

# **Current Trends Impacting the Future of the Church in the U.S.**

## Hybrid Church = In-Person + Digital

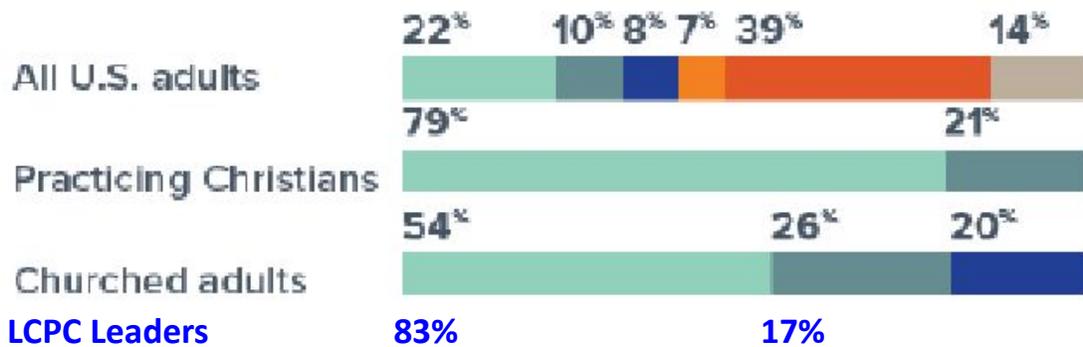
**7 in 10**

**churched adults (70%)  
agree that, post-  
pandemic, churches  
should use digital  
resources to reach  
and engage their  
neighborhoods.**

# Church Attendance Trends

## Pre-pandemic attendance

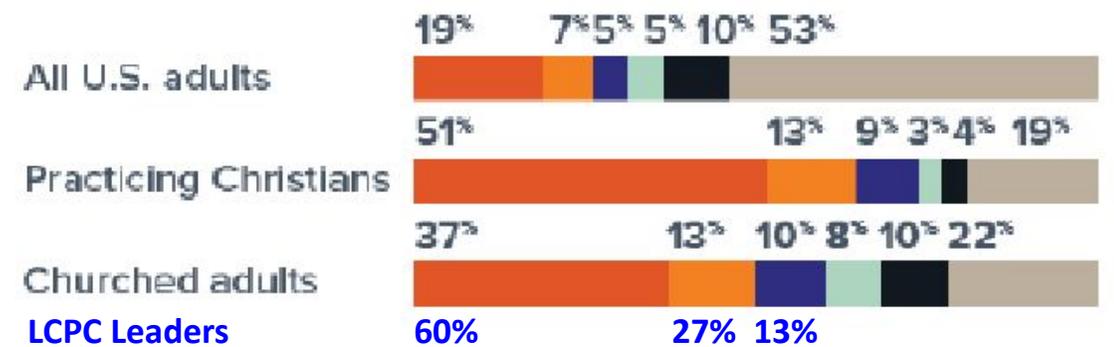
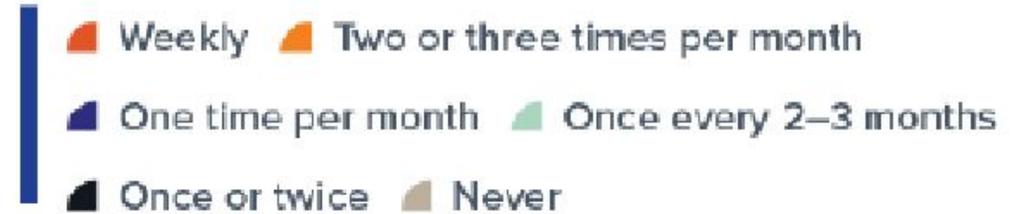
When was the last time you attended a Christian church service, other than for a holiday service, such as Christmas or Easter, or for special events such as a wedding or funeral?



n=1,003 U.S. adults, December 5–18, 2019.

## Pandemic attendance

During the COVID-19 pandemic, on average, how often have you attended a church worship service, either in person or digitally?



n=1,302 U.S. adults, September 1-15, 2020.

## Church Attendance Trends

**1 in 5 (20%)\*** of those who would normally be defined as churchgoers has "never" attended a service-digitally or in person-during the pandemic

**\* Only 2% (1 person) among our leadership team**

# Will the dropouts come back?

*“I am waiting for church services to go back to normal before I return.”*



*“I am spiritually growing during this pandemic in ways other than church attendance.”*



*“I am not interested in church engagement because I’ve been rethinking or drifting from my faith practice.”*



n=661 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020.

# Three in five churched adults have moderate to high digital openness



Churched adults

**LCPC Leaders: 48% “Open”... 38% “Not Open”**

n=661 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020.

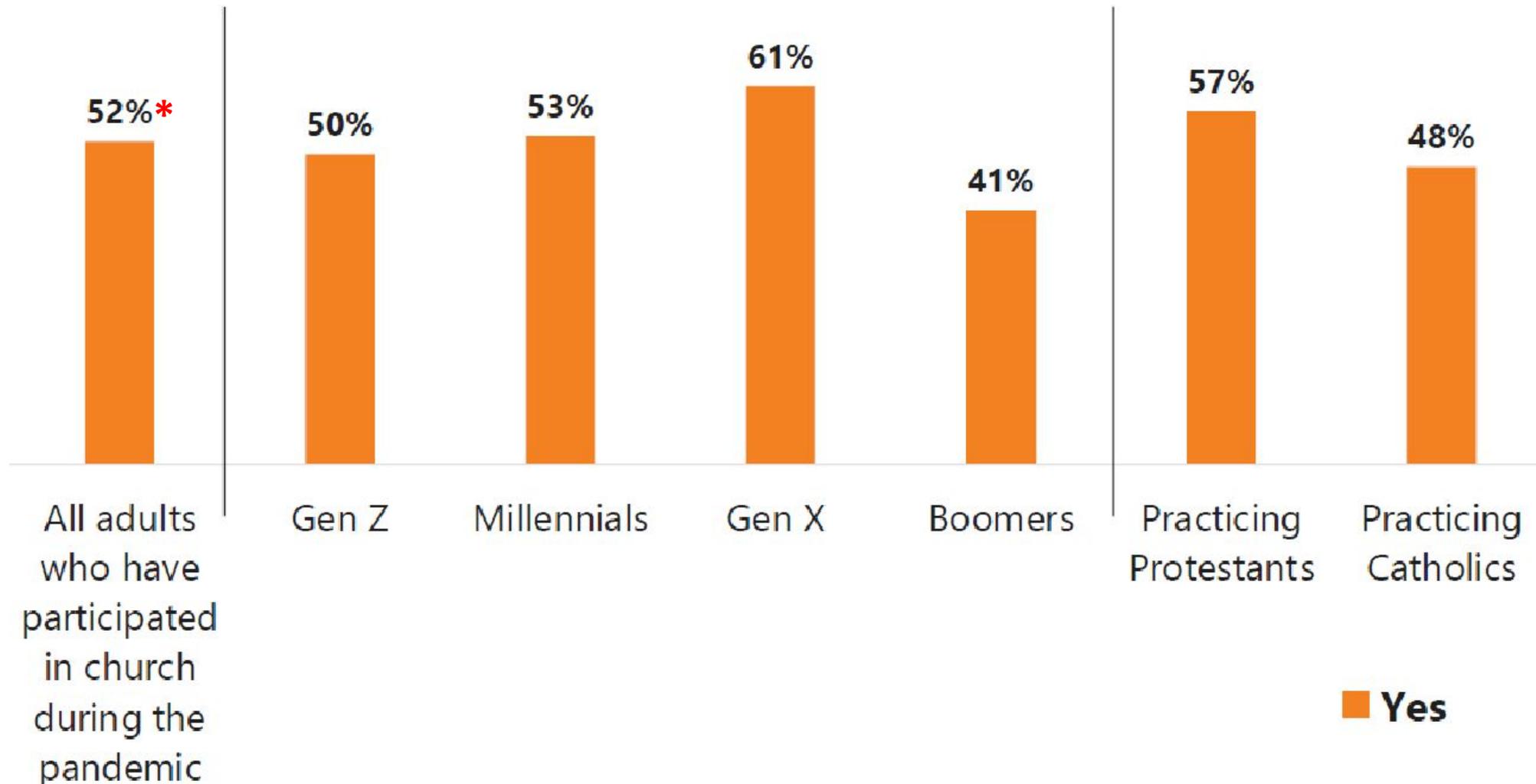
***Don't assume digital is new field ripe for evangelical harvest -- 70% of “unchurched” adults express NO openness to digital church experience, with 17% expressing “Low” openness, and 14% “High”***

## Digital openness among church-goers

After the pandemic, **63 percent\*** of churched adults believe churches should use digital resources for purposes of spiritual formation and discipleship.

**\* 56% among our leadership team, with 35% indicating “don’t know”**

# Did your experiences during the pandemic make you more open to the idea of digital church in the future?



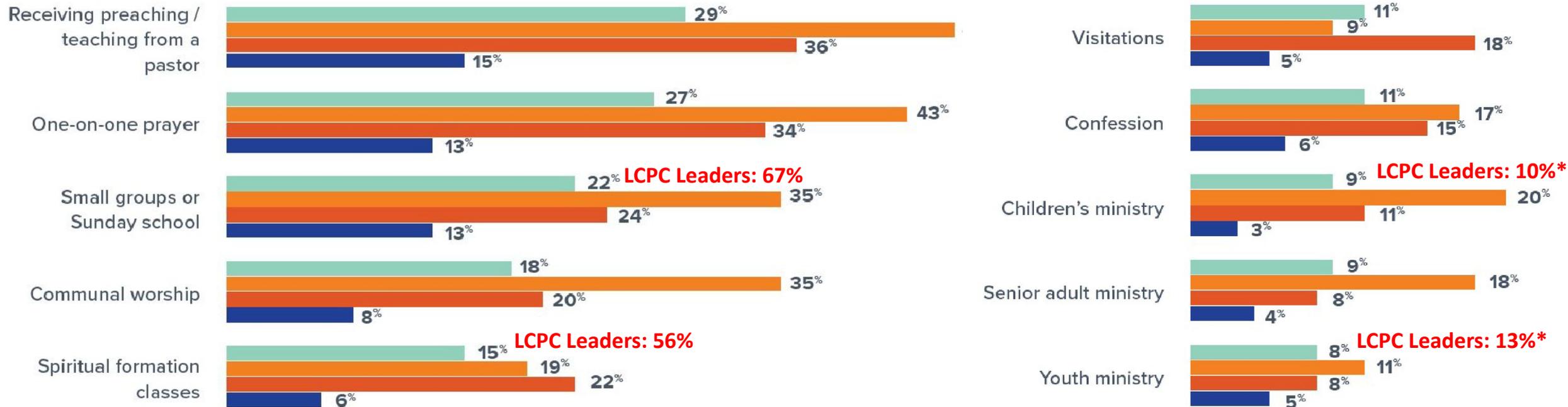
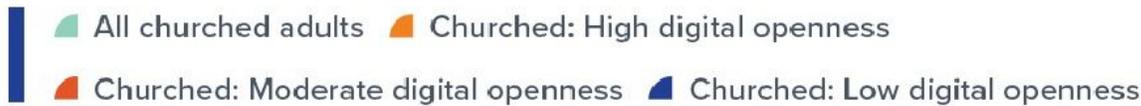
\* 48% among our leadership team

n=661 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020.

# Relatively high openness to opportunities for digital prayer and small groups; digital solutions of limited value to children's and youth ministry

Which of these items are you open to experiencing digitally / online?

Select all that apply. Base: Churched adults

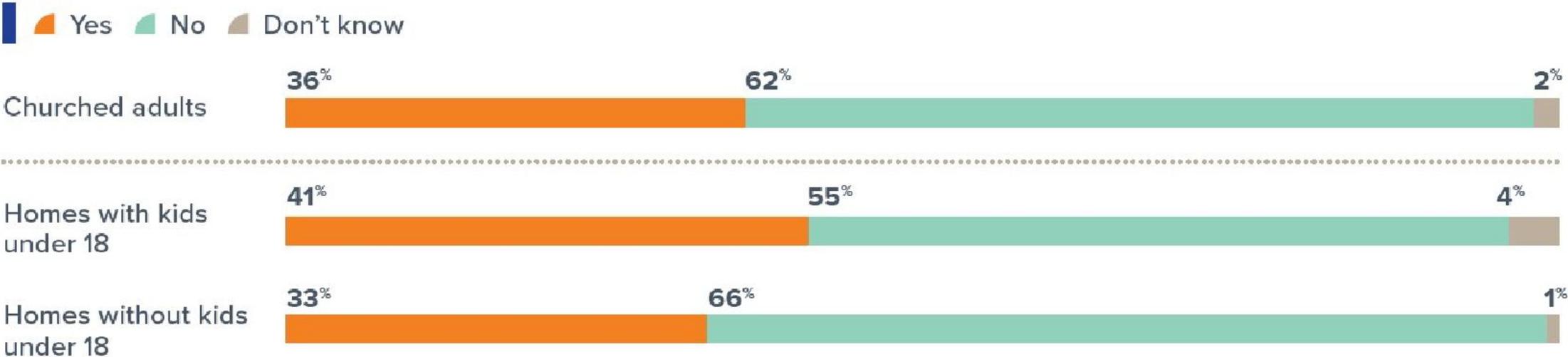


\*Results may not be meaningful due to high number of "N/A" answers (~40% for both), which could either mean "don't know", or, more likely, the fact that person answering doesn't have kids in the program.

# Combating the struggle to focus during online services

## *Do you struggle to focus during online church?*

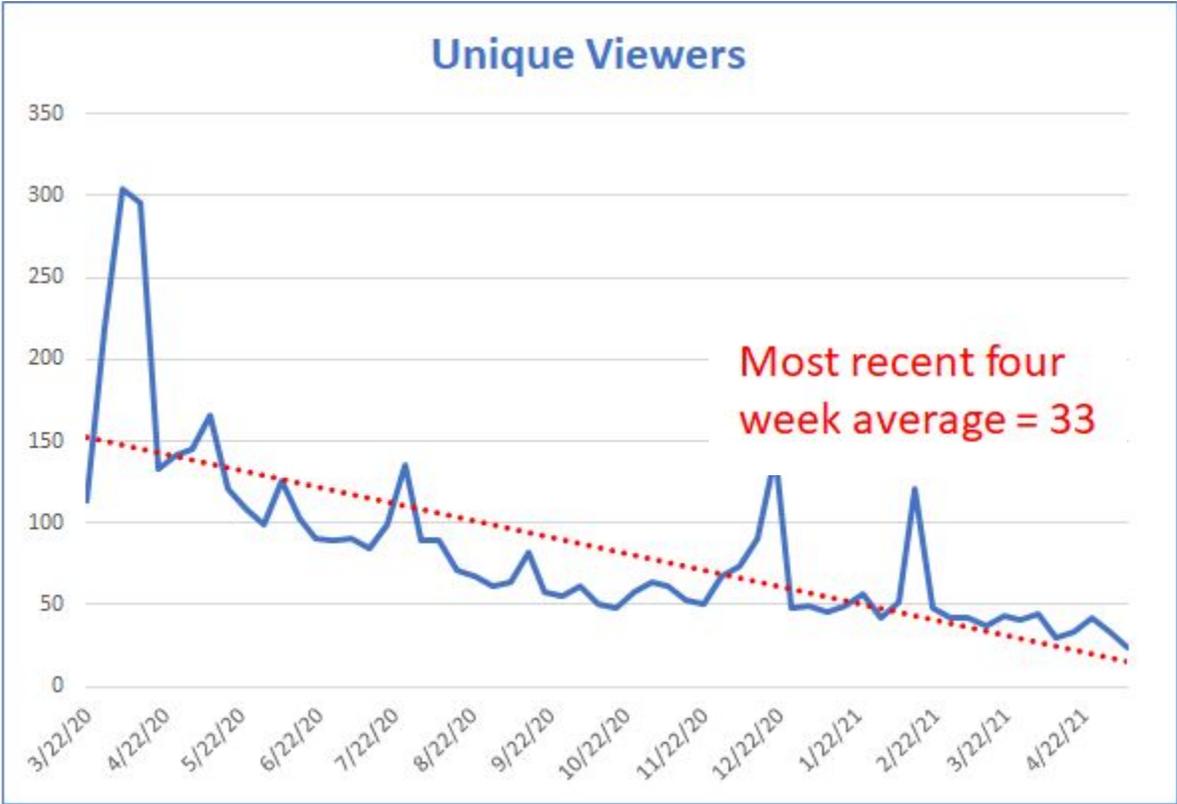
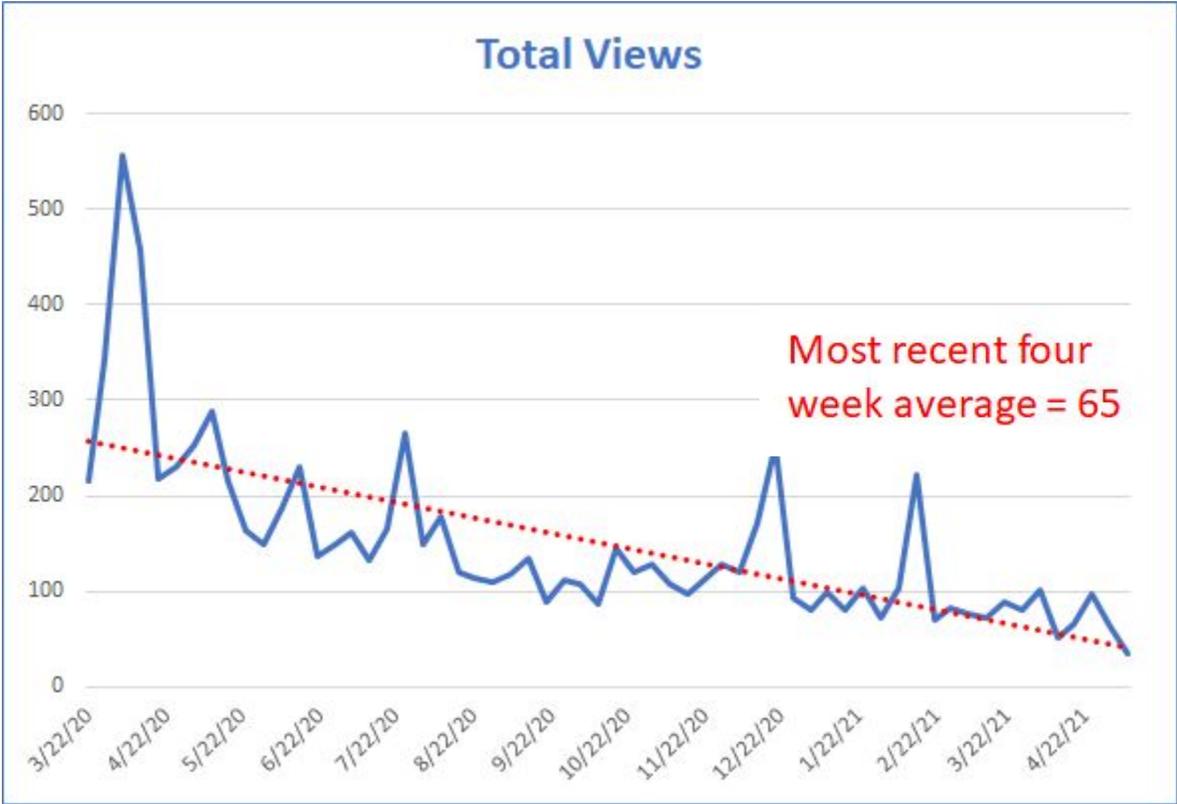
Base: have attended church during the pandemic and at some point have watched a church service online



**LCPC Leaders: 33% 67%**

# Trends for **our** online services: fewer people watching...

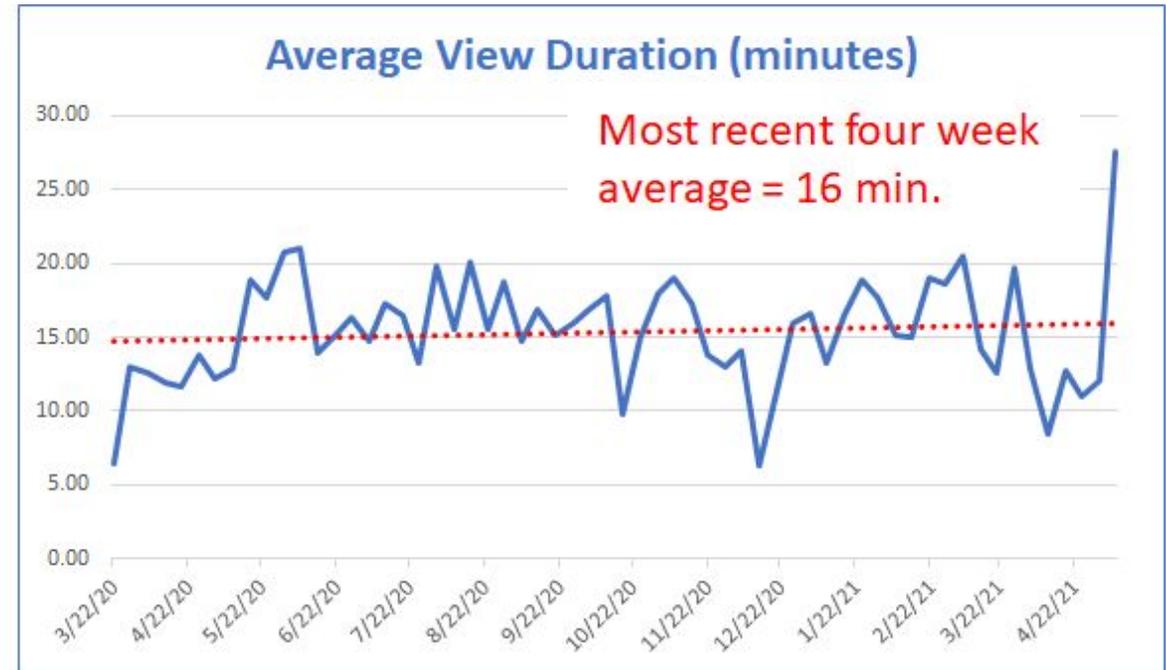
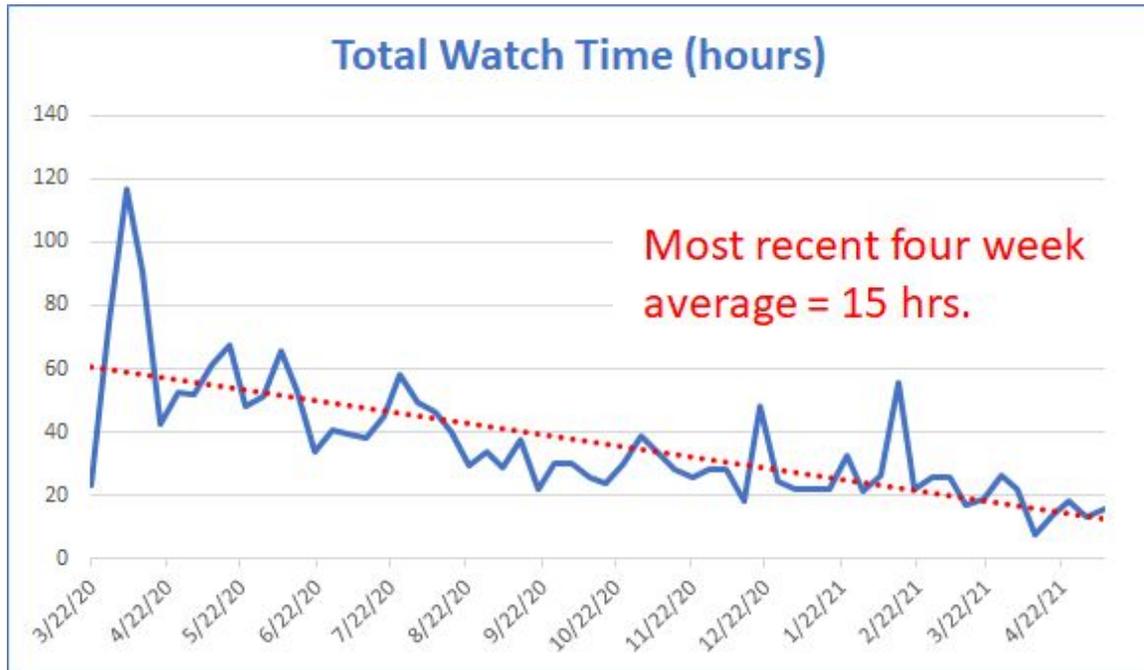
## LCPC Online Service Viewership Trends



Source: Youtube Analytics

... but spending slightly more time with us when they do watch

## LCPC Online Service Viewership Trends



Source: Youtube Analytics

Are there ways to keep people engaged longer? OR, if we can only keep people engaged for about 15 minutes, how should we package content to maximize the impact of those 15 minutes?

# Ideas other churches are using to enhance online worship experience:

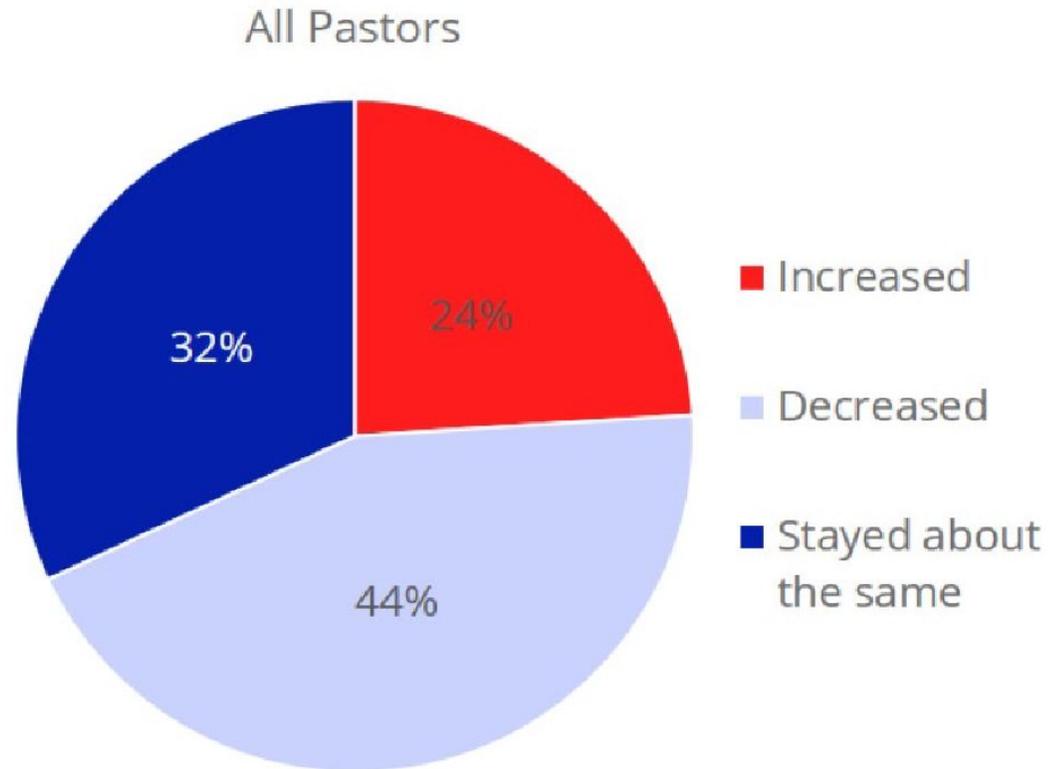
- **Consolidate.** Instead of spending all your energy creating one elaborate hour-long experience together on Sunday, think about having a more condensed service that invites people to an online prayer time on Monday, a youth group meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, or some other midweek experience.
- **Adapt.** Find ways to make the service more interactive and participatory – there’s opportunity to make people feel even more cared for and heard during live stream service than when meeting in person!
  - Encourage use of comments, respond in real time
  - Ask people to text their prayer requests; again, respond in real time
- **Hook viewers from the beginning.**
  - Start by telling people what they will be able to learn and take with them after watching the service
  - Make announcements at the end, and frame them as action steps to live out the core message from the sermon
- **Promote online service on your website.**
  - Your website is the new front door of your church. Make sure your online worship times and the web address for the virtual service are more prominent than your physical address.
  - Consider recording a short video with your pastor that welcomes first-time guests to the website and invites them to join the online worship service on Sunday -- place it prominently on the home page.
- **Create moments for people to accept Jesus** even in their own homes
- **Hold online coffee breaks** after service to encourage members to connect
- **Create a space for small groups to meet to worship together (view online service)** in their homes with a handful of people as a way to encourage community amongst the congregation

# What are our goals for digital ministry? Using our vision statement as a guide...

*We are a community of imperfect people, united by God's Spirit, discovering new life in Christ. Our mission is to love God with all our heart, love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and become better disciples of Jesus who will make new disciples.*

Elements of Vision Statement	Online Worship	Lee's Zoom Bible Study	Small Groups / Book Club	Online Fellowship Events	Website	Social Media
Does it help us be / build community?						
Does it help us become more united in God's Spirit?						
Does it help us discover new life in Christ?						
Does it help us to love God more?						
Does it help us love our neighbor more?						
Does it help us become better disciples?						
Does it focus on Jesus?						
Does it help us make new disciples?						

# Expectations of pastors... “once the crisis has resolved, I expect our church attendance will have...”



n=415 U.S. Protestant Pastors, January 22-27, 2021.

# Meet the Pandemic-Era Converts to Christianity:

*Approximately one in 20 of those who presently self-identify as Christian (4%) says they actually came to faith during the trying months of the pandemic.*

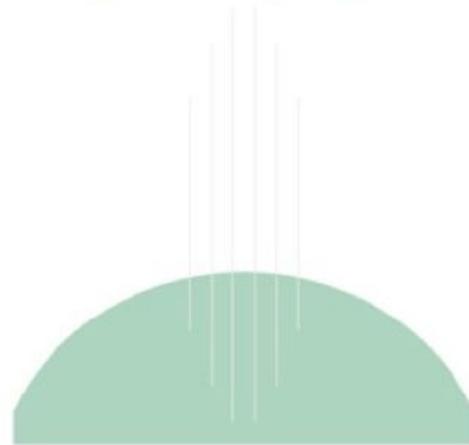
55%



- More than half—55 percent—are Millennials.

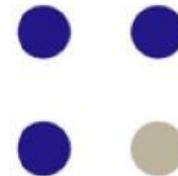
58%

- This group is more likely to represent racial and ethnic minorities (58% vs. 42% white only).



- Thus far, this group has some preference for digital faith activities. They are more comfortable extending invitations to online church rather than to in-person church, they prefer digital spiritual conversations, and they feel less judged in digital environments.

- They are ready to pay it forward. Three-quarters (74%)\* say they want to be given tools to better share their faith online.



The return to in-person is inevitable.

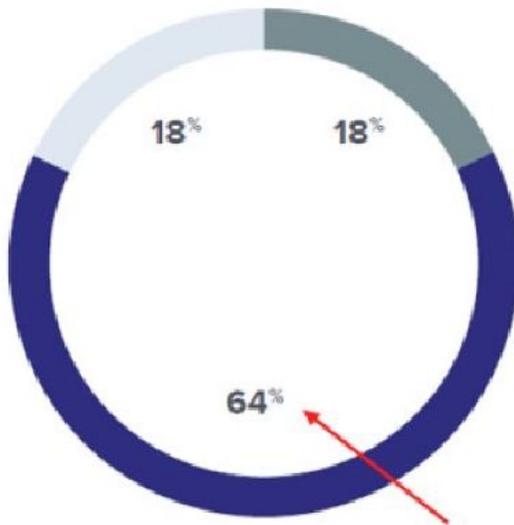
**4 in 5 (81%)\*** of churched adults say it's very important to them to experience God alongside others at a physical church gathering

**\* 88% among our leadership team**

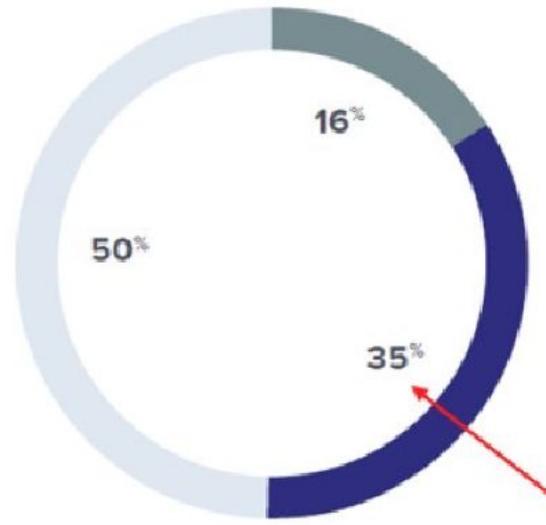
# Among professing Christians, there is strong preference for spiritual conversation to take place in-person vs. digital; among non-Christians *willing* to have such conversations, that preference is less pronounced

*If you had to choose, would you want to participate in spiritual conversations in a digital or an in-person environment?*

■ Digital ■ In-person ■ Neither



Christians



Non-Christians

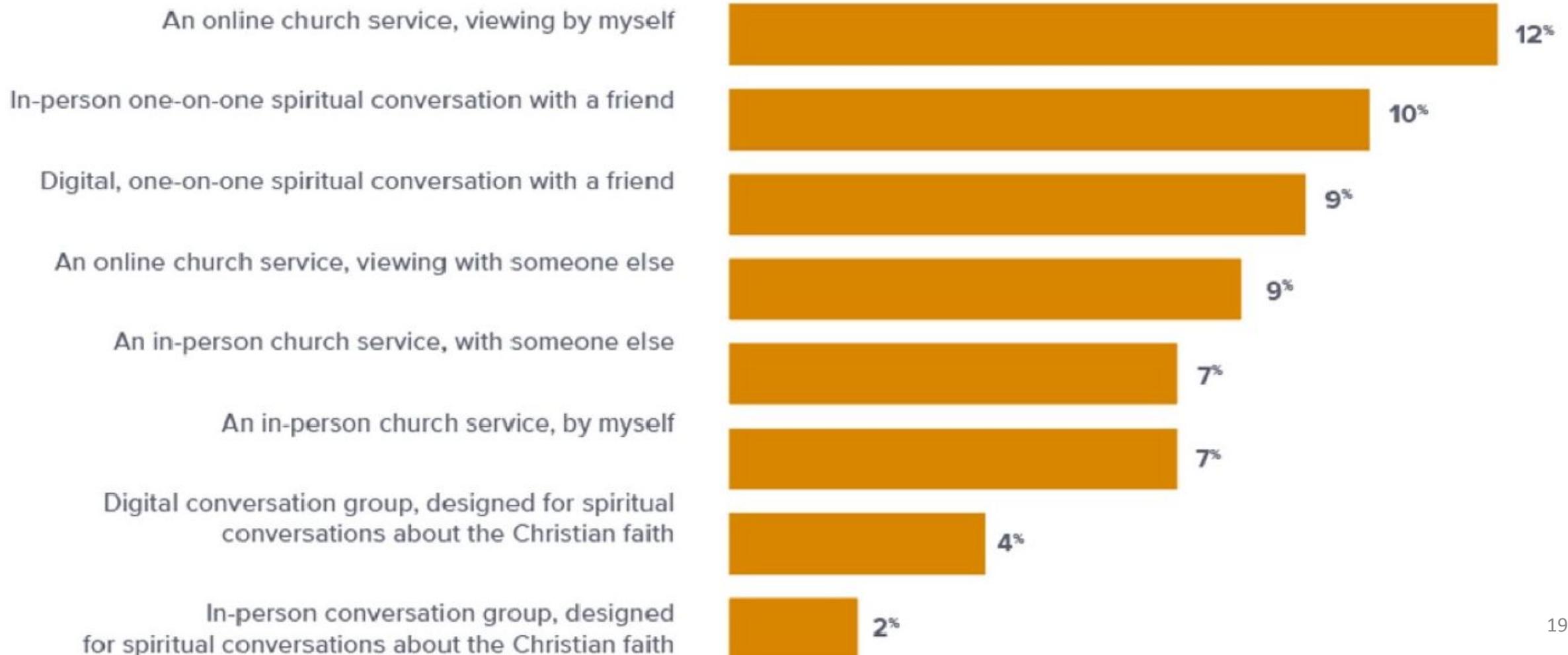
What are the implications for evangelism?

n=1,302 U.S. adults, September 1–15, 2020.

**Among LCPC leaders, 56% are “open” to digital spiritual conversation... 8% are “not open”, and 35% don’t know**

# The “invitational” model is not getting much traction right now with non-Christians.

## *Openness to attending...*

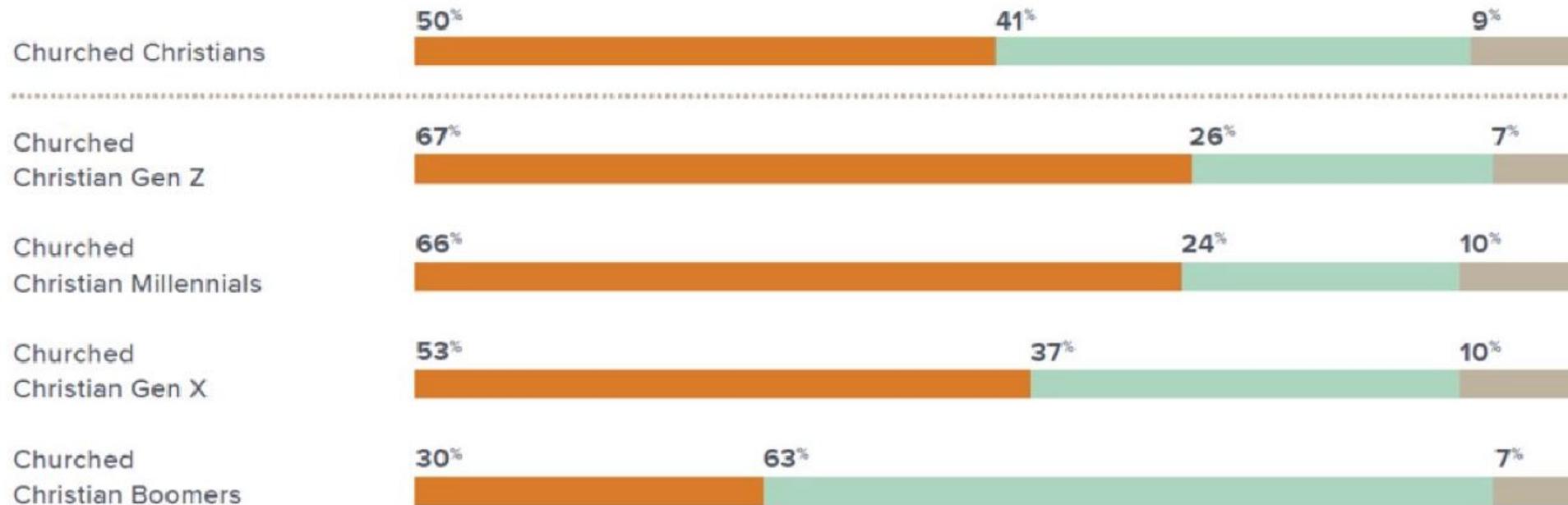


# Especially among younger Christians, there is strong interest in using new digital tools for sharing their faith with non-Christians.

*“I would like to be coached and / or given tools for how to share my faith with non-Christians digitally.”*

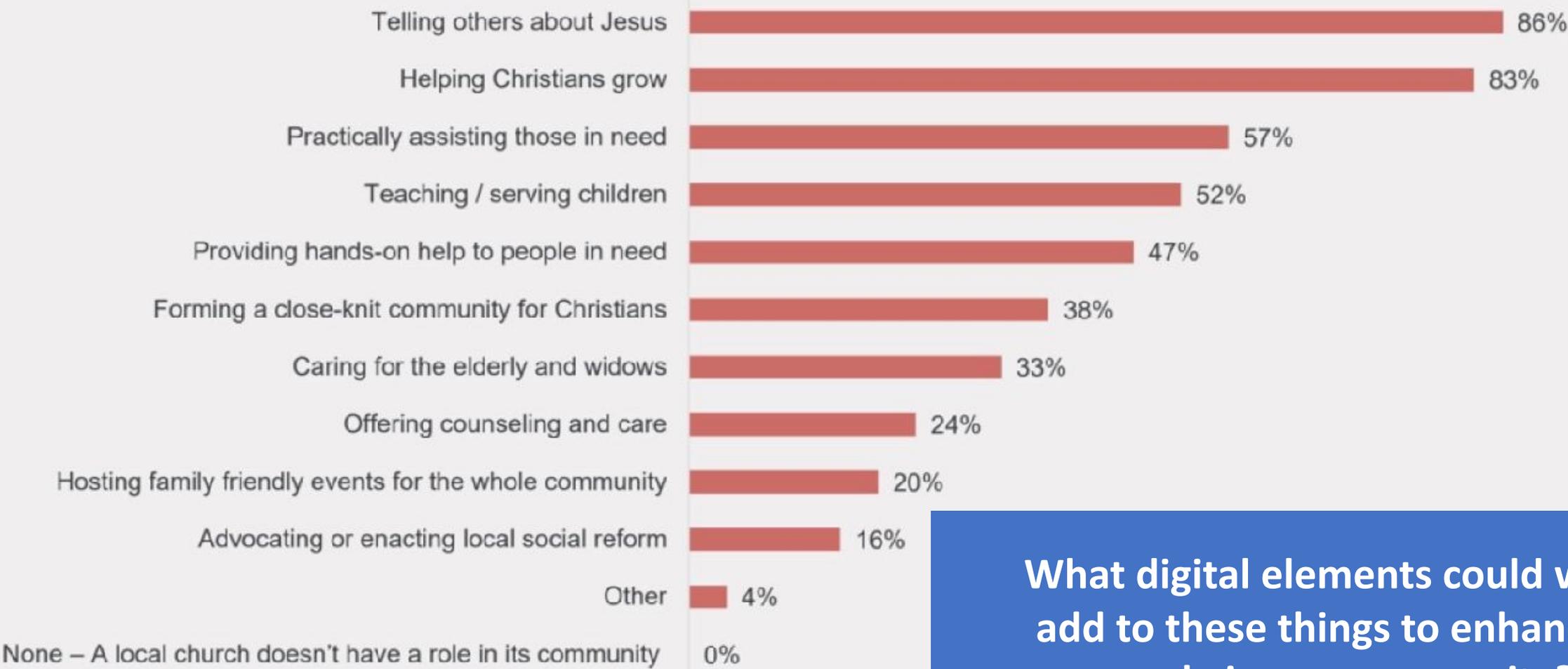
Base: Churched adults

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Not applicable



*n*=559 U.S. churched Christian adults, September 1–15, 2020.

# Most important roles of church in community (from survey of pastors):



**What digital elements could we add to these things to enhance our role in our community?**