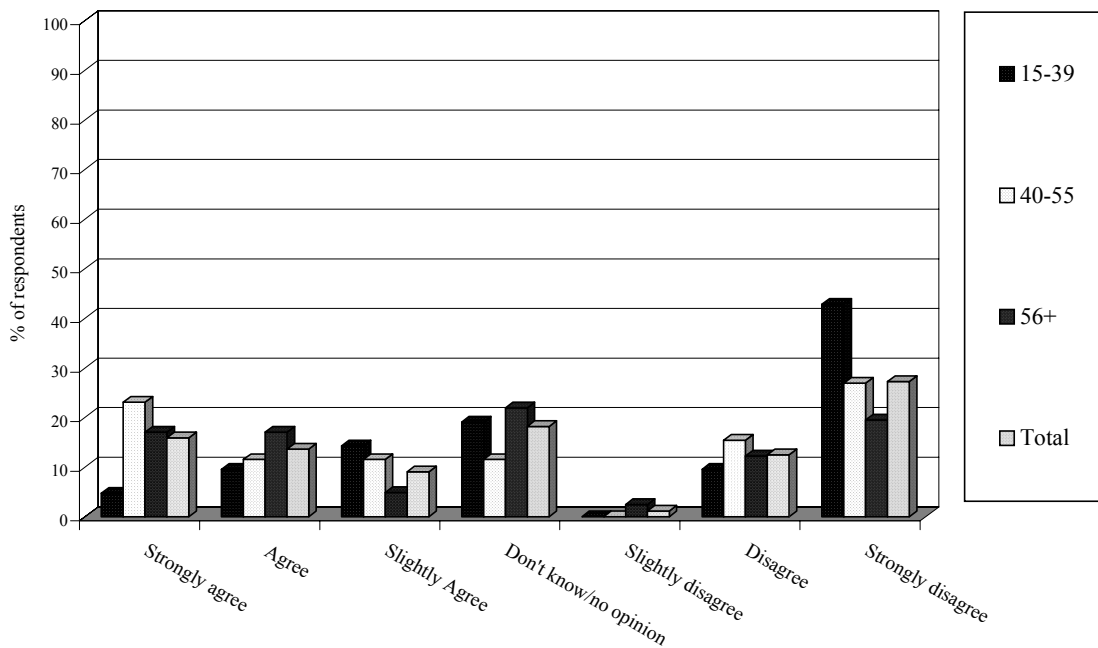


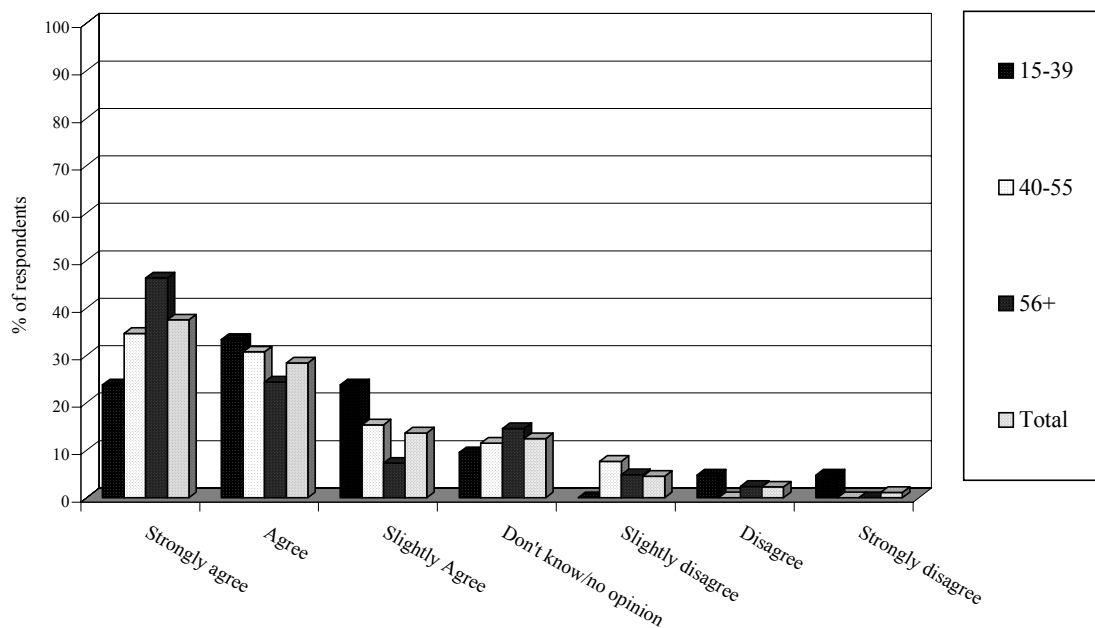
10: WORLD RELIGIONS

The presence of other world religions in Ireland has a long history, but has recently become more conspicuous due to the development of pluralism, post-modernity, globalisation and increased immigration. The SEP remitted the Scoping Study to examine respondents' attitudes toward, and experiences of other world religions. Statistical findings are found in **Figs. 67-72**.

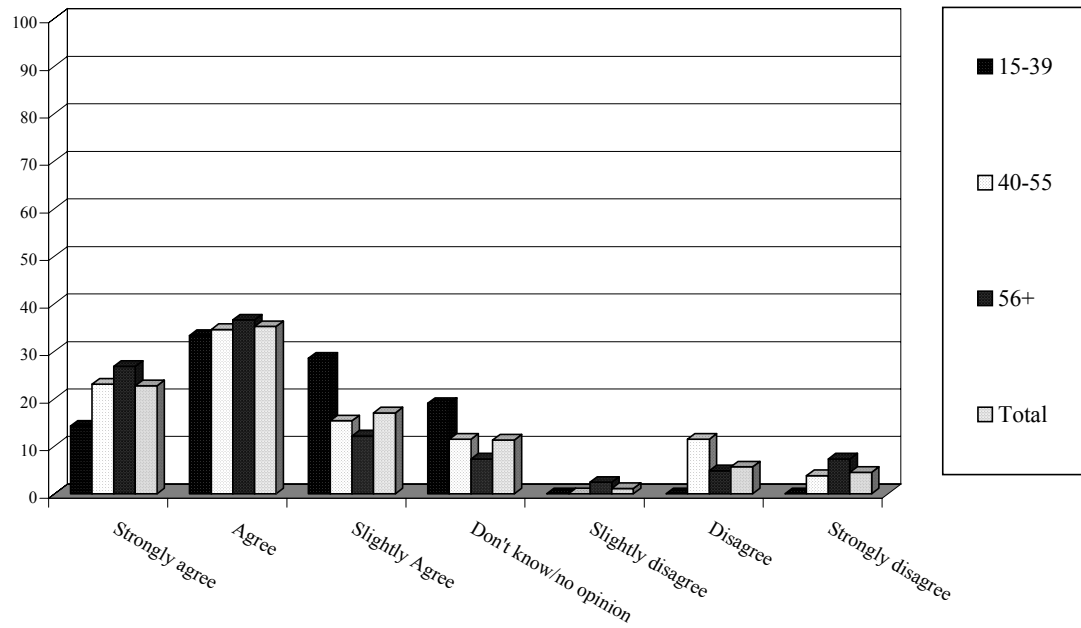
Lay People
I have at least one friend who is a member of another world religion
Fig. 67



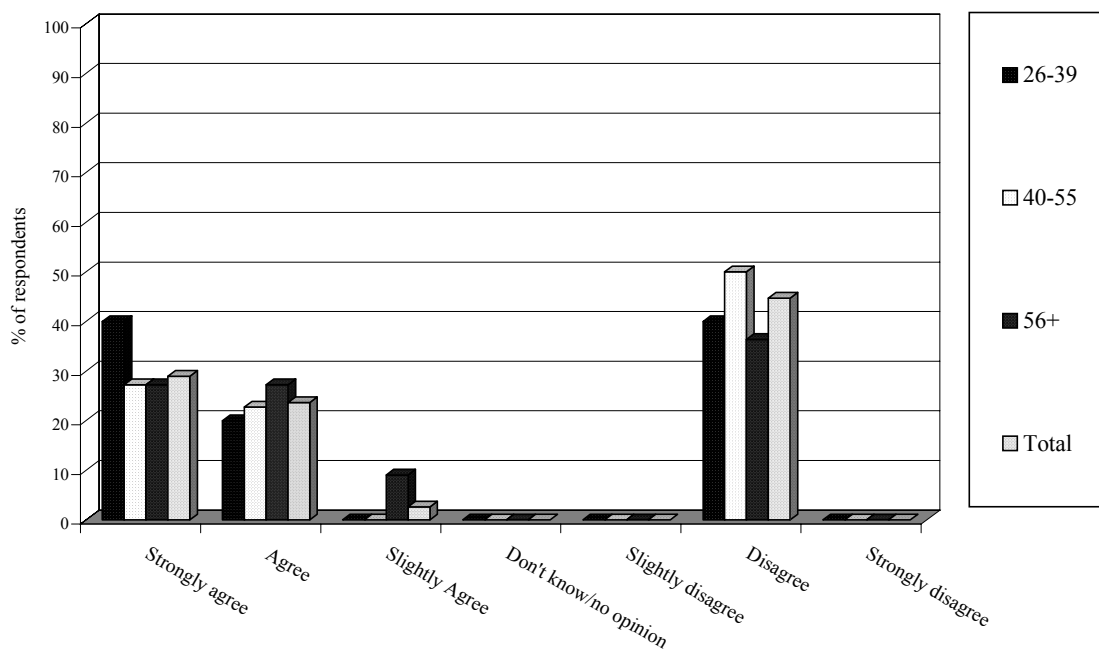
Lay People
The Church of Ireland should help its members to better understand other world religions
Fig. 68



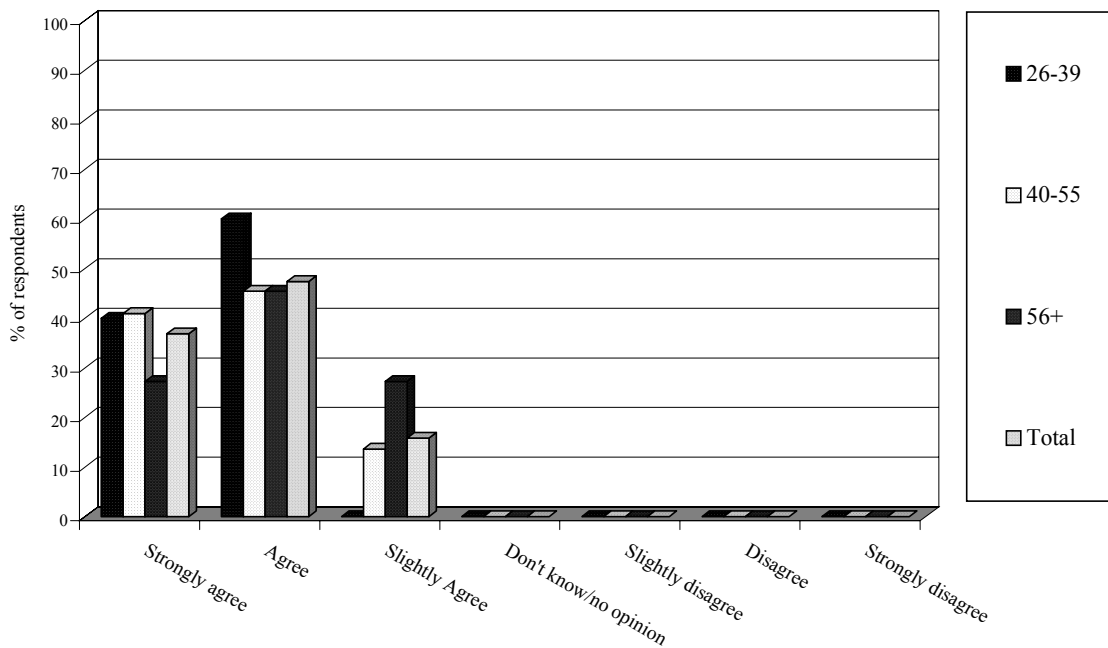
Lay People
The Church of Ireland should have formal non-ecumenical relationships with other world religions
Fig. 69



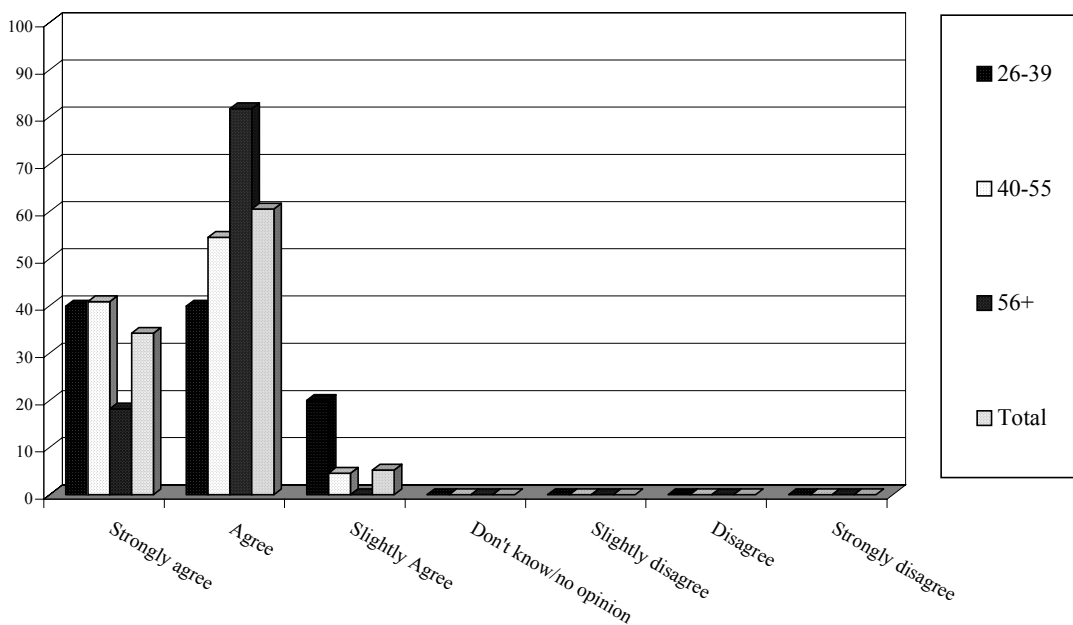
Interviewed Rectors
I have at least one friend who is a member of another world religion
Fig. 70



Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should help its members to better understand other world religions
Fig. 71



Interviewed Rectors
The Church of Ireland should have formal non-ecumenical relationships with other world religions
Fig. 72



92% of clergy respondents, and 72% of lay respondents agreed that the church should help its members better understand other world religions, and 96% of clergy/68% of lay respondents believed that the Church of Ireland should engage in formal non-ecumenical relations with other world religions. (It was explained to respondents that formal non-ecumenical relations might include, for instance, participation in a Jewish-Christian dialogue group, or co-operation on social issues, but not shared inter-faith worship, for instance). There was an unsurprising lack of experience in this area, although 35% of lay people, and 49% of rectors said they had at least one friend who is a member of another world religion.

The nature of relations between the Church of Ireland and other world religions, including inter-faith worship was discussed:

Dialogue with other world religions, including atheists is helpful; but ecumenism a blurring of boundaries.
Lay person, Derry and Raphoe

I would [support inter-faith worship], provided it was not just a face-save, it wasn't just window dressing. Provided it was thought through, we knew what we were doing, and we knew what we were trying to achieve, and it was to the glory of God and not to some sort of...theological compromise as it were – [if] it was a genuine act of worship and reconciliation. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

How might [you reach out to other world religions]?

How might they do that? By inviting people of other religions to come and share fellowship – not necessarily at a Sunday morning service, but to come where you could have fellowship, you could have a meal. Like the Alpha programme, have a big meal. And just discuss, and talk, and then again have people from other traditions come and say a few words...Because the idea that the Christian churches, and the Anglican Church, and the Church of Ireland as a whole have the truth...is to deny what's going on in the world. And...especially as Ireland becomes more of a pluralistic society and more of a multi-cultural society, how do you know that your [child] is going to take up with a Sikh, or a Muslim, or a Hindu?

Would you like to say anything else about how the church should approach...other world religions?

We should not sell ourselves short. As Christians, of all denominations, we tend to be very lovey-lovey towards other churches who don't allow us to have cathedrals or churches in their countries, and don't allow our Christians to practice openly, so I don't see why we should apologise all the time for being Christians. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

There were differing views about evangelism in the context of other world religions:

I suppose you want good relationships with all. That's the Christian thing, and I suppose the problem for the Christian is you also want to uphold the uniqueness of Christ...You don't want just a big wishy-washy religious conglomerate, if you believe in Christ. **Rector, Armagh**

How should relationships be conducted given theological reservations?

It's a case of working at local level, and maybe on social levels...if there is a social issue of injustice, or of poverty, or of lack of housing etc. **Rector, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I think perhaps it would be more important that they would understand what world beliefs are. Our church isn't going to disagree that much with Presbyterianism and Methodism, but it's going to disagree quite a bit with Islam and Buddhism and so on. So I think there's a place to teach our church people what other faiths believe, to point out from the Bible where the other churches are wrong. That might sound awful, but that's the way I feel.

Is there anything else you'd like to say about other world religions?

Evangelism. I know it sounds arrogant, but I believe that the doctrine is the truth, and our thirty-nine articles, I think they are absolutely biblical. Therefore I believe we are right, and that people who try to find a way to God other than through Jesus, I believe they are wrong. Therefore I think we have the

responsibility to reach out to them with the gospel we believe is right. So it's evangelism, not just to get on well with people, I think Jesus calls us to something much stronger than that. **Rector, Connor**

Because of September 11th...there was a lot of dealings in relation to...Islam. So I decided...to look during Lent at the other world religions...So we [looked at] Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism...The response was absolutely tremendous...We have a tendency to look at other world religions and see them as very monolithic things, but each of them...has their own [internal] divisions. The sort of general consensus was...that each of these religions was authentic in their own right, and that a genuine follower of these religions was a genuine seeker after God, in the same way that we would see ourselves as that. And certainly it would be the general consensus that these people have something to say to us, and that we should be getting more involved and getting together more.

And what are the implications for evangelism of that?

Well I mean I have never been an advocate of Christians going around the world beating Christianity into what we call – certainly not. I think we should certainly go in terms of – well something like the way CMS would have gone, for instance, in terms of agricultural projects and in that sort of way, but the idea of going out there – which is a nineteenth century idea – I think has no place now. **Rector, Armagh**

Jesus is the way, and he's unique, but I do feel that there's lots of enlightenment in other religions. They've discovered all sorts of things that we're blinkered to. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

A few respondents commented on the potential encroachment of other world religions into people's everyday lives:

What's the name of the ones who go round annoying people? Jehovah's Witnesses. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

The Church of Ireland should be more interested in its own church. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

But most respondents who had experience of the issue of other world religions contended that approaching this form of difference may well be as important as facing other forms of sectarianism, and that the challenge will only increase in the coming years:

I think we need to get to grips with an increasingly large number of people of other world religions, particularly in the Dublin area. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

It is almost hilarious to reflect upon how backward we are – we are still debating Holy 'Spirit' vs Holy 'Ghost', when on the world stage it is Allah and God and Buddha; we are being left behind, re-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic! **Rector, Cork, Cloyne and Ross**

As well as the Protestant/Roman Catholic sectarianism explicit and implicit in the church, we have become aware of the anti-Semitism [that] has infested the church since the early centuries. This too needs to be addressed in any project dealing with sectarianism. **Retired rector, Down and Dromore**

WORLD RELIGIONS

- *Like ethnic minorities and asylum seekers, the issue of relating to world religions is a relatively recent development for the Church of Ireland.*
- *Discussions about the issue are at an early, undeveloped stage.*
- *There is a diversity of views within the church about relating to world religions, ranging from 'no experience' (the majority view), to advocacy of cordial relations or co-operation on social matters only, to a small number of respondents who support ecumenism in an inter-faith context.*
- *There is a concern to maintain the church's teaching on the uniqueness of Christ without denying the possibility of learning from other world religions.*
- *Some respondents recognise that the issue of relating to world religions will become increasingly important for the church in the future.*

11: PEACE/ADDRESSING SECTARIANISM INITIATIVES: PRIORITIES, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES

In spite of the appearance to the contrary, Northern Ireland has a highly developed peace and reconciliation sector, sometimes referred to as an 'industry' due to its often highly bureaucratic and systematised nature. Just as this society is in danger of being 'research-saturated', there appear to be far more peace and addressing sectarianism initiatives than one would think necessary for such a conflict, in such a small society. Respondents were given an opportunity to discuss their experiences of and attitudes toward such initiatives. Questions were put to respondents in the Republic as well as to those based in Northern Ireland. However, the results, perhaps predictably, include a large group of 'don't know/no opinion'. This may reflect three things. One, a perception on the part of some Republic-based respondents that sectarianism is a Northern Irish issue. Two, that materials generated largely within the Northern Irish context are not publicised widely outside that area and therefore are unknown to respondents living elsewhere. Three, a lack of awareness within Northern Ireland of the available resources. Theological perspectives (see **Figs. 73-75**) and attitudes toward such initiatives may well be linked, so the first relevant question was as follows:

Please indicate the statement below that comes closest to your opinion:

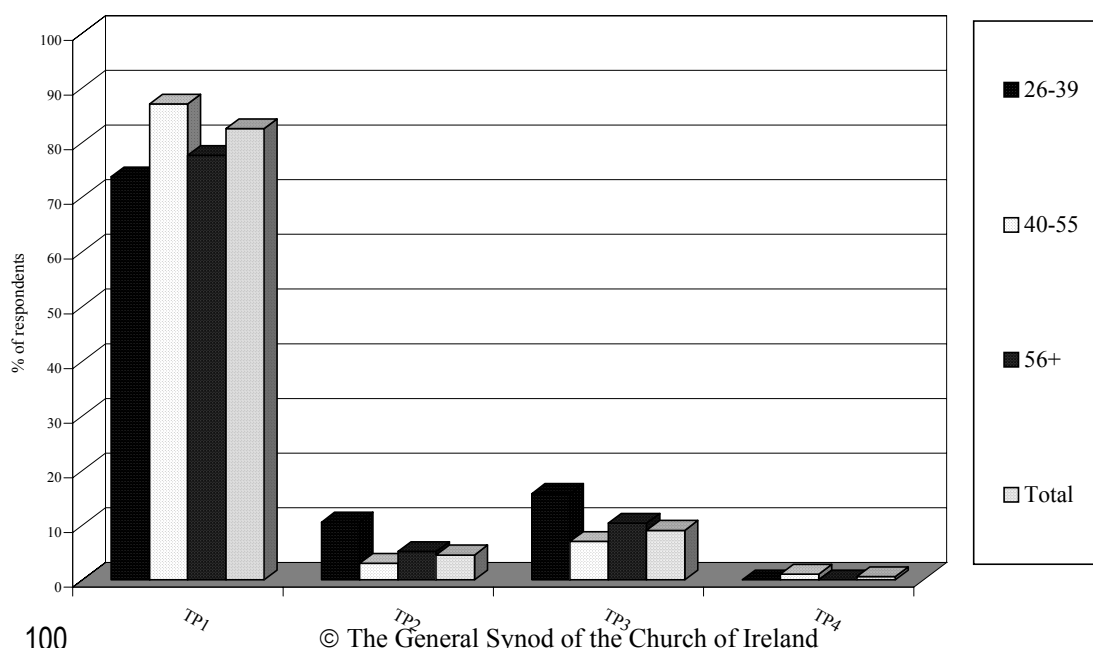
TP1: Being a Christian includes crossing the boundaries in this society. This will mean getting involved in peace and reconciliation work. Our relationship with Catholic neighbours may include worshipping together.___

TP2: Being a Christian includes crossing the boundaries in this society. This will mean getting involved in peace and reconciliation work. However, our relationship with Catholic neighbours should not include worshipping together.___

TP3: Some kind of peace and reconciliation work is important, and it may be appropriate for Christians to be involved in it. We should usually not be involved in joint worship with Catholic groups due to doctrinal differences; but we should co-operate at other levels.___

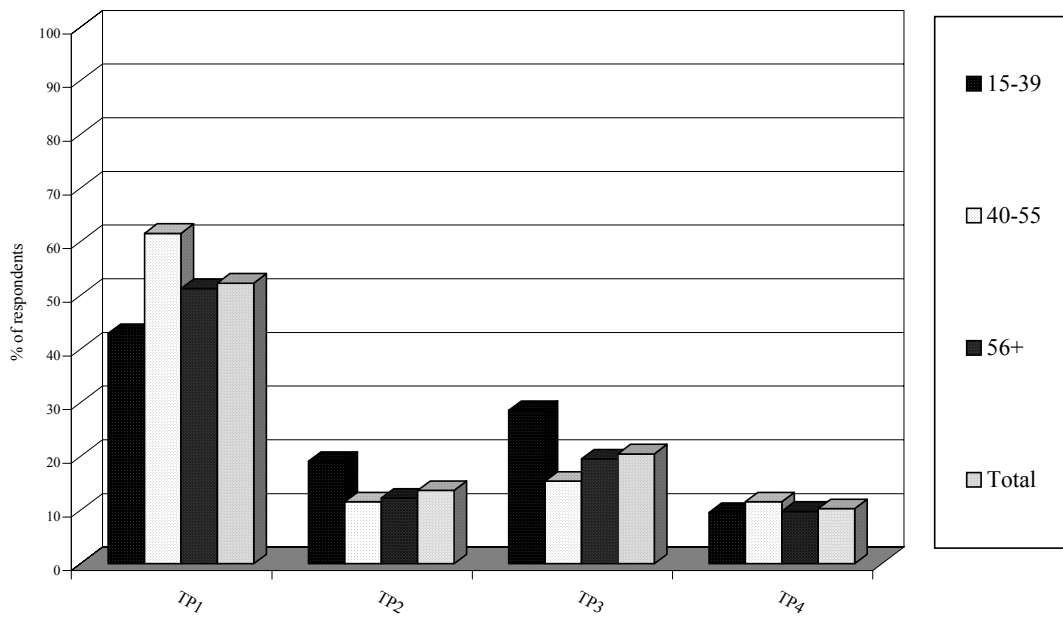
TP4: Any level of cross-community work may be a distraction from the true meaning of the gospel. We should love our neighbour but need to lead others to the truth. Peace and reconciliation work can sometimes confuse the issue, and it is sometimes too similar to ecumenical work.___

All Rectors
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 73

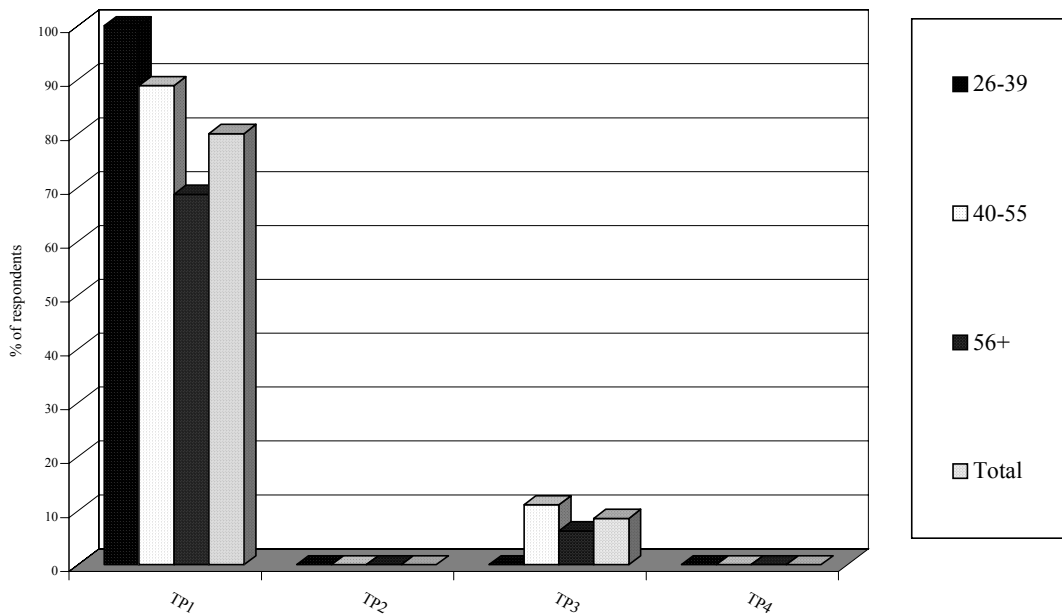


Lay People
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 74

14 May 2003



Standing Committee
Theological Perspectives
Fig. 75



The vast majority of clergy respondents (80%) agreed with statement 1, while 50% of lay people concurred. Only 1% of the rectors and 9% of lay respondents indicated statement 4. It is noteworthy that the clergy respondents who indicated statement 4 (which does not affirm shared worship) still disavowed sectarianism. The statistics for this chart are encouraging for the SEP, for they imply a great deal of good will toward bridge-building work, while also serving as a reminder that some people have genuine concerns about the conflation of peacemaking with ecumenism. Although none of the statements is perfect, this question was an attempt at eliciting true information, rather than 'skewing' results in the direction that some people may assume is the SEP's preference. It is also noteworthy that it was only respondents from within Northern Ireland (or dioceses that include both Northern Ireland and the Republic) that indicated statement 2 or 3. Ecumenism and cross-community encounters, whatever the challenges, appear (naturally) to be much more a part of everyday experience for the Church of Ireland in the Republic. Some respondents underlined the value of addressing sectarianism and other forms of difference as a core element of discipleship, as exemplified by the following comments:

We need to develop a discerning mind, which marries a commitment to biblical truth as our basis for belief and a selfless love for others – whoever the others are. **Bishop**

I would not recommend any attempt to achieve uniformity of all branches of the Church but rather to develop a spirit of understanding and respect for those whose views/doctrines differ from our own. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

There has been a lack of reflection among the clergy about the system of sectarianism and the manner in which other forms of difference manifest themselves at the level of the social structure, and often a sincerely-held but possibly incomplete view that 'preaching the gospel' alone is an adequate response:

My feeling is, if we're about our real business, the sectarian issues are dealt with.

And your real business is the gospel?

It's spreading that gospel. It's making that gospel available to all people. **Rector, Armagh**

Prayer life, peace and reconciliation, and I think evangelism in its best sense [are my priorities]...But it may not be the formal sort of peace and reconciliation that you would tick in a box. It may be done among neighbours who have been neighbours for a hundred and fifty years...It has become fashionable in the last few years to talk about this, largely sparked off I think by the Archbishop drawing attention, focusing, building it up. Building up the awareness of the problem. I think we've faced up to it, the fact that you're doing this survey means that we're trying to cope with it. I don't know yet how well we're coping with it, and I don't know if any other churches are coping with it any better. The worry about that question...is, 'this may mean getting involved.' It's not something that's starting now – it's something that's ongoing. *Being* involved, rather than getting involved. **Rector, Armagh**

None of the [theological perspectives in the questionnaire] resembles my own! Joint prayer and worship is perfectly acceptable and welcome but it should happen naturally and not because everyone is pressured into 'peace and reconciliation work'. **Rector, Armagh**

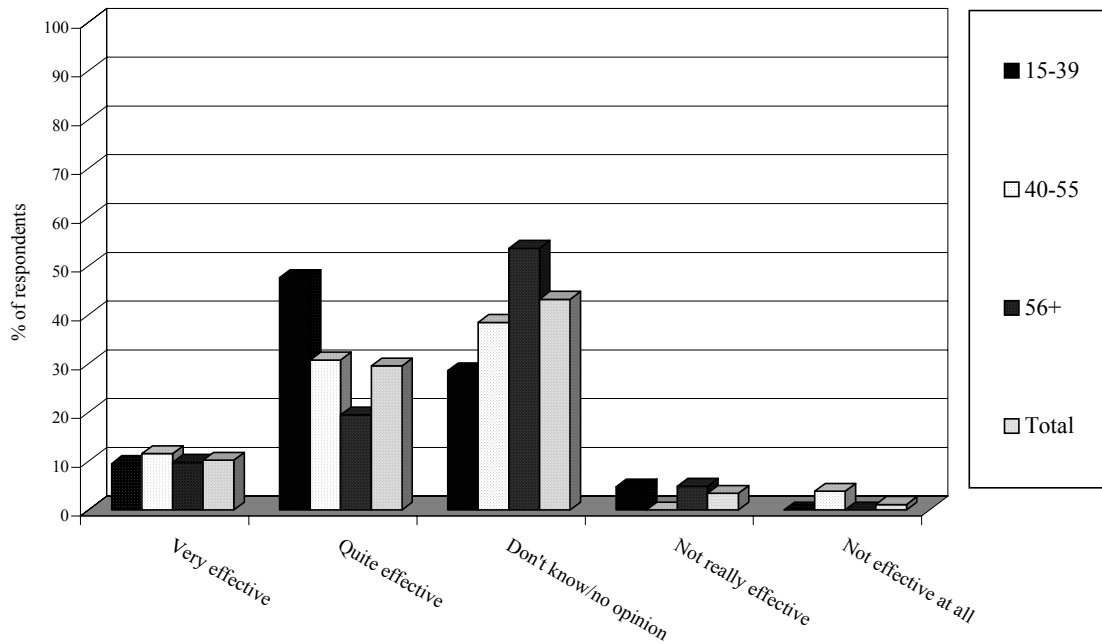
You should be told that [sectarianism] is not part of Christian discipleship. Not a part of it at all...But generally our church teaching from the pulpit would be co-existence with people...

So you wouldn't see active peace and reconciliation work as...?

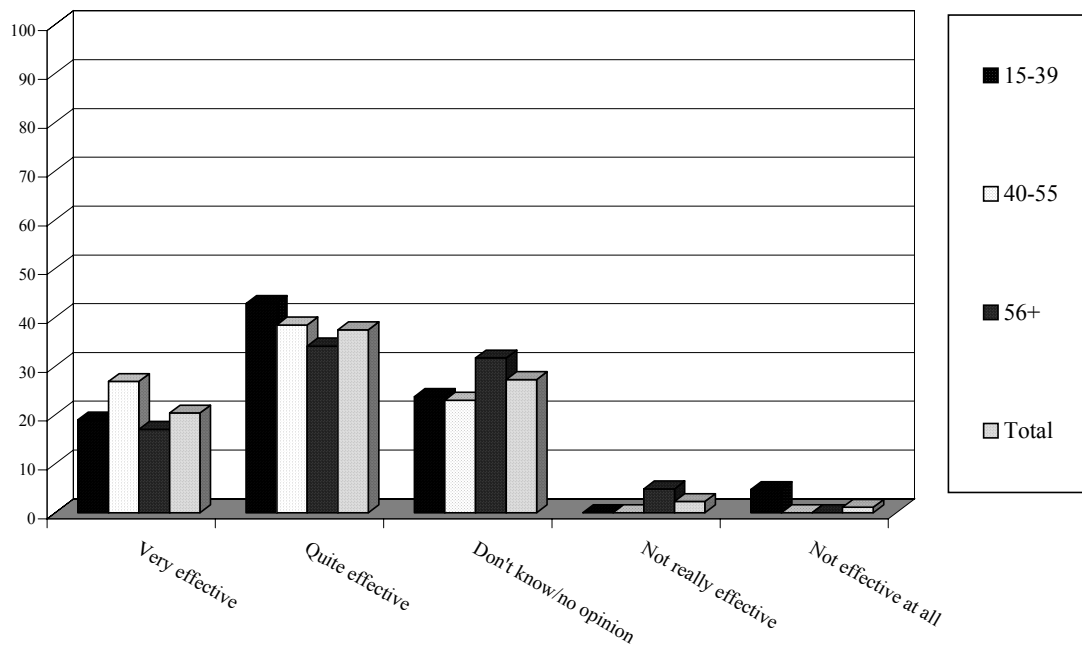
We have been involved in it. Not between Protestant and Roman Catholic. Between Protestant and pagan. Because the pagans are our problem, as far as community relations goes. There are no real...difficulties between...the main churches here...It's the people with little or no church connection. **Rector, Connor**

Respondents were asked to judge the value of different kinds of initiatives; they commented on the effectiveness of initiatives with which they were familiar as follows (see Figs. 76-97):

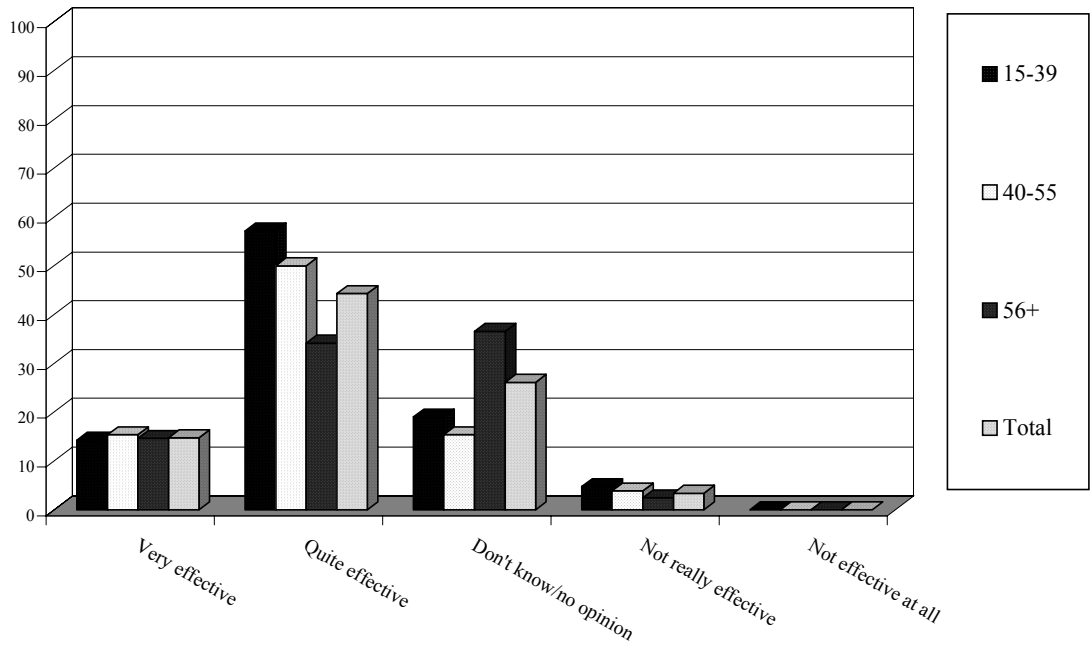
**Lay People
Single Identity work
Fig. 76**



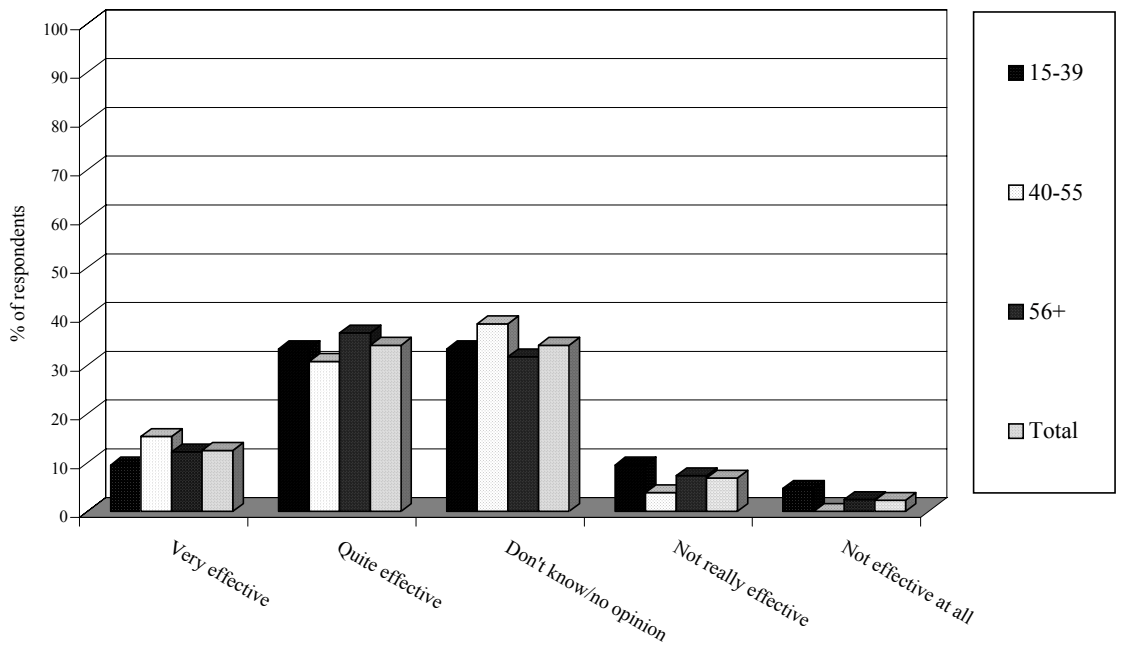
**Lay People
Cross-community 'encounter' group
Fig. 77**



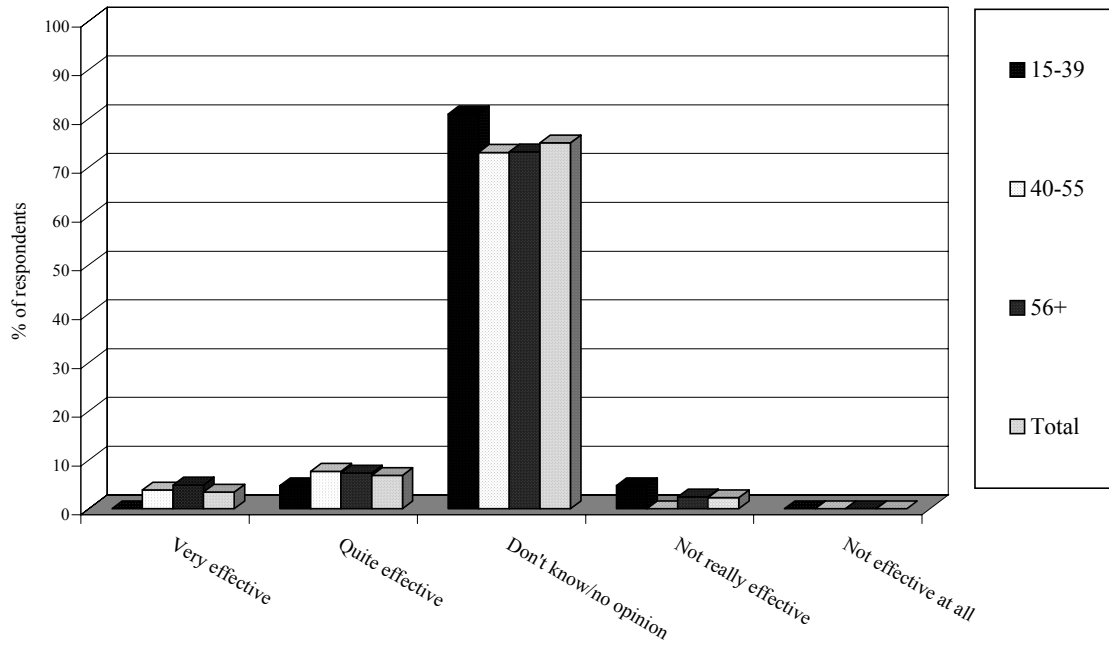
**Lay People
Cross-community project work
Fig. 78**



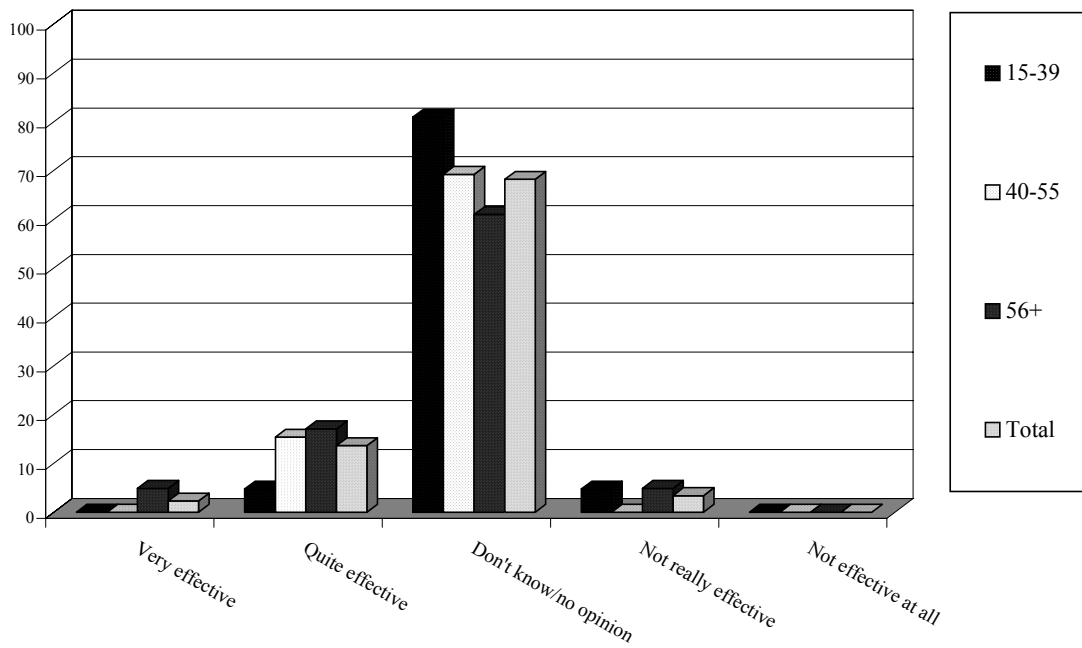
**Lay People
Ecumenical activity
Fig. 79**



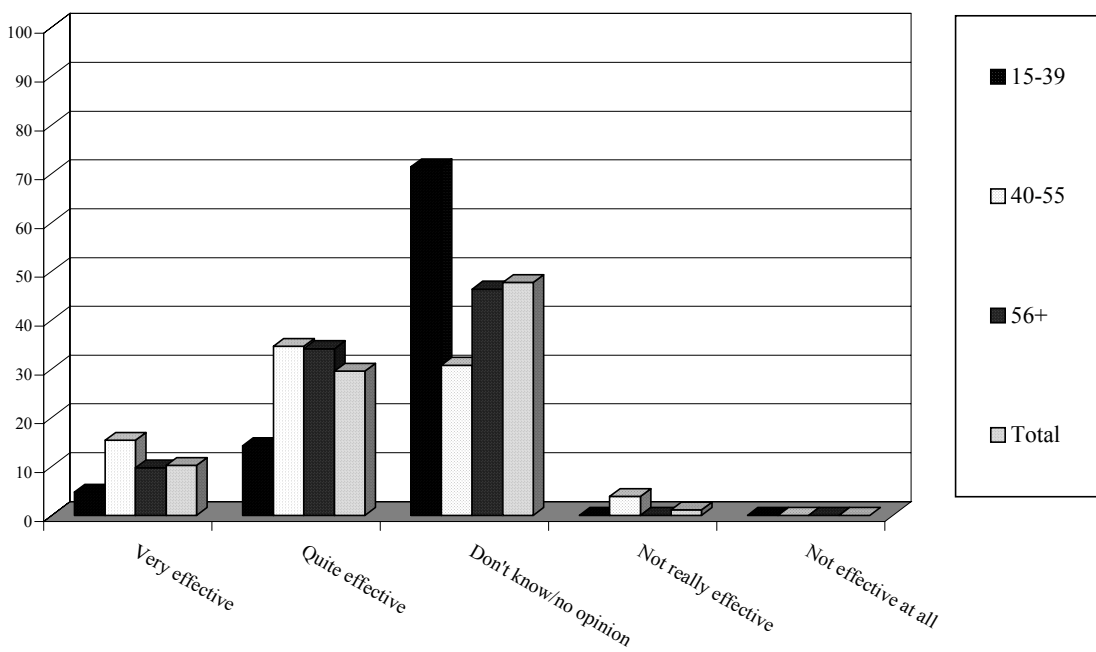
Lay People
ECONI resources
Fig. 80



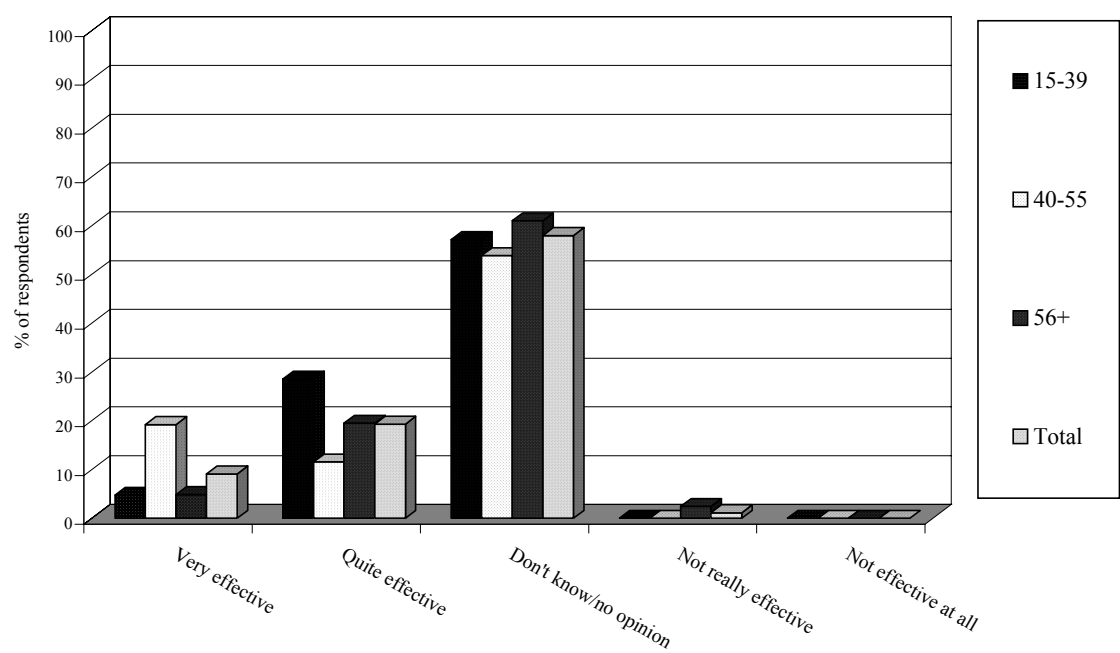
Lay People
ISE resources
Fig. 81



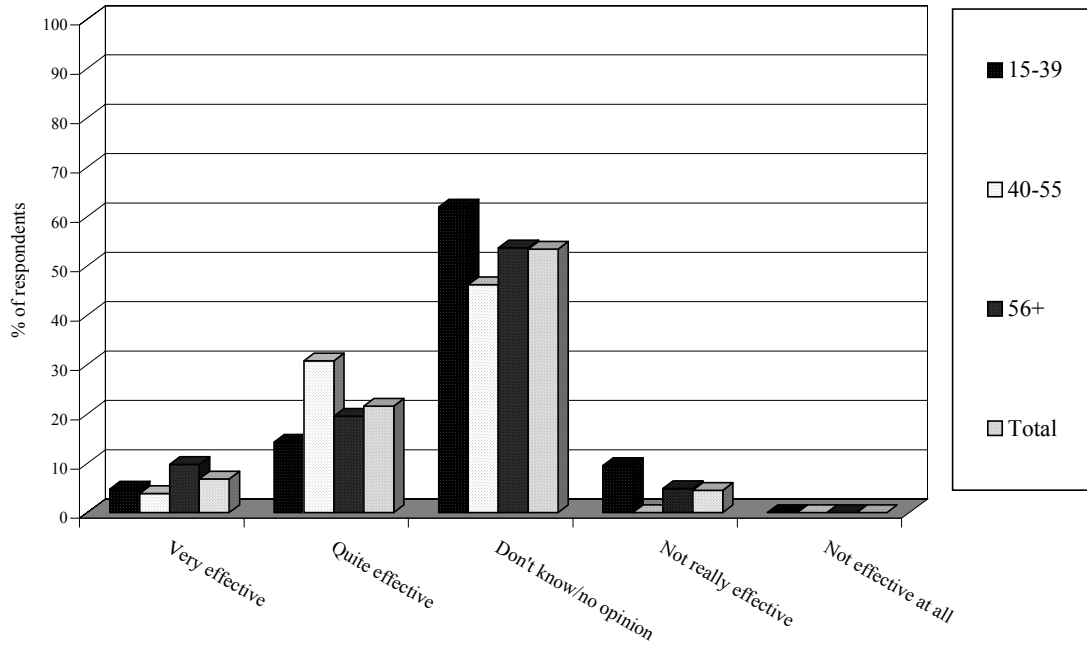
**Lay People
Corrymeela resources
Fig. 82**



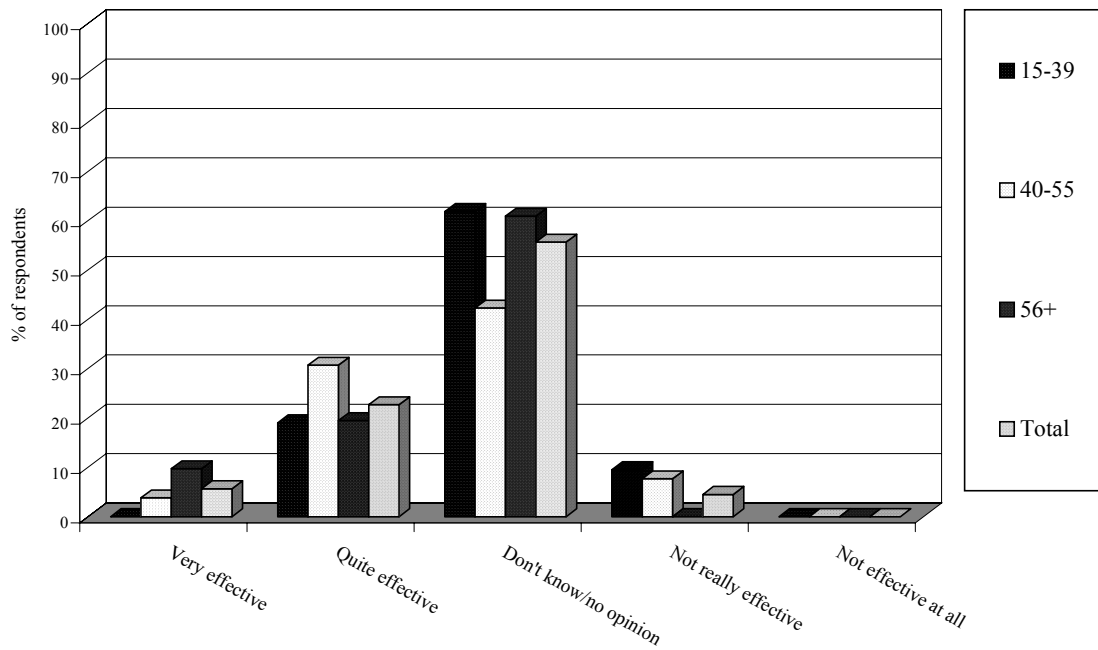
**Lay People
Youthlink resources
Fig. 83**



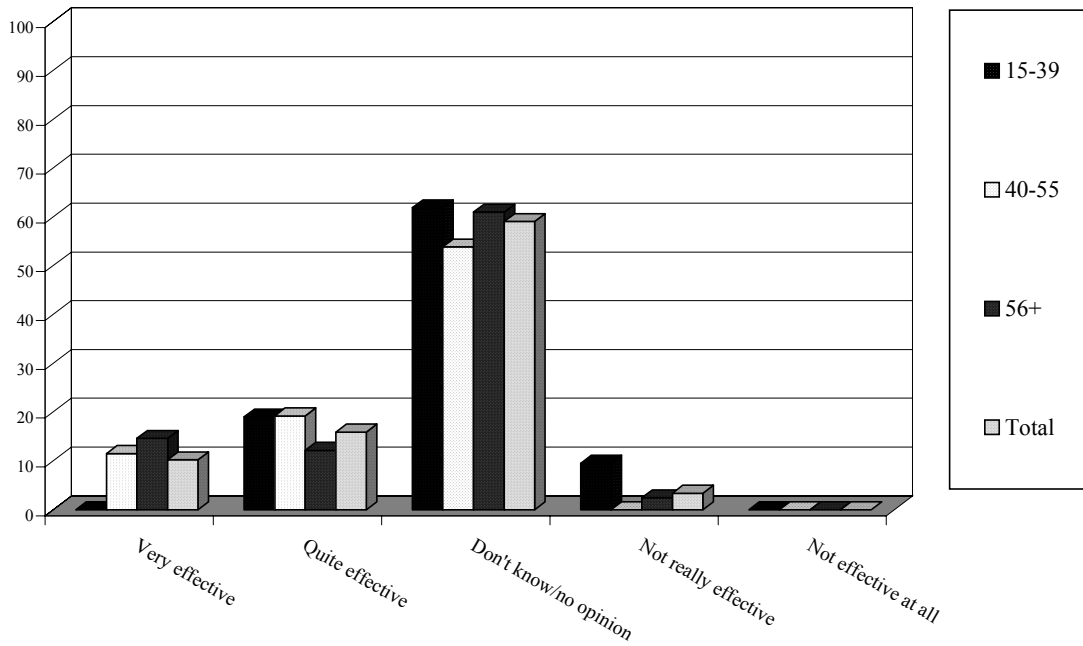
Lay People
Local Church forum
Fig. 84



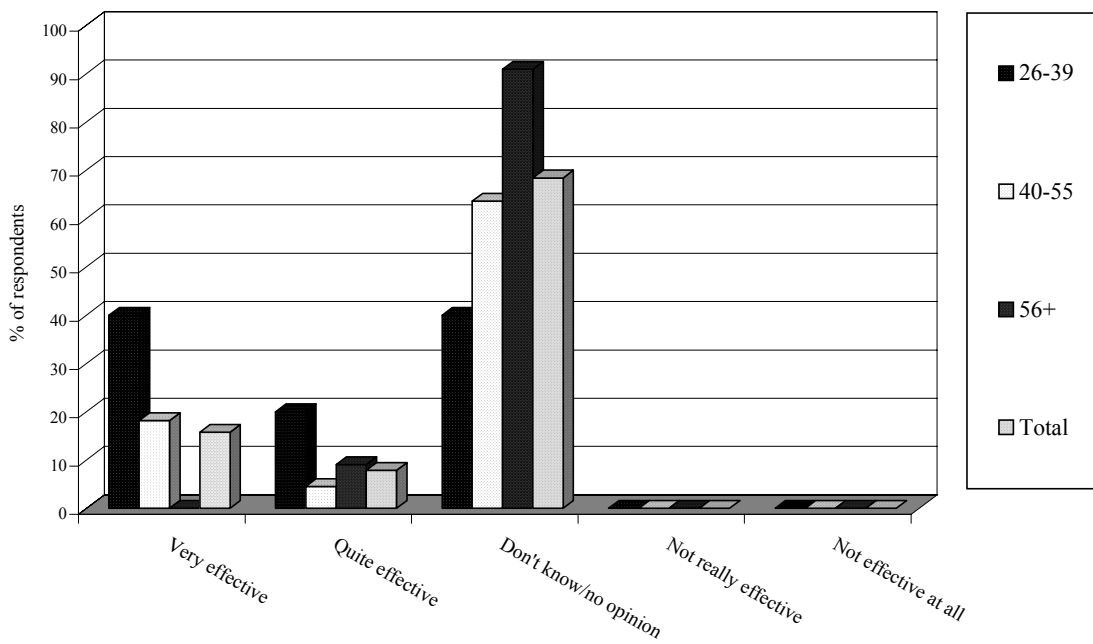
Lay People
Clergy fraternal
Fig. 85



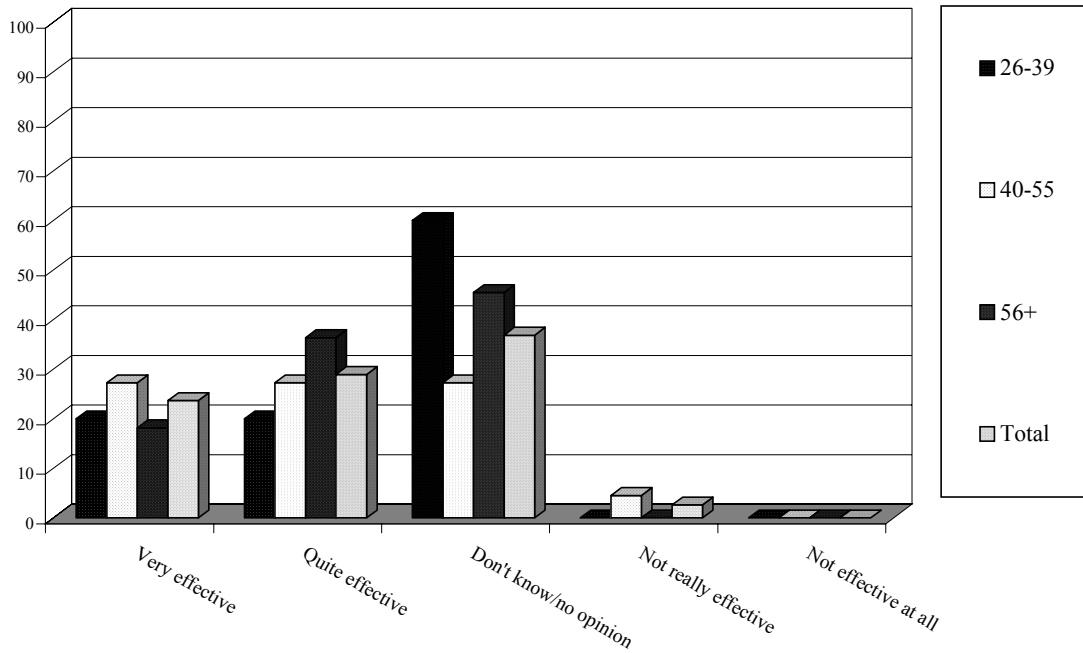
Lay People
Inter-faith forum
Fig. 86



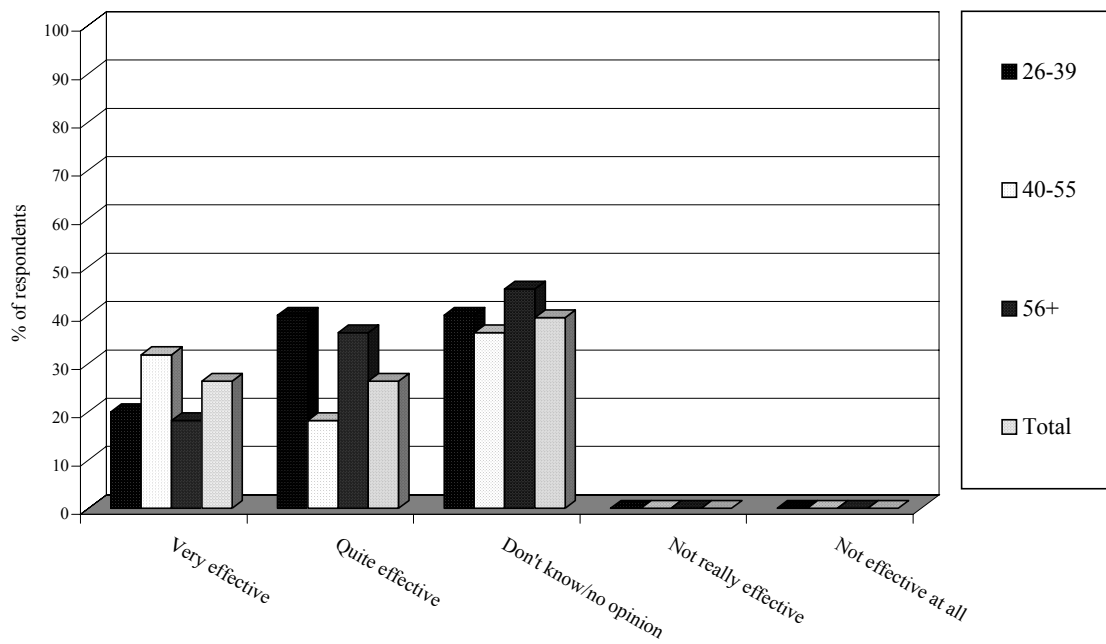
Interviewed Rectors
Single Identity work
Fig. 87



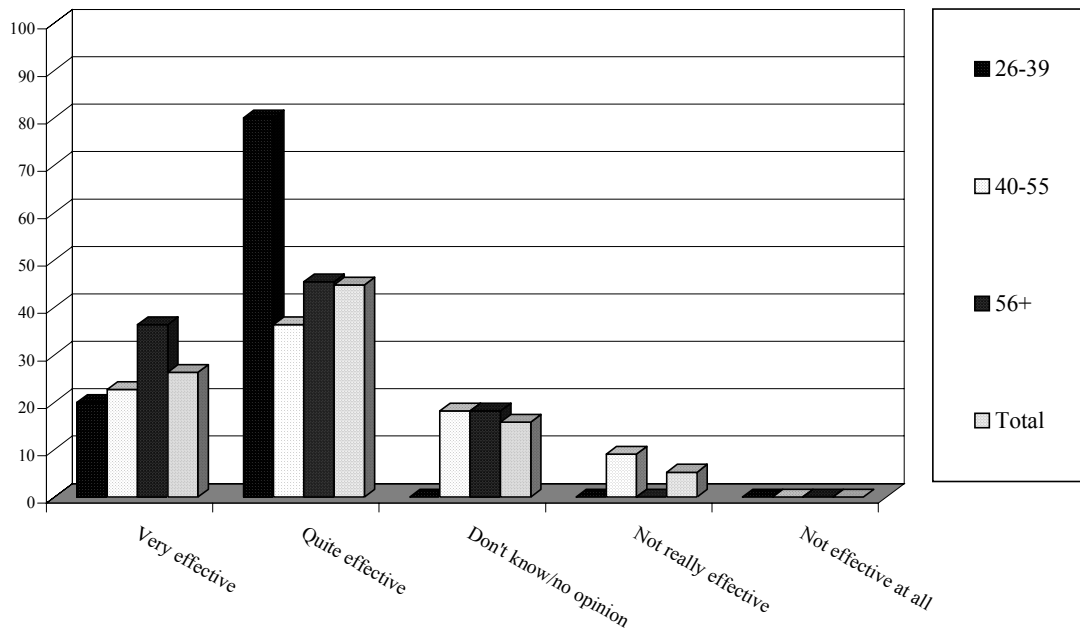
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community 'encounter' group
Fig. 88



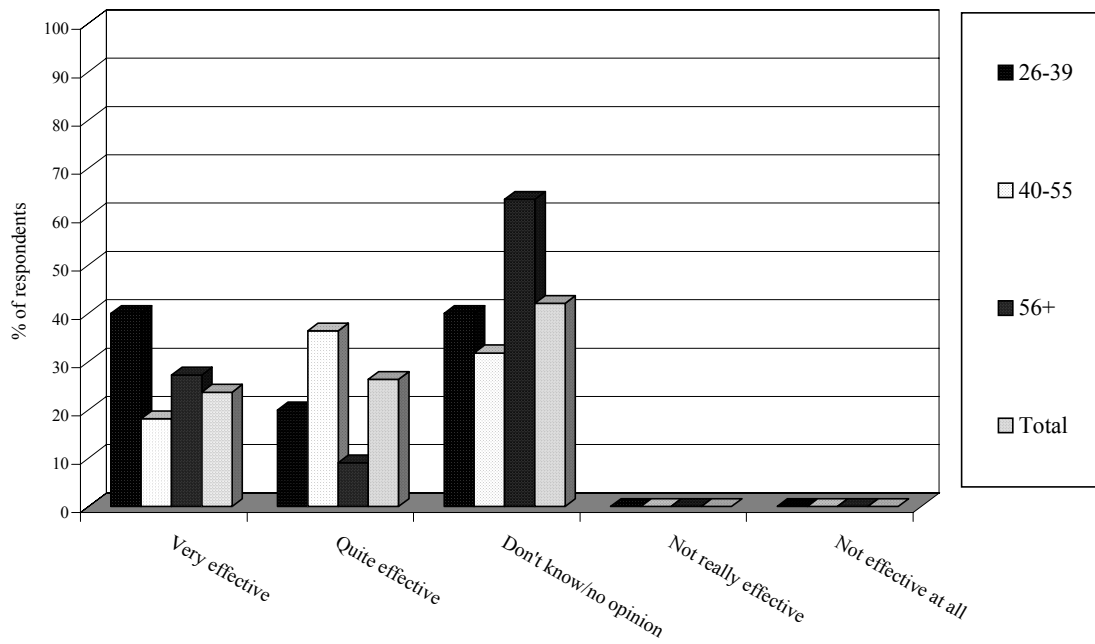
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community project work
Fig. 89



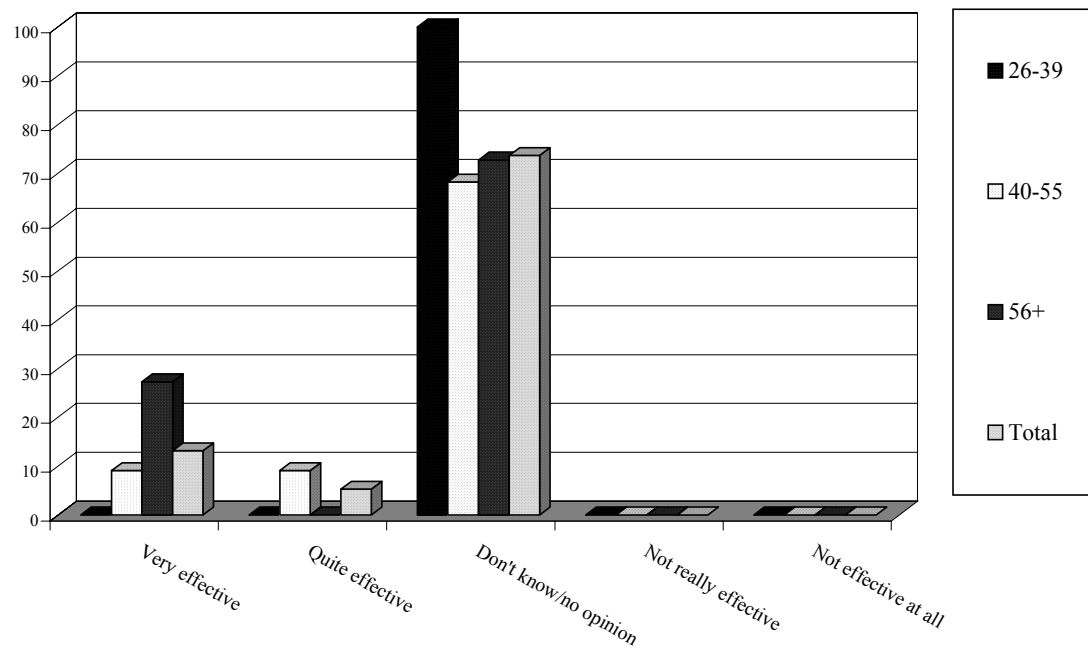
Interviewed Rectors
Ecumenical activity
Fig. 90



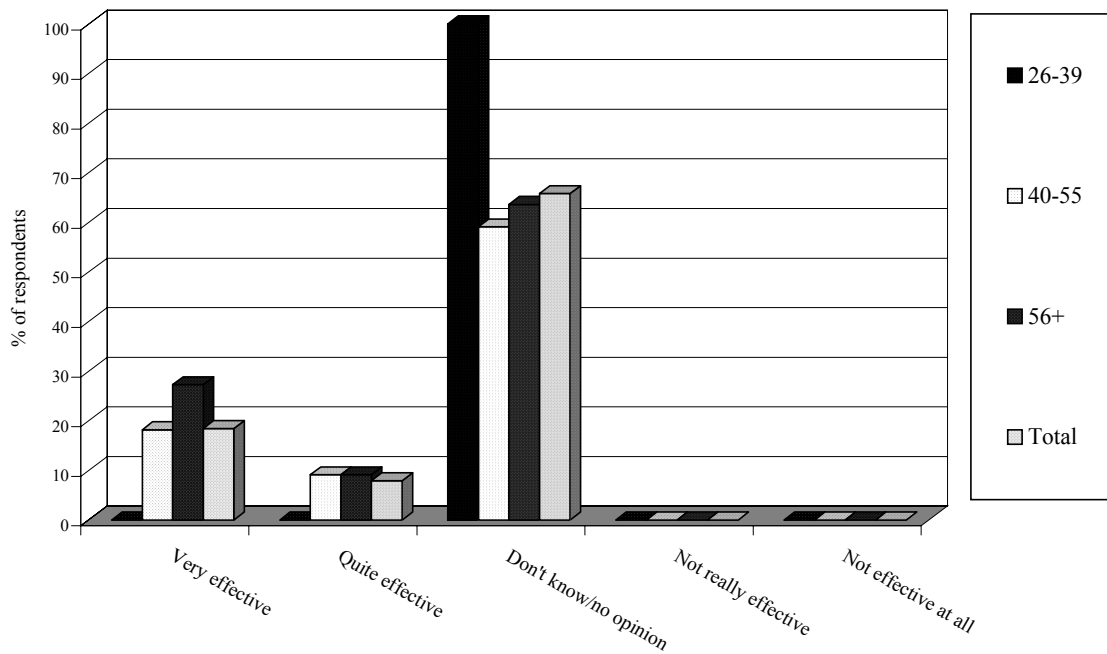
Interviewed Rectors
ECONI resources
Fig. 91



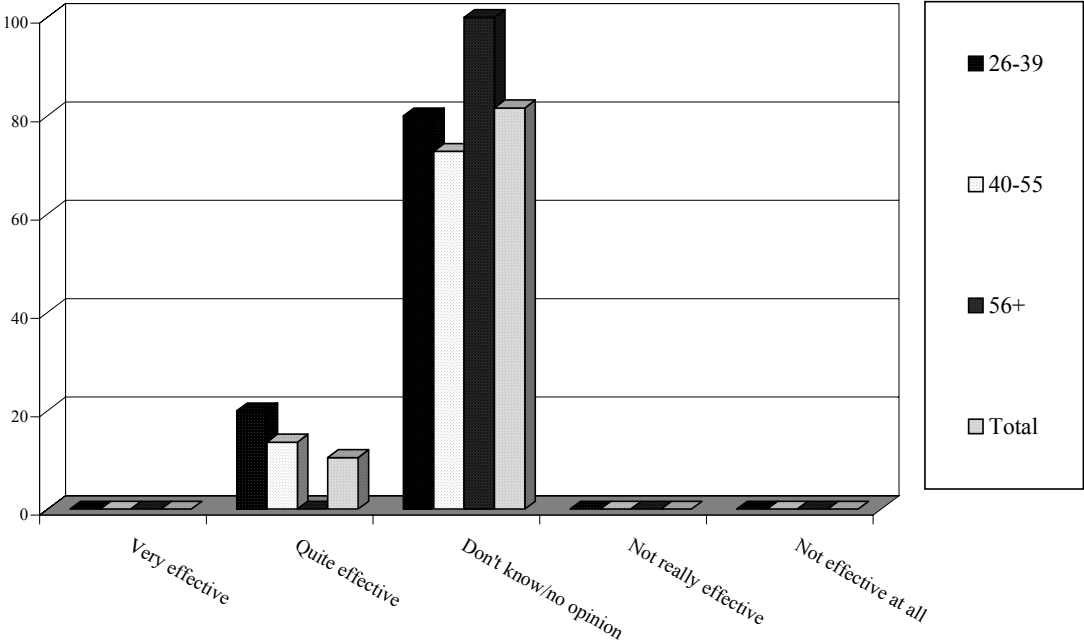
**Interviewed Rectors
Irish School of Ecumenics resources
Fig. 92**



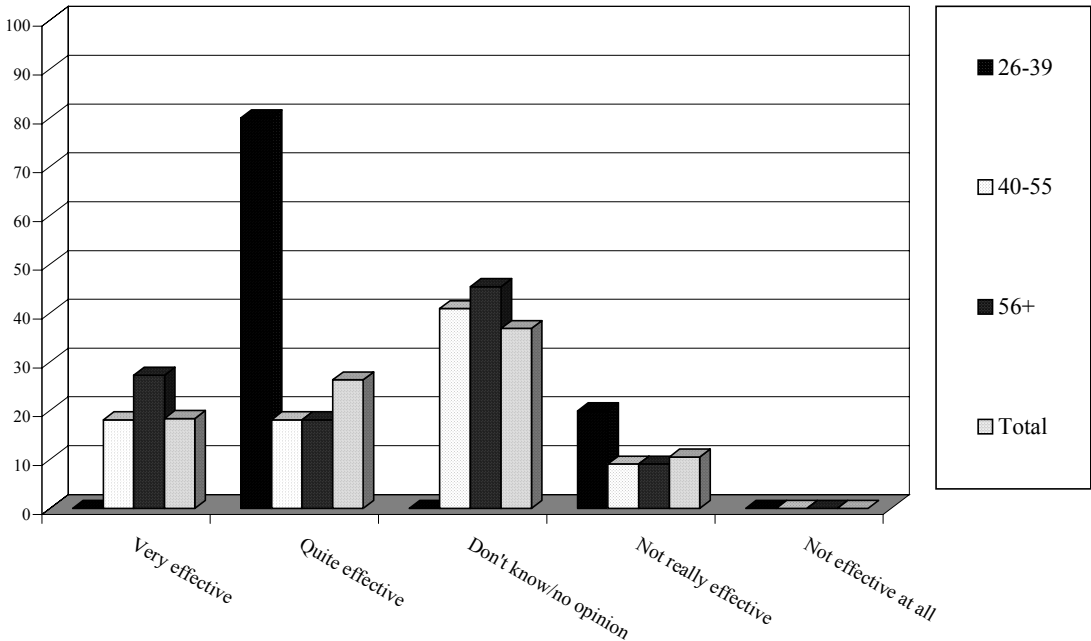
**Interviewed Rectors
Corrymeela resources
Fig. 93**



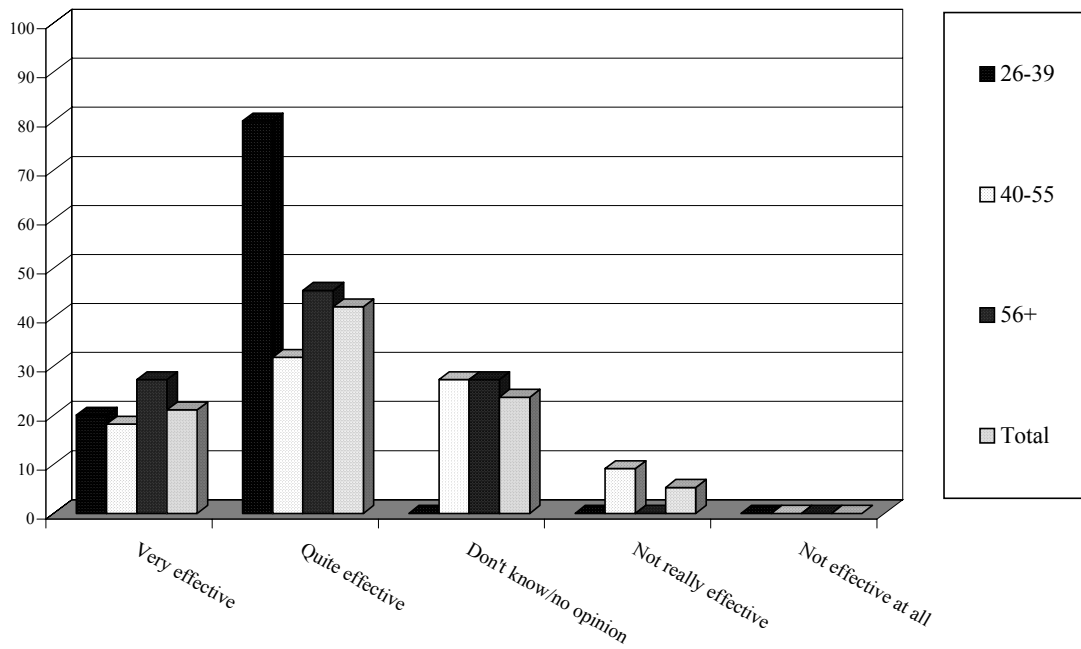
Interviewed Rectors
Youthlink resources
Fig. 94



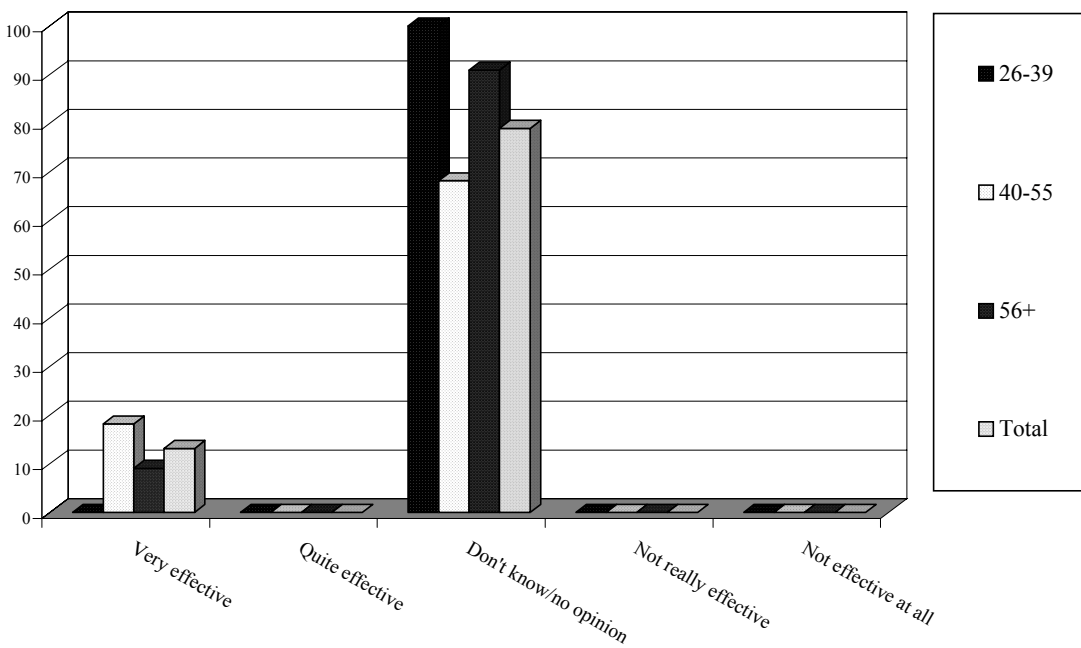
Interviewed Rectors
Local Church Forum
Fig. 95



**Interviewed Rectors
Clergy Fraternal
Fig. 96**



**Interviewed Rectors
Inter-Faith Forum
Fig. 97**



How effective did you find the...project?

I think [an international cross-community exchange] was quite effective in a limited way, because...our resources were not great, small numbers. But it left lasting contacts. **Rector, Armagh**

Those [activities] do go on, but they may not be all that well supported. **Rector, Armagh**

We had a school exchange with a Catholic school, but people stayed in their own groups. **Young lay person, Connor**

I have found that they do not instantly solve the problem of sectarianism – but they are valuable forms of working at helping all of us deal with the problem. **Rector, Connor**

My personal experience has been positive...However I am not convinced that such activities have a significant impact on challenging sectarian attitudes as those involved are often 'the converted'. **Bishop**

In our [locality] the external input of 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism' was the first major initiative towards making several individual Christian communities face their own inherent prejudices. **Rector, Connor**

Participation in these initiatives is a powerful means of promoting the growth of trust and understanding among people from both sides of the sectarian divide. They led to a realisation of the relative insignificance of theological differences compared with cultural and political differences. **Rector, Connor**

[These initiatives] have been helpful but there still remains a distrust at grass roots level...This is in a large way due to the unstable peace process which many in our own worshipping community no longer trust...These projects...may not go to the heart of our problems in Ireland. **Rector, Armagh**

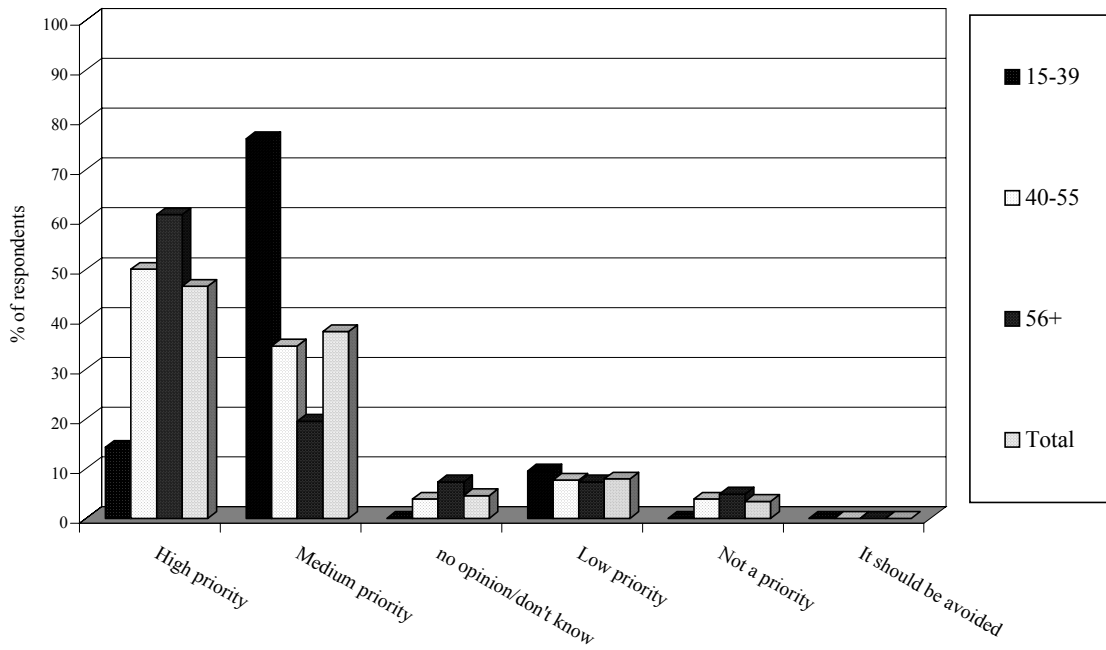
Ecumenical and fraternal experience has always left [me] with the 'us' and 'them' feeling unchanged...Everyone retreats into their own ghettos. **Rector, Armagh**

It is good to study and *pray* with believers from other churches. Clergy fraternal are also a source of encouragement personally and a place for prayer and study together. As a result a more balanced view concerning sectarianism is gained and outreach can be planned. **Rector, Armagh**

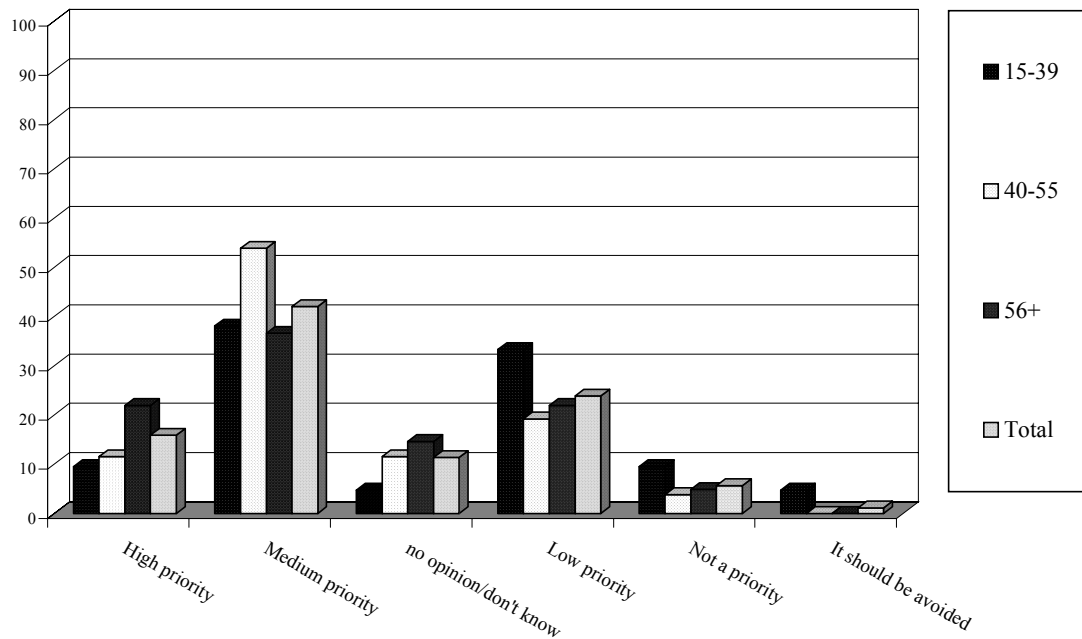
Cross-community and inter-church projects...tackling cross-community problems, i.e. drug abuse can have a much greater...effect in promoting reconciliation than most imagine. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Respondents who had used resources from, in particular, Corrymeela, ECONI, or the ISE praised them highly, often remarking that they had been impressed by the biblical content of some initiatives. There was significant openness (although limited hands-on experience) toward using peace and addressing sectarianism resources in local parishes. Respondents often suggested that sectarianism and other forms of difference might be best approached through existing structures such as Sunday services, Mothers' Union, Men's Fellowships, Youth groups, etc. It is useful to compare the views of lay people with those of the clergy regarding the priority and practice of initiatives to challenge sectarianism and other forms of negatively approaching difference (see **Figs. 98-135**):

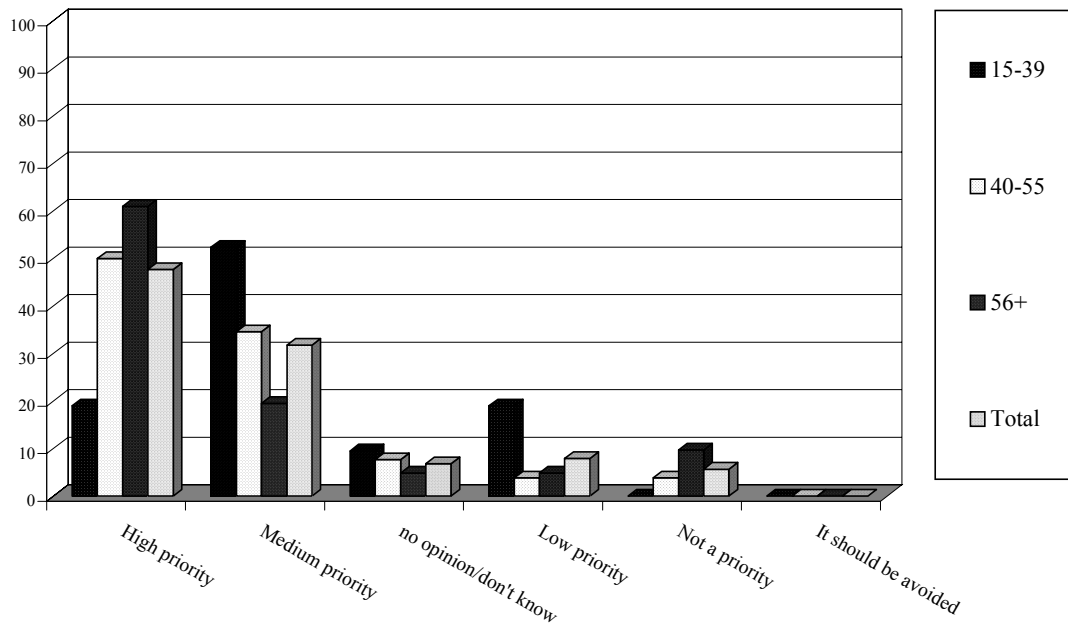
Lay People
 What priority would you like peace and reconciliation work to have in your parish?
 Fig. 98



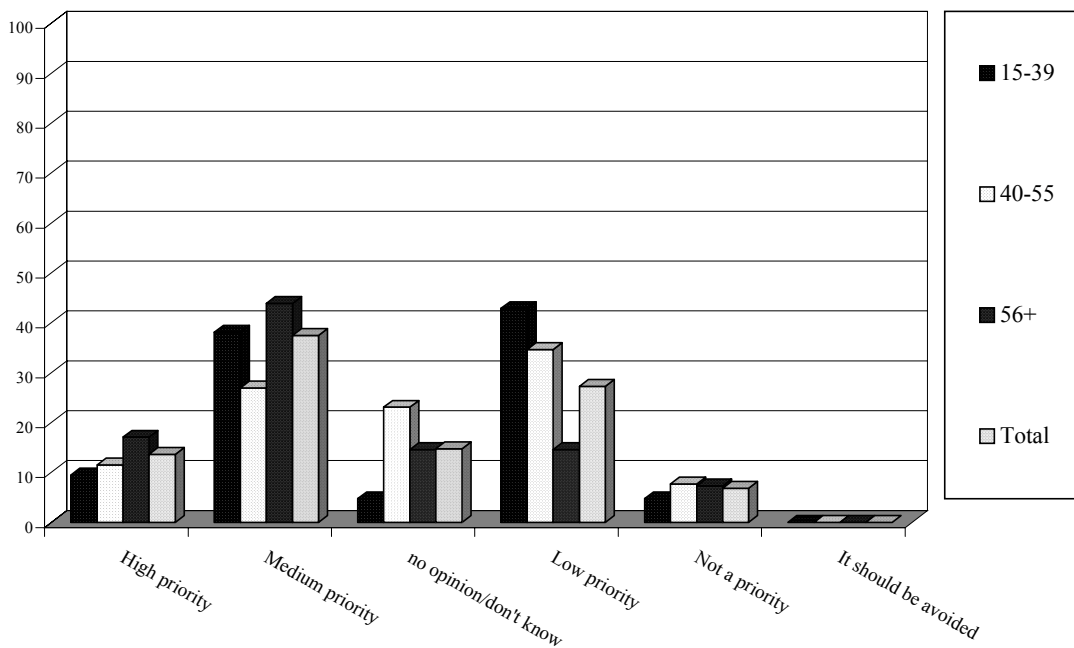
Lay People
 What priority is peace and reconciliation work given in your parish?
 Fig. 99



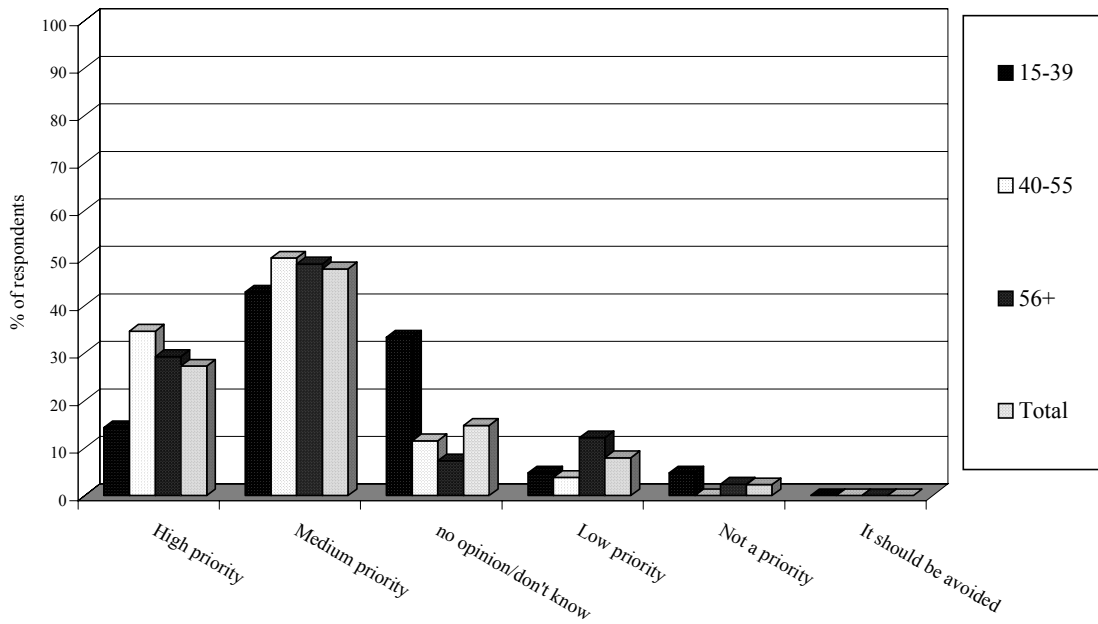
Lay People
What priority would you like dealing positively with sectarianism to have in your parish?
Fig. 100



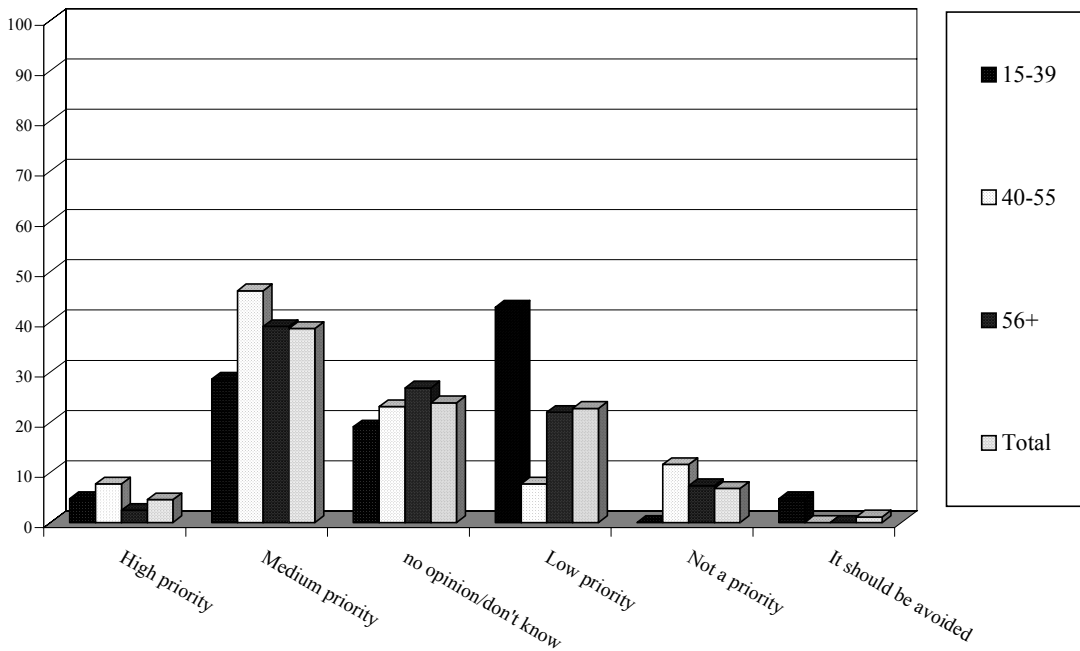
Lay People
What priority is dealing positively with sectarianism given in your parish?
Fig. 101



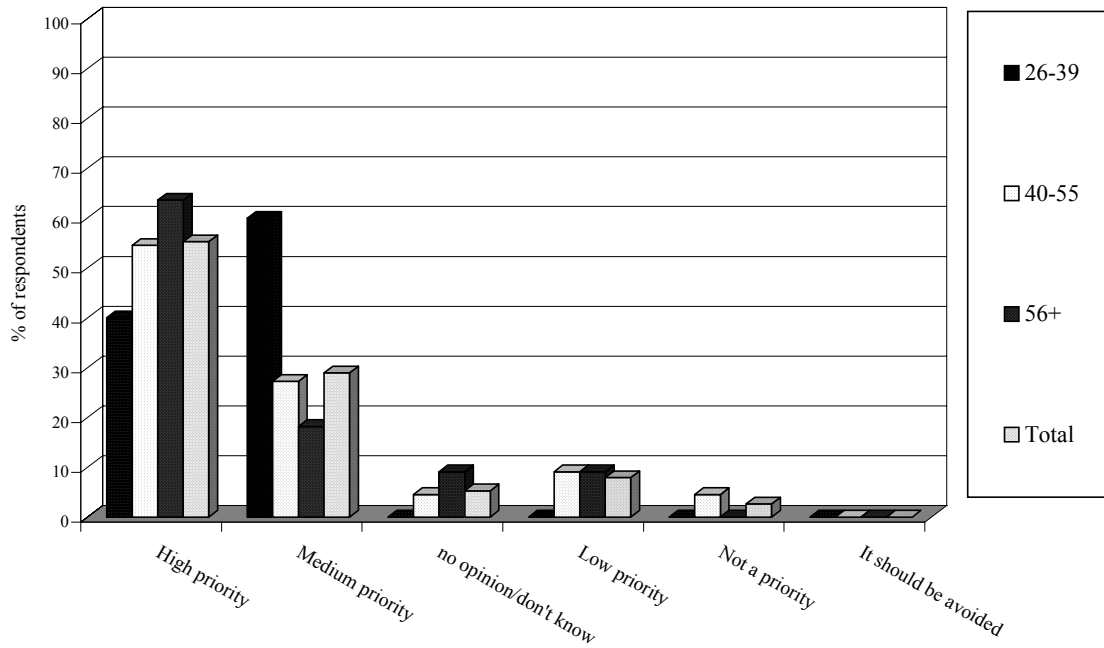
Lay People
What priority would you like dealing positively with other forms of difference to have in your parish?
Fig. 102



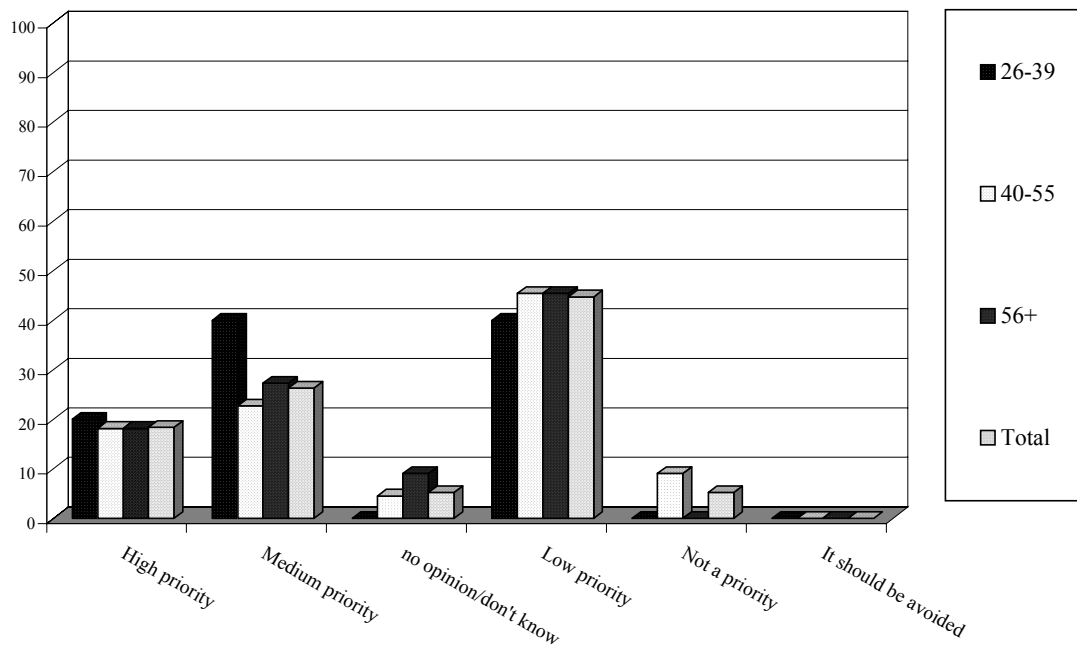
Lay People
What priority is dealing positively with other forms of difference given in your parish?
Fig. 103



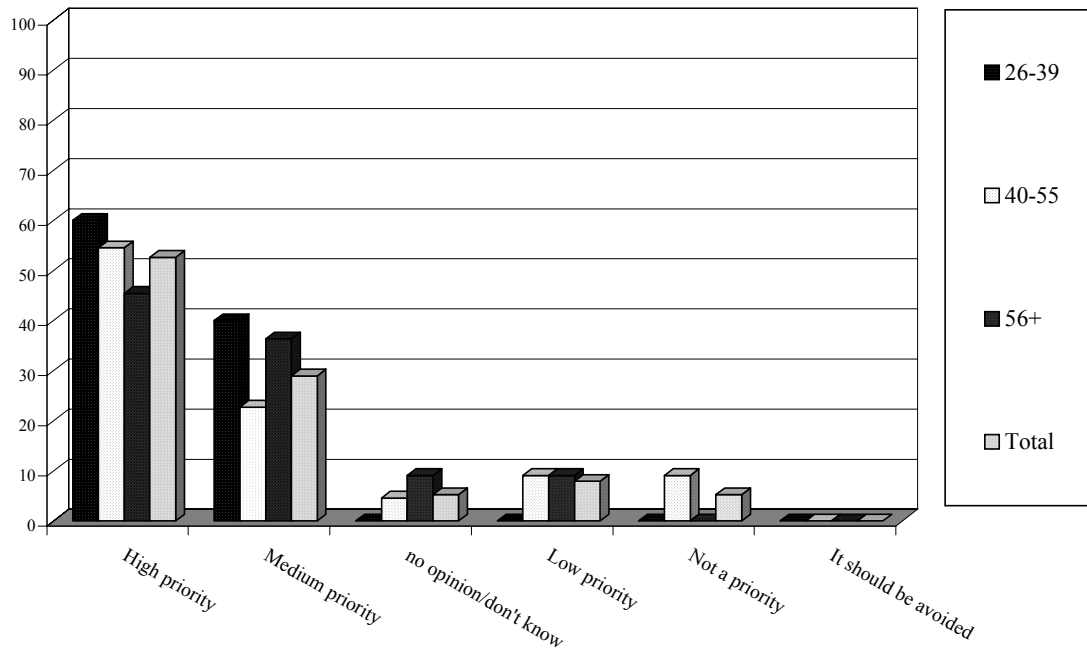
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like peace and reconciliation work to have in your parish?
Fig. 104



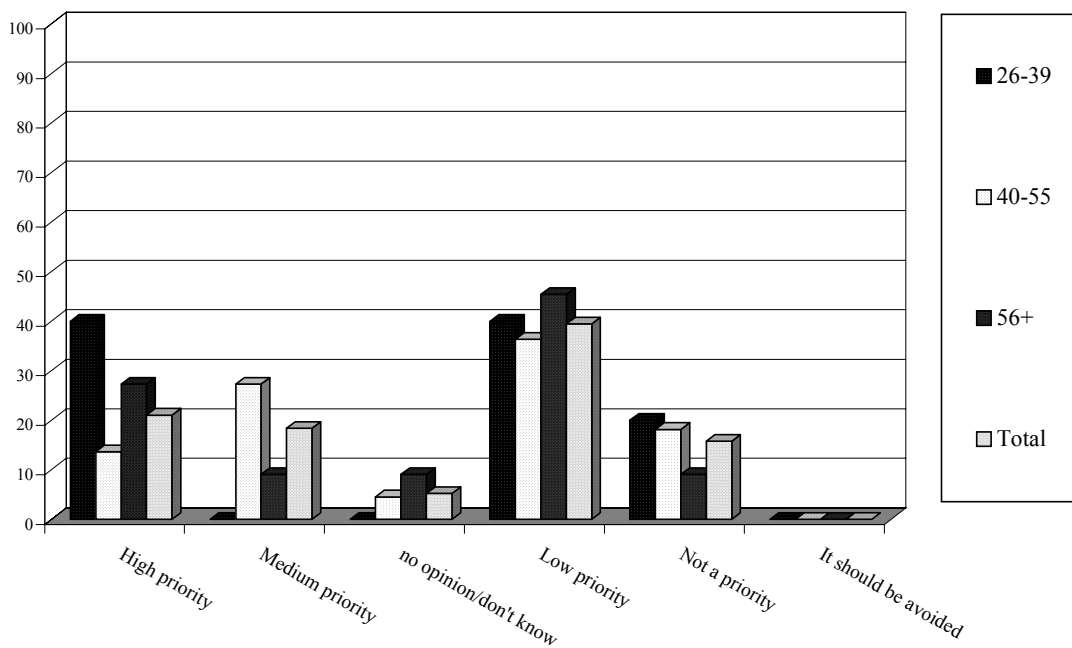
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is peace and reconciliation work given in your parish?
Fig. 105



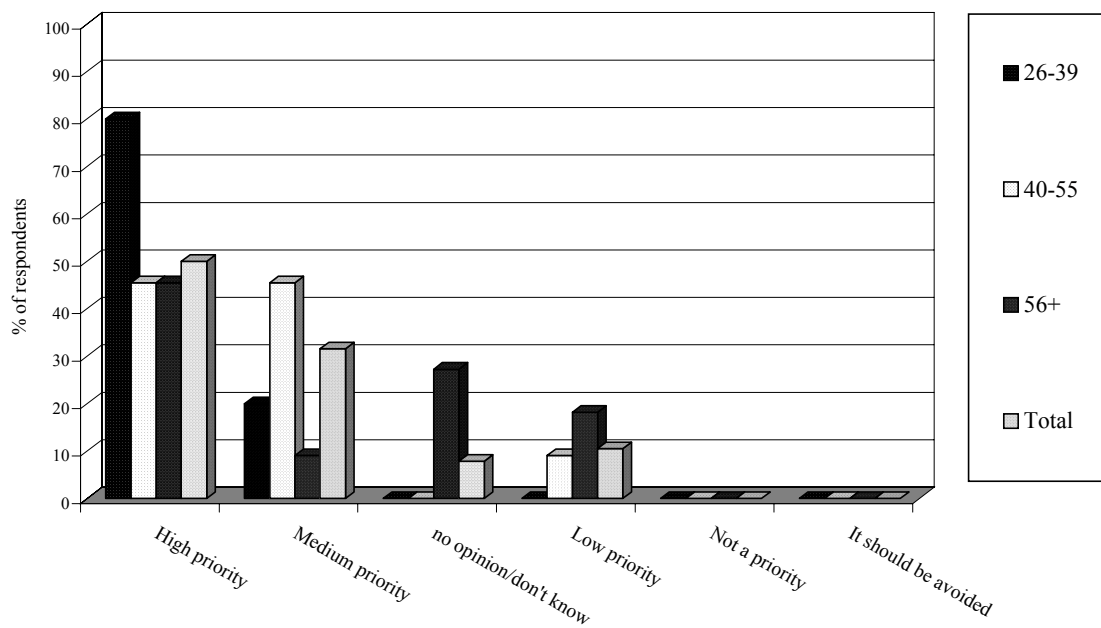
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like dealing positively with sectarianism to have in your parish?
Fig. 106



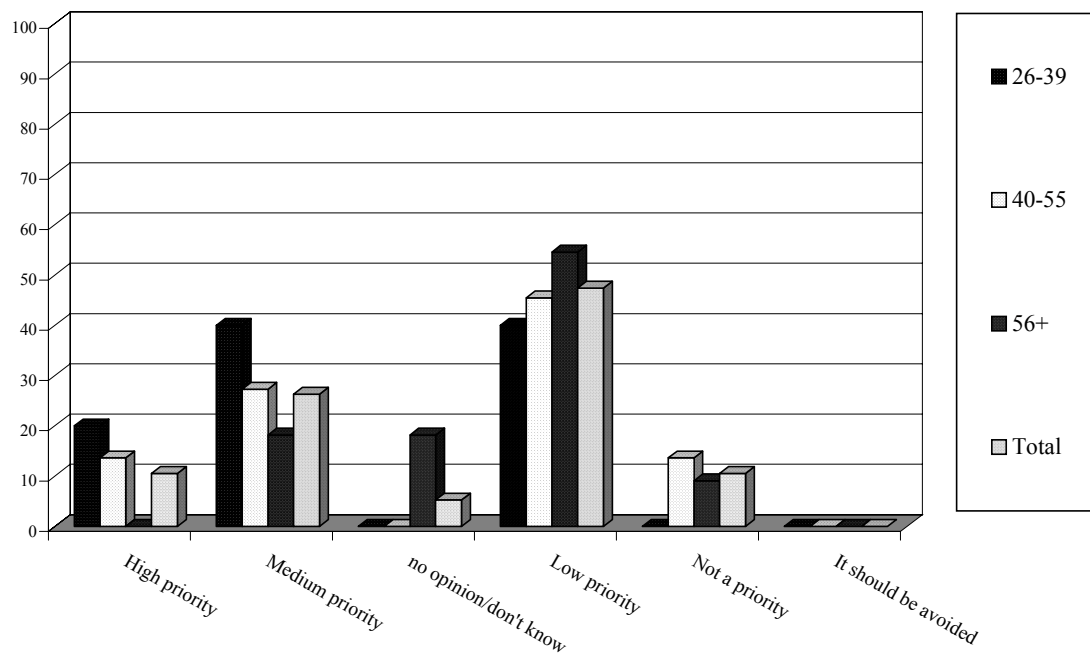
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is dealing positively with sectarianism given in your parish?
Fig. 107



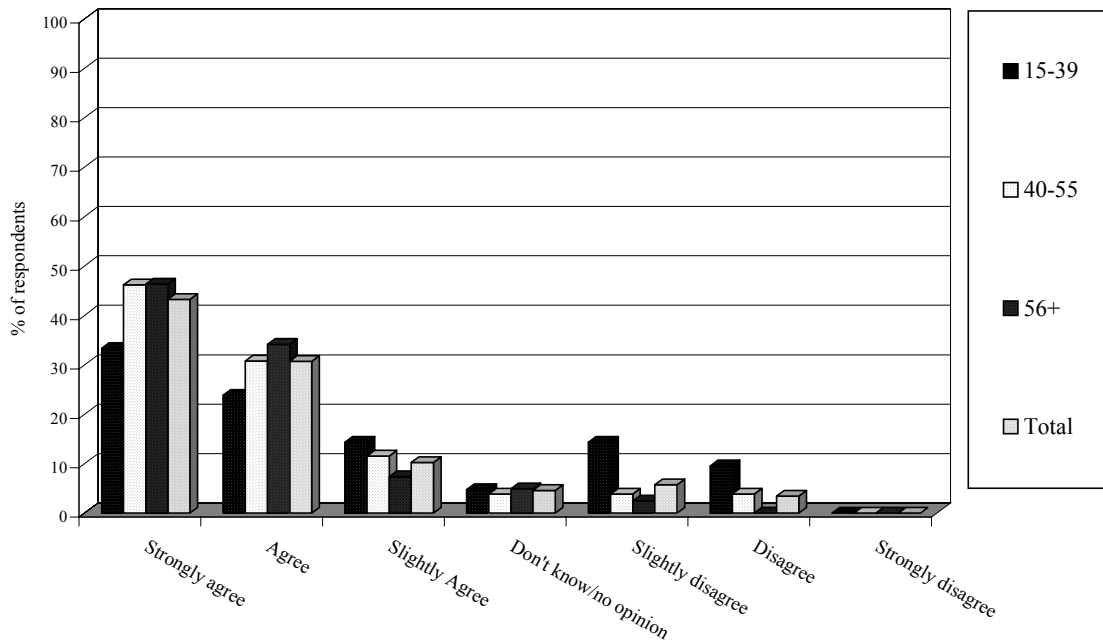
Interviewed Rectors
What priority would you like dealing with other forms of difference to have in your parish?
Fig. 108



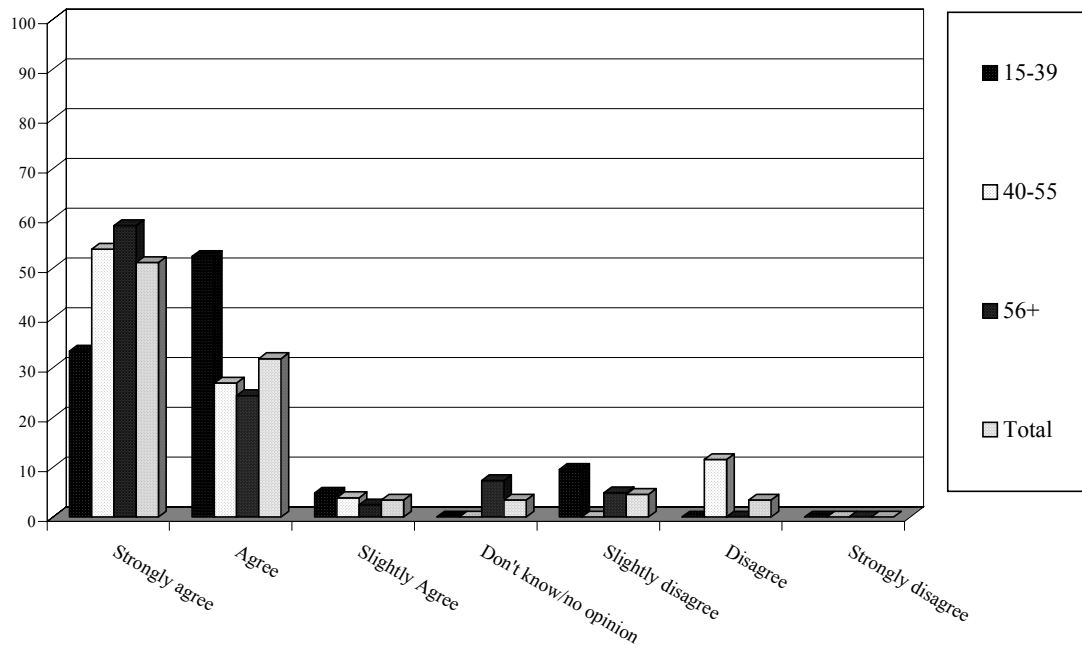
Interviewed Rectors
What priority is dealing positively with other forms of difference given in your parish?
Fig. 109



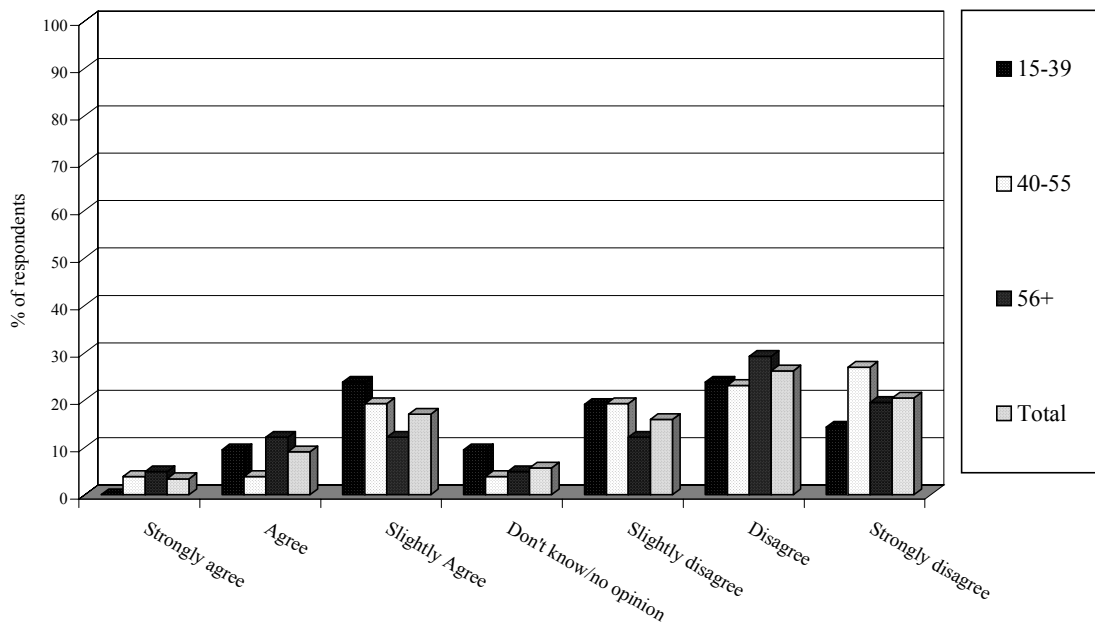
Lay People
Cross community work is an important part of being a Christian in Ireland
Fig. 110



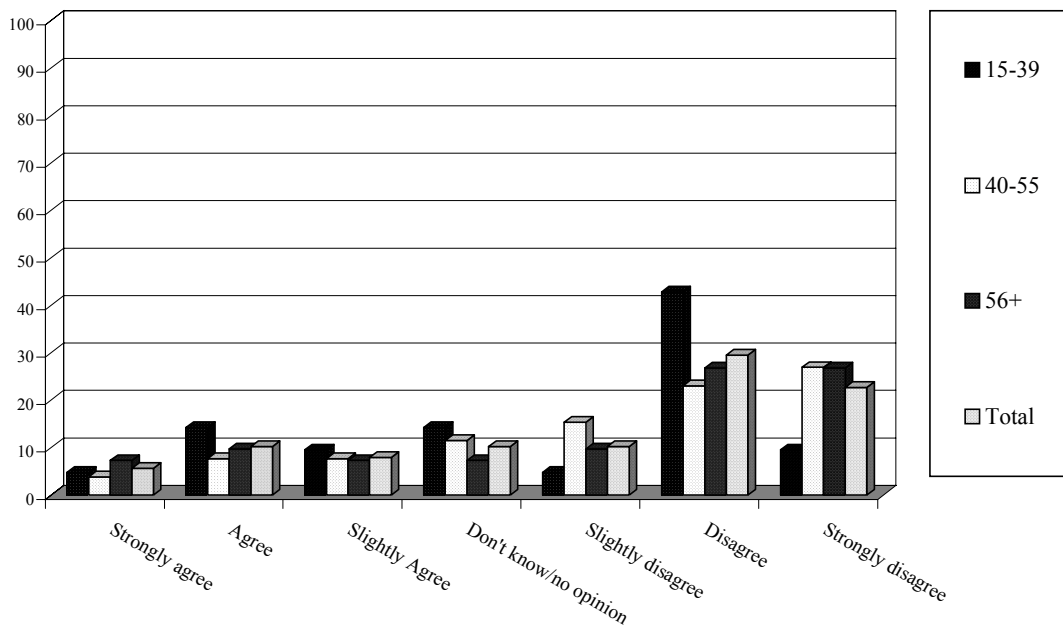
Lay People
Peacemaking in society is a central part of Christian faith
Fig. 111



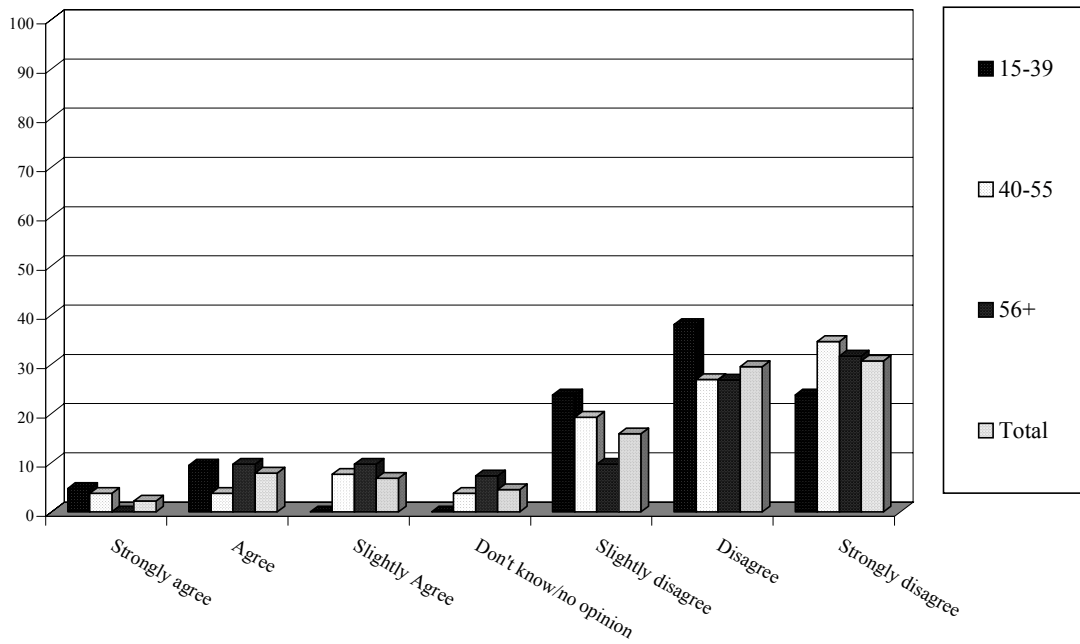
Lay People
Cross-community work can be problematic because it means too much co-operation with the Roman Catholic Church
Fig. 112



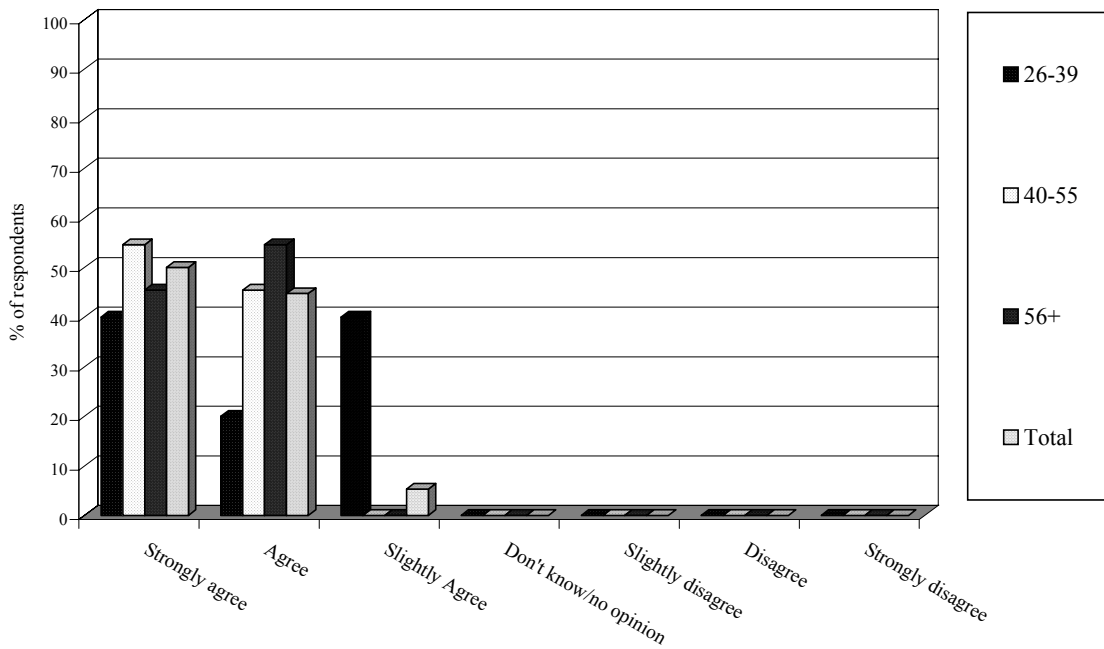
Lay People
Cross-community or anti-sectarian work is a distraction from the real issues of being a Christian
Fig. 113



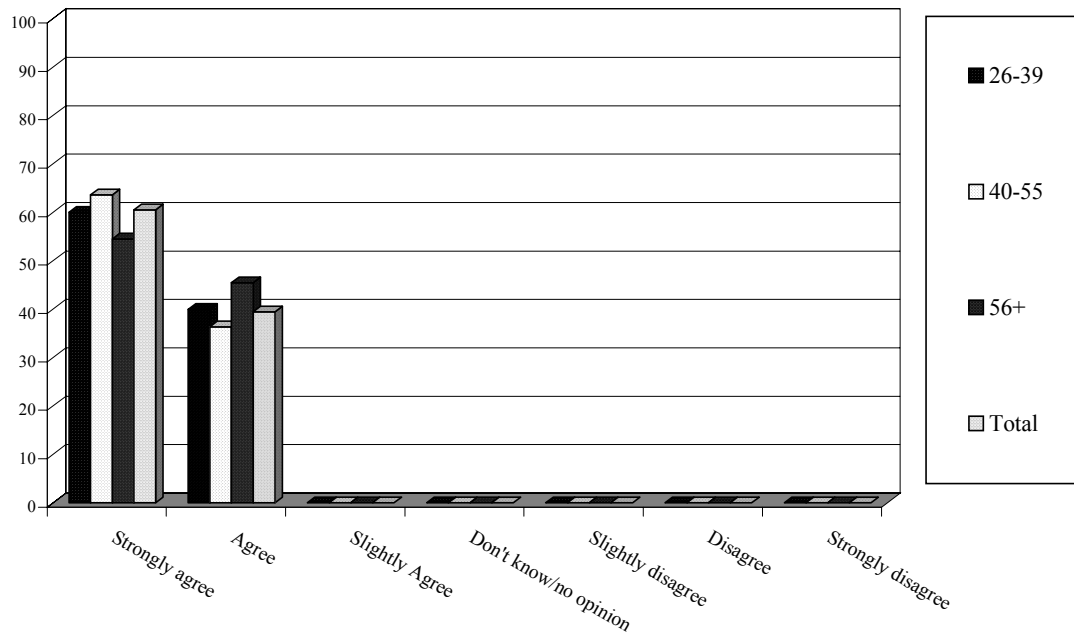
Lay People
Peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility
Fig. 114



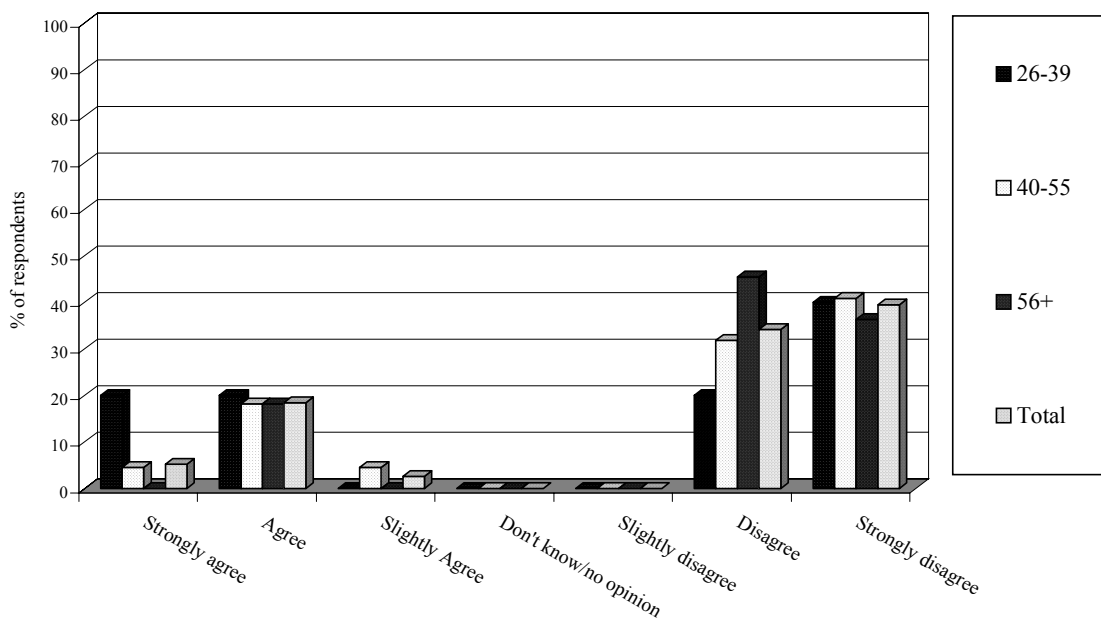
Interviewed Rectors
Cross community work is an important part of being a Christian in Ireland
Fig. 115



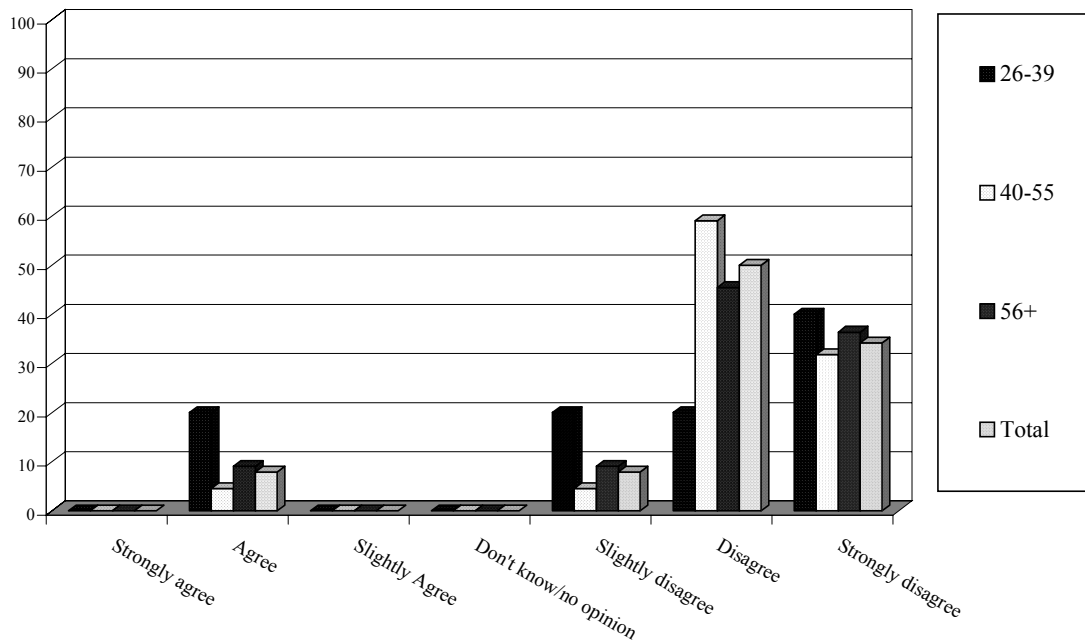
Interviewed Rectors
Peacemaking in society is a central part of Christian faith
Fig. 116



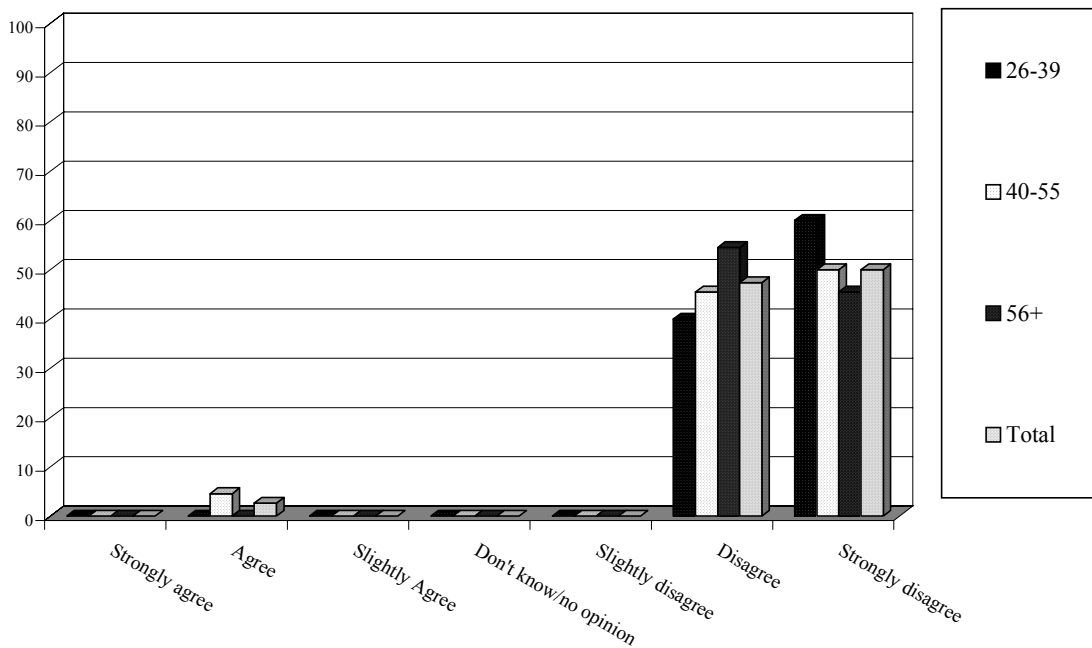
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community work can be problematic because it means too much co-operation with the Roman Catholic Church
Fig. 117



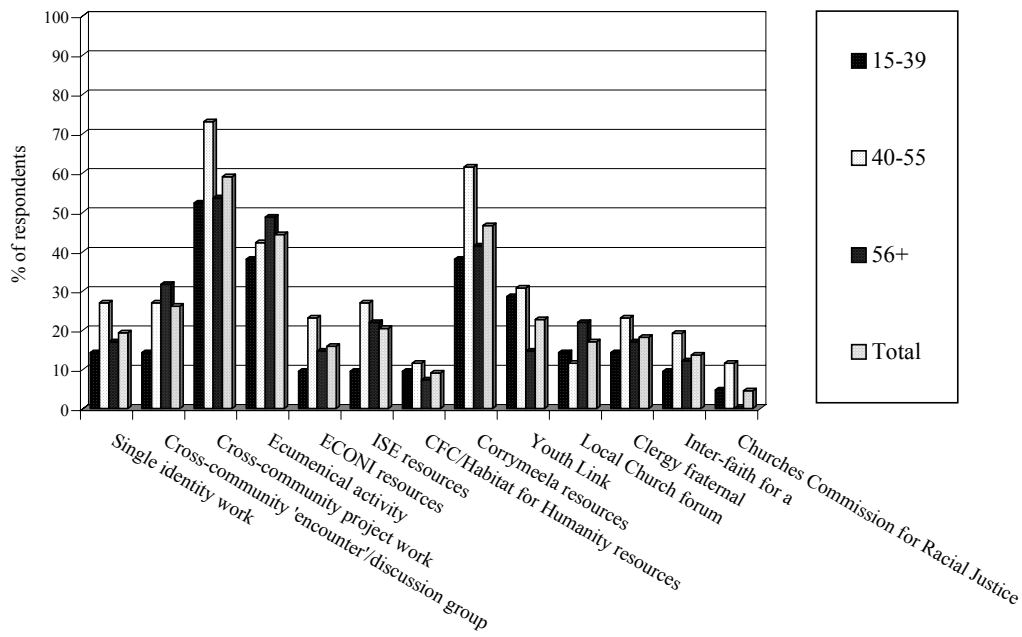
Interviewed Rectors
Cross-community or anti-sectarian work is a distraction from the real issues of being a Christian
 Fig. 118



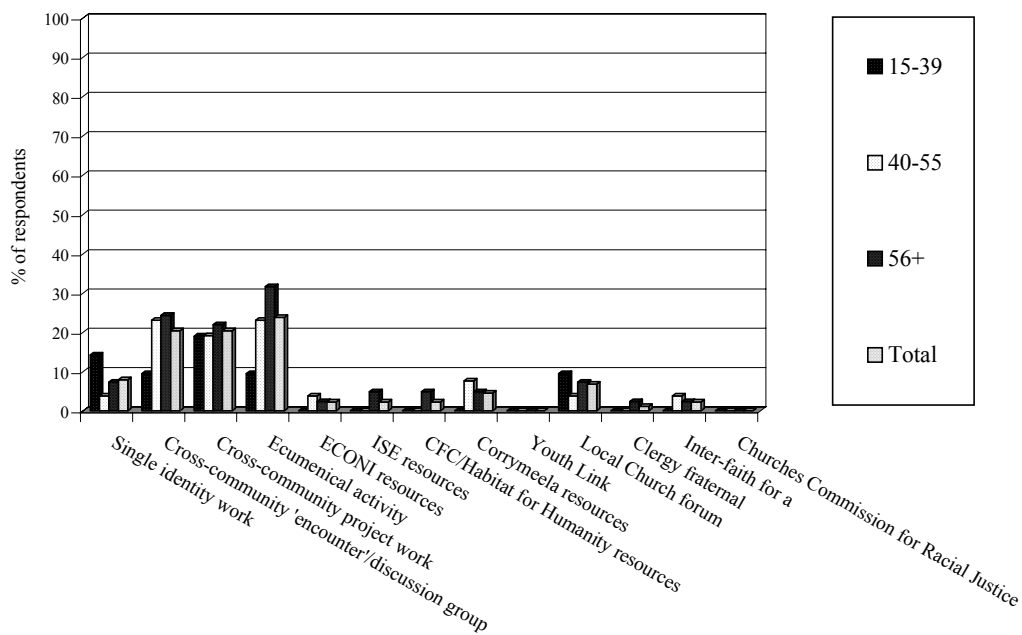
Interviewed Rectors
Peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility
 Fig. 119



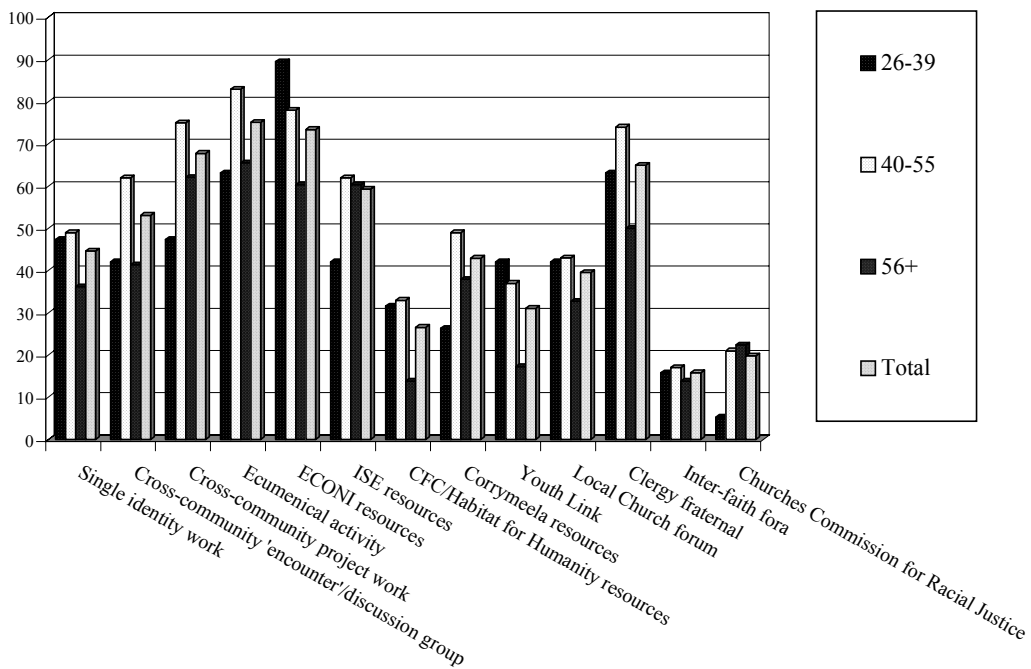
Lay People
Initiatives / resources you are aware of
Fig. 120



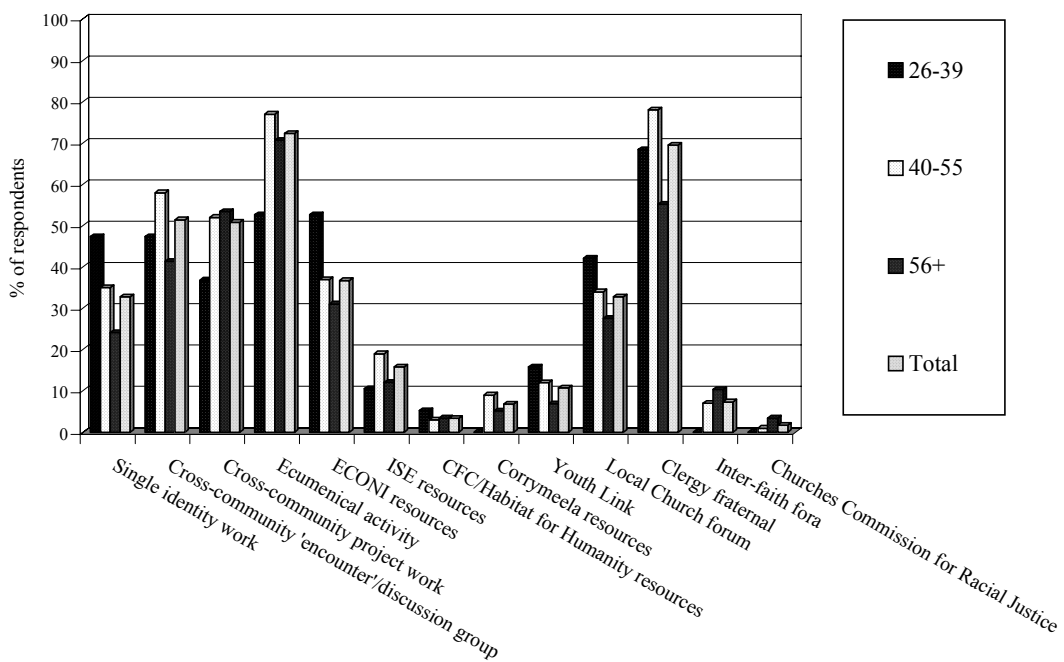
Lay People
Initiatives / resources you have participated in
Fig. 121



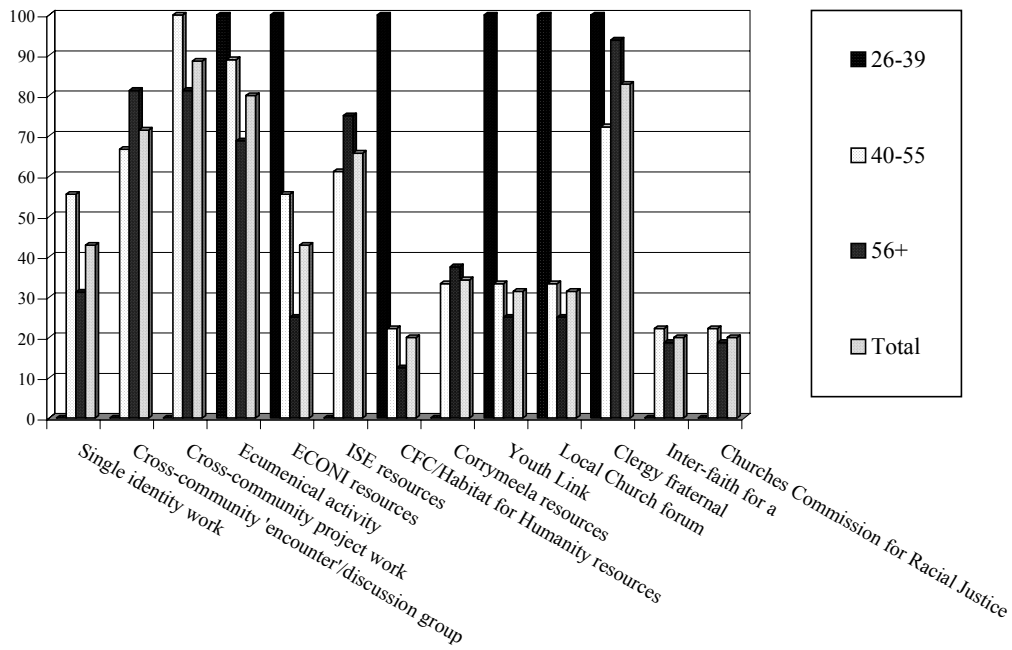
All Rectors
Initiatives / Resources you are aware of
Fig. 122



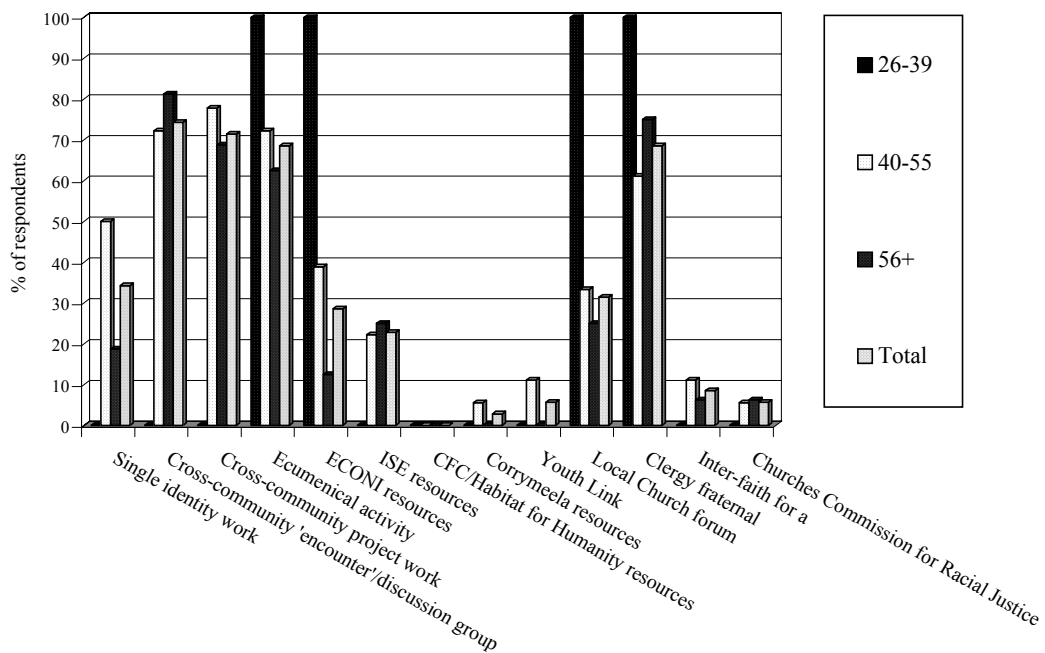
All Rectors
Initiatives / Resources you have participated in
Fig. 123



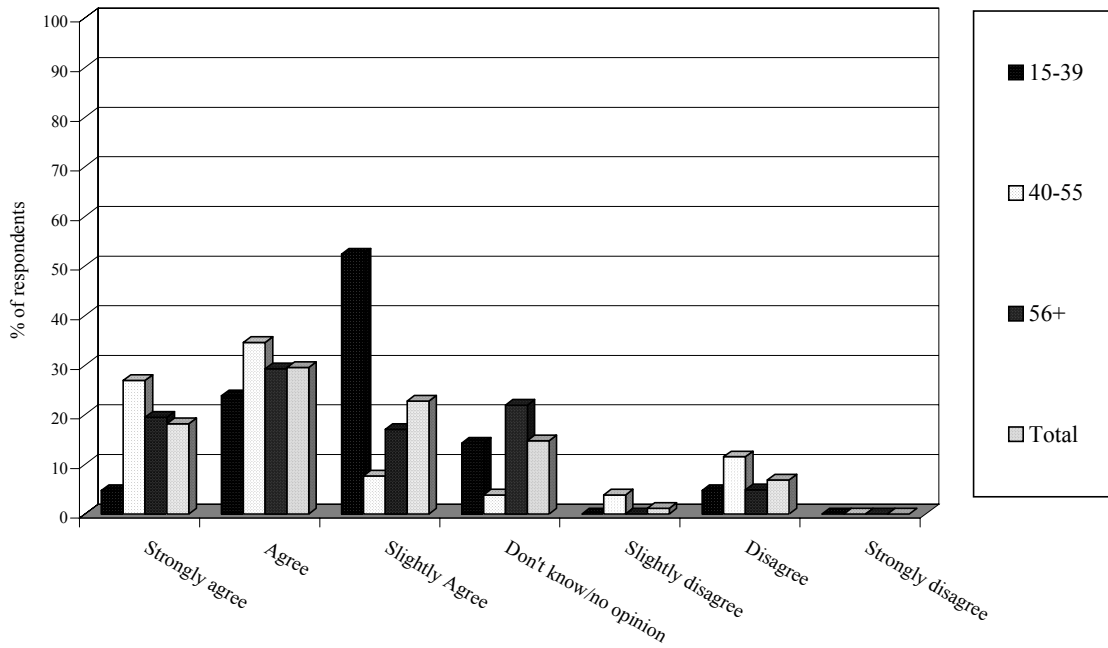
Standing Committee
 Initiatives / Resources you are aware of
 Fig. 124



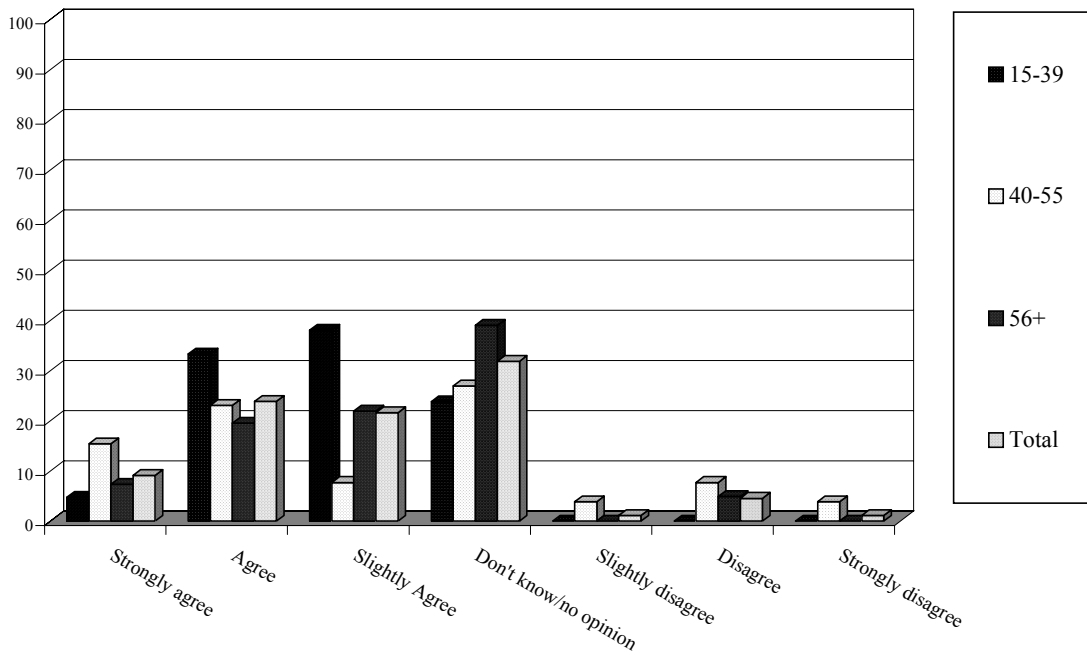
Standing Committee
 Initiatives / Resources you have participated in
 Fig. 125



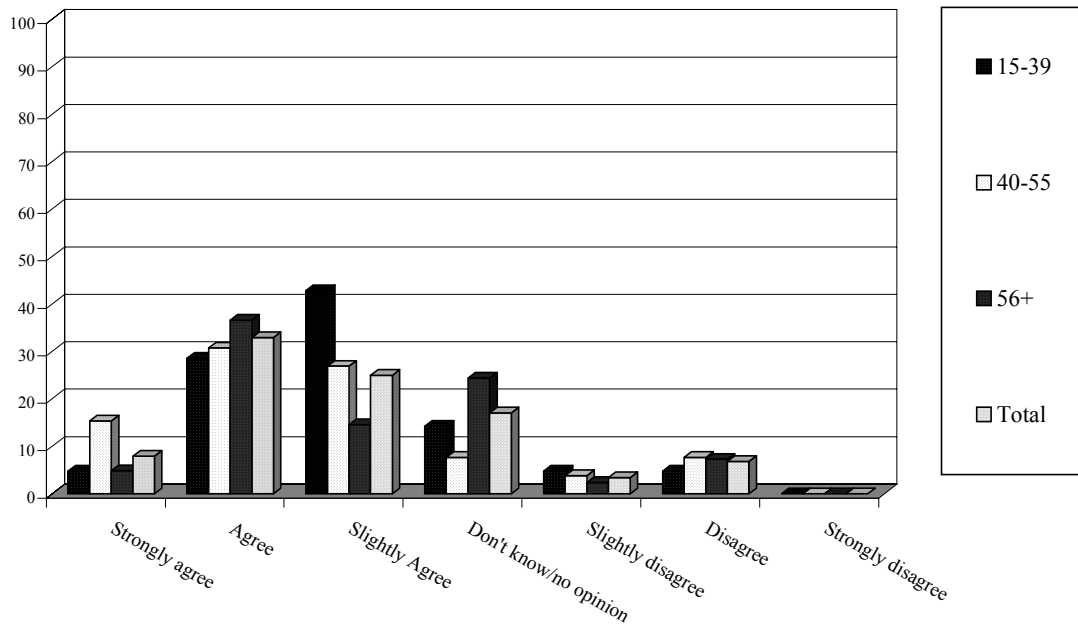
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of cross-community initiative
Fig. 126



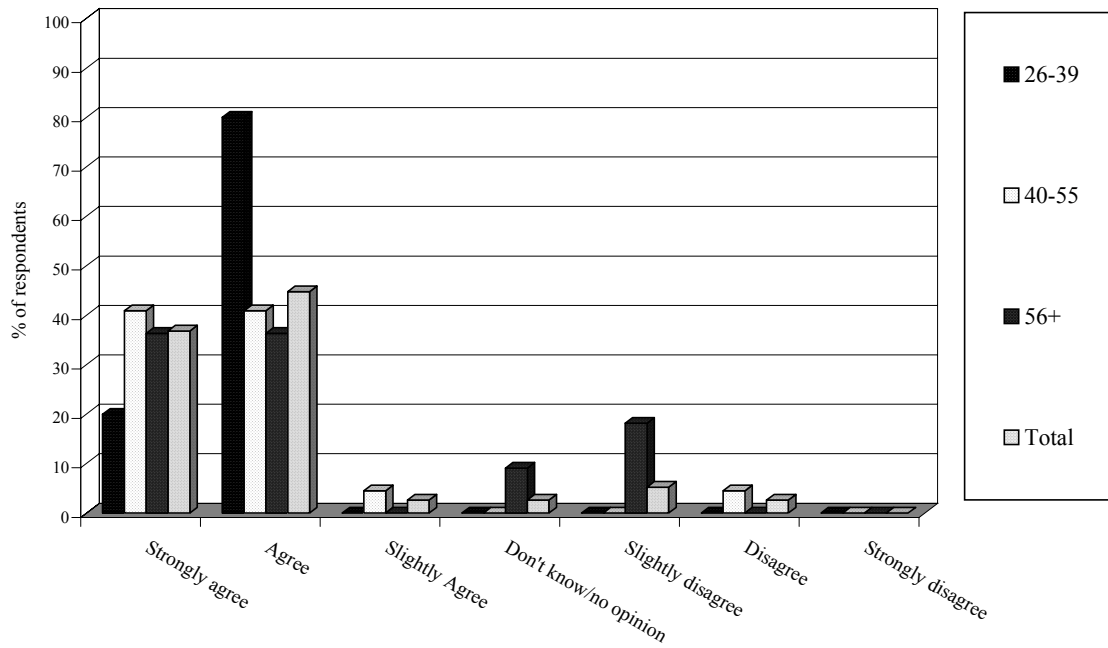
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of single identity work
Fig. 127



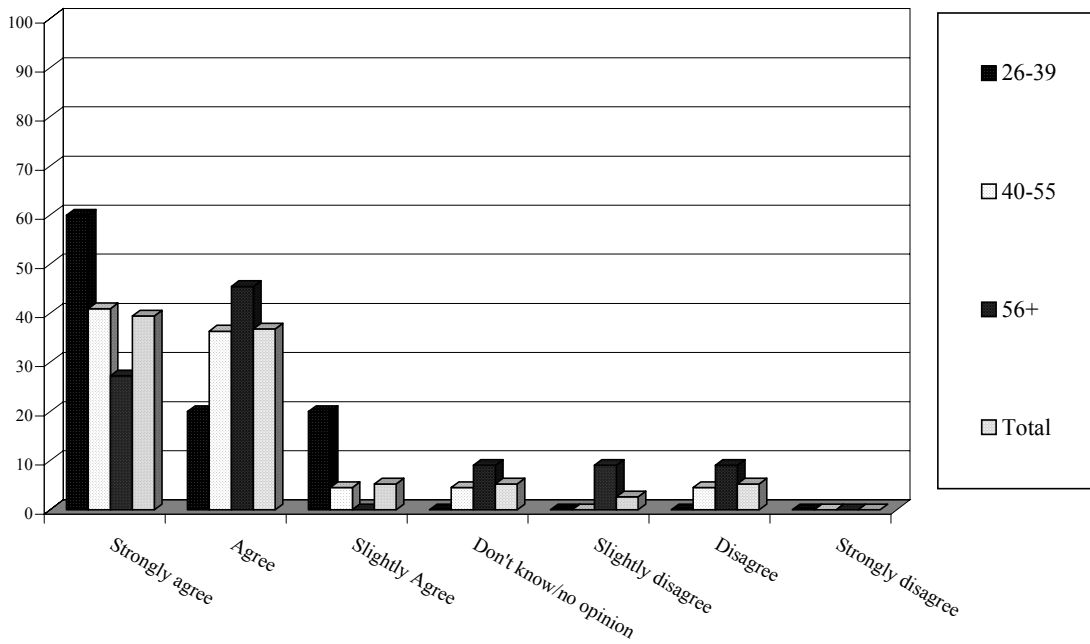
Lay People
I would like to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
Fig. 128



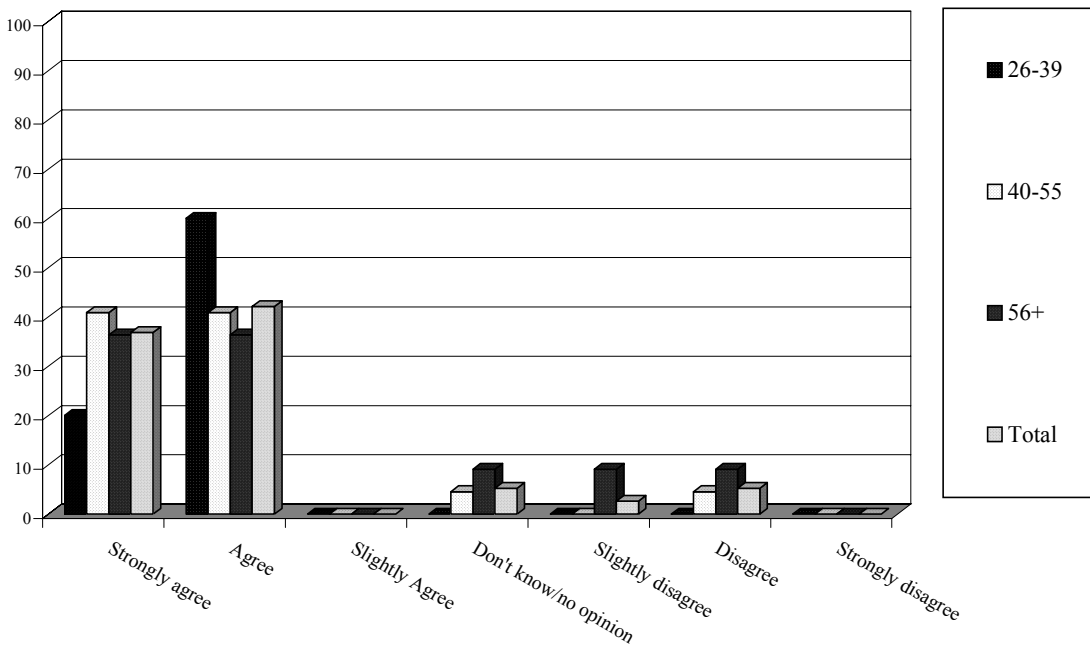
Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of cross-community initiative
Fig. 129



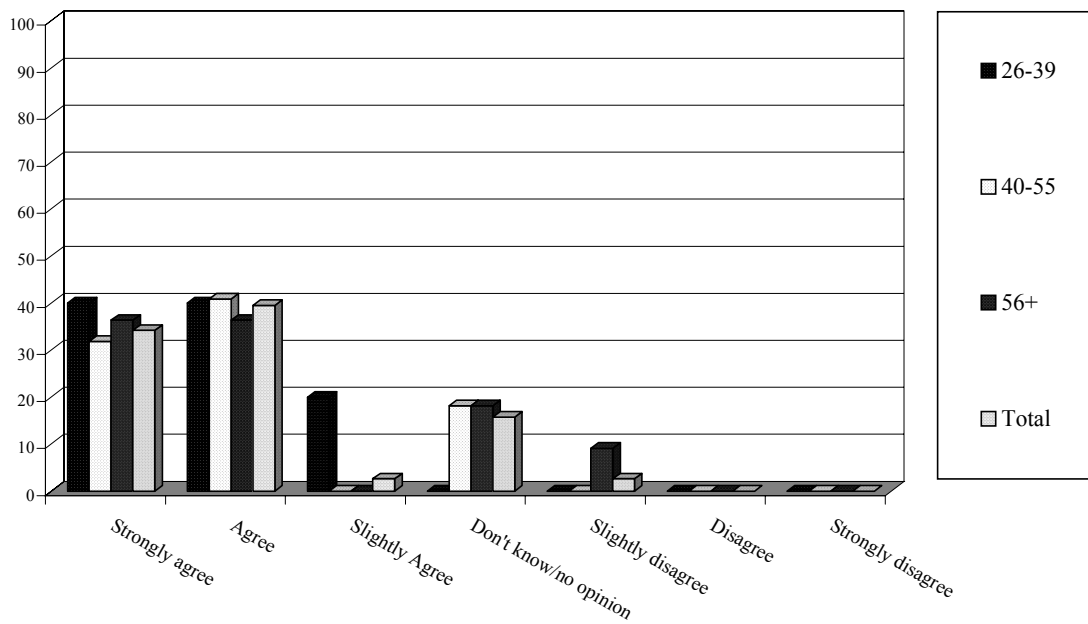
Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of single identity work
Fig. 130



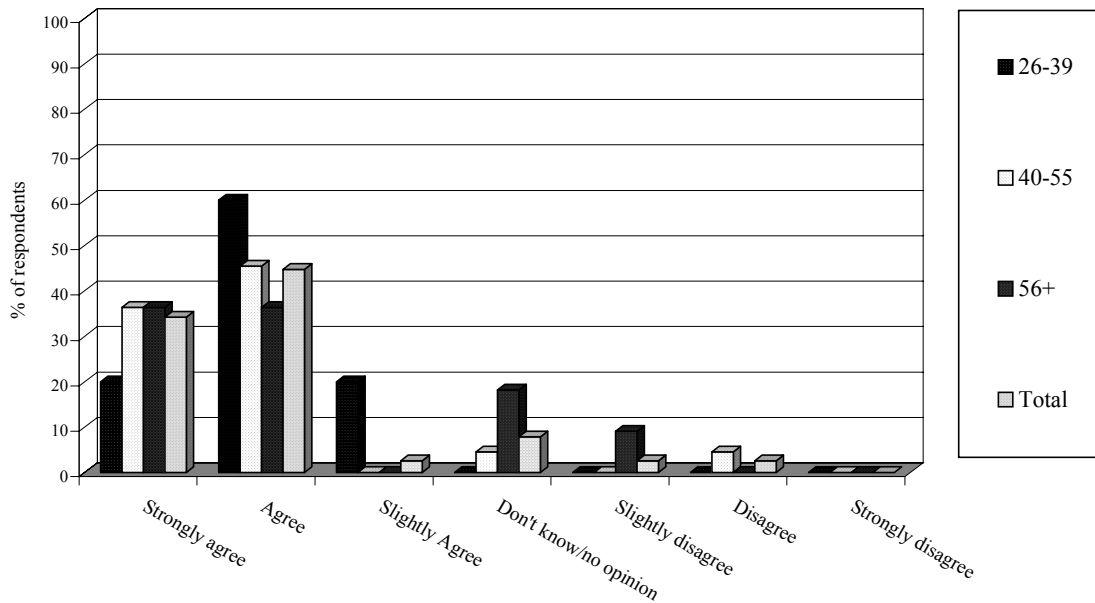
Interviewed Rectors
I would like to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
Fig. 131



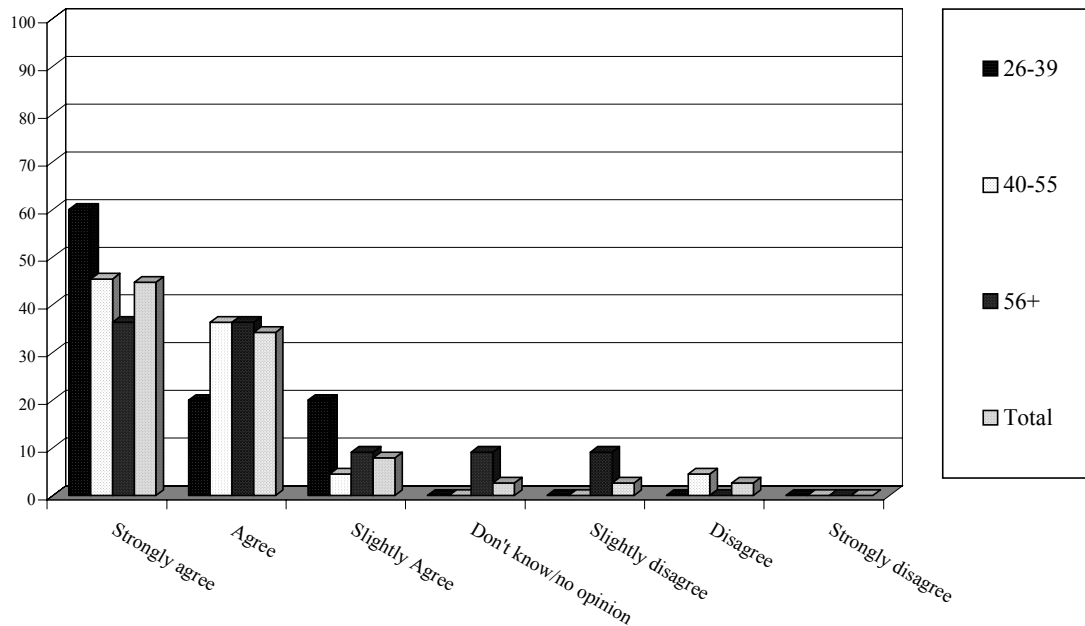
Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of peacemaking initiative
Fig. 132



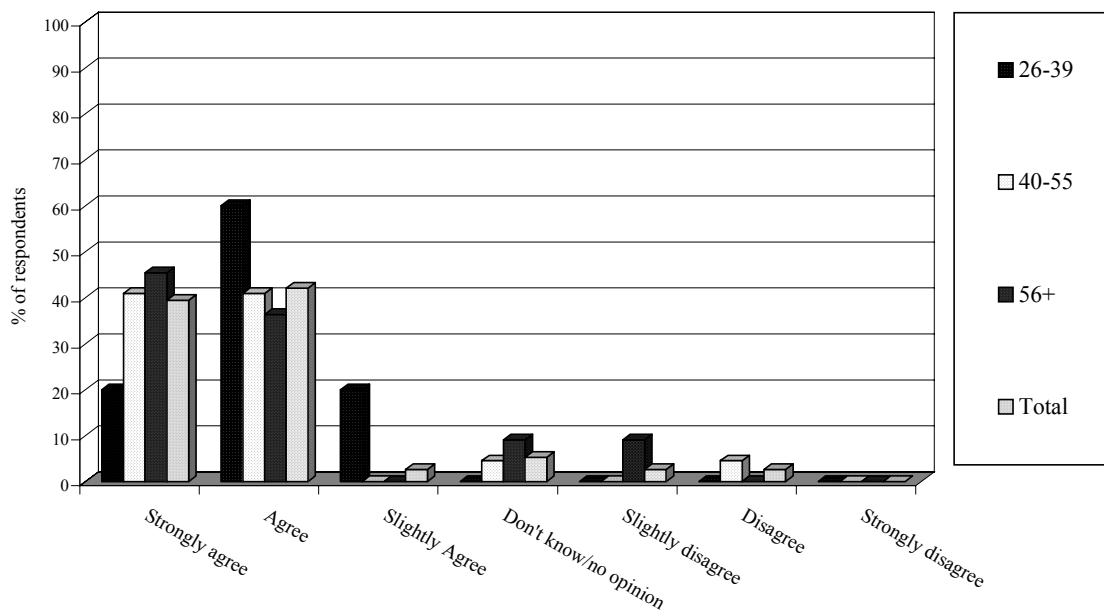
Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of cross-community initiative
Fig. 133



Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of single identity work
Fig. 134



Interviewed Rectors
I would like my parish to have the opportunity to participate in some form of dealing positively with other areas of difference
Fig. 135



Some respondents felt that such initiatives were unnecessary in their locality:

I think our parish copes well with peace and reconciliation; no one wants to fight in our parish. **Lay person, Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh**

I tend to disengage from peace and reconciliation activities, it isn't really the issue here – sectarianism doesn't really apply either. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

Some respondents mentioned particularly difficult challenges of approaching the issue of sectarianism and dealing positively with difference:

I remember a young fellow was [killed by his own bomb]...So when it came to light that this fellow was a local, my predecessor...actually went to offer his condolences to the family and attended the funeral. He didn't so much get flak from parishioners, because the parishes would be very well integrated, but it was in the national media that he had done this. So he got quite a number of threatening letters, I think there were death threats as well. So it was a situation where you could have sat back as a Church of Ireland rector and said, 'Well it's got b***** all to do with me. He was trying to scupper the peace process, so I'm not going.' So you're caught between a rock and a hard place. There are one or two in the parish who will be still very Orange, and will be up at Drumcree in the summer and that. But they have to keep themselves to themselves, because they'd be in the minority...It did heal a lot of wounds for people, that...the Anglican community were there as well supporting the family, even though...the family were very republican...That's neither here nor there. **Rector, Cashel and Ossory**

I hadn't experienced this kind of prejudice till I moved here...perhaps it's because people feel threatened that they adopt these principles. **Lay person, Connor**

Maybe it should be [a higher priority], but the reality of it for most people...we get on with life and it's not something that we're consciously thinking of or doing much about, generally speaking. The problem is that the issue really surfaces more as we come into July...There's a certain tension...you can feel...People react in different ways – some people...want to get away out of the place. It's a very emotive issue, you always like to be careful what you say and where you say it, amongst certain people.

What should the church do about that?

It's a very difficult one...I don't think the gospel, the teaching of the bible – I think it confronts that whole attitude really. True Christianity is not sectarian. **Rector, Dromore**

Have you ever run any specific peace and reconciliation initiatives?

No. If you give something a label you tend to find that's when people start to bring out the placards. If you leave something open, then whoever comes, comes, and you can argue about it after the event. The way I'm trying to do this is as quietly as I possibly can. People come and we mix, and staunch loyalists mix – those on the Green side, some of them very staunch, and meet over a cup of tea and a biscuit and can talk, and then it's only afterwards you can sort of say, 'Well we were speaking to him the other day, and he's not as bad as you probably thought.' **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

The key thing that will decide whether the reconciliation strand of Think Again works or not – the key deciding factor – I think will be whether actual projects happen on the ground. **Bishop**

For the marching season...we are producing a credit-card size card with scripture sentences; 'blessed are the peacemakers,' or 'swords into ploughshares,' and then a prayer, and we're giving those out to everybody, so that during this season they can carry them in their wallet, and use them to get congregations to pray...as a community for peace. It's to empower the whole community – rather than just me praying on a Sunday morning. **Rector, Connor**

[Clergy] seem to be afraid to encourage their church members to take part in inter church events. **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

Perceptions of much peace and addressing sectarian work are sometimes negative, but these usually (although not exclusively) come from respondents who had little or no personal experience of the initiatives:

When you mention 'cross-community work' it puts people off. **Lay person, Armagh**

When asked about whether or not the parish should have the opportunity to participate in some form of peace making it was stated that "this could open up a minefield." **Focus Group report, Connor**

Because of the way peace and reconciliation work is generally defined and practiced in Northern Ireland, I'd want it to have a very low priority...It is relativism at large, normally. It is devoid of Christian foundation. It is – if I can use a colloquialism – it's touchy-feely, and it is frightened of objective truths.

And does this come from your experience at your sectarianism workshop?

Yes. **Rector, Clogher**

Some respondents felt that cross-community work could be difficult because of the levels of co-operation implied with the Roman Catholic Church. It is important to note that respondents who acknowledged a difficulty in this regard usually said that it was simply a fact of life, rather than a reason not to engage in such work:

That's why I can't talk to my Presbyterian neighbours, because they know that we would speak to [Catholics], so probably indirectly it is...

But not because you don't like Catholics.

Not because I don't like Catholics, but because of the impact that has on some other folks. I did a course with the diocese with ECONI on sectarianism, and it was brilliant. **Rector, Connor**

Sadly I'd have to strongly agree with that.

But that's not a reason for not doing it?

Oh no. No, but it's reality. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

But [you think it's] problematic because it might pose difficulties for your own people, or problematic because Catholics might try to get you to do things you don't want to do, or...?

It's problematic because a) they feel inadequate about themselves, and their own identity and understanding of faith, and b) because they don't want to be pressured.

[Does that] mean you shouldn't do the work, or is it just too problematic to handle?

The whole secret is finding out what people can accept, and working from where they are. **Rector, Connor**

Some respondents were enthusiastic, deeply committed to and had participated in peace and reconciliation and addressing sectarianism initiatives:

Well I won't go to the [local] Ministers' Group.

Because it doesn't [include the Catholic] priest ?

Yes. It seems a wee bit bizarre because it's turning on it's head what I said earlier, that I think a congregation needs to be involved in some single identity work.

But there's something about the exclusivity...

Yes. **Rector, Connor**

Cross-community project work is very important if we are to carry out our Lord's command 'To love our neighbour as ourselves'. **Standing Committee lay member, Derry and Raphoe**

There isn't enough cross-community work, that's the problem. **Lay person, Armagh**

Such [initiatives] are a necessary adjunct to Christian living – perhaps it is more true to say that they form a central part of Christianity. **Rector, Derry and Raphoe**

If peace and reconciliation work is not really the church's responsibility, then what is the church's responsibility? **Lay person, Armagh**

I was involved in setting up [a] Churches Advice Centre...Hugely encouraged by that creative and positive time in my life and ministry. Ecumenical prayer study groups, all of that...Can we build

relationships by doing [practical] things together rather than sitting and staring at each other and contemplating the problems?...I think that can be very effective...with the proviso that they aren't sufficiently superficial – that we just make-believe. They're effective but they need to have a certain focus and people need to be willing to look about hard issues, and to be very honest about problems. As long as there's an honesty and an integrity about them I'm very happy with them. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

We've done some single identity work...That was with – Down and Dromore had this programme called Think Again, and they had a reconciliation officer who came to do a night with us all about that. [As for a] cross-community encounter/discussion group...the clergy group that met put together a programme for lent which was very, very useful. We started off and the Church of Ireland watched a video about our church and then the clergy answered questions. Then we moved on to the Catholic church, the Methodist church, and ended up in the Presbyterian church with the same programme – watched a video about this tradition and asked the questions...To me that's the first step. Building up the confidence of their own traditions, and then we're going to progress on, and I'd like to do...a pilgrimage of the churches. That makes a huge difference actually. **Rector, Connor**

And does the opportunity to be involved in something like a peacemaking initiative, some sort of addressing sectarianism thing appeal to you?

It's not so much an appealing thing as an obligation for me, that when the opportunity arises and you see that there is something to be done, that needs to be done and we have the opportunity to take action or to meet with people I think we should take it, as...our Christian obligation. **Former rector, Belfast**

Above all we need to look at it in educational terms, and help people to realise that some of these attitudes and so on are simply not consistent with following Jesus. **Rector, Dublin and Glendalough**

Respondents often indicated that while they support such initiatives in principle, the priorities of parish life squeeze out the space for either wider reflection on the issues, or implementing specific strategies to address them:

I believe...that I have certain priorities in the ministry, and they take my time. [So peace and reconciliation activities are] not high on the list. We do have occasion to meet together to try to reach out to these people who cause trouble, and say to them, there's other ways. But it's not a regular, set fixture...I am probably fairly narrow in how I see the role of the Christian Church. I think time is short, I think my life is short, and therefore I should be prioritising all the time. And there are so many people outside of God, not knowing Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sin – I think that has to be my priority. Other things are going on around me in the world, in society, and if I can contribute to make it a better place I'll do so, so long as I'm not diverted from my main aim. **Rector, Connor**

You could say yes to loads of these but the problem is having the time to do it. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

I think just generally [my priority is] church attendance...I would probably slightly agree that [sectarianism] does play a part, especially...coming up to the summer, and Drumcree...People home in on it. But it is an issue, and I suppose the fact that we've been told to do this proves that it is an important issue for the hierarchy...[But] at this point it's not one of the most important for me. It is an issue, but I mean I think...where I work there are more important things to deal with at the minute.

And those are..?

Really just to bring people...to faith, because in my view whenever...they have God working in their lives, they're then able to deal better with people who have differences...Definitely it is an issue in the villages, but I think to get people to a point where they can see God's point of view is more important at the minute. **Rector, Down and Dromore**

And some respondents said that they were confused by the apparent inconsistency of how the Church of Ireland approaches sectarianism and other areas of difference:

There seems to be a lack of a strategy within parishes for dealing with the issues of differences [and] a lack of consistency as regards what happens in different dioceses...Even in the manner with which people are sent...for selection, some dioceses would...have conferences beforehand of several people,

and go into it in detail, and other places are just more [ad hoc]. And also there's very little follow-up afterwards, amongst those who are successful or unsuccessful. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

And some respondents were unsure of what peace/addressing sectarianism initiatives actually *are*:

It's hard to say what priority you would like peace and reconciliation to be given when you're not sure what it means. **Lay person, Dublin and Glendalough**

Many respondents stressed their belief that the **key time for Church of Ireland ministry to impact the issues of sectarianism and other forms of difference is the Sunday service**. That is obviously the time when most people come into contact with the church, and it is self-evident (especially because most people either do not want, or simply do not have the time to participate in extra programmatic initiatives) that it should also be the time when the priorities of ministry regarding sectarianism and other forms of difference are enfolded:

How do you feel about the kind of programmatic initiatives that are available?

I think [it is difficult to] get Protestant people to do more than their Sunday morning worship – I could be wrong, but if I organised a course I'm not sure what response I would get. To me my prime slot is Sunday morning. **Rector, Clogher**

Some respondents felt that the issues of sectarianism and difference are not discussed at local parish level, and left for the diocesan structures or General Synod to deal with:

There is a discrepancy between the priority afforded at parish level to peace and reconciliation to that at hierarchical level – there is a meeting of minds on the issue at hierarchical level and it is a topic for active discussion; it doesn't seem to have the same importance at local level. **Lay person, Limerick and Killaloe**

And some respondents acknowledged the connection between sectarianism and other forms of difference, for example:

I think the problem with sectarianism and dealing with difference in all walks of life [is] very similar, and dealing with difference I think almost is a bigger problem than is dealing specifically with sectarianism. People don't realise that. I think if they can't get on with themselves within their own parish, it augurs badly for dealing with major difference between political communities...Whether sectarianism creates an inability to deal with difference, or whether not dealing with difference produces sectarianism is a difficult thing...I would recognise...a lot of the difficulties in parish ministry are certainly aggravated at least because of the political problems of the thirty years, and people's intransigence about things, underlying it all is a sense of insecurity which comes down to the problems in the community. **Rector, Connor**

PEACE/ADDRESSING SECTARIANISM INITIATIVES: PRIORITIES, ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES

- *Theological perspective seems to affect attitudes toward initiatives that aim to build peace and challenge sectarianism.*
- *There is openness to using such initiatives, but other time commitments may inhibit this.*
- *There is a consensus that Sunday services are a key resource of the church and may be the only forum in which most people encounter the SEP.*
- *Theological training of clergy may be limited to the notion that 'preaching the gospel' is an adequate response to sectarianism.*
- *Clergy generally do not feel equipped to facilitate such initiatives, nor are many of them aware of where outside facilitation could be found.*
- *Awareness and experience of such initiatives is somewhat limited; some respondents feel such initiatives are unnecessary or inappropriate.*
- *There are similar philosophical challenges as with inter-church activity; perhaps especially the view that these initiatives 'preach only to the converted'.*
- *There is some concern about engagement with Roman Catholic structures, usually centred on the perception that one side will seek to control the process.*
- *Some respondents acknowledged that other forms of difference are similar to sectarianism and may be approached in similar ways.*