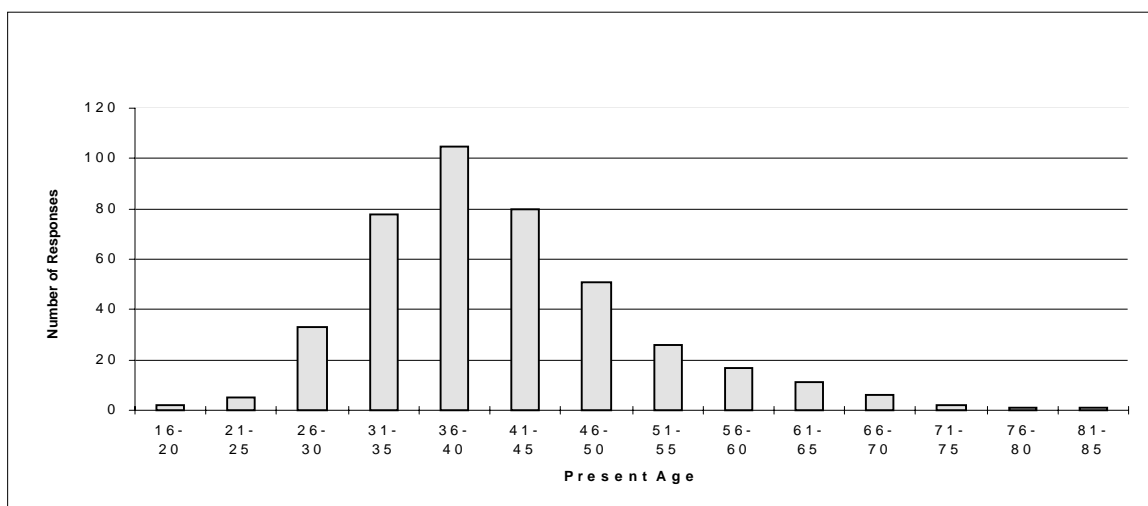


## The Pastors

The first series of research questions (RQ1 - RQ5) focus on constructing a background profile of the pastor. The first research query (RQ1) studies the impact of age in the areas of conversion and pastoring. Responses to the questions about the pastors yielded very interesting data. The current average age of Costa Rican pastors is 41.5 years. The median average age (Md) is 40 years old and the most common mentioned age (Mo) was 39 years. The oldest respondent to the survey was eighty-two (82) years old and the youngest was eighteen (18). The table below shows the distribution of the ages of the pastors.

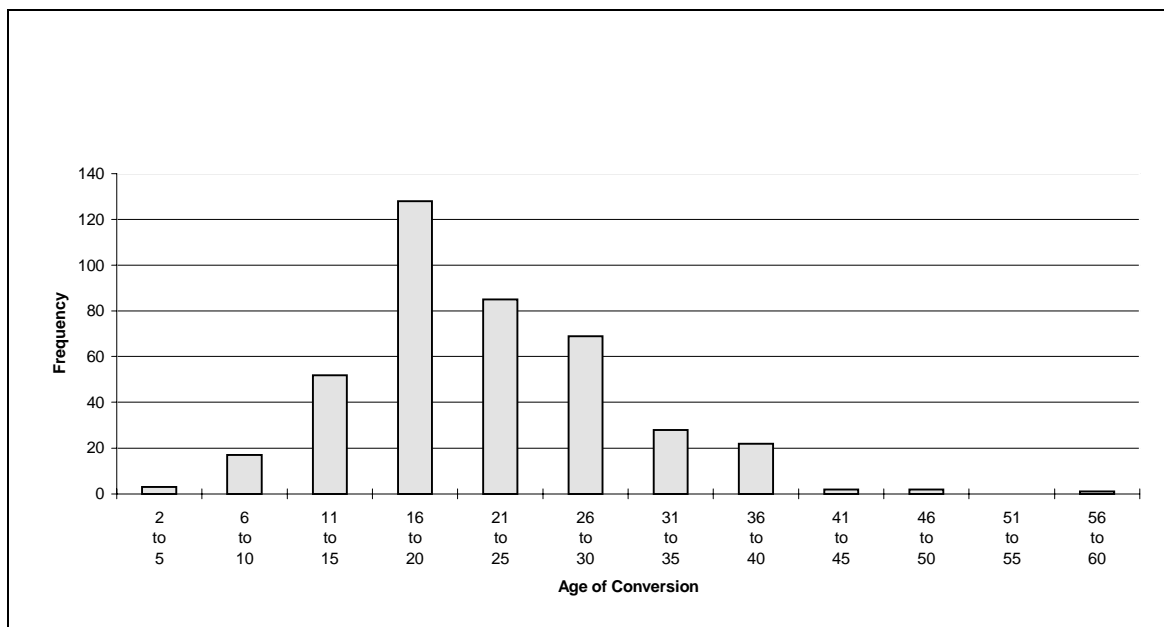
Figure 4.15  
Current Age Distribution of Pastors  
(n = 418)



Most Costa Rican pastors (31.3%) became Christians when they were between sixteen and twenty (16-20) years old. Thus Jorge Gomez' conclusion that this group be targeted for special evangelistic efforts (Gomez, 223-225) is reinforced by the fact that this age level is when most of the current Costa Rican pastors made their own decisions

to follow Christ. The oldest conversion recorded in the data occurred at age 56 years old while the youngest occurred at age two (see Figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16  
Age at Conversion, Costa Rican Pastors  
(n = 409)

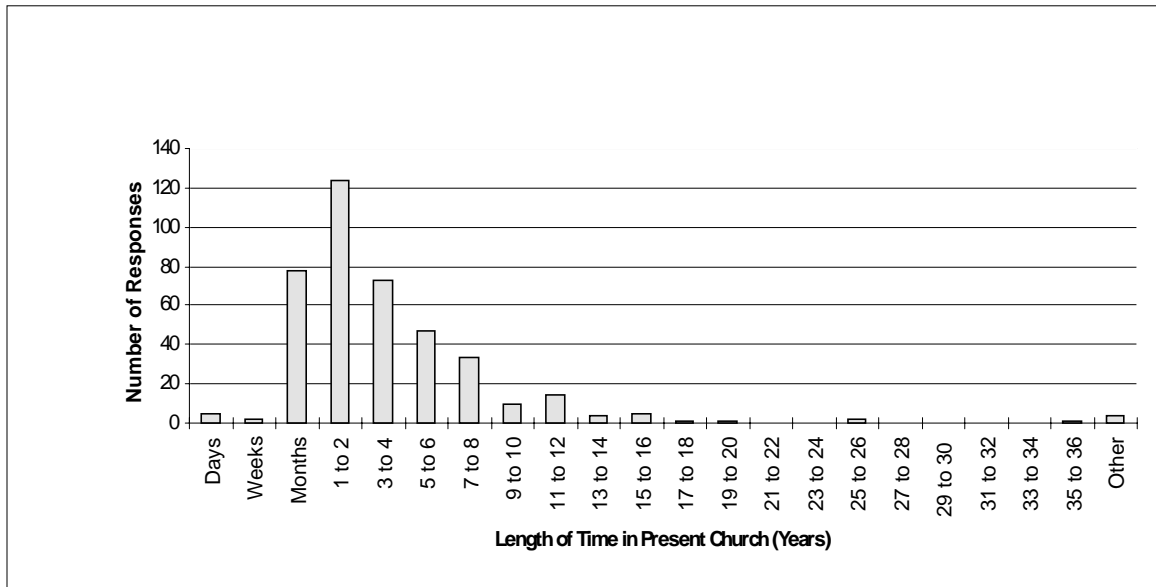


The most often mentioned age of conversion was at age twenty (20). An interesting phenomenon related to the age of the pastors' conversion was that there was a significant number (f.= 154 or 37.7%) who became Christians in their twenties (21-30 years). Combining the pastors who became Christians in their teens with those who did so in their twenties accounts for 69% of the pastors. The average age of conversion for the research was 22.3 years.

This study found that 92.1% of pastors have served in their present church for ten years or less. Sixty-seven percent (67%) have served four years or less. Many respondents (f. = 124 or 30.6%) had served one to two years in their churches. Another 19.3% (f. = 78) indicated that they had only been in their present church assignment for

“months.” These data indicate that pastors generally serve in their churches for short periods of time and do not have a tendency to pastor one church all their lives (see Figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17  
Length of Time in Present Church  
(n = 405)

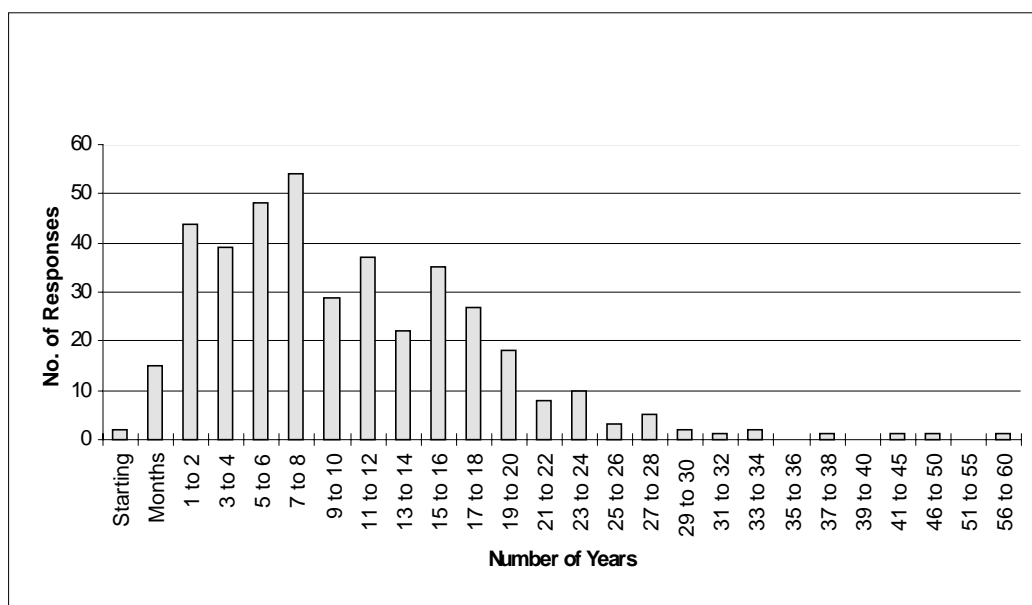


The most churches that any one person had pastored were fourteen (14). This person was 23 years old when he became a Christian, is presently 52 and has been pastoring for 28 years. This means that he was 24 years old when he pastored his first church. In other words, he had been a Christian for only one year before beginning to pastor. Having pastored 14 churches in 28 years makes his average length of stay in a church two years. He has been serving in his present church assignment for three years.

Data gathered on the number of years the respondents have served in the pastorate showed that 49.9% had been pastoring for eight years or less. Another 41.4% had been pastors for nine to twenty years. Only 8.7% of respondents have been pastoring for more than twenty-one years. The fact that almost 50% of pastors have served for eight years or

less and that 41.7% have served nine to twenty-one years, shows that there is a good crop of young pastors who have come out of the rapid church growth experienced between 1970 to 1984. This could mean that there is a good pool of young pastors for the development of strong churches and good prospects for the advancement of more church growth in the future (see Figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18  
Years in Pastorate  
(n = 405)

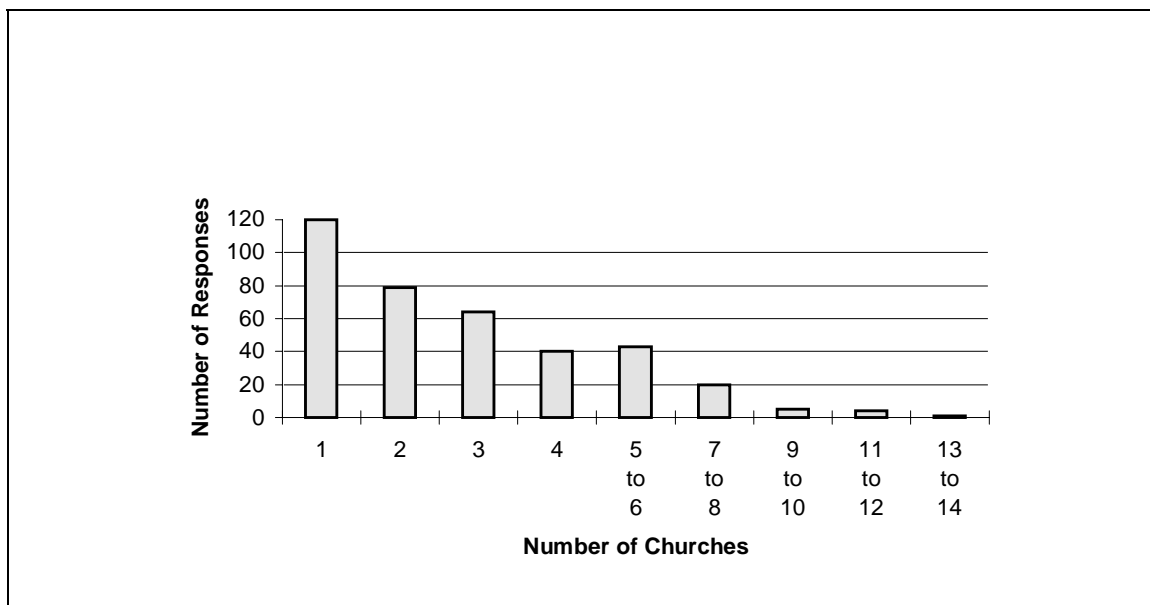


By subtracting the average time the respondents have been in the pastorate (10.89 years) from their current age (41.56) we see that the respondents began pastoring churches at an average age of 30.7. If the average age of when most of the respondents became Christians (22.3) is subtracted we can see that there is a period of approximately 8.4 years when the future pastors are being formed for ministry. This period is critical in the life of future ministers. Leaders and pastors should pay particular attention to the kind of discipleship given to young men (and women) in this age bracket in terms of their

development in Bible knowledge and discipleship practices.

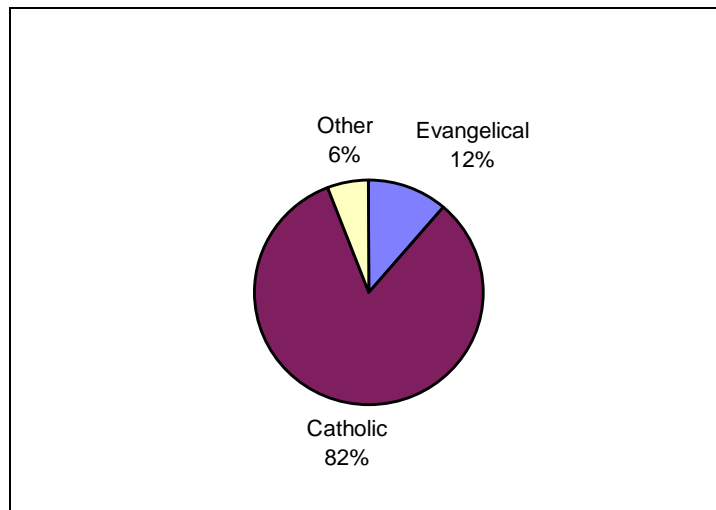
The research indicated that 32% of pastors are serving in their first pastorate, 21% are in their second, 17% are in their third while 30% are pastoring the church which is their fourth (or more) pastorate (see Figure 4.19).

Figure 4.19  
Number of Churches Pastored  
(n = 379)



The religious orientation of the pastors' family backgrounds were queried in the research. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the pastors were born in Catholic homes, while eleven point five percent (11.5%) came from evangelical households. Another five point five percent (5.5%) came from "other" backgrounds. This is similar to the results found in the 1996 *La Nacion* study showing that the general Costa Rican population was 78.8% Catholic, 12.2% non-Catholic, and 8.9% were of other religious persuasions.

Figure 4.20  
Pastoral Home Background  
(n = 416)



In order to construct an accurate picture of the financial profile of the pastors it is necessary to identify the salary range of the pastors, the source of income, whether the pastors participate in the Social Security program of the government, if they owned their own home, and if the pastors have a pension plan.

Salary figures provided by Costa Rican evangelical pastors show that 65.9% of the pastors are making US\$307.00 or less a month and that 34.2% make \$308.00 or more. A significant percentage (16.7%) make \$102.00 or less a month, which is below the official Costa Rican poverty line.

Table 4.4  
Pastoral Salary Range  
(n = 395)

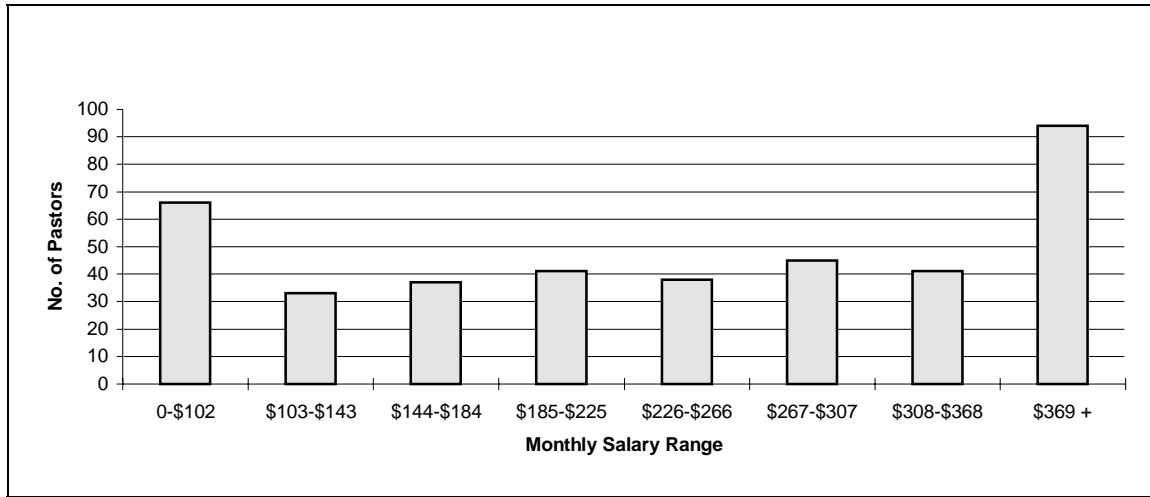
Amount Colones	Amount USD*	No. of Pastors	Percent
0-25,000	0-\$102	66	16.7%
26,000-35,000	\$103-\$143	33	8.4
36,000-45,000	\$144-\$184	37	9.4
46,000-55,000	\$185-\$225	41	10.4
56,000-65,000	\$226-\$266	38	9.6
66,000-75,000	\$267-\$307	45	11.4
76,000-90,000	\$308-\$368	41	10.4
91,000 +	\$369 +	94	23.7
	Total	395	100%

\*Exchange rate = 245 colones to one dollar (USD)

As mentioned in Chapter One, the average salary for a Costa Rican Social Service worker according to the Ministry of Economy is \$336.34 per month and the minimum wage for workers generally is \$198.37. If we apply these figures to the income of the pastors we find that at least 34.5% of the pastors are receiving less than minimum wage. On the other end of the scale, there are a significant number of pastors (f.= 94 or 23.8%) that have monthly income in excess of \$369.00 per month, which is more in line with the average for Community Service worker.

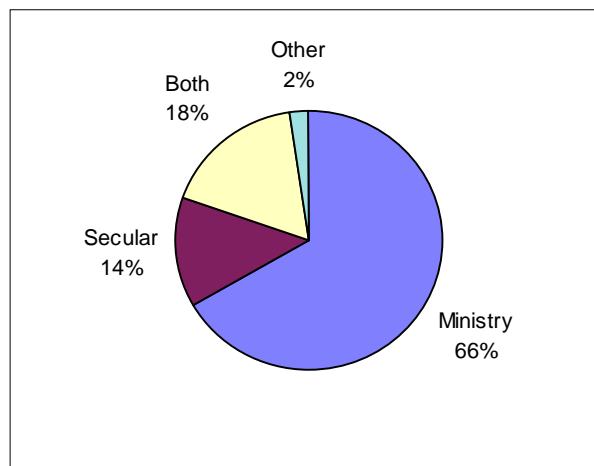
Figure 4.21

Salary levels  
(n = 395)



Regarding the source of the pastors' income, 66.5% said that it came directly from the ministry itself and not from any other sources. Another 13.7% reported that it came from secular work and 2.1% marked "other." Seventy-two (72) out of 410 (17.7%) indicated that their income came from both the ministry and secular sources. These data indicate that approximately one-third of pastors are bi-vocational.

Figure 4.22  
Pastor Salary Source  
(n = 410)



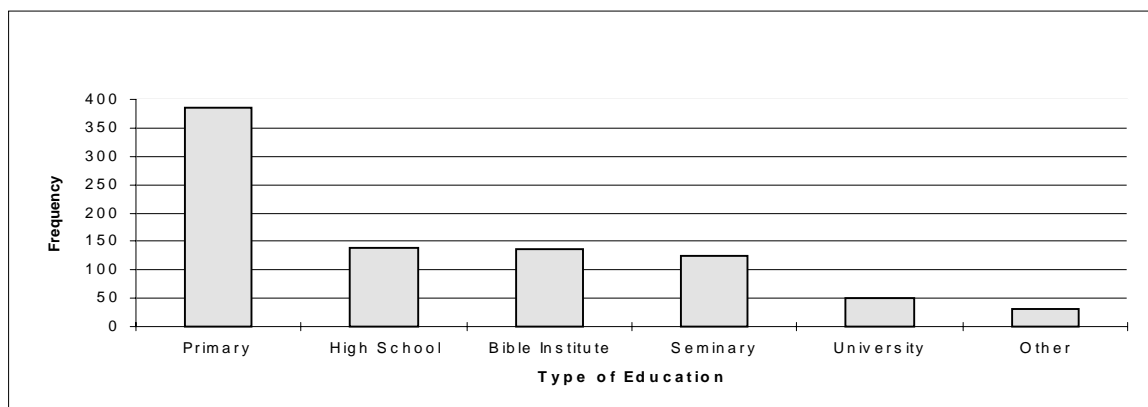
Data from the survey found that seventy-three percent (73%) of pastors have



some form of social security (which in Costa Rica is more than an old age pension but also includes medical benefits), yet over a quarter (27%) do not. Fewer pastors (62%) own their own homes while 38% do not. Very few pastors (32%) belonged to a denomination that provided a pension program. This means that 68% of the pastors surveyed have no retirement plan other than social security.

Ninety-four percent (94%) of the pastors surveyed have completed primary school, which covers grades 1 - 6 in Costa Rica. Only 34.2% however, have completed high school. Thirty-three percent (33%) of the pastors have completed some form of Bible Institute training, while only 12% have earned a university degree. There were thirty responses (7.3%) marking “other” educational programs. Of those who indicated the nature of “other” education, three wrote “Doctorate,” one wrote “Masters,” and one wrote “Commercial.” This shows that while almost all pastors have a basic education, a great many, 65.8%, have not completed high school and only a few (12%) have earned a university degree (see Figure 4.23).

Figure 4.23  
Pastor’s Educational Level  
(n = 409)

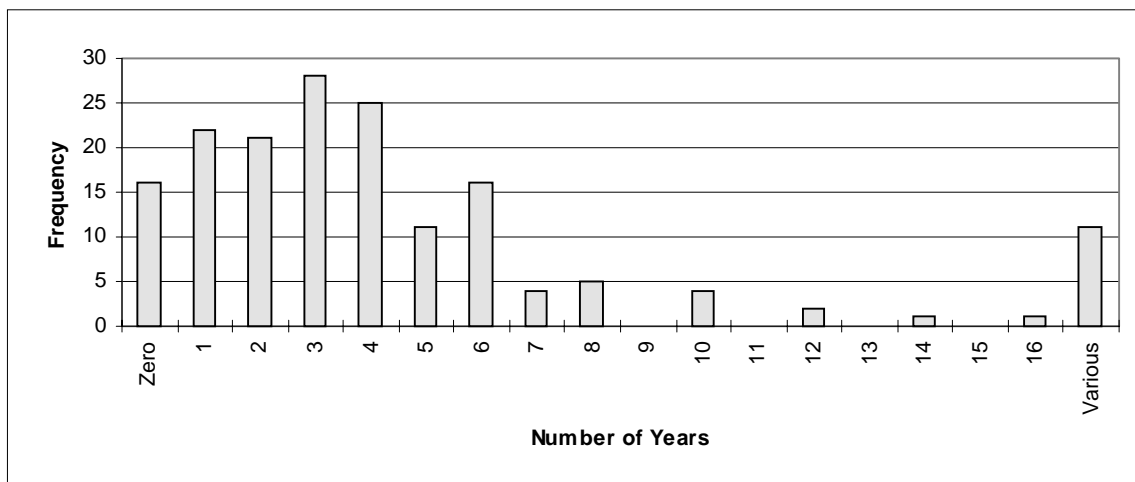


When asked to elaborate on where the pastors had studied, for how long and at what level, the response rate was 72.6% (n = 313). One hundred eighty-four (184) or

58.8% of the pastors named an institution where they had done theological studies. The majority were institutions in Costa Rica, but there were three responses naming institutions outside the country. The institutions in Costa Rica most often mentioned were; ESEPA (Bible Church Seminary, f.= 30), CEFON (Church of God, f.= 24), Methodist Seminary (f.= 21), IBAD (Assembly of God Bible Institute, f.= 16), and Elim Bible Institute (f.= 13). The institutions mentioned outside of Costa Rica were Asbury Seminary (f.= 1), Columbia International University (f.= 1), and Fuller Seminary (f.= 1). Of the 184 pastors who indicated a place of study 40.6% (f.= 43) attended a Bible institute, 51.9% attended a seminary, and 7.5% attended a university.

There were 167 responses (53.3%) regarding the length of time pastors had been involved in theological studies. The majority of the pastors (f.= 96 or 57.5%) that responded to this item had studied four years or less, 21.6% had been studying five to eight years, eight pastors (4.8%) for nine years or more. Eleven (6.6%) said they had studied for “various” years, and sixteen (9.6%) said they had had no studies. In thirty responses (17.9%) it was obvious that the pastors were presently involved in some theological classes (see Figure 4.24).

Figure 4.24  
Years of Theological Studies  
(n = 167)



Fifty-eight pastors indicated the level of theological studies they had reached or were presently involved in completing a program of study. Most pastors (60.3%) had completed or were involved in theological studies that were at or below the Diploma level of education while 34.5% were studying or had completed studies at a Bachelor to Doctoral level.

Table 4.5  
Level of Education  
(n = 58)

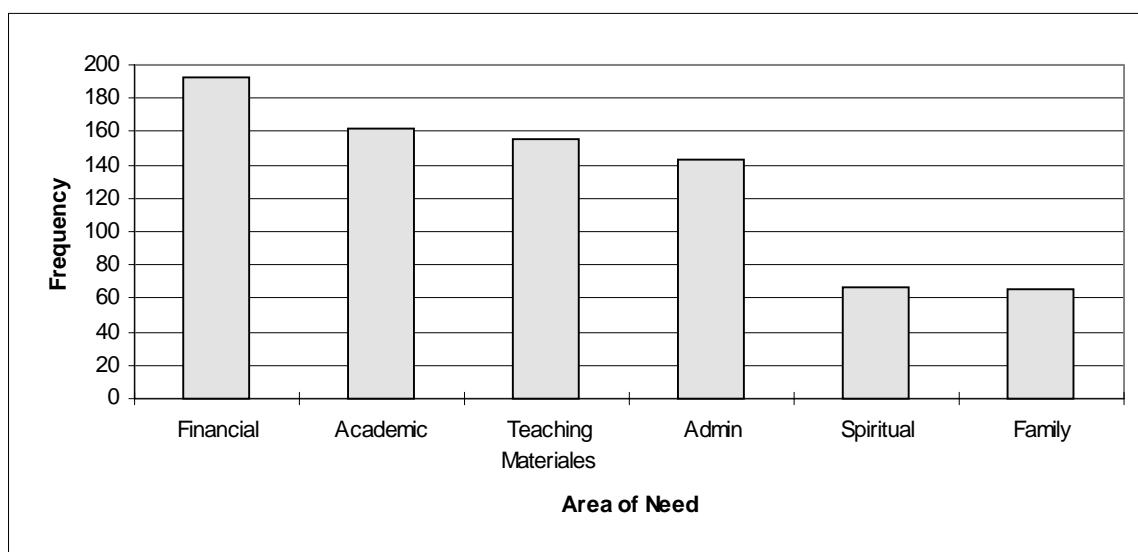
Level	Responses	Percent
Certificate	3	5.2%
High School	18	31.0%
Diploma	17	29.3%
Bachelor	12	20.7%
Master	5	8.6%
Doctoral	3	5.2%

When asked where the pastors would go to find help in the areas of evangelism and discipleship most (f.= 159) mentioned that they would look to their own denomination. Within their own denominations the majority (f.= 27) mentioned consulting their supervisors although others (f.= 20) stated they would consult with their denomination's national office or with their churches (f.= 14). Other significant answers

included International Institute of Evangelism in Depth (IINDEF) (f.= 59), seminaries (usually their denomination's) (f.= 27), or “directly from the Bible” (f.= 10).

This study sought information about what were the areas of greatest needs of the pastors (RQ 5). Overall, the areas of finances, academic preparation, teaching materials, and training in administration were identified by pastors. Among the least frequently marked areas of needs were “spiritual” and “family” issues. These data show that the number one issue in the pastor's lives was the financial area. This, coupled with findings about the financial position of pastors, confirms that there is a problem among the pastors regarding the pay for the work they are doing (cf. Figure 4.25).

Figure 4.25  
Areas of Most Need  
(n = 409)



In addition to asking pastors to identify areas of need, the research instrument also asked if they felt they had a mentor in whom they could confide during difficult times. Most pastors (87%) felt that they had a mentor that they could turn to in times of trouble.

When asked what was the ministry vision that they felt the Lord had given them

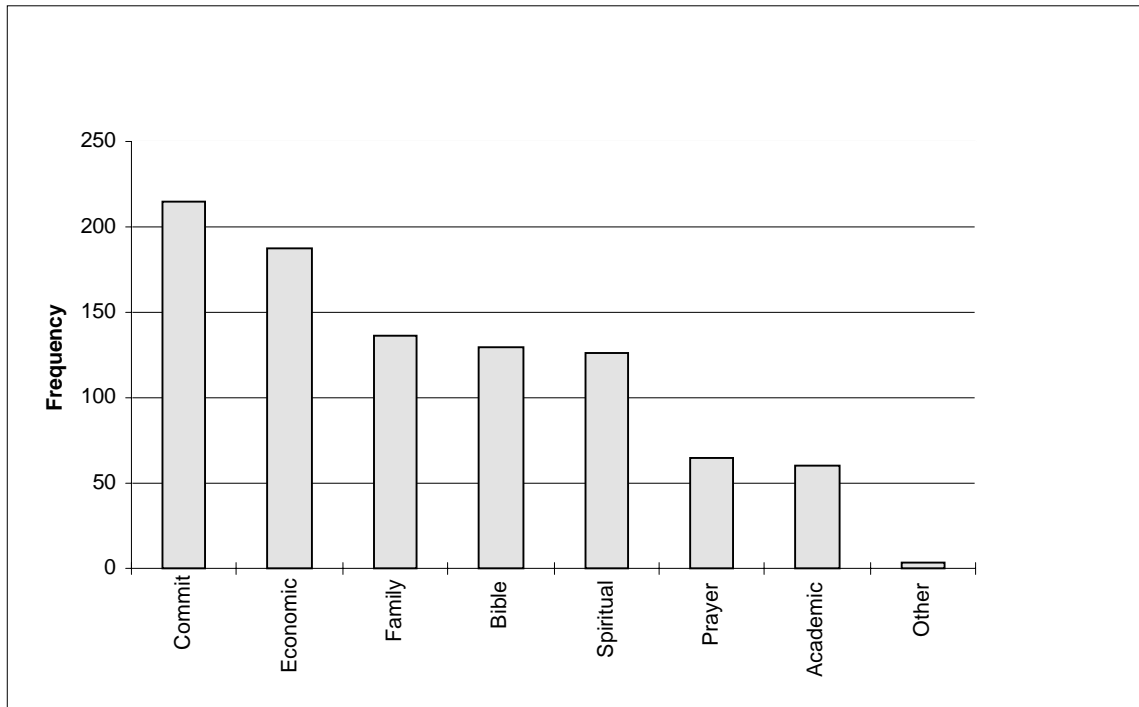
there were two kinds of answers. One set of answers was focused geographically. Here, as with the question on their missionary vision, the majority of pastors indicated that their ministry vision was aimed at reaching Costa Rica for Christ. Of the seventy-six geographical responses, fifty-five mentioned something that indicated a national focus. Several pastors (f.= 21) mentioned that their ministry focus was “the world,” or “reaching the nations.”

Top priority among those with a national perspective was the health of their own churches (35 of 55 responses). More than a third of these pastors (20 of 55), however, mentioned that their ministry visions were oriented toward their communities or the country as a whole.

The second category of answers revolved around the common phrases used to describe the pastor’s ministry vision. Here the most common phrase used was to “save souls” (f.= 65). Other descriptive phrases included pastoring or pastoral work (f.= 43), evangelizing and discipling (f.= 41), “restoration” (f.= 25), and planting new churches (f.= 21).

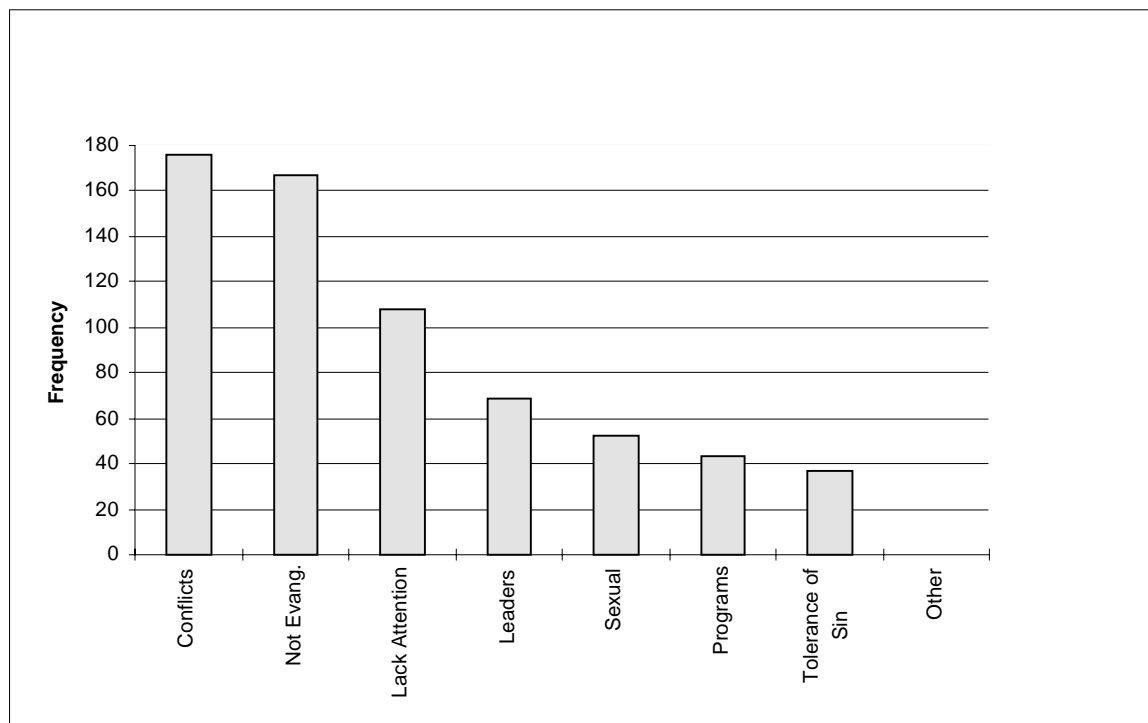
According to the pastors, the greatest need of their congregations was to have a greater commitment to Christ. Financial problems were the second most commonly marked need, followed by family problems, Bible training, spiritual nurturing, and prayer (cf. Figure 4.26).

Figure 4.26  
Congregational Needs  
(n = 405)



The greatest obstacle to church growth is the problem of conflicts and divisions in the church (f.= 176). A close second was the churches' failure to evangelize sufficiently (f.= 169), followed by a lack of personal attention to the church members and discipleship (f.= 108). Far behind in response ratings were the conduct and testimonies of the leaders (f.= 69), sexual sins (f.= 52), programs that were not meeting needs (f.= 43), and too much tolerance for people that sin (f.= 37). Given that the main obstacles that keeps people from identifying with the evangelical churches was the bad testimony of believers and that the number one obstacle to church growth is conflict within the church, pastors need to know not only how to disciple people, but also how to resolve conflicts.

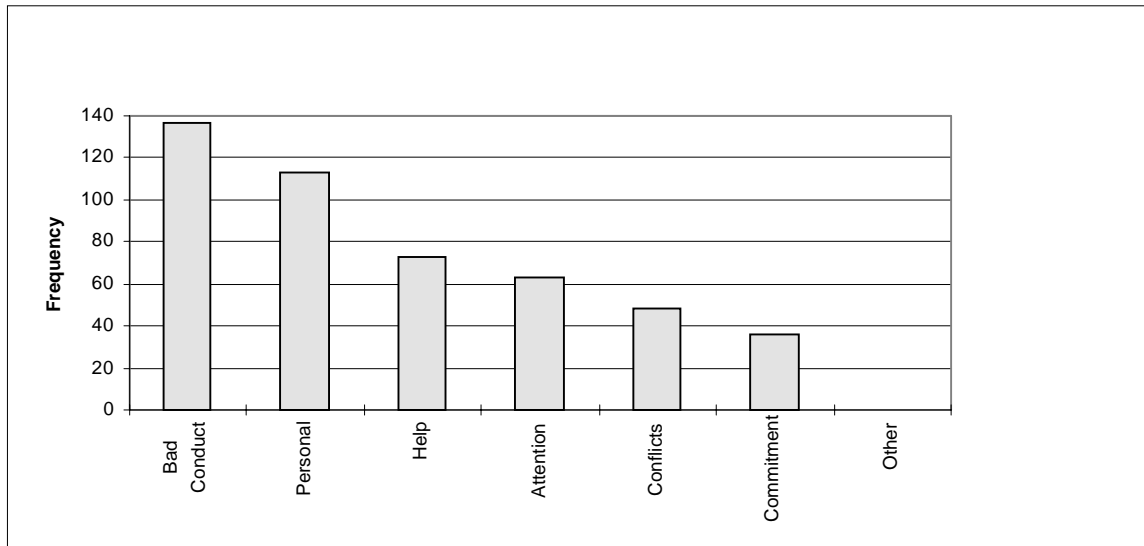
Figure 4.27  
Obstacles to Church Growth  
(n = 335)



Respondents suggested some pastors have left the pastorate because of their own bad conduct (f.= 137) and “personal problems” (f.= 113). Other suggested causes of pastoral attrition included lack of support from believers (f.= 73), lack of support from superiors (f.= 63), conflicts in the church that were not their fault (f.= 48), and lack of commitment (f.= 36). Also mentioned were adultery, financial needs, burn-out, isolation, health problems, bad conflict management, and the pastor being treated as just an object.

Recalling that one of the main reasons pastors fail in ministry was because of personal problems, it is satisfying to see that most pastors feel that they have mentors. Nevertheless, there may be a breakdown in the process if the pastors do not actually go to their mentors in times of trouble.

Figure 4.28  
Why Pastors Leave  
(n = 335)



### Summary

From the information gathered through the questionnaire we can now construct a profile of the Costa Rican evangelical pastor. The prominent characteristics of such a profile would include the following elements.

- The average age of the pastors surveyed was 41.6 years.
- The average age of conversion was 22.3 years.
- The most often mentioned age of conversion was 20 years.
- 37.7% became Christians in their teens.
- 31.3% became Christians in their twenties.
- 83% of the pastors came from Catholic homes, 11.5% from evangelical backgrounds, and 5.5% other.
- The pastors were an average of 30.7 years old when they began in the pastorate.
- Pastors have been serving an average of 10.9 years.
- There were 8.4 years between the pastors' conversion and his beginning to pastor.



- The pastors have served in an average of 2.9 churches.
- The average number of years in each church is 3.7 years.
- 76.2% of the pastors receive less than \$369.00 per month.
- 34.5 % of the pastors receive less than \$198.37 per month.
- 66.5 % of pastors receive their salary from ministry only.
- 13.7 % of pastors receive their salary from secular sources only.
- 17.7 % of pastors receive their salary from both sources.
- The greatest needs of the pastors are in the areas of finances and academic preparation.
- The greatest obstacles to church growth are church conflict and failure to evangelize.
- Most pastors leave the pastorate because of bad personal conduct, personal problems, or lack of support by believers.

Educational characteristics of the pastors:

- 94% completed grade school.
- 34% completed high school.
- 33% completed Bible institute.
- 12% completed university.
- 30.6% completed seminary.
- 40.6% have been/ are in a Bible institute.
- 51.9% have been/ are in seminary.
- 7.5% have been/ are in university.
- 17.9% are currently studying.

- 60% are studying at Diploma level and 35% are studying at Bachelor level or above.

Having formed a general profile of the Costa Rican evangelical pastor we can now begin to build a profile of the ministry realities that the pastors face in their work of leading their churches.

At this point, the database will be segmented by the location of the church served, rural and urban. From the analysis of these data, differences in the opinions and worldviews of rural pastors as opposed to those of urban pastors can be presented.