

Pastor Attrition Study 2021 compared to 2015

A SURVEY OF 1,576 EVANGELICAL AND BLACK PROTESTANT PASTORS

Lifeway research

Methodology

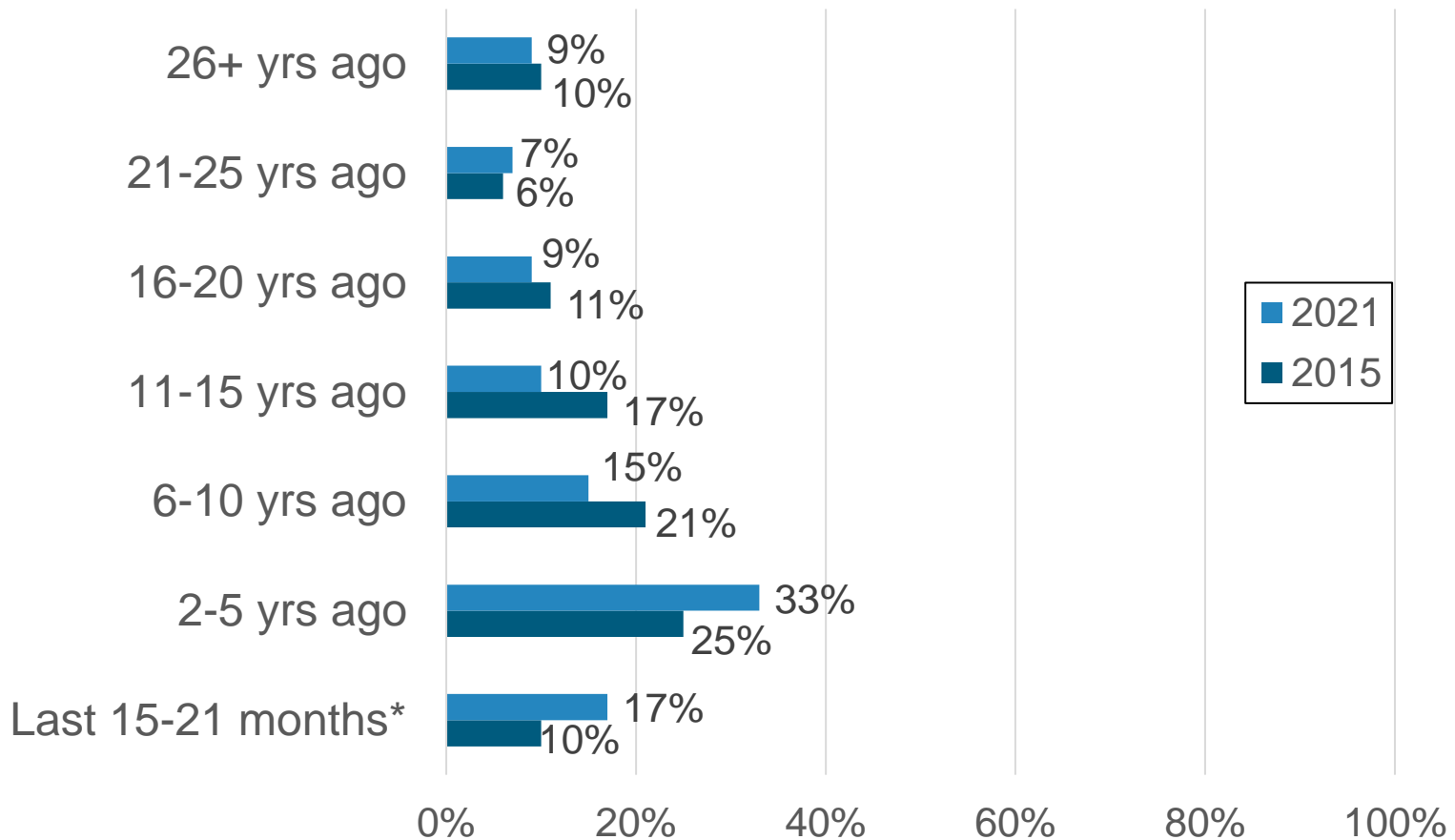
- The study was sponsored by Houston's First Baptist Church and Richard Dockins, MD
- The mixed mode survey of 1,576 Evangelical and Black Protestant pastors was conducted August 17–September 15, 2021, using both phone and online interviews
- Phone: The calling list was a random sample, stratified by church membership, drawn from a list of all churches in all Evangelical and Black Protestant religious traditions except Southern Baptists
- Online: The email list was a random sample drawn from all Southern Baptist congregations with an email address. Invitations were emailed to the pastor by Lifeway Research followed by one reminder
- Each survey was completed by the senior pastor, minister or priest at the church contacted

Methodology

- The completed sample is 1,576 surveys (1,000 phone 576 online)
- Responses were weighted by region, church size, and denominational group to more accurately reflect the population
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 2.7\%$ This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
- Comparisons are made to a phone survey of 1,500 Evangelical and Black Protestant pastors conducted by Lifeway Research March 5-18, 2015. The 2015 Pastor Protection study was sponsored by the North American Mission Board and Richard Dockins, MD

51% of pastors started at their current church in the last 6 years

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

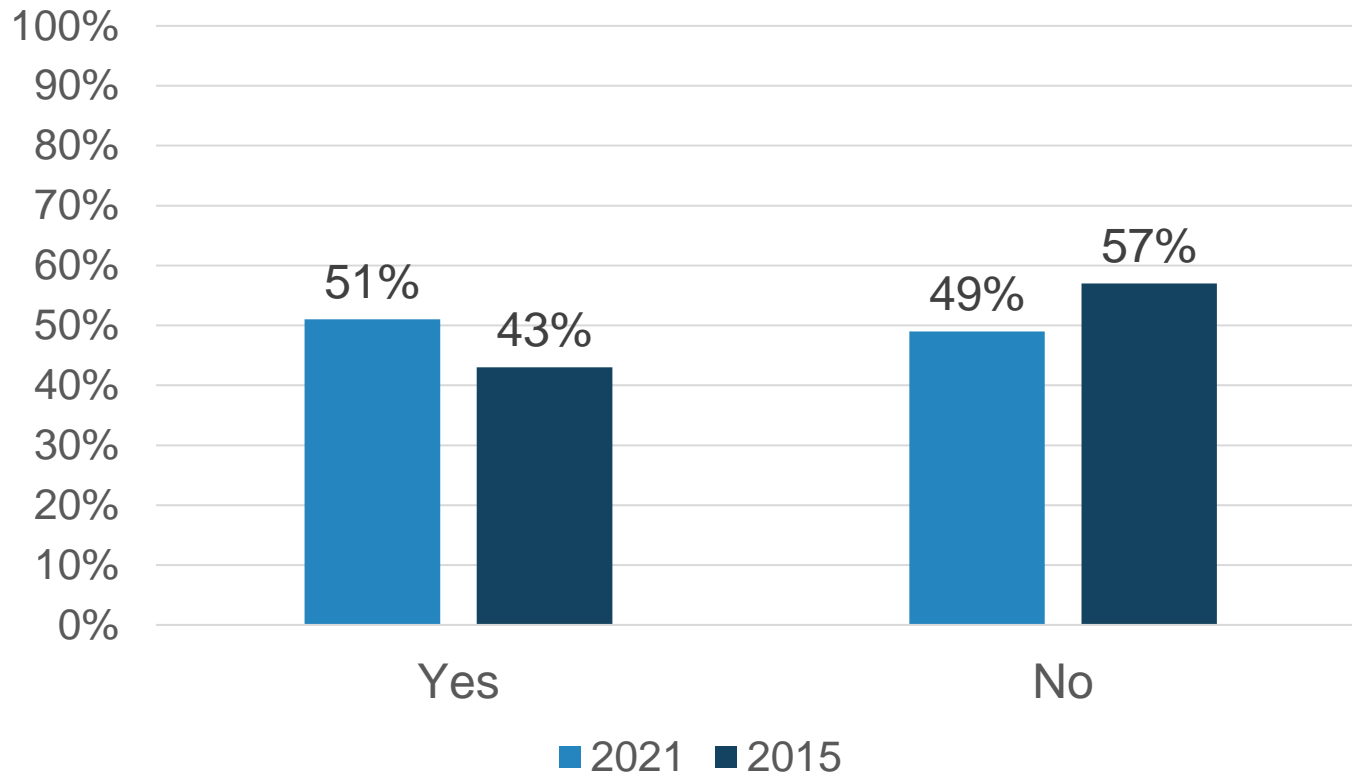


*2015 survey asked 2014-Mar 2015
2021 survey asked 2020-Sept 2021

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The number of first-church pastors increased from 2015 to 2021

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

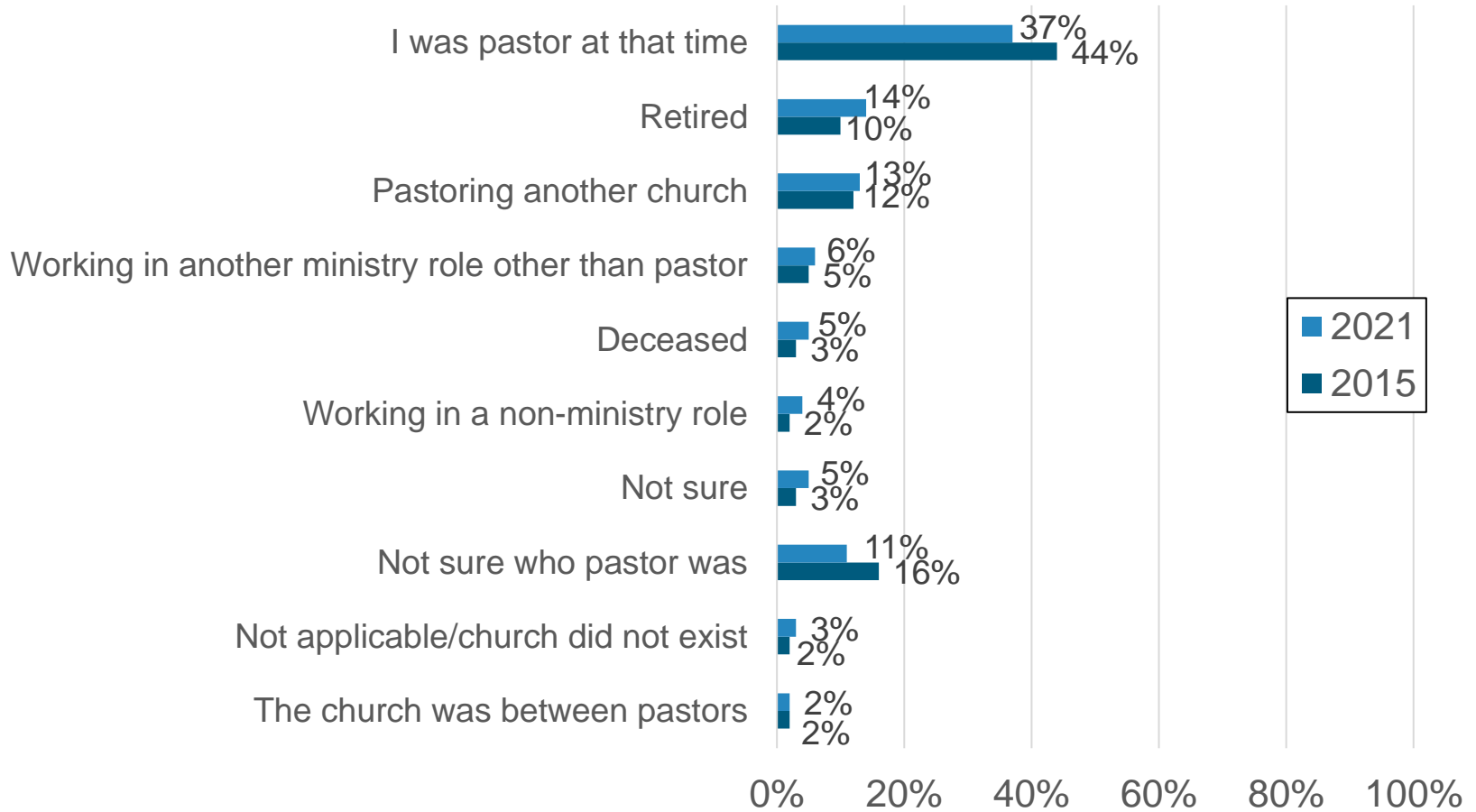


Lifeway research

Q3: "Is this the first church you have served as senior pastor?"

Where is the pastor who was pastoring this church 10 years ago?

Whereabouts of person who pastored this church in August 2011



Lifeway research

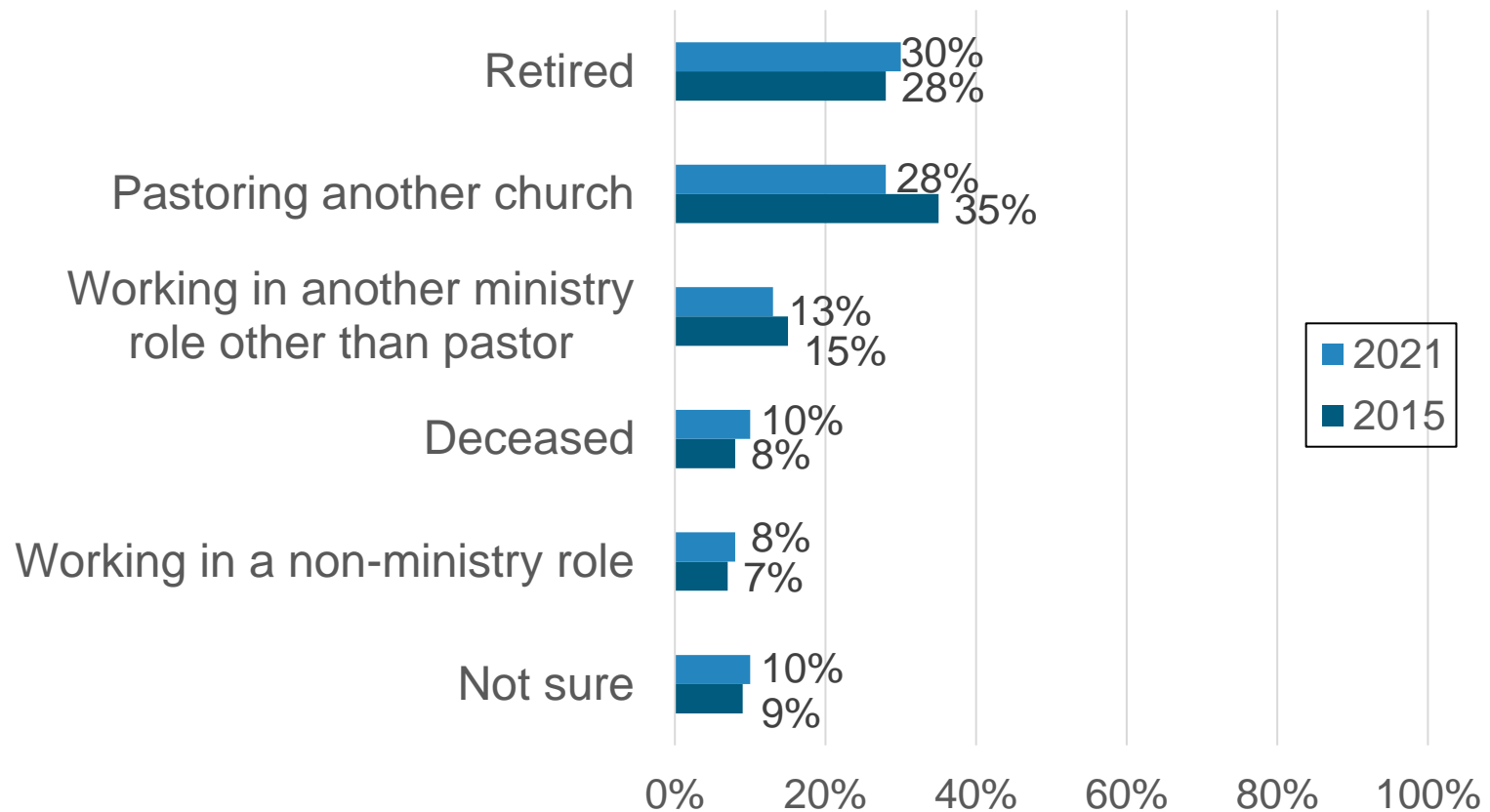
Q2: "In what year did you become the senior pastor of this church?"

Q4: "Do you know the name of the person who was pastor of your current church in August 2011?"

Q5: "As far as you know, which of the following best describes where that pastor is today?" combined n=1,576

Pastors who have left a church in the past 10 years tend to be retired or pastoring another church

Among pastors who were not at their current church in 2005/ 2011 and who can name the pastor at that time



Lifeway research

Q5: "As far as you know, which of the following best describes where that pastor is today?"

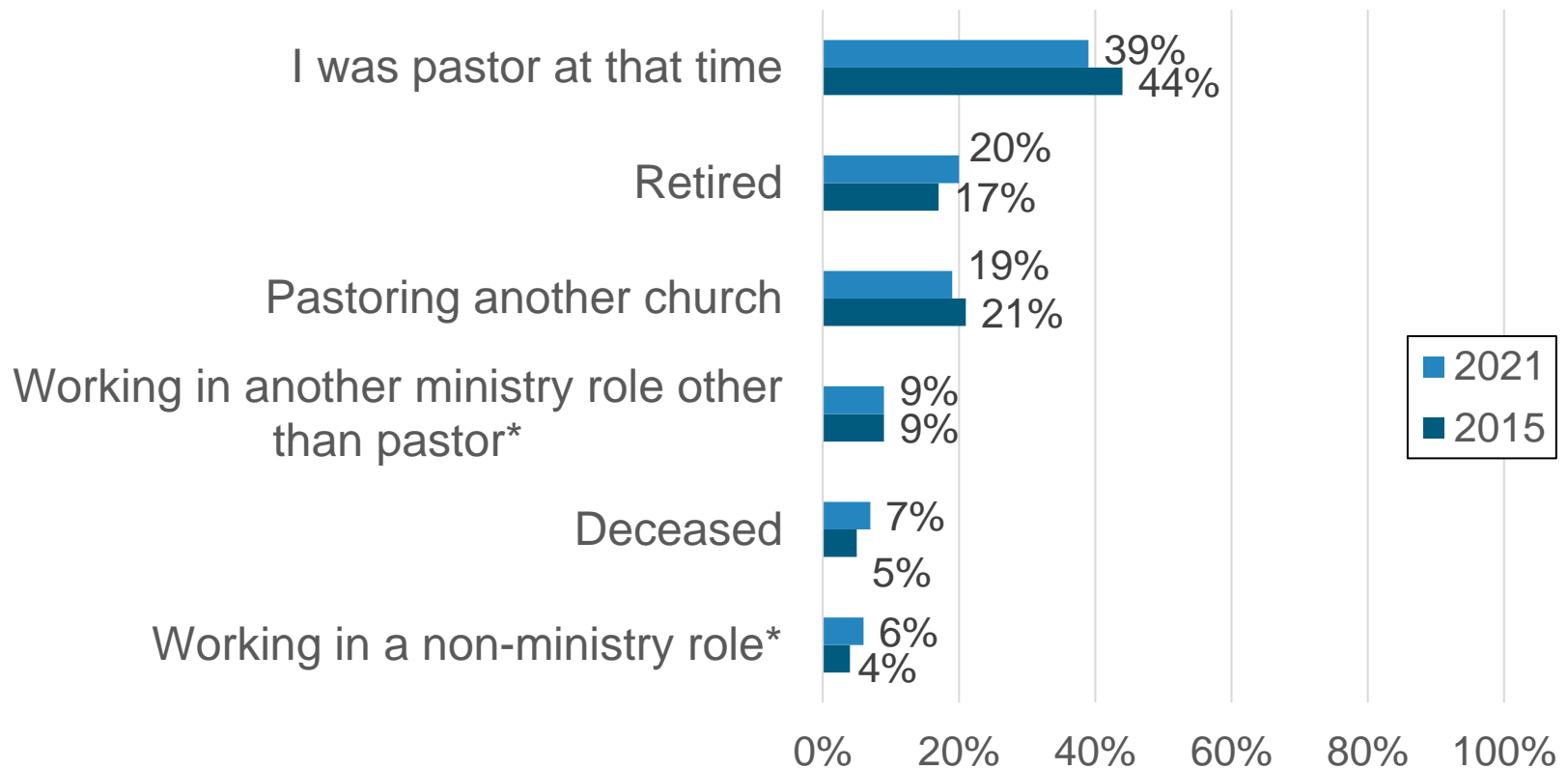
Pastor Attrition

- Defined as pastors who have left the pastorate for reasons other than retirement or death in the last 10 years.
- Cohorts studied are those who were pastoring in February 2005 and August 2011
- Estimate of Pastor Attrition assumes that the current whereabouts for pastors unknown to the current pastor of their church is the same as those in which their whereabouts is known.
 - The cumulative *known* attrition rate undercounts attrition where the previous pastor's whereabouts are unknown.
 - **The Pastor Attrition Rate Estimate is:**
 - February 2005 cohort: 13% over 10 years
 - **August 2011 cohort: 15% over 10 years (*difference from 2005 is not statistically significant*)**

Based on churches where the current pastor knows the whereabouts of the pastor 10 years prior applied to all congregations that existed in that year that had a pastor

Estimated whereabouts of all August 2011 pastors (known percentages applied to all pastors)

Whereabouts of person who pastored this church in August 2011



*Pastor Attrition

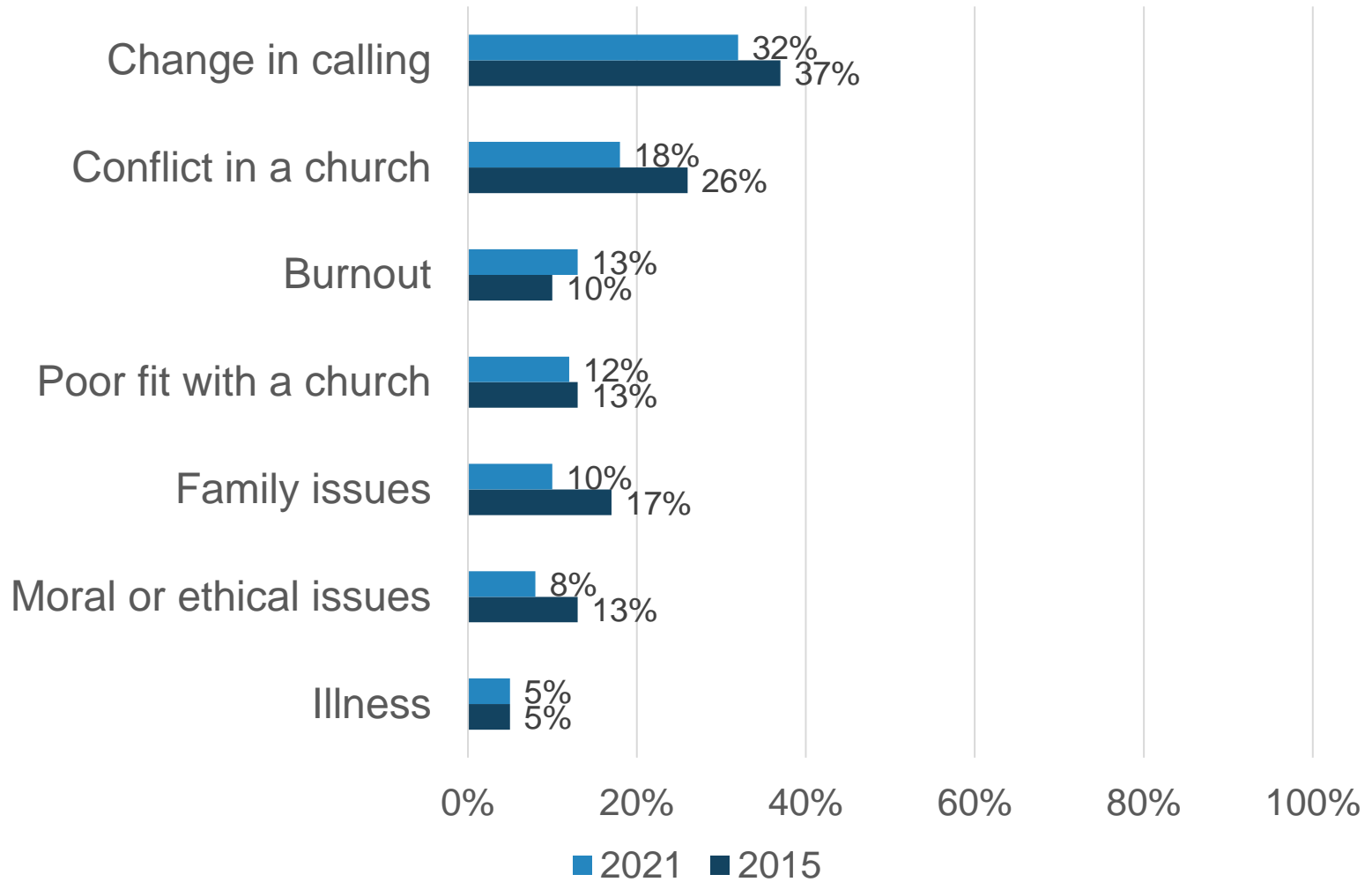
Lifewayresearch

Q5: "As far as you know, which of the following best describes where that pastor is today?"

Base: Churches that existed and had a pastor in August 2011

Reasons previous pastor left the pastorate

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



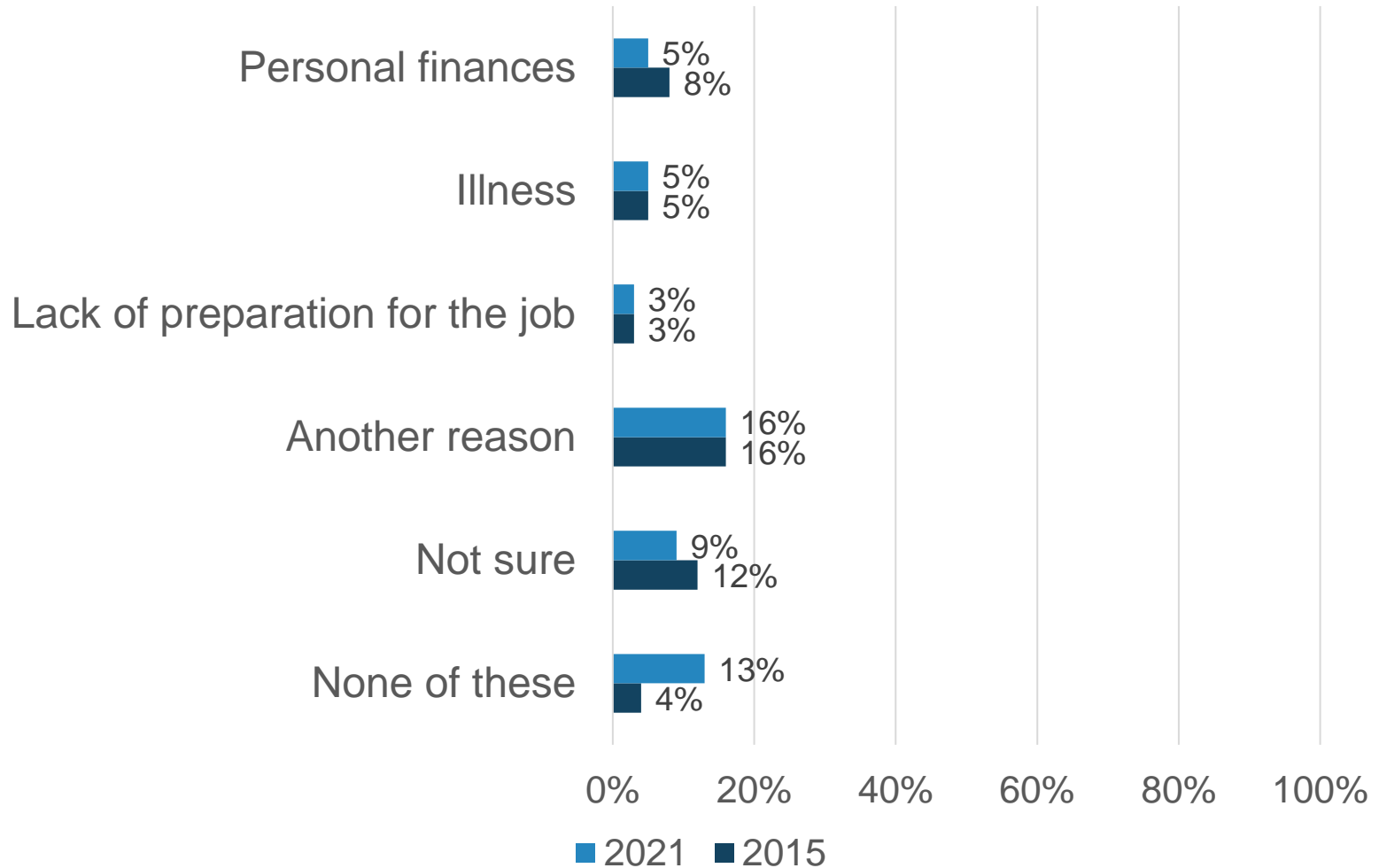
Lifeway research

Q6: "To the best of your knowledge, why did this pastor leave the pastorate? (Select all that apply)"
Base: August 2011 pastor is working in another ministry role other than pastor or working in a non-ministry role

Reasons previous pastor left the pastorate

continued

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

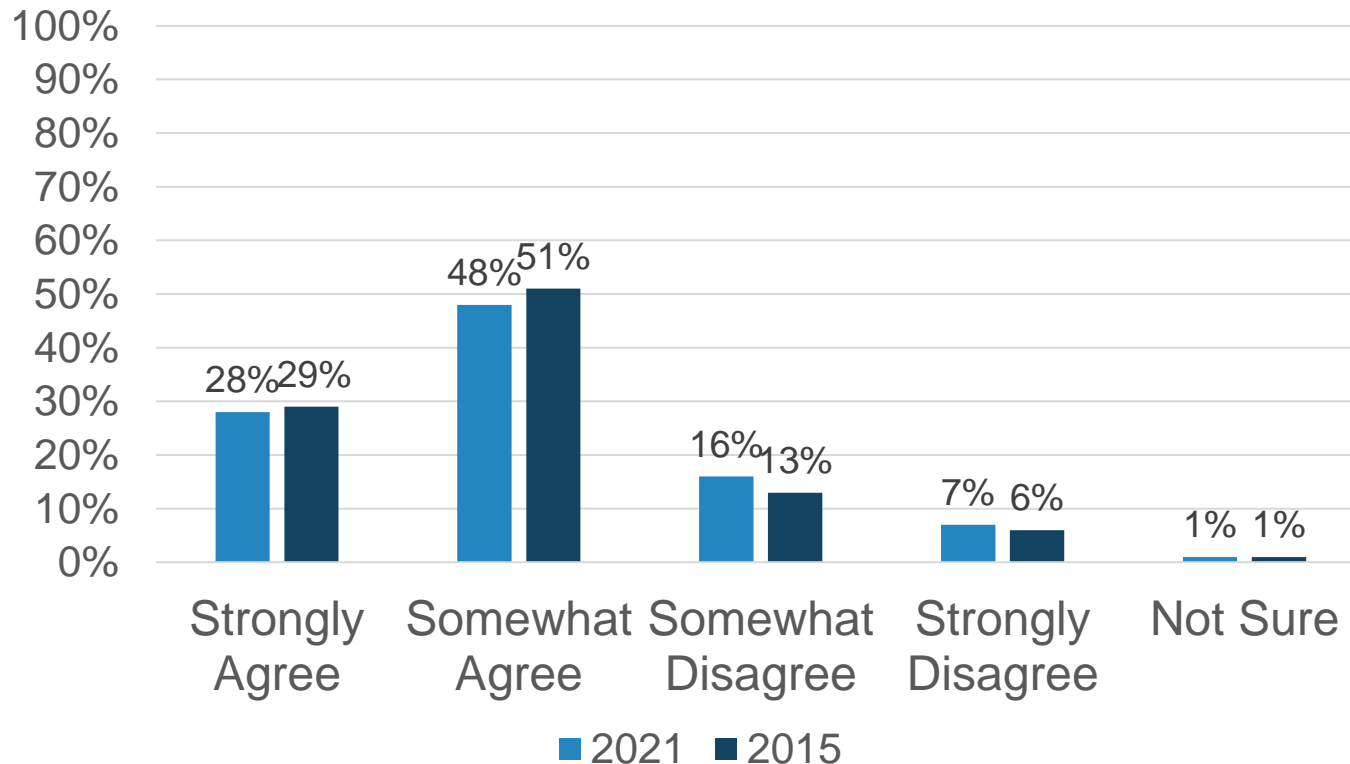


Lifewayresearch

Q6: "To the best of your knowledge, why did this pastor leave the pastorate? (Select all that apply)"
 Base: August 2011 pastor is working in another ministry role other than pastor or working in a non-ministry role

Pastors who agree their training prepared them for the people side of ministry decreased slightly

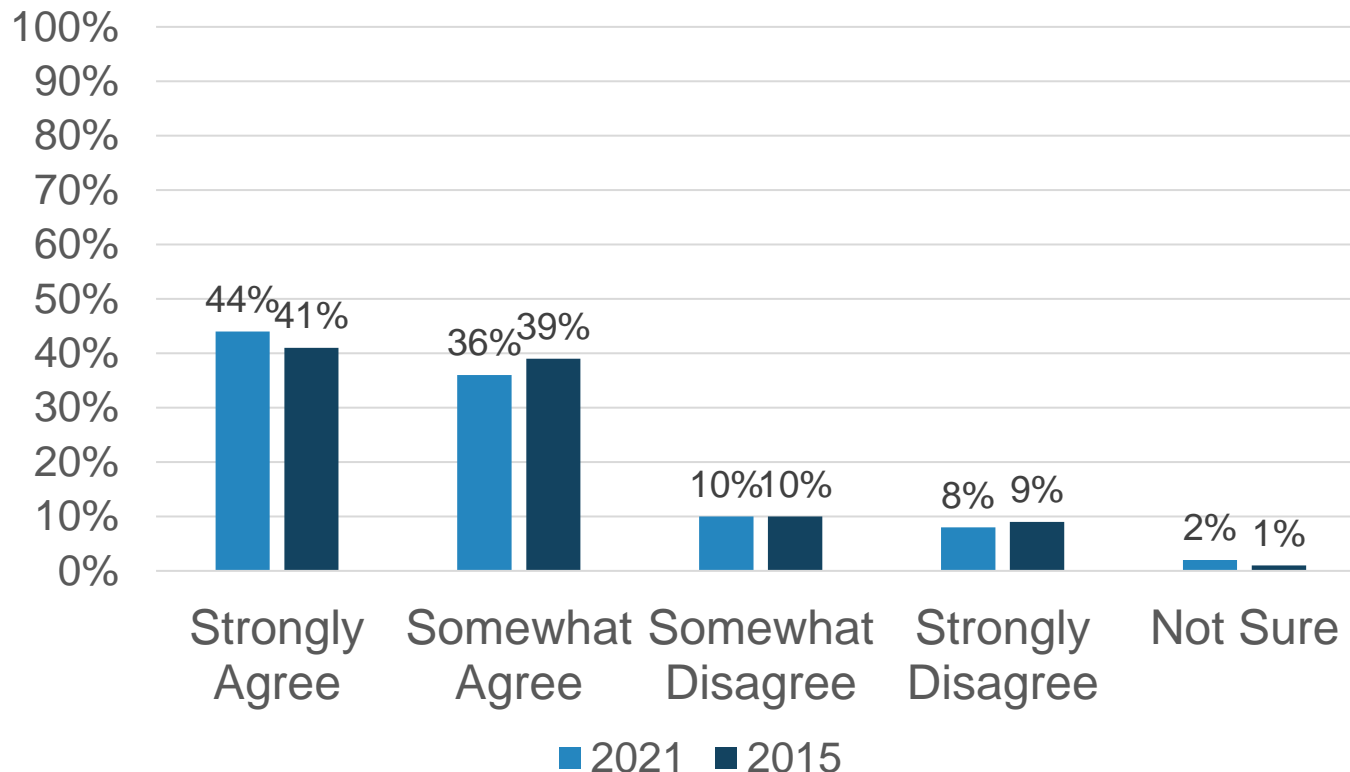
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

80% of pastors agree they will need to confront conflict in this church in the future in both 2015 & 2021

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

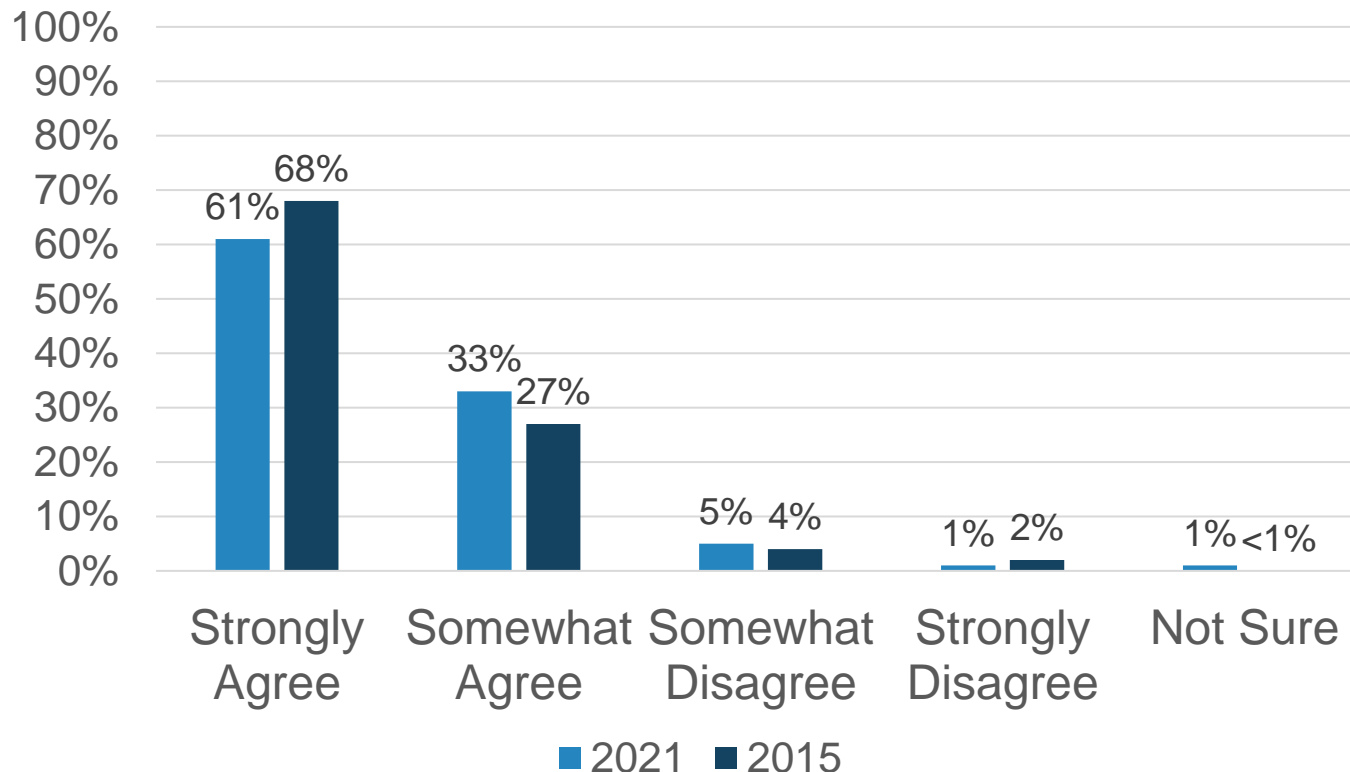


Lifeway research

Q8: "I expect I will need to confront conflict in this church in the future."

Pastors who strongly agree they consistently protect time with their family decreased from 2015 to 2021

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

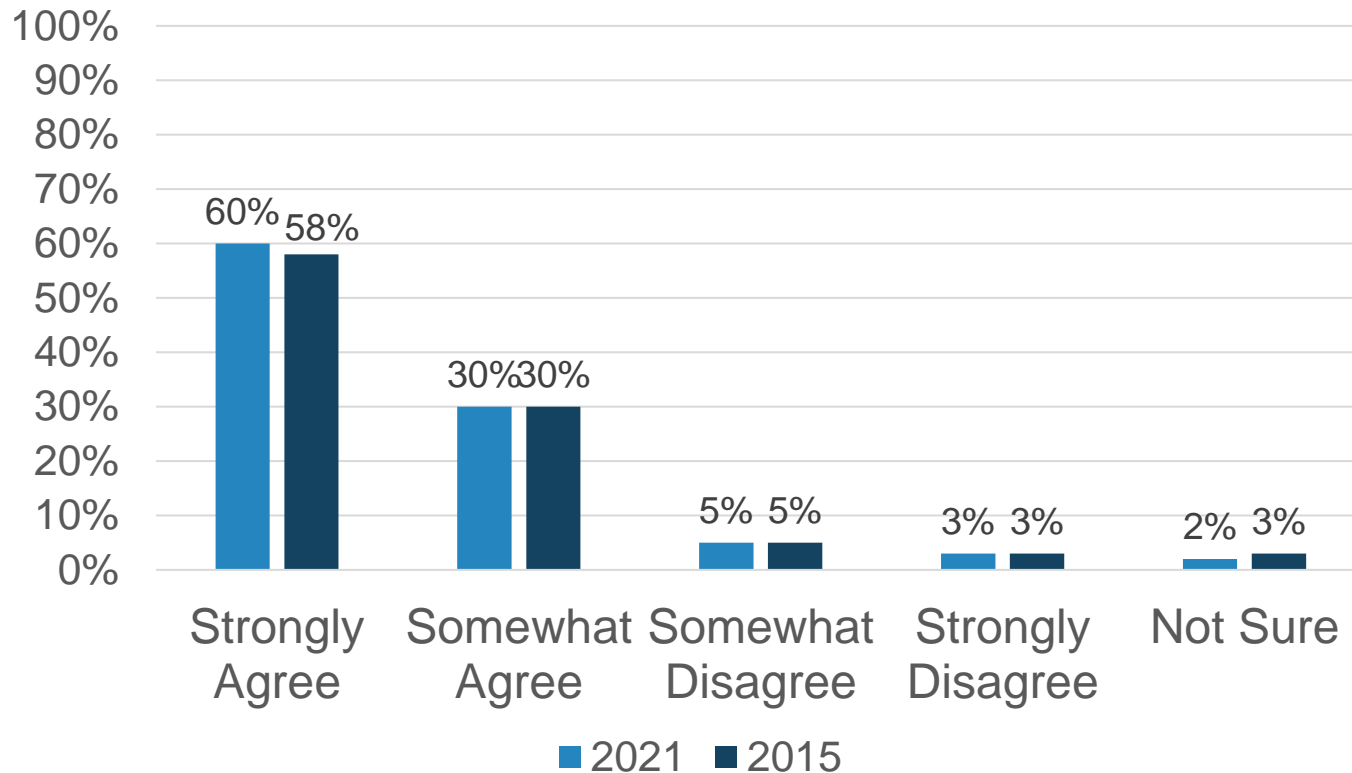


Lifeway research

Q9: "I consistently protect my time with my family." *Not applicable responses removed*

Pastors who agree they are sure they can stay at their church as long as they want is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

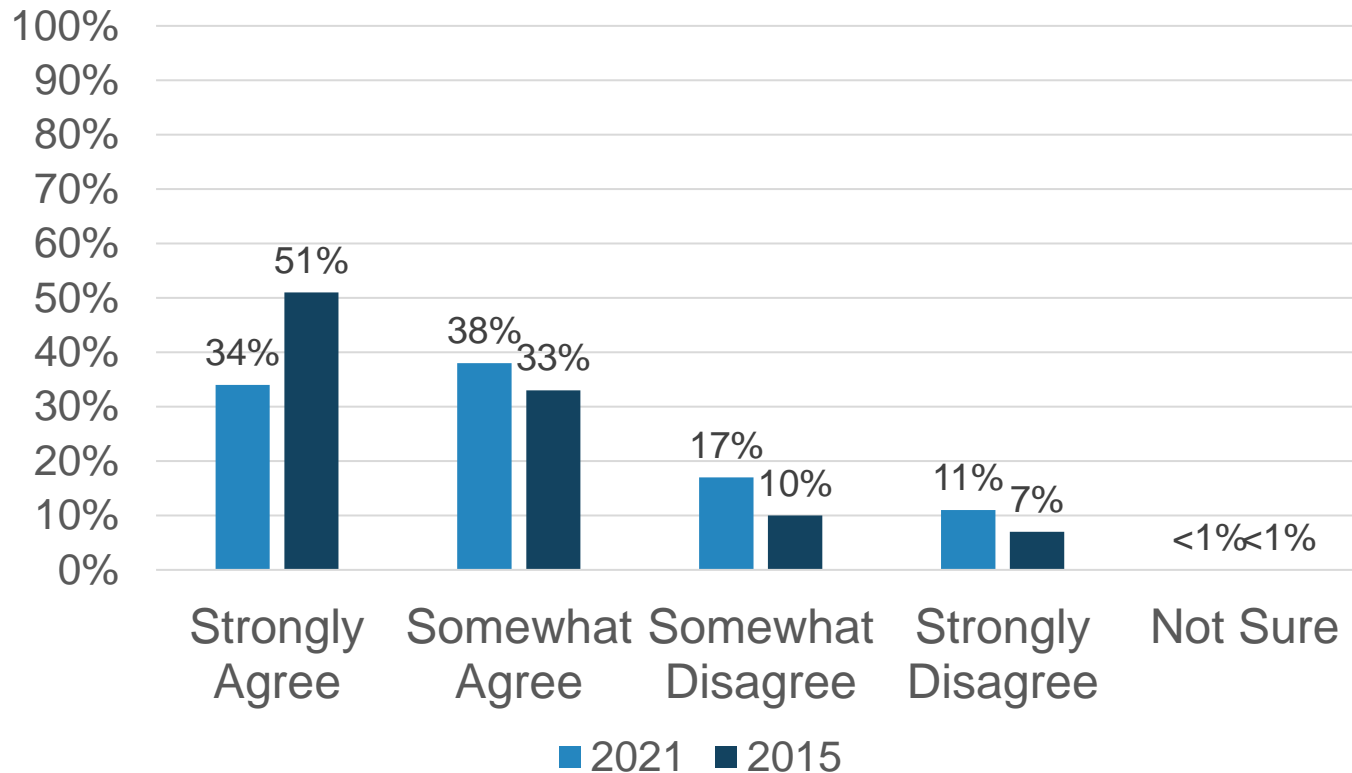


Lifeway research

Q10: "I am sure I can stay at this church as long as I want."

The number pastors who feel they must be 'on-call' 24 hours a day decreased

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

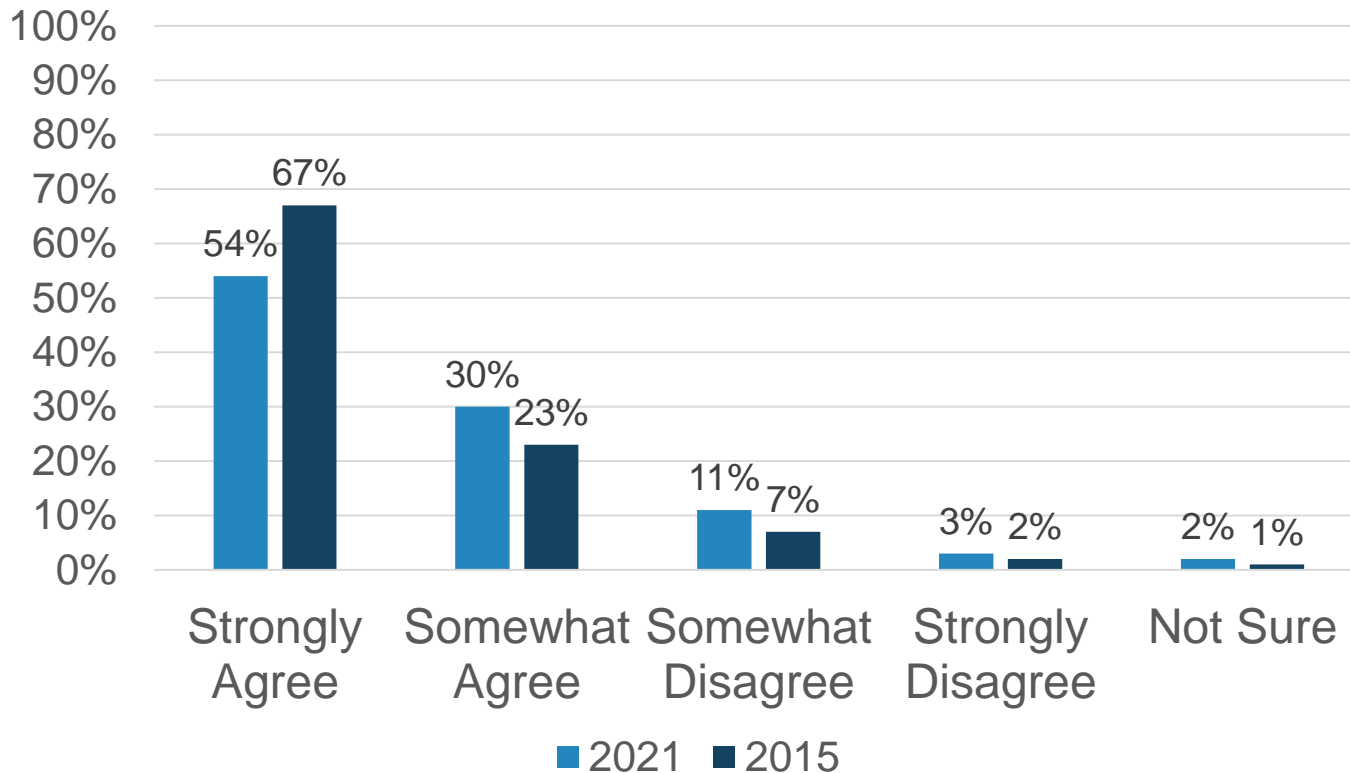


Lifeway research

Q11: "I feel I must be 'on-call' 24 hours a day."

Pastors who agree they work hard to protect their image as a pastor decreased from 90% to 84%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

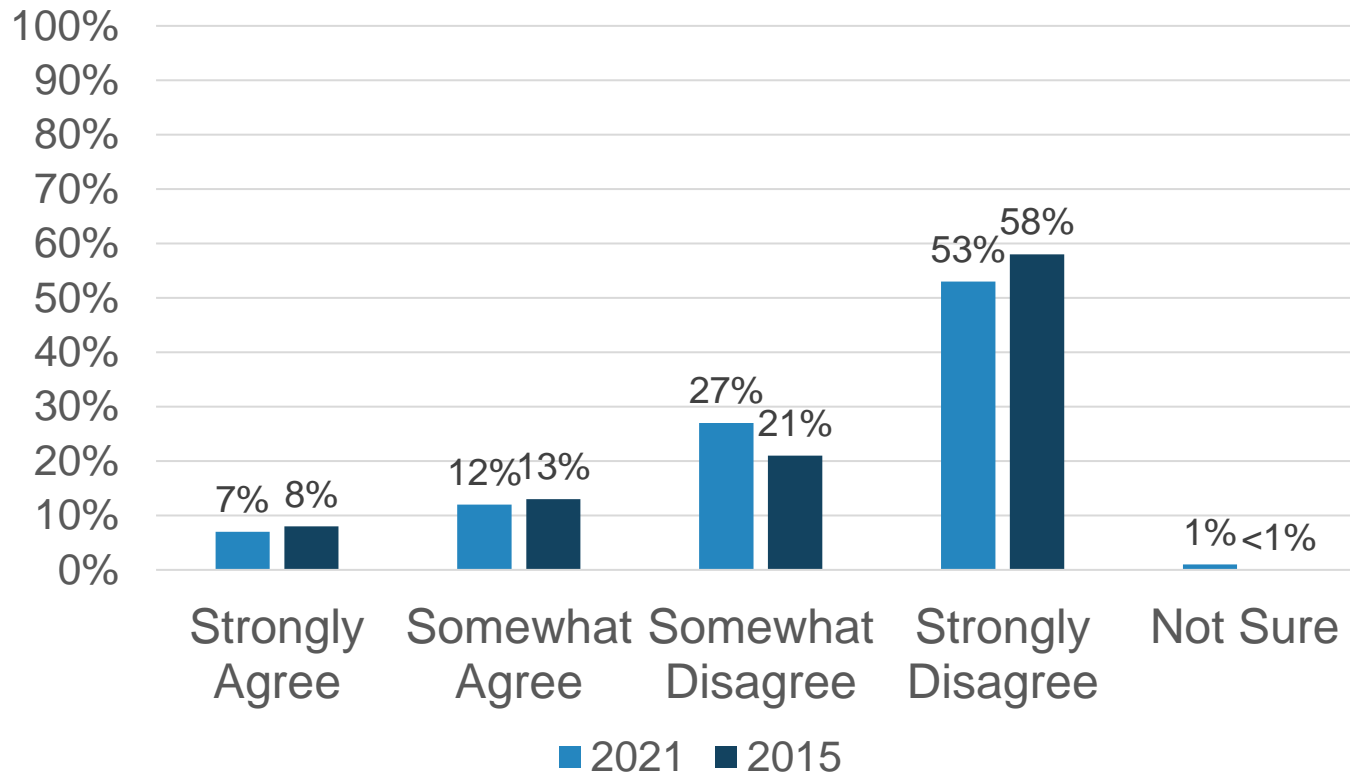


Lifeway research

Q12: "I work hard to protect my image as a pastor."

Pastors who agree their family resents the demands of pastoral ministry is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

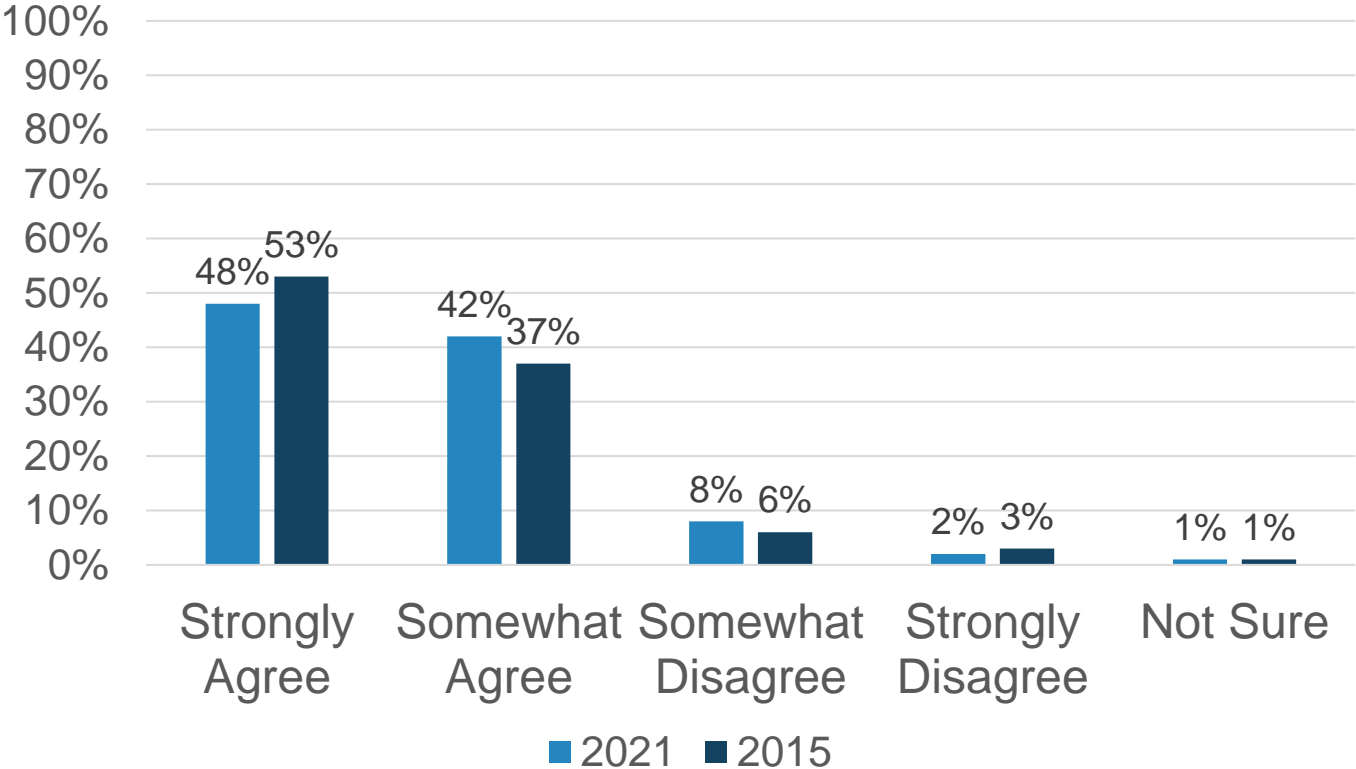


Lifeway research

Q13: "My family resents the demands of pastoral ministry." *Not applicable responses removed*

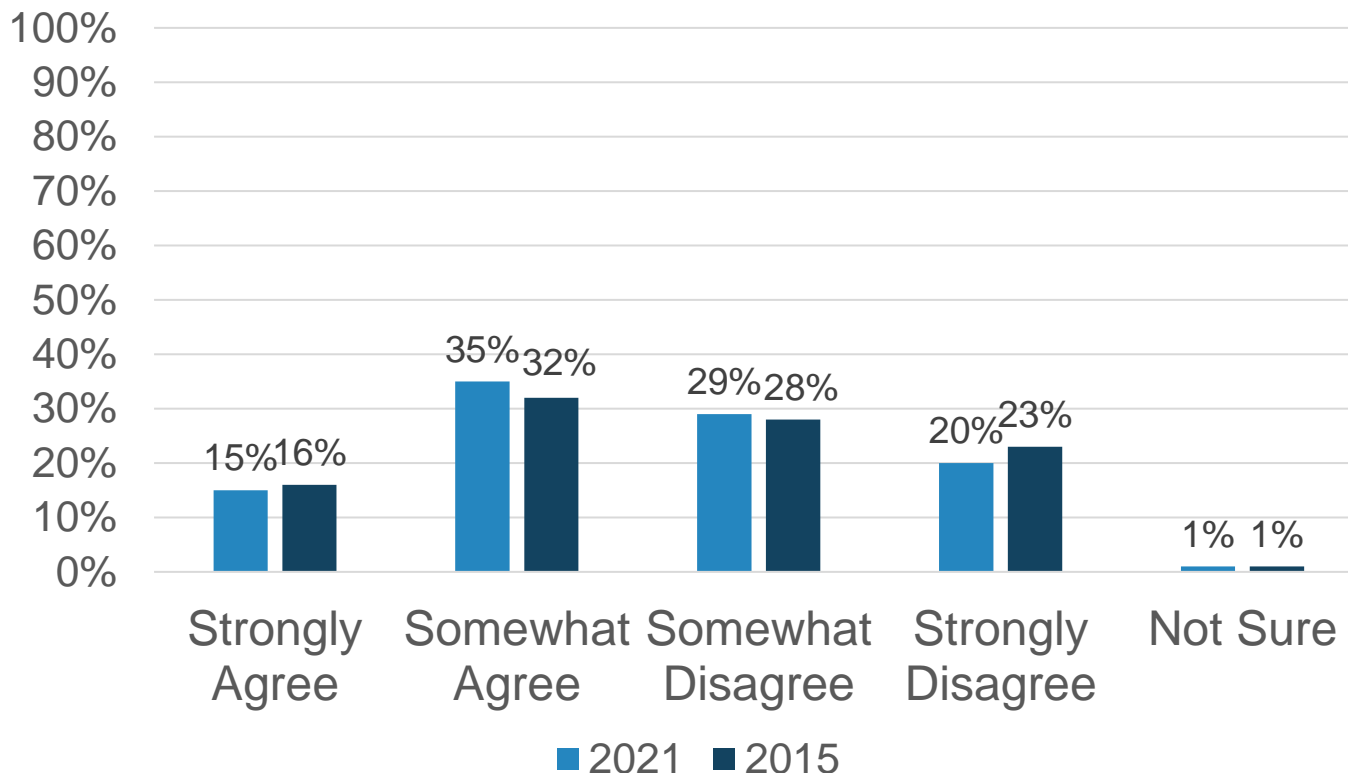
There was no change in pastors who agree they consistently listen for signs of conflict in their church (but strong agreement decreased)

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Pastors who agree they often feel the demands of ministry are greater than they can handle is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

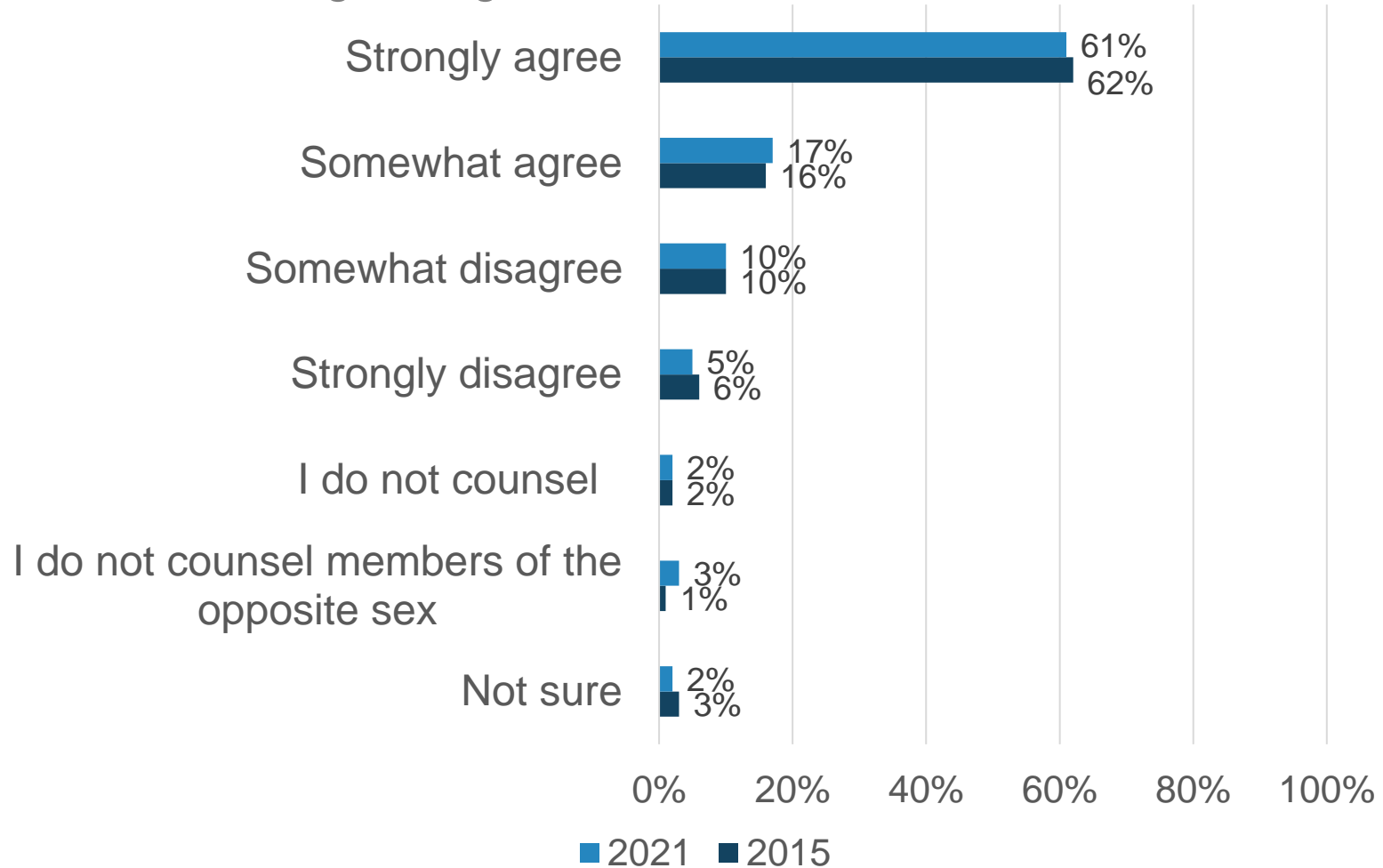


Lifeway research

Q15: "I often feel the demands of ministry are greater than I can handle."

The number who have a staff member present when counseling members of the opposite sex is unchanged

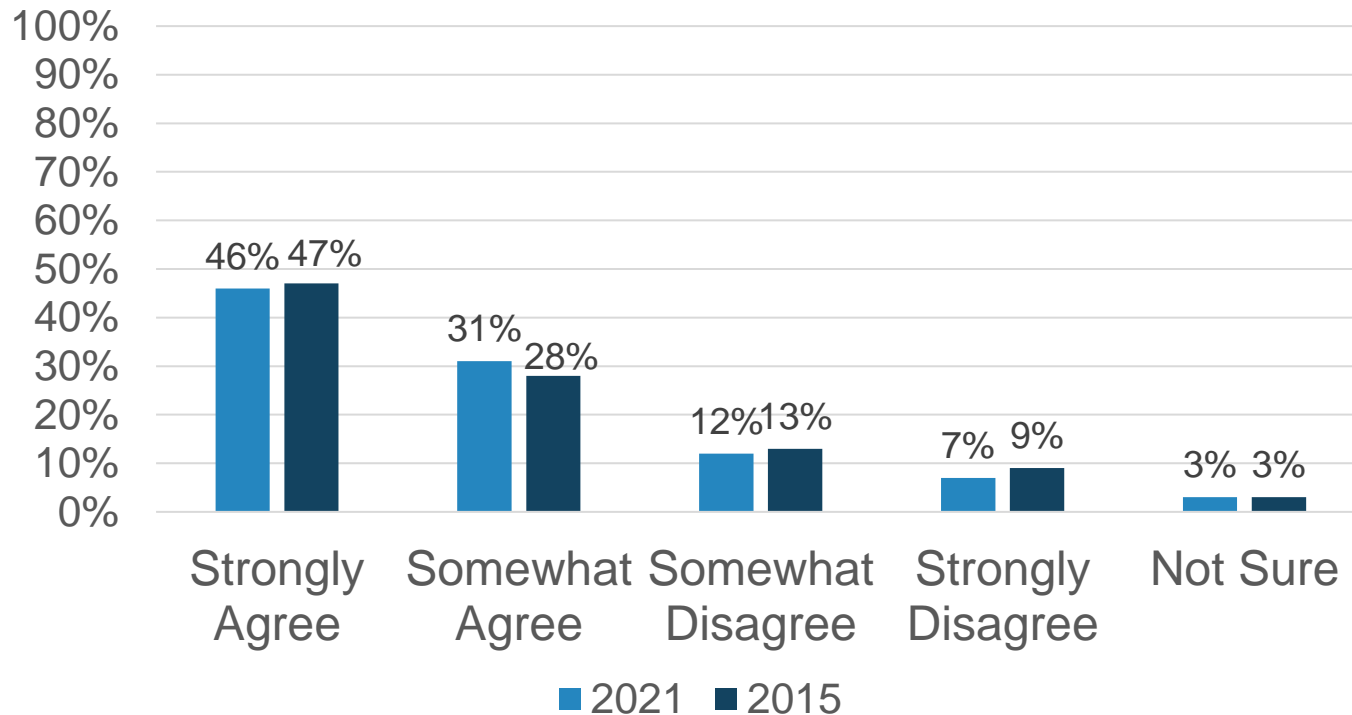
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Pastors who refer members to a professional counselor if the situation requires more than two sessions is unchanged

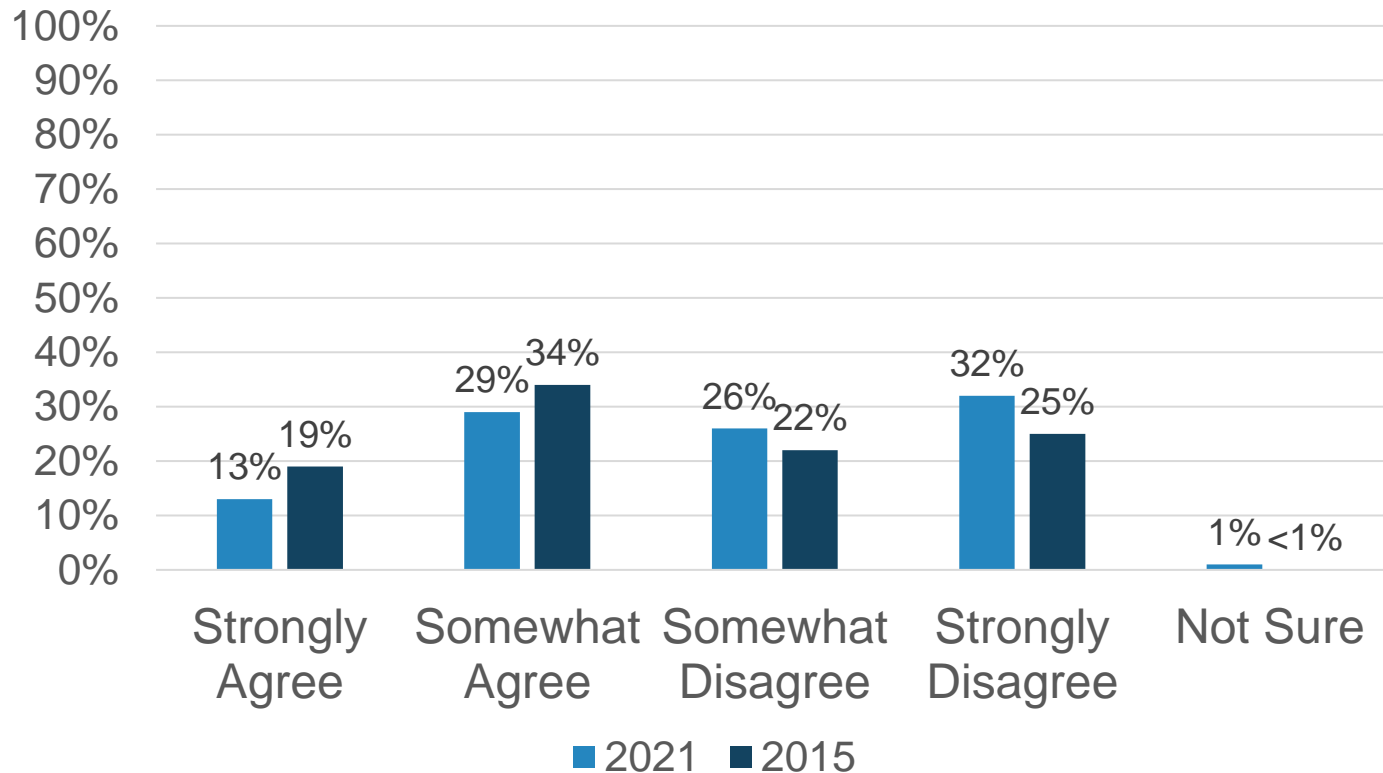
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Pastors who agree they are often concerned about their family's financial security decreased from 53% to 41%

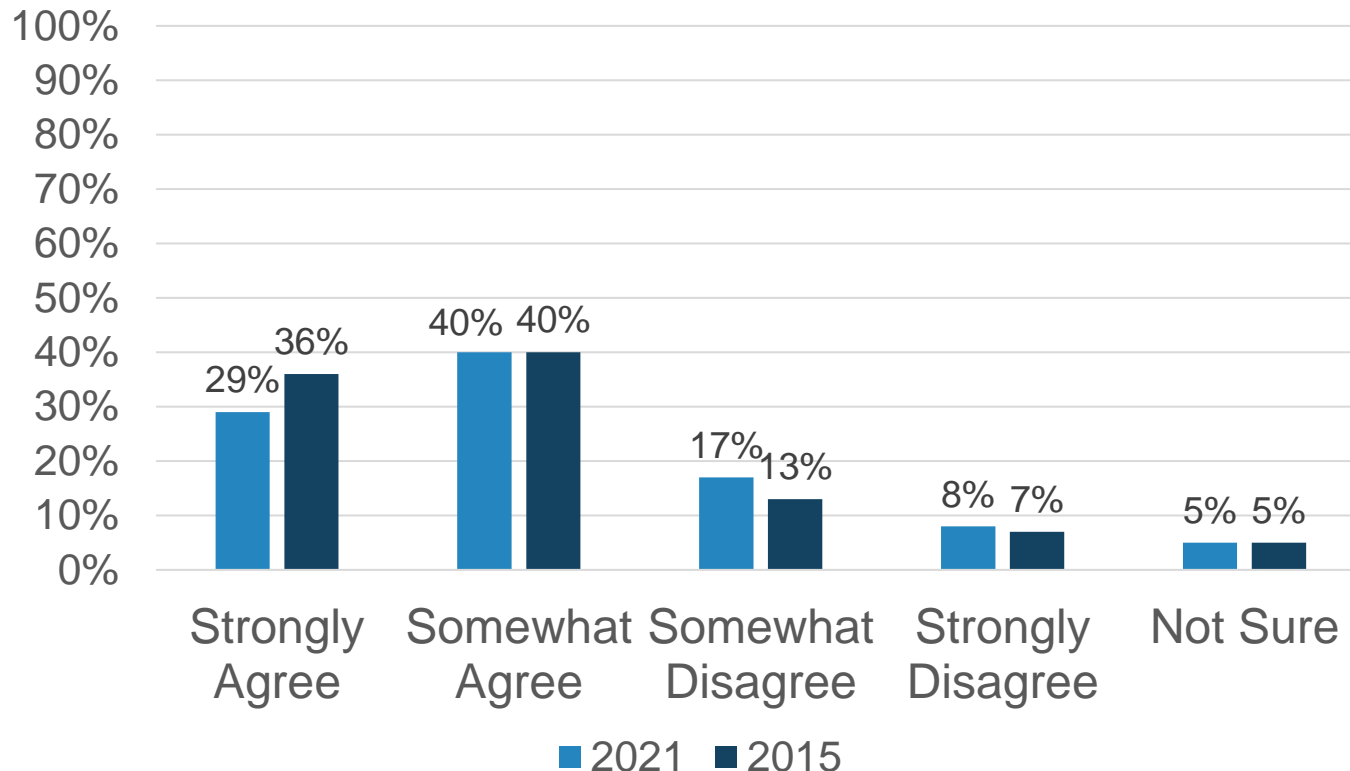
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The number of pastors who agree they deserve the respect of their people decreased from 76% to 70%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

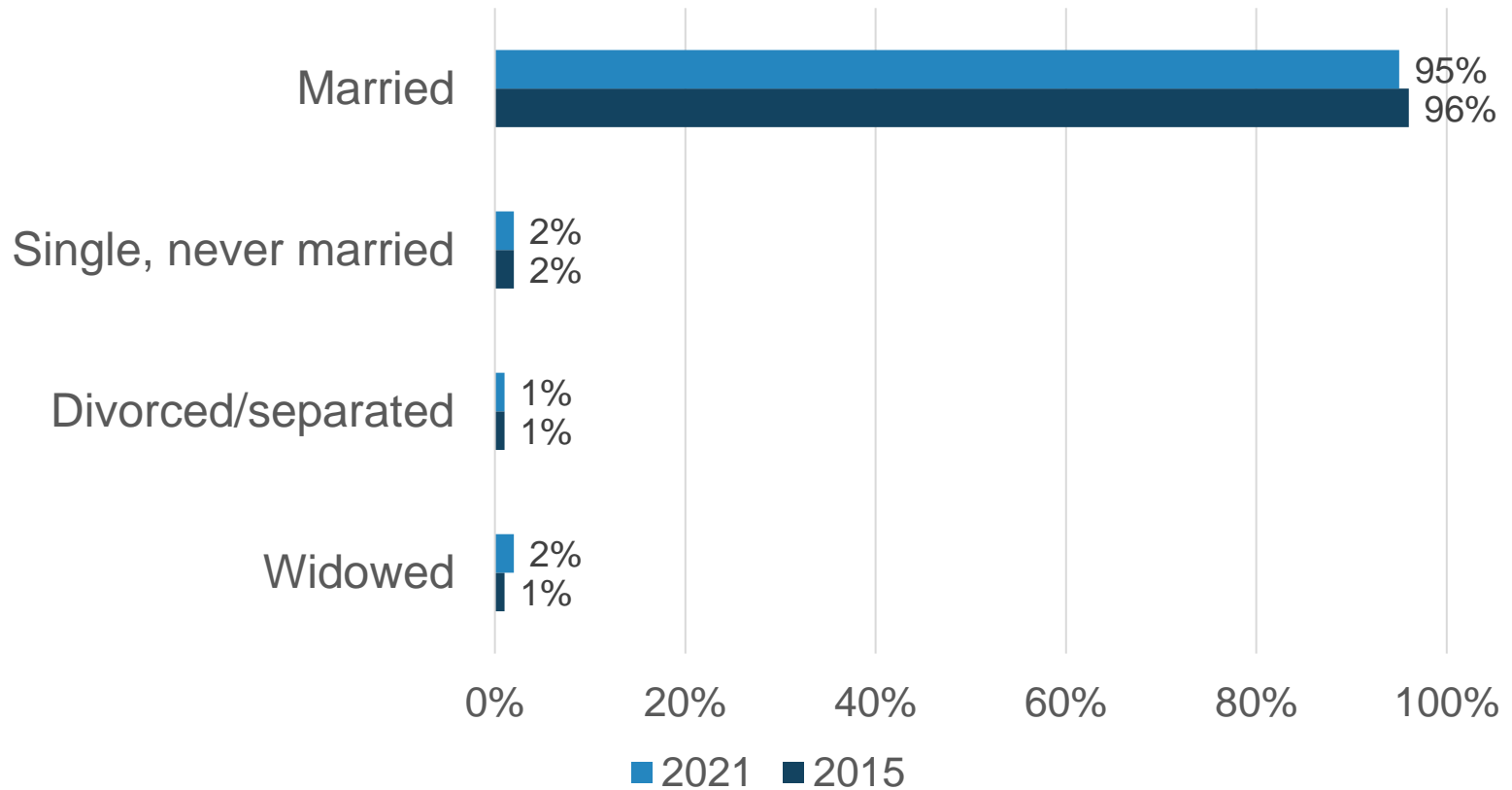


Lifewayresearch

Q19: "I deserve the respect of my people."

Percentage of pastors who are married

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

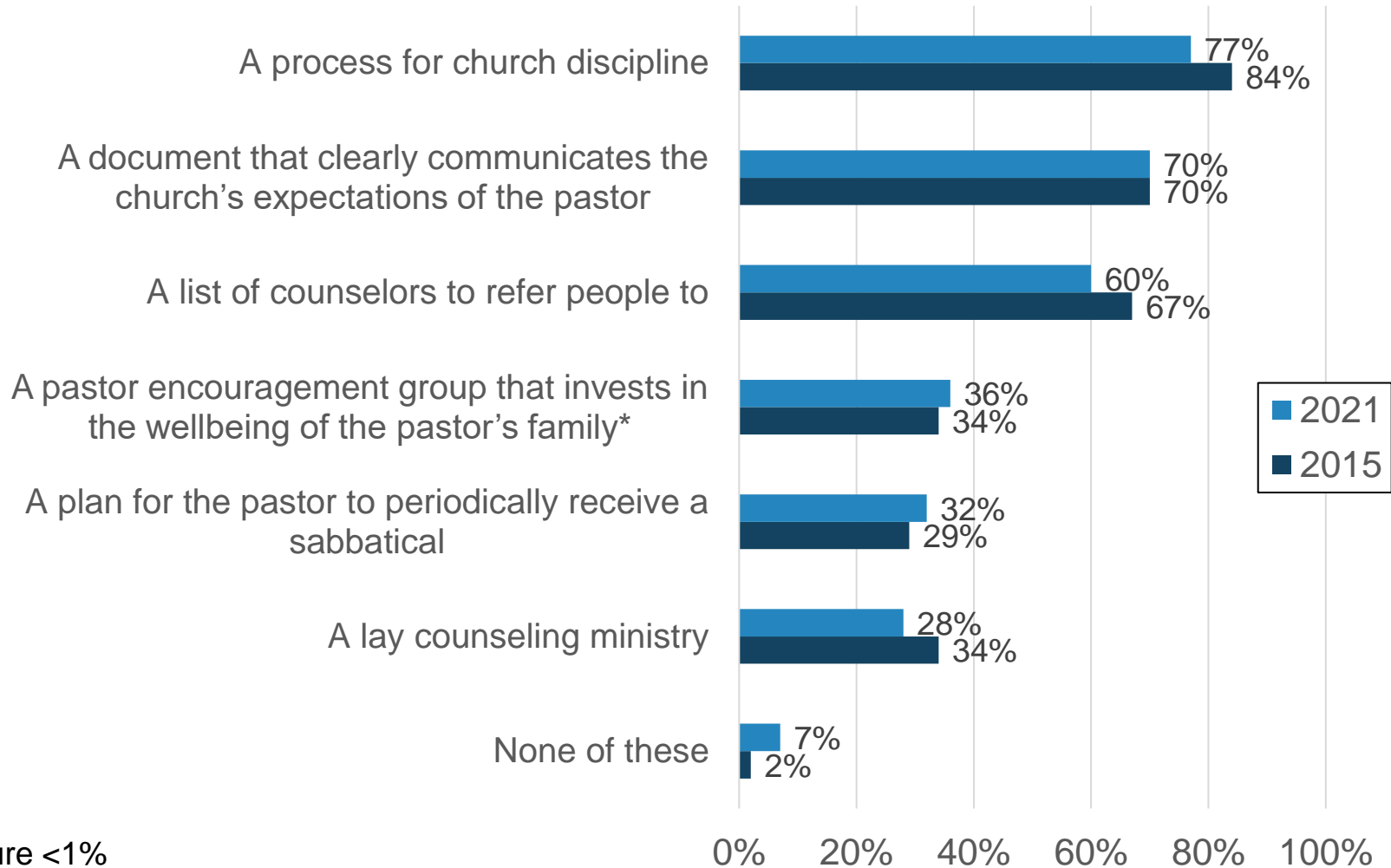


Lifeway research

Q20: "Which of the following best describes your marital status?" Refusal responses removed

Fewer churches have a list of counselors to refer people to (60% v. 67%)

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



■ 2021
■ 2015

Not sure <1%

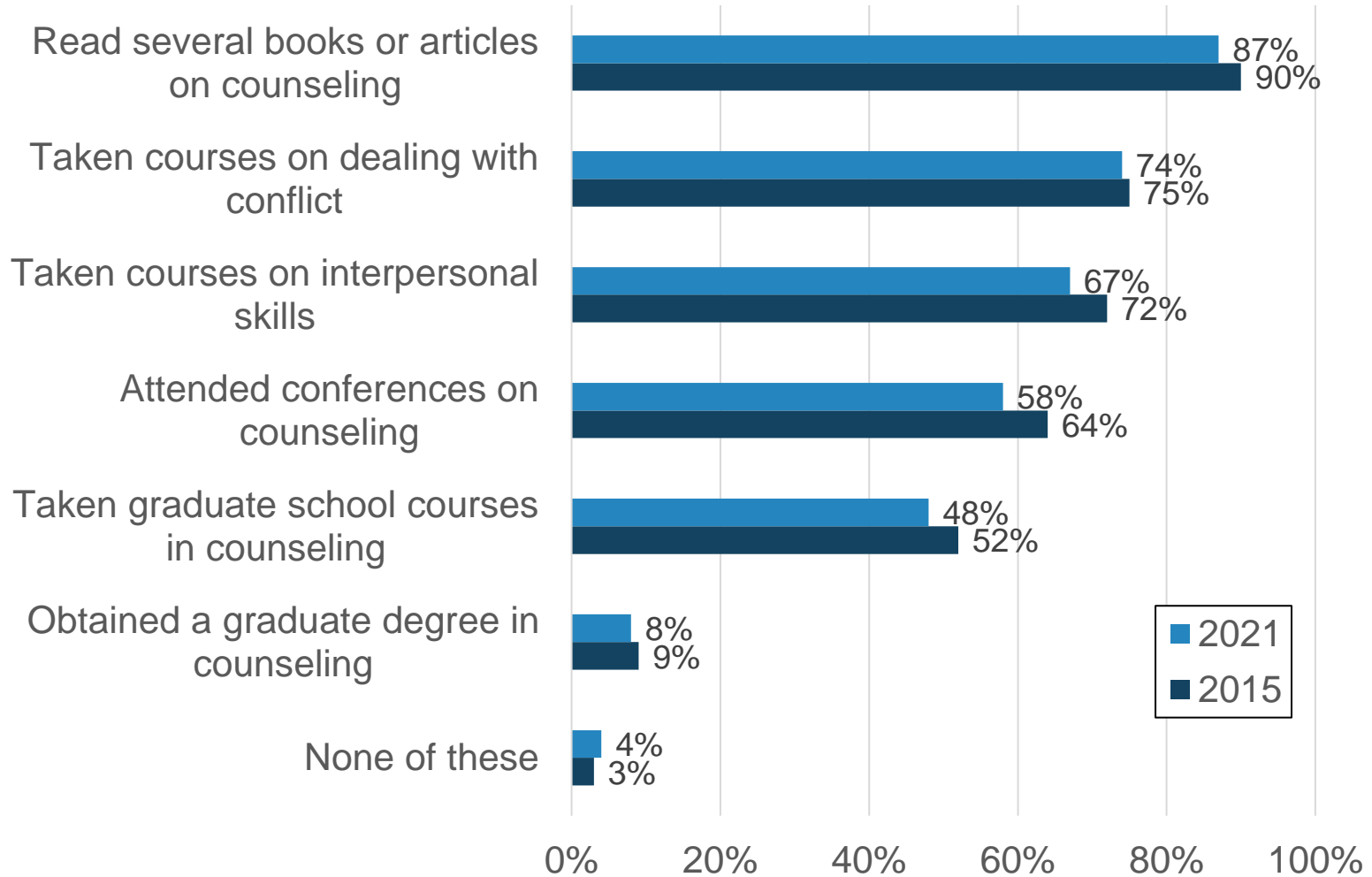
*2015 wording "A pastor support group that invests in the health of the pastor's family"

Lifeway research

Q21: "Which if any of the following does your church have in place today? (Select all that apply)"

Fewer pastors have taken courses on interpersonal skills

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



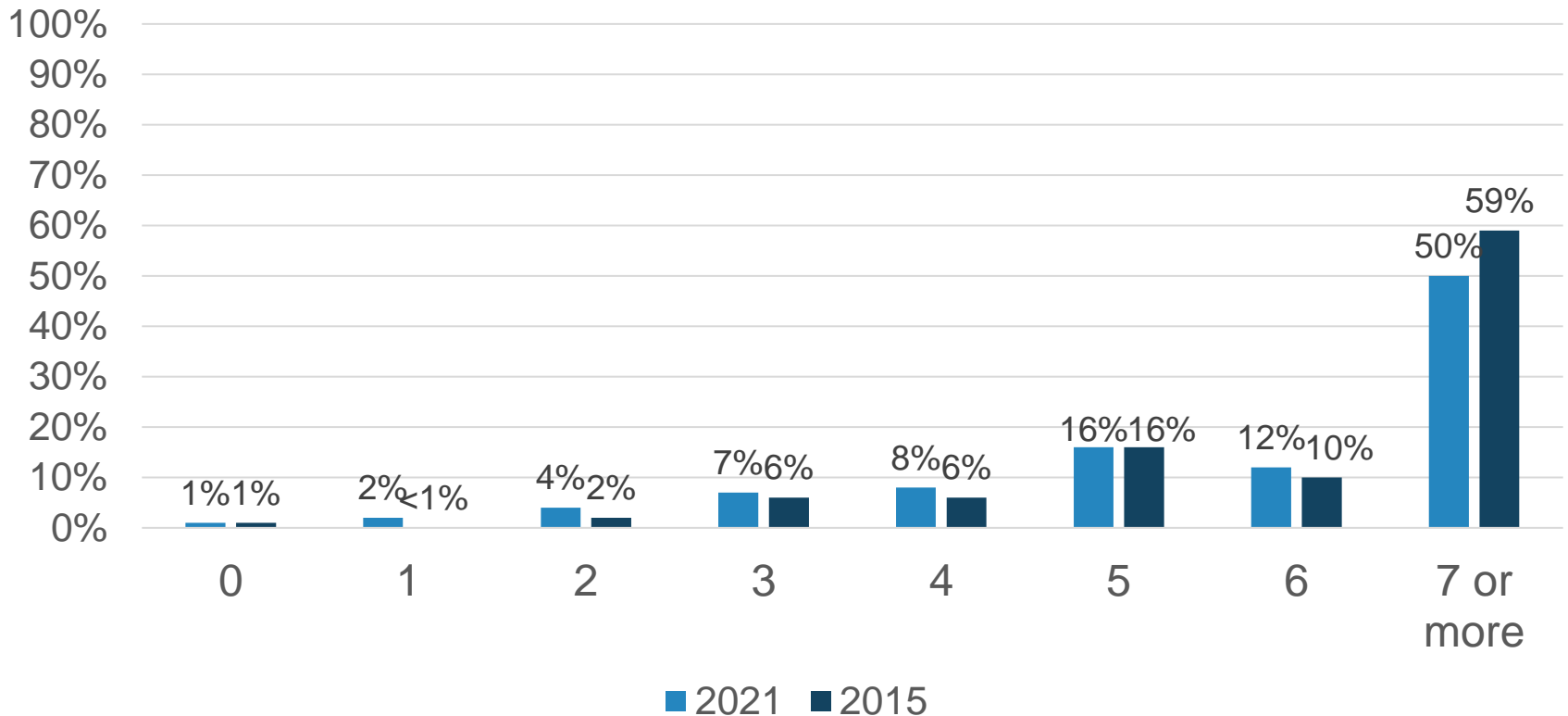
Not sure <1%

Lifeway research

Q22: "Which of the following training, if any, have you received? (Select all that apply)"

Pastors who spend time alone with the Lord every day of the week went from 59% to 50%

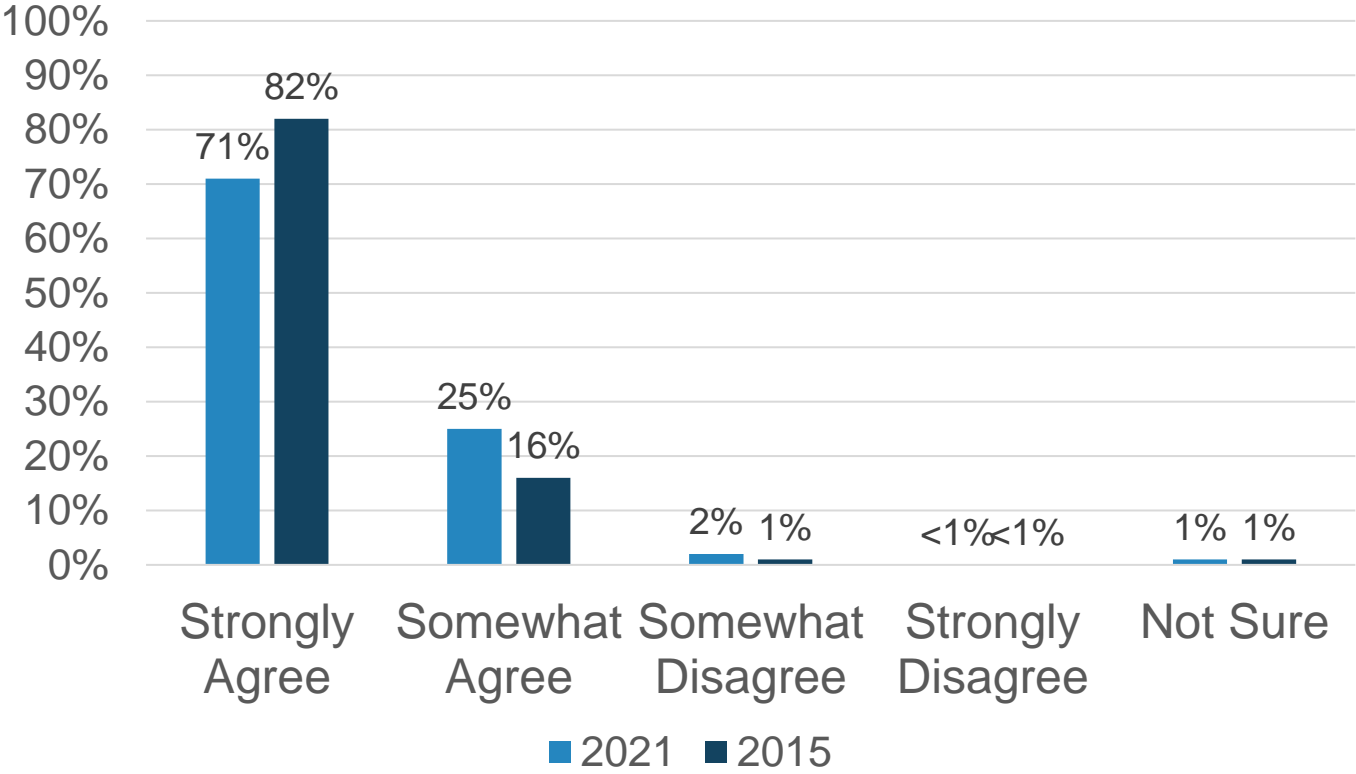
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

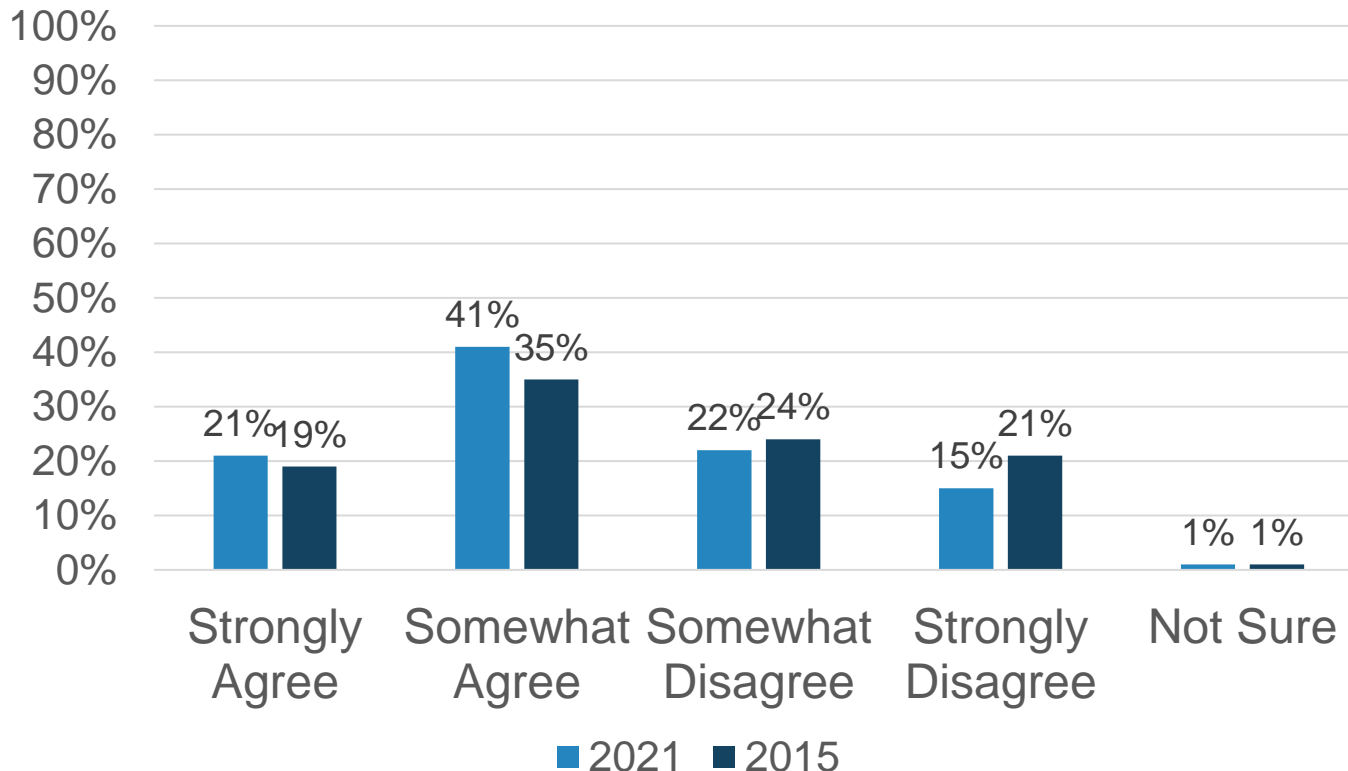
Fewer pastors strongly agree their spouse is very satisfied with their marriage today

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Pastors who agree their role is frequently overwhelming increased from 54% to 63%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

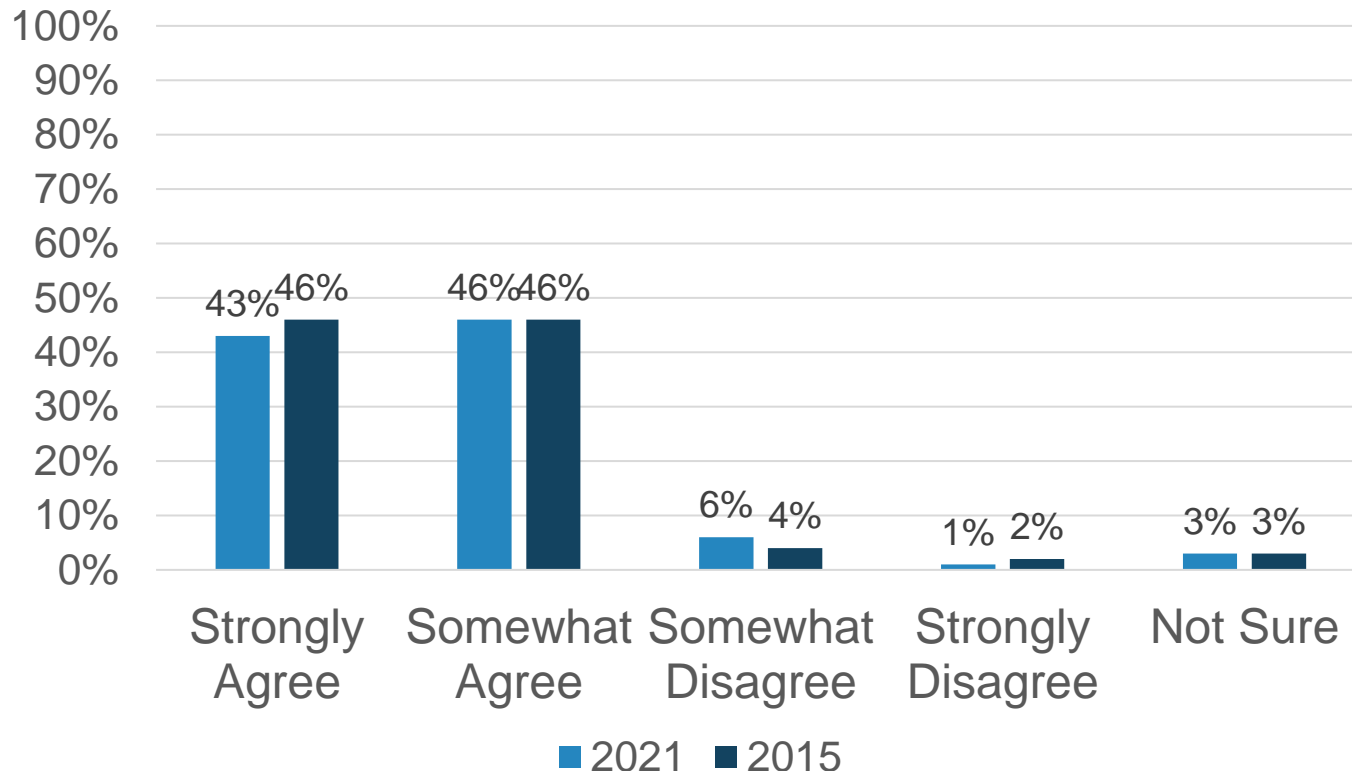


Lifeway research

Q26: "The role of being a pastor is frequently overwhelming."

Pastors agree they invest in processes and behaviors to prevent conflict went from 92% to 89%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

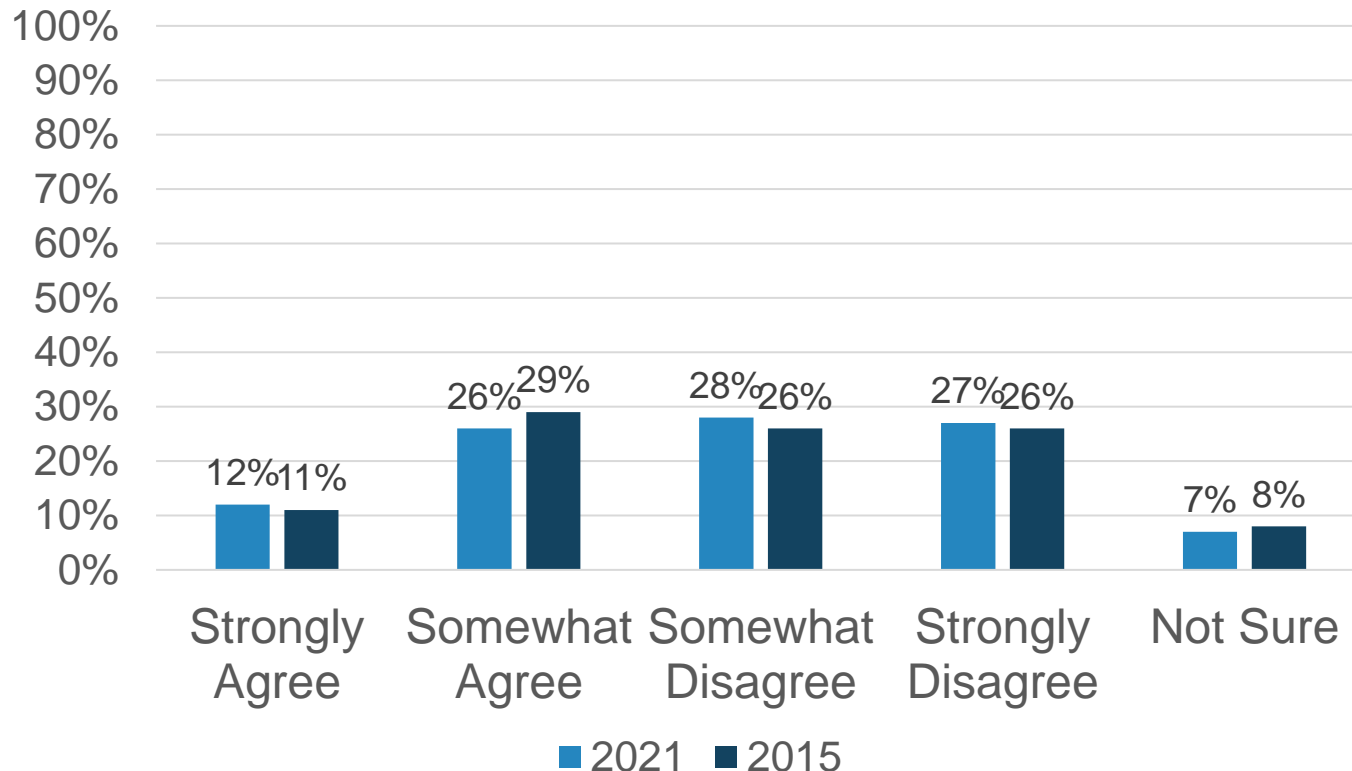


Lifeway research

Q27: "I invest in processes and behaviors to prevent conflict."

Pastors who agree their church would not have achieved the progress it has without them is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

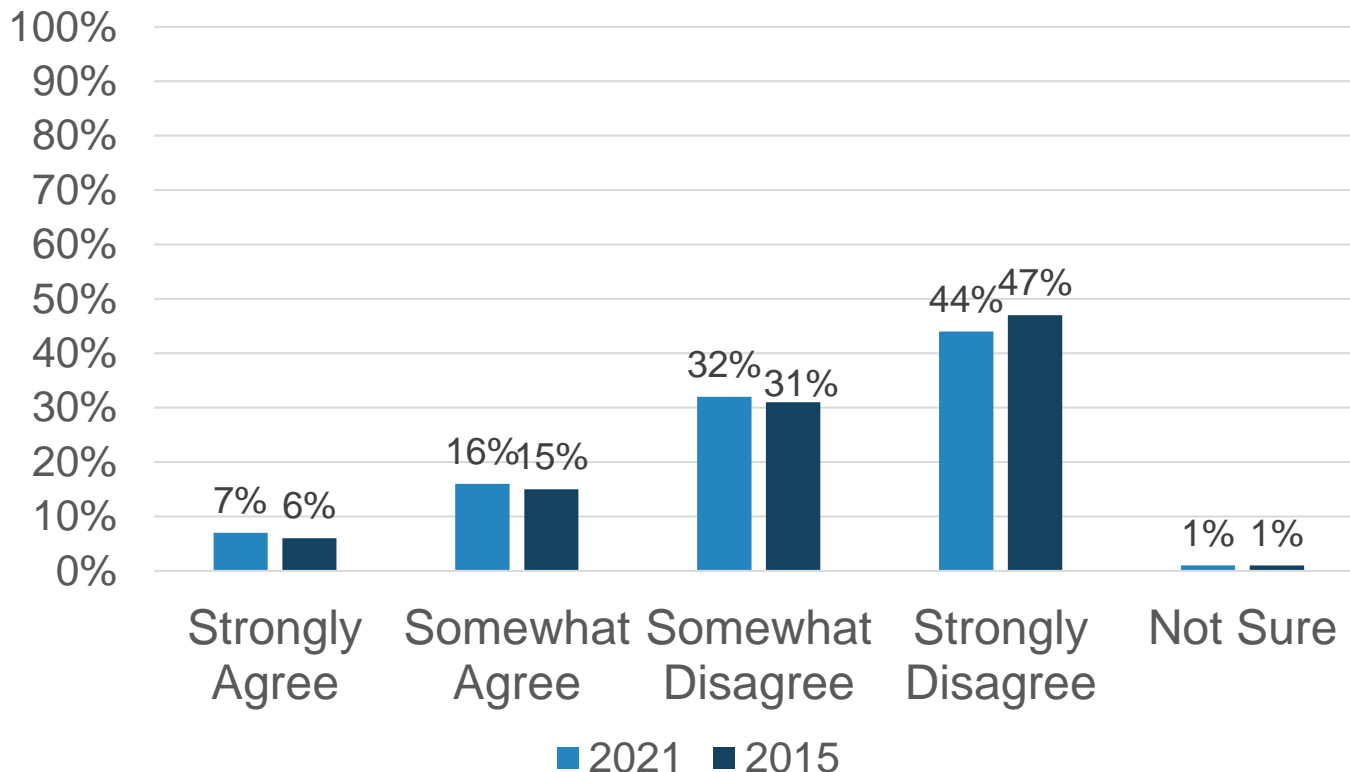


Lifeway research

Q28: "This church would not have achieved the progress it has without me."

Pastors who agree their church has unrealistic expectations of them is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

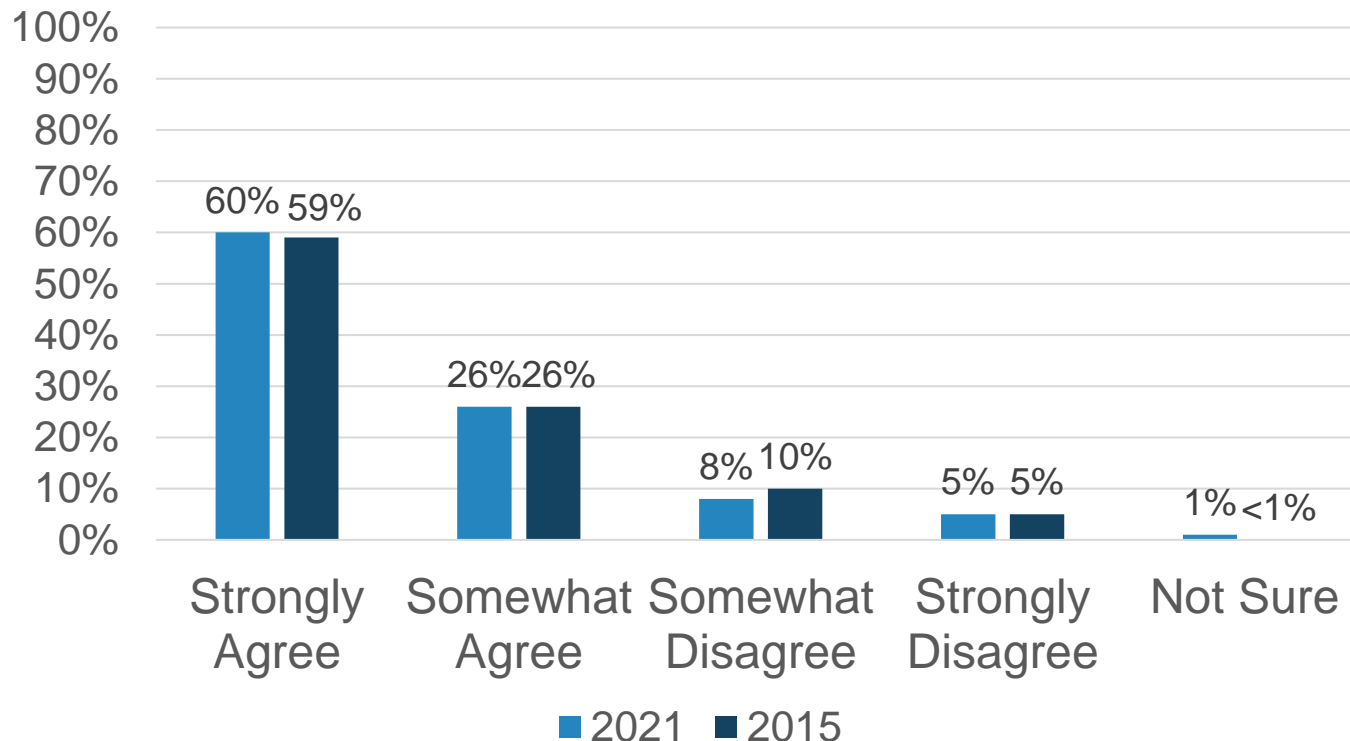


Lifeway research

Q29: "My church has unrealistic expectations of me."

The number of pastors who agree they “unplug” from ministerial work and have a day of rest at least one day a week is unchanged

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

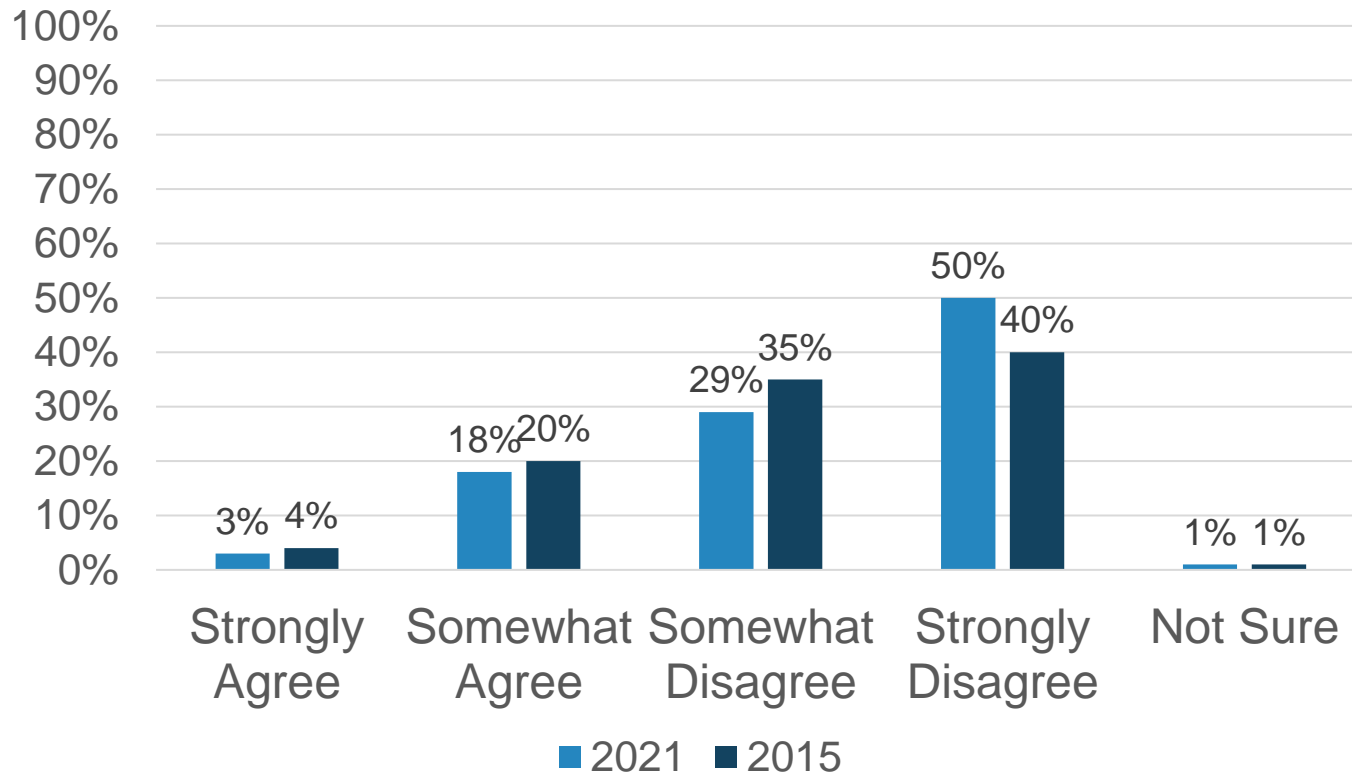


Lifeway research

Q30: “At least one day a week I “unplug” from ministerial work and have a day of rest.”

Pastors who frequently get irritated with people at their church decreased from 24% to 21%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

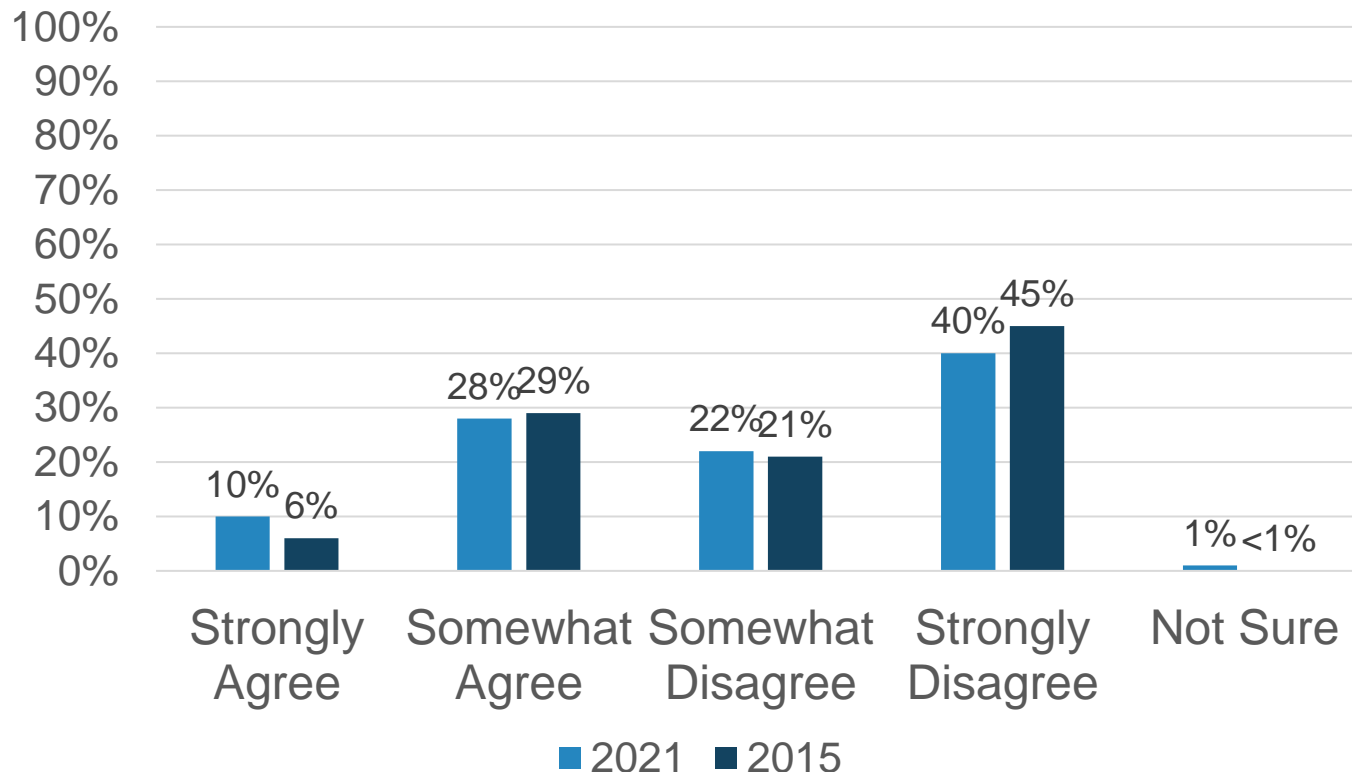


Lifeway research

Q32: "I frequently get irritated with people at the church."

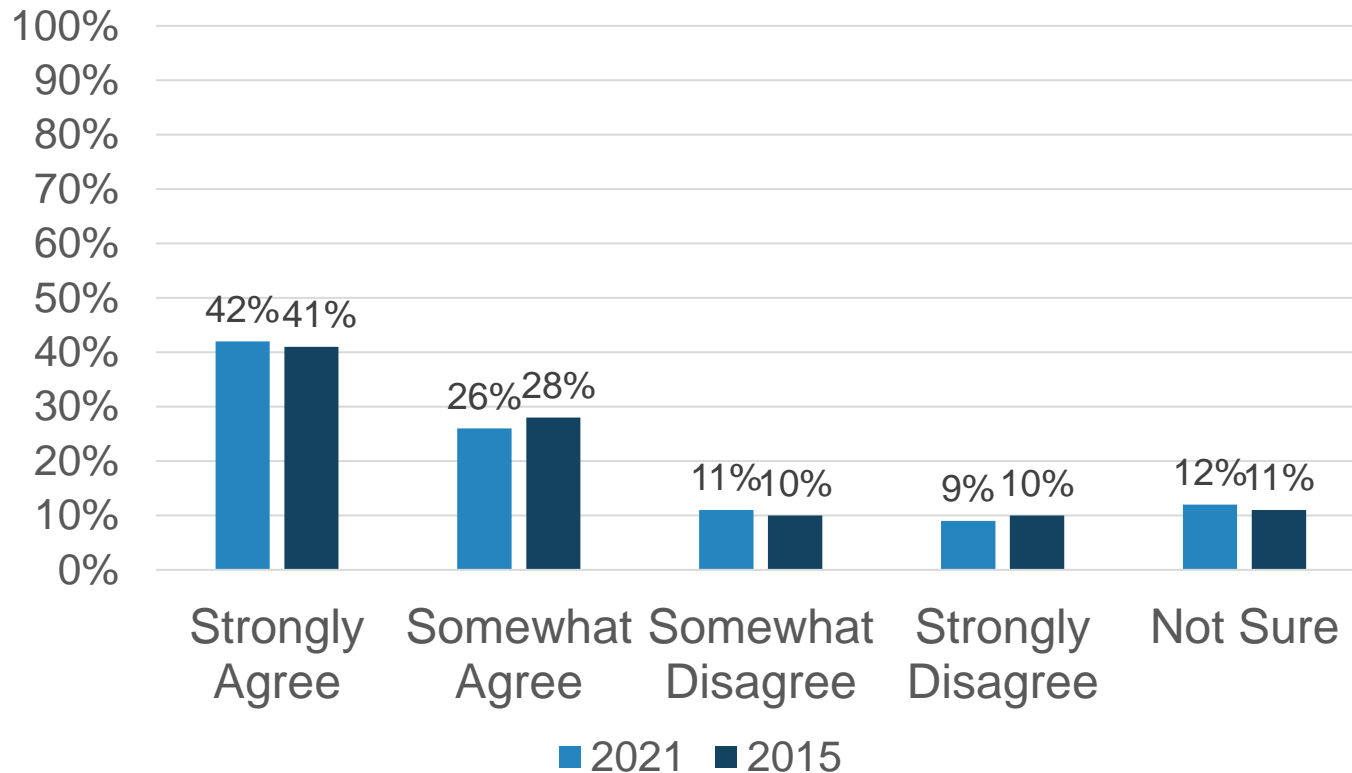
Pastors who agree they feel isolated as a pastor is unchanged (but strong agreement increased)

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



The same number of pastors, 1 in 5, disagree that the church accurately described the church before they arrived

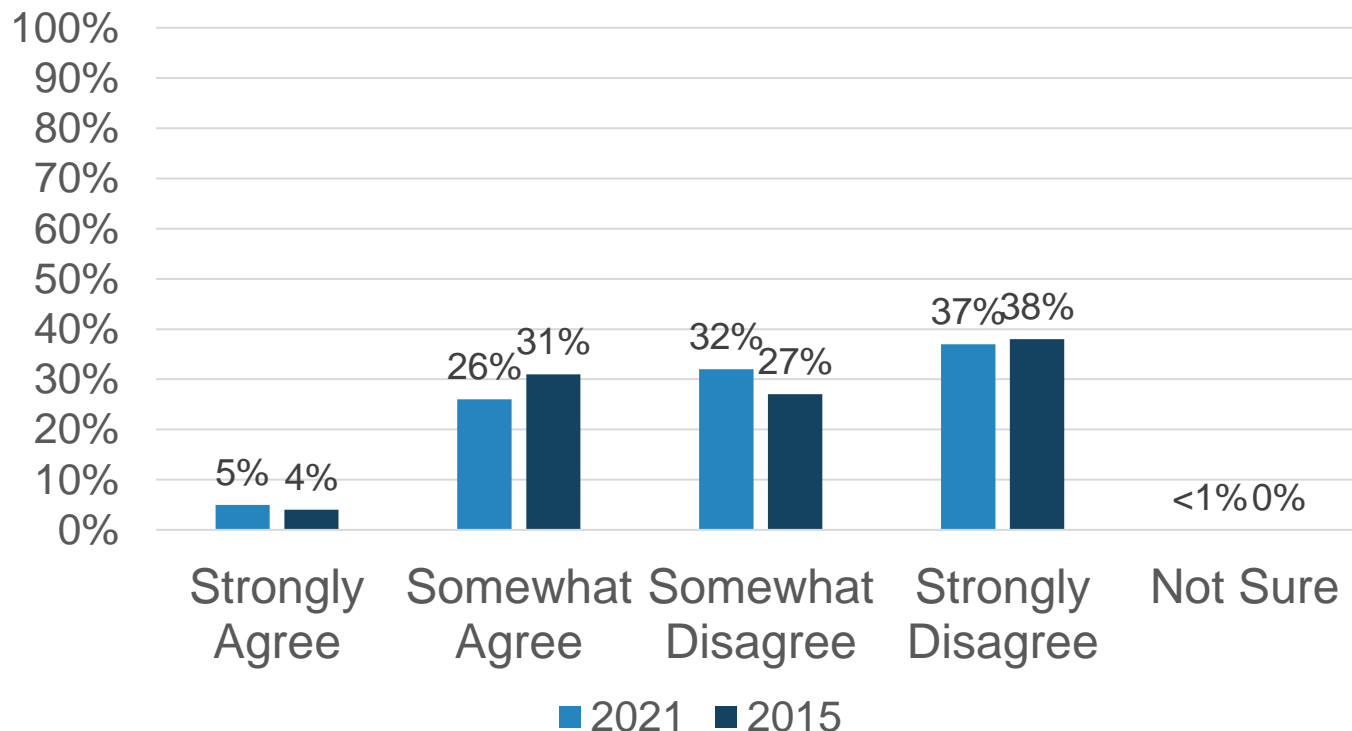
Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

The number of pastors who agree the demands of ministry keep them from spending time with their family decreased from 35% to 31%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

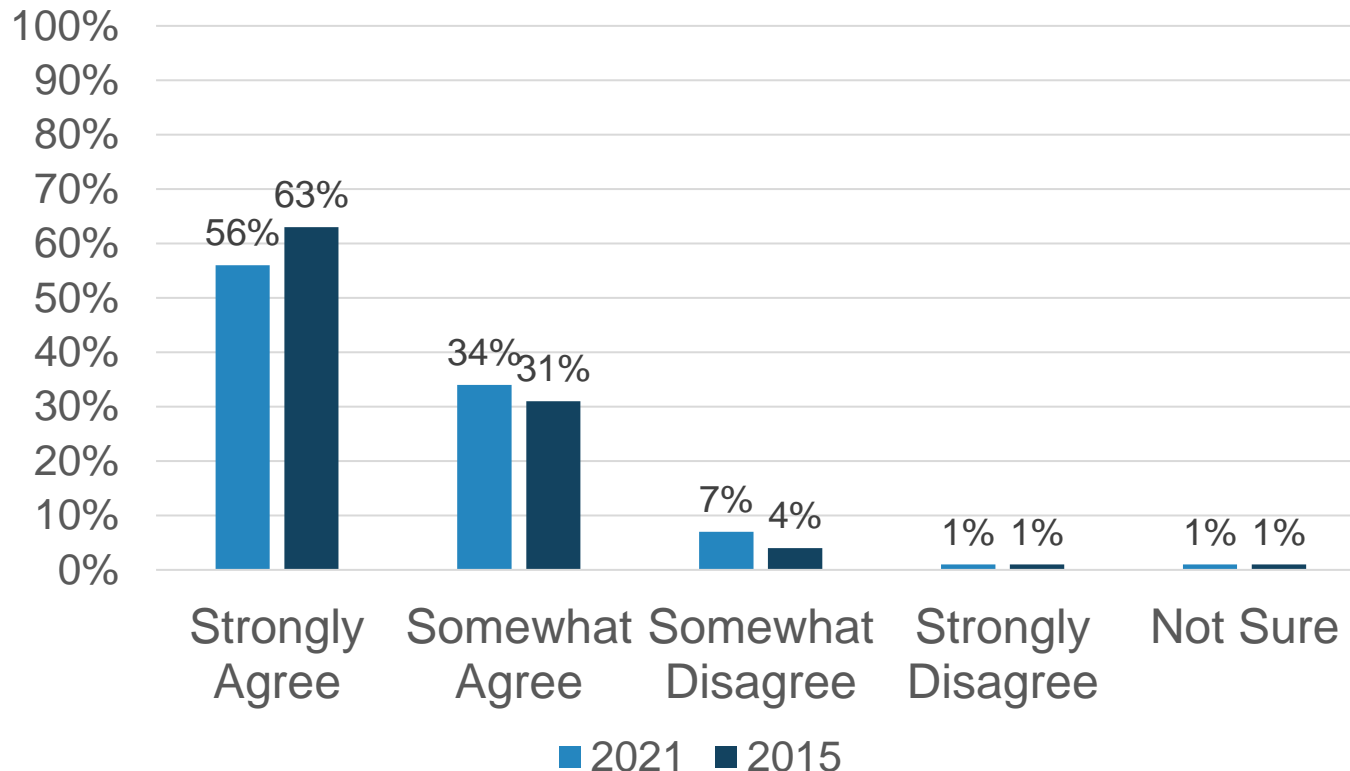


Lifeway research

Q35: "The demands of ministry keep me from spending time with my family."

The percentage of married pastors who agree their spouse is enthusiastic about life in ministry together decreased from 94% to 91%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

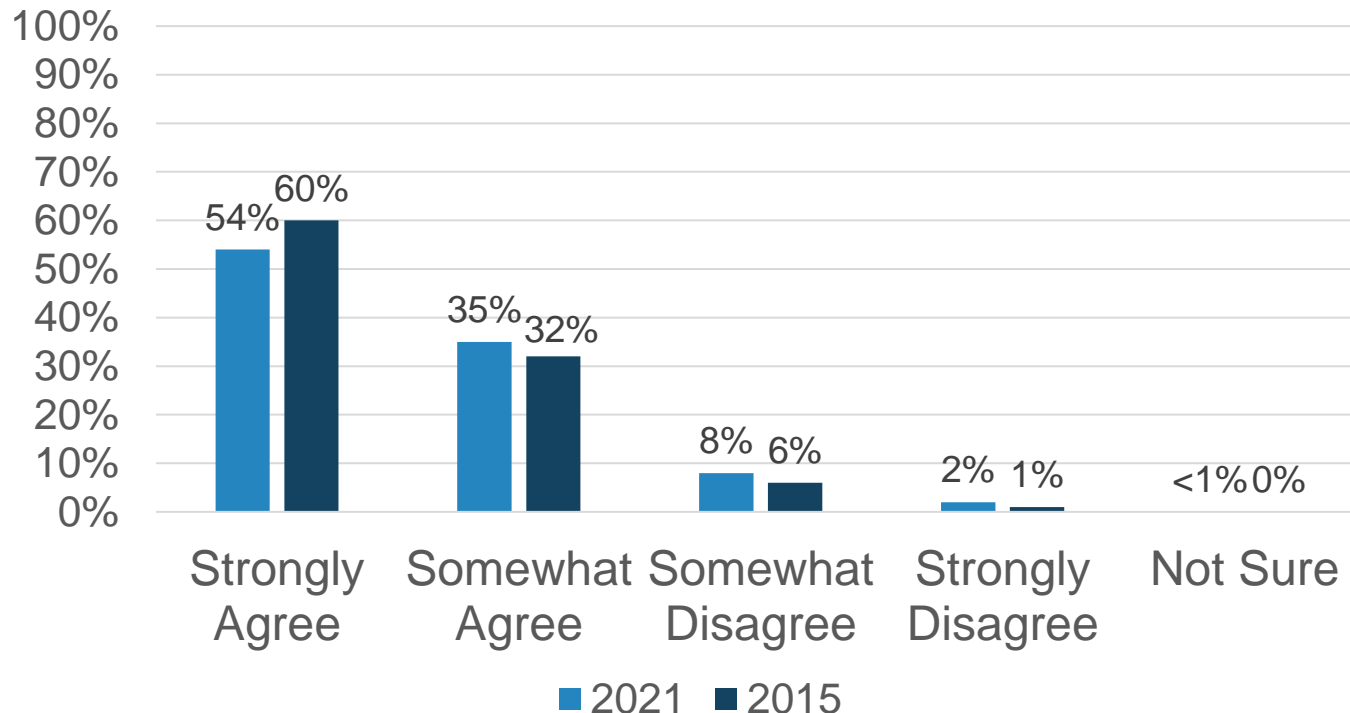


Lifeway research

Q36: "My spouse is enthusiastic about our life in ministry together."

Pastors who agree their family regularly receives genuine encouragement from the church decreased slightly (92% to 90%)

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

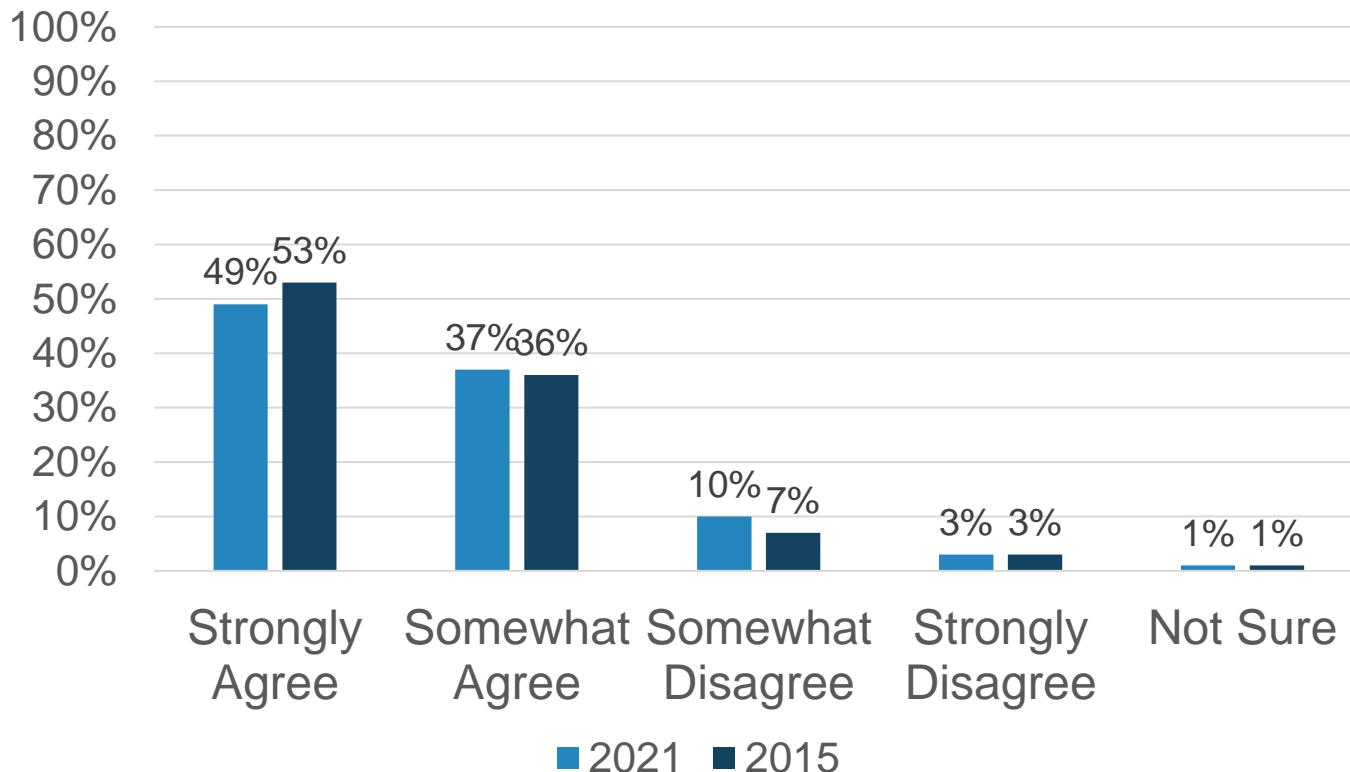


Lifewayresearch

Q37: "My congregation regularly provides my family with genuine encouragement."

Pastors who agree they feel free to say “no” when expectations are unrealistic decreased from 89% to 86%

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

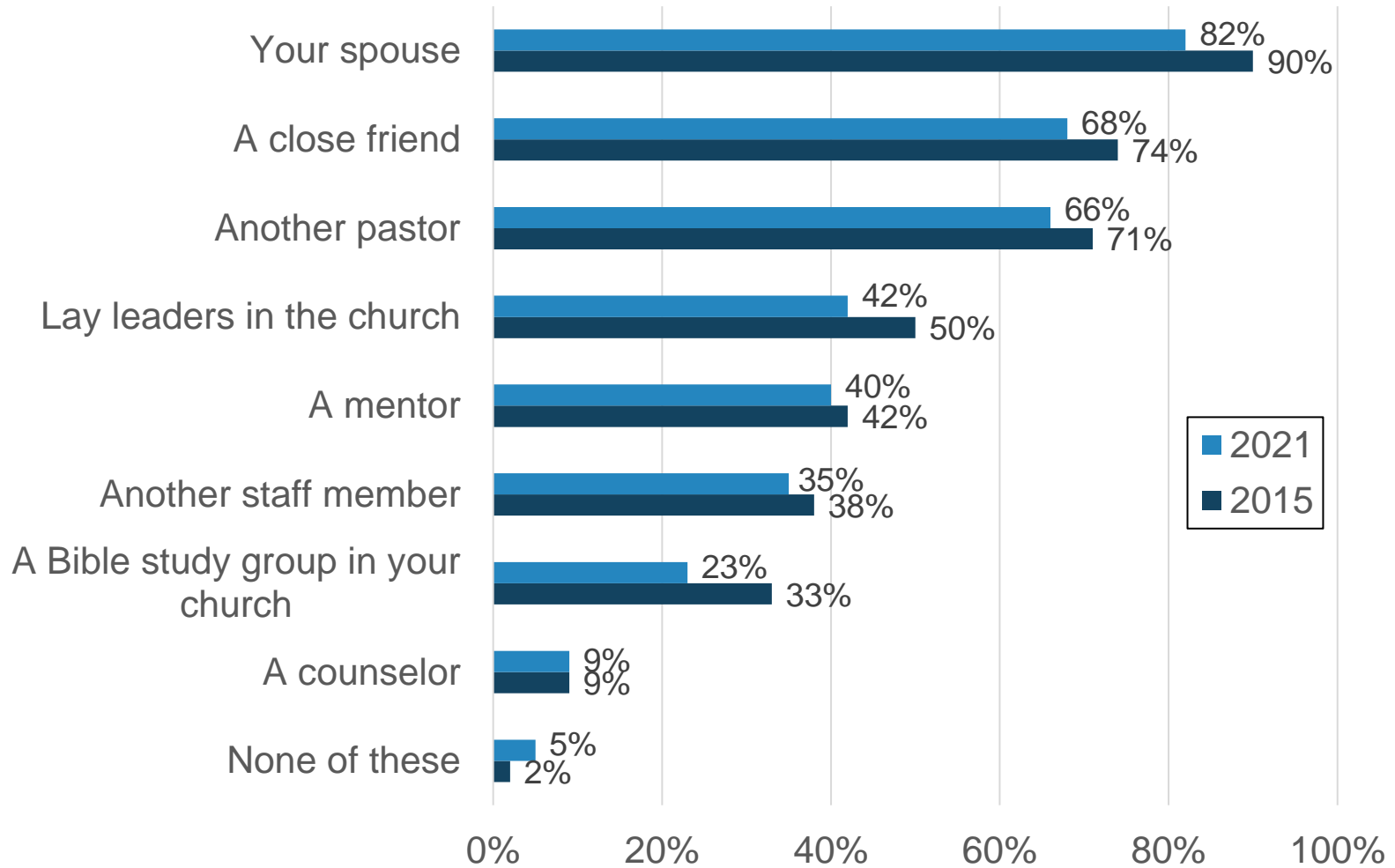


Lifeway research

Q38: “I feel free to say ‘no’ when expectations of me are unrealistic.”

Most pastors meet to share struggles with their spouse, close friend, or another pastor in both 2015 & 2021

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors

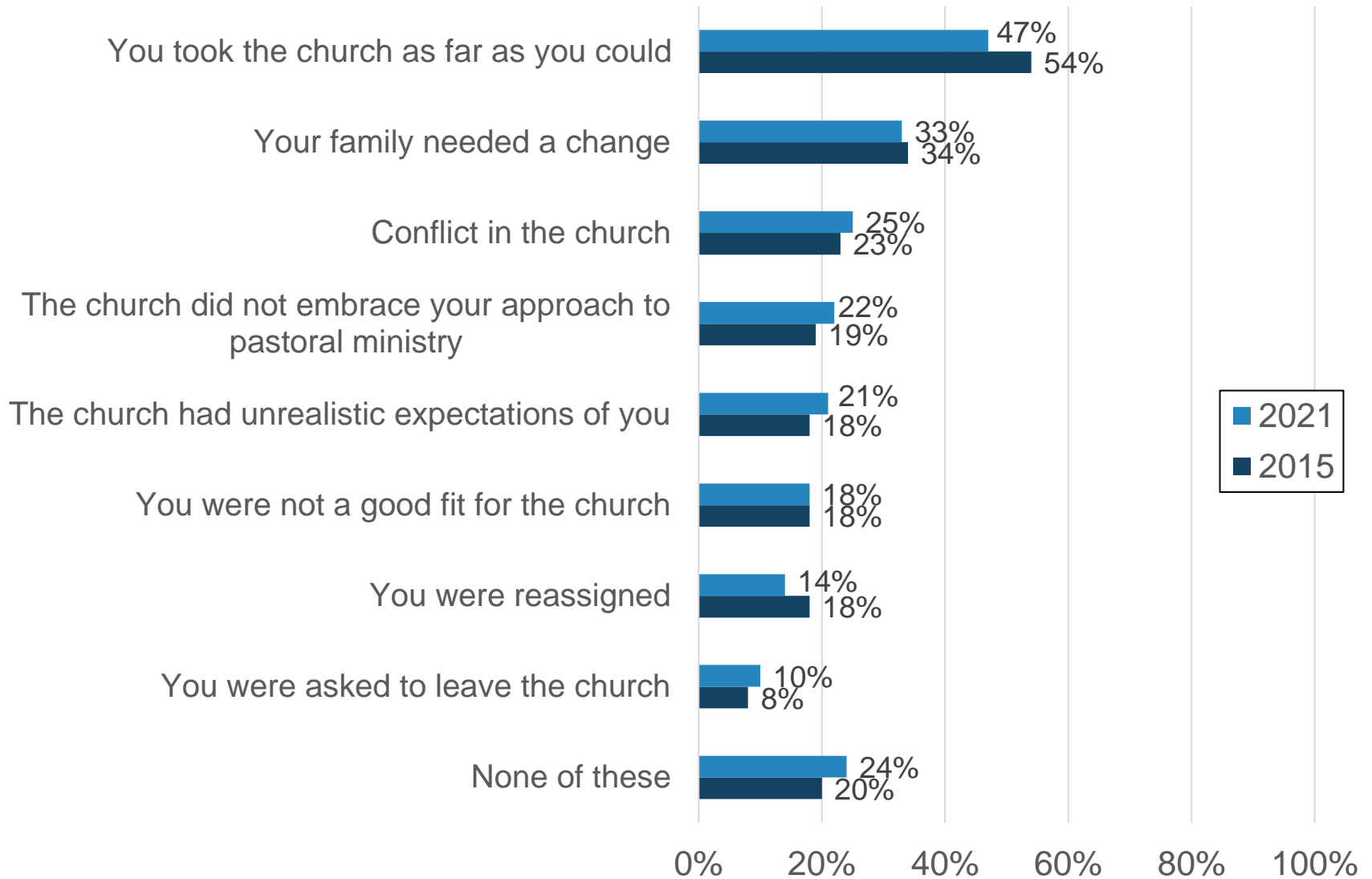


Not sure <1%

Lifeway research

Reasons pastors left their last church

Among Evangelical and Black Protestant Pastors



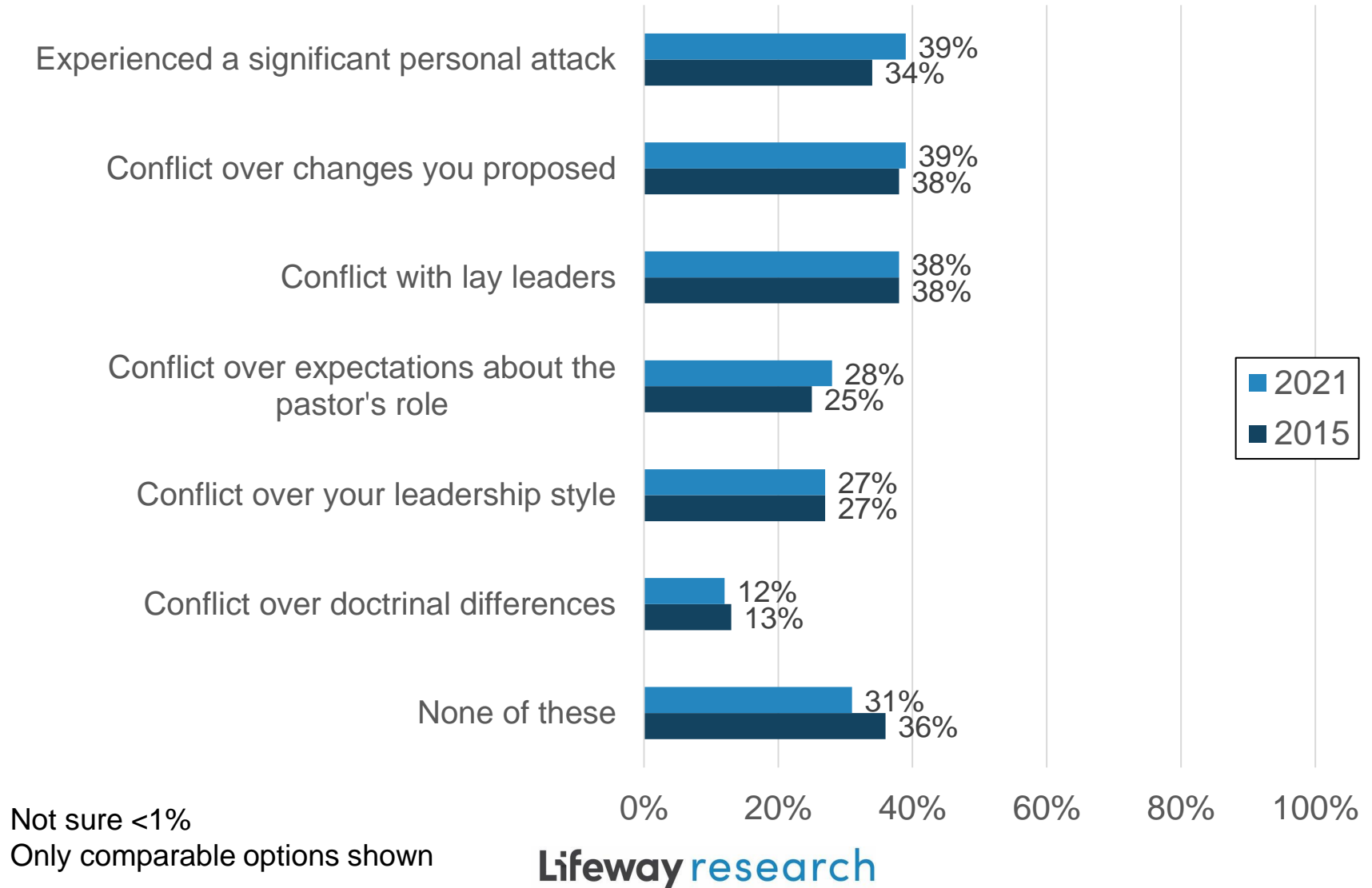
Not sure <1%

Lifeway research

Q40: "Which of the following reasons describe why you left your last church? (Select all that apply)"

More pastors experienced a significant personal attack (39% v. 34%)

Among Pastors who Served in a Previous Church



Q41: "Which of the following types of conflict did you personally experience as pastor in your last church? (Select all that apply)"

Pastor Attrition Study 2021 compared to 2015

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Lifeway research