

2025 Annual Council Statistical Report

David Trim

[FIRST SLIDE] Before I move into the report, Council members and viewers of the livestream should know that, if they want to find out more about the subjects covered in this report, [NEXT] they can access historical and current church statistics at adventiststatistics.org, that's adventiststatistics.org. And my report will be available online at adventistresearch.info.

[NEXT] First let's look at our latest membership figures, from June 30, 2025, and compare them to statistics for the mid-year point of each year over the previous five years.

The next two charts show net accessions rather than total membership.

These are for each calendar year, rather than the twelve months ending June 30.

[NEXT] This chart is a close-up just on the last quinquennium and shows the upward trend in net accessions, which totalled 6,583,700 in the last five

years. [NEXT] This next chart shows a 15-year trend, and brings out the impact of Covid-19 as well as the recovery in evangelistic outreach. It illustrates the way that church outreach has bounced back from the effects of the pandemic. Last year was the 22nd year in total in which there were one million or more accessions; the first such year was 1999, and the only year in the last 15 in which there were fewer than one million accessions was the worst year of the pandemic, 2020. The last two years, 2023 and 2024, were both record-breaking years for accessions: the 1.465 million people added to the denomination in 2023 was a record, one considerably exceeded by the 1.887 million members added last year.

But church growth is the function both of accessions and of losses. So, in the next two slides, we will focus on net losses.

[NEXT] This chart is another close-up, showing the last five years, in which there was a total of 4,050,104 living losses. [NEXT] And this chart is another 15-year trend. While the last quinquennium saw two record-breaking years for net accessions, it also saw the second- and third-highest years on record for net losses, which totalled 897,712 last year and 961,037 in 2022. In a sense

these are not statistics to celebrate, unlike the increase in accessions, but there is nevertheless grounds for a degree of satisfaction, in that membership reviews are taking place around the world which are registering the departure of church members, whereas twenty years ago, in many parts of the world, we were ignoring losses, yet they were taking place all the same. So we can be satisfied that we now have a more realistic picture of trends in membership.

We celebrate people coming to Christ and into the remnant Church and we celebrate growth in the Church. Why then do I talk about losses? Ellen G. White has powerful words on this subject. [NEXT] In *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 187, she writes of the divine Good Shepherd in the parable of Luke 15:

“No sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock.”

In the spirit of that quotation, of counting and recounting the flock, I will share now slides on cumulative total losses, which I have shared at each annual council since 2017.

Starting in 1965, church statistical reports provide data on losses and different kinds of accessions, as well as baptisms, so that, through 2024, we have exactly sixty years of data on accessions and losses.

[NEXT] We know that in those six decades, a total of 47,005,367 people have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

[NEXT] Of those, at least **20.29 million** have chosen to leave.

[NEXT] This means that **our net loss rate is slowly *rising*, and is now 43.17%**.

[NEXT] Thus, more than **4 of every 10** church members are slipping away. The world Church rightly continues to address this challenge, but it is a challenge not only to the leaders gathered in this room but also to every church member – to every disciple of Jesus – to be their brother's keeper, and their sister's, too.

Nevertheless, praise the Lord, the Church continues to grow, thanks to the large numbers of accessions, which are themselves due to a strong focus on

mission at all levels of church structure and to increasing integration of our missional efforts. What is the effect?

What do our increasing accessions mean for how our global membership stands in comparison to the world population? After all, if we were growing but the population were growing faster than us, our growth would be deceptive—it would be like trying to go up a down escalator.

However, as this next slide shows, that is not the case. [NEXT] This graph shows the population-to-member ratio in the world—the number of people for every Seventh-day Adventist. As membership *grows*, the population-to-member ratio gets *lower*, and therefore in the case of this graph, the lower the number the better.

Throughout our history, the ratio has dropped, and, as of December 31, 2024, there were 341 people to every Seventh-day Adventist. A year earlier the ratio was exactly 350 to 1. And you can see that, as recently as the year 2000, the global ratio was 519 people to every member; only in 2011 did the ratio drop to 400 to 1, but in the last thirteen years it has dropped by nearly sixty.

[NEXT] As the next slide shows, the world church in 2024 achieved an average of nearly 7,500 accessions every day—around the world, someone became a Seventh-day Adventist every eleven and a half seconds, compared to one every twenty-one and a half seconds in 2023.

There are other ratios that are significant in missiological terms. I shared one at last year's Annual Council and at this year's General Conference Session: the member-to-accession ratio. Now I will share a second significant ratio, namely the accession-to-congregation ratio.

[NEXT] Let me ask a question: how many baptisms are produced on average by each congregation, that is by each local church or company? [Pause] This is a key statistic, because it tells us how effective our church is in reaching people.

[NEXT] And the answer to that question for 2024 is 10.4 new members per congregation. With this ratio, the higher the number the better. But that is a global figure. What are the equivalent figures around the world? This allows us

a different way of identifying areas with high mission challenge. The next several slides highlight each division's accession-to-congregation ratio.

[NEXT] The East-Central Africa Division averages 13.4 accessions for each congregation.

[NEXT] The Euro-Asia Division has the most challenging statistic, with an average of eight-tenths of one accession per congregation.

[NEXT] In the Inter-American Division, the ratio is 6.5 accessions for each local church or company.

[NEXT] In the Inter-European Division, the ratio is 1.6 accessions per congregation.

[NEXT] The North American Division has a ratio of 6.4 accessions per congregation.

[NEXT] In the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, the ratio is 3.6.

[NEXT] In the South American Division, there are 7.1 new members for every local church or company.

[NEXT] In the South Pacific Division, the ratio is 23.5— this is the second-best ratio of any division but reflects growth in Papua New Guinea. In Australia, the ratio is only 2.8 per congregation.

[NEXT] In the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, the ratio is almost the same as the global average, with 10.7 accessions per congregation.

[NEXT] In the Southern Asia Division, there are 2.7 accessions per each local church or company.

[NEXT] In contrast, in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, the ratio is 29.5 per congregation—this is the best of any division.

[NEXT] In the secular Trans-European Division, the ratio is 1.8 accessions per congregation.

[NEXT] In the West-Central Africa Division, each congregation produces 4.6 new members.

[NEXT] The Chinese Union Mission has 1.8 accessions per congregation.

[NEXT] In contrast, the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, though it has by far the most challenging population-to-member ratio, averages 5.4 new members per congregation.

[NEXT] And in the Ukrainian Union Conference the ratio is 1.1 accession per local church or company.

The picture I have just painted is not one of missional success and failure, because *every* territory in the world Church *has* enjoyed *growth* – in *every* part of the world, our members and pastors are working to share the gospel and prophetic truth. But in some parts of the world that work of sharing is easier than in others, due to the wider religious culture, but also due to social, political, economic and religious-liberty factors. What this composite that I

have shared gives us is a picture of where missional circumstances are favourable, and where they are difficult. So let's bear that in mind when we hear reports of varying church growth around the world.

[NEXT] Having reviewed all these numbers, I want to conclude by pointing us away from the importance of numbers. Counting baptisms and members is a means, not an end in itself. It is a way to tell us how we are doing in reaching our greater goal of lifting up Jesus.

[NEXT] I would adapt the words of the prophet Zechariah, Not by might, nor by power, *nor by numbers*, but by my spirit says the Lord – that is how the work will go forward successfully and that is how, in due course, our mission will be accomplished. Let's keep our focus on mission, let's work in an integrated way, and let's move forward in God's power to finish the work.