

2025 General Conference Session Statistical Report

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[FIRST SLIDE] Before I move into the report, Session delegates and viewers of the livestream should know that if they want to find out more about the subjects covered in this report, [NEXT] then 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] This first chart shows the year-end membership over the last 15 years, since 2010, when reported membership was 16.923 million; as of December 31, 2025, the reported membership was 23.684 million, an increase of 40 per cent over the 15 years.

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

[NEXT] This chart is a close-up just on the last quinquennium and it illustrates the way that church outreach has bounced back from the effects of the pandemic. [NEXT] This next chart shows another 15-year trend, and, again,

brings out the impact of Covid-19 as well as the recovery in evangelistic outreach, which owes much to church planting, something I will speak about more later in this presentation. 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. [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.

I should emphasise that the losses I am talking about are those who have departed our ranks – they do not include deaths. [NEXT] The statistics for deaths for the last 15 years are shown in this chart – you will see that the worst year on record for church-member deaths was not 2020 but 2021, still undoubtedly reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some may ask, “How are accessions and losses made up?” [NEXT] This chart shows last year’s accessions by category. It should be noted that the 1.586 million baptisms include the *rebaptism* of 71,783 *former* members. We praise God for the way the Church is reaching out to those who have left our ranks and *reclaiming* them. [NEXT] This chart shows the breakdown of living losses – the largest single category is *Negative Adjustments* which total almost 534,000 – what are called adjustments are the results of membership reviews

which have taken place or are taking place in most, though not yet all, of the thirteen world divisions.

We know that there are more losses to come, as the reviews continue, and we can gauge this by using the mortality rate of Adventists and comparing it to the mortality rate of the general population. The mortality rate is the number of deaths per thousand people.

[NEXT] This chart, which shows the global Adventist and general mortality rates in the last 25 years, illustrates the impact of membership reviews, as the Adventist mortality rate comes closer to the general rate. The Adventist health advantage means Adventist mortality should be about two-thirds of general mortality. Currently it is around 45 per cent, so we know there are still more losses to be registered.

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 annual council every year 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. In this case, therefore, the lower the number the better. I realise this is not what we are used to, so let me just explain. If I moved to a city of 10,000 people by myself and was the only Adventist there,

the ratio would be 10,000 to 1. But if my wife moved with me, there would be two of us and so the ratio would be *five* thousand to 1. Let's imagine that we plant a small church and that by the end of the year there are ten of us – that would make the ratio *one* thousand to one. Now let's imagine that our church holds an evangelistic series and the membership grows to one hundred. That would mean the ratio would fall to one hundred to one. As membership *grows*, the population-to-member ratio gets *lower*, and thus 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.

Another way to consider growth is not the raw numbers of total membership and accessions, but the membership growth *rate*. This is the percentage change in total membership each year. This chart illustrates the annual growth rate over the last twenty-five years. The growth rate declined considerably in the 2000s but then saw something of a recovery in the mid-2010s – but then there was a decline even before the collapse caused by Covid. However, given the bounce-back in accessions in the last two years, we see a positive increase in the growth rate, though it is still not as high as in the year 2000. But the higher the total membership, the more difficult it is to sustain a high growth rate. We need to continue to monitor this metric, but the recent trend is positive.

Having shared the population-to-member ratio earlier, there is another ratio that is significant in missiological terms. That is the member-to-accession ratio.

Let me ask a question: how many church members does it take to produce each baptism? [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 12.5 to 1. So, it takes twelve and a half church members to produce every new member.

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. We cannot simply look at net membership or even at population-to-member ratios, because some divisions in the world have very high populations. So while the population-to-member ratio in the Middle East and North Africa Union is very sobering, at ninety-four and a half thousand persons for every Seventh-day Adventist, and while this accurately identifies where the world Church's greatest mission challenge is, membership totals or population-to-member ratios alone don't necessarily tell us which divisions face particularly difficult missional circumstances. The next several slides highlight each division's member-to-accession ratio.

[NEXT] The East-Central Africa Division figure is almost the global average with one accession for every 12 church members.

[NEXT] In the Euro-Asia Division, there is one accession for every 45 church members.

[NEXT] In the Inter-American Division, the ratio is one accession for every 23 church members.

[NEXT] In the Inter-European Division, the ratio is 38 members for every accession.

[NEXT] The North American Division has a ratio of 30 members to every accession.

[NEXT] In the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, there are 53 church members for every accession.

[NEXT] In contrast, in the South American Division, the ratio is 13 to 1.

[NEXT] And in the South Pacific Division, it is 4 to 1 – this is the best ratio of any division but reflects growth in Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific

Islands, which all have very religious cultures. In secular New Zealand, the ratio is nearly 50 to 1.

[NEXT] In the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, the ratio is 14 members to every accession.

[NEXT] In the Southern Asia Division, which is predominantly Hindu and Muslim, the ratio is 46 to 1.

[NEXT] In contrast, in the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, the ratio is 5 to 1.

[NEXT] In the secular Trans-European Division, the ratio is 37 to 1.

[NEXT] In the West-Central Africa Division, it takes 21 members for every new member.

[NEXT] The Chinese Union Mission has the most challenging statistic, with 70 members to every accession.

[NEXT] In contrast, in the Middle East and North Africa Union Mission, though it has by far the most challenging population-to-member ratio, there is one accession for every 14 members.

[NEXT] In the Ukrainian Union Conference the ratio is 39 to 1.

[NEXT] While in the last field attached directly to the General Conference, the tiny Israel Field, the member-to-accession ratio is 23 to 1.

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 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.

There is a final metric that is important to consider in statistically assessing the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and that is church planting, which I will explore in the last few slides.

[NEXT] This chart shows the last three years. The planting of new companies was beginning to dry up, but there was an explosion in planting of new companies in 2024, which plainly is associated with the record number of accessions.

[NEXT] This next chart shows the last quinquennium. In 2020, the number of companies actually decreased instead of growing, for only the second time.

[NEXT] This chart gives us a broader perspective, showing the numbers of *new* churches and companies over the last *fifteen* years. We see that the decline in companies of 2020 was not solely due to Covid, as there had been a similar decline in 2019. In my report to the 2021 Annual Council, I highlighted that there was something of a crisis in church planting. Praise God that church leaders and pastors around the world have responded in such a positive fashion.

[NEXT] This chart shows the annual *total* number of congregations – both churches and companies – also over the last fifteen years. In that time period, the number of companies has increased by virtually one fifth, from 65,200 to 77,800, even though many of those companies have become local churches. The number of local churches in the same time has increased by 48% or almost half.

[NEXT] This chart shows the trend over those 15 years in the *annual* growth rate of congregations. We can see that the percentage increase in congregations dropped through the 2010s but has now rebounded, and we hope that there continues to be a boom in the planting of new churches. Ours has been a church-planting movement since the very beginning and church-planting is vital in fulfilling our ultimate mission.

A final statistic – this is another ratio, one that gives the global number of accessions per congregation. This is how many accessions each local congregation produces on average in the world Church. With this ratio, the higher the number the better.

[NEXT] This graph shows the figures for the last 25 years, and we can see that while the ratio was falling in the late 2000s and in the 2010s, last year's figure was a record high.

Having reviewed all these numbers, some of them challenging, but many of them very satisfactory, and the trends in the numbers, I want to conclude by pointing us away from the importance of numbers. Sometimes perhaps we look on numbers with pride and as the fruit of human endeavour. But all the glory should go to God. And there are times, as in the experience of Gideon, when smaller numbers of more spiritually powerful people are better than big numbers.

[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.