

RESEARCH REPORT

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*Southern Baptist Congregations and Worshipers:
Supplement to A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations*

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INTRODUCTION

In April of 2001 nearly 300,000 worshipers, age 15 and older, in more than 2,000 congregations in the United States participated in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. Results from this study have been published in *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's Going Where and Why* by Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Ky., 2002).

This report is designed as a supplement to the Field Guide and contains information on the nearly 20,000 Southern Baptist worshipers in 165 Southern Baptist congregations that participated in the national study.¹ Headings and figure numbers in the remainder of this report correspond to those in the Field Guide. Thus, a person reading the Field Guide can easily find information for Southern Baptist worshipers that correspond to the findings for all worshipers in the United States.

Portions of the Field Guide that provide background for the U.S. Congregational Life Survey or summary commentary are not replicated here. This explains why this study begins with Chapter 2 and some of the sections in the Field Guide, primarily at the end of each chapter, are not replicated in this report.

In order to interpret this report, it is helpful to understand who the approximately 20,000 survey participants in Southern Baptist congregations are. Based on responses to the survey, 81.7 percent of worship service attendees in Southern Baptist congregations are members of the church where surveyed. Given that they were both members and attendees, these respondents are primarily active Southern Baptist members. Another 7.4 percent of survey respondents indicated that while they were not members, they did regularly participate at the church and still another 2.2 percent indicated they were in the process of becoming a member. Thus, 91.4 percent of worship service attendees are members or regular participants in the congregation where enumerated. The remaining attendees either are not members and not regular participants (5.6%), or did not respond to the question (3.1%).

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey was conducted in 2001 by U.S. Congregations, a religious research group staffed by religious researchers and sociologists, and funded by the Lilly Endowment and the Louisville Institute and supported by the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Research Services Team of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), assisted in recruiting Southern Baptist congregations for the study. This report and other reports for Southern Baptists are posted at <http://www.namb.net/research>. Findings from the national study are posted at <http://www.uscongregations.org>.

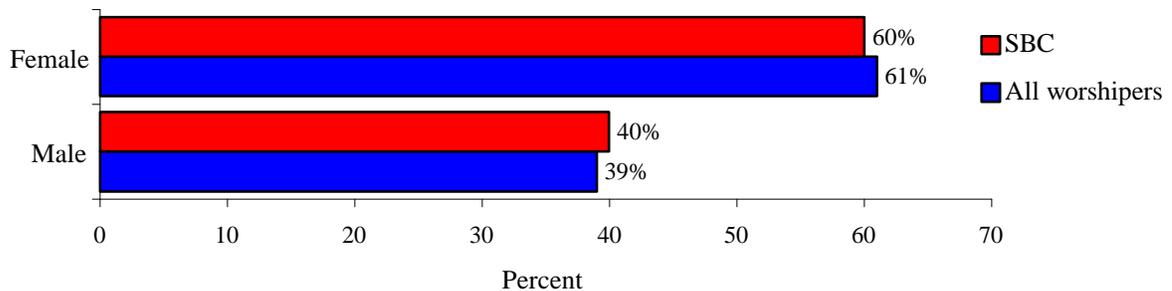
¹ Southern Baptist congregations were selected to provide a representative sample of the approximately 5.2 million people who attend worship services in Southern Baptist churches and missions on a typical Sunday morning as reported on the 1999 Annual Church Profile (LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn.).

Who Worships Where?

How to Identify a Worshiper

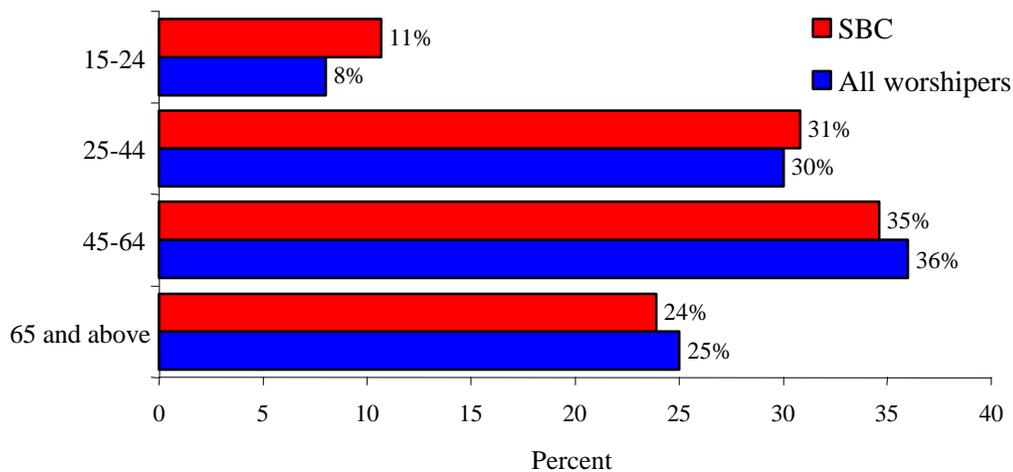
Men or women? Like all religious groups, Southern Baptist worshippers are predominately female.

Figure 2.1—MEN OR WOMEN?



How old are they? The average age of a worshiper in a Southern Baptist congregation is 49 years old.² (As noted in the Field Guide, participants in the study were age 15 and older.)

Figure 2.2—HOW OLD ARE THEY?



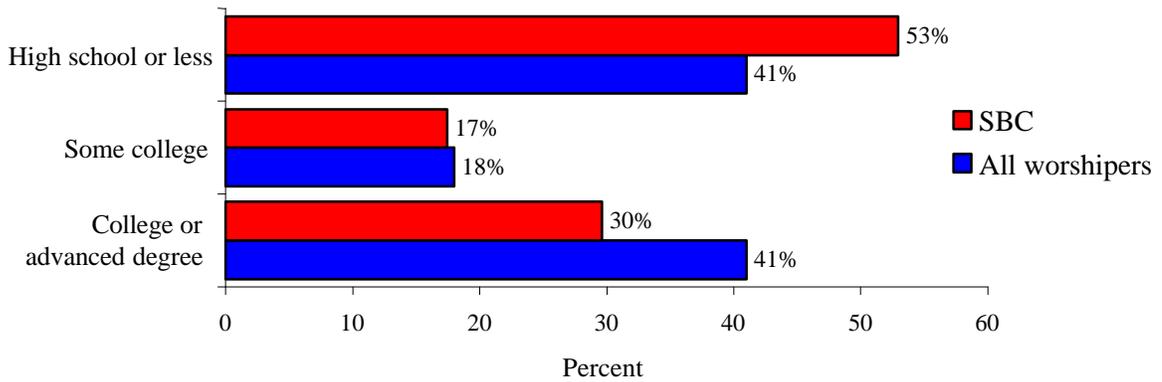
² The median age for Southern Baptist worshippers is also 49.

Do they work outside the home? Fifty-four percent of worshipers in Southern Baptist churches are employed full-time or part-time. Twenty-three percent are retired, 10 percent are full-time homemakers, and 3 percent are students.

How much education do they have? Worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations are less educated than worshipers in general.

Figure 2.3—HOW EDUCATED ARE WORSHIPERS?

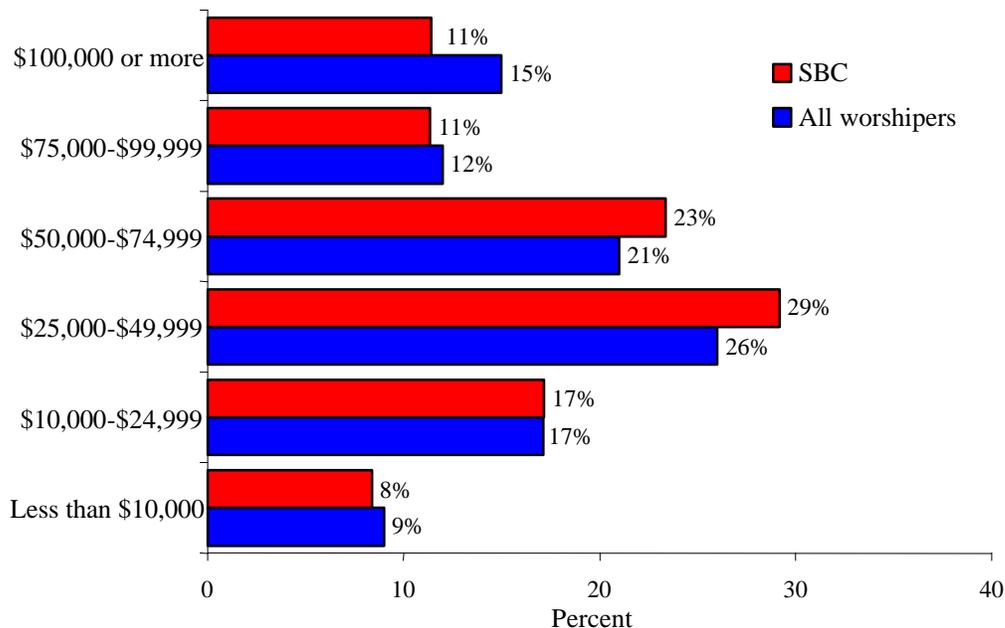
What is the highest educational level you have completed?



What is their annual income? Southern Baptists are fairly representative of the population as a whole regarding income.

Figure 2.4—WHAT IS THEIR ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME?

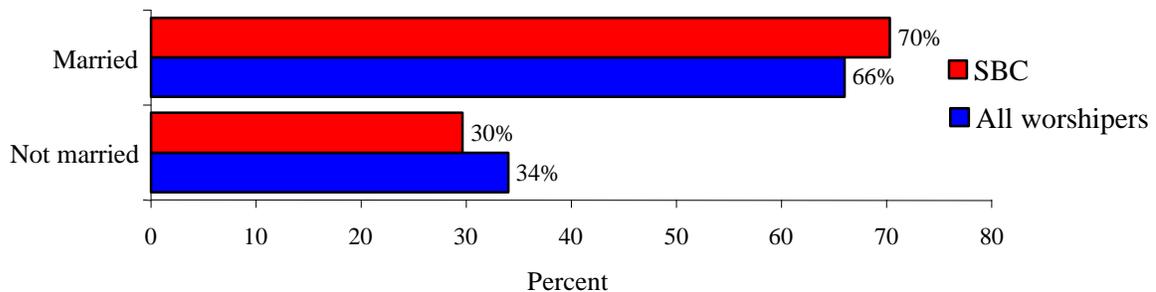
Which of the following describes your total annual household income before taxes?



Are they married? Seven of 10 Southern Baptist worshippers are married—75 percent of those that are married are in their first marriage. Fourteen percent of worshippers have never married. One of 5 worshippers (21.3%) has experienced divorce or is currently separated—the large majority (70%) have remarried. Eight percent of Southern Baptist worshippers report they are currently widowed—an additional 2 percent report they remarried after being widowed. Two percent of worshippers are not married but indicate they live with someone in a committed relationship.

Figure 2.5—ARE THEY MARRIED?

What is your present marital status?



Do worshippers attend services alone? Forty-two percent of worshippers in Southern Baptist congregations indicated they were attending worship with their spouse at the time of the survey.

Do they have children? Forty-four percent of Southern Baptist worshippers have children who live with them. Thirty-one percent live in a marital relationship where children are not currently present. Five percent of worshippers live in a household where there is one adult with children present. Twelve percent of worshippers live alone.

What is their race and ethnicity? Southern Baptists are less diverse than worshippers as a whole and less diverse than the U.S. population.³

Figure 2.5.1—DISTRIBUTION OF SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

What is your race or origin?

(Mark all that apply.)

Asian or Pacific Islander	1%
Black or African American	4
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	3
Indian (American) or Alaska Native	2
White or Caucasian	91
Some other race	1

(Note that respondents were allow to choose more than one category, thus the sum of percentages does not equal to 100.)

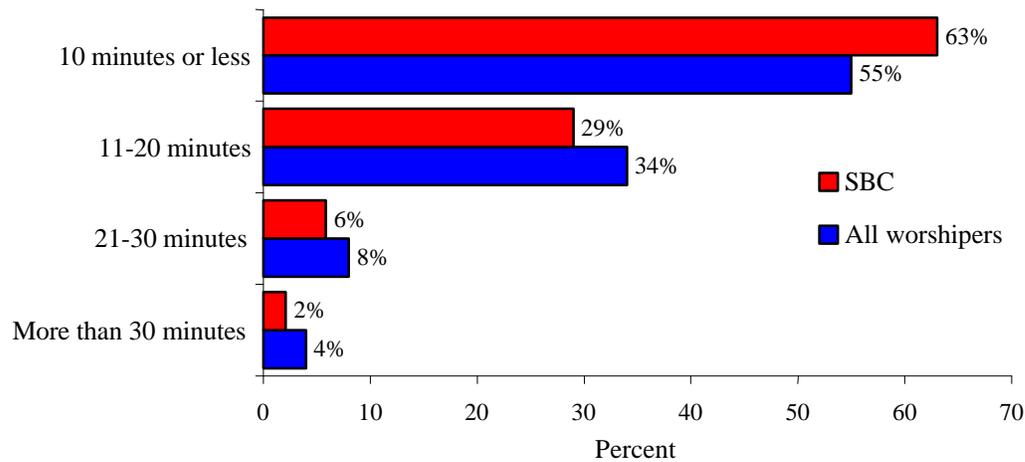
³ However, these statistics do not indicate that Southern Baptists are less diverse than other specific religious groups. For example, comparable data have been released for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This group reports approximately the same racial/ethnic mix among their worshippers.

Where were they born? Ninety-seven percent of Southern Baptist worshippers were born in the United States. Most of the other 3 percent were born in non-English speaking countries.

Location, location, location Like all worshippers, Southern Baptists do not commute long distances to church. Nearly two-thirds travel 10 minutes or less to get to their congregation. Rarely do Southern Baptists commute more than 30 minutes to get to church.

Figure 2.5.2—LENGTH OF TIME TO COMMUTE TO CHURCH

How long does it usually take you to get here?



How to Identify a Congregation

Like all religious groups participating in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, Southern Baptist congregations were given a Congregational Profile containing questions regarding the overall organization. The pastor was the primary person completing the questionnaire for Southern Baptist congregations. However, the Congregational Profile is not the source of most of the information that follows. Instead, much of the information that follows comes from a study of Southern Baptist congregations conducted in early 2000, since it is based on a larger sample of SBC congregations than the U.S. Congregational Life Survey.⁴

How large? While a few Southern Baptist congregations are among the largest in the nation, the typical Southern Baptist congregation tends to be small. Specifically, the median Southern Baptist congregation is smaller than the median given for all congregations in the U.S.

Figure 2.6—HOW LARGE ARE U.S. CONGREGATIONS?

How large are Southern Baptist congregations?

	Median
Number of people associated in any way with the congregation	125
Number of people regularly participating in the congregation	90
Number of adults (18 and up) regularly participating in the congregation.....	60
Average worship attendance.....	80

What's the congregation's affiliation? Most Southern Baptist congregations are uniquely Southern Baptist. Only 3.2 percent are dually aligned with other denominations.

Where does the congregation worship? Ninety-seven percent of Southern Baptist congregations meet in a church building—usually this is a building owned by the congregation. Typically, a Southern Baptist congregation has worship space for double the number of its worship service attendance. The median Southern Baptist congregation can seat 200 worshipers.

⁴ Results from the earlier study have been published in *Southern Baptist Congregations Today* by Phillip B. Jones and is available at www.namb.net/research.

How is the congregation financially supported? The median Southern Baptist congregation reports \$90,000 in total income. This is \$15,000 less than the norm for all congregations. The primary source of these receipts is the tithes and offerings of congregational members.⁵

Figure 2.7—HOW IS THE CONGREGATION FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED?

	Median Amount for Most Recent Fiscal Year
Income from all sources.....	\$90,000
Income from individuals' donations, dues, or contributions.....	\$86,293
Total congregation budget	\$79,000
Congregation's operating expenses	\$61,841

Nine of 10 (91%) Southern Baptist congregations report that they have a stable or increasing financial base with the remainder indicating declining finances. Only half a percent report a financial condition that threatens survival.

How is the congregation staffed? Nine of 10 Southern Baptist congregations have the services of an ongoing pastor—either regular or interim. Nearly all pastors are paid. Seven of 10 are employed full-time by the church. Almost all Southern Baptist pastors are male. In addition to the pastor, the typical congregation has a part-time ministerial/program person and a part-time secretarial or janitorial support person.

How old is the congregation? While some Southern Baptist congregations date back to the late 18th century, the typical Southern Baptist congregation is 66 years old.

⁵ The source for this statistic and those in figure 2.7 is the Congregation Profile from the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. The sample data from the Congregation Profile has been weighted to reflect the population of all Southern Baptist congregations. Still, the total income is higher than the median \$79,057 total receipts for all Southern Baptist congregations as calculated from the 2000 Annual Church Profile, a yearly denominational survey of Southern Baptist congregations administered by LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn. The higher figure calculated from the Congregational Profile is probably due to response bias.

What Does Typical Mean?

Southern Baptist congregations, like congregations of most religious groups, tend to be small. Nearly two-thirds of Southern Baptist congregations have 100 or fewer in worship on Sunday morning.⁶ At the other extreme, only 1 percent of Southern Baptist congregations have 1,000 or more in weekly worship.⁷ Note that worshipers are distributed differently. For example, while large and mega churches account for only 7 percent of Southern Baptist congregations, they account for 38 percent of all worship service attendees. At the other end of the spectrum, the 63 percent of Southern Baptist congregations that have 100 or fewer in worship attendance account for only 23 percent of all worship service attendees. The charts below illustrate these differences.

Figure 2.7.1—CONGREGATIONS BY SIZE

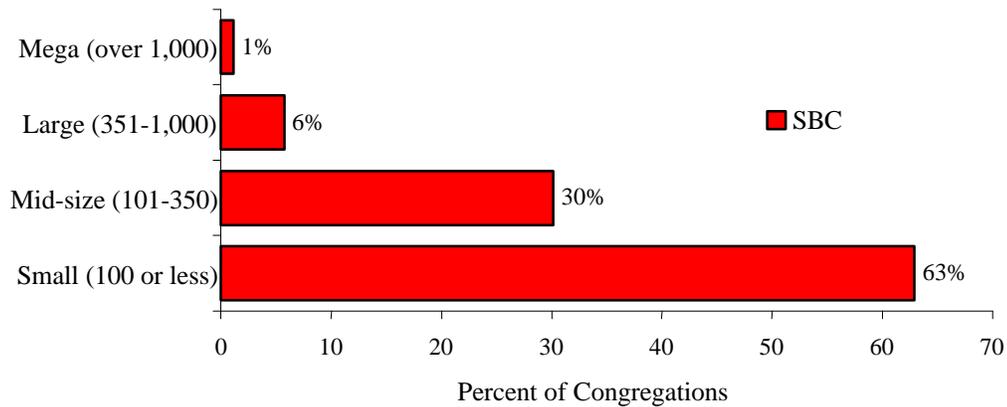
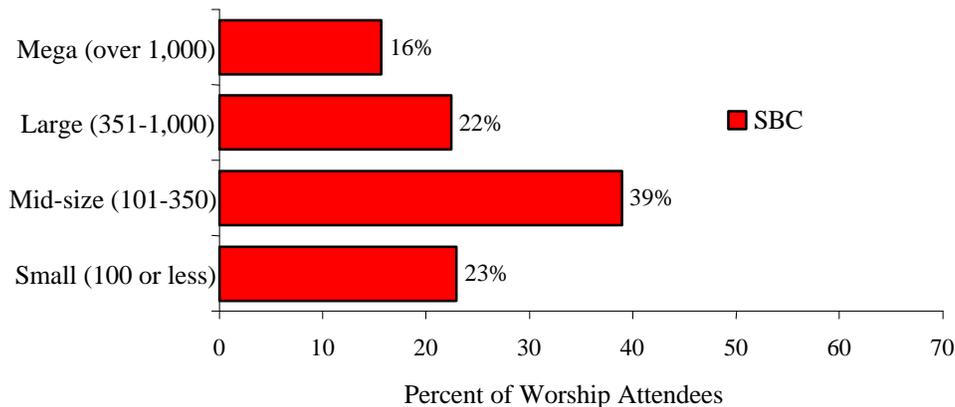


Figure 2.7.2—WORSHIP ATTENDEES BY SIZE OF CONGREGATION



⁶2000 Annual Church Profile, LifeWay Resources, Nashville, Tenn.

⁷ For U.S. Congregational Life reports, “mega” is defined as 1,000 or more worship service attendees. Other studies define “mega” as 2,000 or more in worship.

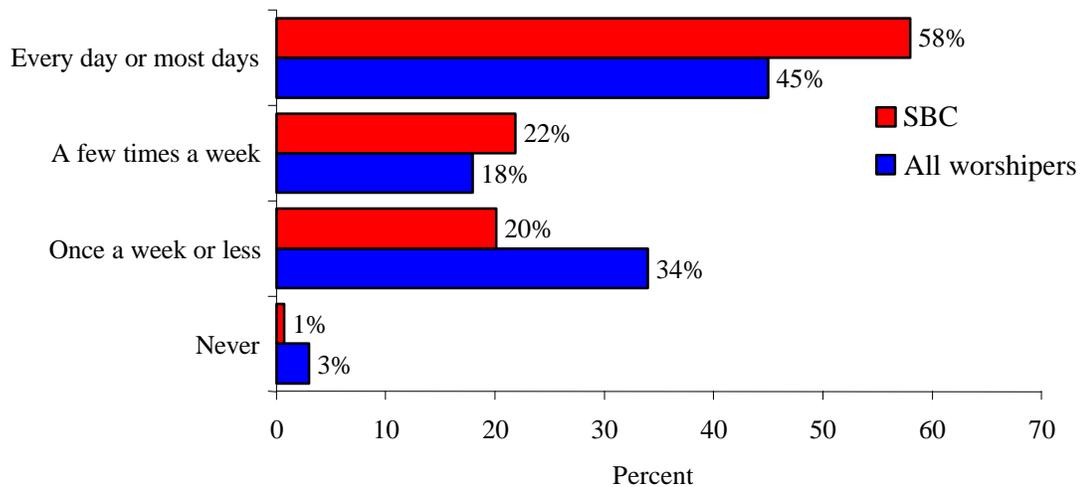
Spiritual Connections

What Are Spiritual Connections?

Private devotions: How often do worshipers pray, meditate, or read the Bible?
 Southern Baptist worshipers tend to spend more time in devotional activities than most worshipers.

Figure 3.1—TIME IN PRIVATE DEVOTIONS

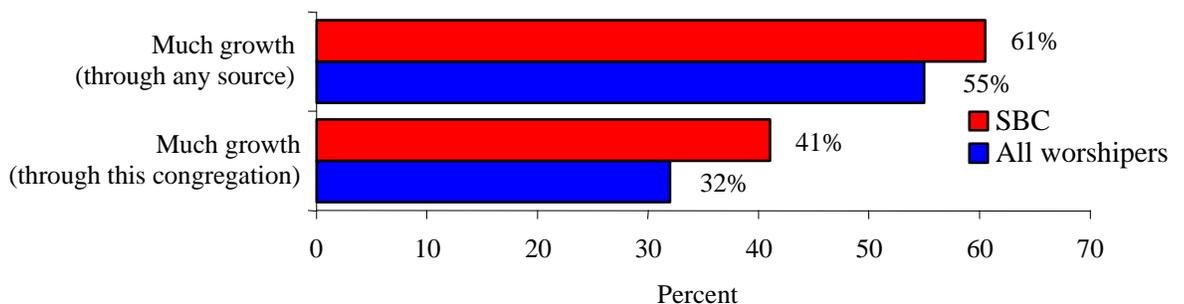
How often do you spend time in private devotional activities (such as prayer, meditation, reading the Bible alone)?



Growing in faith? Six of 10 worshipers (61%) in Southern Baptist congregations indicate they have experienced much spiritual growth during the past year. The local congregation was the primary source of this growth. Four of 10 worshipers (41%) responded that their growth came through their congregation, while 9 percent indicated their growth came through another group or congregation and 11 percent attributed their growth to their own private activities.

Figure 3.2—GROWING IN FAITH?

Over the last year, how much have you grown in your faith?

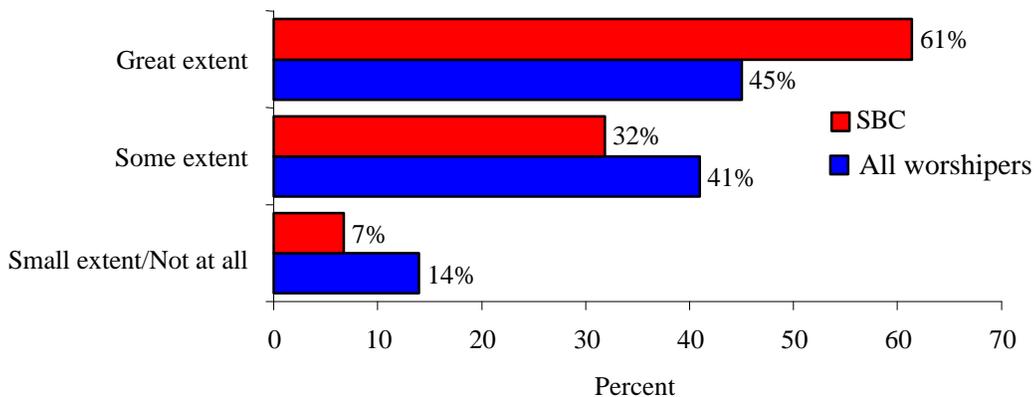


Rating the congregation or parish: Is it meeting worshipers' spiritual needs? Most worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations, 86 percent, feel that their spiritual needs are being met in the context of their congregation. This is close to the national average.

Another sign of satisfaction Six of 10 Southern Baptist worshipers report that the worship services or other activities of their congregation greatly help them with everyday living.

Figure 3.2.1—HELP WITH LIVING

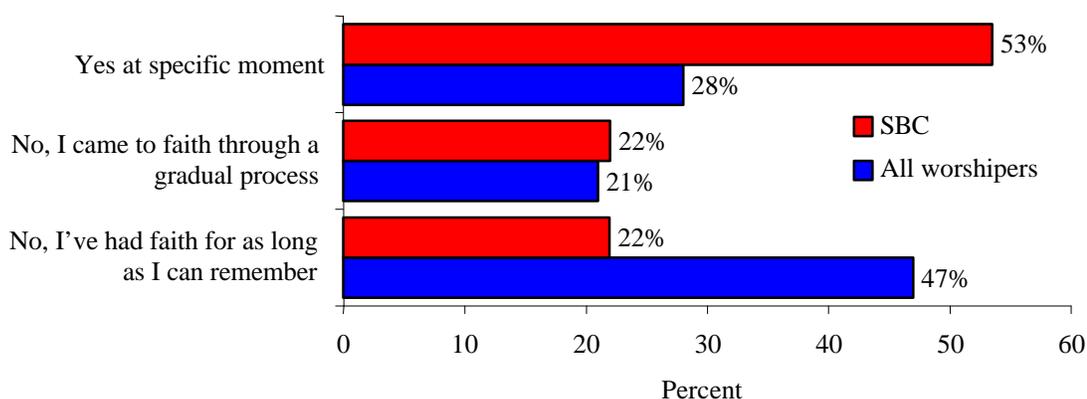
To what extent do the worship services or activities of this congregation help you with everyday living?



Conversion or not? They've not seen the light. *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations* makes clear distinctions between conversion, gradually coming to faith, and always having had faith based on responses to a specific question in the survey. (See figure 3.3 for precise wording of the question.) However, most Southern Baptists equate having faith with being converted. For Southern Baptists, conversion is the same as being saved, being born again, or more specifically having accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. While the term can have a connotation of an instantaneous transaction, it does not exclude the possibility of gradual development. The point is that some Southern Baptists still see themselves as being converted even though they would also describe themselves as coming to faith through a gradual process or as having faith for as long as they can remember. These are not mutually exclusive concepts for Southern Baptists. This is born out in another set of questions in the U.S. Congregational Life Survey that was asked of a sub-sample of about 2,000 worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations. Here almost 9 of 10 worship service attendees (87.9%) affirmed that they "...have had a conversion experience—that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ and accepted Him as your Lord and Savior." Furthermore, most were able to specify an age at which this commitment occurred. Even in the context of the original question (figure 3.3), most worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations describe their faith experience as a moment of decisive faith commitment. In fact, Southern Baptists are nearly twice as likely to describe their faith in this manner as compared to all worshipers. Still, sizeable portions also describe their experience as a process and always being grounded in faith.

Figure 3.3— FAITH DEVELOPMENT⁸

Some people feel they came to faith gradually. For others, it began at a definite moment of commitment. Have you ever experienced such a moment of decisive faith commitment or conversion?



One Book but many views: Views of the Bible Most Southern Baptists have a high view of the Bible. Seven of 10 worshippers in Southern Baptist congregations affirm that the Bible is the Word of God and it is to be taken literally word for word. Southern Baptists are 2½ times more likely to interpret scripture literally compared to the norm. Despite some differences in how it is to be interpreted, nearly all affirm that the Bible is the Word of God.

Figure 3.4—Views OF THE BIBLE

Which statement comes closest to your view of the Bible? (Mark one only.)

The Bible is the Word of God, to be taken literally word for word	71%
The Bible is the Word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context	17
The Bible is the Word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the church's teachings	11
The Bible is not the Word of God but contains God's word to us	1
The Bible is not the Word of God but is a valuable book	0
The Bible is an ancient book with little value today	0
Don't know	1

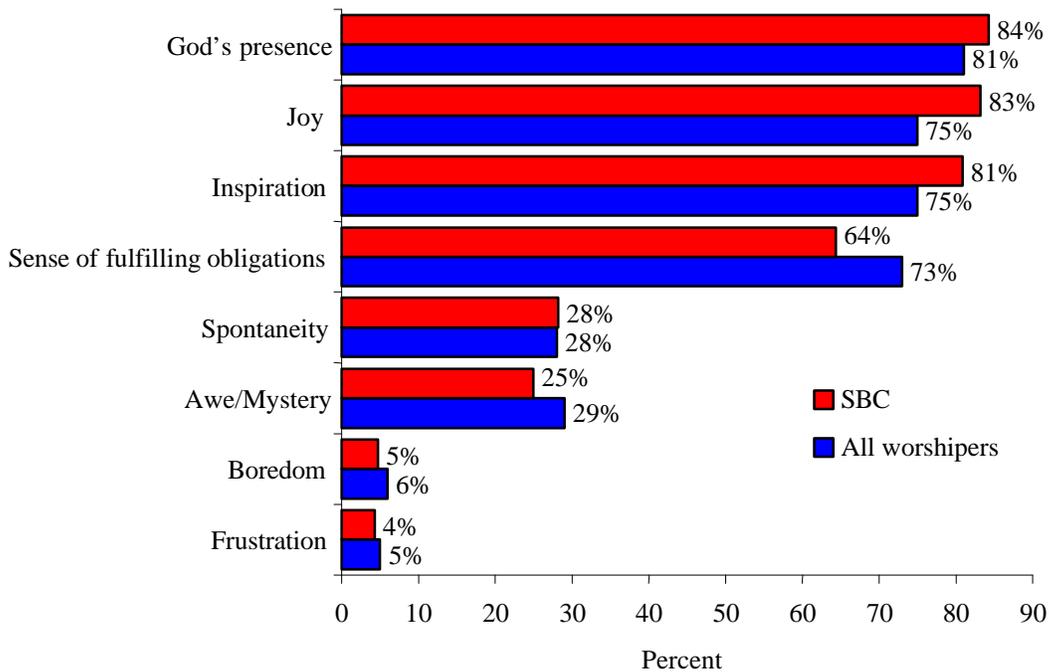
⁸ This figure was titled "Conversion or Not" in the Field Guide.

“I like mine, but they’re all good.” Southern Baptists tend to be less relativistic in their stance toward religion than worshipers as a whole. Still, 1 of 5 worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations (21%) believes that “all the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.” Conversely, two-thirds (66%) disagree with this statement. The remaining 14 percent are neutral or unsure regarding this matter.

How do people experience the worship services of their congregation? Four of 5 worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations usually experience a sense of God’s presence, joy, and inspiration during worship. Two-thirds also indicate usually experiencing a sense of fulfilling an obligation. Only 1 in 20 is typically bored.

Figure 3.5—WORSHIP EXPERIENCES

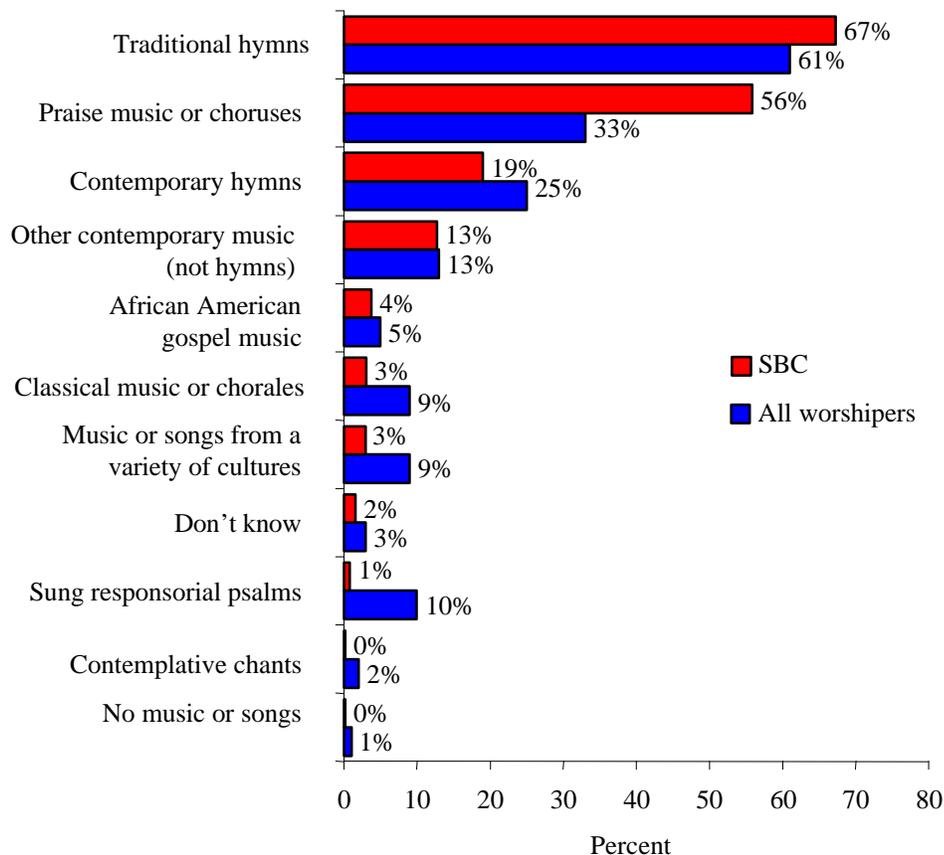
How often do you experience the following during worship services at this congregation? (Percent who say always or usually.)



Hymns top the charts Music is an important part of Southern Baptist worship services. The majority of worshipers prefer traditional hymns (67%) and praise music or choruses (56%).⁹

Figure 3.6—HYMNS TOP THE CHARTS

While you may value many different styles of music, which of the following do you prefer in congregational worship? (Mark up to two options.)



Worship as the Main Event

When and how many services? Sunday morning is the primary time for worship in Southern Baptist congregations—99 percent conduct services on Sunday morning. About 1 in 12 (8%) conduct two or more worship services on Sunday morning. A small group of large congregations even conduct three or more worship services (1%). However, most congregations only have one Sunday morning worship service with the typical congregation (the median) having 80 in attendance.¹⁰

⁹ Congregational Profile, U.S. Congregation Life Survey.

¹⁰ *Southern Baptist Congregations Today*

The secondary time for Southern Baptists to hold worship services is Sunday evening. More than three-fourths of all congregations (78%) conduct Sunday evening services. For those reporting a Sunday night worship service, the typical church reports 40 in attendance.

Wednesday evening is the third traditional time that worship services are held. Half of the Southern Baptist congregations (55%) report having Wednesday worship services.¹¹ A very small percentage (about 1%) even report Friday or Saturday worship services. The point is, most Southern Baptist congregations (85%) conduct more than 1 worship service during the week and typically have two or three worship services (primarily held on Sunday and Wednesday) each week.

In the Congregational Profile (a portion of the study completed by one person in each congregation, usually the pastor in Southern Baptist congregations), the respondent was asked to classify each worship service according to style of worship. The classifications given were traditional, contemporary, and blended (having both traditional and contemporary elements). Out of all the worship services reported for Southern Baptists, 51 percent were classified as traditional, 10 percent contemporary, and 39 percent blended. Another way of looking at style of worship is that 58 percent of Southern Baptist congregations conduct 1 or more worship services they classify as traditional, 15 percent of congregations conduct 1 or more contemporary worship services, and half of all congregations conduct 1 or more blended worship services.¹²

What happens in the typical worship service? Most Southern Baptist worship services run about an hour to an hour and a half. All contain a sermon that is typically 20 to 30 minutes long. Most services follow a written outline (or bulletin).

Music is an important part of the worship service. Nearly all worship services include congregational singing plus additional music by either a choir or soloist. Most include piano accompaniment and at least half employ an organ. Three-fourths use a hymn book for congregational singing.

Southern Baptist worship services are somewhat informal in the sense that most informants report that their worship services include laughter, applause, and a time when people greet each other by shaking hands (or some other greeting). Even the use of “amen” and other expressions of approval are frequently found in worship services. However, the services are orderly. Jumping, shouting, and dancing are not common, and speaking in tongues is rarely (if at all) found among Southern Baptists.

An offering or collection of money occurs in nearly all worship services. Most congregations report that the Lord’s Supper is celebrated in their major worship services; still, this is not usually a weekly event and probably occurs only several times a year or quarterly.

¹¹ This figure comes from the Congregational Profile that was part of the U.S. Congregational Life survey. Many congregations have prayer services on Wednesday evening and it is not known whether churches report these as worship services or not. Thus, the 55 percent may not be fully representative of the extent to which Southern Baptist congregations have some type of Wednesday evening service.

¹² These do not total 100 percent because churches conduct multiple worship services, e.g., a church could have both traditional and contemporary worship services meeting at different times.

Figure 3.7—THE LARGEST (OR ONLY) WORSHIP SERVICE INCLUDES:

Sermon, homily, or speech	100%
Singing by the congregation	98
Taking up a collection of money	98
Singing by the choir or soloist	93
People greeting each other	88
Use of piano	84
Applause	78
Communion or Lord’s Supper	78
Use of hymn books	77
Laughter	74
Calling out “amen,” etc.	74
Use of organ	56
Silent prayer or meditation	53
Special time directed at children	50
Speaking, reading, or reciting together	43
People raising their hands in praise	40
Participation by teens	38
Use of visual projection equipment	37
Use of drums or electric guitar	28
Jumping, shouting, or dancing	5
Use of incense	0

What kind of music? In Southern Baptist worship services, a traditional hymn is the most common type of music. Praise music or choruses are also used in a majority of worship services but to a lesser extent than traditional hymns. Contemporary hymns are cited as being employed by a substantial number of churches. These music styles correspond with the primary types of music that Southern Baptist worshipers indicate they want and what worshipers nationwide say they want. On rare occasions, other types of music are found in Southern Baptist churches or more frequently in non-typical congregations.

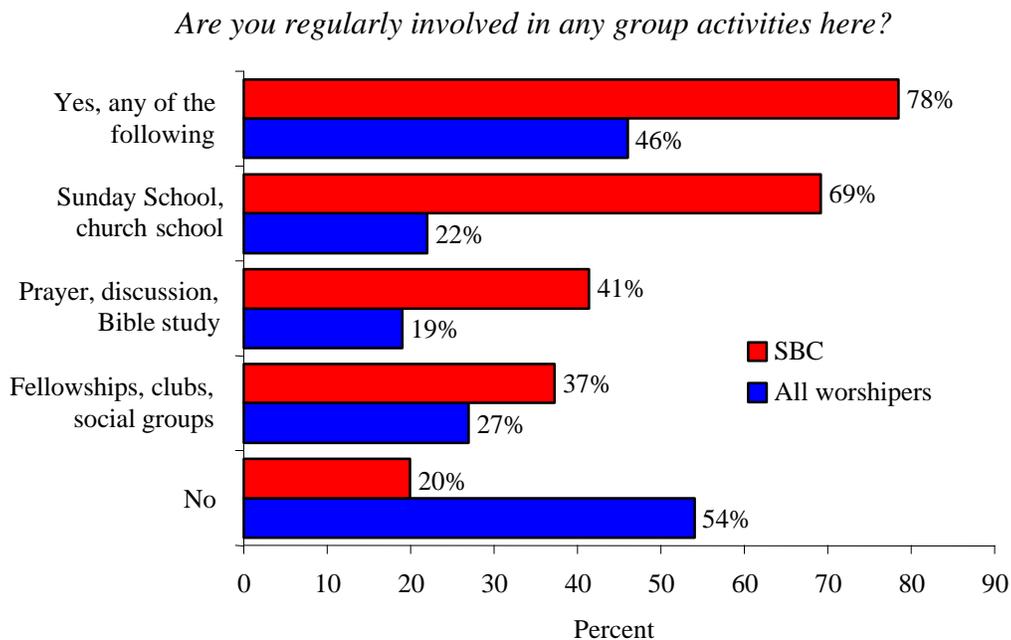
Inside Connections

Worshiper Behavior

Becoming a member Seven percent of survey respondents in Southern Baptist worship services indicated that while not members, they did regularly participate at the church. An additional 2 percent indicated they were in the process of becoming a member.

Involvement in small groups Nearly 4 of 5 Southern Baptist worshipers are involved in group activities at their congregation. Worshipers are most likely to be involved in Sunday School. Southern Baptists are much more involved in small group activity than worshipers in other religious groups.

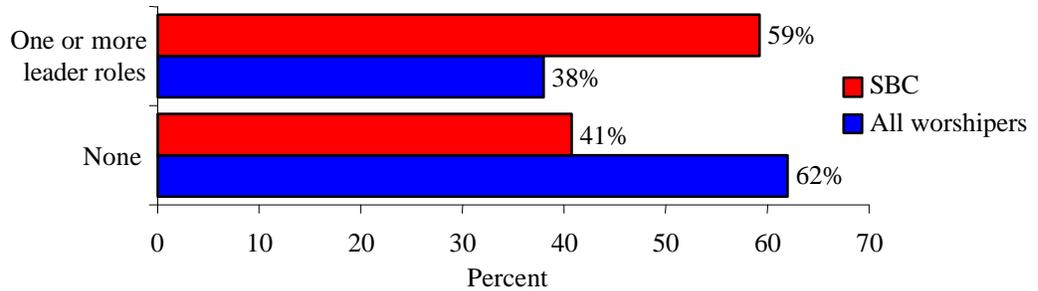
Figure 4.1—INVOLVEMENT IN SMALL GROUPS



Worshippers as leaders Six of 10 worshippers in Southern Baptist congregations have some type of leadership role in their congregation. This is another indication that Southern Baptists are more actively involved in their congregations than is the norm.

Figure 4.2—WORSHIPERS AS LEADERS

Do you currently have any of the following roles here? (Mark all that apply.)



Involved in making decisions Four of 5 Southern Baptist worshippers (81%) say they have been given opportunity to be involved in congregational decision making. More than half (55%) indicate they are involved in decision making at least occasionally. Twenty-five percent report they do not get involved even though they are given the opportunity. In contrast, 19 percent of Southern Baptist worshippers indicate they are not given opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process. Sixteen percent of all worshippers indicate that while they have not had the opportunity to be involved in decision making, they are fine with the lack of opportunity. Only 4 percent of all Southern Baptist worshippers are unhappy with not being able to participate in some manner in the decision-making activities of the congregation.

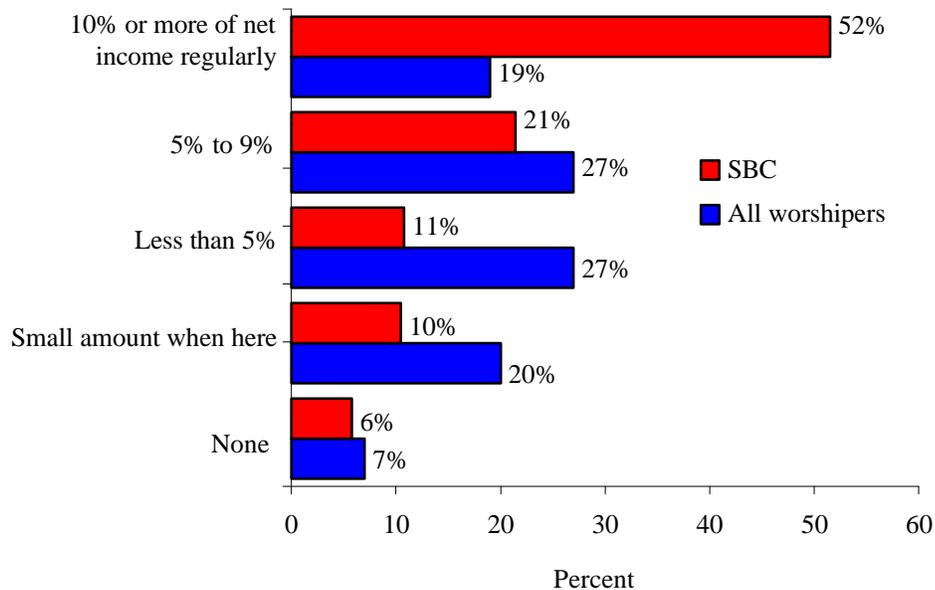
Participating—for how long? New people are defined as those who have been attending 5 years or less. Forty-two percent of worshippers surveyed in Southern Baptist churches are new people. While this percentage seems high and is higher than the norm, the norm is that a third of all worshippers nationally have been in their congregation five or fewer years. A little less than a third, 29 percent, have been attending their congregation from 6 to 20 years. About a fourth of Southern Baptists have been participating in their congregation for more than 20 years. In Southern Baptist congregations, only 3 percent of worshippers are visitors.

Participating—more or less? Like the national norm, 12 percent of Southern Baptist worshippers indicate they participate less in congregational activities than they did two years previously. The large majority of worshippers report that their participation has increased or remained stable. Specifically, 36 percent report their participation is up and 43 percent report their participation is the same.

Making financial contributions Half of worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations report they give 10 percent or more of their income on a regular basis—this is 2½ times the national norm.

Figure 4.3— MAKING FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

How much of your net income do you give to this congregation?



It’s All about Relationships

I know I belong here. Most worshipers (88%) have a strong sense of belonging in their Southern Baptist congregation—61 percent indicate their sense of belonging is growing, while 27 percent describe their sense of belonging as steady or declining.

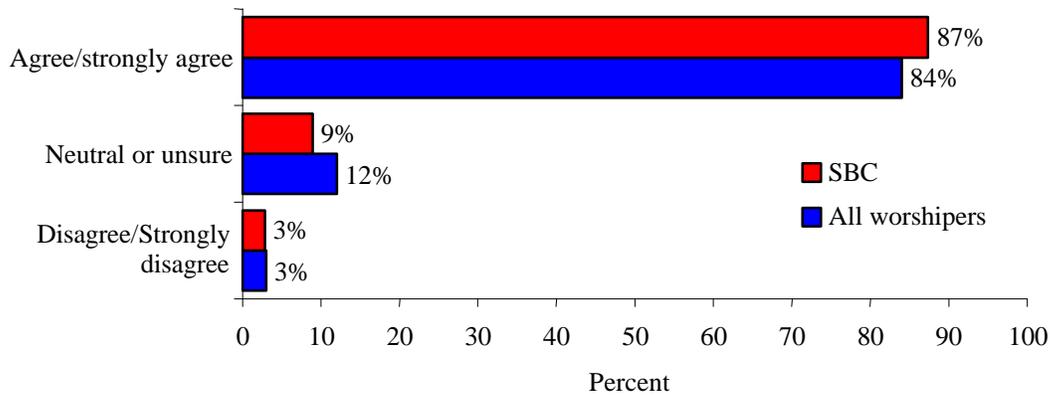
“Some of my best friends go here.” Four of 5 Southern Baptist worshipers (81%) report that at least some of their close friends attend the same congregation. One-fourth of worshipers (24%) say most of their closest friends are part of the congregation. In contrast, 8 percent indicate they have little contact with others in the congregation outside of congregational activities and 11 percent report some friendships in the congregation but state their closest friends are not part of the congregation.

What about conflict? Forty-six percent of worshipers reported there had been no conflict in the congregation during the previous two years of which they were aware. Forty-one percent reported some conflict—most of it being minor (30% of all worshipers). Of the 12 percent of Southern Baptist worshipers reporting major conflict, 8 percent (of all worshipers) reported it was serious enough that some leaders or members left because of it. Southern Baptist congregations tend to be more susceptible to conflict than the national norm.

Being a team The overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist worshipers believe there is a good match between their pastor and the congregation. This is also true for worshipers in non-Southern Baptist congregations.

Figure 4.4— BEING A TEAM

Do you agree or disagree: “In general, there is a good match between our congregation and our minister, pastor, or priest”?



Growing Congregations and Types of New People

New people, defined as those attending congregations for five years or less, come from four different faith backgrounds. Transfers are those who were participating in another Southern Baptist church before attending their current church. Transfers make up half (50%) of all Southern Baptist newcomers. Switchers, those who came from other denominational backgrounds, comprise 22 percent of newcomers. Returnees are those who have returned to church after not attending anywhere for several years. They account for 1 of 5 newcomers. First-timers, which make up 8 percent of new people, are those who have never regularly attended anywhere. The composition of new people in Southern Baptist congregations is not very different from new worshipers in other religious groups. In particular, Southern Baptists are no more effective in reaching the unchurched (first-timers and returnees) than other religious groups.

Figure 4.5—PROFILE OF NEW PEOPLE

How long have you been going to worship services or activities at this congregation?

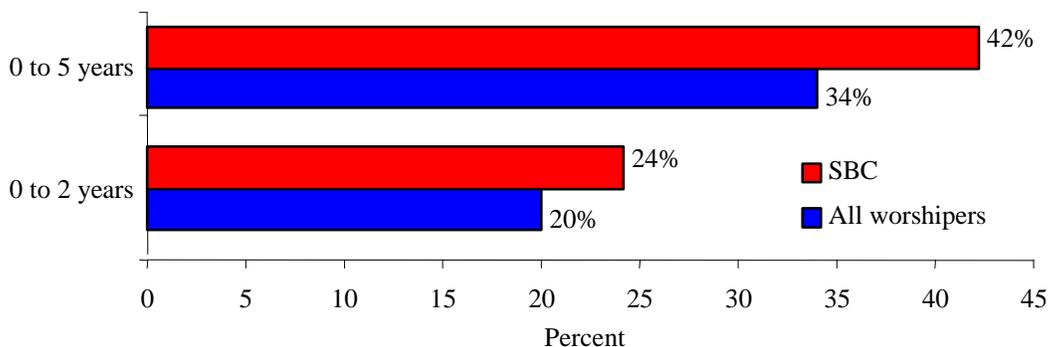
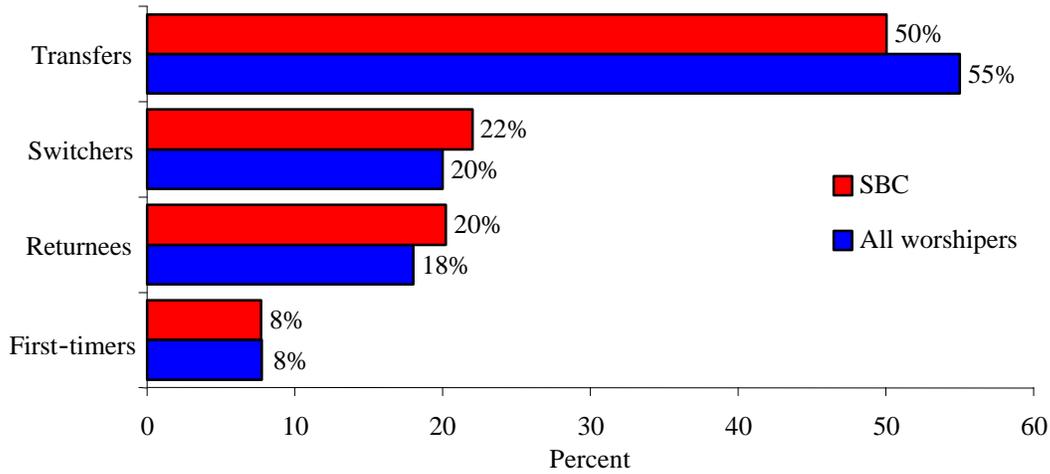


Figure 4.6—TYPE OF NEW PEOPLE

(New people are those attending the congregation for five years or less.)



What Is There to Do Here?¹³

Religious education All Southern Baptist congregations conduct religious education classes for worshippers. The median congregation reports 15 children, age 11 and younger, attend such classes in typical week. The median number of youth, ages 12 to 18, reported in attendance is 10, while 40 adults are reported in attendance each week. Southern Baptists are more successful than the norm in getting adults involved in religious education.

Small groups Most Southern Baptist congregations (61%) employ small groups for sharing and spiritual growth. Three-fourths of those report that small groups are an important part of their strategy to involve people in congregational life.

Group prayer life Nine of 10 Southern Baptist congregations have some type of organized prayer groups.

Figure 4.7—TYPES OF PRAYER GROUPS

Which of the following best describes the group prayer life of this congregation? (Mark all that apply)

Prayer groups that meet infrequently	8%
Regular prayer groups that meet at certain times of the year (Lent, revivals)	13
Regular prayer groups that are part of a small group or cell program	29
Regular prayer groups attached to specific classes, groups, or ministries	43
Other types of prayer groups	52
No organized prayer groups	10

¹³ The source for this section is the Congregational Profile, U.S. Congregational Life Survey.

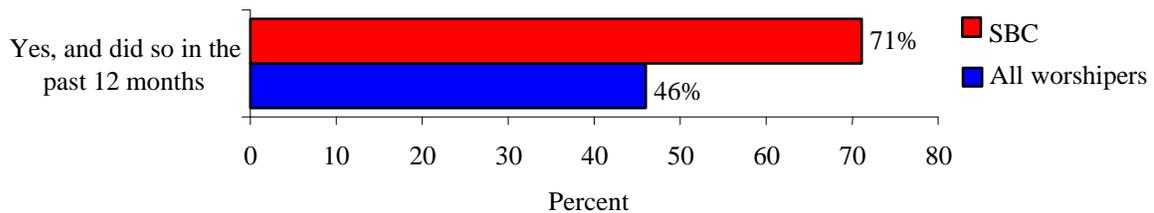
Outside Connections

Reaching Out to Nonmembers

Inviting behavior Ninety-three percent of Southern Baptist worship service attendees reported that they would be willing to invite family and friends to a worship service. Seven of 10 reported they actually did so in the past year. Southern Baptists are significantly more likely to invite people to church than non-Southern Baptist worshippers.

Figure 5.1—INVITING OTHERS

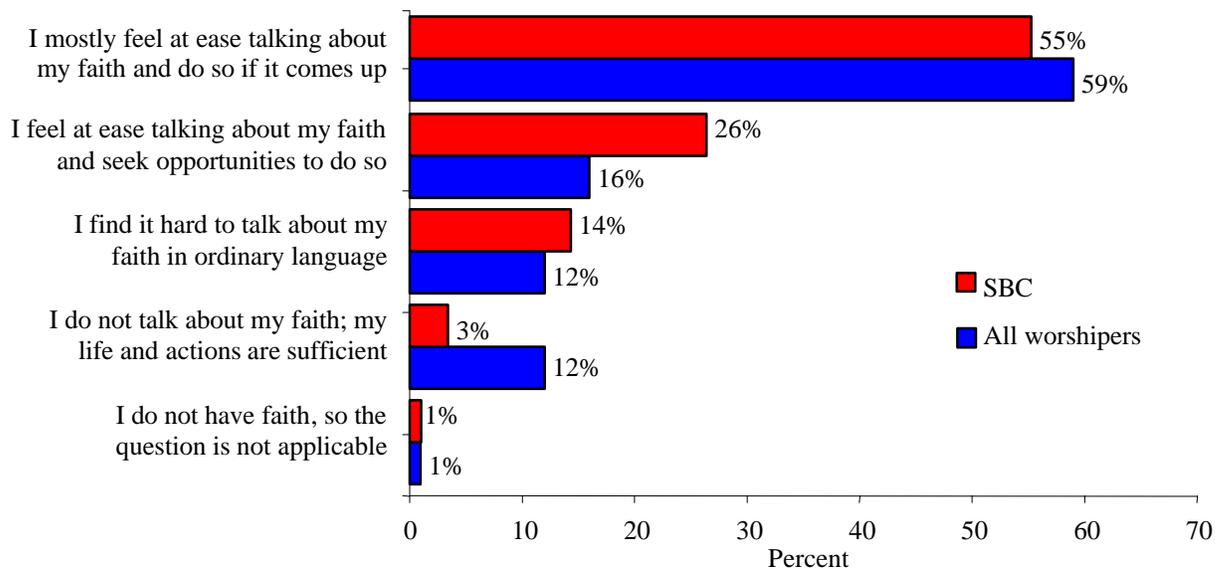
Would you be prepared to invite to a worship service here any of your friends and relatives who do not now attend a congregation?



Talking the walk Most Southern Baptist worshippers (82%) are willing to share their faith. However, it appears that only 1 in 4 (26%) are intentional about sharing their faith. The majority of Southern Baptists (55%) appear to be comfortable in talking about their faith if it comes up in conversation, but seem reluctant to take initiative in witnessing. Furthermore, 1 in 5 have difficulty or are unwilling to talk about their faith even it comes up in natural conversation.

Figure 5.2—TALKING ABOUT FAITH

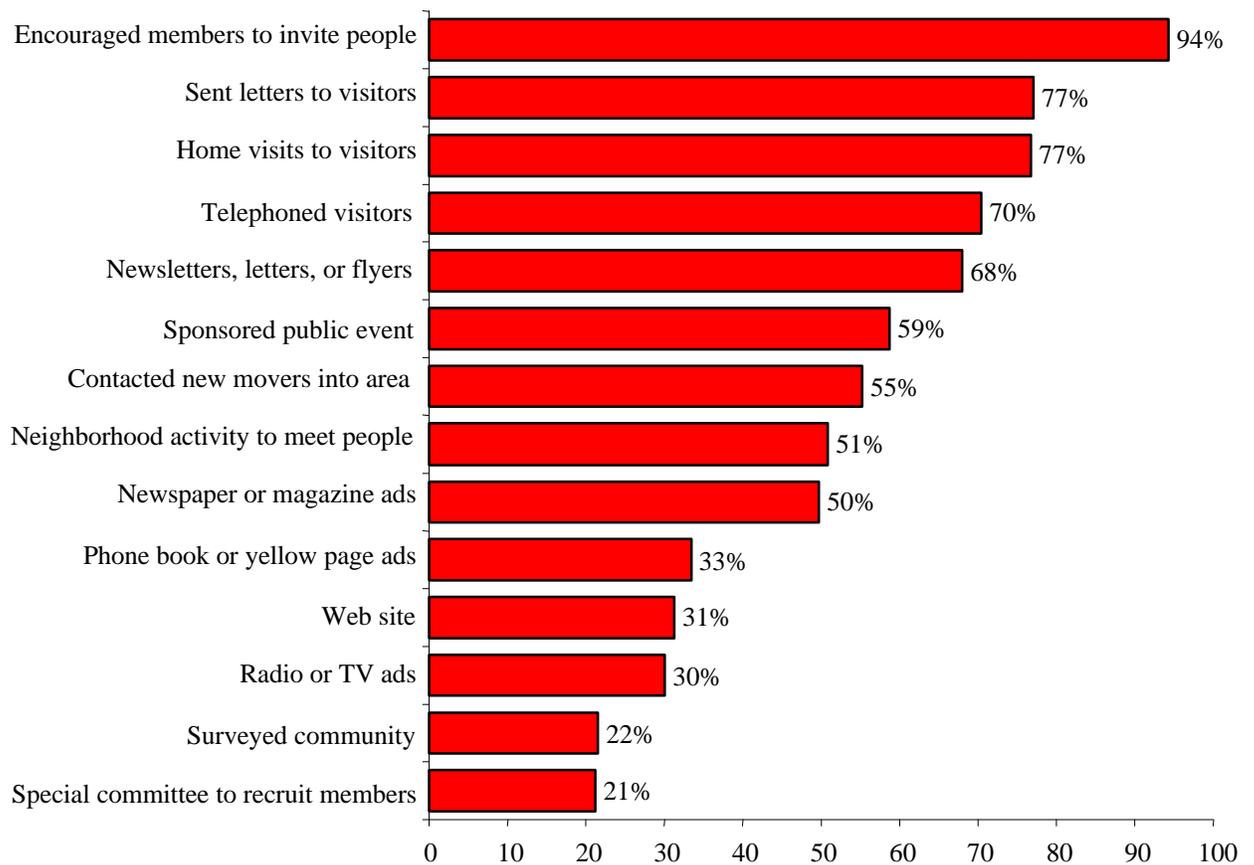
Which of the following best describes your readiness to talk to others about your faith?



Congregational efforts A survey form with a list of 14 possible outreach activities was given to the pastor or another informant for each congregation. (This question was not asked of individual worshipers.) Out of the list of 14 activities, the typical Southern Baptist congregation employed 8 of them during the past year. The nearly universal strategy for Southern Baptist congregations is to encourage people already in the congregation to invite new people. Other frequently used activities are sending letters to visitors, visiting them in their homes, and telephoning them.

Figure 5.3—CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In the last 12 months, has this congregation done any of the following to reach out to nonmembers? (Mark all that apply.)

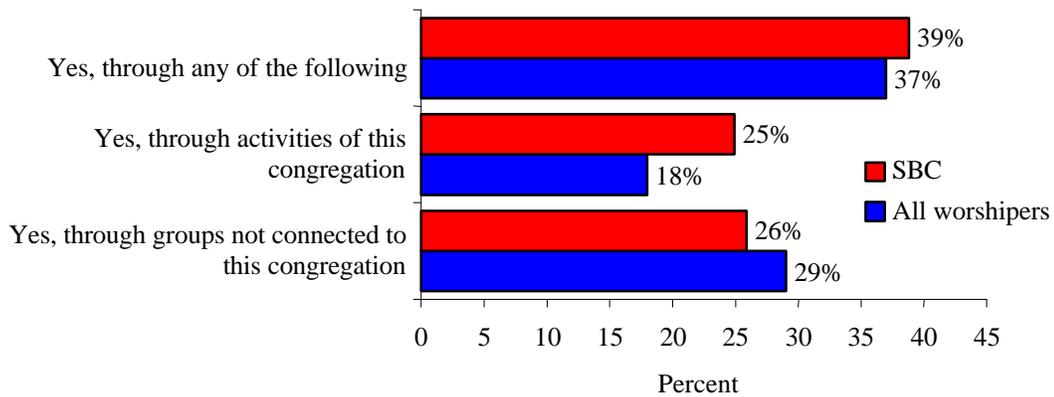


Serving the Community

On my own—doing community service or advocacy Four out of 10 Southern Baptist worshipers are engaged in service to the community. They are equally split between working through the congregation and working with groups outside the congregation in order to provide this service. Southern Baptist worshipers are a little more likely to serve through their church than non-Baptists. (Like worshipers as a whole, 70% of worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations are not active in community service or advocacy work apart from the congregation.)

Figure 5.4—SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Are you involved in any community service, social service, or advocacy groups?



Individual charity begins at home While Southern Baptist worshipers are similar to all worshipers in their acts of charity, they are a little less likely to donate money to charitable organizations (other than their church).

Figure 5.5—ACTS OF CHARITY

*In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following?
(Mark all that apply.)*

Donated money to a charitable organization (other than this congregation).	64%
Donated or prepared food for someone outside your family or congregation	53
Loaned money to someone outside your family	29
Cared for someone outside your family who was very sick	24
Helped someone outside your family find a job	20

Acts of advocacy and politics Southern Baptist worshipers are involved in politics and advocacy issues about the same extent as all worshipers.

Figure 5.6—ACTS OF ADVOCACY AND POLITICS

*In the past 12 months, have you done any of the following?
(Mark all that apply.)*

Voted in the last presidential election	72%
Worked with others to try to solve a community problem	17
Contacted an elected official about a public issue	18

Providing education Only 1 percent of Southern Baptist congregations conduct five-day-a-week Christian elementary and secondary schools.¹⁴

Services offered through the congregation Congregations were asked what social services they provide for their members and to the community. Out of a list of 23 different types of service, the typical Southern Baptist congregation indicated they provided four services. The only service provided by more than half of Southern Baptist congregations (72%) is emergency relief assistance. The services provided by Southern Baptist congregations are fairly similar to those provided by all congregations. The biggest differences are that Southern Baptists are less likely than the norm to provide counseling or support groups, health-related programs and activities, and political or social justice activities. (See figure 5.7.)

¹⁴ *Southern Baptist Congregations Today*

Figure 5.7—Types OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

In the past 12 months, did your congregation provide any of the following services for your own congregation's members or for people in the community? (Mark all that apply.)

Emergency relief or material assistance (food, clothes for the needy)	72%
Counseling or support groups (marriage or bereavement counseling, parenting programs, women's groups)	48
Other social, recreational, or leisure activities	37
Prison or jail ministry	30
Other senior citizen programs or assistance (Meals on Wheels, transportation)	24
Sporting activities or teams (intramural teams)	24
Arts, music, or cultural activities or programs	24
Other programs for children and youth (job training, literacy program, scouting, sports)	23
Health-related programs and activities (blood drives, screenings, health education)	18
Day care, pre-school, before or after-school programs	17
Voter registration or voter education	17
Other welfare, community service, or social action activities not mentioned above	16
Hobby or craft groups	15
Housing for other groups (crisis, youth shelters, homeless, students)	14
Care for persons with disabilities (skills training, respite care, home care)	12
Immigrant support activities (English as a second language, refugee support, interpreting service)	8
Substance abuse or 12-step recovery programs	7
Community organizing or neighborhood action groups	6
Elementary school	2
Political or social justice activities (civil rights, human rights)	2
Housing for senior citizens (nursing homes, assisted living)	1
Activities for unemployed people (preparation for job seeking, skills training)	1
Animal welfare or environmental activities	1

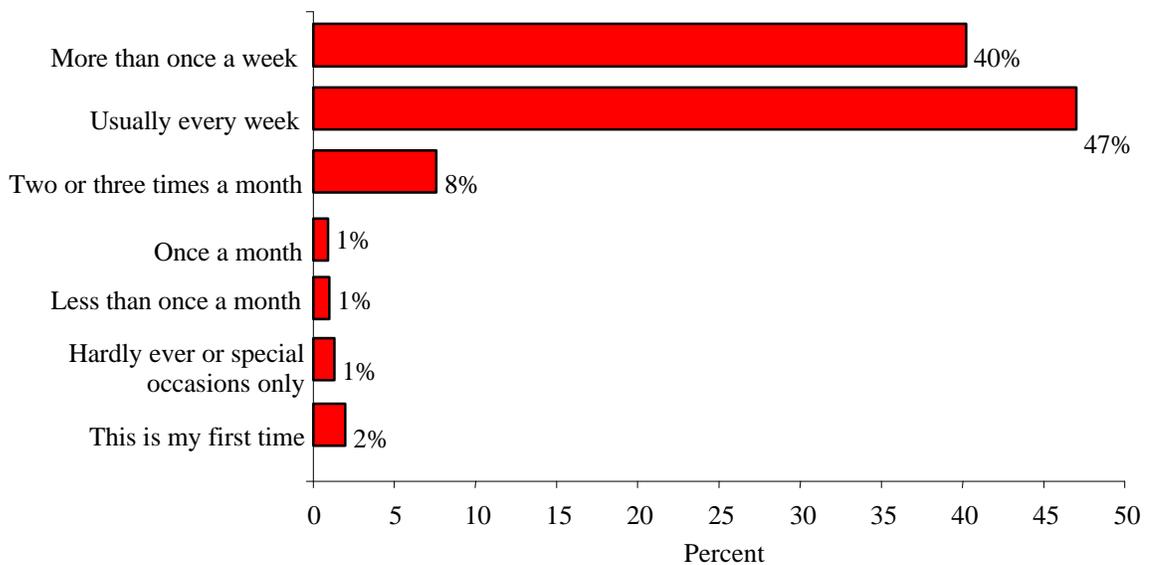
Types of Worshipers

The 83% [87% for Southern Baptists]: Weekly Worshipers

Southern Baptist worshipers are fairly active in their participation. Ninety-five percent indicate they attend worship services (at the congregation where surveyed) at least two or three times a month. Eighty-seven percent of worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations report that they attend worship services (at the congregation where surveyed) “usually every week” or “more than once a week.” In contrast, only 2 percent of worshipers were visiting for the first time when surveyed.

Figure 6.0.1—WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

How often do you go to worship services at this congregation?



Denomination or faith group Southern Baptist worshipers attend worship services at about the same level as Catholic worshipers. As stated above, 87 percent are weekly worshipers.

Long-term attendance The length of time a person has been connected to a congregation is related to how frequently a person attends worship. For example, 79 percent of Southern Baptist survey participants who have related to their congregation for less than a year are weekly attenders. This percentage increases to 90 percent for those affiliated with a congregation from three to five years. Beyond five years there are only minor increases. Ninety-two percent of Southern Baptists who have affiliated with their congregation for more than 20 years are weekly attenders.

Involvement in other activities Weekly worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations are 2½ times more likely than occasional attenders to be involved in small group activities in the congregation and 4 times more likely to be involved in evangelism/outreach activities of the congregation or in community service through the congregation. Weekly attenders are also nearly 4 times more likely to have a leadership role in the congregation than people who attend worship services less than once a week.

Big givers Southern Baptist worshipers are 3½ times more likely to be tithers (10% or more of net income regularly) than are occasional attenders (56% versus 16%). Furthermore, Southern Baptist weekly attendees are twice as likely to be tithers compared to weekly attendees in all religious congregations. Occasional attenders in Southern Baptist congregations are 4 times more likely than weekly attendees to indicate they only give a small amount whenever they are at church (30% versus 8%).

Gender As is true with all worshipers in the U.S., there is no difference between men and women in Southern Baptist congregations in regard to whether they attend weekly or occasionally.

Age In Southern Baptist congregations, age makes a little difference in the frequency that worshipers attend services. Eighty-four percent of persons age 15 to 24 are weekly attendees, also 84 percent of those 25 to 44 are weekly attendees. Eighty-eight percent of people age 45 to 64 are weekly attendees while 92 percent of worshipers age 65 and older attend on a weekly basis.

Work Southern Baptist retirees are the most likely to be weekly attendees (92%) but are closely followed by full-time homemakers (91%). Eighty-six percent of those employed as well as 86 percent of students attend at least once a week. Those who report themselves as unemployed have the lowest percentage of weekly attendees—82 percent.

Education and income As is true of all worshipers, there is no discernable relationship between education and income and the frequency that Southern Baptist worshipers attend worship services.

Race, ethnicity, and nationality Among Southern Baptist worshipers there are no significant differences in the weekly attendance rate of Whites (88%), Blacks (87%), and Hispanics (89%). The rate is slightly lower for Asians (80%). Persons born outside the U.S. in English speaking countries have a slightly lower rate of weekly attendance than those born in the U.S. (82% versus 87%). Those born outside the U.S. in non-English-speaking countries have the same rate as those born in the U.S. (88%).

Marital status The highest rates of weekly attendance are found among those Southern Baptist worshipers who are remarried after the death of a spouse (91%), widowed (91%), and those in their first marriage (89%). In contrast, the lowest rates are found among those living in a committed relationship (77%) and those separated (78%). The rates for other marital status groups are never married (84%), remarried after divorce (86%), and divorced (82%).

Children For Southern Baptist worshipers, the presence of children in the home makes no difference in whether they are weekly attendees or occasional attendees. This holds true even limiting worshipers to the age groups of 25 to 65.

Travel time Up to a commute of 20 minutes, there is no difference in the frequency of attendance at Southern Baptist worship services—the percentages range from 88 to 89 percent. For those persons commuting 20 to 30 minutes, the percentage attending weekly drops to 82 percent. For those commuting more than 30 minutes the percentage drops to 62 percent.

**Figure 6.1—THE 83 % [87% FOR SOUTHERN BAPTISTS]
WEEKLY WORSHIPERS: A PROFILE**

Attending 20 years or more	27%
Involved in a small group	87
Gives 10% or more	56
Women	60
65 years of age or older	25
Retired	25
Married	71
No children residing at home	43

The 34% [42% for Southern Baptists]: New People

New people comprise a larger percentage of worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations than is the norm for all religious groups. Forty-two percent of those surveyed in Southern Baptist churches are new people. These are worshipers that have been participating in their congregation five or less years.

Denomination or faith group (See previous paragraph.)

Low levels of involvement As is true for all religious groups, new people in Southern Baptist congregations are less involved than longer-tenured worshipers—although they are more engaged than new people in general. In Southern Baptist congregations, new people are less likely to be involved in Sunday School, prayer groups, Bible study groups, and fellowship or social groups than are longer-tenured worshipers—75 percent versus 87 percent. Furthermore, they are less likely to be involved in evangelism or outreach activities and in community service activities than long-term participants (33% and 51%, respectively). Not surprisingly, new people are less likely to have leadership roles within the congregation—47 percent compared to 71 percent for old timers.

Giving New people in Southern Baptist congregations are less likely to be tithers (giving 10% or more of their income annually) than are longer-tenured participants—44 percent versus 59 percent. Still, this level of stewardship is high compared to national norms.

Age Not surprisingly, new people are younger than longer-tenured Southern Baptist worshippers. Forty-three percent of new people are age 25 to 44 and 31 percent are age 45 to 64.

Work Because of their age structure, Southern Baptist new people are more likely to be employed and less likely to be retired as compared to their longer-tenured counterparts. Sixty-one percent of new people are employed.

Education Among Southern Baptist worshippers, there are no significant differences in the education backgrounds between new people and longer-tenured participants.

Marital status and children There are no substantial differences in the marital status of new people and longer-tenured participants in Southern Baptist congregations. Because of their younger age structure, new people are more likely to have children at home compared to longer-term participants—57 percent versus 42 percent.

Non distinguishing field marks There are no substantial differences in Southern Baptist new people and longer-tenured worshippers in regard to gender, income, race/ethnicity, foreign born, marital status, and education.

**Figure 6.2—The 34% [42% for Southern Baptist Worshippers]
NEW PEOPLE: A PROFILE**

Involved in a small group	75%
Gives 10% or more	44
Women	57
25 to 44 years of age	43
Employed full- or part-time	61
College or more advanced degree	32
Married	70
No children residing at home	36

First-time Worship Visitors

Like all religious groups, only 2 percent of worshippers in Southern Baptist congregations were attending for the first time when the U.S. Congregational Life Survey was administered.

Denomination or faith group (See previous paragraph.)

History of worship attendance At least half of first-time visitors in Southern Baptist congregations were visiting from another church.¹⁵ One-fourth indicated they did not regularly attend church.

¹⁵ More exact statistics cannot be determined because many first-time visitors incorrectly responded to a second question about how long they had been attending the specific congregation where surveyed. Many seemed to be

Age Thirty-seven percent of first-time visitors in Southern Baptist churches are age 25 to 44 and 29 percent are age 45 to 64. One in 5 first-time visitors is under age 25.

Gender The ratio of women to men for first-time visitors in Southern Baptist congregations is the same for all worshipers.

Work The primary difference in the work status of visitors from other Southern Baptist worshipers is that they are less likely to be retired.

Marital status Forty-one percent of first-time visitors in Southern Baptist churches are not married. About 1 in 5 (22%) have never been married; 1 in 10 (11%) is either separated or divorced; 5 percent are living in a relationship but are not married; and 4 percent are widowed. All of these are close to national norms.

Figure 6.3—THE 2%—FIRST-TIME VISITORS: A PROFILE

Married	59%
Women	61
Employed full or part-time	56
25 to 44 years of age	37
Attending elsewhere recently	63
Returning after long-term absence	19
Never regularly attended anywhere	15

What Matters?

Figure 6.4—COMPARING WORSHIPERS

	All Worshipers	Southern Baptist Worshipers
Weekly worshipers	83%	87%
New people	34	42
First-time visitors	2	2

answering the question in regard to how long they have been attending church in general. If this assumption is true, then approximately three-fourths were visiting from another congregation.

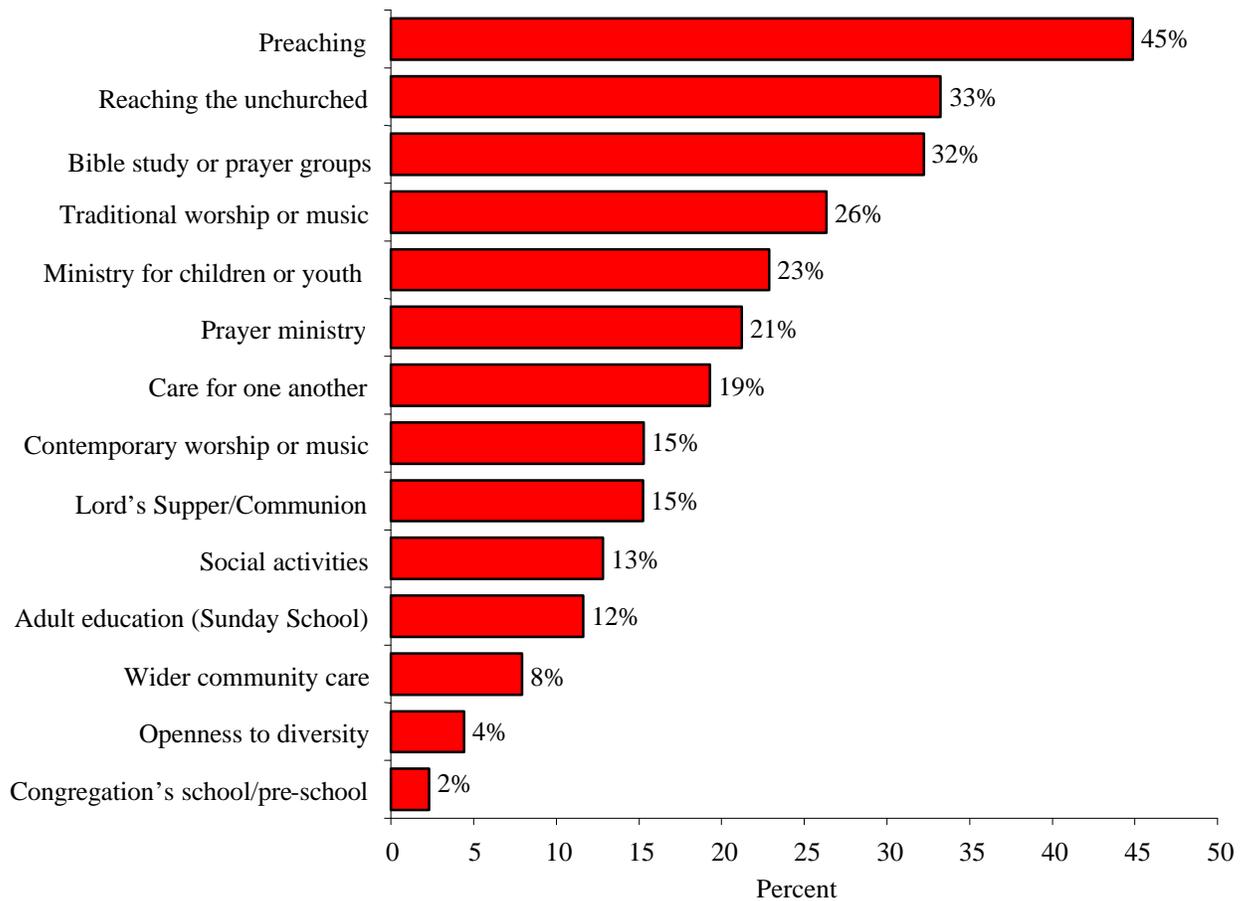
Identity, Leadership, Vision

Identity: Who Do We Think We Are?

We are what we value There are significant differences in what worshipers value in Southern Baptist congregations versus the norm for all worshipers. Some of these differences, such as those regarding the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion, Eucharist), are based on theological differences. Southern Baptists tend to most value preaching, evangelism (reaching those who do not attend church), and participating in Bible study or prayer groups. In contrast, Southern Baptist worshipers are less interested in social issues and community ministry.

Figure 7.1—WE ARE WHAT WE VALUE

*Which of the following aspects of this congregation do you personally most value?
(Mark up to three options.)*



Leadership: Can You Help Us Get There from Here?

Perceptions about the roles of the pastor Teaching, preaching, and pastoring seem to be the primary roles that Southern Baptists want in their ministers. Over half of Southern Baptist worshippers (56%) believe that a primary role of their pastor is to teach people about the faith. Close to half (46%) acknowledge that leading worship is a primary role as well. A third of worshippers believe that visiting, counseling, and helping people is a main role. Close to a fourth of worshippers think that being a spiritual role model and winning people to Christ are primary roles. Note that only 1 in 5 believe that training people and being a visionary leader are primary roles. Less than 1 in 10 believes administration of the church is a primary role and 1 in 20 believes that community involvement or involvement with social issues is the primary role of a pastor.

Figure 7.2—PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLES OF THE PASTOR

What do you think are the main roles that your minister, pastor, or priest actually carries out here? (Mark up to three options.)

Teaching people about the faith	56%
Conducting worship or administering the sacraments.	46
Visiting, counseling and helping people	35
Offering prayer or being a spiritual role model	25
Converting others to the faith	23
Training people for ministry and mission	19
Providing a vision and goals for the future	19
Administering the work of the congregation	9
Involvement in wider community groups or social issues	5
Don't know	4

Leadership style of pastor Over half of Southern Baptists describe their pastor's leadership style as one that inspires people to take action. The second most frequent description is that their pastor is one that takes charge.

Figure 7.3—LEADERSHIP STYLE OF PASTOR

Which of the following is the best description of the style of leadership of your pastor, minister, or priest?

Leadership that inspires people to take action	54%
Leadership that tends to take charge	21
Leadership that acts on goals that people here have been involved in setting	13
Don't know	8
Leadership where the people start most things	3
There is currently no leader here	1

Ministers take into account worshipers' ideas In another attempt to understand the leadership style of pastors, worshipers were asked about the extent that pastors take into account the ideas of the people in the congregation. The overwhelming majority (86%) of Southern Baptist participants responded that their minister takes into consideration the ideas of worshipers—51 percent indicated to “a great extent,” 30 percent to “some extent,” and 5 percent to “a small extent.” Only 1 percent indicated that their pastor doesn't take into consideration the ideas of others.

Another good sign The overwhelming majority of worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations (87%) indicated that congregational leaders have encouraged them to find and use their gifts and skills in their church—44 percent responded to “a great extent,” 32 percent to “some extent,” and 12 percent to “a small extent.” In contrast, 6 percent of worshipers responded that they have “not at all” been encouraged to do so.

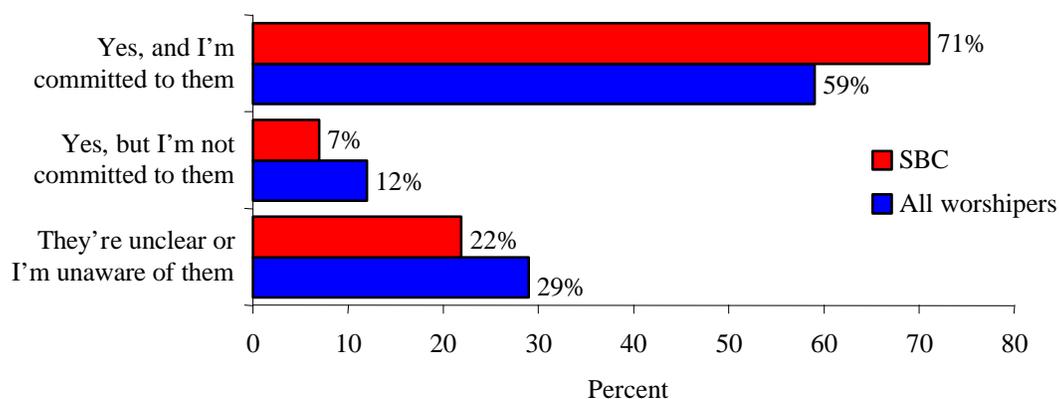
Being a team The overwhelming majority of Southern Baptist worshipers (87%) believe there is a good match between their pastor and the congregation. This is also true for worshipers in non-Southern Baptist congregations. Only 3 percent indicated there is not a good match between pastor and congregants.

A Vision for the Future

Possibilities for the future Eight of 10 worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations feel their congregation has vision, goals, and direction. Seven of 10 report they are committed to them. Worshipers in Southern Baptist congregations seem to be more aware of their church's vision, goal, and direction and more committed to them than is the norm for all worshipers. Still, 3 of 10 worshipers are either not aware of the direction of the church or, if they are aware of it, they are not committed to it.

Figure 7.4—POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Does this congregation have a clear vision, goals, or direction for its ministry and mission?



Excitement about the future Like most worshipers, Southern Baptists overwhelmingly have a sense of excitement about their congregation's future—83 percent. In contrast, only 3 percent indicate they are not excited about their future.

Another indicator of hopefulness about the future Two-thirds of Southern Baptist worshipers (65%) describe their church as moving in new directions—either currently or planning to do so. Nine percent indicate their congregation is faithfully following a direction that was decided upon sometime in the past. (This does not necessarily imply an outdated direction.) It appears that 13 percent are unhappy with the current direction or lack of direction of the congregation—6 percent say the congregation needs to rethink direction, 5 percent want to return to the past, and 2 percent appear doubtful about the future of the congregation.

Figure 7.5—HOPEFULNESS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Of the following, which one best describes your opinion of the future directions of this congregation?

We are currently moving in new directions	43%
We are currently deciding on new directions	22
We are faithfully maintaining past directions	9
We need to rethink where we are heading	6
We need to get back to the way we did things in the past	4
Our future is very unclear or doubtful	2
Don't know	14

Is the congregation ready to try something new?

Congregations' tolerance for change was studied by asking worshipers about their perceptions of their congregation's willingness to try something new. Sixty percent agreed with the statement: "This congregation is always ready to try something new." In contrast, 11 percent disagreed with this statement, while 29 percent were unsure. The percentages were very close to those reported by worshipers in all religious groups. Thus, it appears that Southern Baptists are no more open or resistant to change than the national norm.

POSTSCRIPT

A major contribution of the U.S. Congregational Life Survey for Southern Baptists is that it examines congregational life through a very large sampling of people who sit in Southern Baptist congregational pews. Usually our knowledge about congregations comes from collecting congregational statistics, surveying congregational leaders, or sharing case studies of individual congregations. Seldom do we have the opportunity to study a randomly selected sample of members and other participants and to include their experiences and perceptions in describing congregational life. The result is that the study of congregational life is enriched while at the same time we now have a clearer picture of what individual Southern Baptists are like—or at least active Southern Baptists.

As a result of the study we find there are many similarities between Southern Baptists and other religious groups. Like other religious groups, most Southern Baptist congregations are small. Women outnumber men. Most participants are married. They don't travel long distances to worship. Most attend worship every week. Worshipers feel that their congregation is meeting their spiritual needs and that worship assists them in their everyday life. During worship most participants feel a sense of God's presence, along with joy, inspiration, and a sense of fulfilling an obligation. Most worshipers prefer traditional hymns. They have a strong sense of belonging in their congregations and are excited about their congregation's future. They also feel there is a good match between their minister and their congregation. Southern Baptists are no more open or resistant to change in their congregation than other worshipers.

There are also significant differences between Southern Baptists and worshipers as a whole. Southern Baptist worshipers tend to be less educated. They spend more time in private devotions. They are more likely to describe their coming to faith as an instantaneous, decisive commitment of faith. They are much more likely to interpret the Bible literally. They are less likely to believe all the different religions are valid ways to God. They are more likely to be involved in small groups in the congregation—especially in Sunday School classes and other prayer and Bible study groups. Southern Baptists are also more involved in leadership roles within their congregation. They are significantly more likely to be tithers. They value reaching the unchurched (evangelistic outreach) to a greater extent, but value communion or the Lord's Supper to a lesser extent. They are also more likely to have actually invited someone to attend worship services with their congregation.

It is hoped that this document will help shed light on who Southern Baptists are, what they value, and how they worship together as congregations. In particular, this supplement is intended to provide national norms for Southern Baptist congregations so that individual Southern Baptist congregations can better understand themselves and discover those areas of strength and giftedness upon which they can further develop.

A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations. Who's Going where and why. Author: Cynthia Woolever. "This report contains comparative information for Southern Baptist worshipers and congregations that correspond to national norms presented in the Field guide"--Web site. 2002-01-01. in Religion. Cynthia Woolever. Field Guide to United States Congregations. Author: Cynthia Woolever. Publisher: Westminster John Knox Press.