

# Nurturing Faith Communities

## Meeting the Needs of Your Neighborhood

Today's Presentation for *the Children, Youth and Family Network of the ELCA* is Offered by Barna Group, the ELCA and the ELEA.



Evangelical  
Lutheran Church  
in America



Evangelical Lutheran  
Education Association

# About This Research

Online market research panels

Quota random sampling methodology

Representative sample

$n=1,000$  U.S. adults, April-May, 2023.

The overall margin of error for the study is  $\pm 2.96\%$ .

# About This Research

This presentation contains key findings from our community survey, the goal of which was to capture and understand **the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of various people groups in our neighborhoods** the ELCA and ELEA are looking to serve.

- Understand the reasons why individuals do or do not participate in religious activities and identify potential barriers to their engagement.
- Provide clarity on the felt needs of new, young, diverse people in communities around the country and identify potential strategies to increase their engagement.
- Identify opportunities for improving the inclusion and support of adults who identify as LGBTQIA+ within the ELCA.
- Explore the perceptions of young couples with kids towards church life and identify the factors that influence their participation in religious activities.
- Examine the perceptions of parents towards ELEA schools, including their expectations, experiences, and goals for

# A Note from the ELCA



The ELCA has made its top priority to be A Welcoming Church: Engaging new, young and diverse people. We believe that one of the best ways to do that may be through our 1300 preschools that are a part of ELCA congregations. These preschools often better reflect the communities where the church building is located and tend to be more diverse than the congregation as a whole.

We hope that this study will point you in some new directions that will help new people engage with preschools and the Christian communities to which they belong.

# **Understanding Our Unchurched Neighbors**

## **Understanding the Needs of Young Parents**

# People Groups Studied

## Churched and Unchurched

- **Churched:** Has attended a church service in the past 6 months.
- **Unchurched:** Has not attended a church service in the past 6 months.
- **Unchurched Under 40:** Less than 40 years old and unchurched.

## LGBTQIA+

- **LGBTQIA+:** Identify as LGBTQIA+.

## Parents

- **Parents:** Parent, caregiver and/or legal guardian of a child under 18 in their household.
- **Parents Under 40:** Less than 40 years old and parent, caregiver and/or legal guardian of a child under 18 in their household. Often referred to as “young parents.”

# Understanding Our Unchurched Neighbors

1

**Very few of our unchurched neighbors are familiar with the churches in their neighborhood.**

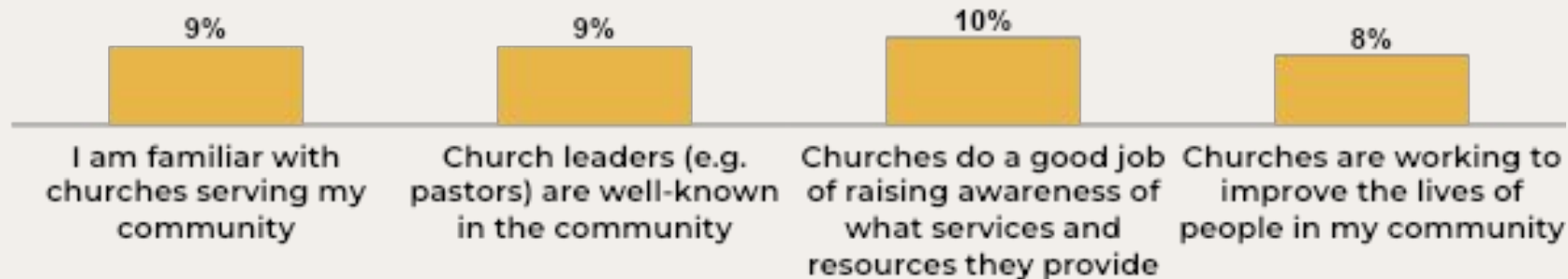


## Very few of our unchurched neighbors are familiar with the churches in their neighborhood.

Think about Christian churches in your own community. How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

% strongly agree

Unchurched



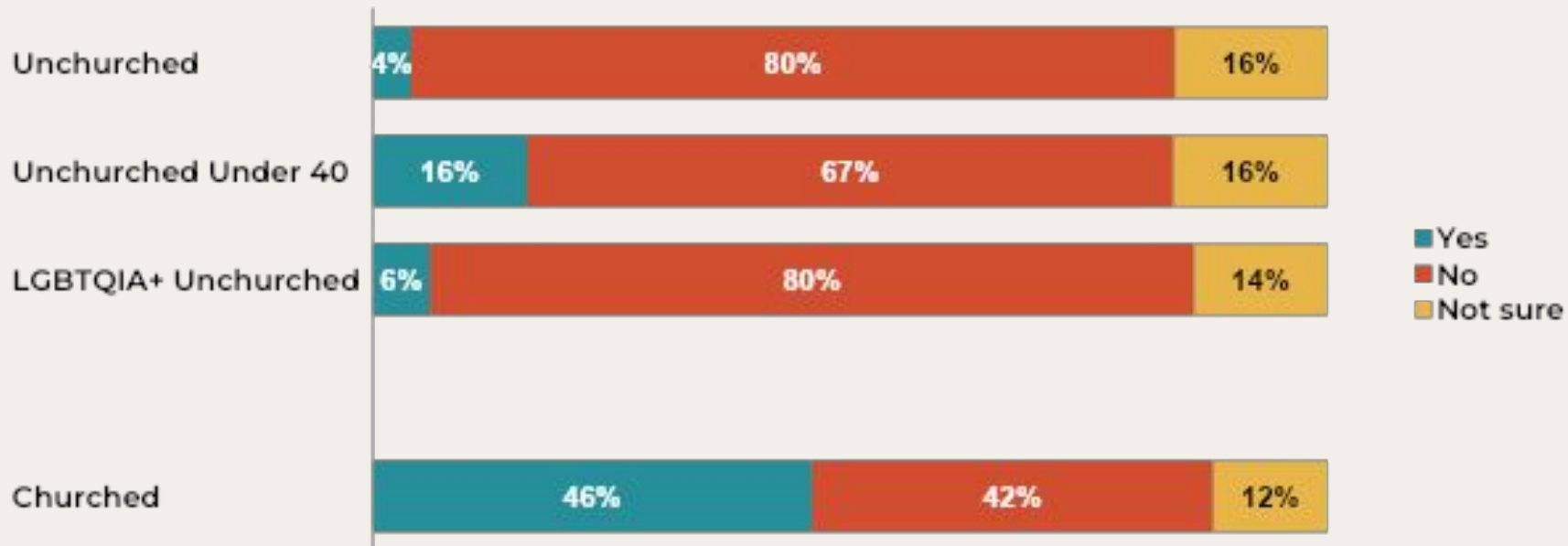


# 2

**Even fewer unchurched adults know about the ELCA or ELCA congregations.**

Even fewer unchurched adults know about the ELCA or ELCA congregations.

Are you familiar with churches that are members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) denomination?





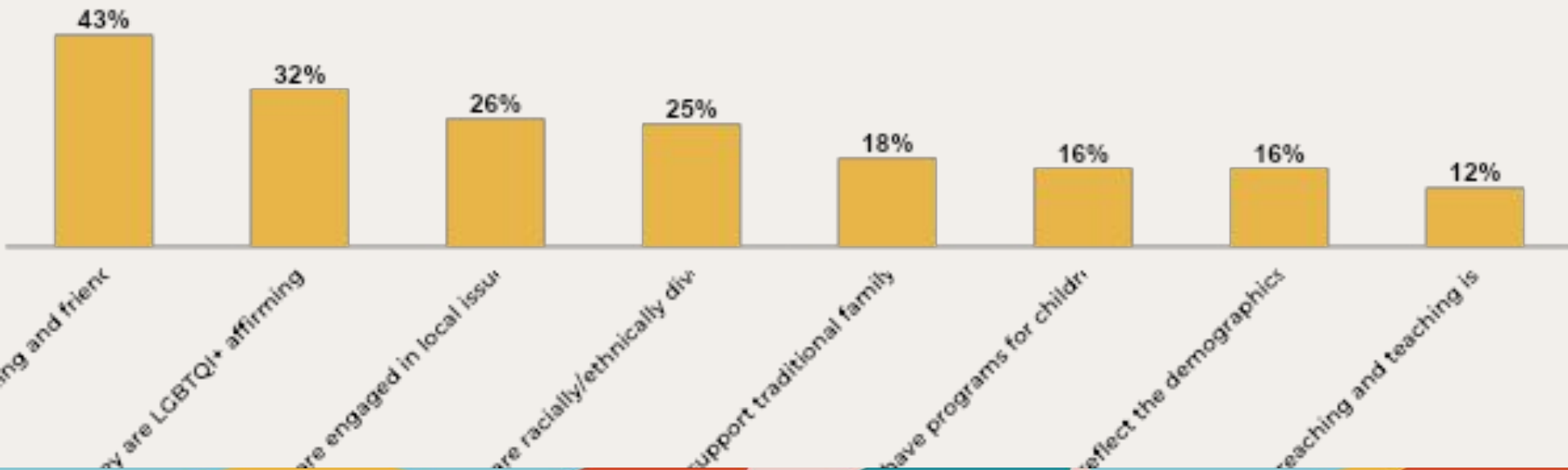
# 3

**Unchurched adults are looking for churches to be welcoming and inclusive.**

# Unchurched adults are looking for churches to be welcoming and inclusive.

Which of the following values would be most important for a Christian church to hold? Select up to three.

■ Unchurched





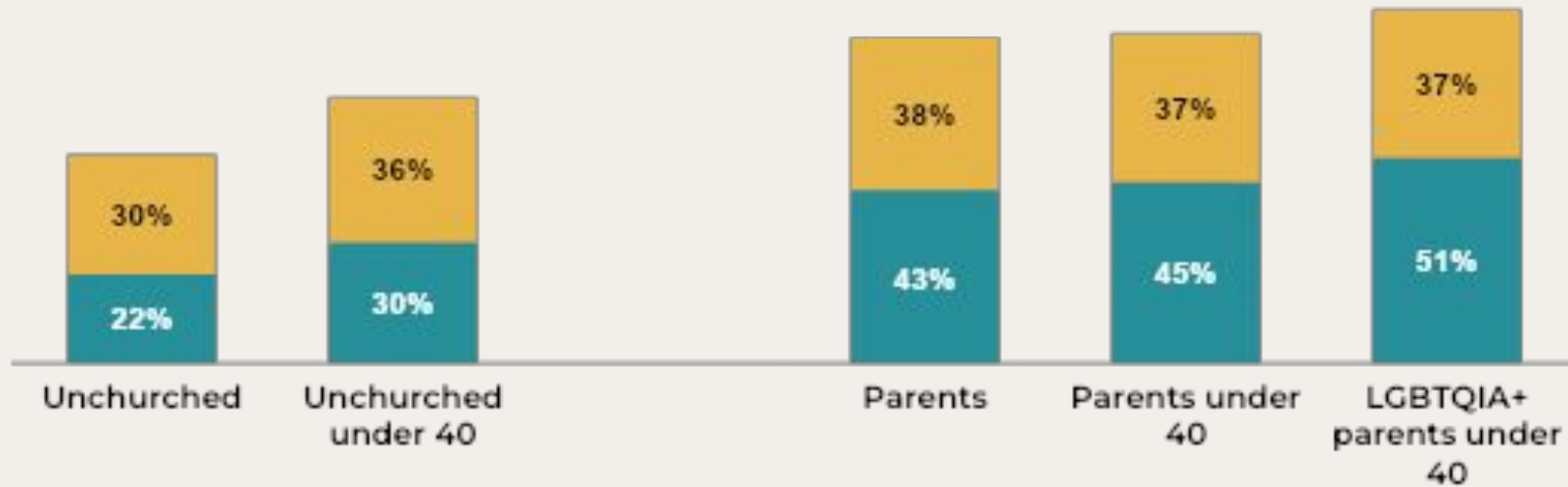
# 4

**Both inside and outside the Church, people are increasingly motivated to address injustices. This is truest of young parents.**

Both inside and outside the Church, people are increasingly motivated to address injustices. This is truest of young parents.

Today, how motivated are you to do something about injustices in your community? By injustices, we are referring to the unfair or undeserved treatment of people.

■ Very motivated ■ Somewhat motivated



# Understanding the Needs of Young Parents





# 5

The 3 things young parents want most for their children are \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_.

The 3 things young parents want most for their children are self-love, positive role models and quality education.

As a parent, which of the following goals are most important for your child(ren)?

*Among parents under 40*

Love and accept who they are.

**58%**

Have positive role models in their life.

**56%**

Have access to quality education.

**49%**

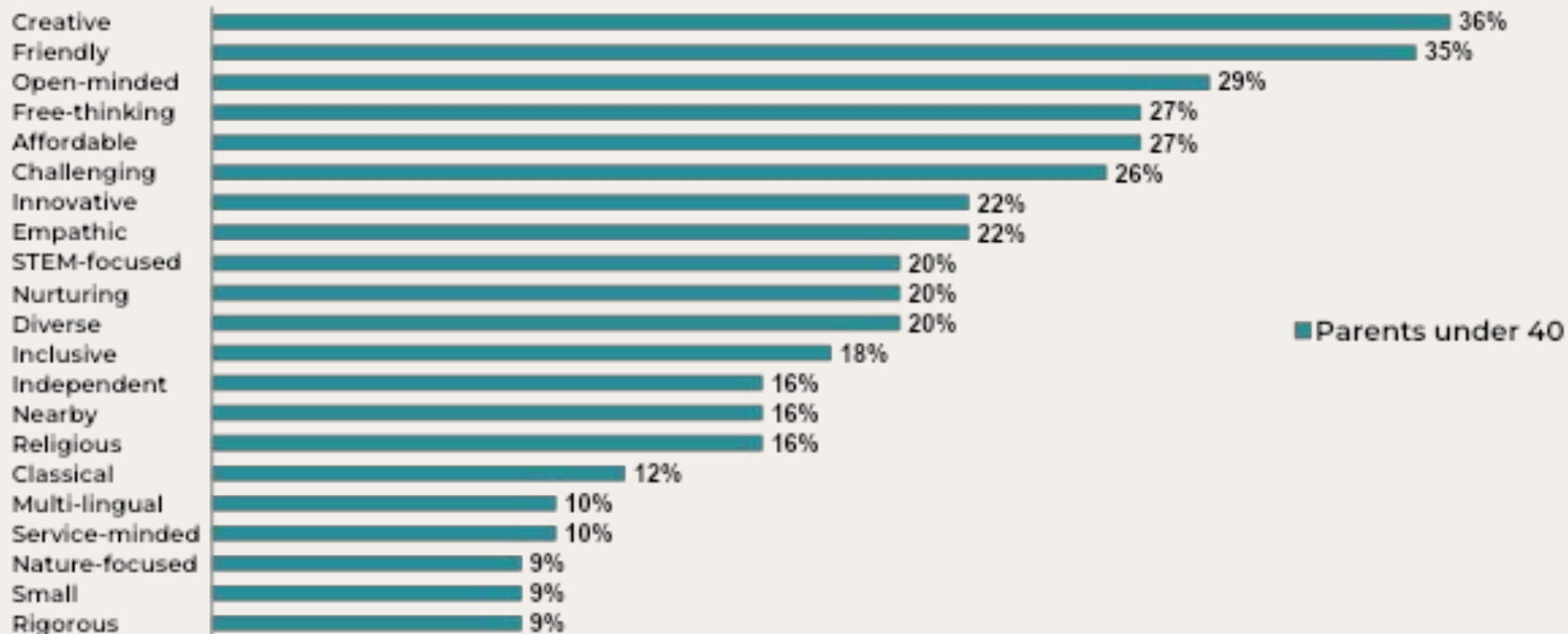


# 6

**Young parents say they want schools to be creative, friendly and open-minded.**

## Young parents say they want schools to be creative, friendly and open-minded.

In thinking about your child's education, what are the most important qualities in a school? Select five.





# 7

**Young parents today are most concerned about \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, \_\_ and \_\_\_\_.**

Young parents today are most concerned about school safety, mental health, social media and gun violence.

**When you think about the issues affecting children today,  
which of the following are most concerning to you?**

*Among Parents Under 40*

School safety

**50%**

Social media

**44%**

Mental health

**45%**

Gun violence

**44%**



# 8

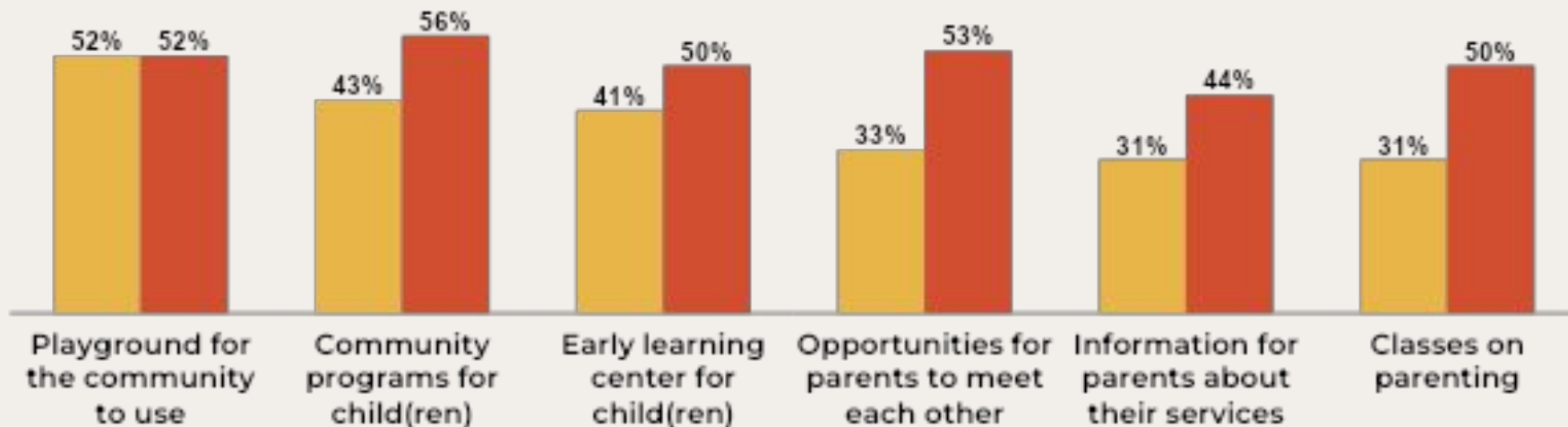
**There is ample opportunity for ELCA churches to serve the young parents in our neighborhoods, especially with services for their children.**

There is ample opportunity for ELCA churches to serve the young parents in our neighborhoods, especially with services for their children.

If a church in your area provided the following services to the community, how interested would you be in them?

% very interested

■ Unchurched parents under 40     ■ LGBTQIA+ parents under 40





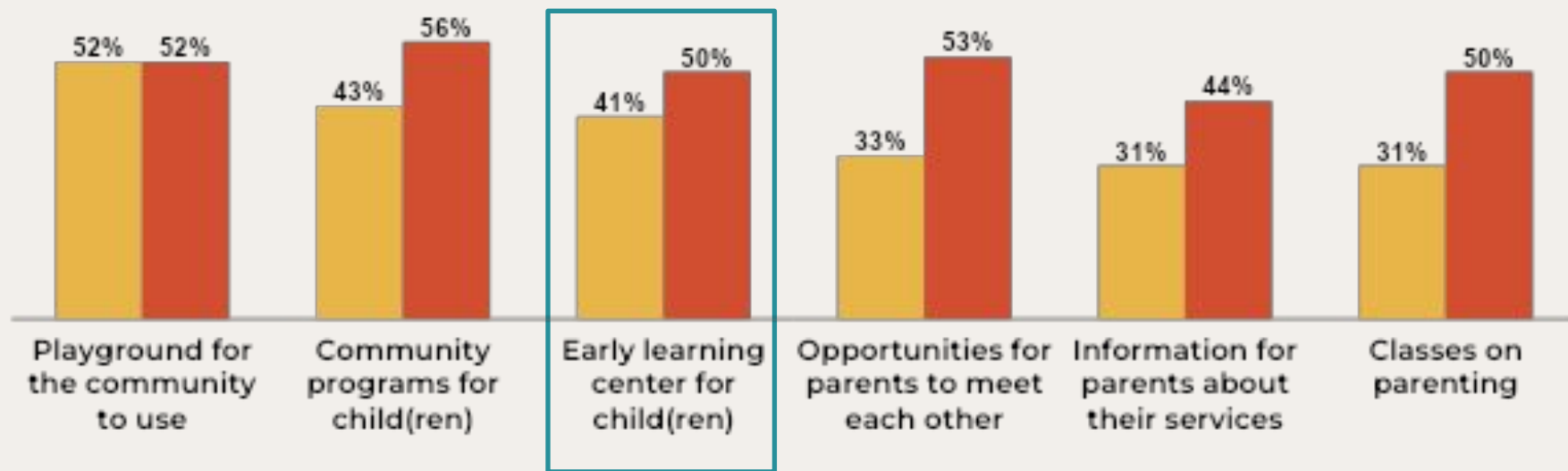
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■ LGBTQIA+ parents under 40





# 9

**Church-based early learning centers are a wonderful way to serve both churched and unchurched parents.**

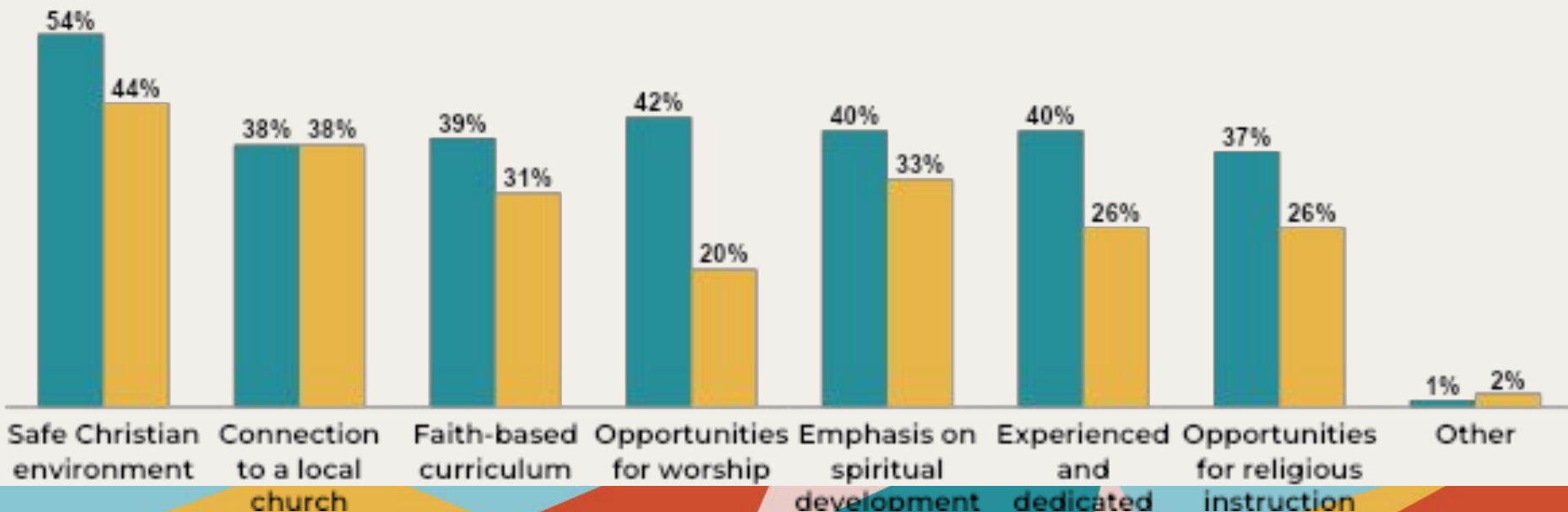
## Church-based early learning centers are a wonderful way to serve both churched and unchurched parents.

What aspects of a Church-based early learning center are most appealing to you?

Select all that apply. | Base: Interested or Somewhat interested in a Church-based early learning center

■ Churched parents


■ Unchurched parents



1. Very few of our unchurched neighbors are familiar with the churches in their neighborhood (9%).
2. Even fewer unchurched adults know about the ELCA or ELCA congregations (4%).
3. Unchurched adults are looking for churches to be welcoming and inclusive.
4. Both inside and outside the Church, people are increasingly motivated to address injustices. This is truest of young parents (82%).
5. The 3 things young parents want most for their children are self-love, positive role models and quality education.
6. Young parents say they want schools to be creative, friendly and open-minded.
7. Young parents today are most concerned about school safety, mental health, social media and gun violence.
8. There is ample opportunity for ELCA churches to serve the young parents in our neighborhoods, especially with services for their children.
9. Church-based early learning centers are a wonderful way to serve both churched and unchurched parents.

Take a Quick Survey!



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**Wow, this is so interesting! But  
how can this research help me  
as a leader?**

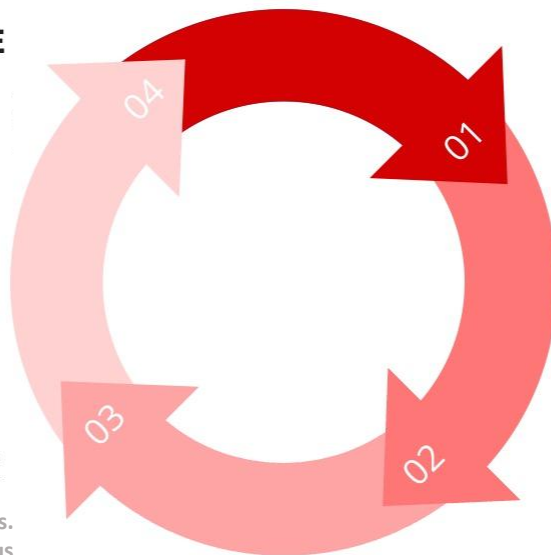
# INSIGHTS-TO-ACTION FRAMEWORK

## 4-APPLY & EXECUTE

Turning solutions into actionable “prototypes.”  
Testing ministry ideas, and ultimately creating  
future ministry strategies and programs.

## 3-IMAGINE & SOLVE

Brainstorming solutions to key problems.  
Considering how you might turn various  
scenarios into solutions.



## 1-OBSERVE & LEARN

Seeing clearly with data-informed insights.  
Identifying and framing the problems that  
need to be solved.

## 2-INTERPRET & UNDERSTAND

Analyzing insights and evaluating problems.  
Moving toward understanding how problems can  
become possibilities.

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9. Church-based early learning centers are a wonderful way to serve both church and unchurched parents.

**Select your key finding.**



# Identify problems.

*(Implications & ministry challenges that result from the statistic being true.)*

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**Brainstorm solutions.**  
*(Ministry plan possibilities that might solve your selected problem.)*




**One solution to implement in...**

*The next 7 days*

*The next 7 weeks*

*The next 7 months*

# Learn the needs and interests of YOUR young parents and caregivers with the ELEA's *Understanding Young Families* free assessment!



ELCA

## Understanding Young Families

New Assessment



In your own words, what is your biggest need right now as a parent / caregiver?

24 of 36 questions

Consider Deploying This Survey Today!

