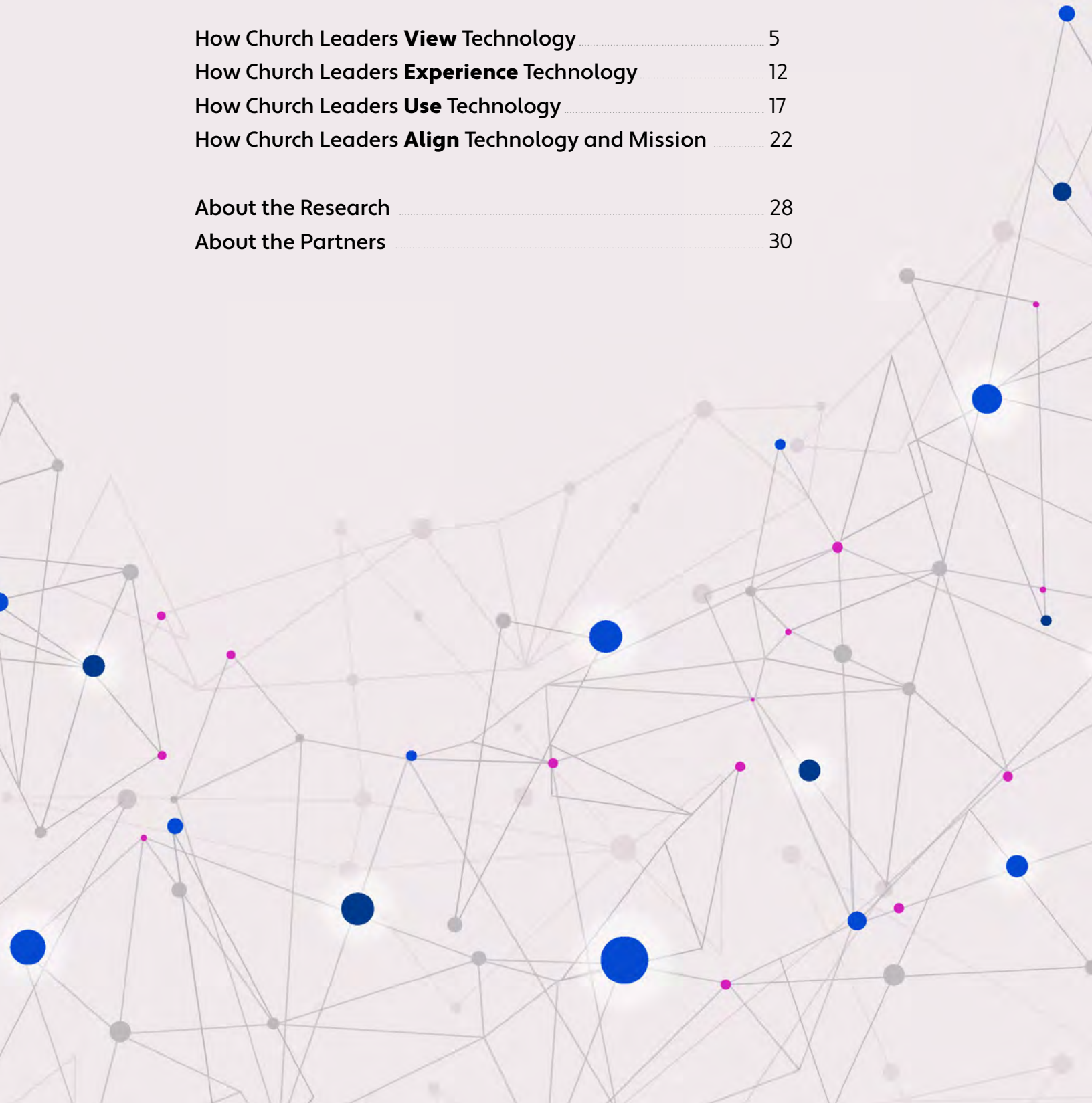


A background network diagram consisting of a complex web of thin grey lines connecting various nodes. The nodes are represented by small circles in shades of blue, grey, and pink, scattered across the page.

TECHNOLOGY FOR MISSIONAL IMPACT

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Partner Perspective

by Pushpay

We talk a lot about innovation at Pushpay. For fifteen years, we've been developing technology purpose-built for the Church, and we are proud to be the pacesetter for the latest technology that fits the unique needs of today's ministries.

But innovation without direction isn't really innovation at all. We need to know what churches expect, what they're wrestling with, and where technology is actually making a difference. That's why, five years ago, we commissioned our first State of Church Technology report. We surveyed ministry leaders about their tech usage, then took that information to identify trends that could help us meet their evolving needs. For these past four years, this report has informed not just our team, but thousands of leaders all over the country by allowing them to compare their experiences against their peers and, in doing so, better chart a course for the future.

As the years have gone by, however, the landscape of both technology and the Church has shifted in remarkable ways—and so have the questions we need to ask. So we applied that same spirit of innovation to the report itself. The result is our first collaboration with Barna, and we couldn't be more excited to share it with you.

Technology for Missional Impact is an incredible reframing of the church tech conversation. We carried forward many of Pushpay's tried-and-true questions from previous years, but in partnership with the brilliant team at Barna, we also reimagined how we approached the survey altogether.

As you'll see in the pages that follow, the results speak for themselves—and speak directly to the questions churches are grappling with today. The word “authenticity” keeps popping into my mind, particularly as AI becomes more embedded in our daily lives and ministries. How do we use digital tools to strengthen our communities, rather than diminish the deeply human connection at the heart of them? How do we use technology to serve the mission, rather than detract from it?

I won't pretend there's a single, tidy answer to those questions in this report. But what follows—an intentional unpacking of the extensive data shared by your peers across the country—serves as a powerful guide for understanding the patterns and perspectives shaping how churches like yours are navigating technology today.

My hope is that this report encourages you, challenges you, and equips you to move forward with both clarity and confidence in our shared mission of building his kingdom.



Kenny Wyatt, CEO, Pushpay



Introduction

by Barna Group

Technology is no longer a peripheral conversation in the Church. It is embedded in how ministries communicate, organize, disciple and connect. The question facing leaders today is not whether to use digital tools, but how deeply those tools should shape the life and mission of the Church.

This year's *State of Church Tech* research reveals a landscape marked by both optimism and discernment. Most church leaders affirm that technology plays an important role in achieving their mission. At the same time, many remain cautious—particularly as artificial intelligence expands rapidly. Leaders are leveraging AI to enhance communication and efficiency, yet they remain hesitant to outsource spiritual authority or pastoral leadership to machines.

The data also highlights an important distinction. While many ministries use digital tools primarily to streamline operations, a smaller segment integrates technology more intentionally into discipleship, worship and community life. These churches report stronger engagement among younger generations and greater confidence in congregational vitality. As digital adoption becomes commonplace, alignment—not access—may become the defining factor.

For more than 40 years, Barna has helped ministry leaders understand the times and discern faithful responses. Research, when grounded in mission, becomes more than information; it becomes a tool for wisdom. We are grateful to partner with Pushpay in mining these insights, bringing together data and digital expertise to serve the Church. Together, we share a commitment to guiding leaders into a vital, thriving future for the sake of the kingdom.

This report offers a data-informed look at how technology is shaping ministry today, and what these patterns may suggest about the road ahead.

How Church Leaders **View** Technology





Embracing Opportunity, with Reservations

*Church Leaders See Promise in Technology—
Alongside Real Risks*

Nearly all church leaders agree that digital tools and online platforms open new opportunities for ministry (34% agree strongly, 61% agree somewhat). A similar proportion agrees that digital ministry tools can help the Church better fulfill its mission in today's culture (33% agree strongly; 61% agree somewhat). A strong **majority believes innovations in technology will positively shape the Church's future** (17% strongly, 62% somewhat). Forty-four percent say technology is an important component of their future strategy.

This optimism is reinforced by lived experience: Nearly four in five church leaders say technology tends to make ministry life easier (19% much, 59% somewhat), suggesting that digital tools are reducing friction in day-to-day ministry work.

Still, leaders are not naïve about the risks. While most are confident that technology cannot compete with humanity's desire for God, 44 percent of church leaders believe digital tools could pose risks to the health and growth of congregations (10% strongly, 34% somewhat). A similar share of leaders worries that technology could distract from or distort authentic ministry (8% strongly, 31% somewhat).

Generally, church leaders are hopeful about technology's role in ministry, yet attentive to its limits and risks. As they look ahead, they are weighing opportunity alongside responsibility.



78%

of church leaders
say technology
tends to make
ministry
life easier



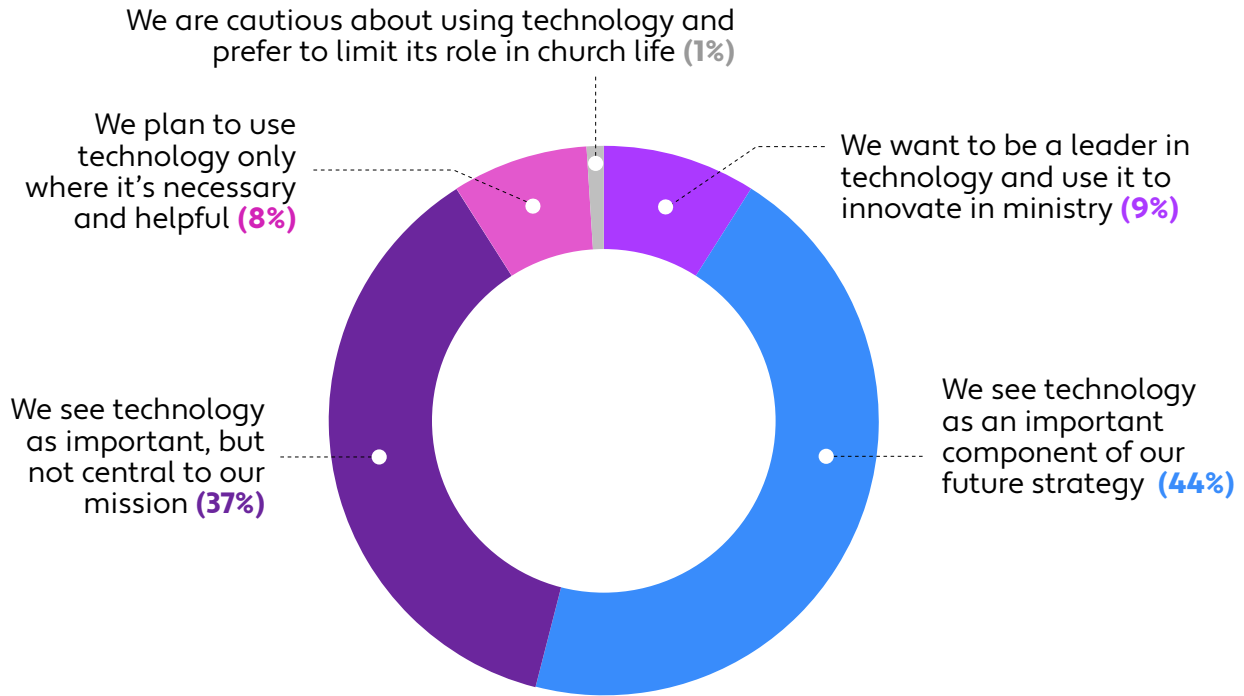
1 in 3

church leaders
strongly agree
that digital
tools open new
opportunities for
ministry (34%)
and can help the
Church fulfill its
mission (33%)

● Most Church Leaders Are Strategic with Tech (If Not Innovative)

When you imagine the future of your church's use of technology, which of the following best describes you?

Select one



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.



Who Are the Church's Tech Champions?

Church Staff Are More Likely Than Pastors to Embrace Technology

If churches are looking for enthusiastic champions of technology, they are more likely to find them behind the scenes than behind the pulpit.

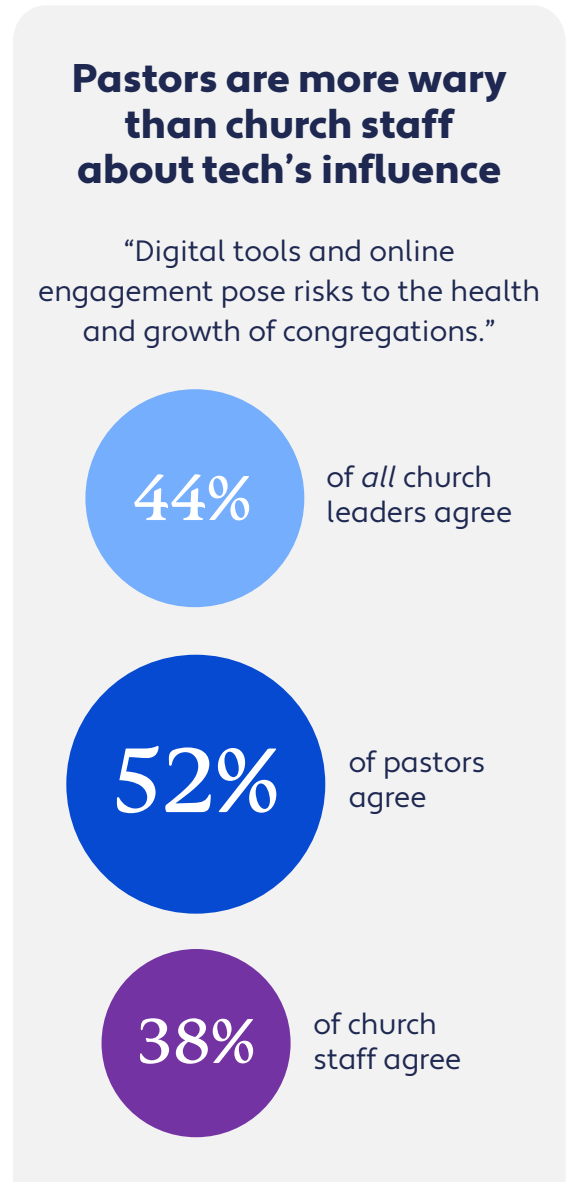
When church leaders are grouped by role—senior pastors versus other church staff—clear differences emerge. Both groups express openness to technology, but staff members tend to be more optimistic, while pastors voice greater caution.

As noted earlier, more than half of pastors agree (12% strongly, 40% somewhat) that digital tools and online engagement pose risks to the health and growth of congregations. Among church staff members, however, only 38 percent share this concern (9% strongly, 29% somewhat).

Staff members are also more likely than pastors to view technology as essential to core ministry functions. Half of church staff (50%) say technology is “extremely important” for worship, compared to 37 percent of pastors. A similar gap appears when it comes to community: 41 percent of staff members versus 29 percent of pastors see technology as “extremely important” to their church’s mission in this area.

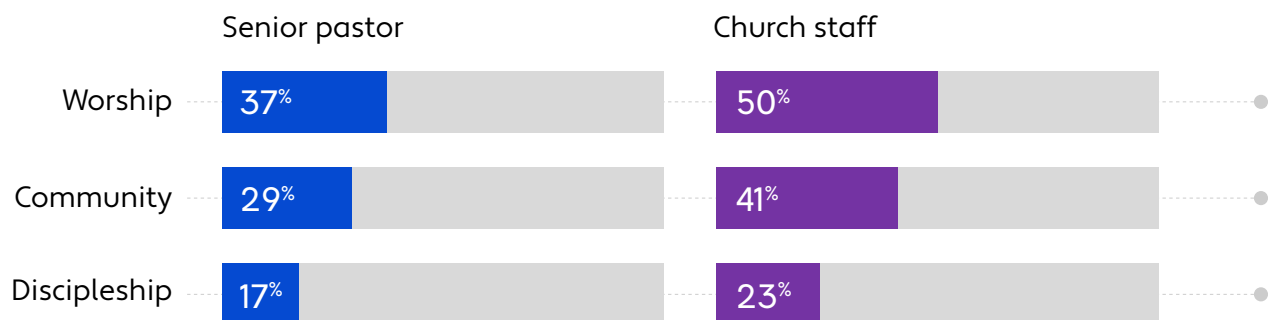
These differences matter. Church staff often carry responsibility for the operational details of ministry and are more likely to be daily users of digital tools, including artificial intelligence. In many cases, they are closer to both the practical challenges of ministry and the technologies that can help address them.

● Church Staff See a Central Role for Tech



How important is technology in achieving your church’s mission?

% say “extremely important”



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.



Affording Innovation

Resources Shape Churches' Tech Ambitions

Barriers to tech adoption in churches may sometimes have less to do with church leaders' perspectives and more to do with practicalities.

Currently, larger and more-resourced churches tend to have a greater number of digital tools already in use, compared to churches with fewer attendees or smaller operating budgets. But bigger, wealthier churches don't just have greater adoption of technology; they also seem to have a more ambitious vision for using it.

Among church leaders with annual budgets under \$500,000, just 37 percent say technology is an important component of their future strategy. That share rises to roughly half among leaders in higher budget categories. At the upper end, ambition becomes even clearer: One-quarter of leaders in churches with budgets exceeding \$5 million say they want their church to be a leader and innovator in ministry technology. By comparison, only 9 percent of church leaders overall—and just 7 percent of those in churches with budgets under \$500,000—share this aspiration.

In smaller or less-resourced churches, leaders are still generally positive about technology. However, they are more likely to describe it as helpful rather than central, and few see themselves as innovators.

These patterns highlight the financial and logistical barriers that shape technology adoption. While enthusiasm for digital tools is widespread, churches with larger staffs, bigger budgets and more capacity simply have greater ability to experiment, demonstrate leadership and sustain new approaches.



24%

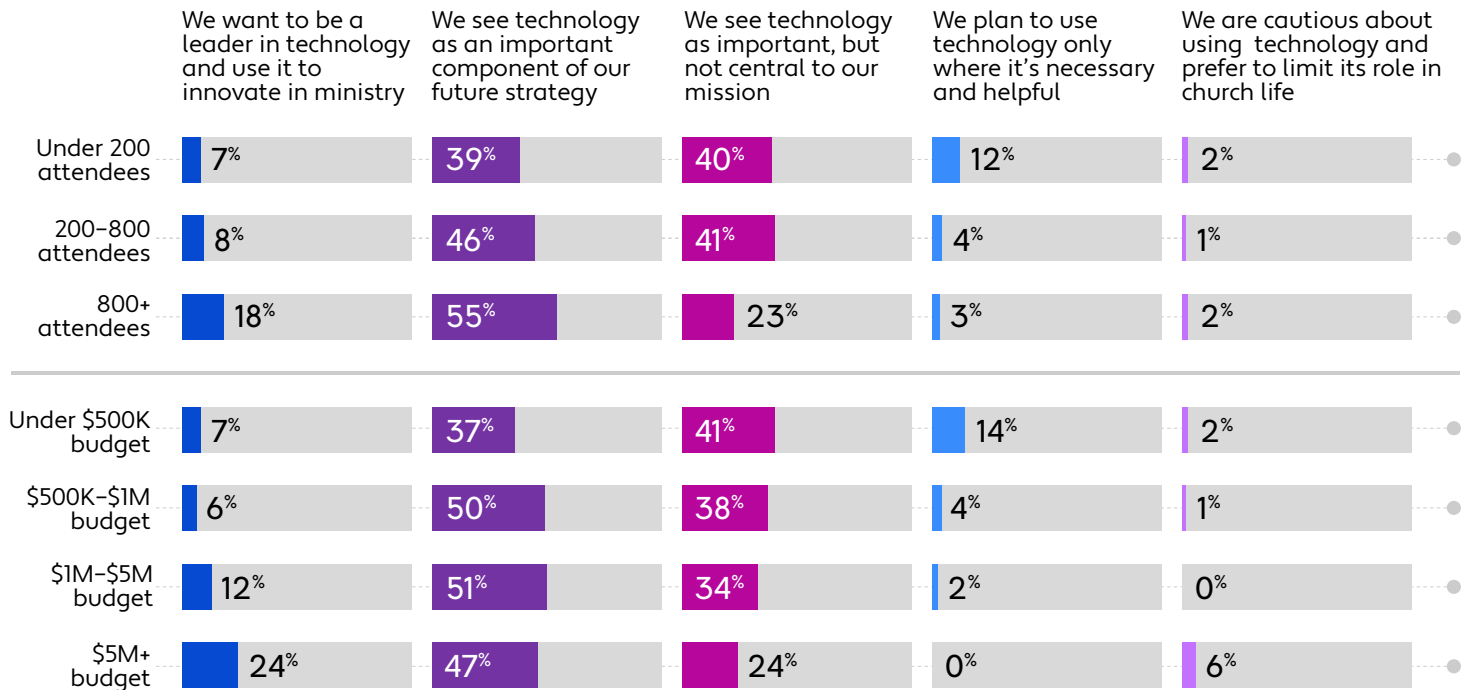
of leaders in churches
with budgets
exceeding \$5M say:

“We want to
be a leader in
technology and
use it to innovate
ministry”

● Tech Ambition Increases with Church Size & Budget

When you imagine the future of your church’s use of technology, which of the following best describes you?

Select one



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.



Addressing AI Anxieties

Church Leaders Want Guardrails for AI

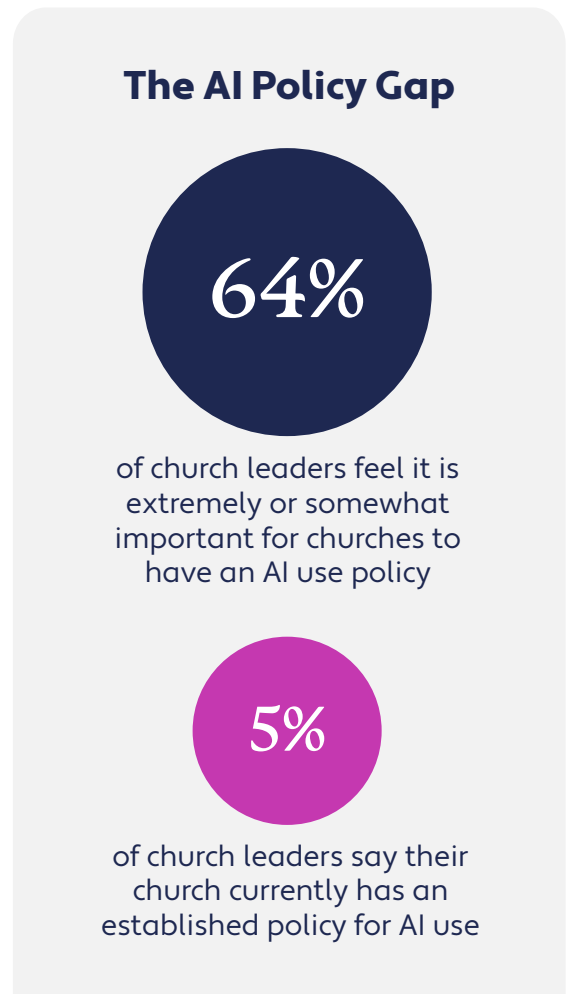
Artificial intelligence presents a distinct set of questions for church leaders, raising both practical and pastoral concerns about if—and how—it should be used in ministry. Concerns about AI use in ministry peak around the centerpiece of most church services: the message. About half of church leaders say they are very concerned about plagiarism and compromised message integrity (51%) or about losing the authenticity of their preaching and teaching (49%). Data privacy ranks as the top concern for AI adoption, with 83 percent of church leaders saying they are very (47%) or somewhat concerned (36%).

Beyond technical risks, leaders also express unease about AI's potential spiritual impact. While relatively few fear AI replacing pastors outright, more worry about it displacing spiritual guidance more broadly (37%) or diminishing congregants' trust (35%).

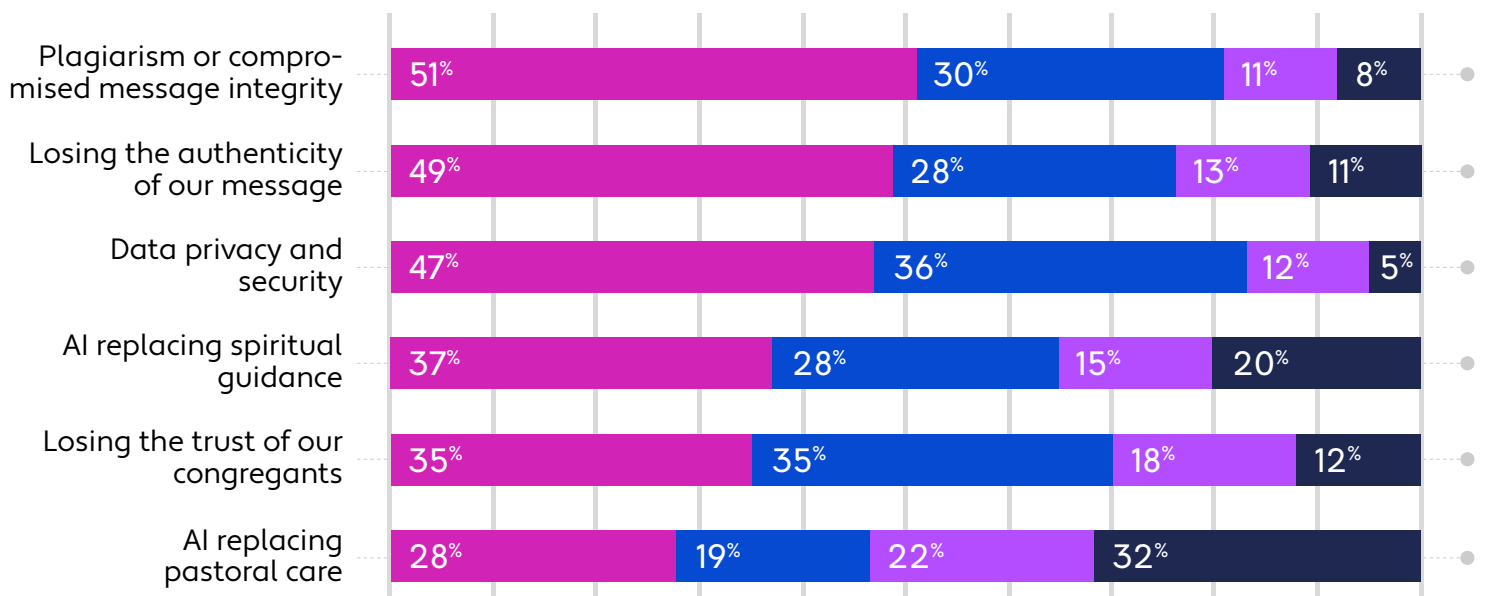
Clear guidance could help address these tensions. **Most church leaders believe it is important for churches to establish policies governing AI use (24% extremely, 40% somewhat). Yet few churches have taken this step.** Only 5 percent of church leaders say their church currently has an established AI policy—revealing a significant gap between leaders' sense of responsibility and their organizational readiness.

● Top AI Hangups in Ministry Focus on the Message

How concerned are you about the following potential aspects of AI adoption in your church ministry?



● Very concerned ● Somewhat concerned ● Somewhat not concerned ● Not concerned at all



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.

How Church
Leaders
Experience
Technology





Tech as a Tool

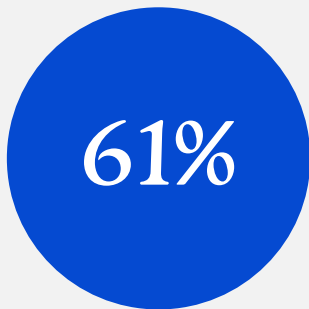
Most Ministries Use Technology as a Practical Asset, Not Formational Support

A strong majority of church leaders (91%) say technology has helped them better care for their community.

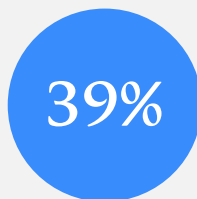
For many, this impact is primarily practical. Digital tools simplify operations, improve communication and extend reach. While technology may expand a church's capacity for care, leaders are less likely to describe it as a direct driver of spiritual formation or relational depth.

When asked about the primary purpose of technology in their ministry, the plurality of church leaders—one-quarter (27%)—points to technology as an aid for communicating clearly and effectively. One in five says technology primarily helps them reach more people with the gospel (19%) or

“Technology has played an important role in deepening the faith of parishioners / congregants”



of church leaders say yes



of church leaders say no



91%

of church leaders say technology helps them better care for their community



79%

of church leaders say technology has improved connection within their congregation (22% significantly; 57% moderately)

makes ministry more effective and organized (19%). Smaller proportions see tech's primary value in strengthening community (15%), relevance (11%) or discipleship (9%).

This pattern appears elsewhere in the data. For example, 79 percent of church leaders say technology has significantly (22%) or moderately improved (57%) connections among congregants. And 61% believe technology has played an important role in deepening the faith of their congregation.

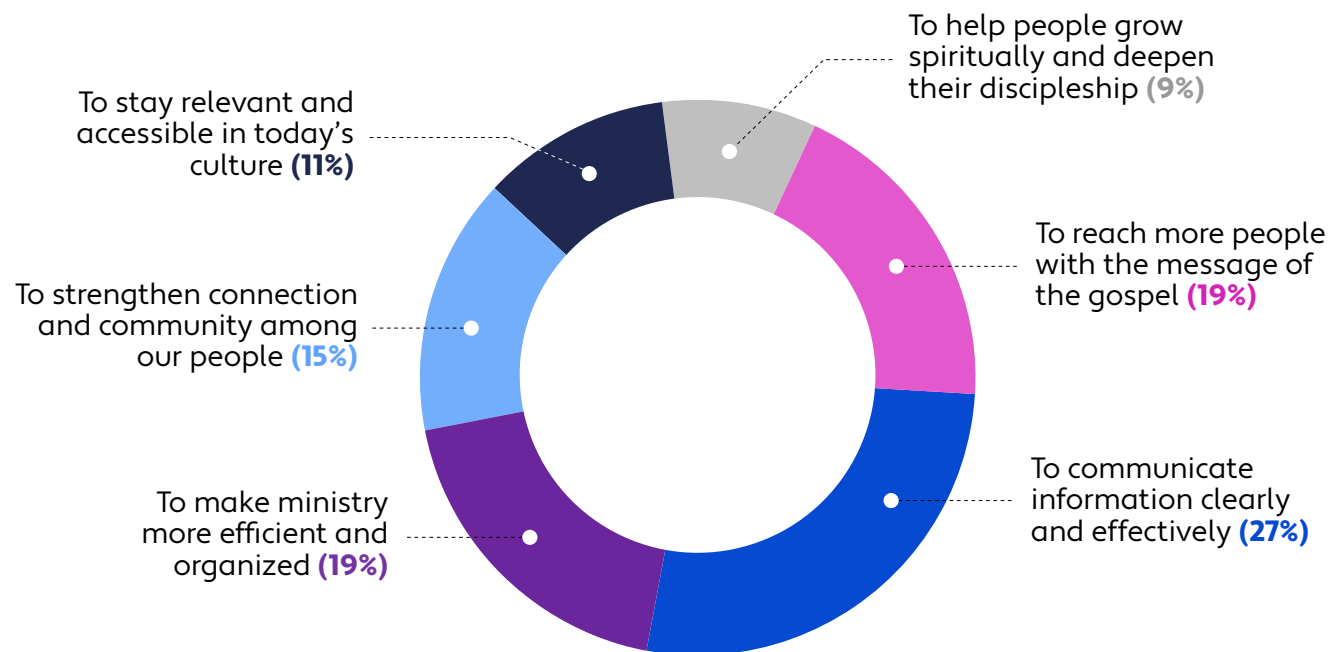
When it comes to fostering congregants' connections to God and to each other, church leaders regard digital tools as supplemental, not essential. Even so, as noted earlier, the operational benefits are clear: 78 percent say technology has made ministry life at least somewhat easier (19% much, 59% somewhat).

Technology may not be transformative in itself, but it is still supportive of ministry outcomes.

● Tech's Main Ministry Use: Communication

In your view, what is the primary purpose of technology in your church's ministry?

Select one



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.



An AI Surge in Ministry? Not Quite

Church Leaders' AI Adoption Is Focused on Producing Content

Despite headlines about rapid artificial intelligence expansion, most churches have not yet incorporated AI into their ministry or operations. The majority of church leaders (58%) say, to their knowledge, their church is not using AI. Meanwhile, just one-third (33%) reports that their church is using AI in some capacity. Eight percent say they are unsure.

At the individual level, self-reported usage is somewhat higher; Overall, 60 percent of church leaders say they personally use AI at least a few times a month (16%, a few times a month; 12%, once or twice a week; 17%, throughout the week but not daily; 7%, once or twice day; 8%, throughout the day). Just one in four (24%) says they never do. Still, routine reliance on AI is not widespread among either senior pastors or church staff members.

When church leaders do adopt AI, they primarily use it as a tool to support creativity and efficiency. The most common use cases involve generating or editing written materials, graphics, emails, social media posts—and, in some cases, sermons. This aligns with church leaders' general approach to technology as a communication aid.

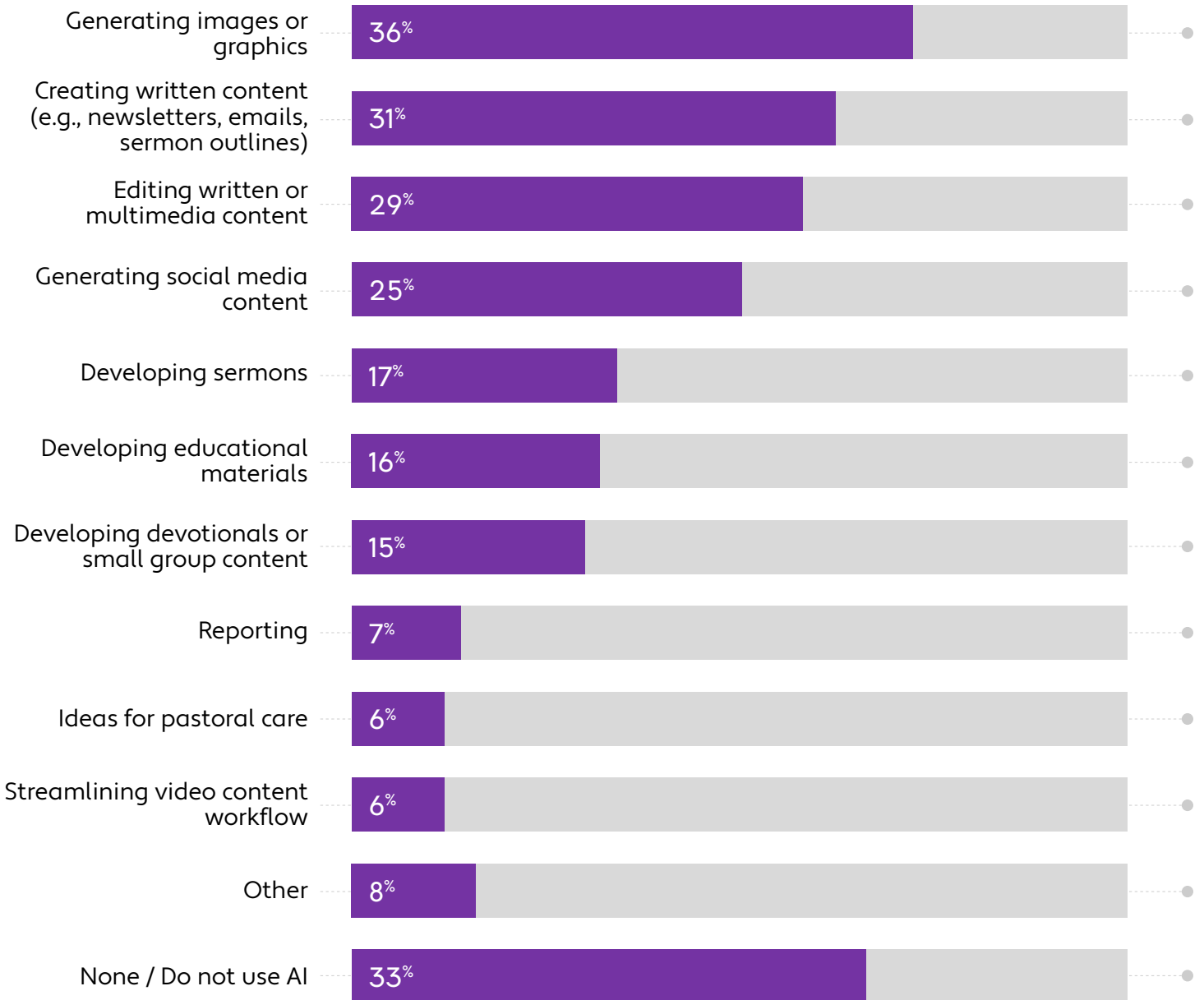
Of course, some churches may already be interacting with AI-enabled features embedded in the software they use, even if they do not label it as such. But strategic, frequent incorporation of AI technology in ministry or pastoral work is still rare.



● AI: A Creative Partner for Church Leaders

How is your church currently using AI?

Select all that apply



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.

How Church Leaders **Use** Technology





The Church Tech Stack

Most Churches Operate with a Core Set of Digital Tools

When asked to inventory the tools they use across ministry tasks—from event management to online giving—the plurality of church leaders (44%) say their church relies on a moderately sized digital toolkit (between five and nine digital tools). A similar proportion (39%) uses between one and four tools.

Tool adoption increases sharply with church size and budget, reinforcing patterns seen elsewhere in the study.

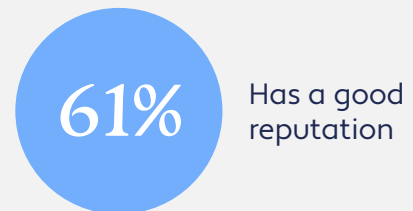
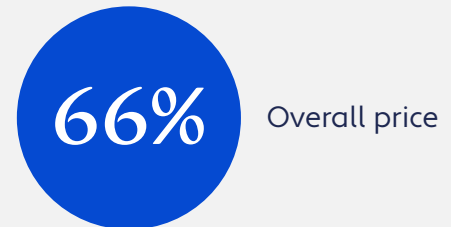
Several technologies now appear nearly universal in ministry: social media, online giving, livestreaming and church management software. These are also the tools church leaders rank as most strategically important in the years ahead. In other words, churches are doubling down on the digital infrastructure already embedded in ministry life.

At the same time, leaders anticipate growing importance for emerging or less widely adopted tools. These include mobile apps, multilingual tools and targeted marketing.

Before adding new software, however, church leaders have clear priorities. They place highest importance on ease of use, affordability and security. Factors such as customer support and innovation matter—but they rank below these core functional needs. In practice, churches are not chasing novelty; they are seeking reliability, clarity and stewardship.

Top 5 Things Church Leaders Want in New Tools

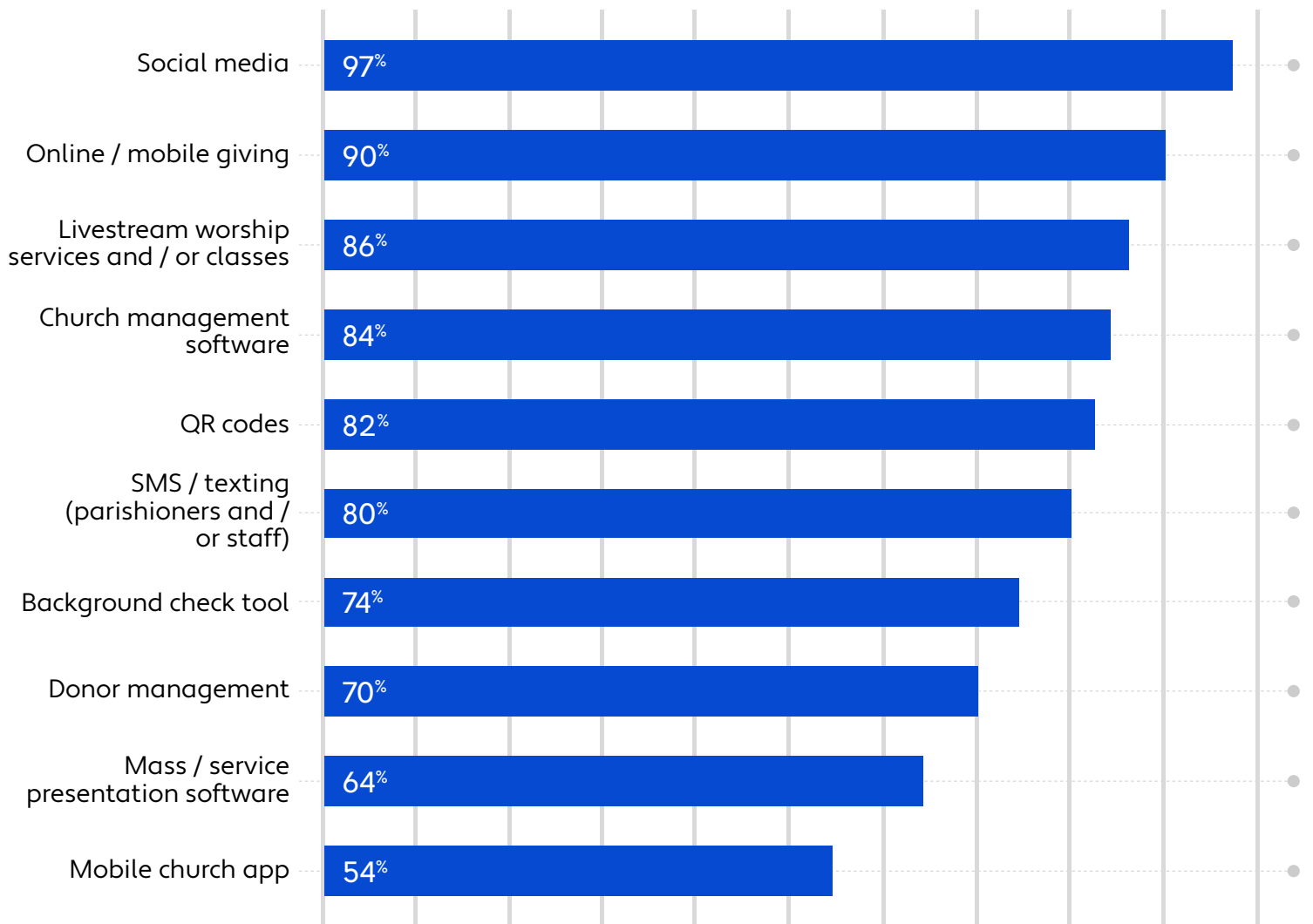
% say “extremely important”



● Social Media & Online Giving Are Ministry Mainstays

Which, if any, of the technology products below does your church currently use?

Only the top 10 of 21 response options are shown



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.

44%
of church leaders say their ministry
uses 5 to 9 digital tools



Measuring What Matters

Churches Track Giving & Attendance; Engagement Is Harder to Measure

One of technology's most practical functions in ministry is data collection—helping churches understand and keep pace with the life of their congregation.

Almost all church leaders (90%) say their church tracks tithes and offerings. Other commonly tracked metrics include baptisms (72%) and lists of members and attendees (62%). Among Catholic church leaders, there is greater emphasis placed on tracking baptisms, compared to leaders in Protestant mainline and non-mainline congregations.

Churches track many additional indicators, from email open rates to volunteer signups. Yet when asked what matters most for measuring true engagement, church leaders most often point to attendance and giving.

Many express uncertainty about whether their data infrastructure is strong enough to support more advanced insights. Just 19 percent of church leaders say they are confident their church's data could produce meaningful AI insights.

This uncertainty is especially pronounced among smaller and lower-budget churches. The finding underscores an emerging gap: While interest in digital tools is high, data quality and infrastructure may limit how effectively churches can leverage more advanced technologies in the future.

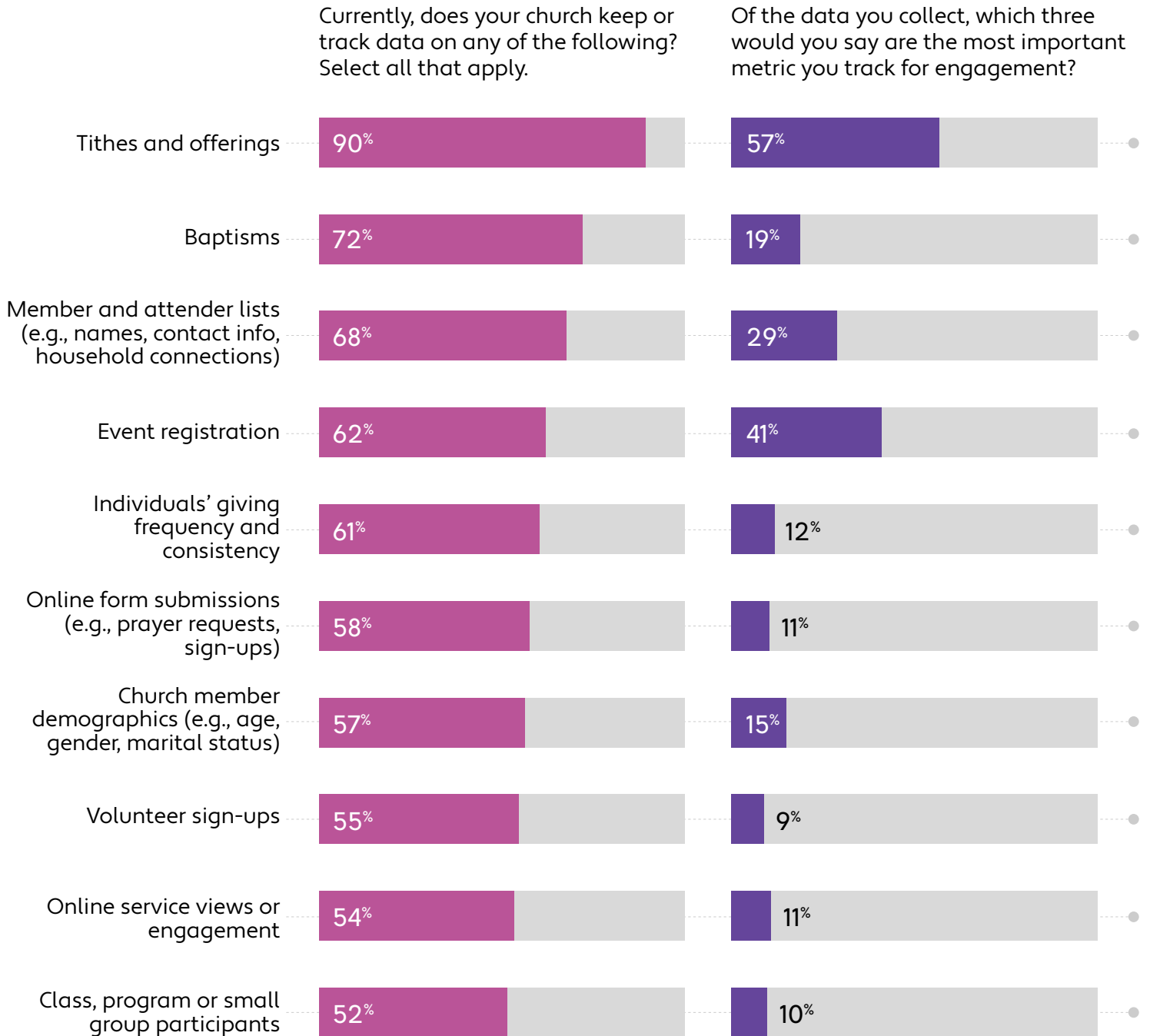


19%

of church leaders express confidence that their church's data could produce meaningful AI insights

● What Churches Track vs. How They Measure Engagement

Only the top 10 of 23 response options are shown



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.

How Church Leaders **Align** Technology and Mission





Mission-Driven Technology

For One in Four Churches, Technology is Deeply Embedded in Mission

One in four church leaders fits a group Barna defines as “highly missional” in their approach to technology. In these churches, technology is not merely operational support—it is integrated into the church’s spiritual and relational mission.

To identify this segment, church leaders were asked how important technology is to their church’s mission in the areas of discipleship, worship and community. Each item was rated on a five-point scale, from “not at all important” to “extremely important,” and combined into a composite score. Churches with the highest scores represent environments where technology is deeply embedded in mission (see About the Research for full definitions).

Leaders in these “high-missional” churches, where technology is central to mission, report several standout traits.

● Stronger Engagement Among Younger Generations

Churches with a highly missional approach to technology are more likely to report recent growth among younger adults. Roughly half of leaders in these environments say engagement has increased among Gen Z (51%) and Millennials (47%) over the past year. This contrasts with churches where technology plays a less central role in mission.

● Greater Spiritual Vitality

High-missional churches also report stronger indicators of spiritual health. Sixty percent of leaders in these congregations say their church is very effective at fostering reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance and discernment—35 percentage points higher than leaders in low-missional tech environments.



51%

of church leaders of high-missional churches say they’ve seen increased engagement among Gen Z



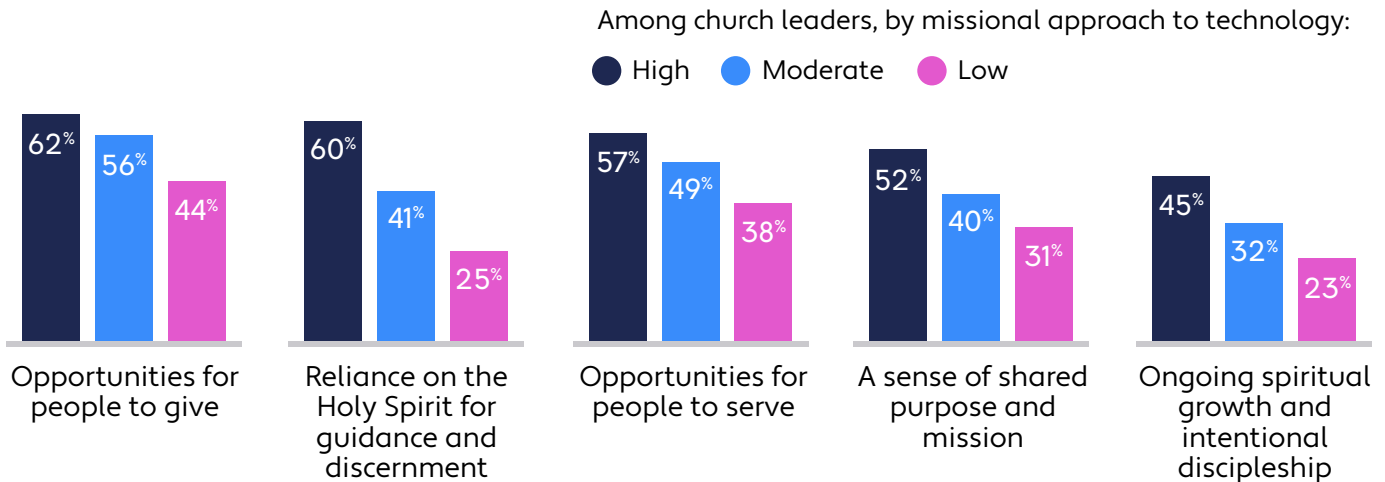
60%

of church leaders of high-missional churches say their church is very effective at fostering reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance and discernment

● Missional Tech in Holistic Church Life

In your opinion, how effectively does your church currently foster the following aspects of spiritual and relational life?

Responses with the five greatest gaps between High and Low are shown, out of nine possible responses.



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.

● Technology as Ministry, Not Just Communication

In churches that aren't as missional with their technology, the plurality of church leaders see technology as a communication tool.

By contrast, leaders in high-missional contexts are more likely to see digital tools as integral to reaching people with the gospel and strengthening community. In these settings, technology shifts from delivery mechanism to ministry partner.

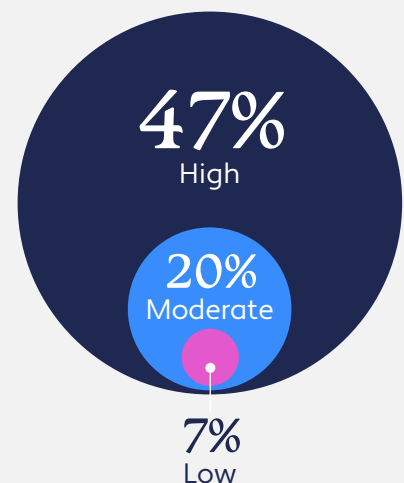
● Stronger Connection and Broader Adoption

Nearly all leaders in high-missional churches (93%) report improved congregational connection as a result of their approach—47 percent say connection has improved significantly and 46 percent say moderately. Far fewer leaders in low-missional environments report similar gains.

Deepening Connections

To what extent has technology helped your congregation feel more connected?

% say "significantly improved"
Among church leaders, by missional approach to technology



These churches also tend to use a broader suite of digital tools. Rather than relying solely on attendance metrics, they are more likely to track additional indicators of engagement and reduce friction points for congregants and staff alike. Technology is leveraged strategically to inform ministry decisions.

● Supporting Spiritual Growth

Eighty-eight percent of leaders in high-missional churches believe technology has played an important role in deepening the faith of their congregation. That compares to 68 percent among moderate-missional leaders and just 30 percent among low-missional leaders.

When technology is intentionally aligned with discipleship and community, its influence appears to extend beyond operational efficiency.

● Positioned for the Future

Leaders in high-missional contexts also express greater optimism about the future of digital ministry. Three in five believe digital tools open new opportunities for ministry (60%) and help the Church better fulfill its mission (57%).

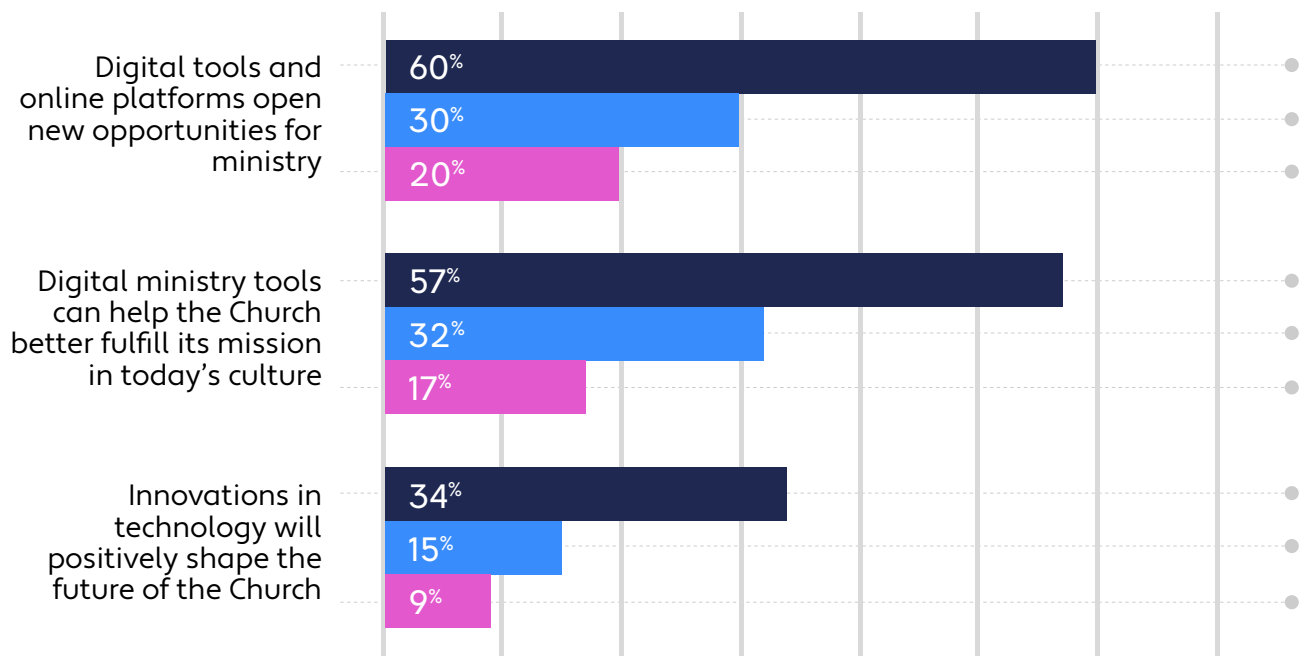
These churches are not simply adopting technology. They are positioning it for long-term, mission-aligned impact.

Missional Tech & a Hopeful Future

% strongly agree

Among church leaders, by missional approach to technology:

● High ● Moderate ● Low



n=1,306 U.S. church leaders, November 2025.



Signals on the Horizon

A Forward-Looking View of the Data

The findings in this year's study point less to a technological revolution and more to a gradual reshaping of ministry posture. Several patterns emerge that may offer clues about where the Church is headed in its use of technology.

1. Cautious Optimism Is Becoming the Norm

Church leaders are neither resistant to technology nor wholeheartedly enthusiastic about it. Instead, the data reflects an attitude of measured optimism. Leaders broadly affirm the value of digital tools—including AI—particularly for communication and operational efficiency. At the same time, hesitation remains around authenticity, spiritual authority and wise use of emerging technologies.

This tension suggests that the next chapter of church tech may be defined less by rapid adoption and more by discernment. The desire for clearer policies and guardrails around AI use indicates that more leaders may be preparing for long-term integration rather than short-term experimentation.

2. The Conversation Is Shifting from Access to Alignment

Technology is now widely embedded in church life. Most ministries use digital tools for giving, communication and coordination. As tech adoption becomes commonplace, the distinguishing factor appears to be alignment.

Churches that report the strongest outcomes are not necessarily those with the most tools, but those that integrate technology intentionally into discipleship, worship and community rhythms. This suggests a potential shift from asking “What tools do we have?” to “How does this tool serve our mission?”

3. Missional Integration Appears Linked to Measurable Impact

Only one-quarter of churches in this study take a highly missional approach to technology. Yet these churches consistently report stronger engagement among younger generations, deeper congregational connection and greater confidence in spiritual

vitality. This alignment suggests that when digital tools are positioned as ministry partners rather than operational utilities, their impact may extend beyond efficiency into formation.

4. Younger Generations Are Signaling Expectations

Engagement gains among Gen Z and Millennials are more pronounced in churches that emphasize technology's importance to mission. This may indicate that digital fluency is no longer a peripheral preference but an embedded expectation for younger adults seeking connection and belonging.

As generational engagement stabilizes and, in some cases, rises, technology may increasingly function as a bridge rather than a barrier, particularly when integrated thoughtfully.



Looking Ahead

The question facing church leaders is no longer whether technology belongs in ministry. That decision has largely been made. The emerging question is how deeply digital tools will be woven into the spiritual and relational life of the Church.

The data points toward a future shaped less by innovation alone and more by intentionality. Technology's role will likely continue to expand, but its ultimate influence may depend on whether it remains a support system for operations or becomes a fully integrated instrument for ministry impact.



About the Research

This report contains the findings from a nationally representative study of U.S. church leaders commissioned by Pushpay and conducted by Barna Group. Between November 11 and December 8, 2025, Barna and Pushpay surveyed 1,306 church leaders. Barna and Pushpay utilized their own networks for this data collection; 644 respondents came from Pushpay’s invitations, and 661 came from Barna’s. Of the 1,306 respondents, 1,027 answered all survey questions. This report utilizes partially completed surveys when possible. Throughout the report the term “church leaders” is used to refer all respondents.

● Sample Demographics

	All Respondents	Barna Respondents	Pushpay Respondents
Age: Under 45 Years Old	34%	29%	40%
Age: 45 or Older	66%	71%	60%
Gender: Male	70%	81%	56%
Gender: Female	30%	19%	44%
Denomination: Catholic	7%	1%	13%
Denomination: Mainline	17%	22%	11%
Denomination: Non-mainline	76%	77%	76%
Church Size: Less than 200	52%	65%	35%
Church Size: 200 to 800	33%	28%	39%
Church Size: More than 800	15%	7%	26%
Budget: Less than \$500,000	50%	60%	37%
Budget: \$500,000 to \$999,999	23%	22%	24%
Budget: \$1 million to \$5 million	24%	17%	34%
Budget: Over \$5 million	3%	1%	6%
Race: White	83%	89%	75%
Race: Black / African American	7%	5%	9%
Race: Hispanic / Latino(a)	3%	2%	5%
Race: Asian / Asian American	2%	2%	4%
Race: Another ethnic group	2%	1%	3%
Race: Prefer not to answer	2%	1%	4%

● Glossary

Roles

Senior pastors: church leaders who self-identified as either senior pastor (Protestants) or priest (Catholics)

Church staff members: all other respondents (including approximately 70 respondents who identified as a volunteer)

Missional Approaches to Technology

Barna created a custom metric to measure church leaders by the missional approach to technology in their churches. This metric is calculated by scoring the following questions:

How important is technology in each of the following areas of your church's mission?

- Discipleship
- Worship
- Community

Respondents could rate each item on a five-point scale from “not at all important” (scored as a one) to “extremely important” (scored as a five). The three items were then summed to create a “missional” scale that ranges from 3 to 15, 3 being the lowest and 15 being the highest. For analysis, Barna segmented church leaders into three missional groups based on their scores:

High: Score 14 or 15

Moderate: Score 12 or 13

Low: Score 11 or lower



About the Partners



Since 1984, Barna Group has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about faith and culture, leadership, vocation and generations. Barna Group has worked with thousands of businesses, nonprofit organizations and churches across the U.S. and around the world. Barna is an independent, privately held, nonpartisan organization based in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas.



Pushpay empowers mission-based organizations to engage their communities by bringing people together and fostering meaningful connections. Through their innovative suite of products, they help create cultures of generosity by streamlining donation processes, enhancing communication, and strengthening relationships.

Pushpay's purpose-built ministry solutions include ChurchStaq, ParishStaq, Pushpay Insights, Resi, and more, designed to simplify operations, provide data-driven insights, and support your mission. Whether helping churches manage donations, organize events, or connect with their community, Pushpay's integrated tools enable leaders to focus on what matters most—growing their ministry and deepening engagement.