



DECEMBER 8, 2020

**FIRESIDE CHAT**

The New Reality of the Urban Church:  
What Has Changed?

# Congregational Census & Survey

## STUDY AREA

Grand Rapids + Kentwood + Wyoming

## GOALS

Analyze trends over time in the congregational ecology of our urban area and gather information on the main characteristics of religious leaders and their congregations.

## TIMELINE

### Census

**2016**

July-November

### Survey

**2017**

June-September

## Process

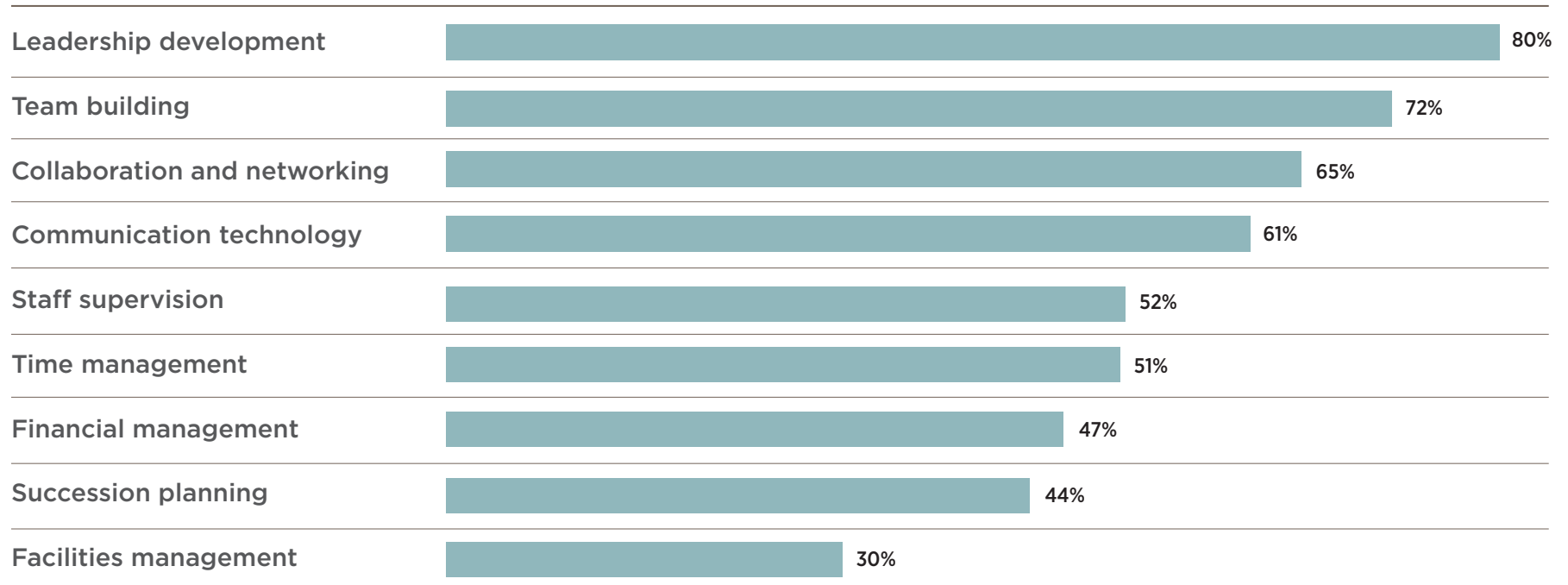
- Canvassed more than **90 square miles** of roads and walkable districts
- Used existing lists, maps, and online research to compile a list of all known congregations
- **Surveyed 348 of the 532 congregations** from the master list, or 65% of the study-eligible congregations
- **Interviewed the leaders of 75% of Hispanic and 72% of Black churches**
- Included **14 primarily Black and primarily Hispanic congregations** that are located directly adjacent to the study area
- Used Key Informant Method, which relies on a key leader to describe an organization
- Included demographic information from the American Community Survey (ACS), an ongoing project directed by the U.S. Census Bureau





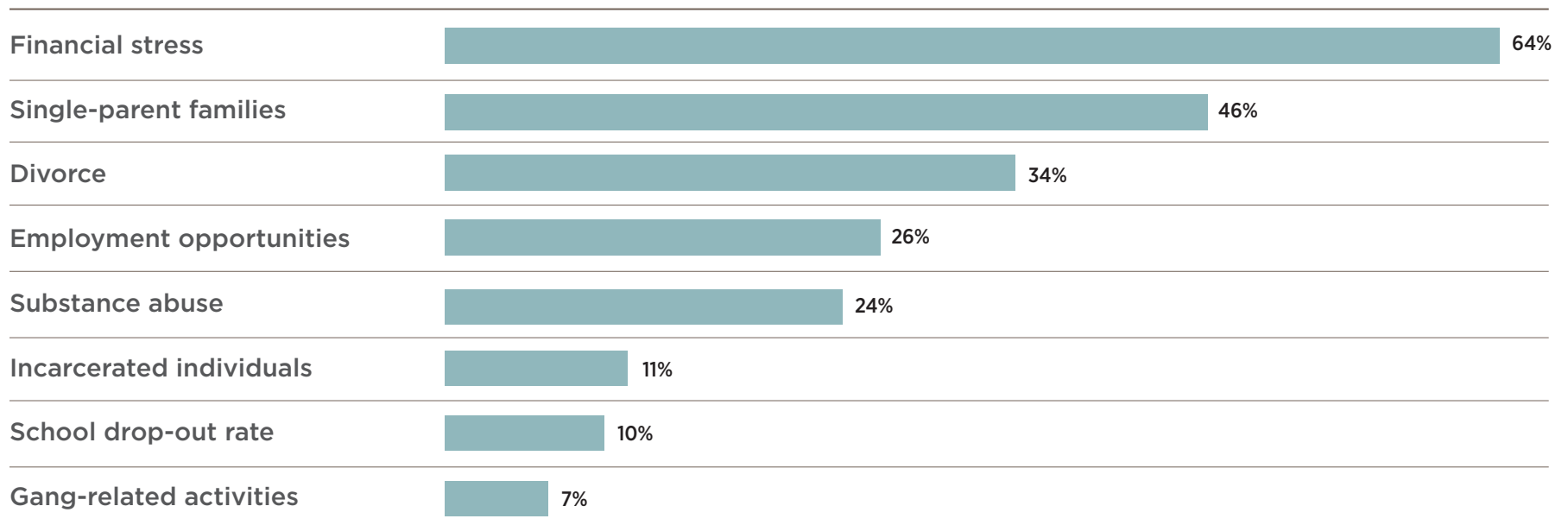
## Interest in improving management abilities

*Percent who indicate an interest*



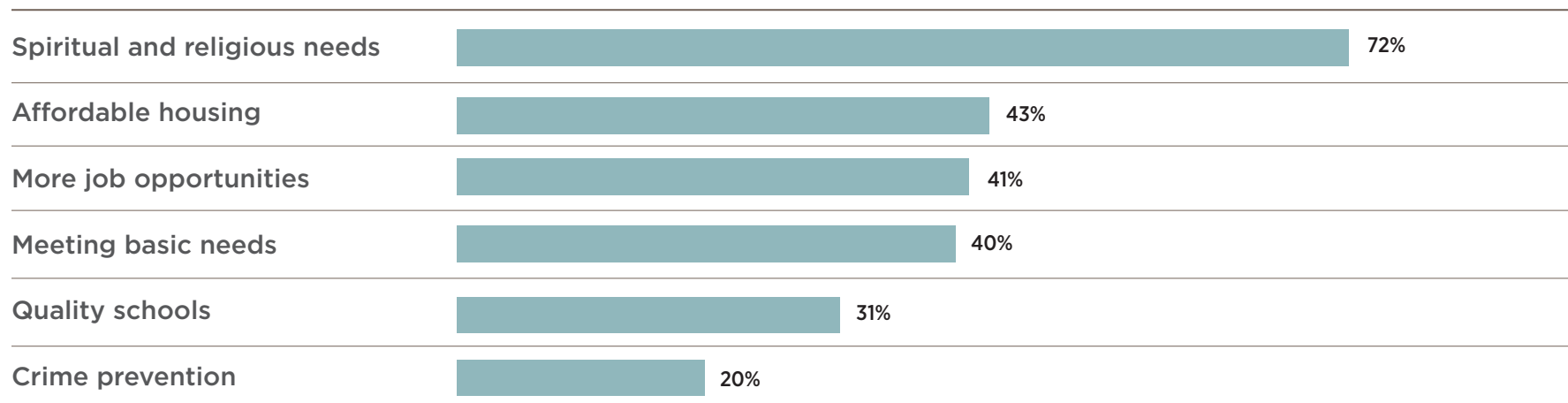


## Sources of concern for families in the congregation

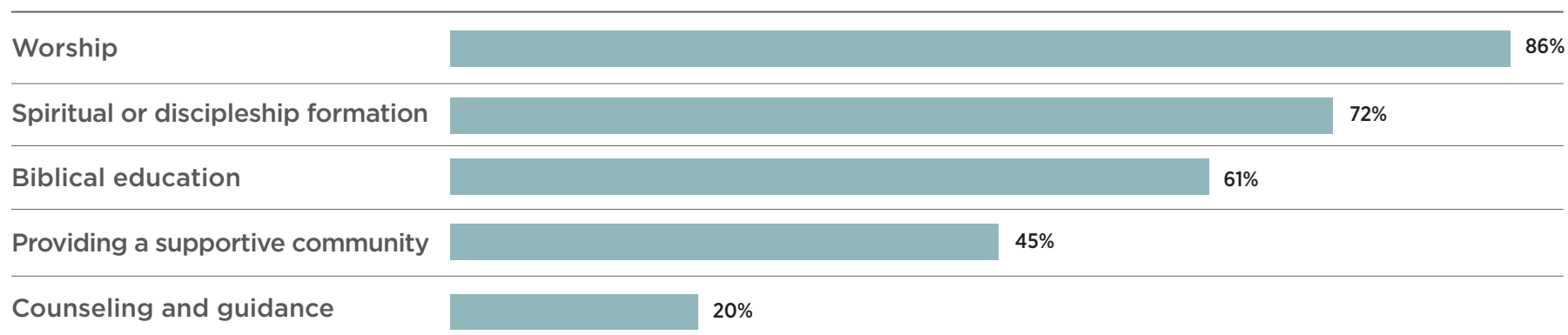


## OUTREACH

### Most important needs of people in the neighborhood



### Most important ways congregations serve their members





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What has changed?

What have we learned?



# 2020 + COVID

“GOD HAS TAUGHT US SOMETHING.  
THAT THE BUILDING ISN'T ALL THERE IS.”



## ENGAGEMENT

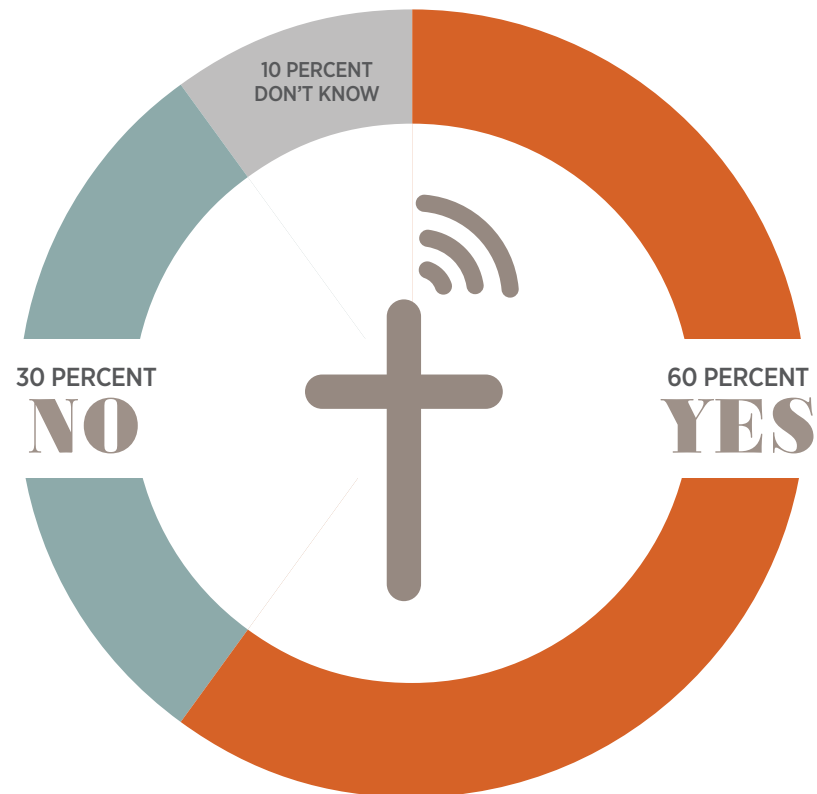
# Digital Services

Are online/streamed services the only activity your church has offered during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Base: Churched adults who have participated in a church that offered online services during COVID-19.

n=429 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020.

Source: Barna; *Six Questions about the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*; page 8.



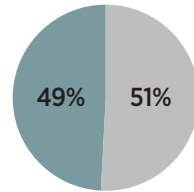


# CHURCHES + CONGREGANTS

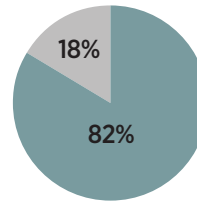
## DIGITAL WORSHIP NEWBIES

At some point during the pandemic, have you watched a church services online?

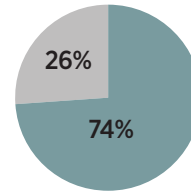
■ Yes ■ No



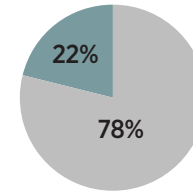
All U.S. adults



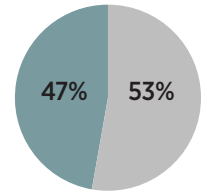
Practicing Christians



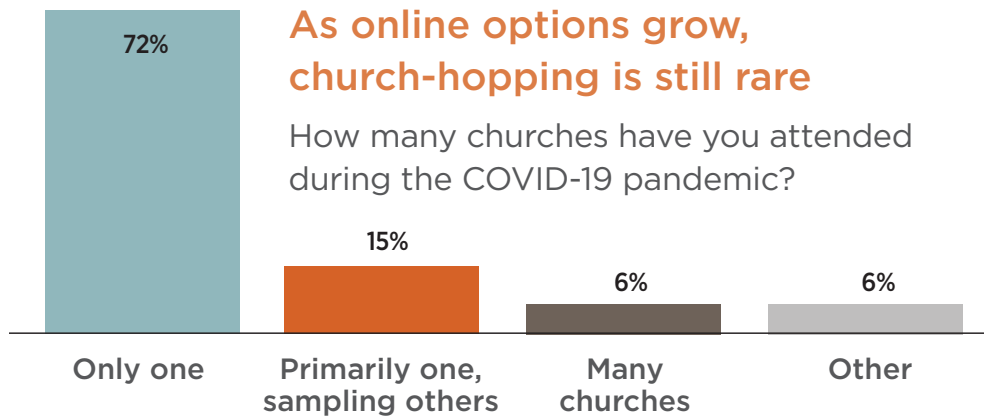
Churched adults



Unchurched adults



Dropouts



**As online options grow, church-hopping is still rare**

How many churches have you attended during the COVID-19 pandemic?

ADAPTING

**67%**

of churched adults whose churches **previously didn't offer digital services** before the COVID-19 pandemic say **there is now an online option.**

Base: Churched adults.

**90%**

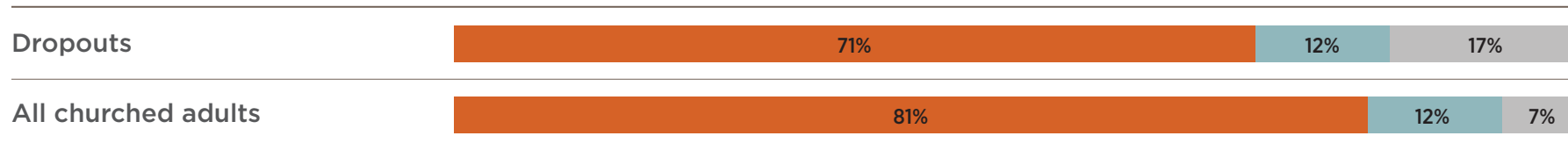
primarily **engage with the same church** they were committed to before the pandemic.

Base: Churched adults who have participated in church during the pandemic. n=1,302 U.S. adults, n=661 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020. Source: Barna; *Six Questions about the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*; page 13.

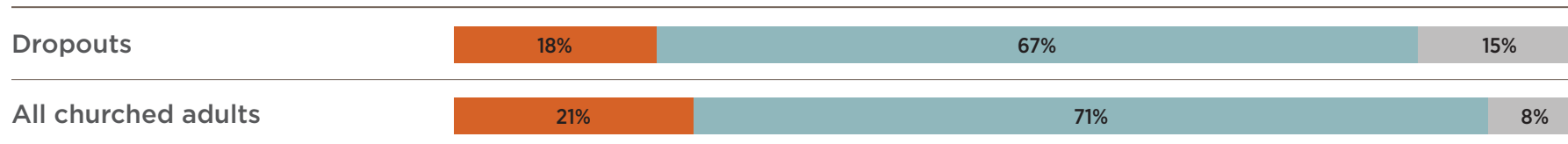
# Potential Barriers

Churchgoers still attending services during the pandemic haven't let their preference for in-person worship keep them from engaging. Even church dropouts acknowledge value in online service—but are less interested in committing to a “new normal.”

“Experiencing God in a church service alongside others, in person, is very important to me.”



“I don't see the value of attending an online church service.”



■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Not applicable

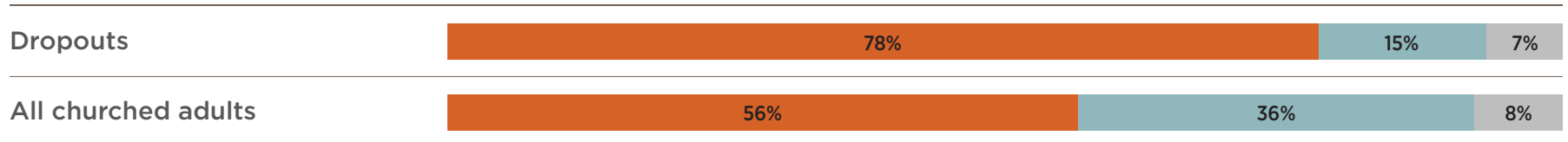
Base: Churched adults.

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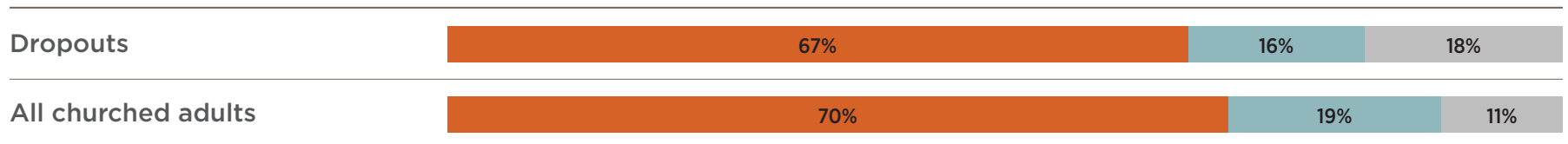
Source: Barna; *Six Questions about the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*; page 15.

Continued. Potential Barriers

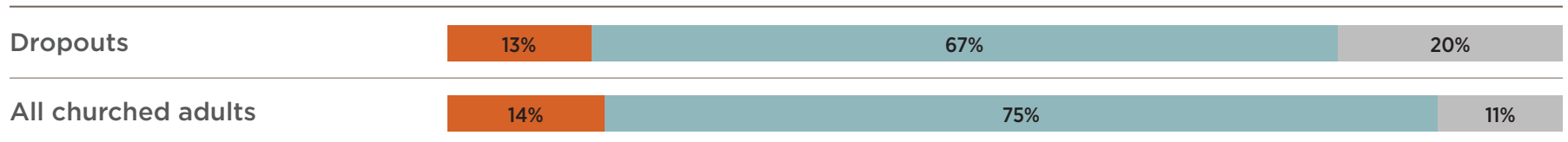
“I am waiting for church services to go back to normal before I return.”



“I am spiritually growing during this pandemic in ways other than church attendance.”



“I am not interested in church engagement because I’ve been rethinking or drifting from my faith practice.”



Agree Disagree Not applicable

Base: Churched adults.

n=661 U.S. churched adults, September 1-15, 2020.

Source: Barna; *Six Questions about the Future of the Hybrid Church Experience*; page 15.



## DISCUSSION QUESTION

How do we lead effectively through these changes to keep ministry relevant?