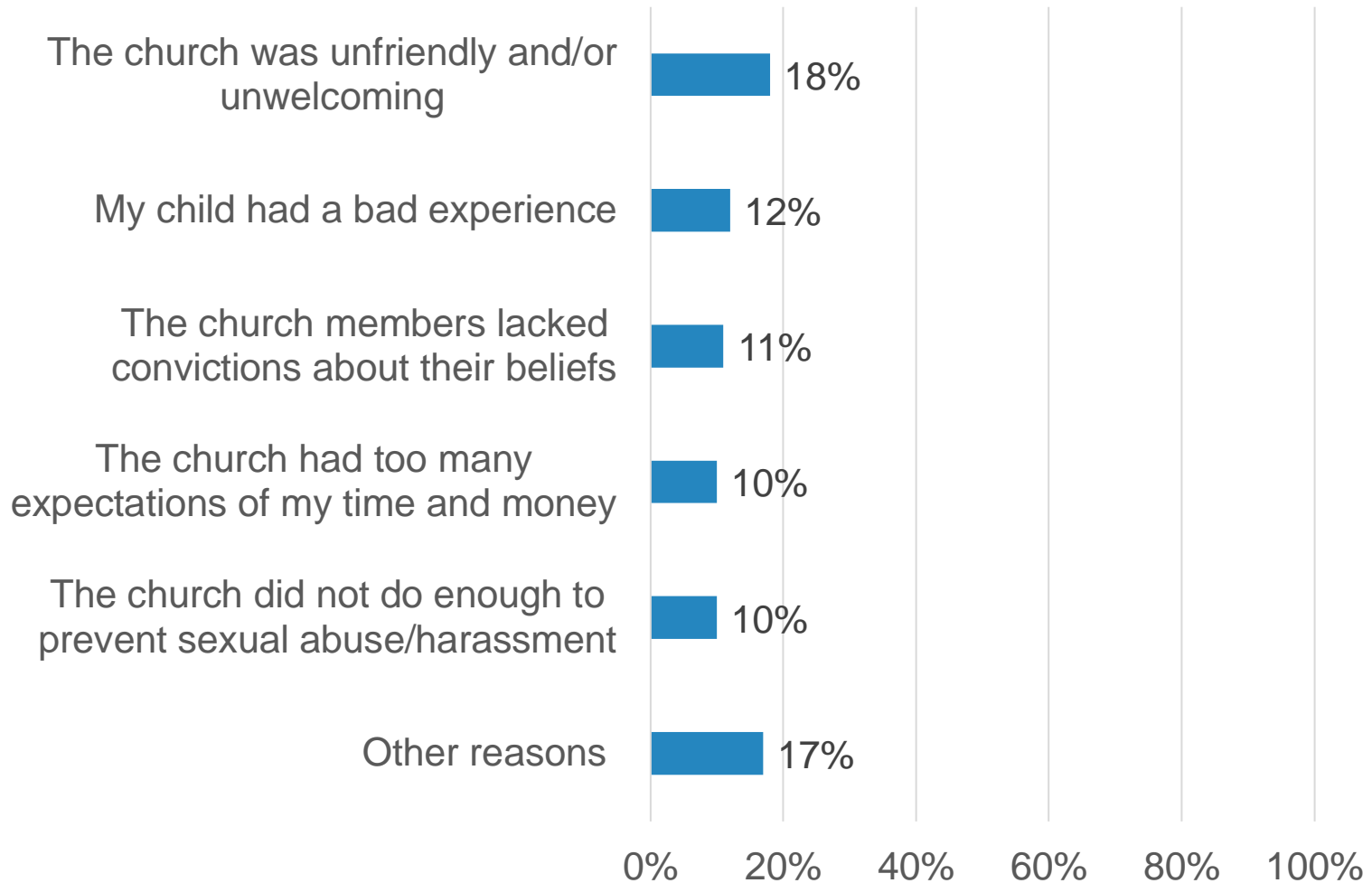


Lifewayresearch

Q11b: “Why did you become disenchanted with the church? (Select all that apply)” n=105

“Why did you become disenchanted with the church?” *Continued*

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

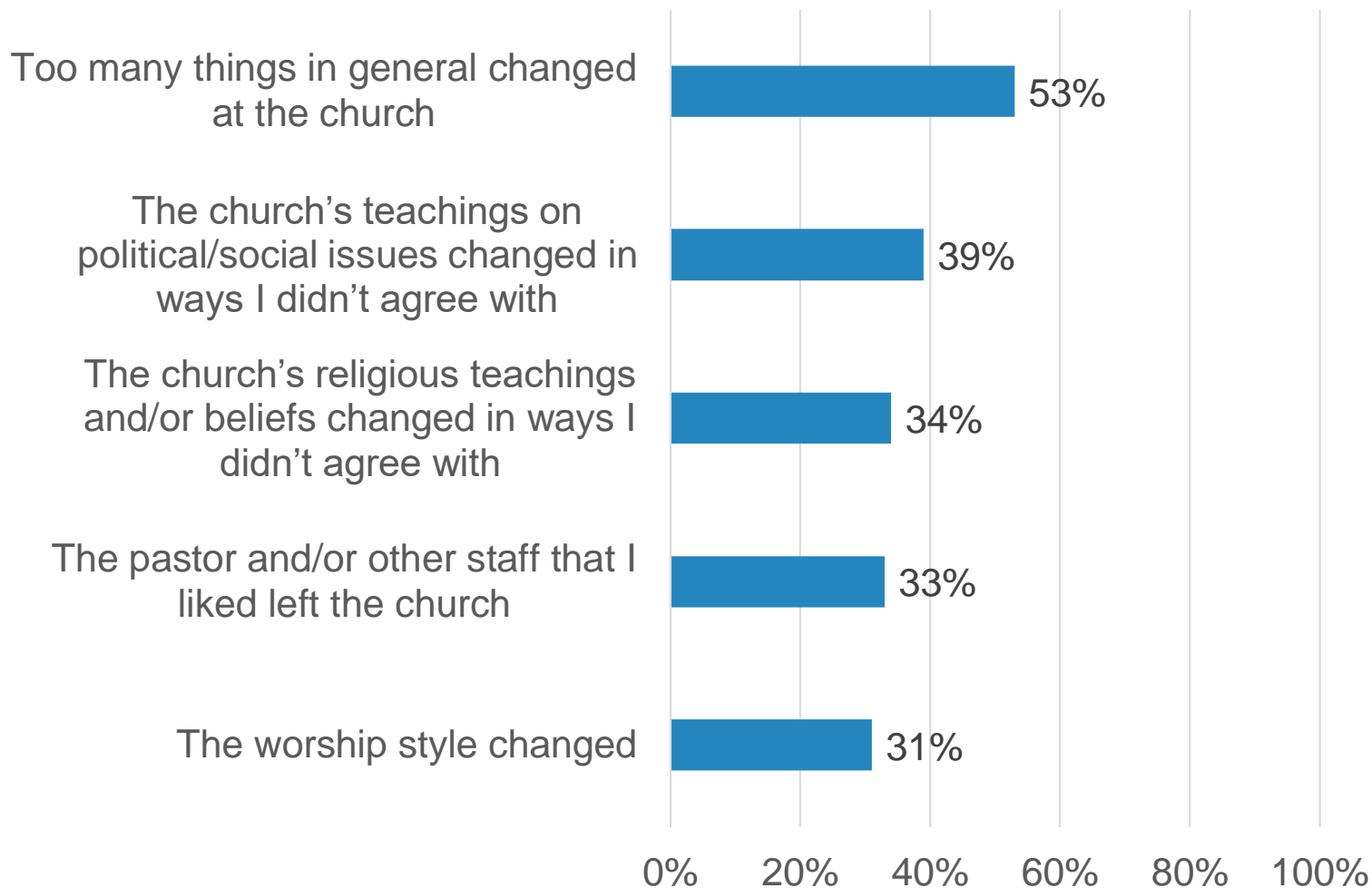


Lifewayresearch

Q11b: “Why did you become disenchanted with the church? (Select all that apply)” n=105

“What changed about the church that you did not like?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

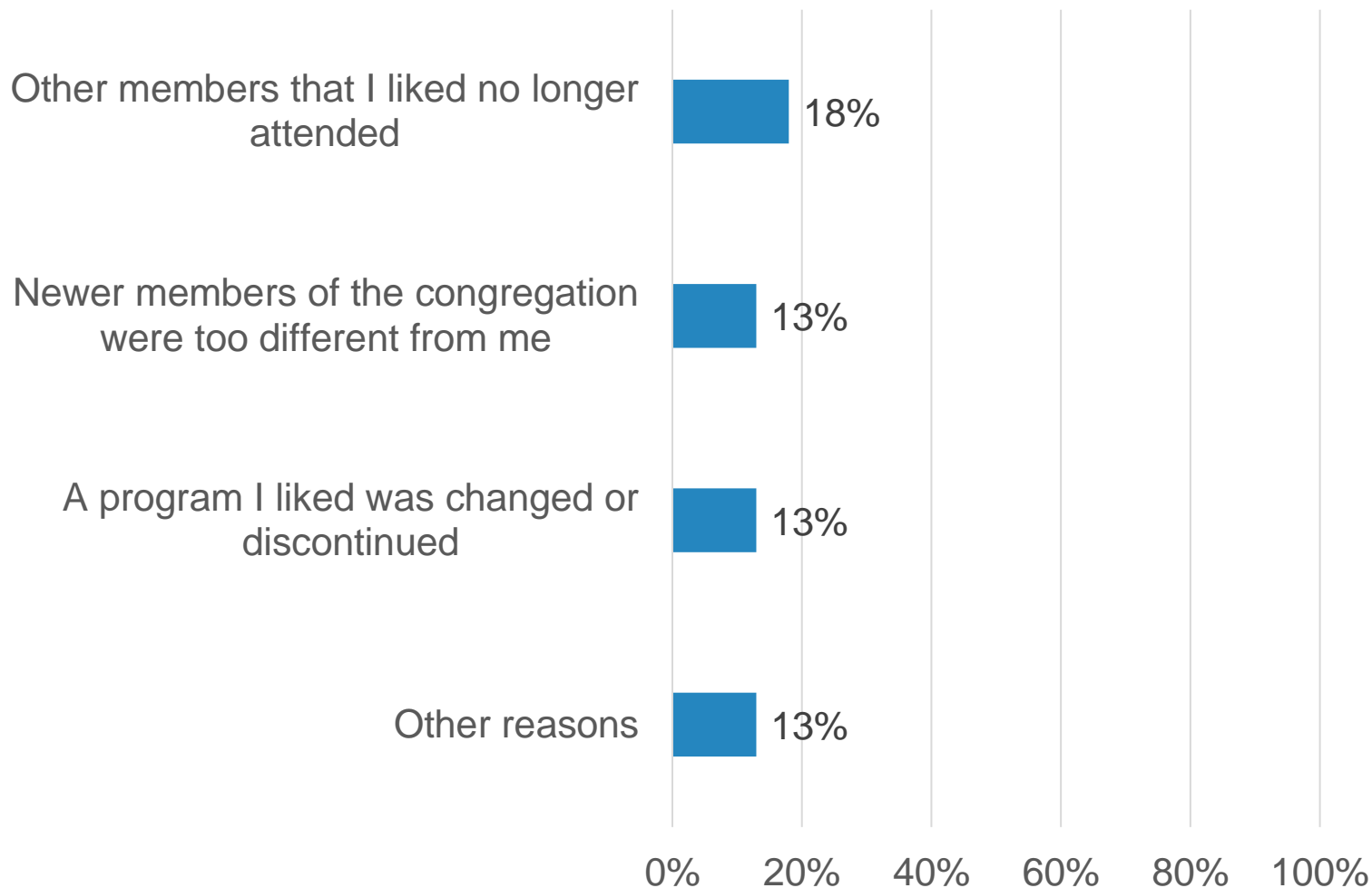


Lifewayresearch

Q11c: “What changed about the church that you did not like? (Select all that apply)” n=119

“What changed about the church that you did not like?” *Continued*

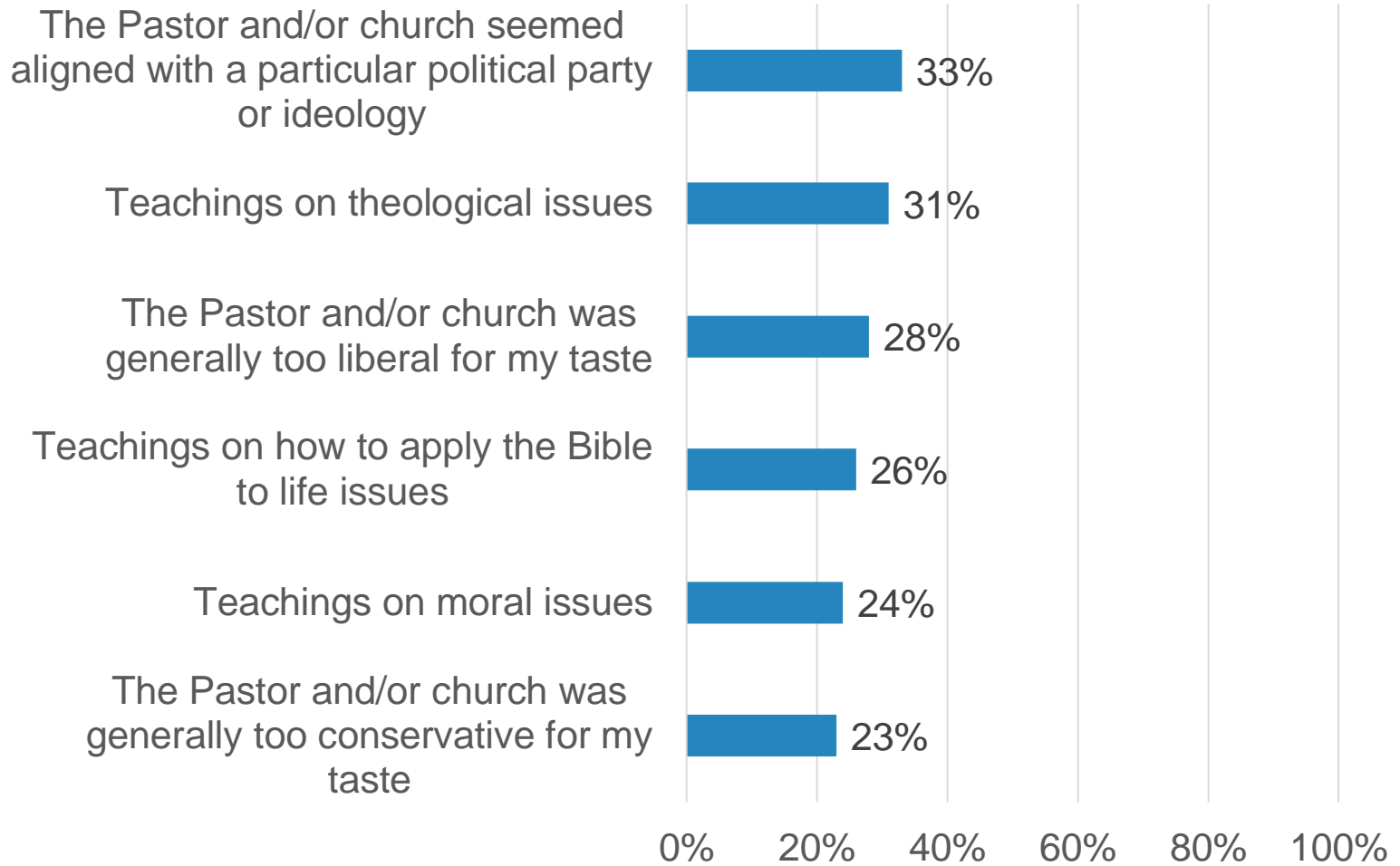
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifewayresearch

“What was it about the church’s teachings or positions on issues that you disagreed with or did not like?”

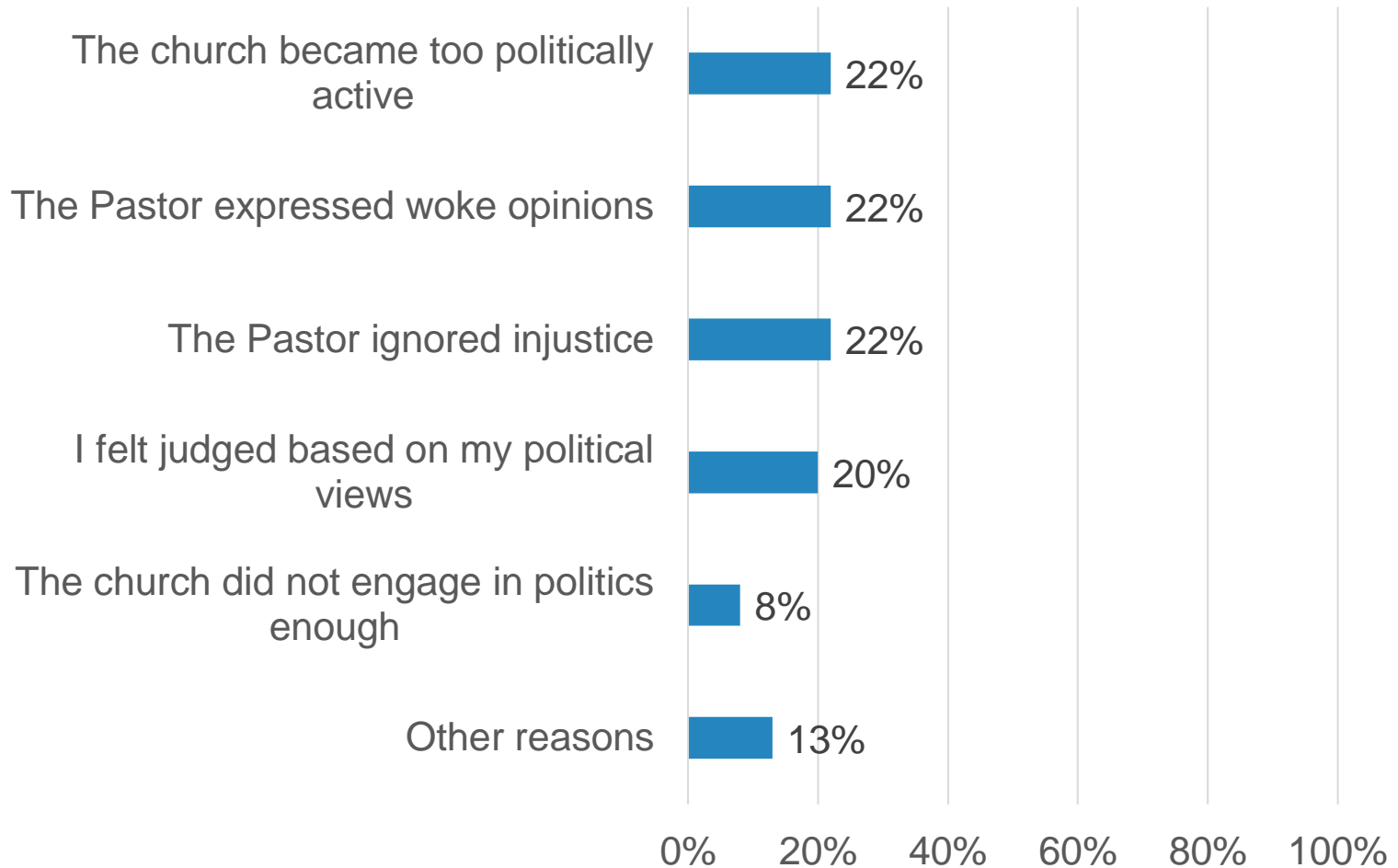
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifeway research

“What was it about the church’s teachings or positions on issues that you disagreed with or did not like?” *Continued*

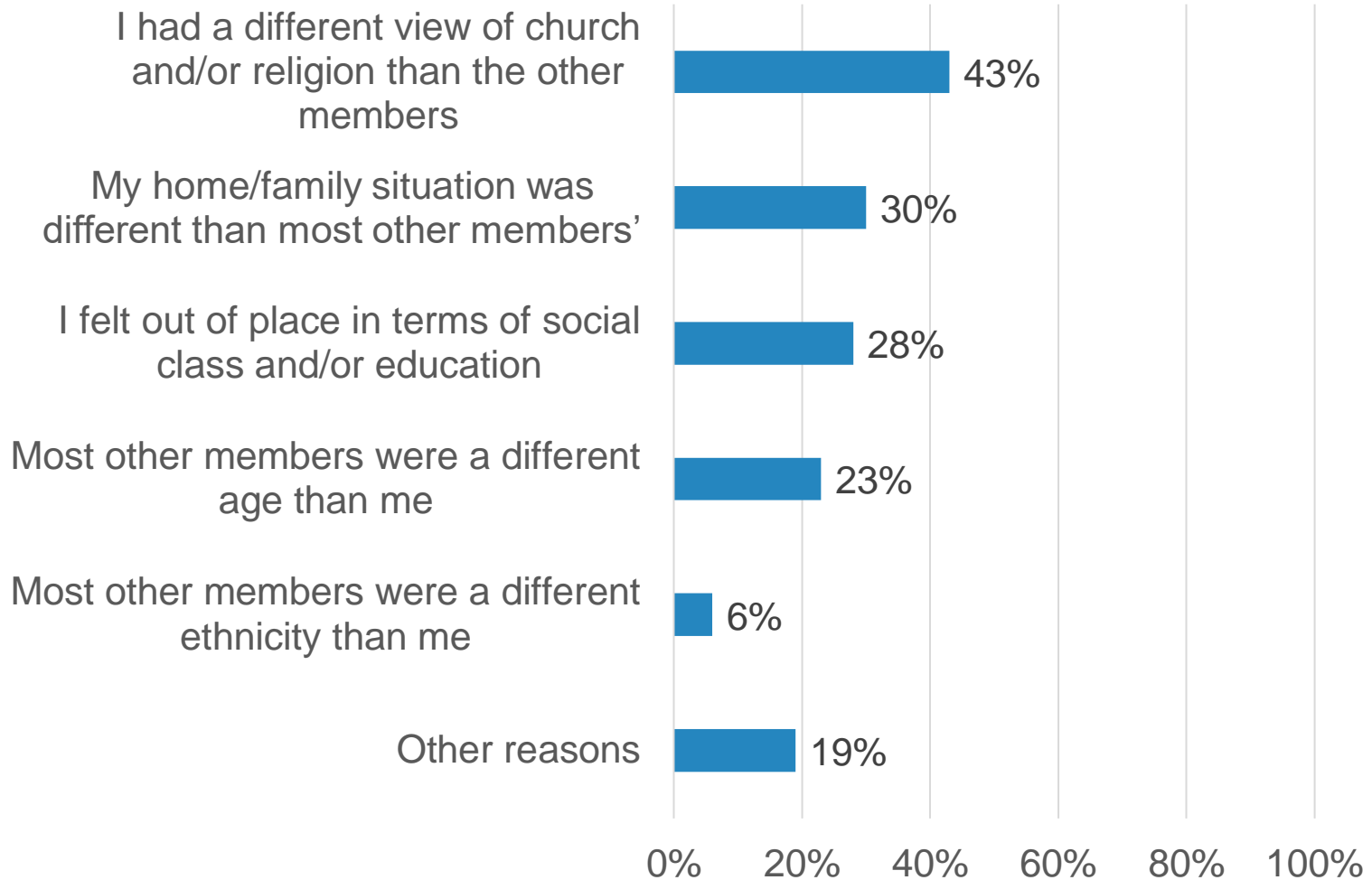
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifeway research

“In what ways did you feel out of place at the church?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

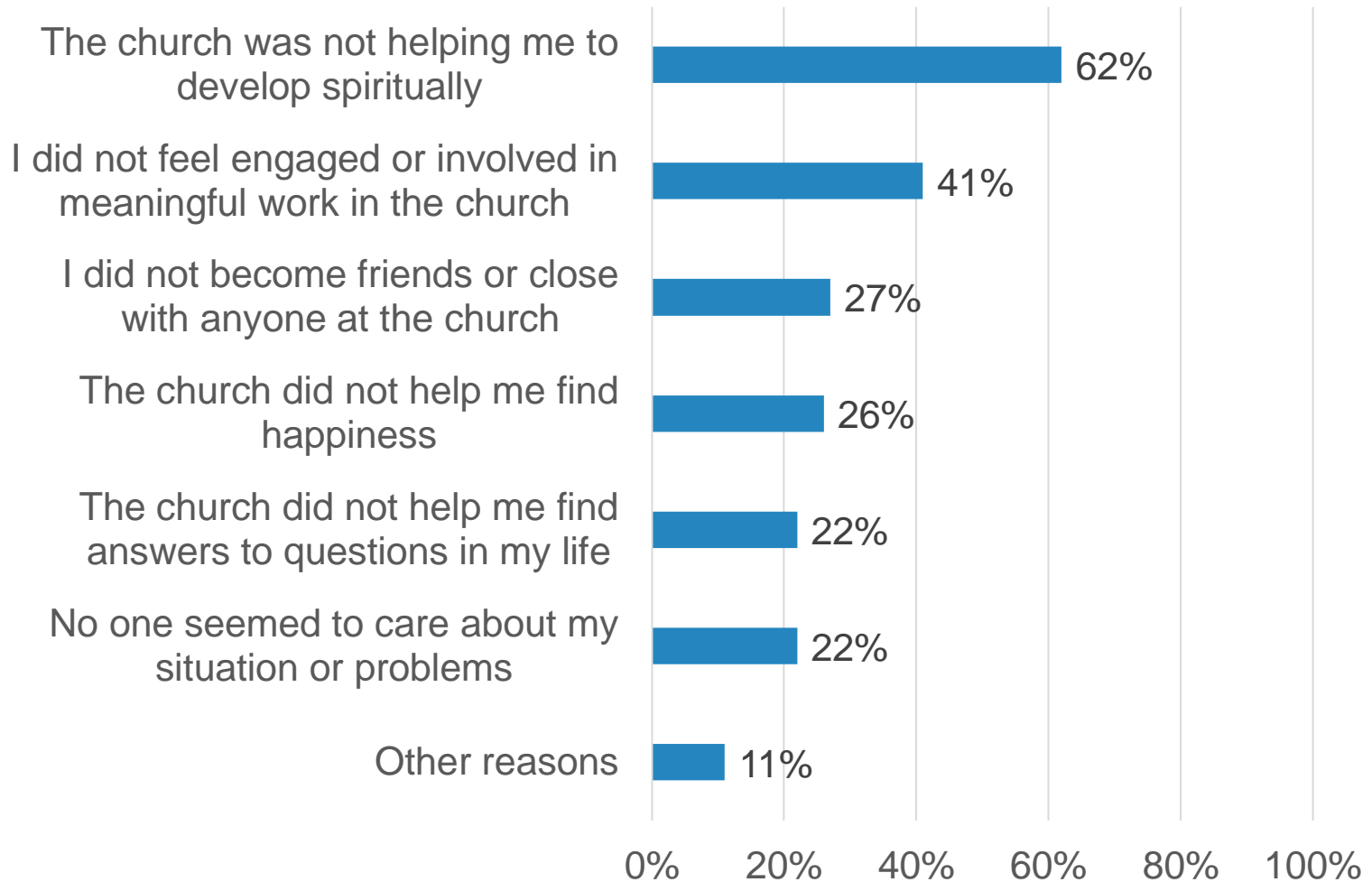


Lifewayresearch

Q11e: “In what ways did you feel out of place at the church? (Select all that apply)” n=79

“In what ways was the church not fulfilling your needs or reasons for attending church?”

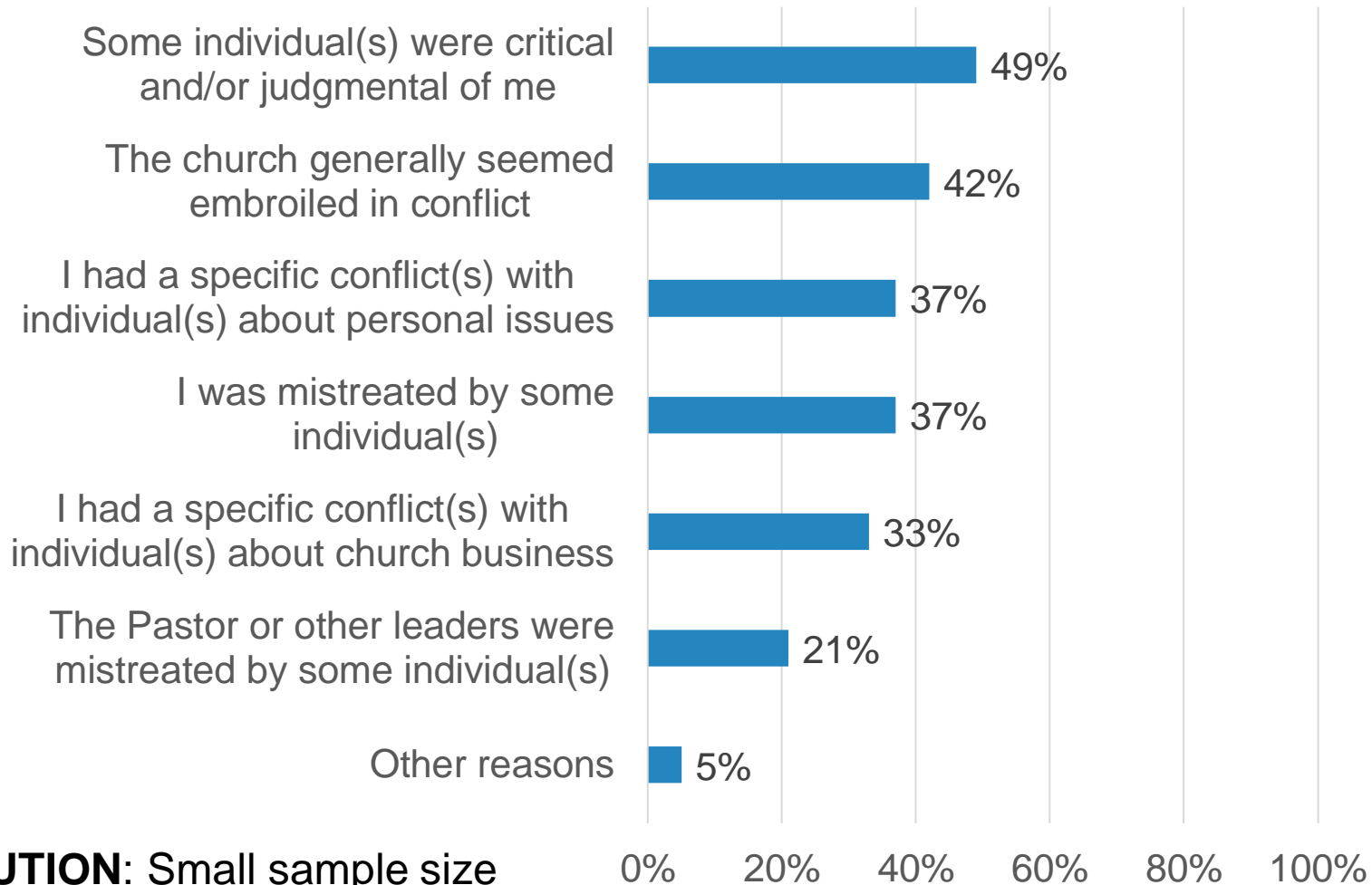
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifewayresearch

“What kinds of problems or conflicts did you have with other church members, staff or clergy?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move

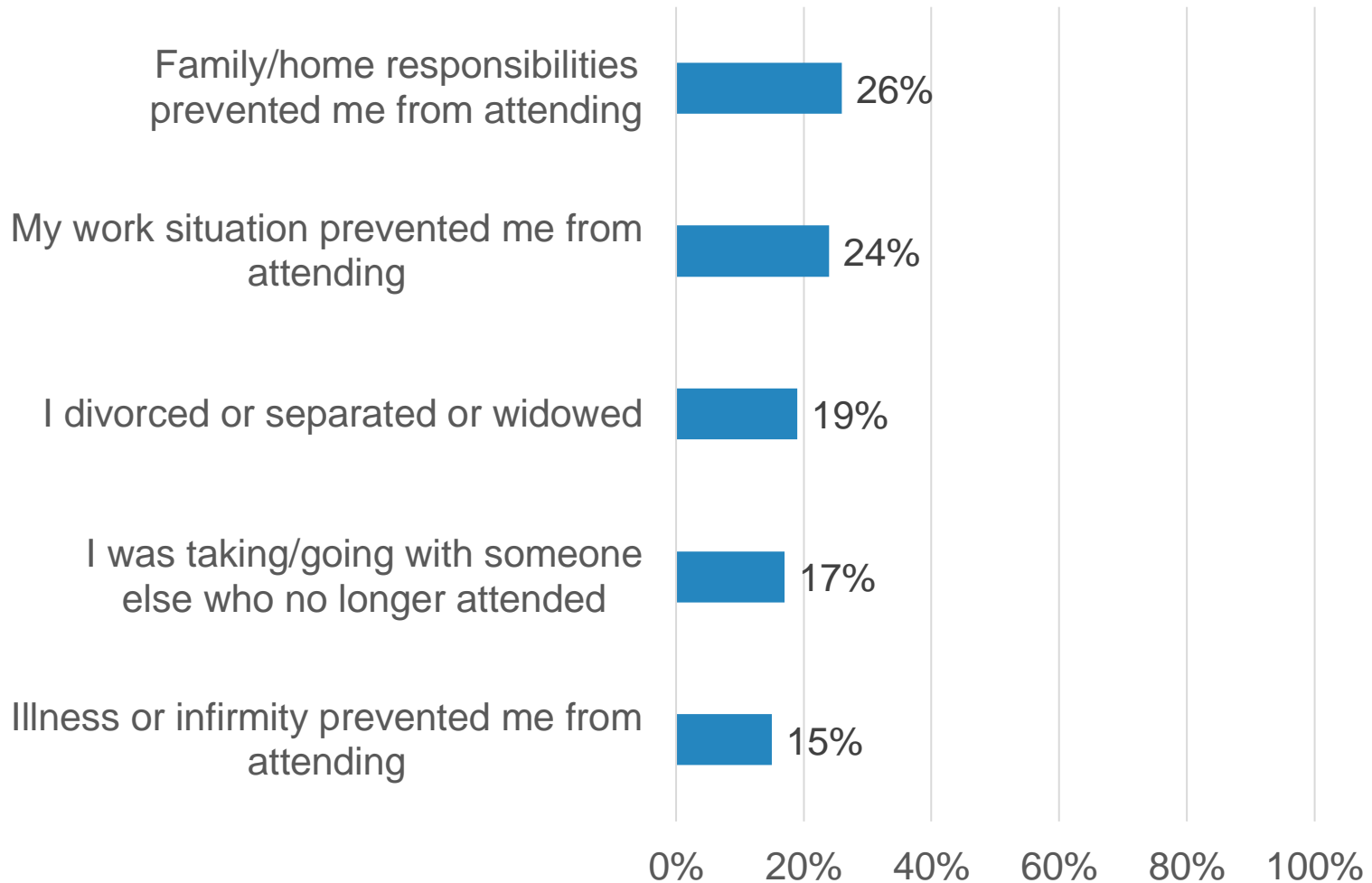


CAUTION: Small sample size

Lifeway research

“What changes in your life situation caused you to stop attending your previous church?”

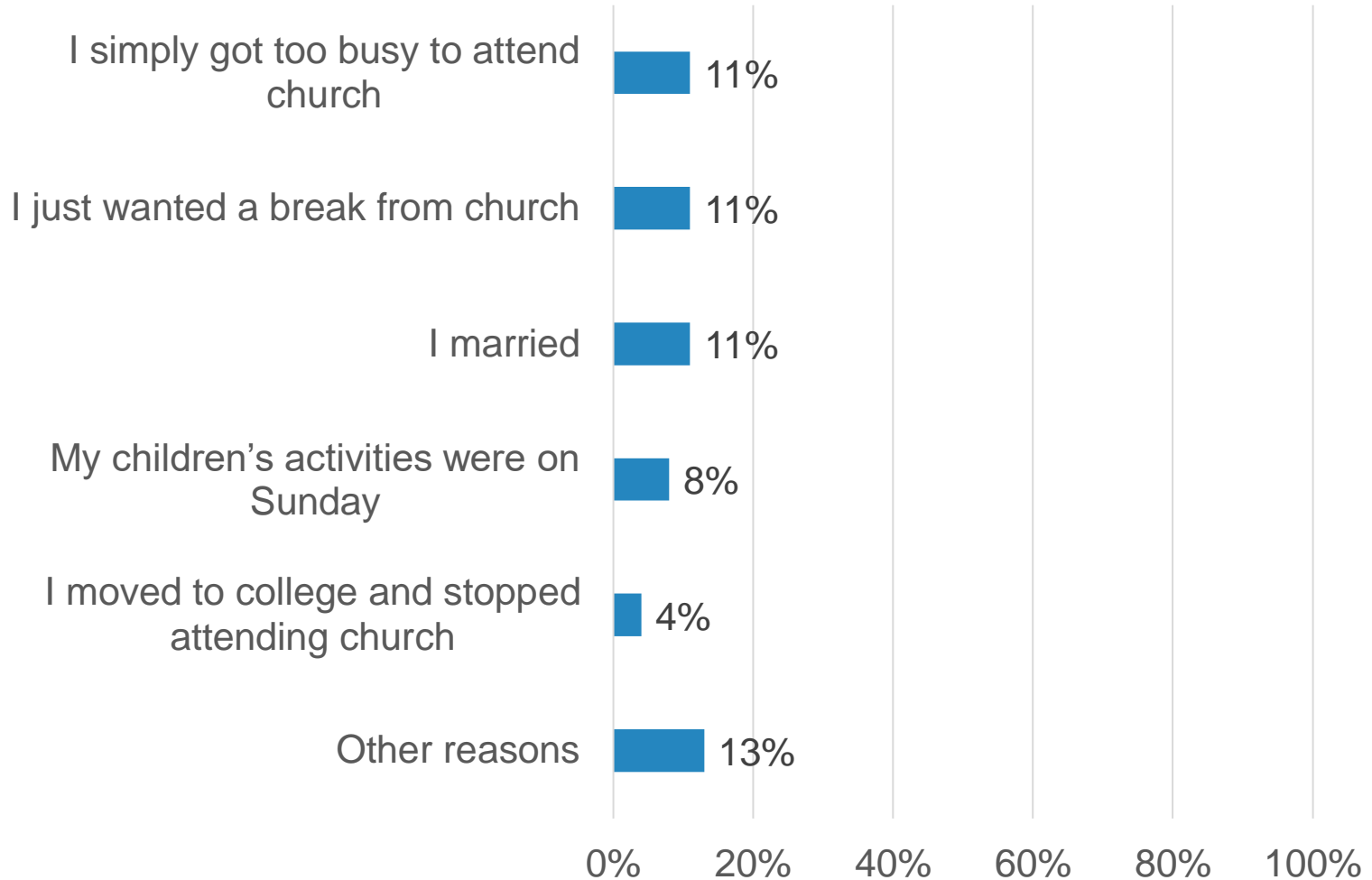
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifeway research

“What changes in your life situation caused you to stop attending your previous church?” *Continued*

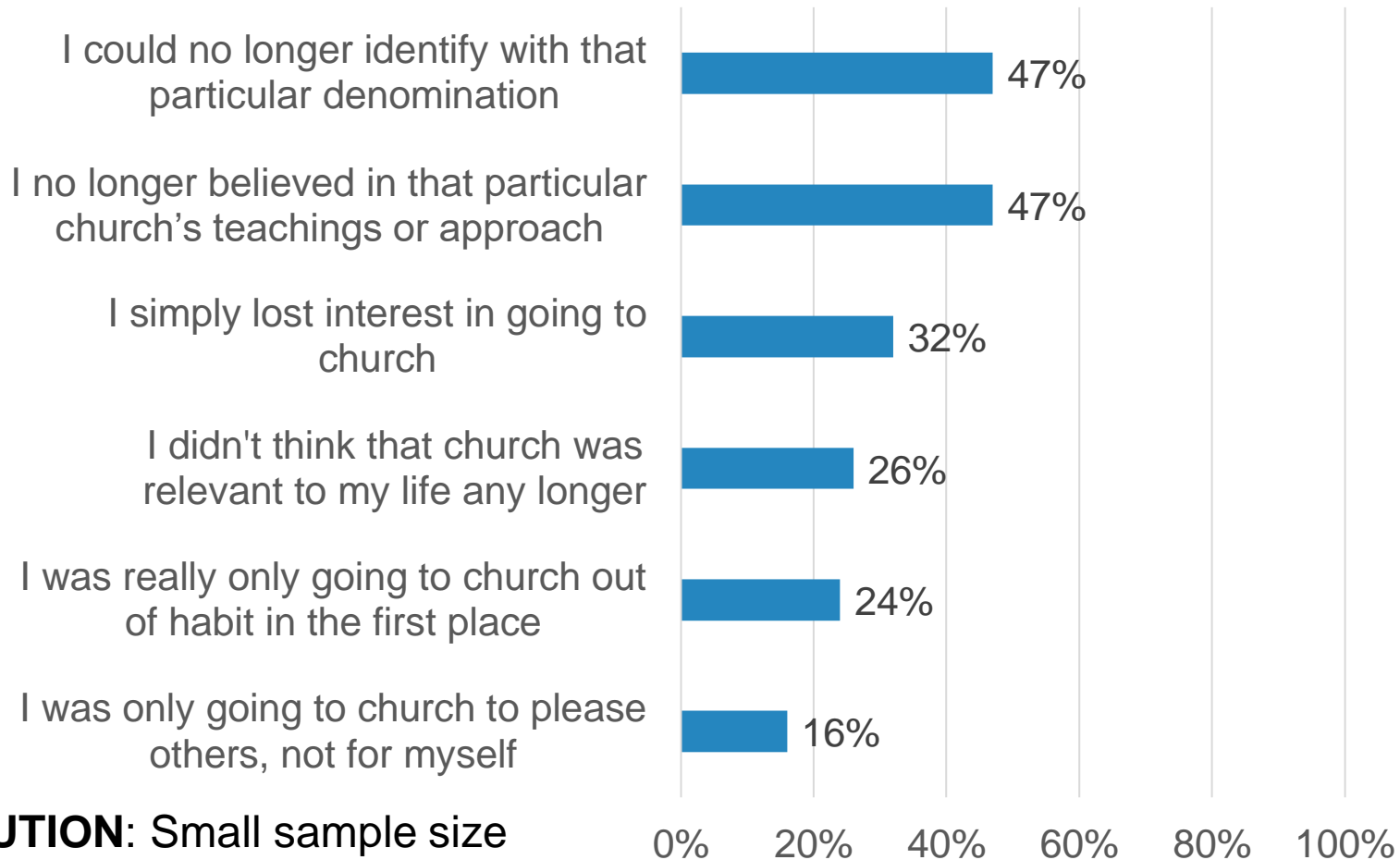
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not
Related to a Residential Move



Lifewayresearch

“What about your beliefs or attitudes toward church and religion changed to cause you to stop attending your previous church?”

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



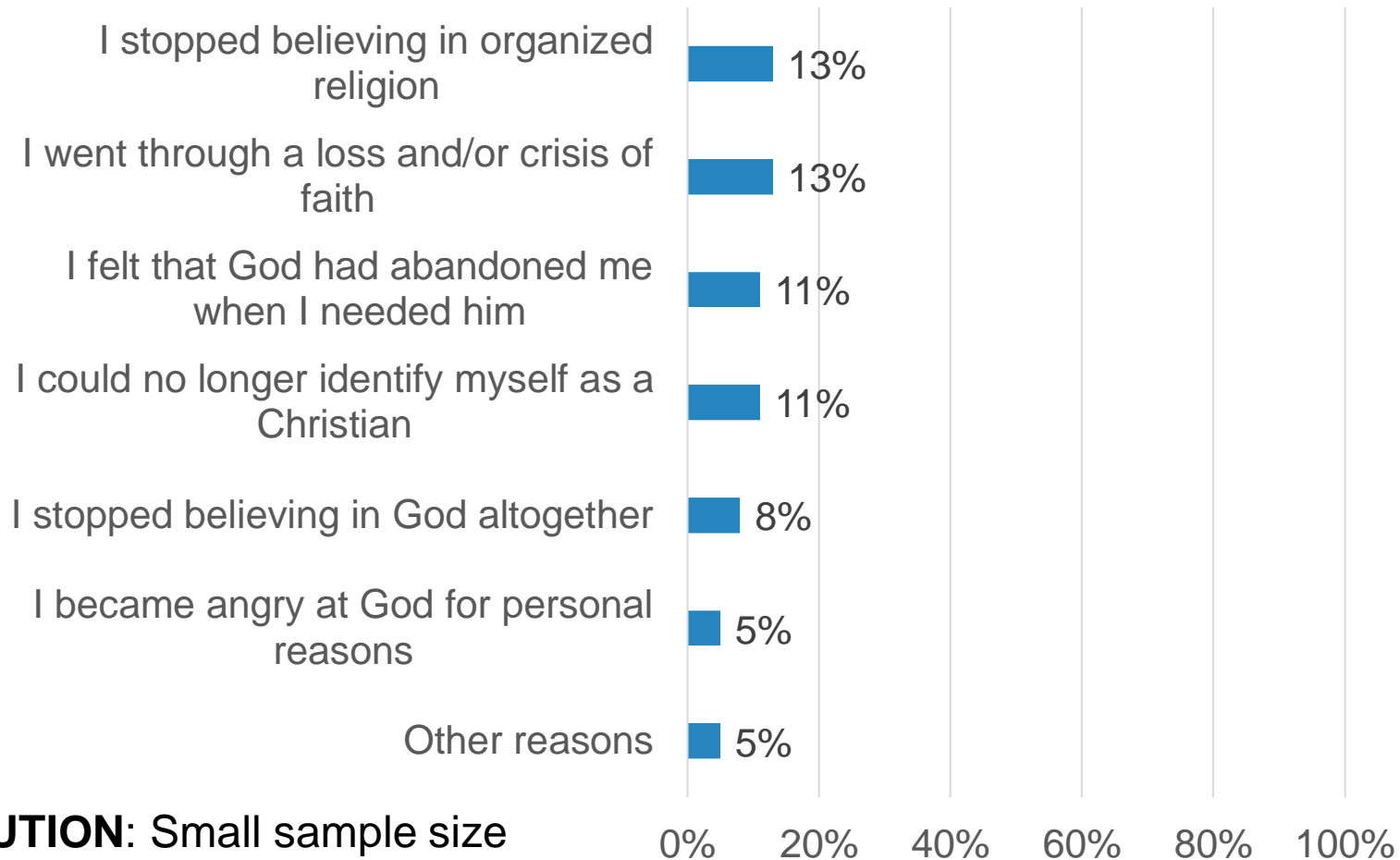
CAUTION: Small sample size

Lifeway research

Q11i: “What about your beliefs or attitudes toward church and religion changed to cause you to stop attending your previous church?”
(Select all that apply) n=38

“What about your beliefs or attitudes toward church and religion changed to cause you to stop attending your previous church?” *Continued*

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



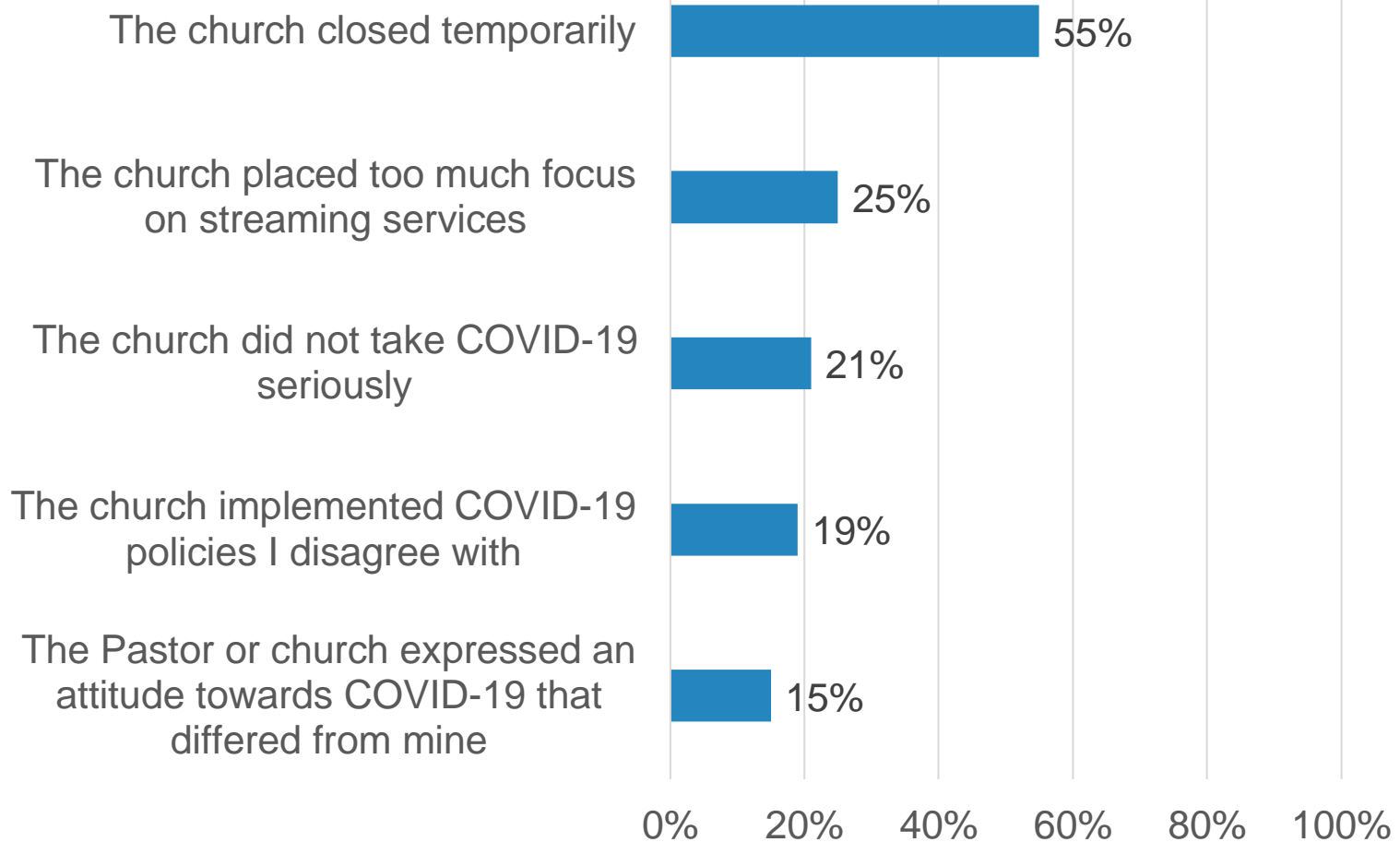
CAUTION: Small sample size

Lifeway research

Q11i: “What about your beliefs or attitudes toward church and religion changed to cause you to stop attending your previous church?”
(Select all that apply) n=38

“What about COVID-19 caused you to stop attending your previous church?”

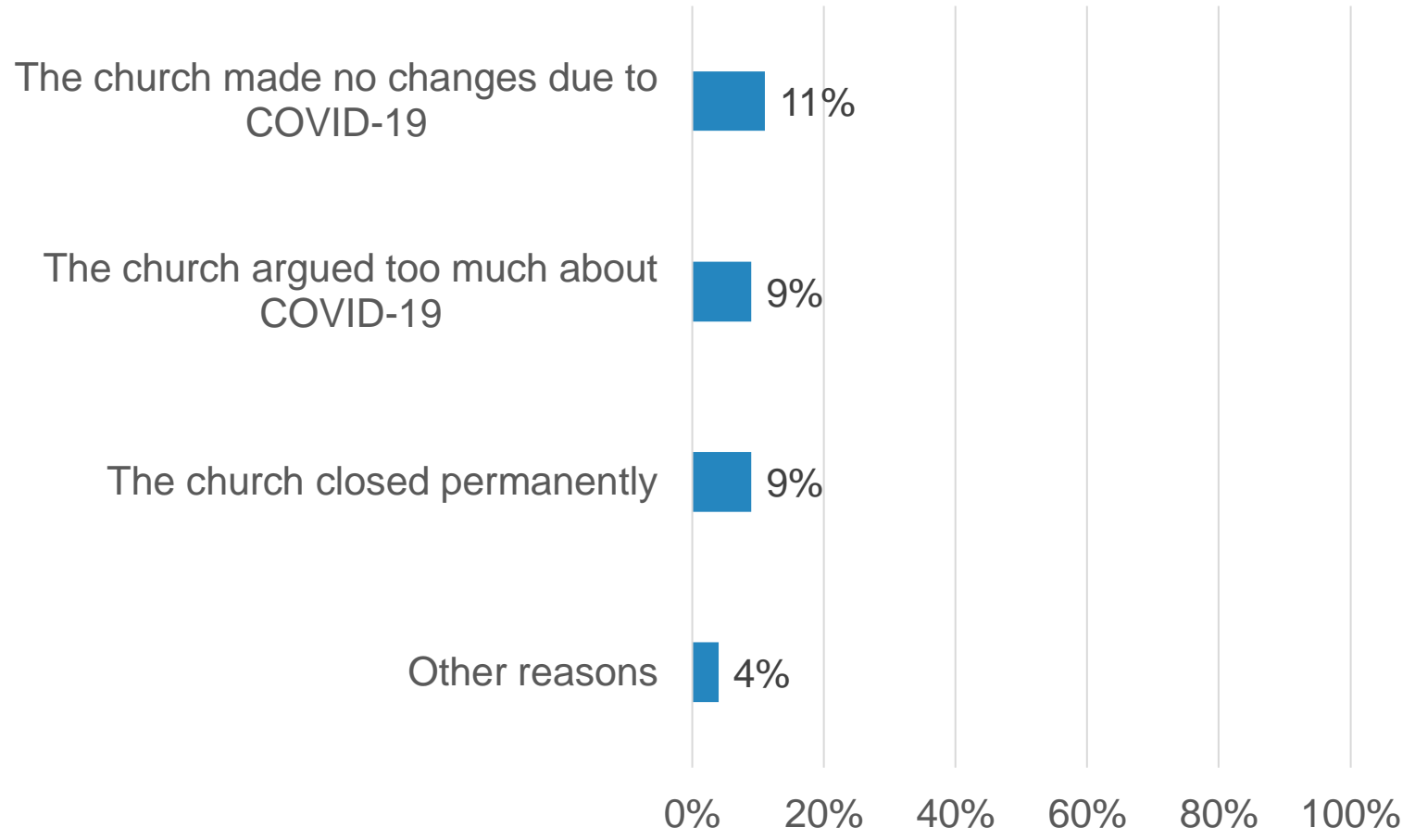
Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifeway research

“What about COVID-19 caused you to stop attending your previous church?” *Continued*

Among Church Switchers whose Change was not Related to a Residential Move



Lifewayresearch

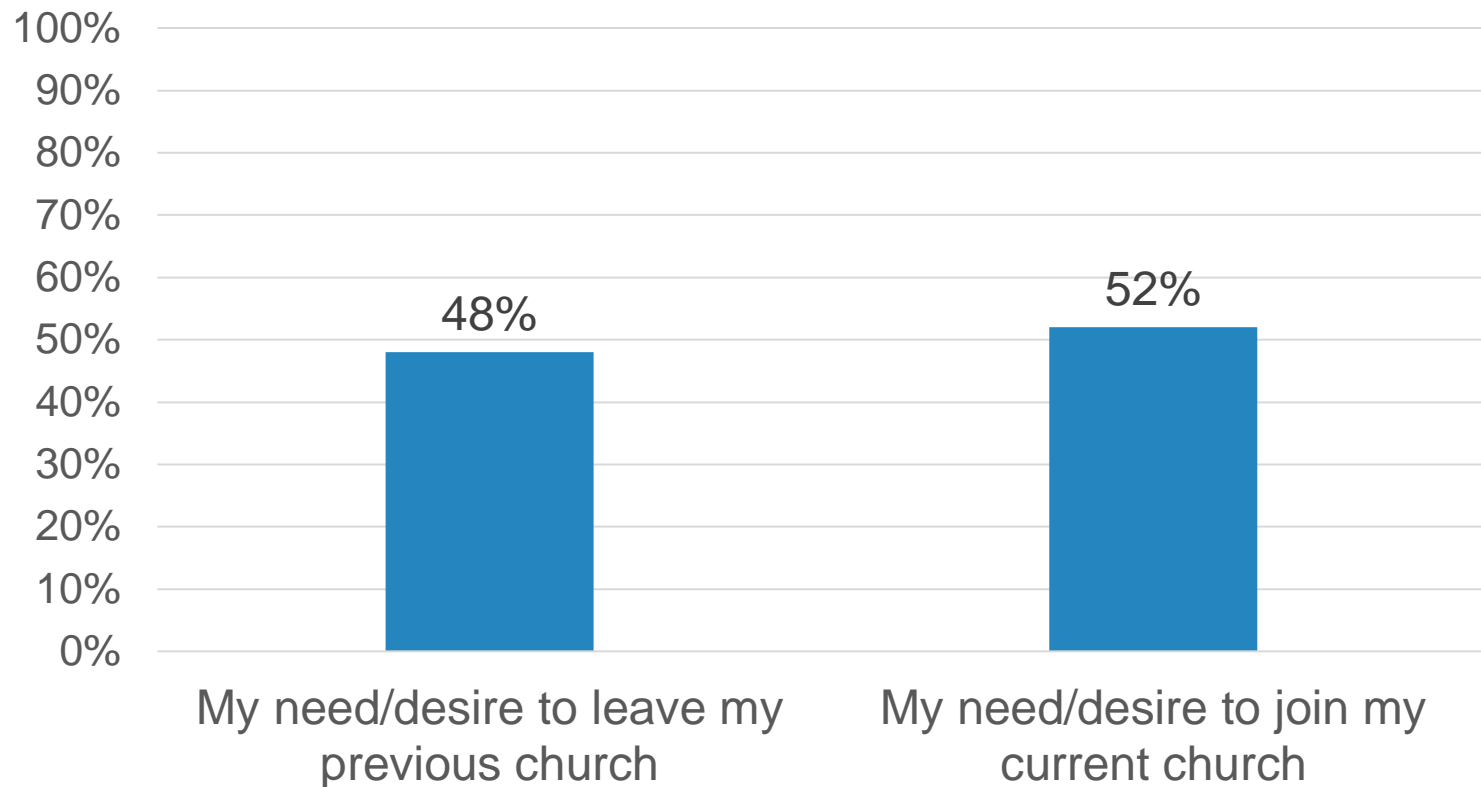
Q11j: “What about COVID-19 caused you to stop attending your previous church? (Select all that apply)” n=53

Comparison of previous and current churches

Lifeway research

52% say their need/desire to join their current church most impacted their decision to switch churches

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

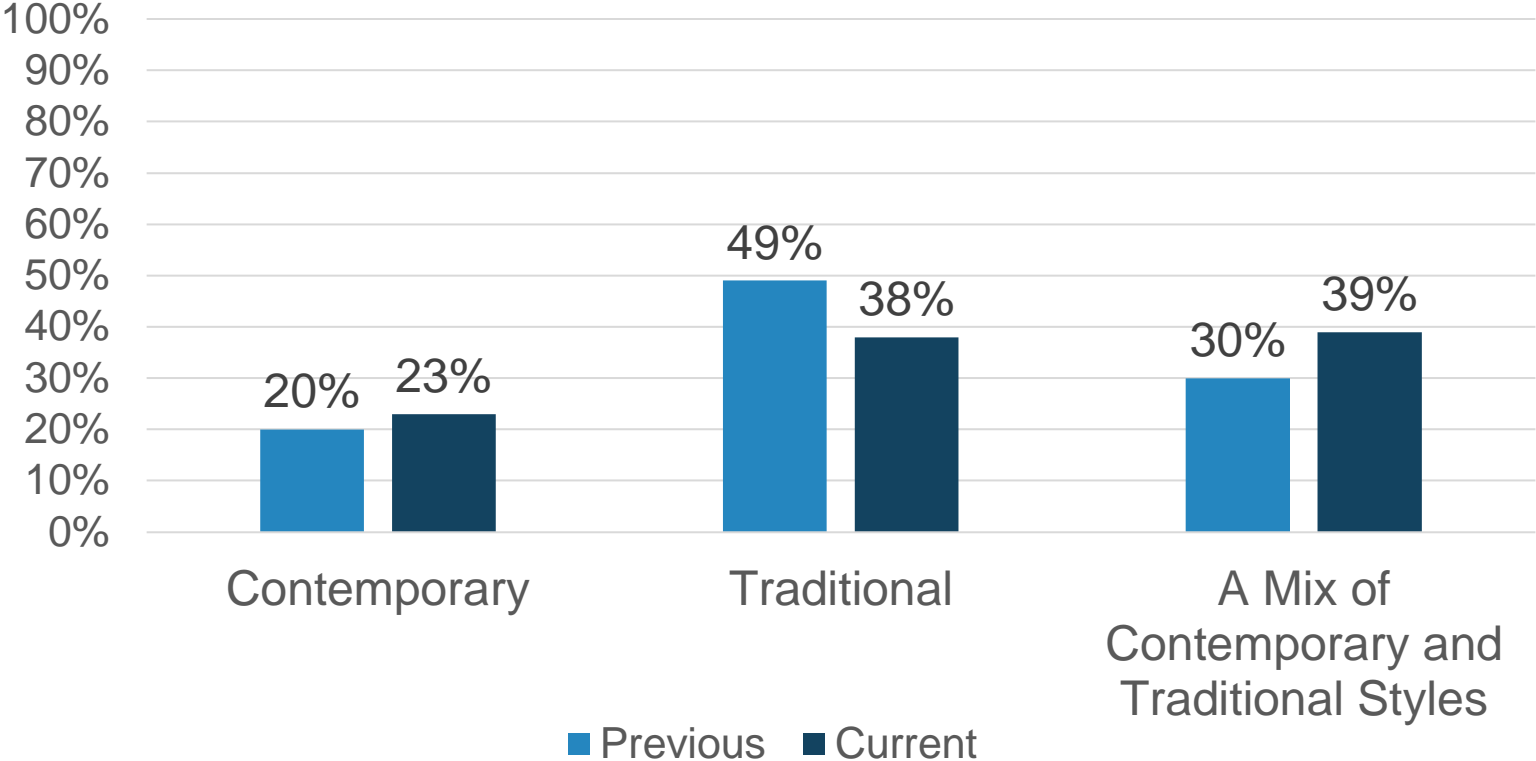


Lifewayresearch

Q12: "My decision to switch churches was most impacted by... (Select one)" n=1,001

Worship style of previous and current churches

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

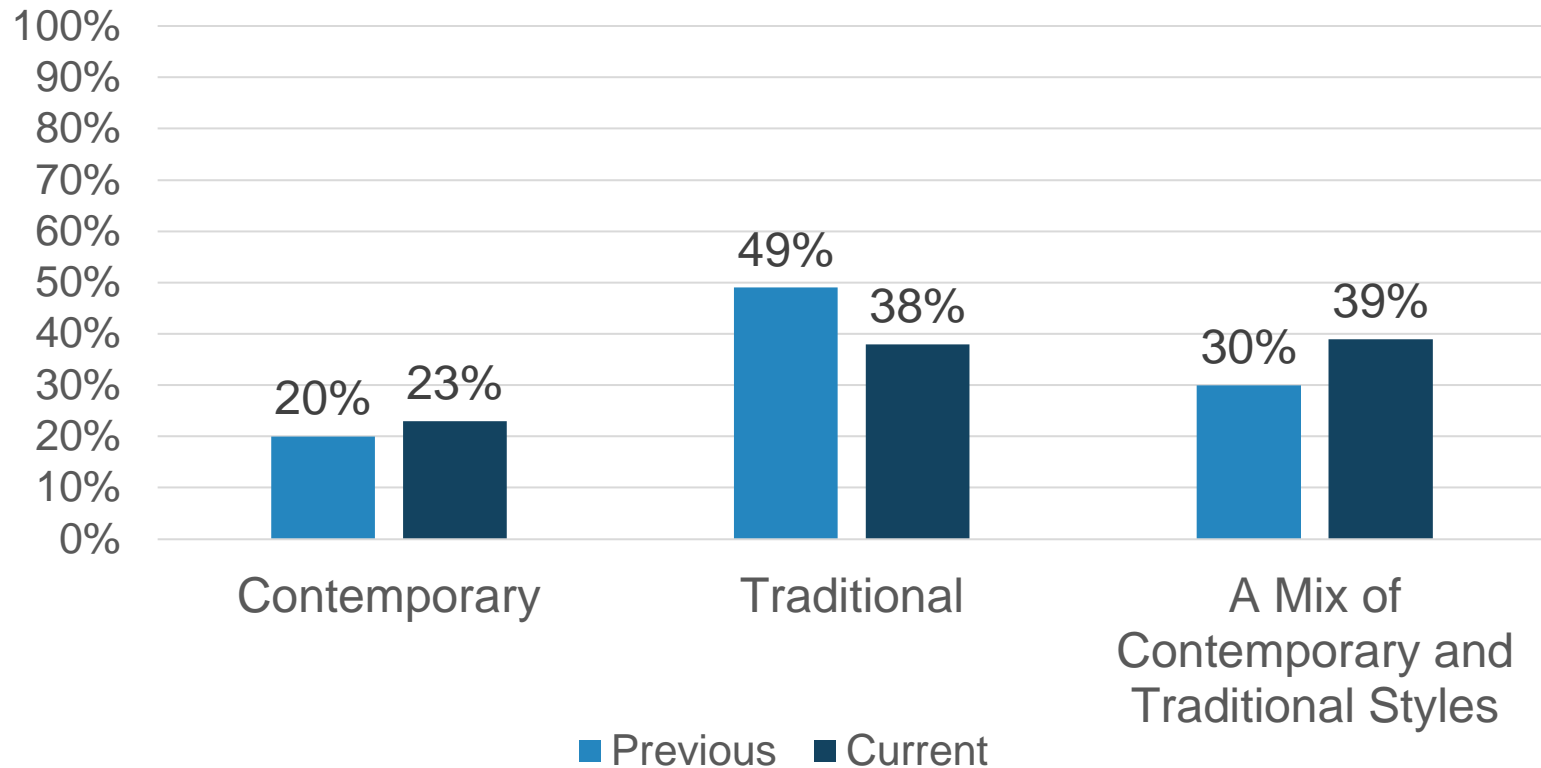


Lifeway research

Q10b: "Which of the following best describes the style of Worship Service at your previous/current churches? (Note: If multiple services of different styles are offered, please indicate the style of the service that you attended most often) (Select one per church)" n=1,001

In 2006, all three shifts were significant. Today only the shift away from Traditional and to a Mix are significant

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



2006

21%→27%

52%→34%

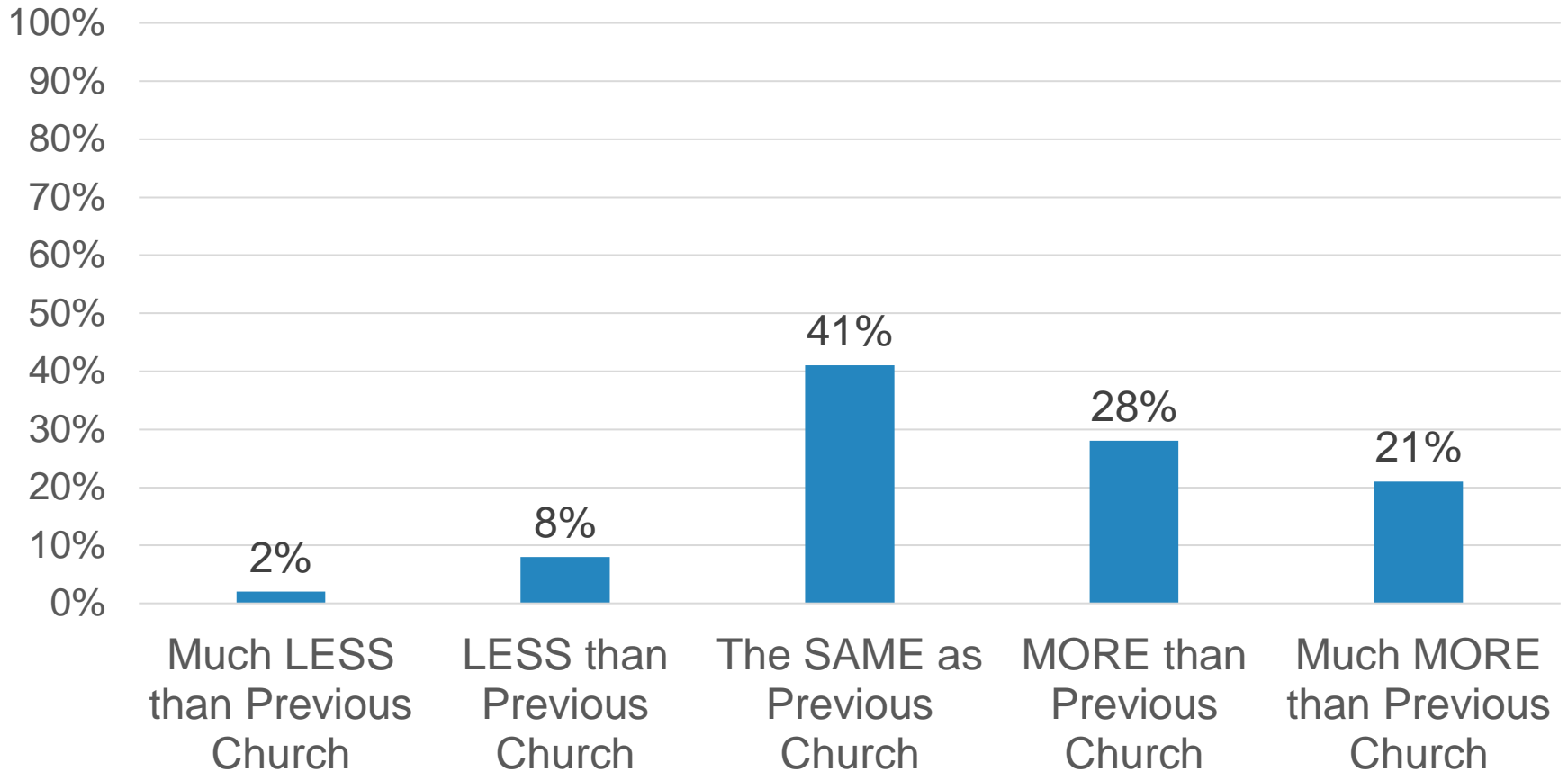
27%→39%

Lifeway research

"Which of the following best describes the style of Worship Service at your previous/current churches? (Note: If multiple services of different styles are offered, please indicate the style of the service that you attended most often) (Select one per church)"

My church provides me with opportunities to use my talents to serve

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

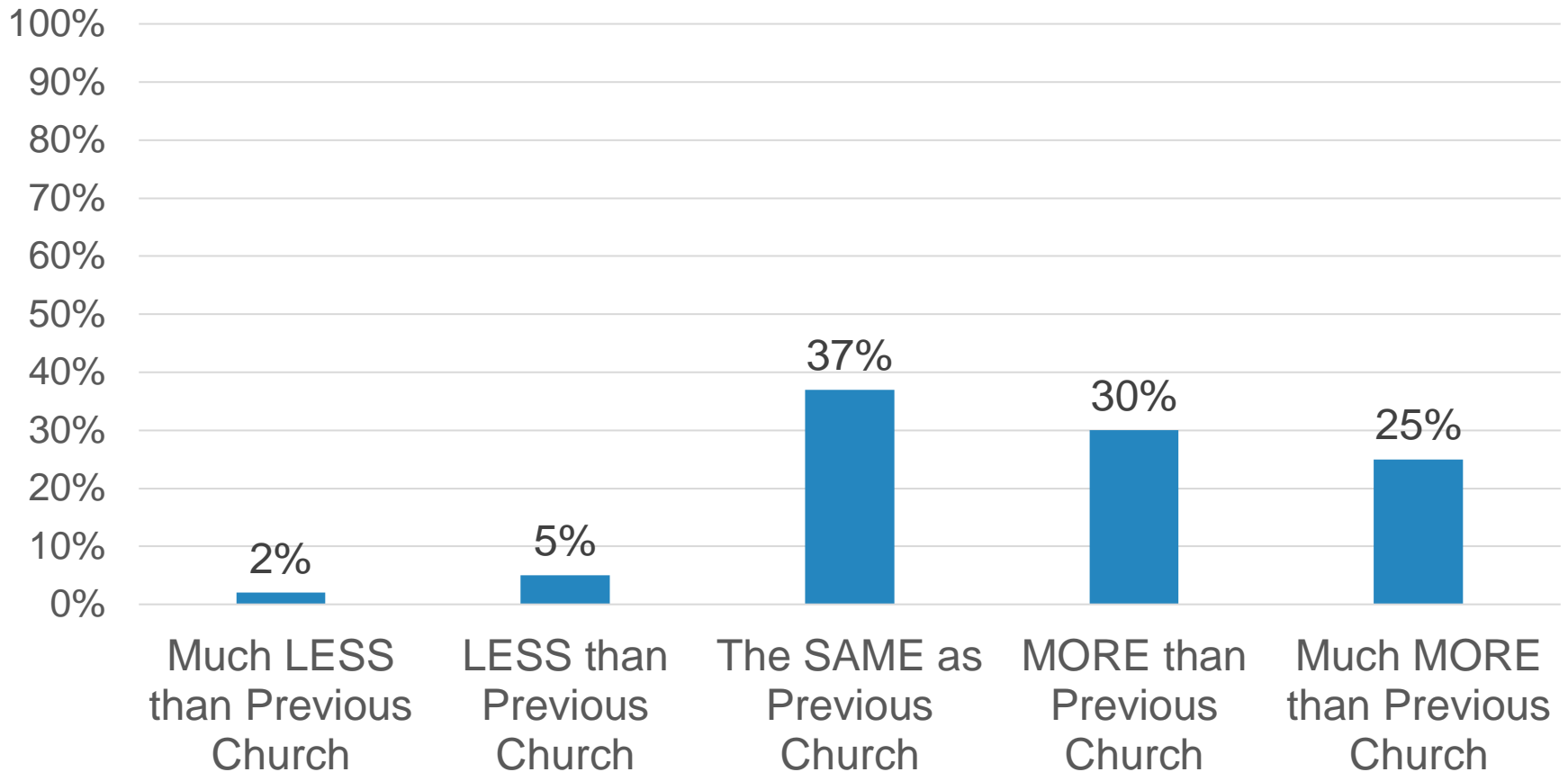


Lifewayresearch

Q13_1: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

My church fosters spiritual growth/maturity

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

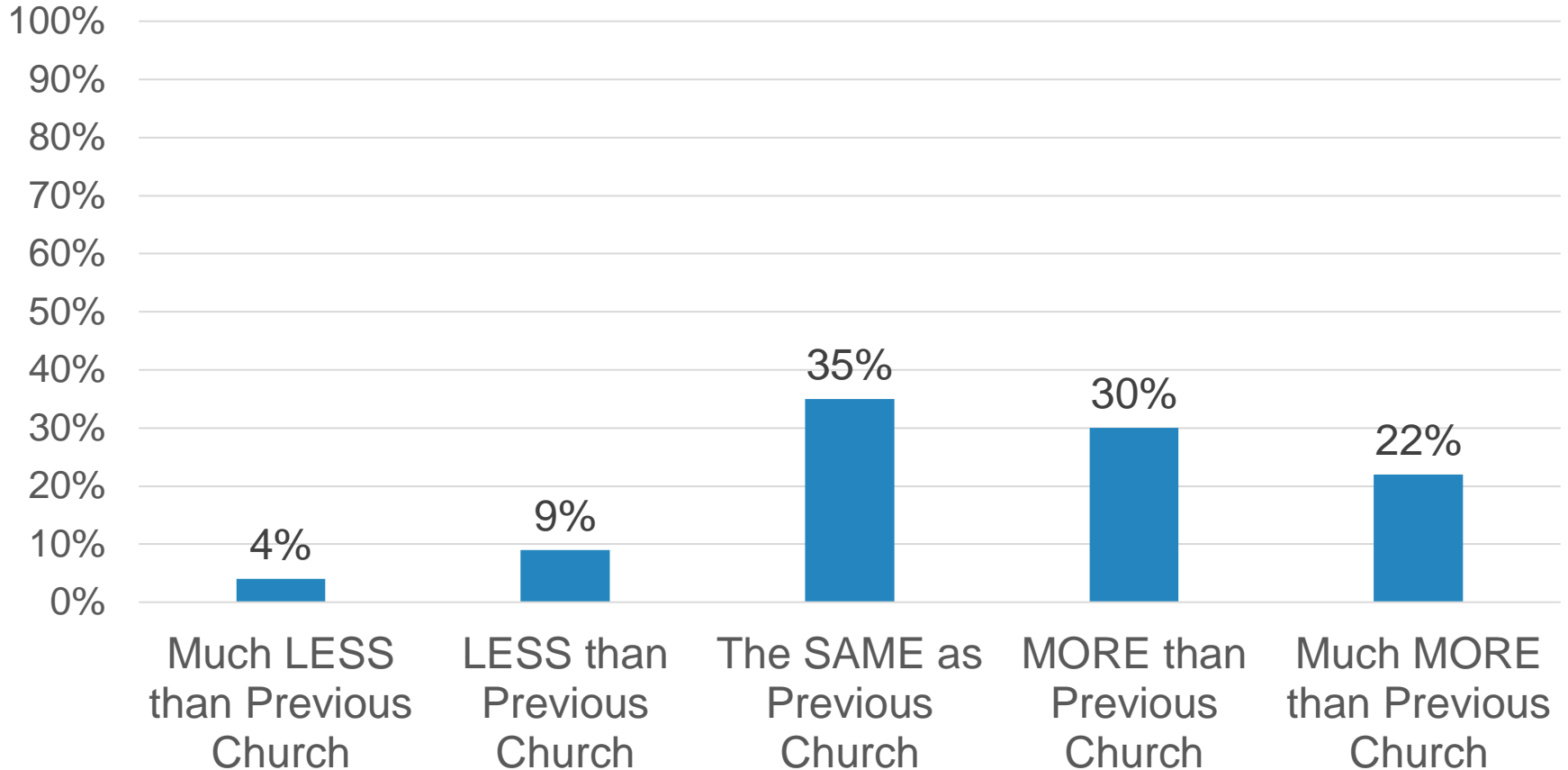


Lifewayresearch

Q13_2: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I have developed deep relationships with my fellow church members

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

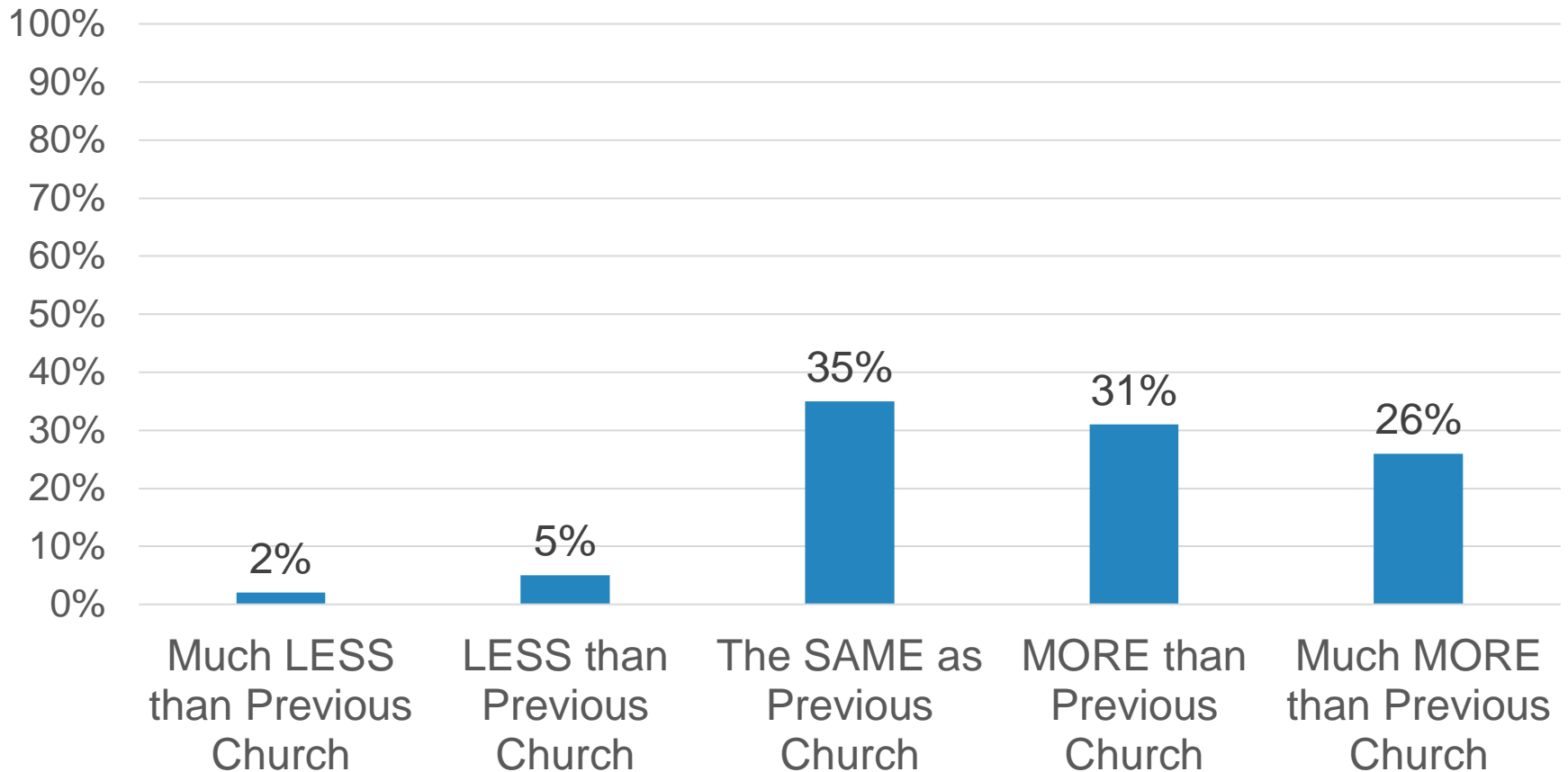


Lifewayresearch

Q13_3: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

The church members and pastor seem authentic / real / down-to-earth

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

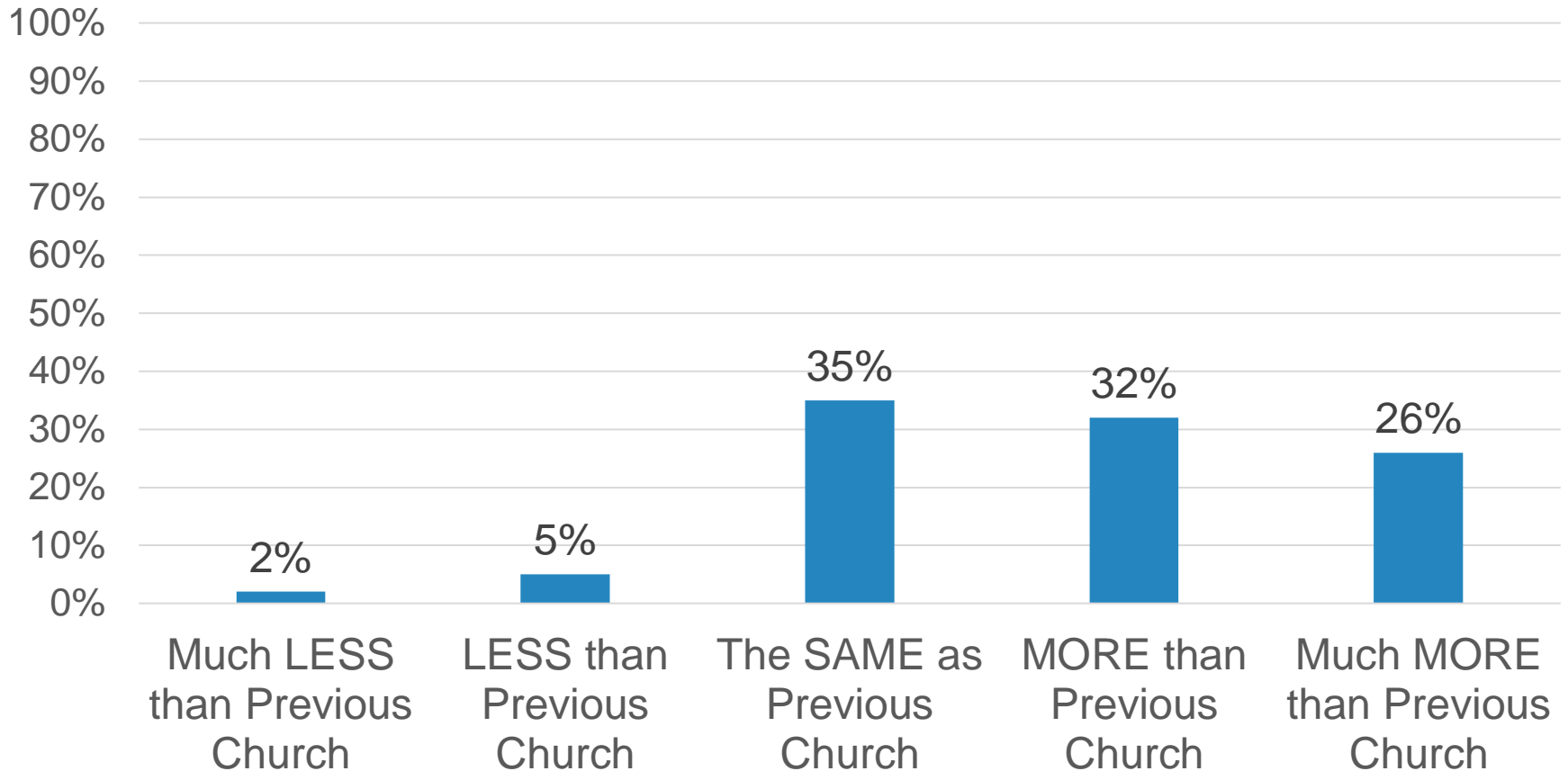


Lifewayresearch

Q13_4: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

The sermons at my church are consistently engaging / enlightening

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

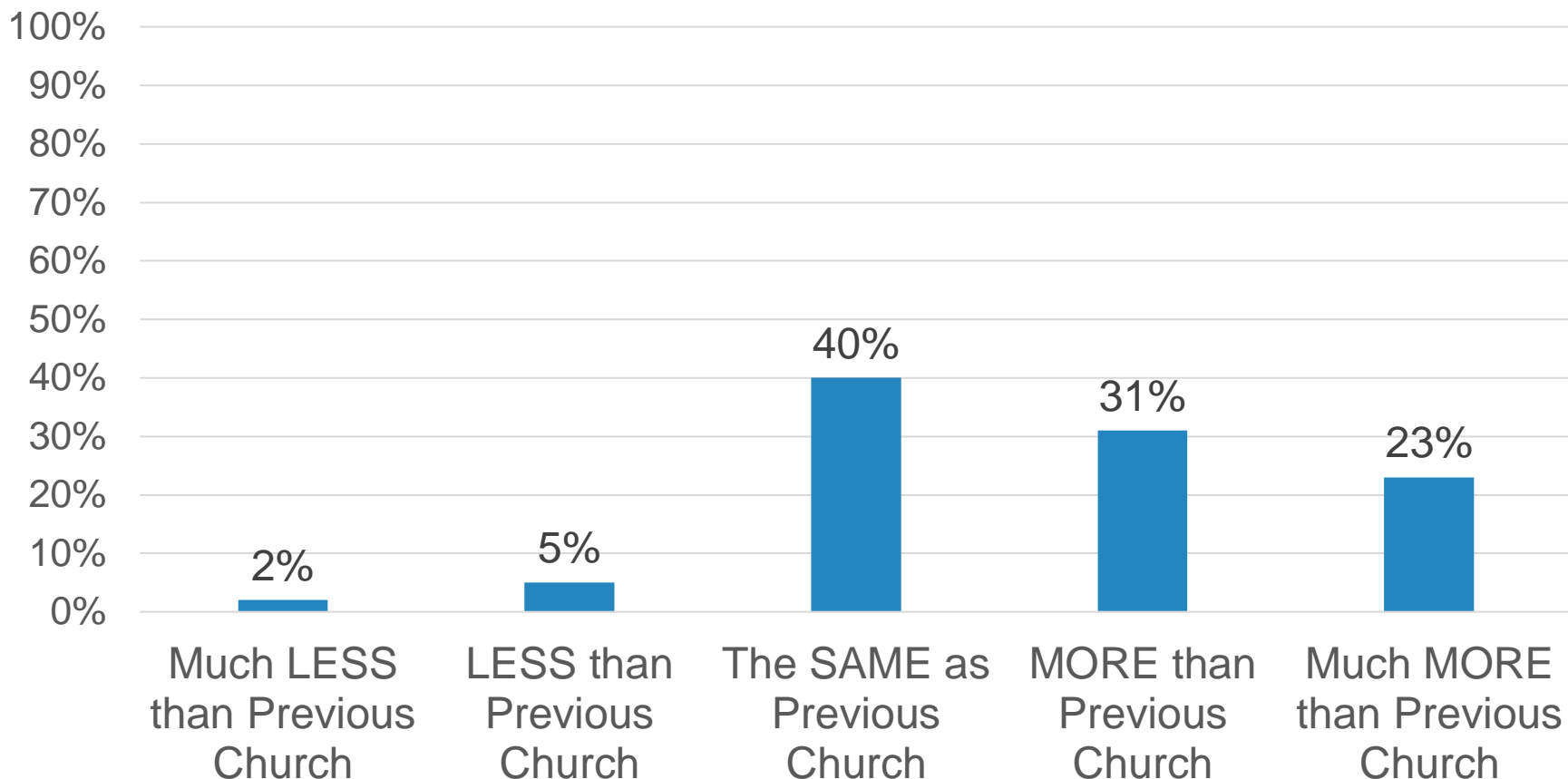


Lifewayresearch

Q13_5: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I find it easy to worship because of the style and elements of my church's worship services

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

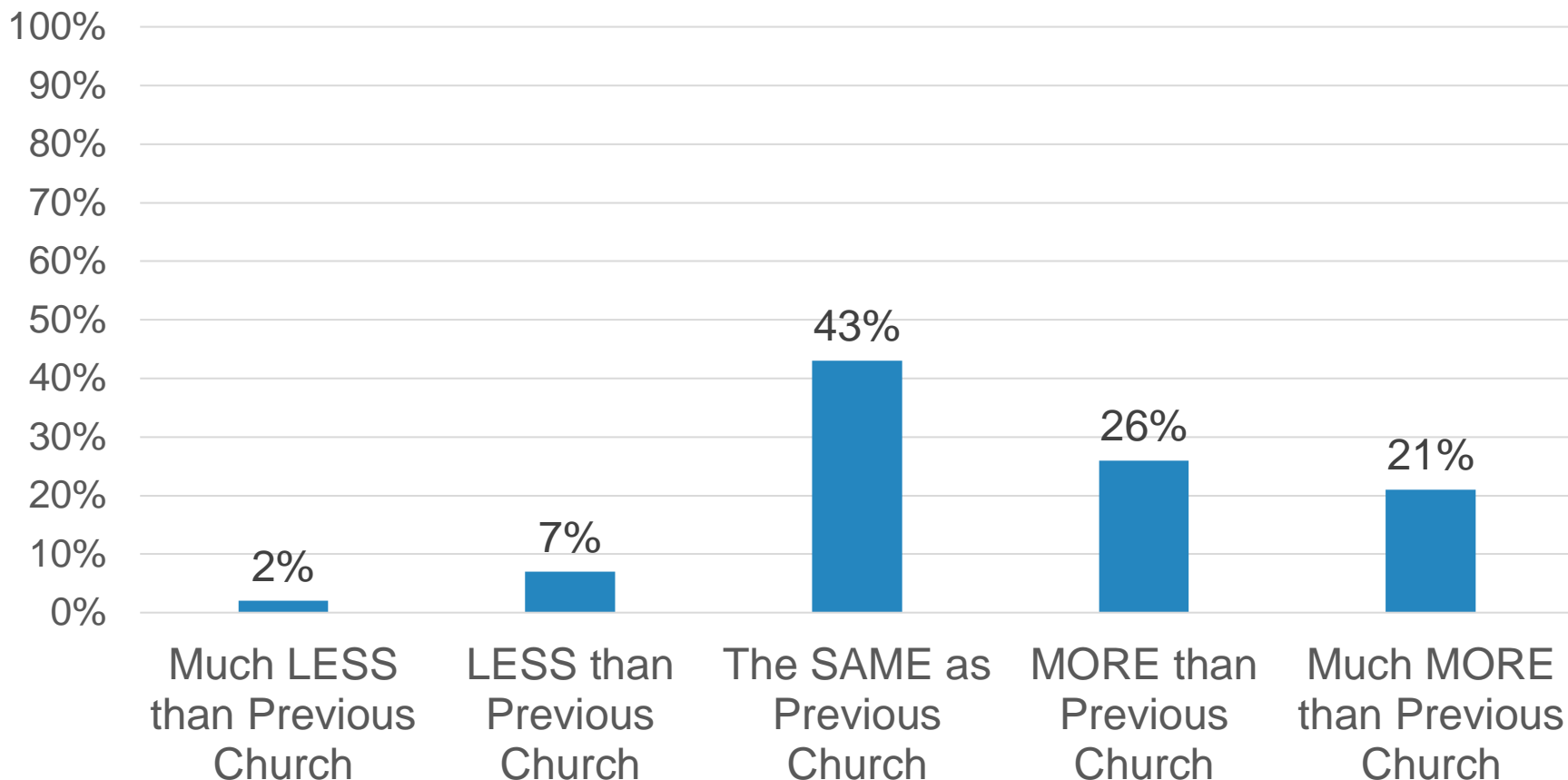


Lifewayresearch

Q13_6: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

My church's worship services are convenient for me to attend (time, location, etc.)

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

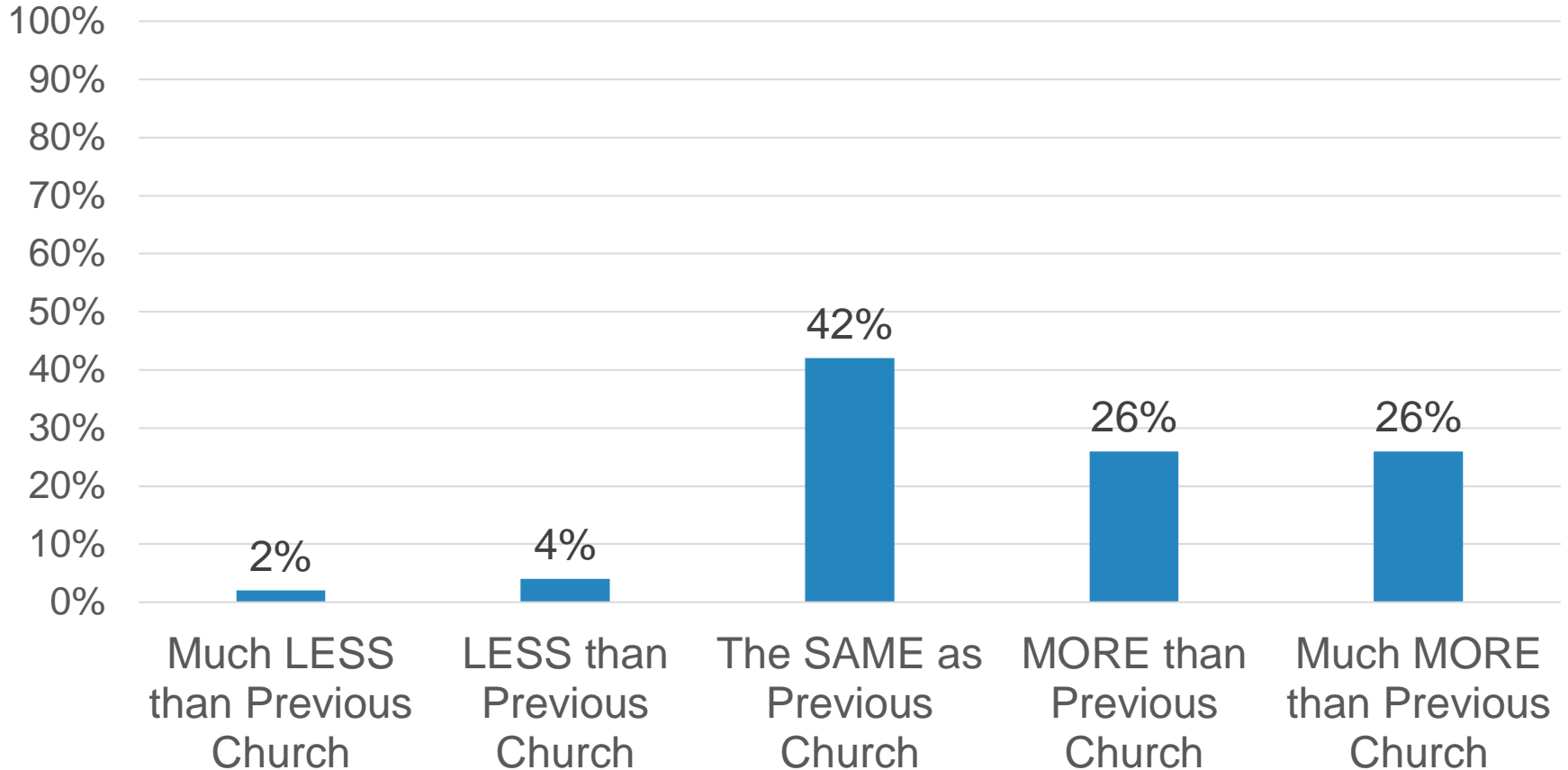


Lifewayresearch

Q13_7: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I agree with the teachings / beliefs / doctrine of my church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

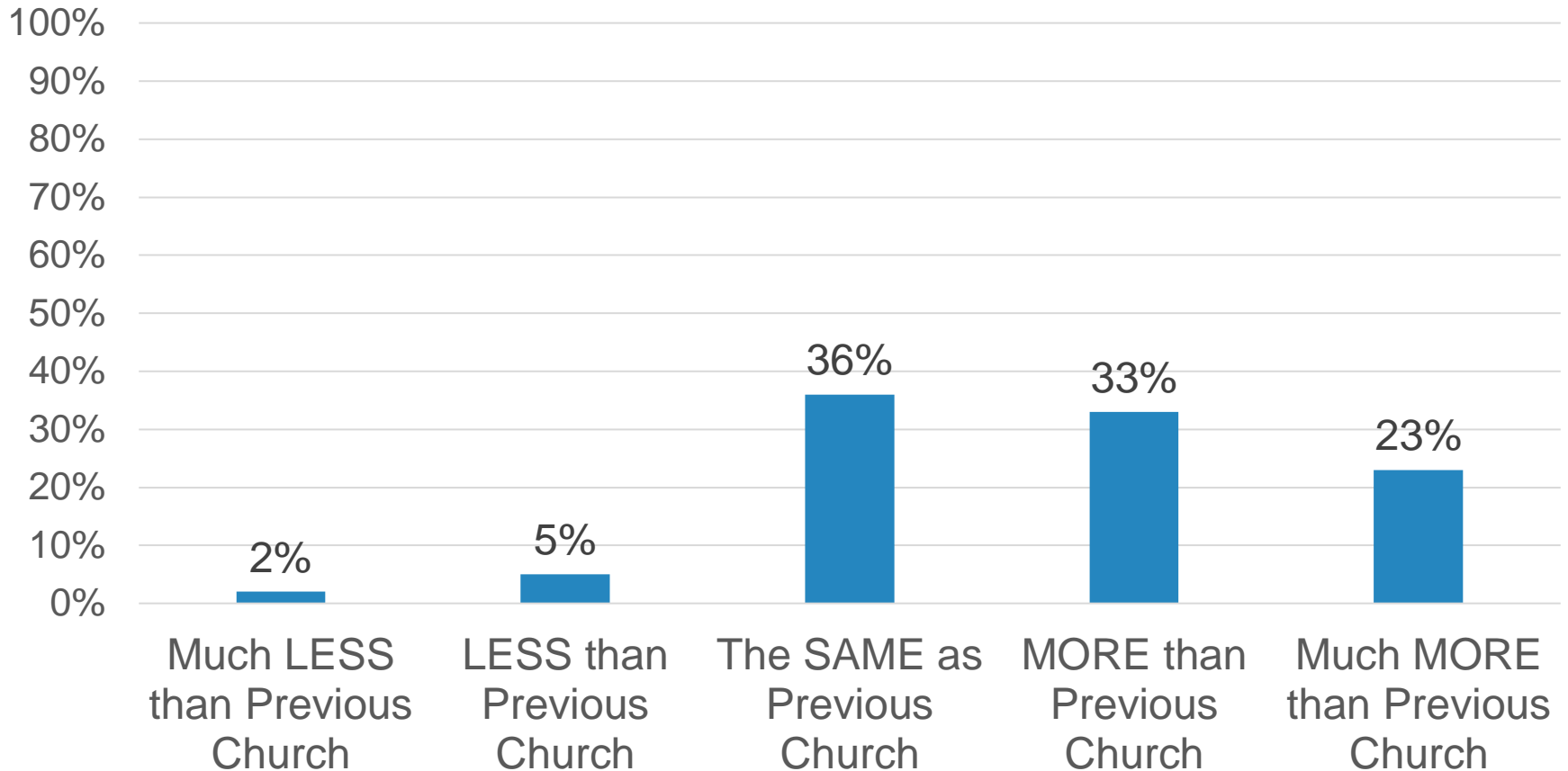


Lifewayresearch

Q13_8: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I see God at work in people's lives at my church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

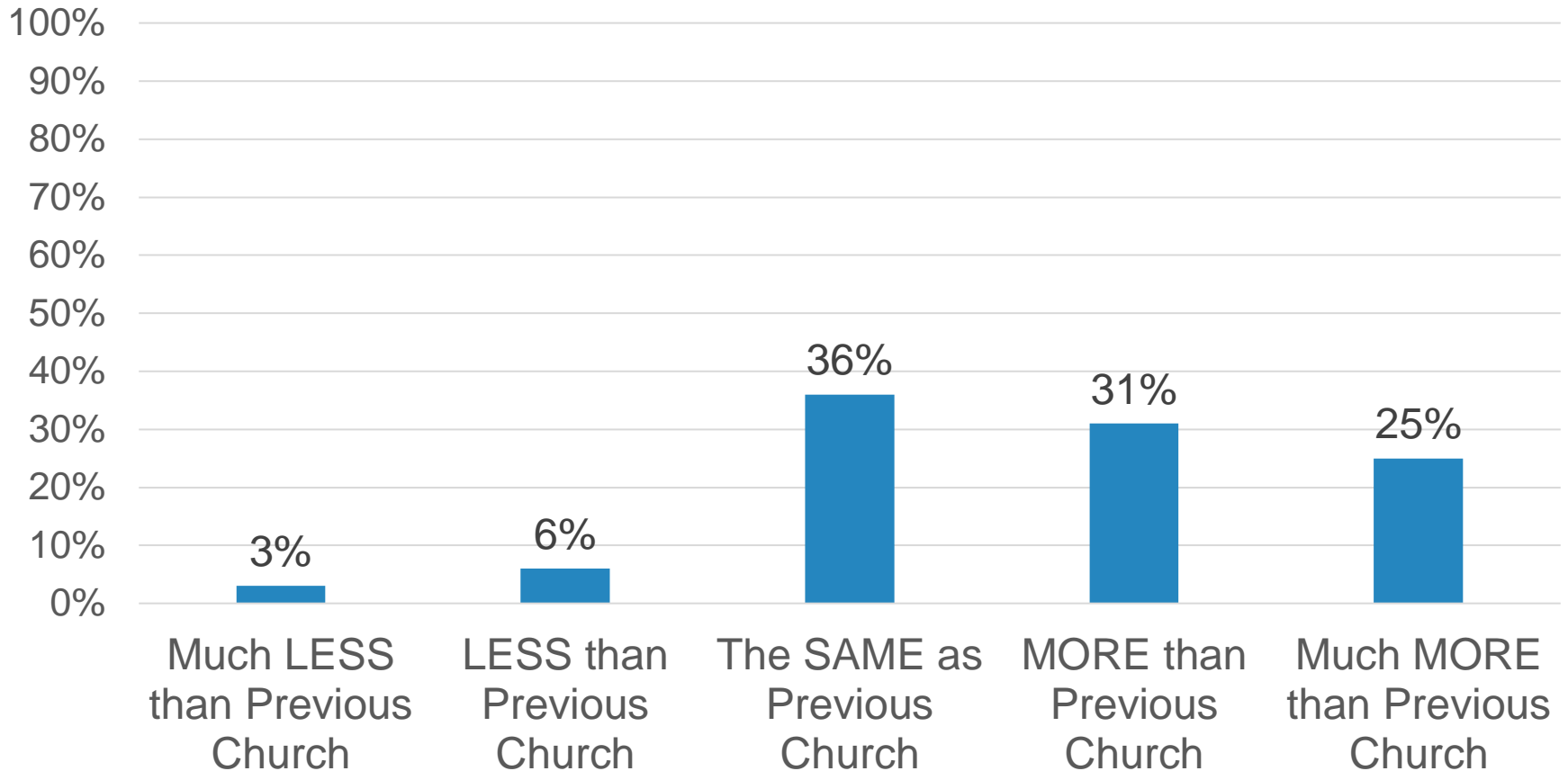


Lifewayresearch

Q13_9: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

My church cares for the community in tangible ways

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

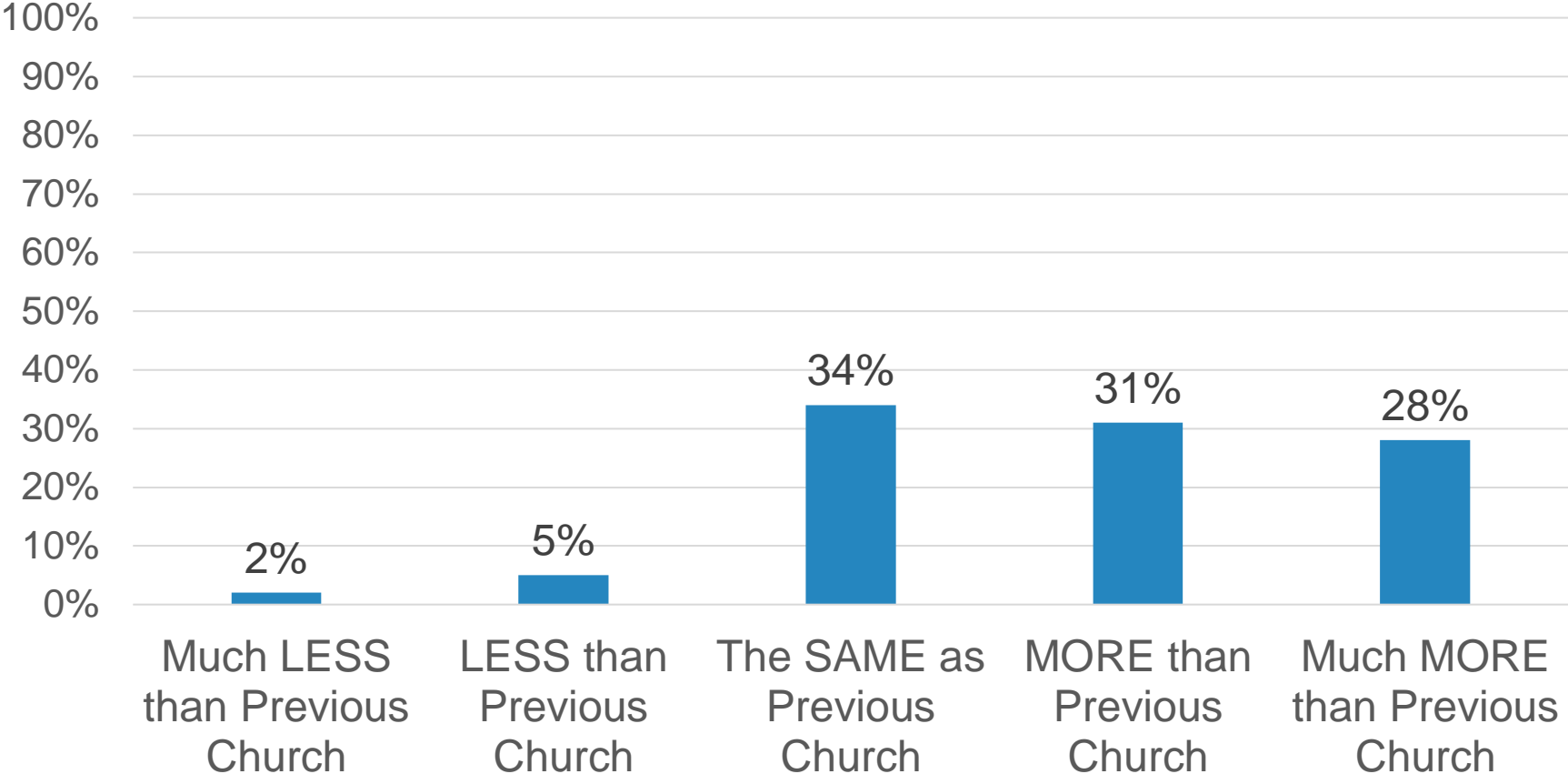


Lifewayresearch

Q13_10: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

The preaching at my church is relevant to my life

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

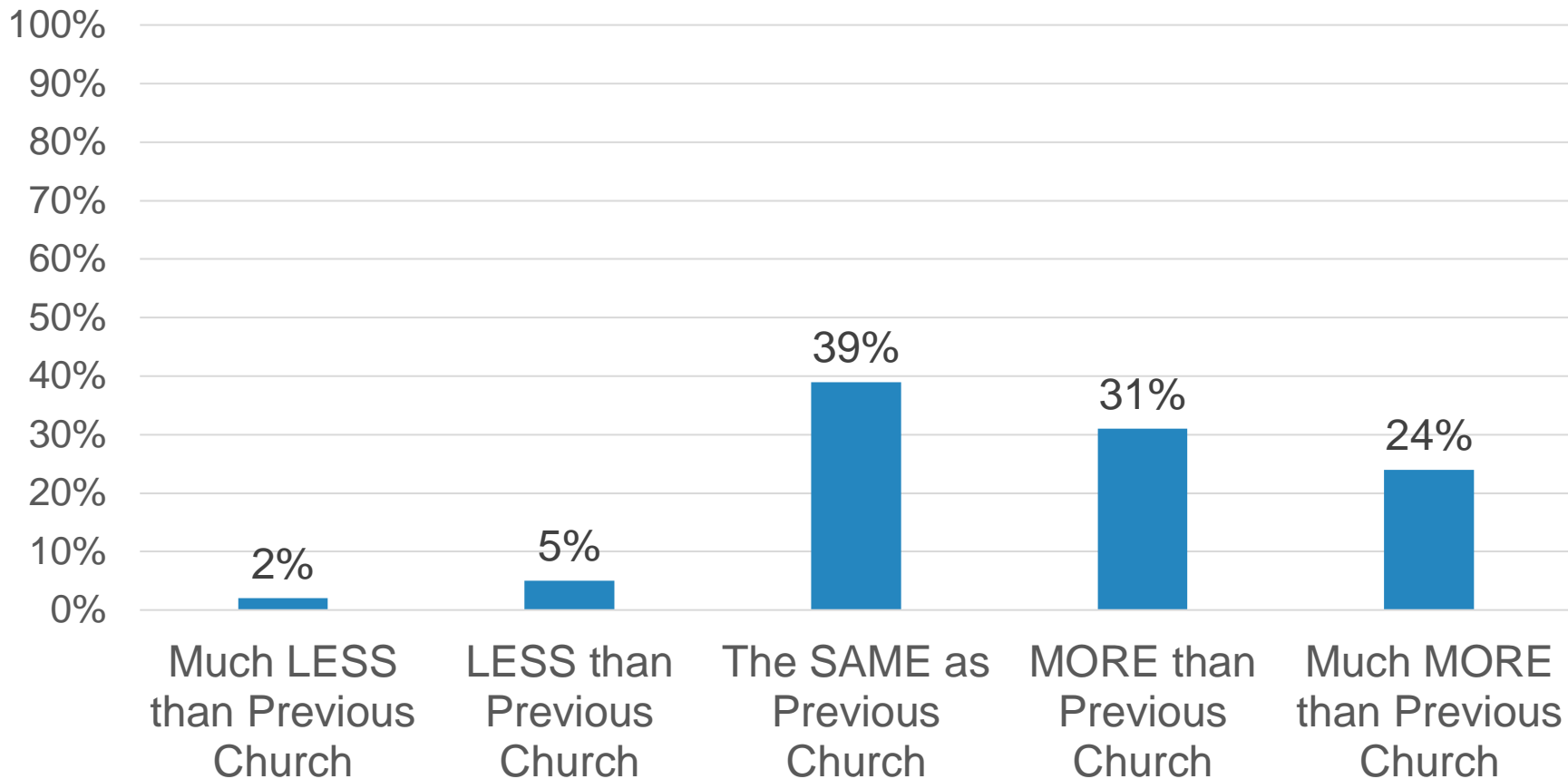


Lifeway research

Q13_11: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

There is unity among members at my church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

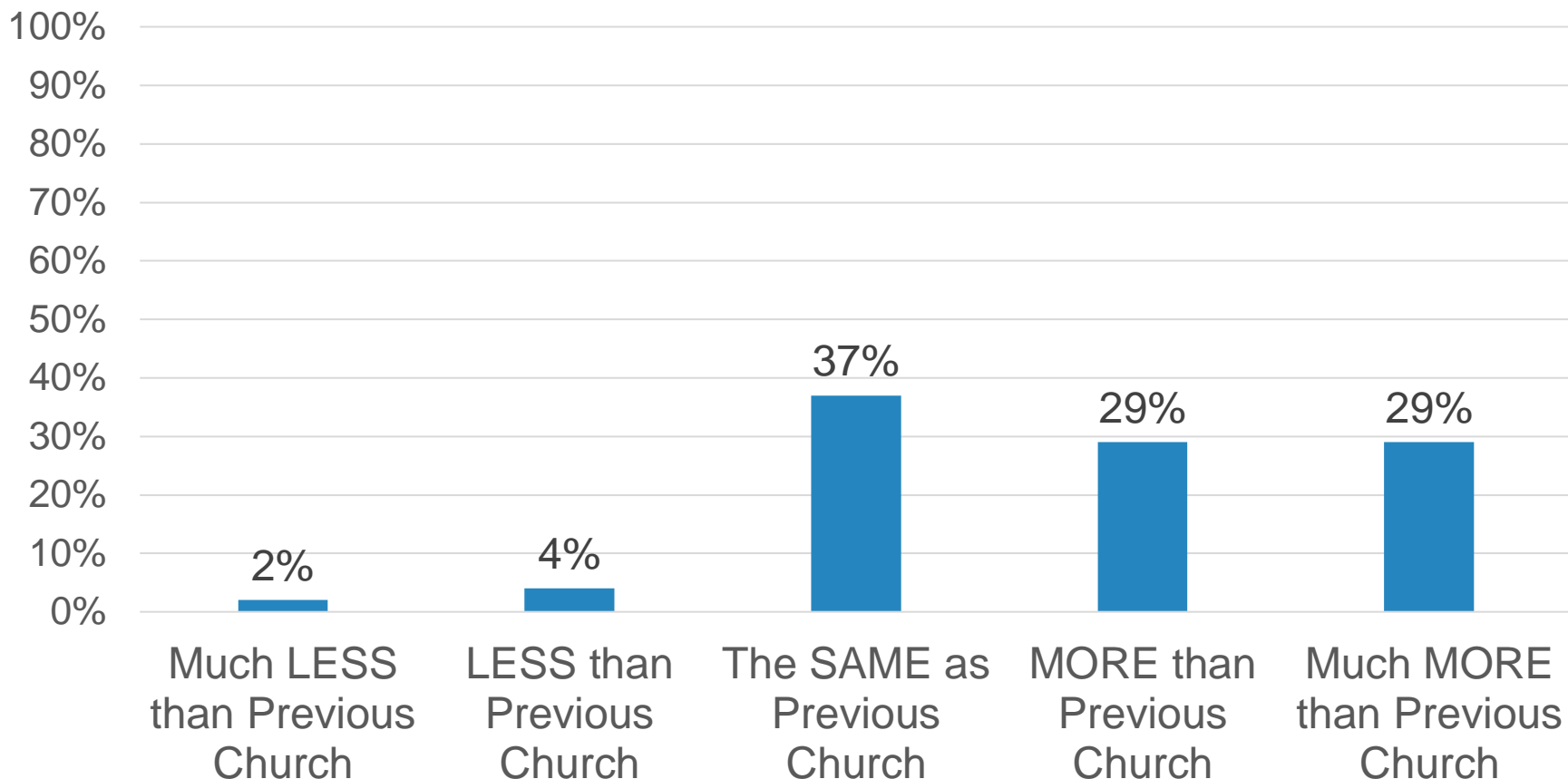


Lifewayresearch

Q13_12: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

My church is welcoming / friendly

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

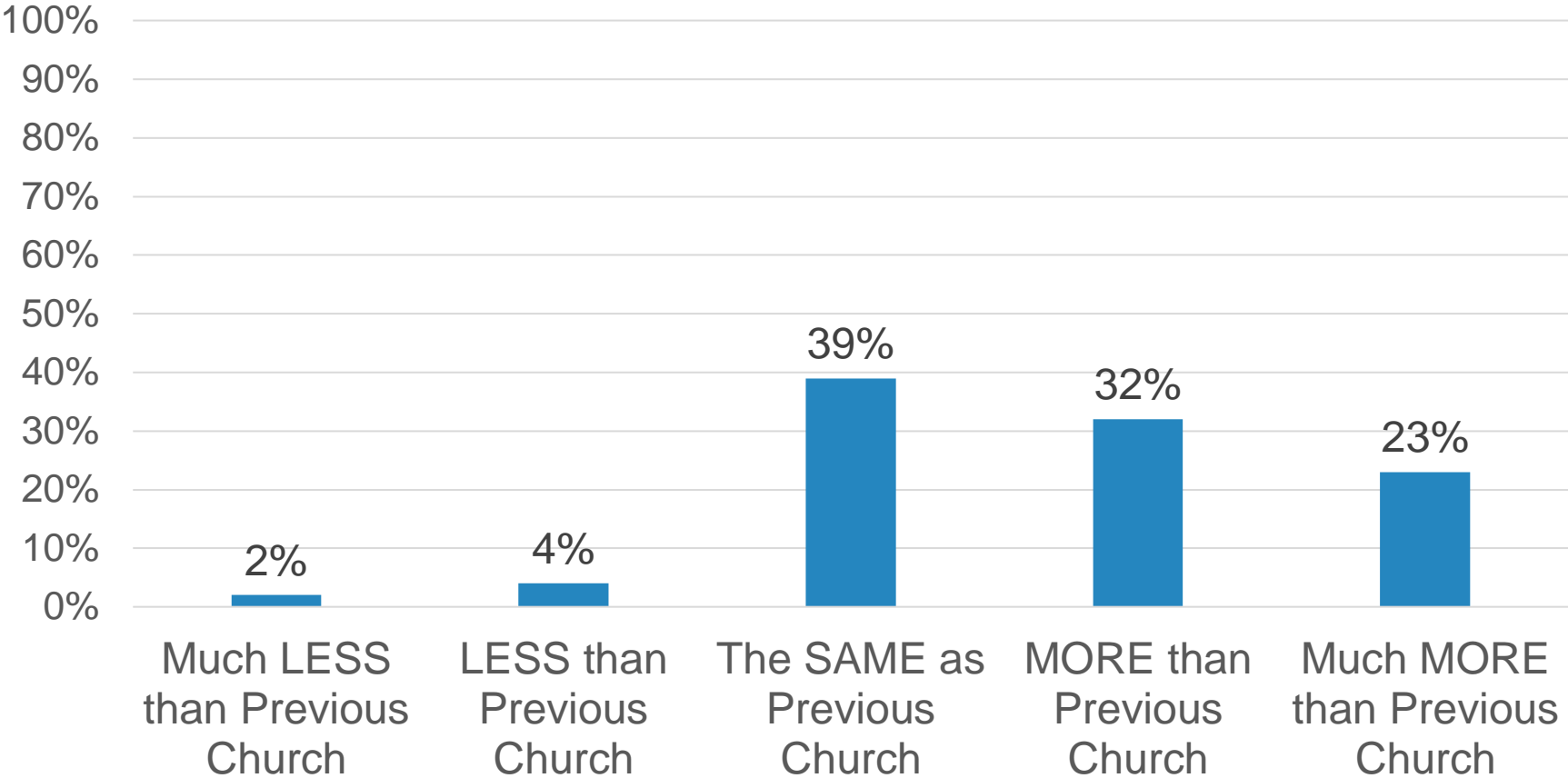


Lifewayresearch

Q13_13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

My church does things with excellence

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

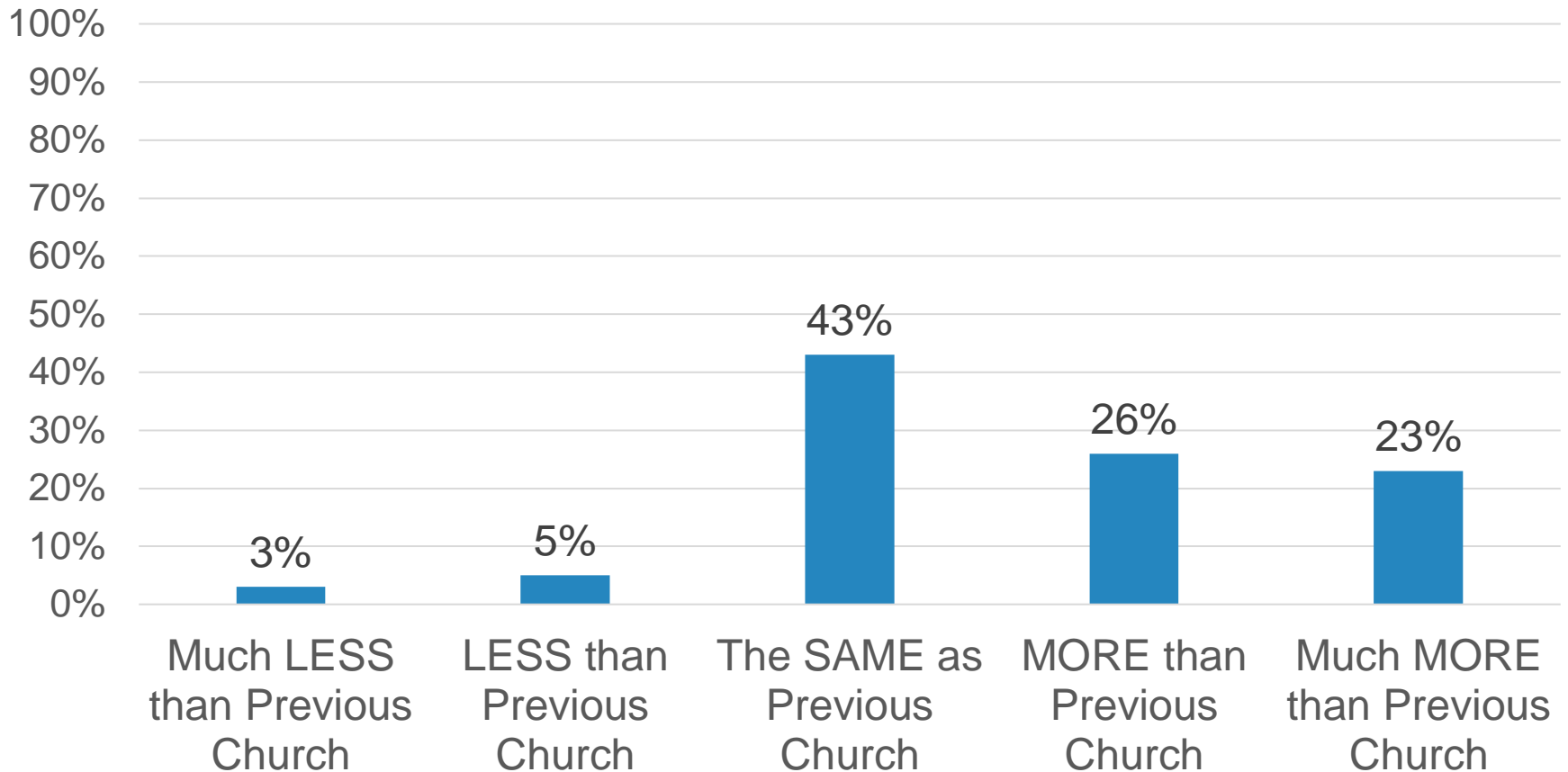


Lifeway research

Q13_14: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I don't want to miss services at my church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

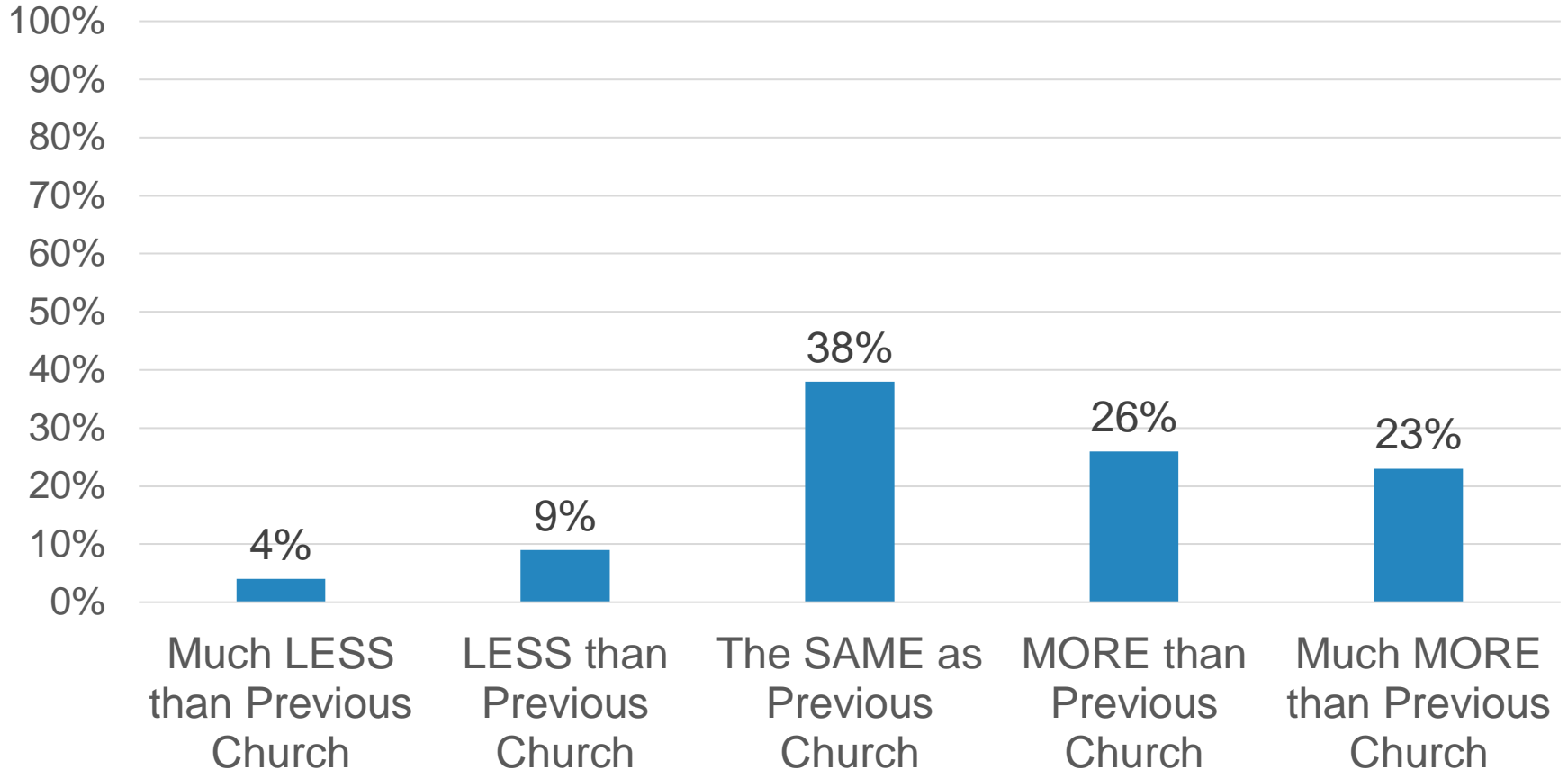


Lifewayresearch

Q13_15: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

I am actively involved in my church

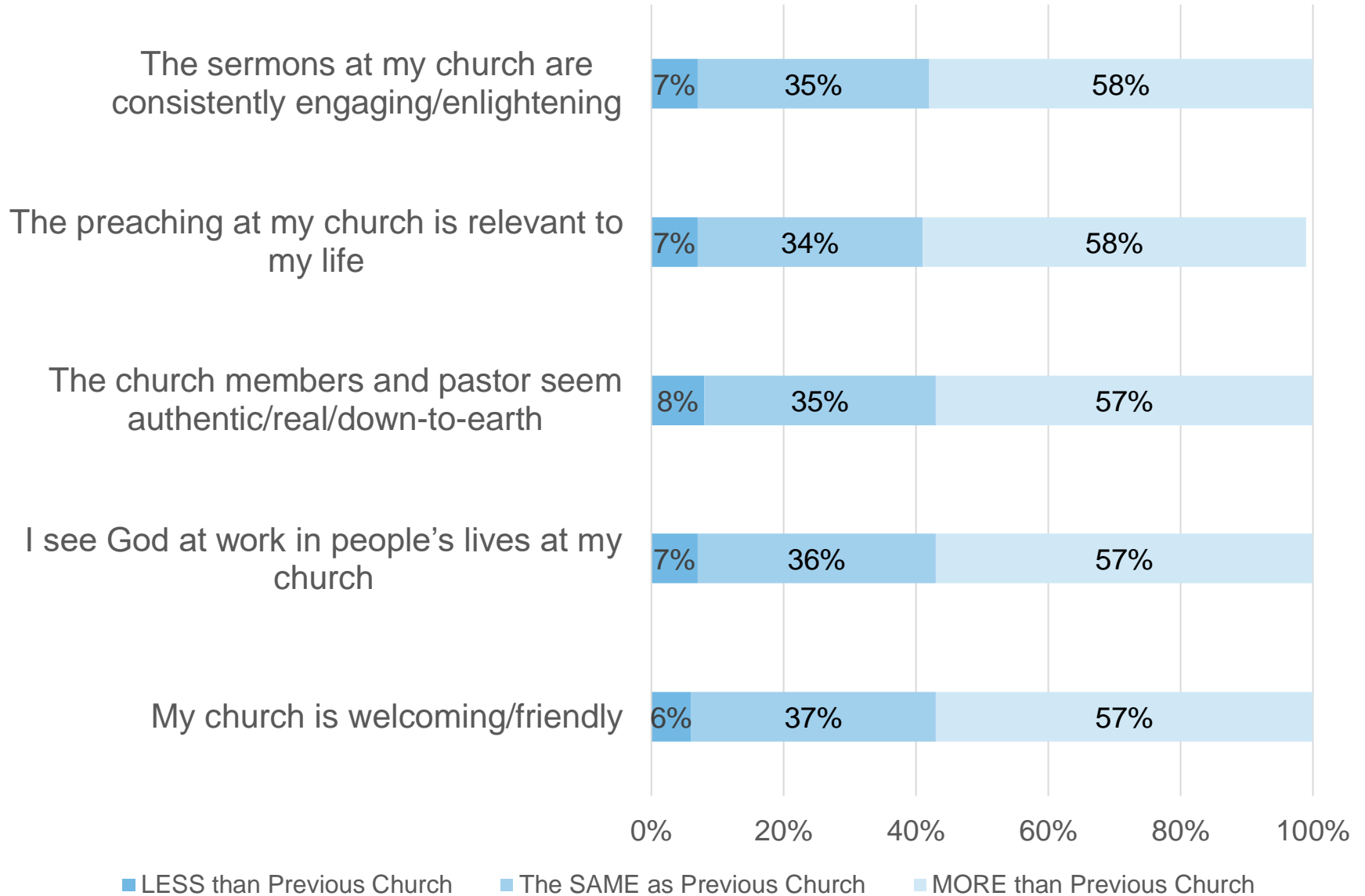
Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



Lifewayresearch

Q13_16: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas?
(Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

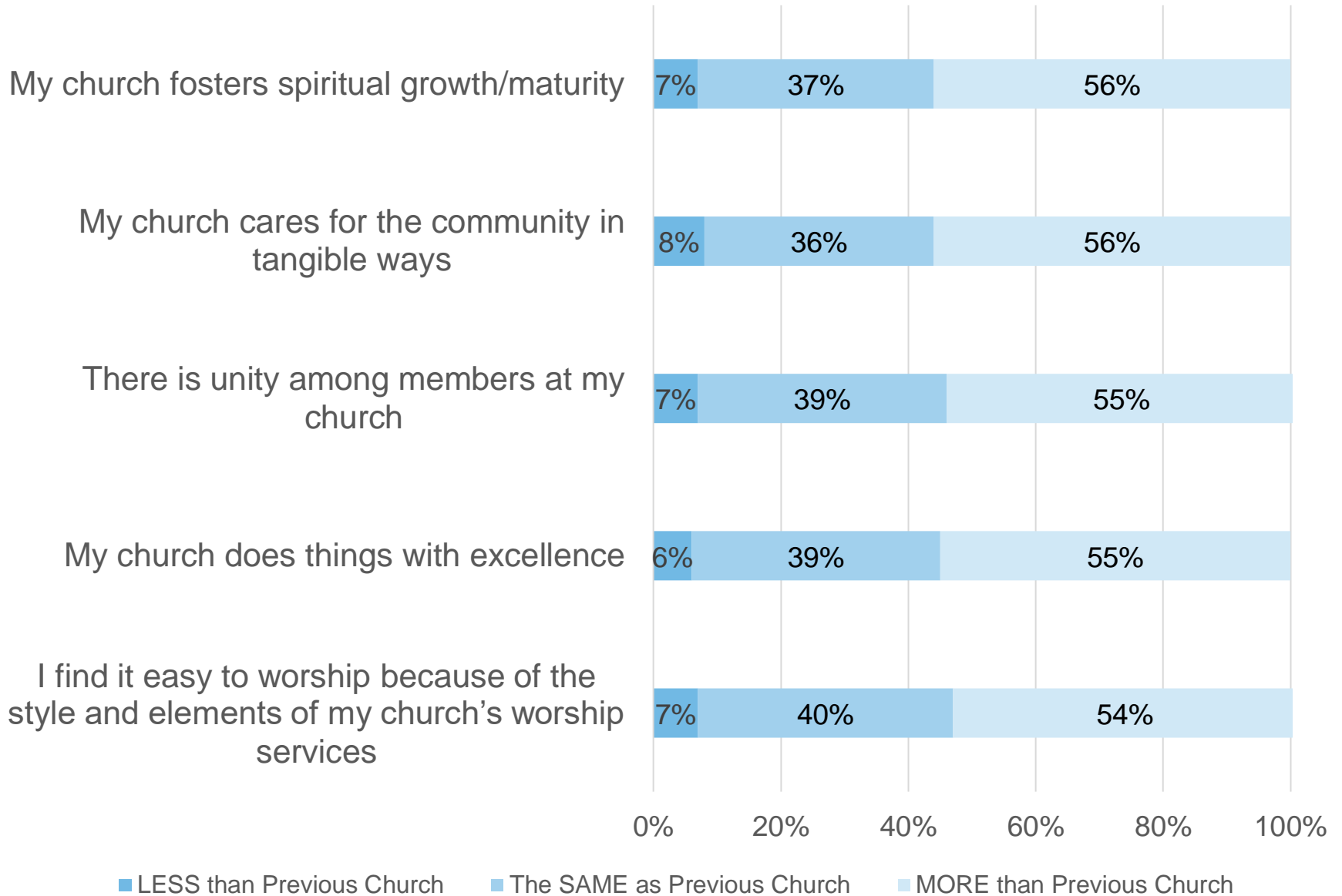
Comparison of current and previous church (1 of 3)



Lifewayresearch

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

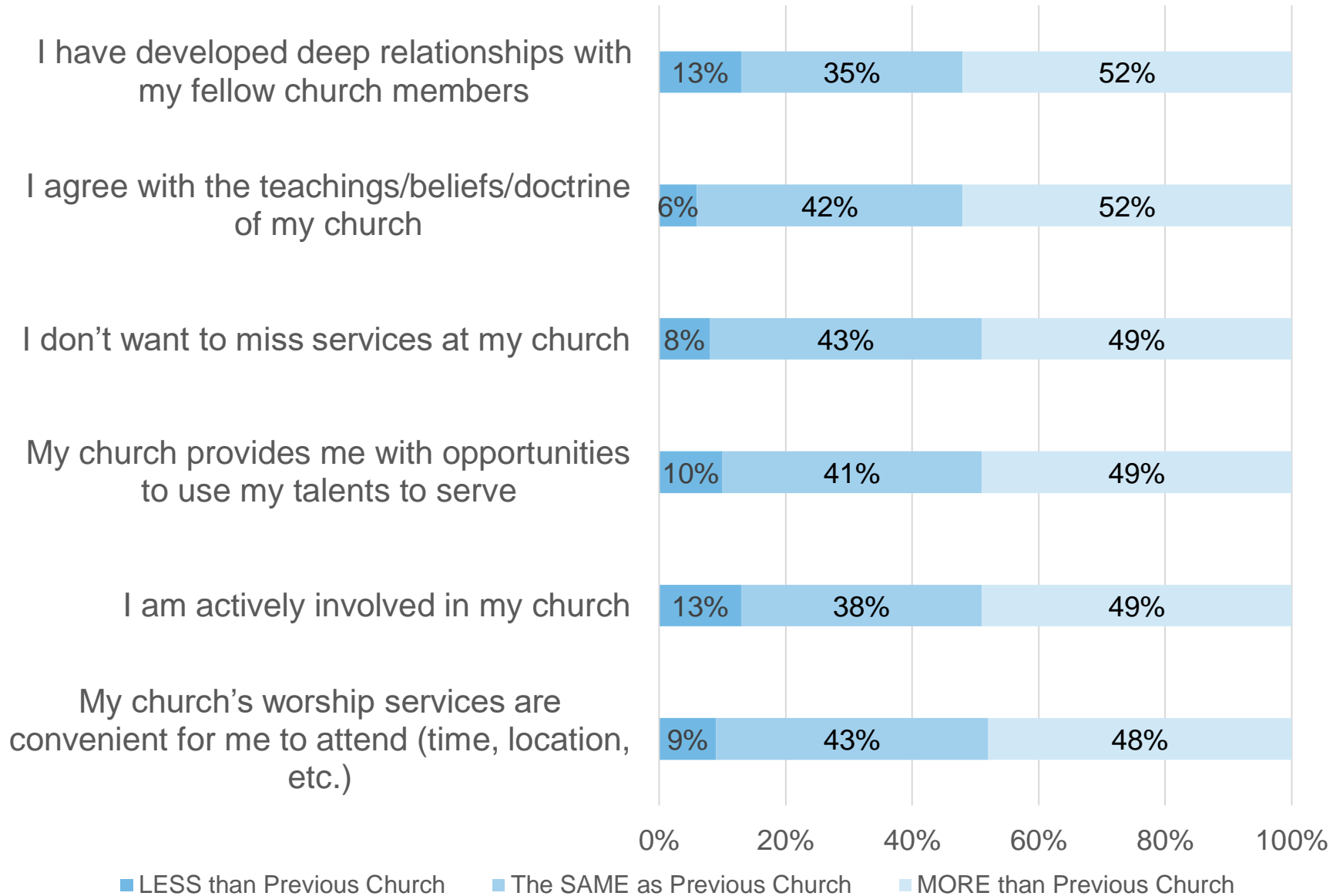
Comparison of current and previous church (2 of 3)



Lifewayresearch

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

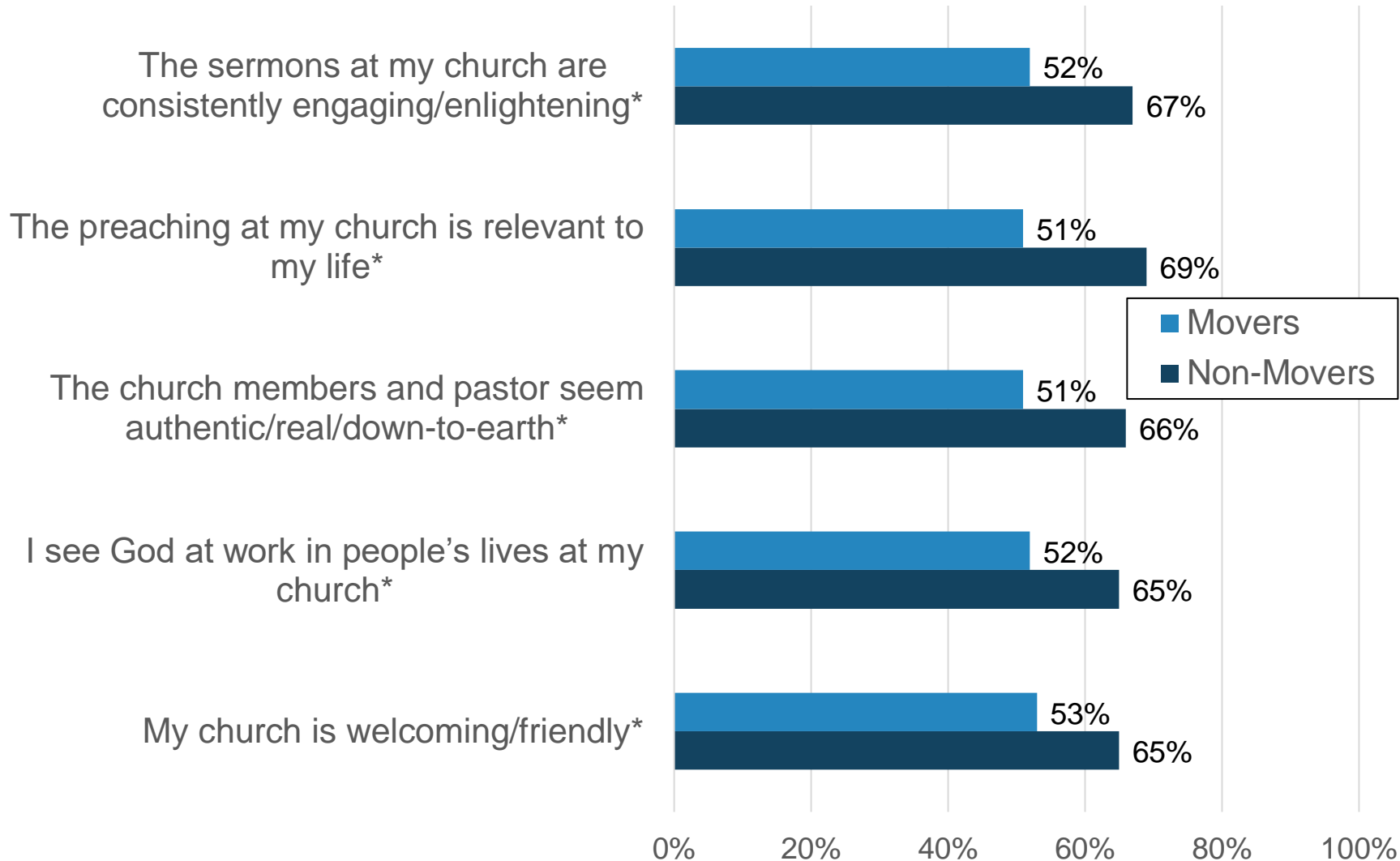
Comparison of current and previous church (3 of 3)



Lifewayresearch

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

Movers v. Non-Movers current church meets needs More/Much More than previous church

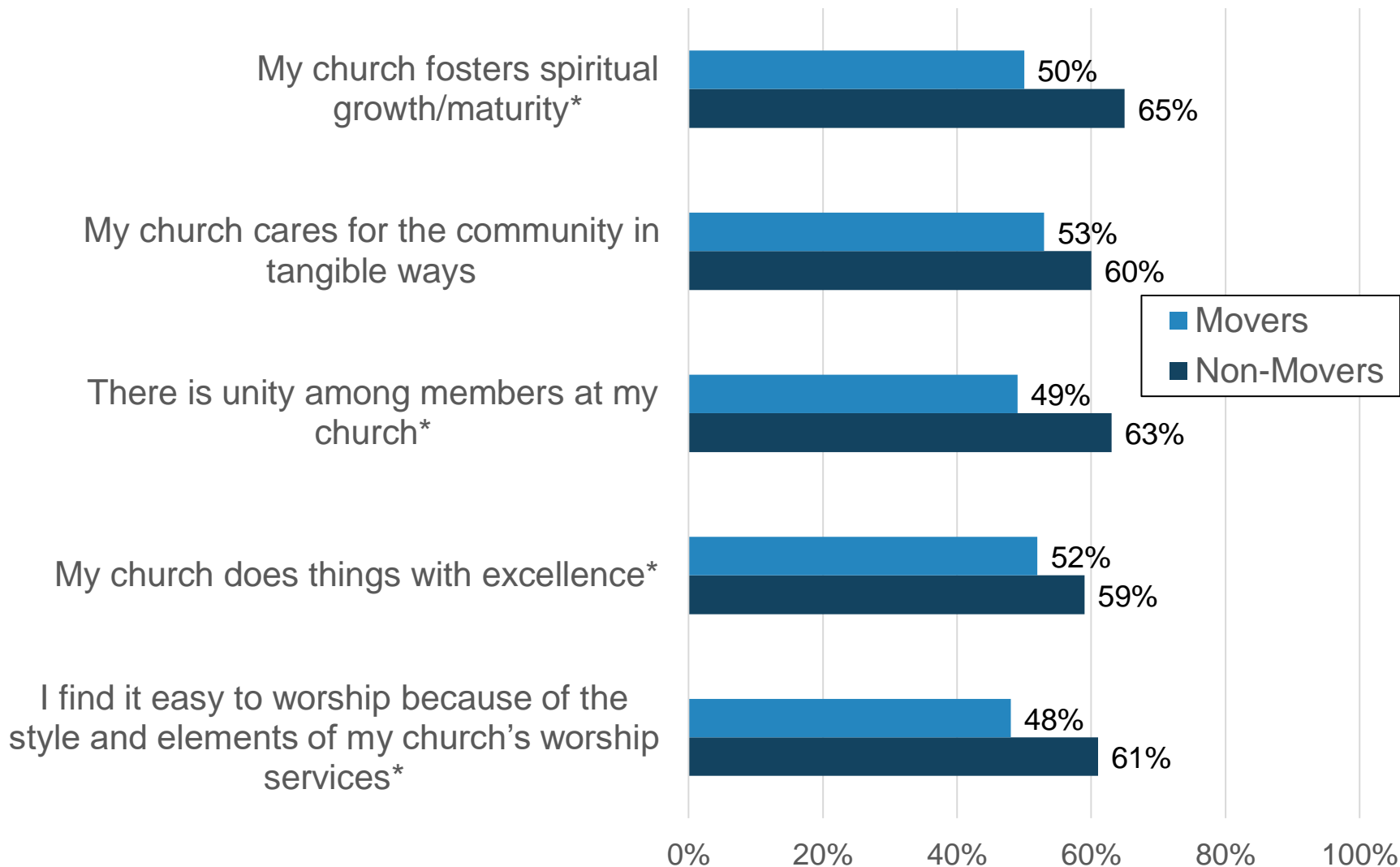


*Statistically significant difference

Lifeway research

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

Movers v. Non-Movers current church meets needs More/Much More than previous church *Continued*

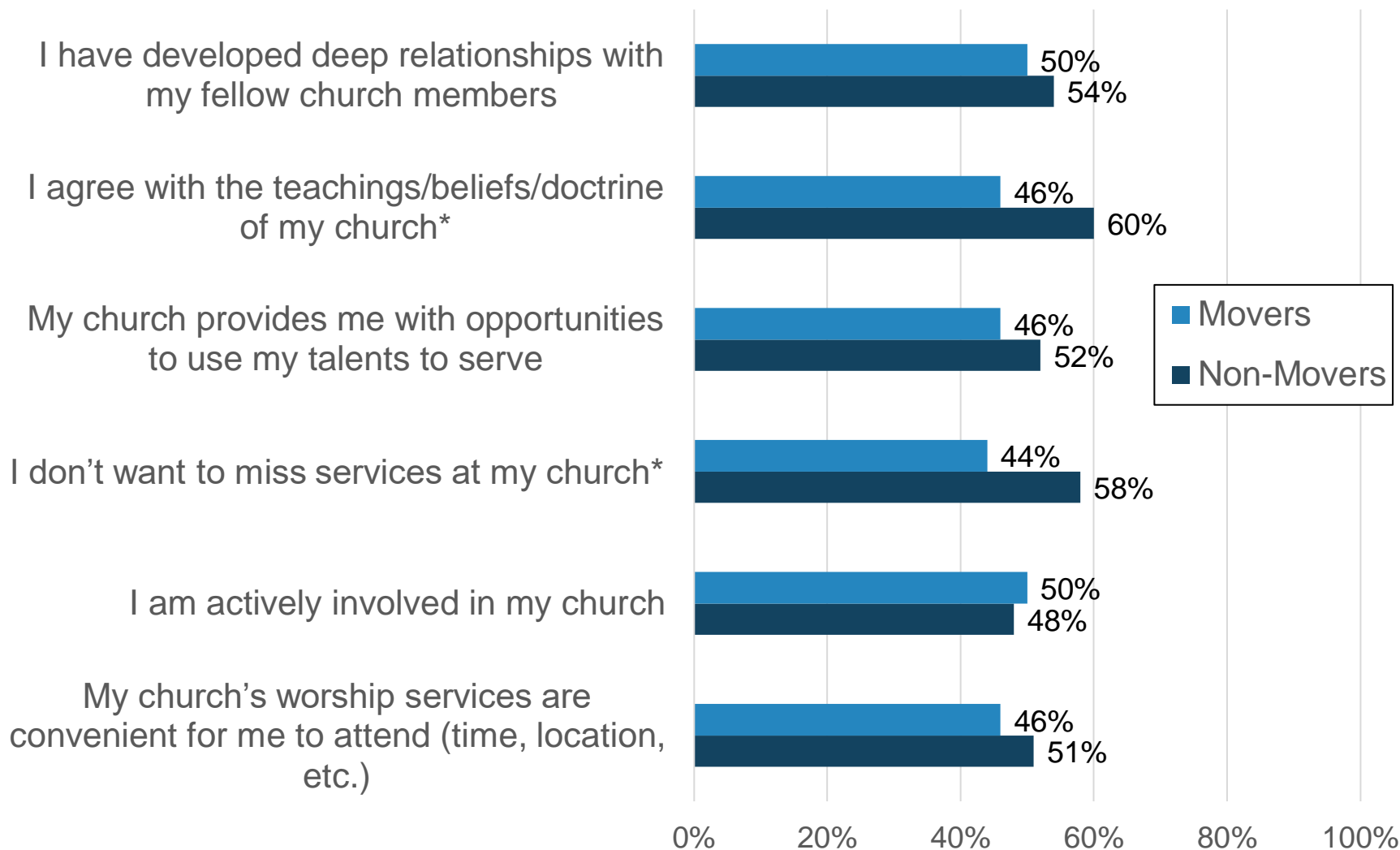


*Statistically significant difference

Lifeway research

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

Movers v. Non-Movers current church meets needs More/Much More than previous church *Continued*



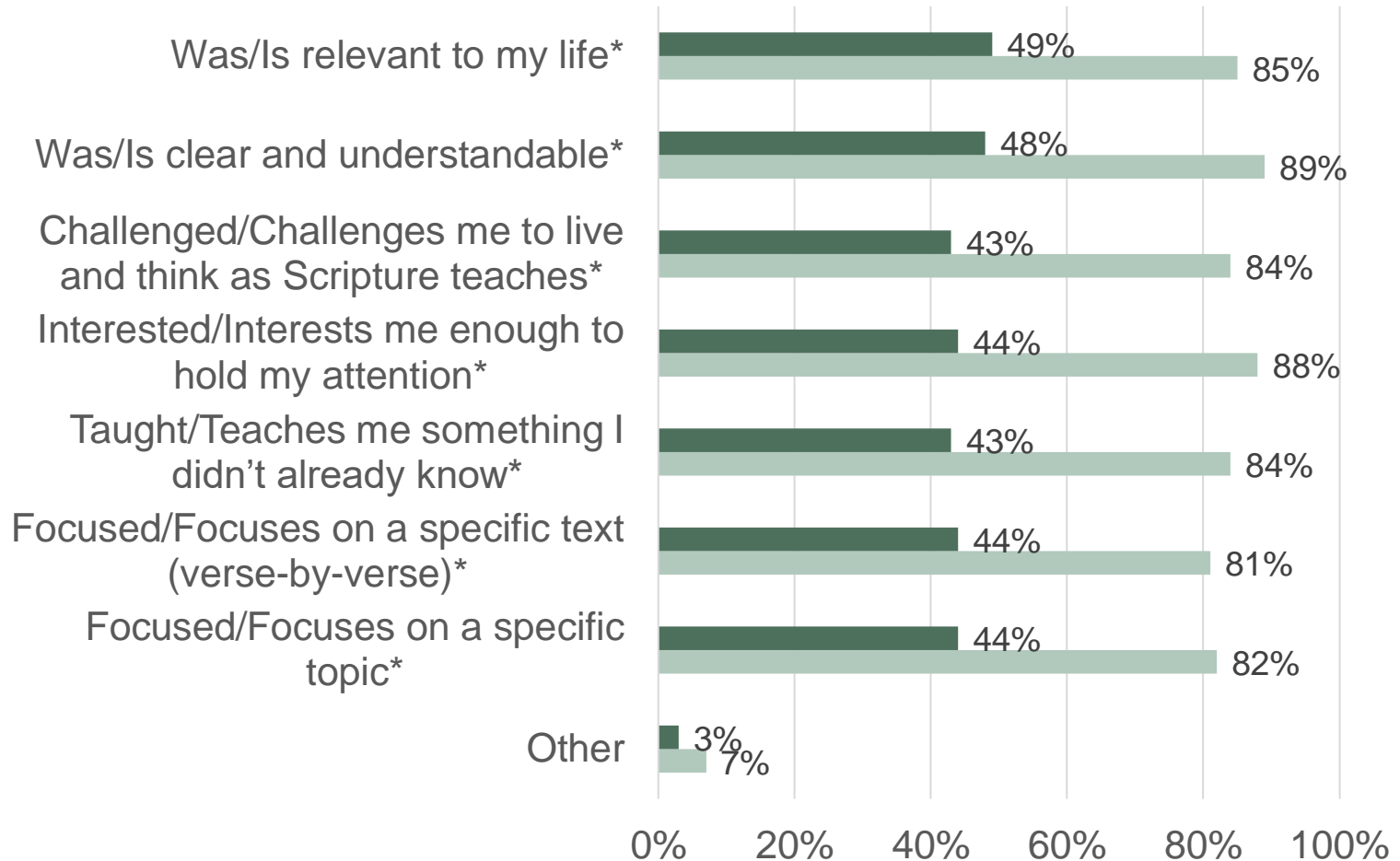
*Statistically significant difference

Lifeway research

Q13: "Compared to your previous church, how well does your current church meet your needs in each of the following areas? (Select one answer for each attribute)" n=1,001

“Which of the following best describe the preaching at your previous/current churches?”

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

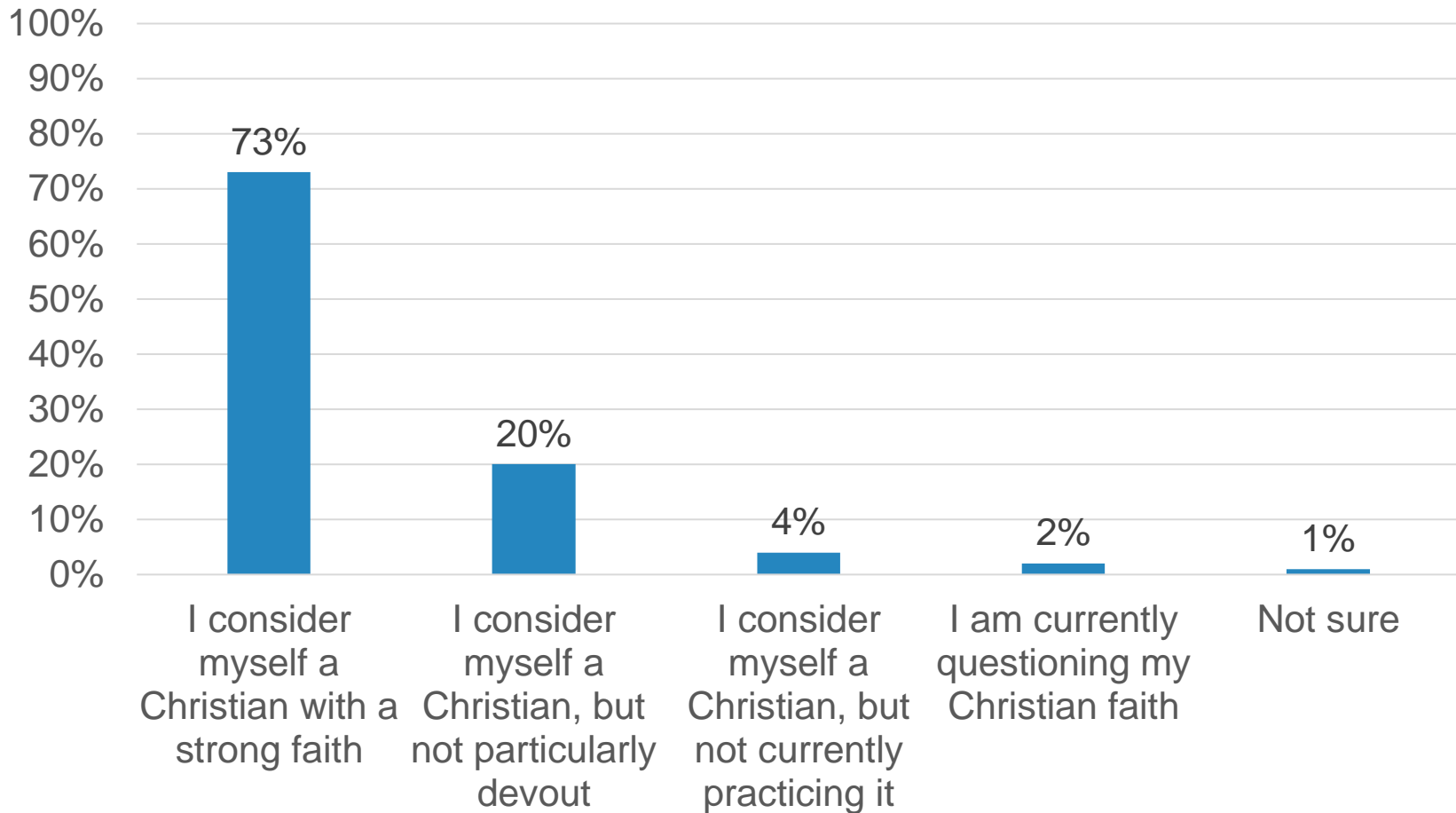


*Statistically significant difference

Lifeway research

73% consider themselves a Christian with strong faith

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

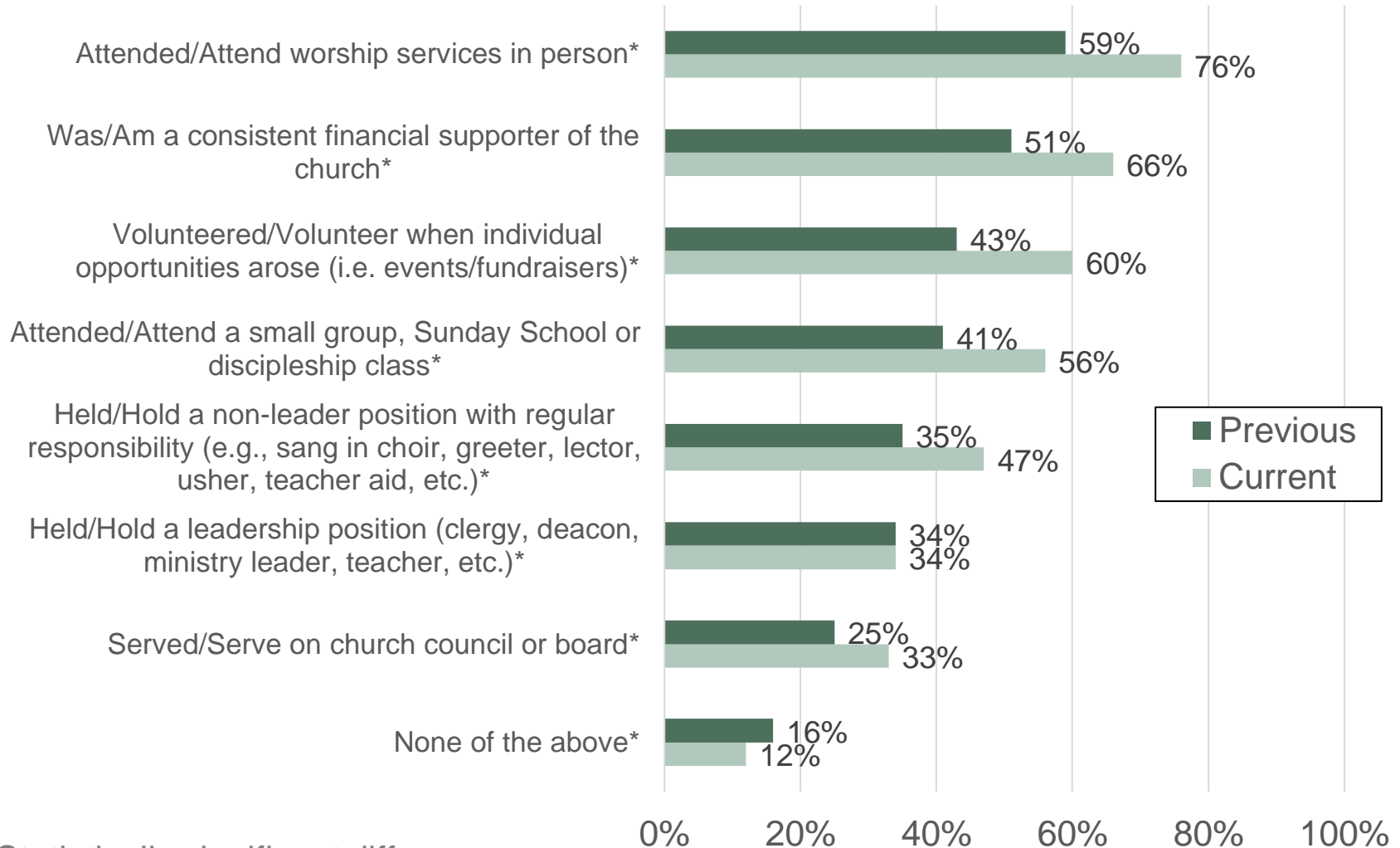


Lifeway research

Q14: "Which of the following statements best describes your current faith? (Select one)" n=1,001

“In what ways were you/are you involved in your previous and current churches?”

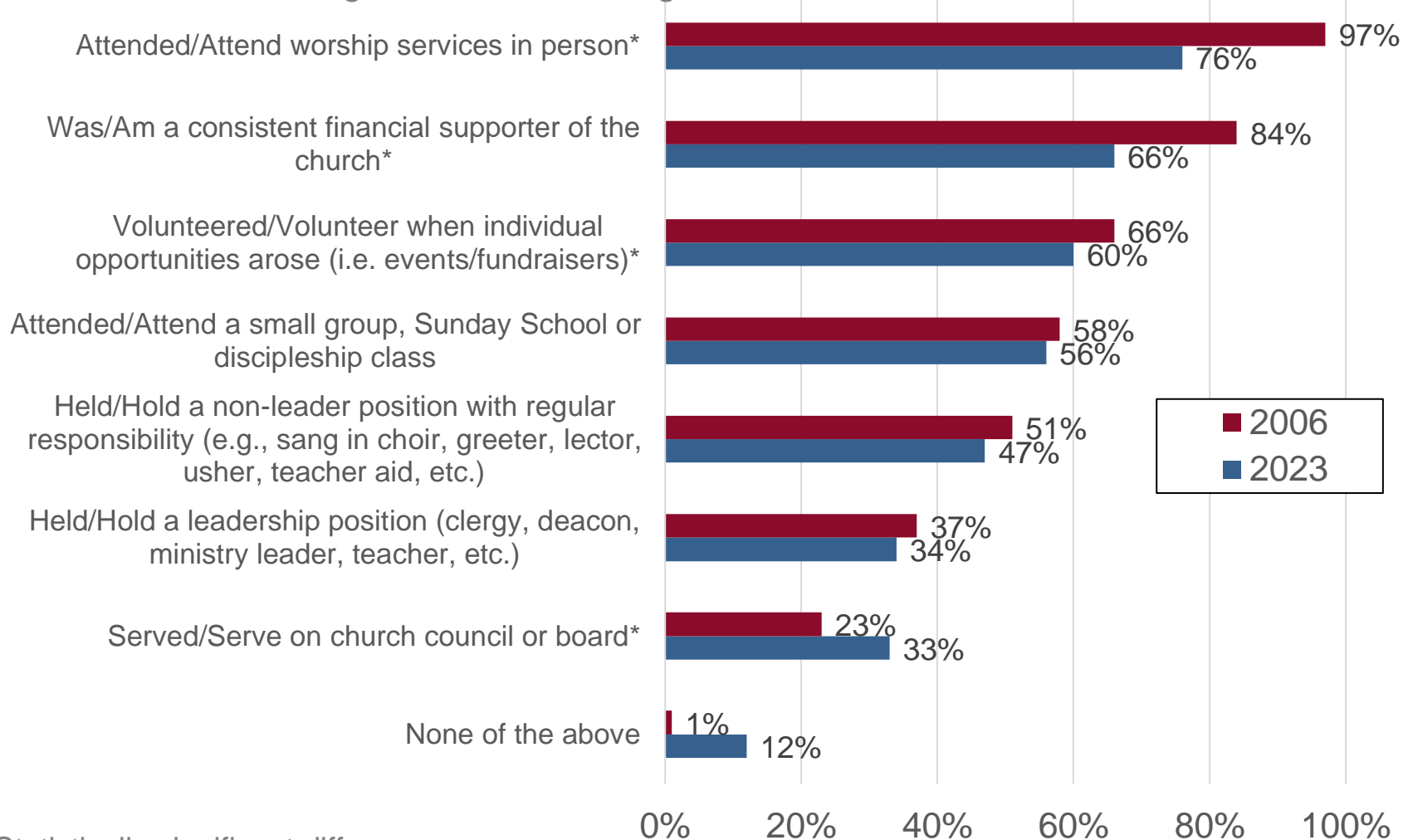
Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



Lifeway research

Current Church: Switchers are less likely to be attending worship in person and financially supporting their current church than in 2006

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



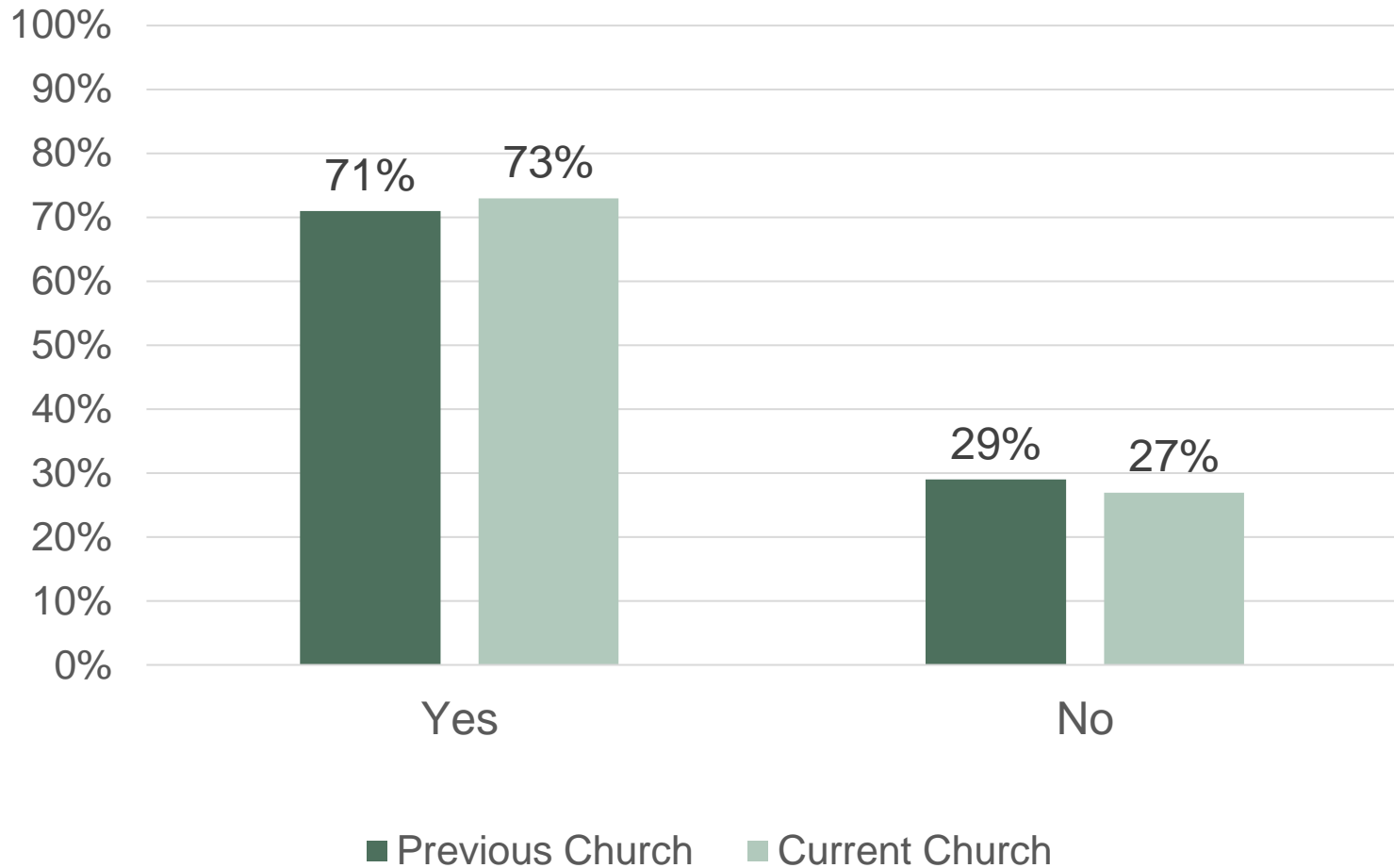
*Statistically significant difference

Lifeway research

“In what ways were you/are you involved in your previous and current churches? (Select all that apply for each church)”

73% of Church Switchers are members of their current church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches

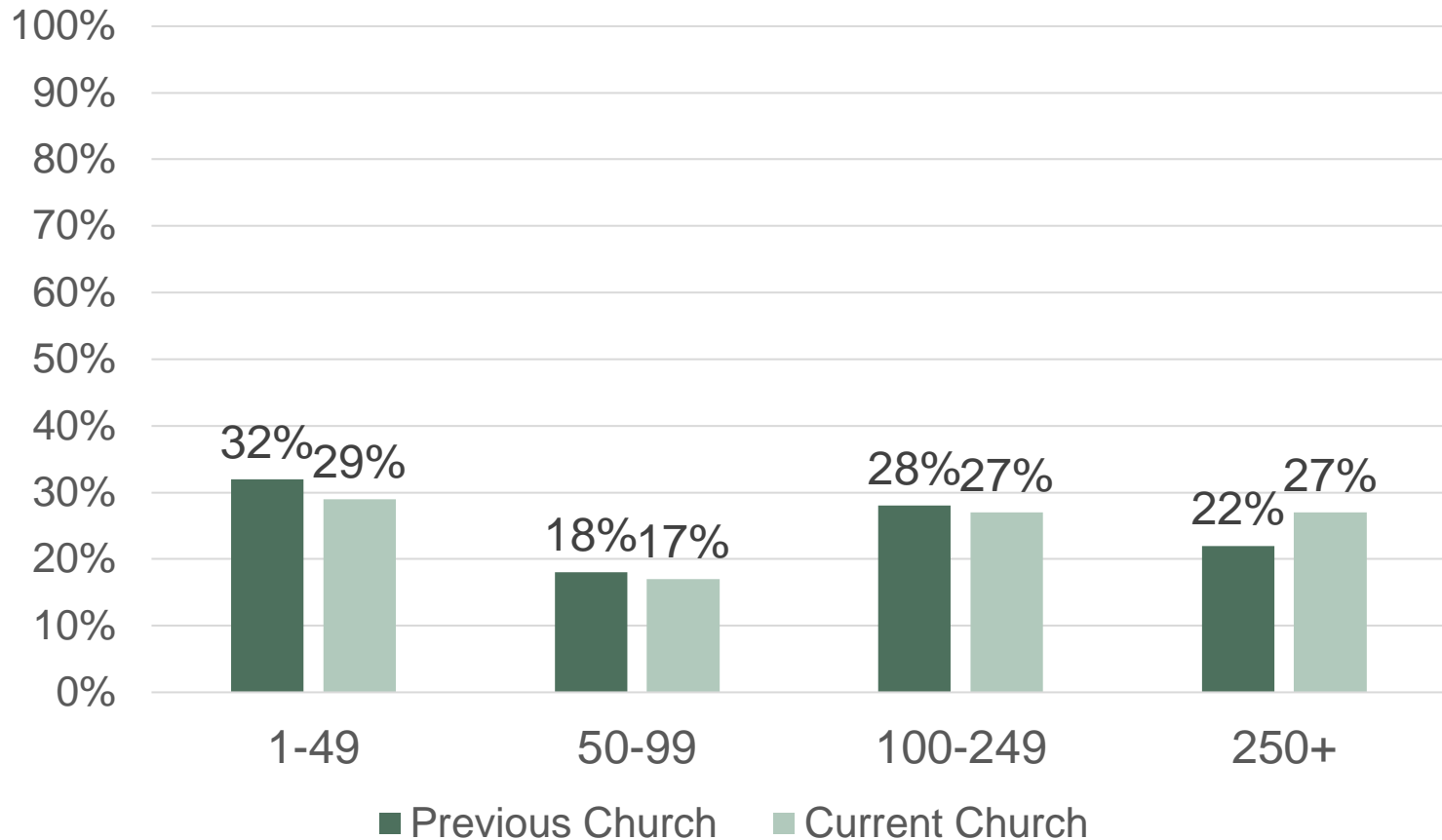


Lifeway research

Q16: "Did you formally join/become a member of your current/previous churches? (Select one for each church)" n=1,001

Comparison of average worship attendance at their current and previous church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



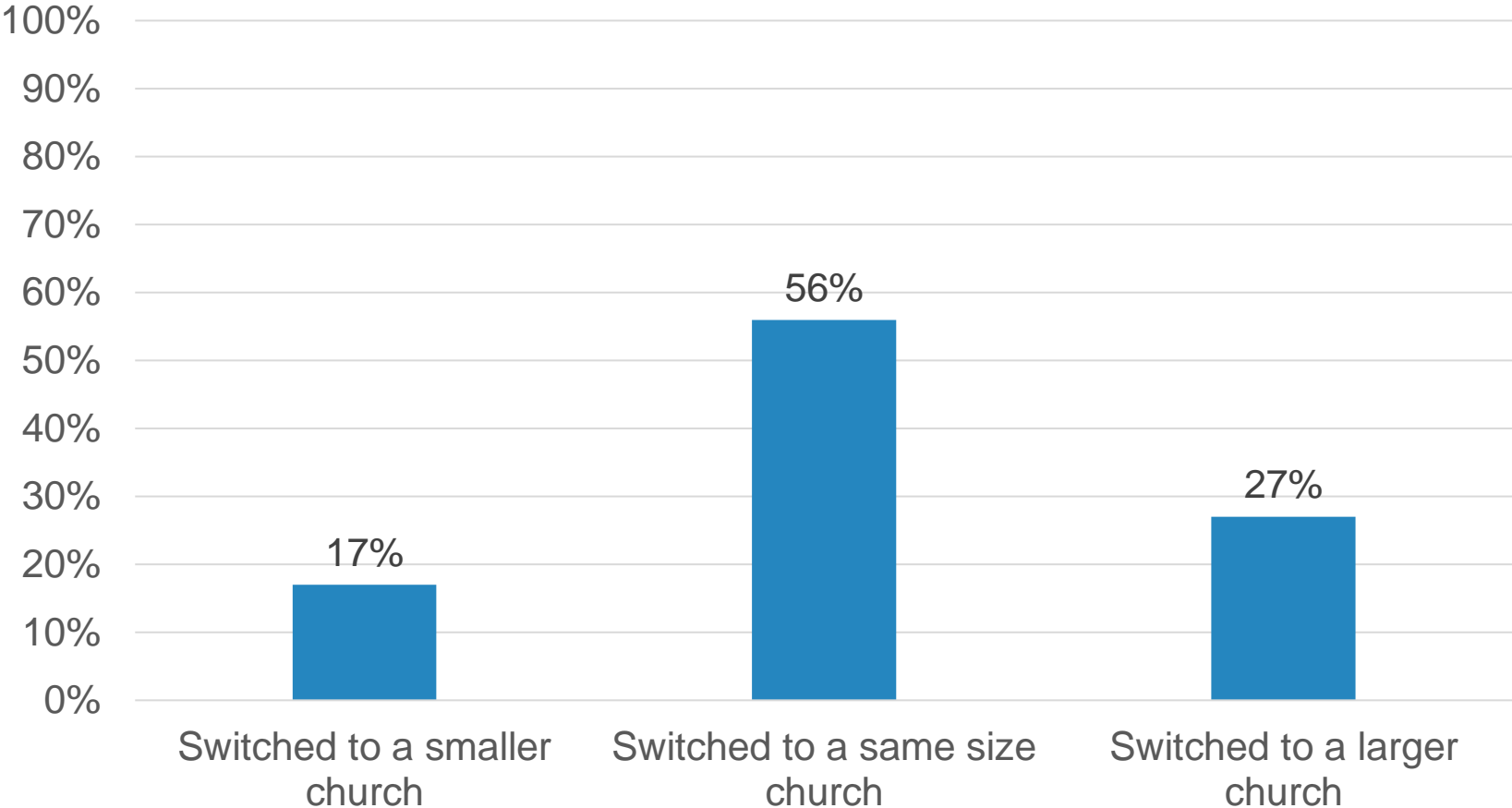
Growth in those in churches with attendance of 250+ is statistically significant

Lifewayresearch

Q21: "What is your church's average worship attendance in-person on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)? If you are not sure, please give your best estimate. Previous church attendance, Current church attendance" n=1,001

Percent of Church Switchers who changed to a church in a different size category

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



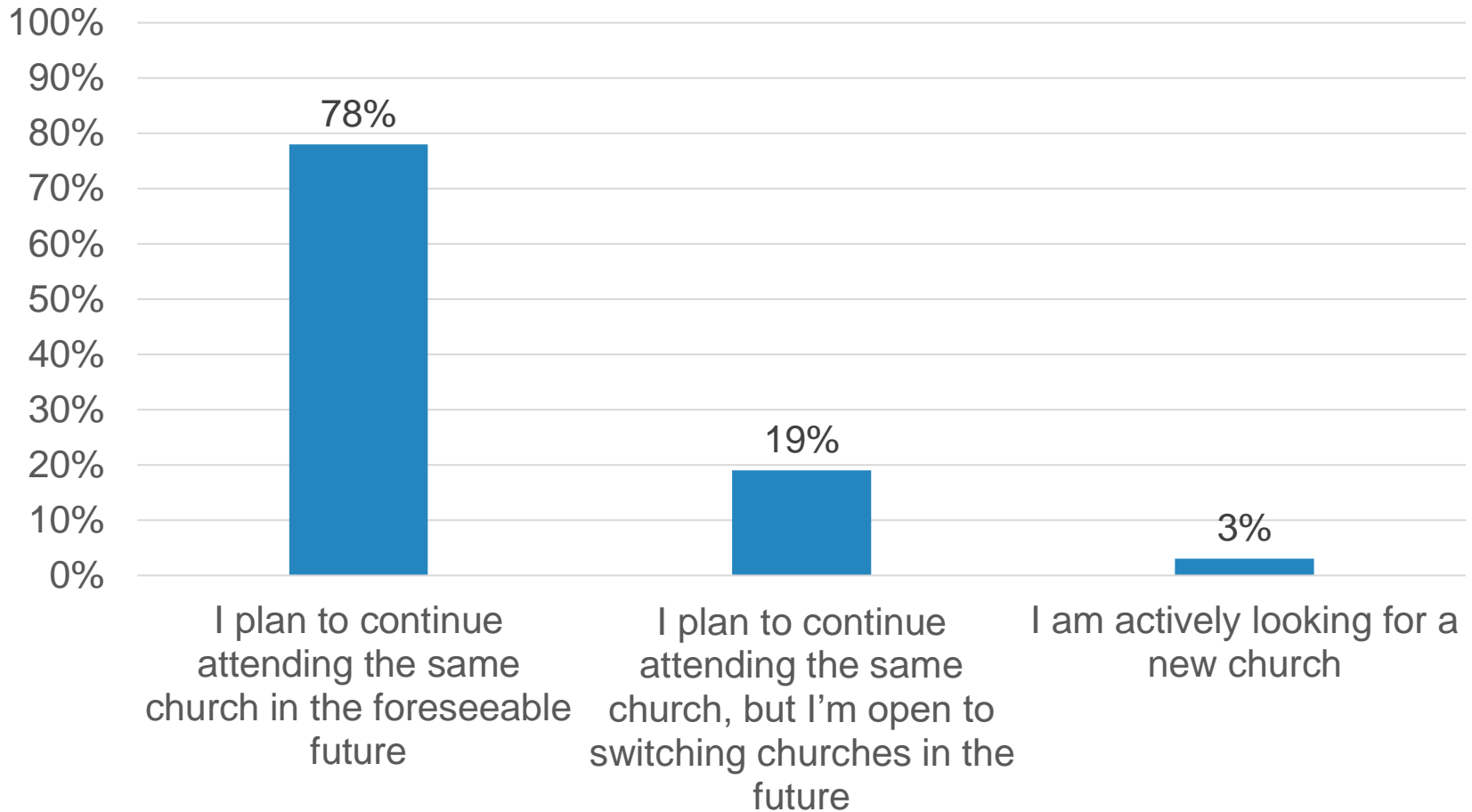
Categories: 1-49, 50-99, 100-249, 250+

Lifewayresearch

Q21: "What is your church's average worship attendance in-person on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)? If you are not sure, please give your best estimate. Previous church attendance, Current church attendance" n=1,001

78% plan to continue attending the same church

Among Protestant Churchgoers who Switched Churches



Lifewayresearch

Q18: "Which of the following reflects your plans to continue attending church in the future? (Select one)" n=998

Church Switcher Study 2023

Reasons for Switching Churches Report

A SURVEY OF 1,001 AMERICAN PROTESTANT CHURCH SWITCHERS

Lifewayresearch