



# NCD Status Guide

## Whynot Local Church

March 2021

Pastor for 7 years: Rev. O. Lution

Profile	Date	Minimum Factor	Maximum Factor	Min-Max Difference	Average
2	Mar 2021	48 Inspiring Worship Service	65 Holistic Small Groups	17	54
				Change 1 - 2	+10
1	Jan 2020	37 Empowering Leadership	53 Holistic Small Groups	16	44



# Status Guide Instructions

**B**y way of preparation for your ongoing NCD result discussions, **please work through the explanations and charts on the following pages.** Ask yourself the associated questions while imagining the responses others may have to the various topics. While your first pass through the guide is to help you establish a personal response to the results, the following important points will help you relate your findings to the stories and strategies put forward by others along the way.

## The importance of your work with this guide

In the same way as the church depends on different parts of the body working together, the NCD process works best when unique, complementary contributions are encouraged. Your role in working with or presenting this guide is to **bring objectivity to the discussions as well as background information that will help to move the group forward.**

For many people, soberly seeing their church in comparison to the wider Christian Church can be quite a challenge. After all, given enough time, everything in even a very *unhealthy* church can appear normal! The normalisation of your church's results against national benchmarks, as presented in this guide, will help you establish this objectivity.

## Pragmatic analysis

Given the volume of information, **you will need to be selective in using the data in this guide** based upon what will be most helpful to your process right now. Look for the insights that will both sharpen the perceptions of the group and move them through to simple, refined, practical action.

Even if you feel that objectivity and detail are sometimes being compromised by this apparent "pragmatism", keep in mind that NCD is a process based on continuous, relatively short, cycles of development. That means it will never be too long before your important deeper insights are finally recognised by others, or that perhaps others will help you to make new discoveries that further deepen everyone's understanding. **At all times, try to bring a new level of clarity to discussions and actively respond to the very real feelings and practical concerns of others.**

## If facilitating group discussion...

It may be that your pastor has asked you to provide insights from this NCD Status Guide. If so, when you gather to discuss the results, (in consultation with your pastor) **you will need to have arranged for the relevant pages to be available to the rest of the group** either on paper or on a screen. The PDF file can simply be displayed in full screen mode on most computers connected to a projector.

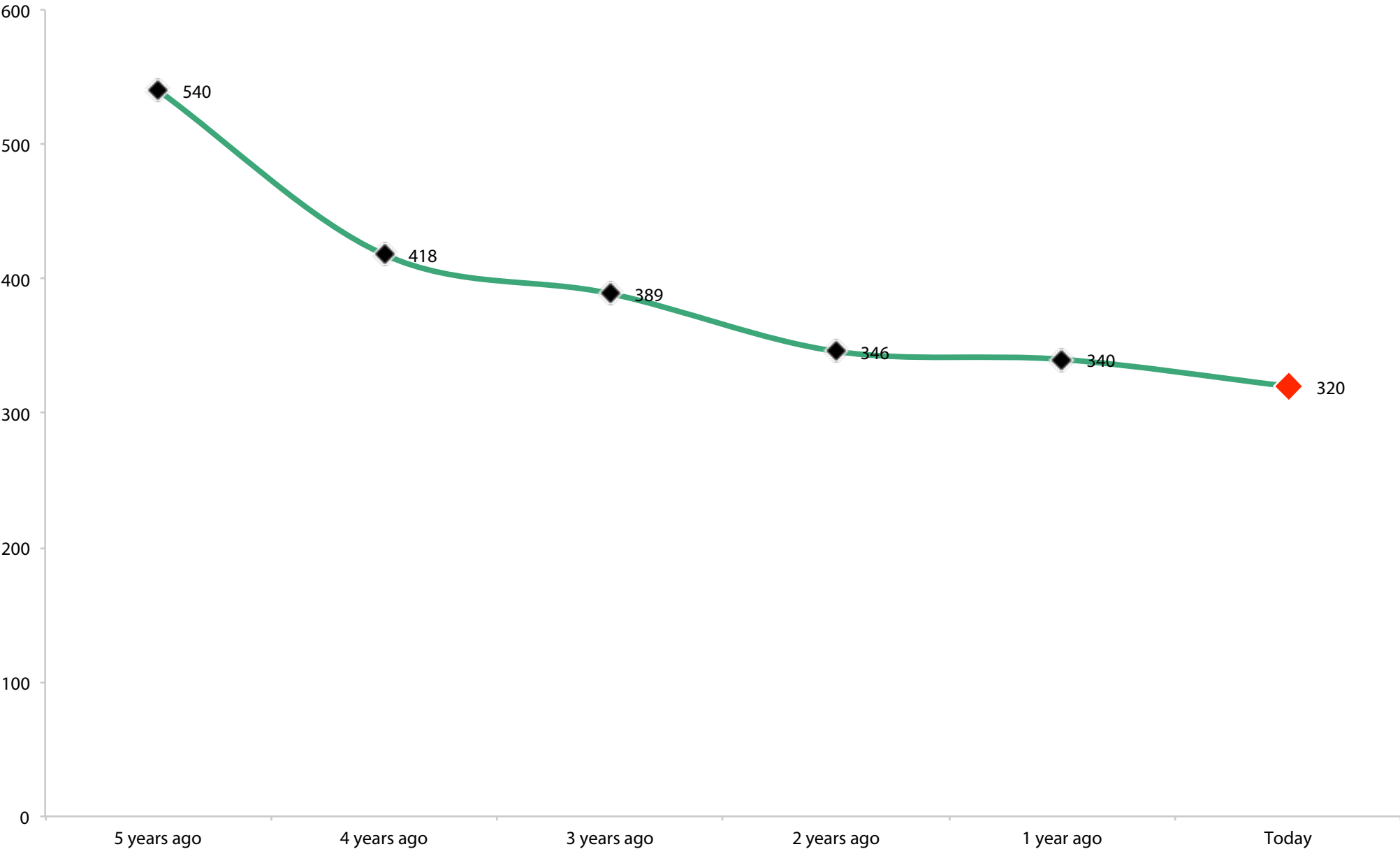
## Priority discussion points

You will have many more opportunities very soon to share additional thoughts in subsequent cycles of the process. But for now, (in addition to the two mandatory topics) **tick two or three topics below that you believe will help move the group to the next level of understanding about your results and then present those points.** For your preparation, you can start reading through the charts from the next page, or systematically work through the explanations for the topics below.

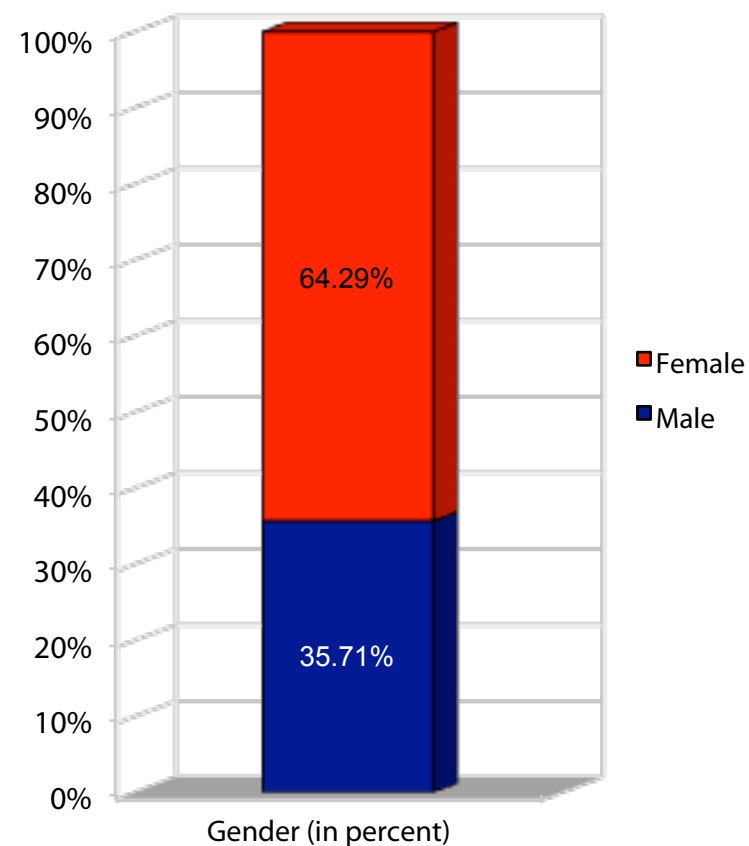
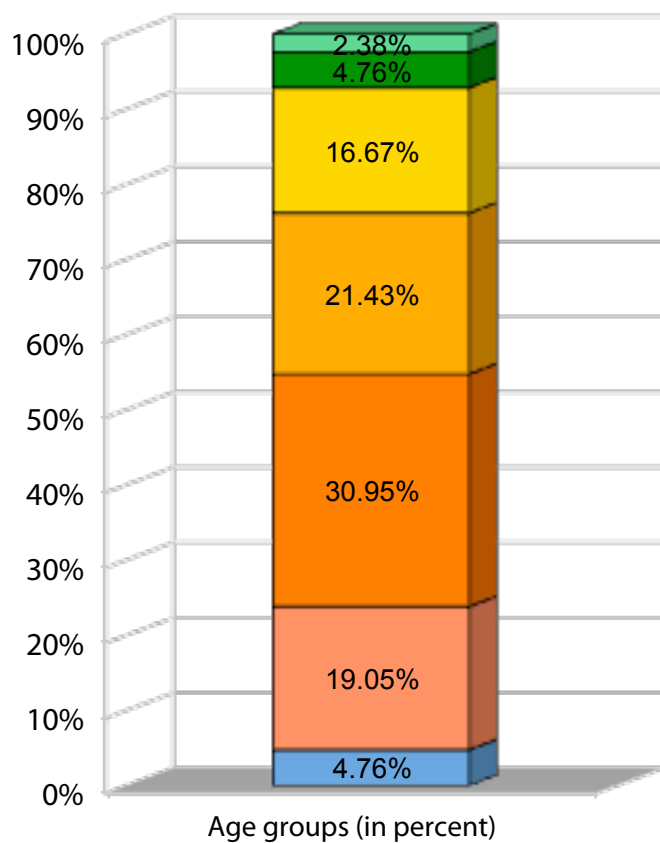
- ☐ The background to your results (pages 28-29)
- ☐ Age and gender demographics (page 30)
- ☐ Sustainability (page 31)
- ☐ Progress charts (page 32)
- ☐ Cultural 'sticking points' (page 33)
- ☐ Minimum factor detail (page 34)
- ☐ Lowest and highest 10 questions (page 35)
- ☐ Current capacity (page 36)
- ☒ Understanding the facts beyond reasonable doubt (page 37)
- ☒ Cycling together through our personal growth options (page 39)



# Adult attendance growth

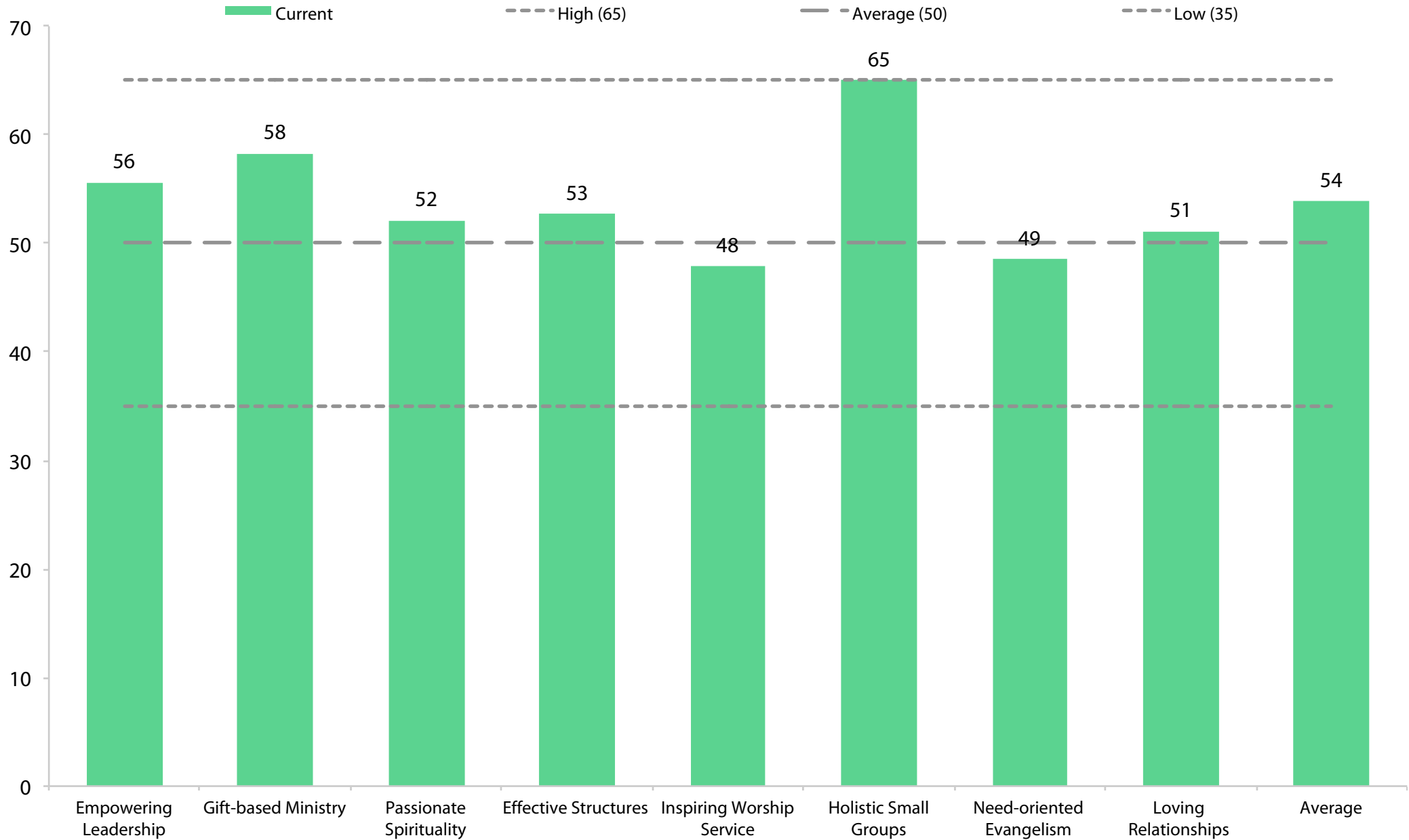


# Survey participants by age groups and gender



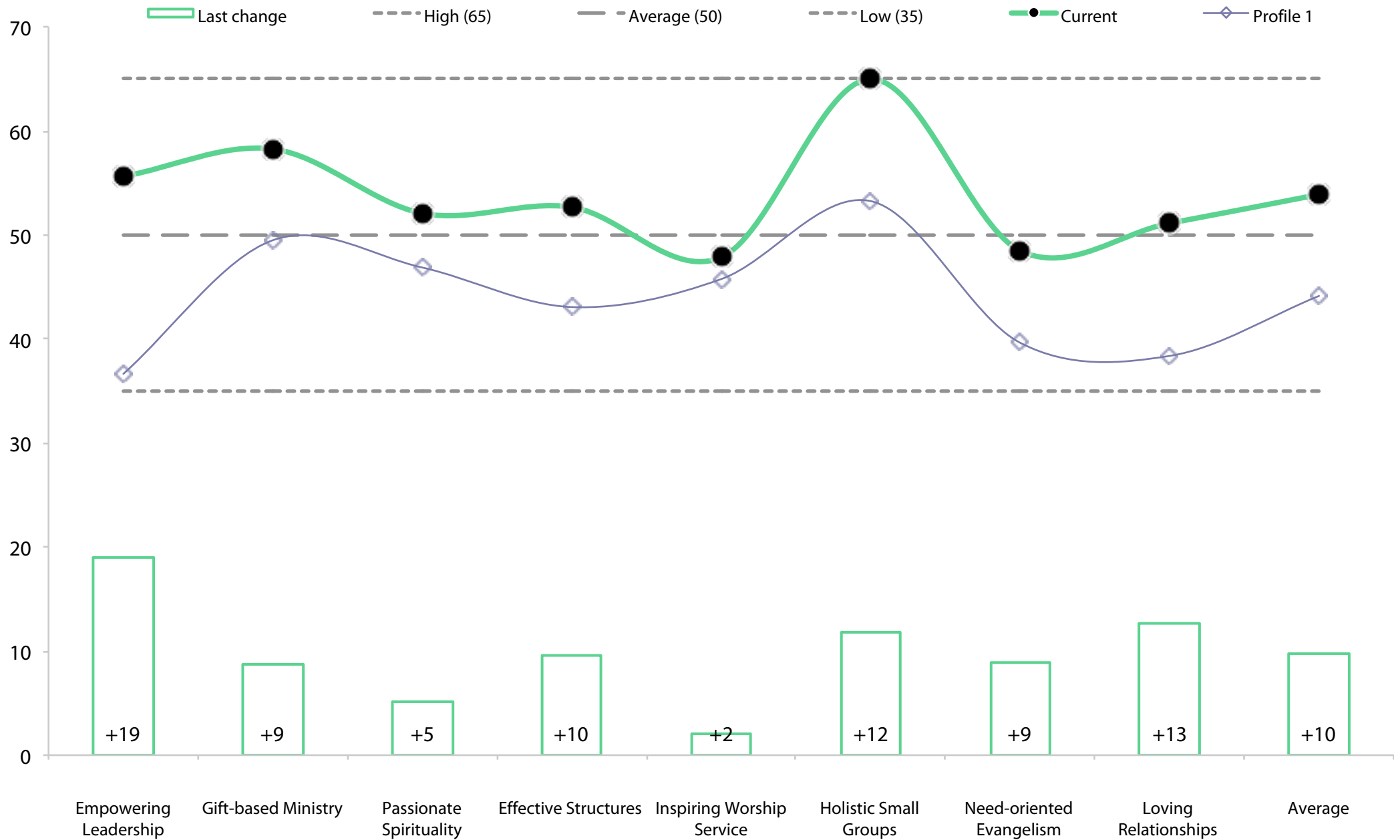


# Quality characteristic current profile

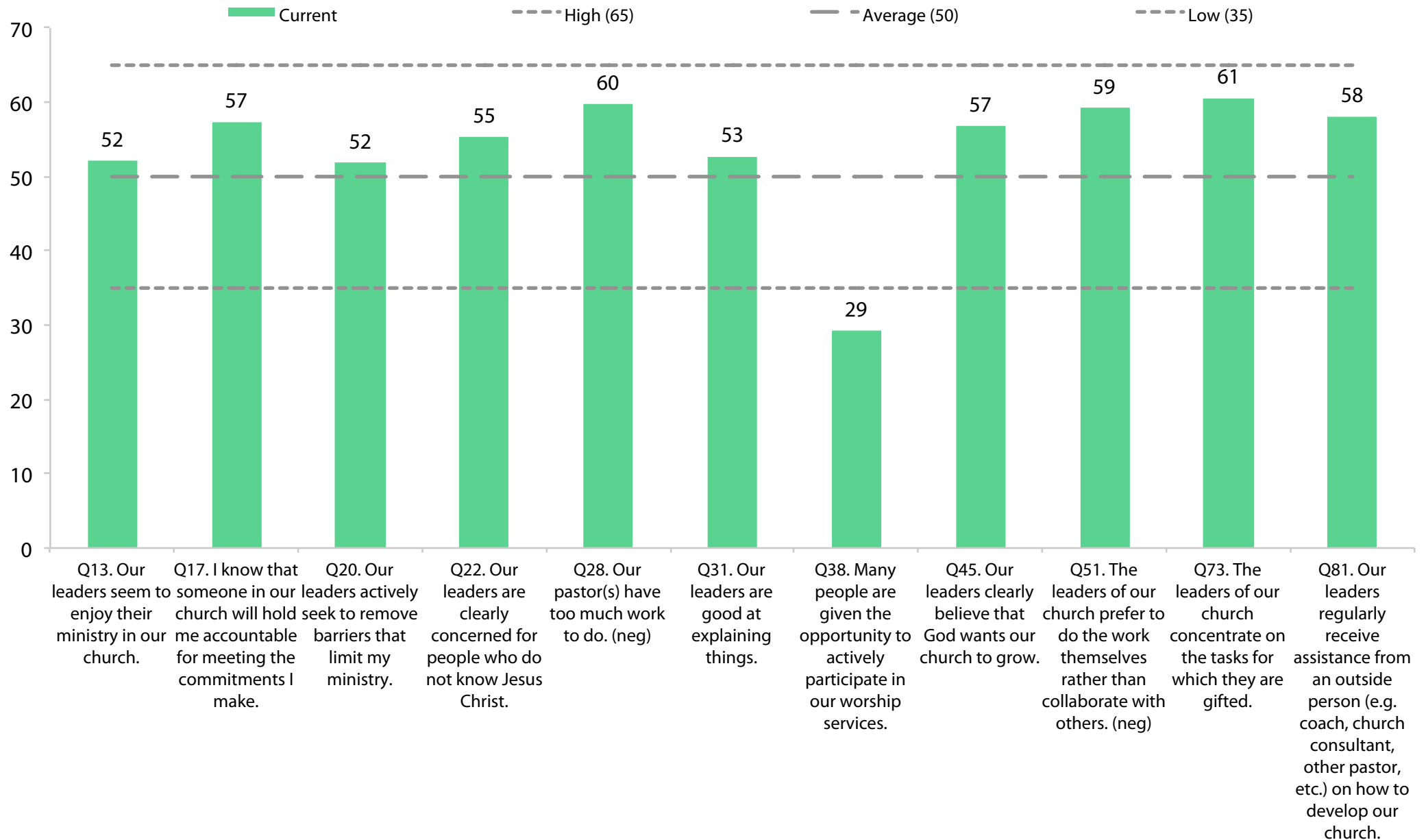




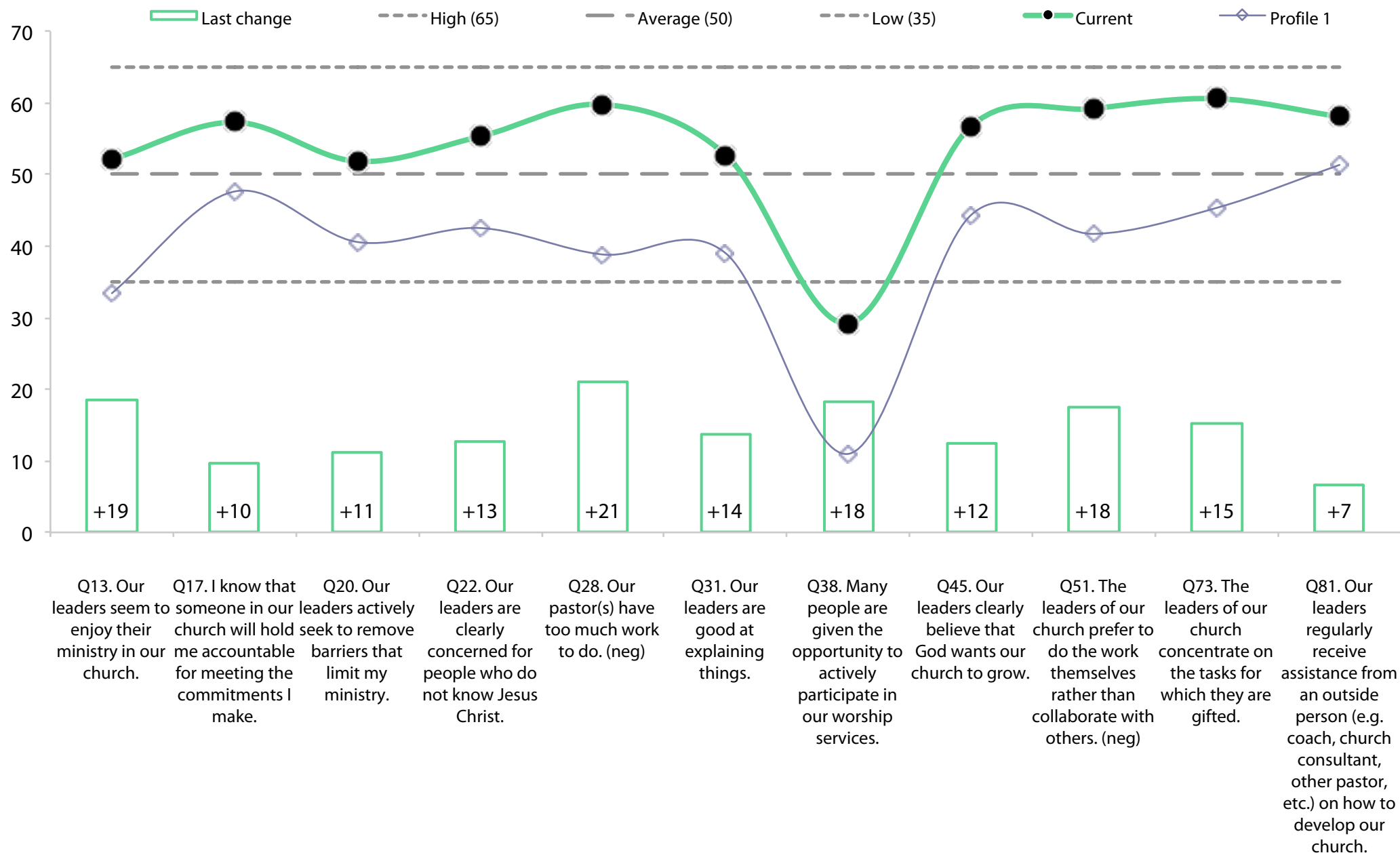
# Dynamic progress



# Empowering Leadership Current Profile



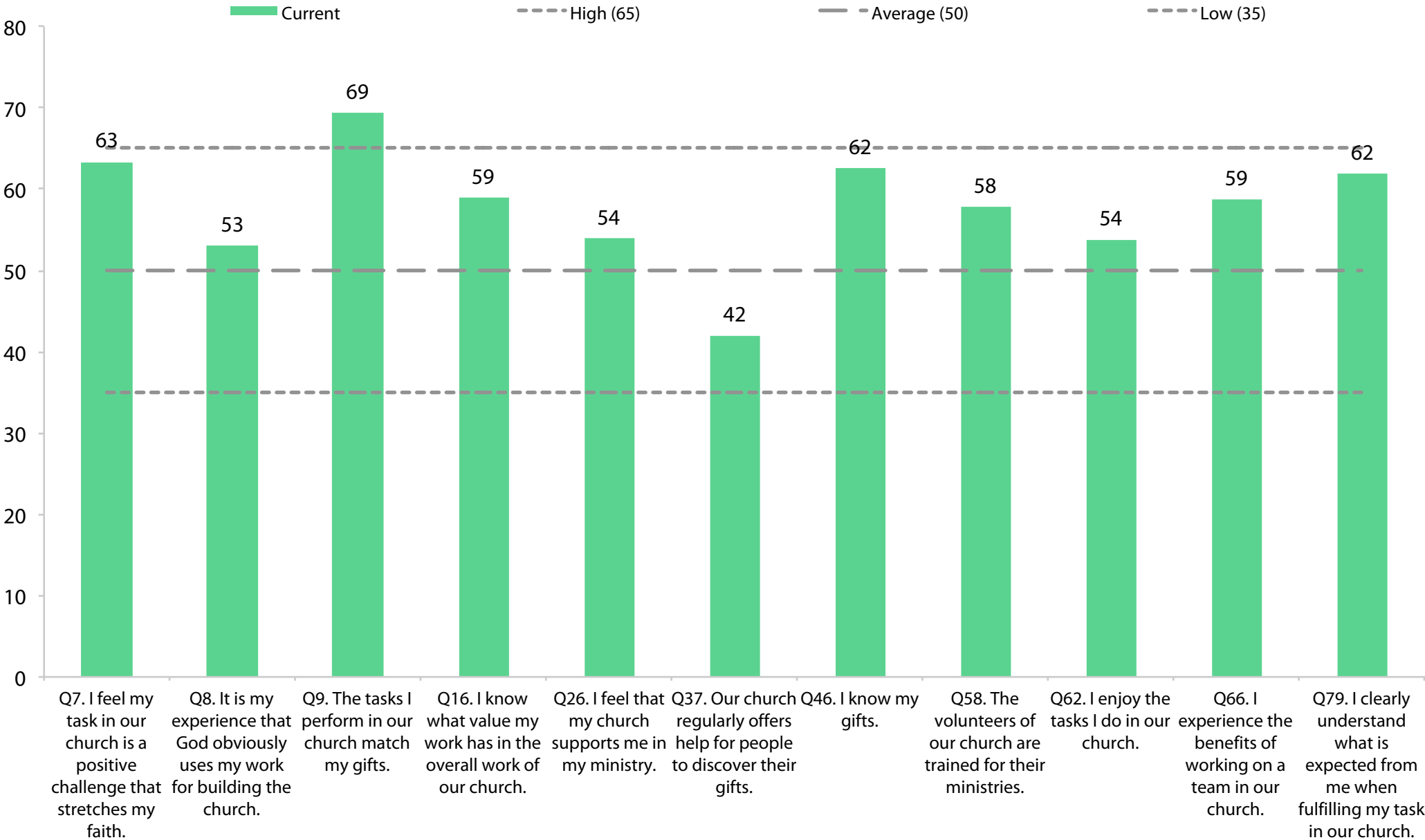
# EL Dynamic progress





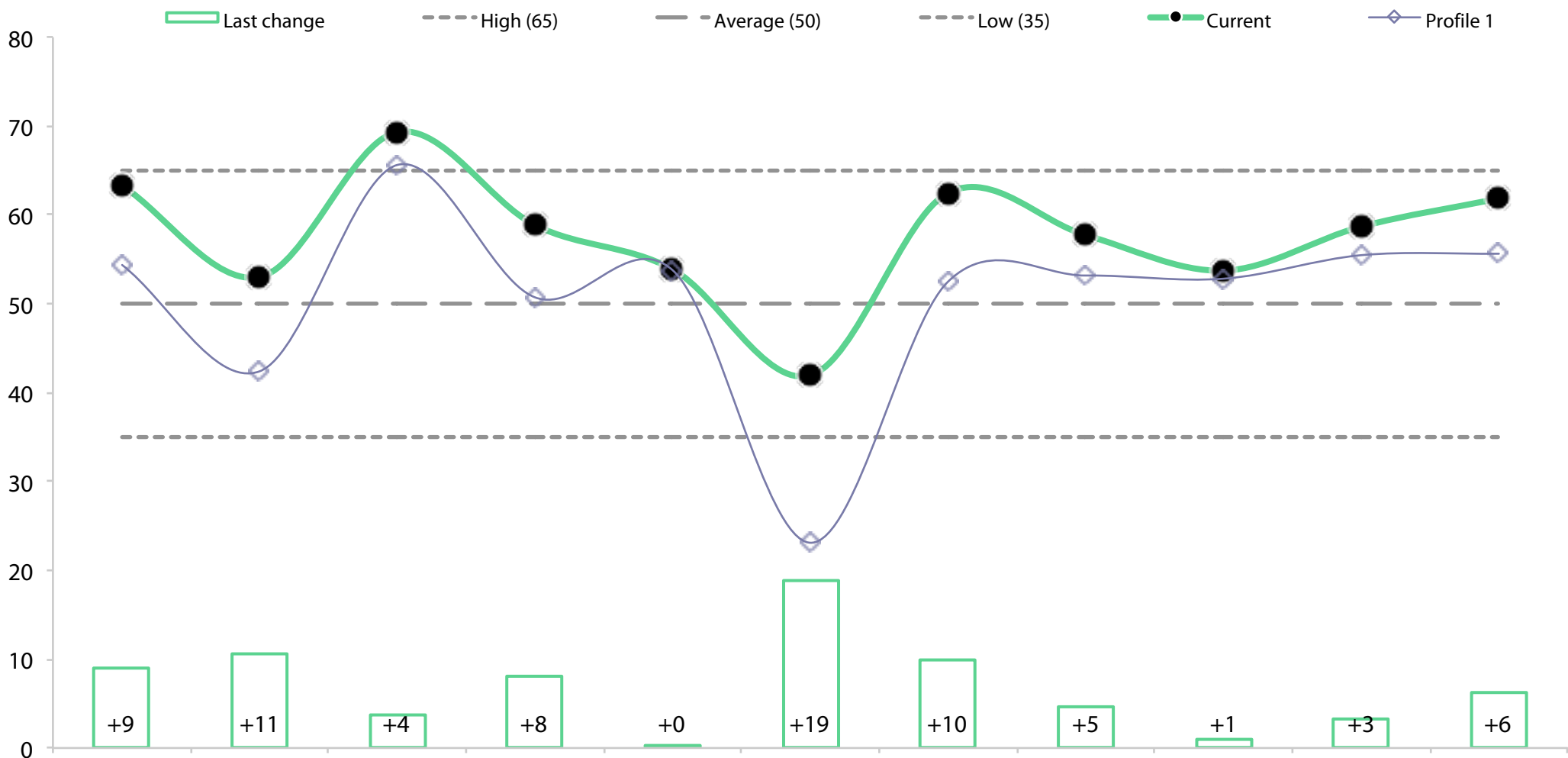


# Gift-based Ministry Current Profile





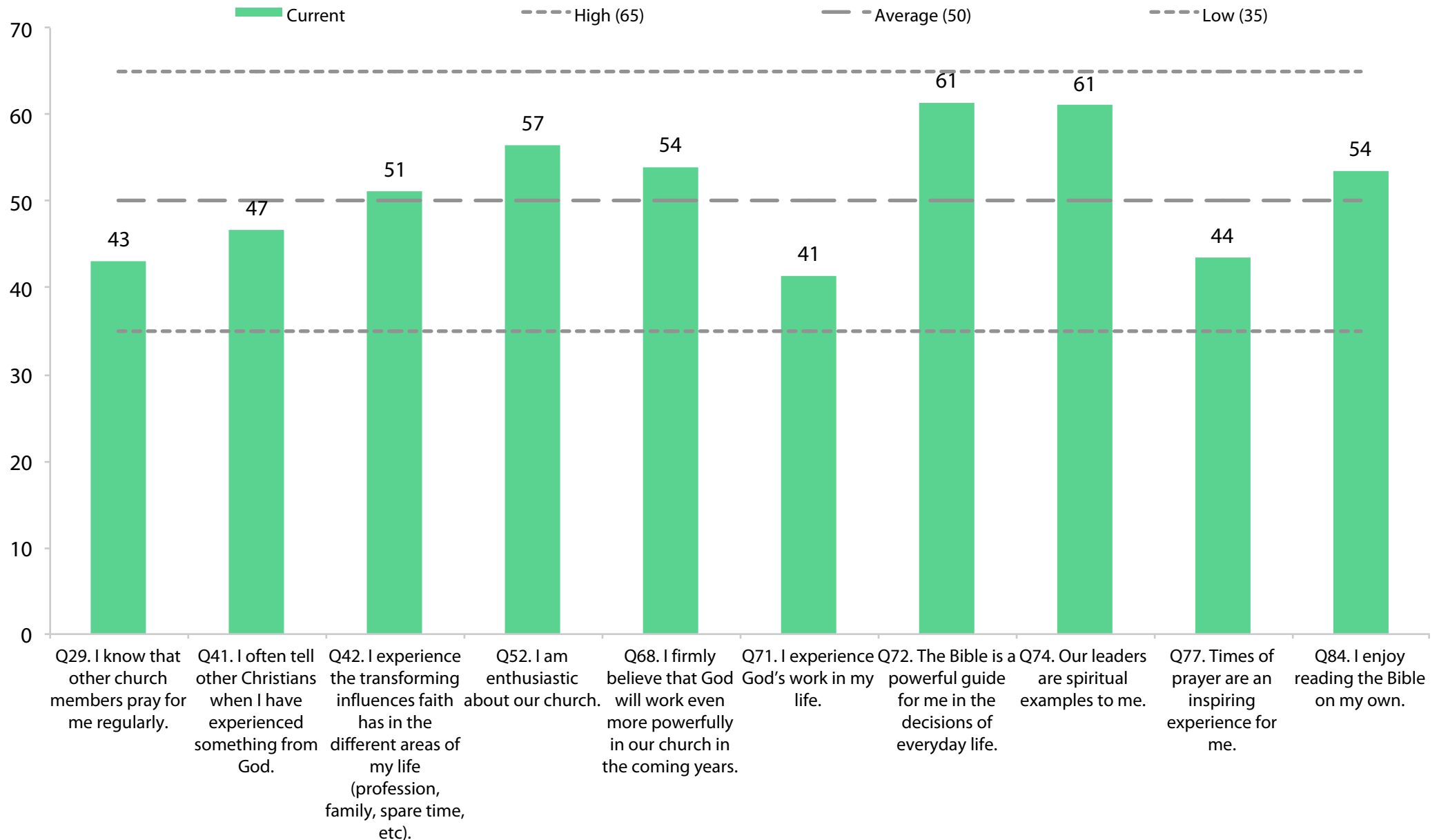
# GbM Dynamic progress



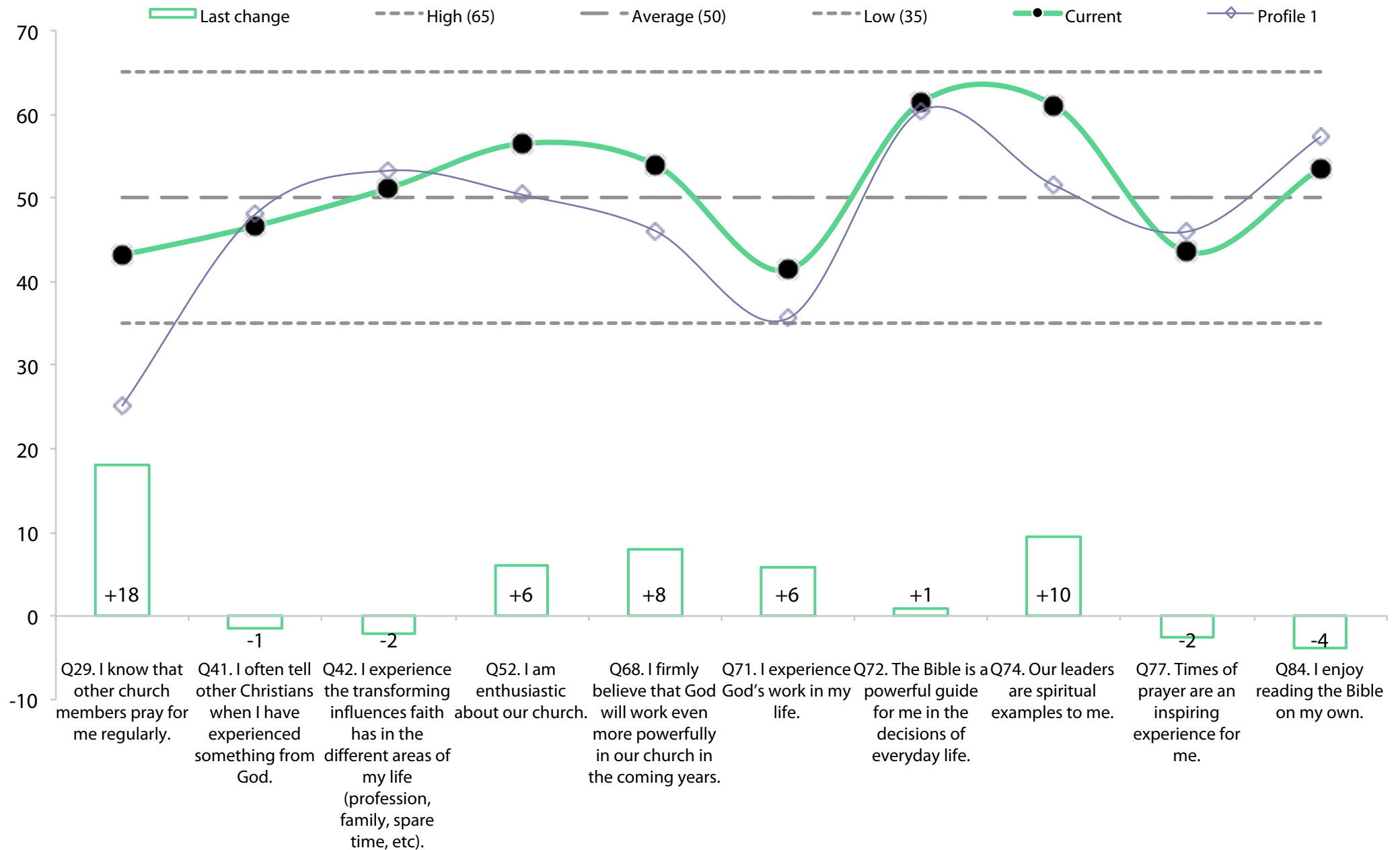
- Q7. I feel my task in our church is a positive challenge that stretches my faith.
- Q8. It is my experience that God obviously uses my work for building the church.
- Q9. The tasks I perform in our church match my gifts.
- Q16. I know what value my work has in the overall work of our church.
- Q26. I feel that my church supports me in my ministry.
- Q37. Our church regularly offers help for people to discover their gifts.
- Q46. I know my gifts.
- Q58. The volunteers of our church are trained for their ministries.
- Q62. I enjoy the tasks I do in our church.
- Q66. I experience the benefits of working on a team in our church.
- Q79. I clearly understand what is expected from me when fulfilling my task in our church.



# Passionate Spirituality Current Profile

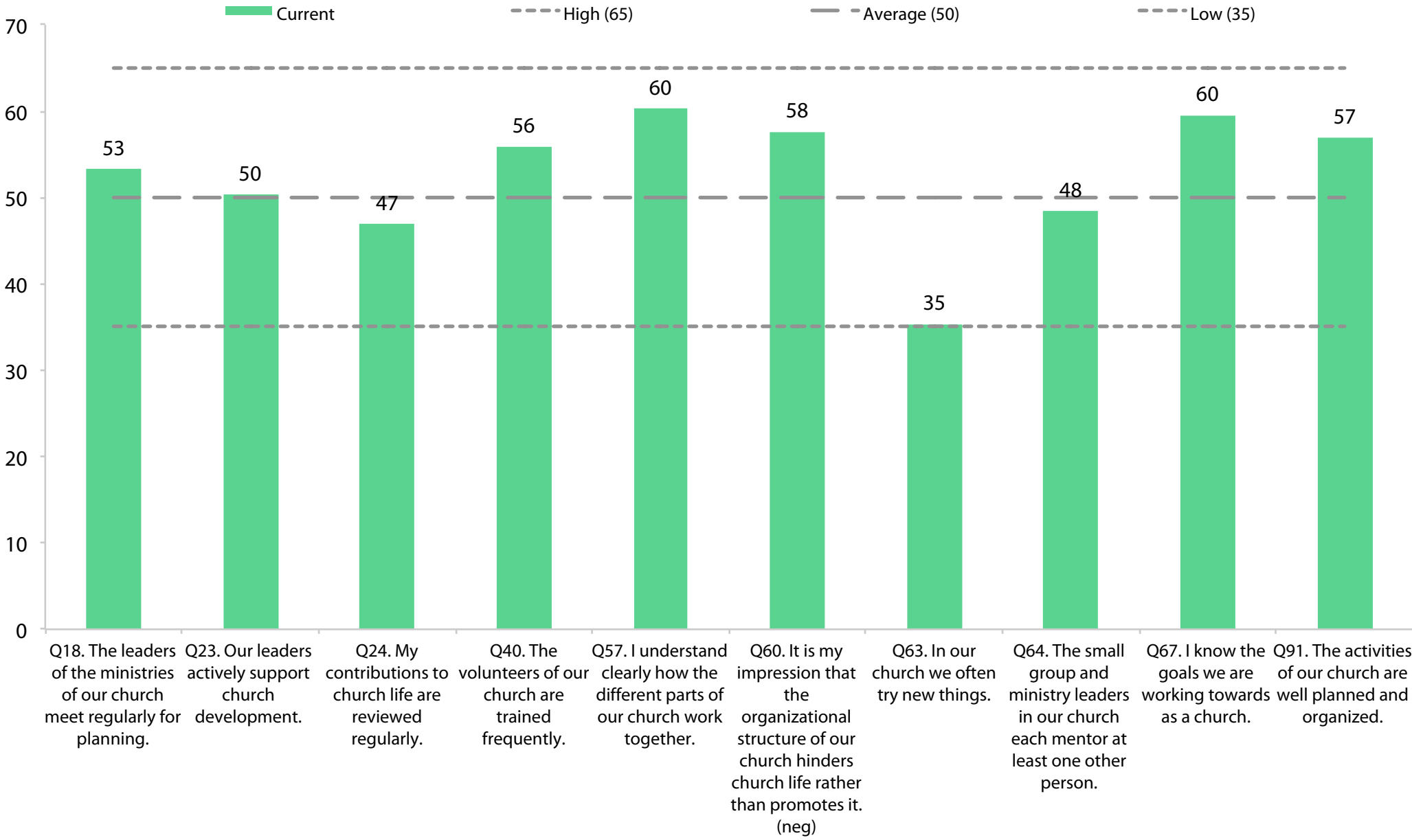


# PS Dynamic progress

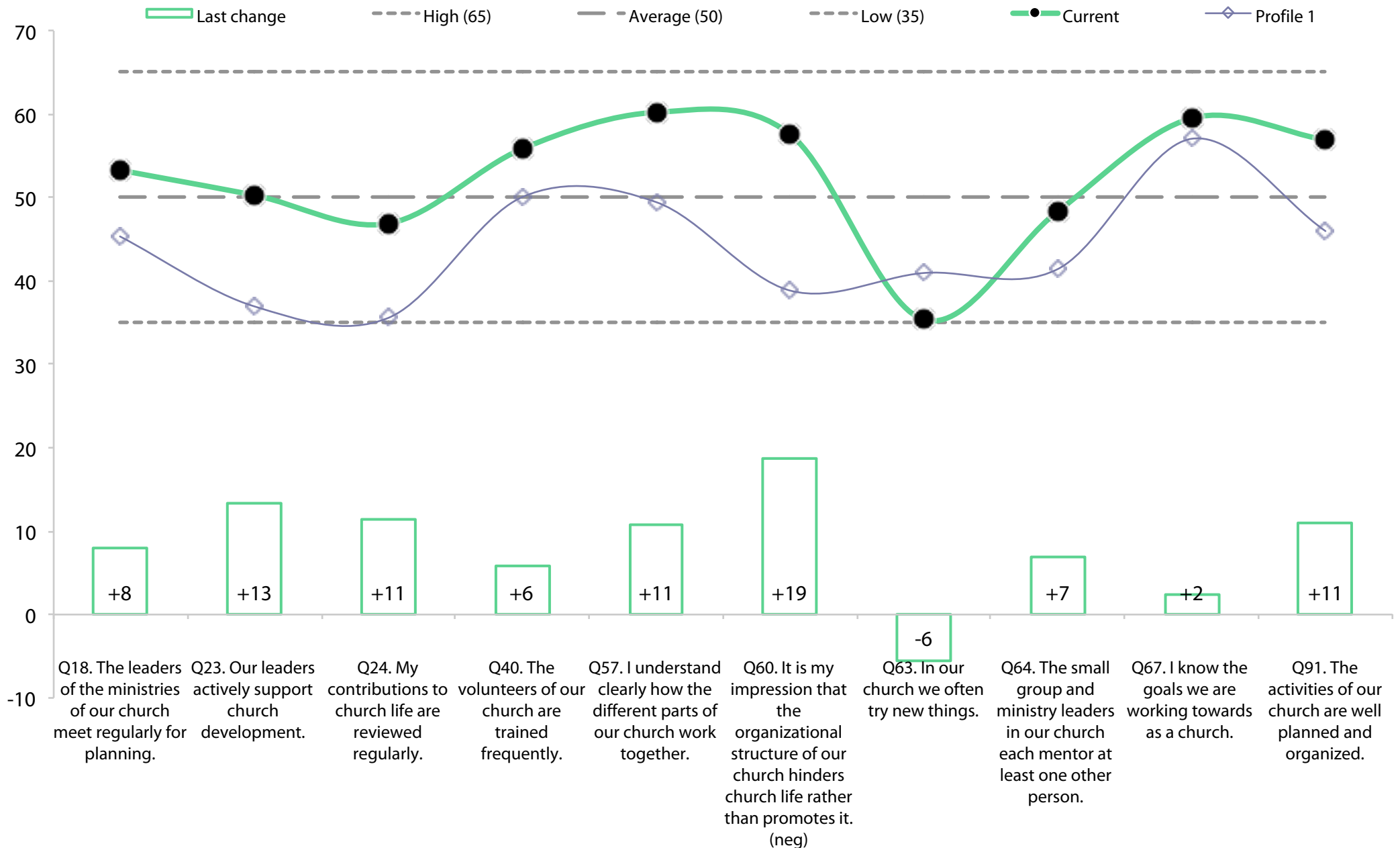




# Effective Structures Current Profile

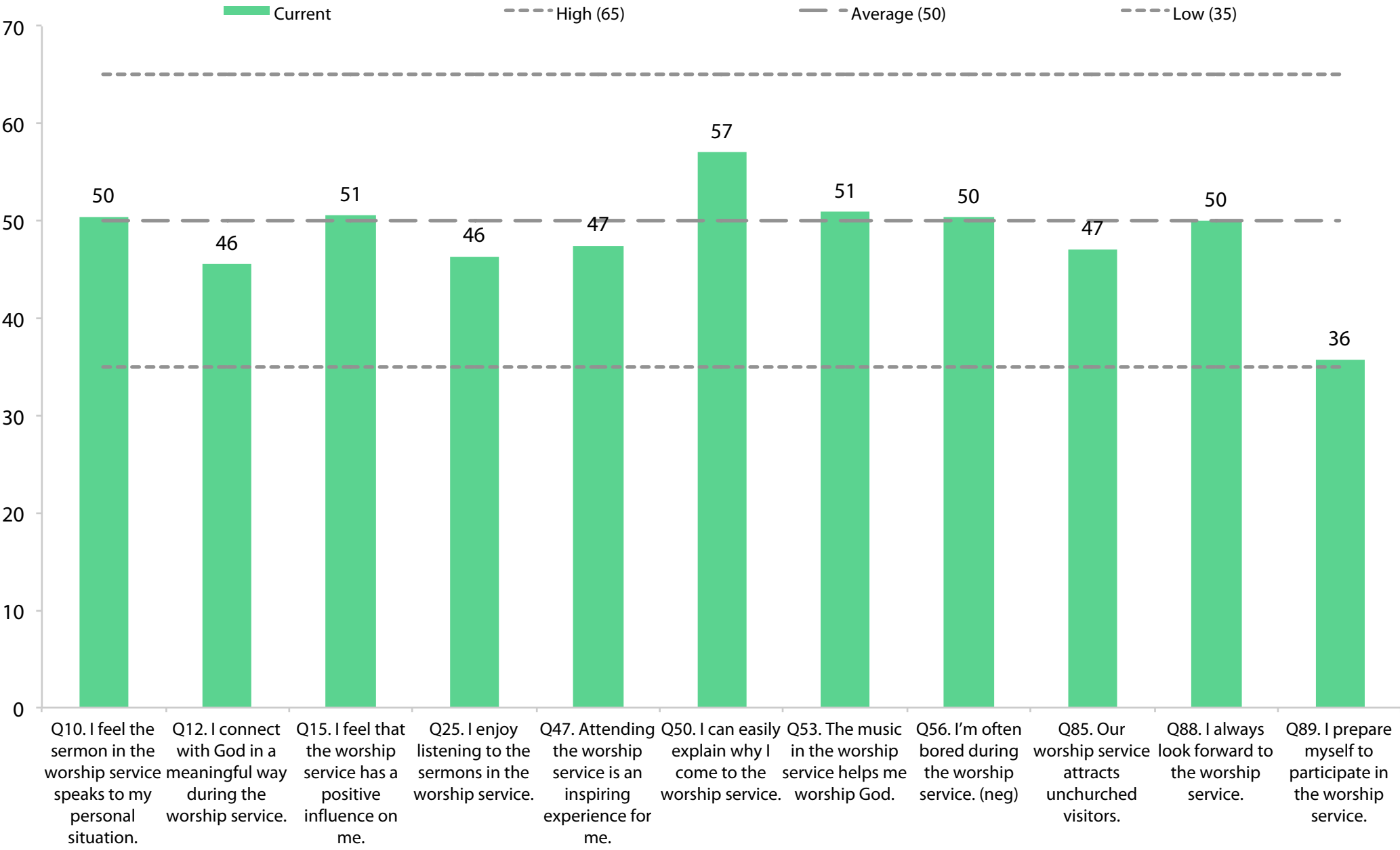


# ES Dynamic progress

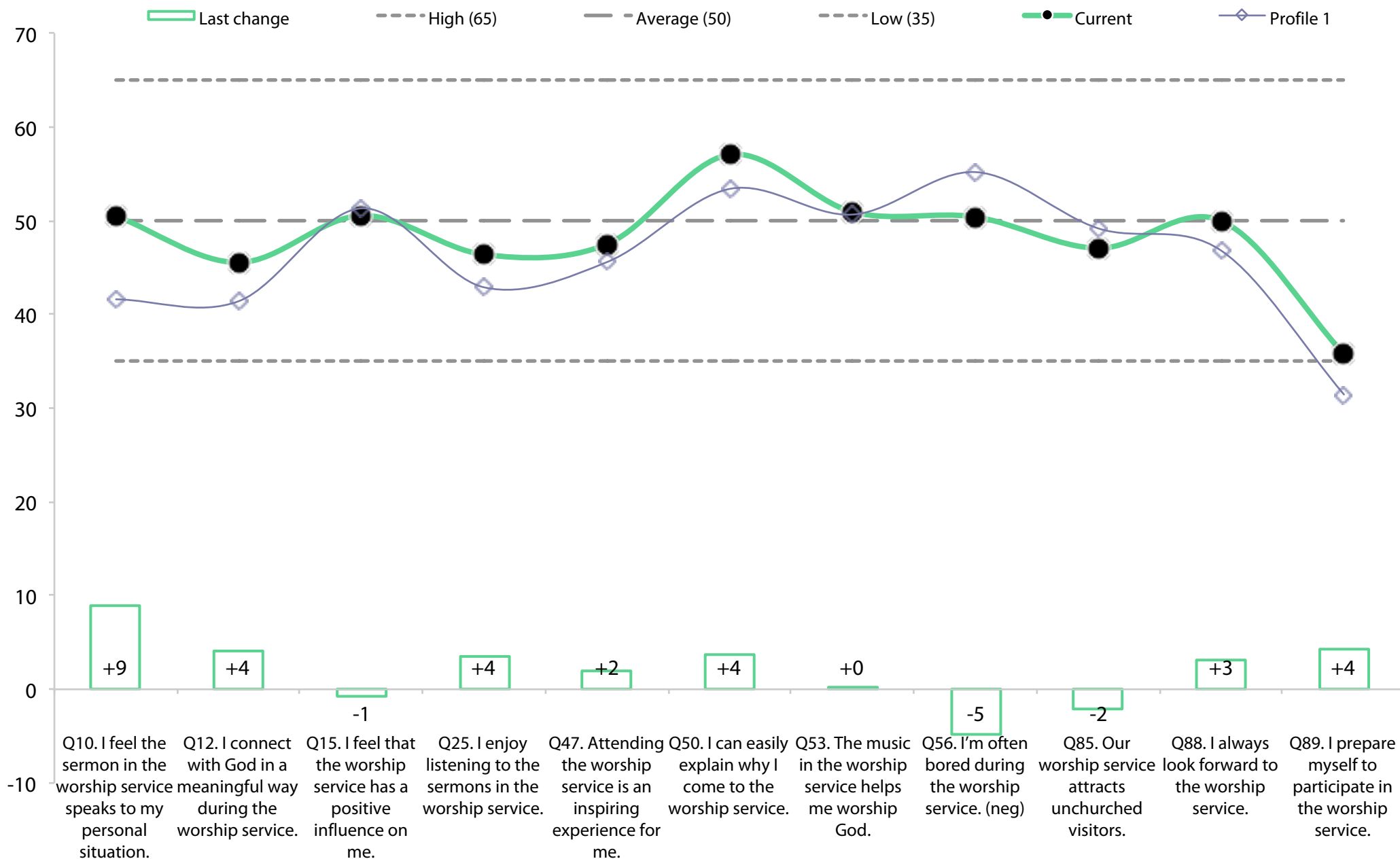




# Inspiring Worship Service Current Profile



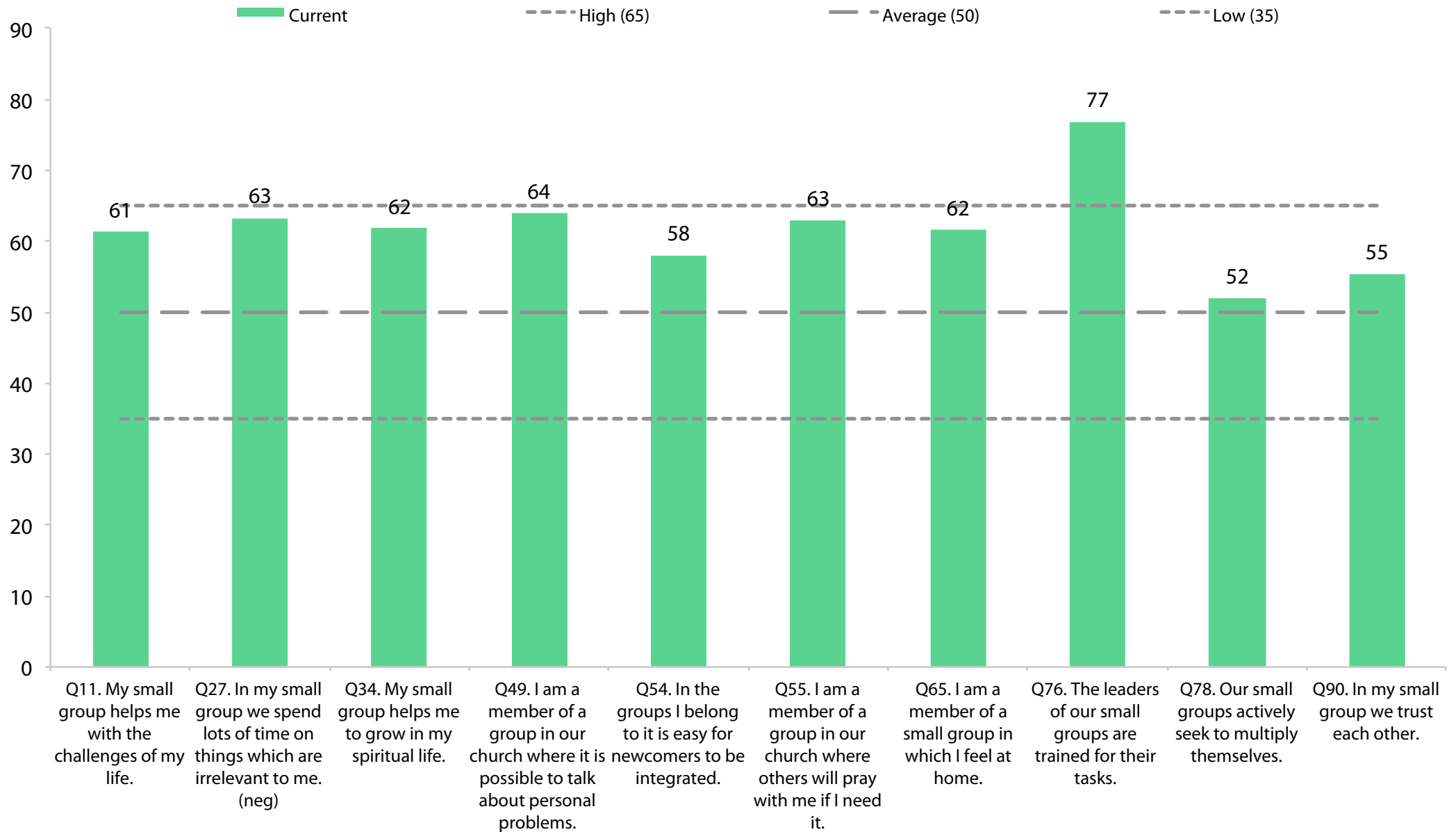
# IWS Dynamic progress



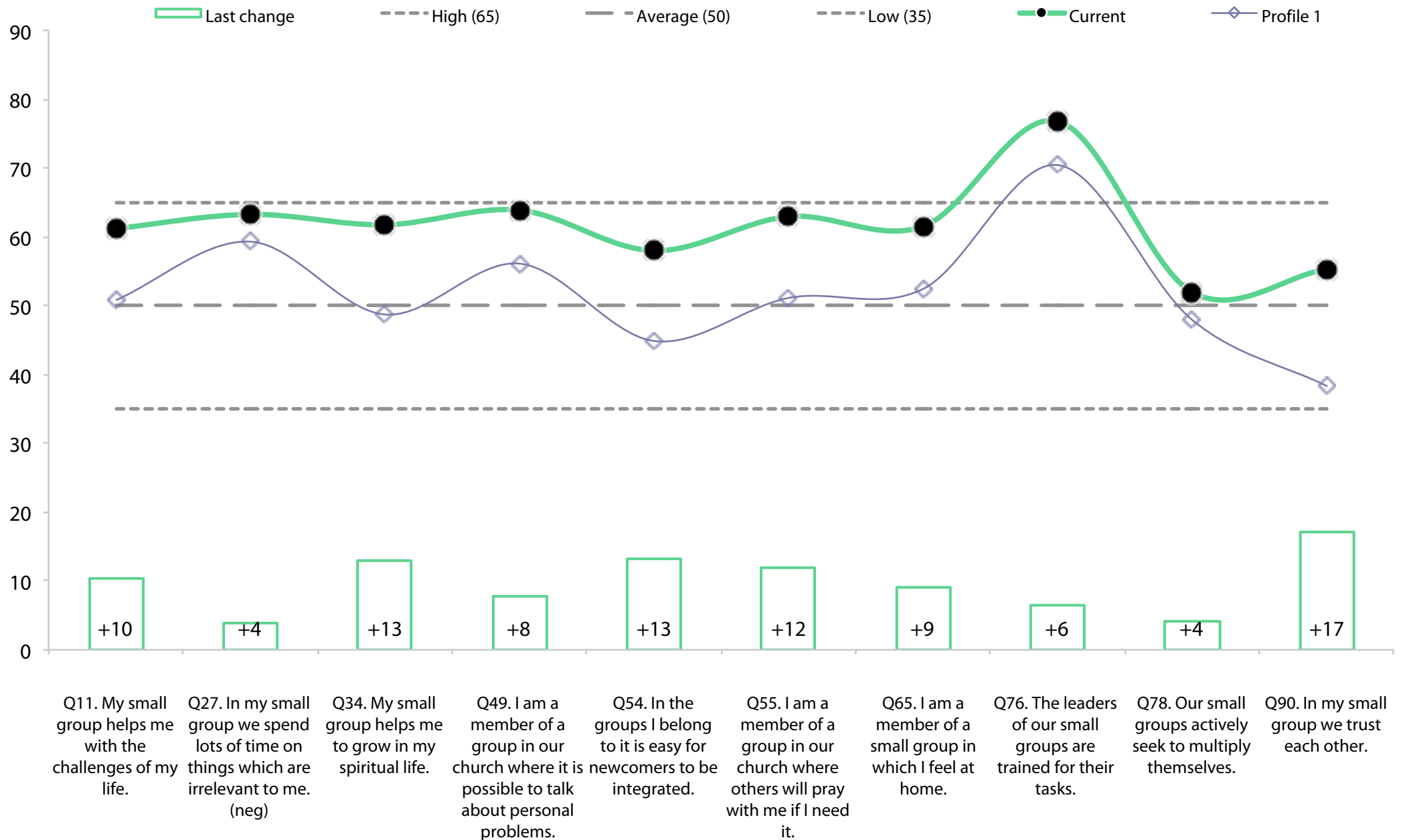




# Holistic Small Groups Current Profile



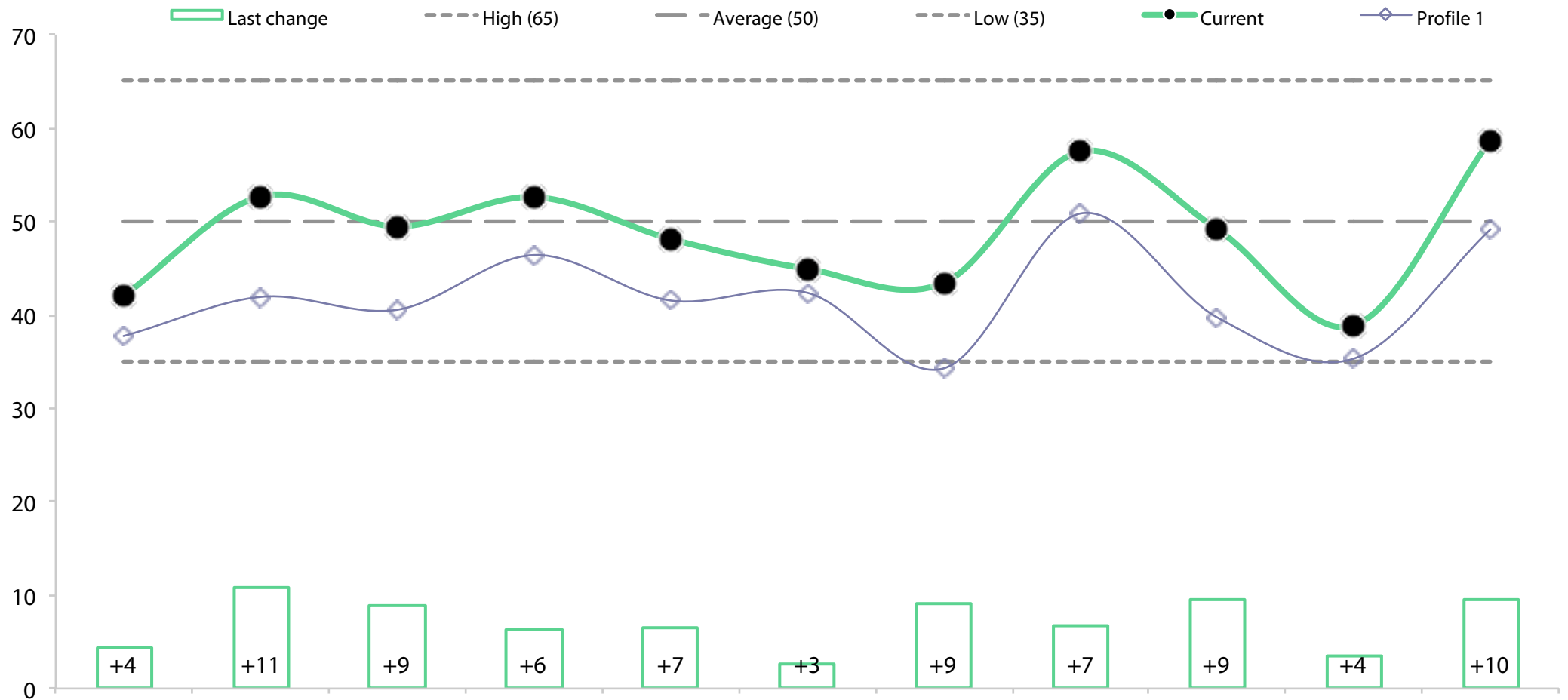
# HSG Dynamic progress



# Need-oriented Evangelism Current Profile



# NoE Dynamic progress



Q19. We encourage new Christians in our church to get involved in evangelism immediately.

Q21. The evangelistic activities of our church are relevant for my friends and family who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

Q33. I pray for my friends, colleagues and relatives who do not yet know Jesus Christ, that they will come to faith.

Q36. Our church tries to help those in need (food, clothing, education, counsel, etc.).

Q44. New Christians find friends in our church quickly.

Q69. There is a lot of creativity in the evangelistic activities of our church.

Q70. I know of a number of individuals in our church who have the gift of evangelism.

Q75. I try to deepen my relationships with people who do not yet know Jesus Christ.

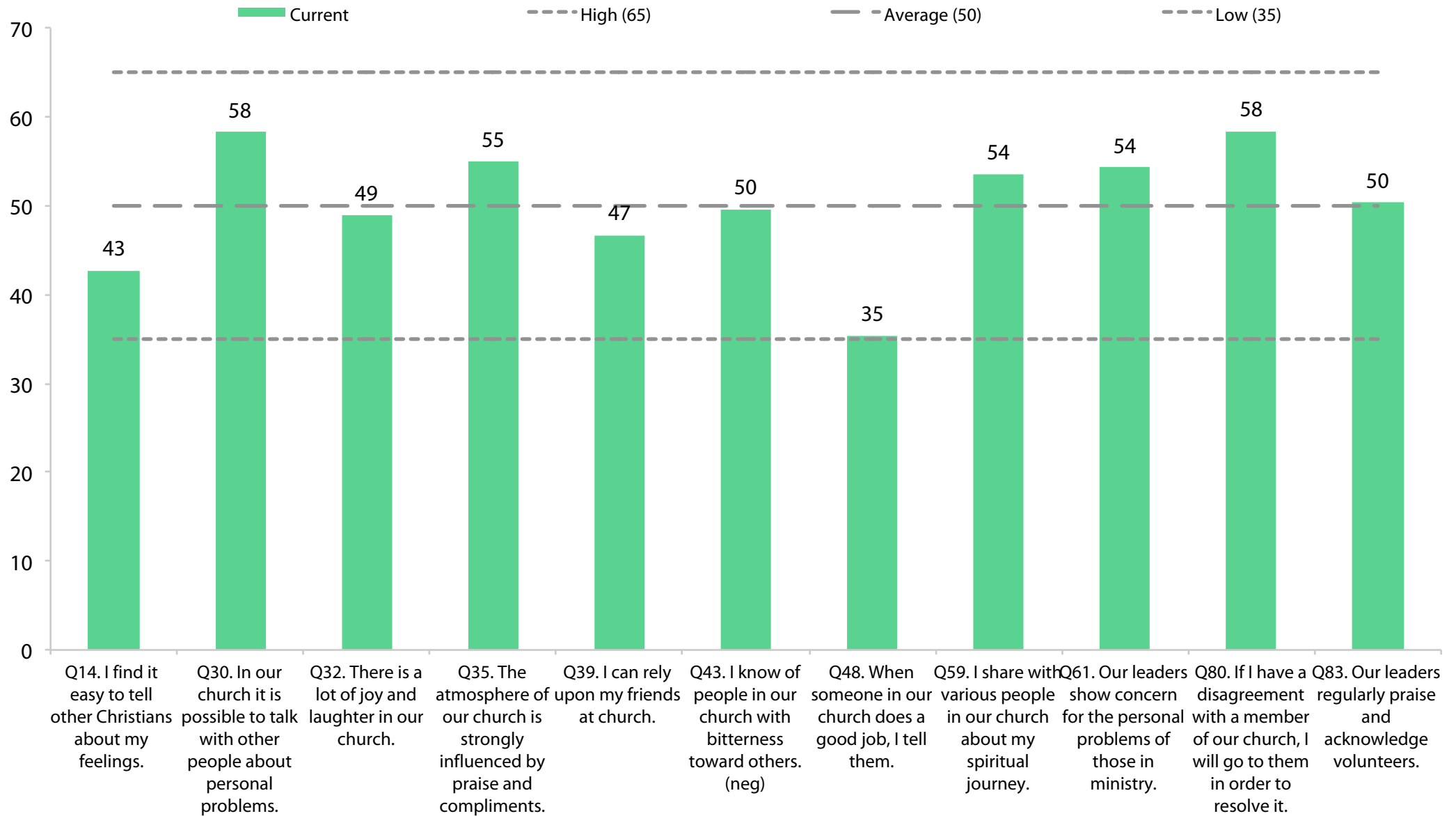
Q82. The leaders of our church support individual Christians in their evangelistic endeavors.

Q86. When new people come to church events, we approach them openly and lovingly.

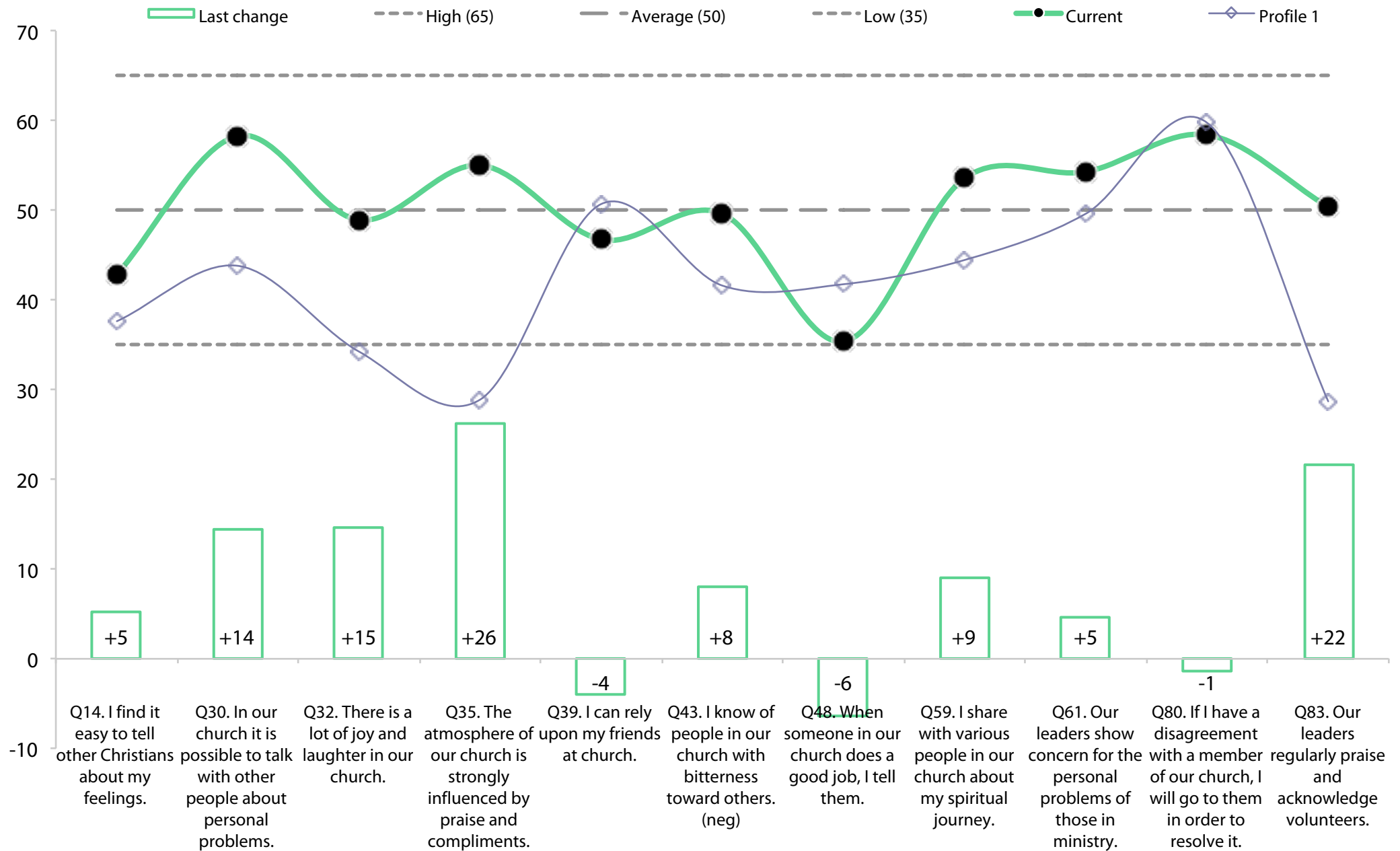
Q87. Our church provides practical help for new Christians to grow in their faith.



# Loving Relationships Current Profile

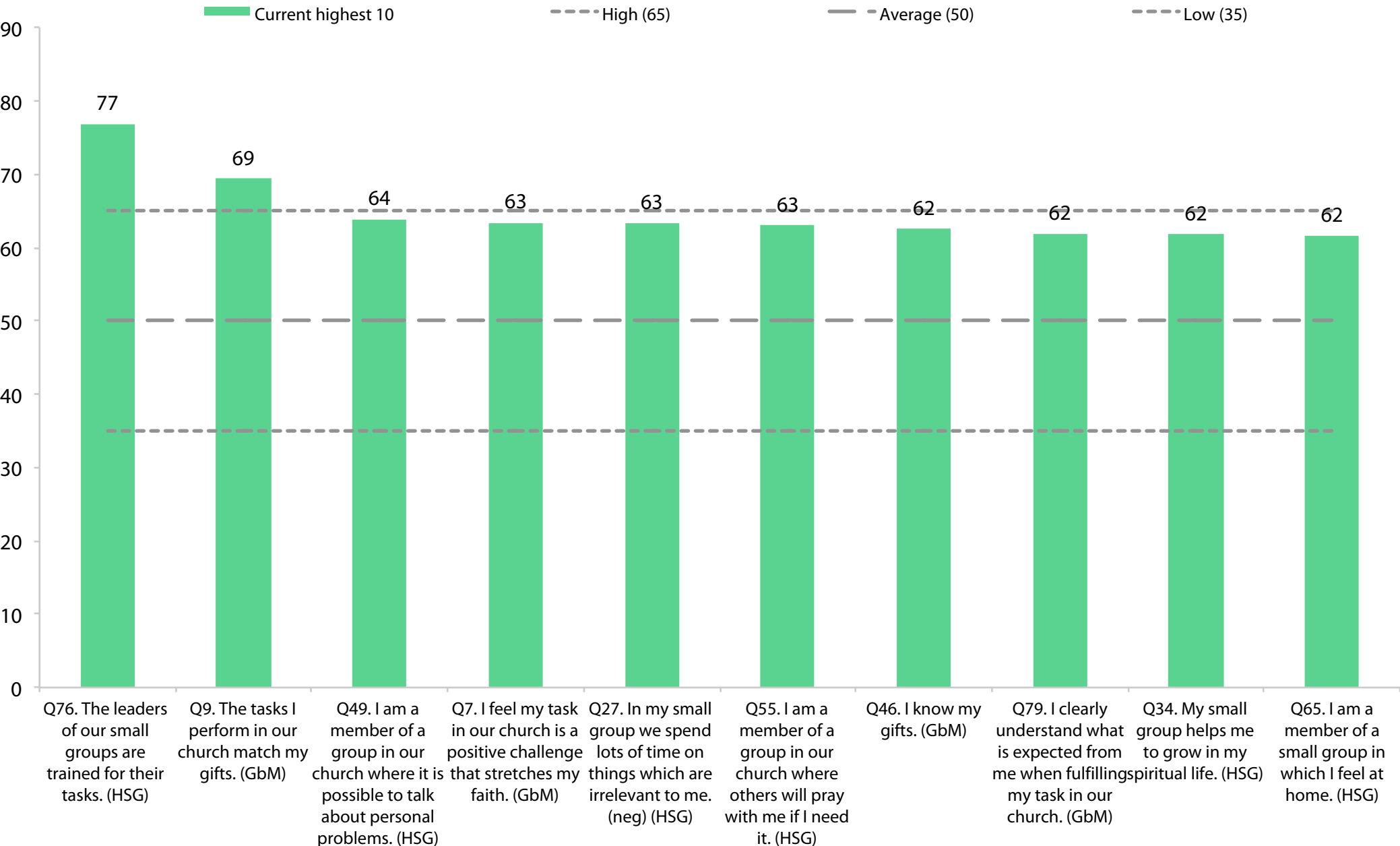


# LR Dynamic progress

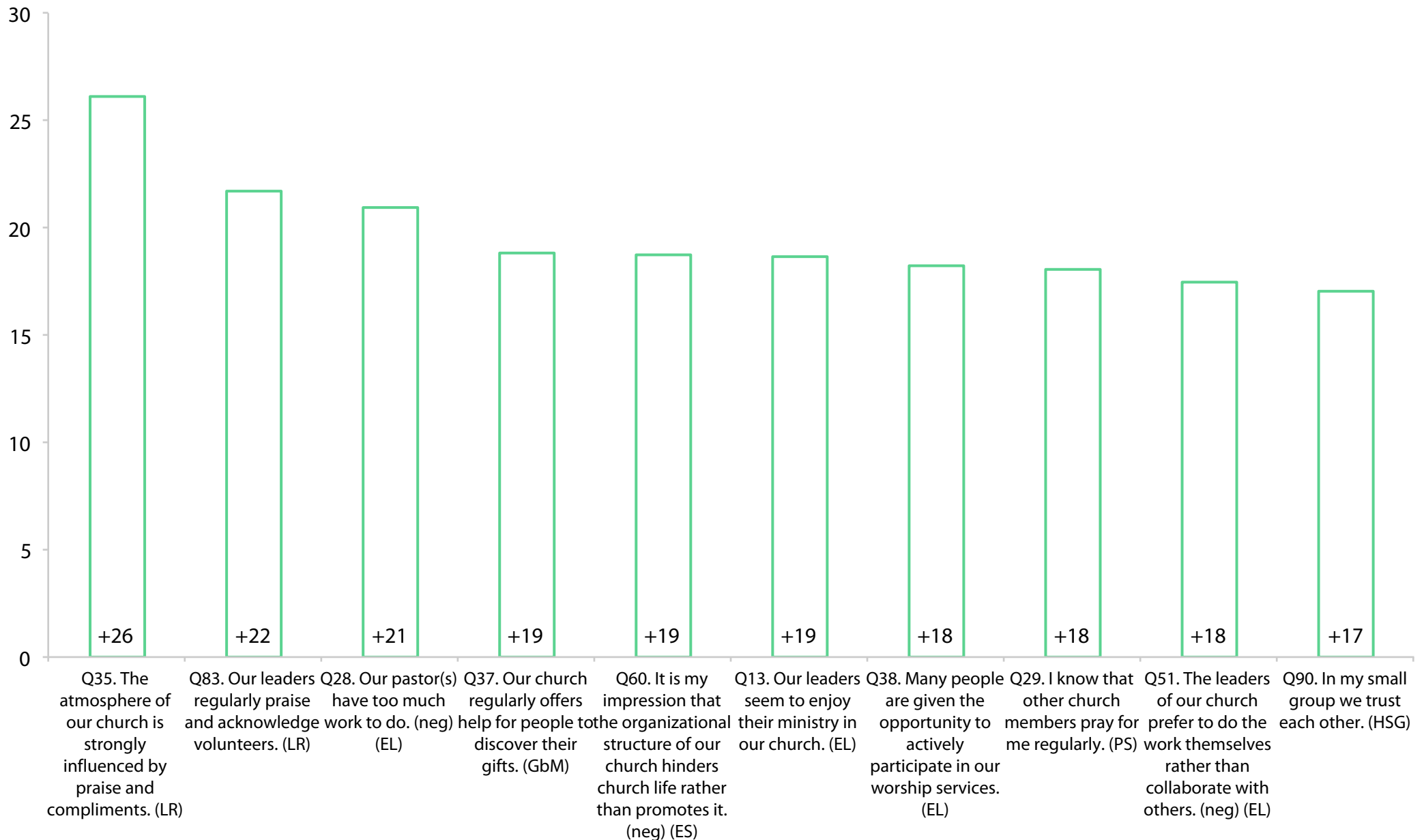




# Current highest 10



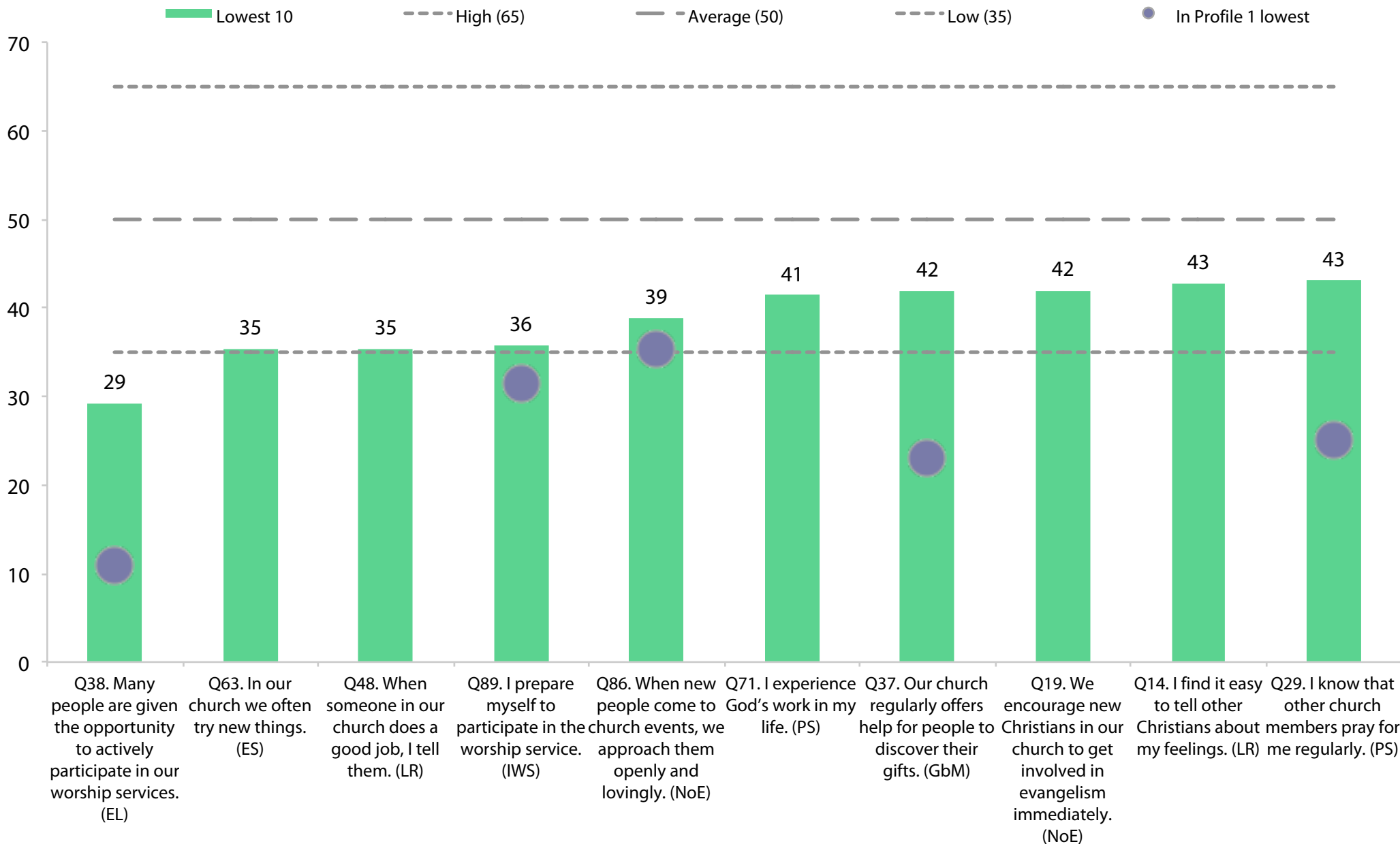
# Highest 10 changes from previous to current



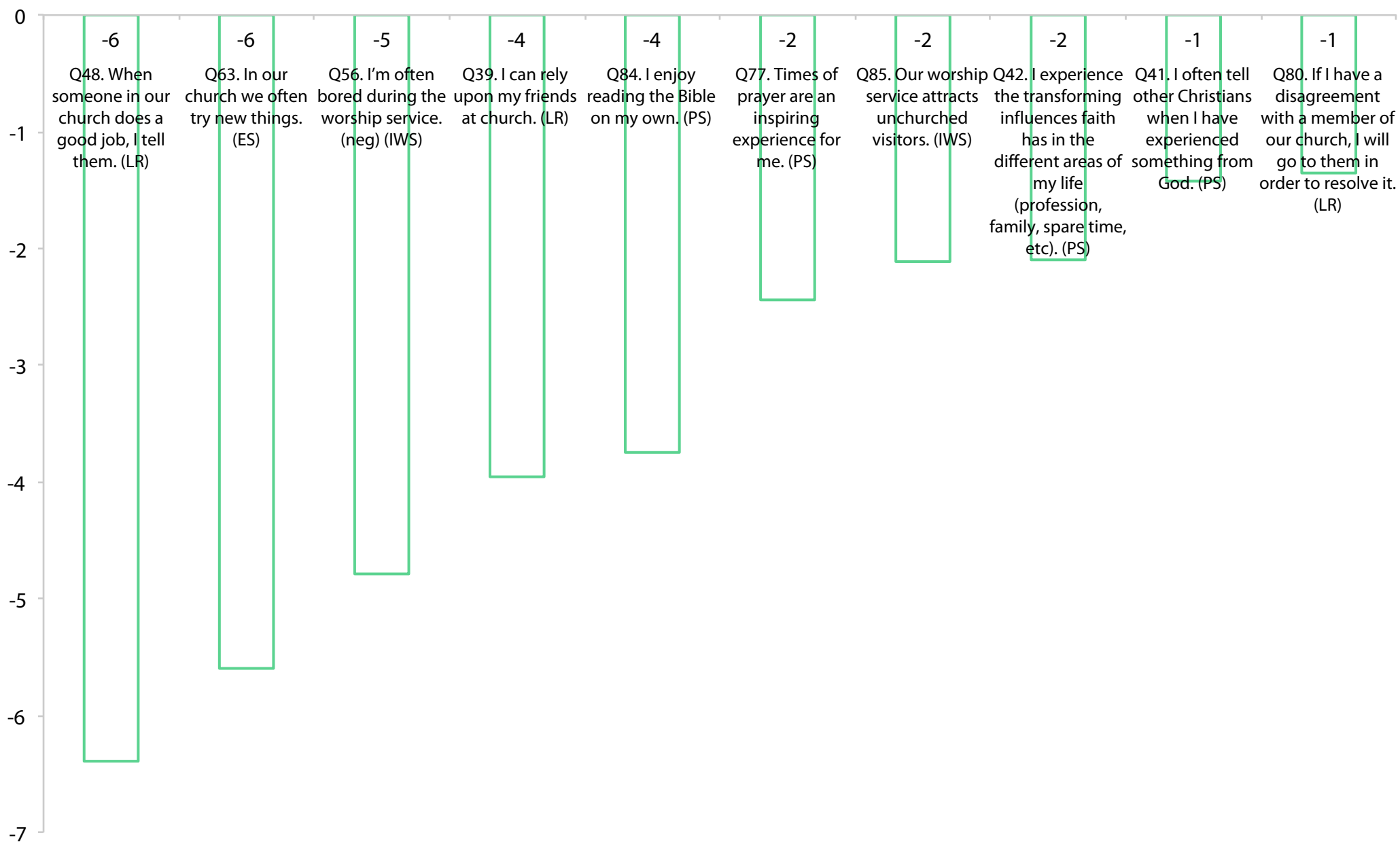




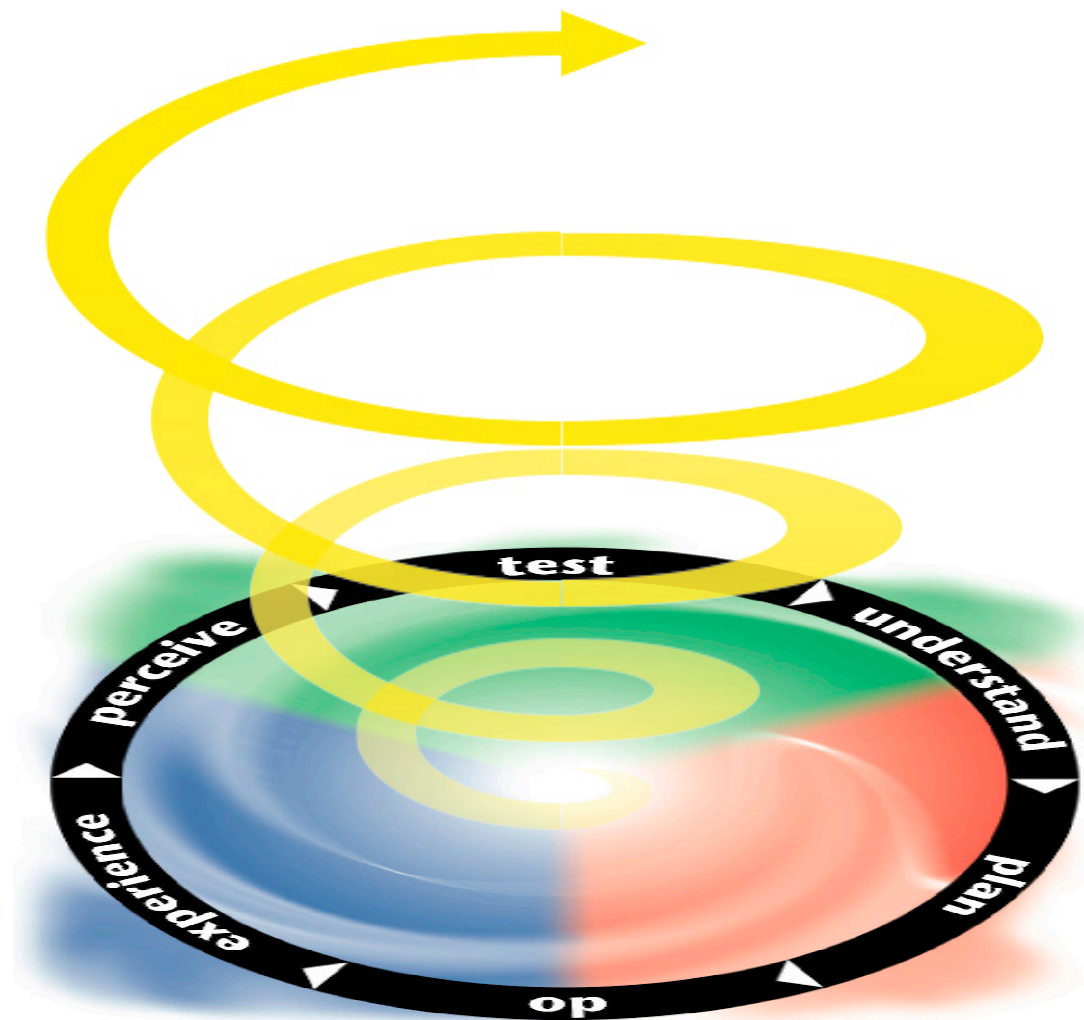
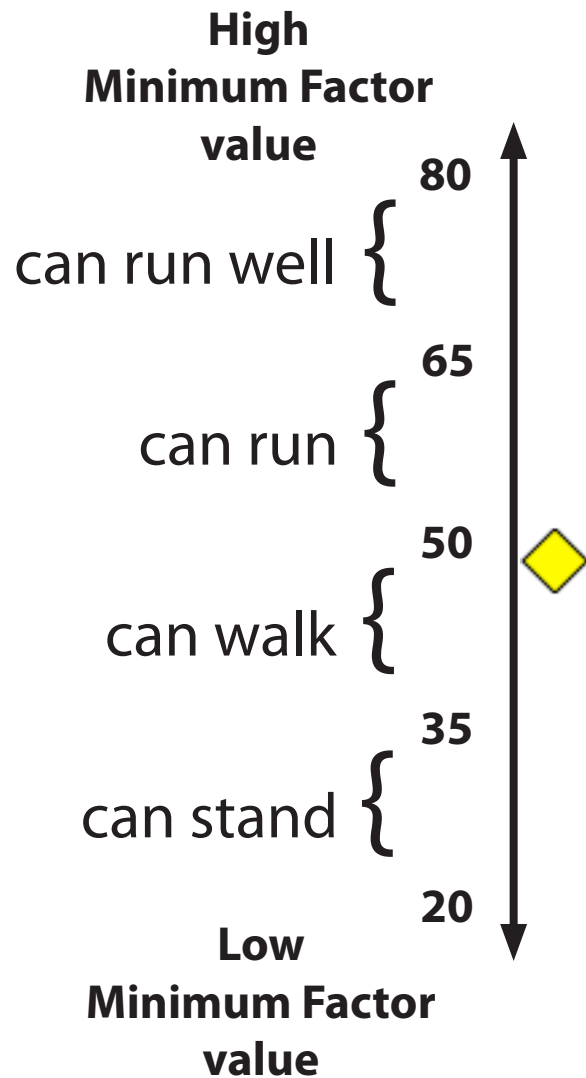
Current lowest 10



# Lowest 10 changes from previous to current



# Current Capacity



Inspiring Worship Service



# The background to your results

As you read through the various charts in your NCD results, it will be important to understand what the numbers mean as well as how the results came about. Consider the following.

## The research of NCD

The initial research of NCD was based on 1000 churches in 32 countries on all continents (now 60,000 surveys, 70 countries). It was aimed at, for the first time, **determining the universal principles of long-term church growth regardless of nationality, denomination, culture or worship style.**

Many theories about church growth were evaluated against the external benchmark of sustained numerical growth (growth of at least 10% per year for five years). This filters out gimmick driven growth or momentary spikes in attendance. It also **provides us with the most important answers as to what should be in place when God chooses to add people to the church and for those people to want to stay there and encourage others to be part as well.** Put another way, the overall question posed and answered by NCD research is, “What should each church and every Christian do to obey the Great Commission in today’s world?” Collectively, the eight quality characteristics of NCD, and the partnership with God that they nurture, are the answer to the question.

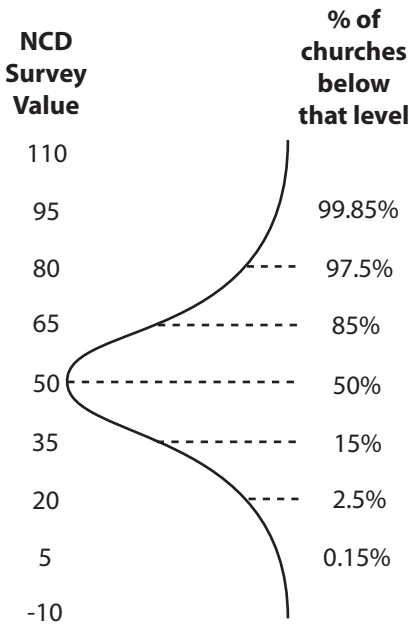
## How your results were calculated

The NCD Survey is a standardised comparative analysis tool. This means it compares ‘apples with apples’ with reference to the average quality of apples in a given country. To do this, **the responses of a representative sample of those in your church with some form of ministry, small group involvement and who attend worship services, were compared with the responses in the national database from people who fit the same broad criteria.** Your result for each question and quality characteristic was then plotted on the charts in this guide relative to that national average. Because the results are standardised around an average, it means that for every church that has a result on one side of the average, there are about as many churches in your country with a result just as far on the other side of the average.

## The numbers

The average value for any question or quality characteristic in this guide is 50. Coincidentally, this corresponds with the 50th percentile for churches in your country. However **the numbers shown on each page are not percentages**, but index values based on a standard bell curve distribution with a standard deviation of 15 points. To convert a given NCD value to a percentage, see the table to the right.

Note that **the score for any given quality characteristic is not simply the average of the questions related to that area.** There are other weightings discovered through the research that collectively contribute to those final results.



## The “exact meaning” behind each question

As you read any of the individual survey questions in this guide, keep in mind that **there is no one specific meaning behind each question.** As with any question ever asked, there are as many ways of looking at it as there are people responding to it. On the basis of NCD research into long-term growth trends, all that can be said of any given question from the survey is that, for *whatever* reason, when a group of people collectively respond to it in a positive way, it is indicative of a healthy growth dynamic in the background.

So what you must do is to **think about each question and the response to it in the specific context of your church and consider all possibilities.** Even put yourself in the shoes of specific survey participants to imagine what they may have been thinking when responding positively or hesitating strongly to a given question. The wording of survey questions within this guide is identical to the NCD questionnaire itself. This allows you to ask the question, “When faced with exactly these words and under the protection of anonymity, why did the average person in our sample group respond positively/negatively?” Or, “What from the life of our church went through the average person’s mind when they read exactly these words?” Participants may not always be able to articulate clearly why they responded as they did, but there will be reasons.



## The background to your results continued

### Negatively worded questions

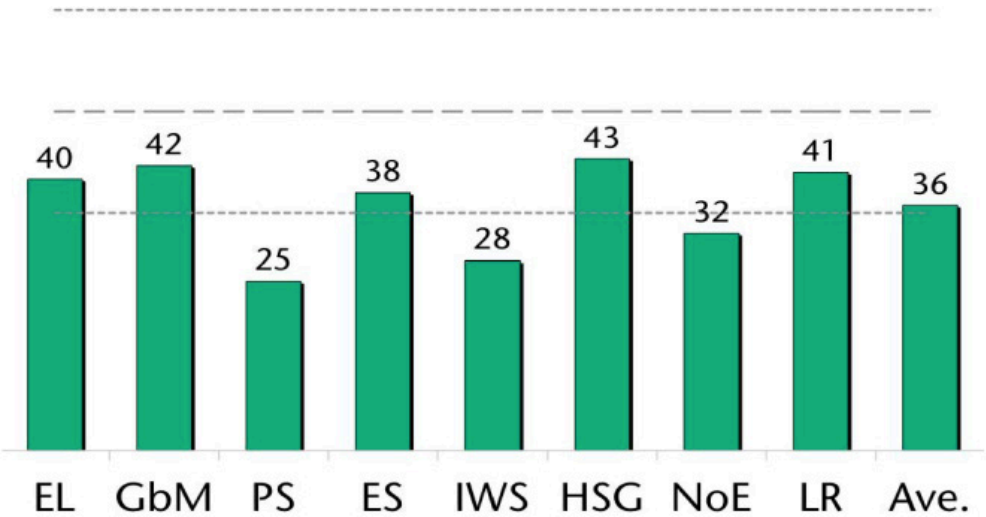
A few questions, you will notice, are worded negatively. This is indicated in the guides by a (neg) after the question. Some questions are worded this way because the underlying issues cannot be assessed by using positive wording. For example, when answering the question, “Attending the worship service is an inspiring experience for me” people tend to look at the whole service. But when answering the question, “I’m often bored in the worship service” there is a tendency to respond about a specific part of the service.

In the instance of negatively worded questions, the results have been reversed on the chart so that those questions can be compared directly with the other positively worded questions. For example, in the boredom in worship question mentioned above, a high result means that people are not bored. So, **the results for these questions should be interpreted the same as for all other questions – the higher up the graph the healthier.**

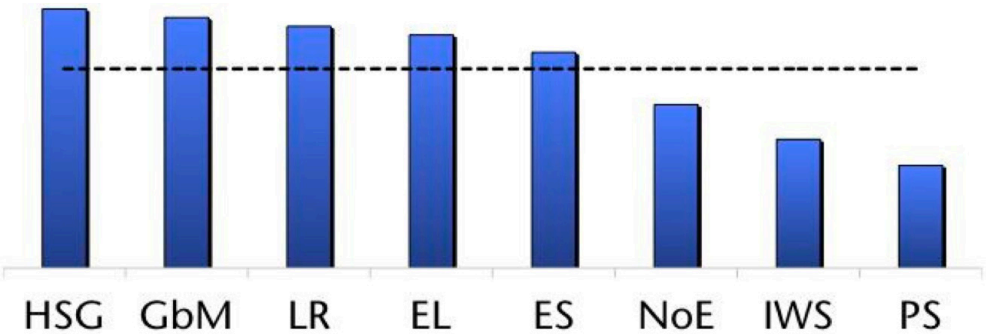
### Story and Status Guides – different points of comparison

While this guide shows your results in comparison to the national average for churches, the Story Guide your church has received shows your results in comparison to your church’s own average. This is to simplify the Story Guide discussion so that it keeps focused on your maximum and minimum factor areas in comparison with each other without the added complexity of comparing them to the national average as well. Ultimately, **it is more important that a church focuses on what its minimums are and not what value they have scored. Therefore, the information you have available in this guide should be used with discretion in such a way that it does not excessively burden your church if the results are very low, or leave the church feeling like “we’re already good enough” if the results are high.**

The example below shows this difference in the plotting of a church’s quality characteristic results for the same sample church.



In the Status Guide (green), **the middle dashed line on the chart corresponds to the national average of 50 points.**



In the Story Guide (blue), **the dashed line on the chart corresponds to this church’s own average of 36 points (the quality characteristics being reordered by rank to emphasis the story approach).**



# Age and gender demographics

When considering your results, keep in mind the make up of the survey participant group. If the survey instructions were followed, the survey sample will be (along with other criteria) a representative sample of the age and gender demographics in your church. The pages referred to below will show you how your sample is constituted based on those two categories.

## Age distribution of survey participants (page 4)

This chart shows the distribution of the survey sample according to seven age group options listed on the questionnaire. It is not important that every age group is evenly represented or represented at all. **It is of greater interest that the percentages roughly relate to the proportion of active attenders your church has in each grouping.**

Consider which age groups are represented in the church’s leadership. Your leaders do not necessarily have to represent the largest age groups. There could be good reasons why just the opposite might be beneficial. However, it is helpful to acknowledge the very different dynamics associated with a mainly older leadership group leading a predominantly younger congregation, or a young leadership team providing leadership to a mostly older congregation. While both of these scenarios can work very well, on some occasions, frustration at the leadership level can simply relate to the gap between these generations in either direction.

Knowing the age and gender demographics can be helpful in understanding why particular results have emerged. **If there are age groups comprising of significant numbers of people who are not represented on the leadership team, make sure you encourage the inclusion of some of the “missing” leadership age groups in the discussions around the NCD process.** That one simple step will enhance the discoveries that take place and therefore the next steps of your church towards greater health.

- Are you listening to and including in your result discussions the full spectrum of age groups represented in your church?
- Are there age groups you should be working extra hard at trying to understand and embrace?

## Gender distribution of survey participants (page 4)

**Most of what has just been said about age groups also applies to gender distribution within the church.** There are several questions that should be asked in this regard. They will help in shaping who should be included in the NCD process discussions in order to ensure that a realistic picture of the church is being seen and realistic plans will ultimately emerge.

- On balance, which gender does most of the ministry work in your church?
- Does your leadership team represent the workload distribution and spiritual influence of your church in terms of gender?
- Who, in terms of gender, do your survey results most reflect? Does this line up with the most influential gender in your church? If not, what are the implications of this?

In both age distribution and gender distribution, regardless of whether you feel the survey sampling could have been slightly more precise, the results are a very accurate picture of those represented — the kind of people the leadership most wanted to hear from.

## My thoughts and questions

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# Sustainability

Your church is a living body with the potential to move, grow, bear fruit, multiply... and get sick. While the NCD process as a whole is focused on increasing health and therefore fruitfulness, **it is important to consider the urgency of that remedial action and the natural effects of not taking it.**

## The systems of your body

Like any body, your church is made up of what could be called systems. In the human body these systems are the muscular, skeletal, cardiovascular, digestive, respiratory, nervous, etc. In the church, the systems are empowering leadership, gift-based ministry, passionate spirituality etc. In both types of bodies, every system is essential, interrelated and depends upon all of the others. **If one system is sick or under-developed, it will place an additional load on all of the others and the body as a whole.**

Imagine that your muscles are better developed than 85% of people on earth. On the down side though, your heart is only healthier than that of 15% of people. What is going to happen to you? You are capable of performing some incredible feats of strength and many people may even be drawn to you as they marvel at your great power. However, without intervention, such feats will be short lived. Eventually, your unhealthy heart will simply fail to keep up with your muscles. The feats of strength will fade away and eventually your muscles will wither if you don't die of a heart attack first.

Sadly, churches, revivals and even whole movements through church history have likely died or paled into insignificance as a result of trying to defy this simple reality. They start out with a great strength in a particular area and see marvelous things happen, but after some time, collapse. Often those involved become disillusioned and wonder 'What happened in the end?' The truth is that nothing happened in the end. The effect of neglecting certain systems long before that time, simply came to fruition.

This muscle/heart example is exactly like a church very focused on Need-oriented evangelism with an NCD score of 65 (85%) but whose work in discovering, utilising and developing its people's gifts is somewhat lower at 35 (15%) (review percentage chart on page 28). Despite all the passion in the world to see people saved, God simply did not create any living thing to function fruitfully over the long-term with two of its major systems so far out of balance — least of all, his Church. This level of difference between the minimum and maximum factor is not that uncommon in churches around the world. The specific minimum and maximum quality characteristics will differ, but the principle is the same — **balance underpins sustainability.**

## Using resources for growth or just maintenance?

When a church has a large minimum/maximum factor difference, the extra resources required just to maintain its health are considerably higher. In the human body example, this takes the form of compensatory medication, extra trips to the doctor and perhaps even hospital stays. In the church it could take the form of additional conflict resolution, recovery from burnout and many other resource-hungry issues.

The good news is that **reducing the number of points between your maximum and minimum factor simply involves being diligent about strengthening your minimum factor areas.** The result? A church that is not only healthier and more fruitful, but will endure in its Kingdom influence.

## Sustainability reference points (front page)

Refer to the front page of this guide and consider the following...

- A Min-Max difference of 15 points or less shows strong sustainability as the systems of the church body are becoming very well integrated.
- A Min-Max difference of 15-30 points (more than one standard deviation) is cause for concern. There is a degree of urgency emerging as the minimum factor/s are putting some significant downward pressure on the other quality characteristics and therefore the health of your church.
- If your Min-Max is above 30 points, there will be considerable energy being spent in simply maintaining the church where it is and there is a high risk of the overall health of the church collapsing if remedial action is not taken. This is cause for serious engagement with your church's results as a matter of high priority.
- Consider the urgency of dealing with your church's results based upon your Min-Max difference.

For your interest, in your minimum and maximum factor areas, the percentage of churches below your church is:

Maximum Factor	84.1%
Minimum Factor	44.3%





# Progress charts

There are a number of progress charts throughout this guide that indicate the changes in your church from your previous NCD Survey. These charts also show the dynamic progress of your church for up to four surveys. Such changes will either be a cause for celebration or a reason to do some soul searching about the past for the sake of the future.

## Helpful whether you were focused or not

From a progress perspective, NCD does not just measure the effects of activity surrounding your previous minimum factor area, but the effects of all church activity since your last survey. Decisions have been made, money spent, programs and activities undertaken, and thousands of other dynamics of church life played out. All of these dynamics will have impacted your church (for good or ill) and therefore your current results. The important question is: what has all of that activity produced in terms of long-term increased fruitfulness, even if you didn't focus on your previous minimum factor as you would have liked? The progress charts will lead you to the answer.

## Quality characteristic progress (page 6)

Turn to your "Quality Characteristic Dynamic Progress" page.

- What specific activity (or lack of activity) in your church has led to these changes in the overall health and culture since the last survey? (Focus on the largest two positive or negative changes first, followed by the smallest two changes.)
- Given your previous minimum factor, what does this say about activity and allocation of time, treasure and talent since the last survey?

## Previous minimum factor progress (page 8 )

Turn to the "Dynamic progress" page for your previous minimum factor.

- What specific activity (or lack of activity) in your church has led to these changes since the last survey? (Focus on the largest two positive or negative changes first, followed by the smallest two changes.)
- What does this say about your church's approach to your previous minimum factor? What can be learnt from this?

## Highest 10 changes (page 24)

Turn to your "Highest 10 changes from previous to current" page. This page indicates the greatest gains that have come from all of the activity of church life since the last survey.

- To what can you attribute some of these gains?
- Which of these gains relate to your previous minimum factor?

## Lowest 10 changes (page 26)

Turn to your "Lowest 10 changes from previous to current" page. This page indicates the areas that have progressed the least despite all the activity of church life since the last survey.

- Do any of these areas relate to your previous minimum factor? If so, what does that say?
- Are you surprised by any of these low changes? If so, why?

## My thoughts and questions

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# Cultural ‘sticking points’

Culture is a wonderful thing when it comes to the strengths of a church. When a strength is part of your culture, it takes little effort to keep it going and bearing fruit. What’s more, people grow up (either physically or spiritually) in such a church knowing no other way. Though when a minimum factor area is part of your long-term culture, it can sometimes be very challenging to change. Again, people have often grown up knowing no other way.

After two, three, or ideally four NCD surveys, this guide will highlight many deeper cultural challenges or ‘sticking points’ as they are often called. These are aspects of church life that have proven very resistant to change, despite a lot of activity and progress in other areas of church life. By identifying them clearly, it is possible to focus your time, treasure and talent far more specifically in order to see them transformed. Below are clues as to where to find these sticking points.

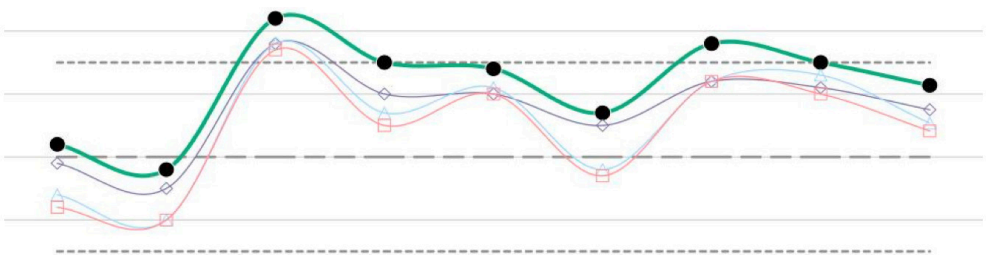
### Recurring minimum factor (front page)

The easiest place to start in identifying a sticking point is if you have the same minimum factor as your last survey. If this is the case, it indicates a need for you to explore and confront the deeper issues holding back your minimum factor. These will become apparent when you look at your minimum factor dynamic progress page.

While on the front page, you may also notice a recurring maximum factor. This indicates that it won’t take much conscious thought or energy to keep that area high. It is deeply rooted in your DNA.

### Parallel lines (starting page 6)

The dynamic progress charts you have begun looking at, in a sense, show the individual frames of a moving picture. As more frames (surveys) are added, you can see where your church health story is moving. Turn first to the quality characteristic dynamic progress page. If the lines on this page are quite random in their relationship to each other, it may suggest that your culture is quite flexible or that you have made great strides in shifting the culture of your church. If however the lines appear to be parallel, this indicates the unique cultural ‘shape’ of your church. See the example in the right column.



Lines following a very similar path indicate rigid culture

Having looked for any parallel line shape on your quality characteristic progress page, turn now to your [current minimum factor] dynamic progress page to look for similar signs of cultural sticking points.

### Recurring lowest 10 questions (page 25)

When particular survey questions repeatedly end up on your lowest 10 page over multiple surveys, it means they are clear cultural sticking points. If any exist, they are indicated, along with their previous level, by dots on that page.

### Questions for all of the above pages

- What are the longer-term cultural reasons why the concerns behind these quality characteristics or individual questions have not been addressed effectively?
- Of the various sticking points from the pages referred to above, which appear to have been the most difficult to change?

### My thoughts and questions

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# Minimum factor detail

The detail behind your minimum factor is particularly helpful in making sure that assumptions are not made about why that quality characteristic has scored poorly compared to the rest. Remember that if over time, the leadership had clearly understood your minimum factor area and its importance, it would probably not have become the minimum factor. Therefore, **a growing understanding of your churches unique issues within this area can prevent the leadership from sticking with the first idea that is presented, or simply following the loudest voice in the room, whose opinion may not be particularly objective.**

## Themes across your minimum factor (page 16)

Look across the lowest few questions in your minimum factor to identify connected sub-themes. For example, in passionate spirituality, the questions “Our leaders are spiritual examples to me” and “I firmly believe that God will work even more powerfully in our church in the coming years” might both be low. In the unique context of such a church, it may become apparent there is a strong link between these questions and one can even picture how those dynamics play out in everyday church life.

Based on your observations of the life of your church...

- Which low scoring questions seem to have a connection with each other? What does that combination look like in church life?
- How would you summarise in a few words the common theme behind the low questions within your minimum factor?

## Contrasts within your minimum factor (page 16)

Aside from the low points within your minimum factor, it is also of value to look at the contrasts it may contain. These contrasts can be clues to the deeper challenges facing the future development of your church. For example, in effective structures, the question “I understand clearly how the different parts of our church work together” may score highly, but the question “It is my impression that the organisational structure of our church hinders church life rather than promotes it” might score poorly. In such a situation, it might become apparent to one that “People know how it fits together... but just don’t think it works!”

When looking at some of the larger differences between the individual questions of your minimum factor, it is important to make sure that those variations are statistically significant. As a starting point, only look at combinations of questions that are at least 15 points apart. Keep in mind that the ideal is for all factors to have high results and be balanced. Therefore, large contrasts mean that there is a lack of interdependence within that characteristic. Looking at the various high/low contrasts...

- Which contrasts between questions stand out to you as showing an obvious lack of integration or interdependence?
- How would you explain these contrasts from your observations of church life?
- What missing or unfruitful processes or practices in church life have led to these contrasts?
- What connections can you see between the minimum factor detail and themes contained within it and your church’s Summary Guide and Story Guide themes?

Sometimes in a given set of results, the minimum factor detail is all generally low without much contrast. In these instances, apart from taking note of what that overall picture communicates, it is often of greater value to look at the lowest 10 question page referred to in the next section.

## My thoughts and questions

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# Lowest & highest 10 questions

Your lowest 10 scoring questions from across the whole survey form a unique virtual minimum factor. (The quality characteristic they are primarily associated with is abbreviated in brackets beneath each question.) **These questions represent the issues that are collectively limiting the long-term growth of your church to the greatest extent right now.** Substantial progress simply will not be sustainable or even take place unless they are progressively addressed.

Exploring this group of questions is especially helpful when your church has a number of low scoring quality characteristics that are within only a few points of each other (check on page 5), thereby making it difficult to point to a clear minimum factor area. However, even if your minimum factor is at least five points lower than the next lowest quality characteristic, the lowest 10 group can be very insightful.

## Lowest 10 questions (page 25)

Look across the questions on your lowest 10 page and make a note of any that seem to you to have a connection with each other. For example, if the list included low scores for questions such as...

*“The leaders of our church prefer to do the work themselves rather than collaborate with others.”*

*“The leaders of our church concentrate on the tasks for which they are gifted.”*

*“I experience the benefits of working on a team in our church.”*

*“The small group and ministry leaders in our church each mentor at least one other person.”*

...you might sense that this points to a general challenge with leaders working together with others. You should see evidence of this in everyday church life.

Based on your observations of the life of your church...

- Which lowest 10 questions seem to have a strong connection with each other? Where have you seen that combination play out?
- How would you summarise in a few words each of the sub-groups of questions you can see within your lowest 10 page?

## Lowest & highest 10 question combinations (pages 23 & 25)

The other way to gain insight from your lowest 10 questions is to contrast them with your highest 10 questions. To do this, you simply flick between the two pages asking yourself, “If this question scored high, but this question scored low, what could that be telling us?”

Based on your observations of the life of your church...

- Which contrasts stand out to you?
- How would you explain each notable contrast?
- What missing or unfruitful, processes or practices in church life have led to these contrasts?
- What connections can you see between the lowest and highest 10 question pages and your church’s Summary Guide and Story Guide themes?

## My thoughts and questions

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# Current capacity

**T**here is no evidence in the massive NCD International database that an unhealthy church has any more difficulty improving their results than a church starting from a medium or high level of health. Churches of all levels have a minimum factor and churches of all levels display good and poor progress. So what makes the difference?

## The health spiral

High quality churches are those which have deliberately (or intuitively) learnt to cycle all aspects of church life through each stage of the NCD Cycle in a thorough and consistent way (see page 27). Therefore, to make progress on their minimum factor, churches of all levels need to move through the NCD Cycle on an ongoing basis more thoroughly with each revolution.

Aside from embracing or ignoring the need for cyclical growth, **the big difference between churches who make great progress and those who don't is the willingness and ability to soberly acknowledge and act on the basis of their current level on the health spiral – their current capacity.** This level is their current minimum factor level.

## Understanding the levels

To understand these capacity levels, imagine the difference in helping a person to become a good runner whose current capacity to run scored an NCD value of 35 (ie. at the 15th percentile – see page 28) compared to someone who could already run. The person at 35 is not yet even able to stand up with confidence, so their immediate level of challenge must be far lower because of their lower current capacity. In cycle terms, they would have very limited...

- *understanding* of how to run
- ability to *plan* the first steps
- capacity to therefore *do* it
- *experience* of what running feels like
- *perception* as to what they were doing right or wrong
- *testing* skills for determining whether they were achieving the goal

It is exactly the same for a church with a lower current capacity. Therefore the approach to each cycle must be different depending on your level.

## Matching load with capacity

The diagram (page 27) shows the health spiral using your current minimum factor as an example. It could equally depict the process ahead for any of your low scoring Summary or Story guide themes. The immediate implication of the capacity issue in the current cycle for your church is to make sure that the leadership is not reaching “up” for *understanding, planning, doing, experiencing, perceiving* and *testing* that is too far beyond them for now.

In the context of this guide, the leadership should not believe that it can, if they just discuss them long enough, *understand* all there is to know about your minimum factor issues. More *planning, doing, experience* etc. (through further cycles) will be necessary. So at any level of the spiral, “beyond reasonable doubt understanding” is more than enough for moving on.

The Cycle Starter concept associated with these guides, aims at helping your leaders to move one level higher on their spiral, and doing so in a few weeks. This simple step in the early stages of the process will take the leadership (and therefore church!) to a new level – a vantage point from which your understanding of the minimum factor issues becomes considerably clearer.

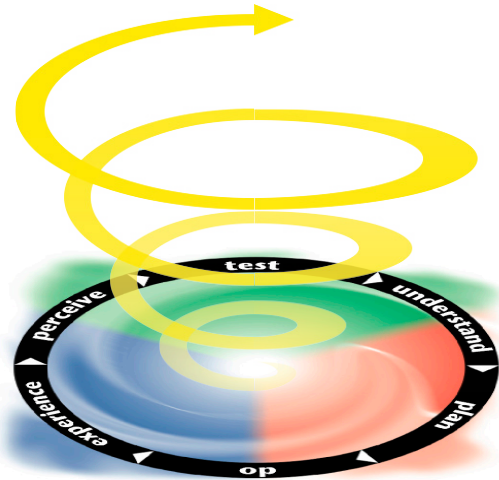
With all of the cycle stages the principle is the same. Soberly match the expectations and load that the leaders put on themselves with a realistic picture of their current capacity at this stage of the journey.

- Based on the dynamics of the growth spiral, in which cycle stages are the leaders likely to be tempted to overload (or under-challenge) themselves during the NCD process? What about yourself personally?

**Warning:** Presenting this concept to the church leadership should be done with great caution if your minimum factor level is particularly low, as some leaders may struggle with grasping the church's or even their own limited current capacity. Be mindful of this as you provide guidance and suggestions throughout the process. Such guidance will help your church to avoid getting bogged down with complex action plans, having made the whole *Natural Church Development* process too complicated and lofty.

# Understanding the facts beyond reasonable doubt

So far (if following the suggested process) your church leadership will have discussed both the Summary and Story guides and embarked on personal Cycle Starters. Having also worked through this Status Guide, they are likely to have spiraled up to a whole new level of understanding about your current challenges. What the leadership now need to do is to express that new level of understanding as 'facts beyond reasonable doubt'.



## Documenting the current facts beyond reasonable doubt

As the process of Natural Church Development is cyclical, **you must not get stuck on trying to understand everything before moving on to the next plan stage within the spiral.** It is not possible without further experimentation and experience. Instead you should ask, "What do we understand that is beyond reasonable doubt right now?" You then move onto simple revised plans that you will cycle again fairly quickly, eventually arriving back at yet another higher level of understanding.

On the following page, write down what you personally understand, beyond reasonable doubt, to be the strengths and weaknesses of your church based on your analysis so far. At the Status Guide discussion meeting, make sure that you firmly state what you believe the facts from the results to be. Others, who are perhaps not as strong in testing and understanding to establish facts, are likely to find it helpful for someone like yourself to make some clear, well thought through statements, as long as they know that you are also remaining open and teachable. Having stated your own perspective, invite others to comment or add to your statements. **If points are not generally agreed upon, leave them for a later cycle and simply focus upon those that are beyond reasonable doubt for the vast majority of those in the discussion.**

- Based on the Summary, Story and Status guides and your discussion so far, what are the basic facts beyond reasonable doubt about your church right now?
- Objectively, what do your results tell you that newcomers to your church are likely to experience?
- What facts are you willing to accept about your church that are a personal challenge to you?
- What has become a fact beyond reasonable doubt despite them being somewhat different to your pre-survey perceptions?
- How important are these findings for the future of your church? Be specific.
- What points raised by the guides or in discussion are you not yet convinced of and should therefore leave off a list of facts beyond reasonable doubt? Be sure to leave them off for now.

## "Cycling together" discussion

Having completed the Status Guide discussion and documented current facts beyond reasonable doubt, **it is time to review each person's Cycle Starter exercise** that was initiated after the Story Guide discussion. Check with your pastor as to who is going to facilitate that discussion with the help of the "Cycling together" instructions (presented on page 39 of this guide or page 16 of the Story Guide). For your convenience, the "My Cycle Starter Plan" page introduced in the Story Guide meeting is included on page 40 of this guide.

**As these discussions take place, keep in mind and try to provide gentle steerage in accordance with your church's current capacity (see previous page) and the general findings presented from the Summary, Story and Status guides.**

**Be sure that you are ready to share about your own Cycle Starter progress and what you intend to put in place as your revised or new plan for the next short cycle.**







# Cycling together

**C**ycling together to explore your church's current challenges simply involves **following the instructions on any given Cycle Starter sheet** (introduced in the Story Guide). However, if you are facilitating Cycle Starter discussions in a group (which should happen each time your group gets together to consider your church's results), here are some suggestions.

If facilitating discussion, refer the group back to their personal Cycle Starter sheets while you read or summarise the following...

*A growth cycle discussion simply involves putting your Cycle Starter sheet on the table and inviting others to ask the cycle questions starting at the Do stage, with the aim of helping them to move to a higher level on the growth spiral. If a person would like to talk through deeper personal issues with the group, we should make time for that. Otherwise, each person should move through his or her cycle questions in just a few minutes. So, who'd like to go first?*

If helpful, you can expand slightly on the questions for the group.

**Do:** *Are you following through and inviting God and others to go beyond your plan? Are you actually doing what you said you would do while recognising you can't do it all alone and need the help of others?*

**Experience:** *Have you freed yourself to receive from God and others? Have you given yourself the time and space to experience what has emerged from putting your plan into action?*

**Perceive:** *What do you see? What do you think happened (whether you like it or not) as a result of putting your plan into action?*

**Test:** *How do you know that you are seeing clearly? What means have you used to check you are being objective about your observations?*

**Understand:** *What are the facts? What can you now state about your chosen challenge topic that is beyond reasonable doubt?*

**Plan:** *What is most important now? If not the same plan, what refined or completely new plan is now a priority for your challenge topic?*

## Creative questioning

Feel free to **invent and ask other questions** that relate to each of the cycle stages. The aim of the discussion is to help each other move through each stage of the cycle in an open, honest way and to ensure that everyone finishes with a simple, concrete revised plan for their next cycle until you meet again.

Be sure to **lock in a date for your next round of cycle discussions** (and discussing your next NCD Result Guide if appropriate).

Some will of course be more diligent than others with their personal growth cycle. It is important to **keep encouraging those faithful few**, because often, once others see the fruit that begins emerging in their lives, a very motivating Godly jealousy develops.

## Anywhere... anytime... with anyone

Typically, for the sake of momentum, such discussions should take place at least monthly. However, **greater cycle discussion frequency will bring about far more rapid and consistent progress.**

Eventually, asking the cycle questions of other key influencers will be a natural part of everyday conversation. Until then, it will be important that designated cycle meetings take place. These meetings could be at the start of a leadership meeting, as part of a small group gathering, with a friend over lunch, or even as part of family dinner time discussions.

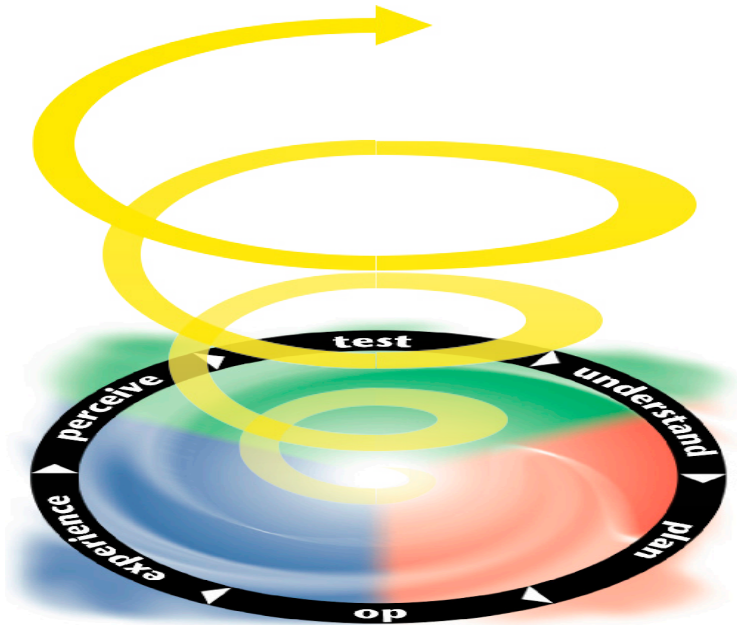
In short, **cycle discussion can take place anywhere, anytime, with anyone.** Though, your initial survey result group should at least meet a few times as a group until they are into the rhythm of consistent cyclical growth.

## Connecting back into your results

In these initial cycle meetings, it will be important to **keep your NCD Result Guides on hand** in order to review your results with the benefit of fresh experiences and increased understanding.

For those interested, let them know that the Strategy Guide discussion will include broadening the process to include the wider church.

# My Cycle Starter Plan



## Our current challenges

Faith

Inspiring Worship Service

releasing

affirmation

prayer



"Opening the front door" & "Breathing in"

**Beyond reasonable doubt,  
which of the above do you personally  
need to explore further  
for the sake of your church?**

[www.ncdchurchsurvey.org/cycle-starters](http://www.ncdchurchsurvey.org/cycle-starters)