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PASTORAL LONGEVITY IN MINISTRY
SURVEY REPORT

Institute of Church Ministry

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Leaving Pastoral Ministry: A Multifaceted Study to Understand Long-term Pastoral Longevity* survey was led by the Institute of Church Ministry and funded by the Ministerial department of the North American Division (NAD). The purpose of this survey was to gather data to be utilized to answer several research questions such as: When Pastors withdraw from full time ministry, what factors are most salient in their decisions to leave? What elements or combination of factors are most significant in the decision that Pastors make to stay engaged in pastoral ministry? What factors are most compelling for individuals to enter full-time pastoral ministry? What are the factors making Pastors successful (i.e. their churches thrive)?

The survey's findings show that a majority of NAD Pastors want to stay in pastoral ministry. About 61% consider the pastoral ministry as their ideal ministry where to serve, 75% are likely/very likely to stay in pastoral ministry until retirement, about 82% are very like/likely to remain in ministry, even if a job with similar pay and benefits is available elsewhere. Reasons that may lead Pastors to leave the ministry include the drive to move on to another kind of ministry (27%), followed by health issue (15%). Other reasons include burnout (14%) and church politics (12%).

There is about 32% of Pastors who get discouraged because nobody cares and (41%) who sometimes feel like leaving the pastoral ministry. Pastors who are likely to remain engaged or motivated, with no intention to give up, are apparently those with strong adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, solid spiritual discipline, excellent ministry qualities, knowledge of and commitment to core Adventist doctrines, specific skill areas, excellent relationship with their congregations and their conferences. In this category are also included Pastor who consider Pastoral Ministry, Teacher and Denominational Administrator as their ideal/primary choices of ministry to serve rather than Chaplaincy, Institutional Administrator or others careers.

Pastors with Asian background, although a minority among the respondents (7%), seem to have a greater potential for pastoral longevity than their Black, White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino counterparts. Gender does not seem to weight much when it comes to Pastors' predisposition to stay or to leave ministry, while recognizing that females represent a tiny portion in analysis (6%).

In order to improve pastoral longevity in ministry, the study recommends NAD to consider:

- Upholding current policies that keep Pastors engaged/motivated and not willing to leave until retirement.
- keeping track of the standing of incoming and already in-ministry Pastors in the areas of adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, spiritual discipline, ministry qualities, knowledge and commitment, specific skill areas, relationship with congregations, and relationship with conferences.
- Ensuring that incoming Pastors clearly identify pastoral ministry, teacher or denominational administrator as their ideal/primary career choice.
- Increase the ratio of Asian, as they seem to have the greatest potential for longevity in pastoral ministry.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was hosted on Survey Monkey. The target group of participants was full-time employed Adventist Pastors. Emails were obtained through a time-consuming manual search of public websites including the Adventist archive site, union, conference, and church websites. The survey was launched on July 22, 2019.

Method of Analysis

First, in order to respond to the research questions, we created the following combined variables, considered as 6 core factors/areas that we have hypothesized as possible determinants in Pastors' decision to stay in pastoral ministry and their feeling encouraged/motivated:

1. Adherence to SDA Beliefs (combining the variables from question 12)
2. Spiritual Discipline (combining variables from question 13)
3. Attitude to Pastoral Ministry (combining variables from question 18)
4. Ministry Qualities (combining variables from question 33)
5. Knowledge and Commitment (combining variables from question 34)
6. Specific Skill Areas (combining variables from question 35)
7. Relationship with Congregation (combining variables from question 42)
8. Relationship with Conference (combining variables from question 52)

Second, for our analysis, we picked 3 questions that seem to capture Pastors' intention to stay/leave pastoral ministry: Q30, Q31, Q52.24), and 2 questions that seem to capture Pastors' feeling of discouragement/giving up (Q18.2, Q18.9).

Our goal was to see how the 6 core areas or dependent variables play into Pastors' decision to stay in pastoral ministry until retirement, and how they play into Pastors' feeling of discouragement/leaving.

Since the data was not evenly distributed, we could not run a Pearson correlation analysis. Thus, we computed the means of the variables for each of the six core areas. The scores of these variables range from 1 to 5, as follow: 1-Strongly agree, 2-Agree, 3-Not sure, 4-Disagree, and 5=Strongly disagree. Accordingly, the lower the mean, the better a respondent does in this core area.

Finally, we compared the mean scores of the core areas across the answers collected from questions Q30, Q31, Q52.24, Q18.2, and Q18.9 by running a One-way ANOVA for each question.

Delimitations of this report

For the purpose of this report, only the questions were considered in-depth among a questionnaire of 66 questions and about 206 sub-questions in total:

- *Q30: In which of these ministries would you ideally prefer to serve?*
- *Q31: How likely is it that you will stay in pastoral ministry till retirement?*
 - *Q32: If you were to leave the pastoral ministry, what would be the main reason?*

- Q52.24: To which extent do you agree with the statement: I would like to remain in ministry, even if a job with similar pay and benefits were available elsewhere?
- Q18.2: To which extent do you agree with the statement: I get discouraged because nobody seems to care?
- Q18.9: To which extent do you agree with the statement: Sometimes I feel that I would like to leave pastoral ministry?

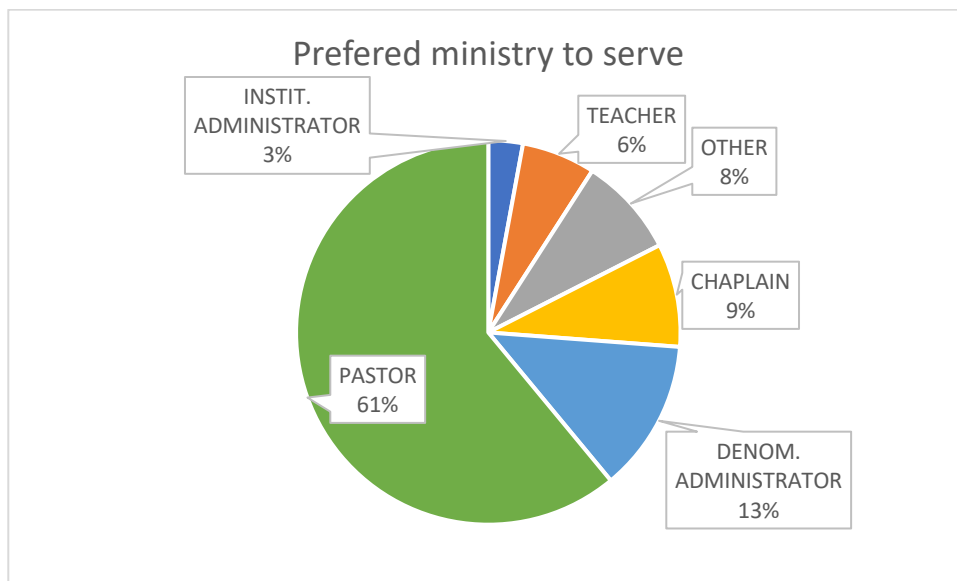
To facilitate the analysis process, I reduced the scores from 5 to 3 for each one of the questions.

- 1= Very likely, likely
- 2= I am not sure
- 3= Unlikely, very unlikely

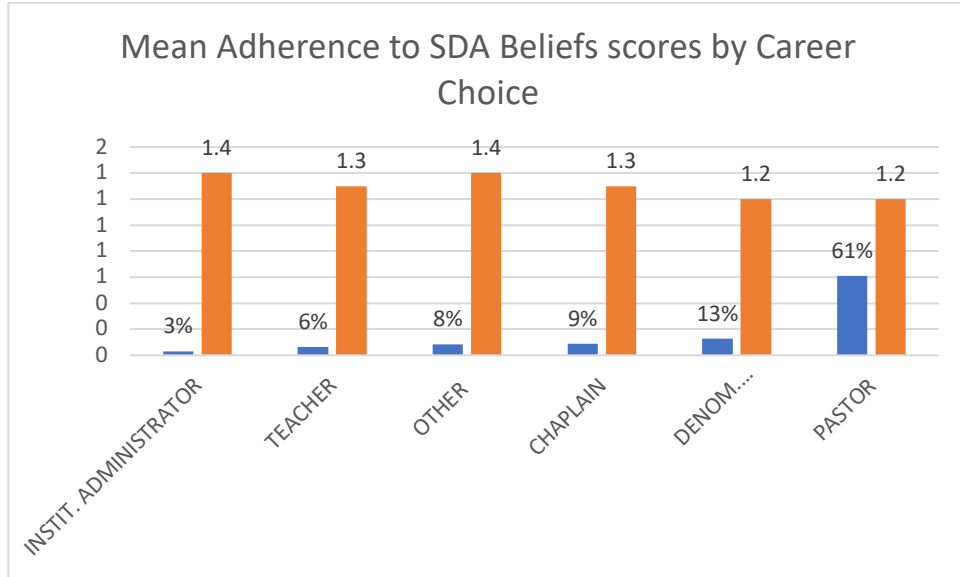
FINDINGS

Q30: In which of these ministries would you ideally prefer to serve?

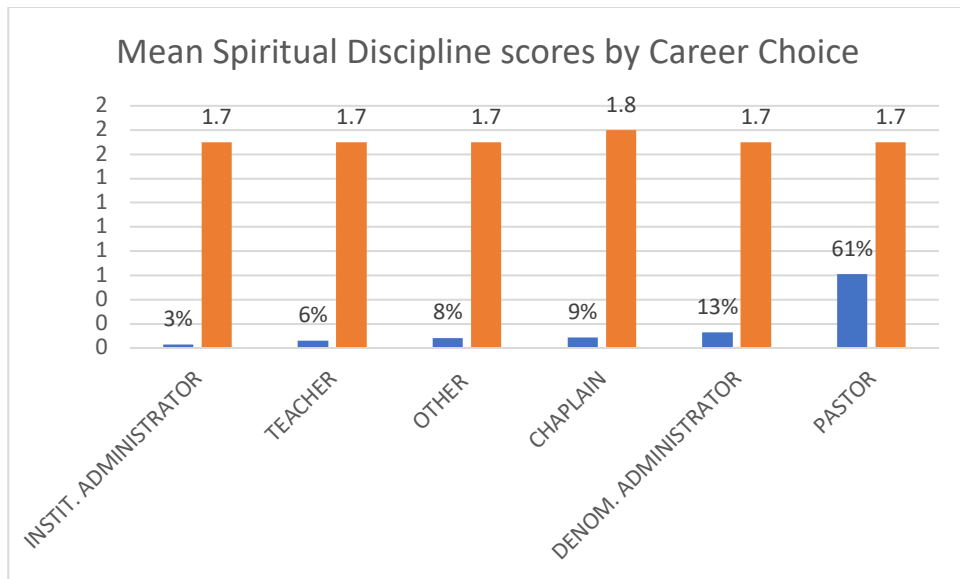
The majority of Pastors (61%) select pastoral ministry as their ideal ministry to serve, followed by denominational administrator (13%), and chaplain (9%). Teacher, institutional administrator scored respectively 6%, 3% and 8%.



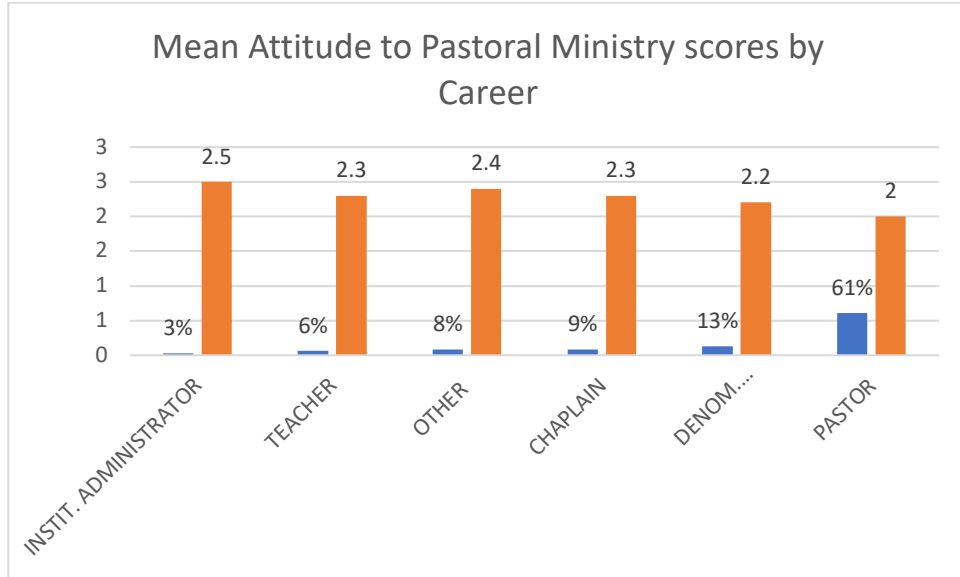
Below table shows the mean Adherence to SDA Beliefs score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor or Denominational Administrator get a better score for Adherence to SDA beliefs (1.2).



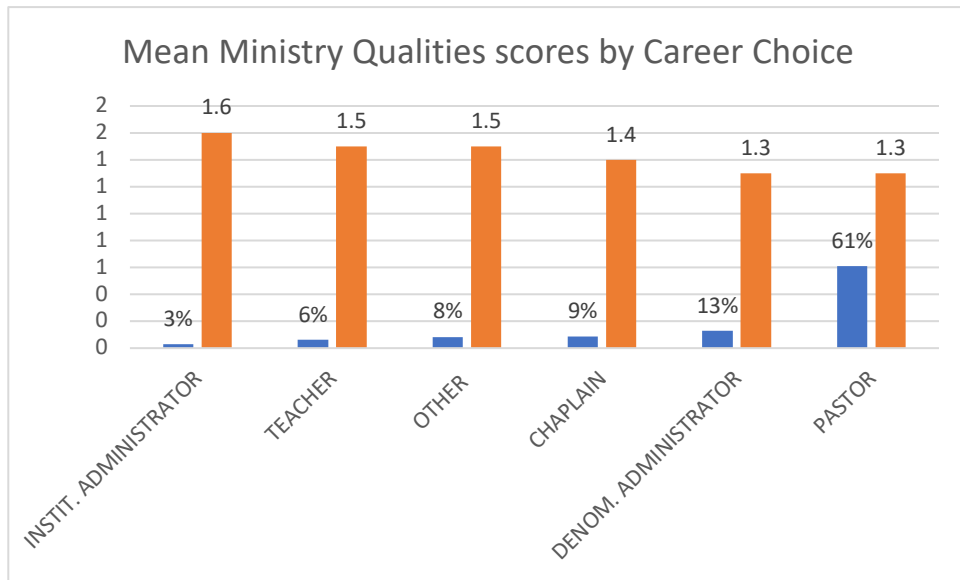
Below table shows the mean Spiritual Discipline score for the six preferred career choices. The difference across the six career choices in terms of Spiritual Discipline does not seem to be too significant. They all have a mean average score of 1.7.



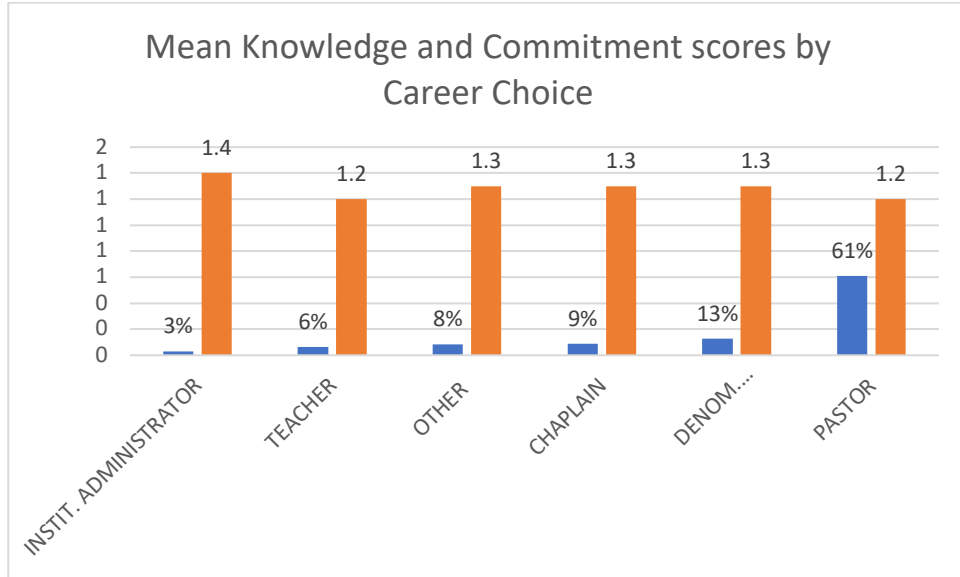
Below table shows the mean Attitude to Pastoral Ministry score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor get a better score for Attitude to Pastoral Ministry (2). This is not surprising because, one would expect someone who would ideally prefer serving as pastor to have a more positive attitude toward this role than those who would prefer serving elsewhere (like Institutional Administrator, with a score of 2.5).



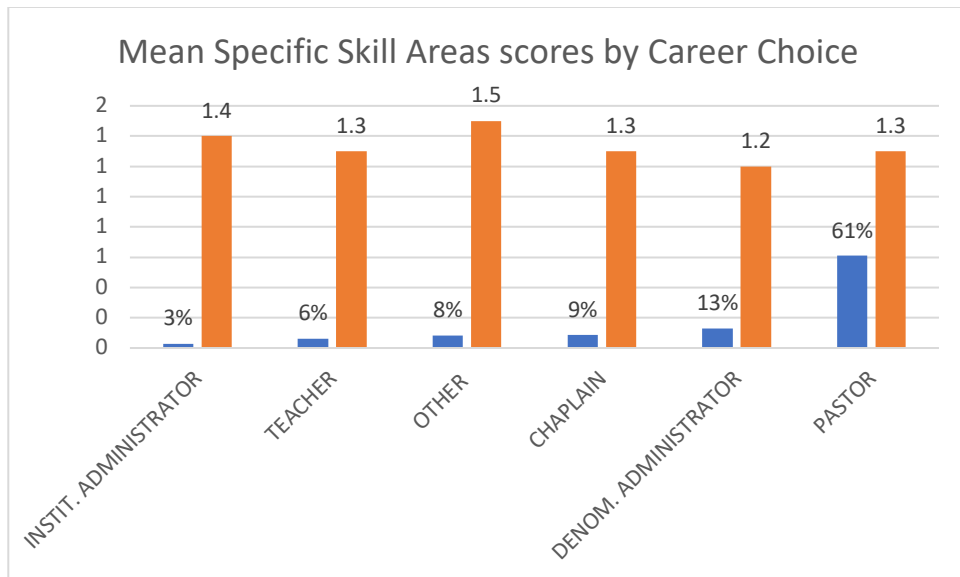
Below table shows the mean Attitude to Ministry Qualities score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor or Denom. Administrator get a better score for Ministry Qualities (1.3), as compared to Inst. Administrator (1.6), Teacher (1.5), Other (1.5), and Chaplain (1.4).



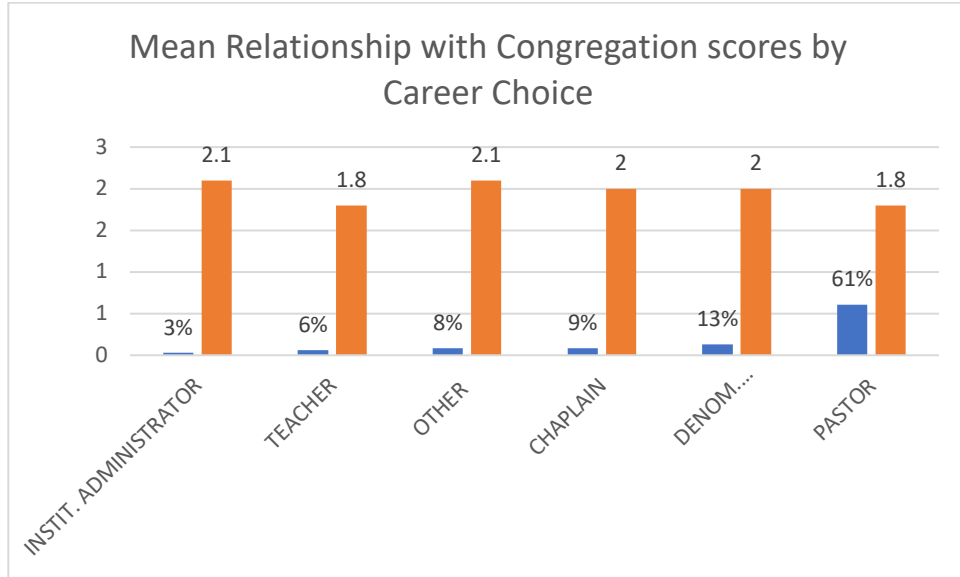
Below table shows the mean Attitude to Knowledge and Commitment score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor or Teacher get a better score for Knowledge and Commitment (1.2), as compared to Inst. Administrator (1.4), Other (1.3), and Chaplain (1.3).



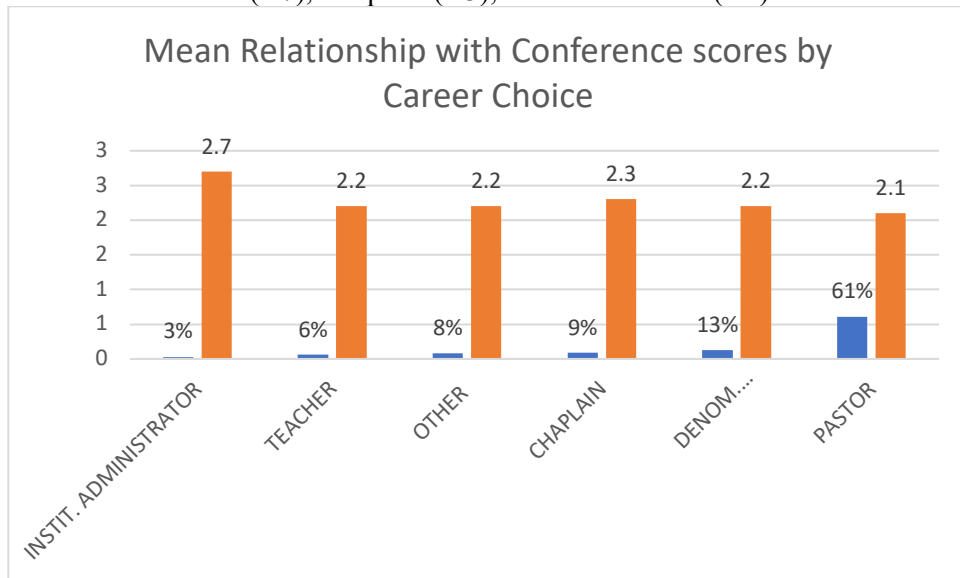
Below table shows the mean Specific Skill Areas score for the six preferred career choices. The difference across the six career choices in terms of Specific Skill Areas does not seem to be too significant. Those who would prefer to serve as Denom. Administrator (1.2), Pastor (1.3) or Teacher (1.3) have better scores, as compared to Other (1.5) and Inst. Administrator (1.4).



Below table shows the mean Relationship with Congregation score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor or Teacher get a better score for Relationship with Congregation (1.8), as compared to Inst. Administrator (2.1), Other (2.1), Denom. Administrator (2), and Chaplain (2).



Below table shows the mean Relationship with Conference score for the six preferred career choices. Those who would ideally prefer Pastor get a better score for Relationship with Conference (2.1), as compared to Inst. Administrator (2.7), Chaplain (2.3), and all the others (2.2).



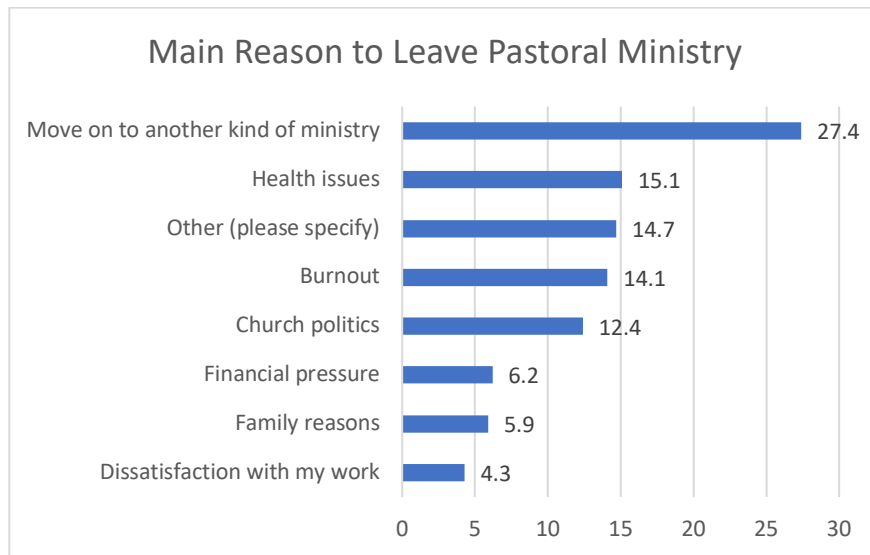
Q31: How likely is it that you will stay in pastoral ministry till retirement?

Three quarter of Pastors say to be likely and very like (75%) to stay in pastoral ministry till retirement. Just 16% are not sure and 9% unlikely and very unlikely.



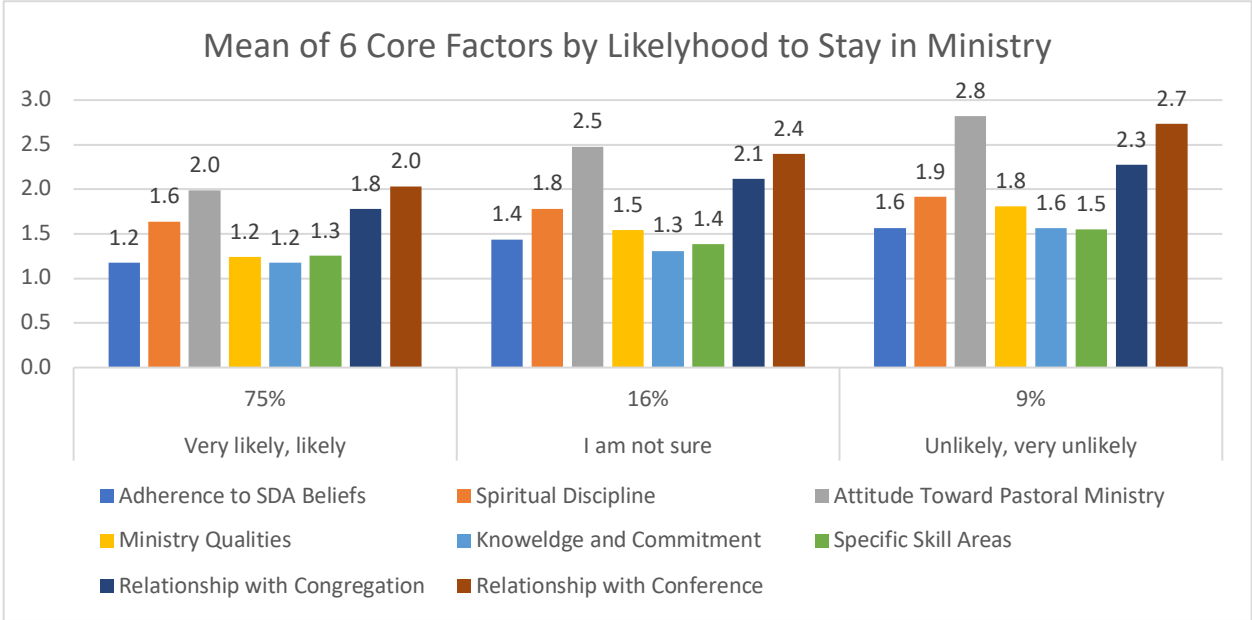
Q32: If you were to leave the pastoral ministry, what would be the main reason?

The data show that the main factor that potentially will drive a pastor away from pastoral ministry is the drive to move on to another kind of ministry (27%), followed by health issue (15%). In their comments, Pastors frequently state that a new passion, or new opportunity, or a new calling by God will cause them to leave pastoral ministry. New opportunity includes an administrative position in Conferences or Unions, or a more appealing opportunity elsewhere. Other factor that comes frequently in their comments (besides other ministry opportunity) are retirement, age and death. Burnout (14%) and church politics (12%) are also factors that may push a pastor to leaving pastoral ministry.



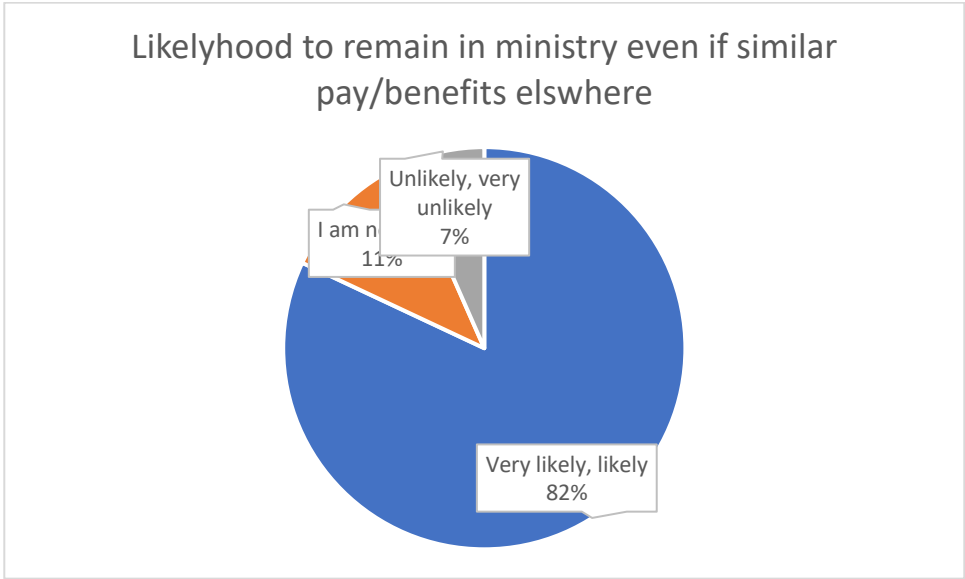
The table below shows and compares the mean score of the six dependent variables (core factors) across the three groups of respondents: “Likely/very likely,” “I am not sure,” and

“Unlikely/very unlikely.” For any of the core factors, the “Likely/very likely” categories get a lower mean (better score) than the “I am not sure,” and the “I am not sure” category get a lower mean (better) than the “Unlikely/very unlikely.” For example, the mean score for variable Adherence to SDA Beliefs is 1.2 in “Very likely/likely” category, 1.4 in “I am not sure,” and 1.6 in “Unlikely/very unlikely.” In the same way, the mean score for Spiritual Discipline is 1.6 in “Very likely/likely,” 1.8 in “I am not sure,” and 1.9 in “Unlikely/very unlikely.”

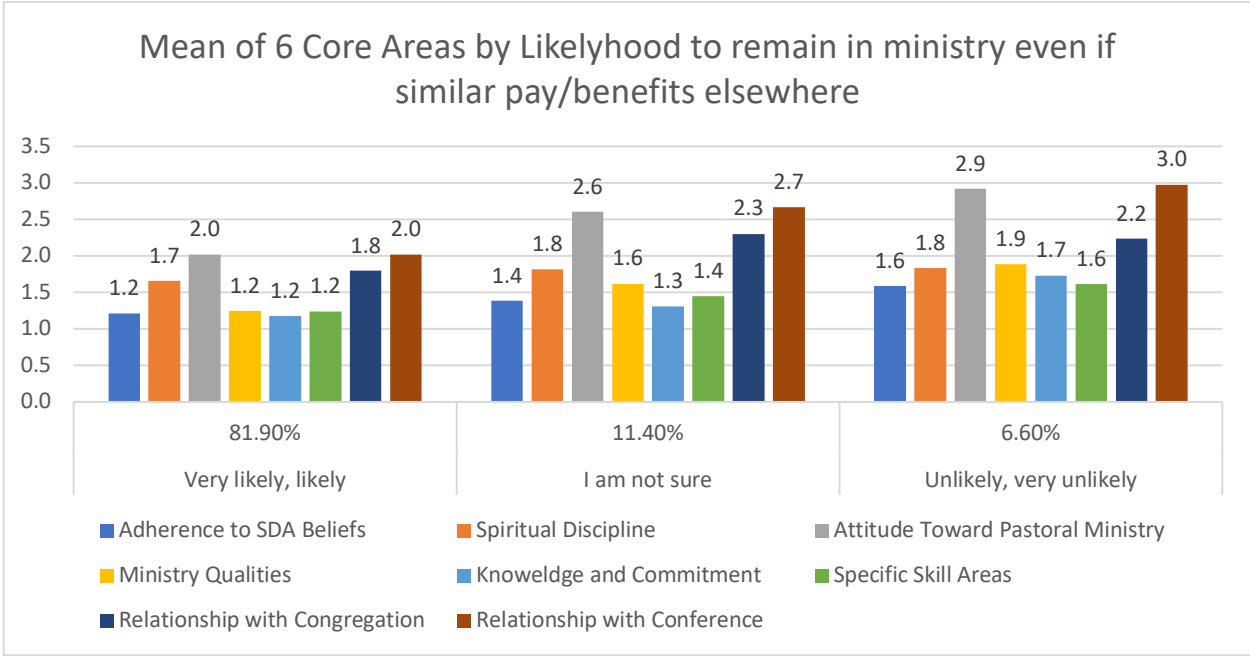


Q52.24: To which extent do you agree with the statement: I would like to remain in ministry, even if a job with similar pay and benefits were available elsewhere?

The likely to remain in ministry even if a job with similar pay and benefits were available elsewhere is relatively high among NAD Pastors. About 82% are very like/likely to remain in ministry, against 11% who are not sure, and 7% who are unlikely/very unlikely.

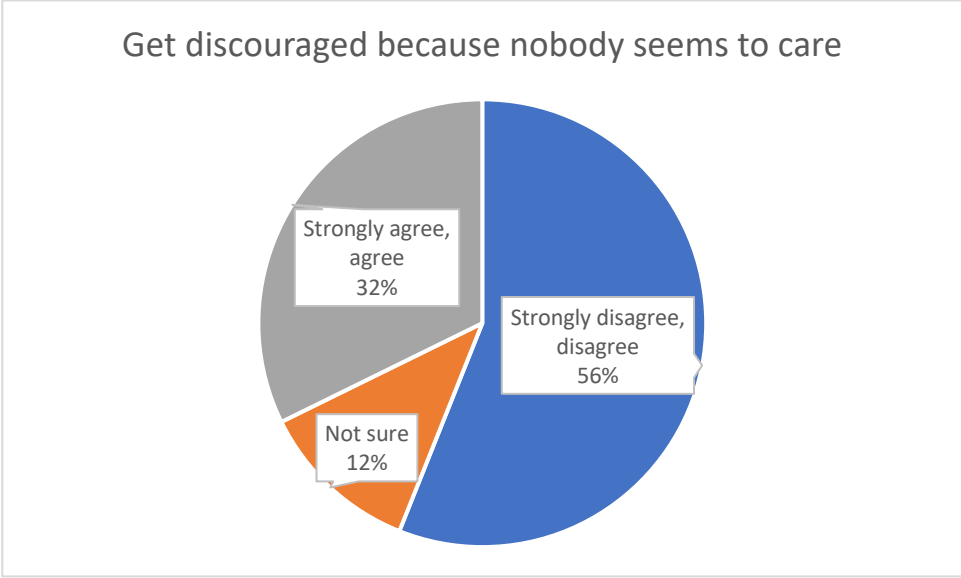


The table below shows and compares the mean score of the six dependent variables (core factors) across the three groups of respondents: “Likely/very likely,” “I am not sure,” and “Unlikely/very unlikely.” For any of the core factors, the “Likely/very likely” categories get a lower mean (better score) than the “I am not sure,” and the “I am not sure” category get a lower mean (better) than the “Unlikely/very unlikely.” For example, the mean score for variable Adherence to SDA Beliefs is 1.2 in “Very likely/likely” category, 1.4 in “I am not sure,” and 1.6 in “Unlikely/very unlikely.” In the same way, the mean score for Spiritual Discipline is 1.7 in “Very likely/likely,” 1.8 in “I am not sure,” and 1.8 in “Unlikely/very unlikely.” The mean score for Relationship with Conference is 2.0 in “Very likely/likely,” 2.7 in “I am not sure,” and 3.0 in “Unlikely/very unlikely”

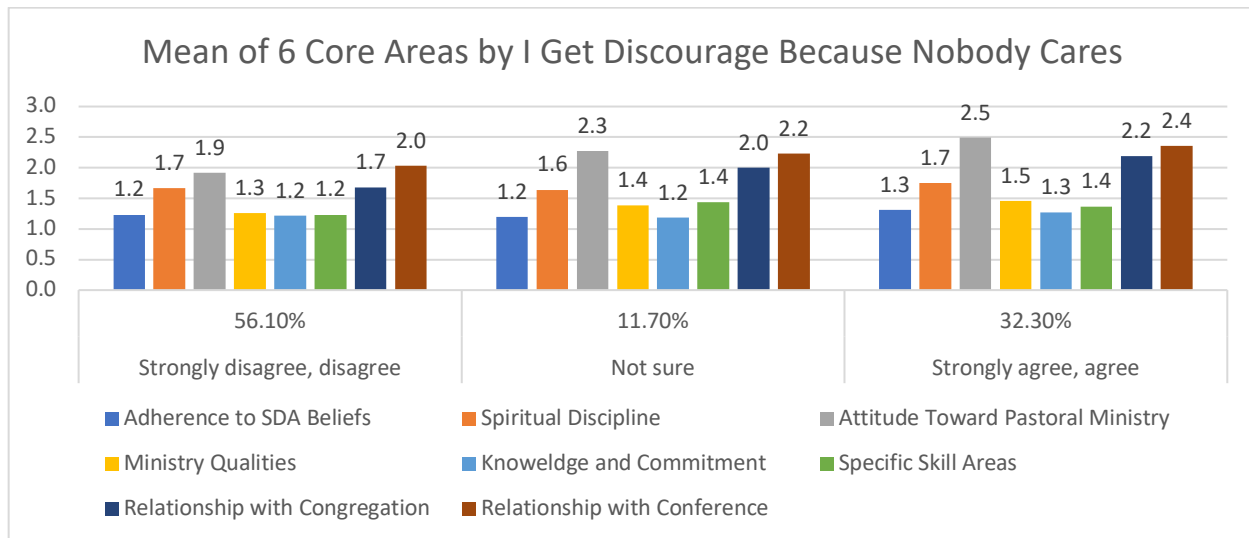


Q18.2: To which extent do you agree with the statement: I get discouraged because nobody seems to care?

About one third of Pastors (32%) agree/strongly agree that they get discouraged because nobody seems to care, against about two thirds (56%) who disagree/strongly disagree. About 12% are not sure.

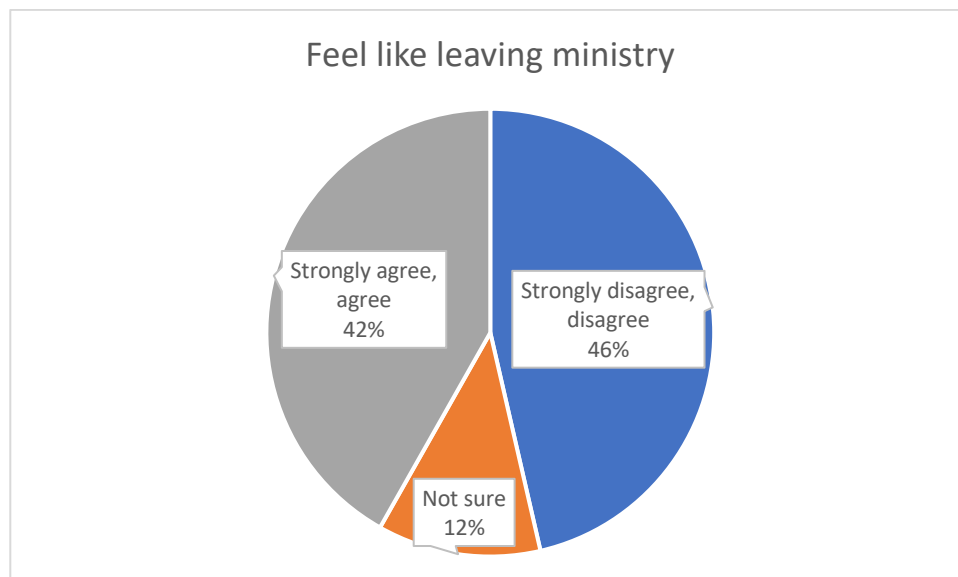


The table below shows and compares the mean score of the six dependent variables (core factors) across the three groups of respondents: “Strongly disagree/disagree,” “Not sure,” and “Strongly agree/agree.” Even though the difference across the groups is not as big as in the previous comparisons, the mean scores in the “Strongly disagree/disagree” category are generally lower (better) than the “Not sure,” and the “Not sure” category lower (better) than the “Strongly agree/agree.” For example, the mean score for variable Attitude Toward Pastoral Ministry is 1.9 in “Strongly disagree/disagree” category, 2.3 in “Not sure,” and 2.5 in “Strongly agree/agree.” In the same way, the mean score for Relationship with Congregation is 1.7 in “Strongly disagree/disagree,” 2.0 in “Not sure,” and 2.2 in “Strongly agree/agree.” The mean score for Relationship with Conference is 2.0 in “Strongly disagree/disagree,” 2.2 in “I Not sure,” and 2.4 in “Strongly agree/agree.”



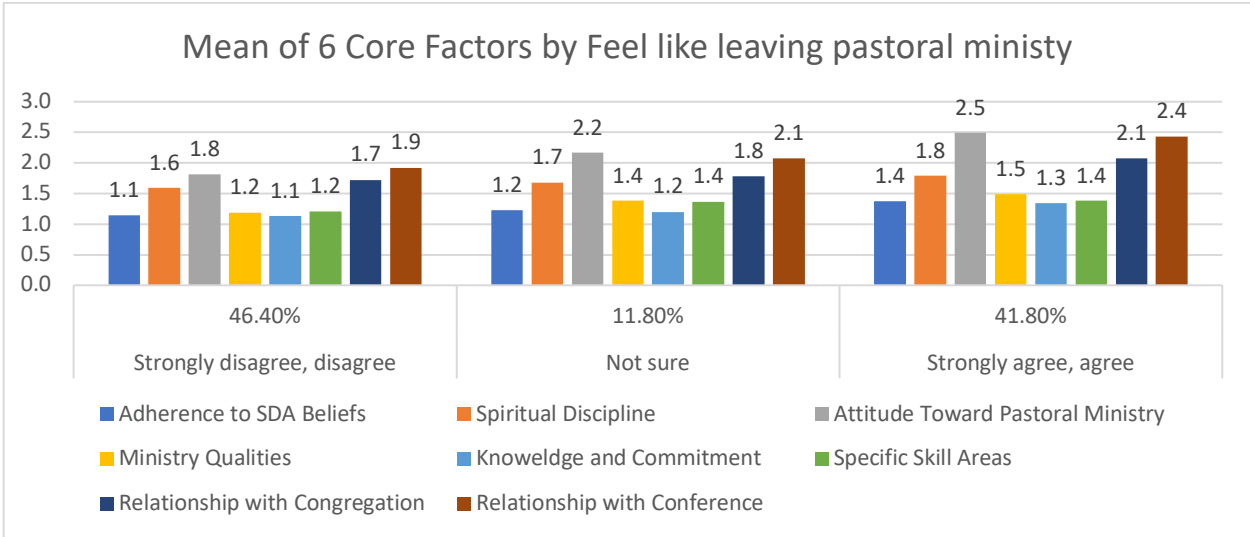
Q18.9: To which extent do you agree with the statement: Sometimes I feel that I would like to leave pastoral ministry?

Almost half of Pastors (42%) sometimes feel like that they would like to leave pastoral ministry, against another half (46%) who say the contrary. About 12% are not sure.



The table below shows and compares the mean score of the six dependent variables (core factors) across the three groups of respondents: “Strongly disagree/disagree,” “Not sure,” and “Strongly agree/agree.” For any of the core factors, the “Strongly disagree/disagree” categories get a lower mean (better score) than the “Not sure,” and the “Not sure” category gets a lower mean (better) than the “Strongly agree/agree.” For example, the mean score for variable Adherence to SDA Beliefs is 1.1 in “Strongly disagree/disagree” category, 1.2 in “Not sure,” and 1.4 in “Strongly agree/agree.” In the same way, the mean score for Spiritual Discipline is 1.6 in “Strongly disagree/disagree,” 1.7 in “Not sure,” and 1.8 in “Strongly agree/agree.” The mean

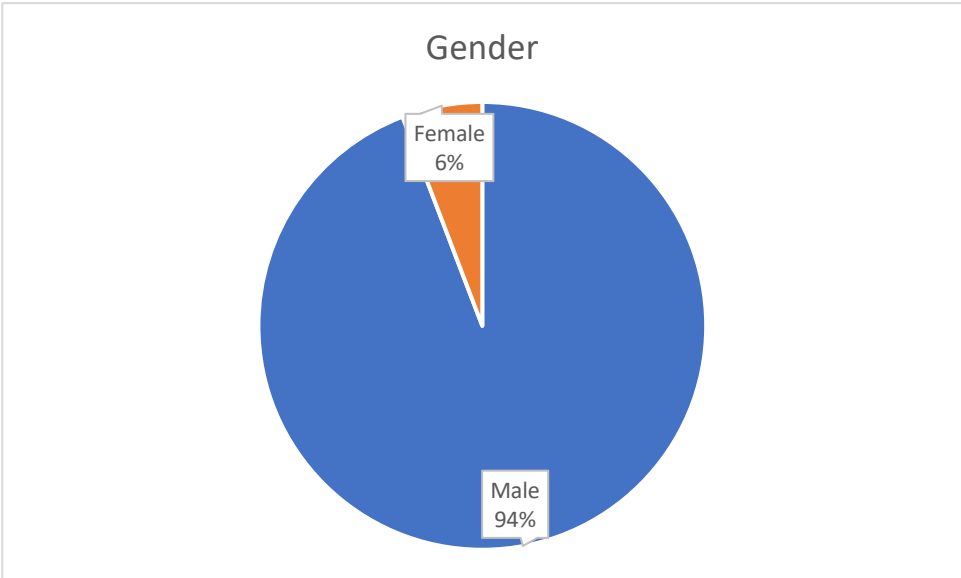
score for Relationship with Conference is 1.9 in “Strongly disagree/disagree,” 2.1 in “I Not sure,” and 2.4 in “Strongly agree/agree.”



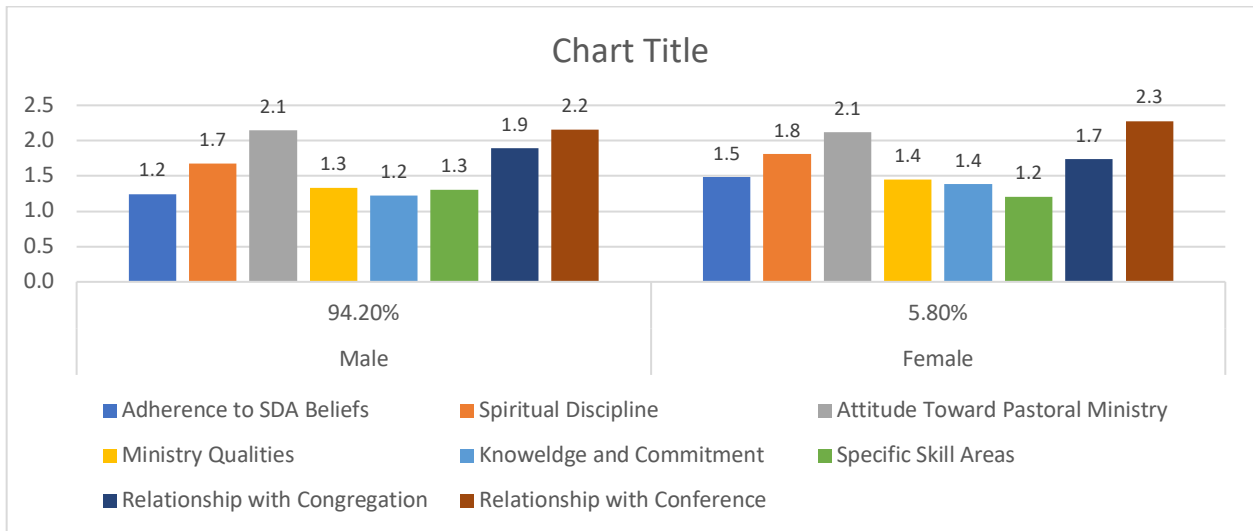
Demographics Information

Gender

Females are lowly represented among survey respondents. Just 5.6% are females compared to an overwhelming majority of men (94.2%)

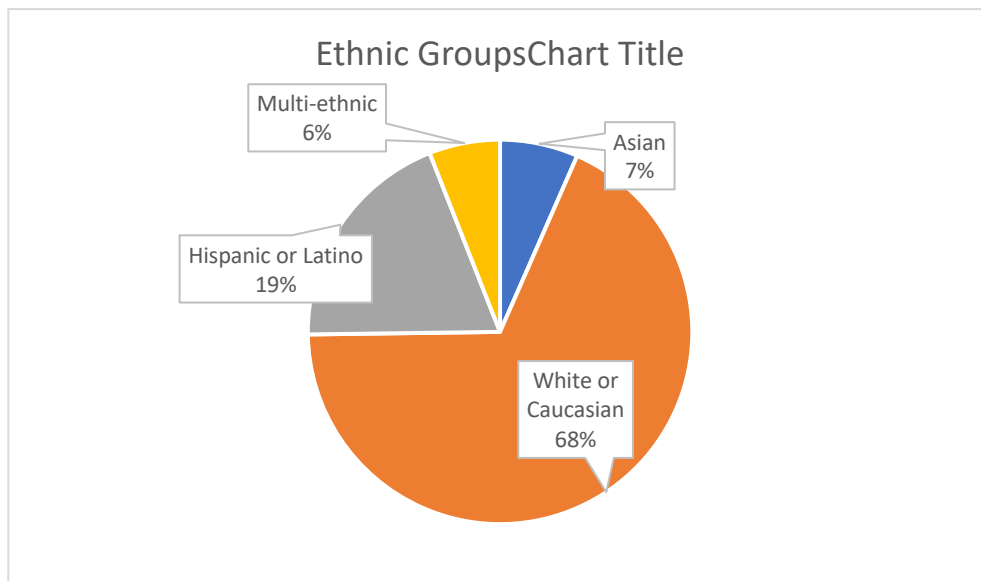


Difference between male and female does not seem to be too significant in the 6 core areas, with a slight advantage for men, especially in the area of Adherence to SDA Beliefs (1.2 vs 1.5), and Knowledge and Commitment (1.2 vs 1.4). When it comes to Relationship with Congregation, Female seems slightly to do better than Male (1.7 vs 1.9).

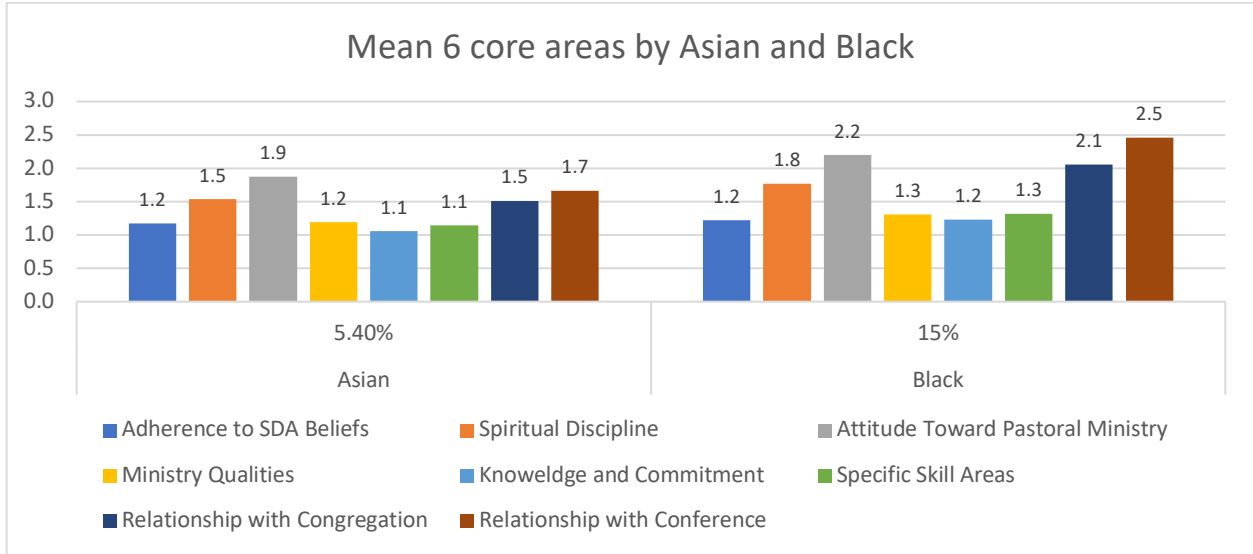


Ethnic Groups

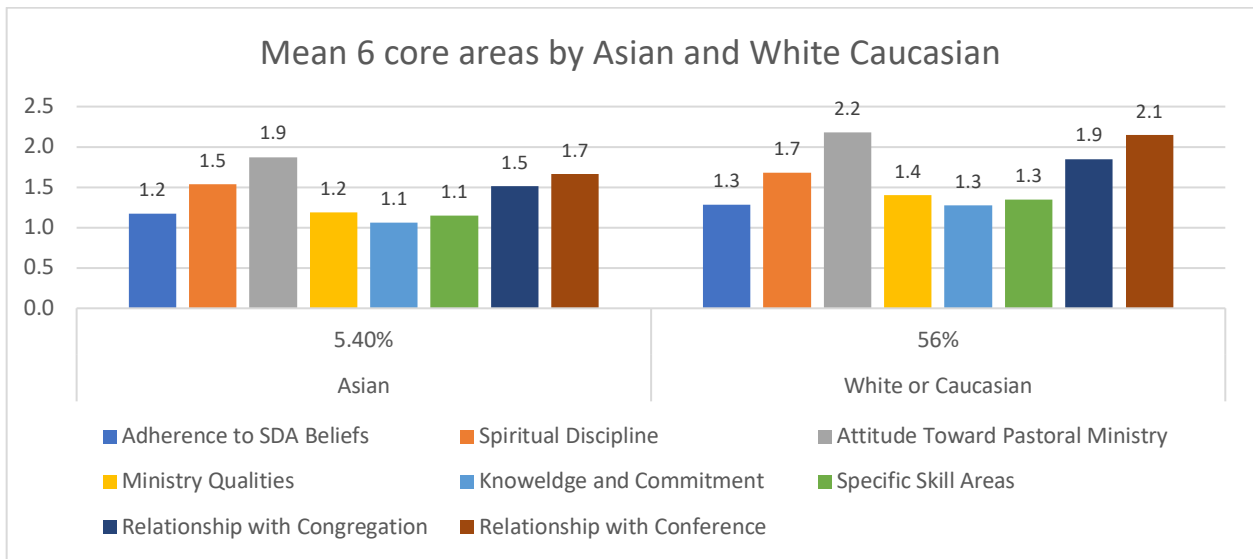
More than half of Pastors are White or Caucasian (56%). Hispanic or Latino (15.8%) and Black (15%) combined represent one third of the pastoral force in the NAD.



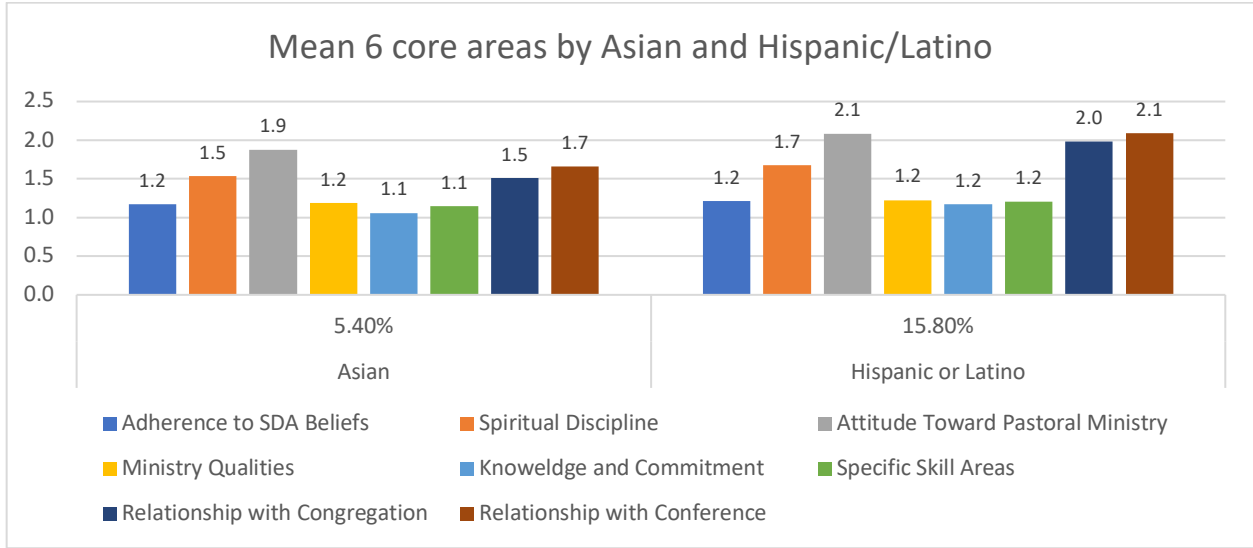
The table below show that Asians generally tend to do better than Black in the six core areas (Adherence to SDA Beliefs, Spiritual Discipline, Attitude Toward Pastoral Ministry, Ministry Qualities, Knowledge and Commitment, Specific Skill Areas, Relationship with Congregation, and Relationship with Conference).



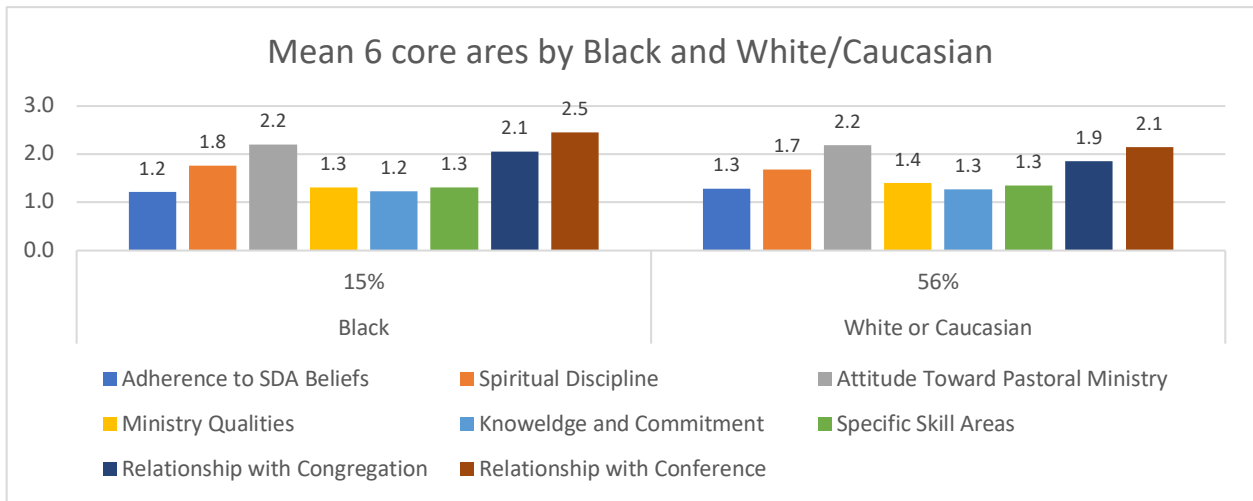
Asians tend also to do better than White/Caucasians in the six core areas.



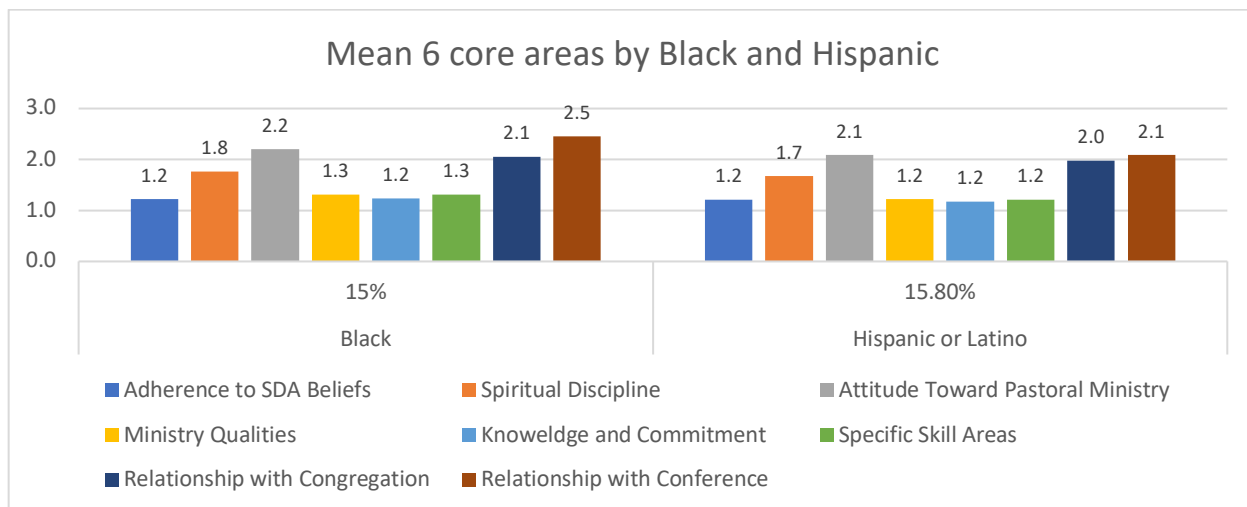
Asians do better than Hispanic/Latinos in the 6 core areas



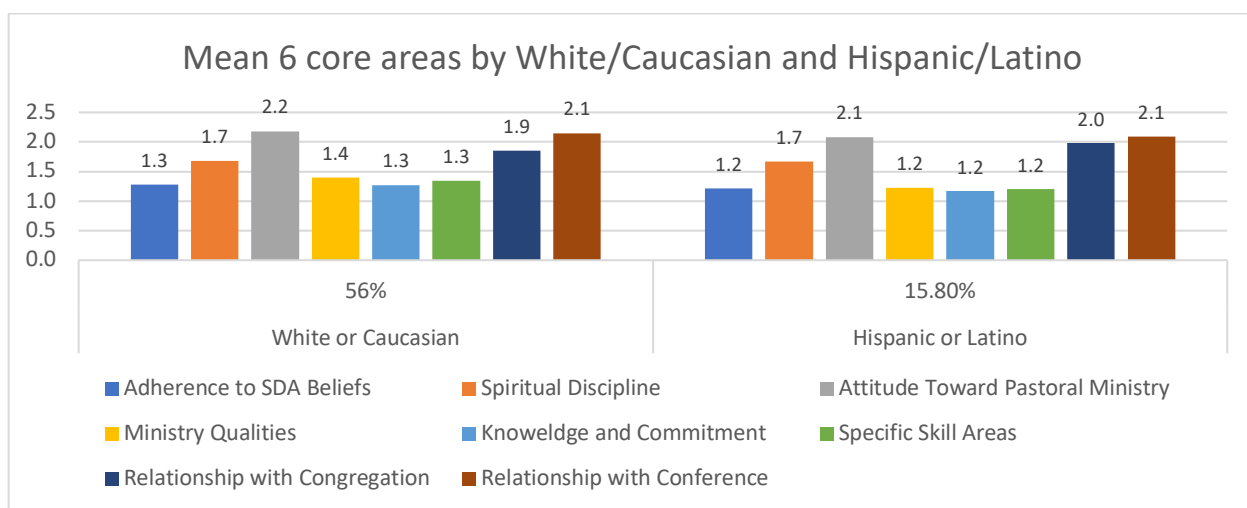
Black and White/Caucasians seem to score the same in the six core areas, except for “Relationship to Conference” where White/Caucasian do better (2.1) than Black (2.5).



Hispanic/Latino seem to slightly doing better than Black in the six core areas.



It does not seem to be much difference between Hispanic/Latino and White/Caucasian in the six core areas.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

When Pastors withdraw from full time ministry, what factors are most salient in their decisions to leave? What elements or combination of factors are most significant in the decision that Pastors make to stay engaged in pastoral ministry? What factors are most compelling for individuals to enter full-time pastoral ministry? What are the factors making Pastors successful (i.e. their churches thrive)?

The study shows that the majority of NAD Pastors want to stay in pastoral ministry. About 61% consider the pastoral ministry as their ideal ministry where to serve, 75% are likely/very likely to stay in pastoral ministry until retirement, about 82% are very like/likely to remain in ministry, even if a job with similar pay and benefits is available elsewhere. Reasons that may lead Pastors

to leave the ministry include the drive to move on to another kind of ministry (27%), followed by health issue (15%). Other reasons include burnout (14%) and church politics (12%).

However, Pastors get discouraged because nobody cares (32%), and sometimes feel like leaving the pastoral ministry (41%). The study finds a consistent link between Pastors' discouragement and feeling like leaving and six core areas such as their adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, spiritual discipline, ministry qualities, knowledge and commitment, specific skill areas, relationship with their congregations, and their relationship with their conferences. Those who are motivated/engaged and have no intention to leave tend to do better in those core areas. Those who consider Pastoral Ministry, Teacher and Denominational Administrator ideal ministries serve are also better in the above-mentioned areas than those who see Chaplaincy, Institutional Administrator and Others as ideal ministries to serve (they do not seem to be happy with their current role as Pastor).

Regarding the six core areas that seem to predict Pastors' motivation to stay longer in ministry, Asian, although a minority among the respondents (7%) seem to do better than Black, White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino. Black and White/Caucasians seem to score the same in the six core areas, except for "Relationship to Conference" where White/Caucasian do better (mean score 2.1) than Black (mean score 2.5). Hispanic/Latino seem to slightly doing better than Black in the six core areas.

Gender does seem to much weight when it to how Pastors perform in the six core areas, except maybe a slight advantage for men, especially in the area of Adherence to SDA Beliefs (1.2 vs 1.5), and Knowledge and Commitment (1.2 vs 1.4). When it comes to Relationship with Congregation, Female seems slightly to do better than Male (1.7 vs 1.9).

In order to improve pastoral longevity in ministry, that study recommends that NAD take the following actions:

- Keep doing what has worked so far in keep Pastors engaged/motivated and not willing to leave until retirement.
- Implement a program that aim at improving the competence of in-ministry Pastors who seem to lack in the six core areas: adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, spiritual discipline, ministry qualities, knowledge and commitment, specific skill areas, relationship with congregations, and relationship with conferences.
- Develop an evaluation grid or an assessment tool during recruitment of Pastors to verify candidates' standing in relation to the six core areas: adherence to Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, spiritual discipline, ministry qualities, knowledge and commitment, specific skill areas, relationship with congregations, and relationship with conferences.
- In the recruitment process, give priority to candidates that clearly identify pastoral ministry, teacher or denominational administrator as their ideal/primary career choice.
- Increase the ratio of Asian, as they seem to reach the highest standard in the six core areas, thus allowing to believe they are likely to stay longer in pastoral ministry.