

# *Stopping the Haemorrhage, Healing the Wounded*

*Creating church communities  
that are caring and welcoming*

David Trim, Ph.D



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

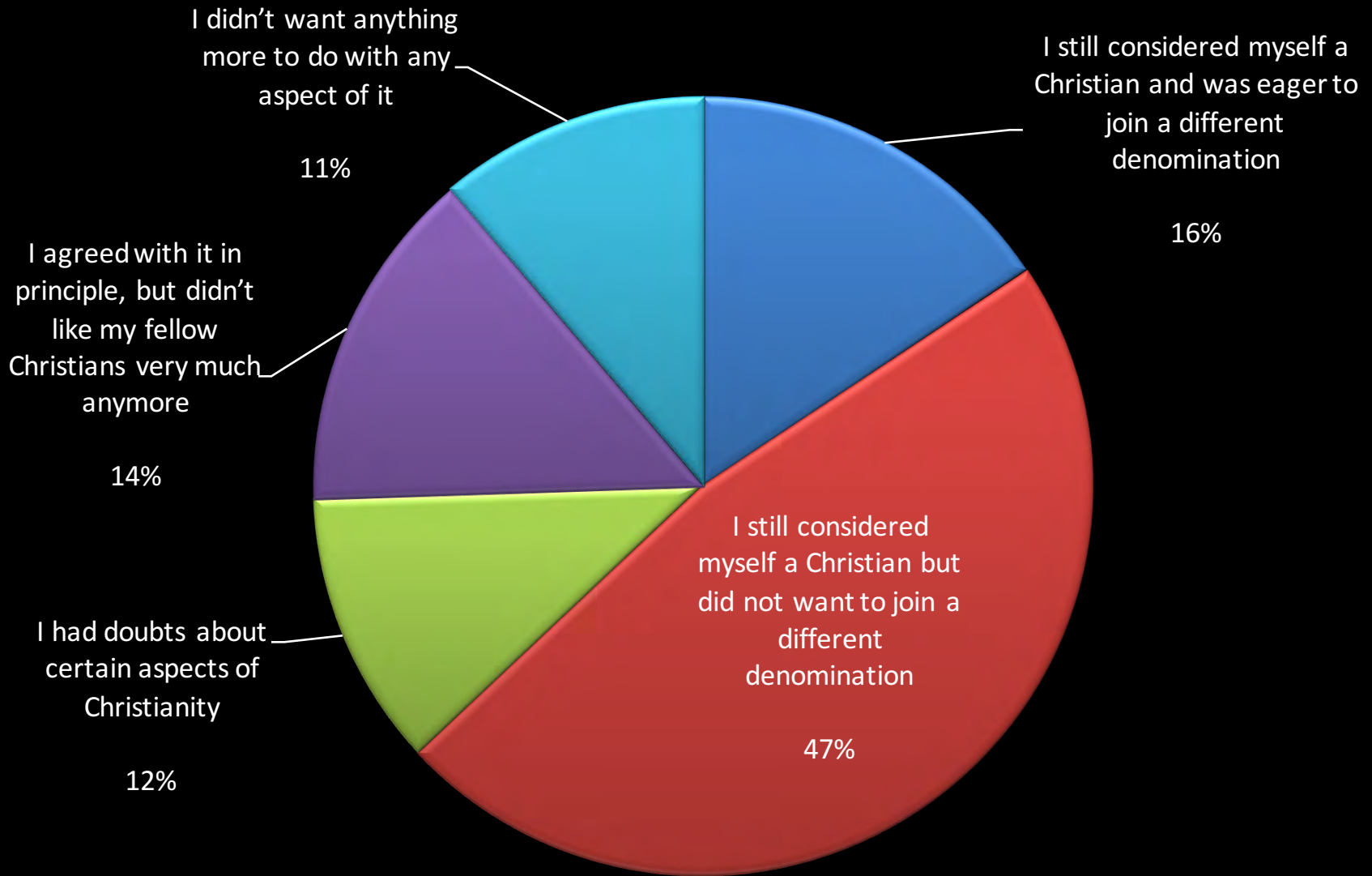
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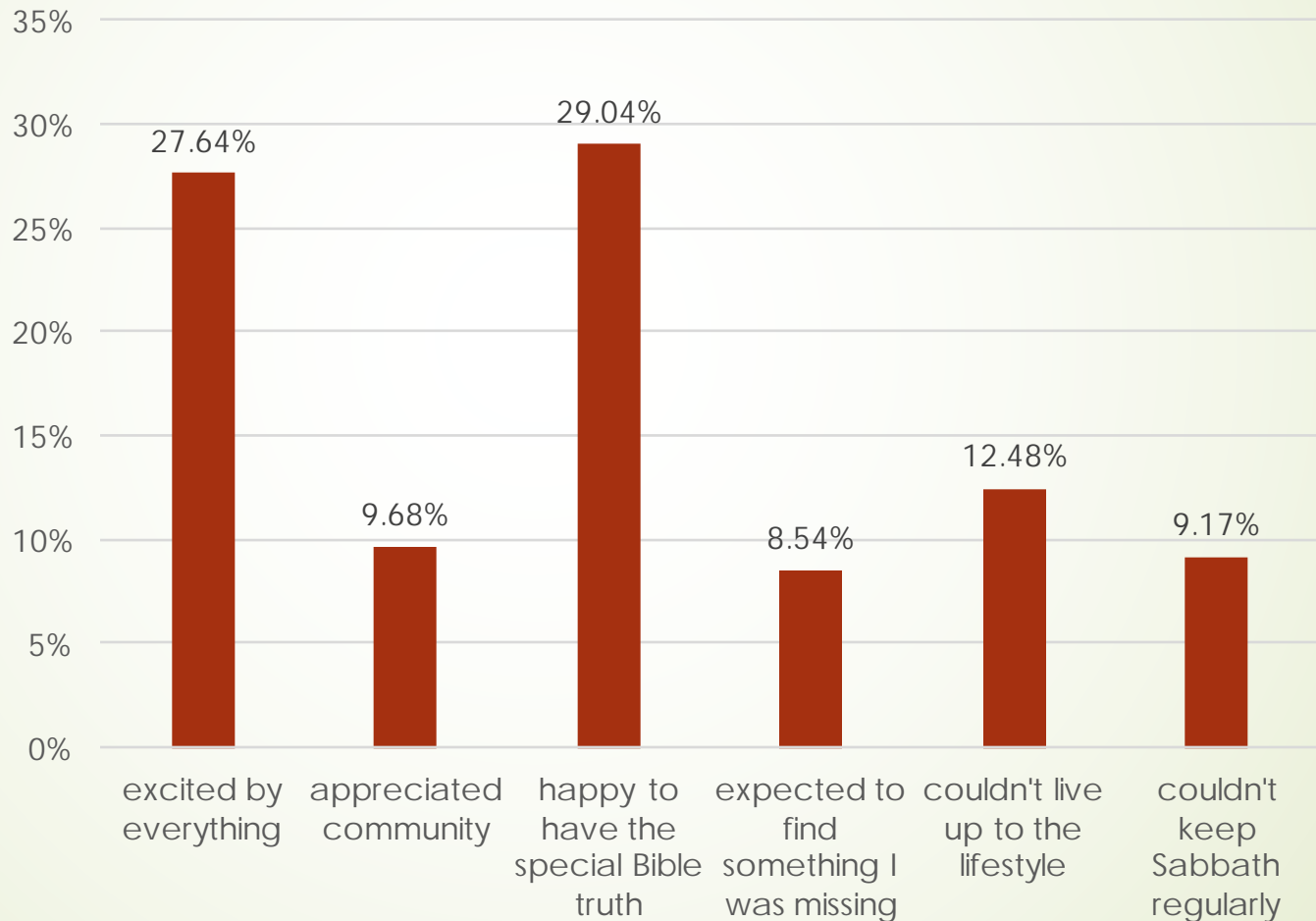


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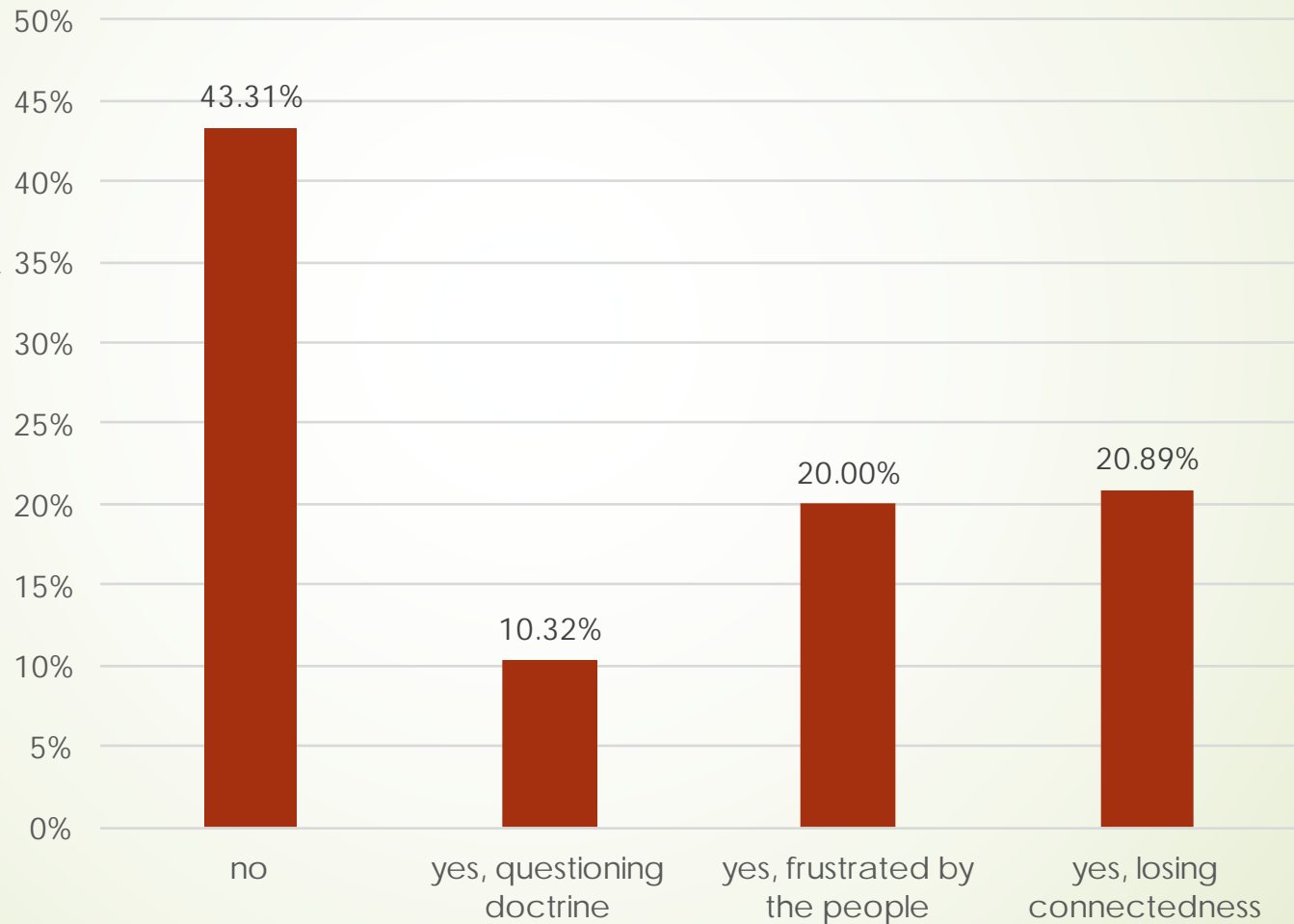
# What did you think of Christianity at the time you left the Adventist church?



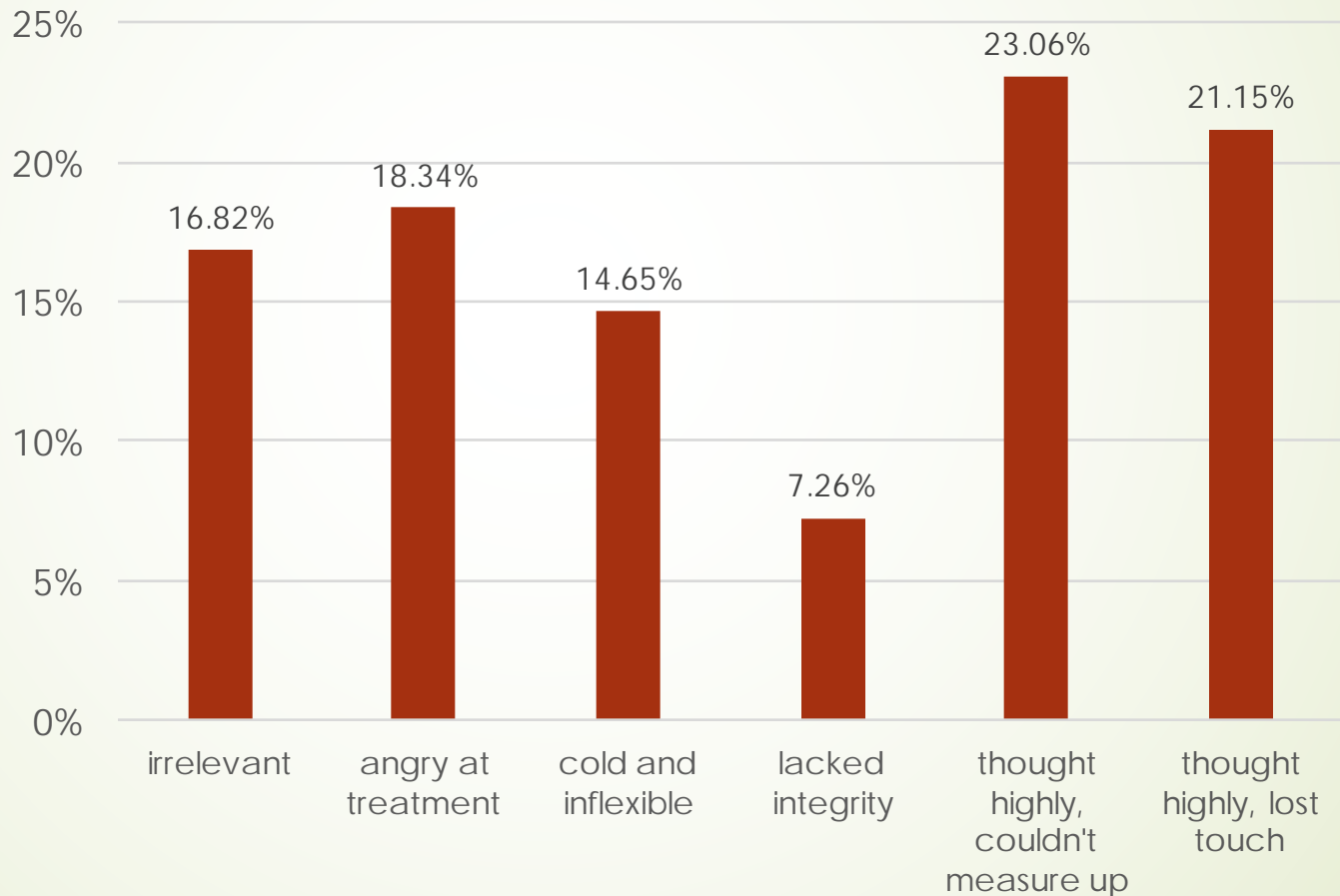
# View of Adventist Church: first 5 Years after Baptism



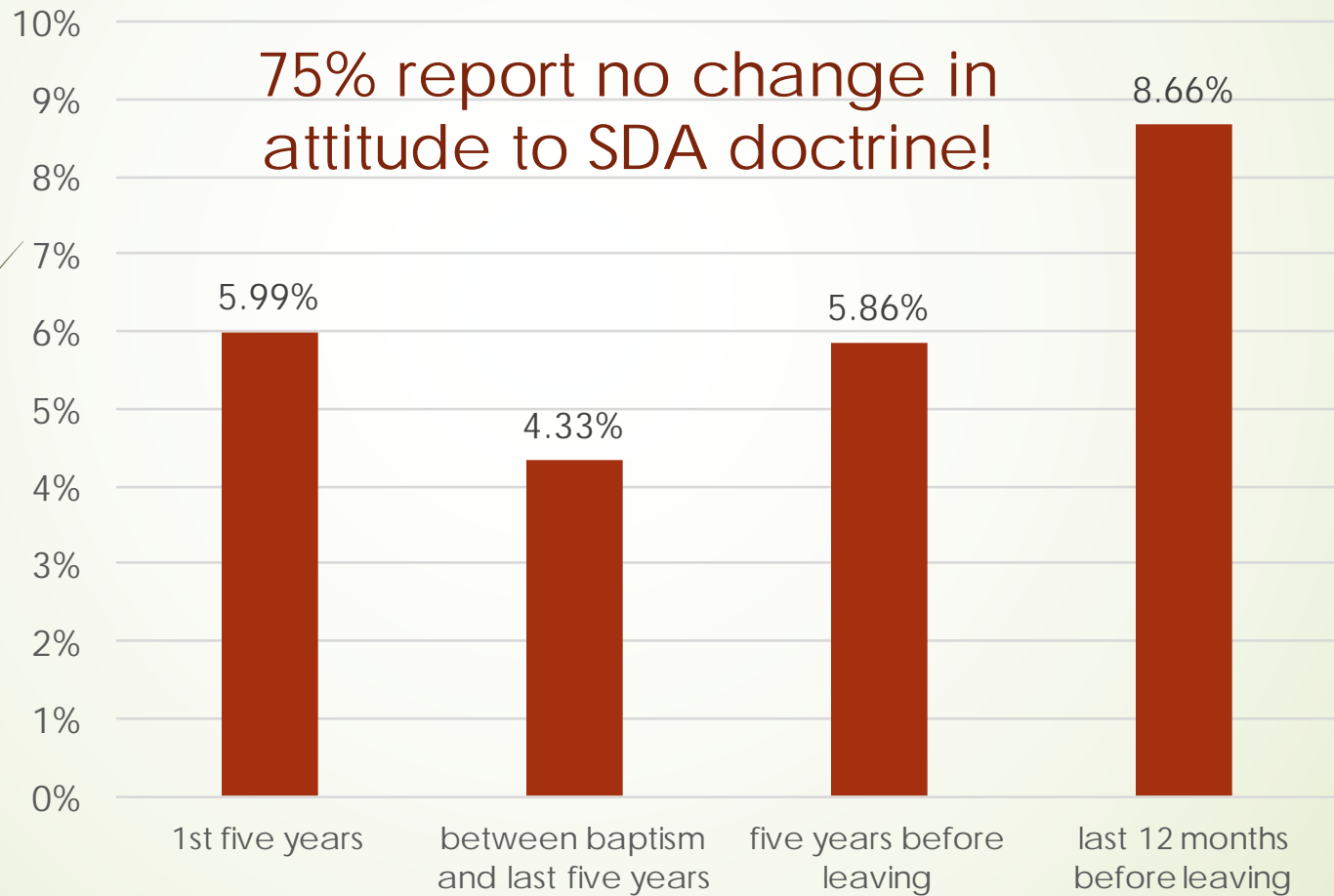
# Change in View of Adventist Church, 5 Years before leaving?



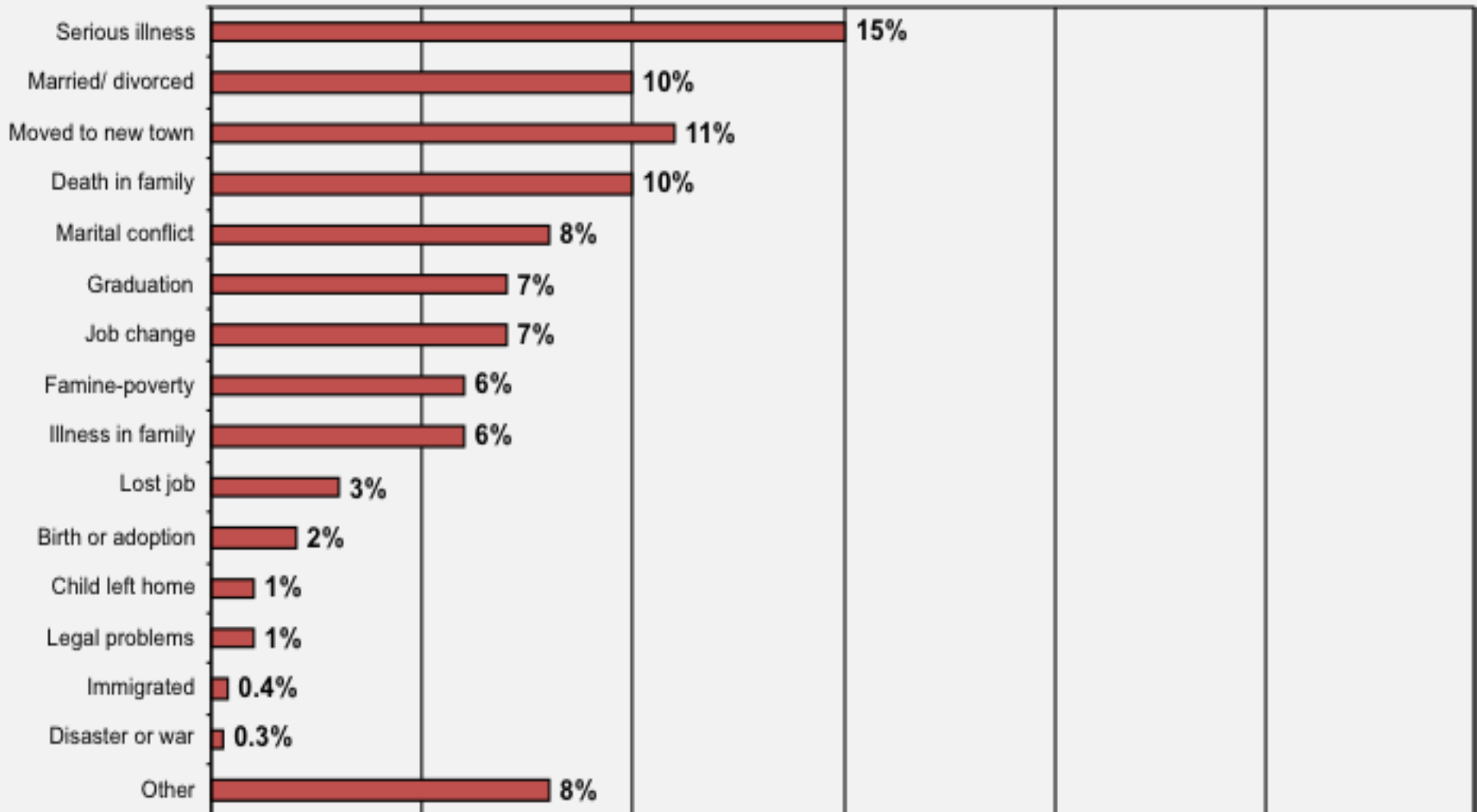
# View of Adventist Church at Departure (All Survey 2 respondents)



# Timing of Change in Attitude Toward Doctrine



# 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

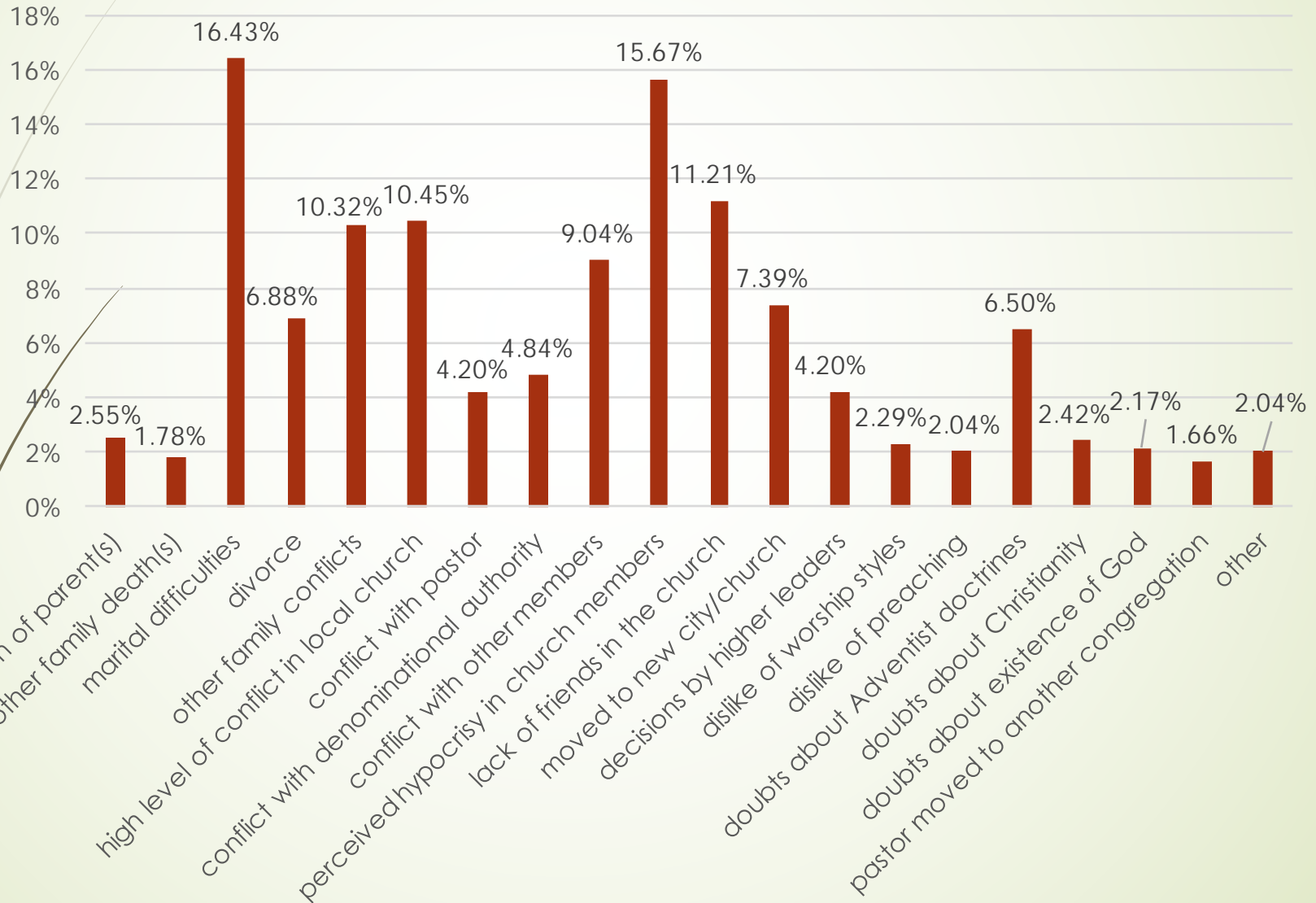
3% The worship was not very spiritual

3% Too much asking for money

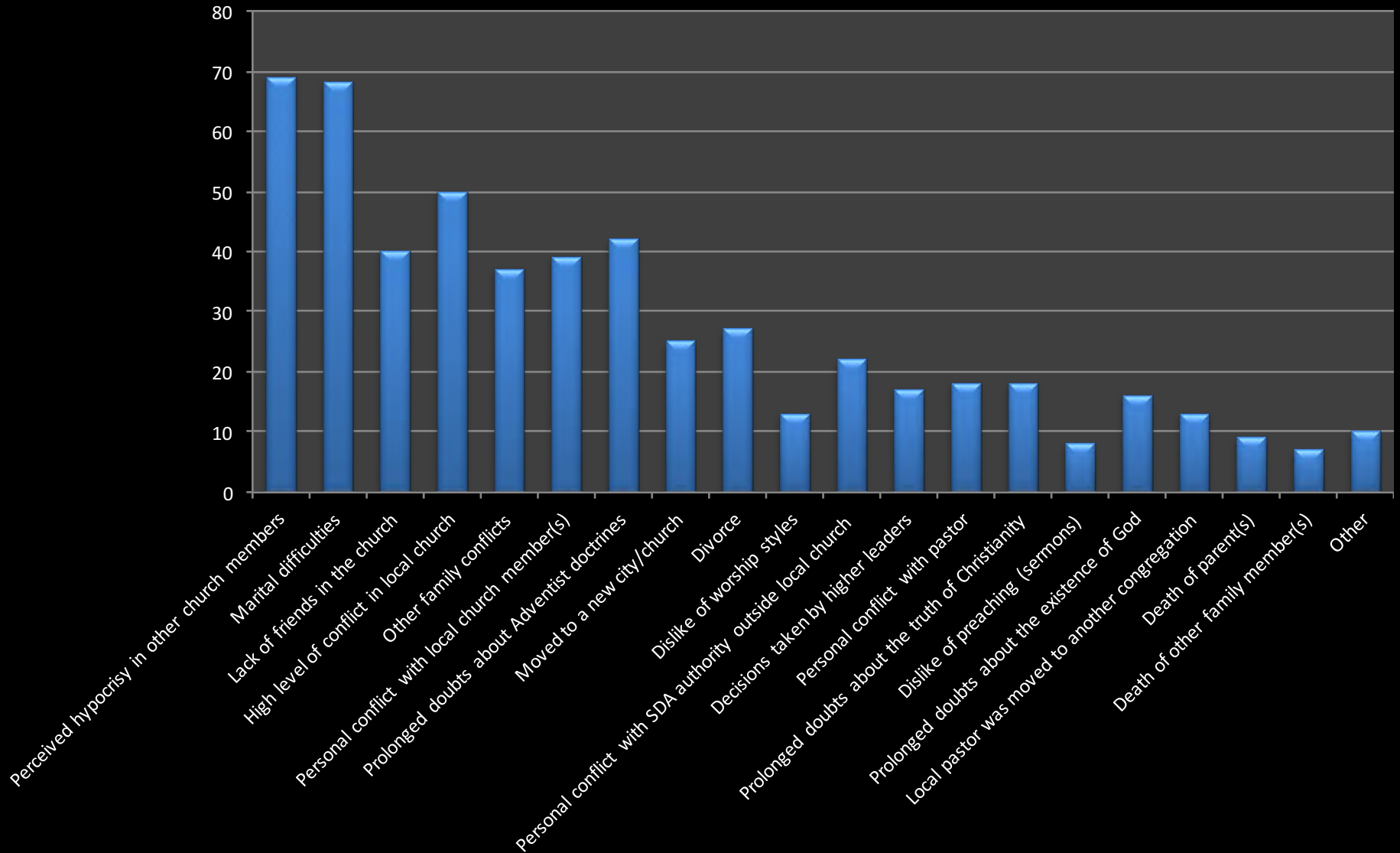
2% Church voted to drop me from membership

1% Apostate ideas were promoted

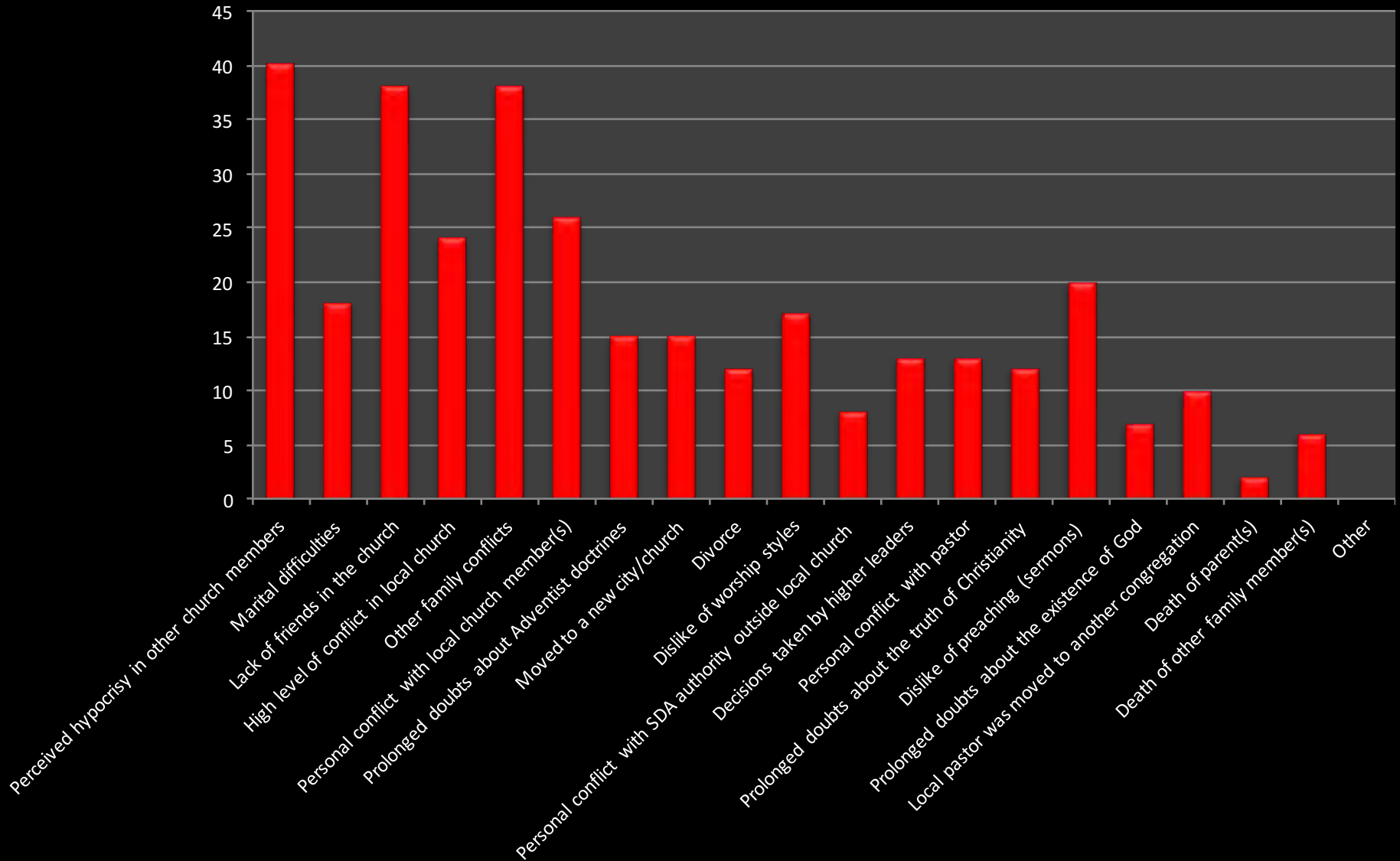
# Primary Triggers for Departure



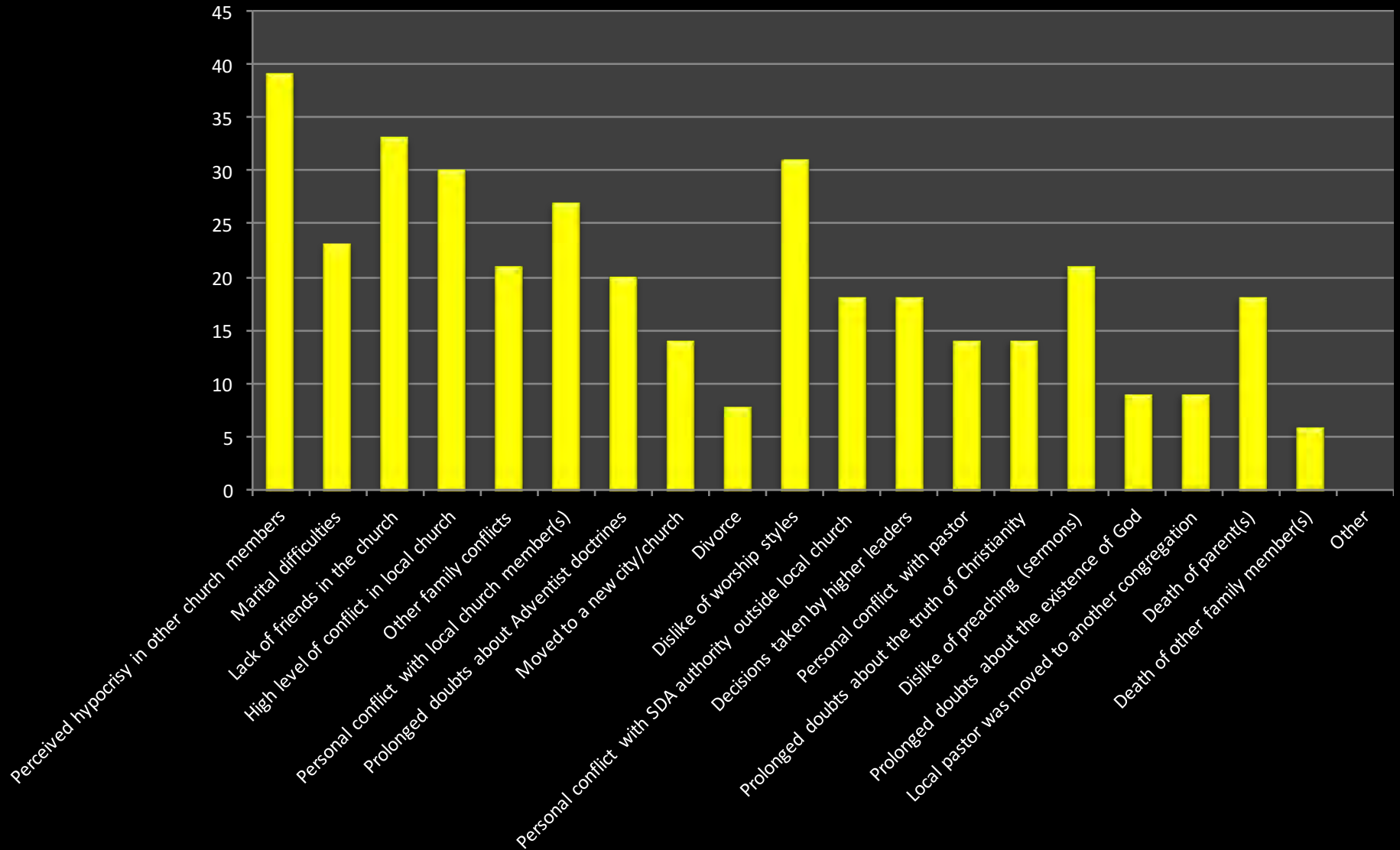
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Primary



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

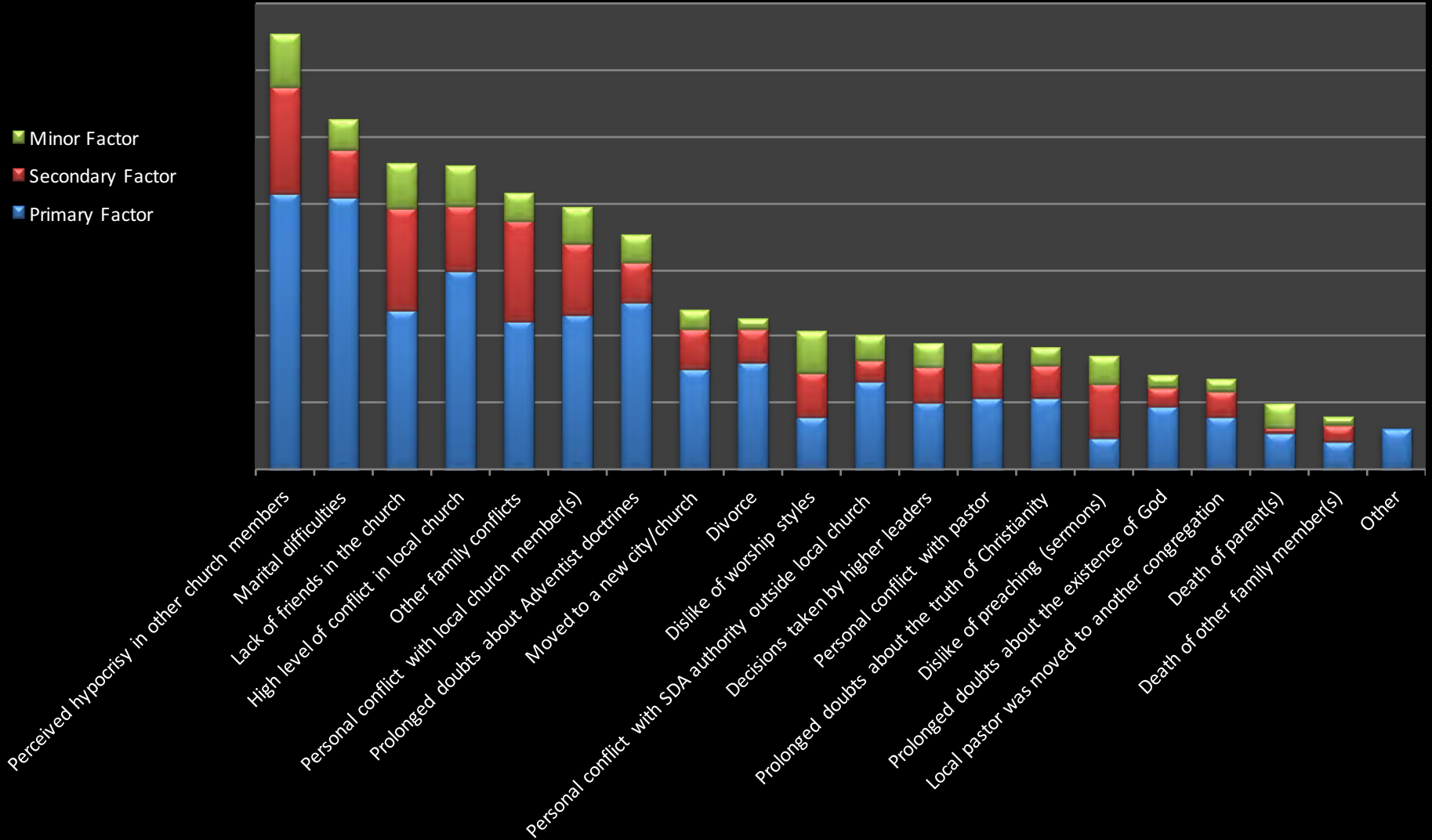


# What event triggered your decision to leave? (Listed in weighted rank order) – Minor Factor





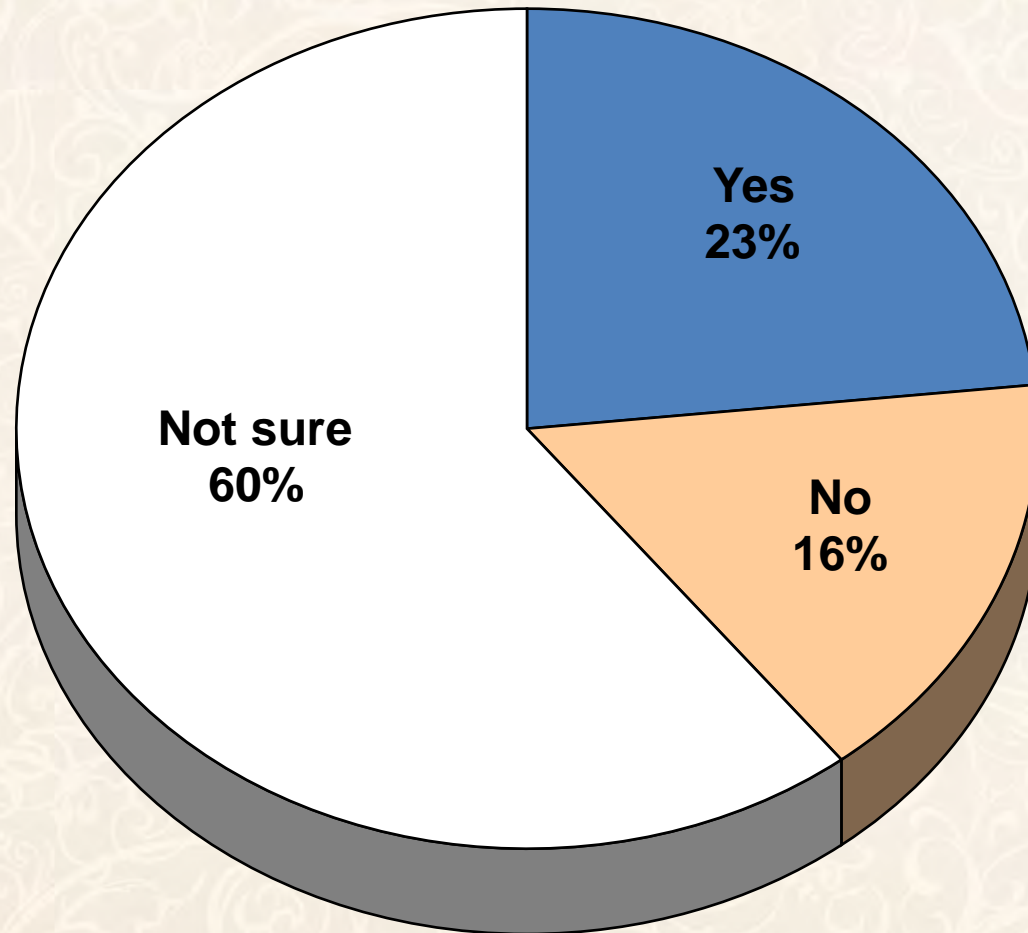
# What event triggered your decision to leave? (weighted) (all survey 2)



# What Happened When They Stopped Attending Church

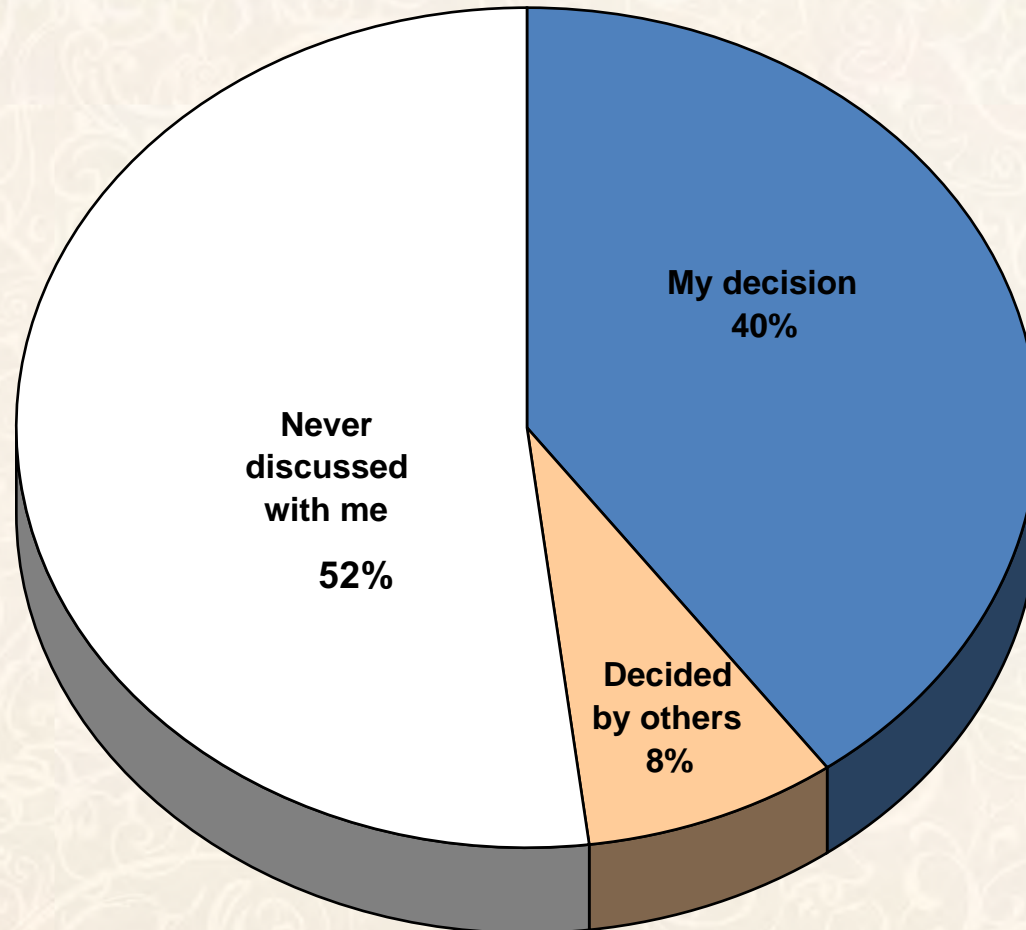
- 40% No one contacted me
- 19% A church member came to visit me
- 17% A local elder came to visit me
- 15% A local church member contacted me by phone
- 10% An Adventist relative made contact
- 9% The pastor came to visit me
- 6% The pastor contacted me by phone or Email
- 3% An Adventist, not a local 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—and then they can train elders and church-members

In light of these statistics, which 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; the same proportion (53%) say that they also received no training in these areas in postgraduate study.

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# Other factors affecting retention and loss

## EDUCATION



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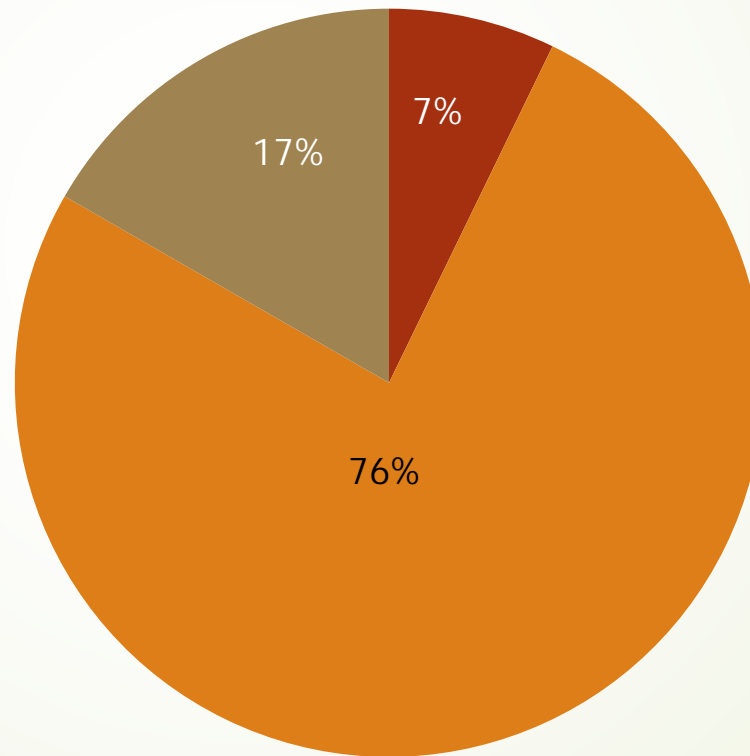
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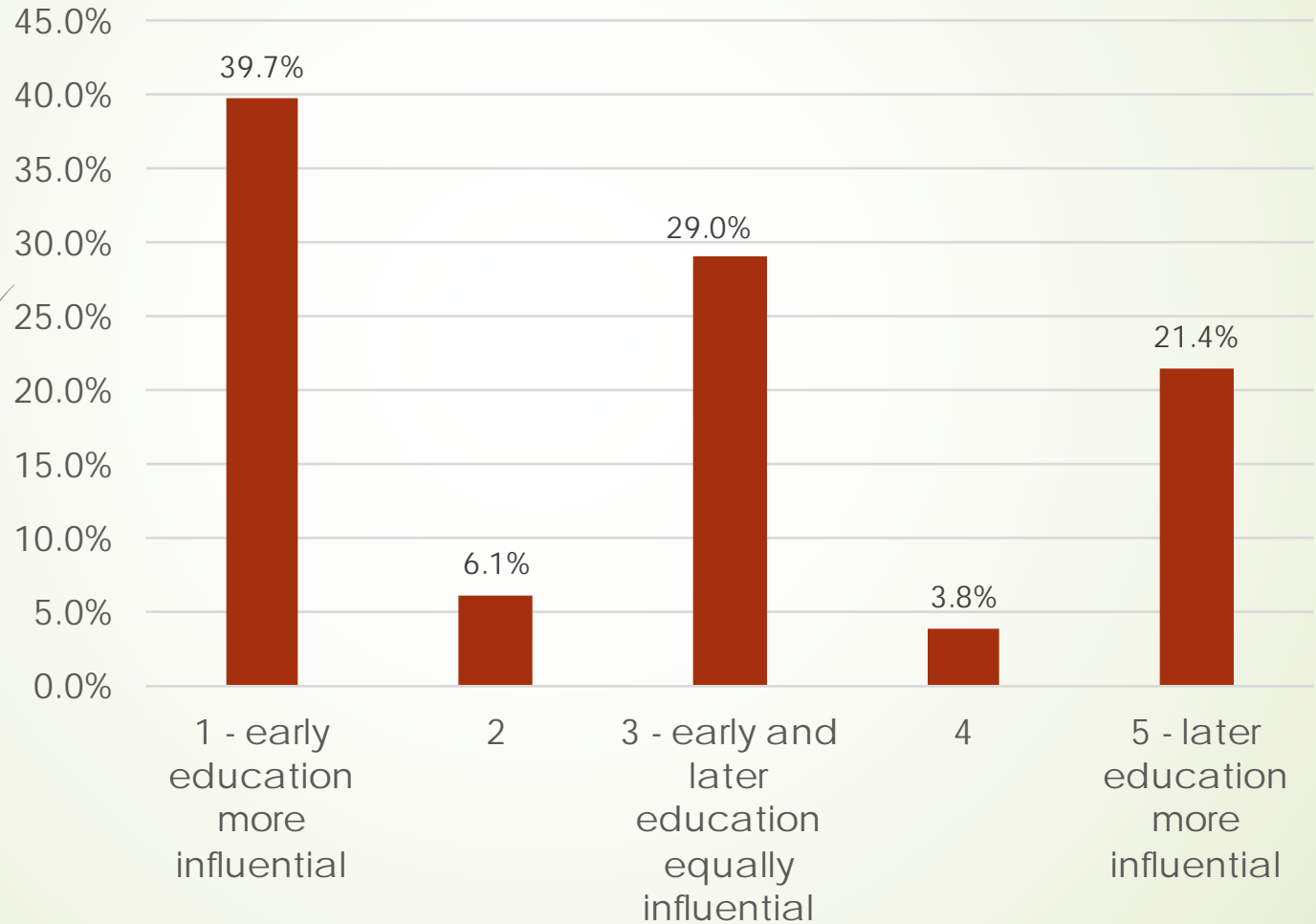
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# Adventist Education a Factor in Departure?

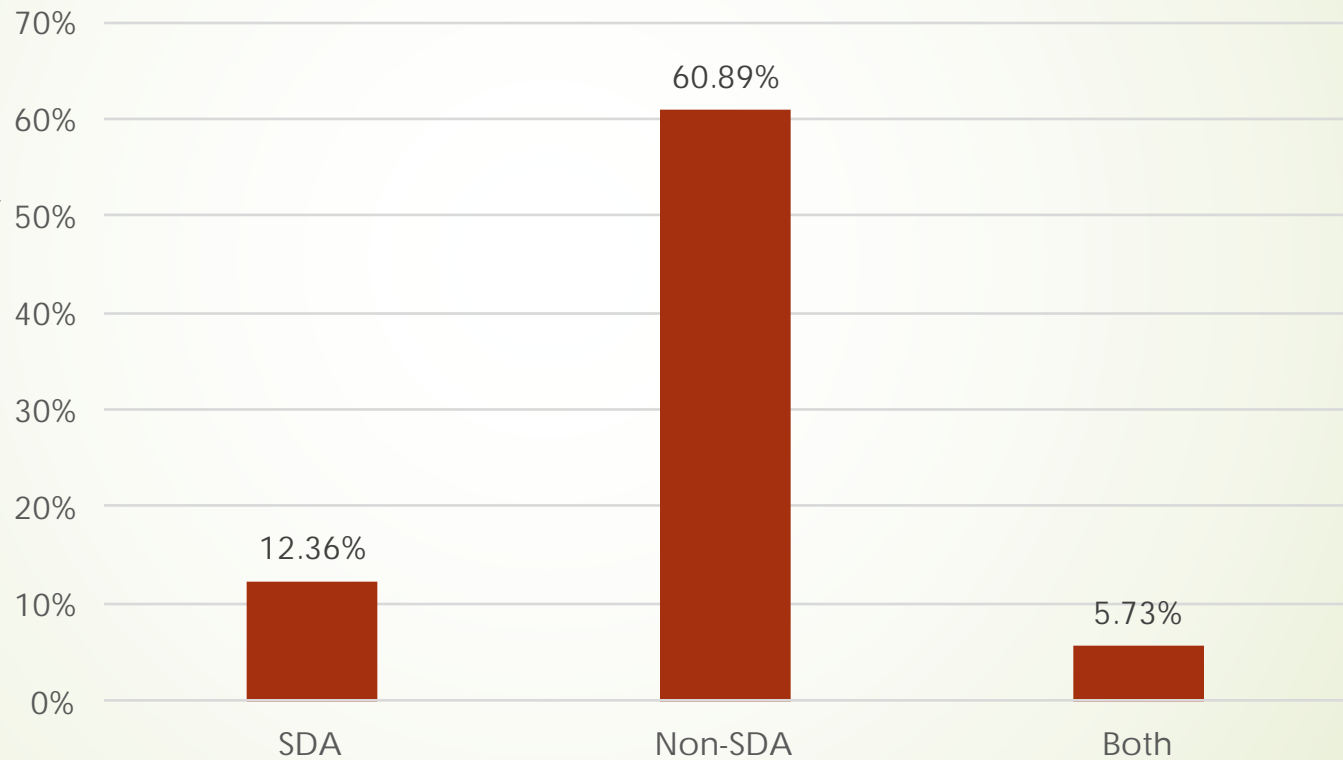


■ yes ■ no ■ don't know

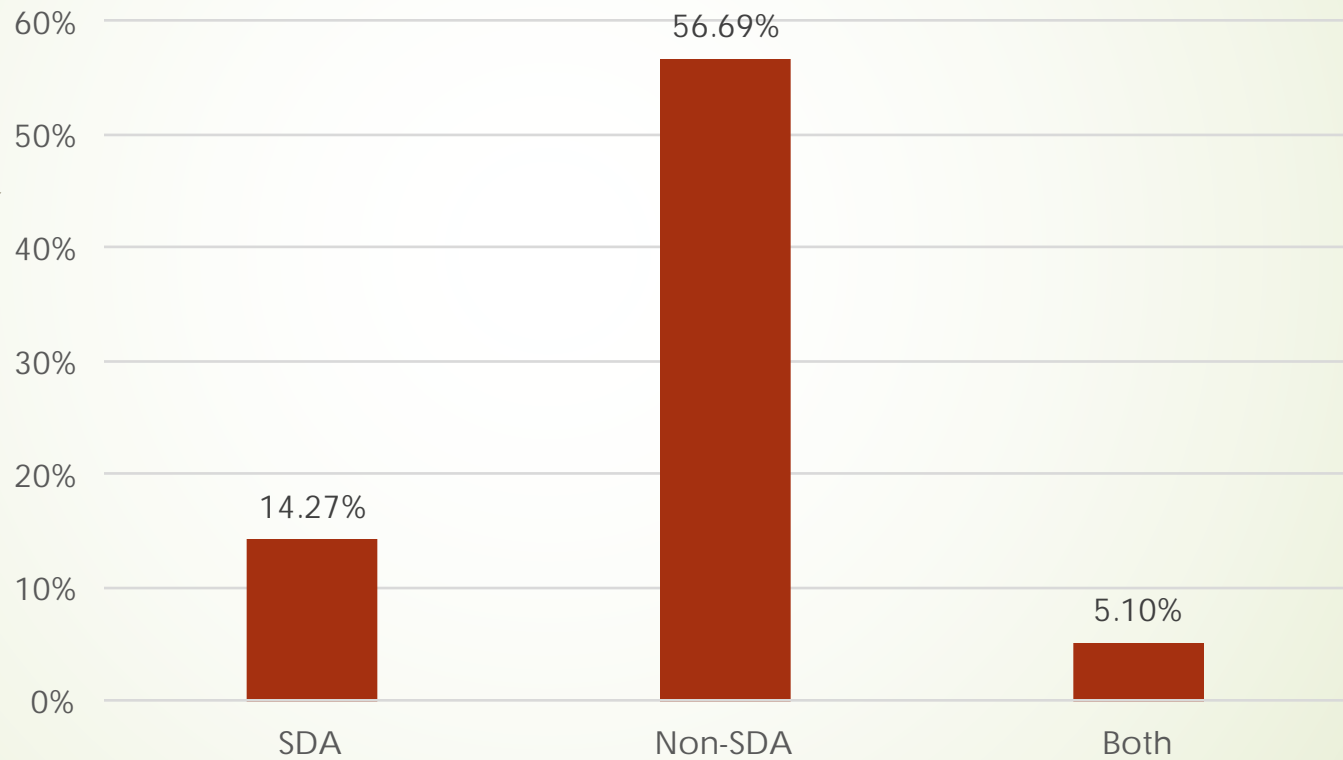
# Educational Influences to Stay



# Type of Educational Institution Attended: Primary

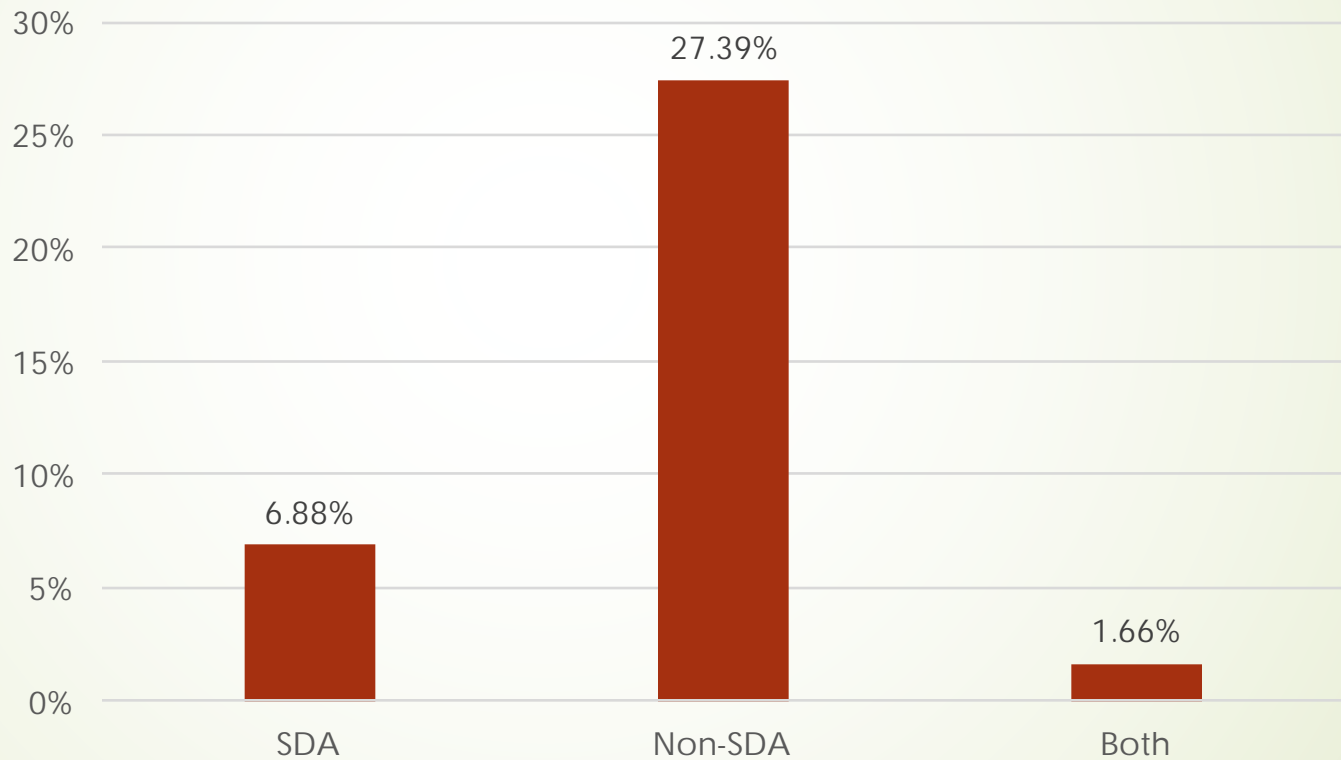


# Type of Educational Institution Attended: Secondary

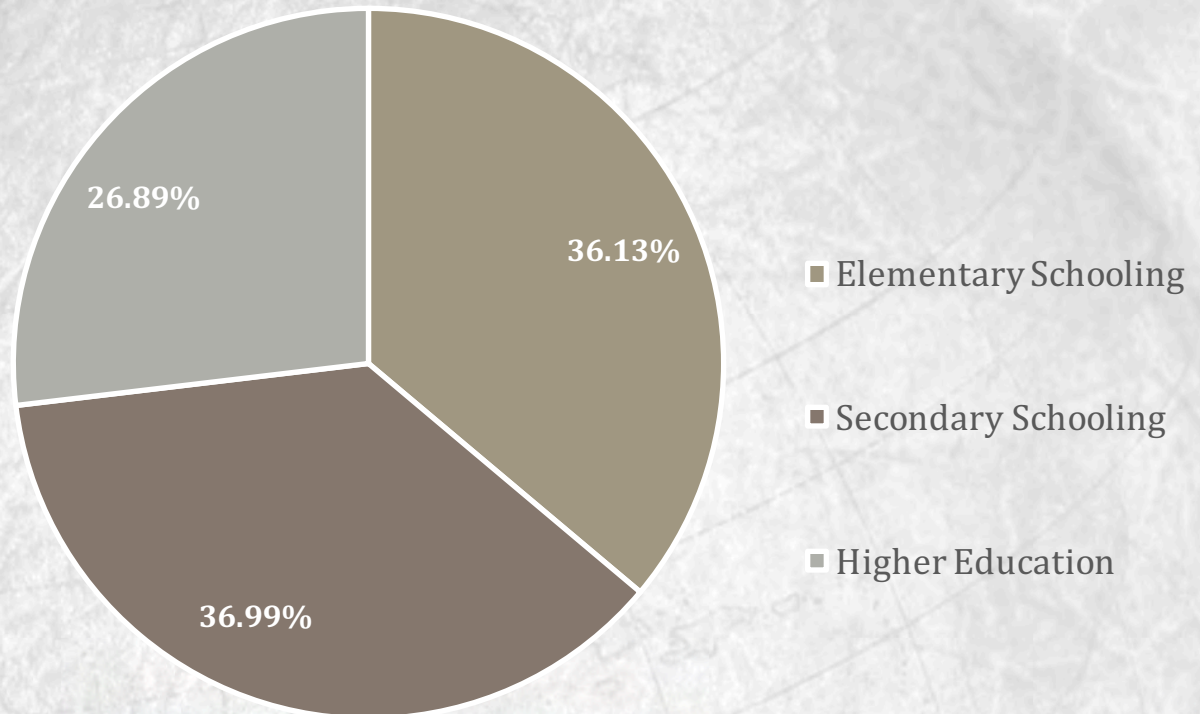




# Type of Educational Institution Attended: Tertiary



# Percentage of church members (worldwide) with different levels of Adventist education



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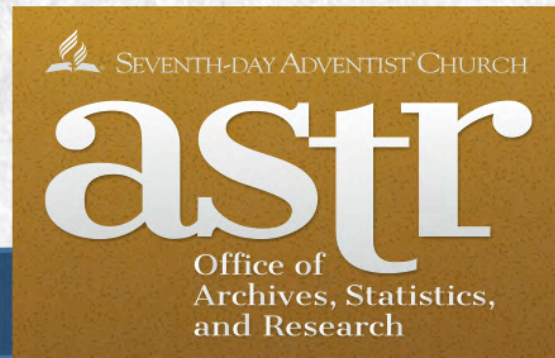


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# Adventist education helps to keep members in the Church

People who have left the church are proportionately less likely to have experienced Adventist education, at all levels, than the majority of church members.

One way to improve retention: promote Adventist education!





# Factors affecting reconnection and reclamation

## **Might they comeback?**



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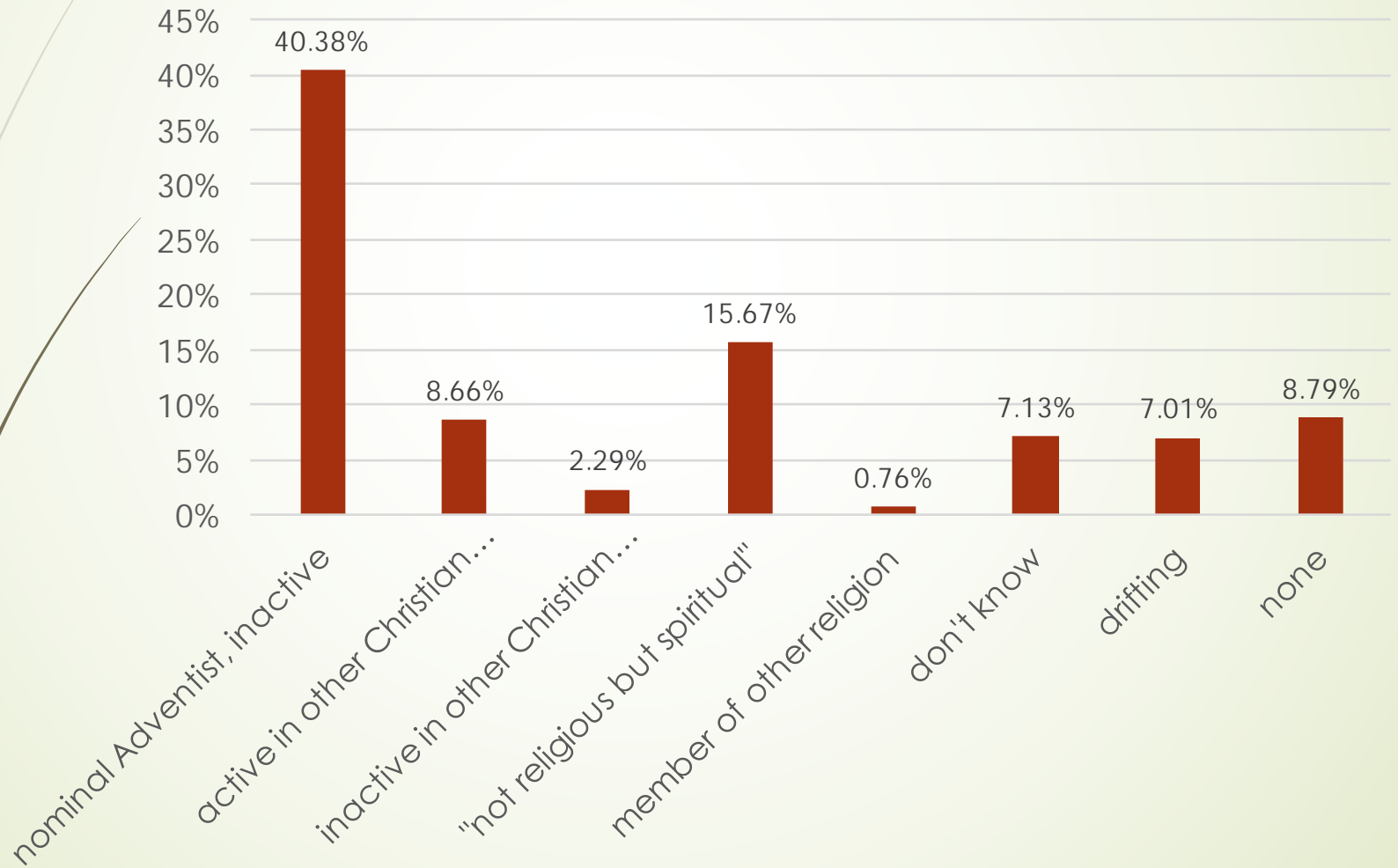
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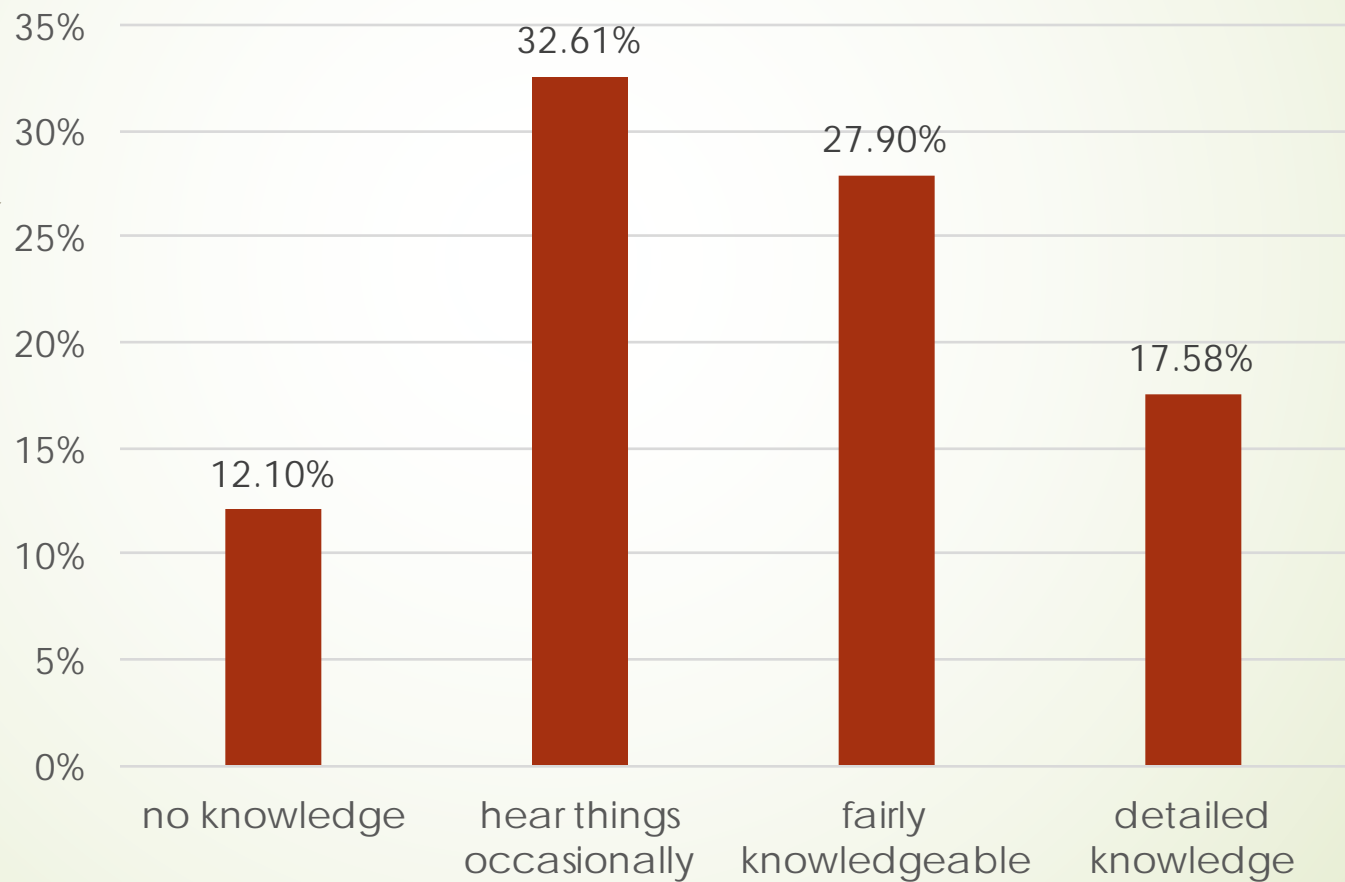
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# Religious Affiliation After Stopped Attending Church

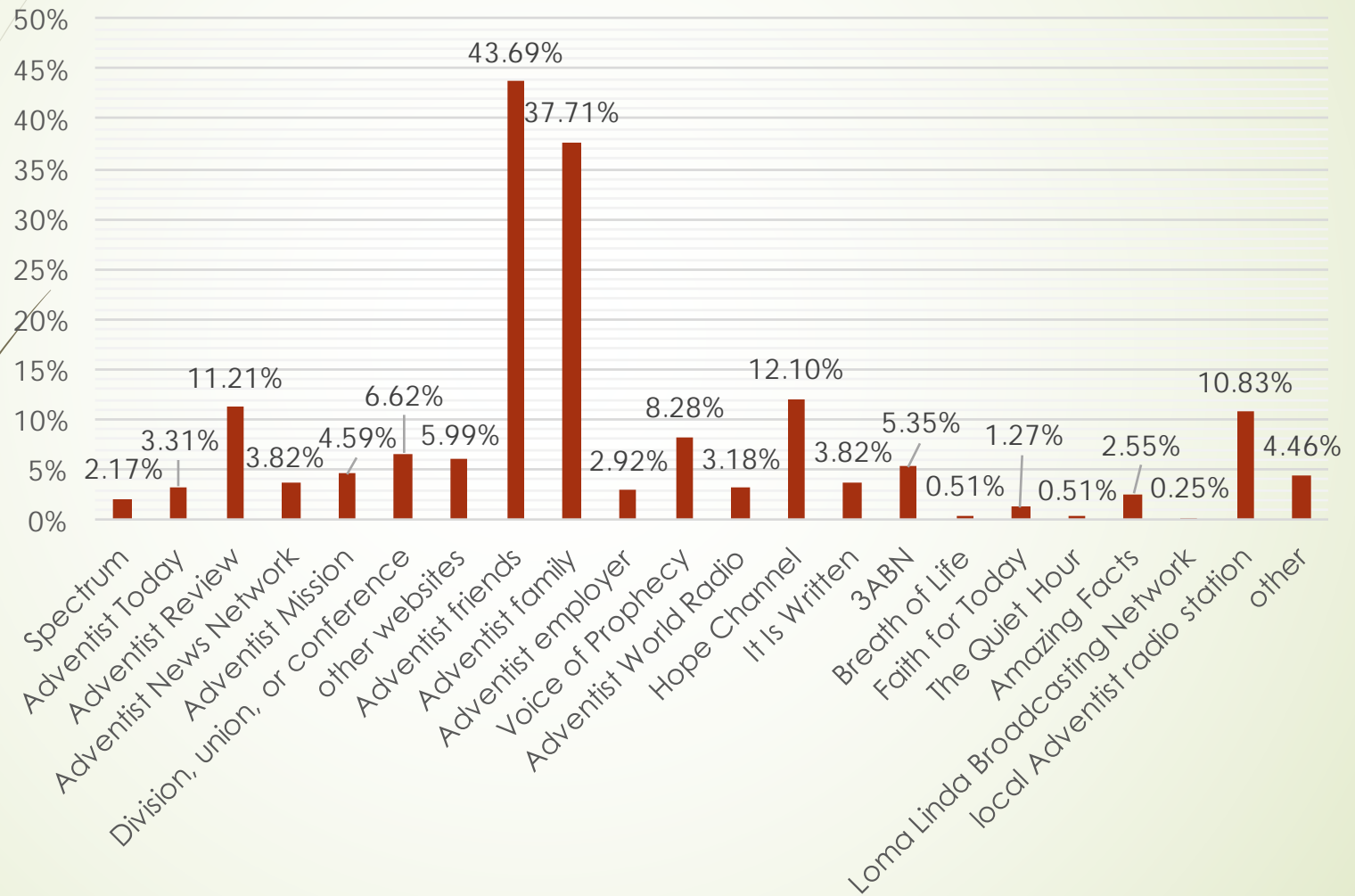




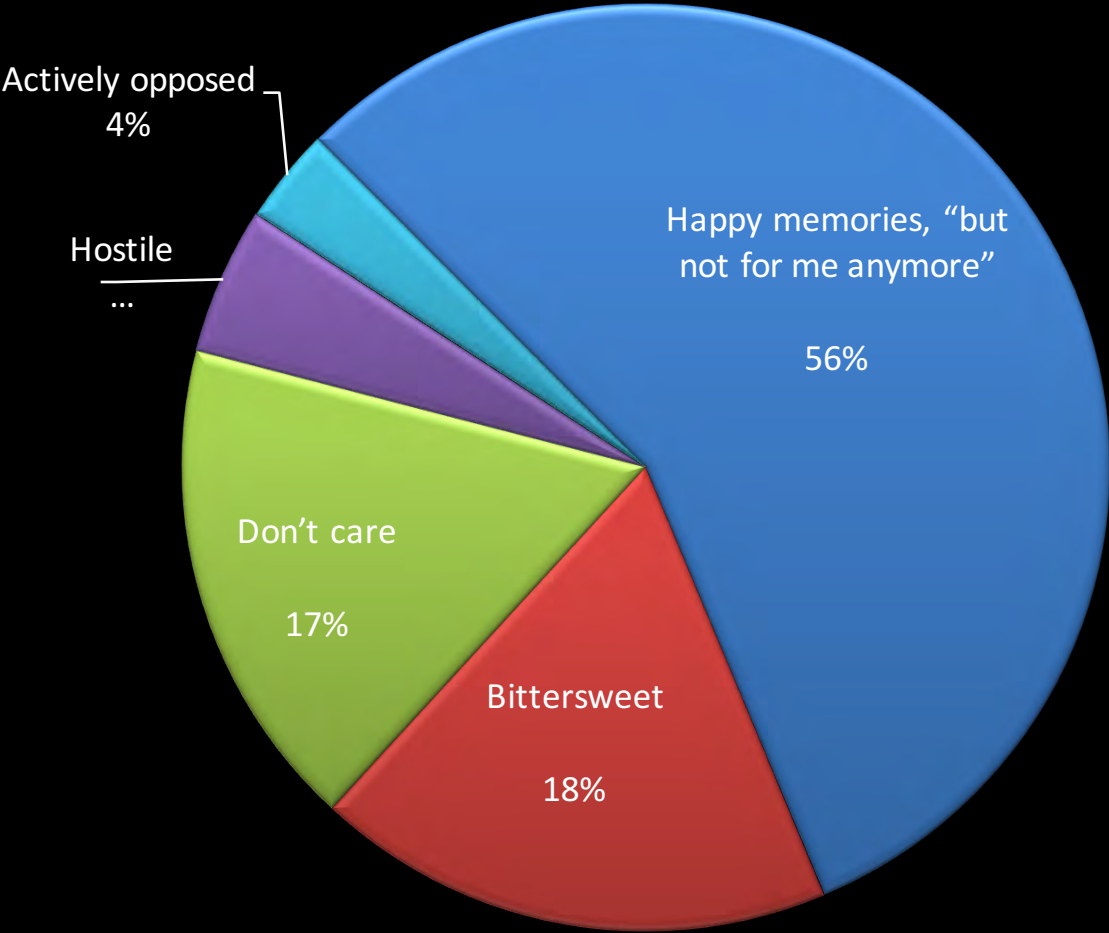
# Awareness of Developments in Adventism



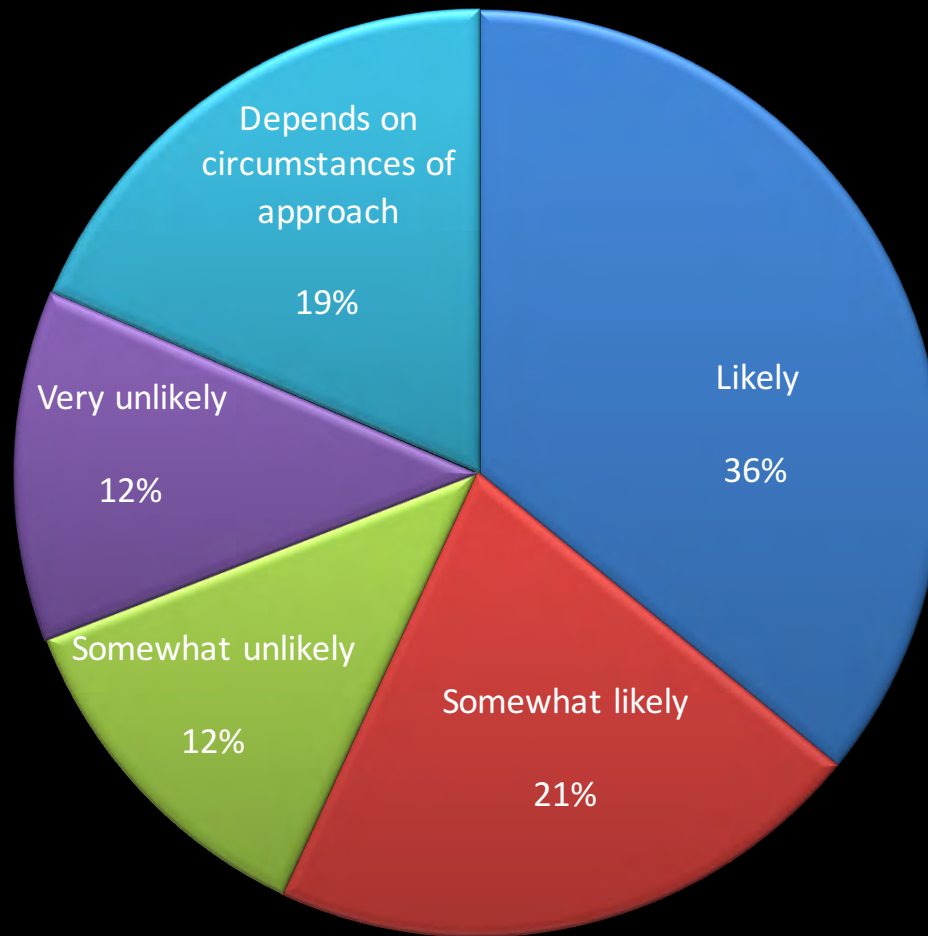
# Sources of Information



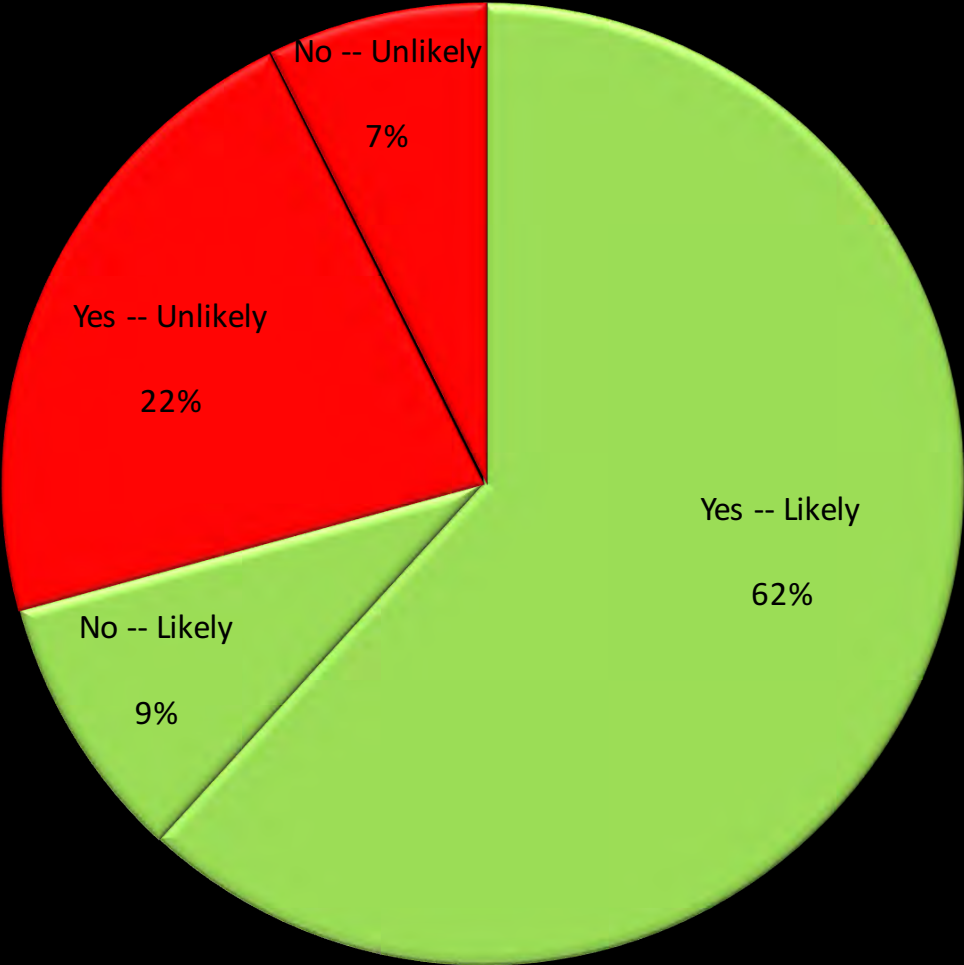
# How do you presently feel about Adventism? (Former Members)



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

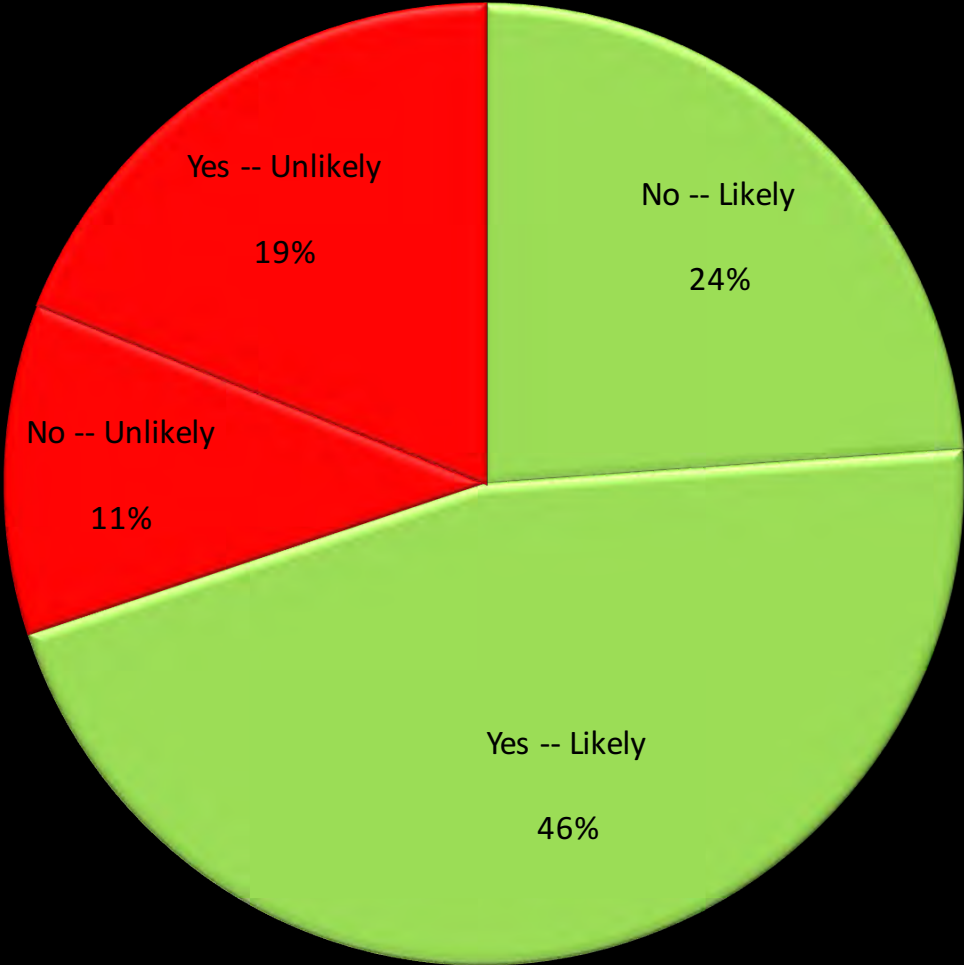


**Table 37: Correlation between Visitations after leaving and openness to reconnect with the Church – Former Members**





**Table 38: Correlation between social relationships with Adventists and Openness to reconnect – Former Members**



# What guidance is there in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy?



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# The Lessons of Scripture

1

1 Chron. 21: 1-2, 7

“Now Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel. So David said ... to the leaders of the people, ‘Go number Israel from Beersheba to Dan, and bring the number to me ... And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel.’”



# Lessons from the Spirit of Prophecy

*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 747:

“It was **pride and ambition** that prompted this action of the king. The numbering of the people would show the contrast between the weakness of the kingdom when David ascended the throne and its strength and prosperity under his rule.”

# The Lessons of Scripture

1

Have we sometimes counted our church members not out of pastoral concern, but out of pride?

Have we looked to our own strength, rather than to God's?



# The Lessons of Scripture

## 2

### Ezekiel chapter 34:

vv. 1-2: “And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel...

v. 4: The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you . . . brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost.”

# The Lessons of Scripture

## 2

Eze. 34: 11–12: “thus says the Lord God: “Indeed **I Myself will search for My sheep** and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered”.

[and when Christ is the Shepherd . . .]

v. 26: “I will cause showers to come down in their season; **there shall be showers of blessing.**”



# The Lessons of Scripture

## 3

Luke 15:4-6

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he

# The Lessons of Scripture

## 3

calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’

“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”



# Lessons from the Spirit of Prophecy

“The shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing, does not look ... on the flock that is safely housed, and say, “I have ninety and nine, and it will cost me too much trouble to go in search of the straying one. Let him come back and I will open the door ... and let him in.” No; **no sooner does the sheep go astray** than the shepherd is filled with grief

# Lessons from the Spirit of Prophecy

and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock. When he is sure that **one sheep is lost, he slumbers not.** He leaves the ninety and nine ... and goes in search of the straying sheep. The darker ... the night, and the more perilous the way, the greater is the shepherd's anxiety, and the more earnest his search. **He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep."**

*Christ's Object Lessons, p. 187*



# The Lessons of Scripture

## 3

We are missing many more than one sheep out of every hundred.

**Are we unwilling to follow the example of our Lord and Saviour?**

# The Lessons of Scripture

## 4

### 2 Corinthians 13:11

“Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.”



# The Lessons of Scripture

## 5

James 5: 19–20

“My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death, and cover over a multitude of sins.”

# Final lesson: the Good Shepherd

“In the parable 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



# What should we do?

## Recommendations



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# “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: suffered terrible attrition and introduced a new measure: *every* new member, the moment after baptism, is introduced to a small group which will be their spiritual family



# How then should we live?

- If you don't see someone in church for a while, call them up and see how they're doing
- 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

# GC N&R Committee Recommendations

1. Every union to have an active discipleship program: General Conference recommends “Growing Fruitful Disciples” . . .





**Discipleship is life.**

<http://growingfruitfuldisciples.com/>



# Recommendations

1. Every union to have a discipleship program: GC recommends “Growing Fruitful Disciples” (adapted to local contexts).
2. Adopt attendance counts as standard, so that pastors and elders can track the net retention rate
3. Adopt membership software for keeping records of members, to help pastors and elders be aware of who is slipping away!

# Recommendations

4. Specific training in nurture–retention–discipling to become part of ministerial education at all NSD seminaries
5. Implement comprehensive, practical training in **conflict resolution and reconciliation** at all levels: union and conference/mission employees and in local churches
6. Divisions to hold conferences: 👍 🤞



# Recommendations

7. Every union to appoint a Nurture and Retention Coordinator and a Nurture & Retention Committee, chaired by one of the officers, and including the following key departmental directors as members: Children's Ministries, Education, Family Ministries, Ministerial Assoc., Sabbath School & Personal Ministries, Women's Ministries, and Youth Ministries



# First global Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling

All the presentations given at the 2013 World Summit on Nurture, Retention, and Discipling are available:

<https://www.adventistarchives.org/summit-on-nurture-and-retention-2013> (along with audio recordings of the discussion sessions that followed each presentation)

# Other Resources

Full reports on both studies of former and inactive members are available at:

[www.adventistarchives.org/general-resources-on-nuture-discipling-and-retention](http://www.adventistarchives.org/general-resources-on-nuture-discipling-and-retention)

**At the same URL** is a copy of my reports to Annual Council in 2014 & 2015 which draw out key findings and statistics, for people who don't have time to go through the full reports