



# Better Together

**How Christians Can Be a Welcome Influence in Their Neighborhoods**



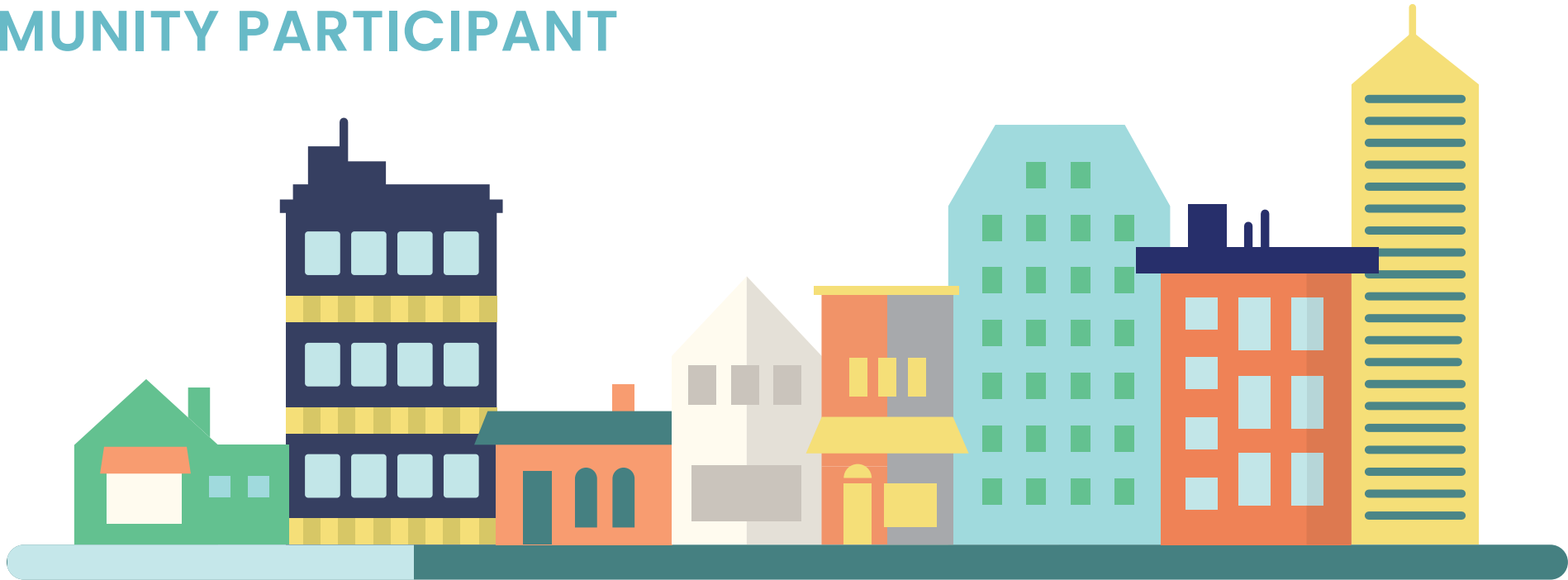
For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2020 report:

### ***Better Together***

The full report is available at **shop.barna.com** or through Barna Access membership.

# Who is Better Together?

ONE IN FIVE PRACTICING CHRISTIANS IS A...  
COMMUNITY PARTICIPANT

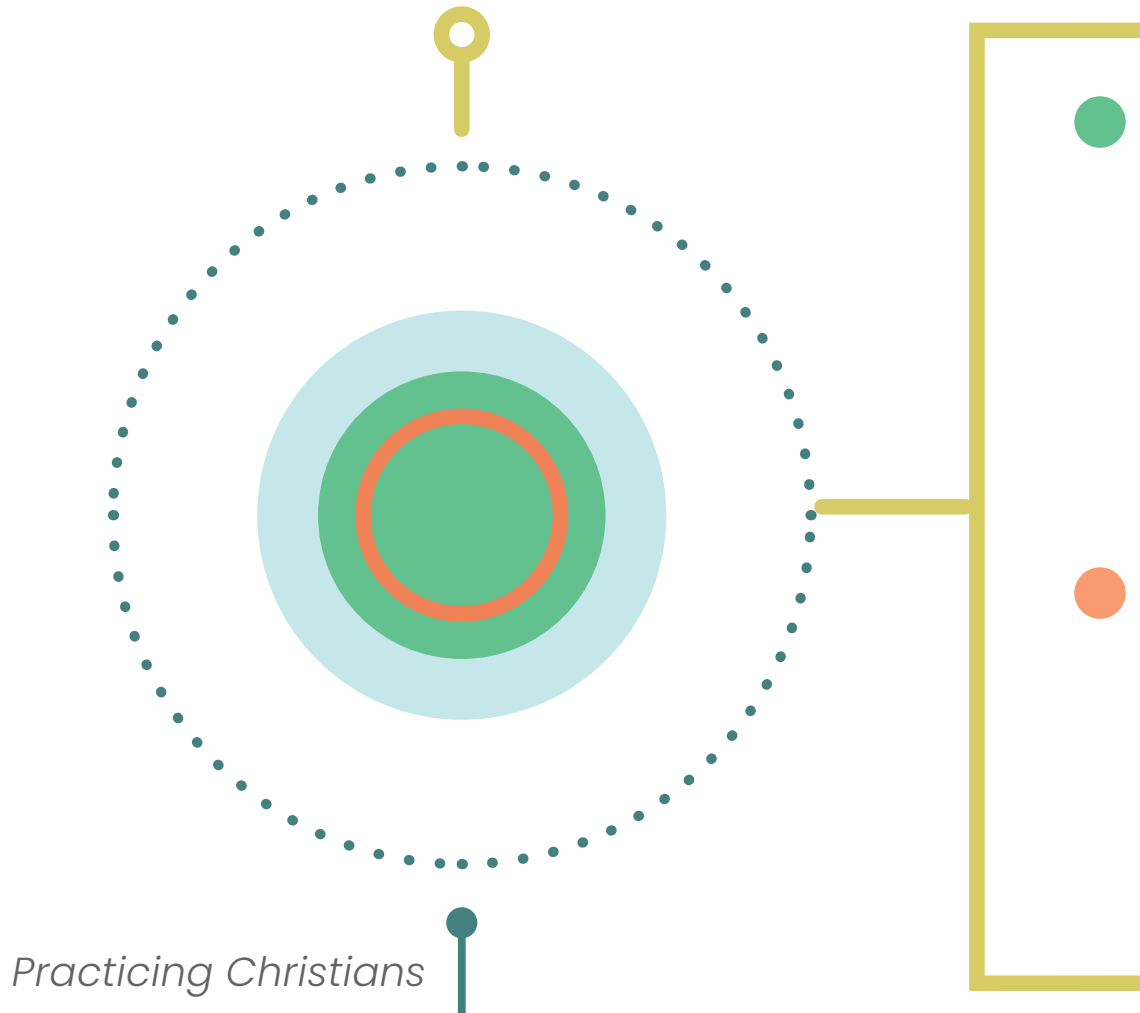


**COMMUNITY PARTICIPANT:**

Adults who have taken initiative to gather with multiple people multiple times for some level of local influence

# Going Deeper

% among practicing Christian community participants



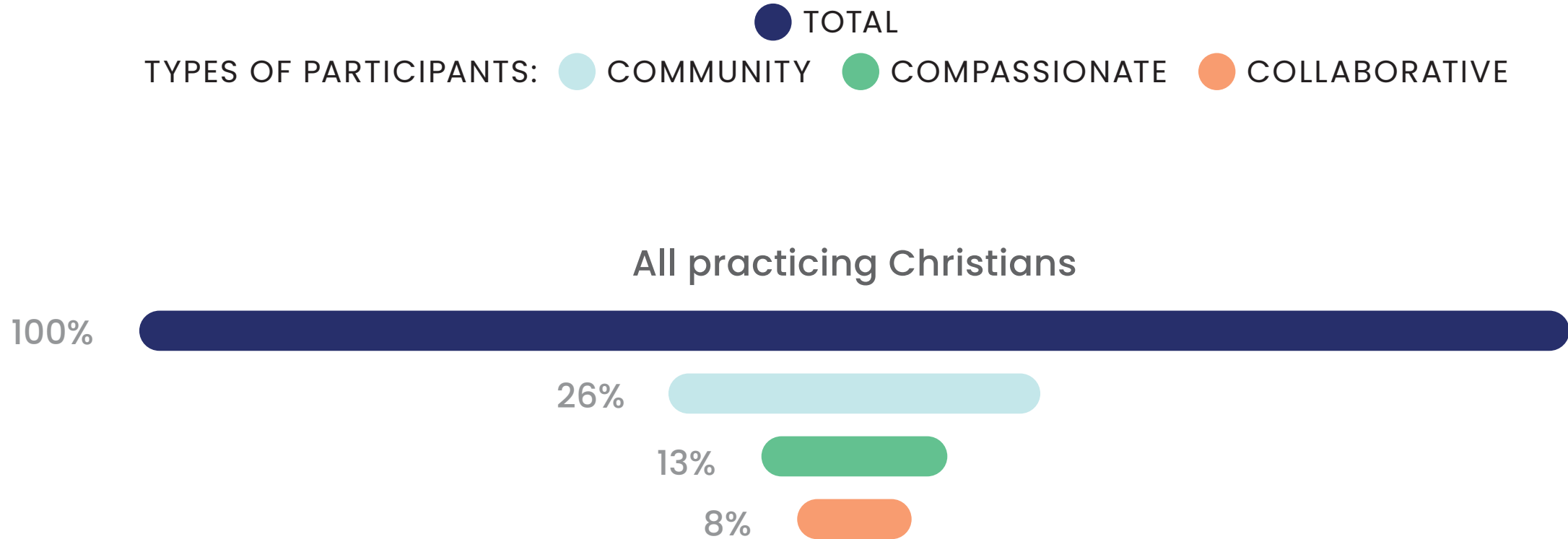
- 45 PERCENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS ARE... **COMPASSIONATE**

*Community participants who have connected with other members independently over their interests or a desire to change something or help others*

- 30 PERCENT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS & 67 PERCENT OF COMPASSIONATE PARTICIPANTS ARE... **COLLABORATIVE**

*Compassionate participants who have been involved in a group where things were shared—passions, dues, decisions and so on—and the community was impacted*

# A Spectrum of Engagement

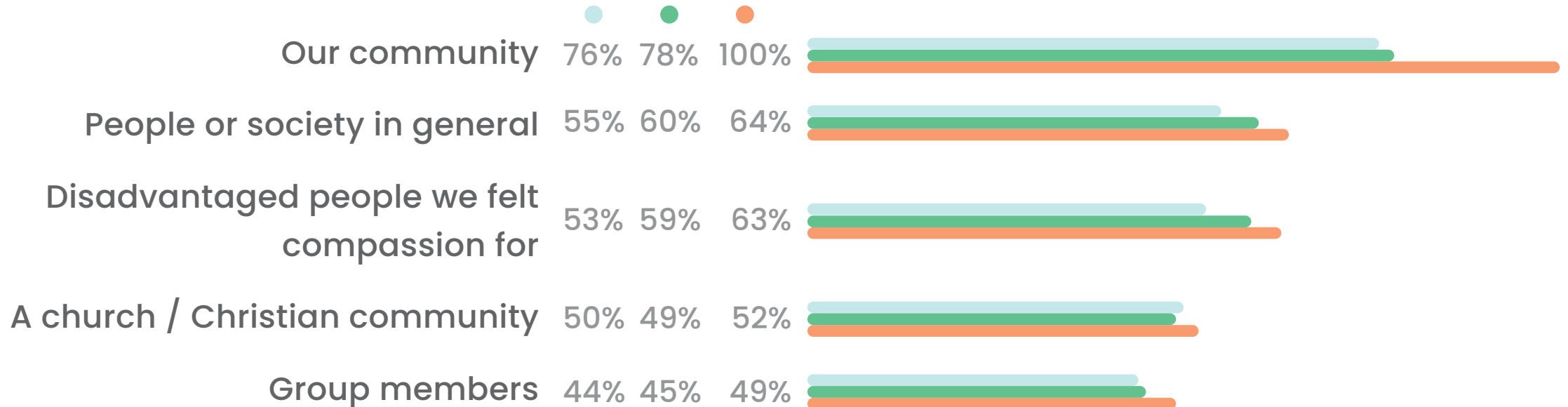


# Who & Where: Beneficiaries of Groups Part 1

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**"Who benefited from this group?"**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

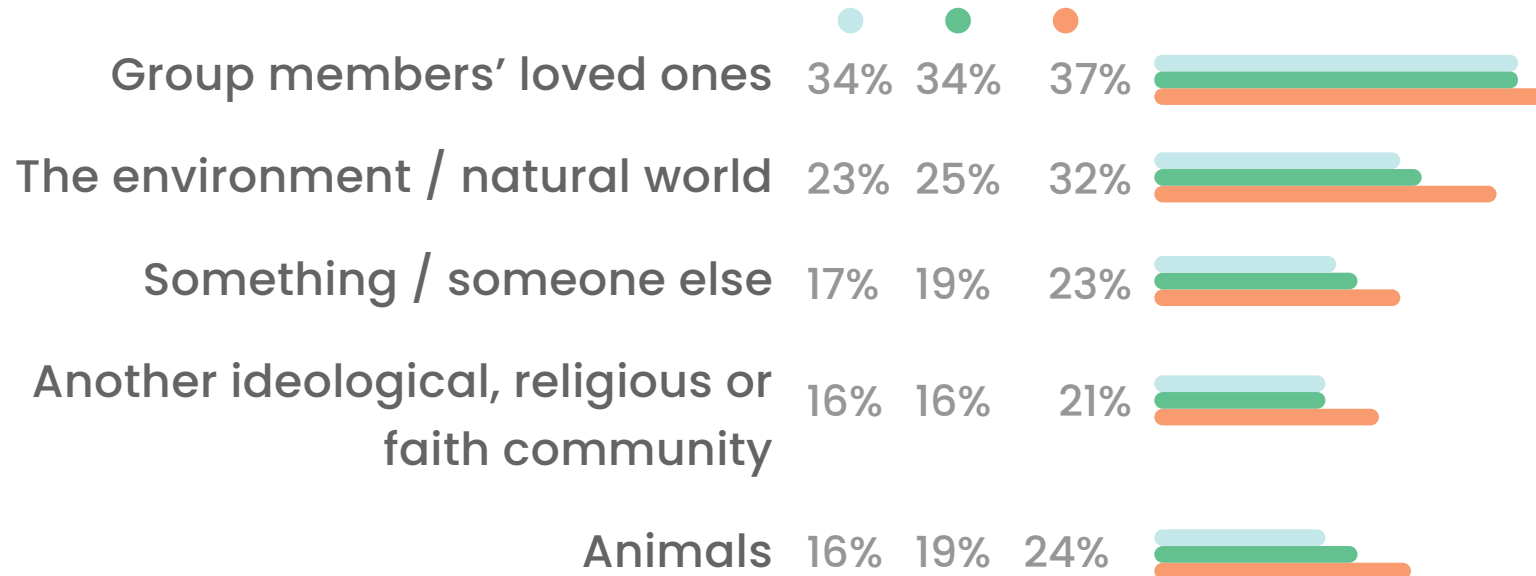


# Who & Where: Beneficiaries of Groups Part 2

Base: practicing Christian community participants

**"Who benefited from this group?"**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

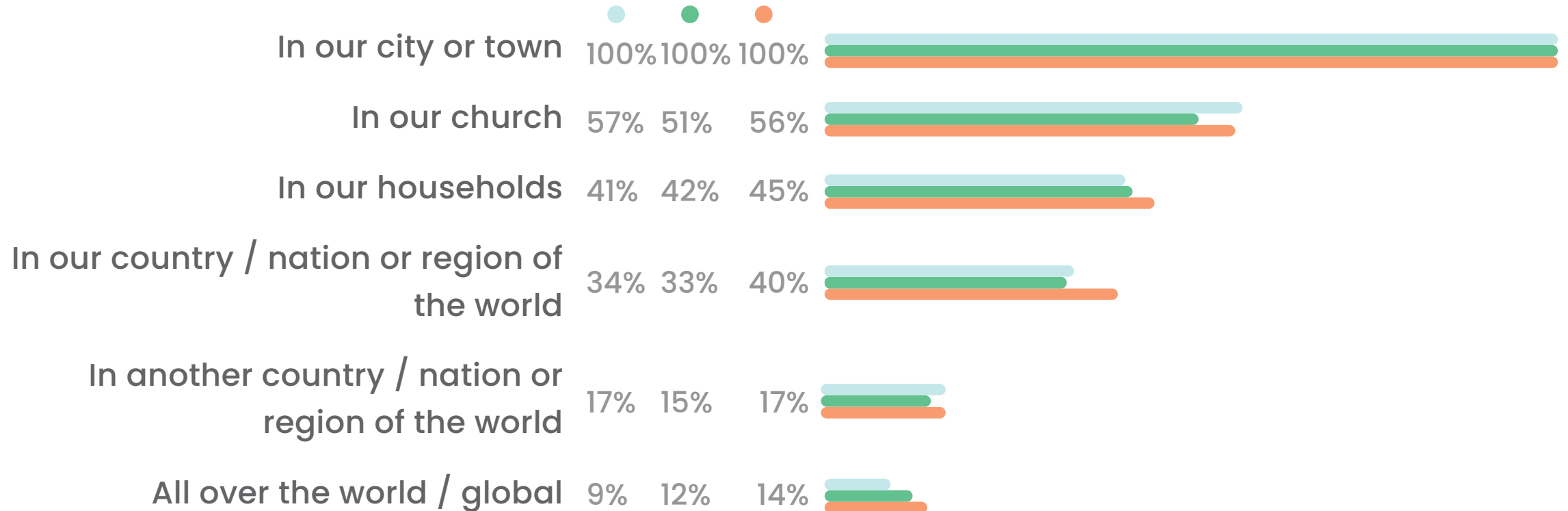


# Who & Where: Beneficiaries of Groups

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**"Where did your group have an effect?"**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



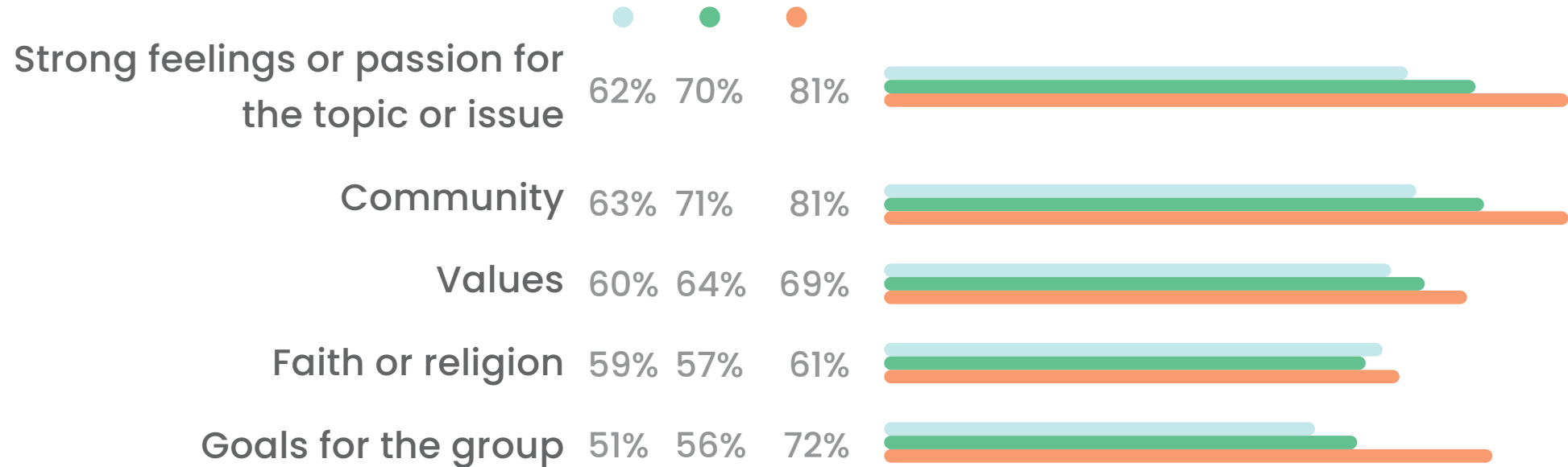


# Common Ground in Groups Part 1

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**“Which of the following did the members of those groups share or have in common? Select all that apply.”**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

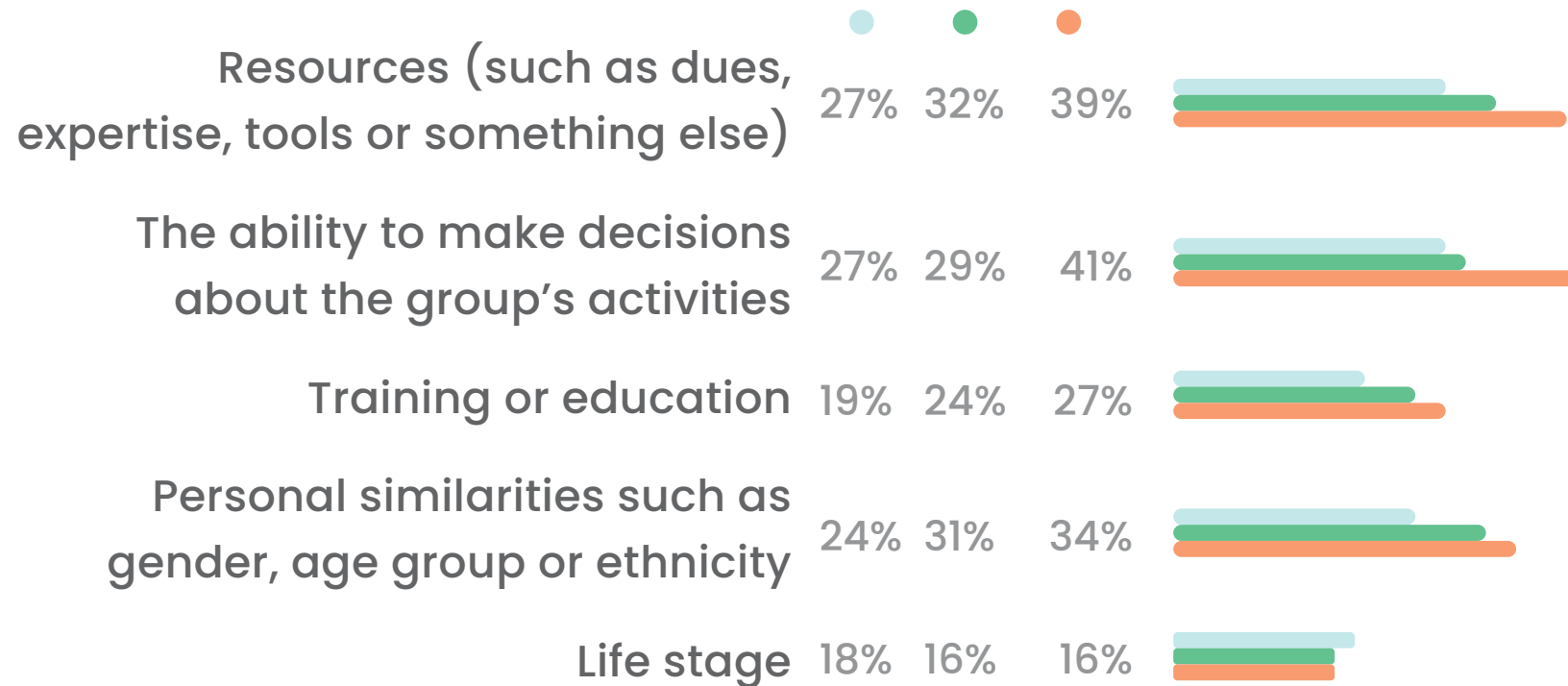


# Common Ground in Groups Part 2

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**“Which of the following did the members of those groups share or have in common? Select all that apply.”**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

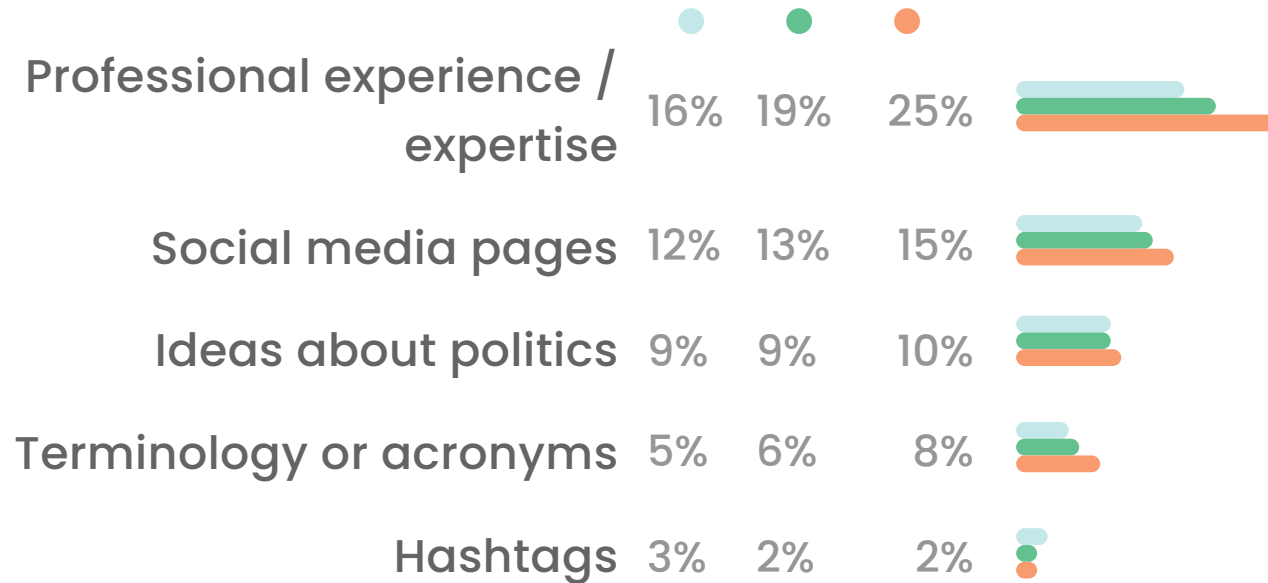


# Common Ground in Groups Part 3

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**“Which of the following did the members of those groups share or have in common? Select all that apply.”**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



# A Spectrum of Engagement

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS:\*

- COMMUNITY
- COMPASSIONATE
- COLLABORATIVE

Base: practicing Christian community participants

The plurality of practicing Christians who contribute in their communities reports living in the suburbs. Roughly one-quarter is in an urban context, with the rest calling rural areas home.

Suburbia  
● 42% ● 40% ● 43%

Small Town / Country  
● 13% ● 11% ● 11%

Urbanites  
● 24% ● 25% ● 22%

Practicing Christian participants—already defined by monthly church attendance—are a steady weekly presence in services.

Weekly Church Attendance ● 77% ● 74% ● 74%

Though practicing Christian participants are generally more likely to be women, there is equal gender representation among the collaborative participants.

Male ● 41% ● 45% ● 50%  
Female ● 59% ● 55% ● 50%

The ethnic makeup of practicing Christians with community group experience mirrors that of the general population.

White ● 72% ● 76% ● 71%  
Hispanic ● 11% ● 10% ● 12%  
Black ● 12% ● 11% ● 15%

Parents of Children Under 18  
● 64% ● 49% ● 51%

Boomers ● 41% ● 44% ● 44%  
Gen X ● 20% ● 22% ● 21%  
Millennial ● 27% ● 21% ● 23%

Likely because of more opportunity and life experience, Boomers are more likely than younger generations to be represented among practicing Christians who have contributed to their neighborhoods at some point.

Most practicing Christians who have had some involvement in community groups—about two-thirds—are parents.

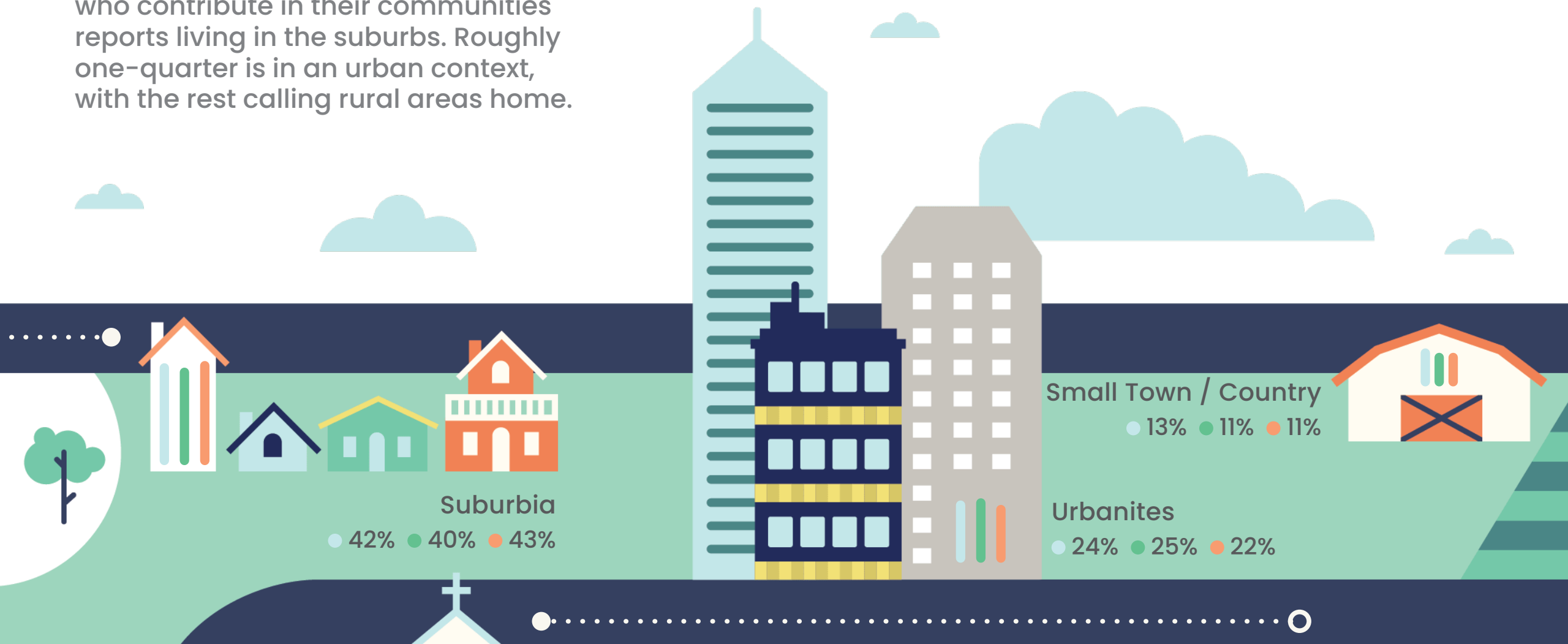
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# A Spectrum of Engagement

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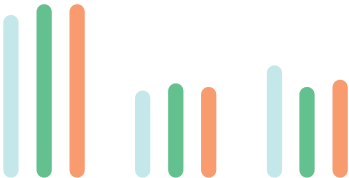
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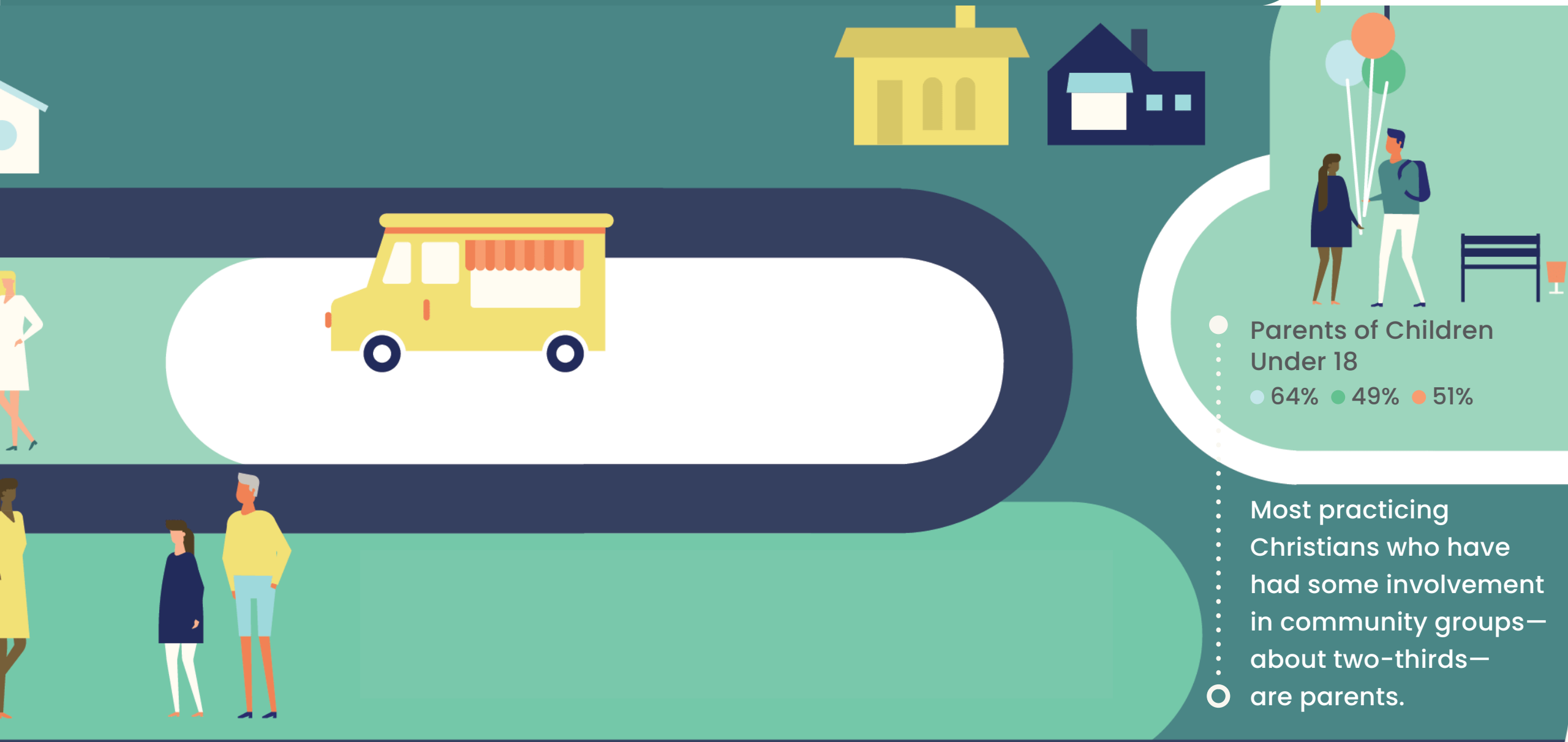


# A Spectrum of Engagement

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS:\*

- COMMUNITY
- COMPASSIONATE
- COLLABORATIVE

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*



● Parents of Children Under 18

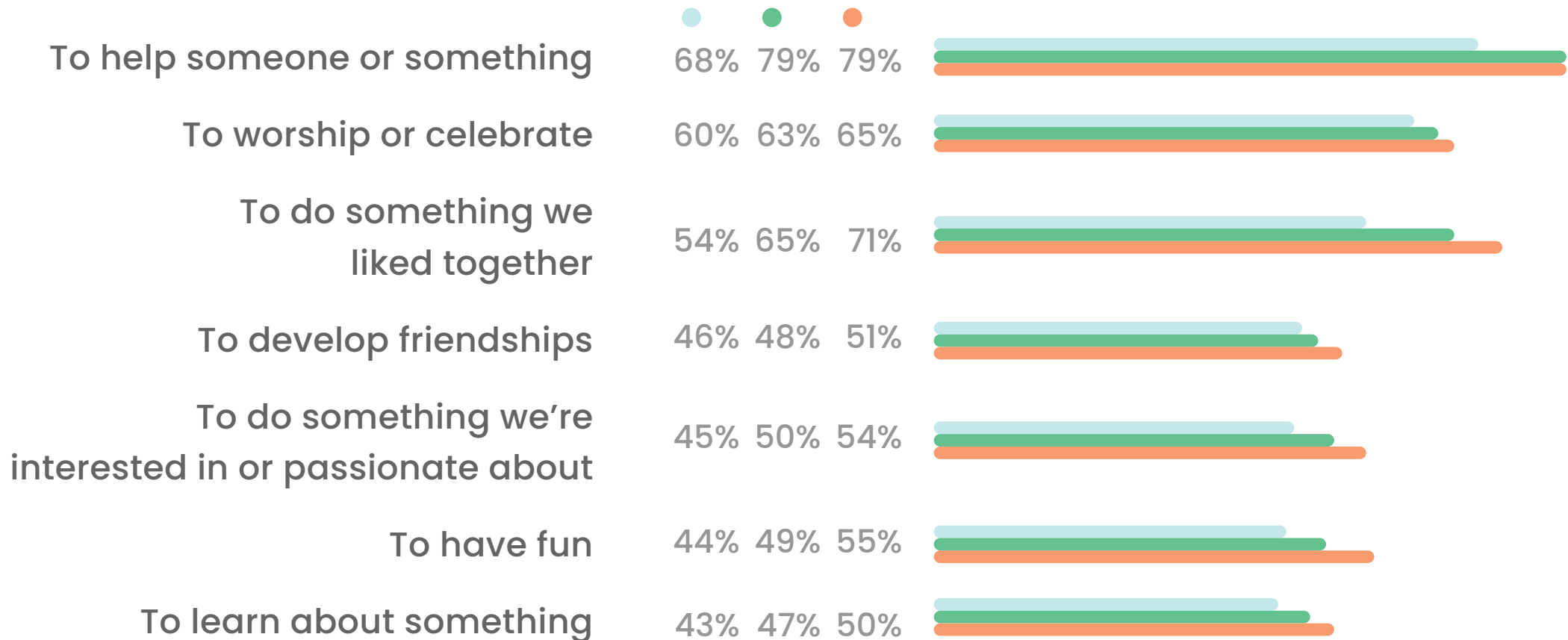
● 64% ● 49% ● 51%

○ Most practicing Christians who have had some involvement in community groups—about two-thirds—are parents.

# Group Reasons for Gathering Part 1

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

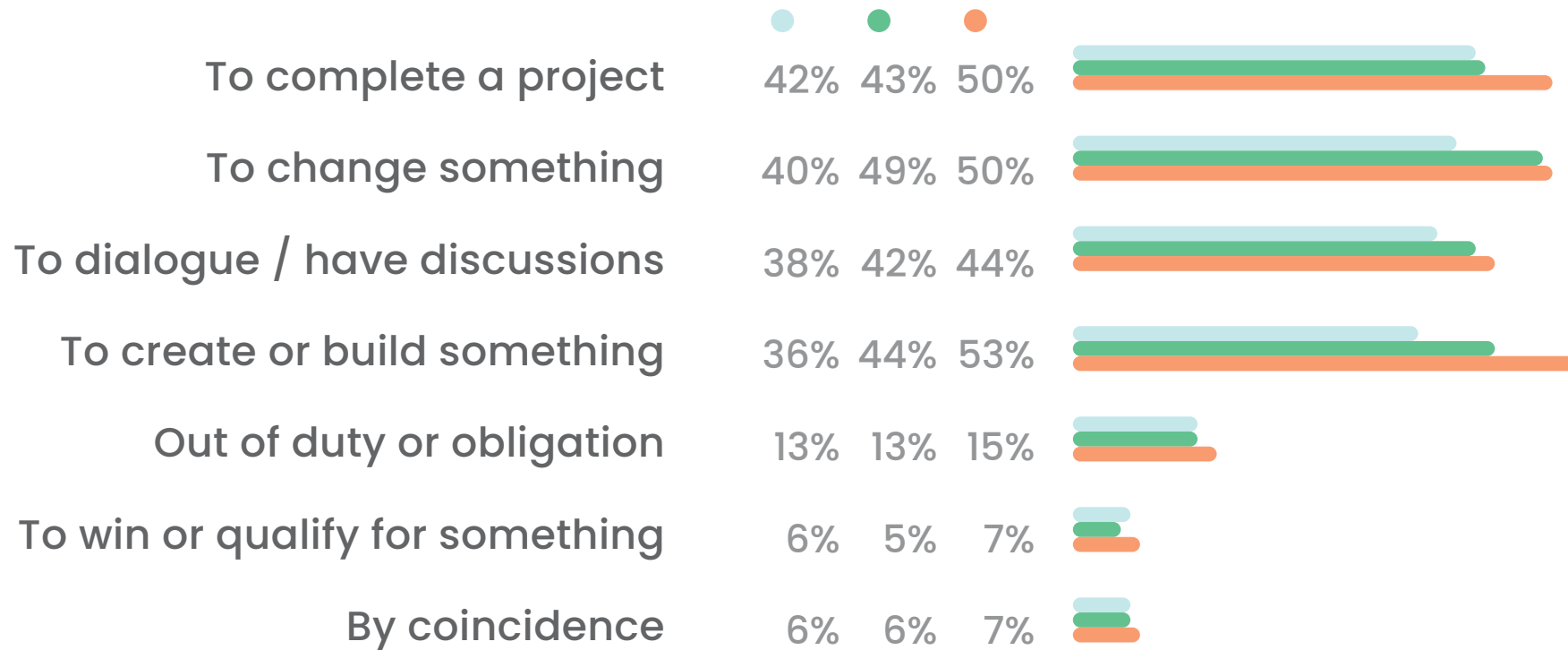
TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



# Group Reasons for Gathering Part 2

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

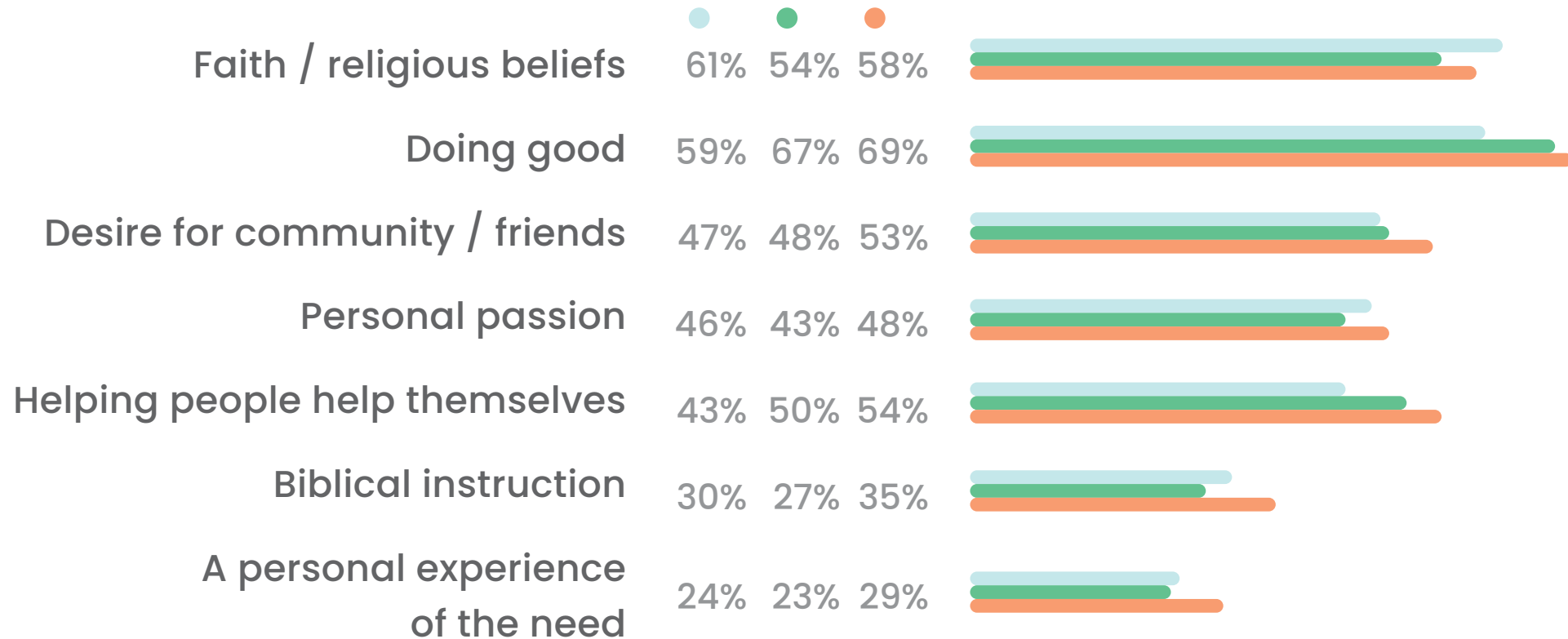


# Personal Reasons for Being Involved in a Group Part 1

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*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

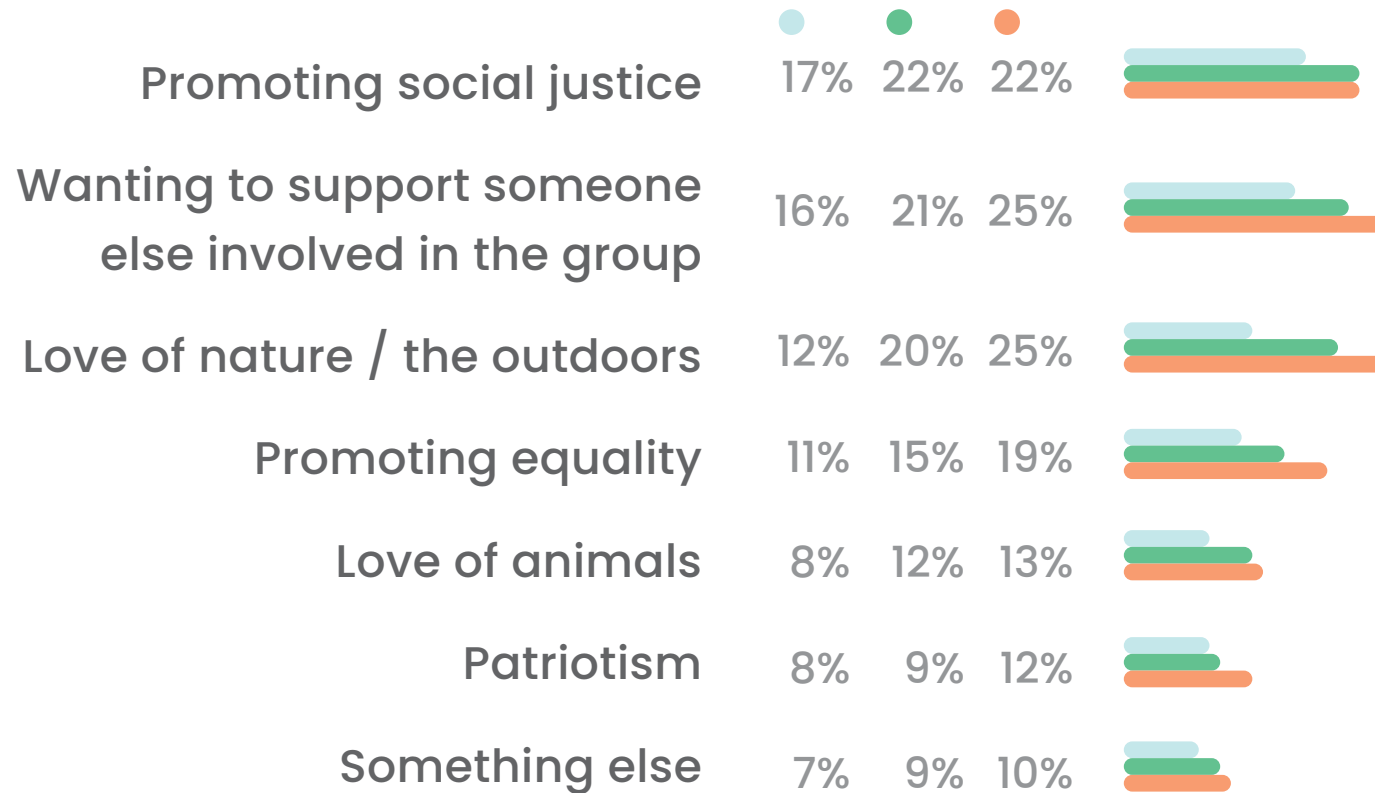


# Personal Reasons for Being Involved in a Group Part 2

Barna

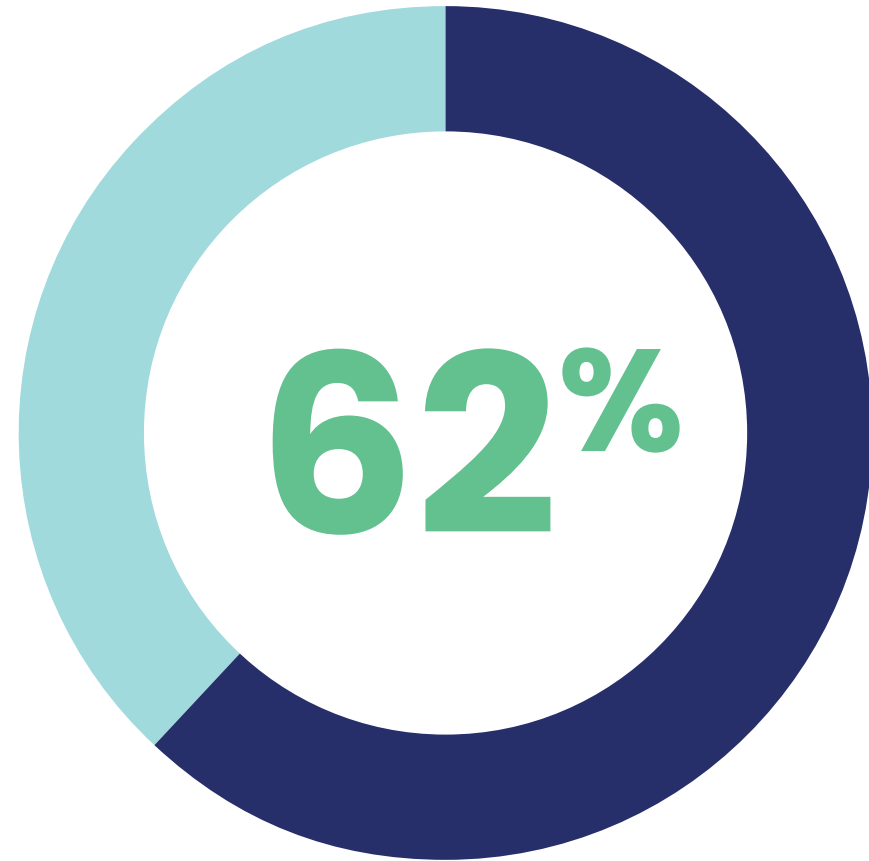
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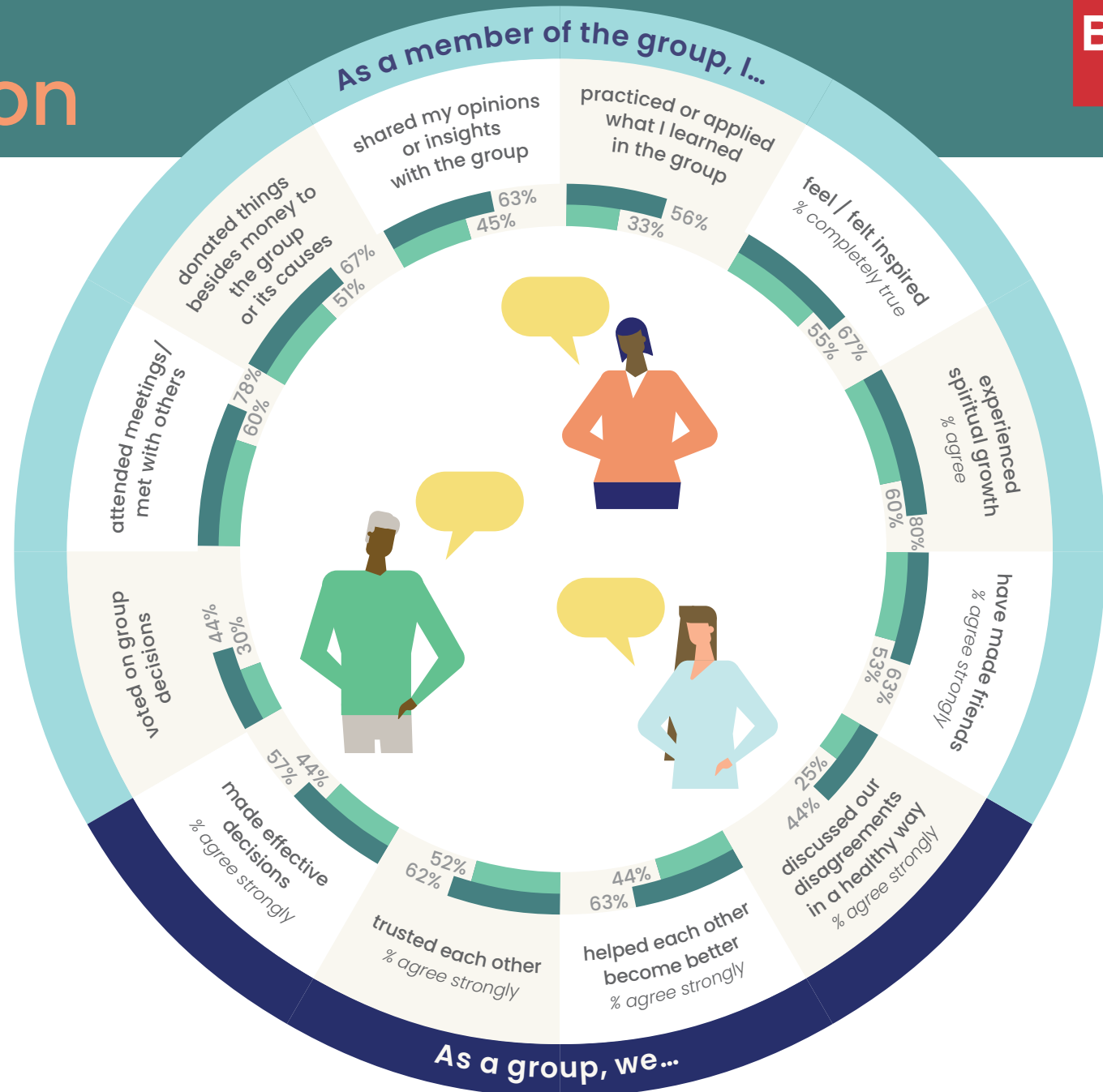
# The Power of Passion

**62%** of practicing Christians who participated in a community group shared a strong passion for the cause with their fellow group members. In several dimensions, this mutual enthusiasm correlates with deeper engagement and positive outcomes.



# The Power of Passion

- COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS IN GROUPS THAT SHARE A PASSION
- COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS IN GROUPS THAT DO NOT SHARE A PASSION



# The Power of Passion Part 1

As a member of the group, I ...

● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT SHARE  
A PASSION

voted on group  
decisions



donated things besides money to  
the group or its causes



● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT DO NOT  
SHARE A PASSION

attended meetings /  
met with others



shared my opinions or  
insights with the group





# The Power of Passion Part 2

As a member of the group, I ...

● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT SHARE  
A PASSION

practiced or applied what  
I learned in the group



experienced spiritual growth  
*% agree*



● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT DO NOT  
SHARE A PASSION

feel / felt inspired  
*% completely true*



have made friends  
*% completely strongly*



# The Power of Passion Part 3

As a group, we ...

● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT SHARE  
A PASSION

made effective decisions  
*% agree strongly*



helped each other become better  
*% agree strongly*



● COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS  
IN GROUPS THAT DO NOT  
SHARE A PASSION

trusted each other  
*% agree strongly*



discussed our disagreements  
in a healthy way *% agree strongly*

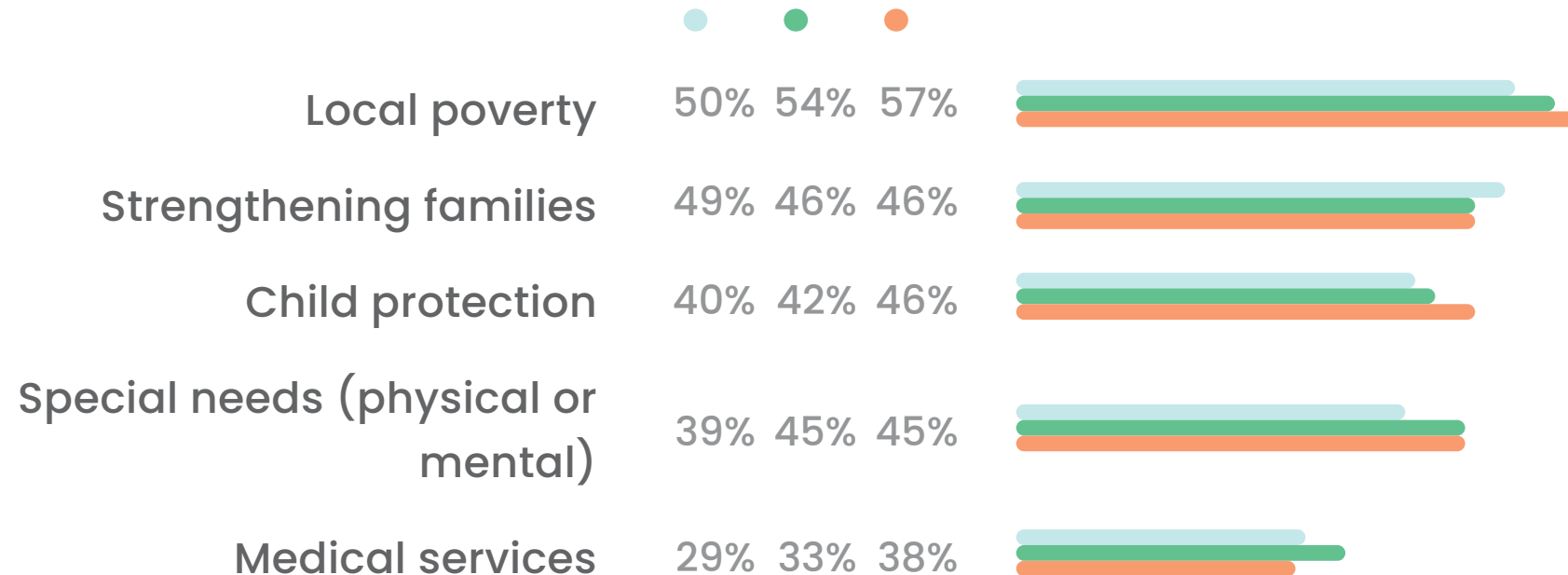


# Causes & Concerns Part 1

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

**“Are there any particular causes or issues which might affect your local community that you are particularly passionate or concerned about? Select all.”**

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

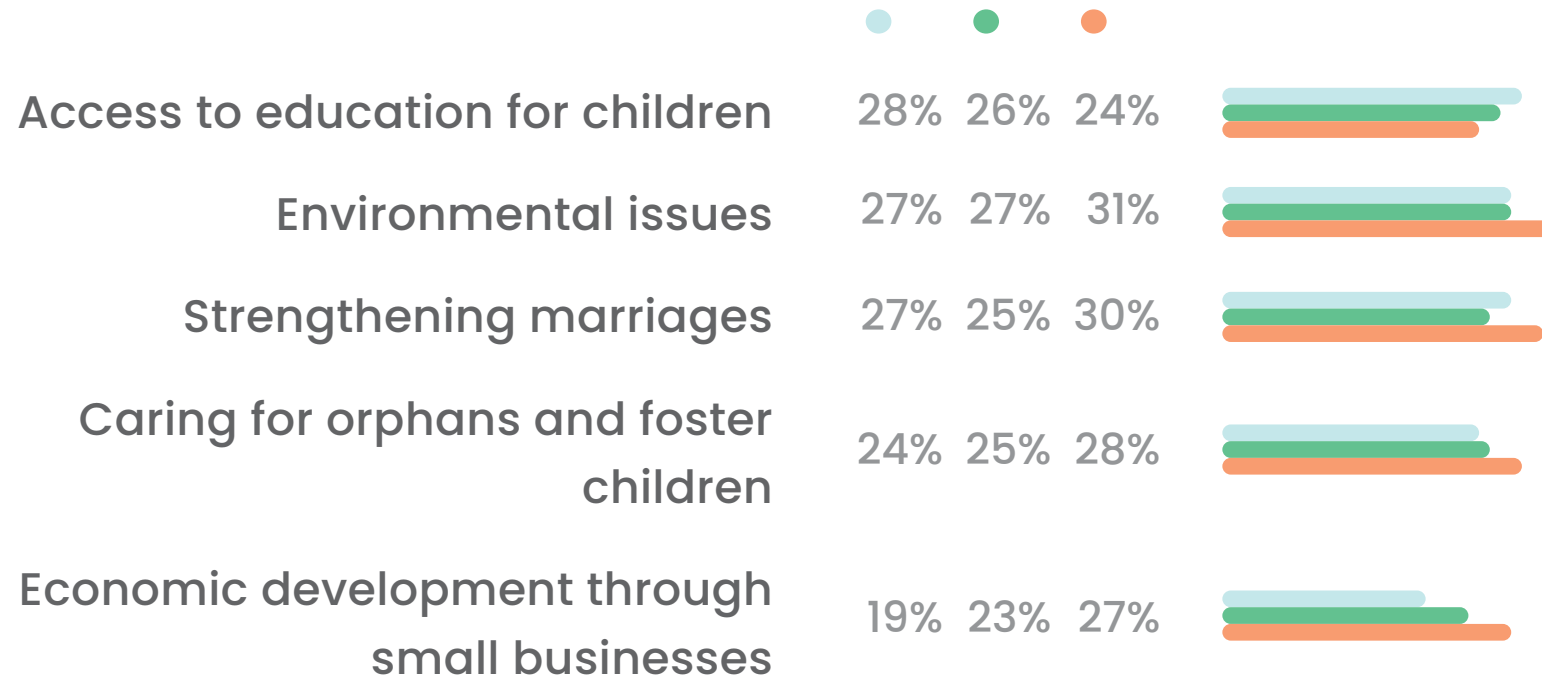


# Causes & Concerns Part 2

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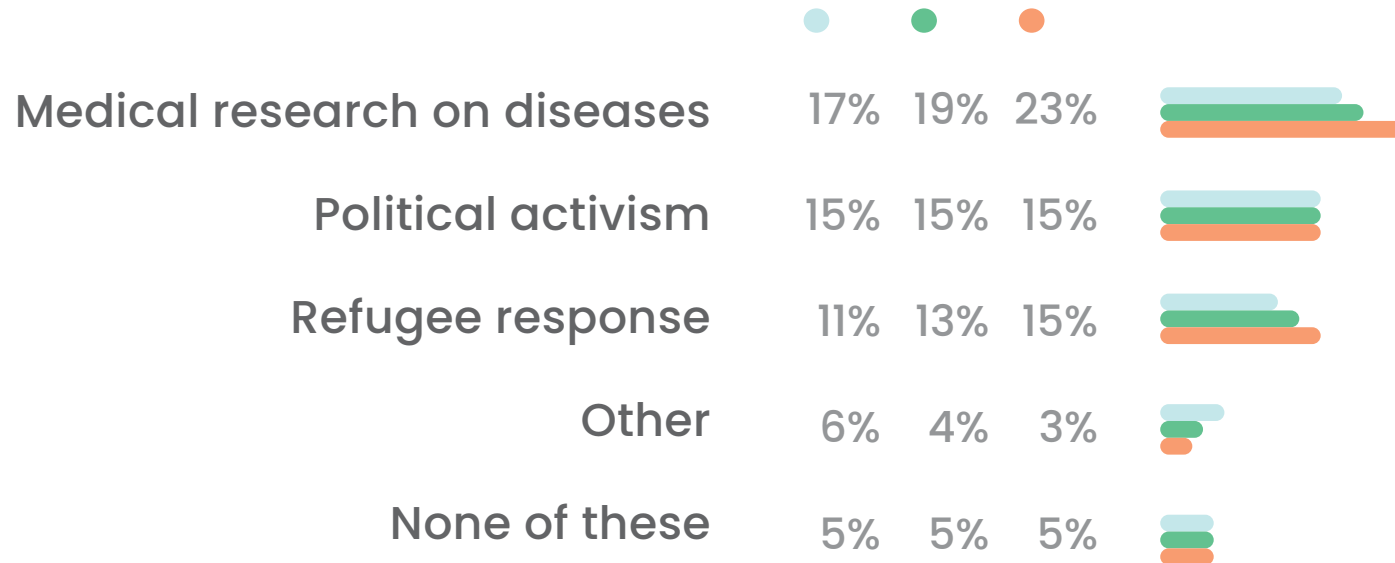


# Causes & Concerns Part 3

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

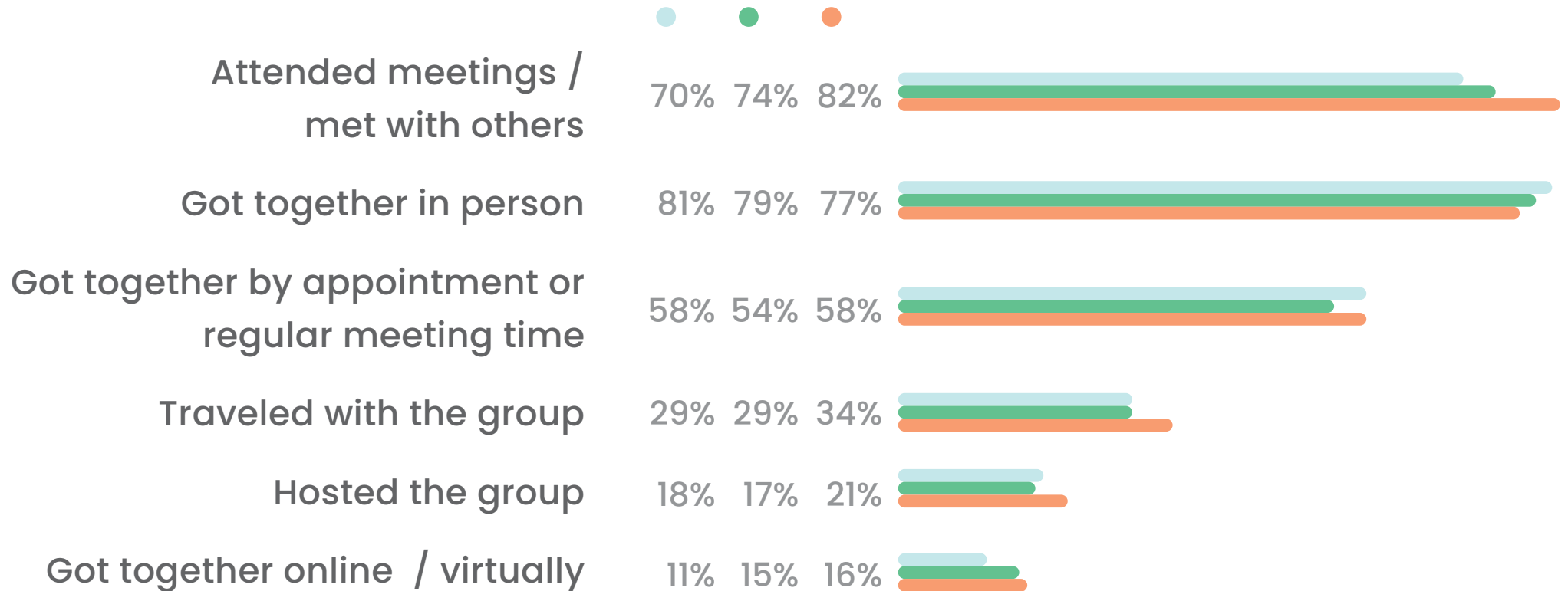
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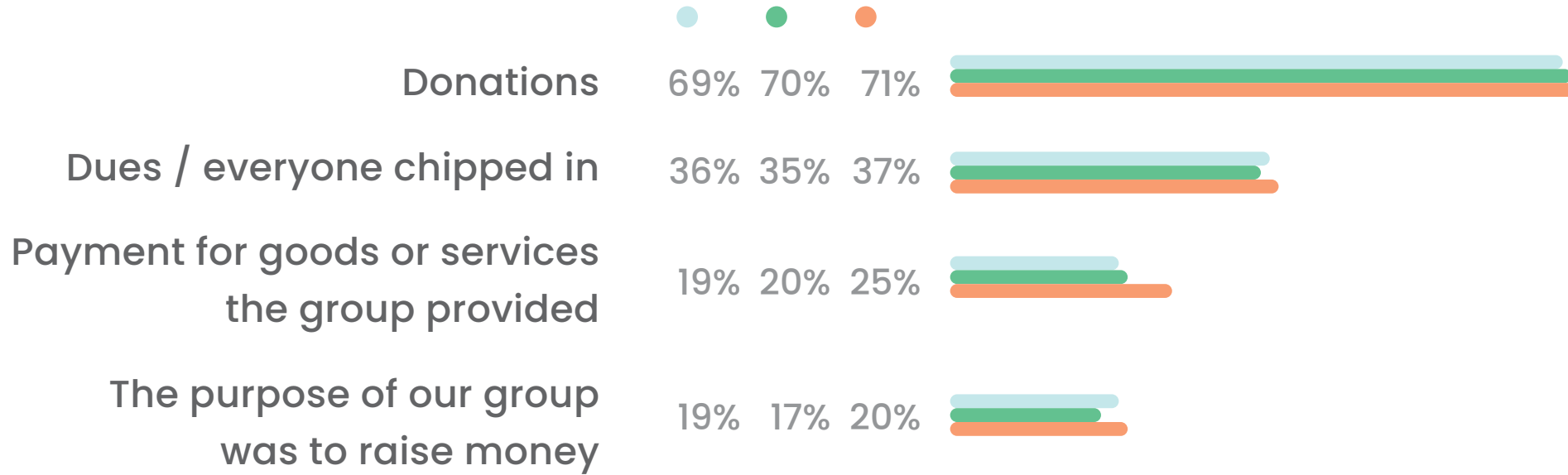
# Group Meetings

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



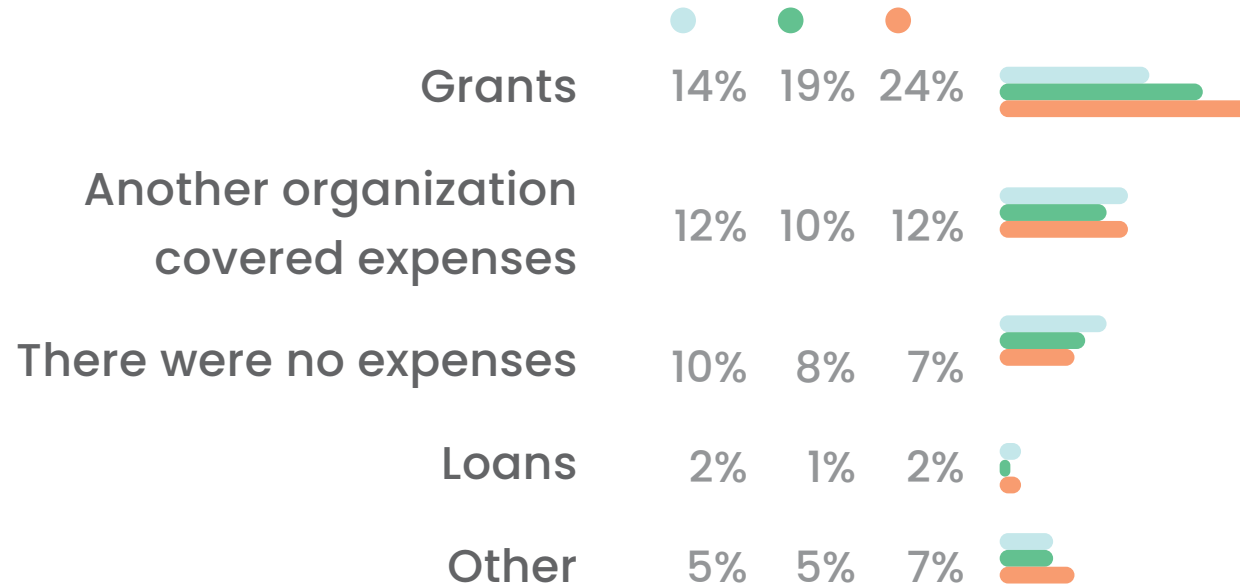
# Group Finances Part 1

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



# Group Finances Part 2

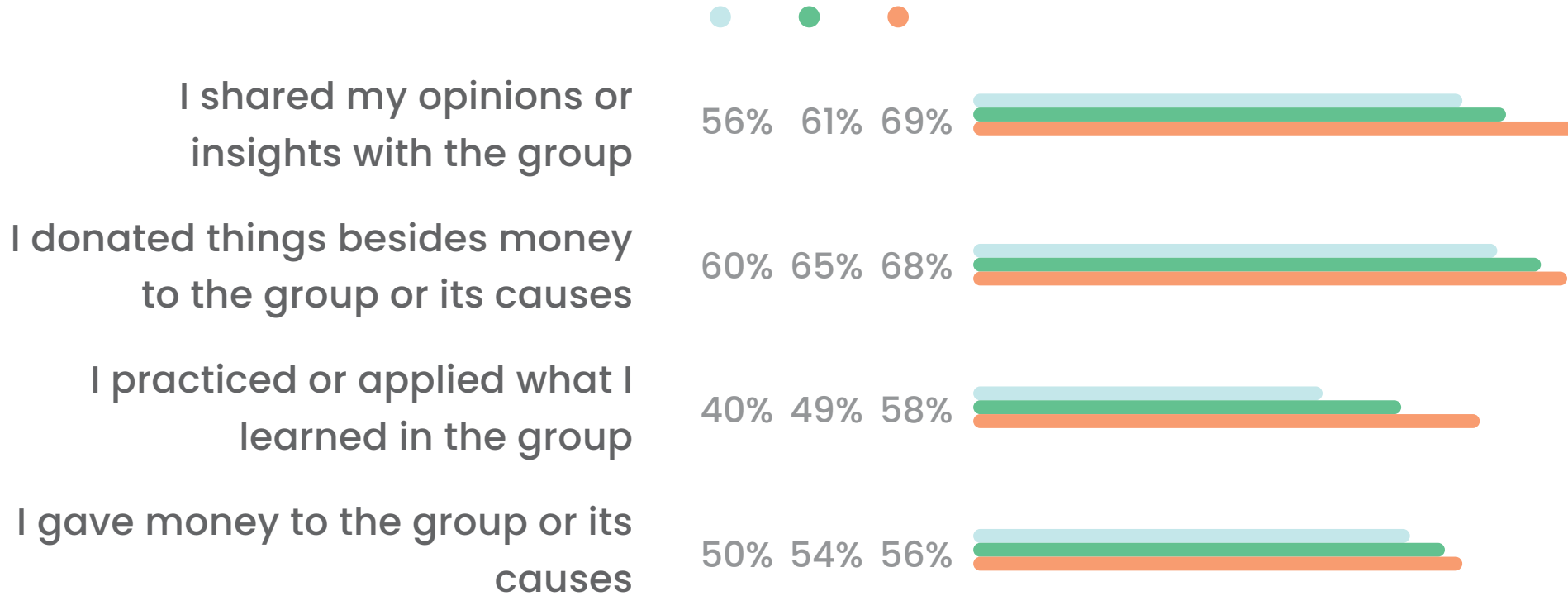
TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE





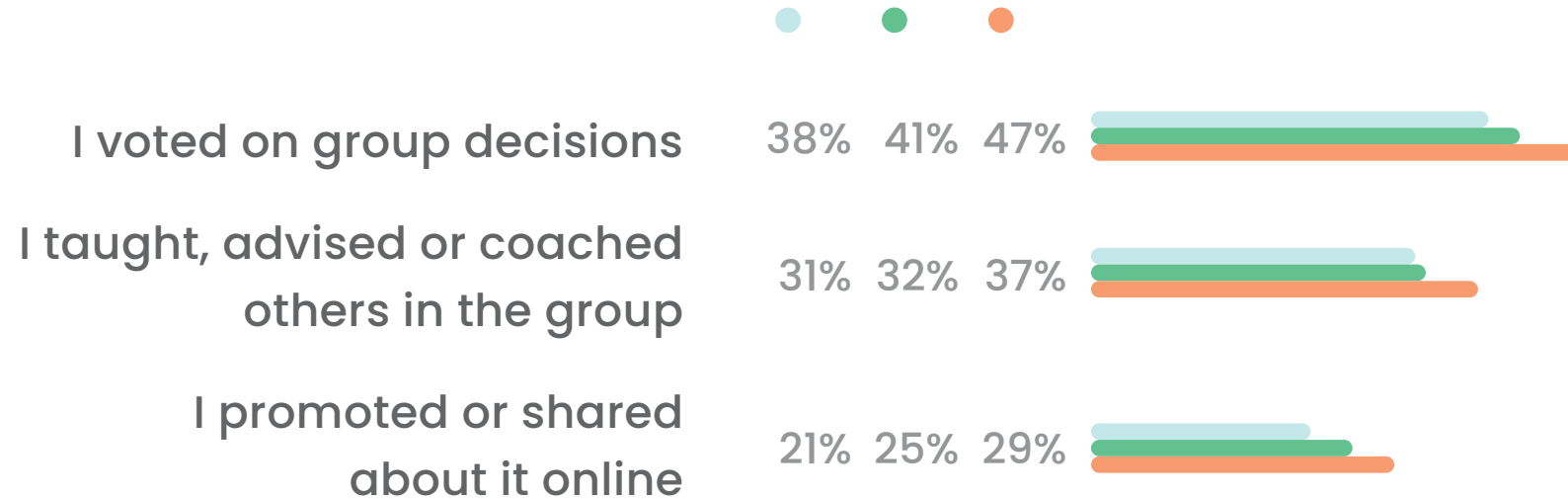
# Group Engagement Part 1

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



# Group Engagement Part 2

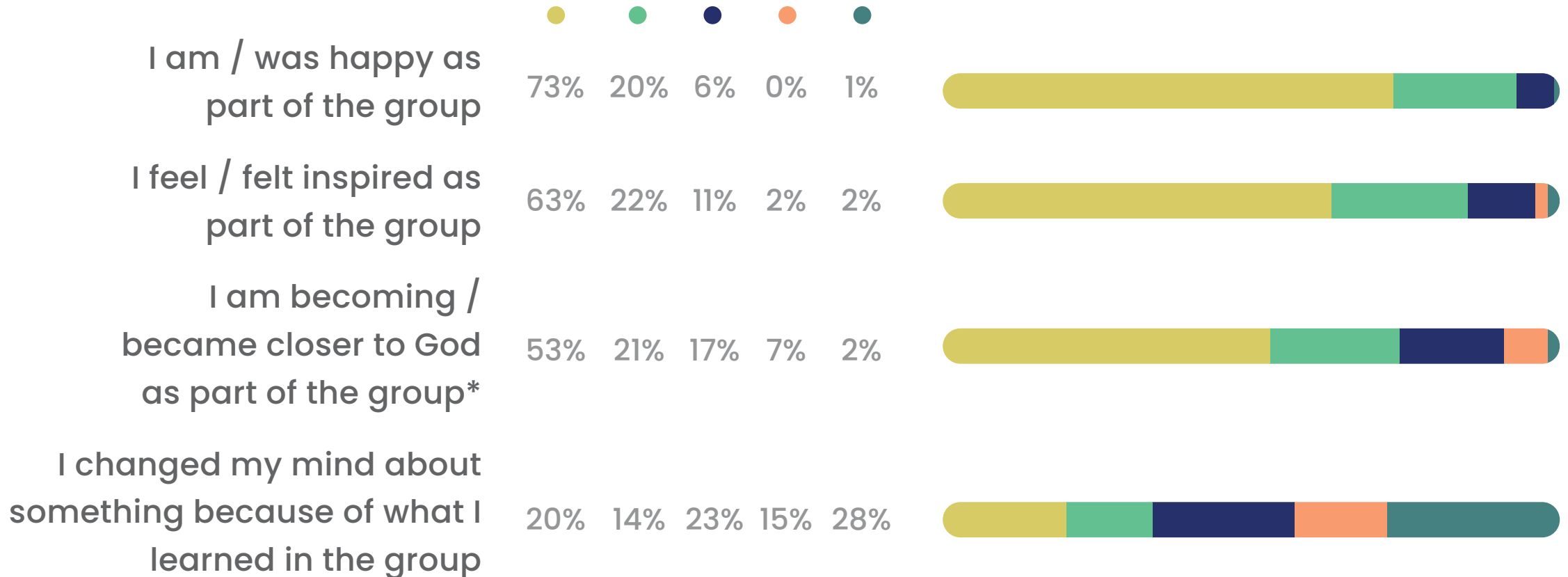
TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE



# Personal Outcomes in Successful Groups

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

● COMPLETELY TRUE ● MOSTLY TRUE ● SOMEWHAT TRUE  
● A LITTLE TRUE ● NOT TRUE AT ALL

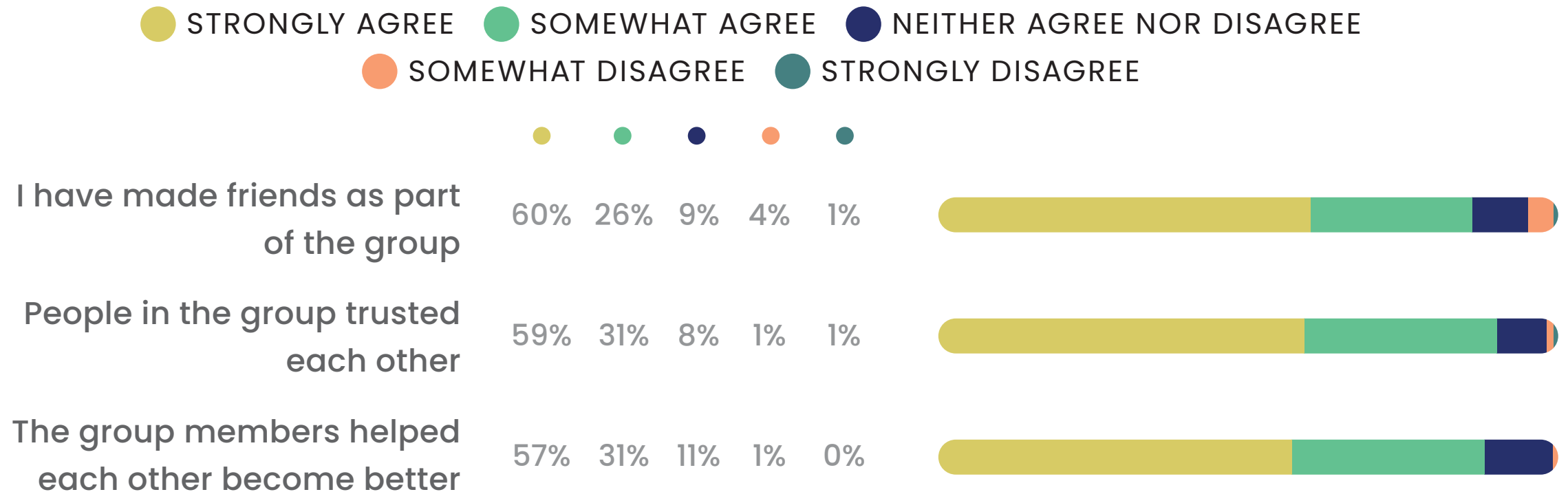


# Relational Dynamics in Successful Groups

## Part 1

Barna

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

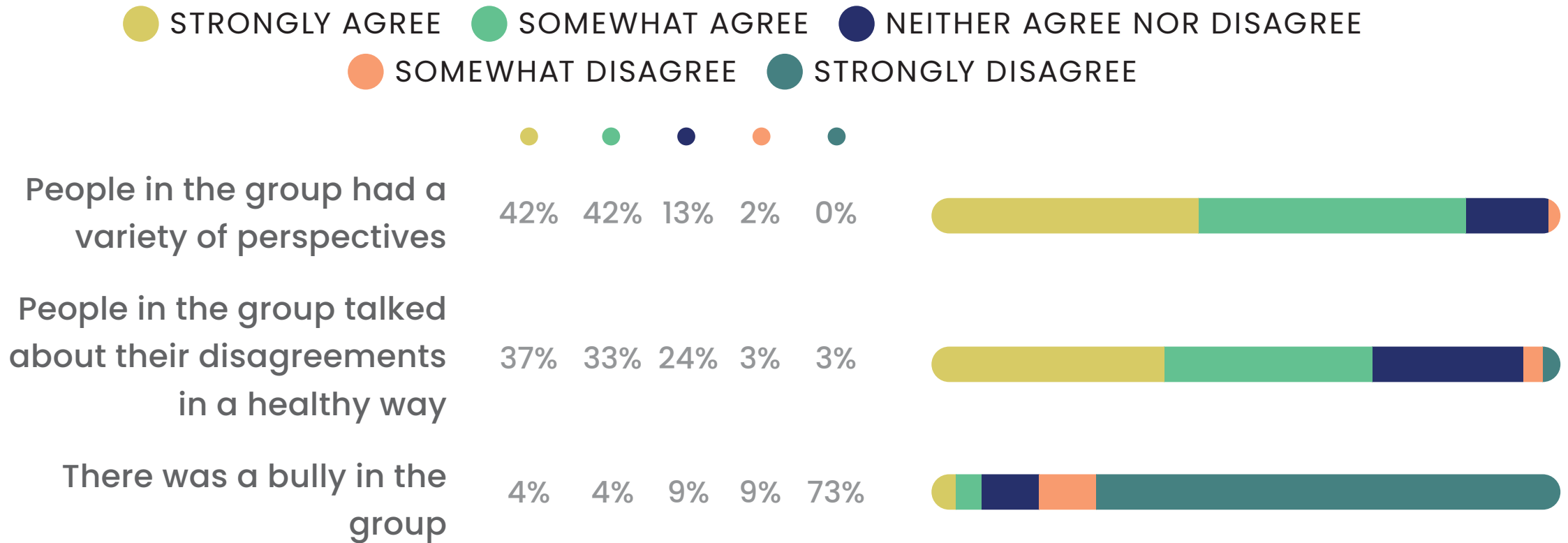


# Relational Dynamics in Successful Groups

## Part 2

Barna

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*



# Size of Successful Groups Over Time

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

● GROUP SHRUNK IN SIZE   ● GROUP SIZE HELD STABLE   ● GROUP GREW IN SIZE



●   ●   ●  
12%   27%   61%

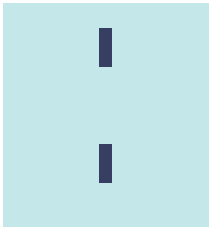
# Where Neighborhood Engagement Leads Part 1

Barna

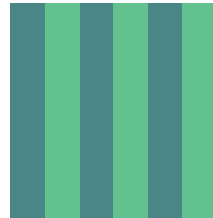
*% who strongly agree*

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS:  COMMUNITY  COMPASSIONATE  COLLABORATIVE

73%



70%

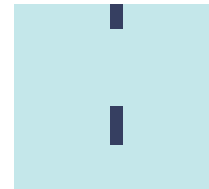


71%



I am happy

60%



50%

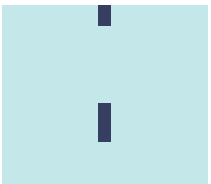


59%



I have made new friends

59%



52%

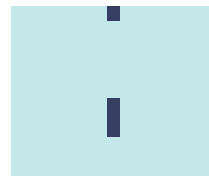


52%



We trust one another

57%



54%



61%



We help each other become better

# Where Neighborhood Engagement Leads

## Part 2

% who strongly agree

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

42%



43%



53%



We have a variety of perspectives

37%



34%

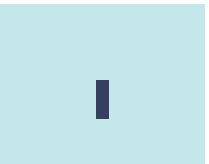


41%



We discuss our differences in a healthy way

52%



52%



59%



We made effective decisions together

20%



21%



20%



My opinion was changed about something



# Where Neighborhood Engagement Leads

## Part 3

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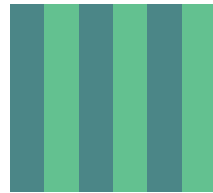
*% who strongly agree*

TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS: ● COMMUNITY ● COMPASSIONATE ● COLLABORATIVE

63%



61%



67%



I feel inspired

52%



47%

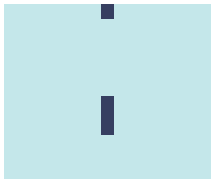


53%



I have become closer to God  
as part of the group

57%



48%



53%



Our group is well organized

# Overlapping Outcomes



74% I made new friends



82% I feel inspired



71% We trust one another



70% We help each other become better



61% I have become closer to God



84% I feel happy



81% I made new friends



83% I feel inspired



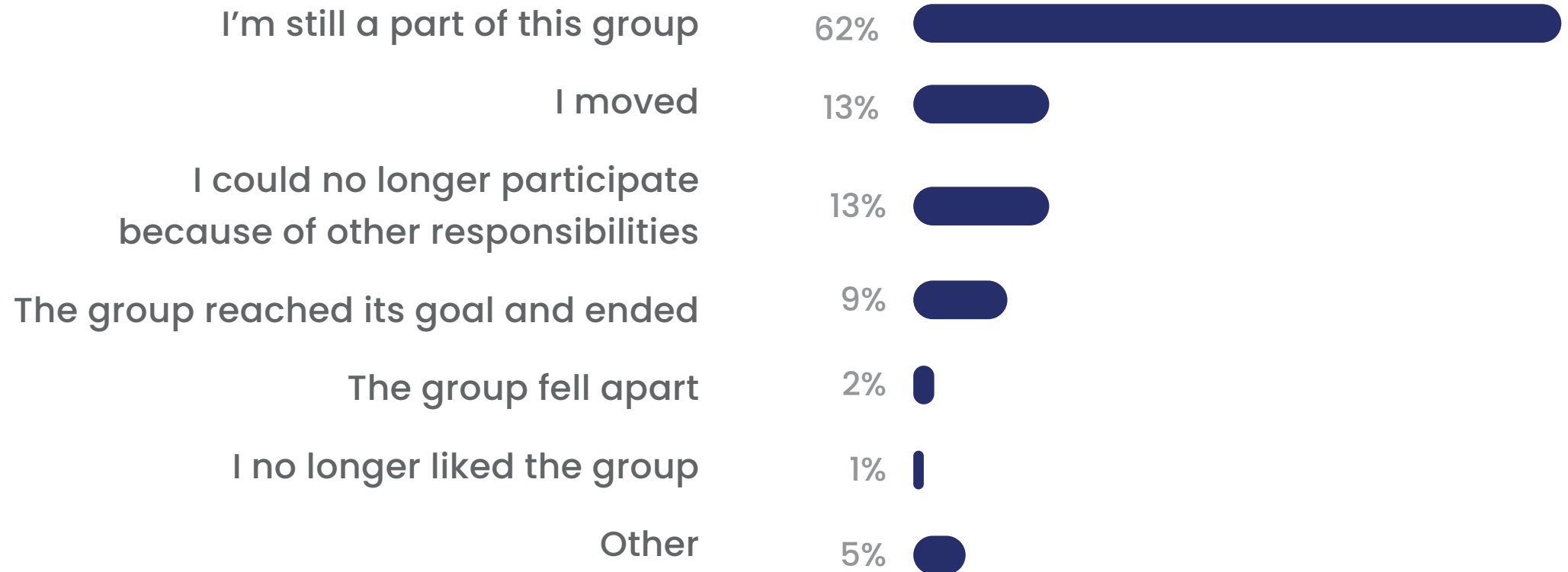
76% We trust one another



83% We help each other become better

# When Groups End

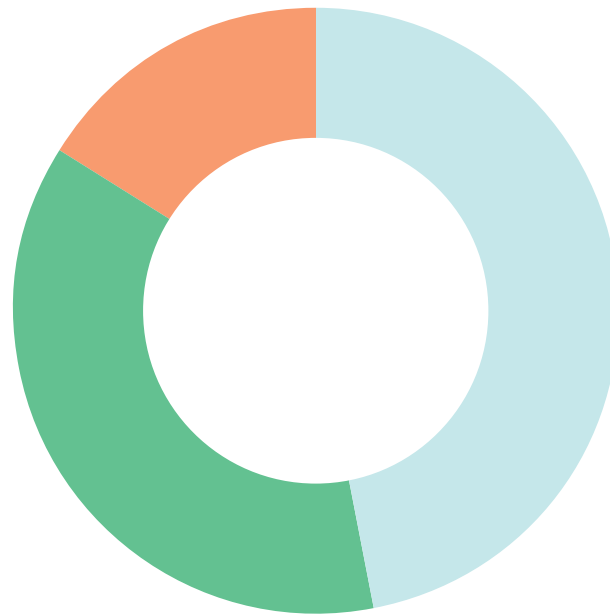
*Base: practicing Christian community participants*



# Organizational Health of Successful Groups

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

● VERY HEALTHY ● MODERATELY HEALTHY ● LESS HEALTHY



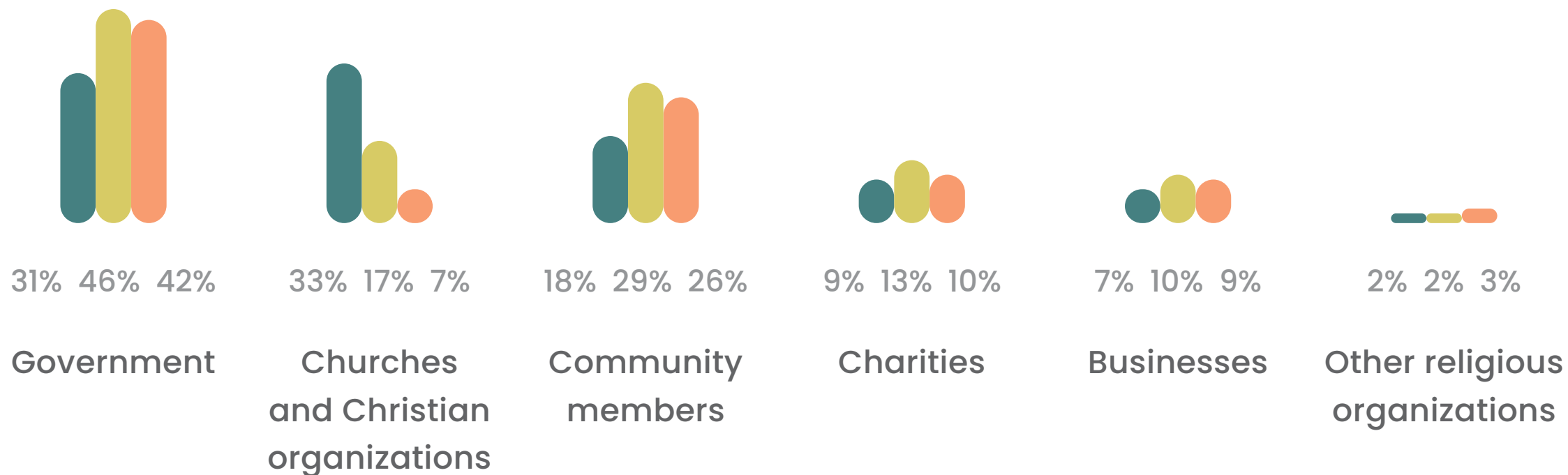
● 47% ● 37% ● 16%

# Who Is Best Suited to Solve Community Problems?

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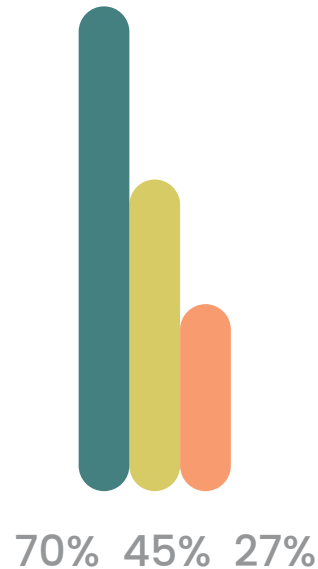
*% ranked this option #1*

● PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ● NON-PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ● NON-CHRISTIANS



# Religion's Relevance in Good Works

● PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ● NON-PRACTICING CHRISTIANS ● NON-CHRISTIANS



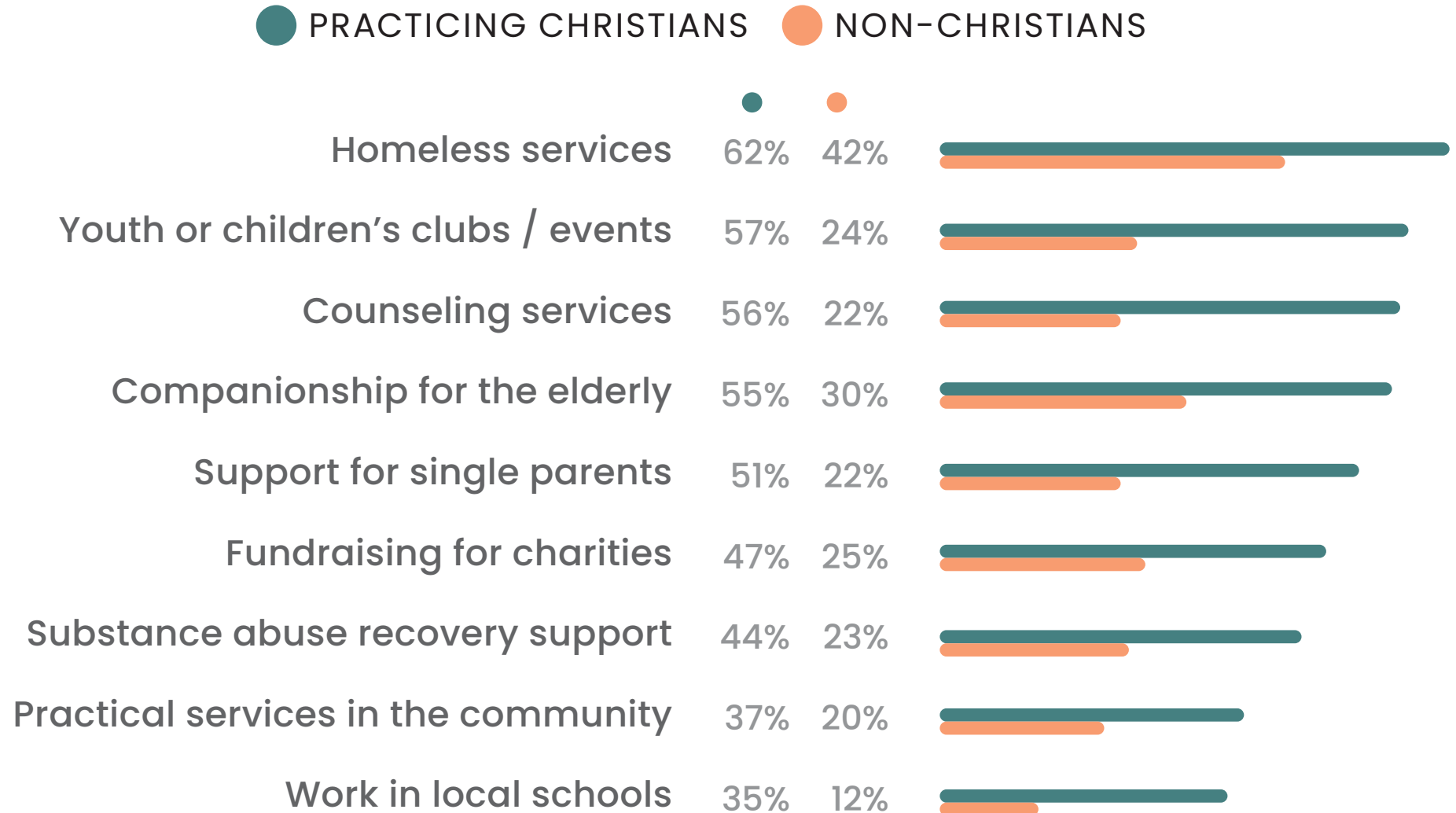
People of faith and religious organizations provide the majority of good works in the country. If these organizations didn't exist, those good works wouldn't get done.



A majority of good works would still happen even if there were no people of faith or religious organizations to do them.

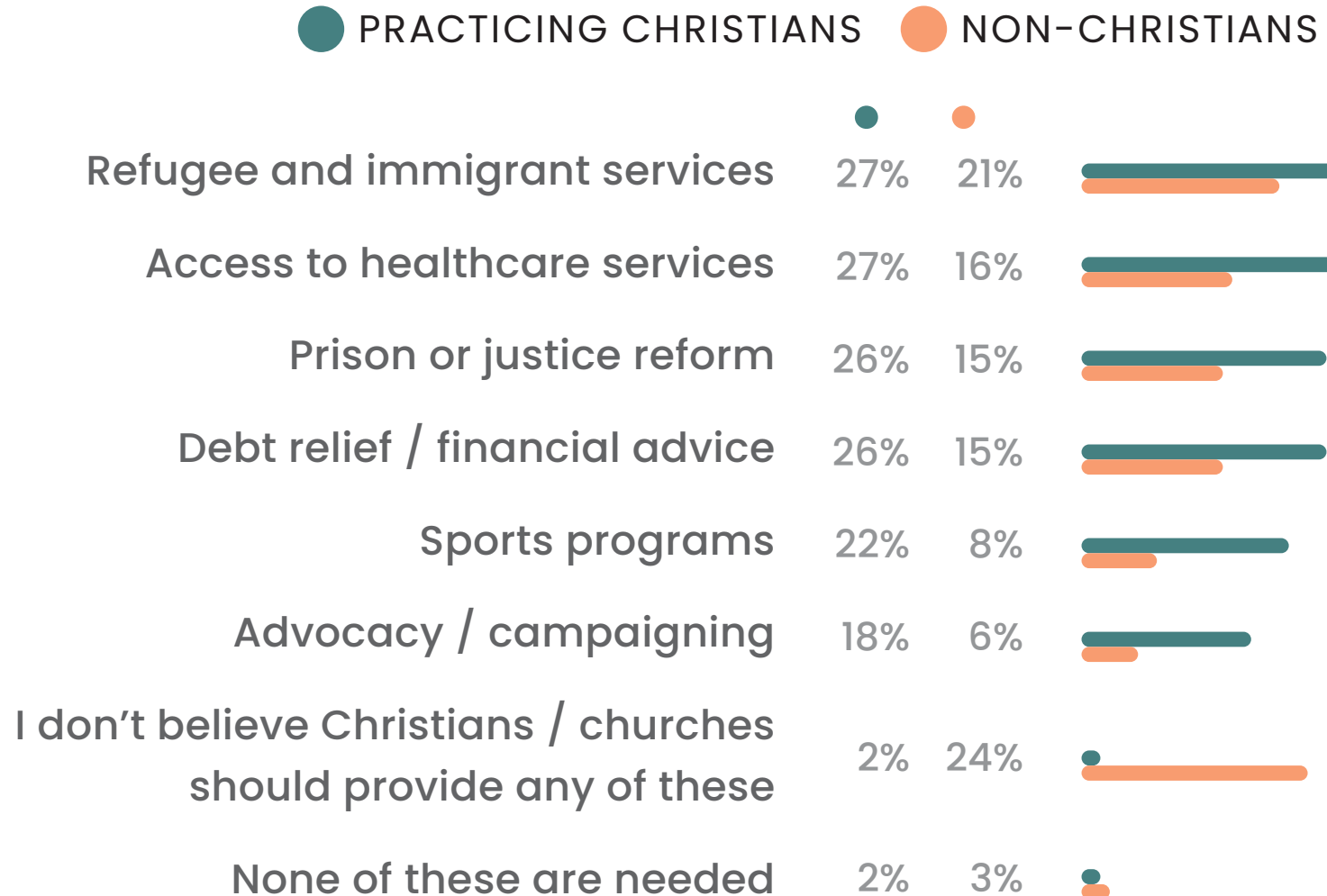
# What, If Anything, Does Your Community Need That Churches or Christian Organizations Could Provide? Part 1

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# What, If Anything, Does Your Community Need That Churches or Christian Organizations Could Provide? Part 2

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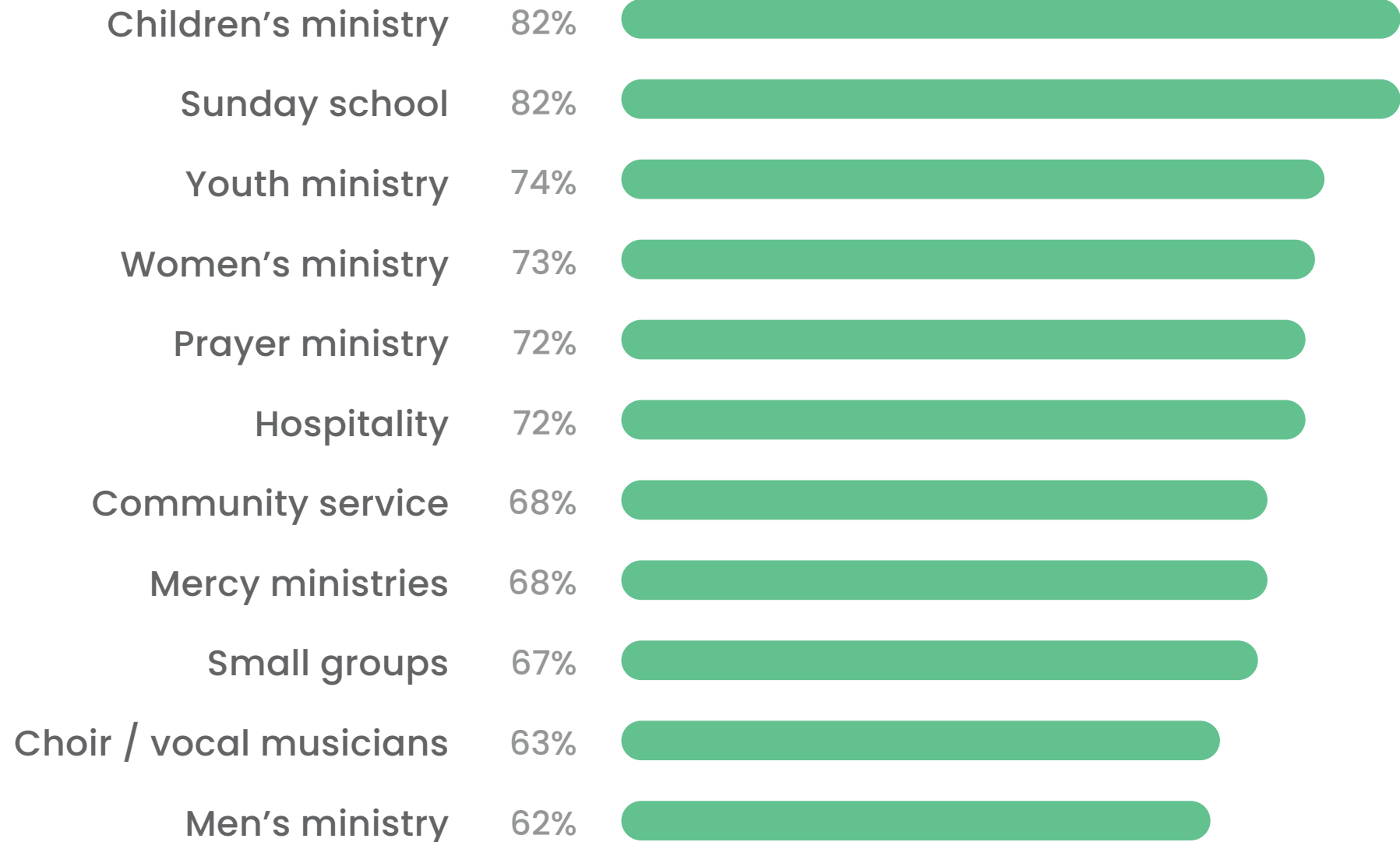




# Programs Churches Offer

## Part 1

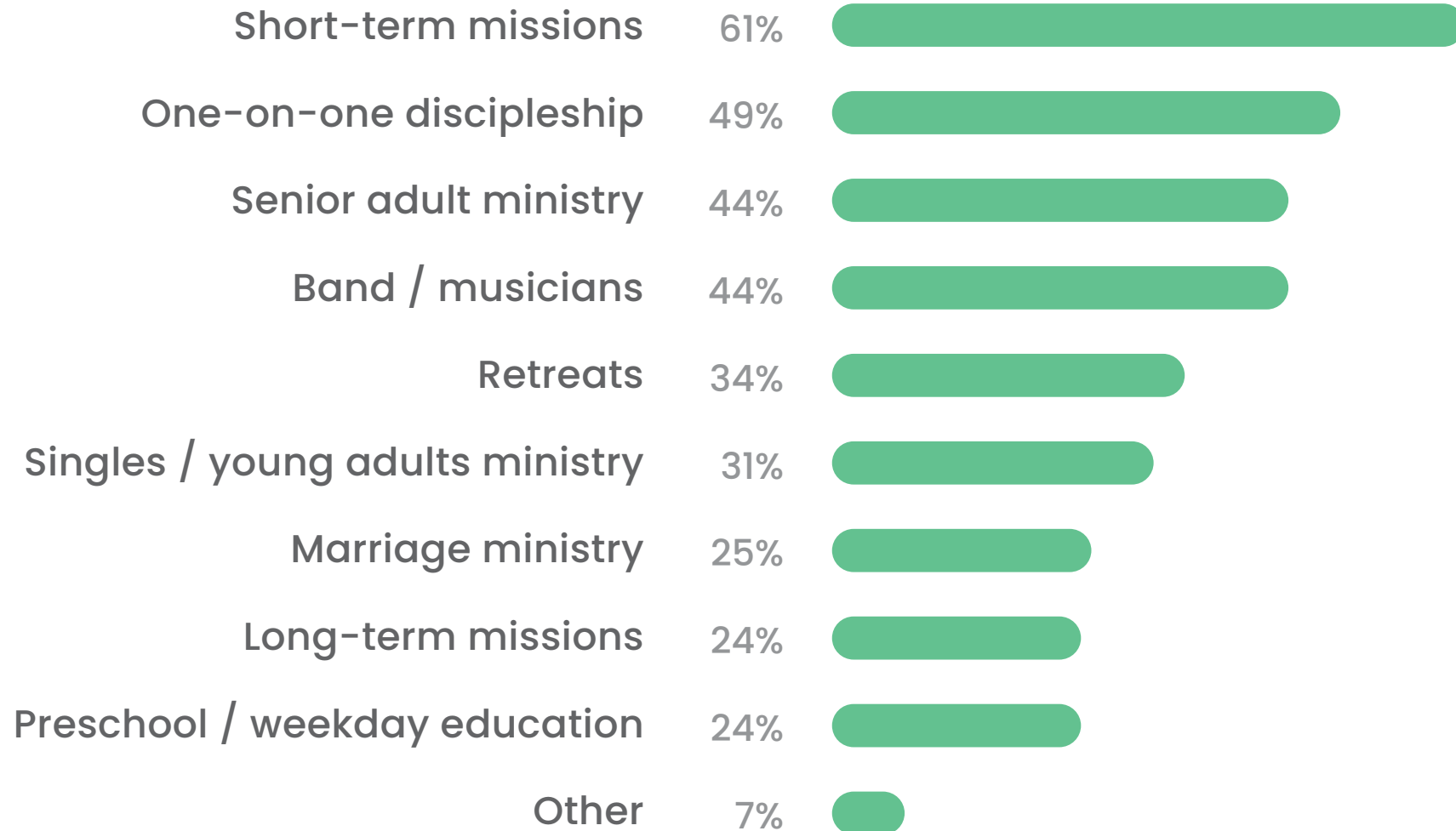
Barna



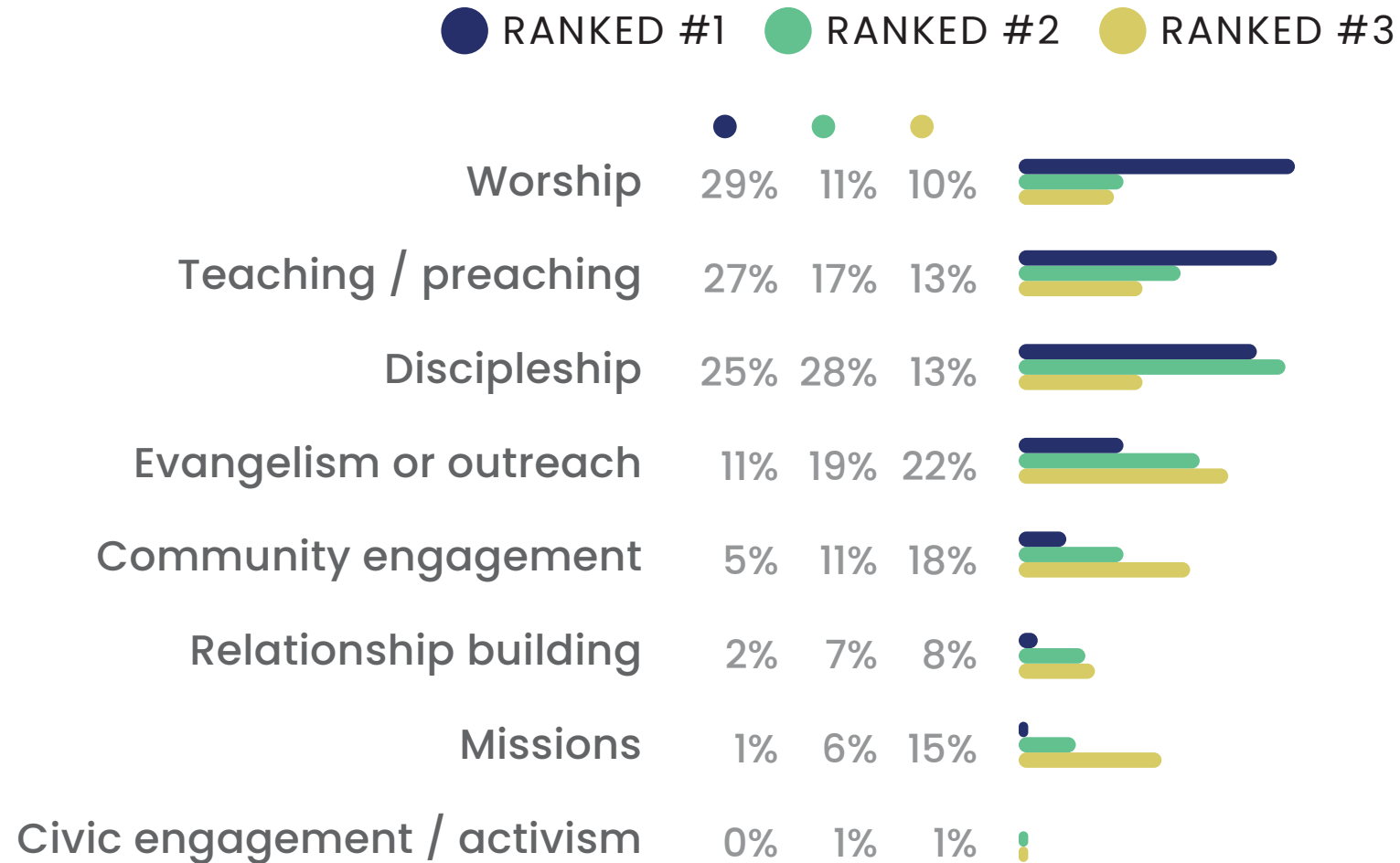
# Programs Churches Offer

## Part 2

Barna



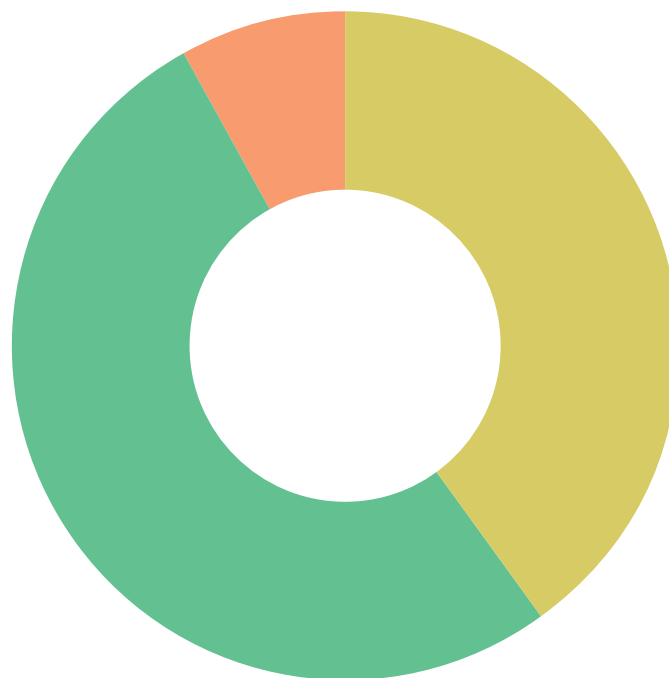
# Top Church Priorities



# "I Prefer Lay Initiatives to New Church Programs"

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● AGREE STRONGLY ● AGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE STRONGLY

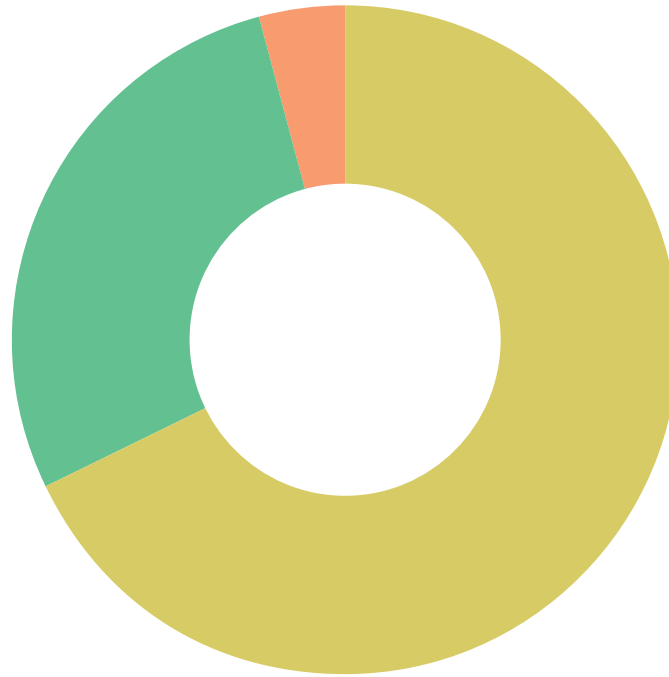


● 40% ● 52% ● 8% ● 0%

# “For Our Church to Be Healthier, Lay People Must Take More Responsibility”

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● AGREE STRONGLY ● AGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE STRONGLY

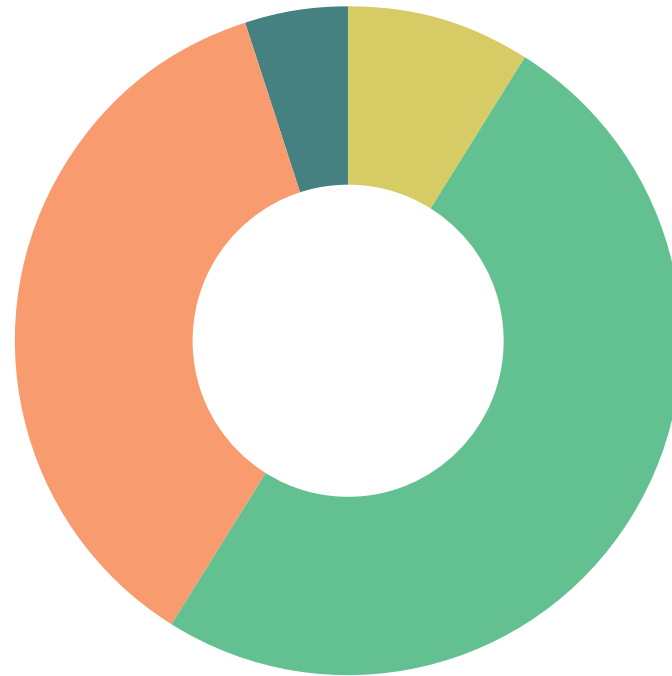


● 68% ● 28% ● 4% ● 0%

# "My Church Leadership Is Good at Developing New Leaders"

Barna

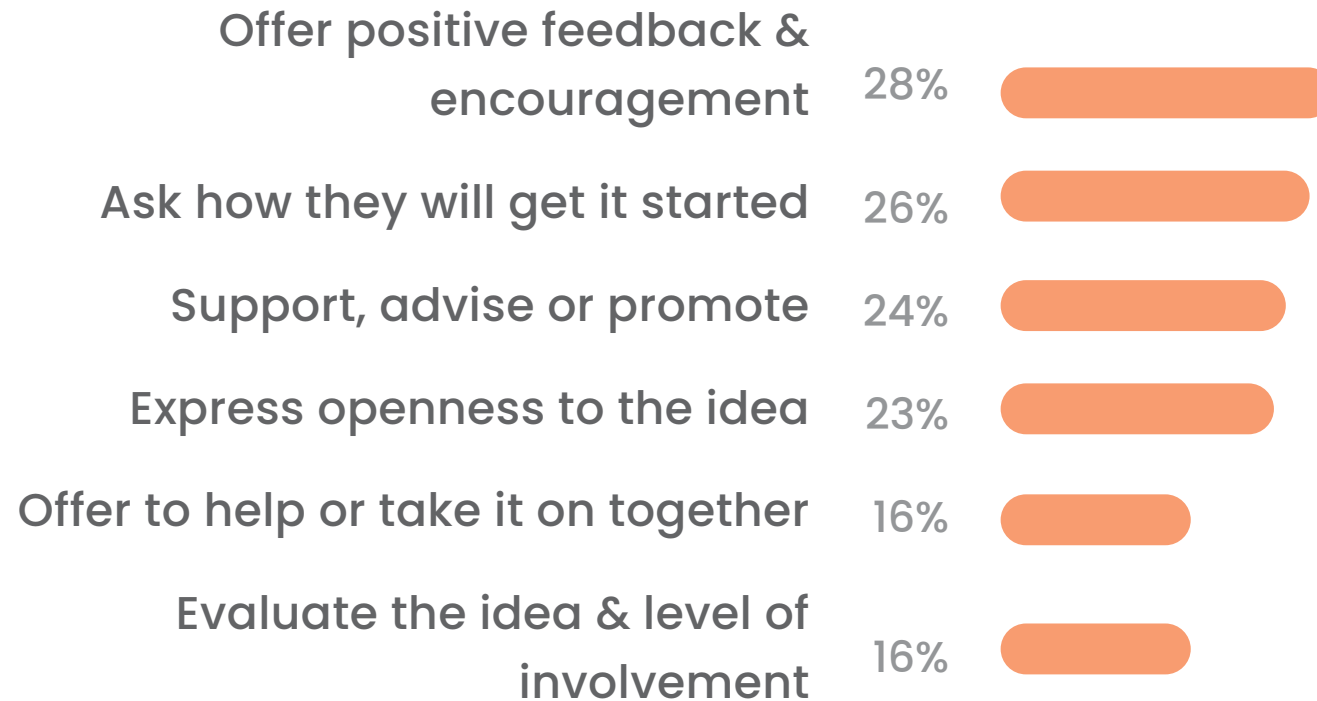
● AGREE STRONGLY ● AGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE SOMEWHAT ● DISAGREE STRONGLY



● 9% ● 50% ● 36% ● 5%

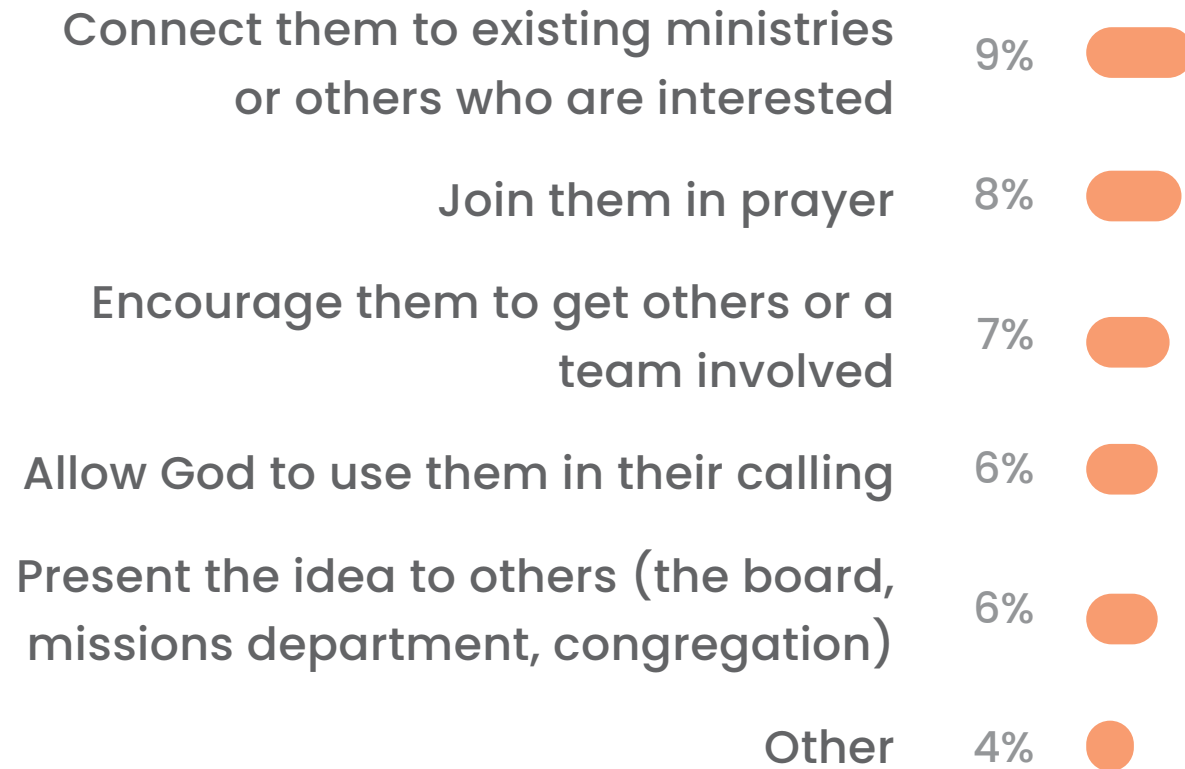
# Some of Pastors' Responses When People Have Suggestions for Helping Others Part 1

Barna



# Some of Pastors' Responses When People Have Suggestions for Helping Others Part 2

Barna





# Could Groups Have Been More Successful with More Support from Your Church?

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● DEFINITELY ● PROBABLY ● MAYBE ● PROBABLY NOT ● DEFINITELY NOT



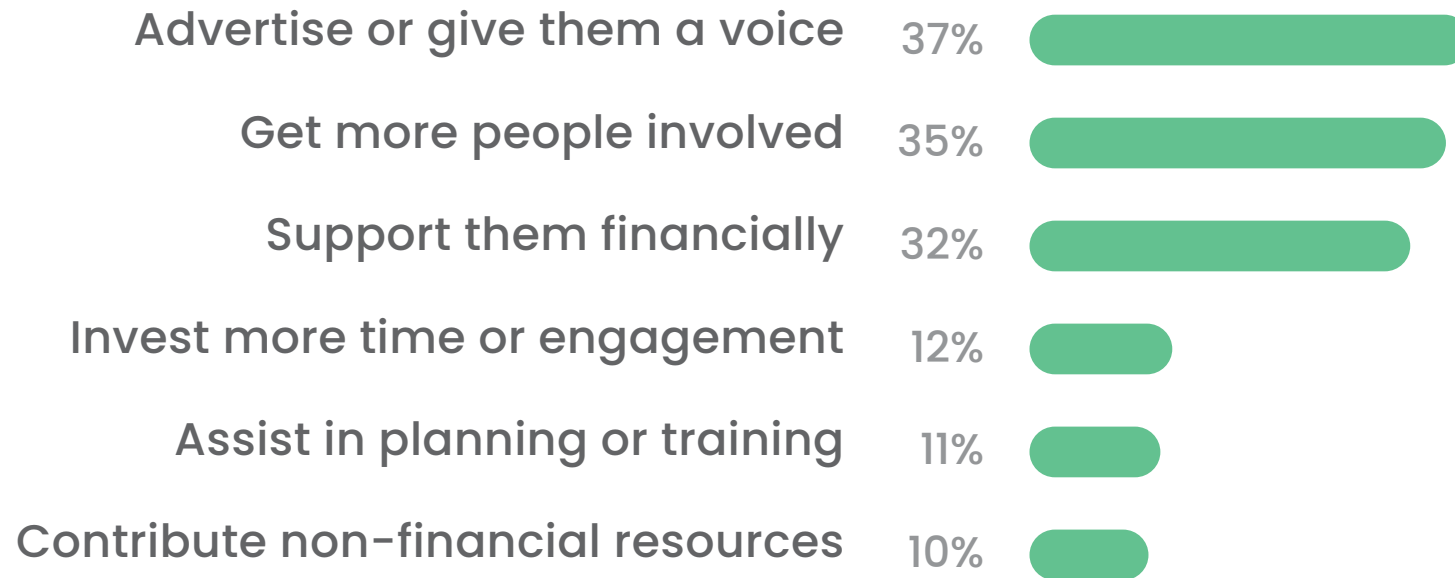
● ● ● ● ●  
12% 25% 46% 15% 2%

# How Can Churches Lend Support to Groups?

## Part 1

Barna

*% who feel support would help groups be more successful*

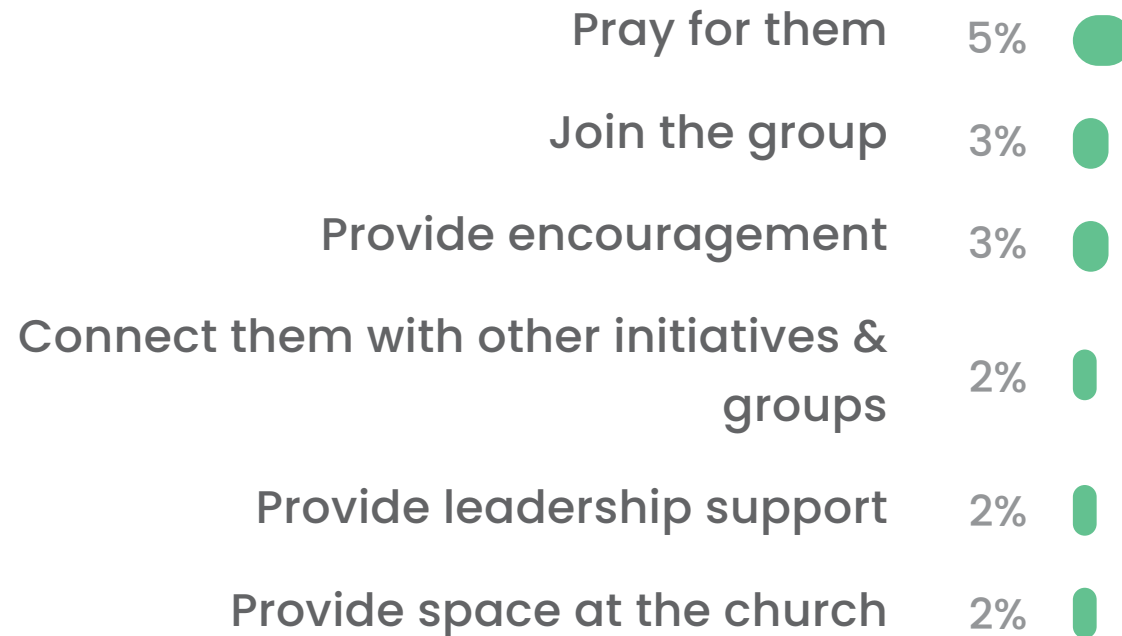


# How Can Churches Lend Support to Groups?

## Part 2

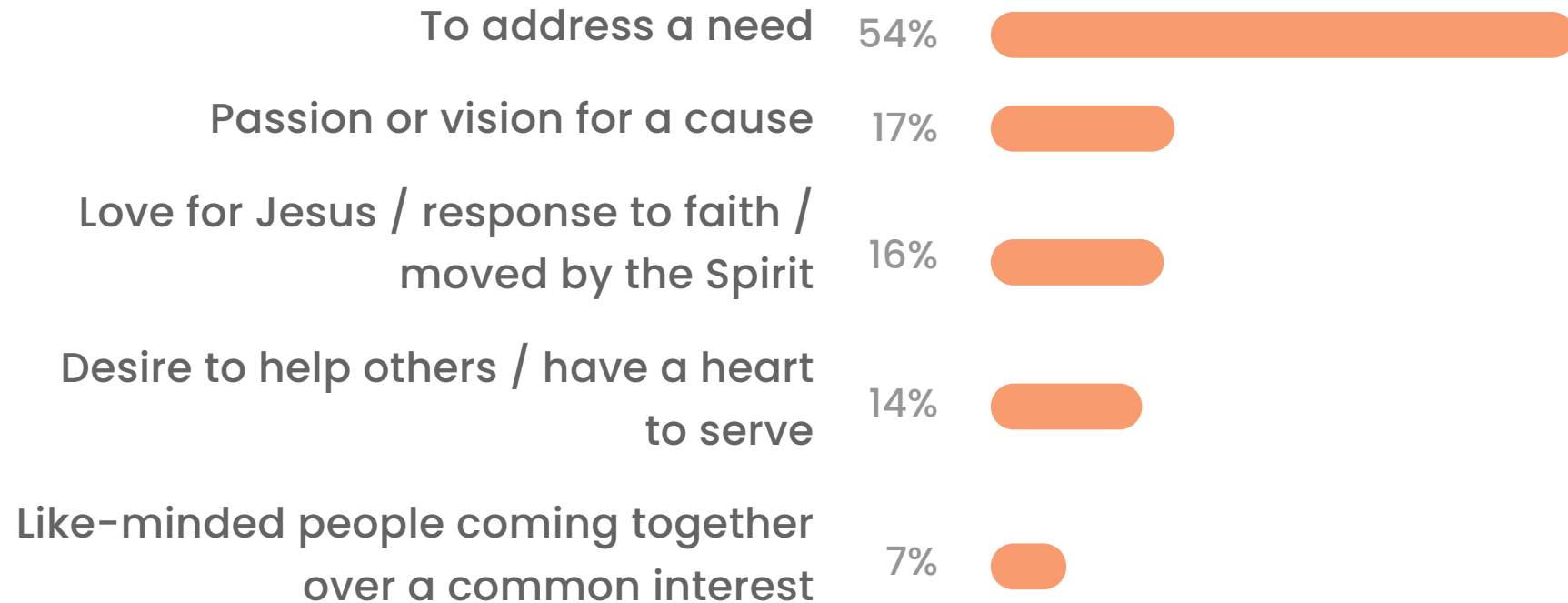
Barna

*% who feel support would help groups be more successful*



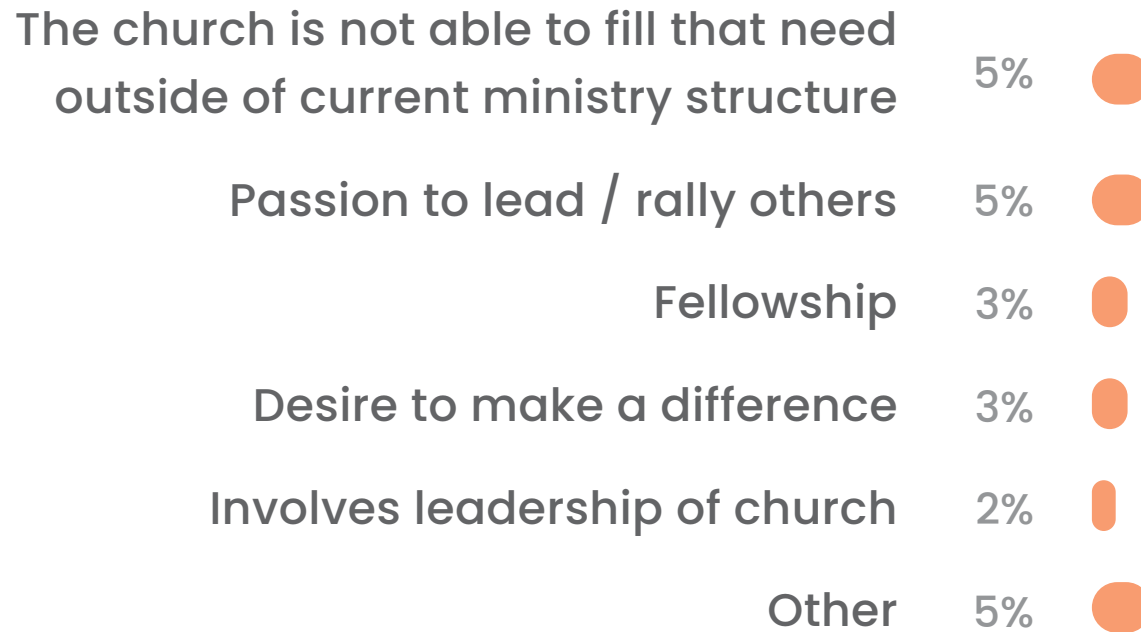
# Pastors' Top Explanations for Why Groups Begin Part 1

Barna



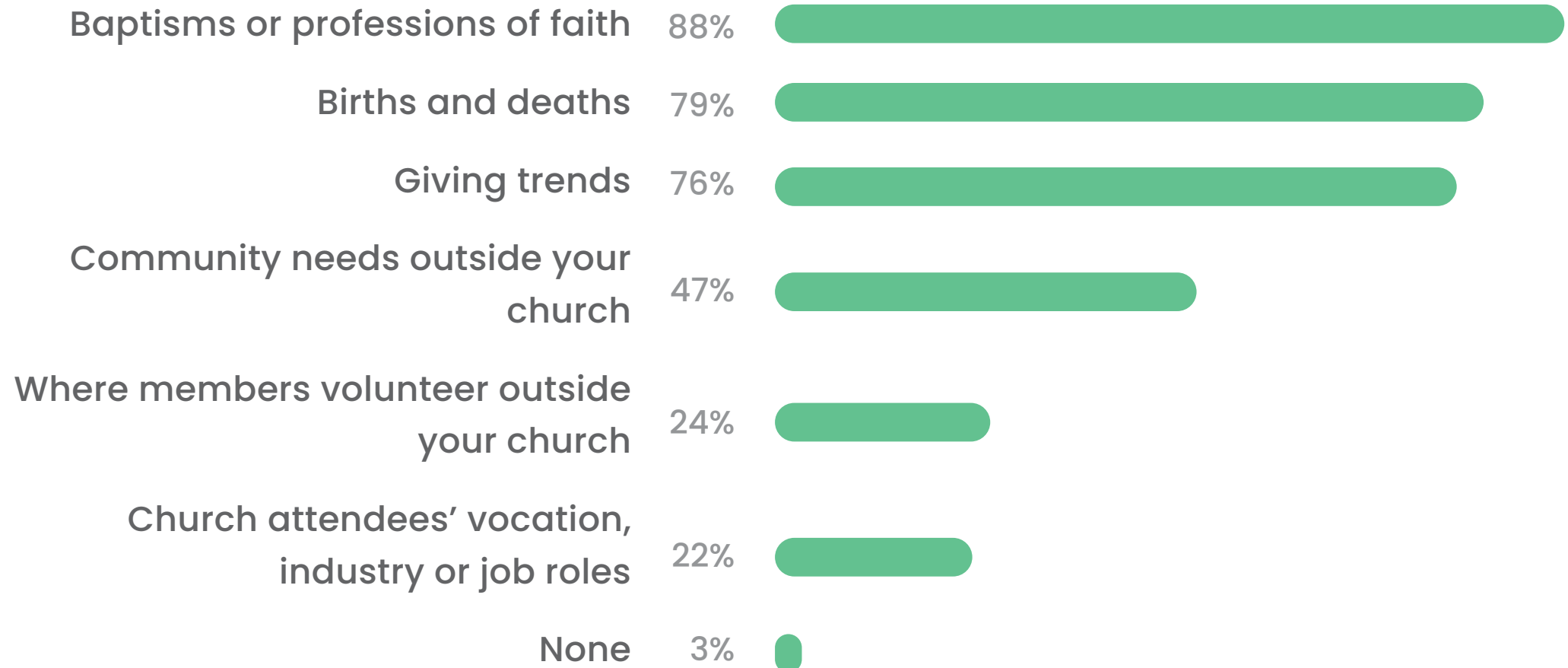
# Pastors' Top Explanations for Why Groups Begin Part 2

Barna



# Information Churches Track or Collect Each Year

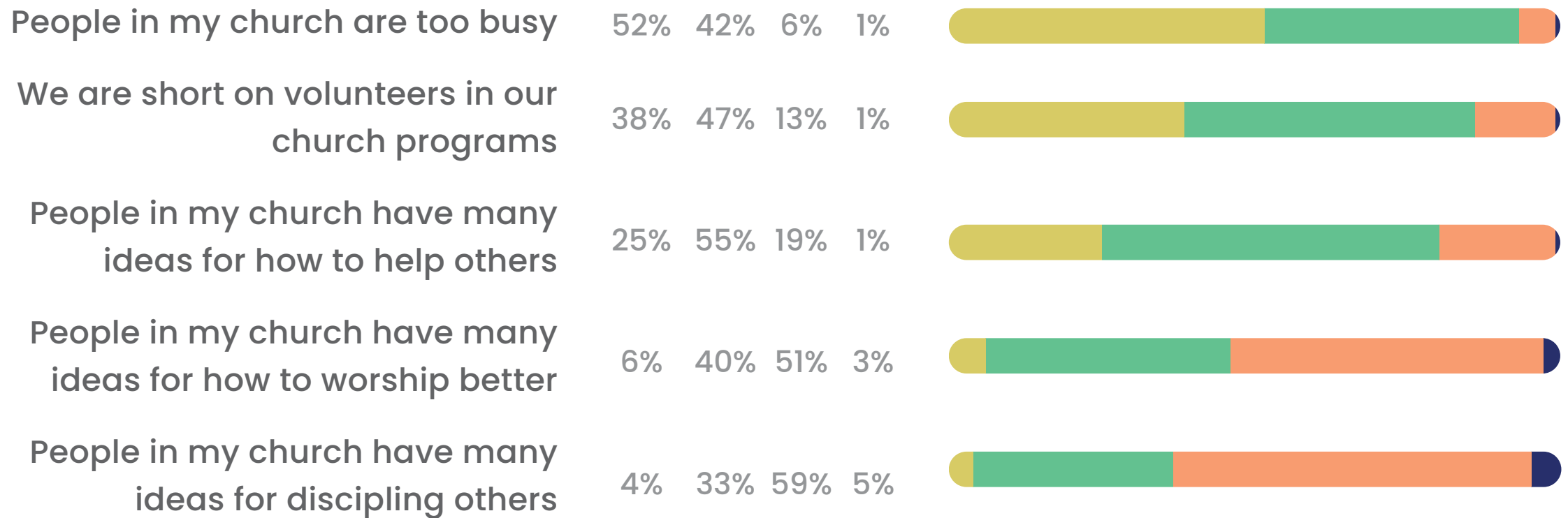
Barna



# Capacity & Initiative of Congregations

● OFTEN ● SOMETIMES ● SELDOM ● NEVER

● ● ● ●

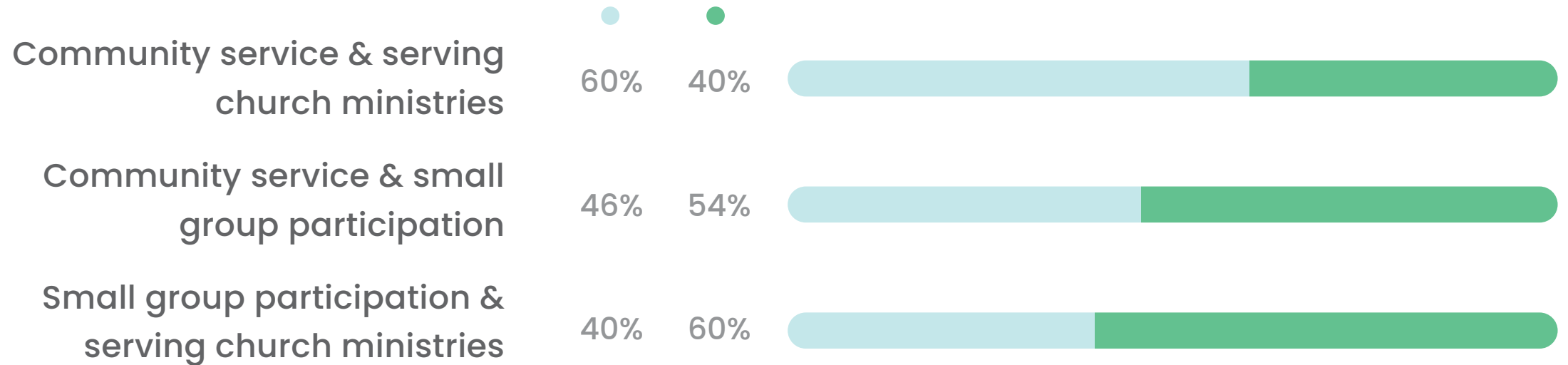


# Pastors Feel Community Service Requires Time Tradeoffs

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“Have you seen a tradeoff between these activities? That is, a person does less of one to do more of the other?”

● YES, THERE IS A TRADEOFF ● NO, PEOPLE DO BOTH EQUALLY



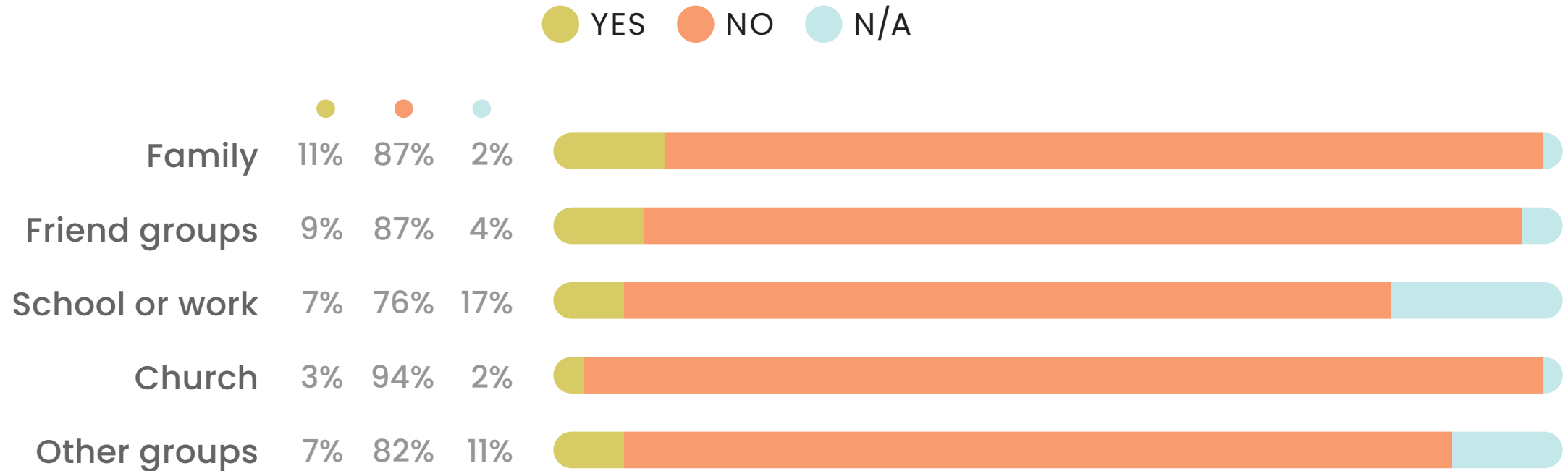


# ... But That Isn't the Experience of Group Participants

Barna

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

"Because of your involvement in any of these groups, did your involvement in any of the following decrease?"



# Vocation & the Church

*Base: practicing Christian community participants*

● STRONGLY AGREE ● SOMEWHAT AGREE ● SOMEWHAT DISAGREE ● STRONGLY DISAGREE

I wish I could better connect my vocation (profession or skills) to serving at or through my church

● ● ● ●  
29% 42% 17% 12%



I have opportunities to use my talents and skills at or through my church

51% 39% 6% 4%



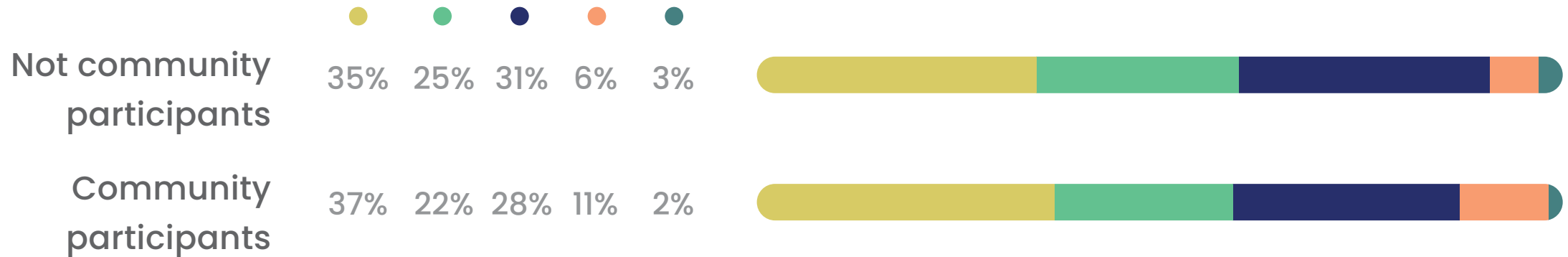
# Practicing Christians' Openness to the Church's Help with Finding Groups

Barna

*Base: practicing Christians at least somewhat interested in joining a group*

**"Would you like for your church to help you find or join a group that addresses one of these causes?"**

● DEFINITELY ● PROBABLY ● MAYBE ● PROBABLY NOT ● DEFINITELY NOT



# Methodology

This quantitative study consisted of two online surveys.

The first was a survey of 2,500 U.S. adults conducted from July 25–August 19, 2019. The sample breakdown was as follows: 1,505 U.S. practicing Christians (meaning they self-identify as Christian, say their faith is very important in their life and have attended church within the past month other than for a holiday service or for a special event, such as a wedding or funeral), and 995 adults who are not practicing Christians. The margin of error for this sample is  $\pm 1.7$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

The second quantitative online survey was conducted among 508 U.S. Protestant senior pastors from July 25–August 13, 2019. These pastors were recruited from Barna's pastor panel (a database of pastors recruited via probability sampling on annual phone and email surveys) and are representative of U.S. Protestant churches by region, denomination and church size. The margin of error for this sample is  $\pm 4.2$  percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

# About the Project Partners

**Barna Group** is a research firm dedicated to providing actionable insights on faith and culture, with a particular focus on the Christian church.

[www.barna.com](http://www.barna.com)

**Lutheran Hour Ministries** is a trusted expert in global media that equips and engages a vibrant volunteer base to passionately proclaim the gospel to more than 71 million people worldwide each week.

[www.LHM.org](http://www.LHM.org)



For more information about this study and to see the complete findings, check out our 2020 report:

### ***Better Together***

The full report is available at **shop.barna.com** or through Barna Access membership.