

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION  
OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

# Women in Ministry



Seventh-day Adventist Female Pastors WW  
GOD CALLS & EQUIPS

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The Commission was to explore why women are not entering into the ministry and report to MinTC in March with recommendations.

Questionnaire:  
(61 anonymous  
answers)

Analysis  
(Unions of responses  
is unknown)

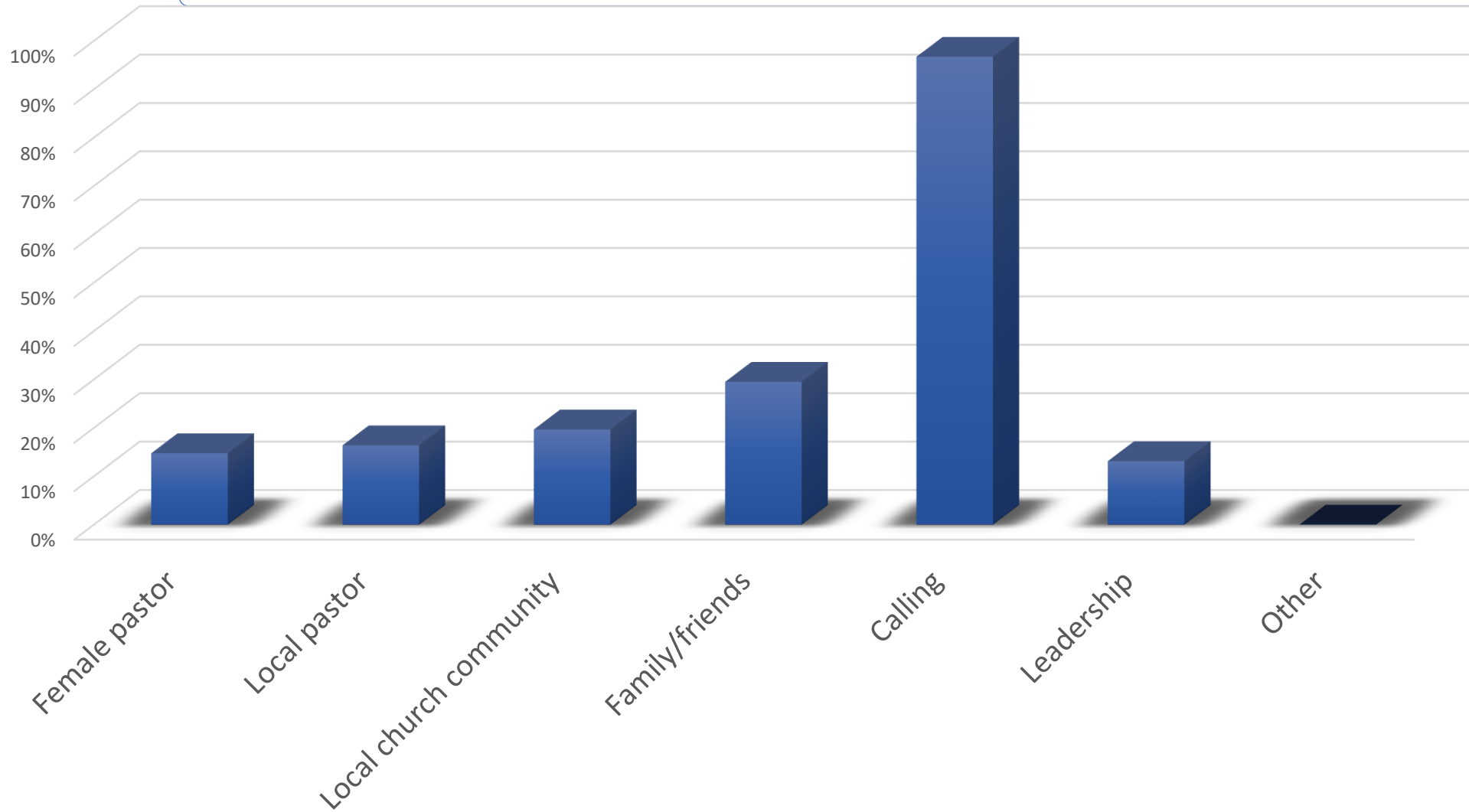
Recommendations

# Areas of interest in the Questionnaire:

- I. RECRUITMENT
- II. TRAINING
- III. EMPLOYMENT
- IV. SUPPORT
- Added questions send to the leadership in unions & conferences

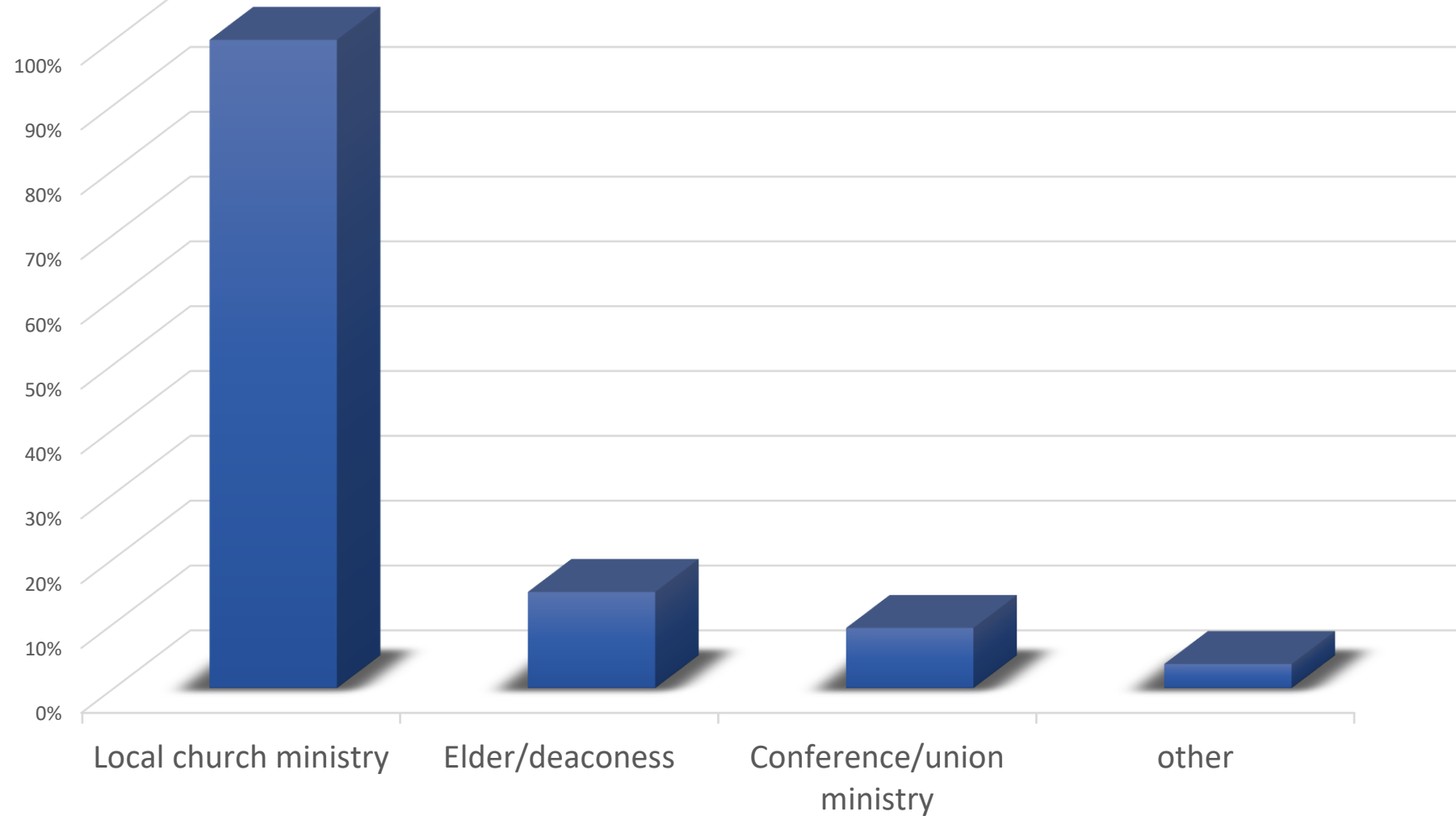
## AREA I. RECRUITMENT

What inspired you to want to become a pastor?



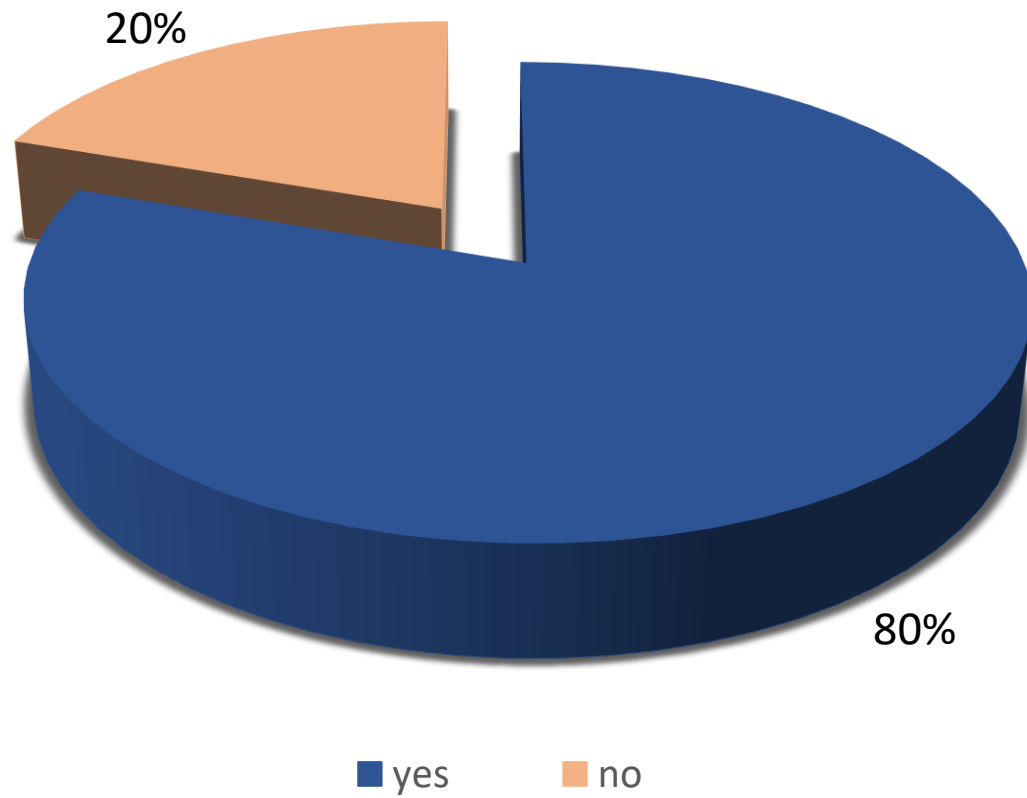
## AREA II. TRAINING

Before beginning your formal education were you ever elected to...



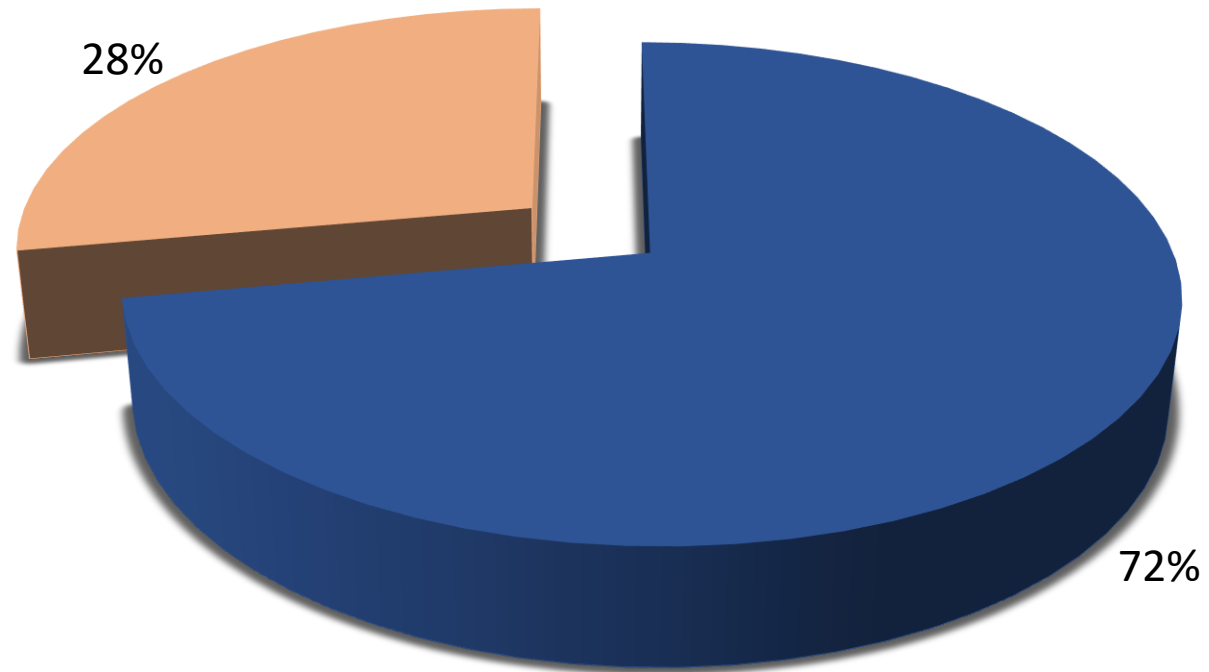
## AREA II. TRAINING

Were you aware of and did you receive any sponsorship during your studies?



## AREA II. TRAINING

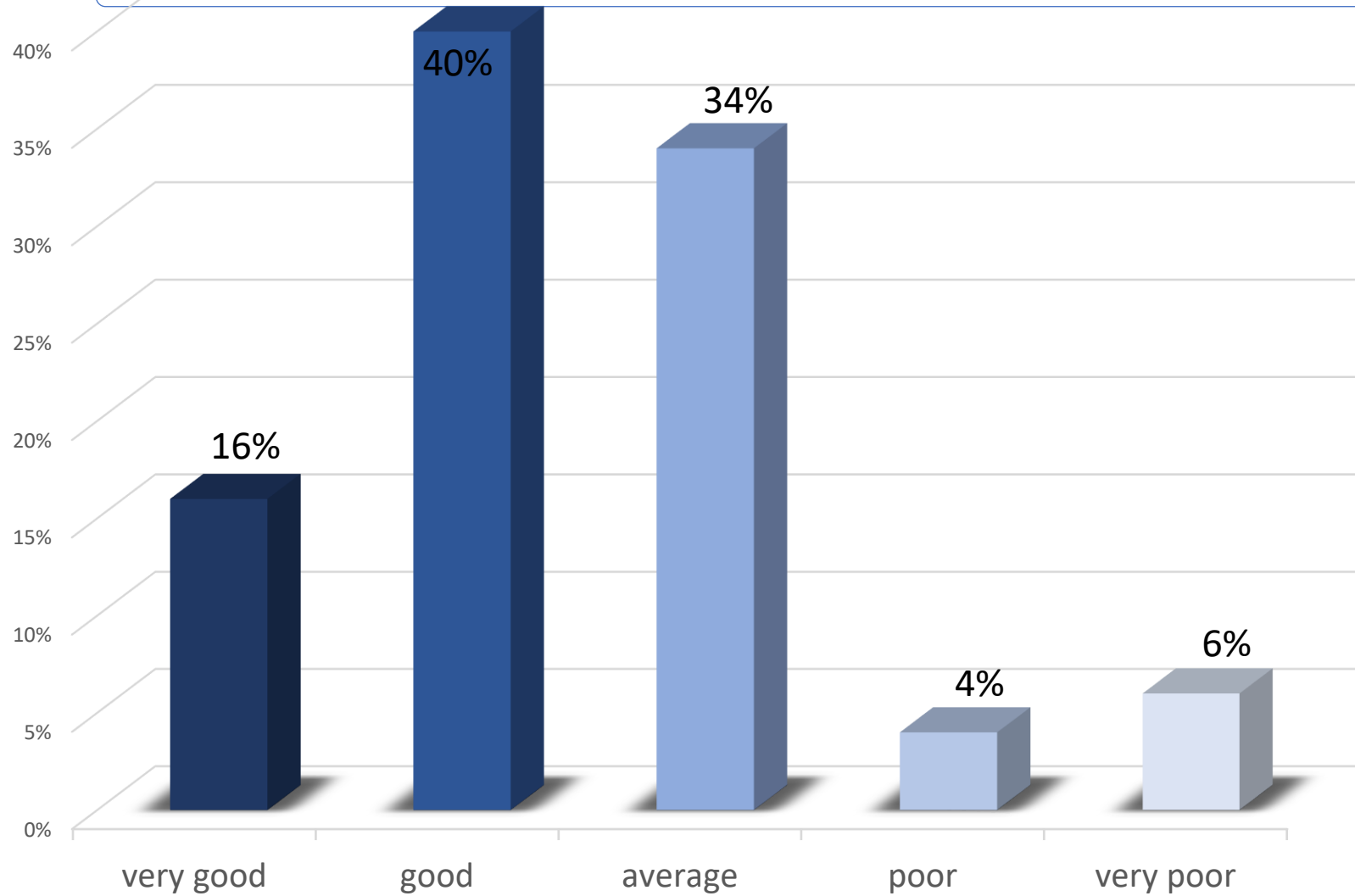
Did you do any local church placements during your studies?



■ yes ■ no

## AREA II. TRAINING

How would you rate your placement experience?



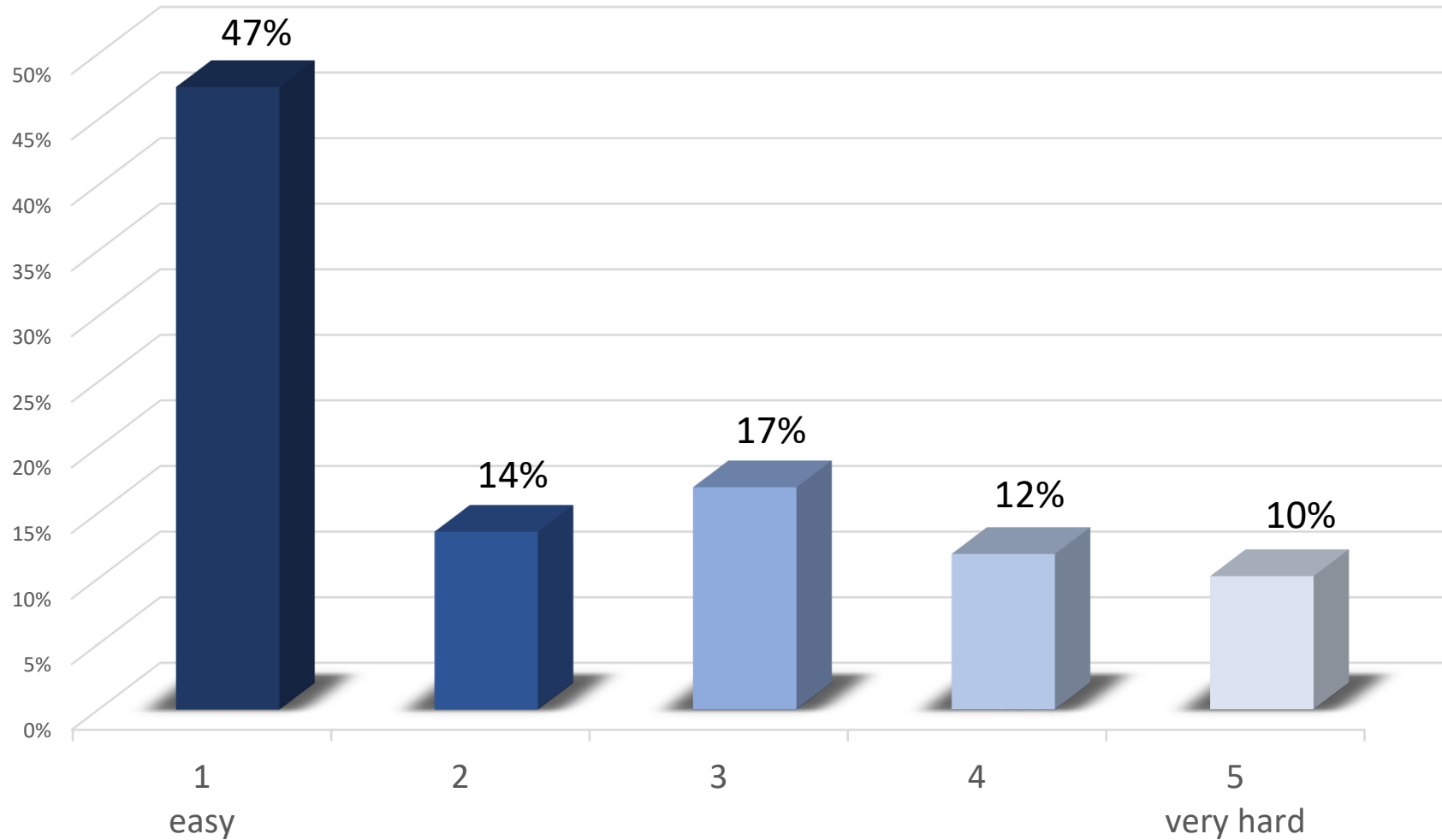


## Comments on the placement

- I had excellent spiritually minded senior pastors/mentors.
- The local pastor decided to provide experiential knowledge of pastoring, involving me in all aspects of being a pastor.
- I was welcomed into the churches I did my placement. I was given opportunities to learn and grow, and to see and experience a range of the different aspects of what ministry can be like.
- Needed more structure. Very basic.
- There were too many of us to truly get deep into it.
- I rate that experience with an average rating because there was a lack of a more professional mentoring approach.
- It was OK, but most of the time pastors were reluctant on letting me shadow them because I'm female and that could lead to issues, so I was mostly given some small tasks/projects and I was included in church service
- It wasn't thorough. Got to tell the children's story or youth Sabbath school. No great guidance
- It was a bit too far away.

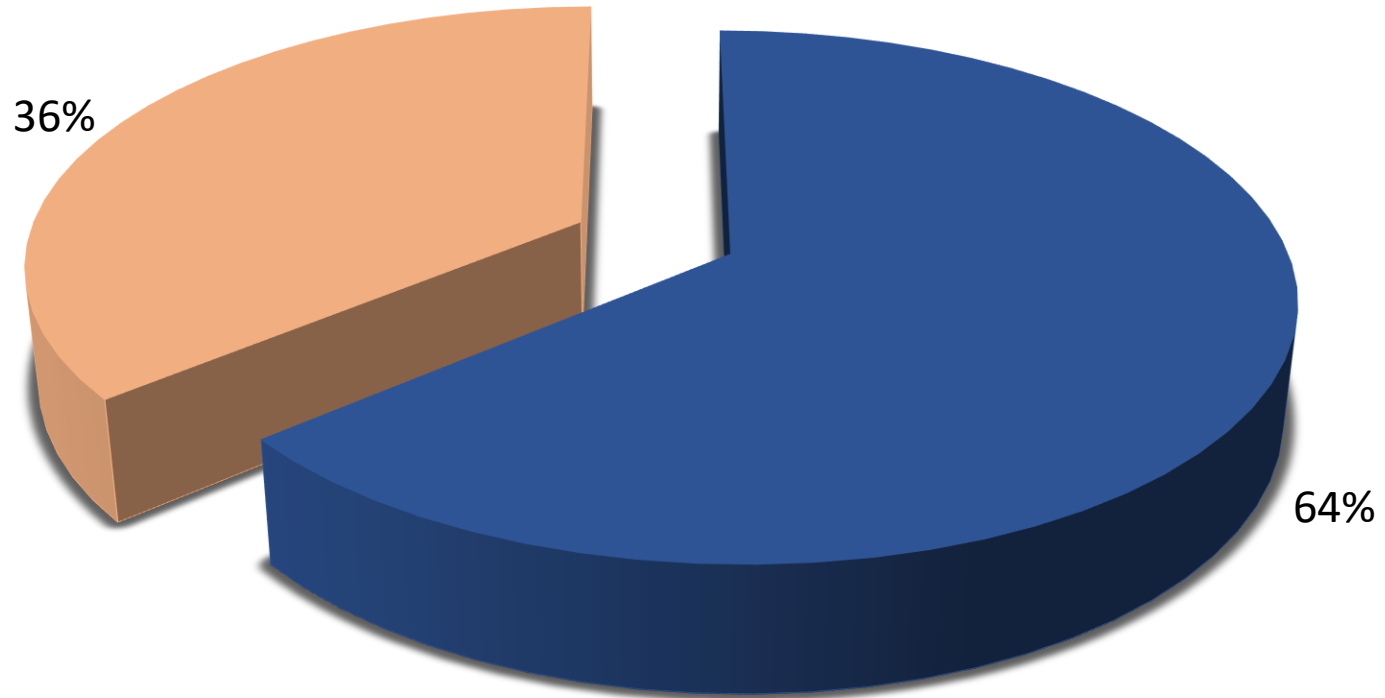
## AREA III. EMPLOYMENT

How was it for you to find employment as a pastor after the completion of your studies?



### AREA III. EMPLOYMENT

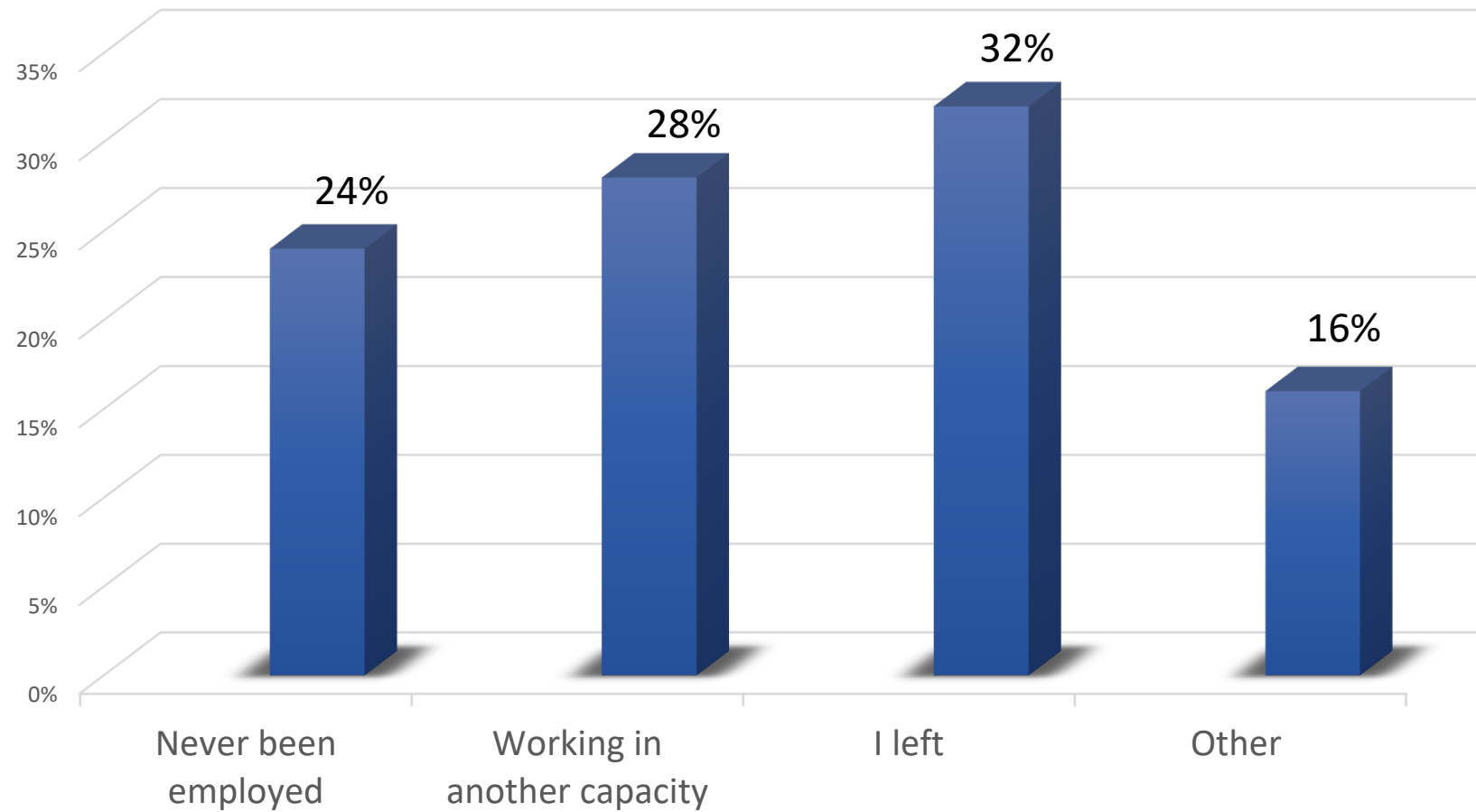
Are you currently employed as a pastor?



■ yes ■ no

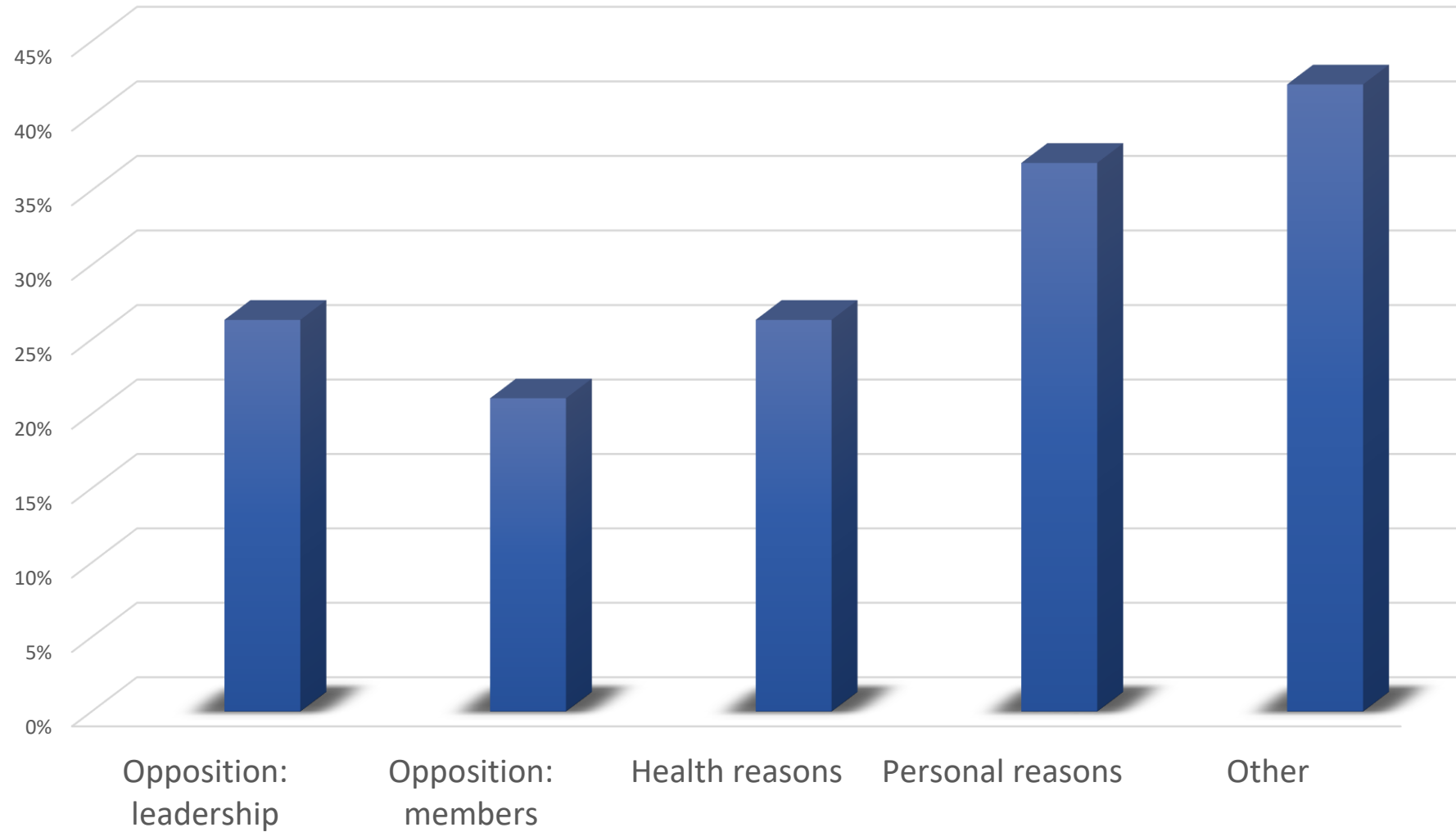
## AREA III. EMPLOYMENT

If you are not currently employed as a pastor, would you describe your current status as:



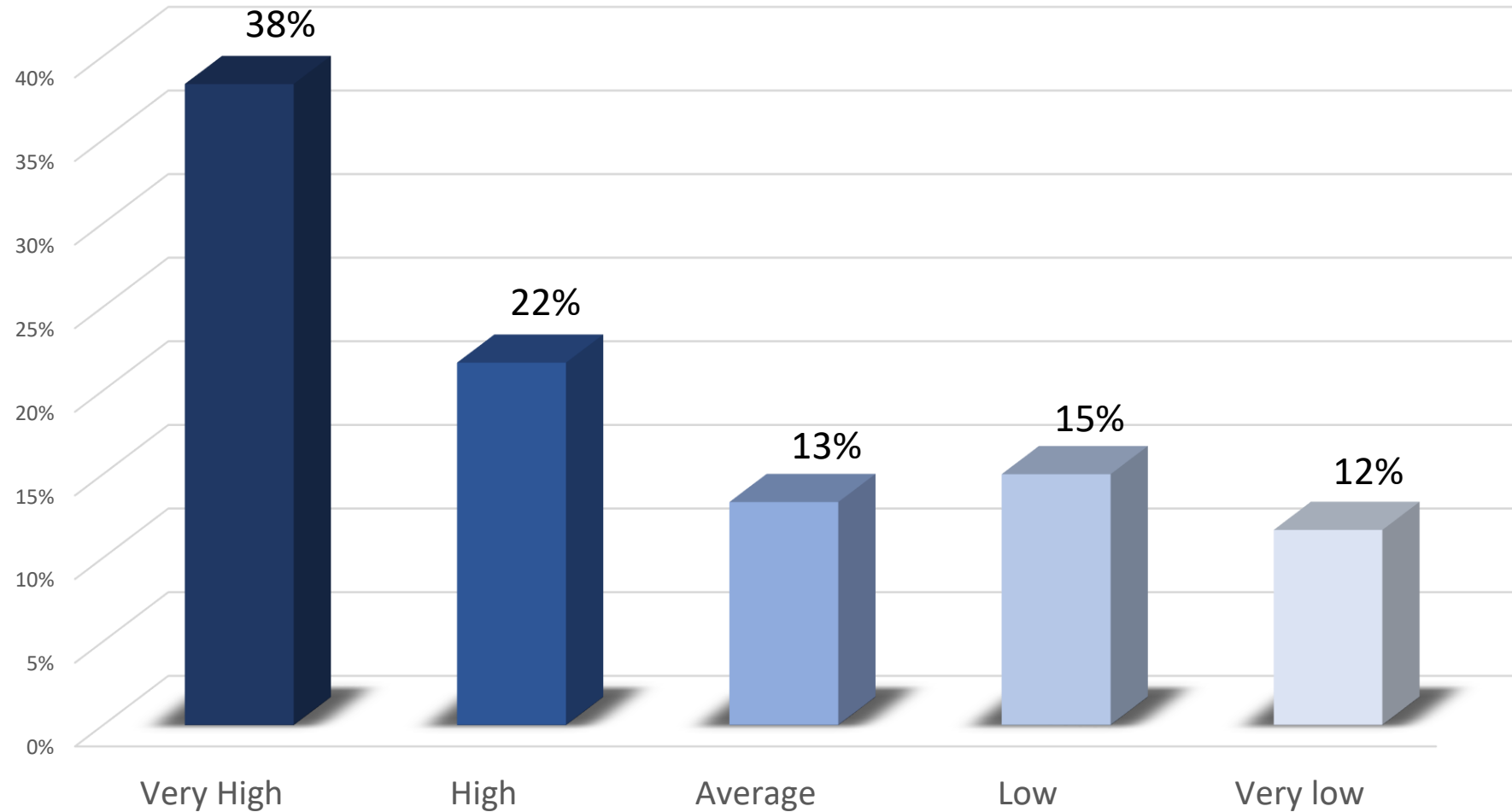
## AREA III. EMPLOYMENT

I left the ministry because...



## AREA III. EMPLOYMENT

How would you rate the chances of a female being employed as a pastor in your union/conference?



## Comments on the employment

- I couldn't ask for better employers. They have been really understanding and supportive when I have had family challenges.
- I think about one third of all pastors in our union are female pastors. Most members have no problem with female pastors. There is also a great need of more pastors.
- The leadership (Union, conferences) is supportive of women in ministry, though church members range from full acceptance to active abuse of women employed as pastors.
- I don't think there is any discrimination on the basis of gender at the level of union/conference leadership. However, there are some local churches and church members who see female pastors as a problem. This causes tension and worries for the leadership as well.
- Neither churches nor conference leaders are ready to take a "risk".

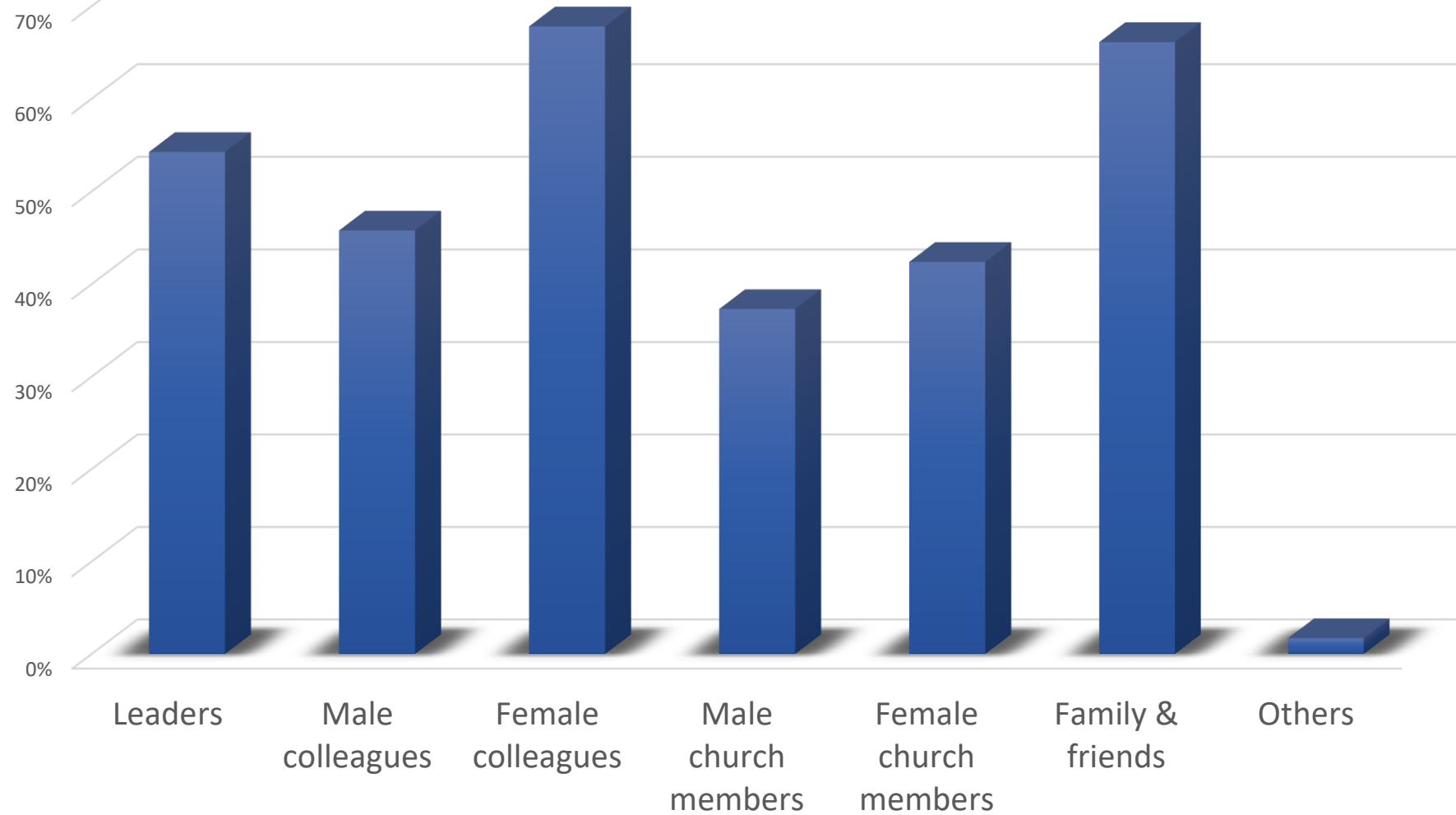
## Comments on the employment

- As I know, in our Union we had one case of a single female pastor employed. Usually, females are doing pastoral internships but when it comes to employment, females become pastors' spouses helping them in ministry. Or there were situations where females give up on ministry after an internship in church.
- Almost impossible to get employment if a husband is also a pastor. Almost impossible to get employment if you are single.
- As a young pastor, I see the work culture of SDA very old fashioned. Pastors work alone and there is no culture of teamwork (at least at my area). It would be so important to create a new way of working where everyone is part of a team and is not left alone.



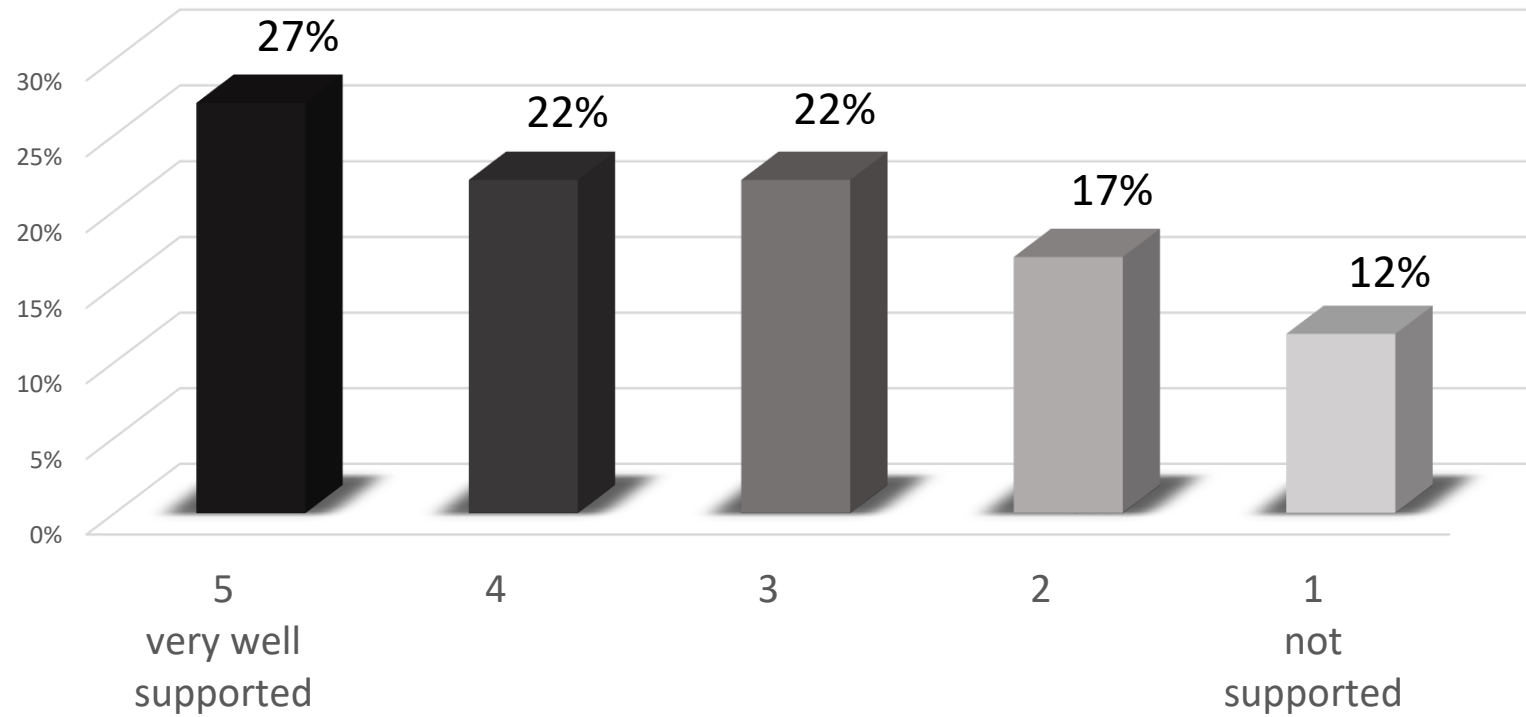
## AREA IV. SUPPORT

Where have you gained the most support in your ministry?



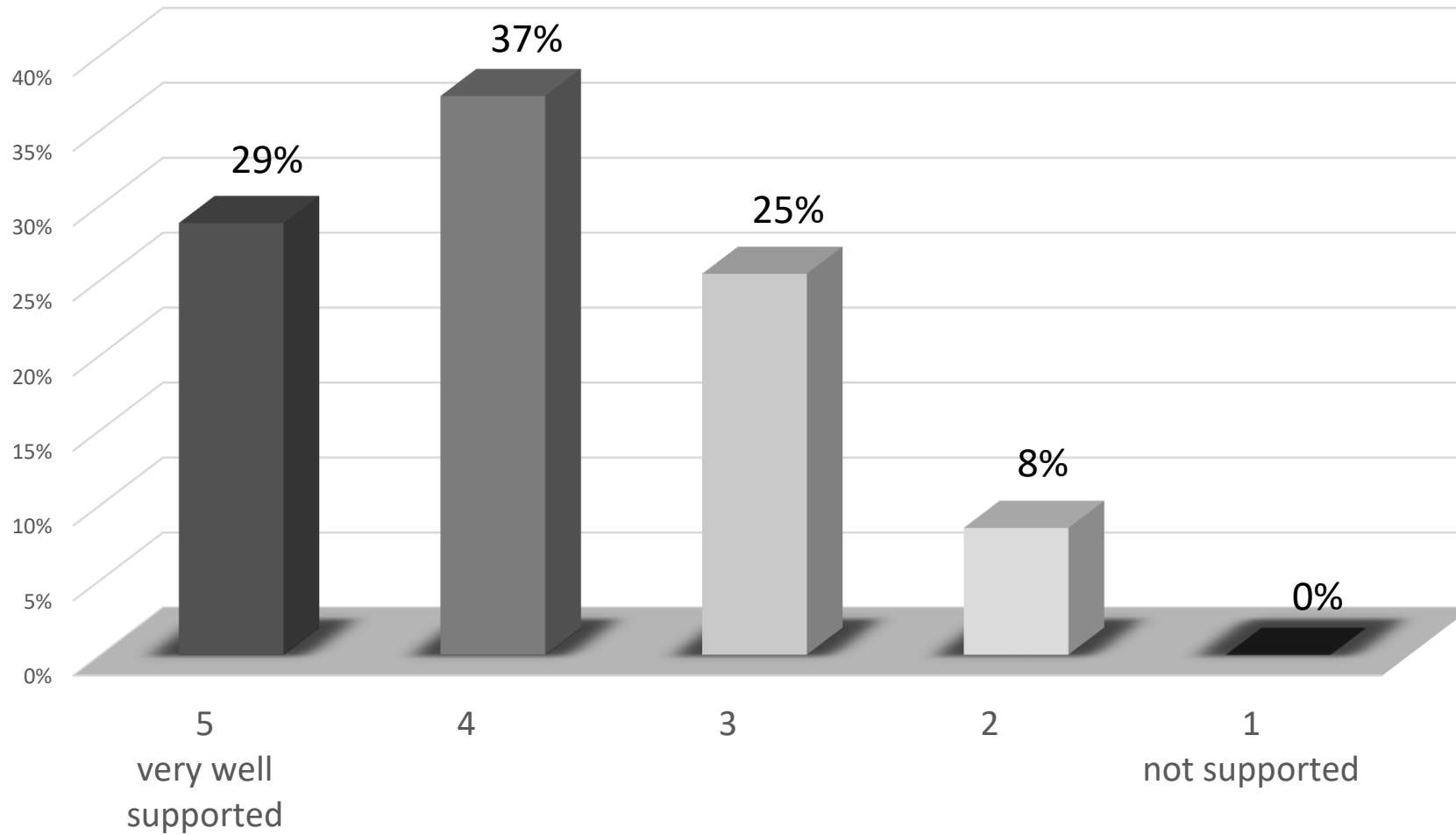
## AREA IV. SUPPORT

How much recognition and affirmation do you feel you get from your  
leaders



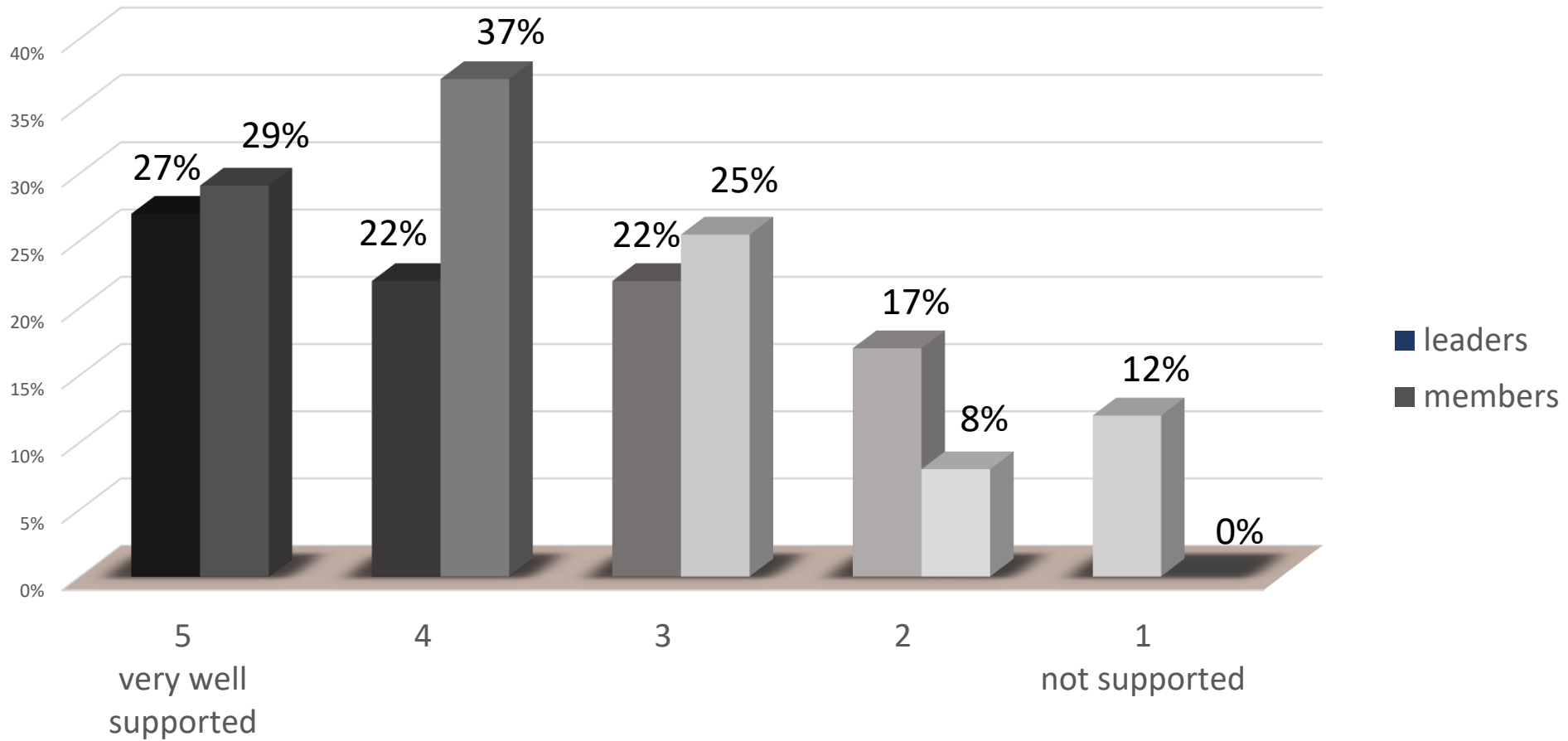
## AREA IV. SUPPORT

How much recognition and affirmation do you feel you get from your members



## AREA IV. SUPPORT

How much recognition and affirmation do you feel you get from your leaders & members



## Comments on the support

- Not supported at all by leaders. Felt so alone while in ministry. I felt unsafe and struggled so much by myself
- Despite verbal support church leaders do not necessarily take much action to ensure the physical or mental safety of pastors. They seem to try to do the easiest option - involving the least possible risk for them or the church as an institution - in dealing with harassment towards pastors. Yet, when a pastor - especially a woman pastor - makes a mistake, is perceived as making a mistake or is complained about by church members, the church often takes drastic measures against the pastor and thus - again - chooses an easy option for the institution. The corporate body is too often more important than an employee and the well being of an individual. Local lay-church leaders are amazed at how lousy job the church does in taking care of those it employs.
- It is hard to answer properly as the support is not from "leadership" or "church members" as a group, but from certain individuals. Some are not very supportive, while others are great! Too many of our pastors have experienced burnout or nearly had a burnout. I know the awareness is growing among the leaders, but I still think it more has to be done. When our leaders themselves are on the edge and has way too much on their tables it is hard for those who would need support to ask for it. I think a third part is needed, some one employed, at least halftime, to deal specifically with pastors and their needs. It is too much to place even that responsibility on our leaders who deal with everything else too...

## Comments on the support

- Support and recognition mostly in form of words and letters, which at the end of the day made very little difference. Sometimes, good intentions had an adverse effect, such as being given flowers together with pastors' wives. I was really missing the bravery and willingness from the leadership to embrace and work with a vision how a female pastor with her specific sets of gifts can minister in the most effect way.
- Not all of my female colleagues have had positive experiences in ministry. More time should be taken by the senior church administration team to work alongside female pastors who need more support. Additionally, there is a need for our senior team to voice the message of zero tolerance for negative treatment of female pastors. As an employer, the church falls down on providing a duty of care towards both female and male pastors.
- We are supported and encouraged in my Union. But as long as the world church does not see us as equals and good enough it will never be attractive. As long as the organisation does not fully approve we will always be seen as second class and the less ideal option.

## Comments on the support

- I think we have a good rate of female pastors in our country. However, I do think female pastors experience a greater stress due to the fact that no matter how equal our society is, the greatest load when it comes to caring for children and home still is often on the female. It is tough to care for children and managing home and at the same time having the energy to deal with conflicts in church and managing things in church as well. I think few male pastors/leaders realise that. At least we hardly ever talk about such things or take them into consideration when talking about expectations etc. on a pastor.
- The church largely does not want them. The church is not welcoming to women pastors. Your calling must be exceptionally strong to be willing to keep on hitting your head on the wall and bearing with everything. God works everywhere and many women will choose to minister according to their gifts in other settings. Also, the church is often very much stuck in certain ways of doing ministry and is trying not to offend tradition loving members. This does not leave much room for genuine creativity and boldness in communicating the reality of God in ways that the current culture would understand and appreciate. Young women called by God are often exceptionally talented in certain areas and are not interested in wasting their life in church politics. Perhaps they can be most efficient without the confining walls of church employment.

## Comments on the support

- Church membership is not yet ready to accept women as pastors in some parts of my Union (which covers more than a country). The largest number are those who misunderstand GC decisions, thinking that since they cannot be ordained, it means that they cannot be pastors at all. But there are also some who support women in ministry, and there are those who strongly oppose, fight against and even abuse women pastors, despite all support by the leadership (most of these are groups of church members lead by retired pastors living there).
- Women have challenges on many fronts. (1) They are often not sure if it is ok to have such aspirations as to serve as pastors. (2) Culture in and outside of the church is not very supportive of women in church leadership. Churches have been, for decades, accepting our services, but have not been willing to recognize the calling (e.g., you can preach, but you cannot lead, you have to submit, or you can work as much as your husband, but that is to be voluntary work). (3) Abuse of women in ministry has not been seriously dealt with. We need to educate our churches, our seminary students, our pastor and leaders on all levels. Leaders also need to openly support and promote and stand by their female employs. Only exceptional women even get a chance while all male pastors receive ongoing encouragement and support.



## Questions to the hiring (union/conf.) leadership team (president, exec. secretary, treasurer) through ministerial secretaries

1. How likely are you to hire a female pastor? Why?

1. 18 yes / 2 no

2. What would be the hindrance?

1. Theological hindrance (2)

2. Cultural roles given to women (6)

3. Churches not accepting even exhibiting abusive behaviour (4)

4. Practical issues concerning family (moving husband, maternity, childcare) (6)

# Recommendations

## 1. Recruitment

- Union/conference leadership to support and recognize the calling of women for ministry.
- Encourage the election of more female elders

## 2. Training

- Ensure information re available financial support is given
- Intentionality in choosing and training placement supervisors (especially homefields)
- Placement training for pastors around Newbold
- Cooperation between Newbold and students' home unions
- Placement of female students with female pastors for at least one phase of their theological field education

# Recommendations

## 3. Employment

- Intentionality in employing women
- Protect women against the abuse that the ordination debate brought out
- Create an environment of acceptance where females do not need to fight for their right to exist

## 4. Support

- In media: stories of female pastors sharing their stories
- Commitment by TED to include women as plenary speakers in all events
- Strengthen Biblical teaching on equality, gifts-based ministry and the priesthood of all believers
- Historical study of how females have served in ministry