Office of information and Research
Report 26

1997-98
Local Church Usage
and Evaluation of ACN

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Executive Summary
1997-98 Local Church Usage & Evaluation of ACN

In 1994 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America created a satellite network to link its congregations. Live events and video reports are carried by the Adventist Communication Network (ACN), which has grown to include at least 2,146 downlinks. The network has now been in operation for three full program years.

This report is based on 364 telephone interviews conducted April 19 through May 5, 1998; a random sample of pastors and lay ACN coordinators in local churches. Comparisons are made with a similar study conducted in 1996.

No more than 1,000 of the ACN churches participated in one or more of the three evangelistic campaigns that were provided via satellite during 1997. This is about half as many as participated in Net '96. One in three sites (31%) participated fully in the SatelLight Seminar with Doug Bachelor, Oct. 3-Nov. 1. One in seven sites (14%) participated fully in the "Hope Beyond 2000" campaign with Kenneth Cox, Nov. 1-Dec. 6. Only a small number of ACN sites (5%) report participating in "La Red '97" with Alejandro Bullon, Nov. 8-15.

Four out of five churches (78%) are positive about the training events provided by ACN. Only 4% give a negative response. This is substantially the same evaluation given in the 1996 ACN survey, and reflects a continued need for this important service.

Attendance at training events averaged five to 16 at each local site from October 1997, through early April 1998. The largest group was 125 at one church for the Jan. 10 training event for greeters and ushers. The majority of groups are reported to be less than 15. This is consistent with the goal for these training events to reach a few key leaders in each congregation and not for every-member audiences.

Four out of five churches (81%) are positive about the special events in the ACN schedule. Only 3% give a negative evaluation. This is about the same as in 1996.

Attendance at special events averaged nine to 78 at each local site from November 1997, through April 1, 1998. The largest group was 500 at one church for the Jan. 3 Day of Prayer event. The majority of groups are reported to be less than 40.

Two out of three of the churches that have a satellite downlink (64%) make some use of First Wednesday each month. Currently, some 2,145 congregations in the NAD are part of ACN, so segments of First Wednesday are being viewed in about 30% of the total 4,700 congregations in the NAD on a regular basis.

Overall use of First Wednesday has decreased a little since the 1996 survey, but much of this decline is among churches that have installed satellite equipment in the last two years. In 64% of the participating churches either a classroom-size group or a

small group view one or more segments from First Wednesday each month. A third of the churches report that about 50 or more people see segments each month. *This is an unusual pattern for a denominational program of this type. The typical pattern would have predicted a large decrease in participation.*

About half of the respondents **(47%) would like to see the ADRA segment restored** on First Wednesday. Very few express a negative feeling, but nearly half have no opinion. There is evidence that a significant number of local church leaders are largely disinterested in denominational programs. These data are an excellent demonstration of this, and indicate how important it is that planning by ACN and other denominational entities are conducted on the basis of input from their active users/supporters.

A third of the respondents (34%) report that they usually register for ACN training events and use the handouts. The records for orders do not indicate a level of participation this high, and it is likely that a "halo effect" can be seen in these data, as well as the fact that in many cases a single master is being copied for a number of churches.

Four out of five respondents (79%) say that they give the information in each month's ACN Bulletin to the appropriate church officer. One in three (37%) take the information to church board meetings where specific planning can take place. The majority (58%) report that they place announcements in the church bulletin, and almost as many (50%) promote the events in other ways.

Two out of five churches (39%) report that they routinely use automation to tape all ACN transmissions. Another 16% indicate that they do it most of the time, while one in five do it on some occasions. Churches where satellite equipment was installed in 1994 and 1995 are more likely to tape regularly. Some **85% make use of the ACN 800 number**. Two out of three (64%) say they have used it four times or more, and four out of five give the service a positive rating.

Four out of five respondents say that their church decided to purchase a satellite dish in order to engage in public evangelism. About half as many (41%) did so in order to get access to satellite seminars for outreach and training. Only one church in seven (14%) bought satellite equipment for special events and for mission reports and news from denominational entities. Almost as many mentioned other reasons. ACN planners need to explore whether budget realities match the needs expressed by the local churches. *It may be tempting for denominational entities to spend more money on special events and news reports than is being spent on training and outreach seminars that actually meet the needs of local churches.*

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May 1998

Introduction

The Adventist Communication Network (ACN), which has grown to include at least 2,146 downlinks and now completed three full program years. It has become a major communication organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, as well as an essential resource for local churches.

In order to gather information about usage by local churches, audience size and the evaluation of pastors and local volunteers who serve as ACN coordinators, a total of 364 telephone interviews were conducted April 19 through May 5, 1998. The respondents constitute a random sample drawn from the ACN database of downlink sites.

This report is based on these interviews and comparisons made with a similar study conducted in 1996. All sample surveys are subject to sampling error—the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population had been interviewed. The error factor in this study is no more than six percentage points (plus or minus) at the 95th percentile of reliability. A more detailed statement about the probability of sampling error in the data in this report is given the Technical Appendix.

At first glance it may appear that participation in ACN events is decreasing. In fact, the lower rates of participation are mostly among the churches that have installed satellite dishes and joined ACN during the last two years. When these churches are added to the totals, their participation is often so much lower than the "early adopters" who joined ACN in 1994 and 1995, that the totals for the entire network are pushed down.

There is considerable evidence from studies that I and others have conducted over the past decade that the majority of local churches in the NAD display a low rate of participation in most denominational programs and events. These congregations tend to be less vigorous and productive than those who most quickly adopt new concepts and first join new initiatives.

For example, nearly three times as many local churches participated in Net 96 as in Net 95, but the average audience size and the average number of baptisms per church dropped significantly. As any new denominational strategy moves beyond the early adopters and begins to reach into the bulk of local churches, it appears to be a constant principle that efficiency decreases and resistance increases. This is precisely what is happening to ACN when the findings from this study are compared with those of two years ago.

Strong leadership will not be deterred by the inevitable "bogging down" as the saw cuts deeper into the wood. Some fine-tuning to increase the cost effectiveness of ACN should be done, but it would be a mistake to abandon any of the major features of the ACN strategy because of this study.
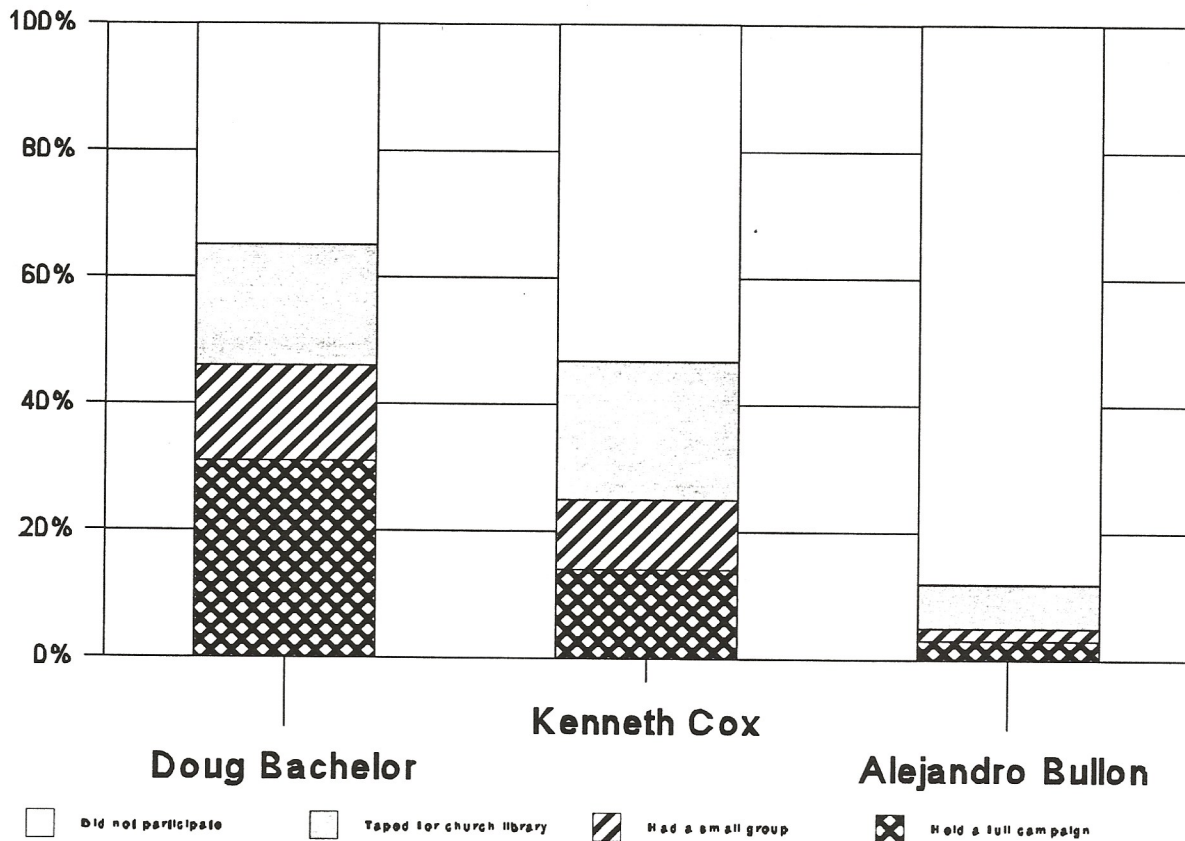
I am pleased with the professionalism and hard work that my team invested in this study. They found that the pastors and lay leaders who participate in ACN feel strongly about this resource and value opportunities to talk with people asking questions on behalf of the NAD. We have done our best to accurately present the voice of these front line users of satellite-linked events and video materials.

I want to thank each person who worked on this project, and acknowledge the many contributions that make this report possible. It is my prayer that this information will help ACN board, staff and producers as they chart the future of the network.

Monte Sahlin
May 1998

Satellite-linked Evangelism in 1997

ACN Churches Participating

Legend: Did not participate | Taped for church library | Had a small group | Held a full campaign

X-axis categories: Doug Bachelor, Kenneth Cox, Alejandro Bullon

No more than 1,000 of the ACN affiliate churches participated in one or more of the three evangelistic campaigns that were provided via a satellite link. This is about half as many as participated in the Net '96 initiative.

One in three sites (31%) participated fully in the SatelLight Seminar with Doug Bachelor, October 3 through November 1. Another 15% used the SatelLight Seminar only with a small group. One in five (19%) simply taped it for the church library, while the remaining portion (35%) did not use the Bachelor series at all.

One in seven sites (14%) participated fully in the "Hope Beyond 2000" campaign with Kenneth Cox which was sponsored by the North Pacific Union Conference, November 1 through December 6. Another 11% used the Cox campaign only with a small group, and one in five (22%) taped it for the church library. More than half (53%) did not use the Cox series at all.

Only a small number of the ACN sites report participating in the Spanish-language evangelistic initiative "La Red

'97" with Alejandro Bullon, November 8-15. One in twenty sites (5%) say that they participated fully or used it with a small group. Another 7% taped it for the church library. (It is likely that a number of the churches reported to participate in the La Red initiative by the NAD Office of Multilingual Ministries and the NAD Ministerial Association have not registered with ACN as affiliates. Many may have used rented downlink facilities or tape-delayed presentations.)

Over all, sites where satellite downlink equipment has been installed during the last year are more likely to have participated. Early adopters of satellite technology, who joined ACN in 1994 and 1995, were less likely to participate.
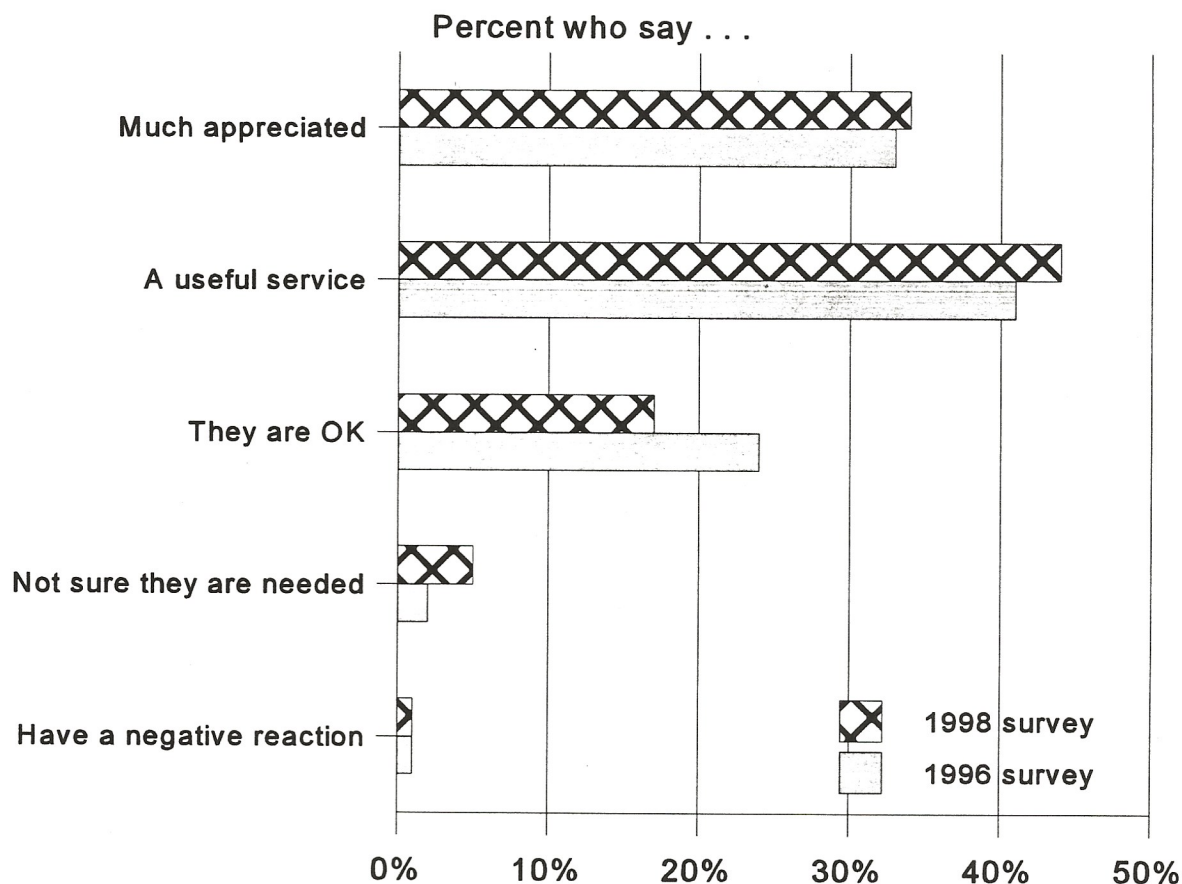
Table 1
Audience Estimates for Public Evangelism

	Full campaign Sites/Audience		A small group Sites/Audience		Total Sites/Audience	
Oct 3 - Nov 1, 1997 SatelLight Seminar with Doug Bachelor	465	32,685	225	5,272	690	37,957
Nov 1 - Dec 6, 1997 "Hope Beyond 2000" with Kenneth Cox	210	11,655	165	3,053	375	14,708
Nov 8-15, 1997 La Red '97 with Alejandro Bullon	45*	4,775*	30*	1,062*	75*	5,837*

*It is likely that a number of the sites reported by the NAD Office of Multilingual Ministries and the NAD Ministerial Association are not affiliated with ACN, and were could not be included in this study.

Evaluation of training events

Percent who say . . .

Legend:
- 1998 survey
- 1996 survey

Categories (top to bottom):
- Much appreciated
- A useful service
- They are OK
- Not sure they are needed
- Have a negative reaction
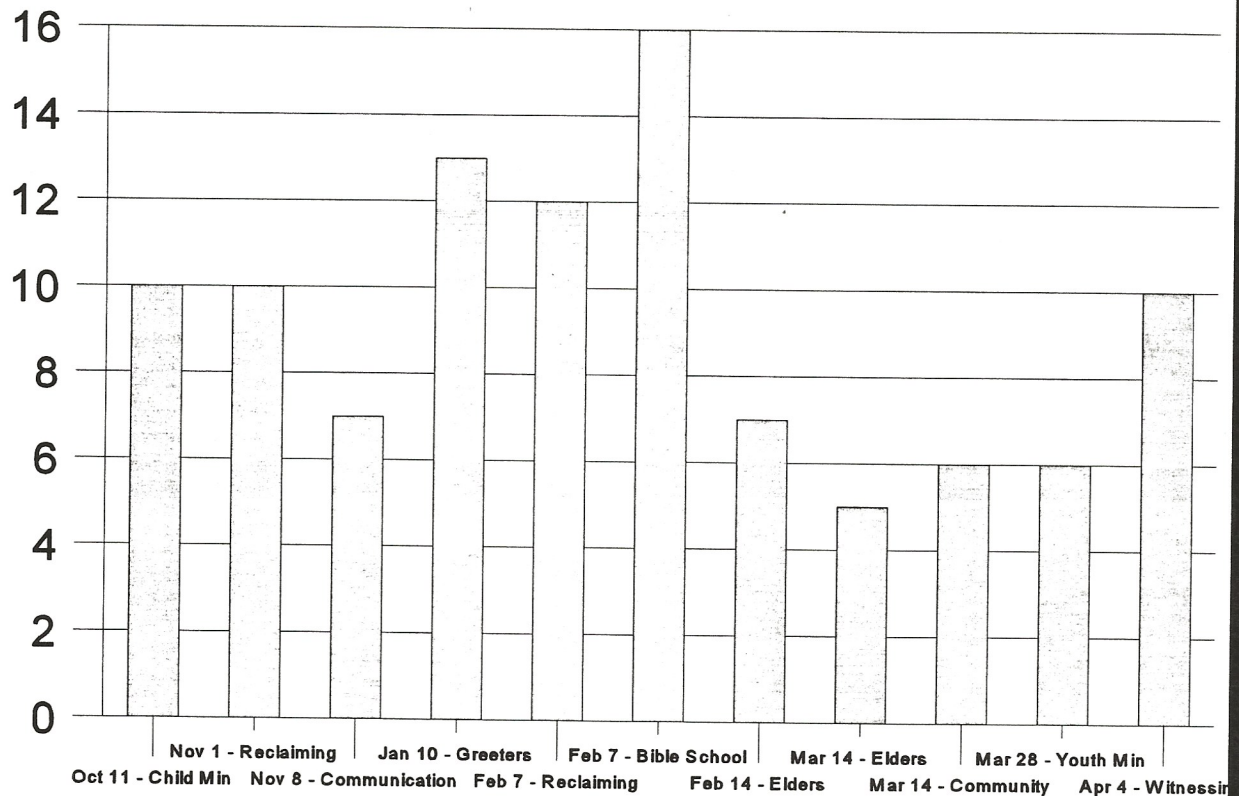
X-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%

Nearly four out of five respondents (78%) give a positive evaluation to the training events provided by ACN. Another one in five (17%) give a more neutral evaluation, selecting the median response on a five-point scale. Only 16 out of 364 pastors and local church ACN coordinators interviewed (4%) give a poor rating to the training events.

Three has been no significant change in the very positive response to training events since the same questions were asked in the 1996 survey of ACN churches. Except for the decrease in the percentage of median responses, all of the other comparisons are within the range where there is no statistical significance.

Training events

Average attendance at each site

| | Oct 11 - Child Min | Nov 1 - Reclaiming | Nov 8 - Communication | Jan 10 - Greeters | Feb 7 - Reclaiming | Feb 7 - Bible School | Feb 14 - Elders | Mar 14 - Elders | Mar 14 - Community | Mar 28 - Youth Min | Apr 4 - Witnessin |

About two out of three respondents were able to give a specific attendance each training event. These averages range from 16 at each local site for the best-attended event on February 7, 1998, to 5 at each local site for the poorest attendance on March 14.

The specific attendance reports include a number of sites for each event at which only one person participated. The largest group re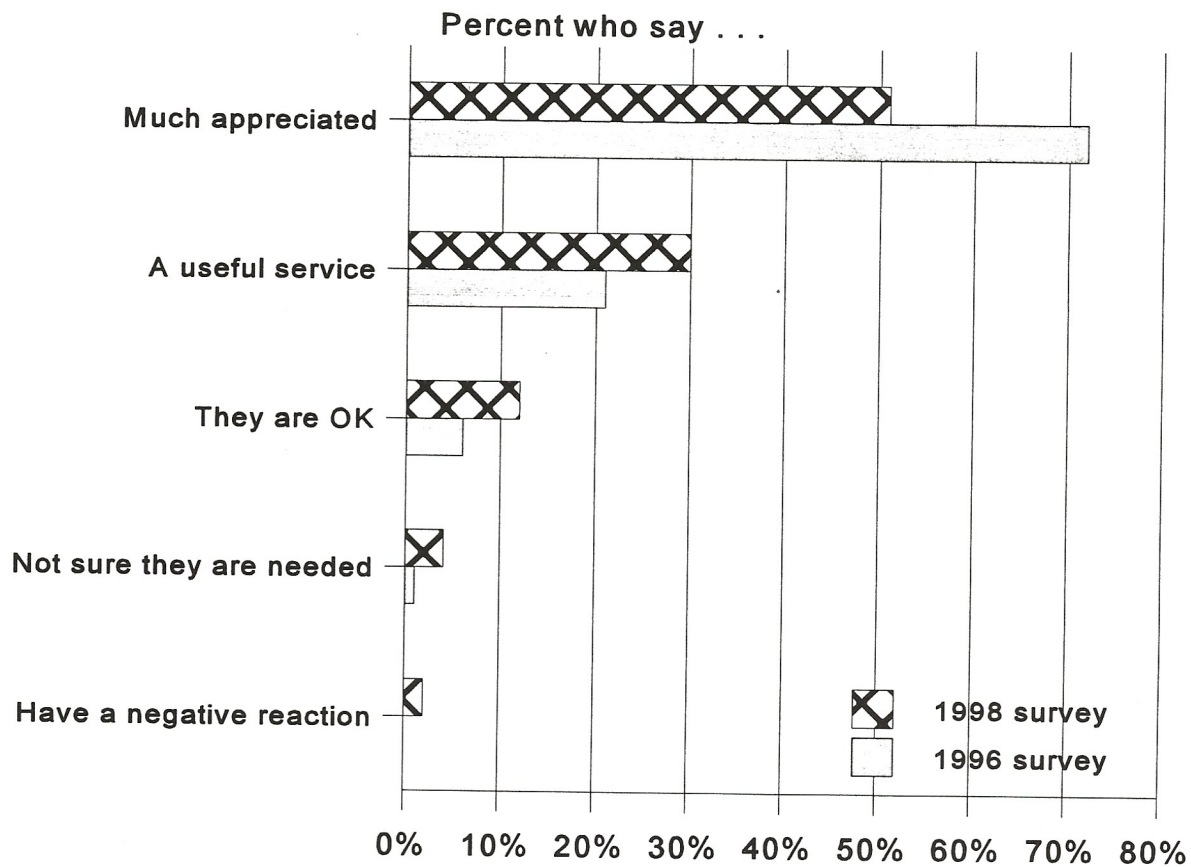ported is 125 at one church for the January 10 training event for greeters and ushers. The majority of groups in each case are reported to be less than 15. This is consistent with the current objectives of for these training events, which are designed for a few key leaders in each congregation and not mass audiences.

Churches which have had satellite equipment installed during the last 18 months are less likely to participate in training events than are those who joined ACN in 1994-95.

Table 2
Audience Estimates for Training Events

	Live & Same-day Sites/Audience		Different Day Sites/Audience		Total Sites/Audience	
Oct 11, 1997 - Children's Ministries S Tyner, D Valenzuela, & E Neely	105	1,010	150	1,443	255	2,453
Nov 1, 1997 - Reclaiming Ministry Mike & Brenda Aufderhar	90	913	75	760	165	1,673
Nov 8, 1997 - Communications K Netteburg, C McClure, & C Murray	105	780	180	1,337	285	2,117
Jan 10, 1998 - Greeters & Ushers Elaine Gemmell & Rene Barnett	105	1,406	180	2,410	285	3,816
Feb 7, 1998 - Reclaiming Ministry Paul Richardson & Mike Aufderhar	75	892	120	1,427	195	2,319
Feb 7, 1998 - How to Start a Discover Bible School (VOP team)	105	1,695	135	2,179	240	3,874
Feb 14, 1998 - Elders: How to Deal with Conflict (Jim Redfield)	105	759	120	868	225	1,627
Mar 14, 1998 - Elders: How to Chair Meetings (Loren Dickinson)	60	302	105	529	165	831
Mar 14, 1998 - Community Impact Sandra Brown & John Gavin	45	253	75	421	120	674
Mar 28, 1998 - Youth Ministry Ron Whitehead & William Hurtado	45	291	90	582	135	873
Apr 4, 1998 - Witnessing Kurt Johnson & VOP Team	30	309	75	773	105	1,082

Evaluation of special events

Percent who say . . .

Much appreciated	
A useful service	
They are OK	
Not sure they are needed	
Have a negative reaction	

☒ 1998 survey
☐ 1996 survey

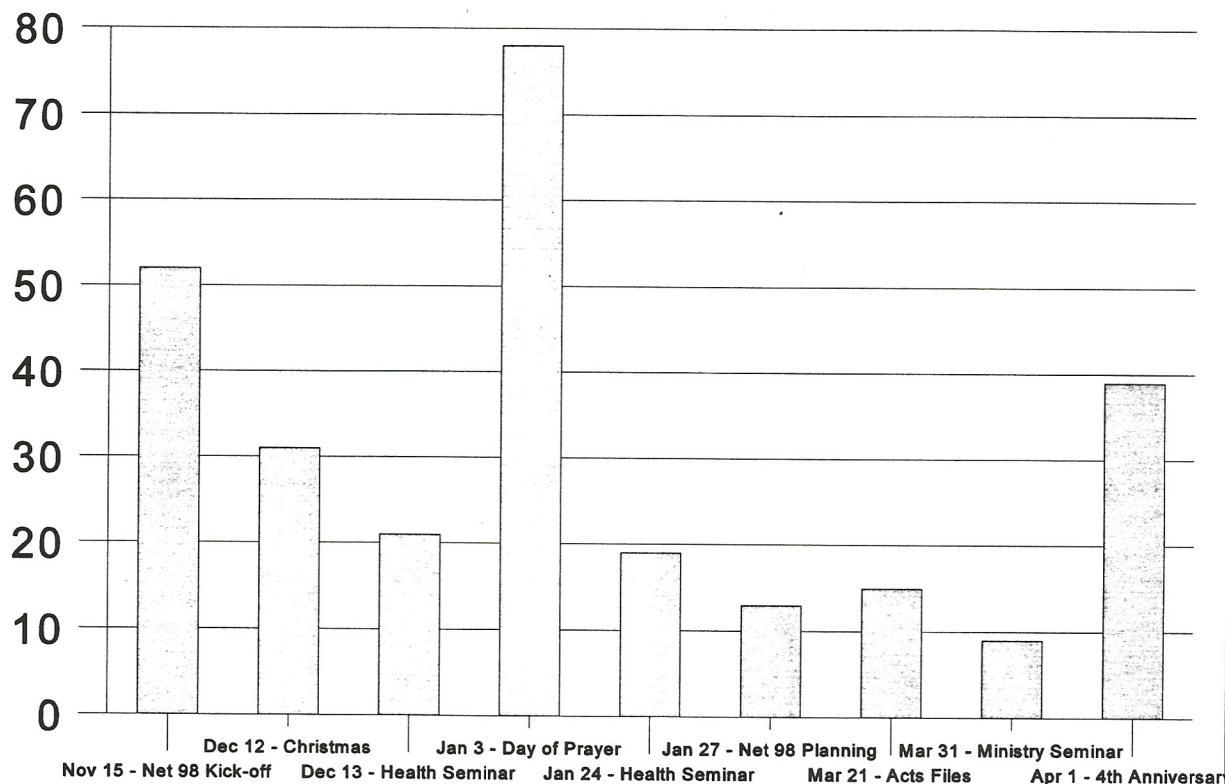0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Four out of five respondents (81%) give a positive evaluation to the special events in the ACN schedule. One in eight (12%) give a more neutral response, selecting the median answer on the five-point scale. Only 12 of the 364 pastors and local church ACN coordinators who were interviewed (3%) give a negative evaluation.

In a reversal from the data on training events, sites that joined ACN in the last two years are more likely to be positive about special events. Those who installed satellite downlinks in 1994 and 1995 are more likely to give a neutral or negative evaluation.

Special events

Average attendance at each site

Nov 15 - Net 98 Kick-off	Dec 12 - Christmas	
	Dec 13 - Health Seminar	Jan 3 - Day of Prayer

Bar chart labels (x-axis):
Nov 15 - Net 98 Kick-off
Dec 12 - Christmas
Dec 13 - Health Seminar
Jan 3 - Day of Prayer
Jan 24 - Health Seminar
Jan 27 - Net 98 Planning
Mar 21 - Acts Files
Mar 31 - Ministry Seminar
Apr 1 - 4th Anniversary

About two out of three respondents provided a specific attendance for each special event. These averages range from 78 at each local site for the best-attended event on January 3, 1998, to 9 at each local site for the poorest attendance on March 31.

Only one or two of the sites report only one person in attendance. The largest group reported is 500 at one church for the January 3 Day of Prayer event. The majority of groups in each case are reported to be less than 40. These special events are designed for larger groups—entire congregations or even the general public in some cases.
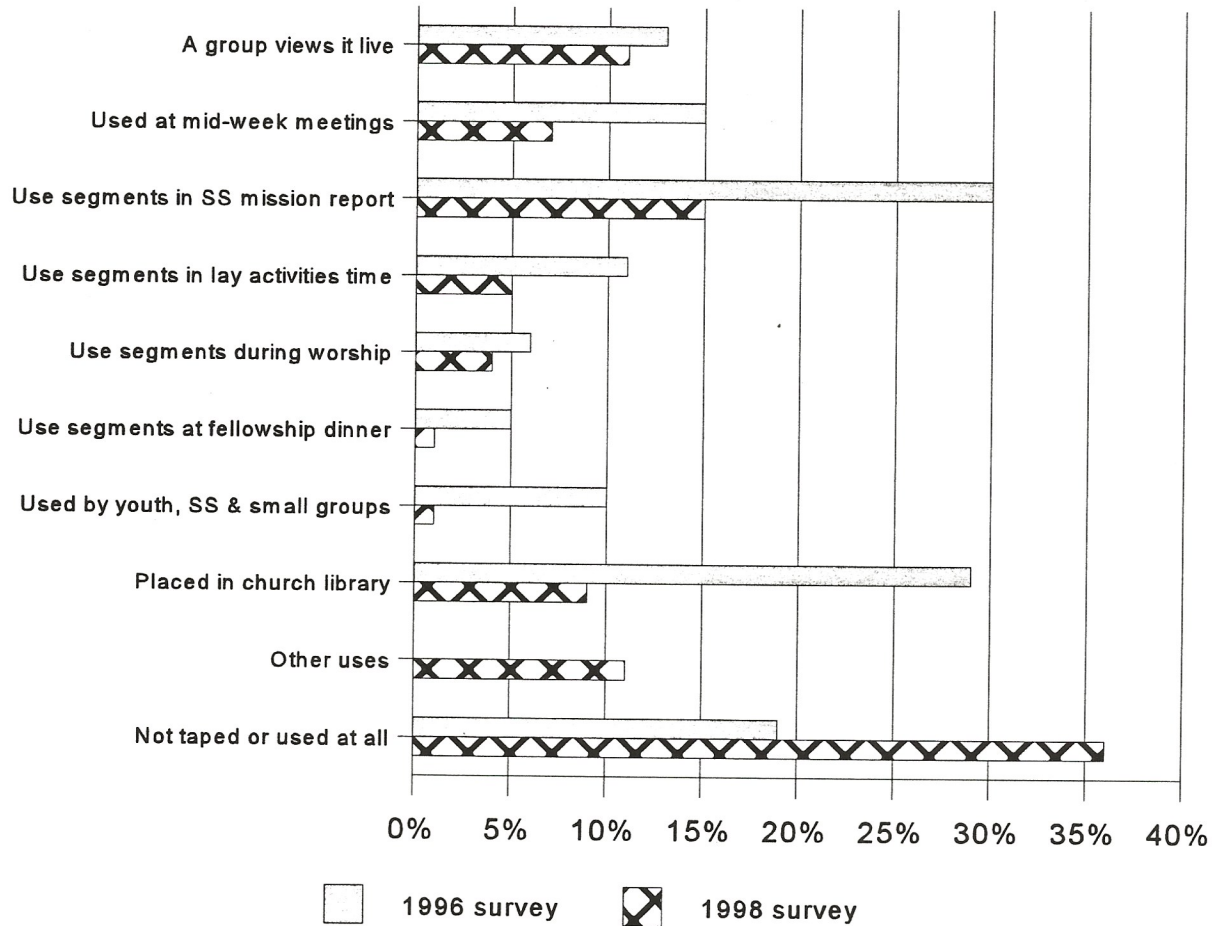
Churches which have had satellite equipment installed during the last 18 months are less likely to participate in special events than are the early adopters who joined ACN in 1994-95.

Table 3
Audience Estimates for Special Events

	Live & Same-day Sites/Audience		Different Day Sites/Audience		Total Sites/Audience	
Nov 15, 1997 - Net 98 Kick-off Dwight Nelson & A. C. McClure	390	20,452	270	14,159	660	34,611
Dec 12, 1997 - Christmas Memories Voice of Prophecy/Faith for Today	135	4,251	135	4,251	270	8,502
Dec 13, 1997 - Nutrition Matters Dan Matthews & Dr. Monica Reed	210	4,498	165	3,534	375	8,032
Jan 3, 1998 - Day of Prayer Dwight Nelson & team	435	34,078	165	12,926	600	47,004
Jan 24, 1998 - Prevention Matters Dan Matthews & Dr. Monica Reed	165	3,168	120	2,304	285	5,472
Jan 27, 1998 - Net 98 Planning Council for Pastors & Coordinators	165	2,166	255	3,348	420	5,514
Mar 21, 1998 - The Acts Files Bill Johnsson & Adventist Review	120	1,780	105	1,557	225	3,337
Mar 31, 1998 - Ministry Seminar Charles Bradford & Dwight Nelson*	375*	3,424*	90*	821*	465*	4,245*
Apr 1, 1998 - 4th Anniversary of First Wednesday	135	5,316	165	6,498	300	11,814

*Ministry magazine may report a larger number of sites and audience due to the fact that a number of sites not affiliated with ACN were included in this event.

Use of First Wednesday

Chart: horizontal bar chart comparing 1996 survey and 1998 survey

Categories (top to bottom):
- A group views it live
- Used at mid-week meetings
- Use segments in SS mission report
- Use segments in lay activities time
- Use segments during worship
- Use segments at fellowship dinner
- Used by youth, SS & small groups
- Placed in church library
- Other uses
- Not taped or used at all

X-axis: 0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35% 40%

Legend: ☐ 1996 survey ⬖ 1998 survey

Two out of three of the churches that have a satellite downlink (64%) make some use of First Wednesday each month. Currently, some 2,145 congregations are part of ACN, so segments of First Wednesday are being viewed in about 30% of the total 4,700 congregations in the NAD on a regular basis.
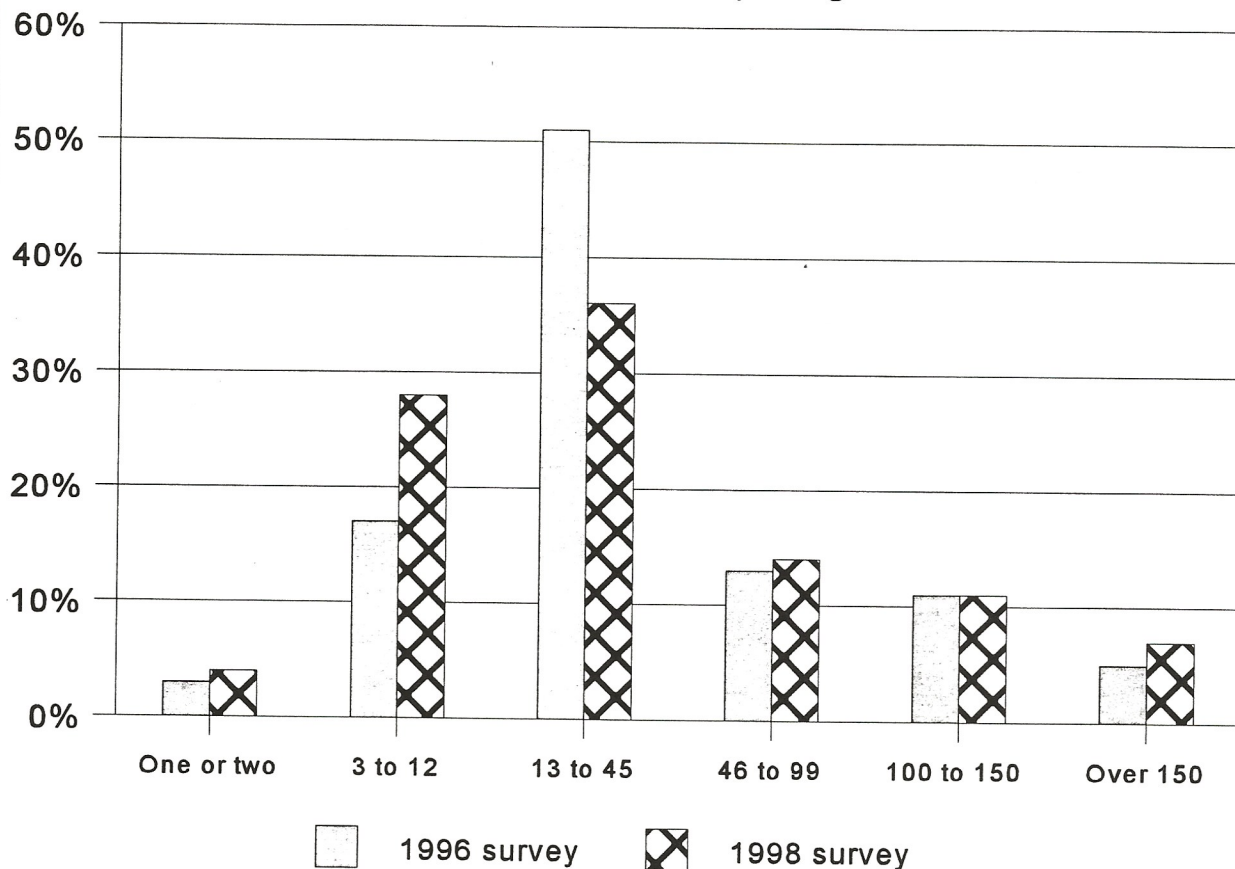
The First Wednesday package is used in a wide variety of ways by local churches. In fact, as time goes by churches are finding more and more ways to use this video resource. One in ten (11%) indicate "other" usage which is not on the extensive list read by interviewers, and those who installed satellite equipment during 1994 and 1995 are more likely to report "other" uses than are those who have joined ACN more recently.

Over-all use of First Wednesday has decreased some since the 1996 survey, but much of this decline is among churches that have installed satellite equipment in the last two years.

Viewers of First Wednesday

Percent of churches reporting ...

| | One or two | 3 to 12 | 13 to 45 | 46 to 99 | 100 to 150 | Over 150 |

Legend: □ 1996 survey   ☒ 1998 survey

In two out of three of the participating churches (64%) either a classroom-size group or a small group view one or more segments from First Wednesday each month. This is consistent with the wide range of uses reported for this video resource.

The only change with statistical significance in the comparison of these data with the 1996 survey is the shift of about one in ten churches from a classroom-size group (13 to 45 people) to a small group (3 to 12 individuals).

Despite this small decay in the viewing audience, a third of the churches still report that about 50 or more people see segments each month.

This is an unusual pattern for a denominational program of this type. The typical pattern would have predicted a large decrease in participation. First Wednesday continue to be one of the most powerful communication tools for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Should the ADRA segment be restored on First Wednesday?
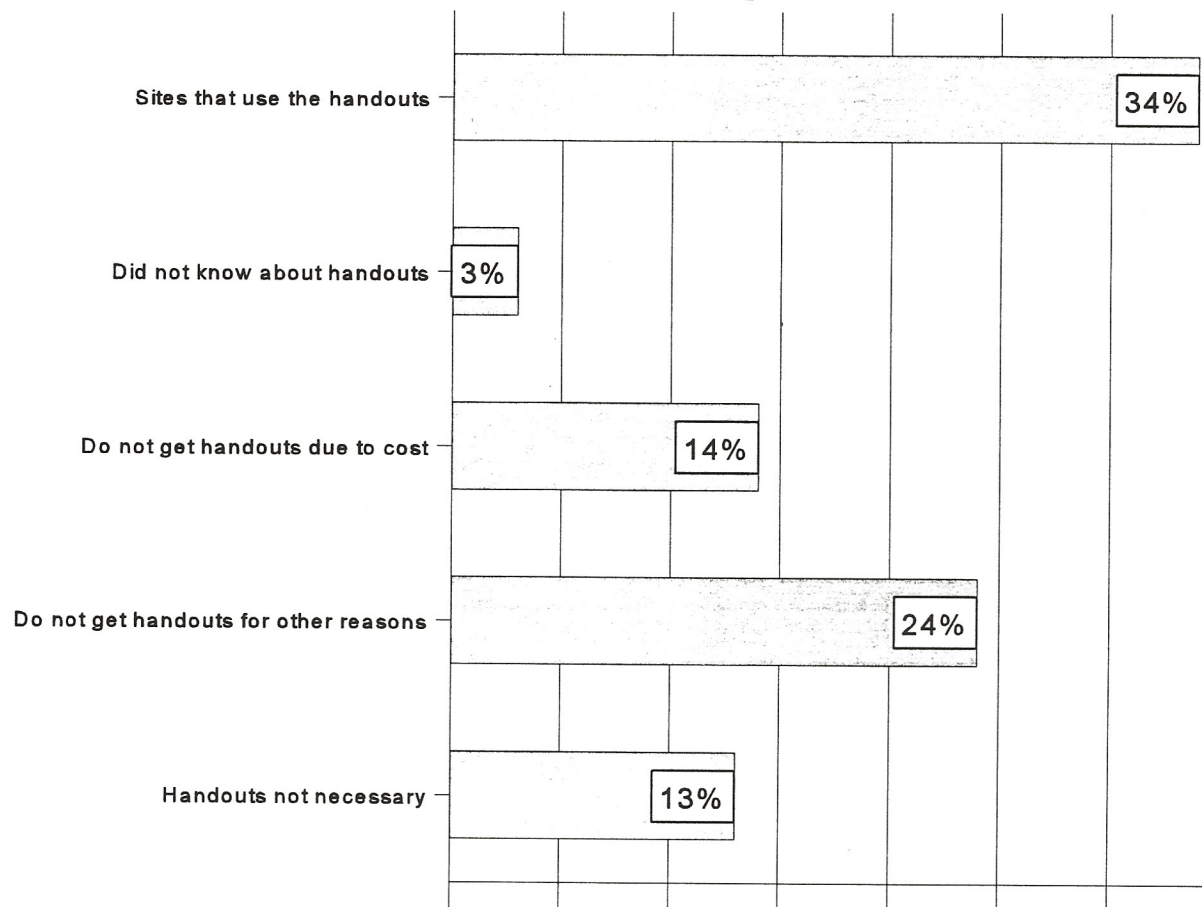
Yes 47%

No 7%

Don't know/no answer 46%
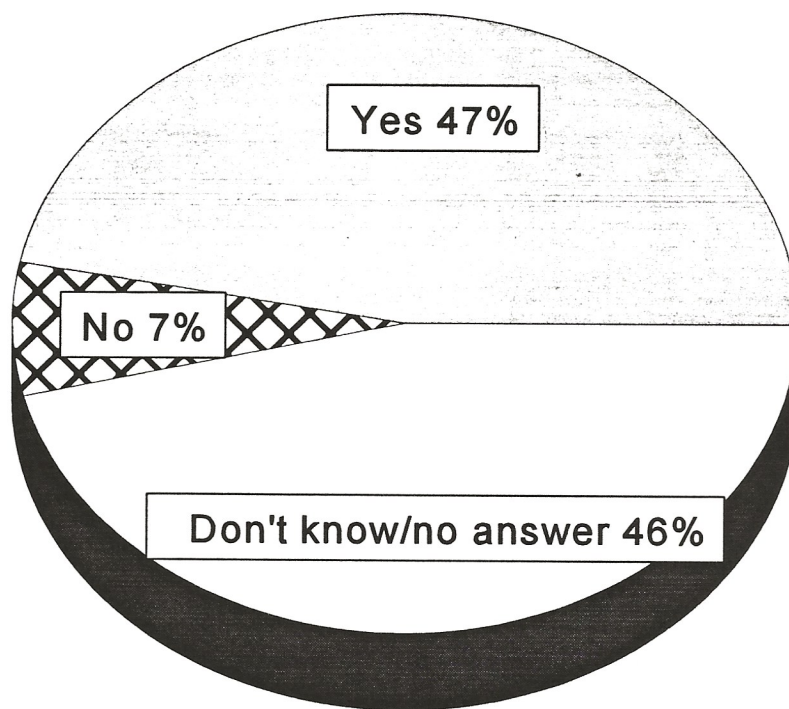
About half of the pastors and local church ACN coordinators interviewed (47%) would like to see the ADRA segment restored on each monthly First Wednesday. It was discontinued early this year.

Very few express a negative feeling about the ADRA reports (only 20 of the 364 respondents). Nearly half indicate that they do not have an opinion on this question (36%) or did not answer the question at all (10%).

There is considerable evidence in a number of studies conducted over the past ten years that a significant segment of local church leaders are largely disinterested in denominational programs. These data are an excellent demonstration of this trend, and indicate how important it is that planning by ACN and other denominational entities be conducted on the basis of input from their active users/supporters.

Use of handouts in training events

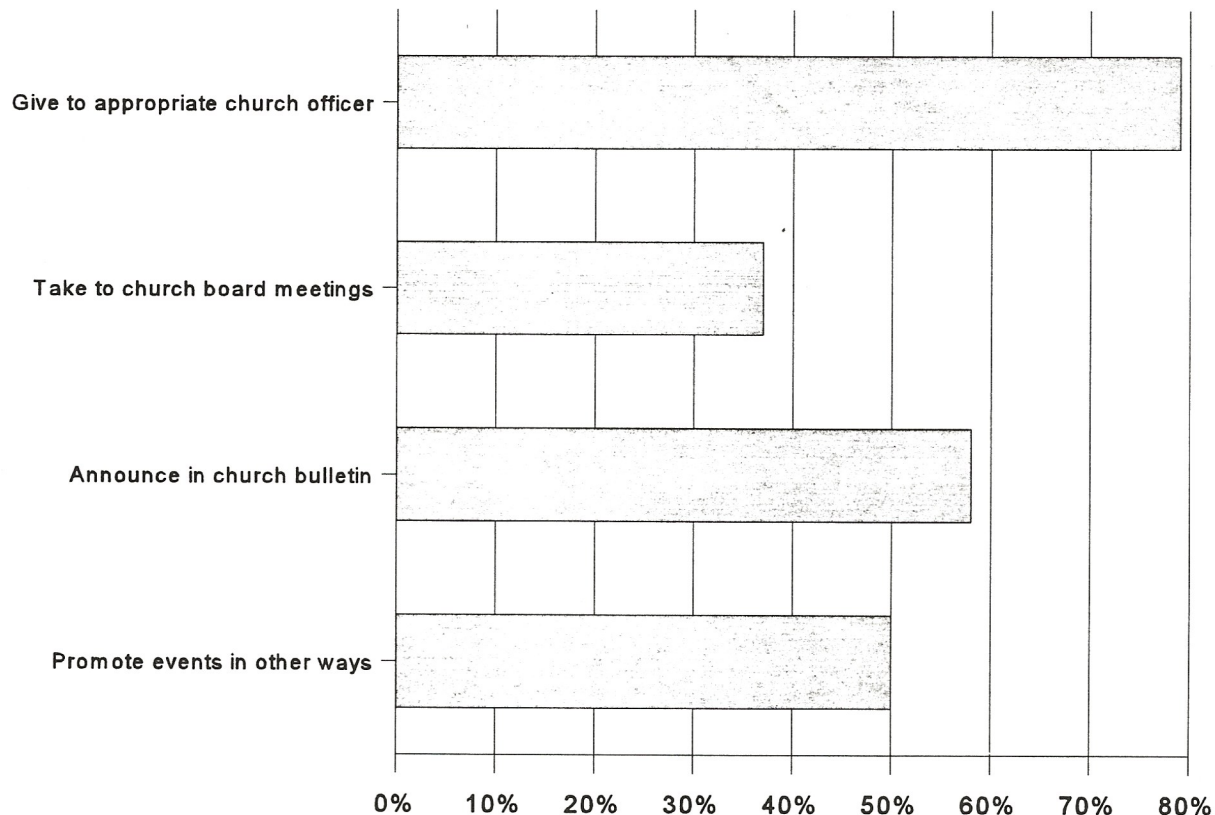| Category	Percentage
Sites that use the handouts	34%
Did not know about handouts	3%
Do not get handouts due to cost	14%
Do not get handouts for other reasons	24%
Handouts not necessary	13%

A third of the respondents (34%) report that they usually register for the training events delivered by ACN and use the handouts. The records for orders at AdventSource do not indicate a level of participation this high, and it is likely that a "halo effect" can be seen in these data, as well as the fact that in many cases a single master set of handouts is being copied for a number of churches.

Only one in seven respondents (14%) indicate that the cost of the handouts is prohibitive. Almost an equal number (13%) simply do not see the need for using the handouts, and nearly twice as many (24%) cite other reasons.

It is likely that the major dynamic in operation here is the significant level of disinterest on the part of many local church leaders in the agenda of denominational departments and programs. Again, it is important for planners to focus on those churches that are using this service.

What is done with the information in the monthly ACN Bulletin?

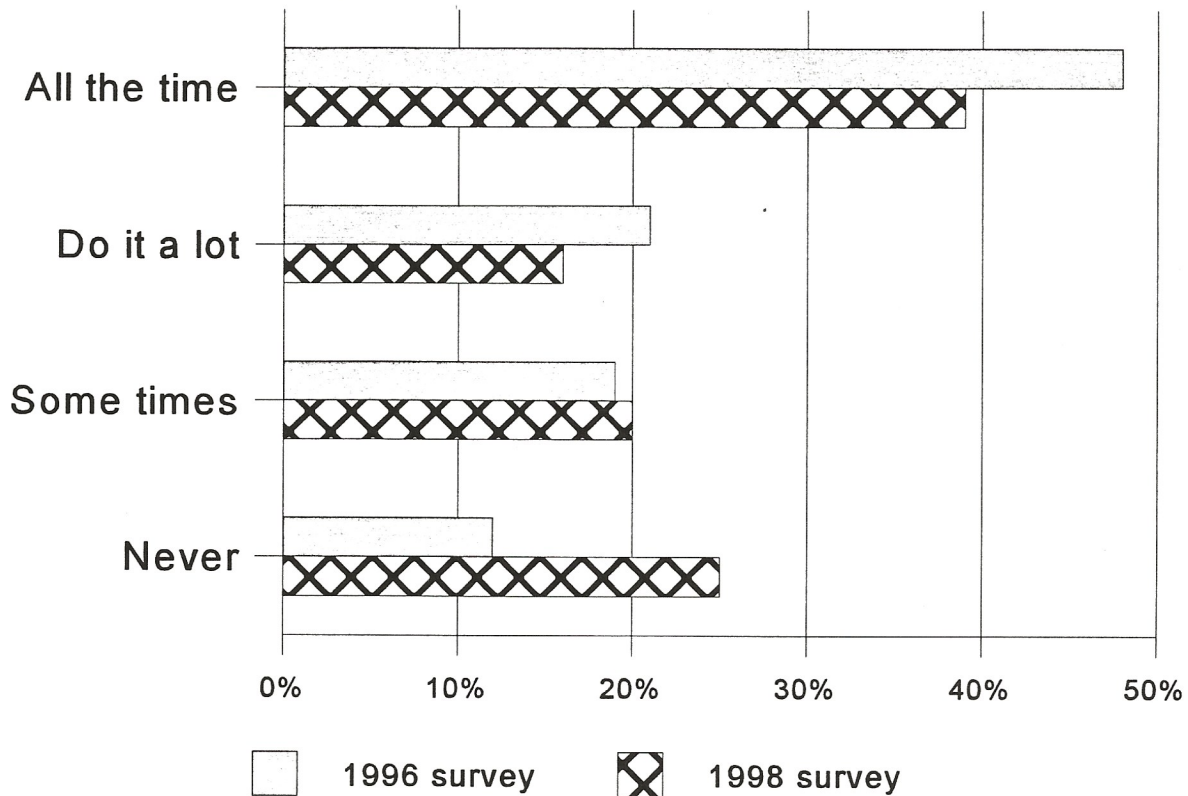| Category	Percentage
Give to appropriate church officer	~79%
Take to church board meetings	~37%
Announce in church bulletin	~58%
Promote events in other ways	~50%

(Chart axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%)

Four out of five respondents (79%) say that they give the information in each month's *ACN Bulletin* to the appropriate church officer. Because the strategy for most training events is to focus on the needs of specific church officers, this is a vital link in the dissemination of the information necessary for this resource to be used.

One in three (37%) take the information to church board meetings where specific planning can take place. Otherwise it is left up to each church officer to make arrangements on their own, which probably inhibits participation.

The majority (58%) report that they place announcements about ACN events in the church bulletin, and almost as many (50%) promote the events in other ways. Early adopters of satellite technology, who installed downlinks in 1994 and 1995 are more likely to make personal contact with the appropriate church officer or take the information to church board meetings.

How often are events taped with no one present?

Legend:
- 1996 survey
- 1998 survey

Categories (top to bottom): All the time, Do it a lot, Some times, Never
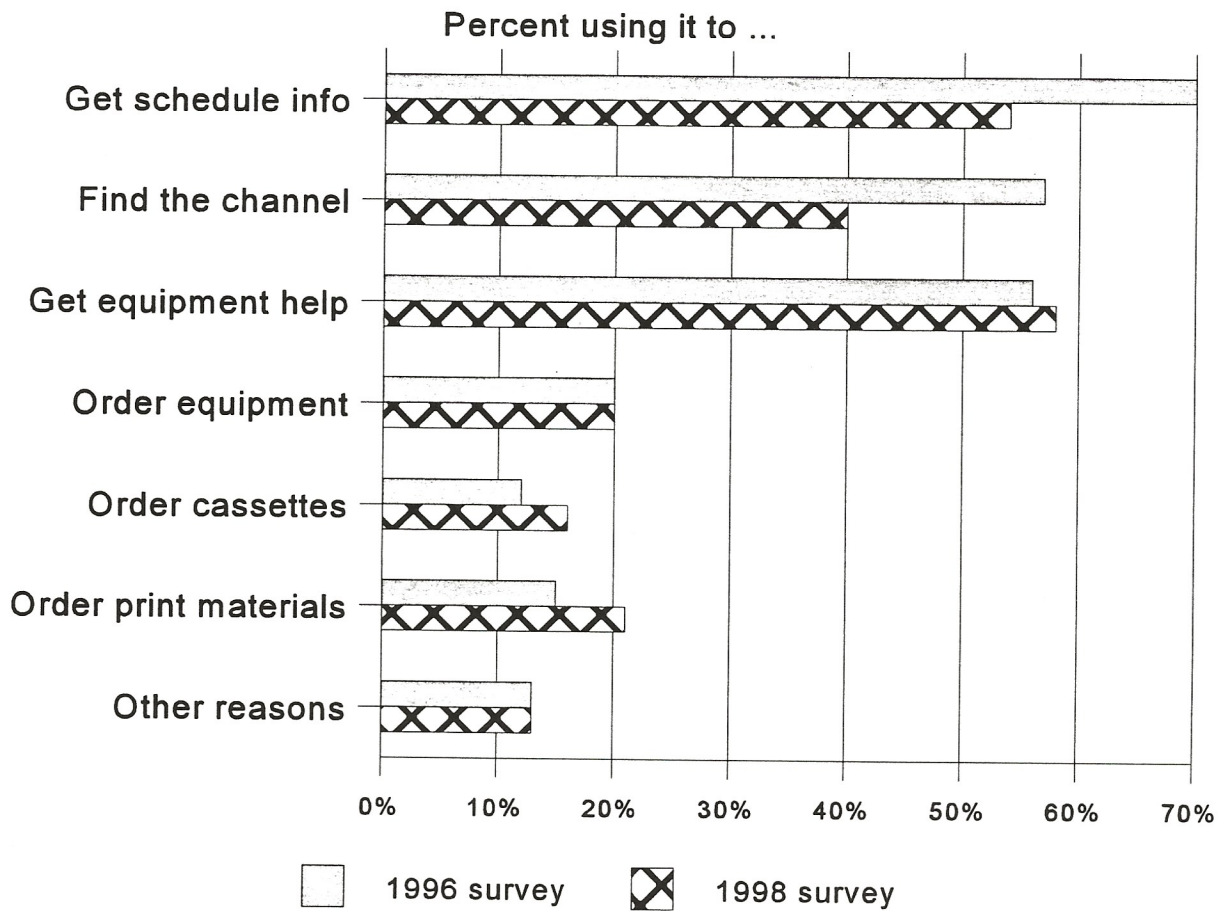
X-axis: 0% to 50%

Two out of five local churches (39%) report that they routinely have the automation set up on their satellite receiver and a cassette in place to tape all ACN transmissions. Another 16% indicate that they do it most of the time, while one in five do it on some occasions.

One church in four (25%) report that they do not tape transmissions unless some person is present to operate the receiver and VCR. About a third of these say that it is because either they do not have automation built into their satellite downlink (4%), or because they have found that their automation equipment does not work reliably (4%).

Churches where satellite equipment was installed in 1994 and 1995 are more likely to use automation to tape regularly. Churches that have joined ACN in the last 18 months are more likely to not use the automated taping system.
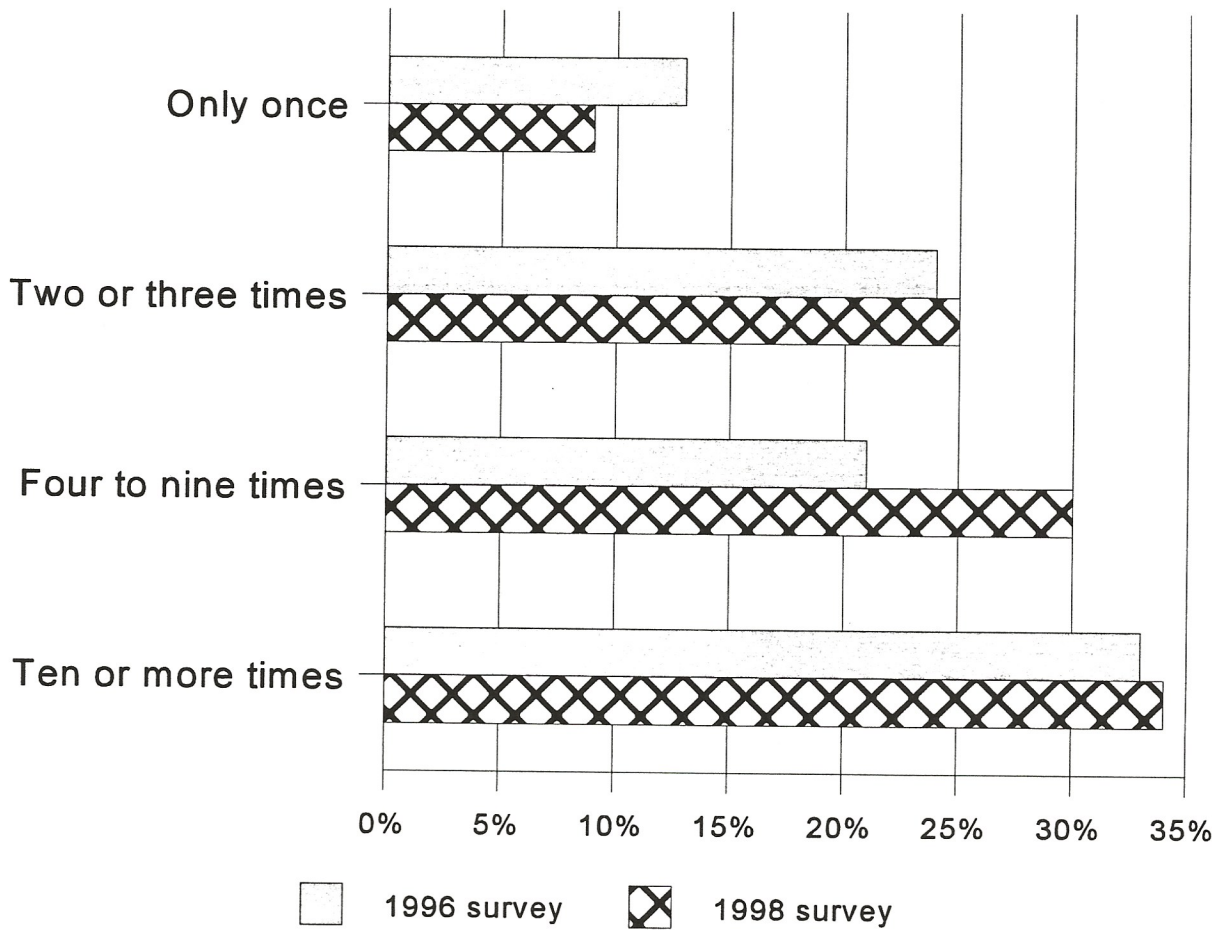
Use of 800 number

Percent using it to ...

Category	
Get schedule info	
Find the channel	
Get equipment help	
Order equipment	
Order cassettes	
Order print materials	
Other reasons	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%

☐ 1996 survey   ⊠ 1998 survey

Six out of seven participating churches (85%) make use of the ACN 800 number. Those that joined ACN in 1994 and 1995 are more likely to use it than are those who have installed satellite dishes more recently.

It is most often used to get help when a problem develops in the satellite equipment, which is a significant change from 1996 when the highest usage was to obtain schedule information and the correct satellite channel. Evidently local churches are

becoming more comfortable with allowing the automation system to find the correct channel, and the *ACN Bulletin* is doing a more consistent job of distributing schedule information.

One in five sites (21%) have used the 800 number to order print materials related to a training event, and one six (16%) have used the number to order a video cassette copy of some ACN event. Both of these represent significant increases.

Frequency of use of 800 number

Chart showing Frequency of use of 800 number with categories: Only once, Two or three times, Four to nine times, Ten or more times. Legend: 1996 survey, 1998 survey. X-axis: 0% to 35%.

Nearly two out of three respondents (64%) report that they have used the ACN 800 number four times or more. This continues to be an important element in the operation of the network.

It should not be surprising that there is an increase in the level of usage over the past two years. A respondent who joined ACN in 1995 and indicated two years ago that he had called the 800 number three times, would move to the next usage category even if he made less use of the number during 1997 and 1998.
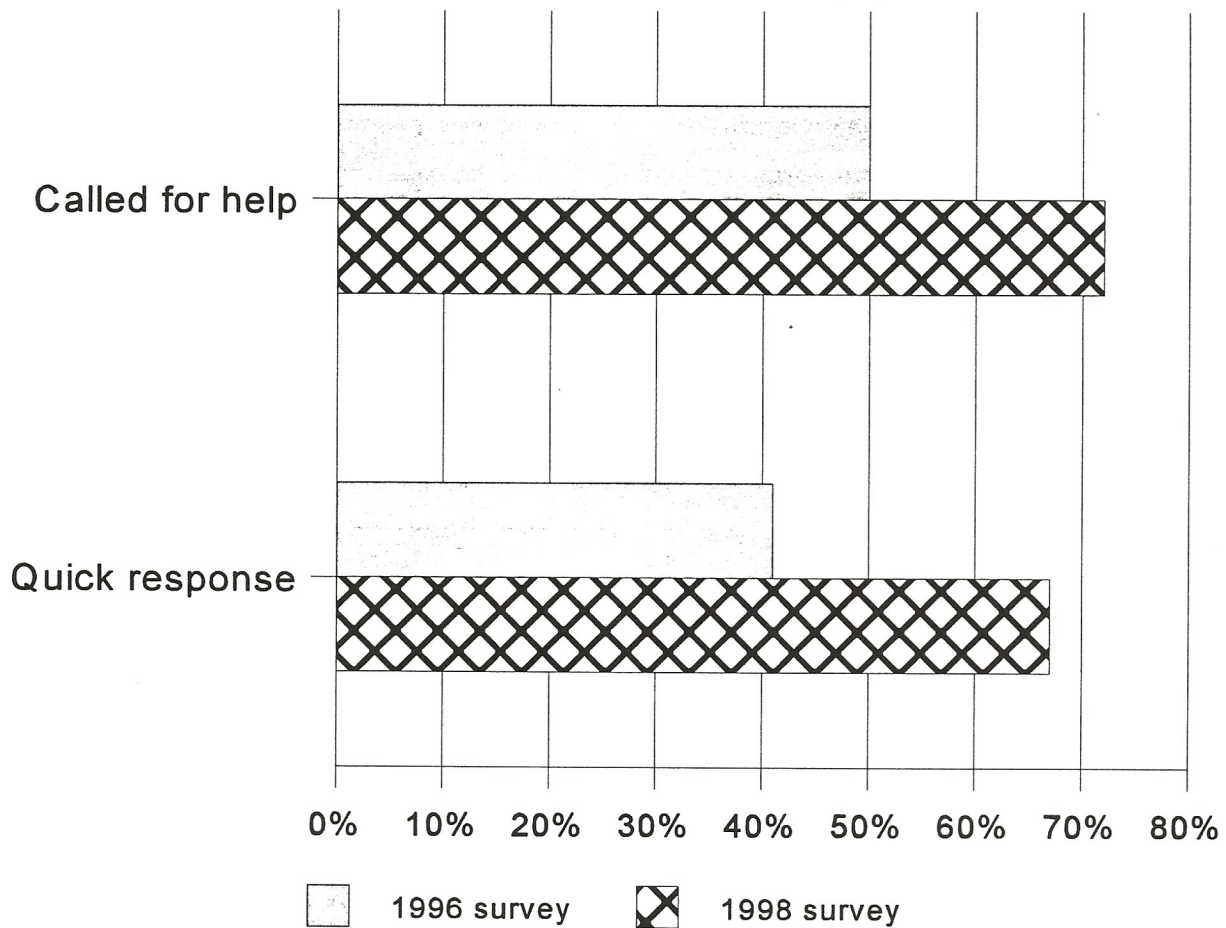
Evaluation of 800 number service

Excellent

Good

"OK"

Poor

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

☐ 1996 survey   ⊠ 1998 survey
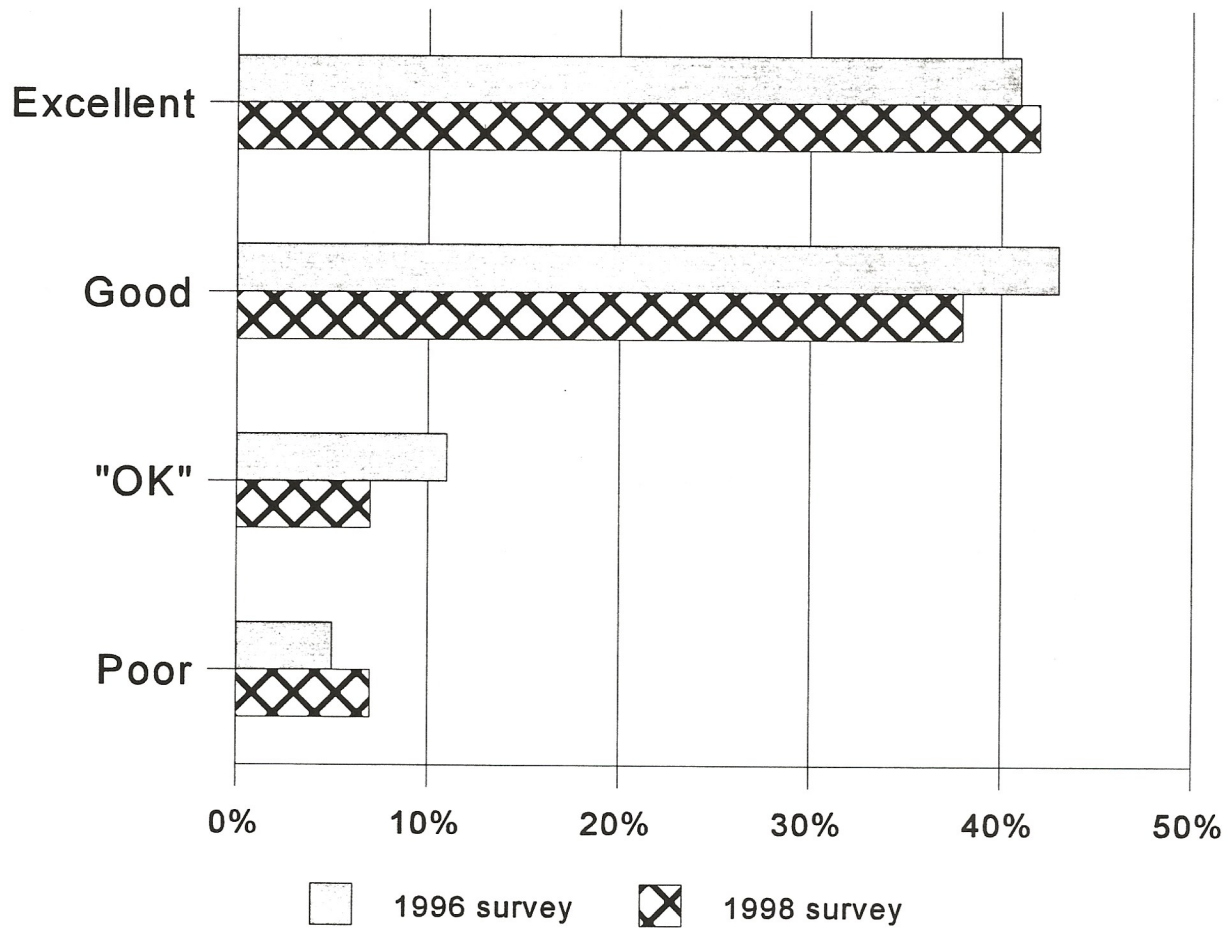
Asked to rate the service they receive from the individuals who answer the ACN 800 number, four out of five respondents say it is excellent or good. Only one respondent in seven indicate receiving poor service. Only two individuals out of the 364 interviewed said that on at least one occasion they left a message and no one ever called them back.

The differences between the responses in this study and those in the 1996 survey are not statistically significant. ACN has continued to provide a high level of customer satisfaction in this important part of its service.

Satisfaction with technical support

Legend: ☐ 1996 survey   ☒ 1998 survey

Chart categories (top to bottom): Called for help, Quick response. X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
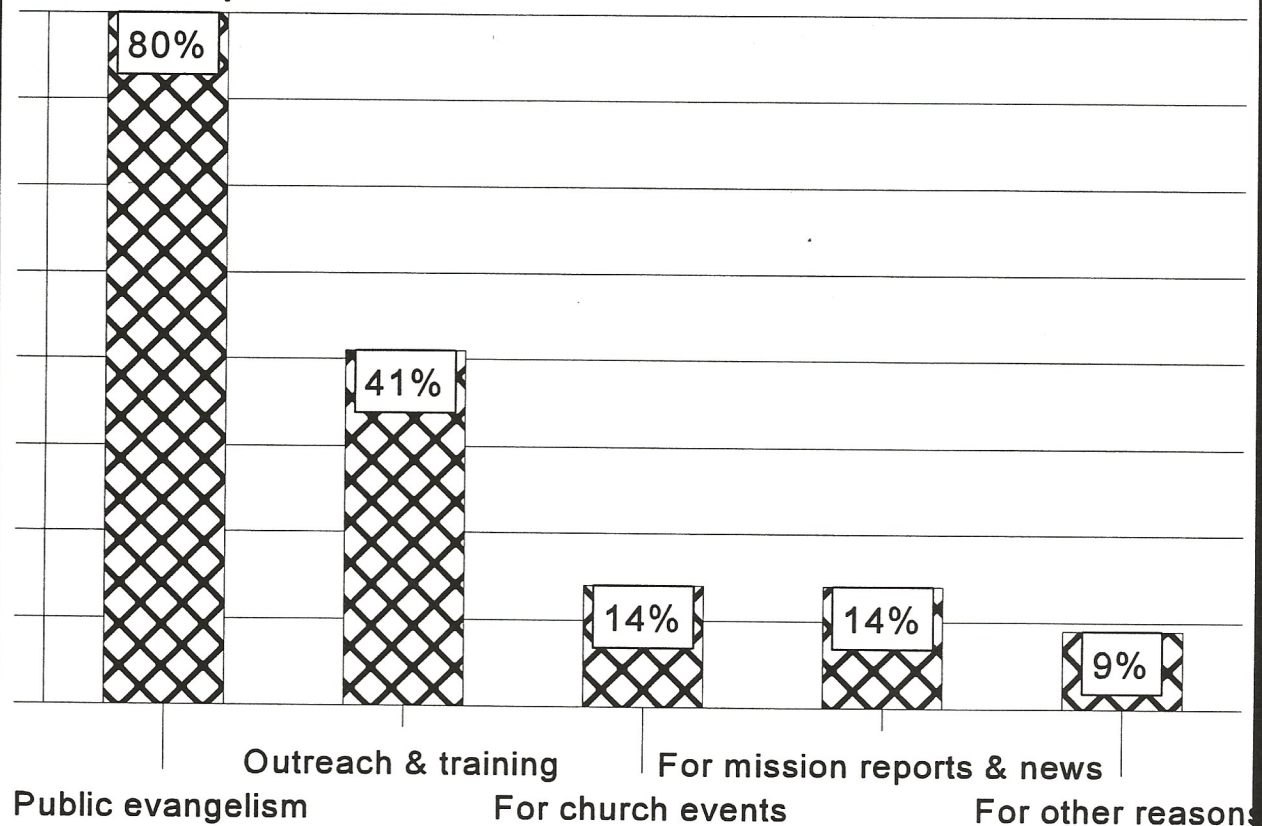
Nearly three out of four of the participating churches (72%) report that on at least one occasion they have called ACN's technical support "help desk." The longer a church has had satellite equipment, the more likely it is to report calling for technical support.

ACN has, over the past two years, both handled a growing number of calls for technical support and improved the level of satisfaction with its "help desk." Only 5% of respondents say that they were not satisfied with the technical support they received. Nearly twice as many were dissatisfied in the 1996 study.

What was the objective when your church purchased a satellite dish?

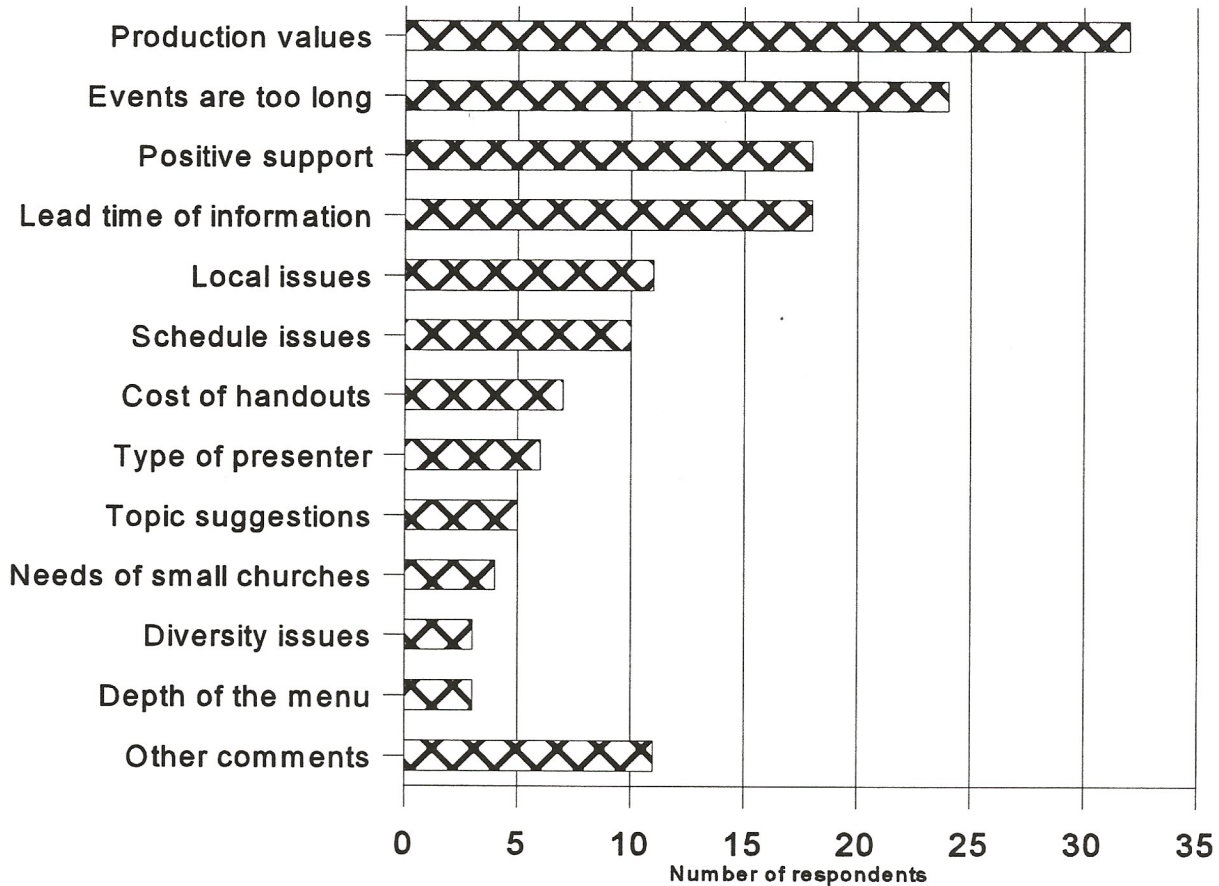|	
80%	Public evangelism
41%	Outreach & training
14%	For church events
14%	For mission reports & news
9%	For other reasons

Four out of five of the churches affiliated with ACN decided to purchase a satellite dish in order to engage in public evangelism. About half as many (41%) did so in order to get access to satellite seminars for outreach and training.

Only one church in seven (14%) bought satellite equipment for major church events such as Adventist Review special events, camp meeting and GC Session. An equal portion got a downlink for the mission reports and news from denominational entities. Almost as many mentioned other reasons.

ACN planners need to explore whether budget realities match the needs expressed by the local churches. It may be tempting for denominational entities to spend more money on special events and news reports than is being spent on training and outreach seminars that actually meet the needs of local churches.

Suggestions to improve training events

Category	Number of respondents
Production values	32
Events are too long	24
Positive support	18
Lead time of information	18
Local issues	11
Schedule issues	10
Cost of handouts	7
Type of presenter	6
Topic suggestions	5
Needs of small churches	4
Diversity issues	3
Depth of the menu	3
Other comments	11

Number of respondents

The interviewers who worked on this study report that the respondents were unusually talkative, and gave evidence of a high degree of emotional investment in the topic. The interview script was designed to be completed in 15 to 20 minutes, but the interviews actually averaged about 40 minutes. A significant number of interviews lasted more than an hour.

One of the open-ended questions asked for "suggestions to improve the training events delivered by ACN." Nearly half the pastors and lay leaders interviewed (152 out of 364) offered specific comments. Many of these comments are recorded below, clustered into major themes.

Production Values

The largest number of comments (32 respondents) want the investment in training events to be increased so that production values can be upgraded. The pervasive presence of television in North American society today has familiarized

pastors and church members with a level of production values that is way beyond the budget for ACN training events, yet many respondents do not understand why these are not present.

> The topics have been relevant, but the presentations need help. ... Content is good but format and presentation could be improved. ... They need stronger content and faster pace. Too many talking heads. It is not good television to have people sitting around a table chatting. ... Be interactive, not just around a table. ... I do not like the panel format; it seems like a waste of time. Should be produced to look like [the production values in] Faith for Today or It Is Written. ... Different hosts [each time] and not always the same interviewers. ... Use presenters on par with other organizations on satellite. ... Video clips are needed of actual happenings. Maximum was money spent locally on equipment, but it appears that minimal money is being spent on production. ... The format is not effective; it needs to be more lively. ... I've seen only the October 11, 1997, event. The two-hour program, I felt, could have been edited down to one hour. Take out "dead" time, up the dynamics, use a tighter format, include graphics, and make it more interesting. That would increase the quality. ... Use more graphics. ... Make them more visual, more lively. ... Continue to work on being able to flow smoothly from one person to the next. The silent gaps between presenters is not professional. Some presenters do not look "natural" and it [sounds] like they are reading. They look "stiff." It causes the event to "drag." It needs to be more animated. Change the shot more often, to make it more lively. ... Some presentations are not organized. ... Need to use a teleprompter. ... Use more than one camera to add interest. ... For those who are visually oriented, more information needs to be placed on the screen. ... Tighten up the quality of the first 10 seconds of the program.

Perhaps one respondent best summarizes these suggestions in a very specific recommendation. There is "too much sit and listen to discussion," he said. "Use a blackboard [flipchart] or [graphic screens] to quickly make key points at first and then move to discussion."

Length of Training Events
A total of 24 respondents feel that the training events would be improved if they were shorter. "The time frame is too long; shorter sequences would be better. ... [Make them] shorter in length (bogs down a little bit.) ... Cut it down to one hour. ... I think they are too long! An hour would be better. ... Dumping too much information, cut [the length of each event] in half. ... People won't sit for two hours. It takes too long to get to some topics; too much relaxed conversation. Get to point quicker. [Training events] must be packed with suggestions. ... Tighten them up, with less 'fluff.' ... Make them more crisp; not so long-winded."

Feedback of this nature is not always a useful guide for producers. For example, sometimes the input is contradictory. One respondent says, "Take telephone calls so

there is some dialog." Another one feels that "there is too much dialog," while a third one says, "Forget the calls in unless they are prearranged. Some calls are silly and inappropriate." Others urge that producers "screen calls prior to [them] coming on the air." And others (probably due to hearing loss) say, "When you have people phoning in, we cannot hear the questions, so we don't know what the answers are about."

In fact, some respondents can be downright narcissistic. The events are "too long and boring," says one person, and then suggests that "you need to give the experts a chance to say what they need to, and more time [for local participants] to write answers. Leave the information on the screen longer." And another person complains about the $25 charge for handout materials, but says she "would like to speak to a live operator rather than a recording" on the ACN 800 number, evidently without any thought of the cost.

The length of training events may need to be determined by learning considerations rather than the perceptions of practiced consumers of television entertainment. A more fundamental issue needs to be addressed first—how to establish a learning partnership with local church leaders.

Positive Statements of Support

A total of 18 comments simply expressed positive statements and support for the ACN training events. "They are excellent! ... They are good. If I could do better, I'd be doing it myself! We are very pleased with ACN. ... 95% are excellent! ... [You are] doing a good job. ... What is being offered is valuable, and I love to see it put to use in my church. ... Helpful. ... Some events are good, and others not so good. ... They are doing the best they can. ... Keep up the high sensitivity to the person in the pew. ... I'm very pleased and wish I could get more participation. ... They are just excellent the way they are; we are a dying church and so they are helpful."

"Don't pull the training events!" states one pastor. "They are needed, but it takes a while for the congregation as a whole to be on fire for something new." A lay leader from another church says, "Make sure they continue."

Lead Time for Information

Increasing the lead time for distribution of information and materials for ACN training events is the concern of 18 respondents. "The promotional material and handouts do not get here with enough lead time to get preparations for the event done well. ... Give out schedule and information sooner. ... Not enough lead time for information and materials. (But, thanks; you're doing better!) ... Provide information about ACN programs a year in advance so we can plan ahead, and provide dialog back to ACN about what pastors want. ... Send schedule [far enough] ahead, so we can bring it to the church board and decide. ... We need more timely information on events coming up. ... Advance publicity sometimes does not contain enough information. ... [We need] better awareness of the event; more advance communication. ... I would like to see better pre-announcement of [training events]. California is a different time slot from the east coast, and needs more advertising to get attention. ... There needs to be more advertisement for each event; separate posters for each event would help a lot. ... [Once] I ordered handouts, and they arrived after the event. ... Make sure appropriate people are contacted directly for events. ... We need better description and information

on what the programs are all about, and extra copies for [other] people. ... I don't get the information and schedule regularly; the pastor gets it.

Local Issues

The concerns expressed by 11 respondents are local issues that local leaders will have to deal with. Although these issues are beyond the control of ACN, the fact that they are mentioned illustrates the degree to which satellite events are a partnership between the NAD and local churches.

They [training events] are good, but adjustments need to be made at [my local] church in order to view them, specifically darkening of the windows. This is being worked on. ... Much depends on the motivation of local church members and the understanding that they need to be professionally trained through these events. ... We have not received the handouts because there is a materials charge. I assume that these materials may take care of [our problems] with the training events. If we have the materials, the pastor can do homework before [the events] and be able to lead discussion after the event. ... Equipment needs to work at all times, and this church does not have ACN equipment, so we've had problems. ... ACN should communicate to conference presidents the importance for pastor to use the material. There is a lack of leadership in my church. The pastor needs to delegate to an ACN coordinator since he isn't "on fire" about ACN presentations and seems to have his own agenda. ... The church needs to let the members that they should be attending the events. ... It is hard to get people out. ... "Skips" in tape make it difficult to use later because of the information missed. I don't know if it was the satellite signal or the poor quality of tape we used. ... Our equipment has been out of commission since shortly after Net 96. We need a technician or someone knowledgeable enough that the ACN technical support line can "talk them through it." ... Our dish is down while the roof is repaired.

Schedule Issues

Providing live events over five or six time zones is one of the continuing challenges faced by ACN. Ten respondents shared concerns related to this challenge. "The time difference is a problem for us. ... If programs were aired closer to vespers more would attend. ... Saturday night is poor time. ... Sabbath afternoon events are not a good time; Friday night is a better time to schedule these programs. ... A little better choice on different time zones. I'm in Central time zone. ... Better if it was earlier in the afternoon. ... Have the programs in the evenings, so we can be sure to get them. Our equipment hasn't been very reliable to tape something when no one is there to run it. ... I would like events on the first Sabbath of the month."

Cost of Handouts

Seven respondents mentioned the fee charged for handout materials. "The registration fee should be kept minimal. ... Our church is small, so cost is a big factor. ...

We would appreciate the product, if we did not have to pay $25 for each event. If there was a possibility of downloading the program over the computer. It's hard for small churches to come up with the money! ... Use a Web page to distribute the hand-outs rather than [local churches] having to purchase materials. ... Reduce the hassle of signing up, and the cost of materials."

But, not everyone wants to reduce the fee. "Don't change the $25 fee," says one pastor. Another makes a very interesting suggestion which should be carefully considered by ACN management and AdventSource. "I wish there was a way to pay one lump sum every 6 or 12 months and get all of the handout packages rather than paying $25 each time."

Type of Presenters

Six respondents expressed opinions about the type of people who should be invited to present training events. "Emphasize people who have experience rather than theory; people who have experienced success. ... In the [events] I have seen there has been a lack of practical application; they need more examples of 'how to.' ... They talk in generalities. ... Boring [because of] impractical presentations. ... Make it practical. ... Get some key figures, well-known speakers from other denominations."

Topic Suggestions

Five respondents suggest specific training topics. "Church Clerk training is needed. ... Training for Personal Ministries is needed. ... Offer programs for preschoolers. ... Get into youth programs with youth. ... [I am] looking forward to 99th birthday of Sister Richards."

The Needs of Small Churches

Four respondents feel that ACN training events do not always take into consideration the unique needs of small, rural churches. "Some events are not geared to small churches. ... Some [training events] are too complicated for small churches. ... Have some [events] that are more suitable for county folk; uneducated farm people in small churches in rural Canada. Much of [what is presented] is not applicable to us. ... Provide more to help pastors of small churches."

Diversity Issues

Three respondents mention issues related to ethnic diversity. "More multicultural/ethnic representation is needed among the presenters. ... Provide closed captioning in Spanish. ... Be more sensitive to minority languages; have more events translated into Spanish."

A Rich Menu of Choices

Three respondents express the reality that the array of training events provided by ACN is intended to provide a wide range of choices. "There are so many [training events], we can't use all of them. ... Sometimes there are so many things going on in an active church that it's hard to keep up with all that is offered on satellite. So we are selective and do what we can. ... They are all good, but we are a small church and have rather specific needs."

Other Comments

Eleven respondents made comments on other topics. Some are negative and some are positive.

We're not real impressed with this "high tech" approach. We feel it should be "high touch." ... Not really pleased with video; I like to have real live people here, in person. ... We have had some negative reaction to some of the music used in some presentations. ... Why is it with some of the events you don't tell the channel number unless we register? ... Without the interaction of a live audience [training events are] too "canned," like soda that has lost its fizz. ... There needs to be more advertising in church papers. ... Some participants are not representative of the church. ... Issues are not being brought forward to address questions that [my local church] church has. ... Some people [in my church] think 3ABN is better and want to leave ACN. ... Are materials still available a year or two later that are mentioned on programs that are taped? ... You should interview pastors in the field for questions, comments, and suggestions.

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 on the number of interviews or questionnaires.

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/or the same questionnaire.

Table A shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of any percentage reported. This table would be used in the following manner: If a reported percentage is 33 for a groups includes 1,250 respondents ... then, 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. This means 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 the survey.

In comparing survey results in two sub-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. Table B and Table C indicate the number of points which must be allowed for in such comparisons to make them "statistically significant." Table C is for percentages near 20 or 80. Table B is for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the factor to be allowed for is between those shown on the two tables.

Here is how these tables are used: If 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them, can we say that the 10 point difference reflects a real difference between the two groups on that question? Let's say the sample contains about 750 of each gender.

Since the percentages are near 50, consult Table B. Since the total sample is 1500, look for the number in the column headed "1500." Since the two sub-samples are 750 persons each, look for the row designated "750." Where the row and column intersect, you will find the number 5. This means that the difference between the two groups must be greater than 5 percentage points to be "statistically significant." In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a real difference exists in the answers of men and women to this question.

Table A
Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error

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

Table B
Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference
In Percentage Points for Percentages near 50

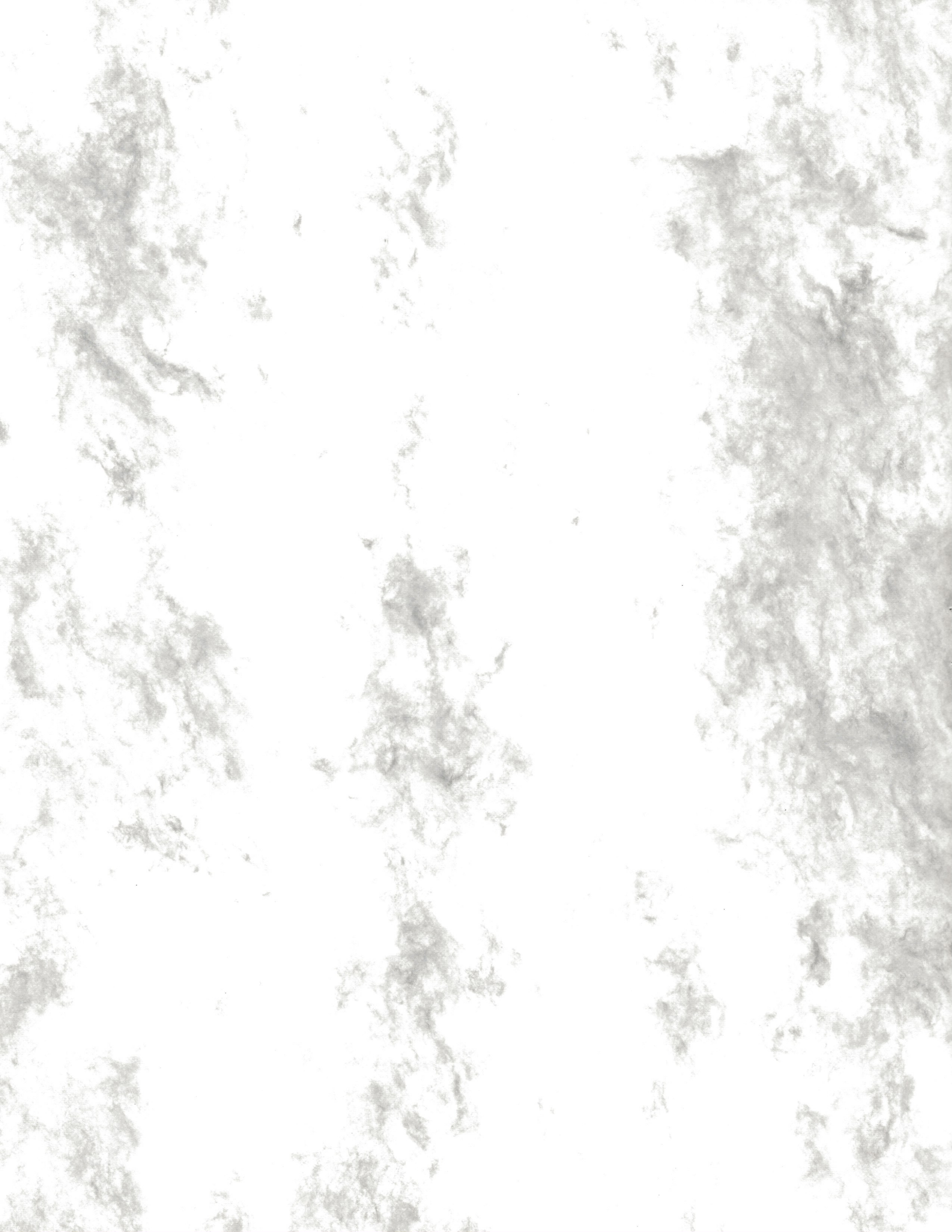| Size of Sample	1500	1250	1000	750	500	250	100
1500	4						
1250	5	5					
1000	5	5	5				
750	6	6	6	6			
500	6	6	7	7	8		
250	8	8	9	9	9	11	
100	13	13	13	13	13	14	17

Table C
Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference
In Percentage Points
For Percentages near 20 or Percentages near 80

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

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