

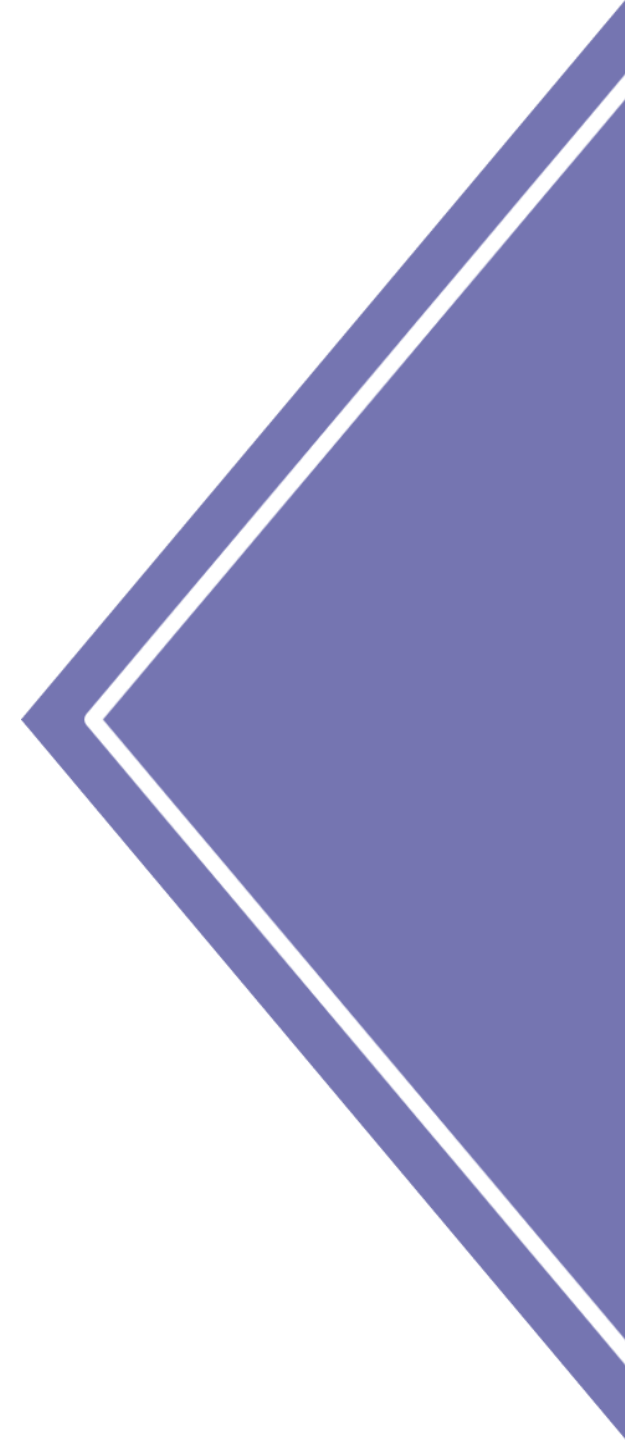
Pastors' Views on How COVID-19 is Affecting Their Church

Survey of American Protestant Pastors

Methodology

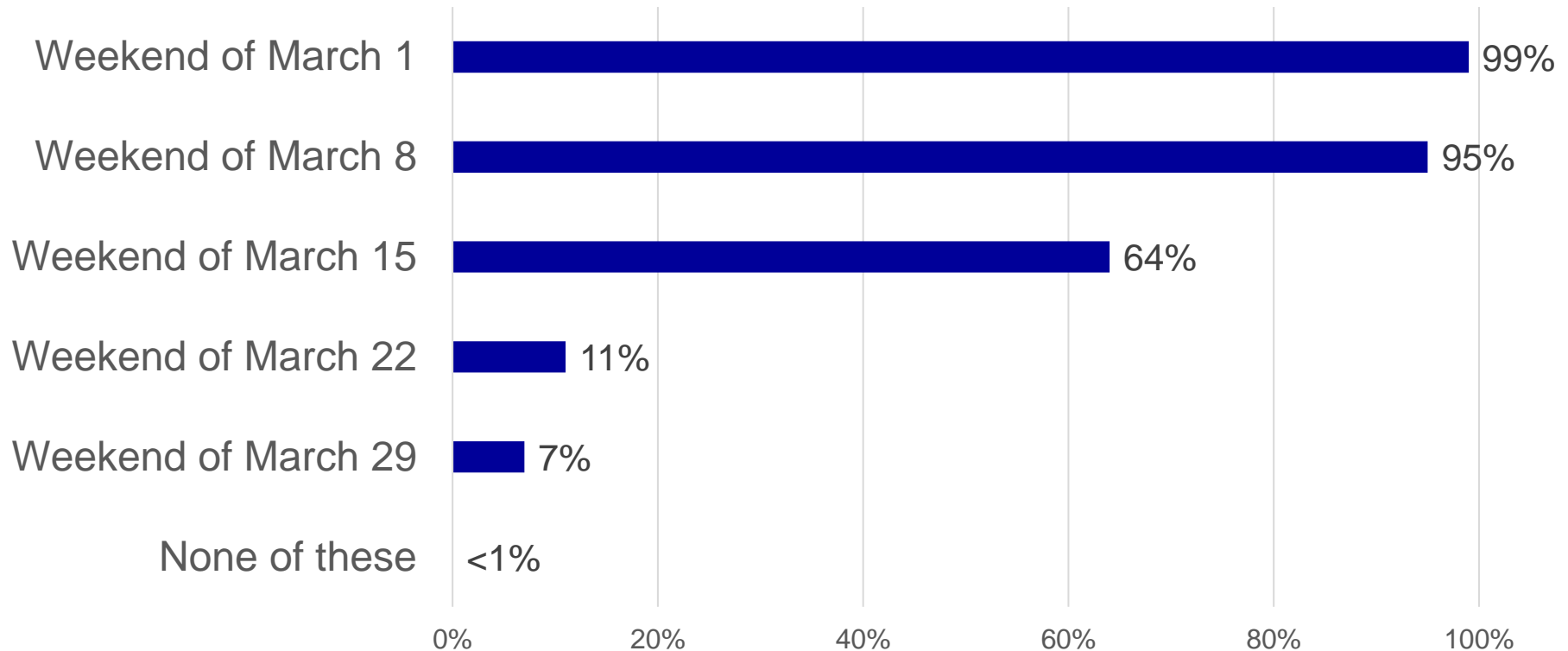
- The online survey of 400 Protestant pastors was conducted March 30-31, 2020
- Invitations were emailed to the LifeWay Research Pastor Panel followed by two reminders.
- The probability sample of Protestant churches was created by phone recruiting by LifeWay Research using random samples selected from all Protestant churches. Pastors who agree to be contacted by email for future surveys make up this LifeWay Research Pastor Panel.
- Each survey was completed by the senior or sole pastor or a minister at the church
- Responses were weighted by church average attendance, region, ethnicity of pastor, and whether the pastor self-identified as evangelical or mainline to more accurately reflect the population
- The final sample is 400 useable surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 5.5\%$
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

Survey Responses



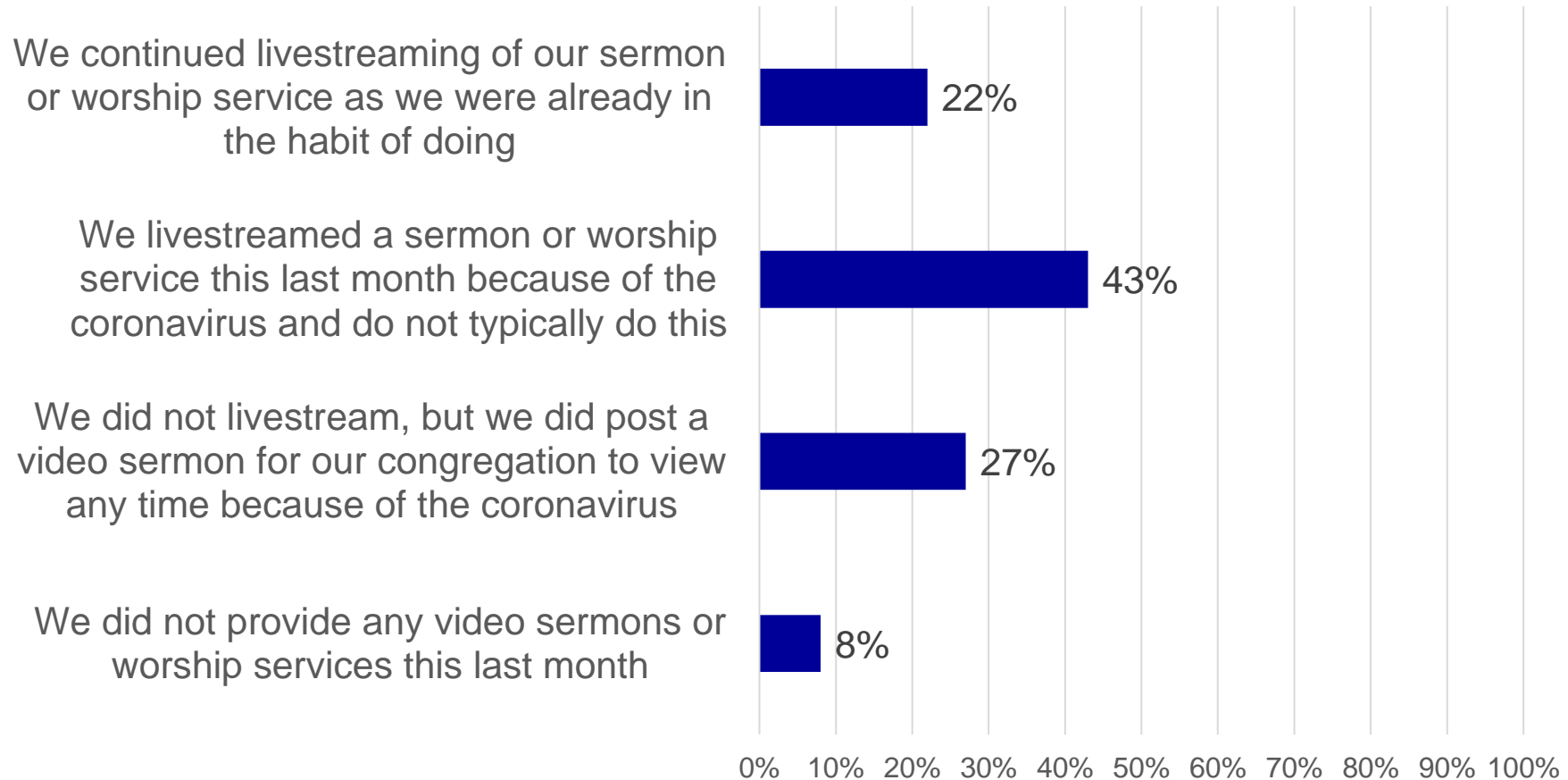
“Which weekends in March did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)?”

Among Protestant Pastors



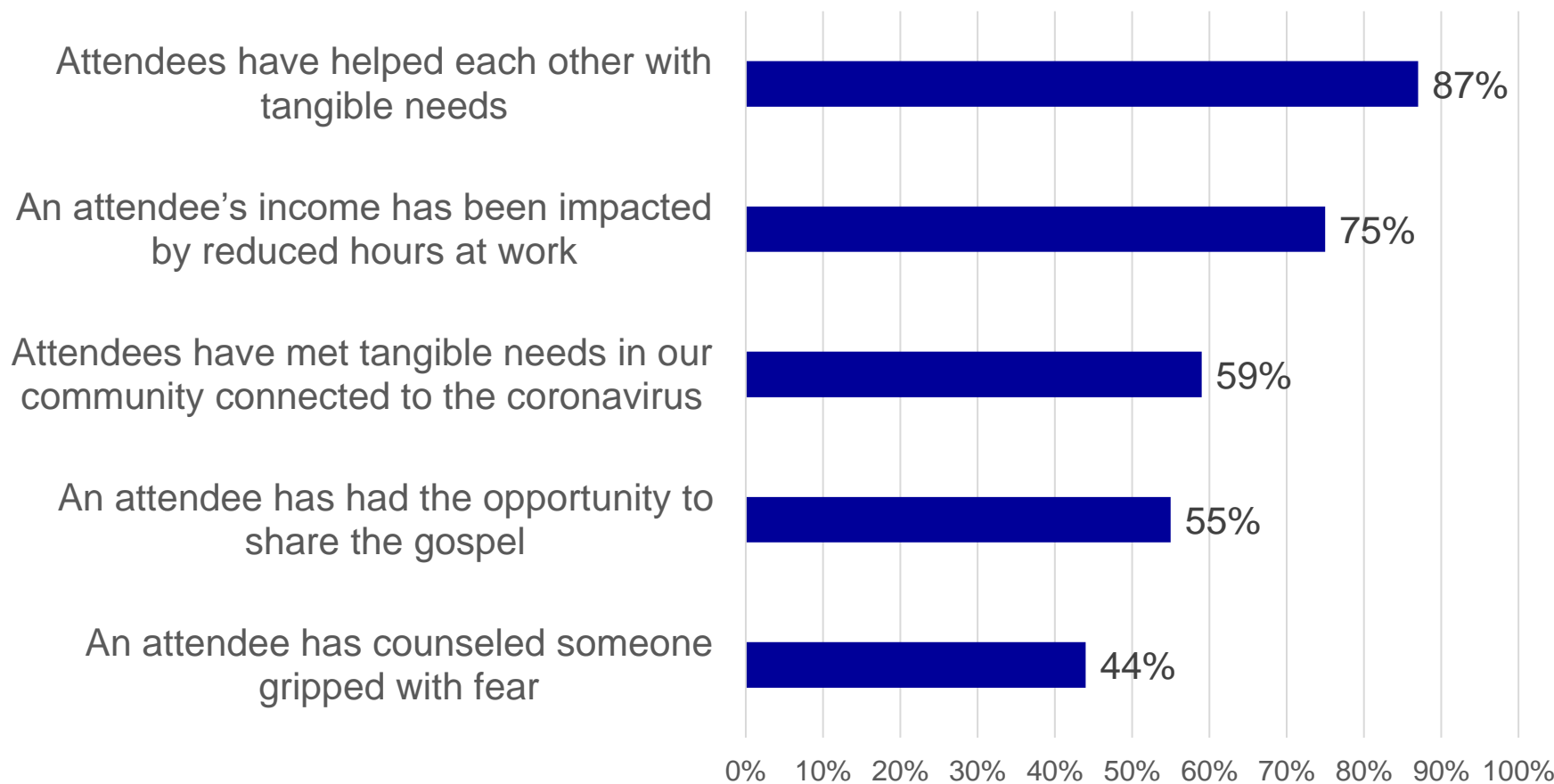
43% livestreamed a sermon or worship service that do not typically livestream

Among Protestant Pastors



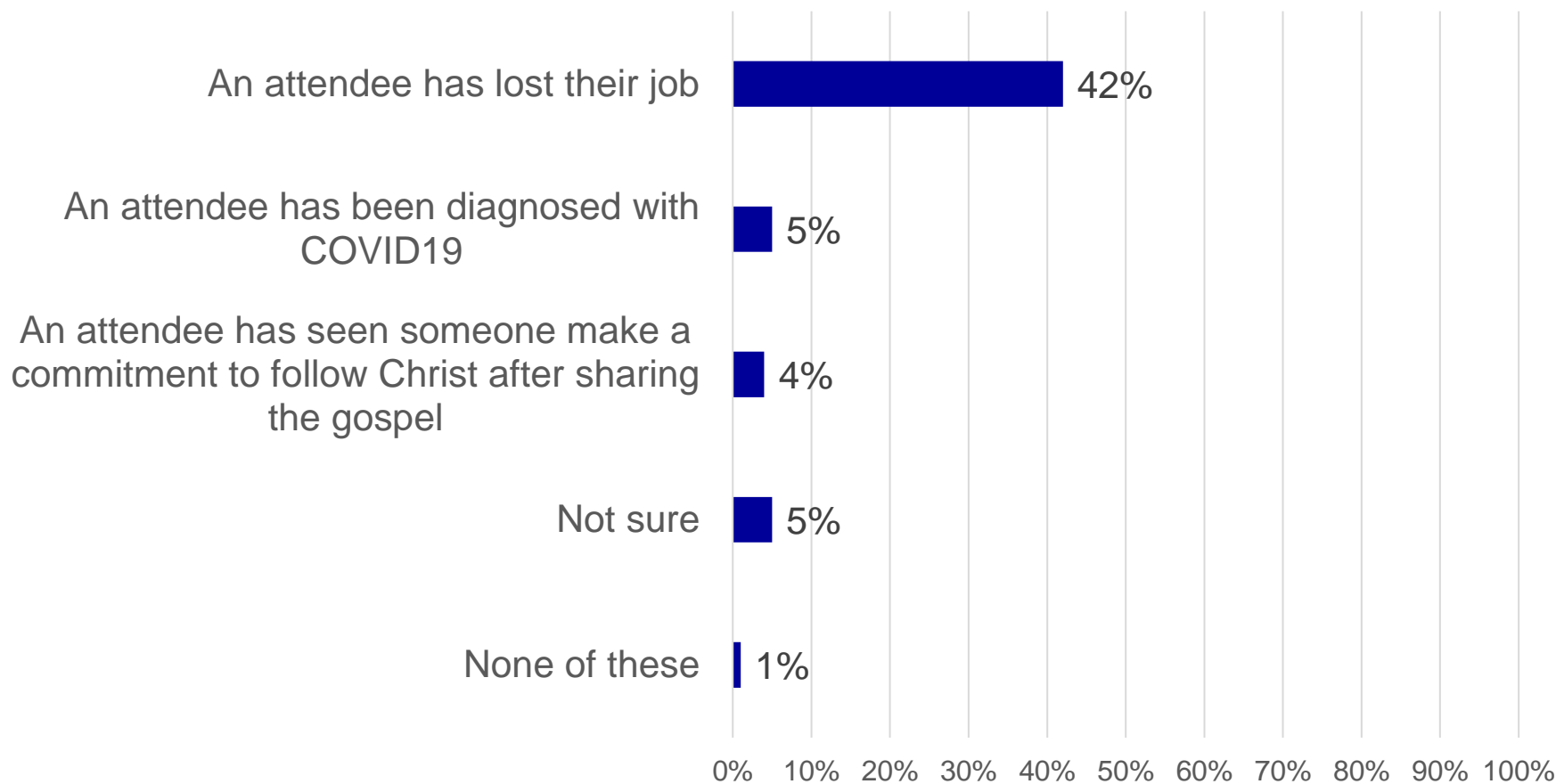
“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

Among Protestant Pastors



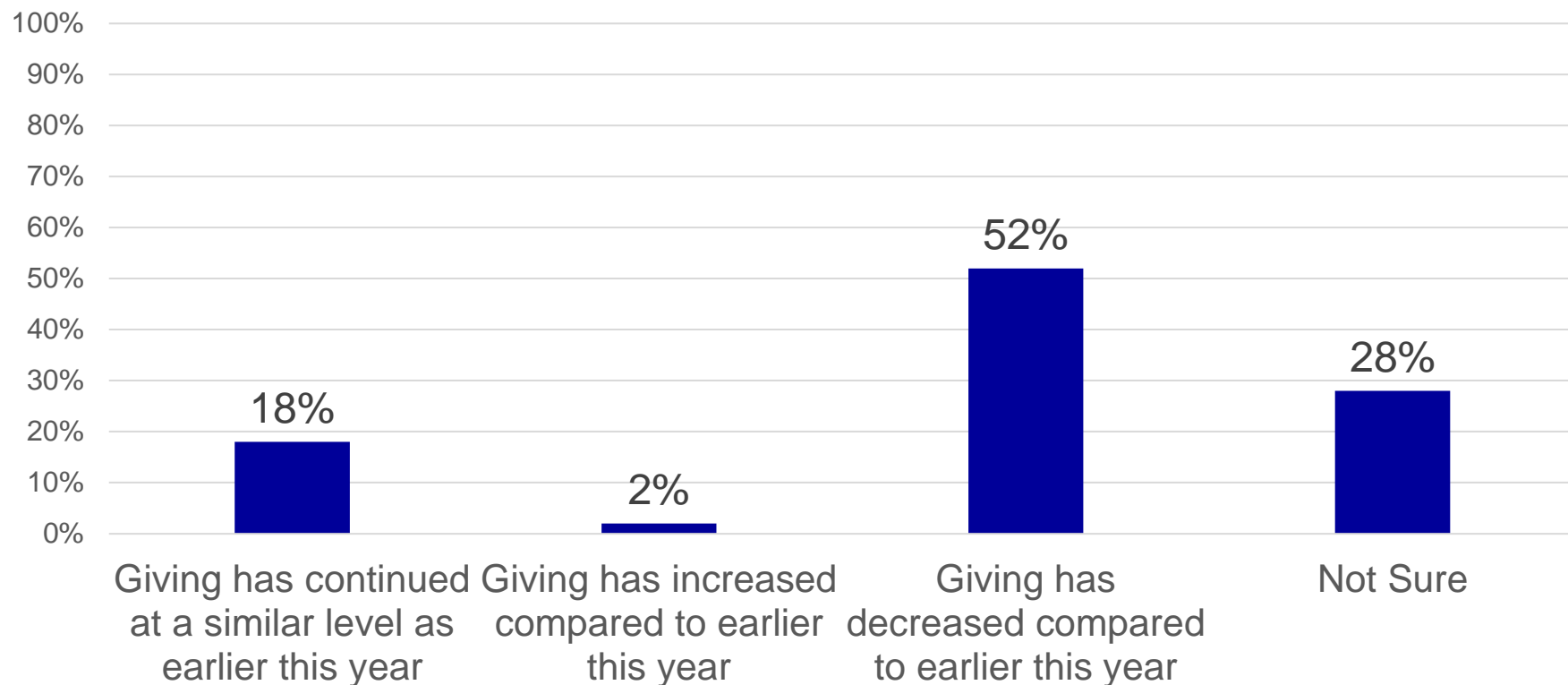
“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?” (continued)

Among Protestant Pastors



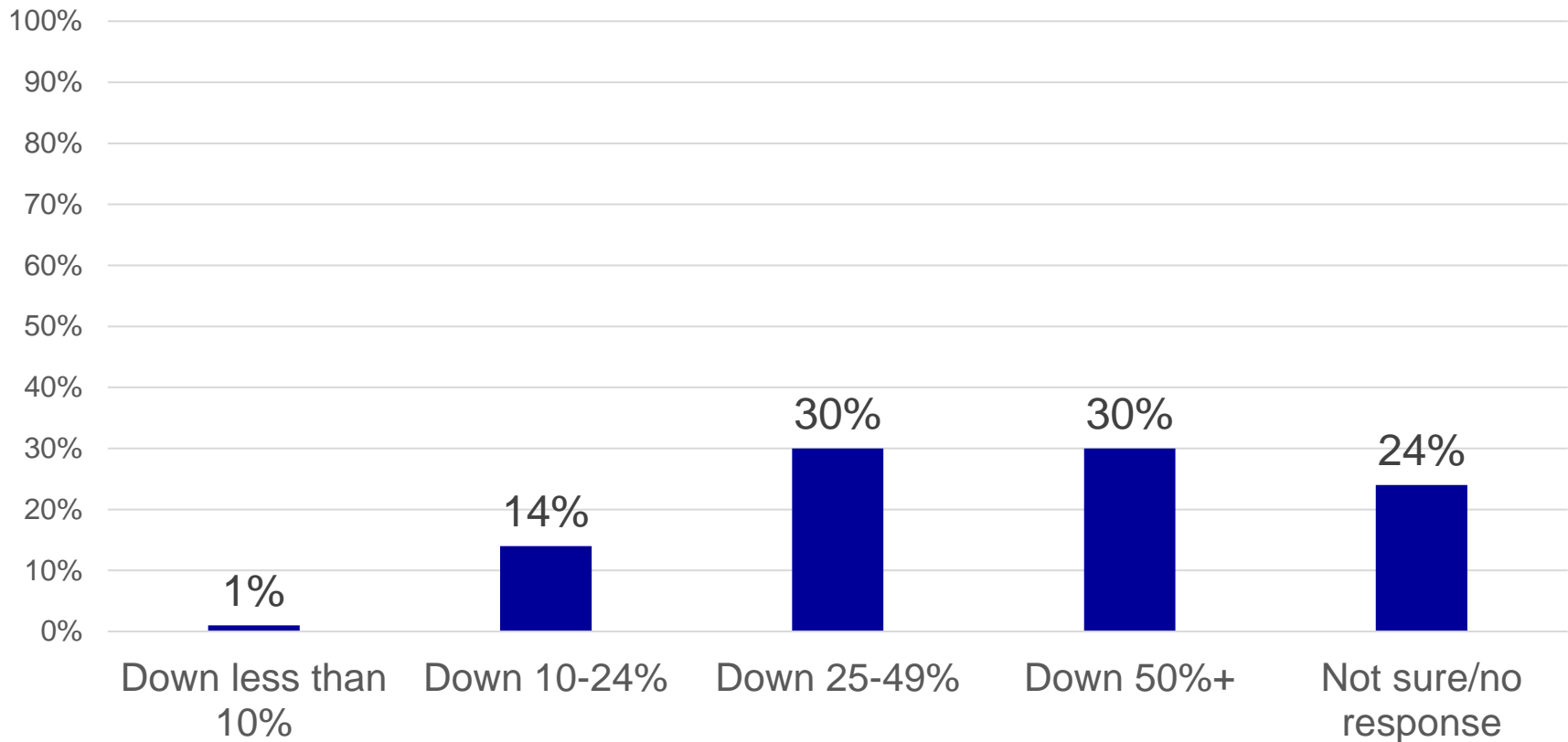
18% say that giving is at the same level as earlier this year; 52% say it has decreased

Among Protestant Pastors



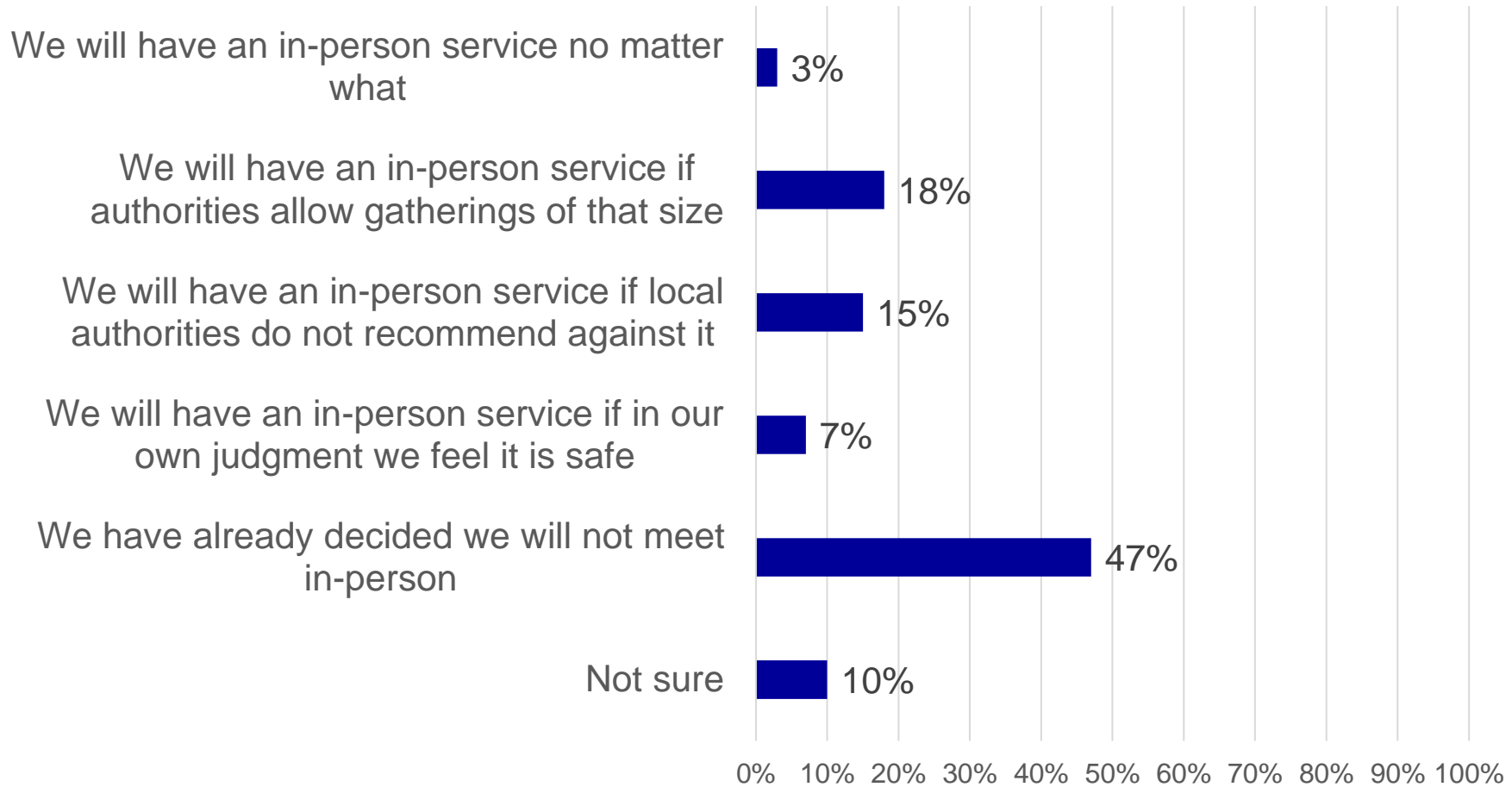
30% say giving has decreased by at least 50%

Among Pastors Saying Giving Has Decreased



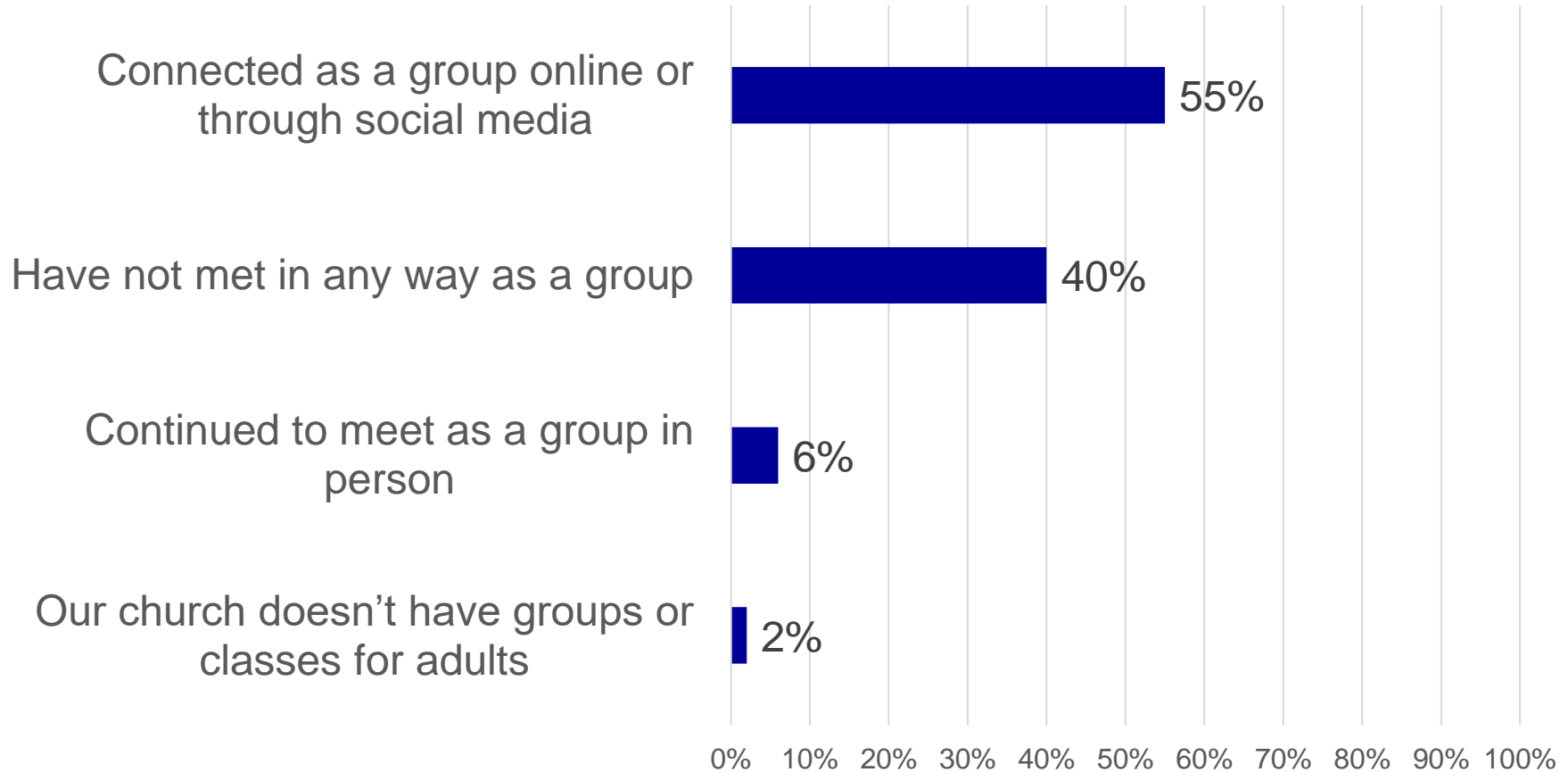
47% say that their church has decided not to meet in-person on Easter Sunday

Among Protestant Pastors



“How have most of your church’s primary groups for adults met during this period of disruption?”

Among Protestant Pastors



Q7: “How have most of your church’s primary groups for adults (e.g., small groups, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, etc.) met during this period of disruption? (Select all that apply)” n=389

Top pressure points mentioned by pastors

Among Protestant Pastors



Examples of responses related to: Connecting – Urgency

- “Keeping people informed and connected, communicating real hope, encouraging people to reach out to neighbors and community”
- “The frequency, importance, and difficulty of communication have all increased, because: nothing can be assumed; everything is changing and must be communicated; and not everyone has/checks email.”
- “Trying to keep the sense of fellowship within the body.”
- “Keeping in touch by phone and email with all parishioners of 2 rural congregations. My weekly sermons are posted on our website, emailed to those with email, and snail mailed to those without. Frequent phone calls both ways.”
- “We are trying to keep our people connected in whatever way we can.”

Examples of responses related to: Connecting – Loneliness

- “Everyone is lonely, I miss seeing people”
- “Find that it is very lonely. Trying to use the phone to the fullest extent possible but I was never much of a phone person!”
- “People are feeling bored, uncertain, and in need of more community.”

Examples of responses related to: Connecting – Finding opportunities

- “Not seeing the people from church has added difficulties in connecting with them and knowing what they are dealing with.”
- “Feeling the disconnect. Missing fellowship and hands on ministry. But finding new opportunities to minister online, text messages, and phone calls.”
- “It's remarkable how this situation is renewing a sense of koinonia in our congregation.”
- “I am having to find new ways of connecting with folks. I also am feeling not only my own uncertainties, struggles and fears, but also the uncertainties, struggles and fears of the congregation. The most helpful support has been geared toward helping me to understand that God does not expect me or the congregation to make a seamless transition and helping me to be grateful for the signs of God's working during this time.”

Examples of responses related to: Connecting – Difficulty

- “Trying to distribute the work of keeping people connected has been difficult. We are seeing very little effort among many leaders other than staff.”
- “Rapid change of job description and duties, increased demand for communication and pastoral care.”
- “The work is tedious, and I need a web page. I know I am supported yet every avenue of pastoring experience is blocked.”
- “Wanting to lead well and not having feedback as to how effectively or ineffectively I am leading. I miss so much the social interaction.”

Examples of responses related to: Finances – Staff

- “Church has adequate reserves for 6 months, but finance committee is unwilling to access them to meet payroll.”
- “Our preschool is closed so we have lost that income; and giving is down, so we may have to let go of staff.”
- “We are not sure where we are and are afraid that we will not be able to support staff. We may face layoffs.”
- “Most staff working from home but two not able to work - how long can we pay them?”
- “I am concerned about the financial impact moving forward and the possibility of needing to find outside employment to alleviate the burden on the church.”

Examples of responses related to: Finances – Online giving

- “Giving has been down before all of this has been going on. We've been looking into online giving but there are mixed emotions. There are a lot of options so coming up with the right fit is a challenge. With giving low and the fees that are applied to some of these online giving sites we're torn.”
- “Giving is down because we cannot gather. Implementing online giving this week.”
- “More of our people are starting to take advantage of online giving, but the giving still does not match what it was before we had to close.”

Examples of responses related to: Finances – Giving without meeting

- “We are trusting people to send in their tithes/offerings. Our team that counts the money has not been able to meet, any money coming in through the mail is locked up in a safe.”
- “What is most needed for support is for offerings to continue in the absence of regular times of worship.”

Examples of responses related to: Technology – Stress learning new tech

- “Researching and implementing the new technology to make our services happen online has been stressful, and because of technical difficulties not always the most successful.”
- “Dealing with technology beyond our normal uses has added stress.”
- “Technical help with live streaming would help a lot! I expend a great deal of energy trying to get everything up and running and that level of pressure right before the service causes deep anxiety for me.”

Examples of responses related to: Technology – Second guessing decisions/tools

- “Constantly trying to determine if we're doing things the right/best way possible.”
- “Uncertain how to use technology better.”
- “[Pressure point] is inadequate knowledge of technology, and lack of equipment to use technology to its fullest.”
- “[Pressure point] Learning a new paradigm of ministry, what technology is available, and how to use it-- Videoing/posting, Zoom, Zelle, etc.”
- “Mostly just not knowing the most important thing to do and technically how to do them.”

Examples of responses related to: Pastoring over a distance

- “Feeling limited on how to minister with congregational members. Outside of phone calls, the task is challenging.”
- Through a "Zoom" process, I am preaching from my home to the people of the congregation. Face to face is so much more effective. I miss the personal communication. Also, I have members in nursing homes that I cannot see. Also, I am 82 years old and a prime target for the virus.
- “Pastoral care from a distance”
- “Ministering to people in the hospital and nursing homes.”
- “Not able to visit shut-ins or those in the hospital.”
- “Not being able to personally visit the elderly.”

Examples of responses related to: Members with no technology

- “Older members of the church are not ‘connected’ or struggle with the technology to be connected.”
- “Trying to keep connected when many don't use social media.”
- “Trying to stay in touch with people by phone but feel this is not enough.”
- “We are trying to help older adults stay quarantined and we are running out of energy as the situation continues.”
- “Just trying to reach beyond technology to make contact with our elderly and non-computer folk.”

Examples of responses related to: Members with no technology

- “Trying to discover ways to reach members/community who are not online.”
- “Many of our people do not use any type of computer or social media. This makes it difficult to stay connected.”
- “Adapting to technology and not being able to easily communicate with the entire congregation at once. (Many of the seniors in our congregation do not use e-mail or social media, so lots of phone calls.)”

Examples of responses related to: Pastoral Uncertainty

- “How to be strategic in this uncertainty. Getting ahead of the changes.”
- “Our town's main employer and everyone else seems to have slowed down and be complaining that they are running out of projects to do. I am treading water. Things which had come easy before are so much more challenging. It should get better but it's hard to see right now. I have many opportunities to pray.”
- “Knowing how to lead when there is no routine/stability.”
- “How to steward my energy and our resources in the most faithful way.”

Examples of responses related to: Not Meeting – conflicting views

- “Some in the congregation want to meet and rebel against authority. Some are saying that by having the worship team and audio/video members in for live streaming that we are not doing enough to protect people. Caught in the crossfire.”
- “How do I balance safety of my congregation and community and our desire to meet in person? What are some things that we could be doing while we wait this out?”
- “Balancing desires to meet, particularly from some who don't believe the pandemic is serious enough to warrant altering our schedule, with the need to cooperate with the community.”
- “We are concerned that not meeting will have a devastating effect on the congregation, but that meeting will be dangerous to our members.”
- “That even though we may meet according to government guidelines, there are members who are angry because we are meeting.”

Examples of responses related to: Not Meeting – frustration

- “I'm just waiting for our churches to remember the admonition to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as some are in the habit of doing. I'm ashamed that our churches have let civil authorities dictate whether we can meet or not.”
- “Unable to meet due to state governor's order. No idea when this will end. (I thought we lived in a free country).”
- “There's pressure to close off Sunday meetings.”

Significant Differences

Pastor

Age

Self-identified Evangelical/Mainline

Church

Region

Average Attendance

Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the pastor's age and self-identified Evangelical or Mainline, as well as the church's region and average attendance

Age	Self-Identified	Region	Attendance
18-44	Evangelical	Northeast	0-49
45-54	Mainline	South	50-99
55-64		Midwest	100-199
65+		West	200+

“Which weekends in March did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)?”

Weekend of March 1

- No significant differences

Weekend of March 8

- Pastors age 18-44 (99%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (93%)

Weekend of March 15

- Pastors in the Midwest (76%) are more likely to select than those in the South (59%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the least likely to select (45%)

“Which weekends in March did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)?”

Weekend of March 22

- Pastors age 65+ (21%) are more likely to select than pastors age 45-54 (8%) and 55-64 (8%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the least likely to select (1%)

Weekend of March 29

- Pastors age 65+ (13%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (5%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 (12%) and 50-99 (10%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 200+ (0%)

“Has your church livestreamed or posted video sermon or worship service in the past month?”

- Pastors age 18-44 (34%) are more likely to select “We continued livestreaming of our sermon or worship service as we were already in the habit of doing” than pastors 55-64 (20%) and 65+ (16%)
- Pastors age 45-54 (53%) are more likely to select “We livestreamed a sermon or worship service this last month because of the coronavirus and do not typically do this” than pastors age 65+ (37%)
- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “We did not provide any video sermons or worship services this last month” (20%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select “We continued livestreaming of our sermon or worship service as we were already in the habit of doing” (53%) and the least likely to select “We livestreamed a sermon or worship service this last month because of the coronavirus and do not typically do this” (30%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to select “We did not provide any video sermons or worship services this last month” (19%)

“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

An attendee has been diagnosed with COVID-19

- Pastors in the Northeast (13%) and West (16%) are more likely to select than those in the South (2%) and Midwest (1%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ (12%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (2%) and 100-199 (4%)

An attendee has lost their job

- Pastors in the Northeast are the most likely to select (69%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ the most likely to select (68%)

“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

An attendee’s income has been impacted by reduced hours at work

- Pastors age 18-44 (86%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (73%) and 65+ (64%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (90%), while those with attendance of 0-49 are the least likely (60%)

An attendee has counseled someone gripped with fear

- No significant differences

“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

An attendee has had the opportunity to share the gospel

- Pastors age 45-54 (62%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (46%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (65%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (47%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (74%)

An attendee has seen someone make a commitment to follow Christ after sharing the Gospel

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 50-99 (6%) and 100-199 (7%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (0%)

“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

Attendees have helped each other with tangible needs

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (99%), while those with attendance of 0-49 are the least likely (70%)

Attendees have met tangible needs in our community connected to the coronavirus

- Pastors age 18-44 (68%) and 45-54 (66%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (45%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to select (42%)

“In which of the following ways has giving to your church been impacted during the month of March as the coronavirus began to impact normal life?”

- Pastors in the Northeast are the least likely to select “Giving has continued at a similar level as earlier this year” (5%)

“Which of the following best describes your expectations around having an in-person Easter service(s) at your church?”

- Pastors age 18-44 (23%) are more likely to select “We will have an in-person service if local authorities do not recommend against it in our area” than pastors age 65+ (8%)
- Pastors in the West (28%) are more likely to select “We will have an in-person service if local authorities allow gatherings of that size” than those in the Northeast (8%)

“How have most of your church’s primary groups for adults (e.g., small groups, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, etc.) met during this period of disruption?”

Connected as a group online or through social media

- Pastors age 65+ are the least likely to select (42%)
- Pastors in the South (59%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (46%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (77%)

Continued to meet as a group in person

- No significant differences

“How have most of your church’s primary groups for adults (e.g., small groups, Sunday School classes, Bible studies, etc.) met during this period of disruption?”

Have not met in any way as a group

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 50-99 (49%) and 100-199 (46%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 200+ (19%)

Our church doesn’t have groups or classes for adults

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 0-49 (6%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 100-199 (1%) and 200+ (0%)
- Pastors in the Midwest (8%) are more likely to select than those in the South (0%) and West (0%)

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