

# Impact of COVID-19 on Canadian Christian Charities

Final Report

*June 5, 2020*

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Note: This report, including specific slides, statistics, and visuals, may be freely shared. If possible, please include a link to the full report.

## Change can happen in an instant.

For Christian ministries across Canada and around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic struck like lightning in March 2020 and the impact was immediate. Buildings closed. Services and meetings switched online. Travel plans were cancelled. Revenue plummeted. Some staff were laid off. Everyone retreated at home. With little forewarning, everything changed.

On April 22, Christian researchers and research organizations met together to look at the question of how COVID-19 was impacting Christian churches and charities in Canada. WayBase took the lead to facilitate a national survey where 2,630 ministries responded from every province and territory, including 132 different Christian traditions.

This final report provides an overview of what the survey uncovered. You will see:

- 1) Ministries are having a shared experience across all faith traditions, provinces, and ministry size and types;
- 2) The lockdown and unemployment from COVID-19 has created a significant decrease in revenue;
- 3) One third of ministries are experiencing an increase in people engaging in their services;
- 4) Ministries are rapidly adapting, particularly in offering more services online;
- 5) Ministries want to reopen safely, navigate challenges, and know how to serve the needs of their community.

Change happened quickly and Christian ministries are quickly responding to serve their communities.

# Research Partners:

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## Organizations

Canadian Council of Christian Charities

Flourishing Congregations Institute at Ambrose University

Cardus

## Researchers

Rick Hiemstra, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

James Watson (PhD), The Salvation Army

Sam Reimer (PhD), Crandall University

Kevin Phang, WayBase.com

# Overview of the Christian Movement

Based on WayBase data

**32,000+**

**Christian organizations in Canada**

**77%**

**are churches**

**\$6+ billion**

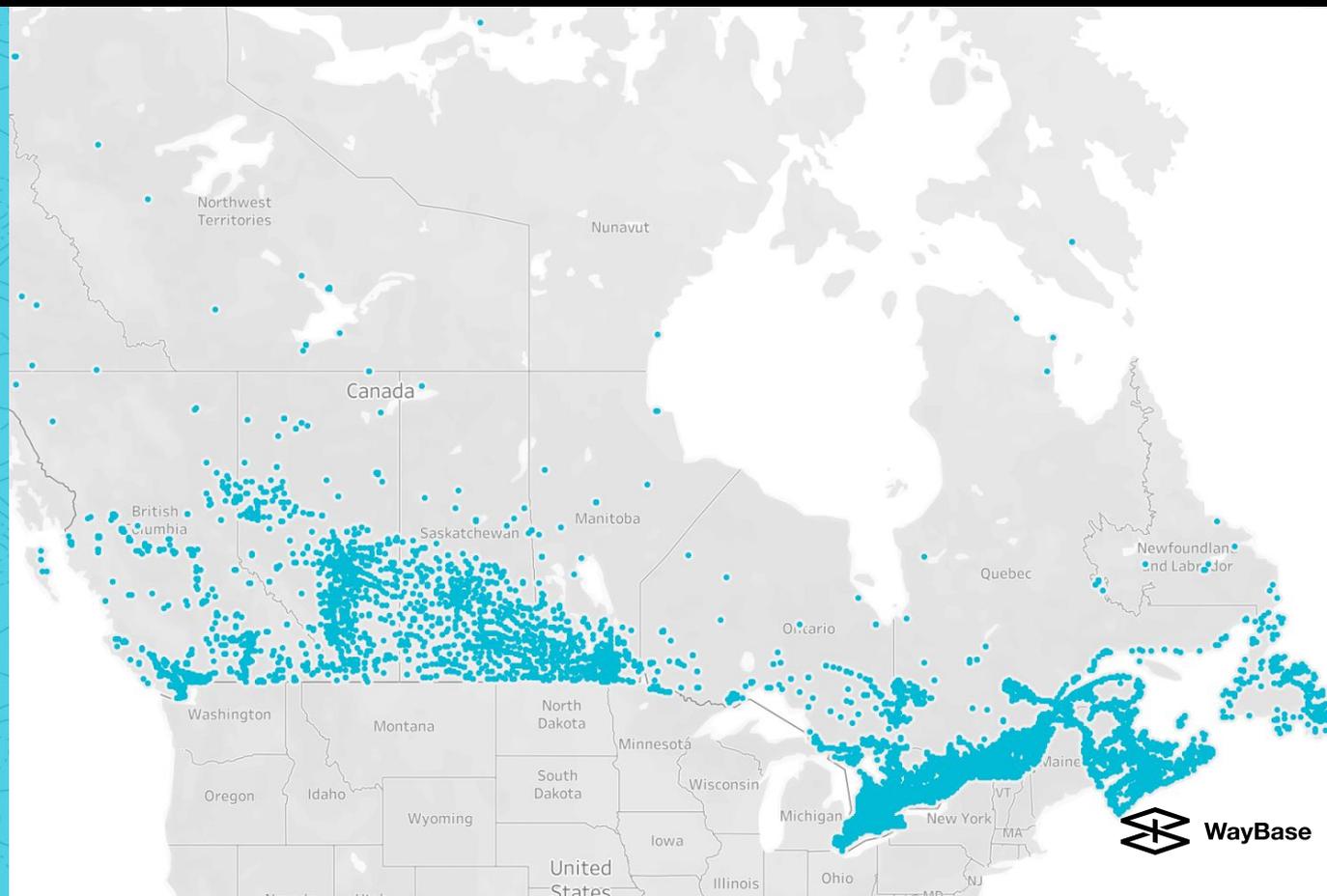
**Church Revenue**

**\$8+ billion**

**Welfare, health, others**

Christian ministries gather in community and invest in their communities.

While 32,000 organizations and \$15 Billion in revenue seem like large numbers, both of these are magnified by the power of volunteers.

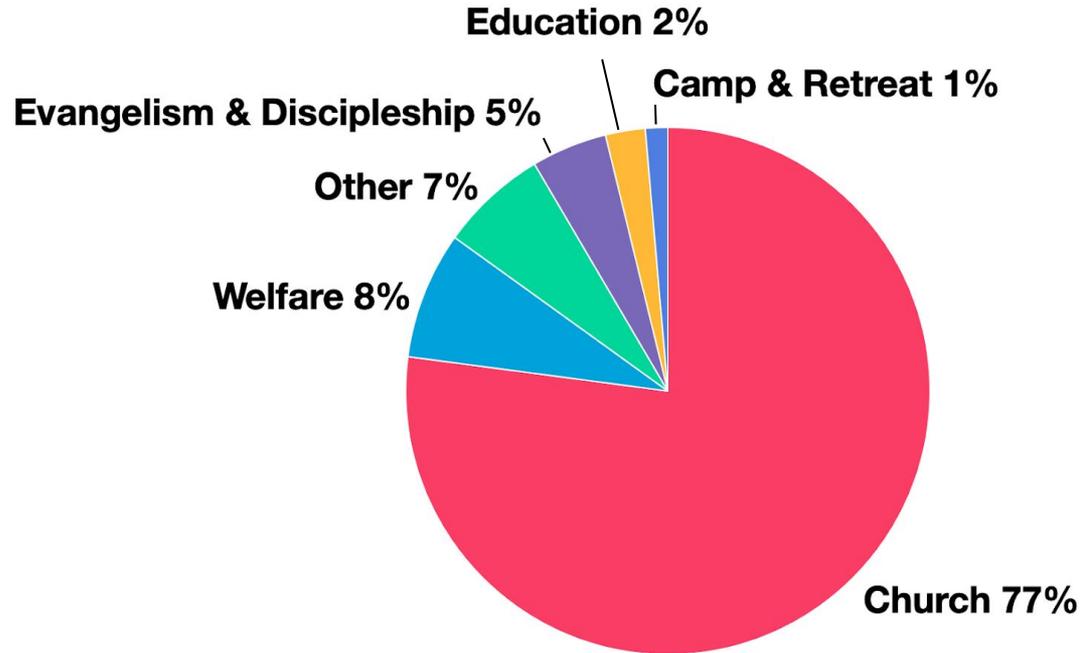


# What kinds of Christian ministries are there in Canada?

Churches are the primary way Christians gather.

Their members experience community together in a network of care support. They also get organized to serve and invest beyond themselves.

In this way, Churches become the support base for many important community-serving organizations as well.

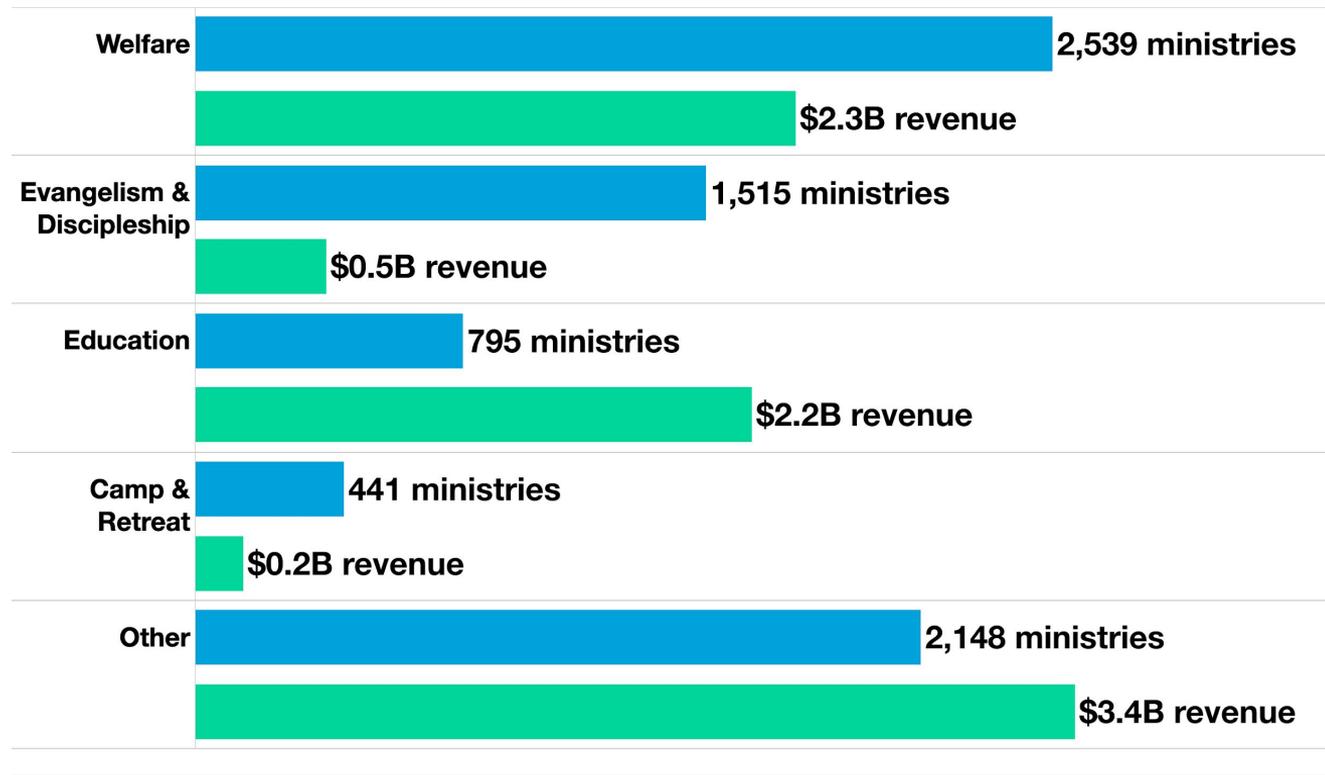


**Note:** for a better understanding of all categories, refer to the appendix

# Beyond churches, what other ministries invest in the well-being of communities?

Christians invest heavily in welfare, health, community benefit programs, education, and youth programs to promote physical, social, mental, and spiritual well-being.

The Christian movement has the potential to play a vital role in Canada's recovery.



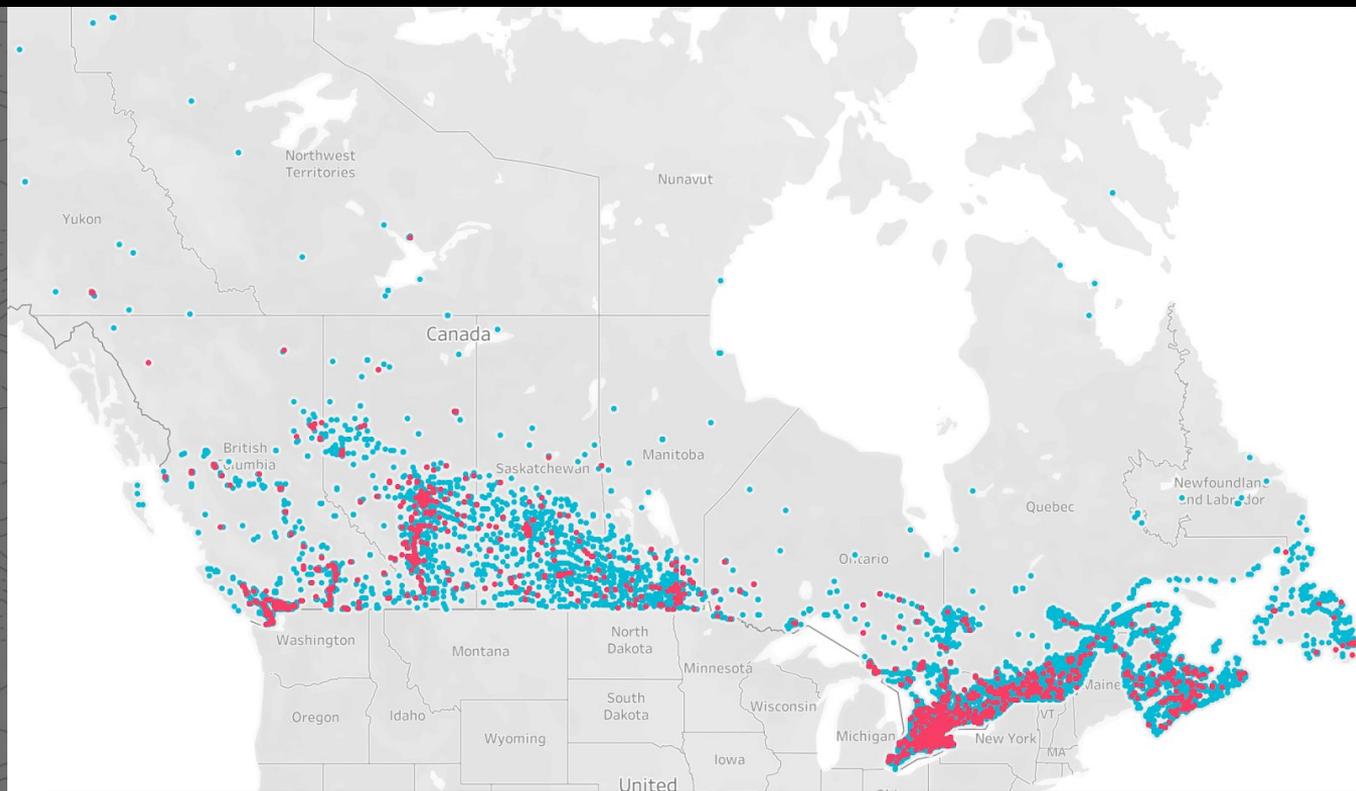
■ Number of ministries   ■ Revenue

# | Survey Results

# How many ministries participated in this survey?

3,100 ministry leaders participated in the survey from 132 Christian traditions, provinces, and categories of ministries.

This indicates Christian leaders from all parts of the Christian movement want to learn from each other.



Ministries who participated in the survey



All other ministries

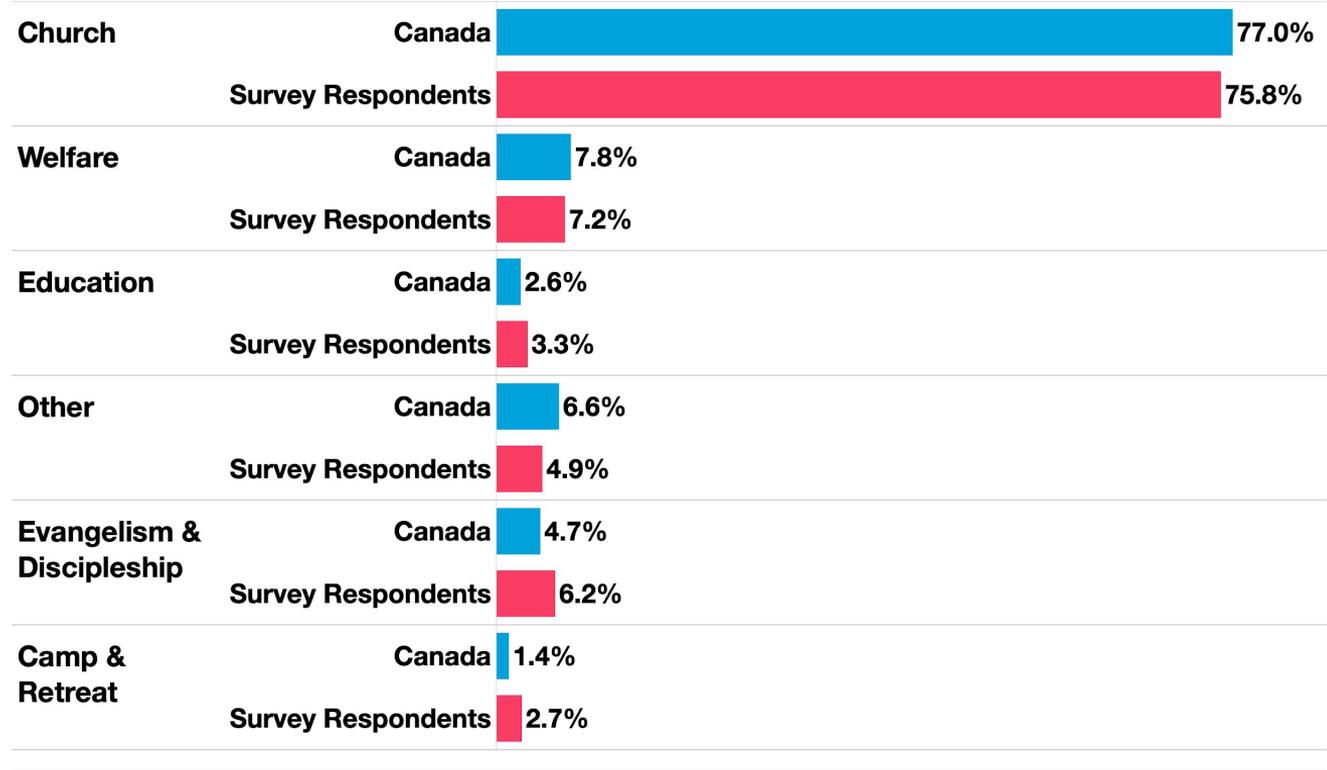


WayBase

# How many ministries participated by ministry type?

The results are fairly representative of the Christian movement in Canada.

The distribution of survey responses closely matched the number of organizations by each ministry type.

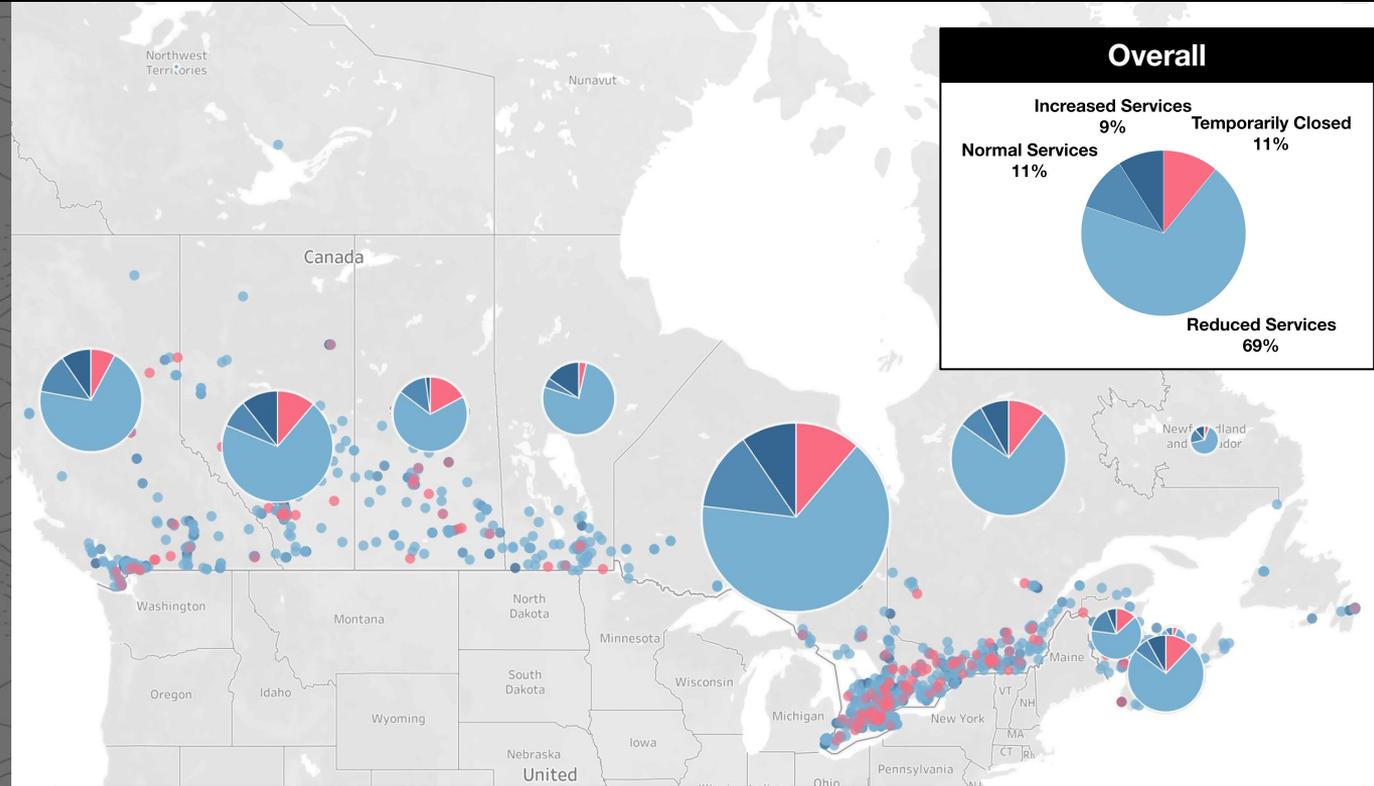


# | Operations

# How did COVID-19 impact Christian ministries' ability to operate?

Most ministries continued to operate, although with reduced services.

Ministries that noted they were permanently closed were less than 1%. Automated responses from permanently closed ministries indicated that they were not answering emails and so would not be in a position to participate in this survey.



# How did COVID-19 impact Christian ministries' ability to offer their services?

The hardest hit ministries are camps, retreat centres, and education institutions.

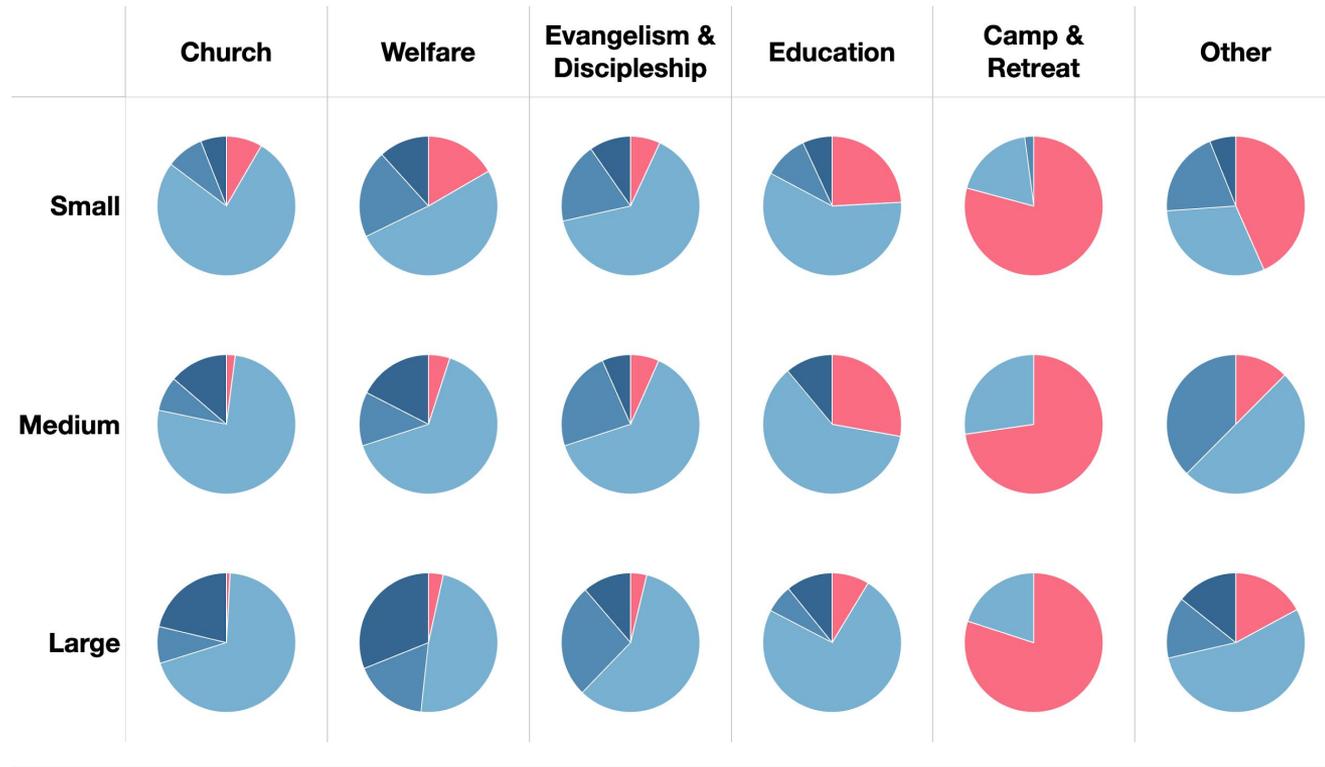
Smaller ministries are more likely to close or have reduced services than larger organizations.

## Size Refers to Revenue

Small - Under \$250k

Medium - \$250k-750K

Large - Over \$750K

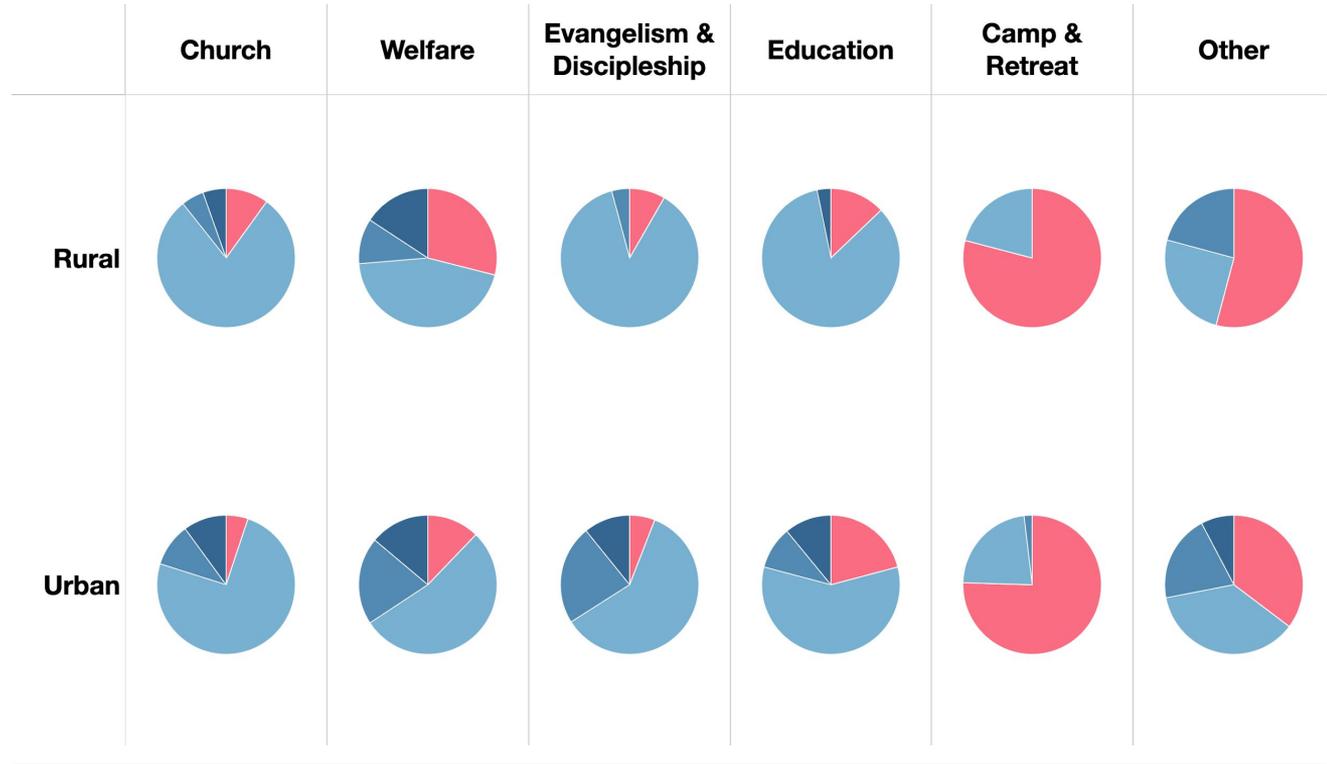


■ Temporarily Closed
 ■ Reduced Services
 ■ Normal Services
 ■ Increased Services

# How did COVID-19 impact rural vs. urban ministries?

Rural ministries are more likely to be temporarily closed or have reduced services.

Approximately 10% of urban ministries have increased their services in response to COVID-19, possibly reflecting an increased need for their services.

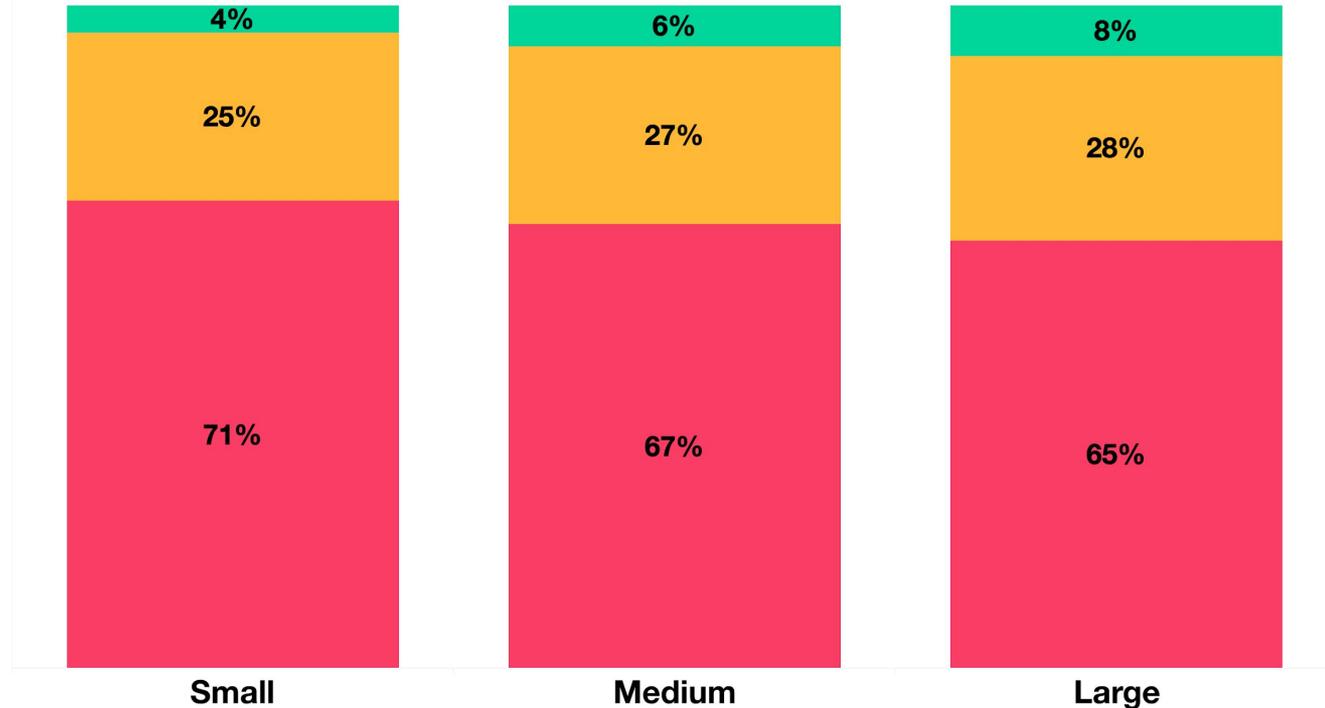


# | Financials

# How has revenue changed by ministry size?

Similar to other sectors like business, entertainment, or travel, Christian ministries are experiencing a major financial decline in revenue across all sizes of ministries.

This level of decline could have devastating consequences, if it continues for an extended period of time.



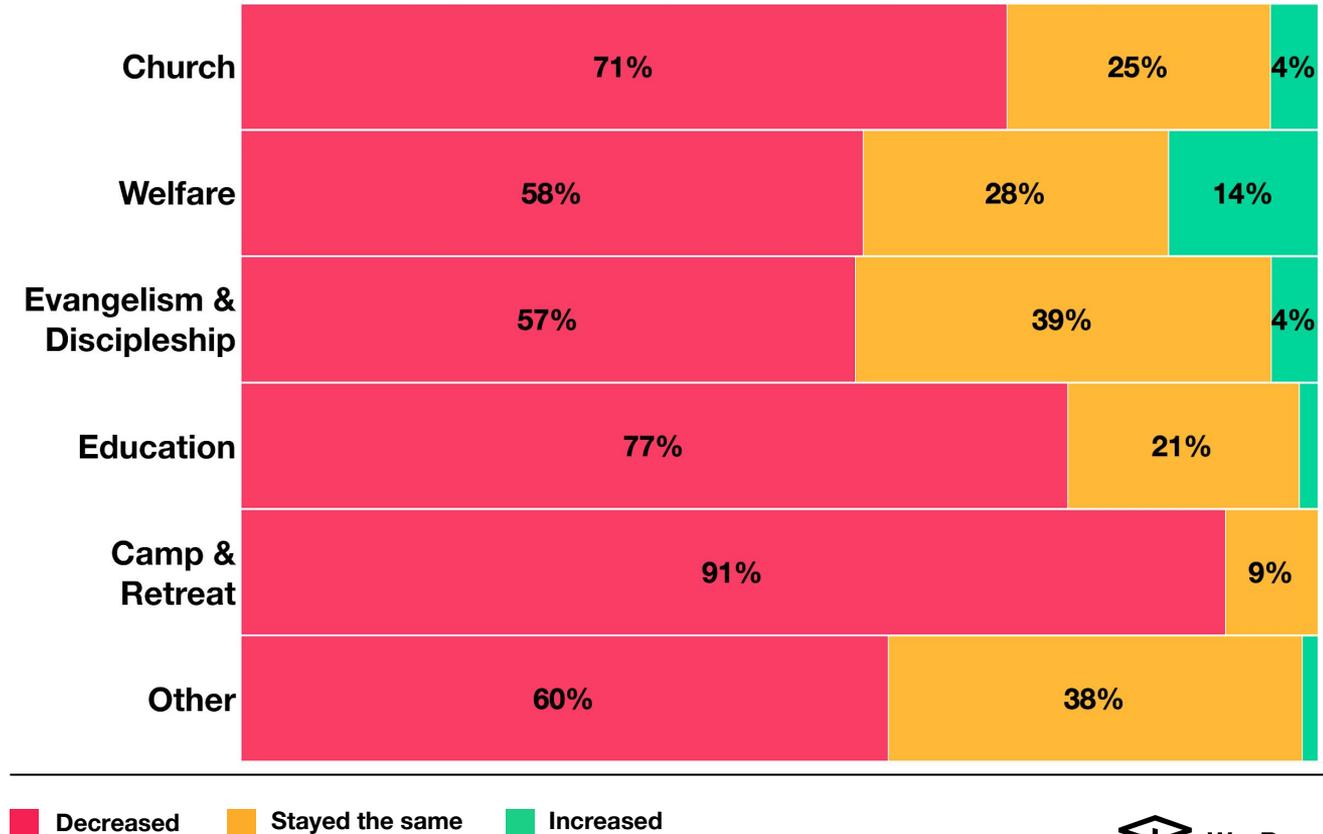
■ Decreased   ■ Stayed the same   ■ Increased

# How has revenue changed by category?

Christian ministries from all categories reported an immediate and significant drop in revenue.

While 14% of welfare organizations indicated an increase in revenue, likely due to their frontline work with vulnerable people, almost 60% saw a decline.

No Christian ministry is immune to the financial impact.



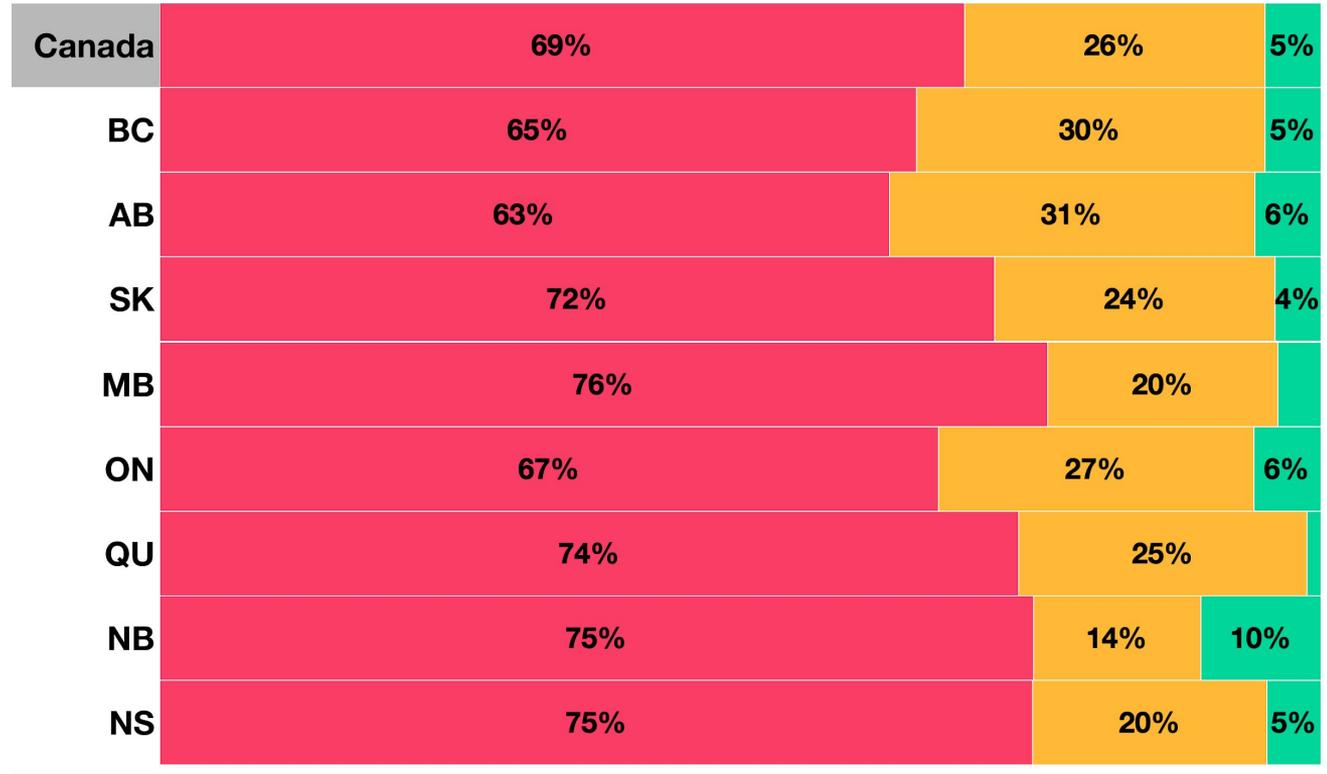
■ Decreased   ■ Stayed the same   ■ Increased

# How has revenue changed by province?

Overall, a high percentage of ministries across all provinces reported a drop in revenue.

Fundraising support will be a key priority now and moving forward.

Note: Newfoundland, PEI, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are excluded due to lack of statistical certainty based on sample size of respondents.

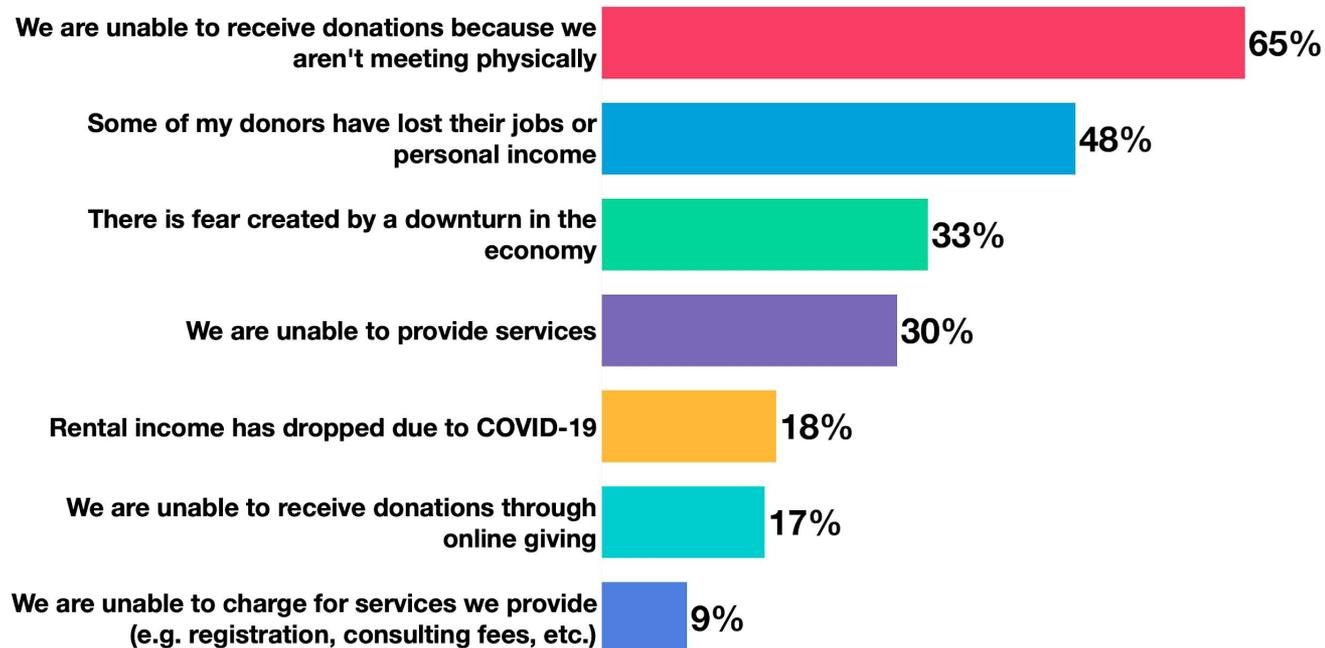


■ Decreased ■ Stayed the same ■ Increased

# If revenue decreased, what reasons were reported for this decrease?

The number one reason for lost revenue is the immediate impact of not being able to be in physical proximity to donors. There are ways ministries are working to mitigate this challenge.

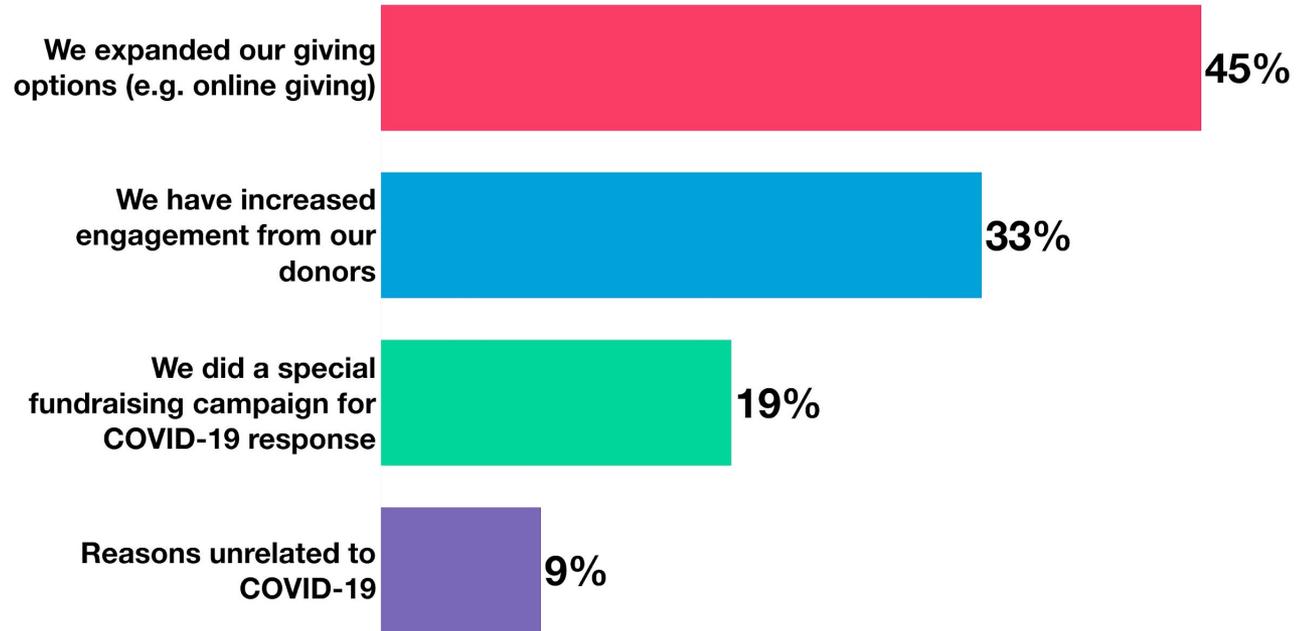
However, the loss of donor income and a downturn in the economy are longer term impacts that will be much more difficult to overcome.



# If revenue increased, what reasons were reported for this increase?

While most ministries saw a decrease and some no change in revenue, a few did see an increase in revenue. These ministries took a proactive approach to expanding both the opportunities to give and engagement with their donors.

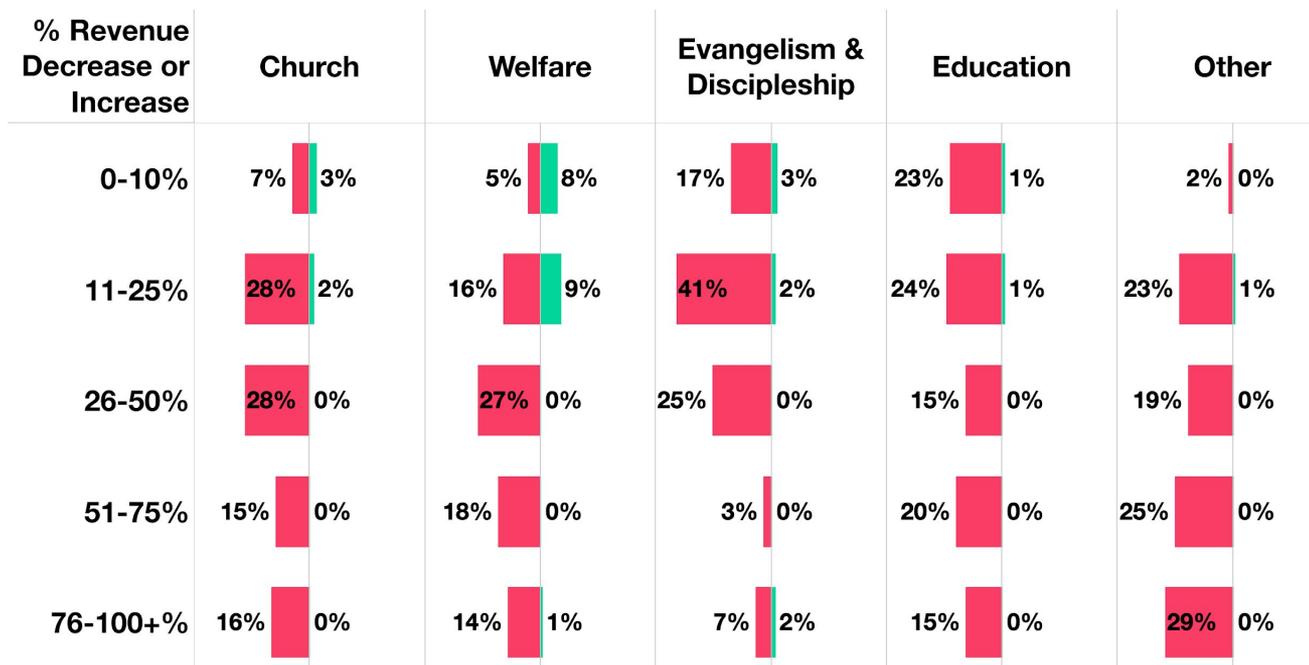
In light of the need for most ministries to restore their revenue levels, these findings offer a hopeful approach.



# How big was the impact on revenue by category of ministry?

Rather than the typical annual 2-5% growth or decline in revenue most ministries experience, the pandemic has created major swings in revenue, most between 10-50%.

Although this creates a significant challenge for ministries, it also opens an opportunity for leaders to work cooperatively to find solutions for fundraising and adapting to the new economic realities.



■ Decrease ■ Increase

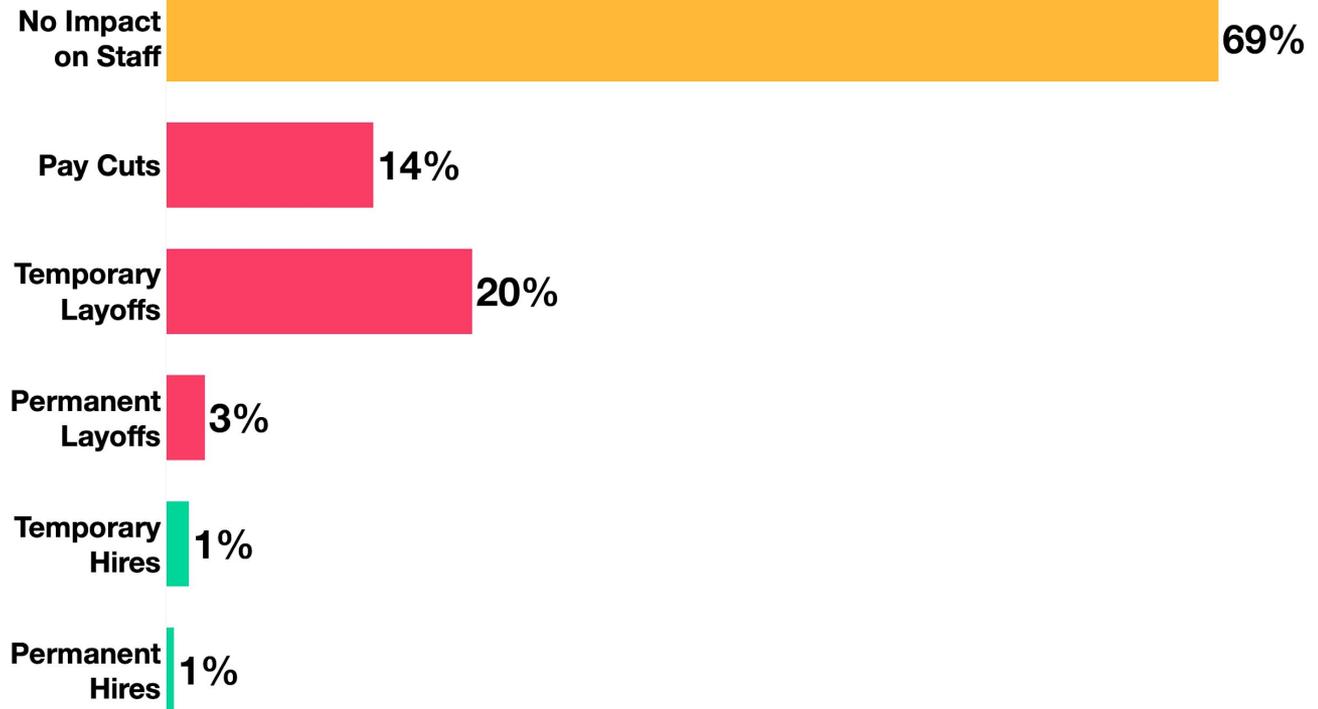
# | Staff

# How did COVID-19 impact staff employment?

One third of ministries reported an immediate impact on their staff employment.

Temporary layoffs and pay cuts are the primary changes ministries made to adjust to decreased revenue.

This reveals that many ministries have the compounding issues of staff transitions in the midst of a crisis.



**Note:** Newfoundland, PEI, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are excluded due to lack of statistical certainty based on sample size of respondents.

# How did COVID-19 impact staff employment by province?

The most common approach across all provinces to adjust to decreased revenue is to temporarily lay off staff.

Permanent layoffs are much less common (3% nationally) but still significant in the midwest provinces (5-8%)

This underscores again how the impact of COVID-19 is uniformly felt across Canada.

	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QU	NB	NS	Canada
Pay Cuts	16%	18%	14%	11%	13%	16%	9%	9%	14%
Temporary Layoffs	23%	22%	21%	14%	19%	20%	17%	22%	20%
Permanent Layoffs	3%	5%	6%	8%	1%	2%	1%	0%	3%

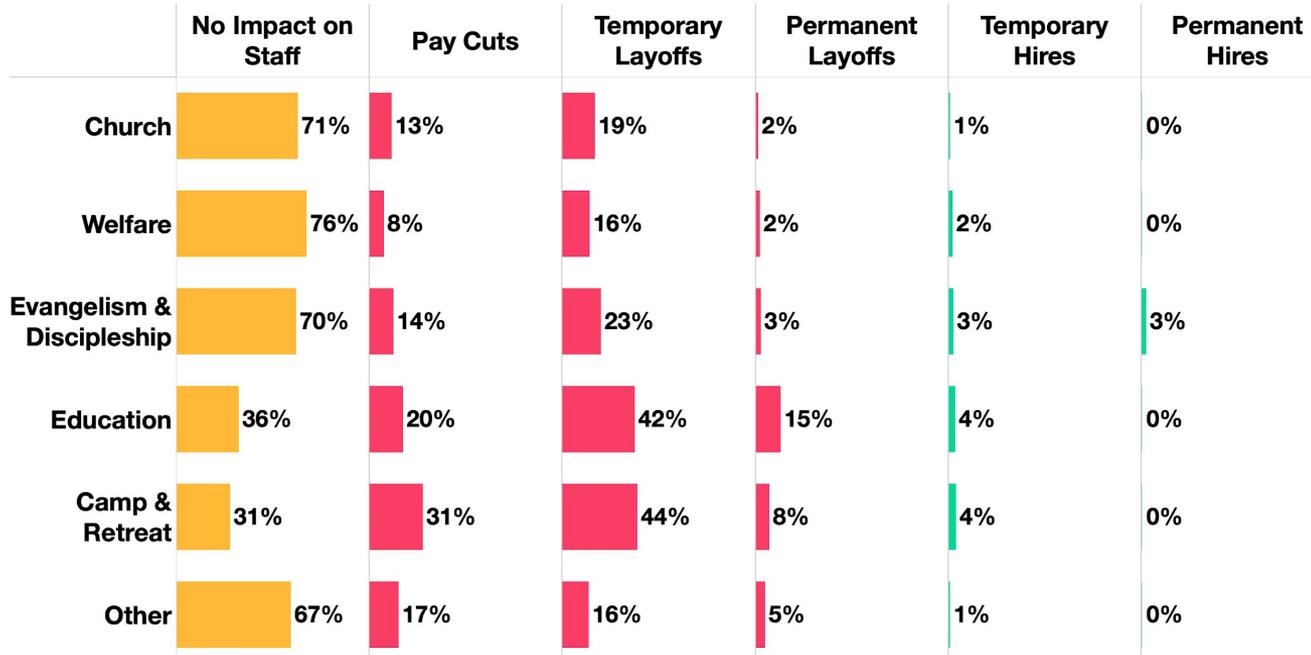
**Note:** Newfoundland, PEI, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are excluded due to lack of statistical certainty based on sample size of respondents.

# How did COVID-19 impact staff employment by category?

Overall, pay cuts and temporarily layoffs occurred in all categories of ministries.

Camps, retreat centres, and education experienced the highest number of temporary and permanent layoffs.

Not surprisingly, all categories of ministries reported a hiring freeze, even if they were not decreasing salaries or number of staff.

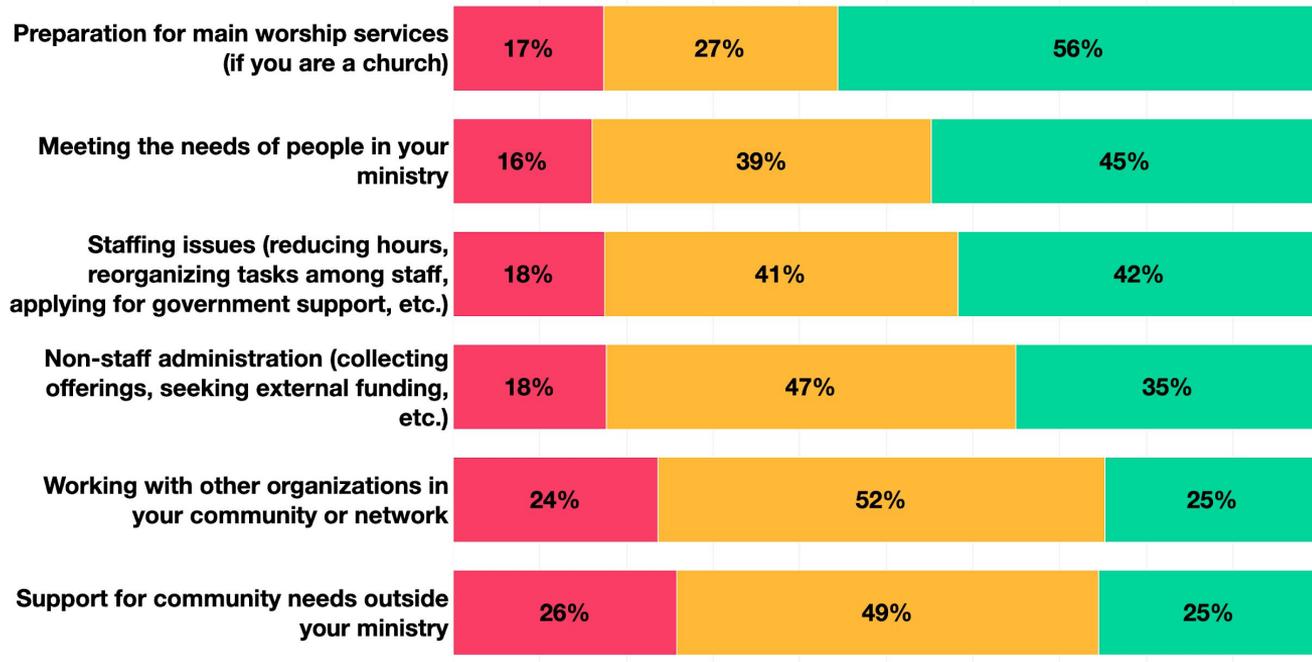


■ No Impact   
 ■ Decrease   
 ■ Increase

# How did COVID-19 impact how staff spent time on these priorities?

For most ministries, COVID-19 has increased the time requirements of leaders, rather than decreased their time requirements.

Changes in worship services (for churches), meeting needs of people, and addressing staffing issues represent the greatest time challenges for ministry leaders.



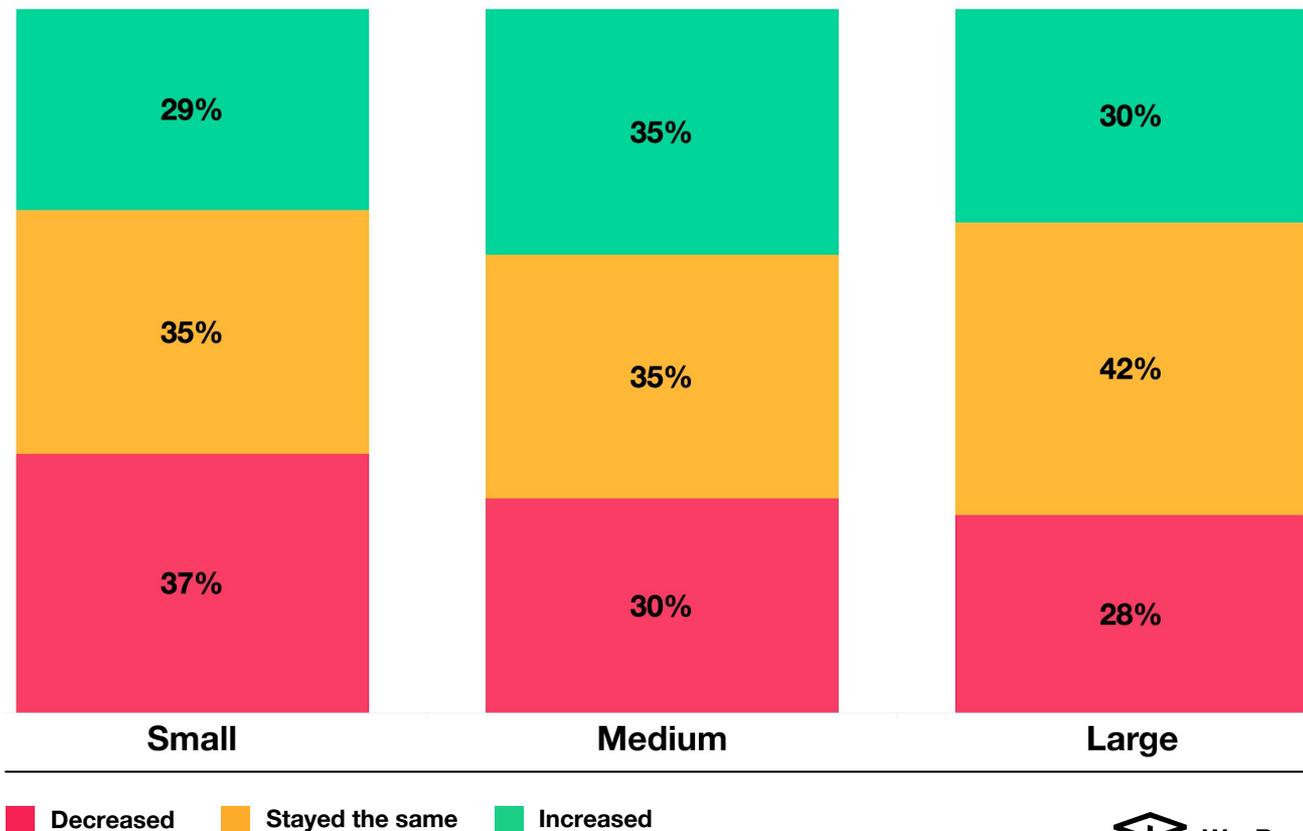
Decreased Stayed the same Increased

# | Engagement

# How has the number of people engaging ministries changed by ministry size?

Many Christian ministries face increased or similar numbers of people needing support but with decreased financial resources.

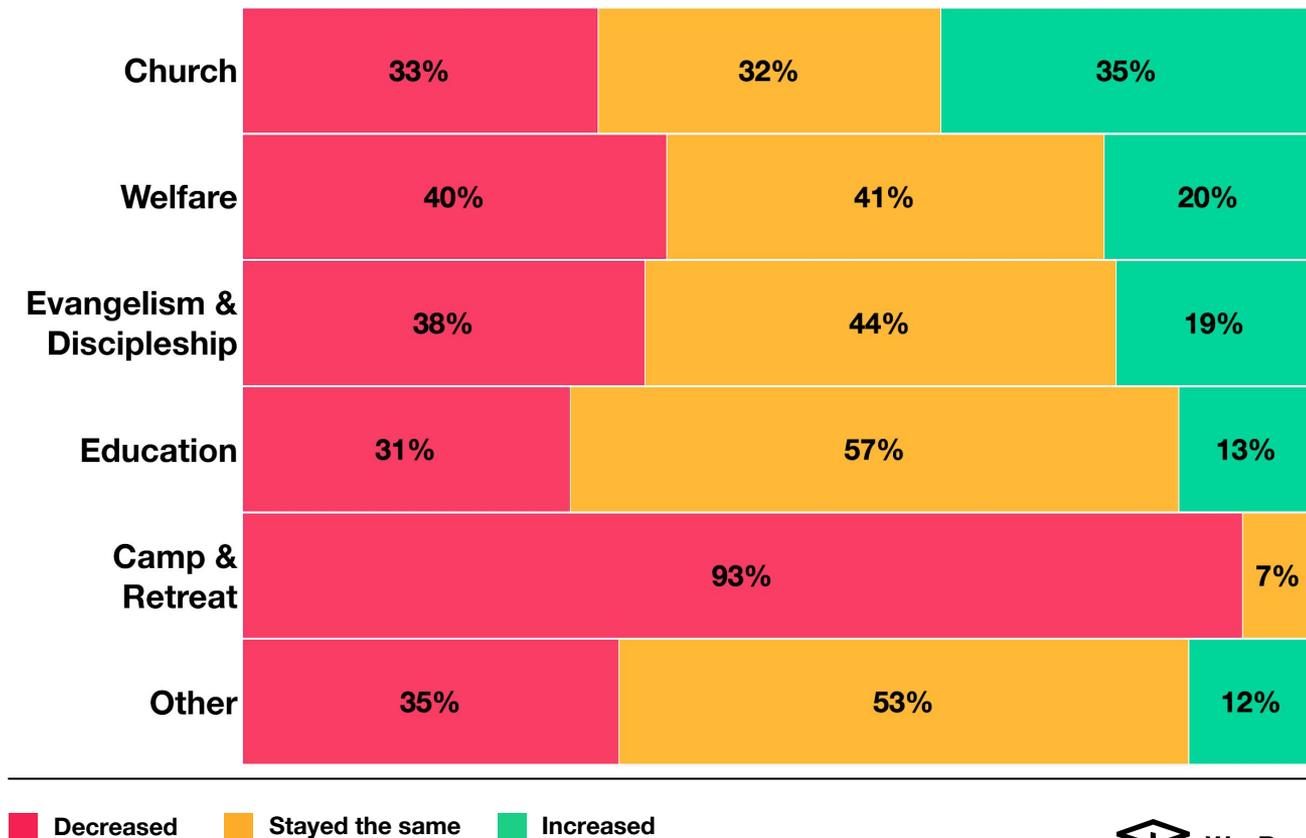
Ministry size is not an automatic advantage or disadvantage to engaging people in your ministry in the face of COVID-19. This represents an opportunity for ministries of similar size to learn from each other on how best engage people during this time.



# How has the number of people engaging ministries changed by category?

It is not surprising that camp and retreat ministries are hit hardest by COVID-19.

The challenge to adapt to serve people well during COVID-19 impacts all types of ministries.

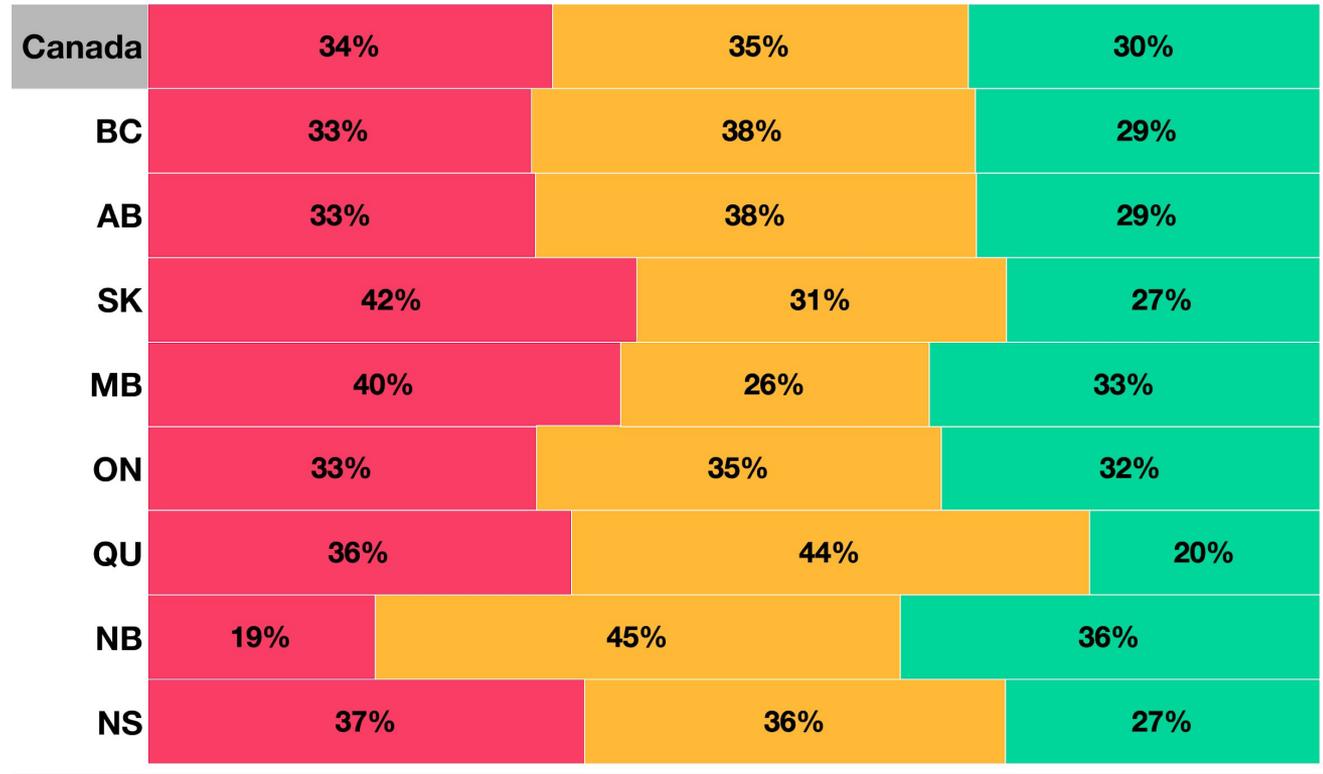


# How has number of people engaging ministries changed by province?

Even by province, the pattern of one third decreasing and one third increasing continues to hold true.

This underscores that the impact of COVID-19 is surprisingly similar across Canada.

Note: Newfoundland, PEI, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are excluded due to lack of statistical certainty based on sample size of respondents.



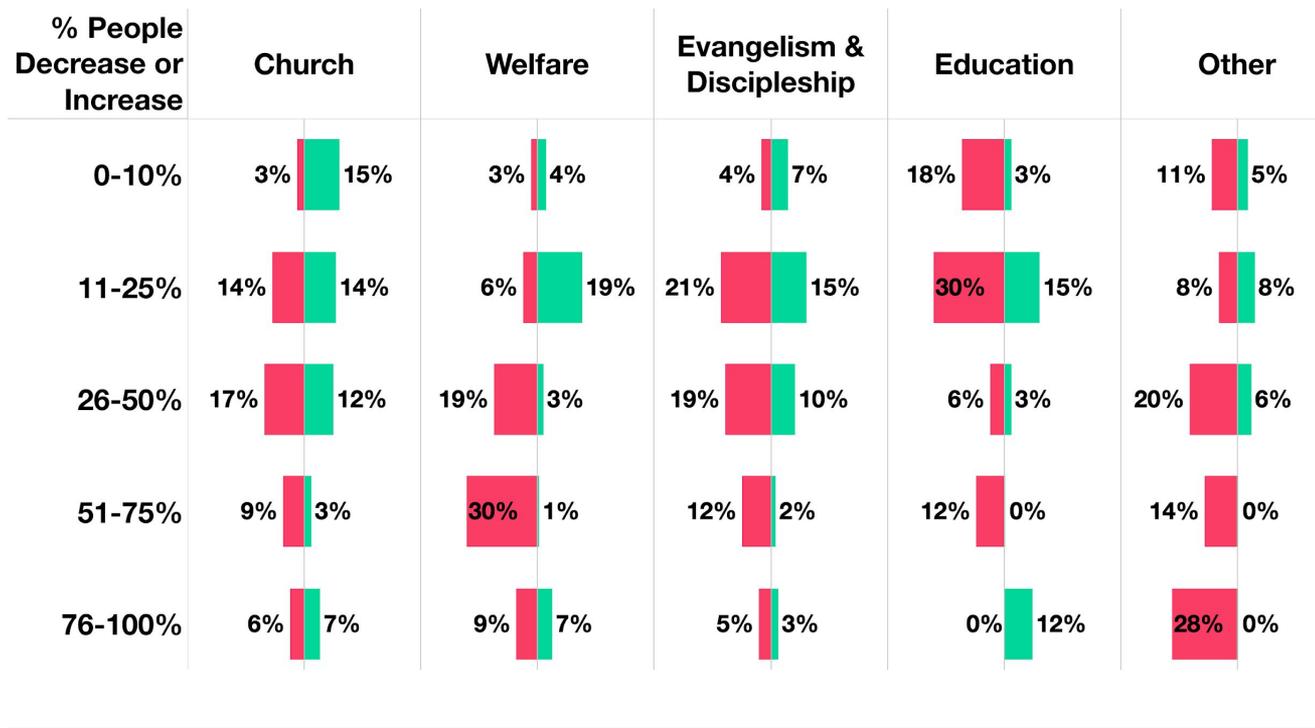
Decreased Stayed the same Increased

# How big is the change in the number of people engaging ministries?

Rather than experiencing a typical annual 2-5% growth or decline in the number of people served, most ministries are reporting major swings in people engagement (10-75%).

Decreases are likely due to temporarily closing or reducing services.

Increases are likely due to people looking for support during the crisis.



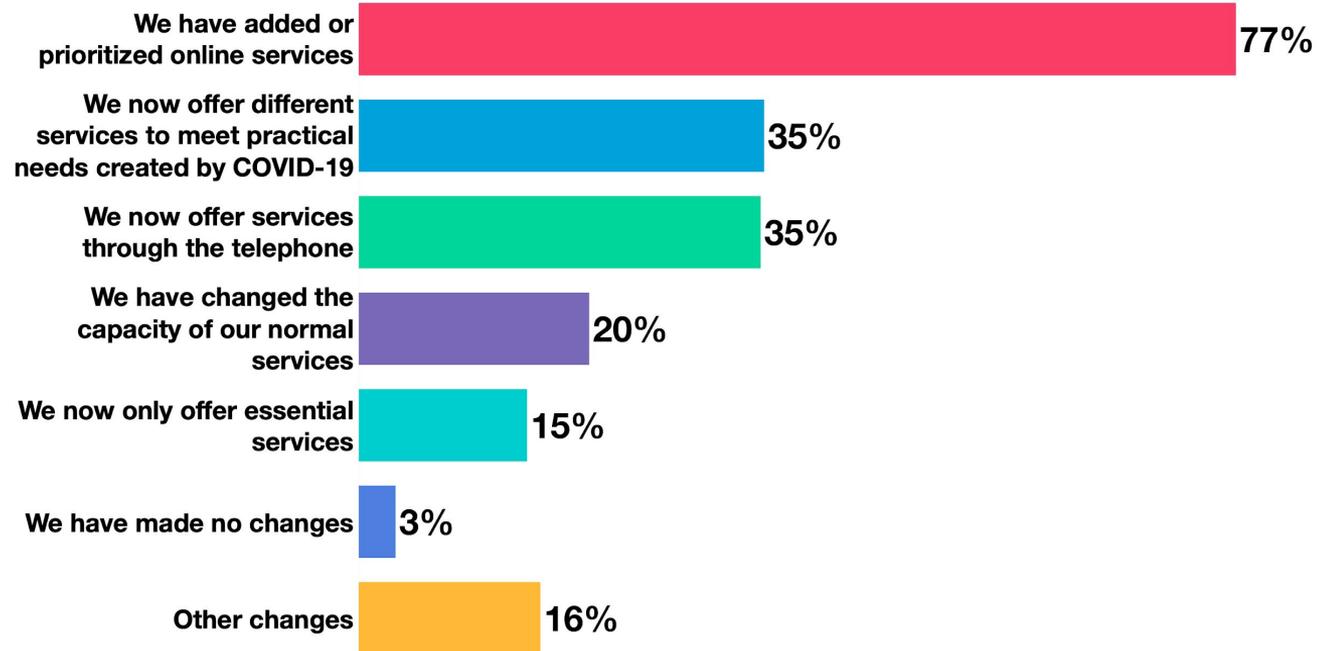
■ Decrease ■ Increase

# | Adaptation

# What immediate changes did ministries make because of COVID-19?

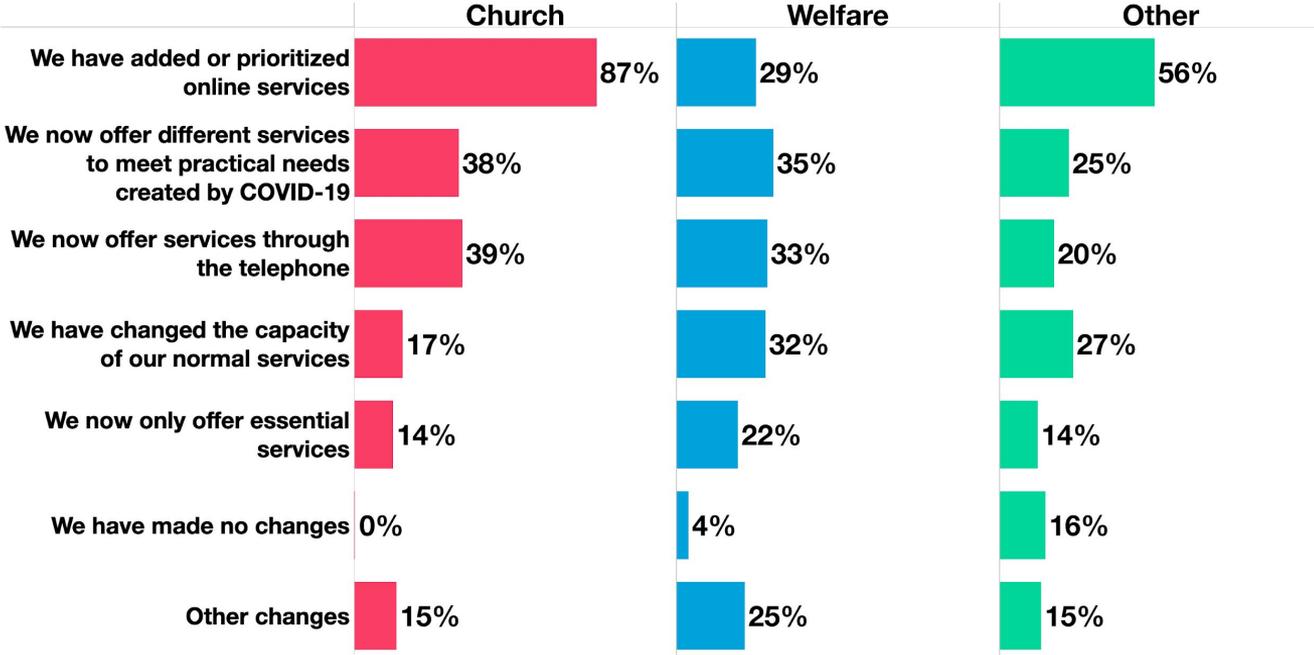
It is not surprising that prioritizing online services and making better use of the telephone were top responses as all people-serving sectors made the same shift.

One in three offered new services to meet the practical needs created by COVID-19. This shows the nimbleness of ministries when it comes to helping people.



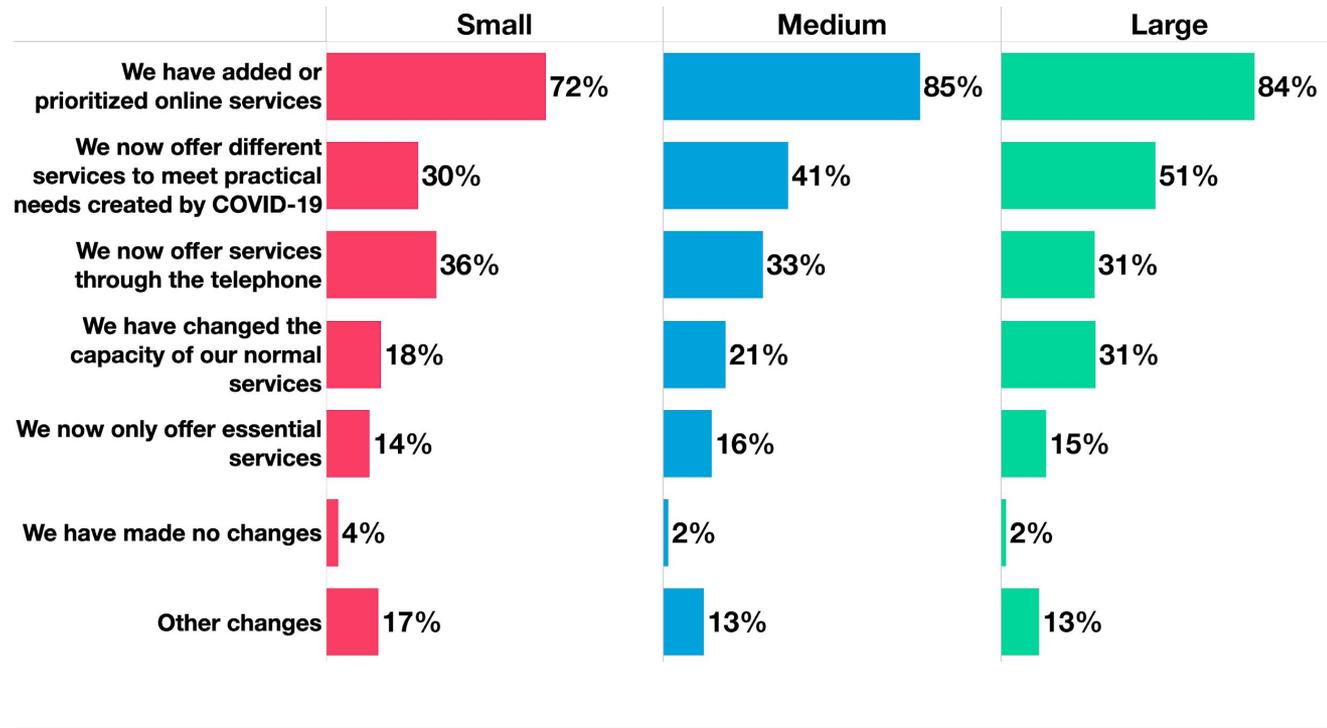
# What changes did ministries make based on category?

Welfare ministries reported a balanced approach to making changes in many categories. Churches and other ministries made a higher priority of increasing their online services.



# What changes did ministries make based on size?

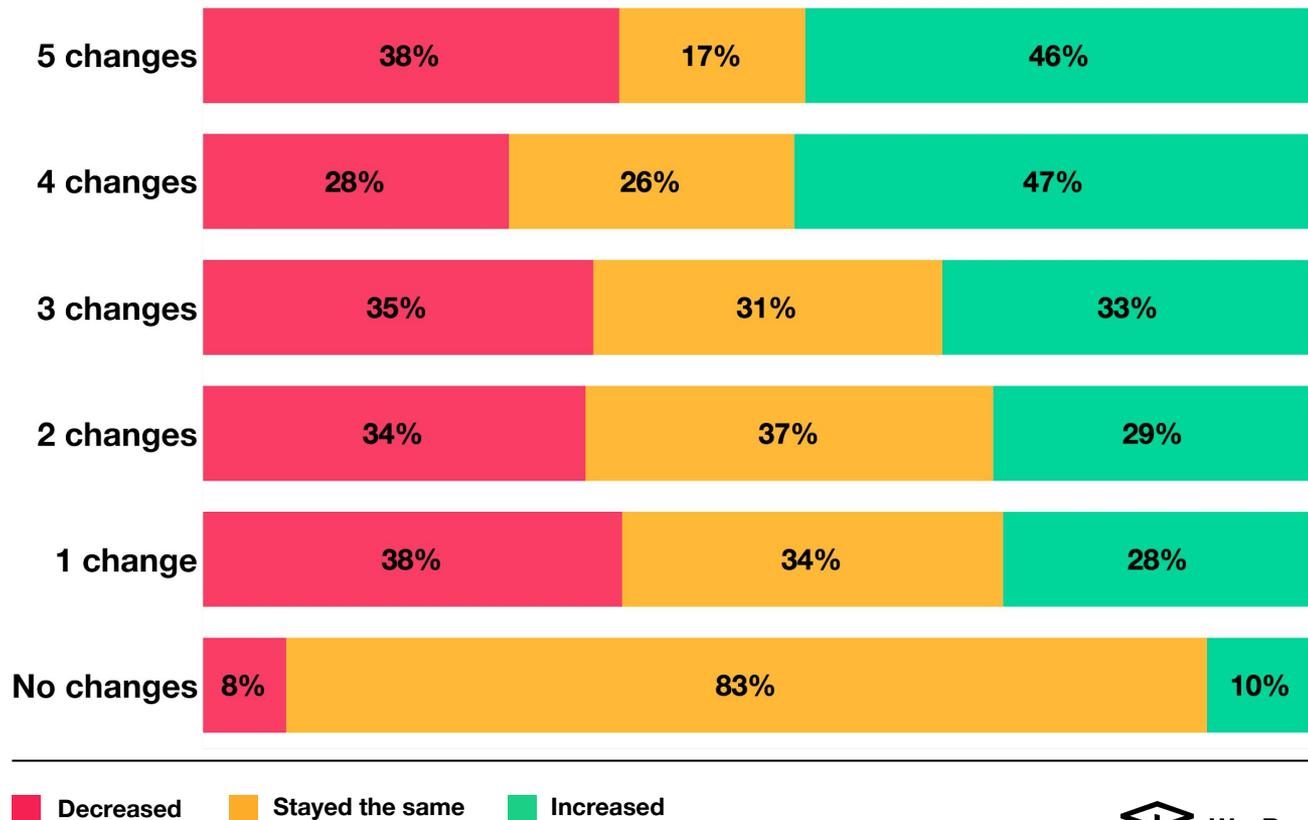
The remarkable similarity in how all sizes of ministries adapted to COVID-19 suggests that leaders across the spectrum share a basic common approach. This should encourage leaders to look for opportunities to collaborate and share learnings and strategies as they move through the various phases of Canada's recovery.



# How did making changes to your ministry correlate to the number of people engaging your services?

A higher proportion of ministries that made immediate changes to adapt their ministry (e.g. switching services online) also reported increases in the number of people engaging in their ministries. However, making changes did not prevent decline for others.

This suggests that making practical changes to adapt is not enough. This represents another opportunity for leaders to collaborate to share insights.



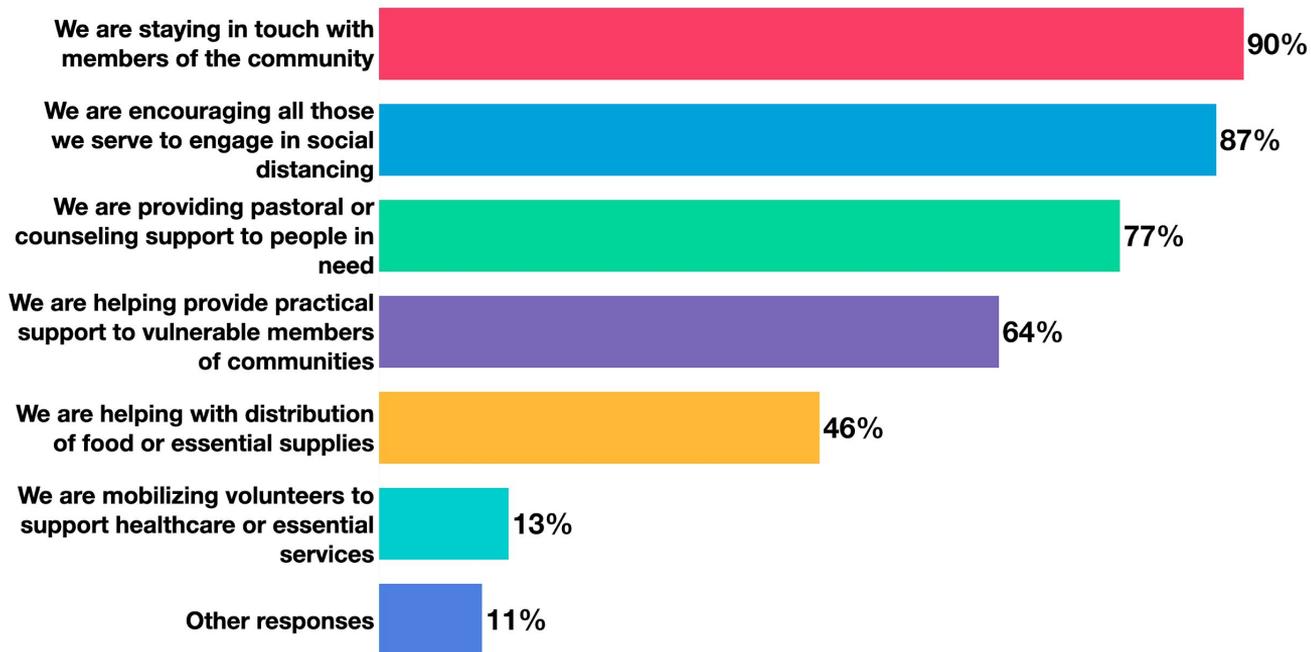
# | Community Service

# How have ministries served their community in response to COVID-19?

Ministries responded to COVID-19 by doing what they do best. They increased the personal care and support they offer people.

Also, almost half of ministries began to help with the distribution of food and other essential supplies.

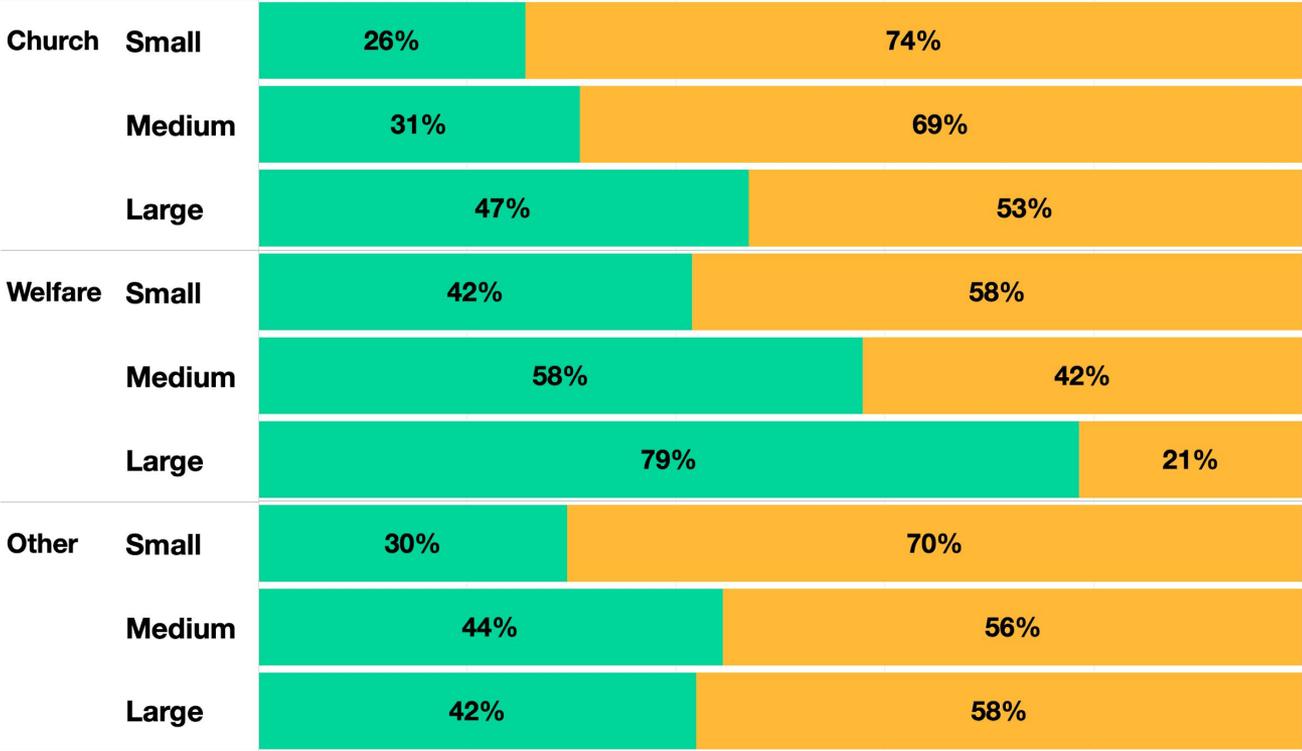
All of these underscore the vital role Christian ministries play in local communities.



# Which groups have increased their time in their local community?

Christian leaders of all ministries sizes and types immediately reacted to COVID-19 by looking for ways to extend their networks and serve their local communities in this crisis.

If this is the immediate response when navigating the initial impacts of COVID-19, as they adapt, these numbers will likely increase over time.



■ Increased Time ■ Did Not Increase Time

# | Future Outlook

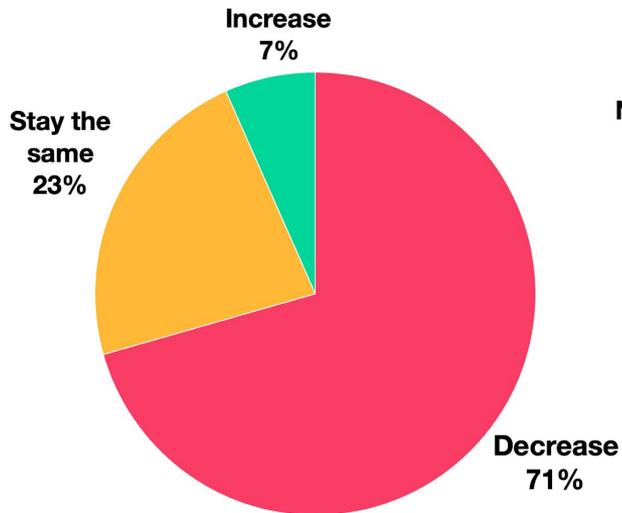
# What do leaders anticipate for the next three months and next three years?

Overall, leaders anticipate a decline in revenue over the next three months but three quarters anticipate a return to normal in three years.

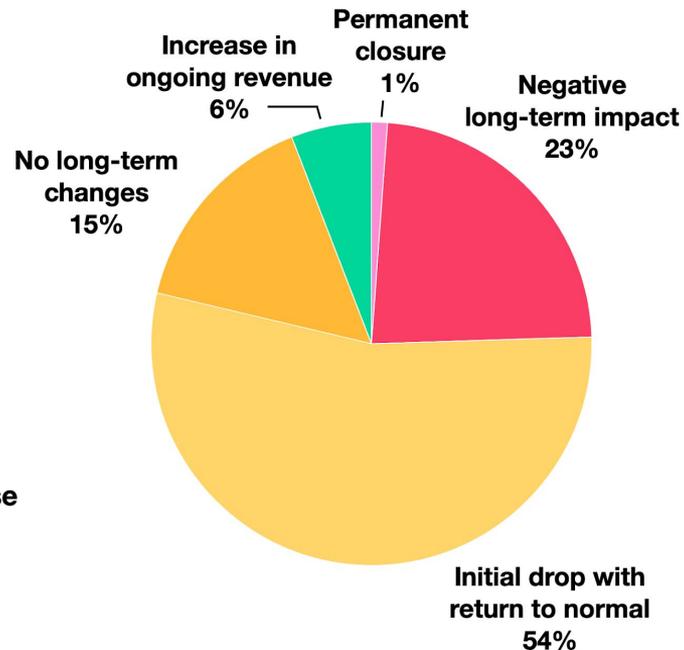
The one in four (totalling 8,000 ministries) that anticipate a long-term decline may signal a significant concern.

### Three Month Expectation

(May-July)



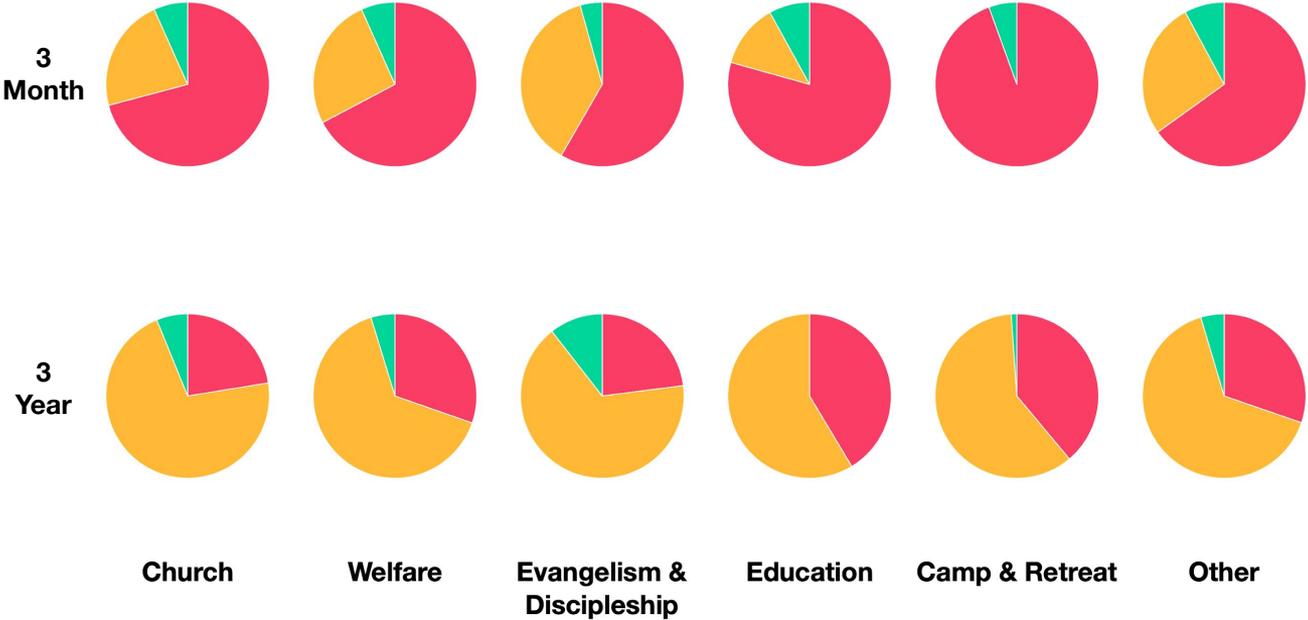
### Three Year Expectation



# What is the three month and three year projection based on category?

The three year projection reveals that education, camp, and retreat ministries anticipate the most significant long-term negative impact and will no doubt require additional support.

With nearly 25% of all categories reporting a negative long-term view, it is vital leaders work cooperatively to find solutions for revitalizing all ministries.



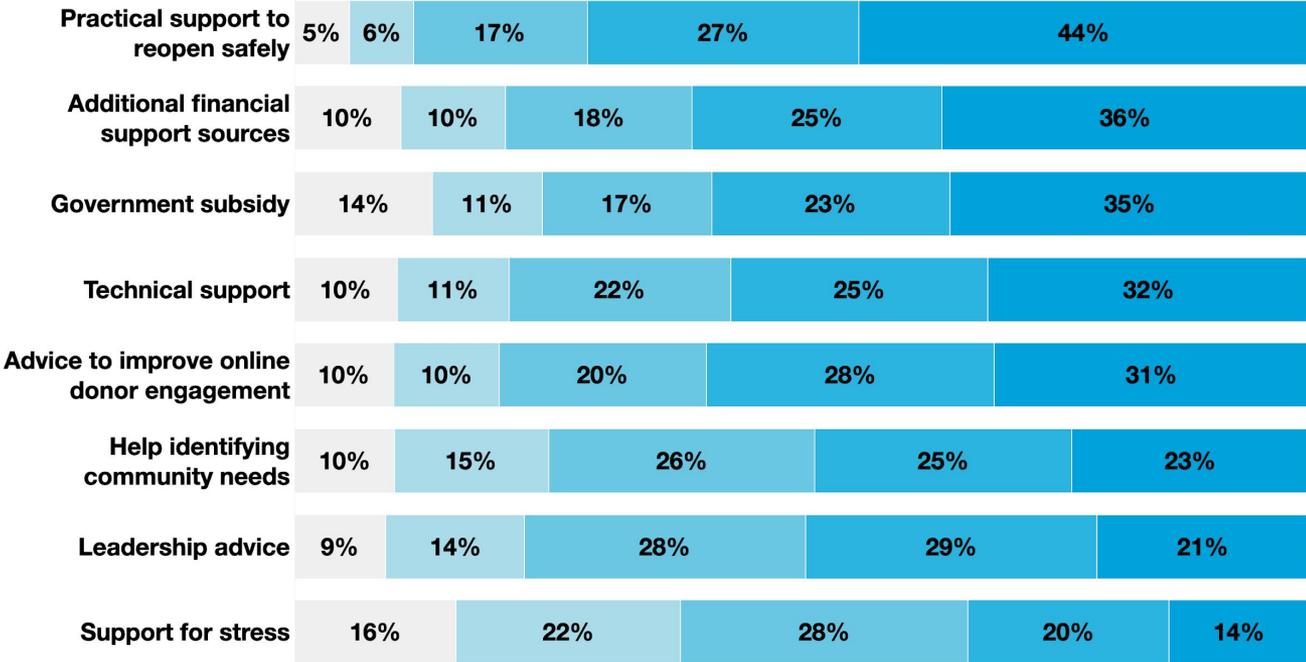
■ Decrease    ■ Stay the same    ■ Increase

# | Greatest Needs of Ministries

# What are the greatest needs of ministries because of COVID-19?

It is not surprising that the greatest needs at this time across the board are practical advice to manage the changes and fill the financial gaps.

But there is also a significant number of smaller organizations who have identified support for stress as a high level need.



■ No need   ■ High need

# | Conclusion

# Conclusion

**Change can happen in an instant.**

**Building a better future will take time and working together.**

In a recent national call with Dr. Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Nova Scotia, he indicated that this new normal could last between 12 and 24 months. He cautioned that some changes in health approaches may need to be permanent as we learn to live with the COVID-19 virus as a part of society. He then challenged the Christian leaders to see the opportunities in this moment to improve how we work together, care for people in vulnerable situations, and serve locally and globally.

As the survey uncovered, Christian ministries are all significantly affected by COVID-19 and its impact on the economy. Some ministries are hit harder than others. However, it is clear that most ministries are adapting, improving how they serve people online and adjusting their programs to serve people in this new reality.

**The next steps are to reopen safely, build strong networks to serve each city, and continue to adapt and take action to serve the significant needs created by the pandemic locally and around the world.**

As Christian ministries move past Pentecost 2020, may Jesus' timeless promise inspire and reassure us to share and live his gospel: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem (your city), and in all Judea and Samaria (your country) and to the ends of the earth (our world)" Acts 1:8.

# Resources to Help You Take Your Next Steps

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The greatest need identified by survey respondents was support to safely reopen.

On May 28th, Dr. Robert Strang, Chief Medical Officer of Health of Nova Scotia consulted thousands of Christian ministry leaders on how to reopen safely and support Canada's recovery.

Watch video [here](#).

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## Other Resources:

- [\*\*The EFC Reopening Churches Video\*\*](#) (Dr. Kami Kandola, Chief Medical Officer of Health of the Northwest Territories provides additional practical advice on how to reopen Christian churches and organizations safely)
- [\*\*Alberta's Church Plan\*\*](#) (recommended as a resource for all provinces). Children's ministries are recommended to look up [provincial guidelines](#) for schools and daycares when able to physically open.
- [\*\*Guide to Reopening Church Services\*\*](#) (U.S. resource that can be adapted)

# | Appendix

# Ministries by Category

**Church** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Congregation Multisite Congregation (Campus) Church Office - Church Network	Church Office - Church Planting Church Office - Denomination District/Diocese/Conference	Church Office - Denomination Head Office Church Office - Multisite	Church Office - Parish/Pastoral Charge
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**Welfare** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Abuse Services Agricultural Programs Disaster/War Relief Food Bank/Food Security Homelessness/Homeless Shelter Indigenous Peoples Social Services Infrastructure Development	Low Income Housing Orphanage Peace Work Prison & Reorientation Services Refugee/Immigration Services Relief and Development Social Justice Advocacy	Thrift Stores After School Program Community Benefits - Child Care Disability Services Drop-In Centre Employment and Career Services Government Engagement	Group Home Legal Services Marriage, Family, and Sexuality Community Benefits - Pregnancy Care/Family Planning Community Benefits - Other Welfare - Other
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# Ministries by Category

**Education** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Early Childhood Elementary/High School Higher Education Adult Education	Alternative Education Library Literacy/Language Studies Research	Scholarships & Educational Awards Education - Other School District/Board/Division (note: The Catholic District School Board was	excluded from this survey due to its significant size and unique funding model that would skew results)
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**Camps and Retreats** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Day Camp Overnight Camp	Other Recreation	Retreat Centre	Retreat - Other
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**Evangelism and Discipleship** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Student Ministry Conferences & Events	Discipleship General Evangelism General	Missionary Sending/Support	Evangelism/Discipleship - Other
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# Ministries by Category

**Other** includes ministries engaged in the following work:

Association - Faith and Work	Environment/Animals - Animal Care & Preservation	Leadership Development - Training Programs	Religious Order - Monastery
Association - Financial	Environment/Animals - Environmental Care & Preservation	Leadership Development - Other	Religious Order - Salesians
Services/Financial Benefit Programs	Foundation - Christian Ministry	Property/Trusts - Cemetery	Religious Order - Vincentian
Association - Ministerial/City	Foundation - Education	Property/Trusts - Facilities, Buildings, and Maintenance	Religious Order - Other
Networking Association	Foundation - Health	Property/Trusts - Trust	Resource Individuals - Author/Blogger
Association - General	Foundation - Other	Property/Trusts - Other	Resource Individuals - Chaplain
Culture & Media - Bookstores	Health - Addiction Recovery	Religious Order - Augustinians	Resource Individuals - Choir
Culture & Media - Museum/Heritage	Health - Children's Hospital/Care	Religious Order - Benedictines	Resource Individuals - Counselor
Culture & Media - Music	Health - Hospice/Palliative Care	Religious Order - Carmelites	Resource Individuals - Entertainer
Culture & Media - Online Media	Health - Hospital	Religious Order - Carthusians	Resource Individuals - Musician/Band
Culture & Media -	Health - Mental Health Services	Religious Order - Cistercian	Resource Individuals -
Publishing/Curriculum	Health - Seniors Homes/Elder Care	Religious Order - Convent	Speaker/Communicator
Culture & Media - Radio	Health - Other	Religious Order - Dominicans	Resource Individuals - Spiritual Director
Broadcasting	Leadership Development -	Religious Order - Franciscans	Resource Individuals - Visual Artist
Culture & Media - Technology	Conferences & Events	Religious Order - Jesuits	Resource Individuals - Wedding
Culture & Media - TV Broadcasting	Leadership Development - Resources	Religious Order - Missionaries of Charity	Officiant
Culture & Media - Other			Resource Individuals - Other

# Comments on Methodology and Limitations

## General Methodology

WayBase exists to enable Christian ministries and individuals to find each other, partner together, and show collective impact. As a part of this vision, WayBase maintains a database that endeavours to contain data on every Christian ministry in Canada.

The qualification for being listed in WayBase.com is dependent on that ministry:

- Identifying as Christian (by subscription to a statement of faith by either: The Canadian Council of Churches, The Canadian Council of Christian Charities, or The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada);
- Having charitable status or being confirmed as a ministry by another ministry already listed on WayBase.

From May 13-30, 2020 we invited leaders from these Christian organizations to respond to our online survey on the impact of COVID-19 on their ministry.

## Linking Results with Ministries

Emails inviting responses were connected with the organization name and a unique identifier, ensuring all responses were associated with the correct organization.

Where the responder modified the organization name or location, a verification was done to assign the response to the new organization.

Where multiple responses were received on behalf of a single organization, these were manually reviewed to assess the individual in the best position to give a representative answer on behalf of the organization.

# Comments on Methodology and Limitations

## Representativeness

In order to ensure the representativeness of the results, we reviewed the distribution of results by organizational category, size (indicated by revenue), and province. Size was determined by the following revenue buckets (determined by their 2017 charitable return): <\$25K, \$25K-\$100K, \$100K-\$249K, \$250K-\$499K, \$500K-\$759K, \$750K-\$999K, \$1M+. These were then grouped into small, medium, large (<\$250K, \$250K-\$750K, >\$750K, respectively). This was done after observing minimal differences between the more granular sized buckets.

For the most part, responses were well in line with the distributions of organizations identified in WayBase.

The one case where distributions were skewed was an underrepresentation of the smallest

categories of organizations (<\$25K). This was not completely surprising given:

- Our reliance on web presence (in addition to charity contact data) in order to identify individuals to invite for responses while many of these organizations do not have a web presence.
- The limited time resources that smaller organizations might have to respond.
- The possibility that smaller organizations may have permanently closed, rendering them unable to reply.

These factors may be possible limitations on the representativeness of results. However, we did receive a non-trivial number (177) of responses from organizations in the <\$25K size. We resampled the data to increase the weighting of these smaller organizations so that the impact on these smaller ministries was properly accounted for at the national level.

*Continued on next page.*

# Comments on Methodology and Limitations

While distribution between provinces and sizes individually was accounted for, we did not resample in blocks by both province and size due to cases of insufficient numbers of smaller organizational responses at this number of dimensions. In our assessment, this would result in oversampling that would over bias results to the limited numbers that responded. In our analysis we avoided analyzing by both province and size, limiting the impact. However, if there were both significant regional combined with size factors at play for small organizations when both were combined together, then this might be underrepresented at national levels results.

At this stage, we have not fully validated by Christian faith stream or faith tradition. Three of our four largest faith streams were represented very well. However, Catholics (while present with >250 results) were underrepresented by approximately 40%.

## Other notes:

If multiple organizations are using the same charitable number, their sizes are treated the same. This is because we have no principled criteria to assign a size, and at the same time, the responses of sub-organizations is to a certain extent a representation of the larger organization. This was a relatively minor factor affecting <1% of responses.

In this survey and report, size refers to revenue and not to the number of people served. WayBase recognizes that organizations can have small revenue but serve a large number of people. Estimating functional size based on revenue size is a common practice. Revenue data was only available in the case of charities. Non-charity responses (30) were used when division by revenue size was not a factor.