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*The Annual Survey  
of Church Board Members*

- ▶ *Local Ministries in 1998*
- ▶ *Attitudes toward ADRA*
- ▶ *Training and Resources  
for Local Leaders*



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## ***Introduction***

Every year a survey is conducted of the local church members who serve in volunteer leadership roles in their congregation. This is one element in the information system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America which has operated since it was mandated by the North American Division Committee in 1988. Annual surveys are also conducted of the general church membership, pastors and educators.

The annual Survey of Church Board Members is conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry for the NAD Office of Information, Research and Strategic Planning. Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the NAD president, directs the Office of Information, Research and Strategic Planning. Paul Richardson is director of the Center and headed the team that conducted the research presented in this report.

A random sample of local church board members was drawn from the latest conference directory submitted by each of the 58 local conferences in the NAD, including only those with home phone numbers listed. A total of 332 telephone interviews were completed during June 1998. The allowance for sampling error is six percentage points, plus or minus. See the appendix for additional information on sampling and statistics.

Paul Richardson  
September 1999

## ***Executive Summary***

Overall, there was a significant increase in *evangelism activities* in 1998 conducted by Seventh-day Adventist congregations in North America as compared to the previous year. The number of local churches scheduling a public evangelistic campaign more than doubled (from 18% to 41%) as did the number with a Pastor's Bible class (from 5% to 13%). There was also an increase in the number of congregations with plans for personal and family Bible studies and for small group outreach. At the same time, the percentage of congregations conducting a Vacation Bible School (VBS), a Revelation Seminar or other approaches to evangelism dropped significantly.

Public evangelism is more likely to have been conducted by congregations over 100 members, especially those with more than 600 members. Home Bible studies, Revelation Seminars, small group outreach and Pastor's Bible classes are more likely to be implemented in congregations with more than 250 members. Ethnic minority congregations are more likely to conduct personal Bible studies. African American congregations also favor a Pastor's Bible class, Revelation Seminars and small group outreach. Hispanic congregations favor Revelation Seminars and family seminars. VBS is more likely to be conducted in a congregation with 100 to 600 members, and by black and Asian congregations.

At the same time evangelism activities increased, there was a decline in most *community services*. Only one in three Adventist congregations (35%) indicate that they sponsor a community food pantry this year as compared to more than half last year. Ethnic minority and multicultural congregations are more likely to sponsor a community food pantry, as are congregations with more than 250 members. The same is true of programs that distribute donated clothing to families in need.

The one area of significant increase in community service is the fact that three times as many congregations report they sponsor or cosponsor a Community Service Center as compared to last year. This increase may reflect the growing strength of Adventist Community Services (ACS), the domestic branch of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency in North America. In fact, this may explain the decline of activity reported in other areas of community service. A growing number of congregations are evidently joining coalitions of Adventist churches in sponsoring Community Service Centers with multiple programs and services, instead of operating smaller, less comprehensive activities at the church. Congregations with 100 to 600 members are more likely to sponsor Community Service Centers as are multicultural congregations.

*Health ministries* have also seen an increase in the last year among the Adventist congregations in North America. Cooking schools continue to be the

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most popular health education activity, conducted by three out of ten local churches. Congregations with 100 to 600 members are more likely to sponsor a cooking school, as are Hispanic congregations.

The largest increases are in stop-smoking programs and health education exhibits at fairs, malls and community events. In each case, the number of congregations sponsoring these activities this year has nearly doubled over last year. Congregations with more than 250 members are more likely to sponsor stop-smoking programs. Respondents with White Collar occupations and young adults are more likely to report that their congregation sponsors a stop-smoking program, while respondents with Blue Collar occupations are more likely to report that their congregation sponsors an exhibit at a fair or mall.

There has also been an increase in *Family Ministries* conducted by local churches over the past year. Every type of family life activity has increased except for the most generic category of general family life seminars. One in eight congregations (12%) reports a marriage-strengthening weekend during the last year. One in ten (9%) reports a Family Sabbath. Congregations with more than 250 members are more likely to report these activities as are ethnic minority congregations. Respondents with White Collar occupations and those from the Baby Boom generation are more likely to indicate that their congregation sponsors a marriage weekend.

As *Women's Ministries* mature, there is a shift away from the retreats for women and Women's Sabbath events which have characterized this new department of the Church. Local churches report a decrease in both of these activities, and significant increases in the number of small group ministries for women and other Women's Ministries programs. Congregations with more than 250 members are more likely to report Women's Ministries activities of all kinds, while black congregations are more likely to report a Women's Sabbath and Hispanic congregations favor a retreat for women.

The level of *stewardship education* activities in local, Adventist churches in North America is largely unchanged. One in three congregations (35%) indicate that a sermon or series of sermons on stewardship is presented each year. One in six report inviting a guest speaker on stewardship. Ethnic minority congregations are more likely to have a sermon or sermon series on stewardship, as are mid-sized congregations of 250 to 600 members. Black and Hispanic congregations are more likely to invite guest speakers. Black congregations are more likely to have special meetings about stewardship, while Hispanic and Asian congregations are more likely to use pledge or commitment cards.

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## ***Awareness of and Attitudes toward ADRA***

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) was organized 15 years ago by bringing together a number of separate relief and development functions at the General Conference. It has become one of the most dynamic and progressive agencies of Seventh-day Adventist mission around the world. How do local church leaders in North America feel about ADRA and its work? Are they aware and supportive, or uninformed and negative? A cluster of questions on this topic has been included in this year's Annual Survey of Church Board Members.

Almost every respondent interviewed (97%) says that he or she has heard of ADRA. This is true across all demographic segments, except that young adults and black and Hispanic respondents are somewhat more likely to lack information about ADRA.

Church board members also place a high value on ADRA's work. Nine out of ten agree that "it is an important part of the mission of the church." In fact, one in twelve (8%) believe the work of ADRA "is more important today than traditional evangelism." Only 3% of respondents say "it is a nice thing to do, but it is not as important as soul-winning." Not a single respondent selected the most negative response: "I do not think the Adventist Church should be involved in relief activities at all." And only 1% refused to answer this question.

Respondents with Blue Collar occupations are more likely to think that ADRA is an important part of the Church's mission, while those with professional and managerial occupations are somewhat more likely to say it is more important than traditional evangelism. Respondents over 65 years of age are more likely to believe that the work of ADRA is not as important as soul-winning.

Four out of five church board members report that they receive information and materials from ADRA. Respondents over 65 years of age are most likely to be getting materials, while those born since 1945 are less likely to hear from ADRA. Board members in large churches, and white, Anglo respondents are more likely to report that they get ADRA information and materials, while those from ethnic minority congregations and congregations with 250 to 600 members are less likely to do so.

Two out of three lay leaders (63%) say that they share the materials they get from ADRA with others in their congregation. Middle-aged respondents are most likely to do so, while young adults are least likely to share ADRA materials. These materials are most likely to be distributed in congregations with fewer than 100 members, and in Asian and white, Anglo congregations. Leaders in

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black and Hispanic congregations are less likely to pass on ADRA materials and information.

### ***Training and Resources for Local Leaders***

Only one in four (23%) church board members reports that he or she has attended any kind of training event for local church leaders during the last year. Local leaders with professional, managerial and White Collar occupations are more likely to have done so, as are young adults. Men are more likely to have attended a training event than are women. Respondents from congregations with more than 250 members and those from ethnic minority congregations are more likely to have attended training.

One in eight (13%) have participated in any of the training events provided by satellite link. Lay leaders with professional and managerial occupations are more likely to have done so.

Most church board members do not feel a great need for training. One in six (15%) indicate that they have a good idea of how to do their church responsibilities and do not need training. Another two thirds (65%) also feel that they are experienced in their church role, although they would like an up-date from time to time. Only 16% say, "I definitely need more training."

Respondents over 65 years of age and those from largely white, Anglo congregations are more likely to feel that they *do not* need training. Middle-aged respondents and those from black, Asian and multicultural congregations are more likely to say they are experienced in their church responsibilities, but would like occasional up-dates. Young adults, respondents with Blue Collar occupations, those from Hispanic congregations and churches with more than 600 members are more likely to feel that they definitely need training.

The majority of church board members (55%) prefer for training events to be conducted at their local church by a resource person from the conference. Young adults and board members from Blue Collar occupations are more likely to have this opinion, as are those from congregations with more than 250 members and African American congregations.

Two out of five board members prefer training events conducted at their local church by their pastor (41%) and/or the use of training videos (39%). Young adults are more likely to prefer training conducted by their pastor, while respondents from the Baby Boom generation are somewhat more likely to prefer the use of training videos.

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One in three lay leaders prefer training events at a central location for the entire conference (38%) or seminars delivered by live, satellite connection (35%). Young adults and board members from African American and multicultural congregations, and congregations with 250 to 600 members, are more likely to prefer the conference-wide training events. Lay leaders with professional and managerial occupations and those from the Baby Boom generation prefer satellite seminars, as do those from Asian congregations.

Only one in six respondents (15%) prefer a correspondence course as a way to get access to training. Only a handful (5%) suggested methods other than the six in the list read to them by the interviewer. Those with professional occupations and from large congregations are more likely to prefer correspondence courses, as are those from African American and Asian congregations.

About half of the Adventist churches in North America now have a satellite dish which enables them to utilize the resources delivered by the Adventist Communication Network. White, Anglo congregations are more likely to have satellite dishes, while four out of five ethnic minority congregations do not.

A third of local churches (37%) get tapes of satellite events from another local church which has a satellite dish. Small congregations with fewer than 100 members and Asian congregations are more likely to give this response.

Another third of the congregations (34%) have a member with a satellite dish at home who tapes events for the church. (There is some overlap between this group and the 37% in the prior paragraph.) White, Anglo congregations are more likely to give this response.

Two in five local church leaders (43%) get one or more of the newsletters published on behalf of the departments at the North American Division headquarters. Respondents over 65 years of age and those who are retired or full-time homemakers are more likely to report getting a newsletter, while those under 50 and those with professional and managerial occupations are much less likely to do so. Leaders in immigrant congregations are more likely to say they get a newsletter, while those from African American and multicultural congregations are less likely to give the that response.

About one in six church board members (17%) have called one of the 800 numbers operated by the Church Resources Consortium or one of its affiliated resource centers during the last year to ask a question or get information. Leaders from black congregations are more likely to have done so. Respondents over 65 years of age are less likely to have done so.



Two in five local lay leaders (44%) have received one or more catalogs of resource materials during the last year from AdventSource or one of the other members of the Church Resources Consortium. Leaders from ethnic minority congregations are more likely to have received a catalog. So are respondents from congregations with 250 to 600 members and those with White Collar occupations. Those from white, Anglo congregations and churches with 100 to 250 members are less likely to have received a catalog.

One in six church board members (17%) ordered materials from the resource catalogs they received. Leaders in black and Hispanic congregations are more likely to have ordered from the catalogs, as are those from churches with 250 to 600 members. Young adults and respondents over 65 years of age are less likely to have ordered materials from the catalogs.

Five out of six lay leaders (84%) report that their local church provides no funding for the purchase of resource materials for their church office or department. Only one in ten (9%) indicate that they have more than \$100 each year to spend on resource materials from their church budget. This lack of funding is true across all demographic segments.

### ***Estimates of Actual Numbers***

Table 1 provides an estimate of the actual numbers of Adventist congregations engaged in various ministries based on the 1998 annual Survey of Church Board Members. It is based on the 4,718 local churches reported by NAD Secretariat for mid-1998.

Table 2 provides an estimate of actual numbers of local church lay leaders reporting several activities in this survey. It is based on the estimated 45,000 individuals who serve on local church boards and as heads of departments in congregations throughout the NAD.

**Table 1**  
**Number of Local Churches Reporting Ministries**

Vacation Bible School	2,076
Public evangelistic meetings	1,934
A plan for Bible studies	1,510
Revelation Seminar	991
Ingathering contacts with non-members	896
Small group outreach	755
Pastor's Bible class	613
Family Seminar	142
Other evangelism activities	1,557
Clothing distribution program	1,793
Community food pantry	1,651
Community Service Center	1,463
Help for the elderly	283
Help for abused children	94
Aid for battered women	47
Tutoring or literacy program	47
Job-finding program	47
Family counseling service	47
Other community service projects	1,132
Vegetarian cooking school	1,415
Stop-smoking plan	802
Health screening program	519
Exhibit at fair or mall	330
Stress seminar	94
Weight control program	47
Other health ministries	519
Marriage-strengthening weekend*	566
Family Life seminar	472
Family Sabbath	425
Singles ministry event/program	330
Grief recovery seminar or group	283
Parenting seminar	236
Divorce recovery seminar or group	47
Other family ministries	613
Women's ministries retreat	1,180
Bible study group for women	708
Women's Day or Women's Sabbath	707
Support group on abuse issues	94
Other women's ministries	1,368

**Table 1, Part 2**  
**Number of Local Churches Reporting Ministries**

Stewardship sermon or sermons	1,651
Guest speaker on stewardship	708
Church business meeting	377
Special meetings about stewardship	189
Use of pledge or covenant cards	188
Visiting homes about stewardship	187
World Stewardship Day	187
Send church budget to membership	47
Other stewardship activities	755
Church has satellite dish	2,406
Church gets tapes from near-by church	1,746
Church member tapes events on home dish	1,604

**Table 2**  
**Number of Lay Leaders Reporting Participation**

Attended a training event	10,350
Participated in satellite training event	5,850
Get one or more of the ministry newsletters	19,800
Called a church resources 800 number	7,650
Received a resource catalog	19,800
Ordered from the resource catalog(s)	7,650

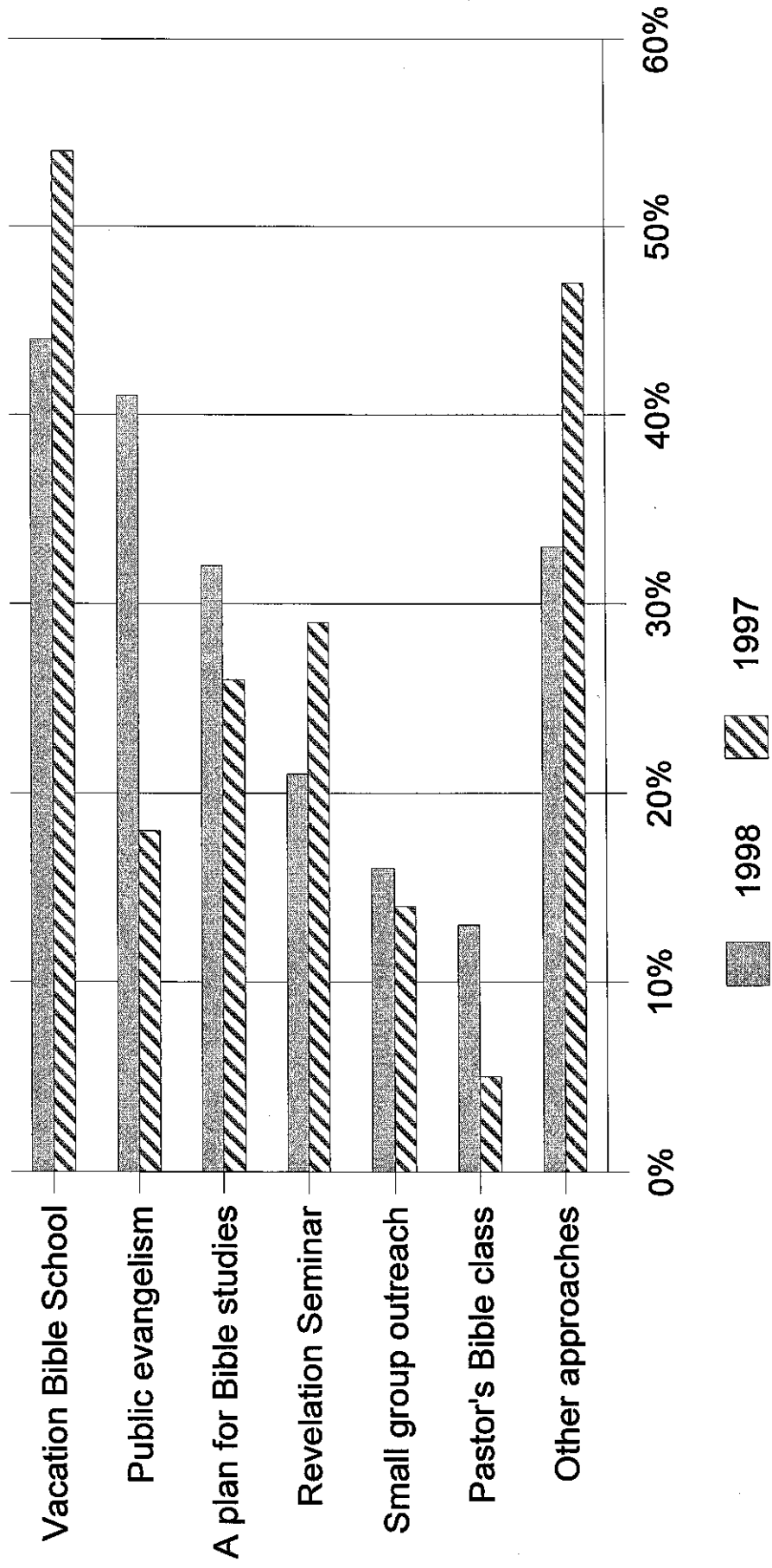
# **Church Ministries**

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**Activities in local churches in 1998**

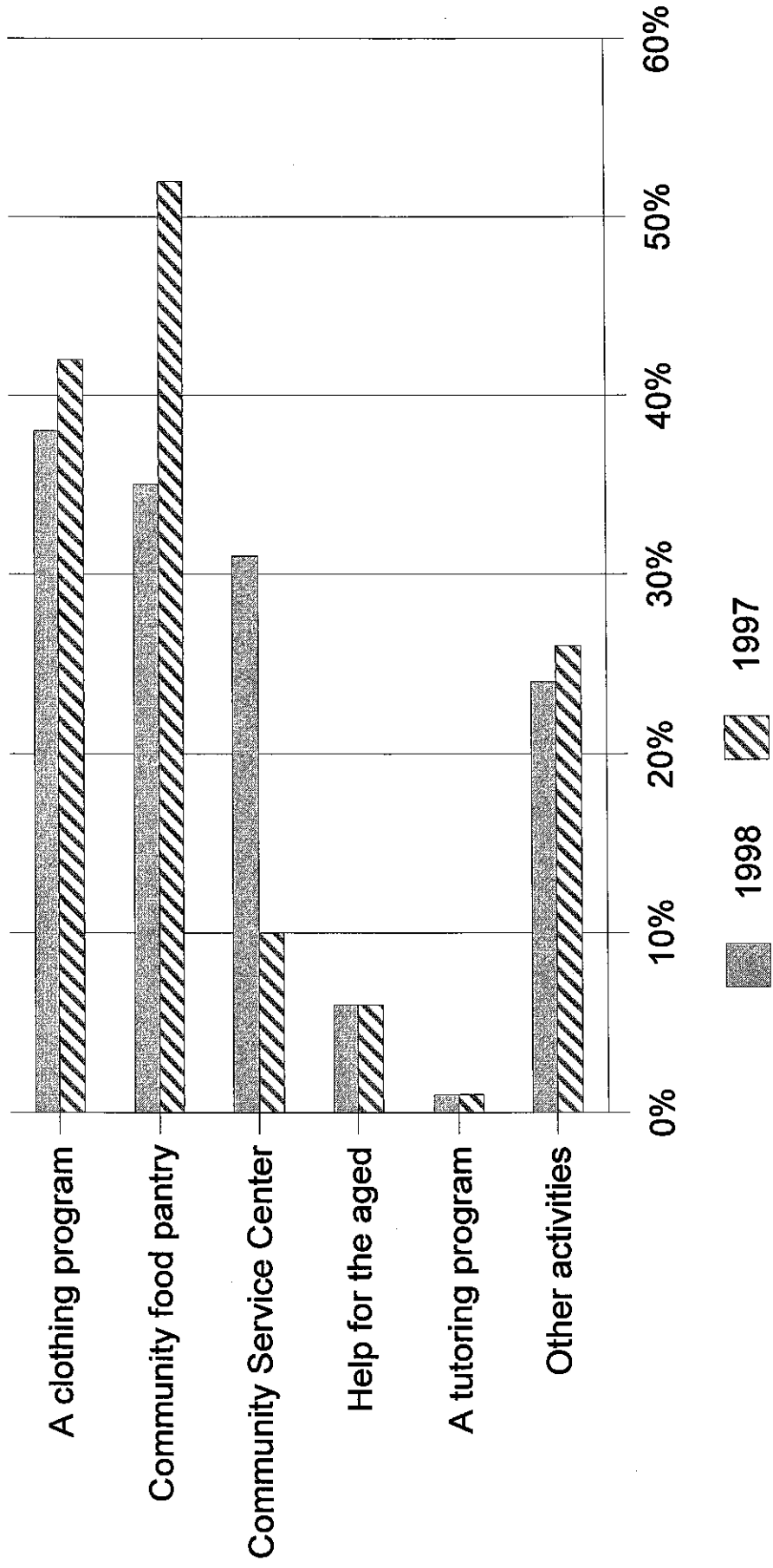
# Evangelism activities

Percent of local churches conducting events in 1998



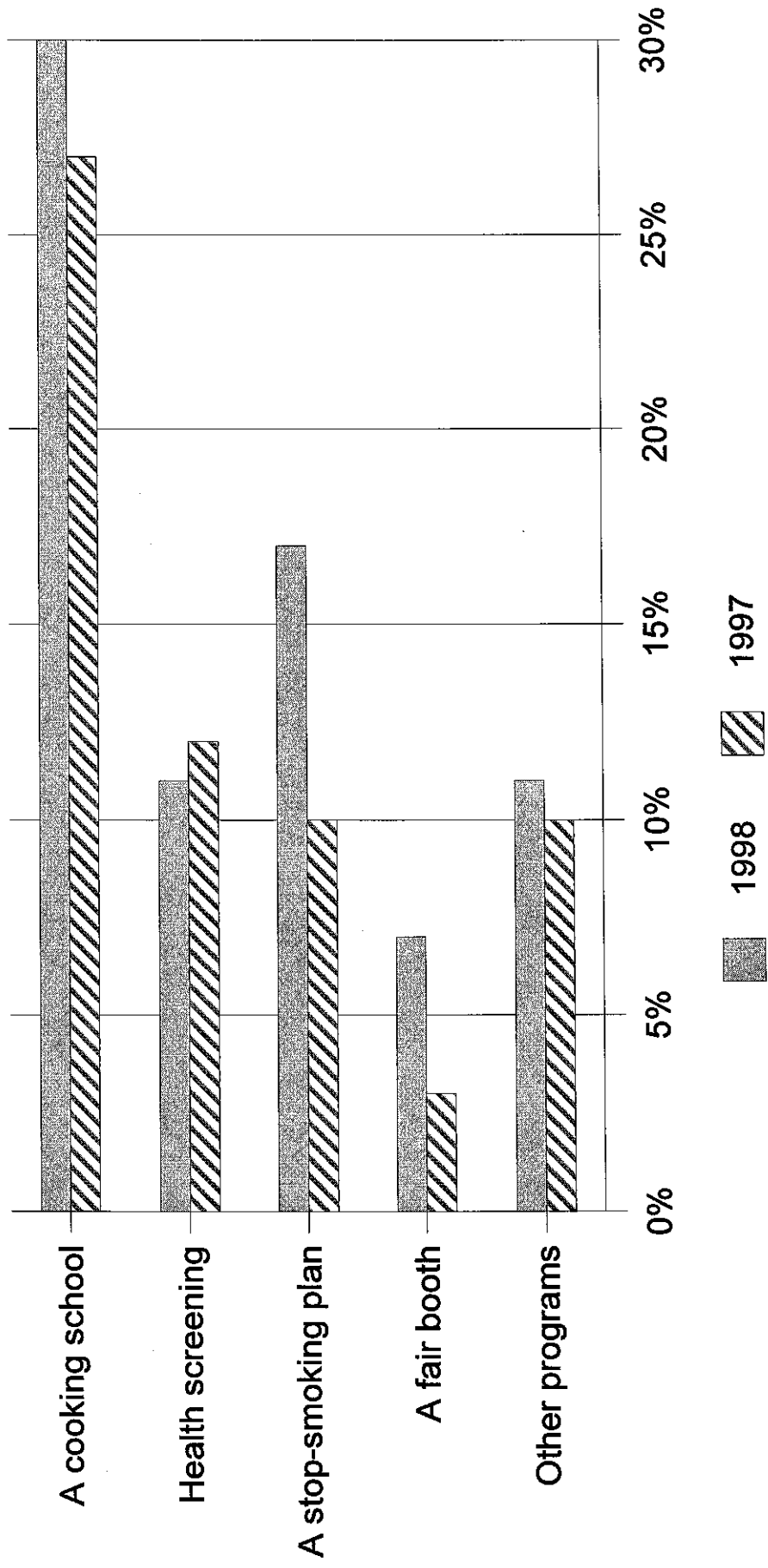
# Community service

Percent of local churches sponsoring activities in 1998



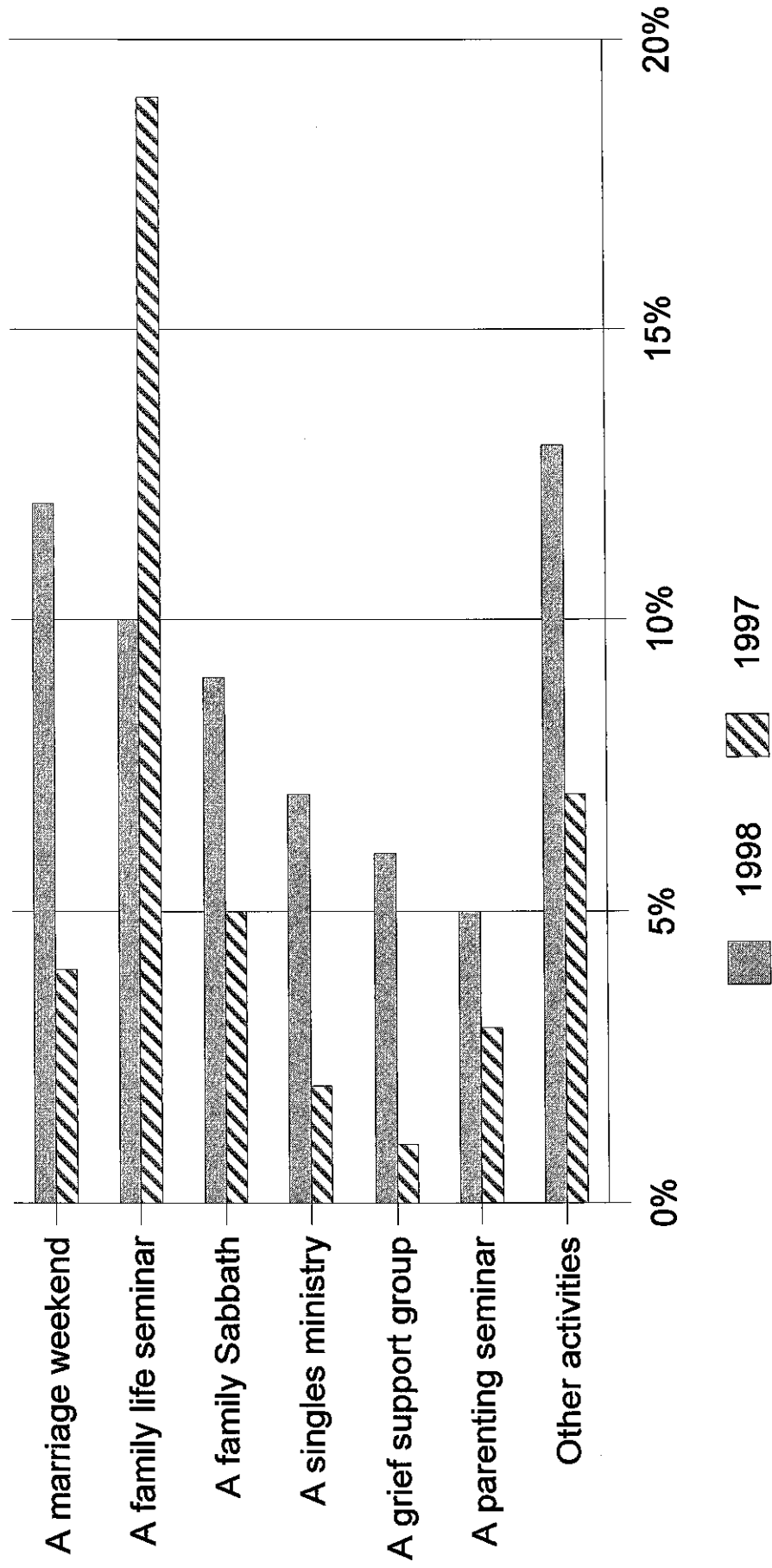
# Health ministries

Percent of local churches conducting activities in 1998



# Family ministries

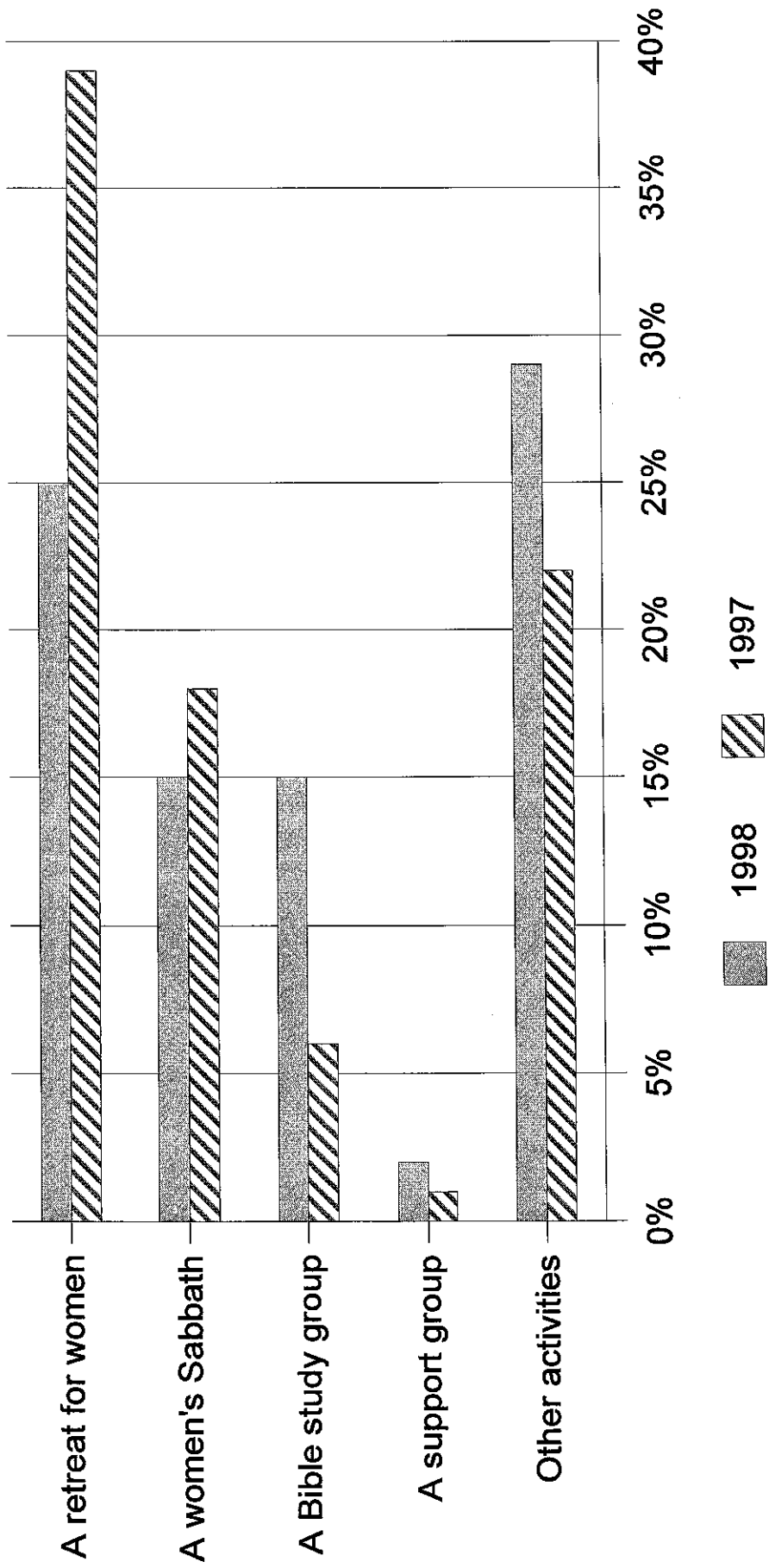
Percent of local churches conducting activities in 1998





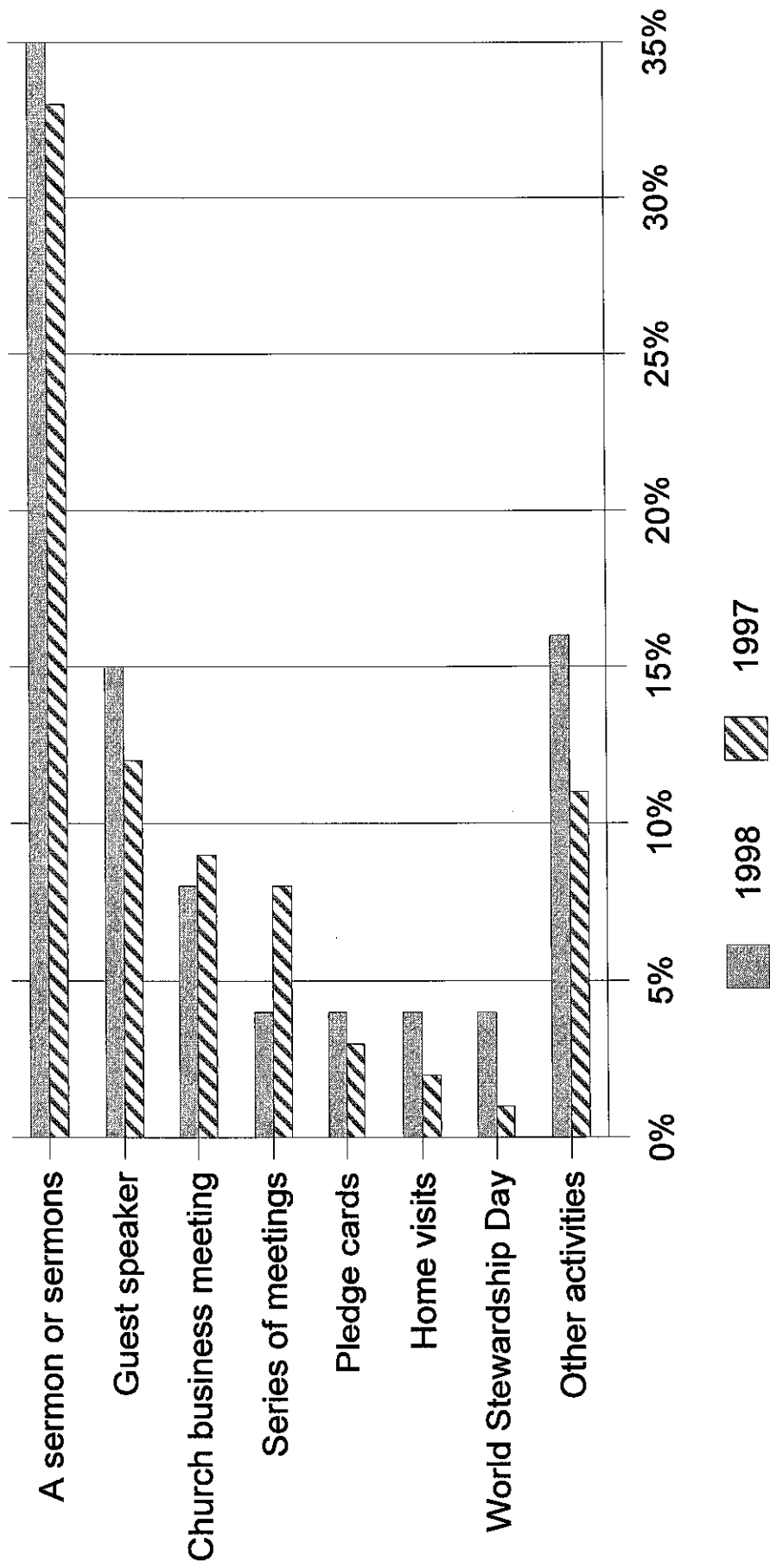
# Women's ministries

Percent of local churches conducting activities in 1998



# Stewardship education

Percent of local churches conducting activities in 1998



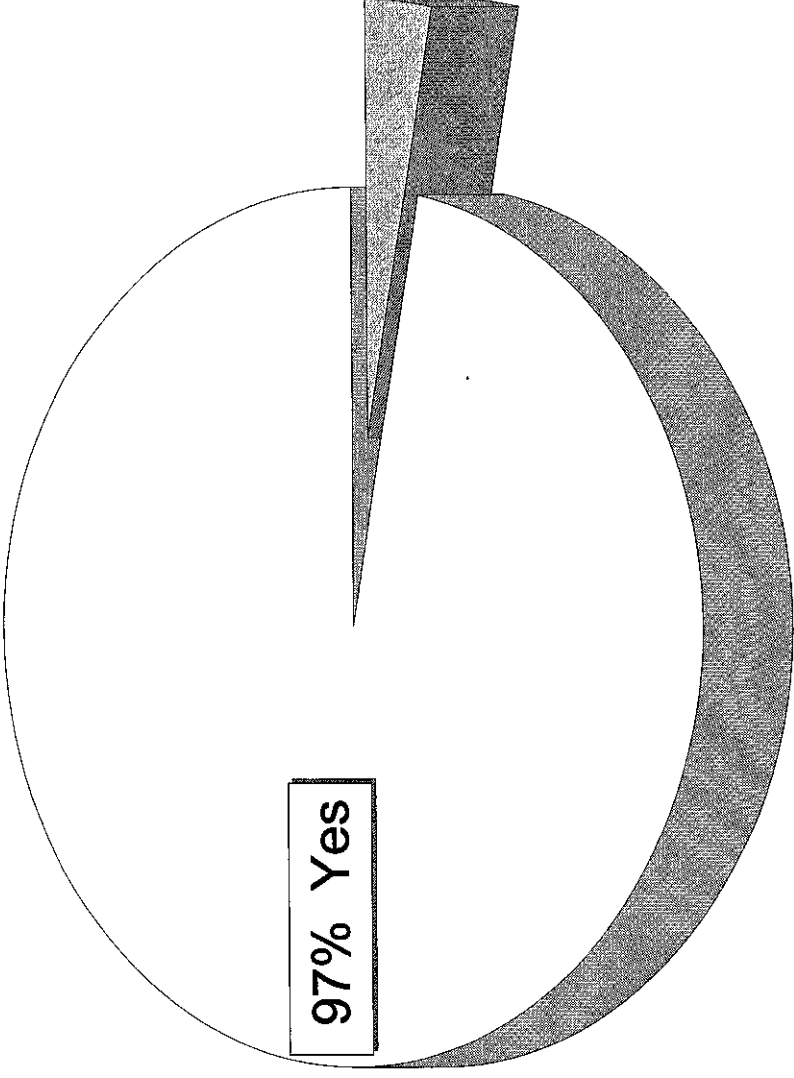
# **Awareness of and Attitudes toward ADRA**

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# Have you heard of ADRA?

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Annual survey of local church board members



# Opinion about the work of ADRA

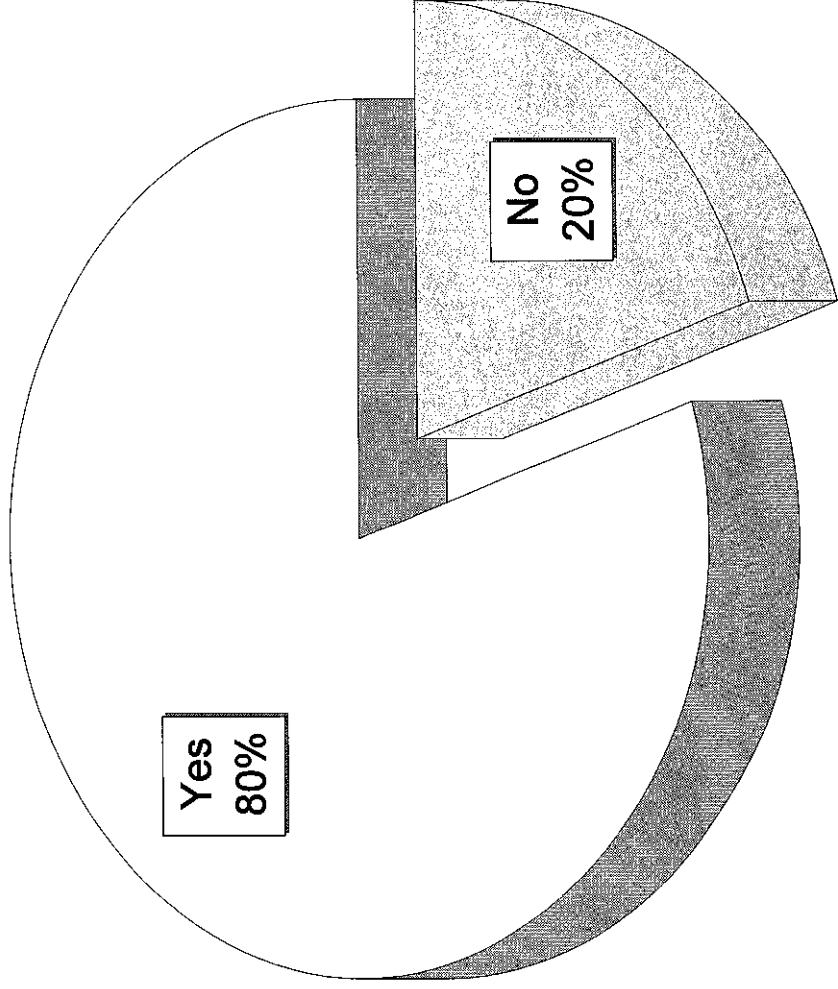
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Annual survey of local church board members

- 88% — It is an important part of the mission of the church.
- 8% — It is more important today than traditional evangelism.
- 3% — It is a nice thing to do, but it is not as important as soul-winning.
- Zero — I do not think the Adventist Church should be involved in relief activities at all.
- 1% — No opinion.

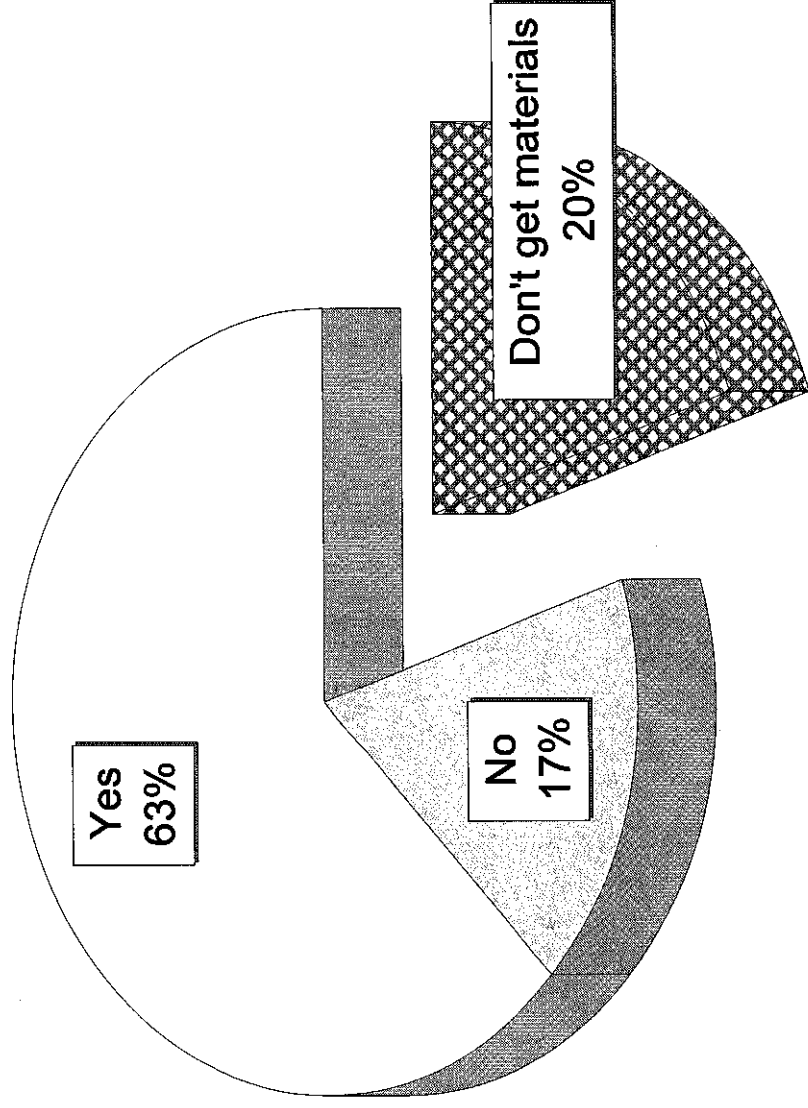
# Do you receive materials and information from ADRA?

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# Do you share ADRA materials in your congregation?

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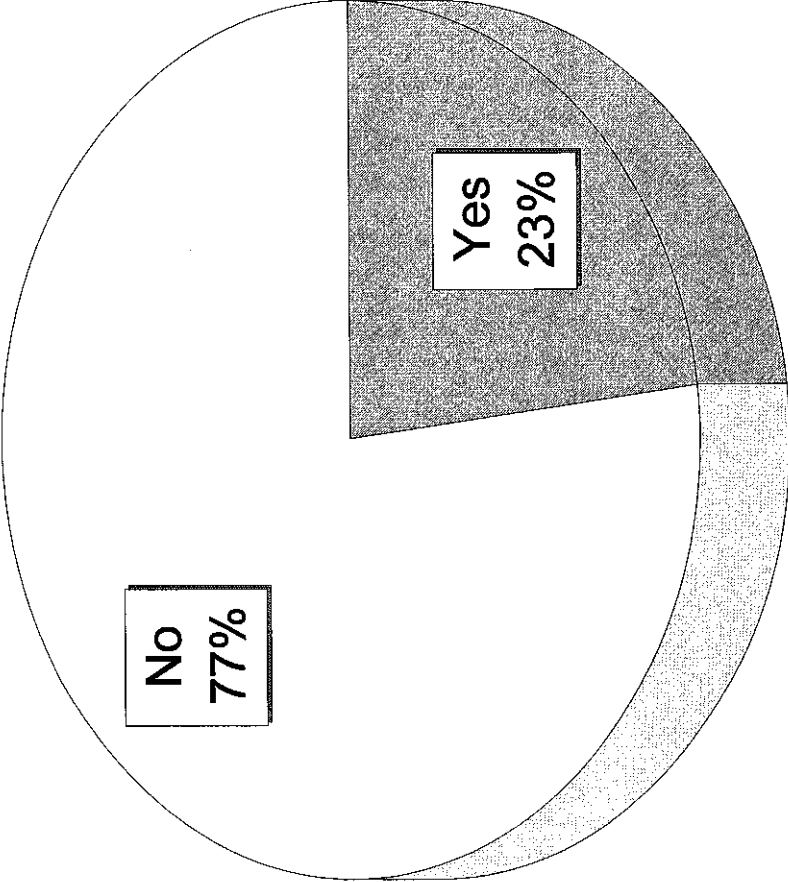
# **Training and Resources for Local Church Leaders**

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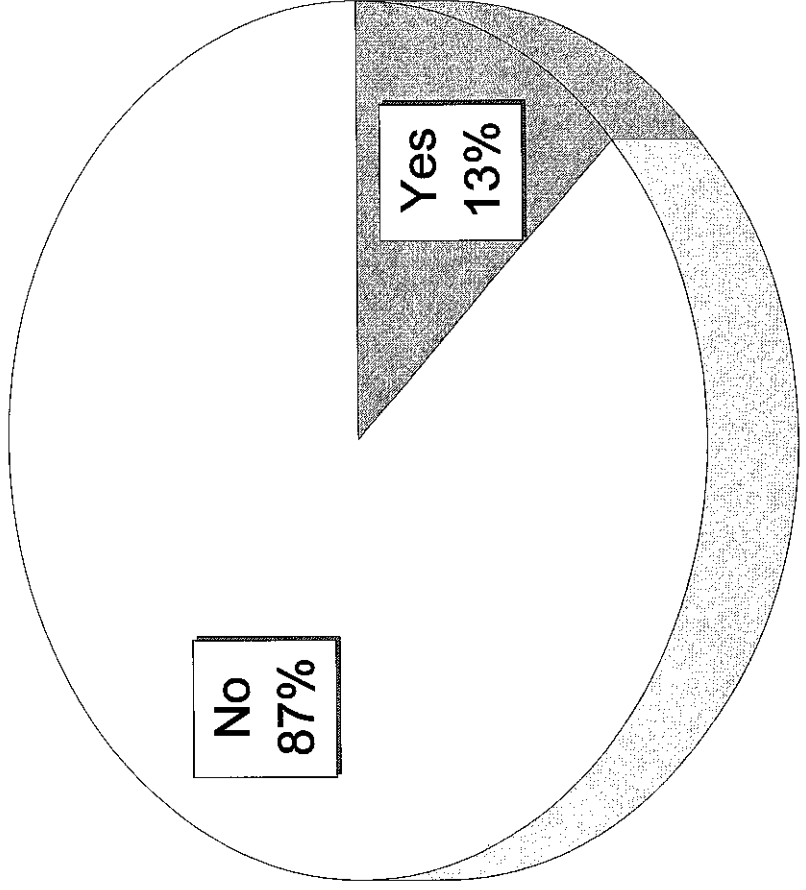
# Have you attended any training event for local church leaders in the last twelve months?

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# Have you participated in any of the training events provided by satellite?

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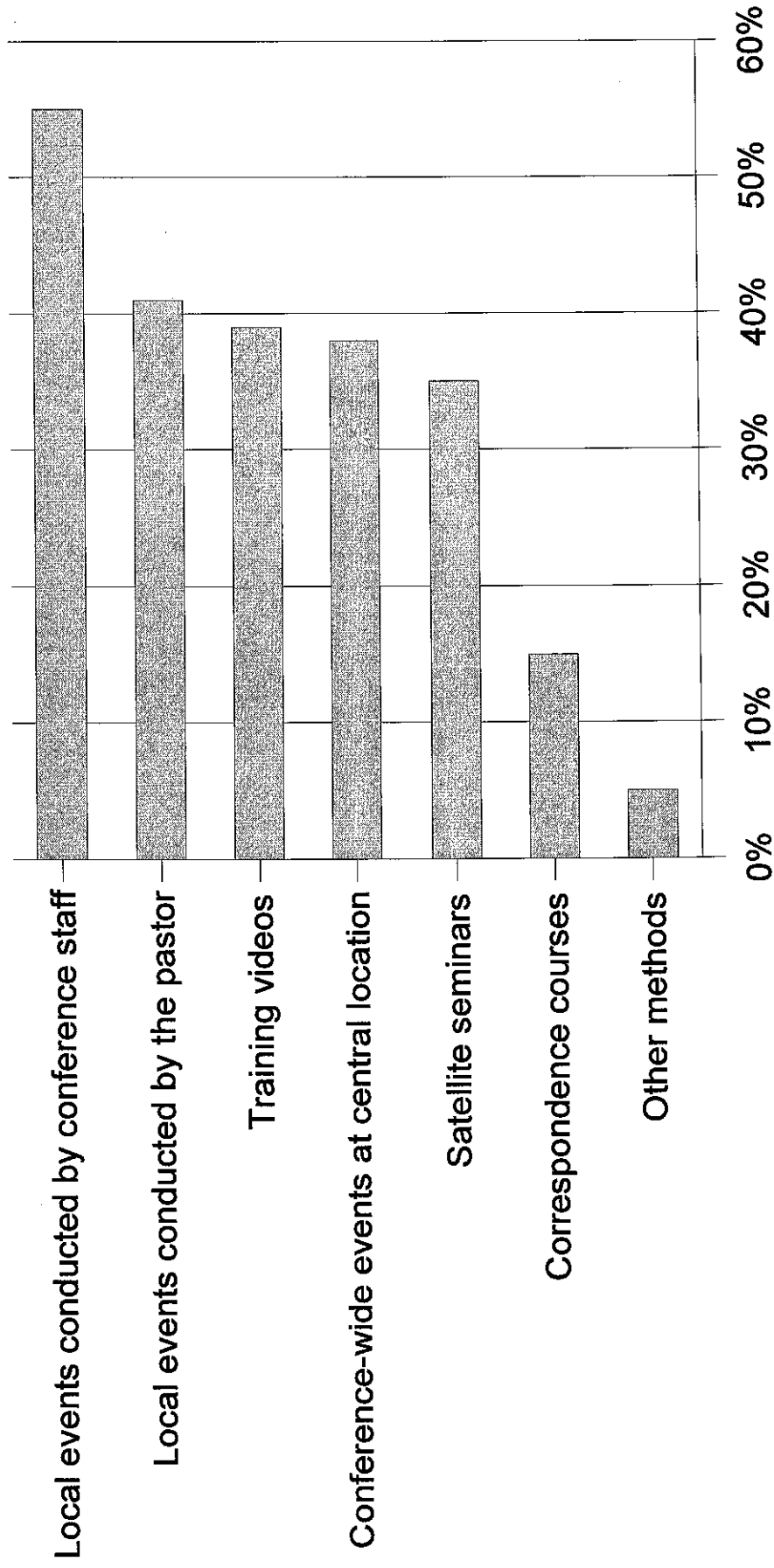


# Your opinion about training provided for local church leaders

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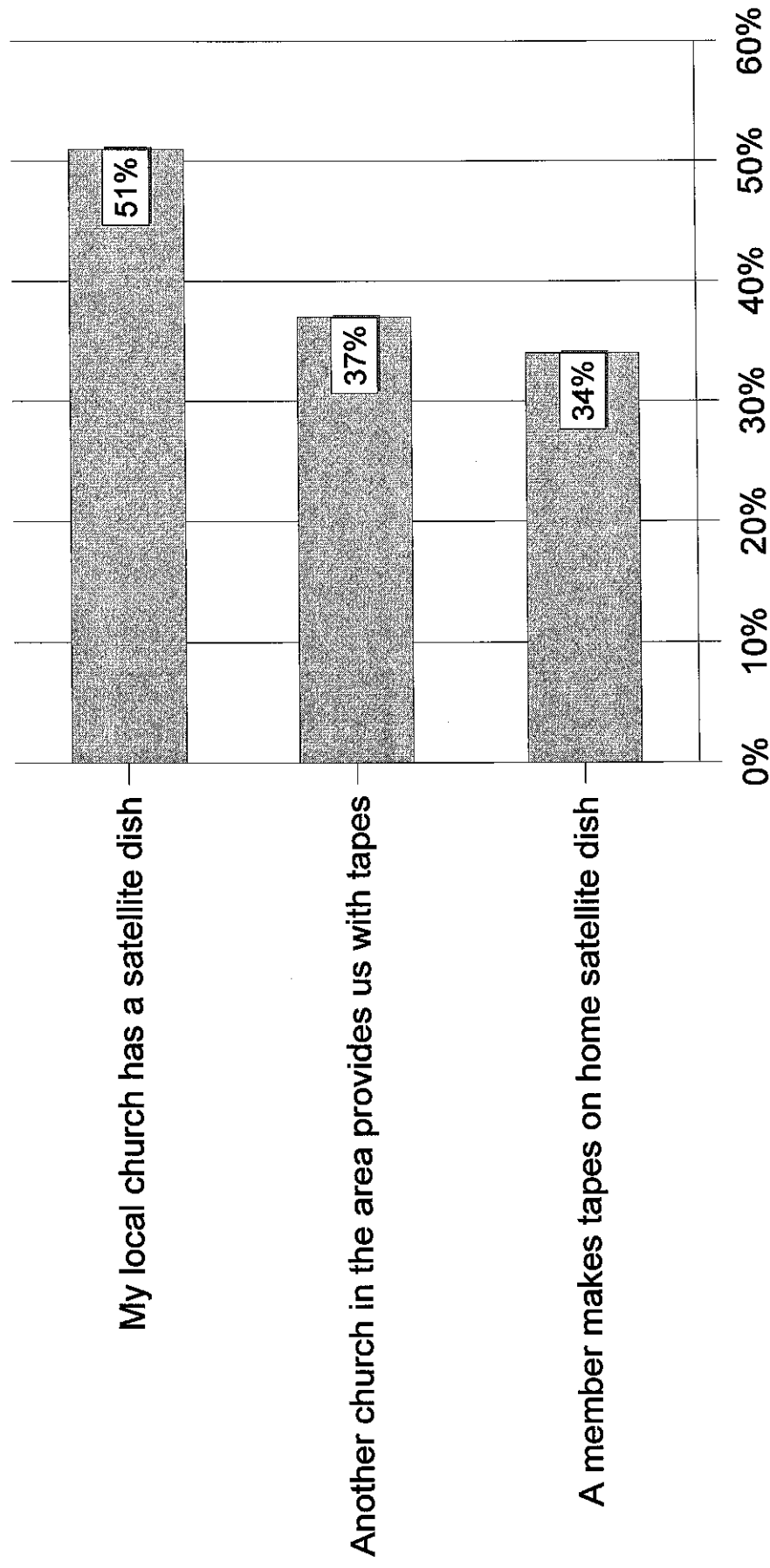
- 65% — I have experience in my assignment, but I would like an up-date from time to time.
- 16% — I definitely need more training.
- 15% — I have a good idea of how to do my responsibilities and *do not* need training.
- 4% — No opinion.

# What is the best way for the denomination to provide training for local church leaders?



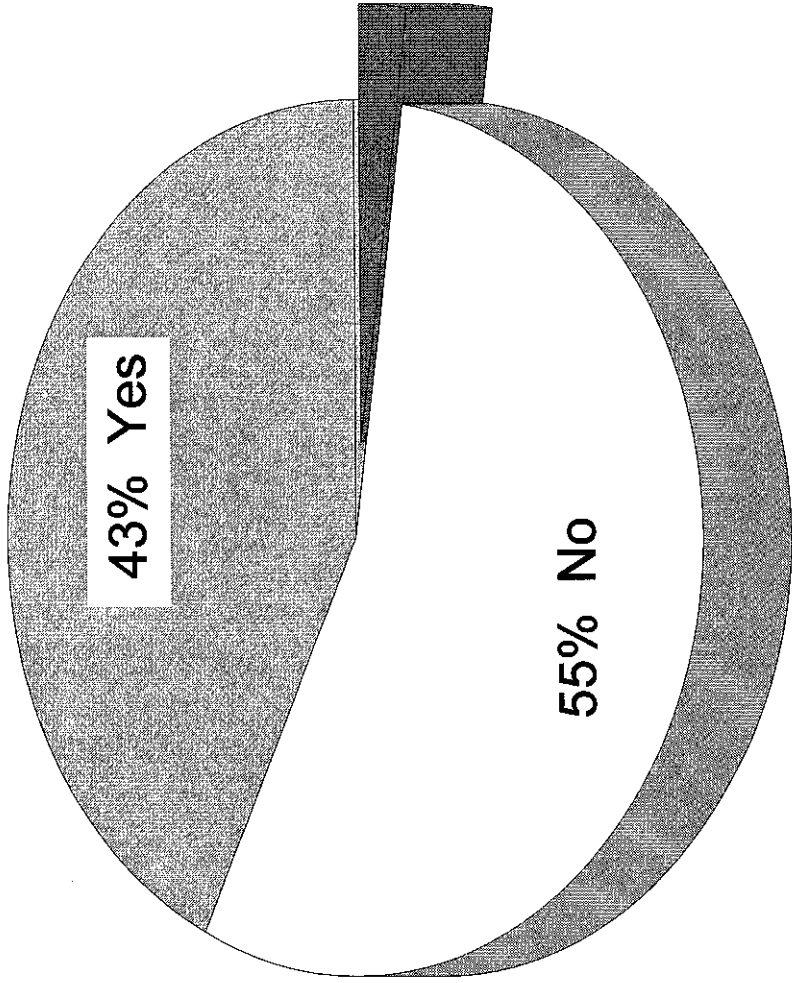
# Access to satellite resources

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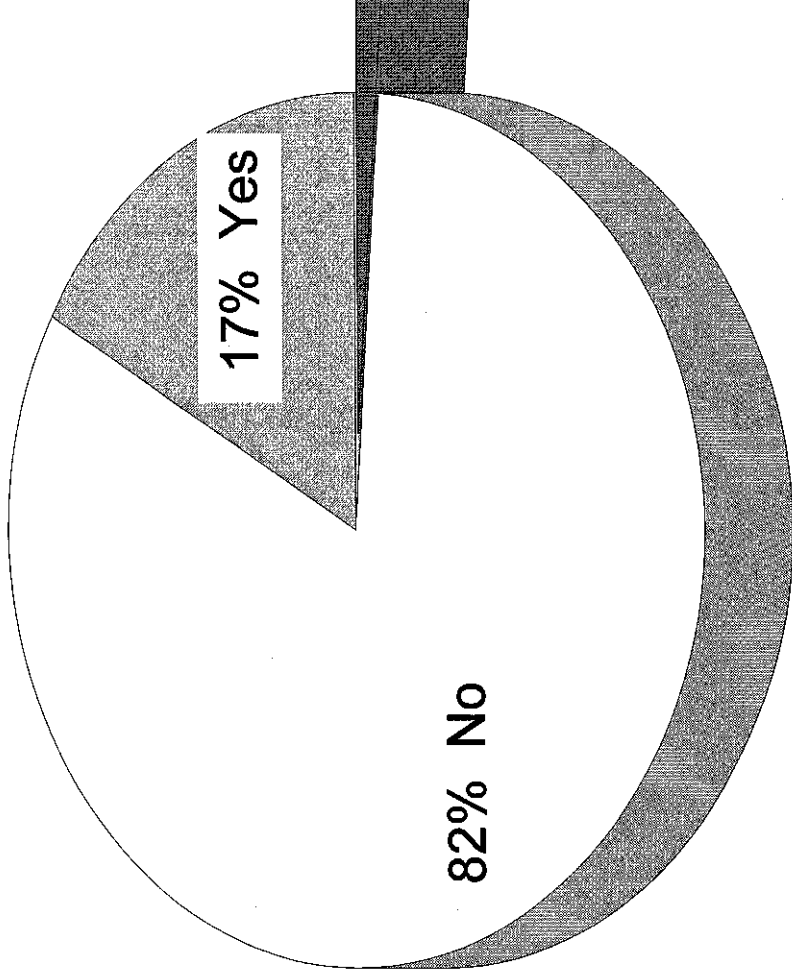
# Do you get one of the departmental newsletters from the NAD?

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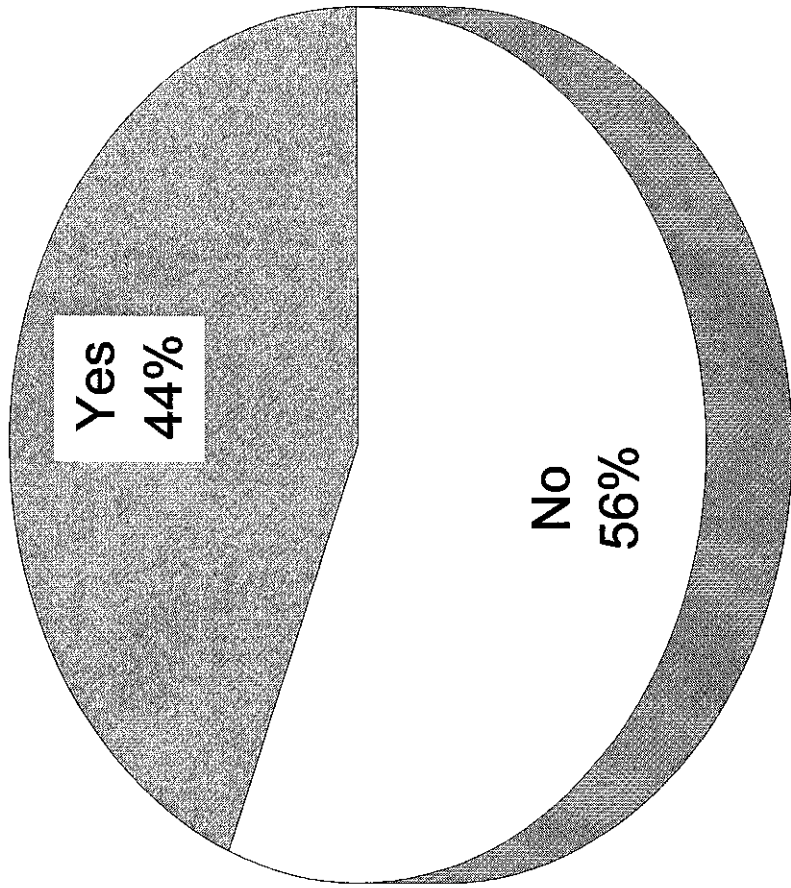
# Have you called an 800 number at a Resource Center in the last year?

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# Have you received a catalog of resource materials in the last year?

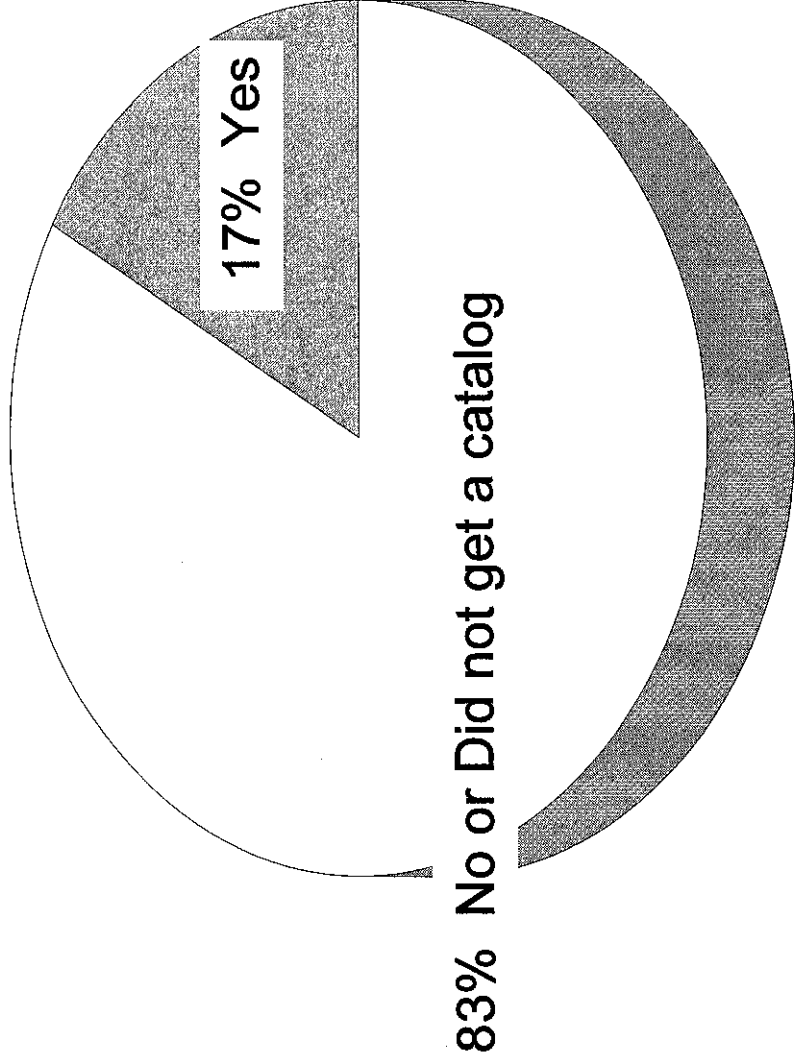
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# Have you ordered any materials through the catalog?

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# How much money does your church provide for you to purchase resource materials for your department?

