

Part 2

Rural vs. Urban Pastors

To obtain the data presented in this part, the general database was segmented by source those responses that came from the greater metropolitan San José area constituting one group and those that did not constituting the other. Those responses that came from the eleven counties included in the official definition of the San Jose Metropolitan Area (cf. 23) were considered to be from “urban” church pastors. All other responses were treated as coming from “rural” church pastors. In comparing data from rural and urban pastors, it was noted that both groups showed many of the same tendencies as has already been presented in Part I of this chapter. The analysis of data in this part however, will focus on those areas of *greatest* difference between rural and urban pastors.

Calculations for making the graphs presented in this section were based on the averages of the frequency of responses within each group (i.e. rural $n = 353$ and urban $n = 78$) so that the results would remain proportional, and accurately show the differences between the groups (see above, p. 41). In the text, for comparison purposes, responses are expressed as percentages based on the data of each group.

According to previous research done by the Socio-religious Research Committee (CISRE), there were approximately 2,300 churches in all of Costa Rica in 1997 (see above, p.17). It also was estimated in Chapter I that in the greater metropolitan area there are 472 churches (see above, p.18). Using these data we can estimate that the urban

churches constituted 20.7% of all evangelical churches and the rural churches 79.3%. In this study, 350 (81%) questionnaires were from rural churches, 78 (18%) from urban churches and 3 (1%) were unidentified.

The denominational distribution of the pastors that participated in the study showed that the largest group of rural church pastors were from the Pentecostal church family (260 churches). The next largest groups were from the Bible churches (43 churches) followed by Methodists (22 churches). Pentecostal pastors also topped the list as pastors serving in urban churches (53 churches) followed by pastors from “other” denomination families and then Methodist churches (9). See Table 4.6.

Table 4.6
Distribution by Denominational Family

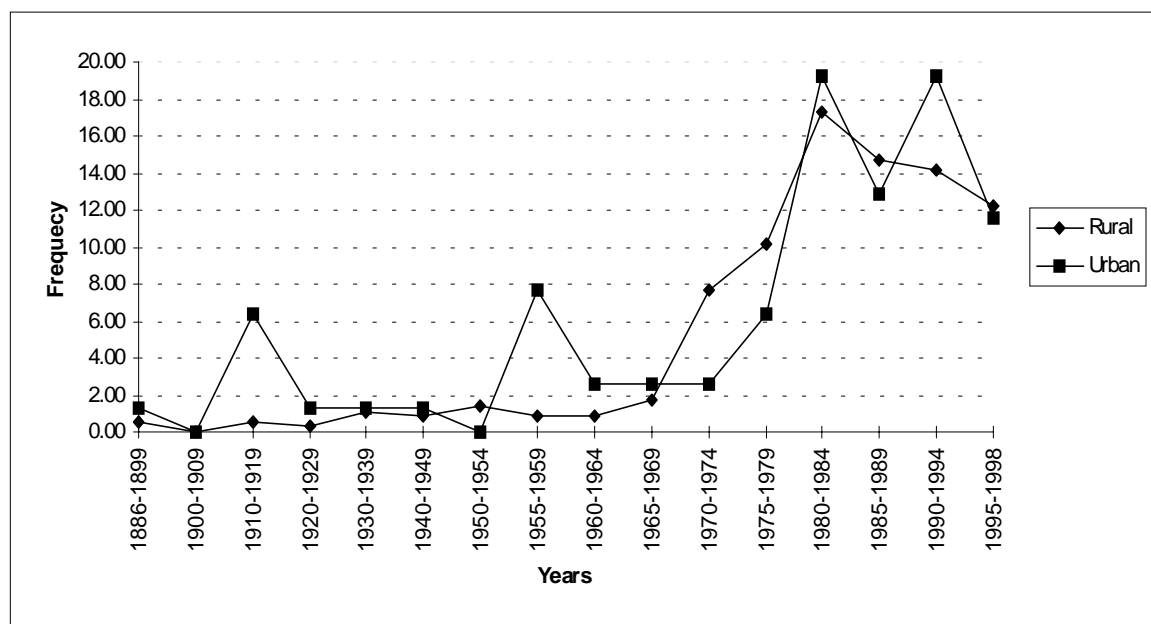
	Pentecostal	Bible	Methodist	Other	Total
Rural	260	43	22	25	350
Urban	53	5	9	11	78
Unidentified	2	0	0	1	3
Totals	315	48	31	37	431

There were two periods before the major growth period that began in the 1970 - 1974 period when urban church multiplication occurred. The first was the ten-year span between 1910-1919 and the second in the five-year span of 1955-1959. It would also appear from the charts that the latest period of church growth, beginning in the 1970 - 1974 time frame, was sparked by an increased frequency of church planting in the rural areas of Costa Rica that then led to an increase in the rate of church planting in the urban areas.

In the most recent period of growth the planting of rural churches peaked in the 1980 - 1984 period, this has since been slowly dwindling while urban church plants,

which also peaked in the same period, have been erratic with successive highs and lows. As of 1998, both the rural and urban rate of church plantings has been the same. A possible explanation for these patterns could be the migration of people from the rural areas of the country to the urban areas.

Figure 4.29
Years Churches were Started

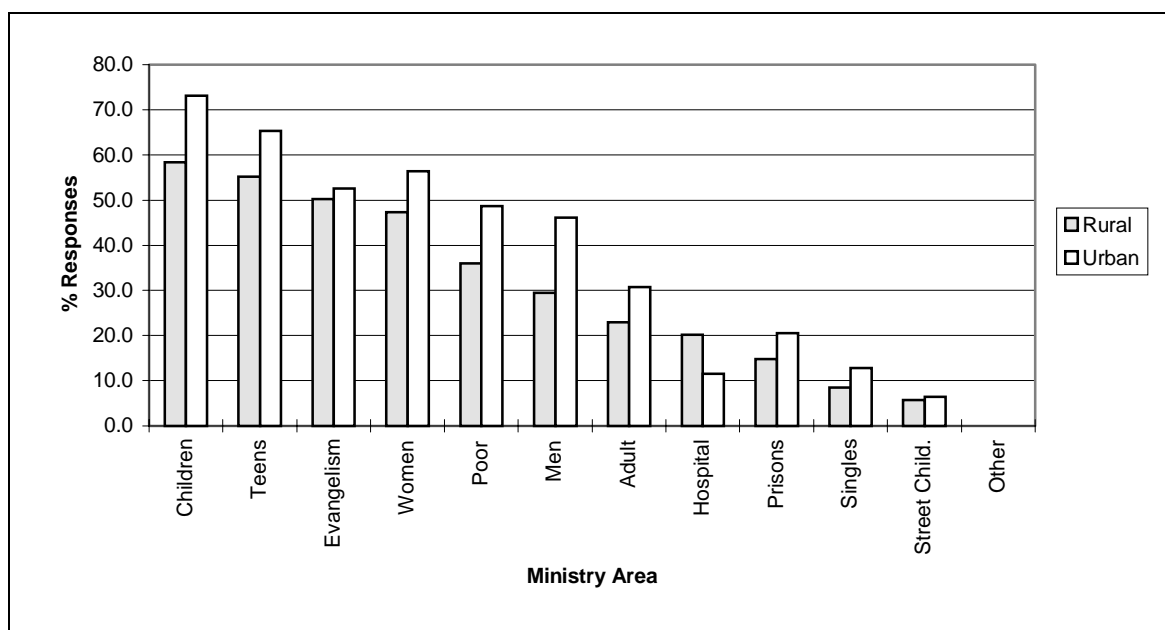


The survey indicates there is an average attendance of 87 people in the rural churches and 150 people in urban churches. This means that the average urban church is 1.7 times larger than the average rural church. It was found that urban churches and rural churches have almost identical percentages of men (28% vs. 27%) but that urban churches have slightly more women (41% vs. 38%) than do rural churches. Rural churches averaged more children in attendance than did urban churches (35% vs. 31%). Urban churches on the other hand, tended to have a higher percentage of people involved in leadership (24% vs. 20%).

Ministry Realities: Rural vs. Urban

With regard to the kinds of ministries in which rural and urban pastors are involved, there were three areas of church programs that showed significant (> 2%) differences. Urban churches are more likely to have programs directed toward children, men, adults, singles and the poor. The tendency for urban churches to have a ministry to men was especially strong (46.2% vs. 29.5%). For the rural churches there was more of a ministry emphasis for evangelism and hospital visitation programs. Figure 4.30 shows these areas of differences in the form of a graph.

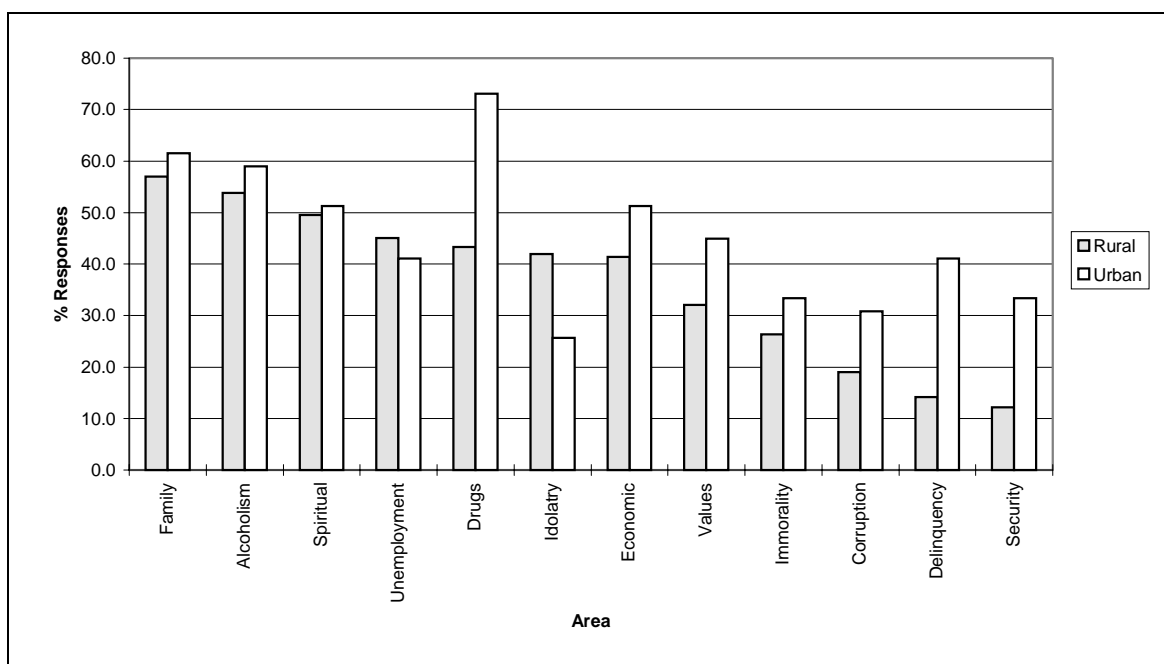
Figure 4.30
Ministry Areas



Responses varied widely between rural and urban pastors in the area of problems facing the communities. For rural pastors, family problems (56.9%) were the number one difficulty that communities faced, while drugs were the worst in the opinion of the urban pastors (73.1%). Unemployment (45.0% vs. 41.0%) and problems with idolatry (41.9%

vs. 25.6%) were more accentuated for rural than urban pastors. Urban pastors, on the other hand, noted greater problems with drugs (73.1% vs. 43.3%) and delinquency (41.0% vs. 25.6%) than did rural pastors. Urban pastors also responded more frequently to economic problems and a loss of values as important community problems they face in their work.

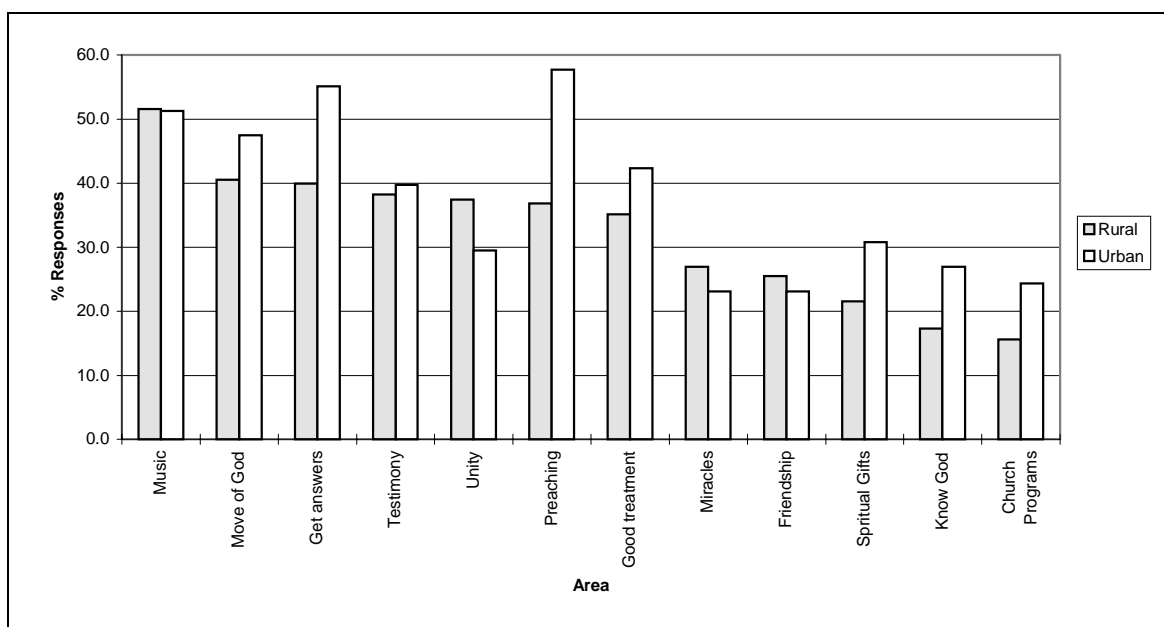
Figure 4.31
Community Problems



Pastors of urban churches thought that people were more attracted to evangelical churches by the preaching (57.7% vs. 36.8%), getting answers to their questions (55.1% vs. 39.9%), and wanting to know God (26.9% vs. 17.3%) than did rural pastors. Rural pastors, while having similar opinions, placed more emphasis on the importance of unity (37.4% vs. 29.5%), miracles (29.6% vs. 23.1%), and friendship (25.5% vs. 23.1%). Among the factors least cited as attracting people, the widest differences were in the seekers desire to know God (17.3% for rural churches, 20.9% for urban) and church

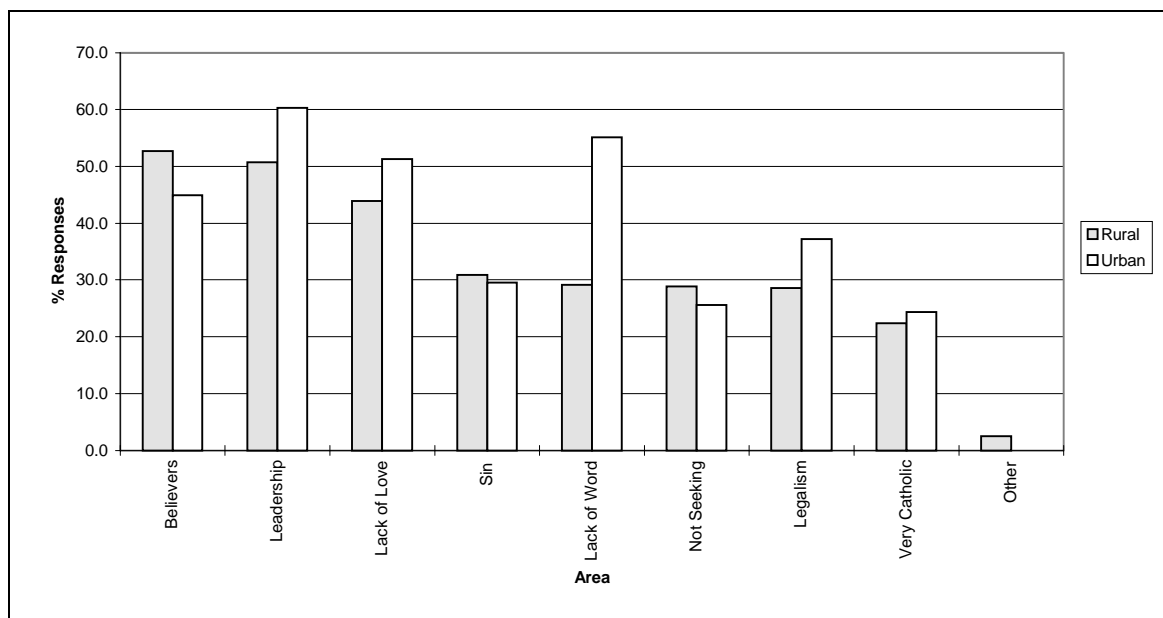
programs (15.6% rural vs. 29.4% urban). In both areas rural pastors especially felt that these were low- priority items in terms of attracting people to their churches.

Figure 4.32
What Attracts People



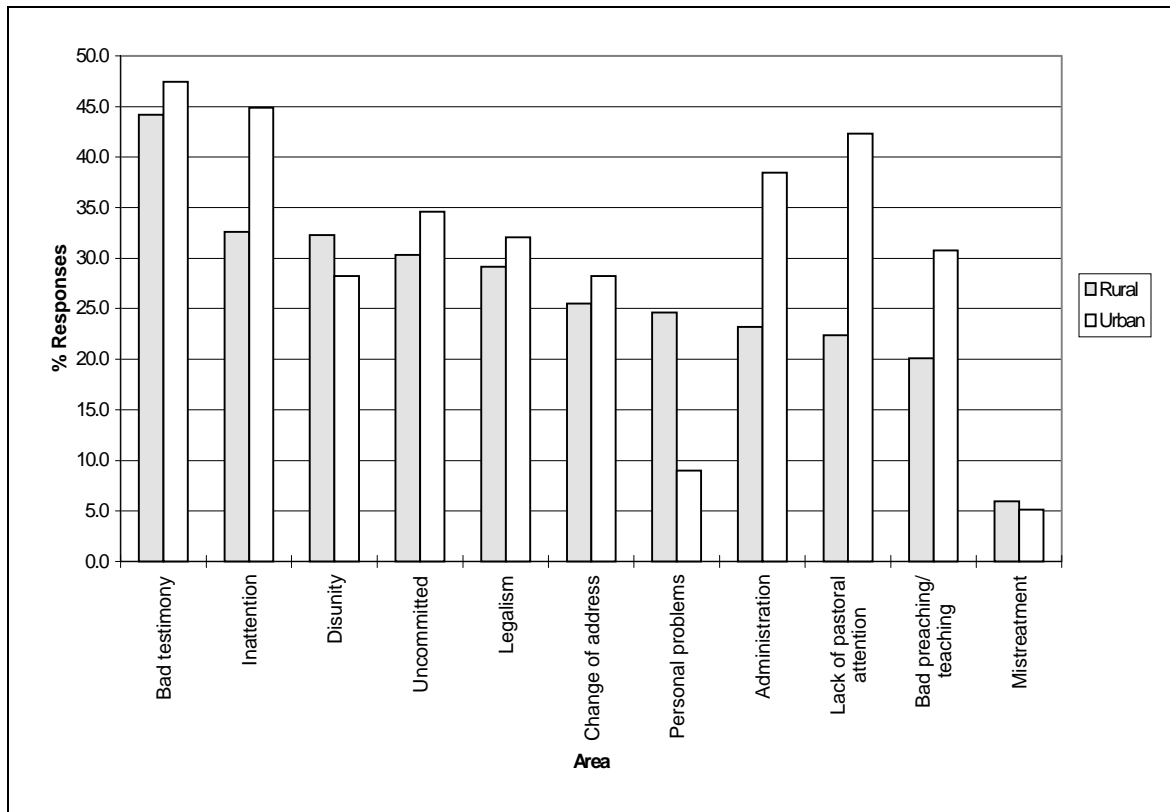
Rural pastors placed more of an emphasis on the negative impact of the lives of other believers (52.7%) as to why people were not attracted to evangelical churches. This may be because people know each other better in rural areas. While urban pastors also acknowledged the negative influence of other believers (44.9%), they placed more emphasis (or blame) on the role of the leadership in the church (60.3% vs. 50.7%). Rural pastors also thought that people were “not seeking” (28.9%) were strong reasons why people were not attracted to their churches. The largest difference between the two groups was that the lack of preaching the word rated much higher with urban pastors (55.1%) than with rural pastors (29.2%) as a reason why people are not attracted to evangelical churches.

Figure 4.33
What Repels Unbelievers



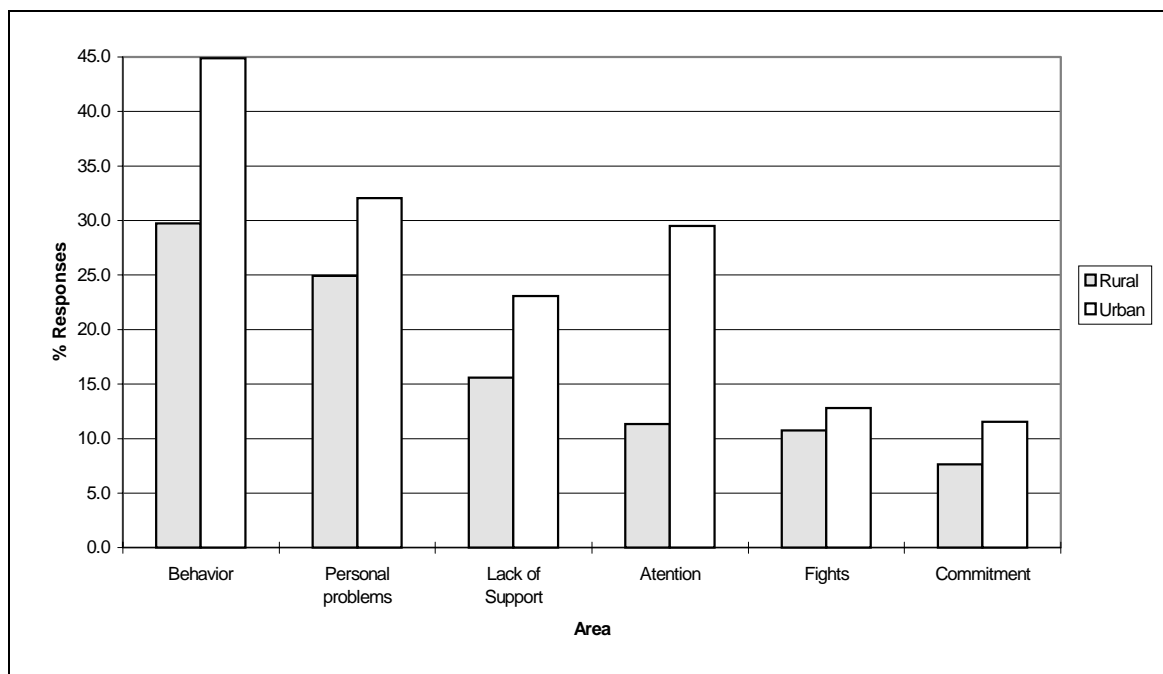
As to why people leave evangelical churches, both rural and urban pastors pointed to problems between church members as the principal cause (44.2% and 47.4%). Where they differed the most widely was that more urban pastors felt a lack of pastoral attention was a problem in desertions (44.9%) than did rural pastors (32.6%). Since the average attendance for rural churches was reported to be smaller (87 people) than that of urban churches (150 people), perhaps the rural pastor has a closer relationship with his people than do urban pastors. Personal problems were more frequently mentioned by rural pastors (24.6%) than by urban (9.0%) as a factor of desertion. The importance of good church administration, or lack thereof, was more of an issue for the urban pastor (38.5%) than it was for the rural pastor (23.2%). Both groups of pastors were least likely to identify mistreatment of people (5.9% rural and 5.1% urban) as a reason why people leave the evangelical church, showing that neither group feels this is a problem in their ministry environments.

Figure 4.34
Why People Leave Evangelical Churches



Overall, bad behavior (29.7% rural and 44.9% urban) and personal problems (24.9% vs. 32.1%) were the two most often cited reasons as to why pastors had left the pastorate. Significantly, urban pastors rated the lack of love or attention by church members higher (29.5%) than rural pastors did (11.3%) which may indicate that the urban pastors are affected emotionally from the detachment that comes from pastoring larger churches. The isolation and stress of urban life could also be factors.

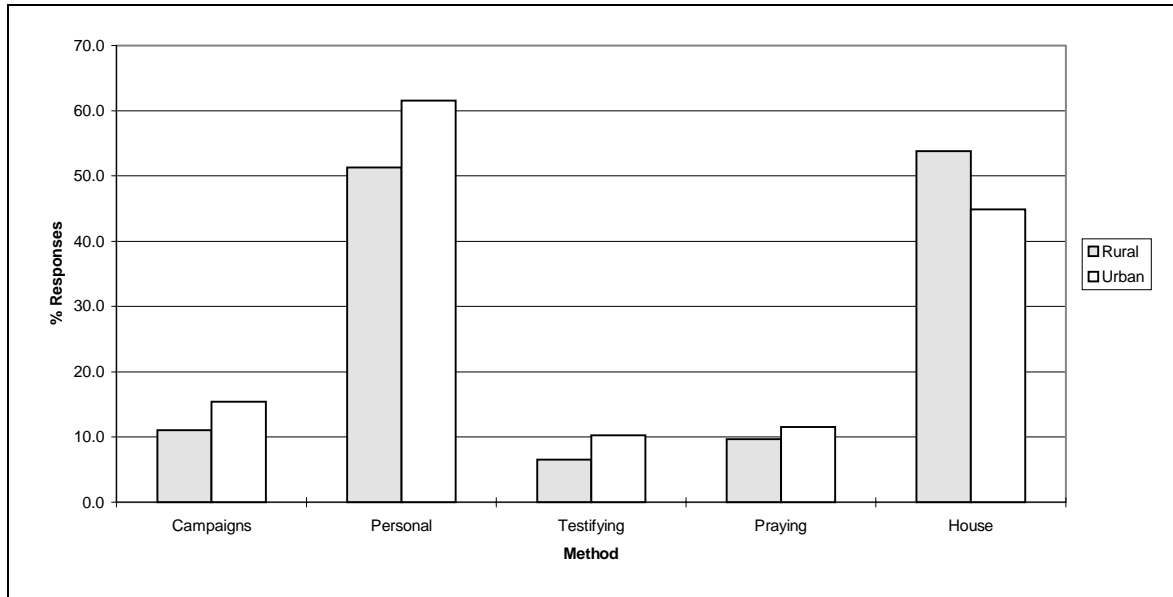
Figure 4.35
Why Pastors Leave



Rural pastors tended to have a slightly better outlook regarding the moral status of the country by rating “getting better” more often (13.0%) than urban pastors (6.4%). Both agreed that the country was “getting worse,” though urban pastors tended to sense this more (73.1%) than do rural pastors.

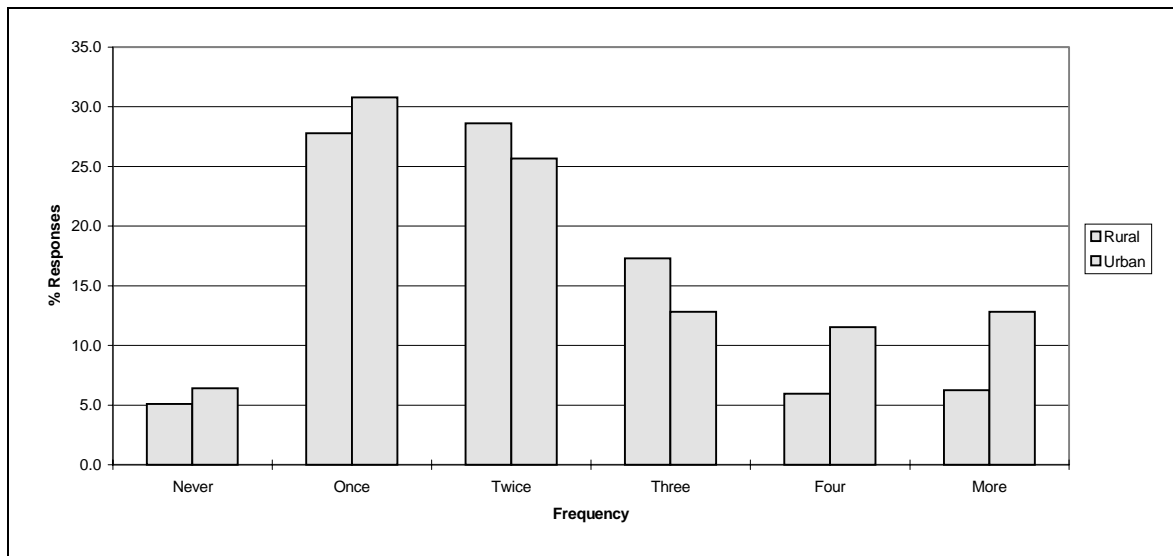
While person-to-person evangelism (friendship evangelism) was thought to be the best method to evangelize people by urban pastors (61.5% vs. 51.3%), rural pastors felt that visiting house-to-house was more effective (53.8% vs. 44.9%). Urban pastors also had a slightly better opinion of using campaigns to reach people for Christ than did rural pastors (15.4% vs. 11.0%). Praying for people also was slightly more preferred by urban pastors than rural pastors (11.5% vs. 9.6%), though for both groups this method was not frequently mentioned.

Figure 4.36
Evangelism Methods



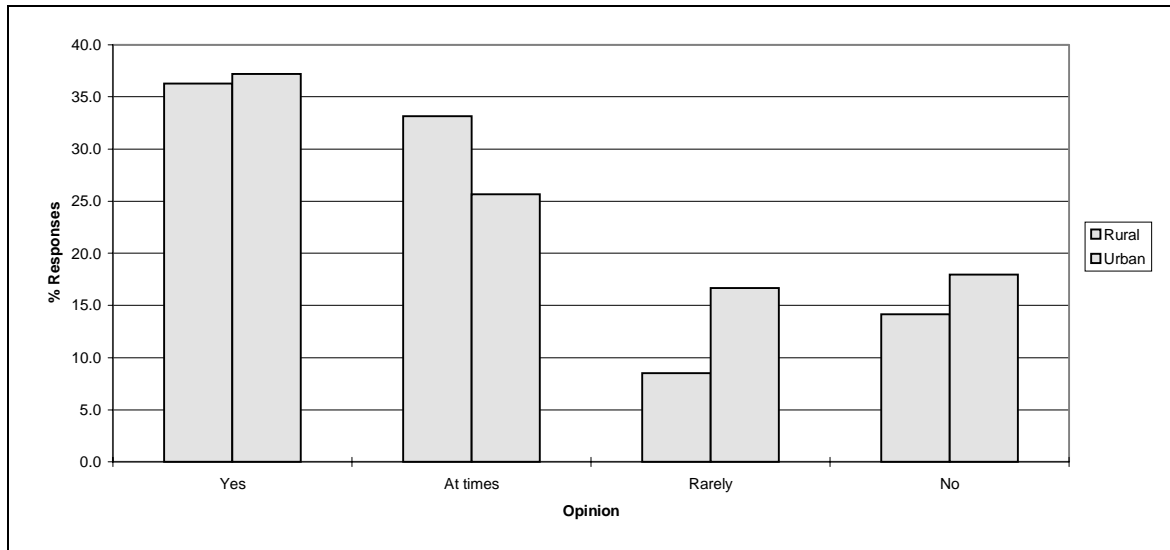
In terms of the frequency of evangelistic events, rural pastors were more likely to have two or three events a year than many urban pastors, although urban churches are more likely to have four or more events a year (see figure 4.37 below).

Figure 4.37
Evangelism Events per Year



Cooperation among pastors is very frequent both in the case of rural and urban pastors (36.3% rural and 37.2% urban) but urban pastors are almost twice as likely to say that they “rarely cooperate” than rural pastors (8.5% vs. 16.7%). Rural pastors also marked “yes” and “at times” more frequently than did the urban pastors showing that in general, rural pastors were willing to cooperate more than urban pastors in joint evangelistic events with other churches.

Figure 4.38
Cooperation



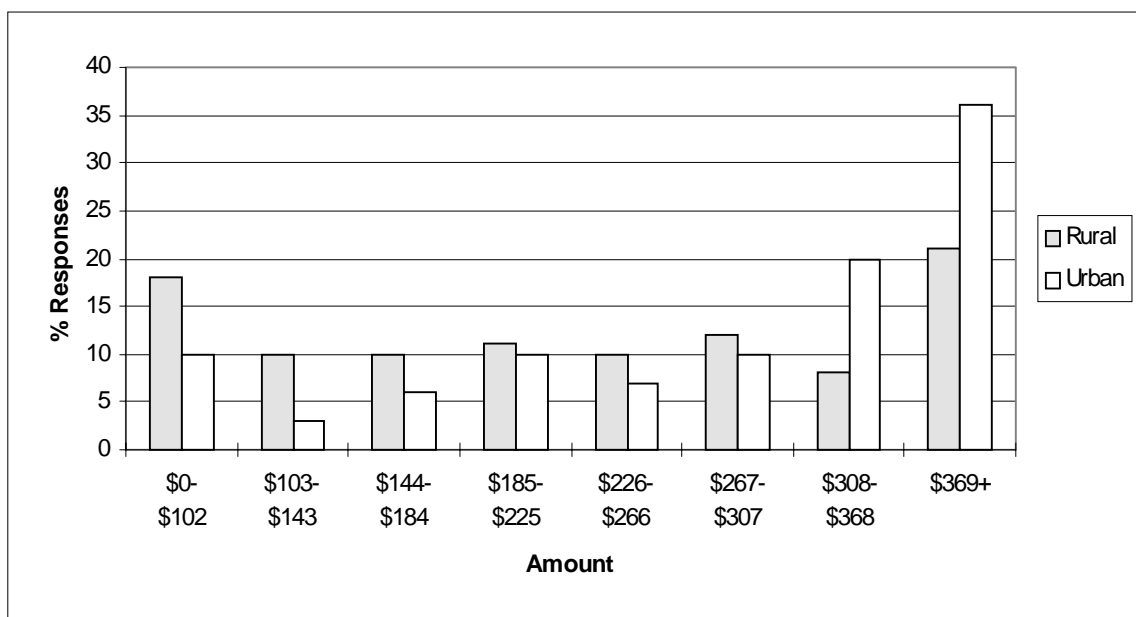
The Pastors: Rural vs. Urban

Data gathered from the respondents showed that the median average age (Md) of urban pastors is 39.5 years old while his rural counterpart is slightly older with a median average age of 40.0. The most common (Mo) age noted among the urban pastors was 37.0 while among rural pastors it was 39.0 years. Those who serve as rural pastors had a tendency to become Christians at an older age (22.6 years old) than did urban pastors, who were an average of 20.7 years old when they accepted Christ. The research also found that urban pastors have been pastoring an average of 12.5 years while rural pastors have been pastoring for 10.1 years, indicating that the urban pastors have been pastoring in the ministry an average of 2.4 years longer than rural pastors. The modal (Mo) length of time serving in churches for both groups was eight years. Subtracting the number of years in the pastorate from the present ages of the pastors and then subtracting from that the age when the pastors became Christians we can determine how old the pastors were when they entered the ministry and then the interval between their conversion and when they began to pastor. On the average, the urban pastors began their pastoral careers when they were 27.0 years old and had been Christians for 6.3 years. Rural pastors, on the other hand, entered the ministry when they were 29.9 years old and had been a Christian for 7.3 years. So while urban pastors became Christians at a younger age and started to pastor at a younger age, rural pastors became Christians at a slightly older age and were also a little older when they entered the pastorate. In both groups, the average number of churches pastored was about the same (2.9 rural, 3.1 urban) but urban pastors showed a definite tendency to stay longer (3.0 years) in their present churches than did rural pastors (2.0 years).

Urban pastors were more likely to come from evangelical homes (17%) than were rural pastors (10%), while rural pastors were slightly more likely to come from “other” homes (7%) than were urban pastors (3%). By far though, both groups had Catholic backgrounds (83% rural vs. 80% urban).

At the lower end of the salary pay scale, the salaries of rural pastors predominated. The average salary for a Costa Rican Community Service worker, according to the Ministry of Economy, is USD\$336.34 per month and the minimum salary of the general population is \$198.37. If we apply these figures to the income of rural pastors we find that 35% are receiving less than the minimum salary as compared with 17% of urban pastors. In contrast, urban pastors predominate the upper end of the scale. Approximately 51% of urban pastors earn \$308.00 a month or more while this is true for only 27% of their rural counterparts. Clearly, urban pastors are better paid than their rural counterpart as can be seen in Figure 4.39.

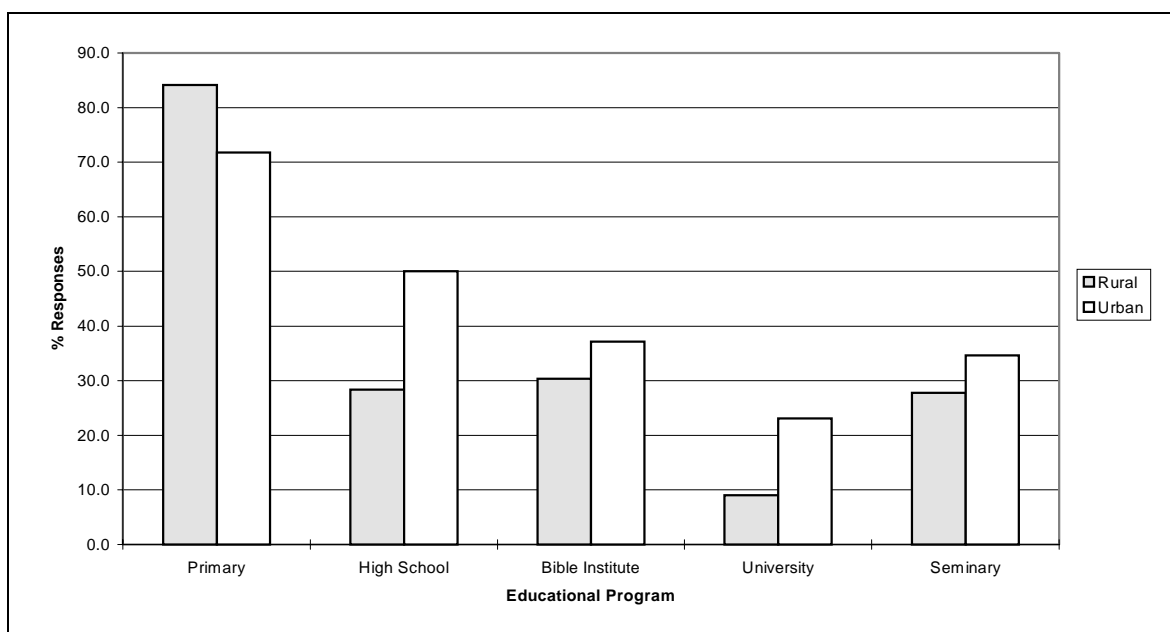
Figure 4.39
Pastor Salary Levels



The sources of the salaries for the two groups of pastors was nearly identical. Both groups reported that they get their salaries from the ministry (80.2% rural and 78.2% urban). Only 26.6% of the rural pastors and 26.9% of the urban pastors hold secular jobs to support their ministry and only 6.5% rural and 5.1% urban depend on “other” sources of income to sustain themselves.

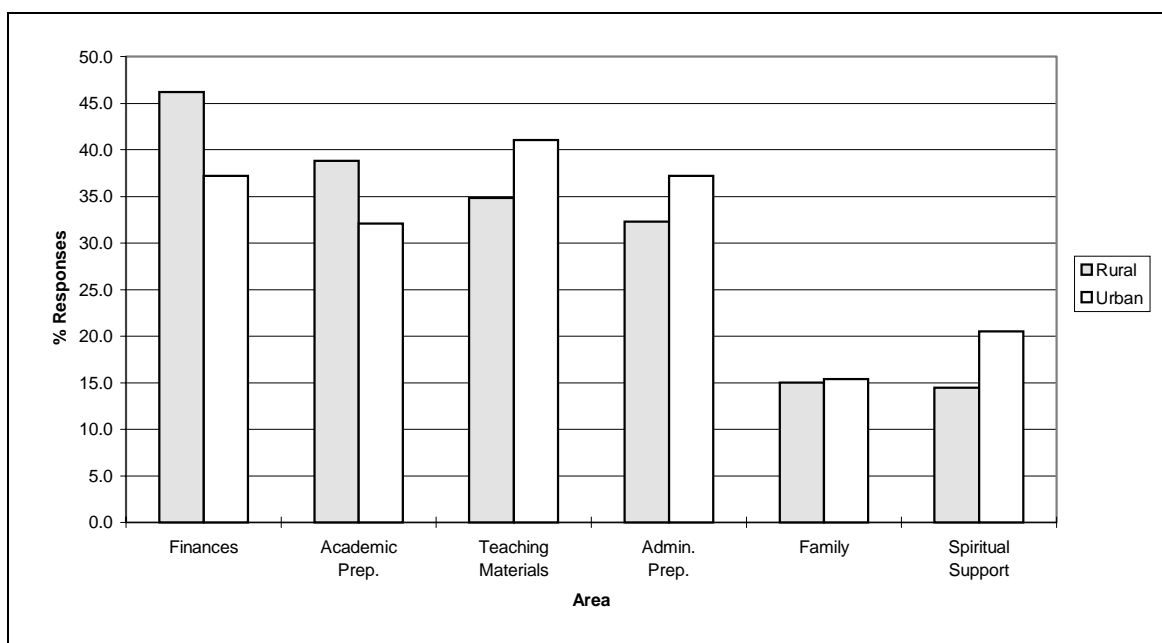
The level of education reported by the pastors was interesting. While more urban pastors generally had a higher level of education, this was not true in the area of grade school (grades 1-6). There was a higher percentage of rural pastors (84.1%) that had completed grade school than urban pastors (71.8%). A possible explanation for this could be the lack of schools in the marginal areas of the greater metropolitan area where there are many evangelical churches. On the whole, the two groups have very similar educational profiles which is a credit to the educational infrastructure available throughout the country. Figure 4.40 compares the educational levels of the two groups.

Figure 4.40
Educational Levels



As is to be expected, rural pastors need more support in the areas of finances (46.2% vs. 37.2%) and academic preparation (38.8% vs. 32.1%) than do urban pastors. Urban pastors indicated more of a need for teaching materials (41.0% vs. 34.8%) and help in administrative matters (37.2% vs. 32.3%) than do rural pastors (see Figure 4.41).

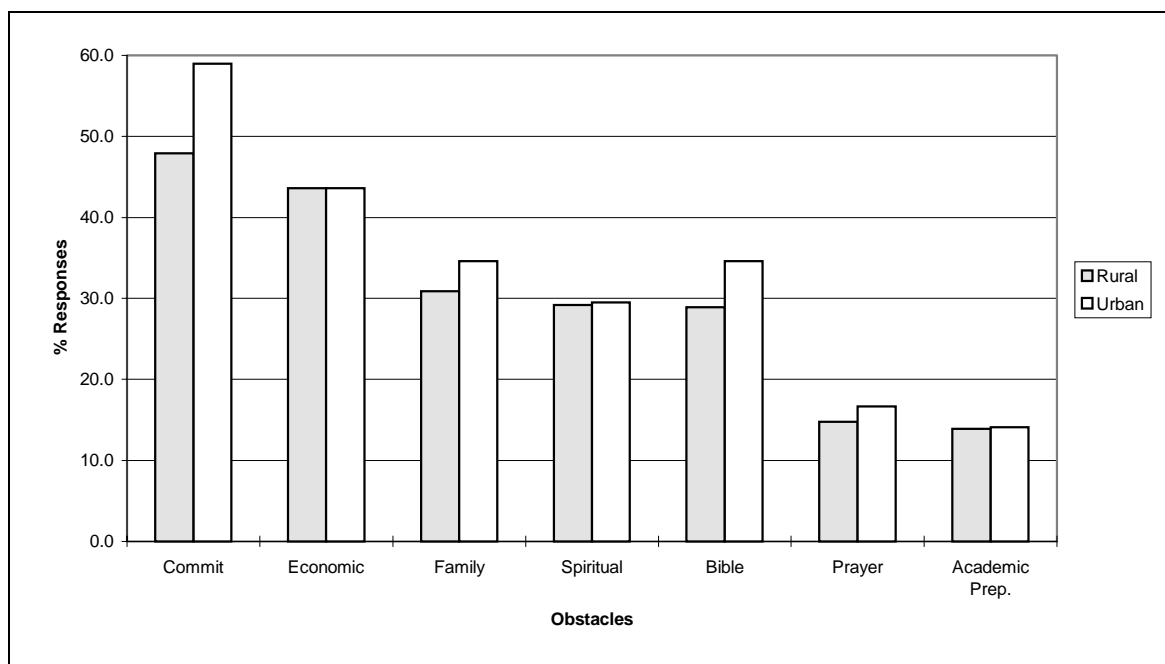
Figure 4.41
Pastor's Area of Need



Both pastoral groups felt that they had mentors (88% rural and 82% urban) and most (73% rural and 72% urban) had social security, but both groups lacked participation in a pension program. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of rural pastors and sixty-eight percent (68%) of urban pastors responded that they do not have a pension plan. More urban pastors (71%) than rural pastors (60%) own their own homes. While it is encouraging to see that the pastors are participating in the social security program and most have their own housing, it is unfortunate that so many do not have a pension plan. Especially in the case of rural pastors, the denominations must address this need.

Regarding what congregations are perceived to need, responses from both urban and rural pastors were very similar, except more urban pastors felt that their people need to be more committed to the Lord (59.0%) than did the rural pastors (47.9%). The issue of the commitment of the people is the single most often marked area of need for both rural and urban congregations. Both rural and urban pastors felt that their people had financial needs (43.6% rural vs. 43.6% urban) and for both it still remained the second biggest congregational need next to commitment.

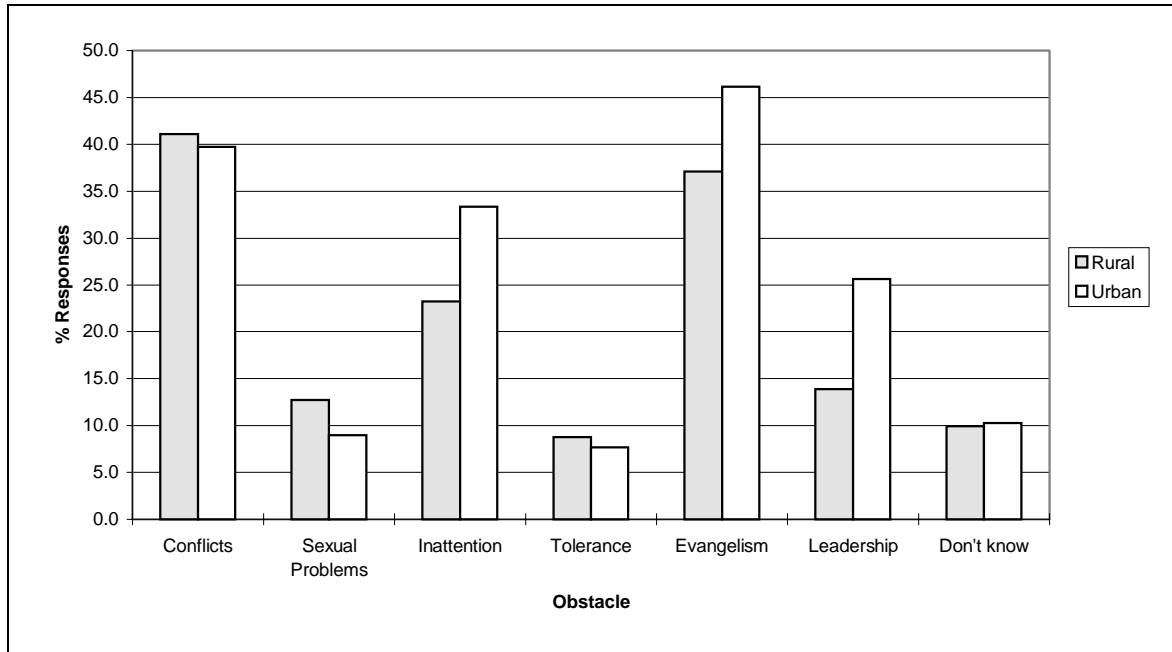
Figure 4.42
Congregational Needs



There were three areas of discrepancy when pastors were asked about the obstacles to church growth. Urban pastors responded that a lack of evangelism zeal was their number one obstacle to the growth of the church (46.2%) while for rural pastors it was second to conflicts in the church. A lack of attention to parishioners was reported to be more of a problem for the urban pastors (33.3%) than it was for the rural pastors

(23.2%). The third area of divergence was a concern for proper leadership on the part of the pastor. Here again, this was reported to be more of an issue for urban pastors (25.6%) than it is for rural pastors (13.9%).

Figure 4.43
Obstacles to Church Growth



Summary

This section reviewed the principal differences between rural and urban pastors. While many of the areas focused in the research demonstrate that the two groups have very similar opinions, others demonstrated significant differences relevant to this study. The greatest differences appeared in the areas of community problems, factors that attract people to the churches (or repel them), salary, and education.

These data indicate that rural pastors are primarily concerned with family problems as an important part of their ministry environment. For urban pastors, the problem of drugs in their communities is a major concern.

For rural pastors, music is the most important ministry area in attracting people to their churches. This was not so for urban pastors. Urban pastors felt that good preaching and giving people answers to the problems of life were more important than were music.

Financial factors are an important part of developing an accurate profile of the pastor's ministry environment. Salary differences revealed in the data showed that rural pastors are paid significantly less for their work than are urban pastors. The data also showed that 35% of the rural pastors are receiving less than a minimum salary. Urban pastors however (i.e. those serving in the metropolitan area of San Jose) are paid much better salaries for their work, with 51% earning in excess of \$308.00 a month.

Data from the study revealed that there are significant differences in the educational levels between the two groups of pastors. Rural pastors were more likely to have completed primary school but much less likely to have further studies in high school, a Bible institute, university, or seminary than were urban pastors. On the average the urban pastor is better educated than his rural counterpart.

This section has presented data showing how rural churches differ from urban churches. Part III of this chapter will report an analysis of the data of the opinions of pastors from smaller churches differ from those of pastors from larger churches.