

The State of Christian Nonprofits



Barna



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A guided tour of the Faith, Tech & Media findings—from macro media shifts, to what Christian audiences are hungry for, to where AI fits and where it doesn't.

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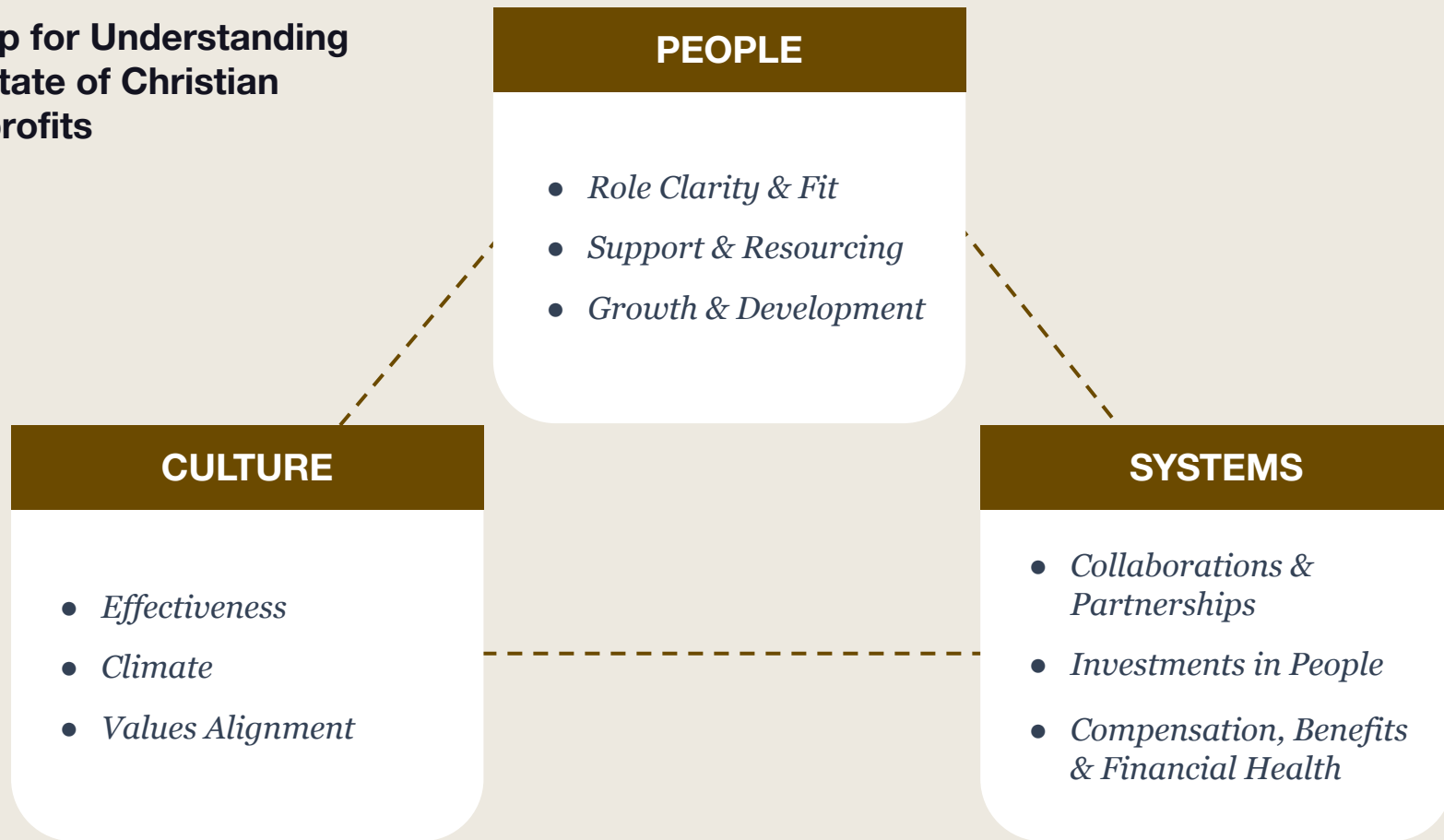
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SECTION 01

Overview & Summary

OBJECTIVES

Understand the current landscape of today's faith-based nonprofits.

METHODOLOGY

U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees: in February–March 2026, Barna Group surveyed n=1,017

U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees. The survey was conducted online.

Glossary of Terms Used in This Report

ORGANIZATION SIZE

Very small — 1 to 10 employees

Small — 11 to 50 employees

Mid-size — 51 to 500 employees

Large — 500+ employees

ROLE

Executive leadership (e.g., CEO, President, Executive Director)

Senior leadership (e.g., VP, Director, Department Head)

Manager or supervisor

Program staff

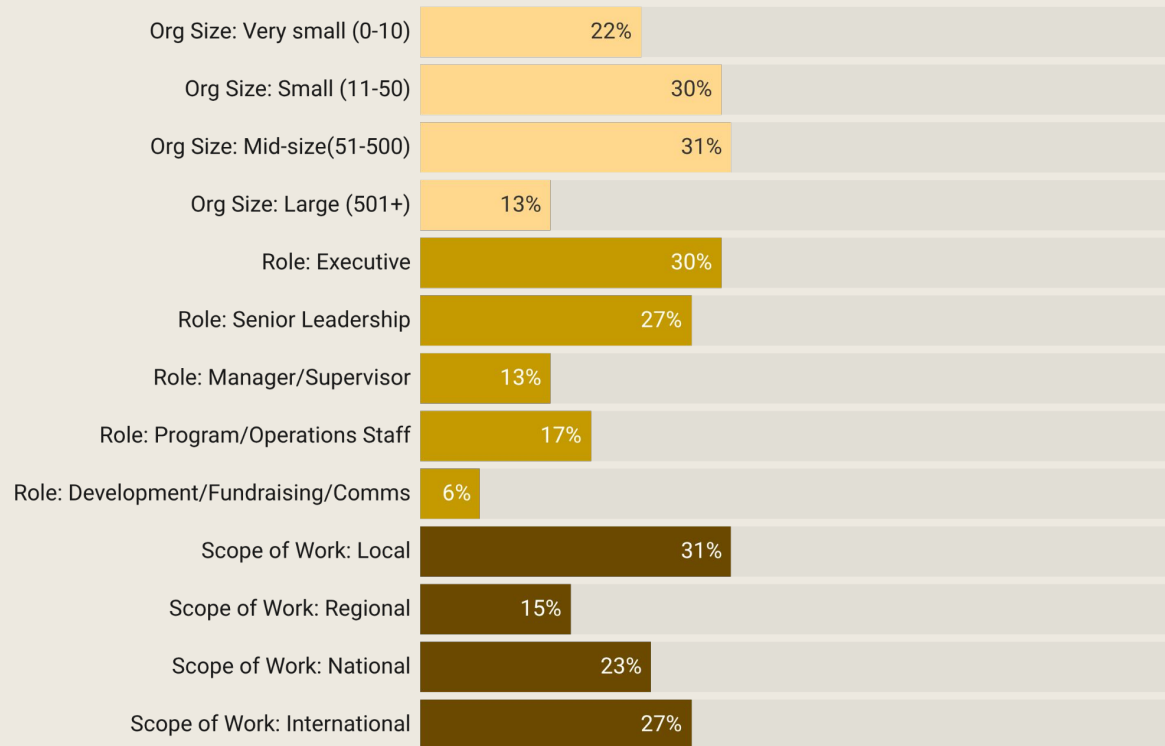
Administrative or operations staff

Development/ fundraising / communications

This research reflects the voices of leaders across the faith-based nonprofit ecosystem—from small teams to global organizations

- Largest segments come from small to mid-sized organizations (61%)
- Leadership roles make up the majority of respondents (57%)
- Organizations span local (31%) to international (27%) reach

Christian Nonprofit Sample Characteristics



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Summary of Findings

Summary of Christian Nonprofit Findings

*Christian nonprofits are defined by **strong mission, relationships, and values**, but face growing challenges in sustaining that strength over time. The data reveals three clear trends:*

01

People: High calling, but fragile sustainability

Staff feel deeply aligned with their work, yet many roles—especially in leadership—are difficult to sustain. Relational support is strong, but structural support is uneven, and development is often expected without being fully built.

02

Culture: Healthy on the surface, strained underneath

Organizations report strong culture, care, and values alignment. Yet burnout, uneven morale, and limited investment in learning and innovation reveal pressure beneath the surface.

03

Systems: Relationally driven, but underdeveloped

Collaboration is widespread but often tactical. Investment in people is culture-driven but system-light. Financial pressure is increasing, exposing gaps in long-term sustainability and infrastructure.

Bottom Line: A sustainability challenge, not a mission problem. The next phase of the sector will require strengthening the systems that support the people and culture already in place.

SECTION 02

The People of Christian Nonprofits

- 
- *Role Clarity & Fit*
 - *Support & Resourcing*
 - *Growth & Development*

Role Clarity & Fit

Strategic Insight #1

Role alignment is high, but sustainability is fragile.

Strategic Takeaway:

Christian nonprofit staff feel called, gifted, and effective in their work, but many roles—especially in leadership—are difficult to sustain over time.

The sector is not struggling to attract the right people; it is struggling to build roles that can hold them.

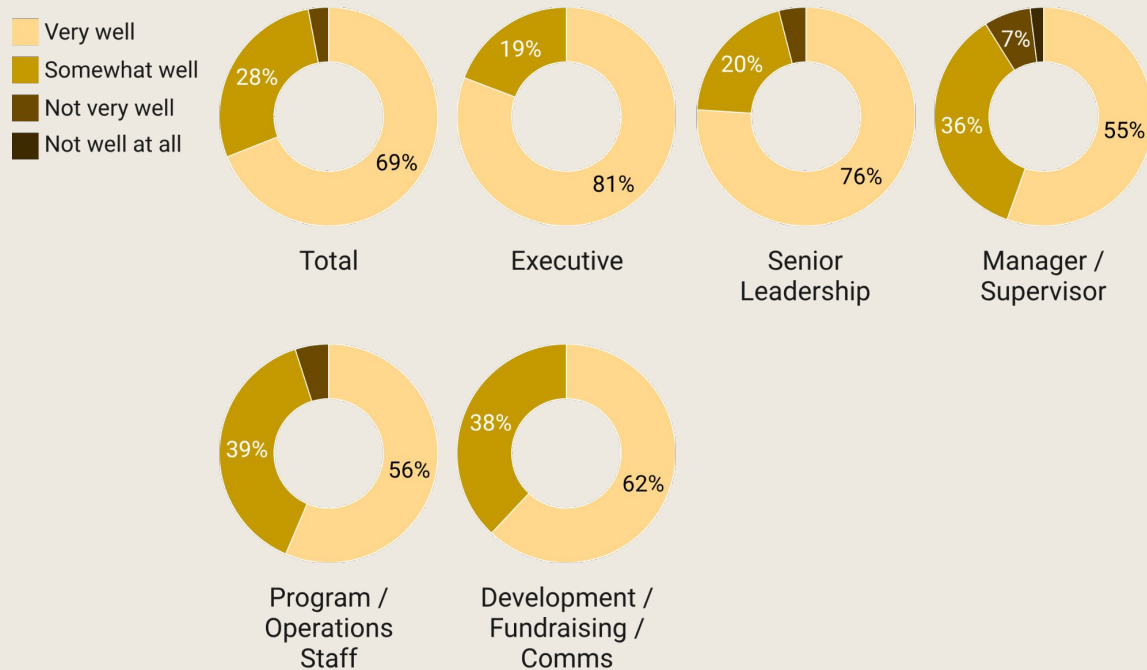
Action:

Organizations and those who support them should prioritize role sustainability as a design challenge—revisiting workload, scope, and expectations, especially at the leadership level, to ensure calling does not become a liability.

Strong alignment across the board—about 97% of staff say their gifts align at least somewhat with their role, including nearly 7 in 10 “very well.”

Alignment is strongest at the top: 81% of executives say their strengths fit their roles very well. However, only about half (~55–56%) of managers and program staff feel like their gifts and roles are aligned.

How well would you say your personal gifts and strengths align with your job responsibilities?



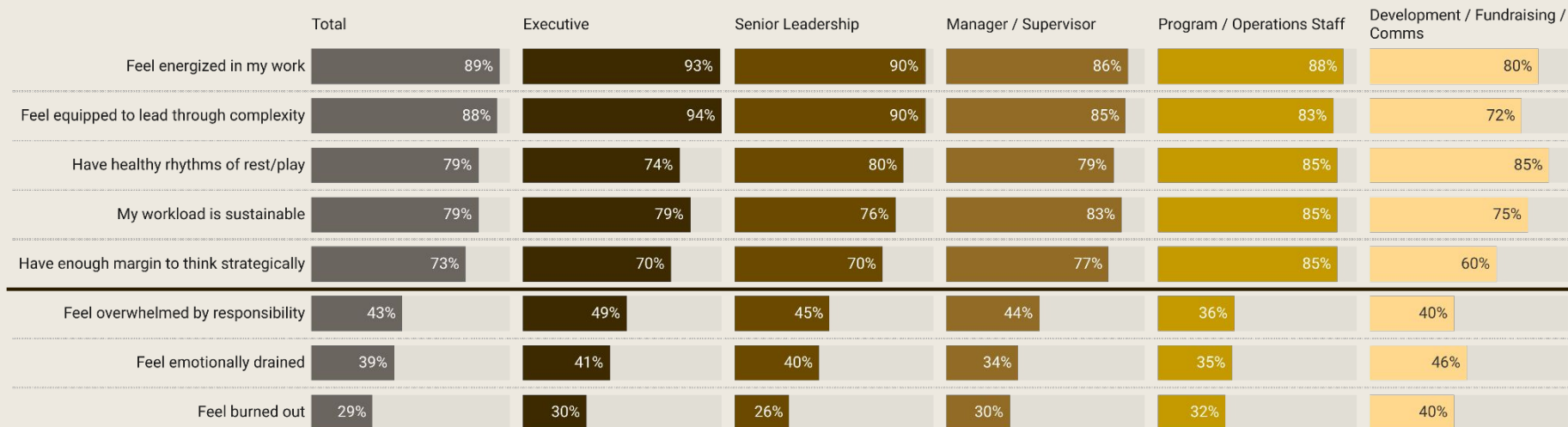
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Strong engagement does not eliminate strain.

Staff report strong positive experiences—feeling energized, equipped, and effective—while negative experiences like burnout and emotional drain are less frequent but still present.

Thinking specifically about your work life, how often do the feel each of the following?

Broken down by role in Christian Nonprofit Organization.



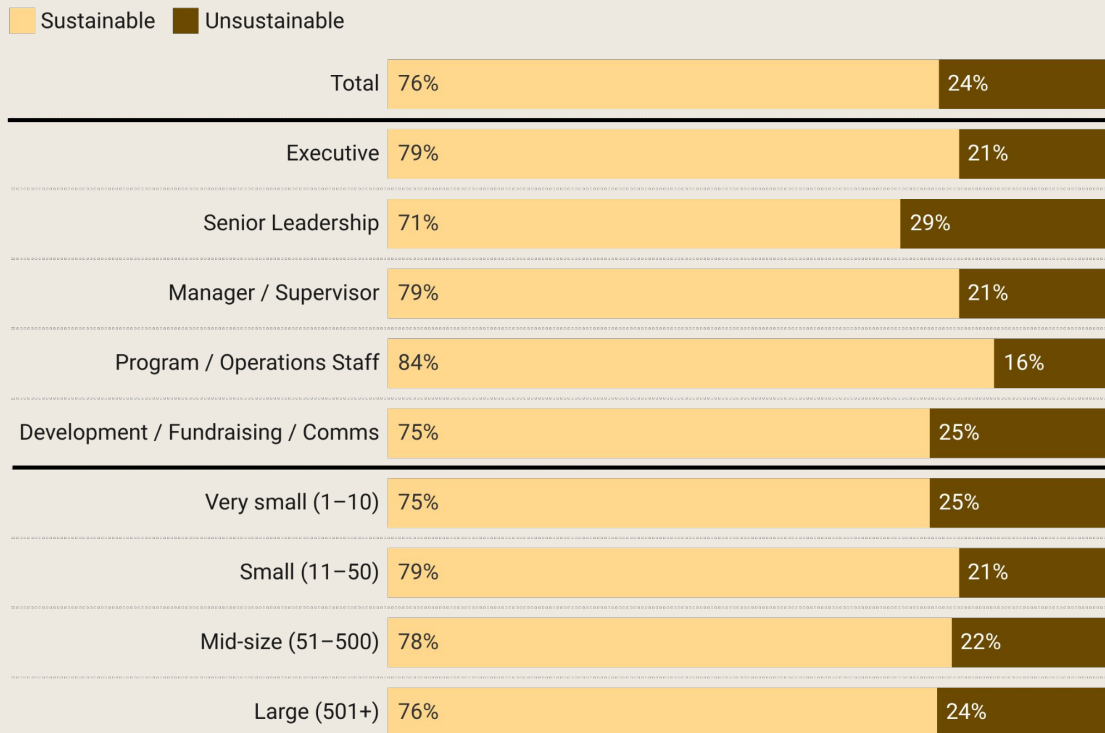
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

While most staff report sustainable workloads, nearly one in four (24%) say their role is unsustainable.

This strain is most pronounced in senior leadership roles, where almost a third (29%) report unsustainable roles.

How sustainable does your role at work feel?

Sustainable = % Very + % Somewhat. Unsustainable = % Completely + % Somewhat.



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

“What would you say makes your work *unsustainable*?”

1. Workload & Capacity Overload

“Doing the work of three separate people... 12+ hours a day” | “Never getting caught up”

2. Understaffed & Under Resourced

“Extremely small team with heavy workload” | “We are grossly understaffed”

3. Leadership & Clarity Gaps

“Lack of clear direction” | “Everything is urgent... too many priorities”

4. Financial Pressure

“Low salary... have to work 2 jobs” | “Hard to provide for a family on a ministry salary”

5. Burnout & Always-On Culture

“On call 24/7... hard to disengage” | “I will keep going till I drop from emotional exhaustion”

Support & Resourcing

Relational support is strong, but structural support is inconsistent.

Strategic Takeaway:

Employees feel deeply supported by people around them, but less consistently supported by systems like leadership structures, staffing, compensation, and boards. Care is present—but not always reinforced by design.

Action:

The next phase for the sector is to translate relational care into repeatable systems, strengthening management practices, board engagement, and operational support so that care is not dependent on individuals alone.

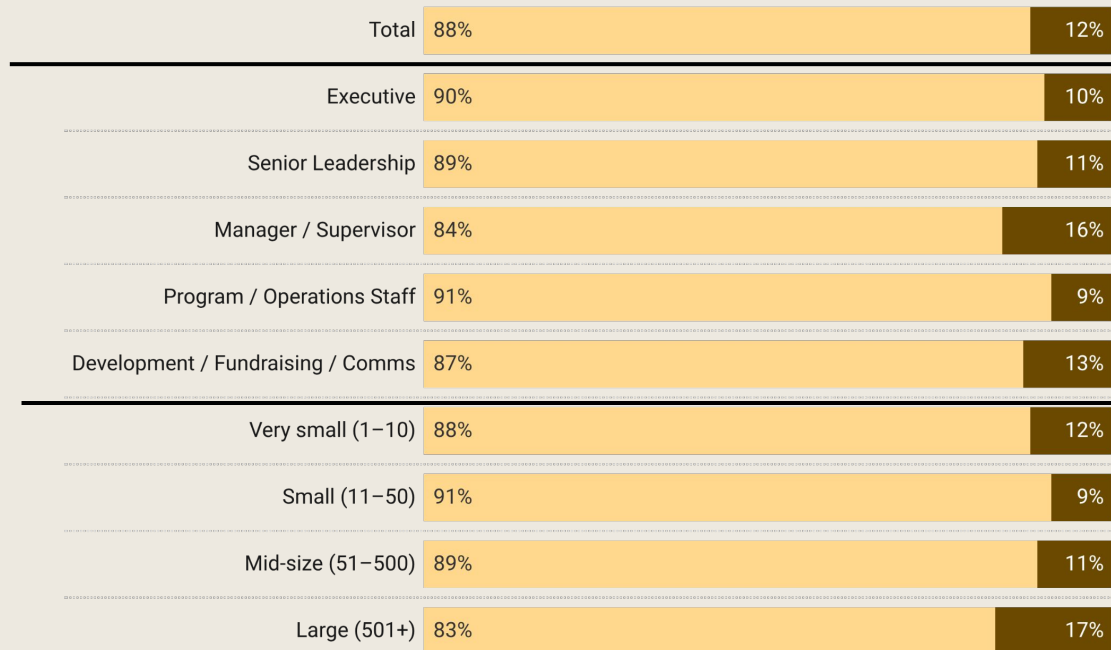
Most staff feel equipped—but gaps emerge at larger scales

Most staff feel equipped to meet their role's demands (88%), with strong confidence across roles. However, larger organizations stand out—about 2 in 10 staff in large orgs report feeling unequipped, pointing to capacity challenges at the biggest scale.

How equipped do you feel to meet the operational demands of your role?

Equipped = % Very + % Somewhat. Unequipped = % Completely + % Somewhat.

Equipped Unequipped



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

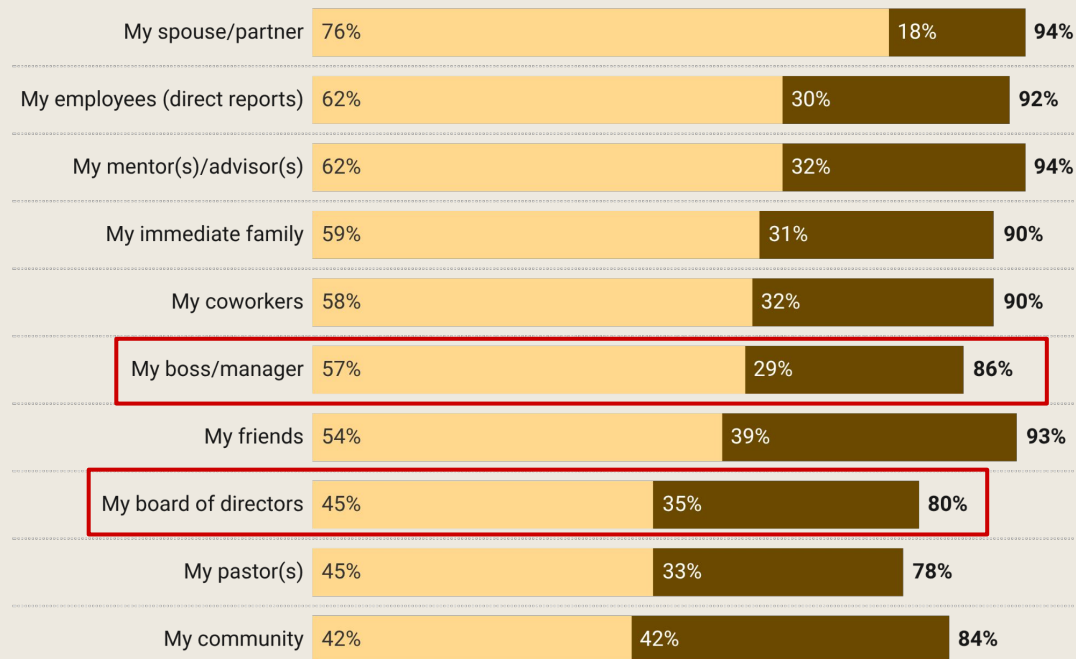
Where support is strongest: relationships...

... but less consistent within formal leadership structures.

While staff report feeling well supported overall, only about half report being very supported by their boss/manager (57%), and even fewer by their board of directors (45%).

How supported do you feel by the following groups or structures?

Very supported Somewhat supported



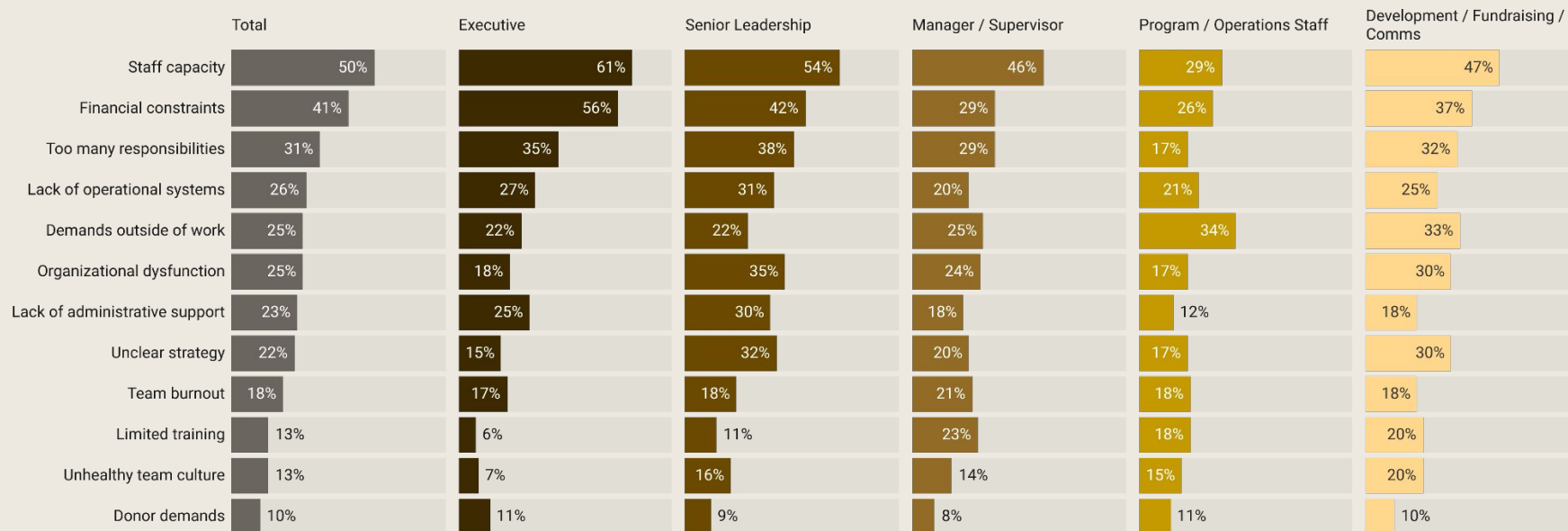
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Where support breaks down: capacity and systems

Capacity and financial resources are the biggest constraints—half of staff cite limited staff capacity (50%) and four in ten point to financial constraints (41%). These pressures are especially acute in executive roles and senior leadership.

Which areas most limit your ability to work effectively right now?

Select all that apply.



Satisfaction is highest around purpose and relationships, over 9 in 10 affirm mission and team connections.

However, structural areas like salary, career growth, and professional development lag behind, revealing a gap between meaning and infrastructure.

How satisfied are you with each of the following?

% Very satisfied + % Somewhat satisfied.



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Growth & Development

Professional development is inconsistent compared to personal growth

Strategic Takeaway:

Staff are motivated to grow and often develop *personally*, but organizational pathways for professional growth are less defined and less consistent across roles.

Action:

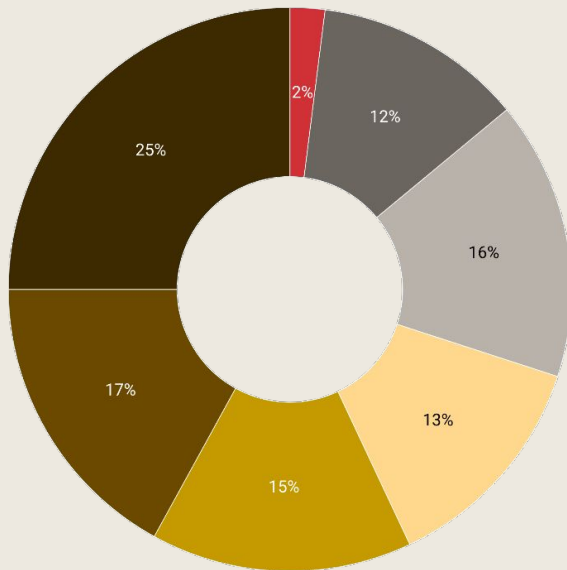
There is a clear opportunity to **build structured development pathways**, including clearer advancement tracks, role-based training, and intentional investment in professional growth, not just personal formation.

Growth is happening, but driven more by individuals than organizations.

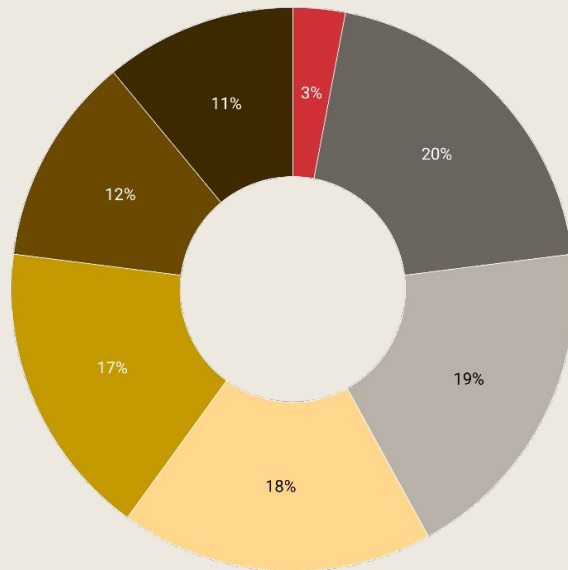
Organizations have an opportunity to better support and structure staff development.

How often do you invest in your...

- Never
- Once or twice a year
- Every few months
- At least once a month
- Multiple times a month
- At least once a week
- Several times a week



Personal growth



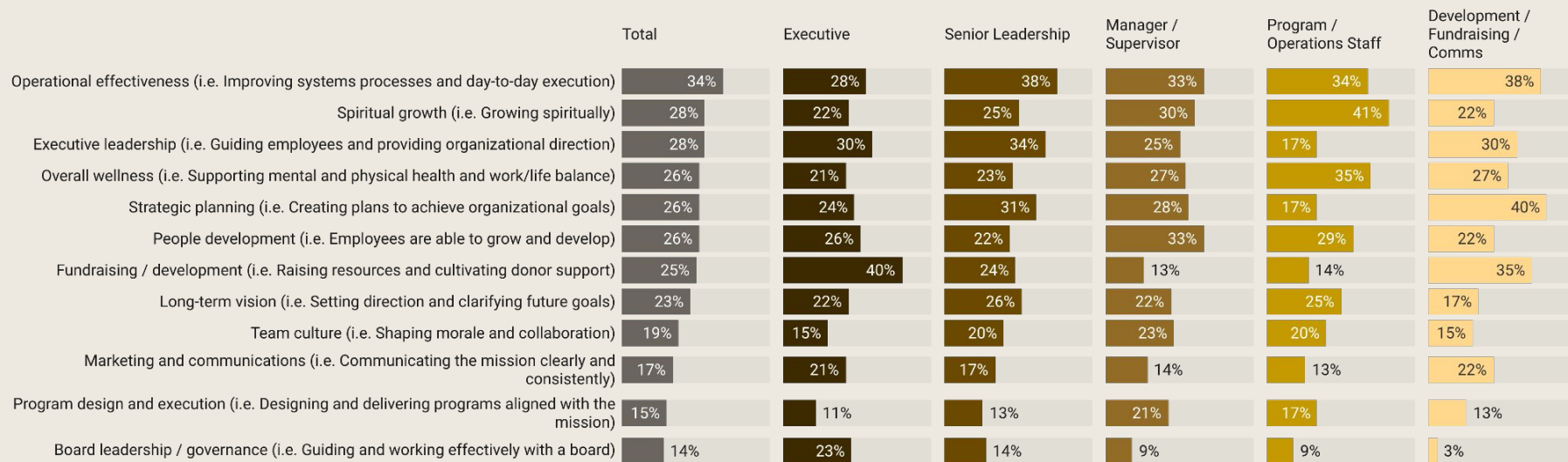
Professional growth

How do people want to grow? Operational effectiveness rises to the top, but needs split by role.

Staff lean toward spiritual growth and well-being, while leaders and fundraisers focus on strategy, fundraising, and direction—revealing distinct, role-driven development gaps.

If you, personally, could meaningfully grow in any of the following areas, which three would have the greatest impact on you as a leader?

Select up to 3.



SECTION 03

The Culture of Christian Nonprofits

- 
- *Effectiveness*
 - *Climate*
 - *Values Alignment*

Effectiveness

Culture inspires commitment, but doesn't always sustain performance.

Strategic Takeaway:

Christian nonprofits are strong in mission, relationships, and spiritual vitality, but less consistent in areas like operational effectiveness, innovation, and people development.

Action:

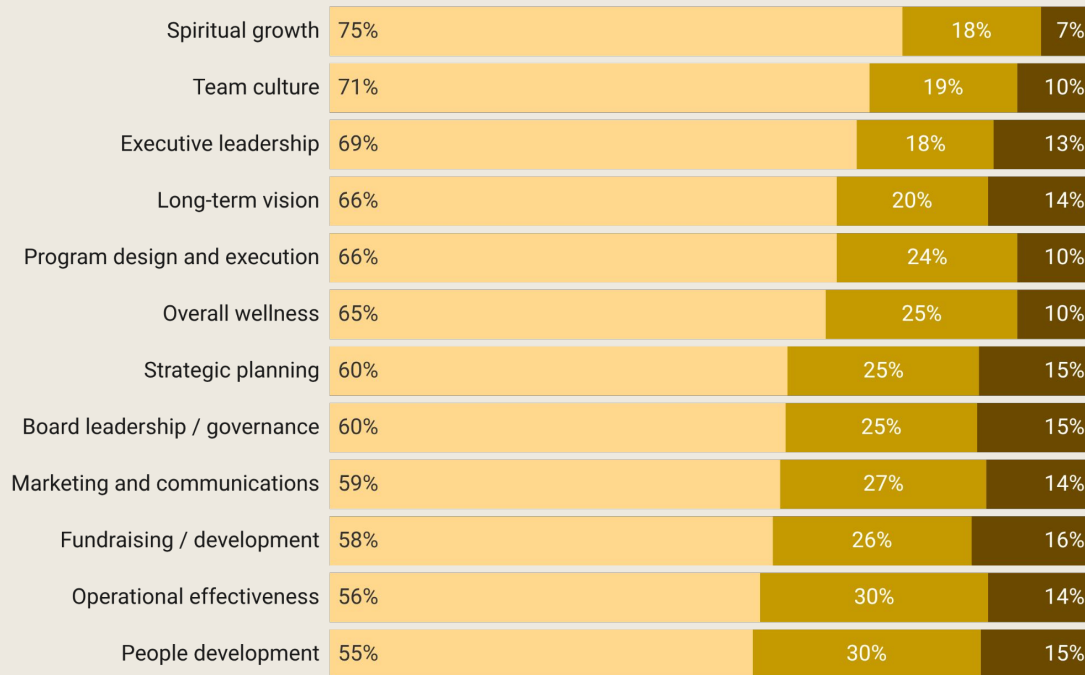
Leaders and sector partners should focus on **strengthening the operational habits of culture**—embedding rhythms of evaluation, learning, and development so that strong culture translates into long-term effectiveness.

Staff grade their organizations highest in mission and culture—spiritual growth (75%) and team culture (71%) lead, with leadership and vision also solid (~66–69%).

Operational areas lag: people development (55%), operational effectiveness (56%), and fundraising (58%) have lower ratings and higher average/poor scores, pointing to gaps in systems and staff development.

How would you grade your organization in each of the following areas?

Good + Excellent Average Poor + Very poor



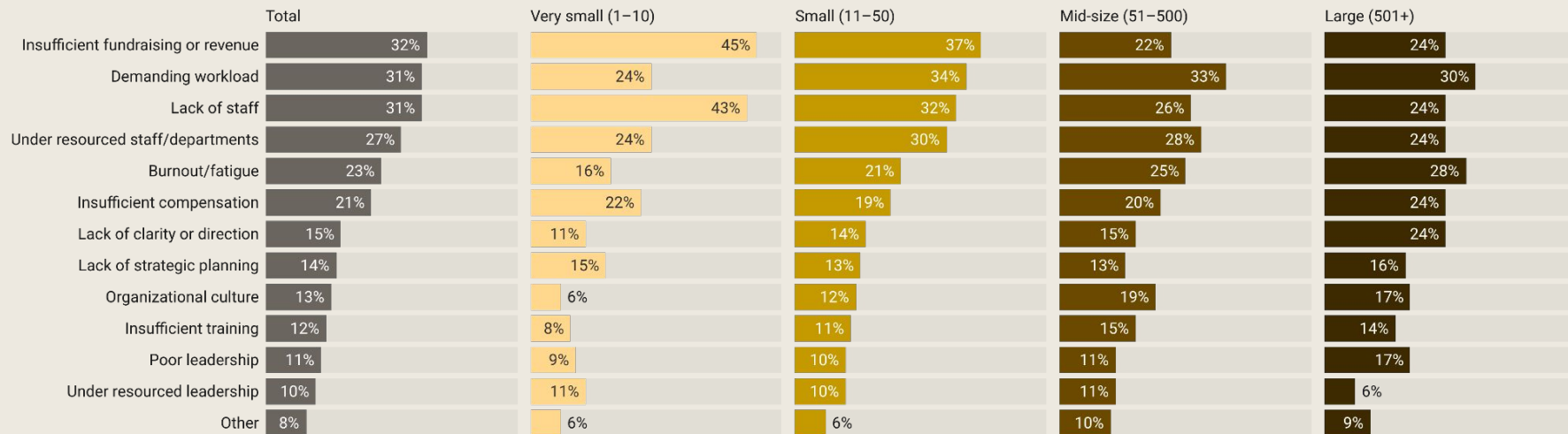
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Nonprofits are navigating a layered capacity challenge, not a single barrier.

Funding, workload, and staffing pressures all rank at the top, reinforcing one another across organizations.

What are the greatest barriers your organization faces in doing its best work?

Select up to 3.



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

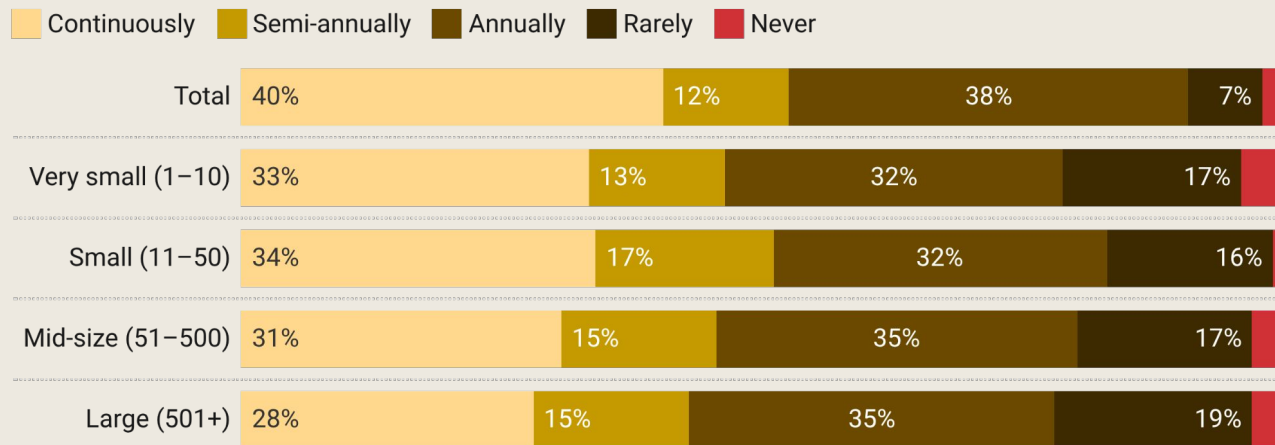
Smaller organizations feel this most acutely as resource and staff shortages while larger organizations are more likely to face challenges around burnout, leadership, and coordination.

Program evaluation is happening regularly for most organizations.

However, a substantial share still operates on slower cycles, with 38% reviewing only annually and 10% rarely or never, suggesting inconsistent feedback loops.

Smaller organizations are more nimble, while larger ones show signs of more formal but less frequent evaluation rhythms.

How often does your organization review or evaluate the relevance and impact of programs?



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Climate

Strategic Insight #5

Healthy culture can mask underlying strain.

Strategic Takeaway:

Most organizations report strong culture and improving morale, yet burnout and uneven well-being persist—especially in key operational roles. Positive culture scores may be hiding where pressure is accumulating.

Action:

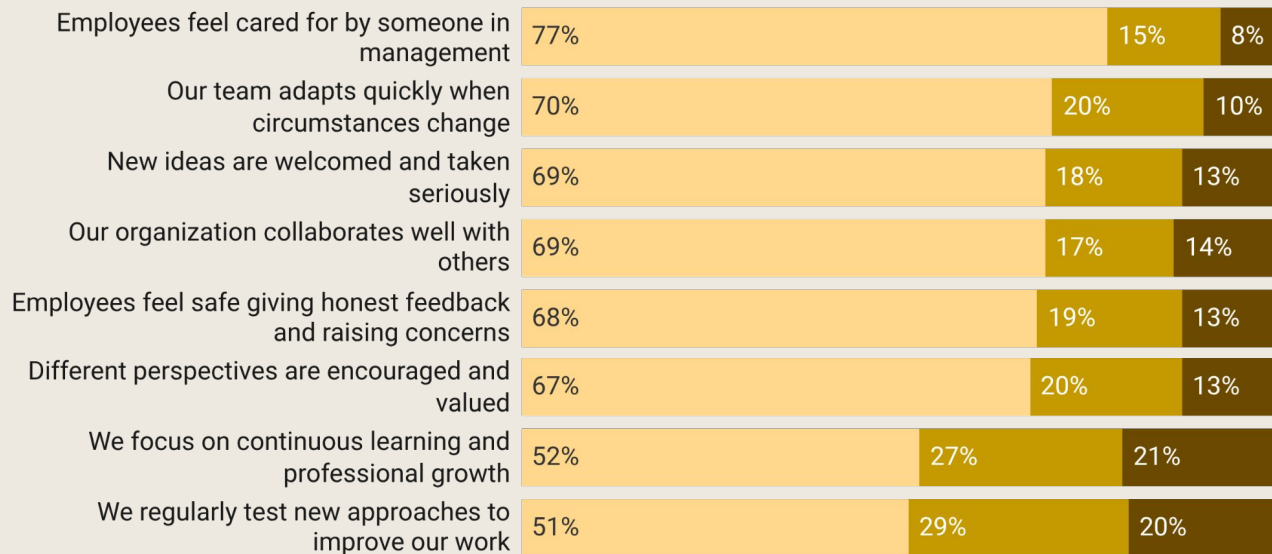
Organizations should measure and address strain alongside culture health—tracking burnout, workload, and role-specific pressure, and designing interventions targeted at the most stretched teams

Relational strength outpaces innovation and learning

77% of staff report feeling cared for by management and 70% say teams adapt quickly, but only ~50% report strong focus on innovation and professional growth—indicating relational strength but limited learning infrastructure.

How well do the following statements describe your organization's culture?

■ % Completely + Mostly
 ■ % Somewhat
 ■ % A little + Not at all



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Staff well-being is strongest in spiritual and relational areas, with emotional health slightly lower – indicating resilience but also underlying strain.

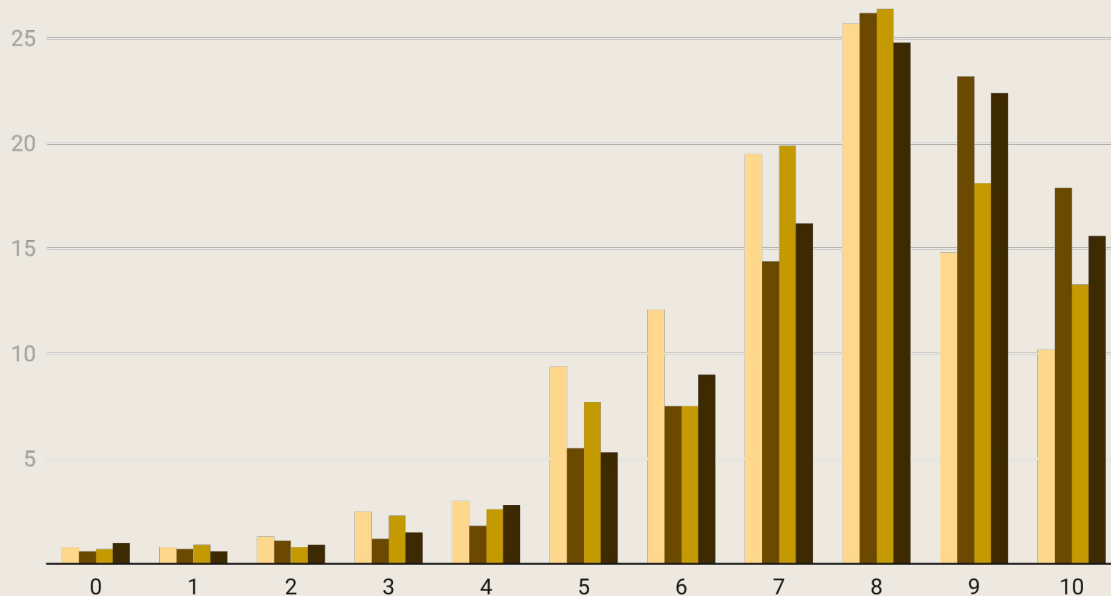
The average scores for each measure are:

- Spiritual: **7.8**
- Relational: **7.7**
- Professional: **7.5**
- Emotional: **7.2**

How would you rate the well-being of your staff in each of the following areas right now?

(0=very poor, 10=excellent)

Emotional Spiritual Professional Relational



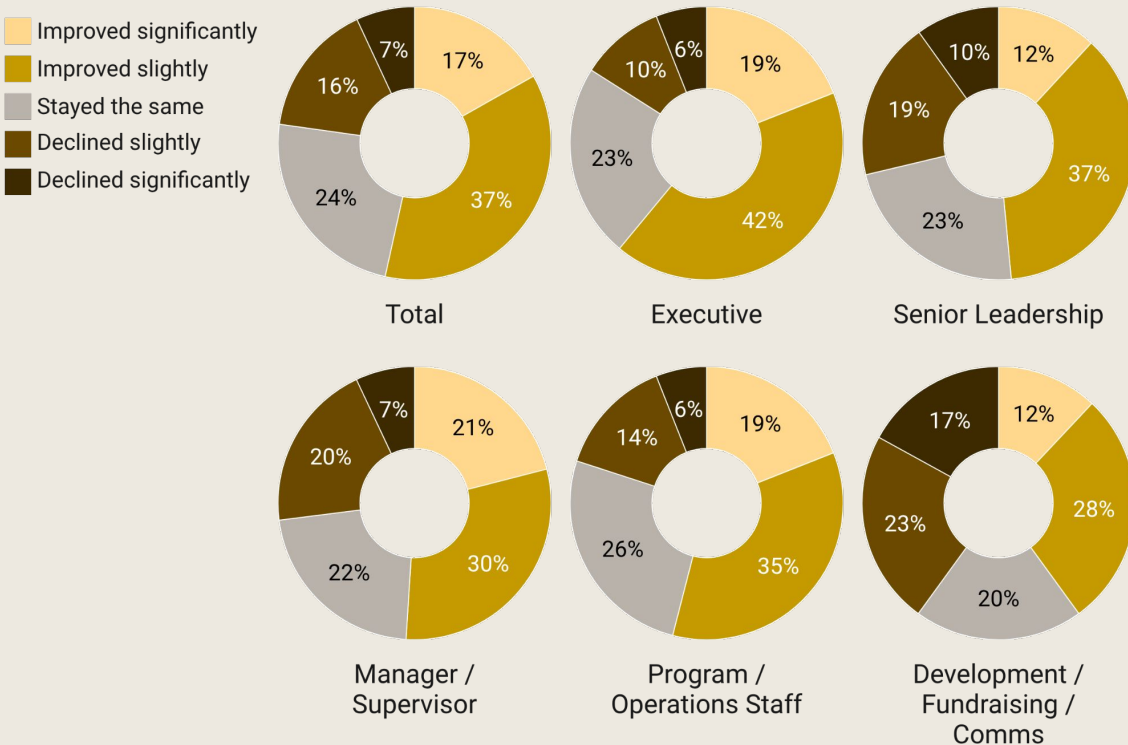
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Morale is somewhat improving overall, but not evenly across roles

54% say morale has improved, led by executives (61%).

But **development/fundraising staff stand out**, 40% report declining morale (vs. 23% overall), including 17% declining significantly. **Managers show more strain than senior leaders**, pointing to pressure concentrated in key operational roles.

How would you describe the staff morale over the past year?

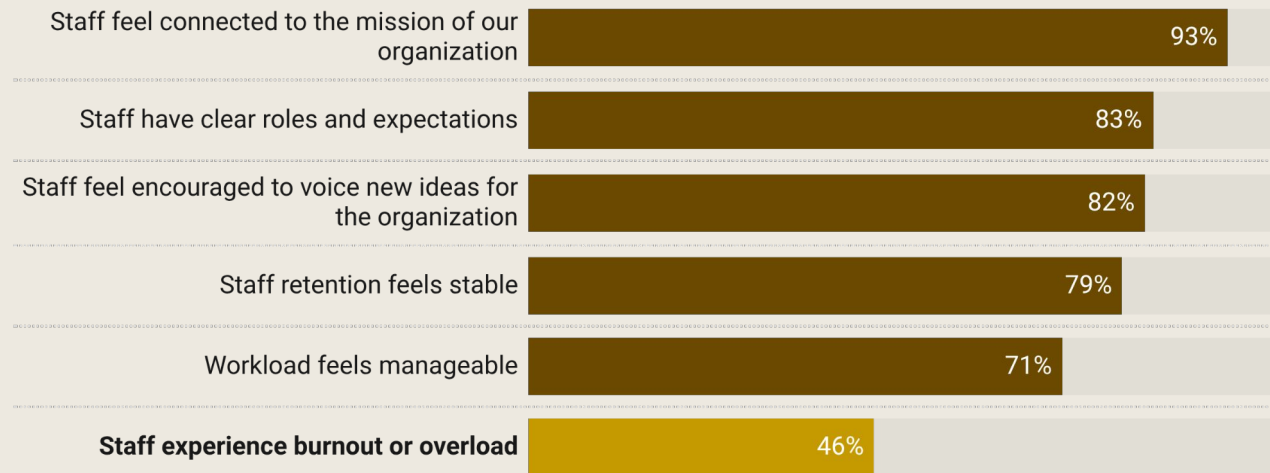


On the surface: strong culture and connection...

...but nearly **half (46%)**
admit their staff
experiences burnout or
overload, pointing to
ongoing capacity strain
beneath the surface.

How often do the following describe your organization?

% Very often + % Somewhat often



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

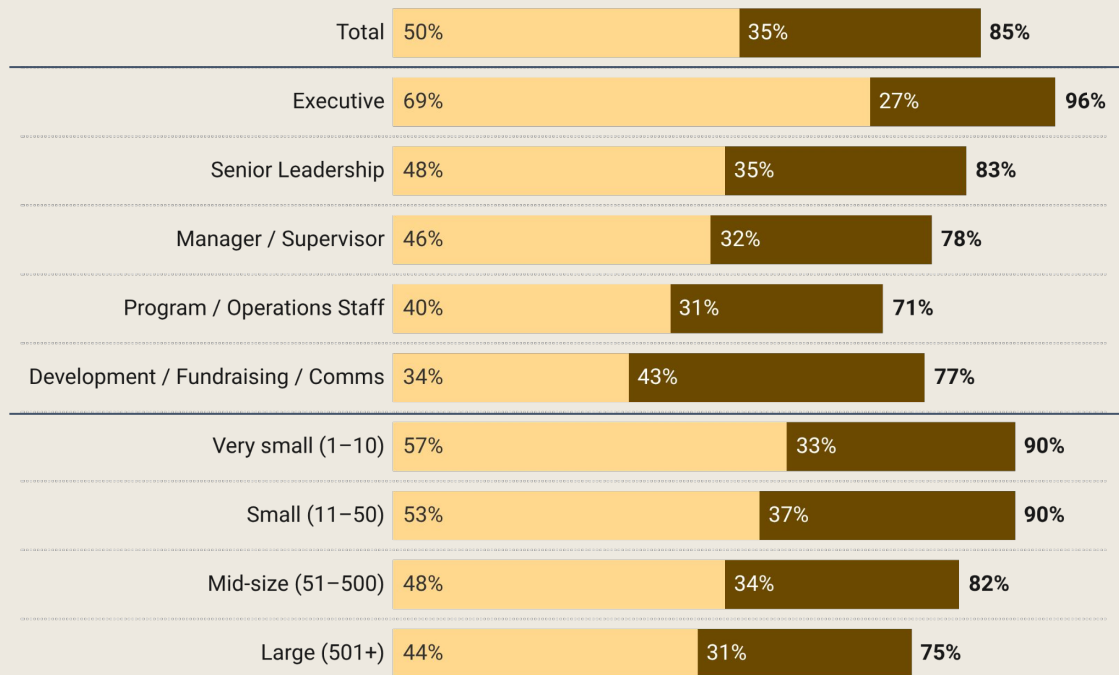
Hidden pressure: lower psychological safety in key groups

Most staff feel comfortable giving feedback—but that confidence isn't evenly distributed.

Leaders feel far more comfortable than giving honest feedback than frontline staff, and openness tends to decline as organizations grow, pointing to gaps in psychological safety at lower levels and larger orgs.

How often do you feel comfortable giving honest feedback to leadership?

■ % Very often ■ % Somewhat often



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Values Alignment

Strategic Insight #6

Values scale unevenly.

Strategic Takeaway:

Values alignment is a clear strength across Christian nonprofits, but consistency declines as organizations grow and become more complex, especially across roles and departments.

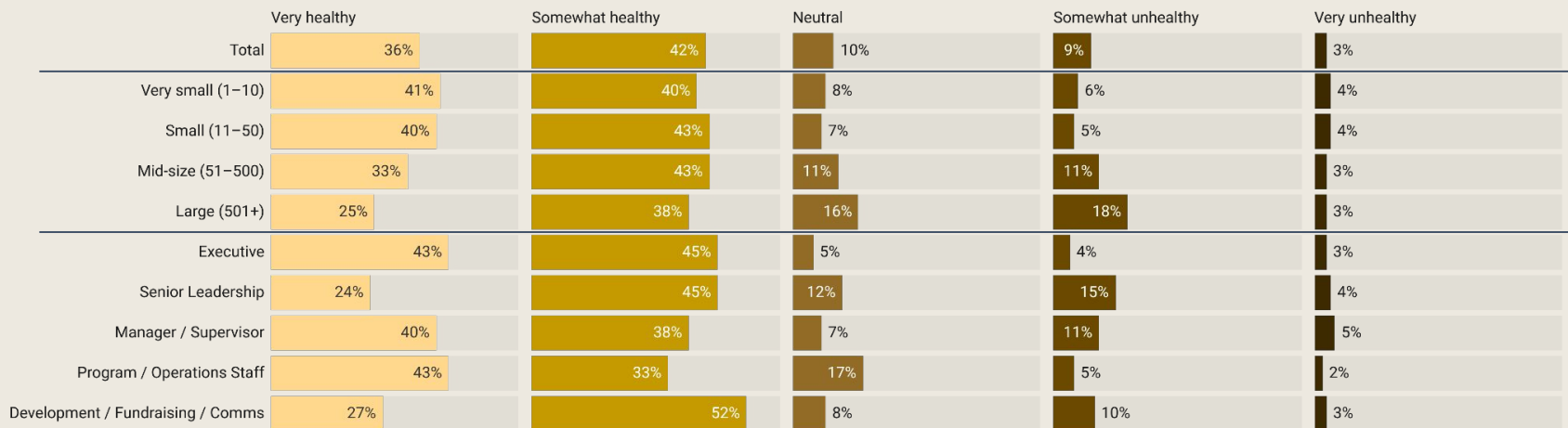
Action:

As organizations scale, leaders should **intentionally operationalize values**, translating them into clear behaviors, decision-making frameworks, and leadership expectations across every layer of the organization.

Organizational culture is broadly positive, with 78% describing it as healthy, but this masks meaningful differences by size and role

Culture strength declines as organizations scale. Smaller organizations report the strongest cultures (81%+ healthy), while large organizations lag significantly, with just 63% positive and 21% unhealthy, signaling growing strain at scale.

How would you describe your organization's overall culture?



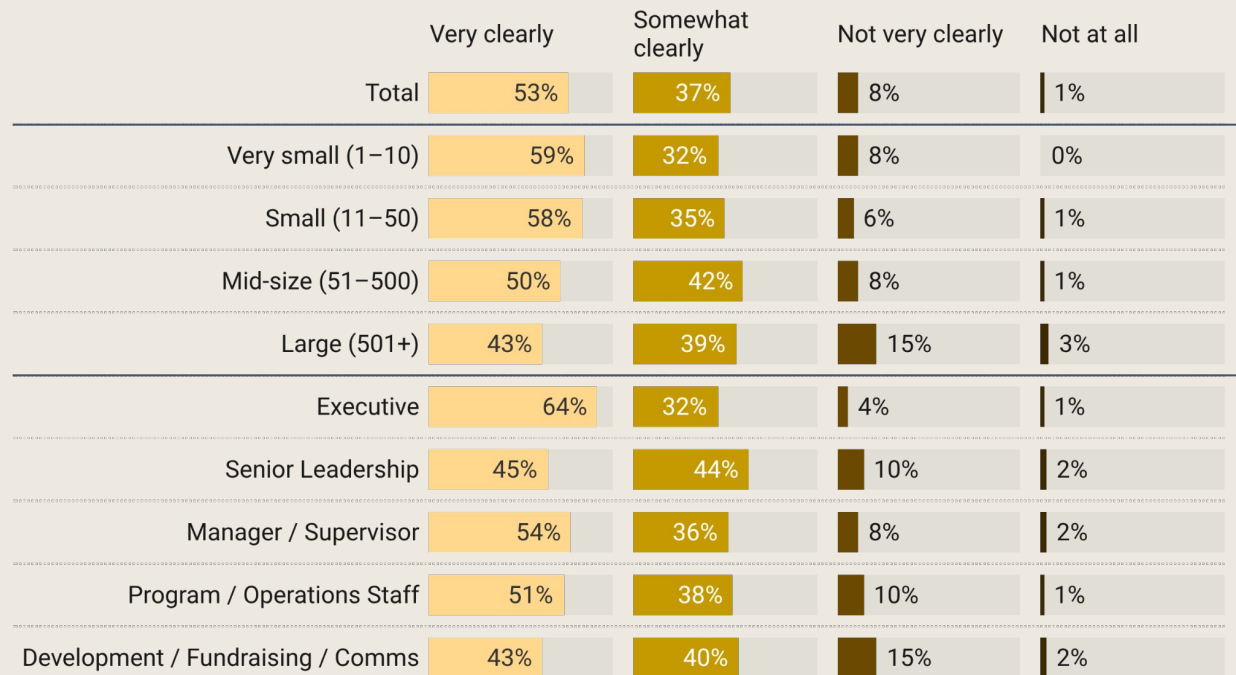
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Perceptions also vary by role, with executives the most optimistic (88% healthy), while senior leadership is less positive—only 69% healthy and nearly 1 in 5 (19%) unhealthy—highlighting pressure at the leadership layer.

Values are clear—but not experienced equally across roles

Clarity declines in larger organizations (82% clear) and among some roles—while executives are most confident (64% very clear), senior leadership and development staff are less so (~43–45% very clear, with higher skepticism)—pointing to gaps in consistency at scale and across key teams.

How clearly are your organization's values demonstrated in day-to-day behaviors and decisions?



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

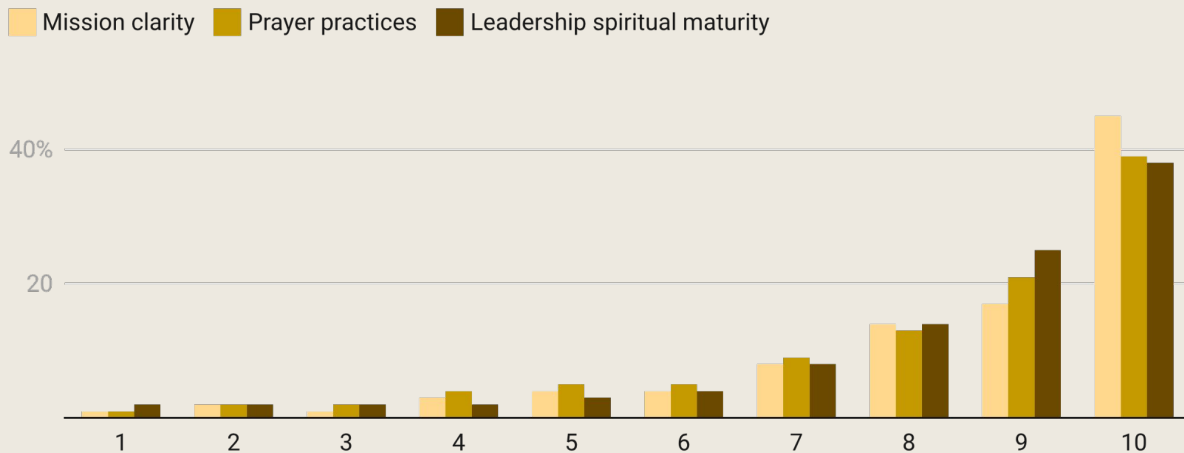
Values alignment is consistently strong across practical areas, with mission clarity, prayer practices, and leadership maturity all rated highly. Staff not only understand the values but largely experience them in practice—pointing to a well-aligned culture.

The average scores for each measure are:

- Mission clarity: **8.4**
- Prayer practices: **8.3**
- Leadership spiritual maturity: **8.3**

How would you rate the well-being of your organization in each of the following areas right now?

(0= very poor, 10= excellent)



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Faith-related values are clearly defined and widely affirmed—especially around being biblically centered.

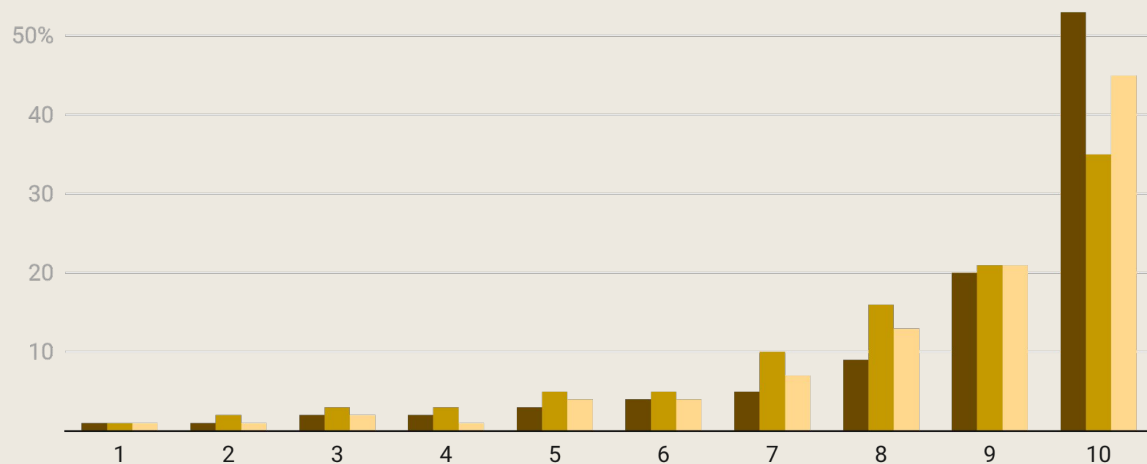
The average scores for each measure are:

- Biblical centered: **8.7**
- Spiritual formation: **8.2**
- Faith integration: **8.5**

How would you rate the well-being of your staff in each of the following areas right now?

(0=very poor, 10=excellent)

- Biblically centered (organization operates in faithfulness to Christian scripture)
- Spiritual formation (staff are encouraged to grow spiritually)
- Faith integration (faith informs decisions/strategy and programs)



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

SECTION 04

The Systems of Christian Nonprofits

- 
- *Collaboration & Partnerships*
 - *Investment in People*
 - *Compensation, Benefits and Financial Health*

Collaboration & Partnerships

Strategic Insight #7

Collaboration is common, but rarely strategic.

Strategic Takeaway:

Most Christian nonprofits partner with others, but collaboration is often focused on service delivery or resource sharing rather than deeper strategic alignment or integration.

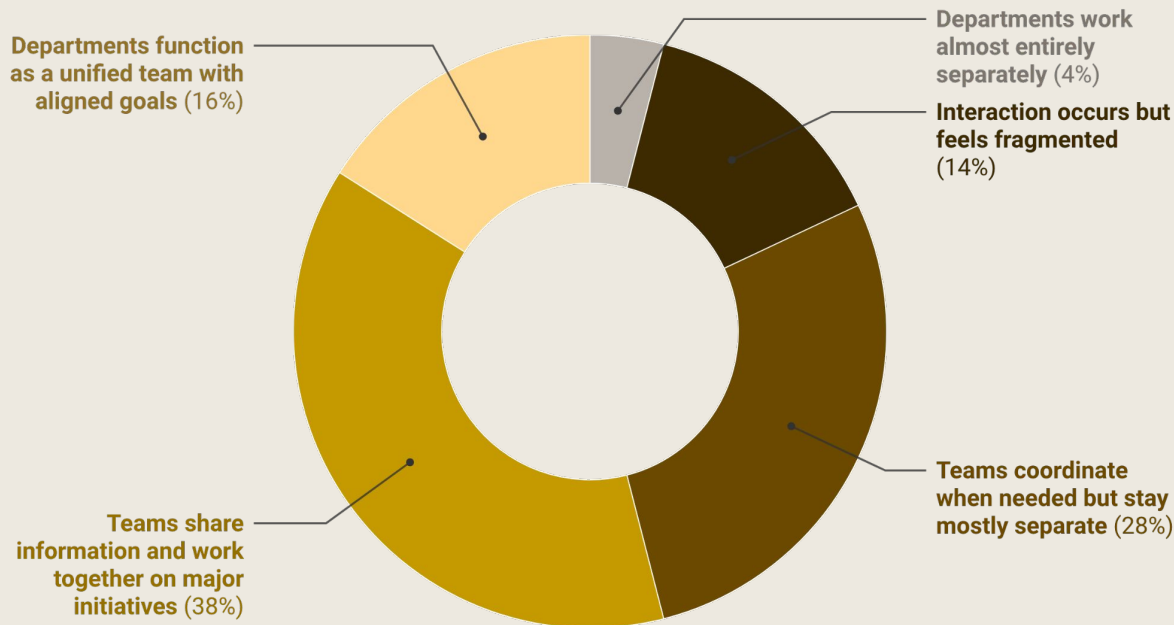
Action:

There is an opportunity to move from **transactional to strategic partnership**, aligning around shared outcomes, coordinated strategy, and collective impact rather than just shared activity.

Coordination is common, but full integration is rare.

54% of staff report at least some alignment across teams (38% collaborate on major initiatives, 16% operate as a unified team), while 42% report remaining more separate (28% mostly separate, 14% fragmented).

How would you describe the relationships between teams/departments at your organization?

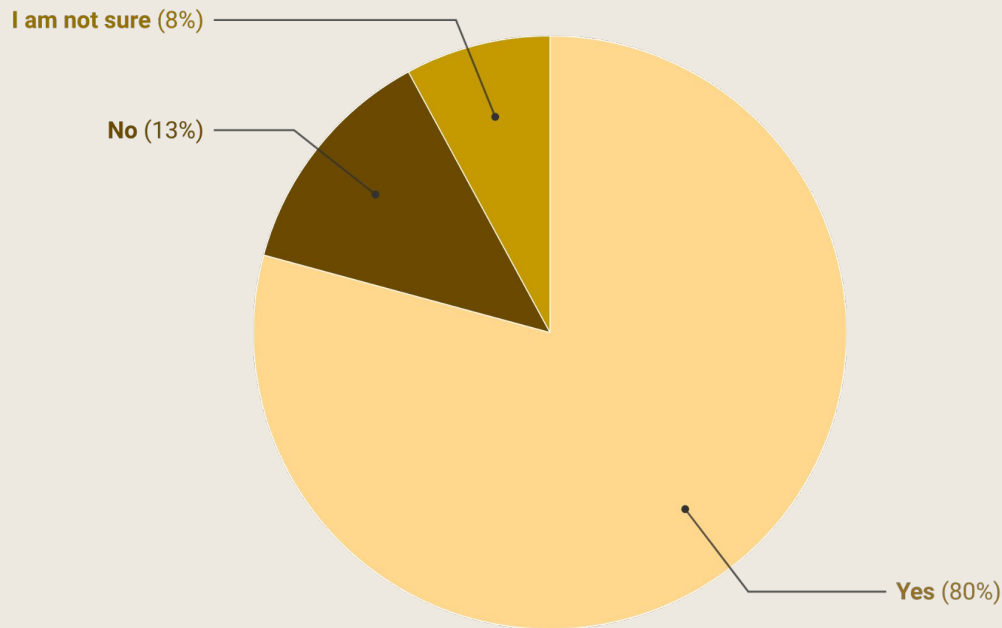


n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

80% of Christian nonprofits collaborate with other organizations

Partnership is a core operating model across the sector.

Does your organization collaborate with other organizations?



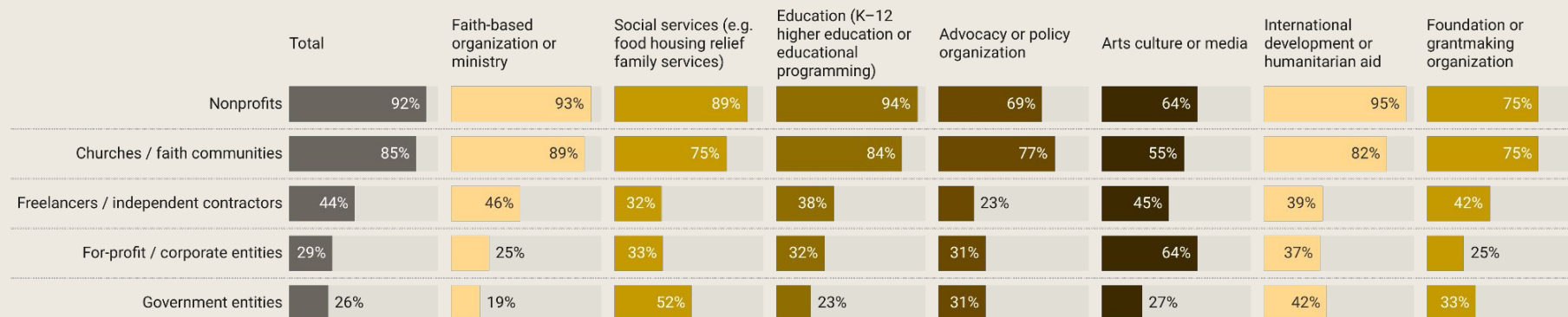
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Almost all (92%) Christian Nonprofits collaborate with other nonprofits

92% of Christian nonprofits partner with other nonprofits and 85% with churches, compared to ~25–30% with government or corporate entities—indicating strong internal networks but limited cross-sector engagement.

Who does your organization typically partner with?

Select all that apply. Broken down by focus of organization that the employee works for.



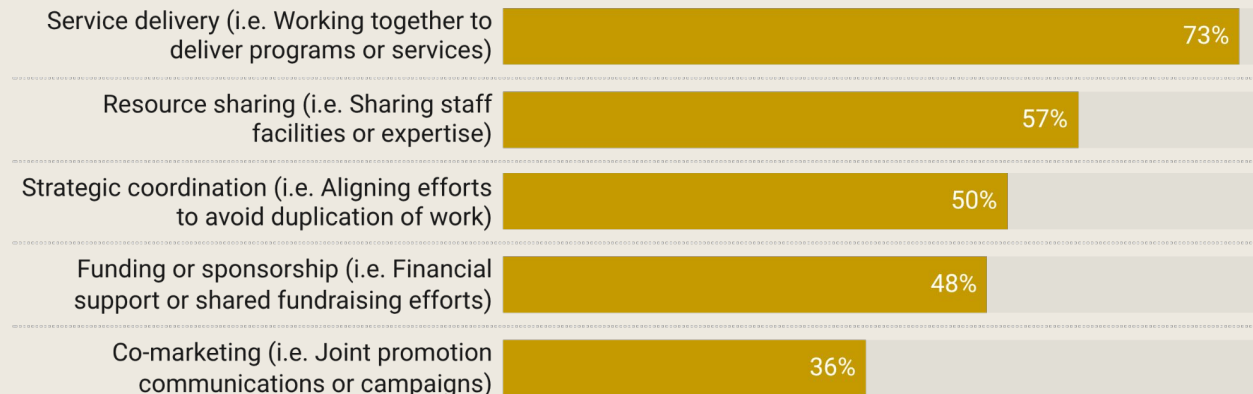
n=807 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Most collaboration remains tactical, not strategic.

Partnerships are most common in service delivery (73%) and resource sharing (57%), with fewer engaging in strategic coordination (50%) or co-marketing (36%)—suggesting collaboration is more tactical than strategic.

In what ways does your organization partner?

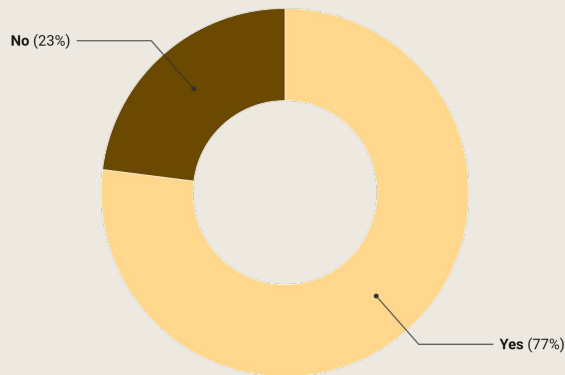
Select all that apply.



n=807 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Among organizations not currently partnering, 3 in 4 see the value

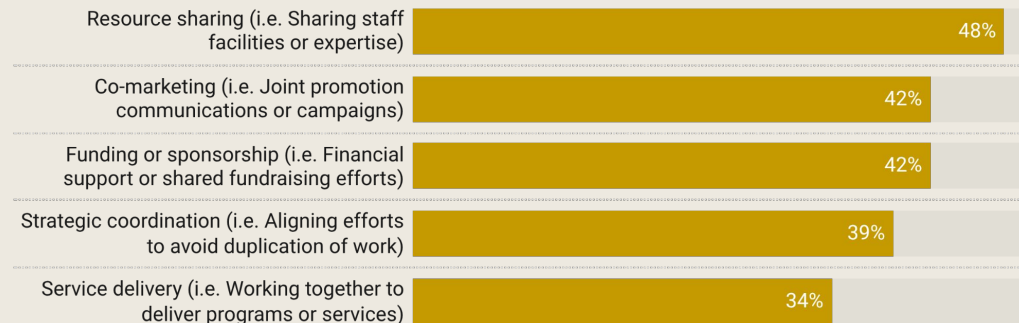
Do you believe your organization would benefit from partnerships with other organizations?



n=127 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

In what ways could you imagine your organization partnering with others?

Select all that apply.

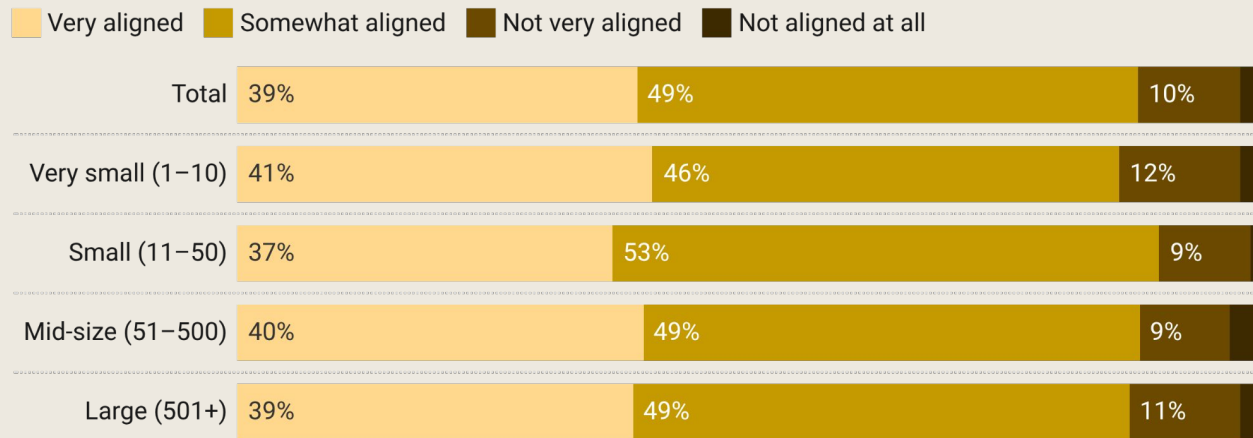


n= 127 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Alignment with other Christian nonprofits is broadly strong, with 88% reporting at least some alignment—including 39% who feel very aligned.

This consistency holds across organization sizes. However, most alignment is moderate rather than deep, with nearly half (49%) only somewhat aligned—pointing to opportunities for stronger collaboration and clearer differentiation in approach.

How aligned do you feel your mission is with other Christian nonprofits doing similar work in your city/region?



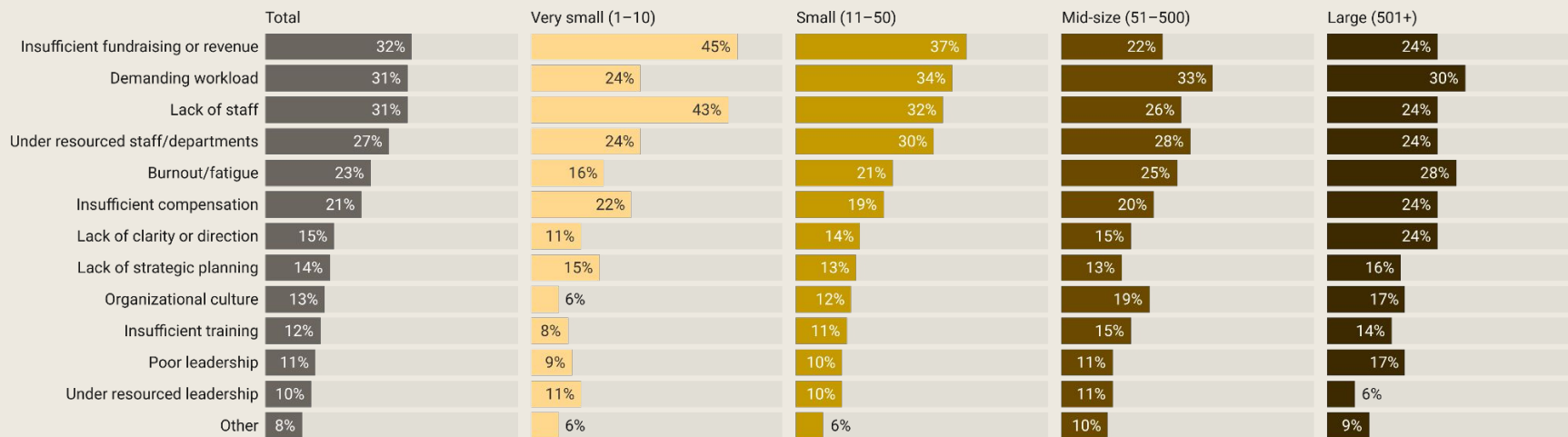
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Capacity is the top barrier—but culture and competition also get in the way.

While limited staff capacity leads (45%), nearly a third point to an organizational culture that prefers independence (30%), highlighting a mindset barrier to collaboration. At the same time, competition for donors and funding (25%) continues to create friction—suggesting that even when mission alignment exists, financial realities and a bias toward autonomy can limit collective impact.

What are the greatest barriers preventing collaboration or collective impact in your sector?

Select up to 3.

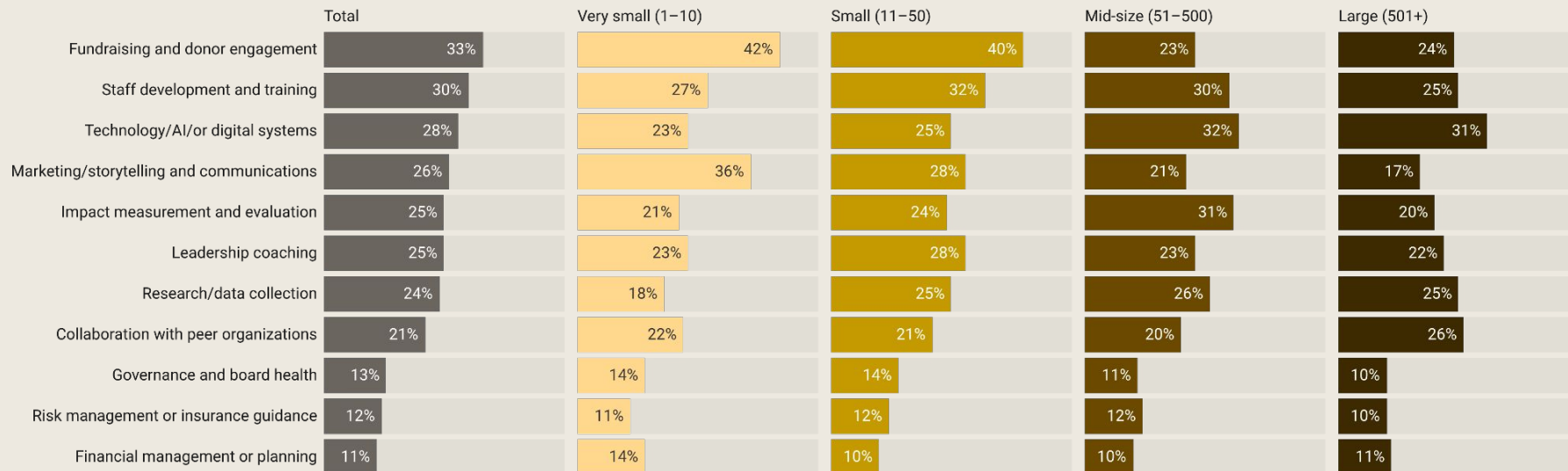


Partnership support needs shift as organizations grow.

Smaller nonprofits prioritize fundraising and marketing, while mid-size and large organizations increasingly turn to technology, AI, and data systems—one of the fastest-rising needs with scale. Staff development remains a consistent priority across all sizes, while governance and financial planning rank lowest.

In which areas would your organization most value support, partnership, or shared services?

Select up to 3.



Investment in People

People investment is culture-driven, but system-light.

Strategic Takeaway:

Organizations consistently invest in relational and spiritual support for staff, but are less likely to invest in structured supports like workload design, role clarity, compensation advocacy, and formal development systems.

Action:

To strengthen long-term staff health, **organizations should balance relational care with structural investment**. Build systems that support clarity, capacity, and sustainability alongside culture.

Where organizations invest: *relational and spiritual support.*

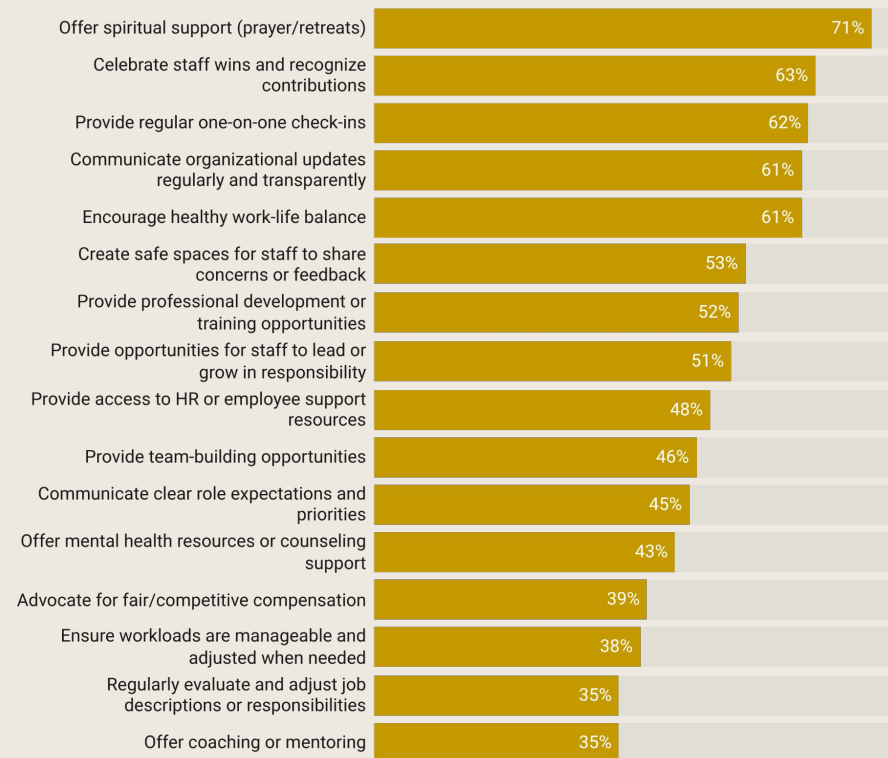
Where investment lags: *structural and operational systems.*

Organizations are most likely to support employees through relational and mission-aligned practices, led by spiritual support (71%), recognition (63%), and regular check-ins (62%)—suggesting a strong emphasis on culture and connection.

Fewer organizations emphasize compensation advocacy (39%), workload management (38%), or role clarity and job design (35%), indicating that while culture is strong, systems and operational supports are less consistently in place.

Which of the following actions does your organization regularly take to support the well-being and development of employees?

Select all that apply.

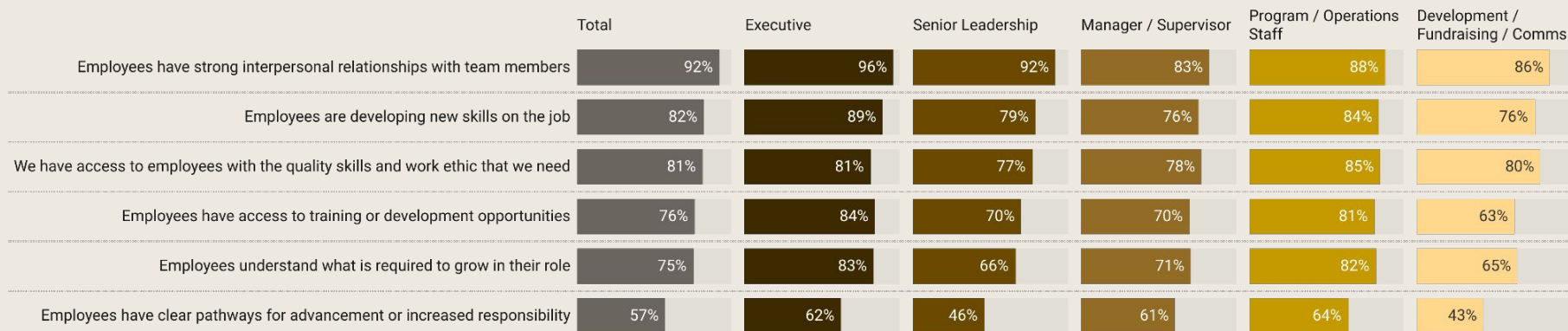


Development is happening — but without consistent structure.

Staff development is strong in practice—over 80% say they are building skills and have strong team relationships—but weaker in structure, with only 57% reporting clear pathways for advancement and lower access to training and growth clarity, especially among development and fundraising staff.

How true are the following statements about staff development in your organization?

% Very true + % Somewhat true.



n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

“Today, what actions does your organization regularly take to support the well-being and development of employees?”

*Support is strongest in **relational and spiritual practices**, while more structured systems are less consistently in place.*

Most Common Supports

- Spiritual practices (~70%)
- Relational check-ins (~65%)
- Flexibility / PTO (~50%)

Less Consistent Supports

- Mental health (~45%)
- Professional development (~35%)
- Retreats (~30%)

Least Common Supports

- Formal systems (~20%)

Gap

- Little to no support (~25%)

Compensation, Benefits & Financial Health

Strategic Insight #9

Financial pressure is shaping both organizational sustainability and employee experience.

Strategic Takeaway:

While staffing and workload remain key challenges, organizations—especially larger ones—are increasingly facing deeper structural issues tied to funding models, donor concentration, and long-term financial resilience.

Action:

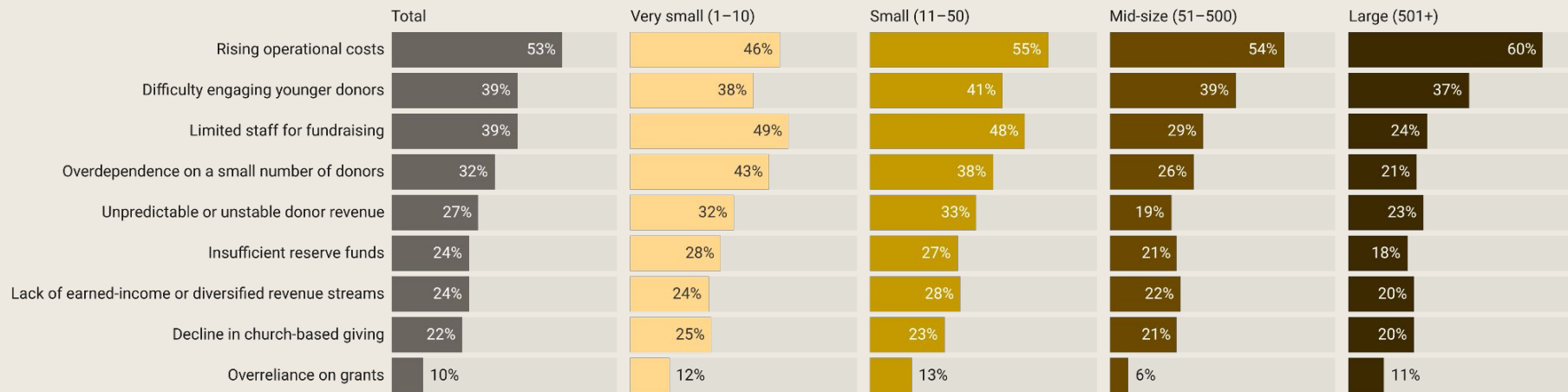
The sector should prioritize more **resilient funding strategies**, diversifying revenue streams, investing in younger donor engagement, and strengthening long-term financial planning.

At the organizational level sustainability pressure is rising.

A majority of organizations cite rising operational costs as their top pressure point. At the same time, roughly one-third point to overdependence on a small donor base and difficulty engaging younger donors—highlighting systemic vulnerability in how revenue is generated. Financial strain is universal, but the constraint shifts from capacity to sustainability as organizations grow.

Which financial challenges most impact your organization today?

Select all that apply.



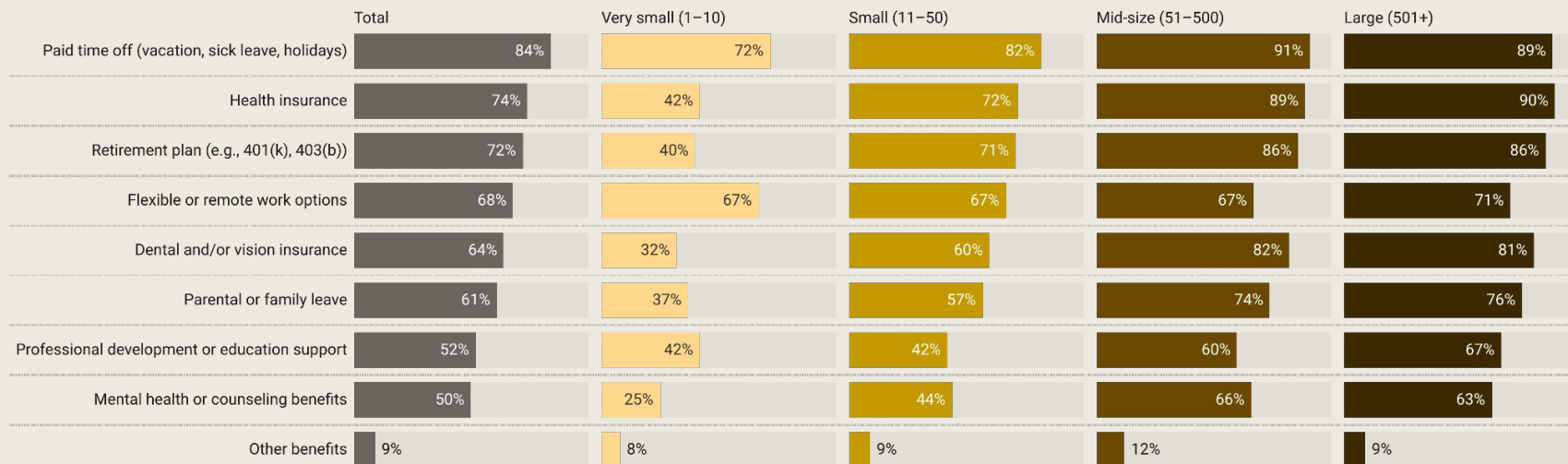
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

At the employee level: financial pressure shows up in benefits and compensation gaps.

Very small nonprofit organizations offer core benefits like health insurance and retirement at roughly half the frequency of mid-size and large organizations.

Which of the following benefits are offered by your organization?

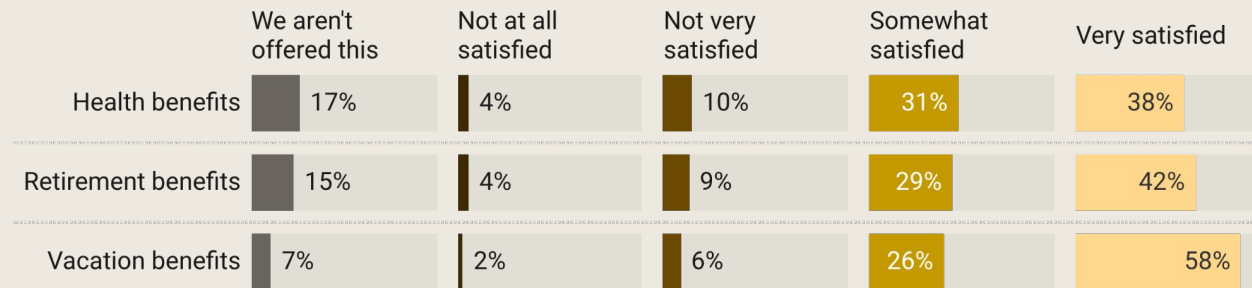
Select all that apply.



Overall, satisfaction for benefits is only moderate.

Only about two-out-of-five employees are very satisfied with their health and retirement benefits. In fact, one-in-six aren't even offered health or retirement benefits.

How satisfied are you with each of the following at your organization?



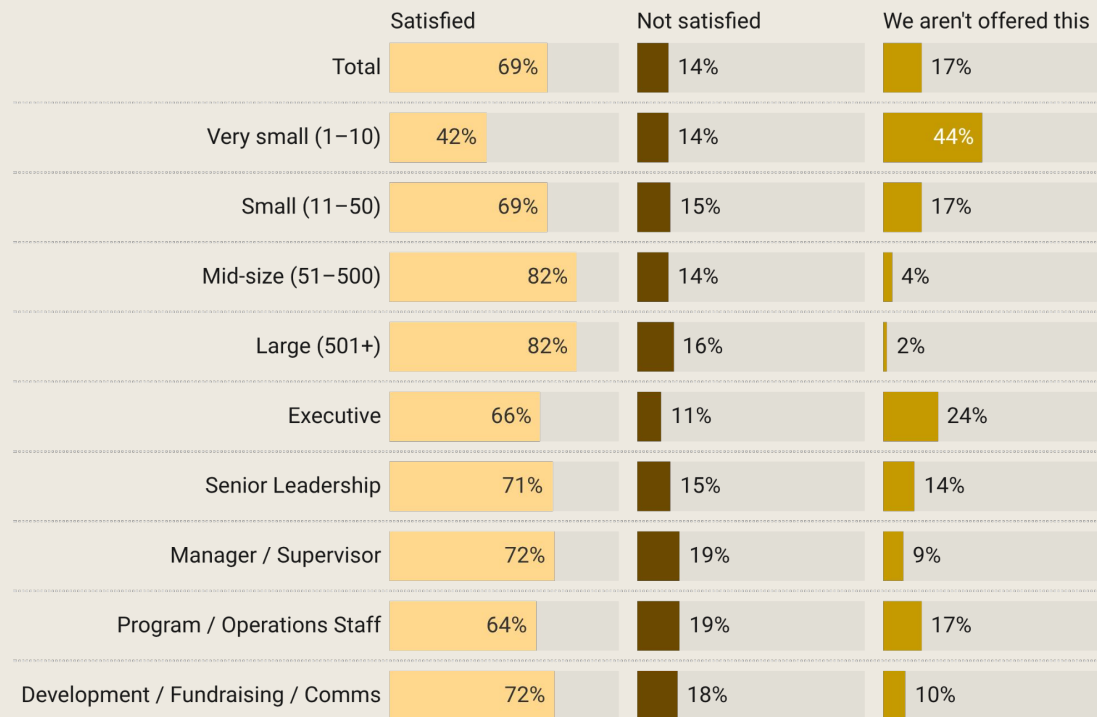
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Health benefits reveal the clearest divide between access and experience.

While satisfaction is moderate overall (69%), very small organizations face a major access gap (44% not offered). Among those with benefits, dissatisfaction is higher than other categories (up to 19% for some roles), and executives report lower satisfaction (66%) alongside higher lack of access (24%), suggesting inconsistency even at senior levels.

How satisfied are you with the health benefits at your organization?

Satisfied = % Very + % Somewhat. Not satisfied = % Not very + % Not at all.



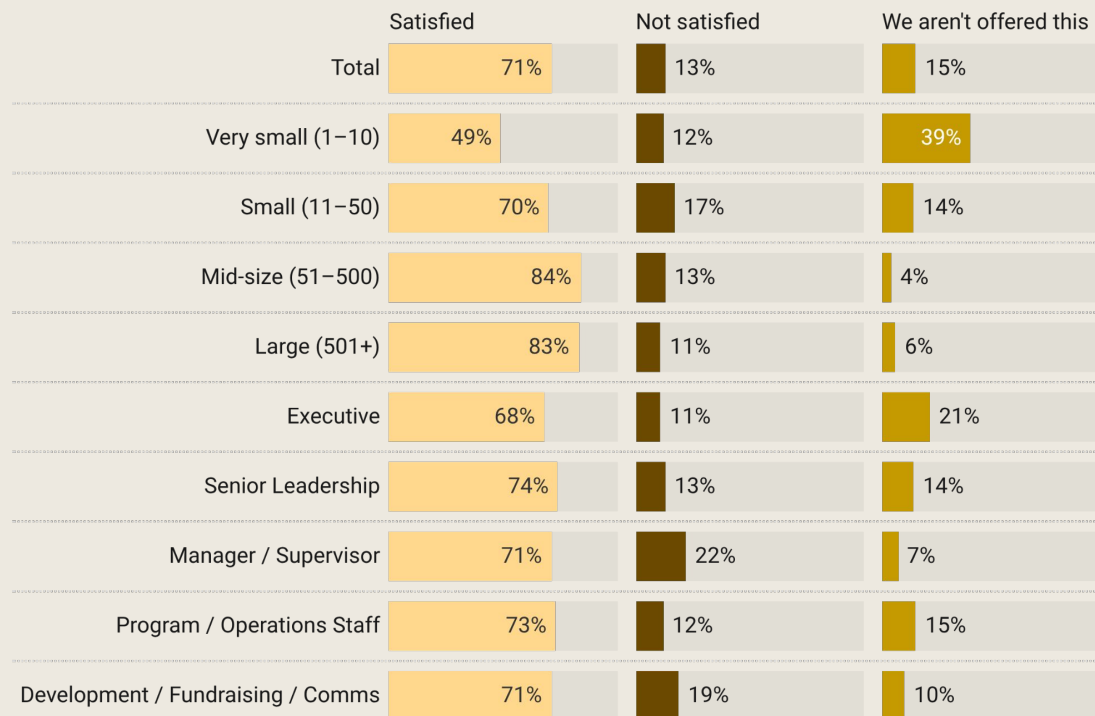
n=1,017 Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

How satisfied are you with the retirement benefits at your organization?

Satisfied = % Very + % Somewhat. Not satisfied = % Not very + % Not at all.

Retirement benefits are uneven and structurally limited.

Although 71% report satisfaction, access remains a key barrier—especially for very small orgs (39% not offered). Among those with benefits, managers (22% not satisfied) and development staff (19%) show elevated dissatisfaction, suggesting gaps in competitiveness or clarity of offerings.



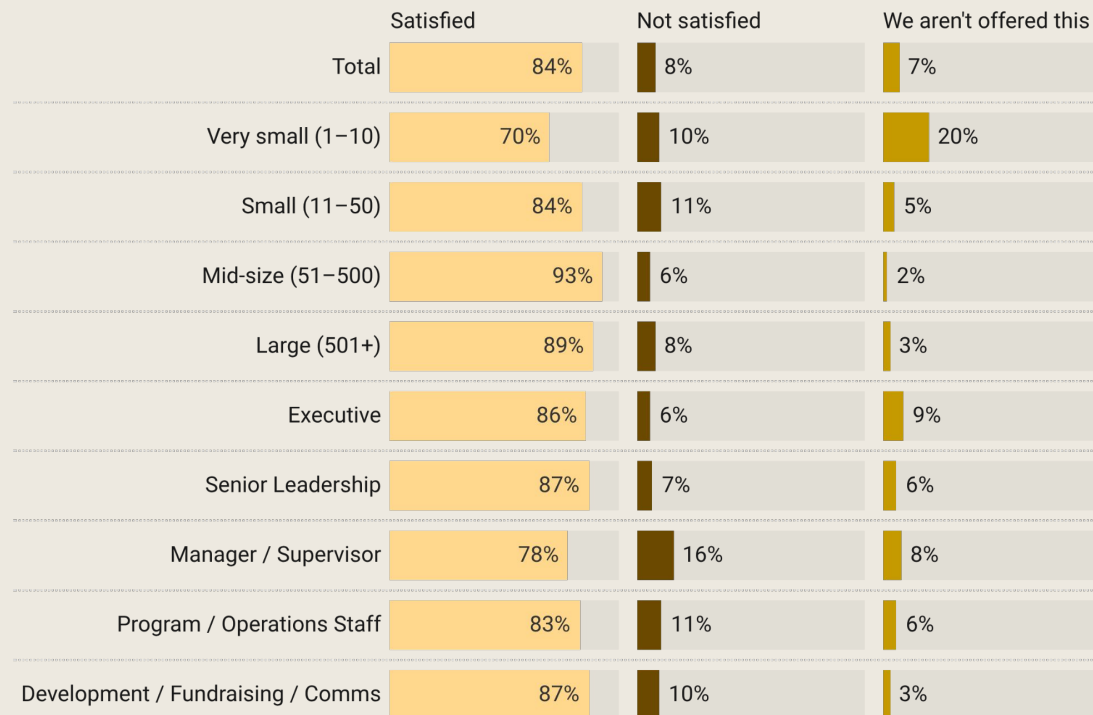
n=1,017 Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

Vacation benefits are a clear strength, with 84% satisfied overall and strong consistency across roles and sizes.

The main gap is access among very small organizations (20% not offered), but where offered, satisfaction remains high and relatively uniform—indicating this is the most stable and equitable benefit area.

How satisfied are you with the vacation benefits at your organization?

Satisfied = % Very + % Somewhat. Not satisfied = % Not very + % Not at all.



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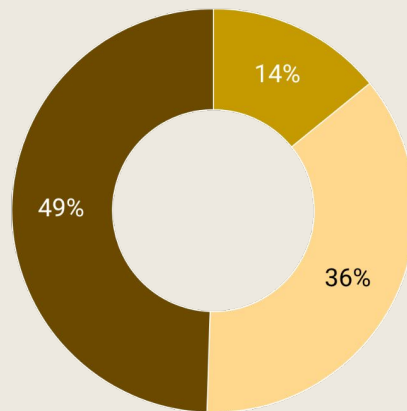
Special Findings:

AI Implementation

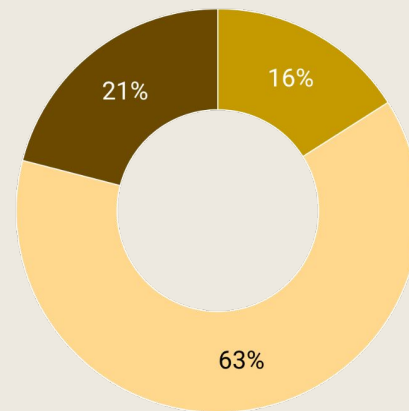
AI adoption is outpacing governance

While 63% of Christian Nonprofits use AI in their operations, only 36% report having an AI use policy

AI Use Policy vs. AI Usage



Does your organization **have an AI use policy?**



Does your organization **utilize AI in any of its operations?**

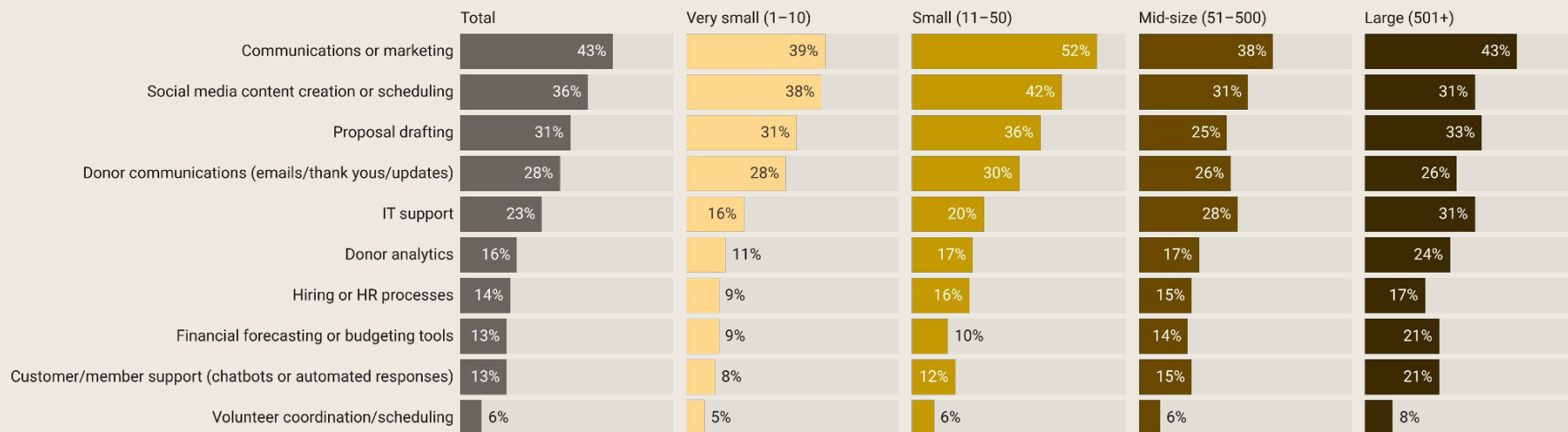
n=1,017 U.S. Christian Nonprofit Employees, February - March 2026.

AI adoption is growing—but concentrated in communications, not operations

AI adoption is strongest in outward-facing work—communications (43%) and social media (36%)—where impact is immediate. Smaller orgs often lead here, using AI to stretch limited capacity. Back-office functions like finance (13%) and HR (14%) lag, while larger orgs show more integrated use across IT, analytics, and support.

Which, if any, of the following areas of your organization currently have AI integrated into its operations?

Select all that apply.



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