

Pastors' Views on Caring for People with Disabilities

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

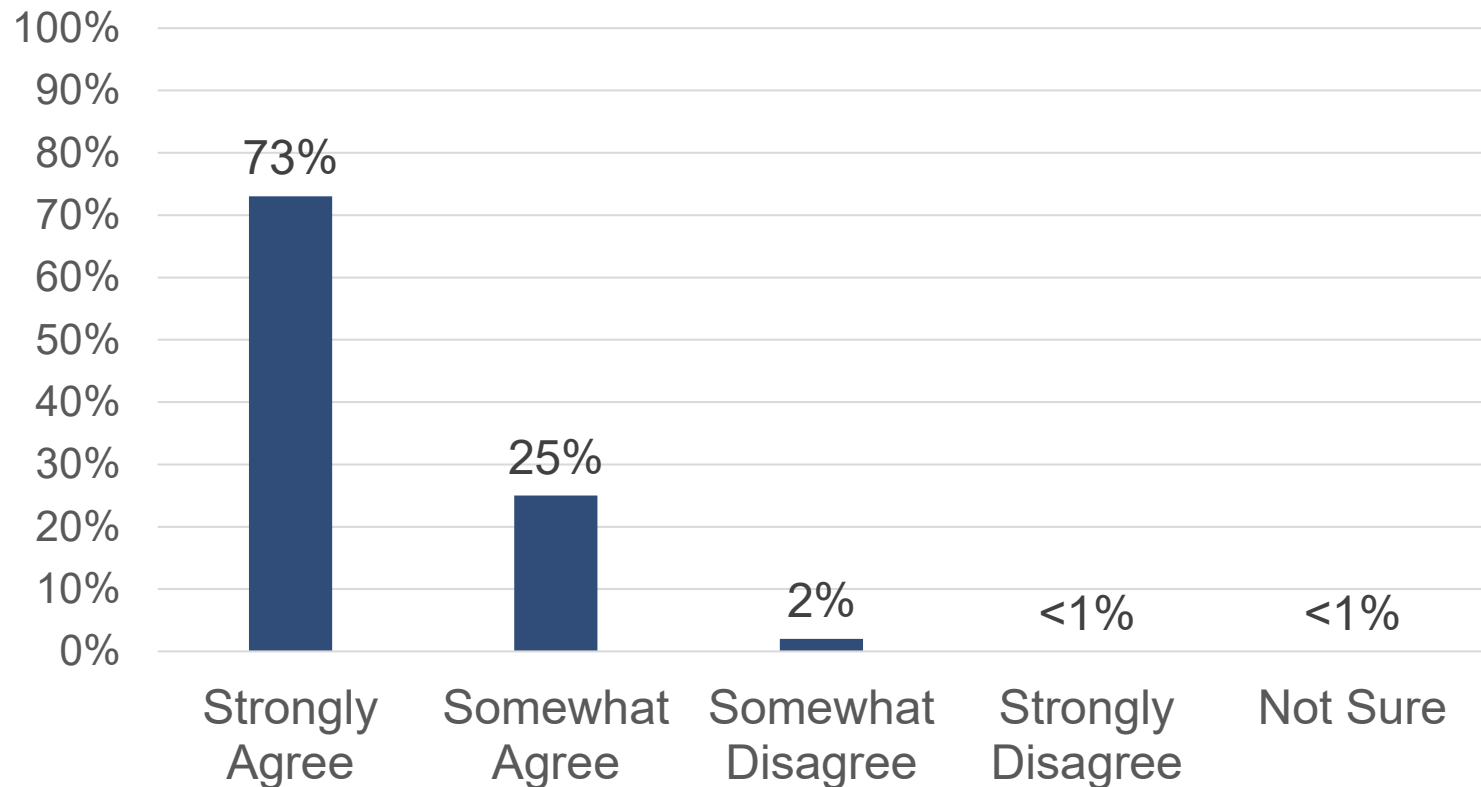
Lifeway[®] Research

Methodology

- The phone survey of 1,003 Protestant pastors was conducted September 2-24, 2025
- 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 1,003 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 3.3\%$ This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
- Comparisons are made to a survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors conducted August 30 – September 24, 2019 with the same methodology

98% say that a person with a disability would feel welcomed and included when coming to their church

Among Protestant Pastors

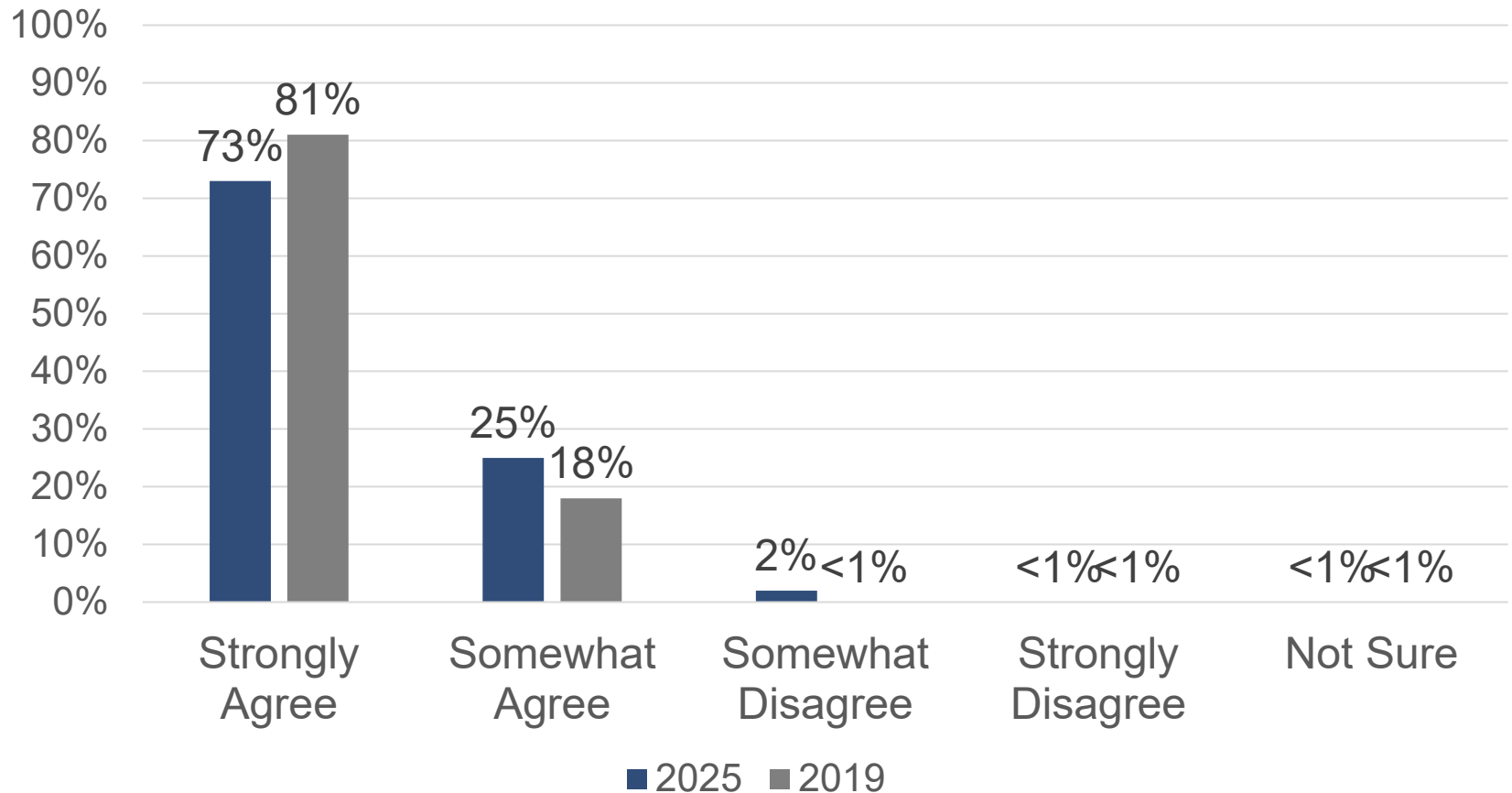


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Q: "A person with a disability (including physical, sensory, cognitive, and intellectual impairments) would feel welcomed and included when coming to our church." n=1,003

Fewer pastors strongly agree that a person with a disability would feel welcomed at their church than in 2019 (73% v. 81%)

Among Protestant Pastors

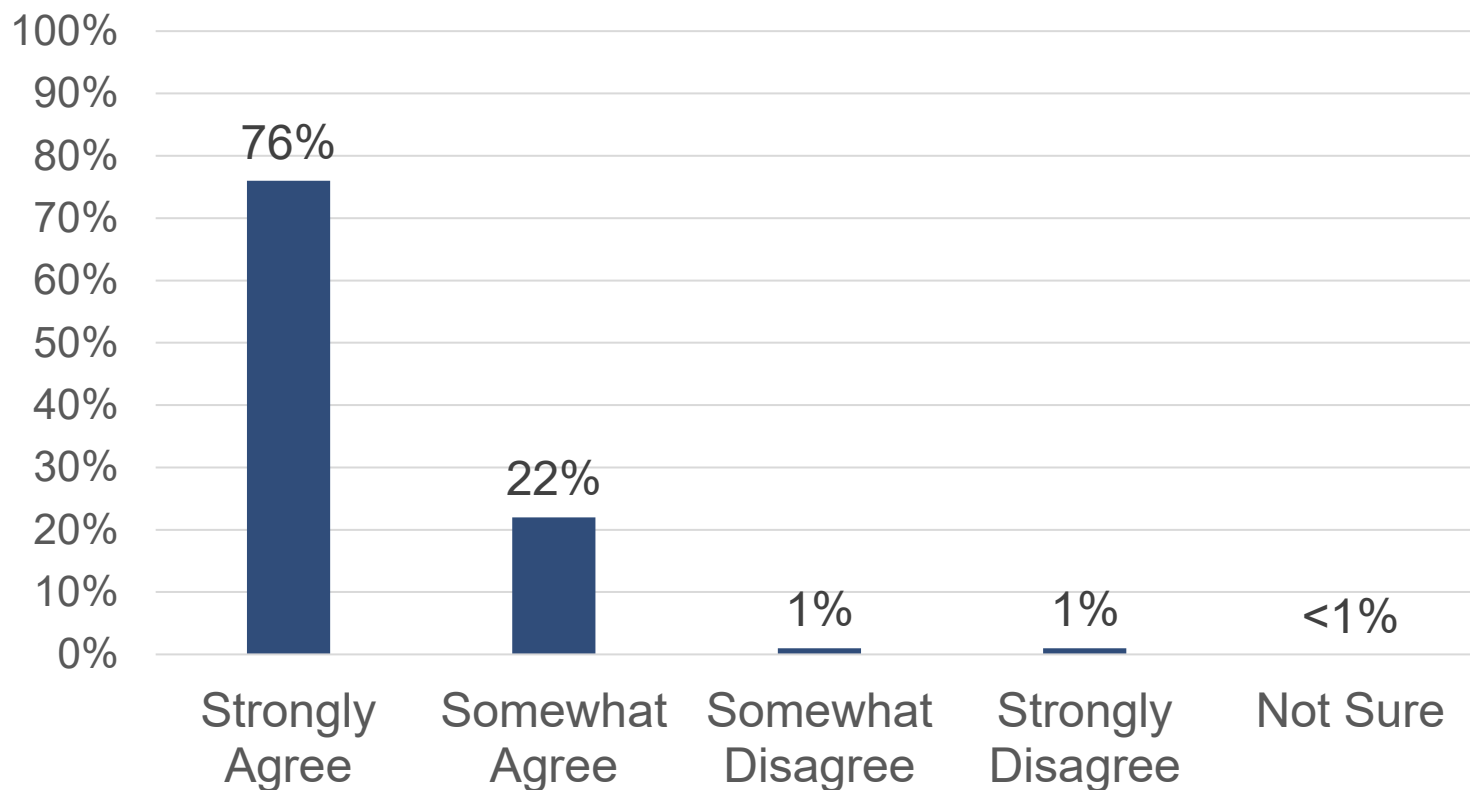


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Q: "A person with a disability (including physical, sensory, cognitive, and intellectual impairments) would feel welcomed and included when coming to our church." n=1,003

98% believe local churches should make necessary modifications to their church facilities to make them accessible to people with disabilities

Among Protestant Pastors

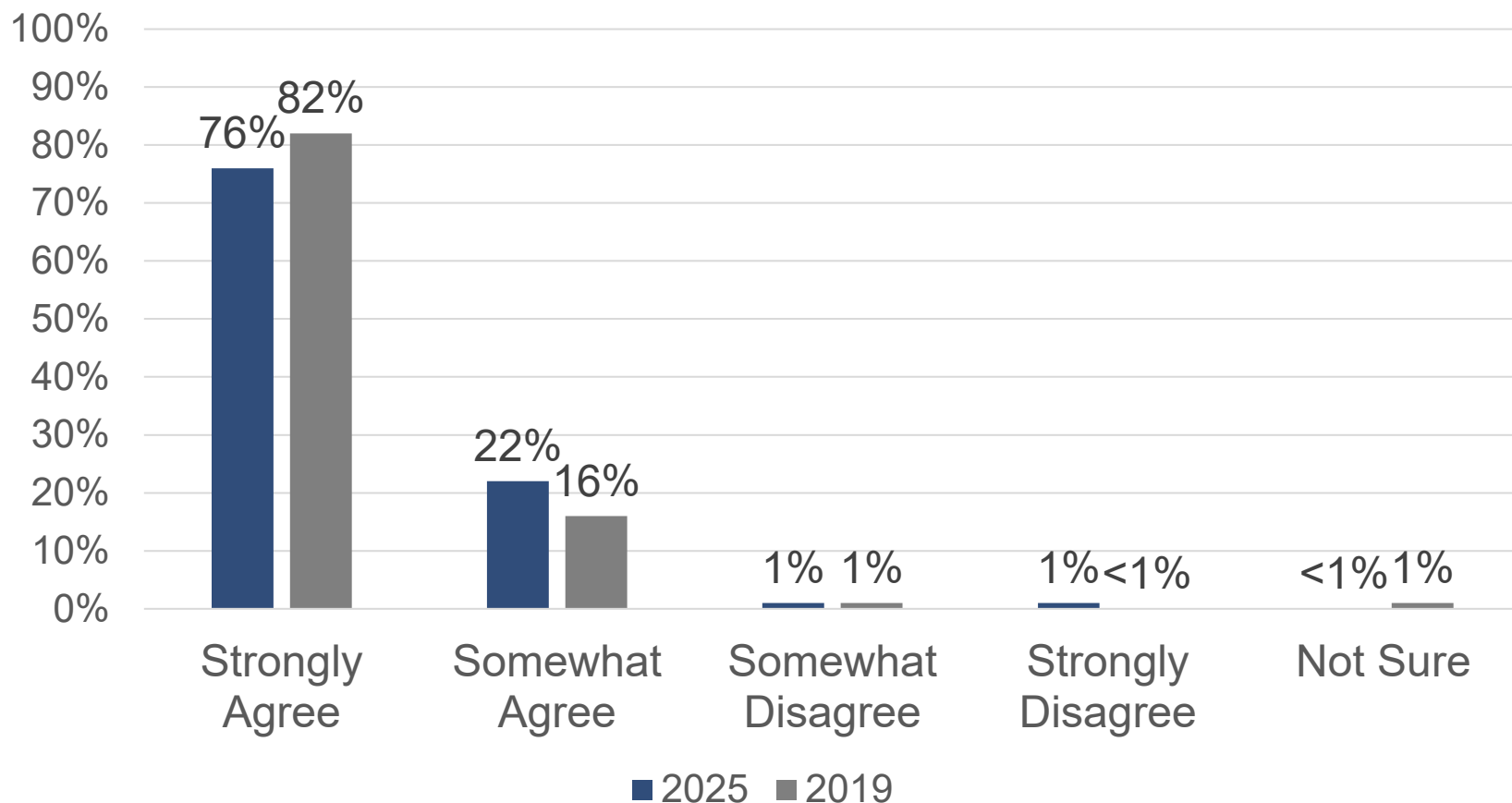


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Q: "Local churches should make necessary modifications to their church facilities to make them accessible to people with physical disabilities even when it is not required by law." n=1,003

Fewer pastors strongly agree local churches should make necessary modifications to their church facilities to accommodate people with disabilities than in 2019 (76% v. 82%)

Among Protestant Pastors

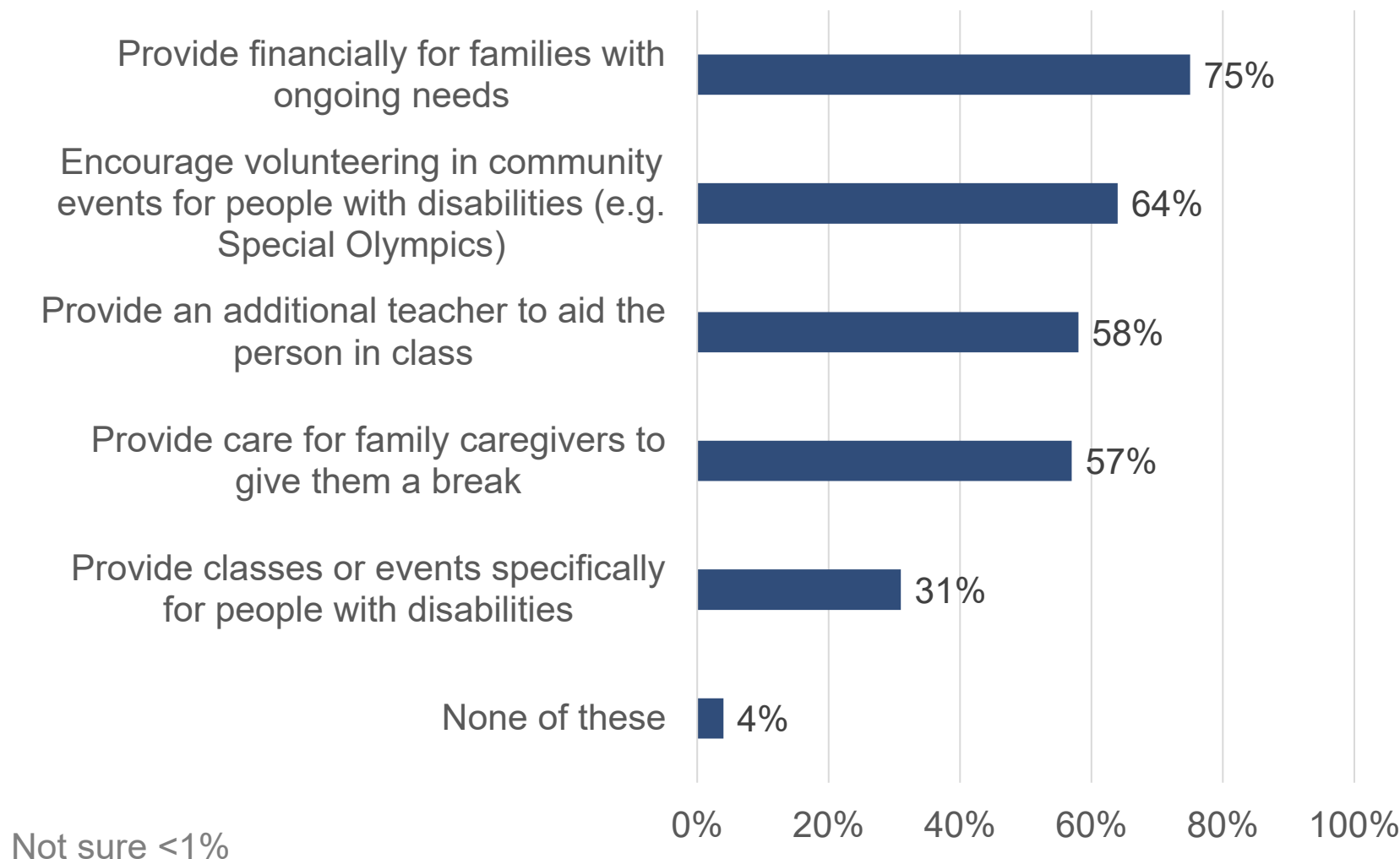


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Q: "Local churches should make necessary modifications to their church facilities to make them accessible to people with physical disabilities even when it is not required by law." n=1,003

95% of churches currently care for people with disabilities and their families in at least one of these five ways

Among Protestant Pastors

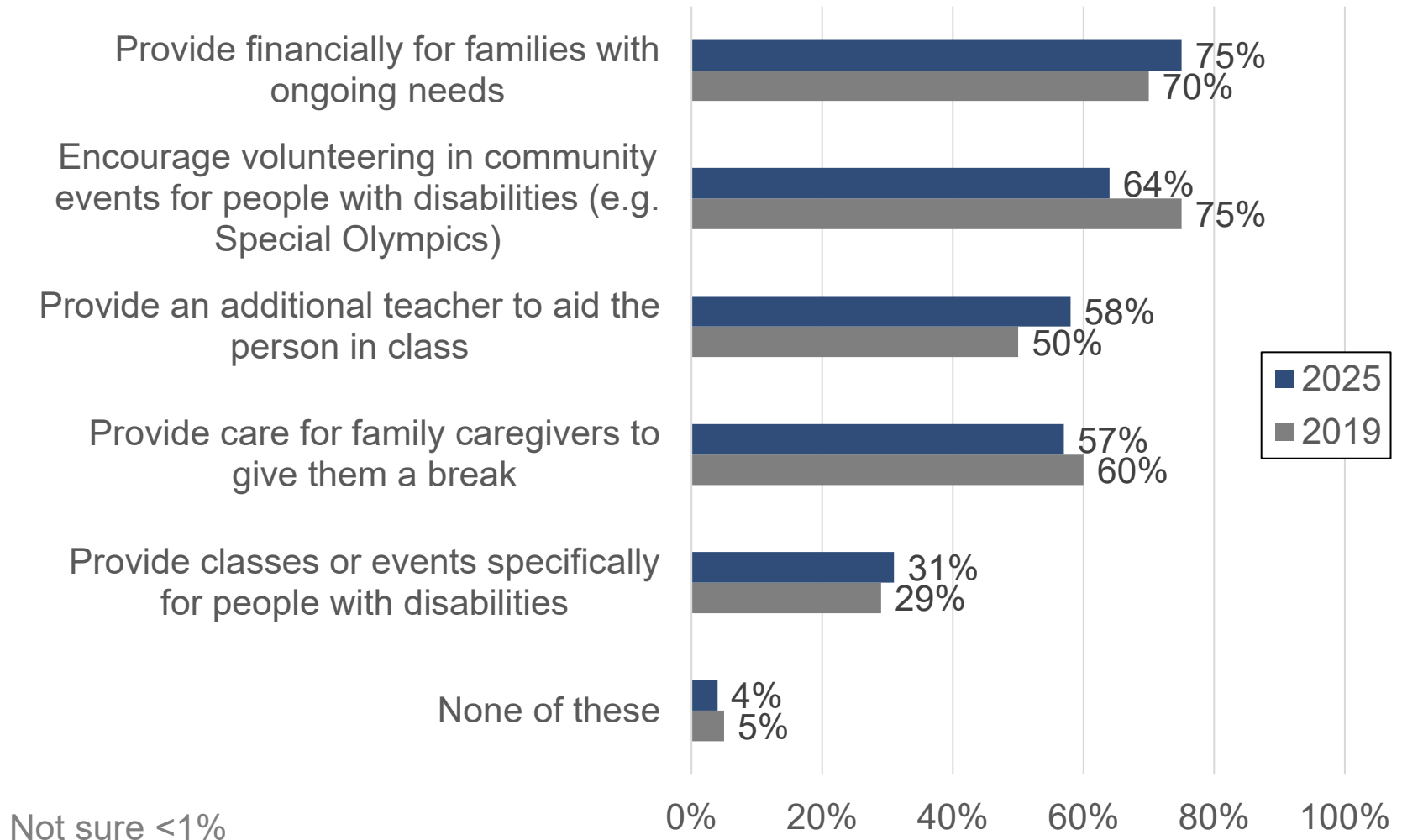


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Q: "In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families? (Select all that apply)" n=1,003

Churches are more likely to have an additional teacher in class and to provide financially for families but less likely to encourage volunteering at community events than in 2019

Among Protestant Pastors

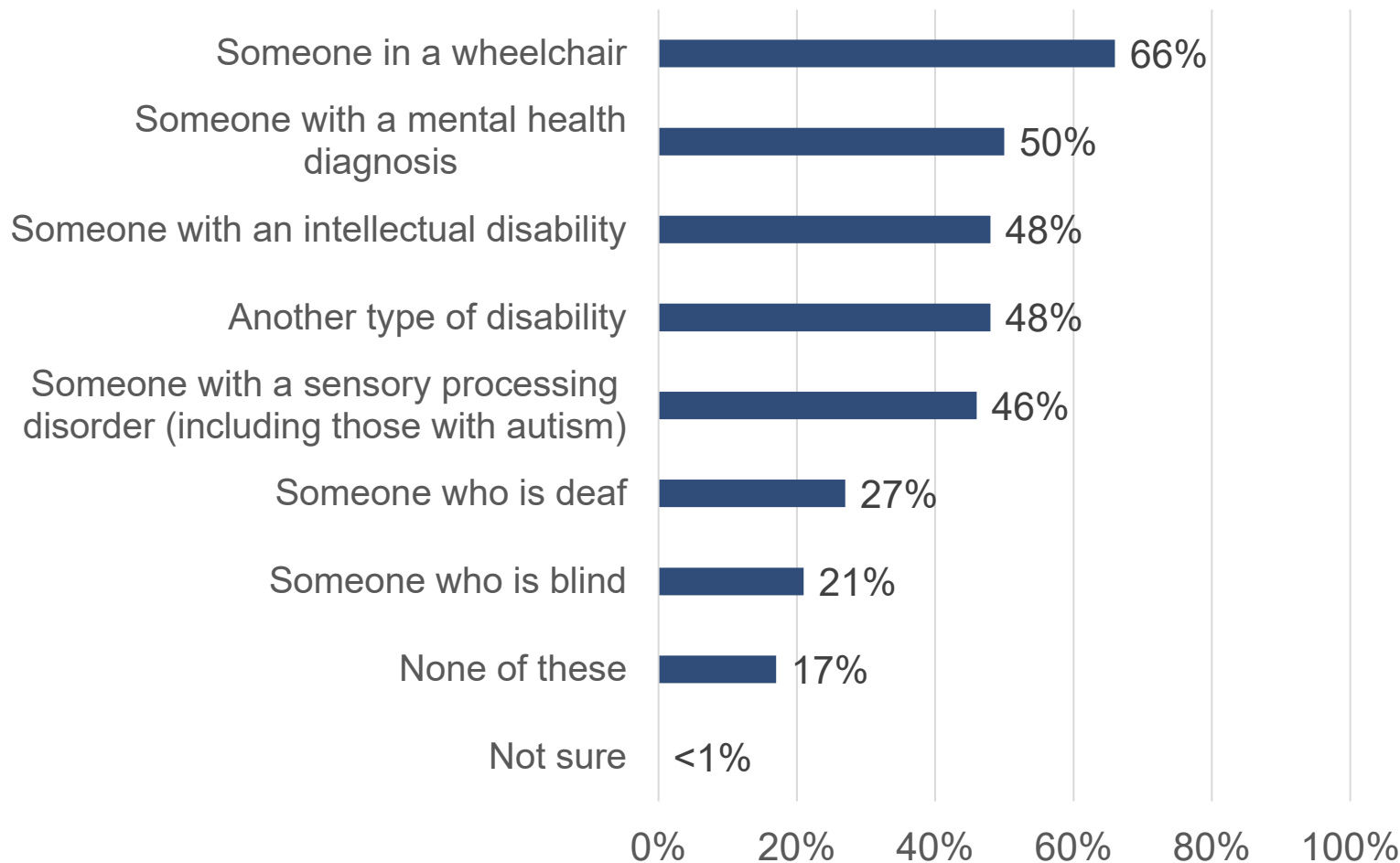


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Q: "In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families? (Select all that apply)" n=1,003

“In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Among Protestant Pastors



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Q: “In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities? (Select all that apply)” n=1,003

Significant Differences

Pastor

Ethnicity

Age

Gender

Education Level

Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church

Region

Denomination

Average Attendance

Location

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		Other Ethnicities	Master's 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, attendance, and location.

REGION	DENOMINATION GROUP	ATTENDANCE	LOCATION
Northeast	Baptist	0-49	Urban
South	Lutheran	50-99	Suburban
Midwest	Methodist	100-249	Rural
West	Pentecostal	250+	
	Presbyterian/Reformed		
	Holiness		
	Non-Denominational		

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations

“A person with a disability (including physical, sensory, cognitive, and intellectual impairments) would feel welcomed and included when coming to our church.”

- Pastors with no college degree (100%) are more likely to Agree than those with a Bachelor's Degree (96%)
- Lutherans (99%) are more likely to Agree than Non-denominational (95%)

“Local churches should make necessary modifications to their church facilities to make them accessible to people with physical disabilities even when it is not required by law.”

- Methodists (100%) are more likely to Agree than Baptists (97%), Lutherans (97%), and Pentecostals (96%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 (100%) are more likely to Agree than those at churches with attendance of 50-99 (97%) and 100-249 (98%)

“In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families?”

Provide an additional teacher to aid the person in class

- Pastors age 45-54 (63%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (53%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (67%) are more likely to select than African American pastors (50%)
- Pastors with no college degree (67%) are more likely to select than those with a Master's Degree (53%) or a Doctoral Degree (54%)
- Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than Mainline pastors (61% v. 53%)
- Baptists (68%), Pentecostals (67%), and Non-denominational (64%) are more likely to select than Lutherans (50%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (47%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select (78%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 are the least likely to select (37%)

“In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families?”

Provide care for family caregivers to give them a break

- Male pastors are more likely to select than females (60% v. 51%)
- Baptists (69%) are more likely to select than Lutherans (50%), Methodists (53%), Pentecostals (54%), Presbyterian/Reformed (58%), and Non-denominational (53%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ (67%) are more likely to select than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (48%) and 50-99 (55%)
- Pastors at church in a suburban area (65%) are more likely to select than those at churches in an urban area (55%)

“In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families?”

Provide financially for families with ongoing needs

- White pastors (76%) are more likely to select than pastors of Other Ethnicities (66%)
- Pastors in the South (79%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (72%) and West (71%)
- Baptists (81%) are more likely to select than Lutherans (71%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 100-249 (80%) and 250+ (81%) are more likely to select than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (70%) and 50-99 (71%)
- Pastors at church in a rural area (82%) are more likely to select than those at churches in an urban area (73%)

“In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families?”

Provide classes or events specifically for people with disabilities

- African American pastors (40%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (43%) are more likely to select than white pastors (28%)
- Methodists (39%) are more likely to select than Non-denominational (24%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select (47%)

“In which, if any, of the following ways does your church currently care for people with disabilities and their families?”

Encourage volunteering in community events for people with disabilities (e.g. Special Olympics)

- Mainline pastors are more likely to select than Evangelical pastors (69% v. 61%)
- Methodists (73%) and Holiness (72%) are more likely to select than Non-denominational (56%)
- Pastors at church in a suburban area (71%) are more likely to select than those at churches in an urban area (62%)

“In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone who is blind

- Pastors with a Bachelor’s Degree (24%) or a Doctoral Degree (26%) are more likely to select than those with a Master’s Degree (17%)
- Baptists (24%) and Methodists (27%) are more likely to select than Presbyterian/Reformed (14%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ (28%) are more likely to select than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (18%) and 100-249 (20%)
- Pastors at church in an urban area (23%) are more likely to select than those at churches in a suburban area (13%)

“In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone who is deaf

- Pastors age 55-64 (30%) are more likely to select than pastors age 18-44 (23%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select (39%)

“In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone in a wheelchair

- Pastors at churches with attendance 0-49 are the least likely to select (53%)

“In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone with a mental health diagnosis

- Female pastors are more likely to select than males (57% v. 47%)
- Pentecostals (62%) are more likely to select than Baptists (45%) and Lutherans (43%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select (62%)

Q26 “In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone with a sensory processing disorder (including those with autism)

- Pastors age 18-44 (54%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (42%) and 65+ (42%)
- Female pastors are more likely to select than males (52% v. 43%)
- Methodists (55%) and Non-denominational (59%) are more likely to select than Baptists (43%) and Lutherans (39%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 250+ are the most likely to select (62%)

Q26 “In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Someone with an intellectual disability

- Pastors in the Northeast (57%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (46%) and South (45%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance 100-249 (53%) and 250+ (57%) are more likely to select than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (37%) and 50-99 (45%)

Q26 “In the last year, has your church made a modification to your facility, your activities, or volunteer assignments to help someone at your church with the following disabilities?”

Another type of disability

- African American pastors (62%) are more likely to select than white pastors (47%)
- Methodists (54%) and Pentecostals (57%) are more likely to select than Lutherans (43%) and Non-denominational (43%)

None of these

- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 (25%) and 50-99 (18%) are more likely to select than those at churches with attendance 250+ (11%)

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