



**COMMUNICATIONS**

United Methodist Communications

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**UMCom Leader Panel**

**GC 2024 Attitudes, Awareness & Participation**

**Feb. 2024**



**ADVOCATE**

MARKET RESEARCH BUREAU

## Methodology

120 panelists across our three ethnic leader panels (Black, Latino and Asian) completed this online study from February 14 to 24, 2024. The questionnaire was 21 questions, with 1 open end question, and average completion time of about 8 minutes. All respondents received a \$5 Amazon gift card. The email invitation is in the Appendix of this report.

## Key Findings

- The results represent 64% from the Black panel, 19% from the Asian panel, and 17% from the Latino panel.
- Among total respondents, 64% reported having attended a General Conference, with the highest attendance in 2012 and 2016, followed by the 2019 Special General Conference.
- Discussions about the upcoming General Conference are prevalent, with approximately half of the churches engaging in them. These discussions often occur in small groups or during pastor meetings.
- Participants in these conversations come from various roles within the church, including pastors, congregation members, church staff, and over a quarter of participants are delegates.
- Primary resources used to facilitate these discussions include Annual Conference resources, General Conference materials, and [www.resourceumc.org](http://www.resourceumc.org).
- Feelings about the upcoming General Conference vary widely among respondents, ranging from hopeful to genuine concern.
- Notably, 12.5% of respondents are delegates themselves, while 72% personally know a delegate. Only 30% report interacting with their delegates, potentially impacting their understanding and comfort level with delegate representation. Of those who do interact with their delegates, it is most often done via meetings or scheduled conversations. Open end responses to “How are you / your church interacting with your delegates” are located in the Detailed Findings of this report.
- While only 33% of respondents will attend the General Conference in person, a significant number plan to engage closely through live streams (60%), the General Conference website (44%), and their Annual Conference website (41%), as well as through articles and discussions.
- Regarding disaffiliation, 35% of respondents reported discussing the possibility, while 38% were clear they were not considering it. Ultimately, only 2.5% reported their church pursued disaffiliation, with theological differences and the LGBTQ stance cited as primary reasons.
- The effects of disaffiliation are varied, with 18% considering disaffiliated churches still part of the United Methodist Church, while 73% do not. Additionally, opinions on the disaffiliated church connection to UMC boards and agencies are divided, with 23% seeing a future role for them and 53% not seeing a connection at all.

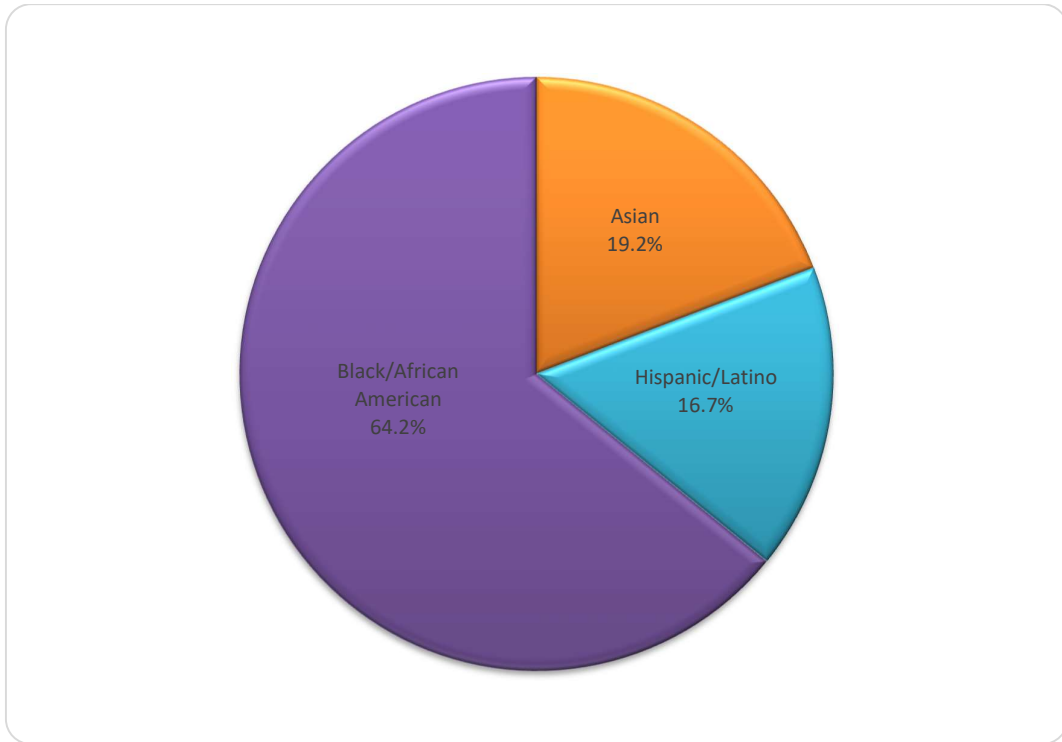
## Next Steps

### **Keep doing what we are doing.**

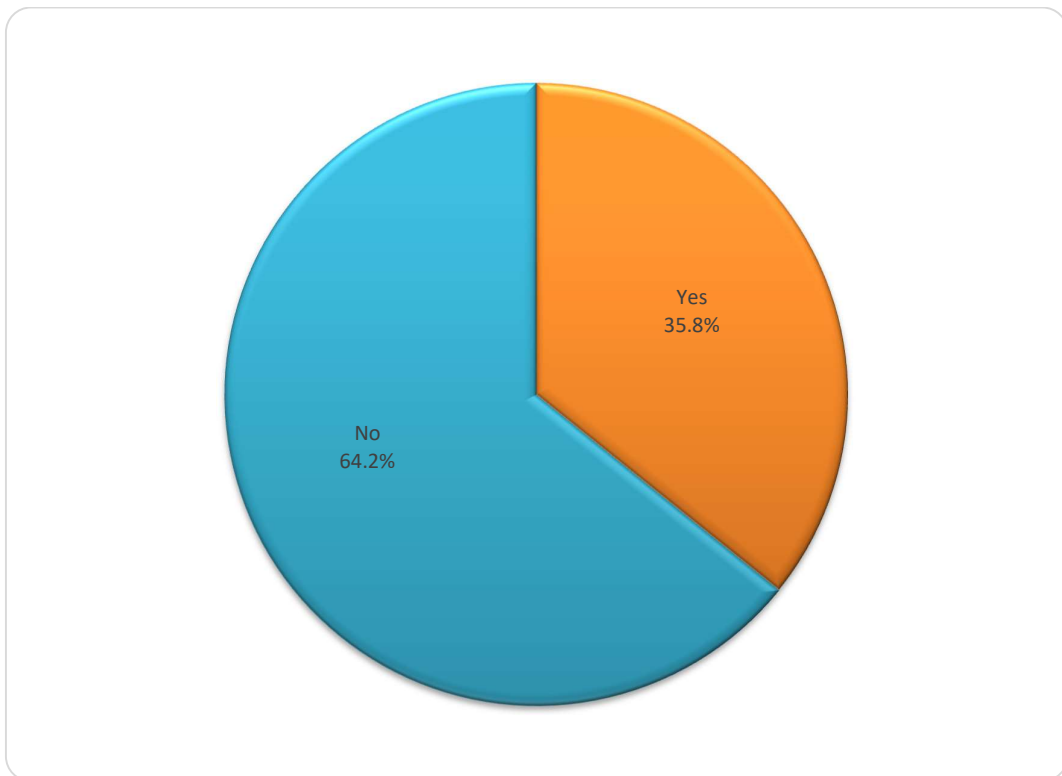
- Increase opportunities for meaningful engagement between delegates and constituents to enhance representation and foster a deeper understanding of delegate roles and responsibilities.
- Develop educational resources and forums to facilitate informed discussions about the upcoming General Conference and its potential implications for the church.
- Provide support and resources for churches considering disaffiliation, including guidance on the process and potential impacts on congregation members and the broader community.
- Foster dialogue and collaboration among church leaders, members, and stakeholders to navigate challenges and explore opportunities for unity and growth within the United Methodist Church.
- Further explore and understand the perspectives and concerns of various demographic groups within the church through targeted surveys or focus groups.

# DETAILED FINDINGS

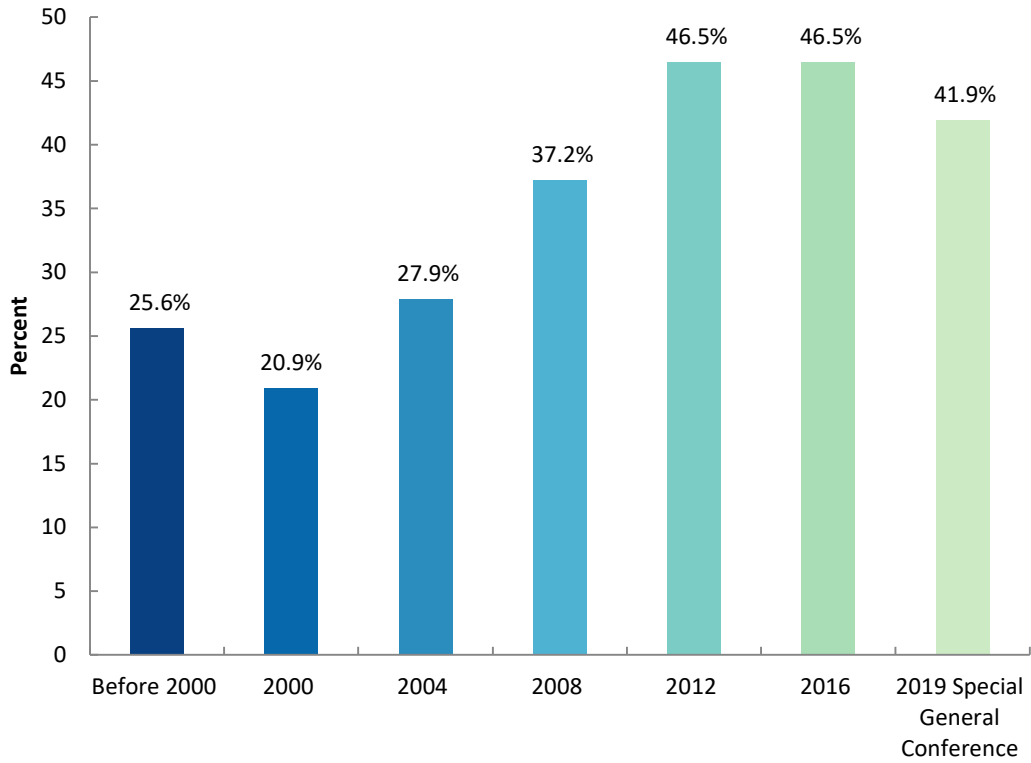
### Which UMC Leader Panel are you a member?



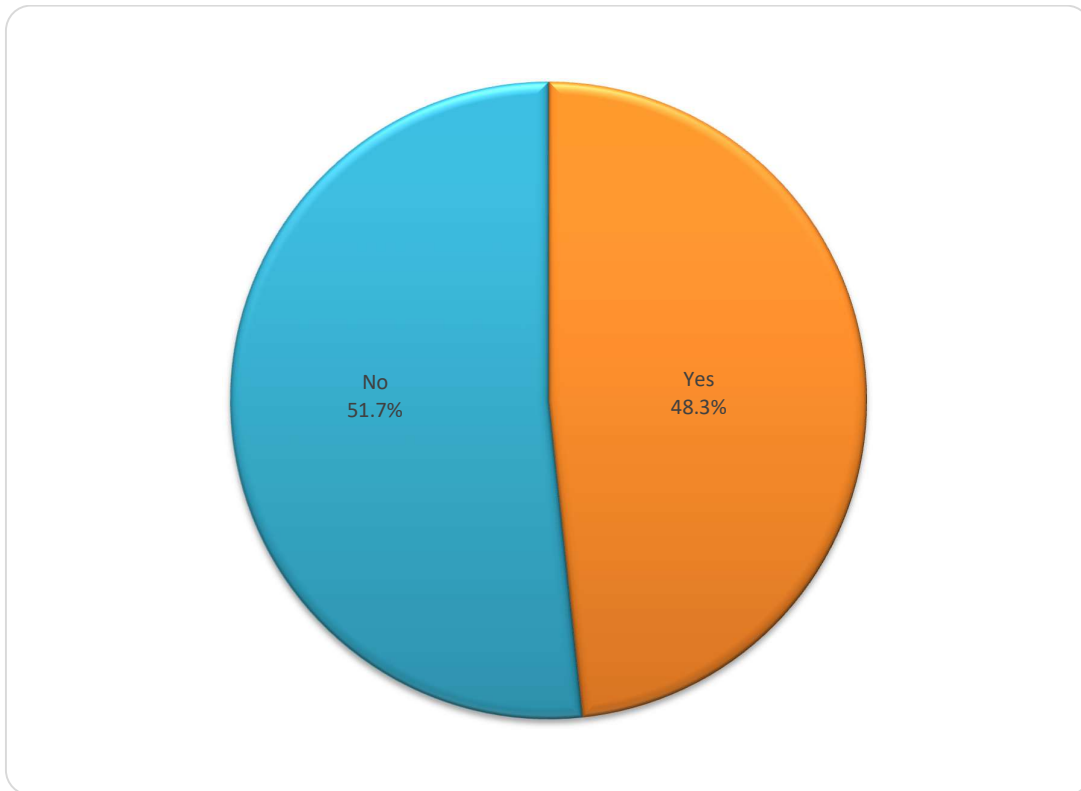
### Have you ever attended a General Conference?



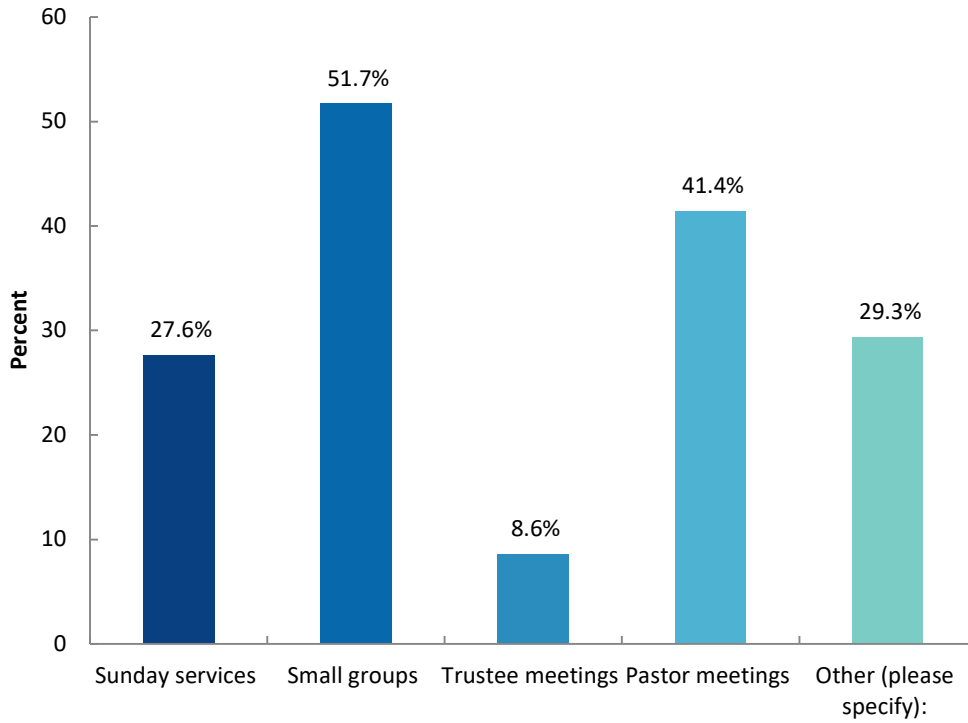
**What year(s) did you attend the General Conference? (Check all that apply)**



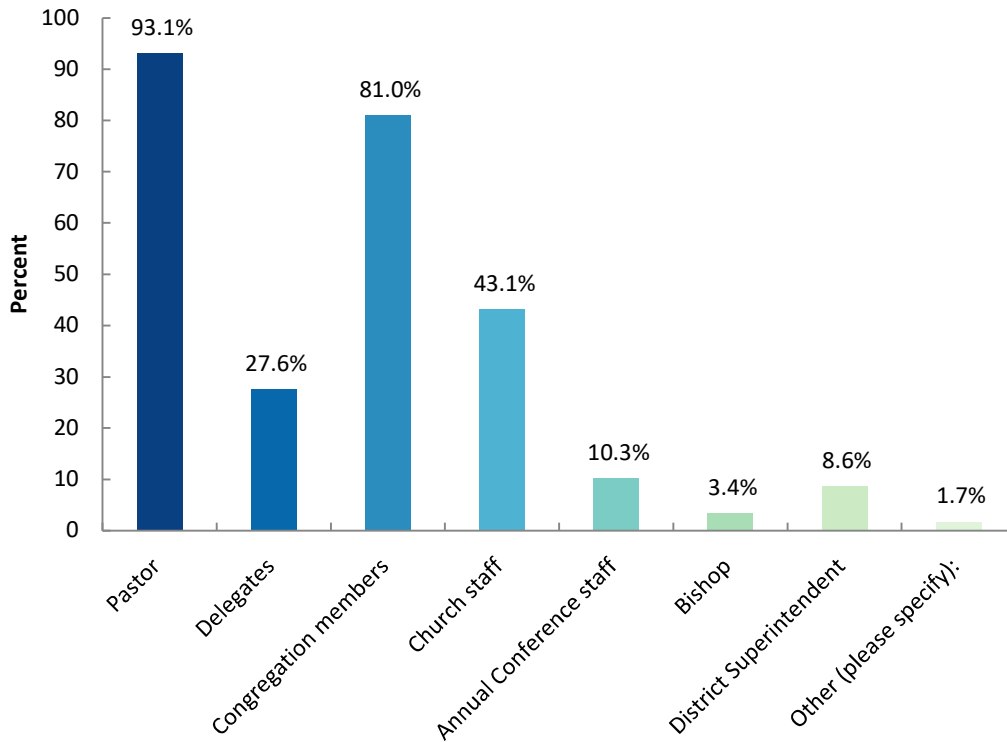
**Is your church currently discussing the upcoming General Conference?**



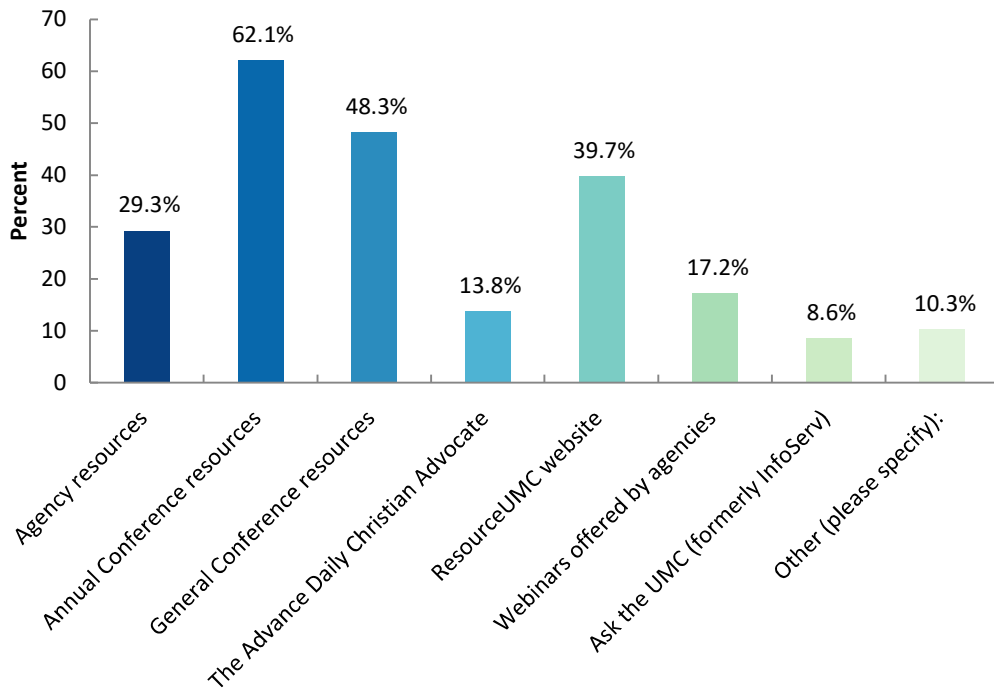
### How is your church discussing it? (Check all that apply)



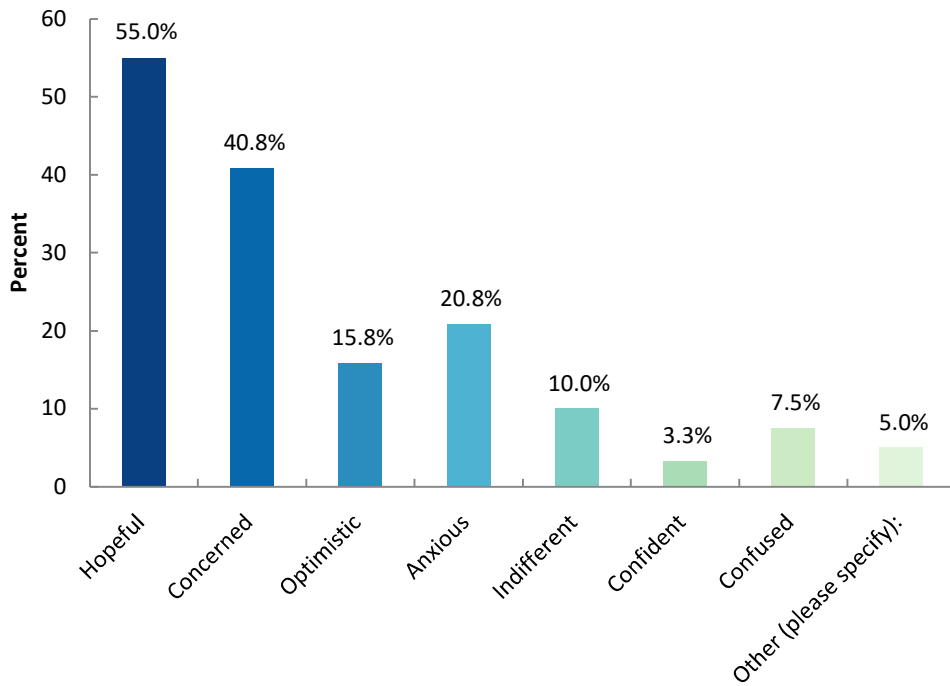
### Who is part of these discussions? (Check all that apply)



**What resources is your church using to discuss General Conference? (Check all that apply)**

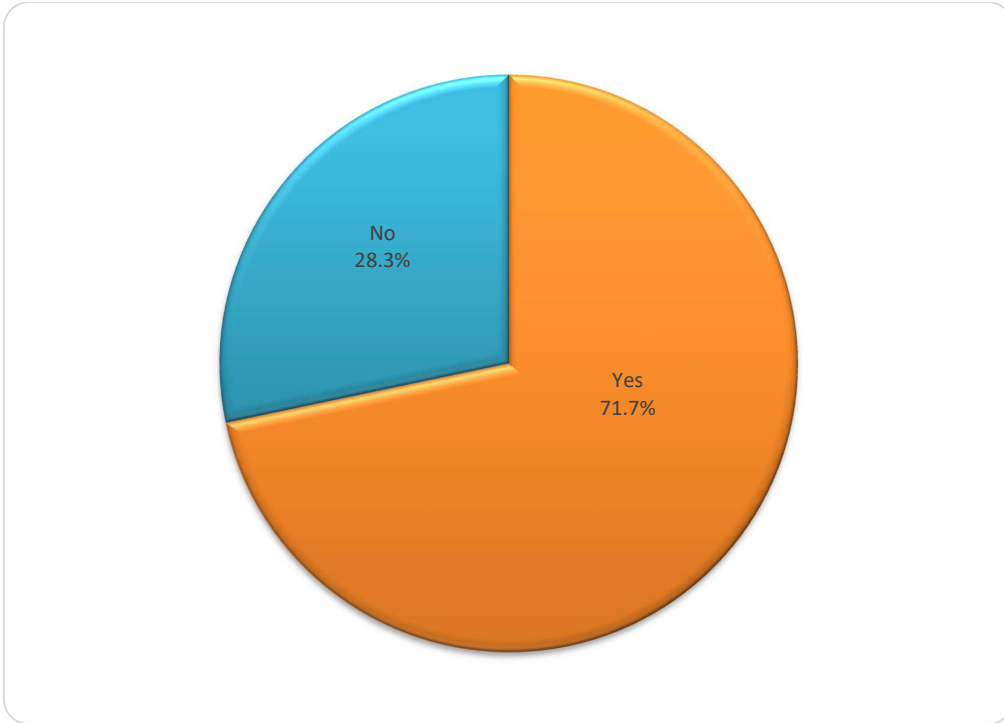


**How do you feel about the upcoming General Conference? (Check up to two answers)**

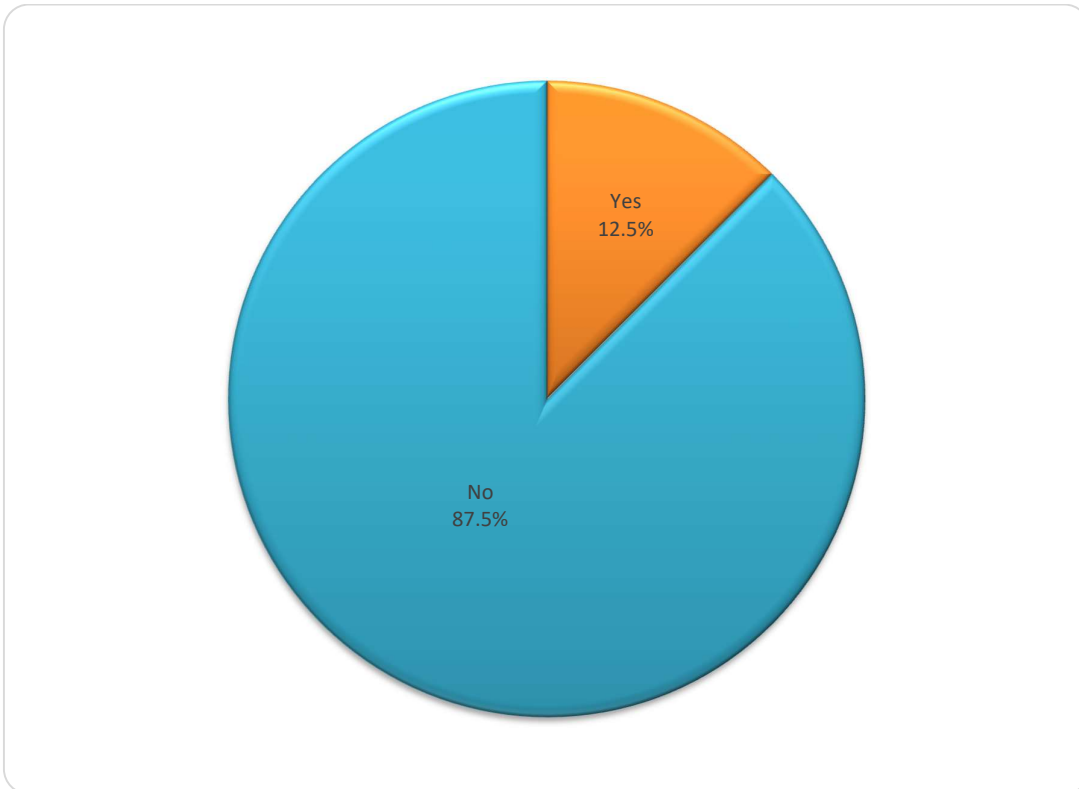




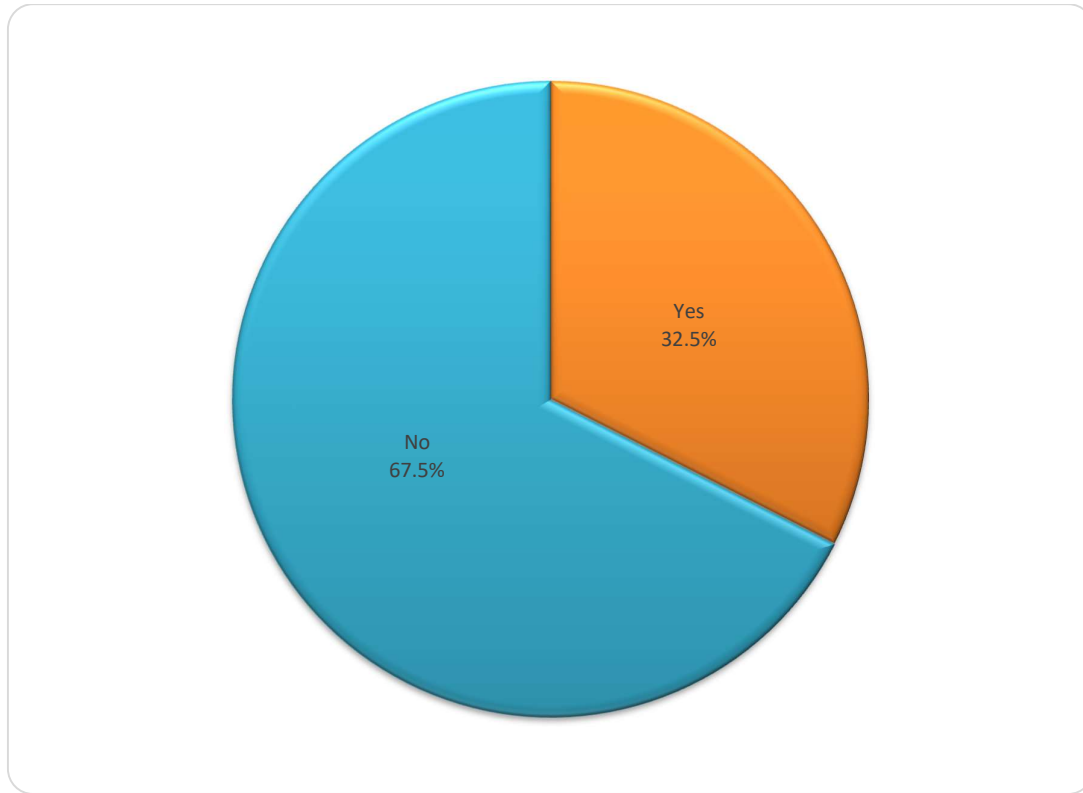
**Do you know any delegates personally?**



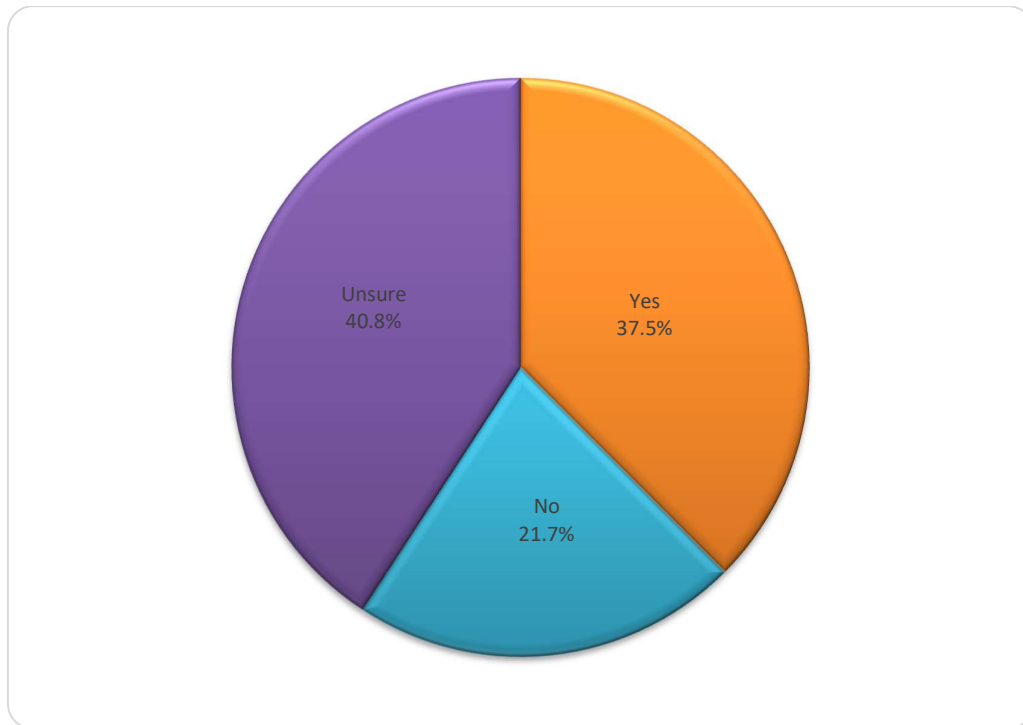
**Are you a delegate?**



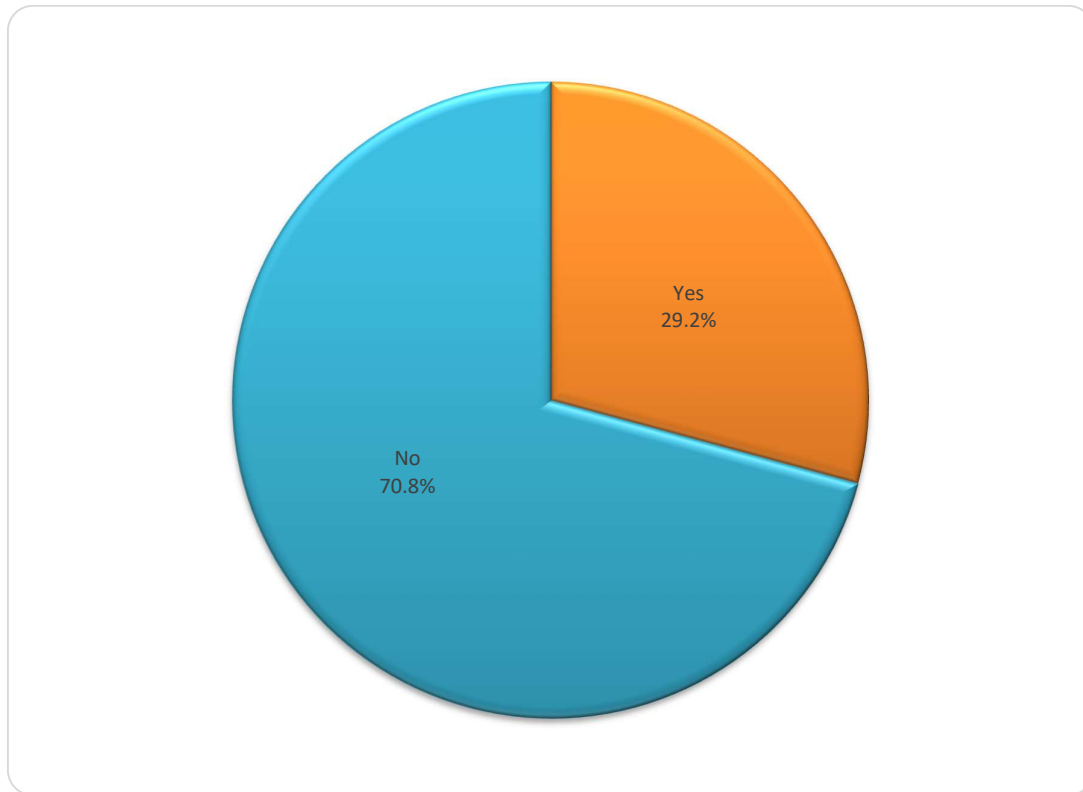
**Are you attending the upcoming General Conference?**



**Do you think your delegates represent your congregation?**



**Are you/your church interacting with your delegates?**



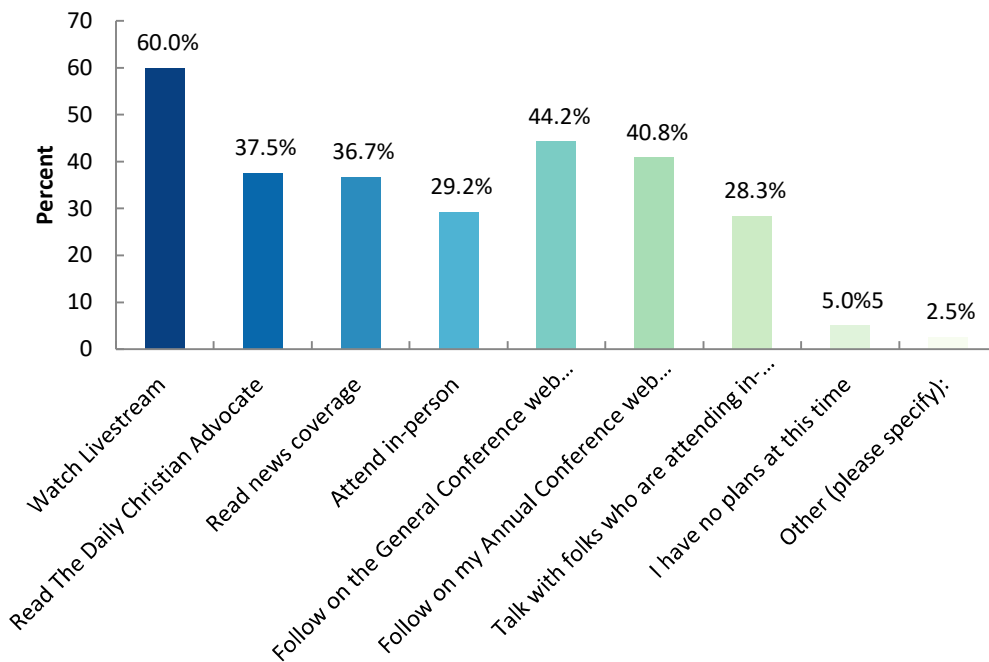
## How are you/your church interacting with your delegates?

ResponseID	Response
22	Attended the meeting with delegates.
27	I'm a clergy delegate and we have monthly meetings. Also, there's a conference website where anyone can learn about each delegate.
30	We talk to them, email them, and bring them to talk to us.
36	I am married to the delegate. She is our associate pastor. The other alternate is our lay leader. Also, the Church Council and other groups openly field questions.
44	Asking them their personal stance on DEI issues.
47	Conversations and listening to them and asking them questions.
57	As a delegate, I interact with the delegation through regular meetings.
63	I am clergy and have served as a delegate in 2023 to the Jurisdictional Conference. As part of that roster, I attend our meetings in preparation for the GC. Even though I am not a delegate to the GC, I am expected to attend the meetings to gain insight for future possibilities.
64	Attending the delegation meetings and bringing information back to the congregation.
68	Zoom sessions and weekly newsletters.
70	Pastor is leading Annual Conference Delegation through discussions and meetings.
71	Conversations over issues of regionalization and deletion and/or addition to the BOD.
73	Conversations with the congregation and board.

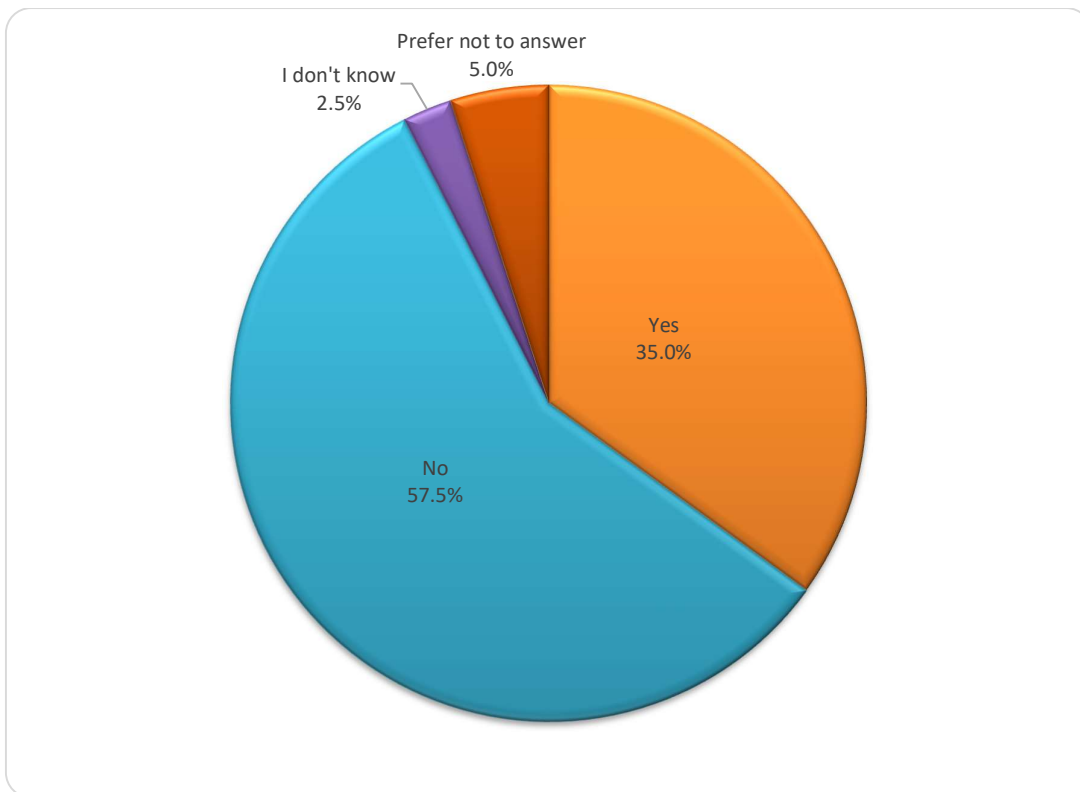
76	One on one communications.
78	Meetings as needed.
80	As a delegate, I keep those interested informed.
89	Meetings in church and after Sunday's service.
98	We have been asking questions and participating in group discussions.
105	They have been invited to speak to the congregation about the General Conference.
107	I am personally a delegate and bring info back to my congregation leadership and pastor. I've also done presentations with other delegates at our WI Laity Convocation that was held Feb 10.
108	We are in conversations with them and let them know we are praying for them.
109	I am active on the district level as a representative for the Southeast District of the Alabama West Florida Conference. I interact personally with my DS and many delegates who are interested in the welfare of the Tuskegee Wesley Foundation. My local church is also active with the Wesley Foundation.
110	One of our members is in the delegation and brings us information.
111	Our UWFaith Unit members plan to send letters of support and encouragement to the Florida delegates.
113	The ones I've known for many years keep in touch.
118	I'm an alternate so I attend our conference delegate meetings.
122	Conversations, sending updates to our delegation, Annual Conference updates
124	Through meetings as needed with our board and congregation.

125	As a delegate to the General Conference, I'm in continuing conversations with the pastor and the church's annual conference delegates. We will host a Q&A for all members prior to the General Conference.
128	Prayers, conversation and encouragement.
134	I am a delegate and so is my pastor so we keep interested parties informed as needed.
135	Sharing information.
136	Sharing information with the church.
148	I have been in a group of Black clergies who meet principally through Zoom. There are a few delegates who are a part of this group. We have been meeting since 2019 discussing potential options for historically black UMC's post GC2024 and post UMC.
159	I have had several opportunities to communicate with delegates and share ideas.

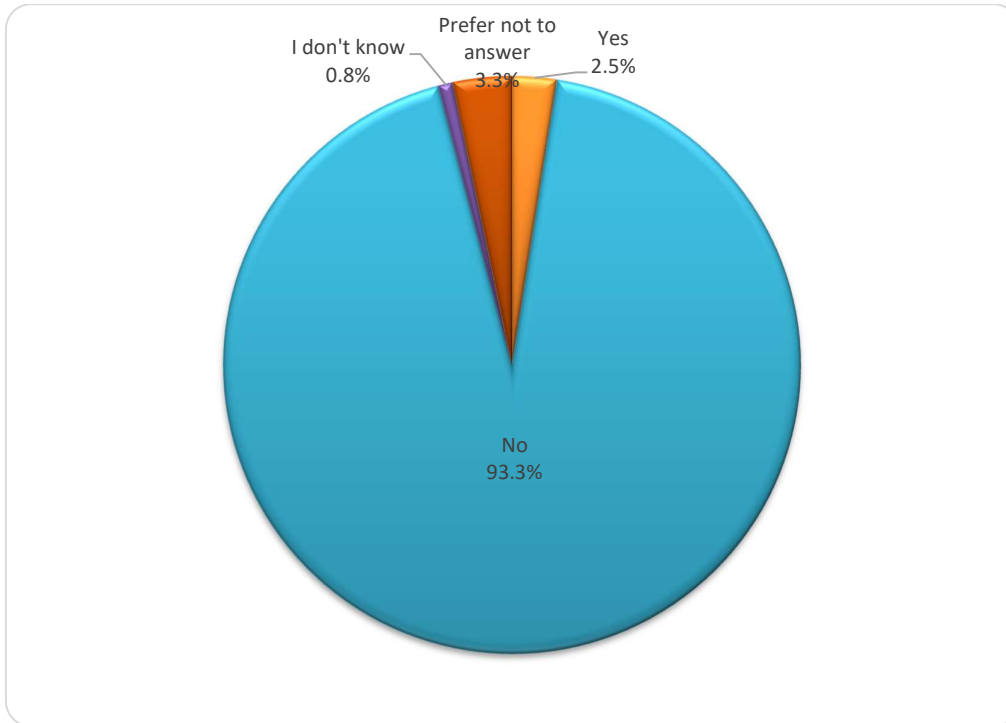
**How do you plan to participate in General Conference (Check all that apply)**



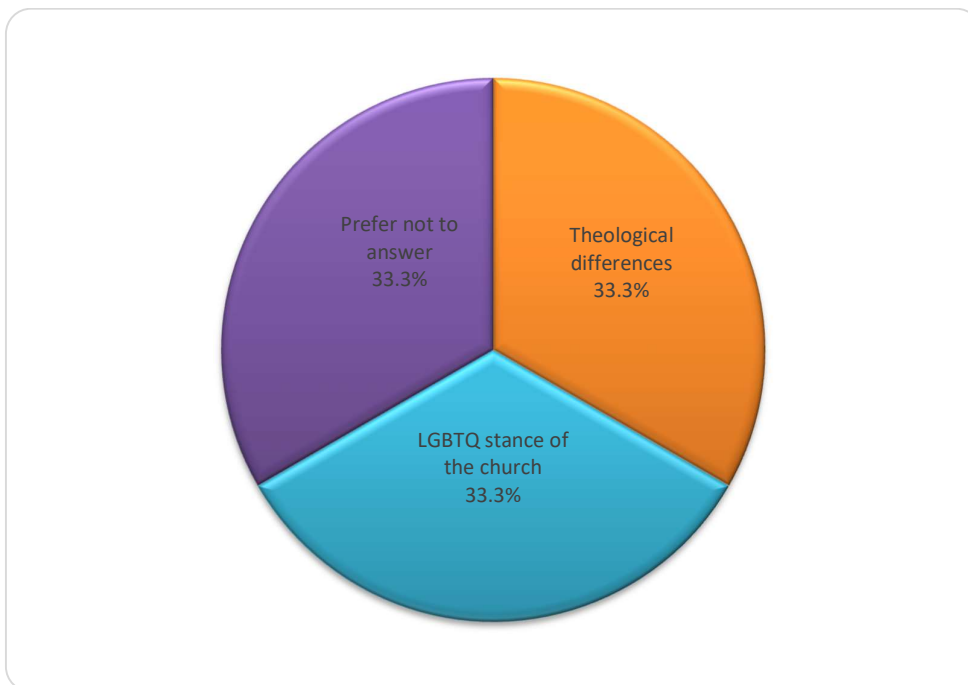
**Now turning to the topic of disaffiliation, did your church discuss the possibility of disaffiliation?**



### Did your church disaffiliate?

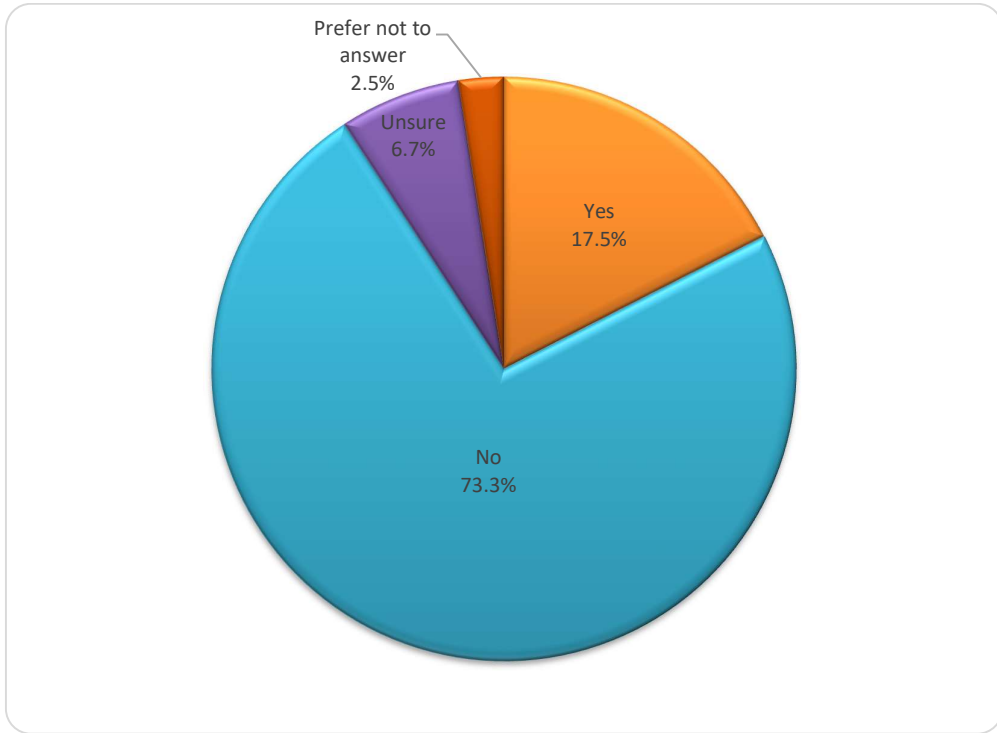


### Why did your church disaffiliate? Please select one main reason.

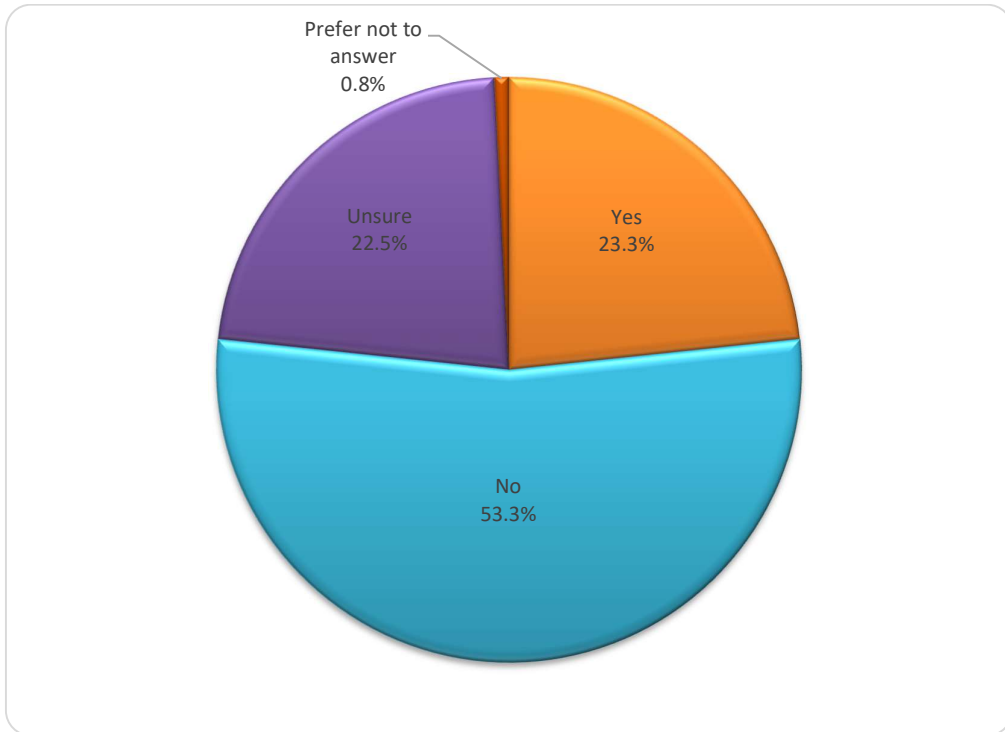




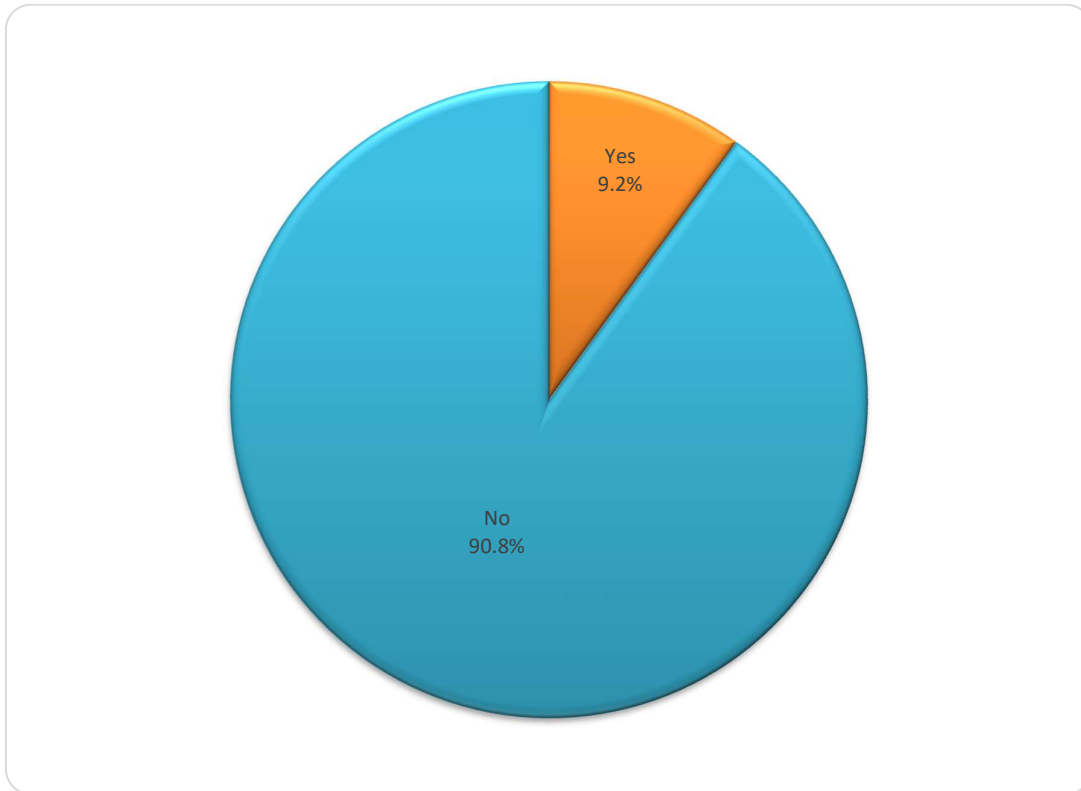
**Do you view/consider disaffiliated churches to be United Methodists?**



**Do you see a place for UMC boards and agencies for disaffiliated churches?**



We would like to continue to build this panel in order to gather as much input as possible and hear as diverse a group of voices as we can. Do you have any recommendations for people, affiliated with a predominantly ethnic church, who you feel would like to participate in this panel moving forward? PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE YOURSELF.



# APPENDIX

## Email Invitation

### Subject Lines

1. General Conference Matters: Complete Ethnic Panel Survey & Claim \$5!
2. Unlock Your \$5 Reward: Ethnic Panel Survey 2024 is Here
3. Your Voice, Our Strength: Ethnic Panel Survey Now Open + \$5 Reward!

Greetings! We hope this message finds you well. As we embark on the journey of 2024, we invite you to participate in our first Ethnic Leader Panel Survey, a vital initiative aimed at fostering relationships within our diverse Methodist community.

The UMC General Conference is on the horizon, and we want to hear your thoughts and feelings about this significant event. Additionally, understanding your experiences and opinions around disaffiliation will help us navigate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Please *[click here]* to complete a questionnaire. It will take about 5 minutes of your time. Please do so by Feb. 25th. All of the information you provide is kept strictly confidential and will only be used to compare your responses to those of other people participating in this survey.

Your participation is appreciated. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to one of the following team members:

- Kalinda Fisher: [kalinda@advocatemr.com](mailto:kalinda@advocatemr.com)
- Teresa Faust: [tfaust@umcom.org](mailto:tfaust@umcom.org)

