

A woman in traditional attire, including a white lace top and a red and white patterned shawl, is seated in a church. She has her right hand raised in a gesture of praise or prayer. Other people are visible in the background, some also with their hands raised. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an indoor church service.

Women in World Christianity: Facts, Figures, Challenges, & Opportunities

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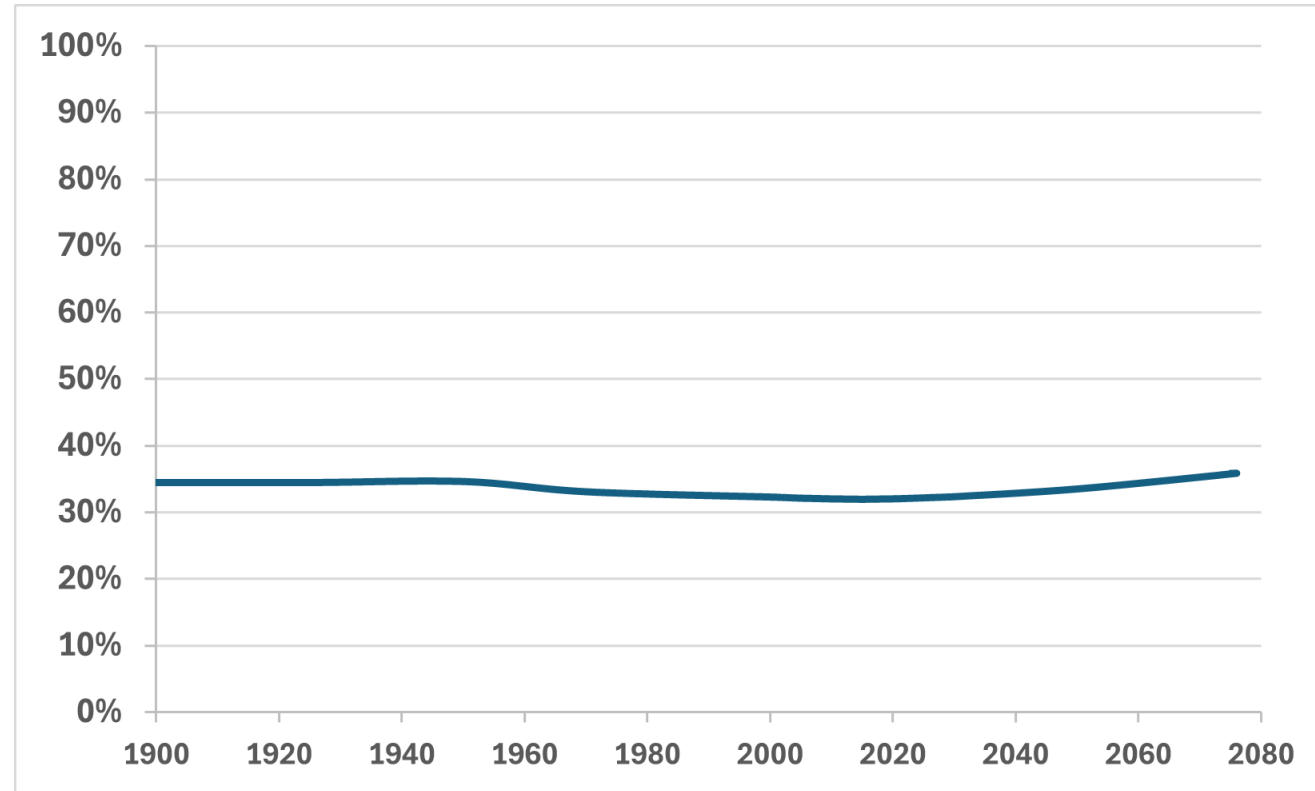
Outline

- Trends in World Christianity, 1900–2075
- Gender Gaps Worldwide
- Gender Gaps in World Christianity: Membership, Participation, and Leadership

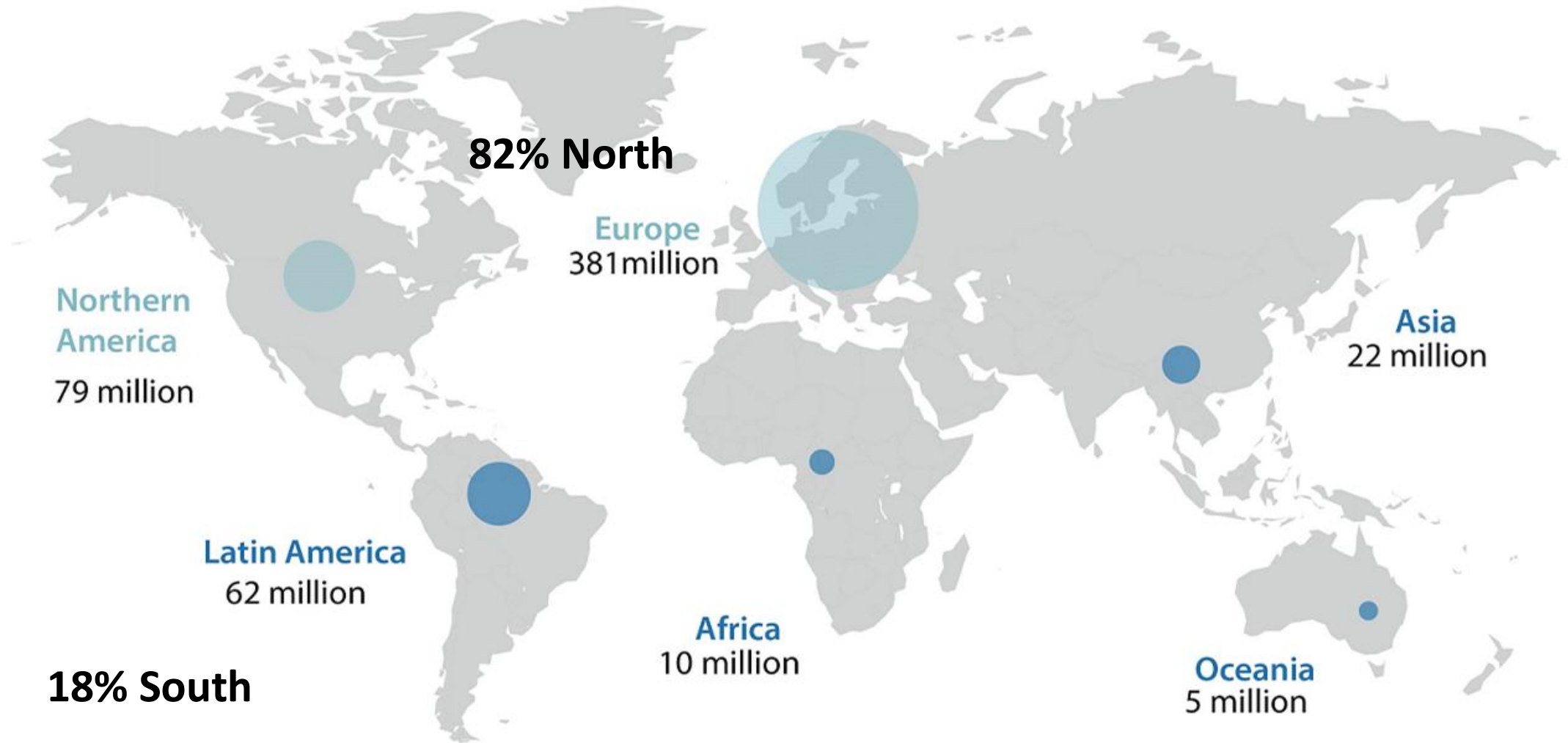


**WORLD CHRISTIANITY
1900-2075**

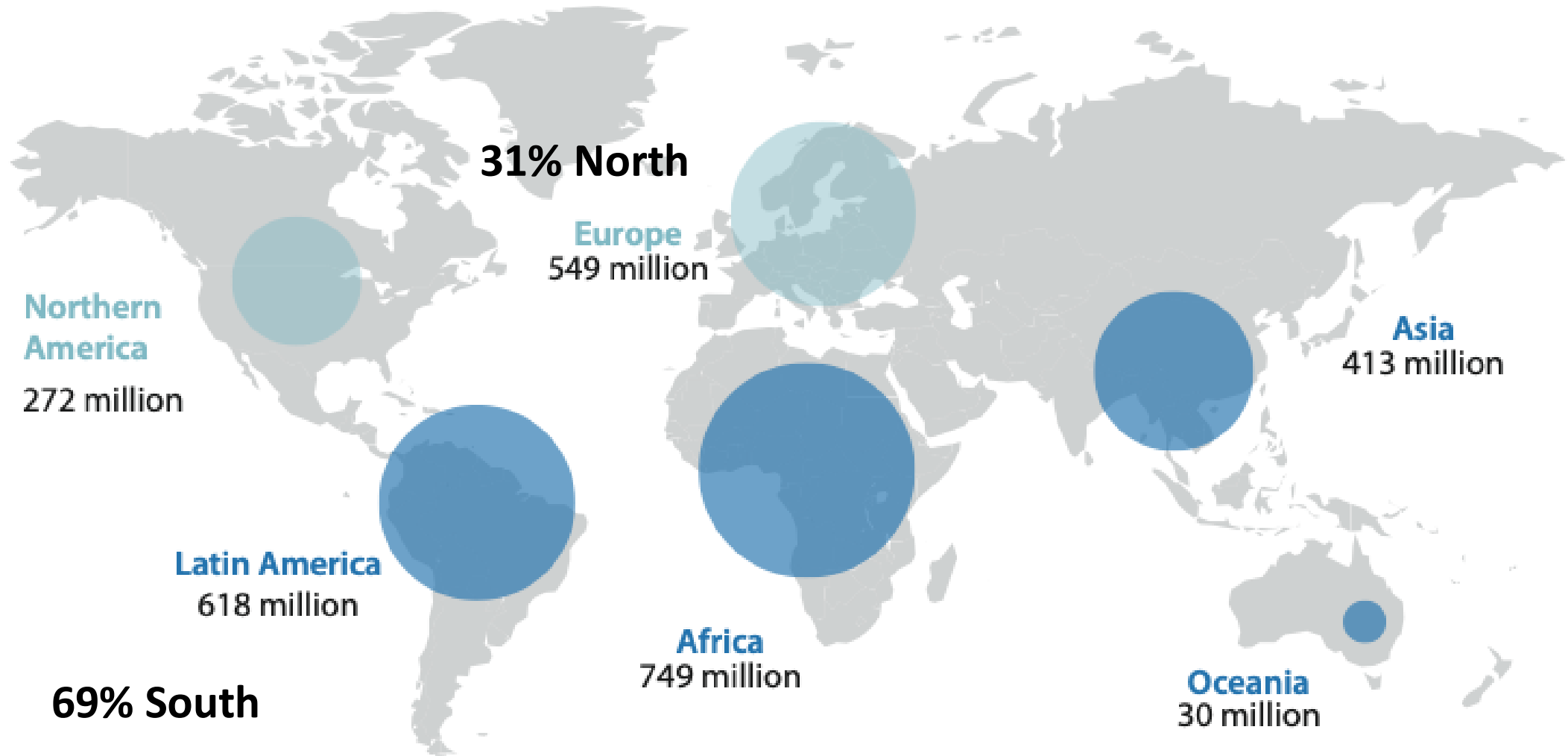
% Christian over time



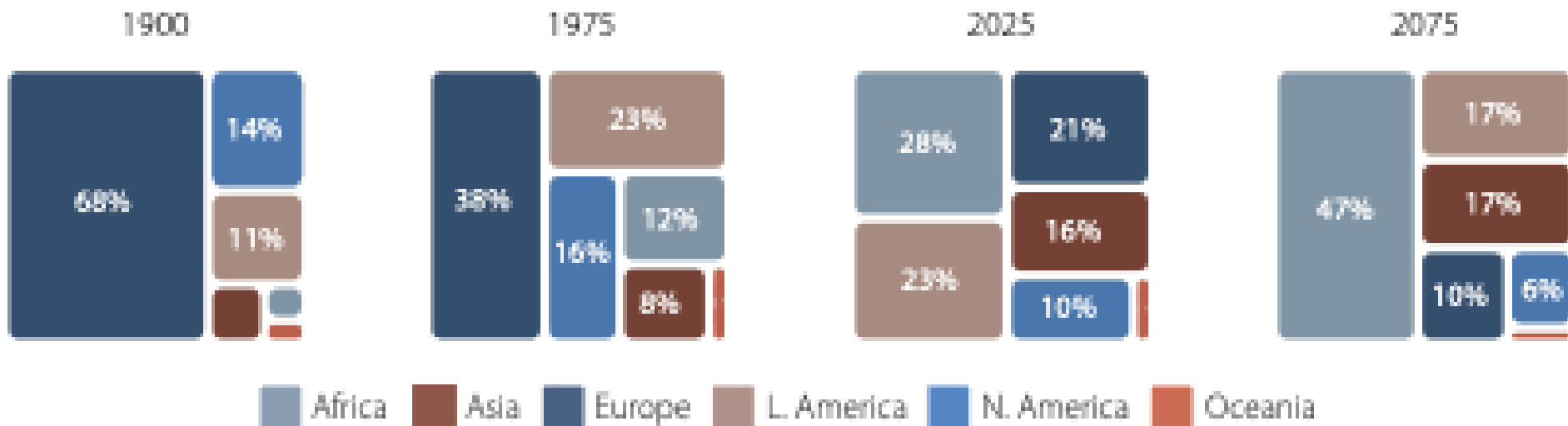
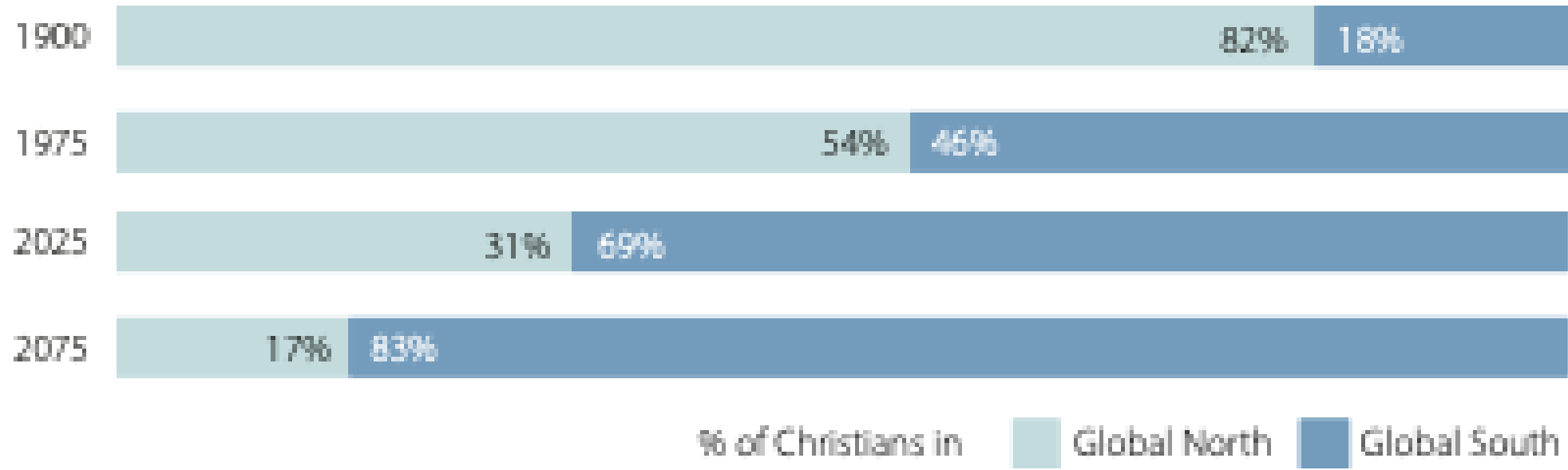
Christians by continent, 1900



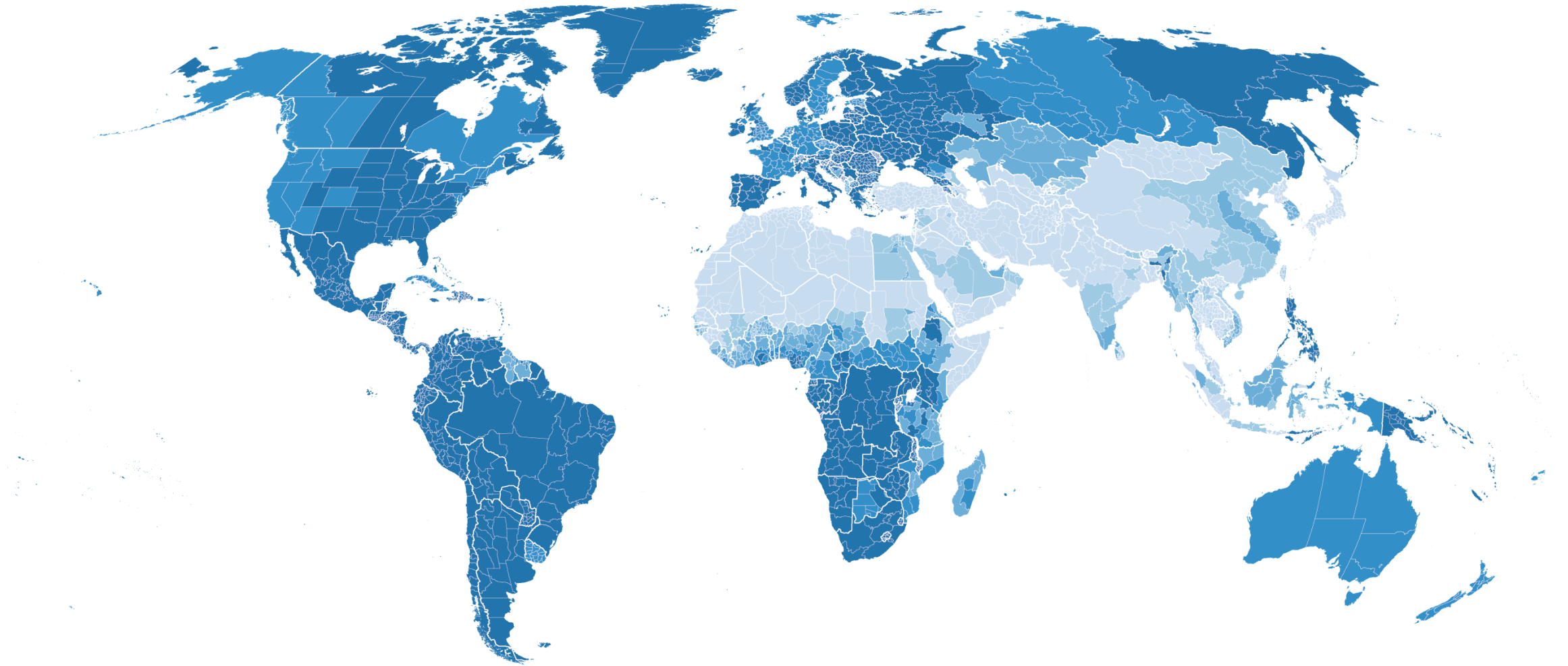
Christians by continent, 2025



Christianity is shifting



Christians, 2025



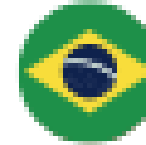
Traditions, 2025



Largest tradition: Catholics



48% of all Christians



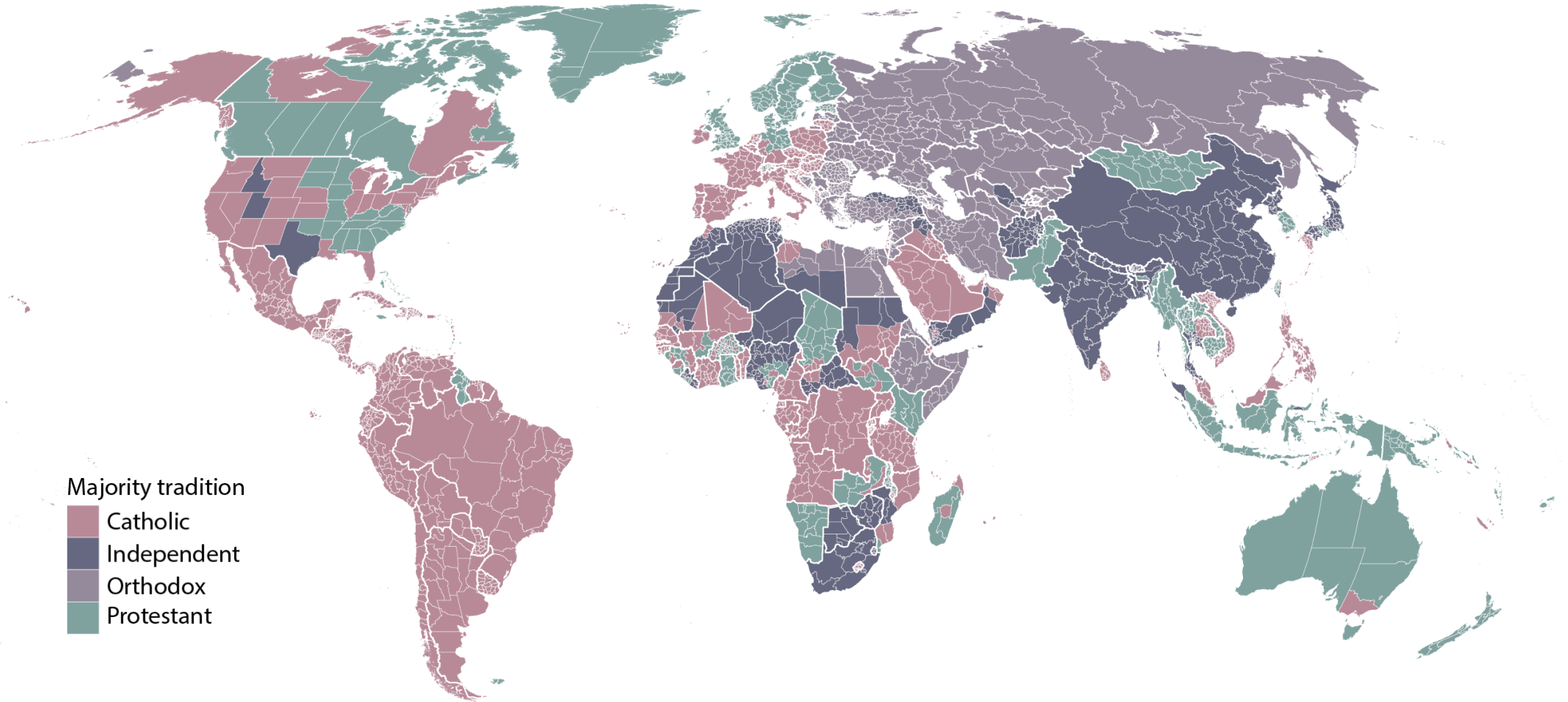
Most Catholics: Brazil
147m (67%)



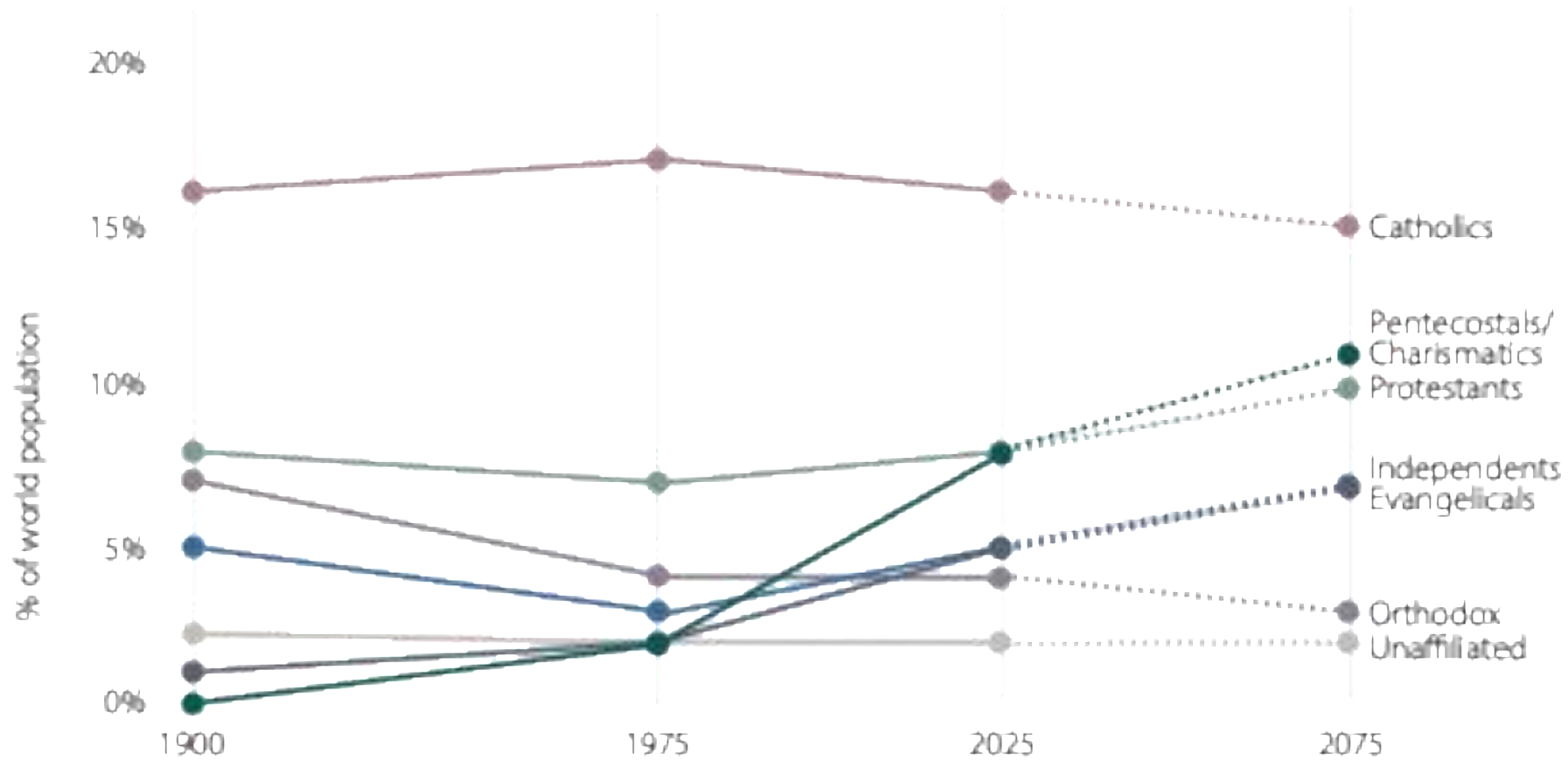
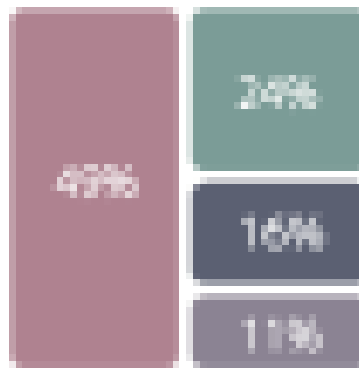
Fastest growing 1975–2025: Independents

Majority tradition

-  Catholic
-  Independent
-  Orthodox
-  Protestant



Traditions, 2025

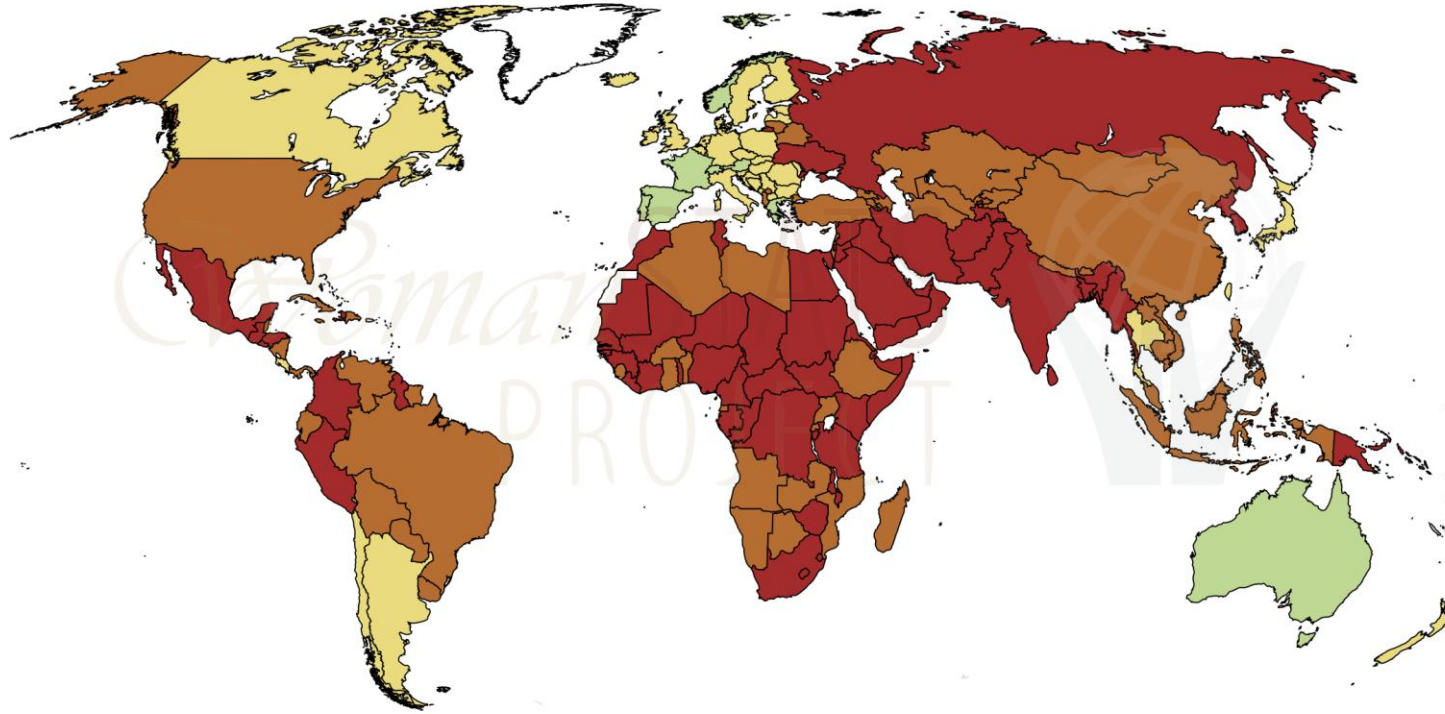


Women



Physical Security of Women

Scaled 2019



MULTIVAR-SCALE-1
Data The WomanStats Project
<http://womanstats.org>

- Women are physically secure
- Women have fairly high levels of physical security
- Women have moderate levels of physical security
- Women have low levels of physical security
- Women lack physical security
- No Data

WOMEN IN WORLD CHRISTIANITY

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING
A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

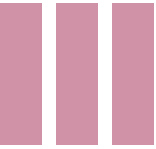


GINA A. ZURLO

WILEY Blackwell

Women in World Christianity: Building and Sustaining a Global Movement (Wiley-Blackwell, 2023)

- Women in the church by continent
 - Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, Oceania
- Women in the church by tradition
 - Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Independent,
 - Evangelical, Pentecostal/Charismatic
- Topics for Christian women worldwide
 - Gender-based violence, ecology, theological education, peacebuilding



Equality is
measured in terms
of gaps, not levels



Economic Participation and Opportunity



Educational Attainment



Health and Survival

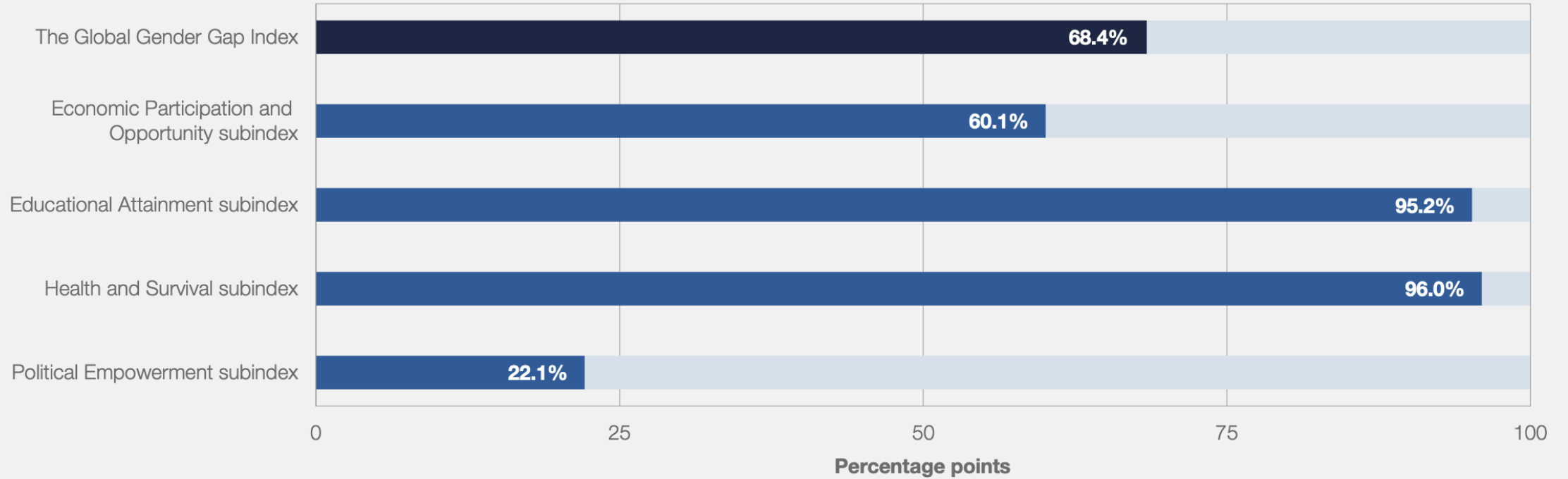


Political Empowerment

FIGURE 1.2

The state of gender gaps, by subindex

Percentage of the gender gap closed to date, 2023



Source

World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index, 2023.

Note

Population-weighted averages, 146 countries.

Status of the gender gaps

United Nations Human Development 2019 report

- No where in the world have women attained complete equality with men.
- If current progress continues, it will take 202 years for women to be fully equal.
- Progress on gender equality is *slowing* down as women attain the “easier” markers of progress, like primary education.

Dana Robert:
“World
Christianity
as a Women’s
Movement”

*(2006, International Bulletin of
Mission Research)*

“What would the study of Christianity in Africa, Asia, and Latin America look like if scholars put women into the center of their research?”

- World Christianity is majority female.
- Gender-based reasons for conversion.

The female majority in World Christianity

- No data?

2019– 2021: Research

1. Literature review – who is writing about women and what are they finding?
2. % female – assessing the % female of every Christian denomination in the world
3. Survey – what are women *doing* in churches? What are men and women's attitudes toward gender in congregational life?

Christianity is majority female everywhere in the world.



Hungary



Sierra Leone



Myanmar

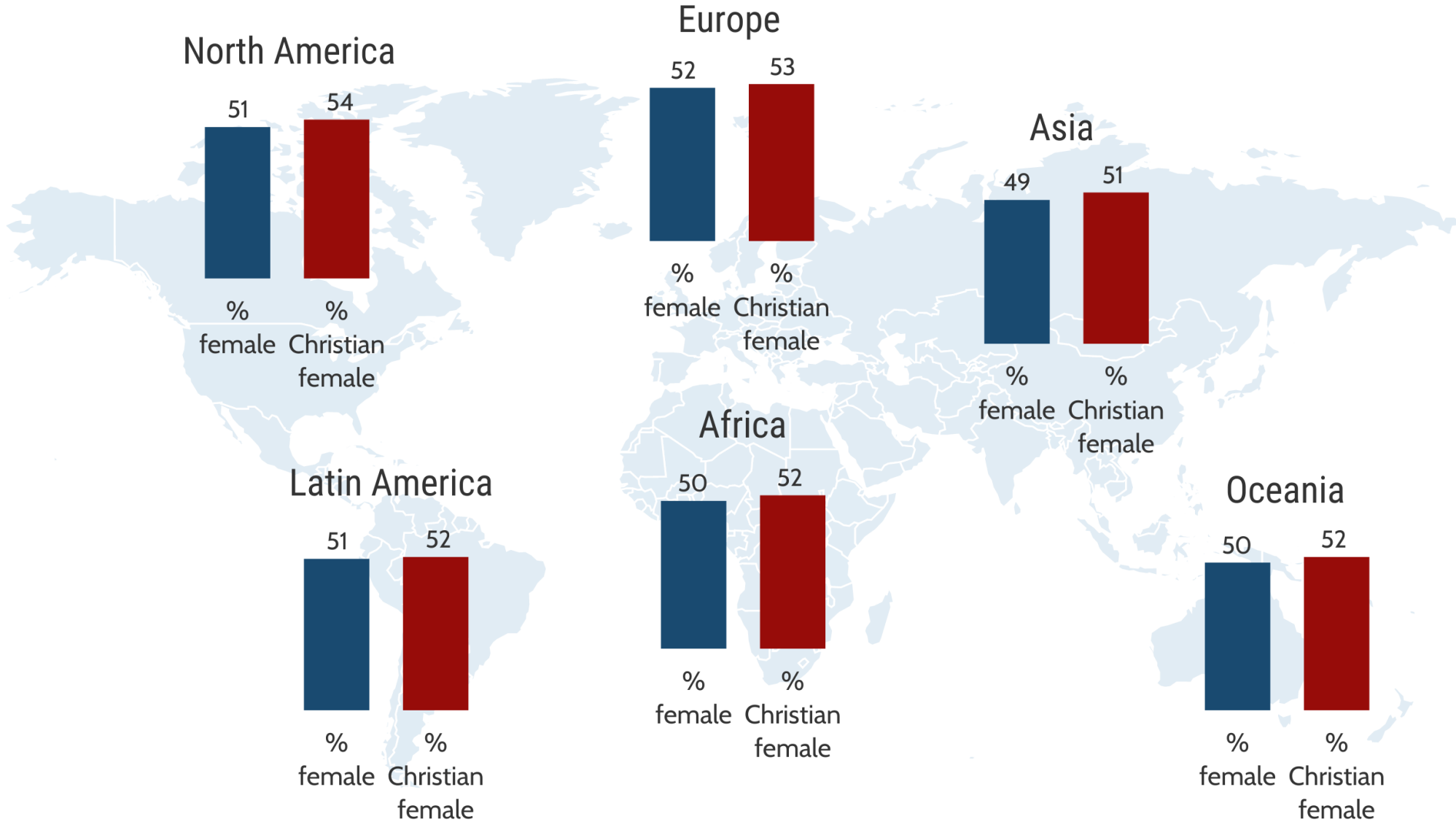


Niue

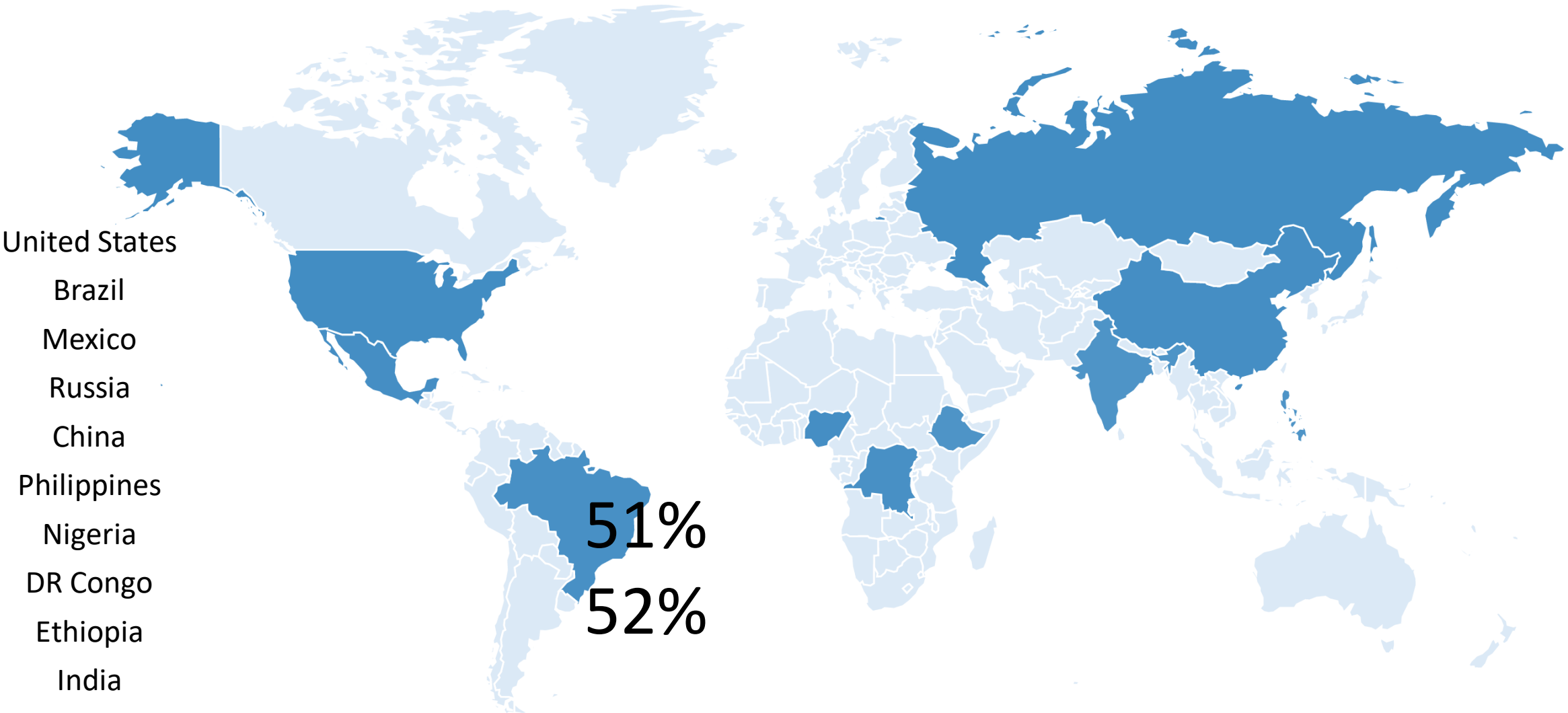


Mexico

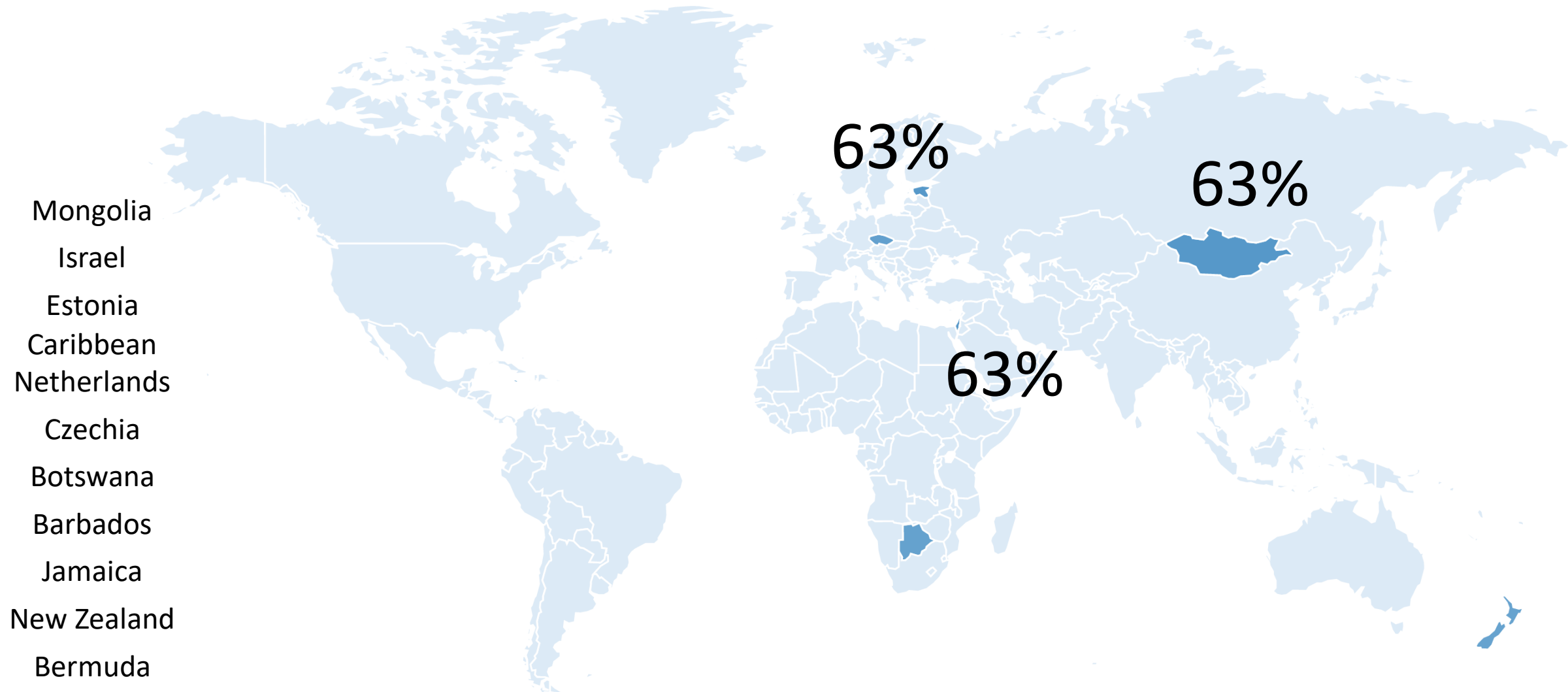
On every continent, church affiliation is more female than the general population.



Generally, the countries with the most Christians report higher % Christian female than the general population – but by slim margins.



The countries with the highest % Christian female are all over the world, with the largest margins in Mongolia, Israel, and Estonia.



There is a chronic lack of data on gender in World Christianity.



Zimbabwe



Tonga



United States



South Korea

Nuancing the data: e.g., Africa

One of the most common refrains of African Christianity is that the church is majority female. Women were among the first converts to Christianity and in most places, women are the drivers of church life, whether in official leadership capacities or not. However, it is extremely difficult to obtain exact numbers for the gender makeup of African churches and denominations.



Nuancing the data: Africa

- On the Catholic Church in Benin: “Women are very active in the Church, [she boasted]. For instance, women are the majority in Church attendance everywhere. Women do everything!.... Coming to the Church, you will find out that the population of women is greater. Women could be about 80%, while men would be something like 20% in attendance.”
- On the International Centre for Evangelism, Burkina Faso: “Ouédraogo indicated that about 90 percent of their church members are women and they are far more dynamic than the men.”





Nuancing the data: Asia

- Protestantism in Korea is majority female; the Presbyterian Church in Korea (Tonghap), the fourth largest denomination in the country and the second largest Protestant denomination, is 70% female
- 20th century Chinese Protestantism was majority female; in some areas, Protestant communities were 94% female
- 2007 survey in China reported Protestantism was 72% female and 27% male

What do women *do* in churches?

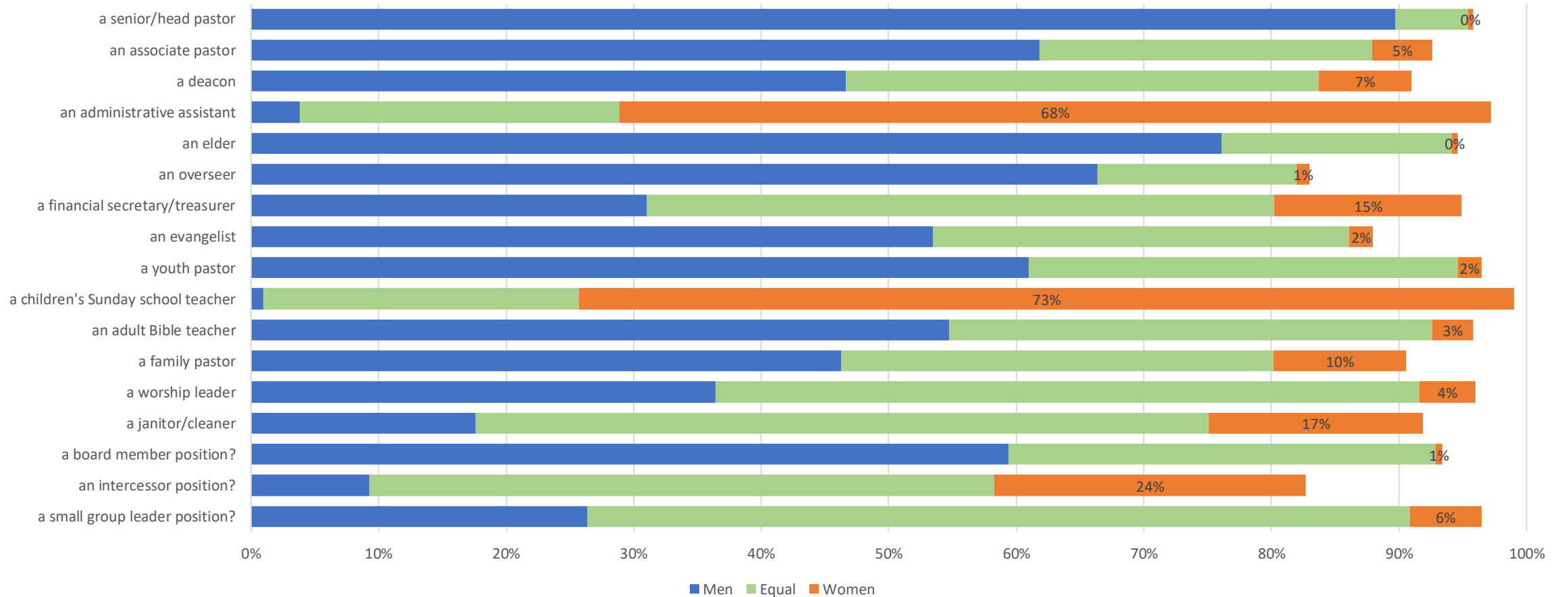
Everything? Or only some things?

Gender and Congregational Life Survey

- Available in English, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Mongolian, Portuguese, and Spanish
- Administered online from February 2021 to April 2021

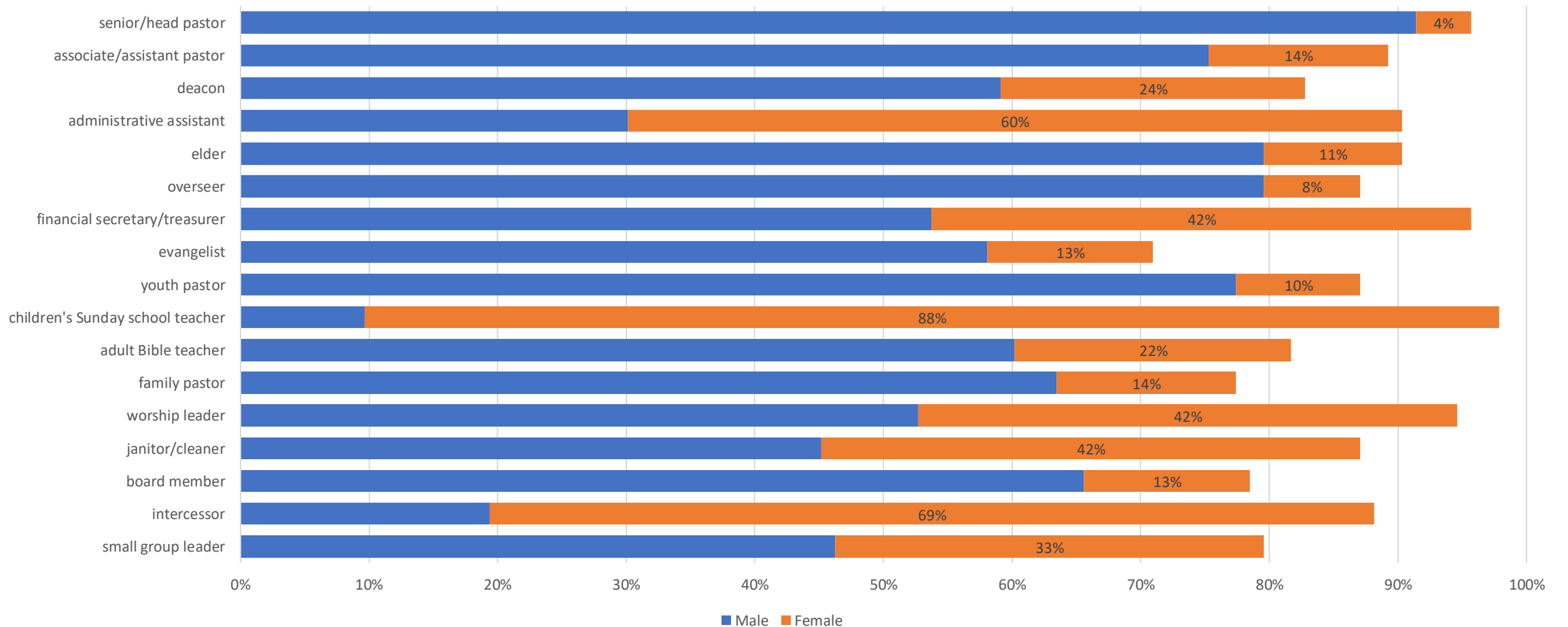
Results: Gender and Congregational Life Survey

Q8–24. How do you think the chances of women and men compare when it comes to getting a ____ position?



Results: Gender and Congregational Life Survey

Q44–60. Thinking of the _____ in your congregation, is this person a man or woman?



Gendered Participation Gaps Exist – But They’re Seemingly Small



Angola



Belize



Tonga



Israel



Singapore

The Participation Gap

Religious service attendance

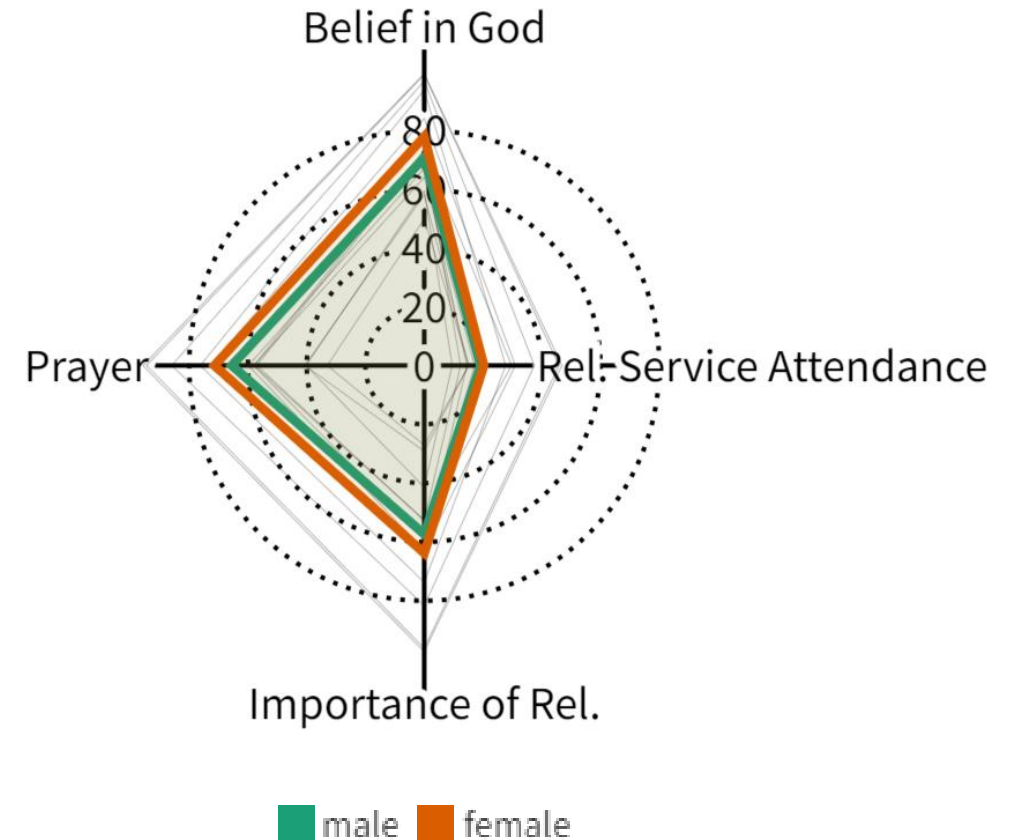
Prayer

Importance of religion

Belief in God

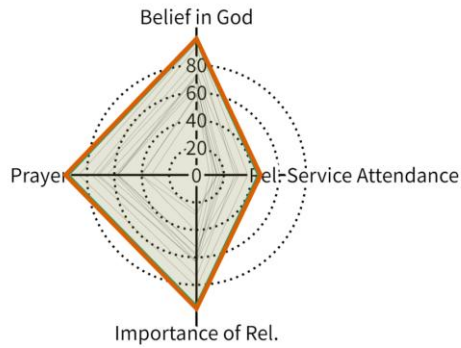
Global

Global totals	% male	% female
Attendance	19%	20%
Prayer	66%	71%
Importance	57%	64%
Belief in God	71%	78%

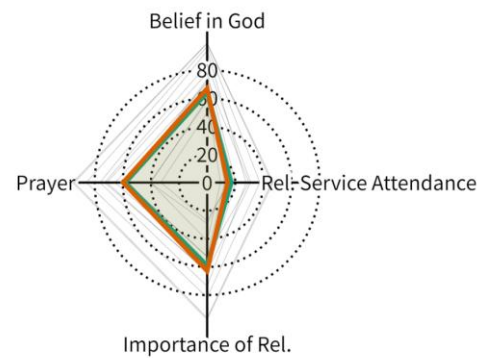


The Participation Gap by continent

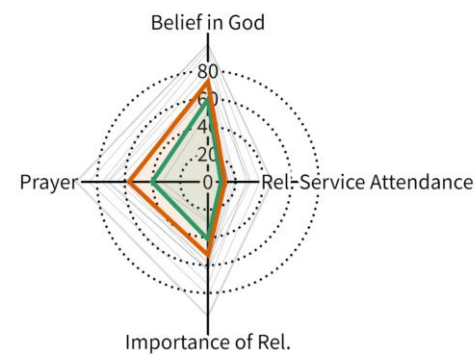
Africa



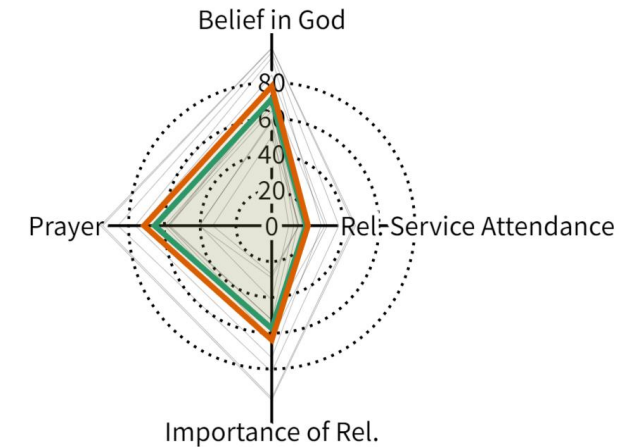
Asia



Europe

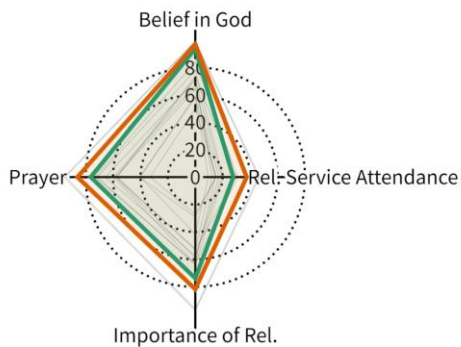


Global

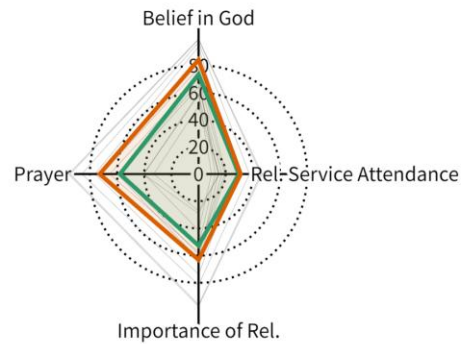


■ male ■ female

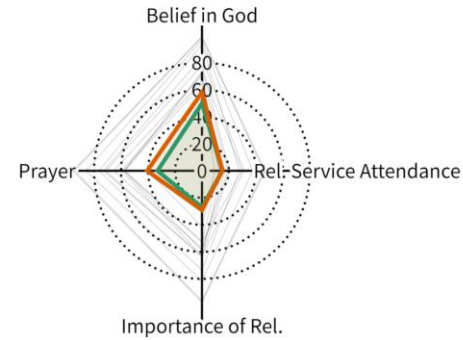
L. America



N. America



Oceania



Gendered Leadership Gaps Exist – And They’re Big



American Samoa



Angola



Australia

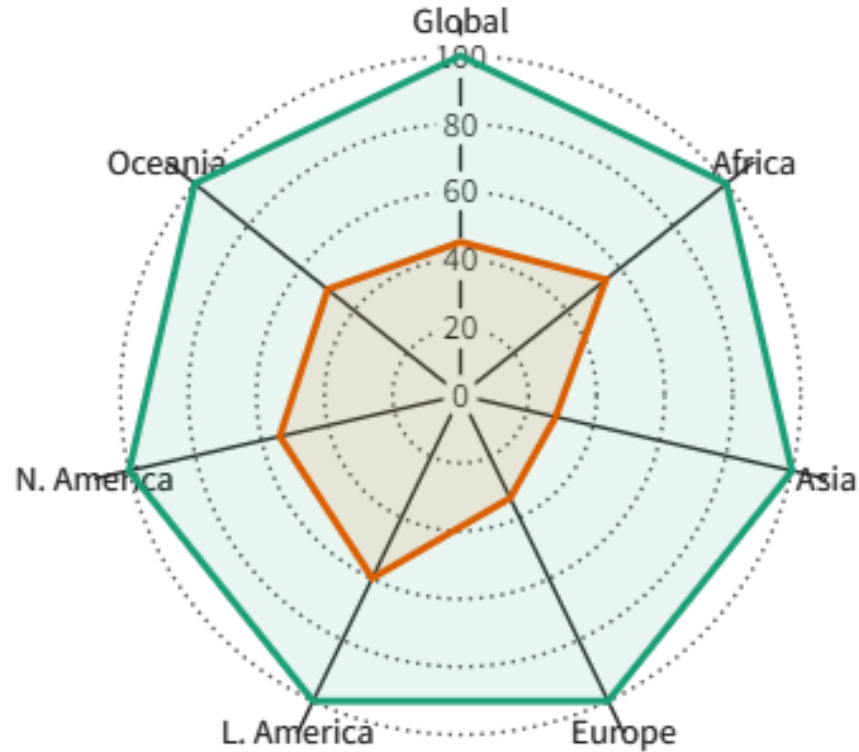


Bangladesh



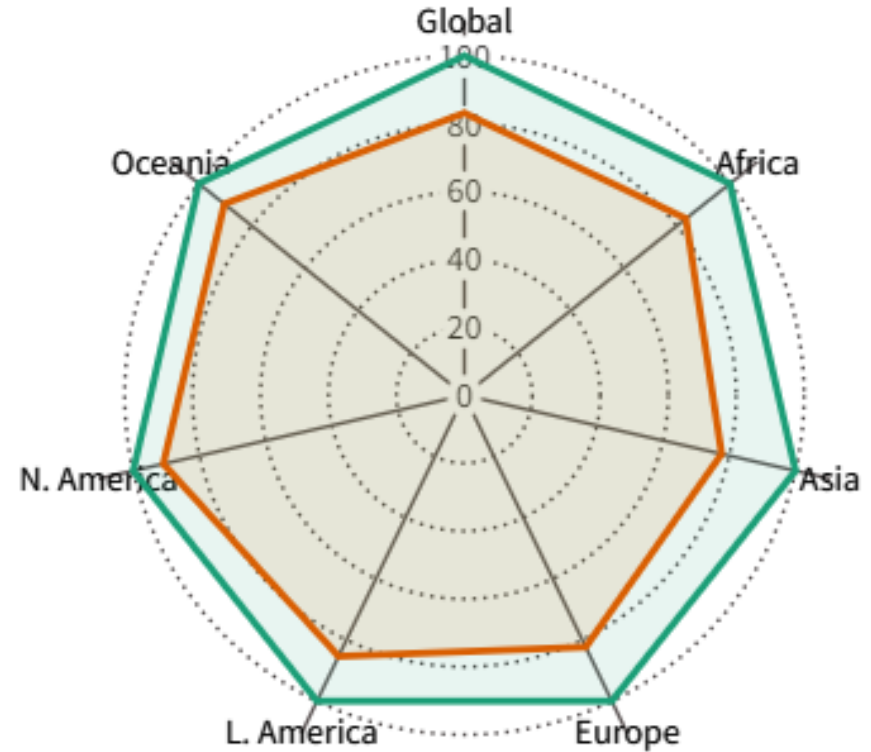
Barbados

The Leadership Gap: Where can women lead?



Pastoral Leadership Gender Gap

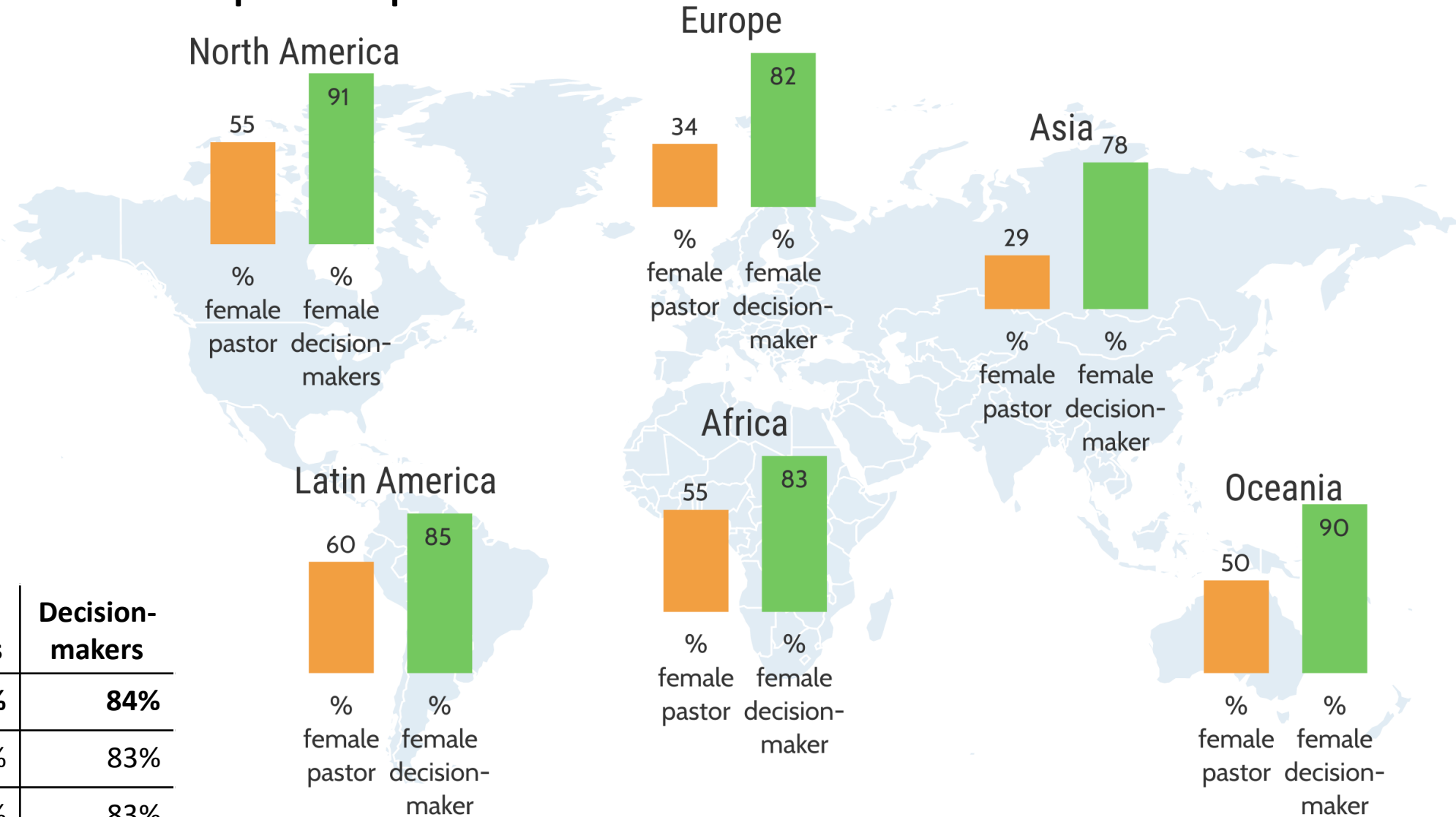
■ male
■ female



Decision Making Gender Gap

■ male
■ female

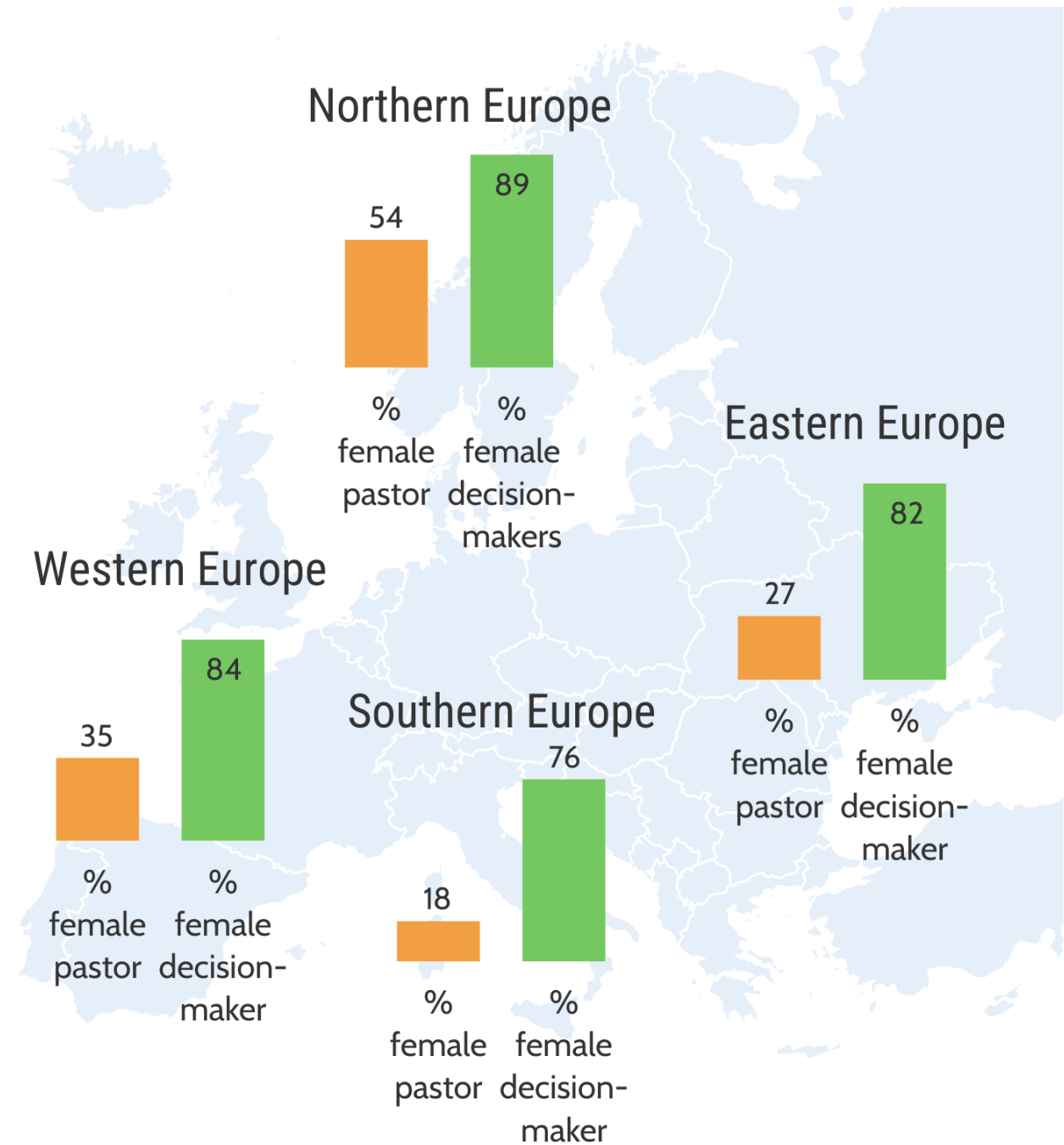
The Leadership Gap



	Pastors	Decision-makers
World Christianity	45%	84%
Global North	35%	83%
Global South	48%	83%

The Leadership Gap: Regional variation

Lowest & highest	Pastors	Decision-makers
World Christianity	45%	84%
Caribbean	70%	88%
Central Asia	12%	76%





Wisdom from Women



Elsa Tamez (Mexico)

“Women must vehemently reclaim and affirm their right to be considered created in the image and likeness of God.”

Philomena Mwaura (Kenya)

“The Church in Africa has a feminine face and owes much of its tremendous growth to the agency of women.”





Emelyn Dacuycuy (Philippines)

“The main concern of women is not merely a demand for more positions and equal opportunity in decision-making bodies of the church; it is more than that. It is a struggle to recognize women’s theological and spiritual contribution as an integral part of the church’s prophetic ministry in the world.”

Emi Frances Oh (Fiji)

“The goal is not reverse discrimination, women dominating men, but a new heaven and a new earth taking hold, with no one being dominated or subordinated, each participating according to their gifts in genuine mutuality.”



Barriers to Leadership

Models

Leaky pipeline

Mentors

Conclusion

Despite social norms and power imbalances that render them invisible, women draw empowerment from their faith traditions and local communities to do the necessary boundary-crossing work to demand justice and peace for themselves, their families, and their nations.