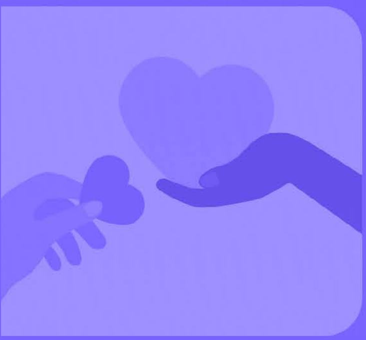
2024 REPORT

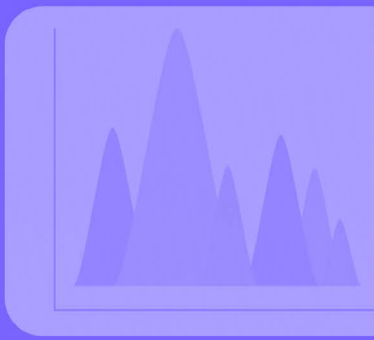
Giving in Faith

Exploring key trends in religious giving







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INTRODUCTION

Executive Summary

Recent research paints a worrying picture of American generosity: The average American is giving less to charitable organizations. However, most of these studies track monetary gifts to registered nonprofit organizations. Little research exists to illuminate how people are generous in less formal ways, from donating to a crowdfunding campaign to volunteering their time and talents for causes they support. Even less research focuses on how the generosity of people of faith and their places of worship respond to the unmet needs of the communities where they are anchored.

The third *Giving in Faith* report, produced by Givelify and Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, part of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, explores the state of faith-based giving in the U.S. by considering the converging perspectives of the individual giver, the faith leader, and the congregation.

Giving in Faith: Exploring Key Trends in Religious Giving draws on responses from 2,001 faith-based individuals to uncover how Americans of faith engaged in formal and informal giving in 2023, how their faith shapes their generosity, and their aspirations to be more charitable.

This report, which also draws on the responses of 980 faith leaders across the United States, shines a light on the community impact of places of worship and how their outreach efforts are funded. Faith leaders also shared how the health of their congregations depends on the generosity and passions of their attendees and how digital giving and other emerging technologies enable them to achieve their vision.

KEY FAITH-BASED GIVING FINDINGS:

- **People of faith are abundantly generous.** Almost all individuals surveyed gave their money, goods, or time to at least one organization, cause, or person in 2023.
- **Faith inspires givers' generosity,** which is fostered within their places of worship.
- **Digital giving is the new norm.** Most givers have given digitally. Digital gifts make up 60% of congregations' total annual contributions.
- **Faith institutions are pillars of their communities.** Almost all congregations surveyed supported at least one community outreach program with money, items or space, or volunteers in 2023.
- **The future of faith communities is bright.** Both faith leaders and their congregants aspire to be even more generous in 2024.

Glossary

Faith leaders self-identified as either the spiritual leader of their place of worship (such as a pastor, rabbi, or imam) or a person in the congregation who is knowledgeable about or responsible for the place of worship's finances (such as a CFO, business manager, church administrator, bookkeeper, or treasurer).

People of faith or faith-based individuals self-identified as being affiliated with an organized religion, regardless of whether they currently attend a place of worship or practice their religion publicly or privately. Individuals who self-identified as spiritual, but not affiliated with an organized religion or non-religious (e.g., atheist, agnostic), were not invited to participate in the 2023 *Giving in Faith* survey.

Faith-based givers are people of faith who contributed any of their money, items (i.e., in-kind donations), or time to at least one of the following organizations or people in 2023:

> **Places of worship** are religious organizations or structures where people (congregations) gather for worship and other rituals, study, or activities belonging to their religion. Some examples of places of worship include churches, mosques, synagogues, shrines, and temples.
>
> **Registered nonprofit organizations** are registered, tax-exempt organizations such as 501(c)(3) organizations, foundations, schools or universities, or registered charities.
>
> **Informal community groups and networks or mutual aid groups** are not registered charities. Rather, these groups are led and run by their own members who cooperate to address unmet social services in their communities. An example could be a mutual aid group that organizes community fridges to support food access for neighbors.
>
> **Directly to people in need** includes friends, relatives, neighbors, or any other people in need.

People of faith are also sometimes referred to by their generational cohort:

Generation	Years born (age)
Gen Z	1997-2012 (18 to 26 years old)
Millennials	1981-1996 (27 to 42 years old)
Gen X	1965-1980 (43 to 58 years old)
Baby Boomers or older	On or prior to 1964 (59 years or older)

Traditional giving methods include cash, check, and direct deposit or wire transfer (including ACH).

Digital giving methods include online tools such as mobile apps like Givelify which are used to give donations to nonprofit or religious organizations, mobile apps whose purpose is to transfer money to other people (e.g., Venmo, Zelle, Cash App), crowdfunding websites (e.g., GoFundMe), or payment portals on the organization's website. This also includes digital currencies such as cryptocurrency (e.g., Bitcoin).

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

People of Faith

For the 2024 *Giving in Faith* report, survey responses were collected from 2,001 faith-based individuals in the United States. This section offers deeper insight into these participants, encompassing their demographic profiles along with personal and public religious practices.

Overall, the demographics of the faith-based individuals surveyed reflect a wide range of diverse backgrounds including age, educational attainment, income levels, geographic location, and political orientation. However, an oversample of Black and African American respondents was obtained to better understand the behaviors and sentiments of this group of respondents (see more details in the Methodology section).

Demographics

Generation	
Baby Boomer or older (59 or older)	32%
Gen X (43 to 58)	35%
Millennial (27 to 42)	28%
Gen Z (26 or younger)	5%
Gender	
Female	61%
Male	38%
Non-binary or prefer to self-describe	>0.01%
Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%
Asian	4%
Black or African	44%
Latino/a or Hispanic	6%
Middle Eastern or North African	1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White or European	48%
Other or prefer to self-describe	1%

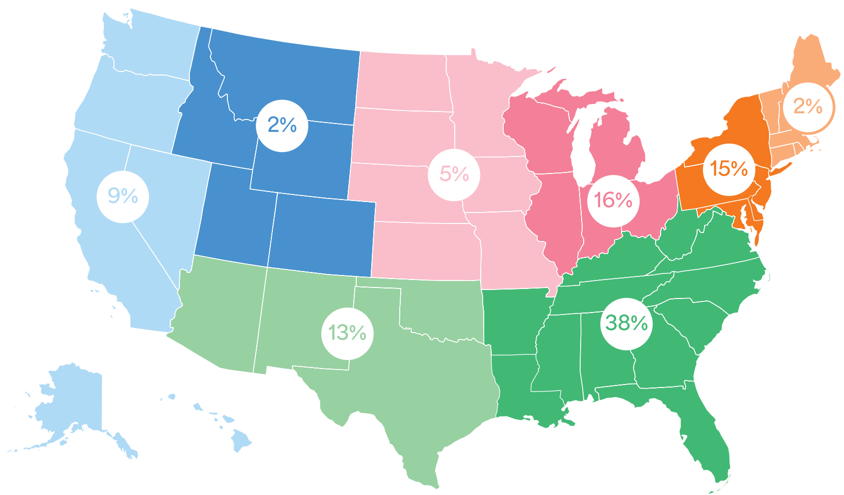
2022 household income

Less than $25,000	8%
$25,000 to $49,999	24%
$50,000 to $74,999	22%
$75,000 to $99,999	18%
$100,000 to $149,999	17%
$150,000 or more	11%

Education

Less than high school degree	1%
High school graduate or equivalent	9%
Trade/technical/vocational school	4%
Some college, but no degree	18%
Associate’s (2-year) degree	13%
Bachelor’s (4-year) degree	32%
Master’s degree	19%
Doctorate or professional graduate degree (e.g., PhD, JD, MD)	5%

U.S. region



9% Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)

5% Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, ND, NE, SD)

15% Mideast (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)

2% Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)

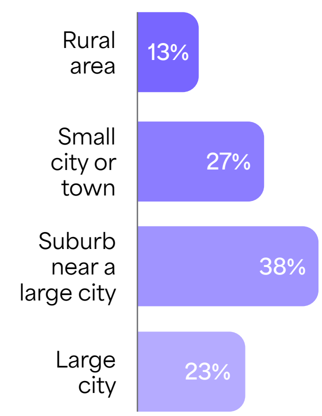
16% Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)

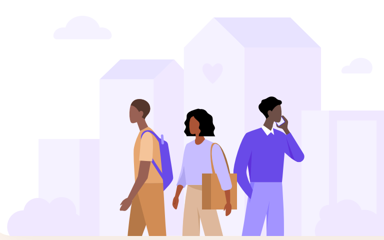
2% New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)

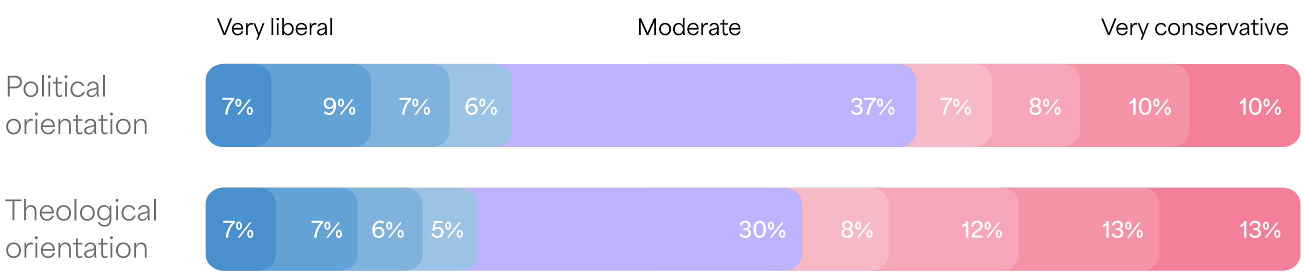
13% Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)

38% Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, PR, SC, TN, VA, WV)

Community type





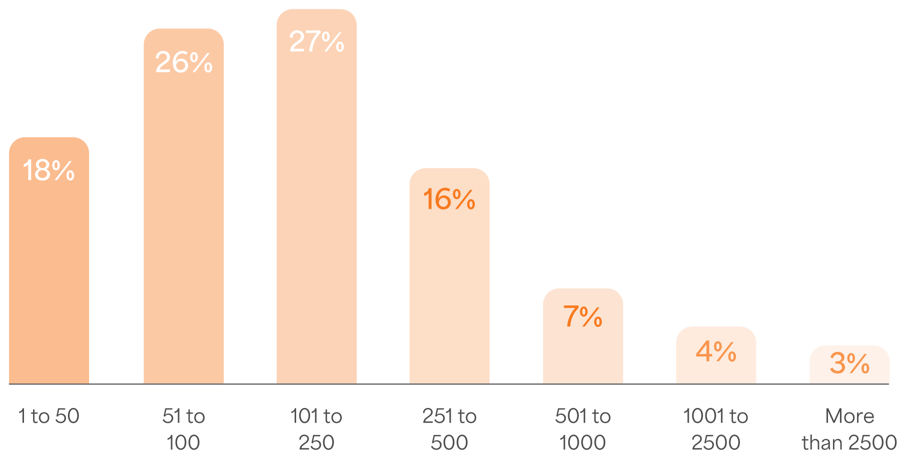


Religious Affiliations and Behaviors

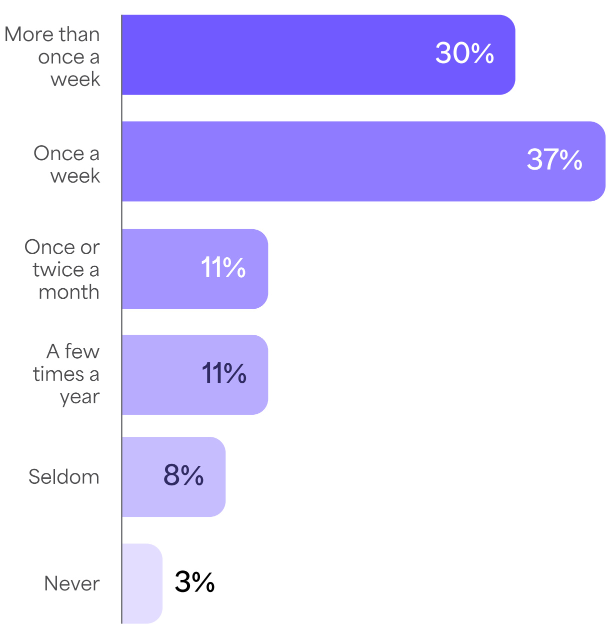
Individuals belonging to a range of organized religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism participated in this study. However, most respondents are practicing Christians and consider themselves somewhat to very religious.

Religion	
Buddhism	0.2%
Christianity	96.5%
Hinduism	0.3%
Islam	1.0%
Judaism	1.5%
Other	0.6%

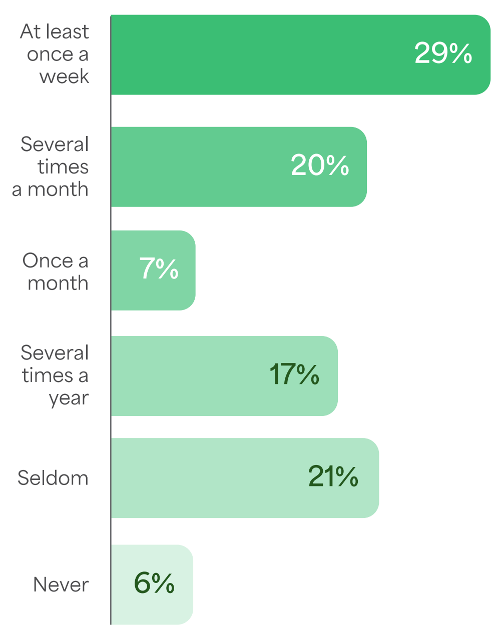
Place of worship size (average weekly attendance)



Frequency of religious service attendance aside from weddings and funerals (in person or virtual)

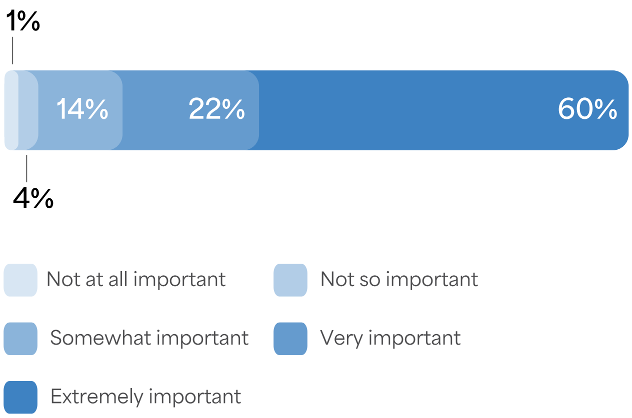


Frequency of involvement in other activities at place of worship (other than religious services)

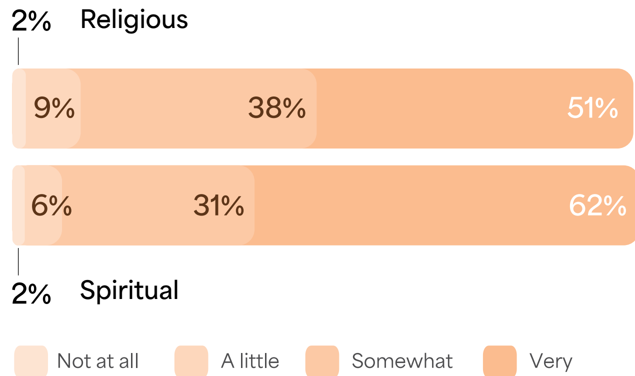


RELIGIOSITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Importance of religion to daily life

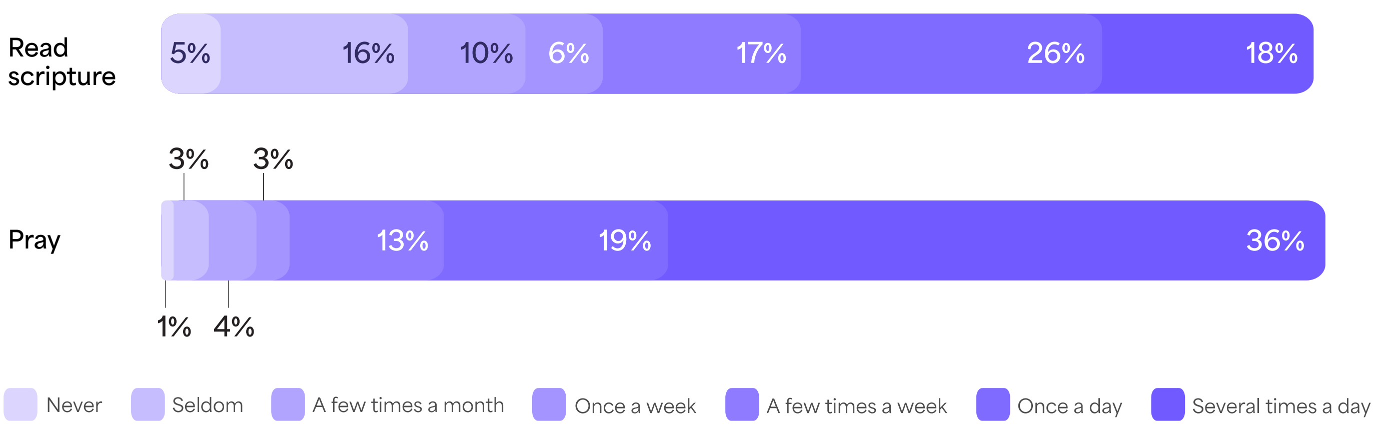


Extent faith-based individuals consider themselves religious or spiritual

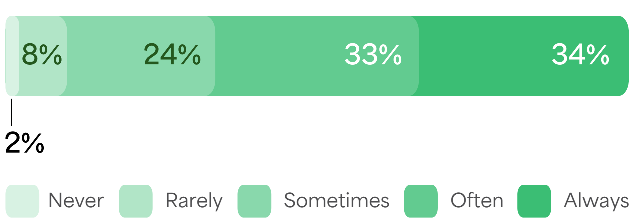


PRIVATE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Frequency that faith-based individuals read scripture or pray outside of religious services



Frequency that faith-based individuals report feeling that God or something divine intervenes in life



NOTE: See Methodology for additional details about people of faith.

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

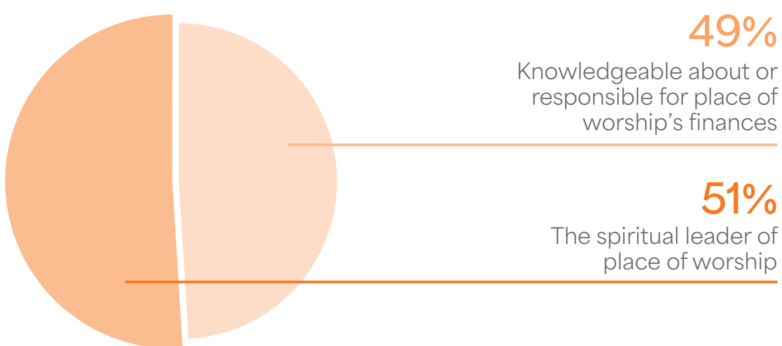
Faith Leaders

For the 2024 *Giving in Faith* report, survey responses were collected from 980 faith leaders of places of worship in the United States. This section offers a deeper insight into these participants, encompassing their demographic profiles and places of worship.

The places of worship represented in this report are predominantly Christian and belong to a wide range of denominations. Additionally, an oversample of Black and African American faith leaders and places of worship was obtained to better understand the behaviors and sentiments of this faith community (see more details in the Methodology section).

Demographics

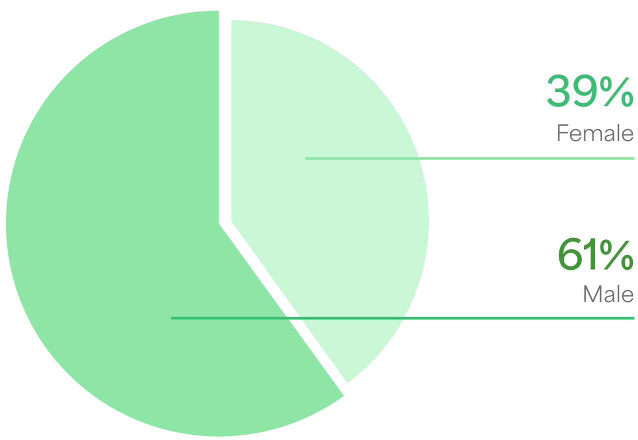
Role within place of worship



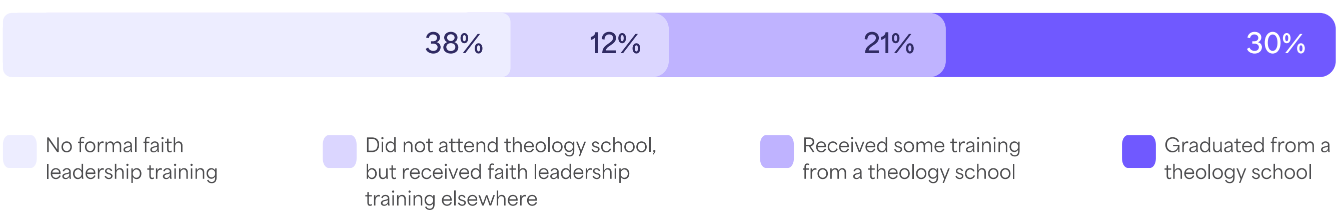
Ethnicity

American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Asian	2%
Black or African	49%
Latino/a or Hispanic	2%
Middle Eastern or North African	0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White or European	49%
Other	1%

Gender



Formal faith leadership training



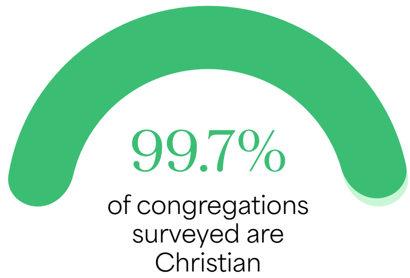
Education

Less than high school degree	0%
High school graduate or equivalent	3%
Trade/technical/vocational school	1%
Some college, but no degree	10%
Associate’s (2-year) degree	11%
Bachelor’s (4-year) degree	36%
Master’s degree	27%
Doctorate or professional graduate degree (e.g., PhD, JD, MD)	11%

About the Places of Worship

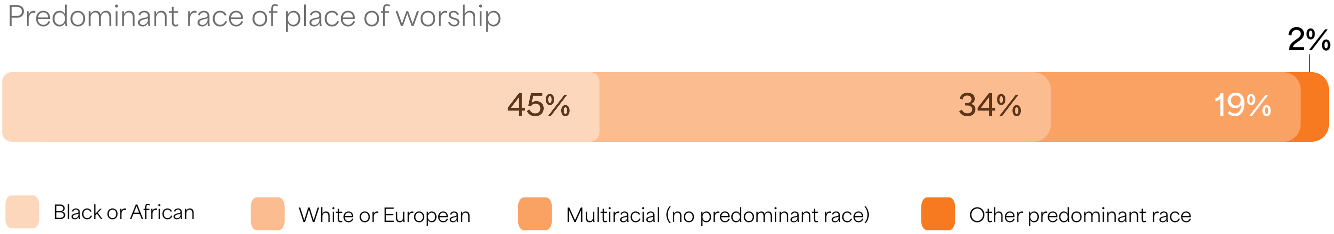
Weekly service attendance

Up to 50	32%
51-100	27%
101-250	17%
251-500	12%
501-1,000	9%
1,001-2,500	1%
More than 2,500	1%



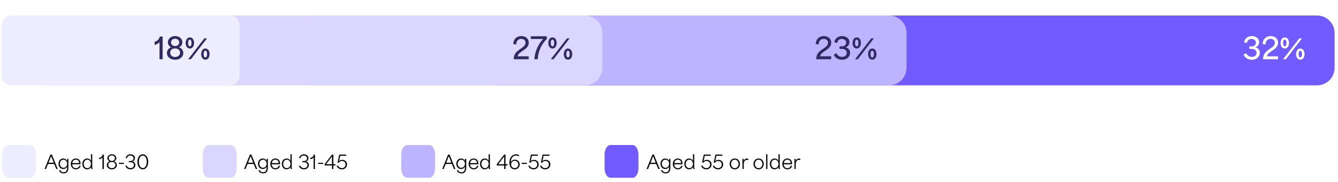
Note: For a breakdown of the Christian denominations surveyed, please see [Appendix](#).

Predominant race of place of worship



Note: For a full breakdown of congregations' predominant ethnicities, please see [Appendix](#).

Age ranges of adult attendees



NOTE: See [Methodology](#) for additional details about faith leaders.

SECTION 1

Giving by People of Faith

This section unveils the 2023 trends in giving among faith-based individuals. It delves into the myriad of ways people of faith demonstrate remarkable generosity, defying reported declines in overall giving in the United States. It dives into where faith-based givers direct their contributions, their preferred methods of giving, and the profound influence of faith and places of worship on nurturing their generosity.

Additionally, it explores congregational giving and sheds light on the pivotal role of digital giving methods from the perspectives of faith leaders.

KEY DATA SNAPSHOT

97% of people of faith gave their money, time, or items in 2023

- 81% of faith-based givers gave money to their places of worship
- 88% of faith-based givers donated money digitally to an organization, cause, or person

98% of places of worship offer at least one digital giving option

60% of congregations' total annual contributions come from digital giving

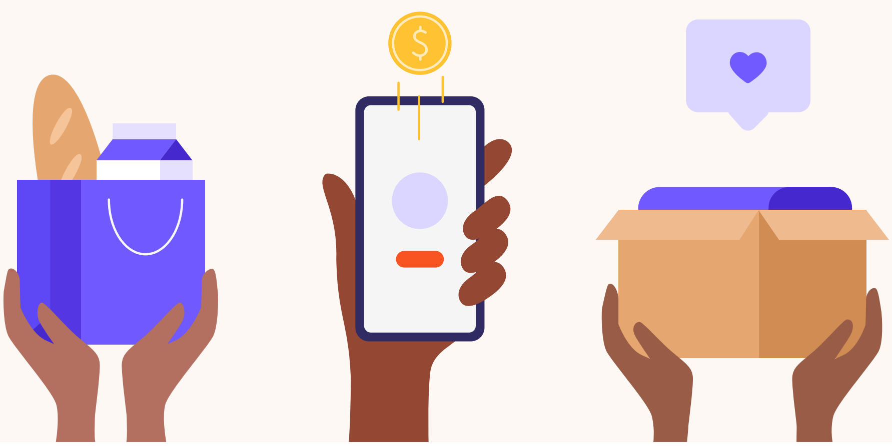
GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH

Introduction

The most recent *Giving USA* report for the year 2022 showed that total giving in the United States declined 3.4% from 2021 (10.5% when adjusted for inflation), suggesting that Americans are becoming less generous in giving to charitable organizations.[1] However, reports such as *Giving USA* do not consider a wide range of charitable giving that individuals and organizations often perform informally, which Americans consider as forms of philanthropy.[2]

In fact, American faith-based givers in this study have been remarkably philanthropic, even more so than the average American. Just over 97% of faith-based givers surveyed reported giving money, time, and/or items in 2023. By contrast, in 2022, GivingTuesday found that 75% of all Americans surveyed had given either money, time, items, or advocacy.[3]

In 2023, **97% of faith-based givers gave money, time, and/or items.**



GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH

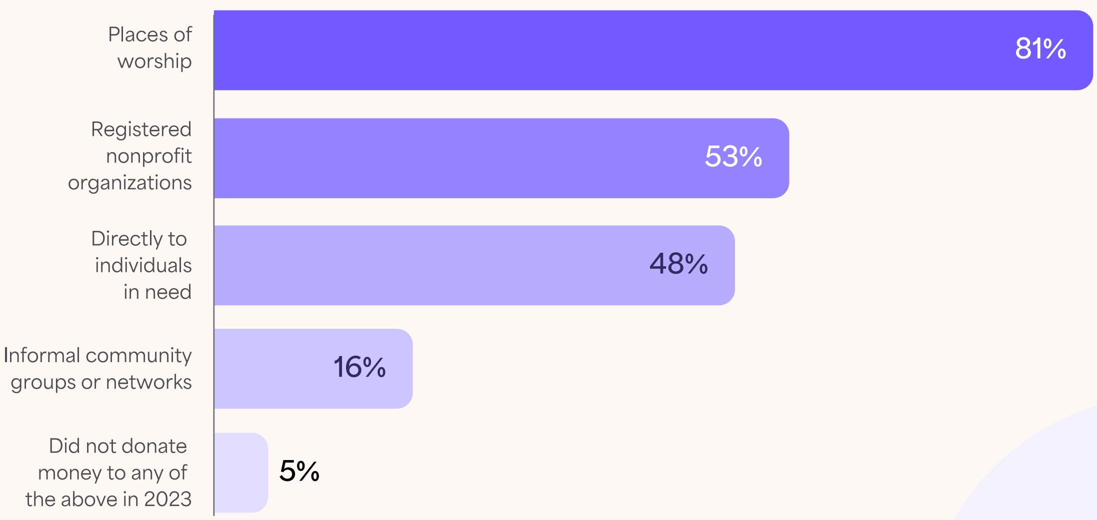
Monetary Giving

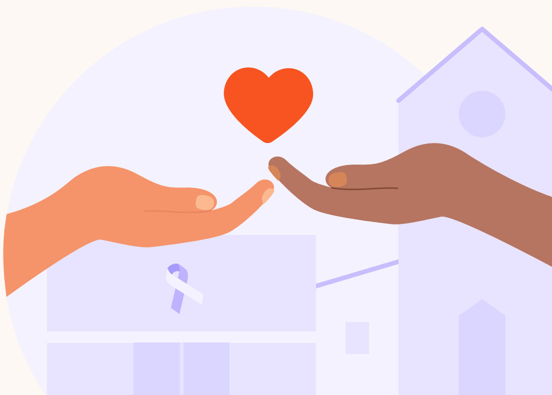
While recent news articles may conclude that Americans are being "stingier" or less generous with their money,[4] a little over 95% of faith-based givers surveyed reported that they gave money to one or more places of worship, registered nonprofits, mutual aid groups, or directly to people in need in 2023. This figure is higher than what GivingTuesday showed in their 2022 report in which 56% of Americans surveyed had given money to an individual or organization outside of family.

Overall, 80% of faith-based givers who gave money reported giving the same amount or more to at least one organization, cause, or person in 2023, similar to the findings of Givelify's 2022 *Giving in Faith* report.[5]

Finally, 88% of faith-based givers who gave money in 2023 used a digital giving method (e.g., website, mobile app, or digital currency) to give to at least one of the organizations, causes, or people they supported.

Organizations or people that faith-based givers gave money to in 2023



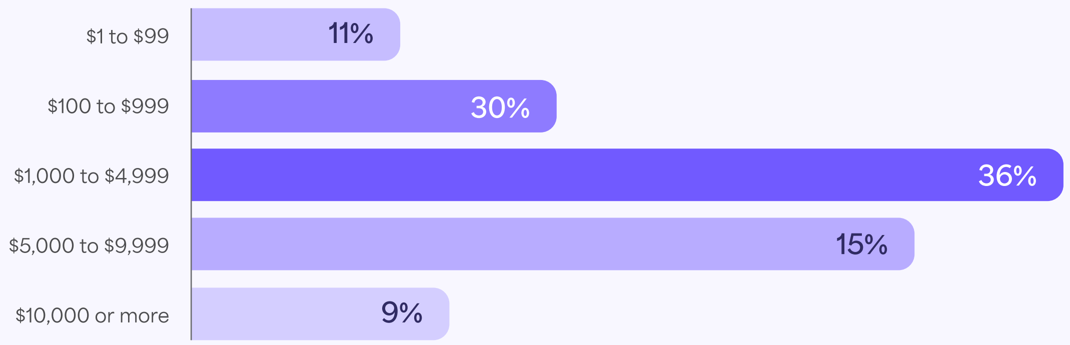


Monetary Giving to Places of Worship

Faith-based givers were generous to their places of worship in 2023: **81% of faith-based givers who gave money in 2023 gave to places of worship,** and 60% of faith-based givers gave $1,000 or more.

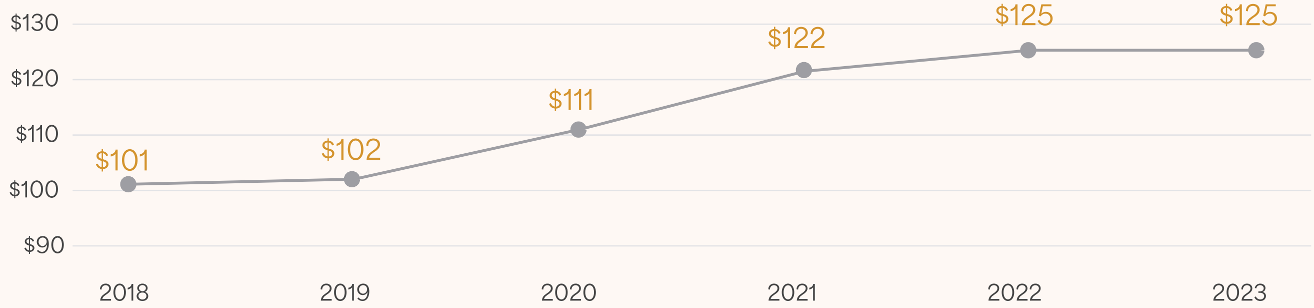
The majority (81%) of faith-based givers gave the same amount (40%) or more money (41%) to their places of worship in 2023 than they did in 2022. This is slightly lower than what Givelify reported in the 2022 *Giving in Faith* report (84% gave the same or more than they did in 2021).[5]

Total dollar value of monetary gifts faith-based givers made to places of worship in the past 12 months (including offerings and tithes)



Additionally, the average gift amount did not increase for the first time in six years. According to Givelify's giving data, givers gave an average of $125 per gift, the same as in 2022.

Average amount of each gift given through Givelify



However, there was an increase in the proportion of givers who gave more money to their places of worship since Givelify's 2022 *Giving in Faith* report.

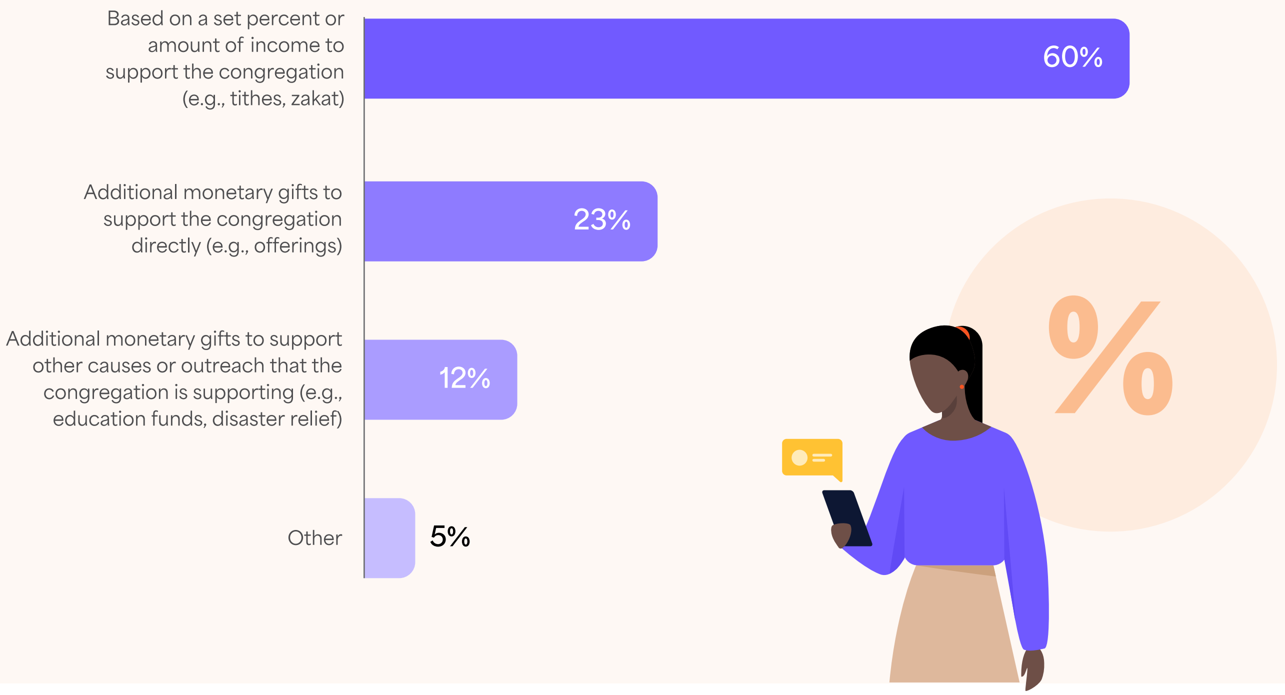
Notably, 30% of faith-based givers reported an increase in their total monetary contributions to their places of worship in the 2022 report.[5] **This reported increase rose to 40% in the 2023 study, with 49% giving more money in 2023 compared to 2022, according to Givelify's donation data.**

Faith-based givers in this study are giving to their places of worship frequently, with most giving on a weekly (35%), biweekly (26%), or monthly (21%) basis.

On average, about 60% of gifts to places of worship from faith-based givers in 2023 are based on a set percent or amount of their income, such as tithes or zakat. This mirrors Givelify's giving data, which shows that approximately 62% of all gifts to places of worship in 2023 are categorized as tithes.

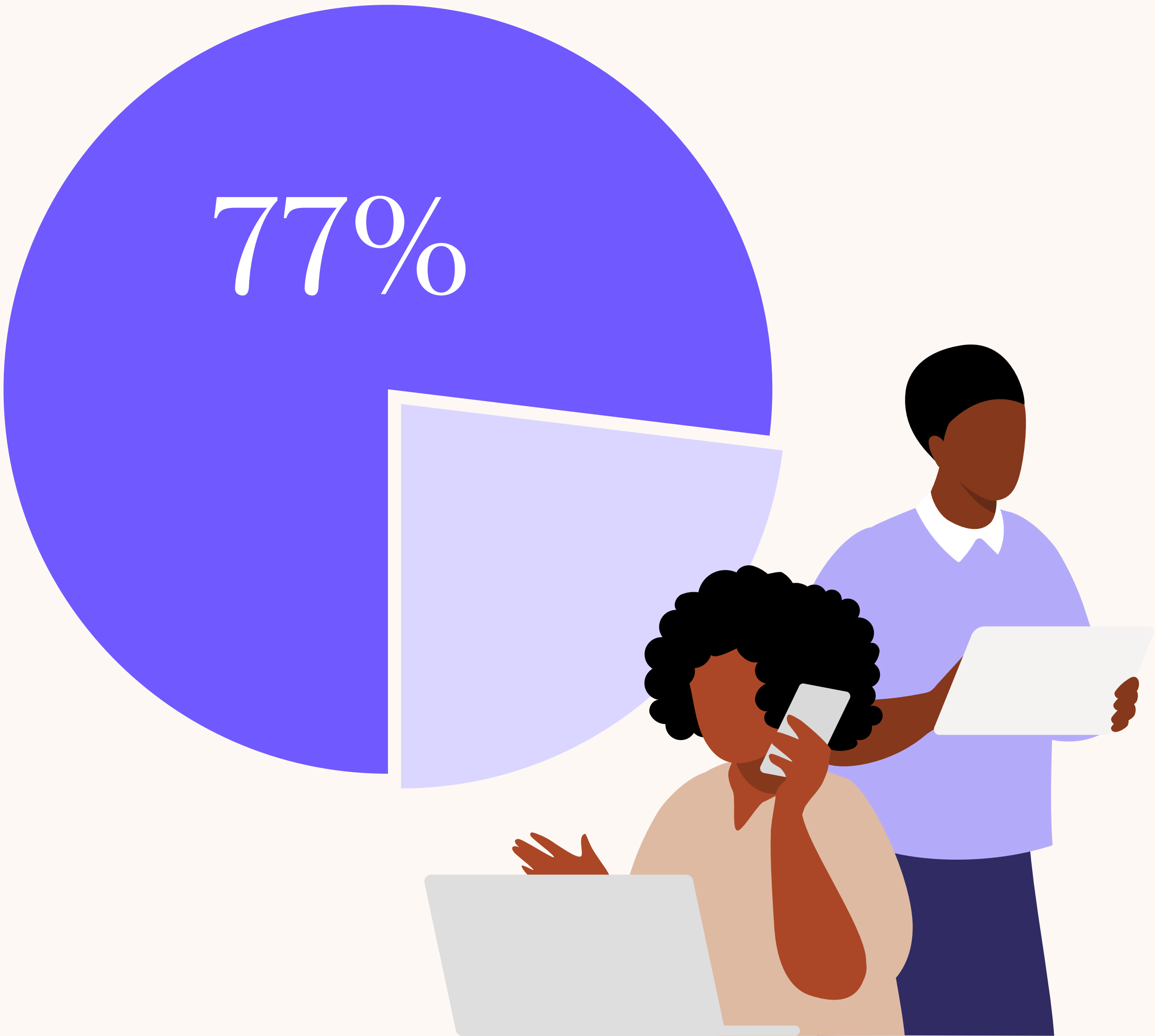
An average of 23% of gifts to places of worship are offerings that support the place of worship, 12% are special offerings that support the place of worship's outreach, and the remaining 4% are other types of gifts.

Percentage of monetary contributions to places of worship given as a set percent/amount of income versus offerings

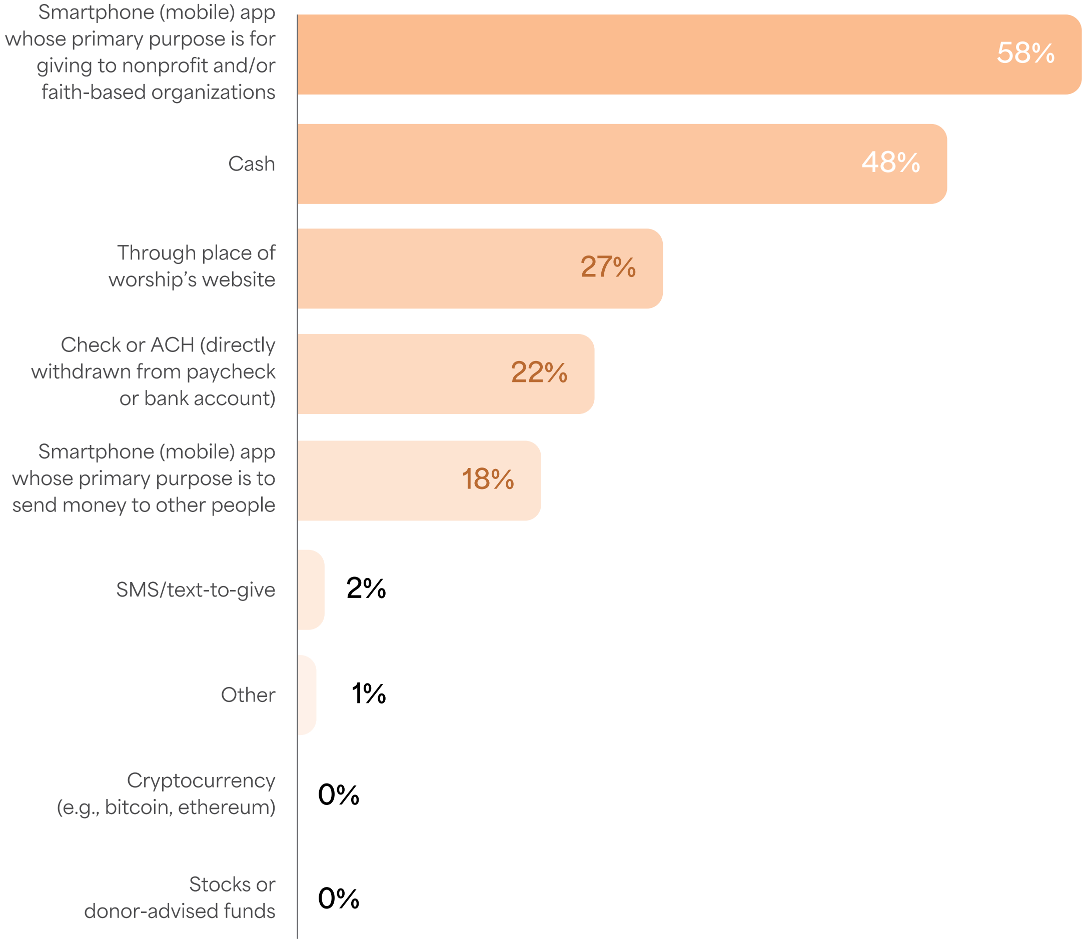


Lastly, the trend of digital giving shows continued growth. Seventy-seven percent of givers stated that they utilized at least one digital means, such as a website, mobile app, or digital currency, to make donations to their places of worship in 2023. Moreover, digital giving is often givers' preferred giving method. Of the 51% of faith-based givers who only use one giving option to give to their places of worship, 66% exclusively use a digital method.

77% of givers stated that they utilized at least one digital means, such as a website, mobile app, or digital currency, to make donations to their places of worship in 2023.



How faith-based givers gave money to places of worship in 2023



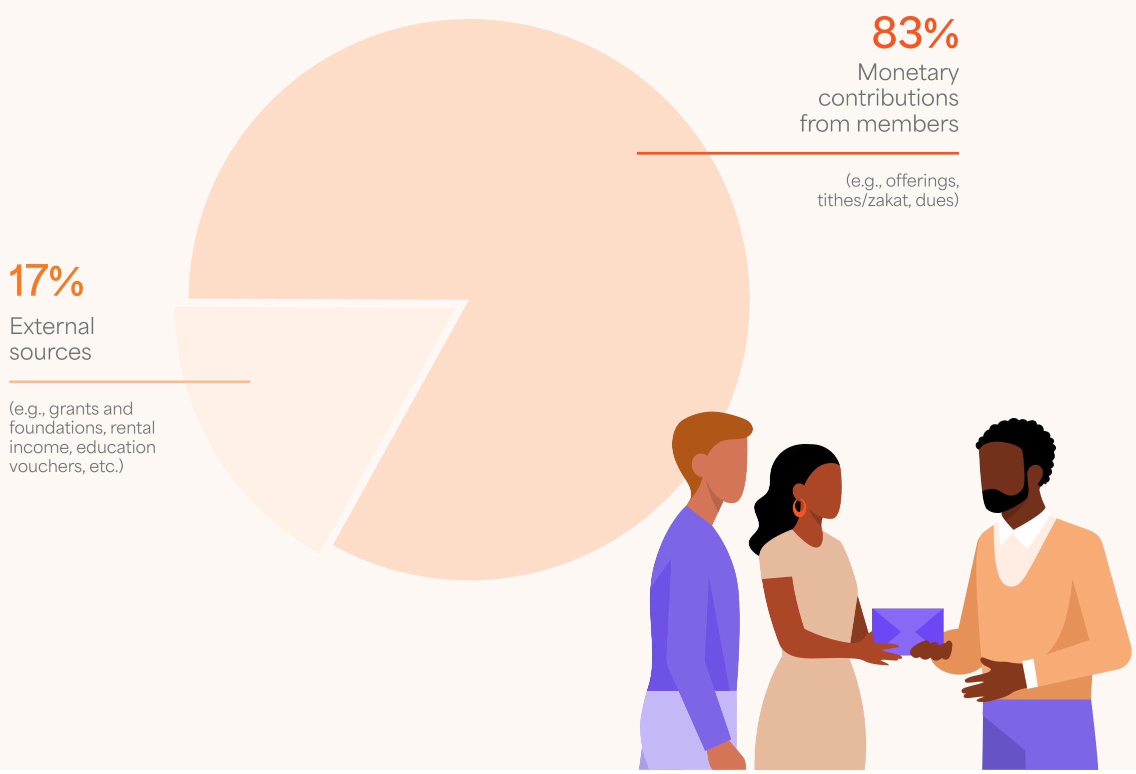
GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH: MONETARY GIVING

Faith Leaders Confirm the Generosity of Their Congregants

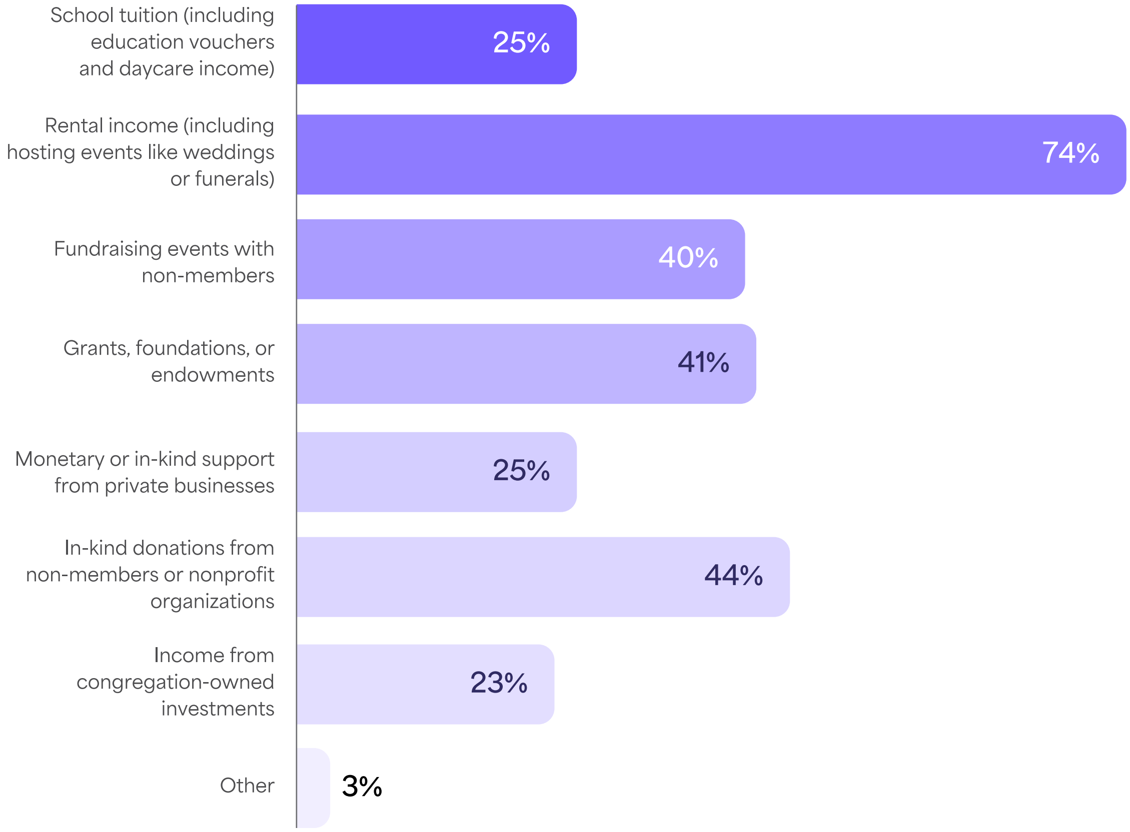
The abundant generosity of givers plays a vital role in maintaining thriving congregations. In 2023, faith leaders reported that, on average, 83% of the funding for their places of worship came from their congregants. This figure is in line with what Lake Institute on Faith & Giving found in their 2019 *National Study of Congregation's Economic Practices* (NSCEP) report (81%)[6] and what Faith Communities Today found in their 2020 study (85%).[7]

Among the 17% of funding from external sources in 2023, most faith leaders cited rental income (74%) as a source of revenue, which includes earnings generated from hosting events such as weddings and funerals. Lake Institute on Faith & Giving also reported that rental income was the largest source (62%) of congregations' earned income in their 2019 NSCEP study.[6] In addition, 76% of congregations with external funding receive income from more than one source, and 55% of these congregations have three or more sources of external income.

Sources of congregations' annual income in 2023



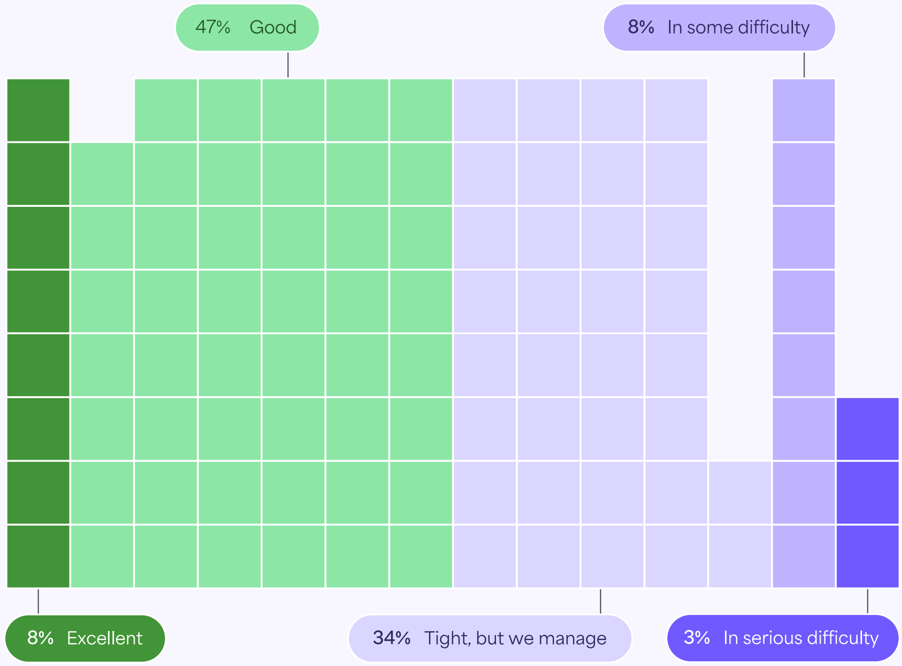
Proportion of congregations that received income from these external sources in 2023



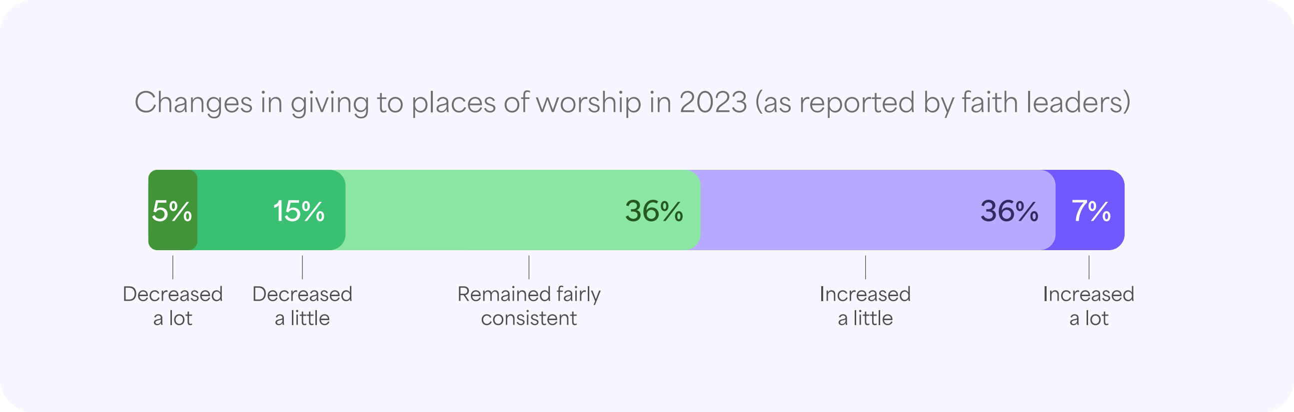
Most faith leaders report that the financial health of their place of worship is either tight but manageable (34%) or good (47%). Just 11% of faith leaders describe their congregation's financial health as facing difficulties of some kind.

This generally positive financial outlook aligns with the Hartford Institute for Religion Research's 2023 *Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations* study,[8] which also reported that only 11% of congregations described their financial health as being in some or serious difficulty. Additionally, the Hartford Institute reported that the median income for congregations has risen to $170,000, an increase of 25% compared to its findings from 2020.[9]

Congregation's financial health in 2023

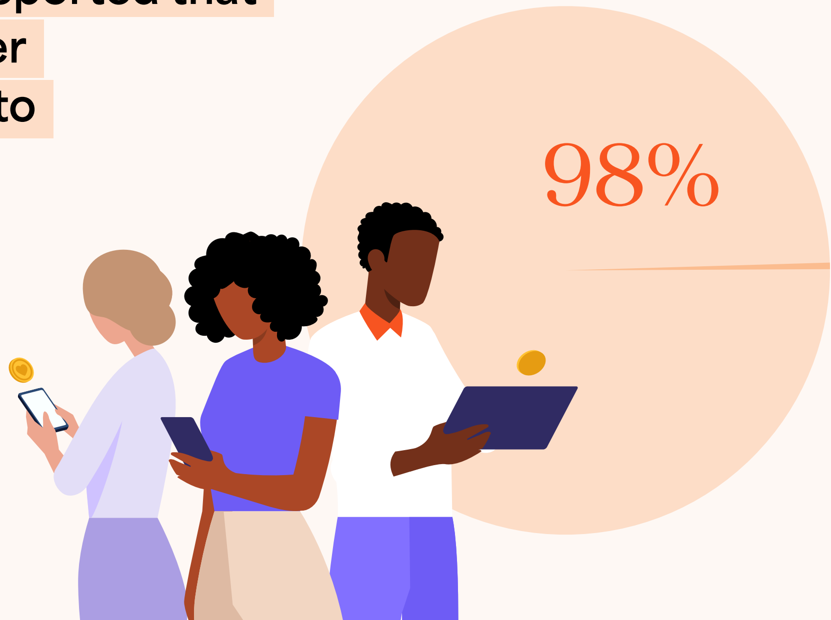


Moreover, most faith leaders (80%) report that giving to their place of worship has increased (43%) or remained fairly consistent (37%) since the previous year. Slightly more faith leaders reported an increase in giving to their place of worship (43%) compared to the 2022 *Giving in Faith* survey (40%).[5]

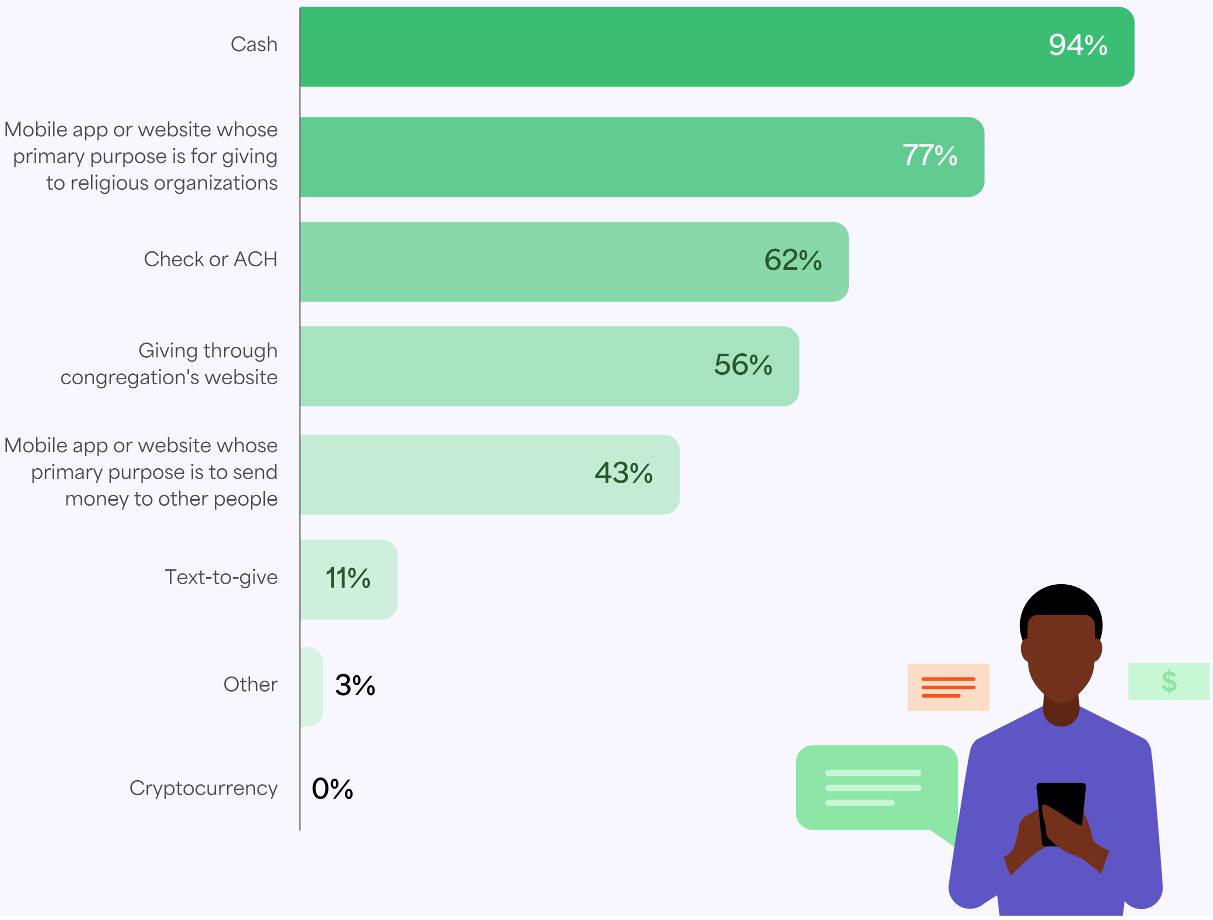


For many places of worship, the COVID-19 pandemic closed in-person worship services and disrupted traditional methods of giving. This contributed to the rapid growth of digital giving methods. The 2022 *Giving in Faith* report showed that almost all (99%) places of worship offered digital giving, up from 64% prior to the pandemic.[5] Although most places of worship resumed in-person worship by 2023, 98% of faith leaders report that they continued to offer digital giving options to their congregants. Faith leaders understand that it is important to adapt to the multiple ways in which their congregants prefer to give. Thus, most (85%) congregations offer their attendees three or more giving methods.

Although most places of worship resumed in-person worship by 2023, **98% of faith leaders reported that they continued to offer digital giving options to their congregants.**



Giving options that congregations offered attendees in 2023

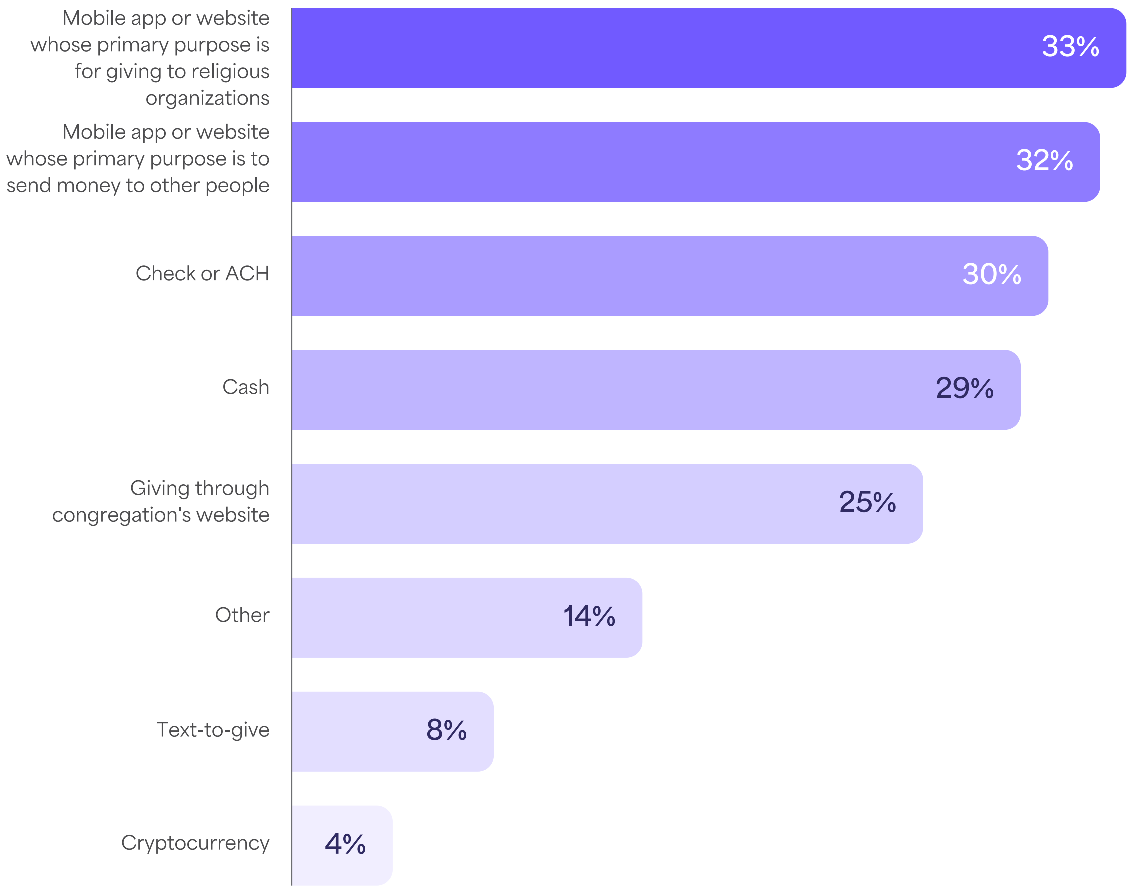


As people increasingly adopt digital payment methods for transactions and peer-to-peer transfers,[10,11] this trend trickles into faith-based giving. Faith leaders indicated that gifts made via digital means collectively constituted a median of 60% of total annual contributions to their places of worship in 2023. Digital giving options included the congregation's website, mobile apps for giving to places of worship or nonprofit organizations (e.g., Givelify), mobile apps to send money to other people (e.g., Venmo, PayPal), digital currencies (e.g., cryptocurrency), and text-to-give or SMS-based giving.

The evidence is clear: Digital giving constitutes a higher proportion of congregational income than non-digital giving because greater use of digital giving options yields higher per capita annual giving.[9] Specifically, the 2023 *Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations* study reported that per capita annual giving was $2,428 and $2,388 for congregations with "a lot of use" and "some use" of digital giving, respectively. In comparison, congregations with only "a little use" of digital giving received only $1,809 per capita annually.

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, some studies reported an increase in texting as a form of communication compared to traditional phone calls.[12,13] However, only 2% of faith-based givers adopted "text-to-give" or giving to places of worship through SMS. And, on average, only 8% of congregations' total contributions came via SMS, compared to 33% from mobile apps dedicated to giving to religious organizations.

Average percent of total annual contributions collected from each giving method



Digital giving is 60% of total annual income for places of worship.

Monetary Giving to Registered Nonprofits

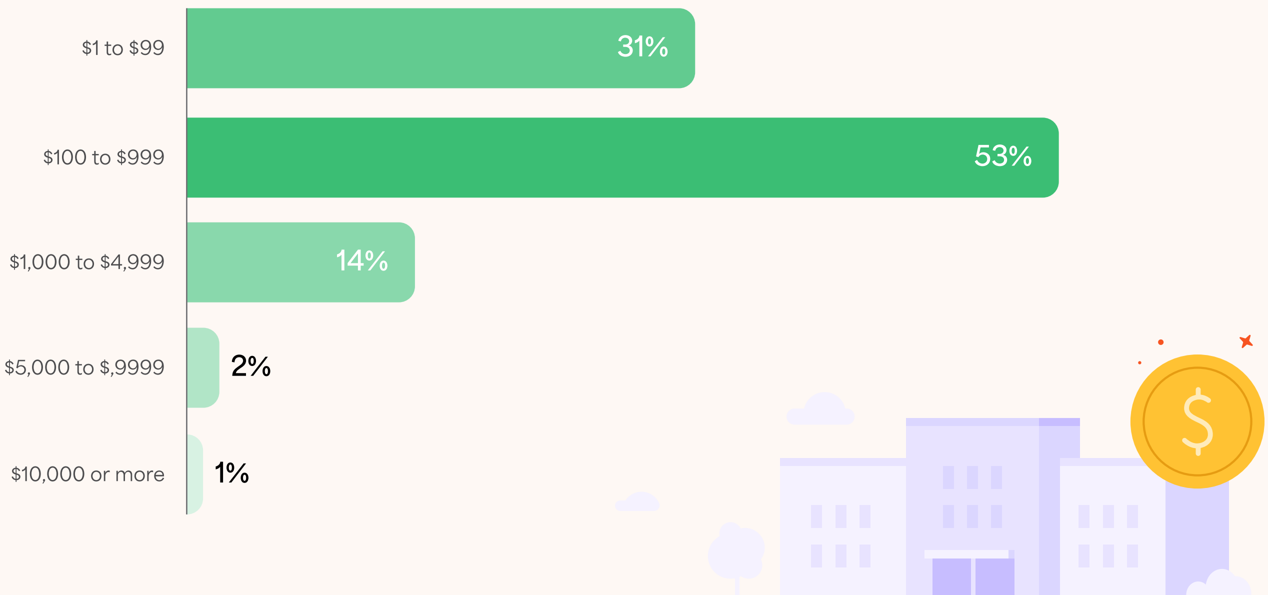
In addition to their contributions to places of worship, faith-based individuals exhibit generosity by supporting various nonprofit organizations.

In 2023, **53% of faith-based givers who gave money donated to registered nonprofit organizations such as 501(c)(3) organizations, foundations, schools or universities, and charities.**

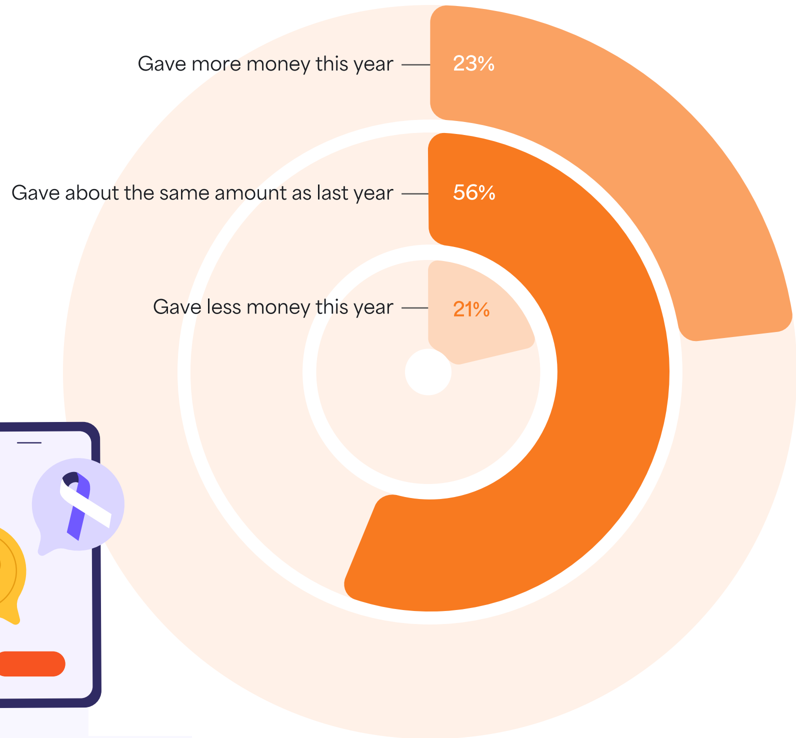
These faith-based givers were less likely to have given to a registered nonprofit compared to American givers as a whole. For example, GivingTuesday found that 68% of Americans surveyed gave to a formal organization.[3] However, several faith-based givers noted in their responses that they often give to nonprofits directly through their places of worship.

Of those who gave money to registered nonprofits, a strong majority (79%) reported giving the same or more money as the previous year. Notably, all faith-based givers who gave to registered nonprofits used at least one digital giving method to give to these organizations.

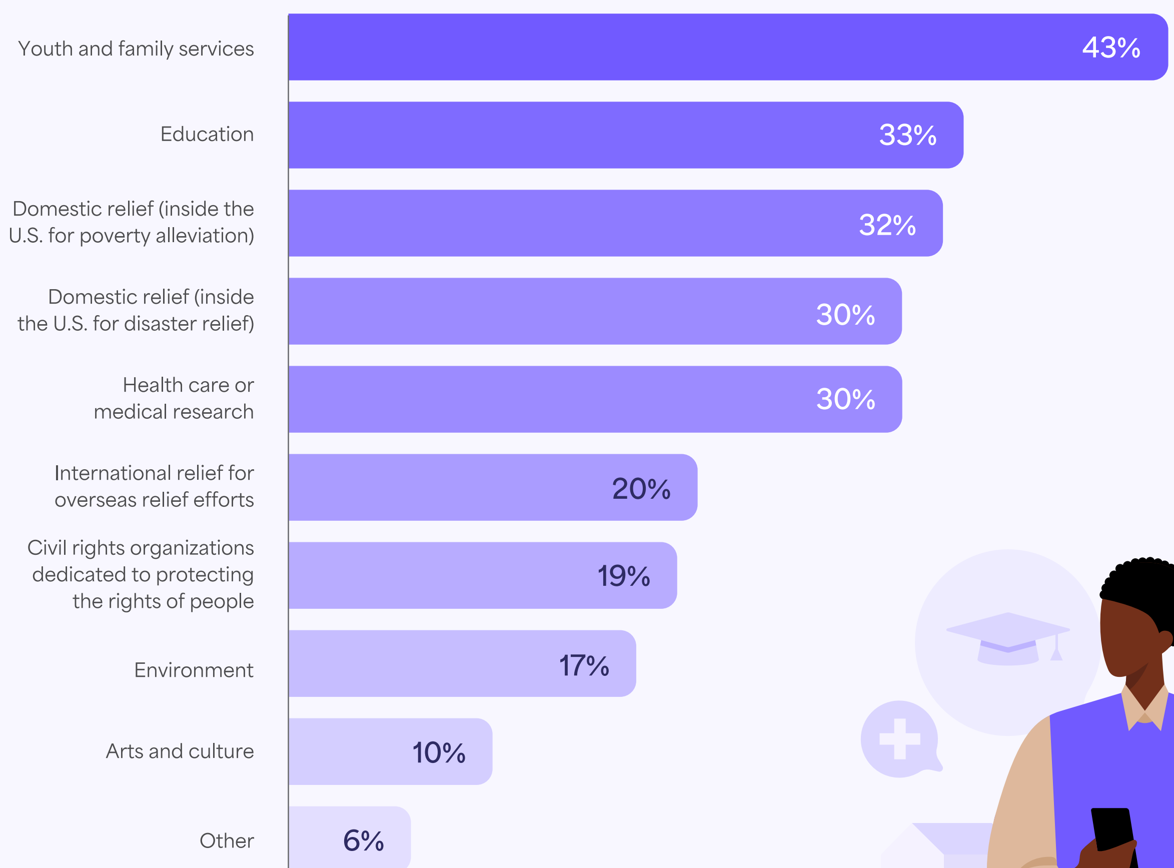
Total dollar value of monetary gifts faith-based givers made to registered nonprofits in the past 12 months



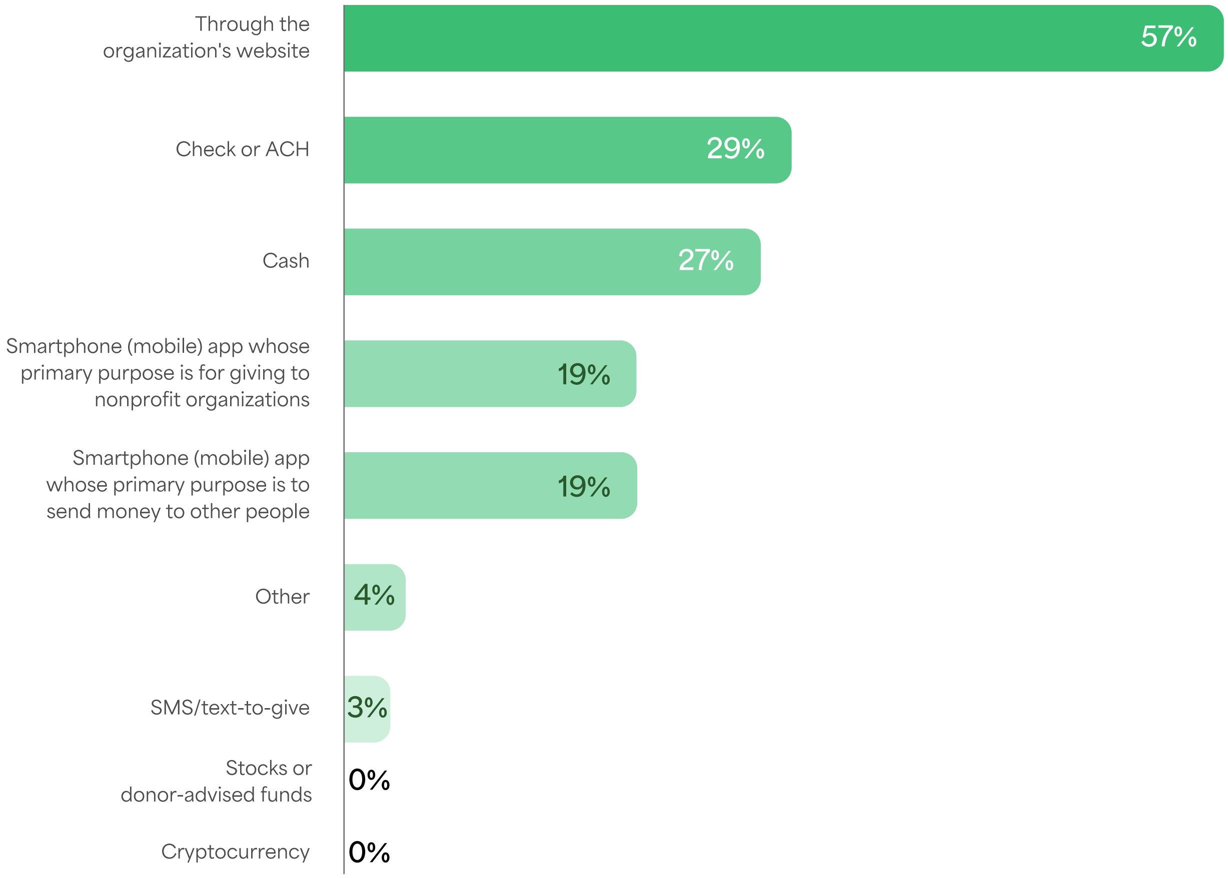
Change in amount given to registered nonprofits by faith-based givers in 2023 versus 2022

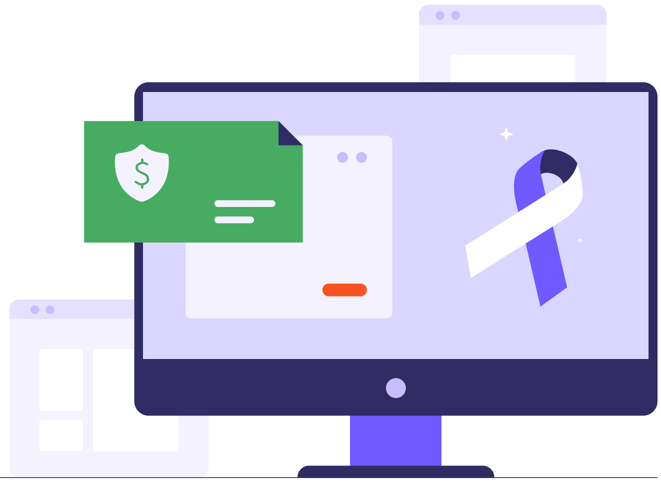


Nonprofit causes that faith-based givers supported with money in 2023



How faith-based givers gave money to registered nonprofits in 2023





GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH: MONETARY GIVING

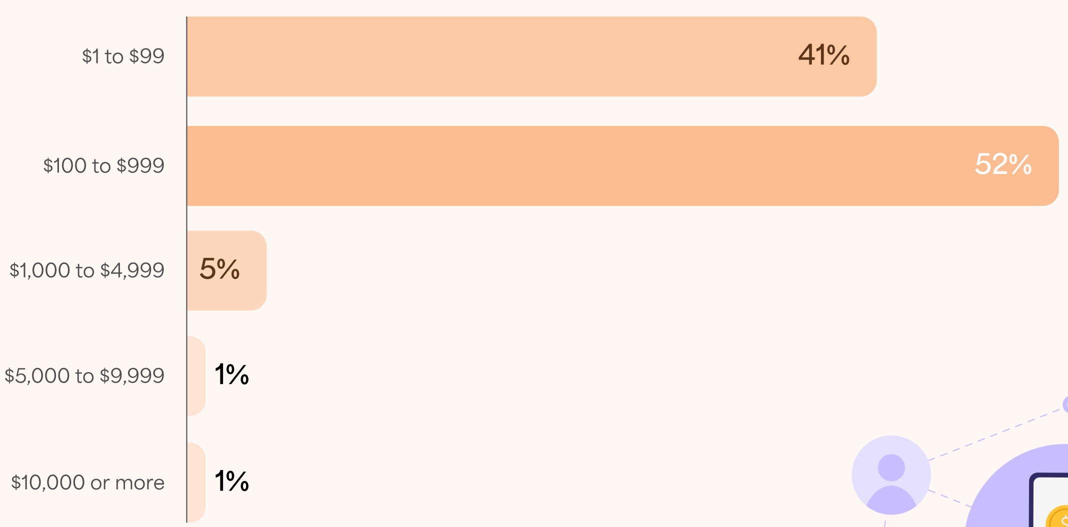
Monetary Giving to Mutual Aid or Informal Community Groups

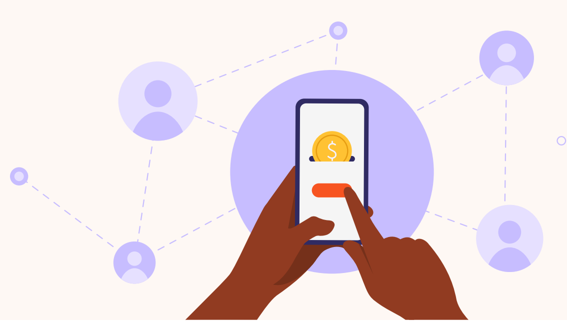
Americans frequently organize mutual aid groups to provide social services and support for others in their own community.[14] For example, a mutual aid group might offer essential support such as food assistance through community fridges or pantries, as well as housing aid for community members experiencing housing insecurity. As mutual aid or informal community groups are not registered nonprofit organizations, donations to this type of organization are not typically quantified in reports on charitable giving.

Of the faith-based givers who gave money in 2023, **16% donated money to informal community groups or networks or mutual aid groups.**

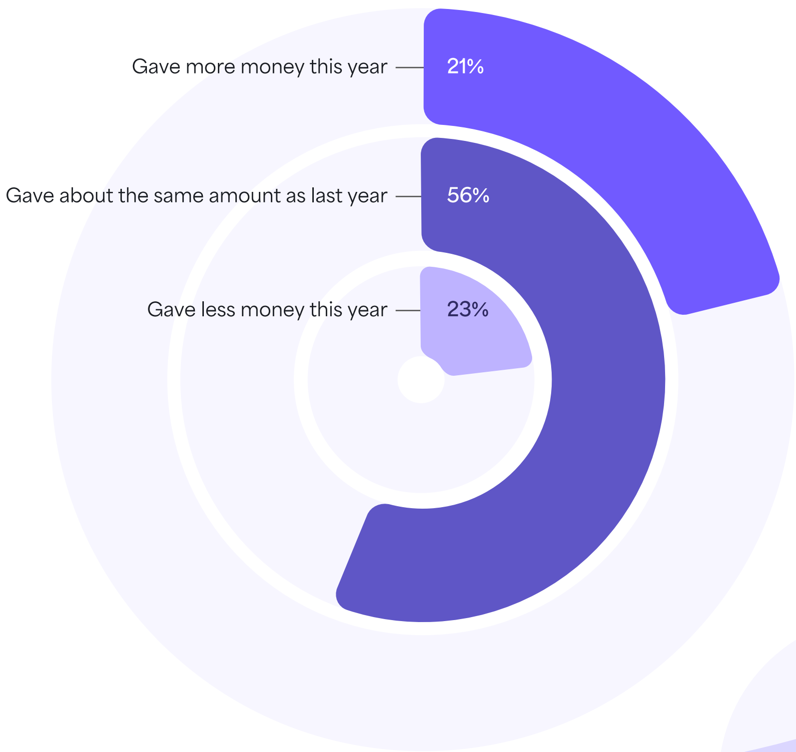
While relatively few faith-based givers reported giving directly to these informal groups, faith-based individuals are often involved in community outreach programs through their places of worship, as we discuss in Section 2 of this report.

Total dollar value of monetary gifts faith-based givers made to informal community groups in the past 12 months





Change in amount given to informal community groups by faith-based givers in 2023 versus 2022



Monetary Giving Directly to People in Need

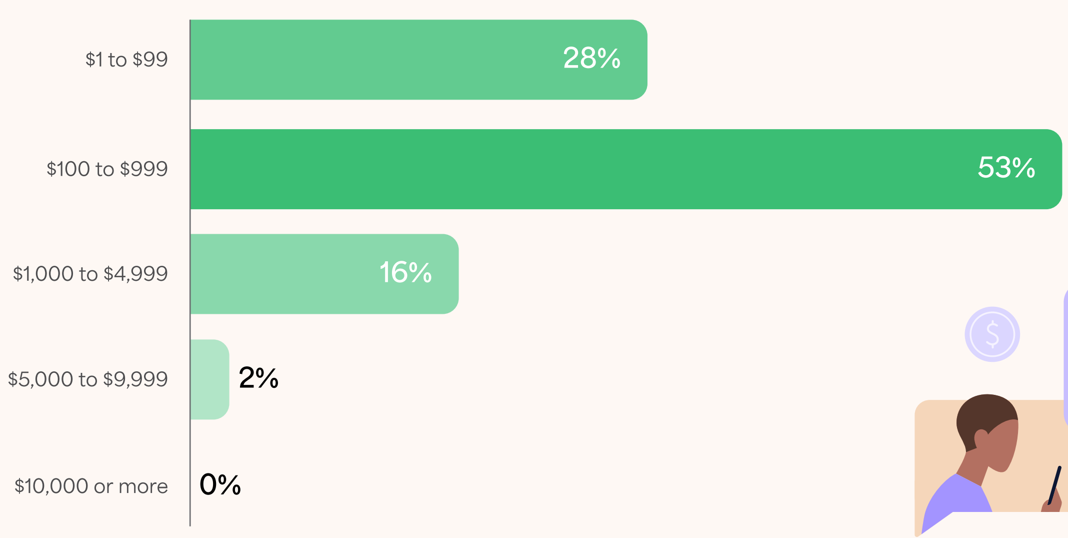
Giving directly to people in need, whether the recipient is a friend, family, or stranger, is a form of charity that has long been practiced yet underreported in philanthropic research.

In 2023, **48% of faith-based givers who gave money gave directly to people in need, which included their friends, relatives, neighbors, or other people in need.**

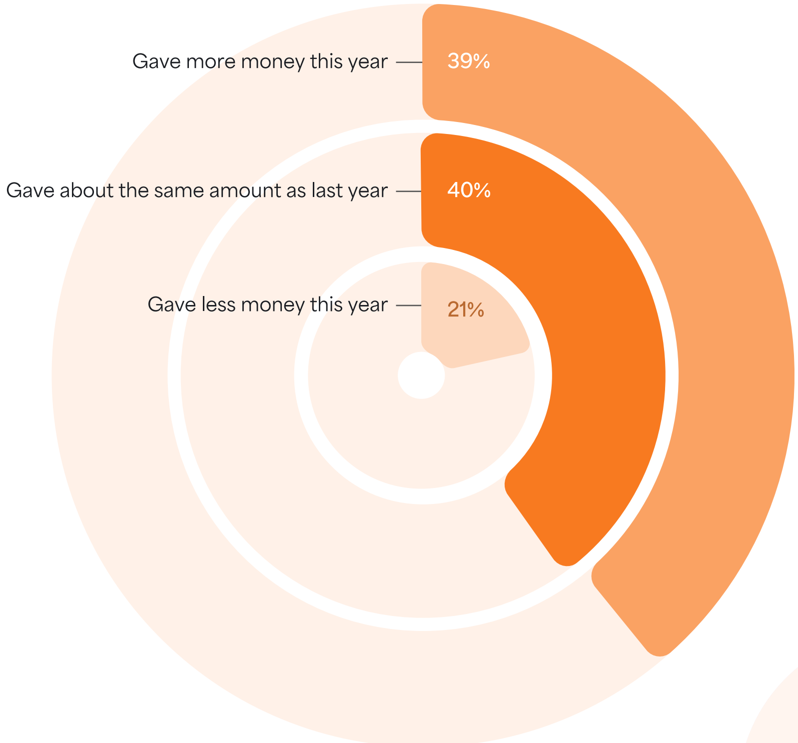
Of the monetary gifts given directly to people in need, 70% reported giving to family members, 61% gave to friends, and 60% gave to strangers. When it comes to giving directly to people in need, faith-based givers mirror the average American. In a 2021 report by Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy on charitable crowdfunding, 73% of individuals reported that they gave to people they know, and 50% of individuals said they gave money to strangers.[15]

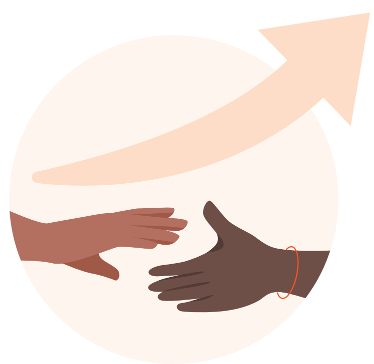
Overall, 79% of faith-based givers who gave directly to individuals reported giving the same or more money as the previous year. It is worth noting that while charitable crowdfunding websites like GoFundMe[15] have gained popularity and are perceived positively, some people still prefer to give gifts with physical currency. In fact, 36% of individuals who gave directly to someone in need exclusively used traditional non-digital methods.

Total dollar value of monetary gifts faith-based givers made directly to people in need in the past 12 months

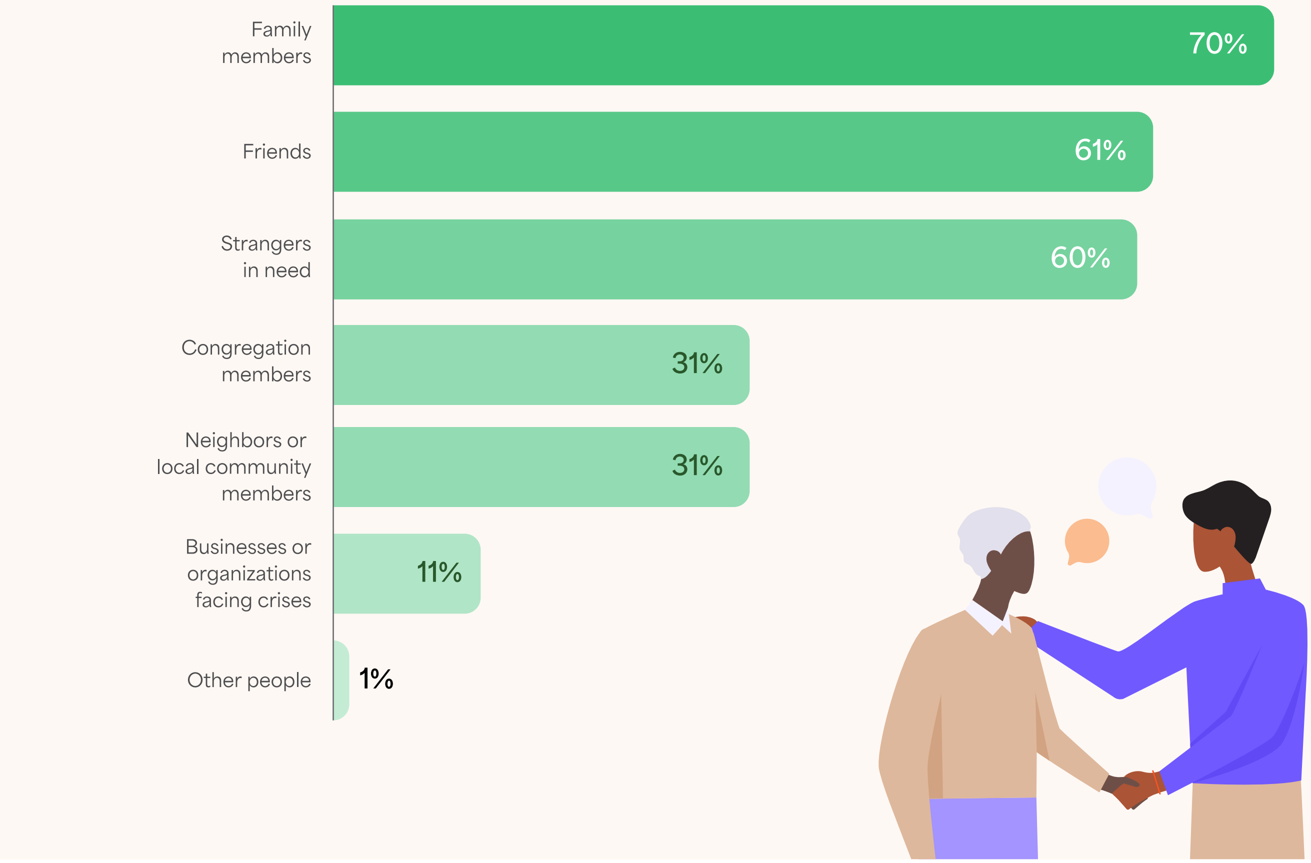


Change in the amount given directly to people in need by faith-based givers in 2023 versus 2022

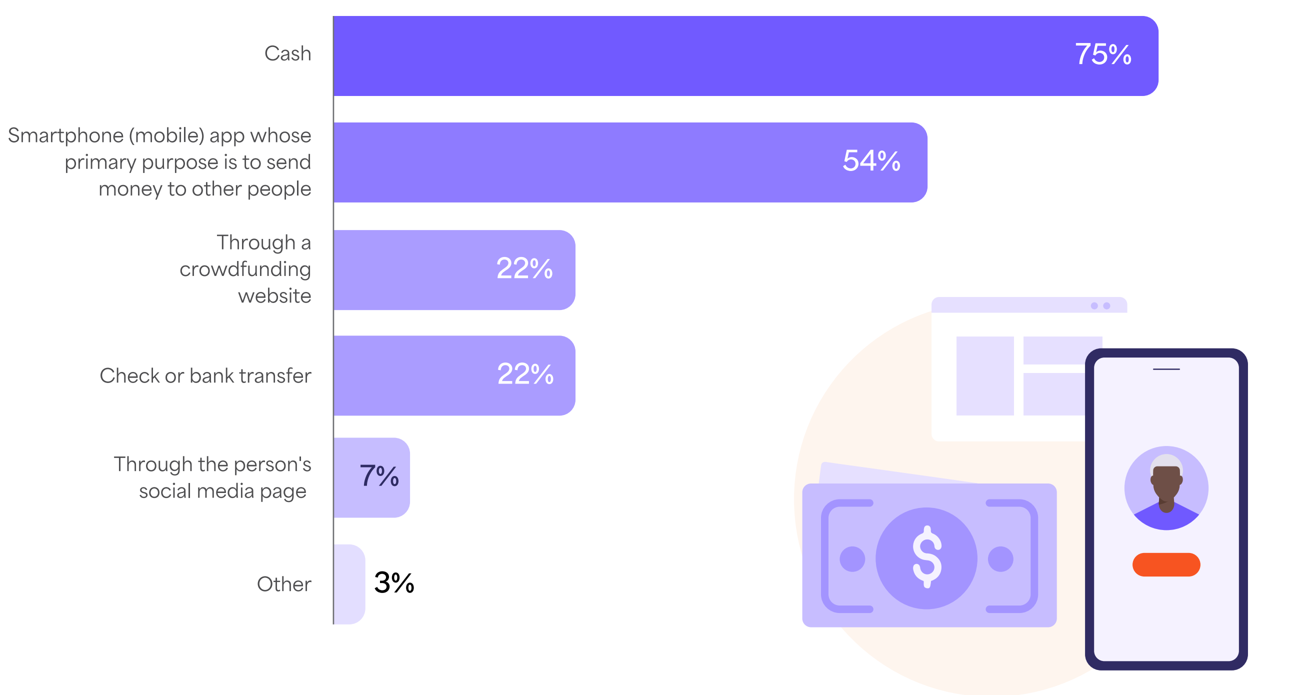




Groups of people that faith-based givers supported with money in 2023



How faith-based givers gave money directly to people in need in 2023



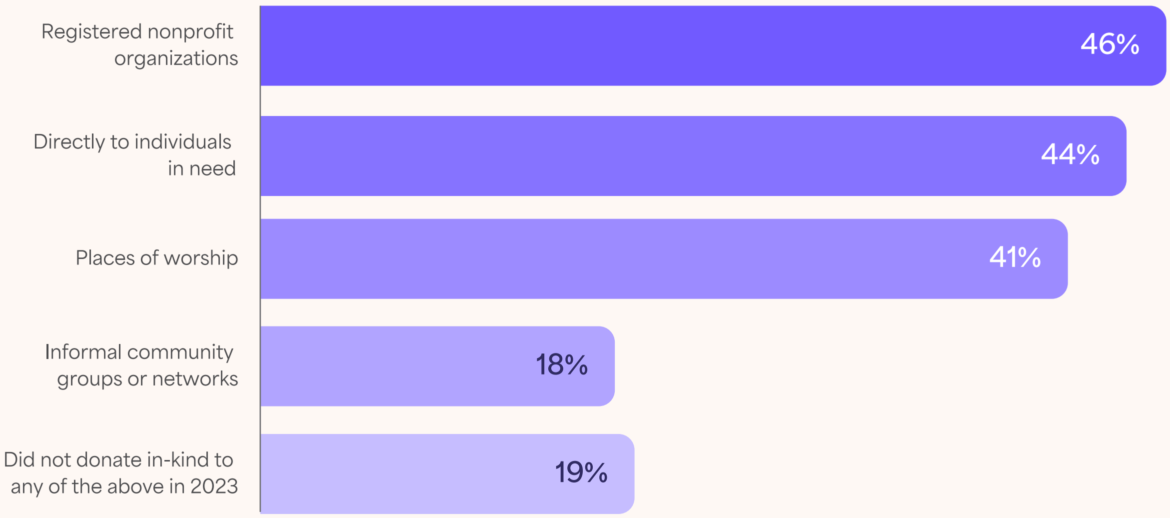
GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH

In-kind Giving

The generosity of people of faith extends beyond financial contributions. In 2023, nearly 82% percent of faith-based givers reported their generosity as in-kind gifts, encompassing physical items or goods. These donations were directed towards places of worship, registered nonprofit organizations, mutual aid or informal community groups, or directly to people in need.

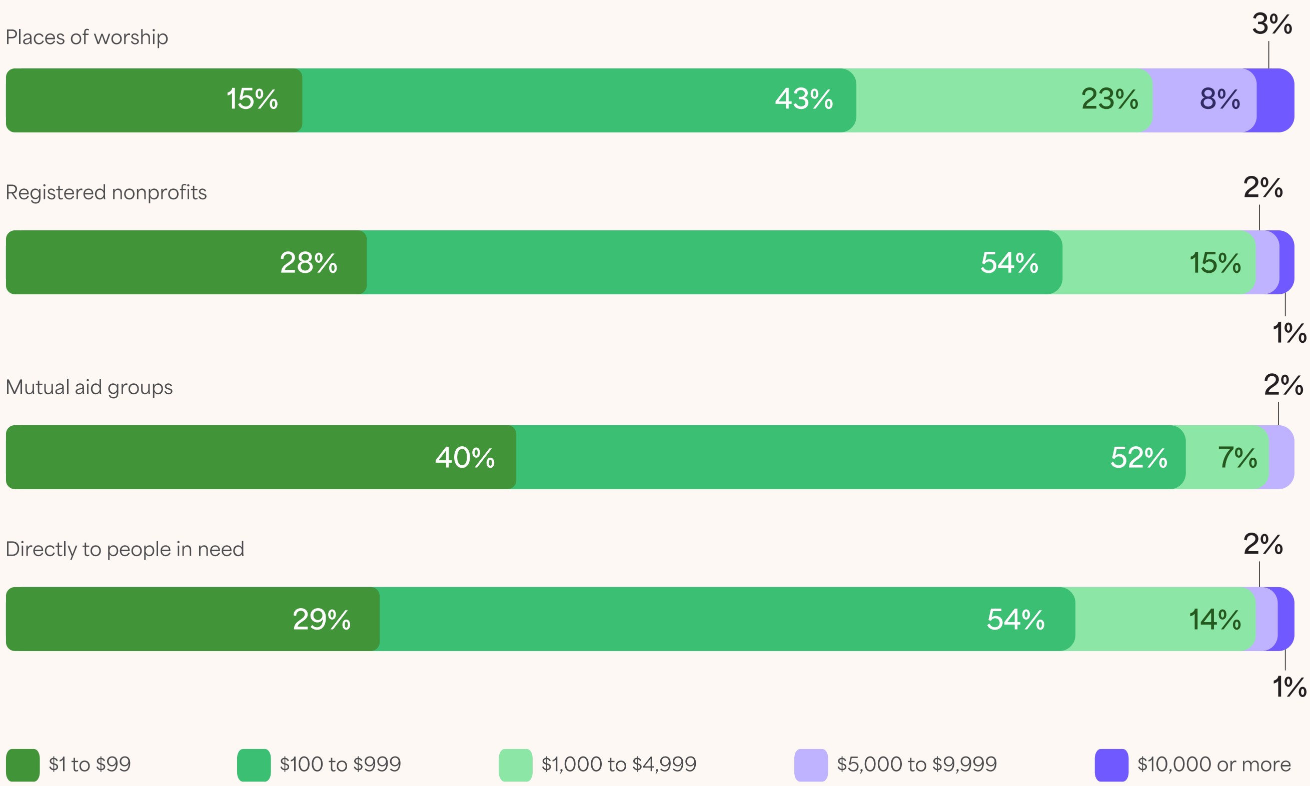
Faith-based givers tended to report higher in-kind giving than the average American. For example, GivingTuesday found that 63% of Americans gave things or items to an individual or organization outside of family.[3] In a 2021 Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy report on charitable crowdfunding, 71% of individuals reported that they donate goods in a typical year.[15]

Organizations or people that faith-based givers gave physical goods or items to in 2023



As demonstrated in the following chart, faith-based givers were also generous in the monetary value of the goods and items they donated.

Total dollar value of physical goods and items that faith-based givers donated in the past 12 months



Faith-based givers are also engaged in providing in-kind gifts in diverse locations and events. Most often, they donated their physical goods and items to charitable organizations such as the Salvation Army or Goodwill (53%), handed them directly to people in need (49%), deposited them at drop-off locations or collection bins (48%), or donated items at their places of worship or during religious services (40%).

GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH

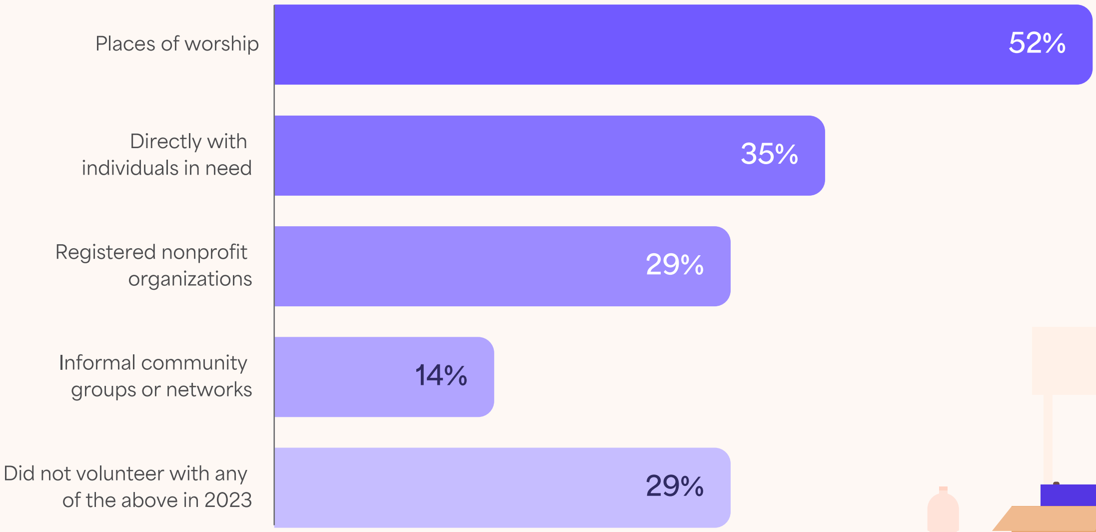
Volunteering

Beyond in-kind contributions and financial support, people of faith also exhibit their generosity by dedicating their time through volunteerism. Just over 71% of faith-based givers surveyed volunteered with one or more places of worship, registered nonprofit organizations, informal community groups, or directly with people in need. Faith-based individuals were more likely to volunteer compared to the average American surveyed in other reports. For example, GivingTuesday's 2022 report found that 41% of Americans gave time to an individual or organization outside of family.[3]

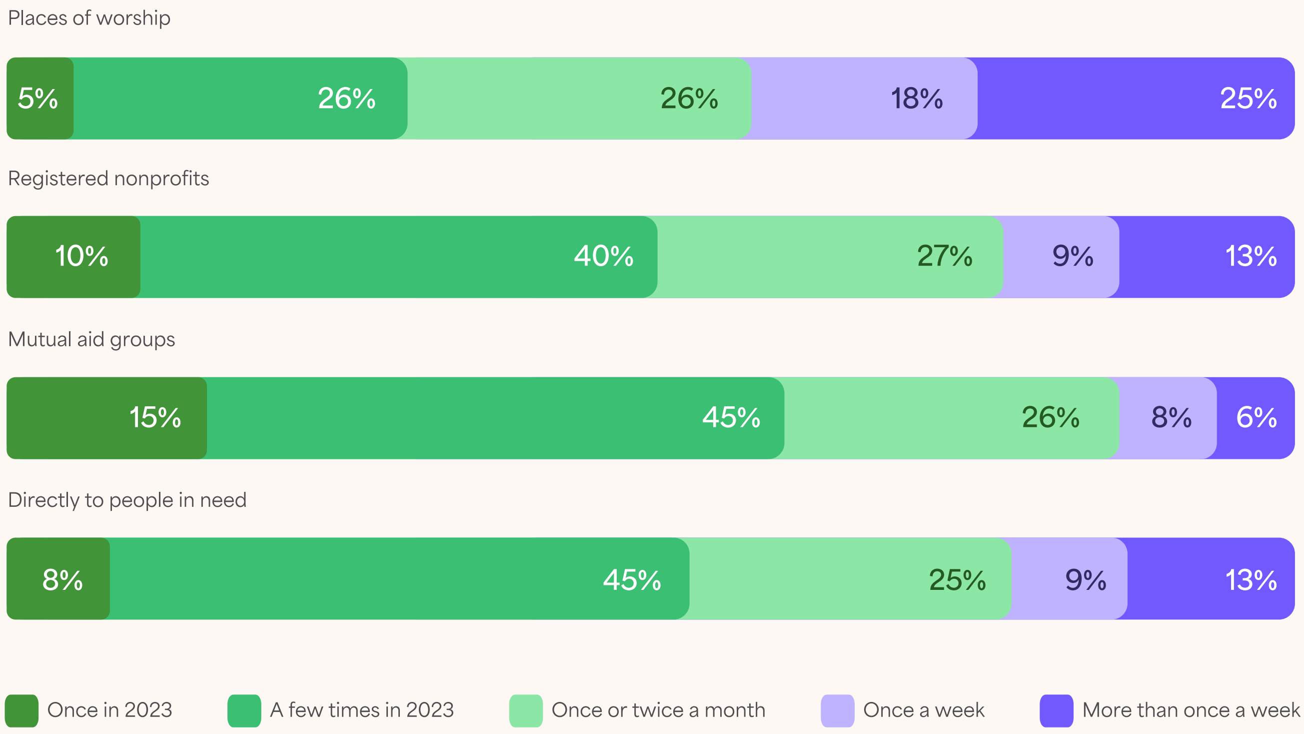
The high rate of volunteerism among people of faith in 2023 is encouraging, especially as other reports such as AmeriCorps' *Volunteering and Civic Life in America Research* study reported declines in national volunteering between 2019 and 2021.[16] In fact, the percentage of faith-based givers who volunteered with formal nonprofit organizations (29%) was close to the percentage of Americans who formally volunteered (30%) as reported by AmeriCorps in 2019.[16]

Perhaps as expected, faith-based givers were most likely to volunteer their time to places of worship. Slightly more than half (52%) of faith-based givers reported that they volunteered with their places of worship at least once in 2023, a figure that parallels volunteerism by American donors in Fidelity Charitable's *The Role of Volunteering in Philanthropy* 2020 report.[17]

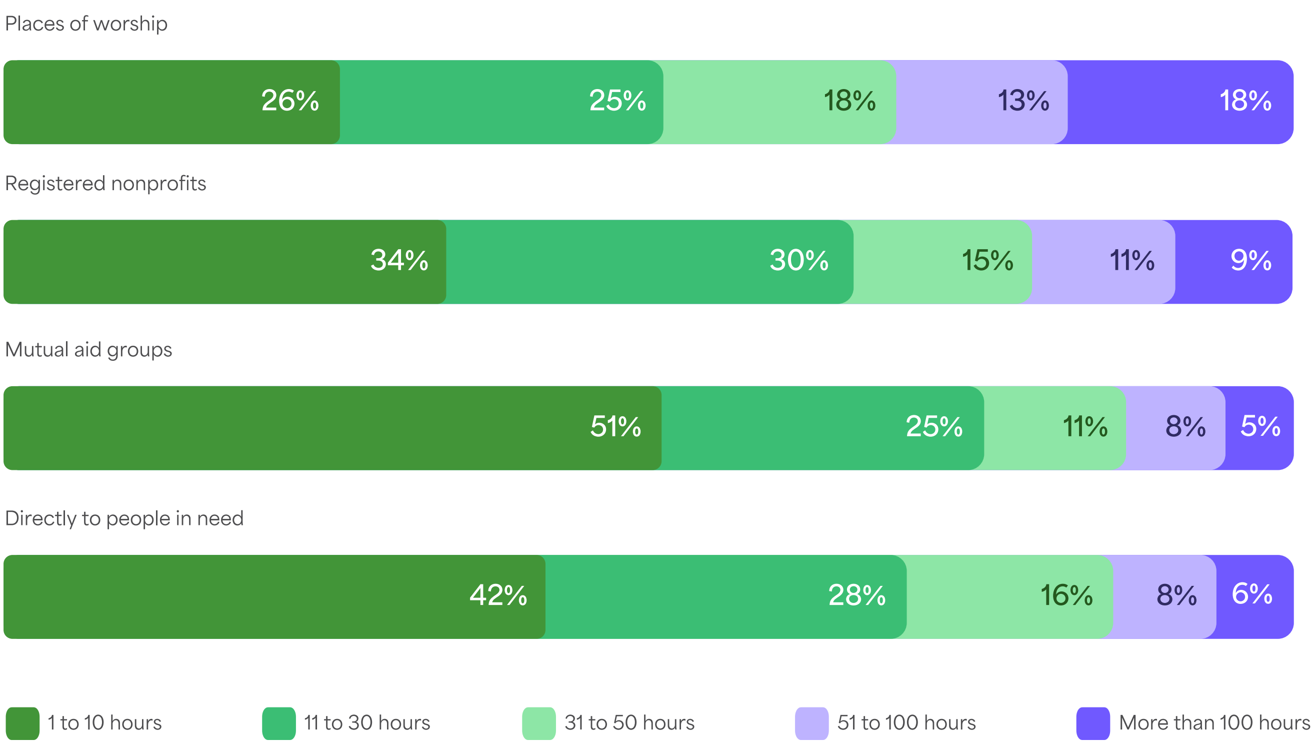
Organizations or people that faith-based givers volunteered with in 2023



How frequently faith-based givers volunteered in 2023



Number of hours faith-based givers volunteered in 2023



Deep Engagement Drives Greater Generosity

DAVID KING
Lake Institute on Faith & Giving

Giving and volunteering are not identical forms of prosocial behavior, but they are certainly connected. Givers are not always more likely to volunteer, but volunteers are more likely to give to the organizations they support. Across America, religious organizations are the most common places where people volunteer.

As time is often our most valuable resource, **faith leaders would be wise to consider how best to regularly acknowledge, thank, and invite volunteers into the life of their organizations.** While regular attendance at religious services is connected to increased giving, studies show that additional forms of engagement such as singing in the choir, ushering, small group participation, or teaching children are even more significant in driving generosity. Perhaps encouraging deeper engagement in your places of worship is just as important as directly asking individuals to give. Keep in mind that volunteering, like giving, can come in all shapes and sizes. In acknowledging and thanking volunteers, you're attending to the many forms that serving may take in your community.

Faith leaders would also be wise to regularly encourage volunteers to connect with both their passion and gifts. Too often, faith-based volunteers report dissatisfaction with opportunities that do not match their gifts. Some volunteers may want to be an usher. Others might like to help the congregation launch a new ministry. Empowering volunteers to discover and put their gifts to good use will not only increase their satisfaction and passion, it can lead to significant additional investments of time, talent, and treasure for the organization itself.

GIVING BY PEOPLE OF FAITH

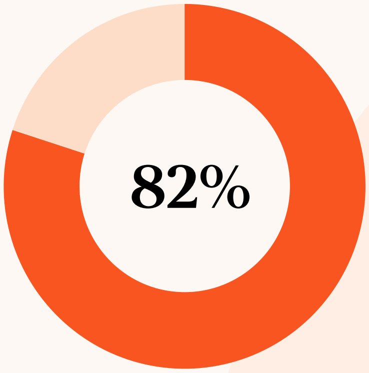
What Motivates Givers' Generosity

Almost all people of faith in this study believe that helping those in need is a key reason for them to give. It comes as no surprise that, for faith-based givers, their faith shapes their desire to be generous.

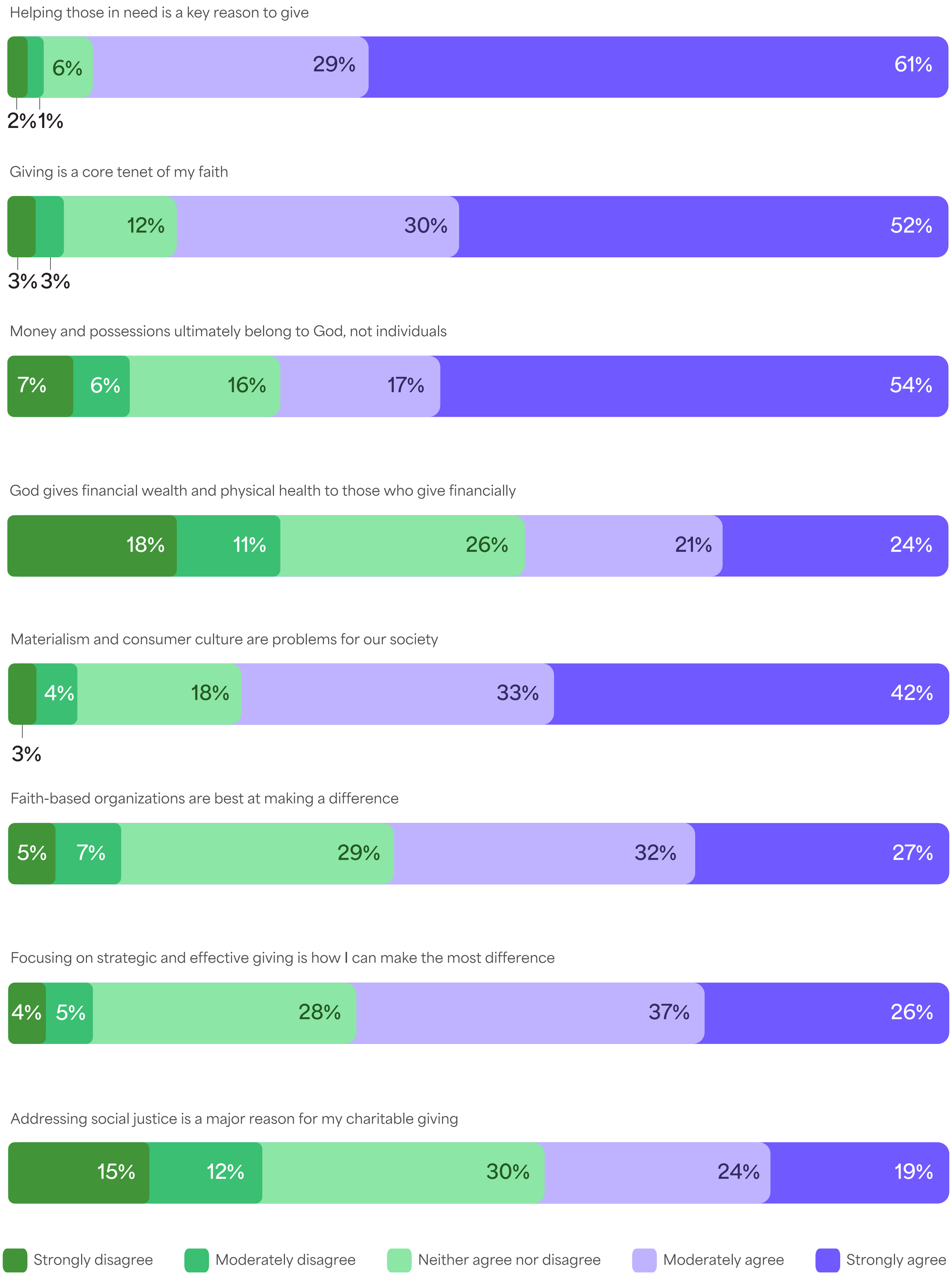
Eighty-two percent agree that giving is a core tenet of their faith. These givers generally agree that faith inspires them to give generously, not only to their places of worship (78%), but to causes, organizations, and people in need outside of their congregations as well (79%).

Faith also significantly influences perspectives on personal finances. Seventy-one percent of faith-based individuals agree that money and possessions are ultimately God's, not individuals', and 75% agree that materialism and consumer culture pose societal problems.

82% agree that **giving is a core tenet of their faith.**



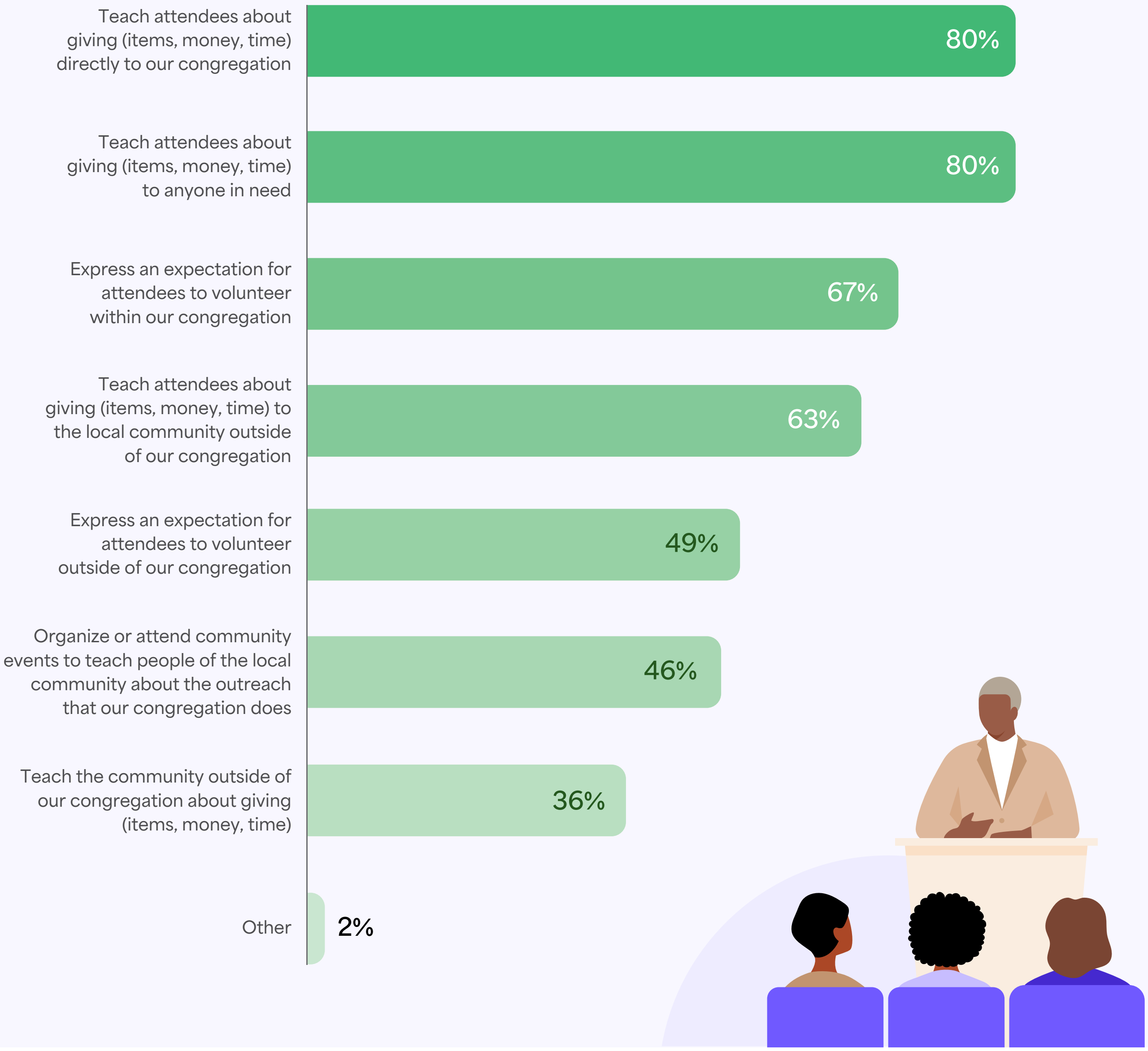
Motivations for faith-based individuals to give



Places of worship actively foster generosity and stewardship in their congregations. For example, 80% of faith leaders report teaching their attendees about giving — whether items, money, or time — directly to their congregations and to anyone in need. In addition to expectations to give to the congregation, faith leaders expect their attendees to volunteer within their congregation (67%). The majority of faith leaders (63%) also expect attendees to support the local community outside the congregation with their time and resources.

Predominantly Black congregations are even more likely to teach giving in their places of worship compared to predominantly white congregations. Black faith leaders are significantly more likely to report teaching their attendees to give items, money, and time to their congregation (84% vs. 77%) and the local community (67% vs. 57%).

How congregations foster generosity and stewardship

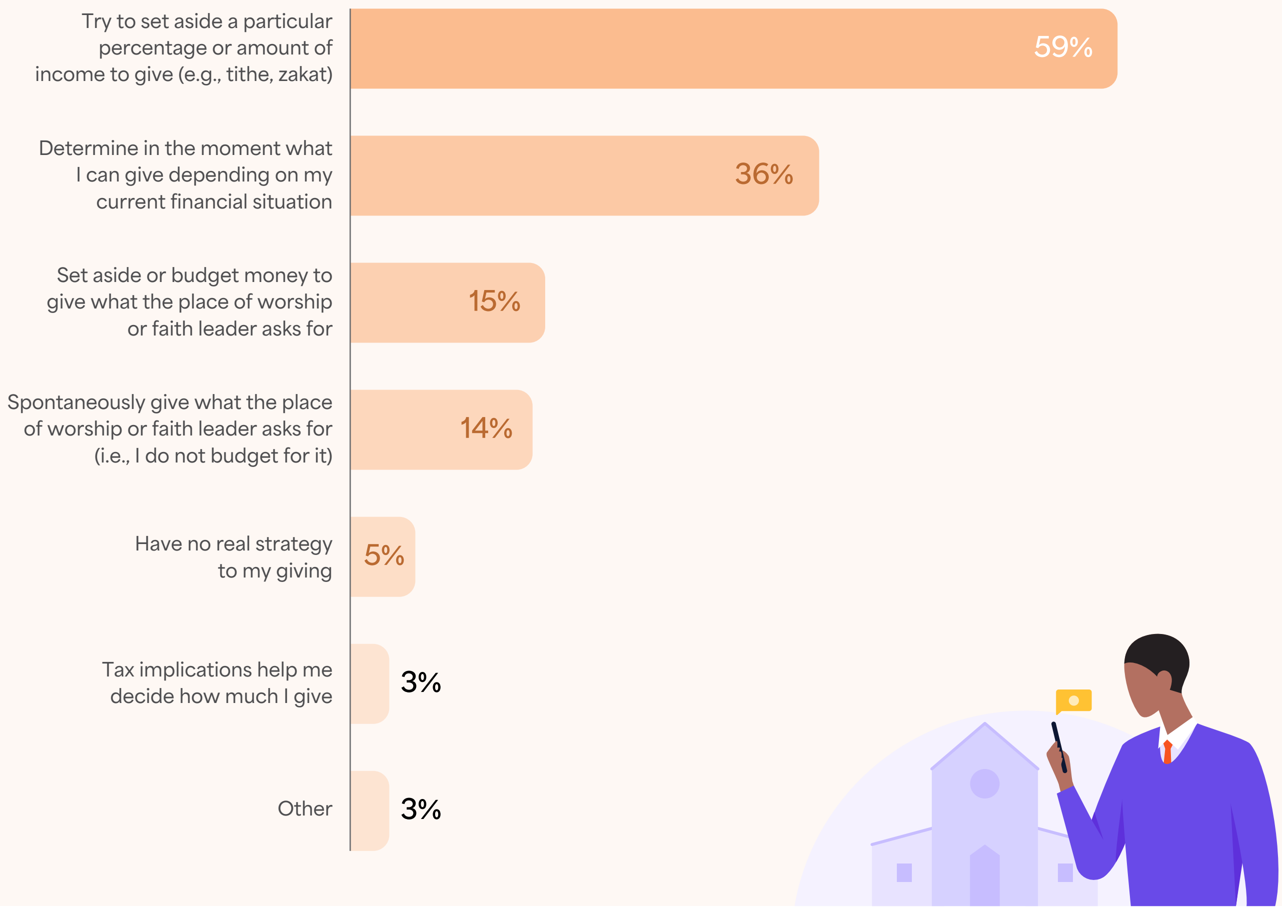


In determining the amount of their monetary gifts, people of faith are more likely to plan when giving to their places of worship than when giving to other causes or organizations. Specifically, most (59%) faith-based givers set aside a set amount or percentage of their income to give to their places of worship (e.g., tithe, zakat), but they are more spontaneous (55%) or have no real strategy (21%) when it comes to giving to causes or organizations outside of their places of worship.

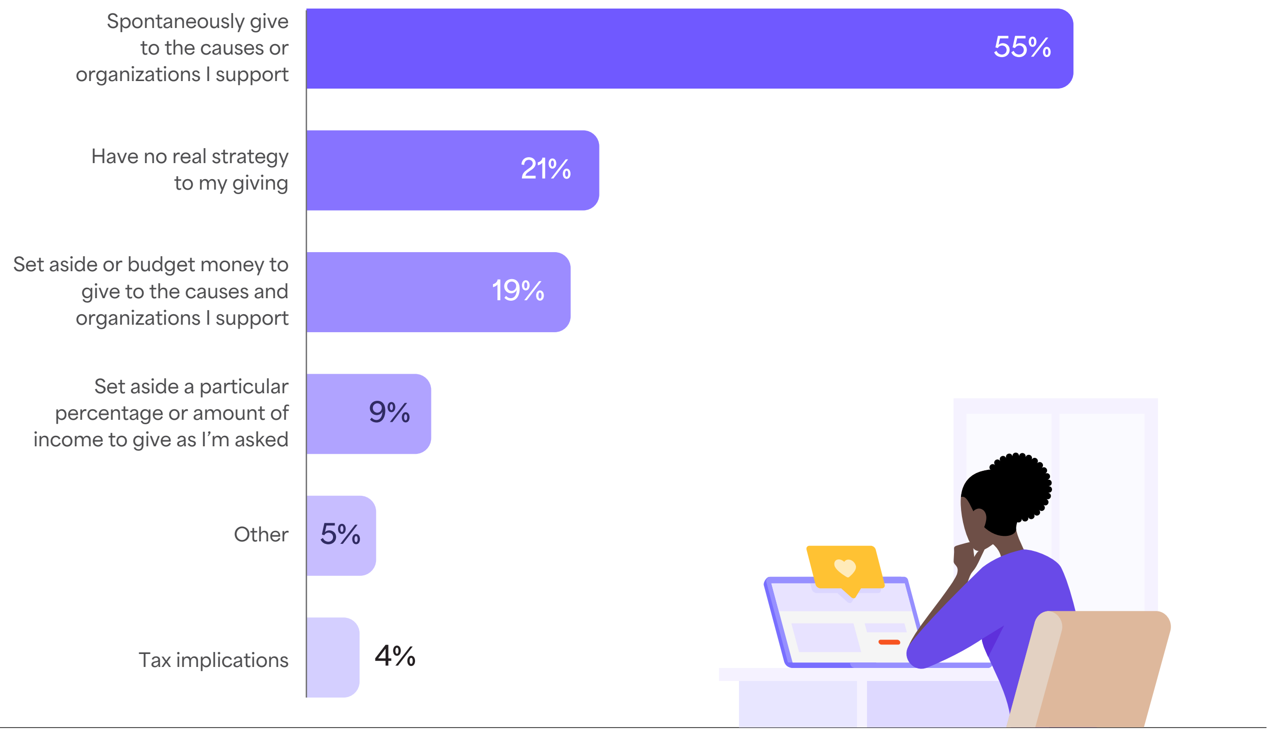
In fact, many of these givers say faith inspires them to give outside of their places of worship. Some shared:

Finally, tax implications are not the main consideration for how much faith-based givers contribute to either places of worship or nonprofit organizations.

How faith-based givers decide how much to give to their places of worship



How faith-based givers decide how much to give to other organizations and causes



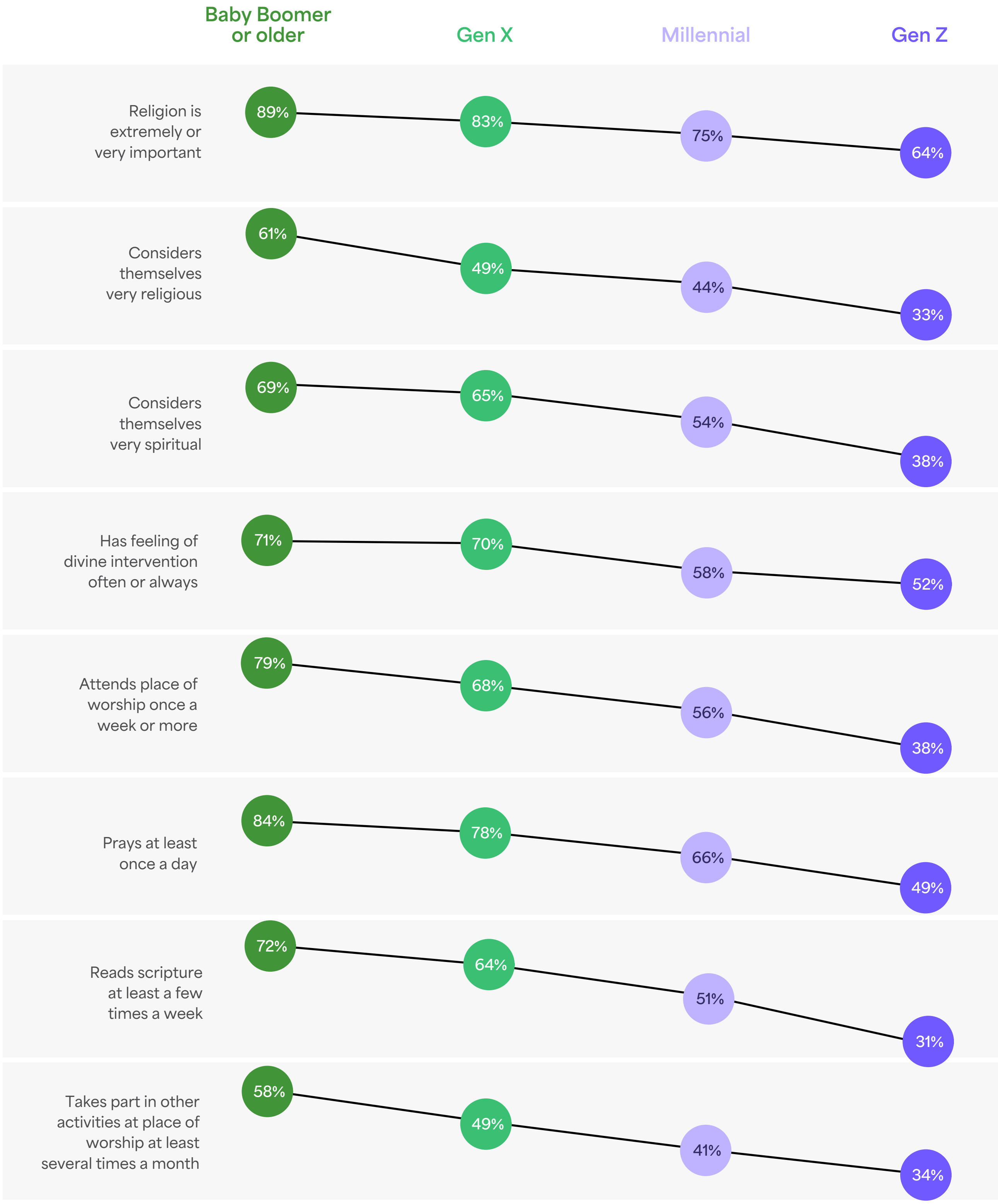
Generational Differences in Motivations for Giving

According to recent studies,[18, 19, 20] young Americans are increasingly leaving organized religion. For example, the 2021 *American National Family Life Survey* reports that 34% of Gen Z and 29% of Millennials are not affiliated with a religion.[21] In comparison, only 18% of Baby Boomers and 9% of the Silent Generation are religiously unaffiliated.

However, other studies find that most young adults still consider themselves religious. In their 2023 *State of Religion* report, Springtide Research Institute showed that most young Americans surveyed still consider themselves at least slightly religious (68%) or spiritual (78%).[22] Similarly, **75% of Millennial and 64% of Gen Z faith-based individuals in this study reported that religion is extremely or very important to them.**

Thus, it appears that while younger generations may not feel less religious, they are much less likely to engage in organized religion. For example, Springtide Research Institute found that only 30% of young Americans are connected to a spiritual or religious community.[23] Compared to older generations, Millennial and Gen Z faith-based individuals are less likely to engage with their places of worship. They also practice religious behaviors, such as praying, reading scripture, or attending worship, much less often than older generations.

How frequently each generation engages in religious behaviors



These differences in the importance of religion and religious institutions to younger generations are reflected in their motivations for giving. While all generations agree that helping those in need is a key reason to give, Millennials and Gen Z faith-based individuals are less likely to believe that giving is a core tenet of their faith or that money and possessions belong to God. And, strikingly, they are less likely to believe that faith-based organizations are best at making a difference.

Rather, it appears that younger givers are more motivated to give to causes they believe in than to established organizations. Specifically, Millennial and Gen Z faith-based individuals in this study were much more likely to report that addressing social justice is a major reason for their charitable giving compared to older generations. This mirrors other studies that show social justice is particularly important to Gen Z,[23] and they are more likely to support grassroots movements over established nonprofit organizations.[24]

Motivations for each generation to give

SECTION 2

Generous Congregations

This section explores the pivotal role that places of worship play in their communities. Beyond offering spiritual teaching and guidance to their congregants, these spaces provide a spectrum of social services that address unmet community needs.

This section also examines the funding sources for these services, the driving forces behind the outreach, and how places of worship communicate their impact.

KEY DATA SNAPSHOT

97% of places of worship support at least one outreach program with money, time, or in-kind donations

92% of congregations maintained or increased their outreach efforts from 2022 to 2023

82% of places of worship addressed primary needs in their outreach

18% of congregations' budgets, on average, is directed towards funding outreach

71% of the money allocated to outreach programs comes from the congregants' contributions

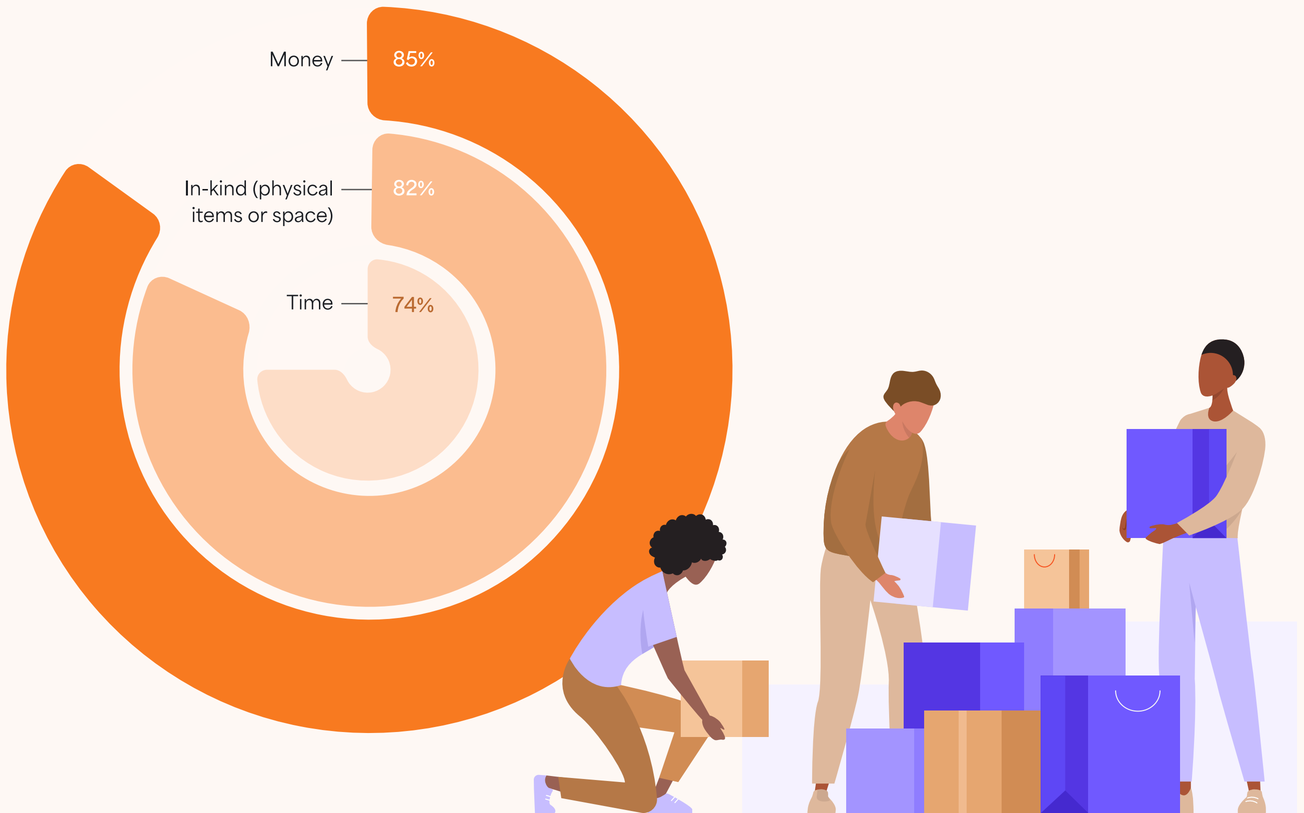
Community Outreach Overview

In 2023, faith communities showcased their remarkable generosity, exemplified by both faith-based individuals and faith leaders.

Almost all (97%) places of worship reported offering at least one outreach program to their communities (supported with money, goods or physical space, and time or volunteers).

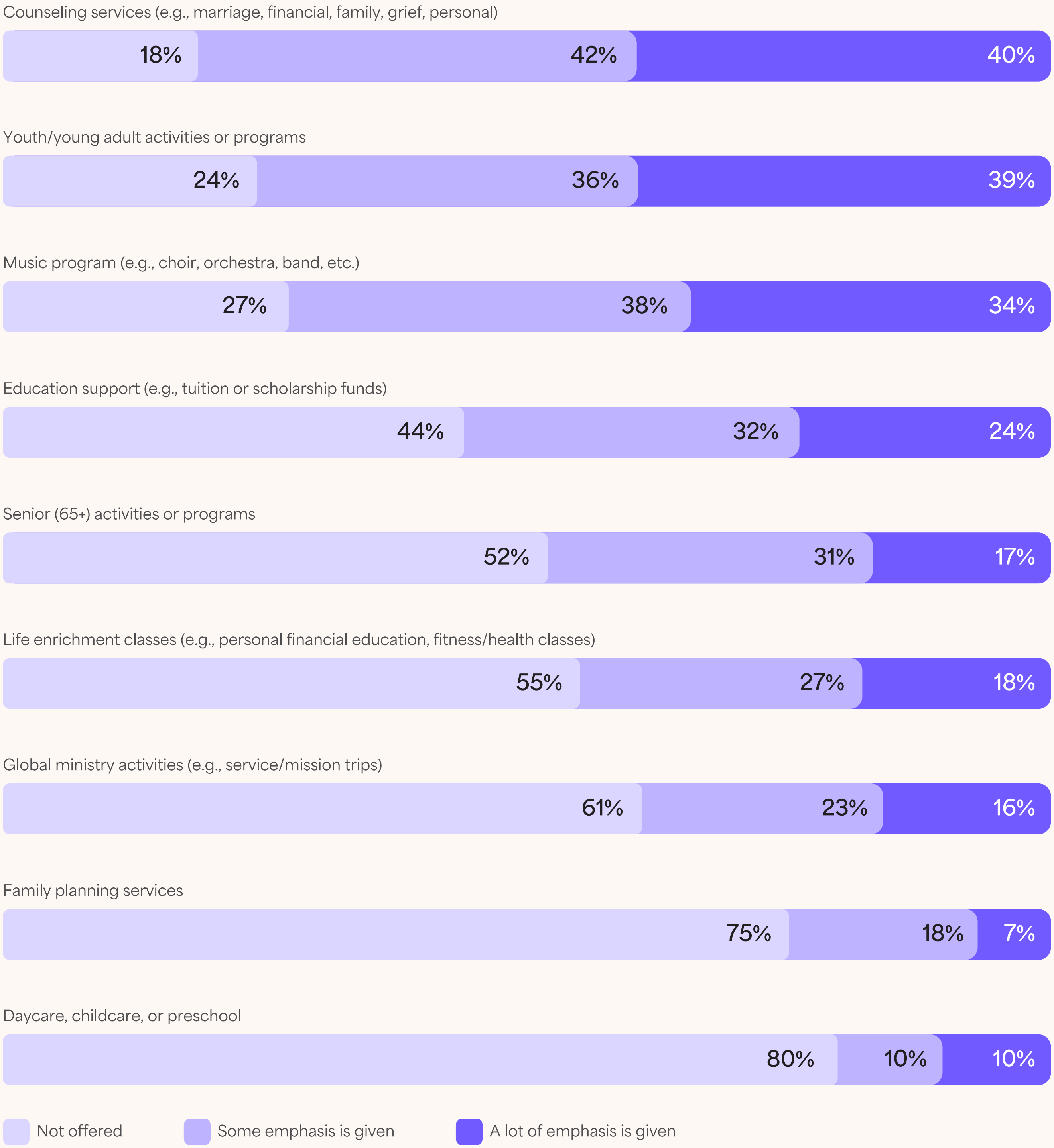
This represents a growth from the 90% of congregations who reported offering community outreach in the 2022 *Giving in Faith* report[5]. It also shows an increase over data reported in the 2019 *National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices*, which found that 84% of congregations offer at least one type of social service.[6] On average, congregations supported about three outreach programs monetarily, in-kind, or with time in 2023. Additionally, most (92%) congregations stated that they either maintained or increased their outreach efforts in 2023 compared to 2022. This was also an increase from the 2022 *Giving in Faith* findings, in which 73% of faith leaders reported that their outreach increased or stayed the same during the pandemic.[5]

Percent of places of worship that supported at least one outreach program with:

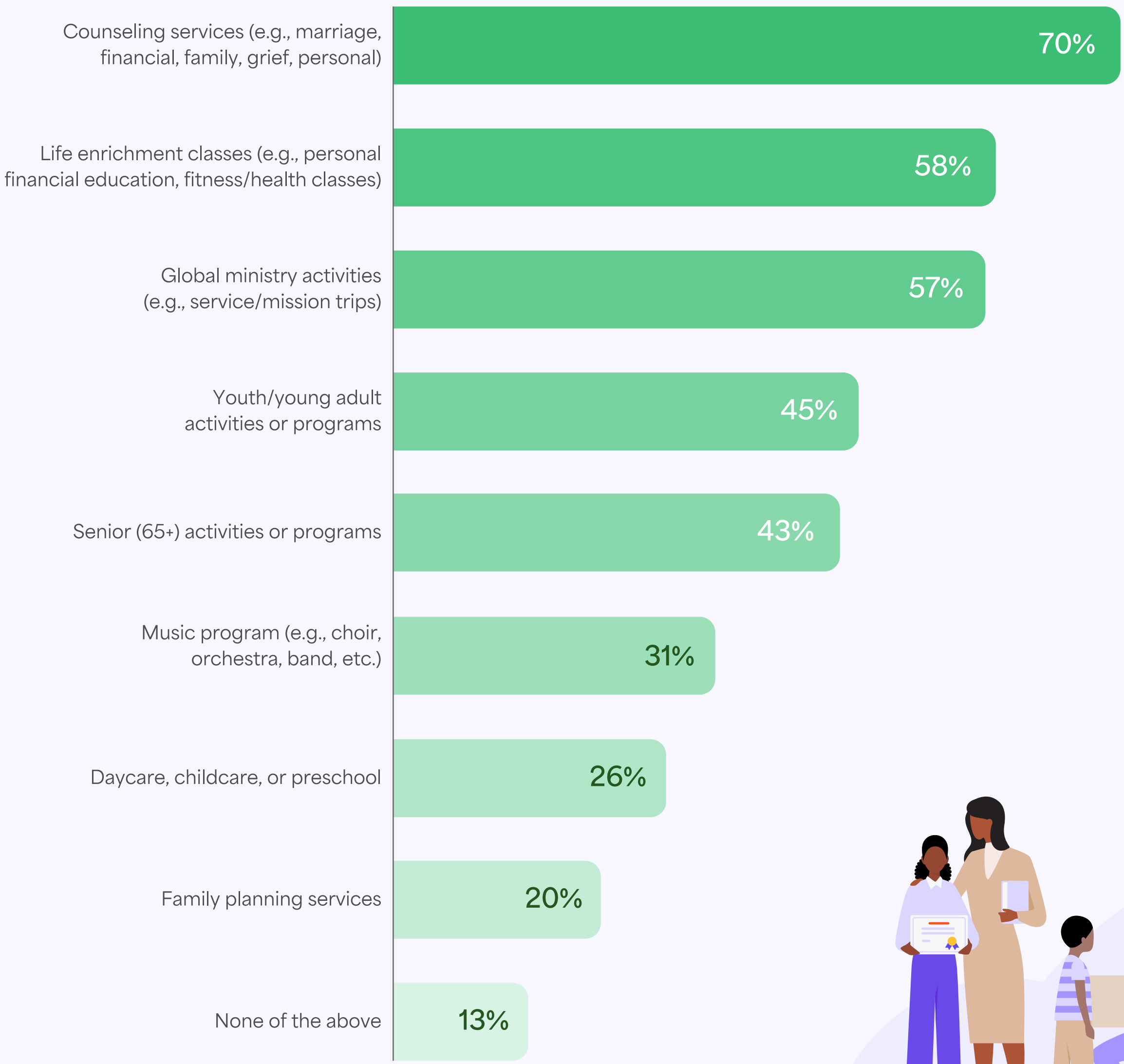


Furthermore, 87% of faith leaders are personally involved in or lead the additional services (beyond regular worship service) they offer in their place of worship. Counseling or guidance regarding marriage, financial, family, grief, or personal matters was the most common (82%) service offered to congregants, with 89% of the congregations' spiritual leaders reporting that they are personally involved in providing this service.

Additional programs, activities, or services beyond regular worship offered by places of worship



Programs, activities, or services that spiritual leaders personally lead or are involved in



Thus, regardless of their size or current financial status, **places of worship demonstrate that they not only serve their congregations but are also beacons of generosity for the communities in which they are anchored.**

Other recent reports corroborate this. Aspen Institute's Inclusive America Project (IAP) curriculum on *Religious Pluralism: The Foundation for Faith-Based Action* notes that approximately 15% of nonprofit organizations in the United States are faith-based.[26] There are also over 350,000 places of worship in the United States, many of which champion social services for their communities.[27] To quantify congregations' sizeable economic and social impact within their communities, The Bridgespan Group estimates that faith-based organizations account for 40% of social safety net spending in six cities.[28]

Programs that Meet Primary Needs are Considered Paramount

Section 1 of this report highlighted that helping those in need is a key motivation for giving by people of faith, a virtue that faith leaders cultivate in their places of worship. However, limited resources may be barriers for places of worship and their congregants in supporting the needs of their communities. To understand the needs that faith-based communities find most important, we asked those surveyed which causes their congregations should support if hypothetically given $5,000 for additional community outreach programs.

Consistent with faith-based givers' commitment to helping those in need, programs that address primary or essential needs, such as food or clothing, emerged as the most important causes to support among both faith leaders (89%) and faith-based individuals (55%). Primary needs support was also allocated the most hypothetical grant money by both faith leaders ($1,346, on average) and people of faith ($2,063, on average).

THE TOP 5 MOST IMPORTANT CAUSES TO:

Faith Leaders

1. Primary needs support
2. Housing support, either through monetary rental support or through shelters
3. Support for women, including single, widowed, or displaced mothers
4. Elderly support or services
5. Support for disaster relief

People of Faith

1. Primary needs support
2. Elderly support or services
3. Mental health programs
4. Child/family services
5. Housing support, either through monetary rental support or through shelters

Note: Ranked in descending order by percent of respondents who chose to allocate money to that cause.
See Appendix for the full data tables.

Four Traditions of Outreach

ELIZABETH LYNN, *Lake Institute on Faith & Giving*

This report captures a rich landscape of community outreach by places of worship. Across this landscape, I see four great traditions of giving: Relief, Improvement, Reform, and Engagement.

The tradition of relief alleviates suffering in the moment – say, by giving someone a meal or a bed for the night. Often, these gifts are made in response to a direct encounter with suffering.

> The majority of community outreach profiled here takes the form of relief. The programs supported by these faith-based individuals meet pressing primary needs for food, shelter, or disaster relief. The relief tradition may be dominant because faith traditions teach this commitment — and also because places of worship are often on the frontline. They are there, in the community, seeing the need and responding directly and compassionately.

The tradition of improvement helps people move forward — say, by supporting education or training programs. Often, in this tradition, we give something of value that we have ourselves received. We "pay it forward."

> The places of worship profiled here strongly support outreach in the improvement tradition. They place a clear value on helping others move forward in life. Nearly 40% support supplemental education programs, for instance.

The tradition of reform focuses on changing structures and laws that prevent whole groups of people from accessing rights and resources. This tradition is animated by justice, a core religious teaching.

> The reform tradition is slightly less common among the places of worship surveyed, but still finds strong support. More than 30% of these places of worship support social justice work (e.g., human rights, health inequalities, environmental justice), which they underwrite with money, in-kind contributions, and/or volunteers.

The tradition of engagement focuses on building participation. It empowers people in a community to come together, collaborate, and shape their own solutions.

> A good example of engagement by these places of worship is around fostering engaged citizenship (voter registration, voter guides, voter transportation). A full 25% of those surveyed support these services.

In short, this report shows that places of worship are engaged across the spectrum of four great traditions of giving in American life — and if we look more closely, we might find other traditions at work as well.

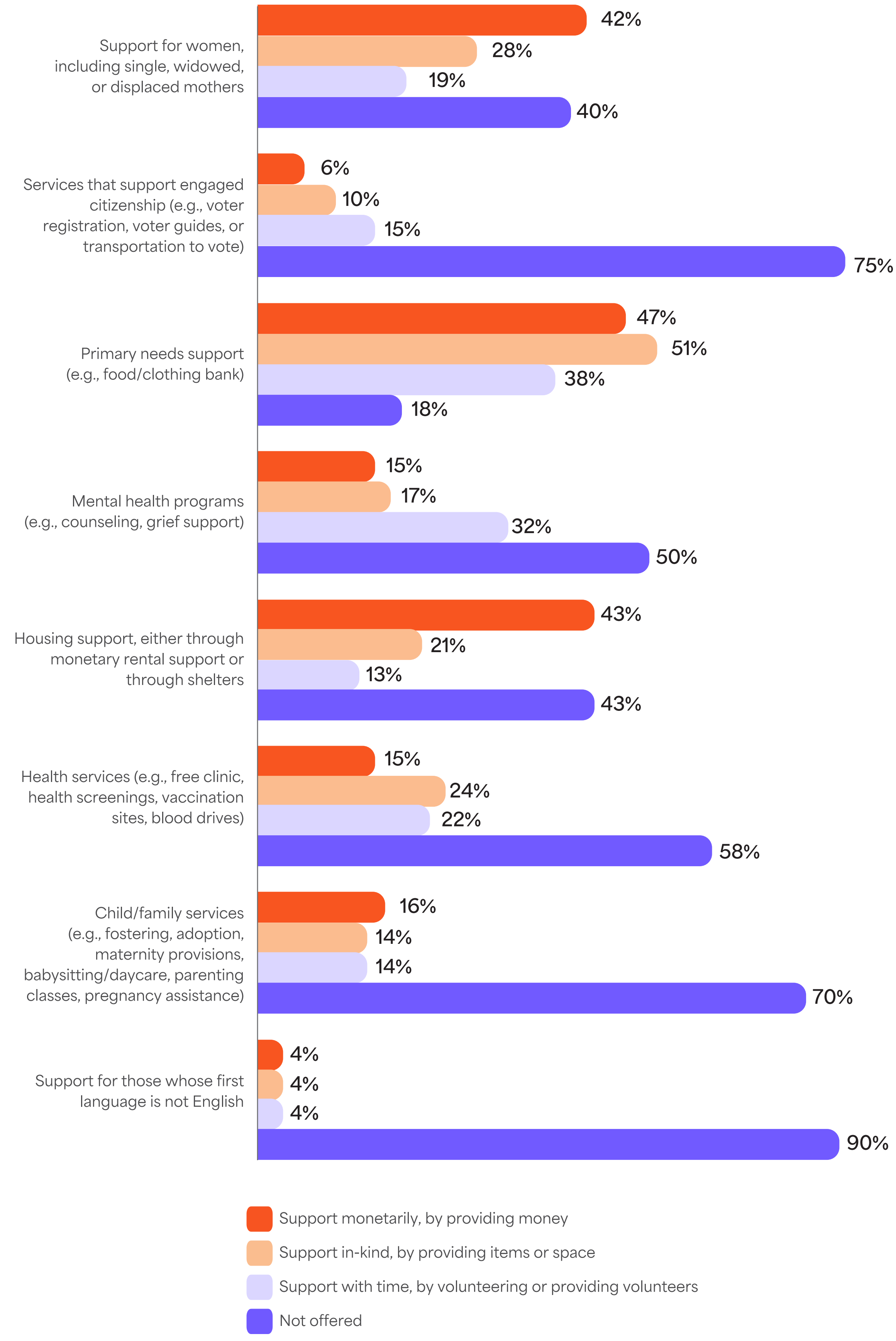
GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

Most Places of Worship Supported Primary Needs Outreach Programs

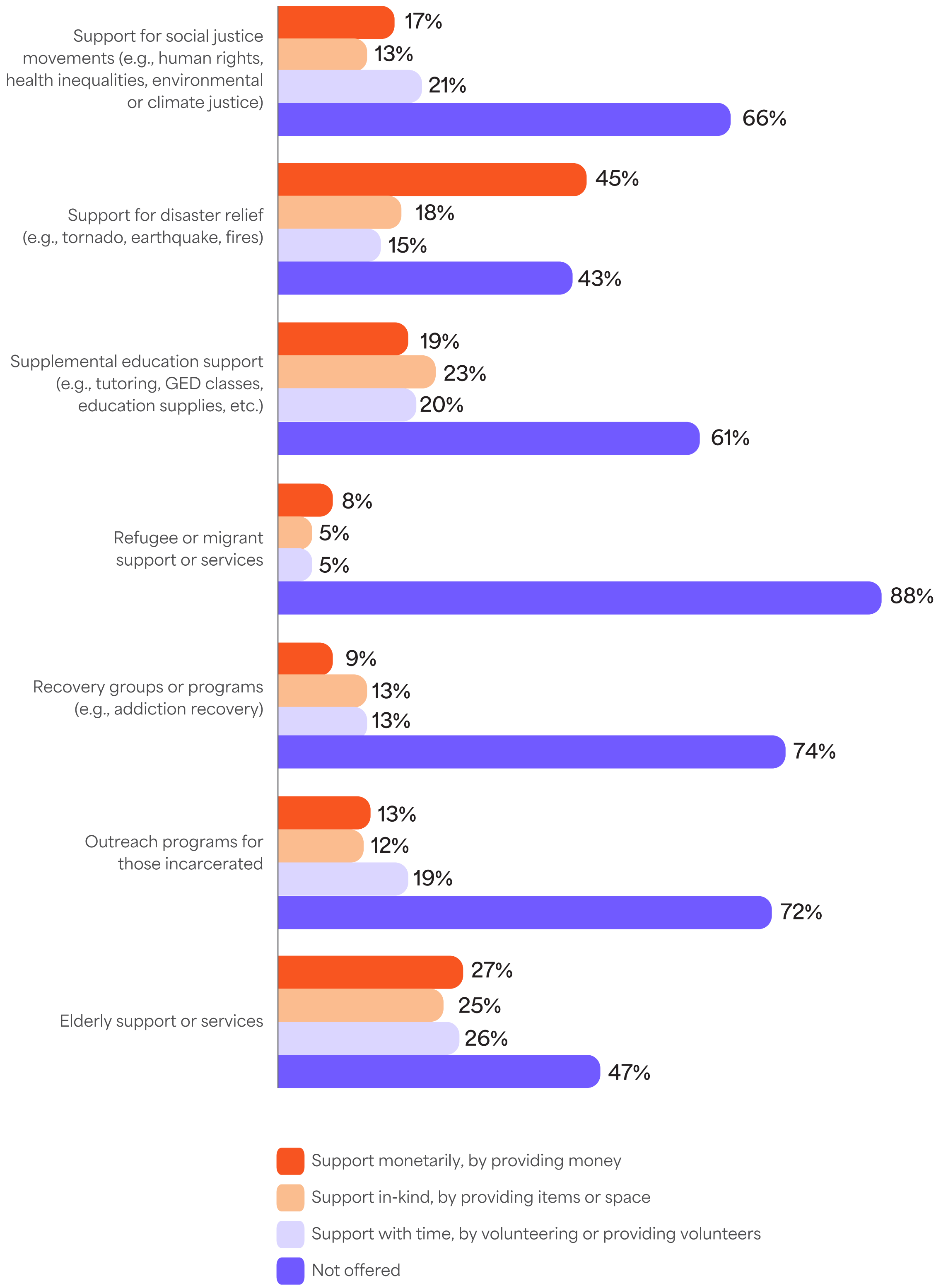
Supporting primary needs was not just hypothetically important for faith-based communities; it also represented the most prevalent type of social service provided by 82% of places of worship that engaged in community outreach in 2023. More than half also supported women's needs (60%), housing support (57%), and disaster relief (57%). In line with similar studies,[6, 29] these findings suggest that congregations are at the front lines when it comes to responding to the immediate unmet needs of their communities.

In 2023, **82% of places of worship engaged in supporting primary needs**.

Outreach programs supported by places of worship in 2023



Outreach programs supported by places of worship in 2023 (continued)



CASE STUDY

One Community's Extraordinary Effort to Tackle Food Insecurity

ORGANIZATION: Hope Worship Center COGIC

LOCATION: Indianapolis, IN

Hope Worship Center Church of God in Christ in Indianapolis, IN, aims to personally touch individuals in the community and serve those in need through its many mission-driven projects.

The problem: A global pandemic leads to a rise in food insecurity

When COVID-19 swept across the globe in early 2020, food insecurity quickly rose to an all-time high. Many struggled as they faced declining income and rising food costs. According to the National Institute of Health, 38% of adults in the U.S. experienced increased food insecurity since the pandemic was declared a national emergency.

The solution: Faith communities rally to help those in need

In this moment of adversity, organizations like Hope Worship Center COGIC in Indianapolis, IN, and other like-minded churches rose to the occasion. Through their extraordinary efforts during the pandemic, Hope Worship Center partnered with the COGIC Evangelism Department and other churches in the region to provide 1.5 million meals to their communities. During those unprecedented times, they became a beacon of hope to many.

> "Churches and pastors have always been first responders to meet the community's needs. Our singular purpose is to serve."
>
> - Pastor Ron Pulliam of Hope Worship Center COGIC

Results: A shared purpose leads to a profound impact

- 1.5 million meals distributed to those in need
- 30,000 pounds of food unloaded each week

Conclusion:

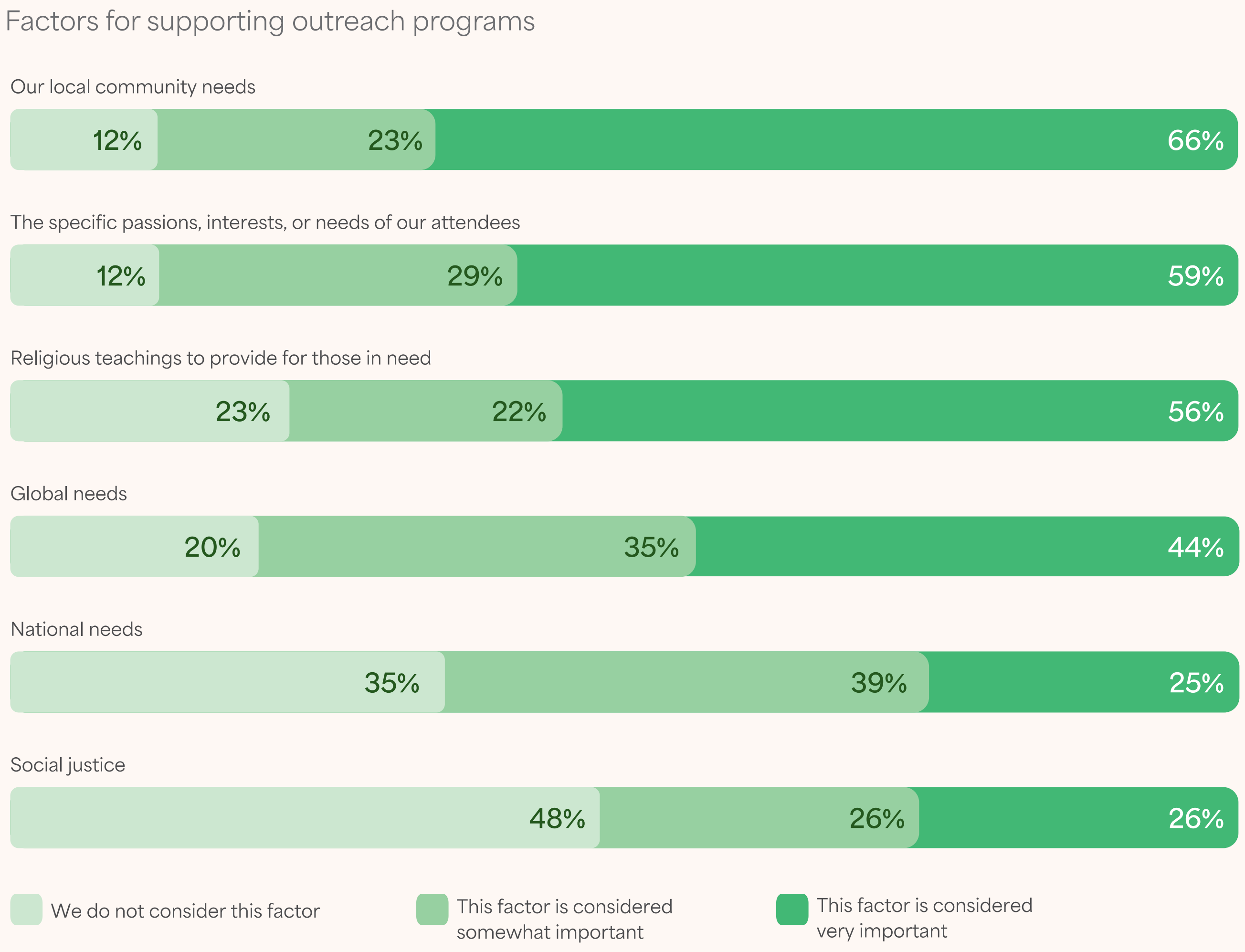
For Hope Worship Center COGIC, like many other faith organizations, serving the community's needs has always been — and continues to be — a part of their mission.

GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

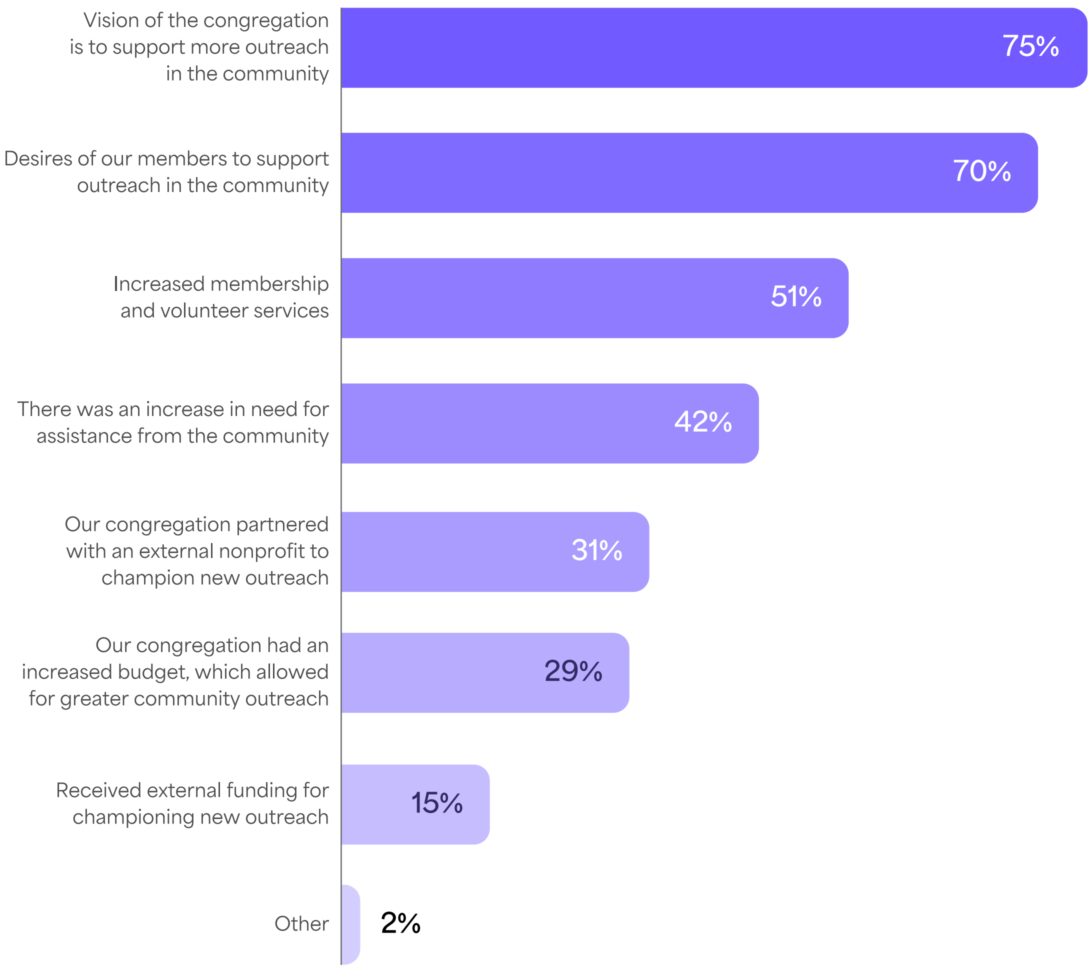
Motivations for Supporting Community Outreach

Numerous factors influence the decisions of places of worship in selecting and endorsing specific outreach programs within their communities. According to faith leaders, what drives these choices are local community needs (66%); the specific passions, interests, or needs of their attendees (60%); and religious teachings that emphasize assistance for those in need (56%).

Faith leaders reported that, in 2023, the primary catalyst for increasing outreach efforts centered on their congregants. The collective desire of attendees to support more outreach in the community (70%), coupled with the congregation's vision to support more outreach initiatives (75%), played pivotal roles in driving these amplified outreach efforts.



Motivations for increasing community outreach efforts in 2023



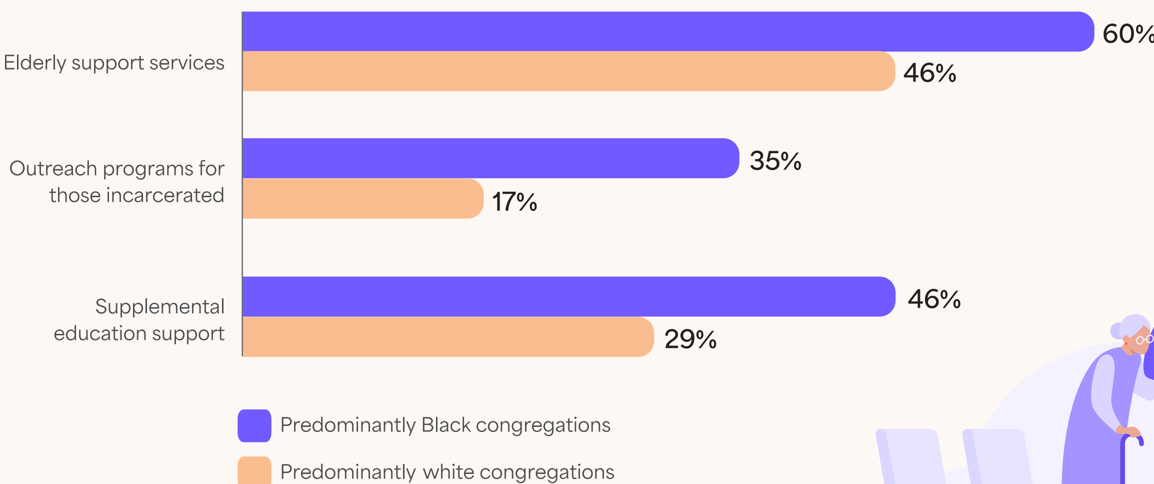
GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

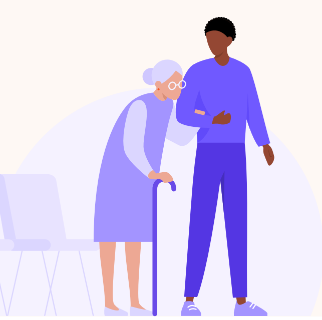
Black Places of Worship as Anchor Institutions

Places of worship are often considered anchor institutions in their communities. This is especially true in underserved communities and communities of color where places of worship play an outsized role in providing a haven for their community members beyond religious services. For example, many Catholic organizations in the United States serve as safe havens for immigrants who often have low trust in public assistance programs.[28] In rural and geographically remote communities, places of worship are often anchor institutions by necessity, providing citizens lacking other social institutions with much-needed support and services.[30]

This report calls attention to the unique relationship between Black places of worship and the neighborhoods in which they anchor. In addition to nurturing the spiritual needs of their attendees, Black congregations are called upon by their communities to prioritize social issues such as addressing local poverty, caring for the elderly, and solving criminal justice issues.[31] While most congregations were equally likely to offer primary needs support such as food, clothing, or shelter, differences emerged in support for outreach programs that address issues important to Black communities. Particularly, Black congregations were more likely than predominantly white congregations to offer elderly support or services (60%), outreach programs for those incarcerated (35%), and supplemental education support (46%) such as tutoring or GED classes.

Factors considered by Black versus white congregations when championing outreach

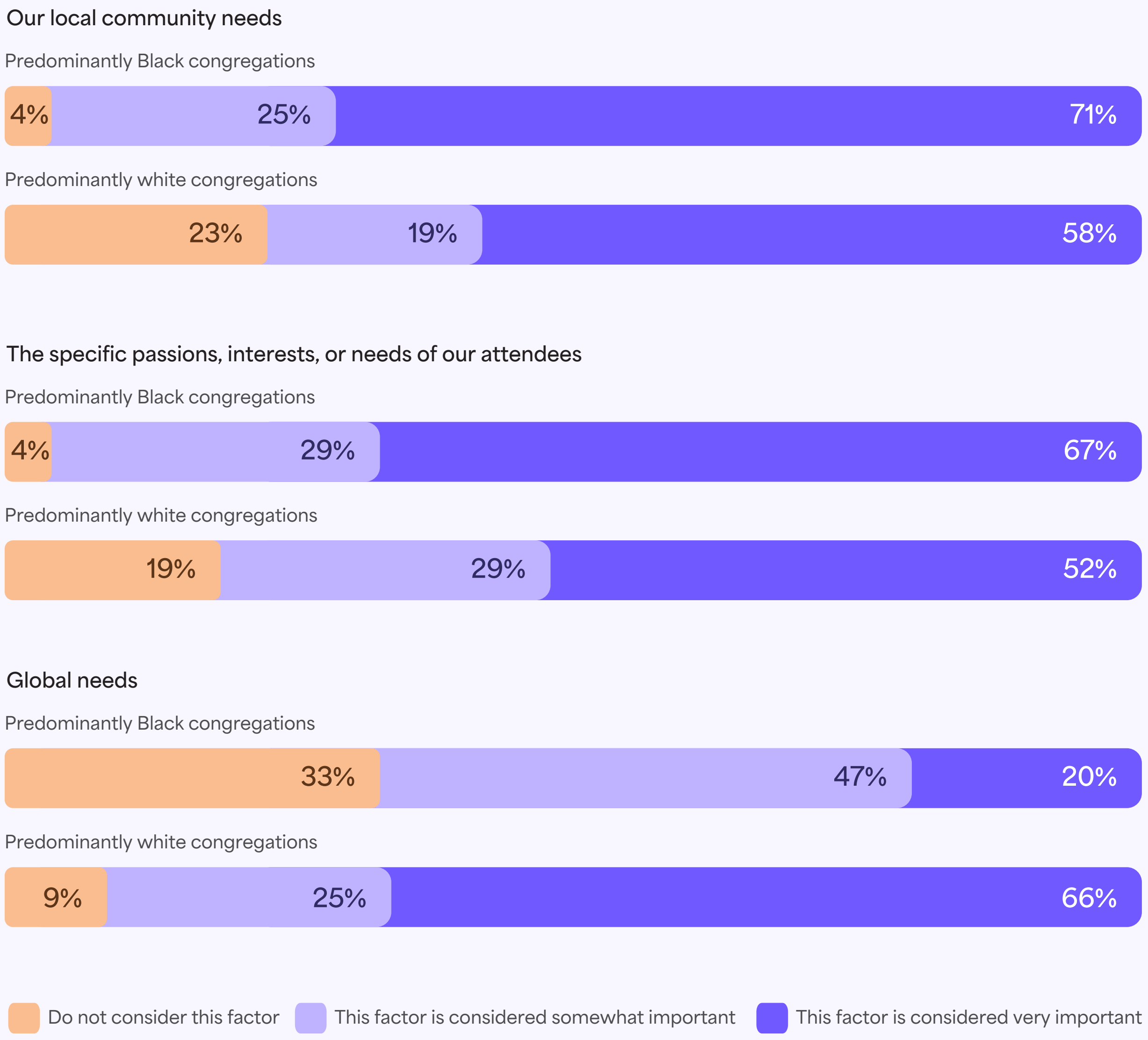




The integration of Black places of worship within their communities is evident from the factors congregations prioritize when championing outreach initiatives. Predominantly Black congregations were significantly more likely to consider their local community needs a very important factor (71%) in outreach decisions than predominantly white congregations (58%). Black congregations were also more likely to consider the specific passions, interests, and needs of their attendees very important (67%) than white congregations (52%).

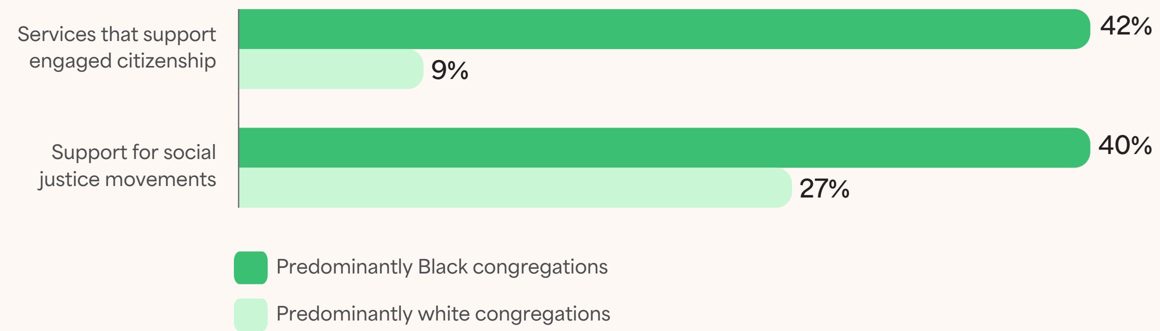
In contrast, white congregations were much more likely to consider global needs (66%) as a very important factor in championing outreach compared to Black congregations (20%). Consistent with this, a greater proportion of white congregations (24%) emphasize global ministry activities than Black congregations (9%).

Factors considered by congregations when championing outreach programs

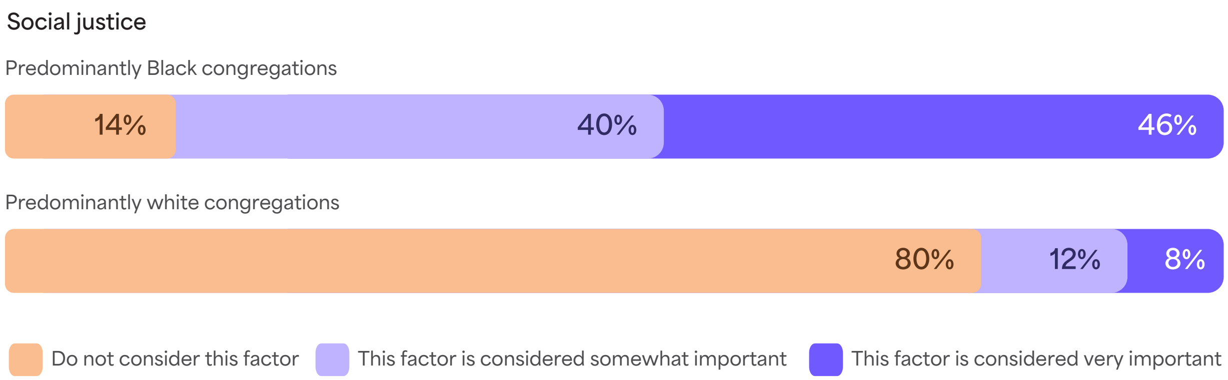


Black churches have historically held a vital role in empowering Black communities through civic engagement and advancing racial equity.[32, 33, 34] It thus follows that predominantly Black congregations (42%) were significantly more likely to report that they offer services that support engaged citizenship such as voter registration than predominantly white congregations (9%). Similarly, predominantly Black congregations were also significantly more likely to offer support for social justice movements (40%) than predominantly white congregations (27%). Finally, given the Black church's momentous and historical role in advancing civil rights, it should not be surprising that they were also more likely to consider social justice very important in their mission (46%) than white congregations (8%).

Support for civic engagement by predominantly Black versus white congregations



Social justice is an important factor for Black congregations when championing outreach

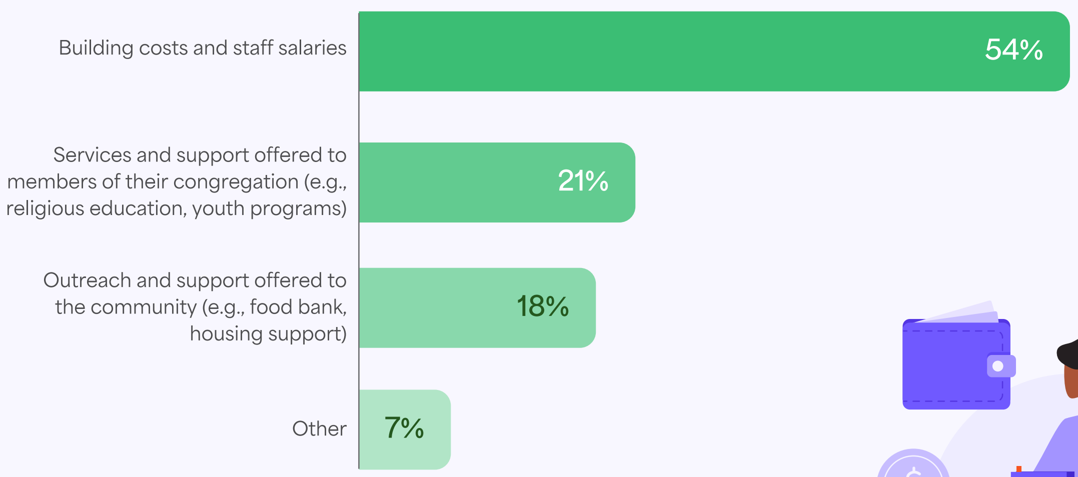


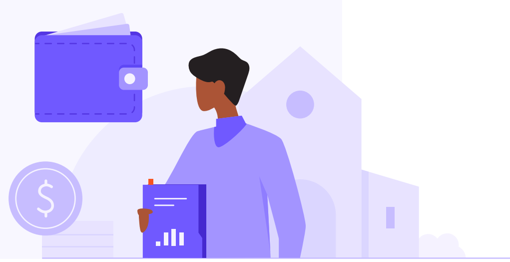
GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

How Places of Worship Fund Their Community Outreach

On average, 18% of congregations' total income in 2023 was spent on outreach and support offered to the community, which was slightly higher than the 13% that congregations reported spending on missions and benevolence in Faith Communities Today's 2020 study.[7]

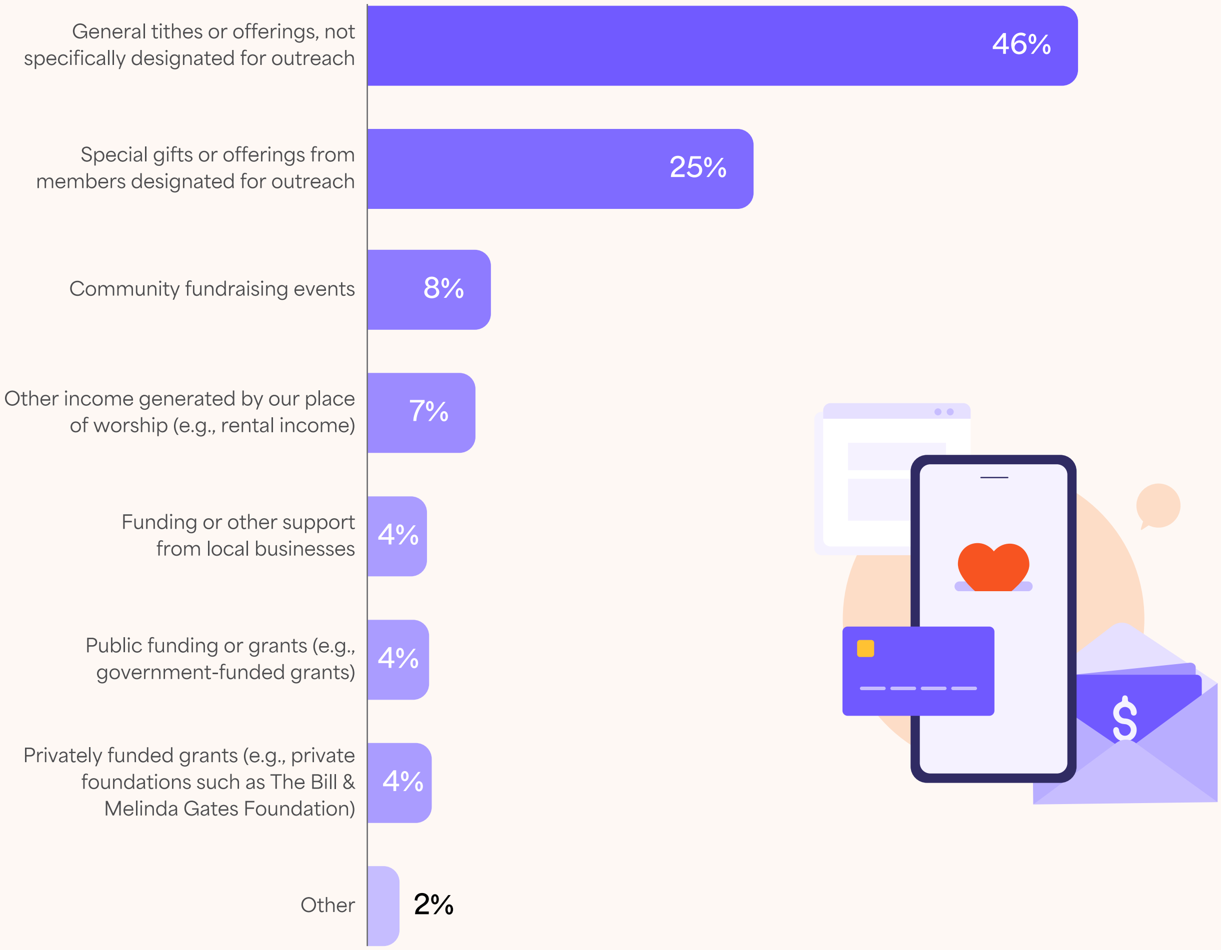
How congregations allocated their annual expenditures in 2023





Most places of worship fund their outreach programs with the contributions of attendees. On average, 71% of the monetary support for outreach comes from their congregants' tithes (i.e., a set amount or percentage, usually around 10%, of the giver's income), offerings (i.e., additional monetary gifts) that were not designated for outreach, or special offerings that were designated for outreach.

How congregations fund their community outreach programs

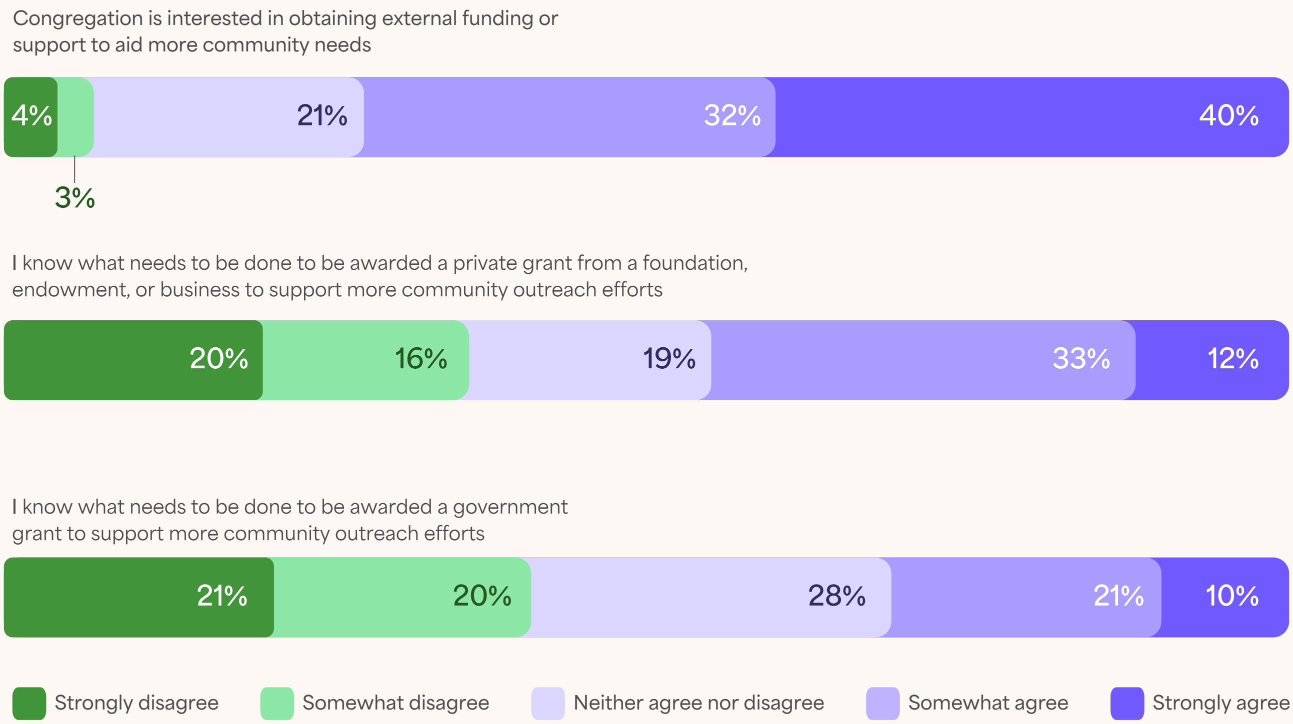


Thus, it should not be a surprise that places of worship that had to reduce their outreach efforts in 2023 did so because of limited financial resources (62%) or limited volunteer or membership services (73%). Similarly, limitations in financial (59%) and volunteer resources (55%) were also primary reasons why some places of worship did not offer any community outreach programs in 2023.

Most places of worship do not have a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization or community development corporation (CDC) dedicated to community outreach (74%). However, 27% of places of worship report partnering with a nonprofit to offer some community outreach programs.

Although 72% of faith leaders agree that they are interested in obtaining external funding to support their congregation's outreach programs, less than half agree that they know how to obtain such funding. Despite the public good that places of worship provide their communities, they, along with faith-based nonprofit organizations, face hurdles in obtaining funding from philanthropic institutions.[4] In their 2021 report, The Bridgespan Group illuminated the "philanthropy gap" that faith-based organizations face; only 2% of grant dollars from the largest philanthropic institutions in the United States went to faith-based organizations.[28]

Interest versus know-how: faith leaders on obtaining external funding for outreach



CASE STUDY

Vision Led to Funding for Rebuild and Outreach

KELLY DUNLAP
Lake Institute on Faith & Giving

When Rev. Dr. Sidney S. Williams Jr. became senior pastor of Bethel Church of Morristown, he got right to work building relationships in the community. Williams used these conversations to tell others about the church and its efforts, but also to learn about the larger community's needs, assets, and hopes. These conversations were enriched by William's own background in business, finance, and community development.

Soon after his arrival, a disastrous flood nearly destroyed Bethel Church. But what could have permanently closed the doors of the church instead ignited a new season of community-focused ministry. Faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the church with insufficient funds, Williams believed that if he was going to ask the community for support to rebuild, they needed a new vision for how they would serve the community in return. That vision came to him: Bethel would start serving a free meal, five days a week, to those in need.

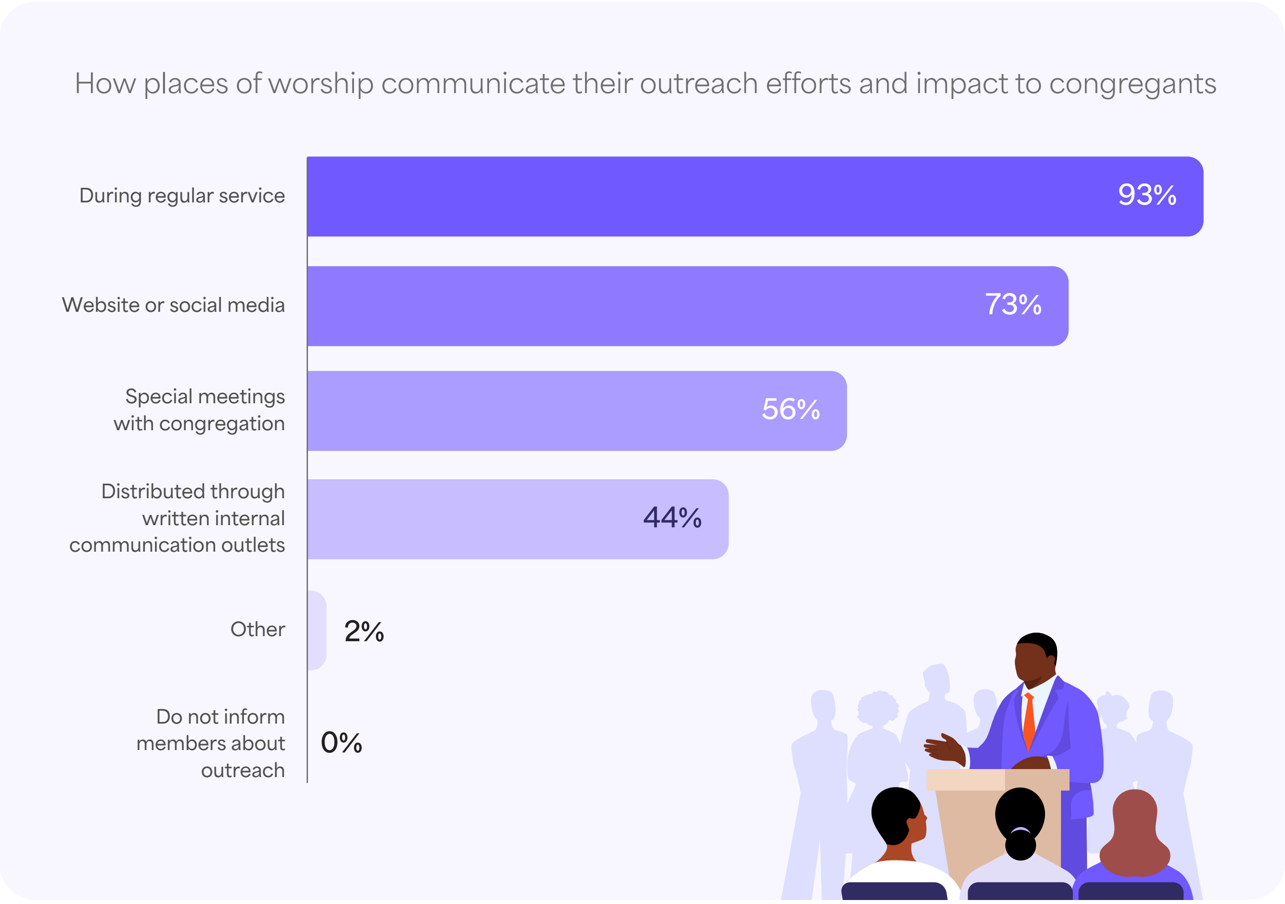
To fund the rebuild and new food program, Williams asked other congregations, civic clubs, and similar organizations for support. Most significantly, a local real estate trust was moved by the vision and volunteered to build the kitchen and contribute about $1 million of the rebuilding cost. Additional financial investment came from grants, community organizations, and current and former church members. When Bethel reopened, they launched the food program – Table of Hope – which went on to become the leading distributor of food in the county during the COVID-19 pandemic. The church has since expanded its community outreach offerings into health screenings, tutoring, and more.

Adapted from works by Ray Marcano and Dave Kresta – see Appendix for more information.

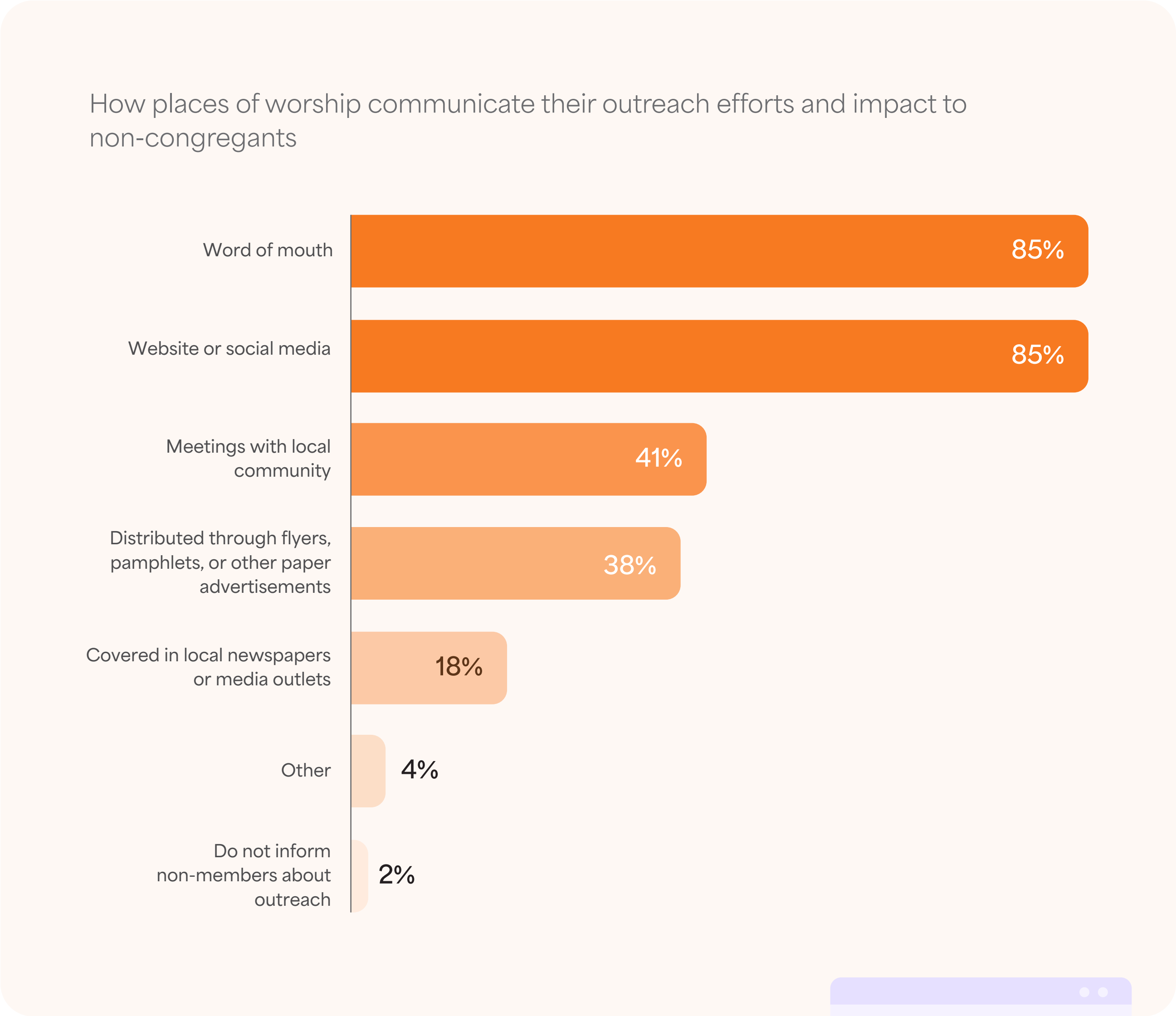
GENEROUS CONGREGATIONS

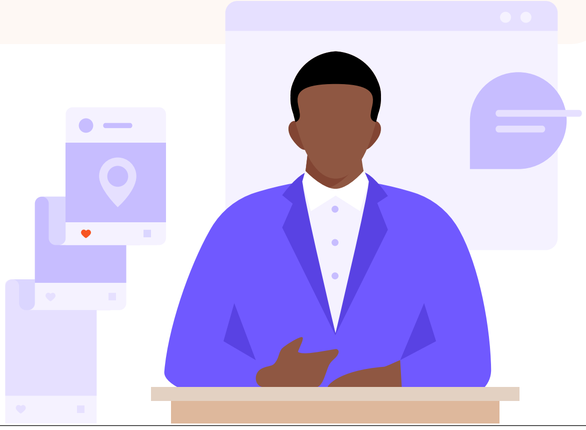
Communicating Community Impact

Virtually all faith leaders (99.8%) whose congregations offer community outreach programs communicate with their congregants about said outreach, most often (93%) during regular services. As a result, most (83%) faith-based individuals know that their places of worship offer community outreach programs.



Almost all (98%) faith leaders also reported communicating their outreach efforts to members of the local communities they serve. However, congregations are most likely to rely on indirect methods to inform the local community about their outreach, including word of mouth, social media, or their website. While most (85%) faith leaders agree that their congregants are aware of their outreach efforts, they are somewhat less confident (65%) that community members are aware of these efforts.





SECTION 3

An Outlook on the Future of Giving

Looking ahead, this section examines the future of giving among people of faith and their places of worship. Here, faith-based individuals express their aspirations to become more generous and confirm their conviction to give to organizations, causes, and people they care about in 2024.

Likewise, faith leaders emphasize their dedication to serving their communities and their optimism for the financial and spiritual well-being of their places of worship.

KEY DATA SNAPSHOT

98% of people of faith want to give the same or more money in 2024

95% of faith-based givers want to give the same or more to their places of worship

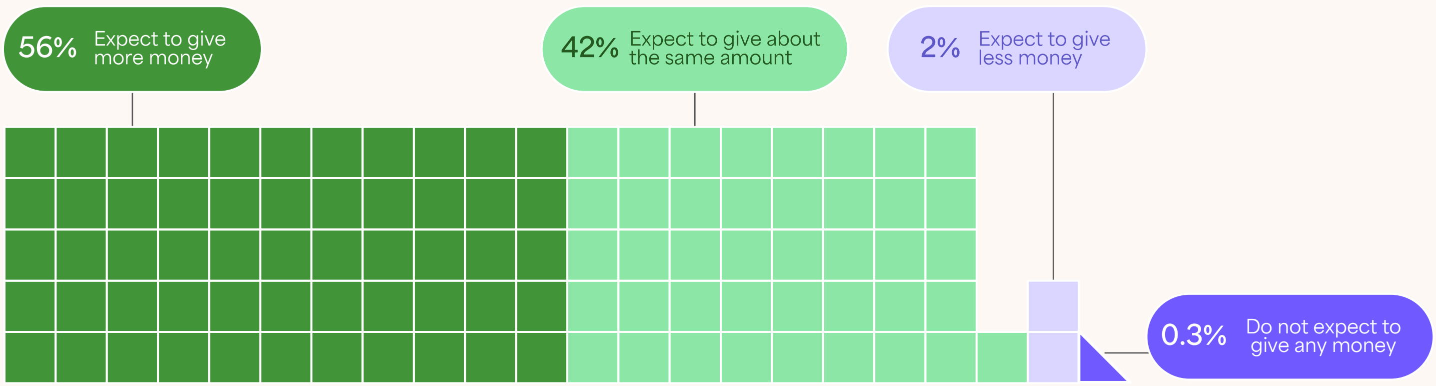
99% of faith leaders expect their places of worship to maintain or offer more outreach in 2024

AN OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE OF GIVING

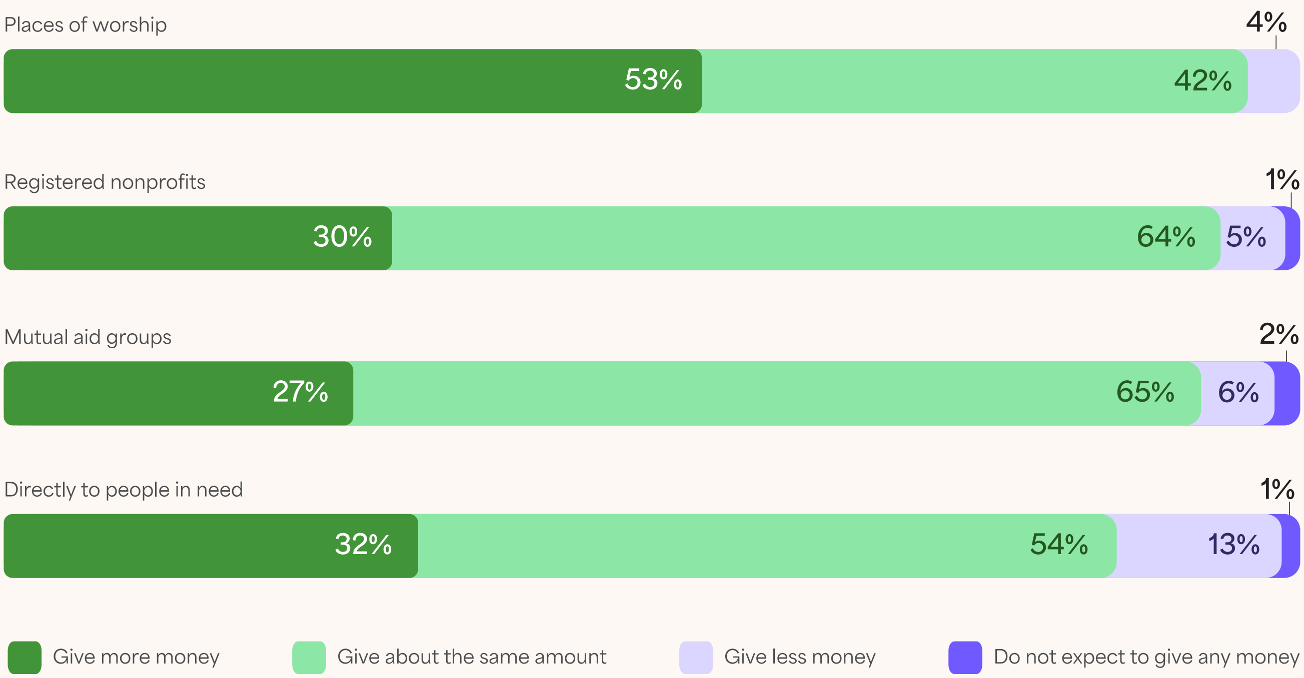
Sentiments From People of Faith

People of faith aspire to be even more generous this year. Faith-based givers (98%) report they want to give the same or more money to at least one cause or organization in 2024. Notably, 95% of the faith-based givers who gave money to their places of worship in 2023 reported wanting to give the same or more money to their places of worship in 2024. Moreover, 94% of faith-based givers who donated money to registered nonprofit organizations in 2023 want to give the same or more money to nonprofits in 2024.

Expectations of future giving from faith-based individuals who gave money in 2023



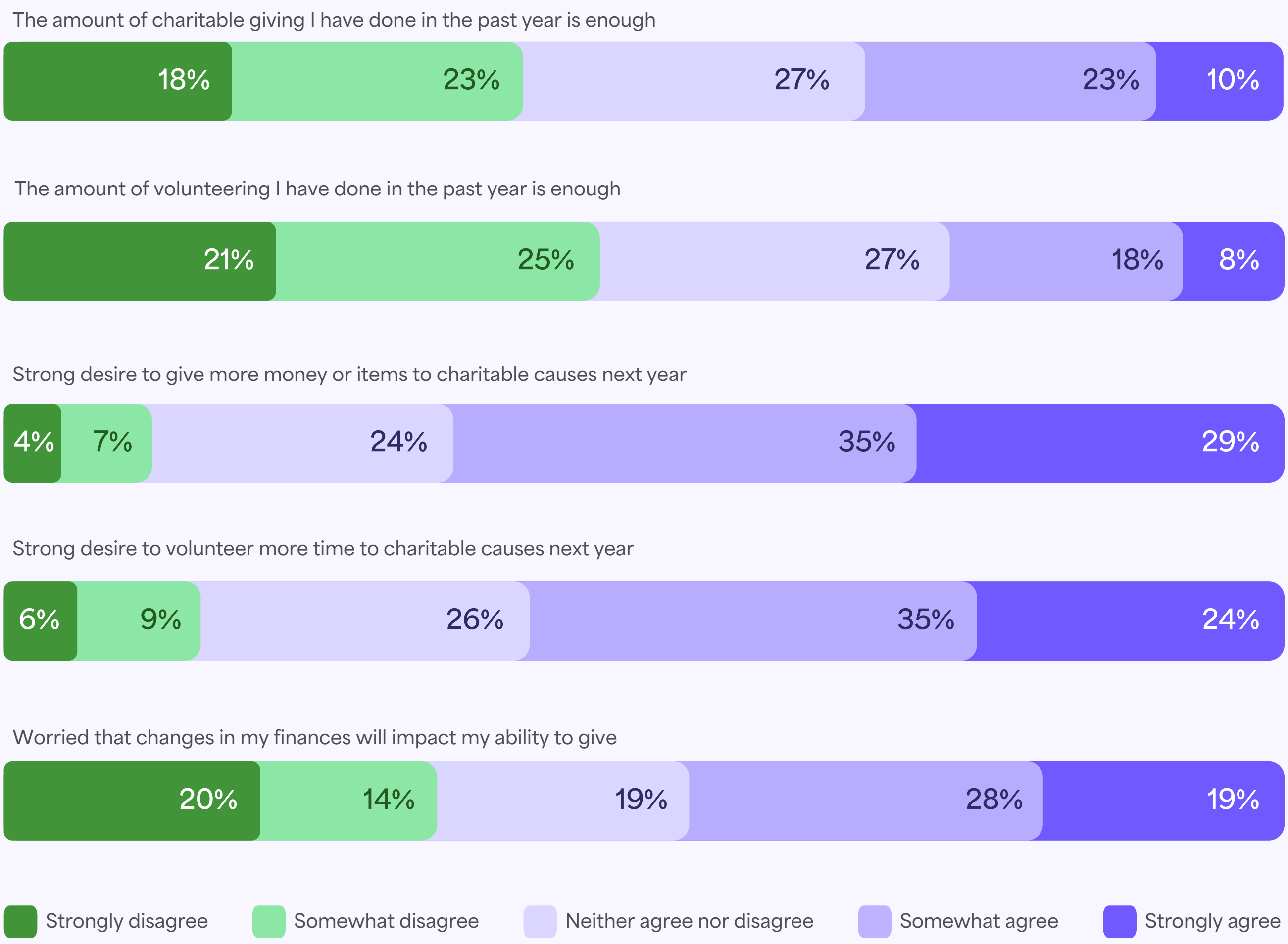
Organizations and people where faith-based individuals expect to give money in 2024



Similarly, faith-based individuals also feel that they could have done more charitable giving and volunteering in the past year. Only 10% of these individuals strongly agree that they have done enough charitable giving in the past year, and 8% of them strongly agree that the amount of volunteering they had done in the past year was enough.

It is worth noting that faith-based individuals generally feel a desire to donate more money, items, or time to charitable causes in the coming year. Only 12% of them disagree that they feel a strong desire to give more money or items in 2024, while only 15% disagree that they have a strong desire to volunteer more time.

Faith-based individuals' sentiments on their current and future charitable giving

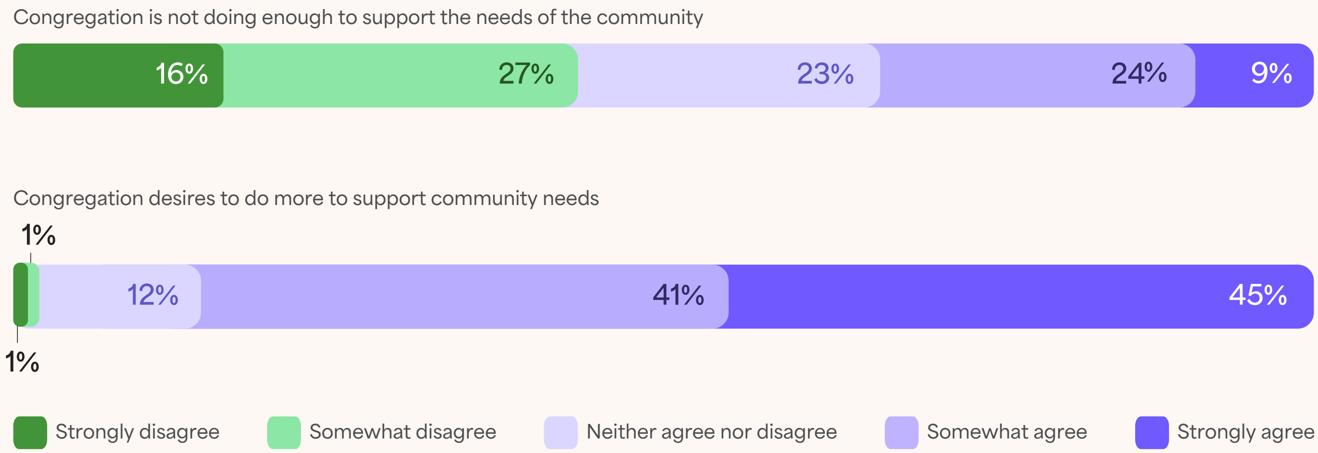


AN OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE OF GIVING

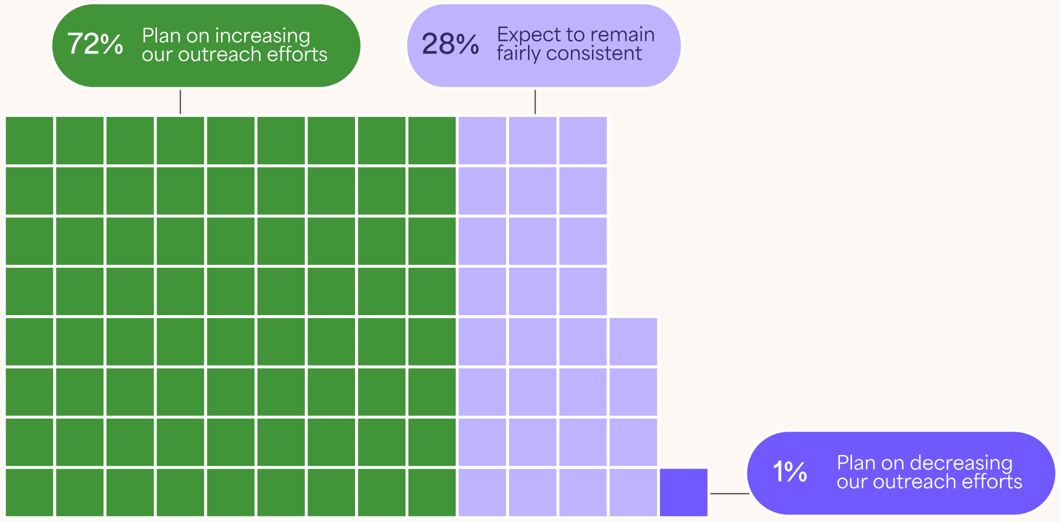
Faith Leaders' Optimism

While most faith leaders generally feel that their places of worship are currently doing enough to support the needs of their communities, they also desire to do more outreach. In fact, 99% of faith leaders report that they plan on maintaining or increasing their community outreach efforts in 2024.

Faith leaders' sentiments on their congregation's current and future community outreach efforts

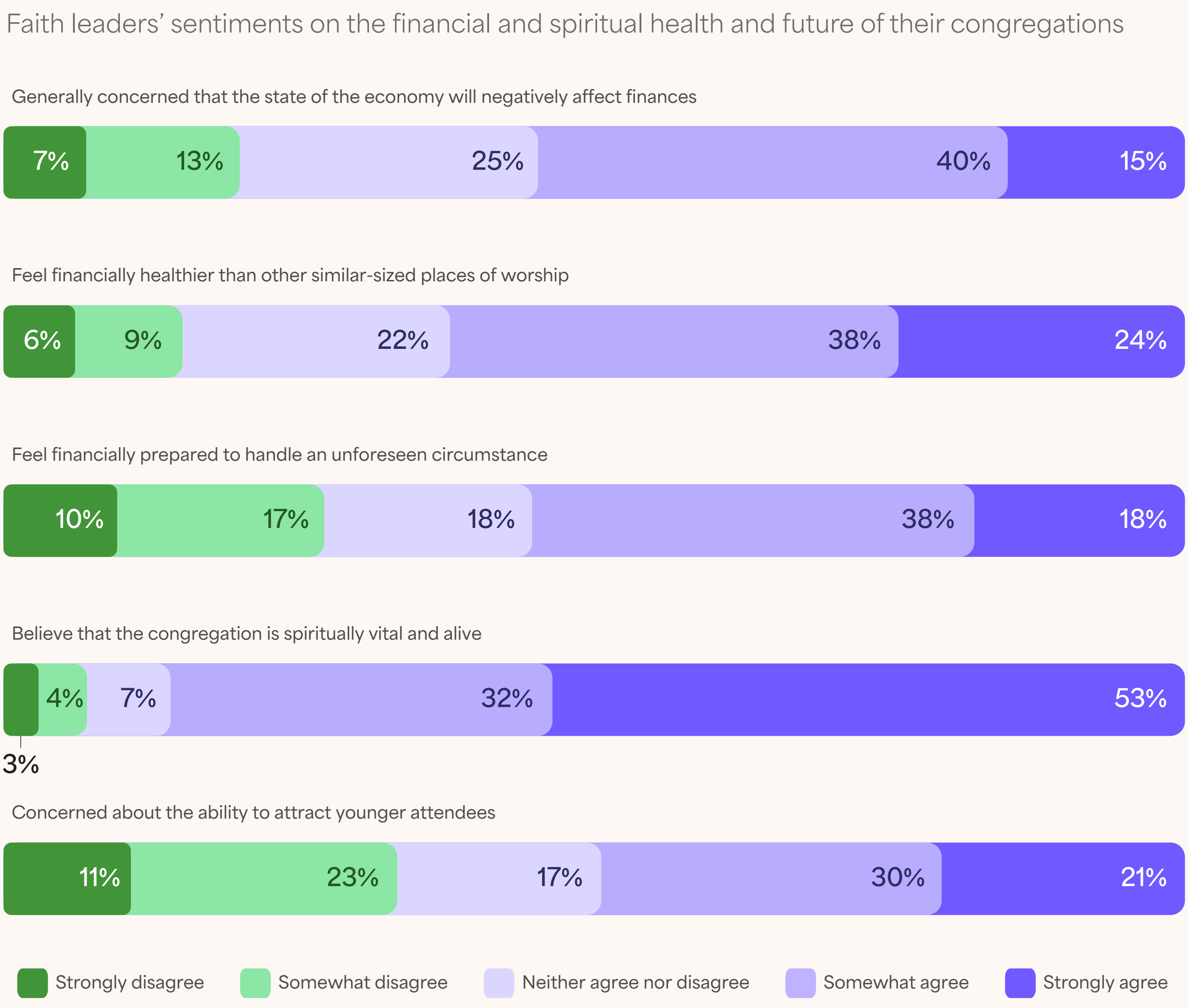


How congregations expect to change their outreach efforts in 2024



Faith leaders are also generally optimistic about the current and future realities of their congregations, a finding that was echoed in Hartford Institute for Religion Research's 2023 study.[6] There, over 80% of faith leaders were positive about their congregation's future, with 45% expressing a very positive outlook.

Regarding their congregations' current finances, 63% of faith leaders agreed that they feel their places of worship are financially healthier than other similar-sized places of worship. They are also optimistic about the spiritual health of their church with 85% of faith leaders agreeing that their congregations are spiritually vital and alive. This is an increase of 20% compared to Faith Communities Today's 2020 Report.[20] Finally, despite recent reports of increasing religious disaffiliation among American adults and trends that suggest the non-religious could become the majority in the United States by 2070,[14,15] only about half of the faith leaders surveyed are concerned about their ability to attract younger attendees.



SECTION 4

Trends in Technology and Religion

This section explores the changing dynamic between places of worship and technology. As people increasingly integrate new digital tools into their daily lives, faith leaders are seeking new ways to connect with their congregants beyond traditional methods.

This section also delves into attitudes, awareness, and adoption of emerging technologies like virtual reality and artificial intelligence (AI) that are revolutionizing various aspects of everyday life.

KEY DATA SNAPSHOT

78% of places of worship offer virtual-only or hybrid worship services

97% of congregations have an online presence on at least one social media platform

78% of faith leaders have heard of an emerging VR or AI-powered tool, but few have used these tools within or outside of their places of worship

TRENDS IN TECHNOLOGY AND RELIGION

The Digital Landscape of Places of Worship

As reported in the 2022 *Giving in Faith* report, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted in-person worship and in-person giving to places of worship. As a result, faith leaders were compelled to embrace new digital solutions in their places of worship to maintain a sense of connection among their congregants. It is no surprise that the adoption of virtual or hybrid worship services in congregations rose to 90% from 67% during that period.[5]

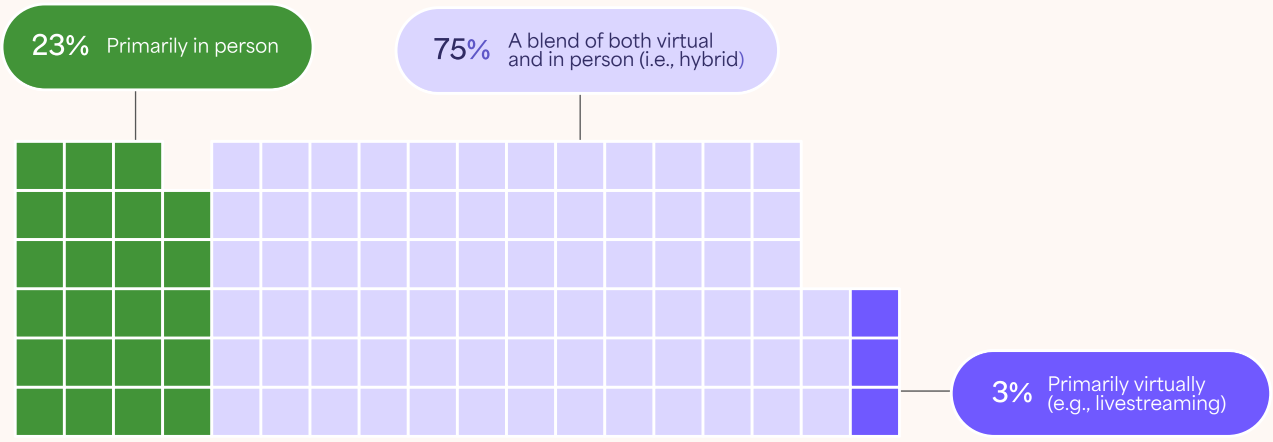
Since then, most places of worship have physically reopened, leading to an increase in in-person worship among attendees. In 2023, 38% of faith-based individuals reported attending their place of worship primarily in person, an increase from the 29% who reported primarily in-person attendance in 2021.[5] Additionally, 63% of faith leaders whose places of worship offer in-person worship reported that their in-person attendance in 2023 has increased compared to 2022.

Even with the return of in-person worship, the flexibility offered by a hybrid mode of worship remains appealing to both attendees and faith leaders.

In 2023, **61% of faith-based individuals reported primarily attending worship services virtually or in some hybrid format.** Additionally, **78% of places of worship offered virtual-only or hybrid worship services to their attendees** in 2023.

This is consistent with the 75% of congregations that Hartford Institute for Religion Research reported were offering either hybrid or online-only modes of worship in Spring 2023.[9]

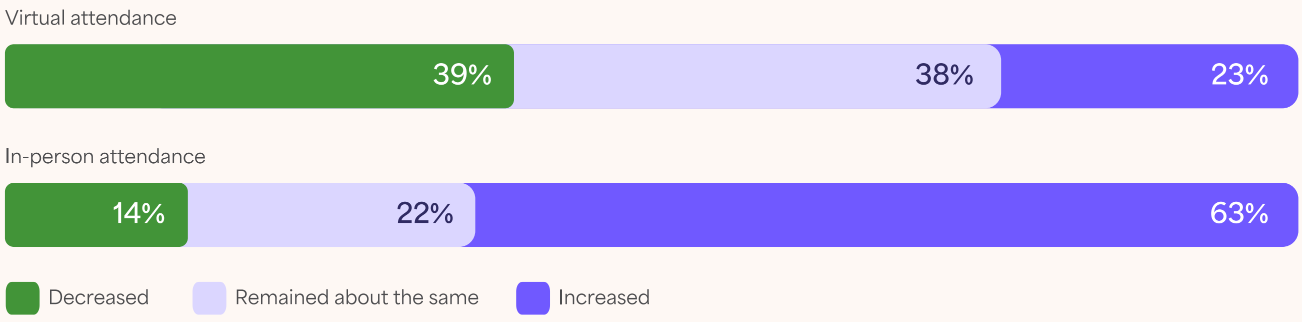
How places of worship delivered worship services to attendees in 2023



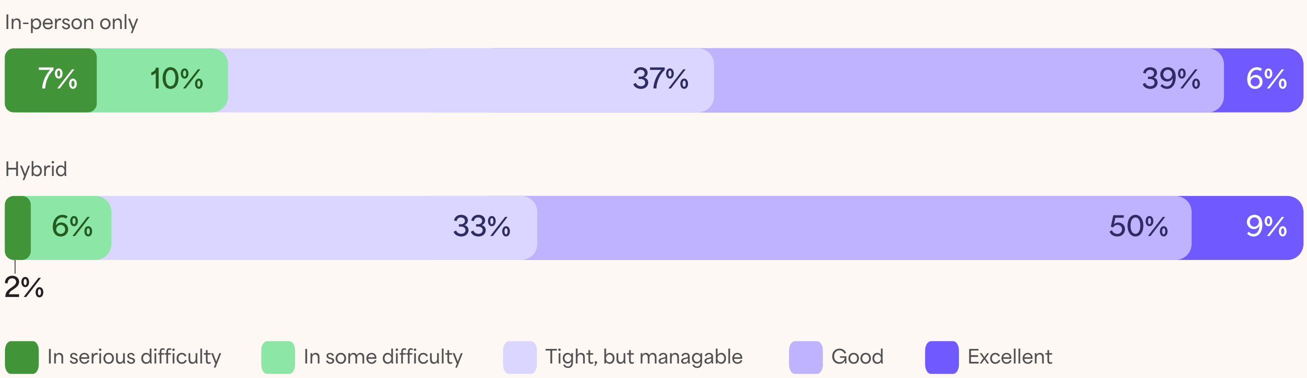
Beyond flexibility, there are monetary benefits of congregations continuing to offer a virtual option to attendees. The *Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations* study shows that congregations that offered hybrid modes of worship in 2023 had an average of 90 attendees and an annual per capita giving of $2,350. In comparison, congregations that offered only in-person worship services had a median of 35 attendees and a lower per capita giving of $2,048.[9]

Similarly, this study found that congregations offering only in-person worship tend to be smaller, with 76% of them averaging 100 or fewer weekly attendees compared to 52% of hybrid congregations. Congregations without virtual worship services reported a smaller increase in overall giving (34%) compared to those that offer hybrid worship (46%). They were less likely to report that their congregation's financial health is good or excellent (45% compared to 59% from hybrid congregations). Finally, in-person only congregations are generally more concerned about the financial future of their places of worship than congregations offering hybrid modes of worship.

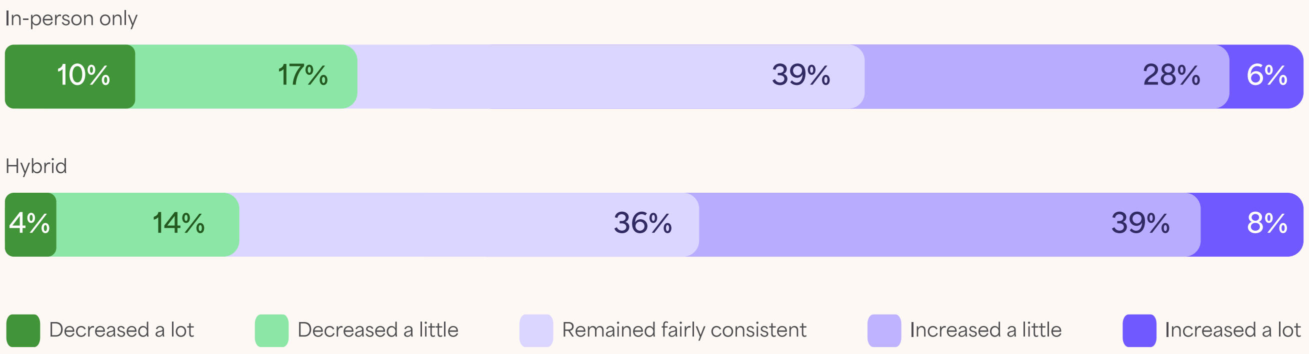
Changes in average virtual and in-person attendance from 2022 to 2023



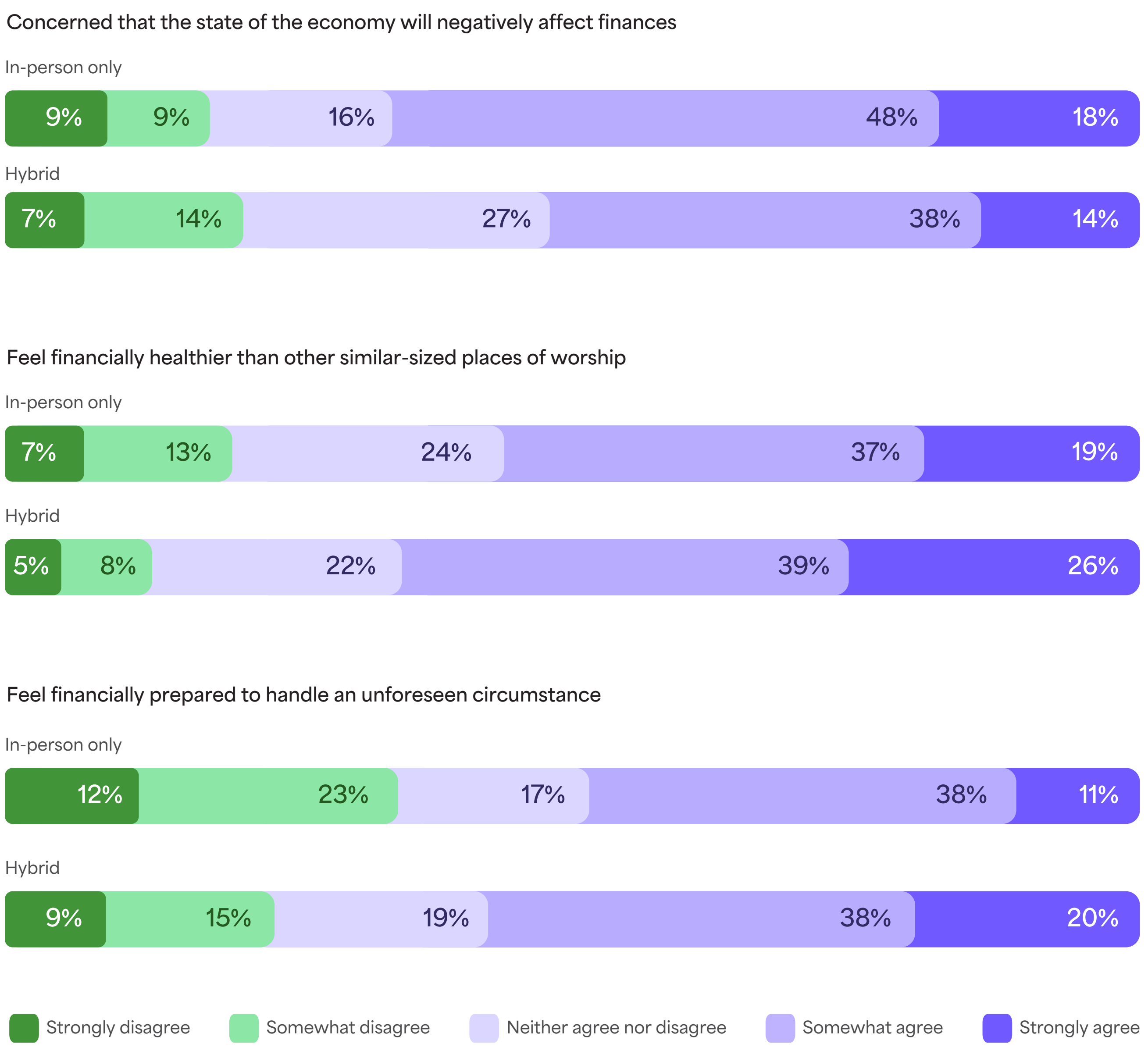
Financial health of in-person versus hybrid congregations in 2023



Changes in overall giving to in-person versus hybrid congregations from 2022 to 2023



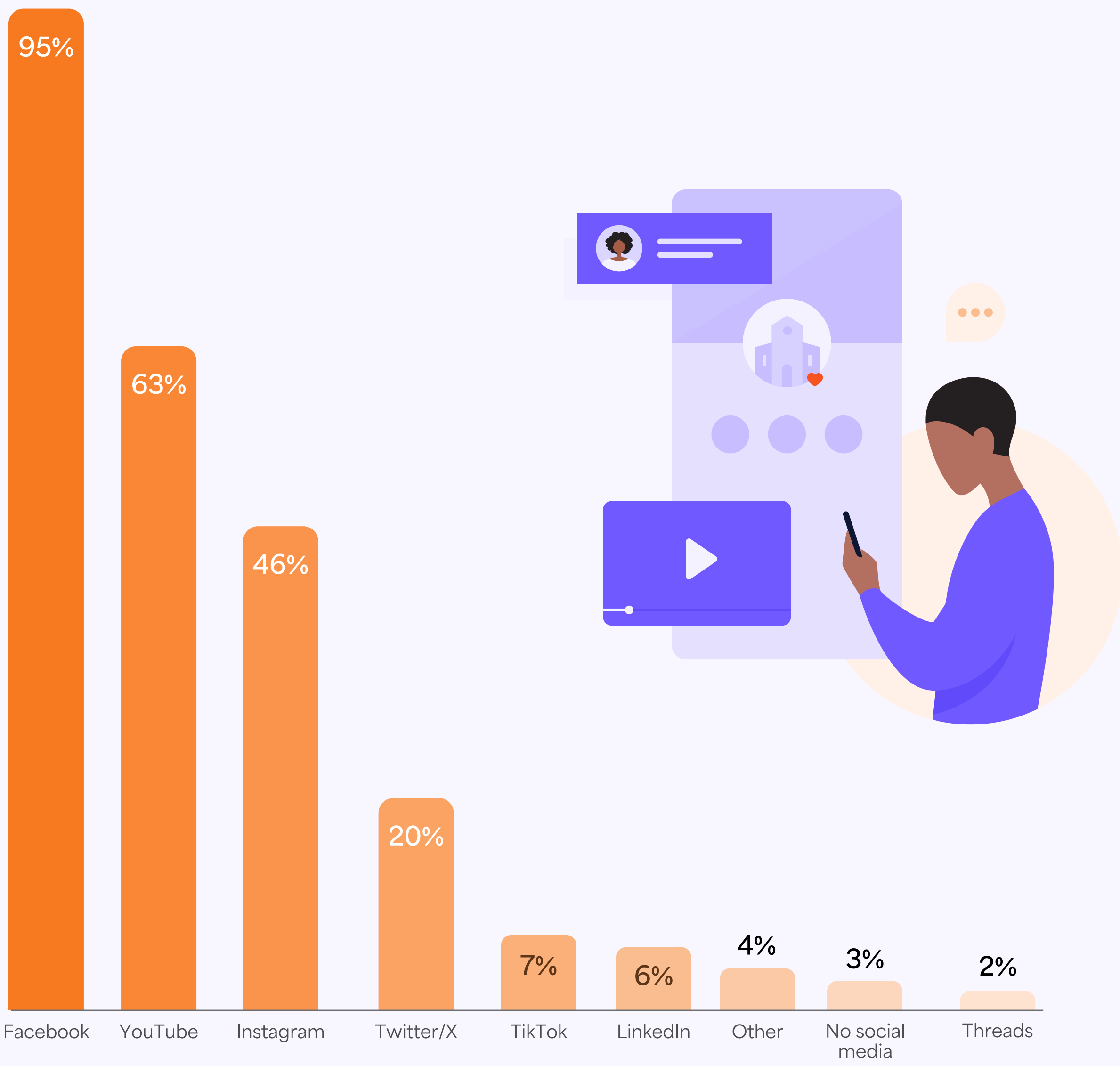
Sentiments of the financial futures of in-person versus hybrid congregations



Almost all (97%) places of worship stay connected to their congregants on social media, with Facebook (95%) and YouTube (63%) being the most popular social media platforms among faith leaders. A recent report from the *Tech in Churches During Covid-19 Research Project* found that congregations turned to Facebook during the pandemic, which became essential for places of worship to communicate and connect with their congregants.[35] Having a digital presence was not the only vital way to maintaining connections with attendees during the pandemic, but congregations with a website, live streaming, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, or YouTube presence received 533% more donations compared to those without.[36]

Finally, digital giving has become an indispensable giving method among both faith-based individuals and faith leaders. Congregations continue to offer digital giving options to their attendees, and these options both bring in a significant share of overall annual contributions and are related to higher annual per capita giving.

Social media platforms where congregations have an online presence



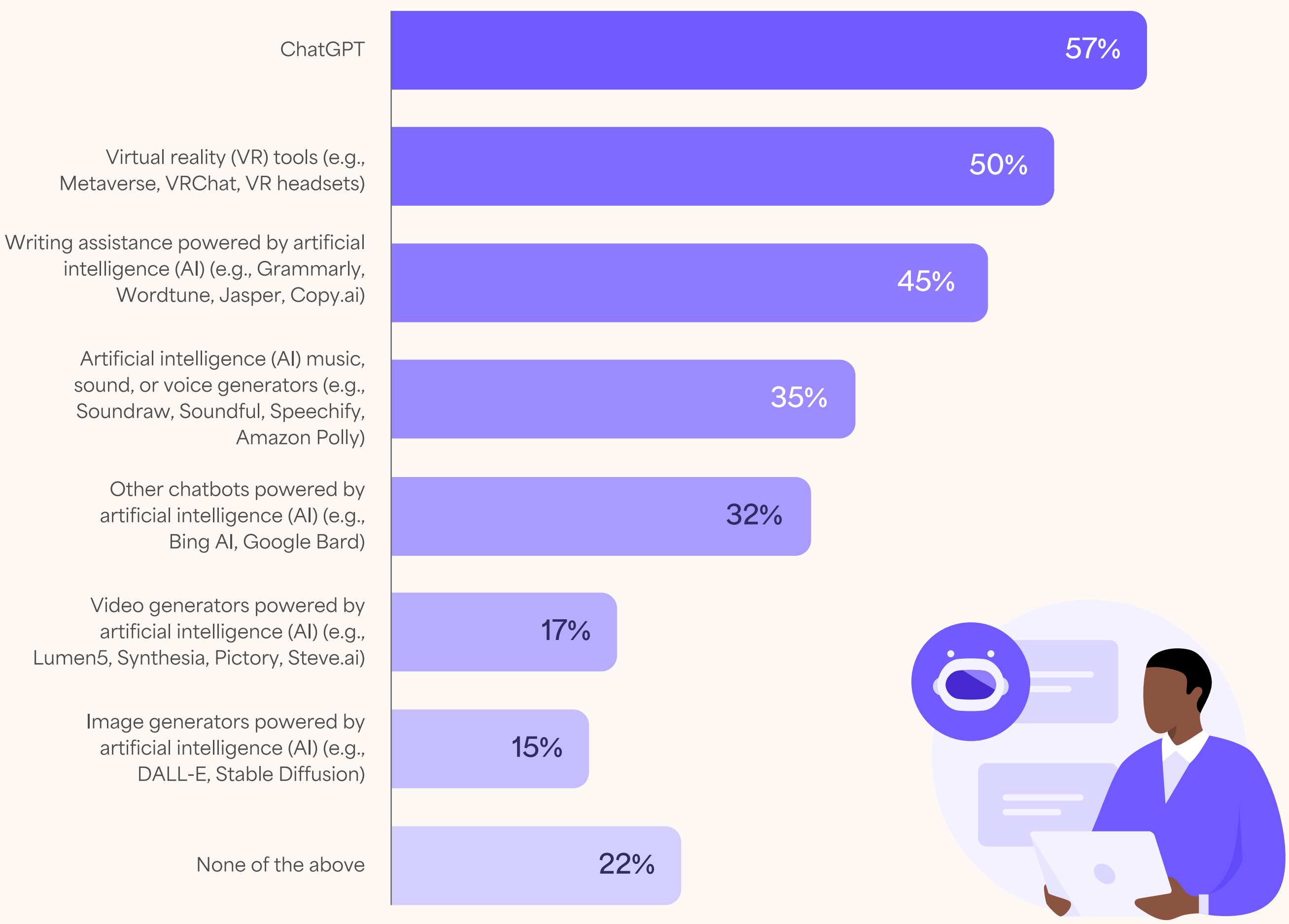
TRENDS IN TECHNOLOGY AND RELIGION

Awareness, Attitudes, and Adoption of Emerging Technologies

Now, more than ever, faith leaders report that the relationship between religion and technology is connected and necessary.[35] In an era when physical and digital worlds are ever more intertwined, congregations that swiftly embrace new and emerging technologies will likely be better prepared to navigate economic, social, and religious shifts. In recent years, we saw an incredible boom in the discourse of how new virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT could be leveraged in nearly every industry.

Faith leaders were also part of this discourse, with a majority (78%) having heard of at least one type of VR or AI-powered tool in 2023. In particular, 57% of faith leaders have heard of ChatGPT, an AI-powered chatbot that became publicly available on November 30, 2022.

Faith leaders' awareness of emerging technologies



AI-powered writing assistants such as ChatGPT or Grammarly are the most popular tools among faith leaders who have heard of and used those technologies at least once. However, like most Americans,[37] most (62%) faith leaders have not used VR or AI tools to help them perform their responsibilities within or outside of their place of worship.

Faith leaders who have adopted these technologies in their places of worship share the innovative ways in which they have incorporated these tools to perform their roles:

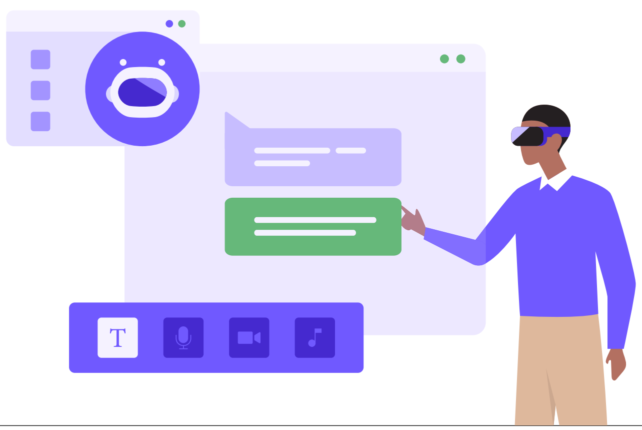
> "**ChatGPT helps me to find various ideas that can be implemented for successful event management and funding.** We use image generators sometimes to generate nice covers for our church's events."

> "**I utilize AI to automate the process of logging financial transactions, classifying spending, and other tasks.** This reduces the workload associated with human data entry and lowers the possibility of mistakes in financial records."

> "**This AI video generator makes online sermon livestreaming and church services more user-friendly**, and I use **ChatGPT to translate written sermons** into different languages and look for different perspectives."

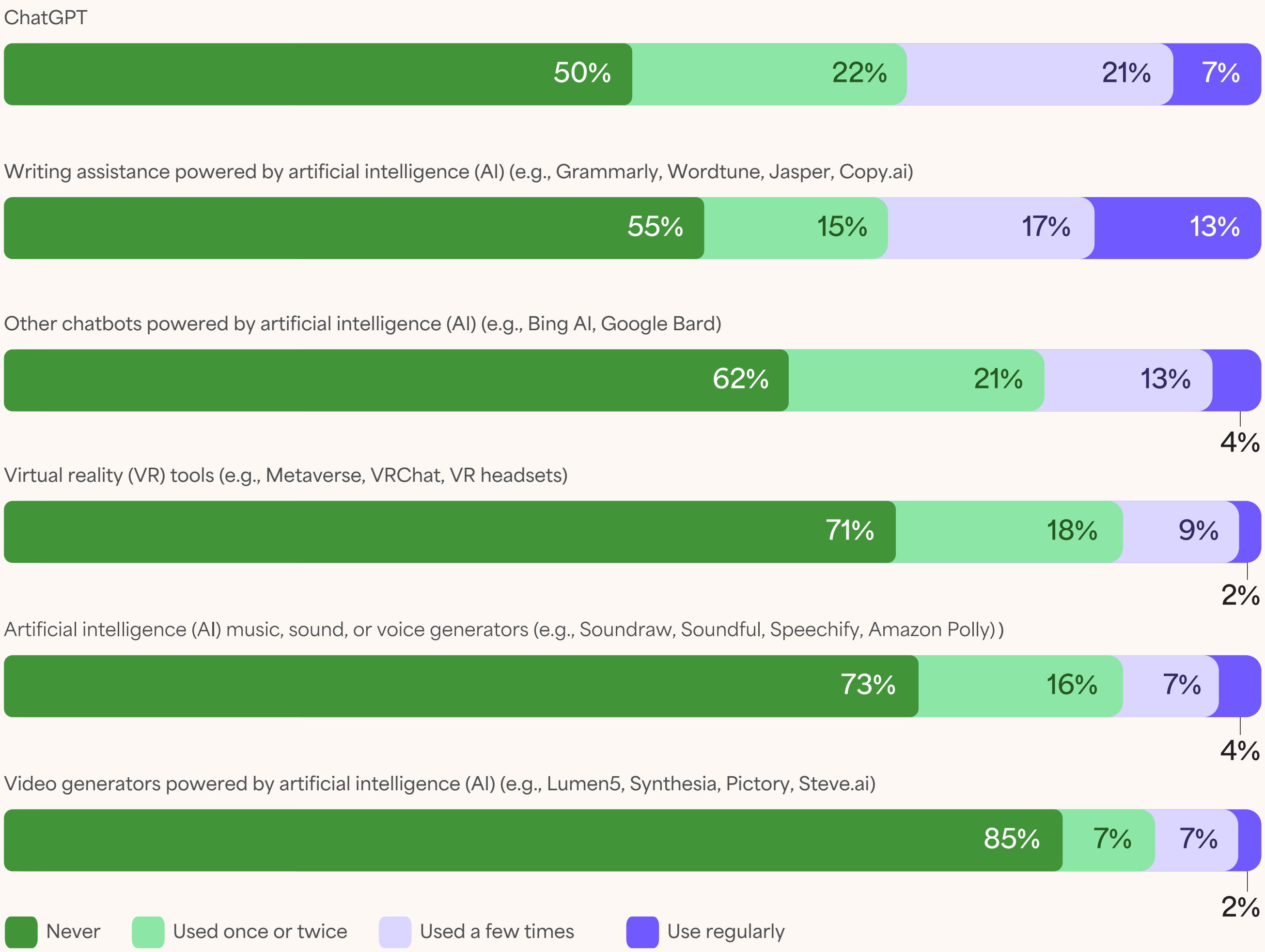
> "We recently started using **AI voice generators for automated announcements and readings**, making our services more accessible to all."

> "We have developed **VR confessionals, providing a private and contemplative space for our members to confess their sins and seek guidance.**"

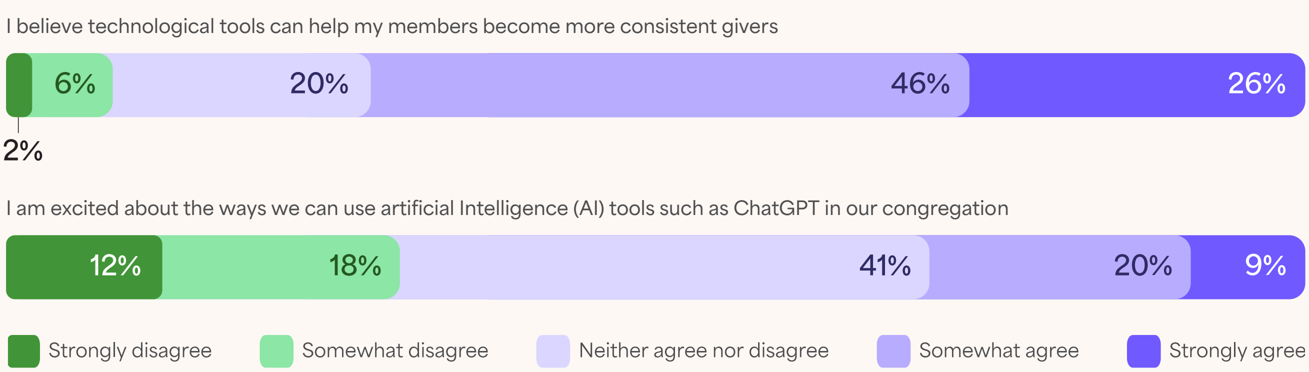


Faith leaders, like other Americans,[38] have mixed feelings about the increasing use of AI in their daily lives. While most faith leaders were ambivalent about how they can use AI in their congregation, they generally expressed excitement about the potential for technology to help their givers become more consistent.

How often faith leaders have used emerging technologies



Faith leaders' sentiments towards emerging technologies



Conclusion

Even as other studies report declines in generosity among Americans, the people of faith profiled in this report are strikingly generous. These faith-based givers gave the same or more to their places of worship in 2023; they gave generously to nonprofit organizations, informal mutual aid groups, and directly to people in need; and they volunteered at a much higher rate than the general population.

The continued growth of digital giving is also a notable trend, with financial implications for religious organizations. Digital giving continues to be highly popular with congregants, constituting 60% of total annual contributions to places of worship in 2023. Even more significantly, gifts made to places of worship through digital means are higher, on average, than those made in other ways.

This is important news for the health of American civil society – especially so for places of worship. The abundant altruism of faith-based givers plays a vital role in maintaining thriving congregations and enables congregations to be beacons of generosity for the communities where they are anchored. Almost all congregations supported at least one outreach program (many of which focused on meeting primary needs) with money, time, goods, or physical space. Notably, most congregations stated that they maintained or increased their outreach efforts in 2023 compared to 2022.

Looking to the year ahead, both people of faith and faith leaders aspire to be even more generous to the organizations, causes, and communities that they support. And, despite the growing trend of religious disaffiliation in America, faith leaders are optimistic about the spiritual and financial health of their congregations.

Finally, the future also ushers in new technologies, such as tools powered by artificial intelligence (AI), that continue to shape our increasingly digital lives. While faith leaders are skeptical of these unfamiliar digital tools, they may be motivated to adopt emerging technologies to stay connected with their congregants, much like they did during the pandemic.

Methodology

Survey development

The survey for faith-based individuals consisted of 45 questions that addressed a variety of topics including their charitable giving in 2023, motivations for giving, expectations for future giving, religious behaviors, and demographics.

The survey for faith leaders consisted of 47 questions that addressed a variety of topics including their place of worship's financial information in 2023, sentiments about the future, experiences with emerging technologies, and demographics. Minor differences existed between versions of the survey that were distributed online versus over the phone to best facilitate the collection of verbal responses. Additionally, respondents recruited through online newsletters completed a screening survey that asked for details on their organization. Respondents whose identities were validated were invited to complete the full survey.

Survey fielding and sample

In total, we received 2,001 completed responses from people of faith across a range of ages, ethnicities, U.S. geographical location, educational attainment, income levels, and levels of religiosity. The survey for faith-based individuals was distributed online to a random sample of Givelify customers and Prolific (an academic survey platform) respondents. Respondents who did not belong to an organized religion were screened from the full survey. One thousand and one Givelify customers and 1,000 Prolific respondents completed the 2023 *Giving in Faith* survey for faith-based individuals between August 28, 2023 and September 11, 2023. We estimate that the margin of error for this sample is approximately ±2% at the 95% confidence level.

In total, we received 980 completed responses from faith leaders between August 21, 2023 and September 11, 2023. The survey for faith leaders was distributed through several means and channels. A random sample of congregations on Givelify were contacted to complete the survey online, with a total of 606 faith leaders responding. Faith leaders were also recruited through online newsletters distributed through partner networks, a total of 52 responses. Finally, faith leaders were also recruited by a contracted market research firm. A total of 322 faith leaders completed the survey online or via phone. Respondents who were not the spiritual leader of the congregation nor knowledgeable about the congregations' finances were screened from the full survey. We estimate that the margin of error for this sample is approximately ±3% at the 95% confidence level.

Notes on statistical significance

In parts of the report, we use the language "statistically significant" or refer to numerical comparisons as "significant." Where this language is used, the differences emphasized are statistically significant at the 0.05 level or lower.

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Lake Institute on Faith & Giving fosters a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between faith and giving, through research, education and public conversation. The institute offers customized programs that translate data and giving trends into practical tools. Lake Institute supports the development of research designed to explore the broad context of religious giving. Through public forums we engage practitioners, scholars, and the community in thoughtful conversation and reflection.

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Appendix

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS: PEOPLE OF FAITH

Religious affiliation of faith-based individuals

Religion	Percentage of respondents
Buddism	0.2%
Christian - Protestant	79%
Christian - Roman Catholic	15%
Christian - Morman	1%
Christian - Orthodox	1%
Hinduism	0.3%
Islam	1%
Judaism	1%
Sikhism	0%
Other organized religion	1%

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS: FAITH LEADERS

Denomination of places of worship that self-identify as Christian

Religion	Percentage of respondents
Baptist	22%
Methodist	16%
Lutheran	7%
Presbyterian	6%
Pentecostal	17%
Episcopalian/Anglican	4%
Church of Christ/Disciples of Christ	3%
Nondenominational, Independent, or Unaffiliated Church	16%
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints/Mormon	1%
Orthodox	0.3%
Roman Catholic	4%
Something else not listed above	3%

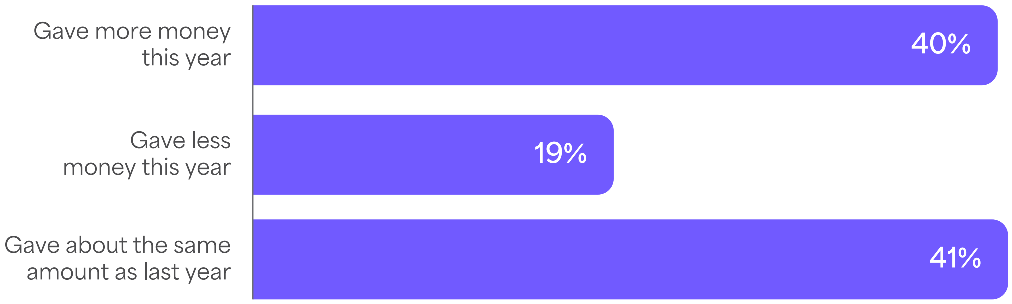
Predominant* racial composition of congregation

Racial composition	Percentage of respondents
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1%
Asian	0.3%
Black or African	45%
Latino/a or Hispanic	1%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White or European	34%
Multiracial (no predominant race)	19%

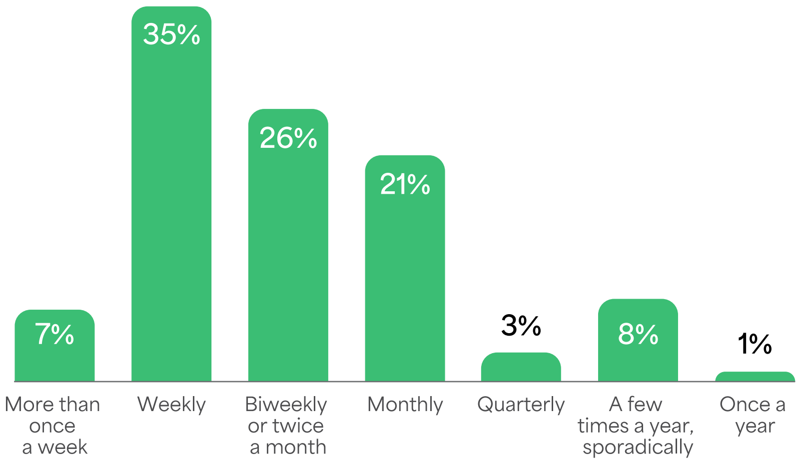
*Note: Predominant is defined as being 80% or more of a single race/ethnicity.

SECTION 1: MONETARY GIVING – MONETARY GIVING TO PLACES OF WORSHIP

Change in amount given to places of worship by faith-based givers in 2023 versus 2022 (including tithes and offerings)

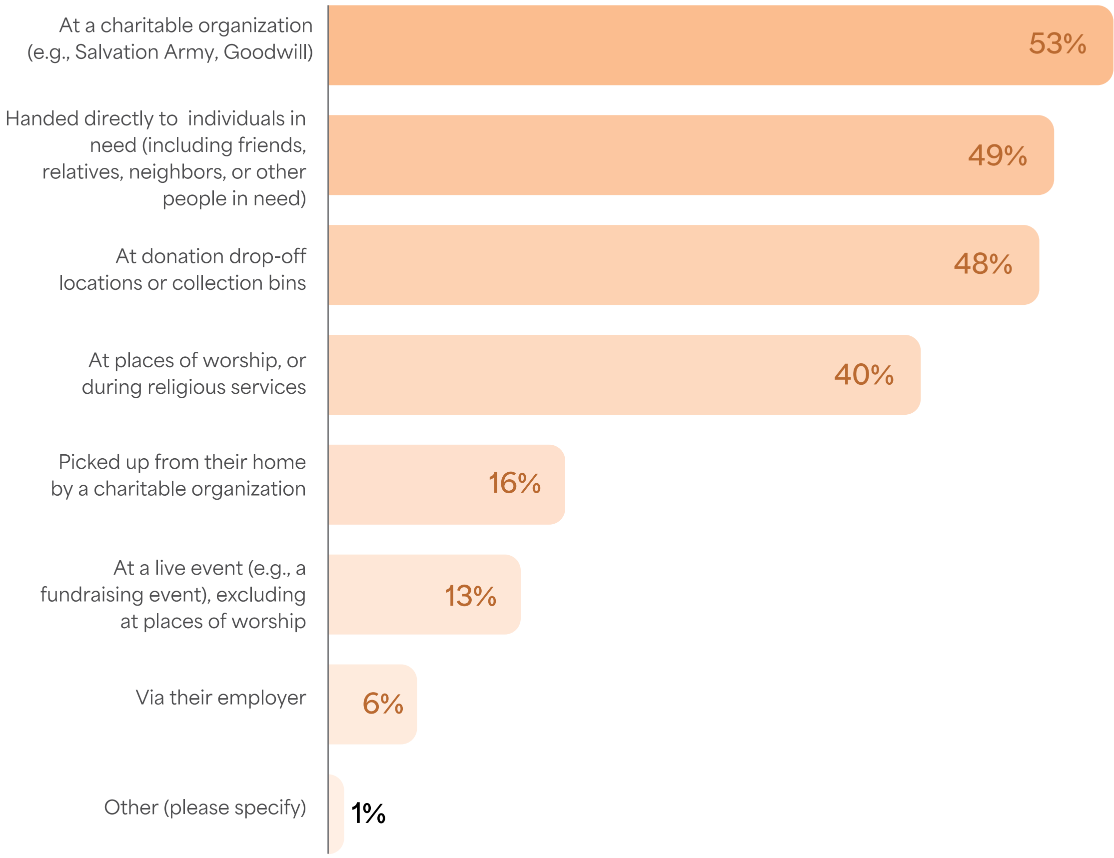


How often faith-based givers gave money to their places of worship in 2023



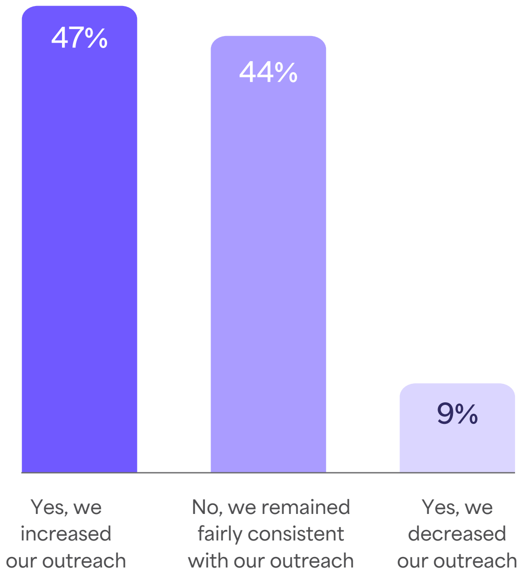
SECTION 1: IN-KIND GIVING

Events or locations where faith-based givers donated physical goods and items in 2023



SECTION 2: COMMUNITY OUTREACH OVERVIEW

Changes in places of worship's community outreach efforts in 2023 compared to 2022



SECTION 2: PROGRAMS THAT MEET PRIMARY NEEDS ARE CONSIDERED PARAMOUNT

How faith leaders would allocate hypothetical grant money to outreach programs

Faith leaders were asked the following question: *"Imagine your place of worship is given $5,000 to support community outreach. To which of the following types of outreach programs would you distribute that $5,000?"* Faith leaders were thus allowed to choose to allocate hypothetical grant money across as many programs that they would have liked to support. Percent of faith leaders who support the program is thus the proportion of faith leaders who chose to allocate any amount of money to that program.

Type of outreach program	Percent of faith leaders who support this program	Average amount they would allocate
Primary needs support (e.g., food/clothing bank)	89%	$1,346
Housing support, either through monetary rental support or shelters	65%	$877
Support for women, including single, widowed, or displaced mothers	62%	$738
Services that support engaged citizenship	24%	$452
Health services	48%	$636
Child/family services	47%	$696
Mental health programs	49%	$634
Elderly support or services	58%	$690
Outreach programs for those incarcerated	31%	$588
Refugee or migrant support or services	17%	$486
Support for those whose first language is not English	10%	$425
Support for disaster relief	52%	$781
Support for social justice movements	30%	$621
Recovery groups or programs	28%	$524
Supplemental education support	40%	$672

How faith-based individuals would allocate hypothetical grant money to outreach programs

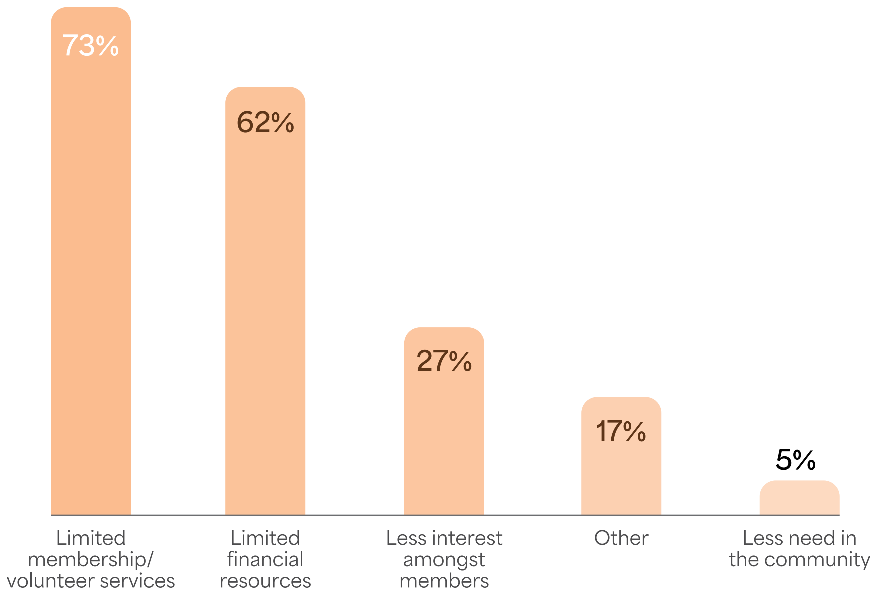
People of faith were asked the following question: *"Imagine your place of worship is given $5,000 to support community outreach. Which three outreach programs would you want them to spend that $5,000 on? Please select the three outreach programs you would most want your place of worship to support."*

Then, they were asked to allocate the hypothetical $5,000 grant across the three programs they selected in the previous question. The exact wording of the question is as follows: *"How would you want your place of worship to distribute the $5,000 among the three outreach programs you selected?"*

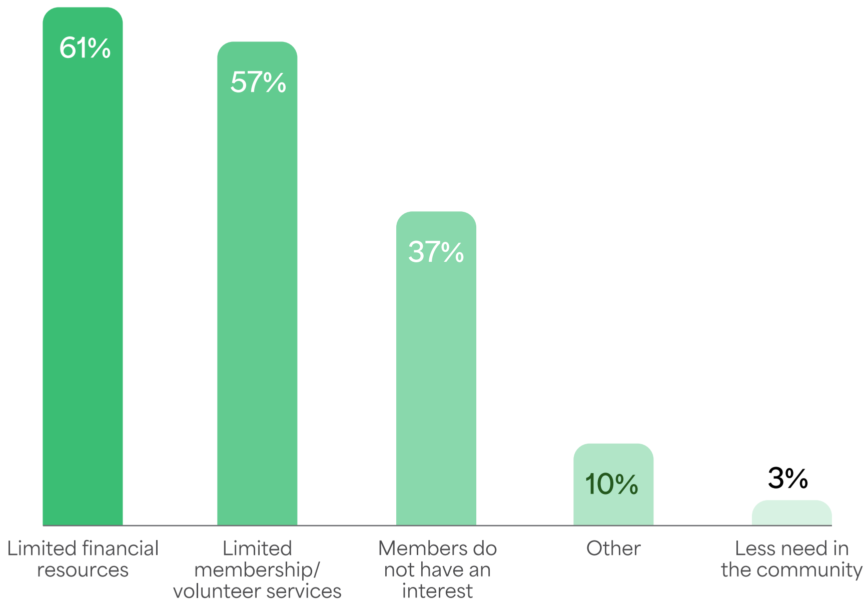
Type of outreach program	Percent of faith-based individuals who support this program	Average amount they would allocate
Primary needs support (e.g., food/clothing bank)	55%	$2,063
Housing support, either through monetary rental support or shelters	27%	$1,764
Support for women, including single, widowed, or displaced mothers	24%	$1,647
Services that support engaged citizenship	5%	$1,352
Health services	25%	$1,546
Child/family services	29%	$1,726
Mental health programs	31%	$1,584
Elderly support or services	35%	$1,606
Outreach programs for those incarcerated	8%	$1,338
Refugee or migrant support or services	6%	$1,568
Support for those whose first language is not English	2%	$1,341
Support for disaster relief	18%	$1,539
Support for social justice movements	12%	$1,474
Recovery groups or programs	14%	$1,403
Supplemental education support	11%	$1,425

SECTION 2: HOW PLACES OF WORSHIP FUND THEIR COMMUNITY OUTREACH

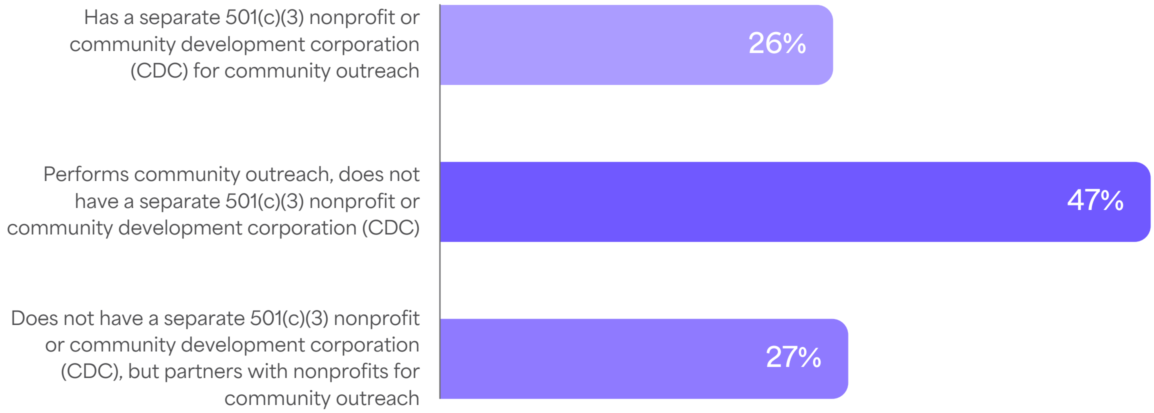
Reasons why congregations reduced community outreach efforts in 2023



Reasons why congregations did not support any outreach programs in 2023



Places of worship's registered 501(c)(3) status



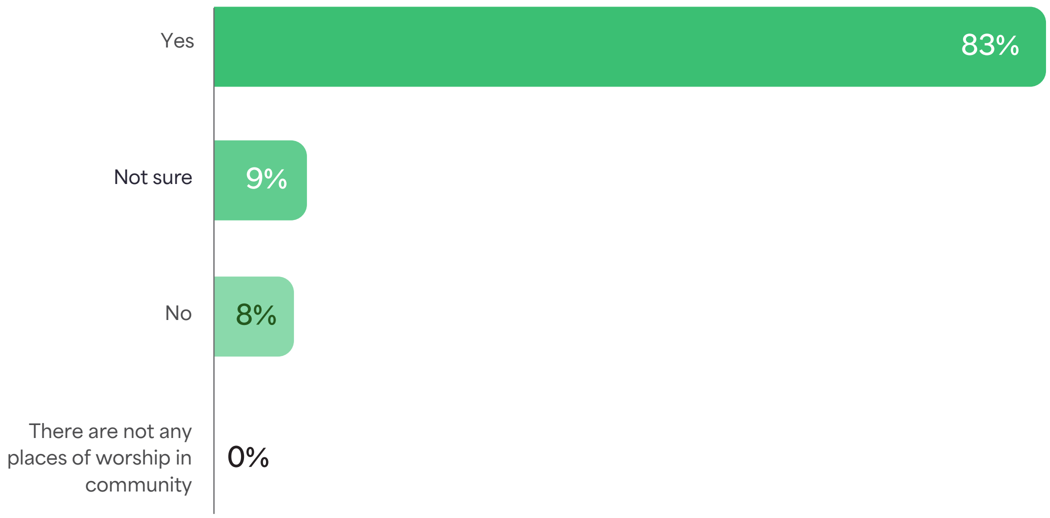
SECTION 2: VISION LED TO FUNDING FOR REBUILD AND OUTREACH

Read original story by Ray Marcano here:
https://faithandleadership.com/devastating-storm-becomes-turning-point-historic-african-methodist-episcopal-church

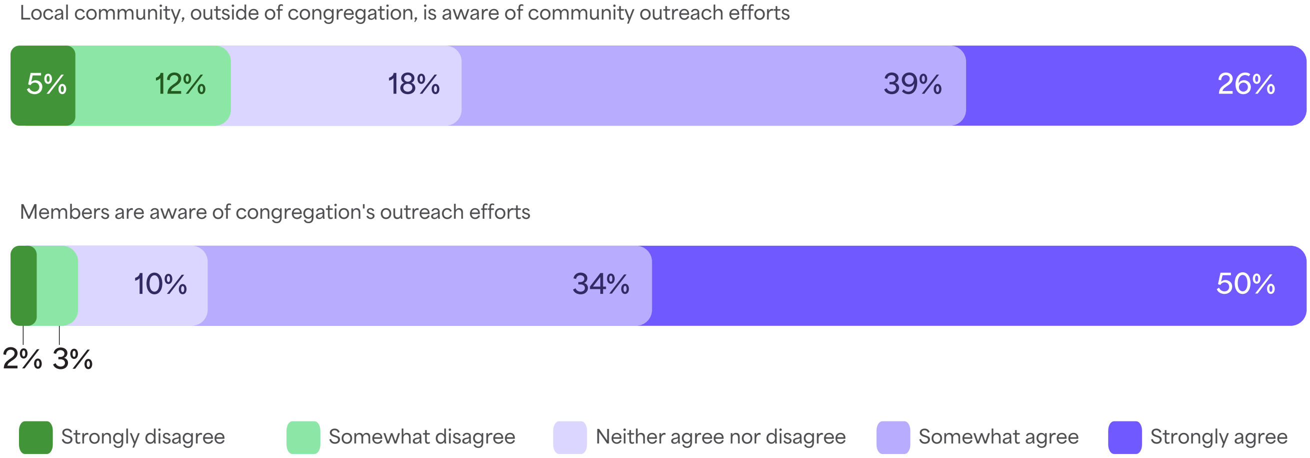
Read the full case study by Dave Kresta here:
https://www.flipsnack.com/C68F8F88B7A/feeding-the-5-000-case-study/full-view.html

SECTION 2: COMMUNICATING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Faith-based individuals' awareness of community outreach programs offered by their places of worship

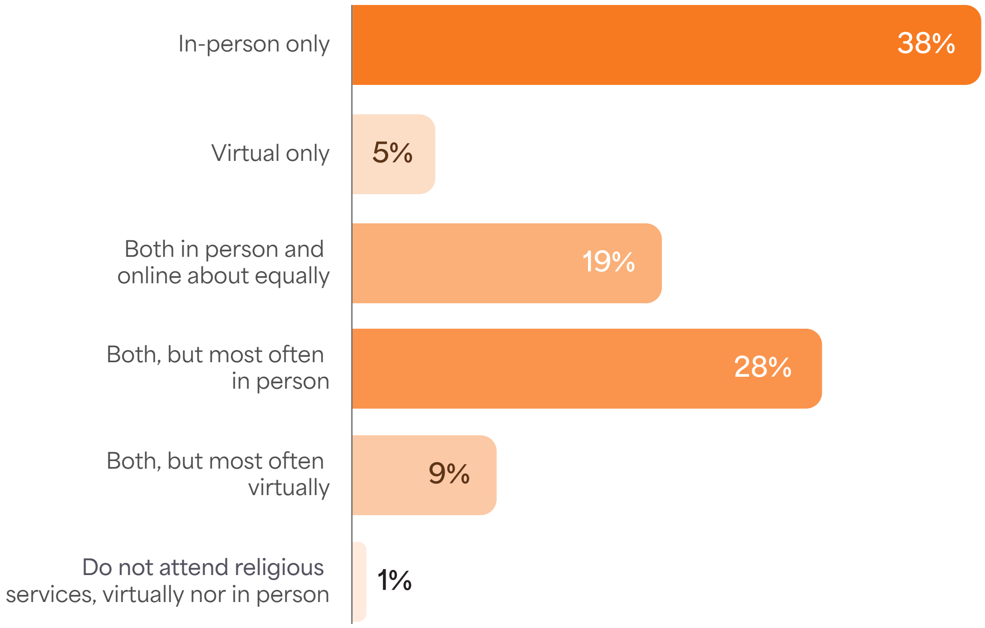


How faith leaders perceive the awareness of their congregation's outreach efforts



SECTION 4: THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

How faith-based individuals attended their places of worship in 2023

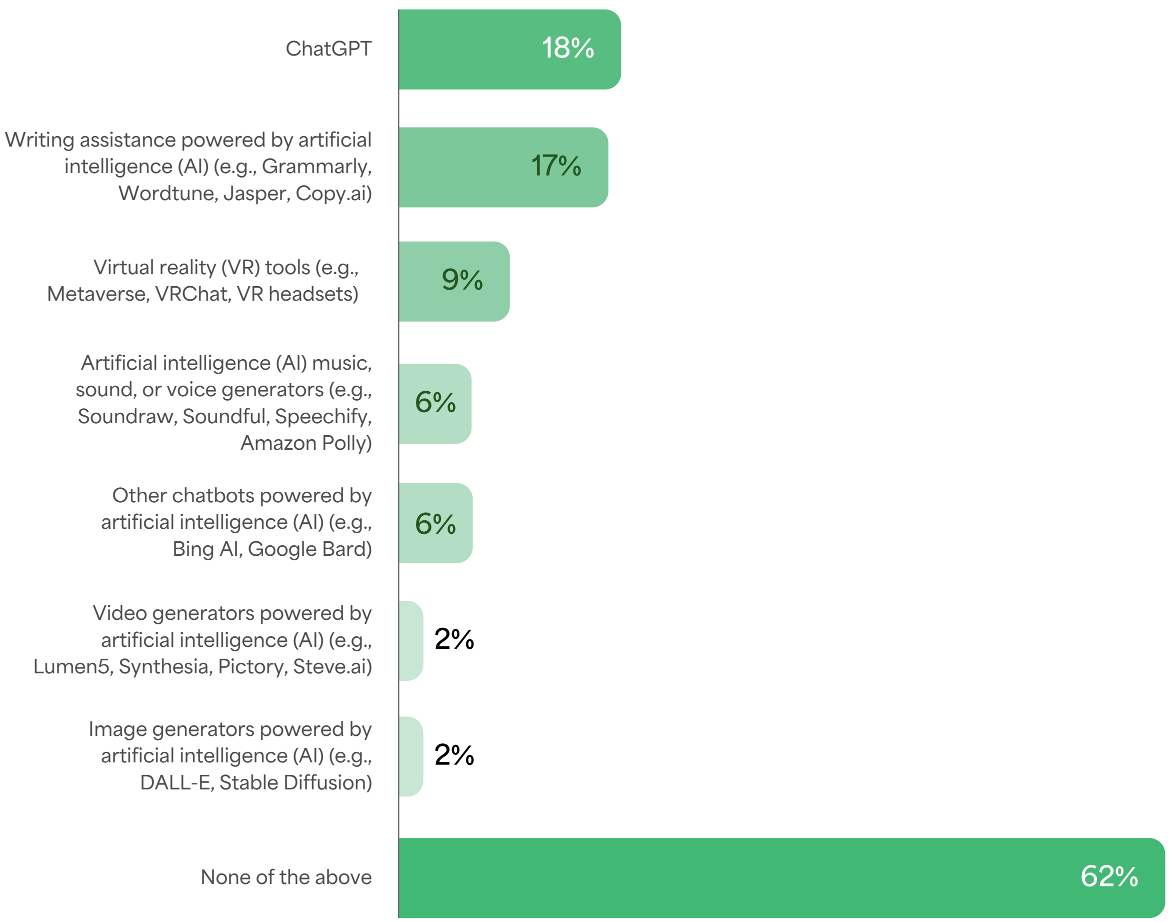


Current average size of weekly service attendance of in-person versus hybrid congregations

Current average size of weekly service attendance	In-person only congregation	Hybrid congregation
Up to 50	41%	27%
51-100	35%	25%
101-250	15%	178%
251-500	6%	14%
501-1,000	2%	11%
1,001-2,500	0.5%	3%
More than 2,500	0%	2%

SECTION 4: AWARENESS, ATTITUDES, AND ADOPTION OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Percent of faith leaders who used emerging technologies at least once at their places of worship



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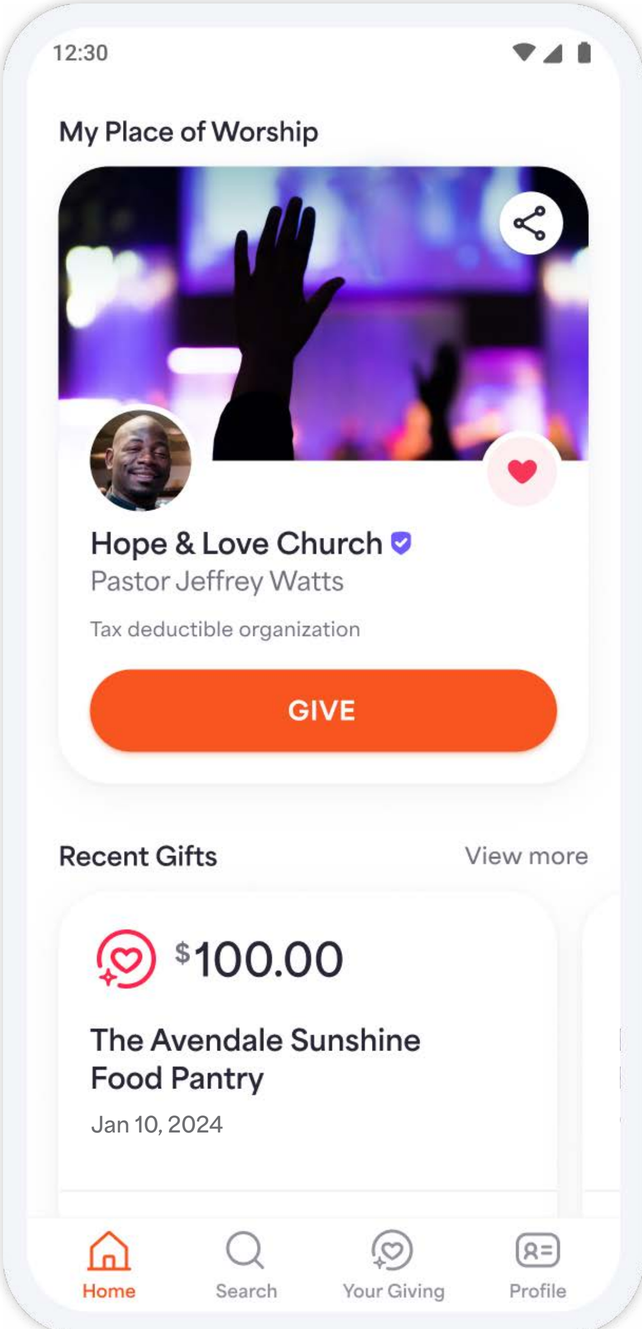

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