

Pastors' Views on How COVID-19 is Affecting Their Church April 2020

Survey of American Protestant Pastors

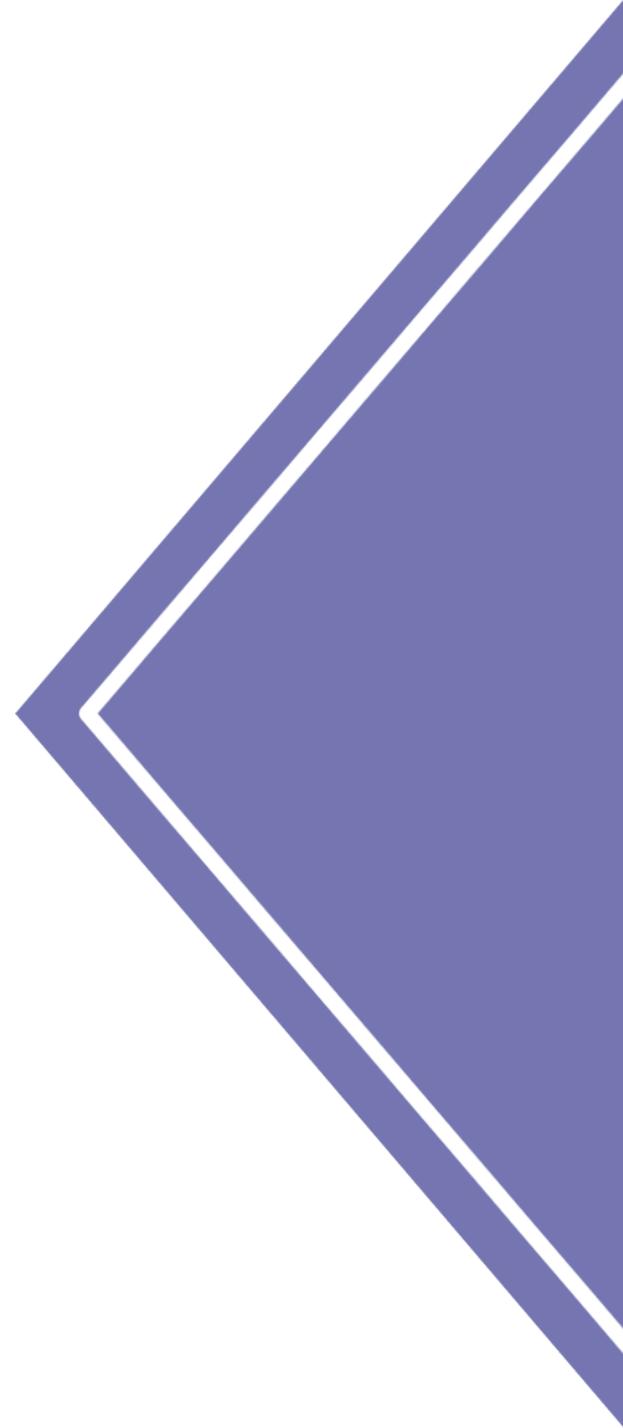
Methodology

- The online survey of 470 Protestant pastors was conducted April 27-29, 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

Methodology

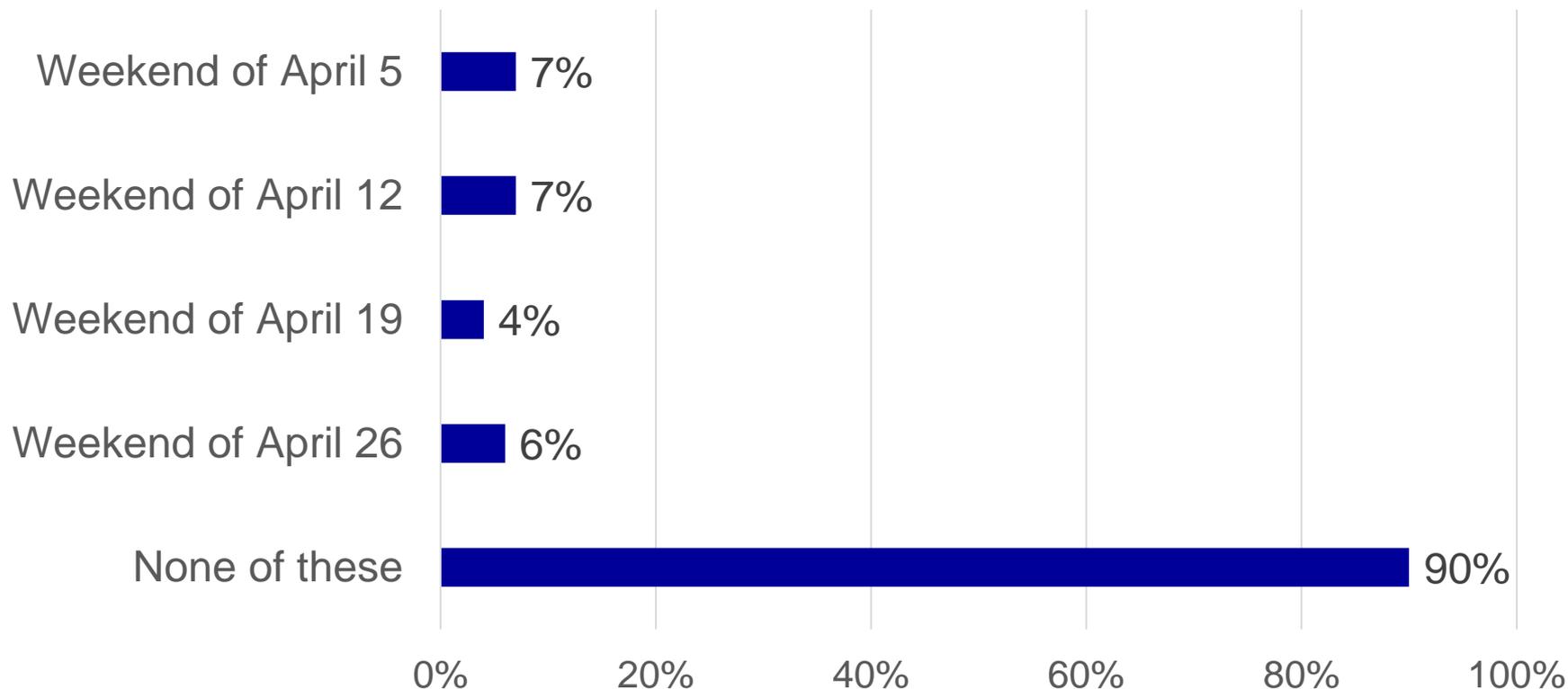
- The final sample is 470 useable surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 5.0\%$
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
- Comparisons are made to a survey March 30-31, 2020 using the same methodology with 400 completes

Survey Responses



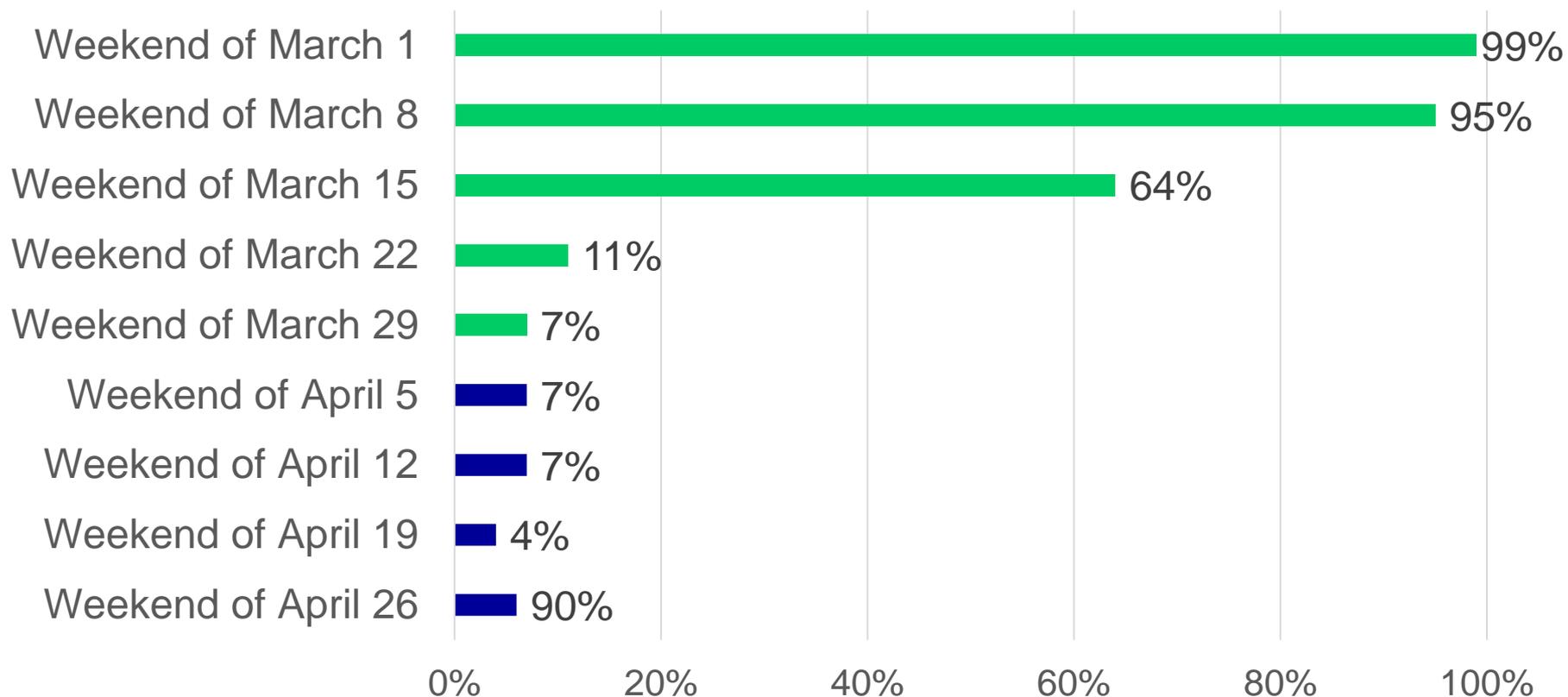
“Which weekends in April did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)?”

Among Protestant Pastors



Weekends in March and April churches gathered in person for worship (even if attendance was light)

Among Protestant Pastors



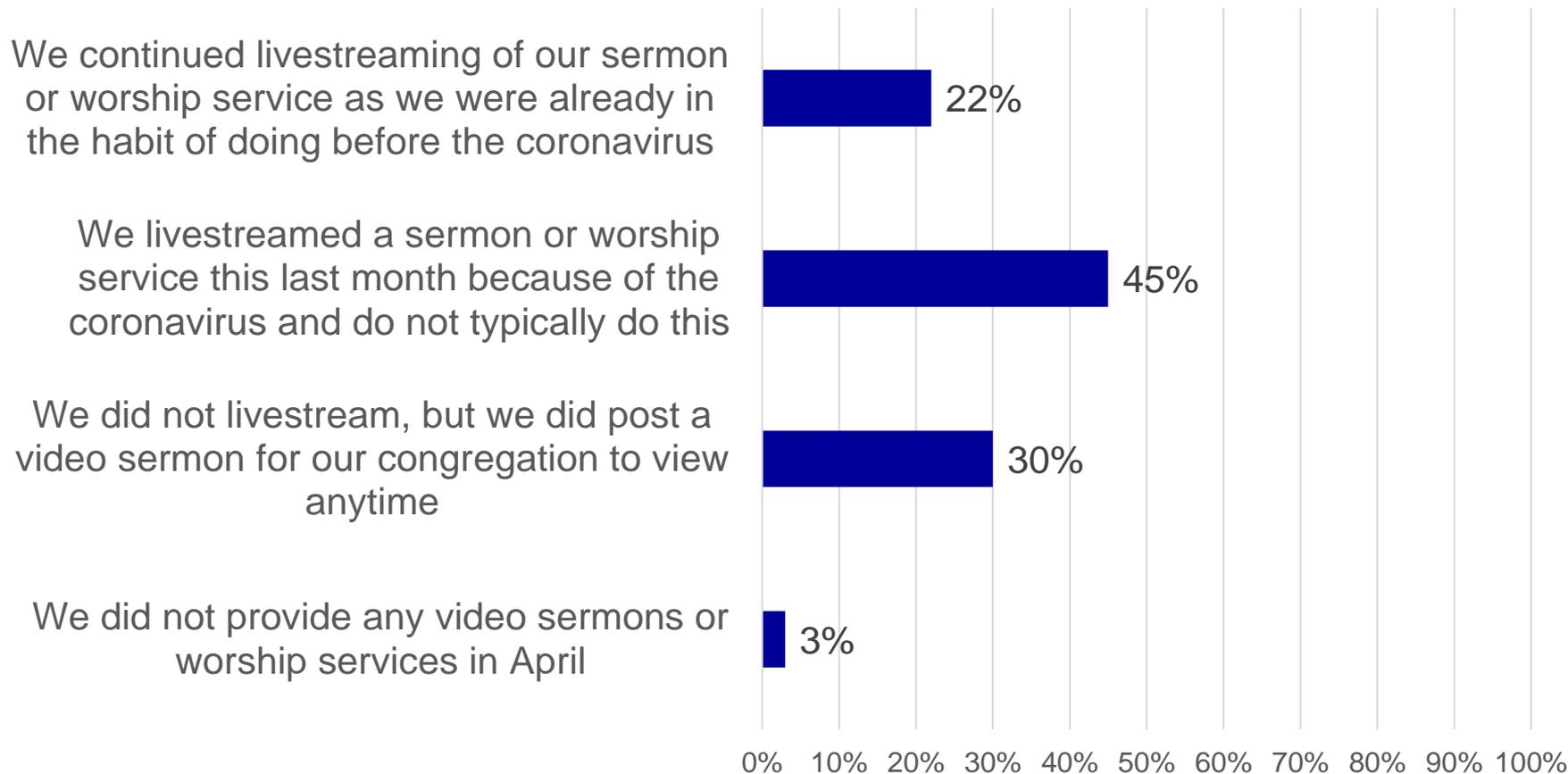
Comparison to March 30-31 survey

Q2: "Which weekends in March did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)? Select all that apply" n=400

Q2: "Which weekends in April did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)? Select all that apply" n=470

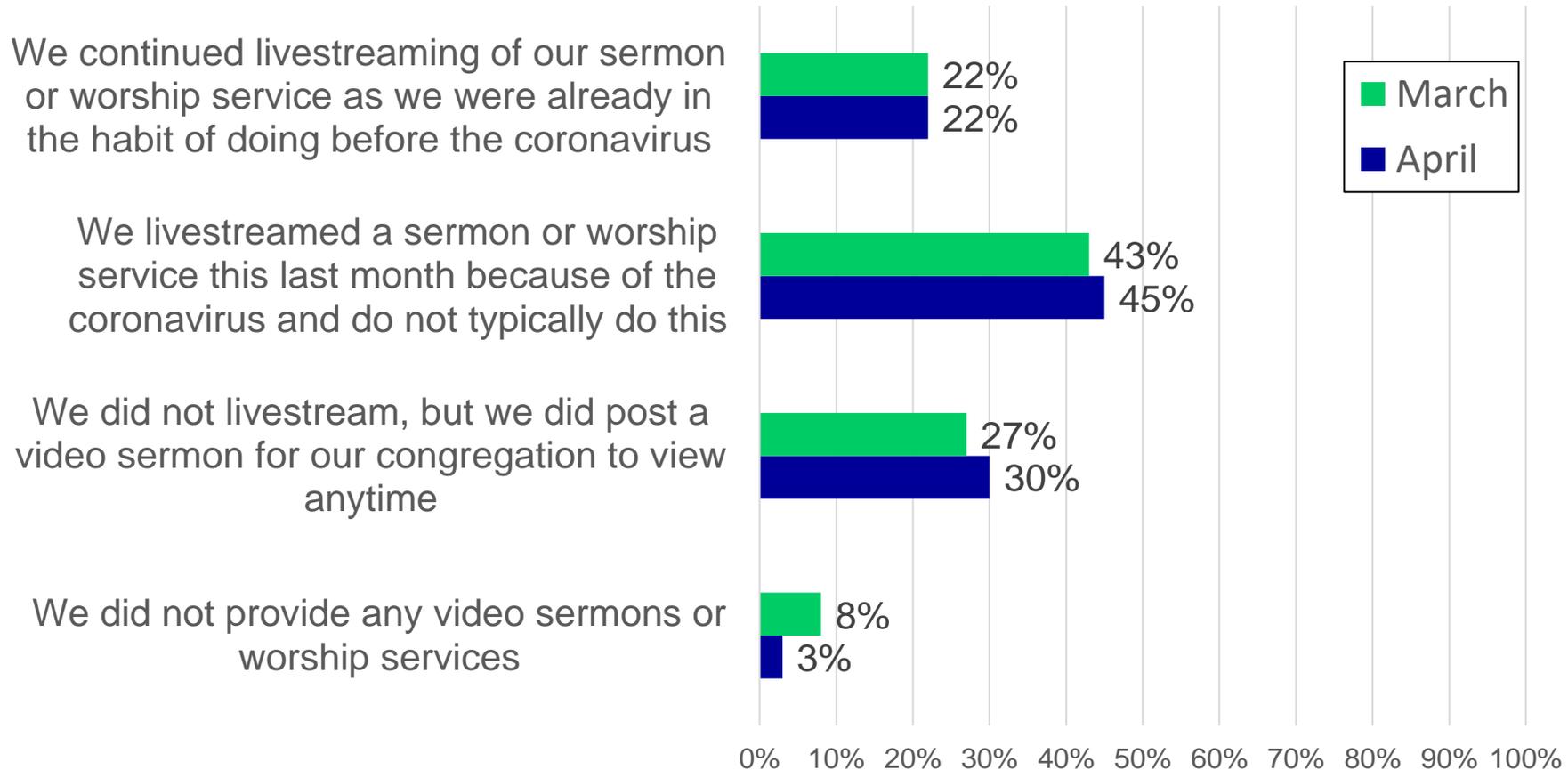
45% livestreamed a sermon or worship service that did not before the coronavirus

Among Protestant Pastors



Only 3% have not provided any video sermons or worship services

Among Protestant Pastors



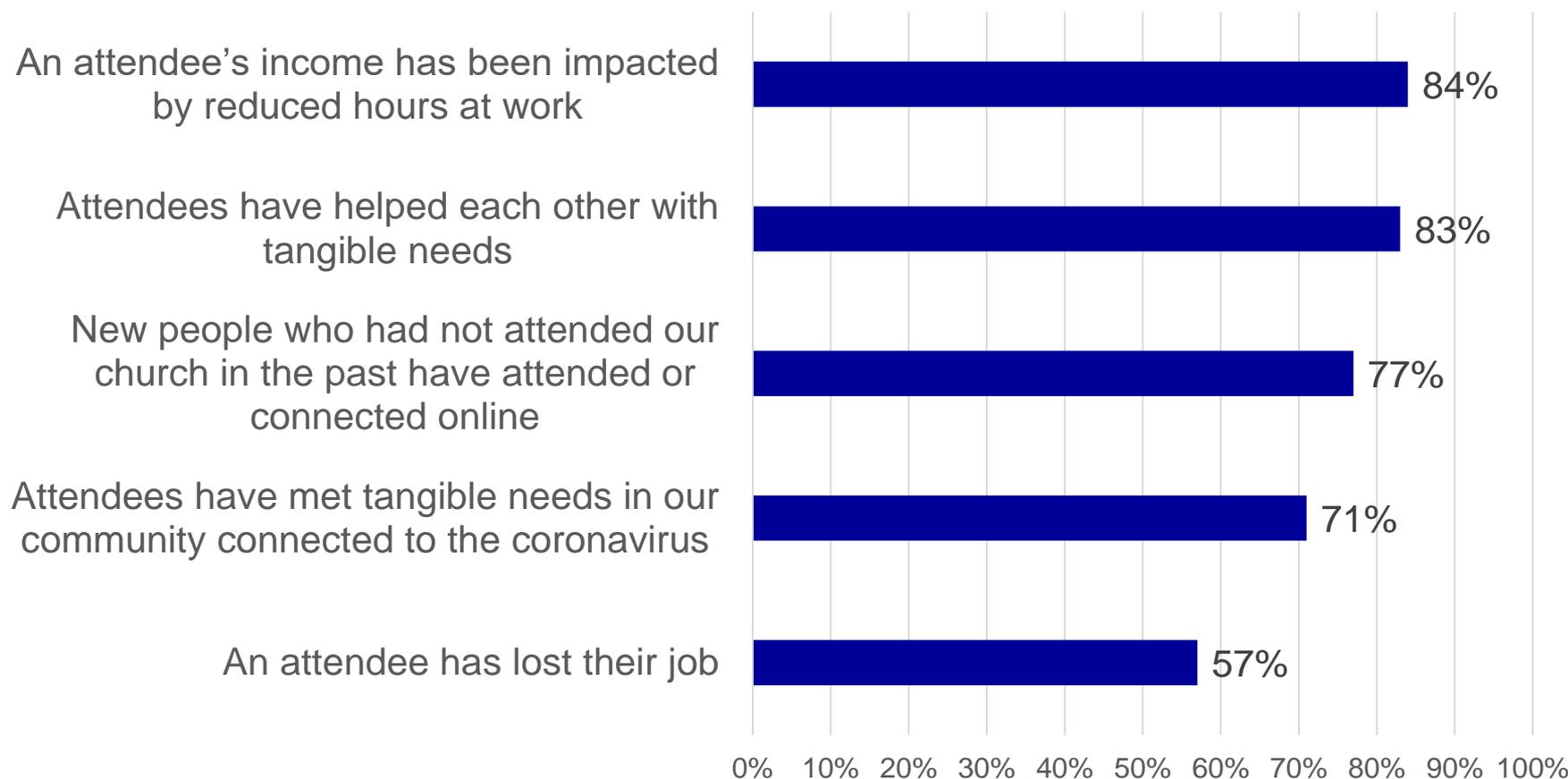
Comparison to March 30-31 survey

Q3: "Has your church livestreamed or posted video sermon or worship service in the past month?" n=400

Q3: "Did your church livestream or post video sermons or worship services in April?" n= 470

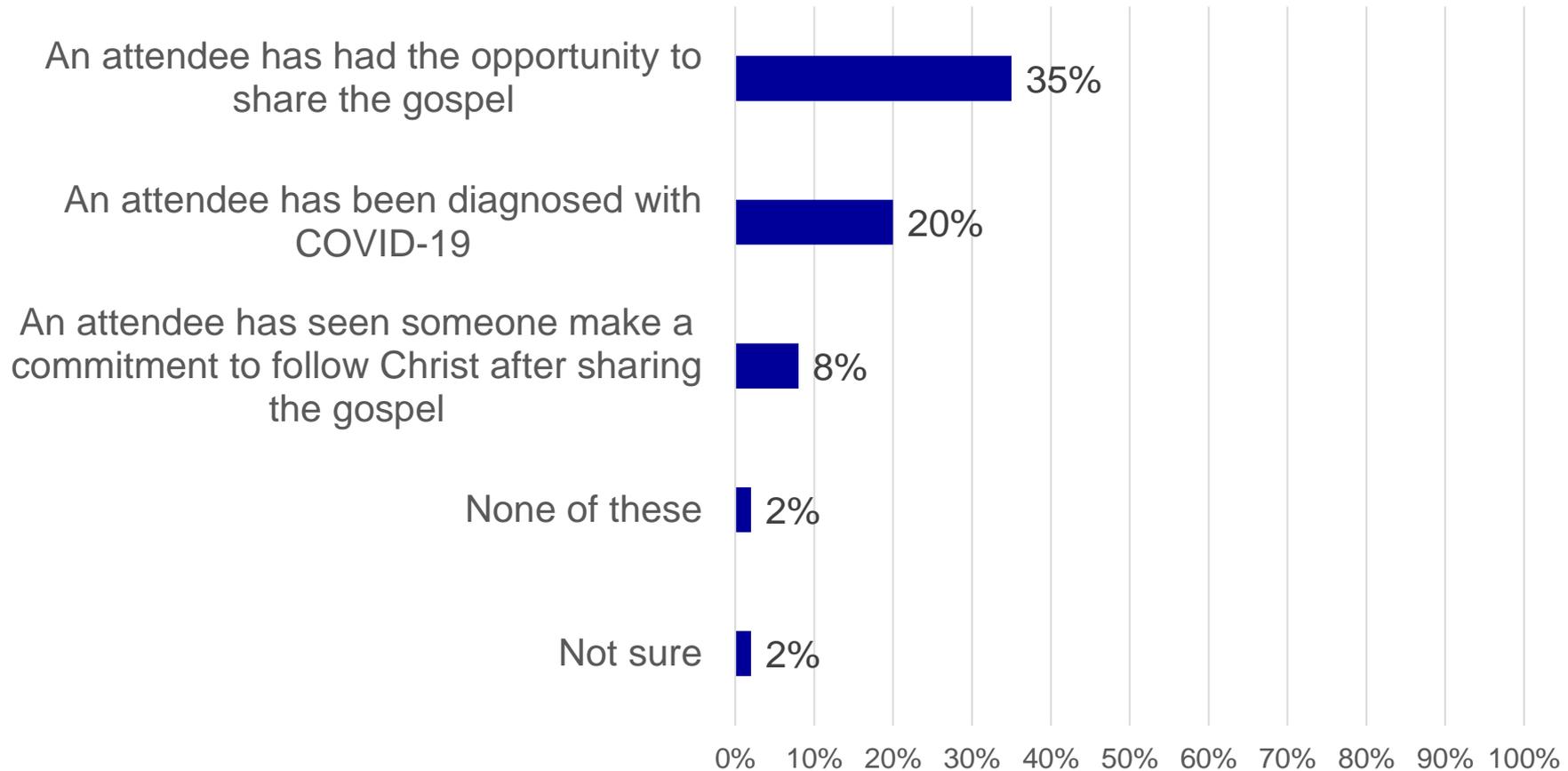
“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including to yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?”

Among Protestant Pastors



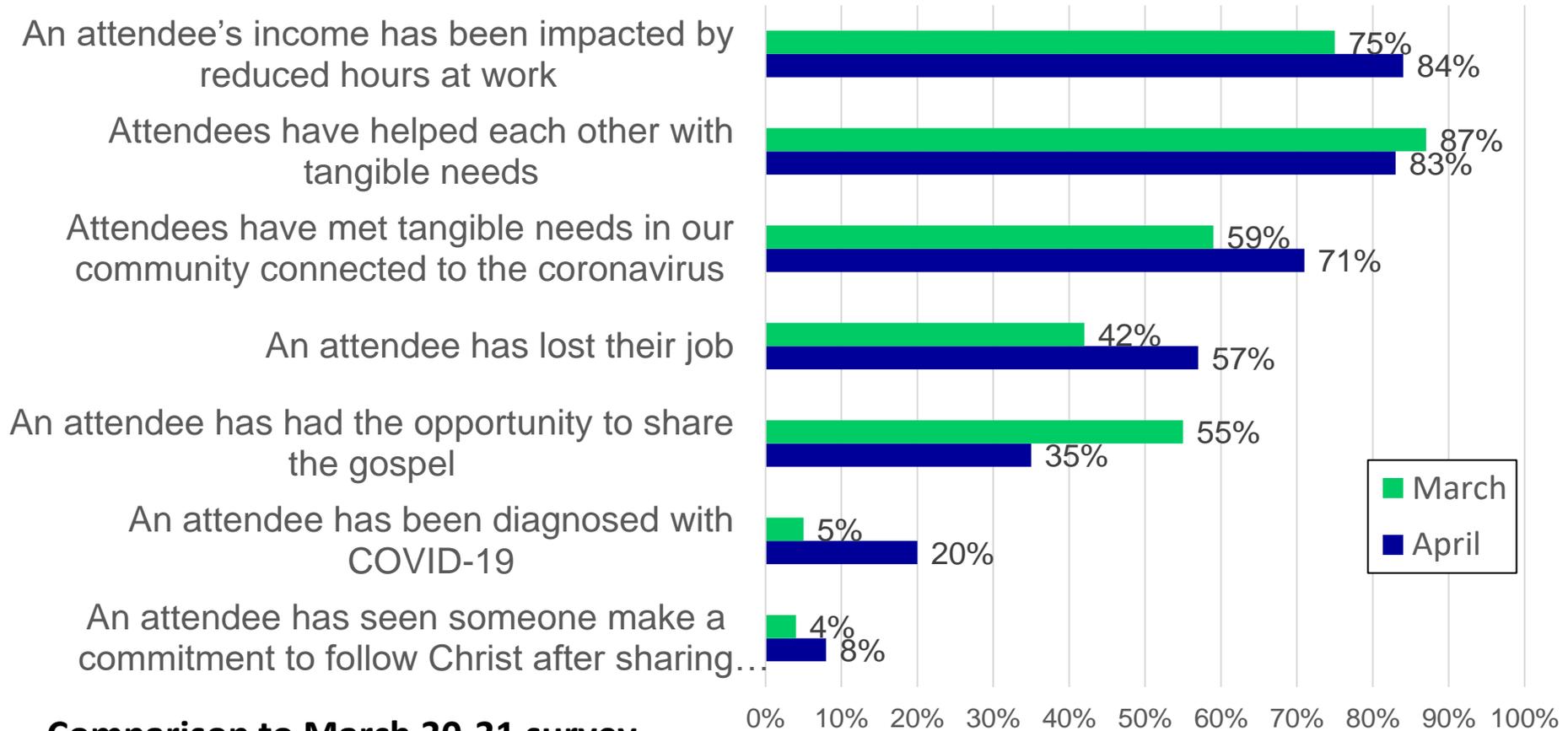
“As of today, have any of the following occurred within your congregation (including to yourself) as a result of the coronavirus spreading?” (continued)

Among Protestant Pastors



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

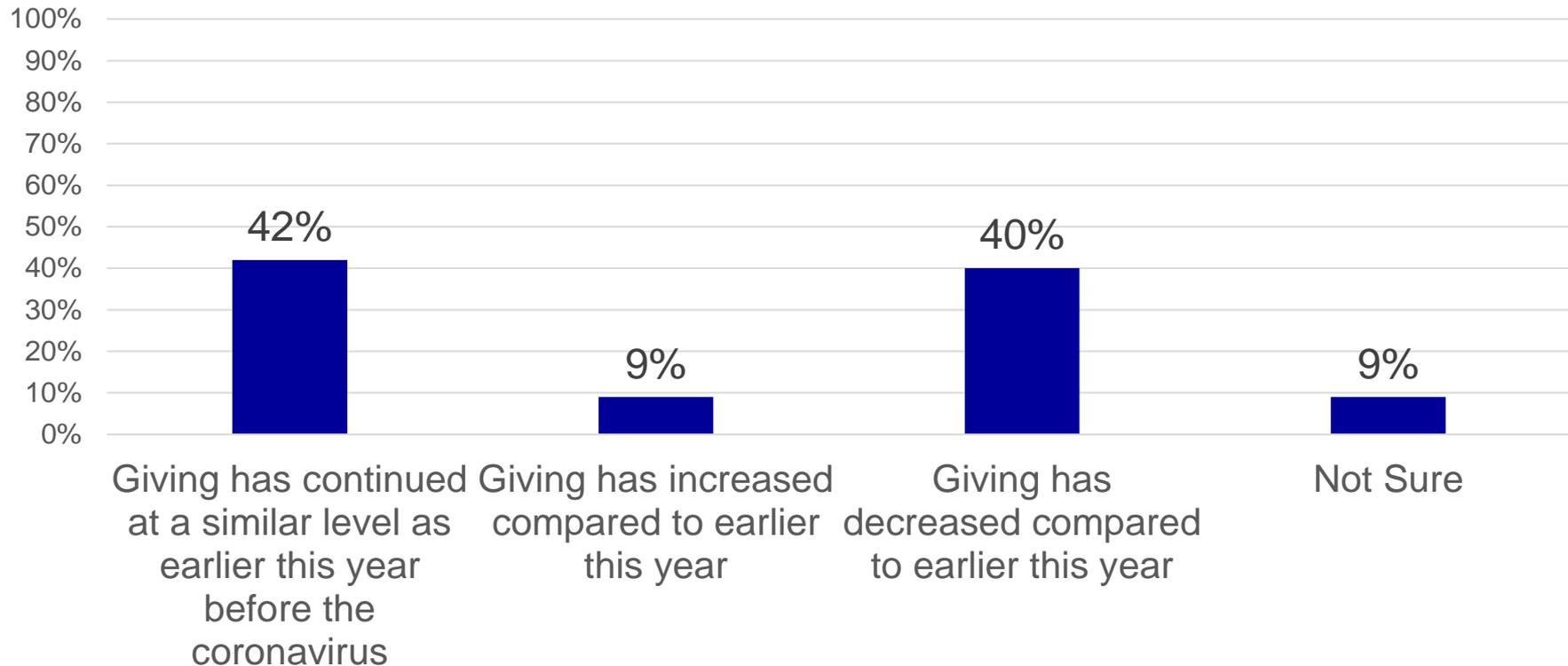
Among Protestant Pastors



Comparison to March 30-31 survey.

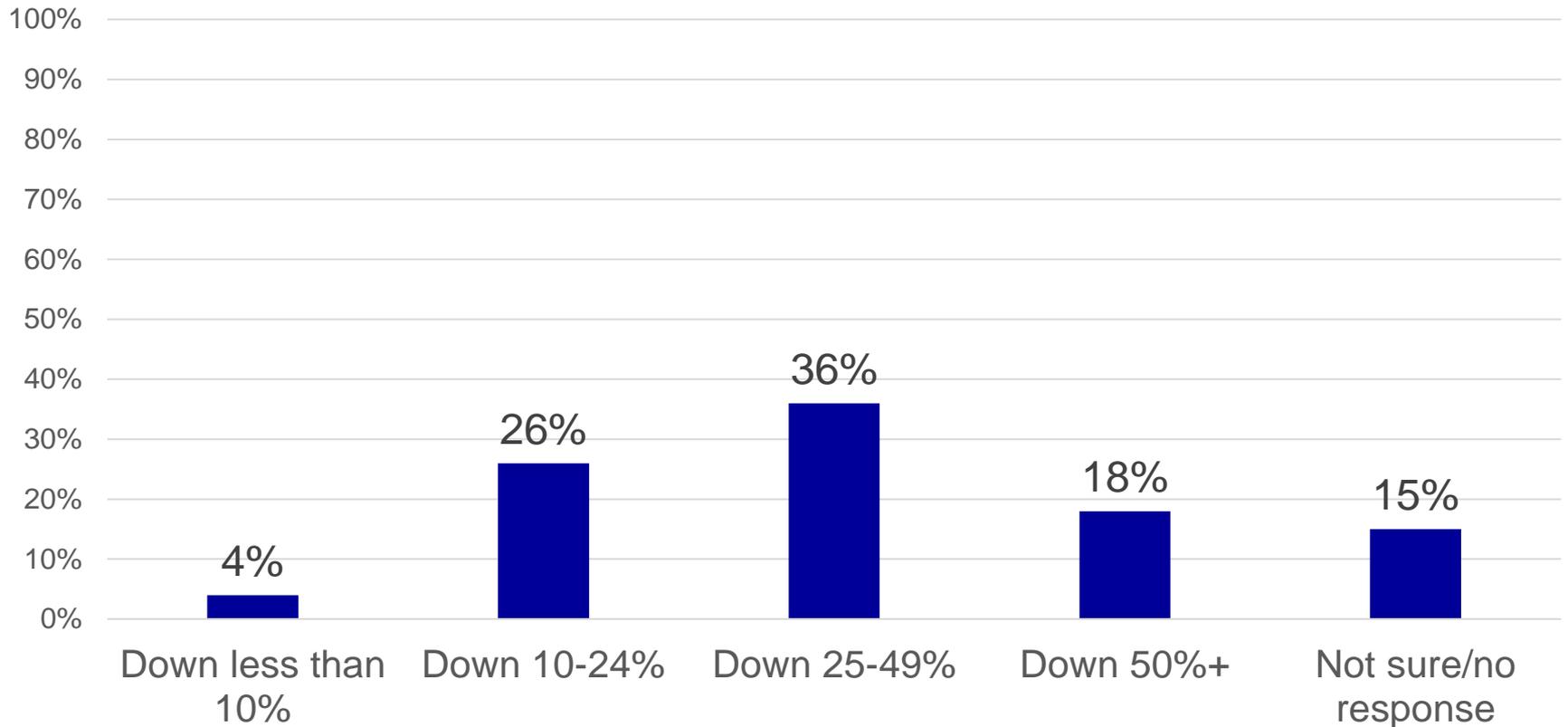
42% say that giving is at the same level as earlier this year; 40% say it has decreased

Among Protestant Pastors



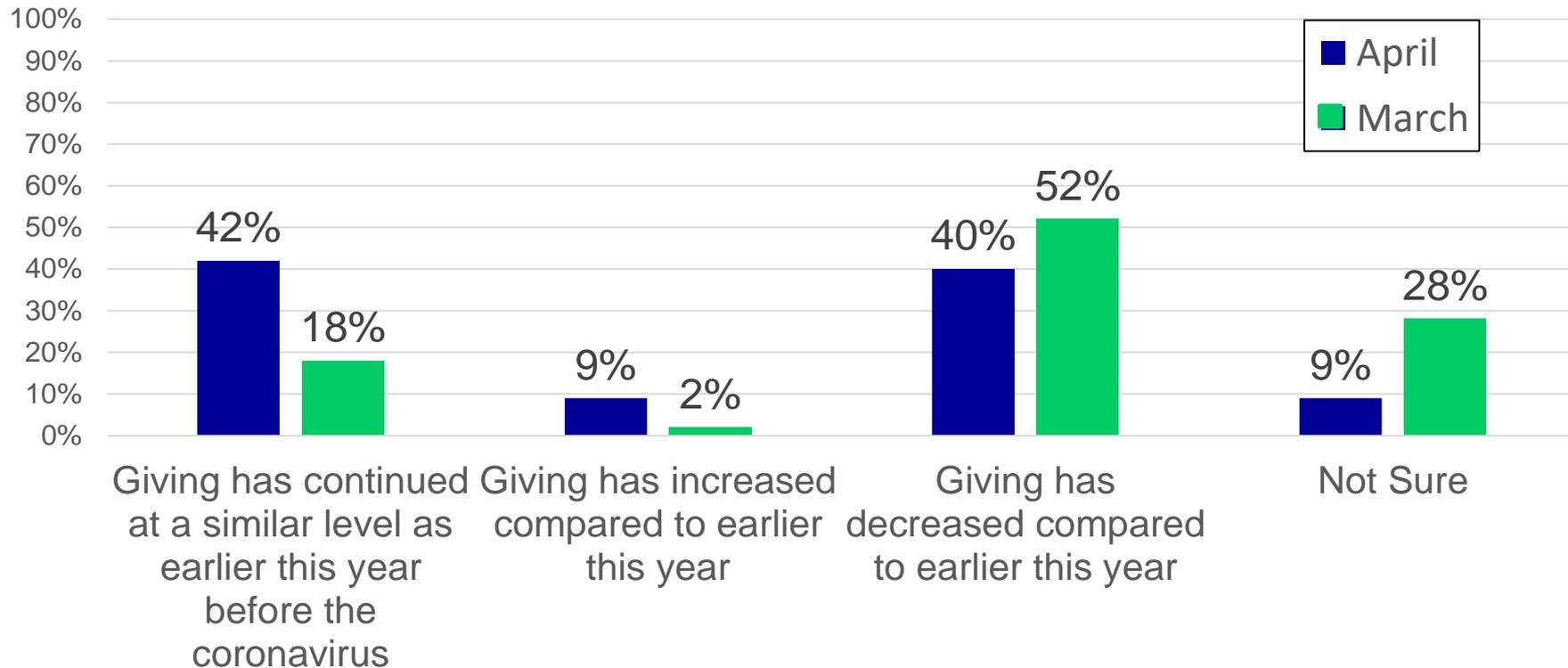
Where giving is down, 18% say it has decreased by at least 50%

Among Pastors Saying Giving Has Decreased



40% say giving has decreased compared to 52% in March

Among Protestant Pastors



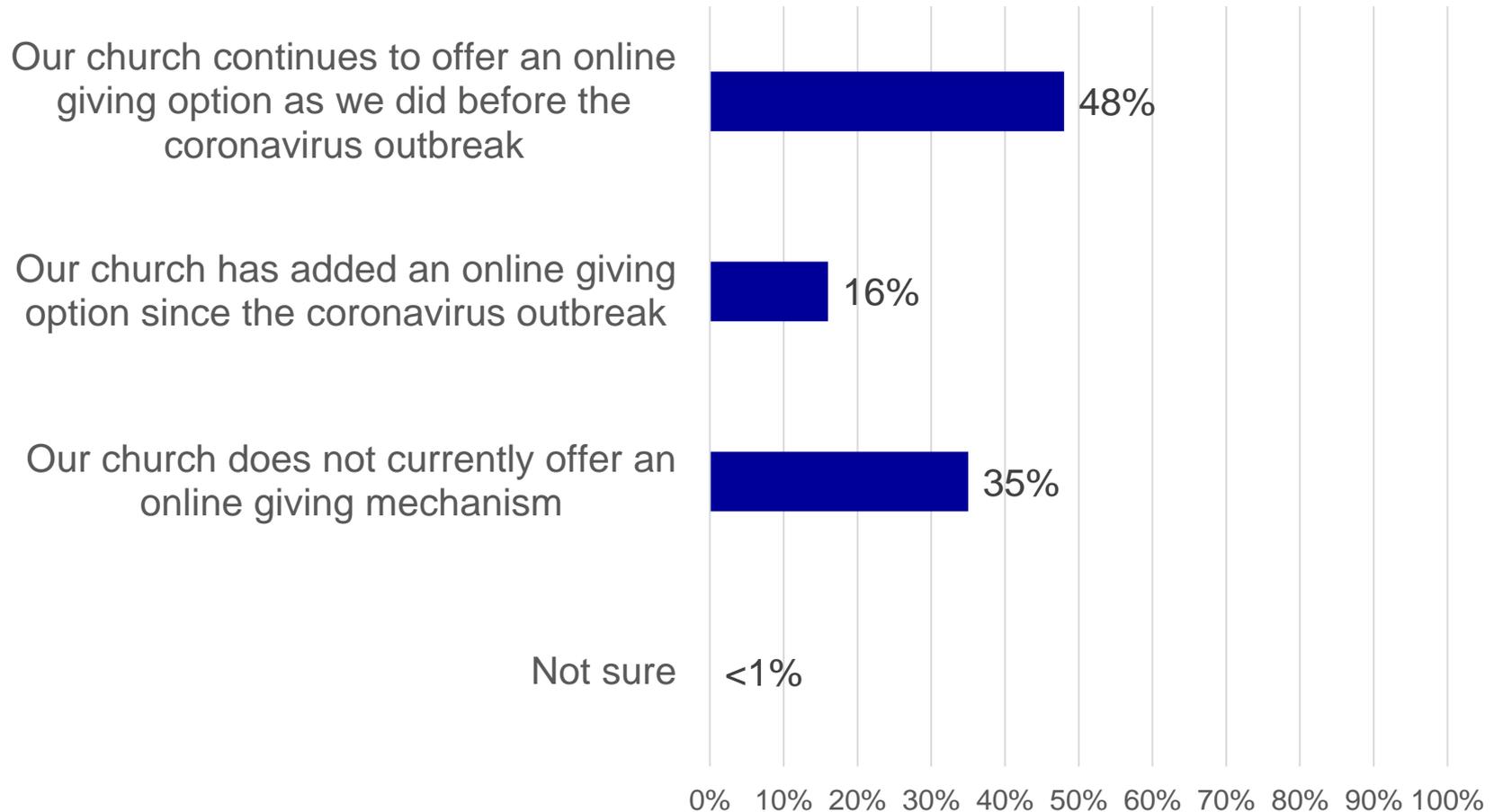
Comparison to March 30-31 survey.

Q5: "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?" n=393

Q5: "In which of the following ways has giving to your church been impacted during the month of April?" n= 470

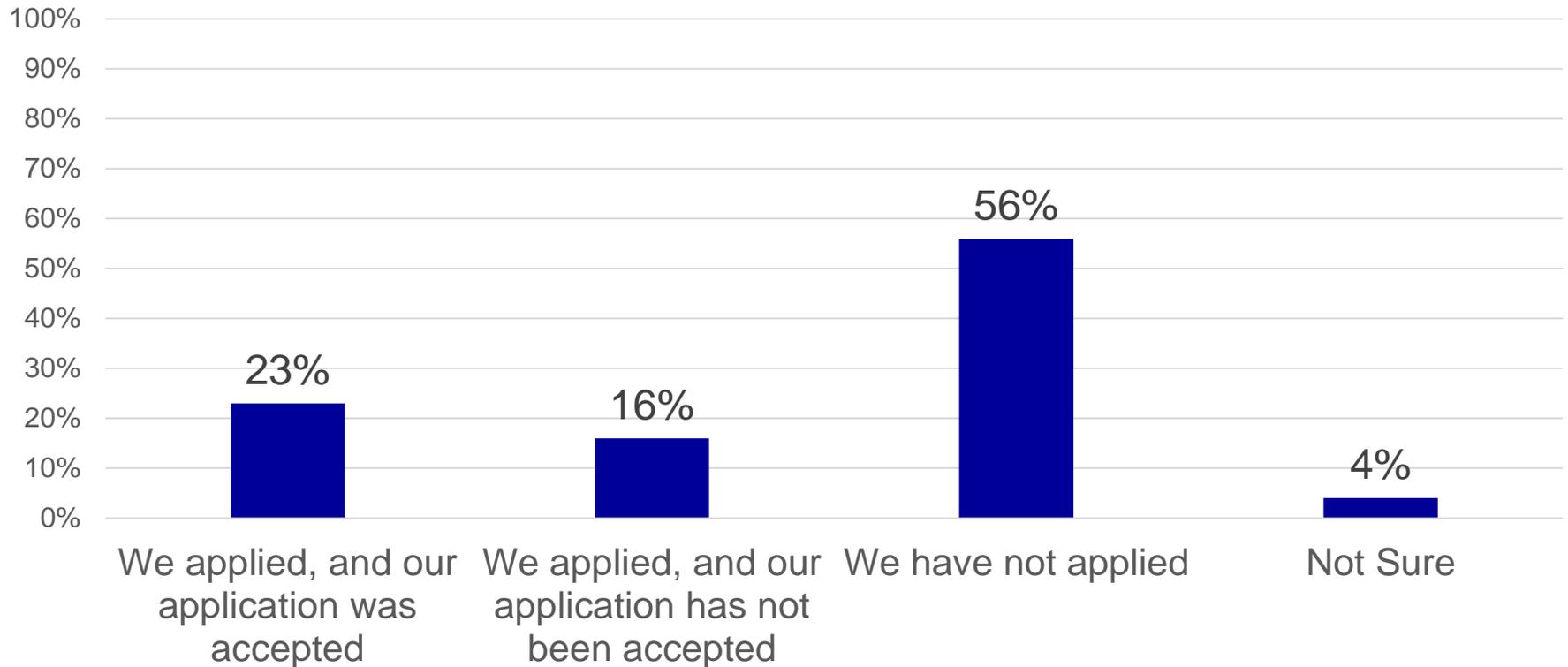
16% say their church has added an online giving option

Among Protestant Pastors



40% applied for government assistance; 23% say their application was accepted

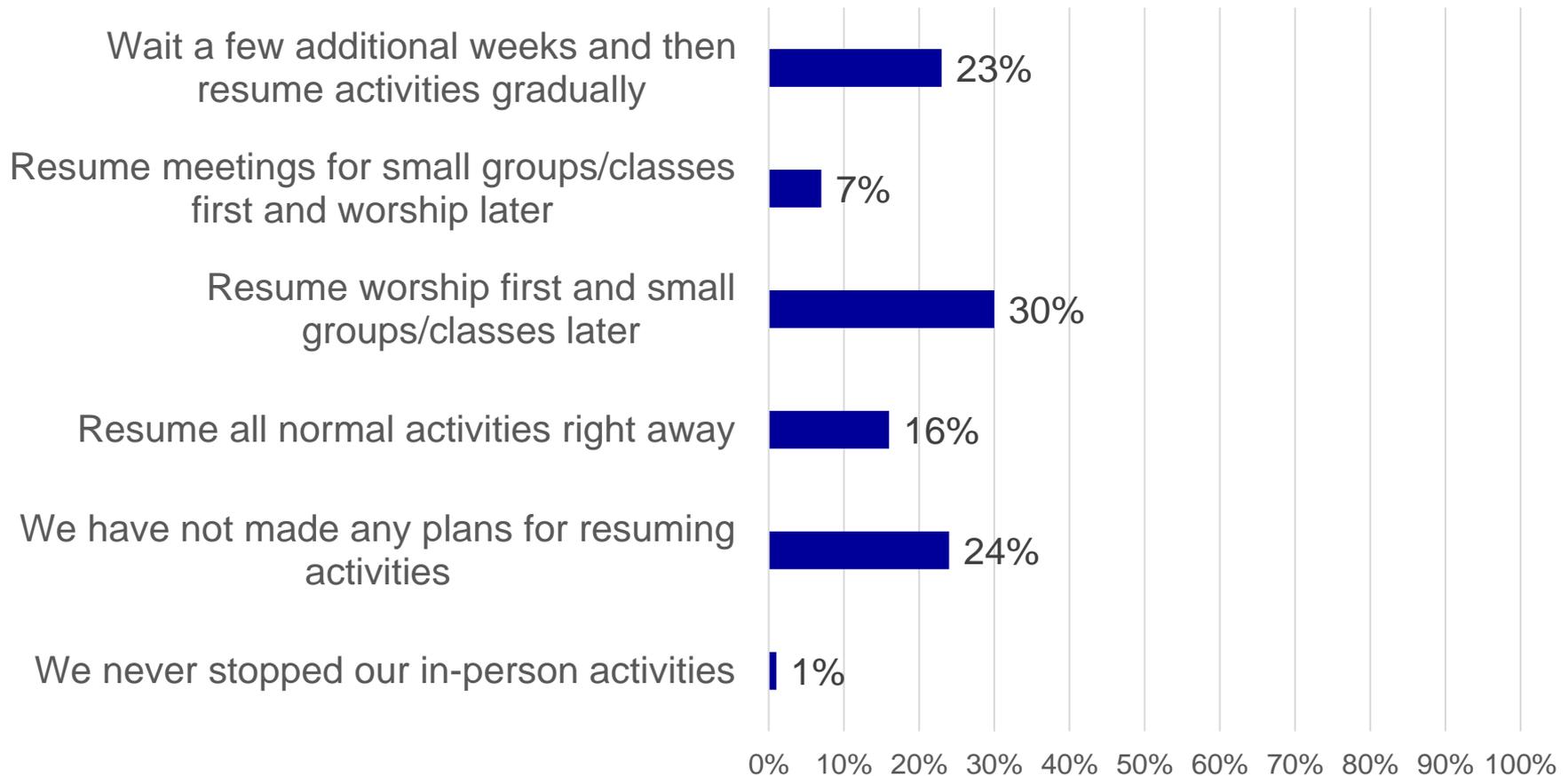
Among Protestant Pastors



Q7: "Did your church apply for any government assistance offered through the CARES Act or Small Business Administration?" n= 470

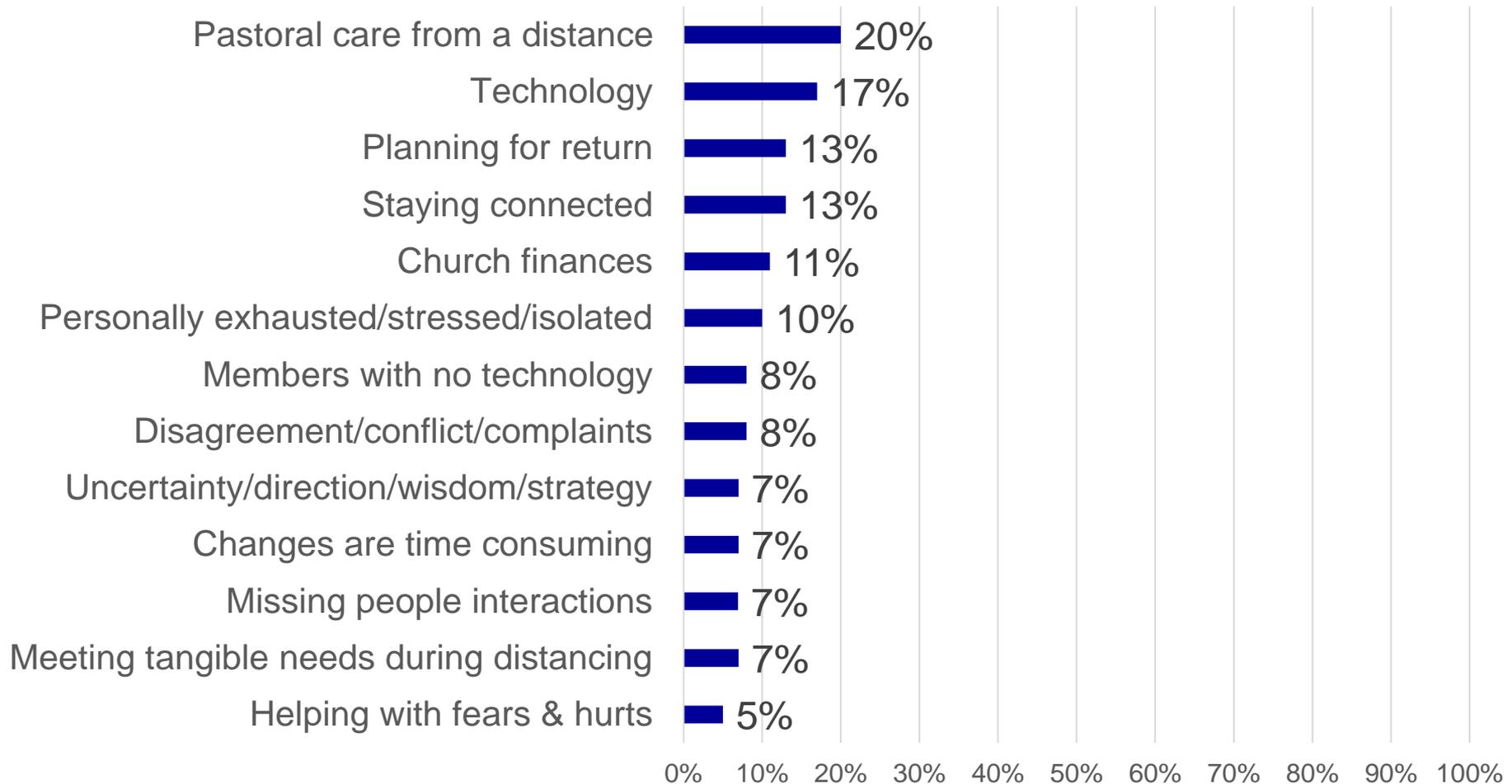
30% plan to resume worship services first; 23% plan to wait a few weeks before resuming activities

Among Protestant Pastors



Top pressure points mentioned by pastors

Among Protestant Pastors



Examples of responses related to: Pastoring over a distance

- “The ability to visit the sick and shut-ins has been taken away.”
- “Pastoral care is especially difficult without being able to touch base on Sundays and visit during the week. Because hospitals are still closed to visitors, all prayer for patients has to be done remotely, and that, too, is difficult.”
- “We've had three deaths in our congregation during the month of April and are searching for ways to grieve together since we cannot have large public funerals at this time.”
- “It is much more difficult to assess the spiritual condition of the membership without personal interaction. We have had at least one member fall away from the church as an apparent result of this lack of fellowship. Others seem to be wavering in their faith.”
- “Feeling useless as you are not able to meet with people to pray and help them.”

Examples of responses related to: Technology

- “Trying to educate folks on technologies such as Zoom.”
- “Having the knowledge to do all the technical work for online ministry.”
- “We have purposely been a low-tech congregation and were unprepared for the demands of teaching and preaching this kind of situation. We plan to upgrade our capabilities, but without compromising our strong focus on community and physical presence.”
- “Technological problems with our livestreaming has been a reoccurring challenge the past few weeks.”
- “I am having to learn more about technology than I ever thought I would.”

Examples of responses related to: Planning for return

- “Thinking and planning about how worship and parish life will be different once we are able to start meeting together again.”
- “Understanding how to plan for uncertain summer ministries.”
- “How to pick up the pieces when restrictions are lifted. Many people are getting comfortable with watching worship on YouTube.”
- “I don’t like the over-zealous advisors who try to “dictate” what “we churches” should do. It would be more helpful to offer information without ‘telling us what to do.’”
- “We are just waiting for guidelines on what “reopening” will look like in our area. It's hard not to know how to plan.”

Examples of responses related to: Staying Connected

- “I've lost contact with 1/2 of this little church body.”
- “Feeling the burden of needing to be in personal contact with all members of the church to help them feel connected and remembered.”
- “We need to increase communication options.”
- “Staying connected to people in a personal way through phone calls and one-on-one video meetings.”
- “Reaching folks who might be falling through the cracks. Ongoing concern that not enough is being done.”
- “Keeping in touch with those who are “on the edge” in our fellowship.”
- “How to use the present crisis to build supportive relationships between people in the church.”

Examples of responses related to: Church Finances

- “Ongoing financial repercussions as more people are losing jobs or having salary reductions; we are currently in a building/relocation process and there are MANY ramifications of the covid-19 situation that has made this a nightmare.”
- “Today I had a call from the Treasurer who informed me that I would be receiving only 1/4 of my present salary per month. It will be difficult for me to make ends meet with this amount of salary.”
- “All the rest of our staff (three part time people) have been furloughed and I am having to do some of their work.”
- “Finances are the biggest pressure point. We are managing, but barely!”

Examples of responses related to: Personally exhausted/stressed/isolated

- “Personal exhaustion from frequent online meetings and worship service prep and presentation.”
- “Personal loss. My mother passed due to Covid-19 and instead of getting the full support of the church, I had to conduct a private graveside service.”
- “Besides the personal sense of the daily “heaviness” of the situation, I also feel that sense collectively for our people and our community.”
- “I am personally struggling with feelings of depression and frustration.”
- “I am tired. Last week I was depressed two days and got little done. I haven’t had clear days off since Covid-19 began.”
- “Personal stress/anxiety over a different schedule.”

Examples of responses related to: Members without technology

- “Connecting the elderly who do not use technology at all.”
- “Trying to stay connected to parishioners, especially those without computers and internet.”
- “Helping people who don't use technology feel connected.”
- “Connecting with members. Many don't use internet. Basically using phone calls.”
- “How to provide spiritual nurture to elderly people who do not have internet access and/or are not computer savvy.”
- “Feeling of guilt not reaching all of my senior adults that are tech challenged weekly.”

Examples of responses related to: Disagreements

- “Tension in conversations between people in the church. For some the electronic conversations have people feeling safe and removed their filters.”
- “Disagreements within leadership about best practices (I was not in favor of closing).”
- “Our folks have mostly gone along with restrictions and all that to this point. But we are starting to get push back from a few that want us to expand what we are doing.”
- “My biggest burden is managing all the emailed ‘shoulds’ from members engaging the on-line comparison game. Teddy Roosevelt was right. It has stolen my joy.”
- “Keeping unity amidst different opinions on the crisis.”

Examples of responses related to: Time consuming work

- “3 COVID-19 deaths in less than two weeks. I'm busier now than before the COVID by about 4x.”
- “The pastoral duties have been immense. In WV we are essential workers and the work has continued at a volume and intensity I have not experienced in my 24 years of pastoral service. Sadly, there is a prevalent assumption that now I work less than an hour a week.”
- “I think the pressure to do more is heightened in this time, and I'm not sure it is healthy.”
- “While I normally have lots of help in church operations, right now I'm kind of running the show solo and getting pretty worn out.”

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 April did your church gather in person for worship (even if attendance was light)?”

Weekend of April 5

- Pastors age 65+ (13%) are more likely to select than pastors age 18-44 (2%) and 55-64 (6%)
- Pastors in the West are the most likely to select (17%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 (9%) are more likely to select those with attendance of 100-199 (3%)

Weekend of April 12

- Pastors age 45-54 (11%) and 65+ (12%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (4%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (9% v. 2%)
- Pastors in the West (13%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (4%) and Midwest (5%)

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

Weekend of April 19

- Pastors age 45-54 (7%) 65+ (9%) are more likely to select than pastors age 18-44 (1%)
- Pastors in the West (12%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (4%) and South (3%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 (8%) and 50-99 (7%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 100-199 (2%) and 200+ (<1%)

Weekend of April 26

- Pastors age 45-54 (10%) and 65+ (11%) are more likely to select than pastors age 18-44 (2%) and 55-64 (4%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (8% v. 2%)
- Pastors in the West are more likely to select (13%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the least likely to select (<1%)

“Did church livestream or posted video sermon or worship service in April?”

- Pastors age 45-54 (29%) are more likely to select “We continued livestreaming of our sermon or worship service as we were already in the habit of doing before the coronavirus” than pastors 65+ (17%)
- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “We did not provide any video sermons or worship services this last month” (%)
- Pastors in the Midwest (29%) and South (36%) are more likely to select “We did not livestream, but we did post a video for our congregation to view anytime” than those in the West (13%)
- Pastors in the West (59%) and Northeast (55%) 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 those in the South (39%)
- 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 before the coronavirus” (50%) 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” (23%)

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

An attendee has been diagnosed with COVID-19

- Pastors age 18-44 are the most likely to select (32%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Evangelical pastors (25% v. 16%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (36%) are more likely to select than those in the South (17%) and Midwest (15%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 100-199 (23%) and 200+ (33%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (11%)

An attendee has lost their job

- Pastors age 65+ are the least likely to select (40%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ (73%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of less than 50 (42%) and 50-99 (54%)

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

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

- Pastors age 18-44 (95%) and 45-54 (91%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (80%) and 65+ (73%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 100-299 (93%) and 200+ (97%) are more likely to select than those with attendance of 0-49 (66%) and 50-99 (83%)

New people who had not attended our church in the past have attended or connected online

- Pastors age 65+ are the least likely to select (59%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 are the least likely to select (61%)

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

An attendee has had the opportunity to share the gospel

- Pastors age 45-54 (46%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (33%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (46% v. 24%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 are the least likely to select (18%)

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

- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (11% v. 3%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (20%)

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

Attendees have helped each other with tangible needs

- Pastors age 45-54 (93%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (79%) and 65+ (77%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select than self-identified Mainline pastors (86% v. 76%)
- Pastors in the South (89%) are more likely to select than those in the Northeast (78%) and Midwest (76%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 are the least likely to select (64%)

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

- Pastors age 18-44 (82%) and 45-54 (83%) are more likely to select than pastors age 55-64 (64%) and 65+ (61%)
- Pastors in the South (78%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (65%) and West (62%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select (95%)

“In which of the following ways has giving to your church been impacted during the month of April?”

- Pastors in the South (49%) are more likely to select “Giving has continued at a similar level as earlier this year before the coronavirus” than those in the Midwest (37%) and West (30%)
- Pastors in the West are the most likely to select “Giving has decreased compared to earlier this year” (58%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 (47%) and 100-199 (43%) are more likely to select “Giving has decreased compared to earlier this year” those with attendance of 200+ (28%)

“Does your church offer an online giving mechanism?”

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “Our church does not currently offer an online giving mechanism” (52%) and the least likely to select “Our church continues to offer an online giving option as we did before the coronavirus outbreak” (33%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the most likely to select “Our church continues to offer an online giving option as we did before the coronavirus outbreak” (88%) followed by 100-199 (62%), 50-99 (40%), and less than 50 (16%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of 200+ are the least likely to select “Our church does not currently offer an online giving mechanism” (3%)

“Did your church apply for any government assistance offered through the CARES Act or Small Business Administration?”

- Pastors age 18-44 (21%) and 55-64 (21%) are more likely to select “We applied, and our application has not been accepted” than pastors age 45-54 (10%) and 65+ (9%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors are more likely to select “We applied, and our application has not been accepted” than self-identified Evangelical pastors (22% v. 13%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (34%) are more likely to select “We applied, and our application was accepted” than those in the South (22%)
- Pastors in the South (20%) are more likely to select “We applied, and our application has not been accepted” than those in the Midwest (11%)

“Did your church apply for any government assistance offered through the CARES Act or Small Business Administration?”

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 100-199 (26%) and 200+ (36%) are more likely to select “We applied, and our application was accepted” than those with attendance of less than 50 (14%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 (62%) and 50-99 (63%) are more likely to select “We have not applied” than those with attendance of 200+ (39%)

“When local government restrictions and guidance against churches meeting are lifted, which of the following best describes your church's plan for resuming in-person activities?”

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “Resume all normal activities right away” (32%)
- Pastors in the 18-44 (32%) are more likely to select “We have not made any plans for resuming activities” than pastors age 45-54 (19%) and 65+ (16%)
- Self-identified Mainline pastors are more likely to select “Wait a few additional weeks and then resume activities gradually” than self-identified Evangelical pastors (34% v. 15%)
- Self-identified Evangelical pastors are more likely to select “Resume worship first and small groups/classes later” than self-identified Mainline pastors (35% v. 16%)
- Pastors in the West are the most likely to select “Resume all normal activities right away” (34%)
- Pastors in the Midwest (31%) are more likely to select “We have not made any plans for resuming activities” than those in the South (20%)

“When local government restrictions and guidance against churches meeting are lifted, which of the following best describes your church's plan for resuming in-person activities?”

- Pastors of churches with attendance of 100-199 (32%) are more likely to select “Wait a few additional weeks and then resume activities gradually” those with attendance of 200+ (15%)
- Pastors of churches with attendance of less than 50 are the most likely to select “Resume all normal activities right away” (27%)

Pastors' Views on How COVID-19 is Affecting Their Church April 2020

Survey of American Protestant Pastors