

**Office of Information and Research
Report 1**

**Demographic Profile:
the Adventist Community
in North America**

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Introduction

The Church Information System was established by the North American Division Committee in November 1988. Its purpose is to provide regular, up-to-date information about the local church and the Adventist member and family—demographics, church attendance and involvement, attitudes and behavior related to the goals of the denomination and its varied ministries. More than a score of significant studies have been conducted over the past decade, but this is the first permanent, systematic program of survey research established by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Three primary streams of data collection are part of the NAD Church Information System:

- The new, consolidated Reporting Forms administered by church clerks and the conference, union and division secretaries. Only the bare minimum of statistics are now required from every congregation.
- The Survey of Congregations, a panel of 40 local churches which have agreed to participate circulate a yearly questionnaire to their entire attendance on Sabbath morning as well as supplementary questions for their church board members. This is conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University using the successful methods they have developed in conducting surveys for the NAD since 1979.

- Adventist Family Opinion (AFO), a market research panel of 1,675 church-related households who have agreed to regularly provide their opinions regarding products, services and goals of denominational institutions and departments, as well as the local church. This is conducted by the Research & Development office of the Review & Herald Publishing Association using state-of-the-art market research methodology.

This data bank is supplemented from time to time by studies conducted by the Survey Research Service at Loma Linda University, the Pacific Union Conference Church Ministries Department, the research and development office at Pacific Press, the Harvest 90 Adventist Research Taskforce (HART), Project Affirmation, and NAD and Union

Conference staff. Some of these projects are done by independent research organizations as contractors for the denomination.

All of these sources, brought together by the Church Information System, provide a rich information base for church leaders, their staff and decision-making groups. The clearinghouse for the system has been established in the NAD Church Ministries Department, office of the Adult Ministries Coordinator. Questions and requests for additional information should be addressed to that office at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring MD 20904. (301-680-6438; Fax 301-680-6464.)

How the Information in this Report was Collected

This is one in a series of reports published by the NAD Church Information System. It presents information collected by the Adventist Family Opinion (AFO) surveys conducted for the NAD by the Review & Herald Publishing Association's Office of Research & Development. AFO consists of 1,675 households selected by stratified probability sampling from among the mailing lists of the Union Conference papers and the membership lists of selected local conferences who do not participate in their respective union papers. The sampling error is between 2 and 3 percentage points at a 95 in 100 confidence level. The sample size and technique is comparable to those used by the most respected public polling organizations in the United States and Canada today. Additional information about the sampling methods and statistical methods used is provided in the Technical Appendix.

I also want to acknowledge the work of Bruce Dillon, the data processing consultant who worked on this project, and Rae Patterson, editorial assistant.

Monte Sahlin

Project Coordinator

January 1, 1990

The Demographics of the Adventist Community in North America

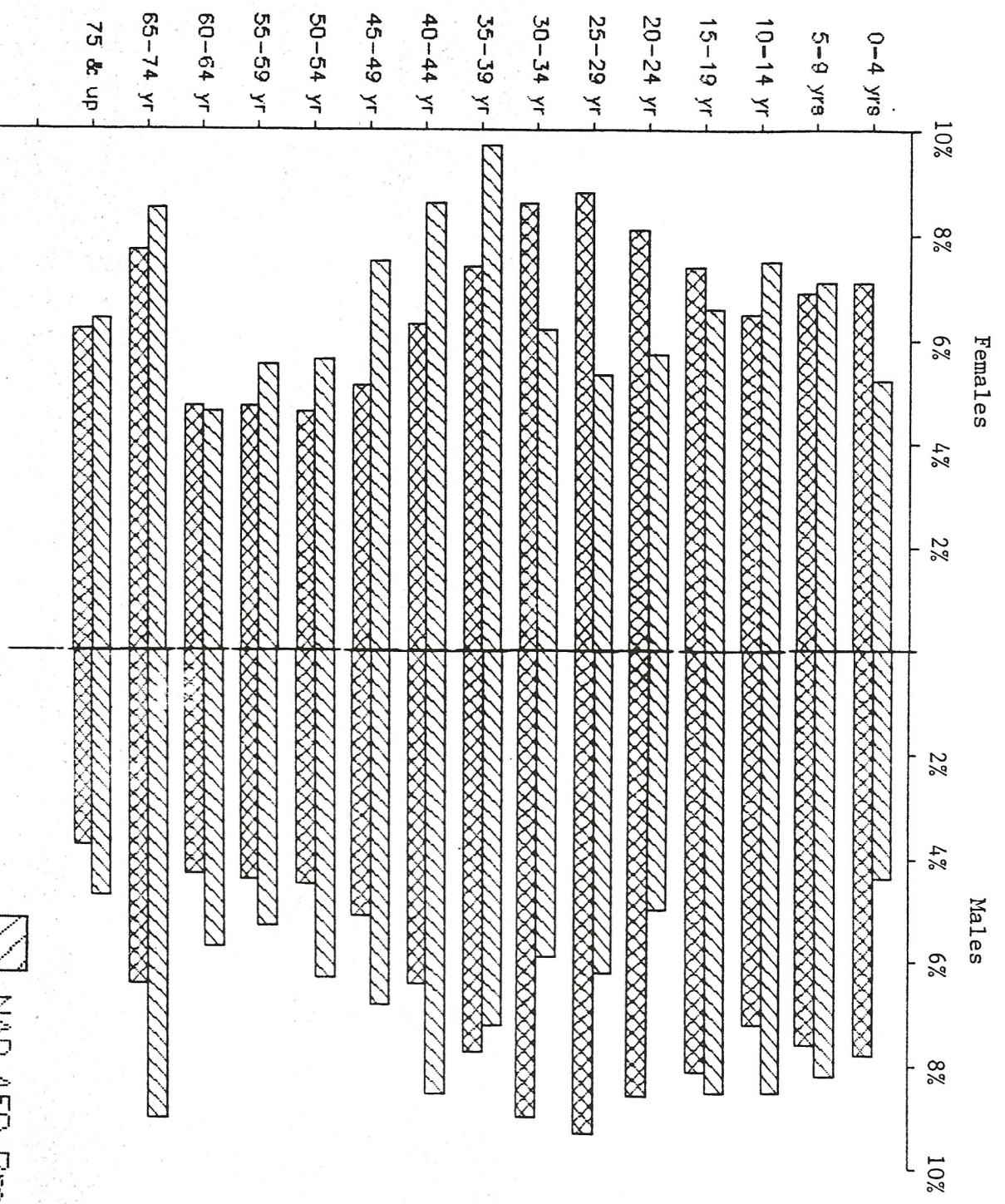
This report provides an unprecedented look at the demographics of the Seventh-day Adventist constituency in the United States, Canada and Bermuda. It looks at the entire Adventist community, including unbaptized children and spouses in church-related families. It shows how Adventists compare with the general public in age and family structure, urbanization, education, occupation, socioeconomic status and some consumer behaviors.

The first graphic is a comparative age/sex pyramid of the Adventist community and the general population of North America. It illustrates the significant under-representation of Adventists in the young adult years and the Baby Boomer generation, and the over-representation of Adventists among the middle-aged and children 10 to 14 years of age. Significant over-representation of women in the Adventist Church begins with the 35 to 39 age group, and with men in the 40 to 44 age group. Some researchers have predicted that as Baby Boomers age, they will return to the church. These data could be interpreted in that way. The significant under-representation of Adventist children in the youngest age group (birth to fifth birthday) indicates that, for Adventists, the "echo boom," or increased supply of offspring from the Baby Boom generation, is over. This is not good news for Adventist schools and may already be felt in the Cradle Roll Sabbath Schools.

Comparisons with the general public in this first graphic and throughout this report were obtained from the latest releases of Statistics Canada and the U.S. Census Bureau. Specifically, *Population, occupied private dwellings, private households, census families in private households: Selected characteristics* (Statistics Canada, 1982) Catalogue # 95-902; *Population, occupied private dwellings, private households and census and economic families in private households: Selected social and economic characteristics* (Statistics Canada, 1983) Catalogue # 95-942; *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1989*, 109th edition, (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1989). These are the sources for data for the general public unless otherwise noted. Actual figures have been combined to arrive at a North American total or percentage in each case.

Table I provides a projection of Adventist population based on the survey results. It is similar to the method used by the official census in the United States and Canada between the times, once a decade, when every home is contacted. To arrive at these numbers, the total sample of completed interviews was first weighted to bring the ethnic characteristics of the final sample into alignment with the known ethnicity of the total membership of the North American Division based on the 1988 statistics supplied by the NAD Office of Human Relations. Also, because about 16% of the sample households were unbaptized children under 13 years of age, the official membership of the NAD, of 708,616 on June 30, 1988, was increased by 16% to project the probable number of unbaptized children, bringing the total Adventist population to 843,361. In using this table, remember that any cell in it has an error factor of 2 or 3 percentage points.

(Continued on page 5)





 NAD AFO Projections
 US & Canadian Census

TABLE I — Total Adventist Population in the North American Division by Age, Sex and Living Arrangements

Years	Heads of Households		Members at Home				Members Aways		Totals by Sex		Grand Totals
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
0-4	0	0	17,905	22,725	0	0	17,905	22,725	40,630	4.8%	
5-9	0	0	32,596	30,300	689	918	33,285	31,219	64,503	7.6%	
10-14	0	0	34,203	31,219	230	1,607	34,432	32,825	67,258	8.0%	
15-19	0	459	27,775	20,889	6,657	7,575	34,432	28,923	63,355	7.5%	
20-24	2,066	5,050	11,477	9,871	6,657	10,100	20,200	25,021	45,221	5.4%	
25-29	15,380	17,446	6,886	3,902	2,755	1,607	24,103	22,955	47,976	5.7%	
30-34	22,266	25,709	1,836	1,377	0	0	25,021	27,087	51,189	6.1%	
35-39	28,694	40,630	459	1,377	0	459	29,153	42,466	71,619	8.5%	
40-44	33,973	36,039	459	1,377	0	0	34,432	37,416	71,849	8.5%	
45-49	27,087	32,366	689	230	0	0	27,775	32,596	60,371	7.2%	
50-54	25,480	22,955	0	1,607	0	0	25,480	24,562	50,042	5.9%	
55-59	21,118	22,955	230	1,148	0	0	21,348	24,103	45,451	5.4%	
60-64	22,955	19,741	230	230	0	0	23,184	19,971	43,155	5.1%	
65-69	19,512	20,889	459	918	0	0	19,971	21,807	41,778	5.0%	
70-74	16,527	14,462	0	918	0	0	16,527	15,380	31,907	3.8%	
75-80	9,411	11,248	689	1,607	0	0	10,100	12,855	22,955	2.7%	
85+	8,493	11,018	459	4,132	0	0	8,952	15,150	24,103	2.9%	
	252,962	280,967	136,352	133,827	16,987	22,266	406,301	437,060	843,361	100.0%	

Source: NAD Church Information System, Adventist Family Opinion Survey, 1989.
 For method of computing projections, see text.

**TABLE II — Total Adventist Population in the NAD
by Sabbath School Divisions**

	Totals by Sex		Grand Totals	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cradle Roll				
0 - 3	9,871	12,396	22,266	2.6%
Kindergarten				
4 - 6	14,232	15,150	29,382	3.5%
Primary				
7 - 9	21,118	20,659	41,778	5.0%
Junior-Baritean				
10 - 14	35,810	31,907	67,717	8.0%
Youth/Teen				
15 - 19	32,366	30,071	62,437	7.4%
Young Adult				
20 - 29	46,369	49,353	95,722	11.4%
Adult				
30 +	246,535	277,524	524,059	62.1%
Totals	406,301	437,060	843,361	100.0%

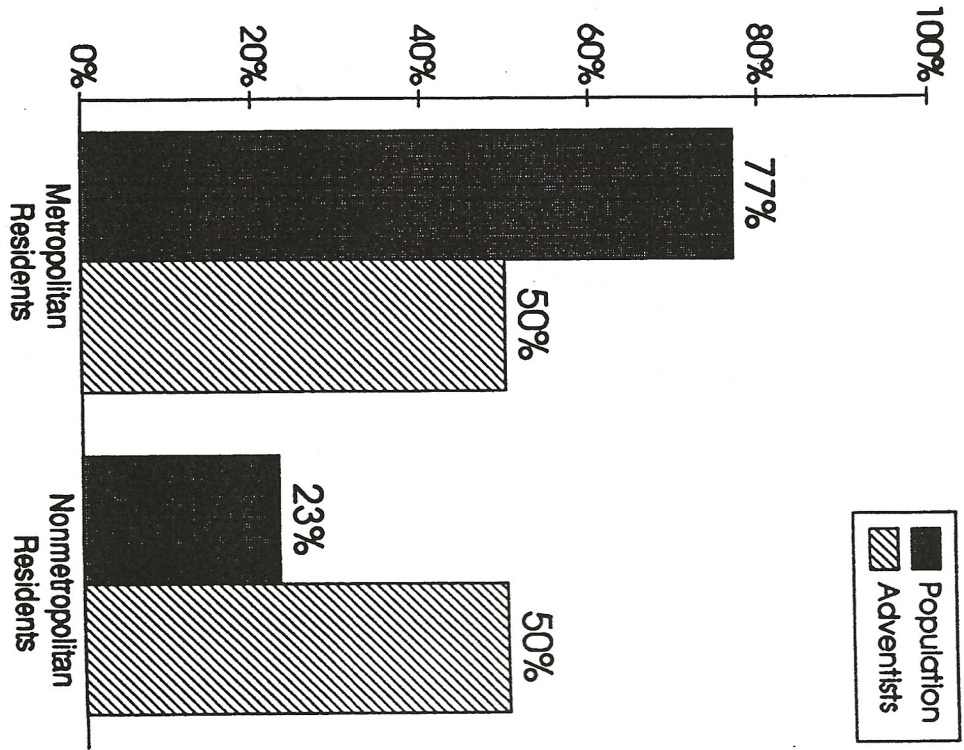
Source: NAD Church Information System,
Adventist Family Opinion Survey, 1989.
For method of computing projections, see text.

Source of the compiled membership statistics is *The SDA Church Directory*, Electronic Version, (Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1987).

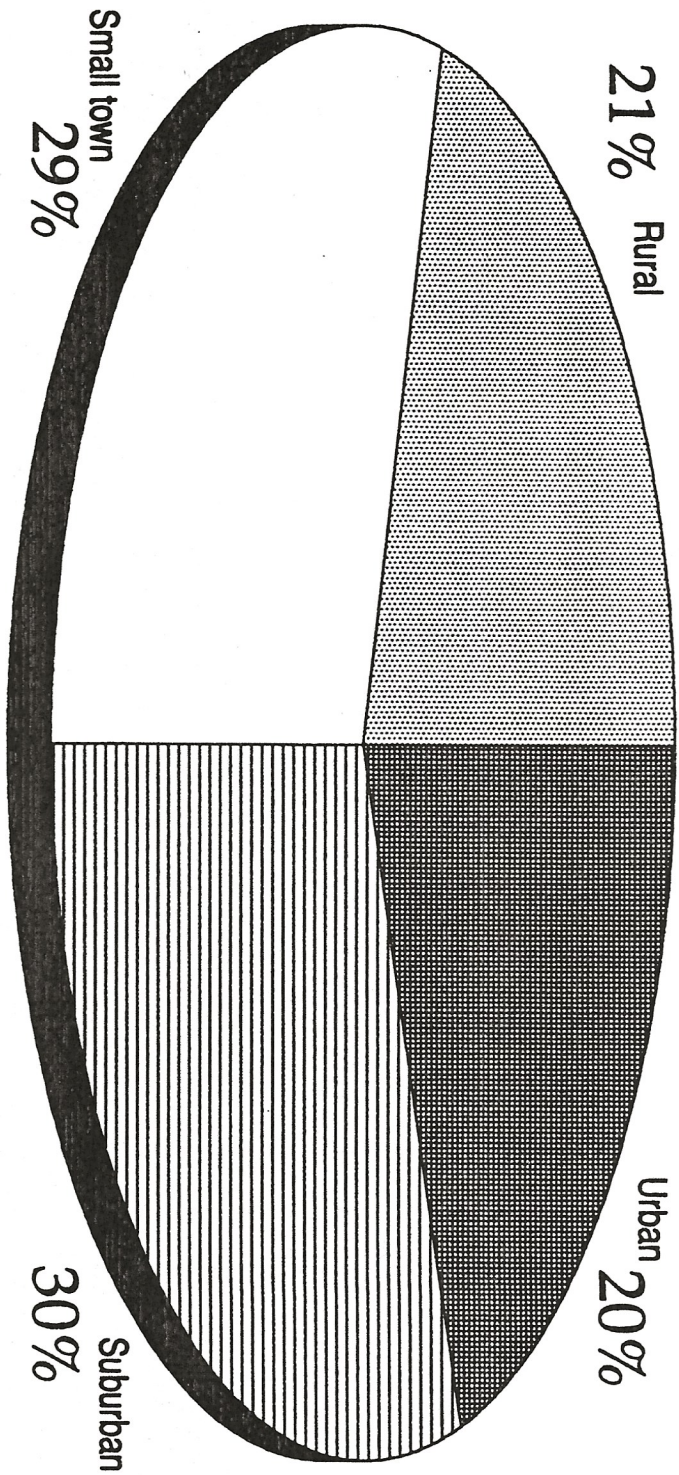
Table II organizes the same data as is presented in Table I in terms of the age levels generally assigned to the divisions of the Sabbath Schools operated by local churches in the NAD. This is useful in comparing the actual attendance reported by congregations, and the circulation figures for Sabbath School materials. It can also give us a picture of the real situation faced in local churches. For example, we know from compiled membership statistics that the 167 congregations with 600 or more members each have 24% of the total NAD membership. If they have a similar share of the 22,266 children who fall into the Cradle Roll age group, then each of these congregations could average 32 children in their Cradle Roll Sabbath School if there is full attendance. On the other hand, we know that the 2,685 congregations with less than 100 members each have 19% of the total NAD membership. If they have a similar share of the total population in this age group, they can average no more than 2 children each, unless they are attracting the children of nonmembers.

Adventists and the Cities

Half of the Adventists in North America live in small towns and rural locations. This is in marked contrast to the general urbanization of U.S. and Canadian society. It reveals a significant gap in Adventist penetration of the large cities, especially the suburbs surrounding North America's largest urban centers. Nearly half of the general population lives in these suburbs, while less than a third of the Adventist community is present there. This may be a contributing factor to the large number of white Adventist churches experiencing little or no growth in membership.



Where Adventists live in North America . . .



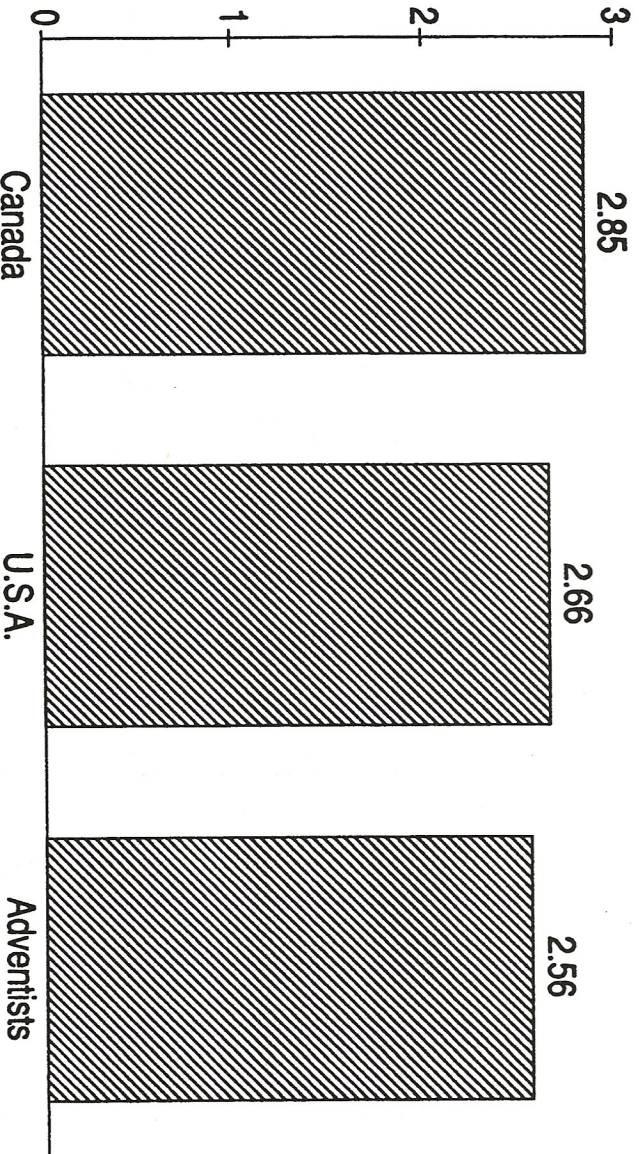
The Adventist Home

Married couples make up the dominant majority of Adventist homes in North America (see page 9), and only one in five include a nonmember spouse (page 11). A third of Adventist families are couples with children, but nearly two out of five are couples without children in the home, and most of these are "empty nesters" whose children have become adults and left home. (See page 10.) This is reflected in the fact that the average household size is smaller among Adventists than it is in the general population in both Canada and the U.S. (See below.) There are more "empty nesters" among whites and more couples with children among minorities.

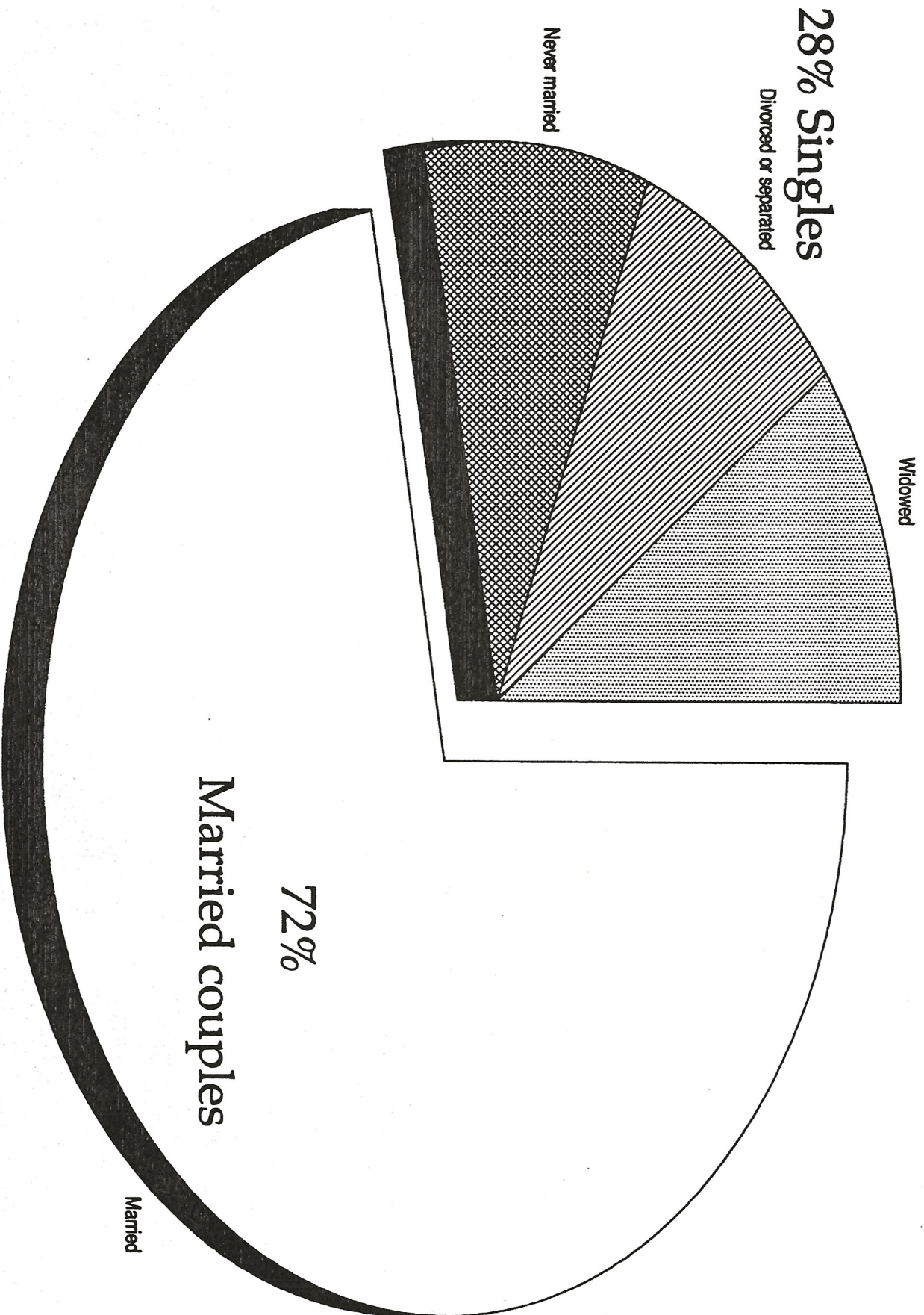
The proportion of single parent families in the Adventist community is the same as in the general population. So is the proportion of divorced

individuals. (See pages 9 and 10.) Never married adults and still single widows and widowers account for the "undersupply" of singles. (See page 9.) One explanation for this is the known tendency of young adults to drop out of the church. Another possible contributing factor is that more widowed Adventists are remarrying due to the longer than average lifespan of Adventist males.

Adventists are more likely to be homeowners and to live in single family dwellings than is the general population. (See pages 12 and 13.) This is especially true for white and Asian Adventists, but it also true to a significant degree among black and Hispanic Adventists. Even low-income Adventist families are likely to be homeowners.

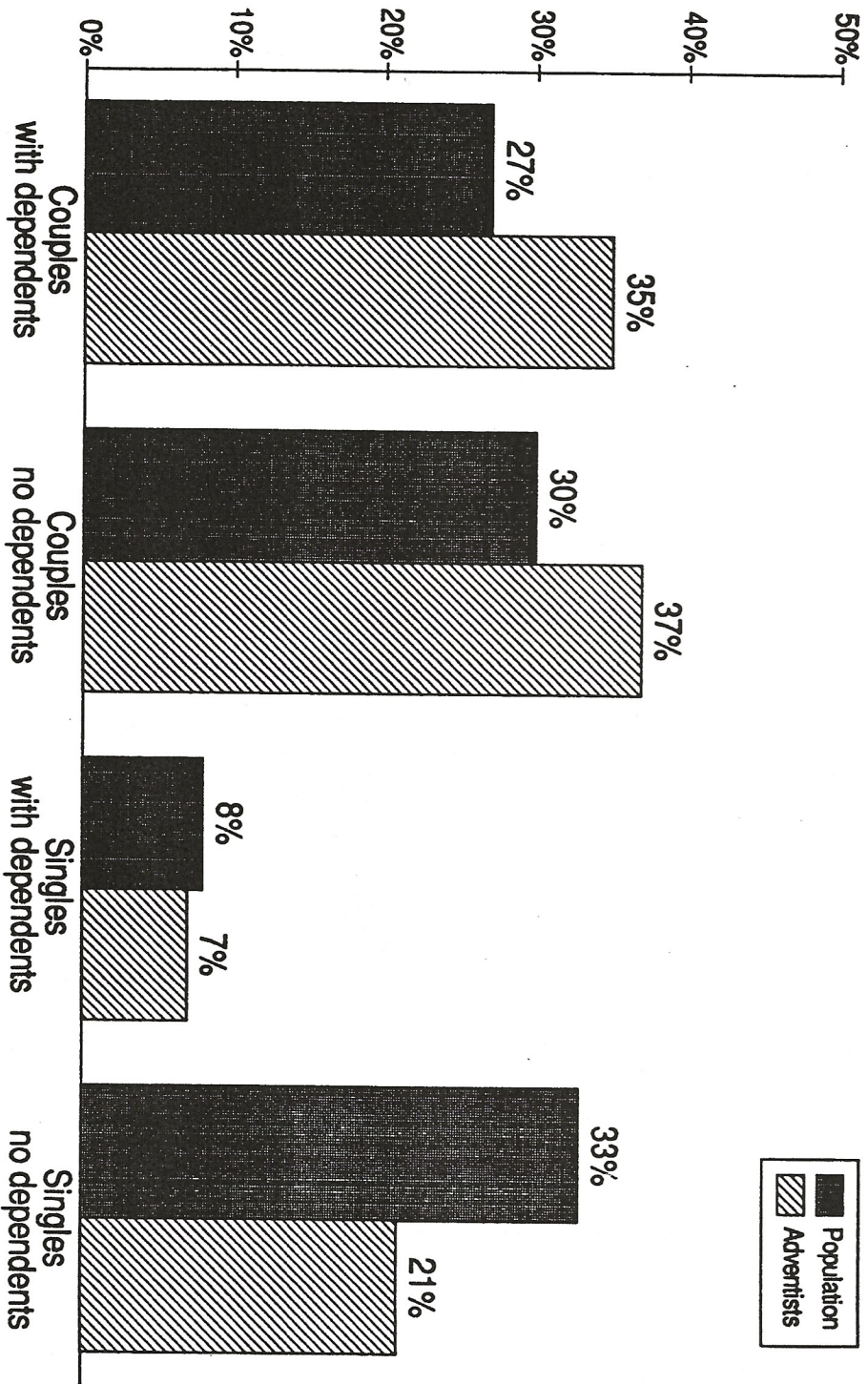


The Adventist family in North America . . .



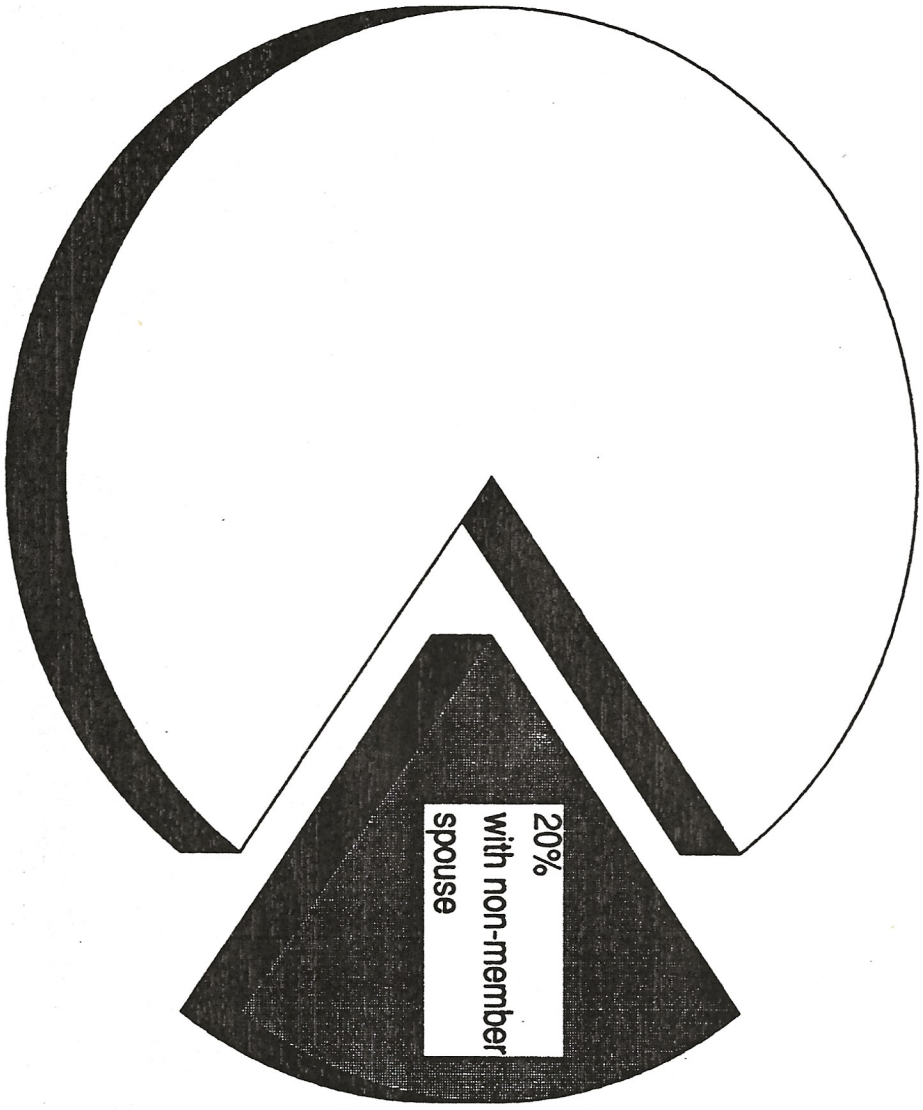
Households by Type

North American Division



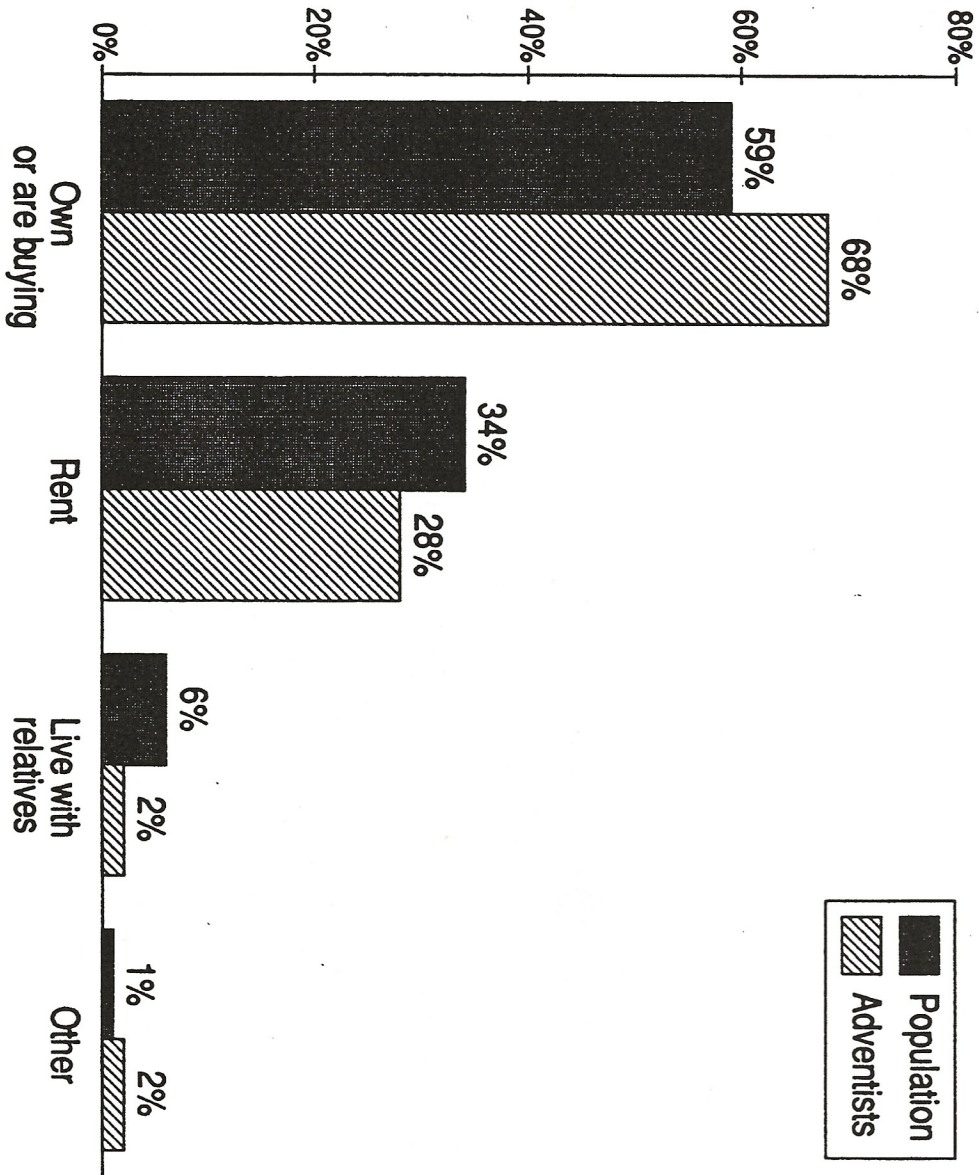
Church Member with a Non-Member Spouse

North American Division

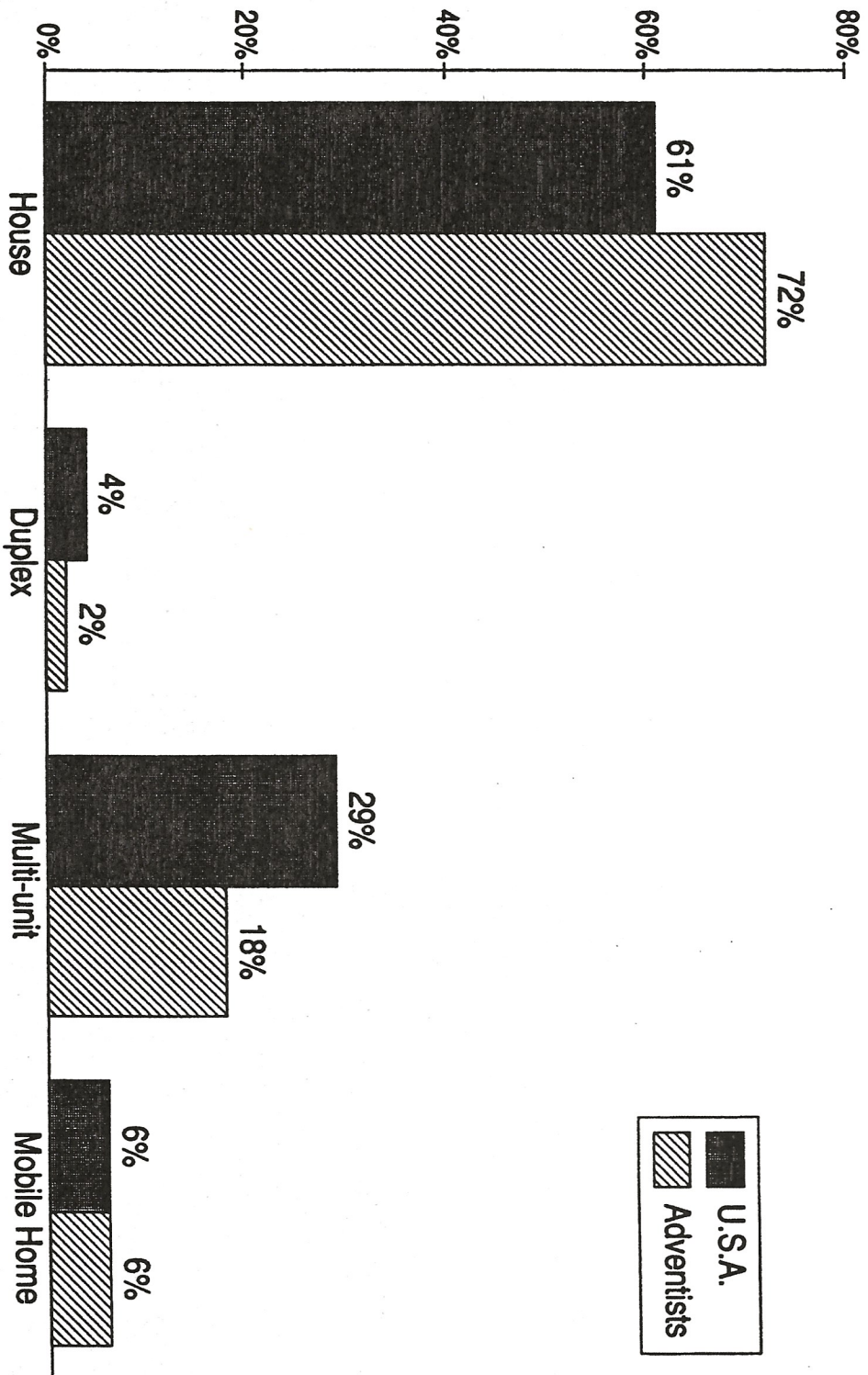


Household Arrangements

North American Division



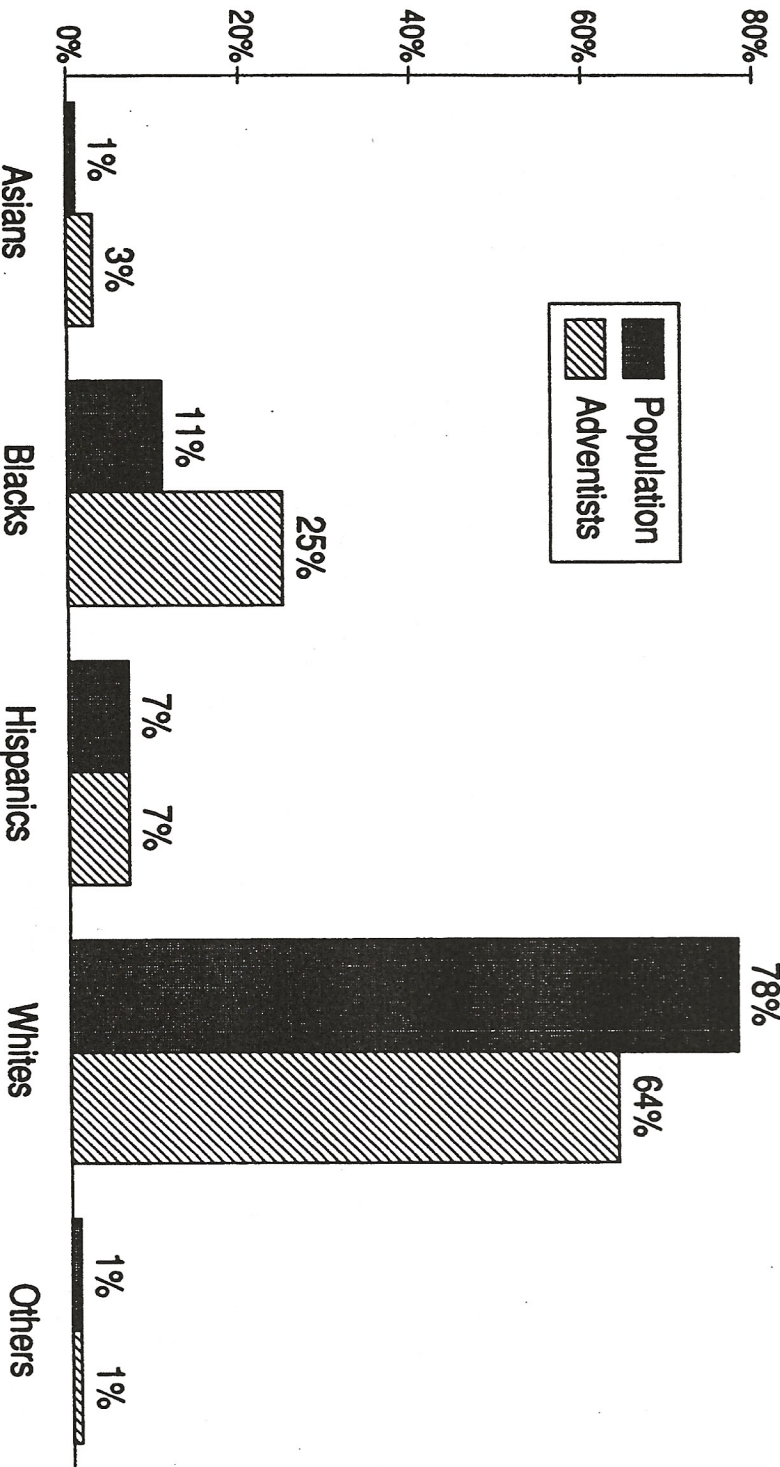
Type of Housing



The Ethnicity of the Adventist Community

The Adventist Church has been particularly successful among the black population of North America. The proportion of blacks in the Adventist community is twice that in the general population. Among Asians, Hispanics and the smallest ethnic groups the number of Advent-

ists is proportionate to the profile of the general population. Future reports in this series will provide detailed profiles of the black and Hispanic Adventist communities in North America.



Educational Attainment of Adventists

The graph on page 16 displays the education of adults in Adventist households. The emphasis on Christian Education in Adventist faith and practice has resulted in a very significant level of educational attainment among Adventists in North America. The percentage of Adventists with less than a high school diploma is half that in the United States and Canada. The percentage of Adventists who have completed some level of higher education is almost double that in the general population. Two out of five Adventist males and a third of the females have a college degree. The majority have spent some time in postsecondary schools.

A comparison of generational cohorts indicates that the dominant majority of educated adults is a recent phenomenon. Among Adventist men born before 1925 only 29% have a college degree, while among Adventist men born from 1946 through 1964 fully 50% have a college degree.

The percentage of highly educated church members is significant in all ethnic groups. In fact the percentage of males with a college degree among black and Hispanic Adventists may be slightly greater than among white Adventists. Canadian Adventists are less likely to have a college degree than are U.S. Adventists.

This highly educated membership is likely related to some of the changes underway in the local church in the NAD, such as in the leadership role of the pastor, in the kind of outreach and nurture activities that receive support, in the decision-making processes of congregations, etc.

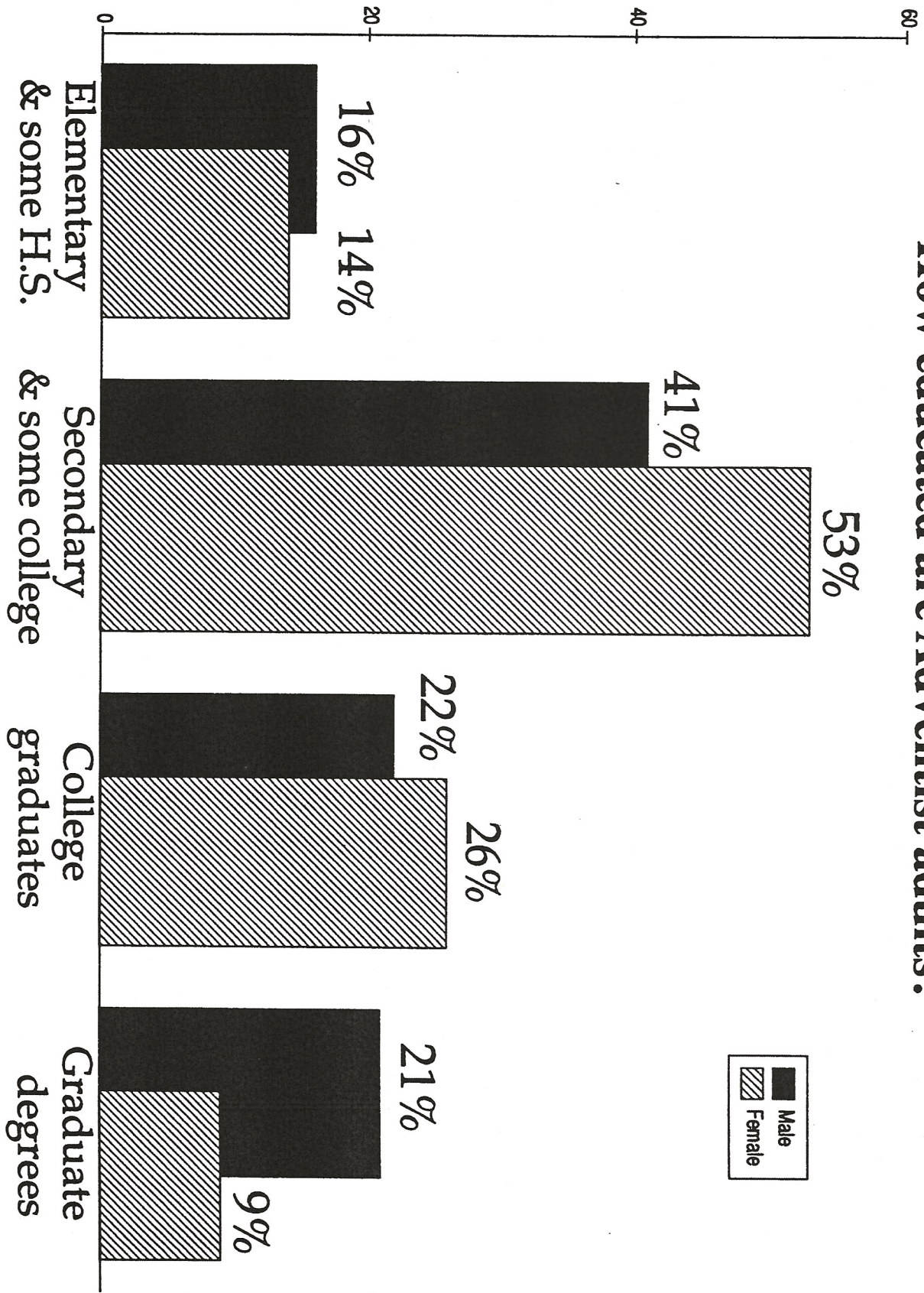
Where do Adventists Work?

Two out of three Adventist men hold professional, managerial, and White Collar jobs or are in school preparing for such positions. Only a third are Blue Collar workers. (See page 17.) This is true for all ethnic groups, but less true for Adventists living in rural areas where one in six Adventist men work in farming and forestry and one in four are craftsmen. Ethnic minority men are twice as likely as whites to be employed in the military.

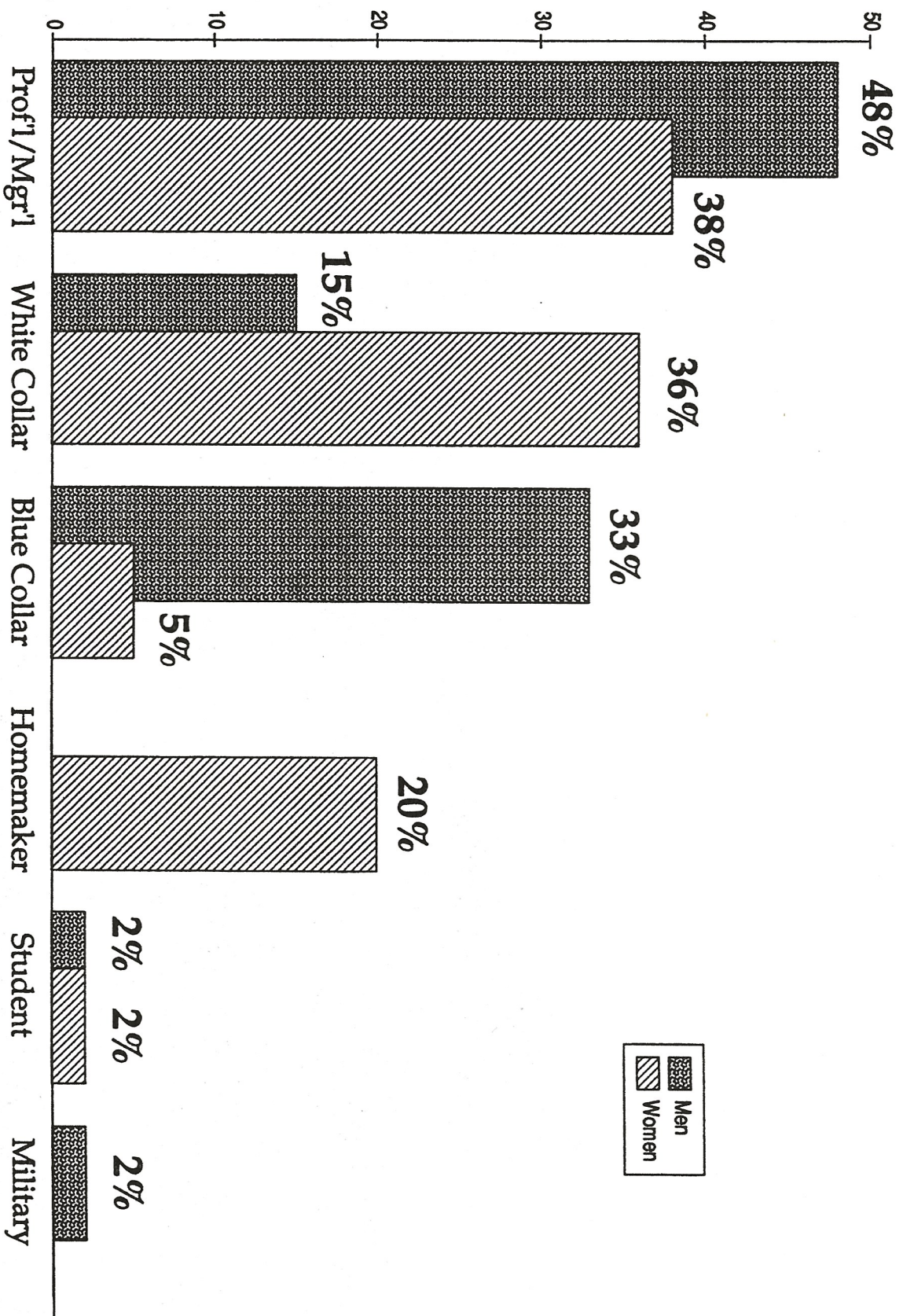
Three out of four Adventist women who are not retired work outside the home; two thirds of these work full time. (See page 18.) Only one Adventist woman in five considers herself a full-time homemaker. This could be an indication as to why volunteer programs in the local church, which historically have relied on the donated time of housewives, are hurting today.

For the purposes of this report, "White Collar" occupations are defined as technical, sales and service positions and "Blue Collar" occupations are defined as farming, forestry, craftsman, artisan and laborer jobs.

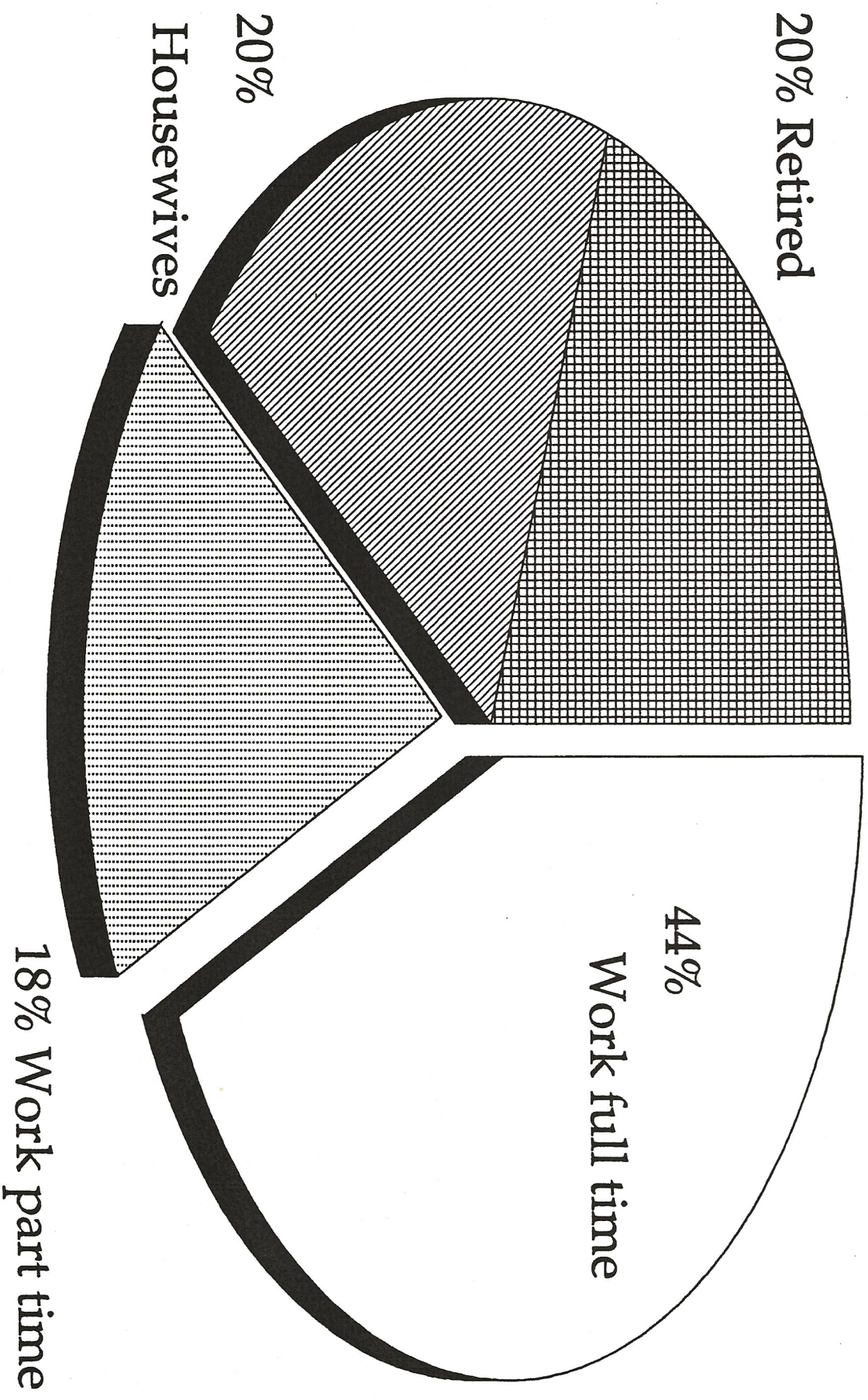
How educated are Adventist adults?



Occupational profile of NAD members



Adventist women in North America . . .



Annual Household Income among Adventists

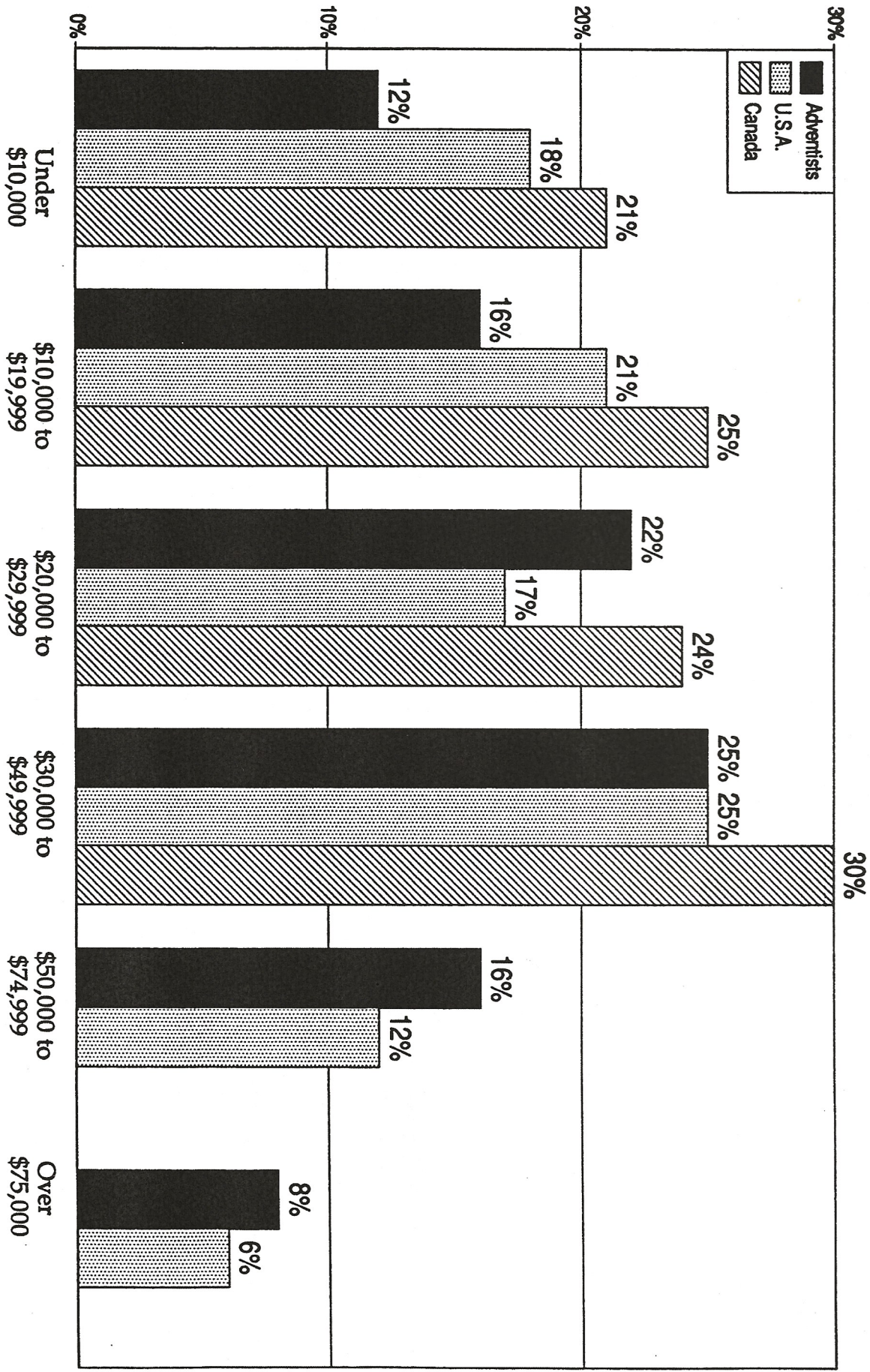
There are fewer poor people and more households with high incomes among Adventists than in the general population in North America. (See page 20.) The majority are above the median household income. Most are middle class in socioeconomic status.

The middle class nature of NAD Adventism is especially illustrated when the use of credit cards among church members is compared to usage among the general population in the U.S. (See page 21.) Adventists are significantly more likely to have bank cards such as Visa and MasterCard, charge cards at retail stores such as Sears and gasoline company credit cards. They are twice as likely to have travel cards such as American Express. Retailers to the Adventist market will be interested in the fact that Visa is the single most used credit card of all types.

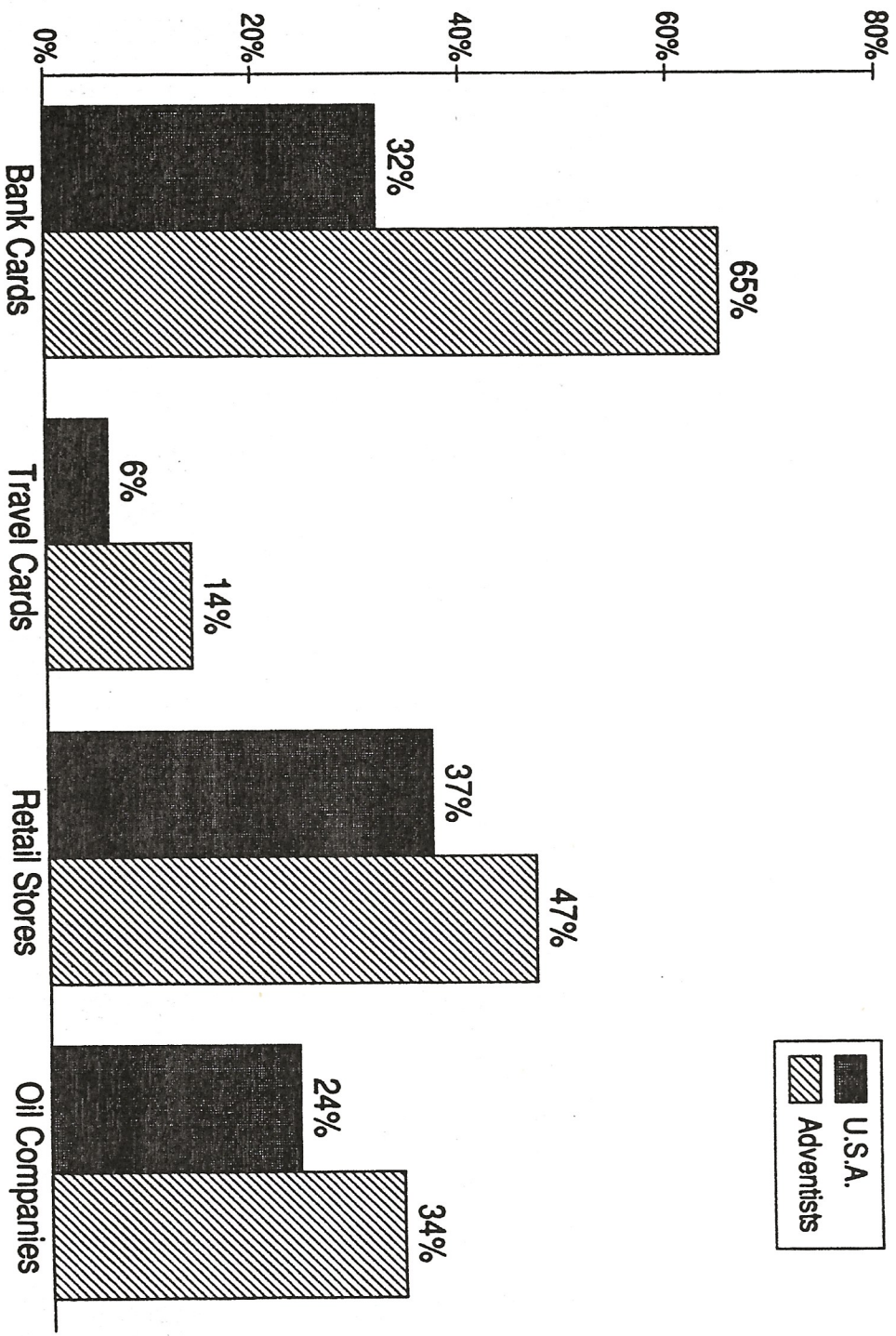
Black Adventists are as solidly middle class as are white Adventists. Asians are even more likely to be middle class. Hispanics and other minorities are more likely to have lower incomes. Congregations with less than 100 members have more low income families, and congregations with 600 or more members have more middle and higher income families.

On page 20, in the census data for Canada, all higher incomes are included in the \$30,000 to \$49,999 category because the highest segment reported by Statistics Canada is those with annual household incomes of \$40,000 and greater. The income figures for Canada are in Canadian dollars. The income figures for the U.S.A. are in U.S. dollars.

Annual Household Income in the NAD



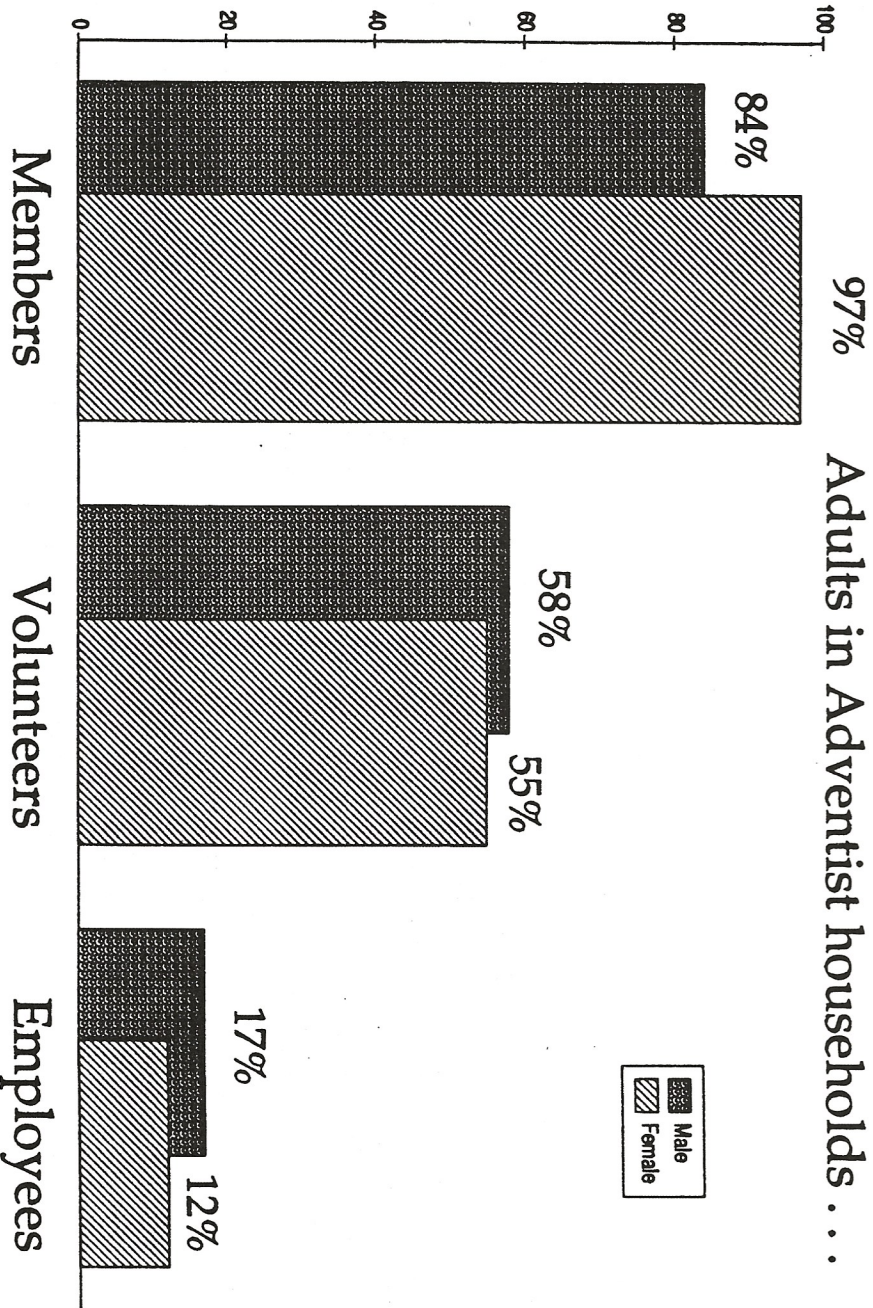
Households with Credit Cards



Church Involvement

A little more than half of the Adventist members in North America hold some office or responsibility in their local congregation. One household in five includes a denominational employee, including 17% of the male heads of households and 12% of women, with some households in which both spouses are employed by the denomination. This is a very wide and significant base of participation compared to mainstream

Protestant denominations, but probably less involvement than among Mennonites and other small, Anabaptist denominations. Men are somewhat more likely than women to be a non-member spouse in a church-related household. This is a consistent pattern in North American society outside the Adventist community as well.



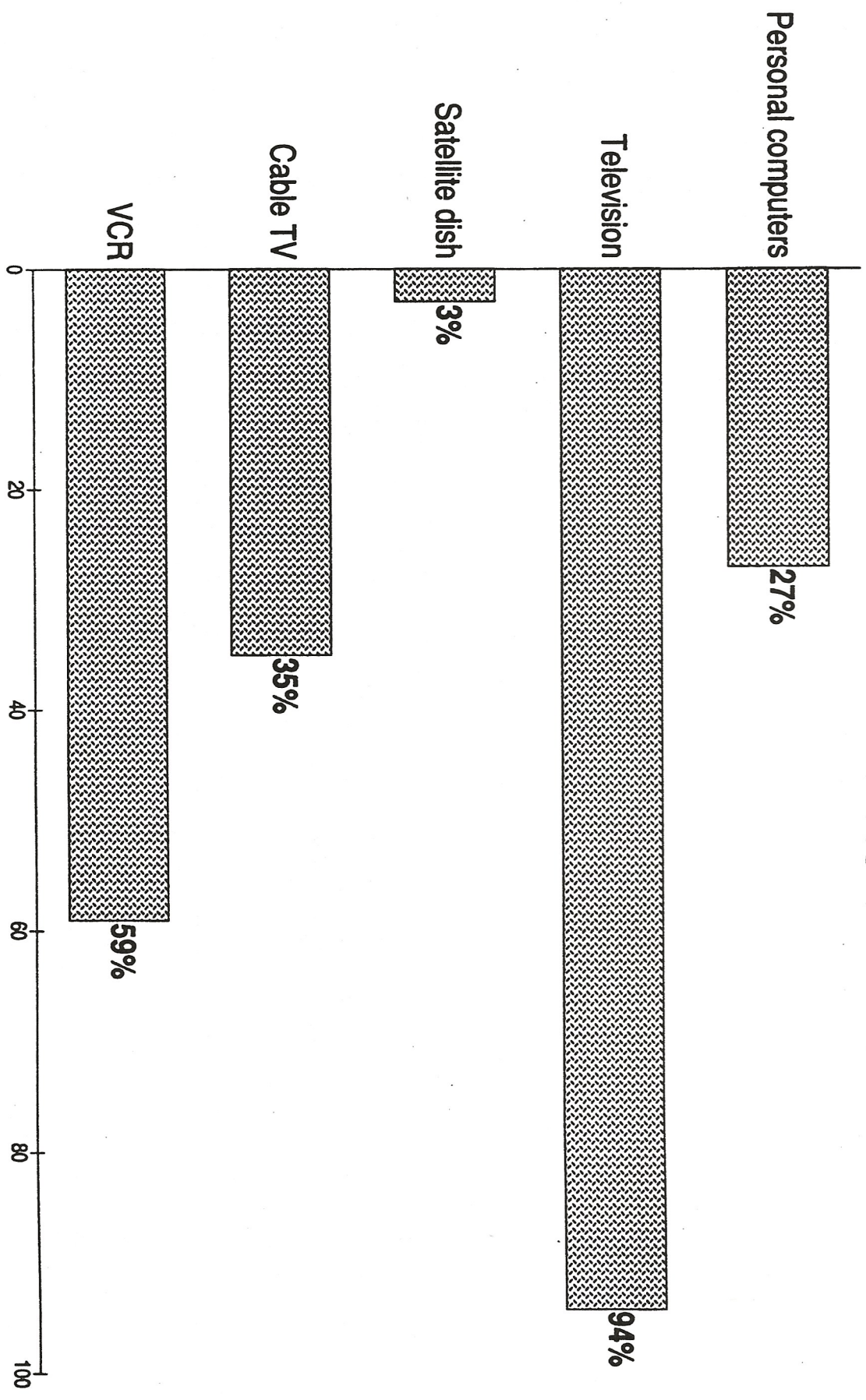
Consumption of Electronic Media and Christian Books

Personal computers are present in a quarter of the Adventist homes in North America, while only 3% have satellite dishes. (See page 24.) This would indicate that a computer bulletin board service might have greater utility than a satellite communications network.

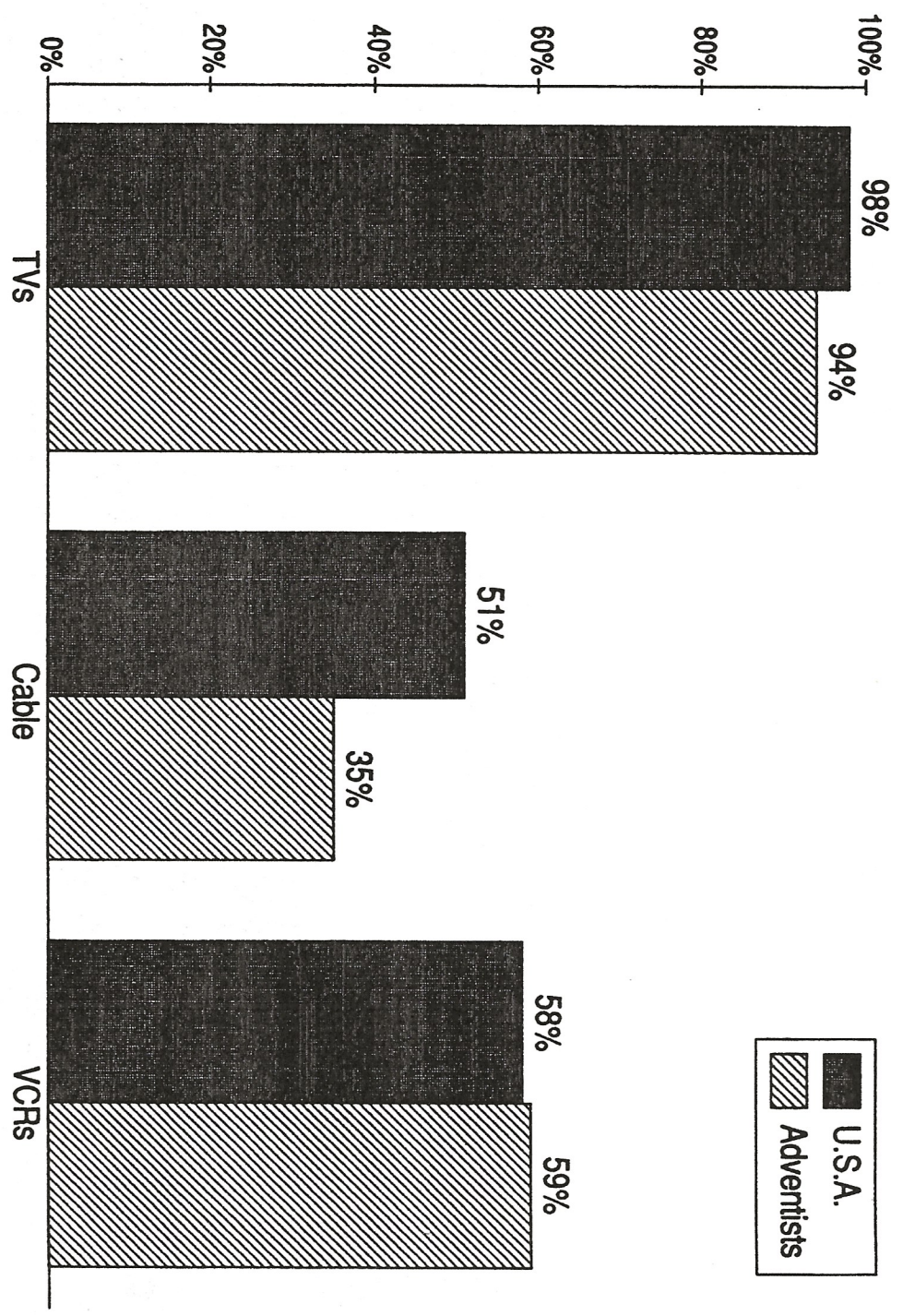
Nine out of ten Adventist homes have a television, almost as many as the general population in the U.S. (See page 25.) Adventists are significantly less likely to be subscribers to cable television services, but perhaps a little more likely to own a VCR than the average American. This may indicate a pattern on the part of some Adventists to exert control of the medium since cable includes many of the more objectionable elements of television programming and video cassettes are the major source of programming of a Christian nature.

The panel was asked about its purchases of Christian books during the last year, including those from all publishers both Adventist and non-Adventist. (See page 26.) Doctrinal books, children's books and those by Ellen White had the largest market. Books on Christian living, health, inspirational topics, and music--the practical subjects--also had a good market. One household in five indicated that a purchase had been made from among story books, books on education, witnessing materials, and books about family life and nature or science. The smallest market share is among books for teenagers, church how-to books and historical topics.

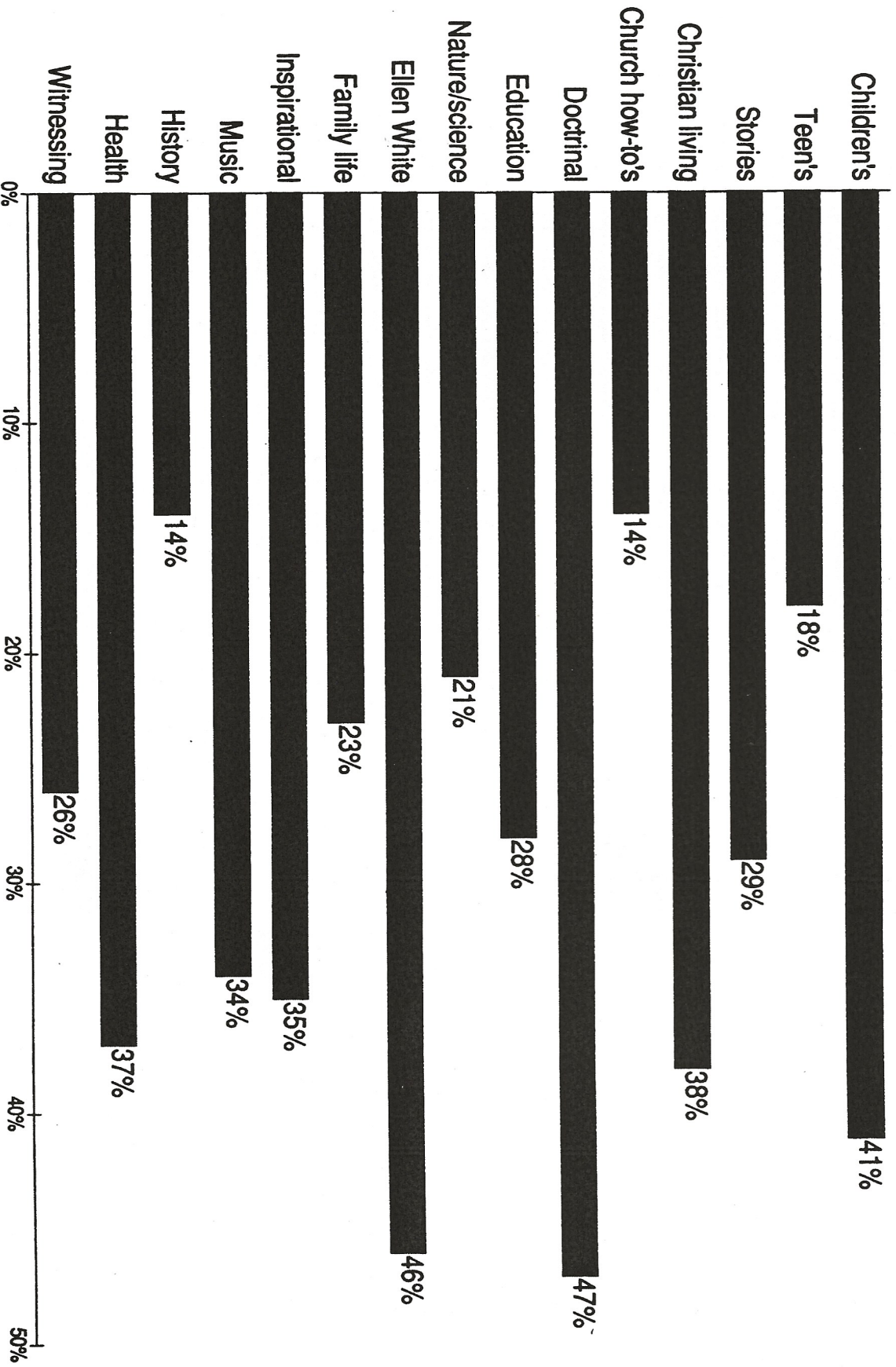
Technology in Adventist Homes in North America



Penetration of Television



Purchases of Christian books in last year



Summary

The total picture of the Adventist community revealed in this report is that of a solidly middle class church. They are more likely to be homeowners and to live in single family dwellings than is the general population. Most households have middle or higher annual incomes. Two out of three Adventist men hold professional, managerial, and White Collar jobs or are in school preparing for such positions. Only a third are Blue Collar workers. The percentage of Adventists who have completed some level of higher education is almost double that in the general population. They own as many VCRs and TVs as the general public. They make more use of credit cards.

Married couples make up the dominant majority of Adventist homes in North America, and only one in five include a nonmember spouse. A third of Adventist families are couples with children, but nearly two out of five are couples without children in the home, and most of these are "empty nesters" whose children have become adults and left home.

The Adventist Church has been particularly successful among the black population of North America. The proportion of blacks in the Adventist community is twice that in the general population. And black Adventists are as solidly middle class as are white Adventists.

The Adventist community is also a community in change. It has always thought of itself as a Blue Collar church, but it must now come to terms with its middle class character. It is aging--there is an overrepresentation of the middle-aged and a rapid decline in the youngest age cohort of children. The role of women has changed within Adventism as it has in society at large in North America; three out of four Adventist women who are not retired work outside the home; two thirds of these work full time. The mission and message of the Adventist Church is unchanged, but the social conditions within which it must work continue to change rapidly. Will the hundreds of decisions that are made each month in church boards, conference committees and denominational boards successfully relate that eternal mission to the changing situation?

Technical Appendix

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne 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 whole population had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary, 95 percent of the time, assuming the same sampling procedures, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)									
Size of Sample	1500	1250	1000	750	500	250	100		
Percentages near 10	2	2	2	3	3	5	7		
Percentages near 20	3	3	3	4	4	6	10		
Percentages near 30	3	3	4	4	5	7	11		
Percentages near 40	3	3	4	4	5	8	12		
Percentages near 50	3	3	4	4	5	8	12		
Percentages near 60	3	3	4	4	5	8	12		
Percentages near 70	3	3	4	4	5	7	11		
Percentages near 80	3	3	3	4	4	6	10		
Percentages near 90	2	2	2	3	3	5	7		

This table would be used in the following manner: If a reported percentage is 33 for a group which includes 1250 respondents. Then we go to row "percentages near 30" in the table and go across to the column headed "1250." The number at this point is 3, which means that the 33 percent obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 3 points. Another way of saying it is that very probably (95 chances out of 100) the true figure would be somewhere between 30 and 36, with the most likely figure the 33 obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large a difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. The tables below indicate the number of points which must be allowed for in such comparisons. One table is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for is between those shown.

Table A Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference 50% and 50% (at 95 in 100 confidence level)							
Size of Sample	1500	1250	1000	750	500	250	100
1500	4	5					
1250	5	5					
1000	5	5	5				
750	5	6	6	6			
500	6	6	7	7	8		
250	8	8	9	9	9	11	
100	13	13	13	13	13	14	17

Table B Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference 20% and 80% (at 95 in 100 confidence level)							
Size of Sample	1500	1250	1000	750	500	250	100
1500	4						
1250	4	4					
1000	4	4	4				
750	4	4	5	5			
500	5	5	5	6	6		
250	7	7	7	7	8	9	
100	10	10	10	10	11	12	14

Here is how the tables are used: 50 percent of men responded a certain way and 40 percent of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say then that the 10 point difference reflects a real difference between the two groups on the question? Let us consider a sample which contains approximately 750 in each of these groups.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table A, and since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750" which is also the row designated "750." We find the number 6. This means that the allowance for error is 6 points, and in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between 4 and 16 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5 percent of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least 2 percentage points.

In another case, responses among a group of 750 men amount to 22 percent and 24 percent in a group of 750 women, we consult Table B because these percentages are near 20. We look for the number in the column headed "750" which is also in the row designated "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously, then, the two-point difference is inconclusive.