

RE IGNITING HOPE

Sharing the Good News
in Canada

A report on attitudes, behaviours, and
experiences in sharing the message of
Jesus across Canada

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***Behold, I am doing
a new thing; now
it springs forth, do
you not perceive it?
I will make a way in
the wilderness and
rivers in the desert."***

Isaiah 43:19

Vision & Mission

In 2021, Alpha Canada and the Flourishing Congregations Institute embarked on a journey to explore how Canadian church leaders perceive and practice evangelization. Our mission was to delve into the evolving landscape of evangelization within the Canadian context, shaped by cultural shifts, changing perceptions, and societal dynamics at the time.

Now, in 2024, we invited church leaders from diverse Christian backgrounds to again share their attitudes, behaviours, and experiences in sharing the message of Jesus across Canada. We desire that with an open heart, these next pages will reignite your hope: **inspiring** and **encouraging** the local church to look out and up as God moves across our country.

A Note from Shaila Visser

Three years later, we’re thanking God for all he has done in and through the local church. Today, we are thrilled to share the latest insights from our 2024 survey, conducted in partnership with the Flourishing Congregations Institute. These results have not only been surprising but encouraging as we witness all that God is doing in our nation.

At Alpha, our mission is to serve the Church in Canada in its mission to help people discover a relationship with Jesus. To navigate the challenges of evangelization, we have gathered vital,

With love,



Shaila Visser
National Director, Alpha Canada

trustworthy research. This effort aims to inform, inspire and equip the greater church community. Together, we are reimagining what it means to share the Good News of Jesus in our cultural context.

As we dive into the findings, you will discover the pivotal role of prayer, the joy of celebrating the transformative work of Jesus, and the power of an invitational culture. We’re excited for you to journey alongside us as we reignite hope for what it could look like to share the love of Jesus in Canada.

A Note from Ed Zadeiks

We are filled with gratitude for the ways God is moving within the Catholic Church through Alpha. It is truly inspiring to see that 19% of all churches running Alpha worldwide are within a Catholic setting.

This global movement is reflected here in Canada, where we have seen a remarkable 47% increase in participation in Alpha within our Catholic parishes. Last year alone, nearly 700 Alphas were hosted in Catholic contexts across Canada, marking an 11% increase from the previous year.

Many thanks for all you do for our Catholic Church,



Ed Zadeiks
National Director, Alpha Catholic Context

The growth of Alpha in the Catholic Church, both globally and nationally, is a testament to the power of the Holy Spirit working among us. We are witnessing a renewed enthusiasm for evangelization and a deepening of faith within our communities. This rapid expansion is not just about numbers; it is about the countless lives being transformed by the love of Jesus. We hope these findings bless you!

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Behind the Survey

The aim of this survey was to explore the attitudes, behaviours, and experiences surrounding evangelization from the perspective of Canadian church leaders across diverse theological traditions and regions. With the incredible support of our friends at Catholic Christian Outreach, Divine Renovation, and other partner networks, survey invitations were circulated via email and various social media outlets to thousands of church leaders across Canada. Church leaders, both paid and volunteer, were encouraged to participate and share the survey within their circles.

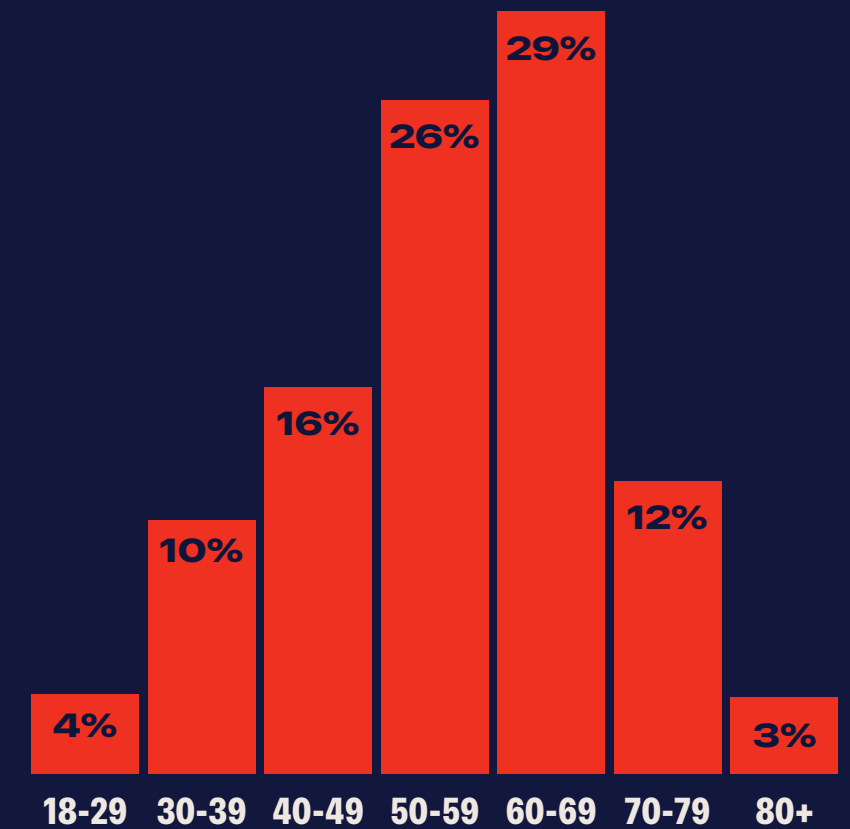
From February to April of 2024,

823 surveys were completed, including over 200 from Catholic leaders in Canada.

We collected several demographic characteristics from survey respondents including age, gender, role in respective parish/congregation, province/territory, city/town/rural district size, overall health of church leader, languages offered in worship services, theological tradition (specified if Protestant), age of parish/congregation, and average number of weekly attenders (online and in-person).

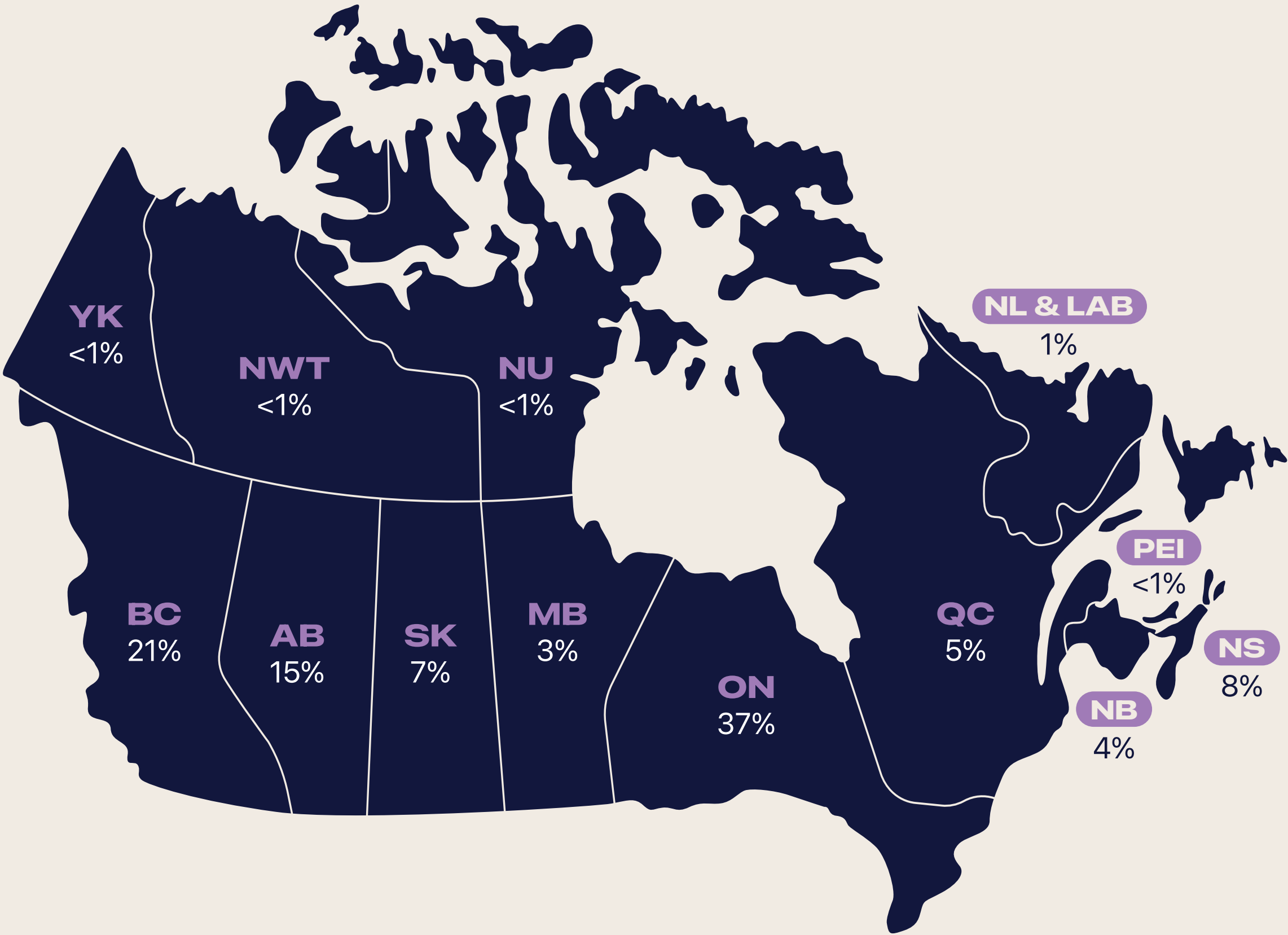
We then analyzed this data, giving attention where applicable to similarities and differences across diverse demographic areas. While this sample is diverse, some groups are represented more than others. This includes **males (59%); those over the age of 50 (71%); church communities that have existed for 30+ years (76%);** and those living in rural populations with fewer than 50,000 residents (26%) alongside cities of 1,000,000+ in size (24%).

Accordingly, as we seek to do in this report, data interpretations should cautiously account for whose perspectives and experiences are included in this sample. The numbers included in this report have been rounded to the nearest percentage point. Thus, total figures may not add up to 100% in every instance.

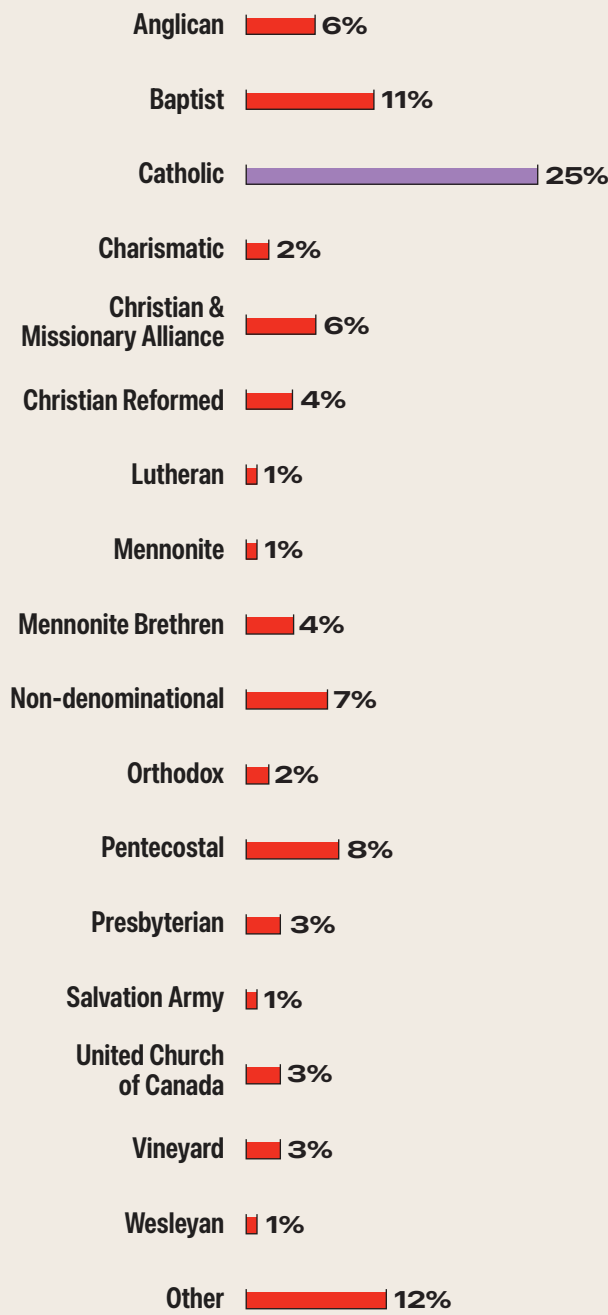


Age range of respondents

In what province/territory is your parish/congregation located?



What Christian denomination/tradition does your parish/congregation identify with?



Others include:
Christian or Plymouth Brethren, Church of Christ, Church of God, Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Free Church, Evangelical Missionary Church, Free Methodist, Foursquare, Full Gospel, and Reformed

This Cultural Moment

Today, approximately 12.6 million Canadians (more than one-third of Canada's population) report having no religious affiliation or identify with secular perspectives like atheism, agnosticism, or humanism. This portion has more than doubled in the past 20 years, reflecting a shift towards a post-Christian society.¹

From this survey, 35% of leaders identified a perceived antagonism towards Christian values as a key barrier to sharing the gospel. Yet, despite this trend,

our survey reveals an unexpectedly hope-filled majority existing at the confluence of two themes.

Firstly, church leaders in Canada are perceiving an inexplicable **spiritual openness and curiosity** in their communities. Secondly, church leaders across Canada are **prioritizing sharing the gospel**, with an **increased clarity and commitment to the mission**. This data reveals a pivotal moment for the church to offer the hope of the gospel to communities who are searching to make sense of a shifting cultural landscape.

¹ The Canadian census: A rich portrait of the country's religious and ethnocultural diversity," Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026b-eng.htm>



Key Findings

Spiritual Openness | Priority of Evangelization | Clarity in Mission

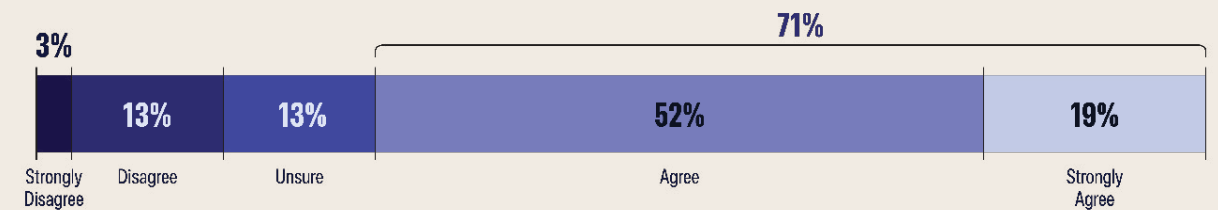
Perceived Increase in Spiritual Openness

There is a palpable sense of increased spiritual curiosity and openness among Canadians,

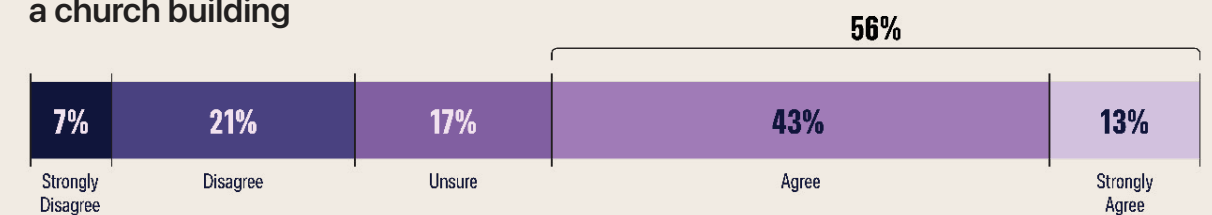
as observed by church leaders. The survey indicates over 70% of respondents have noticed a rise in spiritual curiosity among lapsed or non-Christians in their communities over the past three years. Additionally, nearly 60% perceive a greater openness to the Christian message, and 56% report a higher likelihood of these individuals entering church buildings. These perceived trends reflect a broader social context where spiritual exploration is becoming more prevalent, creating fertile ground for sharing the love of Jesus.

“Compared to three years ago, I have witnessed the following among those I believe to be lapsed/non-Christians in the surrounding neighbourhood/community near my parish/congregation:”

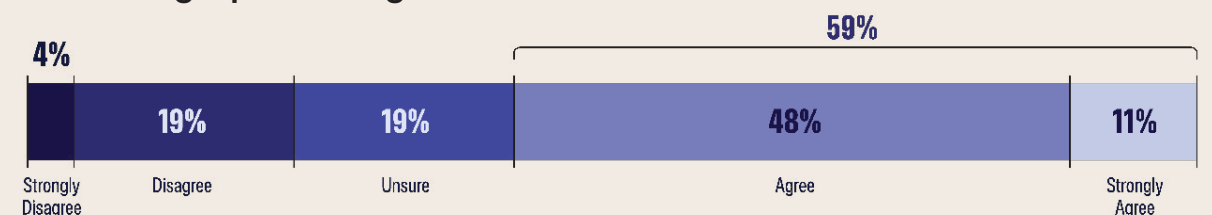
Increased spiritual curiosity



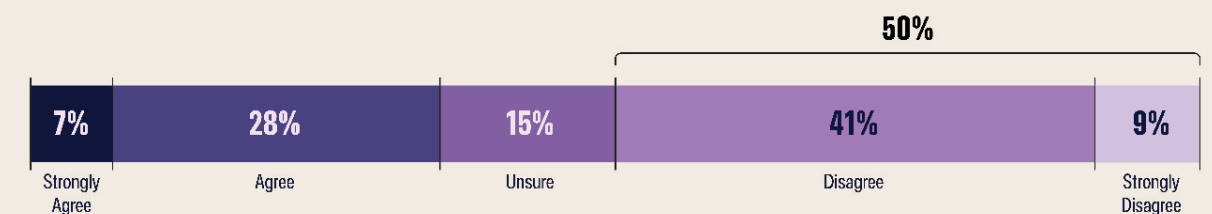
Increased likelihood to enter a church building



Increased openness toward the Christian gospel message



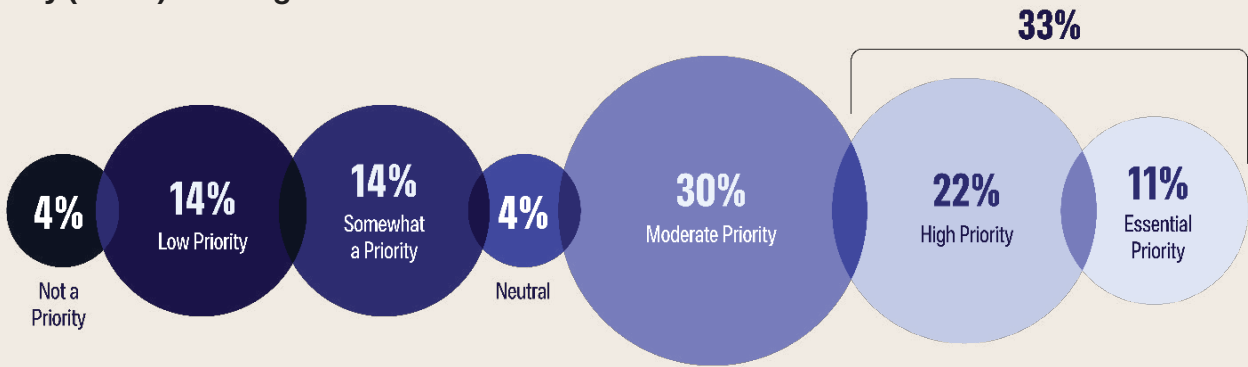
Increased animosity towards conversations around the Christian faith



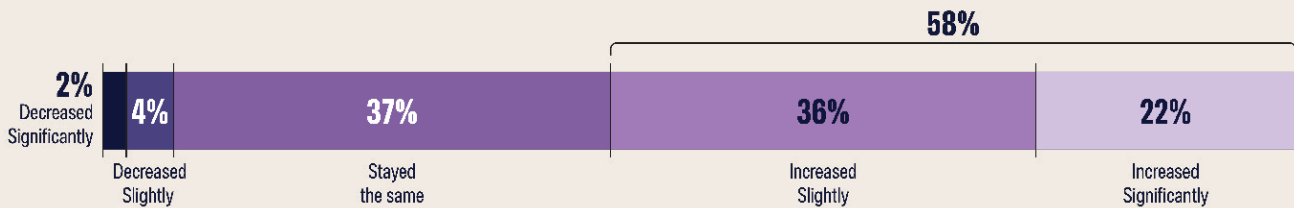
Increased Priority of Evangelization

In the past three years, Canadian parishes have heightened their focus on evangelization. Survey results show that two-thirds of respondents reported an increased priority on evangelization, with 58% noting a rise in evangelistic efforts. This moderate increase is mirrored by a personal commitment from church leaders, with 92% agreeing on the importance of evangelization to their ministry—a notable 30% increase since 2021.²

“As you think about your local parish/congregation over the last three years, to what extent would you say your parish/congregation has given priority (or not) to evangelization?”

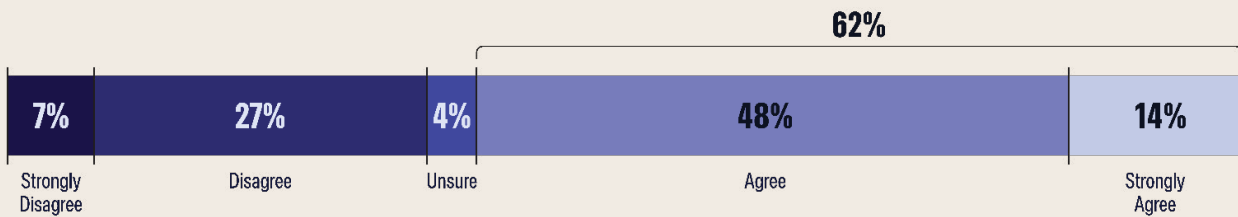


“In the past three years, has the prioritization of evangelization in your parish/congregation changed?”



Equipping members to share their faith

“My church parish equips its members to evangelize”



Additionally, a higher portion of leaders report equipping those in their parish/congregation through weekly teaching/preaching and encouraged participation in evangelistic events or activities.

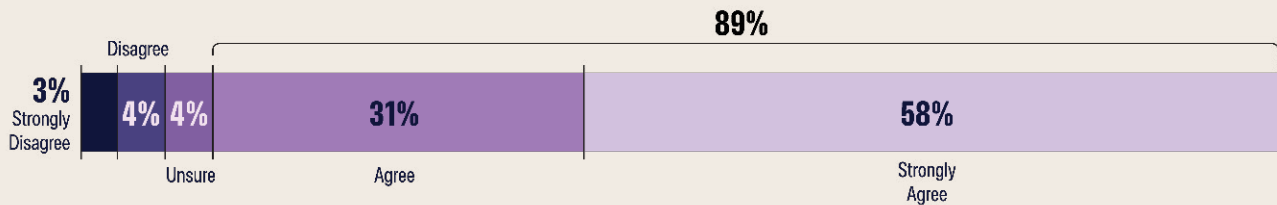
² We are taking into account a change in the survey removing the ‘neutral’ option previously included in 2021

Changes from 2021 to 2024 include a drop from 31% to 5% of leaders who felt uncomfortable sharing their beliefs with those of different or no religious backgrounds.³

This shift points to a renewed commitment to evangelization and adapting to cultural changes. Currently, **62%** of respondents say their church equips its members to evangelize, **up from 44%** in 2021.

Catholics (60%) reported being the most likely to have 3+ relationships for this purpose while mainline Protestants (40%) were the least likely (evangelical Protestants – 52%). This may reflect a sense of urgency to “re-evangelize” nominal Catholics.

“Evangelism/evangelization positively impacts my personal spiritual growth.”



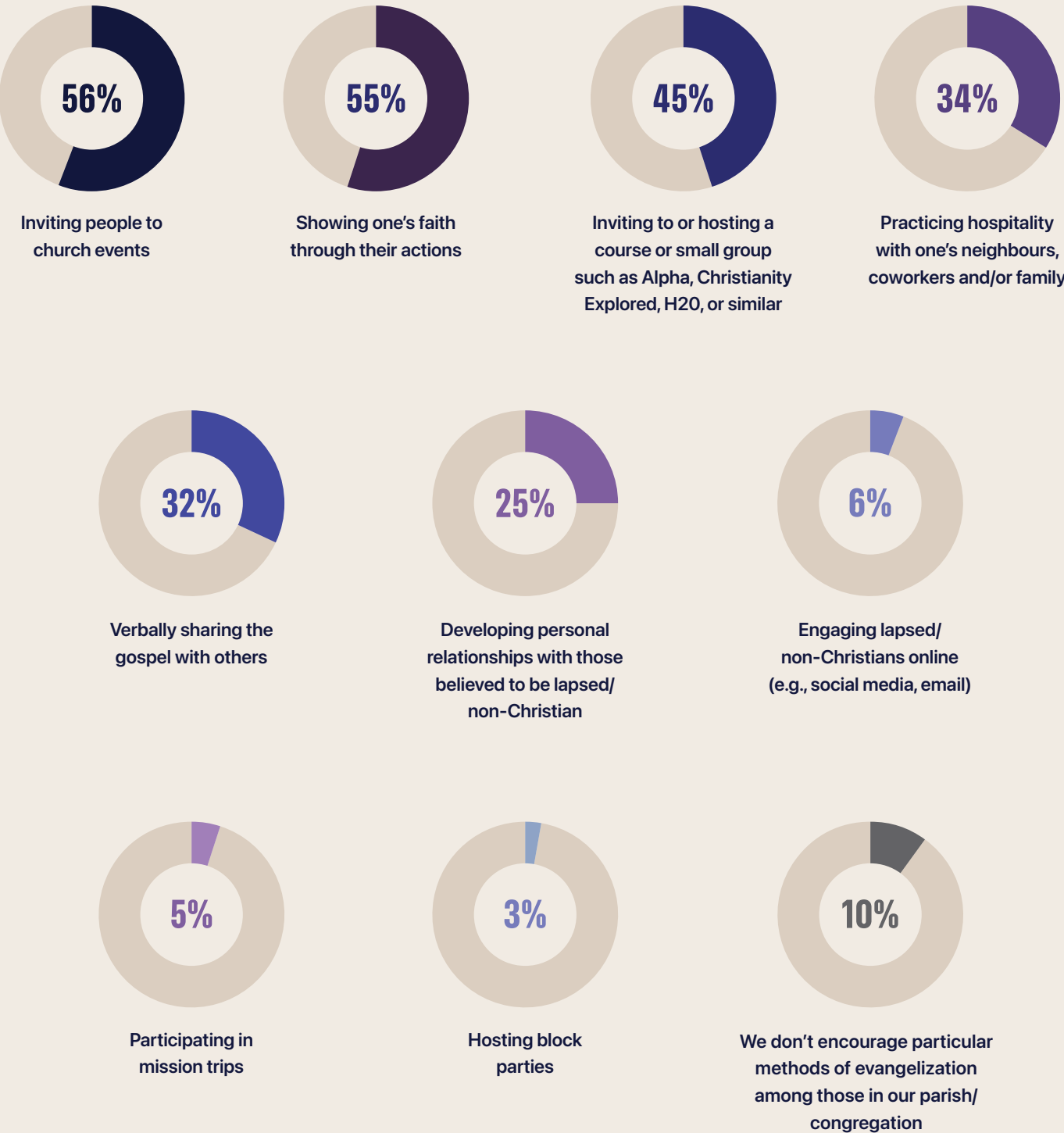
Evangelical Protestants (71.4%) are the most likely to strongly agree or agree compared to mainline Protestant (40.6%) and Catholic (56%) congregations/parishes. Consistent with other literature, this finding suggests that theology can and does play a role to shape how congregations approach sharing faith.

³ We are taking into account a change in the survey removing the ‘neutral’ option previously included in 2021

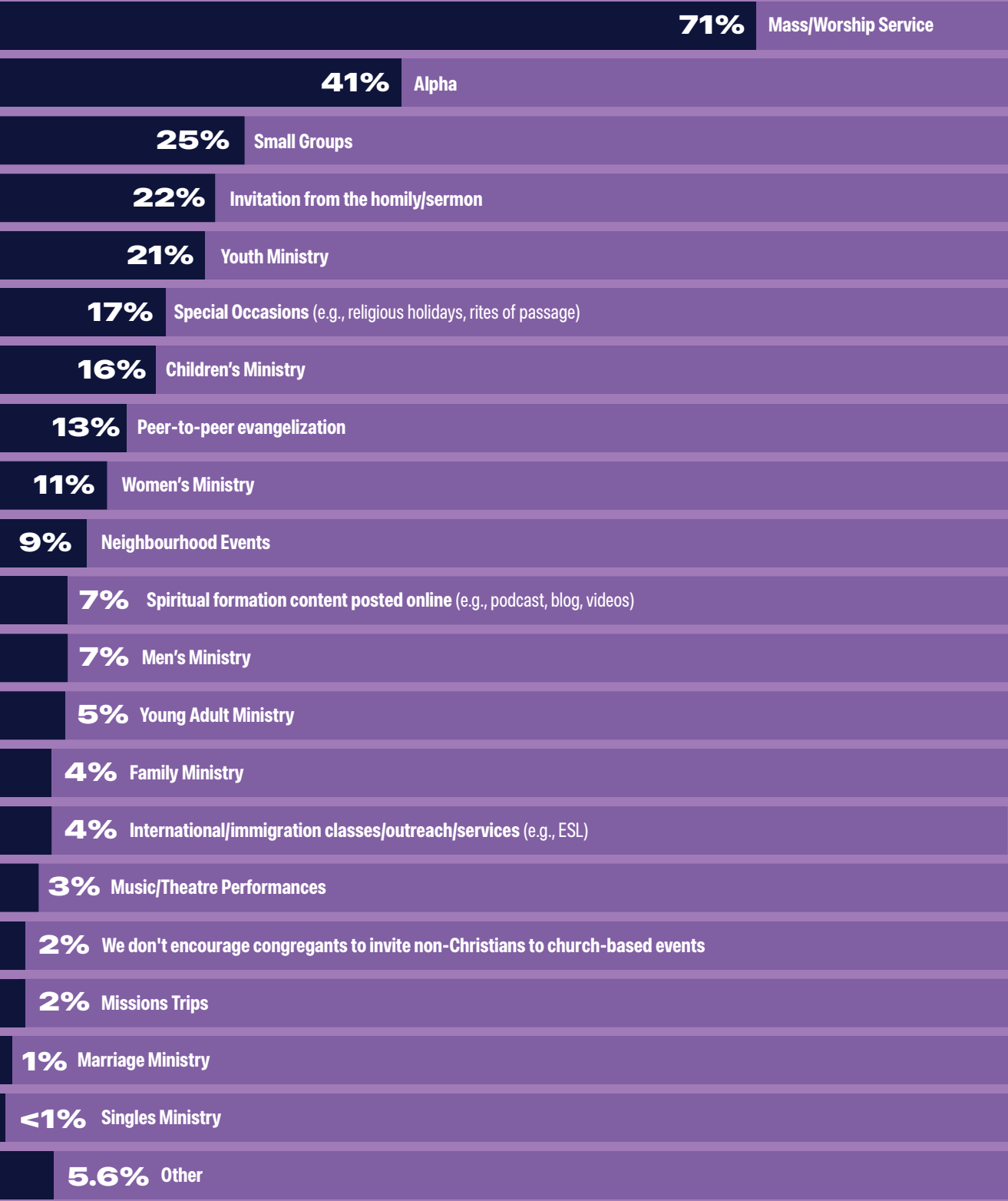
These findings differ from the 2021 survey in that higher proportions of respondents indicate weekly teaching/preaching (31% in 2024 vs 24% in 2021) or evangelistic events or activities (26% vs 9% in 2021).

In many parishes and congregations, people are encouraged to share the gospel through a variety of methods. These include inviting others to church events, demonstrating their faith through actions, and hosting or participating in small groups aimed at newcomers. Additionally, there exists a broad diversity of opportunities for individuals to explicitly hear the gospel, such as during worship services, through programs like Alpha, and in small group settings.

Leaders were asked to select the three most common methods of evangelization encouraged among those in their parish/congregation.

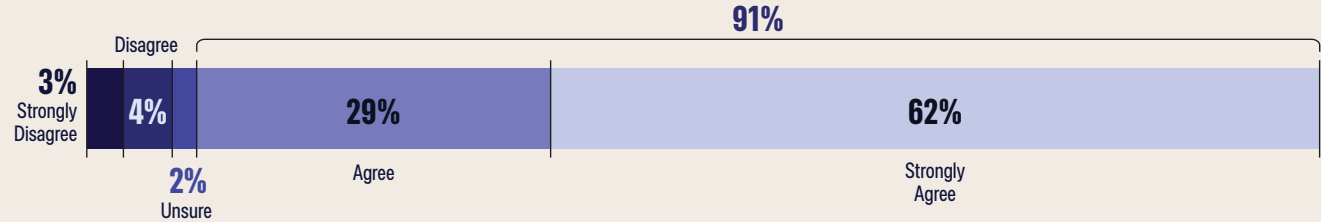


Leaders were asked to select the three most common ministry areas where people have the opportunity to explicitly hear the gospel shared within their church ministry.

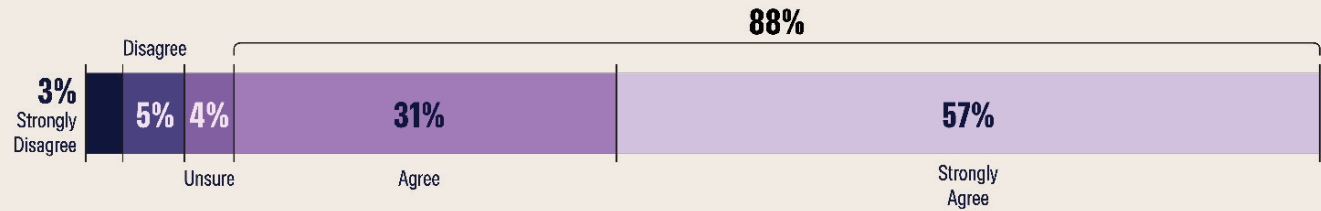


(*nearly 50 write-in responses, many that overlap with different programs identified in the list above, alongside ministries oriented to those in the community (e.g., food and clothing))

“Evangelization is important to me personally in my ministry”



“Evangelization positively impacts my personal spiritual growth”



Increased Clarity in Mission

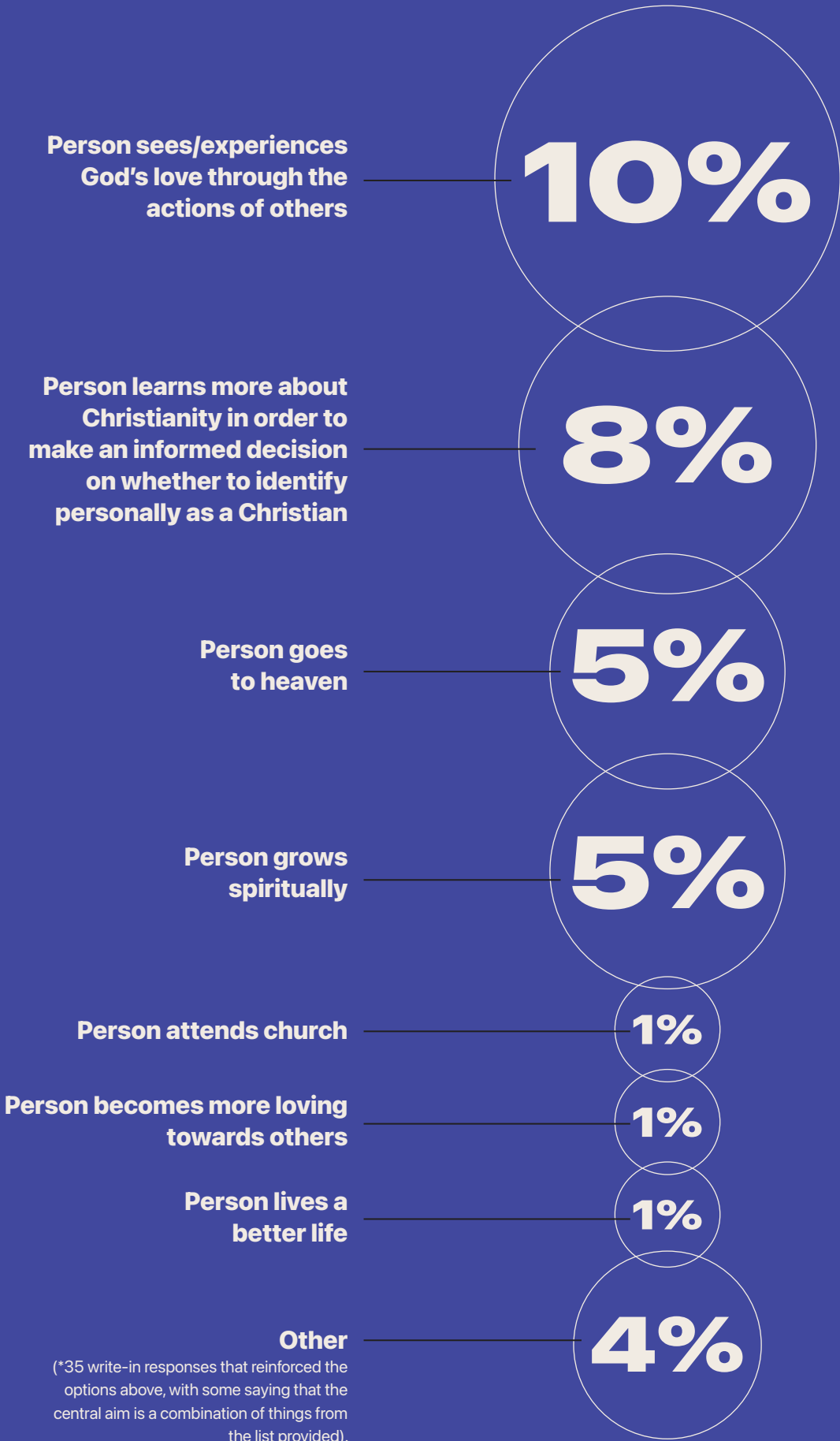
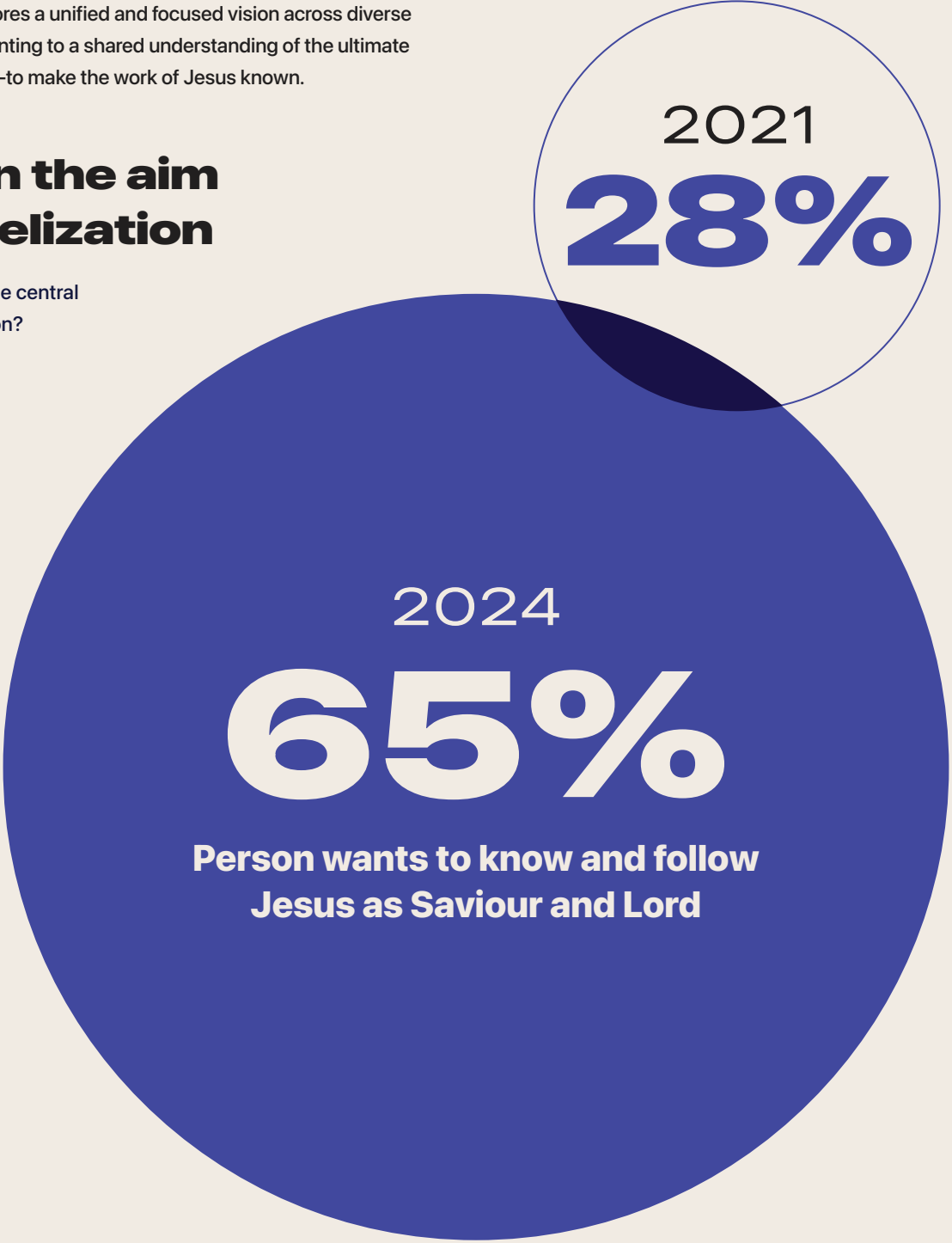
The data suggests a growing clarity among church leaders regarding the mission and goals of sharing faith.

Two-thirds of respondents identified the central aim of evangelization as helping people know and follow Jesus—a significant increase from the 28% who held this view in the 2021 survey.

This consensus underscores a unified and focused vision across diverse theological traditions, pointing to a shared understanding of the ultimate purpose of these efforts—to make the work of Jesus known.

Clarity on the aim of evangelization

What would you say is the central goal/aim of evangelization?



Reigniting the Mission

Prayer | Invitation | Celebration

In this section, we explore three ways that church leaders are moving to an active evangelistic position through prayer, invitation, and celebration. We also review the correlation between these three areas and their relationship with church culture. This includes the prioritization of evangelization and its link to discipleship and prayer, as well as engagement indicators, including how leaders perceive the spiritual curiosity and openness to the gospel in their communities and church attendance.

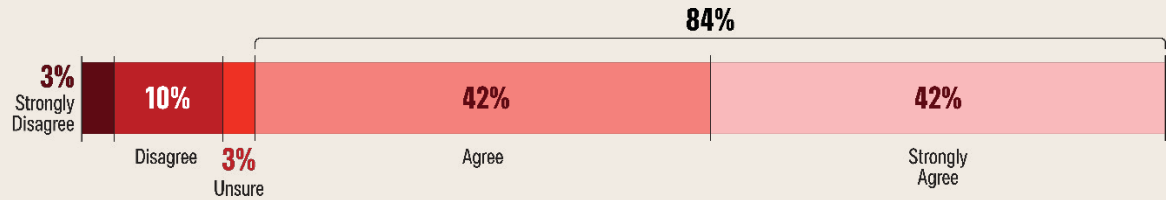
Prayer

The data suggests a shift towards more active forms of sharing faith, such as inviting people to church events and verbally sharing the gospel, compared to the 2021 survey which took a more moderate approach. As we explored above, there are a variety of ways church leaders are sharing the gospel and equipping members to share their faith—but we are also increasingly aware that **prayer is the key to unlocking hearts**. The foundation of evangelization must be prayer.

The role of prayer is paramount and serves as a foundational pillar that supports and invigorates our efforts in sharing the gospel. The survey states that **84% of church leaders agree that prayer is central to their church's approach to evangelization**, representing a significant **growth from the 55% of leaders who agreed in 2021.***

Nearly half of leaders who strongly agree that prayer is central to their evangelistic approach also strongly agree that evangelization is tied to discipleship, representing a 21% increase.

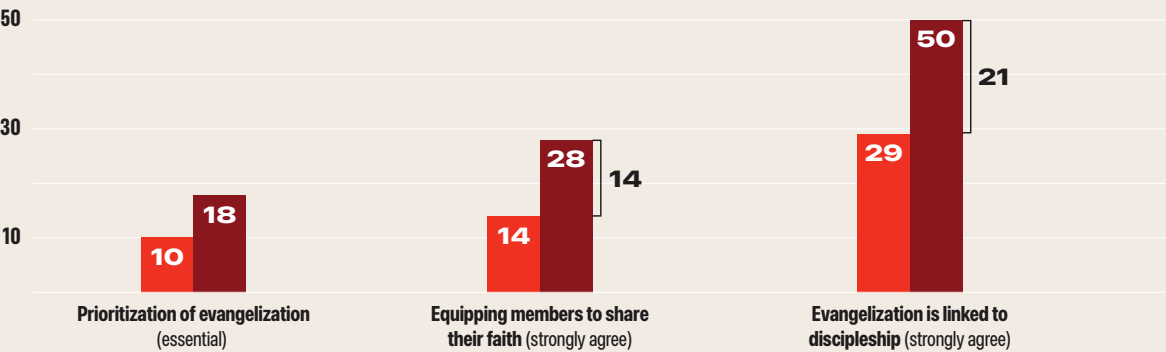
“Prayer is central to my church’s approach to evangelization”



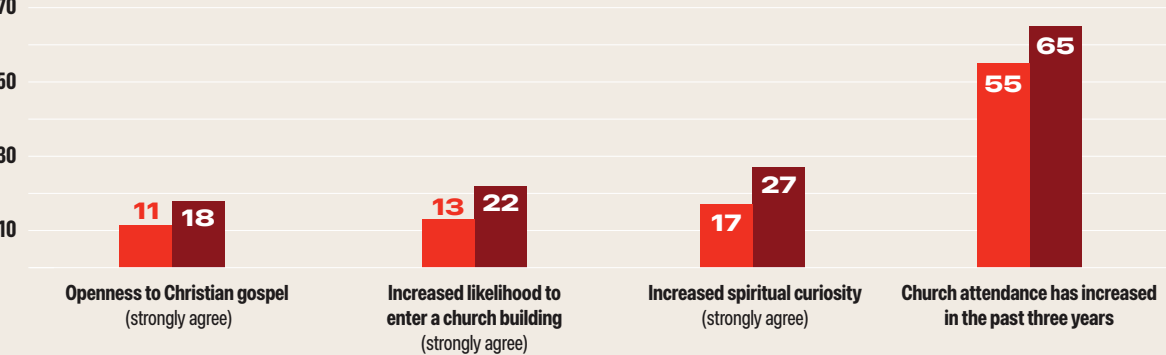
We studied the 42% of church leaders who strongly agree that prayer is central to their church’s approach to evangelization, and see a strong relationship in the priority and practice of evangelization, including missional clarity, how members are equipped and how it is linked to discipleship. We also see a relationship with positive engagement indicators such as perceived openness in lapsed/non-Christians and church attendance growth. **Notably, nearly half of leaders who strongly agree that prayer is central to their evangelistic approach also strongly agree that evangelization is tied to discipleship, representing a 21% increase on the overall sample.** The centrality of prayer also has strong relationships with perceived spiritual openness and church growth, illustrating a dynamic interplay between spiritual disciplines and outreach efforts.

● Overall ● Strongly agree prayer is central to their church’s approach to evangelization

Church Culture



Engagement Indicators

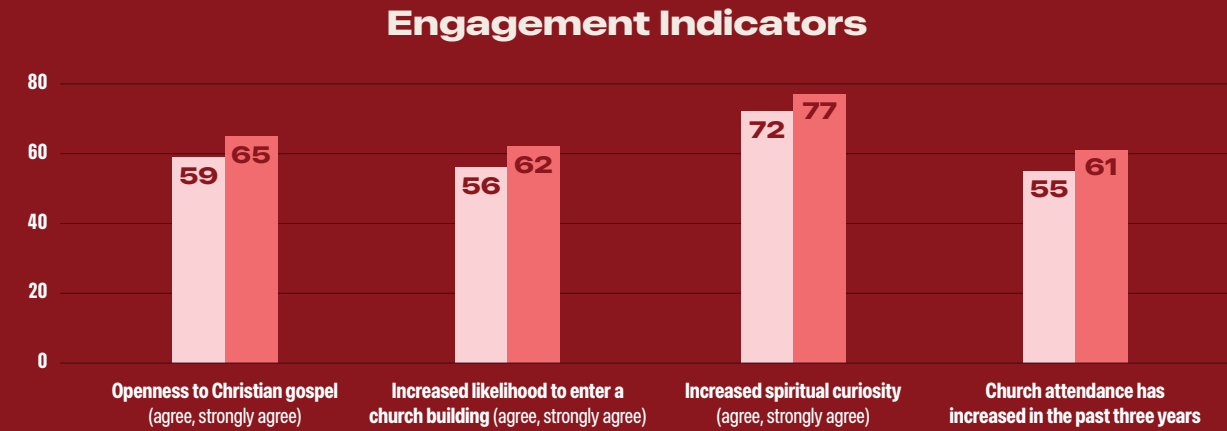
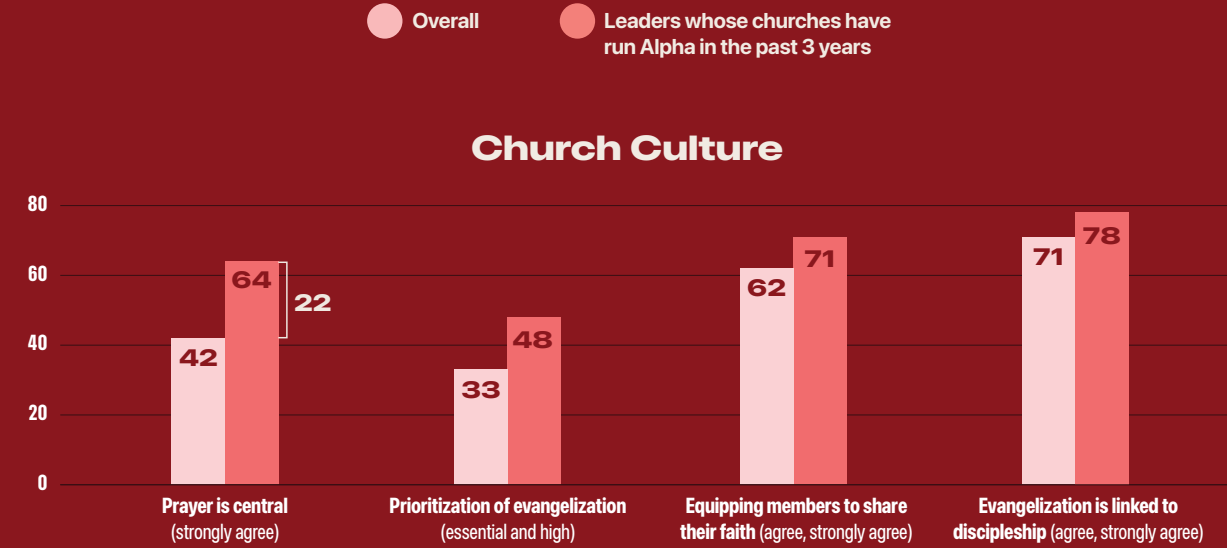


Invitation

Over 61% of leaders reported that their church has run Alpha in the past three years, indicating a structured and intentional method of introducing individuals to the Christian faith. Such programs not only facilitate clear messaging but also provide consistent frameworks for exploring faith, thereby aligning parishes with their evangelistic motives. This clarity in mission is fostering a more vibrant and proactive faith-sharing culture within Canadian churches, contributing to a broader more unified movement of sharing the Christian faith.

We studied the responses of 61% of leaders, and the results demonstrate a positive relationship between Alpha, church culture, and engagement indicators. Of those in this grouping, 64%

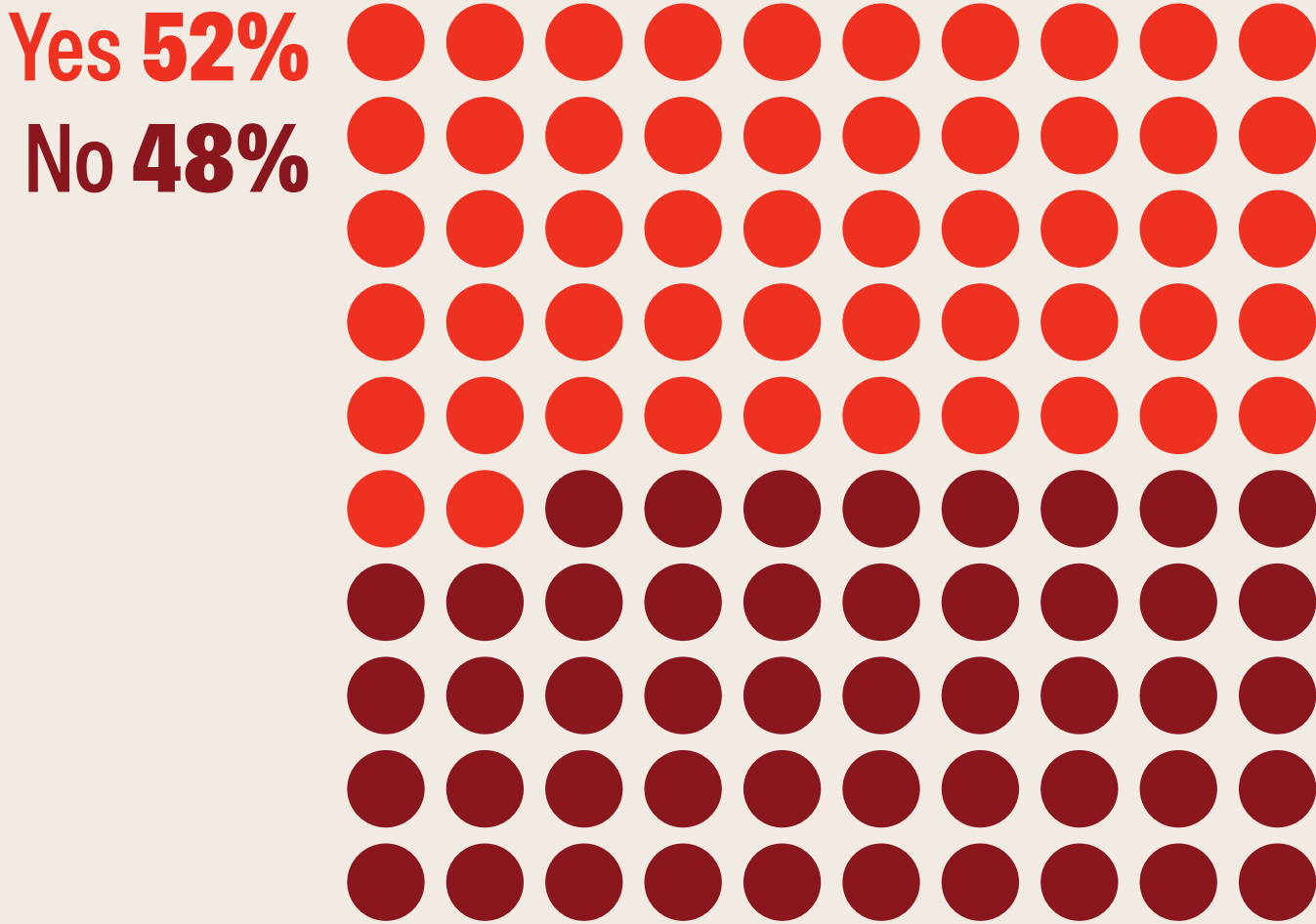
strongly agree that prayer is central to their evangelistic approach representing an increase of over 20% on the overall sample. We also witness a positive correlation with 48% of leaders reporting that evangelization is an essential or high priority, a significant increase on the overall 33%. Churches with a moderate to strong invitational culture also report more church attendance growth and perceive a greater openness to the gospel among lapsed/non-Christians in the community near their congregation (65% agree), which then leads to a more spiritually curious and vibrant church environment, highlighting the profound beauty of invitation.



Celebration

This study highlighted the need for improved celebration of new believers and returnees to the Christian faith within congregations. While 52% of the respondents indicated that their congregations record and celebrate new believers, 48% of leaders noted that they do not measure or track how many people come to the Christian faith for the very first time in their parish or congregation. Another 39% of leaders report that they do not publicly acknowledge or celebrate new or returning people to the Christian faith.

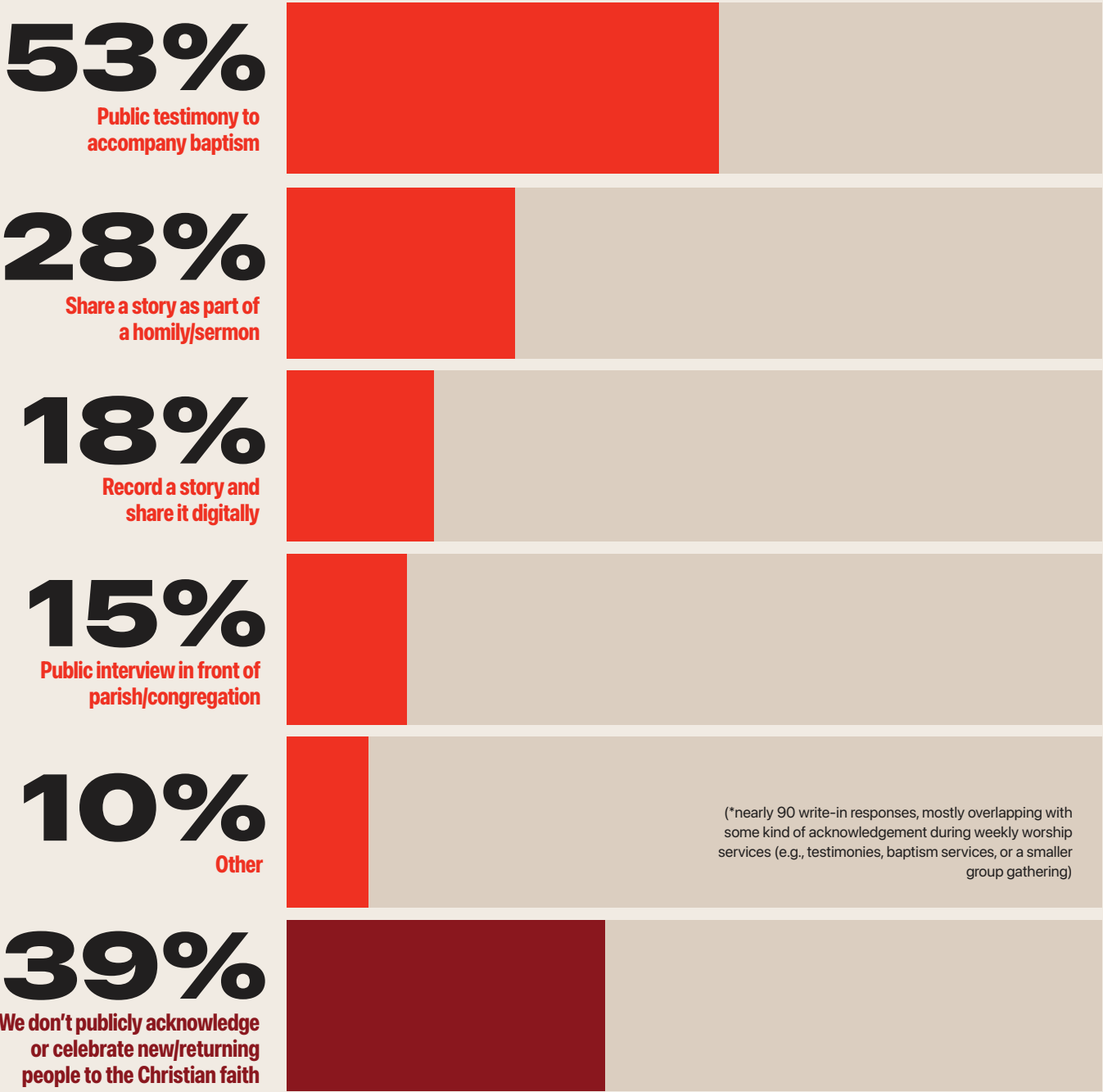
Leaders were asked if their parish/congregation currently measures or tracks how many people come to Christian faith for the very first time.



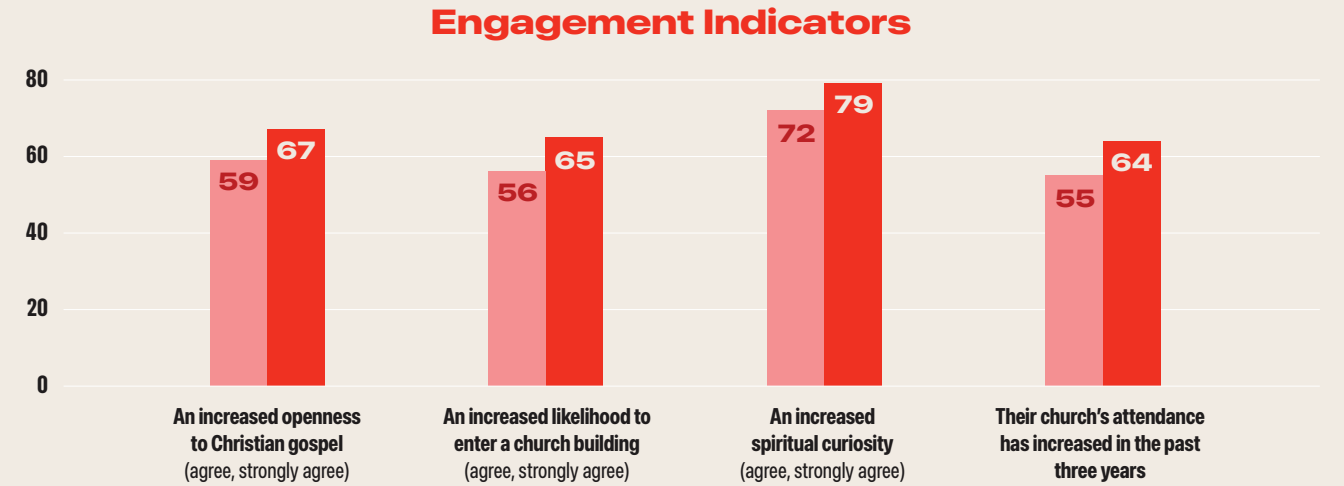
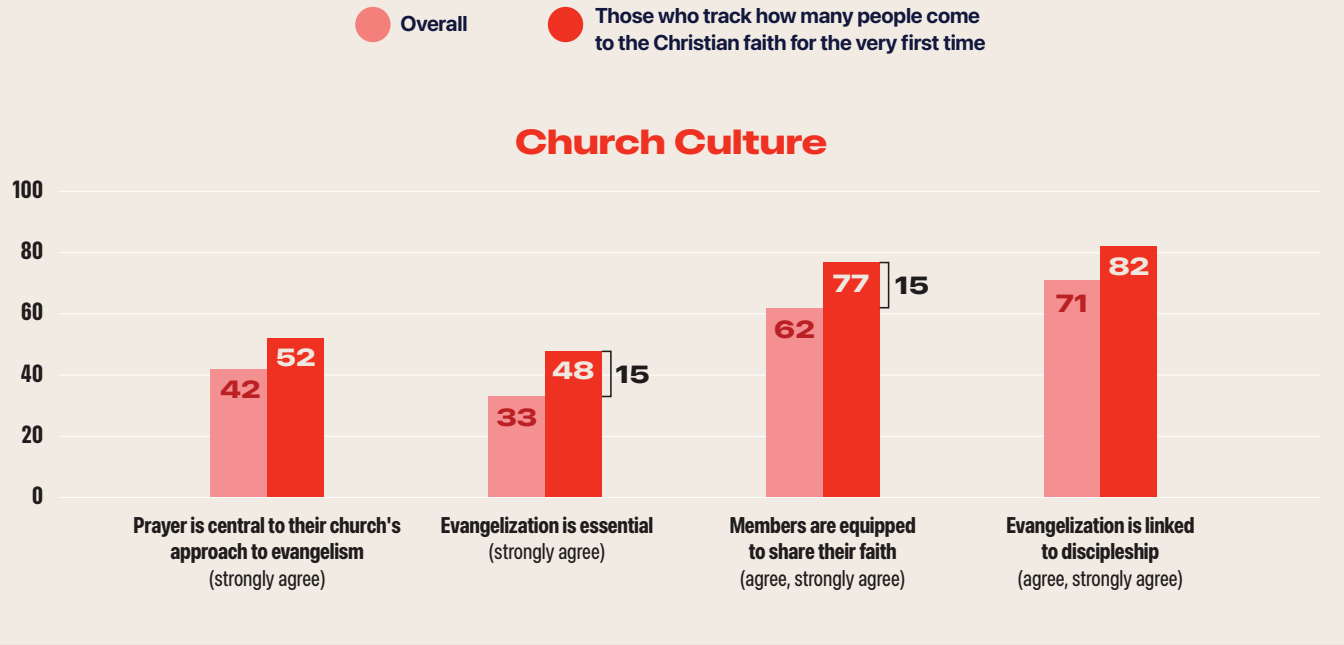
Celebration can remind members in the congregation of the importance of evangelization, recalling one's own experience, involvement in sharing their faith with others and possibly spurring people to consider the impact of sharing their faith with others moving forward.

We see this as a **unique opportunity to put more focus and attention on recognizing the impact of Jesus' transformation within lives and communities**—and to take the time and create space to celebrate.

Leaders were asked to select the three most common ways that their parish/church publicly acknowledges or celebrates new/returning people to the Christian faith.



Looking deeper at the 52% of church leaders who report tracking and celebrating those joining the Christian faith, we see relationships with elements of missional church culture, as well as engagement indicators. In particular, those in this group place a high prioritization on evangelization with 48% reporting it as an essential or high priority. Additionally, 77% of leaders in this group agree or strongly agree that members are equipped to share their faith. In both cases, these figures represent a 15% increase in the overall percentage of those reporting.



Looking Ahead

We believe that God has placed leaders in the local church for such a time as this. It is time to reignite hope with the Good News of Jesus. Our current moment is marked by a perceived increase in spiritual curiosity and openness, alongside a growing commitment to evangelization. We celebrate you as you encourage and equip your communities to share the hope of Jesus across Canada.

Together, let us embrace this opportunity with renewed dedication to prayer, active invitation, and joy-filled celebration. We stand with you, cheering you on as we collectively work to share the transformative message of Jesus.





Alpha

Create a space where people from any background can encounter Jesus.

At Alpha Canada, we believe that fostering a culture of invitation in Canadian Catholic parishes is pivotal to reaching our communities with the transformative message of Jesus. Alpha is just one of the many tools available. We have been encouraged to see that Catholic parishes who are actively engaging in evangelization are using this tool and witnessing remarkable fruit that has enriched many aspects of their ministry.



An increased focus on prayer



Leaders personally focused and engaged in evangelization



Greater openness to the gospel in their communities



Growth in church attendance

To learn more about how Alpha can support an invitational culture within your parish, please visit alphacanada.org/coaching and sign up for your complimentary one-on-one coaching call.

CELEBRATING THE NEXT GENERATION

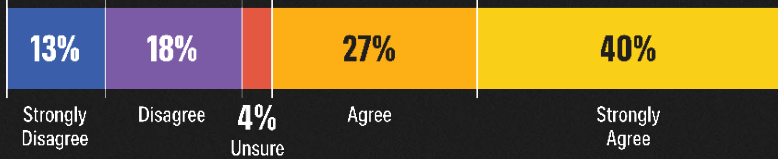
We are filled with hope as we witness God’s work in this generation. Today’s youth are open, optimistic, and curious, seeking to inspire change and valuing authenticity and integrity.

In response to this, we’re releasing a new Alpha Youth Series including 10 episodes tailored for this generation. It explores the core ideas of the Christian faith in a relevant and engaging way, fostering real, open conversations about life, faith, and meaning. It is our prayer that this series would empower and equip teens to share the hope of Jesus with their friends and communities.

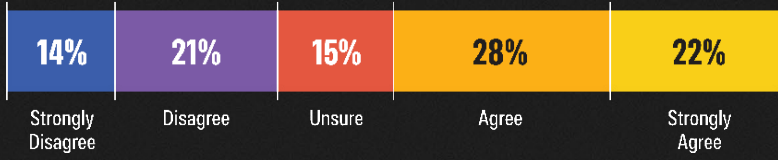
As we prepare to launch the Alpha Youth Series in the fall of 2024, we invite you to join us in intentional prayer for this up-and-coming generation.

Learn more at alphacanada.org/ays.

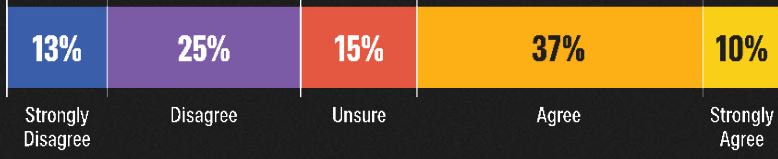
“Our church has an active ministry for teens (age 13-17).”



“To the best of my knowledge, teens who are non-Christians join our ministry for teens.”



“To the best of my knowledge, teens in our church are equipped to share their faith.”





**This report is made
freely available as a
gift to the local church
as we continue to
share the Good News
of Jesus together.**



With special thanks to our friends



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OUTREACH



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