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Office of
Archives, Statistics
and Research

Statistics and Solutions in Church Member Retention

Galina Steele, DMin

SeLD Conference

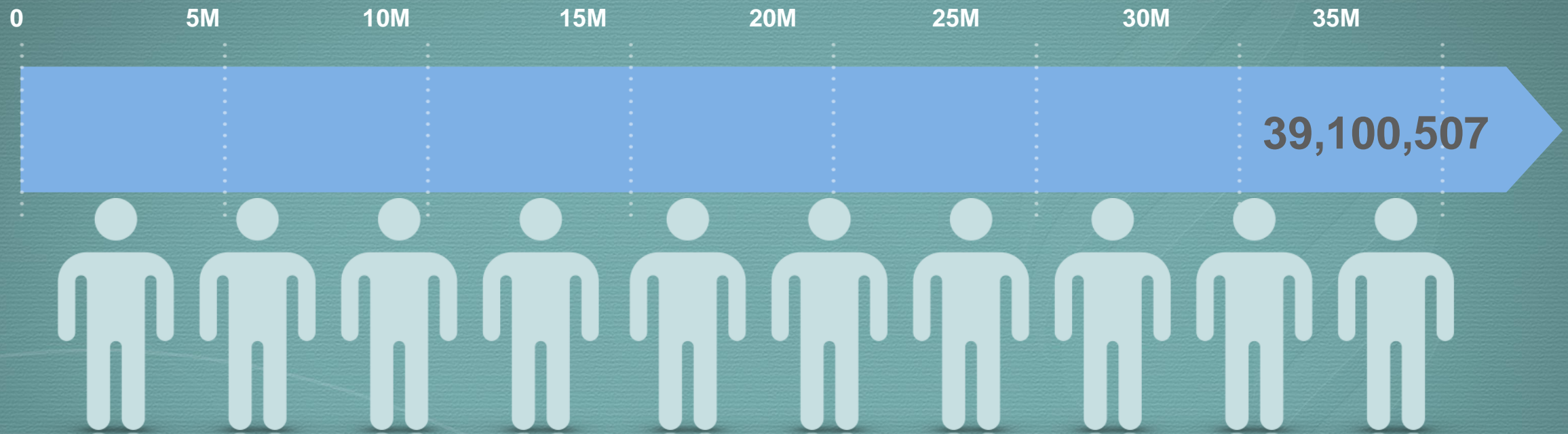
Inter-American Division

July, 2019

"I will miss you forever..."



TOTAL MEMBERS



Since 1965, **39,100,507** people have become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

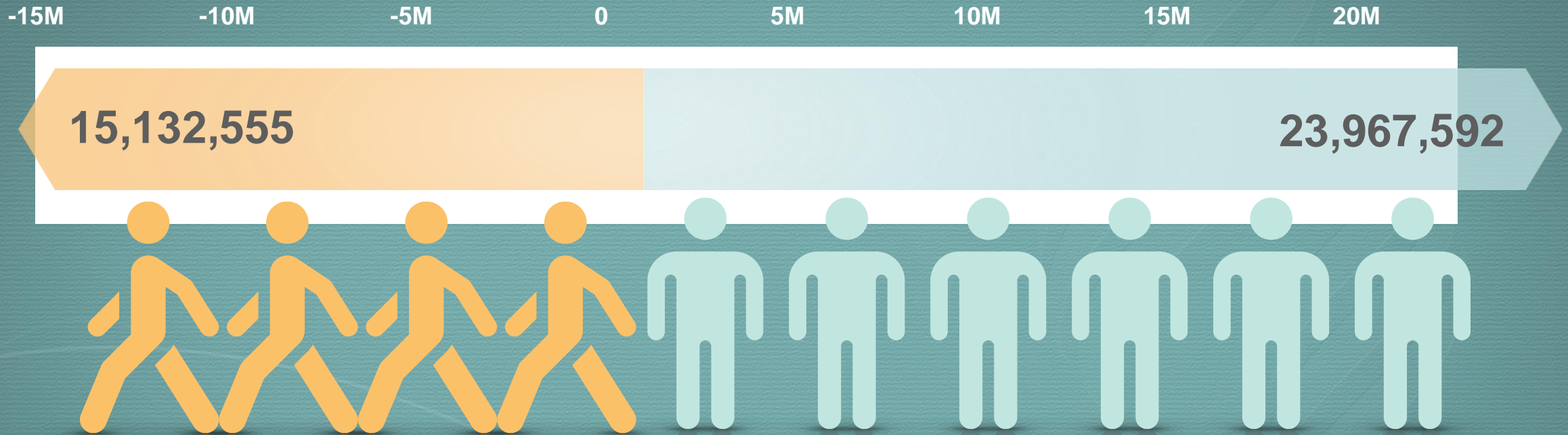
● Members

Research by David Trim

<https://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/Compressed%20N%26R%20Summit%202019%20presentation-compressed.pdf>

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MEMBERS WHO LEAVE



Since 1965, **39,100,507** people have become members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Of those, **15,132,555** have chosen to leave.

Our net loss rate is 39%.

In effect, **4 of every 10** new church members are slipping away.

Research by David Trim

● Members who left
● Members who stayed

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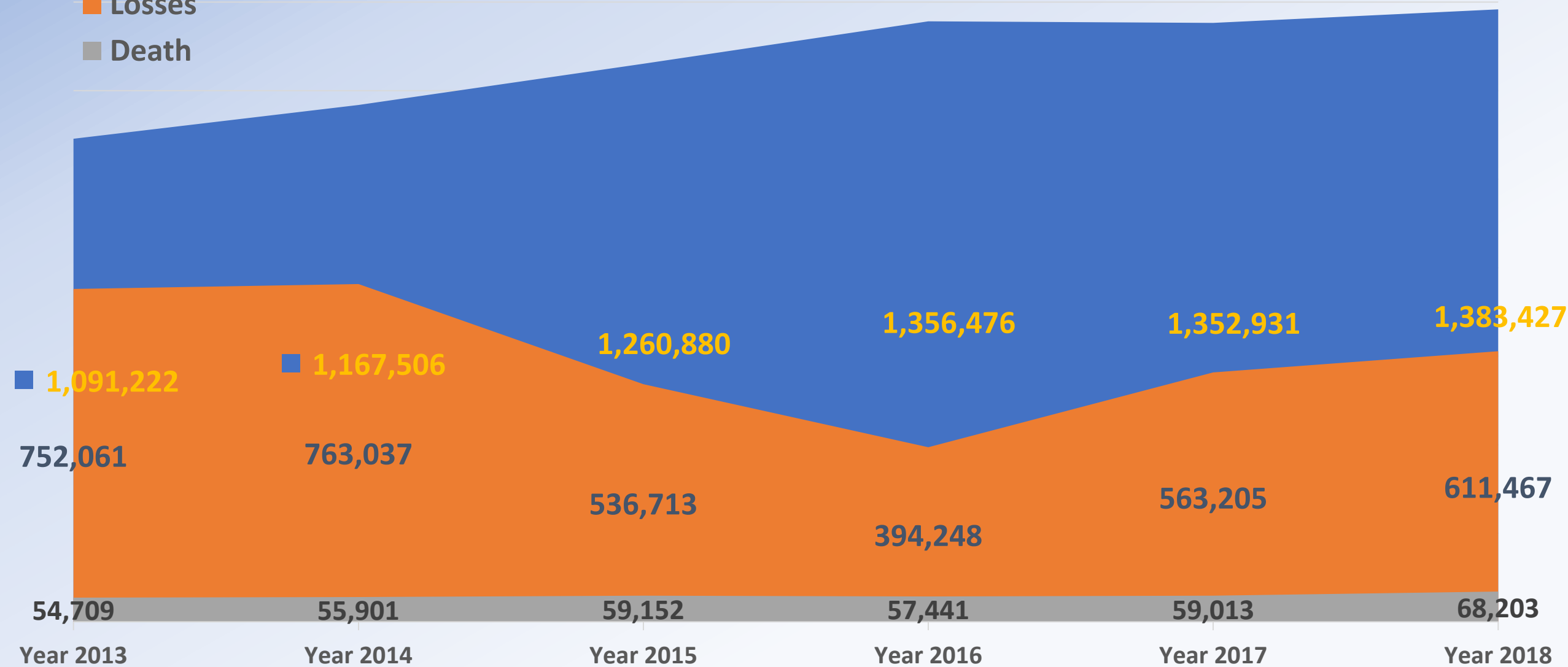
Accessions, Losses, and Death

2013-2018

■ Accessions

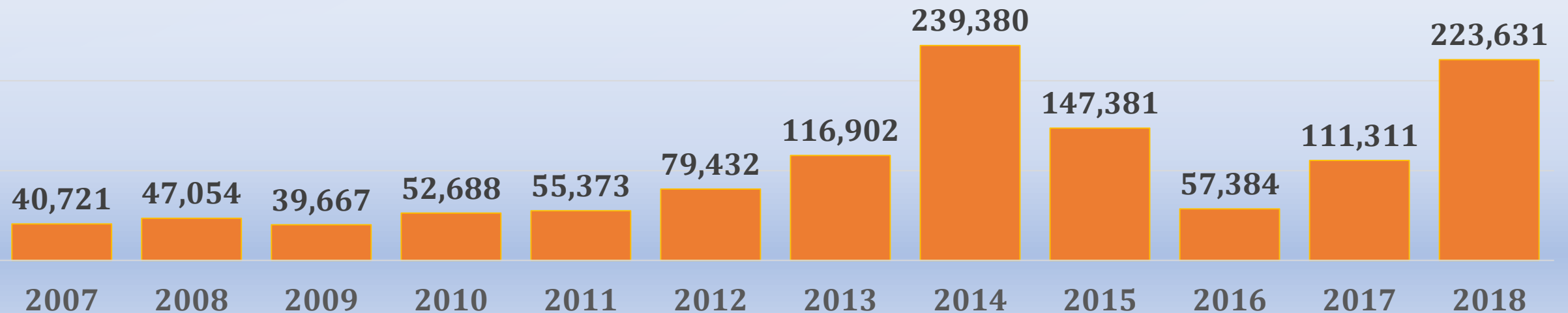
■ Losses

■ Death



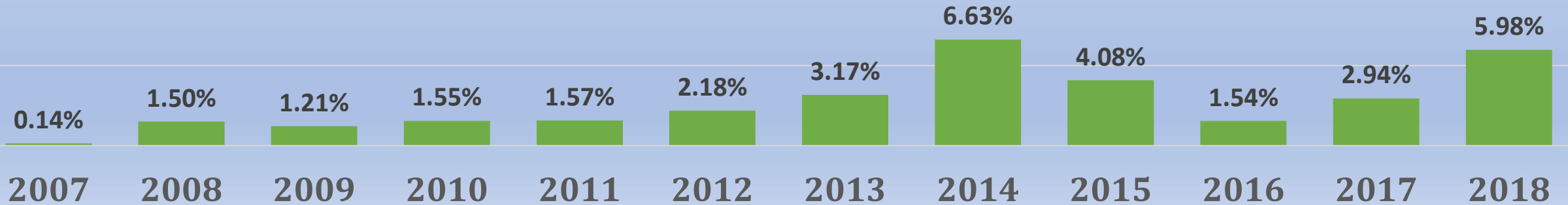
Members Leaving the Church

Inter-American Division (IAD)

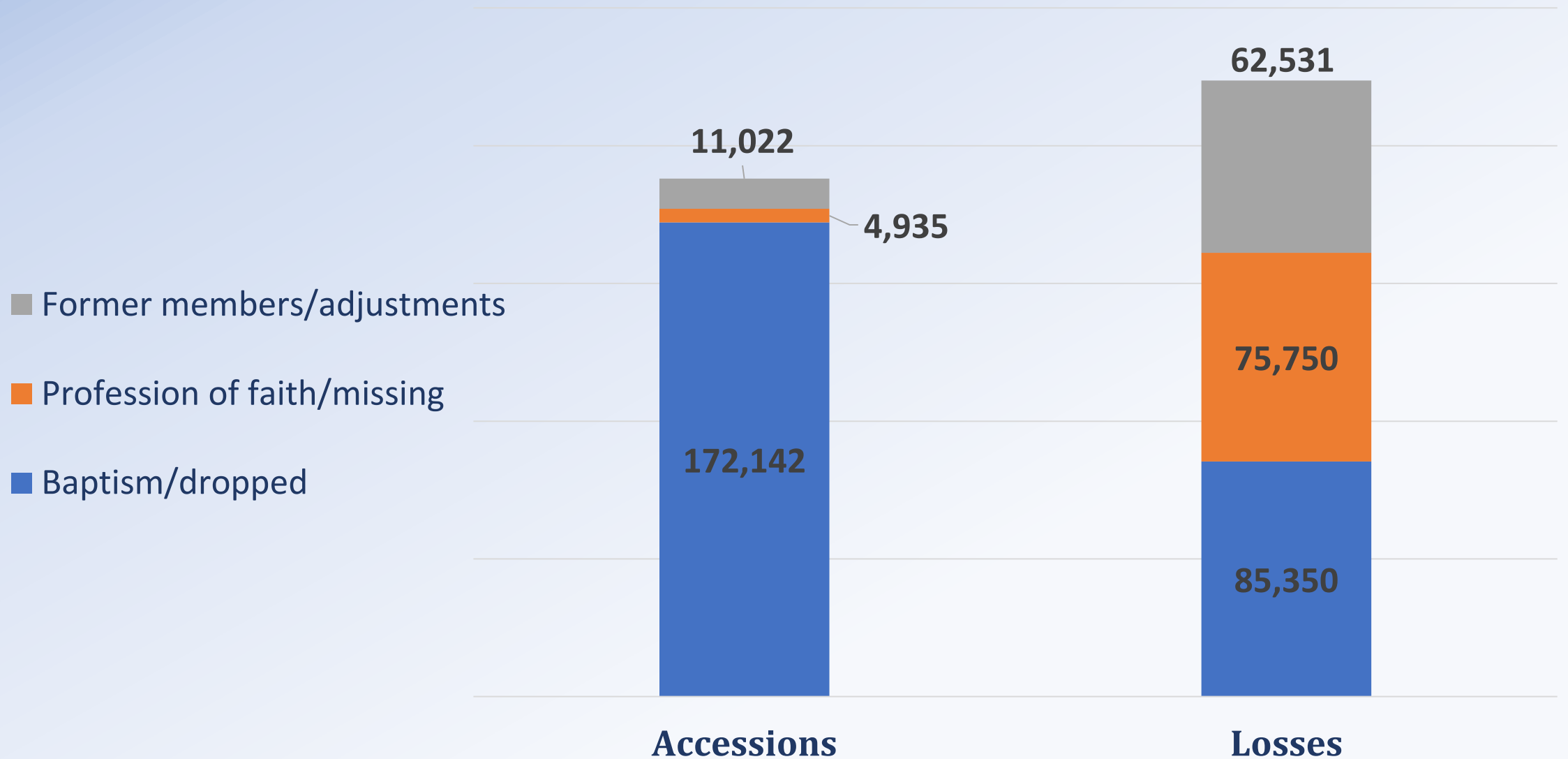


Members Leaving the Church as a Percentage of Division Membership

Inter-American Division

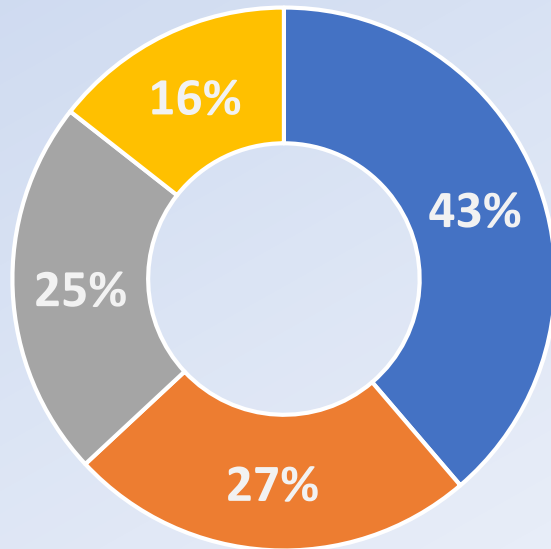


Accessions & Losses: Inter-American Division-2018



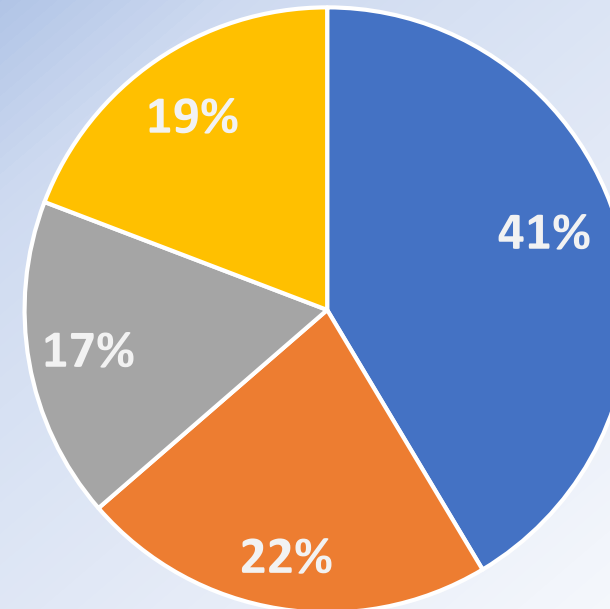
2018 Global Church Member Survey (CMS)

Inter-American Division



- First generation
- Second generation
- Third generation
- Fourth & fifth + generation Adventists

Total



- First generation Adventists
- Second generation Adventists
- Third generation Adventists
- Fourth & fifth + generation Adventists

Nurture and Retention Summit Participants, GC, 2013



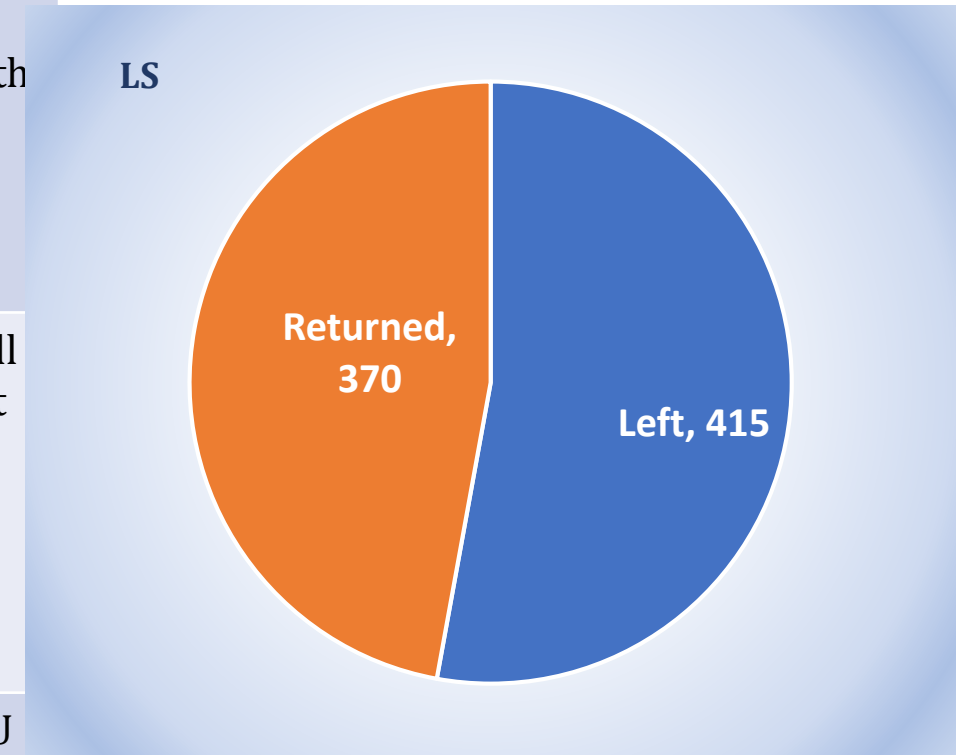
Summit recommendations included:

- To have Nurture and Retention Coordinators
- To develop plans of discipling new members and reclaiming former members
- To train pastors in the areas of nurture, discipling, and retaining church members
- To hold seminars in conflict resolutions
- To conduct conferences or Summits on nurture and retention
- To use small-group approach and other programs for discipling and retaining members, etc.

https://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home

Research on Retention & Connectedness

Name	Investigators	N	Years	Regions/Divisions
Survey of Former & Inactive Church Members	F&IM: Paul Richardson, Monte Sahlin, ICM	N=925	2011-2013	Africa, Europe, North and South America
Retention surveys of ex-members and those who returned (Leaving the Church or Lapsed Study)	LS: GC Retention & Nurture Committee and ASTR	N=785	2011-2014	MENA and all divisions but SUD & WAD
The 21 st Century Seventh-day Adventist Connection Study	21 st CCS: Doug Jacobs & team, SAU	N=1,153	2012-2013	SAU, PUC, OU



The 2018 Global Church Member Survey

Total N=63,756



IAD CMS N=5,185

*Team from Montemorelos
University:*

Andres R. Díaz-Valladares

Isabel Zacarias

Alba Elizande

Jaime Rodríguez

Raúl Rodríguez

Daniel Gutiérrez

Paola de la Cruz



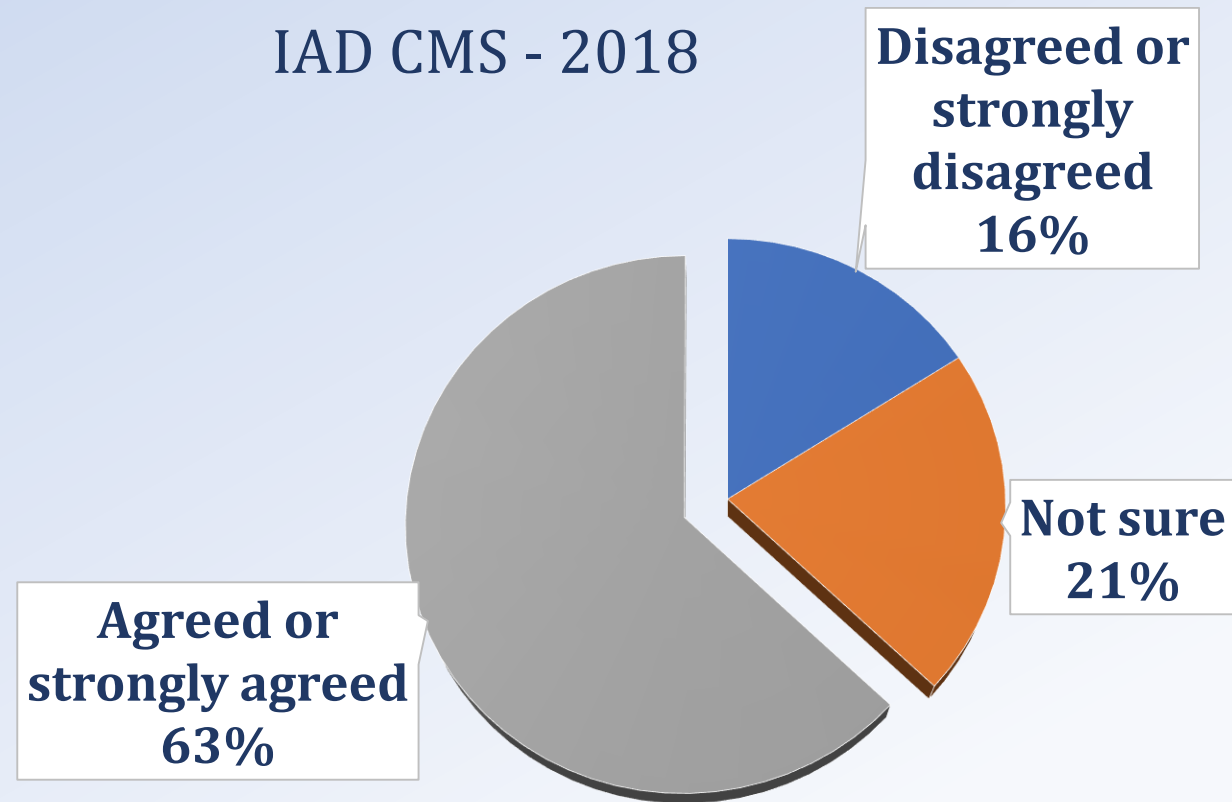
2019 Nurture and Retention Summit

Discipling, Nurturing, and Reclaiming

2019 Nurture & Retention Summit



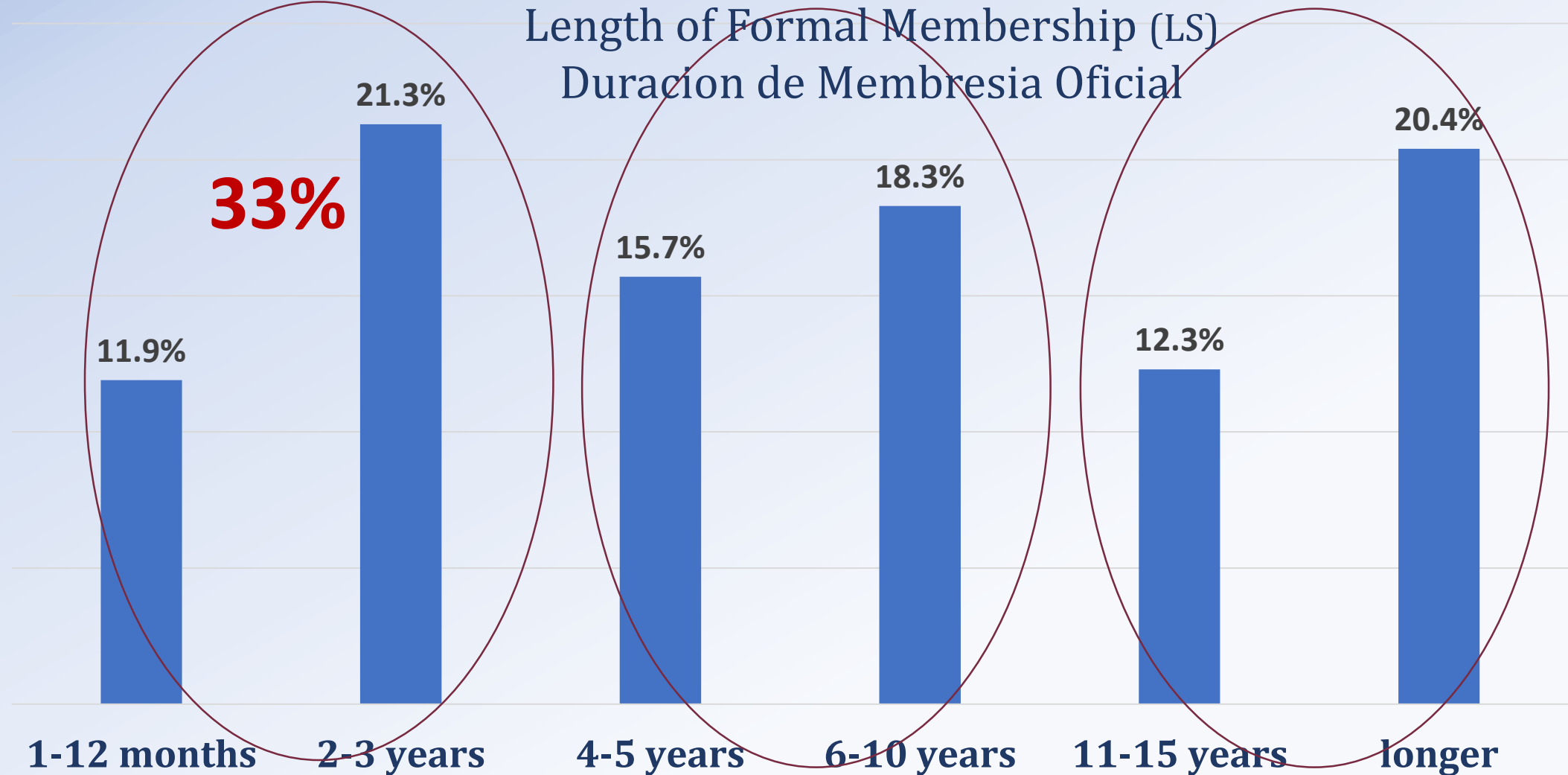
My local church offers training on nurture and discipling of church members.



What kind of people leave our churches?

1. Men & Women: 41%:59% (F&IM); 52%:48% (LS)
2. Those who were raised Adventists or came through friends, public campaigns or other methods.
3. Very well or well prepared (57%). 48% spent several years attending the SDA church before baptism (3 or more years) (F&IM)

4. Those who used to attend the church for a short or long period of time after baptism

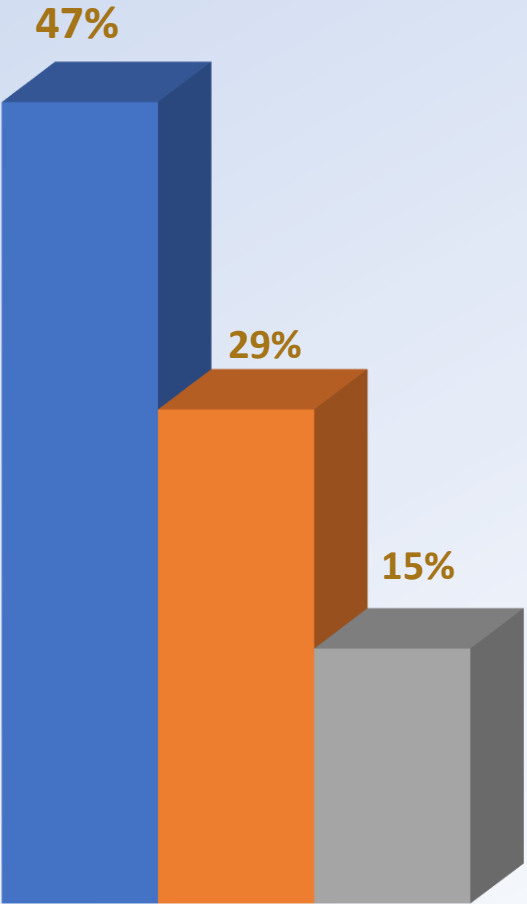


What kind of people leave our churches?

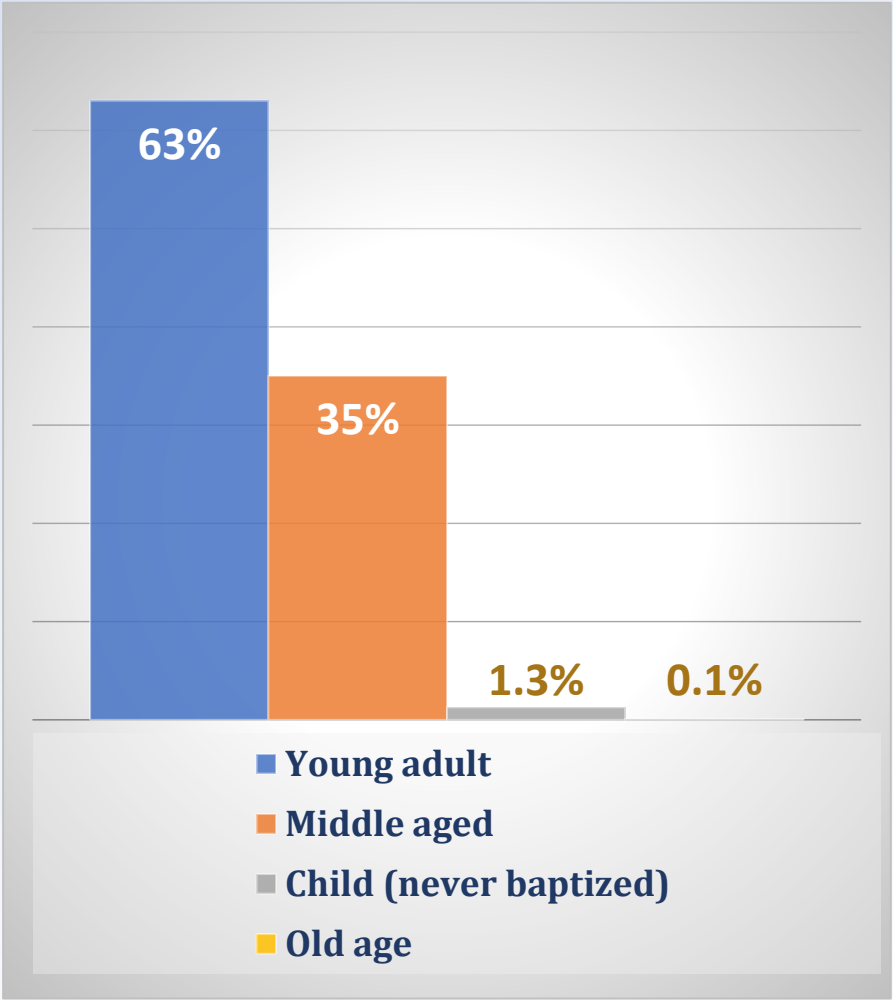
5. People of different ages but big percentage of young people

Age When they Stopped Attending
the Adventist Church (F&IM)

■ 18-29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40 +



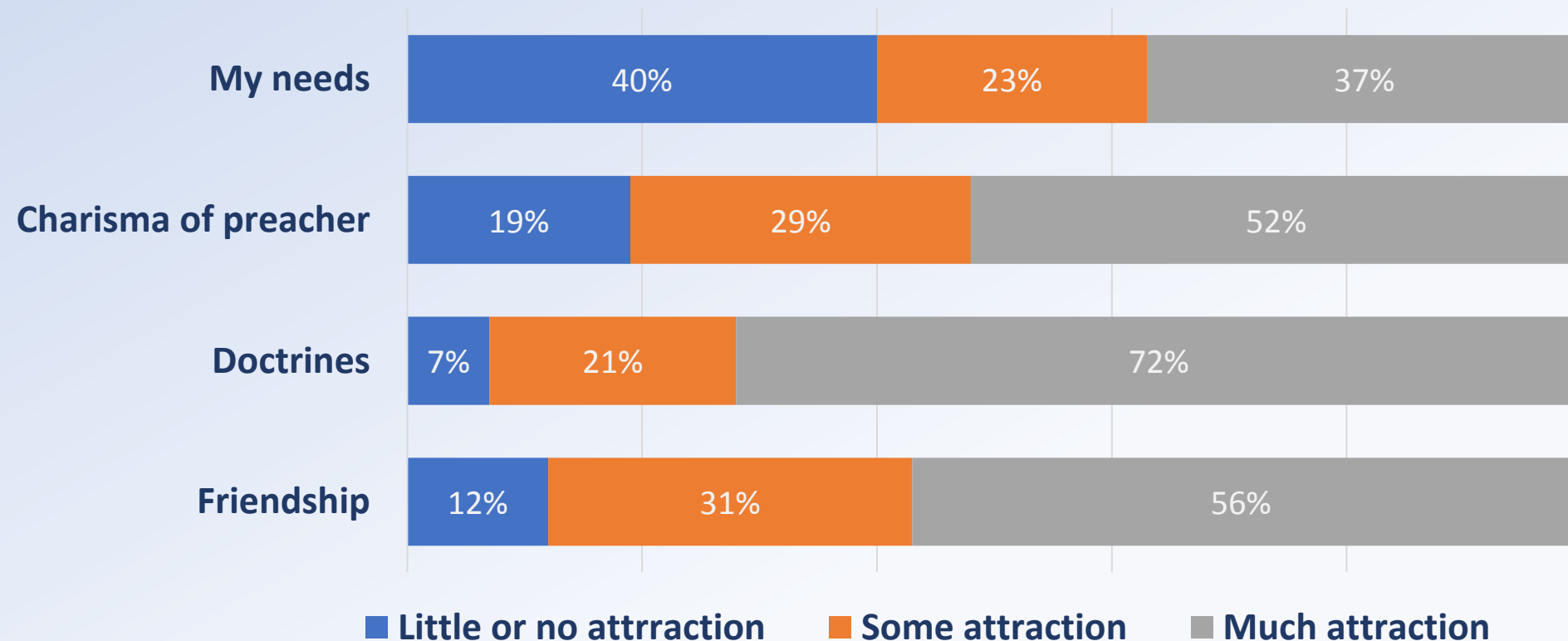
When did you decide
to leave the church? (LS)



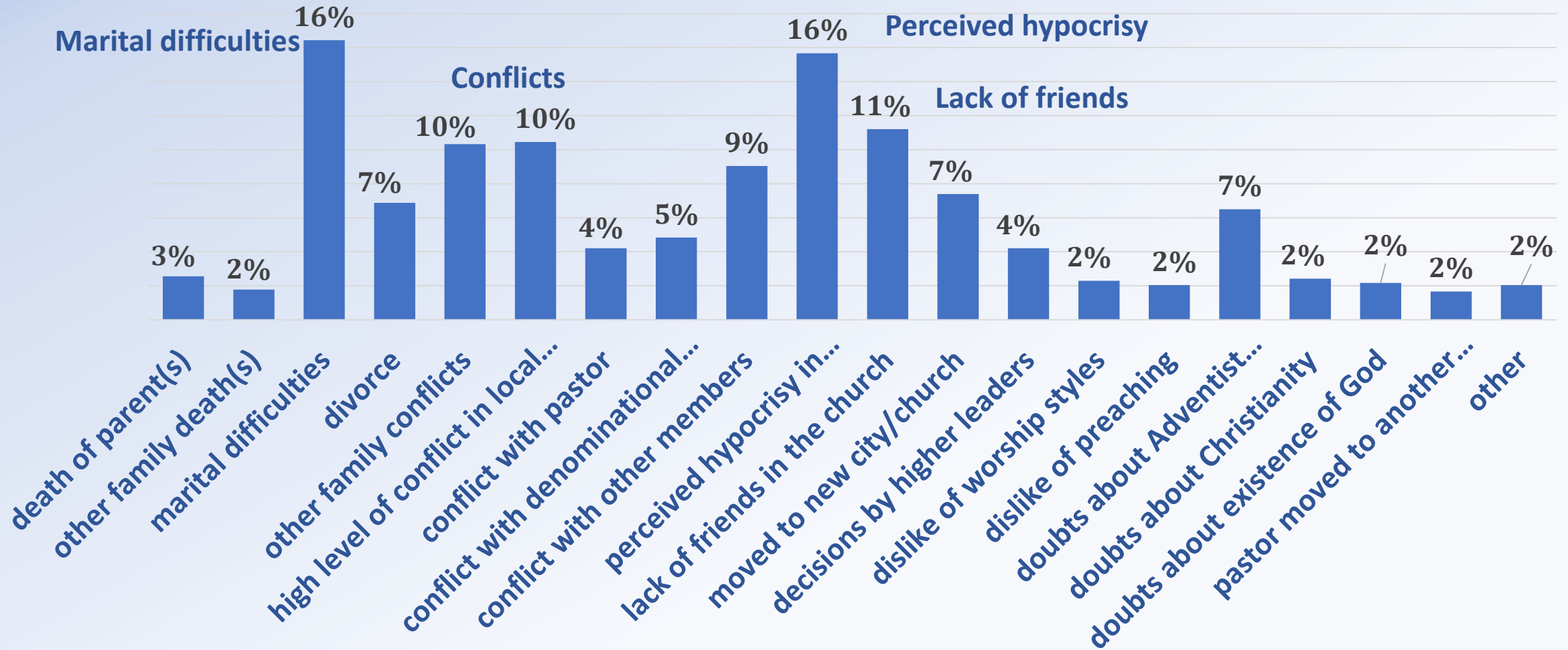
What are the Reasons?

1. Doctrines were not people's primary reasons why they left the church.

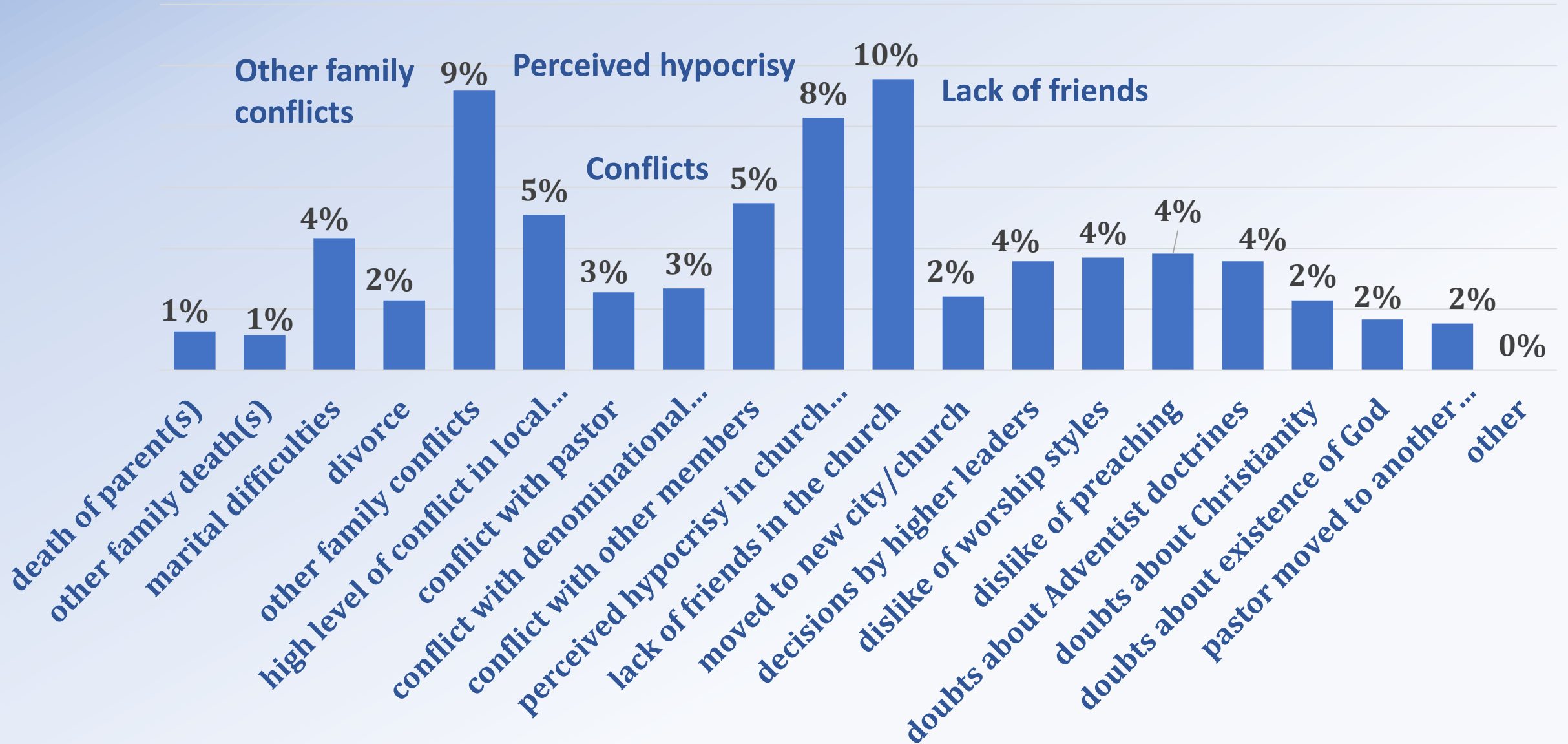
What most attracted you when you decided to join the Adventist Church?
(F&IM)



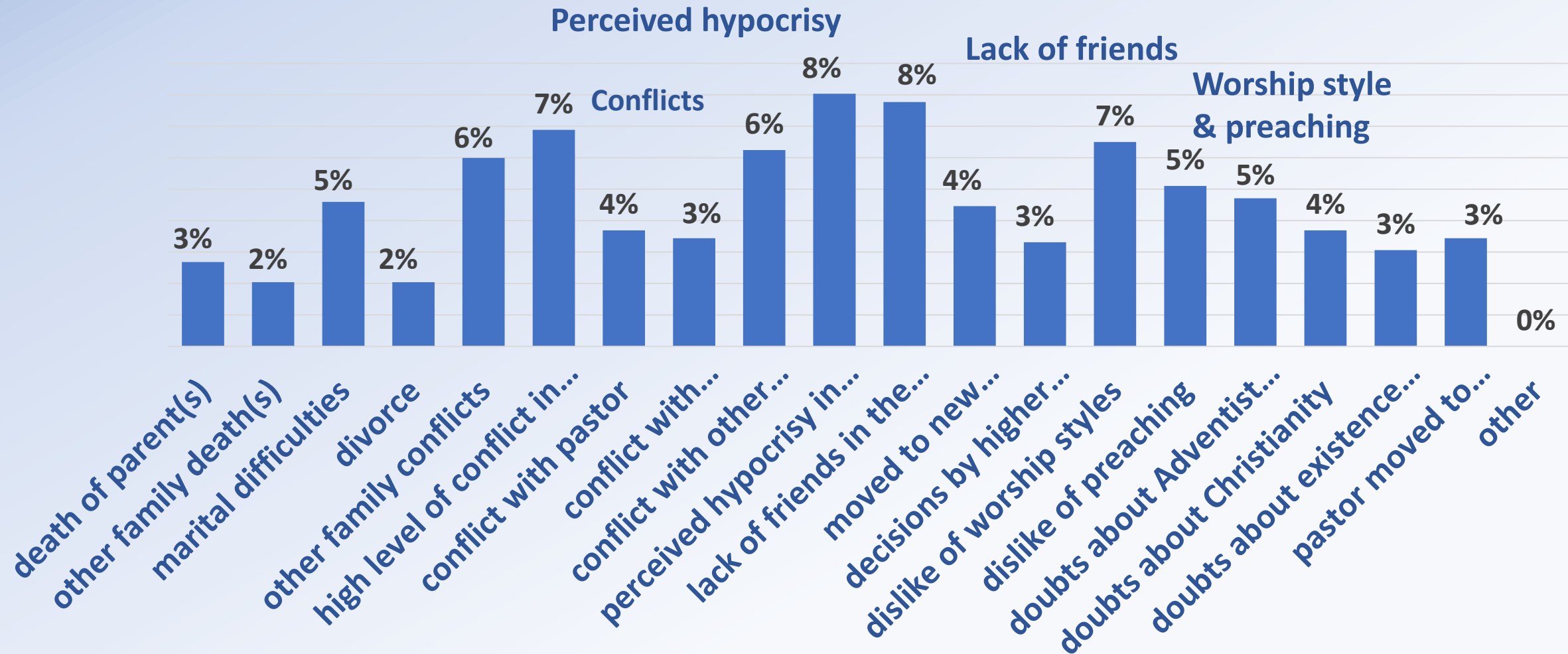
Primary triggers: What was happening in the local congregation and in their families: atmosphere, climate in the church, relationships, and support. (LS)



Secondary Triggers for Departure

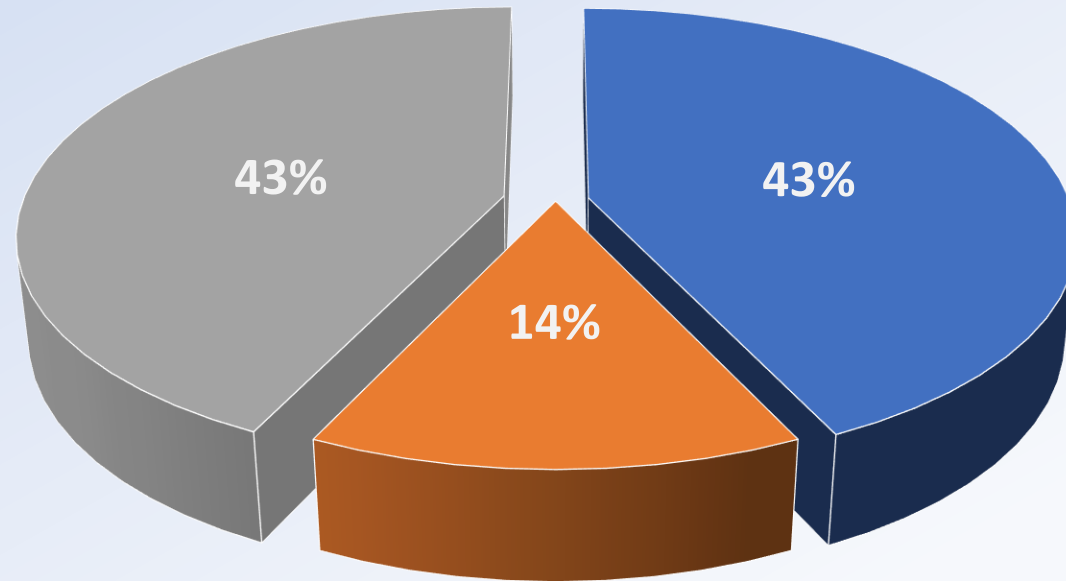


Tertiary Triggers for Departure



Hurt by leaders, people, or incidents in my church

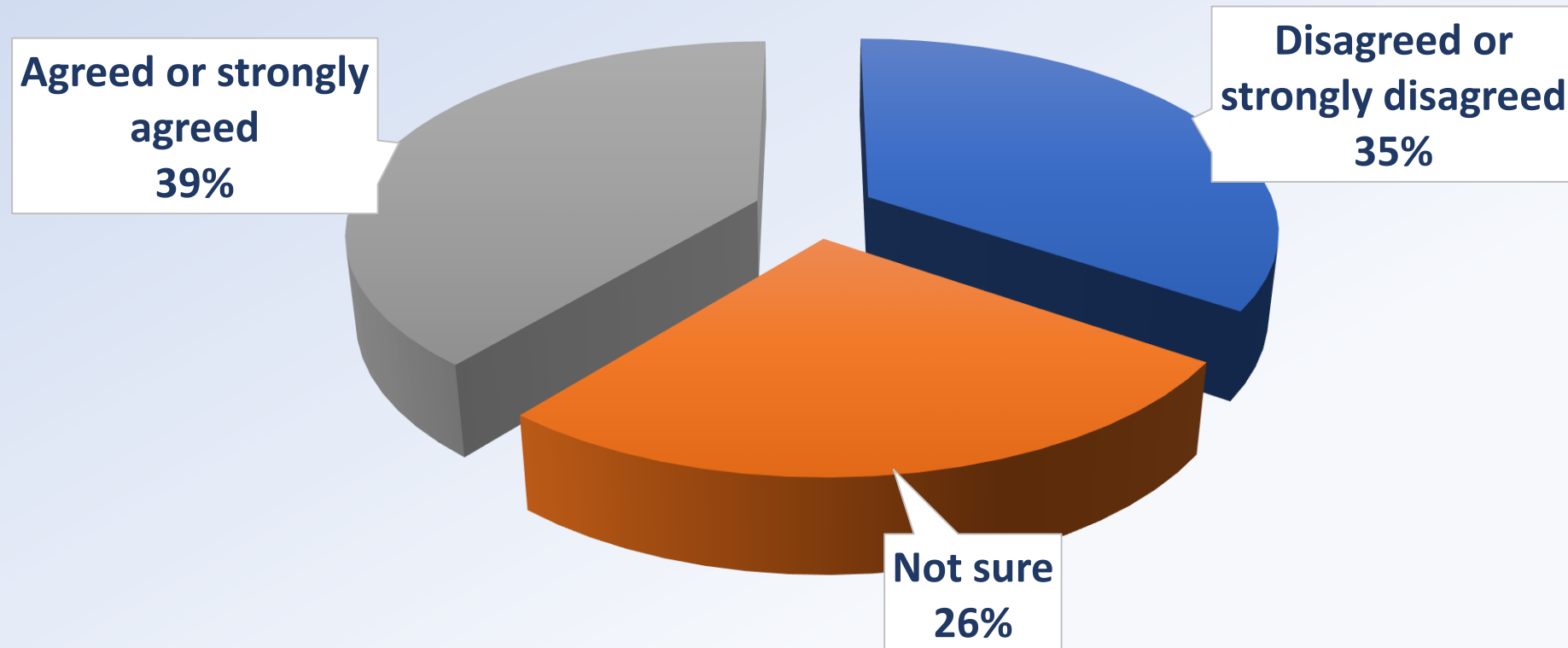
IAD CMS-2018



■ Disagreed or strongly disagreed ■ Not sure ■ Agreed or strongly agreed

My local church offers training on conflict resolution and reconciliation.

IAD CMS-218: Training in conflict resolution



Inter-American Division Church Member Survey Report 2018

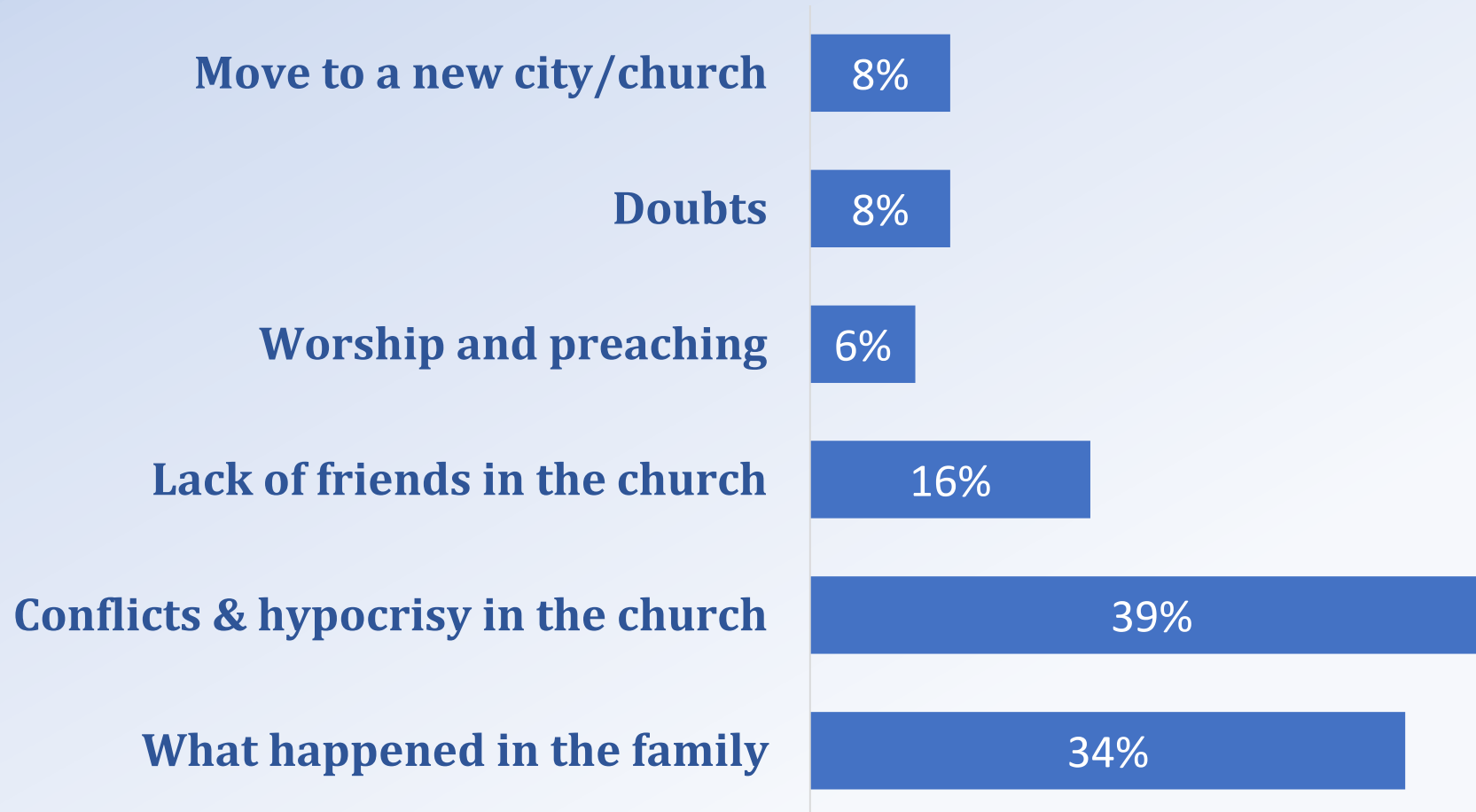
- “The spiritual growth of the participants in the last 12 months has been analyzed with the scale (1. It is not true for me, 2. I am not sure, 3. It is very true), the participants stated the following: 60% have grown spiritually with, 33% said they are not sure if they have grown spiritually and 7% said they had not had spiritual growth in the last year.” (IAD CMS Report, p. 17)
- “A very important issue in society is anger and bitterness that is why 60% of the participants have said that they try to avoid them, to have a better coexistence and harmony in their environment. While 12% have problems in their interpersonal relationships and 28% are not sure to avoid the anger and bitterness itself.” (IAD CMS Report, p. 17)



What triggered your decision to leave?

Major themes (LS, young people)

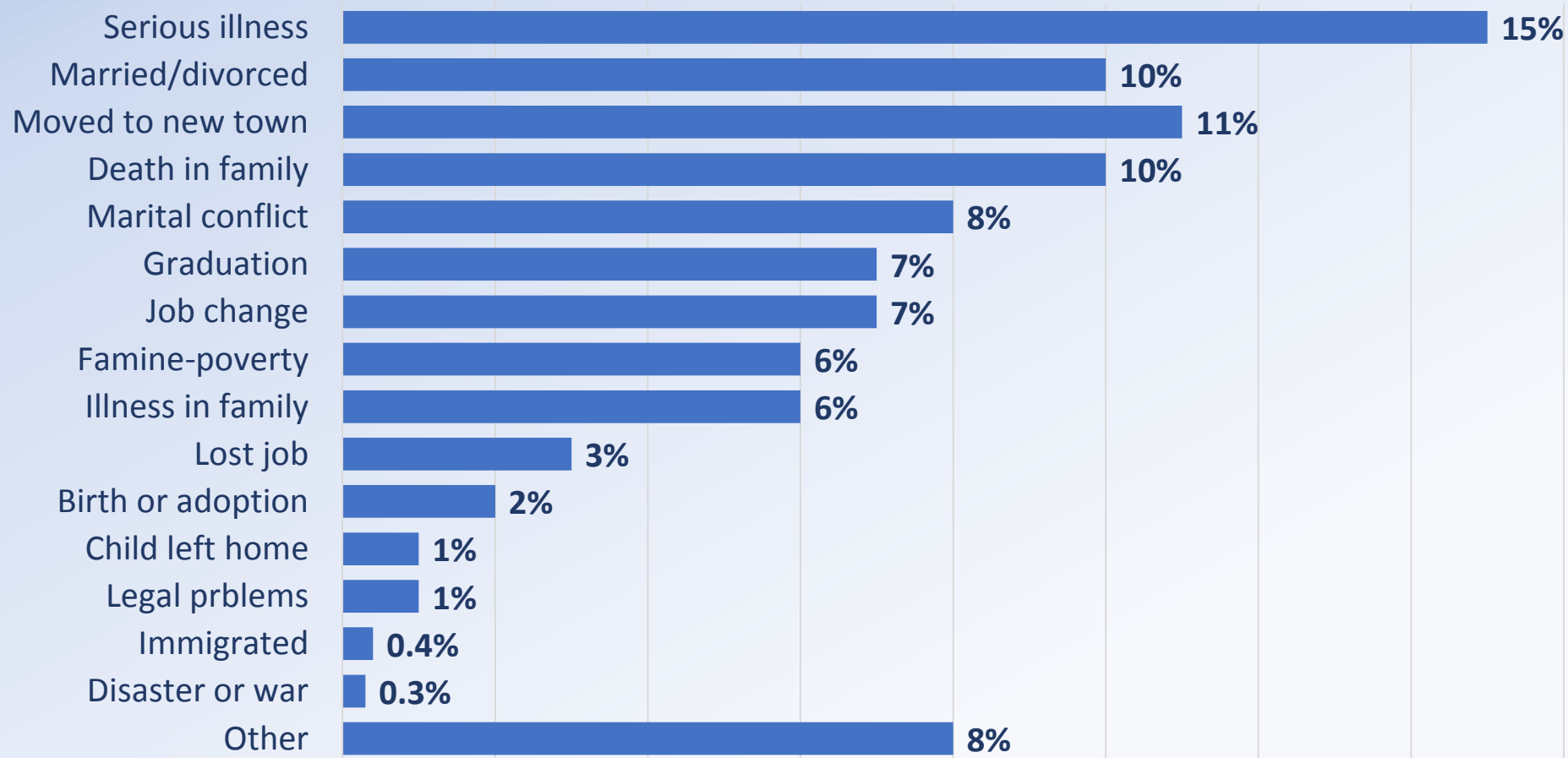
Need of friends & support



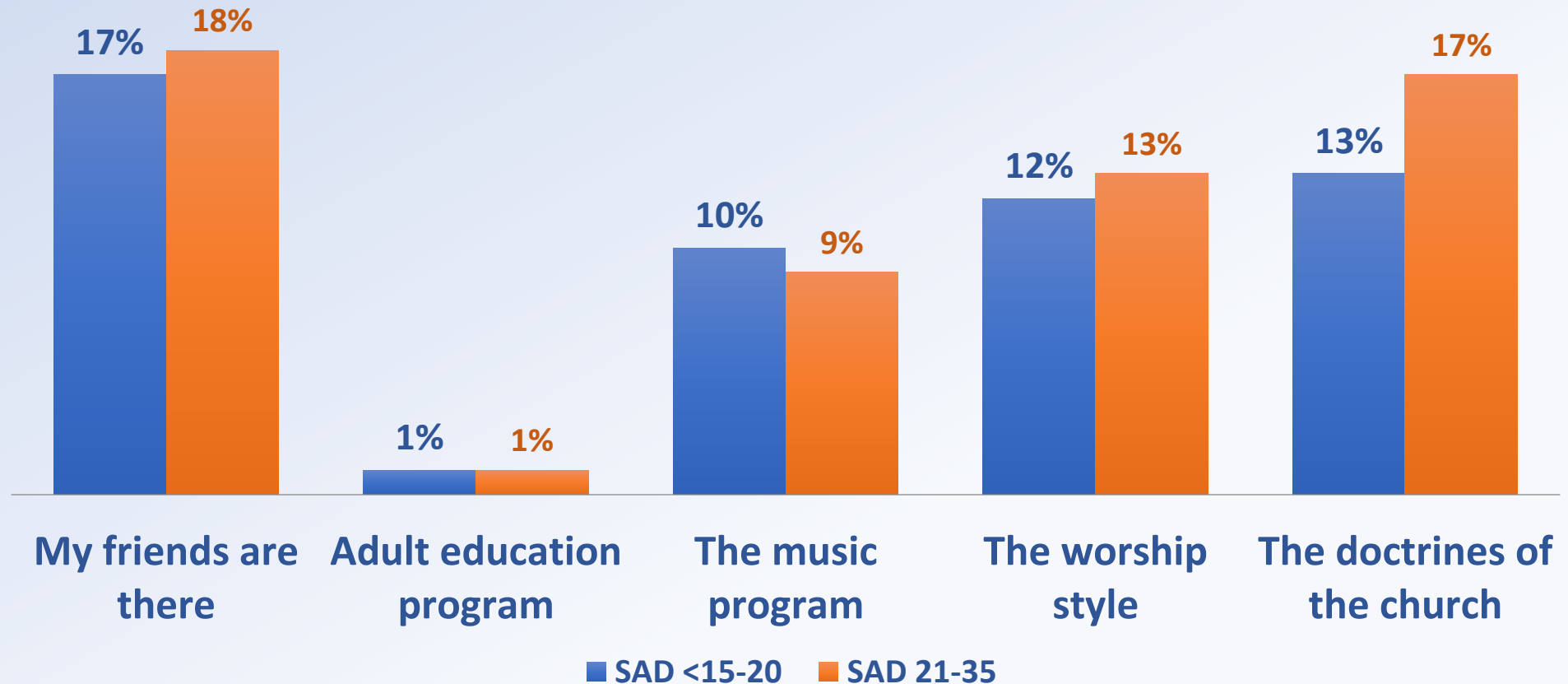
Life events in the year leading up to decision to stop attending the church

(F&IM)

Life Events (F&IM)



What originally brought you to this congregation, what originally attracted you to attend this congregation? (SAD CMS - 2013)

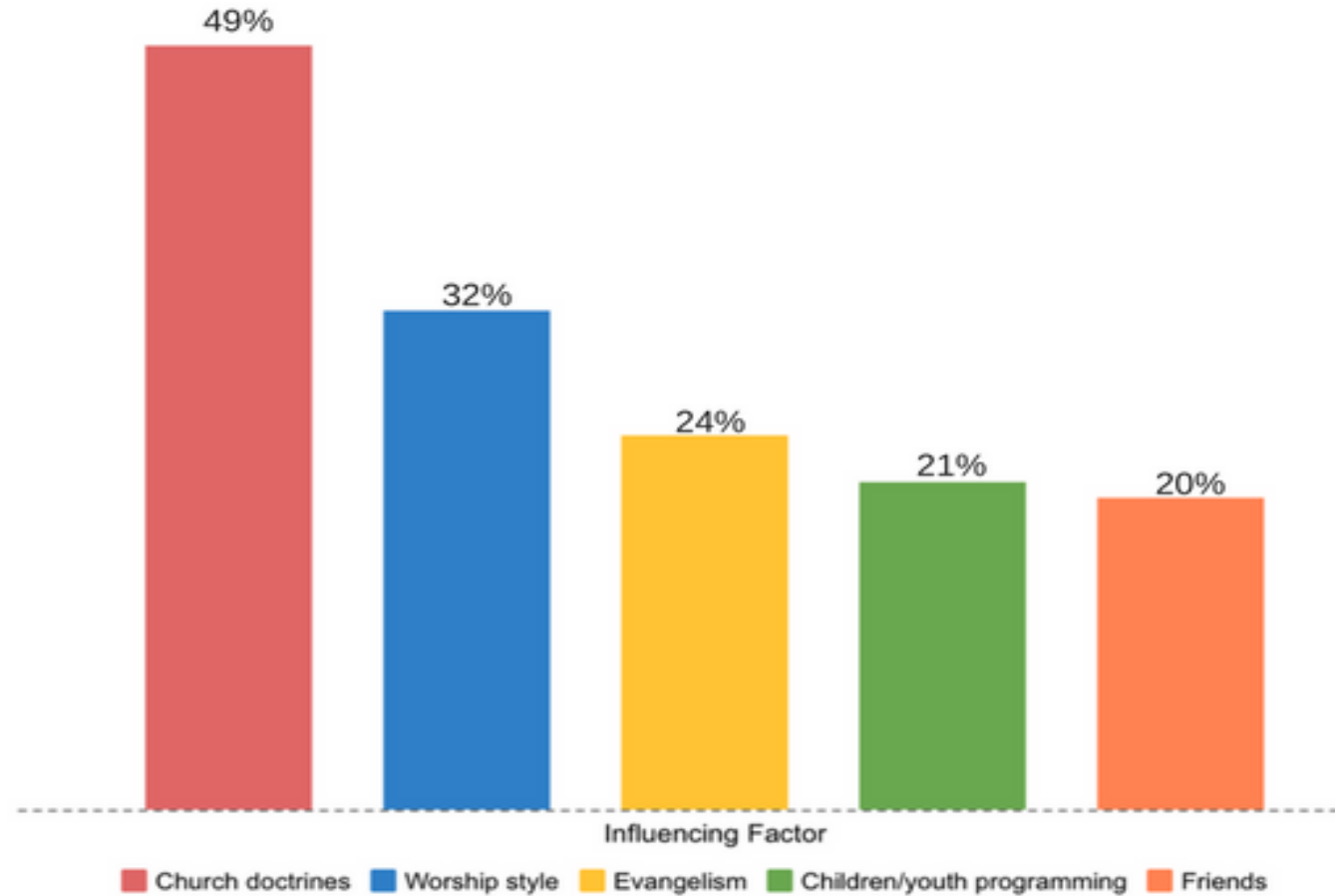




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Doctrines & Worship style

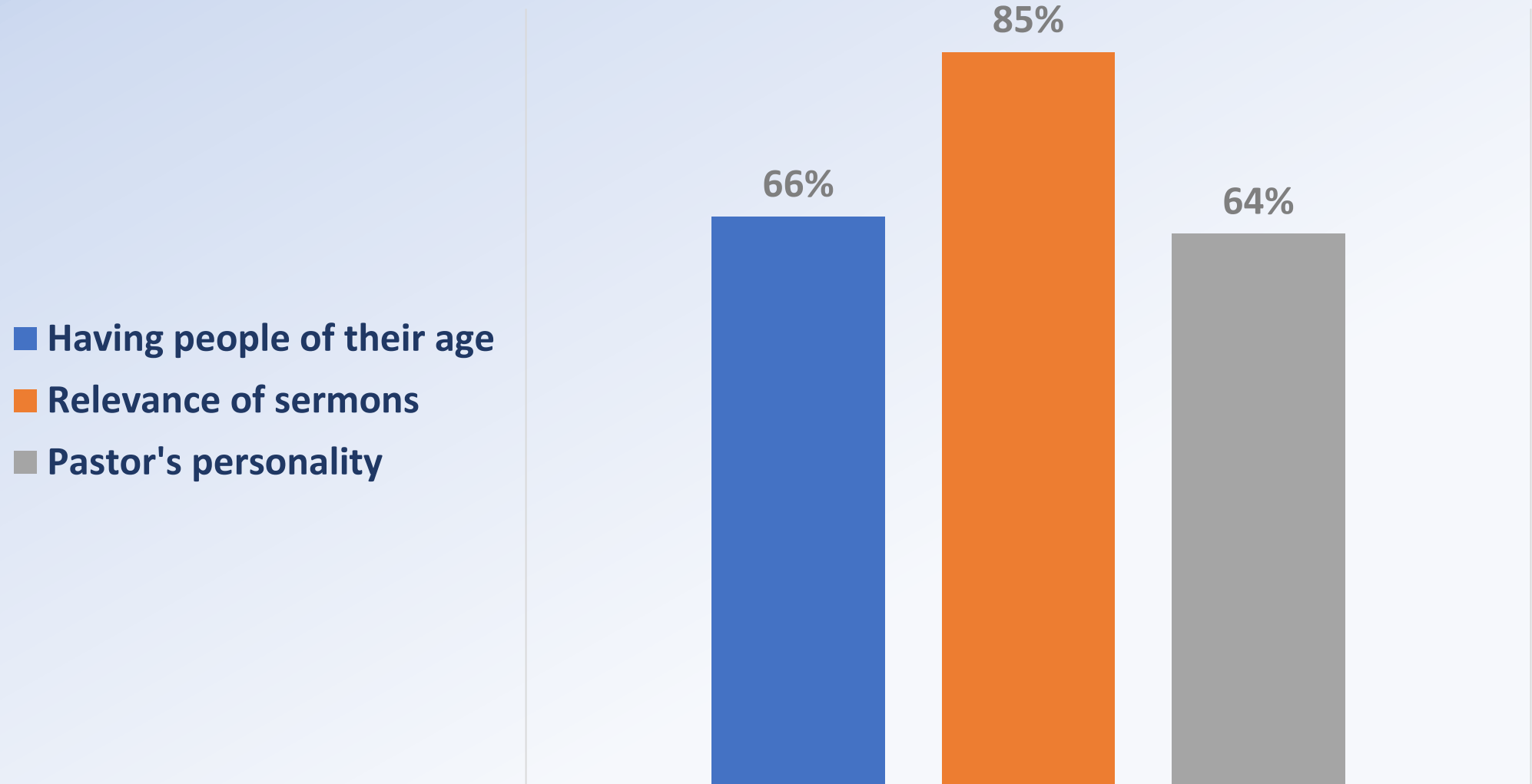
What factors initially drew you to your current congregation?



Church Member Survey (2013), n=24,581

<https://www.adventistresearch.org/blog/2018/01/drawing-new-church-members>

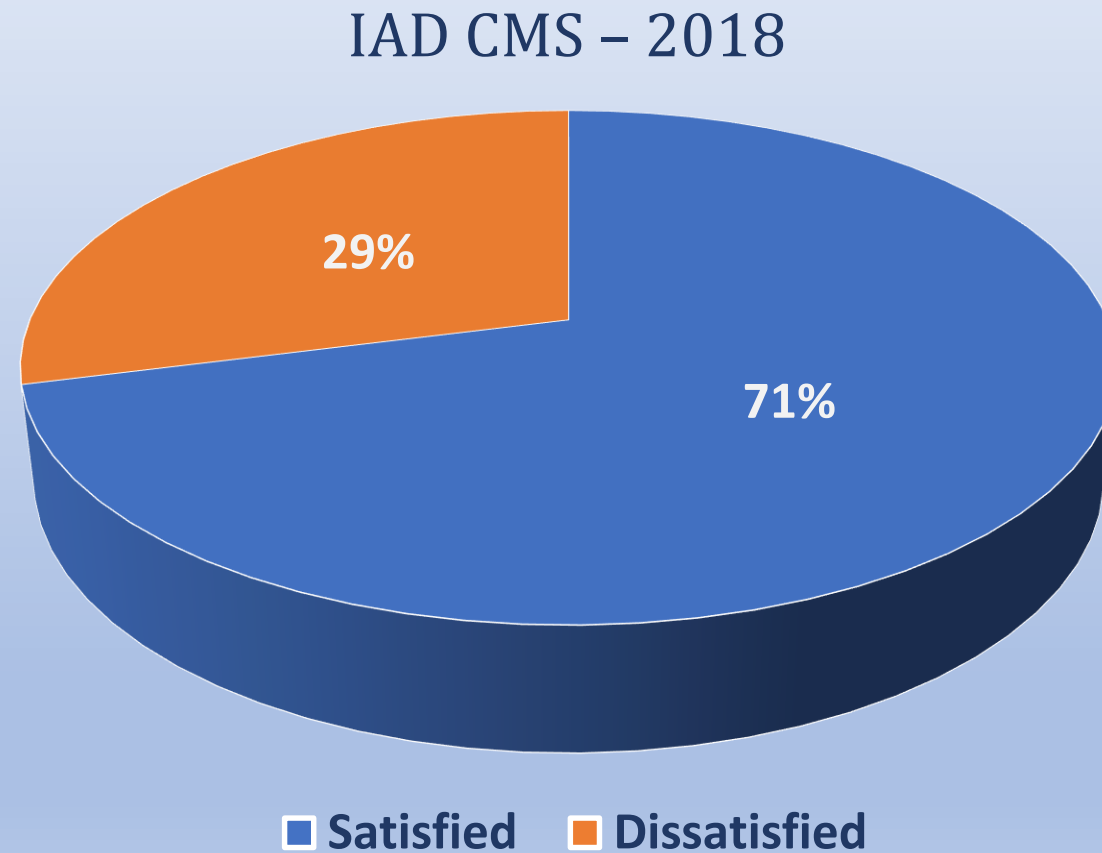
What attracts young people to the church? (21st CCS)



To remain Adventist for the next 20 years (Valuegenesis Europe)

- 8 times more likely if preaching is relevant
- 5 times more likely if spiritual needs are met in the church
- 2.6 times more likely if they are in a supportive and helpful congregation: they use their spiritual gifts and are involved in the church ministry

How satisfied are you with your local church?

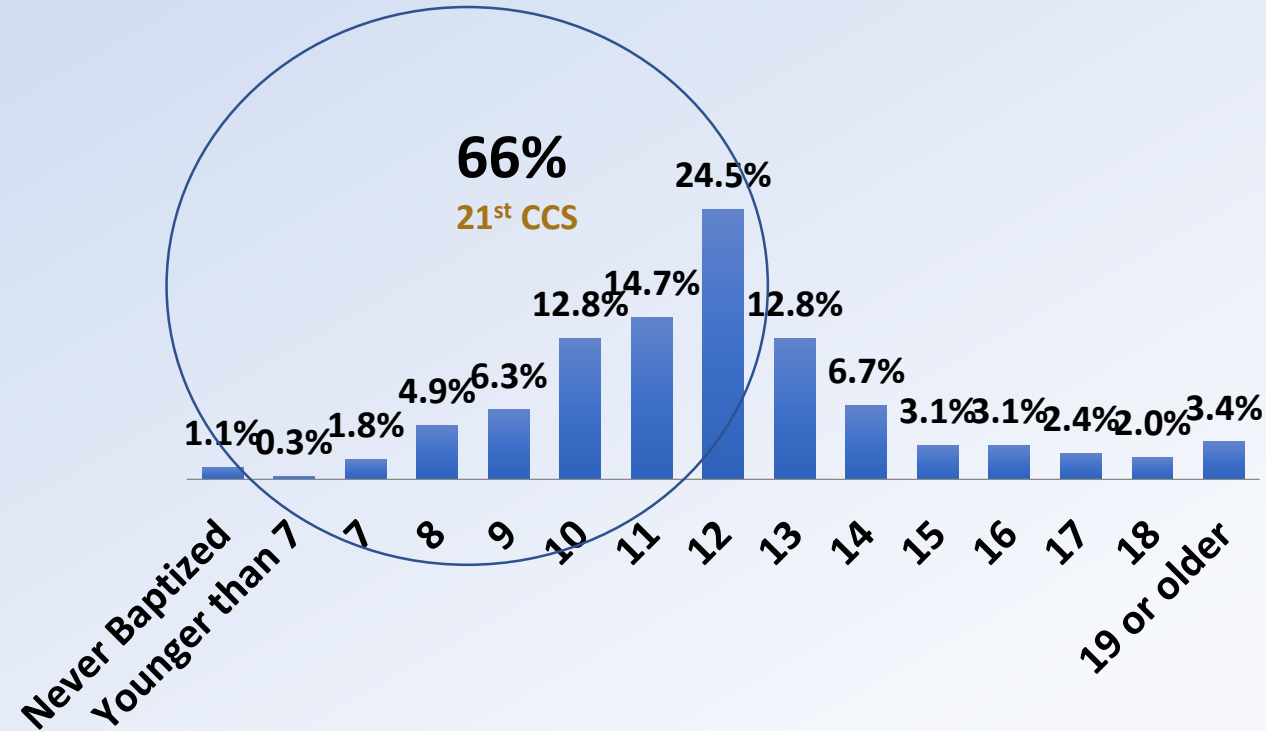


2. Young people: Age at Baptism – Do we have a follow-up after-baptism program for new members and especially for young people?

Follow-up programs and involvement in the life of the church are crucial after their baptism

Valuegenesis SPD:

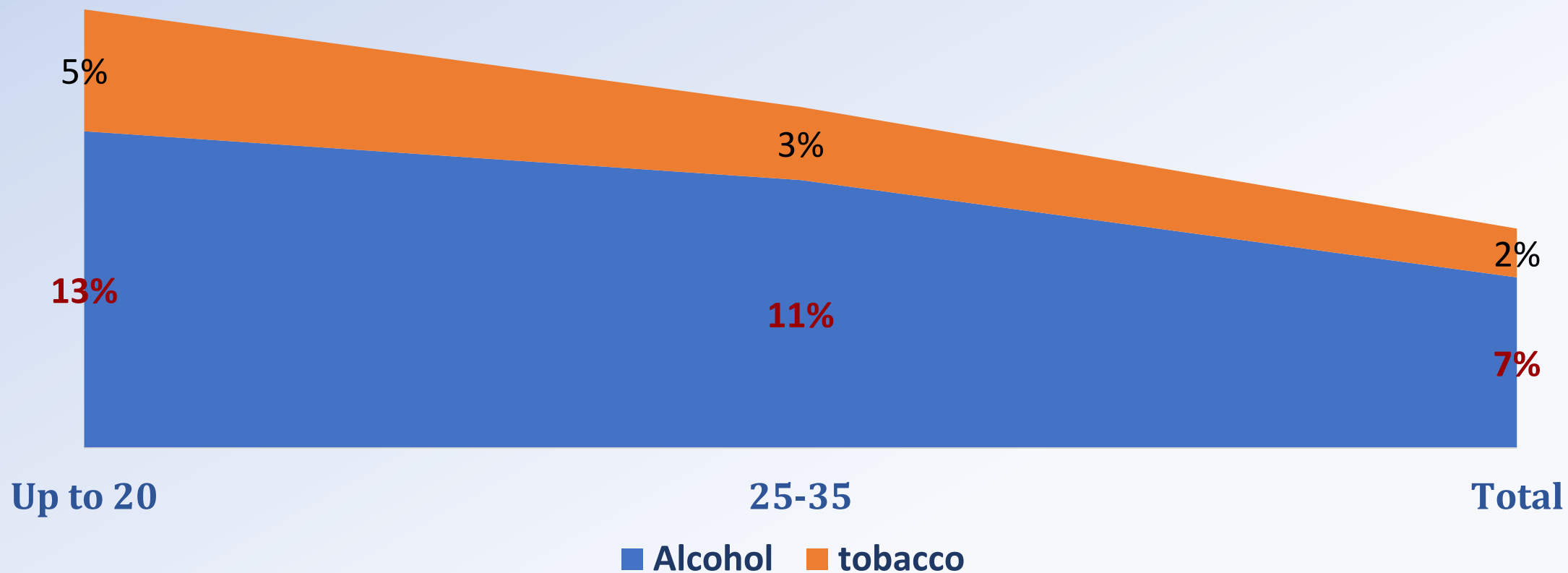
- **24%** - at 12 or under (about **14%** at 9 or under)
- **14%** -- from 13-16 years of age



“I was baptize at the early age so I cannot overcome temptation.” (LS)

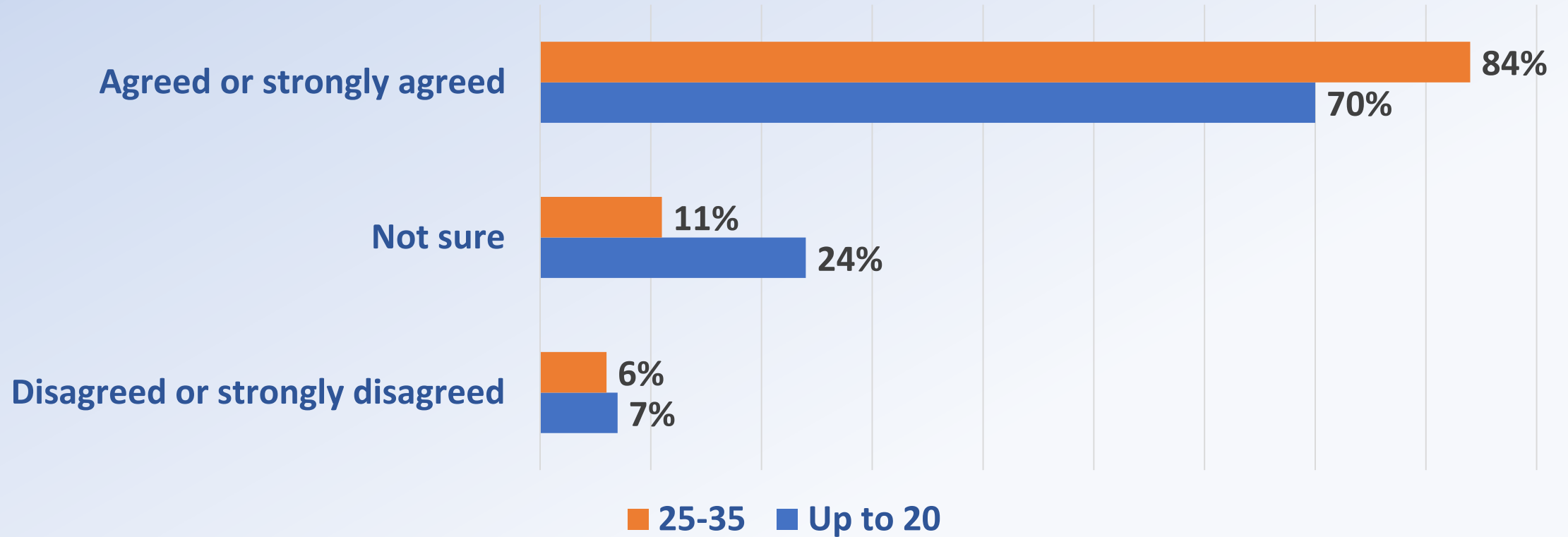
Young people: alcohol and tobacco usage in the last 12 months

IAD CMS - 2018

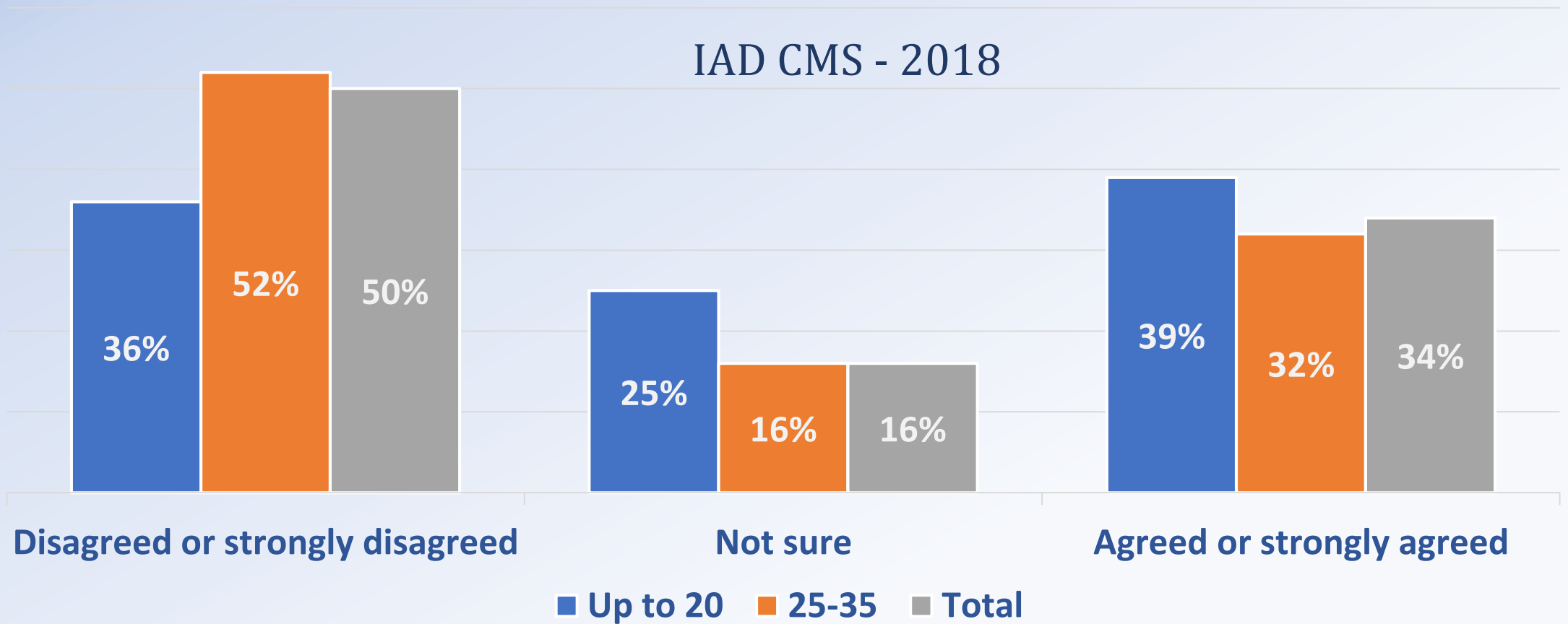


Health message beliefs: the Health Message has largely been supported by scientific discoveries.

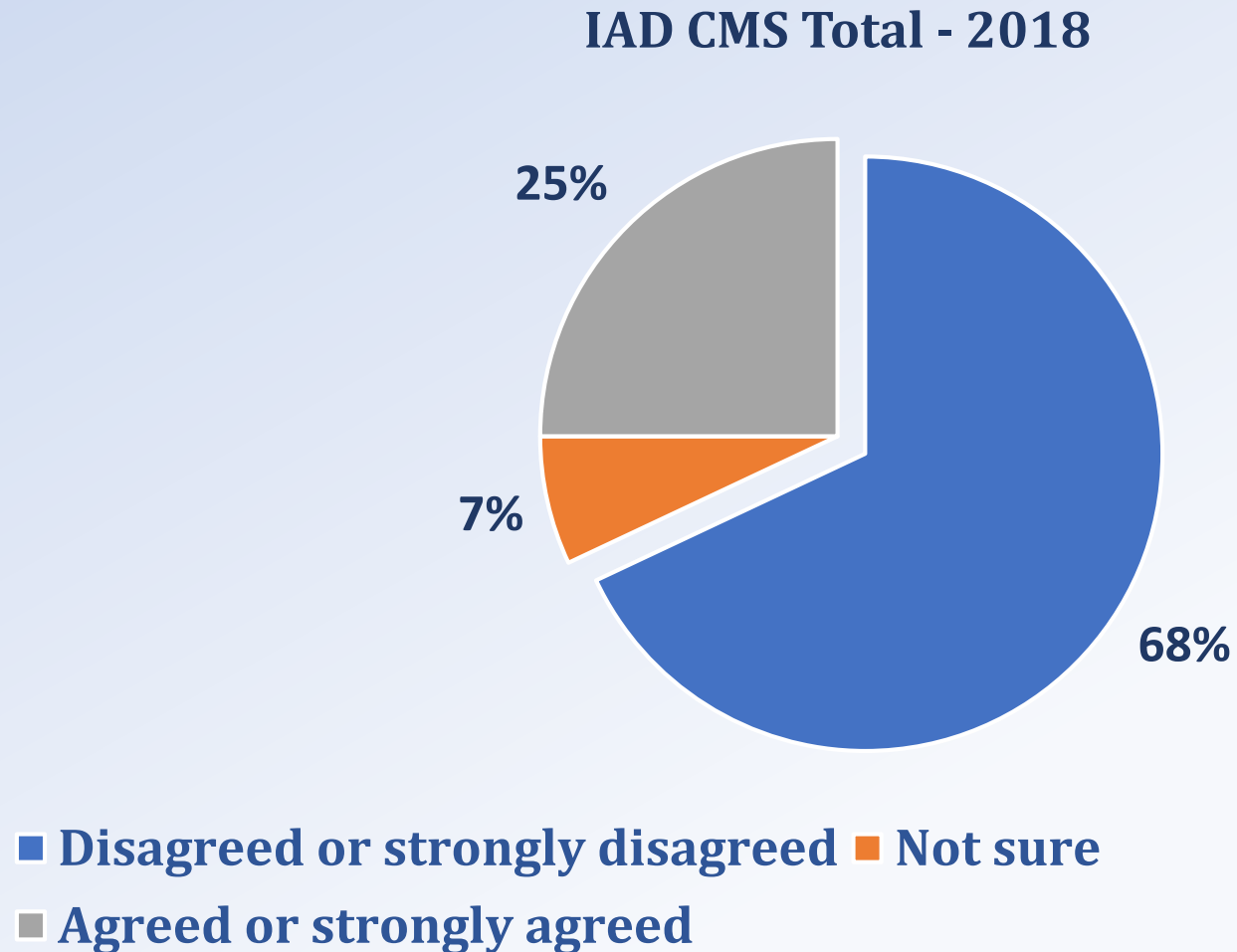
IAD CMS - 2018



Following the health message ensures my salvation.



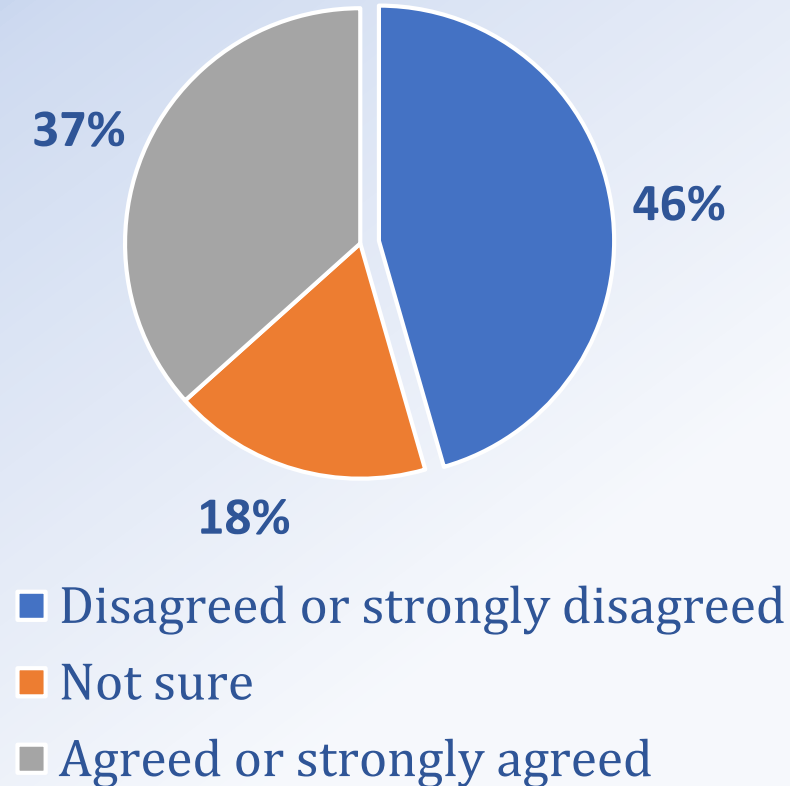
The soul is a separate, spiritual part of a person and lives on after death.



Young people: The soul is a separate, spiritual part of a person and lives on after death.

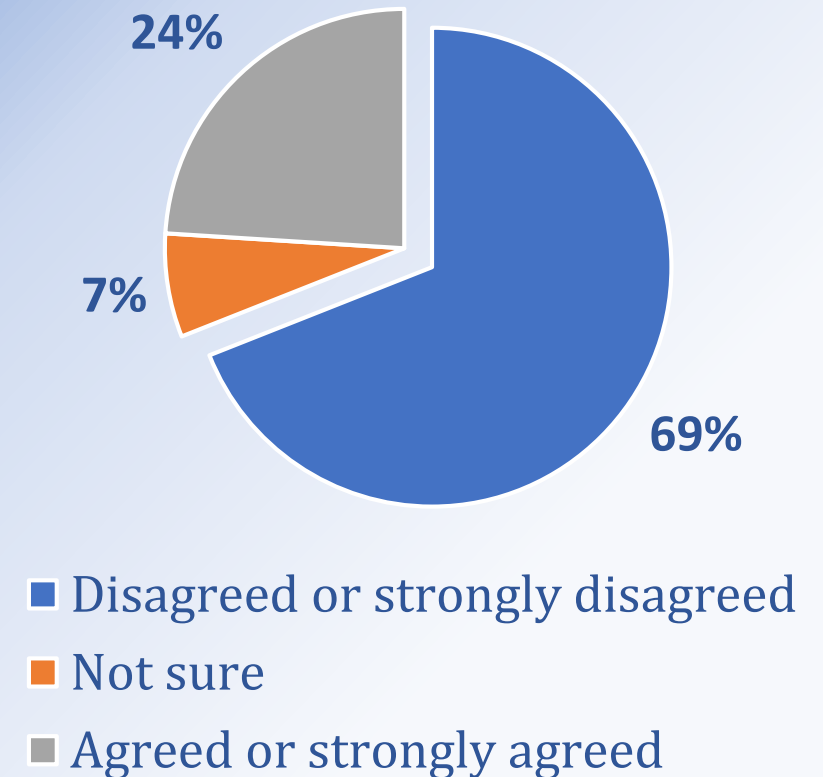
IAD CMS - 2018

Up to 20



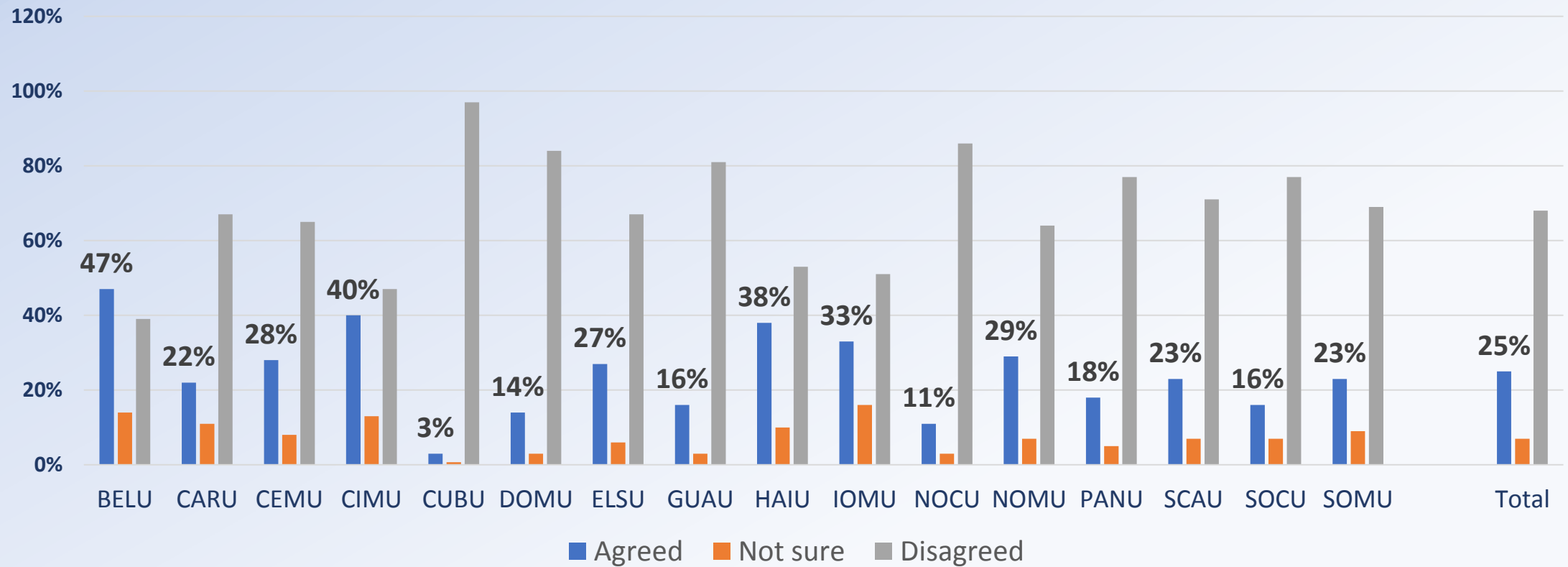
IAD CMS -2018

25-35

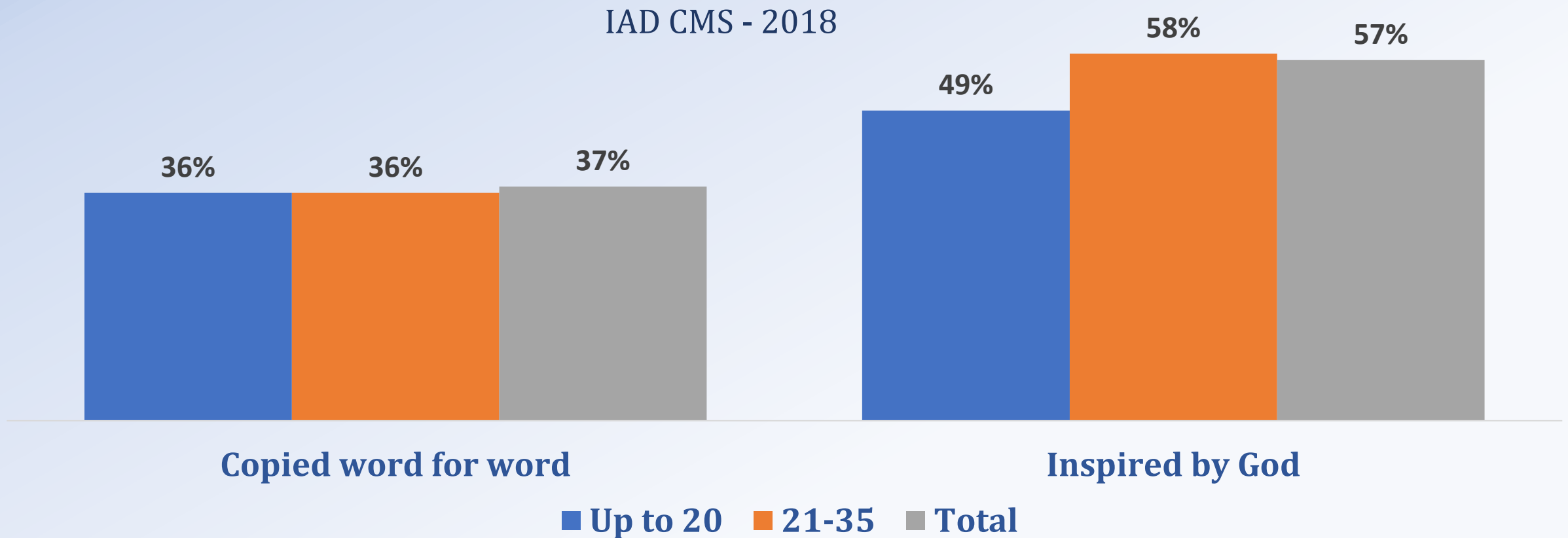


The soul is a separate, spiritual part of a person and lives on after death.

IAD CMS – 2018

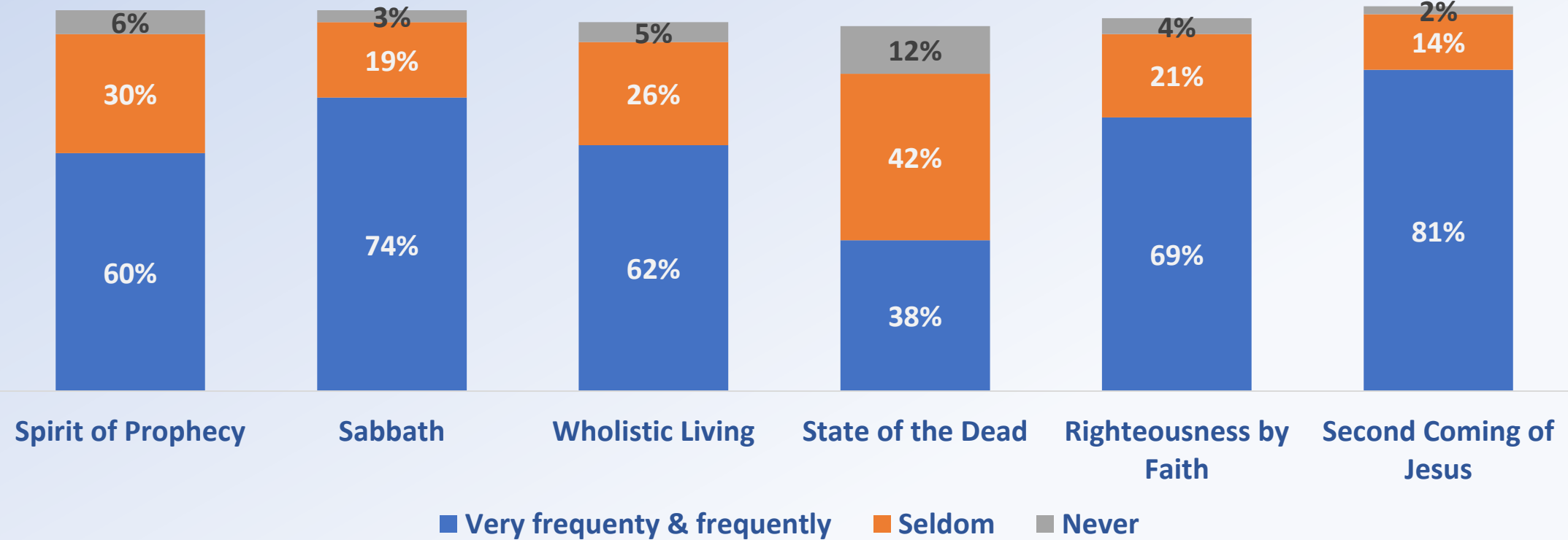


EGW: Copied what God told her word for word, and wrote without being influenced by her own place and time.



Sermons: how often does your pastor preach on the following topics

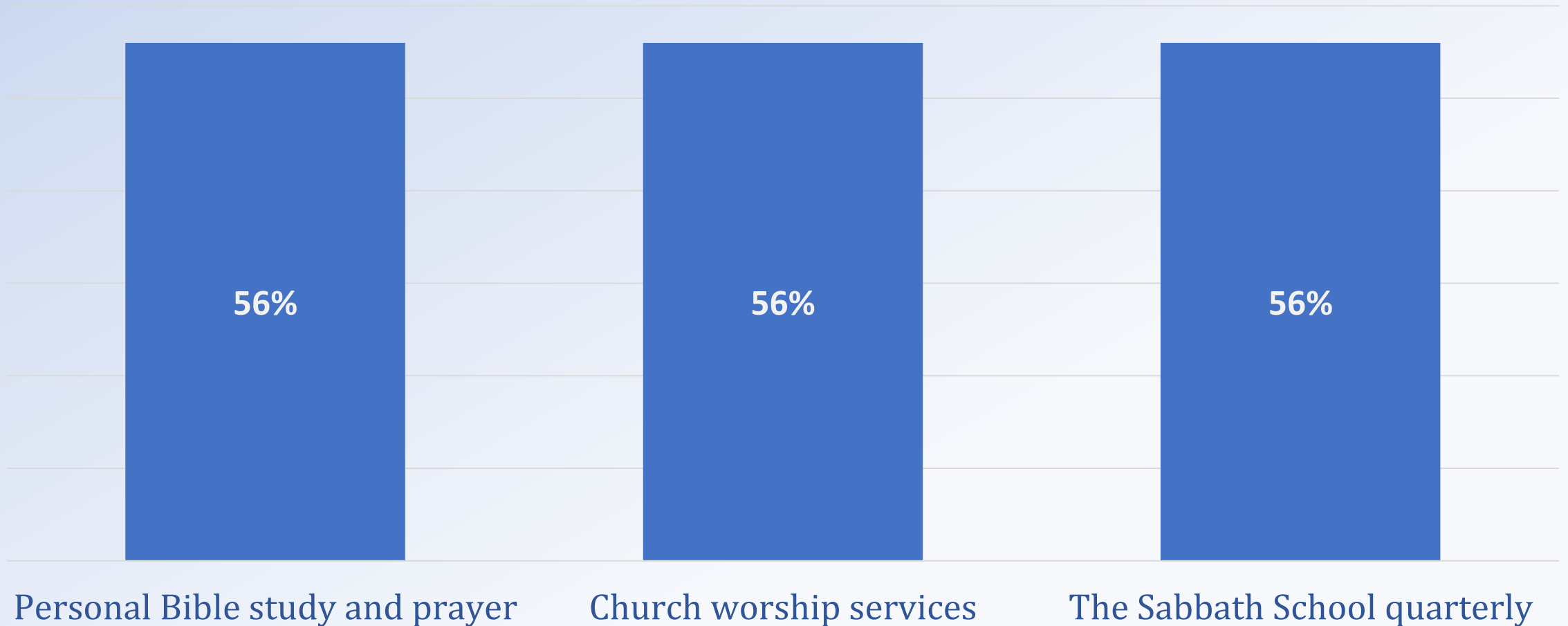
IAD CMS – 2018



Spiritual Life

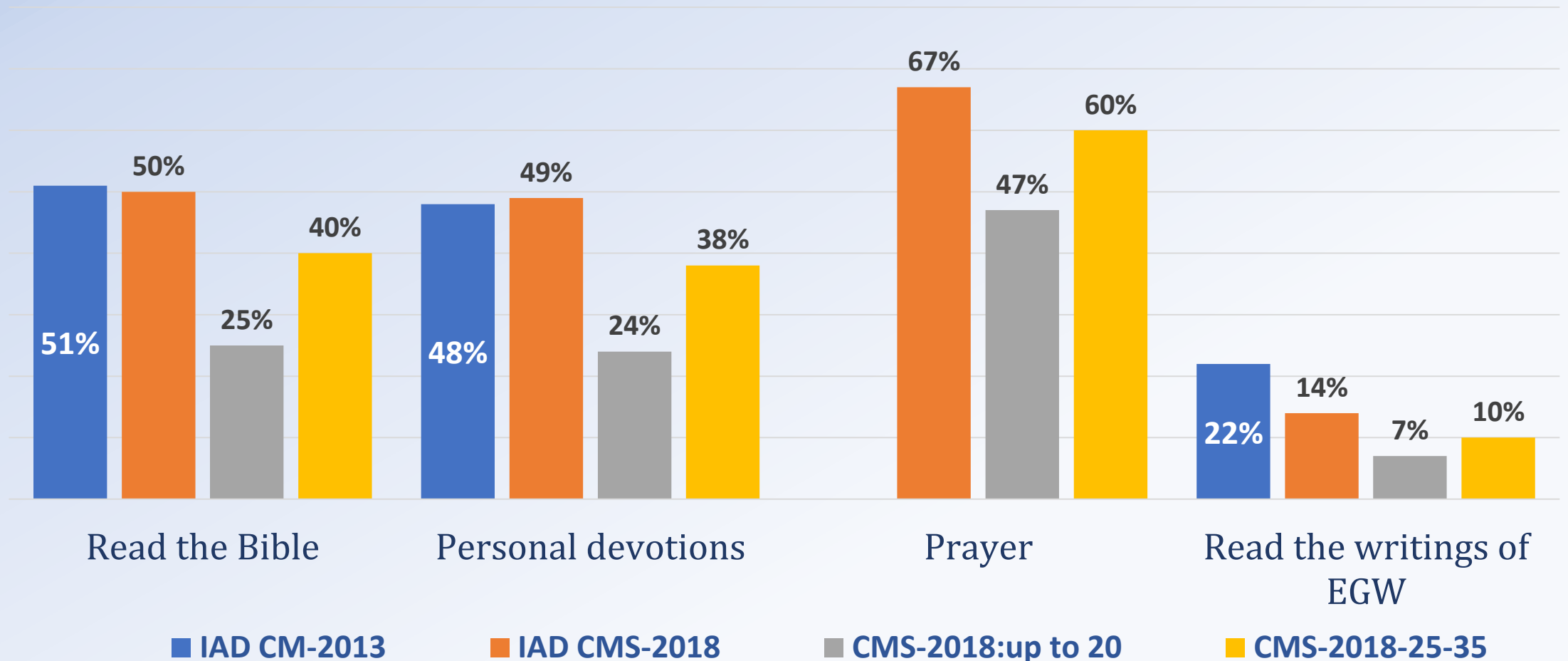
Things that helped develop my religious life (results for “very much”)

IAD CMS - 2013



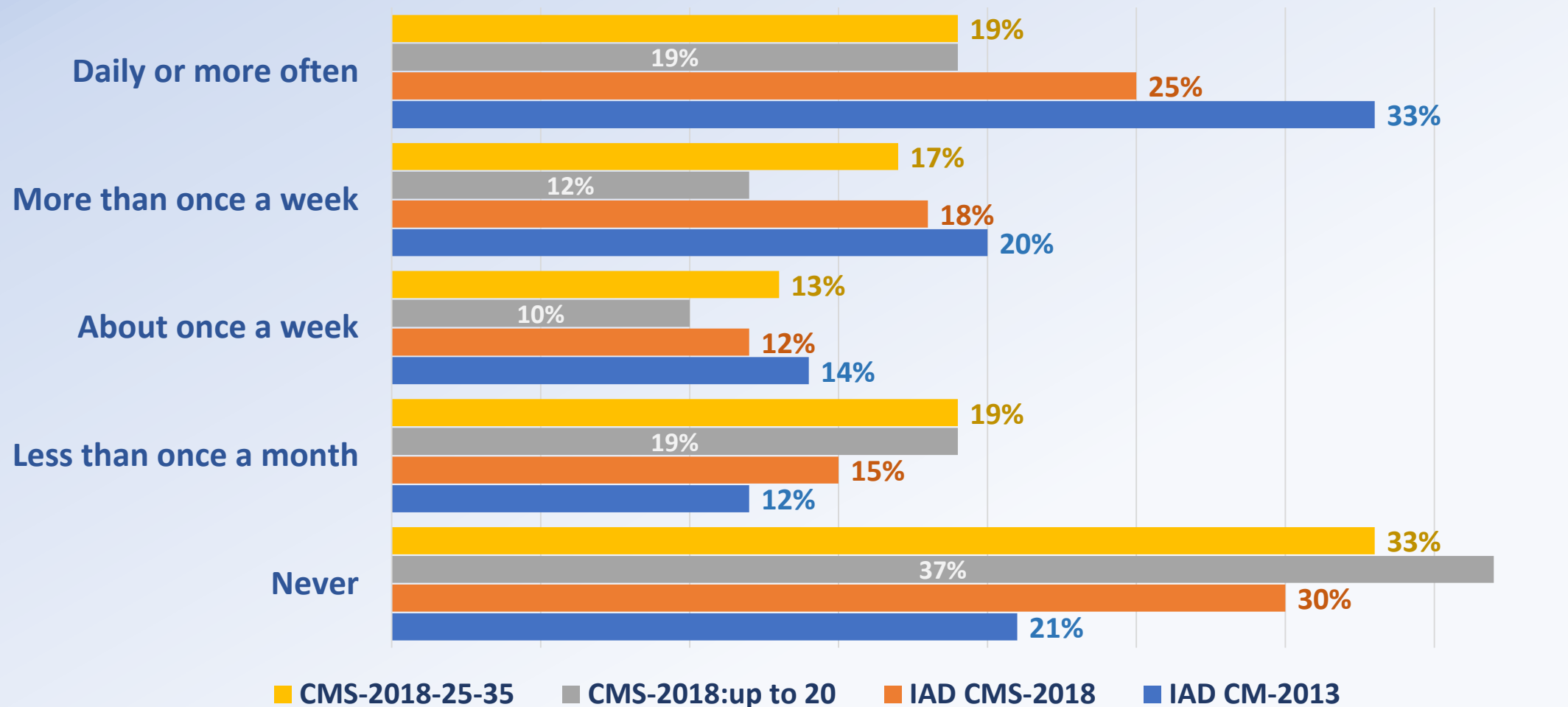
Personal Devotional Life: daily or more often

IAD CMS-2018



Family Worships: have morning or evening worships with members of my family

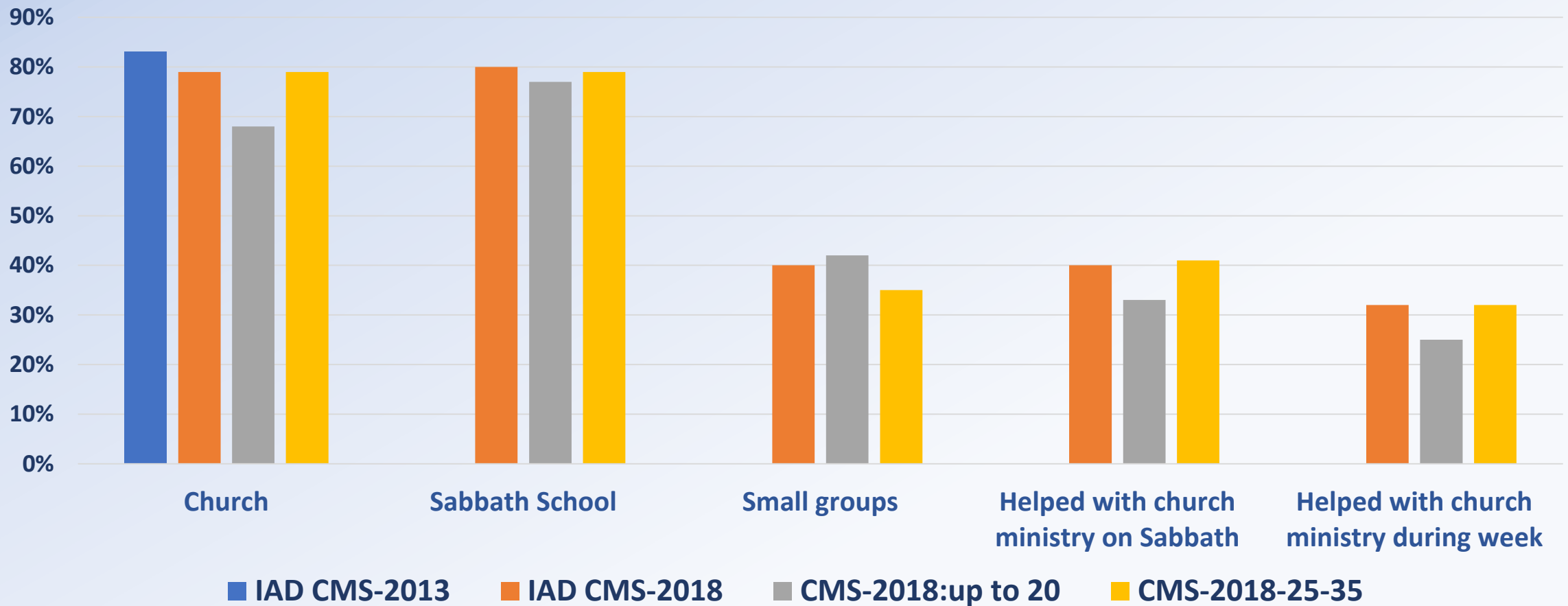
IAD CMS



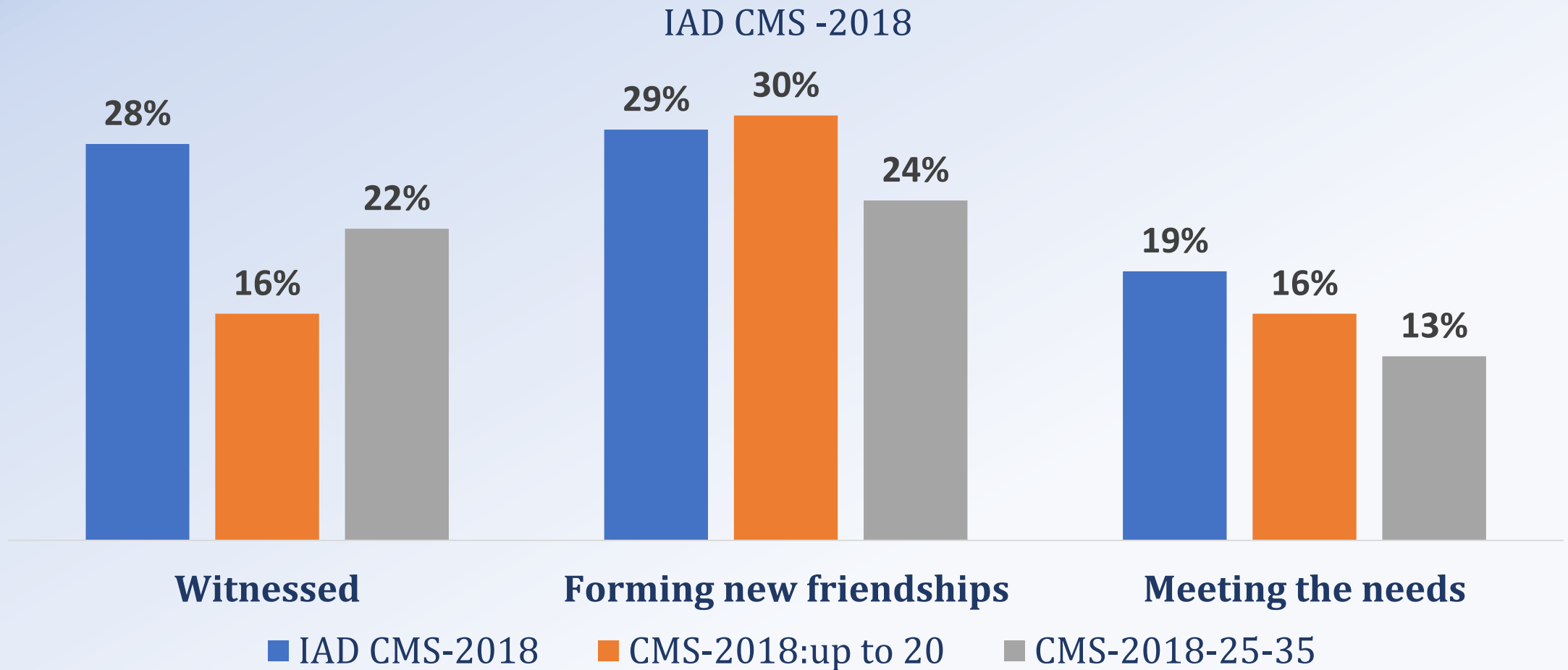
Church and SS Attendance

Help with Church ministry: every week or more than once a week

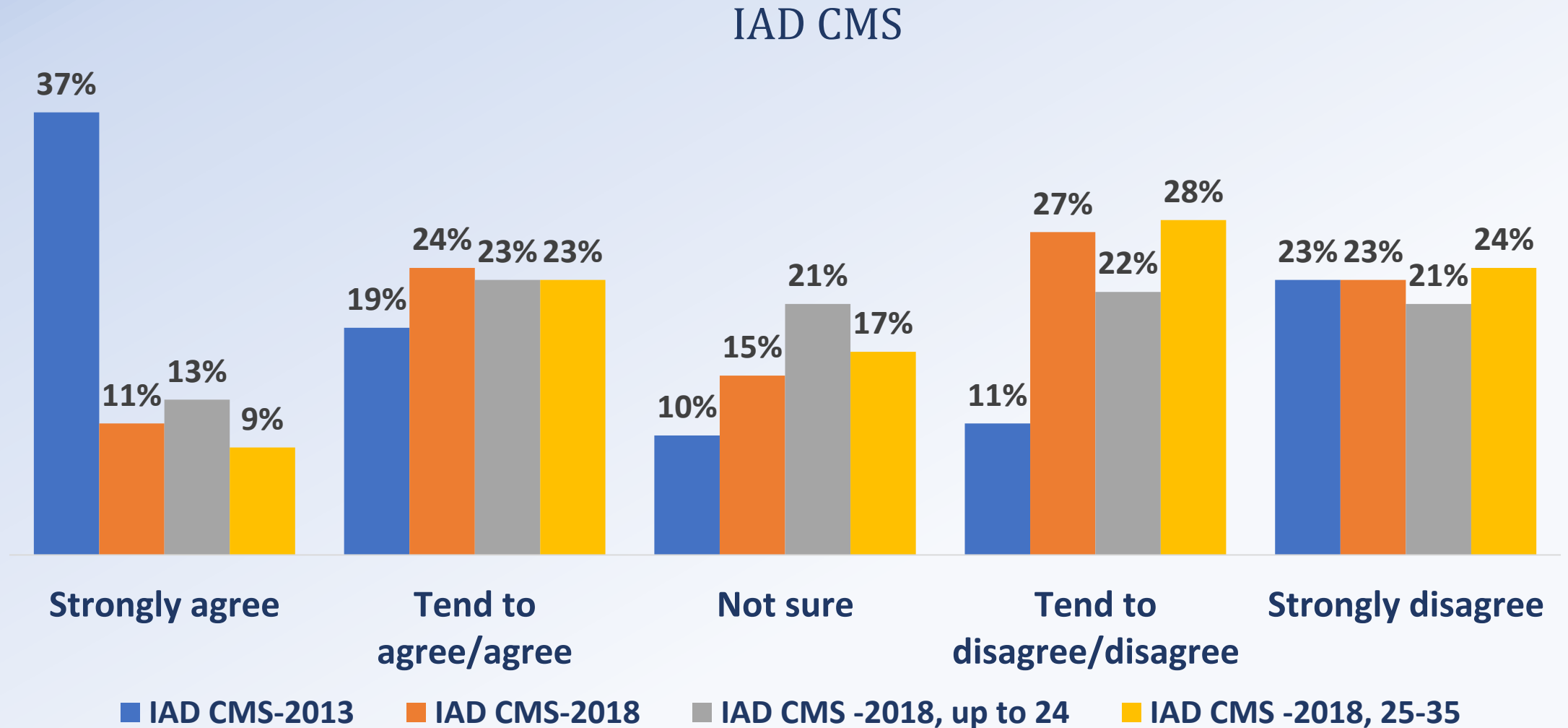
IAD CMS



Involvement in service with non-Adventists in a local community:
every week or more than once a week
(2018- total: never: 16%-15%-18%)

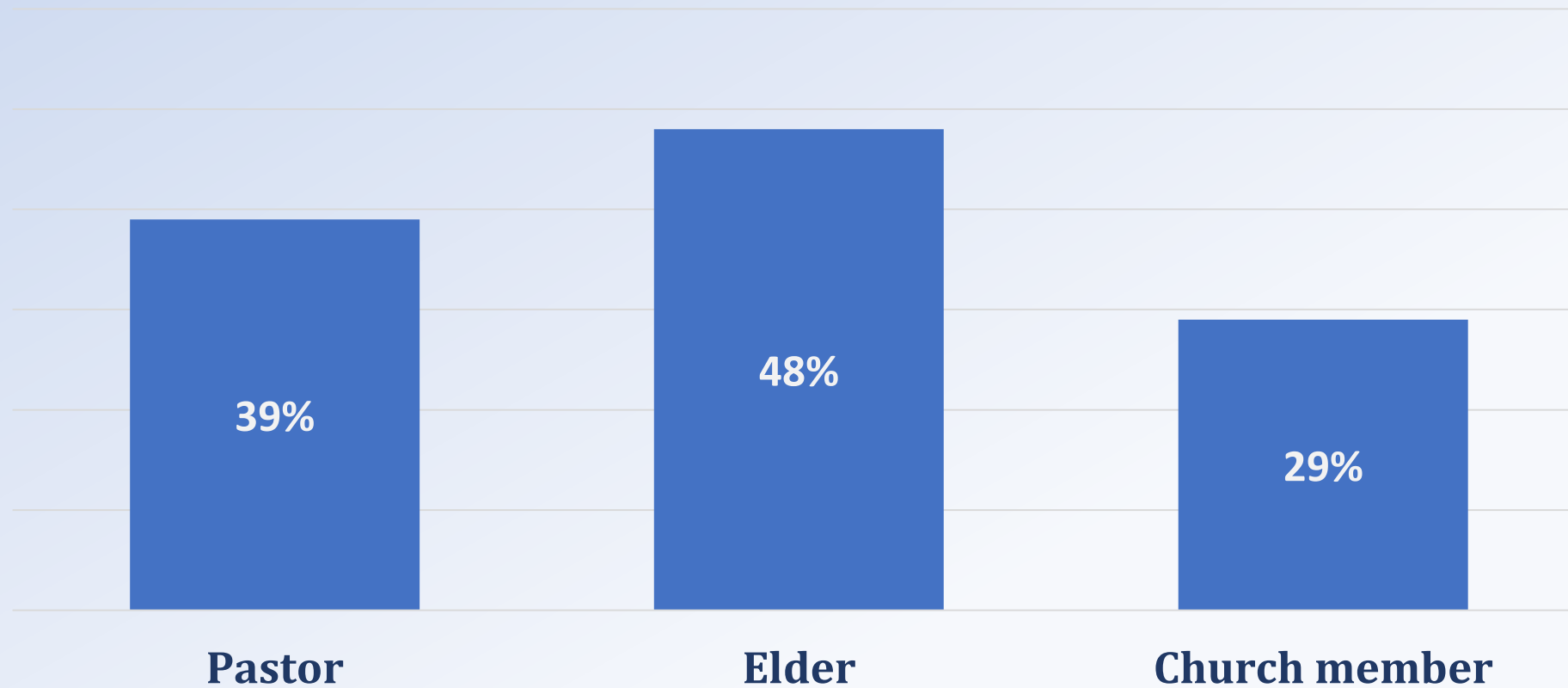


Effect of personal religion: although I am religious, it does not affect my daily life

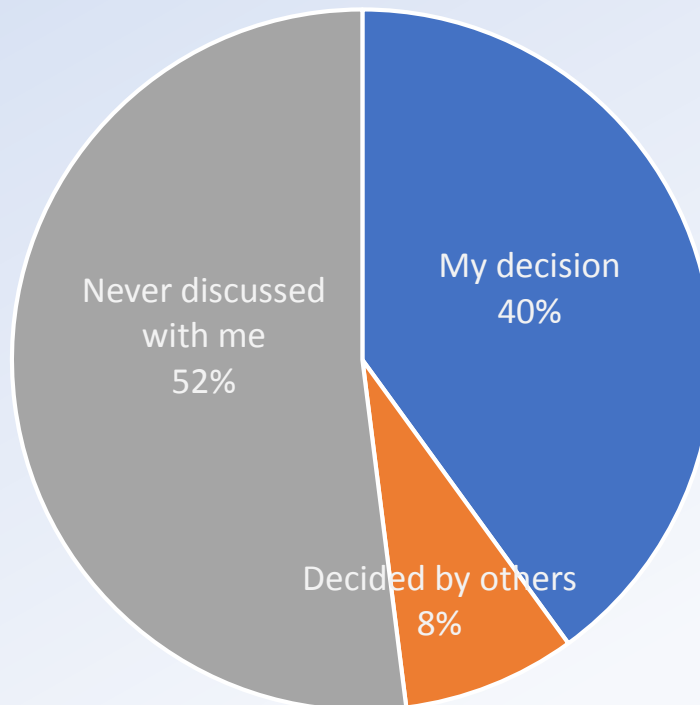


Pastoral Visitation: Who visits church members more often? Results for “Never”

IAD CMS - 2018



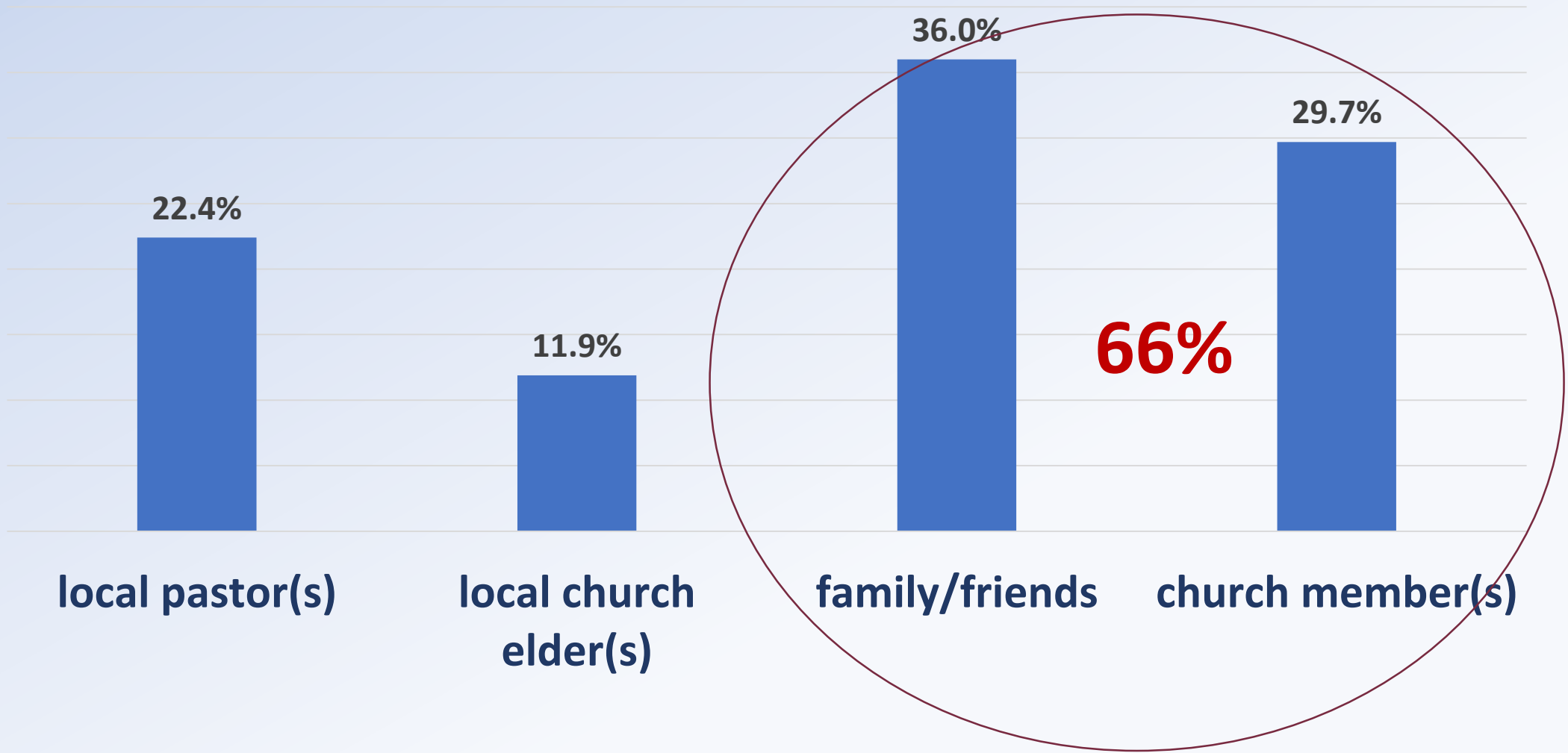
Did you decide to withdraw or were you expelled from the church? (F&IM)



What Happened When They Stopped Attending Church (F&IM)

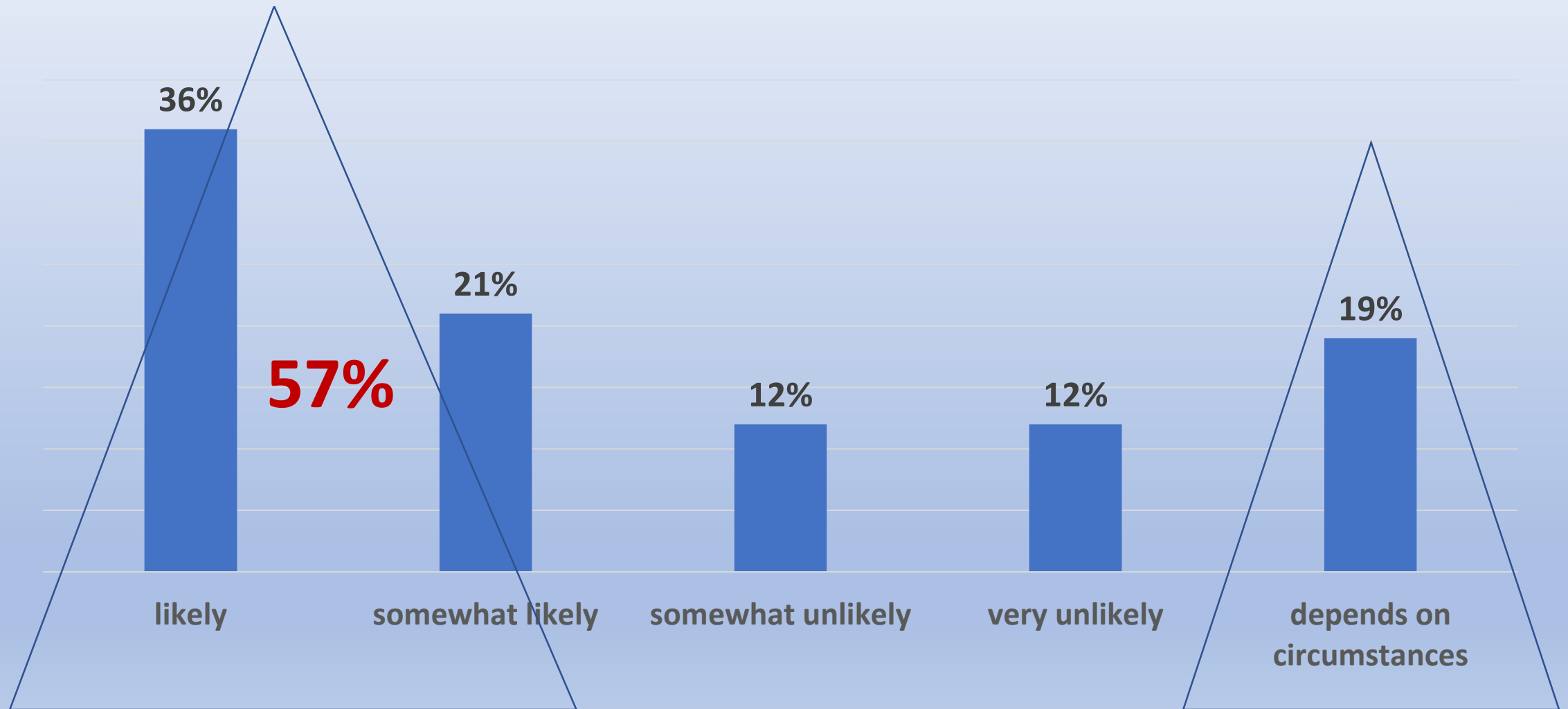
- **40% No one contacted me**
- 19% A church member came to visit me
- 17% A local elder came to visit me
- 15% A local church member contacted me by phone
- 10% An Adventist relative made contact
- 9% The pastor came to visit me
- 6% The pastor contacted me by phone or Email
- 3% An Adventist, not a local member contacted me
- 2% I received a letter in the mail
- 0.3% Printed material was mailed to me

Who Attempted to Reconnect: 66% - family, friends, church members (LS)

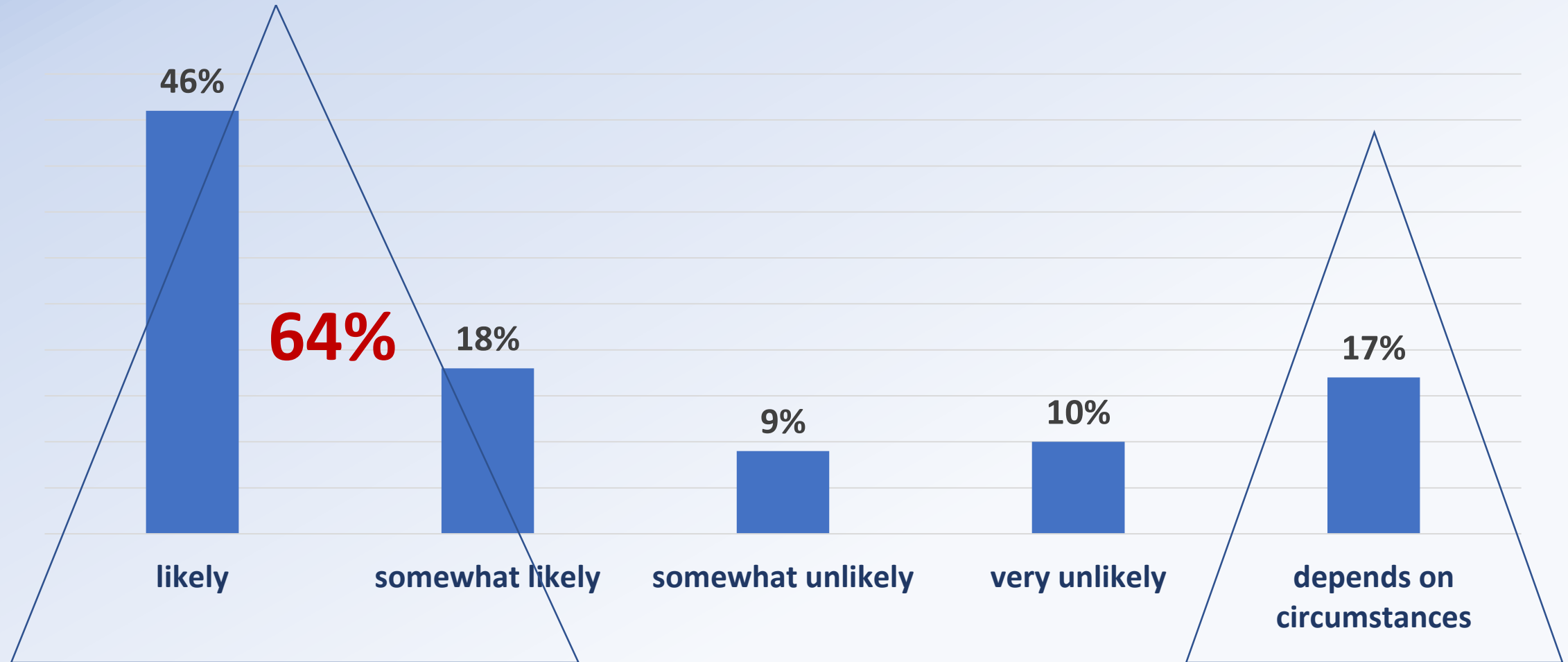


Openness to Reconnect (those who left the church) (LS)

(57% + 19% = 76%)



Openness to Reconnect (combined responses of those who
left the church and of those who returned) (LS)
(64% + 17% = 81%)



Retention surveys: Reasons why people decide to leave the Adventist church (LS)

	Reasons cited by those who left	Reasons cited by those who returned
	30 – lack of discipleship and involvement	37 - lack of discipleship
	27 - lack of support	30 - lack of friends
	24 - lack of friends	29 - lack of support and visitation
	23 - interpersonal conflicts	22 - separation from God
	22 - lack of love	19 - lack of involvement
	20 - hypocrisy	18 - lack of love (especially leaders)
	19 - worldly things	17 - worldly things
	18 - work	16 - interpersonal conflicts
	17 - doctrinal issues	16 - hypocrisy
	11 - lack of faith	13 - incomplete conversion
	9 - family problems and pressure	12 - lack of faith
	7 - boredom	10 - focus on human examples

Summary

- The primary reason of people leaving the church is not doctrinal
- Climate, atmosphere, relationships, support, and worship in the local church are crucial What is happening in personal and spiritual lives of people are also crucial
- Need for effective support and follow-up system(s) in the local church after baptism and after people dropped - Visitations, personal contacts, and time spent with those who left the church plays a crucial role -

Key issues:

- Perceived hypocrisy
- Marital difficulties and conflicts
- Lack of friends in the church
- Different types of conflicts
- Church climate & support system (visitation)
- Worship & preaching
- Age at baptism & young people (especially up to 20 years old)
- Discipleship programs
- Personal devotional life
- Church attendance
- Involvement in church ministries and witnessing

Solutions

1) Discipleship of church members (new and old, youth and young adults)

- Solid preparation **before** baptism
- Discipleship program **after** baptism which should enable church members to:
 - ✓ Create meaningful devotional life and close relationships with Jesus
 - ✓ Be rooted in the Scripture and Adventist doctrines
 - ✓ Be active attenders of church worships and Sabbath School
 - ✓ Discover their spiritual gifts and be involved in respective church ministries
 - ✓ Become a friendly witness

Solutions

2) Each local church should become an attractive place for church members, young people, and visitors to belong to:

- Warm, safe, and friendly atmosphere
- Inspiring worship & relevant preaching
- Intellectual climate
- Social events outside of worship
- Member care & support ministries: pastoral visitation, small groups, and prayer ministries

Solutions

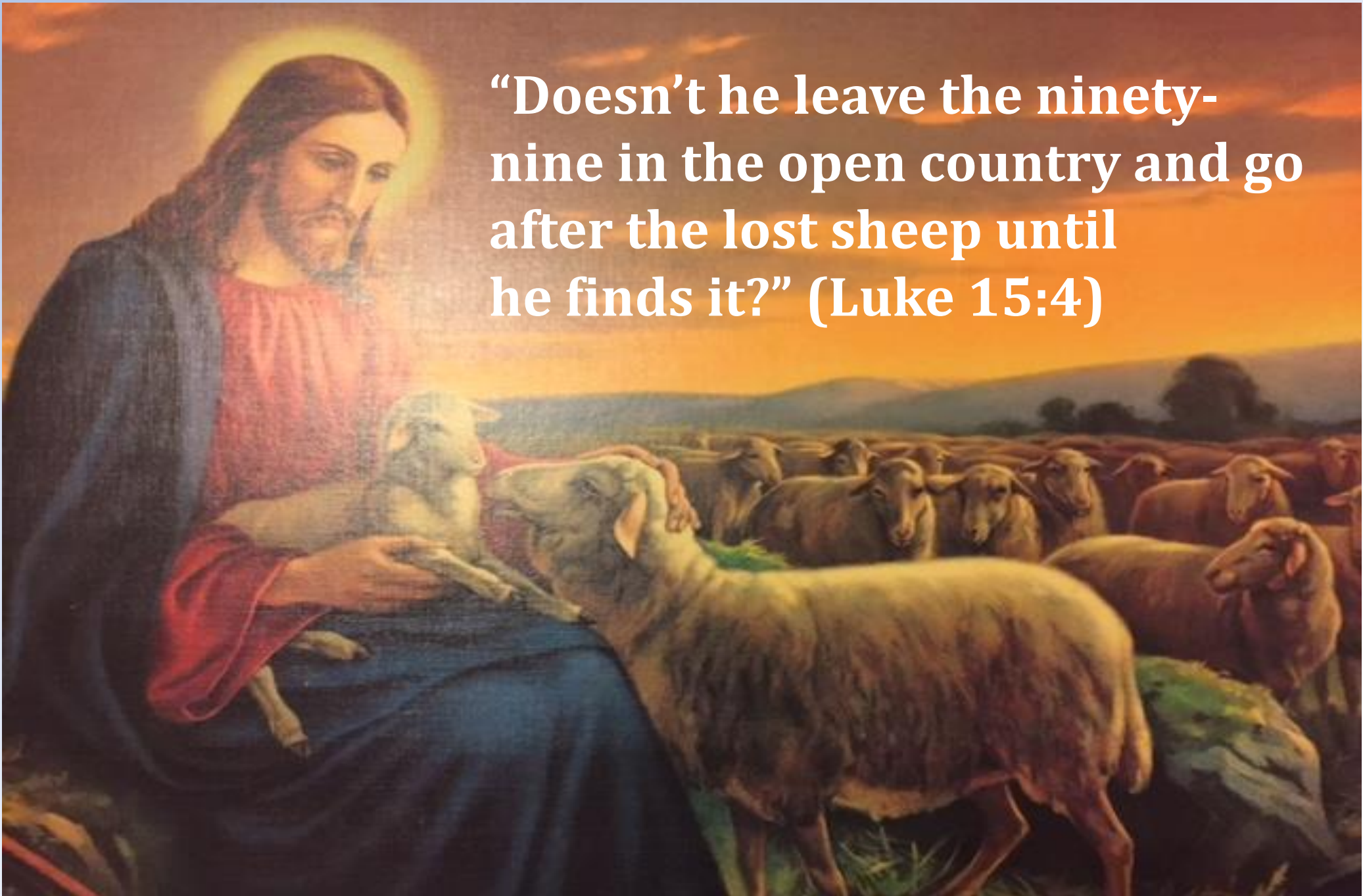
3) Reclaiming

- Nurture & Retention Coordinators on all levels
- Inactive and former member ministry Plans
- Regular membership audit
- Contacts with missing members
- Involvement of inactive members in Discipleship program
- Regular events of reclaiming of former, inactive, and missing members

Calvary: Three Crosses



“Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” (Luke 15:4)



Resources

- General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR). *ASTR Annual Statistical Reports*. <http://adventiststatistics.org>
- General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. 2018 Global Church Member Survey Data.
- General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. 2013 Global Church Member Survey Data.
- IAD CMS – 2018: R. Díaz-Valladares et al. Inter-American Division Church Member Study. Final Report. June 29, 2018.
- IAD CMS – 2013: Raquel de Korniejczuk et al. Inter-American Division Church Member Research Report. August, 2013. <https://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/IAD%20Church%20Member%20Research%20Report.pdf>
- SAD CMS – 2013: Wolter, Berndt Dietrich et al. South-American Division Church Member Research Report. 2013. https://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports
- Trim, David. Building Healthy Relationships with Members and Former Members. <https://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/Compressed%20N%26R%20Summit%202019%20presentation-compressed.pdf>
- 21st CCS: Jacobs, Douglas & team. Twenty-First Century Seventh-day Adventist Connection Study. <https://southern.libguides.com/c.php?g=490463&p=3853417>
- LS: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research. Leaving the Church (Retention Survey, 2014, combined results), 2014. <https://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/Revised%20Leaving%20the%20Church%20combined.pdf>
- F&IM: Richardson, Paul, Monte Sahlin & Petr Cincala. Study of Former & Inactive Adventist Church Members: Report (2013) <https://www.adventistresearch.org/sites/default/files/files/2013-retention-study.pdf>
- ASTR Blog: Drawing in New Church Members. <https://www.adventistresearch.org/blog/2018/01/drawing-new-church-members>
- Gane, B. A. *Valuegenesis II, study 1—Core report: A comparative study of faith development and values formation in Seventh-day Adventist adolescents and youth aged 12-18 years in two generations*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 2012.
- Sigg, S. (2013). *Valuegenesis Europe: A spiritual home for young people? The Adventist youth and their church as seen from the Valuegenesis Europe data. Spes Christiana: Valuegenesis Europe*, 24. 2013.107–184.
- 2013 Summit on Nurture and Retention material can be found at http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home
- 2019 Summit on Nurture and Retention material can be found at <https://www.adventistresearch.org/research-conferences>