Part 2

Pastors' Views on Discipleship

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS

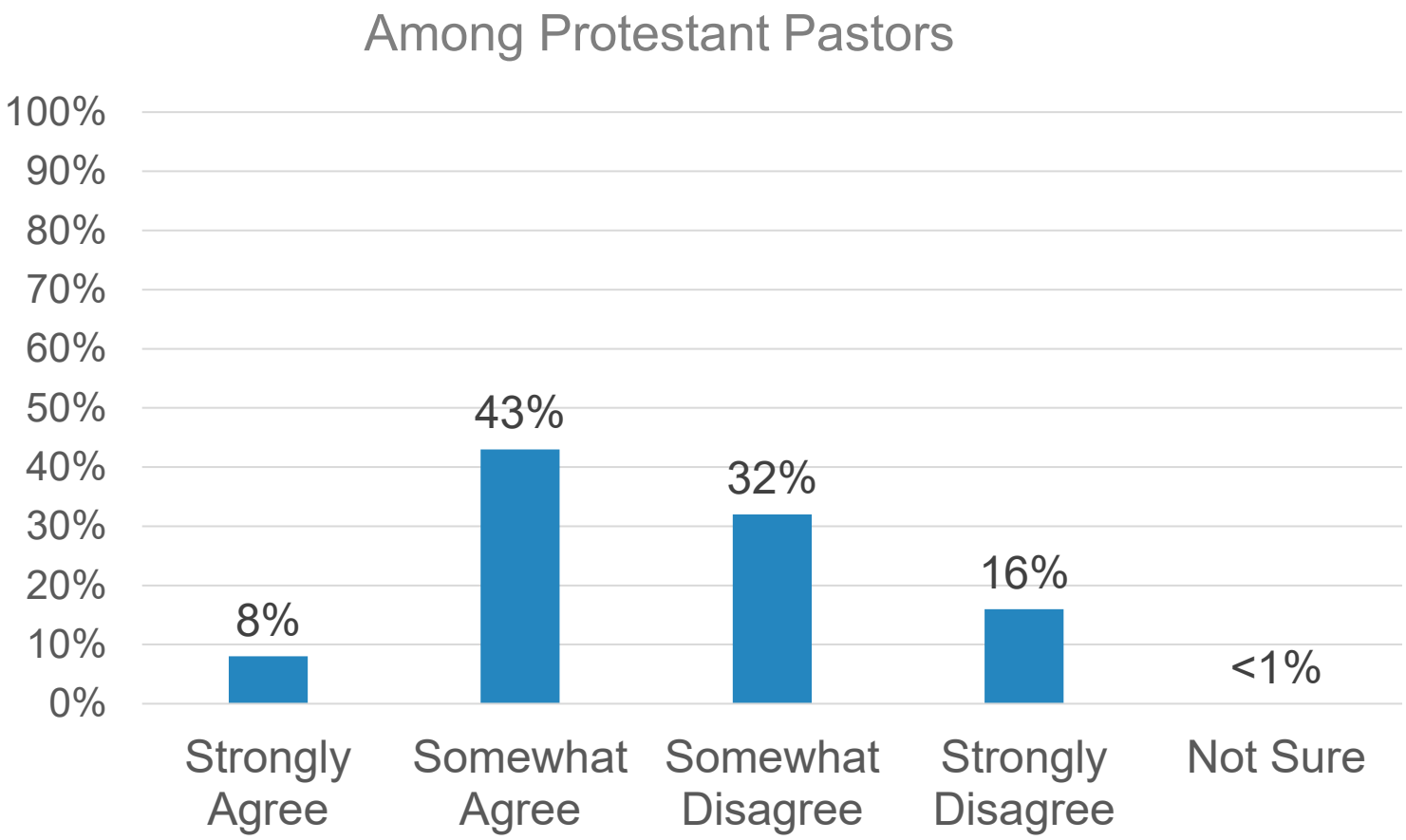
Lifeway research

Methodology

- The survey of 2,620 Protestant pastors was conducted September 10-30, 2024
- Invitations were emailed to a probability sample of Protestant pastors who were recruited by phone using random samples selected from all Protestant churches.
- An oversample of Southern Baptist pastors were randomly selected from all SBC churches with pastor and an email listed. The 2,176 Baptist responses were weighted down to reflect their correct proportion of Protestant churches.
- Each survey was completed by the senior pastor, minister or priest at the church
- Responses were weighted by region, church size, and denominational category to more accurately reflect the population
- The completed sample is 2,620 surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed ±2.05% This margin of error accounts for the effect of weighting
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups

Lifeway research

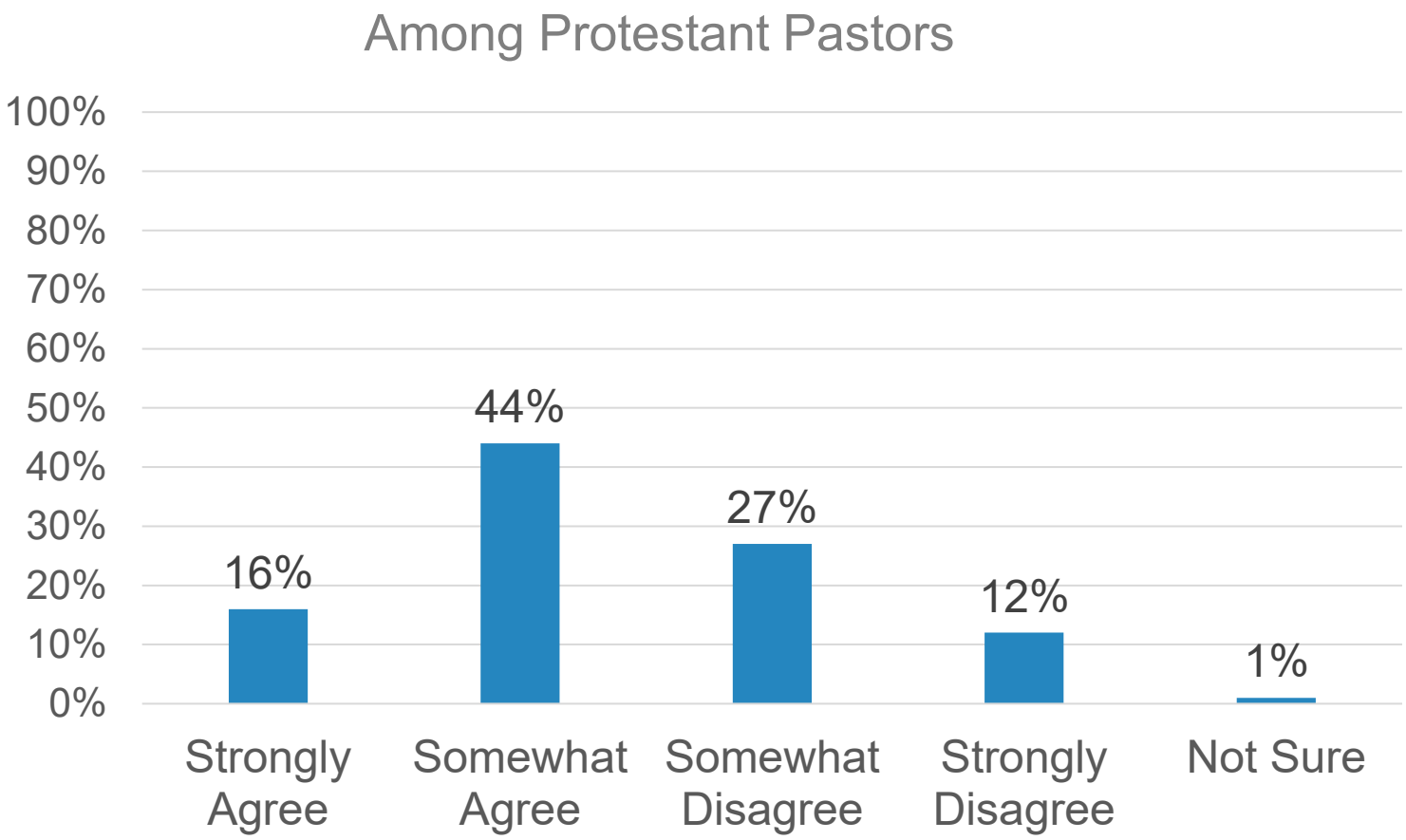
52% are satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in their church



Lifeway research

Q9: "I am satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in our local church." n=2,620

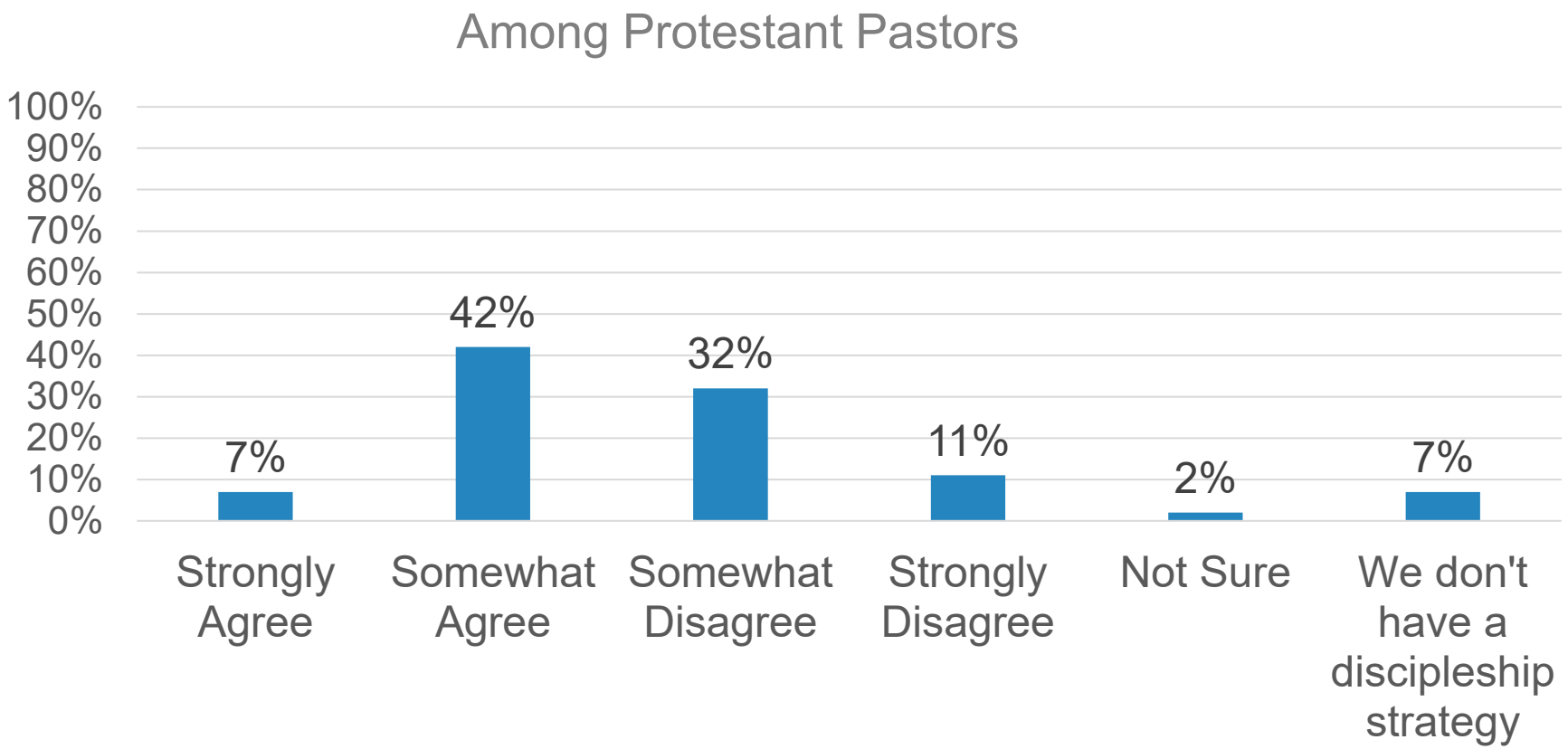
61% say their congregation regularly invites people to church



Lifeway research

Q10: "Our congregation is regularly inviting people they meet to church." n=2,620

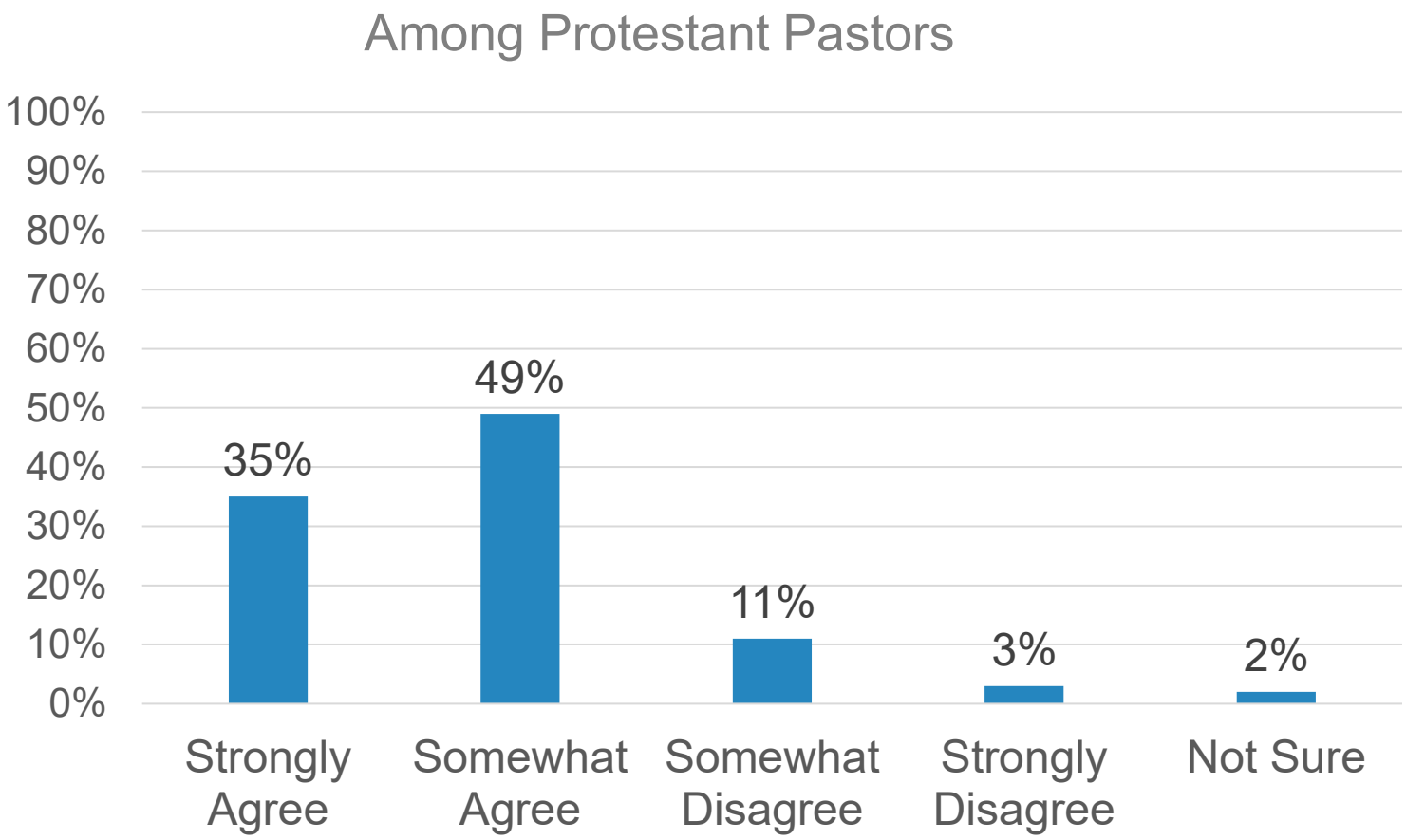
49% believe their church discipleship strategy is effective



Lifeway research

Q11: "Our church discipleship strategy is effective." n=2,620

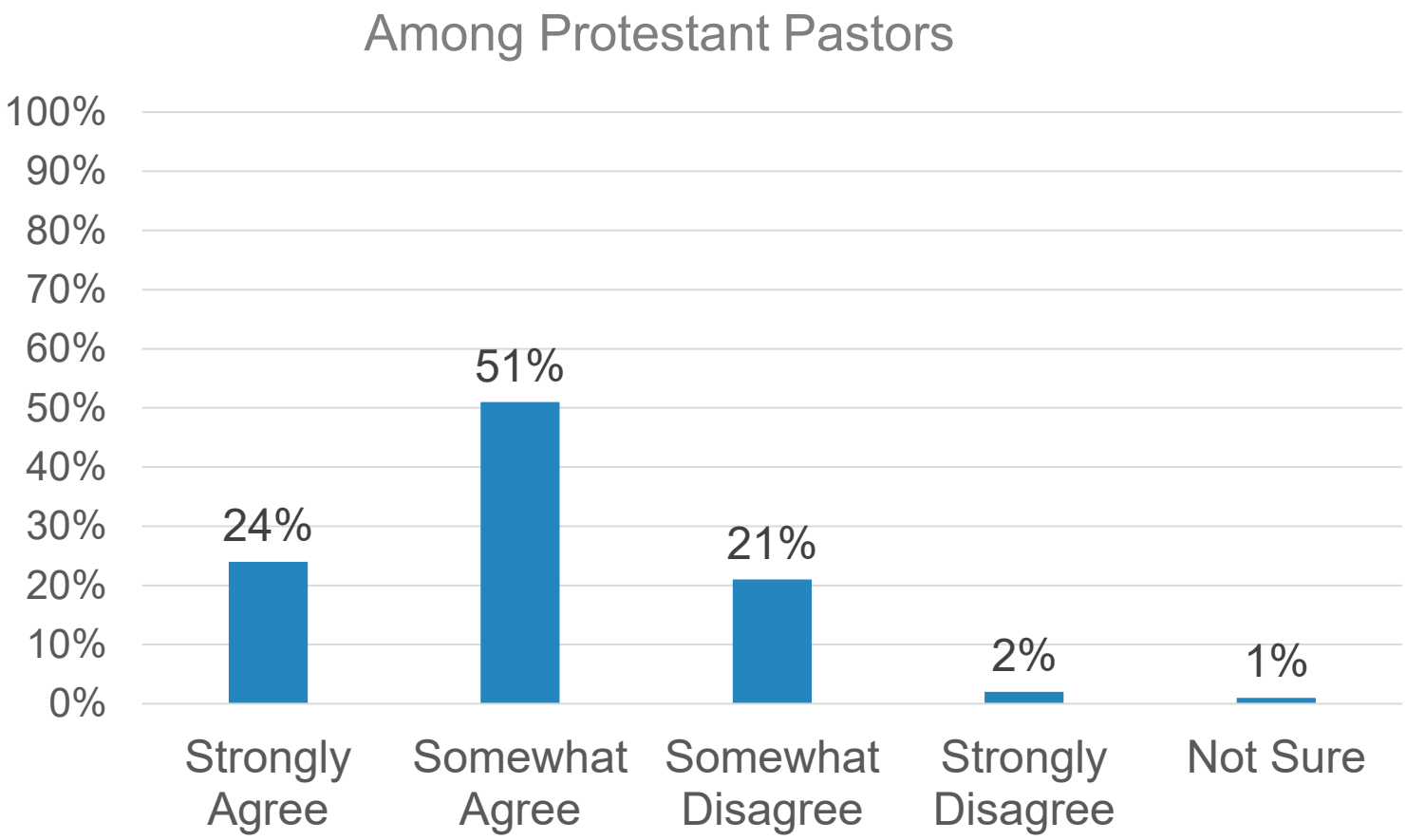
84% say their church emphasizes the discipleship principles each believer should live out



Lifeway research

Q15: "Our church emphasizes the discipleship principles each believer should live out." n=2,620

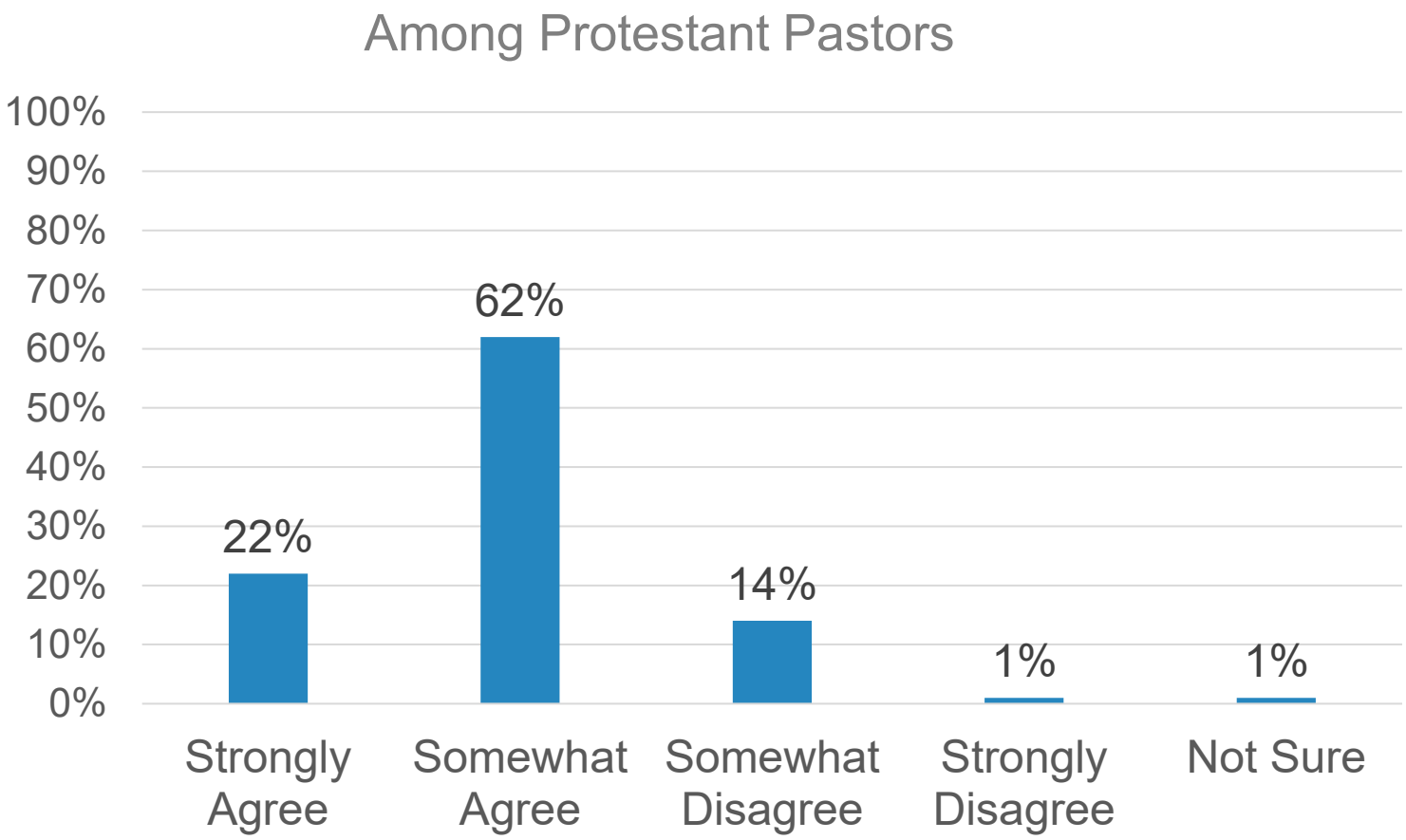
76% say their church creates environments that effectively encourage discipleship



Lifeway research

Q16: "As a church we create environments that effectively encourage discipleship." n=2,620

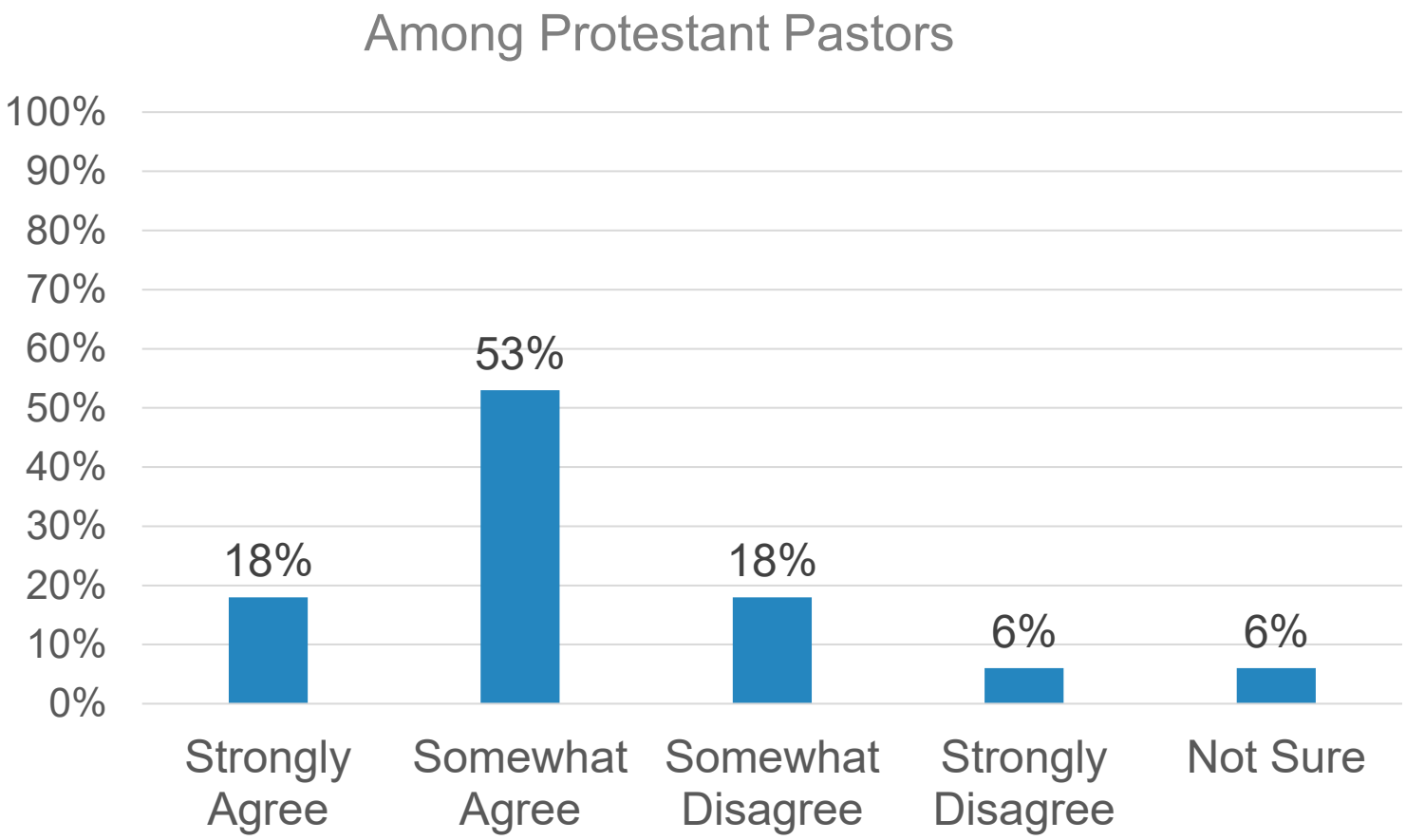
84% say their congregation is making significant progress in their spiritual development



Lifeway research

Q17: "Our congregation is making significant progress in their spiritual development.." n=2,620

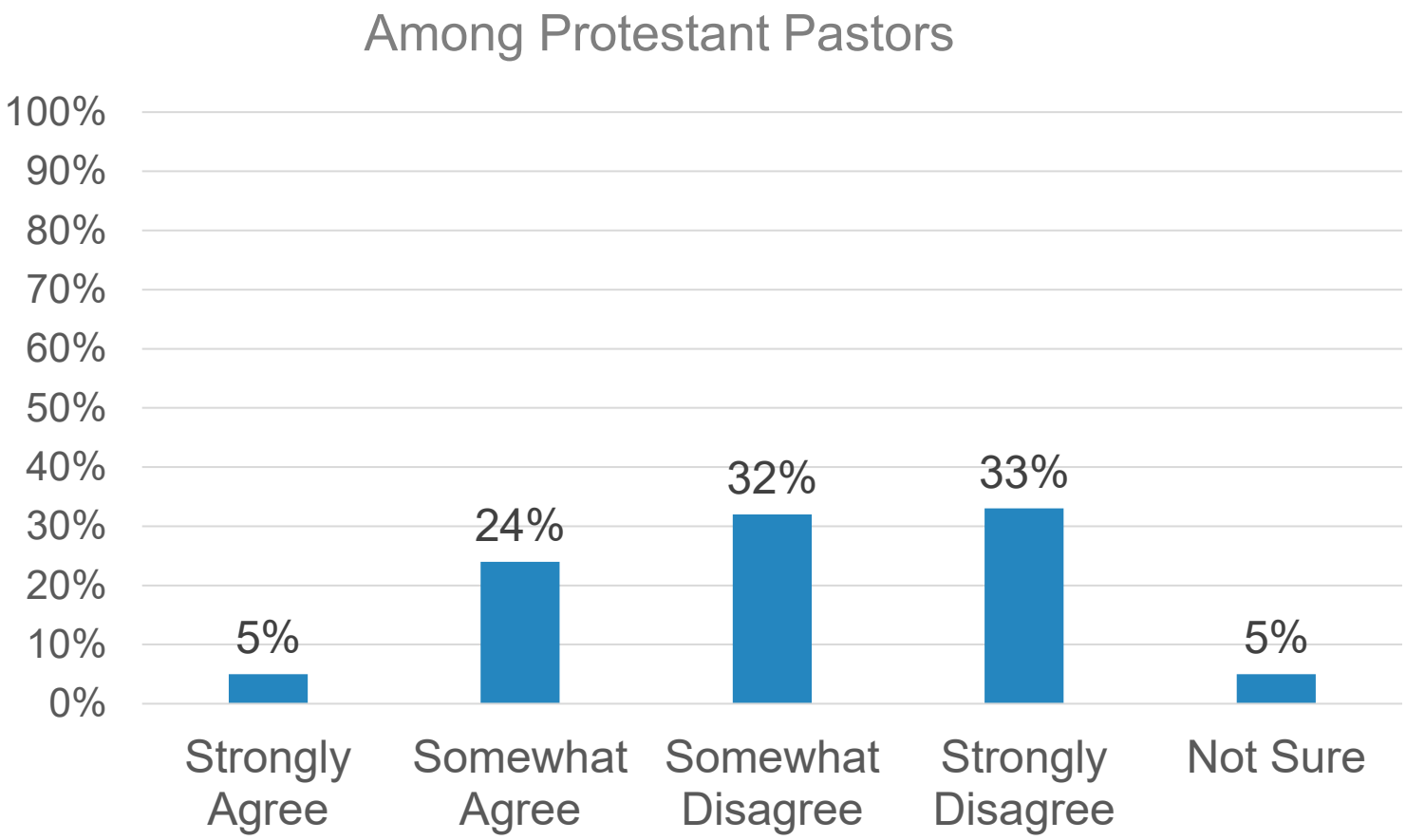
71% believe there are methods for measuring discipleship in a congregation



Lifeway research

Q18: "There are methods for measuring discipleship in a congregation." n=2,620

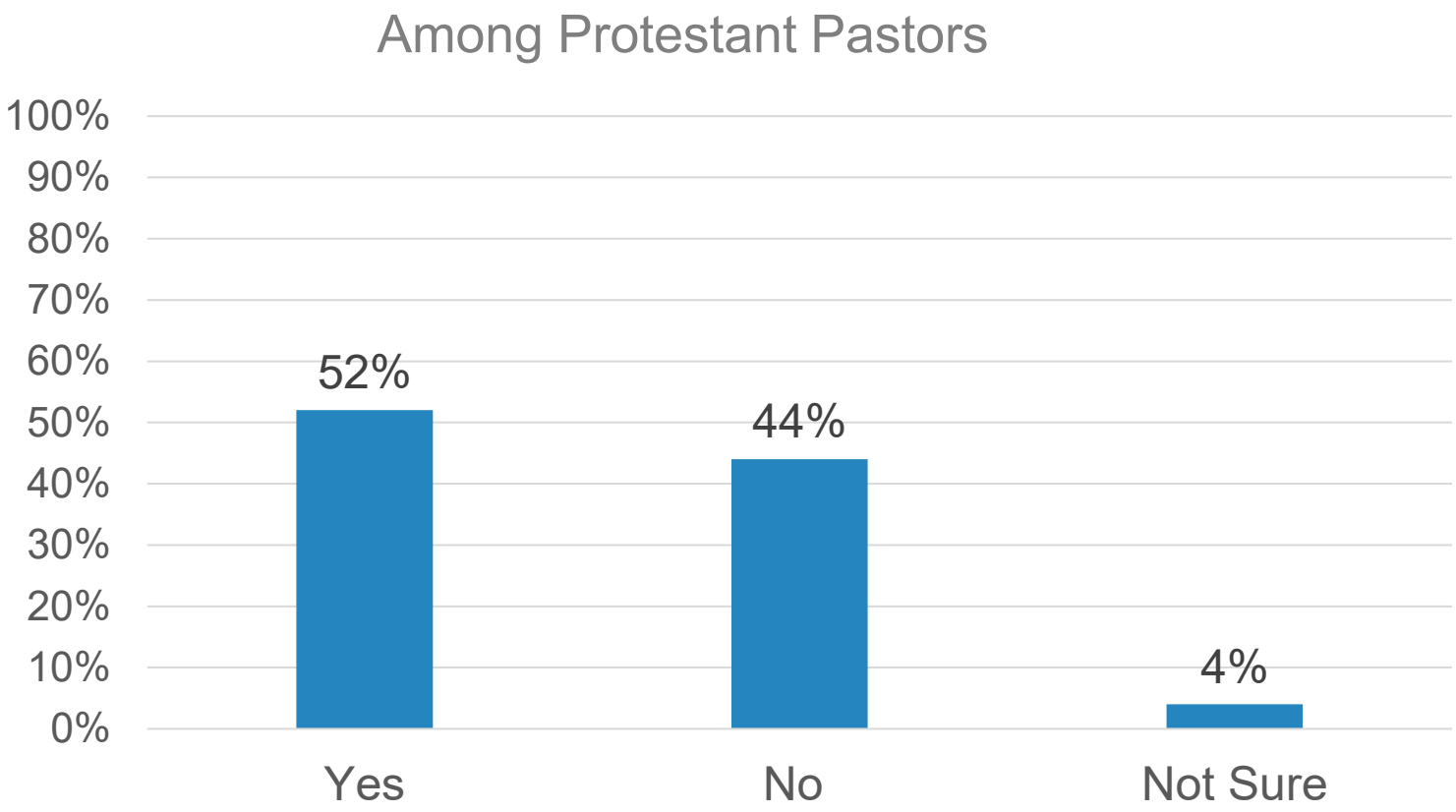
30% say their church has specific methods for measuring discipleship



Lifeway research

Q20: "My church has specific methods for measuring discipleship in our congregation." n=2,620

52% have an intentional plan for discipling individuals in their congregation and encouraging their spiritual growth

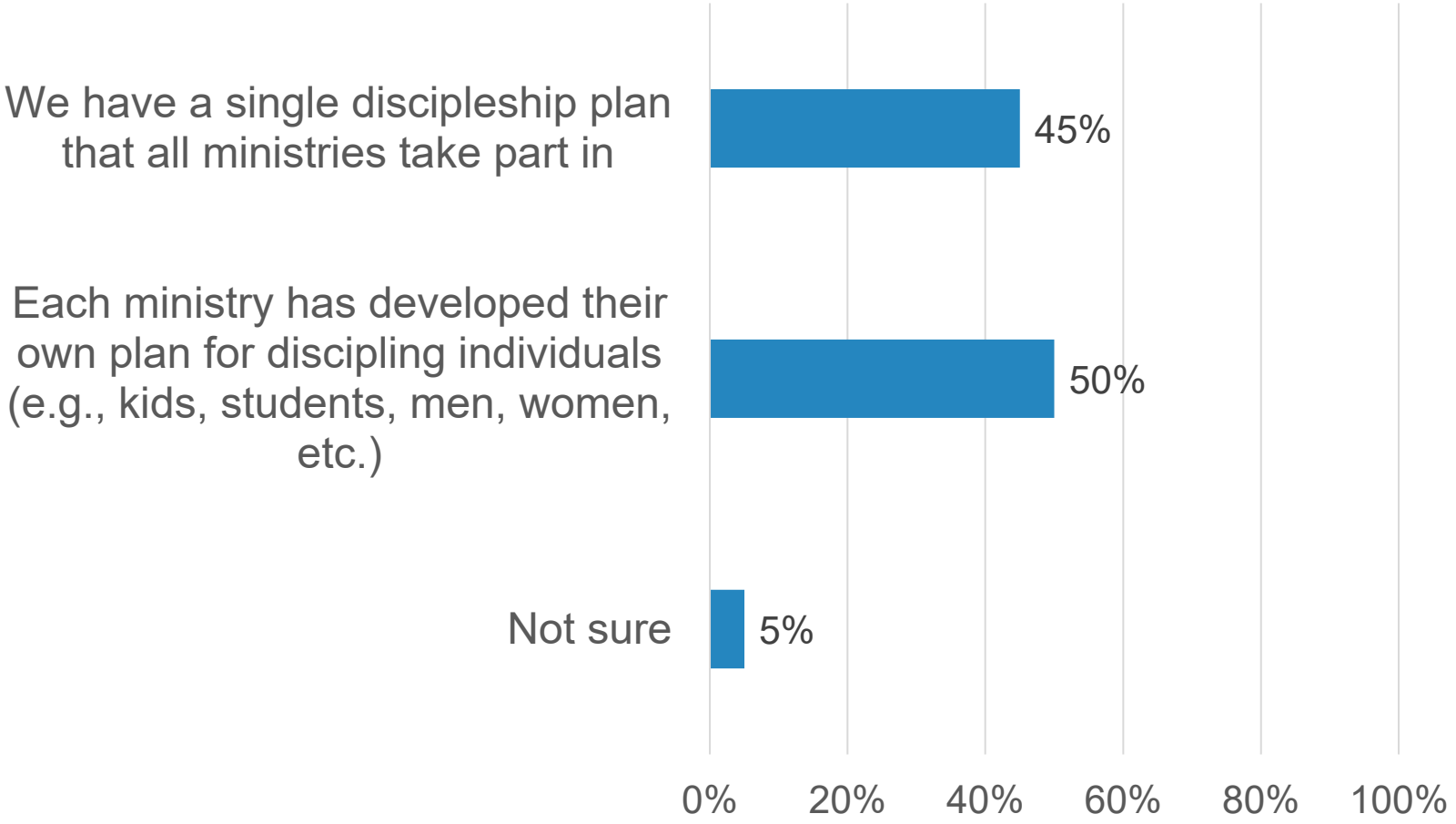


Lifeway research

Q21: "Does your church have an intentional plan for discipling individuals in your congregation and encouraging their spiritual growth?" n=2,620

Churches are split between having a single discipleship plan and ministries developing their own plan

Among Pastors With An Intentional Discipleship Plan

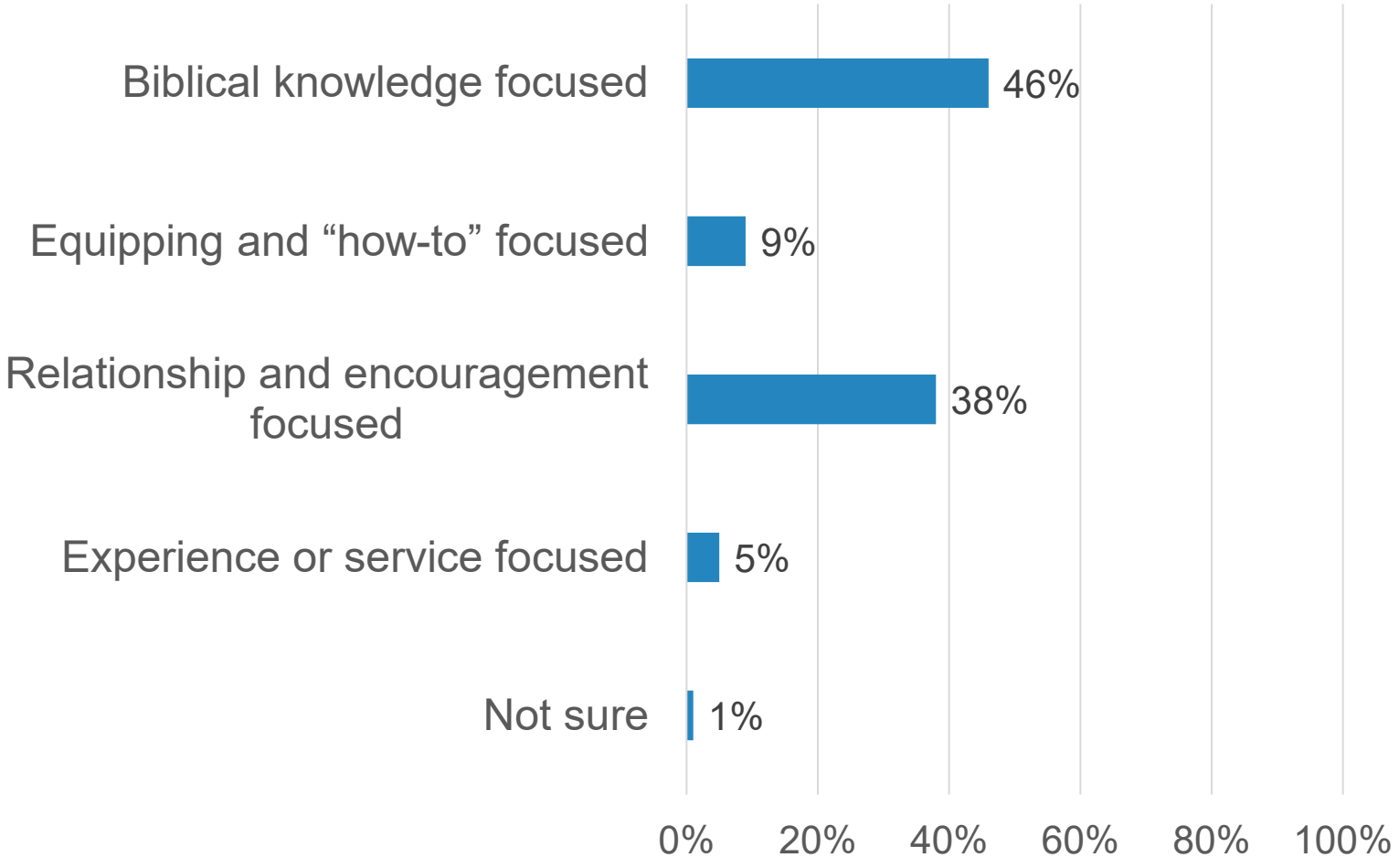


Lifeway research

Q22: "Which of the following describes your plan for discipling individuals in your congregation." n=1,467

“Biblical knowledge focused” is the first priority of the most churches’ discipleship plans

Among Pastors With An Intentional Discipleship Plan

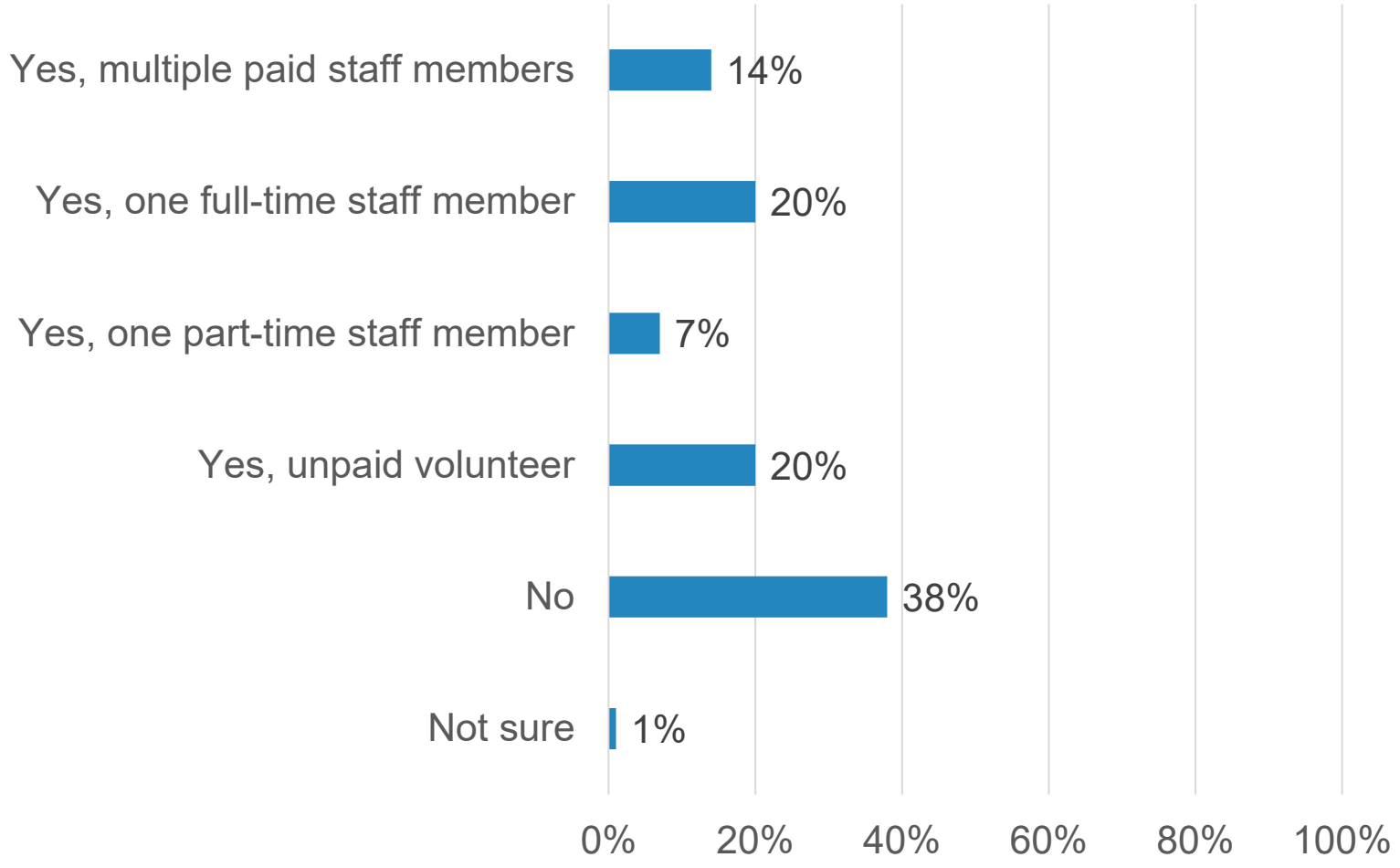


Lifeway research

Q23: “Which of the following best describes the first priority of the activities included in your church’s plan for discipling individuals and encouraging spiritual growth? (Select One)” n=1.467

61% have specific individual(s) responsible for all of their church's discipleship programs

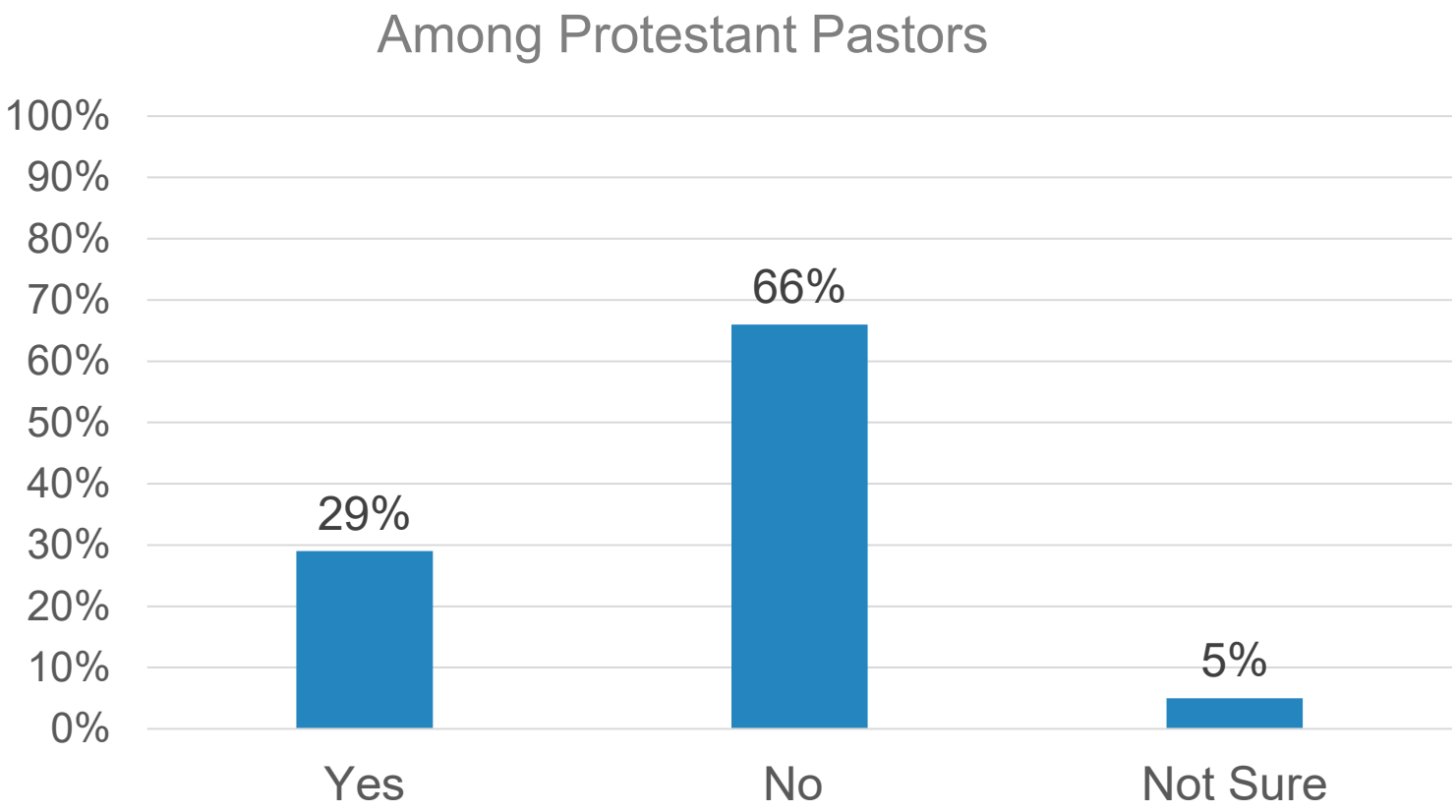
Among Protestant Pastors



Lifeway research

Q29: "Does your church have a specific individual responsible for each or all of your discipleship programs? (Select one)" n=2,620

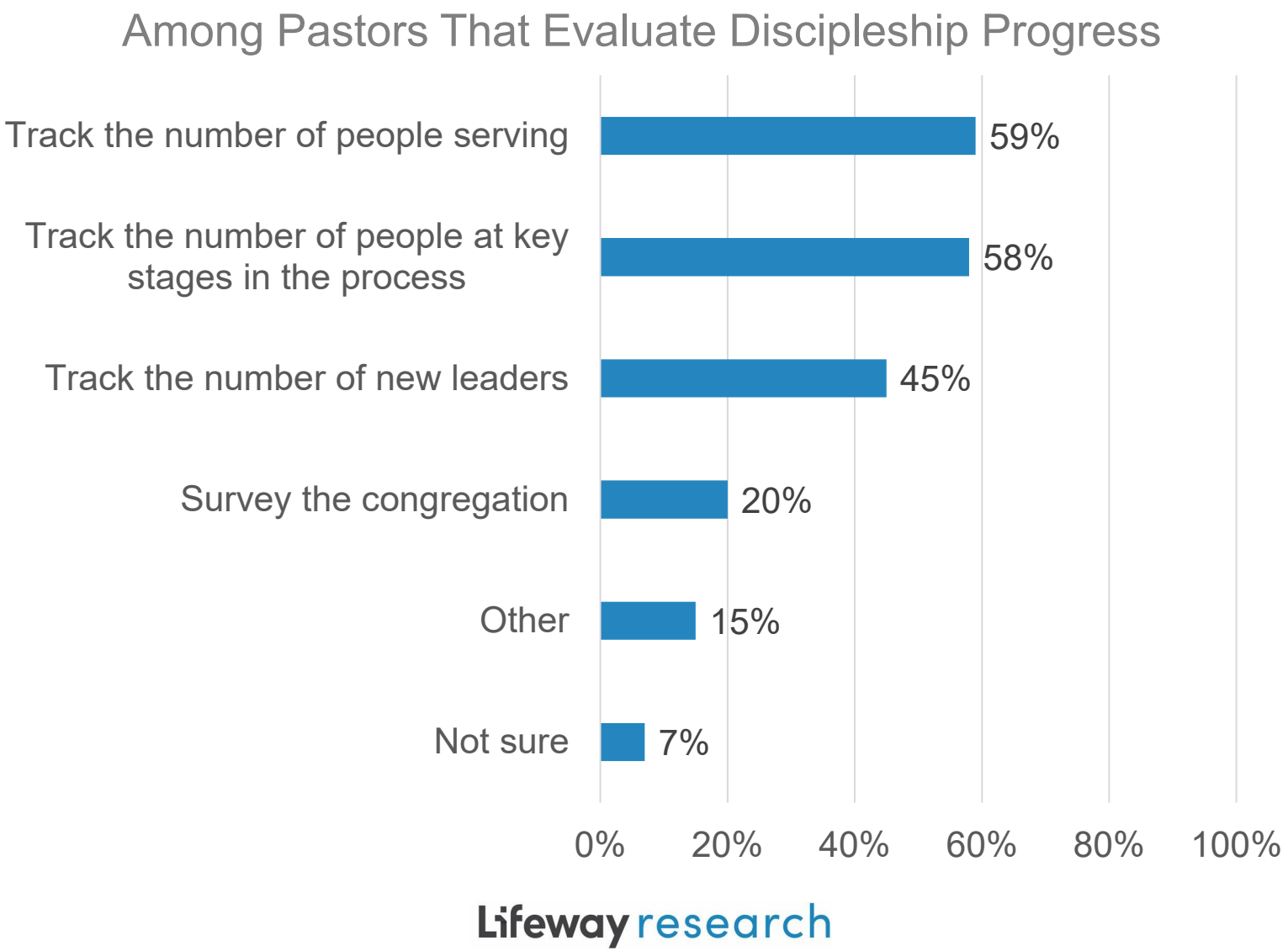
29% regularly evaluate discipleship progress among their congregation



Lifeway research

Q30: "Does your church regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?" n=2,620

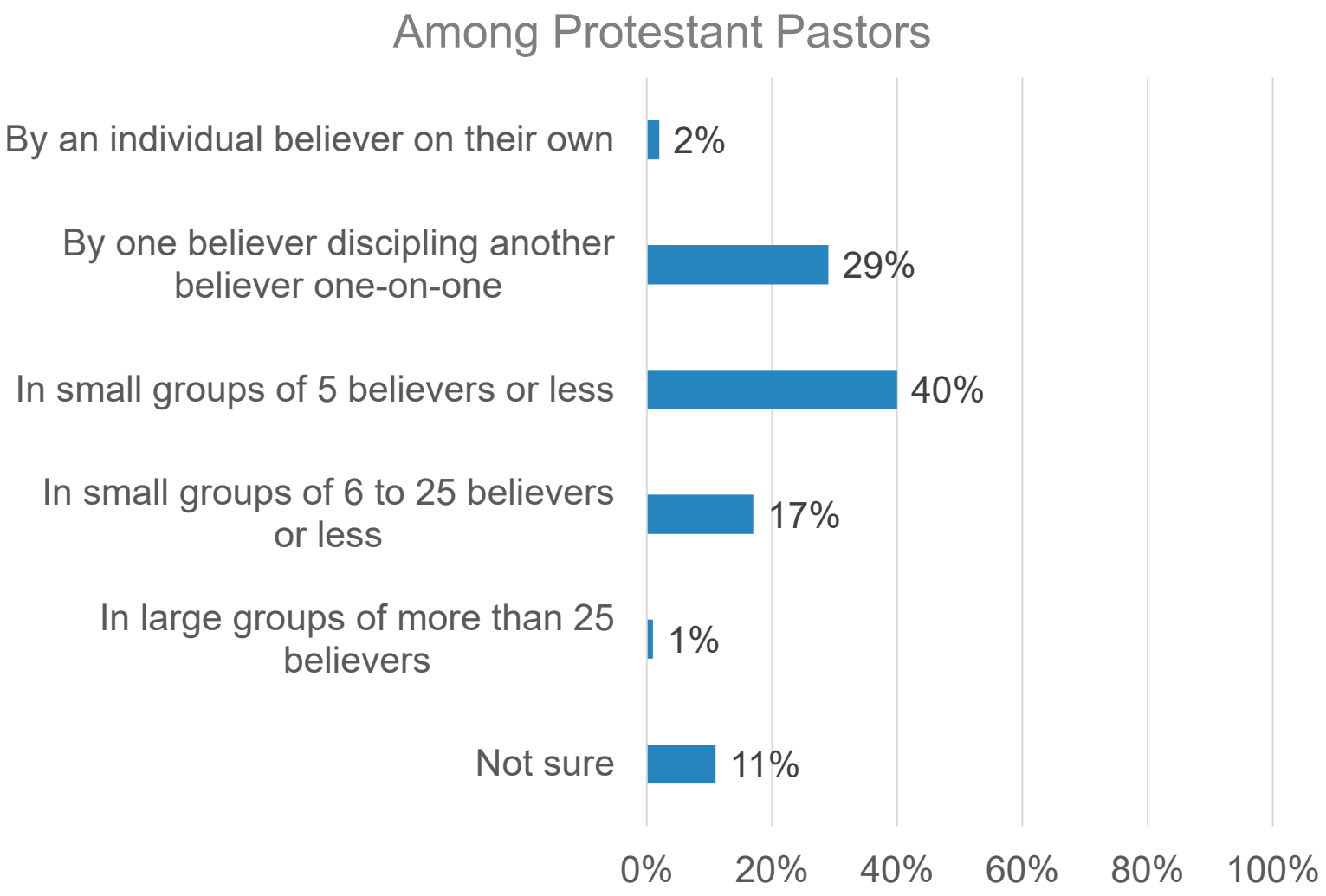
“Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?”



Lifeway research

Q31: “Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation? (Select all that apply)” n=799

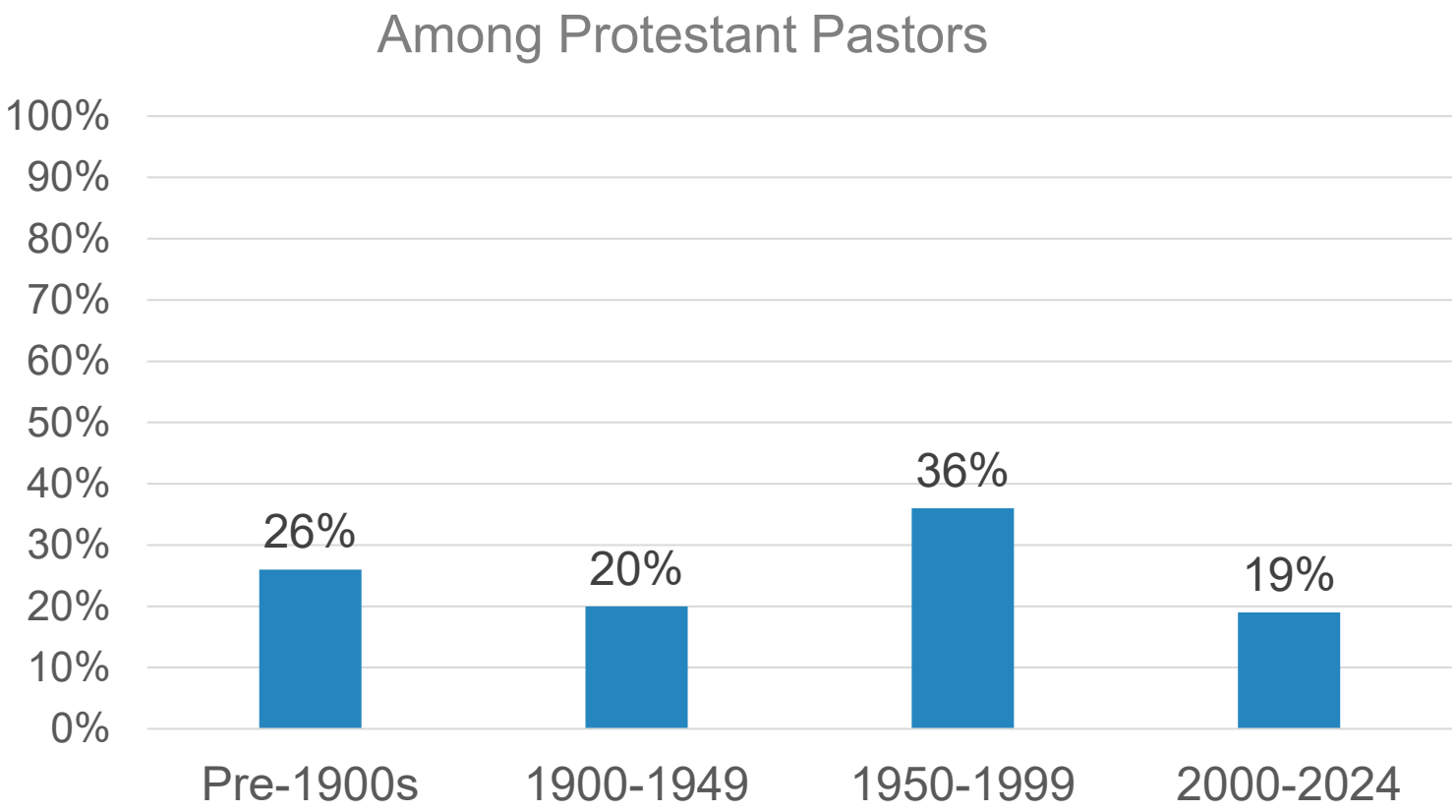
69% believe discipleship is best accomplished in a group of 2-5 believers



Lifeway research

Q32: "Discipleship is best accomplished… (Select One)" n=2,620

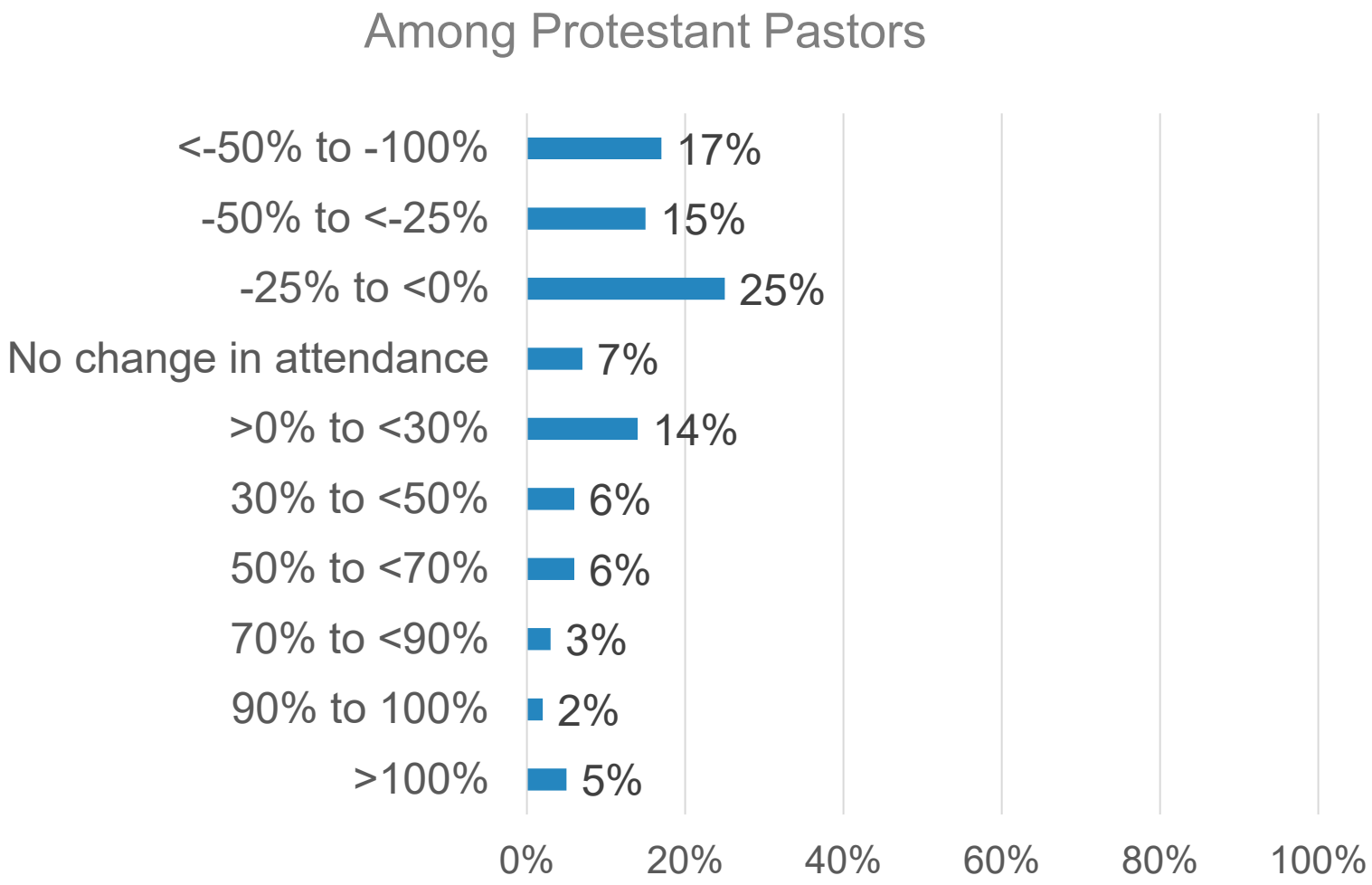
54% of churches surveyed were established in 1950 or later



Lifeway research

Q33: "In what year was your church established? (If you are not sure, please give your best estimate.)" n=2,620

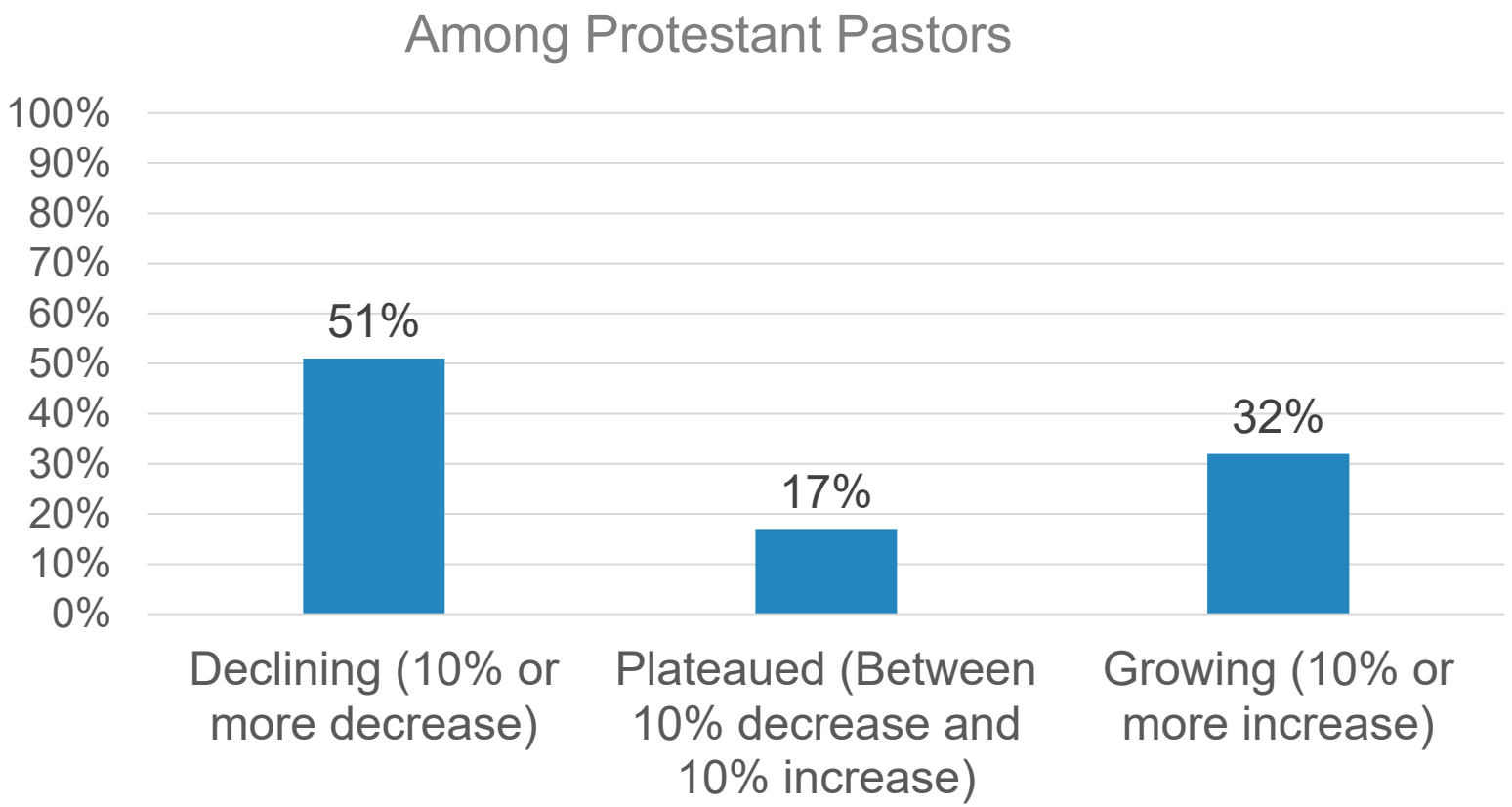
Percent change in Average Worship Attendance (Fall 2024 compared to Fall 2019)



Lifeway research

Q34: "What is your church's average worship attendance on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)? If you are not sure, please make your best estimate." Q35: "Five years ago (Fall 2019), what was your church's average worship attendance on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)?" n=2,620

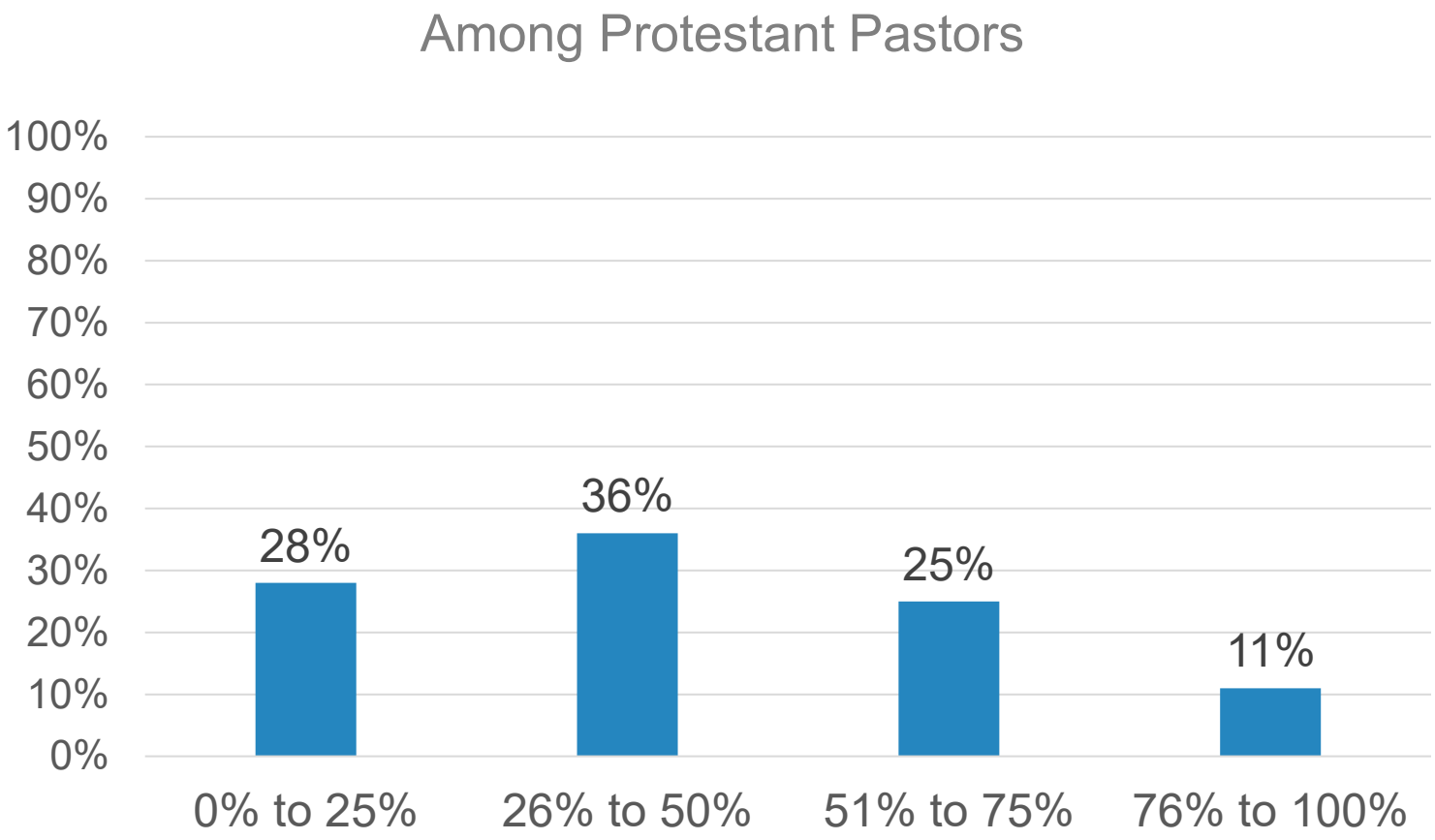
Growth Status (Fall 2024 compared to Fall 2019)



Lifeway research

Q34: "What is your church's average worship attendance on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)? If you are not sure, please make your best estimate." Q35: "Five years ago (Fall 2019), what was your church's average worship attendance on a typical weekend (including all ages from babies to adults but not counting anyone twice)?" n=2,620

Percentage of worship attendees involved in a small group or Sunday School class

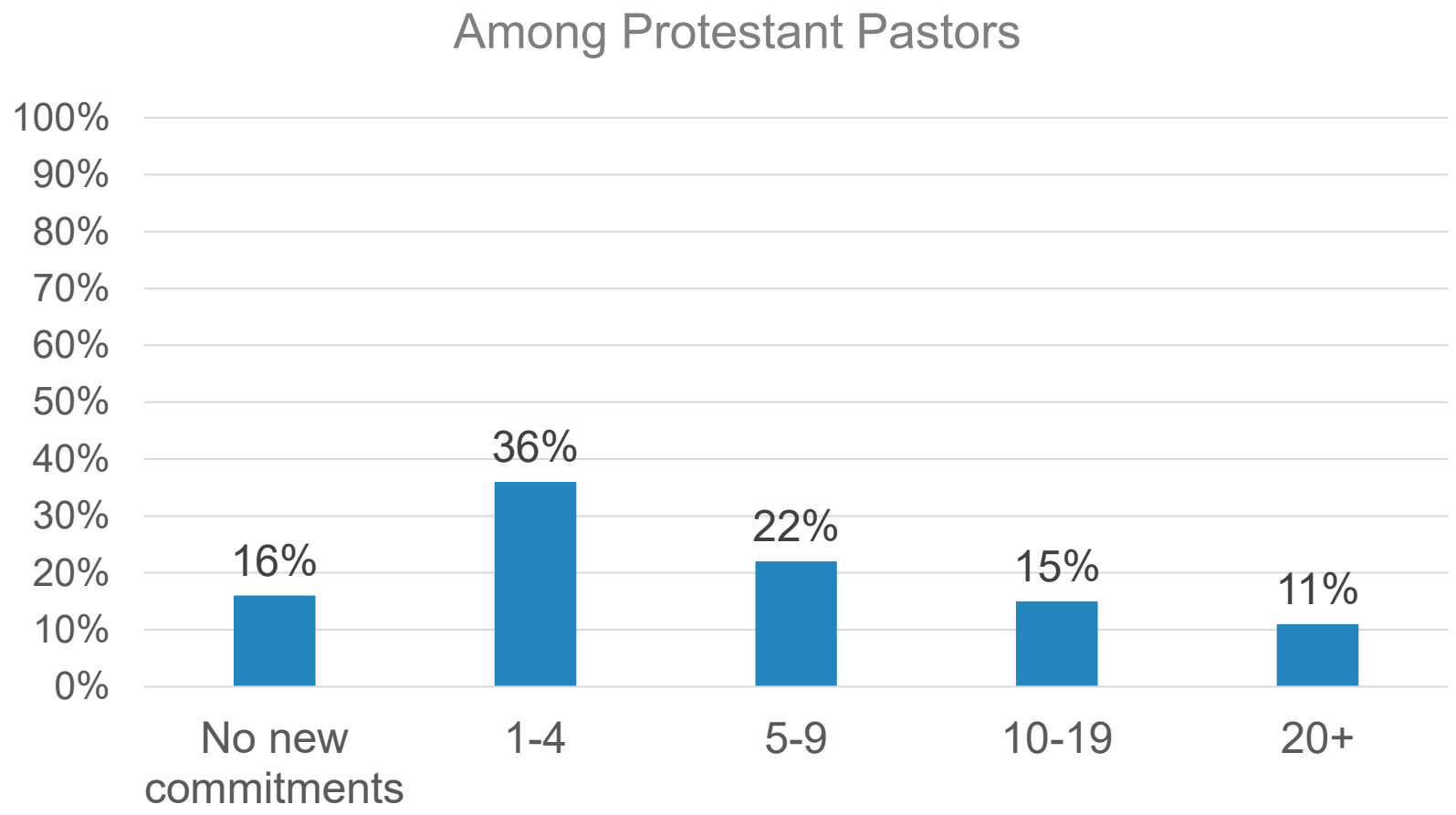


Mean: 46%
Median: 50%

Lifeway research

Q36: "What percentage of your current weekend worship attendance is involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group?" n=2,620

New commitments to Jesus Christ in the past 12 months

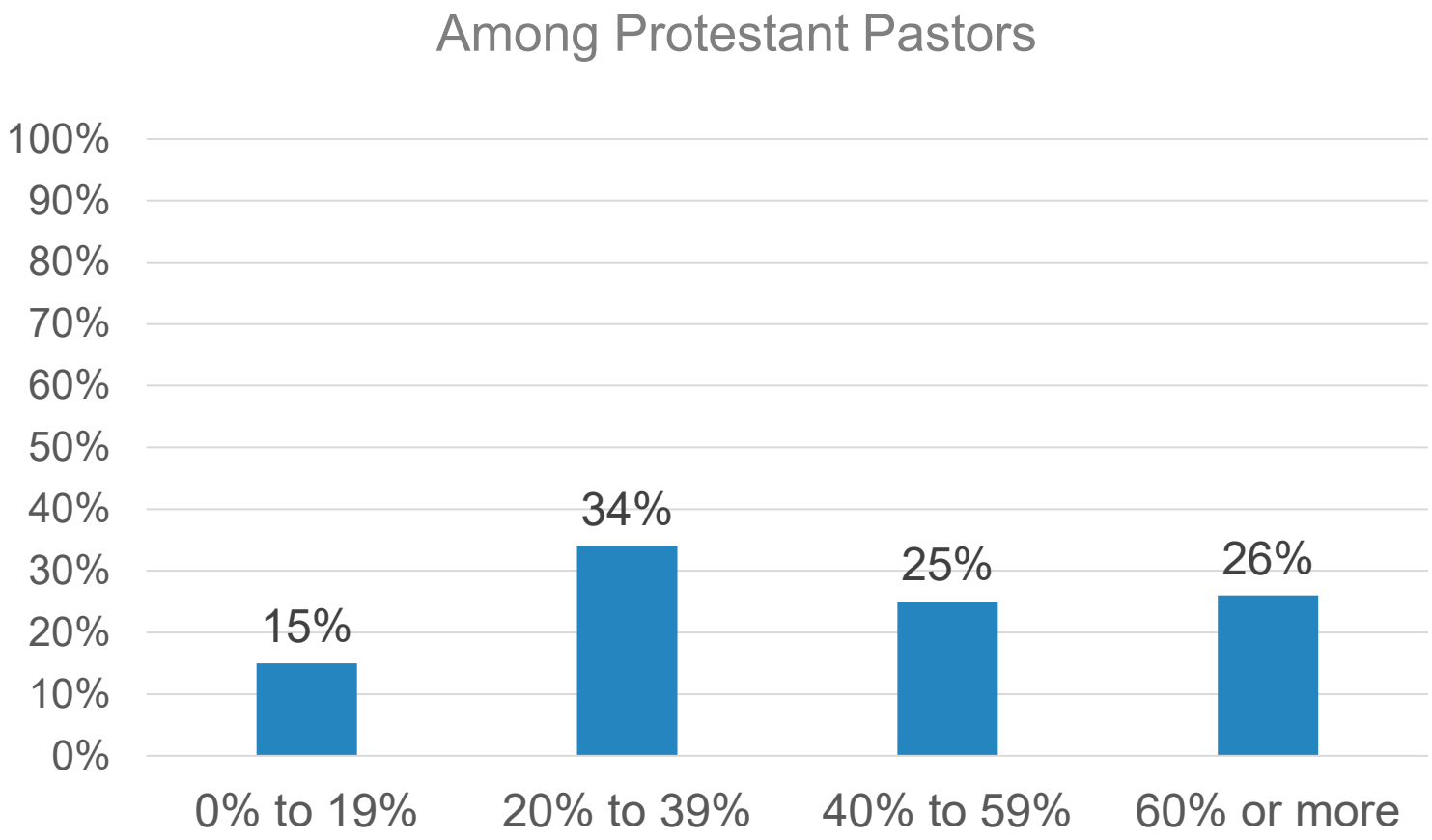


Mean: 10
Median: 4

Lifeway research

Q37: "In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?" n=2,616

Percentage of adults with regular responsibilities

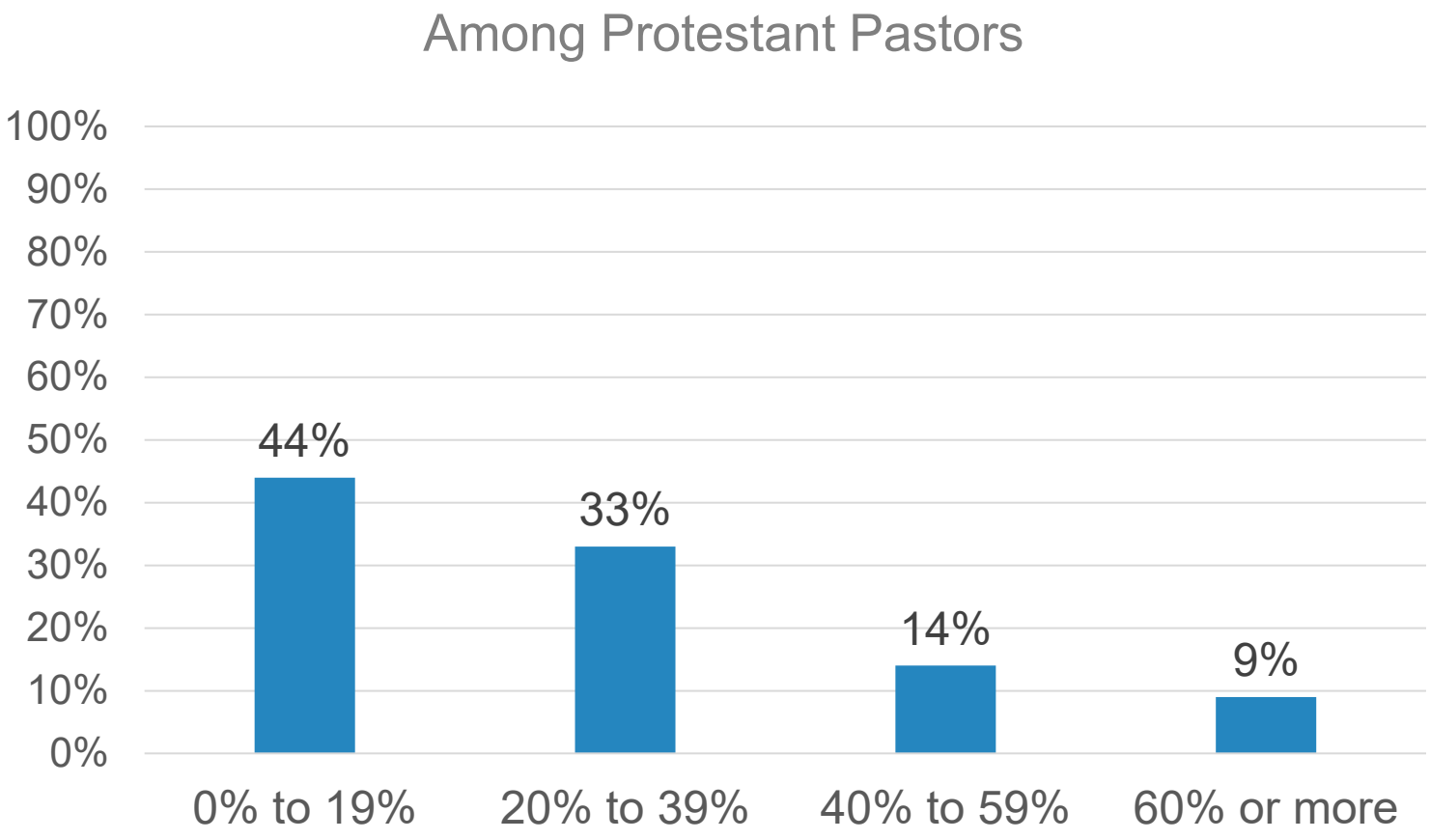


Mean: 41%
Median: 40%

Lifeway research

Q38: "What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month have regular responsibilities at your church (for example, greeter, teacher, childcare, etc.)?" n=2,620

Percentage of adults serving in their community



Mean: 25%
Median: 20%

Lifeway research

Q39: "What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church?" n=2,620

Significant Differences

Pastor

Ethnicity

Age

Education Level

Church

Region

Average Attendance

Year Church Established

Lifeway research

Significant Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the pastor's age, ethnicity, and education.

AGE	ETHNICITY	EDUCATION
18-34	White	No College Degree
35-49	African American	Bachelor's Degree
50-64	Hispanic	Graduate Degree
65+	Other Ethnicities	

Lifeway research

Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among the church's region, attendance, and year established.

REGION	ATTENDANCE	YEAR ESTABLISHED
Northeast	0-49	Before 1900
South	50-99	1900-1949
Midwest	100-249	1950-1999
West	250+	2000-2024

Note: Region is defined by the US Census locations

Lifeway research

“I am satisfied with the state of discipleship and spiritual formation in our local church.”

- Pastors age 50-64 (53%) and 65+ (56%) are more likely to Agree than pastors age 18-34 (44%)
- Hispanic pastors (60%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (62%) are more likely to Agree than African American pastors (42%)
- Pastors in the South (57%) and West (57%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Northeast (45%) and Midwest (42%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (65%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (71%)

“Our congregation is regularly inviting people they meet to church.”

- Hispanic pastors (69%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (69%) are more likely to Agree than White pastors (60%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the most likely to Disagree (42%)
- Pastors in the South are the most likely to Agree (69%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (81%) followed by 100-249 (70%), 50-99 (56%) and 0-49 (47%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (75%)

“Our church discipleship strategy is effective.”

- Hispanic pastors (62%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (72%) are more likely to Agree than White pastors (48%) and African American pastors (45%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to Agree (64%)
- Pastors in the South are the most likely to Agree (58%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (67%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (71%)

Lifeway research

“Our church emphasizes the discipleship principles each believer should live out.”

- Hispanic pastors (90%) are more likely to Agree than African American pastors (77%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (80%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the least likely to select (82%)
- Pastors in the Midwest (85%) and South (87%) are more likely to Agree than those in the Northeast (77%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (95%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to Disagree (22%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (92%)

“As a church we create environments that effectively encourage discipleship.”

- Pastors age 50-64 (77%) and 65+ (79%) are more likely to Agree than pastors age 18-34 (67%)
- African American pastors are the most likely to Disagree (39%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to Agree (86%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (87%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to Disagree (33%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (86%)

“Our congregation is making significant progress in their spiritual development.”

- African American pastors are the most likely to Agree (98%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ (91%) are more likely to Agree than those at churches with attendance of 0-49 (77%) and 50-99 (85%)
- Pastors at churches established before 1900 are the most likely to Disagree (21%)

“There are methods for measuring discipleship in a congregation.”

- Pastors age 65+ are the least likely to Agree (65%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the most likely to Disagree (27%)
- Pastors at churches established 1950-1999 (73%) and 2000-2024 (77%) are more likely to Agree than those at churches established before 1900 (67%) and 1900-1949 (67%)

“My church has specific methods for measuring discipleship in our congregation.”

- Pastors age 65+ (68%) are more likely to Disagree than pastors age 18-34 (58%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (49%) are more likely to Agree than White pastors (28%) and African American pastors (32%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the most likely to Disagree (69%)
- Pastors in the Midwest are the most likely to Disagree (73%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to Agree (48%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to Agree (46%)

“Does your church have an intentional plan for discipling individuals in your congregation and encouraging their spiritual growth?”

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “No” (56%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities are the most likely to select “Yes” (77%)
- Pastors with no college degree (59%) or a Bachelor’s Degree (57%) are more likely to select “Yes” than those with a Graduate Degree (49%)
- Pastors in the South (56%) and West (54%) are more likely to select “Yes” than those in the Midwest (44%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select “Yes” (71%) followed by 100-249 (56%), 50-99 (50%), and 0-49 (40%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to select “Yes” (74%)

“Which of the following describes your plan for discipling individuals in your congregation.” (Among pastors with an intentional discipleship plan)

- Pastors age 18-34 (57%), 35-49 (49%), and 50-64 (44%) are more likely to select “We have a single discipleship plan that all ministries take part in” than pastors age 65+ (34%)
- White pastors (51%) and African American pastors (62%) are more likely to select “Each ministry has developed their own plan for discipling individuals” than pastors of Other Ethnicities (36%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to select “We have a single discipleship plan that all ministries take part in” (54%)
- Pastors in the Midwest are the least likely to select “Each ministry has developed their own plan for discipling individuals” (40%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to select “We have a single discipleship plan that all ministries take part in” (55%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to select “We have a single discipleship plan that all ministries take part in” (53%)

"Which of the following best describes the first priority of the activities included in your church's plan for discipling individuals and encouraging spiritual growth?"

- Pastors age 18-34 (60%) and 65+ (56%) are more likely to select "Biblical knowledge focused" than pastors age 35-49 (45%) and 50-64 (42%)
- White pastors (47%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (49%) are the least likely to select "Biblical knowledge" than African American (23%)
- Hispanic pastors are the most likely to select "Equipping and 'how-to' focused" (24%)
- White (38%) and African American pastors (54%) are more likely to select "Relationship and encouragement focused" than Hispanic pastors (23%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to select "Biblical knowledge focused" (62%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (54%) and Midwest (51%) are more likely to select "Biblical knowledge focused" than those in the South (43%)

"Does your church have a specific individual responsible for each or all of your discipleship programs?"

- Pastors age 35-49 are the most likely to select "Yes, multiple paid staff members" (19%)
- Pastors age 18-34 are the most likely to select "Yes, one full-time staff member" (32%)
- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select "No" (47%)
- African American (37%) and Hispanic pastors (50%) are more likely to select "Yes, unpaid volunteers" than White pastors (18%) and pastors of Other ethnicities (20%)
- Pastors of Other ethnicities are the most likely to select "Yes, one full-time staff member" (40%)
- White pastors (39%) are more likely to select "No" than Hispanic pastors (29%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to select "Yes, unpaid volunteers" (29%)

“Does your church have a specific individual responsible for each or all of your discipleship programs?” Continued

- Pastors in the Northeast (26%) and South (22%) are more likely to select “Yes, unpaid volunteers” than those in the Midwest (15%) and West (14%)
- Pastors in the South are the least likely to select “No” (33%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select “Yes, multiple paid staff members” (43%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to select “No” (50%) followed by 50-99 (41%), 100-249 (31%), and 250+ (24%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to select “Yes, unpaid volunteer(s)” (28%) and the least likely to select “No” (23%)

“Does your church regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?”

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to select “No” (75%)
- Hispanic pastors (43%) and pastors of Other ethnicities (50%) are more likely to select “Yes” than White (28%) and African American pastors (18%)
- African American pastors are the most likely to select “No” (80%)
- Pastors with no college degree are more likely to select “Yes” (40%)
- Pastors in the South (32%) and West (34%) are more likely to select “Yes” than those in the Northeast (26%) and Midwest (23%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select “Yes” (53%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to select “No” (76%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to select “Yes” (45%)

“Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?”

Track the number of people serving

- Pastors age 50-64 (63%) are more likely to select than pastors age 65+ (51%)
- White pastors (61%) are more likely to select than African American pastors (30%) and Hispanic pastors (44%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the most likely to select (64%)
- Pastors in the Northeast are the most likely to select (77%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select (76%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to select (35%)
- Pastors at churches established 1900-1949 (65%) are more likely to select than those at churches established 2000-2024 (53%)

"Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?"

Track the number of new leaders

- Pastors age 65+ are the least likely to select (31%)
- Pastors of Other Ethnicities (59%) are more likely to select than White pastors (44%) and African American pastors (17%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the most likely to select (50%)
- Pastors in the South (48%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (38%) and West (38%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select (65%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the least likely to select (22%)
- Pastors at churches established before 1900 are the least likely to select (29%)

“Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?”

Track the number of people at key stages in the process

- Pastors age 50-64 (63%) are more likely to select than pastors age 18-34 (45%) and 65+ (48%)
- White pastors (60%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (57%) are more likely to select than African American (14%) and Hispanic pastors (33%)
- Pastors in the South (64%) are more likely to select than those in the Midwest (47%) and West (52%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to select (68%)
- Pastors at churches established 1950-1999 (62%) and 2000-2024 (62%) are more likely to select than those at churches established 1900-1949 (44%)

“Which of the following does your church use to regularly evaluate discipleship progress among your congregation?”

Survey the congregation

- African American pastors are the most likely to select (76%)
- Pastors in the Northeast are the most likely to select (39%)

Lifeway research

“Discipleship is best accomplished…”

- White pastors (42%) are more likely to select “In small groups of 5 believers or less” than African American pastors (29%) and pastors of Other Ethnicities (31%)
- African American pastors (39%) are more likely to select “By one believer discipling another believer one-on-one than White pastors (28%)
- Pastors with a Graduate Degree are the least likely to select “By one believer discipling another believer one-on-one” (27%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 50-99 are the least likely to select “In small groups of 5 believers or less” (35%)

"What percentage of your current weekend worship attendance is involved in some small group, Sunday School class, or similar group?"

- Pastors age 18-34 are the most likely to answer "26% to 50%" (52%)
- African American pastors are the most likely to answer "0% to 25%" (51%)
- Hispanic pastors (23%) and pastors of Other ethnicities (20%) are more likely to select "75% to 100%" than White (11%) and African American pastors (3%)
- Pastors in the South are the most likely to answer "50% to 75%" (33%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 100-249 (33%) and 250+ (45%) are the most likely to answer "50% to 75%" than those with attendance of 0-49 (16%) and 50-99 (18%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to answer "50% to 75%" (37%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to answer "75% to 100%" (22%)

"In the past 12 months, how many people have indicated a new commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior through your church?"

- Pastors of Other Ethnicities are the most likely to select "1 to 4" (50%)
- Pastors with a Graduate degree are the most likely to select "No new commitments" (19%)
- Pastors in the Northeast are the most likely to answer "1 to 4" (52%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer "1 to 4" (50%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 250+ are the most likely to answer "20 or more" (55%)
- Pastors at churches established 1900-1949 are the most likely to select "1 to 4" (43%)

"What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month have regular responsibilities at your church (for example, greeter, teacher, childcare, etc.)?"

- Pastors age 35-49 (37%) are more likely to answer "20% to 39%" than pastors age 18-34 (26%)
- White pastors are the most likely to answer "20% to 39%" (36%)
- African American (37%) and Hispanic pastors (38%) are more likely to select "40% to 59%" than White pastors (25%) and pastors of Other ethnicities (16%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to answer "0% to 19%" (27%)
- Pastors in the Northeast (40%) and Midwest (41%) are more likely to select "20% to 39%" than those in the South (30%) and West (32%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 are the most likely to answer "0% to 19%" (24%)
- Pastors at churches established 2000-2024 are the most likely to answer "60% or more" (42%)

Lifeway research

"What percentage of adults who attend your church at least once a month are involved in ministries or projects that serve people in your community not affiliated with your church?"

- Pastors age 65+ are the most likely to answer "0% to 19%" (55%)
- Pastors with no college degree are the most likely to answer "0% to 19%" (60%)
- Pastors at churches with attendance of 0-49 (49%) and 50-99 (49%) are more likely to answer "0% to 19%" than those at churches with attendance of 100-249 (39%) and 250+ (37%)