

The Results of the Third  
Annual Global Survey  
of  
Jehovah's Witnesses

2013

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# A message to the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses

Dear Sirs

Your persistent silence with regards to the results of our annual surveys convinces me and my colleagues that you have zero interest in the opinions and concerns of those whose lives continue to be impacted by your teachings and policies.

I will therefore keep this year's message to you as brief and to-the-point as possible.

It is now becoming widely known that your organization is in financial turmoil. The closing down of branch after branch, the reductions in printing and the desperate clawing for cash from congregations is not going unnoticed regardless of your efforts at spin and propaganda.

This crisis is a direct result of your indifference to the harm you are causing, which is increasingly being exposed on the internet. As much as you would like to think that Jehovah's Witnesses only visit JW.org and only read your publications, you must surely realize that you can't hide the truth from people no matter how much fear and paranoia you try to instill.

You and your predecessors have lied to millions of people for decades, and these lies are now catching up with you. You are reaping what you have sown.

My offer to meet with you or your representatives to identify ways of guiding you away from the extremist path you seem bent on pursuing remains open, but the window of opportunity for you to prevent the downfall of your prized organization is closing. The momentum and advantage now lies with myself and others who are no longer afraid to speak the truth. No amount of name-calling, ad hominem vitriol, DMCA takedown notices or threatening language can silence us.

We have the wind in our sails, and you are already sinking. Your fate still lies in your hands, but not for too much longer.

Yours sincerely,

**John Cedars**

*Senior Editor, JWsurvey.org*

# Introduction

*The 2011 results PDF (downloadable by [clicking here](#)) offers a full rundown of the early development of JWsurvey's Global Survey, and explains how it first began on surveymonkey.com before being hosted on our WordPress-based website, JWsurvey.org, for 2011 through 2013.*

Our 2013 Survey continued the successful use of voter categories from the previous year. These categories enabled us to compare results across different groups of voters, i.e. active witnesses, disfellowshipped ones, elders, those who were never baptized, etc.

The six voter categories are as follows:

- Active witnesses
- Serving elders
- Anointed (memorial takers)
- Inactive ones (faders)
- Disfellowshipped/disassociated ones
- Unbaptized ones

An obvious drawback to having the above categories was the possibility of certain voters failing to understand the category system properly, or being confused as to which category they should vote in. For example, if a voter is an active witness AND an elder AND a member of the anointed, which category should he choose? This problem was partially addressed by giving detailed instructions as to who should or should not vote under a given category *before* questions were presented. These instructions covered every conceivable type of voter.

## **2014 Global Survey**

The 2014 Global Survey, which is already up-and-running at the time of writing, represents a considerable departure from the previous two years in that it is now hosted once again on surveymonkey.com.

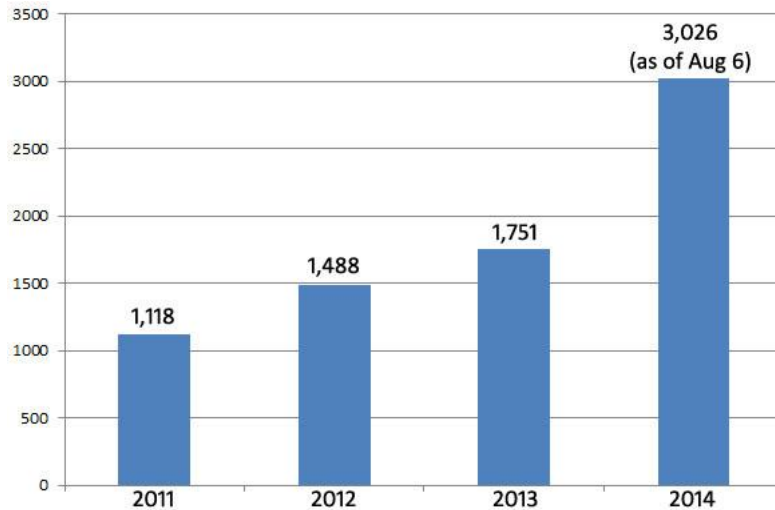
Here is a link to the new survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9QJ6XR2>

By returning to surveymonkey.com we are already seeing the benefits of using this trusted, reputable and user-friendly service. Rather than relying on voter categories we are able to program the survey to intuitively respond to the way voters answer questions, blocking questions in the survey that do not pertain to their situation and opening up questions that do.

The new-style survey is already proving more popular, having attracted over 3,000 respondents by early August 2014 (including over 550 active Witnesses). This is likely due in large part to the less intimidating approach of the new Survey, which allows respondents to answer questions without any cumbersome sign-up process.

Needless to say we are delighted that we are seeing increased participation in the Survey year-on-year, as the following graph demonstrates...

**Total number of Global Survey voters**



### Shortcomings of the Survey

#### **New Light**

The Governing Body is forever changing its teachings, policies, and organizational structure, and this can prove challenging when it comes to formulating questions for the Survey. Fortunately there was no major “new light” over the course of 2013, so the questions remained relevant from the beginning to the end of the Survey period. This is, nonetheless, one area in which the Survey is vulnerable to some extent, because it can only adapt to changes by the end of each calendar year when the next Survey is launched.

#### **Objectivity**

The makers of the Survey recognize that it can never be considered truly reflective of the views of Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide. This is because it is only accessible online and not via the usual organizational channels of the Watch Tower Society.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are warned through their literature to avoid the internet, and in particular, any websites dealing with Jehovah’s Witnesses that are not authorized by Watchtower. Therefore, the majority of active Jehovah’s Witnesses voting on such a survey would be those who have already demonstrated some level of defiance to the Society’s instructions. In other words, most if not all voters *simply by visiting JWsurvey.org* are already likely to have opinions that conflict with those of the organization’s leadership, rendering a negative response against Watchtower almost inevitable.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Survey still offers a useful resource for the following reasons:

By being hosted online, the Survey is made available to all of Jehovah's Witnesses, irrespective of whether they agree or disagree with the organization's teachings. **The Survey questions are worded in such a way as to allow those who agree with the teachings of the Society to express their loyalty without being influenced by the opinions of the website owners.**

Devout Witnesses occasionally participate in the Survey, either intentionally or accidentally, and such ones are welcome. No loyalists or "apologists" are dissuaded from expressing their opinions, because it is intended that the results should give as fair a reflection as possible of the overall opinions surrounding the religion. My approach has always been "the more the merrier."<sup>1</sup>

I genuinely believe that the information yielded by the survey should be welcomed *whatever consensus it reveals*, because no harm can arise from knowing what the consensus is on any matter of this magnitude, irrespective of how uncomfortable such a consensus may be.

In spite of the encouragement to avoid or limit use of the internet, **all Jehovah's Witnesses are personally responsible for their beliefs** - especially concerning matters of conscience. It has been noticed that increasing numbers of active Jehovah's Witnesses are coming to the realization that the partial prohibition of the internet has more to do with shielding Watchtower from negative publicity than any genuine desire to protect worshippers from supposed 'Satanic propaganda.' The opinions of any conscientious visitors are just as valid as those who choose to have their conscience dictated to them by the Governing Body when it comes to how they access information.

Watchtower's restrictions regarding the internet do not compel us to abandon any attempted online survey of believers. **It would be unfair to deny those who have researched Jehovah's Witnesses online the opportunity to express their opinions simply because the organization that they no longer follow is trying to shield itself from criticism.** To do so would be to succumb to coercion.

**It is hoped that, as the Survey grows in popularity, more and more devout Witnesses will become curious and seek to participate and express their views regardless of any restrictions imposed by Watchtower.** At present, the Survey is still only a fairly recent development, and its existence is not as widely known among Witness circles as we would like. However, it is growing in popularity year by year. The longer it remains online, with sufficient publicity and 'word of mouth' stirring up interest via social media etc, the greater the likelihood that it will come to the attention of increasing numbers of ordinary Witnesses. It is hoped that such ones will eventually take part through curiosity, even if they choose not to broadcast the fact that they have done so. I envisage increased participation as an inevitable outcome the longer the Survey is online, so hopefully any perceived bias in the voting pool will gradually lessen over time.

Another shortcoming is that neither myself, nor the website developer John Hoyle, have any formal qualifications in the area of conducting surveys. Also, neither of us can be described as impartial,

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<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, during the course of the year, I have found it necessary to block certain individuals from using JWsurvey.org. I have only taken this recourse if the individuals concerned were "spamming" the site, or being rude or offensive to its users or their beliefs. I derive no pleasure from banning visitors in this manner, and I genuinely hope that they had the opportunity to fill in the survey before they were banned – regardless of how biased the views of such ones may be. However, I have a responsibility to make JWsurvey a pleasant environment for people of all beliefs, and I reserve the right to implement measures to make this possible. One of the benefits of having future surveys hosted on surveymonkey is the fact that people will still be able vote regardless of whether they are blocked from commenting on JWsurvey.

because both John and I share the opinion that many of the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses are deeply flawed and even dangerous, and that the organization does not represent God's chosen people on Earth.

Normally when a survey is undertaken on such matters, the work is outsourced to an external organization that can offer impartiality in the way the data is gathered. That way there can be no accusations that the figures have been tampered with, and one has a degree of assurance that everything has been done in a statistically sound way and in accordance with best practice when it comes to conducting surveys.

Hopefully we will eventually have the resources to commission such a survey. In the meantime, as far as our motives are concerned, I can only give you the sincerest assurance that neither John nor myself have any interest whatsoever in deceiving anyone when it comes to this Survey or its results. Voter information for the 2013 Survey was displayed in real-time, immediately after votes were cast – making it extremely difficult for us to tamper with the figures without this soon becoming obvious. We are just as interested in seeing a fair and impartial survey conducted as anyone, regardless of the outcome.

When it comes to our credentials (or lack thereof) it is worth mentioning that the Governing Body are equally "self-certified" when it comes to wielding authority within the organization. They see no need to offer proof that God has anointed them individually, or that Christ has chosen them to act as his "faithful and discreet slave." They simply expect us to believe it and get on with it – yielding to their profound influence over even the most rudimentary aspects of everyday life in the process.

By comparison, I do not believe myself to be a spokesman for God, nor any form of prophet - and neither does John for that matter. Both he and I are non-religious and thus harbor no aspirations to evangelize our own understanding on biblical or spiritual matters.

We seek the trust of voters, not in wielding any authority over them, but simply in our assurance that we will not distort figures or attempt to mislead anyone through this Survey. If people decide they cannot trust us for whatever reason, then that is their decision, and we cannot insist on being afforded the 'benefit of the doubt'. However, hopefully I have sufficiently explained how the same questions of trust, motives and credentials that could be leveled against us might also be directed towards the Governing Body, and how in conducting this Survey and gathering votes we are asking for far less than they are.

When it comes to the management of statistics, I have attempted to be as meticulous and thorough as possible in the way figures are collated and displayed. In compiling the following results I have copied the final results directly from the website onto a spreadsheet, and from there into this report – being certain to double-check all figures and make sure that they are as accurate as possible.



## Correcting Mistakes

If there are any particular areas of concern as to how figures or statistics have been derived, you are more than welcome to contact me directly by email using the address provided on [JWsurvey.org](http://JWsurvey.org), and I will attempt to explain any anomalies and/or correct any figures that are found to be in error.

As mentioned above, I derive no personal benefit from publishing untruths or exaggerations. It is not in my interests to devote so much time and energy to something with the sole purpose of misleading people. I am therefore appreciative of any efforts to correct genuine errors or oversights on my part.

It is hoped that the following information will prove useful and informative to any who may read it, and I would like to thank all those who voted, the *silent majority*, for sharing their opinions with us.



# General voter statistics

At least **1,751** people participated in the Global Survey of Jehovah’s Witnesses for 2013<sup>2</sup> - an 18% increase on the previous year's total of 1,488. The Survey went live on January 28<sup>th</sup> and ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.

## Voter location

North America	67.0%	1088
Europe	22.3%	362
Oceania	4.9%	79
Africa	1.5%	25
South America	1.2%	20
Asia	1.1%	18
Other	0.9%	15
Central America	0.9%	14
Middle East	0.1%	2
Total voters for this question:		1623

As you would expect, the majority of voters were from North America. Even so, other parts of the world were well-represented in this survey with people from every continent voting (including 15 voters voting from "Other!").

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<sup>2</sup> The total number of voters was derived by adding up the peak votes from each category (the highest number of votes for a single question). Therefore, the total number participating in the 2013 Survey may well be higher, but I would rather work with confirmed figures. This also means the voter numbers will not always fully correspond between questions, because not all voters voted for each and every question.

## Years baptized

Voters who had been baptized at some point were asked to indicate how many years they had spent as a baptized publisher. This is how they responded...

### How many years have you been a baptized Witness (From your baptism to now, or until you left the organization)

	ACTIVE	ELDERS	ANOINTED	INACTIVE	DFd / DAd	TOTAL
10 to 25 years	37% 90	61% 14	27% 4	45% 278	39% 200	41.2% 586
25 to 40 years	24% 58	30% 7	20% 3	24% 149	17% 88	21.5% 305
5 to 10 years	21% 52	0% 0	13% 2	16% 99	25% 130	19.9% 283
Less than 5 years	11% 27	0% 0	0% 0	9% 54	16% 84	11.6% 165
More than 40 years	7% 17	9% 2	40% 6	6% 41	3% 16	5.8% 82
Total voters:	244	23	15	621	518	1421

As you can see, there was a good spread of varying levels of experience among our voters, with the majority of having spent between 10 and 40 years as a baptized Witness.

## Active Witnesses

**292** active Jehovah’s Witnesses (16.7% of voters) participated in the 2013 Survey (previous year, 294).

This number was made up of:

- 28 serving Elders, incl. 3 “anointed” (previous year 33)
- 17 anointed ones (memorial partakers), incl. 3 elders (previous year 13)
- 250 non-Elders with an “earthly hope” (previous year 248)

Active Witness voters declared themselves to hold the following positions within the organization:

- 207 normal publishers (previous year 195)
- 50 Ministerial Servants (previous year 50)
- 32 Regular Pioneers (incl. 6 Elders) (previous year 27)
- 31 RBC volunteers (incl. 7 Elders) (previous year 26)
- 20 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers (incl. 5 Elders) (previous year 19)
- 7 MTS/BSSB graduates (incl. 2 Elders) (previous year 2)
- 3 Bethel volunteers (previous year 7)
- 1 Special Pioneer (previous year 3)
- 0 Hospital Liaison Committee members (previous year 2)
- 0 Circuit Overseer (previous year 1)

The voters professing to be active Witnesses represented a good cross-section of the organization. Enough active elders, servants and publishers voted to form three or four congregations.

Though there were two fewer active Witness voters compared to the previous year, there has already been a notable rise in active Witness involvement with the 2014 Survey, with over 570 voting as of the end of July. This is likely due to the fact that the new Survey model offers more anonymity.

## Inactive ones (faders)

**657** inactive Jehovah's Witnesses participated in the 2013 Survey, a notable increase on the previous year's figure of 545. This meant that the total number of combined active and inactive Witnesses (baptized JWs) taking part was **949**, or 54.2% of voters.

Inactive Witness voters declared themselves to have previously held the following positions within the organization:

- 600 normal publishers (previous year 455)
- 176 Ministerial Servants (previous year 176)
- 233 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers (previous year 174)
- 175 Regular Pioneers (previous year 167)
- 43 Elders (previous year 73)
- 111 RBC volunteers (previous year 70)
- 9 Bethel worker at world headquarters
- 9 Bethel worker at branch / country office
- 4 MTS/BSSB graduates (previous year 9)
- 7 Special Pioneers (previous year 8)
- 1 Missionary (previous year 2)
- 1 Branch Committee member

Obviously, as with all results on this survey, we need to consider the possibility that at least a small number of voters answered questions in a misleading way. I therefore, for example, try not to read too much into the fact that a former Branch Committee member participated in the survey, although it is perfectly likely that this was so.

All the same, one thing becomes strikingly apparent when viewing the above list of former positions, and that is how experienced many inactive "faders" claim to be. More than a quarter of all inactive ones taking part in our survey claimed to have once been Ministerial Servants and Regular Pioneers, and enough former Elders took part to preside over ten congregations.

Certainly it cannot be said that Witnesses drift away from the organization simply because they do not fully grasp the teachings and doctrines. The above list represents a contingent that was previously very active in the organization and well versed in its teachings. The reason for falling away must therefore be more complicated than mere laziness or ignorance on the part of the individual. This is borne out by the answers given to the following question...

**What were your reasons for becoming inactive? (tick any that apply)**

I can no longer preach about something that I do not believe in my heart	78%	507
I discovered the real "truth" about Jehovah's Witnesses	65%	423
I no longer believe that Jehovah's Witnesses are the one true religion	74%	484
I can no longer pretend to be a Witness at meetings	52%	338
I am shocked or stumbled by the actions of individuals in my congregation	41%	266
I just can't be bothered with all that anymore	24%	158
I was never that interested in the first place	11%	69
I am spiritually weak	3%	20
I would rather not say	1%	8
Total voters:		651

It is interesting to note how closely these responses correspond with those of the previous year (2012)...

**What were your reasons for becoming inactive? (tick any that apply)**

I can no longer preach about something that I do not believe in my heart	73%	393
I discovered the real "truth" about Jehovah's Witnesses	71%	383
I no longer believe that Jehovah's Witnesses are the one true religion	70%	375
I can no longer pretend to be a Witness at meetings	50%	267
I am shocked or stumbled by the actions of individuals in my congregation	31%	166
I just can't be bothered with all that anymore	19%	104
I was never that interested in the first place	9%	46
I am spiritually weak	5%	25
I would rather not say	1%	8
Total voters:		538

The book *Organized To Do Jehovah's Will* says the following of inactive ones on page 155...

*"An inactive person may have failed to study God's Word regularly, or because of experiencing personal problems or persecution, he may have lost his zeal for serving Jehovah."*

The above sentiments are certainly not reflected by the majority of those inactive ones taking part in our Survey. A significant majority stopped attending meetings and going on the ministry simply because they no longer believe that Jehovah's Witnesses represent the one true religion. Only a tiny number (3%) claimed to be spiritually weak.

# Disfellowshipped/disassociated ones

**557** disfellowshipped/disassociated ones (31.8% of voters) took part in the 2013 Survey, an increase on the previous year's total of 428. These voters, all former Witnesses, declared themselves to have *previously* held the following positions within the organization:

- 490 normal publishers (previous year 320)
- 160 Regular Pioneers (previous year 132)
- 175 Regular Auxiliary Pioneers (previous year 123)
- 96 Ministerial Servants (previous year 91)
- 41 RBC volunteers (previous year 20)
- 35 Elders (previous year 48)
- 13 Bethel workers at world headquarters
- 12 Special Pioneers (previous year 9)
- 6 Bethel workers at branch / country office
- 5 Missionaries (previous year 3)
- 1 MTS/BSSB graduates (previous year 2)

As previously noted, though it is proper to greet some of the claimed previous positions with a degree of skepticism, the above list does indicate a collection of former believers who were once extremely active in the organization and thus familiar with its teachings.

In explaining the reasons why people get disfellowshipped, the Society has this to say:

*“But what about our time—‘the Lord’s day’? Are the same evil influences evident? Yes, for **immorality is by far the leading cause for disfellowshipping among God’s people.** How important, therefore, that we avoid association with all individuals—inside and outside the congregation—who are a morally corrupting influence!” – w02 10/1 p.21 par.16*

With this in mind, consider the answers to the following question and answers:

## **Why did you leave Jehovah's Witnesses? (Choose one)**

I disagreed with the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses	63%	346
I transgressed the moral code	28%	153
I was unfairly disfellowshipped for something I didn't do	5%	27
I transgressed some other Bible command	3%	17
I would rather not say	1%	8
Total voters:		551

These results are almost identical to the previous year:

**Why did you leave Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick one)**

I disagreed with the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses	60%	251
I transgressed the moral code	28%	117
I was unfairly disfellowshipped for something I didn't do	5%	22
I transgressed some other Bible command	4%	15
I would rather not say	3%	13
Total voters:		418

Far from immorality being “the leading cause,” the above figures show a group of people who predominantly left the Witness faith simply because they no longer agree with its teachings.

Of course, *disfellowshipping* and *disassociation* are slightly different in nature (albeit with the same outcome), and the above Watchtower quote refers only to disfellowshipping. Also, there is a possibility that some of those answering this question were not being entirely honest about their reasons for leaving for whatever reason.

All the same, taken at face value, the above results suggest that not all who leave Jehovah’s Witnesses do so because they are hopeless sinners, but rather because they no longer believe the organization’s teachings.

At the very least, there is good reason to conclude that the reasons for disfellowshipping are not always as straightforward as the Society claims.

## Unbaptized voters

**245** unbaptized non-JWs (14% of voters) participated in the 2013 Survey, a slight increase on the 221 who voted the previous year. These ones described their connection to Jehovah’s Witnesses by answering the following question:

**What is your current relationship with Jehovah's Witnesses?  
(tick those that apply - max 5)**

	%	#
I have family who are Jehovah's Witnesses	81%	198
I have little or nothing to do with them	29%	71
I have close friends who are Jehovah's Witnesses	24%	60
I am studying with them	14%	35
I am just researching JW's on your website	12%	29
I am regularly visited by them	11%	28
I am romantically involved with one of Jehovah's Witnesses	7%	18
Total voters:		245



Apart from a notable increase in the percentage of unbaptized family members of JW's voting in this category, the percentages were comparable with the previous year...

<b>What is your current relationship with Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick whichever apply)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
I have family who are Jehovah's Witnesses	61%	133
I have little or nothing to do with them	28%	62
I have close friends who are Jehovah's Witnesses	21%	45
I am studying with them	13%	29
I am regularly visited by them	9%	19
I am romantically involved with one of Jehovah's Witnesses	6%	13
 Total voters:		 219

It can thus be concluded that a considerable majority of those voting under this category are unbaptized Witness family members, although having Witnesses in your family obviously does not necessarily mean that you live in the same household as them. Even so, you are almost certainly more likely to *become* a baptized Witness if you already have Witness family than if you have no connection whatsoever.

Though it is surprising that as many as 71 individuals with "little or nothing to do" with Jehovah's Witnesses felt inclined to participate in an online survey about them, it is nice to consider that these ones may have received a more rounded impression of the religion through visiting *JWsurvey.org* and going through the survey questions than would otherwise have been the case.

When asked "What is your opinion of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses?" only 1% of voters in this category (3 individuals) ticked to say "I would like to be one of them."

<b>What is your opinion of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses? (tick those that apply)</b>		
They are a cult	77%	185
Their beliefs are deeply flawed	72%	173
They are good people	53%	128
They are just another Christian denomination	15%	37
They go by what the Bible teaches	7%	18
I would like to be one of them	1%	3
 Total voters:		 241

Again, the results for this question closely match those yielded the previous year (2012)...

**What is your opinion of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses?  
(tick whichever apply)**

They are a cult	61%	134
Their beliefs are deeply flawed	56%	124
They are good people	31%	68
They are just another Christian denomination	12%	27
They go by what the Bible teaches	10%	22
I would like to be one of them	5%	10
Total voters:		221

# Topics of interest

## Anointed

Jehovah's Witnesses with a heavenly hope, referred to as the "anointed" or "little flock," are an enigma to many Witnesses. Their numbers are on the increase (with 13,204 partaking at the 2013 memorial, and 12,604 the year before) even though Watchtower publications are written primarily to cater for Witnesses entertaining the hope of a resurrection to a paradise Earth.

The following question was therefore asked of those professing to be of this unique group:

**What led you to conclude that you are of the anointed remnant? (tick any that apply)**

I just know that I am going to heaven	35%	6
It's personal, I would rather not say	35%	6
There is nothing special about me, I believe that all true Christians go to heaven	18%	3
I had a dream or vision that revealed my calling to me	6%	1
None of the above. I don't believe I'm going to heaven - I just partook at the Memorial	6%	1
Total voters:		17

And here is how the same group voted in the 2012 Survey...

**What led you to conclude that you are of the anointed remnant? (tick any that apply)**

I just know that I am going to heaven	44%	4
I had a dream or vision that revealed my calling to me	22%	2
It's personal, I would rather not say	22%	2
There is nothing special about me, I believe that all true Christians go to heaven	11%	1
Total voters:		9

It is interesting that one third of the 17 professed-anointed who answered this question said that they "just know." Only one person claimed to have a particular dream or vision that revealed his or her calling. Three anointed voters even claimed that there is nothing special in having a heavenly calling because this is an inherent teaching of Christianity.

One voter admitted to partaking of the emblems just for the sake of it, without having any heavenly aspirations.

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that anointed ones make up the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7:4. To find out whether all our voters support Watchtower's teaching that 144,000 is a literal number, we asked the following question...

**Do you believe that the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation is a literal number?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DAd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
No	44%	98	62%	13	0%	0	69%	411	74%	375	62%	141	42.9%	111	61.0%	522	69.8%	516	65.1%	1038
Unsure	34%	77	24%	5	31%	4	24%	144	17%	86	25%	58	33.2%	86	26.9%	230	19.5%	144	23.4%	374
Yes	22%	50	14%	3	69%	9	7%	42	9%	49	13%	30	23.9%	62	12.1%	104	10.7%	79	11.5%	183
Total voters:		225		21		13		597		510		229		259		856		739		1595

It is noteworthy that only 23.9% of active Witness voters were able to endorse the idea of the 144,000 being a literal number. Support for the teaching predictably dwindles further once you include the figures for inactive and former/non-JWs, with as few as 9% disfellowshipped/disassociated ones endorsing the teaching.

Many have already suggested that ditching the 144,000 teaching could be one of the next flashes of 'new light' from the Governing Body. Based on the above figures, and with the number of memorial partakers continuing to rise at a rate where the teaching is quickly becoming mathematically untenable, such a change would seem very likely.

***New Light***

In the wake of the 'new light' about the "faithful and discreet slave" from the 2012 Annual Meeting, professed-anointed voters were once again asked about the insinuation in one Watchtower magazine that memorial partakers (i.e. individual members of the anointed) might be "mentally or emotionally imbalanced."

When quizzed on this matter, this is how professed-anointed participants in the Survey voted:

**A recent Questions From Readers (w11 8/15 p22) suggested that some memorial partakers might be mentally or emotionally imbalanced. What are your thoughts on this? (tick whichever applies - max 3)**

I do not consider myself mentally or emotionally imbalanced	93%	14
I object to this suggestion	27%	4
It was an attempt to diminish the role of the anointed in relation to the Governing Body	53%	8
It was a fair observation	13%	2
I have no thoughts on this	0%	0
Total voters:		15

Here is how the same question was answered the previous year...

**A recent Questions From Readers (w11 8/15 p22) suggested that some memorial partakers might be mentally or emotionally imbalanced. What are your thoughts on this? (tick whichever applies - max 3)**

I do not consider myself mentally or emotionally imbalanced	89%	8
I object to this suggestion	44%	4
It was an attempt to diminish the role of the anointed in relation to the Governing Body	44%	4
It was a fair observation	11%	1
I have no thoughts on this	0%	0
Total voters:		9

For both surveys the response was more amicable than expected. In the 2013 Survey less than a third objected to the suggestion that memorial partakers might be insane, and two voters even considered it a fair observation! Interestingly, most but not all voters on this question were able to tick to say that they are not mentally or emotionally imbalanced. Eight voters felt the *Question From Readers* article DID represent an attempt to diminish the role of the anointed in relation to the Governing Body.

A further question related to the “new light” asked for feedback on the change itself.

**At the Annual Meeting on October 5th, 2012, a “new understanding” revealed that Governing Body alone may be considered as being the Faithful & Discreet Slave. What do you think? (Tick any that apply)**

	ACTIVE	ELDERS	ANOINTED	INACTIVE	DFd / DA	ACTIVE JW	Baptized JW	Former / Non-JW	TOTAL									
It was a cynical attempt at consolidating control of the organization	53%	124	65%	15	77%	10	72%	442	67%	348	55.6%	149	96.6%	591	67.3%	348	67.2%	939
They are now no different than the Pope	32%	74	43%	10	31%	4	49%	300	32%	164	32.8%	88	63.4%	388	31.7%	164	39.5%	552
I don't understand how it could take 93+ years to cleanse the organization	33%	76	43%	10	31%	4	35%	215	29%	152	33.6%	90	49.8%	305	29.4%	152	32.7%	457
It makes no difference to me	15%	35	26%	6	31%	4	37%	225	33%	173	16.8%	45	44.1%	270	33.5%	173	31.7%	443
It was a response to the increasing number of memorial partakers	32%	75	39%	9	46%	6	33%	199	25%	128	33.6%	90	47.2%	289	24.8%	128	29.8%	417
I thought the Governing Body was the Faithful Slave before this	25%	58	30%	7	15%	2	20%	122	14%	73	25.0%	67	30.9%	189	14.1%	73	18.8%	262
They should have shared it in the publications first	15%	34	9%	2	8%	1	10%	60	4%	23	13.8%	37	15.8%	97	4.4%	23	8.6%	120
I agree with it, it makes total sense	6%	15	9%	2	8%	1	0%	2	0%	1	6.7%	18	3.3%	20	0.2%	1	1.5%	21
Who are we to argue? It's Jesus Christ's decision	4%	10	0%	0	8%	1	0%	2	0%	2	4.1%	11	2.1%	13	0.4%	2	1.1%	15
Total voters:		232		23		13		612		517		268		612		517		1397

A clear majority considered the new understanding of the “faithful and discreet slave” to be a “cynical attempt at consolidating control of the organization.” This makes sense given the sharp increase in the number of anointed partakers over recent years, and it being increasingly obvious that there is no link between ordinary anointed ones and the Governing Body.

Finally, when asked whether there was a need for the Governing Body members to make some effort to contact the anointed, opinions were split down the middle...

**The Governing Body says there is no need to contact the anointed or find out who they are. Do you agree with this?**

Yes	54%	7
No	46%	6
There used to be, but not anymore	0%	0
Total voters:		13

This indecisiveness was even more apparent the year before, when for at least some of the year the question was more relevant...

**The Governing Body says there is no need to contact the anointed or find out who they are. Do you agree with this?**

Yes	50%	4
No	50%	4
There used to be, but not anymore	0%	0
Total voters:		8

## Apostates

Apostates are increasingly being singled out for intense criticism and stigmatization by Watchtower, so the 2013 Survey asked all voters who consider themselves “apostates” (whether these were active Witnesses or not) how they felt about Jehovah’s Witnesses. They responded as follows...

ONLY IF you consider yourself to be an "apostate," what are your thoughts towards Jehovah's Witnesses? (Tick any that apply - max 8)																				
	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANONITED		INACTIVE		DFd / DAd		UNBAPTIZED		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
The Governing Body know what they are doing, and they should be held to account for their actions	47%	69	60%	6	25%	1	72%	364	68%	309	71%	134	47.5%	76	66.1%	440	69.0%	443	67.5%	883
I would like to see the Watch Tower Society drastically change its damaging policies	66%	96	70%	7	0%	0	59%	299	52%	233	58%	110	64.4%	103	60.4%	402	53.4%	343	57.0%	745
I have nothing against Jehovah's Witnesses, but I would like to see the Watch Tower Society dissolved	46%	67	50%	5	25%	1	60%	302	48%	216	57%	109	45.6%	73	56.3%	375	50.6%	325	53.5%	700
How dare they call me "mentally diseased"?	27%	39	10%	1	50%	2	57%	286	52%	237	45%	86	26.3%	42	49.2%	328	50.3%	323	49.8%	651
I love Jehovah's Witnesses, and I am concerned that they are being misled	60%	88	40%	4	100%	4	47%	239	35%	159	47%	89	60.0%	96	50.3%	335	38.6%	248	44.6%	583
If someone still wants to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses despite knowing the real truth, I am OK with this	34%	50	20%	2	0%	0	26%	134	17%	78	24%	45	32.5%	52	27.9%	186	19.2%	123	23.6%	309
I would rather not say what I think, it would be too offensive	5%	8	20%	2	0%	0	8%	43	12%	53	11%	20	6.3%	10	8.0%	53	11.4%	73	9.6%	126
I hate all Jehovah's Witnesses	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	2%	8	4%	18	4%	8	0.0%	0	1.2%	8	4.0%	26	2.6%	34
I would like to draw them off as followers after myself	1%	1	0%	0	0%	0	2%	9	3%	12	3%	6	0.6%	1	1.5%	10	2.8%	18	2.1%	28
Total voters:		146		10		4		506		452		190		160		666		642		1308

Interestingly, only 2.6% of all self-proclaimed apostate voters felt inclined to tick that they “hate” all Jehovah’s Witnesses. The majority seemed able to separate their feelings for Jehovah’s Witnesses from their indignation towards the organization itself, with 67.5% indicating that the Governing Body should be held to account for their actions. 44.6% of apostates went so far as to say that they *love* Jehovah’s Witnesses and are concerned for their welfare.

It was also interesting to see a common myth about apostates seeking to “draw off followers” utterly debunked, with only 2.1% of apostate voters admitting to having this aspiration.

## Blood transfusions

The ban on whole blood transfusions continues to be one of the teachings that Witnesses are arguably most notorious for in the minds of the public. This survey thus attempted to gauge just how seriously ordinary Witnesses view this ban, and whether opinions soften once leaving the faith.

The following question was therefore asked:

What is your personal stance on blood?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
I openly accept all forms of treatment with blood	5%	11	0%	0	21%	3	56%	340	80%	413	5.2%	14	40.4%	354	79.9%	413	55.1%	767
Secretly, I would accept treatment with blood if my life was at stake	43%	99	21%	5	14%	2	25%	152	6%	29	39.4%	106	29.5%	258	5.6%	29	20.6%	287
I refuse whole blood transfusions, but accept treatment with fractions	35%	82	54%	13	21%	3	9%	52	6%	30	36.4%	98	17.1%	150	5.8%	30	12.9%	180
I would rather not say	12%	28	17%	4	8%	1	7%	40	5%	26	12.3%	33	8.3%	73	5.0%	26	7.1%	99
I refuse blood in all forms	5%	11	8%	2	36%	5	3%	23	3%	19	6.7%	18	4.7%	41	3.7%	19	4.3%	60
Total voters:		231		19		14		607		517		269		876		517		1393

Here is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

What is your personal stance on blood?	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		TOTAL	
Secretly, I would accept treatment with blood if my life was at stake	39%	92	43%	12	17%	1	29%	146	4%	16	22.6%	267
I refuse whole blood transfusions, but accept treatment with fractions	29%	67	32%	9	17%	1	6%	28	2%	24	10.9%	129
I would rather not say	12%	27	11%	3	16%	1	11%	55	10%	39	10.6%	125
I refuse blood in all forms	11%	26	3%	1	33%	2	4%	23	4%	18	5.9%	70
I openly accept all forms of treatment with blood	9%	22	11%	3	17%	1	50%	257	76%	306	49.9%	589
Total voters:		234		28		6		509		403		1180

These results would not make for pleasant reading by Governing Body members. Nearly half (44.6%) of all active Witnesses taking part in our survey expressed that they would either openly or secretly accept treatment with blood depending on the severity of the situation. Only 43.1% of active Witnesses taking part made expressions that comply with the Society’s current stance on blood, namely that blood is to be refused entirely or only used as a treatment through fractions.

Predictably, the percentage of those accepting blood rises dramatically once Witnesses become inactive or leave the organization, to as high as 86% among disfellowshipped and disassociated ones (80% openly + 6% secretly).

If you are an active Witness reading these results, and you are confused as to why so many would disobey Watchtower’s instructions regarding the use of blood, please click on [this link](#) for more information on why the ban on medical treatment with blood has no justifiable basis.

## Charitable and non-profit status

Attention is increasingly being drawn to the non-profit/tax exempt status enjoyed by Watchtower and its legal entities in various countries. In some countries, such as the UK, the organization has even succeeded in gaining charitable status for itself, despite certain policies (such as the shunning of disassociated ones) breaching the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

With this in mind, voters were asked the following question...

### Do you believe the legal entities of Jehovah's Witnesses should enjoy charitable or non-profit status?

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
No	49%	104	50%	10	50%	6	81%	462	86%	431	81%	182	49.4%	120	71.3%	582	84.8%	613	77.6%	1195
Yes	51%	107	50%	10	50%	6	19%	111	14%	68	19%	42	50.6%	123	28.7%	234	15.2%	110	22.4%	344
Total voters:		211		20		12		573		499		224		243		816		723		1539

A significant majority were opposed to Watchtower claiming charitable or non-profit status, with 77.6% voting “no” to the question posed. Predictably, the numbers were more evenly balanced among active Witnesses, with an almost 50/50 split in opinion among that group of voters.

## Disfellowshipping (shunning)

Shunning is unquestionably one of the most damaging elements of the Jehovah’s Witness faith, and can lead to serious mental and emotional trauma for both the ones doing the shunning and those being shunned.



Amazingly, senior officials representing the organization will occasionally deny that the organization has a shunning policy, or seek to downplay it. The following question was therefore asked of disassociated/disfellowshipped ones...

**Are you shunned by any family members who are Jehovah's Witnesses?**

Yes	79%	420
No	21%	113
Total voters:		533

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Are you shunned by any family members who are Jehovah's Witnesses?**

Yes	76%	313
No	24%	98
Total voters:		411

It can be beyond reasonable doubt, despite the protestations of Watchtower through its representatives, that the overwhelming majority of those who leave Jehovah's Witnesses are shunned by their believing family members in obedience to the instructions they receive from Watchtower.

Largely out of fear of being shunned, a large number of inactive ones (so-called "faders") are ceasing to attend meetings rather than announce their disassociation. As with the previous year, the 2013 Survey attempted to gauge the opinions of such ones.

**Are you remaining "inactive" through fear of being shunned if you disassociate yourself?**

Yes	59%	375
No	39%	245
I'd rather not say	2%	12
Total voters:		632

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Are you remaining “inactive” through fear of being shunned if you disassociate yourself?**

Yes	61%	322
No	36%	192
I'd rather not say	3%	14
Total voters:		528

The majority indicated that they were remaining a Witness merely because of the repercussions threatened through shunning. When inactive ones were asked whether they would leave the organization if shunning were abolished, the answer was more emphatic...

**If shunning were abolished within the organization, would you leave?**

Yes	75%	446
No	8%	52
Unsure	17%	100
Total voters:		598

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

**If shunning were abolished within the organization, would you leave?**

Yes	84%	423
No	16%	81
Total voters:		504

The above answer indicates that the threat of shunning is fulfilling the function that it was intended for – namely to keep members bound to the organization against their will, and prevent them from speaking out and potentially sparking an exodus among their loved ones.

Another problem with shunning is that, as with so many rules imposed by Watchtower, Witnesses will often go to extremes in observing them in an effort to prove their spirituality. In the case of shunning, Witnesses will often inflict “pre-emptive shunning” on inactive ones who stop attending meetings, even though Watchtower does not expressly mandate this.

To gauge how bad this problem is, inactive ones were asked the following question...

**Do you experience “pre-emptive shunning” from active Witnesses, who view you as “bad association”?**

Yes	64%	394
Sometimes	19%	120
No	17%	103
Total voters:		617

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Do you experience “pre-emptive shunning” from active Witnesses, who view you as “bad association”?**

Yes	77%	395
No	23%	116
Total voters:		511

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option “sometimes” was added to the more recent survey*

The above answer indicates that a clear majority of inactive ones consider themselves to be shunned to varying degrees even though they have not technically left the religion. This is yet more evidence of the damaging effects of Watchtower practices. Witnesses are so eager to prove their loyalty that they will go above and beyond what is expected of them in shunning those who fall away.

## Elders

As already mentioned, a total of 28 serving elders took part in our survey, including three professed anointed ones claiming to serve in that position. The 25 non-anointed elders described their positions within the congregation as follows:

**In what capacity do you currently serve as an elder? (tick one)**

	%	#
Another congregational role	64%	16
Congregation Secretary	16%	4
Coordinator of the Body of Elders	16%	4
Service Overseer	4%	1
My work at Bethel precludes me from any of the above roles	0%	0
Traveling Overseer	0%	0
Total voters:		25

It is encouraging that the elders participating in our survey represent a good cross-section of congregational positions, with 36% of those voting serving on congregation “service committees.”

There was, however, one slight anomaly. The option for “traveling overseer” was not ticked in the above poll, even though a further answer on the Survey indicated that one district overseer (a now defunct position) participated...

**Do you serve in any of these other roles? (tick whichever apply)**

Regular Pioneer	40%	6
RBC volunteer	47%	7
Regular auxiliary pioneer	33%	5
Hospital Liaison Committee member	0%	0
Branch/Country Committee member	0%	0
Special Pioneer	0%	0
MTS/BSSB Graduate	13%	2
Bethel Volunteer	7%	1
Circuit Overseer	0%	0
Missionary	0%	0
District Overseer	7%	1
An assignment at world headquarters	0%	0
An assignment at a branch / country office	0%	0
Total voters:		15

The above poll also indicates that one bethelite and two MTS/BSSB graduates participated in the survey. If true, this would indicate that the Survey is becoming increasingly well-known throughout multiple levels of the organization.

Elders were also asked for their opinions on what motivates elders to serve...

**What factors do you feel motivate elders to serve? (tick any that apply)**

A desire to help and shepherd the flock	76%	19
A desire for prominence	44%	11
An ambition to succeed	48%	12
A desire to comfort those in distress	36%	9
A desire to teach from God's word in an expanded way	40%	10
A desire to fulfil people's expectations	44%	11
A desire to set a good example	36%	9
Total voters:		25

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

<b>What factors do you feel motivate elders to serve? (tick any that apply)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
A desire to help and shepherd the flock	69%	20
A desire for prominence	55%	16
An ambition to succeed	52%	15
A desire to comfort those in distress	45%	13
A desire to teach from God's word in an expanded way	38%	11
A desire to fulfil people's expectations	38%	11
A desire to set a good example	24%	7
Total voters:		29

As you can see, the majority of elders ticked that “a desire to help and shepherd the flock” plays a role, although this was by no means the only factor indicated. Nearly half of elders answering this question agreed that “a desire for prominence” and “an ambition to succeed” is also a consideration.

The survey also sought to garner the opinions of all voters regarding whether they consider elders to be truly appointed by Holy Spirit, as the Society’s publications repeatedly suggest. This was how the votes were cast across all six categories...

**Do you believe that elders are appointed by Holy Spirit?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
No	78%	176	73%	16	77%	10	97%	585	97%	499	94%	217	77.7%	202	90.9%	787	96.0%	716	93.2%	1503
Unsure	13%	29	18%	4	8%	1	2%	15	2%	11	4%	9	13.1%	34	5.7%	49	2.7%	20	4.3%	69
Yes	9%	20	9%	2	15%	2	1%	6	1%	6	2%	4	9.2%	24	3.5%	30	1.3%	10	2.5%	40
Total voters:		225		22		13		606		516		230		260		866		746		1612

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Do you believe that elders are appointed by Holy Spirit?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
No	84%	199	82%	23	80%	4	98%	504	99%	401	94%	200	95.3%	1331
Yes	16%	37	18%	5	20%	1	2%	8	1%	3	6%	12	4.7%	66
Total voters:		236		28		5		512		404		212		1397

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option “unsure” was added to the more recent survey*

An overwhelming majority of 93.2% of voters felt that God’s Holy Spirit does NOT appoint elders, in total contradiction of Watchtower’s claims. It is noticeable that the answer is more emphatic among those who have left the organization, or who are not yet baptized. 96% of leavers and non-JWs felt that elders aren’t “spirit-appointed” compared with 77.7% among active Witnesses.

## Freedom of expression

A common trait among cults is that they do not tolerate differences of opinion over their official teachings. For this reason, the following question was asked...

**Do you believe that you are free to express a difference of opinion within the Witness faith?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
No	87%	198	86%	18	69%	9	91%	548	88%	448	87%	198	86.2%	225	89.6%	773	87.7%	646	88.7%	1419
Yes	11%	24	10%	2	31%	4	8%	46	11%	57	11%	26	11.5%	30	8.8%	76	11.3%	83	9.9%	159
Unsure	2%	5	4%	1	0%	0	1%	8	1%	4	2%	4	2.3%	6	1.6%	14	1.1%	8	1.4%	22
Total voters:		227		21		13		602		509		228		261		863		737		1600

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Do you believe that you are free to express a difference of opinion within the Witness faith?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
No	89%	210	86%	24	100%	6	95%	487	92%	370	92%	194	92.3%	1291
Yes	11%	26	14%	4	0%	0	5%	28	8%	33	8%	17	7.7%	108
Total voters:		236		28		6		515		403		211		1399

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option “unsure” was added to the more recent survey*

As you can see, 88.7% of voters indicated that there is no freedom of expression in the Witness faith, with similar voting on this question across all six voter categories.

## Internet

The following question may seem superfluous given that most people who venture onto *JWsurvey.org* must have done some degree of research online about Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, this is not always the case. For example, a significant amount of traffic received by the website is from Witnesses typing “JW.org” into their search engine rather than their address bar. Therefore, we thought we would ask the question anyway to find out how familiar voters are with objective information about the organization...

### Have you ever researched Jehovah's Witnesses on the internet?

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
Yes	99%	214	95%	19	77%	10	99%	590	98%	498	96%	216	97.2%	243	98.3%	833	97.4%	714	97.9%	1547
No	1%	3	5%	1	23%	3	1%	7	2%	10	4%	9	2.8%	7	1.7%	14	2.6%	19	2.1%	33
Total voters:		217		20		13		597		508		225		250		847		733		1580

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

### Have you ever researched Jehovah's Witnesses on the internet?

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
Yes	97%	232	96%	27	100%	7	99%	501	98%	393	98%	213	98.2%	1373
No	3%	6	4%	1	0%	0	1%	4	2%	10	2%	4	1.8%	25
Total voters:		238		28		7		505		403		217		1398

The above results indicate that almost all voters claimed to have researched Witness beliefs online before taking the survey. In the case of active Witness voters, this represents a clear violation of Watchtower’s instructions to avoid unofficial websites on the internet. It is a shame that only seven active Witnesses took part in the survey who hadn’t done any previous research online, indicating that their sojourn onto *JWsurvey* was a “one-off” event. However, it is encouraging to think that it is at least *possible* for active Witnesses to stumble on websites that are critical of the organization, and it is conceivable that this number may increase as the Survey slowly becomes more widely known.

## Judicial Committees

A *judicial committee* is convened when evidence emerges that a Witness has committed a sin. Three elders are appointed to speak with the wrongdoer to determine what judicial measures should be taken against him or her. After reading scriptures and asking questions, elders will decide whether to reprove or disfellowship the person depending on whether the individual is deemed suitably

repentant. Sometimes people can be disfellowshipped *in absentia*, despite not having attended their judicial committee.

To find out how many voters had been through these committees, the following question was asked of them (excluding unbaptized ones)...

Have you ever been the subject of a judicial committee hearing?																		
	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
Yes	34%	81	21%	5	43%	6	45%	279	62%	321	33.2%	92	41.5%	371	61.6%	321	48.9%	692
No	65%	156	79%	19	57%	8	53%	326	29%	151	66.1%	183	56.9%	509	29.0%	151	46.6%	660
I was summoned, but didn't attend	1%	2	0%	0	0%	0	2%	12	9%	49	0.7%	2	1.6%	14	9.4%	49	4.5%	63
Total voters:		239		24		14		617		521		277		894		521		1415

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

Have you ever been the subject of a judicial committee hearing?													
	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		TOTAL		
No		60%	141	68%	19	67%	4	55%	281	67%	269	60.5%	714
Yes		40%	95	32%	9	33%	2	45%	228	33%	132	39.5%	466
Total voters:			236		28		6		509		401		1180

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option "I was summoned but didn't attend" was added to the more recent survey*

Whereas last year the majority of voters claimed to have never been the subject of a judicial committee hearing, this year the numbers were more evenly balanced.

It is curious that as many as 29% of those disfellowshipped/disassociated claimed to never have been the subject of a judicial committee hearing (despite now having the option to tick "I was summoned, but didn't attend") but this could be because they found out they had been disassociated/disfellowshipped *in absentia* without any invitation to a hearing being received. This would be against Watchtower policy, but it is not unheard of for elders to act in such a manner.



In the elder category, two questions were posed to find out how elders feel about the decisions reached on judicial committees. These were as follows:

**Have you ever served on a judicial committee?**

Yes	95%	21
No	5%	1
Total voters:		22

**Have you ever regretted a decision that you have arrived at on a judicial committee?**

Yes	76%	16
No	24%	5
Total voters:		21

It is remarkable to consider that the majority of elders taking part in our survey regretted decisions reached during judicial committee hearings, with an incredible 76% answering “yes” to the second question (up from 58% the previous year). These are hearings that can have life-changing consequences due to the heavy sanction of shunning imposed on those who are disfellowshipped. The fact that some elders feel they may have reached a wrong decision, especially if this decision was to disfellowship, is highly disturbing.

## Memorial

The question was asked of inactive ones:

**Do you still attend the annual memorial?**

No	71%	445
Yes	19%	117
Sometimes	10%	62
Total voters:		624

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

<b>Do you still attend the annual memorial?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
No	64%	332
Yes	22%	115
Sometimes	14%	73

It is noteworthy that, as with the previous year, the majority of inactive ones polled no longer attend the memorial. Witnesses consider this event extremely important. They view it as a Christian event not to be missed, and the only way to truly observe Christ's death. The fact that so many inactive Witnesses (despite knowing all about the event and its meaning) choose to no longer attend indicates that these ones no longer recognize it as having any real significance other than to reinforce Watchtower dogma.

## Moving on

To varying degrees, both inactive ones and disfellowshipped/disassociated persons can be considered as having left the Witness organization. Many also manage to escape the influence of the organization before getting baptized. Therefore a number of questions were asked of such ones to determine (1) what the current beliefs of these people are, and (2) whether they feel happier or more content now than when they were affiliated with the Witnesses.

All inactive, disfellowshipped/disassociated and non-baptized voters were asked...

### How would you describe your current beliefs? (Choose one)

	Inactive		DF'd/DA'd		Non-baptized		TOTAL	
I consider myself Christian, but I am not attached to a church	31%	193	26%	138	18%	43	26.8%	374
I am agnostic	27%	167	24%	128	24%	57	25.2%	352
I am an atheist	20%	123	25%	131	31%	72	23.3%	326
I don't believe in anything	12%	75	9%	47	7%	17	9.9%	139
I share the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses	5%	31	2%	17	5%	11	4.2%	59
I consider myself Christian and I regularly attend church	4%	26	8%	42	12%	28	6.9%	96
I am now a member of a non-Christian faith	1%	14	6%	31	3%	7	3.7%	52
Total voters:		629		534		235		1398

As previously mentioned, a common accusation leveled at so-called "apostates" (those who leave the organization) is that these ones try to "draw off followers after themselves," which implies some sort of evangelism on their part. However, the above results indicate that a combined 58.4% of those who escape JW indoctrination are either atheist, agnostic or do not profess to believe anything – hence they have no teachings or revelations to try to impose on others.

A total of 33.7% professed to be of the Christian persuasion, with a further 3.7% claiming to now follow a non-Christian faith. The above results show that those who leave the organization branch out into a diverse array of different beliefs (a small minority even clinging to JW beliefs), and therefore such ones cannot be stereotyped as all falling under any particular religious or atheistic persuasion.

The same voter categories were also asked the following question...

**How would you describe your prospects after you die?**

	Inactive		DF'd/DA'd		Non-baptized		TOTAL	
I don't entertain any hope in particular	72%	451	66%	348	67%	156	<b>69.0%</b>	<b>955</b>
I am going to heaven	9%	57	16%	86	14%	33	<b>12.7%</b>	<b>176</b>
I will be resurrected on the Earth	8%	50	5%	25	6%	15	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>90</b>
I will be reincarnated	5%	34	8%	44	5%	11	<b>6.4%</b>	<b>89</b>
I would rather not say	5%	31	4%	20	7%	16	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>67</b>
I will live forever, but only if I am an active JW	1%	3	1%	3	1%	2	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>8</b>
Total voters:		626		526		233		<b>1385</b>

More than two thirds of voters for this question claimed to entertain no particular hope of an "afterlife," indicating a lack of religious conviction. As with the previous question, at least a small number of voters indicated that they continue to cling to JW beliefs despite not officially being Witnesses. This proves that even Ex-JWs (and non-baptized ones) can remain under the spell of Watchtower indoctrination, and thus in need of assistance.

To find out whether former JW's (disfellowshipped/disassociated ones) consider themselves to be *happier* than they were as Witnesses, the following question was asked...

**Are you happier since leaving Jehovah's Witnesses?**

Yes	95%	505
No	5%	27
Total voters:		532

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Are you happier since leaving Jehovah's Witnesses?**

Yes	96%	397
No	4%	16
Total voters:		413

It goes without saying that the overwhelming majority of voters who have left the organization now consider themselves happier. The small number who felt otherwise (27 voters) corresponds quite closely with the number of disfellowshipped/disassociated in a previous question who said they still share the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses (17).

As mentioned, not all who become disfellowshipped from the organization are able to learn the real truth about its teachings and history during their exile. Mind control can still exert a powerful

influence even when one is undergoing shunning, hence the reason why many disfellowshipped ones strive to be “reinstated.” (see the “Reinstatement” section)

Another question was asked of disfellowshipped/disassociated ones...

**Would you recommend others to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?**

No	95%	506
Yes	2%	11
Unsure	3%	17
Total voters:		534

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Would you recommend others to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses?**

No	98%	403
Yes	2%	9
Total voters:		412

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option “unsure” was added to the more recent survey*

Although this question was answered slightly less emphatically than the previous year, disfellowshipped/disassociated voters were still almost unanimous in dissuading others from joining the religion.

## Organization

Recognizing that Jehovah’s Witnesses represent God’s spirit-directed organization is a fundamental tenet of the Witness faith. One of the two baptismal questions to which all newly-dedicated Witnesses should answer a loud and affirmative “yes” is worded as follows:

*“Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in association with God’s spirit-directed organization?”*

It was therefore felt that it would be worthwhile to find out just how many taking our Survey agree that the organization is truly directed by God’s spirit.

**Do you believe that Jehovah's Witnesses represent God's spirit-directed organization?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized		ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL	
No	61%	137	52%	11	31%	4	91%	549	94%	485	87%	202	58.7%	152	81.3%	701	92.0%	687	86.3%	1388
Yes	15%	35	19%	4	54%	7	3%	16	2%	11	1%	4	17.8%	46	7.2%	62	2.0%	15	4.8%	77
Unsure	24%	53	29%	6	15%	2	6%	38	4%	18	12%	27	23.6%	61	11.5%	99	6.0%	45	8.9%	144
Total voters:		225		21		13		603		514		233		259		862		747		1609

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

<b>Do you believe that Jehovah's Witnesses represent God's spirit-directed organization?</b>	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
No	68%	157	64%	18	37%	3	96%	490	98%	400	89%	194	90.1%	1262
Yes	32%	73	36%	10	63%	5	4%	18	2%	9	11%	23	9.9%	138
Total voters:		230		28		8		508		409		217		1400

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option "unsure" was added to the more recent survey*

As you can see, 86.3% of voters answered in the negative - that the organization is NOT spirit-directed. It is also interesting to note that the ratio of those voting "no" is considerably higher among those who have left the organization, or who are not yet baptized. Indeed, voters from the "anointed" category voted the other way, with the majority indicating their belief that God directs the organization.

# Reform

Some Jehovah’s Witnesses understand that the organization is flawed but believe it is undergoing a cleansing or refining process, and will be somehow reformed by God before Armageddon. There are even some former Witnesses of a Christian persuasion who evangelize such an idea. To find out how many voters entertain such hopes for the Society, we asked the following question...

**Do you believe that the Watch Tower Society can (or should) be reformed?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DFd / DA'd		Non-baptized	ACTIVE JW's		Baptized JW's		Former / Non-JW's		TOTAL		
The Society shouldn't be reformed, it should be dissolved entirely	21%	46	25%	5	33%	4	56%	325	64%	322	53%	119	22.4%	55	45.7%	380	60.4%	441	52.6%	821
The Society should undergo reform, but I cannot see it happening	61%	130	65%	13	25%	3	43%	249	33%	165	43%	97	59.3%	146	47.5%	395	35.9%	262	42.1%	657
Yes, I believe there is a realistic hope of the Society undergoing major reform	10%	22	5%	1	42%	5	2%	9	3%	17	2%	4	11.4%	28	4.5%	37	2.9%	21	3.7%	58
No, the Society doesn't need to reform in any way	8%	16	5%	1	0%	0	0	2	0	3	2%	3	6.9%	17	2.3%	19	0.8%	6	1.6%	25
Total voters:		214		20		12		585		507		223		246		831		730		1561

And this is how the same question\* was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Do you believe that the Watch Tower Society can (or should) be reformed?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
The Society should undergo reform, but I cannot see it happening	75%	178	75%	21	86%	6	92%	454	89%	357	83%	174	86.4%	1190
Yes, I believe there is a realistic hope of the Society undergoing major reform	16%	39	14%	4	14%	1	5%	26	8%	30	8%	16	8.4%	116
No, the Society doesn't need to reform in any way	9%	21	11%	3	0%	0	3%	15	3%	13	9%	19	5.2%	71
Total voters:		238		28		7		495		400		209		1377

*\*The only difference between the two questions was that the option "The Society shouldn't be reformed, it should be dissolved entirely" was added to the more recent survey*

More than half of all voters clicked on the new option to indicate they would prefer to see the organization dissolved entirely, with a further 42.1% feeling that, even if the organization *should* be reformed, there is little chance of this happening.

Once again, answers favorable to Watchtower were more frequent among active Witness voters, with as many as 6.9% indicating that the organization doesn't require any kind of reform.

# Reinstatement

On the subject of reinstatement, the following question was asked of disfellowshipped ones...

**Would you seek reinstatement as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?**

No	95%	505
Yes	5%	27
Total voters:		532

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

<b>Would you seek reinstatement as one of Jehovah's Witnesses?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
No	96%	394
Yes	4%	18
Total voters:		412

As you can see, in both surveys the answer was overwhelmingly negative to the question posed.

To get a feel for whether any voters have at any point deliberately sought reinstatement simply to gain access to friends and family as a result of the shunning policy, the following question was added to the 2013 Survey...

**Have you ever been REINSTATED into the organization just so that you could have contact with your family again, and for no other reason?**

	ACTIVE	ELDERS	ANOINTE D	INACTIVE	DFd / DA	ACTIVE JWs	Baptized JWs	Former / Non-JWs	TOTAL
No	65% 156	95% 20	100% 14	88% 517	89% 464	69.9% 190	82.1% 707	89.4% 464	84.9% 1171
Yes	34% 81	5% 1	0% 0	12% 72	11% 55	30.1% 82	17.9% 154	10.6% 55	15.1% 209
Total voters:	227	21	14	589	519	272	861	519	1380

Though the majority of voters answered in the negative, it is still noteworthy that as many as 15.1% of those answering this question (209 individuals) admitted to returning to the Witness faith simply as a result of having been blackmailed into doing so.

Sincere Witnesses must ask themselves whether there is any merit in an organization counting among its members those who are there through force rather than by choice.

# Suicide

Jehovah’s Witnesses pride themselves on being a “happy people,” and living in a “spiritual paradise” where all emotional and spiritual needs are cared for. Despite this, reports are often heard of Jehovah’s Witnesses suffering from depression or even committing suicide. To find out how bad the problem of suicide is within the organization, the following question was asked:

**Have you ever known or heard of one of Jehovah's Witnesses committing or attempting suicide?**

	ACTIVE	ELDERS	ANOINTED	INACTIVE	DFd / DA'd	Non-baptized	ACTIVE JW's	Baptized JW's	Former / Non-JW's	TOTAL
Yes	80% 176	95% 19	77% 10	89% 530	89% 456	75% 168	80.7% 205	86.7% 735	84.8% 624	85.8% 1359
No	20% 45	5% 1	23% 3	11% 64	11% 55	25% 57	19.3% 49	13.3% 113	15.2% 112	14.2% 225
Total voters:	221	20	13	594	511	225	254	848	736	1584

And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

**Have you ever known or heard of one of Jehovah's Witnesses committing or attempting suicide?**

	ACTIVE		ELDERS		ANOINTED		INACTIVE		DF/DA'd		UNBAP.		TOTAL	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Yes	81%	193	75%	21	100%	7	85%	434	88%	357	62%	133	81.7%	1145
No	19%	44	25%	7	0%	0	15%	75	12%	49	38%	81	18.3%	256
Total voters:		237		28		7		509		406		214		1401

In both surveys the overwhelming majority of voters indicated that they had indeed heard of Jehovah’s Witnesses committing or attempting suicide. I will not go into the specific reasons why this may be, because I am no expert on mental health or psychology. However, few would deny that the above statistics are disturbing for a religion that prides itself on being God’s “happy people.”

To highlight one possible reason why suicides may be such a problem, we decided to find out whether those who fall away from attending meetings face any reprisals from spouses or other family members. This question was put to all “inactive” ones...

**Have you experienced family/marital problems through your decision to become inactive?**

Yes	62%	381
No	38%	235
Total voters:		616



And this is how the same question was answered the previous year (2012)...

<b>Have you experienced family/marital problems through your decision to become inactive?</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>
Yes	60%	304
No	40%	204
Total voters:		508

Though I left the organization in December 2013 I can remember only too well what life was like as an “inactive” one, or fader. I experienced my own problems with JW family members expressing dismay at my failure to attend meetings, and putting pressure on me to resume my allegiance to the organization. So I can well understand why the majority of inactive voters voted in the way they did. If anything, I am surprised the “yes” percentage isn’t higher for both surveys.

I believe this sort of pressure is encouraged by the polarizing “you’re either for us or against us” rhetoric in JW literature, and the way in which Witnesses are trained to think of spiritually floundering family members as being poised for destruction at Armageddon.

This, in turn, heaps enormous mental pressure on those who want to leave the organization, and I am not surprised that some become severely depressed if they are being stigmatized and pressured to such a degree. For this and many reasons, I believe the writers of Watchtower literature over the decades have much to answer for.

## Watchtower beliefs/practices disagreed with

Which of the following beliefs/practices of Jehovah's Witnesses do you DISAGREE with (if any)?	ACTIVE 209 total voters		ELDERS 21 total voters		ANointed 14 total voters		INACTIVE 592 total voters		DFd / DAd 513 total voters		NON-BAPTIZED 224 total voters		ACTIVE JWs 244 total voters		BAPTIZED JWs 836 total voters		FORMER/Non-JWs 737 total voters		TOTAL 1,573 total voters	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
	Young people are not to pursue higher education	92%	193	90%	19	79%	11	97%	577	97%	498	96%	216	91.4%	223	95.7%	800	97%	714	96.2%
Paedophilia: treated as a judicial matter rather than a crime	89%	187	90%	19	57%	8	95%	563	96%	492	93%	208	87.7%	214	92.9%	777	95%	700	93.9%	1477
Outside literature or any other form of information is NOT to be consulted when researching bible teachings, ONLY Watchtower publications are to be recommended.	86%	180	81%	17	57%	8	96%	567	96%	491	93%	208	84.0%	205	92.3%	772	95%	699	93.5%	1471
Witnesses who leave are to be shunned by family members if they are old enough to leave home	85%	177	81%	17	50%	7	95%	563	96%	495	94%	210	82.4%	201	91.4%	764	96%	705	93.4%	1469
Armageddon is imminent, and only Jehovah's Witnesses will survive	83%	173	81%	17	50%	7	95%	562	95%	488	94%	211	80.7%	197	90.8%	759	95%	699	92.7%	1458
Apostates are "mentally diseased"	82%	172	86%	18	64%	9	95%	560	95%	487	94%	210	81.6%	199	90.8%	759	95%	697	92.6%	1456
Sisters who are beaten by their husbands are not entitled to a divorce. They must remain married to their abuser (or present evidence of adultery for a divorce) if they wish to remain in the faith.	81%	170	81%	17	71%	10	95%	562	95%	489	92%	207	80.7%	197	90.8%	759	94%	696	92.5%	1455
Paedophiles: two witnesses required to convince elders of molestation	87%	182	81%	17	71%	10	93%	552	94%	483	94%	210	85.7%	209	91.0%	761	94%	693	92.4%	1454
Young people should not be involved in extra curricular sports	83%	173	81%	17	50%	7	94%	558	95%	486	94%	211	80.7%	197	90.3%	755	95%	697	92.3%	1452
The Governing Body is God's sole channel of communication	81%	169	81%	17	50%	7	93%	553	95%	486	92%	207	79.1%	193	89.2%	746	94%	693	91.5%	1439
Beards are frowned upon, brothers with beards not used to give convention items	81%	170	86%	18	64%	9	93%	551	93%	479	92%	206	80.7%	197	89.5%	748	93%	685	91.1%	1433
Paedophiles: not automatically prohibited from becoming an elder or ministerial servant in the future	80%	168	81%	17	57%	8	92%	545	94%	482	90%	201	79.1%	193	88.3%	738	93%	683	90.3%	1421
Past mistakes and future refinements are due to "increasing light" from God's holy spirit	79%	166	81%	17	50%	7	90%	535	93%	477	90%	201	77.9%	190	86.7%	725	92%	678	89.2%	1403
Bible prophecy: Christ appointed Rutherford and his associates as his "Faithful and Discreet Slave" over his "domestics" in 1919	81%	169	90%	19	29%	4	90%	535	92%	470	91%	204	78.7%	192	87.0%	727	91%	674	89.1%	1401
Paedophiles: names kept confidential from the congregation unless the Branch Office decides otherwise (see Oct 1st 2012 B.O.E. letter)	79%	165	76%	16	57%	8	90%	535	93%	475	89%	199	77.5%	189	86.6%	724	91%	674	88.9%	1398
Disfellowshipped teenagers are comparable to Nadab and Abihu, the Israelite priests who were struck dead by Jehovah for offering illegitimate fire on behalf of the entire congregation	75%	156	71%	15	50%	7	90%	533	92%	473	92%	205	73.0%	178	85.0%	711	92%	678	88.3%	1389
The Governing Body is the Faithful and Discreet Slave	78%	163	76%	16	43%	6	90%	534	91%	467	90%	201	75.8%	185	86.0%	719	91%	668	88.2%	1387
The Society should dictate what goes on in the bedroom between a married couple	83%	174	76%	16	64%	9	89%	527	89%	456	83%	187	81.6%	199	86.8%	726	87%	643	87.0%	1369
Celebrating birthdays is wrong	62%	129	62%	13	36%	5	91%	540	92%	472	90%	201	60.2%	147	82.2%	687	91%	673	86.5%	1360
Giving no minimum age for baptism, which leads to many in their early teens (or even younger) getting baptized oblivious to the full ramifications of this decision.	71%	149	71%	15	43%	6	90%	531	90%	461	88%	197	69.7%	170	83.9%	701	89%	658	86.4%	1359



## Analysis of beliefs/practices question

As with previous Surveys, the final question in our 2013 survey offered voters the opportunity to indicate which JW beliefs or practices they most disagree with. This question serves as an excellent barometer for finding out which issues are of utmost concern to awakened Witnesses and former members. There is arguably no other way of getting this kind of data from such a large number of current and former Witnesses.

The statistics from this question have been compiled and produced on the previous two pages in descending order of the most contentious. Perhaps the most revealing statistic is found at the bottom of the list, where we see that only **266** voters out of **1,573** (16.9% of voters on this question) were able to indicate their agreement with ALL teachings and practices in Watchtower publications.<sup>3</sup>

Remarkably, if you focus purely on active Witnesses, the percentage lowers to just 13.9% of voters indicating total loyalty!

As tempting as it would be to go into detailed analysis of all the issues of contention in this list, I would prefer to briefly discuss the top four most contentious beliefs/practices. Surprisingly there has been a slight shake-up in the top three, which were unchanged between the 2012 and 2011 Surveys. Whereas higher education, shunning and child abuse (specifically the two witness rule) were ranked at the top of the list for the last two Surveys, an increase in options has caused different issues to be brought to the fore by voters.

### Higher Education

The stigmatization of higher education in Society publications continues to be the most contentious belief/practice since the inception of our Global Survey. Watchtower publications frequently portray higher education as a “temptation” to be avoided, and encourage young Witnesses to forsake their careers in order to volunteer their time as regular pioneers until the system’s end. The argument is that, with Armageddon so imminent, it is more important to please God by pursuing “kingdom interests” than to plan for one’s future – including the needs of a potential family.

What few young Witnesses realize is that Armageddon is no more “imminent” now than it was in the 1940s (if anything, the world has improved since then) and by skipping college to go straight into full-time evangelizing they are not only jeopardizing their own future but making life difficult for their future spouse or children should they choose to start a family. Watchtower’s selfish exploitation of the potential of young people is understandably something that meets with almost unanimous contempt among JWsurvey voters.

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<sup>3</sup> Admittedly this was a leap in numbers since last year’s survey, where **45** voters out of **1,384** (3.3% of voters on this question) indicated their total loyalty to Watchtower. But it must be pointed out that, due to the way the Survey was presented, it was easy for voters to mistakenly click on this option indiscriminately when clicking through other options. This glitch has been addressed in the 2014 Survey, in which it will be harder for voters who are not in total agreement with Watchtower to indicate otherwise.

## Child Abuse

In last year's survey, the "two witness" policy that governs child abuse was ranked in third place, just as it was the year before in our inaugural 2011 Survey. In 2013 the issue of child abuse has moved up to second place – but with a different aspect in mind. This year 93.9% of voters expressed concern over the more general idea of pedophilia being “treated as a judicial matter rather than a crime.”

As JWsurvey has repeatedly emphasized when reporting on instances of child abuse in the organization, the Governing Body urgently needs to “let the bible judge sin, let the law judge crime.” Even though the 2010 “Shepherd Book” (secret elder’s manual) emphatically states that child abuse is to be considered as a crime, the directions to elders that follow directly undermine this statement and render it meaningless.

If Watchtower truly considered child abuse to be a crime, they would notify the police in *each and every instance* where an accusation of molestation is made rather than taking the position that this is first-and-foremost an issue for the branch office to deal with. The longer the organization refuses to take child abuse seriously as a crime by reporting it immediately (as it would in the case of murder or theft) regardless of local laws, the longer it will continue to reap the consequences of its negligence through adverse and costly lawsuits and increasingly negative media scrutiny.

And all the while, the children of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who the Governing Body has a self-avowed duty to protect, continue to suffer.

## Information control

In our 2012 Survey, hovering in fifth place just outside the top four most contentious beliefs/practices was the statement “Outside literature or any form of information is NOT to be consulted when researching bible teachings, ONLY Watchtower publications are to be recommended.” It seems consternation at this idea has grown among JWsurvey voters since then, because in our 2013 Survey it has edged upwards two places into third place.

In his well-known “BITE model,” cult expert Steven Hassan identifies *information control* as a key ingredient of undue influence. Hassan describes how cults tend to “minimize or discourage access to non-cult sources of information,” and enforce strict censorship of “Internet, TV, radio, books, articles, newspapers, magazines, other media” or any form of “critical information” to manipulate and coerce cult members.

Clearly JWsurvey voters are tiring of seeing this tactic being used so openly by Watchtower, especially with so many paying the price as their loved ones continue to be indoctrinated before their very eyes.

# Shunning

With most voters on our survey either disfellowshipped, disassociated or inactive, it is no surprise that shunning has figured so prominently on the list of contended beliefs/practices for the past three years. Shunning is a cruel practice that, as already mentioned, is effectively a tool used by the organization to wield control over its members. It is a threat that looms over any Witness who begins to entertain thoughts that this might not be God's organization after all.

One of the most frustrating things about the shunning of family members is that it is actually unscriptural, despite the Society repeatedly referring to scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 5:11 in its defense. A 1947 *Awake!* article, published before the disfellowshipping arrangement was introduced in 1952, even described the practice as "altogether foreign to biblical teachings" - and it isn't hard to see why.

Simply put, the Apostle Paul's recommendations for shunning did not expressly call for the shunning of family members. Even Watchtower publications admit that a degree of mercy is called for in the extent to which family members should be shunned. For example, a disfellowshipped husband is not to be shunned by his wife or children. However, the Society cunningly knows just where to draw the line in exploiting shunning to its advantage, turning it into a barbed-wire fence to prevent awakened Witnesses escaping.

# A final word

Though our Survey is by no means perfect, it does offer an intriguing glimpse into the collective conscience of a burgeoning community of those who have awakened from Watchtower indoctrination.

Perhaps the main criticism that can be aimed at our annual Survey is that it is SO emphatic in its condemnation of Watchtower policies that it may appear rigged or somehow biased, but there has been no tinkering with the numbers (I invite anyone to keep track of the votes as they come in), and the questions give equal opportunity for voters to support the Society if they so wish. There can be no doubt that there are millions of loyal followers of the Society around the world, but if these fail to register their loyalty because the Society has banned them from straying beyond the confines of JW.org, this is the Society's problem and not ours.

We would gladly welcome ALL Jehovah's Witnesses to take part in our Survey, even if this makes the results more weighted on the Society's side – but we know full well the Society would never allow this. Though it would prove the Society has millions of indoctrinated followers, it would also likely show that there are potentially thousands who are tethered to the faith solely through fear of reprisals if they make their true beliefs known. After all, this is not a religion – it is a mental prison.

I am of the firm belief that, even if the Survey results continue to be overwhelmingly condemnatory of the Society, it should still continue as a vehicle for allowing the “silent majority” to make their voices heard year after year. Without the survey one can only say, “there are many of us, that's all I can say.” With the survey one can go one better and say “there are at least 1,485<sup>4</sup> of us who object to some or all of the Society's teachings, and many of those are still trapped inside.”

In short, the number of voters may be small, particularly in these early days – but at least it is a number, and a number that is slowly growing.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the total number of voters (1,751) minus the 266 who indicated that they agree with all Watchtower teachings and practices in the final survey question.