

# 2018 North American **ADVENTIST DEMOGRAPHICS**

Study conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry

Commissioned by the North American Division Office of Education





**MONTE SAHLIN**  
Project Director

## INTRODUCTION

The NAD Demographics 2018 report and the Adventist Demographics and Attitudes Toward Higher Education survey was conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry under a contract with the Office of Education of the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Center can be contacted by phone at 800-272-4664 or on the Web at [www.creativeministry.org](http://www.creativeministry.org).

- A total of 2,146 respondents reported data on their household.
- The data set includes information on 4,920 individuals.
- The standard allowance for sampling error at the 95th percentile of reliability in a sample of this size is 3 percentage points, plus or minus.

**MONTE SAHLIN** is the primary author of this report. He served as a research officer for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination from 1985 until his retirement in 2014. This included assignments as assistant to the president of the Ohio Conference and North American Division, and vice president of the Columbia Union Conference. After retiring from denominational assignments, he also served for several years as executive secretary of the interfaith Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnerships, the organization that implements the Faith Communities Today (FACT) studies of religious institutions in the United States. He is an ordained minister and former associate faculty member in the urban studies program at Eastern University in Philadelphia and adjunct instructor in the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is the author of 26 books, more than 130 research monographs and many journal articles.



**PAUL RICHARDSON**

Director, Center for Creative Ministry

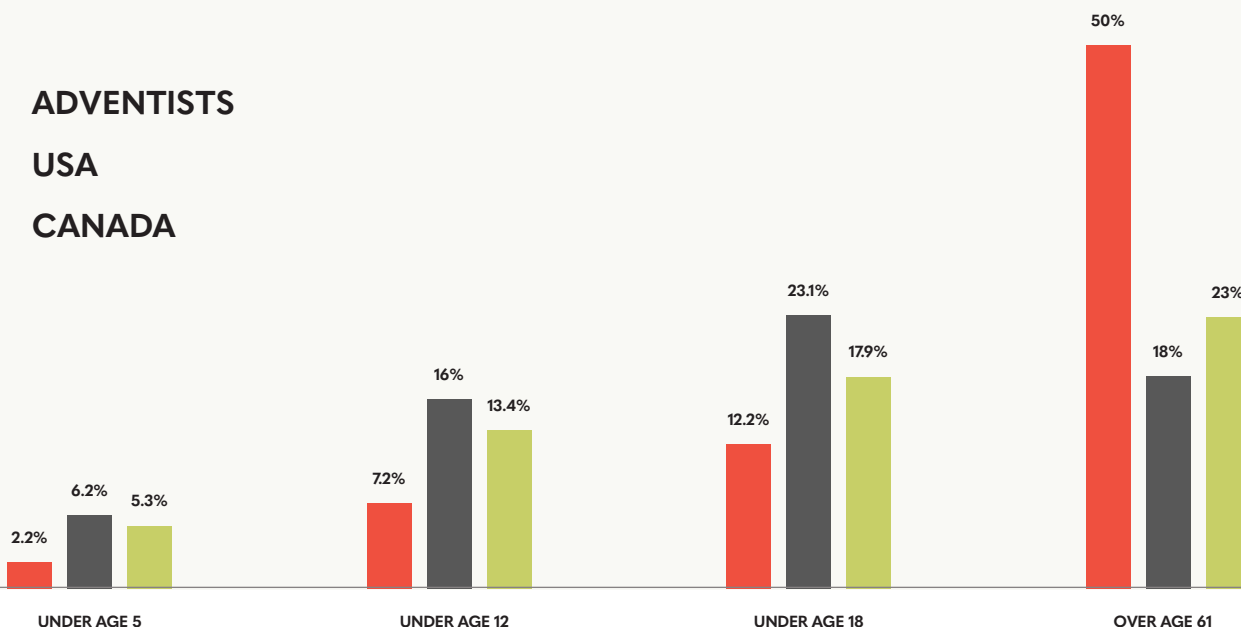
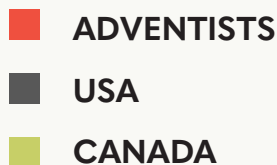
**PAUL RICHARDSON** was the project manager for this study. He is executive director of the Center for Creative Ministry and has extensive experience in market research and marketing strategy, as well as consulting with denominational units, religious nonprofits, media ministries and local congregations. He has written, edited and published many resources for innovative ministry which engages new generations and continues to supply Adventist and other Christian local churches and ministries with new information and contemporary resources. He also played a key role in the 2008 North American Adventist Demographics study.



**PETR CINCALA**

Director, Institute of Church Ministry

**PETR CINCALA** was the primary analyst for the data included in this report and supervised a team of graduate research assistants for the project. He is director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University and an assistant professor of missiology in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. He served as a freelance missionary and church planter in the Czech Republic and research manager for Natural Church Development International along with other research projects. He currently directs the Natural Church Development partnership in the United States. He conducts regular research for the NAD, the General Conference and other Seventh-day Adventist denominational organizations. He also was part of the 2008 demographic study with Sahlin and Richardson.



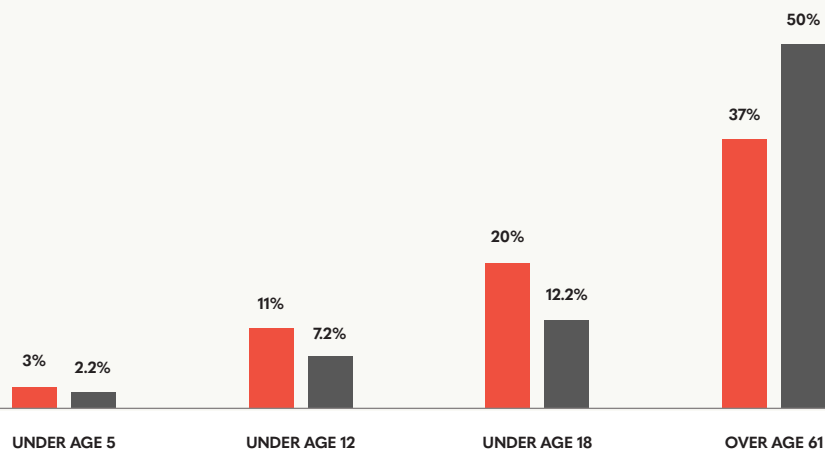
## AGE GROUPS

The Seventh-day Adventist population in the United States, Canada and Bermuda (the denomination’s North American Division) is predominantly made up of older adults. It has relatively few children. The percentage of children under 5 years of age is about one third the percentage in the general population. The percentage of children under 12 years of age is less than half the percentage in the general population, while the percentage under 18 years of age is about half the percentage in the general population. In other words, each younger segment is progressively smaller compared to the general population. This means that over recent years there are fewer and fewer children in Adventist families.

At the same time, the older portion of the Adventist population has increased. In our 2008 demographic study the median age was 51. A decade later the median age is 61. This means that the Adventist population is aging at the rate of one year each year. If it continues at this pace, half the Adventist population in North America will be 71 in 2028, ten years from now. A variety of similar figures have been published by various writers, most of which were not calculated in a manner comparable with standard demographic sources such as the United States Census and Statistics Canada. Because this study collected complete data from entire church-related households, it is entirely comparable with the census data

and other standard demographic sources.

Although many statements in Adventist publications about “average age” or “median age” are not reliable, the trend of “the graying of Adventism” is widely accepted and the data displayed here clearly support this reality. Many observers remark that when they visit Adventist congregations they see far more older adults than children or younger adults, with rare exception. The result is that there is a declining supply of children, teens and young adults for Adventist schools, children’s ministries and youth activities.



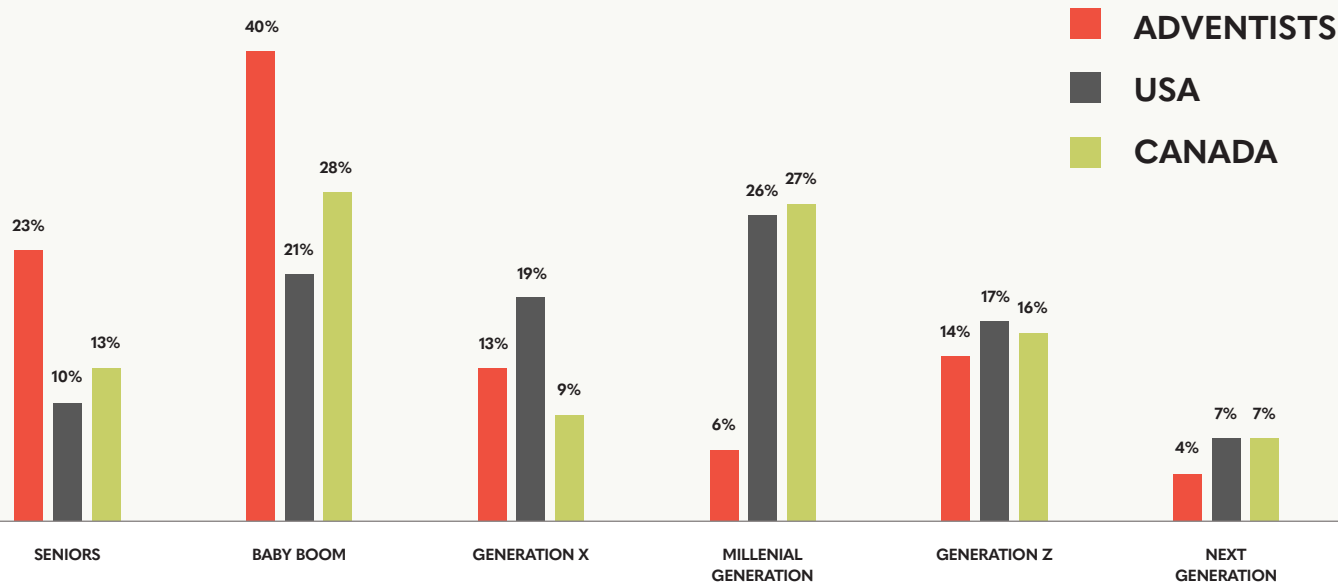
## TREND IN AGE GROUPS: 2008 TO 2018

Over the last decade, the percentage of children in Adventist families has shrunk from 20 percent to 12.2 percent. Across North America there are half as many children as there were ten years ago. Of course, this percentage varies from congregation to congregation and from conference to conference. There are places where Adventist school enrollment is growing and places where it is in decline. Factors other than the pool of available children and young people can be important in

specific local situations, but overall the most important issue in Adventist school enrollment is demographics. Overall, there are proportionately fewer children in Adventist families to go to school and if Adventist schools focus primarily on enrolling students from Adventist families they will find it increasingly difficult to grow or even maintain operations.

If the denomination were to win significantly more converts who are young adults, that might reverse or mitigate the trend

toward fewer children. That would likely require significant innovation in the way outreach and church life is conducted, and there is the risk that such innovation might result in decreasing emphasis on Adventist education. It may be less difficult and less risky for Adventist schools to focus on recruiting students from families not affiliated with the Adventist faith. This approach might also become an avenue for evangelism.



## AGE BY GENERATION

Seniors are those born before 1946 and in 2018 they are over 72 years of age. There are about twice as many in this age group among Adventists in North America as in the general population. They are more likely than the total sample to be a baptized church member for more than 20 years and have attended church four out of the last four Sabbaths, yet this age group is also more likely to be found among church dropouts. Not surprisingly, they are twice as likely as other respondents to be retired and twice as likely to be widowed. Their ethnicity is more likely to be white and less likely to be black or Hispanic. They are also less likely to be immigrants. They are more likely to be in the lower middle household income category (\$25,000 to \$49,999 per year). They are more likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their life and to say they would encourage their children or grandchildren to attend an Adventist college or university.

The Baby Boom generation was born from 1946 through 1964 and in 2018 they are 54 through 72 years of age. They make up the largest generation among Adventists, nearly twice the percentage in

the general population. They are more likely to have been a baptized church member for more than 20 years and also more likely to be among the church dropouts. They are more likely to have a professional or managerial occupation and less likely to be retired, although many are of retirement age.

Generation X (also identified as the Baby Bust generation by some authors) was born from 1965 through 1979 and in 2018 they are 39 through 53 years of age. They are twice as likely as other age groups among Adventists to have one or more children in the family. Most have been baptized church members for less than 20 years and they are more likely to live in a suburb and in a household with an annual income of \$100,000 or more. At the same time there are above average numbers among Adventists with an Hispanic background, those who are immigrants and those in a Blue Collar occupation.

The Millennial generation includes those born from 1980 through 1994 who are 24 through 38 years of age in 2018. Because this is a younger cohort, they are more likely to be a baptized church member for less than 20 years and to have fewer years of Adventist

education than other respondents, although somewhat more likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point. Their pattern of church attendance is less frequent than older people; more likely about half the Sabbaths. They are three times as likely to have not yet married as compared to other cohorts and are more likely to identify their ethnicity as black, Hispanic or multiethnic. They are less likely to have only a secondary education and more likely a college degree or even a graduate degree. So it is not surprising that they are more likely to be employed in a professional, managerial or White Collar occupation, but their careers are only getting started, so they are also more likely to live in a household with an annual income of less than \$75,000. They tend to live in cities and are significantly unlikely to live in rural areas.

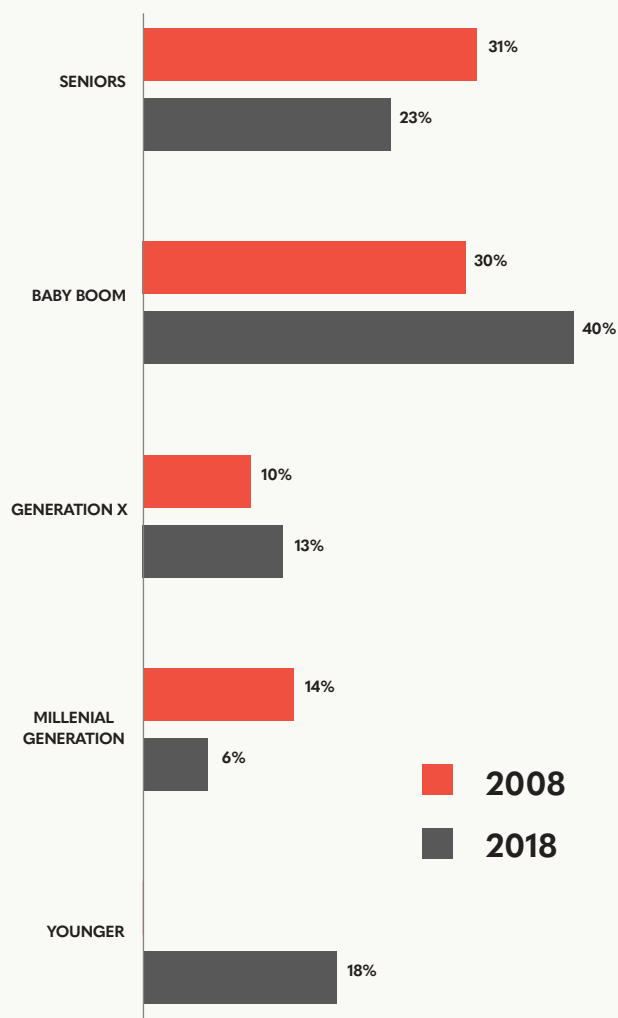
Generation Z includes the teens and young adults born from 1995 through 2010. They are under 24 years of age in 2018 and there is close to the same proportion among Adventists as in the general population. Perhaps surprisingly to some observers, they are less likely to be among church dropouts than older cohorts. Most of their demographics are not significantly different from the overall sample.

What we have labeled simply the “Next Generation” is made up of children 8 years of age and younger. This is a cohort for which demographers have generally not come to consensus on what to call it and it is still being born. Among Adventists there are about half as many in this cohort as in the general population as noted on previous pages.

We have used the birth-year definitions for these generational cohorts as defined by the American Demographic Institute. A number of authors and researchers have used a variety of definitions and even different labels for generations which can make comparisons with our report difficult on some items.

## TRENDS IN GENERATIONS

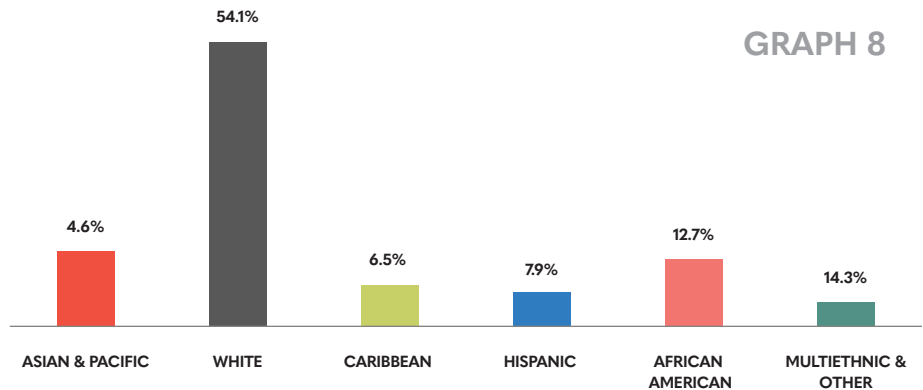
The percentage of Adventists in the oldest cohort has declined over the last decade since the 2008 demographic survey in large part because the Baby Boom generation has become a larger share of the total and the youngest generations have come into the picture. The differential for Generation X is not statistically significant, but the decline in the Millennial generation is consistent with research that has shown that young adults are less likely to participate in organized religion. In their middle age, the Adventist denomination in North America has become predominantly a Baby Boomer church.



ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Much to our surprise, this survey found a white majority among Adventists in North America. (Graph 8) In our 2008 survey, the white ethnic percentage had dropped to half (see Graph 9) and there have been no indicators that the trend toward a majority of ethnic minorities has changed significantly over the last ten years. In fact, when an adjustment is made for the allowance for sampling error in this study (three percent, plus or minus), the ethnic minorities total 55 percent and the white segment is 51 percent; in other words, the data move into a statistical gray area that is not dissimilar to what we found in 2008. (See Graph 10.)

What is the reality? We believe that there is a particular sampling skew in this study which is the result of the current political conflict around immigration in the United States. Adventist church growth has been strong among immigrants for about three decades and it is

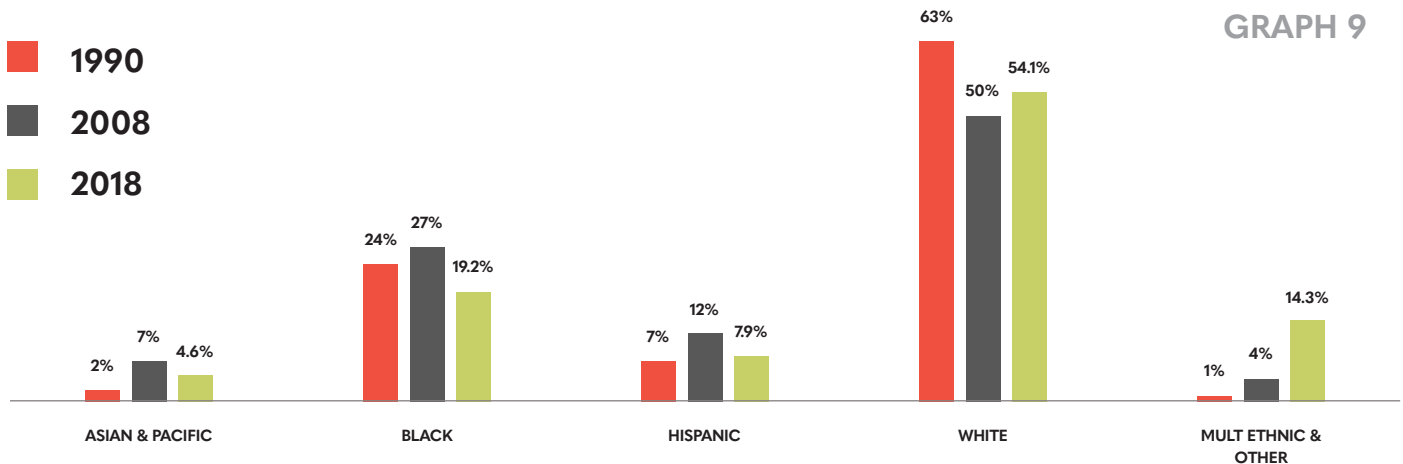


GRAPH 8

likely that the Hispanic, Caribbean and Asian-Pacific percentages of the Adventist population is higher than what we have found in this survey. It is also very likely that many immigrants in the local churches in North America are unwilling to answer questions about their families out of fear that the information may not be absolutely secure. One example of this effect is the decision by the NAD Secretariat to stop publishing its regular reports on the membership from various ethnic groups. This decision was made at the request

of pastors and field coordinators that work with immigrant churches.

Adventists who identify their ethnicity as “white and not Hispanic” make up the largest share of the faith community in North America. This segment is more likely to be among the oldest generation and less likely to be part of Generation X and the Millennial generation. They are more likely to be married and more likely to report that they are retired. They are more likely to have only a secondary diploma, but also more likely to have 16 or more years of



GRAPH 9



education in Adventist schools and a significant share have a college degree. White Adventists are more likely to be church dropouts than are other ethnic groups in the denomination.

Those who identify their ethnicity as black (including African American and Caribbean) make up as much as a quarter of the Adventist population in the NAD. They are more likely to be among the Baby Boom and younger generations and less likely the oldest cohort. They are more likely to be single adults, both the divorced and never married and more likely to live in a suburban or urban community. African Americans are more likely to have only a secondary diploma, while Caribbeans are more likely to have a college degree and both are less likely than other Adventists in North America to have attended an Adventist school. They are more likely to attend four out of four Sabbaths and less likely to be church dropouts.

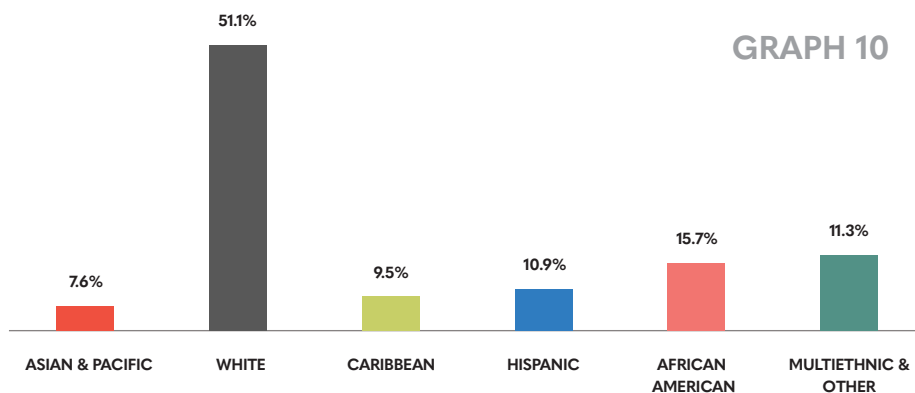
About one in ten Adventists in North America identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino and it is very like more than that due to the sampling error noted above. They are more likely to be in the Millennial generation and less likely to be in the Baby Boom and older generations. They are quite likely to be immigrants, more likely to have a child in the family and more likely to be married, but less likely to be

widowed. They are more likely to report that their annual household income is in the middle-middle category (\$50,000 to \$74,999 per year) and more likely to live in an urban neighborhood. They are likely to have 8 years or less of education in Adventist schools, below the overall median level of Adventist education. They are more likely to have been a baptized Adventist for less than 20 years and a high percentage attend church four out of four Sabbaths.

About one in twenty and perhaps one in twelve of the Adventists in North America identify their ethnicity as Asian or a Pacific Islander. This includes people with a background or ancestry from South Asia, Southeast Asia, Korea, China, Japan and the Philippines, as well as the smaller island nations of the South Pacific. They are more likely to be in Generation X and more likely to be immigrants. They are more likely to have a child in the family. They are exceptionally

well educated and more likely to report that their household income is over \$100,000 a year. They are also more likely to live in a rural area or suburban community. They are more likely to be baptized members for less than 20 years, more likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their lives and more likely to attend church four out of four Sabbaths.

At least one in ten respondents in this survey identified their ethnicity as multiethnic or something other than the six major ethnic categories included in the question. This segment had no items that differed significantly from the overall survey.



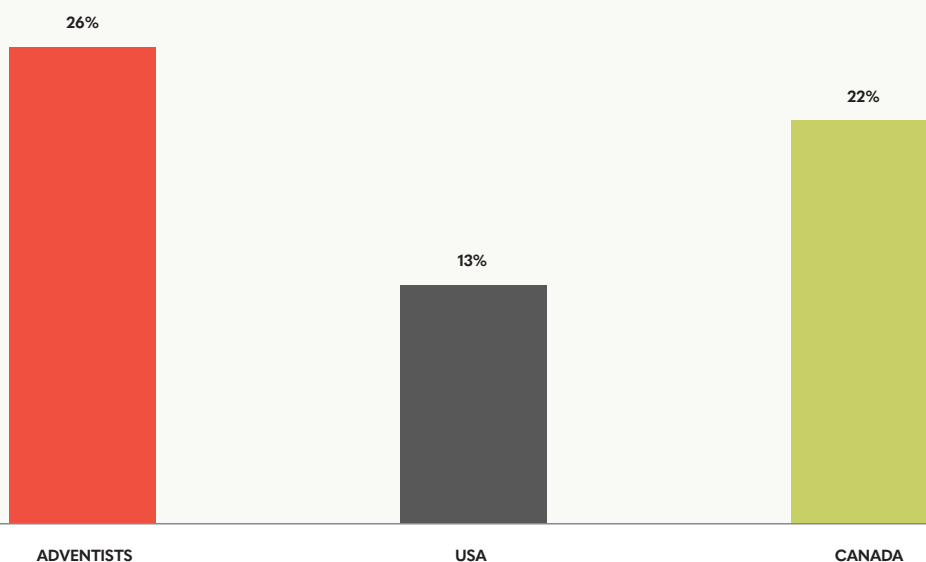
## IMMIGRANTS

The Adventist faith community in North America includes a significantly larger share of immigrants than the general population, especially in the United States where there is currently considerable political tension around the subject of immigration. It is not clear how the American attitudes toward immigration and changes in the legal context may impact Adventist church growth over the next several years.

The immigrants who responded to this survey were more likely to have a graduate degree and be employed in a professional or managerial occupation than other respondents. This is a reflection

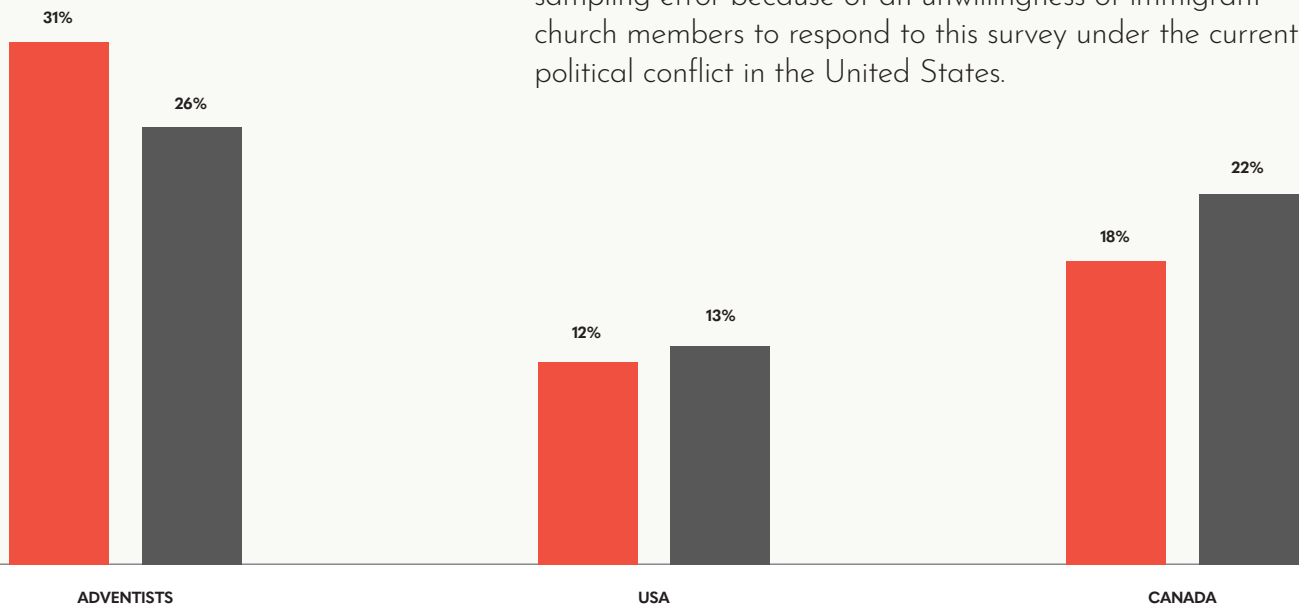
of the fact that immigration law favors highly skilled individuals. They are also more likely to be from Generation X and less likely to be among the cohort over 72 years of age, and somewhat more likely to have one or more children in their family. They are also more likely to attend church four out of four Sabbaths and less likely to be a church dropout.

Immigrants are more likely to report their ethnicity as Asian, Caribbean or Hispanic and less likely as white. They are more likely to live in an urban neighborhood and less likely to live in a rural area or to report that they are retired.

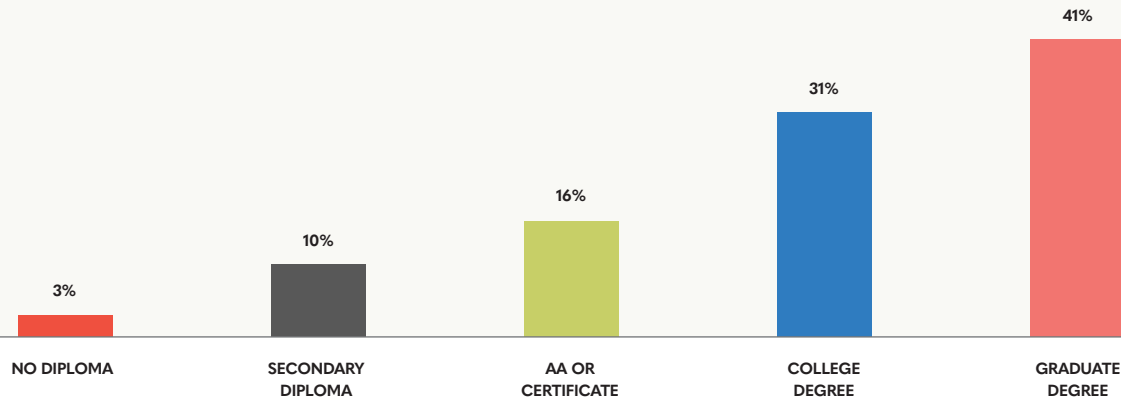


## TREND IN IMMIGRATION

■ 2008  
■ 2018



While the percentage of immigrants in the general population both in the United States and in Canada has increased over the last decade, the percentage of Adventists who identified themselves as immigrants in this survey has declined. It is unlikely that this is the reality. As we have described on page 8 it is likely that this is due to sampling error because of an unwillingness of immigrant church members to respond to this survey under the current political conflict in the United States.



## EDUCATION LEVELS IN ADULTS

Adventists in North America are highly educated. The Adventist faith has long placed a high value on education and therefore the level of education among believers should not be surprising.

Only three percent of the adults in this survey are reported to have not completed a secondary diploma and another 10 percent have only a secondary diploma. People from the oldest cohort are more likely to be in this segment, as are those who are retired and those who live in a rural area. They are more likely to have been baptized church members for less than 20 years and unlikely to have attended an Adventist school, which indicates that these are probably relatively recent converts

to the Adventist faith. They are also more likely to be divorced, single adults.

A larger segment (16 percent) are reported to have a two-year college degree or a business school or vocational school certificate. They are more likely to be employed in a White Collar occupation and be part of a household with annual income of less than \$50,000. Again, this segment is more likely to include relatively recent converts and less likely those who have attended an Adventist school.

Nearly a third of Adventist adults (31 percent) have a four-year college degree, but no additional graduate degree. They are more likely to be part

of Generation X, but otherwise have no statistically significant characteristics.

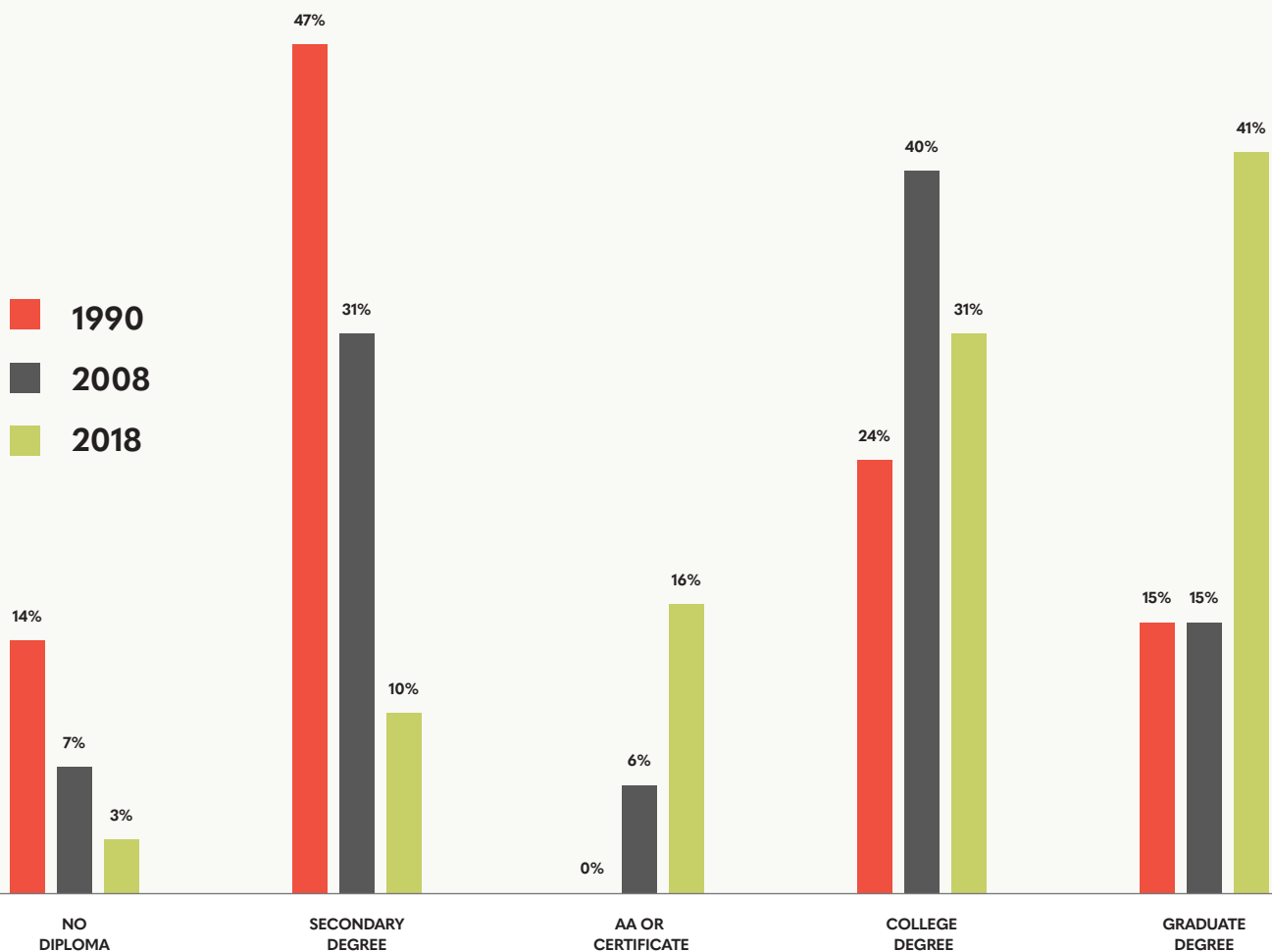
More than two in five Adventist adults (41 percent) are reported to have a graduate degree. Not surprisingly, they are more likely to be employed in a professional or managerial occupation and to be part of a household with an annual income of \$100,000 or more. They are also more likely to have been a baptized church member for more than 20 years, more likely to have attended an Adventist school and less likely to be a church dropout.

## TREND IN LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Over the last three decades the education level among Adventist adults in North America has increased significantly. In part, this could be to a large degree from sampling skew both in 1990 and in 2018. We have already noted the sampling skew in 2018 from the reticence of immigrants to respond due to the political tension on this

topic in the United States. The 1990 survey used a data collection method in which questionnaires were distributed in a sample of local churches and this has been found to garner a larger share of the poor and less educated. We have already described “the graying of Adventism” and this appears to be associated

with a growing number of older professionals among the adult membership in the NAD. That should also result in supportive attitudes toward education in general and Adventist schools in particular.



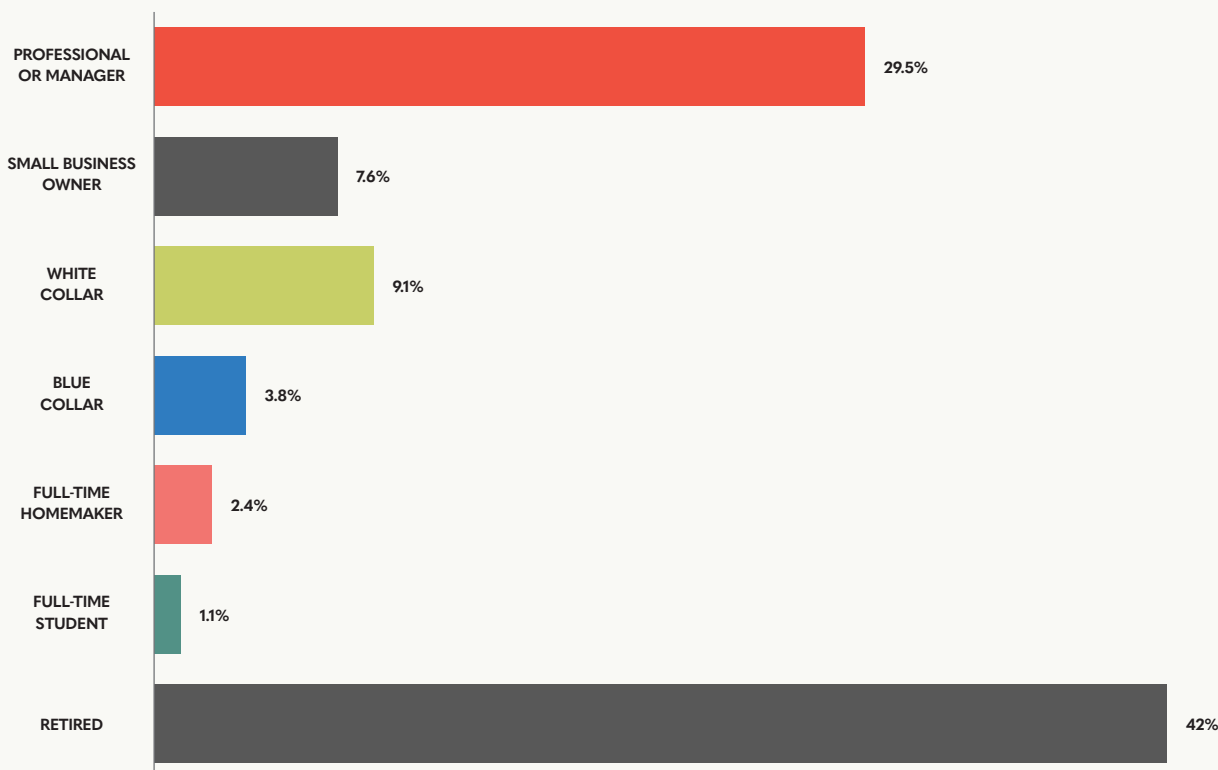
## OCCUPATION

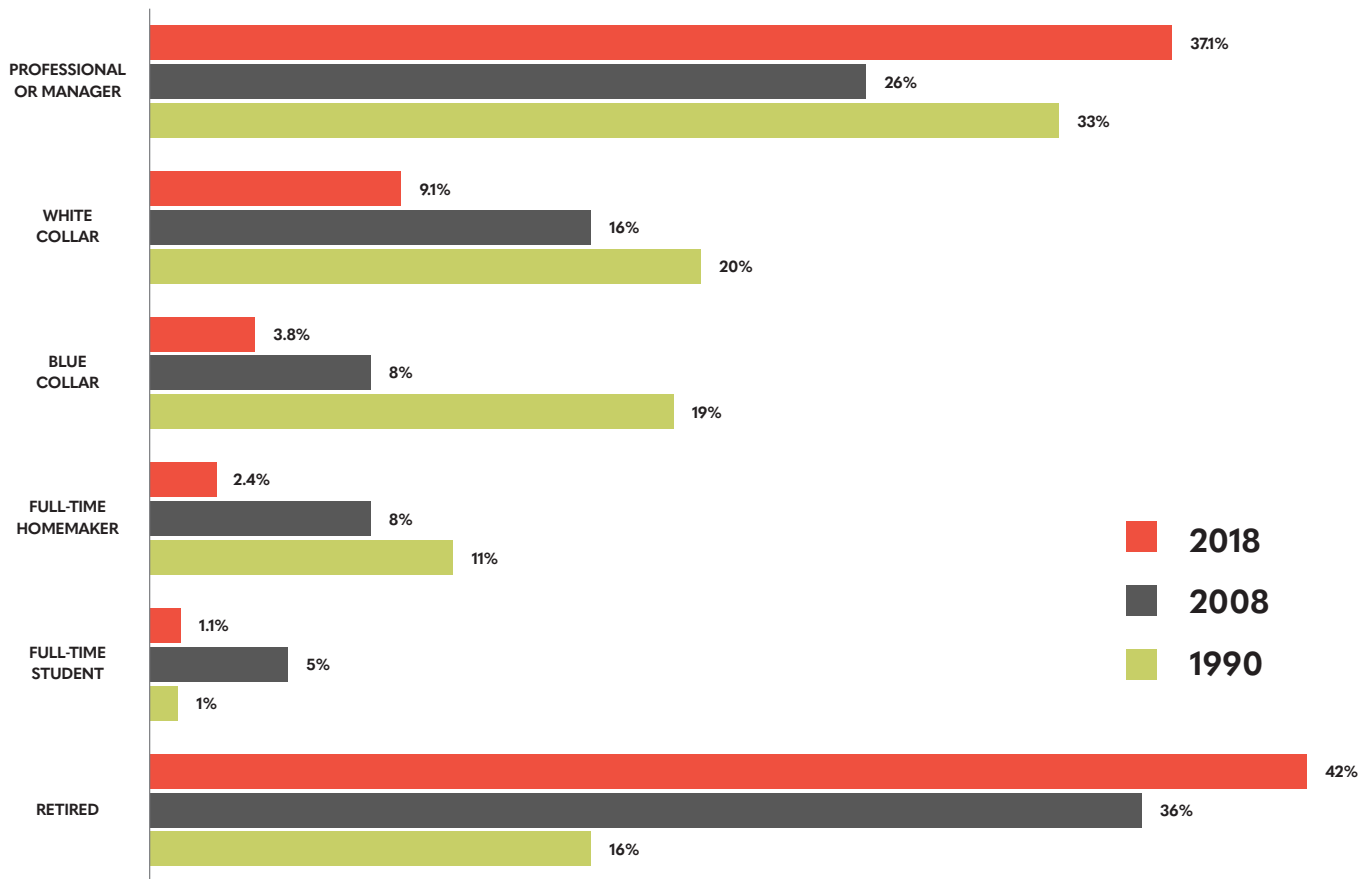
The largest share of the Adventist adults in North America are reported to be retired. This is consistent with the age profile displayed earlier in this report and the trend toward “the graying of Adventism.” The retired are also more likely to be baptized church members for more than 20 years and many of the retired have a college degree or more education.

The second largest occupational category are the nearly one third (29.5 percent) of Adventist adults who are employed in professional or managerial positions. This is part of a picture of an aging upper-middle class membership in the Adventist Church in North America.

About one in five Adventist adults are employed in White

Collar or Blue Collar jobs or own and operate a small business. This segment tends to be somewhat younger and are more likely to have been baptized church members for less than 20 years. These are working and middle class people.





## TREND IN OCCUPATION

In the graph displayed above the small business owner/operators (7.6 percent) have been combined with those in professional and managerial occupations (29.5 percent) because these responses were combined in the previous surveys. The comparison between the 1990 survey and this survey is close to the allowance for

sampling error and therefore only a marginally significant difference over the three decades.

The percentage employed in Blue Collar and White Collar jobs has declined significantly over the decades. This may to some extent be related to the sampling skew related to immigration that has been noted

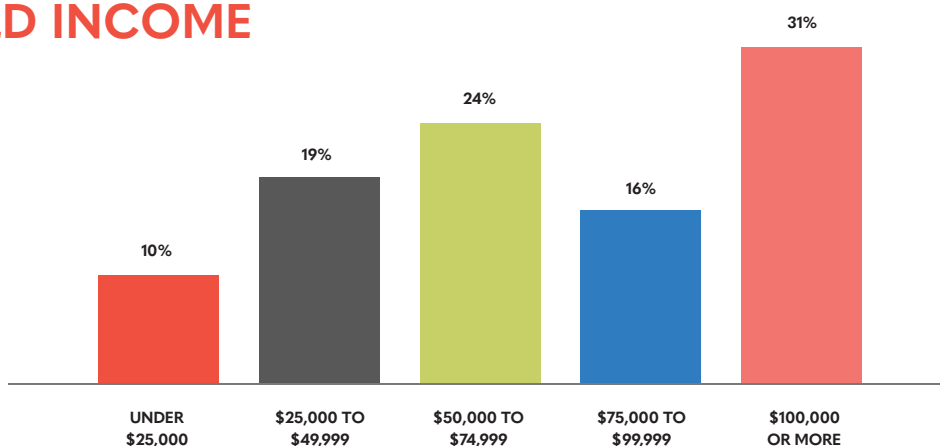
previously, but it is large enough for that not to be the primary reason for this trend. Clearly the Adventist population in North America has a significantly smaller segment of middle and working class members than it did in 1990. These trends were already underway in the 2008 survey and are now more pronounced.

## ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The most recent report of the median household income in the United States (from 2017) is \$59,039. For Canada it is \$70,336 in Canadian dollars. About one third of Adventist-related households report in this survey an annual income below the median and roughly two thirds report an annual income above the median. In general, Seventh-day Adventists in North America are blessed and this supports the income to the denomination and its schools.

One in ten Adventist households reported an annual income of less than \$25,000 which places this segment generally below the poverty line in both the United States and Canada. They are more likely to be single adults, also to be retired or live in a rural area or a small town. They are less likely than other Adventist adults to have a college degree. They are more likely to be relatively recent converts, baptized church members for less than 20 years and less likely to have attended an Adventist school. They are also more likely to have a low attendance pattern at church on Sabbaths and less likely to indicate they would encourage their child or grandchild to go to an Adventist college.

Nearly one in five Adventist households (19 percent) reported an annual income of \$25,000 to \$49,999 per year, which places this segment in the lower middle



class. Like the low-income segment (in the paragraph above) they are more likely to be single adults, also to be retired or live in a rural area or a small town. They are less likely than other Adventist adults to have a college degree. They are more likely to be relatively recent converts, baptized church members for less than 20 years and less likely to have attended an Adventist school.

About one in four Adventist households (24 percent) reported an annual income of \$50,000 to \$74,999 per year, a category generally identified as the middle-middle class. In many ways they are not different from the overall survey results, although they are more likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their lives, more likely to attend 4 out of 4 Sabbaths and somewhat less likely to be church dropouts.

Some 16 percent of Adventist households reported an annual income of \$75,000 to \$99,999 per year, a category identified as upper middle class by some

analysts and simply middle class by others. They are more likely to be married or to have a graduate degree or be employed in a professional or managerial occupation. They are also more likely to be baptized church members for more than 20 years and to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their lives.

Nearly a third of Adventist households (31 percent) reported an annual income of \$100,000 or more, a segment that is definitely upper middle class and may include at least a few families among the most wealthy in North America. Like the previous segment, they are more likely to be married or to have a graduate degree or be employed in a professional or managerial occupation. Not surprisingly, they are also more likely to live in a suburban community. They are more likely to be long-term Adventists, but also more likely to be church dropouts.



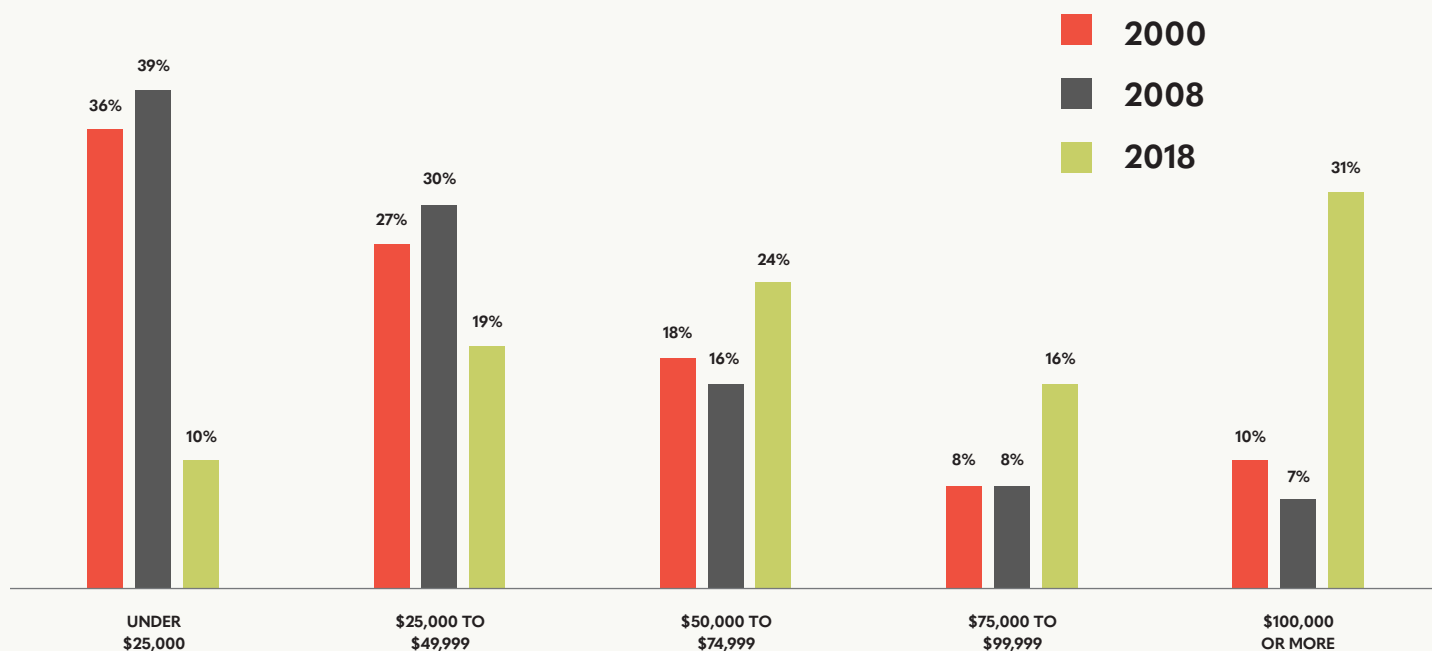
## TREND IN ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

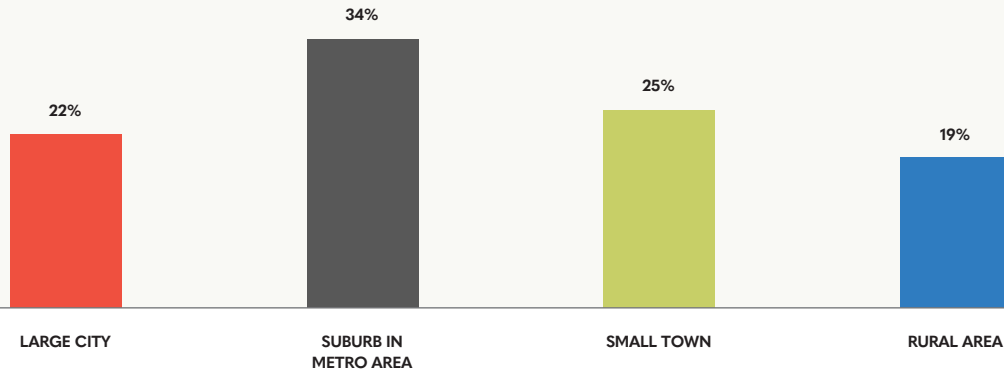
Over the last three decades the Adventist population in North America has moved toward more households with higher incomes. This is consistent with what was predicted from a review of seven surveys in the 1980s and 1990s. (See Sahlin 1998, pages 18-19.) A number of studies have shown that social mobility is correlated with conversion to the Adventist faith, and with the emphasis that the Adventist denomination places on education and strong family life it is highly likely that over time the membership will

shift toward higher income categories. As a growing portion of the membership has come from people born into Adventist families and less attention has been focused on winning people among the poor, this social process is inevitably accelerated.

Social mobility in a religious movement tends to slow over time as the organization becomes less skilled at connecting with and recruiting low-income individuals and families. As the clergy becomes more highly educated their ability to evangelize and

nurture the poor tends to decay. These developments are clear in the NAD. The higher incidence of church dropouts among the most affluent Adventist families suggests that as the Adventist denomination has become more middle class it also needs to increase the skill of clergy and congregations in relating to the most highly educated professional class.





## TYPE OF COMMUNITY WHERE RESIDENT

Nearly a quarter of the Adventist families in North America (22 percent) live in an urban neighborhood. They are more likely to report their ethnicity as African American or to indicate that they are immigrants. They are also more likely to be single adults who have never married and less likely to be retired or in the most senior age group.

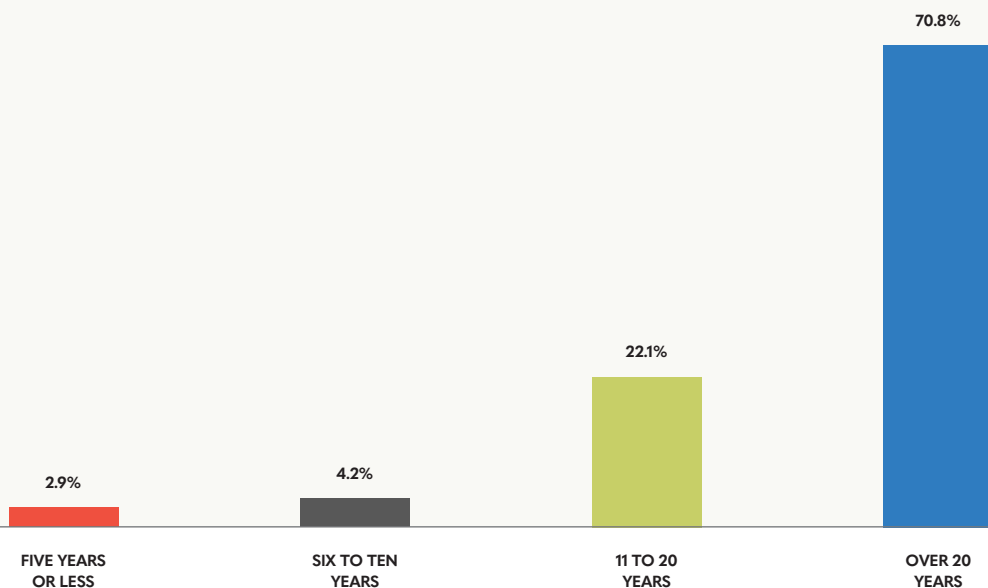
A third of the Adventist families live in a suburban community in one of the major metropolitan areas across the United States and Canada. They are more likely to have an annual household income of \$100,000 or more and to include an adult with a graduate degree or someone employed in a professional or

managerial occupation. They are also more likely have a child in the home and more likely to include someone who is reported to be an African American.

A quarter of Adventist families live in a small town, which is defined according to the census as a town outside of a metropolitan area with a population of less than 50,000. These people are more likely to be senior citizens, to report their ethnicity as white and have no child living in the home. These households are also more likely to report an annual income of \$100,000 or more.

The smallest segment relative to residence is the less than one in five (19 percent) who live in a rural area. They are more likely to

be senior citizens, while Generation X and the Millennial generation are less likely to be present. They are also more likely to be married or to report their ethnicity as white or to be the owner-operator of a small business, but less likely to be employed in a professional or managerial occupation and less likely to have a graduate degree. They are more likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their life. They are also less likely to be immigrants.



## TENURE AS A BAPTIZED ADVENTIST

Respondents were asked, How long have you been a baptized member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? It should be understood that this question is different than how long have you been an Adventist? About half of the Adventists in North America grew up in an Adventist family and would say that they have been Adventists since birth. There are also a significant number who have an Adventist identity who are, in fact, not officially church members and some of these have never been baptized in any denomination.

The vast majority indicated that they have been baptized church members for more than 20 years. This is consistent with the

high percentage of respondents who are middle-aged and older. It means that the Adventist denomination in North America is increasingly dominated by veteran members who are more likely to be inclined toward traditional practices and ways of articulating the faith. It could make it more difficult for the denomination to encourage the innovations necessary to retain the next generation and win younger converts. At the same time this segment is more likely to include individuals who are church dropouts.

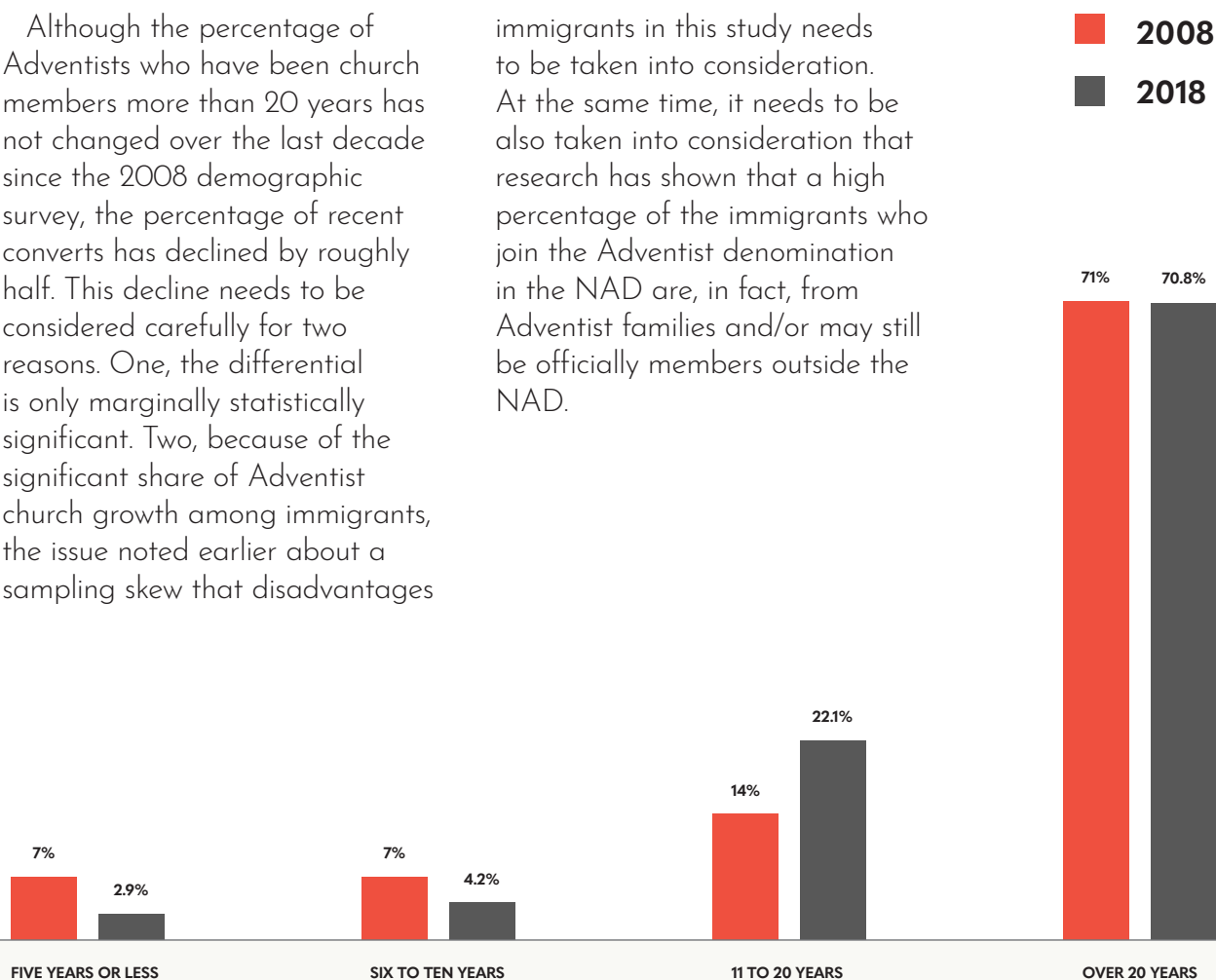
Nearly a quarter (22 percent) report that they have been baptized members for 11 to 20 years. Only four percent have

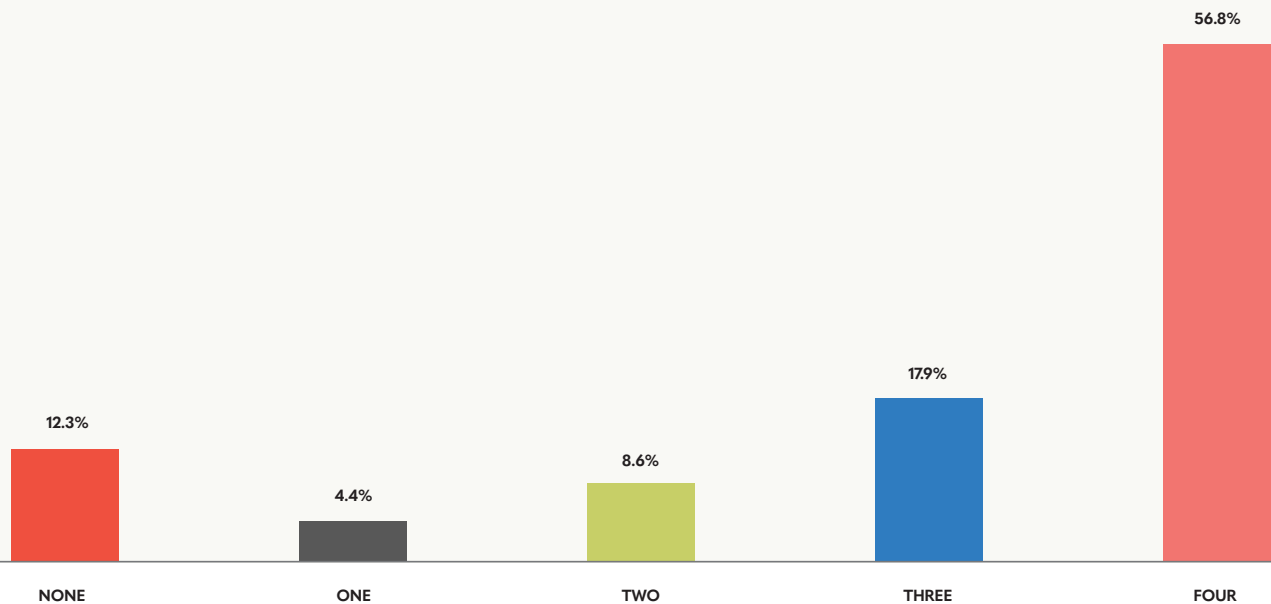
been baptized members for six to ten years and only about three percent were baptized in the last five years. This is an indication of the declining proportion of new converts in the Adventist movement in the NAD. Research focused on public evangelism has shown that about a third of the individuals baptized in these campaigns are former Adventists returning to church membership, and a number of research projects have demonstrated that there is a need for the denomination to develop new strategies for church growth.

## TREND IN TENURE AS AN ADVENTIST

Although the percentage of Adventists who have been church members more than 20 years has not changed over the last decade since the 2008 demographic survey, the percentage of recent converts has declined by roughly half. This decline needs to be considered carefully for two reasons. One, the differential is only marginally statistically significant. Two, because of the significant share of Adventist church growth among immigrants, the issue noted earlier about a sampling skew that disadvantages

immigrants in this study needs to be taken into consideration. At the same time, it needs to be also taken into consideration that research has shown that a high percentage of the immigrants who join the Adventist denomination in the NAD are, in fact, from Adventist families and/or may still be officially members outside the NAD.





## CHURCH ATTENDANCE THE LAST FOUR SABBATHS

Respondents were asked, Out of the last four Sabbaths, how many times did you attend worship in an Adventist church? The intent of this item is to use an immediate and specific behavior as an indicator of the general pattern of church attendance among respondents.

The majority indicated that they were in church each of the last four Sabbaths. Nearly another one in five indicated that they attended three out of four Sabbaths. The combined responses indicate that nearly three out of four Adventists report

very regular church attendance.

Some 13 percent reported that they were in church on one or two out of four recent Sabbaths. These are still defined as “active members” by congregational research scholars who include in the “active” category any member who attends at least once a month at least nine months out of the year. At the same time, these individuals have a less intensive attendance pattern. They are more likely to be found among young adults.

One in eight respondents reported that they did not attend

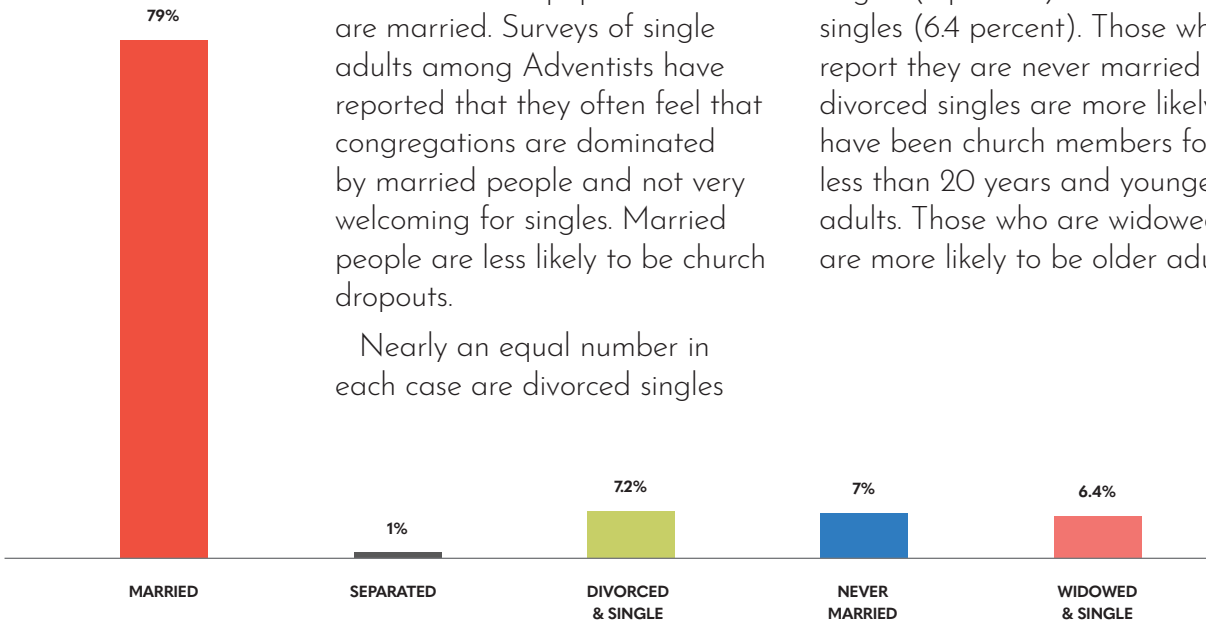
church any of the last four Sabbaths. A number of these made comments that clearly expressed the fact that they are church dropouts who feel alienated or marginalized despite the fact that they have a strong sense of Adventist identity. A few may have had health issues or have been involved in activities such as travel that made it difficult to attend worship.

## MARITAL STATUS

Nearly four out of five adults in the Adventist population are married. Surveys of single adults among Adventists have reported that they often feel that congregations are dominated by married people and not very welcoming for singles. Married people are less likely to be church dropouts.

(7.2 percent), never married singles (7 percent) and widowed singles (6.4 percent). Those who report they are never married or divorced singles are more likely to have been church members for less than 20 years and younger adults. Those who are widowed are more likely to be older adults.

Nearly an equal number in each case are divorced singles

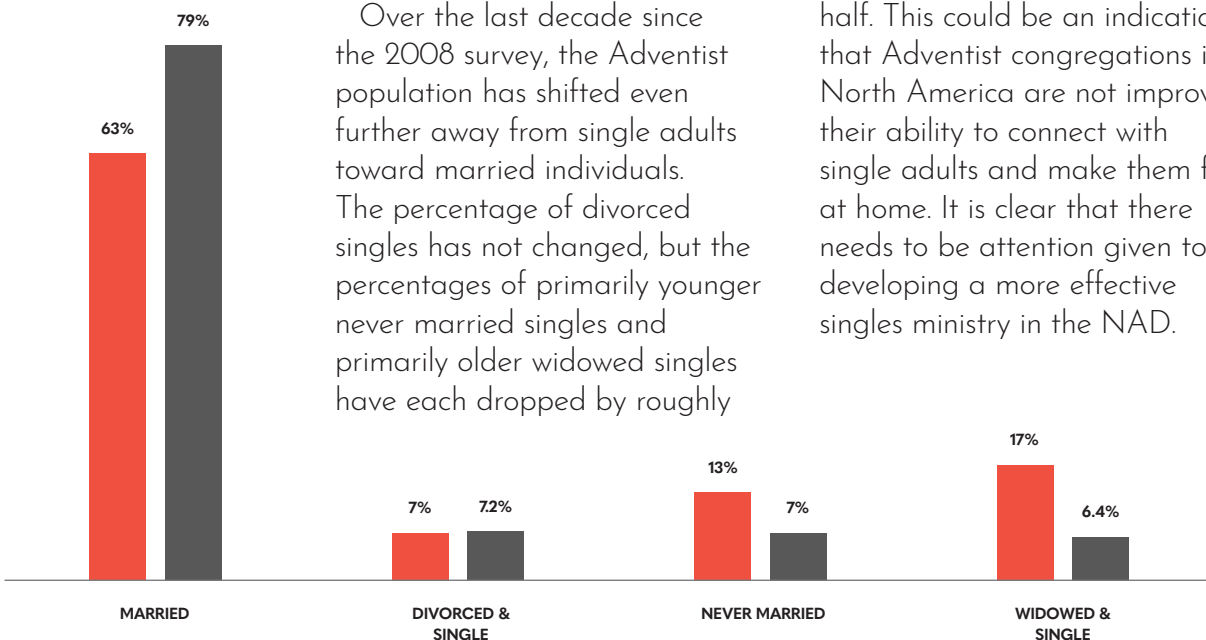


## TREND IN MARITAL STATUS

■ 2008  
■ 2018

Over the last decade since the 2008 survey, the Adventist population has shifted even further away from single adults toward married individuals. The percentage of divorced singles has not changed, but the percentages of primarily younger never married singles and primarily older widowed singles have each dropped by roughly

half. This could be an indication that Adventist congregations in North America are not improving their ability to connect with single adults and make them feel at home. It is clear that there needs to be attention given to developing a more effective singles ministry in the NAD.



## CURRENTLY HAVE CHILDREN IN THE HOME OR AWAY AT SCHOOL

A little more than a third of the Adventist households in North America report having a child in the home or away at school and still part of the family. For each of these children we collected their year of birth, gender and current grade in school. A comparison of the year of birth of the adult respondent and the year of birth of the oldest child leads us to conclude that three or four percentage points out of the total 34 percent are very likely grandchildren evidently being raised in their grandparent's home.

In these households with children, the adult respondent is more likely to be from Generation X, 39 to 52 years of age this year, and less likely to be older. They are also less likely to be retired. The adult head of household is also more likely to be an immigrant and less likely to report their ethnicity as white. They are more likely to live in a suburban community and to be employed in a professional or managerial occupation. They are more likely to have been church members for more than 20 years, but less likely to have attended an Adventist school at some point in their life. Their church attendance pattern is less than every Sabbath, but they are also less likely to be church dropouts.

■ YES, 34%  
■ NO, 67%

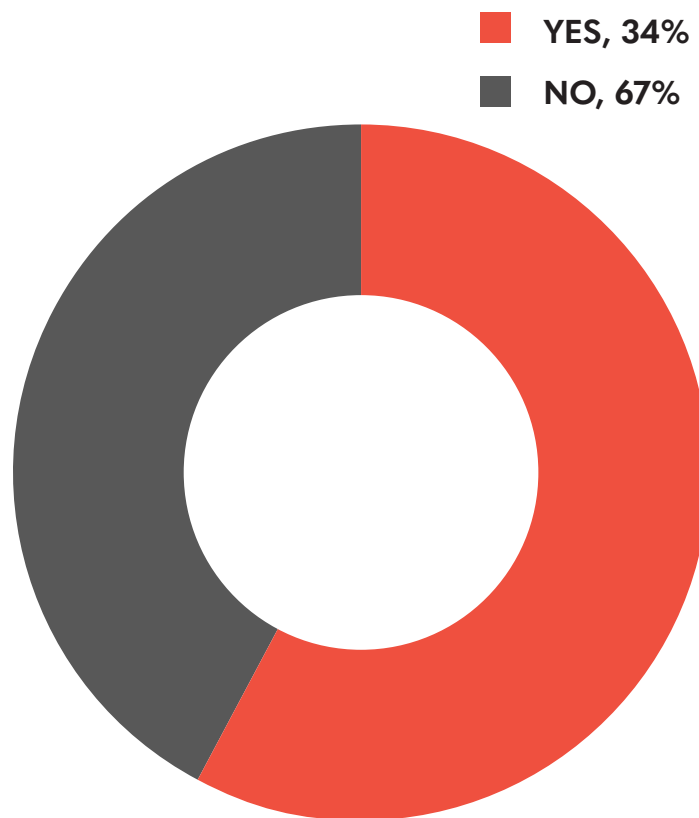


## ANY CHILD ATTENDING AN ADVENTIST SCHOOL

The 34 percent of respondents who reported that they have a child in their household were asked if any of the reported children were currently enrolled in an Adventist school. A total of 42 percent of the 34 percent indicated yes, at least one of their reported children was currently enrolled in an Adventist school. This is 15 percent of the total Adventist households in the NAD.

Respondents from Generation X were less likely to indicate that they have children in Adventist schools and older respondents (parents and grandparents raising grandchildren) were more likely to report at least one child currently enrolled in an Adventist school. Those who reported that they have a child enrolled in an Adventist school are also more likely to have been church members for more than 20 years. It appears that there is significant support for Adventist education among grandparents, perhaps to a larger degree than among parents.

The adults who have children enrolled in Adventist schools in the NAD are less likely to be found among the highest income category and people with professional or managerial occupations, although there is no correlation with the lower income categories. They are also less likely to report their ethnicity as Hispanic and somewhat less likely to live in a suburban community and to be married. They are also less likely to be church dropouts. These marginal negative correlations are likely related to the significant proportion of grandparents involved.



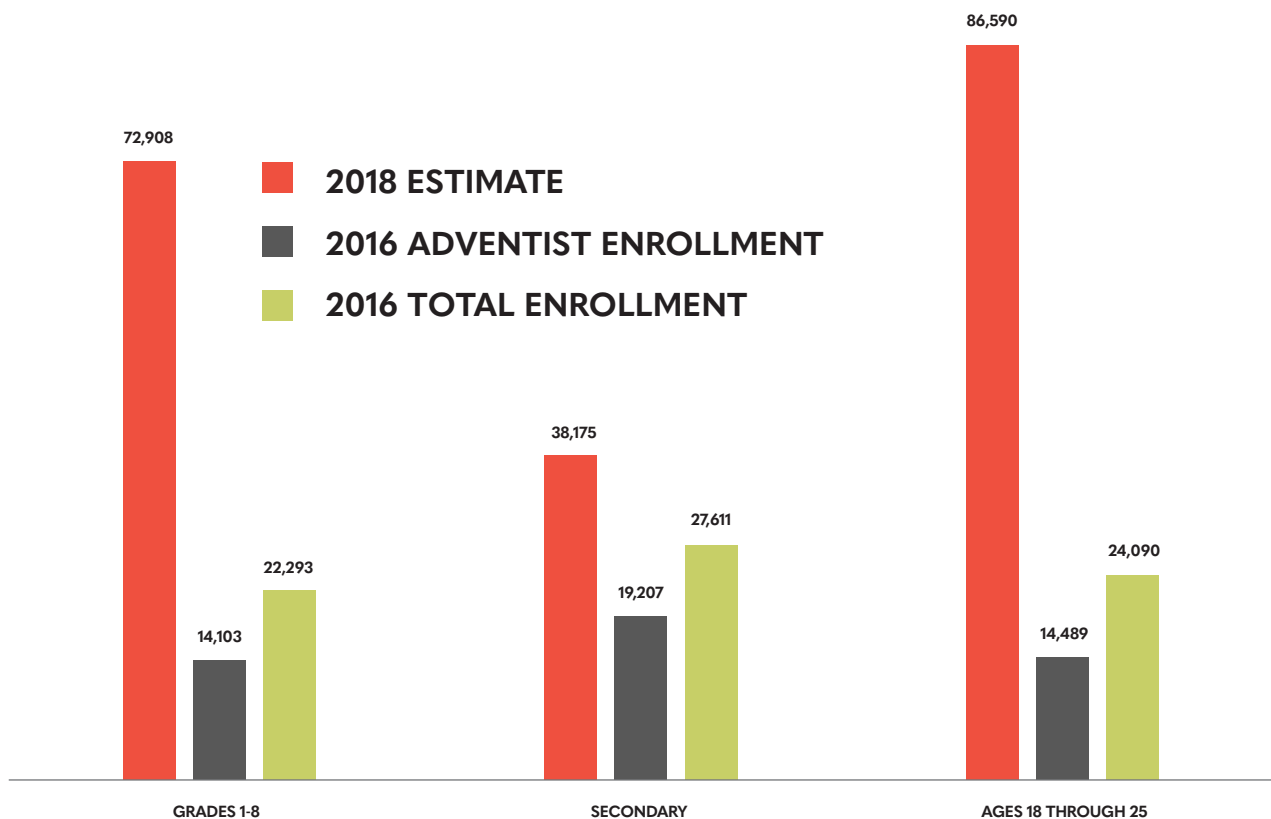


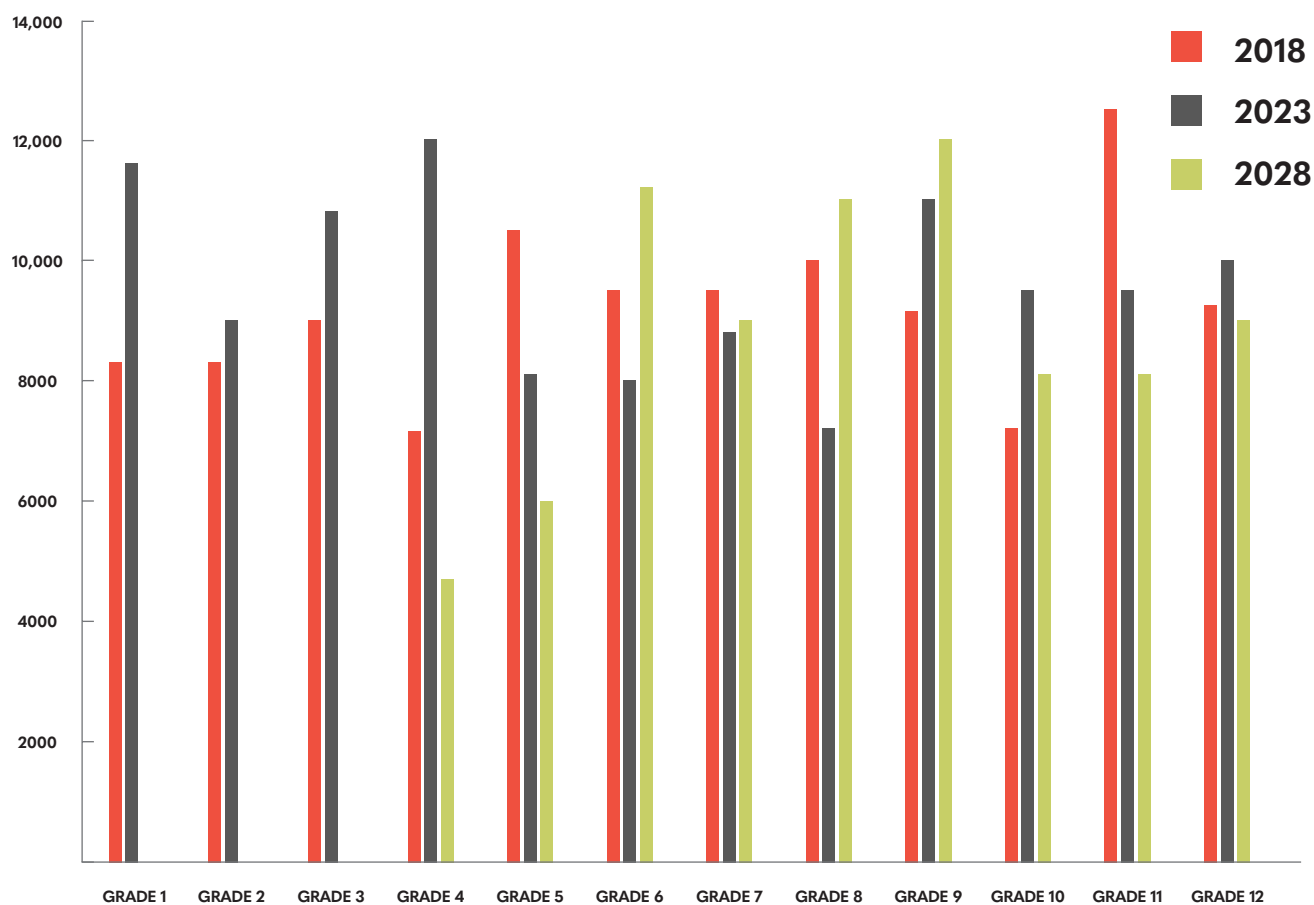
## CHILDREN FROM ADVENTIST FAMILIES

Estimates of the number of children in Adventist families were calculated from the percentages of children reported by respondents in each grade level and in the traditional college age group, 18 through 25. The comparisons are from the December 31, 2016, statistical report of the North American Division Office of Education. (Available online at [www.adventisteducation.org](http://www.adventisteducation.org).)

The data displayed in the graph indicate that no more than 20 to 30 percent of the available pool of children in Adventist households is enrolled in Adventist elementary schools. The situation in

secondary schools is better; 50 percent or better. The analysis related to college enrollment is more difficult to see clearly because we do not know what percentage of the 18 through 25 age group has already completed college or made a decision to pursue job training through an apprenticeship or other approach and are not in the market to go to college. Adventist schools clearly have significant opportunities to recruit larger numbers of students from Adventist families.





## ADVENTIST CHILDREN IN GRADES 1 THROUGH 12 (ESTIMATED/PROJECTED NUMBERS)

Estimates of the number of children from Adventist families for each grade level were calculated based on the percentage of children reported by respondents for each grade level. The red series in the graph displays the current data in 2018. The estimate for 2023 (the black series) includes children with a year of birth that will not place them in Grade 1 until 2023 and projects the estimates from 2018 into Grade 5 through 12. The 2028

estimates (the green series) is also based on the reported year of birth percentages projected 10 years from now starting in Grade 4. It should be noted that the Grade 4 data in the 2028 series is based on only six months of 2018 and could be doubled if it is assumed that the number of births in the second half of 2018 will be the same as the first half.

There are no major shifts projected in the potential number of children from Adventist families

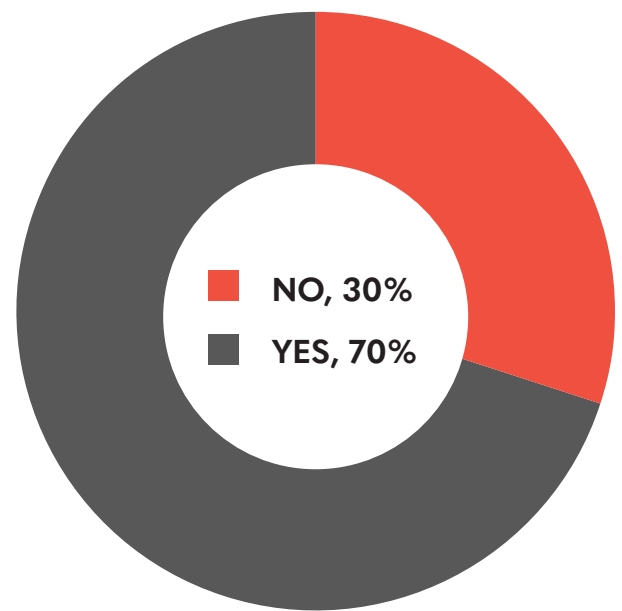
at each grade level over the coming decade. Demographics alone do not predict a crisis for enrollment in Adventist schools at the elementary and secondary levels. Adventist education has significant opportunity to maintain schools at the current level of enrollment if quality education is maintained or enhanced and effective recruitment is sustained.

## ADULTS WHO EVER ATTENDED AN ADVENTIST SCHOOL

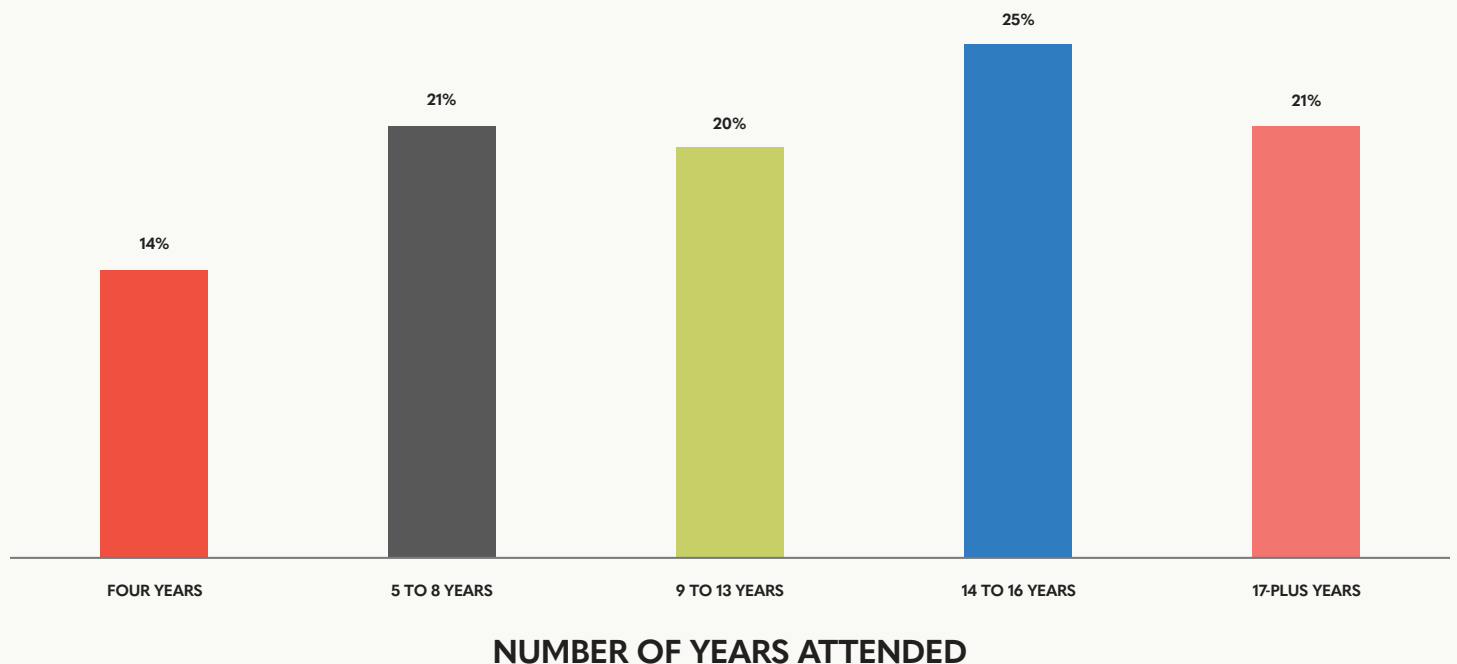
Respondents were asked if they ever attended an Adventist school at any point in their life. A total of 70 percent indicated that they had and only 30 percent said they never had. Those who answered affirmatively were more likely to be among the oldest age cohort and to indicate that they have been church members for more than 20 years. They were also more likely to have completed a graduate degree and less likely to have only a secondary diploma or a two-year college degree, as well as less likely to be part of a

household where the annual income was reported to be less than \$50,000. But, those who reported they had attended an Adventist school were also more likely to be church dropouts.

Those respondents who indicated that they had attended an Adventist school at some point in their life were asked a follow-up question: How many years did you attend Adventist schools? Half reported 12 years and half reported more than 12 years. The number of years do not correlate directly with grade levels.



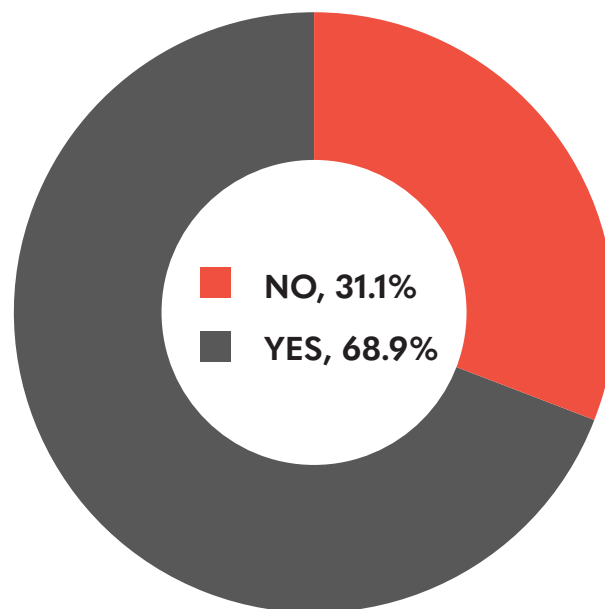
**MEDIAN — 12 YEARS**



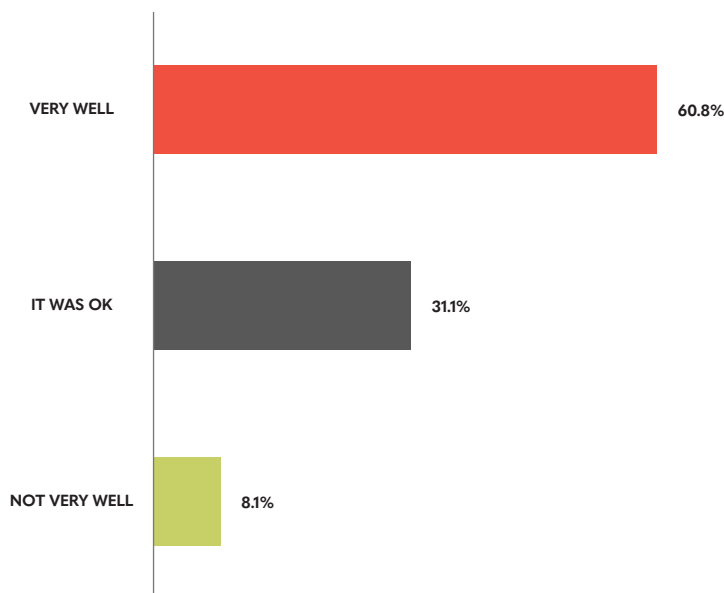
## ADULTS WHO ATTENDED AN ADVENTIST COLLEGE OF UNIVERSITY

Those respondents who indicated that they had attended an Adventist school at some point in their life, were also asked if they had ever attended an Adventist college or university. More than two thirds answered affirmatively to this follow-up question; 68.9 percent of the 70 percent on the previous page yields a total of a little more than 48 percent or roughly half of Adventist adults in the NAD who have attended an Adventist college or university at some point in their life. For some this would mean an institution outside of North America.

Those who indicated that they had attended an Adventist college or university were asked a follow-up question to get their evaluation of the quality of education they received: How well did the Adventist institution prepare you for your occupation? A strong majority (60.8 percent) said “very well” and another third (31.1 percent) said “it was OK.” Only eight percent gave a negative response. In other words, most Adventists who have attended an Adventist higher education institution are positive about the quality of the program they experienced. Church dropouts were the only segment that was somewhat less positive.



### HOW WELL DID THE ADVENTIST INSTITUTION PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR OCCUPATION?

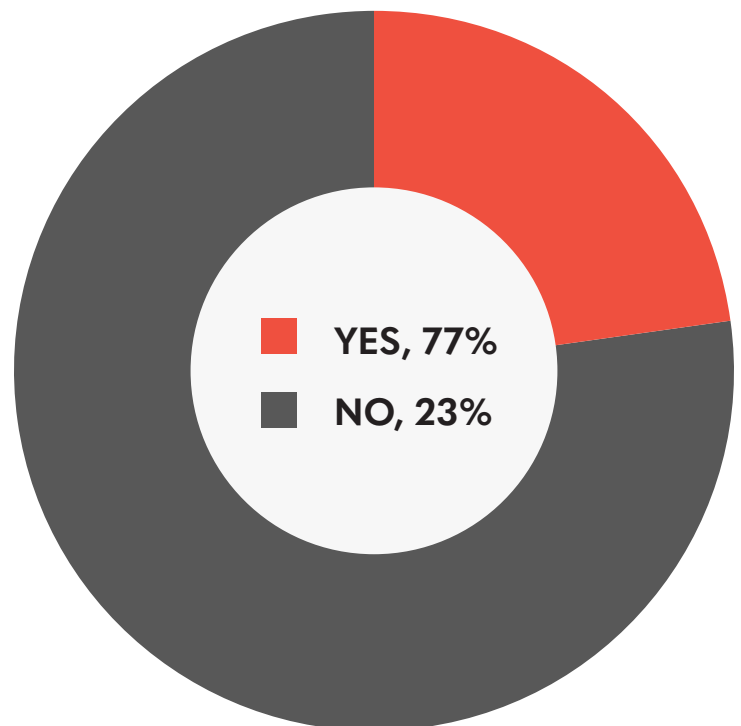
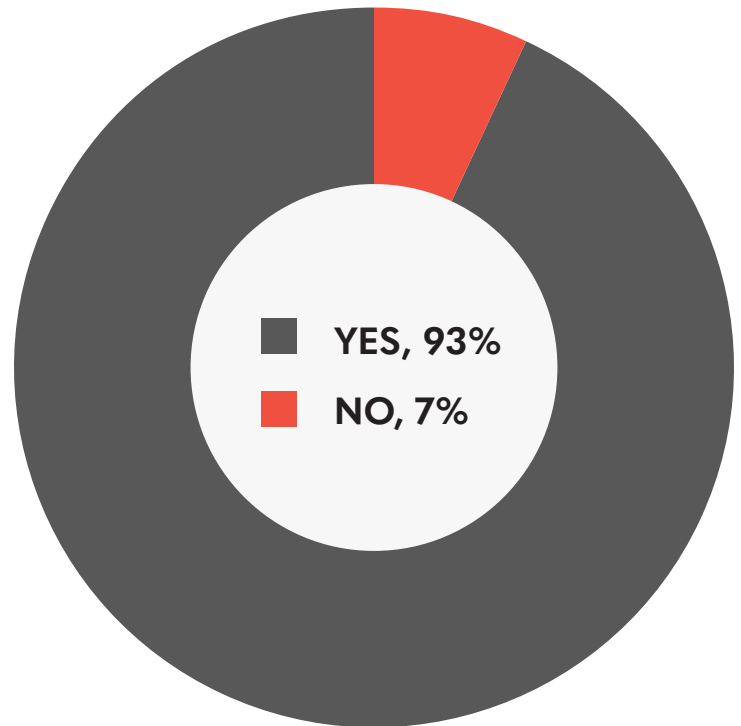


## WOULD ENCOURAGE MY CHILD TO GO TO COLLEGE? ... AN ADVENTIST COLLEGE?

Respondents were asked two parallel questions about their attitudes toward higher education. First, would you encourage your child or grandchild to go to college? And, if so would you encourage them to attend an Adventist college?

More than nine out of ten Adventist adults said they would encourage their child or grandchild to go to college. Some of the older respondents wrote comments indicating their children had gone to college in the past.

More than three out of four (77 percent) said they would encourage their child or grandchild to go to an Adventist college. Those who have been church members for more than 20 years were more likely to give this response, while younger respondents were less likely to do so, as were church dropouts.



## REASONS WHY FOR THOSE POSITIVE ABOUT ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION

The respondents to the question about whether or not they would encourage their child or grandchild to attend an Adventist college were asked a simple, open-ended follow-up question; Why? Each of the written comments were read and classified. To the right is a summary of the positive responses from the 77 percent who said they would encourage their child or grandchild to attend an Adventist college. Below is a summary of the responses of the 23 percent who said they would not encourage their child or grandchild to attend an Adventist college.

<b>62%</b>	Passing on the faith (including family and friendships)
<b>20%</b>	Academic quality, "a good education"
<b>2%</b>	A positive history with Adventist education

## REASONS WHY FOR THOSE NEGATIVE ABOUT ADVENTIST HIGHER EDUCATION

<b>10%</b>	The cost of Adventist higher education
<b>5%</b>	Academic quality not as good as other, secular institutions
<b>5%</b>	Not sufficiently Adventist, "too liberal" (prefer independents)
<b>1%</b>	Prefer trade school or apprenticeship, not higher education
<b>1%</b>	Negative history with Adventist education

## SOMEWHAT NEUTRAL REASONS EXPRESSED BY SOME

There was a small percentage of respondents who gave both positive and negative responses to the open-ended question and seemed to be of a mixed opinion about Adventist higher education. The comments that could not be clearly classified either way are summarized to the right. In almost every case these comments were mingled with positive or negative comments reported above.

<b>10%</b>	Depends on the needs and/or wants of the child/grandchild
<b>7%</b>	Expressed mixed feelings about Adventist education
<b>2%</b>	Concern about long-term debt from higher education
<b>8%</b>	Unique, unclassified comments

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