

2015–2025

CHURCH PLANTING IN NORWAY

Changes and trends



NEW CHURCHES NEW PLACES

THAT REACH NEW PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

It is with great joy that we once again present a new report on church planting in Norway. For more than 30 years, the Sent Network (formerly DAWN Norway) has gathered knowledge about new churches and pioneering work across the country. Every five years, a new report is published. Each report offers a fresh perspective, while also serving as a reminder: God is building His church, and He continues to call people to plant new churches that reach new people in new places.

We are deeply grateful to those who have gone before us and shown the way. We thank all the denominations and organisations that have reported data, and the leaders who have shared their experiences through the survey. A special thanks goes to all of you who are engaged in the actual work of planting—those who pray, lead, fail, learn, and plant new churches. It is your experiences that this report seeks to capture.

In this report, we aim to present a realistic and honest picture of church planting in Norway during the period 2015–2025. Where is church planting taking place today? Who are the people at the forefront? What decisions, framework, and relationships enable planting teams to succeed—while others are forced to give up? And how can our experience of the past ten years help us see more clearly where and how church planting should take place in the future?

Our dream is both simple and ambitious: to see a diversity of new churches and Christian communities—small and large, in rural areas and cities—that together lead people into discipleship with Jesus. We hope this report will inspire, refine, and challenge us all to listen, learn, pray, and act courageously in response to the calling God has for us.

JARLEIF GAUSTAD

Director of Sent Norway



SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This report presents an overview of church planting in Norway during the period 2015–2025. It is based on reported data from denominations and organisations affiliated with Sent Norway, an extensive survey conducted among church planting leaders within the Sent network, and findings from Global Christianity in Norway (2025). Taken together, the material depicts a Norwegian church planting landscape that is both evolving and characterised by increased diversity—particularly through the growth of migrant communities and orthodox churches.

When DAWN Norway became Sent Norway, the network united around a vision to train 4,000 church planters and plant 400 churches and Christian communities across the country. This report shows that more than 300 church planting initiatives were launched during the period 2015–2025. If the numbers had been limited to plantings within the Sent network alone, the number would have been significantly lower. The report explains these figures and highlights the experiences church planters in this period have gained regarding what it means to plant churches in Norway today.

One key finding is that church planting has remained relatively stable despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other external factors—largely due to migrant churches, which now account for nearly half of all new church plants. This represents a significant increase compared to what was identified in previous reports. At the same time, the Sent network's own data shows signs of positive development following a decrease during the pandemic, with more new teams entering training and an increase in church planting activity toward the end of the period.

The survey indicates that new church plants dominate among respondents. 67% are establishing entirely new churches, while replants, multi-site congregations, and house churches make up a smaller proportion. The plantings are clearly

urban in character, as more than 80% take place in cities and larger urban areas. This aligns with general population trends but may also suggest that many teams intentionally orient themselves toward areas marked by growth, mobility, and greater openness to new Christian communities.

Two particularly interesting findings concern the core team in a church plant and when the officially start up. The average age within the core team is 36, indicating a noticeable maturation among church planting teams. Where church planting was previously dominated by young pioneers, current data points toward a broader age composition. This trend was already evident in the 2021 survey and is now confirmed. We also note that the proportion of participants under the age of 18 is higher than in the general population.

Data on core teams further shows that complementary gifts, relational capacity, and especially strong team cohesion are the most decisive factors for a well-functioning church planting team. This emphasis on cohesion marks a shift from earlier years, when more individualistic traits such as determination and personal drive were ranked as more important.

The report also shows that church plants in Norway often establish themselves quickly. More than half begin public church services within one year, and 30% do so within 6 months. This con-

2. SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

trasts with international trends, where start-up phases often extend over several years. In the Norwegian context, this may indicate that planting teams experience expectations that push them towards launching official church services early. At the same time, declining church service attendance numbers may suggest that services are started too early, potentially limiting outward engagement. Alternatively, this trend may reflect the fact that more planters are intentionally forming smaller communities.

Follow-up and support emerge as some of the most decisive factors for success. As many as 77% of respondents report significant benefit from formal follow-up programs, while 20% indicate that they did not participate in such programs. This means that nearly all who did participate report substantial benefit. In particular, coaching, networks with other planters,

and financial support are highlighted as critical. Compared with local leadership networks, the findings indicate that structured follow-up programs provide a stronger sense of support and competence development. This underscores that church planting is not only a spiritual and organisational endeavor, but also a learning process that requires close professional, experiential, and relational support.

Taken as a whole, the report suggests that church planting in Norway is entering an exciting new phase, while remaining dependent on strong teams, a clear vision, local engagement, and robust support systems. Church planting continues to appear as one of the church's most effective missional strategies, and the report identifies both the potential and the challenges that must be addressed to ensure sustainable growth in the years ahead.

SENDTNORGE.NO

Sendt Norge is an interdenominational network working to mobilise, inspire, and equip leaders to plant new Christian churches in Norway. The network brings together a broad range of denominations and organisations around a shared vision for church planting.

We want to inspire the planting of new communities that reach new people in new places. We build relationships and seek to learn across denominational lines. Through research and surveys, we gather ongoing insights from current practice in Norway today.



METHOD OLOGY

This report is based on an updated dataset describing church planting in Norway during the period 2015–2025. The aim has been to establish as comprehensive and representative a picture as possible of developments in church planting across organisations, denominations, and geographical contexts.

The work consists of three main components: the collection of quantitative data, qualitative interviews, and comparative analysis in relation to recent research sources.

3.1 Data Sources

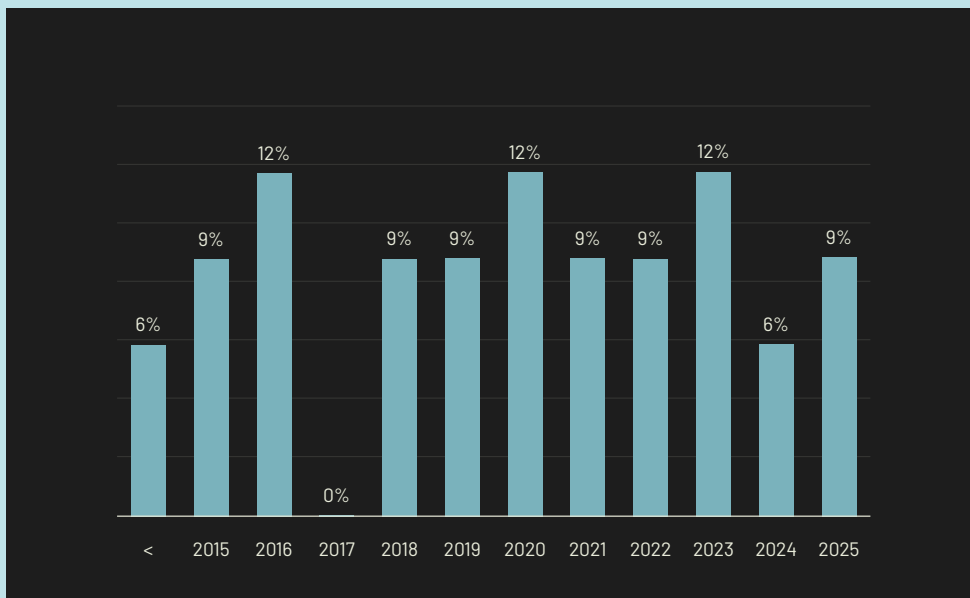
The analyses presented in this report are primarily based on the following sources:

1 Reported overviews from organisations within the Sent Norway network

All organisations affiliated with the Sent network have contributed with overviews of new churches and church planting initiatives established during the period 2015-2025. The material includes:

- Church plants that are today established congregations
- Church plants that are still in a development phase
- Church plants that have been discontinued

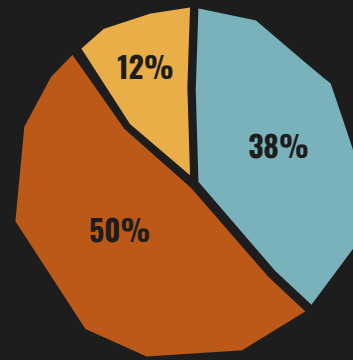
Where possible, the data has been harmonised with information from previous Sent surveys (Nordic Navigation, 2021) to ensure comparability over time.



Distribution by year of establishment among the survey respondents

STATUS OF THE CHURCH PLANTS AS OF 2025 THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

- Still in the establishment phase
- Established as a church
- No longer active



2 Survey distributed to leaders of church plants during the period 2015–2025

To gain a more detailed understanding of church planters' experiences and development processes, a survey was conducted among leaders who have been directly involved in church planting during the period. The survey was sent to 75 individuals, of whom 34 responded – corresponding to a response rate of 45%. This is a high response rate compared to similar studies and provides a solid basis for further analysis.

Data collection took place between December 16, 2025, and January 25, 2026. The survey includes questions related to start-up processes, core teams, growth, local context, faith background, support from mother churches, and assessments of key success factors.

The respondents are geographically well distributed and represent the breadth of the Sent network. The survey therefore primarily serves as an indicator of developments within this network. That the survey reveals proportions pointing toward a new emerging picture should be taken into account when future reports are developed.

In addition, interviews have been conducted with those responsible for church planting within the Sent network, in which they shared reflections on church planting in Norway today.

3 Global Christianity in Norway

To better understand church density, demographics, and changes within the religious landscape, the dataset has been supplemented with figures and analyses from Global Christianity in Norway, a report written by Stian Sørli Eriksen (2025). This contributes to a more precise picture of developments within both Norwegian and migrant-based churches.

As Eriksen notes in his report, there is some uncertainty associated with the figures in this field. While errors may occur, the inclusion of this data nevertheless provides a more comprehensive overview than would otherwise be possible—particularly given that migrant-based churches now account for a significant proportion of church plants in Norway over the past five years. This development is well documented in Global Christianity in Norway.

In the report, Eriksen has carried out extensive work in collecting data and also presents an overview of these congregations by name. This has enabled us to validate and refine reported figures, particularly those submitted by the Baptist Union of Norway and the Pentecostal movement, which include many such congregations within their structures.

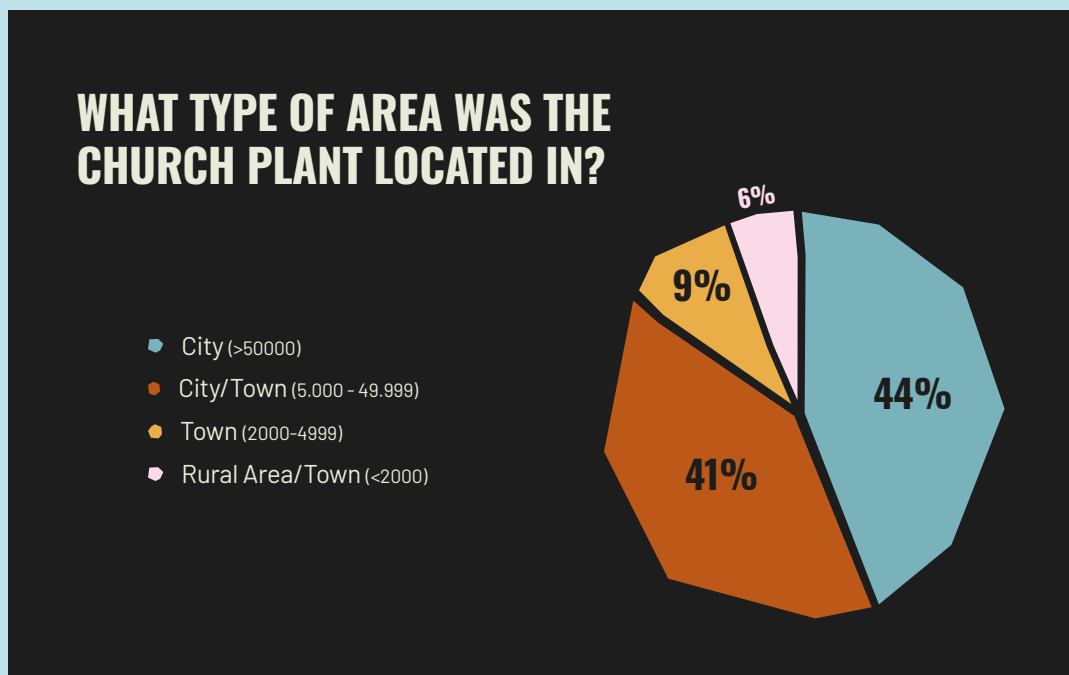
3.2 Survey Sample

The survey sample consists of church plants that:

- Were established during the period 2015–2025
- Represent different denominations, organisations, and networks
- Are geographically dispersed and include almost all counties in Norway

Both new church plants, replants, and multi-site congregations are included in the dataset, in accordance with definitions used by Sent Norway.

A response rate of 45% provides a robust basis for analysing trends, assessments, and experiences from the field.



Shows the population density in the areas where the respondents planted churches, 2021-2025

3.3 Data Quality and Limitations

As with previous reports, certain challenges are present:

- Migrant churches may be underrepresented in the reported material, as mapping independent migrant congregations remains challenging.
- Definitions of church planting vary somewhat between organisations but have been harmonised as much as possible.
- Survey responses reflect subjective assessments by leaders and are therefore interpreted in light of additional data sources.
- Through Global Christianity in Norway, we have had access to information on which church plants are included in that dataset. These have been compared with the broader overview of other church plants.

Despite these limitations, the dataset is assessed as well suited to portraying developments in church planting in Norway during the period 2015–2025.

3.4 Analytical Strategy

The analysis is based on the same methodological principles as previous Sent reports:

- Descriptive statistics
- Comparison of development trends over time
- Qualitative assessments of open-ended survey responses
- Triangulation between survey data, reported figures, and national data sources

This approach enables a comprehensive presentation of both quantitative trends and experience-based perspectives from practice. Overall, the dataset is considered sufficiently valid to provide a representative picture of church planting in Norway during the period 2015–2025.

3.5 Authors

The report has been written by:

- **Jarleif Gaustad** | Norwegian Lutheran Mission
- **Per Eivind Kvammen** | Pentecostal Movement

English translation by:

- **Chelsea Ree** | Norwegian Lutheran Mission

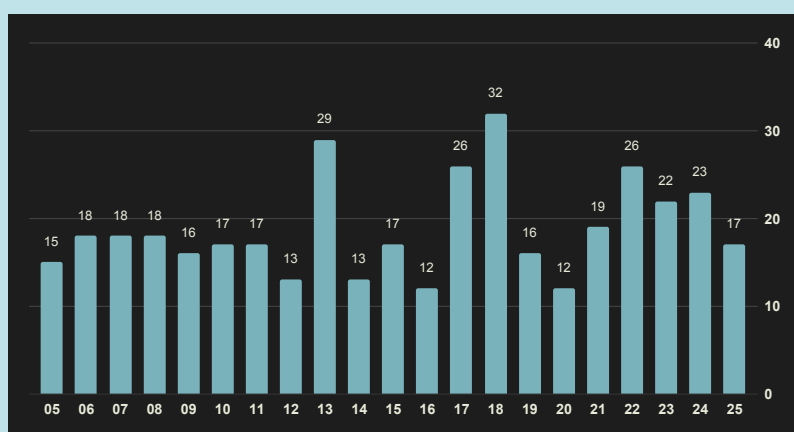
4

CHARACTER- ISTICS OF CHURCH PLANTING IN NORWAY OVER THE PAST TEN YEARS

4.1

NUMBER OF CHURCH PLANTS, WHO IS PLANTING, AND WHERE PLANTING TAKES PLACE

CHURCHES PLANTED IN NORWAY FROM 2005–2025



2005–2020 shows figures from the Sent report. The figures have not been adjusted using data from Eriksen (2025). The figures from 2021 have been adjusted based on a more recent report.

The combined overview of the number of church plants per year during the period 2005–2025 shows that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, church planting in Norway did not decline as much as might have been expected. This is largely due to independent church plants within migrant communities and the establishment of congregations by the Orthodox Church across the country. Together, independent migrant churches, the Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church account for 48% of the total number of church plants in the period 2021–2025.

Through the work on Global Christianity in Norway, Stian Sørli Eriksen has documented a significant number of independent migrant churches that were previously unknown. These figures have now been included in the data for 2021–2025. Growth within this segment has been relatively stable over the past 15 years.

Eriksen’s research suggests that the figures presented in the 2021 report were underreported. Based on conservative estimates, an additional 6–8 migrant churches per year should be added for the period 2005–2010, and 12–15 per year for the period 2011–2020. The figures presented for 2021–2025 can be assumed to be relatively accurate. Eriksen nevertheless emphasises that it remains challenging to establish fully precise numbers. Even if the figures are not exact, they provide an important contribution to the overall picture. Excluding this data would result in more precise individual figures, but a less representative understanding of overall developments.

Sent Norway has held a vision to see 400 churches planted during the ten-year period from 2015 to 2025. Data from the most recent five-year period, together with adjusted figures from 2015–2020, indicate that more than 300 churches (estimated between 306 and 324, according to data from Global Christianity in Norway) have been planted in Norway during the period 2015–2025. This includes church plants that have been initiated but are not yet considered fully established.

THE DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES, SENT NETWORK (INCLUDING OTHER NORWEGIAN DENOMINATIONS), AND CATHOLIC/ORTHODOX CHURCHES IN THE PERIOD 2021–2025

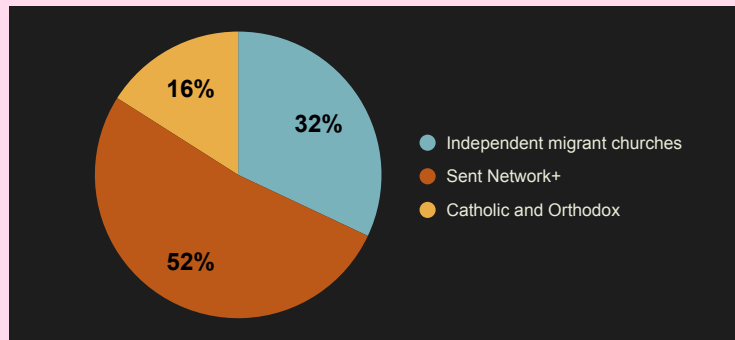
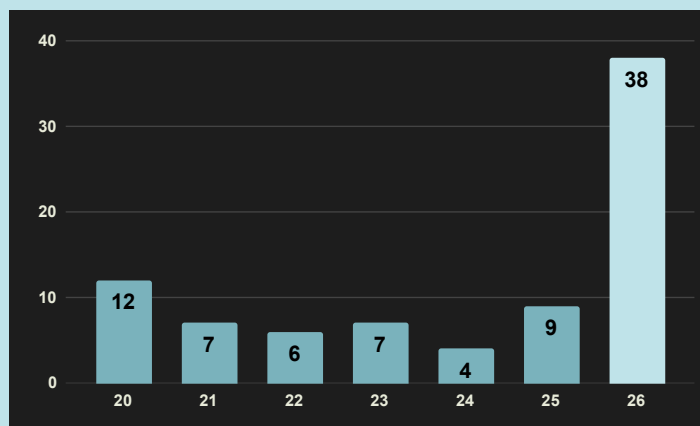


Diagram showing the distribution between independent churches, the Sent network (including other Norwegian denominations), and Catholic/Orthodox churches in the period 2021–2025

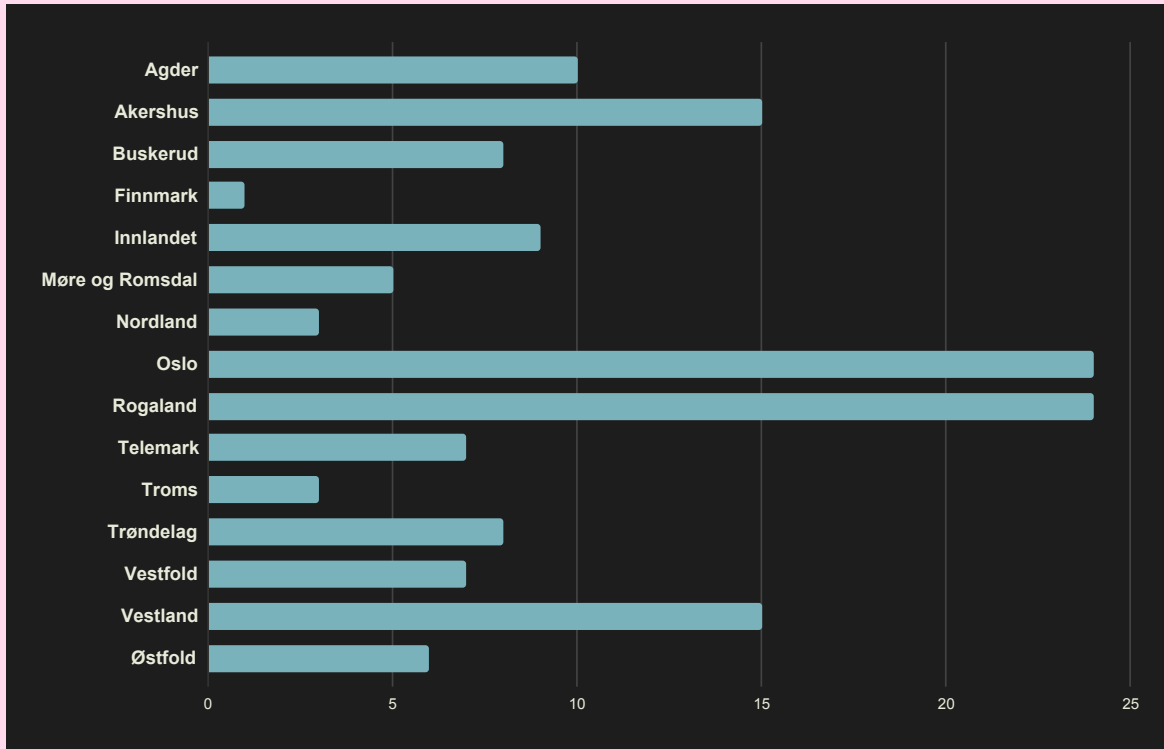
SENT NETWORK 2021-2025



Within the Sent network, there was a decline in church planting activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, but signs of positive change are now evident. Looking specifically at 2025 and the number of teams currently in training, momentum is increasing within the Sent network. There are now more teams in the start-up phase than the total number of churches planted within the network during the entire period 2021–2025.

Organisations within the Sent network were also asked how many congregations in their respective contexts are actively working toward planting new churches. The combined number reported is 68.

COUNTY-LEVEL DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCH PLANTS IN THE PERIOD 2021–2025

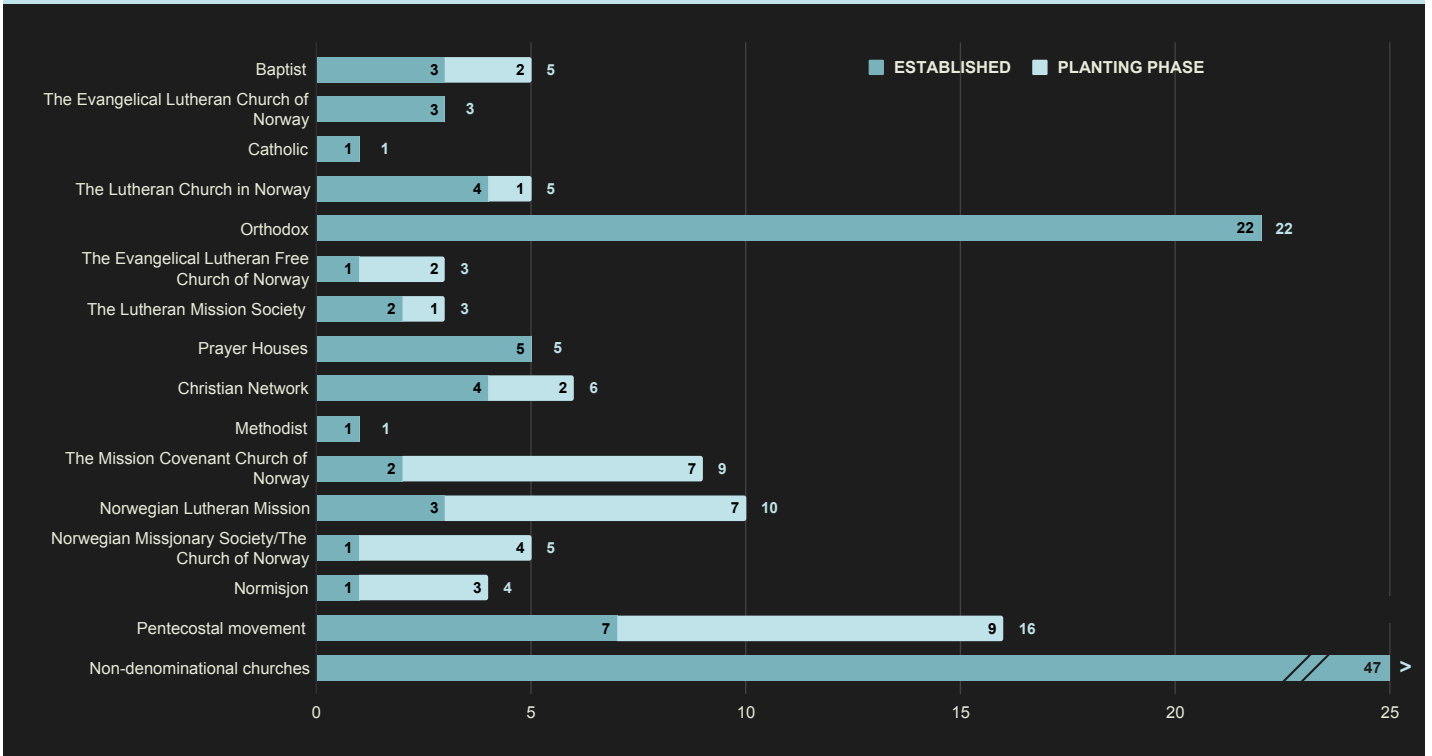


In the 2021 report, it was noted that Oslo and Viken—counties with the largest population and highest population growth—did not have the highest number of church plants. This picture has now changed. When the former Viken counties are aggregated, Viken is now the county with the most church plants, followed by Oslo and Rogaland. Part of this development can be explained by the growth of migrant churches, although these are also geographically dispersed across the country. For example, migrant churches contribute significantly to the number of church plants in Northern Norway and are also well represented in Rogaland.

Compared with the previous survey, the same four counties remain at the top. Akershus alone has surpassed Agder during this period. Northern Norway has seen seven new church plants, representing a 40% increase in the annual average. This increase is clearly driven by independent migrant congregations and church planting efforts within the Orthodox Church.

**AKERSHUS ALONE HAS SURPASSED
AGDER DURING THIS PERIOD**

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHED AND START-UP CHURCH PLANTS PER ORGANISATION IN THE PERIOD 2021–2025



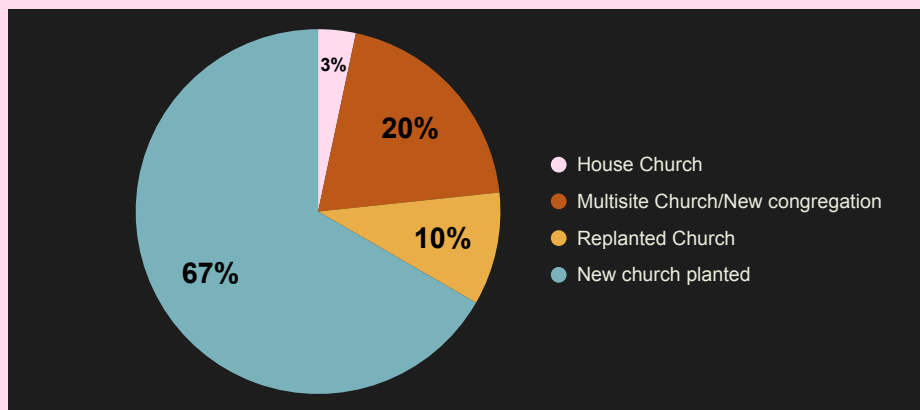
In the Sendt network, we distinguish between church plants in the planting phase and established church plants. The planting phase refers to an initial startup phase in which the church often has not yet begun holding public church services. During this period, the team is being built, and there is active work to reach new people.

What counts as an “official” church plant varies somewhat between different contexts. For example, among independent church plants, there is usually no distinction between the planting phase and the established phase; the church plant is normally counted from the point when a team has been formed and the work begins.

4.2 THE SURVEY

4.2.1 About the respondents

TYPES OF CHURCH PLANTS

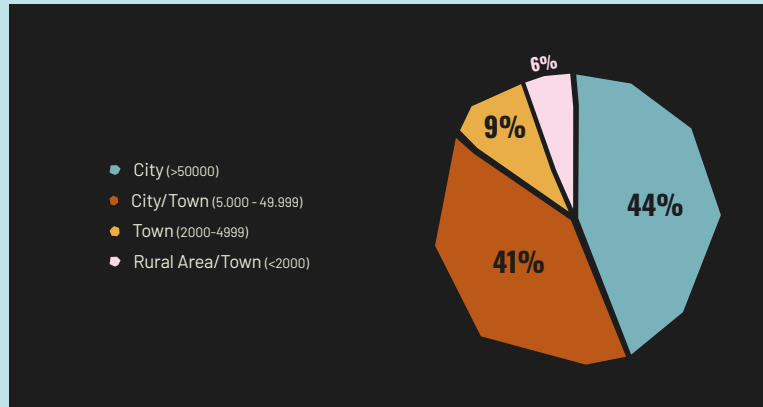


Which description best describes the church plant?

Among the respondents, a clear majority—67%—have established new church plants. Sent Norway operates with the following definitions:

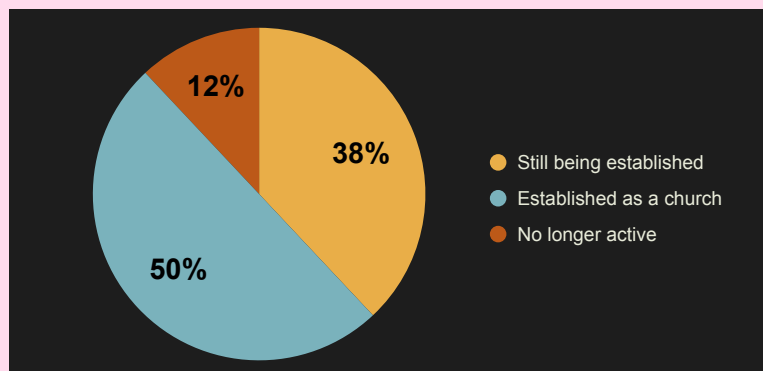
- **New church plant:** A new entity established with new leadership, building to little or no extent on previous structures (people, activities, or location/building).
- **Replant:** A established congregation with new leadership, new structure, and often a new name. New leadership is granted decision-making authority over property, finances, and activities. It builds to little or no extent on previous people or activities.
- **Multi-site church:** One church with multiple congregations, combining local autonomy with a clear shared vision, theology, and culture.
- **House church:** A small, independent church meeting in a home, with a strong emphasis on shared faith, fellowship, and everyday life. It is more than a small group and understands itself as a church.

LOCATION: URBAN/RURAL



Responses in this survey predominantly come from church plants in cities or urban areas with more than 5,000 inhabitants. Of these, 41% are located in areas with 5,000–50,000 inhabitants, and 44% in areas with more than 50,000 inhabitants. 15% are from areas with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. While precise data on how closely this reflects overall church planting patterns is unavailable, population density in the counties with the highest planting activity suggests that this constitutes a representative sample.

STATUS OF CHURCH PLANTS



Half of the respondents consider their church plant to be established. 38% are still in the planting or development phase, while 12% represent discontinued church plants. The share of discontinued plants is therefore somewhat higher in this survey than in the combined data from organisations, possibly indicating better reporting or a greater willingness to share experiences from challenging processes.

RESPONDENT REFLECTIONS

Respondents represent a broad and varied sample of church planting initiatives in Norway during the period 2015–2025. Taken together, they depict a planting landscape that is both diverse and evolving. The most striking characteristic is that a clear majority of responses relate to new church plants: 67% of respondents have established a church from the ground up, indicating that pioneering work remains the dominant driving force in Norwegian church planting. While multi-site initiatives and replants represent smaller proportions, they are significant enough to demonstrate that churches are also working strategically with reproduction and renewal through these models.

Geographically, respondents are clearly urban-oriented. More than 80% of church plants are located in cities and larger urban areas. This reflects Norwegian settlement patterns but may also indicate that planting teams consider population density and inward migration to be key conditions for sustainable growth. At the same time, rural church planting remains challenging and less represented in the dataset.

Regarding status, the respondent group spans the full spectrum: 50% represent established churches, 38% are in the establishment phase, and 12% come from discontinued plants. That the latter group is more strongly represented here than in organisational data may point to more transparent reporting or a greater openness to sharing experiences from difficult processes.

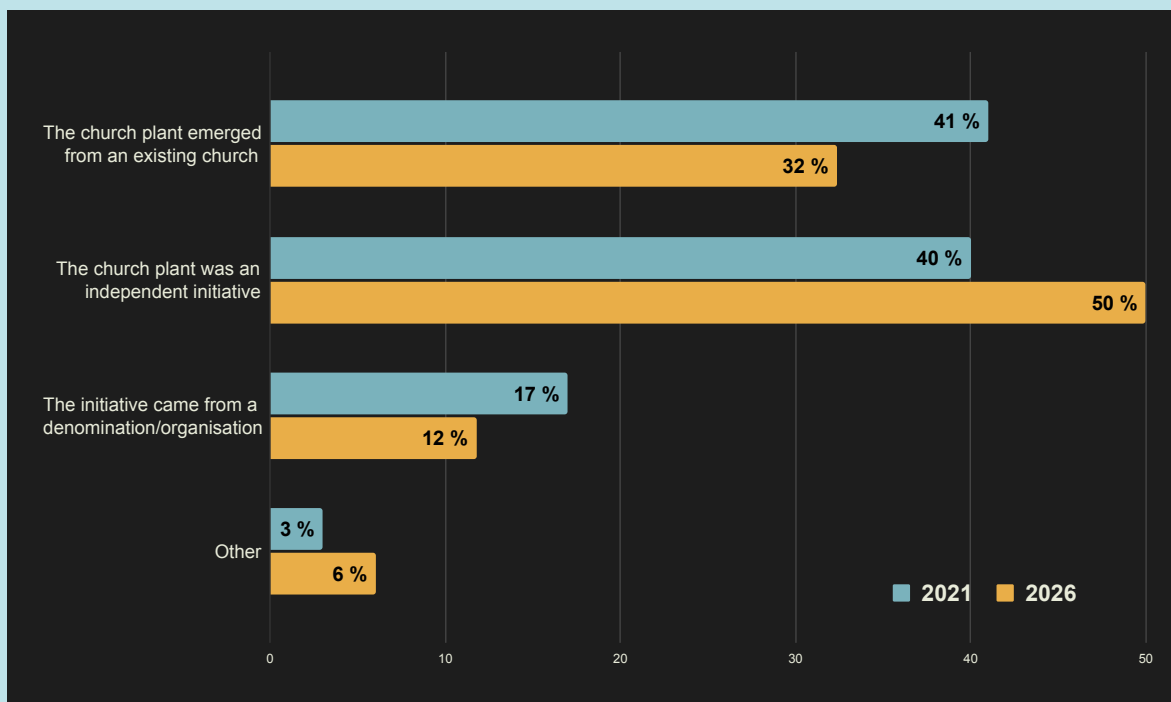
Overall, respondents reflect a wide range of experiences, models, and contexts. They illuminate both the opportunities and complexities of today's church planting reality and provide a solid foundation for further analysis of factors shaping church planting in Norway today, with due consideration of the sample limitations outlined earlier in this report.

**COLLECTIVELY, THEY ILLUSTRATE A
CHURCH PLANTING LANDSCAPE THAT
IS BOTH DIVERSE AND EVOLVING..**

4.2.2 Background for Church Planting

HOW THE CHURCH PLANTS WERE INITIATED

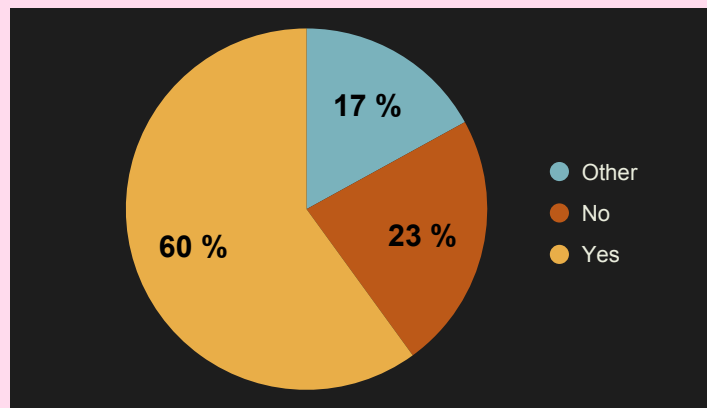
Where did the church planting initiative come from?



In this report, 50% state that the church plant began as an independent initiative, compared with 40% in the 2021 survey. 32% report that the plant emerged from an existing congregation, compared with 41% in 2021, while 12% indicate that it originated within their own denominational context. It is noteworthy that during a period in which denominations and organisations have invested more deliberately in new church planting, a larger share of respondents report independent initiatives. While it is difficult to assess what would have occurred without these increased institutional efforts, the findings nonetheless underline the importance of intrinsic motivation among planters and planting teams.

GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY TO A MOTHER CHURCH

Was the church plant geographically close to the mother church?



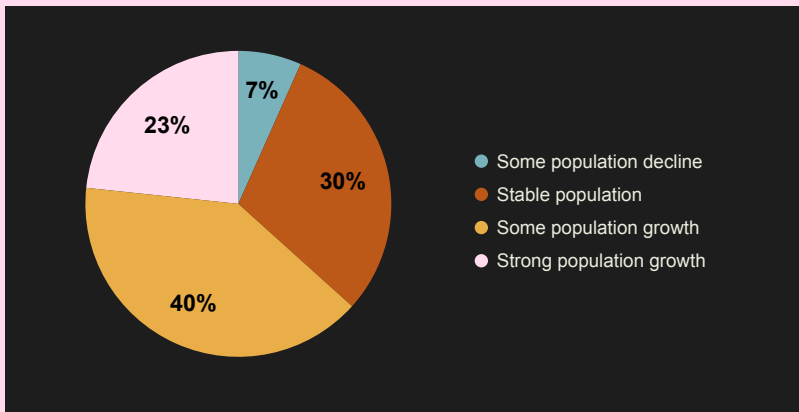
60% report that the plant emerged from an existing congregation, while 23% planted without geographical proximity to a mother church.

4.2.3 Church Density, Local Context, and Growth

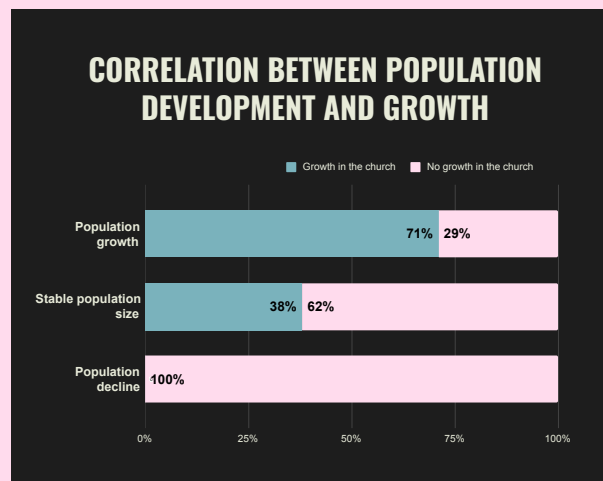
NUMBER OF OTHER CHURCHES IN THE LOCAL AREA

The proportion of church plants located in areas with several existing churches is similar to that reported in 2021, while the proportion planted in areas with only one or two churches has increased from 29% to 40%.

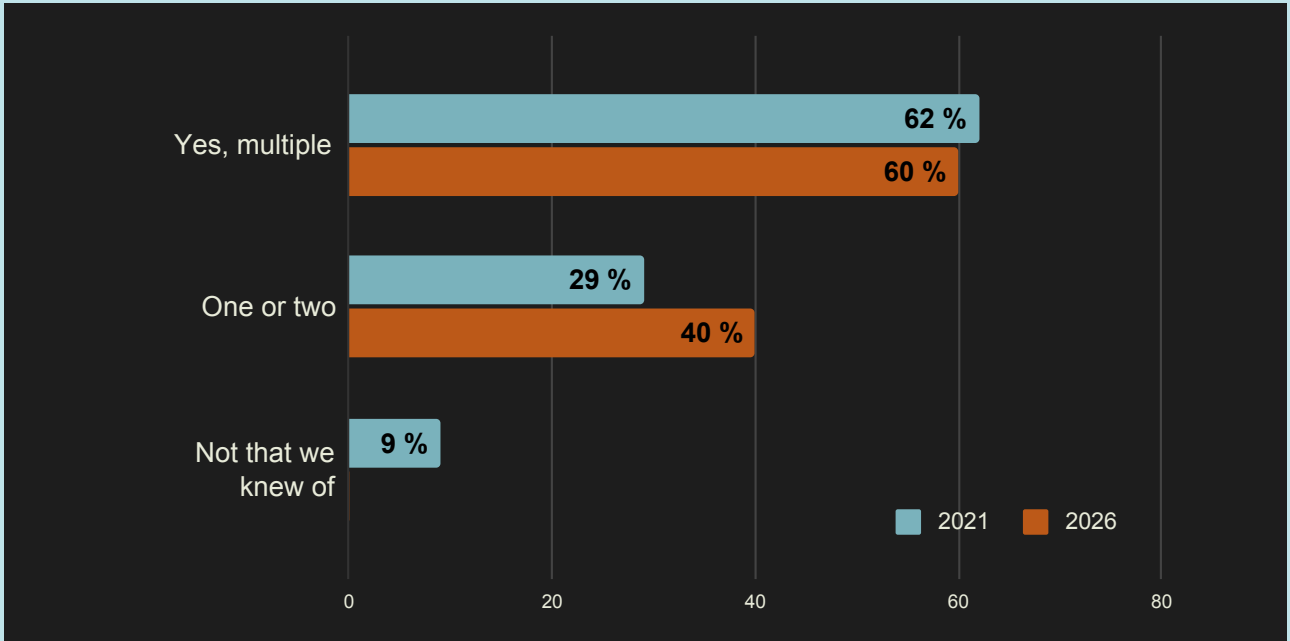
WHAT CHARACTERISES THE POPULATION GROWTH IN THE AREA WHERE THE CHURCH PLANT TOOK PLACE?



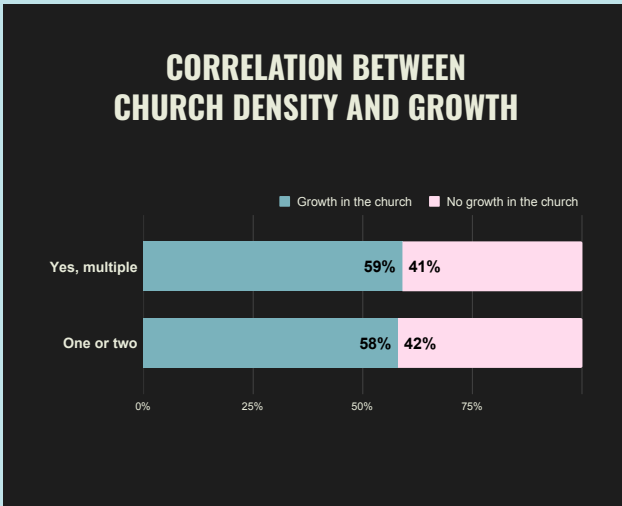
93% of church plants represented in the survey are primarily located in areas with population growth or stable population levels.



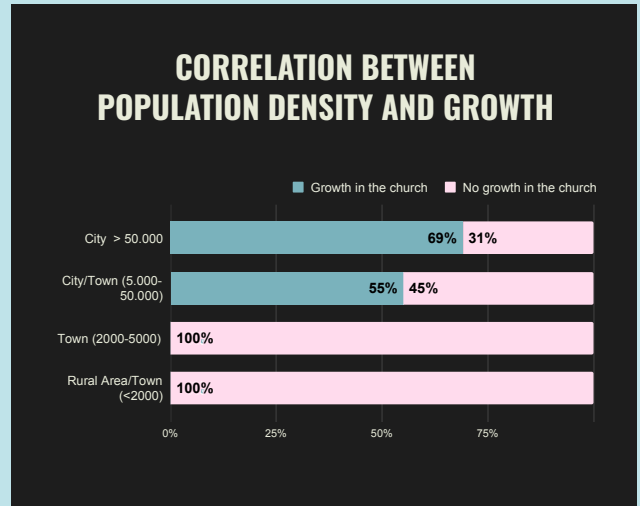
WAS THERE OTHER CHURCHES IN THE AREA WHERE YOU PLANTED IN?



CORRELATION BETWEEN CHURCH DENSITY AND GROWTH



CORRELATION BETWEEN POPULATION DENSITY AND GROWTH



Respondent data shows a clear relationship between population density, population growth, and the potential for growth in new churches. Areas with higher population density and growing population provide significantly greater potential for church growth than areas with stable or declining populations. Conversely, the relationship between church density and growth is less pronounced; it appears to make little difference whether one or several churches already exist in the area.

REFLECTION

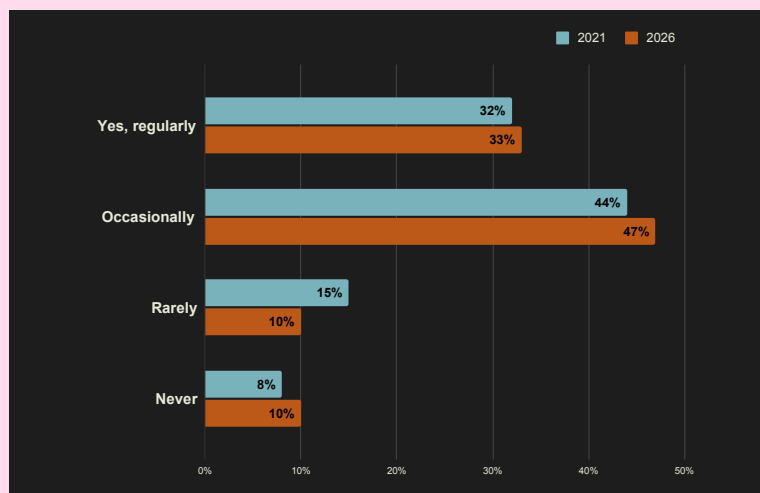
The survey demonstrates that a church plant's relationship to its local context plays a crucial role in establishment, growth, and long-term sustainability. Most church plants are located in areas experiencing population growth or stability, offering natural opportunities for relationship-building and meaningful presence. When 63% of plants are located in growth areas, it highlights the close connection between demographics and missional engagement. Areas characterised by in-migration tend to show clearer growth trajectories and greater participation, likely reflecting increased openness, mobility, and demand for new communities.

At the same time, data on church density indicates that many church plants are established in areas where multiple churches already exist. This may reflect a recognition that diversity of expression and approach allows churches to reach different groups, rather than church planting necessarily occurring where need is perceived to be greatest. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of new church plants are now being established in areas with only one or two existing churches.

CONTACT WITH OTHER LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS

The survey also confirms that contact with other local Christian leaders is important, but not always a given. Many church plants have only sporadic dialogue with existing churches. This points to a potential opportunity: stronger local collaboration could provide greater legitimacy, motivation, and better integration into the local community.

Did you have contact with these churches during the planting phase?

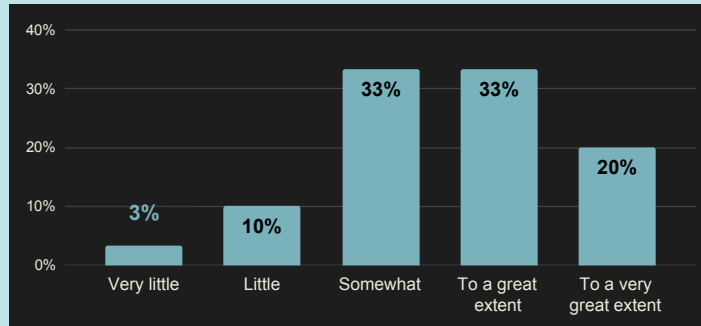


Survey participants were asked whether they had contact with other Christian leaders in the local area during the establishment phase. Approximately one-third reported that they did. These figures are nearly identical to those found in the 2021 survey.

VALUE OF NETWORKS

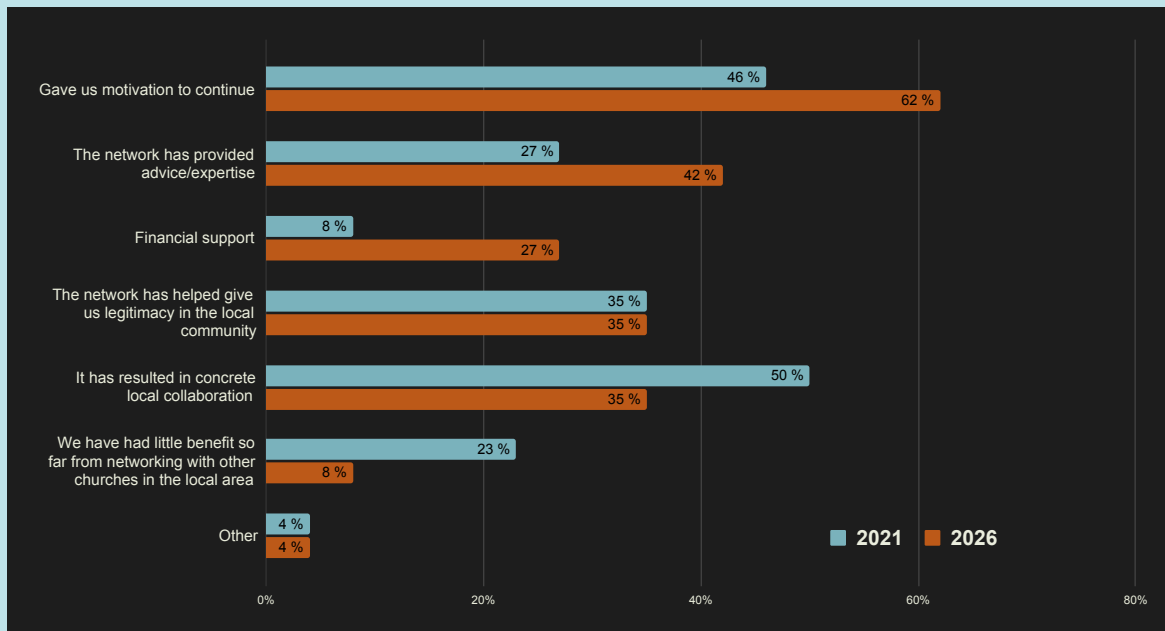
(Collaboration, Legitimacy, and Motivation)

Please assess the following statement: "Establishing networks with other churches during the planting phase has been important for us"



More than half of respondents indicate that establishing networks with other planters has been important to a great or very great extent, while slightly over 10% report that it has not been important at all.

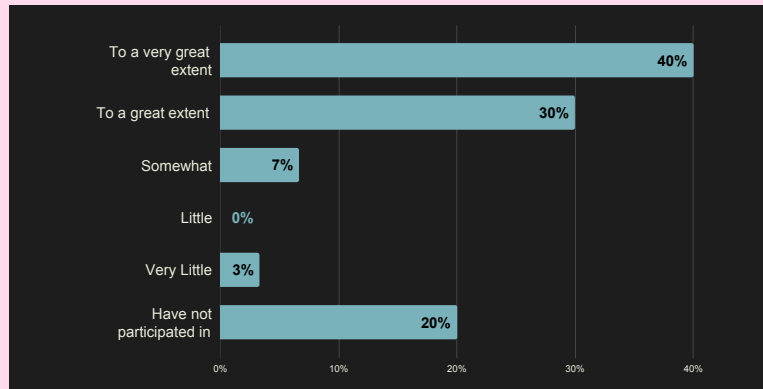
How has networking with other churches been helpful for you?



Respondents particularly highlight motivation and advisory support as key benefits. Both factors have increased in importance by approximately 15% compared with earlier surveys..

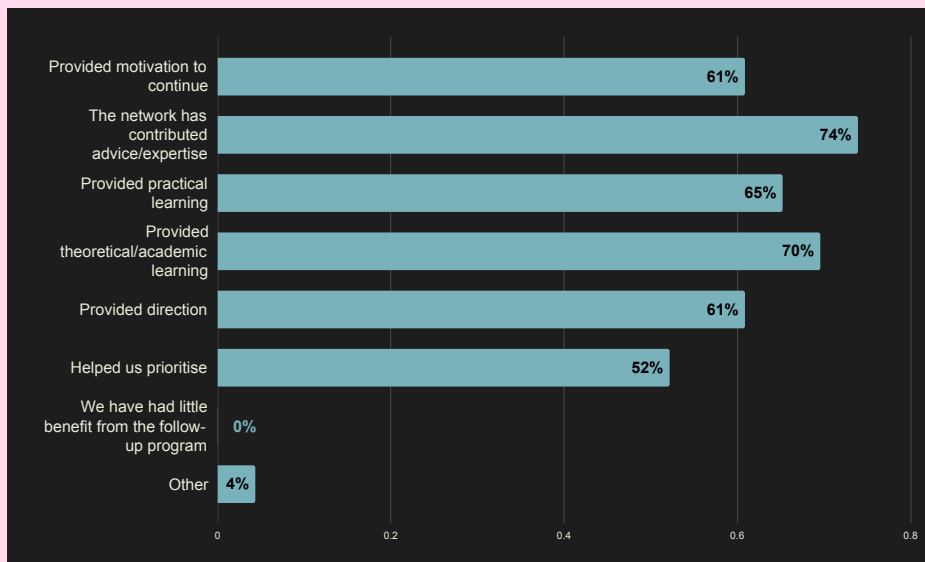
FOLLOW-UP AND SUPPORT

Please assess the following statement: "Being part of a follow-up program (e.g., M4, Planteskolen, or another program) has been very helpful for us"



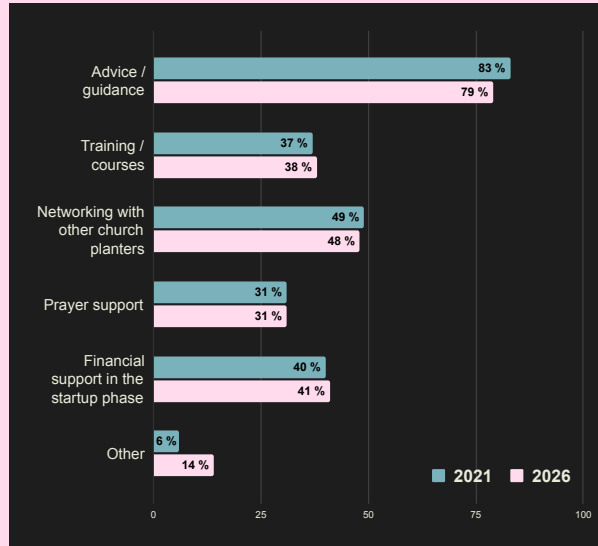
70% report having benefitted greatly from a formal follow-up program, while 20% did not participate, indicating that the network, training, and support received through structured follow-up are highly significant.

How has the follow-up program been helpful for you?



When comparing support from local leadership networks with structured follow-up programs, overall ratings are similar. However, the data shows that advisory support scores substantially higher within formal follow-up programs than in local networks. While response categories are not fully identical and therefore not directly comparable, it is notable that high-level contact with local leaders is rated similarly in both contexts, whereas most other forms of support receive higher ratings within formal follow-up programs.

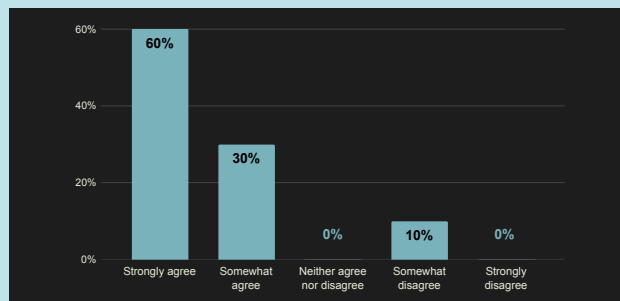
What type of follow- provided by your denomination/organisasjon have you found to be particularly helpful?



Respondents further emphasise that advisory support is the single most important benefit of follow-up provided by denominations or organisations (Q18). Assistance in connecting with broader networks also scores highly, aligning closely with findings from the 2021 survey.

PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM MOTHER CHURCH

Please indicate you level of agreement with the following statement:
"We experienced strong support from our church/denomination in planting."



Overall, planters report substantial support from their mother church or sending denomination. When combining "strongly agree" and "partly agree," support is reported by 90% of respondents. However, 40% fall into the categories "partly agree" or "partly disagree," indicating room for improvement regarding clarity of roles and consistency of support.

REFLECTION

Survey findings clearly show that follow-up plays a central role in the early phase of church planting. Seventy-seven% of respondents report significant benefit from follow-up programs, while the 20% who did not participate lack sufficient basis to assess their value. This underscores that systematic follow-up is not merely a helpful supplement, but one of the most decisive factors for stability and progress in a church plant.

Advisory support stands out as the most important component: 79% of respondents identify this as the most valuable aspect of follow-up. This is followed by networks with other planters, training courses, and financial support. Notably, both advisory support and networking are rated significantly higher within structured follow-up programs than in local leadership networks, suggesting that planting teams benefit from external, experienced advisors with specific church planting expertise.

These findings suggest that follow-up is not primarily about control or structure, but about experienced support, guidance, and practical help. Church planting is demanding, and many leaders navigate complex start-up processes with high responsibility and limited resources. Follow-up therefore provides both strength and direction—helping teams make wise decisions, adjust course, and remain resilient in the face of challenges.

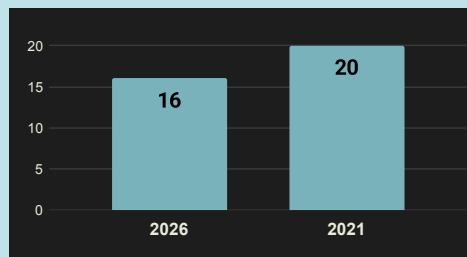
In short, follow-up is not an optional add-on, but a foundational pillar for successful church planting.

**FOLLOW-UP IS NOT SUPPLEMENTARY,
IT IS A CORNERSTONE OF SUCCESSFUL
CHURCH PLANTING.**

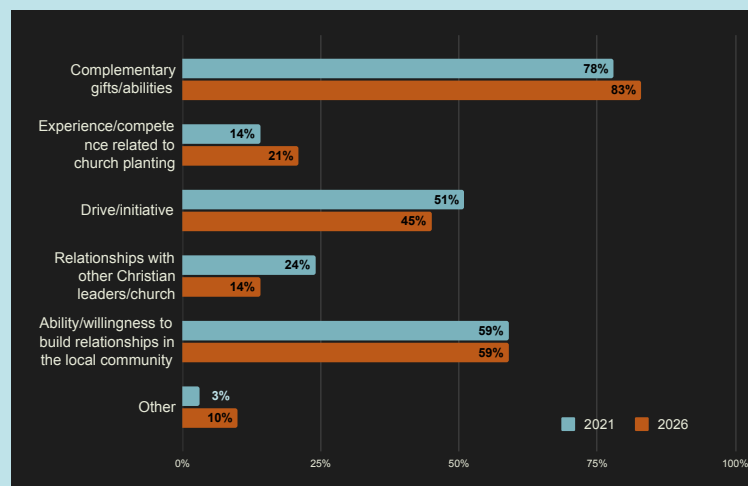
4.3 START-UP AND ESTABLISHMENT PHASE

The survey also addresses various aspects of the start-up and establishment phase of church planting. Many of the questions are the same as those used in 2021, and several responses show nearly identical results. At the same time, some changes are evident. One example is the size of the core team. In the previous survey, the median size was 20 people, whereas the median size of the start-up team in the 2026 report is 16 people. The average is 19 people. The size of core team has therefore decreased slightly. This likely reflects the group size most teams aim for when establishing a core team in church planting.

How many people were in your initial church planting team?

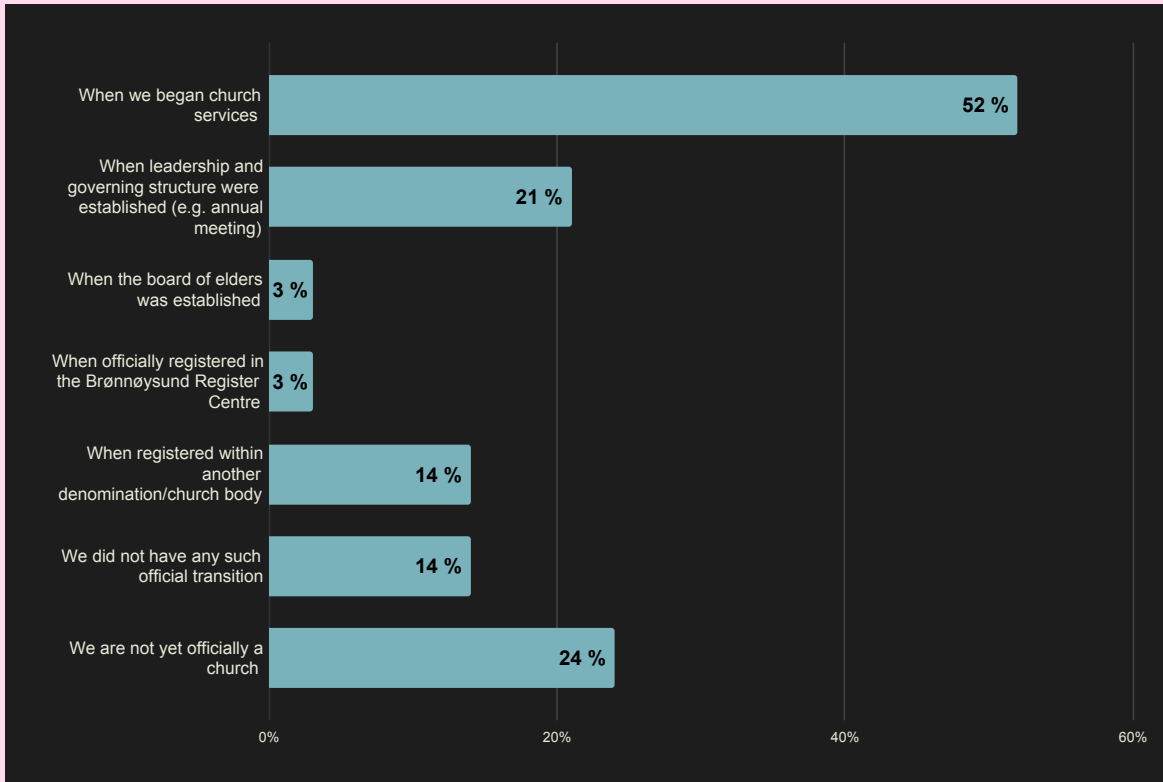


Which aspects of the core team composition were most important for you?



The work of forming a strong core team is clearly important. From the 2021 survey, we know that a weak core team increases the likelihood of a church plant being discontinued. The characteristics identified as most important for a core team are largely unchanged from 2021. As shown in the graph, there are only minor variations: complementary gifts, relational capacity, and initiative/drive are still considered the most important qualities of a core team.

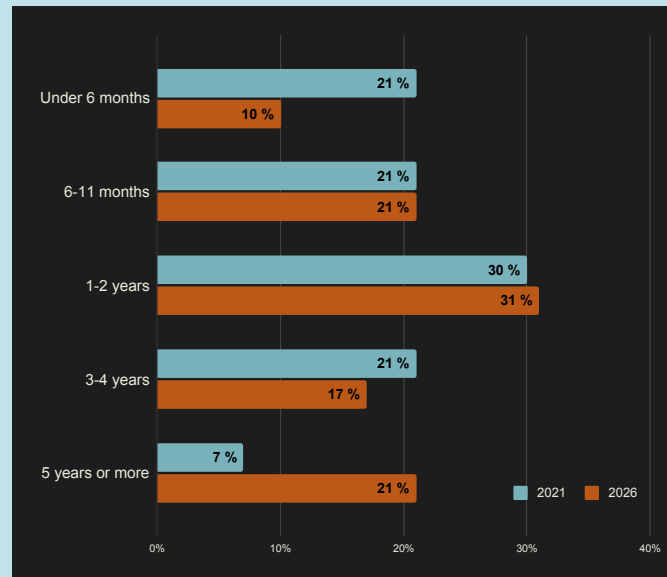
WHEN WOULD YOU SAY YOU OFFICIALLY BECAME AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH?



While the time required to establish a church remains relatively stable, the understanding of when a church plant is considered established is changing. In the 2021 survey, most respondents considered the church to be established at the formal founding and the establishment of official leadership at the first annual meeting (46%). In the 2026 survey, this understanding has declined to 20%. The majority now understand a church to be established at the celebration of the first public church service. In 2026, 51% of respondents held this view, compared with 36% in the 2021 survey.

THE 2026 SURVEY SHOWS THAT FEWER CHURCH PLANTS REPORT BECOMING ESTABLISHED IN UNDER SIX MONTHS

TIME FROM START TO BEING RECOGNISED AS AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH



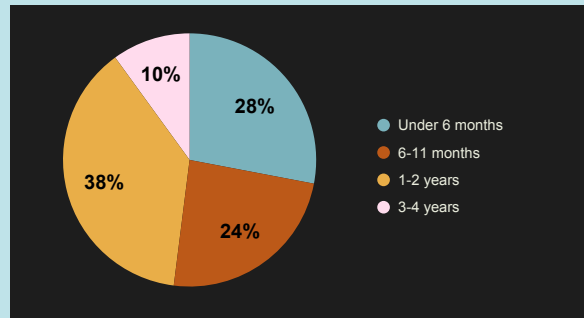
For most church plants, it still takes a relatively short time from the beginning of the process until the church is considered established. The graph presents comparative figures from the 2021 and 2026 surveys regarding the time from start-up to establishment. In both surveys, more than half of respondents report spending between six months and two years before being considered established. The changes appear mainly at the extremes. In the 2026 survey, fewer respondents report being established in under six months, while a larger proportion now report spending five years or more on the process toward establishment.

REFLECTION

The length of the start-up phase—defined as the period from initiation to being considered established—remains relatively stable compared with the 2021 survey. The 2026 survey indicates a slight percentage increase in the number of church plants that spend a longer time in the start-up phase. It may be valuable to view this in light of international trends. Some church planting movements in the United States report longer start-up phases. Steve Pike from the Assemblies of God church planting movement, known in Norway through his book on church planting, highlights this trend in *Next Wave* (Pike, 2020). Traditionally, the start-up phase in his denomination has lasted one to two years, similar to what is seen in the Sent reports from 2021 and 2026. Pike notes that the start-up phase is now becoming longer and encourages patience and caution against rushing the process. He recommends a preparation phase of at least four years, and preferably up to eight years. Early signs of a similar trend in Norway can be seen in the increase in church plants reporting start-up phases of five years or more. This raises the question of whether the one-to-two-year norm, still evident in the 2026 survey, might benefit from being extended. Further research into the significance and optimal use of the start-up phase could be valuable.

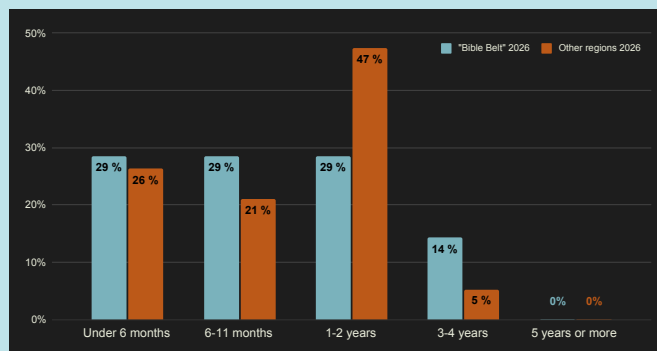
4.3.1 Oppstart

HOW MUCH TIME DID IT TAKE BEFORE YOU STARTED WITH PUBLIC CHURCH SERVICES?



52% of respondents report that they began public church services within the first year, with 28% doing so within six months. 38% began in the following year, and only 10% took more than three years. It is noteworthy that 21% report taking five years or more to be formally established as a church. Since none of the plants took that long to begin public church services, this indicates that some churches hold public services for an extended period without considering themselves fully established.

Regional Differences (“Bible Belt” vs. the Rest of the Country)



Overall, planters in the Norwegian “Bible Belt” began public church services earlier than those in other regions. This confirms regional differences similar to those identified in the 2021 survey.

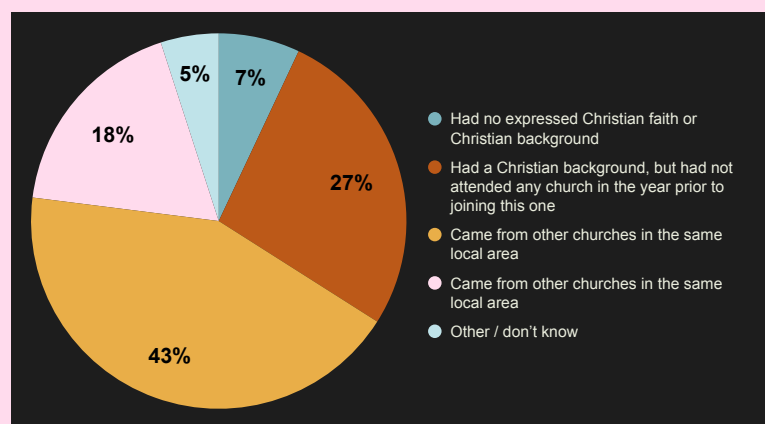
Reflection

The church plants in the survey move quickly toward public church services. Only 1 in 10 wait longer than three years, and none wait longer than five years. Since many respondents also consider the first public church service to mark the point of establishment, this raises the question of whether public church services may sometimes begin too early, and whether the early years of church planting could be utilised in more mission-focused ways.

PARTICIPANTS' FAITH BACKGROUND AT START-UP

Respondents were asked to categorise participants' faith background at the launch of the church plant. These figures are likely more precise than in the 2021 survey, as the earlier survey used intervals (0, 10, 20, etc.), while the 2026 survey requested exact numbers.

The proportion of people who came to faith through the church plant has decreased from 10% to 7%. This is most likely a more accurate figure than that reported in 2021 and does not necessarily indicate a real decline. At start-up, the two largest groups are Christians coming from other churches (43%) and Christians who had not been active in church during the previous year (27%). Many church plants emerge from an existing nearby congregation. The 43% figure does not clarify whether participants primarily come from a sending church or whether they have chosen to transfer. If the latter is the case, it strengthens the case for sharpening the missional focus of church plants..

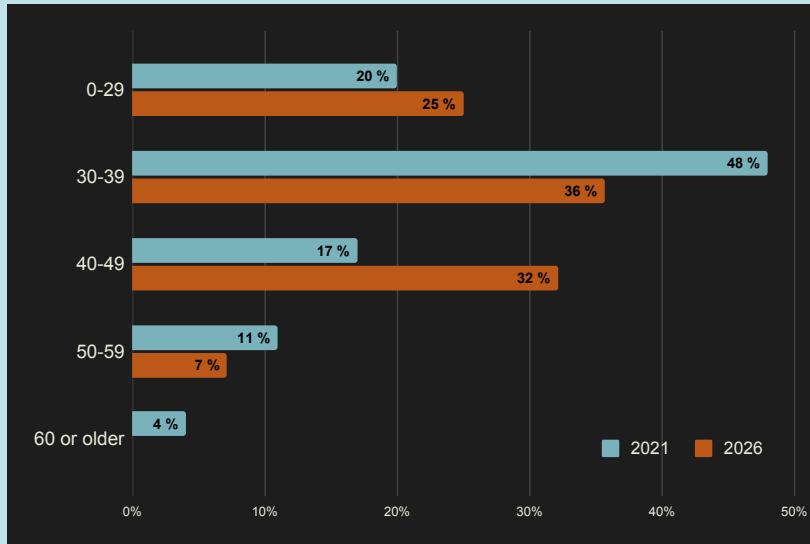


Reflection

Findings from previous Sent surveys provide strong evidence that church planting is an effective missional strategy. Organisations aiming to reach new people can justify investing in church planting on the basis of these findings. While the 2026 survey introduces some adjustments, it reinforces the overall picture of church planting as a fruitful missional approach. On average, each church plant has seen eight people come to faith and become part of the community. While there are no direct comparison figures, this is likely above the average for congregations older than ten years.

ONE THIRD OF THOSE WHO JOIN A CHURCH PLANT ARE NEW BELIEVERS OR PREVIOUSLY INACTIVE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BECOME ACTIVE

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCH SERVICE ATTENDERS



The average age of church service attenders is 36, with the largest group still in the 30–39 age range. The comparative chart shows a shift in the 2026 data from the 30–39 group toward the 40–49 age group.

Under 18 Years of Age

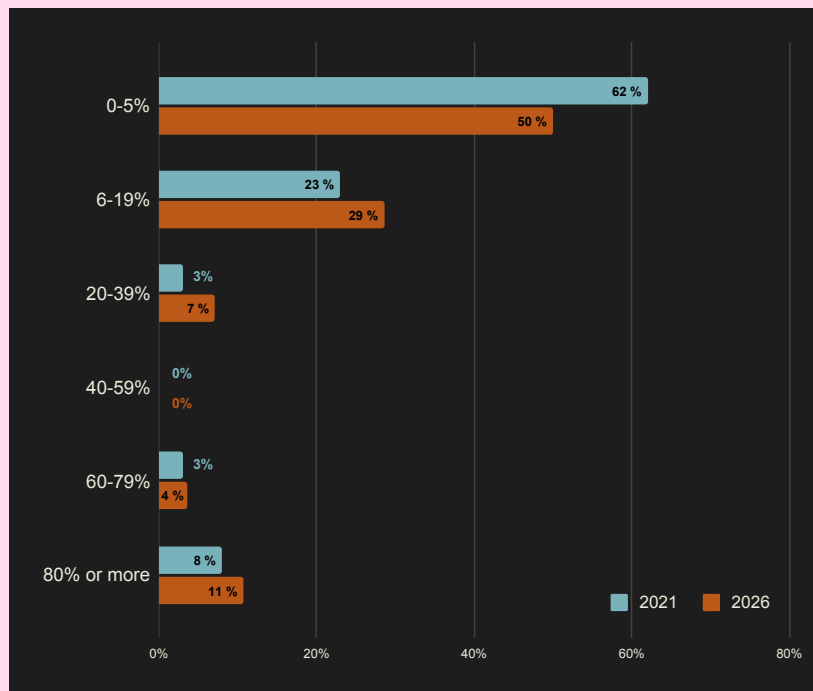
On average, 26% of participants in church plants are under 18 years old—higher than the national population average of just under 20% (SSB). This relatively high proportion suggests that intentional engagement with the next generation is a priority in contemporary church planting.

Reflection

The age distribution indicates that most participants are between 30 and 50 years old, with an average age of 35. The average age of the core team at start-up is 36, suggesting that church plants are able to renew themselves and slightly reduce the average age over time. Many church plants prioritise children and youth from the beginning, and some explicitly focus on families as part of their missional strategy. This may indicate that church plants are becoming more family-oriented, which can lead to steadier rather than explosive growth.

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Can you estimate the percentage of the congregation that has a mother tongue other than Norwegian?

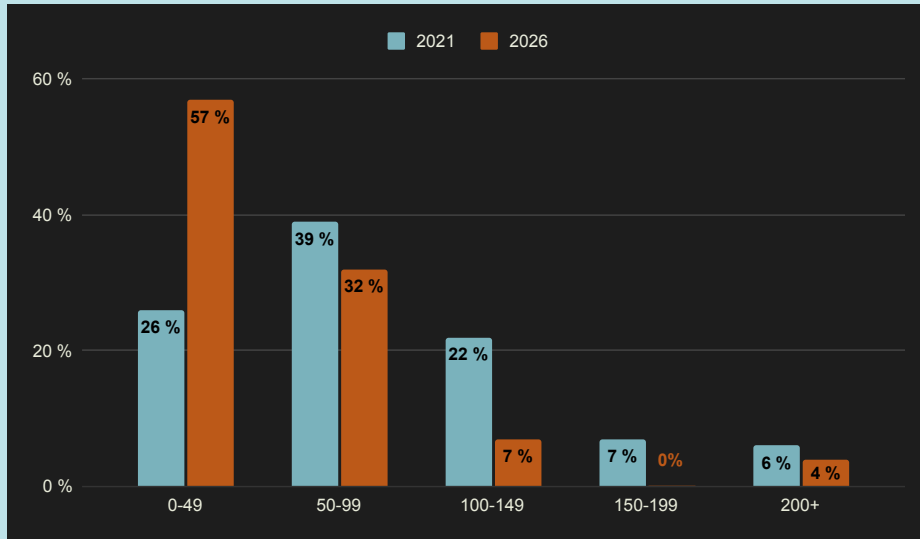


50% of respondents report that 5% or fewer of their participants have a first language other than Norwegian. Compared with 2021, this is changing: the proportion of churches with 6–19% non-Norwegian mother-tongue participants has increased slightly, while churches with 20–80% remain rare. The proportion with over 80% has increased. This suggests that churches are still largely dominated either by ethnic Norwegians or by participants of other ethnic backgrounds, with limited integration between groups. Movement toward reflecting national demographics is positive, but there is still progress to be made.

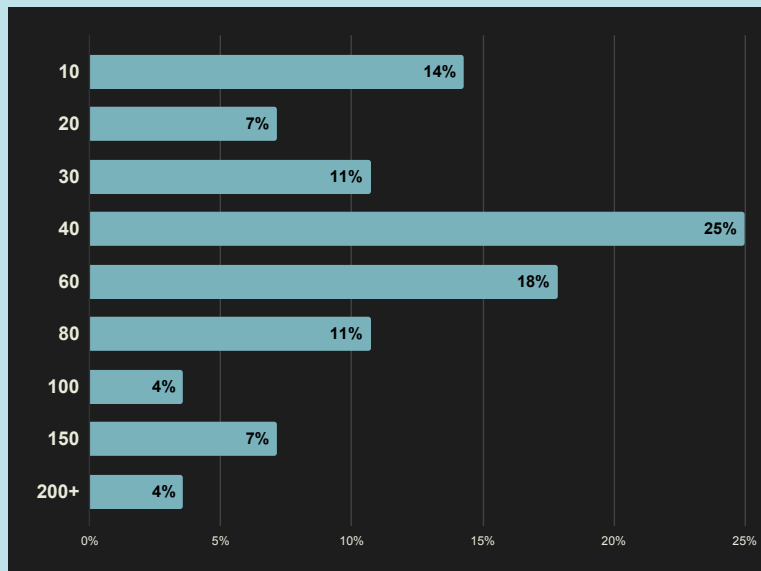
THE SHARE OF PEOPLE WITH A NON-NORWEGIAN MOTHER TONGUE IN CHURCH PLANTS IS APPROACHING THE AVERAGE FOR THE POPULATION IN NORWAY

AVERAGE CHURCH SERVICE ATTENDANCE

At the time of the survey in 2025, 15% of church plants reported attendance of over 100, while a majority—57%—had fewer than 60 church attenders.



Response categories were adjusted in 2026; figures of 0–49 correspond to 0–40 in earlier tables.

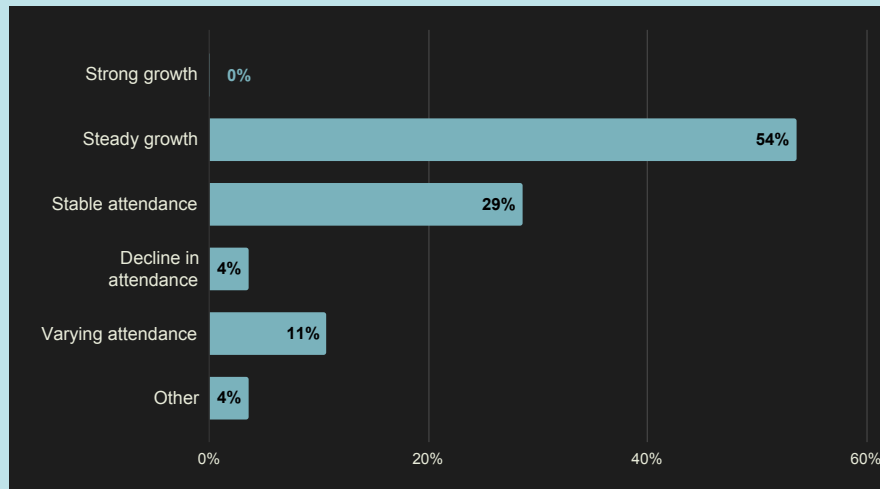


Compared with 2021, the 2026 survey shows a trend toward smaller congregations. Fewer church plants grow beyond 100 in attendance, while many more report fewer than 50. Proportionally, the number of smaller church plants has more than doubled since 2021. One contributing factor is that the 2026 sample covers the past ten years, compared with fifteen years in the earlier survey, and therefore includes fewer long-established congregations.

Reflection

More than half of church plants report average church service attendance below 60. The trend suggests that newly planted churches are generally smaller and experience slower growth. The Sent network encourages church plants of all sizes, including smaller ones, which represent valuable experiences in themselves. Nevertheless, it is worth considering whether some church plants move too quickly into formal church services, and whether a longer missional start-up phase might be beneficial.

How would you describe the change in attendance at services/meetings/mass services over the past five years?



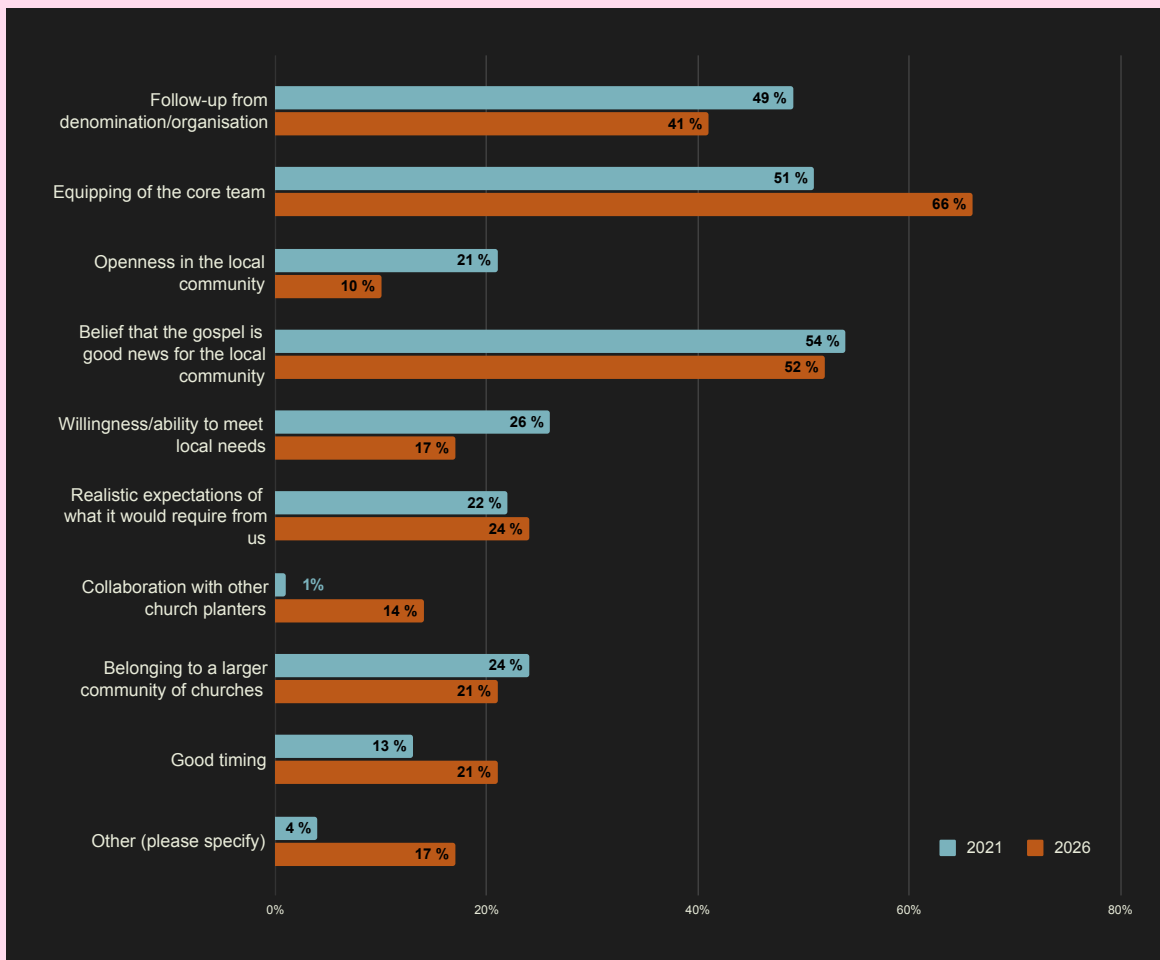
None of the church plants report what the survey defines as very strong growth. A majority—54%—experience steady growth, while few report decline. 29% describe participation as stable. Taken together, this indicates cautious, incremental growth. These findings should be understood in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected church participation during the reporting period.

FEWER CHURCH PLANTS GROW BEYOND AN AVERAGE SUNDAY ATTENDANCE OF MORE THAN 100

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

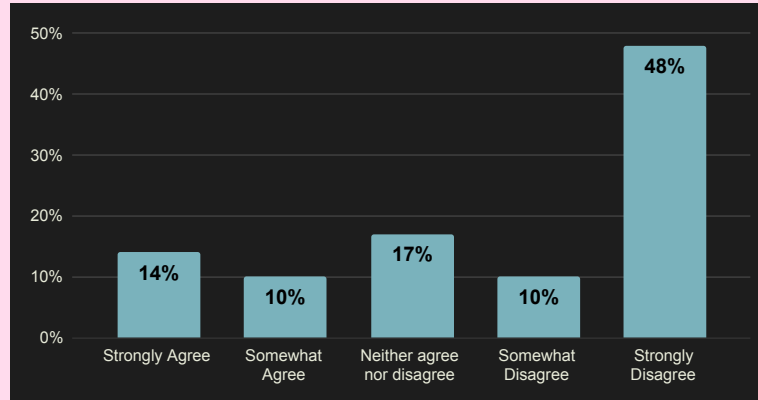
The reasons for successful church planting are complex, involving both human factors within the team's control and contextual factors beyond it. Respondents were asked to identify the most important human factors for success.

What would you say has biggest reason for why you have successfully established your church?



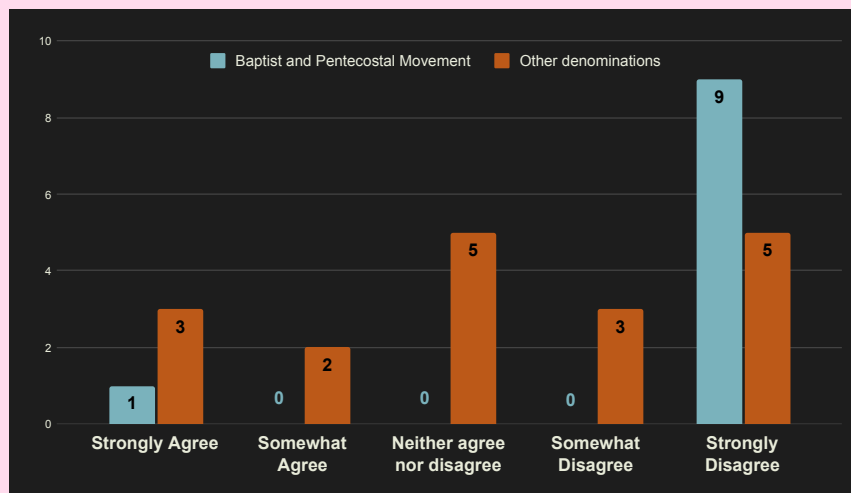
As in 2021, the three most important factors are the quality of the core team, belief that the gospel is good news for the local community, and follow-up from a denomination or organisation. A notable change is that more respondents (14%) now highlight collaboration with other planters as a key factor.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "This church plant would have happened even if the main leader had not been involved."



Respondents were also asked whether the church plant would have happened without the lead planter. Nearly half (48%) strongly disagree that it would have. Including those who partly agree, 68% indicate that the lead planter was essential.

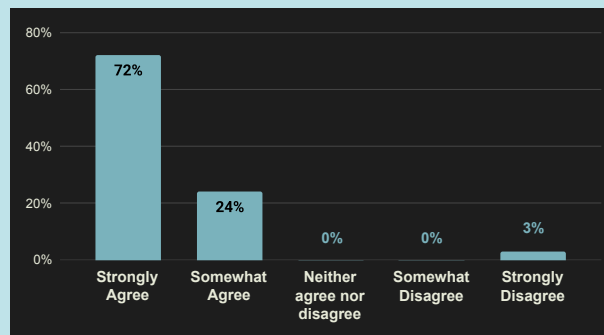
Responses from the Pentecostal movement and the Baptist Union stand out: nine out of ten report strong dependence on the lead planter. This emphasis is reflected in the training provided by the Pentecostal movement, which focuses primarily on equipping the lead planter. In contrast, training programs within the Mission Covenant Church and M4 place greater emphasis on developing the whole team.



IMPORTANCE OF THE CORE TEAM

Regardless of the role attributed to the lead planter, there is near consensus on the importance of the core team: 96% agree fully or partly that the core team is essential for the church plant.

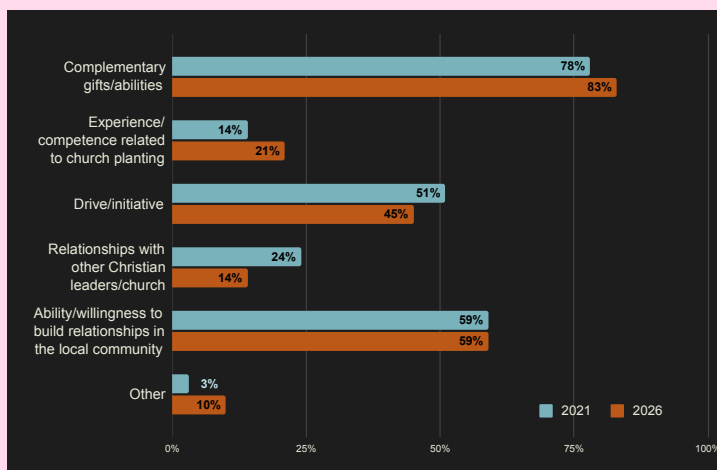
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The church plant has/had a strong core team that stood together in the church planting process"



CHARACTERISTICS OF A STRONG CORE TEAM

Respondents were asked to identify characteristics of a strong team. Compared with 2021, complementary gifts, willingness and ability to build relationships in the local community, and initiative remain the most important factors, with only minor variation.

Which aspects of the composition of the core team did you find particularly important?



WHAT BEST DESCRIBES THE GROUP'S MOMENTUM?



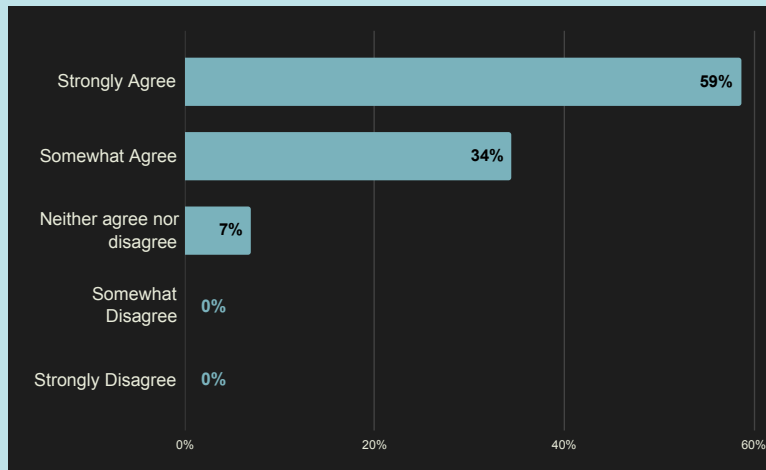
The option “high self-confidence” used in 2021 was replaced in 2026 with “strong sense of solidarity,” which 69% identify as the best descriptor of group initiative. Strong willpower and a strong sense of calling are both mentioned by 48%, a marked decrease from 2021.

Reflection

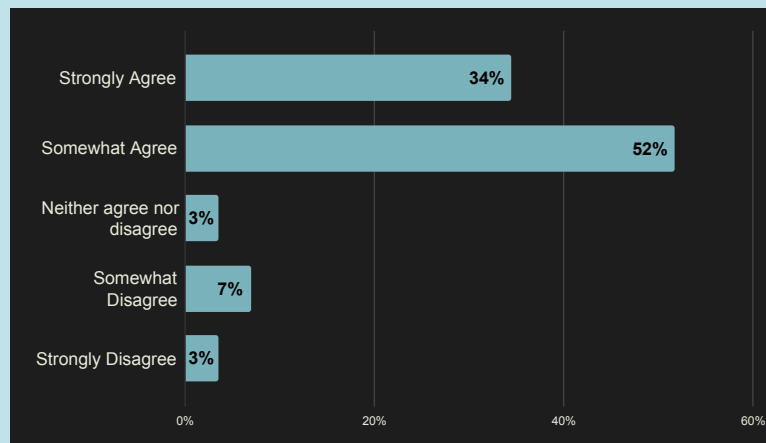
Historically, church planting in some contexts has had a youthful image, driven by young pioneers creating environments attractive to their own demographic—a group traditional churches often struggle to reach. While such examples exist in Norway, international trends, especially in the United States, indicate that both planters and core teams are becoming older. An average core team age of 36 raises the question of whether church planting in Norway is shifting from youthful enthusiasm toward mature competence—and whether it functions as a growth strategy across the life span. The reduced emphasis on willpower and calling, and the increased emphasis on strong cohesion, suggest that church planting is becoming more relational and community-oriented, rather than driven primarily by individual qualities.

CURRENT STRUCTURES AND COLLABORATION

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "We currently have good structures for decision-making in the church/church plant."



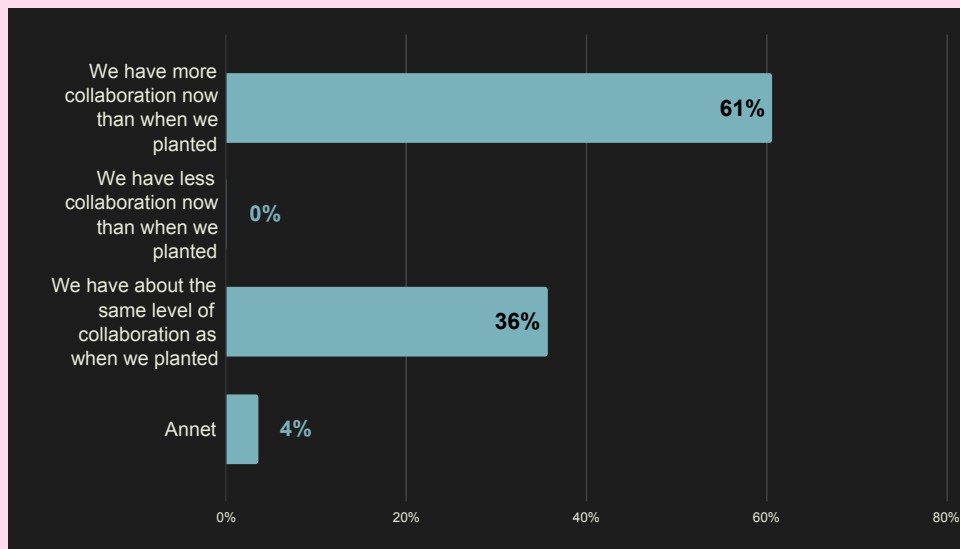
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "We currently have good structures for how we communicate with members, volunteers, and our wider community."



Comparing scores on organisational structure and communication shows that structure generally scores higher than information flow. This mirrors patterns often found in established churches and serves as a reminder of the importance of simple, clear structures and effective communication.

THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION WITH OTHER CHURCHES

Has the level of collaboration with other churches in the local area changed since the church plant began?



In the initial phase, most energy is directed toward the internal group, leaving limited time for collaboration with other churches.

4.4

ADVICE FROM CHURCH PLANTERS

SUCCESS

In a few words, can you describe what you believe was essential for the success of the church plant?

Persevering faith that God is the one who builds the church

The right people joining the work and being willing to persevere through demanding seasons

Financial and relational support from the Mission Covenant Church of Norway

Calling, belonging, and strong cohesion. Support from the network

A combination of calling, knowledge gained through the church planting school, and support from the mother church

Consistent prayer, clear vision, and strong engagement with the local community

Receiving good follow-up and experiencing that Jesus sent people our way whom we could meet with kindness

M4 was very significant. We invested substantial time in building community within the planting team and clarifying the vision

Being planted as a multi-site church provided extensive internal competence and resources that were invaluable in the early phase. You were given the map—then it was simply a matter of walking the path



We were more focused on planting a culture than on the gospel.

COVID-19

WHY DID YOU DISCONTINUE?

In a few words, what do you believe was the main reason for the church plant being discontinued?

We became overconfident.

Looking back from a Kingdom of God perspective, I believe we would have contributed more if we had instead initiated missional work from an existing church.

Take more time, start with a smaller core team, and reach more people before beginning public church services.

ADVICE FROM THOSE WHO DISCONTINUED

What advice would you give yourself as a new church planter, looking back on the planting you were part of?

Put more focus on planting the gospel, and less focus on planting churches.

Be followed up by someone who has planted a church.

Be more patient before launching public church services. Spend more time building relationships and praying for the place.

5

THE WAY FORWARD

Data from the period 2015–2025 shows that church planting in Norway exists in a dynamic tension between continuity and change. On the one hand, we observe stability in who is planting, where planting occurs, and the importance of core teams, calling, and follow-up. On the other hand, new trends are clearly emerging—particularly demographic shifts, increased migrant church planting, more mature core teams, and a cultural movement toward stronger cohesion and less individualistic drive. To understand the way forward, both opportunities and challenges must be considered in light of this dual movement.

1 A Changing Planting Landscape – With New Stakeholders in the Lead

The most striking development during this period is the growth of migrant churches—both independent initiatives and those affiliated with Norwegian free church denominations, as well as Catholic and Orthodox congregations. Together, these account for half of all new church plants in Norway. This report shows that migrant churches now make up approximately half of all church planting activity in the country.

These congregations are typically organised around a shared language or cultural identity, often because joining a traditional Norwegian church is not experienced as a natural option. Paul Omayio (2023), who planted an international church, aptly describes his experience of attending a Norwegian congregation as being “welcomed but not fitting in.” At its core, this is about finding a place of belonging among likeminded people.

For Norwegian church life, this development represents both a gift and a challenge. It enriches the church with diversity, while also raising questions about integration, cooperation, and how future generations within migrant communities will find their place. This calls for more intentional and strategic engagement from both the Sent network and migrant church communities themselves. Church leaders can use the Global Christianity in Norway report to identify migrant congregations in their local area, reach out, build relationships, and invite them to participate and speak within their congregations.

2 The Need for a Clearer Missional Strategy

The data shows that 43% of participants in new church communities come from other churches—an increase from the 2021 report. This highlights a potential risk: church planting may increasingly become a relocation of Christians rather than genuinely missional new initiatives. Several respondents reflect that they would have spent more time building relationships and waited longer before launching public church services.

In one interview, a church planting leader remarked that many planters today function more as pastors than as missionaries, reinforcing this concern. Moving forward, church planting must therefore be strengthened primarily as a missional strategy rather than an organisational growth strategy. This implies a more deliberate focus on relationship-building, local presence, and outward-oriented initiatives before establishing regular church service rhythms.

3 Maturity and Team Strength as the New Normal

With an average core team age of 36, church planting is no longer primarily driven by young pioneers, but by mature adults with experience, families, and broader competencies. At the same time, the survey indicates a shift in what defines a strong team: strong cohesion now ranks higher than willpower and personal drive.

This emphasises the need for team-based training, relational investment, and leaders capable of fostering consensus and deep collaboration. The Sent network should therefore continue to develop tools that build resilient teams—not only highly capable lead planters. At the same time, an important question remains: where do the pioneers fit, and are we able to create space for both pioneering energy and mature leadership?

4 Follow-Up and Networks as Decisive Factors

As many as 77% of planters report that follow-up programs were essential for their church plant. In particular, coaching, professional input, and networks with other planters are highlighted. This is one of the report's clearest findings: church planting rarely succeeds in isolation.

The way forward must therefore include strong prioritisation of follow-up, competence development, and support structures by denominations, organisations, and Sent Norway—along with clear role definitions between lead planter, core team, and mother church.

5 A Shared Responsibility for the Future

Despite a temporary decline during the pandemic, current data on teams in the establishment phase indicates renewed momentum in church planting. Norway continues to need new churches—in cities, in growing regions, in multicultural neighborhoods, and in smaller communities where Christian presence is limited.

Churches currently engaged in planting must be encouraged and strengthened, while more communities must dare to take the initiative. The way forward for church planting in Norway is therefore not just more planting—but more outward-focused planting: church plants that are more missional, more relational, better supported, and more deeply rooted in both local context and team community. Together, we can build a church that reflects the diversity of the country and reaches new people with the gospel.

6

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