

Protestant Churchgoer Views On Biblical Interpretation

A SURVEY OF 1,200 AMERICAN PROTESTANT CHURCHGOERS

Lifeway[®] Research

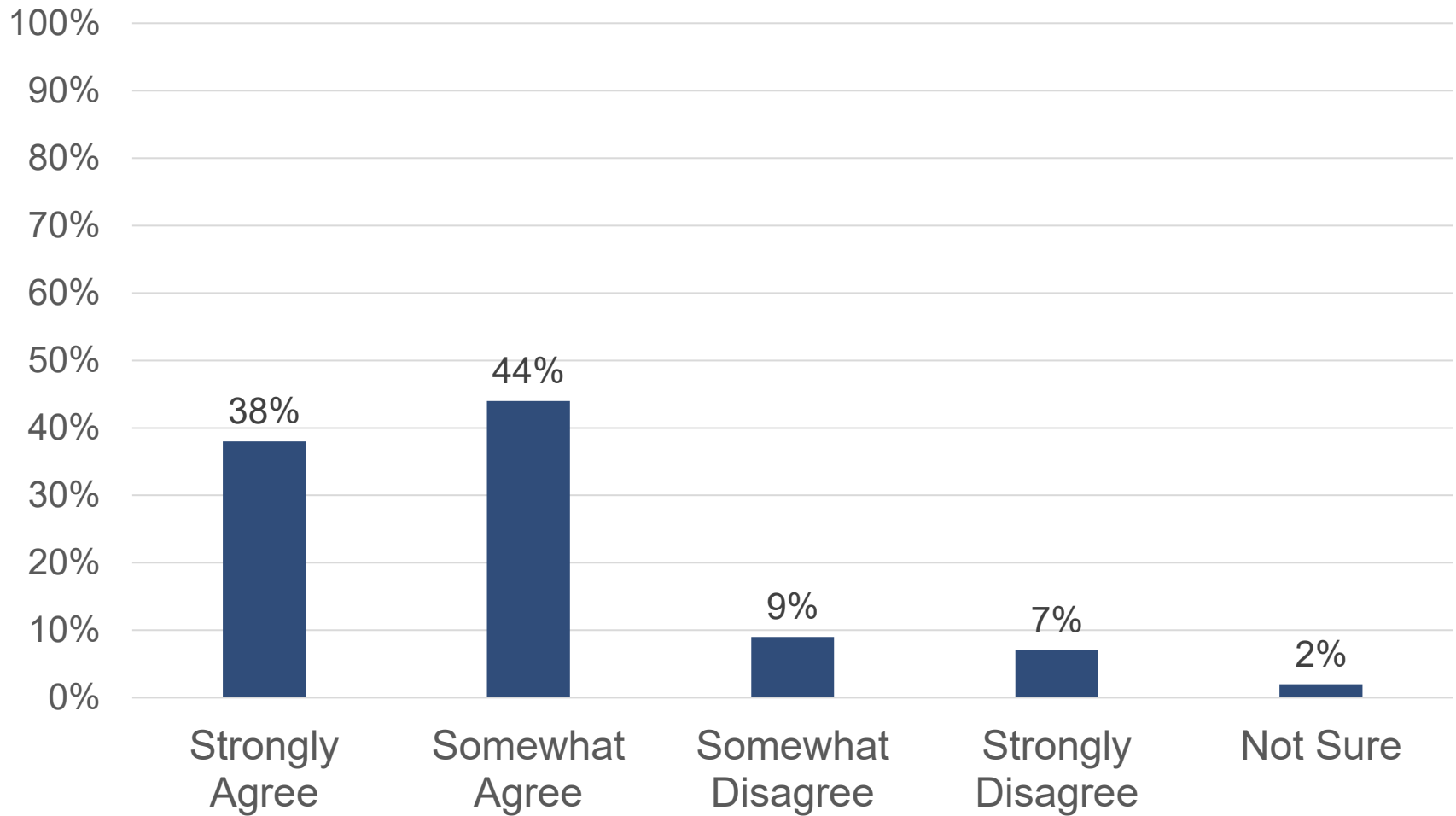
Methodology

- The online survey of 1,200 American Protestant churchgoers was conducted September 2-7, 2025, using a national pre-recruited panel
- Respondents were screened to include those who identified as Protestant/non-denominational and attend religious services at least once a month
- Quotas and slight weights were used to balance gender, age, region, ethnicity, education, and religion to more accurately reflect the population
- The completed sample is 1,200 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error from the panel does not exceed $\pm 3.2\%$ This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
- Comparisons are made to an online survey of 1,002 churchgoers using the same methodology conducted September 20-27, 2019

Definitions

- **Evangelical Beliefs** are defined using the NAE Lifeway Research Evangelical Beliefs Research Definition based on respondent beliefs
- Respondents are asked their level of agreement with four separate statements using a four-point, forced choice scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree). Those who strongly agree with all four statements are categorized as having Evangelical Beliefs
 - The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe
 - It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior
 - Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin
 - Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation

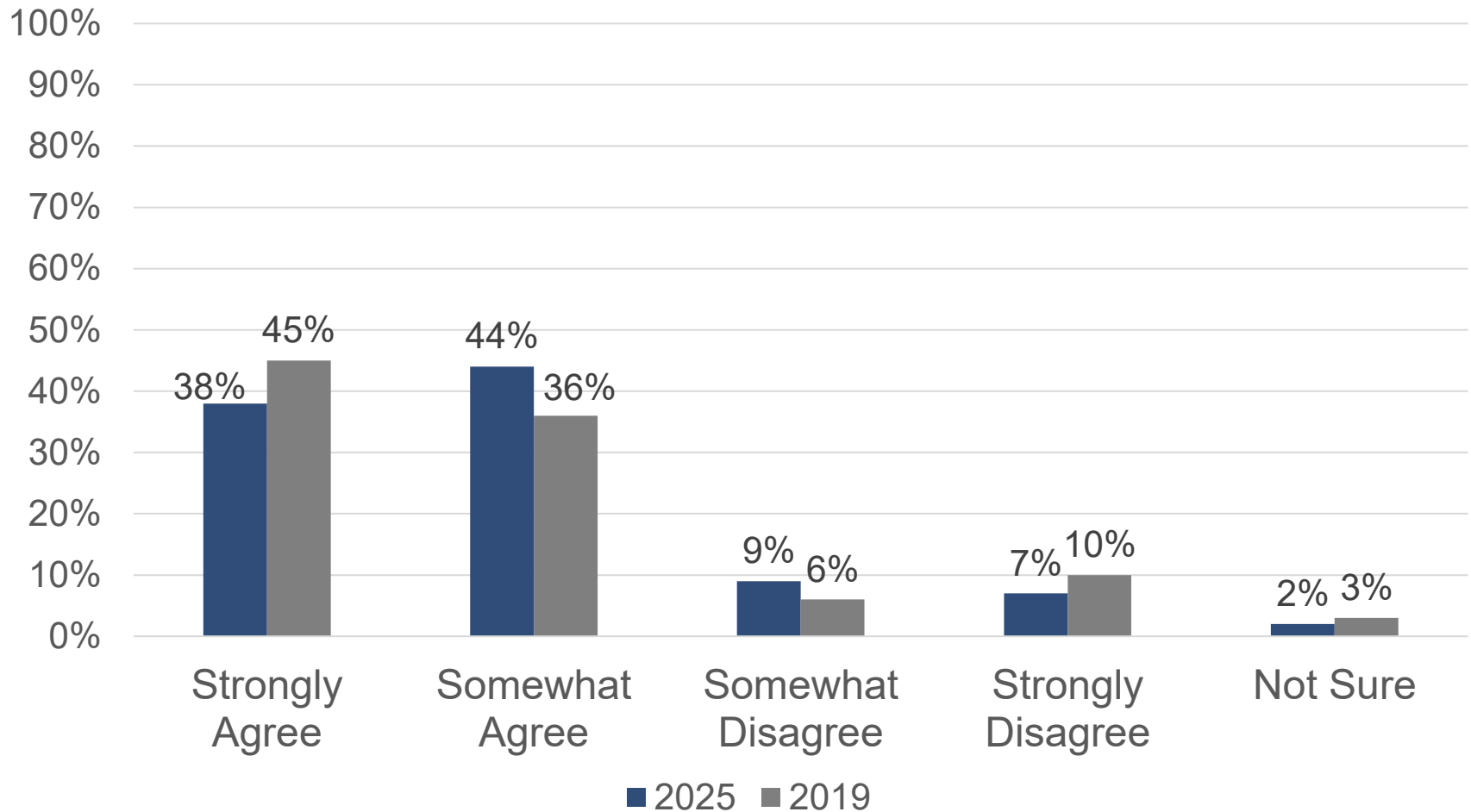
82% say that the truth of God's word can mean different things to different people



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Q: "The truth of God's word can mean different things to different people." n=1,200

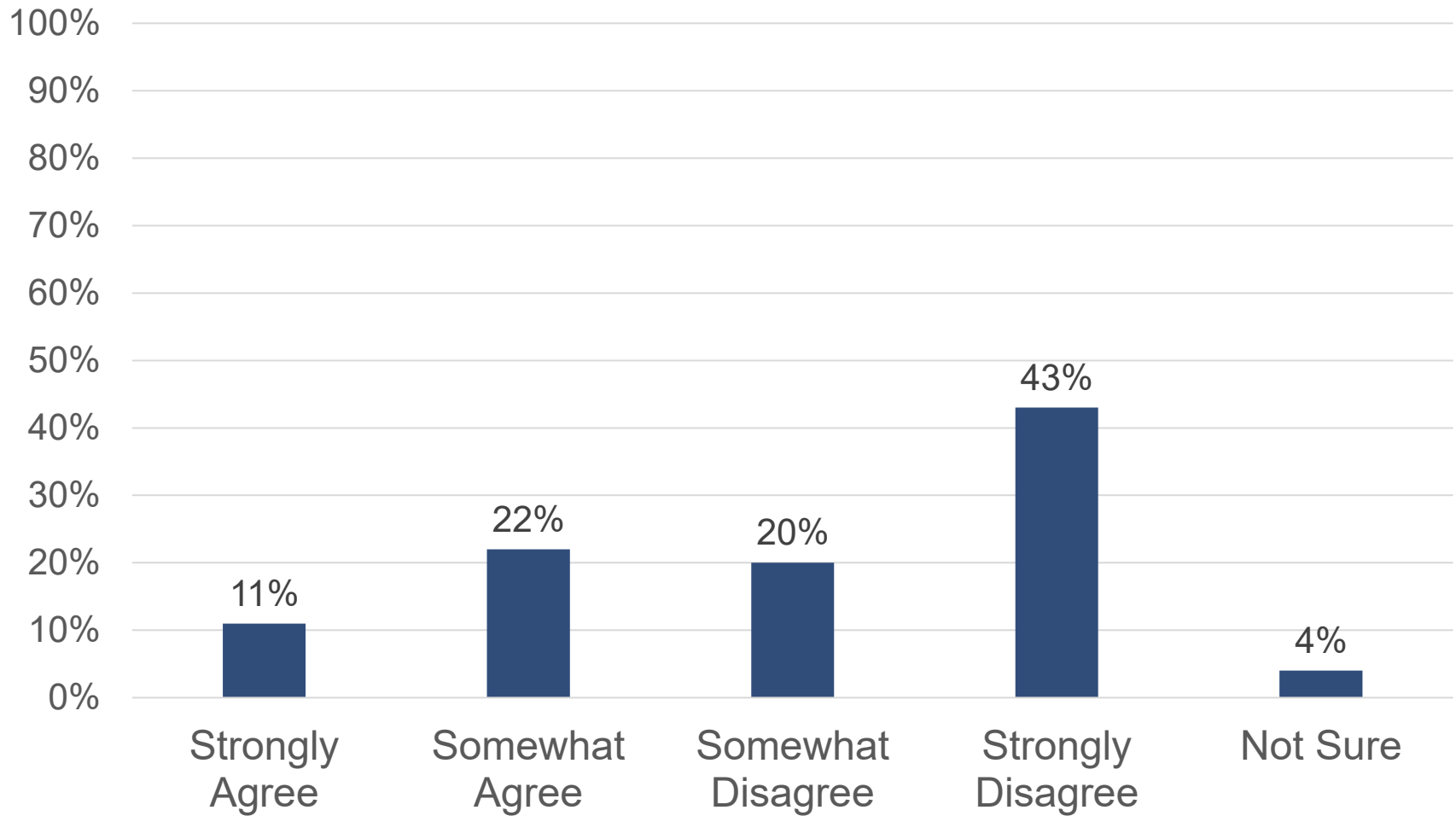
“The truth of God’s word can mean different things to different people.” Agreement is unchanged (82%) but fewer people strongly agree than in 2019



Lifeway Research

Q: “The truth of God’s word can mean different things to different people.”

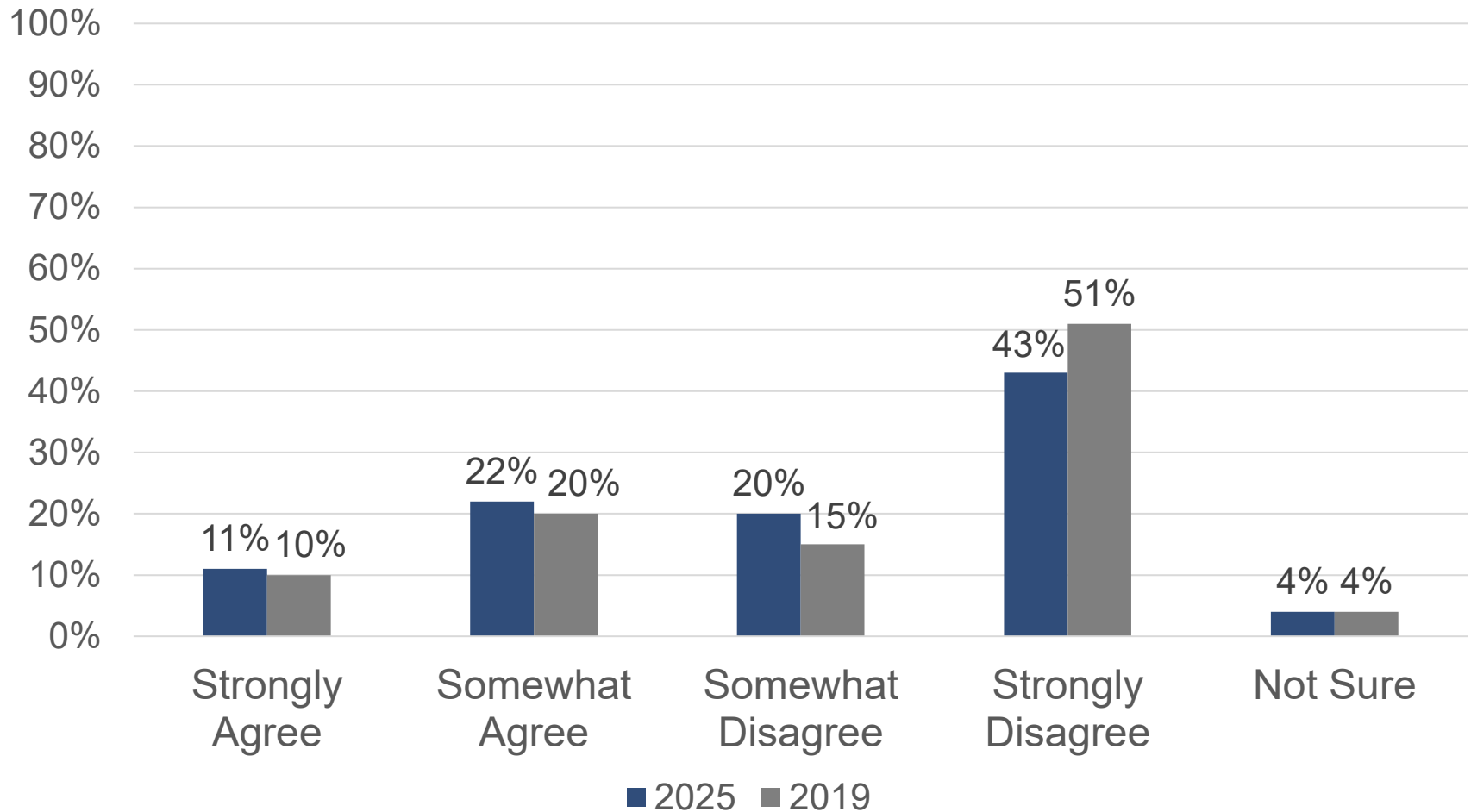
34% accept some truths from the Bible, but others do not fit what they believe



Lifeway Research

Q: "I accept some truths from the Bible, but others just don't fit what I believe." n=1,200

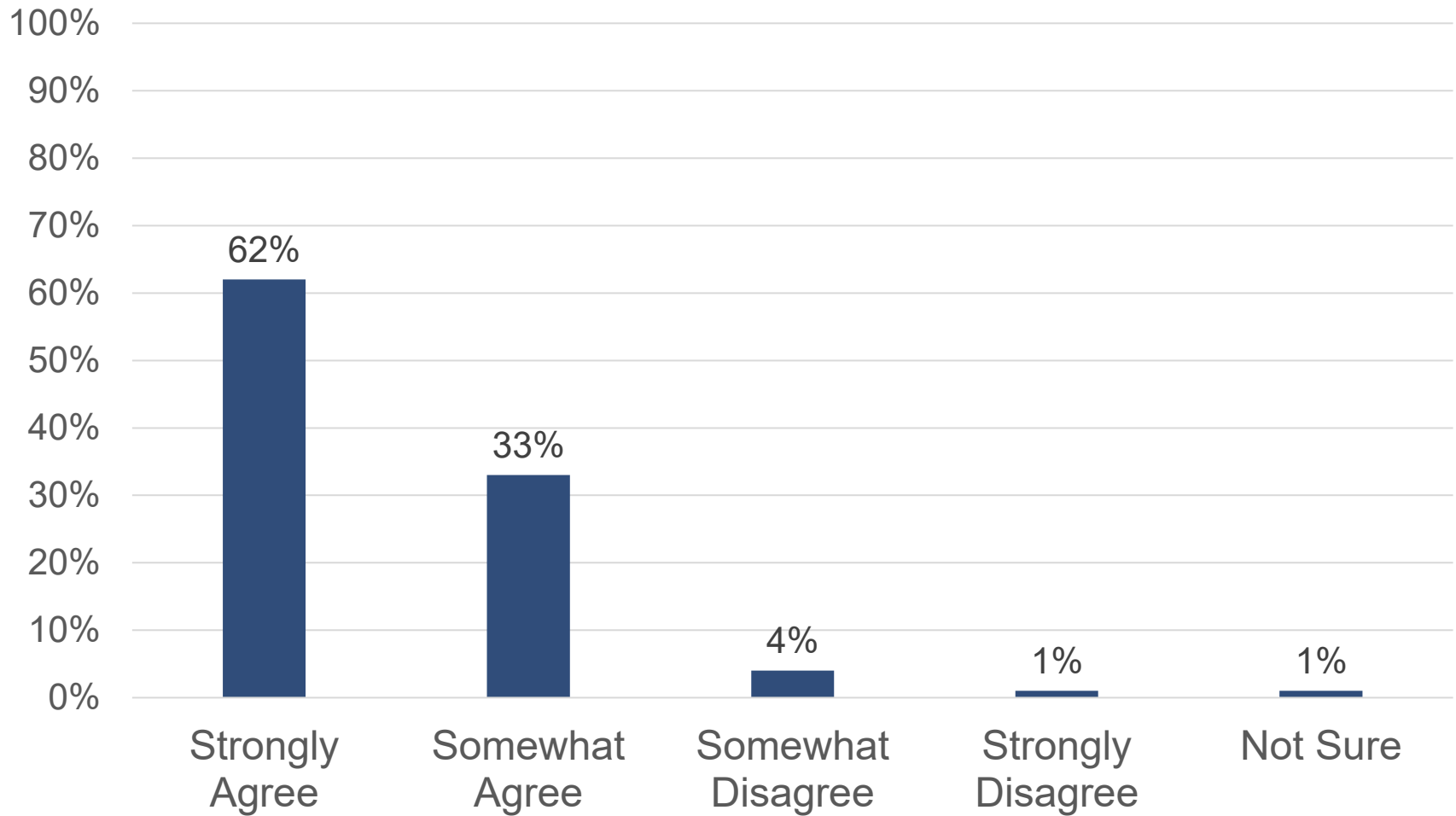
Churchgoers who do not accept all the truths from the Bible increased from 30% in 2019 to 34% today



Lifeway Research

Q: "I accept some truths from the Bible, but others just don't fit what I believe."

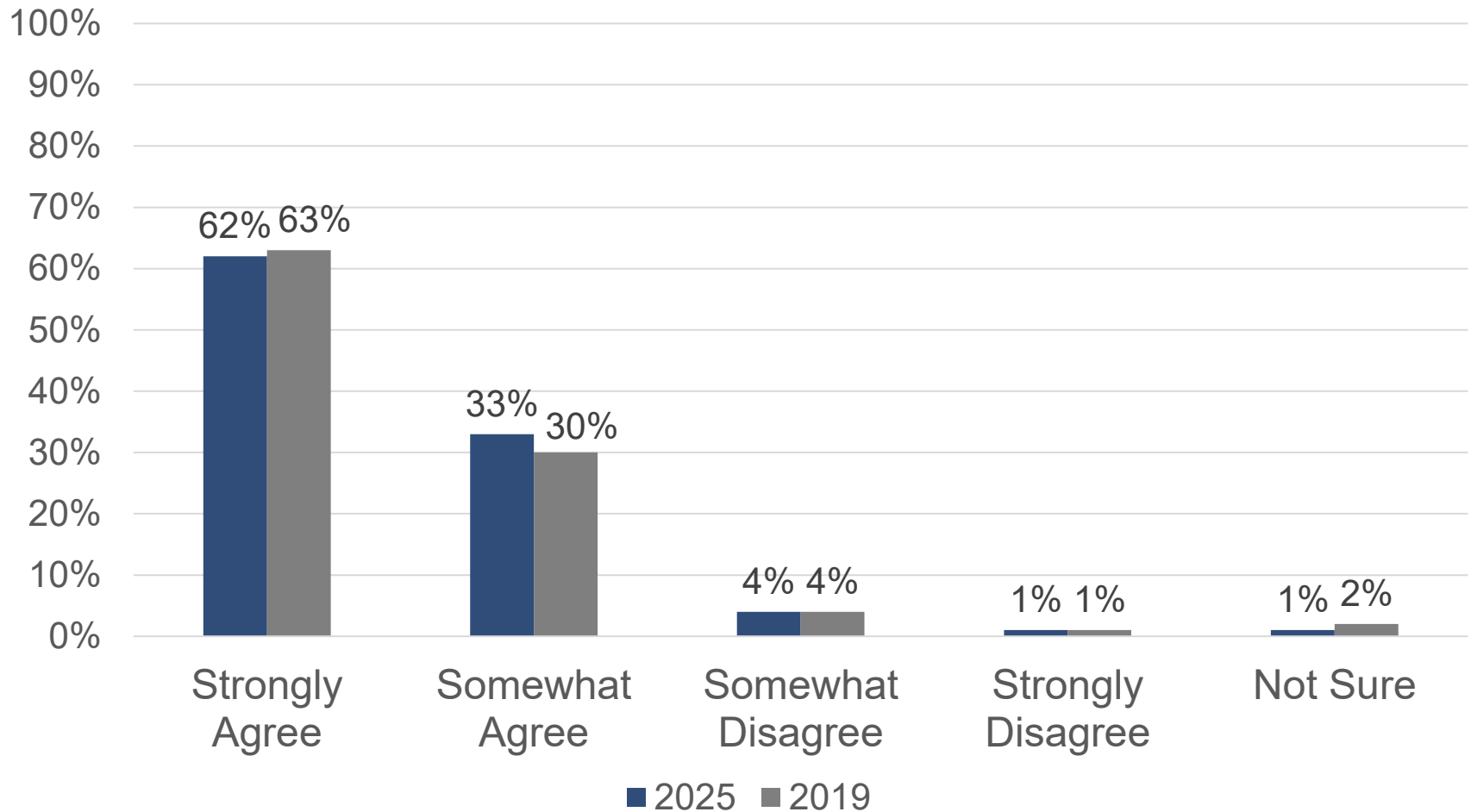
95% enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand what it means



Lifeway Research

Q: "I enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand what it means." n=1,200

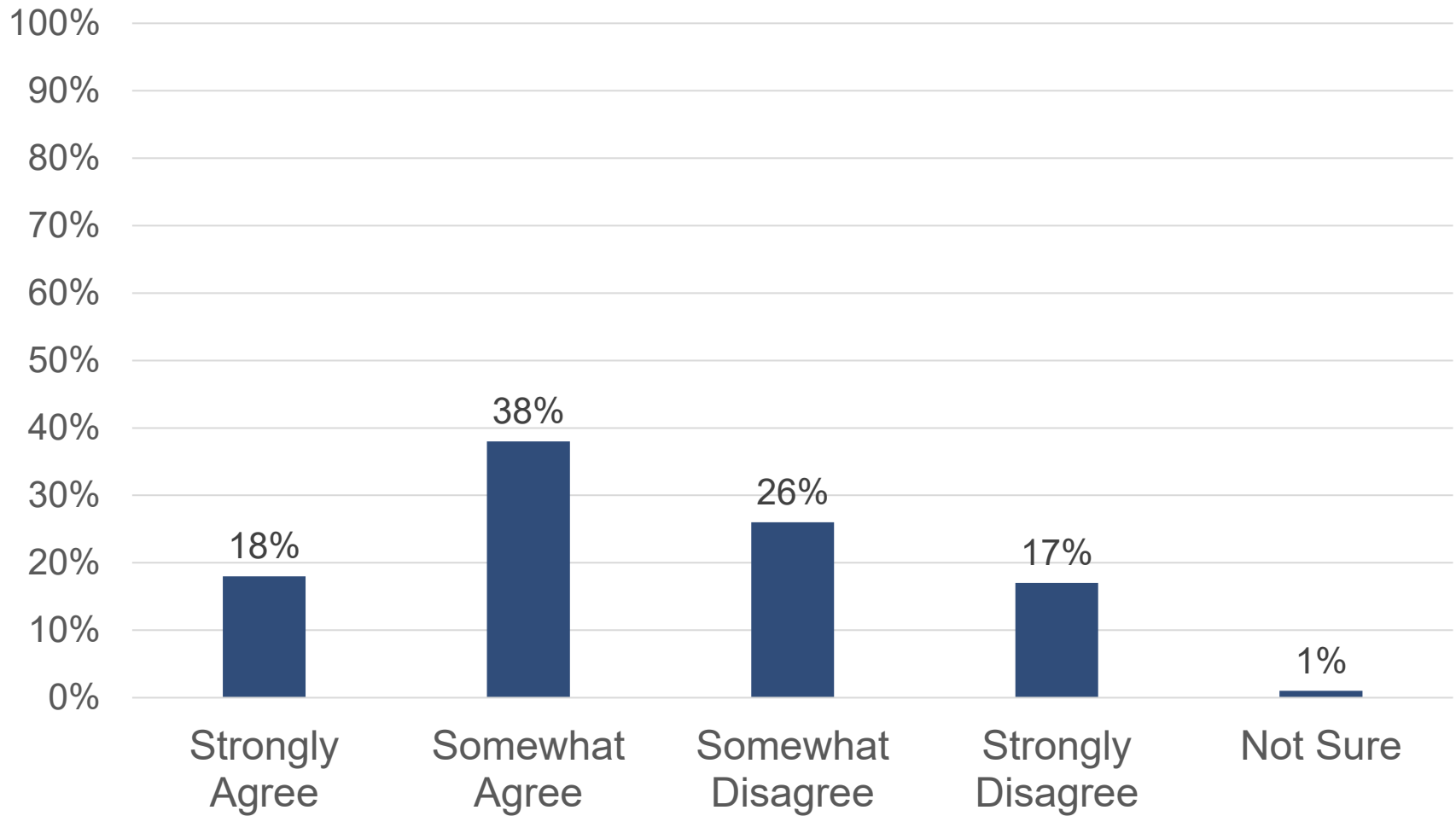
The number that enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand what it means is unchanged since 2019 (95% v. 93%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "I enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand what it means."

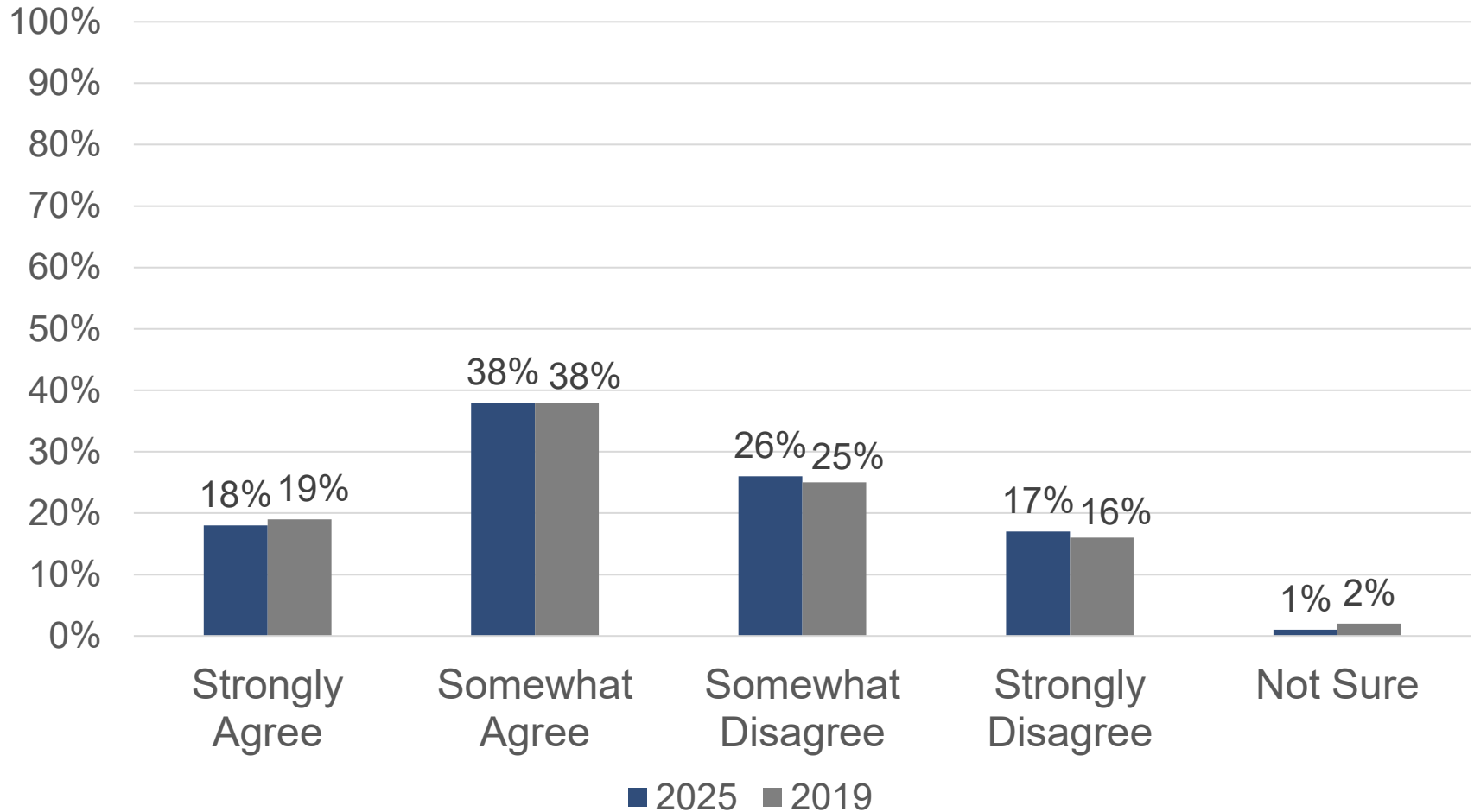
56% find it challenging to makes sense of the Bible when they read it on their own



Lifeway Research

Q: "I find it challenging to make sense of the Bible when I read it on my own." n=1,200

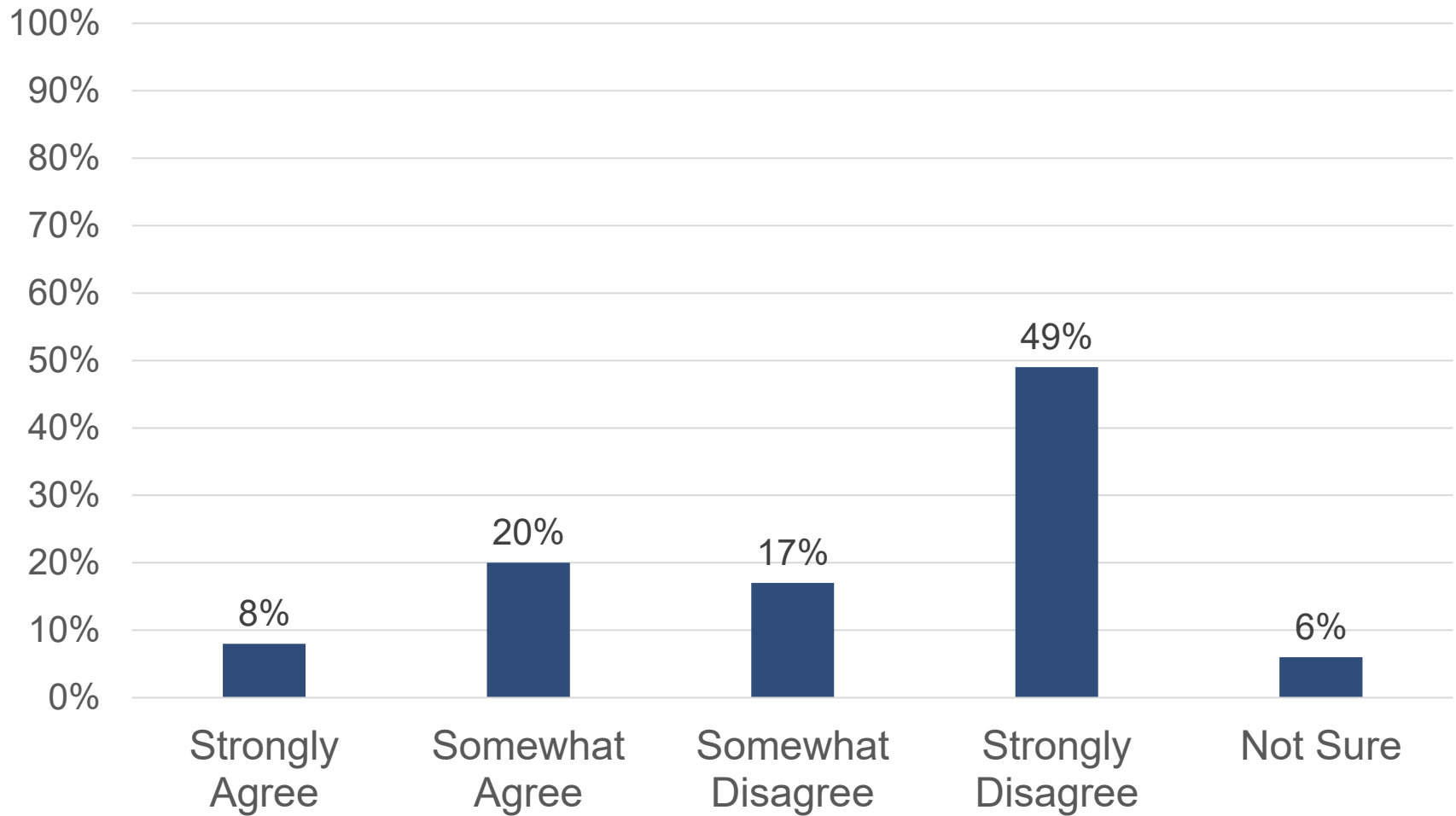
The number who find it challenging to makes sense of the Bible when they read it on their own is unchanged since 2019 (56% v. 57%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "I find it challenging to make sense of the Bible when I read it on my own."

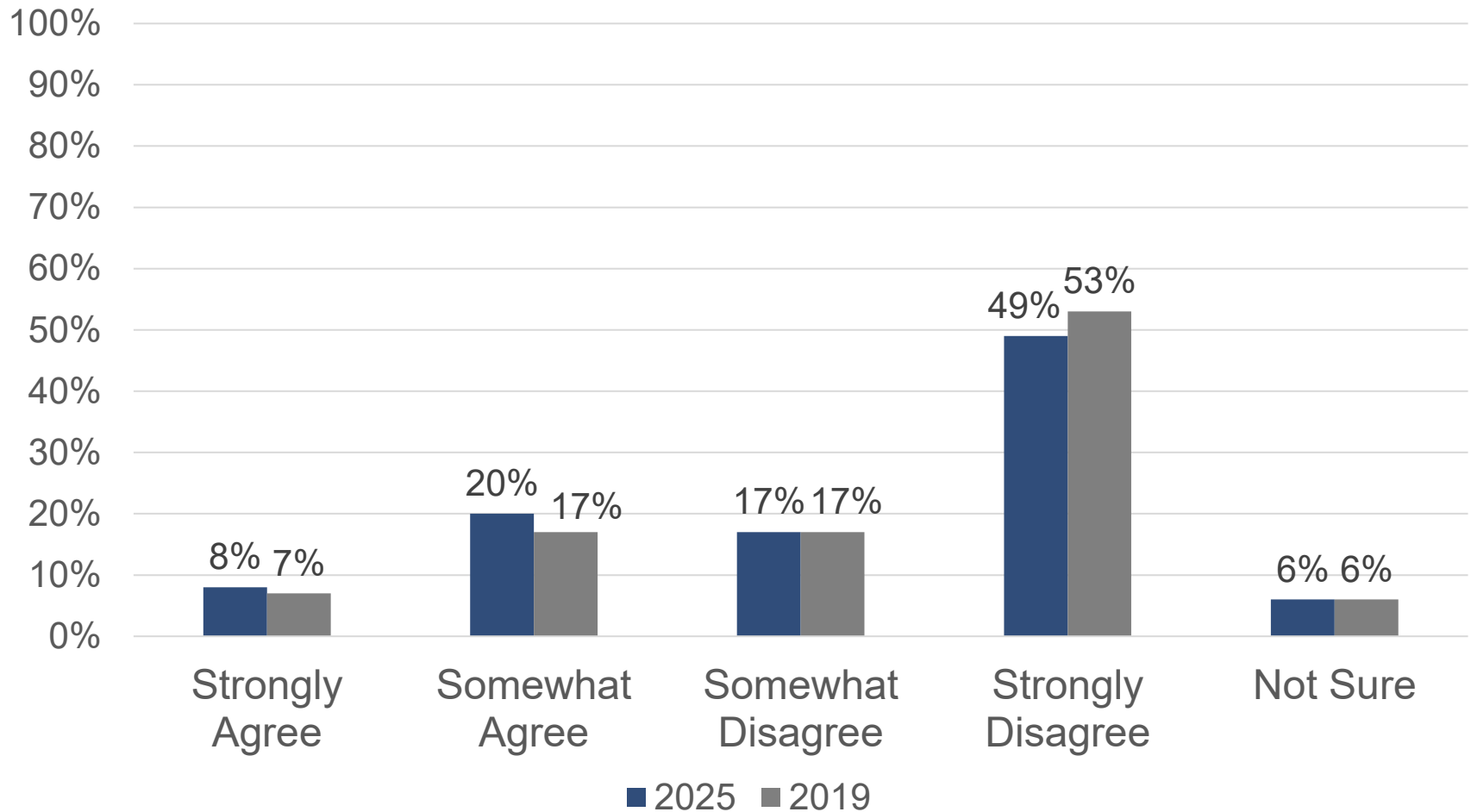
28% believe that as culture changes, some biblical truths become obsolete



Lifeway Research

Q: "As culture changes, some biblical truths become obsolete." n=1,200

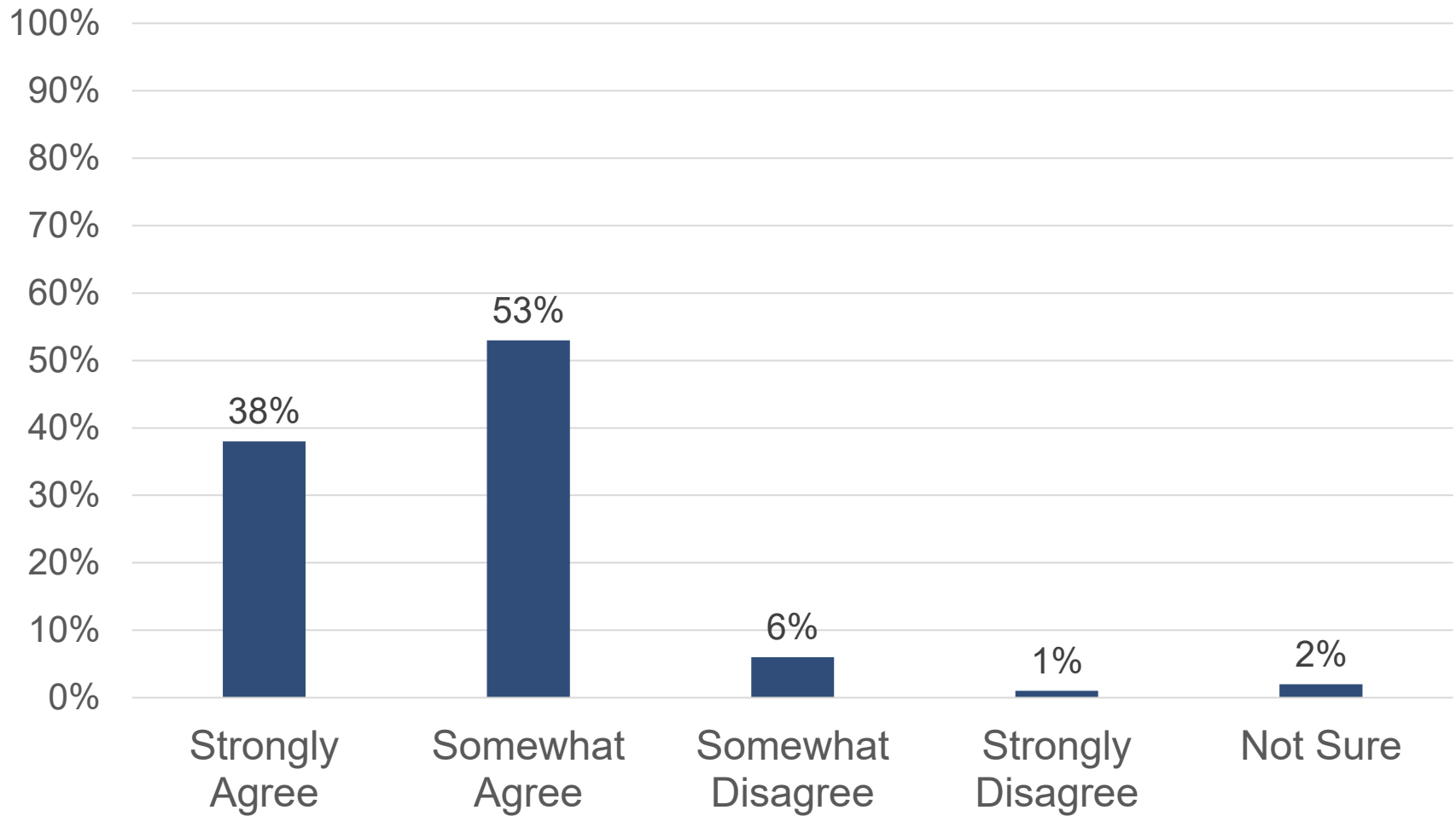
Those who believe that as culture changes, some biblical truths become obsolete increased from 24% in 2019 to 28% today



Lifeway Research

Q: "As culture changes, some biblical truths become obsolete."

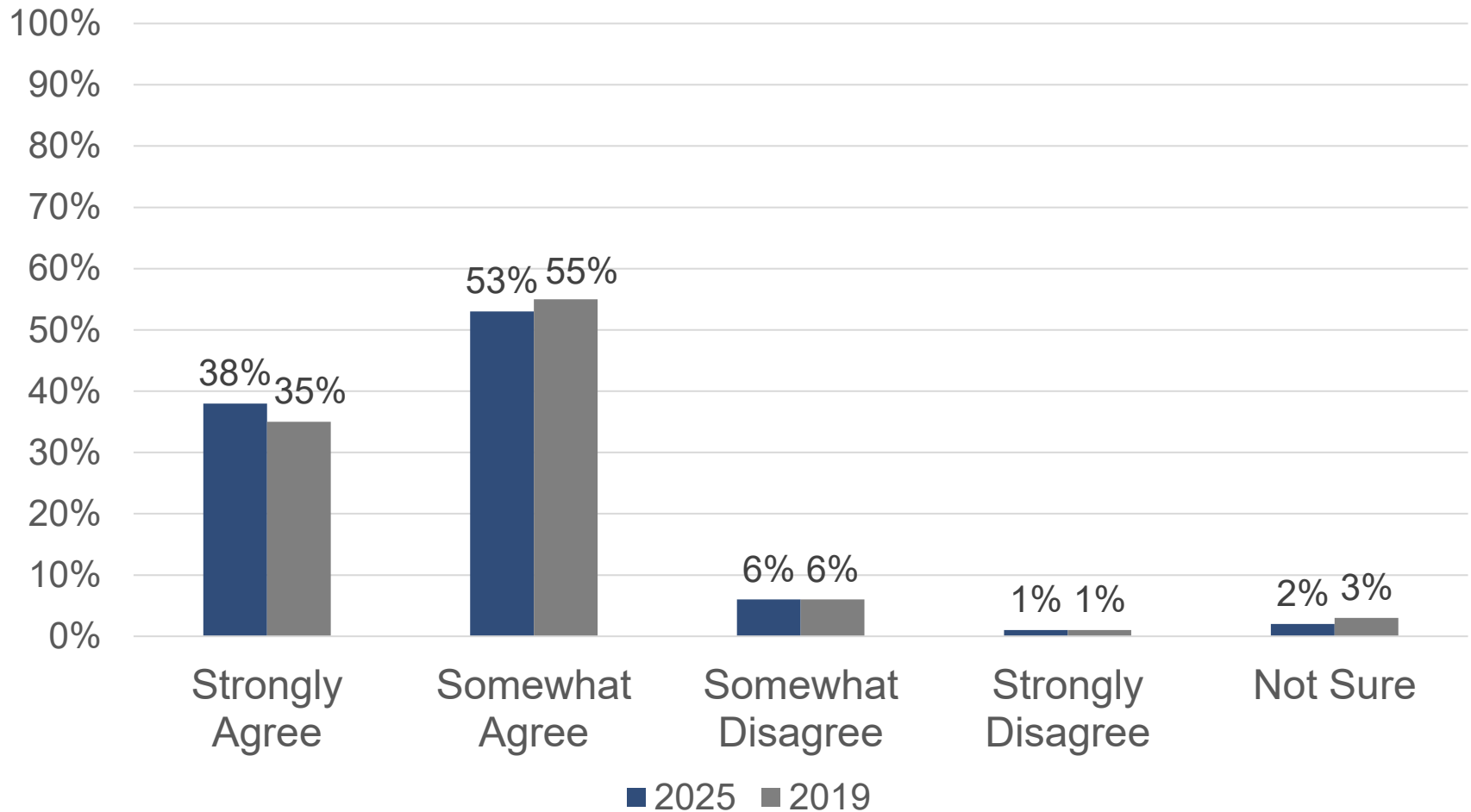
91% say they can read a passage of the Bible and usually understand how it is relevant to them



Lifeway Research

Q: "When I read a passage of the Bible on my own, I can usually understand how it is relevant to me." n=1,200

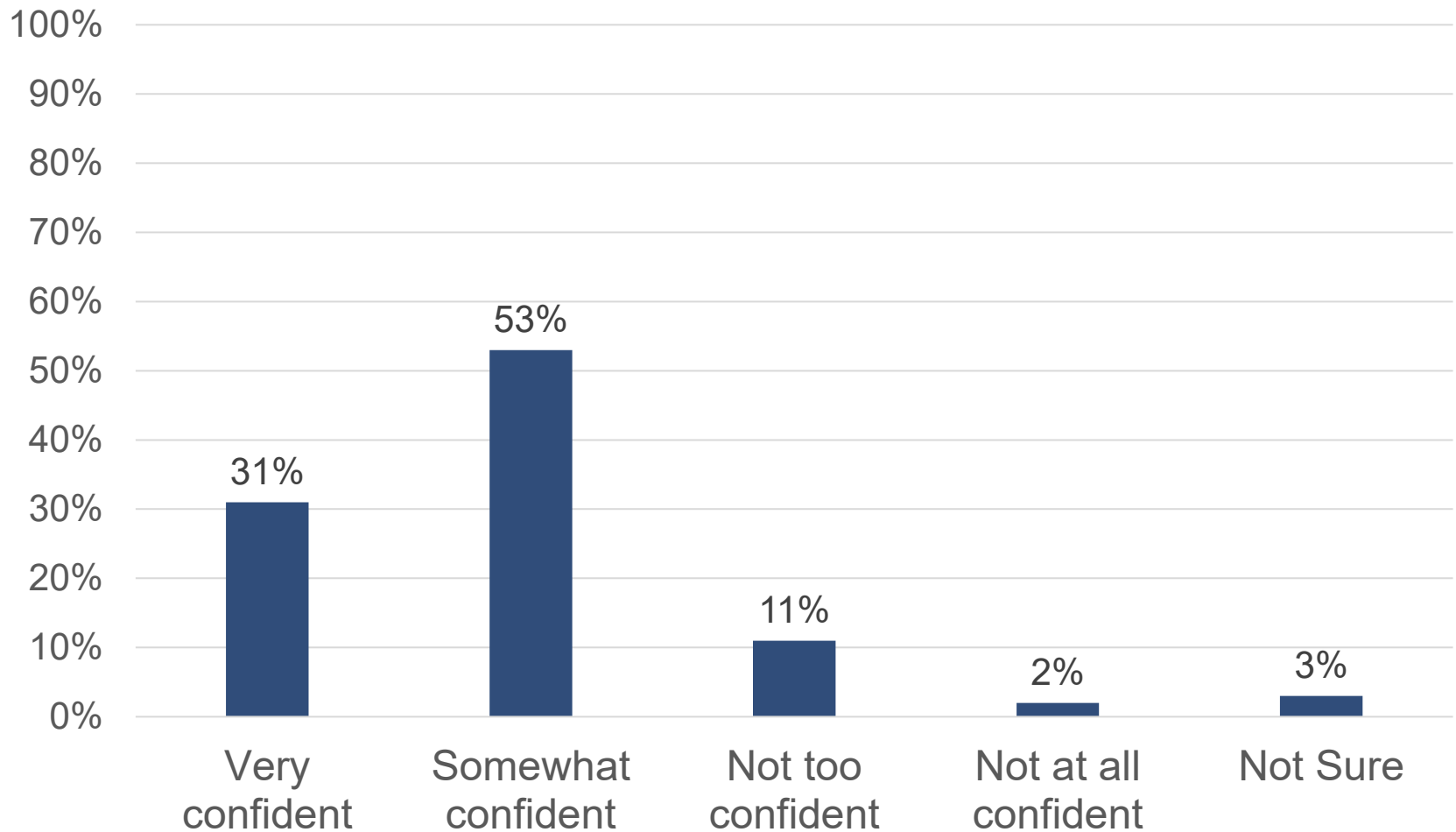
Those who say they can read a passage of the Bible and usually understand how it is relevant to them is unchanged since 2019 (91% v. 90%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "When I read a passage of the Bible on my own, I can usually understand how it is relevant to me."

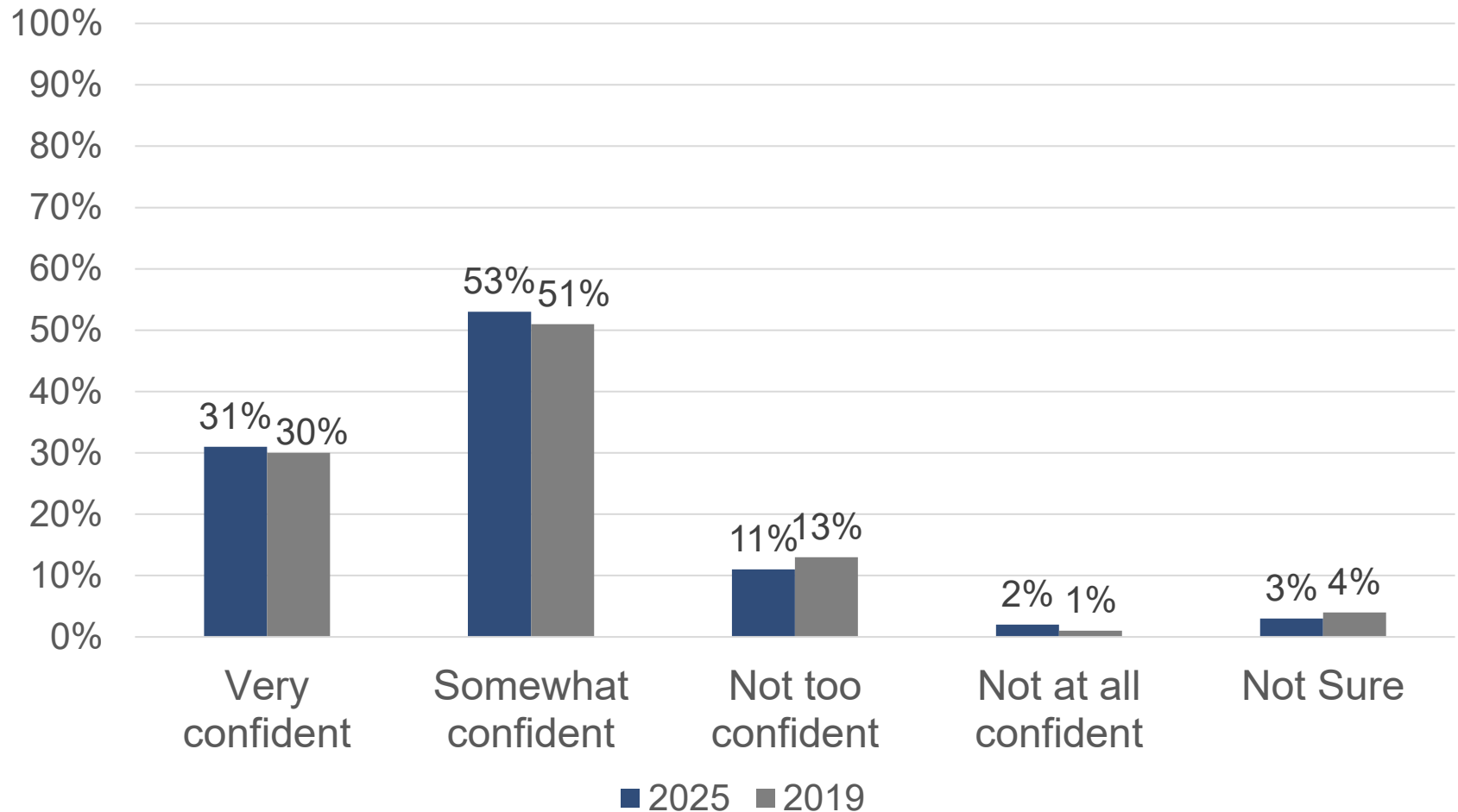
84% are confident they could address someone's doubts about the truthfulness of Scripture



Lifeway Research

Q: "If someone came to you expressing doubt about the truthfulness of Scripture, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their doubts?" n=1,200

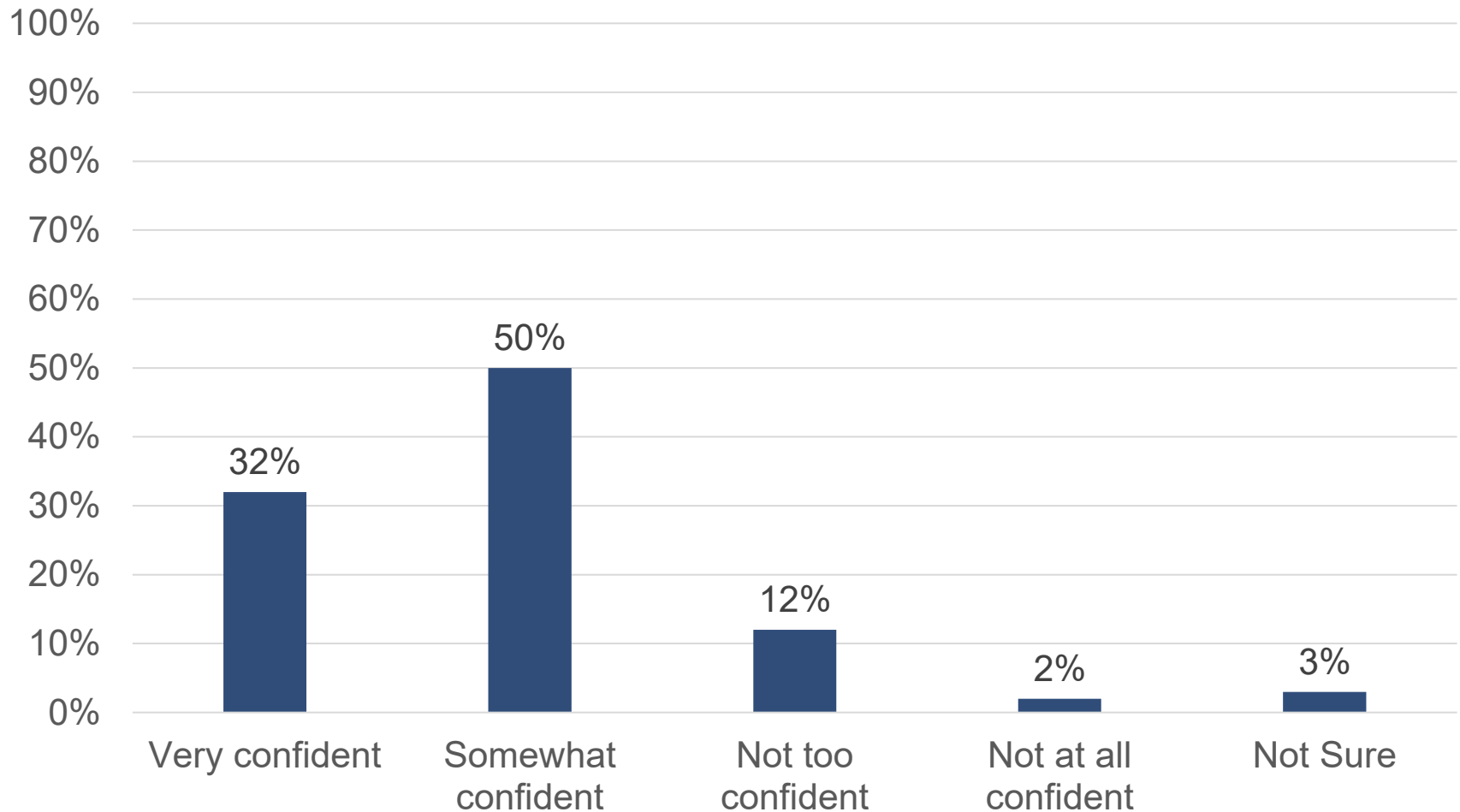
The number who are confident they could address someone's doubts about the truthfulness of Scripture is similar to 2019 (84% v. 81%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "If someone came to you expressing doubt about the truthfulness of Scripture, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their doubts?"

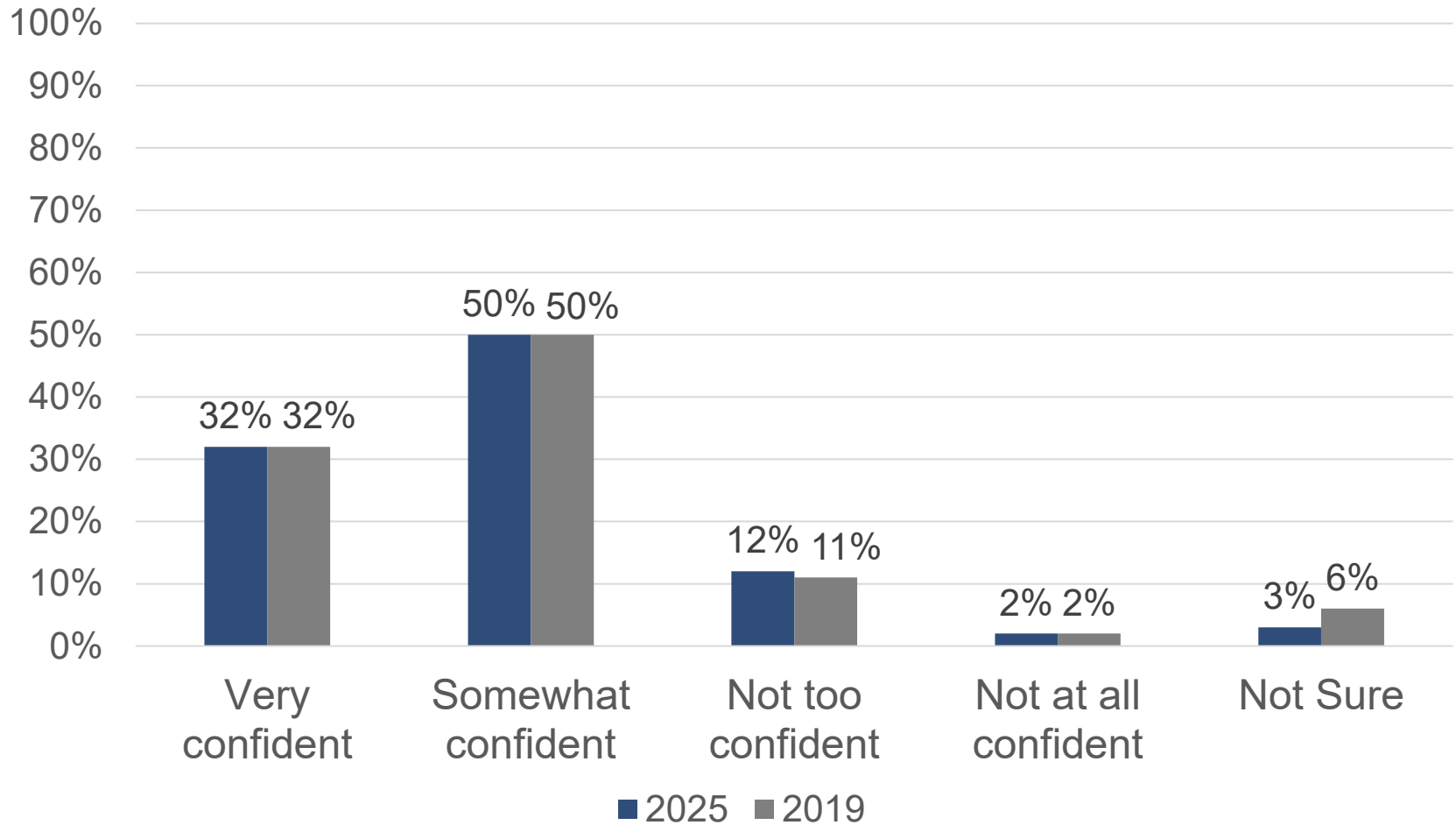
82% are confident they could address someone's difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible



Lifeway Research

Q: "If someone came to you expressing difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible that don't fit their cultural values, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their difficulties?" n=1,200

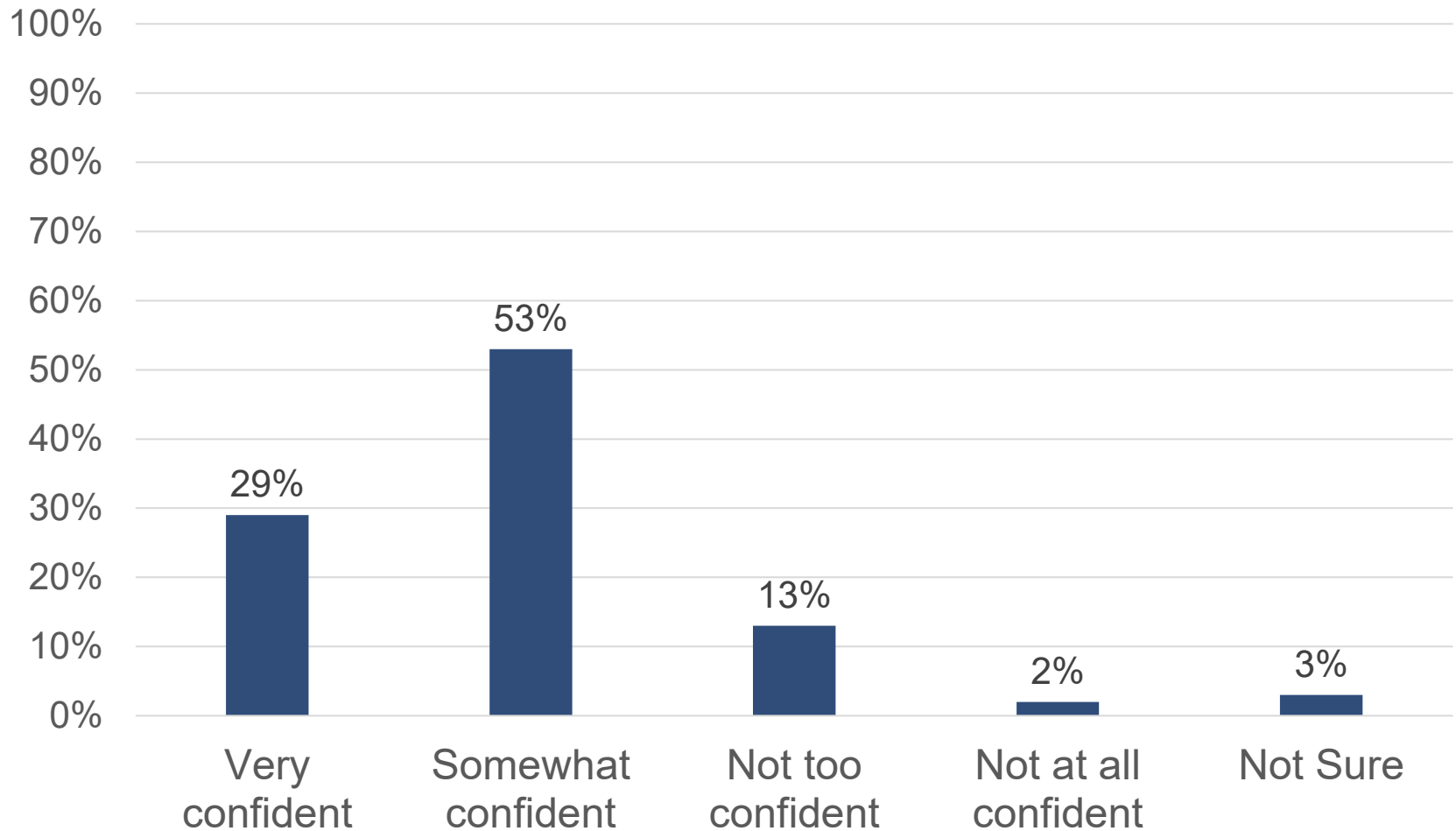
Confidence in addressing someone's difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible is unchanged since 2019 (82%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "If someone came to you expressing difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible that don't fit their cultural values, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their difficulties?"

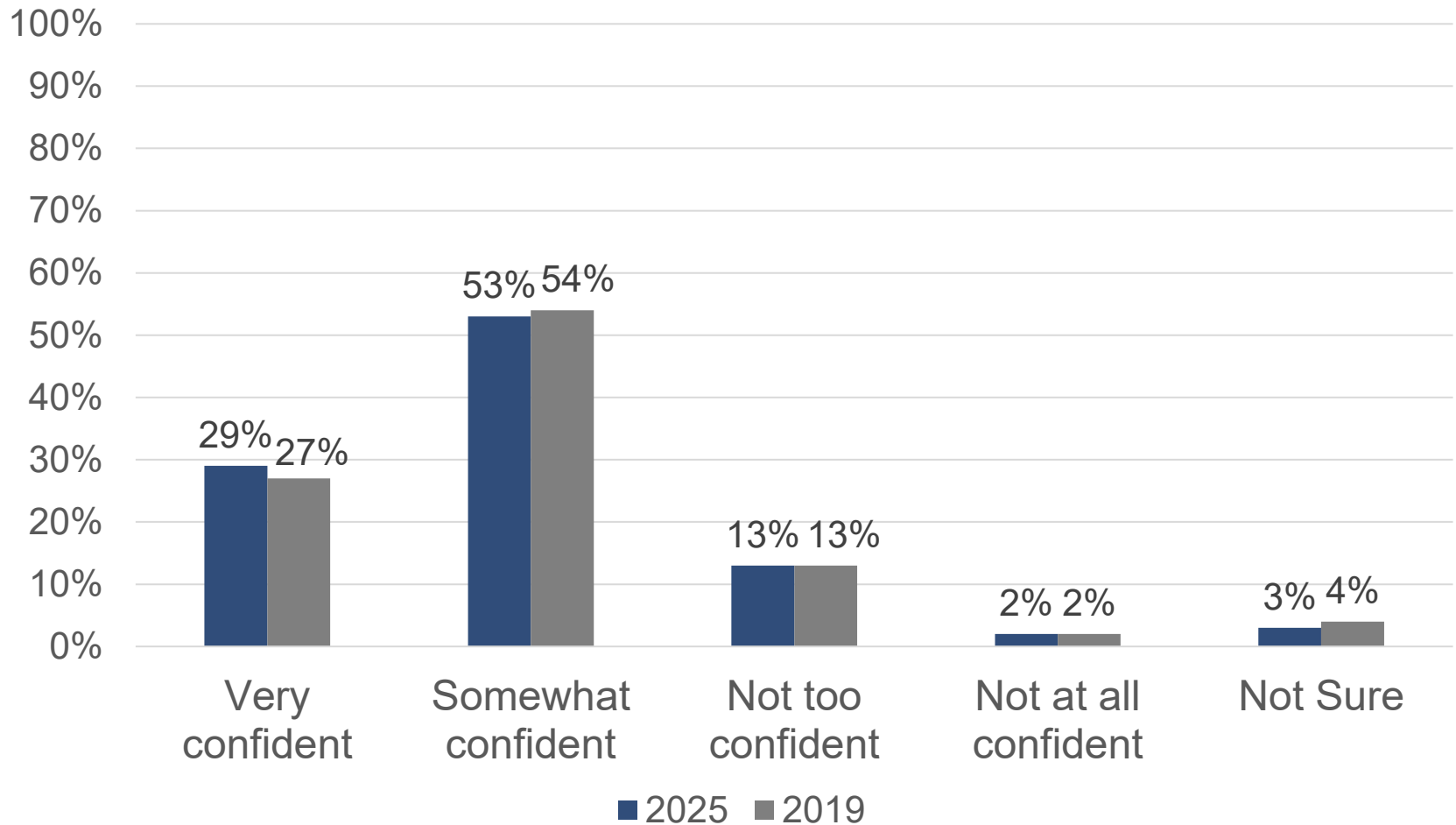
82% are confident they could address someone's confusion over a passage in the Bible



Lifeway Research

Q: "If your neighbor came to you expressing confusion over a passage in the Bible, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their confusion?" n=1,200

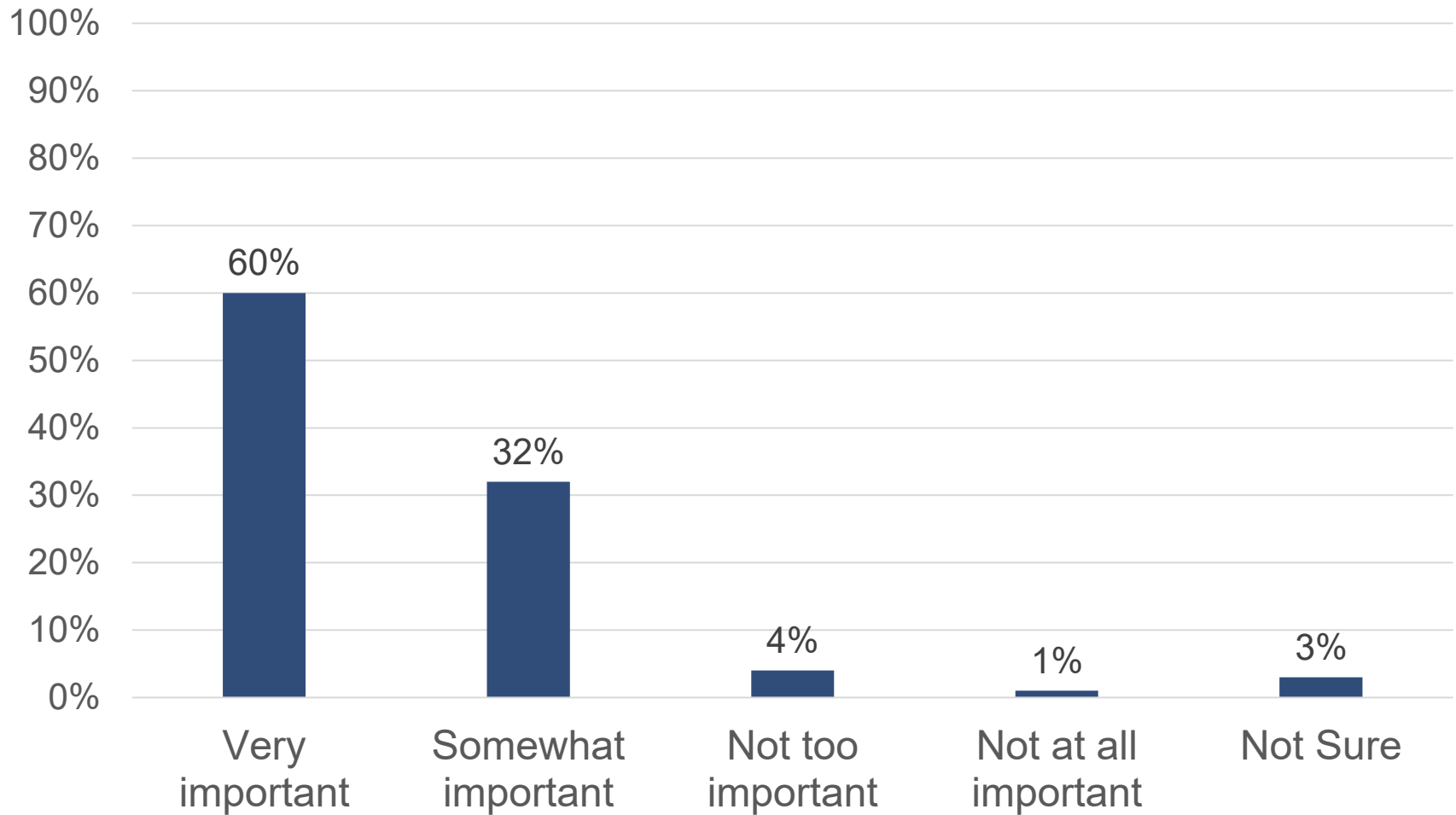
Confidence addressing a neighbor's confusion over a passage in the Bible is unchanged since 2019 (82% v. 81%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "If your neighbor came to you expressing confusion over a passage in the Bible, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their confusion?"

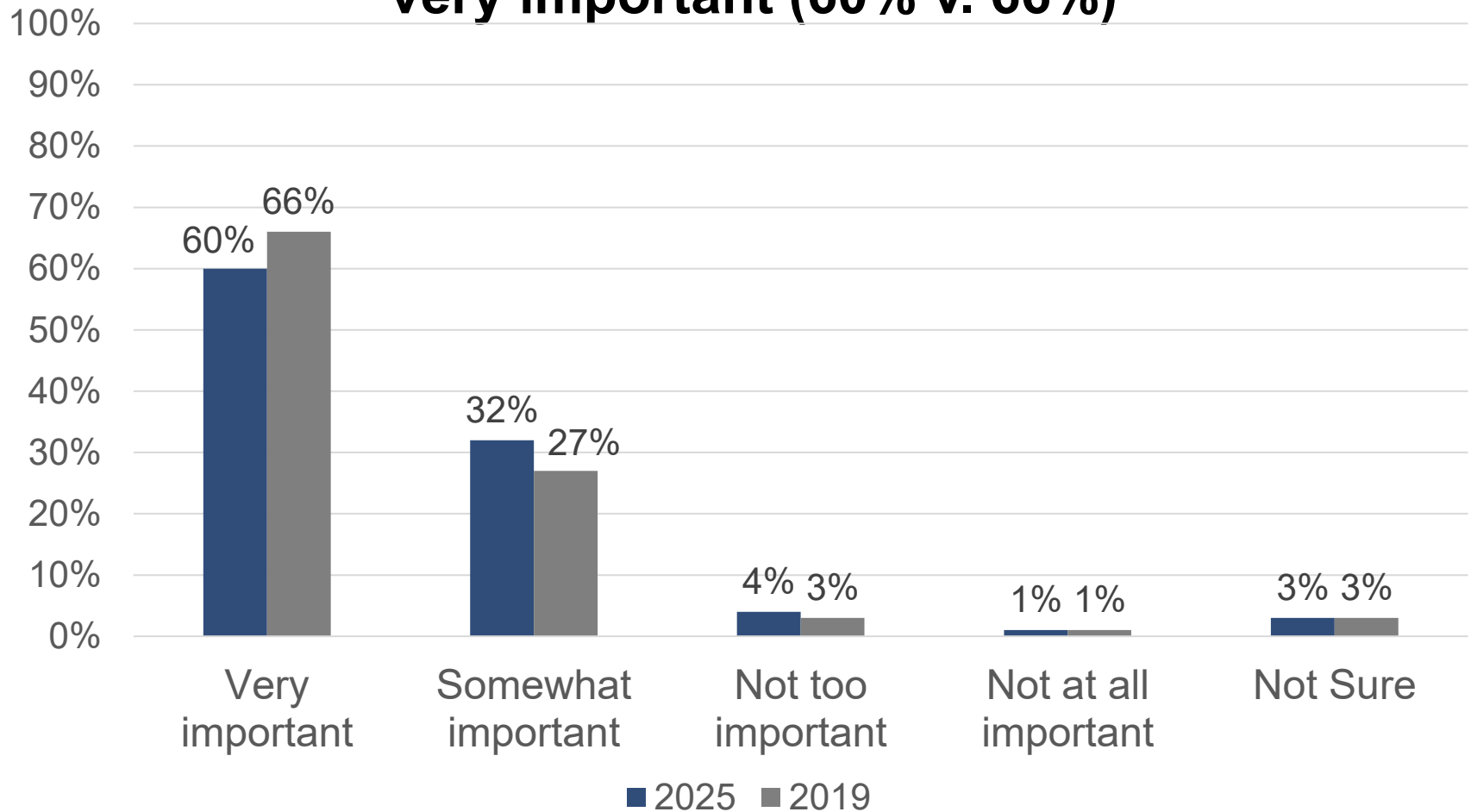
92% say it is important to apply the meaning and principles of Scripture to today's context



Lifeway Research

Q: "In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to apply the meaning and principles to today's context?" n=1,200

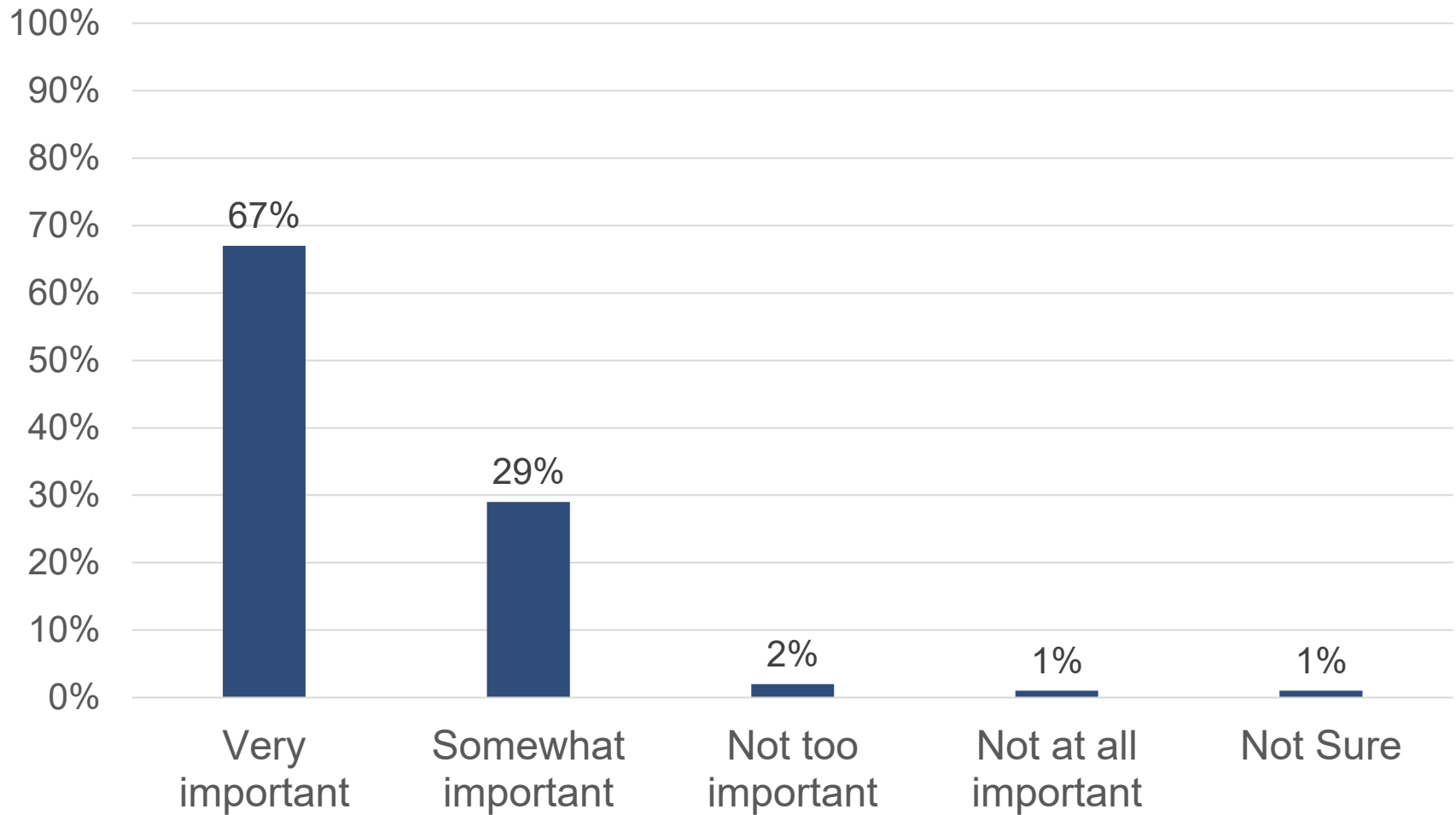
The importance of applying the meaning and principles of Scripture to today's context is similar to 2019 (92% v. 93%) but fewer say it is very important (60% v. 66%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to apply the meaning and principles to today's context?"

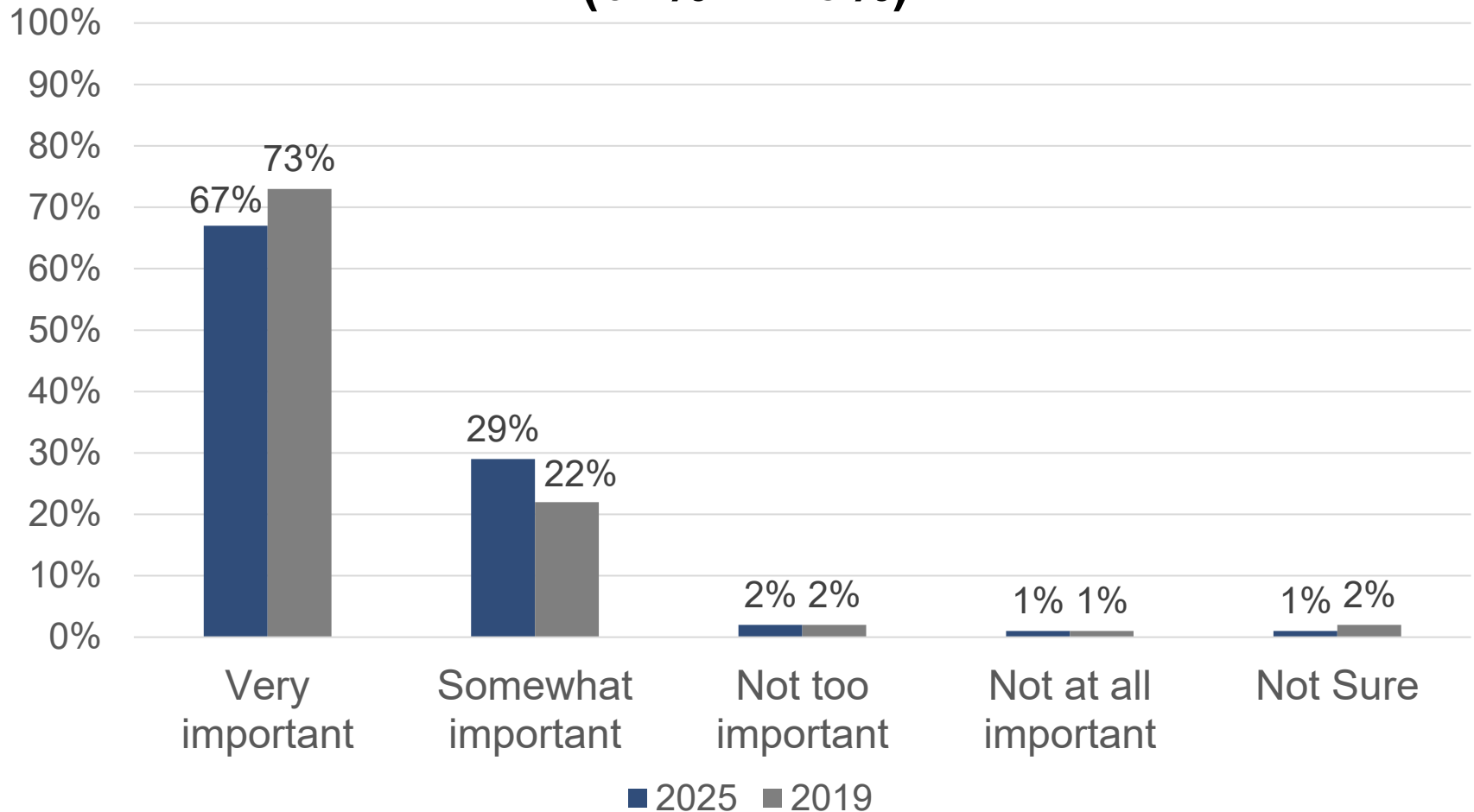
96% say it is important to understand the context in which the Bible was written



Lifeway Research

Q: "In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to understand the context in which the Bible was written?" n=1,200

In both 2025 and 2019, 96% say it is important to understand the context in which the Bible was written, but fewer now say this is very important (67% v. 73%)



Lifeway Research

Q: "In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to understand the context in which the Bible was written?"

Significant Differences

Gender

Age

Ethnicity

Region

Education Level

Denomination

Worship Service Attendance

Evangelical Beliefs

Church Size

Significant Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among gender, age, ethnicity, region, and education.

GENDER	AGE	ETHNICITY	REGION	EDUCATION
Male	18-29	White	Northeast	High School graduate or less
Female	30-49	African American	Midwest	Some college
	50-64	Hispanic	South	Bachelor's Degree
	65+	Other Ethnicities	West	Graduate Degree

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations

Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among denomination, worship service attendance, evangelical beliefs, and church size.

DENOMINATION	WORSHIP SERVICE ATTENDANCE	EVANGELICAL BELIEFS	CHURCH SIZE
Baptist	1 to 3 times a month	Yes	Less than 50
Methodist	4 or more times a month	No	50-99
Lutheran	Not sure		100-249
Presbyterian/Reformed			250-499
Christian/Church of Christ			500 or more
Non-denominational			

“The truth of God’s word can mean different things to different people.”

- Those age 18-29 (87%) and 30-49 (84%) are more likely to Agree than those 65+ (77%)
- African Americans (91%) are more likely to Agree than Whites (80%) and Hispanics (83%)
- Methodists (92%) and Christian/Church of Christ (96%) are more likely to Agree than Baptists (80%), Presbyterian/Reformed (79%), and Non-denominational (77%)
- Those who attend a worship service 1 to 3 times a month (88%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend 4 or more times a month (78%)
- Those without evangelical beliefs are more likely to Agree than those with evangelical beliefs (90% v. 75%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 500 or more (25%) are more likely to Disagree than churches of less than 50 (15%), 50-99 (12%), and 100-249 (17%)

“I accept some truths from the Bible, but others just don’t fit what I believe.”

- Males are more likely to Agree than females (40% v. 29%)
- Those age 18-29 (56%) and 30-49 (44%) are more likely to Agree than those age 50-64 (25%) and 65+ (22%)
- African Americans (46%) are more likely to Agree than Whites (31%) and Hispanics (31%)
- Those with a Graduate Degree (39%) are more likely to Agree than those who are High School Graduates or less (30%)
- Methodists (44%) are more likely to Agree than Baptists (31%) and Non-denominational (25%)
- Those who attend a worship service 1 to 3 times a month (41%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend 4 or more times a month (28%)
- Those without evangelical beliefs are more likely to Agree than those with evangelical beliefs (51% v. 18%)
- Those at a church with attendance of less than 50 (34%), 50-99 (43%), and 100-249 (34%) are more likely to Agree than those with attendance of 500 or more (19%)

“I enjoy exploring a passage of Scripture to understand what it means.”

- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without evangelical beliefs (98% v. 91%)

“I find it challenging to make sense of the Bible when I read it on my own.”

- Females are more likely to Agree than males (61% v. 51%)
- Those who are High School Graduates or less (62%) are more likely to Agree than those with some college (53%) or a Graduate Degree (53%)
- Those who attend a worship service 1 to 3 times a month (62%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend 4 or more times a month (52%)
- Those at a church with attendance of less than 50 (65%) are more likely to Agree than churches of 100-249 (53%), 250-499 (55%), and 500 or more (53%)

“As culture changes, some biblical truths become obsolete.”

- Those age 18-29 are the most likely to Agree (54%) followed by 30-49 (40%), 50-64 (19%), and 65+ (13%)
- African American (38%) are more likely to Agree than Whites (25%)
- Those with some college (70%) are more likely to Disagree than those who are High School Graduates or less (62%)
- Methodists (36%) are more likely to Agree than Lutherans (19%) and Non-denominational (19%)
- Those who attend a worship service 1 to 3 times a month (33%) are more likely to Agree than those who attend 4 or more times a month (24%)
- Those without evangelical beliefs are more likely to Agree than those with evangelical beliefs (37% v. 20%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 500 or more are the most likely to Disagree (84%)

“When I read a passage of the Bible on my own, I can usually understand how it is relevant to me.”

- Males are more likely to Agree than females (93% v. 89%)
- Those age 18-29 (10%) are more likely to Disagree than those 30-49 (6%)
- Those in the South (93%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Midwest (87%)
- Baptists (93%) are more likely to Agree than Non-denominational (87%)
- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to Agree than those without evangelical beliefs (95% v. 86%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 250-499 (95%) and 500 or more (94%) are more likely to Agree than churches of less than 50 (86%)

“If someone came to you expressing doubt about the truthfulness of Scripture, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their doubts?”

- Those age 30-49 (86%) and 50-64 (86%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those 65+ (80%)
- Those in the Midwest (16%) are more likely to select “Not too confident / Not at all confident” than those in the Northeast (8%)
- Those with some college (89%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who are High School Graduates or less (83%) or with a Graduate Degree (79%)
- Baptists (88%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than Methodists (73%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (78%)
- Those who attend a worship service 4 or more times a month (88%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who attend 1 to 3 times a month (79%)
- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those without evangelical beliefs (92% v. 76%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 500 or more (90%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than churches of less than 50 (80%) and 50-99 (82%)

“If someone came to you expressing difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible that don't fit their cultural values, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their difficulties?”

- Males are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than females (85% v. 80%)
- Those age 30-49 (85%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those 65+ (79%)
- Those in the Midwest (18%) are more likely to select “Not too confident / Not at all confident” than those in the South (13%) and West (11%)
- Those with some college (85%) or a Bachelor’s Degree (86%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who are High School Graduates or less (79%)
- Baptists (84%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than Methodists (73%)
- Those who attend a worship service 4 or more times a month (87%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who attend 1 to 3 times a month (78%)

“If someone came to you expressing difficulty accepting morals taught in the Bible that don't fit their cultural values, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their difficulties?” *continued*

- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those without evangelical beliefs (90% v. 74%)
- Those at a church with attendance of less than 50 are the most likely to select “Not too confident / Not at all confident” (25%)

“If your neighbor came to you expressing confusion over a passage in the Bible, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their confusion?”

- Females are more likely to select “Not too confident / Not at all confident” than males (18% v. 13%)
- Those age 39-49 (85%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those 65+ (79%)
- Hispanics (92%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than Whites (80%) and Other ethnicities (81%)
- Those in the South (83%) and West (84%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those in the Midwest (76%)
- Those with some college (86%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who are High School Graduates or less (78%) or with a Graduate Degree (78%)
- Baptists (86%) and Non-denominational (83%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than Methodists (69%) and Presbyterian/Reformed (72%)
- Those who attend a worship service 4 or more times a month (86%) are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those who attend 1 to 3 times a month (76%)

“If your neighbor came to you expressing confusion over a passage in the Bible, how confident are you that you would be able to directly address their confusion?” *continued*

- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” than those without evangelical beliefs (91% v. 72%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 500 or more are the most likely to select “Very confident / Somewhat confident” (90%)

“In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to apply the meaning and principles to today’s context?”

- Those age 30-49 (94%) and 50-64 (93%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those 18-29 (87%)
- Those with some college (94%) or a Bachelor’s Degree (94%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those who are High School Graduates or less (88%)
- Baptists (92%) and Christian/Church of Christ (100%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than Methodists (86%)
- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those without evangelical beliefs (94% v. 89%)

“In reading and applying Scripture, how important is it to understand the context in which the Bible was written?”

- Those age 30-49 (97%) and 50-64 (98%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those 18-29 (91%)
- Those with some college (97%) or a Bachelor’s Degree (97%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those who are High School Graduates or less (93%)
- Those who attend a worship service 4 or more times a month (97%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those who attend 1 to 3 times a month (93%)
- Those with evangelical beliefs are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than those without evangelical beliefs (97% v. 94%)
- Those at a church with attendance of 500 or more (99%) are more likely to select “Very important / Somewhat important” than churches of less than 50 (94%) and 100-249 (94%)

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