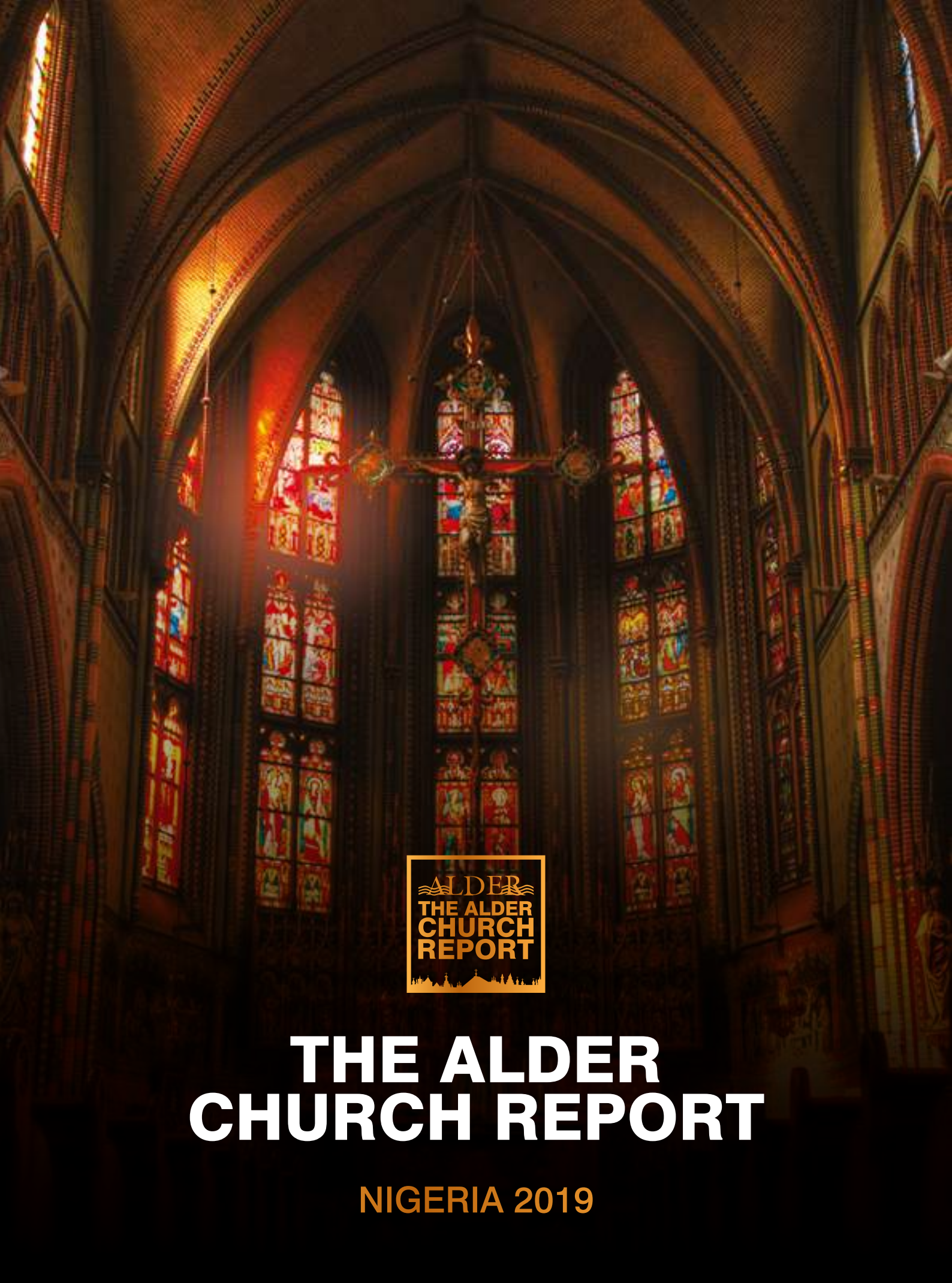


THE ALDER CHURCH REPORT

NIGERIA 2019

CONTENTS

About The Alder Church Report 3

The Church, The People And The Nation — Leke Alder 4

Demographics 8

Leading While Serving: Social Responsibility and the Church — Pastor Godman Akinlabi 10

Overall Results 15

Section 1: Church Attendance 16

Section 2: Social Relevance 17

Section 3: Technology 21

Section 4: Youth Engagement 25

Section 5: Finance & Stewardship 31

What's Church Got to Do With It? Sex & Sexuality in Nigeria — Praise Fowowe 32

Regional Results 38

Section 1: Church Attendance 39

Section 2: Social Relevance 41

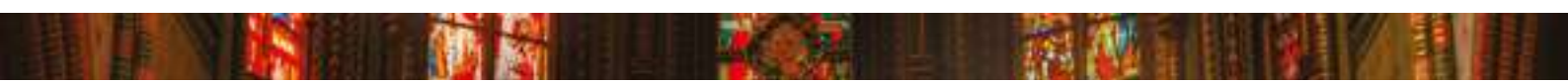
Peer Pressure And Depression in the Age of Social Media — Oyinkansola Alabi 46

Section 3: Technology 66

New Media & the Church: Church Should Embrace (And Not Fear) Media — Chude Jideonwo (With Damola Morenikeji) 74

Section 4: Youth Engagement 80

Section 5: Finance & Stewardship 98



ABOUT THE ALDER CHURCH REPORT

"The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence."
- Ephesians 1:23 (MSG)

According to a gentleman named Paul, the Church is the nucleus of society. This implies that ecclesiastical concepts and ideas should shape and guide nations. A strong church can therefore be defined as one capable of negotiating from a position of strength with extant power blocks to influence outcomes. Why then does it appear, that the Church's influence is not as strong as it can be?

This is a pivotal question that the Alder Church Report 2019 seeks to address.

In addition, as a result of the Church's diverse constitution, multi-generational affiliation and national spread, it serves as a barometer of society. Understanding the concerns & interests of church members (especially millennials), can give insight into what the larger society thinks. Therefore, what are millennials in the Church concerned about? What are they interested in? What is important to them? This is vital as 70% of Nigeria's population is reputed to be below 35 years old.

If the Church must continue to impact society and be relevant in the future, we need new thinking and new approaches. The environment is changing around us. Nigeria is in transition.

I'm happy to present to you our research findings in this report themed, The Church, The People and The Nation.

Happy Reading!

Leke Alder
Principal, Alder Consulting



The Church, The People And The Nation

— Leke Alder

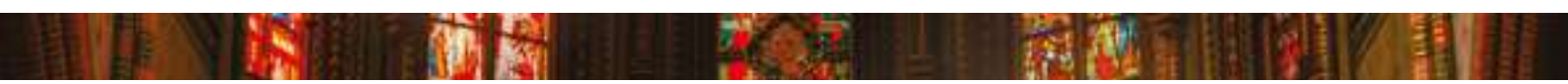


Without a doubt, poverty is Nigeria's biggest challenge. It's what's fuelling crime, terrorism, militancy and insurgency. And the level of poverty is affecting our democratic choices. The poorer the people the poorer the choices made. It has fostered on the nation a breed of rent seekers, economic saboteurs and political landlords.

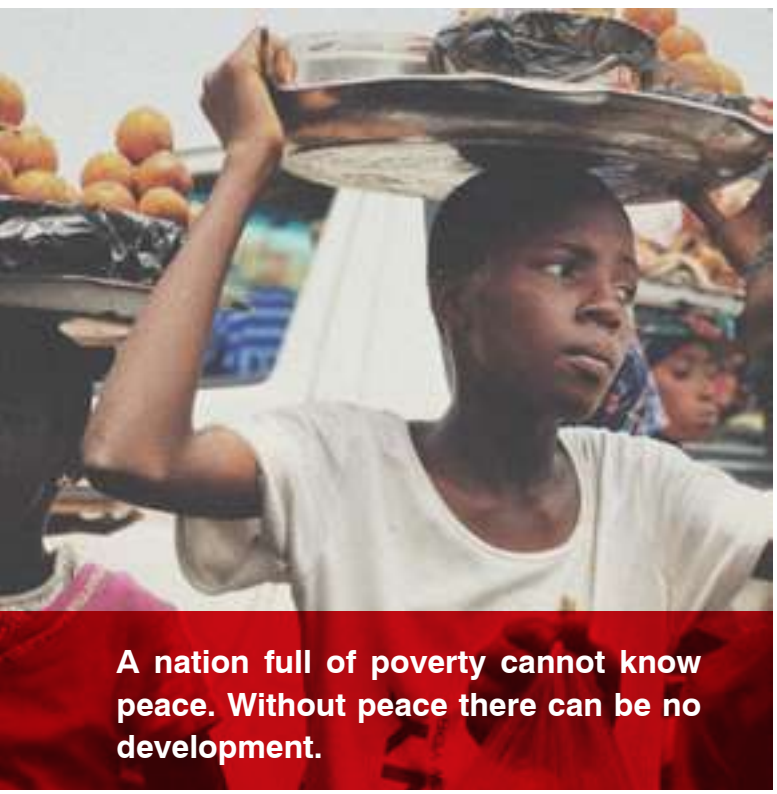
What the church does to tackle poverty is social intervention – we feed the poor, take care of orphans and widows, get street urchins off the streets, repurpose "area boys", build schools, offer scholarships, facilitate workshops for skill acquisition, etc. This is all well and good. Our faith demands we take care of the socially disadvantaged. But we are merely ameliorating the human condition. We are not solving the problem of poverty in our land. That can only be done at the policy level. (In Nigeria, the problem of poverty can only be solved at policy level. Therefore, we need policy missionaries.) Which means some Christians have to get into power and use the instrumentality of state policy to crack the poverty challenge. We need policy missionaries. That doesn't mean the church should stop social intervention, but national problems sometimes require national implements. If we don't resolve our human development challenges as a nation, sort out our educational system as well as our healthcare system, stimulate the economy and encourage enterprise development, poverty will remain with us, even if we pray till kingdom come. There's a reason God asks us to pray for those in government. It is to foster peace. A nation full of poverty cannot know peace. Without peace there can be no development.

In Nigeria, the problem of poverty can only be solved at the policy level. Therefore, we need policy missionaries.

Outside the church is grinding poverty, hopelessness and despair. There are few economic opportunities for youths. They feel buried alive in the concrete tombs of our national misfortune. Youths constitute more than half of the population. There are no jobs.



The unemployment rate is high. Many of those who have jobs are underemployed. In this kind of situation any flagrant or boastful display of ostentatious wealth is bound to attract acrimony. Unfortunately, some Nigerian pastors tend to display prosperity as affirmation of technology of faith.



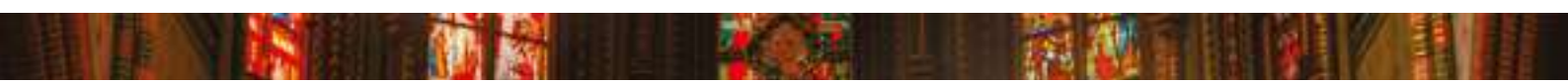
A nation full of poverty cannot know peace. Without peace there can be no development.

Perhaps the reason the youths in Nigeria blame the church for the failure of the state, is because they transcendentally know the church is a "political institution"- it has power and influence. Many of the complaints of the youths should ordinarily be directed at state actors, but the complaints are directed at the church, as if the church is responsible for formulating policy. But what if these kids aren't wrong? What if the church can shape and influence policy? The evidence from the Bible suggests it.

Let's start with Jesus. All the titles of Jesus are political titles. "King of kings," "Lord of lords" are political titles. And he has ministerial portfolios. Jehovah Rapha (the Lord my healer) is his health portfolio, Jehovah El Roi (the Lord my righteousness) is his justice portfolio, Jehovah Nissi (the Lord my banner) is his defence portfolio. The list goes on.

Jesus is also the Messiah. To the Jew, the Messiah is a military and political figure. It's why the disciples wondered if Jesus would restore the kingdom of Israel at that point in time. According to the prophets, the Messiah has two programs – the spiritual and the political. Jesus has already fulfilled the spiritual. The outstanding is the political. Jesus is a political figure; not just a religious figure. Salvation is a citizenship program.

But if the church is in doubt of her political status, the adversary is not. His response is political. Satan's organogram is wholly political. The job titles are blatantly so – Principalities, Powers, Rulers of Darkness . . . A principality is a prince. The Principalities are the political strategists, the Powers have executive power. They're in charge of governments and nations. They influence policy and coordinate national programs. We've been concentrating on non-political actors like witches and wizards, when we should be concentrating on the Principalities and Powers. They're in charge of policy misdirections in Nigeria. Wars, rumours of war, coups, anarchy, unrests, insurgencies, economic meltdowns and leadership ineptitude are coordinated by the Powers.



Even the titles we use in church are borrowings from the political sphere. Take the word Bishop. The Greek word is episkopos. It means "overseer." In Ancient Greece, it was used for government officials. These were Athenian officials sent into allied cities to set up democratic constitutions. The early church borrowed those terminologies for a reason.

The Church needs to make use of her secular assets. Christianity is a Melchizedek proposition.

Paul laid out a progressive vision of the church. He himself would not step into it, but it is a picture of political evolution. We find it in Ephesians 1:20-23 MSG:

"God raised him (Christ) from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the centre of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence."

In other words the church is a political nucleus.

There's a dimension to the church we haven't stepped into. The progression of the church is not a re-enactment of the past, it is an evolutionary movement into the future. There are a number of steps the church needs to take in order to be politically strong. (It is disgraceful that the church has the numbers, the finance and the brains, and yet the church is politically weak):

1. Have a long term political strategy.

The church must plan at least twenty years into the future. We tend to wake up very close to elections or when there's crisis. By then the issues are already defined and we're voting for candidates chosen for us by a motley crew of interests that are not necessarily amenable to Christian ideology.

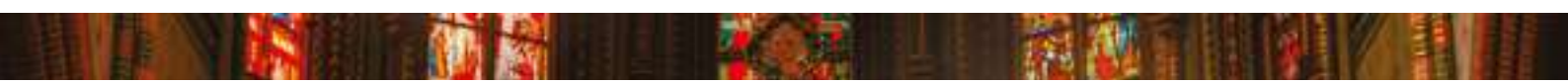
2. Christians must join political parties.

In a democracy, the platform for access to political power is the political party. Many Christians unfortunately see politics as abomination.

3. Churches should set up schools of government. Schools like the Kennedy School of Government and not just schools of ministry. A school of ministry is nothing more than a personnel training institute for the church. The challenge of Nigeria is leadership. A relevant church responds to local challenges. Those schools of government must be open to non-Christians.

4. The church should set up secular media.

A CNN is ultimately more powerful than a TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network). A Christian TV station has limited reach whereas a secular TV station has unlimited reach. The church needs to learn to engage the polity. CNN speaks to the polity, TBN speaks to Christians, and in tongues.



5. The Church needs to make use of her secular assets. Christianity is a Melchizedek proposition. It has both priestly and kingly dimensions. One of the reasons the church is weak is because it tends to rely solely on its priestly assets – the pastors essentially. It is an inversion of the principle laid down in scriptures and it does not represent the diversity Jesus had in mind when he conceptualised the Church. Besides, pastors have their limitation. There's a reason Jesus chose tax agents, doctors, activists and entrepreneurs as disciples. It was a radical shift from the Old Testament template. Unfortunately many pastors are operating in the Old Testament mould. It's why pastors imagine themselves Elijah. It's why pastors seek to anoint candidates in a democracy. It's a conceptual impossibility. Anointing goes with monarchy.

6. In line with modern imperatives, church curriculum has to change. The issues of the future are not issues of the past. Children's church curriculum has to change. Children's church is a breeding ground for a new generation of Christians. This new generation must be a Daniel generation - able to function in secular society as well as in government. They must be able to answer to the issues of the day - the new sociology, the new anthropology, the new ideology, the new theology, the new science.

7. The church must connect with the next generation. That generation feels cut off from opportunities. The church must connect with youths, understand their issues, and address their issues.

8. The church must encourage reasoning capacity development. The Holy Spirit is an intellectual. He inspired the writings of Paul. Paul was an intellectual. We must breed a thinking generation that is able to question issues. An unreasoning, unquestioning and un-examining generation of Christians is a danger to the faith and a danger to their nation.

Children's church curriculum has to change. The issues of the future are not issues of the past.

9. Theology must be taught in church. Enough of our fast food diet – Seven Steps to Prosperity, Three Steps to Answered Prayer, How to Fast for A Husband... Our fast food diet has created spiritually obese individuals who unfortunately imagine themselves a symbol of corporeal health. The history of the church must be taught as well.

10. The church must strategically interface with government. A platform of engagement must be created. This platform cannot be PFN (Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria) or CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria). They essentially function as trade unions now. They are not broad enough to accommodate the secular intellectual assets of the church.

If we must be relevant in the future we need new thinking, new approaches. The environment is changing around us. Nigeria is in transition.

Leke Alder
Principal, Alder Consulting



01

DEMOGRAPHICS

DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Number of Respondents

4,634
in 2019

2,805
in 2016

Online Respondents



3,634
across Nigeria



2,205
in 2016

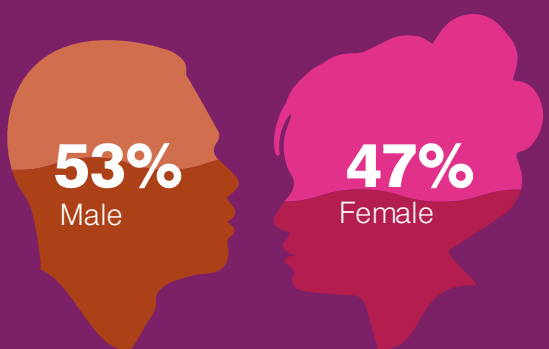
Offline Respondents



1,000
from Abuja, Borno, Enugu, Kano, Lagos and Rivers States



600
in 2016



Employed



64%

Unemployed



32%



Married
50%



Single
50%



Below 35
68%

Leading While Serving: Social Responsibility and the Church — Pastor Godman Akinlabi

Matthew 20: 20-28.
"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. *"What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom". "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*



Leadership is a concept that has been misconstrued for thousands of years. When people think of leaders, the image is often one of pomp and pageantry, accolades and privilege. Leadership is really spelt SERVICE. Service and sacrifice are what actually give meaning to leadership. Without them, leadership is simply a self-seeking grab for power and recognition and is ultimately destructive to all

parties involved. Would people vie for leadership positions as thirstily as they do today if they truly understood its demands?

The world does not need lofty spectators; we need true leaders who have a heart for service.

While Jesus Christ was on earth, the Bible records that He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the enemy. Why would the bulk of his ministry revolve around providing succour to people in society? For one thing, people who are suffering are usually hard of hearing. The sick and oppressed are more likely to listen to a sermon when their immediate needs are met and not before. Jesus did not do miracles to show off, but rather to give people a better life and to alleviate their suffering. He was not content with people having mediocre life experiences. If they were sick, He healed them. If they were hungry, He fed them. If they were confused, He provided direction. If they were mentally disturbed, He delivered them from demonic oppression and helped them to embrace peace and clarity. If they were rejected, He embraced them. When He saw injustice, He spoke up against it. When they wept, He wept. It was not enough for Him to preach fiery sermons; He demonstrated genuine concern for their everyday struggles and actively served the people. That's leadership. A true leader cannot be immune to his environment. The world does not need lofty spectators; we need true leaders who have a heart for service.

The local church has a huge responsibility. Indeed, Jesus has passed the torch to us. We too have been anointed with the Holy Ghost and power to do good and heal all who are oppressed of the enemy, because God is with us. Churches have a glorious gospel to preach but we also have a suffering people to serve. Preaching must go hand in hand with service. We cannot be content with preaching rousing sermons on Sundays while the world around us decays. That's oratory, not leadership. That's a performance, not service.

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them and the social conditions that cripple them is a spiritually moribund religion awaiting burial". If there is any entity that should be interested in the quality of life that people live, it must be the church.

Jesus described the church as the salt of the earth and the light of the world – these are not futuristic terminologies. The effects of salt and light are immediate and resounding. When you have light, you gain direction; where salt is added, there is a change in the taste and configuration of the original substance. We, as the church of Christ, must be able to bring noticeable changes in our environment just by showing up! So what's going wrong? Why are churches not as impactful as we have been called to be?

First, we must embrace visionary leadership. True leadership must have a vision for the betterment



of the people and not personal aggrandisement. A huge part of Africa's problem is that many of our business, political and religious leaders are quite myopic in their sense of vision. They have only a vision for their own personal progress, thereby amassing wealth for themselves while the people remain in poverty. Some politicians 'magnanimously' extend their vision to enriching people from their own clans or tribes. Such shallow, self-centred thinking is a colossal waste of a leadership position! The impact that we have been called to make is not clan or tribe-driven, but to serve and better the lives of people all over the world. As a leader you must have a vision for your neighbourhood, local government, state and so on. Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership did not only affect African-Americans. Its ripple effect is still felt all over the world today – decades after his death. That is true leadership and that is what we should be looking for in our leaders: strength of vision.



Churches have a glorious gospel to preach but we also have a suffering people to serve.

If the average pastor's vision is to grow his or her church and not impact the community, that's a myopic vision. You are neither being salt nor light. What are you doing to cater to the needs of the people, not just spiritually, but mentally, emotionally and economically? It takes a leader with a robust vision to take ownership of a state, community or country. If the politicians are not doing a good job of it, then the onus falls on the religious leaders to do it; and in our environment, there are enough of us numerically to make significant change in our country. Be salt! Be light! Make a difference.

After visionary leadership must come a widespread call to action. The church needs to have a mental recalibration about her reason for existence and this must have a ripple effect from the top leaders to the youngest members. We are all called to serve. It is possible for members of the congregation to erroneously believe that ministry is for the clergy and they are simply consumers. No. We are called to raise disciples and not grow fat sheep. Every member must be a minister. Every member must serve! Church leaders should strive to mobilise their congregants to serve others especially beyond the obvious church administrative roles. After all, how many ushers or choristers can a church have? Not everyone can sing, but everyone has a story. Create avenues where your church members can serve from their experiences. Do you have medical professionals? Let them help with health outreaches. Do you have lawyers? Let them help those in prisons. Do you have engineers? Let them help in community building projects. Do you have law enforcement agents? Let them help to secure the community. Let them serve.



In March 2019, the Pistis Foundation, which is the empowerment arm of The Elevation Church, partnered with an NGO, Pro Health International, to hold a medical and surgical outreach called Ubomi. This free, 5-day event hosted hundreds of medical professionals and other volunteers from all around Nigeria who provided medical interventions and surgeries for over 3,600 people. These skilled professionals all volunteered their time and skills for free. However, there was leadership on different levels to galvanise them, create the opportunities, and facilitate collaborations. When leadership is responsible enough to envision and communicate a vision, people will take up the challenge and execute it. It was a beautiful thing to see people healed as well as the harvest of souls to God's kingdom - because all who felt this hand of mercy were more than willing to hear about the God that sent us.

There is so much good the church can do. We must simply have the courage to envision it and the willingness to try.

SERVICE THROUGH PAIN.

2 Corinthians 1: 3 - 6 *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation".*

Pain prepares us for greatness. We cannot grow beyond our threshold for pain. God never wastes hurt. Your greatest ministry will most likely come out of your greatest hurt. Aldous Huxley once said, "Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you". The common practice is to cover our areas of pain and shame but in actuality, God wants to use our experiences to touch other people's lives. So be they painful family experiences, educational experiences, vocational experiences, spiritual experiences or ministry experiences, they all contribute to make us who we are. So if you have church members that grew up in abject poverty, were abused, faced academic or vocational failure or were in some way incapacitated, and through their relationship with Jesus, have triumphed over such situations, they are the best people to reach out to others in similar circumstances. There are hundreds of other people who are currently facing what they faced and the church can create communities where they can help and mentor such people in their areas of need. Churches can organise career fairs, create fora for single parents, evolve skill-training workshops, sponsor kids and adults to go to school and even organise after school trainings. It doesn't have to be a highfalutin project; start from where you are with what you have. You may not be able to reach 3,000 at the start but reach 30 and watch God multiply your effort. There is so much good the church can



do. We must simply have the courage to envision it and the willingness to try.

Godman Akinlabi is the Lead Pastor, Elevation Church, and the Visionary, The Pistis Foundation.



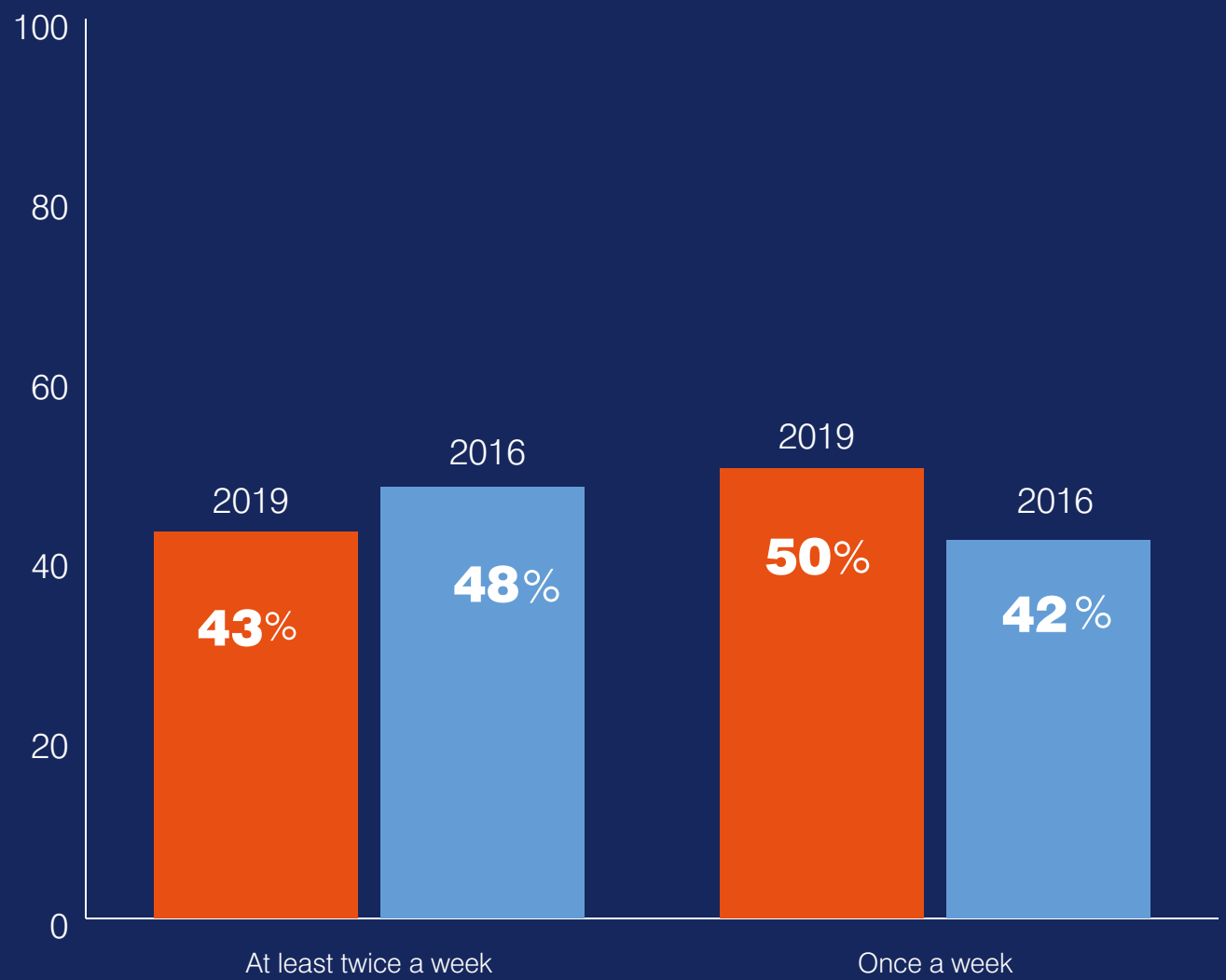
02



OVERALL RESULTS

SECTION 1: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

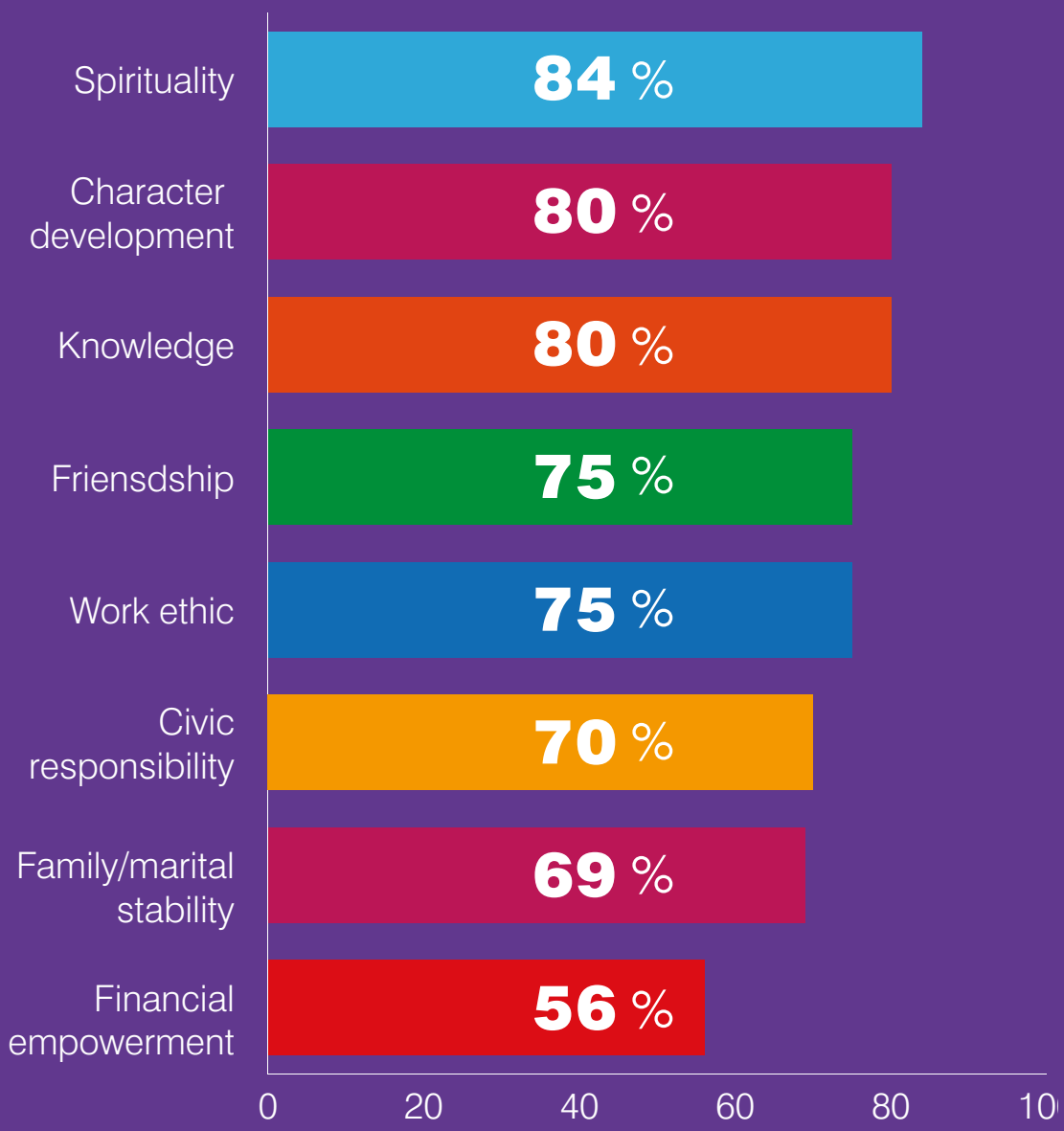
How often do you attend church?



Overall, church attendance seems to be on the increase - 93% (2019) vs. 90% (2016).
However, it appears more people prefer to attend once a week.

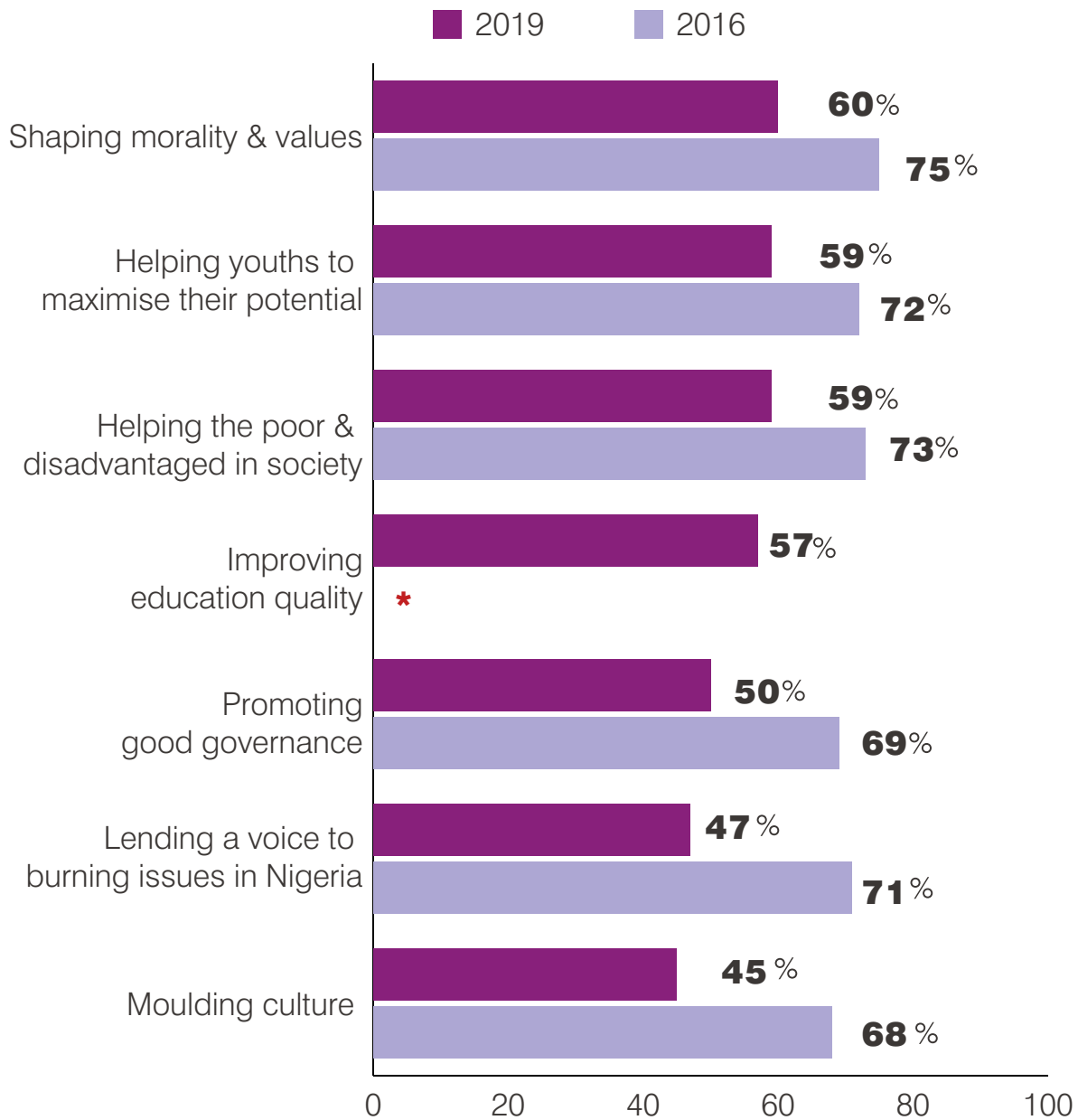
SECTION 2: SOCIAL RELEVANCE

How does your church positively impact your lifestyle?



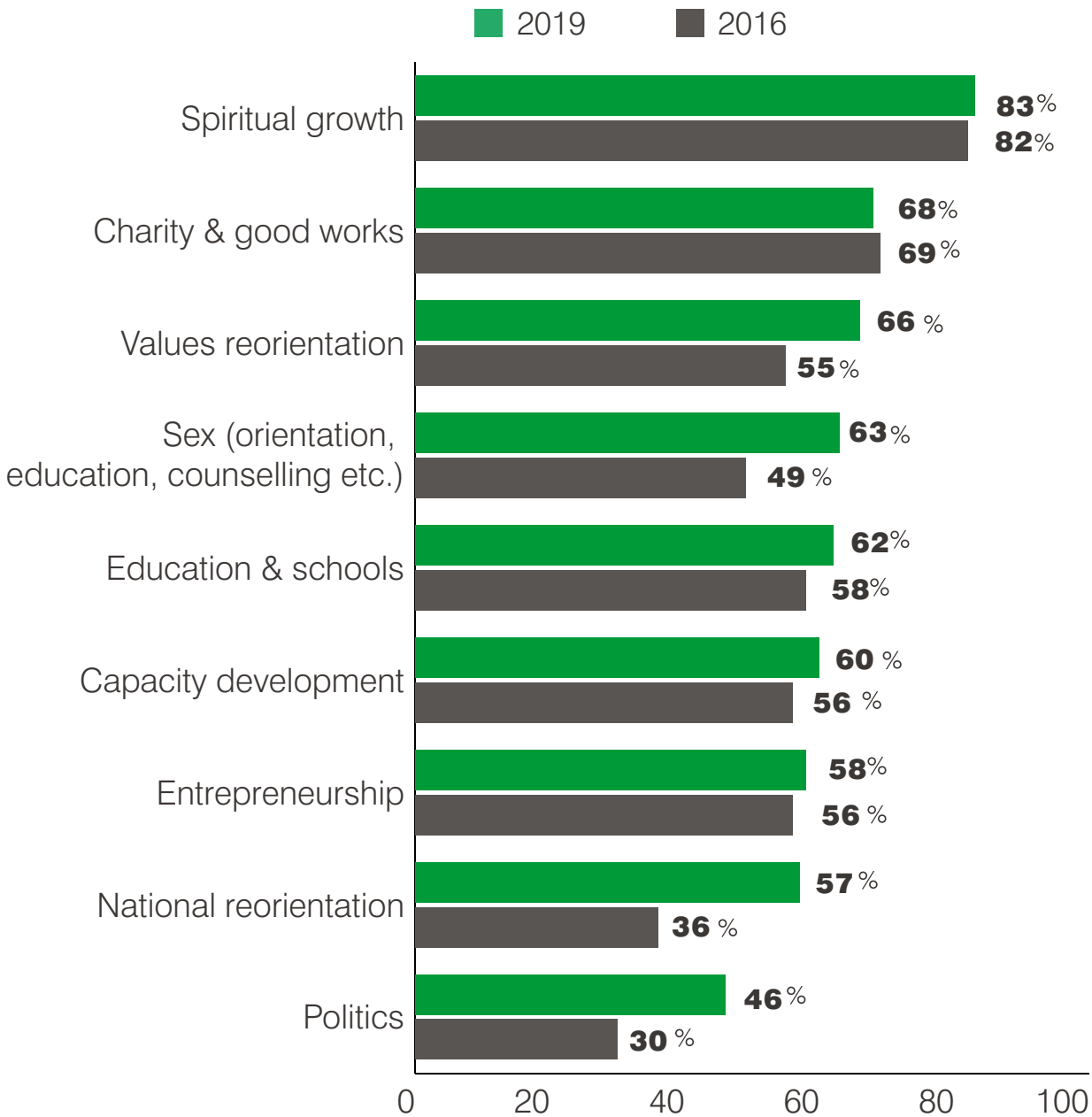
Despite the high volume of financial messages, it would seem people do not feel they are proportionally empowered financially. This dissonance gap raises concern. Family/marital stability should also be watched closely.

How relevant, influential or impactful has the Nigerian Church been in the following areas?



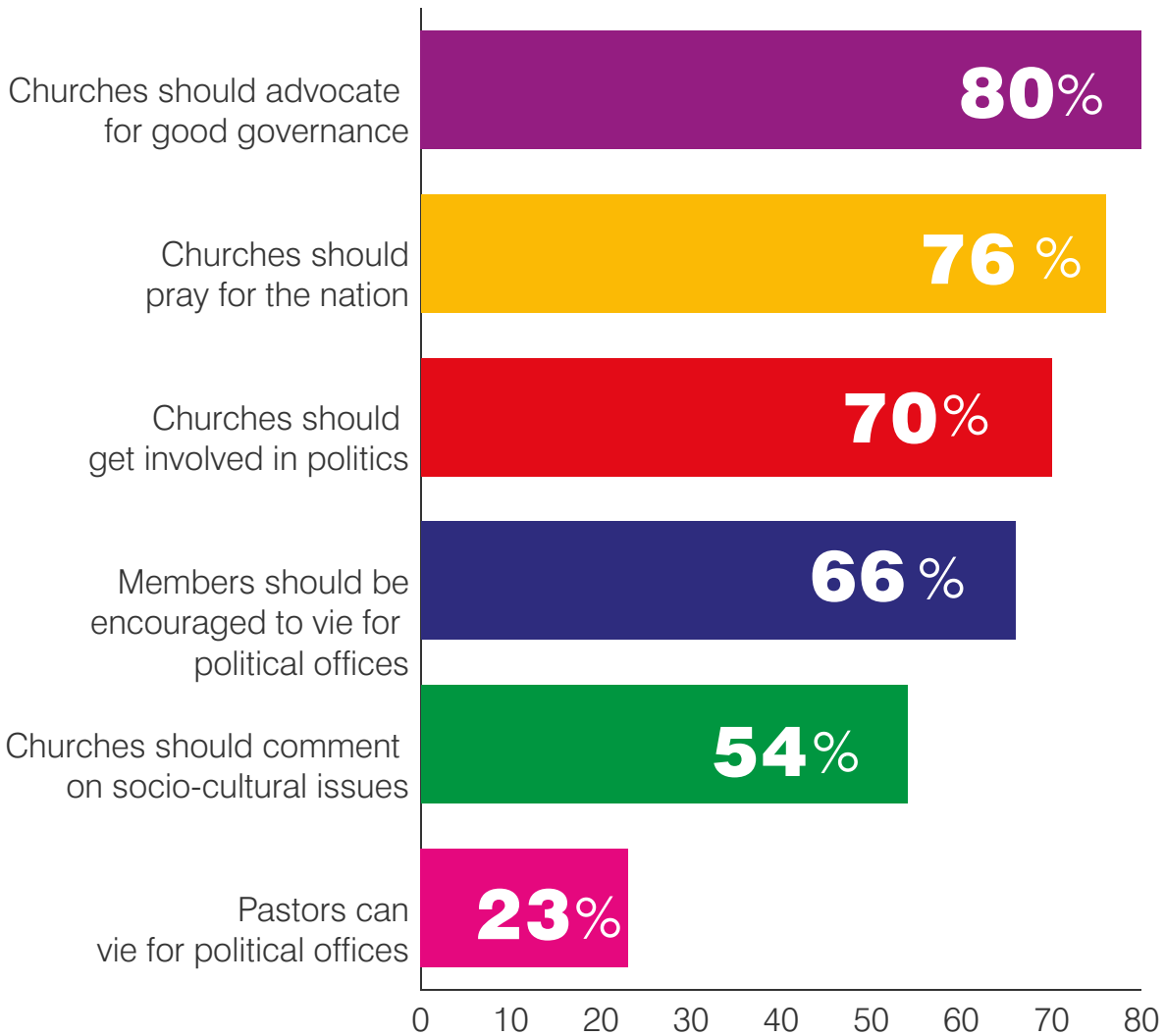
Overall, it appears that the Church's influence on culture and society is waning. There is a significant drop between 2019 and 2016. Impact on education was not measured in 2016.

In your opinion, what issues should the Church in Nigeria focus on right now?



There is a marked increase in results between 2016 and 2019. The Church still scores highest on spirituality and good works. It would seem Millennials want more of church's intervention in socio-cultural matters.

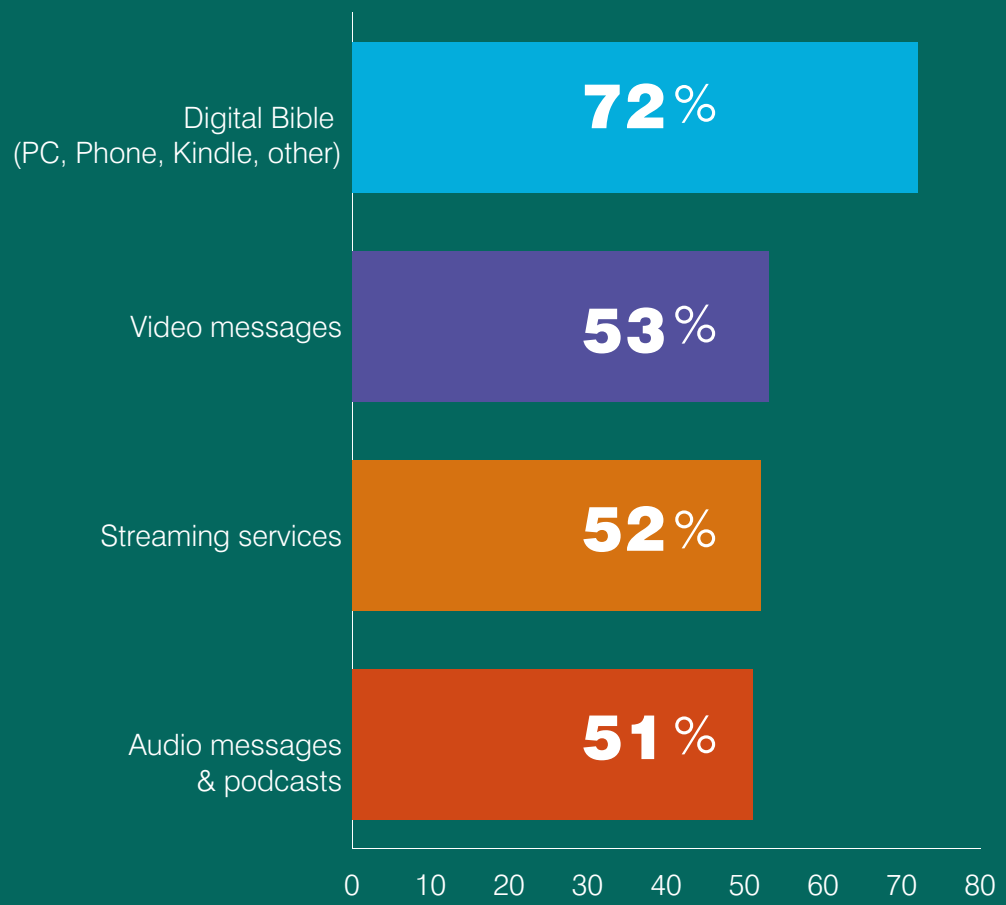
In your opinion, in what ways should the Nigerian Church be involved in politics?



It appears that Churches are expected to remotely participate in politics, via advocacy and prayer. Advocating good governance is ranked highest. This will counteract the low score given to the church on its impact on promoting good governance.

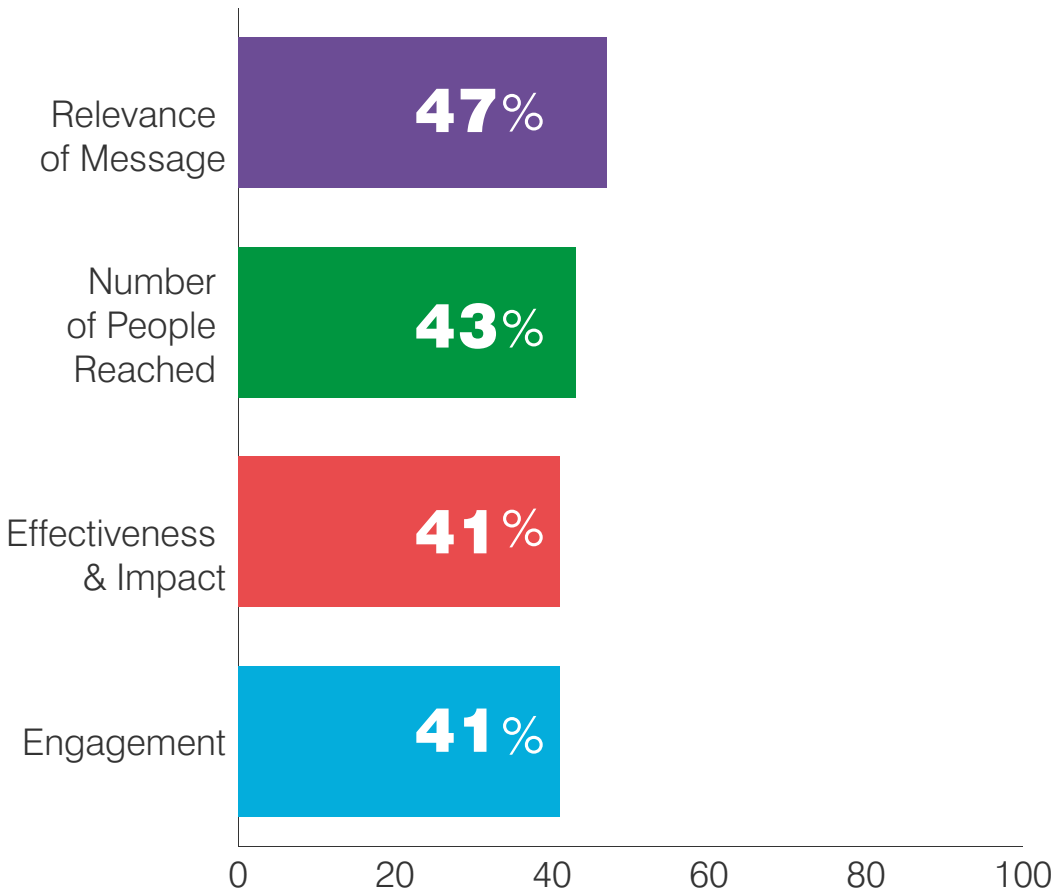
SECTION 3: TECHNOLOGY

Do you consume Christian content in digital formats?



It appears that there is a huge shift towards the use of digital bibles. The adoption of other platforms is average. People still like to physically attend church.

How would you rate the Church's social media content?



The Church scored below average across all parameters. More work needs to be done in the area of social media.

How would you rate the Church's use of technology?





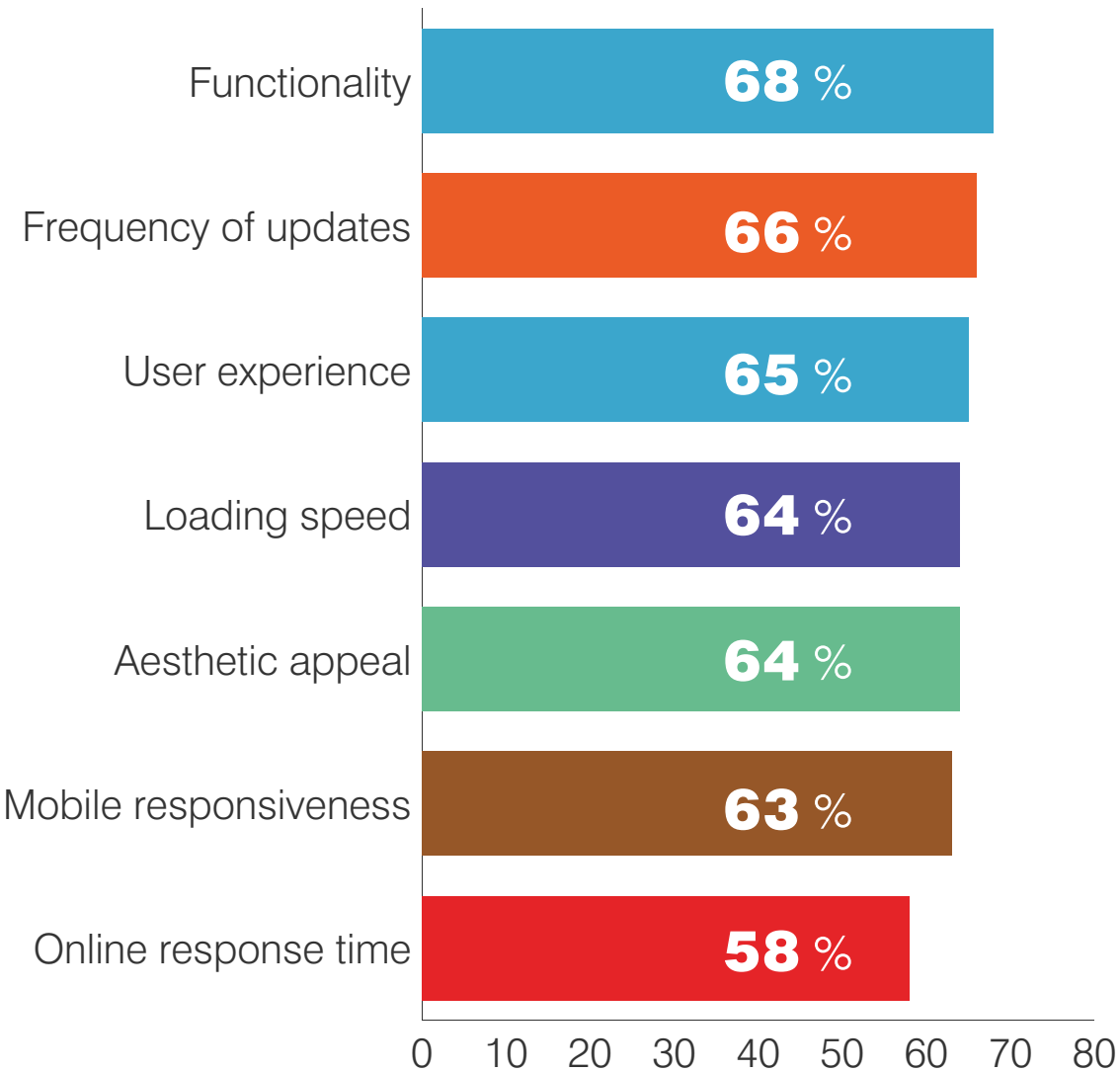
45% Excellent

44% Average

11% Poor

The Church's use of technology is commendable. However, more work can be done to improve its effectiveness.

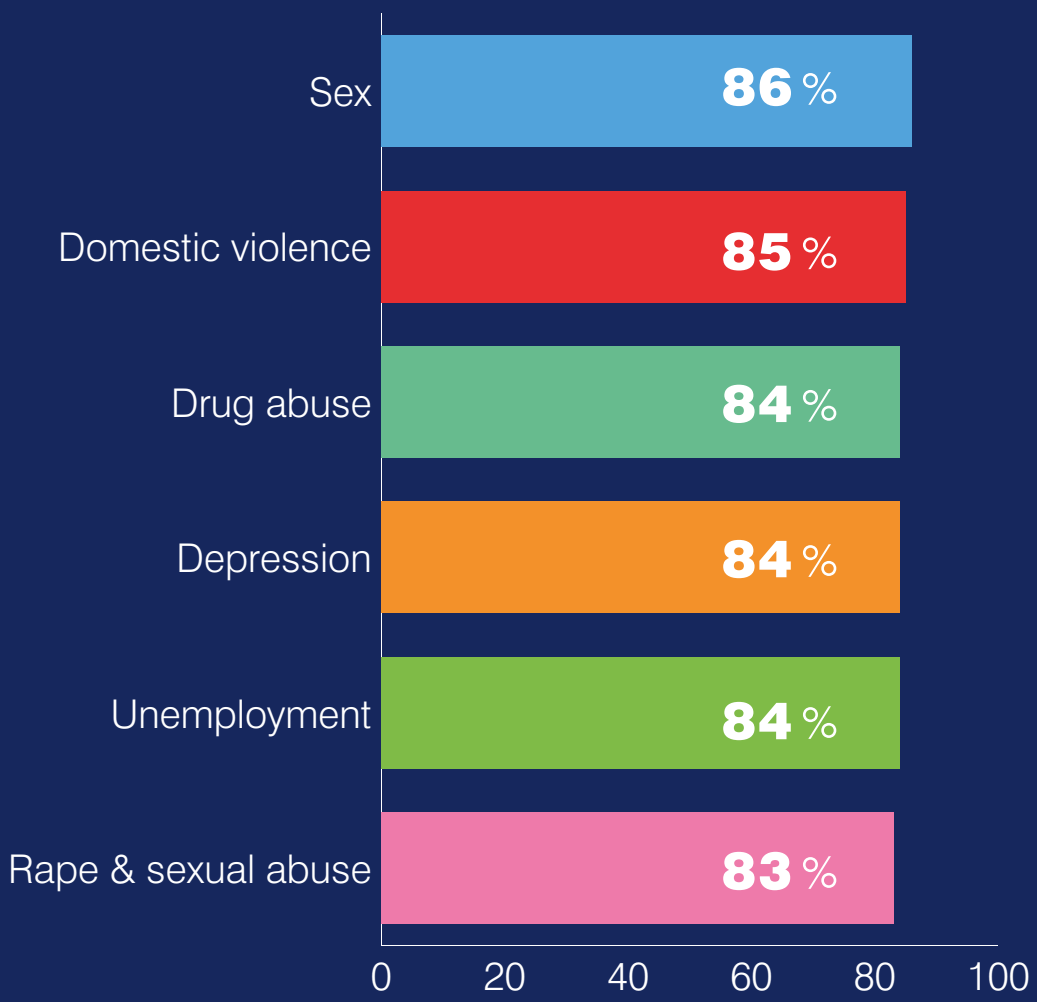
How would you rate Church websites on the following parameters?



The Church scores lowest on online response time. This may be due to a lack of dedicated technology staff in many churches or a heavy dependence on volunteers.

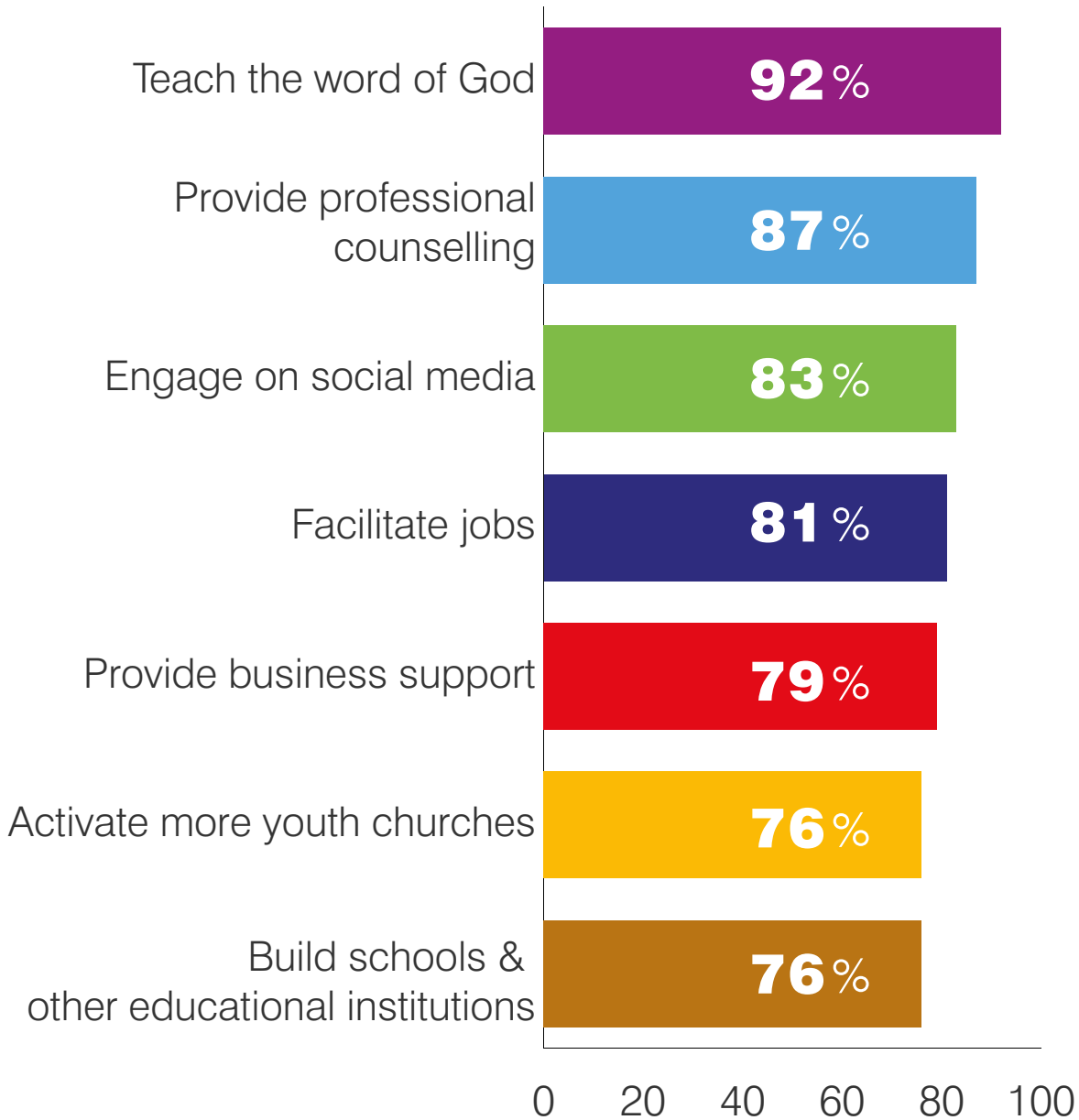
SECTION 4: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

On what social issues should the Nigerian Church actively engage the youth?



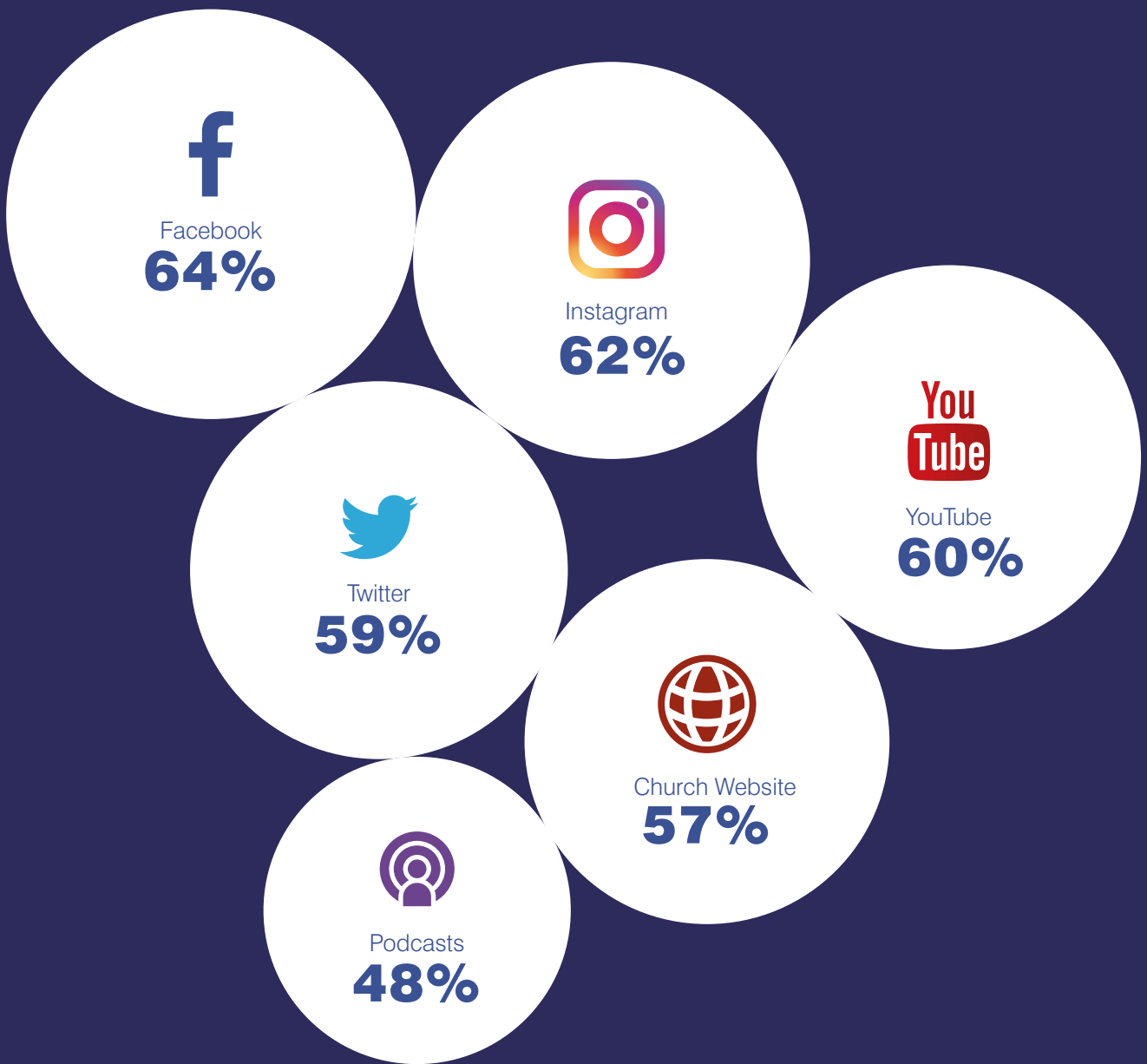
The very high scores point to how much the Youth are concerned about these issues. Addressing them is vital to reaching them.

In what ways can the Church impact the next generation?



People need the Word. In addition, professional counselling and therapy are key, especially in light of the high scores on the previous page.

What online platforms will most enable the Church to engage youths better?



Video based platforms seem to be preferred. This is in line with current global trends.

As a young person, which of the following sexual issues did/do you struggle with?

Usage of Porn
15%



2%
Homosexuality



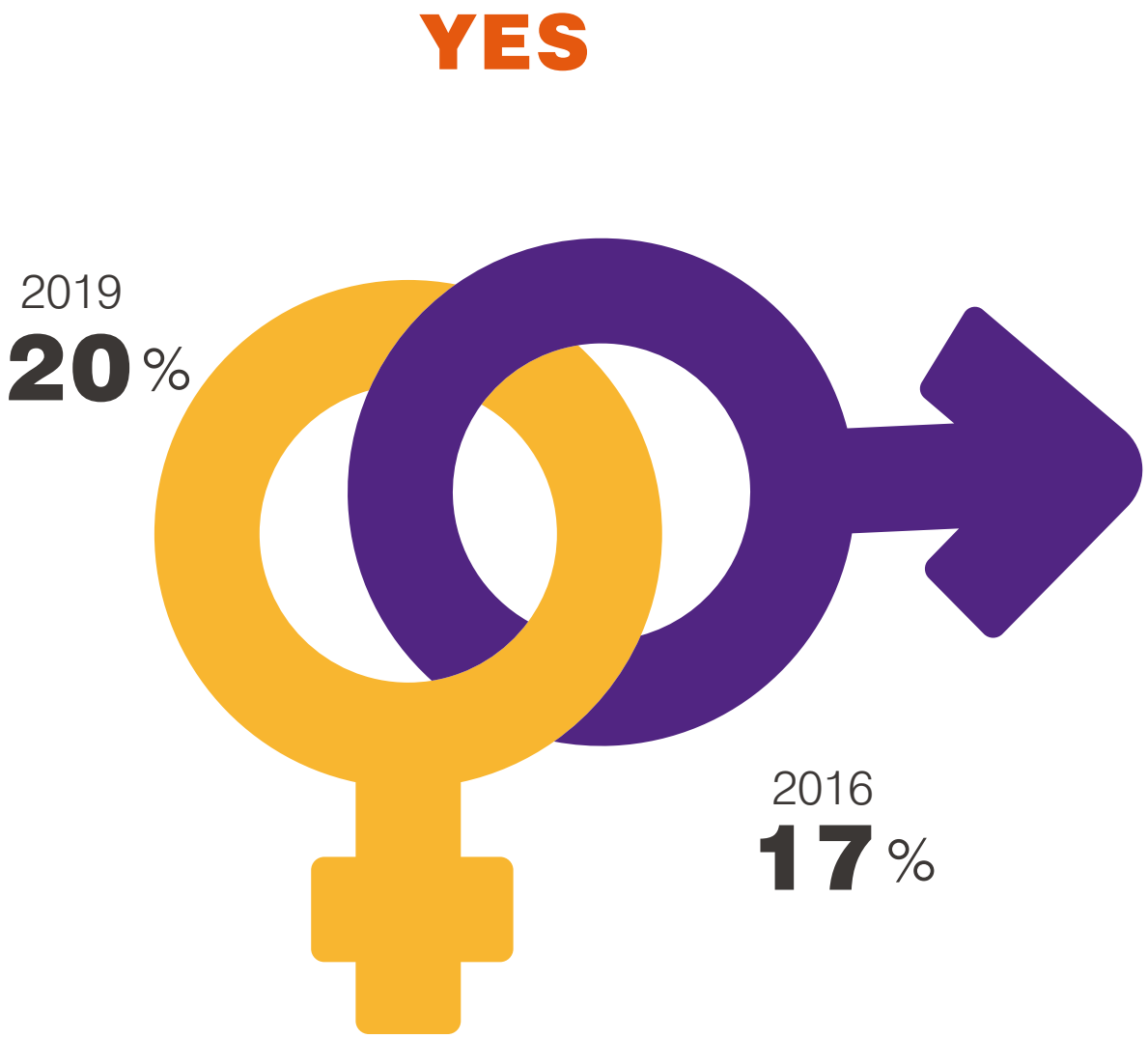
Sexual addiction
20%



1%
Masturbation

These results further highlight the need for professional counseling and therapy structures.

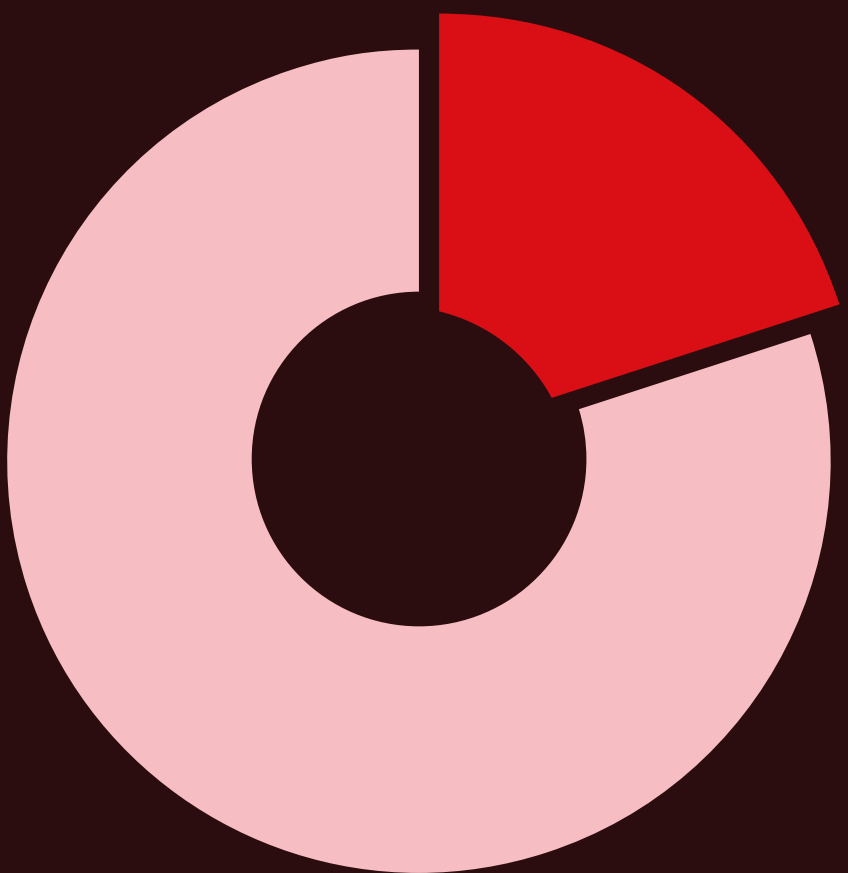
Do you believe in pre-marital sex?



Belief in pre-marital sex is on the rise. This should be monitored.

Are you having pre-marital sex?

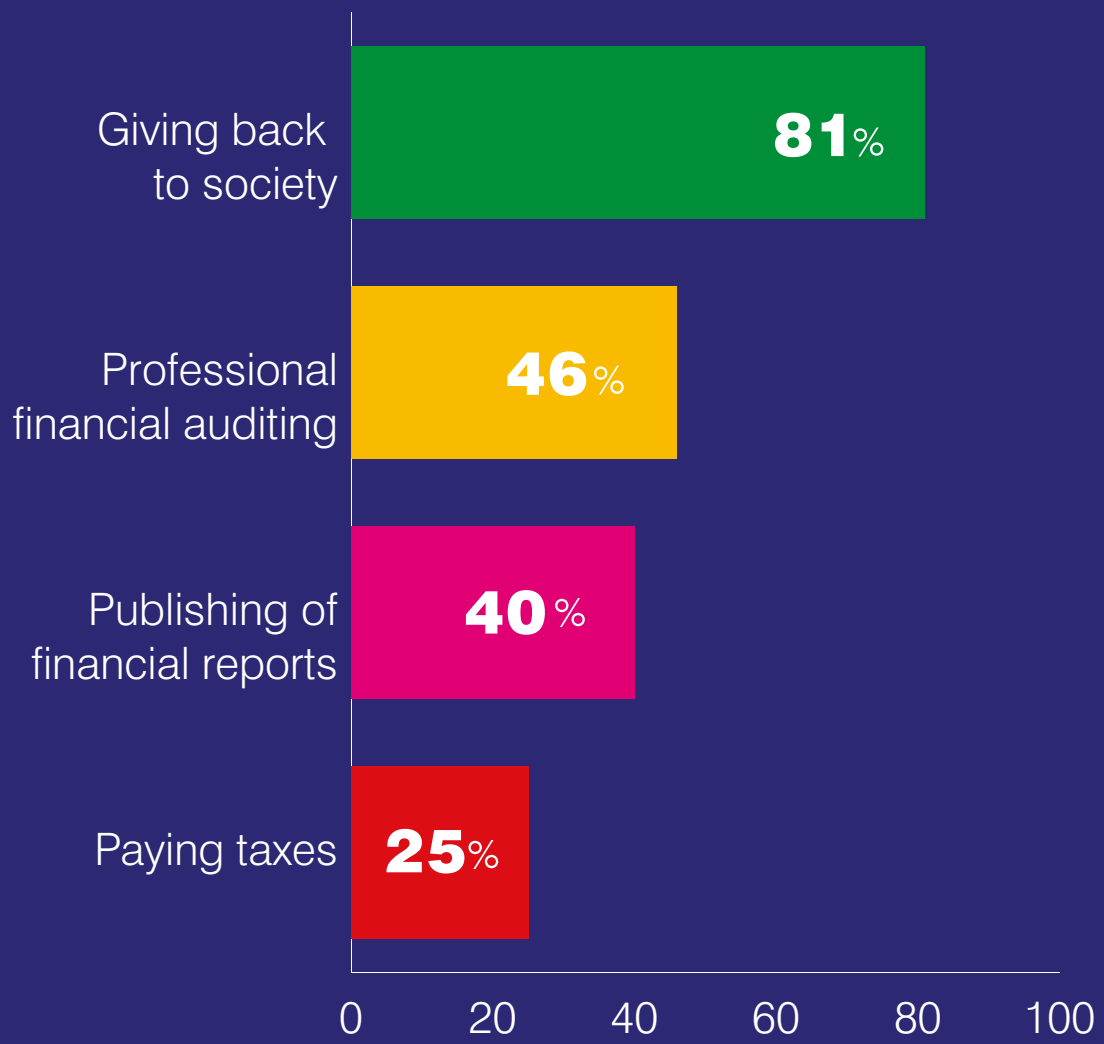
20%
SAY YES



This corroborates the result on the previous page.

SECTION 5: FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

In what ways do you think the Church in Nigeria can show better financial responsibility?



The scores seem to suggest that reporting is not the major concern for Millennials. Rather, people need to see and feel what the Church is doing. This dissonance gap can be reduced with strategic communication and impact reports.

What's Church Got to Do With It? Sex & Sexuality in Nigeria — Praise Fowowe

And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them. Psalm 78: 72

In the year 2005, I visited almost every large church in Lagos Nigeria. I sent proposals to their headquarters sounding the alarm bells about the rate of child sexual abuse in Nigeria (especially that of sexual interaction among the same sex). I did this having worked for two years full time with young people ages 13 - 29 in the Ajegunle area of Lagos. I had also travelled to 13 states of the federation on the platform of different denominations, interacting with teenagers and children.



Unfortunately, very few responded because I was literally unknown, even though I had volunteered to help with free intervention. One church got back to me and the response was, "Our church is a Bible believing church and our kids don't do sexual immorality because they are covered by the blood of Jesus".

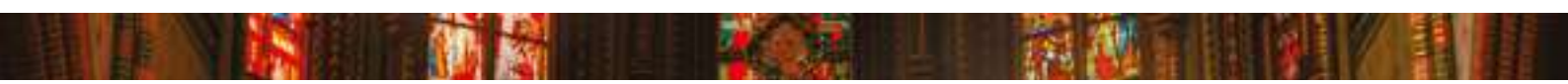
I joined Daystar Christian Center in 2003 and shared my fears with Rev. Sam Adeyemi and Pastor Godman Akinlabi and that was how the sex solutions of Daystar Christian Centre was set up. We began having specialised meetings with young people who were sexually troubled.

Guess what?! Troubled Christians started showing up and we were able to professionally and spiritually assist most of them. We have some of those people happily married today.

A few years later, The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM), led by Bishop Mike Okonkwo became the first church to fully implement basic sexuality education across the entire junior church and the result was mind blowing for some of the teachers.

Sex and Sexuality in Nigeria has attained a new dimension compared to what it was several years ago, when there was no known porn industry in Nigeria.

Sex and Sexuality in Nigeria has attained a new dimension compared to what it was several years



ago, when there was no known porn industry in Nigeria. The only porn visible as at 2006, was foreign porn and young people would need to find their way into cyber cafés to do overnight browsing to consume it. But, by 2017, a well-structured porn industry had fully emerged in Nigeria, with several porn actors and actresses who were no longer ashamed to show their faces. There were over 1 million porn uploads with average views of 400,000 and the highest consumers were between the ages 7 – 26. As a matter of fact, the age of sexual initiation has somehow dropped to age 7, because my team has interacted with a lot of 7 year olds who are sexually active.

Institutional churches abroad once focused their energy on building cathedrals and purchasing pipe organs, with little investment in the younger generation. Because of their inability to manage some of their talents, they found their way into the showbiz industry and started troubling the souls of other young people in church.

There is a visible repetition of this in Nigeria, where almost all the top musicians in the country today cut their musical teeth in church. How come we lost them to the showbiz industry?

The entertainment industry, which is a combination of the music and movie industry is the major creator of culture. It has promoted & defined the sex and sexuality culture in Nigeria more than any other sector. A peep into the lyrics and the videos would make anyone wonder if the producers and the performers actually passed through our churches.

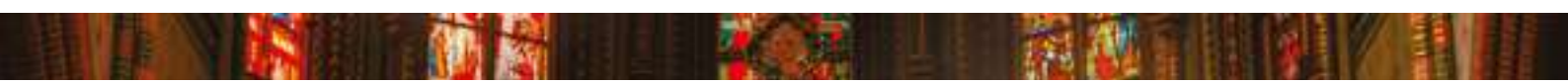
I have seen several churches organise prayer meetings to bind the spirit of sexual immorality among Nigerian youths. But, I am yet to see any visible intervention that is geared towards creating a counter culture that can churn out superior alternatives in the form of content that can promote a kingdom culture.

The Nigerian church needs to creatively solve critical sexuality problems. For example, in the last 6 years, 8 out of every 10 Christian clients can't tell what is truly wrong with Masturbation, outside of, "My pastor says it is demonic". However, this is no longer a sustainable explanation for millennials who are bombarded with a different view on Google.



Sexual issues among Christians, are basically a reflection of a void they are trying to fill.

Sexual issues among Christians, are basically a reflection of a void they are trying to fill and the question we should be asking is, "What could be that vacuum in the lives of believers, in spite of our multiple Christian programmes?"



What should churches do?

The creators of the new normal culture were basically young people who escaped from church, to find expression in the showbiz industry.

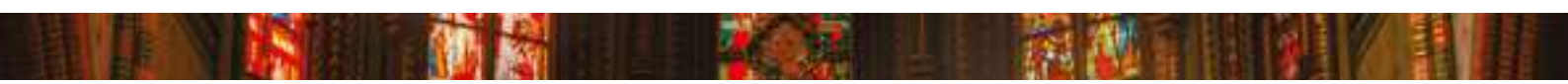
1. **Talent management** – The creators of the new normal culture were basically young people who escaped from church, to find expression in the showbiz industry. This is a clear indictment of our talent management, because several young people with amazing talent have been frustrated by lack of funding from the church for their musical projects. How do we hope to own them, when we don't fund them? I feel if the battle line where sex sells and is most promoted, is the arts and entertainment industry, then it should be a major area where churches seek to play. Imagine if churches owned the best record labels and artiste management companies? Imagine if we produced and owned the best DJ's, then we could determine airplays.

2. **Church buildings as empowerment hubs** - The Anglican Church compound was a home for all when I was a kid. Children learnt how to play musical instruments and fully expressed themselves. Young people have a lot of energy and sex is one of the ways to express that energy, in the absence of other pleasurable activities. What would happen if our church buildings that are locked up on most days, become empowerment hubs where young people can practise sports, play games, learn animation, dance and do other activities that can fully give expression to their energy? Iceland applied this model of empowerment and the percentage of 15 and 16-year-olds who had been drunk, plummeted from 42 percent in 1998 to 5 percent in 2016. The percentage who have ever used cannabis is down from 17 percent to 7 percent. Those smoking cigarettes every day fell from 23 percent to just 3 percent.

3. **A system based discipleship system** – I feel the church needs to beef up its discipleship system to become more contemporary and effective. The terrorist model for example, is able to successfully churn out graduates who become suicide bombers. So, why does the church struggle to produce wholesome adults after 10 years of weekly engagement? A structured discipleship system includes the following:

What would happen if our church buildings that are locked up on most days, become empowerment hubs where young people can practise sports, play games, learn animation, dance and do other activities that can fully give expression to their energy?

- An entry point – Recruitment which is built around an engagement and retention strategy
- An indoctrination system – Built around the use of intentional curriculum and tools that will deliver a predictable outcome. For instance, "In x years of engagement, you will be able to tell



they have been with us, by the way they live."

- Transition points – A clear and intentional rite of passage.
- A deployment system – Releasing them to impact the world.

4. **The need for mentors and therapists** – Often when church people show up in our therapy hub, the first thing they ask us to promise, is to never tell their church leaders what they are about to tell us. This is a major feedback on the fact that many don't trust their leaders to be able to effectively handle their sexual challenges. In situations where the church response is often punitive, we will create an entire generation who will live based on standards that contradict their reality. One of the core challenges we have faced is the apathy of church leaders to therapy. The frequent response we get is, "You want to bring psychology into church and forsake the Holy Spirit'?

In situations where the church response is often punitive, we will create an entire generation who will live based on standards that contradict their reality.

The truth is, there is a limit to the numbers that can visit our office from across the nation, but a lot more can be helped, if every church had a professional that could run sex addiction therapy for troubled Christians. Especially in a nation where the ratio of therapist to patient is about 1 to 6,000.

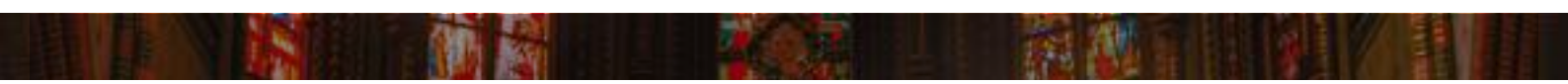
Closely related to this is the need for churches to maximise the use of the professionals amidst them. For example, I don't see any reason why a pastor whose area of focus is not mental health should be delivering a sermon on the same subject, when there are professionals in the same congregation who can do a better job.

Here are a few questions that I want churches to consider:

- What is your response to pre-marital pregnancy among young people?
- What is your response to issues of masturbation and porn addiction?
- How would you handle it if you discovered your lead worship leader was battling with same sex attraction?
- How would you handle the case of fornication and adultery among singles and marrieds?
- What is your flowchart to assist victims of the above to recover?

Only after such constructive measures are taken, can the Church effectively reach the vulnerable amidst her fold.

5. **Transforming preaching airtime into content airtime** - I have asked almost every client I have seen if they regularly watch their pastor's teaching on cable. I am yet to find many who do. This begs the question, "Why do we spend so much on cable TV to air a service that has already been attended? If on the other hand, our target is those who haven't heard about



Jesus, then how are we sure they will tune in to our Christian stations to watch our content? From our research, the greatest promoters of the new sex culture are movie and music makers, so why can't churches engage young people to generate creative content that can promote sexual purity, since airtime is already paid for? Imagine if we shoot all forms of drama series and syndicate across the world? Those contents will find expression on platforms that preaching may never get to in a lifetime. The sad news is the new determinants of trends on social media, drive a lot of sexually explicit content. The good news is the Church has all it takes to respond by raising our own creative content providers who are skilled at engaging the enemies at the gate.

6. **The church as a pressure group for empowering policy making** – Whenever we read in the news that a 5 year old was molested, what was the church's response? When there was the child marriage uproar, what was our response? Each time we see cases of rape and child sexual abuse, how do we respond? Truth is, we can't influence a group that feels we don't care about them.



"Why do we spend so much on cable TV to air a service that has already been attended?

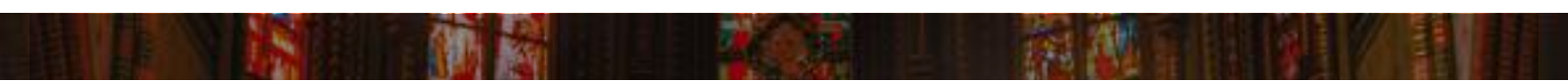
Truth is, we can't influence a group that feels we don't care about them.

Imagine what could happen if we begin to show up in these critical areas to stand for the abused. To pressure government to push for the right policies that can protect the sanity of our kids? For example, there are nations where you may never be able to view porn online.

There was a children's event that held in Nigeria last year, in which the artistes on display were known for their lewd content. We led the move to protest this and the sponsors told us if we could get 1,000 parents to call they would drop the artistes. Guess what? With all our noise on social media, less than 200 parents placed the call. Imagine if several churches had asked their congregants to do so.

There are several forms of sexual orientation showing up across our nation at the moment, and the question for me is, "What is our position as a church outside of what we do on the pulpit?"

I believe the only time evil ever overcomes good, is when good takes the form of evil through selfishness & ignorance. There is a strong battle for the sexuality of our children. The future of our world is endangered by the activities of sexual predators.



But, while the world still seeks to find human predators; the new predators are systems, cultures & legislations by nations, which molest a child's mind & conditions us to accept the new normal.

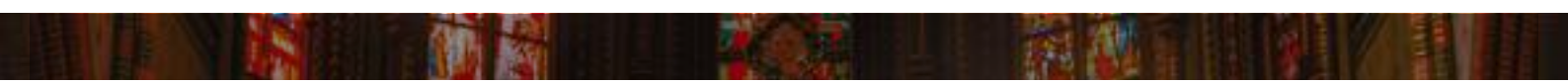
If we don't influence the world, the world will influence the church.

There is a lot the church can do to stem the tide of porn and other forms of sexual deviance sweeping across our nation. I don't believe we have a right to only criticise what we have been empowered by God to solve.

If we don't influence the world, the world will influence the church.

Praise Fowowe is the founder, Institute of Family Engineering and Development Africa





03

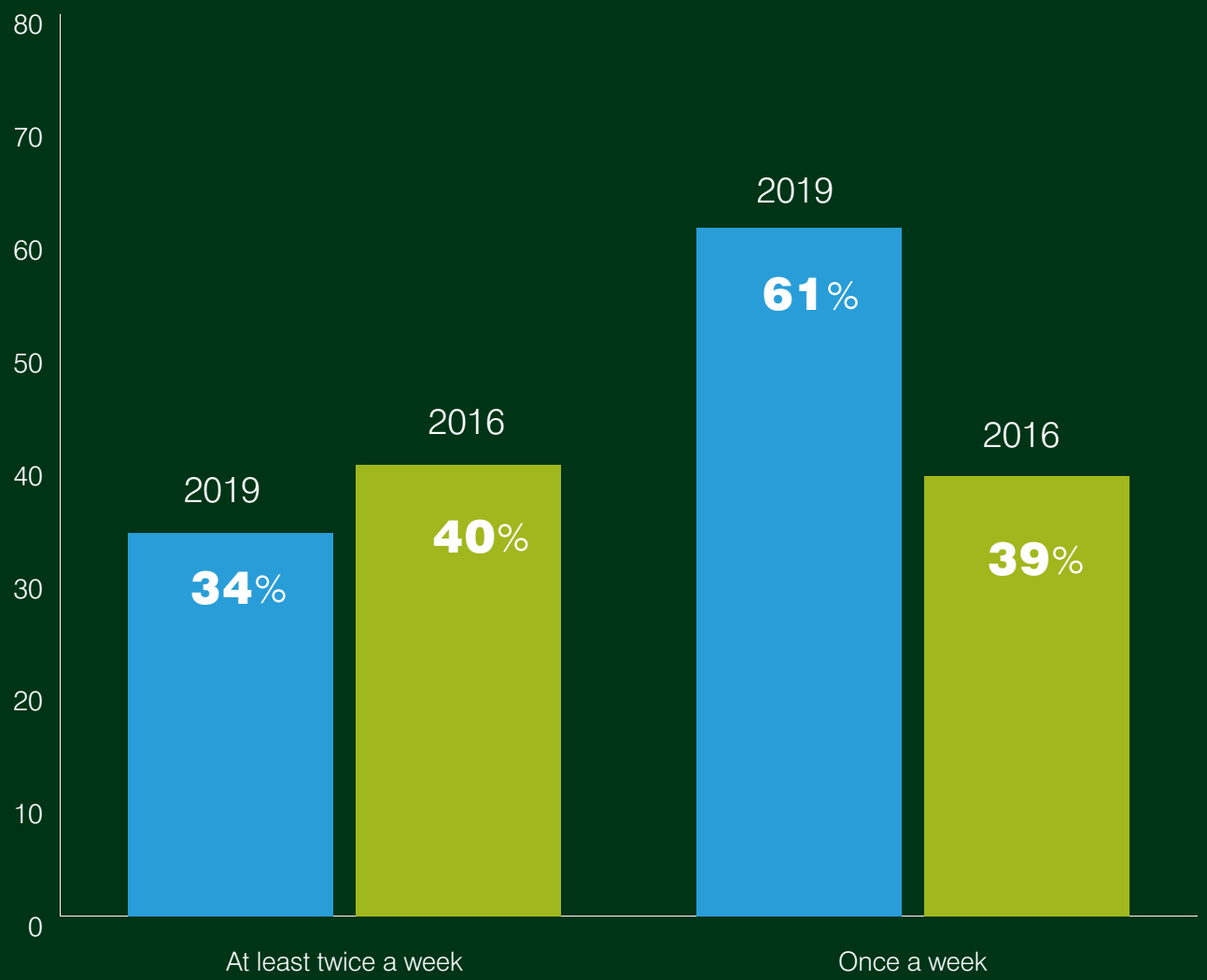


REGIONAL RESULTS

SECTION 1: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

How often do you attend church?

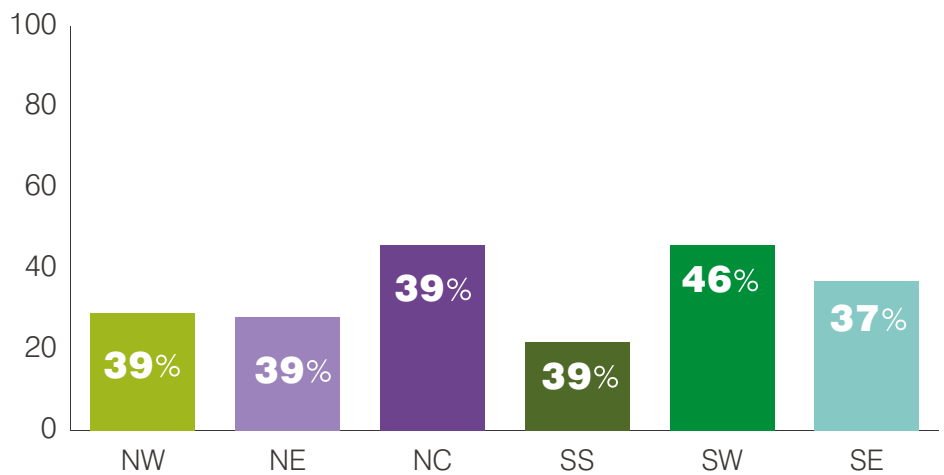
Overall Regional Result



Once a week church attendance has increased significantly (22%), while twice a week attendance has dropped by 6%. Overall attendance has however increased by 16%, implying that more people are attending church.

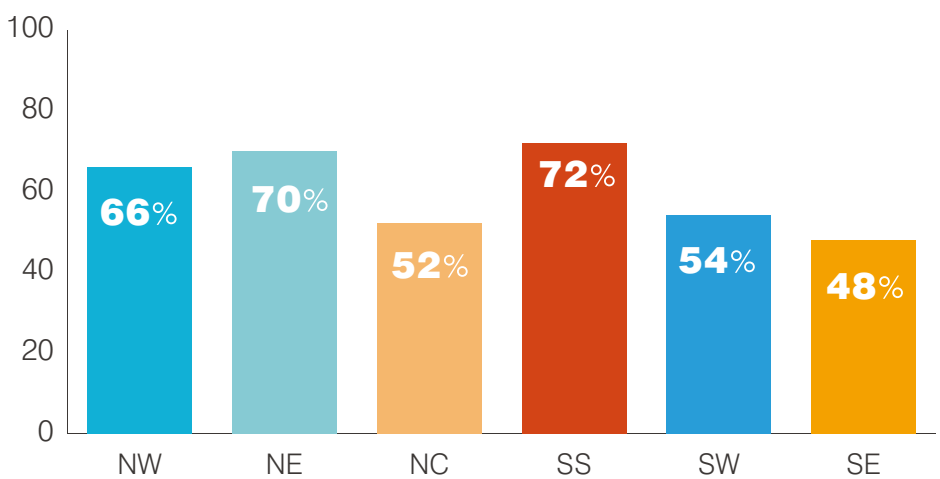
Regional Breakdown

At least twice a week



Twice a week church attendance is predominant in the NC and SW.

ii. Once a week

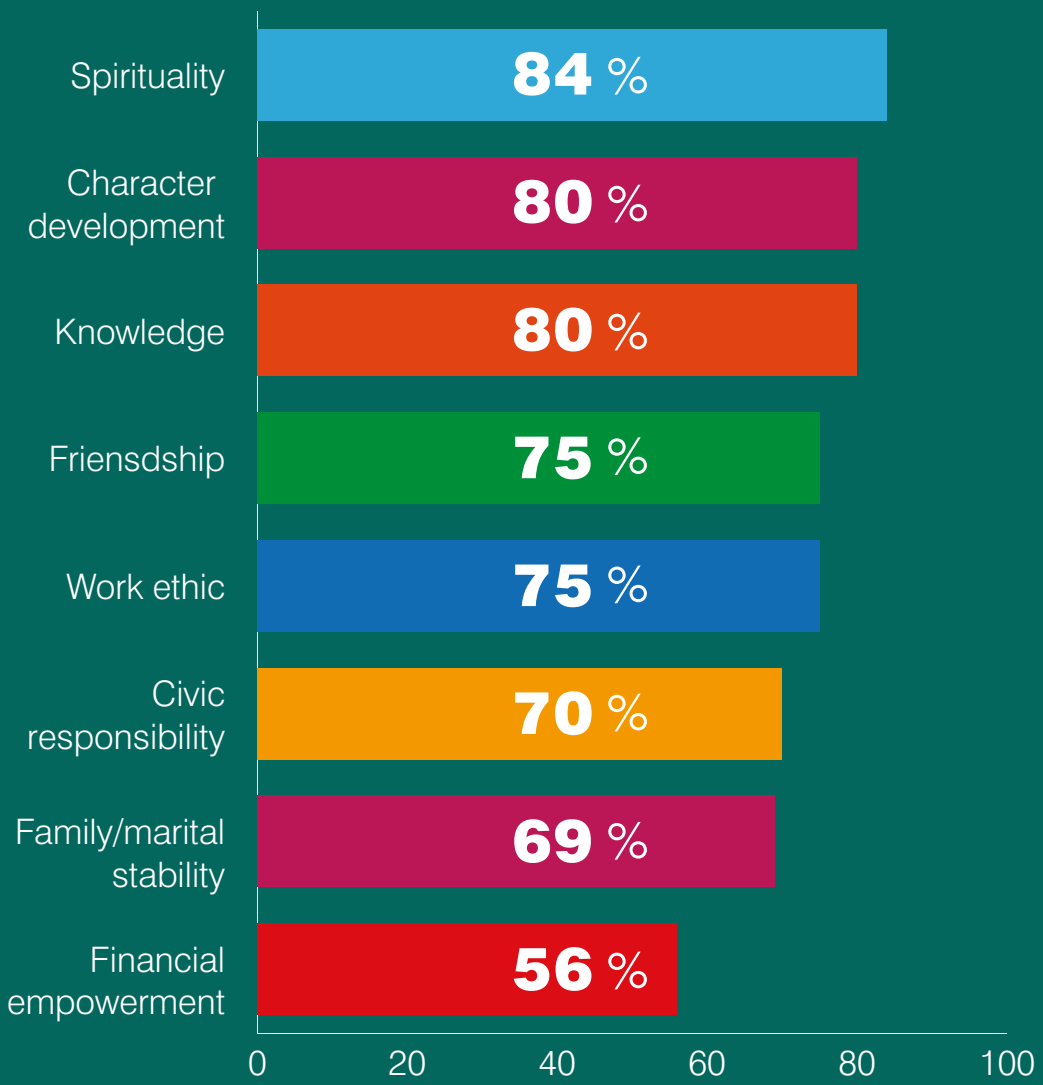


The NE and SS lead once a week church attendance.

SECTION 2: SOCIAL RELEVANCE

How does your church positively impact your lifestyle?

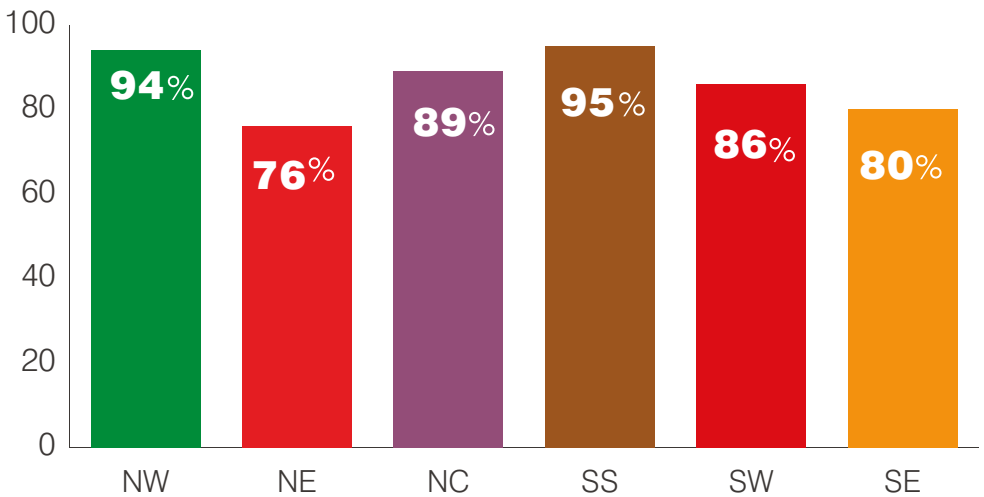
Overall Regional Result



The low score for family/marital stability gives cause for concern. The gap between the volume of teaching on financial increase and actual impact on finances is also visible here.

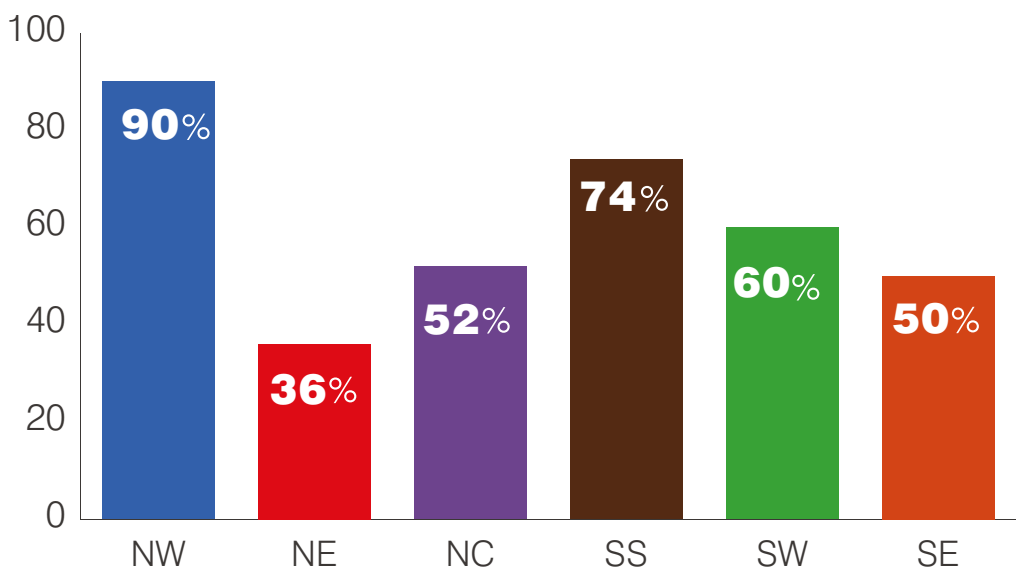
Regional Breakdown

Spirituality



The NW and SS have been impacted the most spiritually. The NE has been impacted the least.

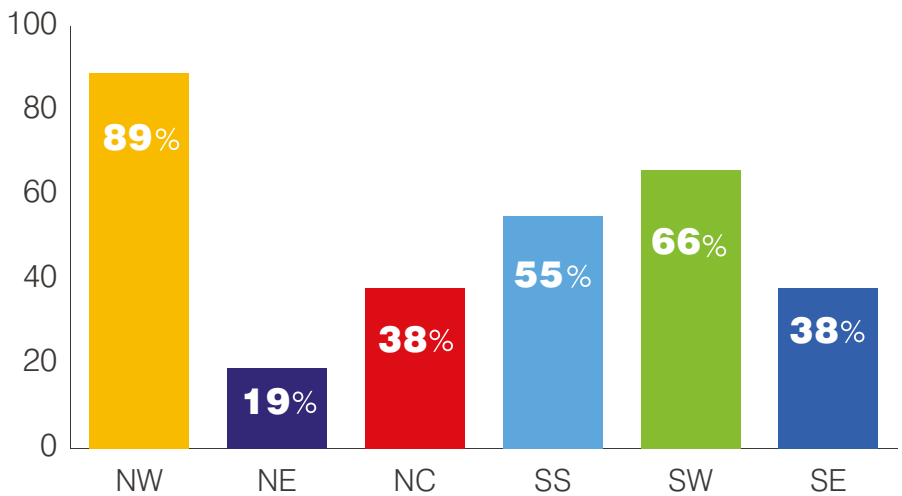
Civic Responsibility



The NW scores highest on civic responsibility while the NE scores lowest.

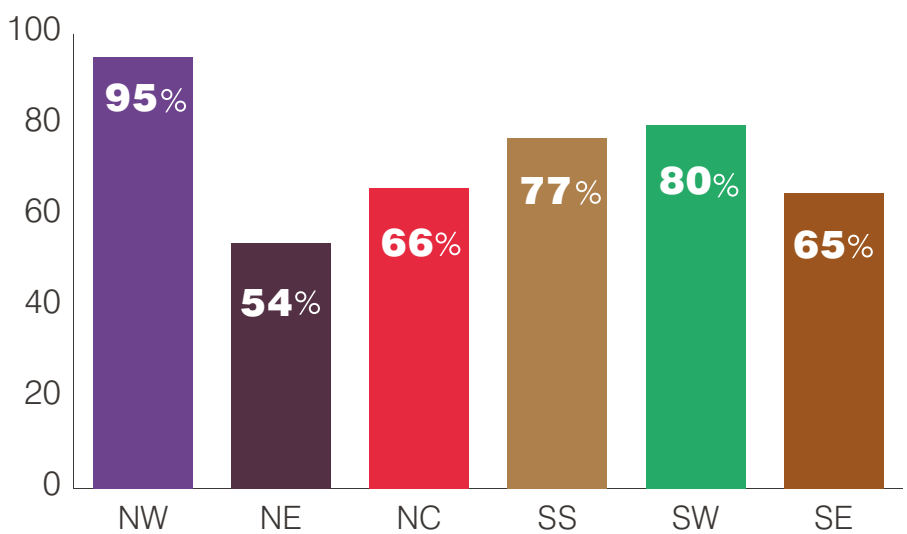
Regional Breakdown

Financial Empowerment



The low score in the NE may be tied to the ongoing Boko Haram scourge in that part of the country.

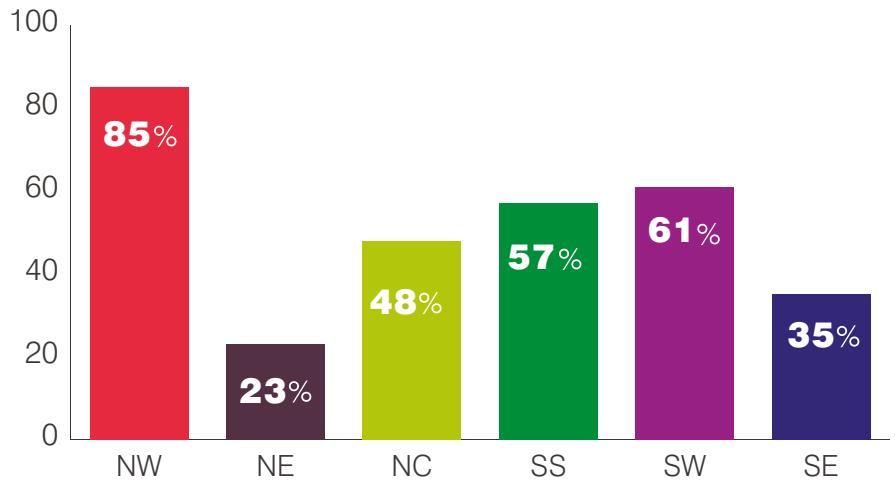
Character Development



All zones score above average (50%).

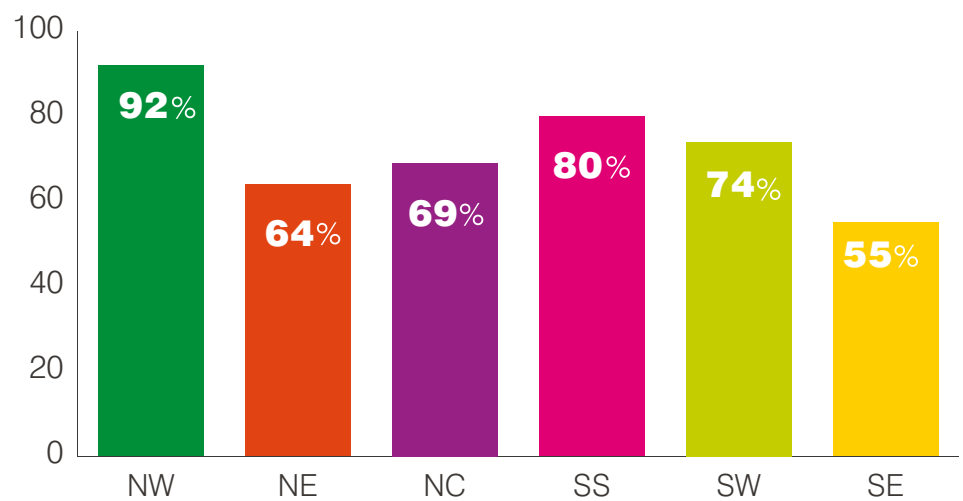
Regional Breakdown

Family/Marital Stability



The low score in the NE, SE and NC is worrisome. Interventions may be required by churches in these zones.

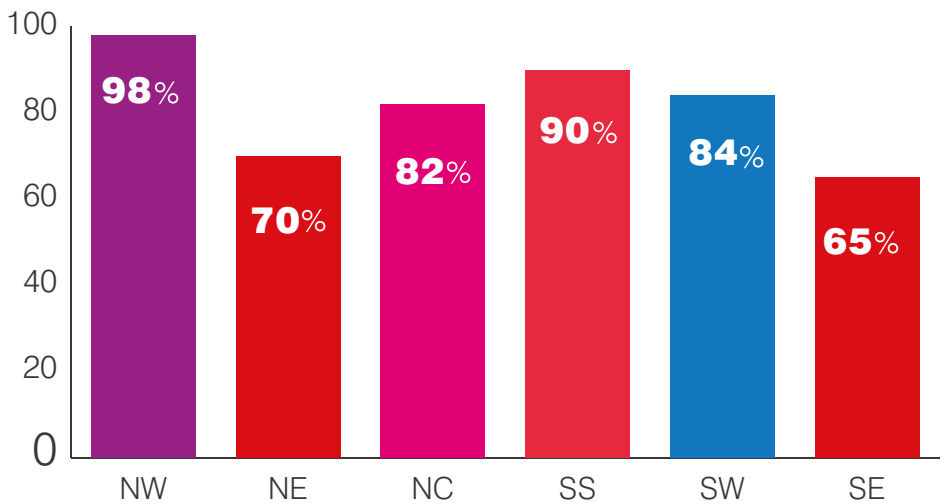
Knowledge



All zones score above average (50%).

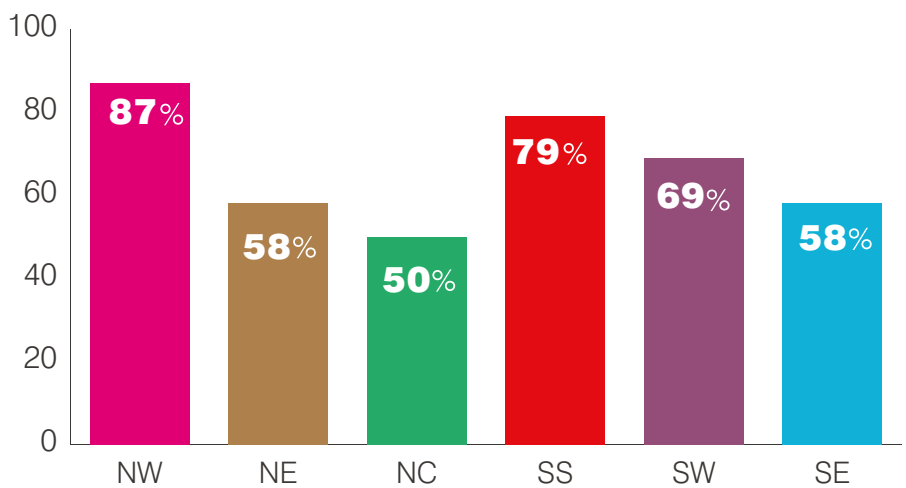
Regional Breakdown

Friendship



All zones were rated highly on this parameter.

Work Ethic



Although the scores are above average, a renewed focus on work ethic has the potential to increase productivity and financial empowerment across the regions.

Peer Pressure And Depression in the Age of Social Media — Oyinkansola Alabi

As social vertebrates, interfacing with family and friends across long distances has been a daily reality since the inception of the world.

We have relied on multiple flavours of communication and connection to strengthen our relationships.

One of such creative solutions is social media. A neutral innovation with a double-edged sword. A weapon capable of extinguishing sanity and improving individuality concurrently.

Before I delve into the dynamics of this article, I would love to define these words: peer, pressure and peer pressure.



Peer means an equal in rank or status or what Nigerians call 'age mate'.

Pressure means suffering, anguish; act or fact of pressing on the mind or heart.

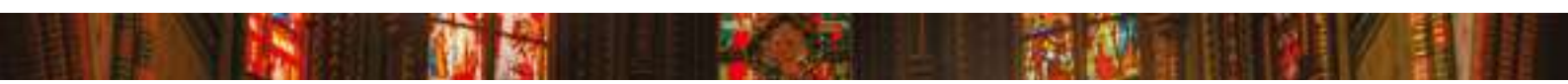
Peer pressure however means a feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group, in order to be liked or respected by them.

Interestingly, peer pressure is supposed to be a stimulant, not a disempowering vibe. It is a narrative to challenge and arouse us to chase our greatness.

However, majority of us have demonised this inert concept. We have used it as a vice not a virtue, and it has become a savage cause of depression in Nigeria and all over the world. In Nigeria, online peer pressure has influenced a lot of emotional and psychological trauma.

Instagram for example, is competing for the title of the greatest brewer of envy and jealousy, where people photoshop their imperfections, pose in cars they do not own and model outfits they borrowed. All in a bid to mask their insecurities and to create false personas behind flawless pictures.

Social media was created to be an interactive computer-mediated technology. It facilitates the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression, via virtual



communities and networks. But, this same golden goose has laid eggs of unhealthy competition, comparison, rivalry, self-sabotage and depression.

A new study candidly concludes that there is, in fact, a causal link between the use of social media and negative effects on well-being; primarily, depression and loneliness. The study was published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology.

"If you use less social media, you are actually less depressed and less lonely; meaning that the decreased social media use is what causes that qualitative shift in your well-being," said Jordyn Young, a co-author of the paper and a senior at the University of Pennsylvania.

A new study candidly concludes that there is, in fact, a causal link between the use of social media and negative effects on well-being; primarily, depression and loneliness.
— Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology

The study included 143 students from the University of Pennsylvania. They were randomly assigned to one of two groups: one that would continue their social media habits as usual or one that would significantly limit access to social media.

For three weeks, the experimental group had their social media usage reduced to 30 minutes per day — 10 minutes on three different platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat).

In order to keep these experimental conditions, the researchers looked at phone usage data, which documented how much time was spent using each app per day. All of the study participants had to use iPhones.



If you use less social media, you are actually less depressed and less lonely.

The question is, why let the experimental group use social media at all?

"We didn't think [complete abstinence] was an accurate representation of the landscape of the world that we live in today. Social media is around us in so many capacities," Young said.

The results were clear; the group that used less social media, even though it wasn't completely eliminated, had better mental health outcomes.

Baseline readings for participants were taken at the beginning of the trial in several areas of well-being: social support, fear of missing out, loneliness, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, autonomy, and self- acceptance.

At the end of the trial, those in the experimental group saw both loneliness and depressive symptoms decline, with the largest changes happening in those who reported greater levels of depression.

"No matter where they started off, if they were told to limit their social media, they had less depression, no matter what their initial levels were," Young opined.

The fact is, internet addiction is a common phenomenon driving many to depression and suicide.

In the United States today, approximately 77 percent of all Americans have a social media profile of some kind while in 2018, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) declared that approximately 103 million Nigerians had access to the internet.

The question then is, how can systems designed to bring us closer to our friends and family be bad for our mental health?

According to Oscar Ybarra, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, you unconsciously activate social comparison, once you log on to any of these social spaces. "People don't necessarily have to be super aware that this is occurring, but it is. You log on and you're generally dealing with very curated content on the other side.

The Fear of Missing Out, or FOMO, is a mental health effect that's been strongly linked with the use of social media.

Although a relatively new phrase often attributed to millennial ennui, psychologists say it has real social significance.



The Fear of Missing Out, or FOMO, is a mental health effect that's been strongly linked with the use of social media.

Amy Summerville, a professor of psychology at Miami University in Ohio, is an expert on issues of regret and the psychology of "what might have been." She explains that FOMO is an extension of larger issues of inclusion and social standing. Once our basic needs are met, like food, shelter, and

water, the need for inclusion and social interaction ranks right up there, she says.

“The FOMO experience specifically is this feeling that I personally could have been there and I wasn’t. I do think that part of the reason that’s really powerful is this cue that maybe we’re not being included by people we have important social relationships with,” she told Healthline.

How can systems designed to bring us closer to our friends and family be bad for our mental health?

The now ubiquitous use of social media and technology has created a world in which we can gaze into our own crystal ball to see what our friends are doing at almost any time of day. And that’s not necessarily a good thing.

This freedom has impacted and adversely affected nations.

According to the World Health Organisation, Nigeria is Africa’s most depressed country and the 85th happiest country on the global happiness report in 2019.

The World Health Organisation also posits that there are 322 million people living with depression in the world. In the WHO suicide ranking, Nigeria has 15.1 suicides per 100,000 population per year and is ranked the 30th most suicide-prone out of 183 nations in the world.

As a matter of fact, the World Bank states that not only do 22% of Nigerians suffer from chronic depression, Nigeria rates 10th in Africa after countries with higher rates of suicide such as Togo (ranked 26th in the world), Burkina Faso (22nd), Cameroun (19th), Zimbabwe (16th), Central African Republic (13th), Sierra Leone (11th), Angola (9th), Equatorial Guinea (7th) and Cote D’Ívoire (5th).

Mental health disorders (particularly depression and substance abuse) are associated with more than 90% of all cases of suicide in Nigeria.

In truth, Daily Trust newspapers tendered that seventy-nine people committed suicide in Nigeria between April 8, 2017 and May 12, 2018.

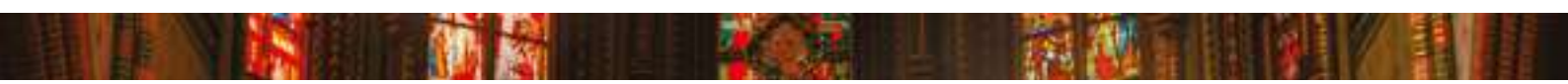
The question therefore is, will we disengage our hearts from these unpleasant realities?

If we won’t, how can we help Nigerians to develop the capacity to alter their state and move from a state of unhappiness to happiness, effortlessly?

Nigeria is ranked the 30th most suicide-prone out of 183 nations in the world)
— World Health Organisation (WHO)

The formula for happiness as defined by Anthony Robbins, is when your life’s conditions (LC) match or equal your blueprint, your story, about what it should be.

Happiness simply means one word, PROGRESS. PROGRESS equals HAPPINESS.





But when your life's conditions do not match your blueprint, your story, or how your life is supposed to be, you are going to have disappointments and may end up depressed.

Mild Depression is an outcome of wrong thinking or cognitive dissonance. A mood disorder marked especially by sadness, inactivity, difficulty in thinking & concentration, a significant increase or decrease in appetite & time spent sleeping, feelings of dejection & hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies.

Every time we experience insecurity, unhappiness and suicidal ideation, we have three choices.

The first choice is to blame something / blame someone / blame yourself.
The second is to change it.
The third is to transform your blueprint if you don't desire to keep interacting with depression or being overwhelmed by life.

Changing your STRATEGY, STORY and STATE furnishes you with the capacity to move from a state of unhappiness to happiness.

So the next time you show up online, remember that:

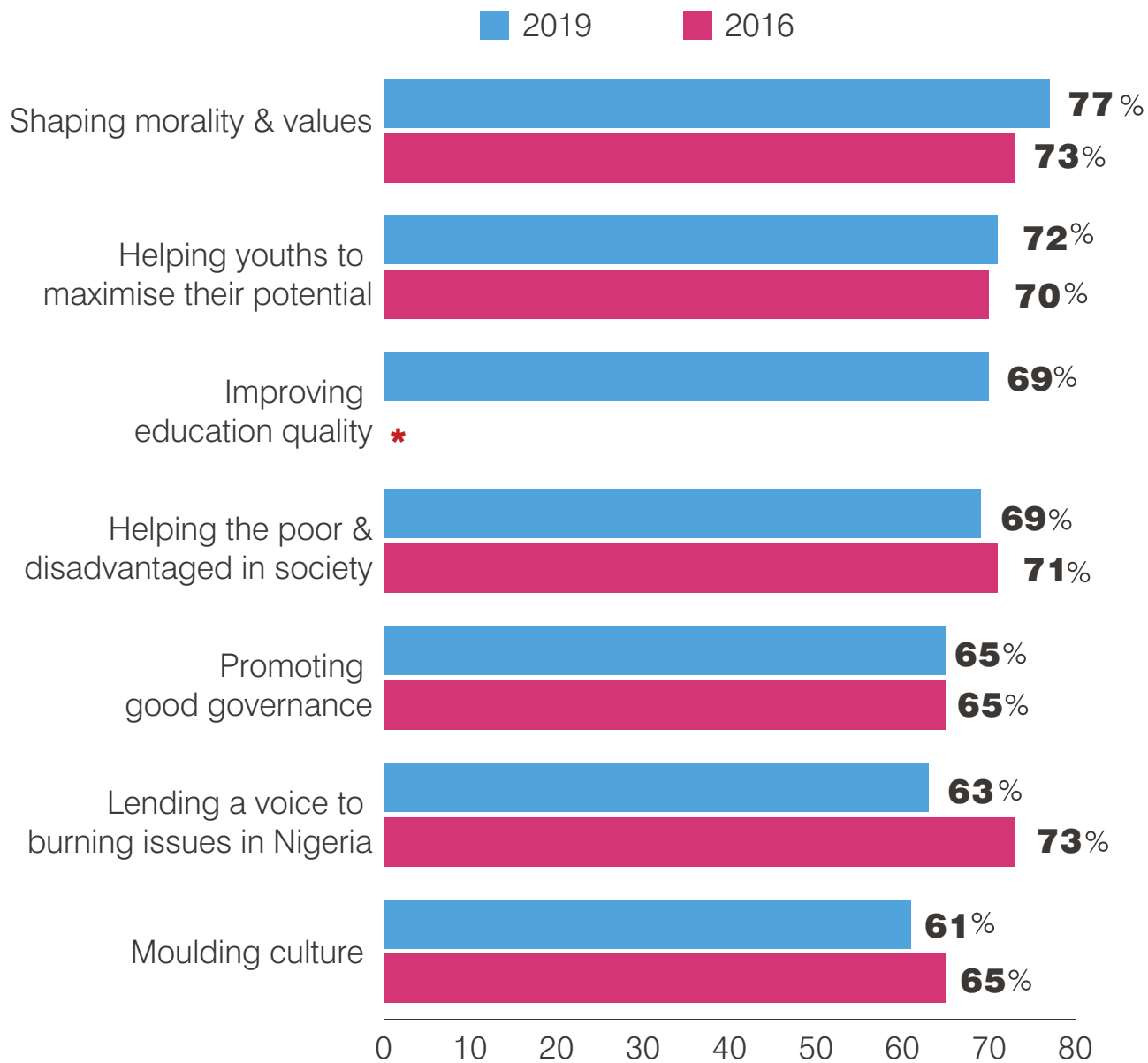
- There will always be someone richer than you and someone you are richer than.
- Pressure reveals content. Social media only has the capacity to amplify your intrinsic state of mind.
- You can decide to nurture and sustain your self-awareness skills.
- You can fumigate your timeline by unfollowing everyone whose handle tensions you.
- You can observe regular social media detox and reduce the time spent online.
- You can connect with the offline world more.
- You can develop a habit of contentment and gratitude.

Oyinkansola Alabi (The Emotions Doctor) is the founder of Emotions City.



How relevant, influential or impactful has the Nigerian Church been?

Overall Regional Result

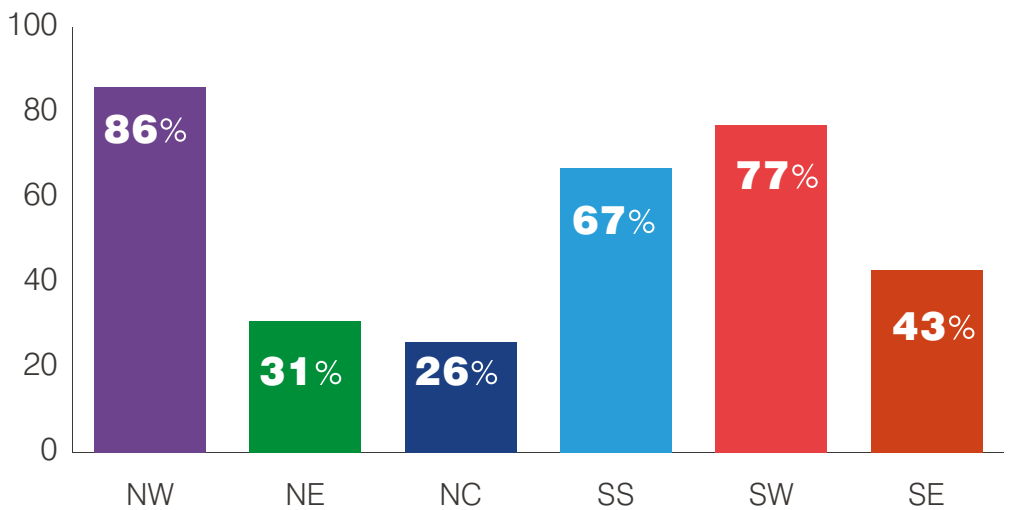


There was a drop in the Church's influence on culture and society between 2019 and 2016. However, overall regional performance across board improved.

*Impact on education was not tracked in 2016.

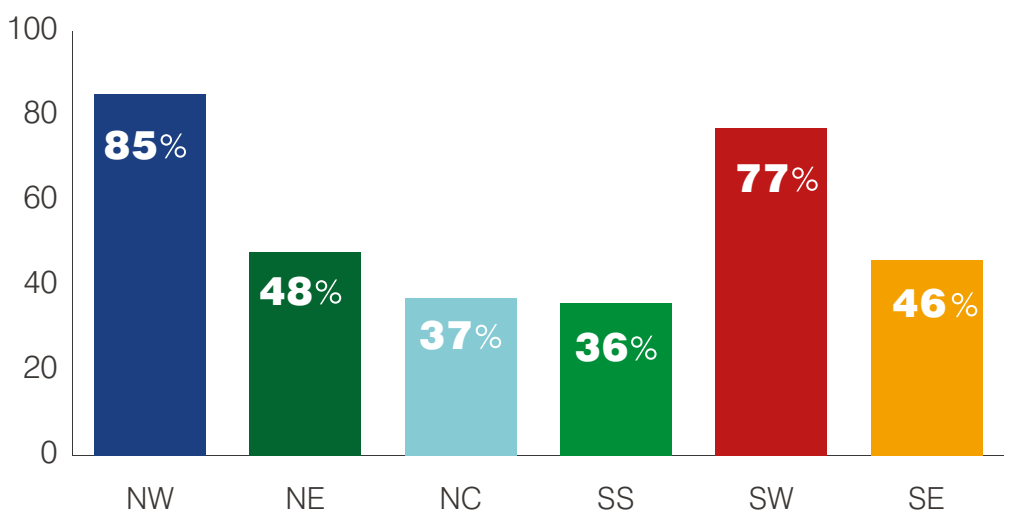
Regional Breakdown

Lending a voice to burning issues in Nigeria



The low scores in the NE and NC may be due to the perception that the Church is not speaking up enough about terrorism and IDPs in these regions.

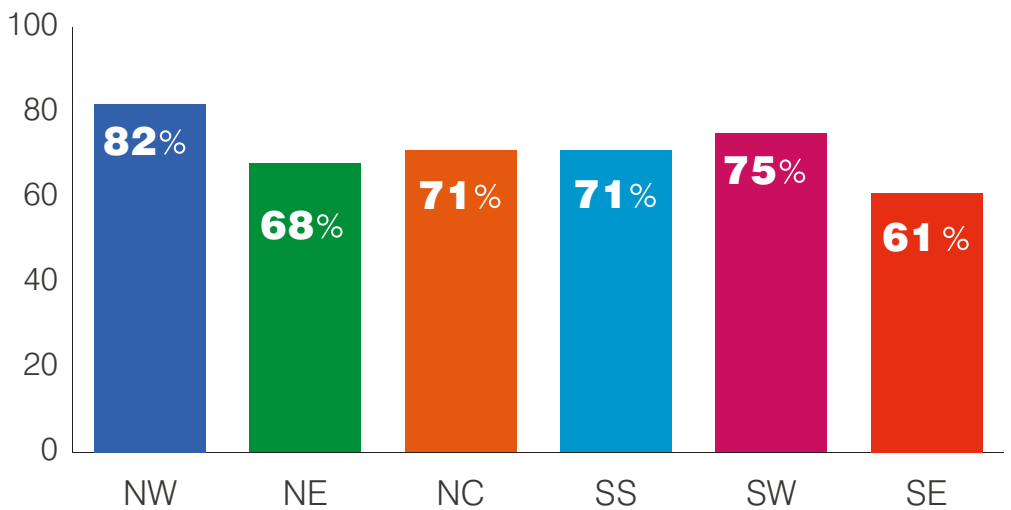
Moulding culture (music, fashion, movies, media etc.)



It would appear that the people in the NW and SW believe that the Church is doing a lot to influence culture. The SS, NC, NE and SE seem to disagree.

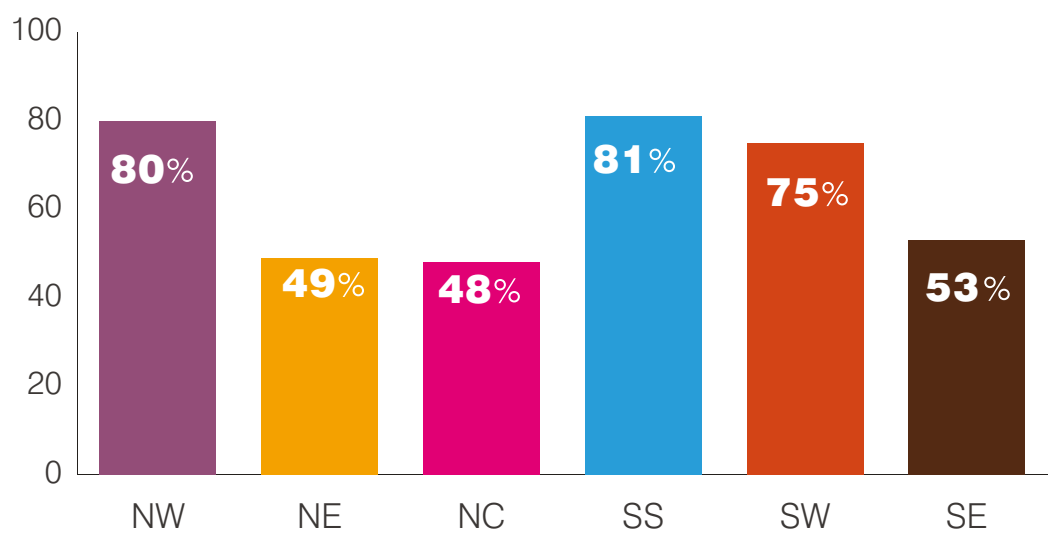
Regional Breakdown

Shaping morality & values



The Church's role in shaping morality and values is rated high.

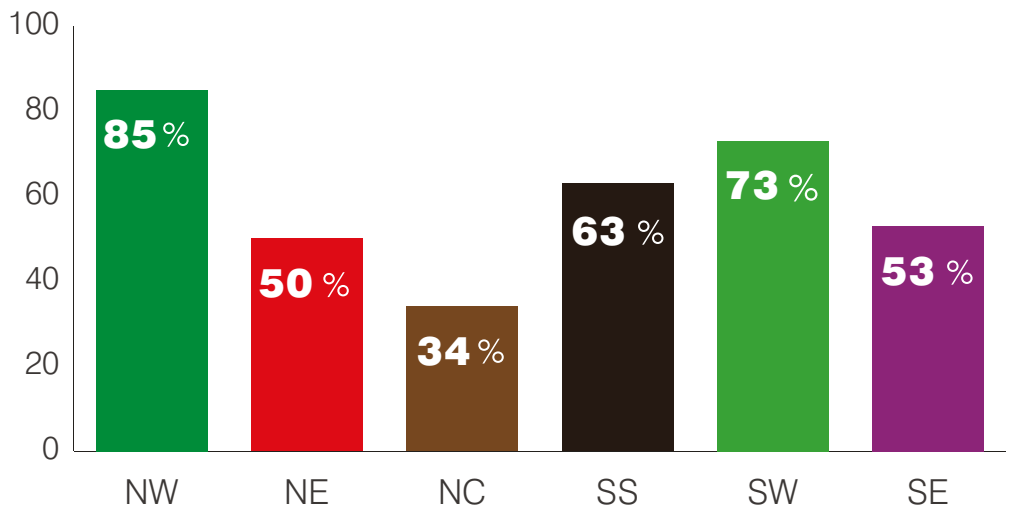
Helping the poor & disadvantaged in society



Those in the NE and NC do not think the Church is doing enough to help the poor and disadvantaged.

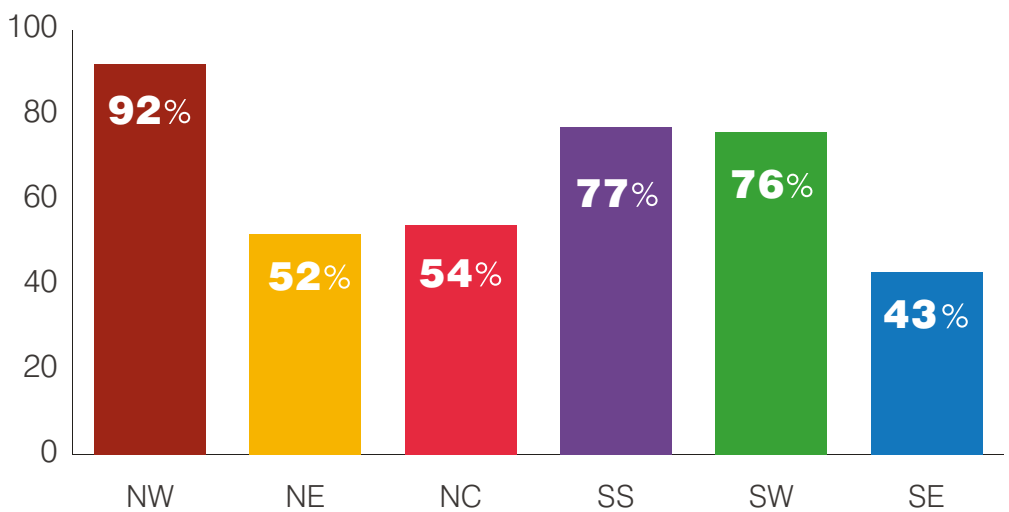
Regional Breakdown

Promoting good governance



Those in the NC do not think the Church is doing enough to promote good governance.

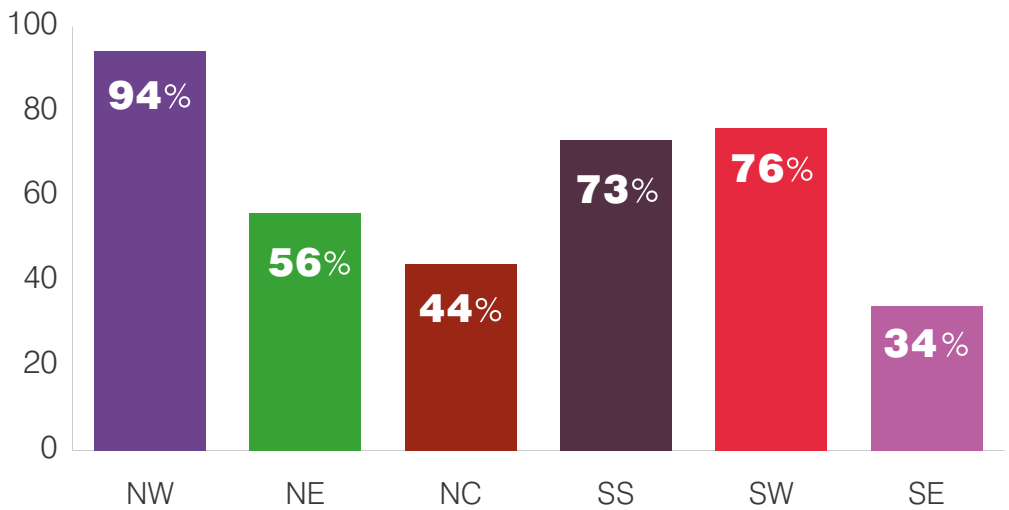
Helping youths to maximise their potential



The low scores in the SE, NE and NC provide a growth opportunity for churches in these regions. Over 70% of Nigeria's population is below 35.

Regional Breakdown

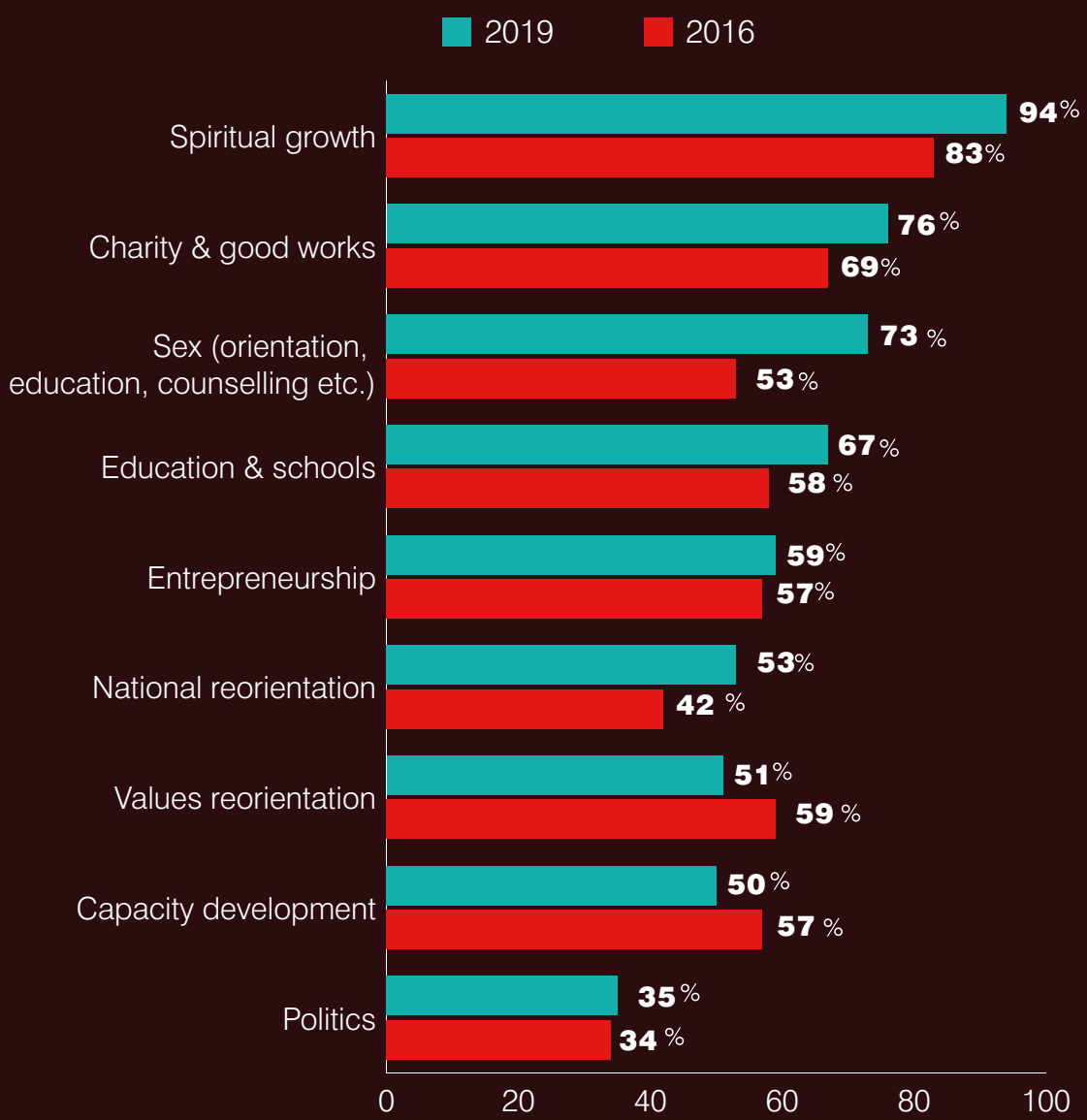
Improving education quality



Those in the SE and NC do not believe that the Church is doing enough to impact education.

In your opinion, what issues should the Church in Nigeria focus on right now?

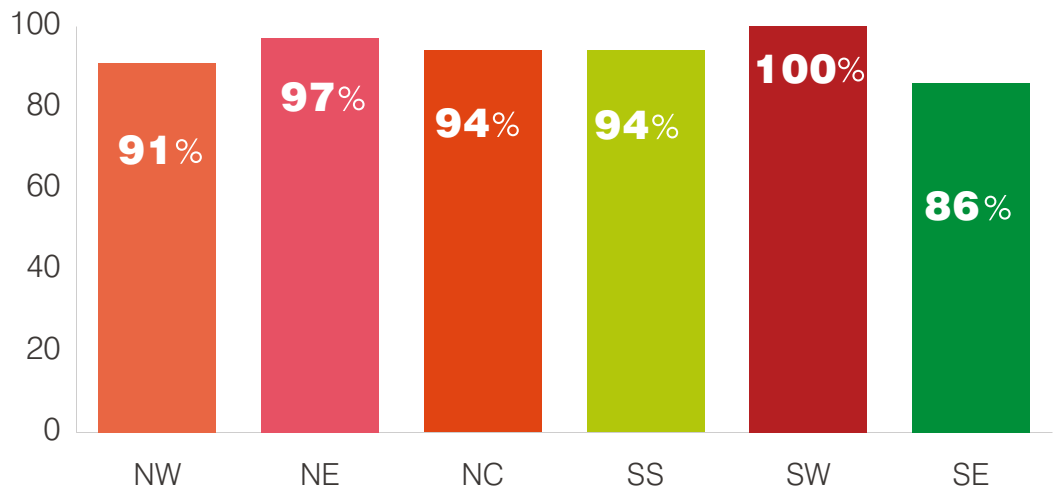
Overall Regional Result



There is improvement from 2016 to 2019 across all parameters except capacity building and values reorientation. Sex is ranked 3rd highest (after spiritual growth and good works) showing how much importance the Youth place on this.

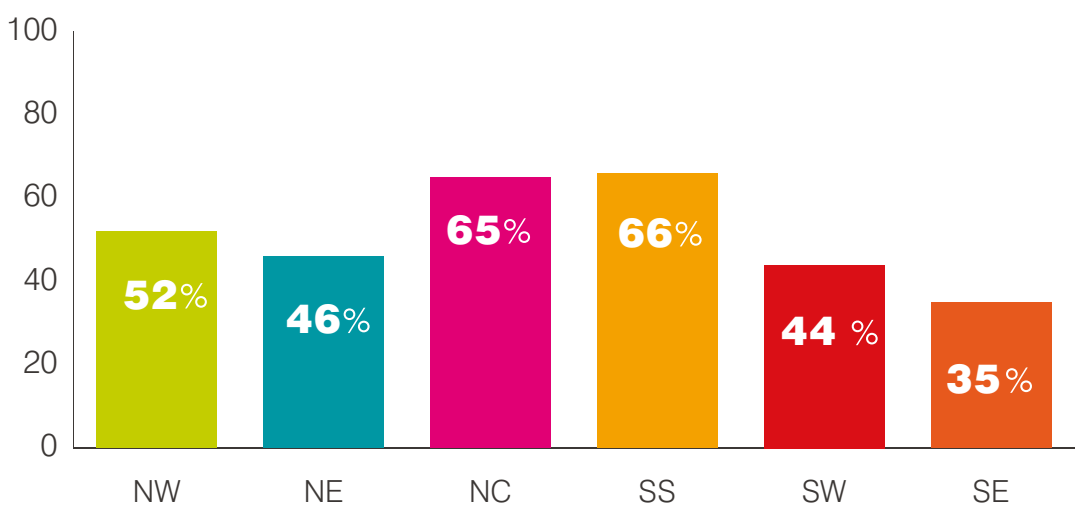
Regional Breakdown

Spiritual growth



The Church is expected to concentrate on its fundamental role of promoting spiritual growth.

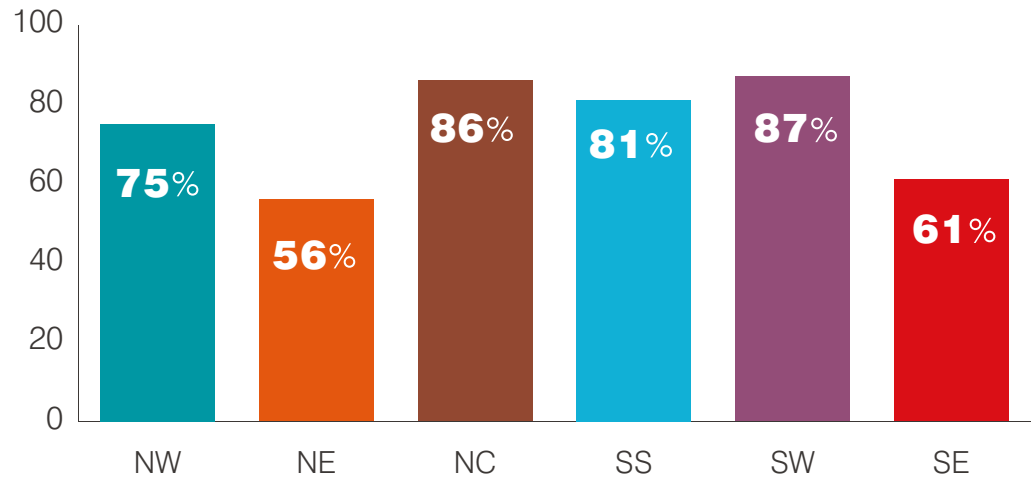
Values reorientation



Although the Church is scored high on impacting values in previous pages, the SE, SW and NE do not seem to think it should be a core focus area. The church needs to find out why.

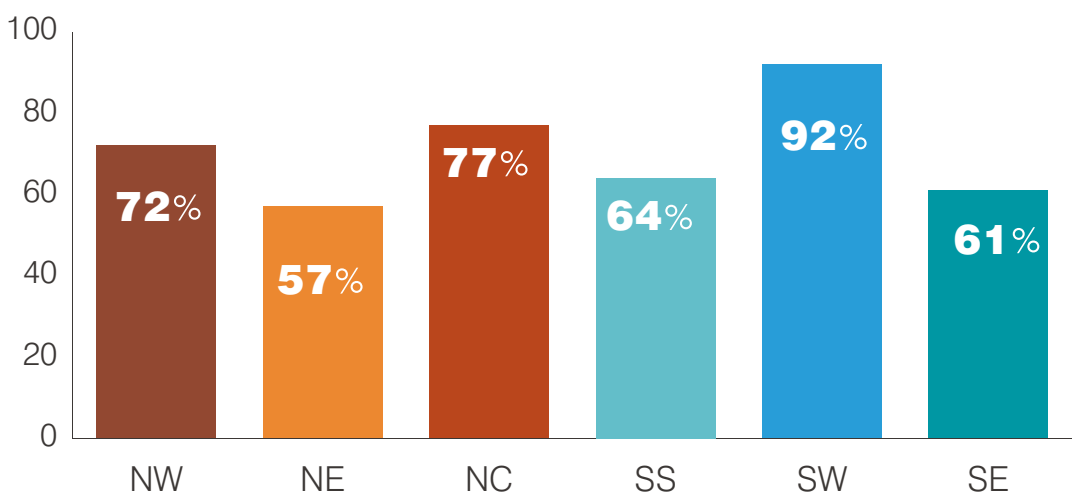
Regional Breakdown

Charity & good works



All regions agree this should be a focus of the Church.

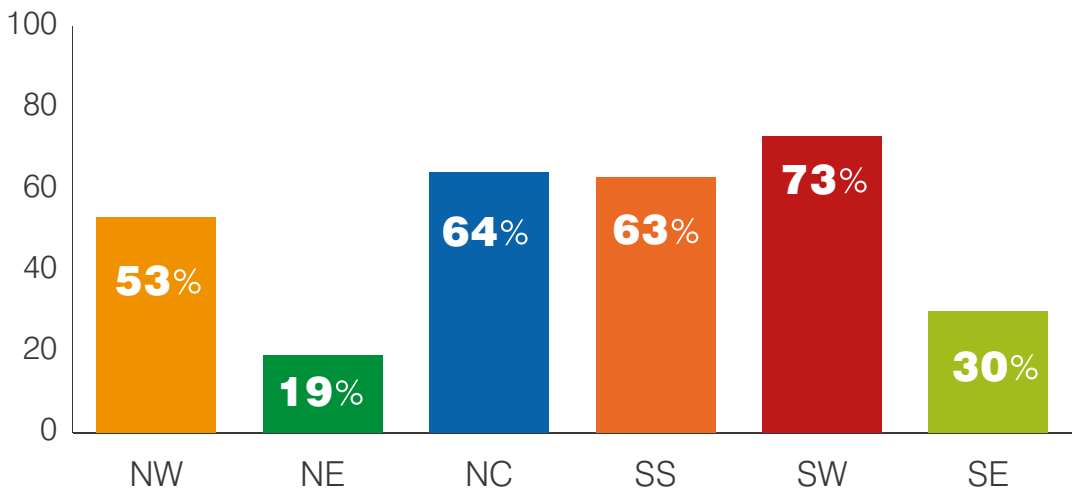
Sex (orientation, education, counselling etc.)



Although all regions say the Church should focus on sex, the SW views it as a critical focus area.

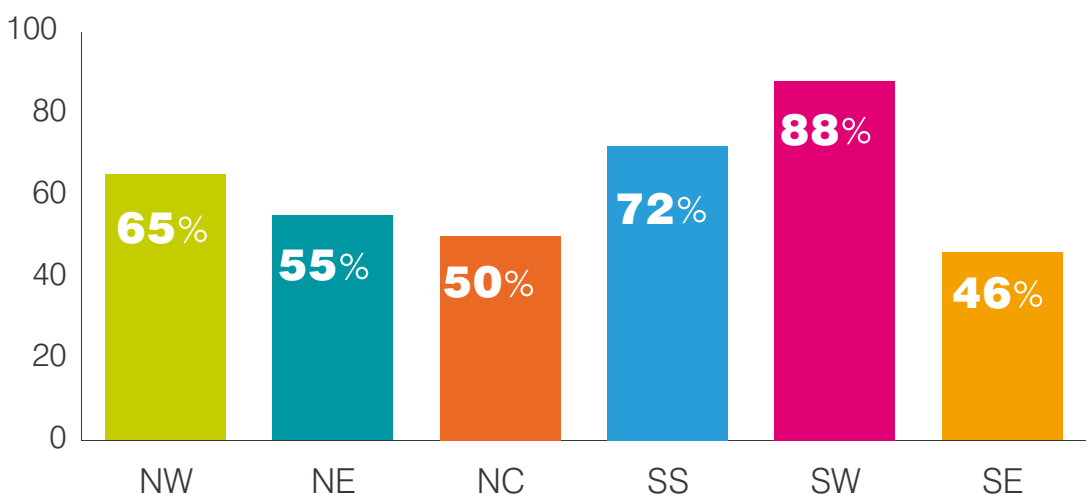
Regional Breakdown

National reorientation



The NE and SE do not think the Church should get involved with national orientation.

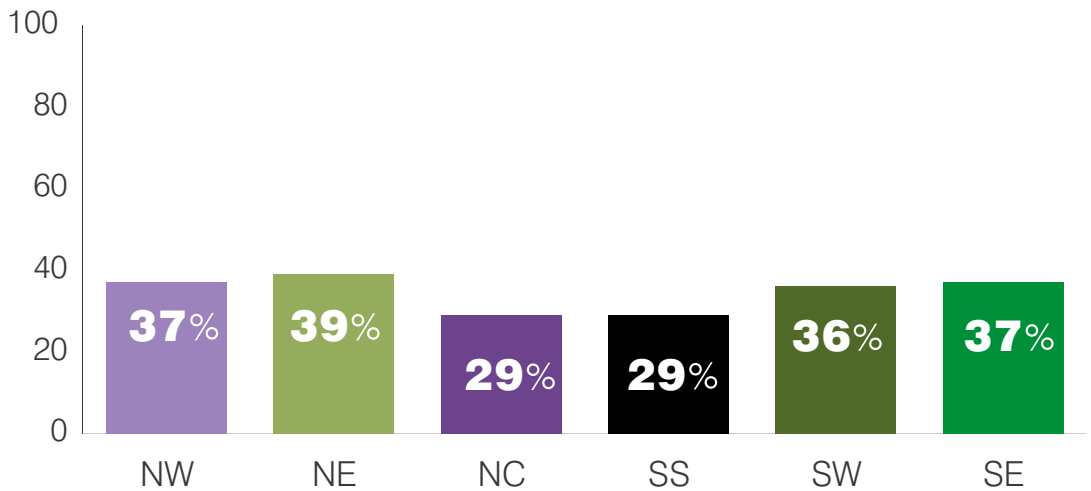
Education & schools



Education seems to be a major concern in the SW, SS and the NW.

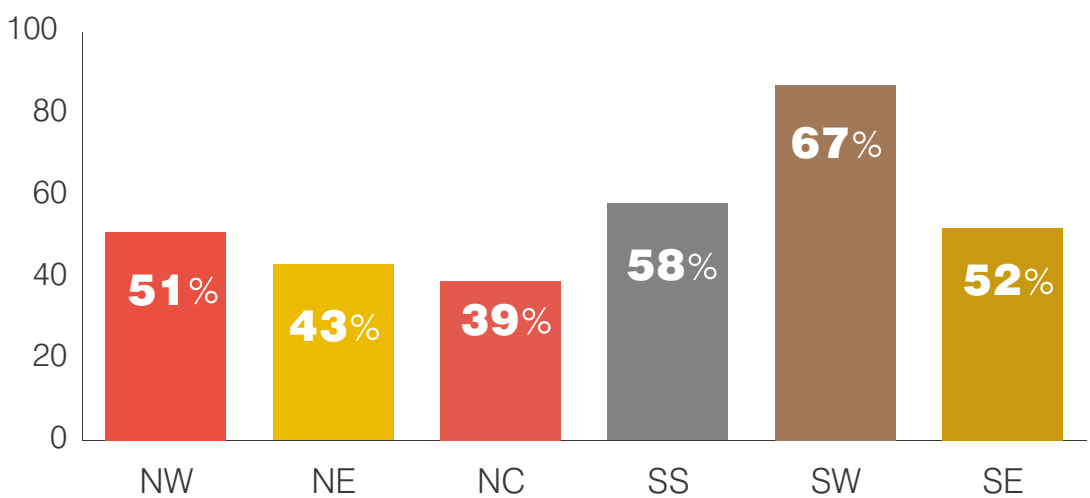
Regional Breakdown

Politics



The regions do not think politics should be a core focus of the church.

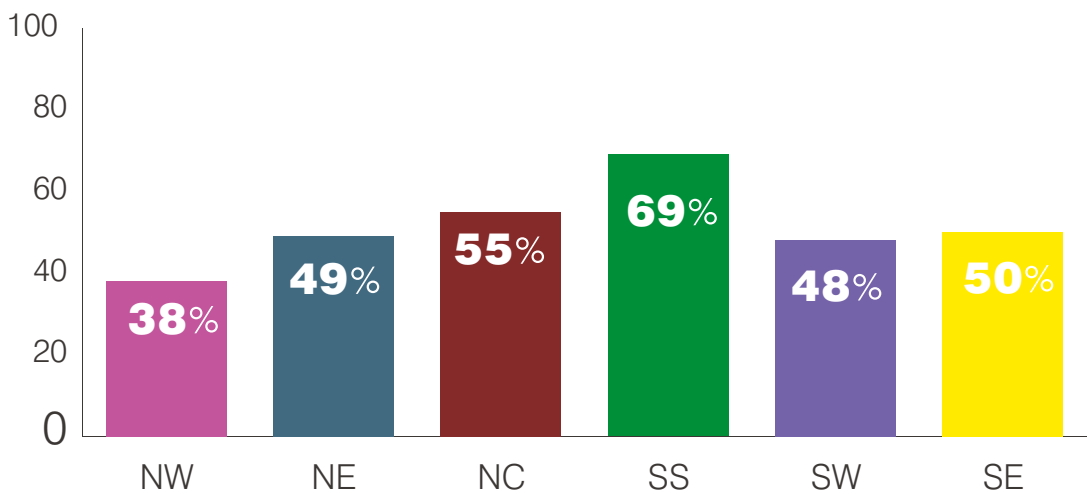
Entrepreneurship



Entrepreneurship is very important to the SW. This presents an opportunity for churches in this zone.

Regional Breakdown

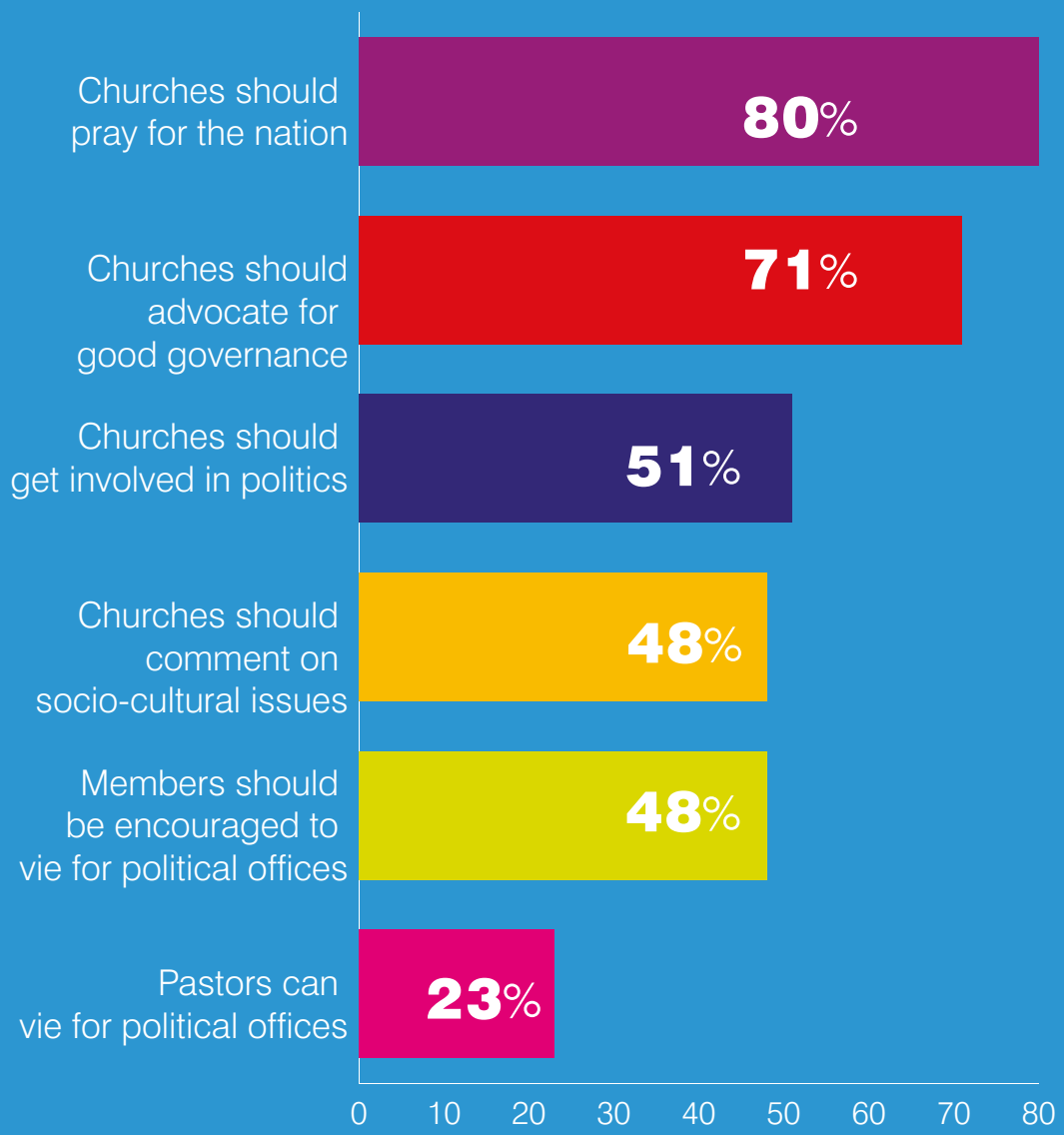
Capacity development



Capacity development is important to the SS. The same level of importance is not attached to it in other regions.

In your opinion, in what ways should the Nigerian Church be involved in politics?

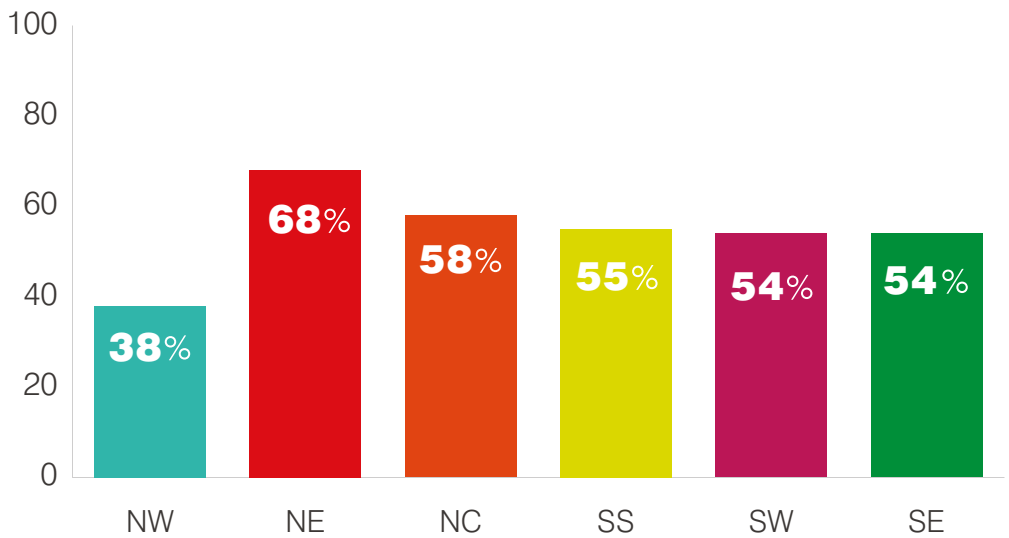
Overall Regional Result



There appears to be a contradiction here. People want Churches to get involved in politics but do not really want members or Pastors to vie for public office.

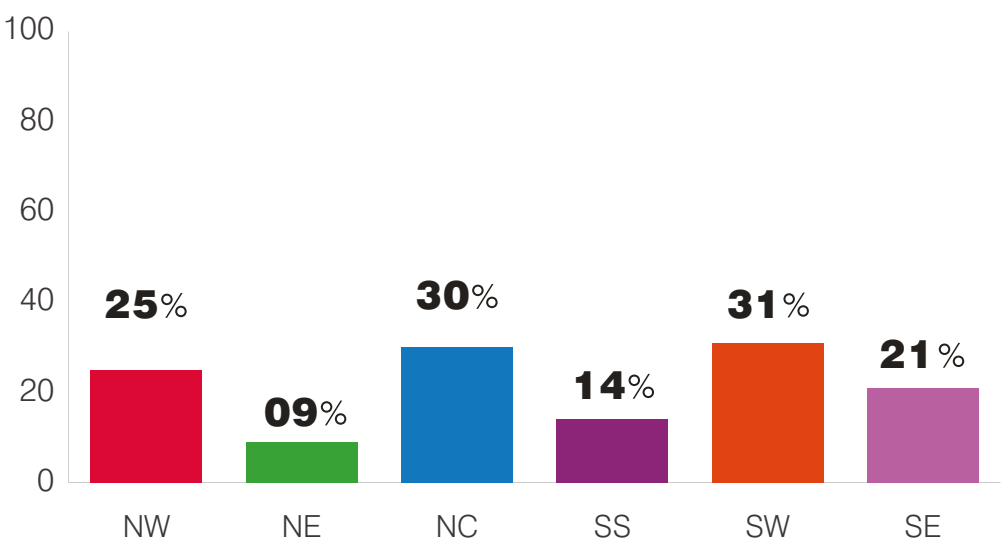
Regional Breakdown

Churches should get involved in politics



The NW does not want churches involved in politics. The other regions seem open to the idea.

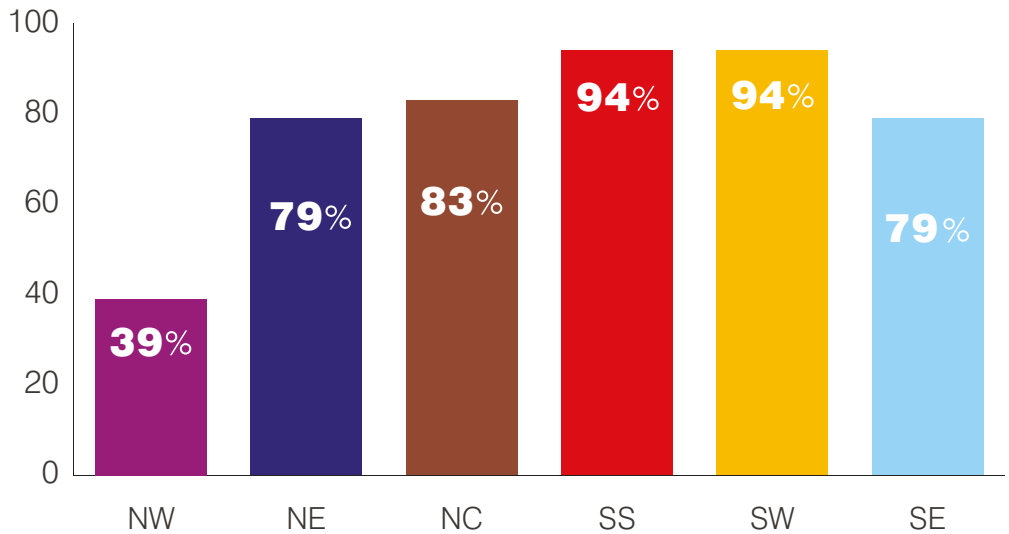
Pastors can vie for political offices



None of the regions think that pastors should vie for political office.

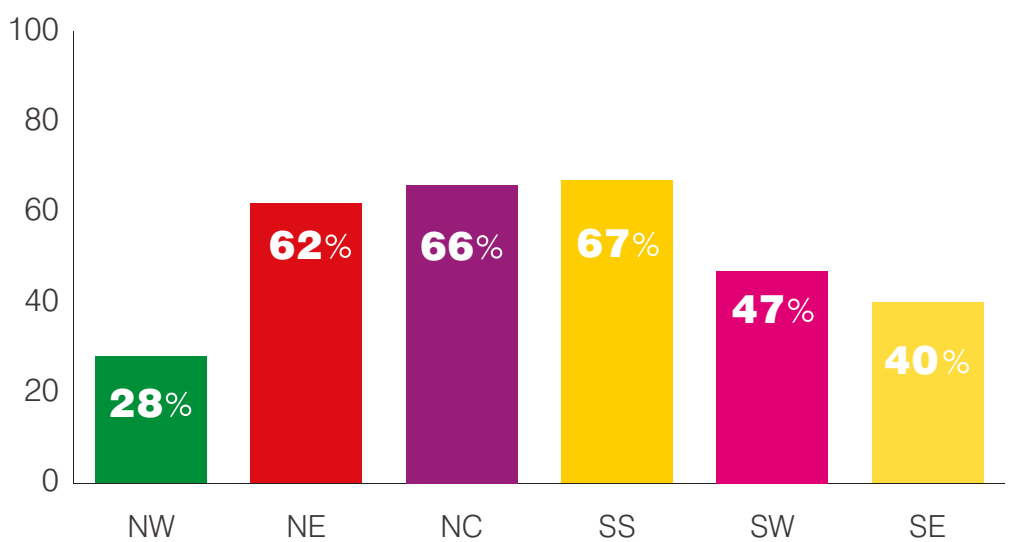
Regional Breakdown

Churches should advocate for good governance



The SS and SW believe that the Church can do a lot to advocate for good governance in Nigeria.

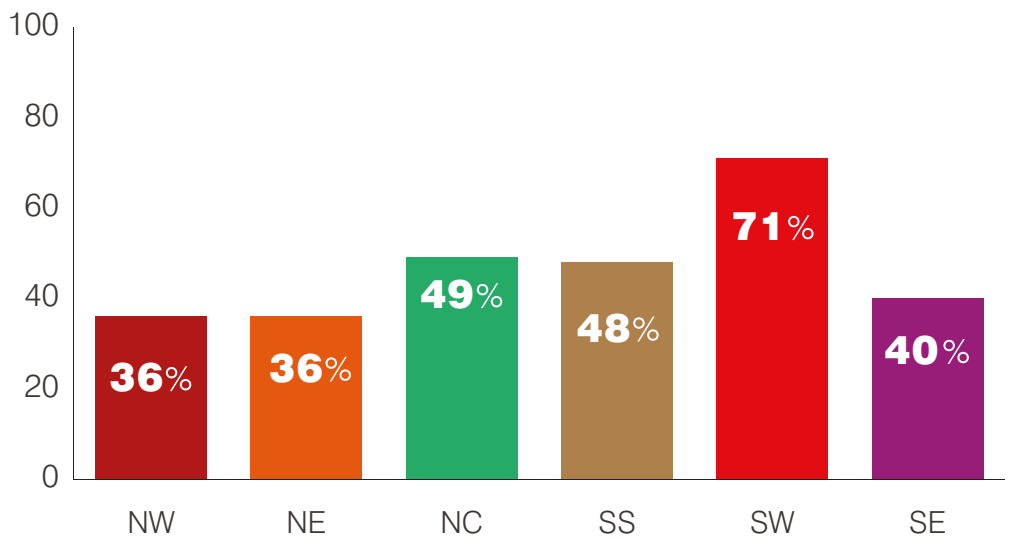
Members should be encouraged to vie for political offices



The NE, NC and SS seem open to church members vying for political offices.

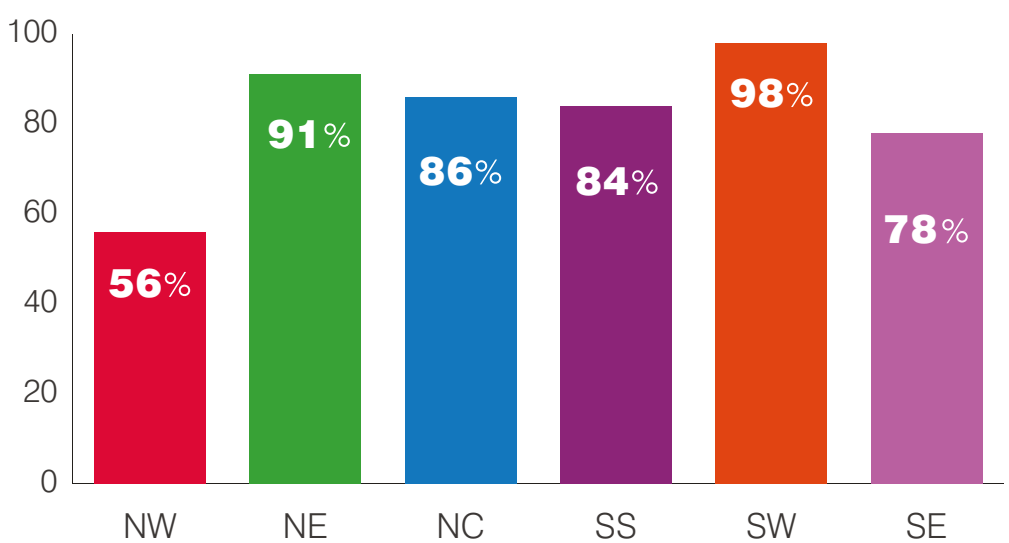
Regional Breakdown

Churches should comment on socio-cultural issues



The SW appears to be saying that the Church should comment on socio-cultural issues.

Churches should pray for the nation



All zones believe that churches should pray for the nation.

SECTION 3: TECHNOLOGY

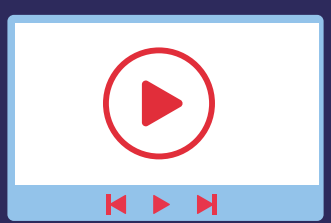
Do you consume Christian content in digital formats?

Overall Regional Result



62%

Digital Bible
(PC,Phone, Kindle, other)



45%

Streaming services



53%

Video messages



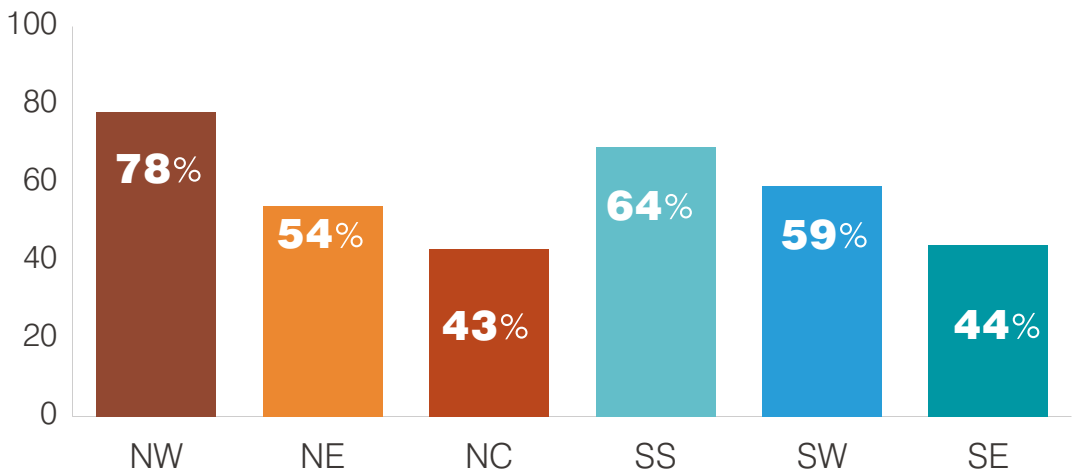
45%

Audio messages & podcasts

These results mirror the overall scores. Digital bibles are becoming a vital part of church services, both from the pulpit and in the pews.

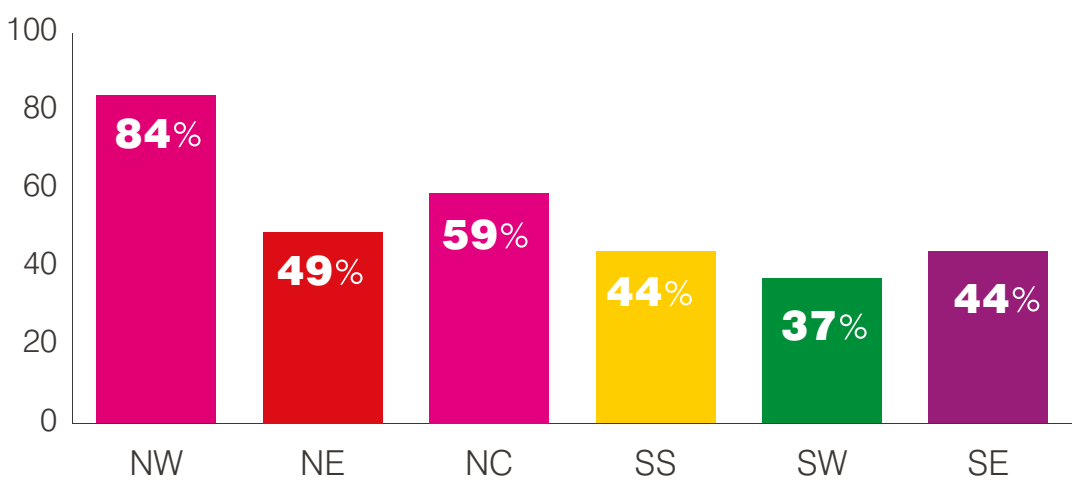
Regional Breakdown

i. Digital Bible (PC, Phone, Kindle, other)



It would appear that usage of digital bibles is highest in the NW and SS.

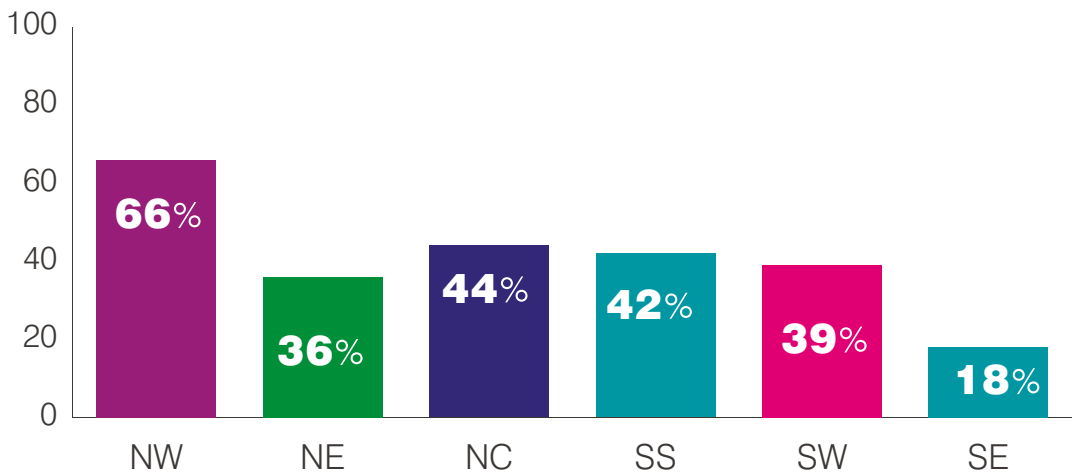
Video messages



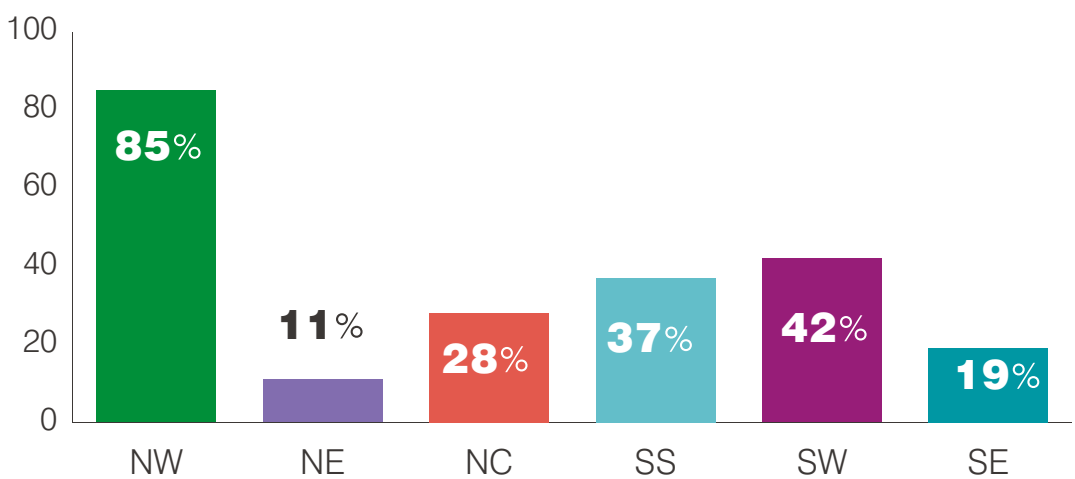
The use of video messages is highest in the NW. Perhaps this points to a desire for more teaching, leading to the use of video messages to bridge the gap.

Regional Breakdown

Audio messages & podcasts



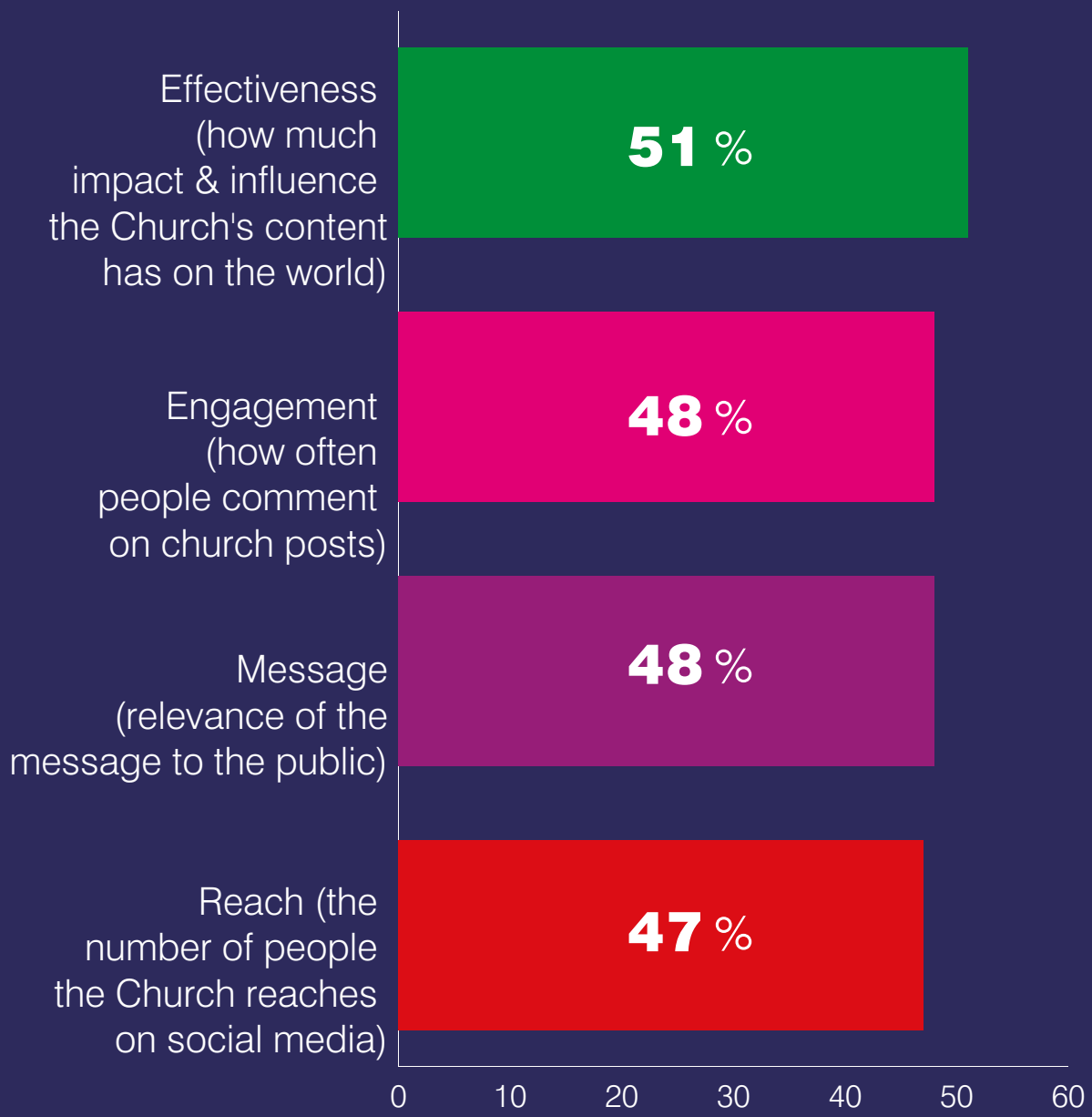
Streaming services



The high score in the NW may be based on the same reason as referenced previously – a desire for more teaching, leading to the use of audio messages and other media to bridge the gap.

How would you rate the Church's use of social media?

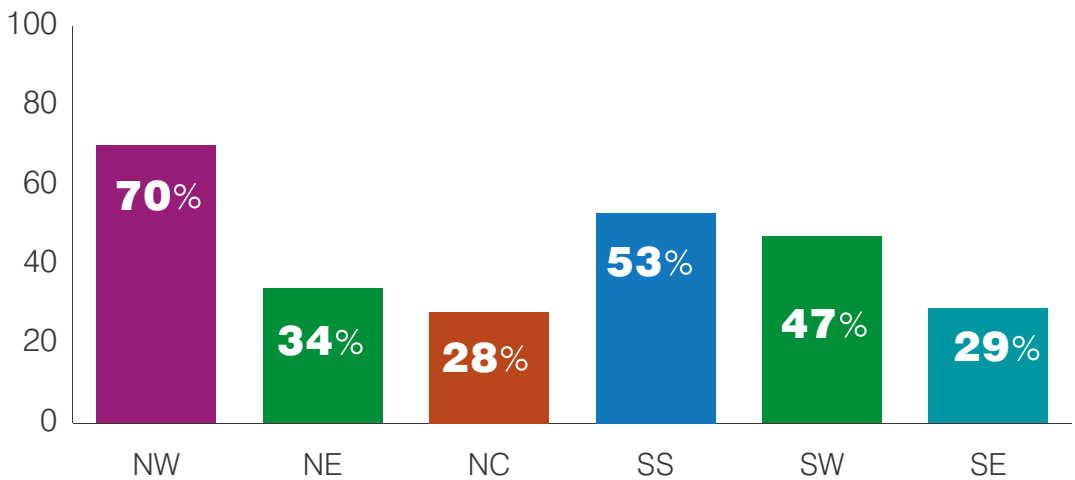
Overall Regional Result



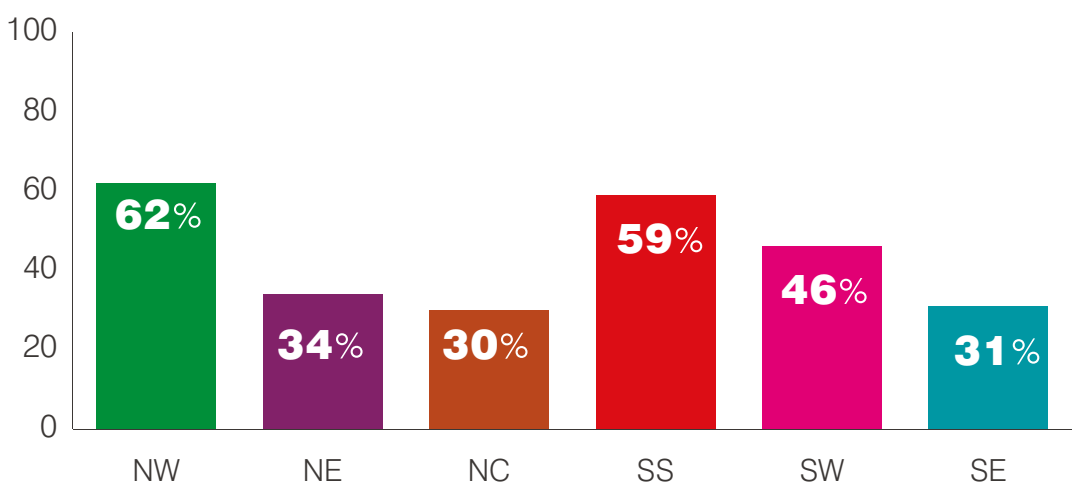
The Church scored below average on 3 parameters and marginally above average on the 4th. More effort is required.

Regional Breakdown

Engagement (how often people comment on church posts)



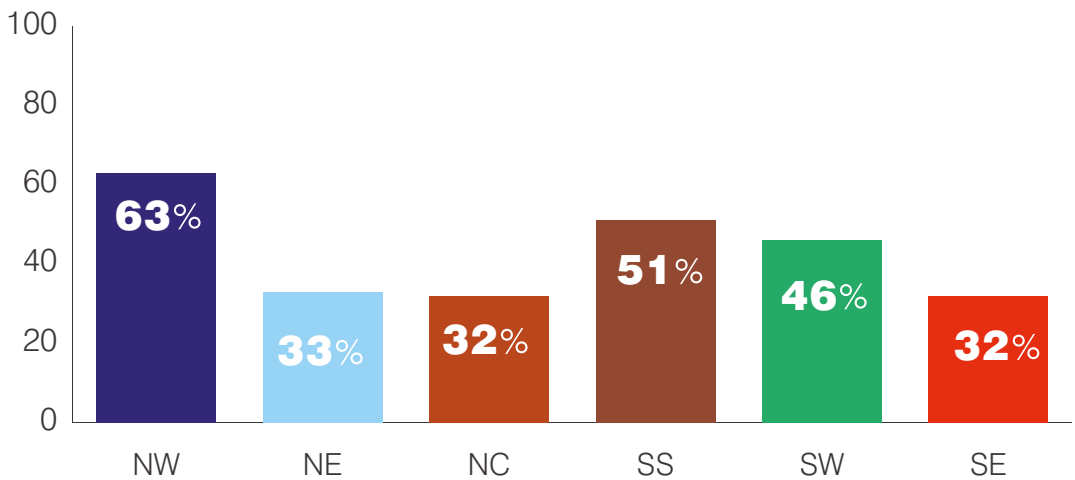
Message (relevance of the message to the public)



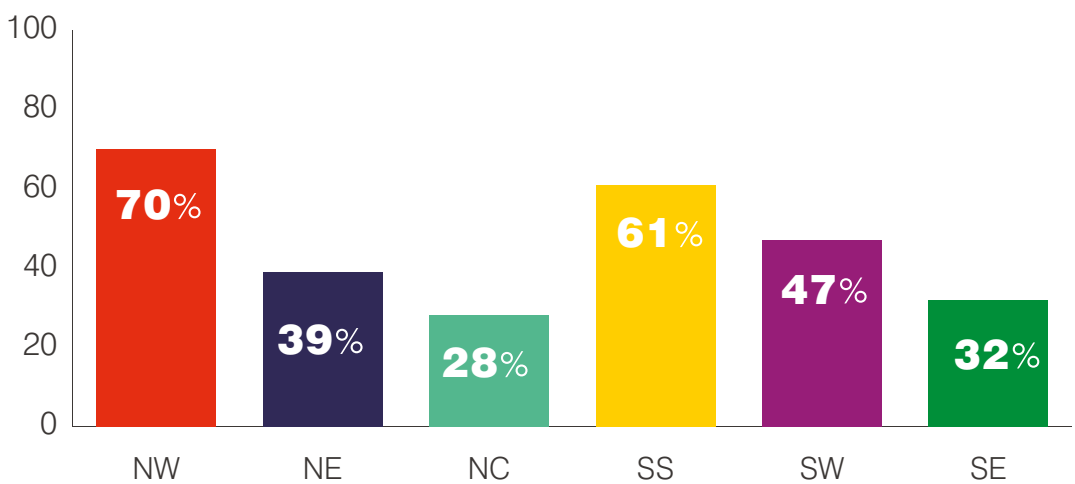
Only 2 regions scored above average on these parameters. More creative engagement is required.

Regional Breakdown

Reach (the number of people the Church reaches on social media)



Effectiveness (how much impact & influence the Church's content has on the world)



Only 2 regions scored above average on these parameters. More creative solutions are required.

How would you rate the Church's use of technology?

Overall Regional Result



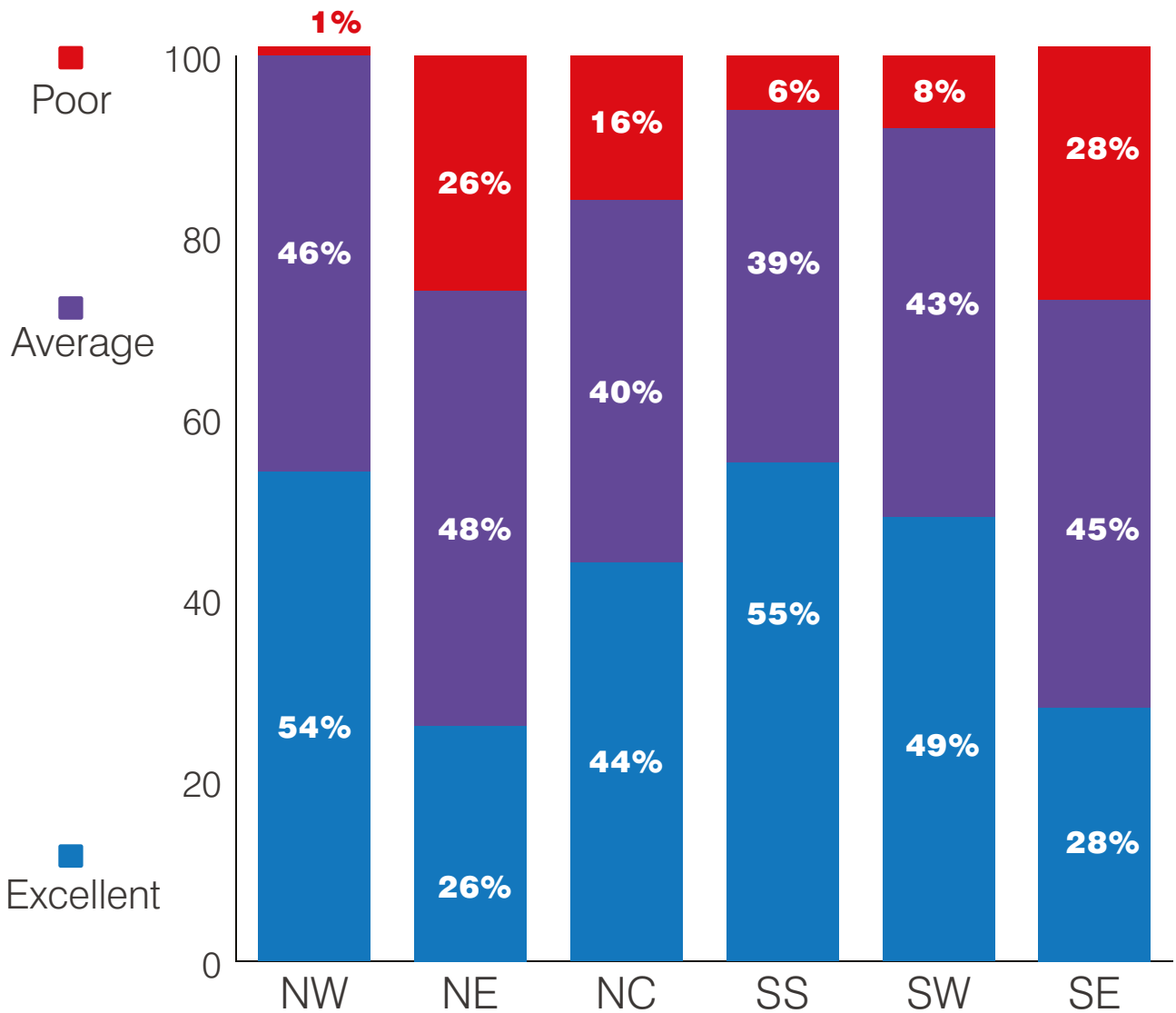
45% Excellent

44% Average

11% Poor

While the Churches desire to apply and deploy technology, more work is required in the area of impact and potency.

Regional Breakdown



The regional breakdown reflects the overall score.

New Media & the Church: Church Should Embrace (And Not Fear) Media — Chude Jideonwo (With Damola Morenikeji)



"Many times activists, lawyers, volunteers, health care workers and others are actually out there, busy doing God's work, while the church is busy fighting useless battles that have nothing to do with God." — Chude Jideonwo, April 22 2019

The church in Nigeria is at a cross-point, dealing with its response, as always, to what matters to a new generation, breathed into and of by God (Philippians 2:13).

New media technologies, emerging platforms & stories about faith, identity, equality, nation building and governance provide the church opportunities to transform lives, and to provide both spiritual and strategic leadership.

This is nothing new, despite the hysteria that change, for peoples un-moored from history, often brings. "The Christian Church throughout its history (has always taken on) different forms and adopted different strategies as it interacted with changing cultures and technologies," the scholar of religion, Kenneth Bedell reminded us about a decade ago[1].

As humanity evolves and gets accustomed to new tools for engagement, it has become common for each generation to question the relevance of the God they serve or are being called to serve, against the background of the culture. The old question of how religion will answer the new questions a new people have, using tools, stories and media relevant to that generation, is ever alive and calling for attention.

New technologies, platforms and stories provide the Church with opportunities to transform lives.

[1] How the church struggles with technology: *https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-christian-churchs-struggle-to-be-faithful/*



Is God here with us, with a better, more inspiring vision for our future than we could ever imagine? Or, is God behind, back there, in the past, endlessly trying to get us to return to how it used to be? Does God use the tools of each generation to communicate with that generation, or does God stick to what God believes has worked, even if the method doesn't appeal to a new audience? Is God with us, today, or is God apart from us, in God's own sacred space, separate?

The problem of course is not God. It has never been.

The whole point of God's appearance on the earth as Jesus, was to make that point once for all:

1. "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). Matthew 1:23
2. "The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." Zephaniah 3:17

The problem has always been with God's priests – the human mediators that God has to use to remind each generation of God's unchanging, unending, unbending love.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" Hebrews 4:15

Can we gladly say the same of the priests in the church and religious institutions?

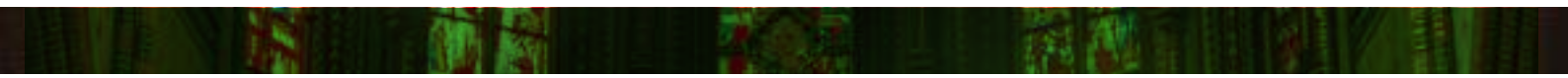
Is the Church involved with the world God is creating today and the future God is moulding for tomorrow?

Anytime the church fails in taking the opportunity to deeply connect, God doesn't. And each time that God has found the traditions and institutions of the church to become obstacles to the move of God, God has found other vessels to make his change felt.

"Churches and religious communities and organisations can claim to speak for God, while at the same time actually being behind the movement of God that is continuing forward in the culture around them . . . without their participation." — Rob Bell.

It happened with slavery in the United Kingdom.
It happened with racism in the United States.
It happened with faith versus works in Germany.
It happened with women speaking in church across the world.
It happened with the democratising effect of the Pentecostal movement in Africa.
It will continue to happen.

Speaking of today's church in the West, author and pastor Bob Roberts Jr is direct: "the church has been stripped of its power and influence in the West today, not because it has lost its wealth and position in society - it hasn't - but because the church has lost its credibility. On the whole, we can



hardly change ourselves, much less the world. We cannot consistently live the message we herald to the world, but never have we been more effective at religious marketing of products that help us appear as if we are living it. As a result, the growing perception is that the church is religious but not spiritual. It has style but not substance."

Anyone who has been paying close attention to the church in Nigeria knows that the institution faces and has faced its own deep questions and reputation crises in the past decade. The ferocious debate over tithes was only the latest instalment. The drama played out fully on new media, of course, emphasising its primacy as the tool that a new generation and a new sensibility is employing to interrogate the church.

The Church in Nigeria has faced deep questions and reputation crises in the past decade.

But new media is asking the same fundamental question (and tithing was just a symptom) that every generation has to answer: What kind of Priest are you? Here or there? Engaged or withdrawn? Real or illusory?

The famous Martin Luther King Jr's letter from Birmingham Jail in August 1963, for instance, confronted the church with this same question. It's hard to imagine it now, but it was true: the institutional church believed that the MLK fight was the wrong fight. They elected to maintain the status quo, to uphold tradition, to stay with what was familiar… in the name of God.

> "I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen.
>
> In spite of my shattered dreams, I came to Birmingham with the hope that the white religious leadership of this community would see the justice of our cause and, with deep moral concern, would serve as the channel through which our just grievances could reach the power structure. I had hoped that each of you would understand. But again I have been disappointed.





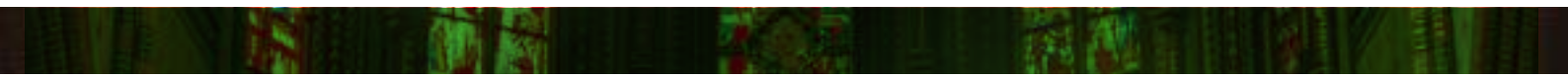
> I have traveled the length and breadth of Alabama, Mississippi and all the other southern states. On sweltering summer days and crisp autumn mornings I have looked at the South's beautiful churches with their lofty spires pointing heavenward. I have beheld the impressive outlines of her massive religious education buildings. Over and over I have found myself asking: "What kind of people worship here? Who is their God? Where were their voices when the lips of Governor Barnett dripped with words of interposition and nullification? Where were they when Governor Wallace gave a clarion call for defiance and hatred? Where were their voices of support when bruised and weary Negro men and women decided to rise from the dark dungeons of complacency to the bright hills of creative protest?"
>
> Yes, these questions are still in my mind. In deep disappointment I have wept over the laxity of the church. But be assured that my tears have been tears of love. There can be no deep disappointment where there is not deep love. Yes, I love the church. How could I do otherwise? I am in the rather unique position of being the son, the grandson and the great grandson of preachers. Yes, I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists. ❞
>
> — Martin Luther King Jr

The church becomes the very best version of its self when it follows the traditions of Paul (that great defier of the old and aggressive enabler of the new) and of the man whose name it bears, Jesus. When we are closer to the today than to the yesterday, to the move of God in his people today, to being the answers to the questions God's people ask today. To being closer to people than power, to being vessels of courage and compassion, to being found sooner on the streets than in the hallowed chambers of aloofness. To actually be like Jesus.

Over our history, we have had those like this: St. Francis of Assisi, and there was the original Martin Luther, and there was Dorothy Day, and there was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and there was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and the glorious revolutionary William Wilberforce, whose Church of England parents were so frightened by his non-conformist religious thinking at the age of 12, they withdrew him from school. But they couldn't stop the move of God in the man. In his later years, he returned to his evangelical leanings and gained the impetus that drove his dogged fight against slavery's ills.

When God has enabled change in the world, the church has often withdrawn in fear and panic, and tribalism.

When God has enabled change in the world, the church has often withdrawn in fear and panic, and tribalism. We cannot forget that when the rapid spread of television decades ago was influencing how people interacted with information, a sect within the church - at a point - regarded this as the devil's



black box, preaching against the possession and viewing of television.[2] Others embraced the change as a tool to reach more people with the gospel.

God is always in the business of helping humans do better; meeting people where they are, all through history, leveraging on the issues, stories and technologies relevant to their generation. God has always been pulling humanity forward and calling us to a place of greater wholeness, well-being and peace.

God meets people where they are by leveraging on the issues, stories and technologies relevant to their generation.

"What we see in these passages is God meeting people, tribes, and cultures right where they are and drawing and inviting and calling them forward, into greater and greater shalom and respect and rights and peace and dignity and equality. It's as if human history were progressing along a trajectory, an arc, a continuum; and sacred history is the capturing and recording of those moments when people became aware that they were being called and drawn and pulled forward by the divine force and power and energy that gives life to everything." — Rob Bell

If the Church does not re-align with the work God is doing via media and technology, to bring the Kingdom of God unto an earth weighed down and reined in by culture, power, resistance, tradition, fear and unbelief - God will still move humanity forward without waiting for the approval of or participation from the Church.

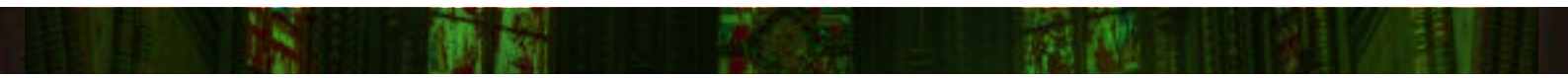
"We will have to repent in this generation", Martin Luther King Jr. writes in that famous letter. "Not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of good people. We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men willing to be co-workers with God, and without this hard work time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation."

"For all that has been lost in the church today, there is hope," Bob Roberts helpfully adds, "there has never been a greater opportunity to see the transformation of people, society and the world, but it will mean a radical redefinition of following Christ and impacting the world."

New media, just like old media, presents us the same opportunity – to make the impact.

New media, just like old media, presents us the same opportunity – to make this impact, and to mediate this always-needed transformation.

[2] Matthews Ojo provided more details about this in his 1995 piece for the International Bulletin for Missionary Research, which can be found at *http://www.internationalbulletin.org/issues/1995-03/1995-03-114-ojo.pdf*



Church, your move.

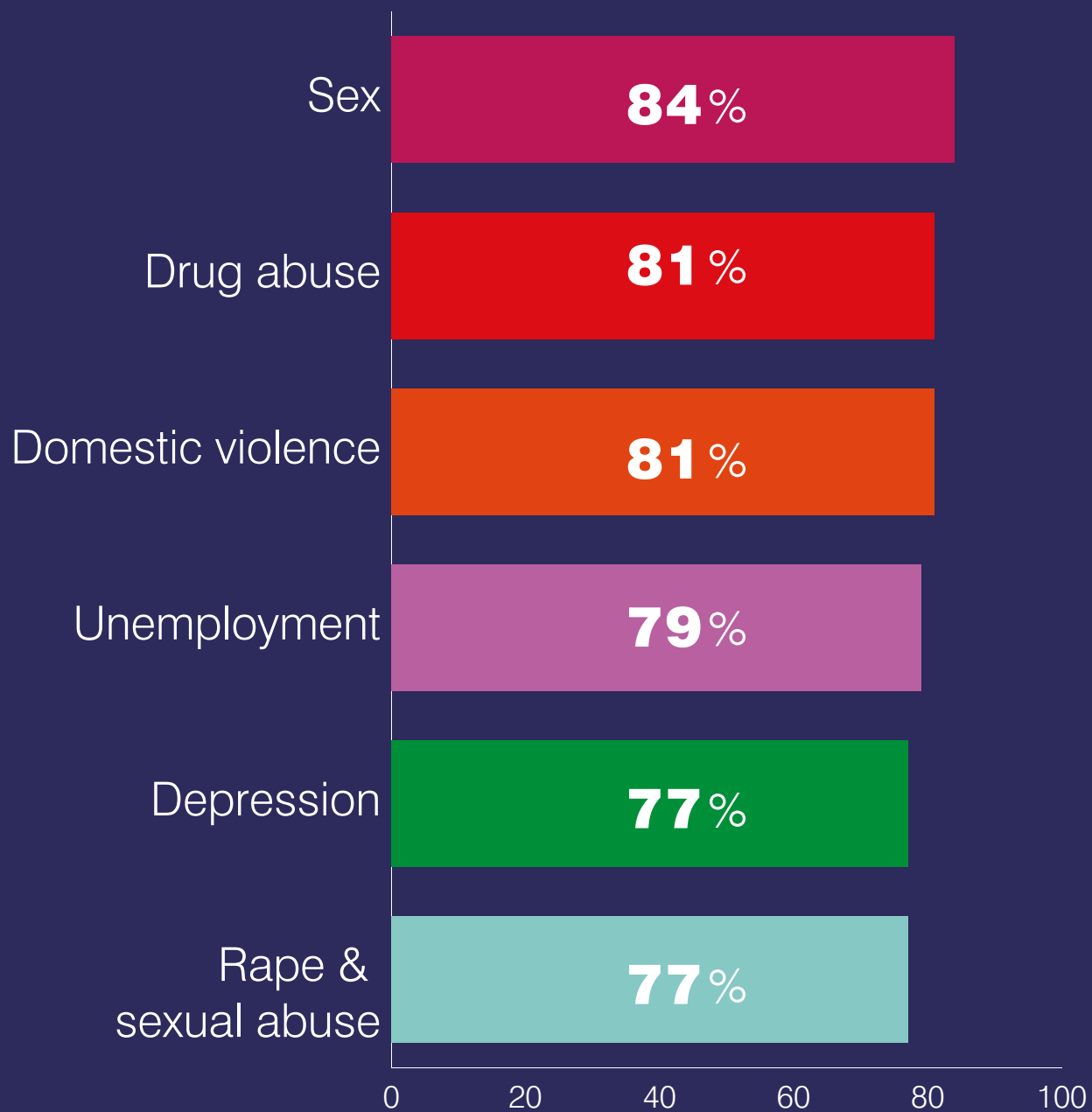
Chude Jideonwo is the founder of Happiness company, Joy. Inc. and media group RED | For Africa.



SECTION 4: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

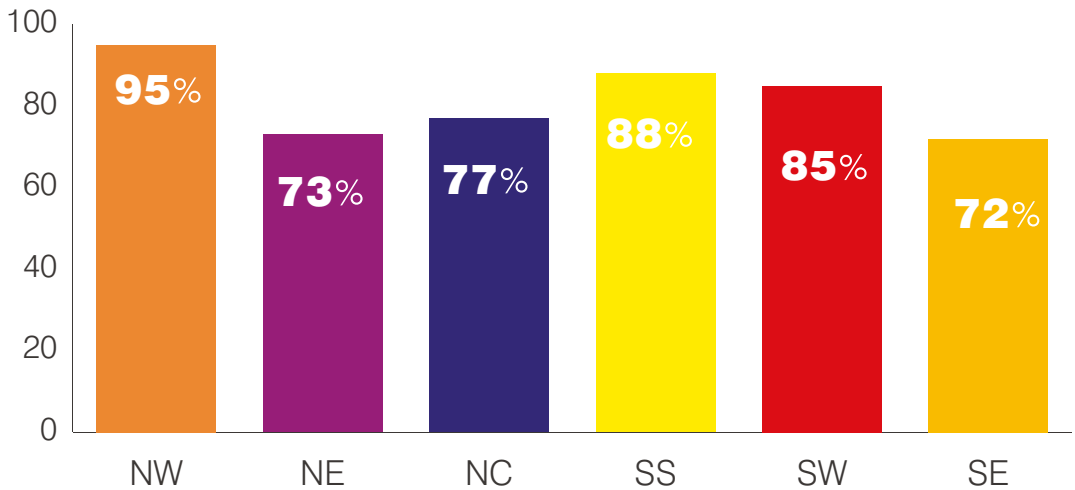
On what social issues should the Nigerian Church actively engage the youth?

Overall Regional Result

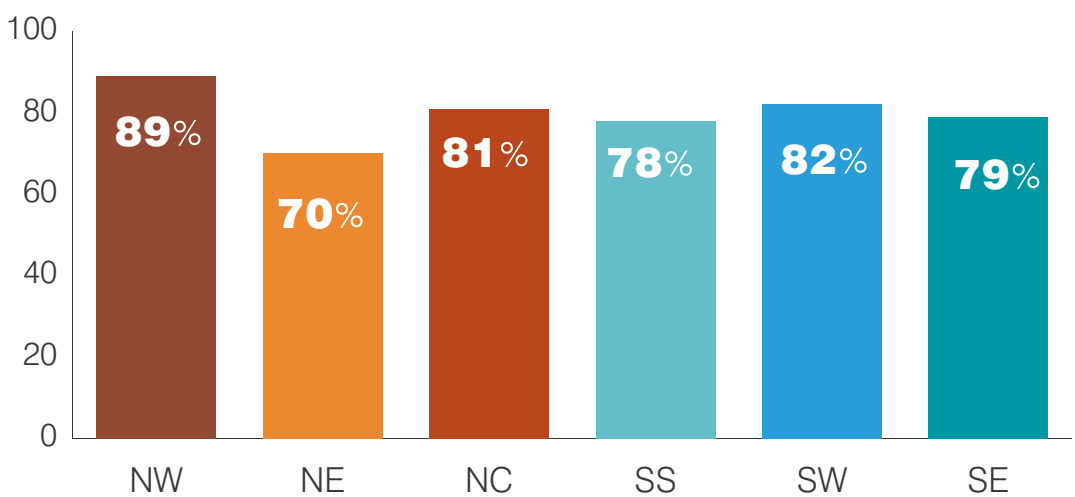


Regional Breakdown

i. Sex



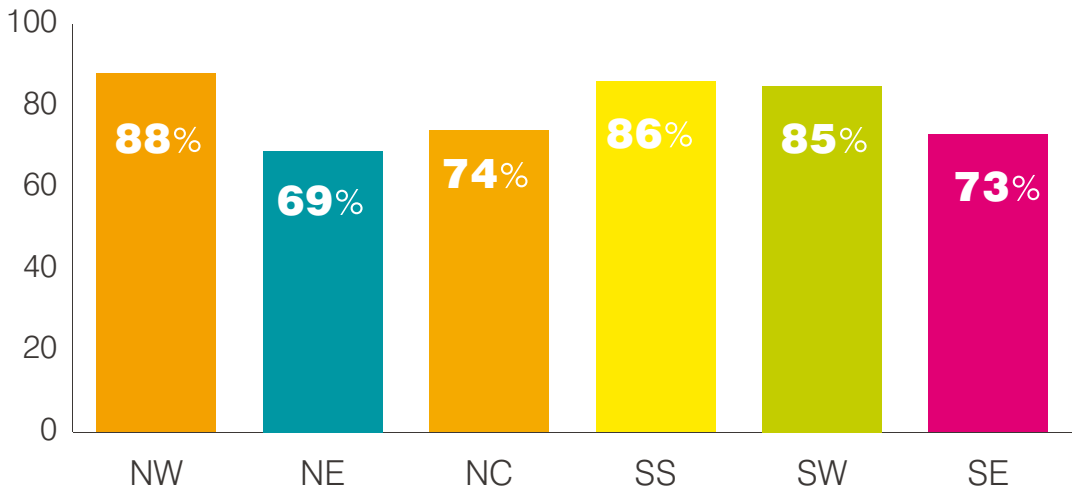
ii. Drug abuse



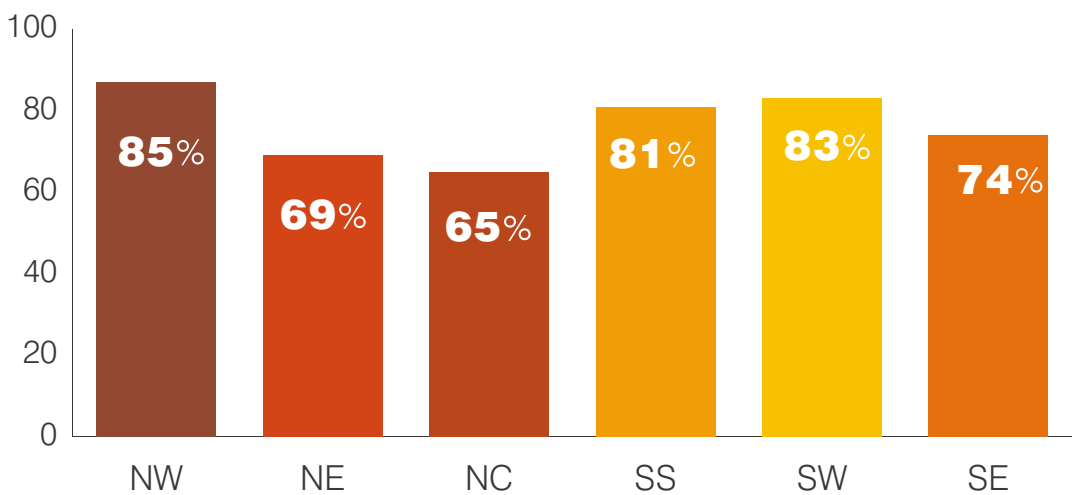
These parameters received high scores across all regions.

Regional Breakdown

Domestic violence



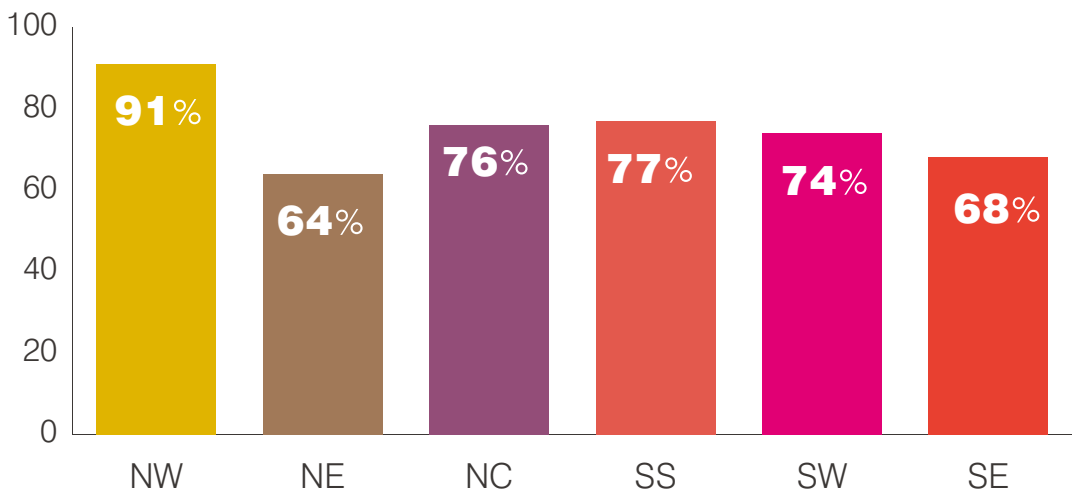
Unemployment



These parameters received high scores across all regions.

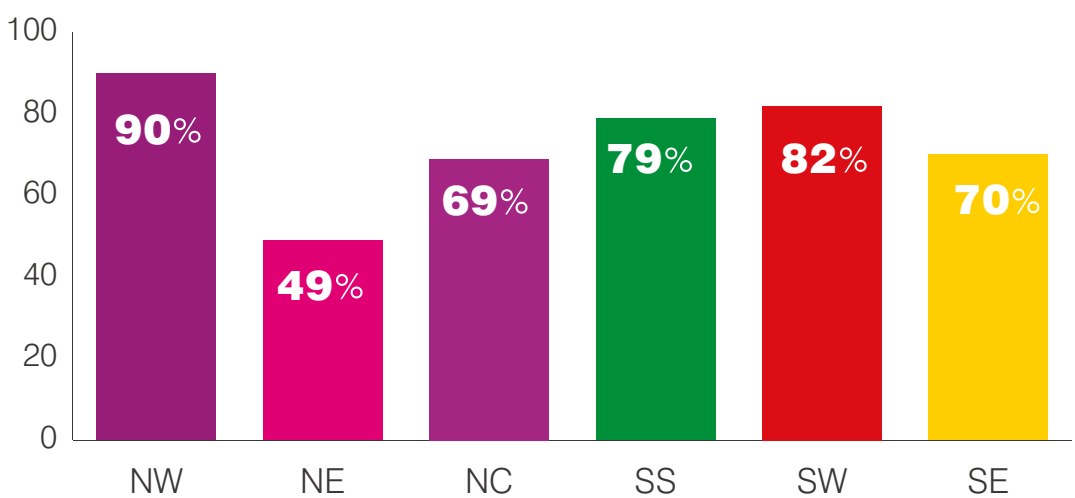
Regional Breakdown

Depression



Depression received high scores across all regions.

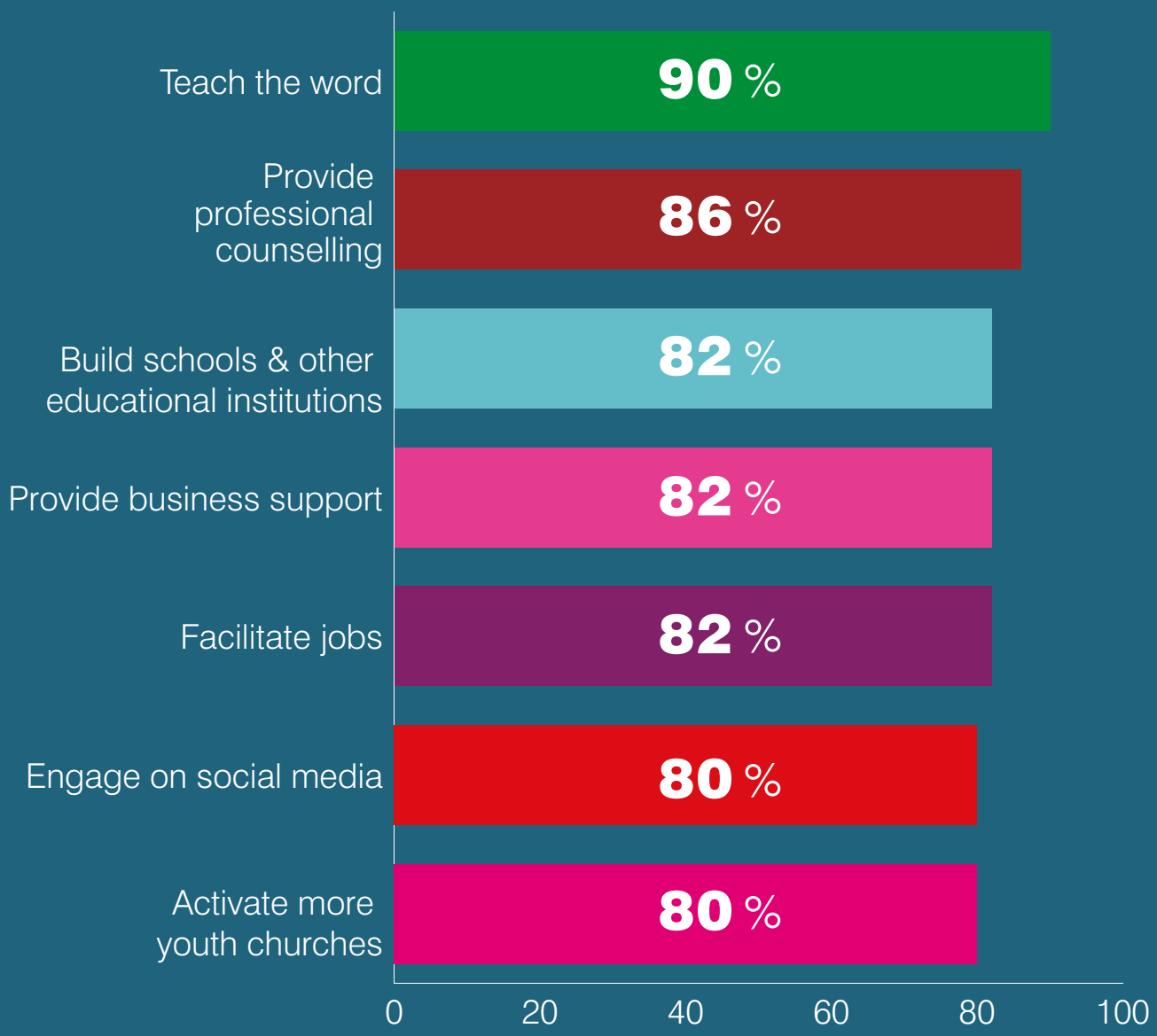
Rape & sexual abuse



The NE does not think this should be a core focus of the Church. This may be due to cultural factors or tied to issues of terrorism and IDPs which overshadow other issues in the region.

In what ways can the Church impact the next generation?

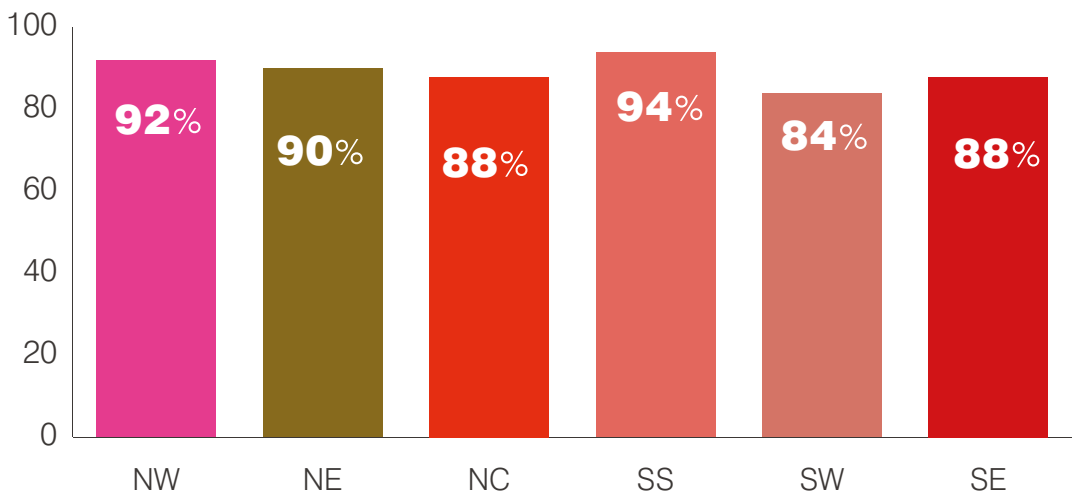
Overall Regional Result



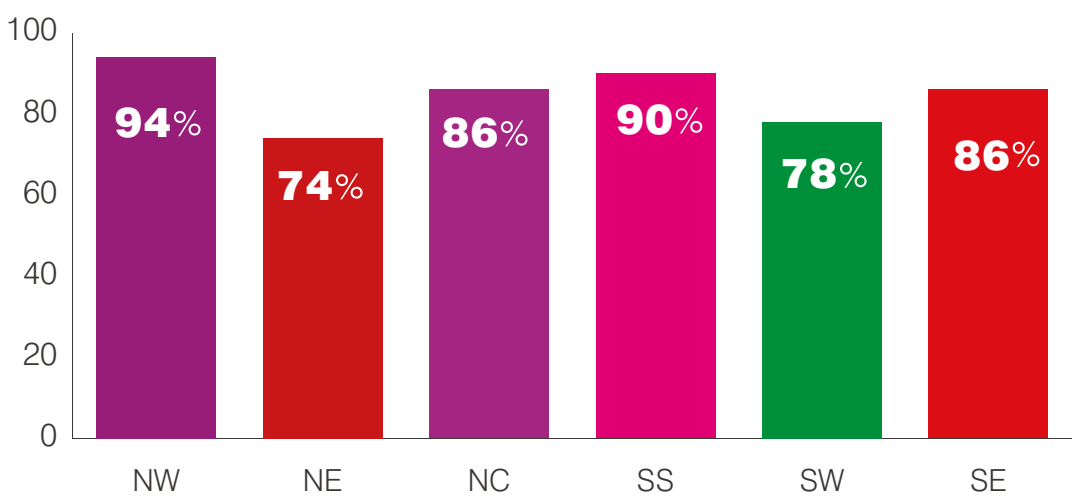
As far as Millennials are concerned, churches should function in all the areas above in order to reach the Youth effectively.

Regional Breakdown

Teach the word



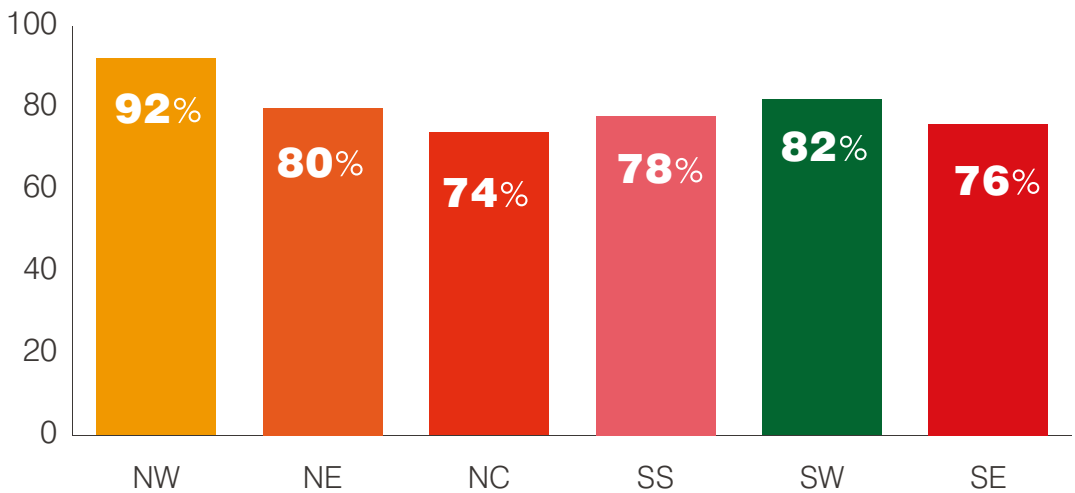
Provide professional counselling



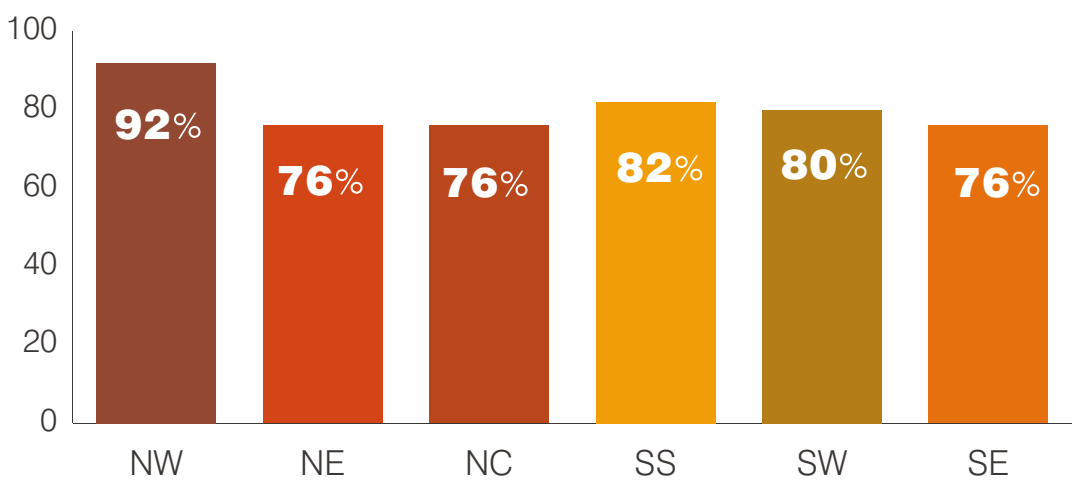
These parameters received high scores across all regions.

Regional Breakdown

Build schools & other educational institutions



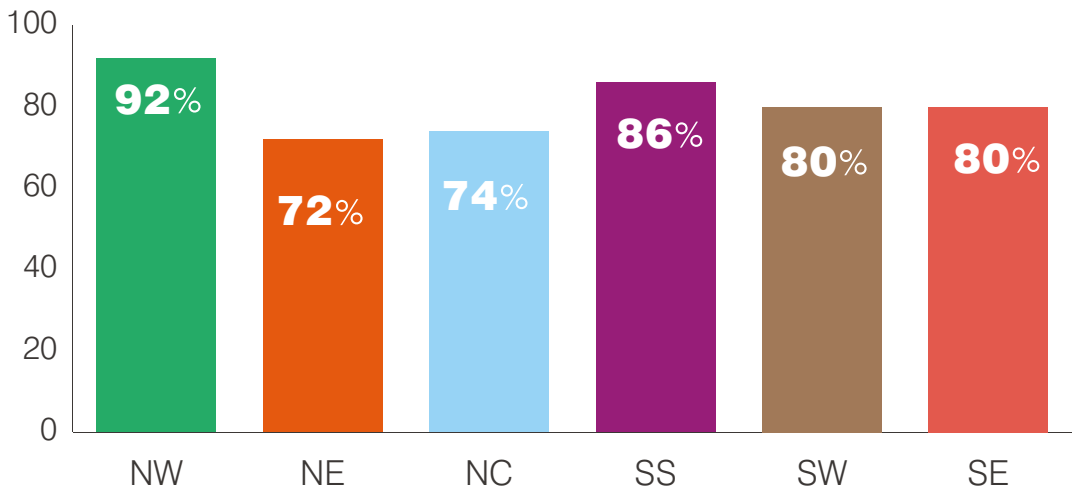
Provide business support



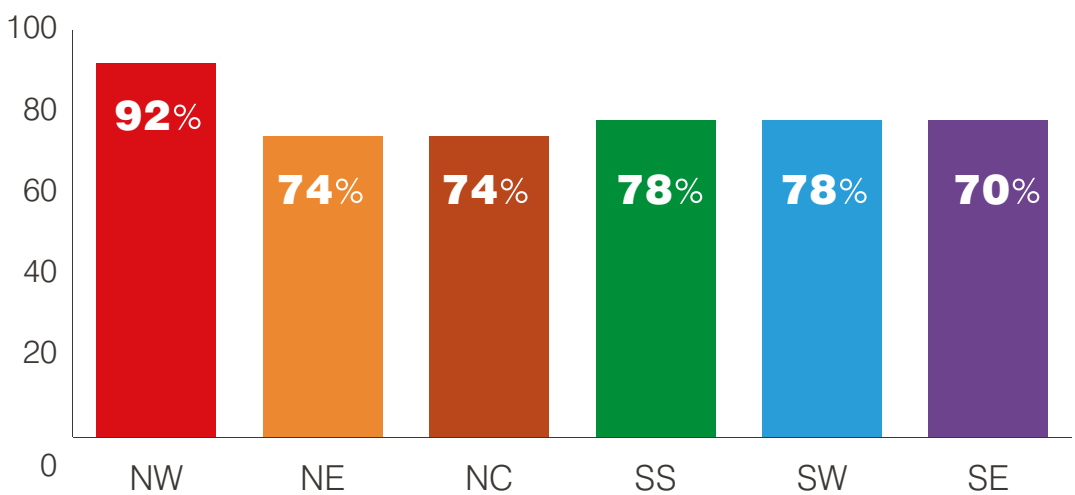
These parameters received high scores across all regions.

Regional Breakdown

Facilitate jobs



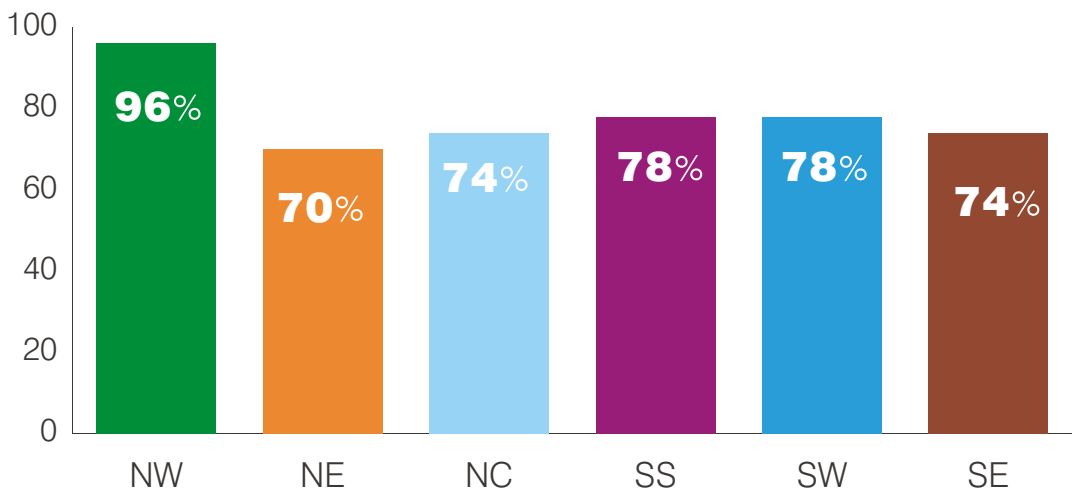
Engage on social media



These parameters received high scores across all regions.

Regional Breakdown

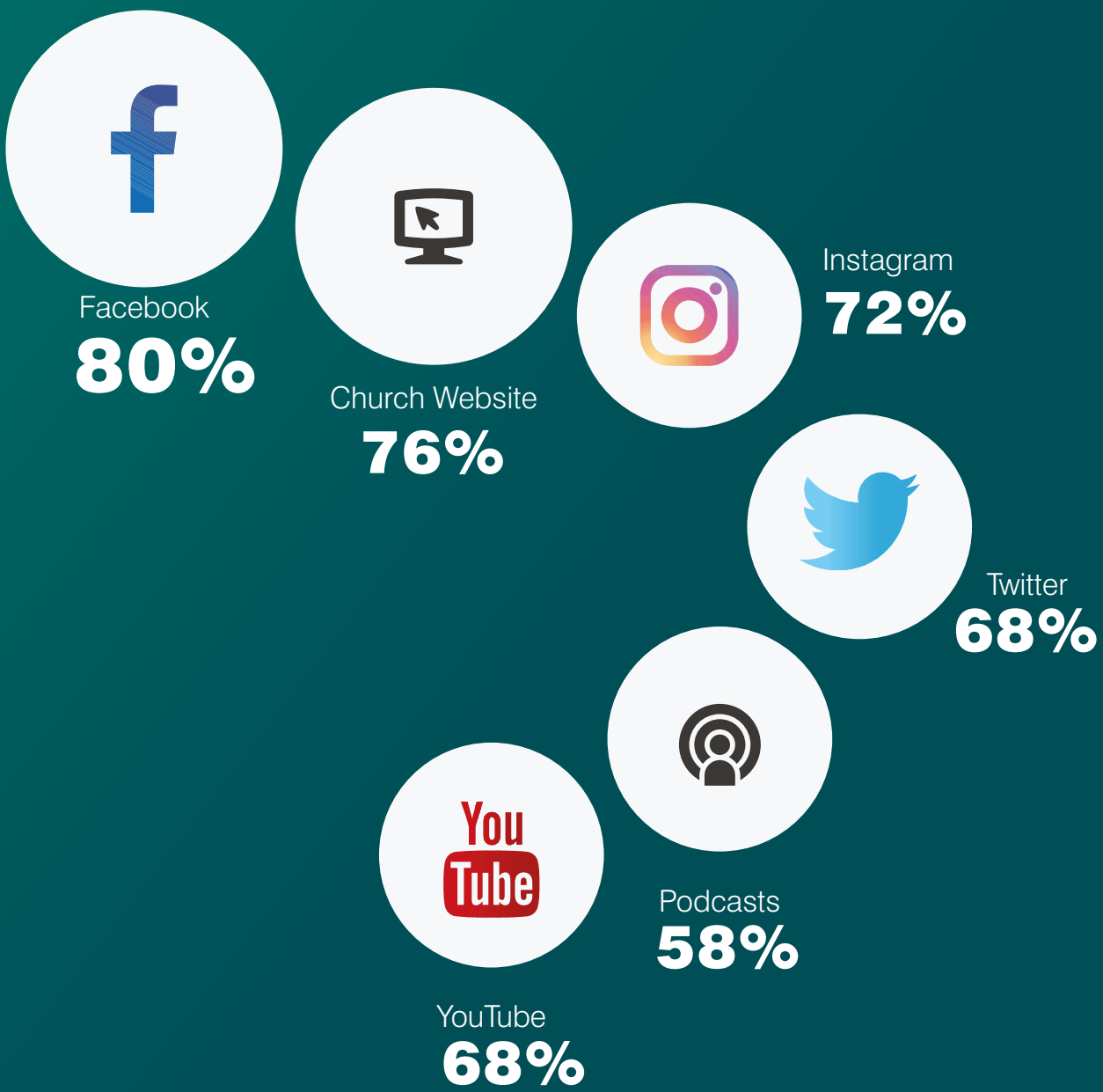
Activate more youth churches



This parameter received high scores across all regions.

What online platforms will most enable the Church to engage the youth better?

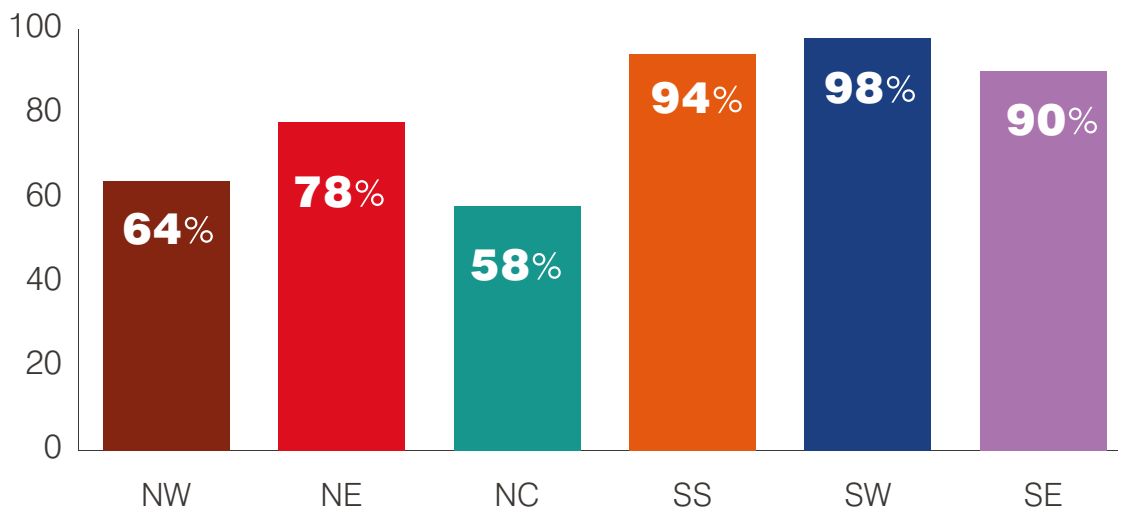
Overall Regional Result



Podcasts seem to have the lowest adoption rate across the regions. Video based platforms are preferred.

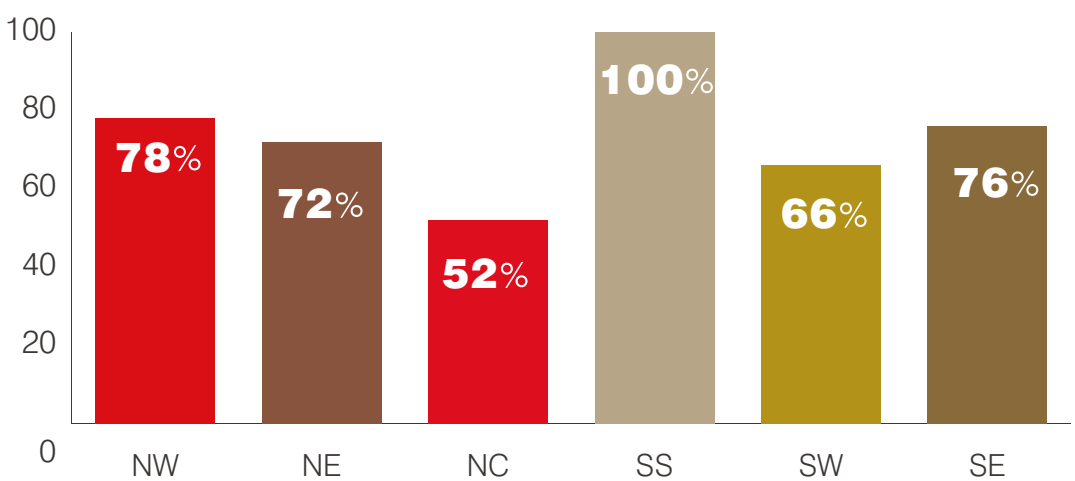
Regional Breakdown

Facebook



Facebook scores very high in the SW, SS and SE.

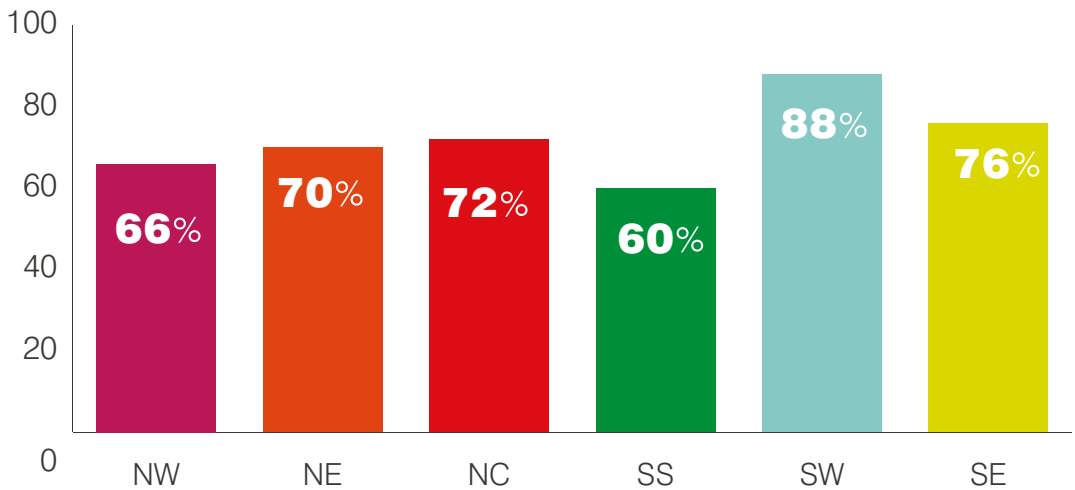
Church website



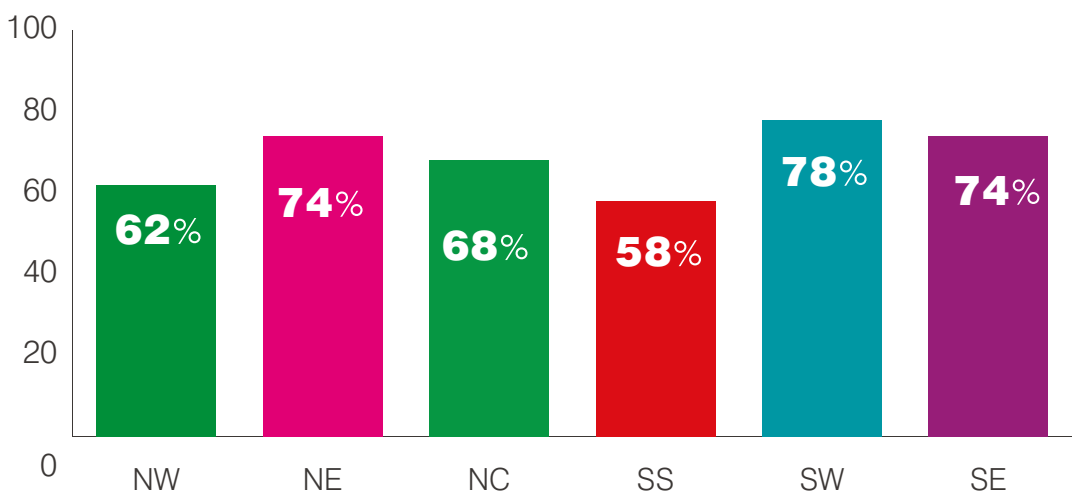
It appears that church websites are very effective in the SS.

Regional Breakdown

Instagram



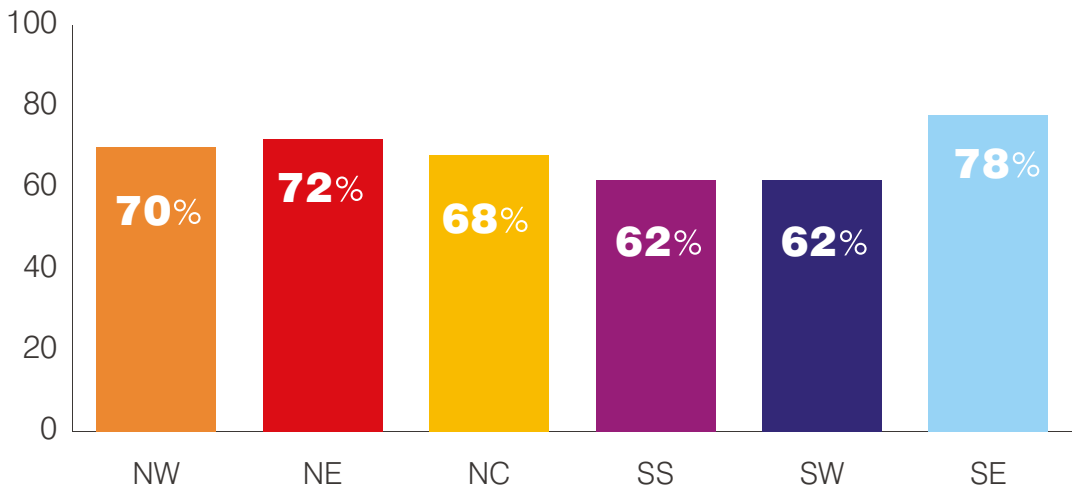
Twitter



Instagram and Twitter are scored highest in the SW. Same as Facebook.

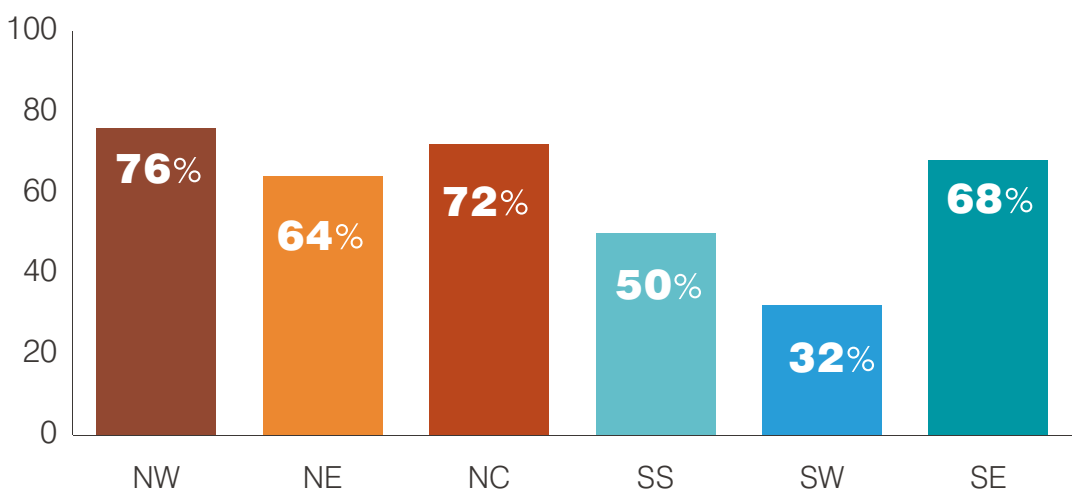
Regional Breakdown

v. Youtube



Youtube scores highest in the SE.

vi. Podcasts



The NW and NC seem to prefer podcasts.

As a young person, which of the following sexual issues did/do you struggle with?

Overall Regional Result



3%

Masturbation



Sexual addiction

12%



2%

Homosexuality

Usage of Porn

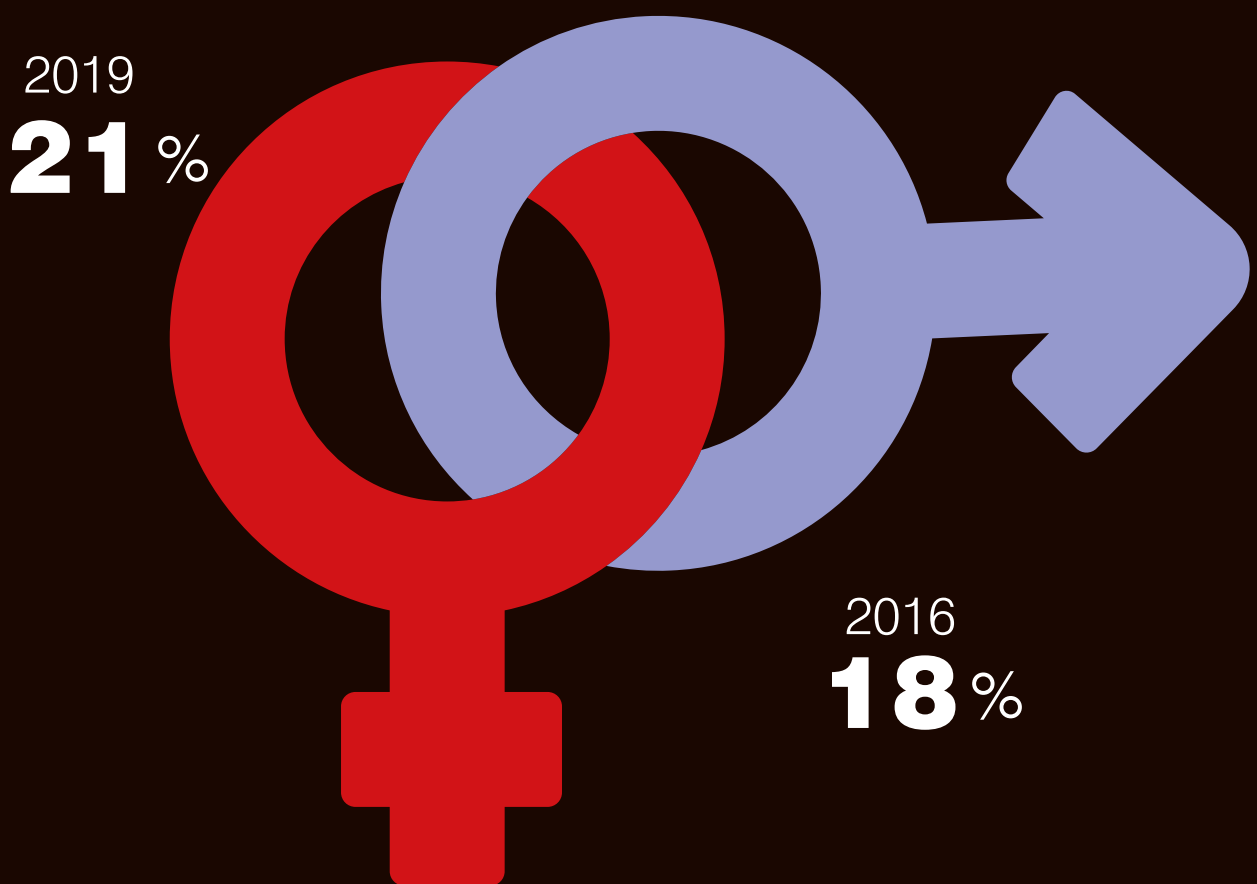
8%

The need for professional counseling and therapy to address these issues cannot be overstated.

Do you believe in pre-marital sex?

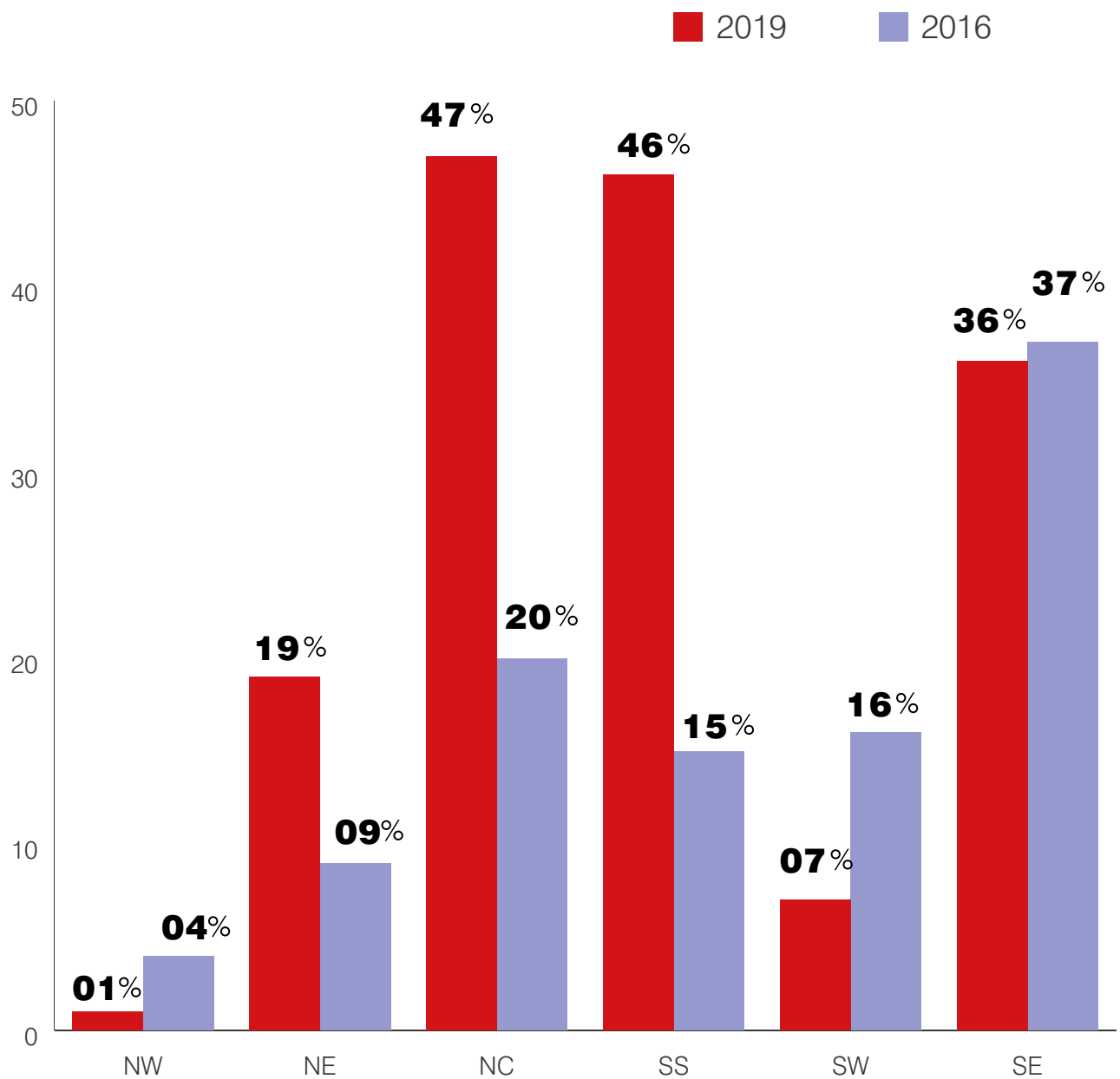
Overall Regional Result

YES



This mirrors the overall results - belief in pre-marital sex is on the rise.

Regional Breakdown



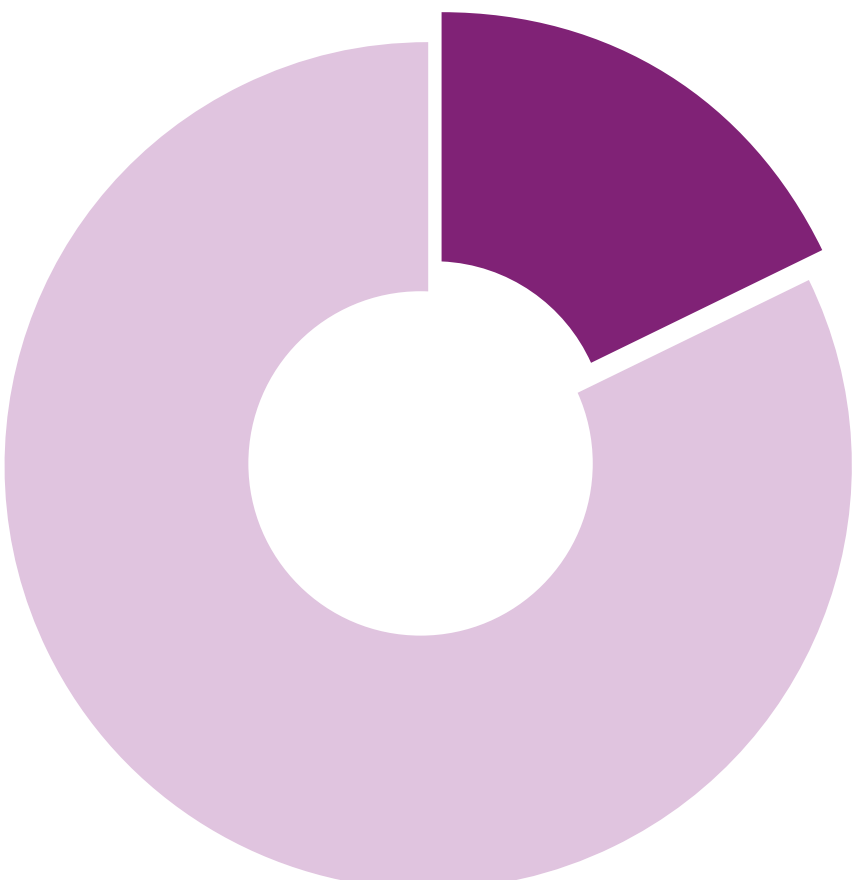
Belief in pre-marital sex is on the rise in the SS, NC and NE. It has reduced in the NW, SW and SE.

Are you having pre-marital sex?

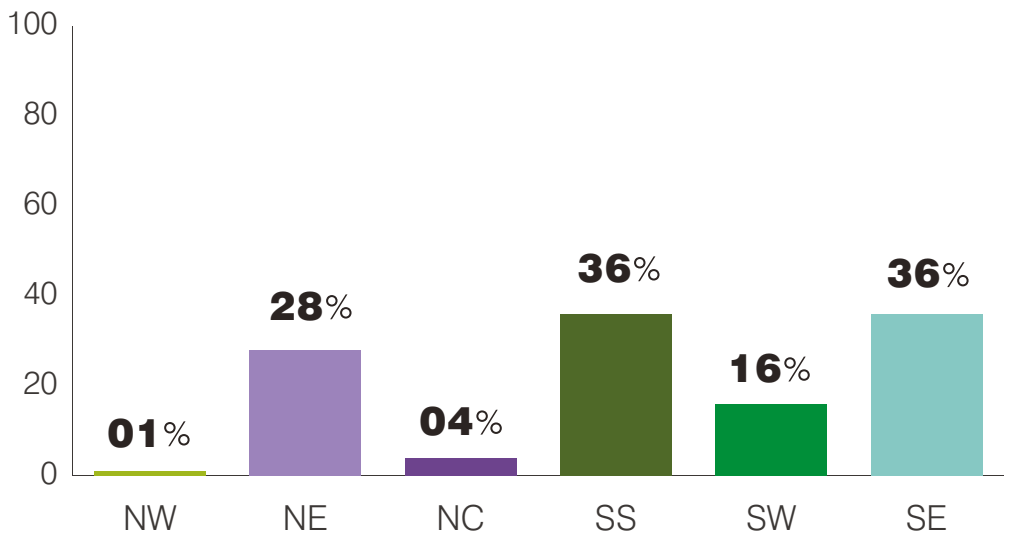
Overall Regional Result

18%

SAY YES



Regional Breakdown

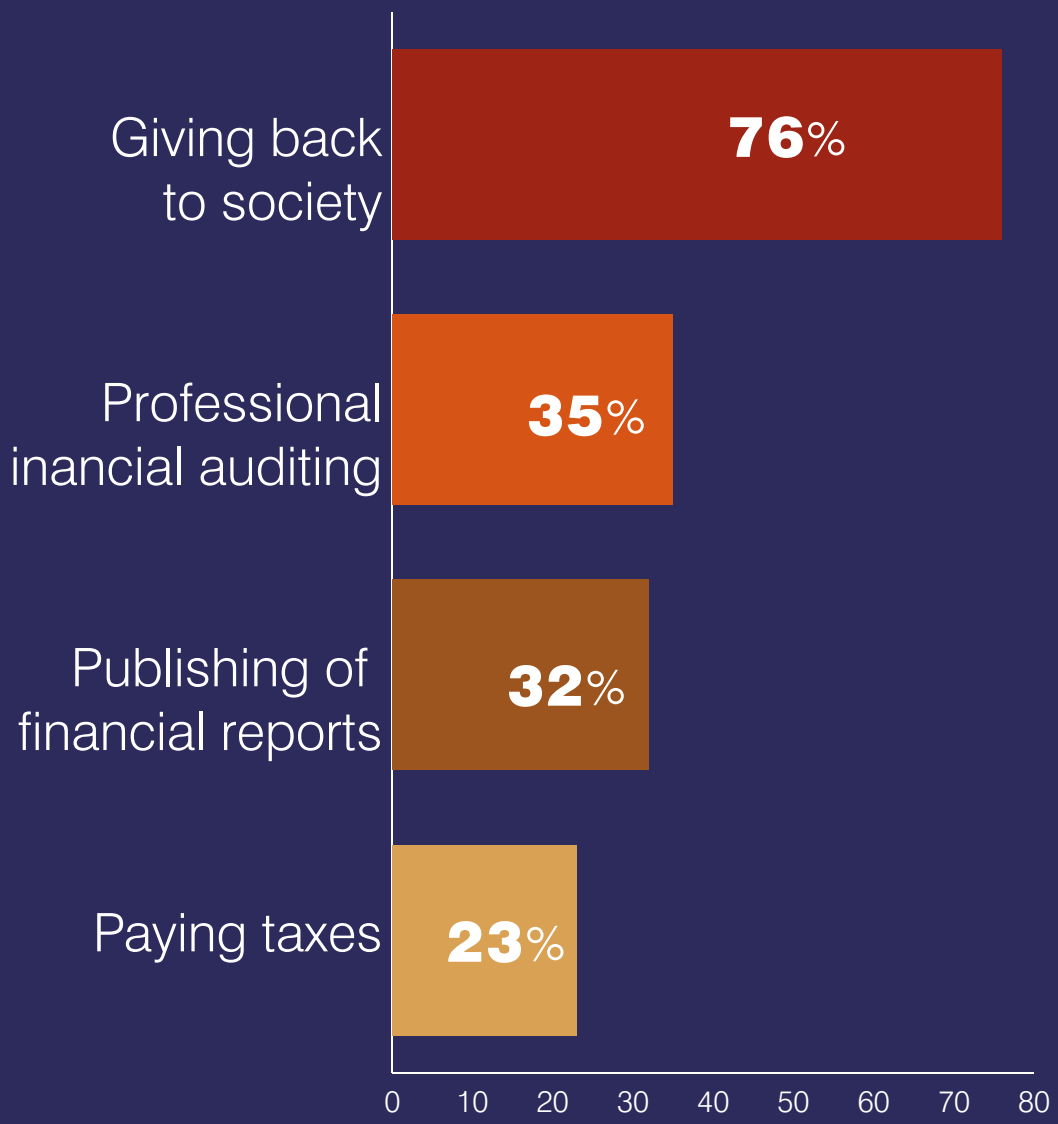


This corroborates the overall result.

SECTION 5: FINANCE & STEWARDSHIP

In what ways do you think the Church in Nigeria can show better financial responsibility?

Overall Regional Result



These scores mirror the overall results. People need to see and feel what the Church is doing. This dissonance gap can be reduced with strategic communication and impact reports.



THE ALDER CHURCH REPORT

NIGERIA 2019

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