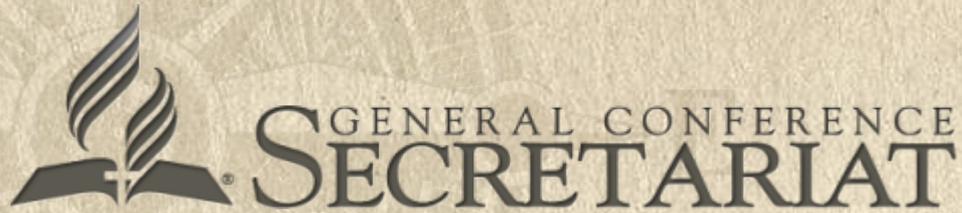


# Nurture & Retention

*Preventing the losses;  
reclaiming the lost*

David Trim, Ph.D.  
Director of Archives, Statistics, and Research





# Nurture & Retention

Having seen the reasons why “they didn’t leave”, today we will look at **why they did** — which implicitly tells us how to prevent many of them from leaving.



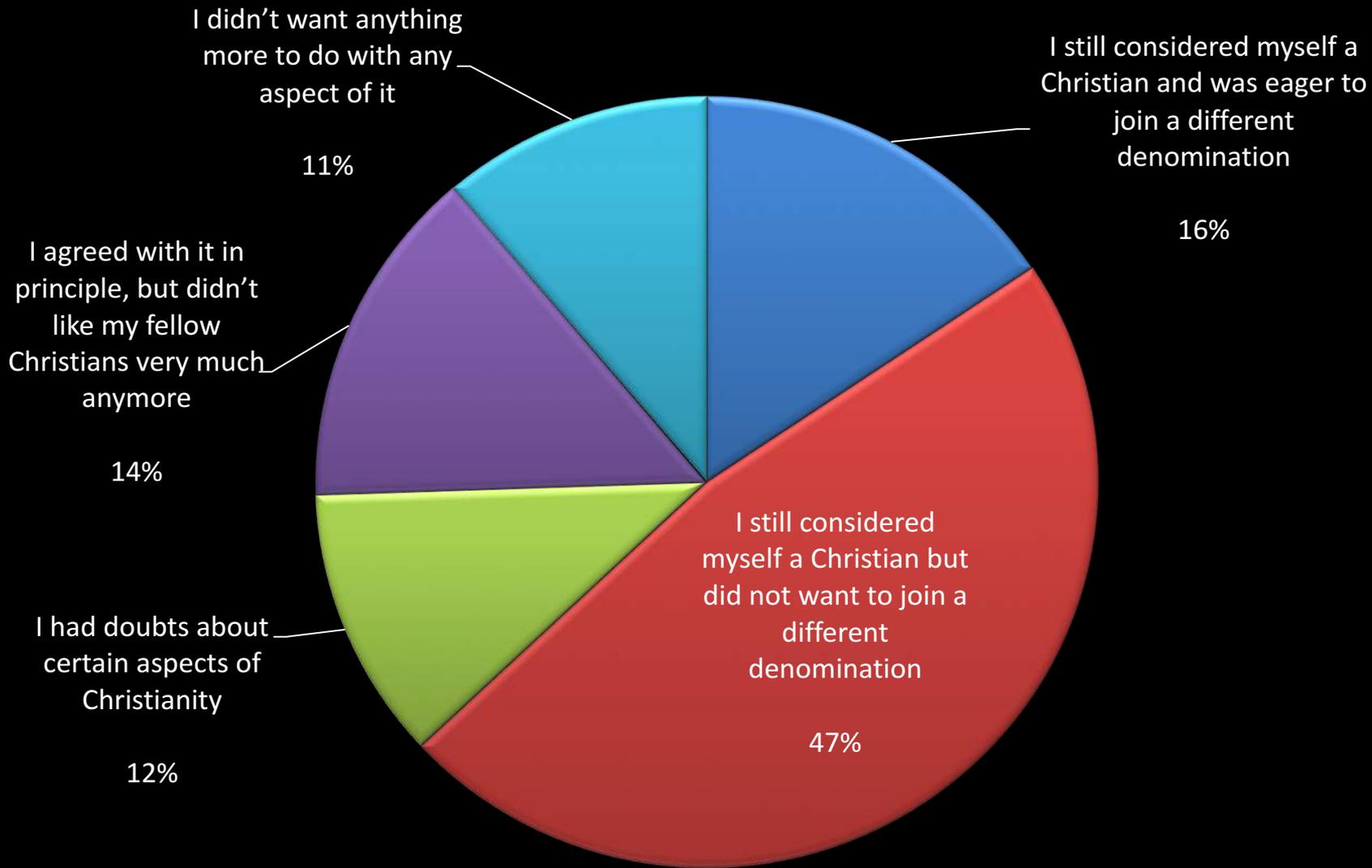


# *Nurture* & Retention

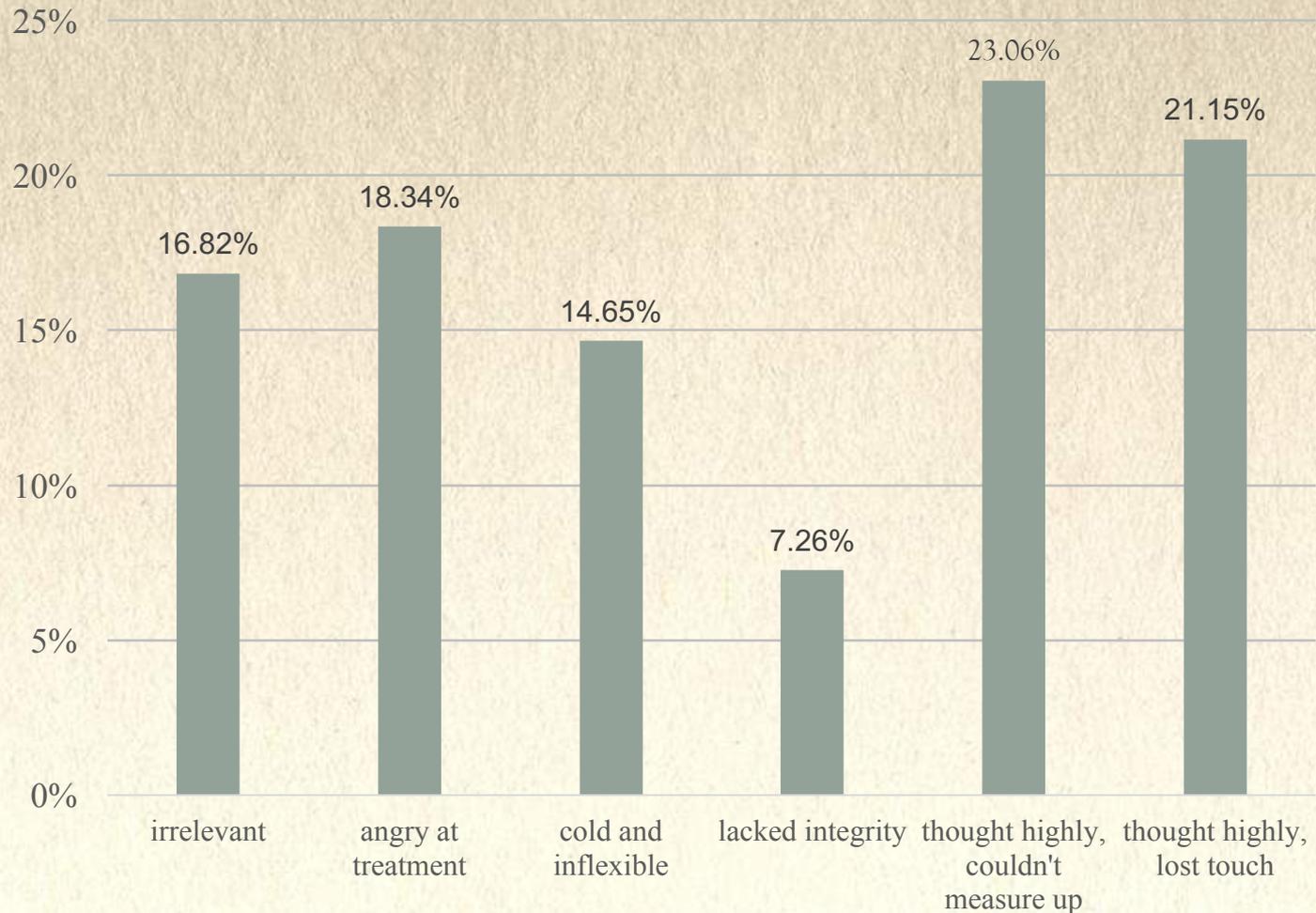
Research also offers insights on how to reconnect and reclaim.



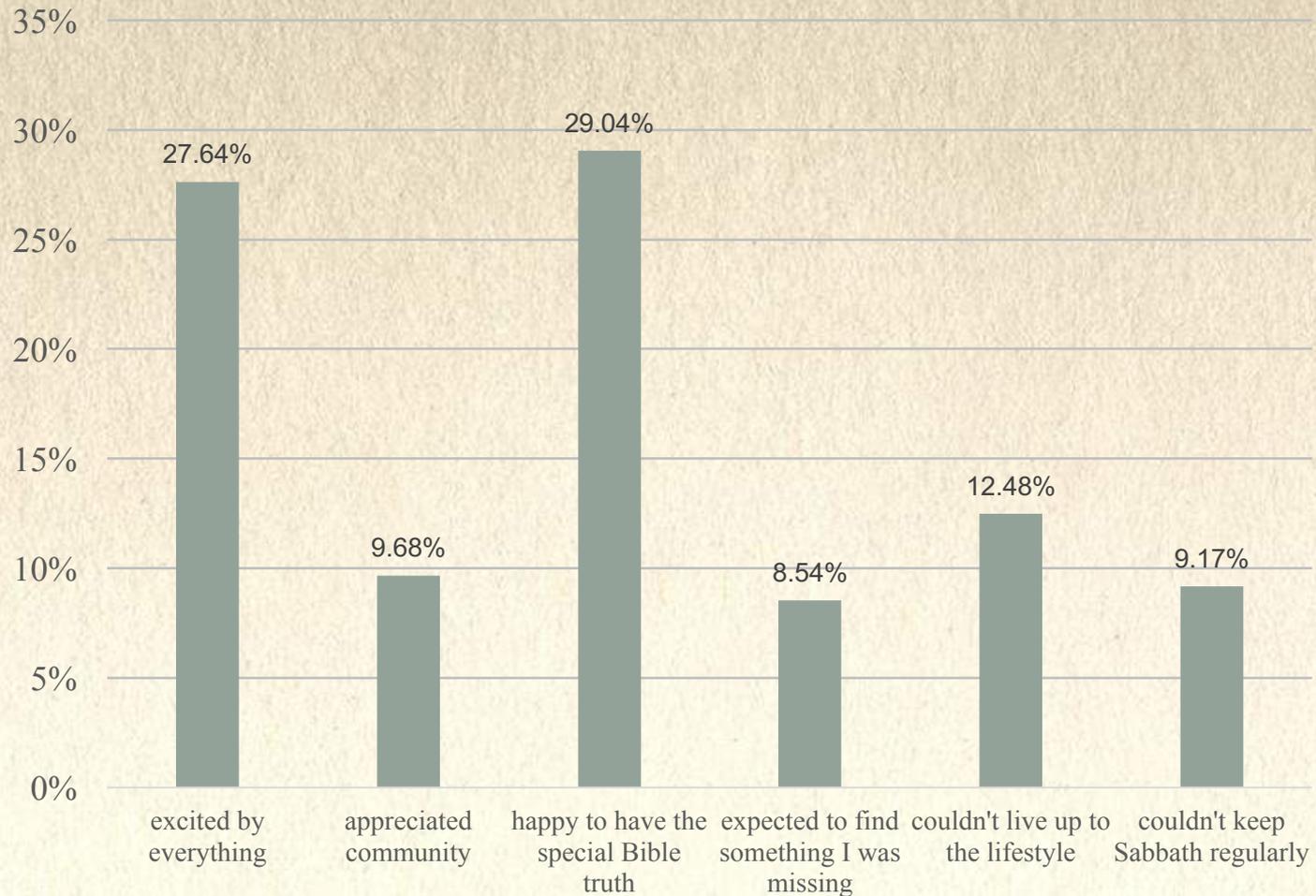
# What did you think of Christianity at the time you left the Adventist church?



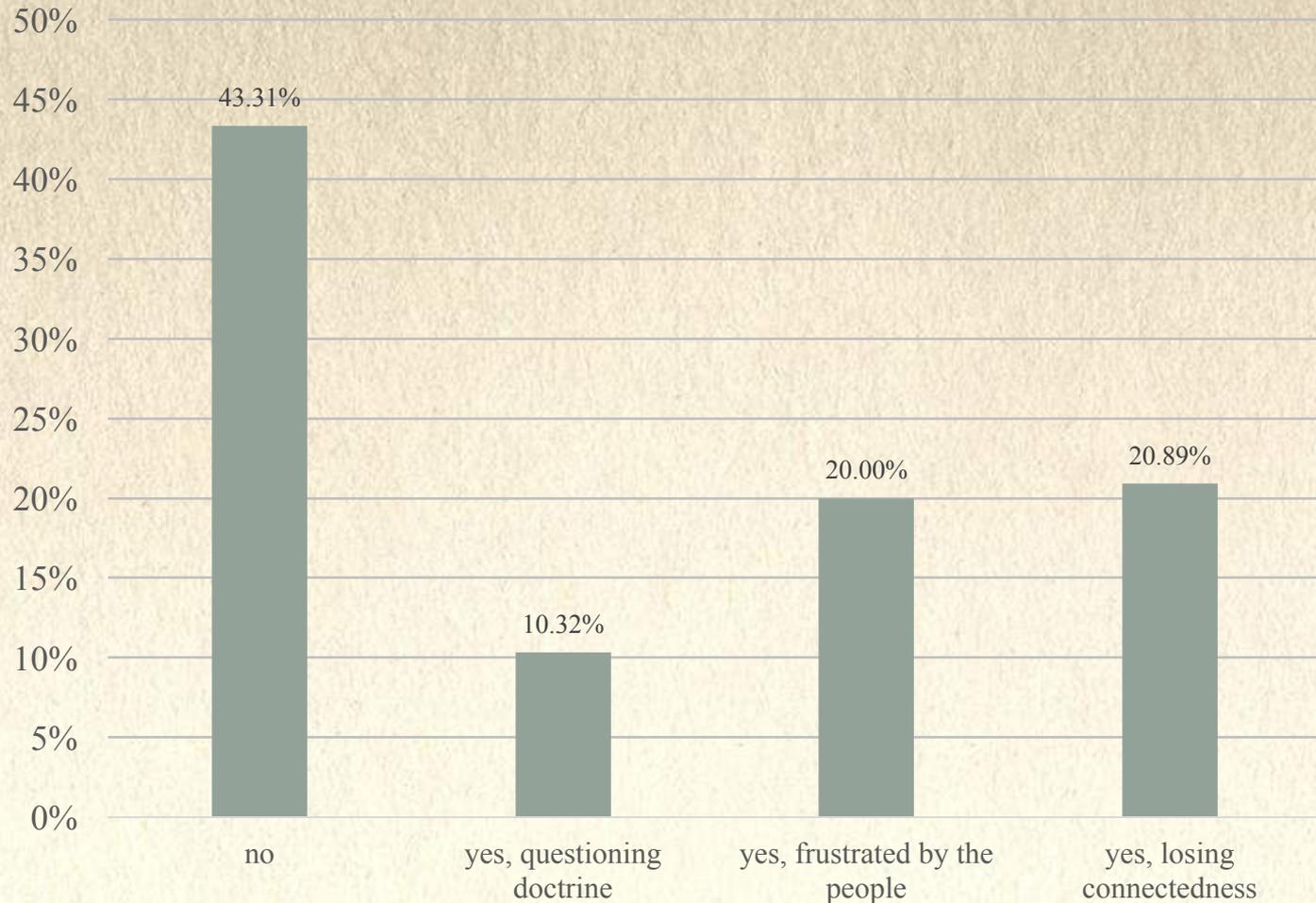
# View of Adventist Church at Departure



# View of Adventist Church: first 5 Years after Baptism



# Change in View of Adventist Church, 5 Years before leaving?



Again, we're seeing why people *didn't* leave rather than why they did...

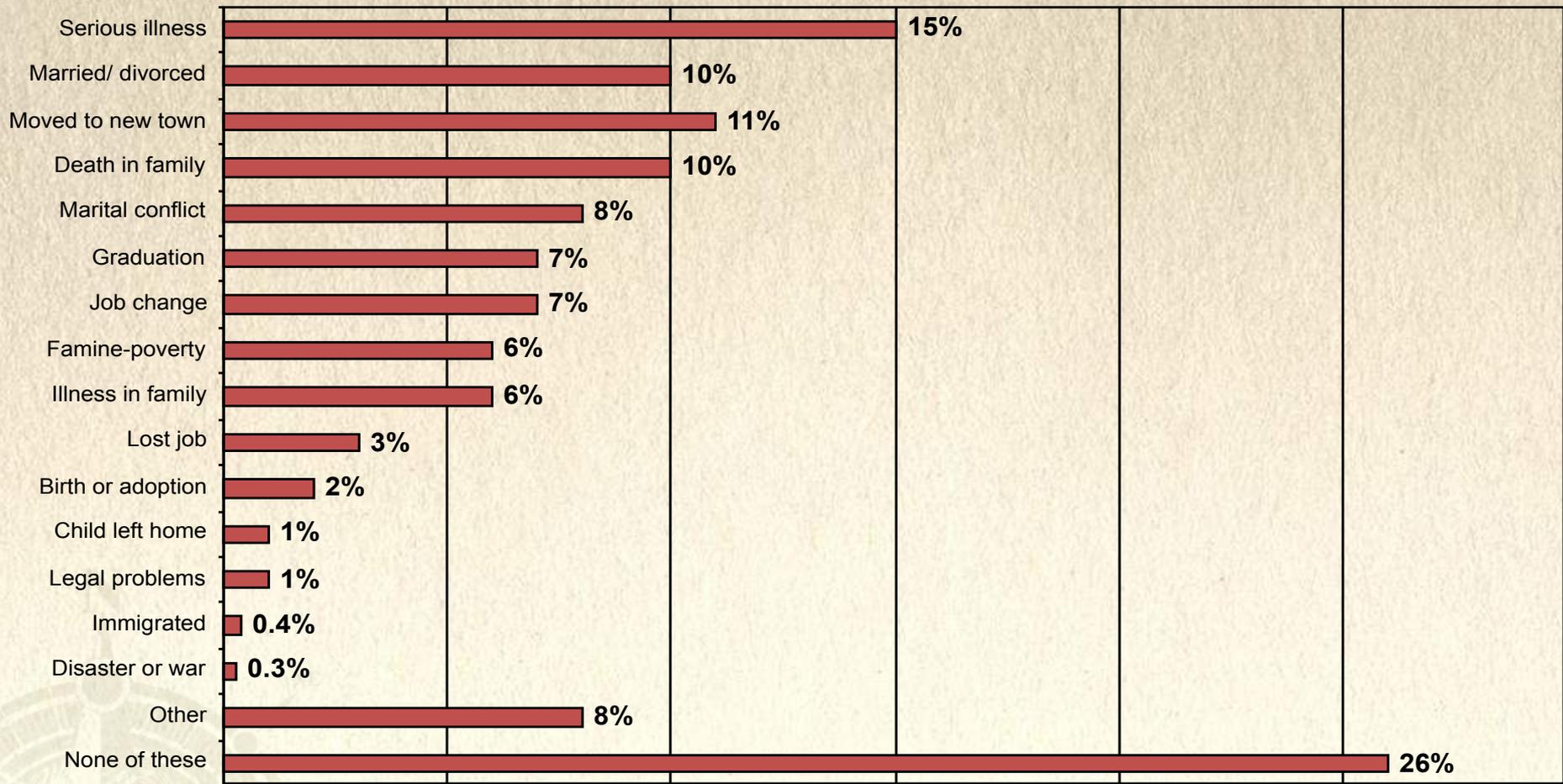
So what *are* the reasons for departure?

*And what can we do about it??*

# Nurture & Retention

Creating caring  
and welcoming  
church communities

# Life Events in the Year Leading Up to Decision to Stop Attending



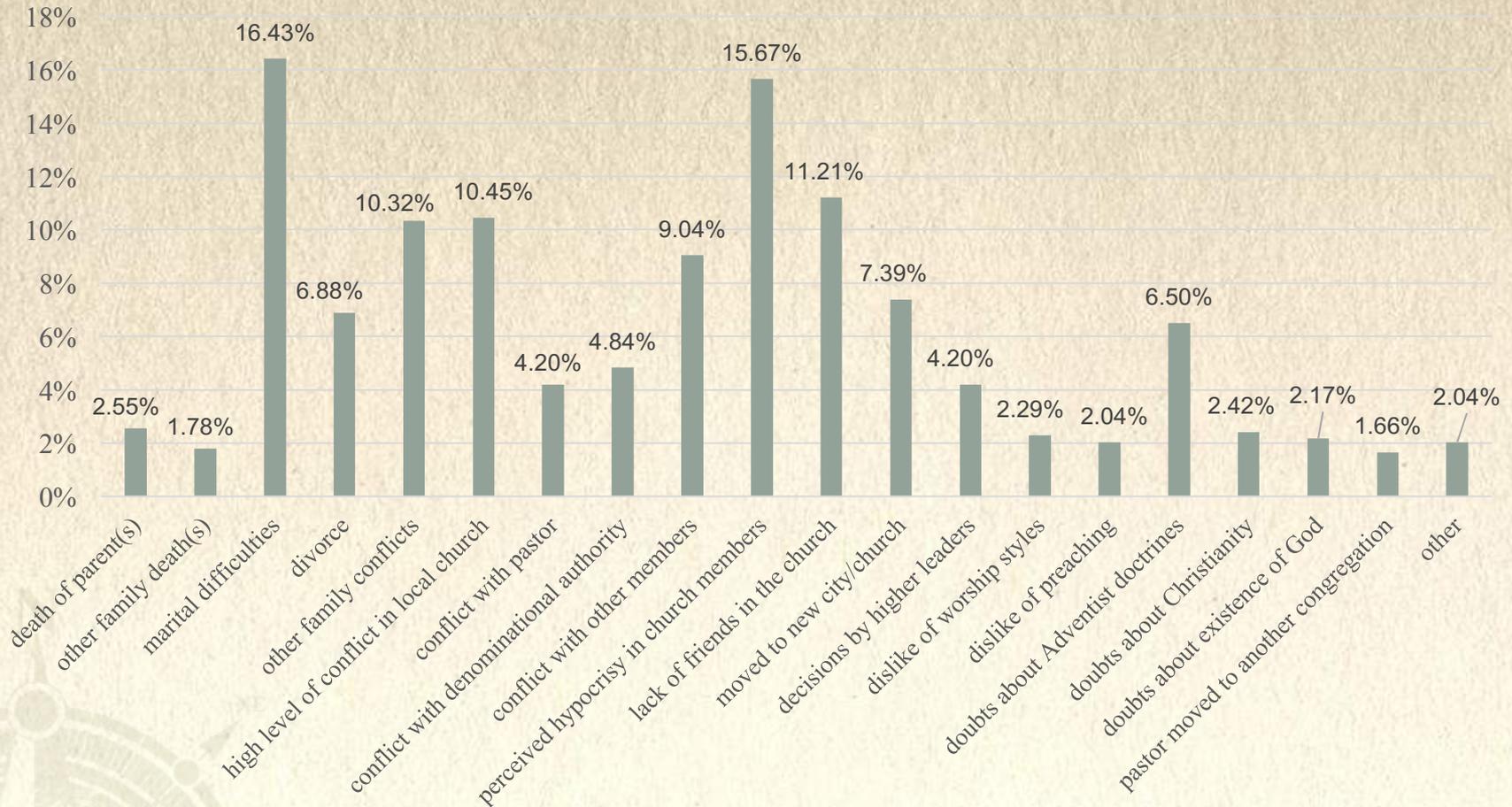
# Most Important Reasons Why Decided to Stop Attending

- 28% No big issue; I just drifted away
- 25% Lack of compassion for the hurting
- 19% Moral failure on my part
- 18% I did not fit in
- 14% Too much focus on minor issues
- 13% Conflict in the congregation
- 12% Moral failures of members
- 11% Moral failures of leaders
- 11% Pressure from family or friends
- 10% Race, ethnic or tribal issues

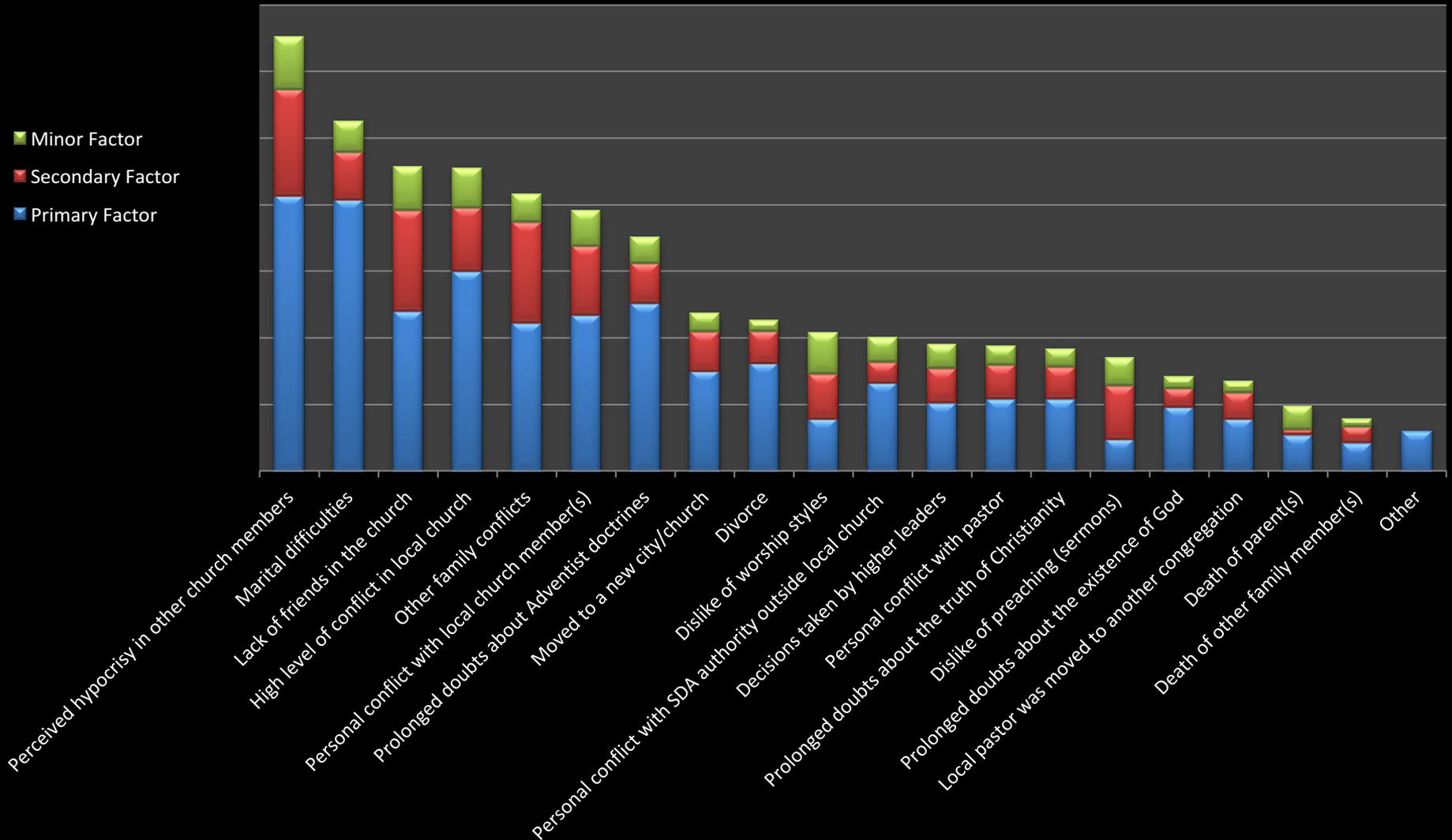
# Most Important Reasons Why Decided to Stop Attending

- 8% Few members of my age group
- 7% Legalistic attitudes
- 6% Pastor was dictatorial
- 6% Church did not do much to help the poor
- 5% I did not believe some doctrines
- 5% Unrealistic demands on members
- 4% Low standards
- 3% The worship was not very spiritual
- 3% Too much asking for money
- 2% Church voted to drop me from membership
- 1% Apostate ideas were promoted

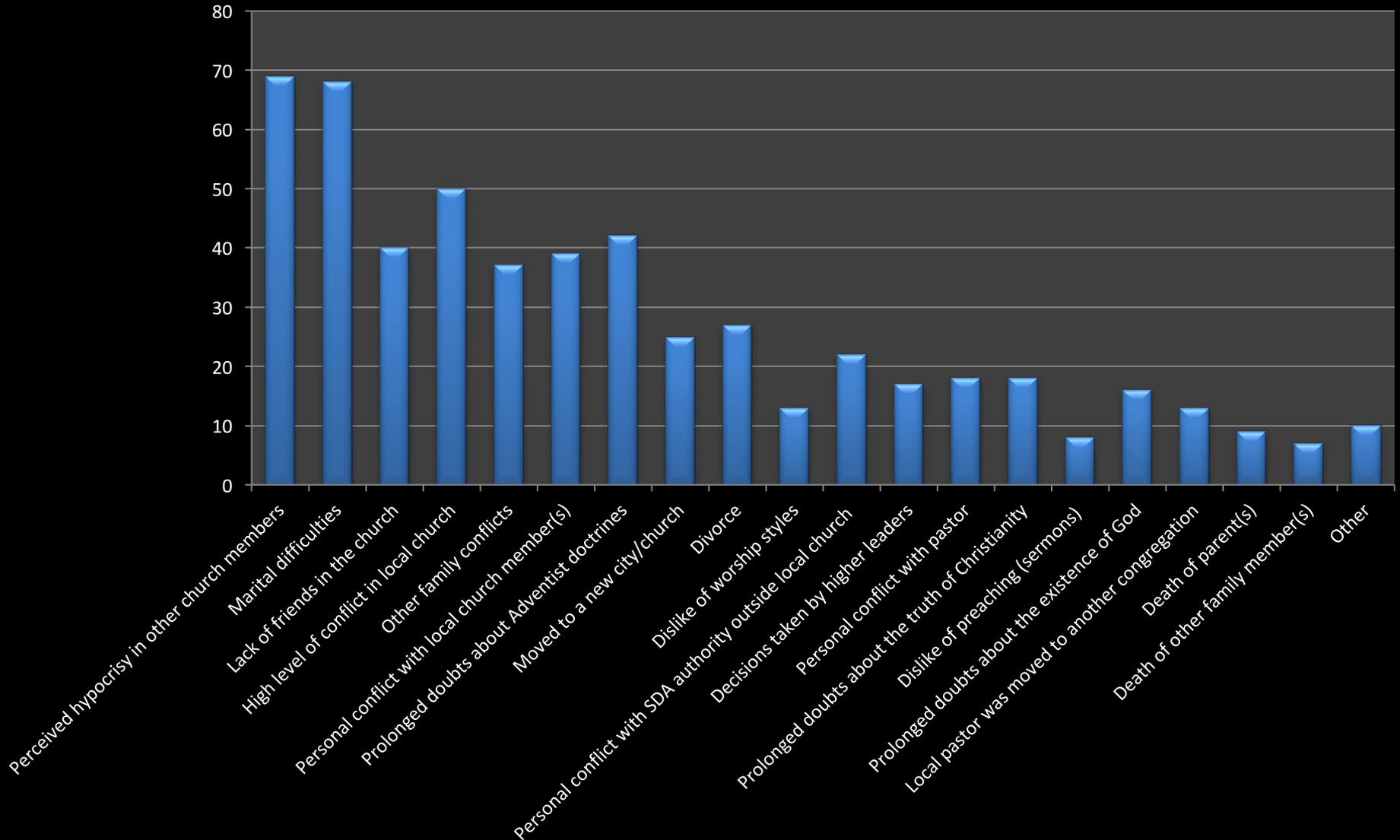
# Primary Triggers for Departure



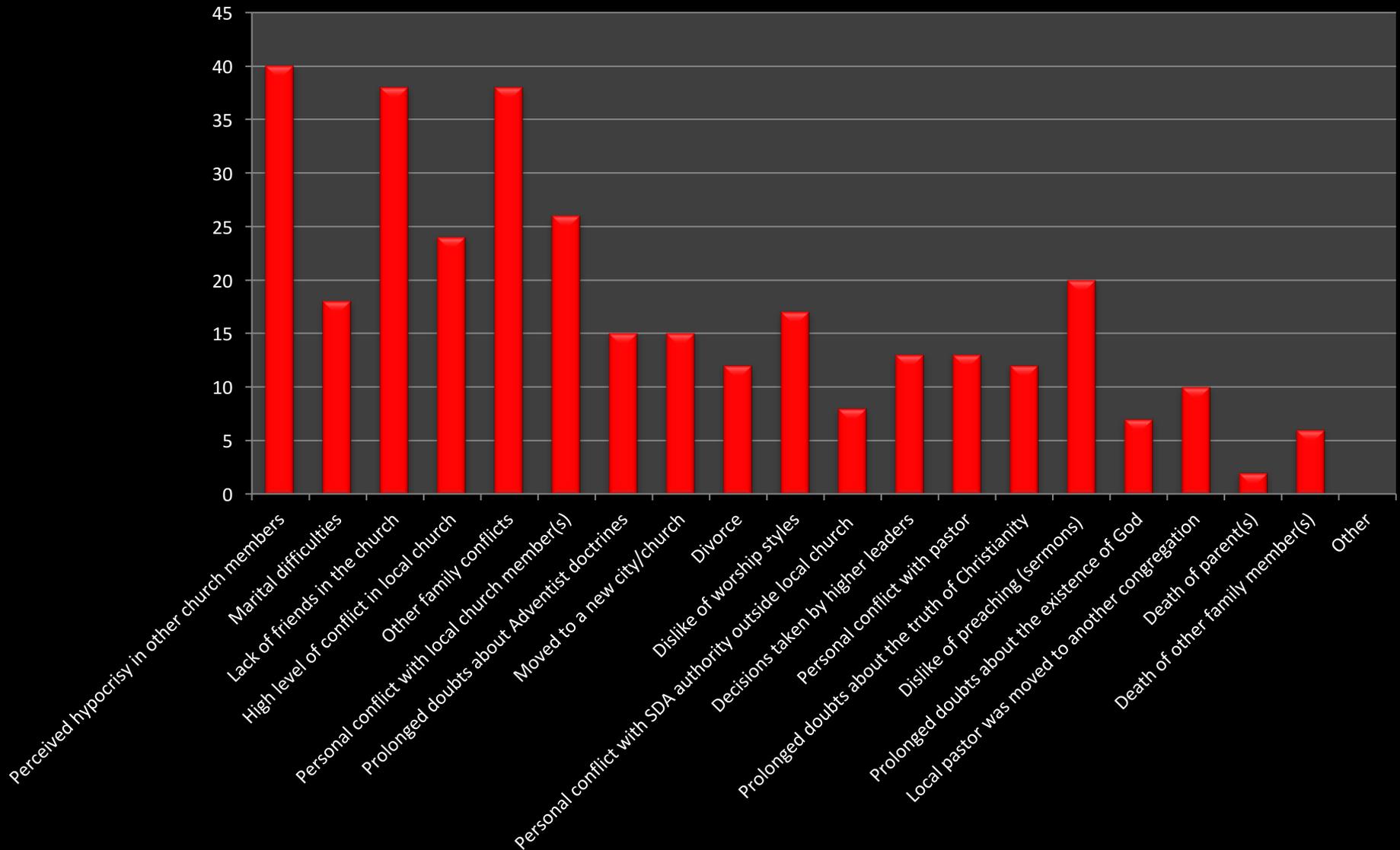
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members



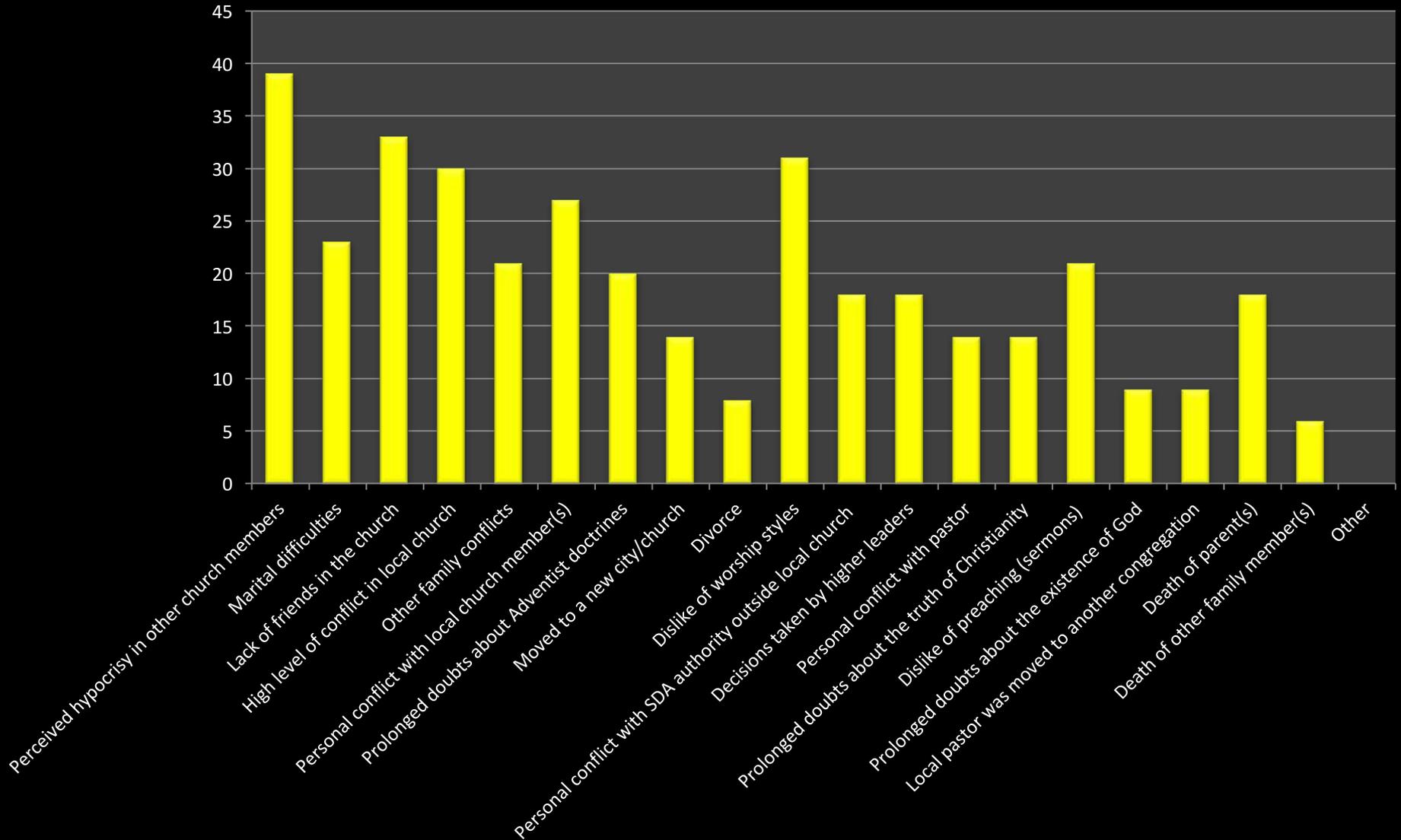
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Primary



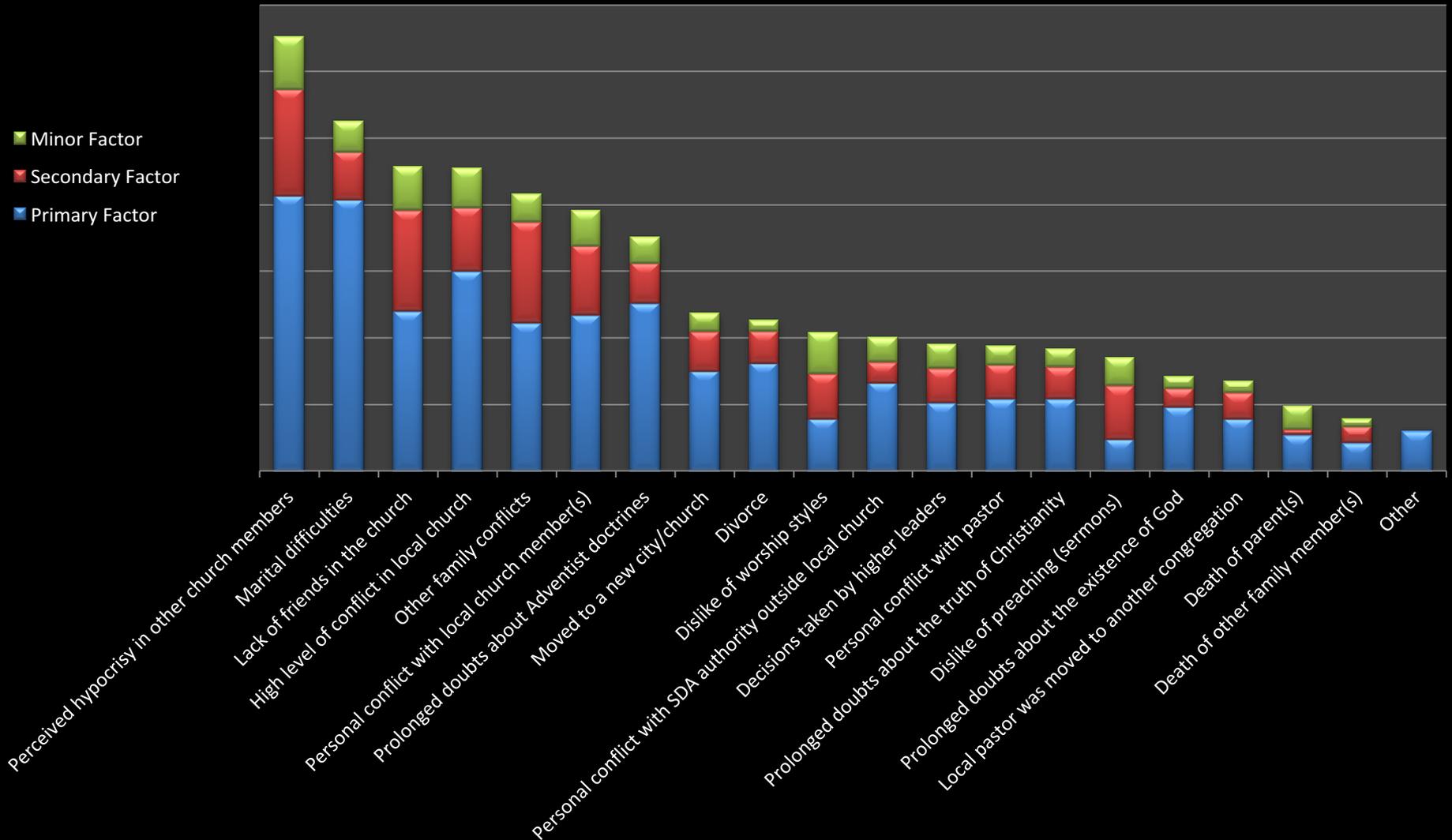
## What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Secondary



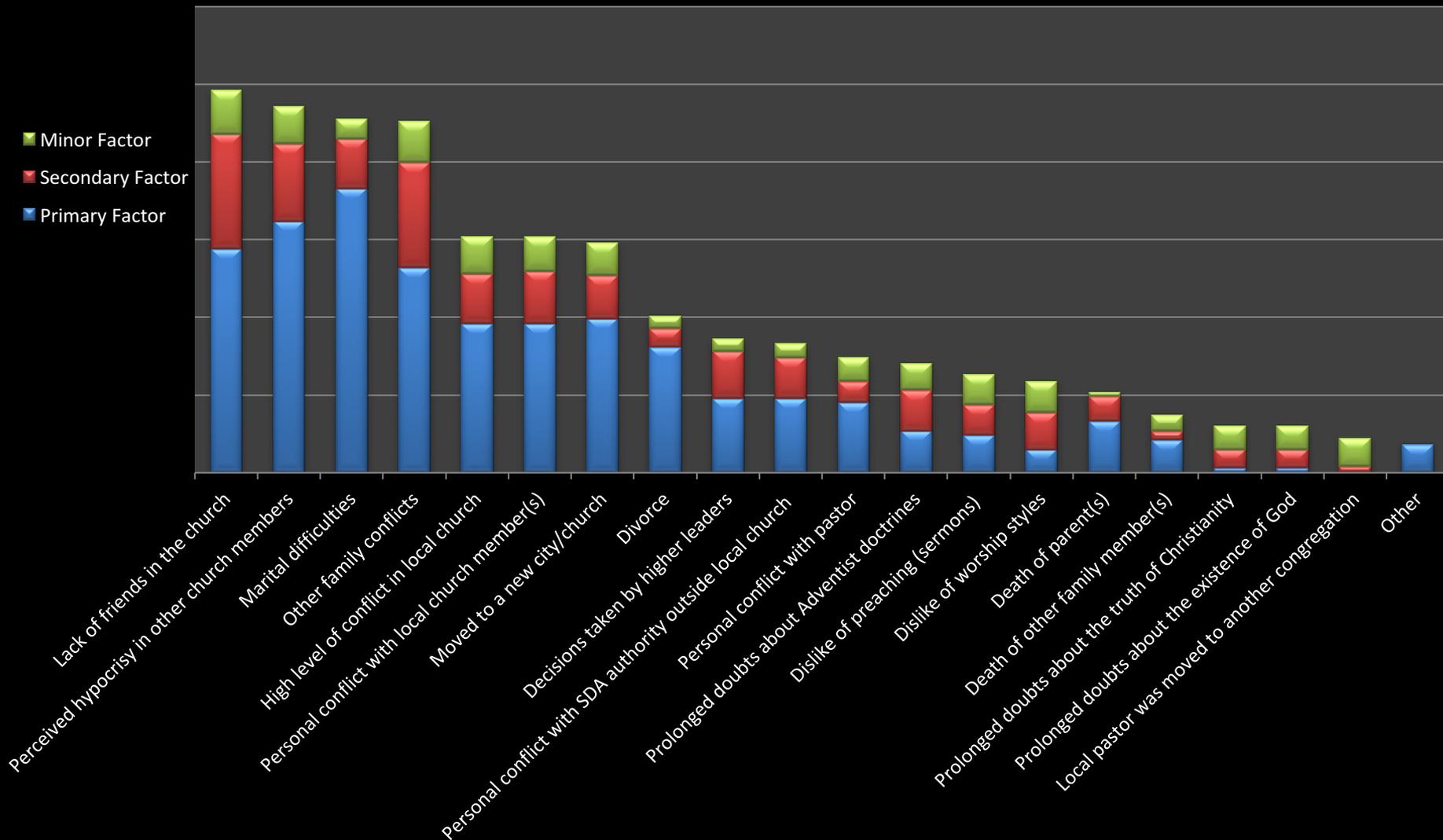
## What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members – Minor Factor



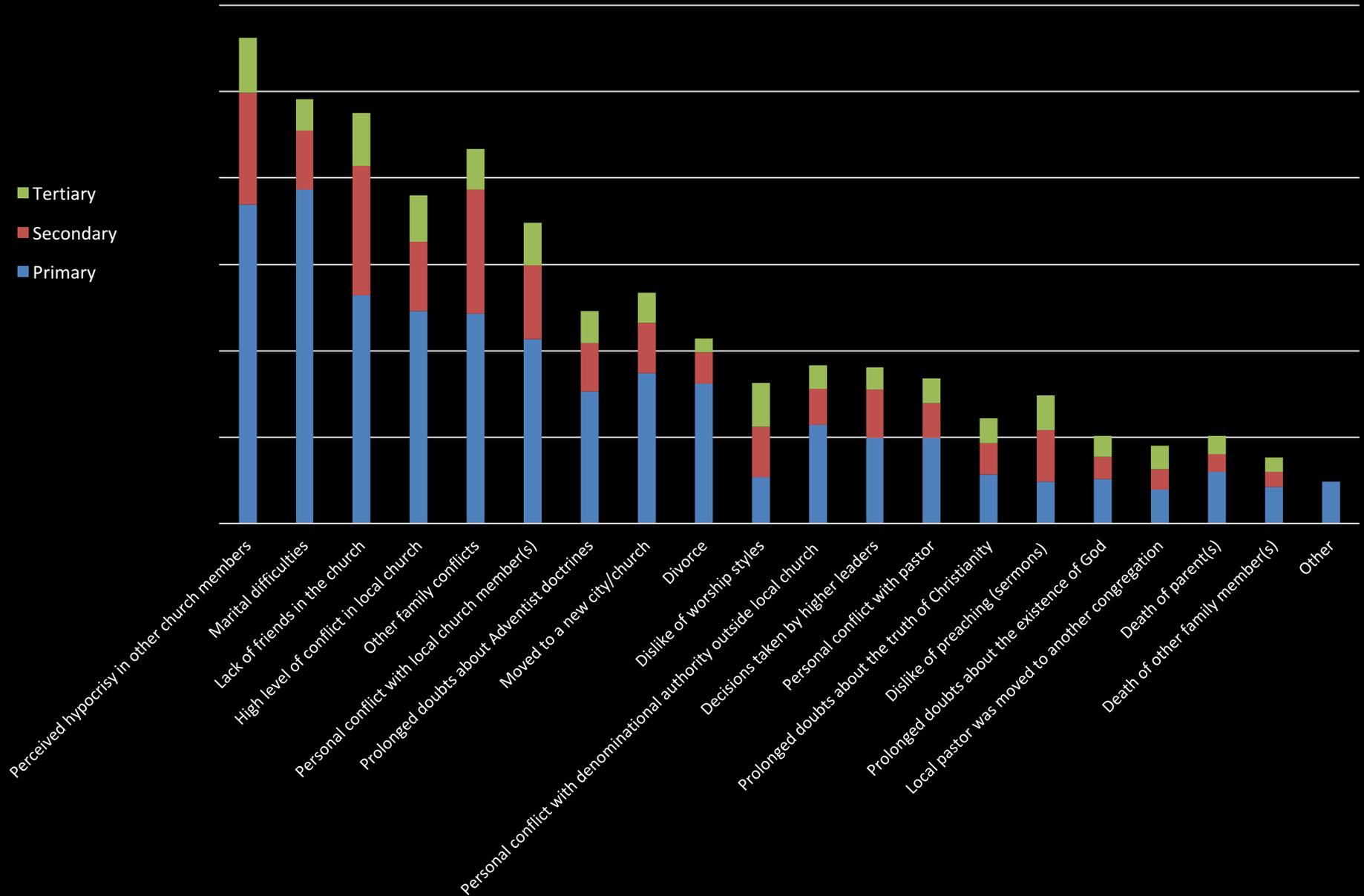
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Former Members



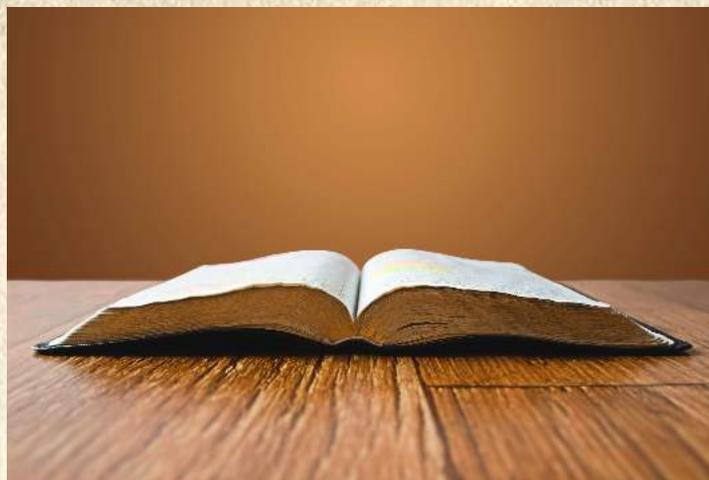
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Returned Members



# What event triggered your decision to leave? (weighted) (all survey 2)

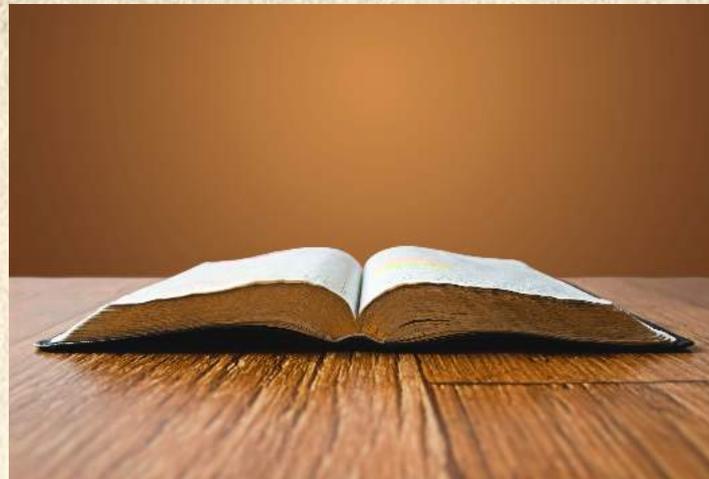


It's not about doctrines



*It's about relationships*

It's not about doctrines

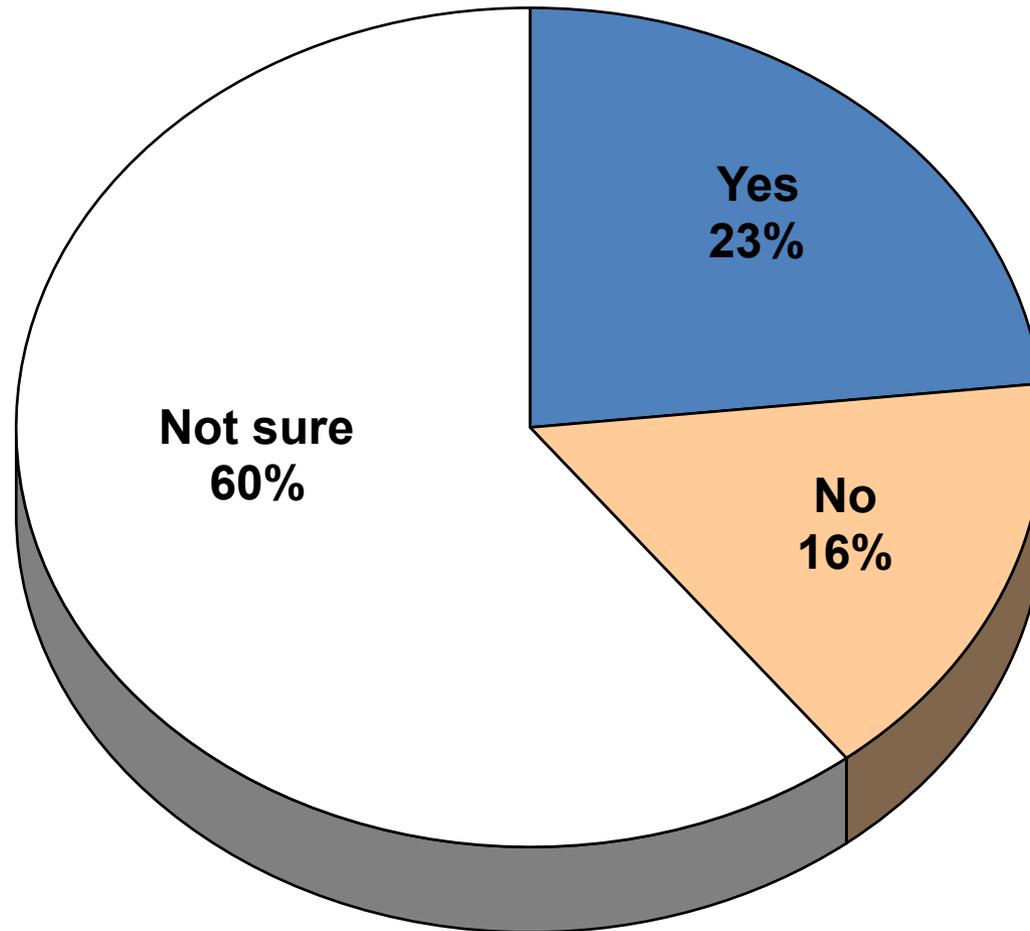


*And about caring for people*

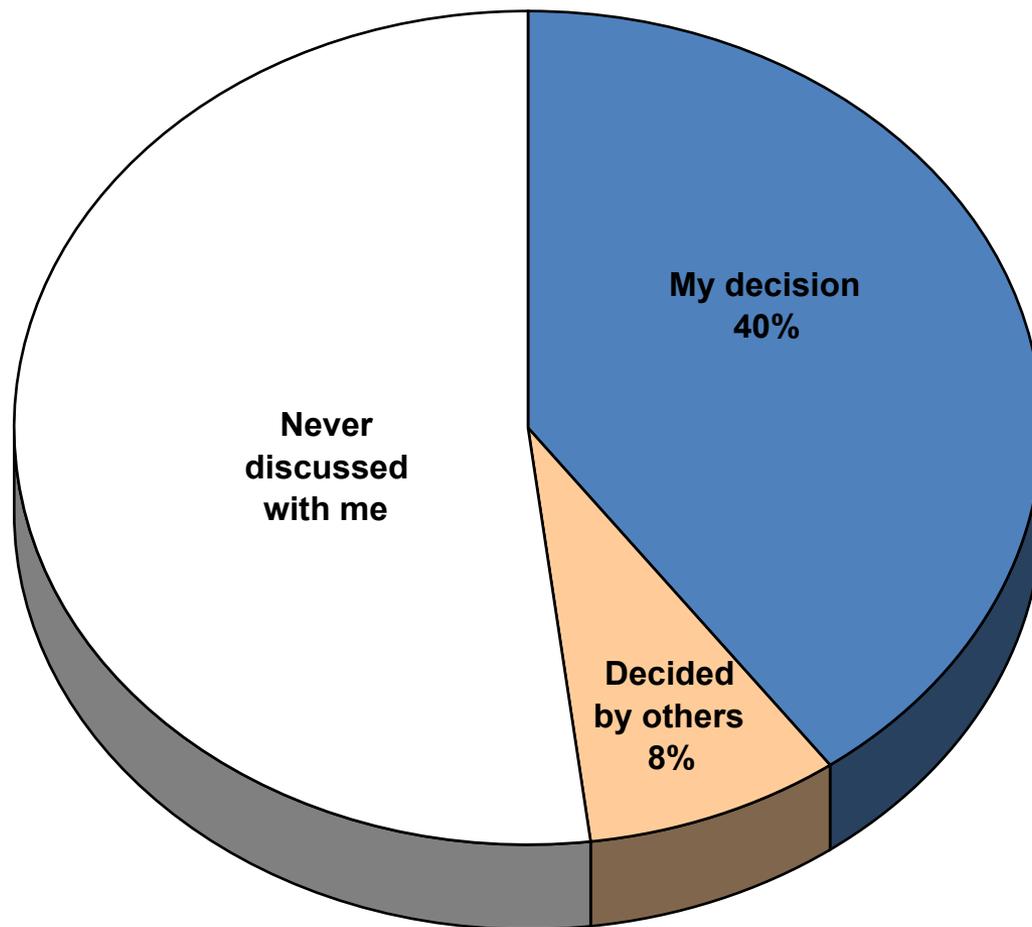
# What Happened When They Stopped Attending Church

- 40% No one contacted me
- 19% A church member came to visit me
- 17% A local elder came to visit me
- 15% A local church member contacted me by phone
- 10% An Adventist relative made contact
- 9% The pastor came to visit me
- 6% The pastor contacted me by phone or Email
- 3% An Adventist, not a local member contacted me
- 2% I received a letter in the mail
- 0.3% Printed material was mailed to me

# Is your name still on the membership list?



# Did you decide to withdraw or were you expelled from the church?



# Pastors need to be equipped and trained — & then they train elders & church- members

*In light of these statistics that show pastors engage very little with members who stop attending church, it is not surprising to find that 53% of global pastors say they never received training in nurturing and retaining members in their first degrees; of pastors with a Masters degree (53%) the same proportion say that they received no training in these areas in their postgraduate study.*

# Stopping the haemorrhage, healing the wounded

Creating caring  
and welcoming  
church communities



GENERAL CONFERENCE  
SECRETARIAT

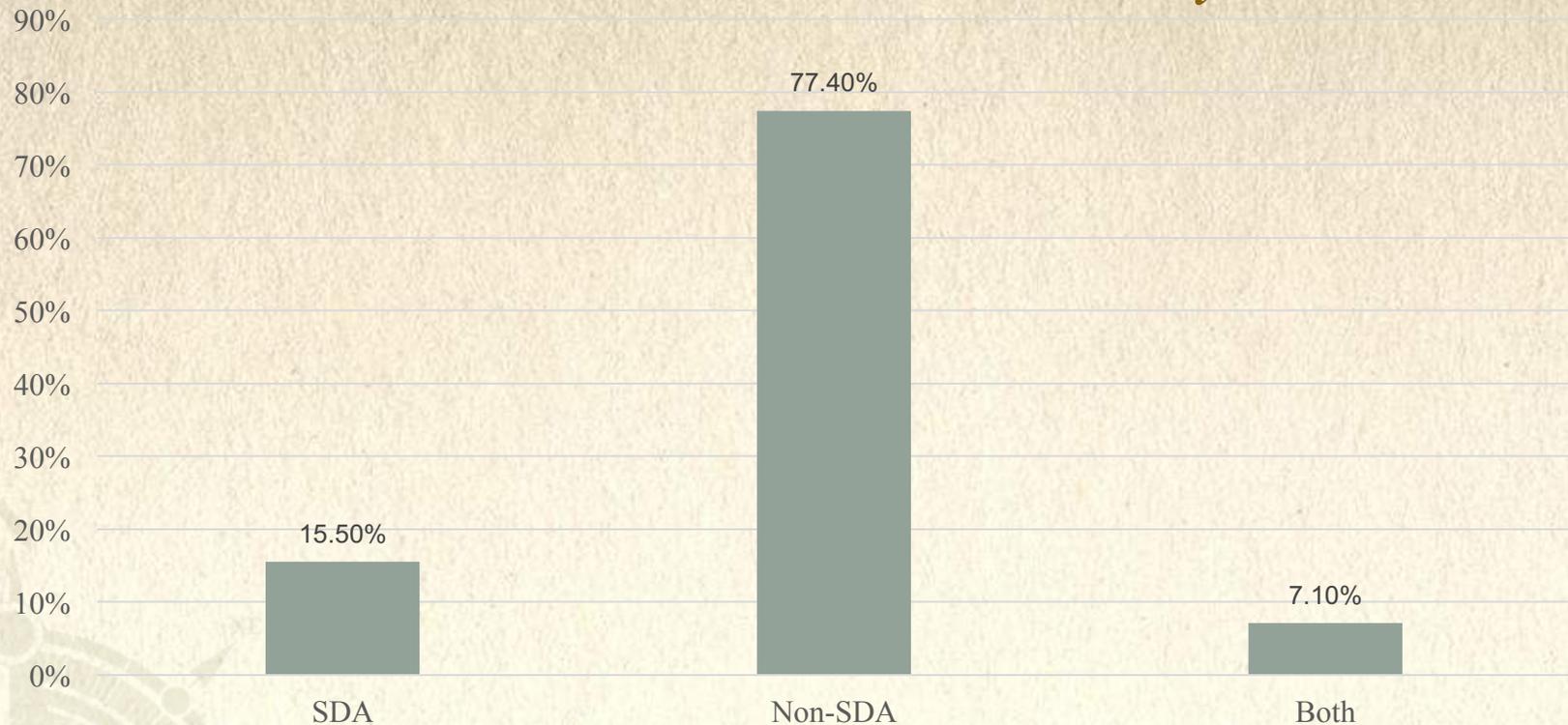
*Nurture* &  
Retention

*Preventive measures against  
member loss*



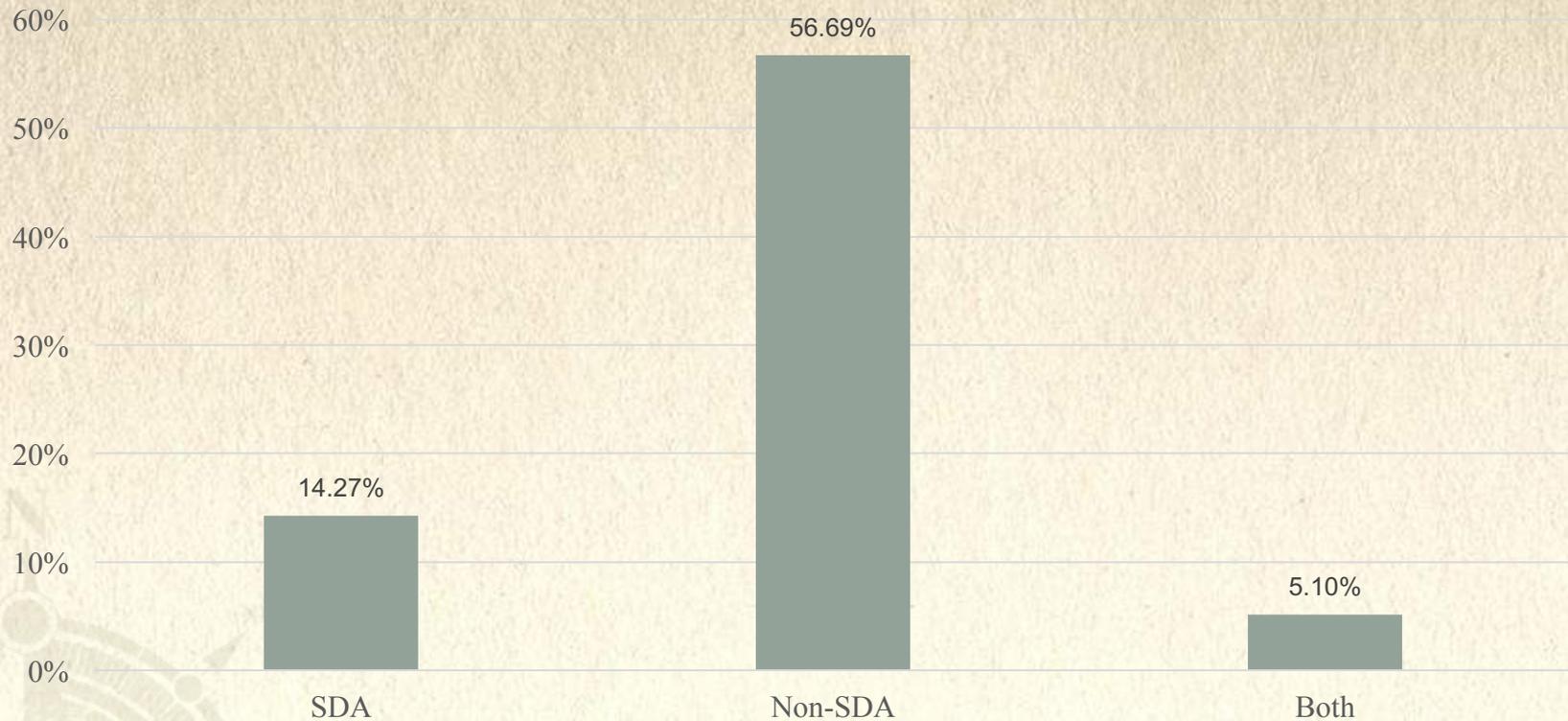
# Ex-Members: Attended Primary (Elementary) School

*Current Members = 46% Attended an SDA Primary School*



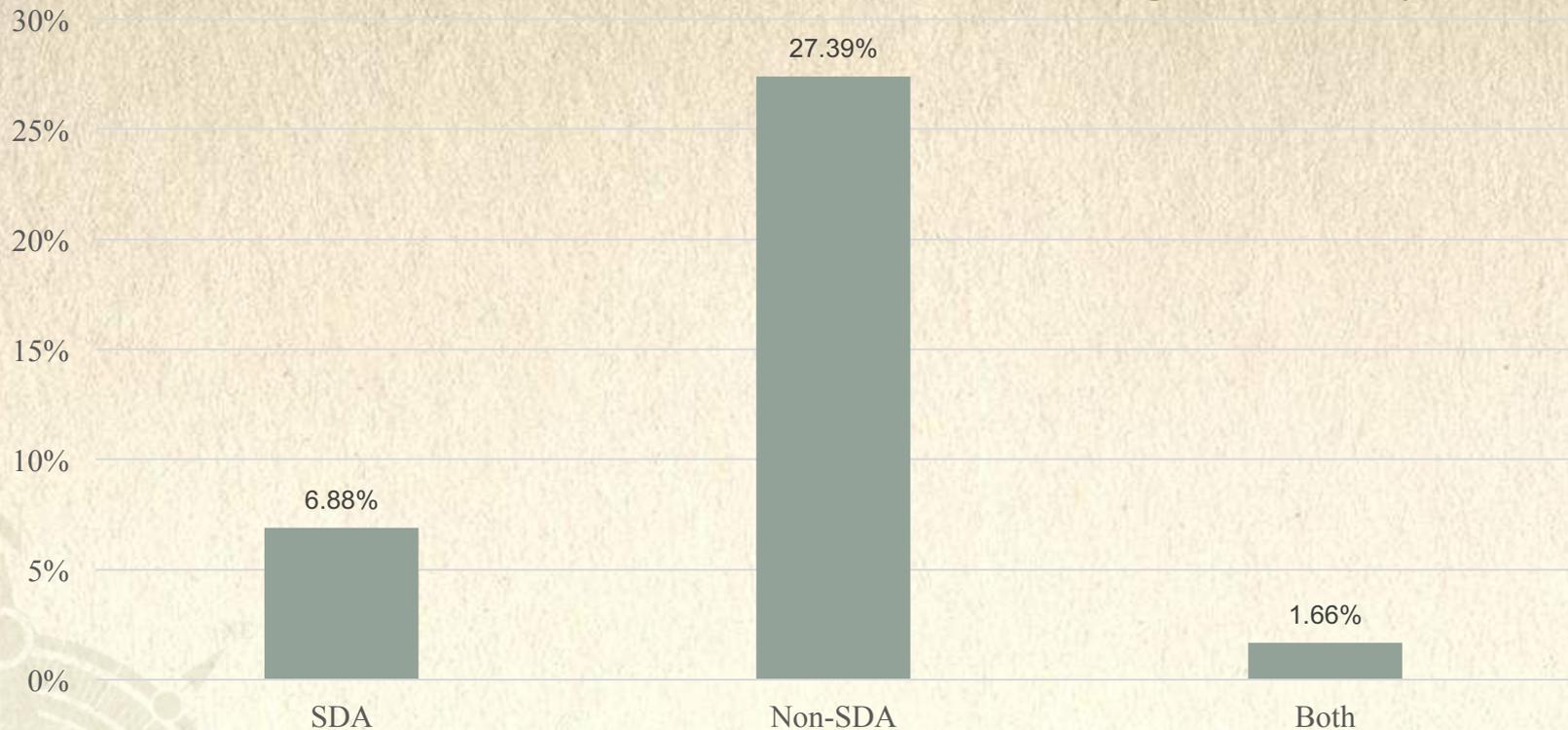
# Ex-Members: Attended Secondary (High) School

*Current Members = 35% Attended an SDA Secondary School*



# Ex-Members: Attended college or university (tertiary/further/higher)

*Current Members = 13% Attended an SDA College/University*

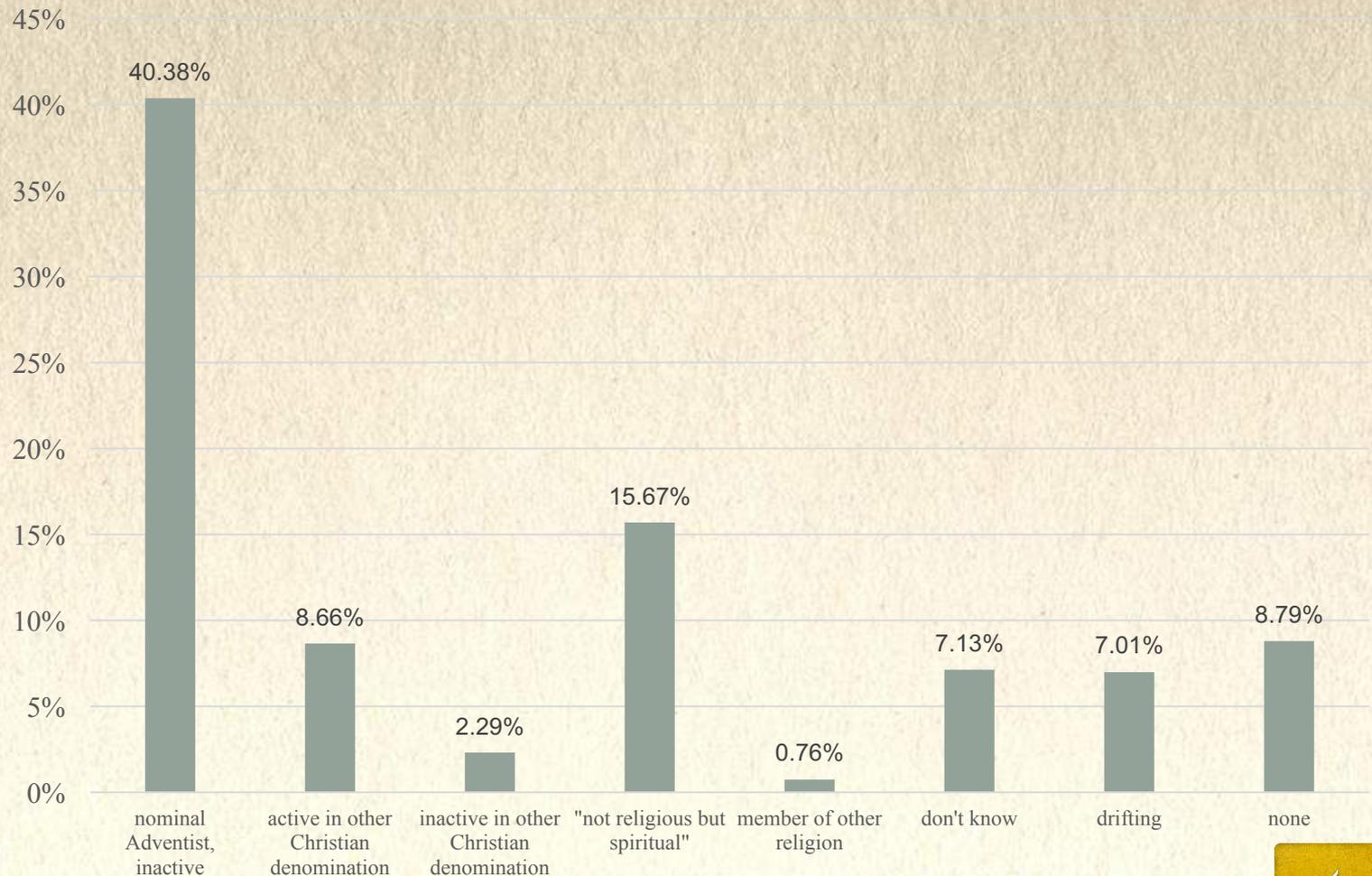


# Nurture & Retention

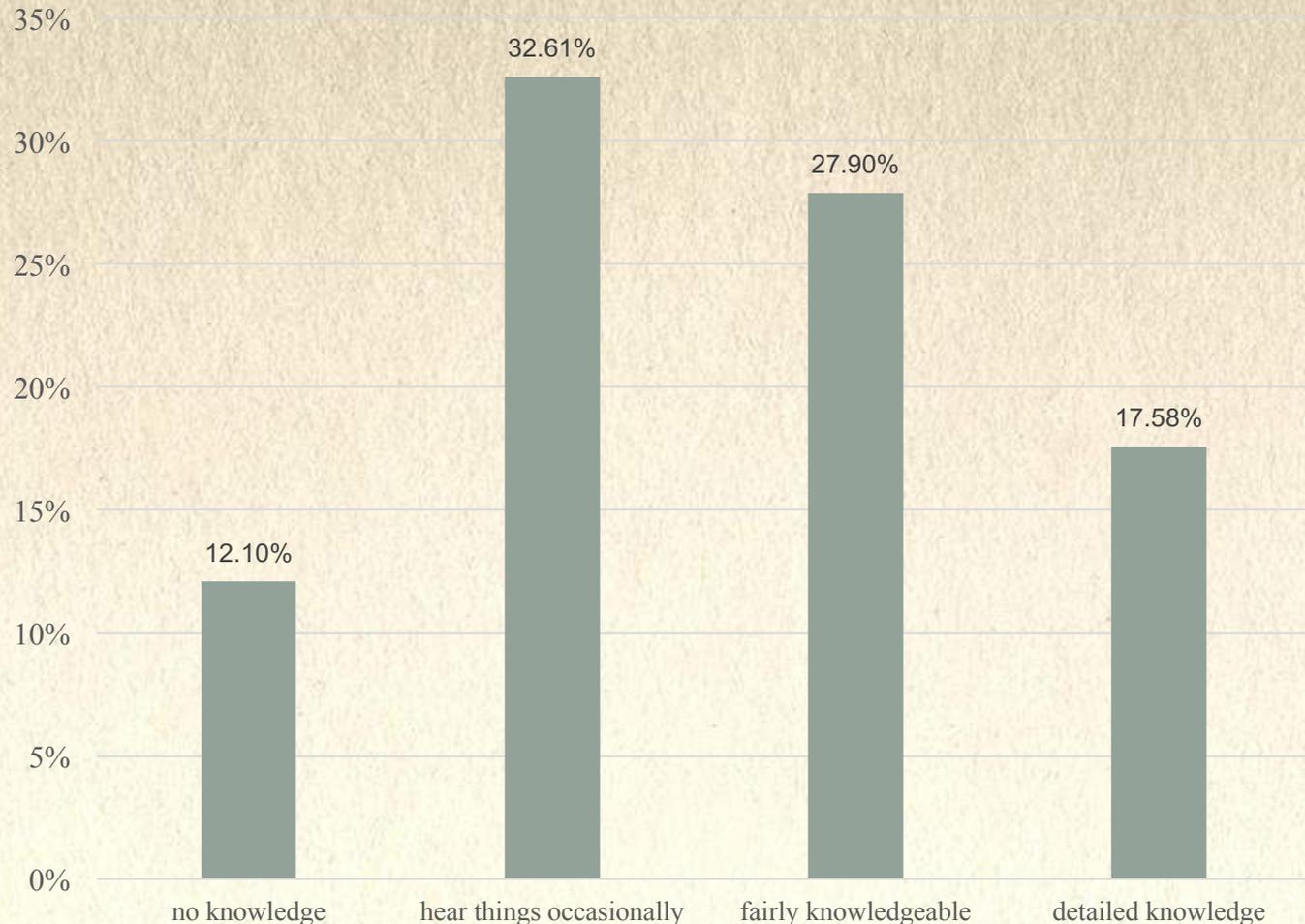
*Reconnecting & reclaiming for the  
kingdom*

Now we know why they left;  
might they come back?

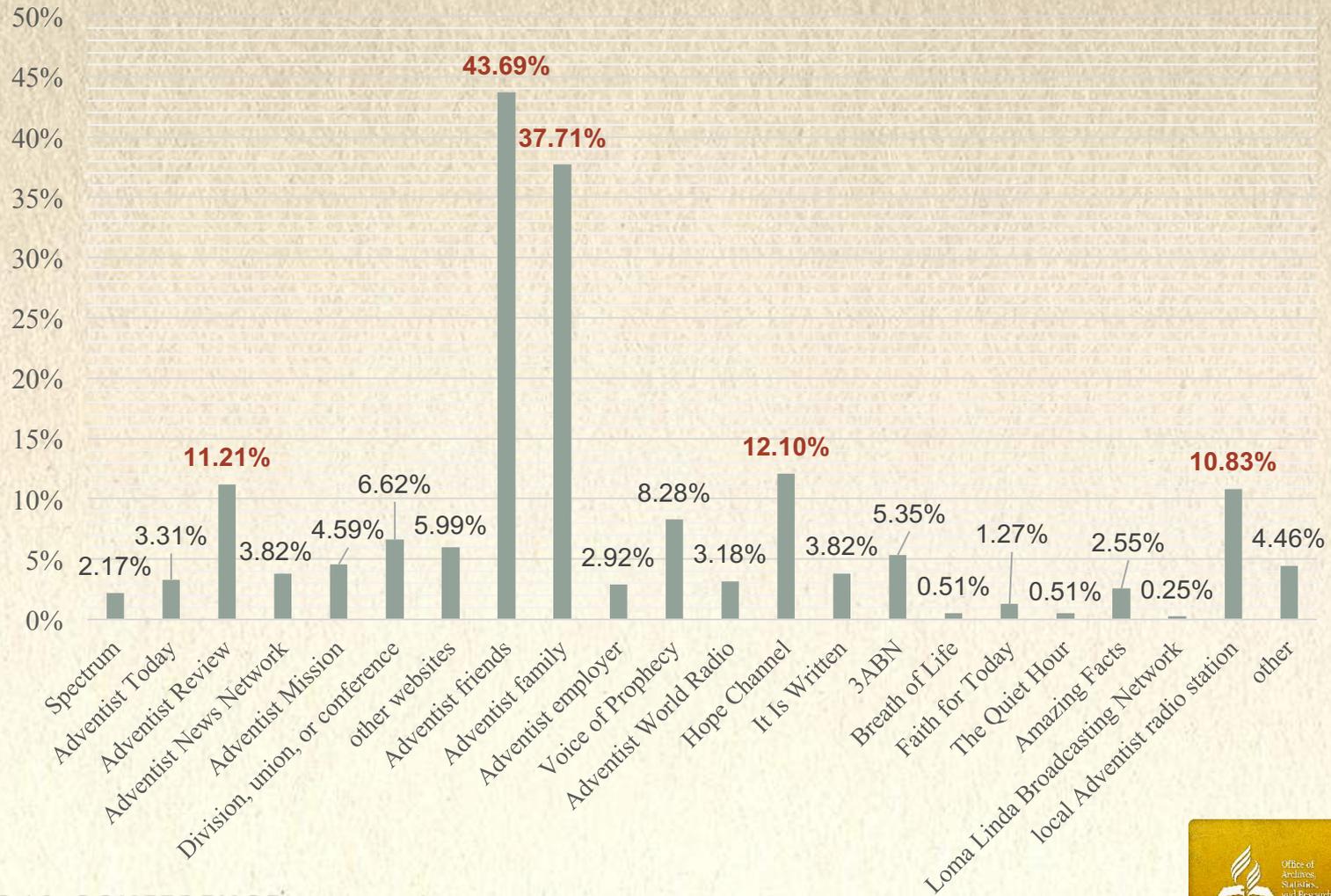
# Religious Affiliation After Stopped Attending Church



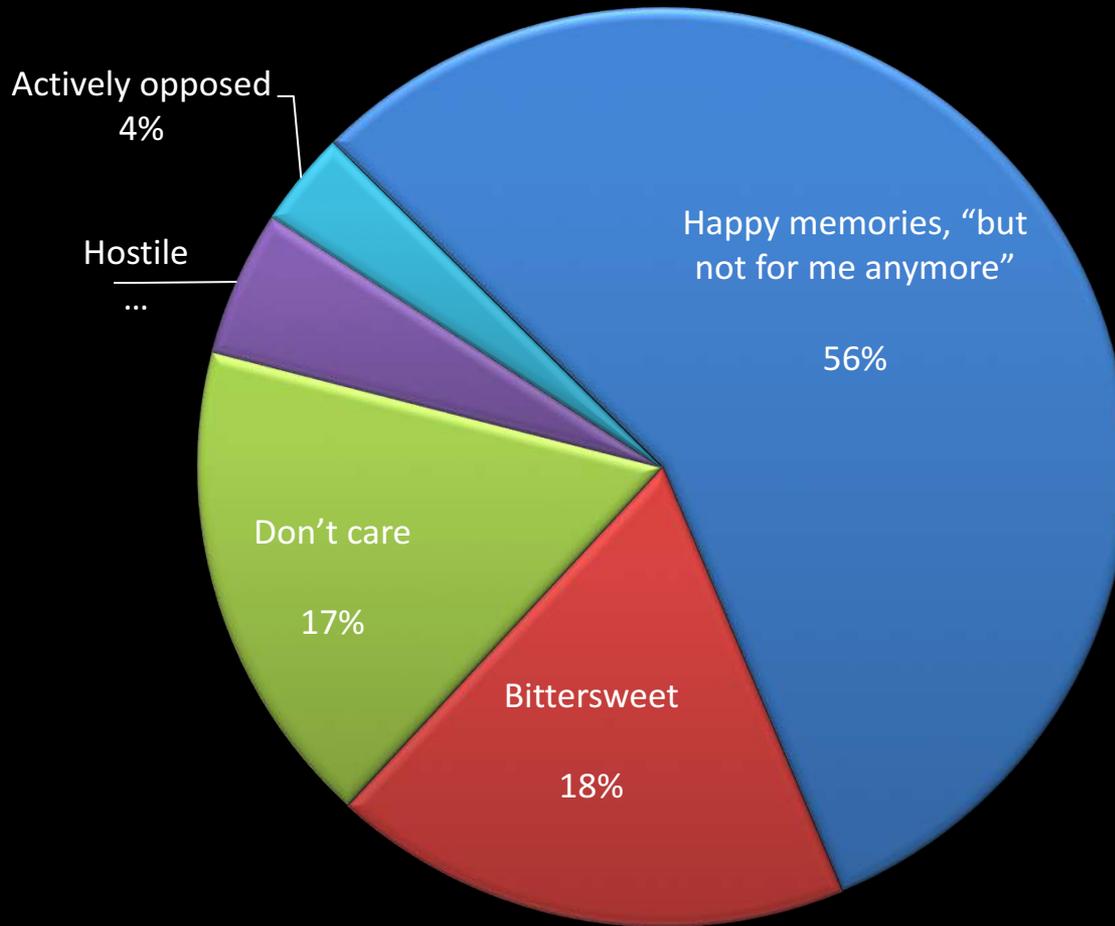
# Awareness of Developments in Adventism



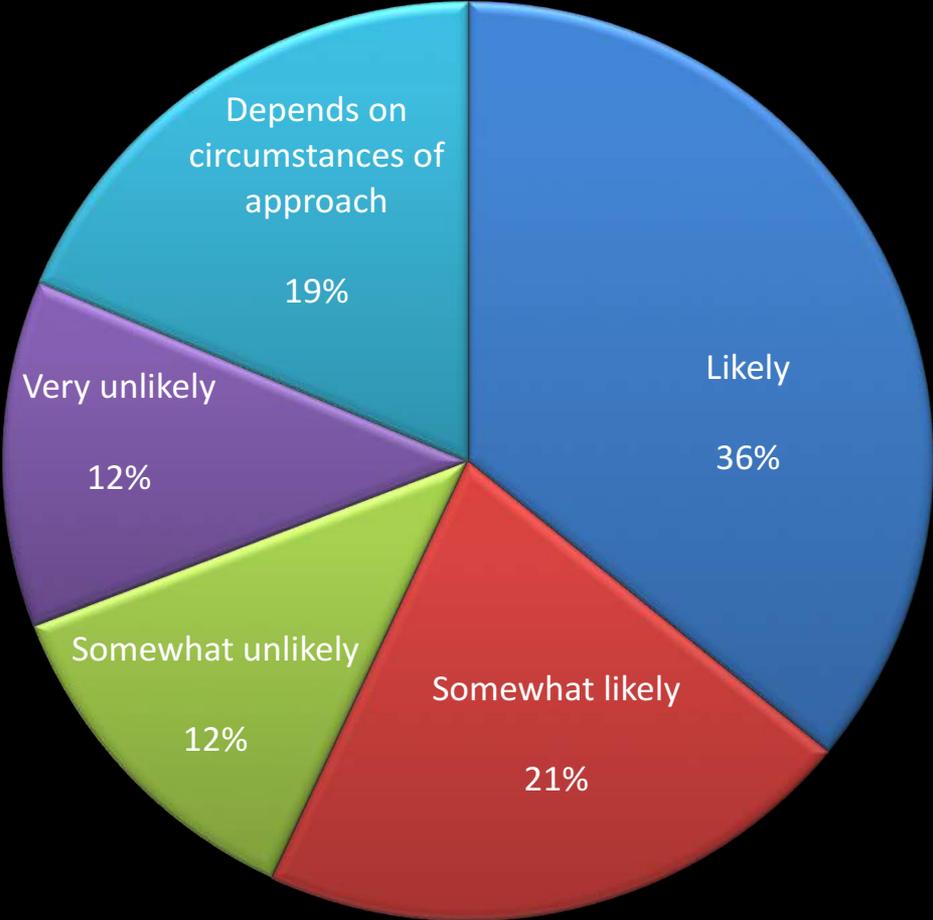
# Sources of Information



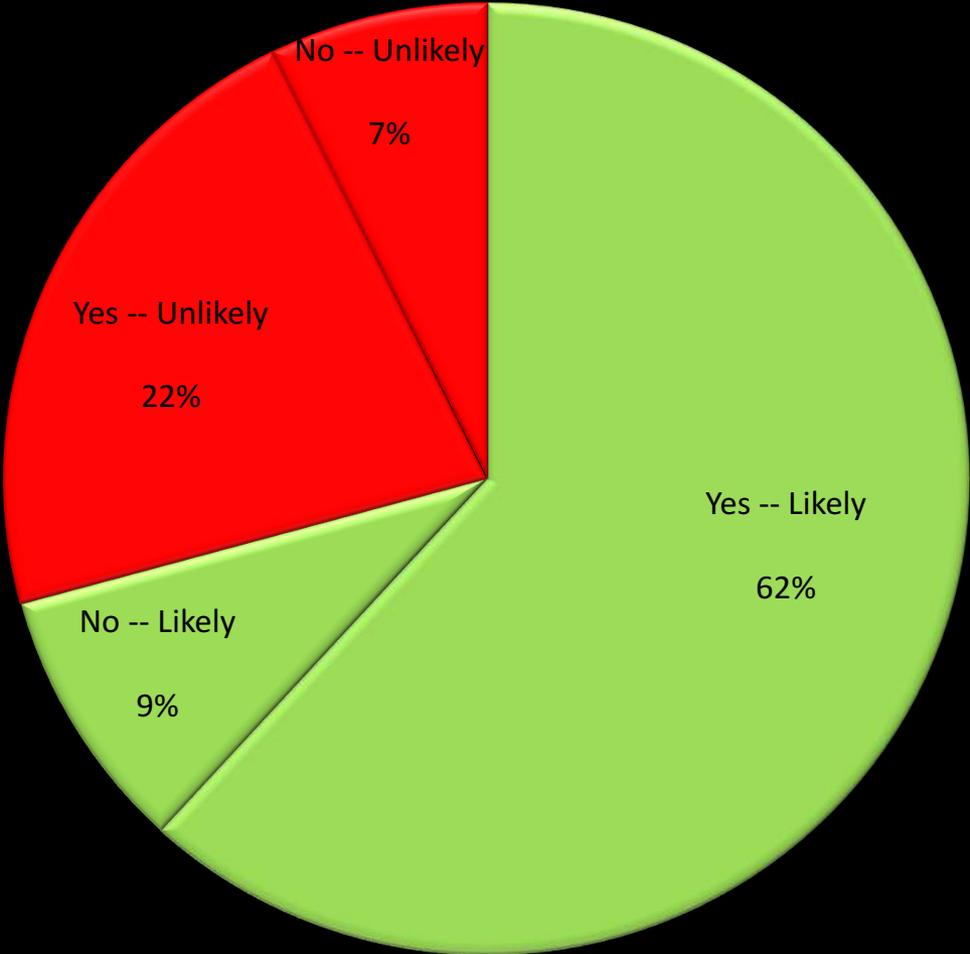
# How do you presently feel about Adventism? (Former Members)



# How would you rate your openness to reconnect? (Former Members)



# Correlation between Visitations after leaving and openness to reconnect with the Church – Former Members



# “How then should we live?”

- **Administrators** need to prioritize discipleship and let pastors know that is a priority
- **Pastors** need to work **collaboratively** with their **elders** and with church members
- **Small groups** have a **vital** role to play
  - South Philippines Union: after terrible attrition, introduced a new measure: *every* new member, the moment after their baptism, is introduced to a small group, which will be their spiritual family

# “How then should we live?”

- **Make contact** with former members of your local church—offer an apology for anything you or other church members may have done to offend and tell them they are always welcome
- **Use neutral ways to reconnect:** e.g., music . . .
- And when former (or current!) members who have not attended church for a while *do* come, *welcome* them, like the father of the prodigal son . . .  

not like too many Adventists . . .

# Recommendations

1. Every union to have an active discipleship program
2. Adopt attendance counts as standard, to focus attention on the issue of who is attending—and who is not
3. Use membership software in all fields: keeping track of members will help pastors and elders know who is slipping away

# Recommendations

4. Specific training in nurture, retention and discipling to be part of all ministerial and theological education programs (i.e., Newbold College of Higher Education)
5. Implement comprehensive, practical training in **conflict resolution and reconciliation** at all levels: union, conference & mission employees, and in all local churches

# Recommendations

6. Every union to appoint a Nurture and Retention Coordinator; and to establish a Nurture and Retention Committee, chaired by one of the officers, with the Coordinator as secretary, and including the following departmental directors:

Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Ministerial, Sabbath School & Personal Ministries, Women's Ministries, Youth Ministries

# The Good Shepherd

“In the parable [Luke 15] the shepherd goes out to search for one sheep—the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been but one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one.”

Ellen G. White,  
*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187

# First global Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling

- All the presentations given at the 2013 World Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling are available:
- [http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture\\_home](http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home)
- (along with audio recordings of the discussion sessions that followed each presentation)

# Other Resources

- [http://www.adventistresearch.org/research\\_reports](http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports)

Under “Retention Studies”:

Full reports on the two studies of former and inactive members that are summarised in this presentation

- [http://www.adventistresearch.org/astr\\_presentations](http://www.adventistresearch.org/astr_presentations)

Copies of David Trim’s reports to Annual Council in 2014 and 2015, which draw out key findings and statistics

# Other Resources

- <http://southern.libguides.com/c.php?g=490463&p=3853417>

A report on American graduates of Adventist universities and how connected they feel to the Seventh-day Adventist Church

- <http://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/Revised%20Adventist%20Youth-Connected%20and%20Disconnected%20Oct%202013.pdf>

A presentation by Galina Stele that brings together data, from several studies, on young Adventists around the world and factors affecting their retention