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# An Information Base for Strategic Planning



## Allegheny East Conference

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*By Monte Sahlin & Paul Richardson*

CENTER FOR  
CREATIVE  
MINISTRY

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## Introduction

We were commissioned to put together for the officers and key planning groups of the Allegheny East Conference an information base that could serve as a useful reference in strategic planning and decision-making. We were asked for an array of information that would not only assess the needs and measure the opinions of church members, but also describe the context within which the Seventh-day Adventist Church works—institutional and demographic trends, and larger realities. In addition, we were asked to gather specific input regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Allegheny East Conference, and the opportunities and challenges facing the conference.

To fulfill that assignment we have brought together in this report information from a number of sources regarding the demographics of the Allegheny East Conference membership, as well as the opinions and attitudes among Allegheny East Conference members regarding the needs and priorities of the work. A key source for comparative data to establish trends is the study conducted by one of the authors together with Harold L. Lee in 1992 and published as *A Portrait of a Regional Conference* (1993). Another source is the study the authors completed last year for the Columbia Union Conference entitled *Beyond Vision 2000* (1998, Center for Creative Ministry).

Key points are briefly described in the summary that follows immediately after this introduction. The full array of data is displayed in a set of 40 presentation slides which make up the bulk of this report. Nearly 100 pages of raw data tables are also available.

A primary source for this information is a telephone survey conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry specifically for this project. A total of 307 telephone interviews were completed with a random sample of Allegheny East Conference church members during January, February and March, 1999. Each interview took 20 to 30 minutes, some as long as 45 minutes.<sup>1</sup> Demographic and school enrollment information was collected on all the individuals in each household—nearly 800 records all together.

Data were also gathered from the NAD Office of Human Relations census of ethnicity in the Adventist Church conducted in 1995. For comparative purposes data were also used from the NAD Office of Information and Research annual surveys for 1989 through 1997, and the U.S. Census Current Population Surveys for 1990 through 1996.

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<sup>1</sup>In interpreting survey results it is important to keep in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error; that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the entire population had been interviewed. The allowance for sampling error in this survey is six percentage points (plus or minus) at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of reliability.

We wish to express appreciation for the professionalism and hard work that the Center for Creative Ministry team put into this study, as well as the cheerful cooperation of the Office of the President in the Allegheny East Conference. Particularly important are the contributions made by Kandra Luke, Center for Creative Ministry administrative assistant, and Melissa Sahlin, research assistant.

It is our prayer that this information, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the vision and creativity of the Allegheny East Conference officers, staff, pastors and committees, will help to strengthen God's faithful people in this territory and build up Christ's church as it prepares for His coming!

Monte Sahlin & Paul Richardson  
April 1999

## Summary

Much of the information in this volume is well within expected ranges. Some of it points out important trends and realities. In this summary we will concisely describe these items and discuss their meaning for the Allegheny East Conference and its congregations, schools, departments and ministries.

### Church Demographics

Allegheny East Conference membership is under-represented among young adults. There is half the portion of members from the Baby Bust generation as there is in the general population in the mid-Atlantic region. At the same time the portion of young adults in the Allegheny East Conference is greater than in the Columbia Union Conference as a whole, which may be an indicator that Allegheny East is doing better in attracting and holding young adults than are its neighboring conferences. There is evidence of a significant drop-out factor among young adults who grew up in Adventist homes and have been baptized as teens. The church must find ways to attract and connect with new generations or it runs the risk of losing these men and women forever.

It appears that the Allegheny East Conference membership may be declining in its diversity and increasing its African American percentage. In 1992, Lee and Sahlin found that “one in five members ... are immigrants from the Carribean [and] another one in ten are Hispanic or of other ethnic background.” The 1999 survey found less than one in five respondents who identified themselves with an ethnic background other than African American. There are two possibilities why these data may *not* indicate a decrease in the actual diversity of the conference membership. Number one, because a different method of data collection was used in 1999 (telephone interviews) it is possible that fewer Hispanic respondents could be included due to language barriers. Number two, individuals who reported themselves as Carribean immigrants in 1992 may now see themselves as “African American” because they have gained United States citizenship in the interim period.

One in five Allegheny East Conference members (19%) were not born as citizens of the United States and immigrated here. This is about the same as in the 1992 survey, so there has not been a significant increase. It is somewhat less than the 24% of Adventists in the Columbia Union Conference who were not born in the U.S., but more than double the 9% of the current population of the U.S. which was born as a citizen of another nation. Overall, it appears that the immigrant portion of the Allegheny East membership is not expanding at the rate that it is in the neighboring conferences within both the Columbia and Atlantic unions.

The Allegheny East Conference membership is largely middle class, and over the seven years since the 1992 survey it has become even more upper middle class. There are less than half the portion of church members from low-income households as in the general population in the

mid-Atlantic region, while the percentage among the highest-income households actually exceeds that of the general population. Why are there so few poor people joining the Adventist Church in the Allegheny East Conference? Historically African American, Seventh-day Adventist congregations have in the past had a particular ministry among the poor. Is that ministry now in decline?

Consistent with data presented above, unemployment has declined among Allegheny East Conference members over the past seven years and the portion of retired persons has increased significantly. These data are further indicators of a membership that is increasingly more upper middle class and "graying." Will this constituency be able to maintain a ministry among the young adult and low-income segments of the community in the large cities of the mid-Atlantic region?

About half the members of the Allegheny East Conference are currently married and living with their spouse. This percentage has declined some since the 1992 study, and it is significantly less than the nearly 80% of Adventists throughout the Columbia Union. The percentages of widowed, divorced and separated church members have increased some since 1992, while the percentage of those never married has decreased by half. Again, this is consistent with the picture of an aging membership. A 20% increase in the portion of church members who are divorced or separated (from 15% of the membership in 1992 to 18% in 1999) does not necessarily reveal that a sizable problem of family breakdown has developed over the last seven years. It could also be evidence that congregations have become more accepting and supportive of the divorced and separated resulting in fewer who drop out of the church.

The Allegheny East Conference membership has an exceptionally high level of education. There are twice as many members with college degrees as is true in the adult population of the mid-Atlantic region. In fact, Allegheny East members are better educated than the average Adventist across North America, and the proportions have grown over the past seven years. Clearly, Adventists believe in education!

## **Evangelism and Church Growth Trends**

The Allegheny East Conference has a much larger proportion of long-term members (those who have been Adventists for 20 years or longer) as compared to recent converts than it did in the 1992 study. This could be related to decreasing numbers of baptisms and Professions of Faith, a growing dropout rate among converts, an increase in the portion of accessions among former Adventists, or some combination of these factors. It is a trend that needs additional study and strategic action by congregations and the conference.

Nearly half of Allegheny East members report that they were raised in Adventist home, as compared to only about a third seven years ago. The portion who are adult converts to the Seventh-day Adventist Church has declined to about half from two-thirds in 1992. Biological church growth has become significantly more important to the conference.

Among adult converts, Friendship Evangelism continues to be the largest single source of new members. The majority come in through this informal, non-programmatic means, but the percentage has dropped steeply over the past seven years. This indicates a decline in member involvement in evangelistic ministry, as do the declines in results from other kinds of personal evangelism, seminar evangelism, small group outreach, literature, and ministries related to specific, felt needs. Only public evangelism has brought in the same portion of the adult converts in 1999 as it did in 1992.

In many ways, the Allegheny East Conference faces a quite different set of realities in its evangelism strategy in 1999 than it did in 1992. The increasing importance of biological growth indicates congregations less interested in outreach and more focused on their own children, youth and families. The fact that most converts still come from Friendship Evangelism despite its steep decline speaks of a need to reinforce this avenue of outreach. The fact that public evangelism has held its “market share” over the seven years while there have been significant declines in other forms of evangelism means both that the importance of public evangelism is greater than in the past, and that more attention must be given to improving the quality and effectiveness, and the level of involvement, in other outreach ministries.

## **Member Attitudes and Needs**

Only six percent of the respondents in the interviews conducted for this study report that they did not attend an Adventist church even once during the previous four Sabbaths. Another 26% reported attending one, two or three out of four Sabbaths. Although normally we would consider a person who attends some Adventist congregation at least half the time an “active” member, these percentages may provide a helpful estimate of the portion of inactive members on the books. It is very probable that the actual portion of church members who do not attend regularly is much higher than 6%, and that the sample interviewed for this survey has a skew toward the active members of Allegheny East Conference congregations.

Seven out of eight Allegheny East Conference members (88%) say they have found a Sabbath School class where they participate regularly. This is a higher percentage than across the Columbia Union, and indicates better than average Sabbath Schools in the conference. Yet, those who have been members more than 20 years are more likely to agree, while new members are less likely to agree. It appears that many congregations are not opening up new Sabbath School classes for their new members, and this has been shown repeatedly to increase the dropout rate among converts, young adults and transfer members. What more can be done to build on the strong Sabbath Schools in the conference and incorporate them into an overall church growth strategy?

There is significant unanimity on the kind of sermons Allegheny East Conference members like. Despite the grumbling you may hear from some sectors, three out of four members (74%) want sermons on “the simple gospel of Jesus.” Nearly as many (70%) prefer topics related to “practical Christian living.” The majority like to hear the traditional doctrines of the church

(57%) preached, and also want sermons on “current moral issues in the secular world” (55%). Half enjoy a series of sermons on a book of the Bible, using the “verse by verse” approach.

There is great diversity in preferences of worship music. Nearly four out of five Allegheny East members (78%) enjoy singing gospel songs on Sabbath morning. Three out of four members (74%) like traditional hymns. At the same time, nearly half (44%) want contemporary Christian music, and about a third of the members (30%) prefer classical music. Allegheny East Conference congregations appear to be making room for all of these tastes without a high level of conflict.

Allegheny East Conference members tend to be more involved in church ministries than the norm among Adventists across North America, though less so than in other conferences in the Columbia Union. About 62% hold a church office as compared to 61% in the NAD and 78% in the Columbia union. More than a third (37%) have attended a witnessing or church ministry training event in the last year as compared to 21% across the NAD and 42% in the Columbia union. The majority (53%) have given evangelistic literature to at least one non-member during the last month as compared to 40% across the NAD and 81% in the Columbia union. Although the norms are reversed in volunteering for Adventist Community Services, Allegheny East members (at 40%) still come in between the NAD where 42% do so and the Columbia Union where only 37% do so.

The trend over seven years, comparing data from the 1992 survey and the 1999 survey, indicates that Allegheny East members are more likely to participate in episodic or individual activities, but less likely to take long-term responsibilities in church and outreach ministries. The percentages who report that they hold a church office and that they volunteer with Adventist Community Services have declined, while the percentages who have attended a training event or given literature to non-members have increased. This is an indicator of how ministry programs have become more complicated to organize and staff with volunteers, and perhaps the need for a new approach to volunteer recruitment and management.

Participation by Allegheny East members in many areas of outreach and evangelism has increased significantly over the past seven years. The largest increase is in small group outreach. This year nearly 40% of the members say that they are assisting with a small, Bible study and fellowship group with hopes of bringing new people to Christ and into the church. About half that percentage was participating in small group ministries in 1992.

Use of the telephone in outreach, participation in door-to-door witnessing, helping to conduct health programs and helping with public evangelism all involve larger percentages of church members than it did seven years ago. There has been a particular increase in participation in health ministries, jumping from 15% in 1992 to 25% in 1999; an increase of about two-thirds in the portion of members assisting in this type of outreach. This is solid evidence of the emphasis and leadership that has been given to health ministry in the Allegheny East Conference over the past few years and demonstrates how effective a conference program can be.



Another example of changing patterns of lay involvement in ministry is the fact that, although still small, the percentage of members involved in conducting family life seminars has doubled over the past seven years. At the same time, participation in Revelation Seminars and similar programs is down, and there has been no change in the percentage of members who report giving personal Bible studies. There is a changing pattern toward more relational and needs-related programs of lay outreach and away from traditional programs. This patterns needs to be taken into consideration in conference planning and church growth strategy.

Almost one member in three (31%) reports that he or she was personally involved in the conversion of a new member during the last year! This is not only evidence of the success of the new patterns in lay witnessing and participation, it is also an important relational reality in evangelism. The church growth strategy and programs of the Allegheny East Conference need to capitalize more fully on this fact.

Asked to identify what they have actually observed to be the most productive means of winning new members into their local church, the largest number of members (36%) say it is Friendship Evangelism. About half as many (18%) say it is public evangelism. Community service and personal Bible studies are also seen to be effective methods. These, as well as door-to-door witnessing, are rated more effective in the Allegheny East Conference than they are elsewhere in the Columbia Union, while Revelation Seminars, small groups, youth and children's ministries, media ministry and literature evangelism are seen to be less effective means of winning new members.

Three out of four Allegheny East Conference members (74%) have had a relative or friend drop out of active membership in the Adventist Church. This is an area of major concern for members, and one they feel the conference must give more attention to.

Another major concern on the part of the members is the need for the Allegheny East Conference to sponsor an expanded program of humanitarian activities. An amazing 98% think the Adventist Church should expand its programs to meet the needs of the homeless, the poor in the inner city and the unemployed. This is significantly greater than the 83% of members across the Columbia Union who hold the same view. Among Allegheny East members, all generations and socioeconomic categories are equally strong in this view. This must be given major attention in the strategic planning of the conference.

## **Spiritual Life of Church Members**

Survey questions about the devotional practices of church members give evidence of an increase in spiritual activity among Allegheny East Conference members. A growing number report daily participation and the percentages exceed the norm for members throughout the Adventist Church in North America.

Nine out of ten church members (88%) indicate that they engage in personal, private prayer on a daily basis. This is a significant increase over the 70% who gave the same response in the 1992 study, and compares favorably to the 68% of Adventists across North America who report the same.

Nearly half of Allegheny East members (47%) participate in personal Bible study each day, and almost as many (43%) study the Sabbath School lesson. Again, this is an increase over the number in 1992, when 33% reported daily personal Bible study and 35% reported daily study of the lesson. Across North America, only 36% report daily personal Bible study and 32% report daily lesson study.

Two in five Allegheny East Conference members (39%) say that they participate in family worship in their home on a daily basis. This too is better than the percentage giving the same report in 1992 and those giving the same response across North America.

Only reading from Ellen White books remains at essentially the same low level over the past seven years. About 16% of Allegheny East members indicate they read daily from Ellen White's writings. In 1992 it was 13% and across North America it is 15%, but the difference between all three of these findings is not statistically significant.

## **Christian Education**

There are indicators of a decline in support for Christian education. Less than a third of church members have ever attended a school operated by the Adventist Church, and this is a smaller portion than gave the same report in the 1992 survey.

Only a third of member households with school-age children (34%) have at least one child attending an Adventist school. About 35 percent of those who do not have their children in church school say that it is because their family finances cannot afford the cost. Less than one in eight (12%) say that it is because the nearest Adventist school is too far away, and smaller portions indicate that it is because of the low academic quality of church school or that the particular course of study their child needs is not available. Cost and accessibility are twice as likely to come up among Allegheny East parent as among Adventist parents throughout the Columbia Union.

It is significant that among respondents who do not have their children in Adventist schools, one of the largest portions (32%) say that their reasons are not on our list, which includes items gleaned from similar studies over the past three decades. We suspect that a new generation of Adventist parents has a non-traditional set of attitudes toward Christian education, and these attitudes need to be explored and understood to insure the continued success of our schools.

## **Giving Styles of Members**

Stewardship education has not increased the number of “intentional givers”—those who commit themselves to give a percentage of their income above and beyond the tithe to church offerings—in the Allegheny East Conference over the past seven years. Members here are still more likely to be intentional givers than are church members across North America, by less likely than throughout the Columbia Union. A decline has also occurred in the proportion of “habitual givers,” which is still less than the percentage in North America or the Columbia Union.

At the same time there has been an increase in the percentage of “reactive givers” that need regular appeals and stimulus to encourage giving. Not only as the portion of reactive givers increased in the Allegheny East Conference, it is now larger than the percentage in North America and the Columbia Union. The number of members who report that they are not giving offerings in addition to Tithe has also increased some. These facts indicate that study may need to be given to a new stewardship approach.

## **Strategic Planning Options**

The church members interviewed in this study were asked to evaluate 19 specific aspects of the Allegheny East Conference. Each member was asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 5, on which “5 means you believe that the item is very strong and positive and 1 means that you feel that the item is very weak and needs much improvement.”

A majority of Allegheny East members gave nine of the 19 items a score of 4 or 5 on the five-point scale. Two thirds or more see as strengths in the conference the length of worship on Sabbath (71%), the team of pastors in the conference (67%), and the gifted, dedicated and active church members (65%). About 60% give the same response to the adult Sabbath School and the organizational structure of the conference. Smaller numbers rate as positive and strong the leadership of conference administration (56%), Pine Forge Academy (55%), strategic planning by the local church (54%), and communication and information in the Adventist Church (50%).

Five items out of the 19 on the list received the highest percentage of low scores on the five-point scale (a 1 or 2). One in four church members see as weaknesses of the Allegheny East Conference the number of Adventist children enrolled in church schools, [the lack of] family counseling services and the training seminars and similar events provided by the conference. One in five church members rate as weak and needing change the type and effectiveness of public evangelism conducted in the Allegheny East Conference. The same number rated communication and information in the Adventist Church as weak and needing change, putting this item on the list of weaknesses as well as the list of strengths.

Six out of the 19 items fall into a middle range where less than a majority of members rate them as “strong and positive” and smaller numbers rate them as “weak and need improvement.” Two in five members rate the department directors at the conference office as

strong while half that number rate them as weak. The same evaluation is given to a shared vision for the conference. The spread is more like two to one, positive ratings to negative ratings for conference finances, the level of trust on the part of church members toward the conference, timely implementation of programs and goals by the conference, and teamwork between the conference, pastors and lay leaders.

Each member interviewed was also asked to prioritize the six major opportunities which have surfaced in the Allegheny East Conference strategic planning process over the past year. The majority would give top priority to involvement of youth (53%) and a holistic approach to ministry that combines health, family life and community service (50%). One in three (35%) would give first priority to the needs of the black male in our society, while one in four would give first priority to the fact that the failure of public schools makes church schools a favorable choice for parents. Less than a quarter of the members (23%) would give priority to an increasingly multicultural society combined with the church's world vision, and only half that number (12%) would give priority to mobilizing the capable church members who want to participate in ministries.

In the same way, each member interviewed was also asked to prioritize the six major challenges facing the Allegheny East Conference as developed in the strategic planning process over the past year. The majority (54%) would give top priority to the needs of our youth. Nearly half the members would give first priority to strengthening the family (45%) and how to become a viable part of the local communities where churches exist (41%). One in four would give first priority to how to re-focus evangelism, while smaller percentages would give priority to the slow-down in church growth and how to get church members to connect with world vision.

### **General Comments by Members**

During each interview, the church members were also asked one general, open-ended question: "If you could make one specific suggestion to the top leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, what would it be?" The majority had no response at all, and a number of the responses were of a general, spiritual character.

The largest number of responses that could be clustered had a "back to basics" theme. Some 36 individuals (12% of the total sample) said things like "get back to the real message that the church was founded on," or "please don't relax the standards on dress and jewelry," or "stress more reverence in the churches." Church leaders "should be concerned with baptizing individuals who really understand the doctrines," said another member.

Almost as many responses mentioned the needs of youth. About 30 individuals (10% of the total sample) made suggestions such as "reach out to the needs of youth," and "focus on the youth, including the ones in public schools. We need more outreach programs to young people in the community, meeting their needs." Another member said, "Listen to the young adults, they are our future as a church." And, "more young people would come to church if young people could

become involved” said yet another. “Target more evangelism toward youth,” said another respondent, while yet another worried that “youth are becoming extinct in our Church.”

A total of 28 church members (9% of the total sample) made comments urging a need for a stronger grace orientation or more warmth in the Adventist Church. “Show more love; be less judgmental,” is a typical comment. The aged members “need to be taken care of by the church,” urged one respondent. “Don’t preach Ellen G. White as doctrine, make Jesus the focal point,” said another. “The Adventist religion needs to be more Christ-centered, not based on tradition and doctrine,” urged yet another. “Teach us to be more loving. [Preachers sound] very judgmental; there is lots of telling us what to do. [Some] people worship Adventism instead of God.”

A total of 26 church members (8% of the total sample) expressed a wish for more “unity” and cooperation between races within the Adventist Church. A typical comment is, “promote inter-racial unity; break down the barriers, so we can act as one” Church. “We need more multicultural congregations,” said one respondent. Another urged that “we need an agreement between blacks and whites to become one; let the public see that we are one and stop being separate.” Several said bluntly, “combine the Regional Conferences with the white conferences.”

On a related topic there were seven comments about problems of racism and acceptance of people of color among the leadership, publications and public activities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Three of these seven individuals also made comments expressing the need for more inter-racial cooperation and harmony. An analysis of the responses from all 30 individuals in both categories provides the following breakdown:

- 7 expressed a need for more acceptance of, or fairness toward, people of color by the white majority or leadership in the denomination
- 10 made clear suggestions about eliminating or modifying separate organizational structures originally based on race within the denomination
- 10 made less specific comments oriented toward bridging the gap between black and white communities within the denomination and encouraging greater cooperation between the two groups on some projects
- 3 made very general comments about “unity” that are difficult to classify

A total of 20 church members (7% of the sample) suggested the need to increase community service and visibility. “Be more concerned with human needs,” said one respondent. “We need more outreach to the inner city,” said another. “Devote more time to community needs,” urged another. “Get out into the community and do hands-on activities,” said yet another. “Give leadership to more community-based efforts such as soup kitchens,” said another. “Adventists stay to themselves too much. We need to enter into the local community more.”

Some 16 church members (6% of the sample) urged an expansion in outreach and evangelism. "We need more emphasis on soul winning," said one member. "Make more use of the media to spread the word," said another. "Equip our members to evangelize," recommended another, asking that the denomination "teach several methods" for personal ministry "instead of just one." The need for a "contemporary approach to the dissemination of our beliefs and doctrines," was mentioned by another member.

Others suggested changes in the budgets and financial policies of the denomination (11 responses) and improvements in the tenure and work of pastors (11 responses). Other comments mentioned a need to improve communication within the denomination (9 responses), do away with "politics" in the church (8 responses), and make church schools more affordable (6 responses). Only two respondents expressed clear, overt "congregationalism." Eight respondents voiced specific praise and support for denominational leaders.

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# **An Information Base for Strategic Planning**

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**Allegheny East Conference  
Seventh-day Adventist Church**

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# Sources

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- 1999 data are from telephone interviews with a random sample of 308 church members during January and February
    - ▶ At the 95th percentile of reliability, the allowance for sampling error is 5% (+/-)
  - Conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry
    - ▶ Paul Richardson, executive director
    - ▶ Kandra Luke, project coordinator
    - ▶ Monte Sahlin, analyst & writer of summary report
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## **Sources - 2**

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1992 data are from *Portrait of a Regional Conference: A Survey of the Allegheny East Conference* by Harold Lee & Monte Sahlin

Union and NAD data are from *Beyond Vision 2000: An Information Base for Strategic Planning* by Monte Sahlin & Paul Richardson

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# American Generations

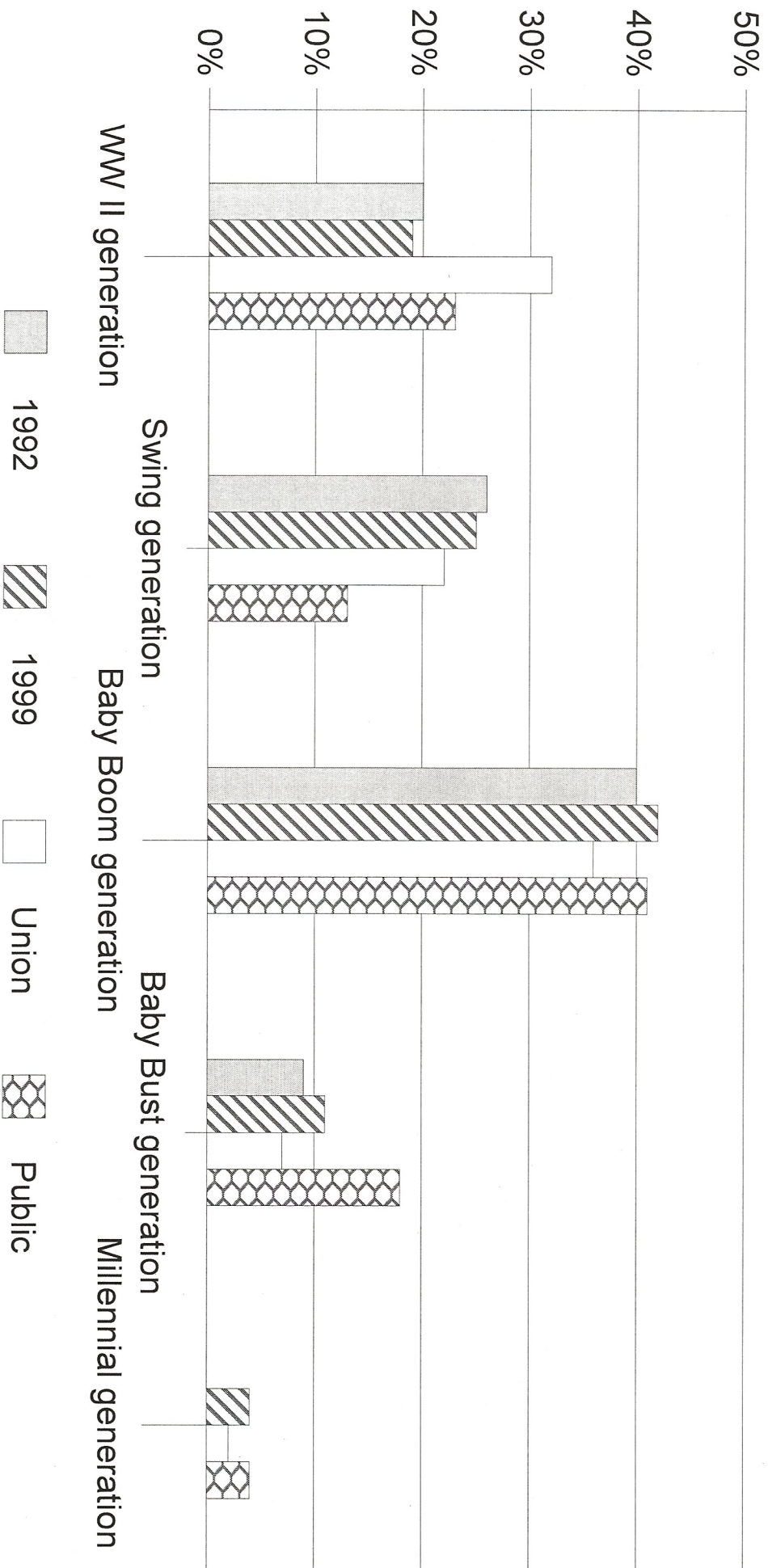
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- World War II generation, born 1909-1932, now 66 through 90 years of age
  - Swing generation, born 1933-1945, now 53 through 65 years of age
  - Baby Boom generation, born 1946-1964, now 34 through 52 years of age
  - Baby Bust generation (sometimes called Gen X), born 1976-1965, now 22 through 33 years of age
  - Millennial generation, born 1977-1994, now 4 through 21 years of age
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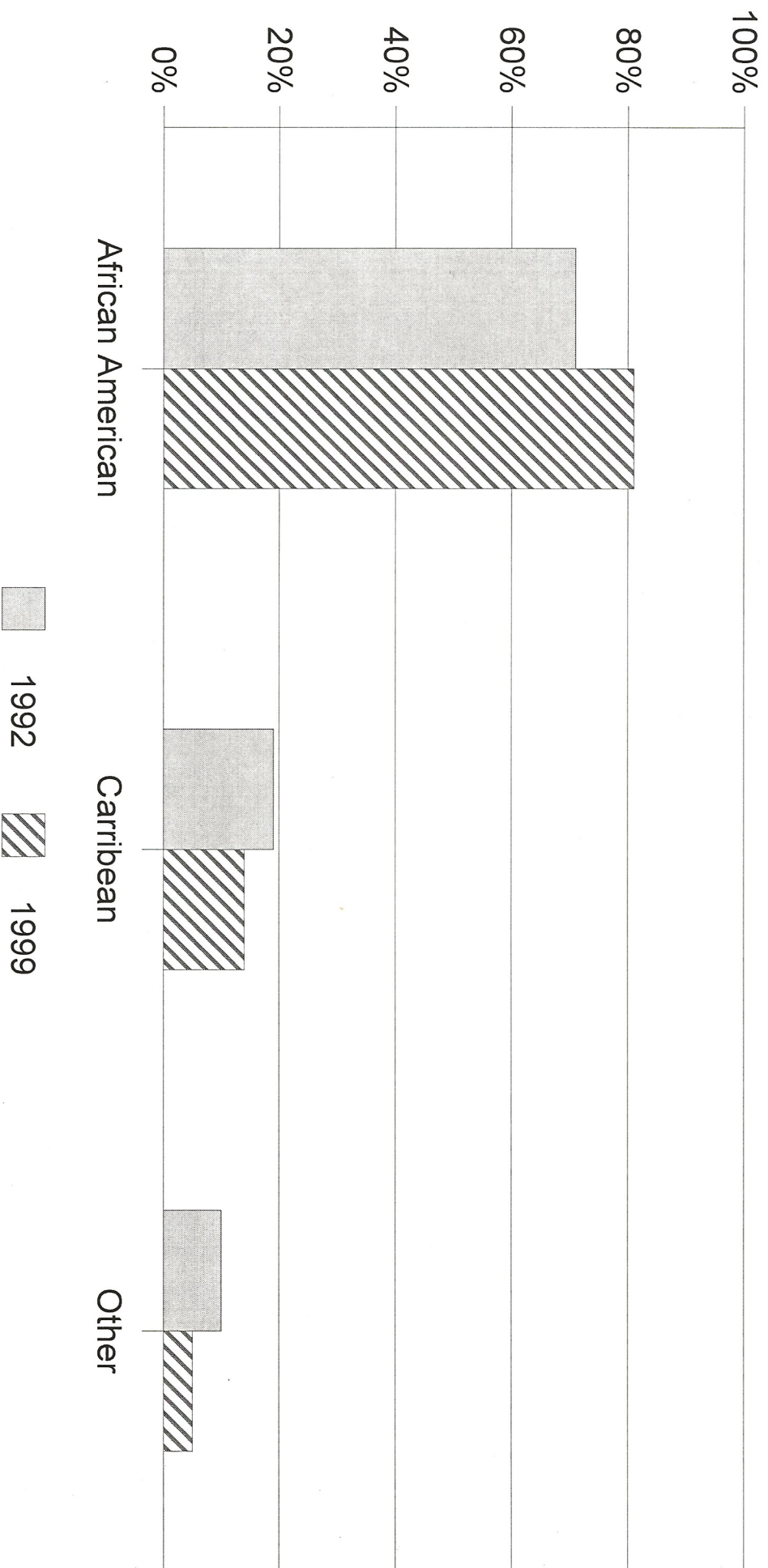
# Generations

## Allegheny East Conference



# Ethnicity

## Allegheny East Conference



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# Immigration

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Allegheny East Conference

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19% of AEC members were **not** born as citizens of the USA

This is about the same as in the 1992 survey, so there has not been a significant increase

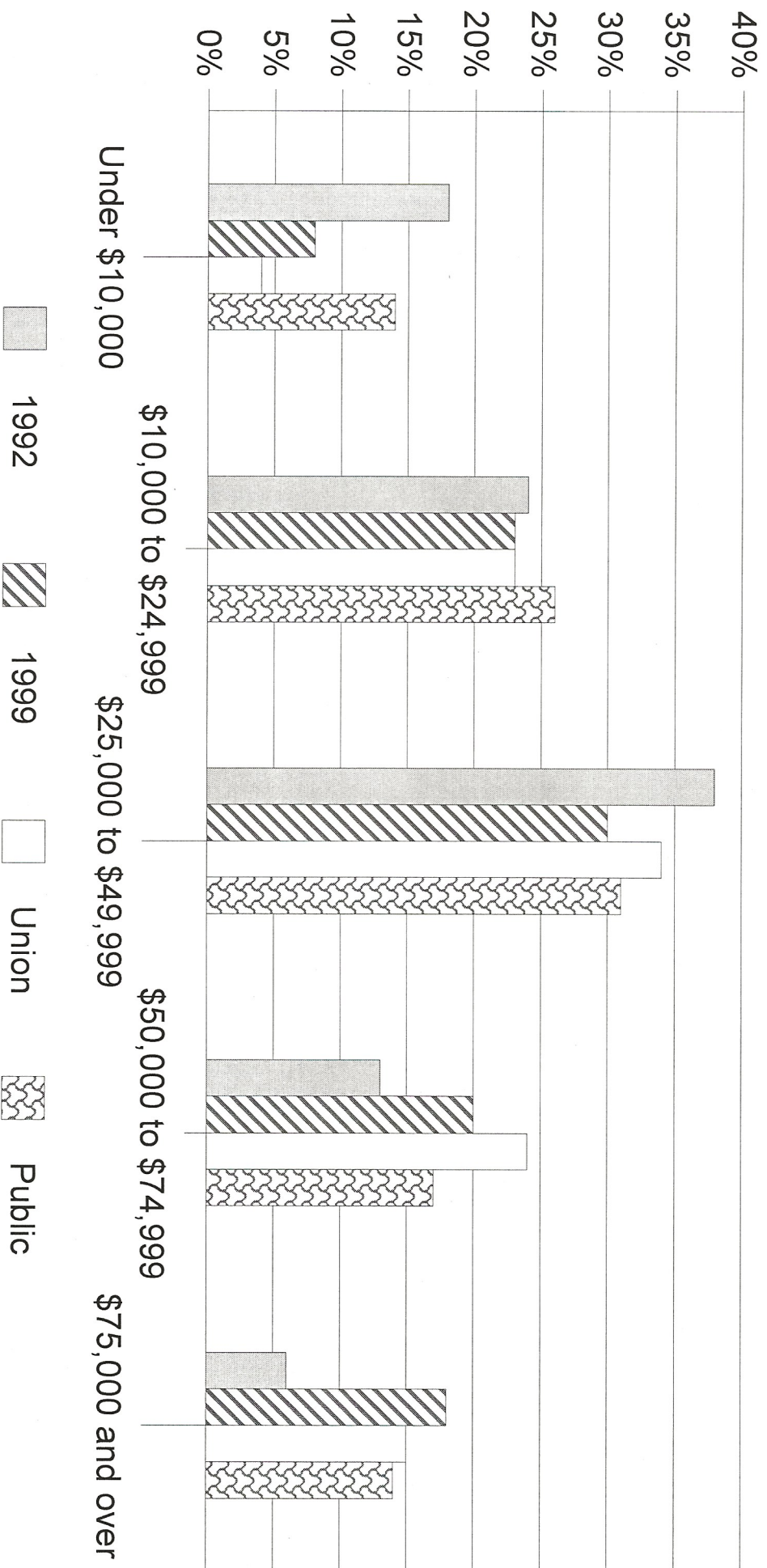
24% of Adventists in the Columbia Union Conference were **not** born in the USA

9% of the current population of the USA was born as a citizen of another nation

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# Annual Household Income

## Allegheny East Conference



# Employment Status

Allegheny East Conference

**1992**

**1999**

**Men**

**Women**

**Men &**

**Women**

**Full time**

**71%**

**63%**

**63%**

**Part time**

**7%**

**13%**

**12%**

**Retired**

**11%**

**10%**

**24%**

**Unemployed**

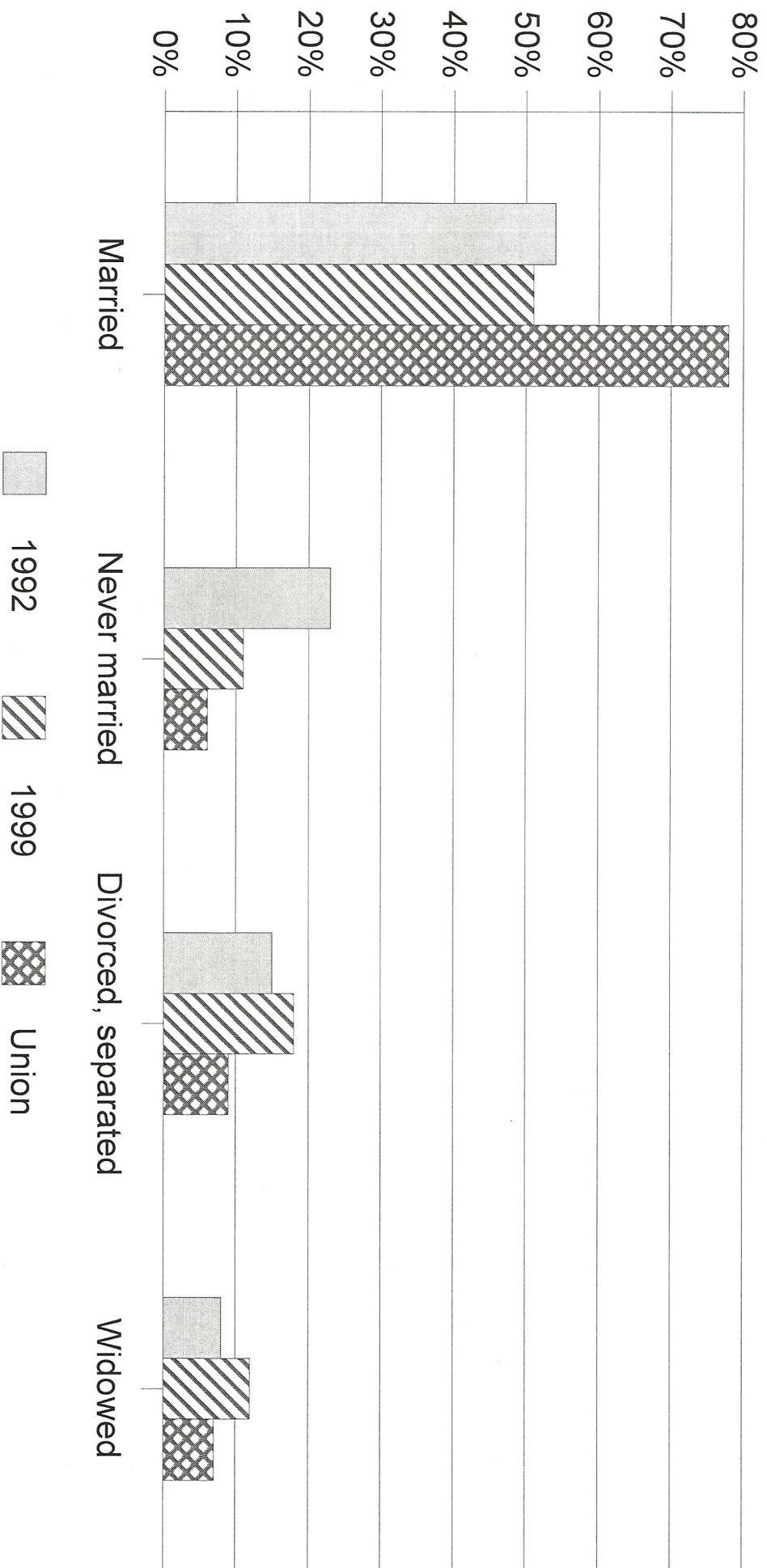
**10%**

**20%**

**0%**

# Marital Status of Members

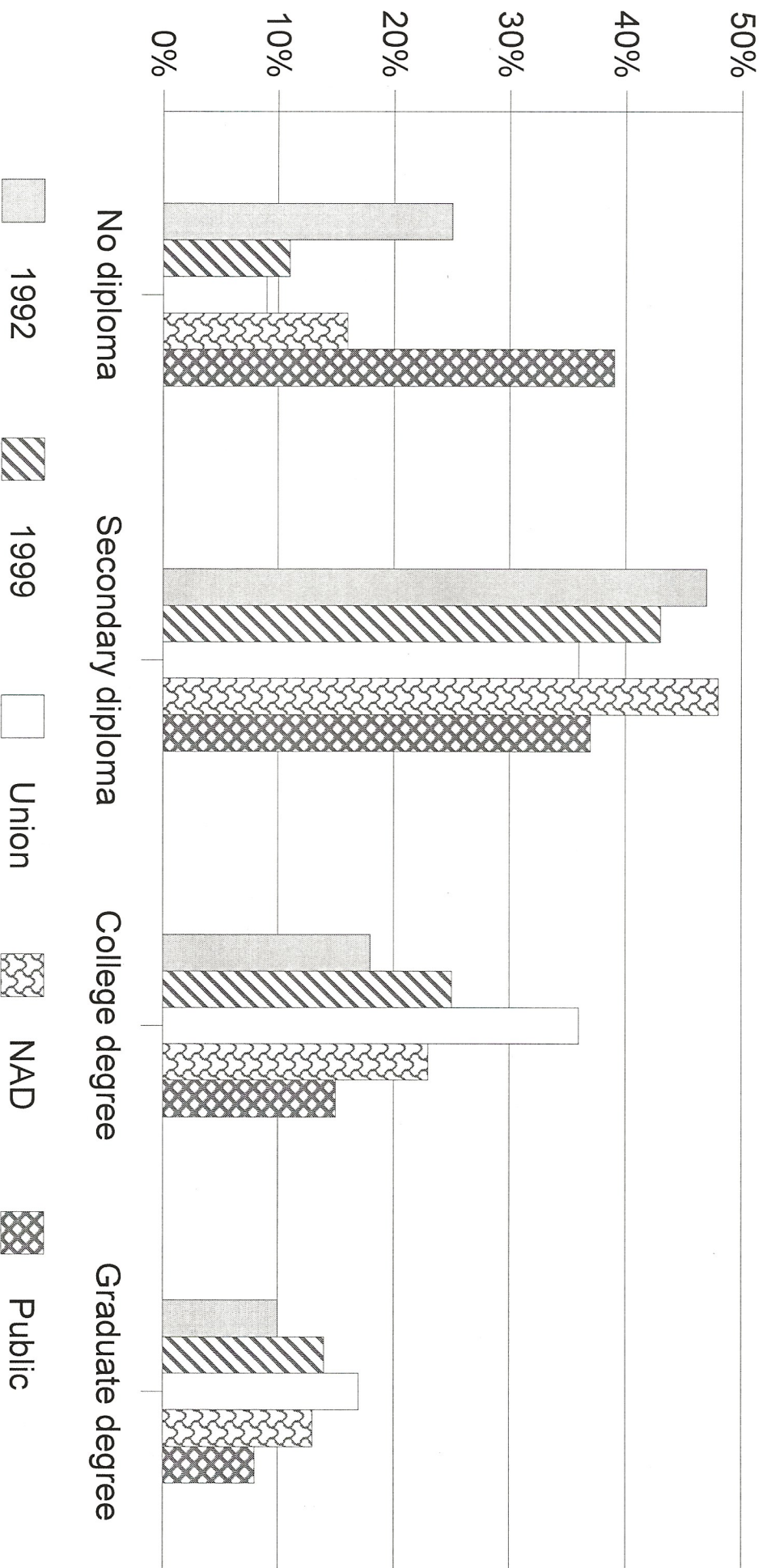
## Allegheny East Conference





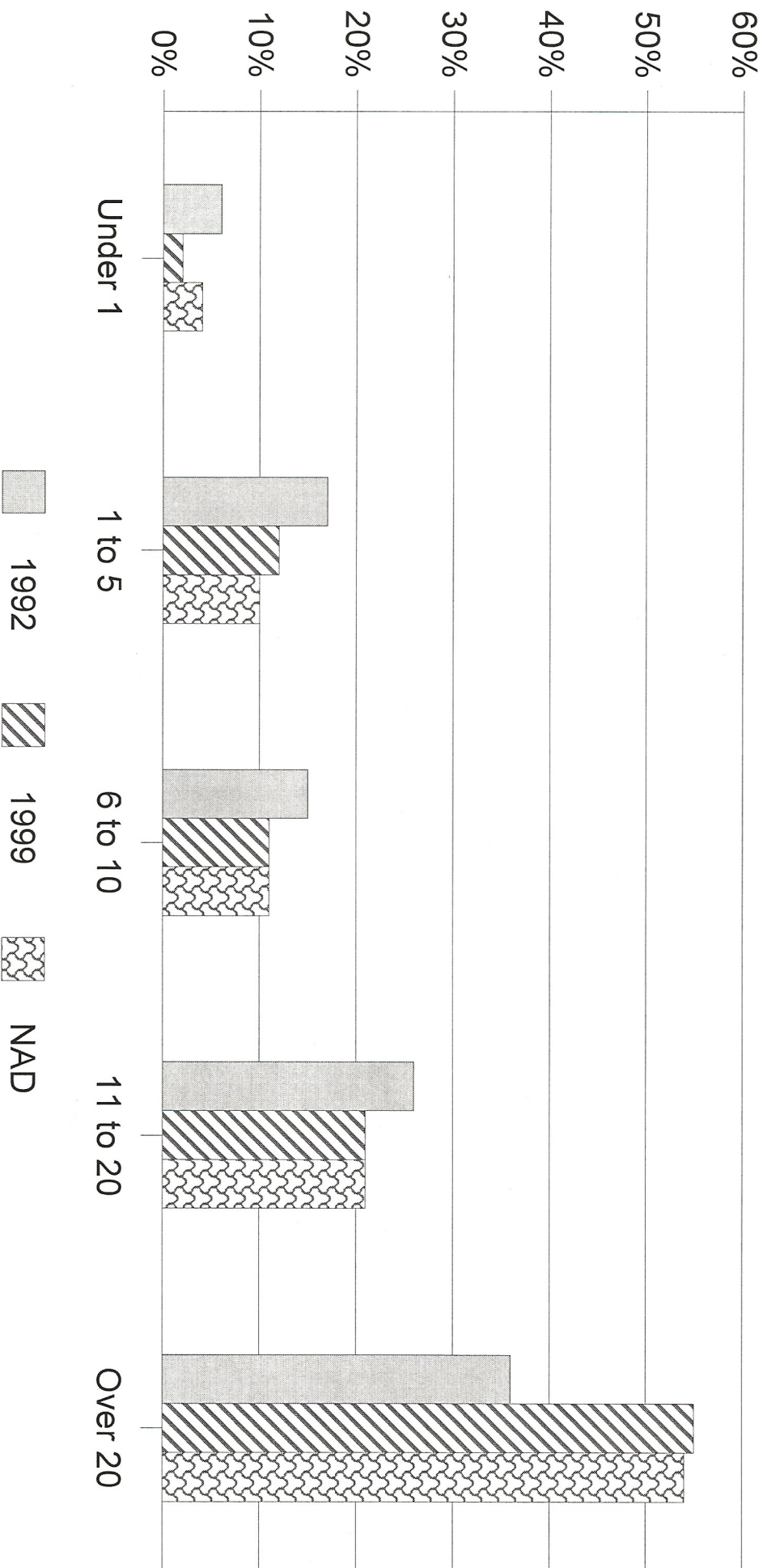
# Level of Education

## Allegheny East Conference

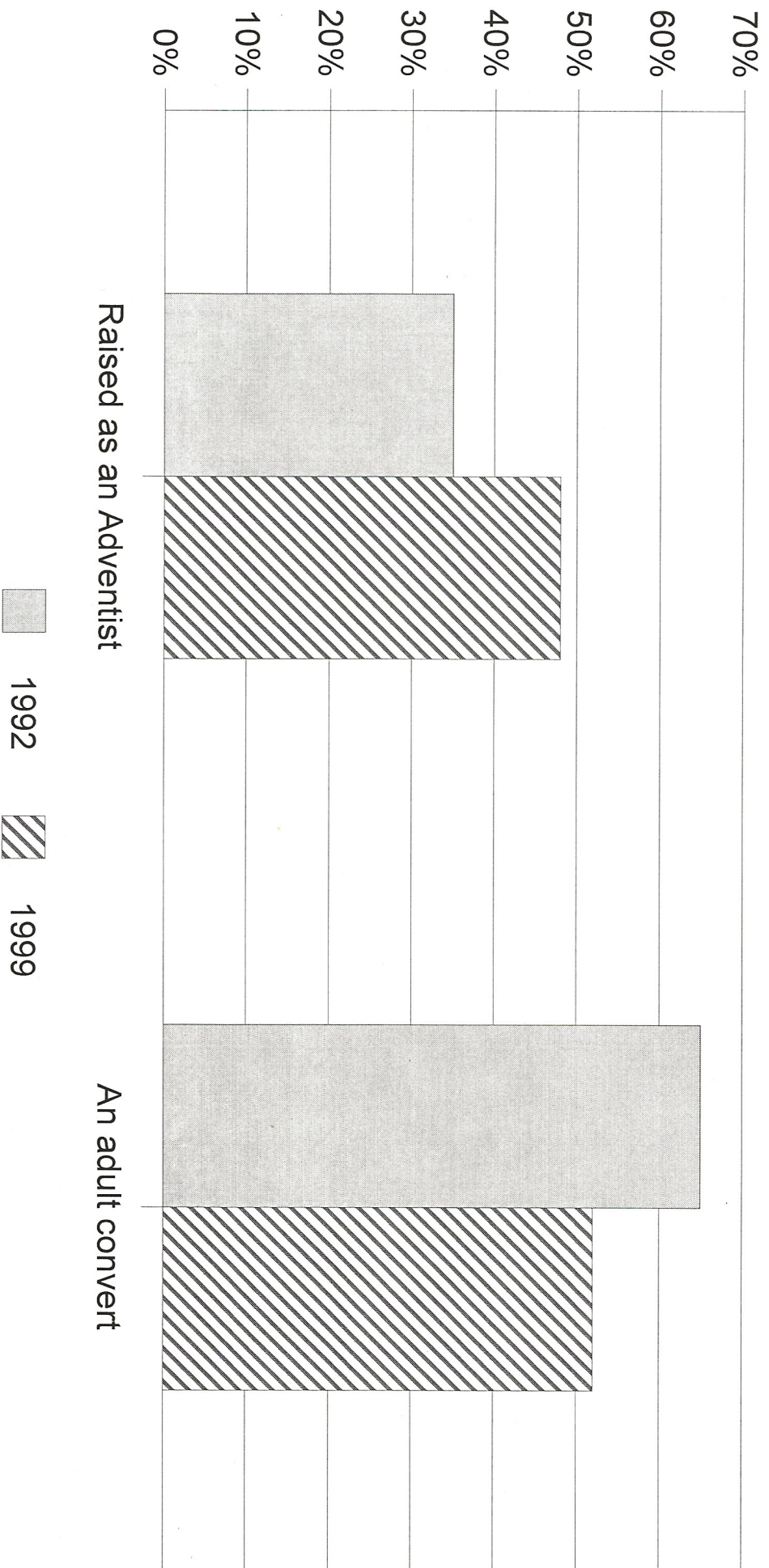


# Years in the Adventist Church

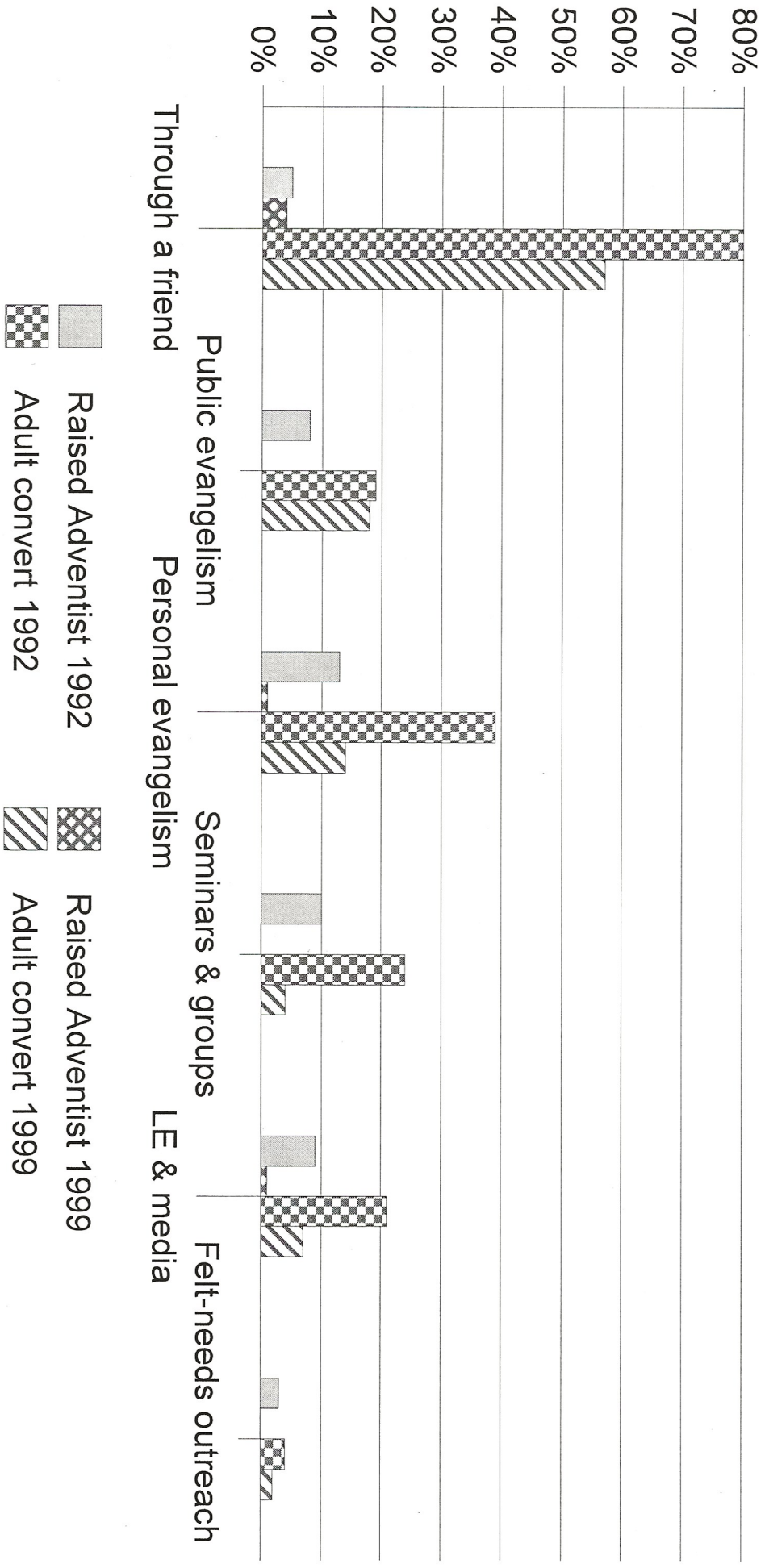
## Allegheny East Conference



# How did you happen to join the church?



# How did you happen to join the church?



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# **Evangelistic Trends**

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Allegheny East Conference

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**Increasing importance of biological growth**

**Most converts still come from Friendship Evangelism**

**Public evangelism has held its “market share” over the seven years**

**Significant decline in all other forms of evangelism**

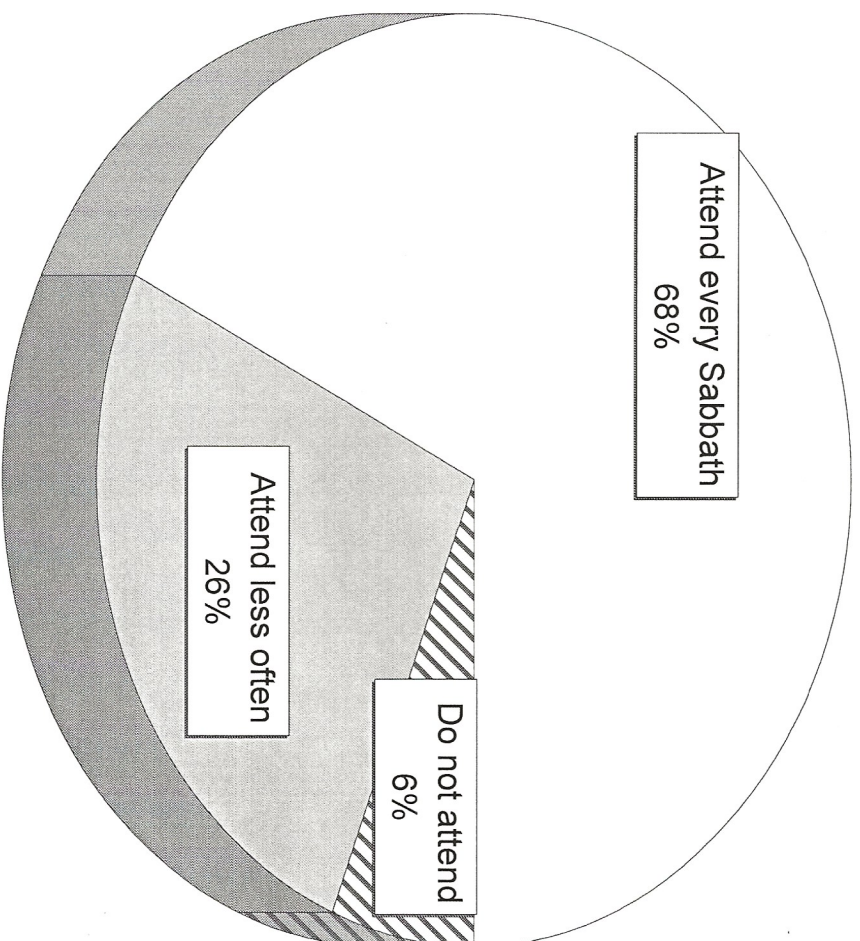
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# Sabbath Attendance

Allegheny East Conference



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# Sabbath School Participation

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88% have found a Sabbath School class where they are comfortable and feel accepted and cared for

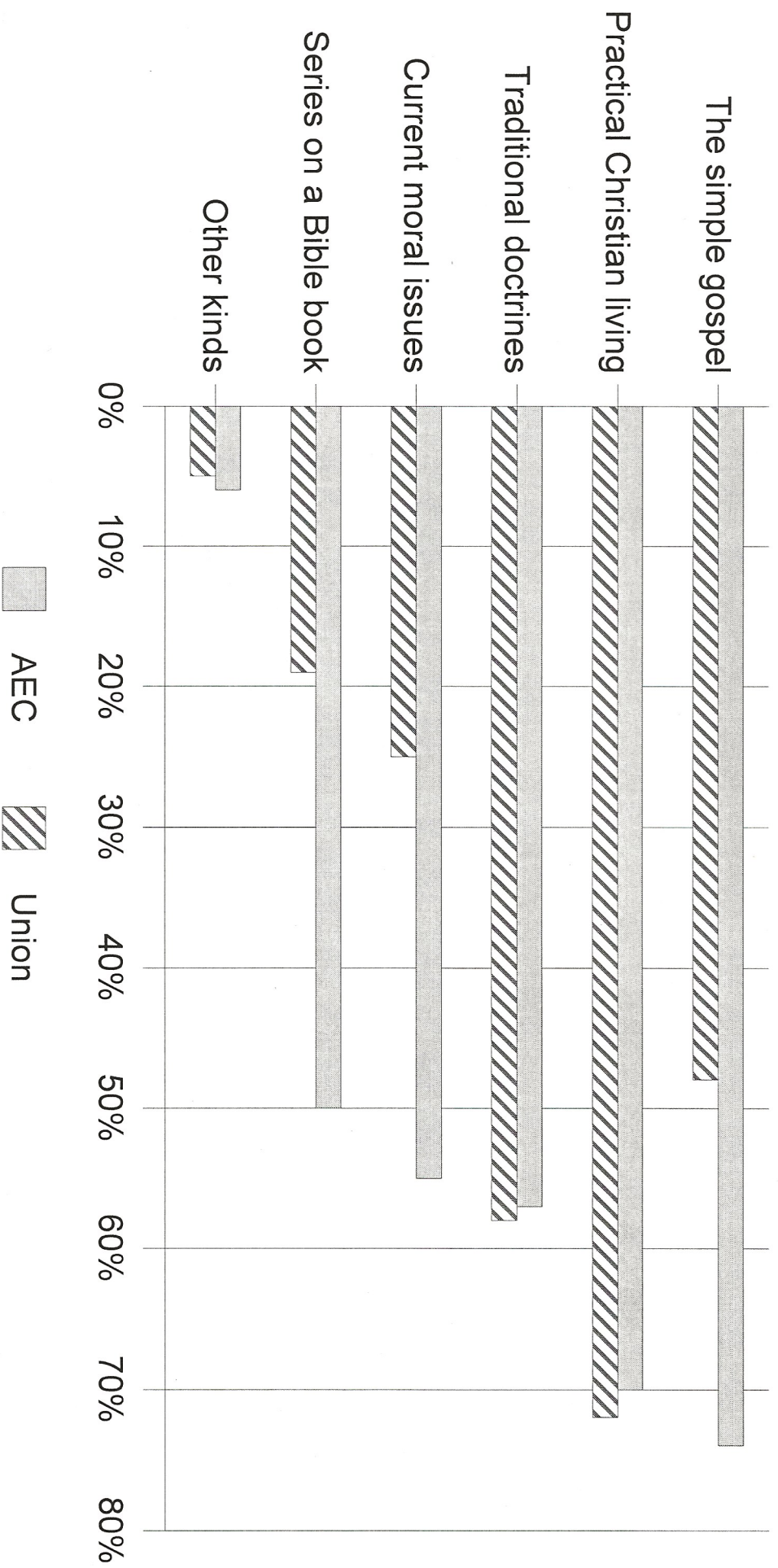
Compared to 83% across the Columbia Union Conference

Those who have been members more than 20 years are more likely to agree; new members are less likely to agree

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# Sermon Preferences

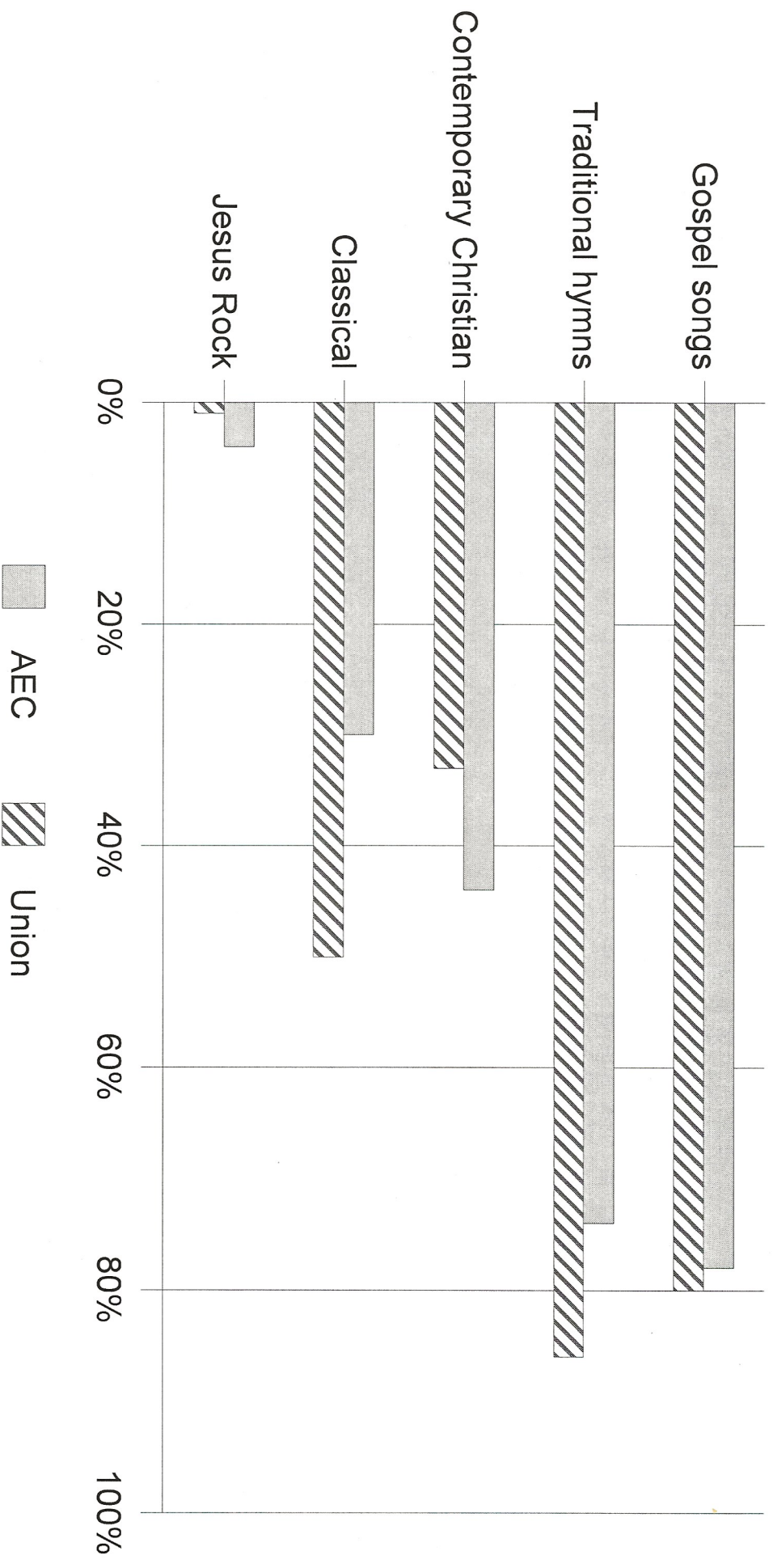
## Allegheny East Conference





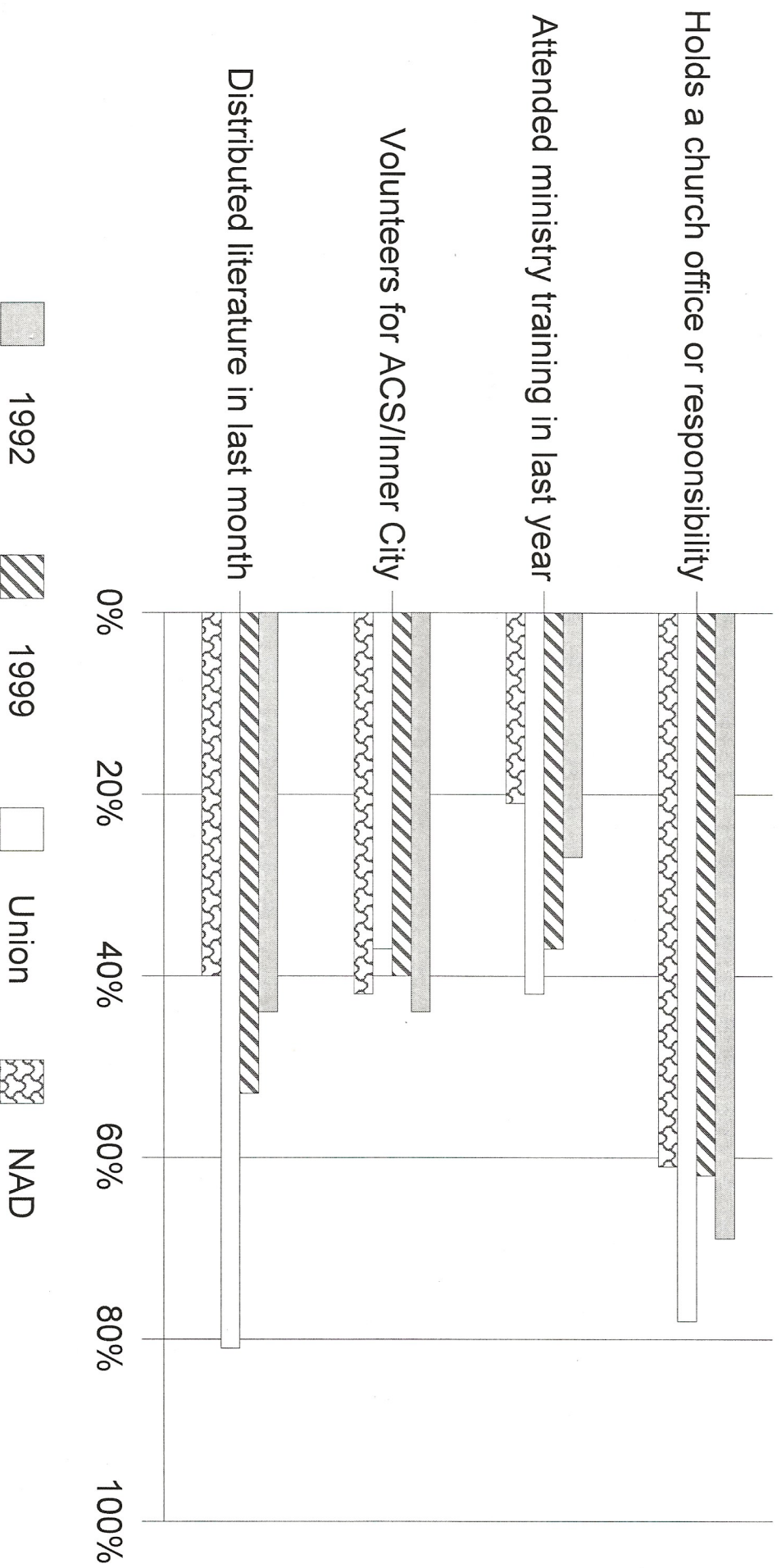
# Worship Music Preferences

## Allegheny East Conference



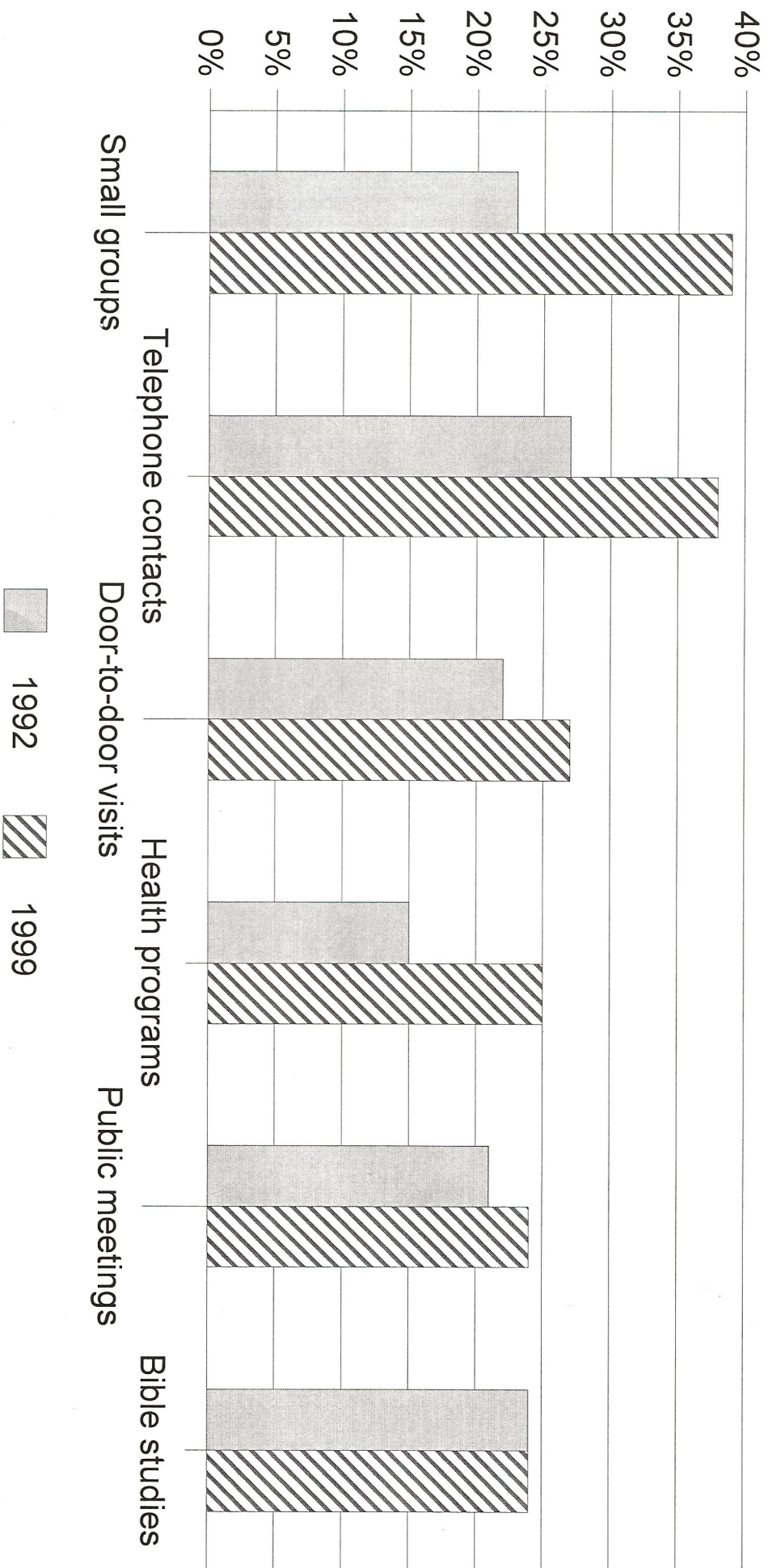
# Involvement of Members

## Allegheny East Conference



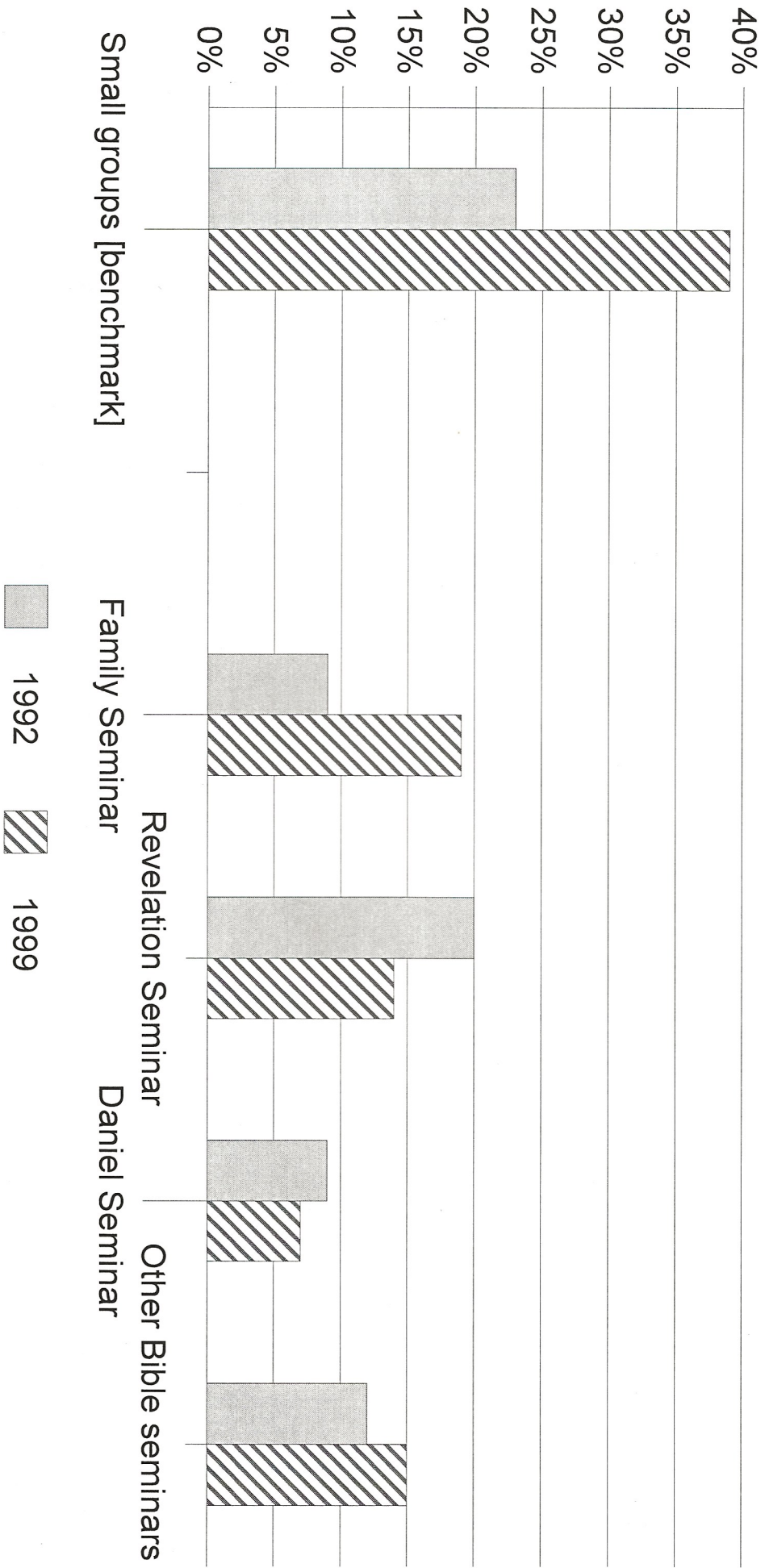
# Participation in Witnessing

## Top Six Programs



# Participation in Witnessing

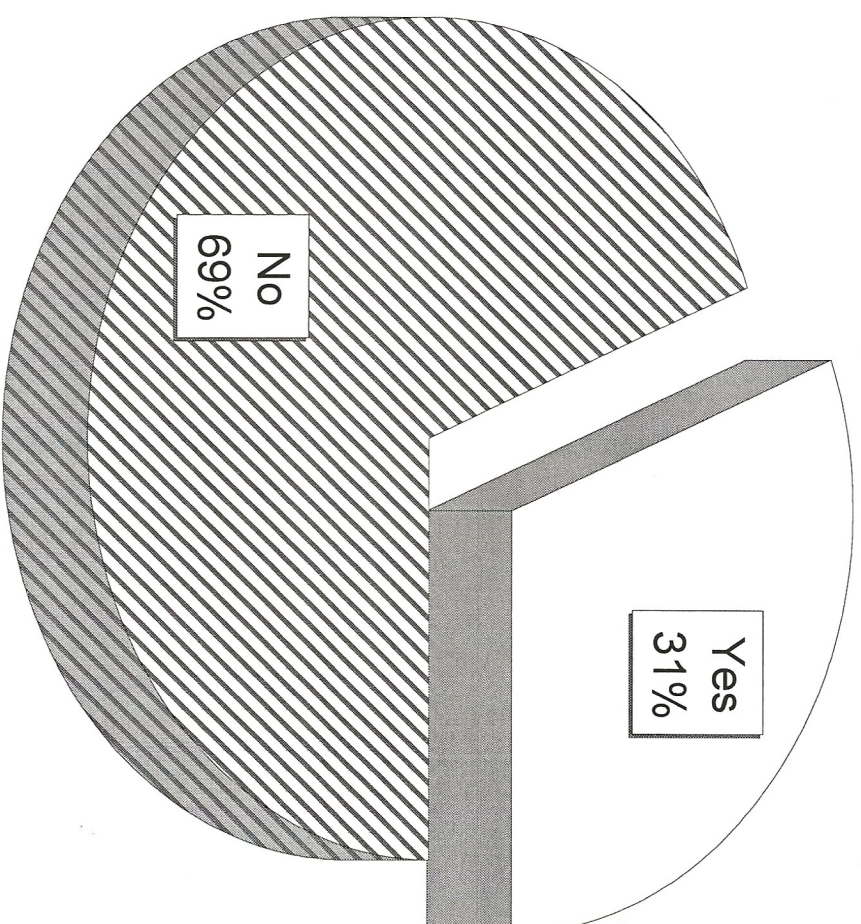
## Second-rank Programs



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# Helped bring someone into the church in the last year

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# Key Question

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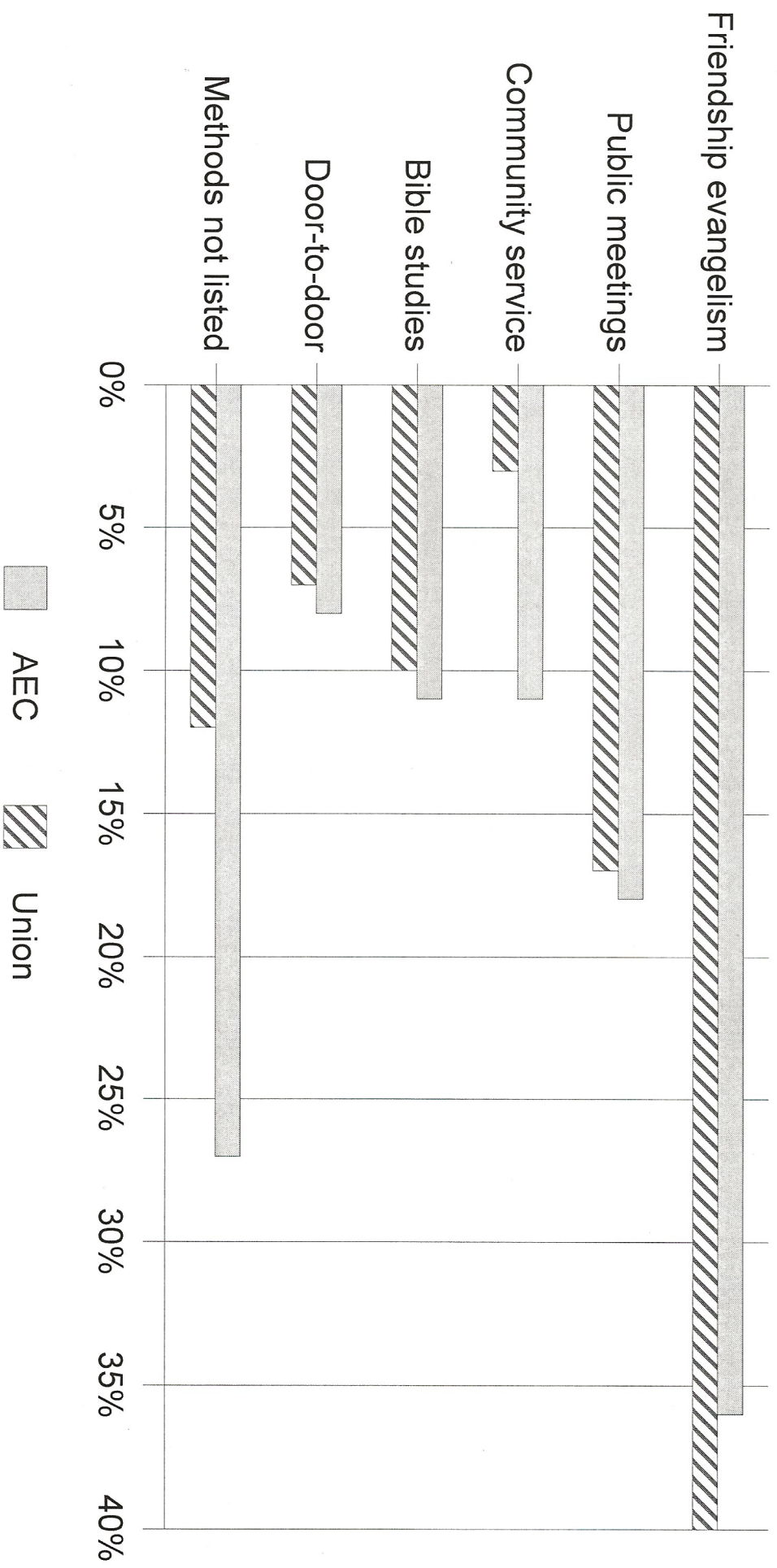
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**In your local church, what have you observed to be the most effective method for bringing in new members?**

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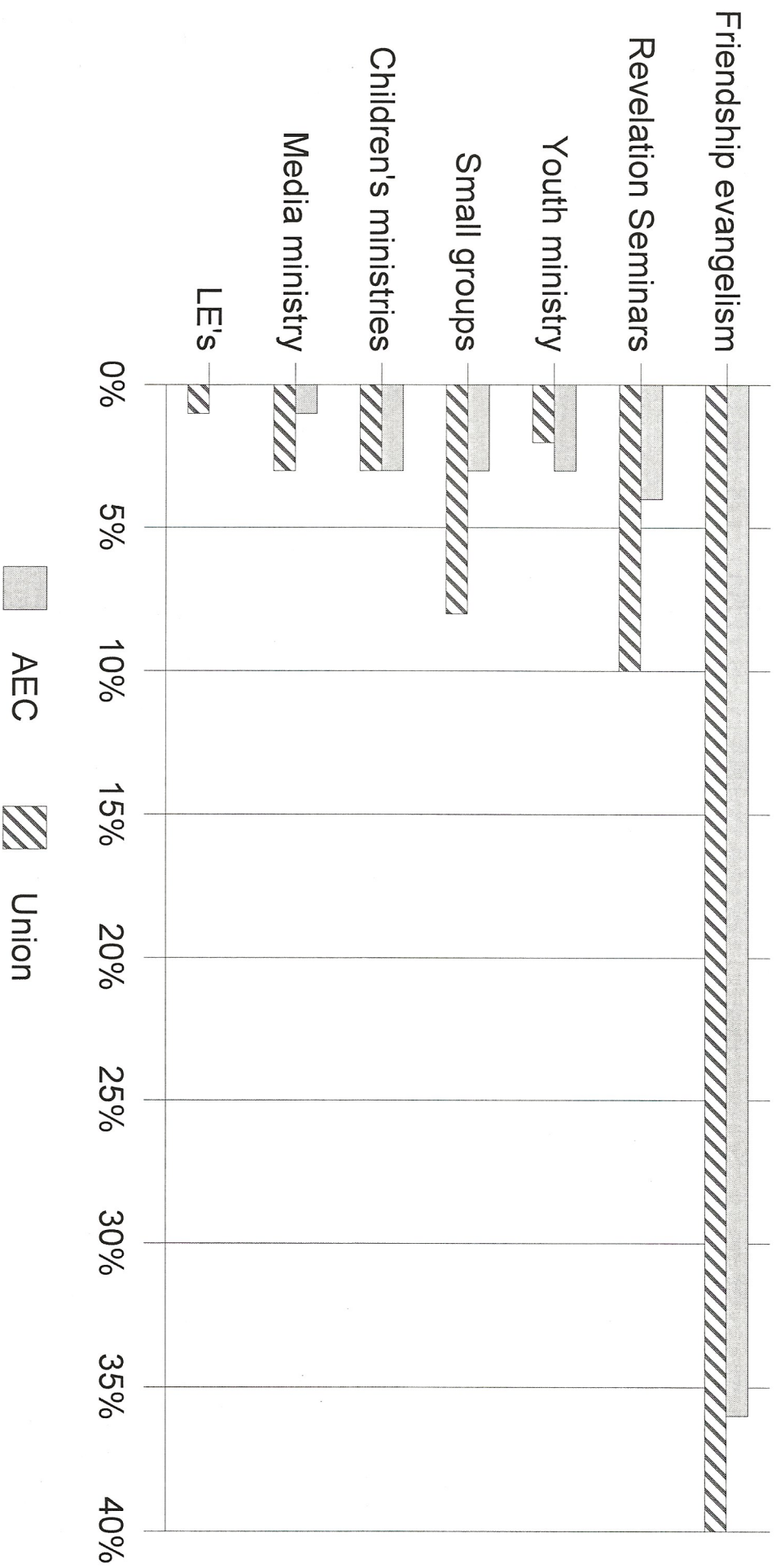
# Most Effective Methods

## Allegheny East Conference



# Most Effective Methods 2

## Allegheny East Conference





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# **Inactive & Former Members**

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## **A Major Concern of the Laity**

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**74% say they have a relative or friend who used to be an active member of the Adventist Church, but has since dropped out**

**The longer a respondent has been a church member, the more likely they are to report that they have a loved one who has dropped out**

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# **Humanitarian Activities**

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## **A Major Concern of the Laity**

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**98% think the Adventist Church should expand its programs to meet the needs of the homeless, the poor in the inner city and the unemployed.**

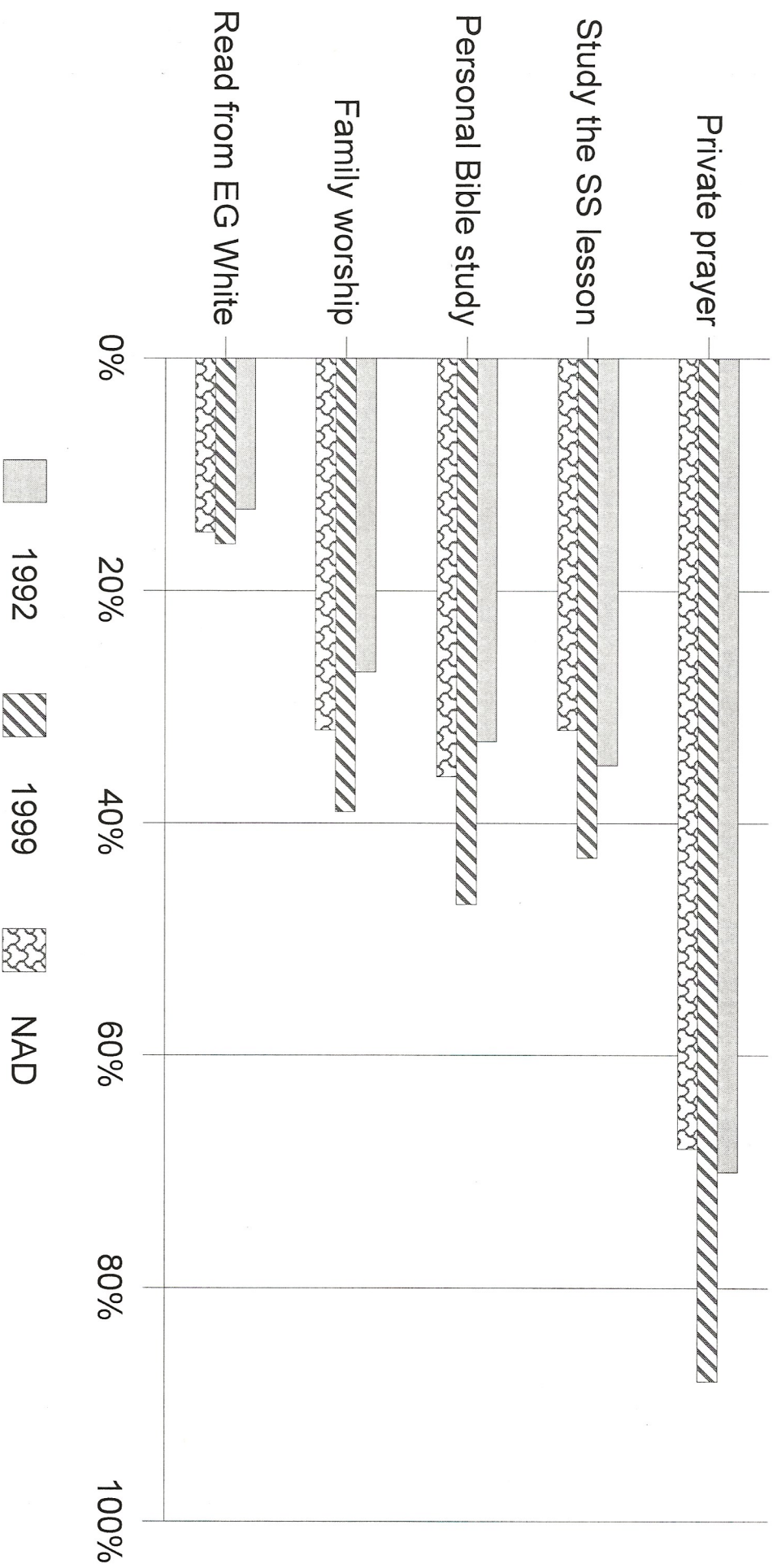
**Compared to 83% across the union**

**All generations and socioeconomic categories are equally strong in this view**

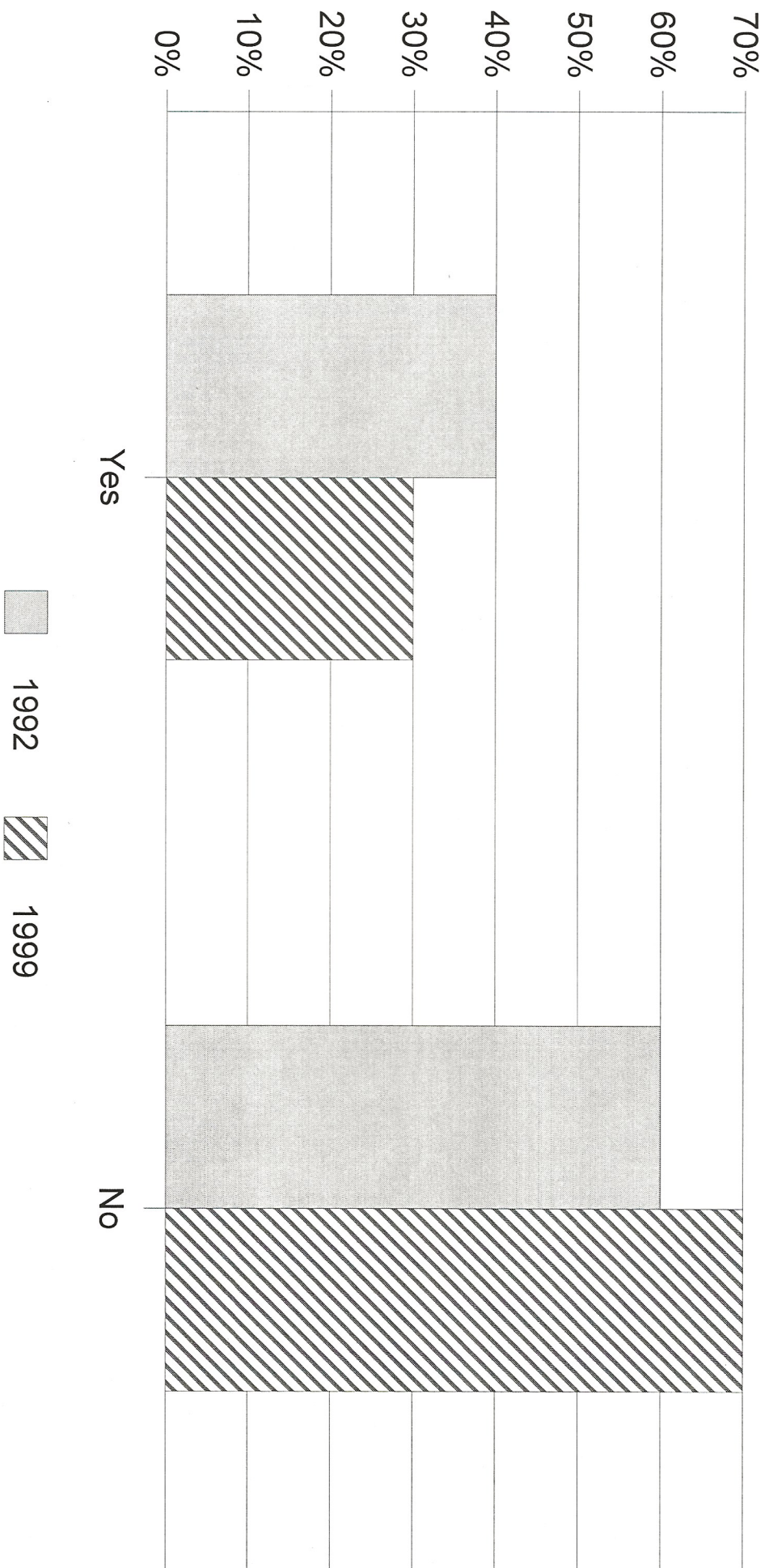
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# Daily Devotional Practices

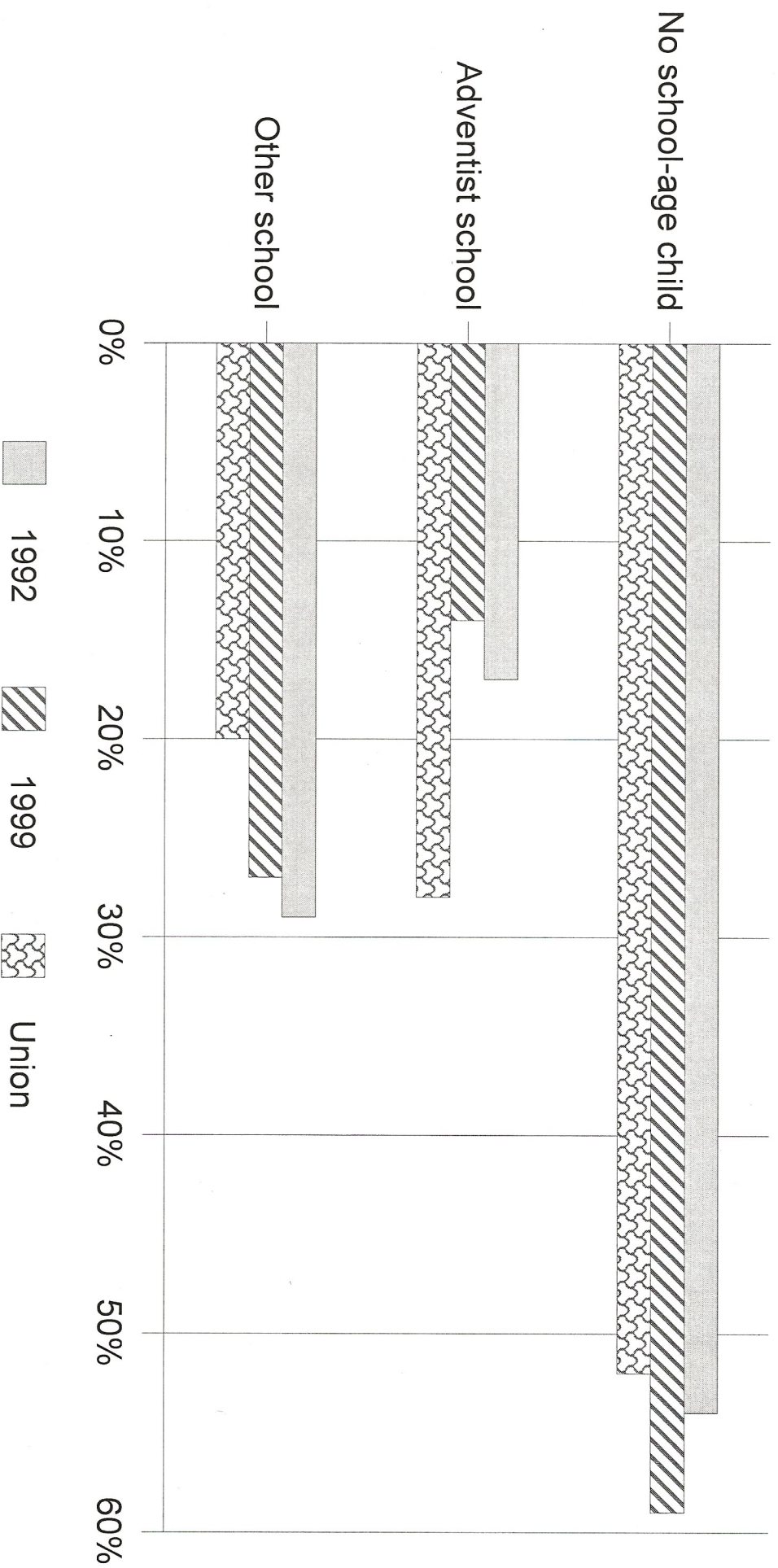
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# Did you ever attend an Adventist school?



# Where are your children enrolled in school?



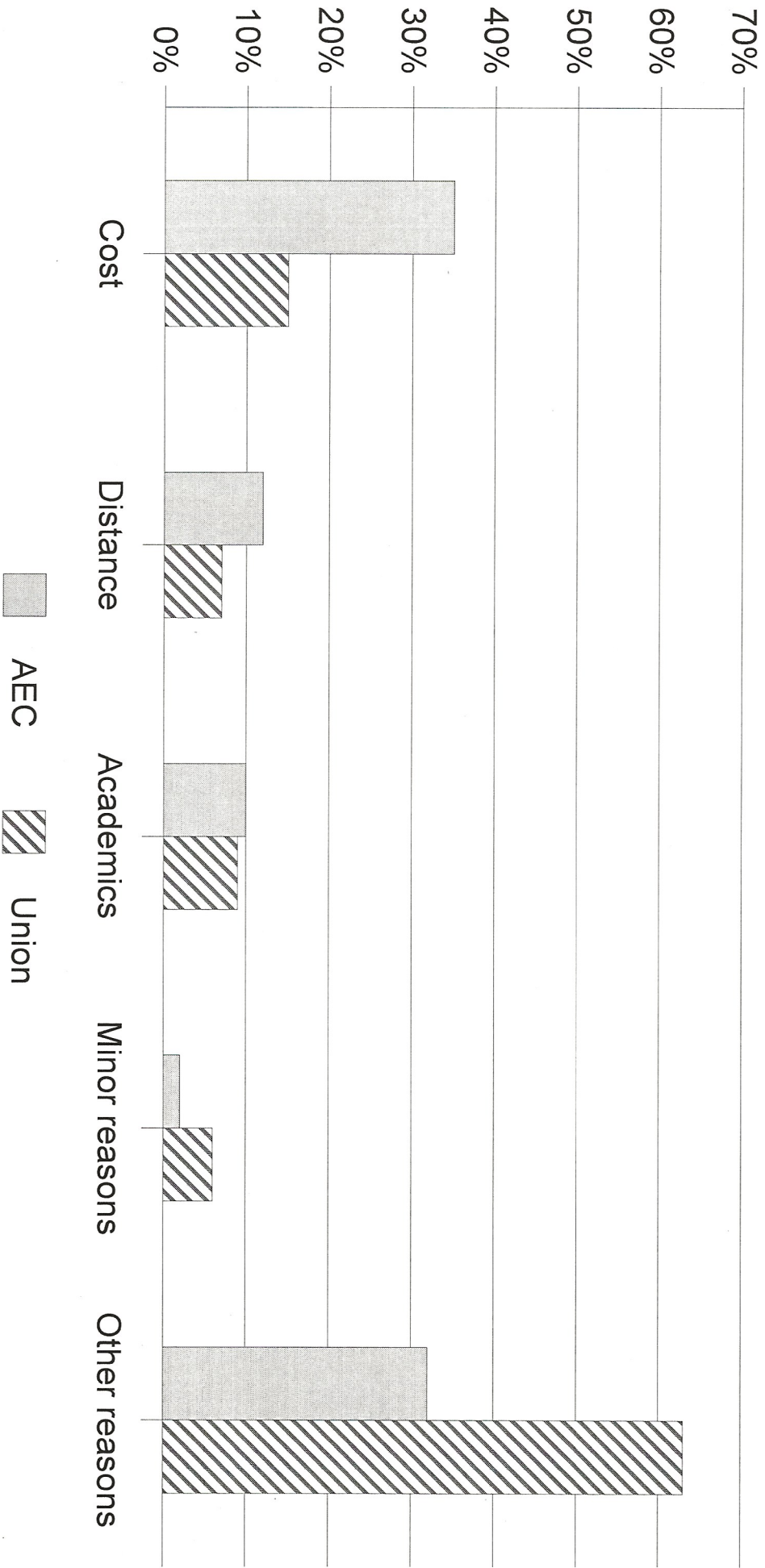
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# **Why my child is not enrolled in an Adventist school**

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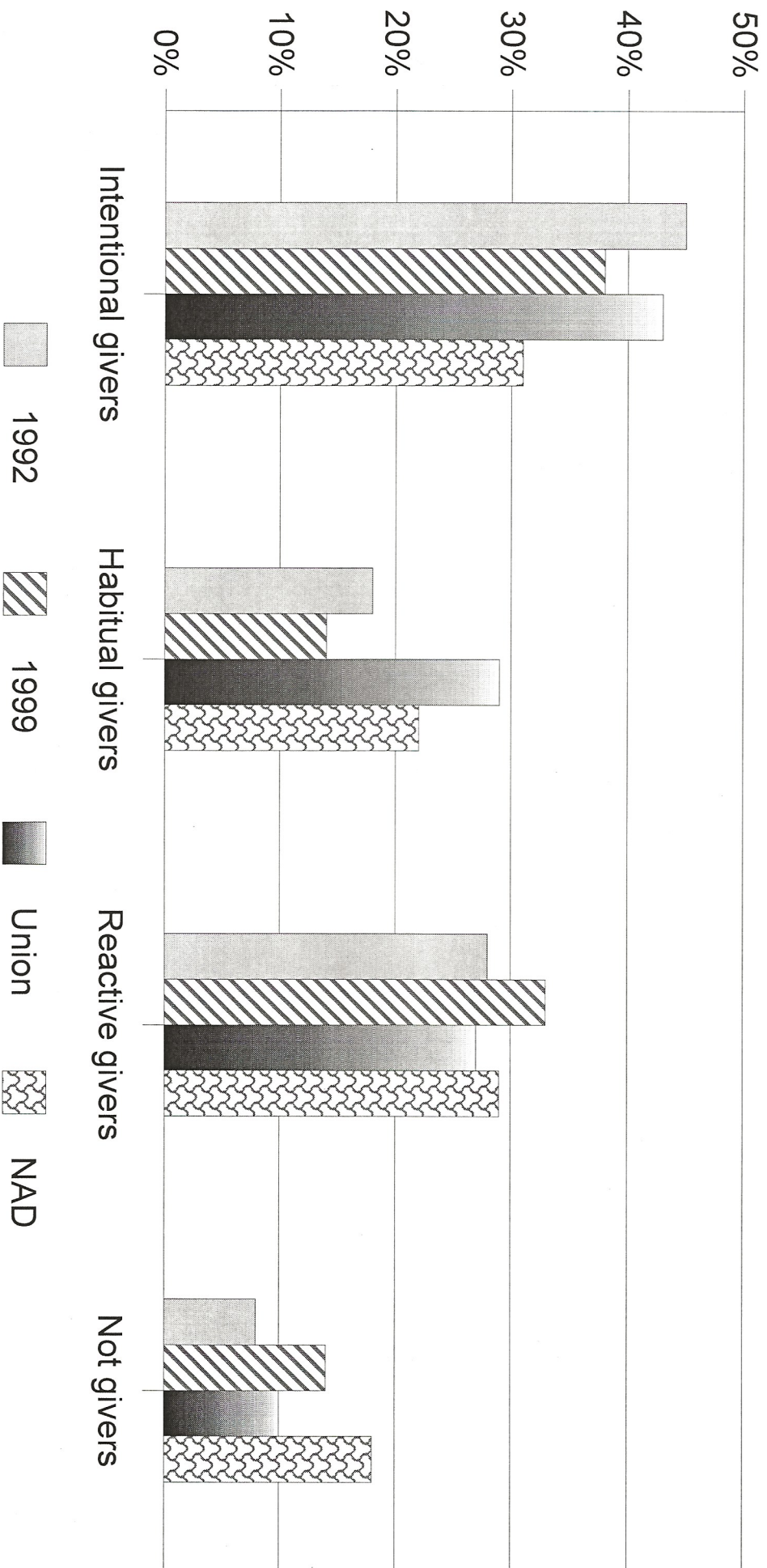
- 35% because of the cost and family finances**
  - 12% because of distance**
  - 5% because specific course is not available**
  - 5% because of poor academic quality**
  - 1% because Adventist school is too crowded**
  - 1% because my spouse will not allow it**
  - 0% because of poor spiritual life of school**
  - 32% because of reasons not on the list**
-

# Why my child is not enrolled in an Adventist school - 2



# Giving Styles of Members

## Allegheny East Conference





# **Strengths of AE Conference**

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**The length of worship on Sabbath (71%)**

**The team of pastors in the conference (67%)**

**The gifted, dedicated, active members (65%)**

**The adult Sabbath School (60%)**

**The organizational structure of AEC (60%)**

**The leadership of AEC administration (56%)**

**Pine Forge Academy (55%)**

**Strategic planning by the congregations (54%)**

**Communication, sharing of information (50%)**

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# **Weaknesses of AE Conference**

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The low number of Adventist children in church schools (26%)

Lack of family counseling services (24%)

The training seminars and similar events provided by the conference (24%)

Communication, sharing of information (21%)

The type and effectiveness of public evangelism conducted in AEC (20%)

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# **“Middler” items**

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## **Strength verses Weakness**

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**Department directors on AEC staff (41% vs 18%)**

**A shared vision for the conference (42% vs 19%)**

**Conference finances (43% vs 15%)**

**Level of trust of AEC by members (45% vs 18%)**

**Timely implementation of goals (46% vs 16%)**

**Teamwork of pastors, lay leaders (47% vs 17%)**

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# Opportunities for AE Conference

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What is the highest priority?

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53% involvement of youth

50% finding a wholistic approach to ministry

35% the needs of the black male in society

25% promoting church schools in view of the failure of public schools in America

23% an increasingly multicultural society

12% mobilizing the capable church members who want to give their time to ministries

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# Challenges facing AE Conference

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What is the highest priority?

54% the needs of our youth

45% strengthening the family

41% becoming a viable part of the local communities where we have churches

25% how to re-focus evangelism

19% the slow-down in church growth

15% how to get church members to adopt a world vision

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# General Comments by Members

## Allegheny East Conference

