

# Marriage Ministry and the Cost of Divorce for Churches

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Survey of 1000 Protestant Pastors

Sponsored by Focus on the Family

# Methodology

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- ❑ The phone survey of Protestant pastors was conducted July 15-29, 2015
- ❑ The survey was sponsored by Focus on the Family
- ❑ The calling list was a stratified random sample drawn from a list of all Protestant churches with phones
- ❑ Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church called
- ❑ Responses were weighted by region 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  $\pm 3.2\%$
- ❑ Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

# Summary

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# Pastors' Views of Marriage Ministry

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- Most Protestant pastors are very positive about their church's impact on marriage
  - 75% agree their church provides enough help for married couples
  - 65% agree their church provides enough help for people who have divorced
  - 89% agree their church invests in the health of marriages
- The majority of churches offer pre-marital counseling (91%), marital counseling (87%), resources (77%), counseling referrals (75%), and classes on marriage (51%)

# Marriage Ministry Potential

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- However, many churches are not proactive in their approach to marriage ministry
  - 69% do not have an ongoing marriage ministry
  - 67% do not have a lay leader responsible for marriage ministry
  - 43% do not have a written plan in place for marriage ministry
  - 29% preach about marriage once a year or less
- Tangible barriers to providing additional support include lack of staff time (40%), not feeling qualified as marriage experts (34%), lack of finances (33%), lack of ideas that would work in their context (22%), and not knowing what to offer (22%)

# Pastors' Experience with the Cost of Divorce

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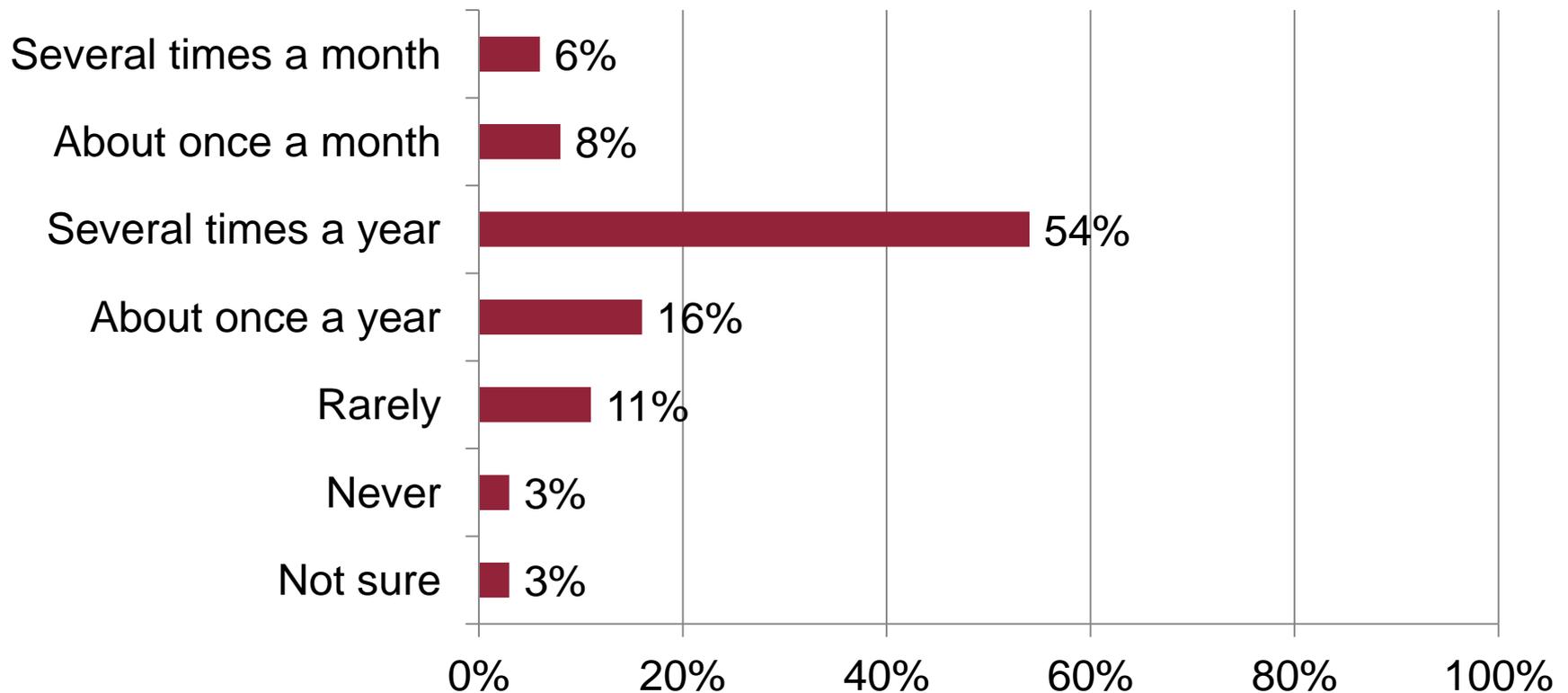
- ❑ For every 41 people in average attendance, one couple will approach a pastor this year with serious marriage difficulties
- ❑ Church staff spend a median of 2 hours a month counseling couples in marriage crisis (mean 4.9 hours)
- ❑ 40% of churches have had a couple separate/divorce in the last year – 73% of these churches had some stop attending
- ❑ Divorce has led to painful spiritual growth for churches such as learning about grace (64%), humility/brokenness (37%), and greater emphasis on marriage (35%)
- ❑ Divorce has also had negative impacts on churches such as fracturing other relationships (31%), creating leadership voids (16%), hurting the church's reputation (11%), stopping a church's momentum (10%), and disbanding an adult small group or Sunday school class (9%)

# Survey Responses

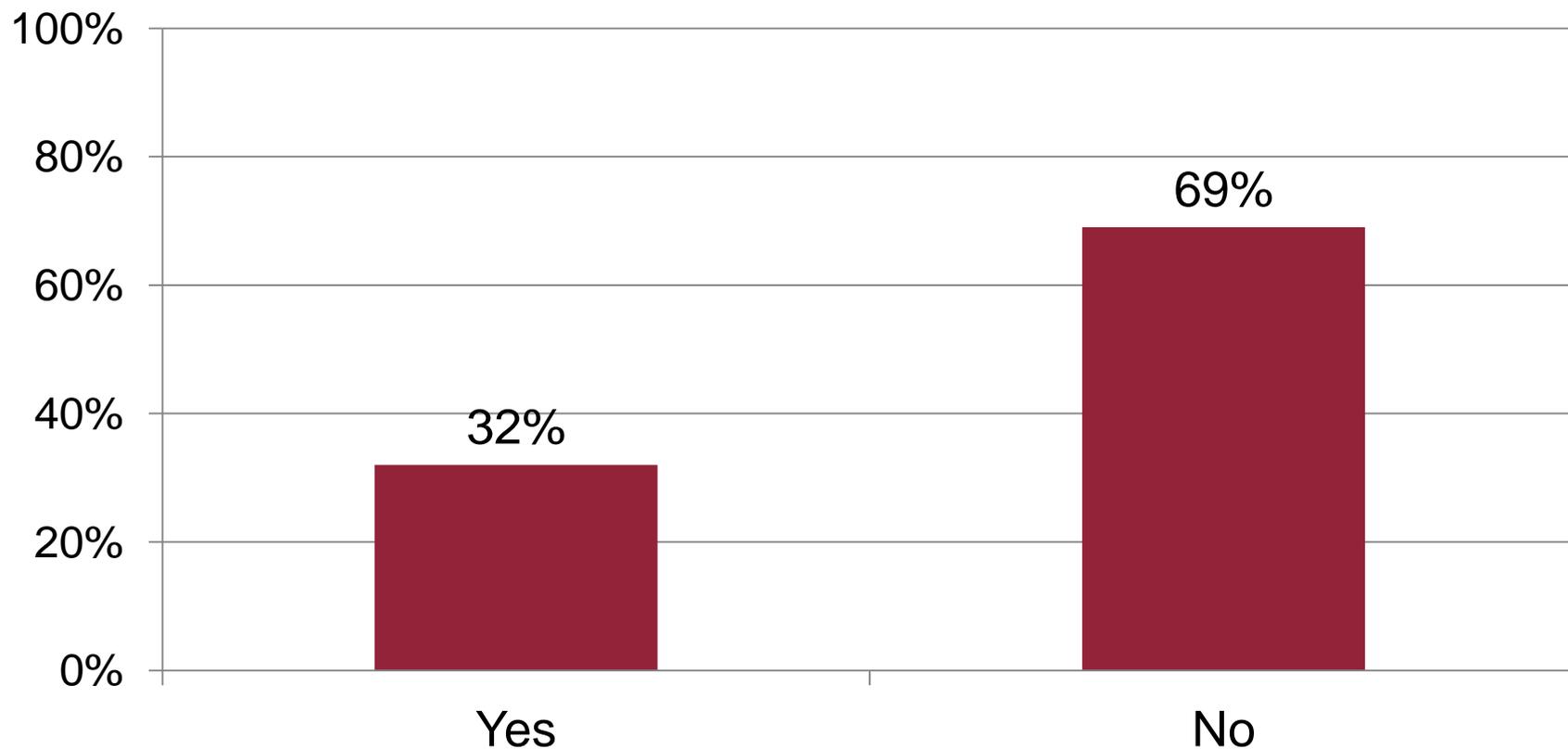
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# 29% of pastors preach about marriage once a year or less

## Among Protestant Pastors

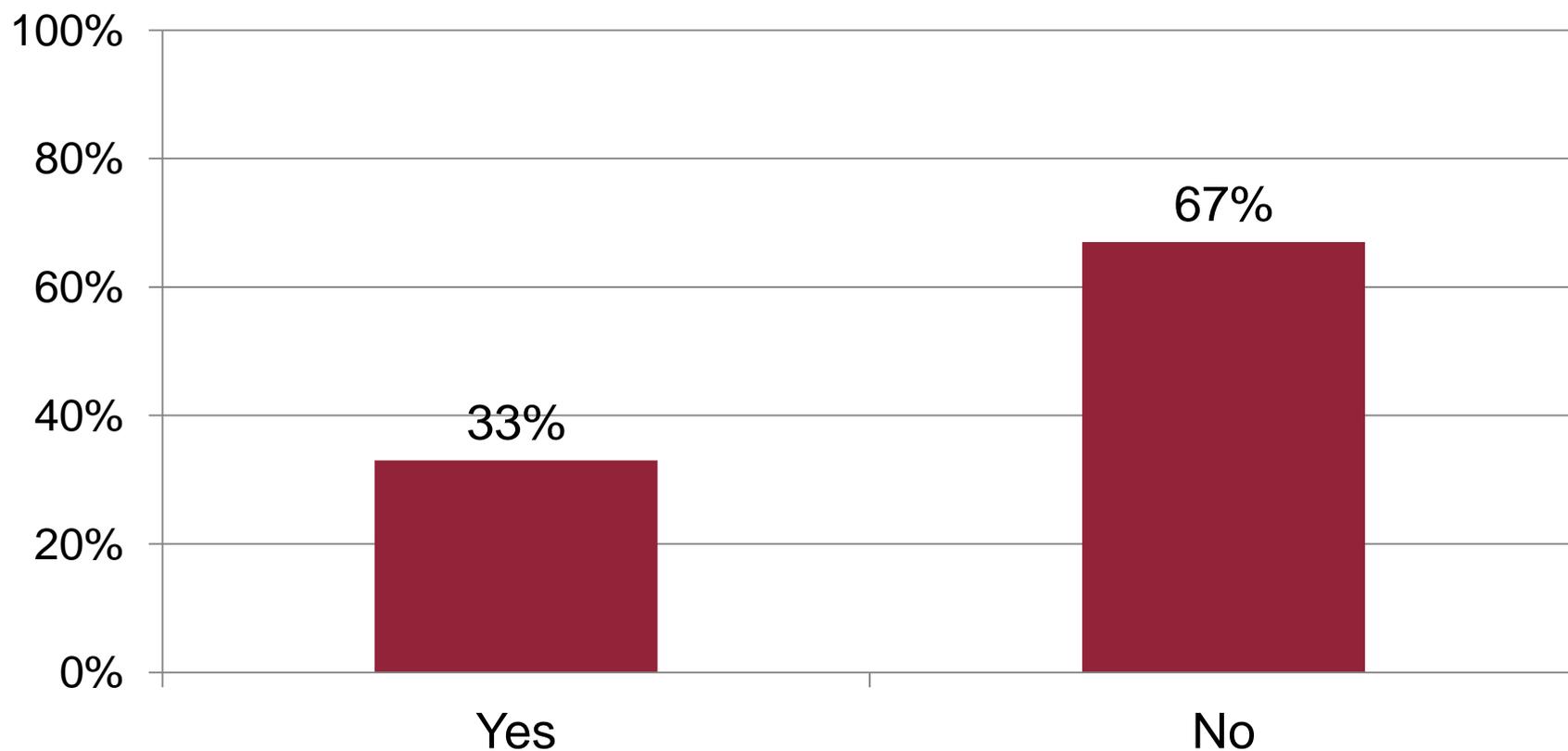


# Less than a third of churches have an ongoing marriage ministry



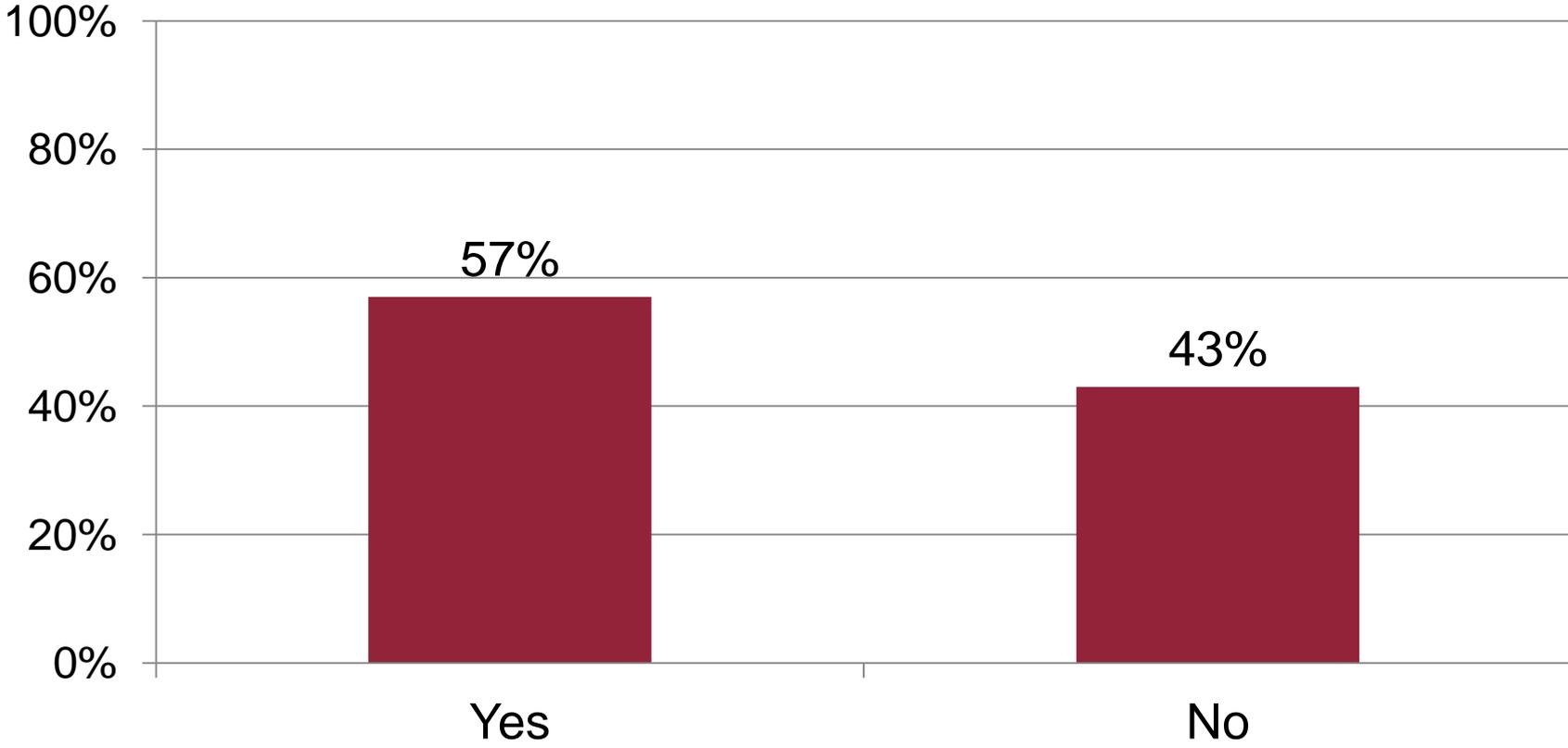
Q2: "Does your church have an ongoing marriage ministry?"

# A third of churches have a lay leader responsible for marriage ministry



Q3: "Does your church have a lay leader in place responsible for marriage ministry?"

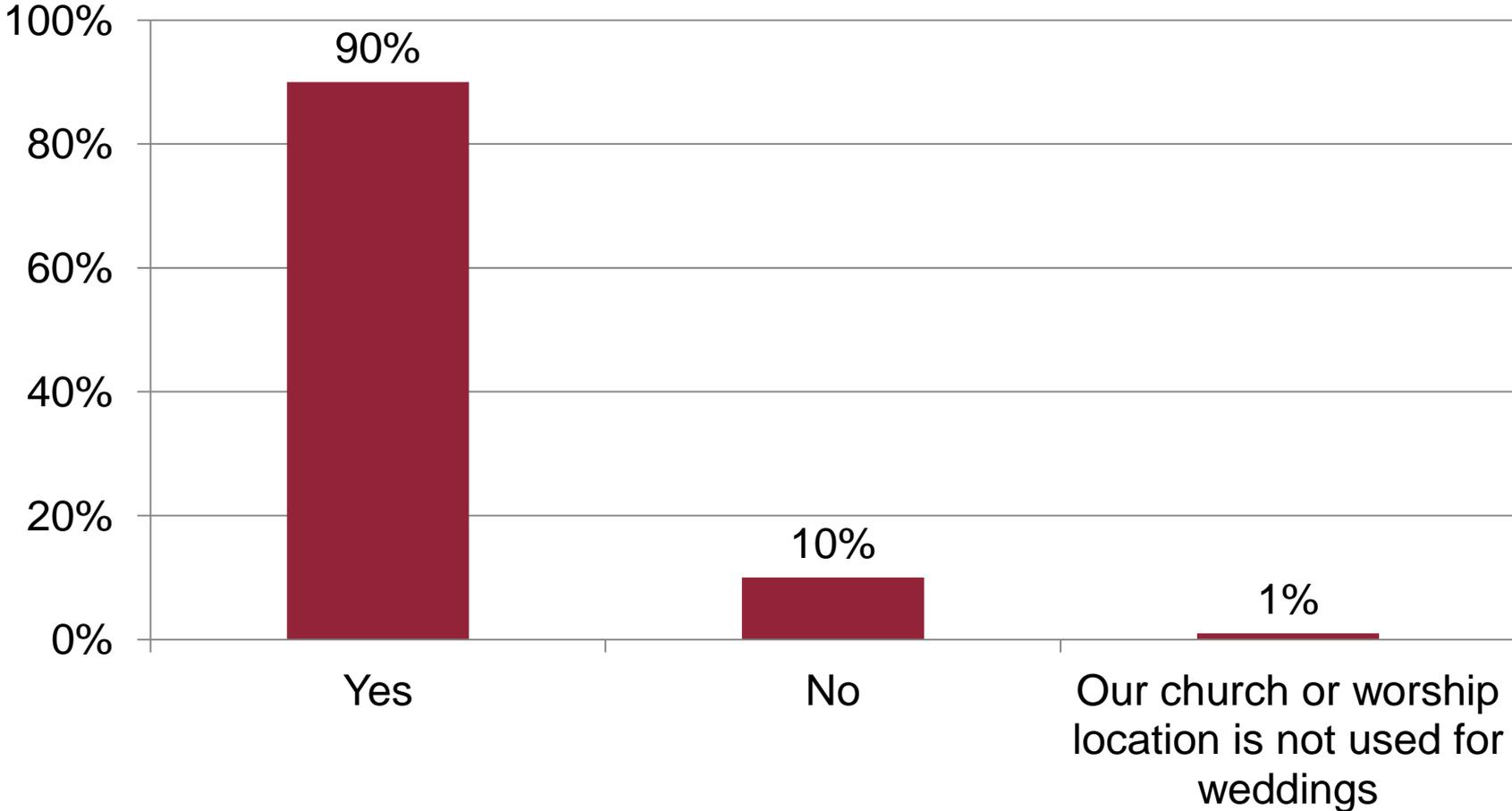
# 57% of churches have a written plan in place for marriage ministry



Q4: "Does your church have a written plan in place for its marriage ministry?"



# 9 in 10 churches require couples to participate in pre-marital counseling prior to using the church for a wedding

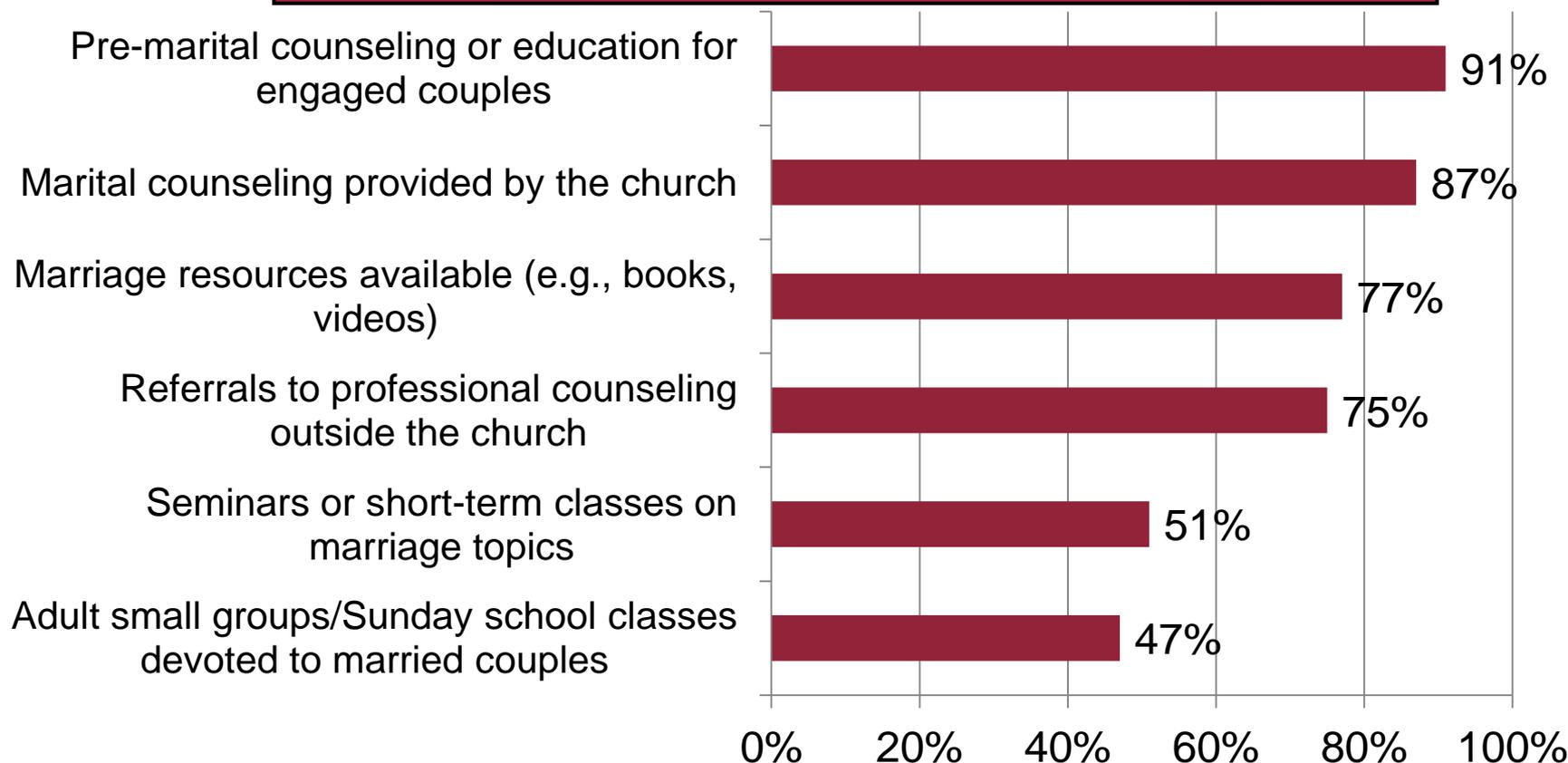


Q5: "Does your church require couples to participate in pre-marital counseling or education before using your church for a wedding?"



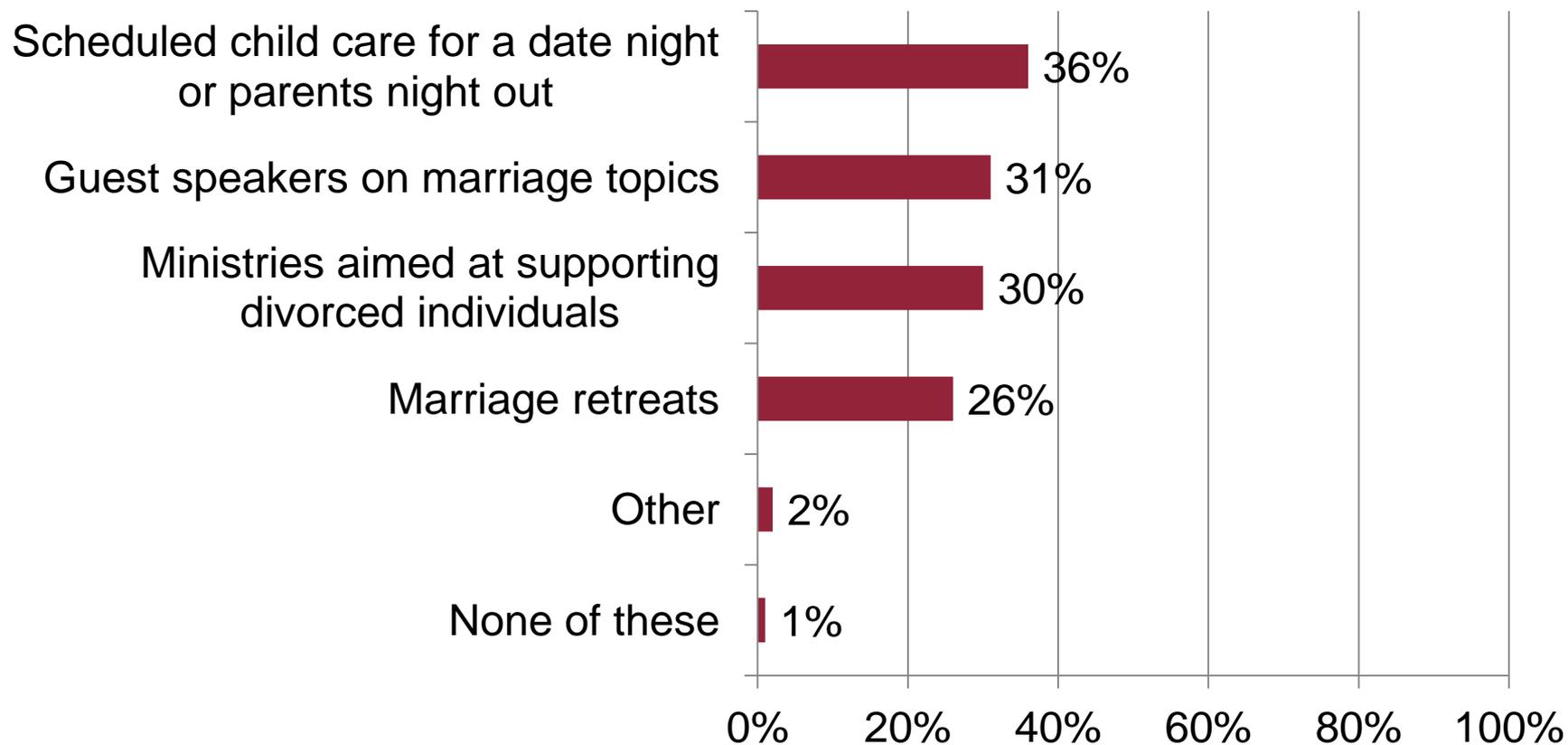
# 91% of churches offer pre-marital counseling

## Marriage Support Services Offered

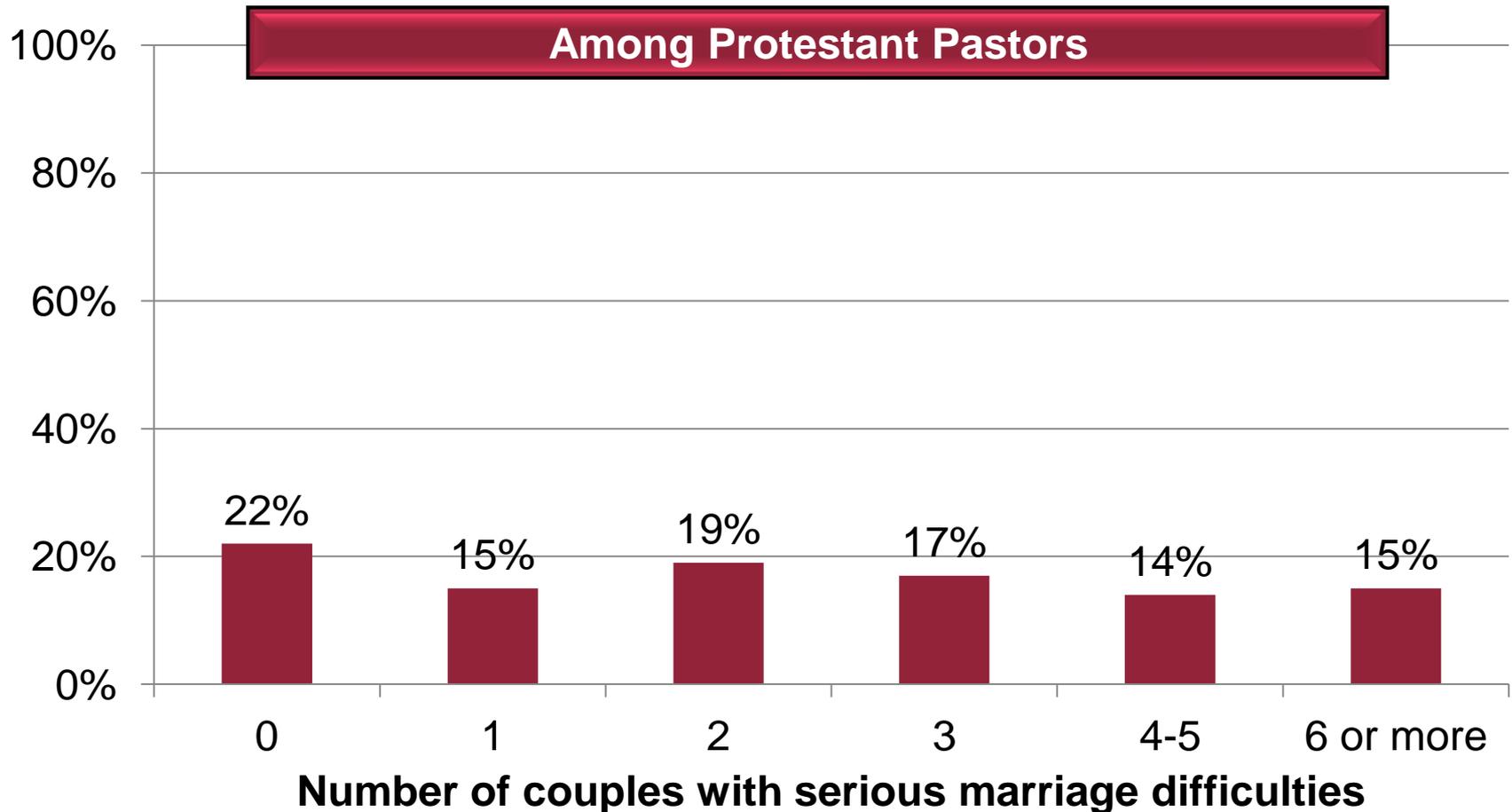


# 3 in 10 churches offer ministries aimed at supporting divorced individuals

## Marriage Support Services Offered -- continued



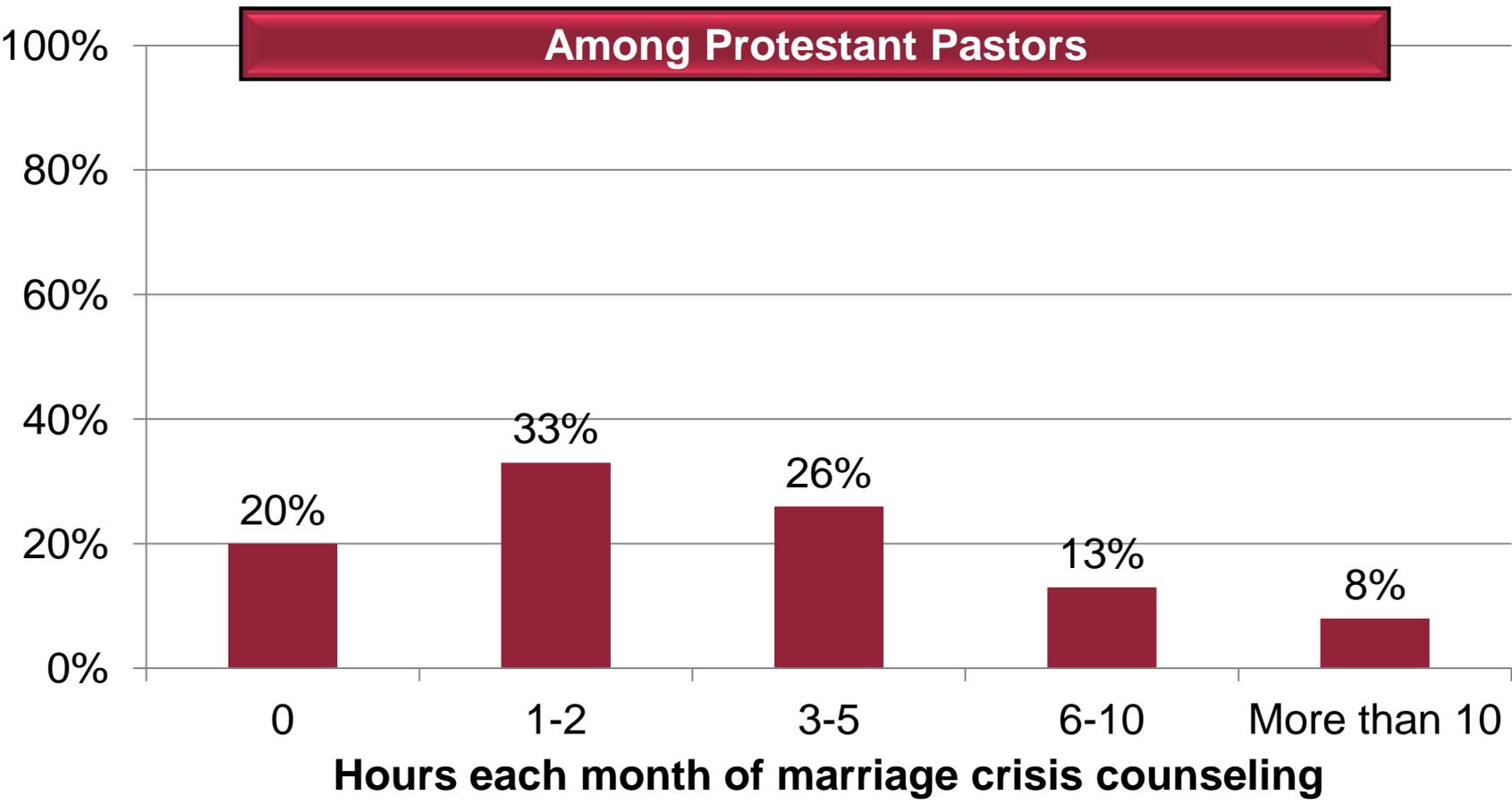
# 78% of pastors have had at least one couple come to them with serious marriage difficulties in the past year



## How many couples approach pastors each year with serious marriage difficulties?

- On average, one couple for every 41 people in average attendance approaches pastors with serious marriage difficulties each year
- Each year individual pastors are approached by a median of 2 couples and a mean of 3.8 couples with serious marriage difficulties.

# 80% of churches have a staff person engaging in counseling couples in a marriage crisis for at least one hour a month



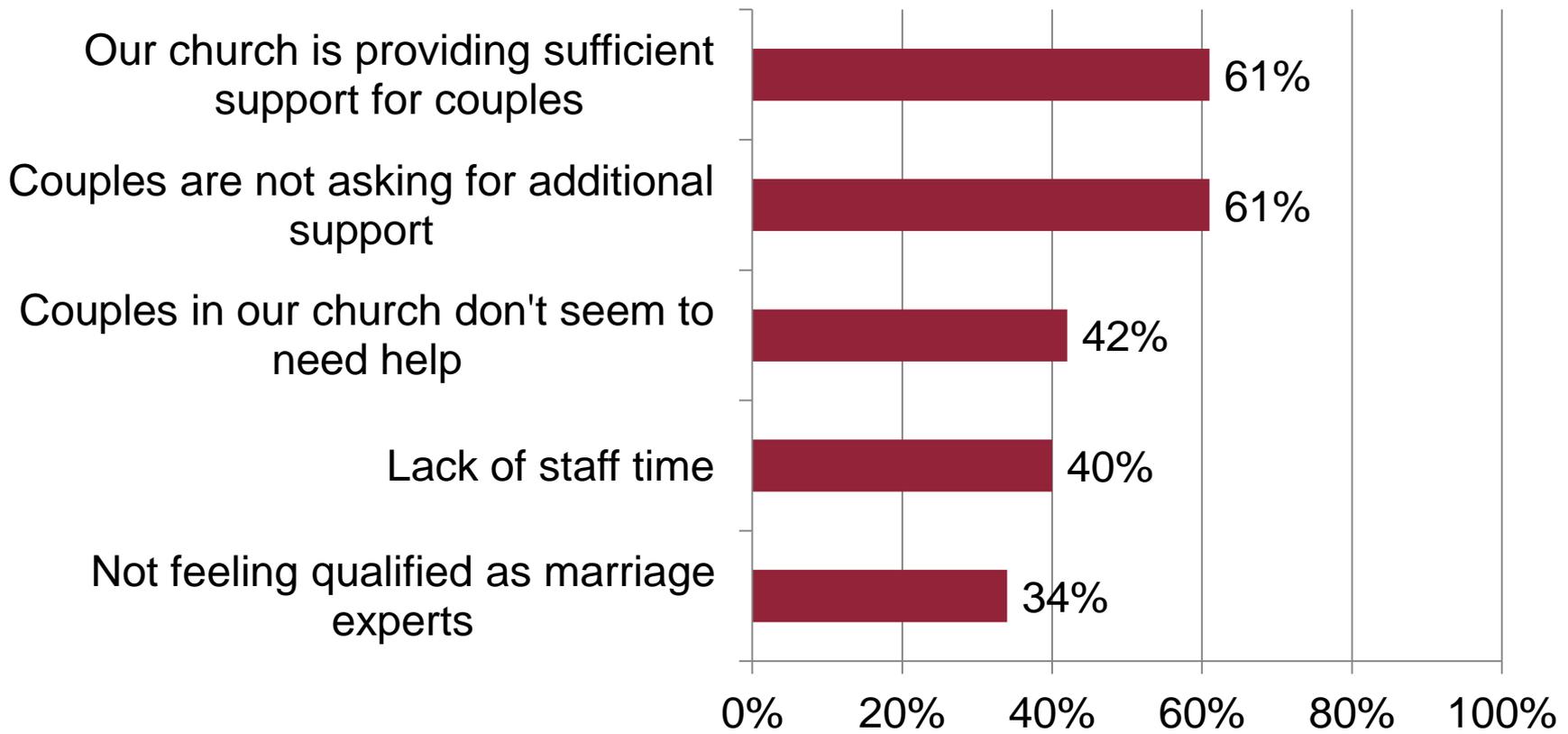
Staff provide a median of 2 hours a month and a mean of 4.9 hours a month of counseling for couples in marriage crisis



Q8: "Approximately how many hours a month does a staff person at your church engage in counseling couples in a marriage crisis?"

# 61% of pastors say a barrier to their church providing additional marriage support is that couples are not asking for it

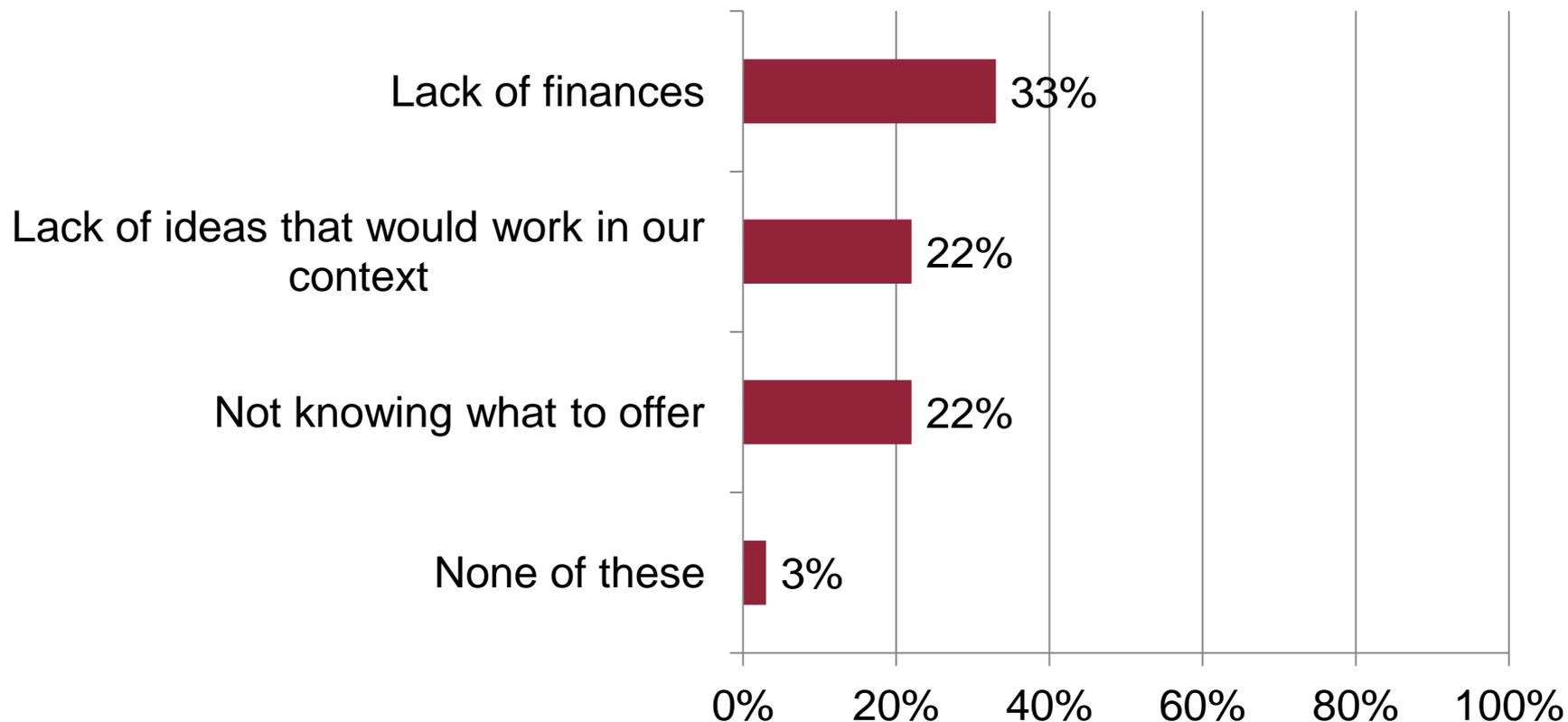
## Barriers to providing additional support



Q9: "Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)"

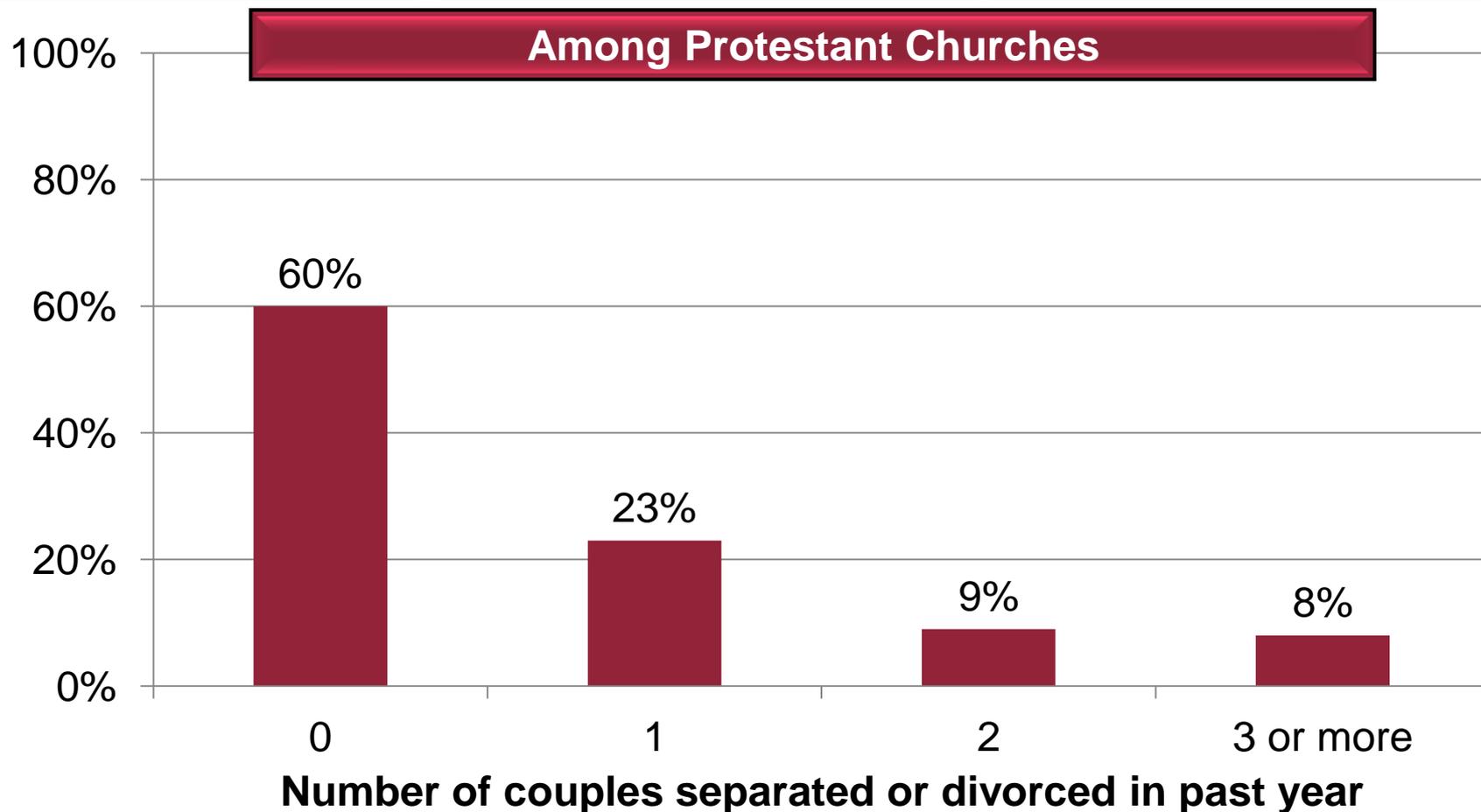
# A third of churches lack the finances to provide additional support

## Barriers to providing additional support -- continued

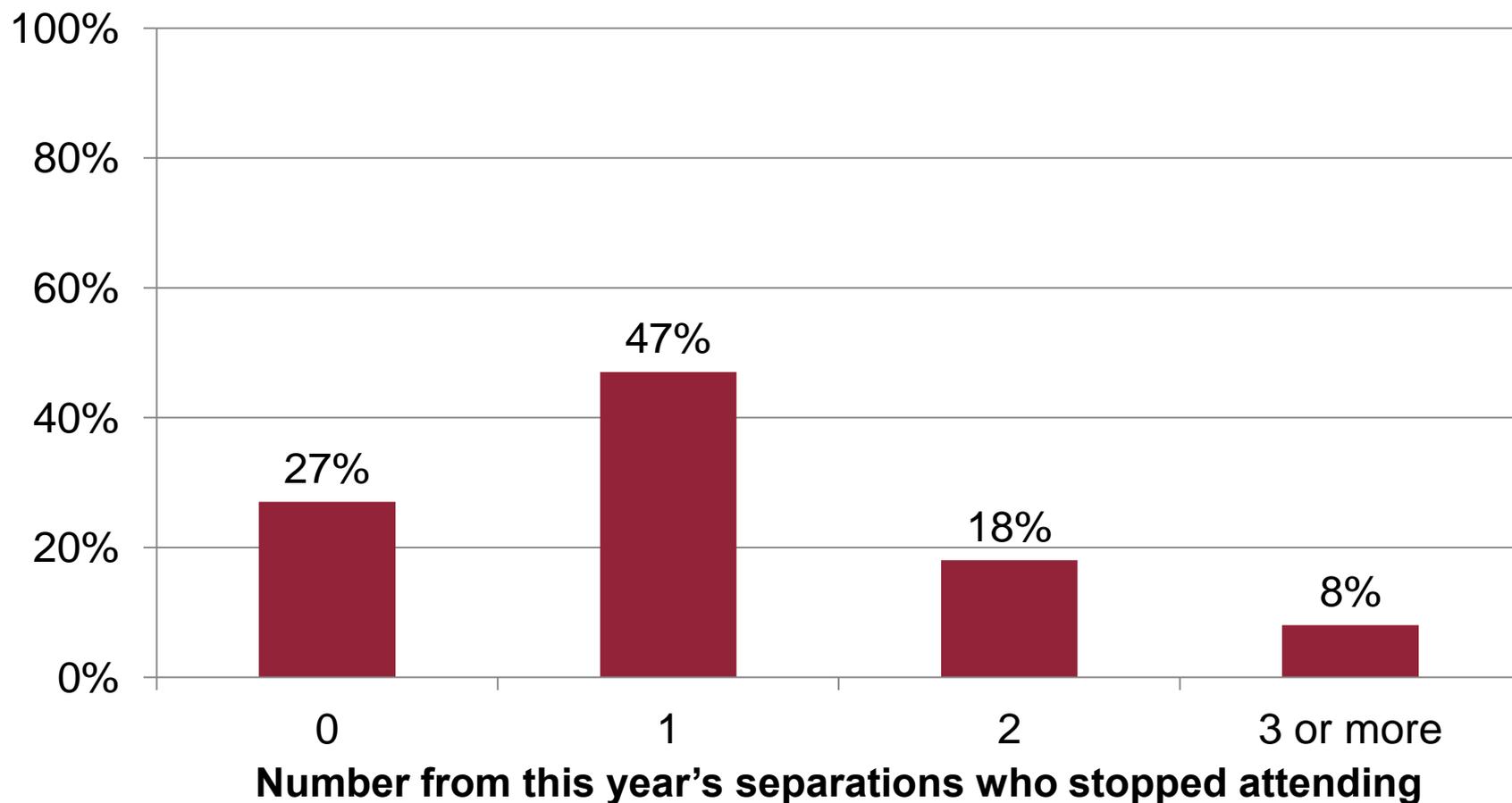


Q9: "Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)"

# 4 in 10 churches have had at least one couple divorce or separate in the last year

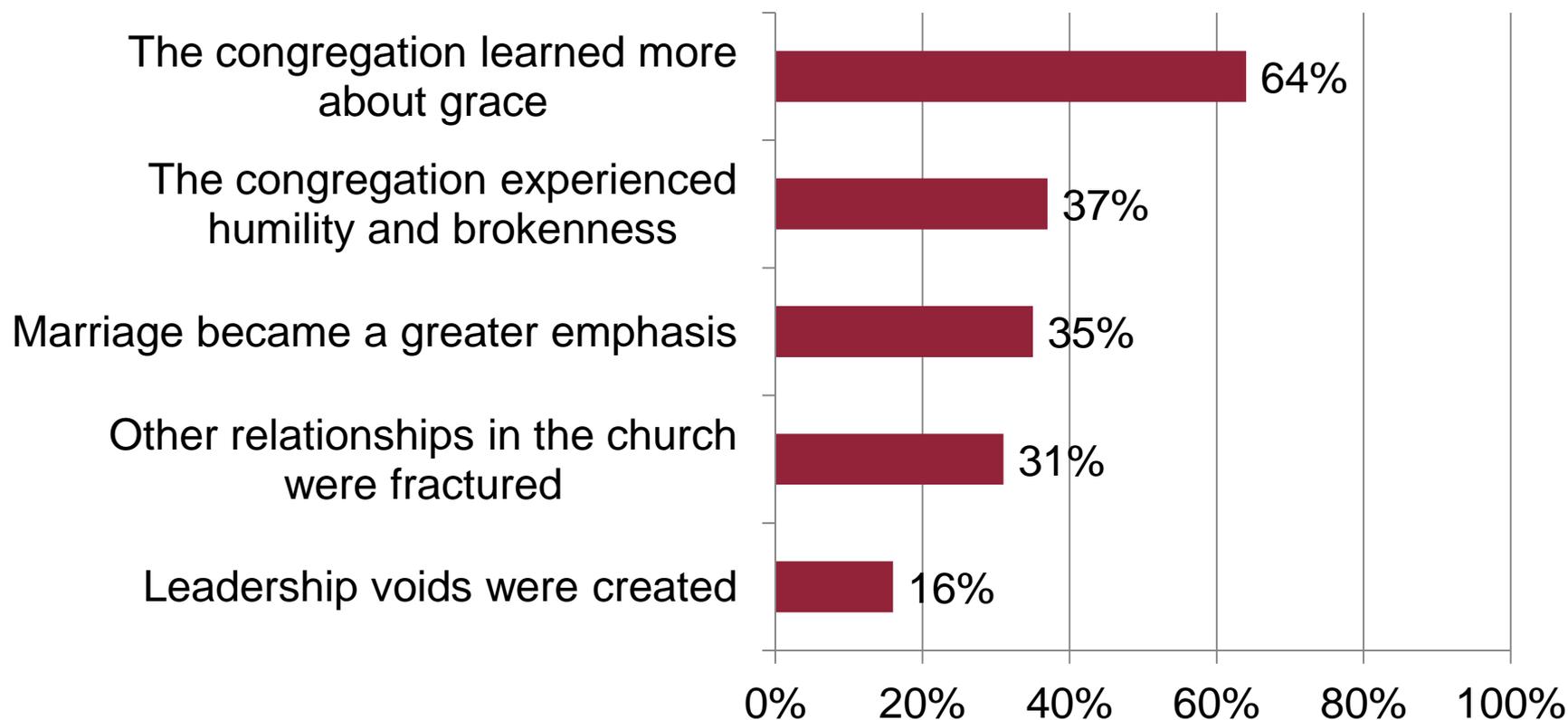


# At least one person stops attending in 73% of the churches where a separation has occurred



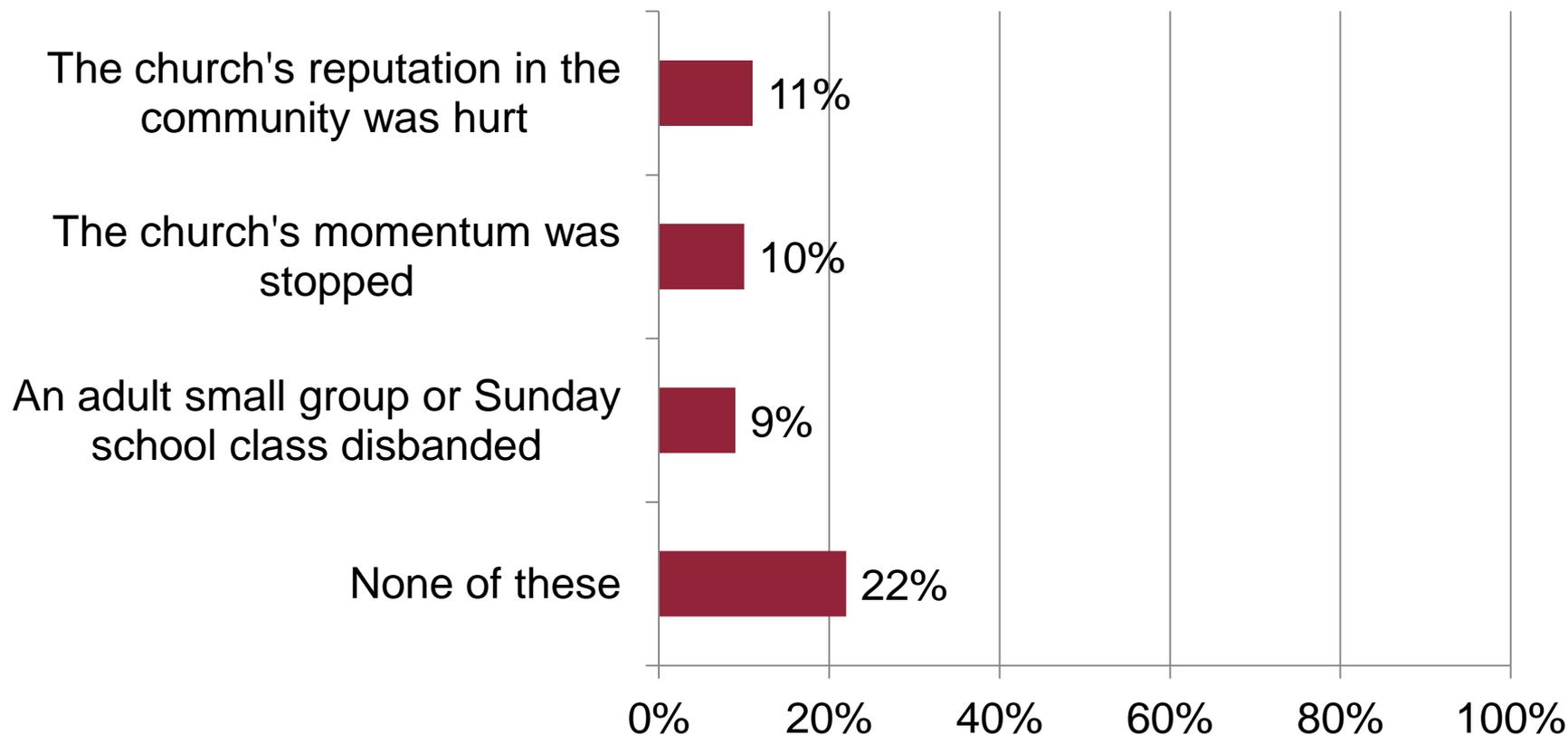
# Nearly two-thirds of pastors say their congregation has learned more about grace as a result of divorce

## Ways Divorce has Impacted Church

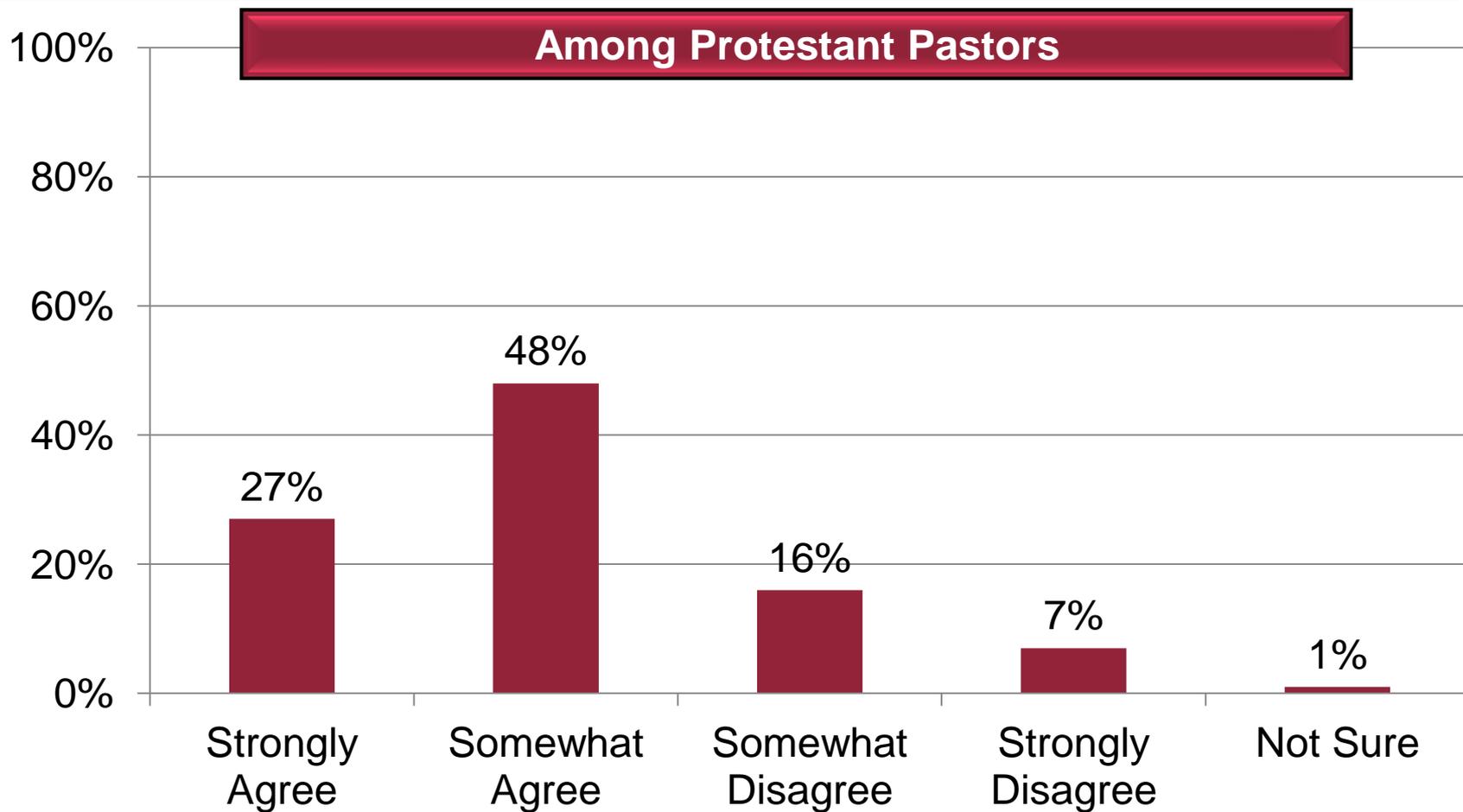


# 9% of churches have experienced a small group or Sunday school class disband as a result of divorce

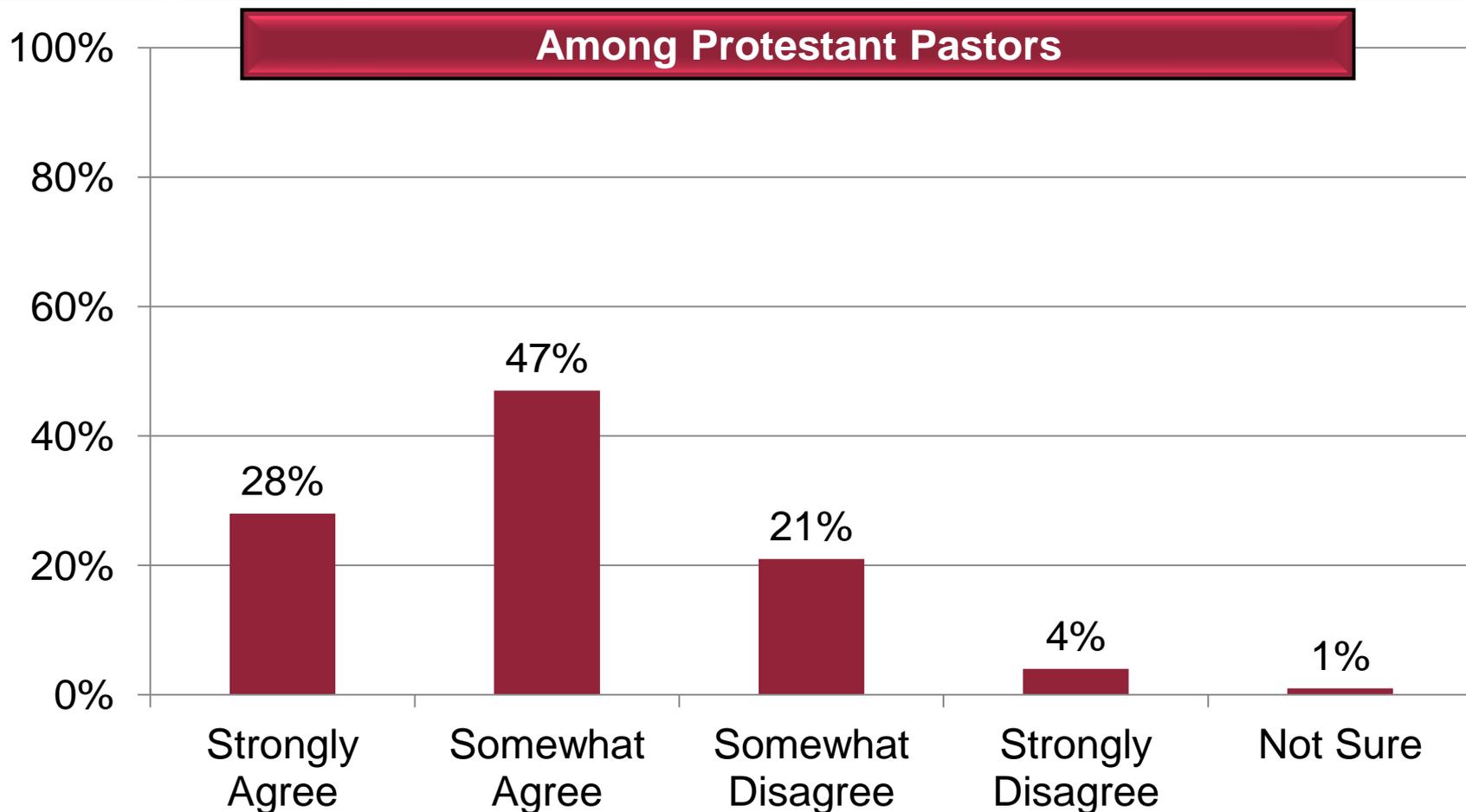
## Ways Divorce has Impacted Church -- continued



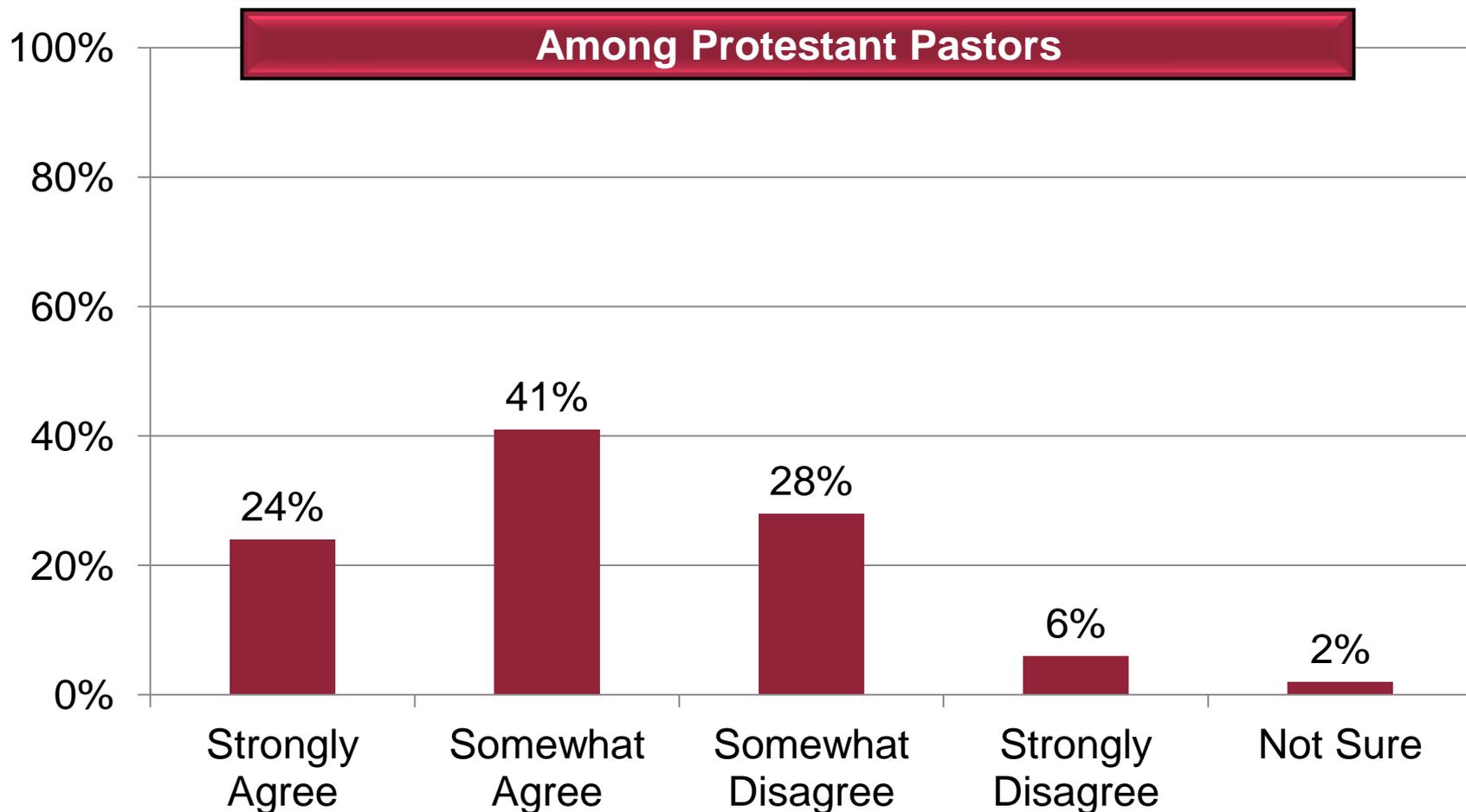
# 75% of pastors believe churches can prevent divorce



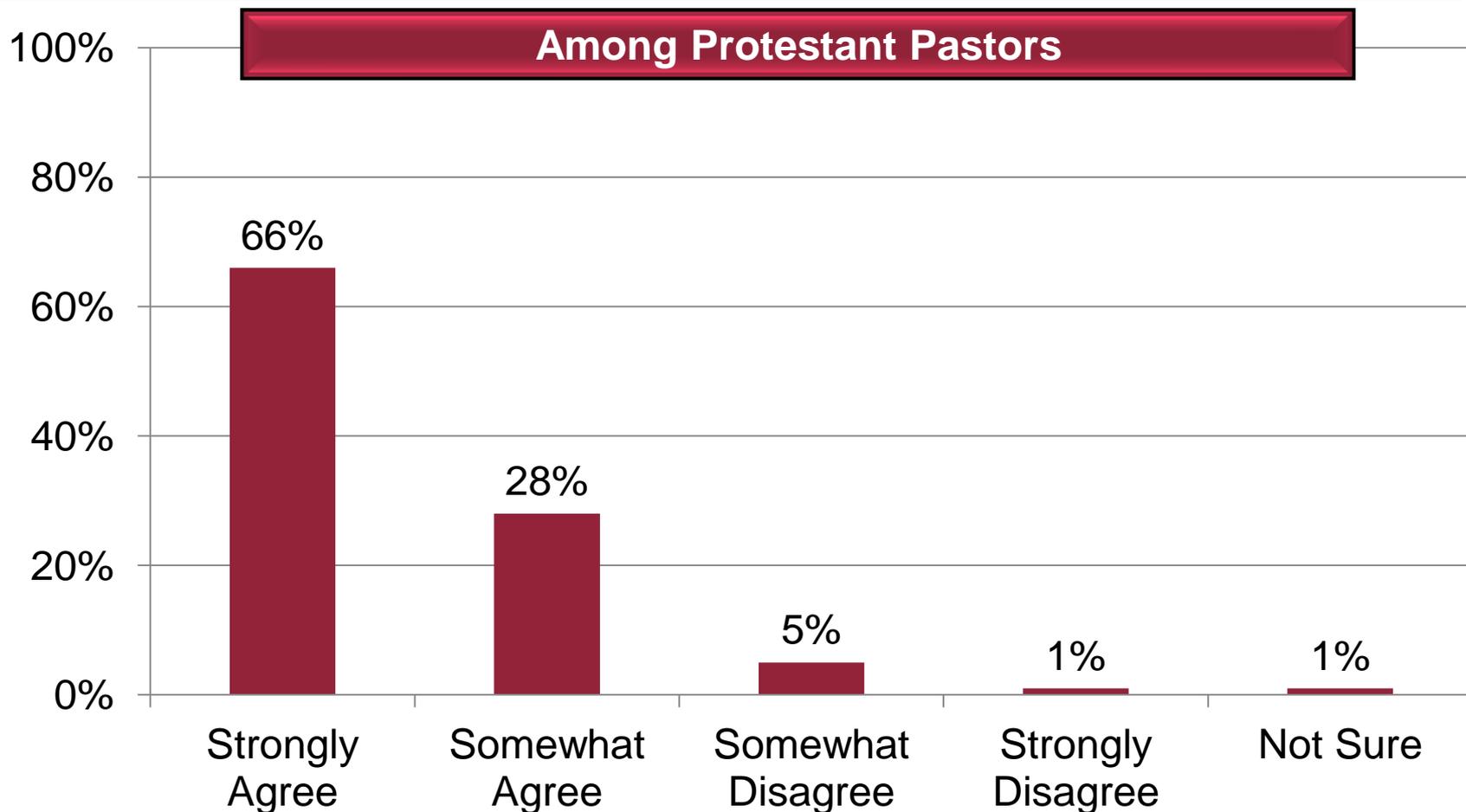
## 3 in 4 pastors think their churches provide enough help for married couples



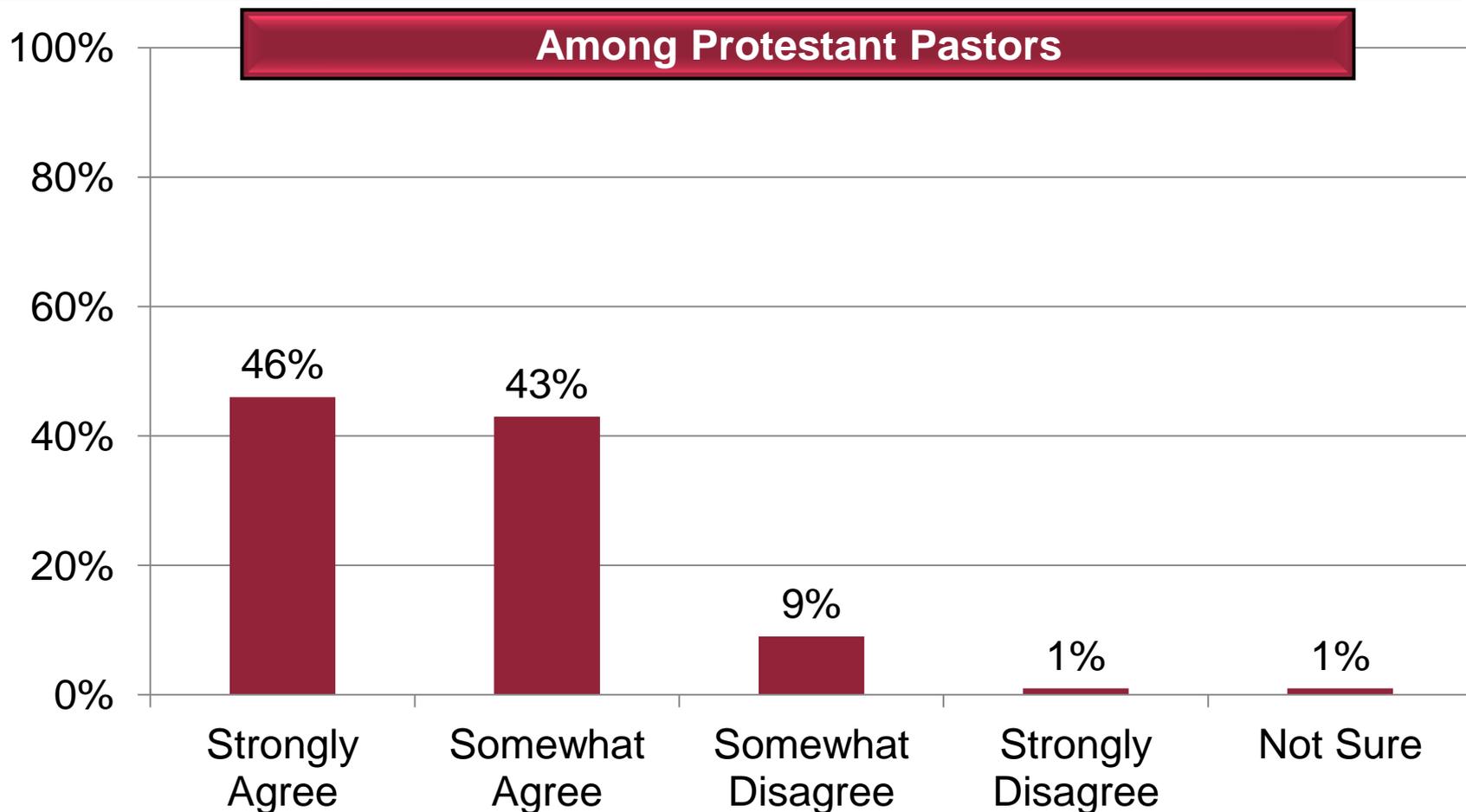
# 65% think their churches provide enough help for divorcees



# 94% say their churches are safe places to talk about marital difficulties



# 89% agree their churches invest in the health of marriages



# Significant Differences

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Pastor

Ethnicity

Age

Education Level

Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church

Average Attendance

Region

# Significant Statistical Differences

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

Pastor's Ethnicity	Pastor's Age	Pastor's Education Level
African American	18-44	No College Degree
White	45-54	Bachelor's Degree
Other Ethnicities	55-64	Master's Degree
	65+	Doctoral Degree

# Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among region of the country, average weekend worship attendance, and whether the pastor self-identifies as evangelical or mainline.

Region	Church Attendance	Self-Identify
Northeast	0-49	Evangelical
Midwest	50-99	Mainline
South	100-249	
West	250+	

Note: Region is defined by US Census locations

## “How often do you preach about marriage?”

- White pastors (5%) are less likely to answer “Several times a month” than African-American pastors (16%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (14%)
- African-American pastors (21%) are more likely to answer “About once a month” than White pastors (8%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (2%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (63%) are more likely to answer “Several times a year” than African-American pastors (42%)
- Those age 18-44 (14%) are most likely to answer “About once a month”
- Those age 55-64 (59%) are more likely to answer “Several times a year” than those age 18-44 (51%) and 65+ (49%)
- Those age 65+ (16%) are more likely to answer “Rarely” than those age 45-54 (8%) and 55-64 (9%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s (14%) are most likely to answer “About once a month”

# “How often do you preach about marriage?” (cont.)

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- Those with a Bachelor’s degree (61%) are more likely to answer “Several times a year” than those with a Master’s (51%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “Several times a year” (42%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (18%) and 50-99 (15%) are more likely to answer “Rarely” than those with attendance of 100-249 (7%) and 250+ (6%)
- Those in the South (8%) are more likely to answer “Several times a month” than those in the Northeast (2%) and the Midwest (3%)
- Those in the Midwest (24%) are the most likely to answer “About once a year”
- Those in the Northeast (18%) are more likely to answer “Rarely” than those in the South (9%)

# “How often do you preach about marriage?” (cont.)

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- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (57%) are more likely to answer “Several times a year” than self-identified Mainline pastors (50%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors (16%) are more likely to answer “Rarely” than self-identified Evangelical pastors (8%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors (4%) are more likely to answer “Never” than self-identified Evangelical pastors (2%)

## “Does your church have an ongoing marriage ministry?”

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- White pastors (30%) are less likely to answer “Yes” than African-American pastors (47%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (47%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ (54%) are the most likely to answer “Yes”
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (16%) are the least likely to answer “Yes”
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (35%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than self-identified Mainline pastors (27%)

## “Does your church have a lay leader in place responsible for marriage ministry?”

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- White pastors (28%) are less likely to answer “Yes” than African-American pastors (63%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (46%)
- Those with a Master’s degree (26%) are less likely to answer “Yes” than those with no college degree (48%) and a Bachelor’s degree (46%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ (46%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 0-49 (19%) and 50-99 (28%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (35%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than self-identified Mainline pastors (23%)

# “Does your church have a written plan in place for its marriage ministry?”

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- African-American pastors (83%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than White pastors (53%)

# “Does your church require couples to participate in pre-marital counseling or education before using your church for a wedding?”

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- Those with a Master’s degree (91%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with no college degree (85%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (91%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 0-49 (85%)
- Those in the Northeast (95%) and the Midwest (93%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the South (87%) and West (86%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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## Marital counseling provided by the church

- White pastors (88%) are more likely to select than African-American pastors (77%)
- Those age 65+ (82%) are less likely to select than those age 18-44 (91%) and 55-64 (89%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (83%) and 50-99 (84%) are less likely to select than those with attendance of 100-249 (90%) and 250+ (92%)

## Pre-marital counseling or education for engaged couples

- Those age 18-44 are the most likely to select (98%)
- Those with no college degree (84%) are less likely to select than those with a Master's degree (93%) and a doctoral degree (93%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (87%) are less likely to select than those with attendance of 100-249 (93%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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## Referrals to professional counseling outside the church

- Those age 18-44 (80%) are more likely to select than those age 55-64 (73%) and 65+ (71%)
- Those with no college degree (61%) are the least likely to select
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (63%) are the least likely to select while those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select (88%)

## Seminars or short-term classes on marriage topics

- Those age 65+ are the least likely to select (37%)
- Those with a Bachelor's degree (64%) are the most likely to select
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (30%) are the least likely to select while those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select (74%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors (40%) are less likely to select than self-identified Evangelical pastors (55%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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## Marriage retreats

- African-American pastors (49%) are more likely to select than White pastors (25%)
- Those with a Bachelor's degree (32%) are more likely to select than those with a Master's degree (23%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (13%) are the least likely to select
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (29%) are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (21%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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## Guest speakers on marriage topics

- African-American pastors (67%) are more likely to select than White pastors (28%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (47%)
- Those with a Bachelor's degree (44%) are the most likely to select
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (12%) are the least likely to select
- Those in the Northeast (20%) are less likely to select than those in the South (36%) and West (32%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (34%) are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (24%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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Adult small groups/Sunday school classes devoted to married couples

- Those age 65+ are the least likely to select (36%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (21%) are the least likely to select
- Those with church attendance of 250+ (77%) are the most likely to select
- Those in the South are the most likely to select (55%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (51%) are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (42%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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Ministries aimed at supporting divorced individuals

- African-American pastors (46%) are more likely to select than White pastors (30%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (23%)
- Those age 45-54 (25%) are less likely to select than those age 65+ (36%)
- Those with a Doctoral degree (40%) are more likely to select than those with a Bachelor's degree (27%) and a Master's degree (29%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (20%) and 50-99 (25%) are less likely to select than those with attendance of 100-249 (32%) and 250+ (48%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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Scheduled child care for a date night or parents night out

- African-American pastors (58%) are more likely to select than White pastors (35%)
- Those age 65+ are the least likely to select (25%)
- Those with no college degree (31%) are less likely to select than those with a Doctoral degree (44%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to select (10%)
- Those with church attendance of 50-99 (29%) are less likely to select than those with attendance of 100-249 (47%) and 250+ (55%)
- Those in the Northeast (28%) are less likely to select than those in the South (40%)

# “Does your church offer any of the following marriage support services to people in the church? (Select all that apply)”

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Marriage resources available (e.g. books, videos)

- White pastors (78%) are more likely to select than African-American pastors (64%)
- Those age 65+ are the least likely to select (68%)
- Those with no college degree are the least likely to select (66%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to select (65%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (80%) are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (74%)

## **“In the past year, how many couples have come to you with serious marriage difficulties?”**

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- White pastors (23%) are more likely to answer “0” than pastors of Other Ethnicities (8%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (31%) are more likely to answer “2” than White pastors (18%)
- African-American pastors (29%) are more likely to answer “6 or more” than White pastors (14%)
- Those age 65+ are the most likely to answer “0” (32%) and the least likely to answer “4-5” (6%)
- Those age 18-44 (18%) are more likely to answer “6 or more” than those 65+ (10%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s degree (24%) are more likely to answer “2” than those with a Master’s degree (16%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer “0” (46%)

## **“In the past year, how many couples have come to you with serious marriage difficulties?” cont.**

- Those with church attendance of 250+ are the least likely to answer “1” (3%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (21%) are more likely to answer “2” than those with attendance of 250+ (12%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (20%) are more likely to answer “3” than those with attendance of 0-49 (12%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “4-5” (4%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to answer “6 or more” (44%)
- Those in the Northeast (19%) and the Midwest (18%) are more likely to answer “1” than those in the South (11%)
- Those in the Northeast (26%) are more likely to answer “2” than those in the South (17%)
- Those in the South (17%) are more likely to answer “6 or more” than those in the Northeast (9%) and Midwest (11%)

# “Approximately how many hours a month does a staff person at your church engage in counseling couples in a marriage crisis?”

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- White pastors (34%) are more likely to answer “1-2” than African-American pastors (18%)
- African-American pastors (24%) are more likely to answer “6-10” than White pastors (12%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (17%) are more likely to answer “More than 10” than White pastors (7%)
- Those age 65+ are the most likely to answer “0” (33%)
- Those age 55-64 (29%) are more likely to answer “3-5” than those age 65+ (18%)
- Those with a Master’s degree (37%) are more likely to answer “1-2” than those with no college degree (24%) and a Bachelor’s degree (28%)
- Those with no college degree (21%) and a Bachelor’s degree (17%) are more likely to answer “6-10” than those with Master’s degree (11%)

# **“Approximately how many hours a month does a staff person at your church engage in counseling couples in a marriage crisis?” cont.**

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- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer “0” (45%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ (18%) are the least likely to answer “1-2”
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (31%) and 250+ (35%) are more likely to answer “3-5” than those with attendance of 0-49 (14%) and 50-99 (21%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (14%) and 250+ (22%) are more likely to answer “6-10” than those with attendance of 0-49 (8%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to answer “more than 10” (21%)

# “Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)”

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## Lack of staff time

- Those age 18-44 (47%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those 65+ (32%)
- Those with no college degree are the most likely to answer “Yes” (54%)

## Lack of finances

- African-American pastors (53%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (45%) are more likely to answer “yes” than White pastors (31%)
- Those with no college degree (39%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Doctoral degree (28%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer “Yes” (43%)
- Those in the Northeast (40%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the South (30%)

# “Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)” cont.

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## Lack of ideas that would work in our context

- Those with a Doctoral degree are the least likely to answer “Yes” (12%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (24%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 250+ (16%)

## Not feeling qualified as marriage experts

- Those with a Doctoral degree are least likely to answer “Yes” (25%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (38%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 50-99 (31%)
- Those in the Midwest (%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the West (%)

# “Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)” cont.

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## Not knowing what to offer

- Those age 18-44 (28%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those 45-54 (20%) and 55-64 (20%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s degree (26%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Doctoral degree (14%)
- Those in the Midwest (26%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the West (16%)

## Couples in our church don’t seem to need help

- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (53%) and 50-99 (49%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 100-249 (35%) and 250+ (29%)

# “Which of the following barriers would your church need to overcome to provide additional support for married couples? (Select all that apply)” cont.

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Couples are not asking for additional support

- Those age 18-44 (68%) and 45-54 (65%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those 55-64 (56%) and 65+ (51%)
- Those with church attendance of 50-99 (66%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 100-249 (58%) and 250+ (56%)
- Those in the Midwest (64%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the West (54%)

Our church is providing sufficient support for couples

- White pastors (62%) are more likely to answer “yes” than pastors of Other Ethnicities (49%)
- Those with a Doctoral degree (69%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Bachelor’s degree (55%)

## “In the past year, how many couples in your church have separated or divorced?”

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- White pastors (9%) are more likely to answer “2” than pastors of Other Ethnicities (1%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (16%) are more likely to answer “3 or more” than White pastors (7%)
- Those age 65+ (71%) are more likely to answer “0” than those 18-44 (57%) and 45-54 (56%)
- Those age 55-64 (25%) are more likely to answer “1” than those 65+ (16%)
- Those age 18-44 (10%) are more likely to answer “2” than those 65+ (4%)
- Those age 18-44 (9%) and 45-54 (11%) are more likely to answer “3 or more” than those 55-64 (5%)

## “In the past year, how many couples in your church have separated or divorced?” cont.

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- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer “0” (80%)
- Those with church attendance of 50-99 (23%) and 100-249 (29%) are more likely to answer “1” than those with attendance of 0-49 (13%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to answer “2” (22%)
- Those with church attendance of 250+ are the most likely to answer “3 or more” (28%)

## **“In which of the following ways has divorce impacted your church? (Select all that apply)”**

An adult small group or Sunday school class disbanded

- African-American pastors (19%) are more likely to answer “yes” than White pastors (9%)
- Those with no college degree (13%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Doctoral degree(5%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (13%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 0-49 (5%) and 50-99 (7%)
- Those in the South (11%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the Midwest (7%)

Leadership voids were created

- No significant differences

## **“In which of the following ways has divorce impacted your church? (Select all that apply)”**

Other relationships in the church were fractured

- Those age 65+ are the least likely to answer “Yes” (19%)
- Those with a Master’s degree (34%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a no college degree (23%) and a Bachelor’s degree (24%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “Yes” (12%)

The church’s reputation in the community was hurt

- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (12%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than self-identified Mainline pastors (9%)

## **“In which of the following ways has divorce impacted your church? (Select all that apply)”**

Marriage became a greater emphasis

- Those age 18-44 (43%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those 55-64 (33%) and 65+ (29%)
- Those with a Doctoral degree are the least likely to answer “Yes” (24%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “Yes” (18%)
- Those in the South are the most likely to answer “Yes” (40%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (39%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than self-identified Mainline pastors (29%)

The congregation learned more about grace

- Those age 55-64 (69%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those 18-44 (60%) and 65+ (58%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “Yes” (50%)

## “In which of the following ways has divorce impacted your church? (Select all that apply)”

The congregation experienced humility and brokenness

- Those with a Master’s degree (38%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Doctoral degree (28%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to answer “Yes” (22%)
- Those in the South (39%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those in the Midwest (31%)

The church’s momentum was stopped

- Those with no college degree (16%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with a Master’s degree (9%) and Doctoral degree (7%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (13%) are more likely to answer “Yes” than those with attendance of 0-49 (6%)

## **“Churches can prevent divorce.”**

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- Those age 18-44 (81%) and 55-64 (77%) are more likely to agree than those age 65+ (68%)
- Those with a Bachelor’s degree (81%) are more likely to agree than those with a Master’s degree (74%)
- Those with church attendance of 0-49 (81%) are more likely to agree than those with attendance of 100-249 (73%)

# “My church provides enough help for married couples.”

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- Those age 45-54 (29%) are more likely to disagree than those age 65+ (19%)
- Those with a Bachelor's degree (79%) are more likely to agree than those with a Master's degree (72%)

## “My church provides enough help for people who have divorced.”

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- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (77%) are more likely to agree than White pastors (64%) and African-American pastors (57%)

# “My church is a safe place to talk about marital difficulties.”

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- Those age 18-44 (7%) and 55-64 (6%) are more likely to disagree than those age 45-54 (3%)
- Those with a Master’s degree (7%) are more likely to disagree than those with a Bachelor’s degree (2%)
- Those in the West (97%) are more likely to agree than those in the Northeast (90%)

## “My church invests in the health of marriages.”

- Those with a Master’s degree (12%) are more likely to disagree than those with a Bachelor’s degree (7%)
- Those with church attendance of 100-249 (91%) and 250+ (93%) are more likely to agree than those with attendance of 0-49 (83%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors (91%) are more likely to agree than self-identified Mainline pastors (86%)

# Marriage Ministry and the Cost of Divorce for Churches

Survey of 1000 Protestant Pastors