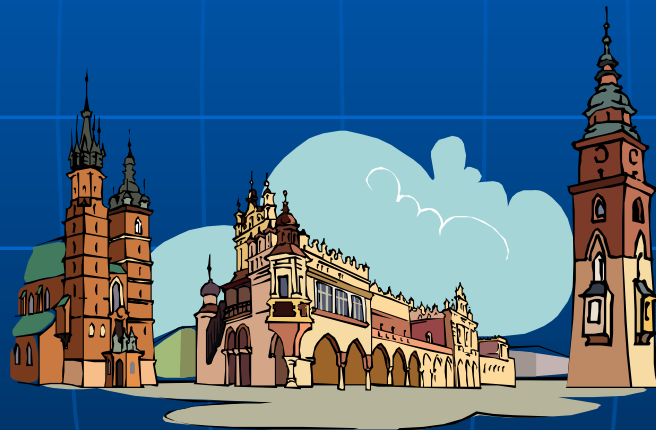


# A Brief Introduction to Multi-site Congregations for Unitarian Universalists



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Dr. Angela Merkert



## What is a multi-site church?

A multi-site church is one church meeting in multiple locations – different rooms on the same campus, different locations in the same region, or in some instances, different cities, states, or nations. A multi-site church shares a common vision, budget, leadership and board.



Churches today are more likely to utilize various types of technology to broadcast sermons site-to-site.

## Definition of Multi-Site Terms

*Multi-site church:* Short for multiple-site church, or one church with multiple locations. A church is considered multi-site if it has more than one worship venue, more than one campus or a combination of both.

*Campus:* Any location where a complete church ministry (i.e., adult worship, nursery, children's programming) takes place. A multi-site church may have several campuses.

*Branch or satellite:* An off-site campus.

*Venue:* A location where a worship service for adults is held, such as a church's fellowship hall, gym, or chapel. For example, Saddleback Church has one campus in Lake Forest, CA, but that campus currently has seven venues for adult worship.

*Strategic partner:* At North Point Community Church in Atlanta, where this idea is most actively being pioneered, a strategic partner is a church that shares North Point's mission, strategy, values, and beliefs but remains a separate entity.

## What does a multi-site church look like?

A multi-site church can resemble any of a wide variety of models. For some churches, having multiple sites involves only a worship service at each location; for others, each location has a full range of support ministries. Some churches use videocast sermons (recorded or live); others have in-person teaching on-site. Some churches maintain a similar worship atmosphere and style at all their campuses, and others allow or invite variation.



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## Models

Five approaches to multi-site have been identified with many churches using more than one approach



**Regional Campus Model**



**Video Venue Model**



**Teaching Team Model**



**Low-Risk Model**



**Partnership Model**

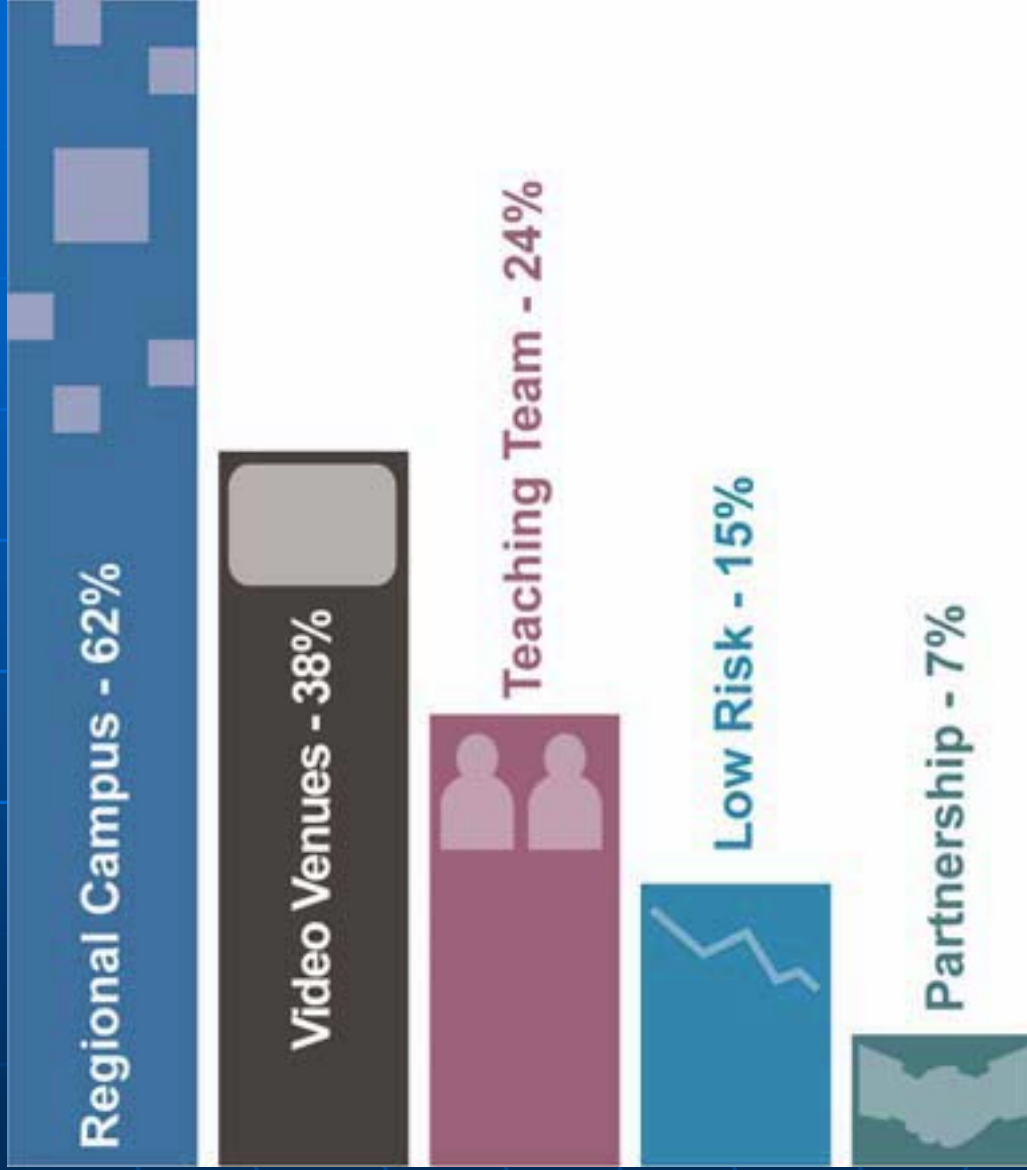
***Video-Venue Model*** Creating one or more on-campus environments that use video-cast sermons (live or recorded), often varying the worship style

***Regional-Campus Model*** Replicating the experience of the original campus at additional campuses in order to make church more accessible to other geographic communities

***Teaching-Team Model*** Leveraging a strong teaching team across multiple locations at the original campus or an off-site campus

***Partnership Model*** Partnering with a local business or nonprofit organization to use its facility beyond a mere “renter” arrangement

***Low-Risk Model*** Experimenting with new locations that have a low level of risk because of the simplicity of programming and low financial investment involved but that have the potential for high returns in terms of evangelism and growth



## Models

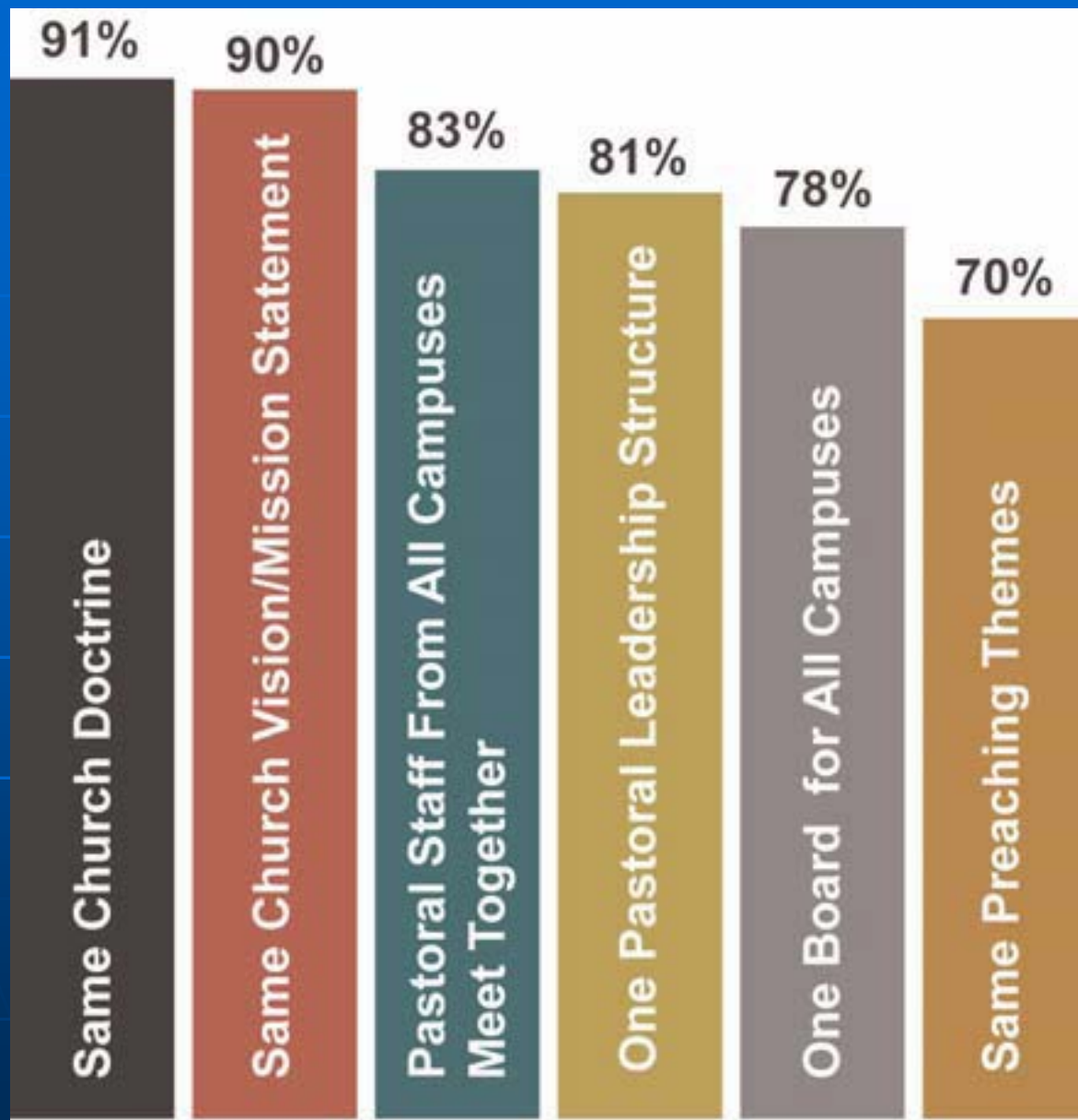
Regional campus  
is the most  
popular approach

# What are the advantages of a multi-site church?

1. Assists in reaching friends and family unwilling to travel a great distance to church
2. Brings together the best aspects of larger churches and smaller churches
3. Increases the total number of available seats during optimal worship times
4. Overcomes geographic barriers when a church facility is landlocked or tightly zoned
5. Enables untapped talent to emerge each time a new venue or site is opened

## What are the advantages of a multi-site church?

6. Mobilizes volunteers through an added variety of ministry opportunities
7. Improves a church's stewardship of funds and resources
8. Enables a church to extend itself into smaller niches
9. Models and trains people for church planting elsewhere
10. Provides a pipeline for the development of emerging leaders and future staff

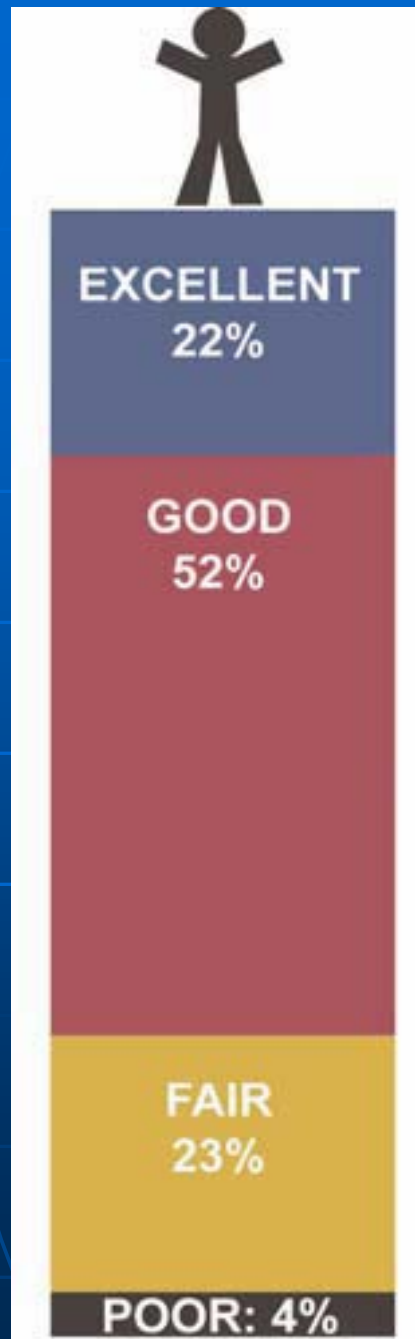


One Church Identity Doctrine, vision and mission are the most important shapers of a multi-site's DNA



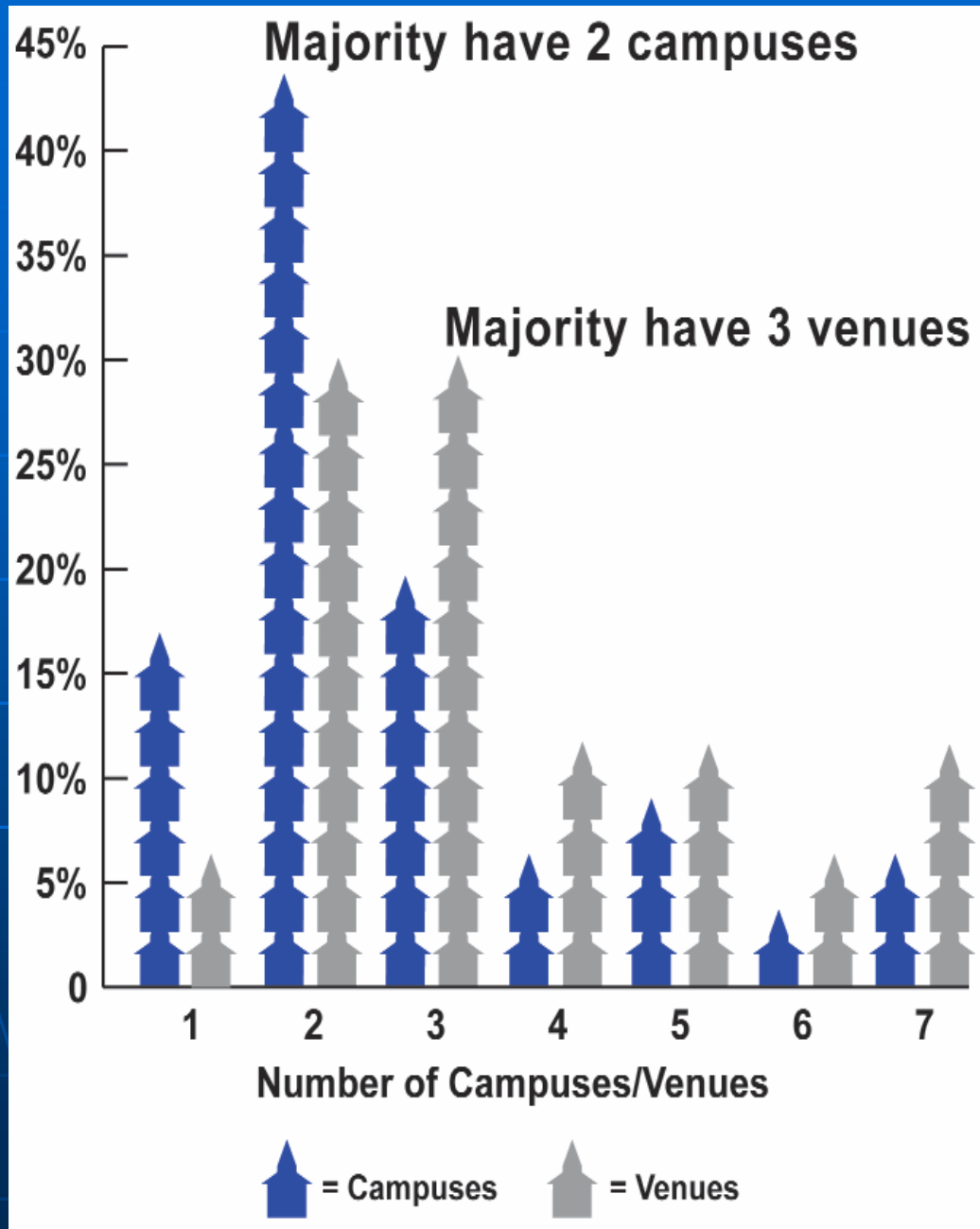
## What are the disadvantages of a multi-site church?

- Going multi-site can stretch the budget,
- invite criticism from other churches,
- and make new demands on church leadership;
- therefore, to be successful, it is vital that the key leaders of the church be unified and enthusiastic about the decision to go multi-site.



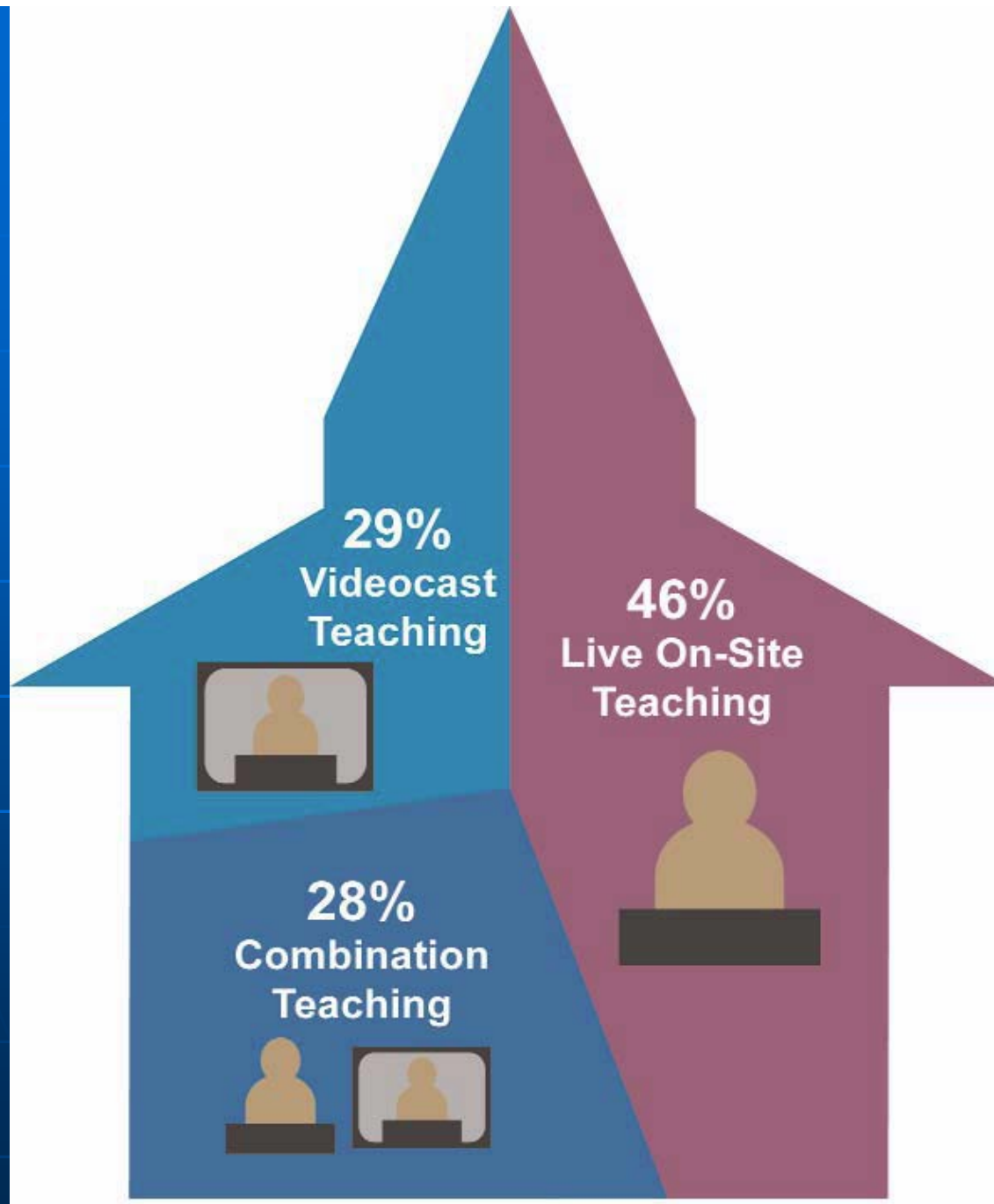
## Overall Multi-Site Development

More than 7 of 10 surveyed churches rate their development as either “good” or “excellent”



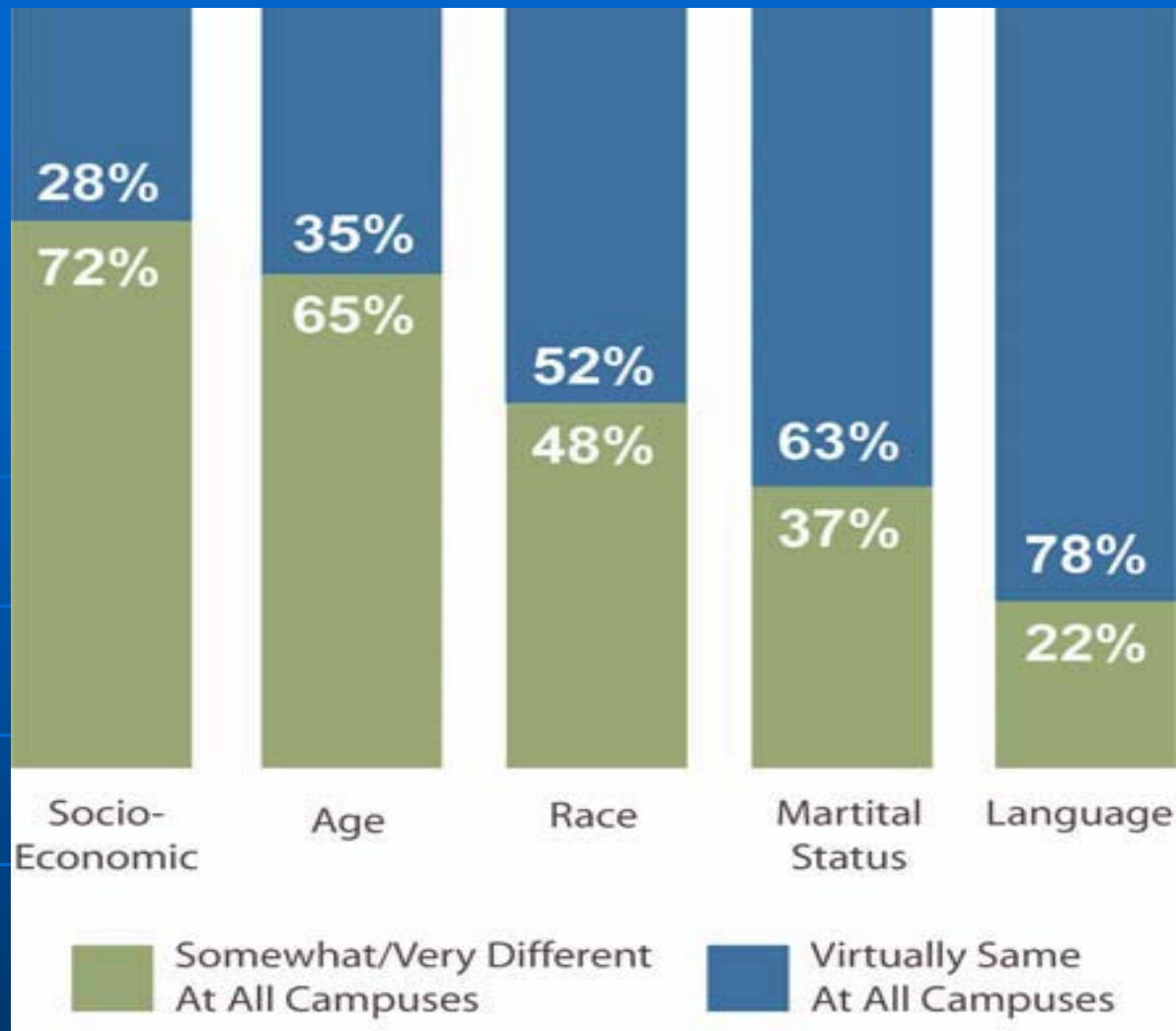
## Multi-Options

The majority of surveyed churches have 2 campuses and 3 venues

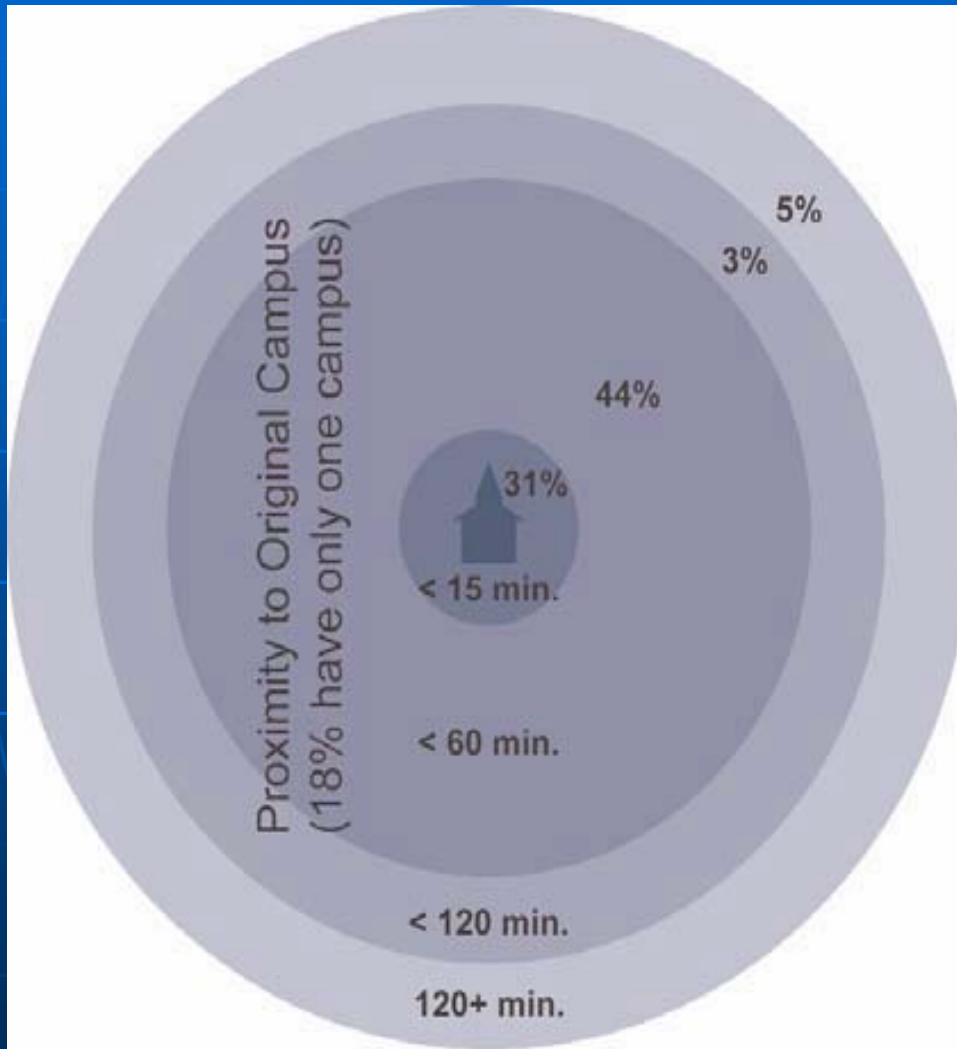


## Teaching (Preaching)

Live on-site teaching is the dominant teaching style in multi-site churches, but the fastest-growing multi-site churches use both in-person and video teaching (preaching)



Different Socio-Economics: More than half the multi-site churches surveyed reach different types of people, especially in terms of socio-economics, at their various campuses



75% of new sites are within an hour's drive of the original location



On average surveyed churches started multi-site in  
2003

# Leading Unitarian Universalist Congregations working with Multi-Site

First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque      Rev. Christine Robinson  
Tennessee Valley UU Church, Knoxville, TN      Rev. Chris Buice  
First UU Church of San Diego      Rev. Dr. Arvid Straube

