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**OC** INTERNATIONAL  
Research Department

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Autumn 1989  
Brazil*

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# A Survey of National Pastors and Church Leaders

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*One of a series of practical missions research case studies*

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**Key Words:** institutional research; survey research; pastors' conference

**Abstract:** A survey was produced, tested and applied to a large gathering of pastors and church leaders. There were two main questions the survey was intended to answer. The first question: What are the felt needs of the Brazilian church? The second question: What are the needs for evangelism? The survey was performed during a plenary session of a large pastors' conference in order to maximize the number of those present who would respond. The same survey was later applied to a group of Christian leaders of the Brazilian church and to the missionaries of the OC team in Brazil. Results from the three groups were compared. The results of this survey have been employed by an interdenominational Brazilian leadership training and evangelistic ministry in the planning of future pastors' conference themes.

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**Background:** The OC team in Brazil was at a crossroads in terms of ministry, strategy and direction. We were asked by home office and regional leadership to develop and carry out a research project which focused on "the needs of the Brazilian church and for evangelism." VINDE, an interdenominational Brazilian ministry which focuses on evangelism and leadership training, holds an annual conference for local church pastors and leaders which was to occur during the period of time the research project was being performed. We asked permission to do a brief survey of those present in order to find out the felt needs of those present as well as their opinions about how to reach the country of Brazil with the gospel of Jesus Christ. At a later date we decided to ask the same questions of a group of selected leaders who were respected by the Sepal team, because there was some doubt as to whether the team would give credence to information gained from an unknown group of pastors. A comparison of these results with the responses of the Sepal team and the large pastors' conference was intended to confirm to the team the validity of the original results.

**Methodology:** Once permission was granted by VINDE to do the survey at their 1989 annual pastors' conference, work was begun on the survey questions. We were required to keep the survey to no more than five minutes in order to not detract from the flow of the meeting. Multiple choice questions were used for the body of the survey in order to speed up the response time as well as to simplify analysis. The questions were drafted and tested on an experimental group of about fifteen people in order to determine if there was any confusion or difficulty in understanding as well as to estimate the time needed to fill out the questionnaire.

After this preliminary testing, the survey was rewritten and laid out in an easy-to-read format using desktop publishing. The final questionnaire was half the size of a legal size page and 1500 copies were printed for distribution at the meeting. The survey content (translated from Portuguese) and layout are shown in (Figure 1).

The first question was included in order to better identify the type of people filling out the survey. This is useful in not only determining the opinions of subgroups, such as only the pastors or only the women, but also in better understanding the type of people being reached by the conference ministry. The purpose of the last item under question 1 (#1e), whether or not one's church was Pentecostal in nature, was to gain insight into the denominational mix of the group. It was asked in this general way because in previous surveys the responses gathered had included so many names of denominations (many of which we didn't even recognize, much less identify as traditional or Pentecostal).

Figure 1

**1. Identification**  
a. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ b. How long have you been a Christian? \_\_\_\_\_ yrs c. Sex: M F  
d. Position: Pastor Pastor's wife/husband Seminarian Other  
e. Do you consider your church to be Pentecostal? Yes No

**2. What are the greatest needs of your local church? (choose two)**

<input type="checkbox"/> Youth work	<input type="checkbox"/> Missions
<input type="checkbox"/> Planning/Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipling of new converts	<input type="checkbox"/> Family
<input type="checkbox"/> Leadership development	<input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism
<input type="checkbox"/> Healing/Deliverance ministry	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaching/Preaching
<input type="checkbox"/> Contextualization	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

**3. In which of the following areas does the Brazilian church most need to improve in order to reach our country? (choose 2)**

- Each church plant new churches
- Use of mass communication
- Evangelistic crusades
- Train lay people in personal evangelism
- Evangelistic home Bible studies
- Neighborhood visitation campaigns
- Train and send out missionaries
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. In what area has your local church shown the most progress in the last two years? \_\_\_\_\_**  
\_\_\_\_\_

We felt the time it took to tabulate the more detailed denominational information was not worth the additional effort it would require. The second and third questions were the body of the survey. We had a hard time deciding to use multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank. It was decided to use multiple choice in order to facilitate the tabulation of the results. We left a space for other responses. The last question was included to increase our understanding of the local church situation, and to allow the person to feel the freedom to express himself if he would like. We recognized when we included this question that it would be difficult to tabulate nearly 1000 freehand responses, but decided to try anyway.

The survey was administered during an evening session of the conference, evening sessions being those most heavily attended. A survey was placed on each chair prior to the meeting. After a 40 minute time of praise, at the beginning of the announcements, the MC, whom we had briefed beforehand, explained the purpose of the survey

and how to fill it out. He asked the people to complete it during the remaining announcements and then to pass it back (this was more efficient than passing it to the end of the rows due to the layout of the auditorium). We had a team of people ready to pick up the surveys as they were turned in. We estimated that there were between 1000 and 1200 people present in the meeting when the survey was performed. Of this total, 868 or about 80% of those present, turned in surveys which were then collated and tabulated.

As was mentioned above, three audiences were surveyed with this questionnaire: 1) attendees of the '89 Vinde conference 2) SEPAL team 3) a selected group of Christian leaders. These surveys were done as part of larger studies regarding the opinions and ministries of these groups and are to be the subjects of future case studies. (We will include the results of this survey from each of these groups in this case study for comparative purposes.) In order to get the information from the Christian leaders, each team member was asked to choose five leaders whom he respected to interview. The first five minutes of the interview was used to fill out the survey. All interviewees were given the same orientation on how to complete the survey as was given to the conference participants. To gather the data from the OC team, each missionary was asked to fill out the survey individually and turn it in to the research department.

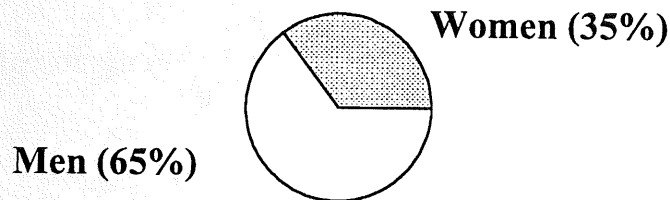
**Analysis:** In order to facilitate the tabulation of the data a program was written in dBase III+ for data entry. Besides the fields for the answers to the questions, a field was included in the data base for a number we assigned to each survey, thus allowing us to easily go back and check the accuracy of data input. These numbers were automatically generated by the program so as to not duplicate numbers, and the person inputting the data was prompted to write this number on each survey before continuing with data input. For questions 2 and 3 the person was requested to choose two answers. If there were more than two boxes checked, that question on that survey was not counted. For the answers that were written out for *others* in questions two and three and the entire response to question four, a text field of 60 characters was allotted for the response. Longer responses were summarized by the person inputting the data.

The first use of the questionnaire was at the VINDE 1989 pastors' conference. After all of the data was input and randomly spot checked for errors, the results were totaled and appropriate graphs were made and included in an eleven page report. This report was provided to the team as well as to regional and home office leadership for use in planning team strategy. A slightly less detailed report was also prepared for distribution in Portuguese and sent first to VINDE, the

organization who hosted the conference, before being made available to other parties in Brazil.

Within several months of the first application of the survey, the results were also in from the approximately 60 trusted pastors and denominational leaders and from the twelve members of the Sepal ministry team. These surveys were tabulated in the same manner and the answers to questions two and three were compared with those of the larger group. These results were summarized in a second report which was also distributed to the team and to mission leadership. For the sake of clarity, we will describe the results of the '89 VINDE conference survey before going on to a comparison of the three groups surveyed.

**Figure 2**  
**VINDE Conference - 1989**  
**Sex of Participants**

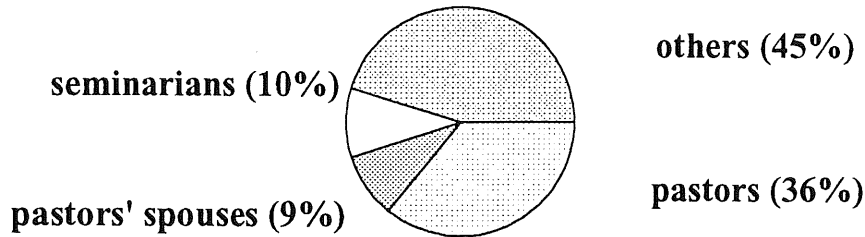


The average age was 34.1 years and the average *spiritual* age was 19.6 years. Of those who responded, 65% were men and 35% women. Information was illustrated in the report in the form of a pie chart (Figure 2).

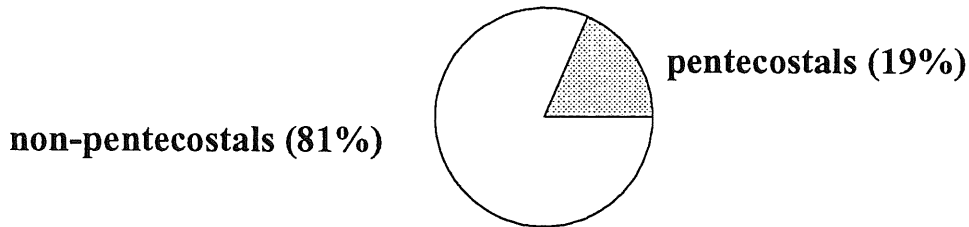
The professions of the participants were also illustrated in the form of a pie chart (Figure 3). As can be seen, 36% of the respondents were pastors, which when projected to the entire group in attendance, implies that there were over 400 pastors present at the conference. Pastor's wives and seminarians were the smaller groups, being 9% and 10% respectively. The largest group, *others*, was 45% and consisted of lay leaders, and some lay people who are not leaders in their churches, but were looking for a cheap vacation.

Question 1e asked if the respondent considered his church to be Pentecostal or not. The results of this question are illustrated in (Figure 4) as 19% Pentecostal and 81% non-Pentecostal.

**Figure 3**  
**Positions of Participants**

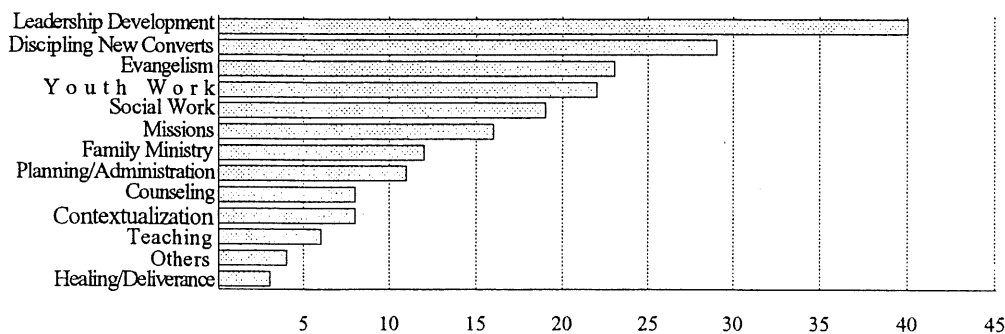


**Figure 4**  
**Religious Background of Participants**



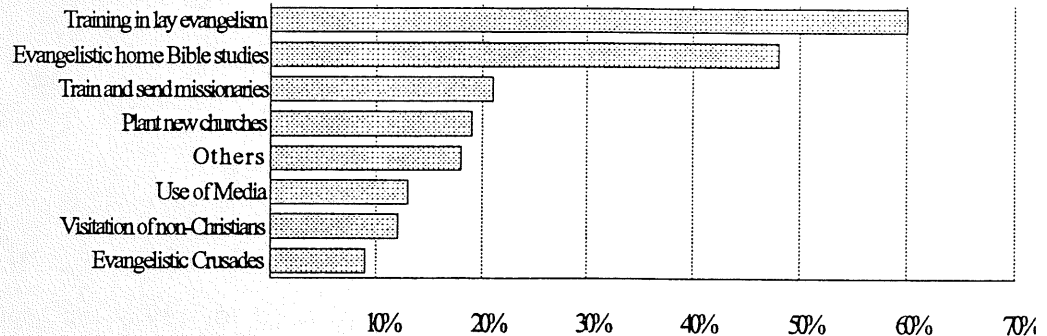
Question 2 was designed to uncover the felt needs of the churches represented at the conference. The results were calculated and placed in decreasing order in a graph (Figure 5). The percentages add up to 200 percent because each person could choose two responses; therefore the percentages are not of total responses, but of the number of people responding who chose that option. The answer *developing leadership* received the highest response, followed by the *discipling of new converts*.

**Figure 5**  
**Felt needs of Church Leaders**



entire country for Jesus Christ. The results were calculated in the same manner as for question 2 and are illustrated in **Figure 6**. The two most common answers were *training lay people in personal evangelism* and *home studies combined with evangelism*.

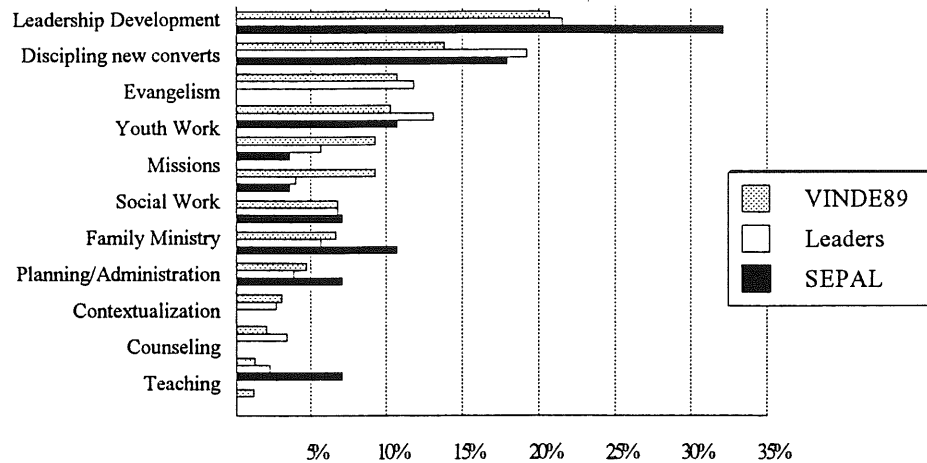
**Figure 6**  
**How to Best Evangelize Brazil**



Question 4 asked the participant in what areas his local church had shown the most progress during the last two years. The responses were grouped together resulting in 100 different response categories. People did respond with more than one area at times and these answers were all considered. Only three areas received more than 50 responses. These were evangelism (156 times), missions (120 times) and teaching (102 times).

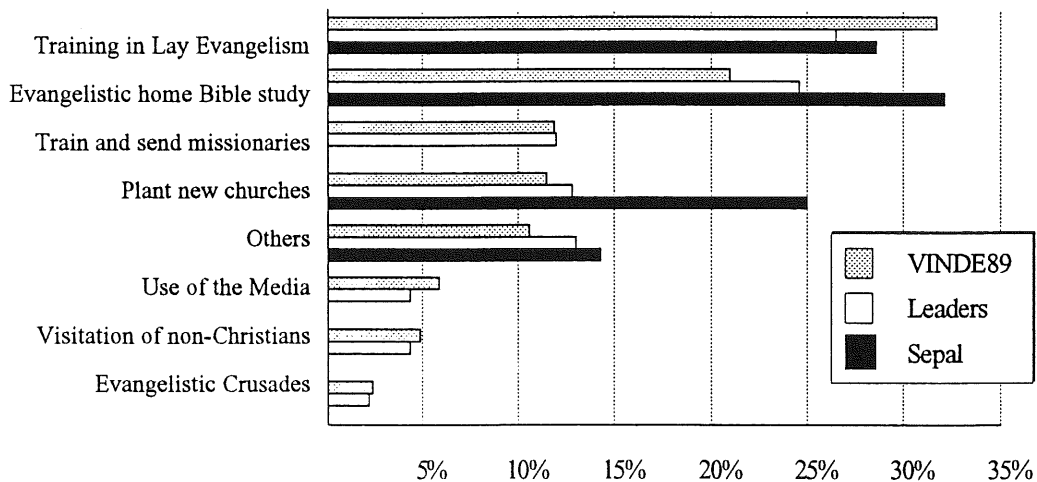
The second report, comparing the responses to questions 2 and 3 of the three groups surveyed, consisted of two bar graphs showing the results of the three groups side by side and a brief discussion of the possible implications of each. Because the two smaller groups were only pastors and/or missionaries, we decided to make the comparison using the recalculated results from only the pastors present at the VINDE conference. The resulting graphs are included as **Figures 7 and 8**. The graphs are arranged in decreasing order of the responses of the VINDE survey. These graphs seem to indicate that there is agreement as to the general trend of the responses among the three groups evaluated. This agreement seems to be stronger between the Brazilian leaders and the VINDE conference participants than with the Sepal missionaries. The only major disagreement was on the question about how to evangelize Brazil. SEPAL missionaries rated the establishing of new churches as much more important than did the other two groups. Could this be because church multiplication is one of OC's four distinctives?

**Figure 7**  
**Greatest Needs of the Local Church**



**Evaluation:** This research project was first planned to survey the opinions of a large gathering of pastors and lay leaders. Unfortunately, the opinions are necessarily influenced by the theme or subject the group is studying at the time. We had wanted to do the survey as early in the conference as possible in order to minimize this tendency, but we were not given permission to do the survey until Thursday, the fourth day of the conference. Therefore, it was good that we could do the same survey with another independent group of Brazilian pastors, and the similarity of the results seemed to confirm the validity of the results gained from the survey of the larger group.

**Figure 8**  
**How to Best Evangelize Brazil**



The results of questions 2 & 3 were very encouraging to the team since the majority of our team's ministry is focused in the area of



leadership training and discipleship ministries. The fact that the Brazilian leadership had begun to identify these areas as needs seems to be a change from the Brazilian church of the 1970's and early 1980's according to most of the older missionaries to whom we have shown these results. We have since included question 2 in several other surveys we have done as a sort of control and to see if this new trend in understanding is being maintained.

Question 4, which allowed the respondents to formulate their own answers, yielded insights into how the Holy Spirit has been operating in the Brazilian church during the recent past. The emphasis on *missions* is noteworthy, especially in light of the fact that our team has a strong emphasis in helping to mobilize the Brazilian church in this area.

It is interesting to note that when the results were calculated for only the pastors of the VINDE group, the results did not change very much, although the most popular responses were not as far out in front as with the whole group. This seems to indicate that there is a wider variety of opinions among the pastors than among the non-pastors who were present.

One could tabulate this data in other ways. For example, we did not include a summary of the opinions of the pastors versus the lay leaders in the first report. Other subgroups could also be compared: women vs. men, Traditional vs Pentecostal.

One other use of this survey was to learn a bit more about the make-up of conference attendees. Upon comparison with the make-up of the group who attended the 1989 Sepal pastor's conference in April, we see that although Sepal had a smaller group (358 participants), and the percentage of pastors was higher, 46% versus 36% at VINDE. The average Sepal participant is about 3 years older than at VINDE and the average *spiritual* age was 2 years more at Sepal. Could this be due to the fact that Sepal is an older organization, has been doing such conferences longer than VINDE and is attracting a more *mature* population? Sepal reached about 36% Pentecostal or charismatic pastors while VINDE reached only 18%. Although the Sepal group better represents the denominational mix of the Brazilian evangelical church, neither is it an accurate representation, as recent estimates would indicate that the Brazilian church is about 80% Pentecostal. It would be interesting to be able to get a similar survey of a predominantly Pentecostal group to see if the same trends and opinions are true for them, but such conferences are not a part of their regular ministry activities.

**Impact:** The results of this survey did indicate several felt needs of the Brazilian church which could have resulted in some new ministry

directions for Sepal, the OC team in Brazil. For example, the openness and confidence in lay evangelism and evangelistic home Bible studies, coupled with the felt need to know how to disciple new converts and develop leadership in their local churches, could have resulted in some new training models to teach pastors how to train their lay people in these areas and the development of materials to help them do so. Historically, the emphasis of discipleship ministries of the Sepal team has been the discipling of individual pastors.

VINDE seemed more willing to use the information for decision-making than our own team. In fact, the next year's conference topic was chosen based on the needs expressed, and the research department of Sepal was given credit in their conference brochure for having helped to identify these needs, thus playing a part in the planning of that year's conference.

The leadership of VINDE invited Sepal back to do another survey in 1990 and again in 1991 and they provided some of the questions they wanted answered through the research. They have stated that they would like to have us do another survey at their 1993 conference, which is expected to draw about 2,500 leaders.

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