

# **ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey – Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery**

ELCA Research and Evaluation

April 2026



# ELCA Congregation Pulse Survey Overview

- The ELCA Congregation Pulse Surveys are an experimental effort to allow ELCA congregations and worshipping communities to communicate their perspectives, strengths, and development needs to synods and the churchwide organization.
- The October 2025 Pulse Survey focused on the [repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery](#). Congregations and worshipping communities reported engagement on 10 activities across four key categories related to the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery: Education (4 activities); Advocacy (3); Relationship-building (2); and Financial Commitment (1).
- The survey was distributed to 1,830 congregations and worshipping communities. Key informants from 333 of these communities responded to the survey, for a response rate of 18%. Responses came from congregations and worshipping communities in 60 of 65 synods.
- Responding congregations and worshipping communities differed slightly from the ELCA in terms of average worship attendance and community context. Responses were more somewhat likely to come from medium and larger sized congregations and less likely to come from smaller congregations than the ELCA overall. They were less likely to be rural and were slightly less racially diverse than the ELCA overall.

	Avg Worship Attendance (in-person)			Community Context			% Active Participants (BIPOC)
	1-100	101-250	251+	% Urban	% Suburban	% Rural	
Respondents	76%	20%	5%	40%	21%	39%	5.8%
ELCA overall	83%	14%	3%	37%	18%	45%	7.2%



# Congregational Engagement

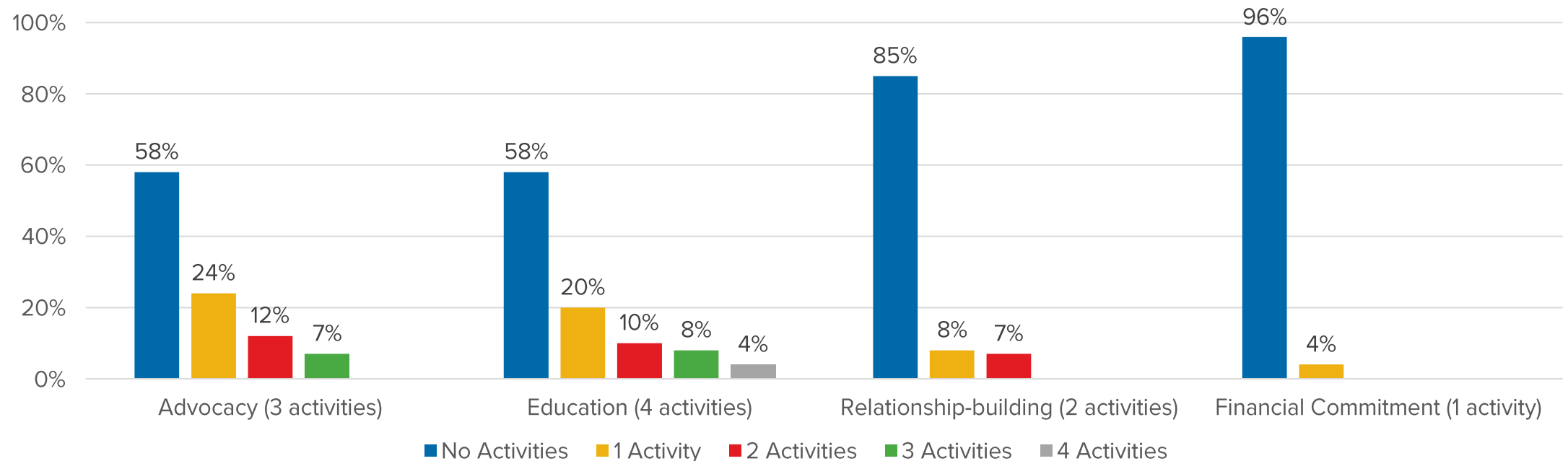
- Overall engagement by congregations and worshiping communities was limited. 56% of congregations and worshiping communities participated in at least one activity, and the average congregation or worshiping community participated in 1.7 activities. Thirteen percent participated in 5 or more of the surveyed activities. The specific activities, organized by the frequency of participation, are included in the table below.
- Engagement differed by community context, proximity to Native communities, and awareness of the Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling initiative, but not by congregation size.

Activity	Activity category	% of congregations
Encouraged congregation members to take action on advocacy alerts	Advocacy	29%
Used resources or participated in events beyond ELCA	Education	23%
Participated in webinar/live event hosted by ELCA	Education	22%
Offer land acknowledgement	Advocacy	22%
Conducted research about the history of Tribal Nations and Native organizations upon whose traditional homelands your congregation is now located.	Education	19%
Commemorated days of Native mourning or celebration	Advocacy	18%
Read articles on elca.org	Education	16%
Participated in events at local cultural center or hosted by Native communities	Relationship-building	12%
Developed relationships with Native congregations or communities	Relationship-building	10%
Learned about Land Back movement or completed transaction	Financial Commitment	4%



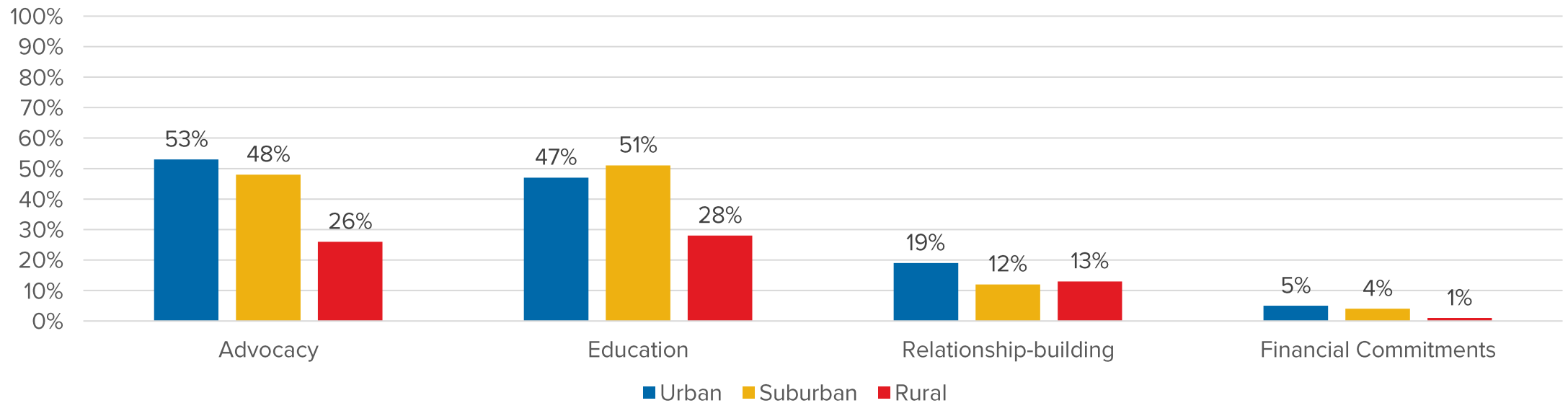
# Congregational Engagement

- Across all categories, the majority of congregations and worshiping communities reported no engagement, ranging from 58% in Advocacy and in Education to 96% in Financial Commitment.
- When engagement occurred, it was most common in Advocacy (43%) and in Education (42%), while engagement in the Financial Commitment activity was very rare (4%).



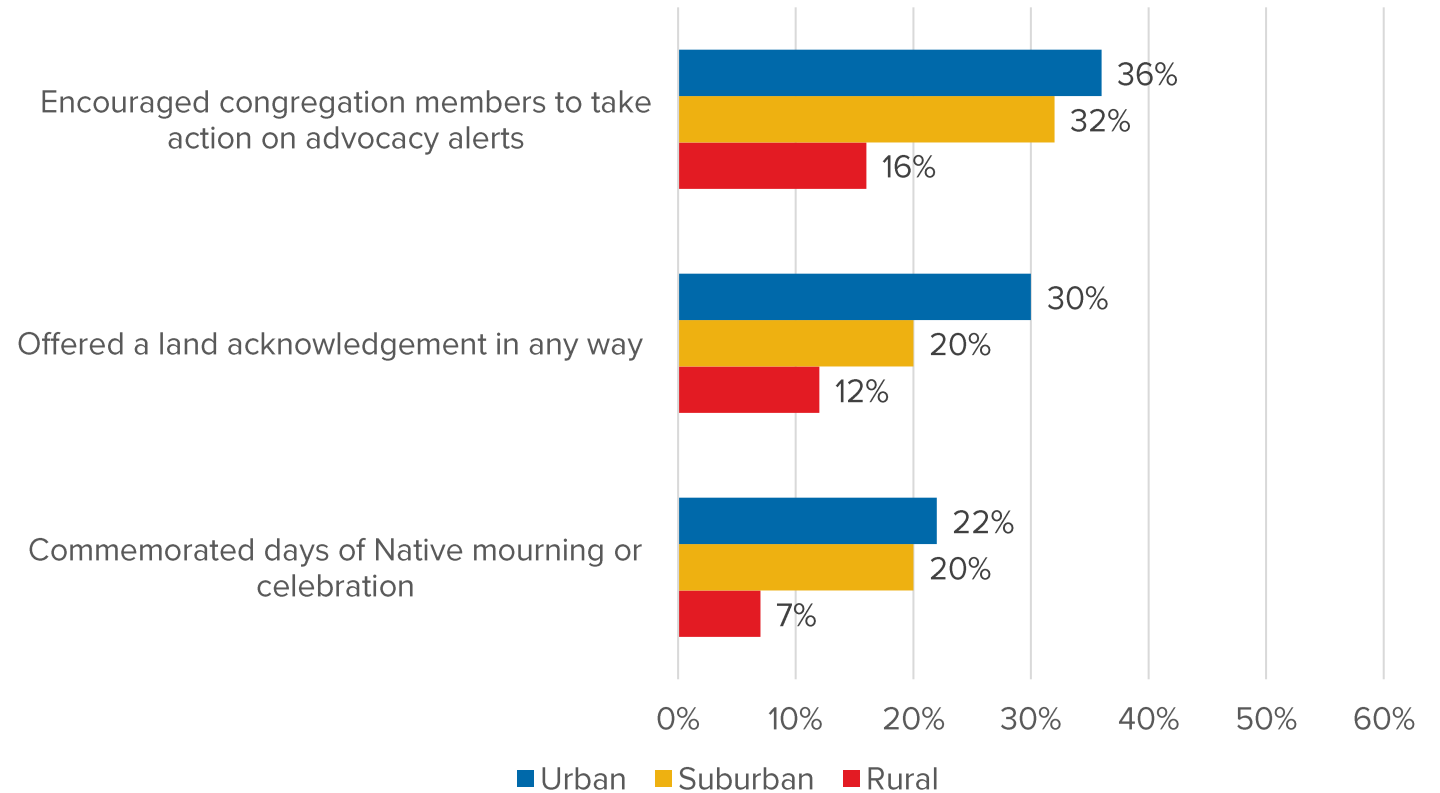
# Engagement Differences by Community Context

- Participation in Advocacy and Education activities differed by community context. Approximately half of urban and suburban congregations and worshiping communities participated in at least one of the surveyed activities in these categories, compared to around one quarter of rural congregations and worshiping communities.
- Participation in Relationship-building activities was lower—fewer than 20% of congregations and worshiping communities engaged in at least one of the surveyed activities, regardless of community context.
- Although congregations and worshiping communities in urban and suburban contexts were more likely than to engage in the Financial Commitment activity than those in rural contexts, engagement was very low across the board.



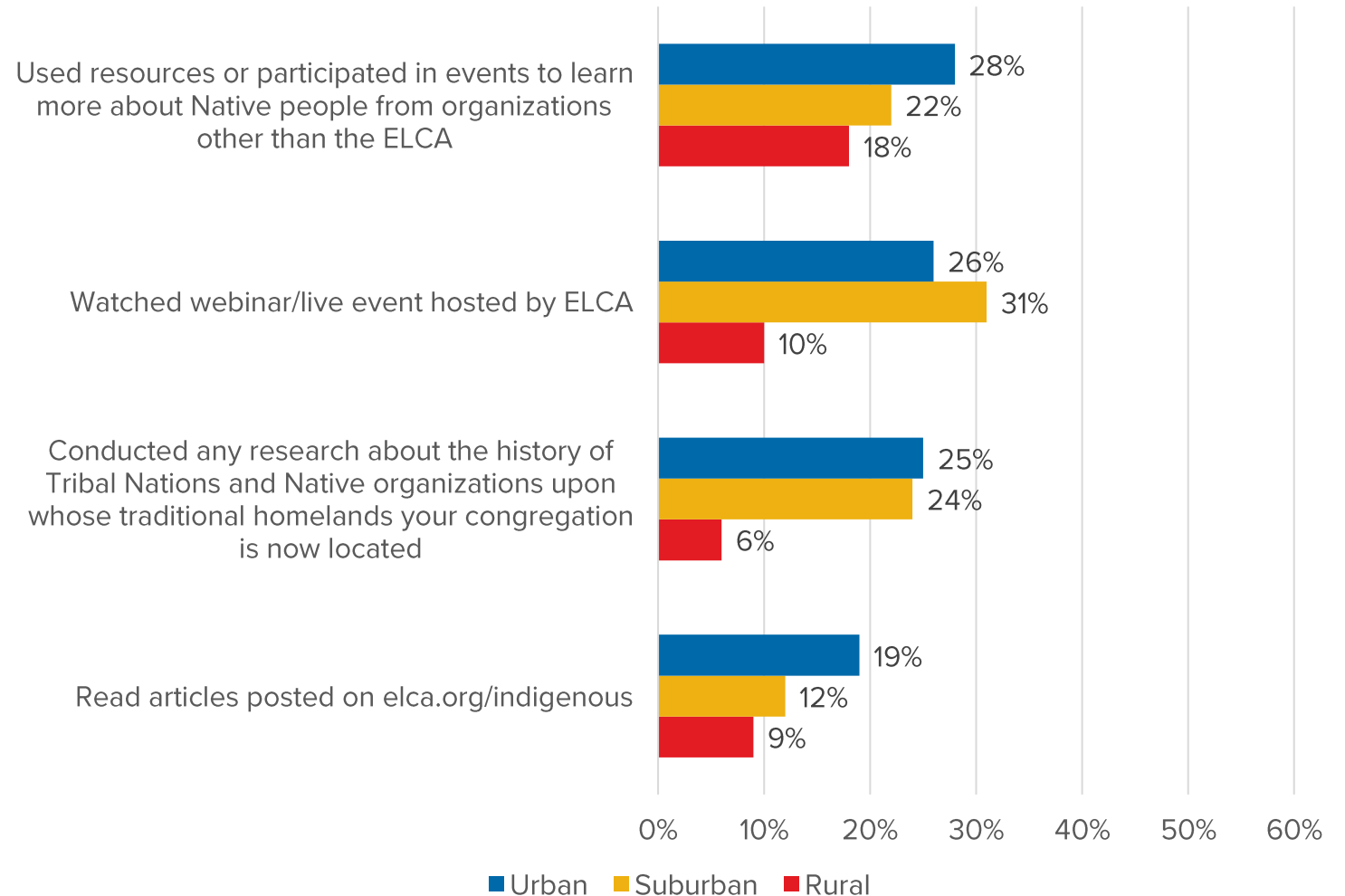
# Differences by Community Context in Advocacy Activities

- Urban and suburban congregations and worshiping communities were more likely to participate in each of the advocacy activities surveyed, compared to those in rural settings.



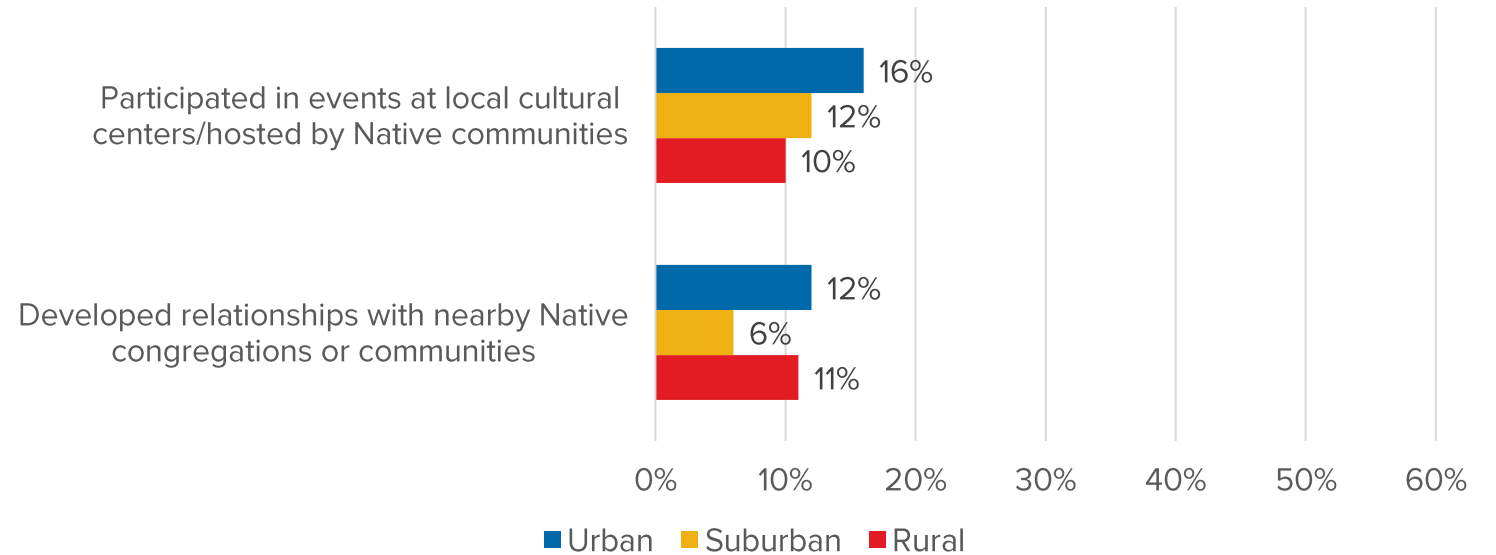
# Differences by Community Context in Education Activities

- Urban and suburban congregations and worshiping communities reported being the most engaged in education activities. Rural congregations and worshiping communities tended to be less engaged.



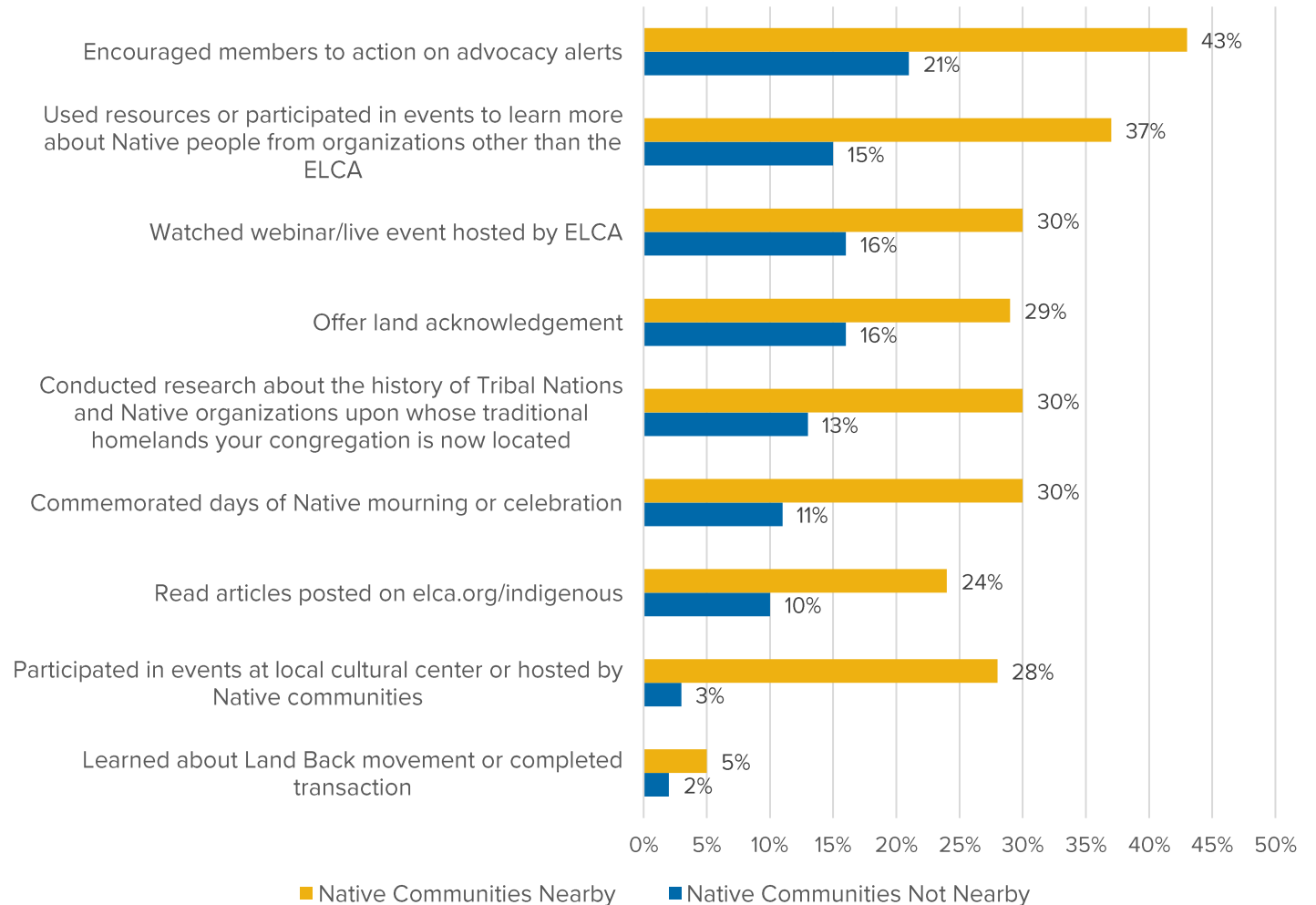
# Differences by Community Context in Relationship-Building Activities

- Although urban congregations and worshiping communities tended to be the most engaged in relationship-building activities, the differences among community contexts was relatively small.



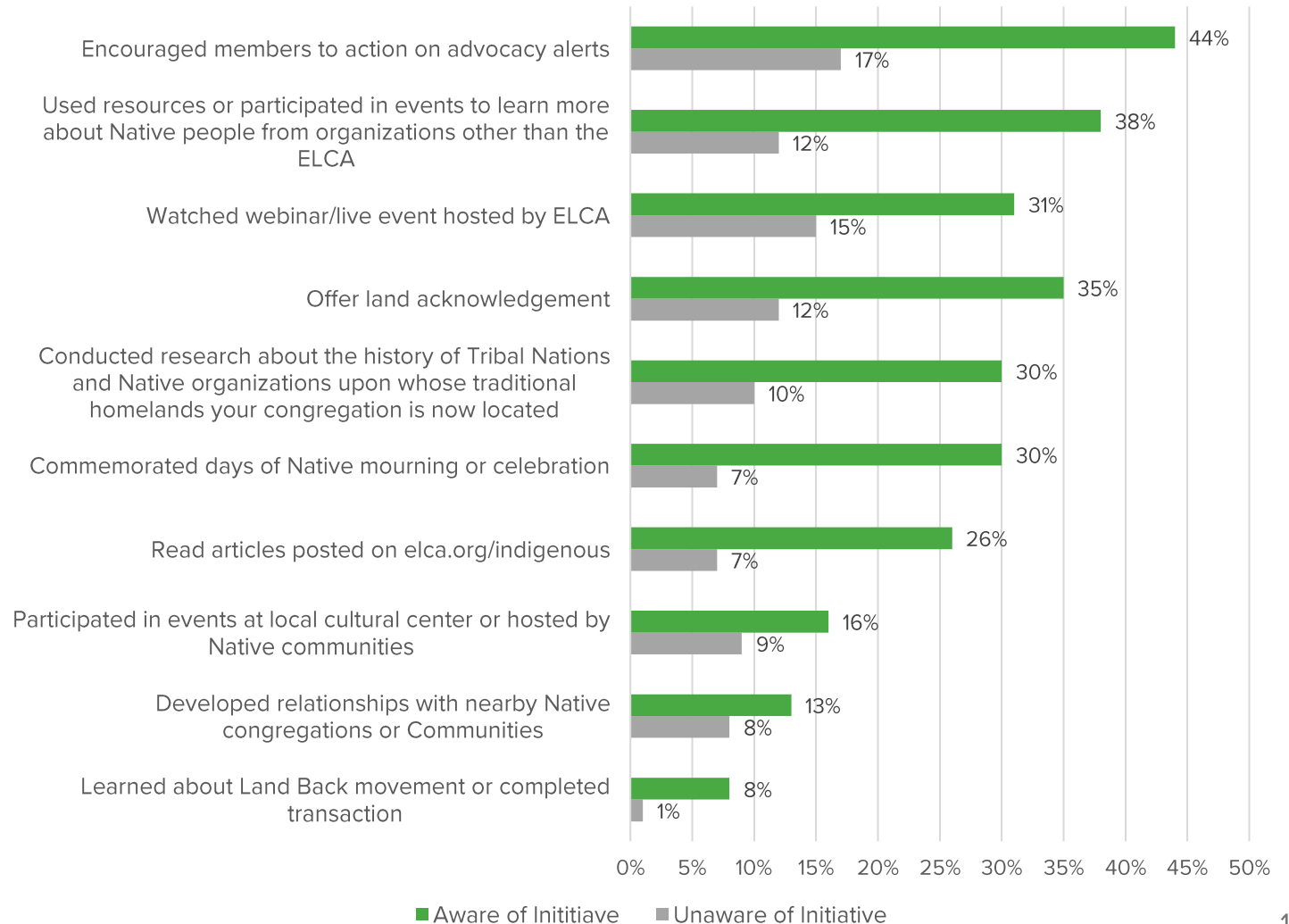
# Engagement by Proximity to Native Communities

- Over one-third (35%) of respondents indicated that their congregation or worshiping community was located near a Native community.
- Proximity to Native communities significantly shaped engagement. Congregations and worshiping communities located near Native people participated in all surveyed activities at substantially higher rates.



# Engagement by Awareness of Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative

- Just under half (44%) of responding congregations and worshiping communities indicated that they were aware of the Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative.
- Congregations and worshiping communities whose survey respondent was aware of the initiative participated in all surveyed activities at substantially higher rates.



# Frequency Tables

## Advocacy Activities

	Yes	No	I don't know
Offered a land acknowledgement in any way (e.g., website, email communications, announcements during events or worship, etc.)?	22% (71)	68% (223)	10% (34)
Commemorated days of Native mourning or celebration (e.g., Indigenous People's Day, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, etc.)?	18% (58)	72% (236)	10% (34)
Encouraged congregation members to take action on advocacy alerts?	29% (95)	58% (190)	13% (43)

## Education Activities

	Yes	No	I don't know
Read articles posted on <a href="http://elca.org/indigenous">elca.org/indigenous</a>	16% (51)	50% (165)	35% (114)
Participated in or watched a replay of a webinar/live event hosted by the ELCA	22% (73)	53% (174)	25% (84)
Used resources or participated in events to learn more about Native people from organizations other than the ELCA	23% (77)	55% (181)	22% (72)
Conducted any research about the history of Tribal Nations and Native organizations upon whose traditional homelands your congregation is now located	19% (63)	60% (198)	21% (68)

## Interaction and Relationship-building Activities

Has your congregation or worshipping community developed relationships with nearby Native congregations or communities?

Yes	10% (34)
No, but there are Native communities nearby	25% (81)
No, there are no Native communities nearby	55% (180)
I don't know	10% (31)

## Financial Commitment

Has your congregation or worshipping community learned about the Land Back movement or completed a Land Back transaction?

Yes	4% (12)
No	84% (274)
I don't know	13% (42)

Has your congregation or worshipping community participated in events at local cultural centers or events hosted by Native communities?

Yes	12% (39)
No	75% (244)
I don't know	14% (44)

## Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling

As a leader in your congregation or worshipping community, are you aware of the Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative?

Yes	44% (145)
No	56% (185)

## Engagement (Number of Activities) by Category

	No Activities	1 Activity	2 Activities	3 Activities	4 Activities
Advocacy	58% (191)	24% (78)	12% (40)	7% (22)	--
Education	58% (191)	20% (68)	10% (33)	8% (26)	4% (13)
Relationship-building	85% (282)	8% (25)	7% (24)	--	--
Financial Commitment	96% (274)	4% (12)	--	--	--

## Engagement by Activity Category and Community Context

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Participated in at least one Advocacy activity	53% (52)	48% (24)	26% (25)
Participated in at least one Education activity	47% (47)	51% (26)	28% (27)
Participated in at least one Relationship-building activity	19% (19)	12% (6)	13% (13)
Financial Commitment	5% (5)	4% (2)	1% (1)

## Engagement in Advocacy Activities by Community Context

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Offered a land acknowledgement in any way (e.g., website, email communications, announcements during events or worship, etc.)?	30% (30)	20% (10)	12% (11)
Commemorated days of Native mourning or celebration (e.g., Indigenous People’s Day, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, etc.)?	22% (22)	20% (10)	7% (7)
Encouraged congregation members to take action on advocacy alerts?	36% (36)	32% (16)	16% (15)

## Engagement in Education Activities by Community Context

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Read articles posted on <a href="http://elca.org/indigenous">elca.org/indigenous</a>	19% (19)	12% (6)	9% (9)
Participated in or watched a replay of a webinar/live event hosted by the ELCA	26% (26)	31% (16)	10% (10)
Used resources or participated in events to learn more about Native people from organizations other than the ELCA	28% (28)	22% (11)	18% (17)
Conducted any research about the history of Tribal Nations and Native organizations upon whose traditional homelands your congregation is now located	25% (25)	24% (12)	6% (6)

## Engagement in Relationship-building Activities by Community Context

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Participated in events at local cultural centers/hosted by Native communities	16% (16)	12% (6)	10% (10)
Developed relationships with nearby Native congregations or communities	12% (12)	6% (3)	11% (11)

## Congregation Participation in Activities by Native Community Proximity

	Nearby Native Communities	No Nearby Native Communities
Encouraged members to take action on advocacy alerts (Advocacy)	43% (49)	21% (37)
Commemorated days of Native mourning or celebration (Advocacy)	30% (35)	11% (20)
Offer land acknowledgement (Advocacy)	29% (33)	16% (29)
Participated in events at local cultural center or hosted by Native communities (Relationship-building)	28% (32)	3% (5)
Conducted research about the history of Tribal Nations and Native organizations upon whose traditional homelands your congregation is now located. (Education)	30% (35)	13% (23)
Used resources or participated in events beyond ELCA (Education)	37% (42)	15% (27)
Participated in webinar/live event hosted by ELCA (Education)	30% (35)	16% (29)
Read articles on elca.org (Education)	24% (28)	10% (18)
Learned about Land Back movement or completed transaction (Financial Commitment)	5% (6)	2% (4)

## Congregation Participation in Activities by Awareness of Truth-Seeking and Truth-Telling Initiative

	Aware of Initiative	Unaware of Initiative
Encouraged members to take action on advocacy alerts (Advocacy)	44% (64)	17% (30)
Commemorated days of Native mourning or celebration (Advocacy)	30% (44)	7% (13)
Offer land acknowledgement (Advocacy)	35% (50)	12% (21)
Developed relationships with nearby Native congregations or communities (Relationship-building)	13% (19)	8% (15)
Participated in events at local cultural center or hosted by Native communities (Relationship-building)	16% (23)	9% (16)
Conducted research about the history of Tribal Nations and Native organizations upon whose traditional homelands your congregation is now located. (Education)	30% (44)	10% (19)
Used resources or participated in events beyond ELCA (Education)	38% (55)	12% (22)
Participated in webinar/live event hosted by ELCA (Education)	31% (45)	15% (27)
Read articles on elca.org (Education)	26% (38)	7% (13)
Learned about Land Back movement or completed transaction (Financial Commitment)	8% (11)	1% (1)