

**North American Division
Church Information System**

Report 2

Survey of Lay Leaders: Activities & Programs in 1989

Robert L. Dale, Secretary
North American Division
Monte Sahlin, Project Coordinator
NAD Church Ministries Department
Gail R. Hunt, Marketing Research Manager
Review & Herald Publishing Association
Roger Dudley, Director
Andrews University Institute of Church Ministry
Harold Lee, Consultant
NAD Church Ministries Department
Carole Kilcher, Consultant
Andrews University Institute of Church Ministry
Jose Chavanz-Q., Consultant
Pacific Union Church Ministries Department

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North American Division of the
General Conference of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

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 annual survey of church board members conducted for the NAD by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University. This survey is conducted during a church board meeting each year in the panel of 40 local churches selected by stratified probability sampling from among the NAD list of churches. This year 390 lay leaders completed the questionnaire. The sampling error is between 5 and 8 percentage points at a 95 in 100 confidence level. Additional information about the sampling methods and statistical techniques used is provided in the Technical Appendix.

Monte Sahlin
Project Coordinator
January 1, 1990

Youth Ministry in the Local Church

Regular, weekly Adventist Youth Society (AYS) meetings are no longer held in most white congregations, although they are still a significant activity in black and Hispanic congregations. (See page 3.) Larger white churches are likely to have a weekly youth meeting. This is understandable with a closer look at the 62,400 youth ages 15 through 19 in Adventist households in North America.

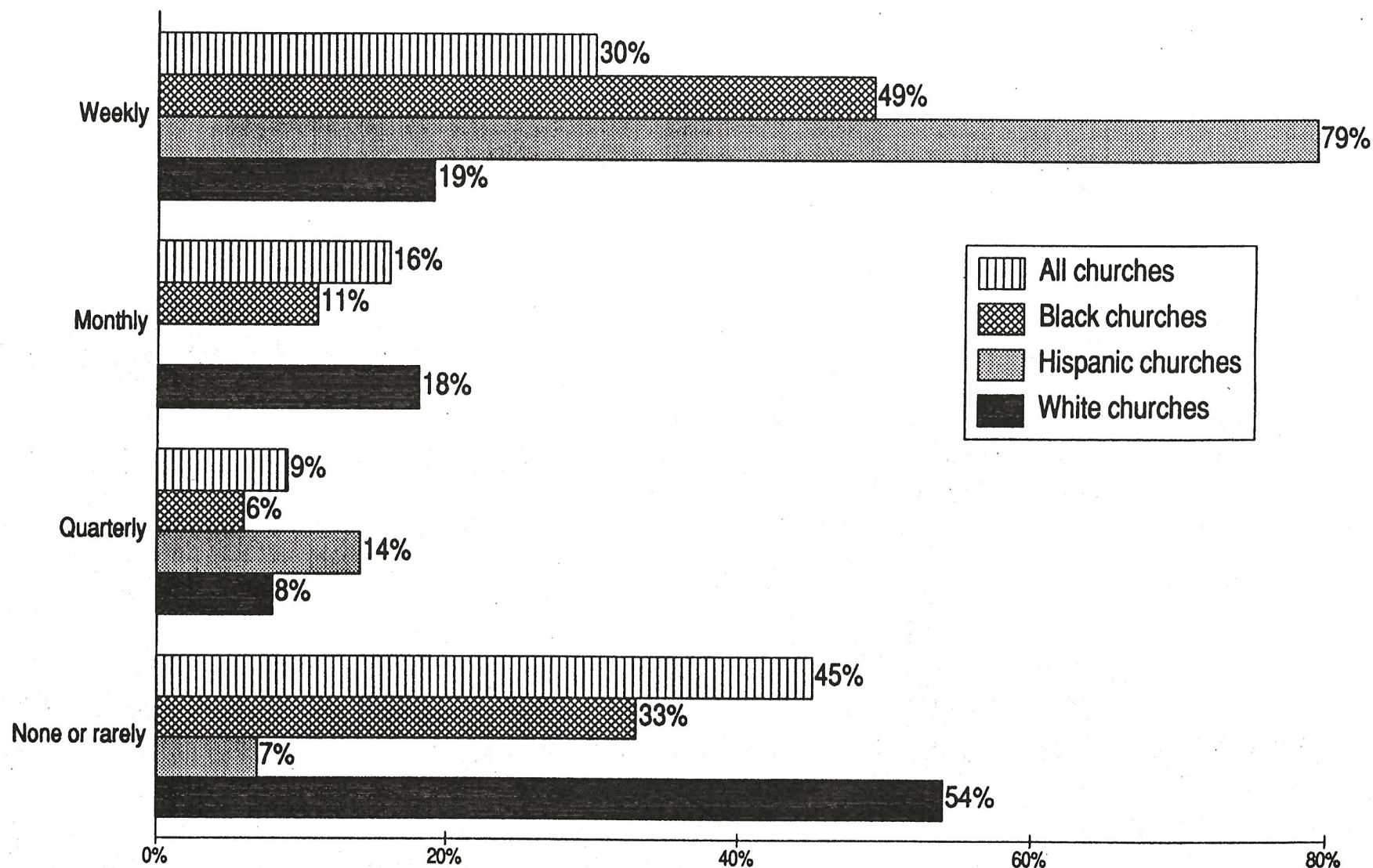
We know from compiled membership statistics that the 167 congregations with 600 or more members each have 24% of the total NAD membership. If they have a similar share of the 15 to 19-year-olds, then each of these congregations could average 90 teens at their youth meetings if there is full attendance. Studies in some local churches indicate that probably about half of the group will be inactive, but 45 teens is still a very viable youth group. 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 5 teens each, of which probably only 2 or 3 are active participants, unless they are attracting the children of nonmembers. This is less than the "critical mass" or viable minimum group size necessary for conventional models of youth ministry, and indicates a need for the denomination to find ways to reach these

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

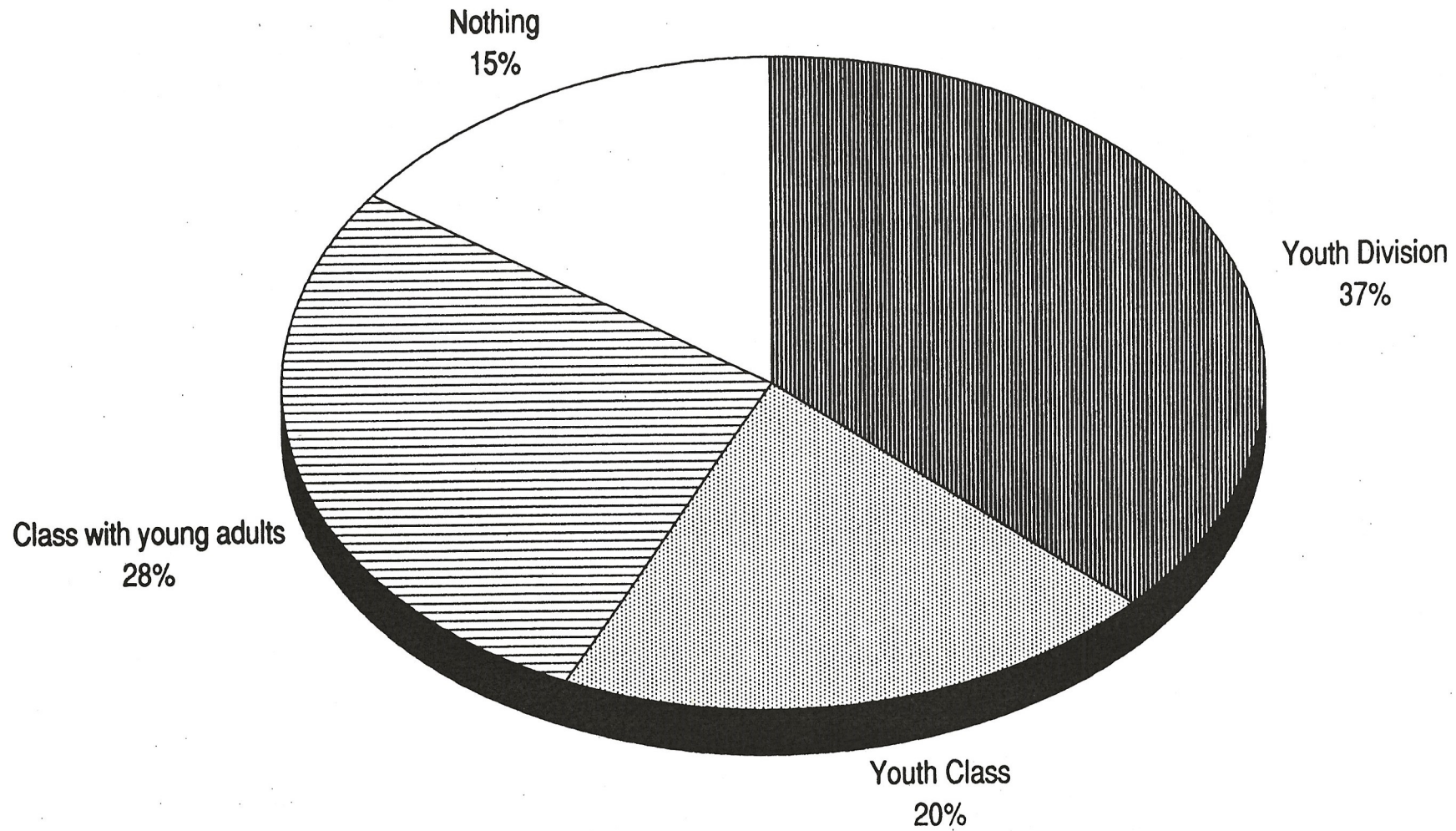
Only one in three church board members say that their congregation operates a Youth Division during Sabbath School. (See page 4.) Nearly half report only a class for teenagers, often combined with the young adults. Youth in these congregations join the adults for the large group activities in Sabbath School. One church board member in six indicates that his local church provides no Sabbath School activities designed especially for youth.

Lay leaders are not disinterested in reaching out to their youth. They report considerable effort toward involving teenagers and young adults in local church offices. (See page 5.) Three out of four say that young adults serve as deacons or deaconesses in their local church. The majority report that teenagers serve as deacons or deaconesses and that young adults serve as Sabbath School and youth ministry leaders. Few teenagers serve as elders or are involved in outreach, although one in three church board members indicate that young adults are holding these responsibilities in their church.

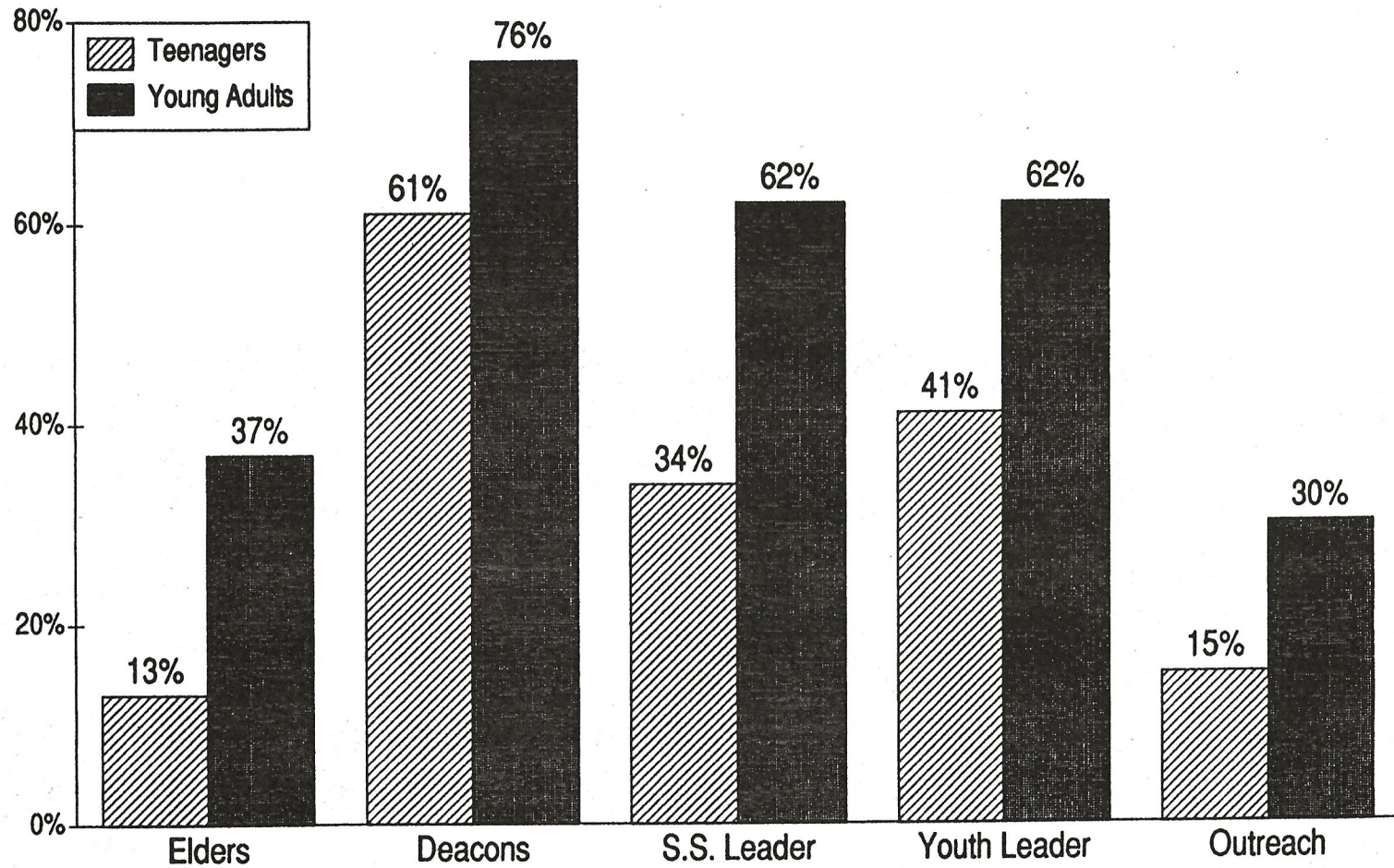
How often does your church have youth meetings?



What does your church do for teens in Sabbath School?



Youth Involvement in Church Offices



Local Church Activities in 1988-89

The typical Adventist congregation during the 1988-89 program year sponsored one or more small groups for fellowship and Bible study, had a pastor's Bible class, conducted Bible studies with interested individuals, participated in the Ingathering campaign, held a Revelation seminar and perhaps a cooking school, held a business meeting where church finances were discussed, heard at least one sermon on stewardship, formulated a church budget, provided groceries and clothing for the poor as well as assistance for the elderly, and may have conducted a family life emphasis on a Sabbath or a family life seminar. Many other activities which denominational departments recommend were held in only a small number of congregations, usually the larger ones.

Evangelism Activities (page 7): Almost every congregation had some evangelistic activity. Small group ministry was the most popular form of soul-winning, with almost equal numbers conducting Bible studies, a pastor's Bible class and Ingathering activities. Half the churches held a Revelation Seminar, but only two out of five sponsored a public evangelistic crusade.

Health-Temperance Activities (page 8): Only about a third of the local churches in the NAD provided health education activities for their members and the community during 1988-89. Cooking schools and health screening were the two most popular health outreach events. The Breathe-Free stop smoking program has almost completely replaced the Five Day Plan. One church in four sponsored a weight control program,

while few congregations sponsored stress seminars and exhibits at fairs, malls or other public locations.

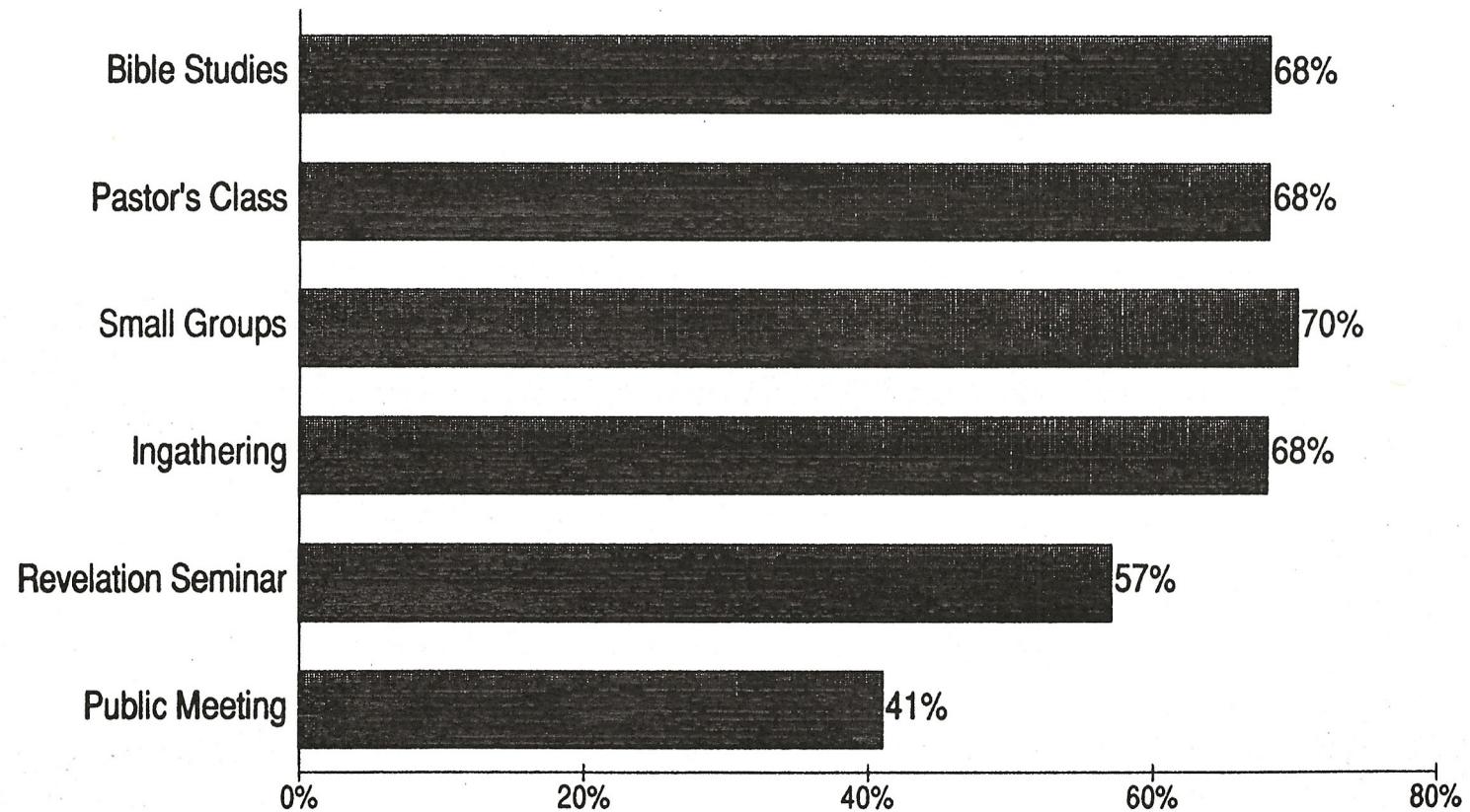
Family Ministries (page 9): Less than a third of the NAD congregations provided family ministry activities. A general Family Life Seminar or a special Sabbath with a family life emphasis were the two most likely events. One congregation in five may have had an event for single adults. Very few sponsored any other family life programs.

Stewardship Education (page 10): Three out of four local churches had some form of stewardship education, most likely a general church business meeting to discuss church finances and one or more sermons on the subject of stewardship. About half formulated a church budget or had a guest speaker on the subject of stewardship. Only a third participated in World Stewardship Day.

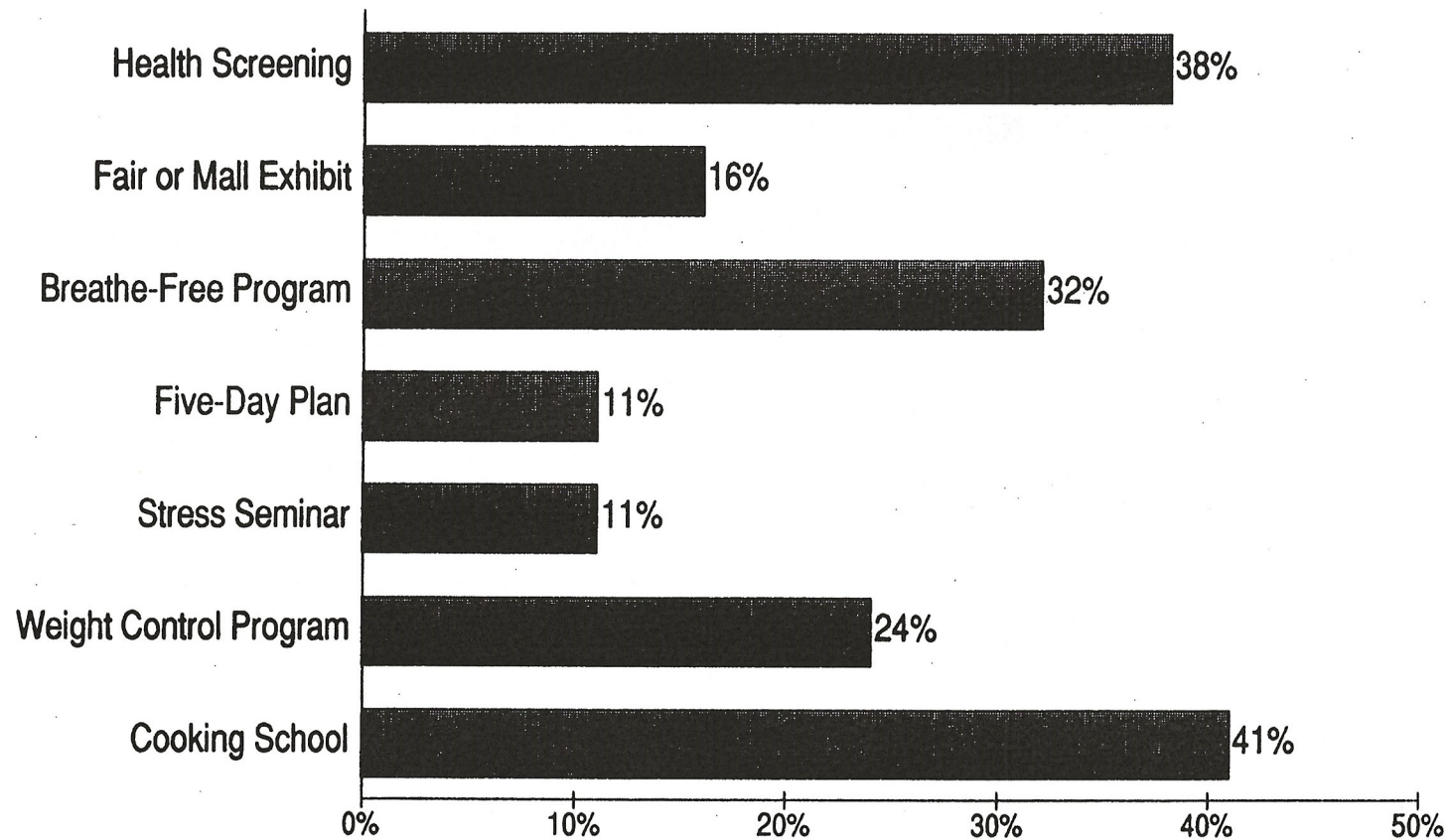
Adventist Community Services (page 11): More local churches provided some form of community service than any other activity. Clothing distribution and food pantry programs were the most popular. Half of the congregations provided some kind of help for the elderly, a third provided some type of family counseling, and a quarter provided a job-finding program.

These data and the graphics on pages 7 through 11 are based on one questionnaire filled out by the pastor or first elder in each of the 40 churches in this panel. The sampling error is between 10 and 15 percentage points at a 95 in 100 confidence level.

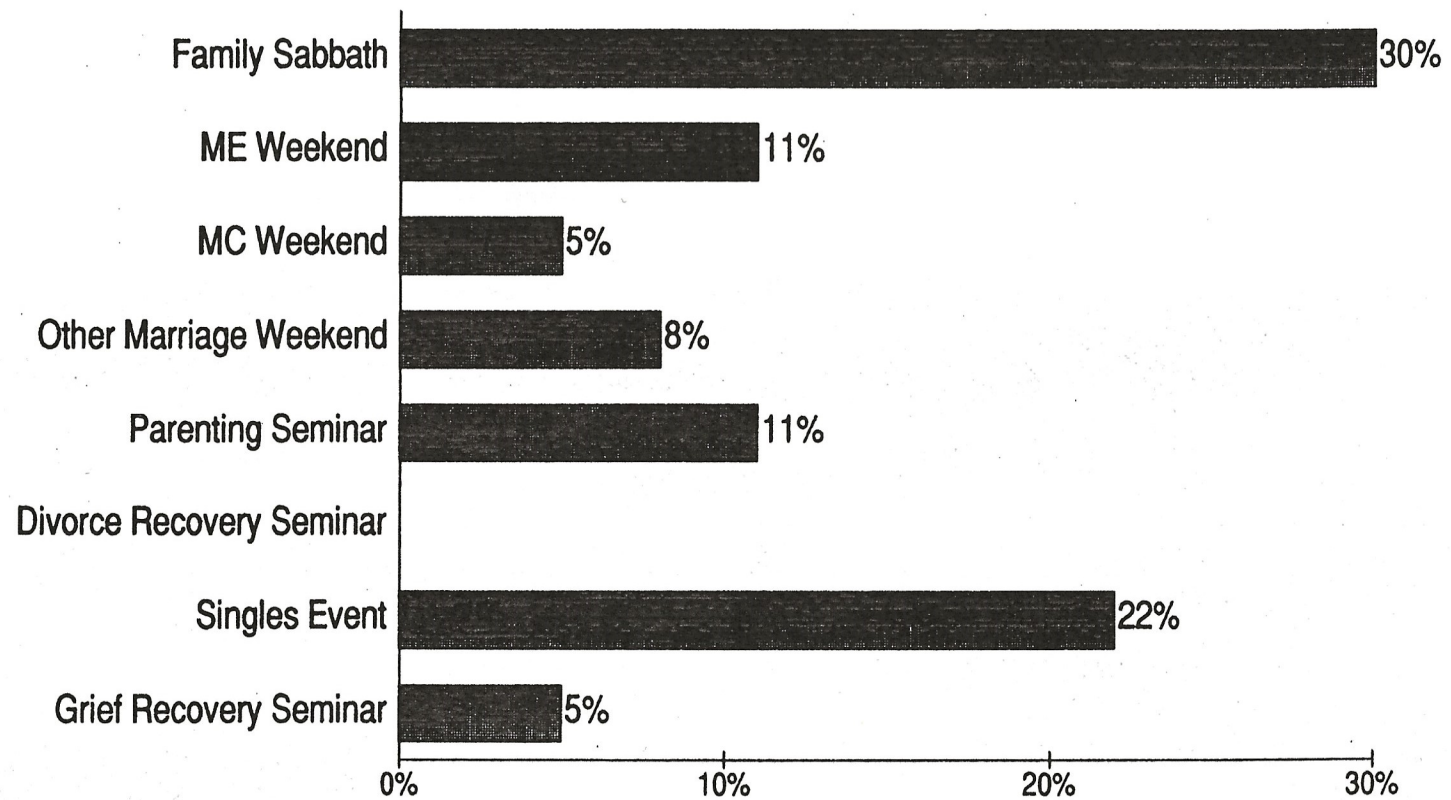
Evangelism Activities During 1988-89



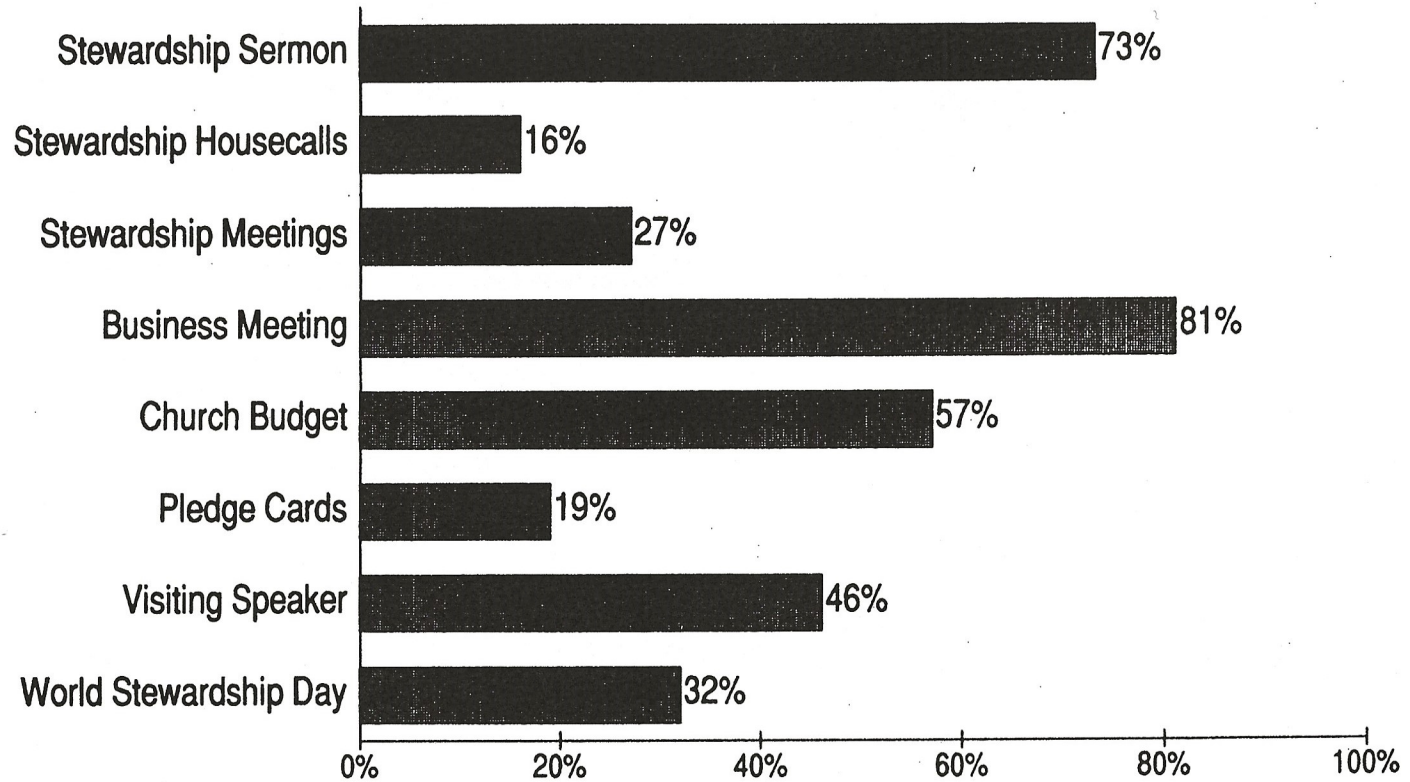
Health-Temperance Activities During 1988-89



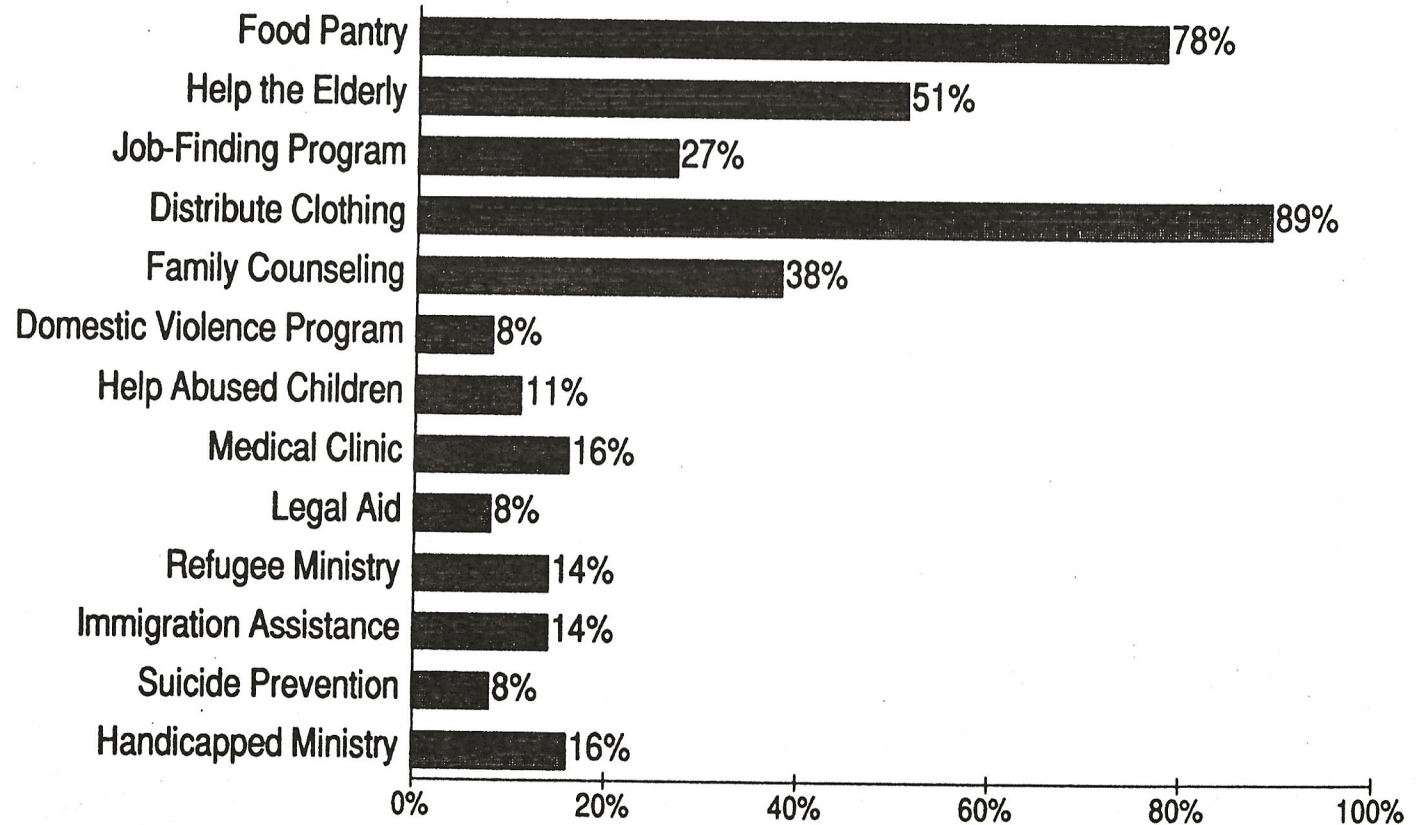
Family Ministries During 1988-89



Stewardship Education Activities in 1988-89



Adventist Community Services Activities in 1988-89

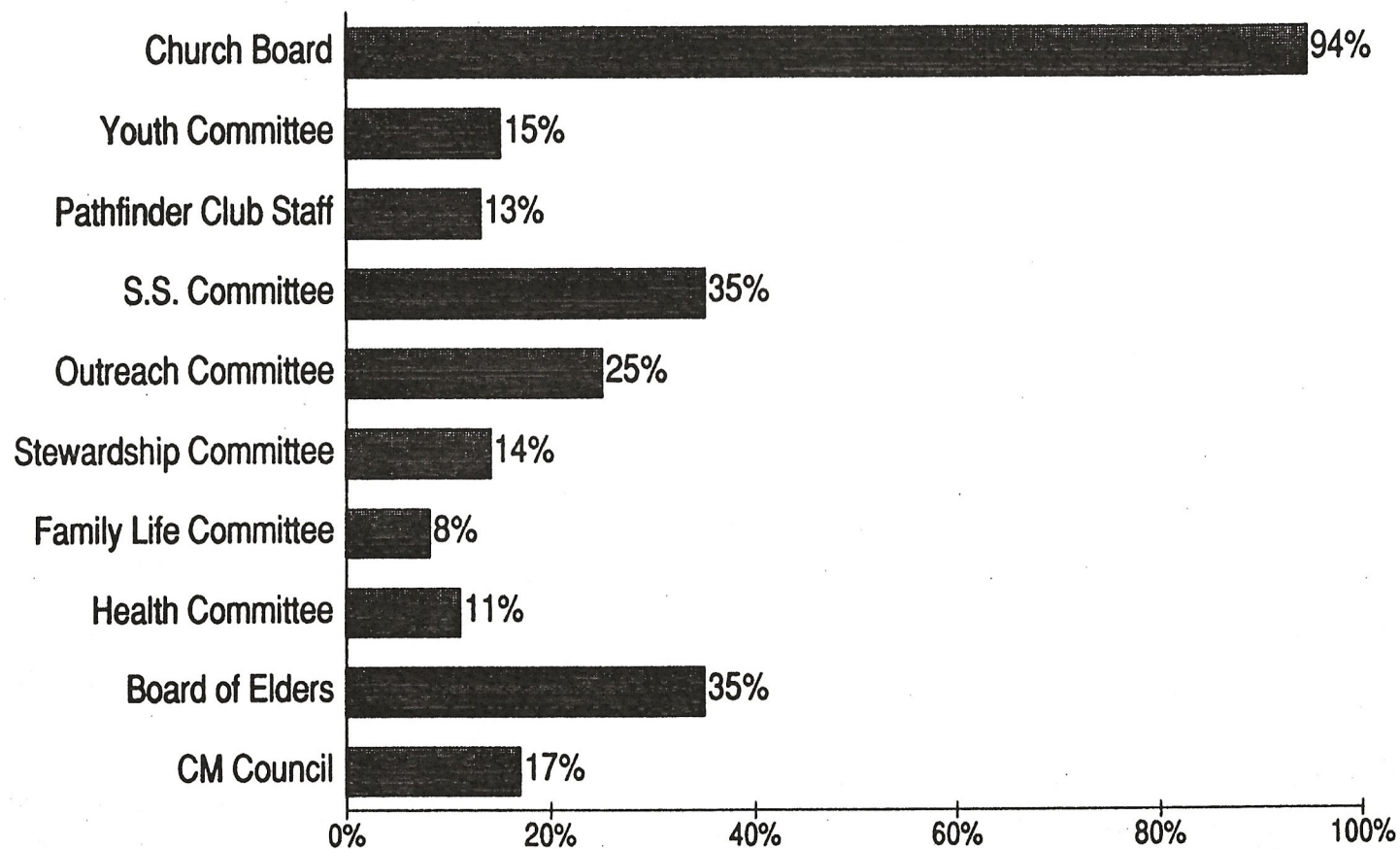


Leadership Development

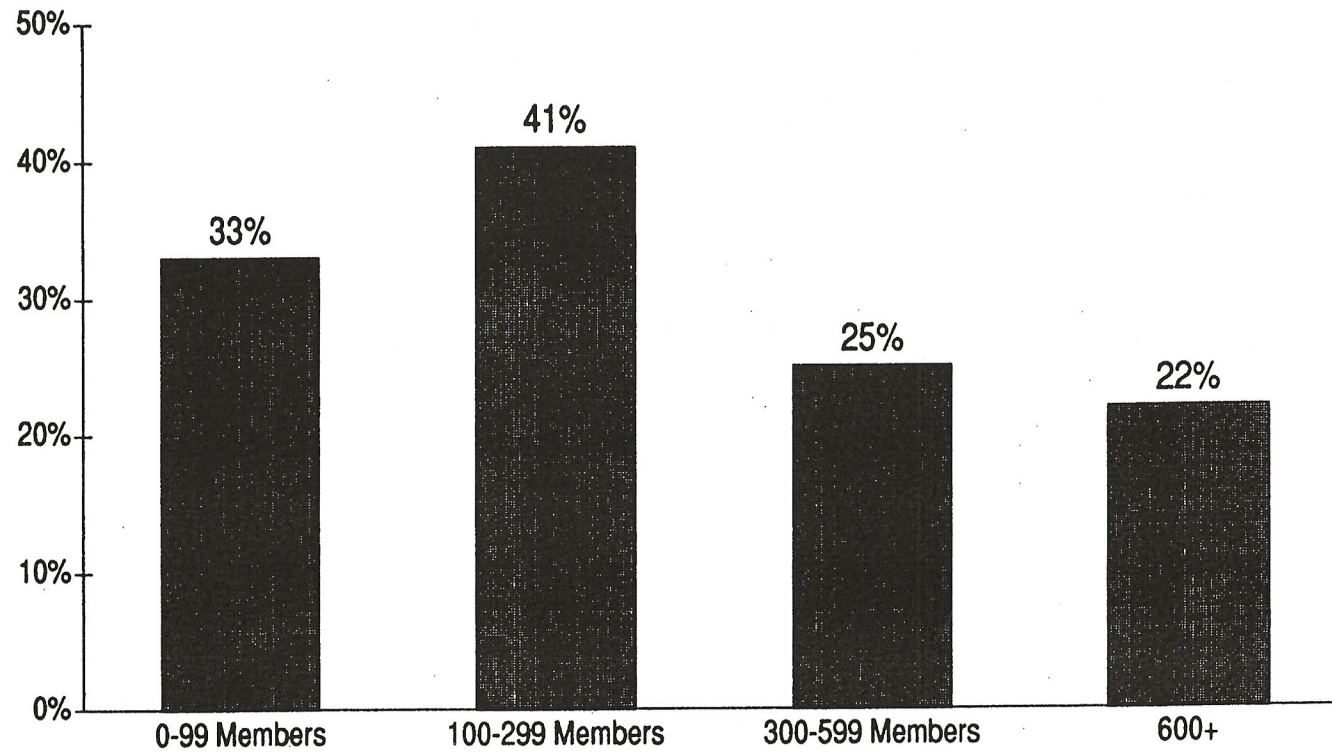
How well do the various leadership structures of the Adventist Church actually function in local congregations, and how many of the lay leaders are participating in the many training programs offered to them? Nine out of ten of the 390 church board members who responded to this survey indicate that they always or usually attend church board meetings. (See page 13.) One in three participate in meetings of the board of elders or Sabbath School committee in their local church. One in four serves on an outreach committee. Surprisingly, 17% of these board members report that their local church already has a Church Ministries Council in operation and they participate. Very few regularly participate in other committees.

One in three lay leaders has attended some training event in the last twelve months. The chart on page 14 shows that church board members from churches of 100 to 299 members are most likely to attend training events, while relatively few lay leaders in large congregations attend. Church officers meetings and seminars designed to teach outreach skills were most highly attended. (See page 15.) The vast majority of lay church leaders are not touched by the training activities provided by the conference staff. This suggests a need for careful evaluation of the denomination's entire training system.

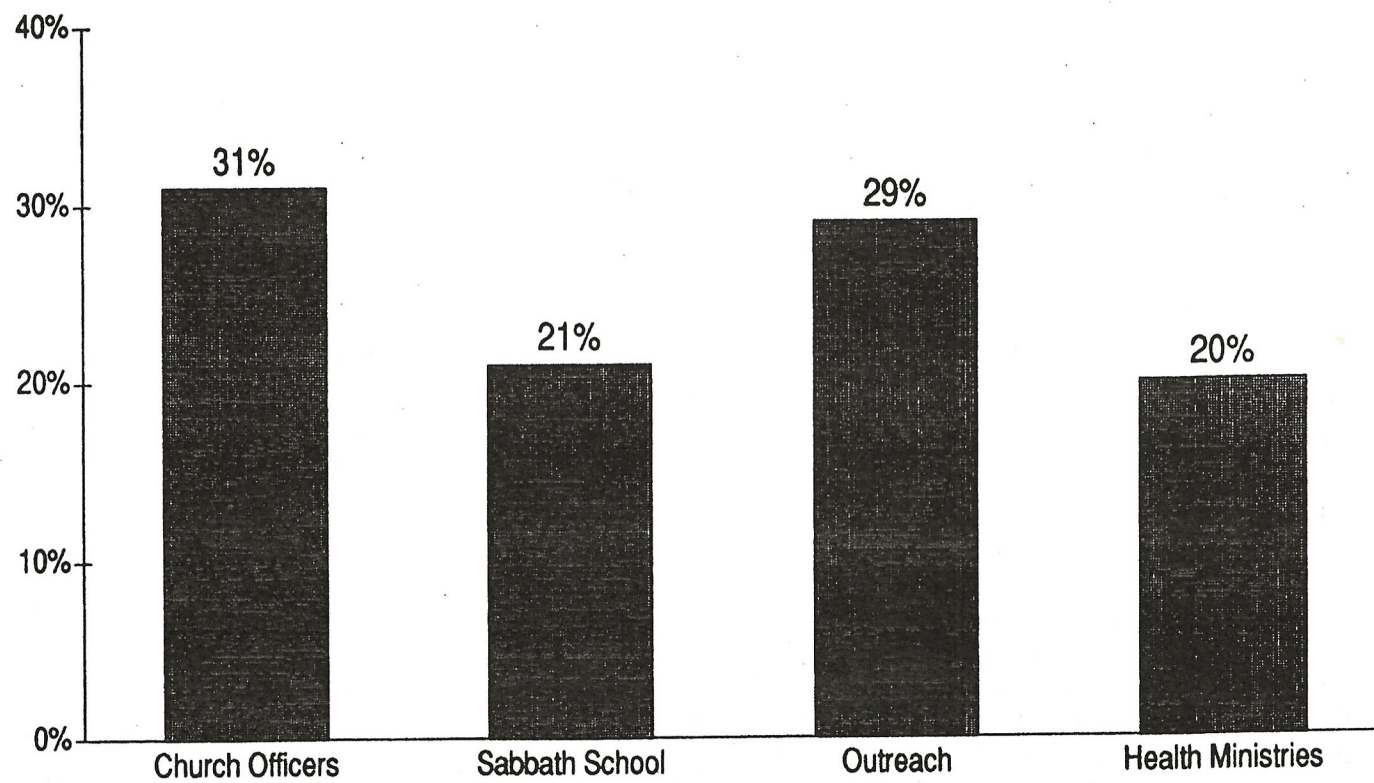
Functioning Committees in the Local Church



**Lay Leaders Who Attended a Training Event in the Last Year
—by size of congregation—**



Lay leaders who attended a training event in the last year in . . .



Audio-Visuals in the Local Church

There is a growing use of various kinds of audio-visual materials by the Adventist Church. How well equipped are the local congregations to make use of these materials? Nine in ten church board members say that their local church has a slide projector, although less than half indicate that they have a rear-projection screen. (See page 17.) Three out of four report that they have access to a video cassette recorder (VCR). The majority say their church has an overhead projector and a motion picture projector.

Adventist congregations are well supplied with audio-visual equipment. A similar survey was conducted in the United Presbyterian Church during 1988. A comparison of the results from the two denominational polls is displayed in the graphic on page 18. Adventist churches are more likely to have a slide projector than are Presbyterian churches, are equally likely to have a VCR, but less likely to have a movie projector. The source of the Presbyterian Church (USA) data in this report is "Communication," *Presbyterian Panel Report*, January, 1989, (Presbyterian Panel, Louisville, KY).

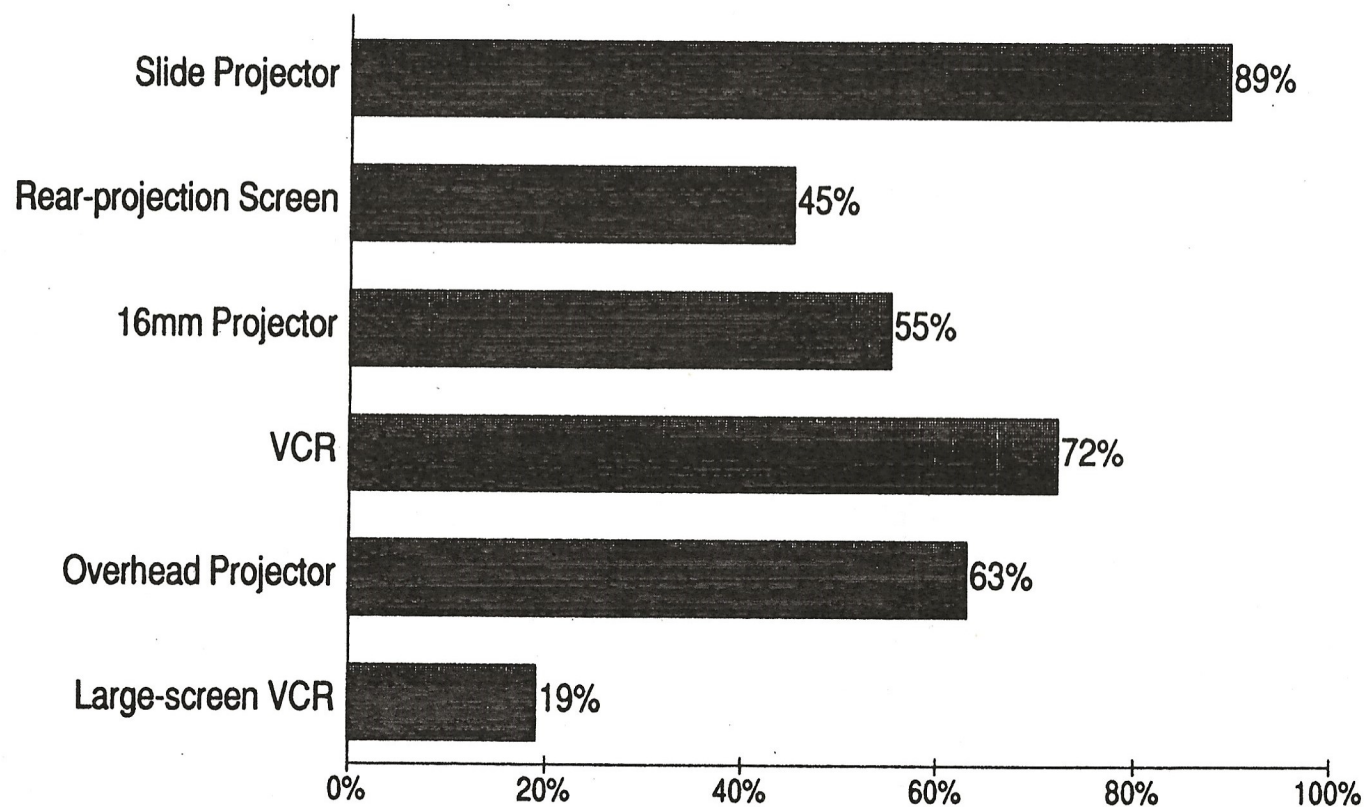
"Mission Spotlight" has established itself as the most successful audio-visual program currently offered to Adventist congregations. Nearly three out of four church board members report that their local church uses this world mission promotion resource. Discussion of the

possibility of providing a similar service in a video format was a major item on the agenda of the January 1989 meeting of the NAD Materials Development and Marketing Committee. At the request of the committee, this survey included specific questions regarding how church board members might respond to additional audio-visual materials promoting world mission. Clearly the equipment is available for most local churches to use video materials, but are lay leader receptive to the concept?

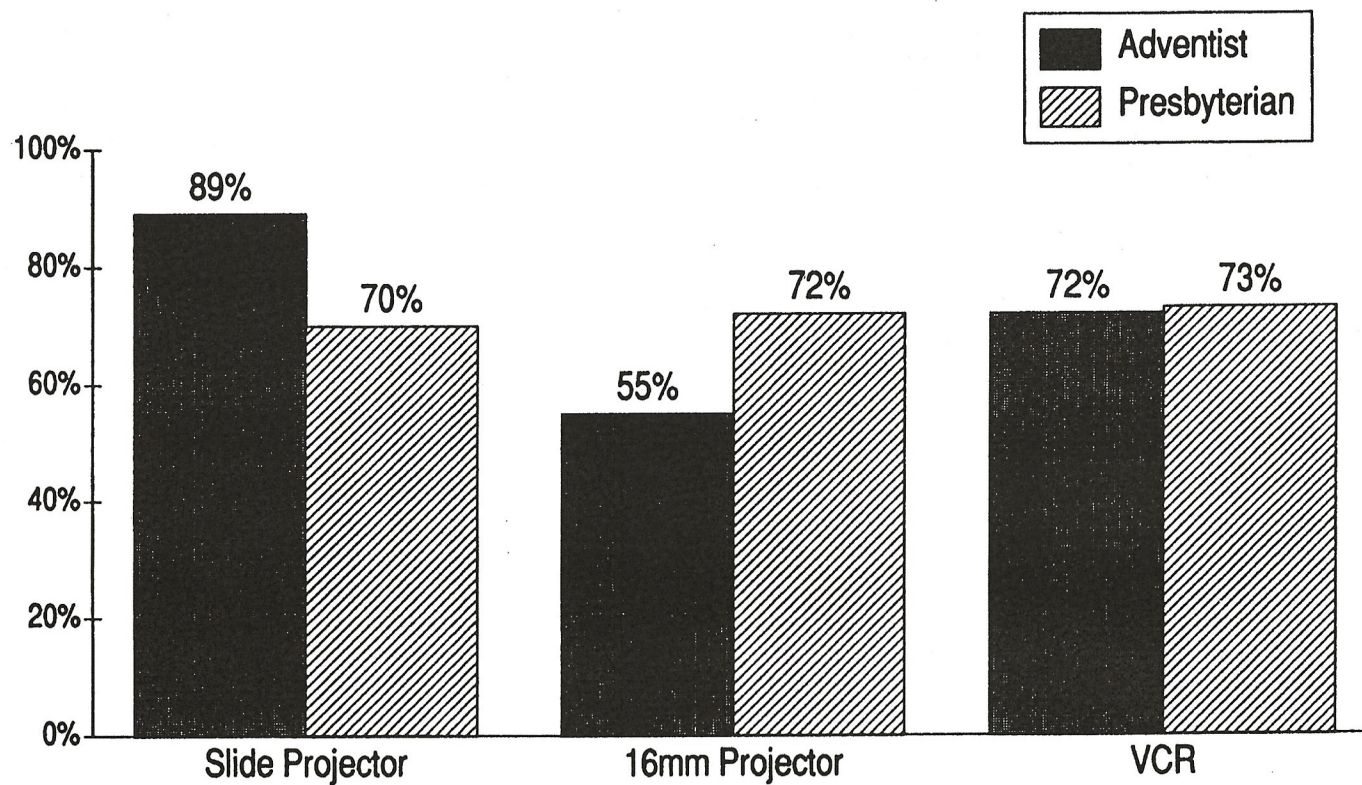
What if a mission video were made available as well as the "Mission Spotlight" slide/sound packages? (See page 19.) The largest number of church board members indicated that they would vote to use both resources in their congregation, while one in four indicated that they would stay with "Mission Spotlight" and not make use of the videos. Only one in ten indicated they would vote to drop "Mission Spotlight" and replace it with the videos.

Respondents were also asked how often mission report audio-visuals ought to be used in their local church. One in ten would prefer it as a weekly feature in Sabbath School. One in five would prefer twice a month, while 42% prefer a monthly presentation and 13% would prefer only once a quarter. About 15% of church board members would prefer not to use any mission report audio-visuals in their local church.

What audio-visual equipment is available in your local church?



How do Adventist churches compare with Presbyterian churches?



If a mission video were offered . . .

