

# Adventist Youth: Connected and Disconnected



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# Why Young People?

**“In the children who were brought in contact with Him, Jesus saw the men and women who should be heirs of His grace and subjects of His kingdom, and some of whom would become martyrs for His sake. He knew that these children would listen to Him and accept Him as their Redeemer far more readily than would grown-up people, many of whom were the worldly-wise and hardhearted. In teaching, He came down to their level. He, the Majesty of heaven, answered their questions and simplified His important lessons to meet their childish understanding.**

**He planted in their minds the seeds of truth, which in after years would spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life”**

**(EGW, MH, 42.3)**

# Several Samples

- *21<sup>st</sup> Century Connection Study* (21<sup>st</sup> ccs) – Dr. Douglas Jacobs (SAU) & team; 2012-2013; n=1,153 (SAU, PUC, OU); mean age=28; 77% 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> generations of SDAs; more than 50% were married
- *Church Members' Survey, SAD*, (SAD) – Dr. Berndt Dietrich Wolter & team, 2013, ( n=4,367), YA n=2,248: <15-20; 21-35 age groups
- *Hope Channel Student Survey* (HCS) – Dr. Duane McBride & team, 2012 (AU), n=453, 57% never married
- *Beyond Beliefs Study* (BBs), Dr. Jan A. and Leanne Sigvarsten, Paul B. Petersen (AU), 2012, n=37, mean age 20, majority were single

# Connected and Disconnected

- **Personal devotional life**
- **SDA doctrines**
- **Lifestyle, SDA standards,  
and media**
- **Church factor**
- **Commitment**

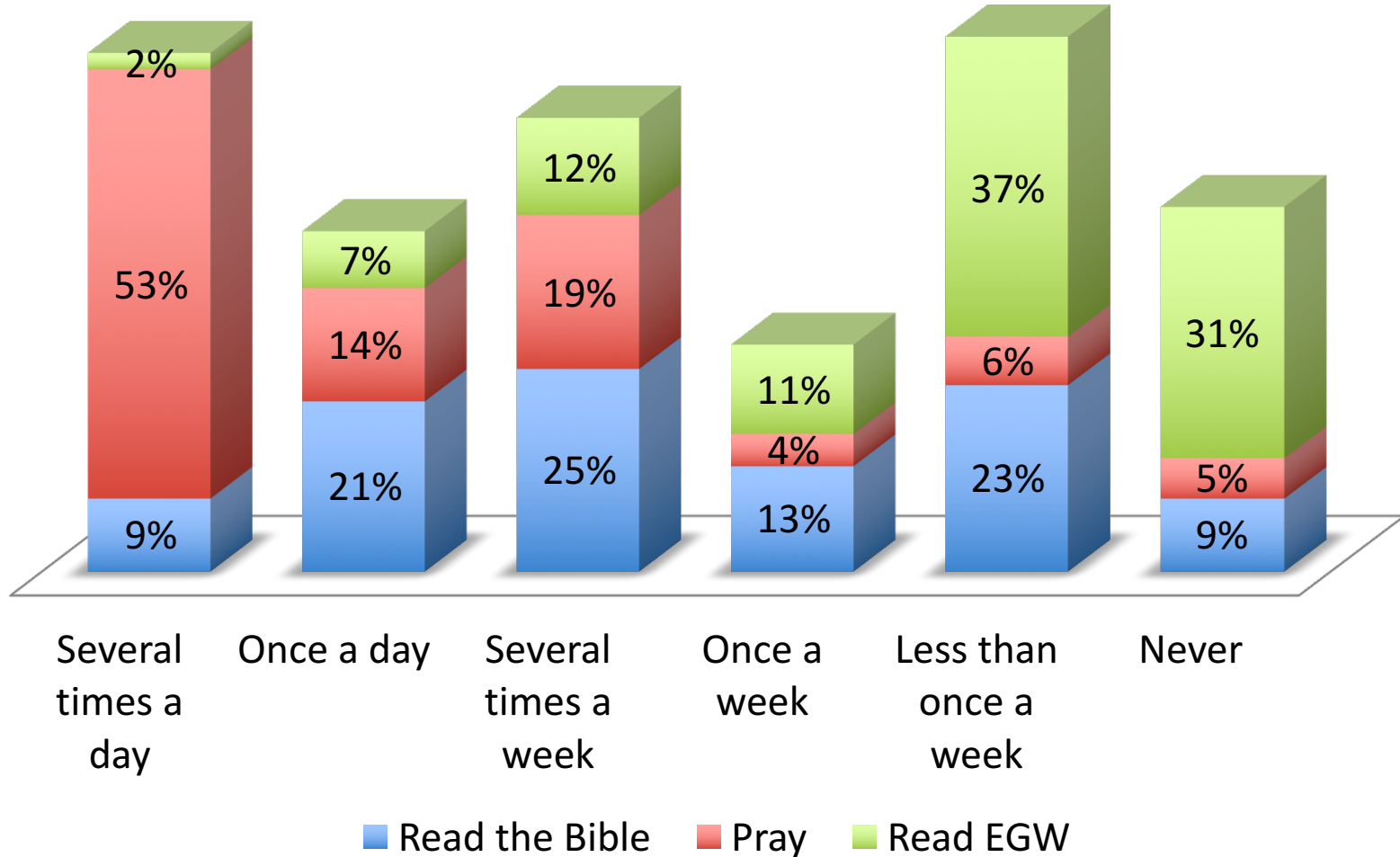
# **Personal Devotional Life**

21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

**There is a significant correlation between strong devotional life and acceptance of SDA doctrines and Adventist lifestyle**

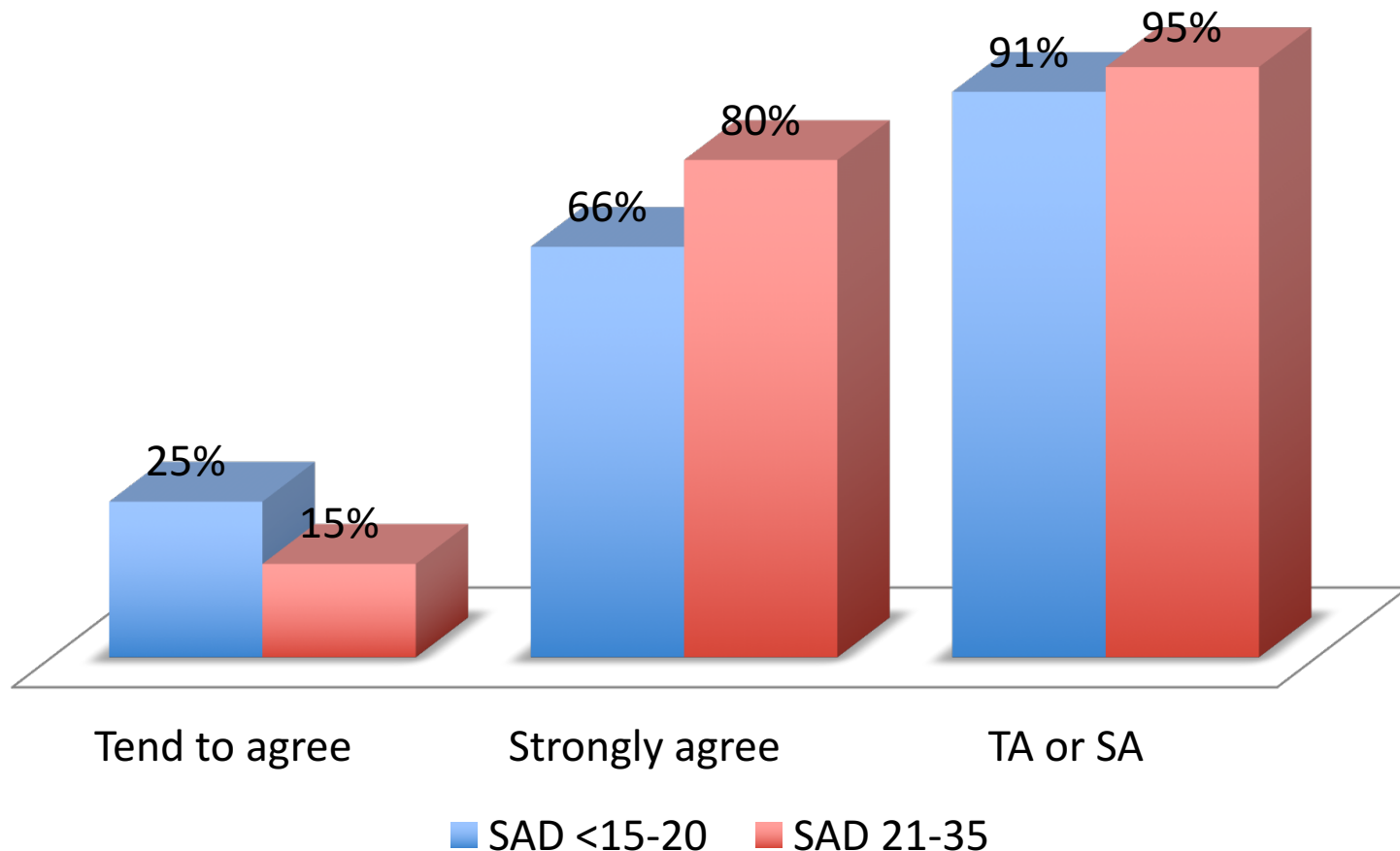
**Is there a problem with devotional life?**

# Devotional Life (21<sup>st</sup> CCS)



# It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer = 91%/95%

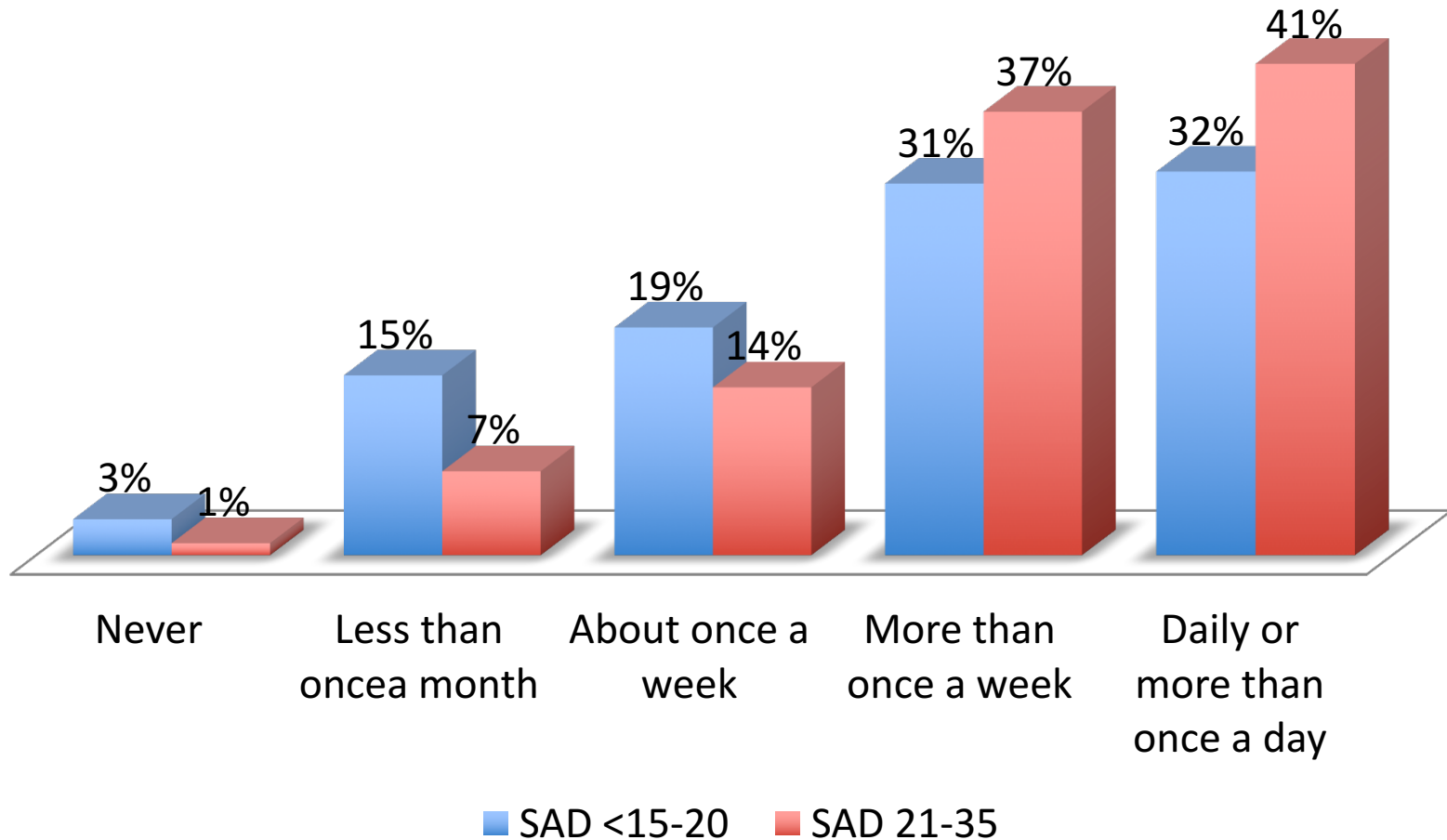
(SAD, Q. 3.55)





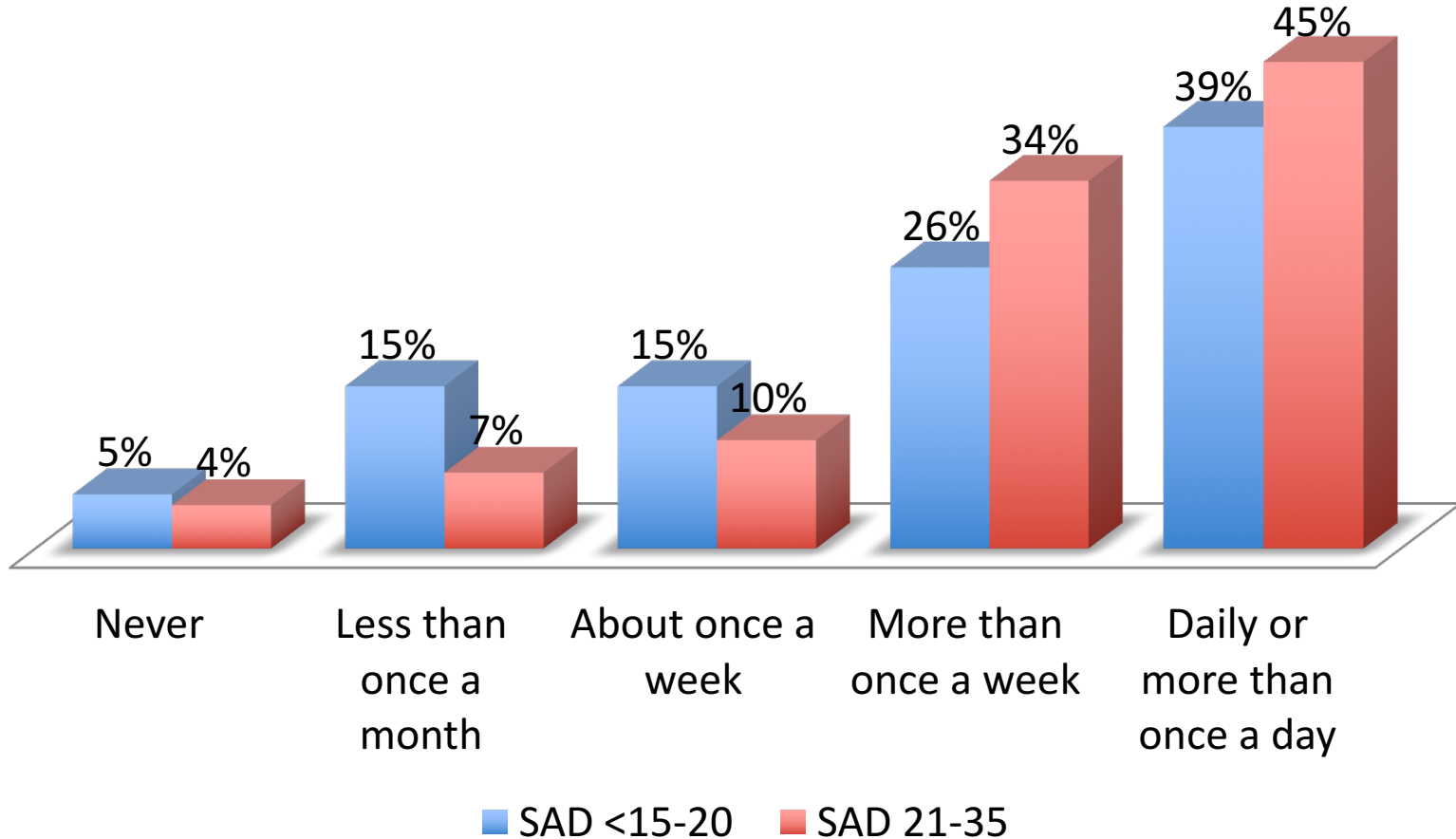
# How often do you read the Bible?

(SAD, Q.3.71) (Daily or more = 32%/41%)



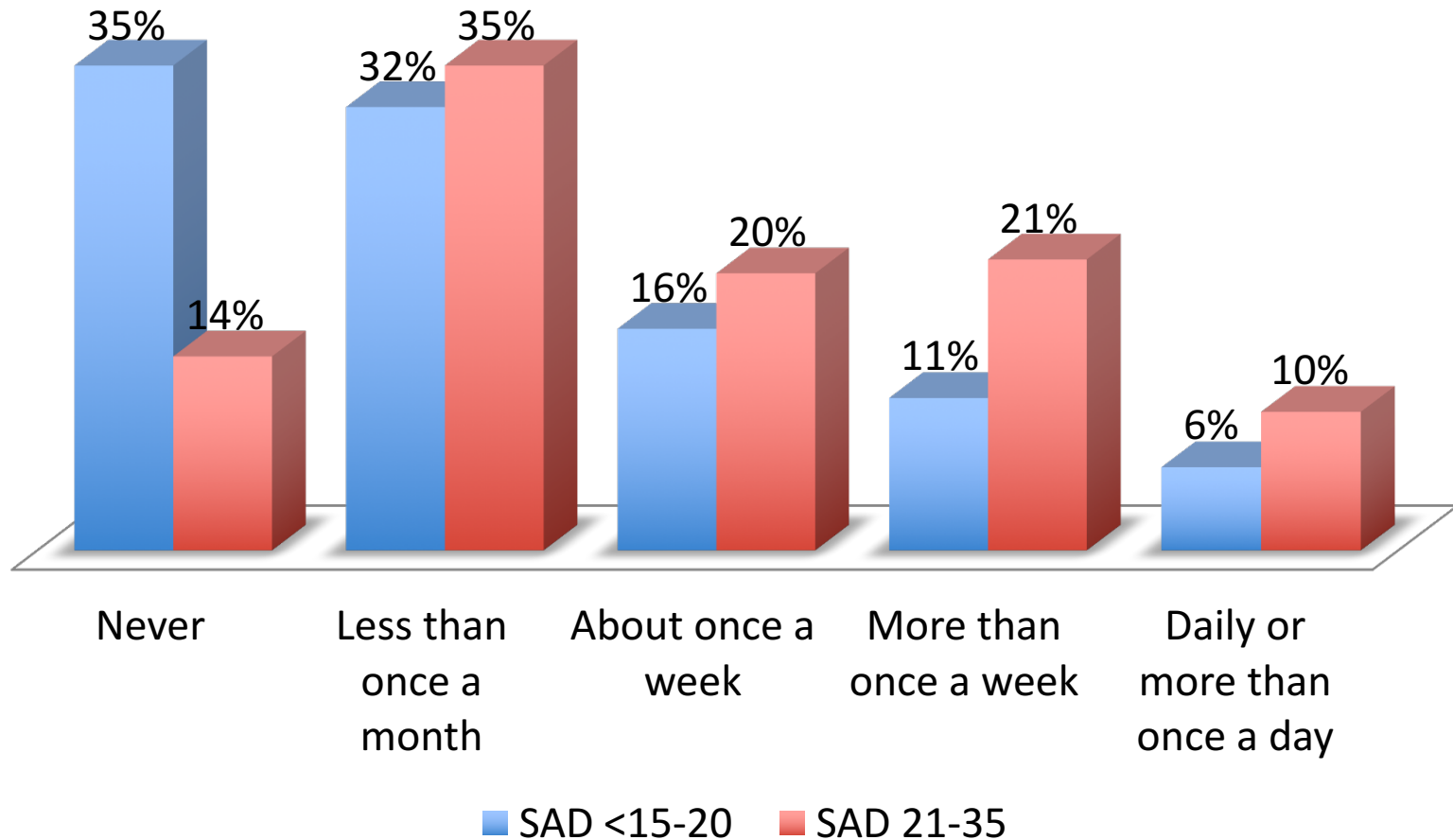
# How often do you have personal devotions?

(SAD, Q.3.71, Daily or more=39%/45%)



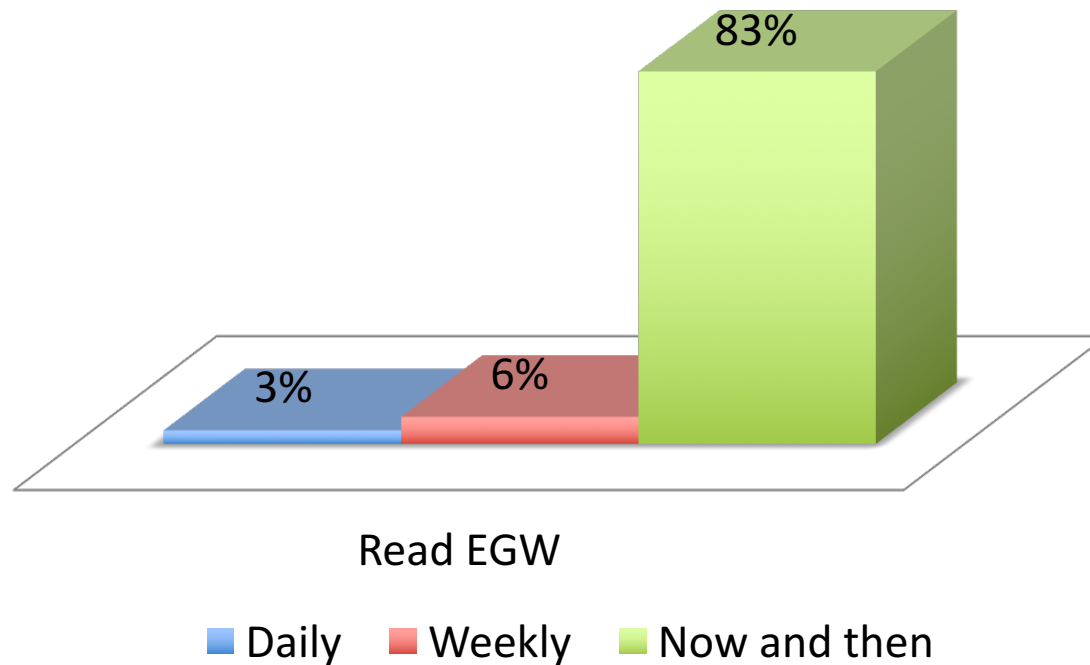
# How often do you read EGW?

(SAD, Q.3.71)



# How often do you read EGW?

(BBs)



# SDA Doctrines

21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

## **Overall, there is a strong support for SDA doctrines**

- 85% said that the Adventist beliefs give them hope and comfort
- 88% said that even if they disagree with church politics, they still believe in the doctrines

- 62% hold a traditional view of the Bible's inspiration
- 58% hold a traditional view of the Bible's authority
- about 94% SA or A that God created the world (85% SA!)
- more than 75% SA about Jesus' role in salvation, the Ten Commandments being valid today, Sabbath is the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week

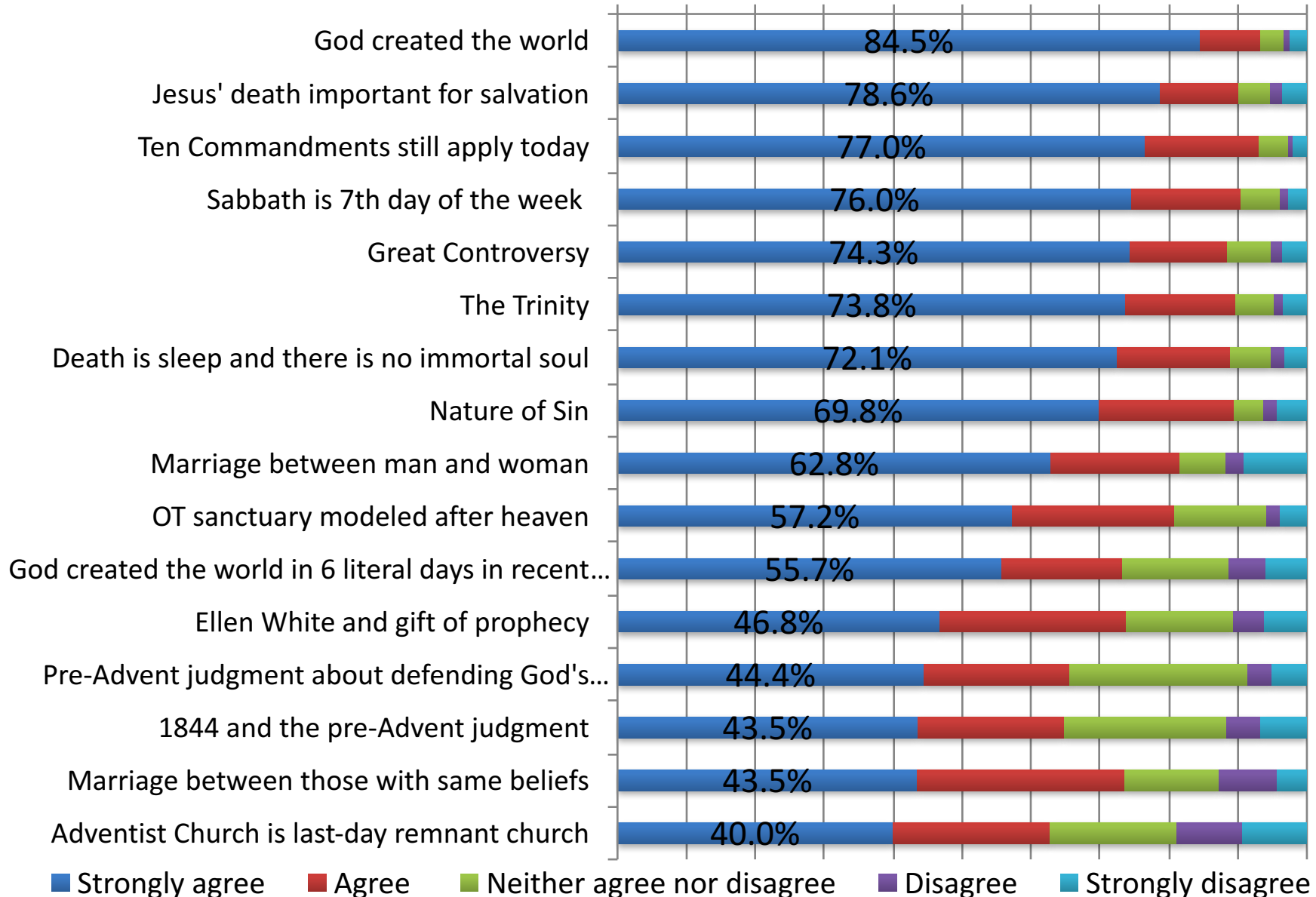
### **Lowest support:**

- Pre-Advent judgment about defending God's character – 44% SA
- 1844 and the pre-Advent judgment – 44% SA
- SDA Church is last-day remnant Church – 40% SA

# Agreement with Adventist Doctrines

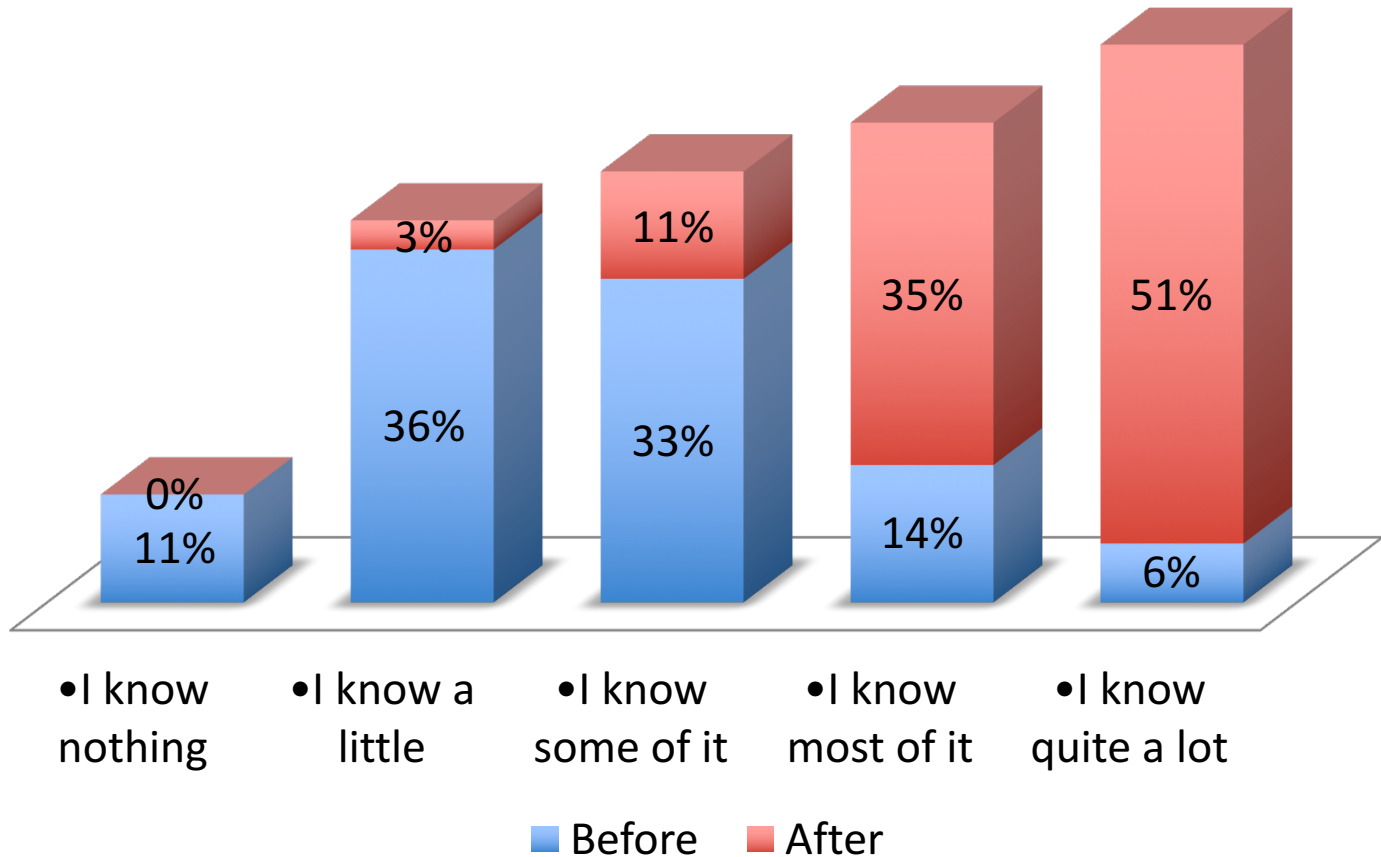
21<sup>st</sup> CCS

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%





# Knowledge of Beliefs before and after the course (BBs)



# SDA Doctrines (BBs)

- B. 11 – Growing in Christ (“spiritual welfare”)
- B. 15 – Baptism, early baptism – unforeseen consequences
- B. 24 – Heavenly Sanctuary – terrified of the investigative judgment (long explanation – 252 words)
- B. 25 – 2<sup>nd</sup> coming – fear (18%) of persecution and that relatives/friends will not make it
- B. 27– The millennial and the End of Sin – “so what?”
- B. 28 – New earth – mixed observations
- (Fears) meeting with ghosts – (19%)
- Trinity – challenging doctrine
- ✓ **How each belief benefits them and can be applied in their lives right now**
- ✓ **Church needs to use relevant language and explanation of the doctrines that less accepted**

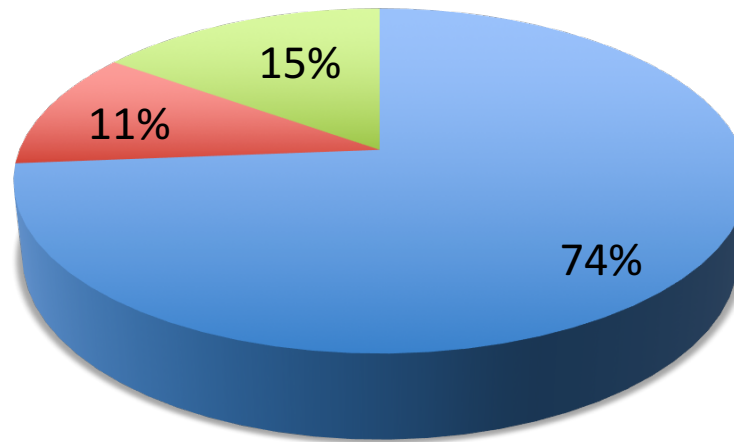
# **Lifestyle, SDA Standards, and Media**

## 21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

- Over 80% for both viewing pornography and using illegal drugs were never or rarely acceptable
- More than 55% drinking caffeinated beverages was always or usually acceptable
- More than 70% eating clean meat was acceptable although many practice vegetarianism
- 71% wholeheartedly embrace the SDA teaching on healthful living

BBs:

- I am not a vegetarian
- I eat chicken, seafood, but not red meat
- I eat dairy, eggs, honey



21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

- 45% did not accept or had major doubts about Adventist teaching on discouraging wearing of jewelry

BBs:

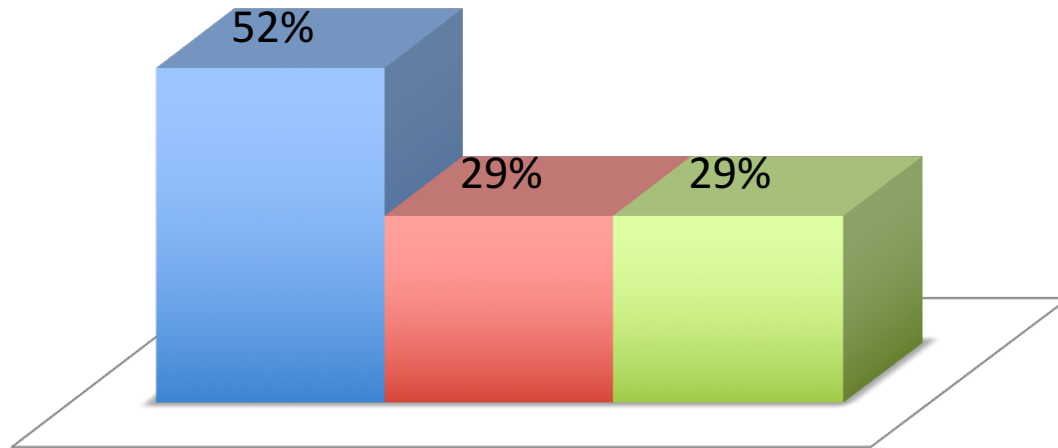
- B. 22– Christian Behavior: don't connect the same way as older generations (simple dress, low heels, not bright colors, etc.)

# Marriage and Homosexuality

21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

- Support traditional marriage (82% SA or A)
- Young adults are questioning the church's stance on homosexuality; at the same time, they generally accept the church's teachings on heterosexuality
- Not necessarily they want the church to accept homosexuality but to be more accepting of those who are (point of disconnection – most of SDA churches are not gay-friendly)
- Overall, there was a more favorable view of homosexuality than there was towards cohabitation
- Marriage between people with the same belief – 44%

# On marriage (BBs)



Marriage

- God at the center
- Lifelong commitment
- Nobody respects in society

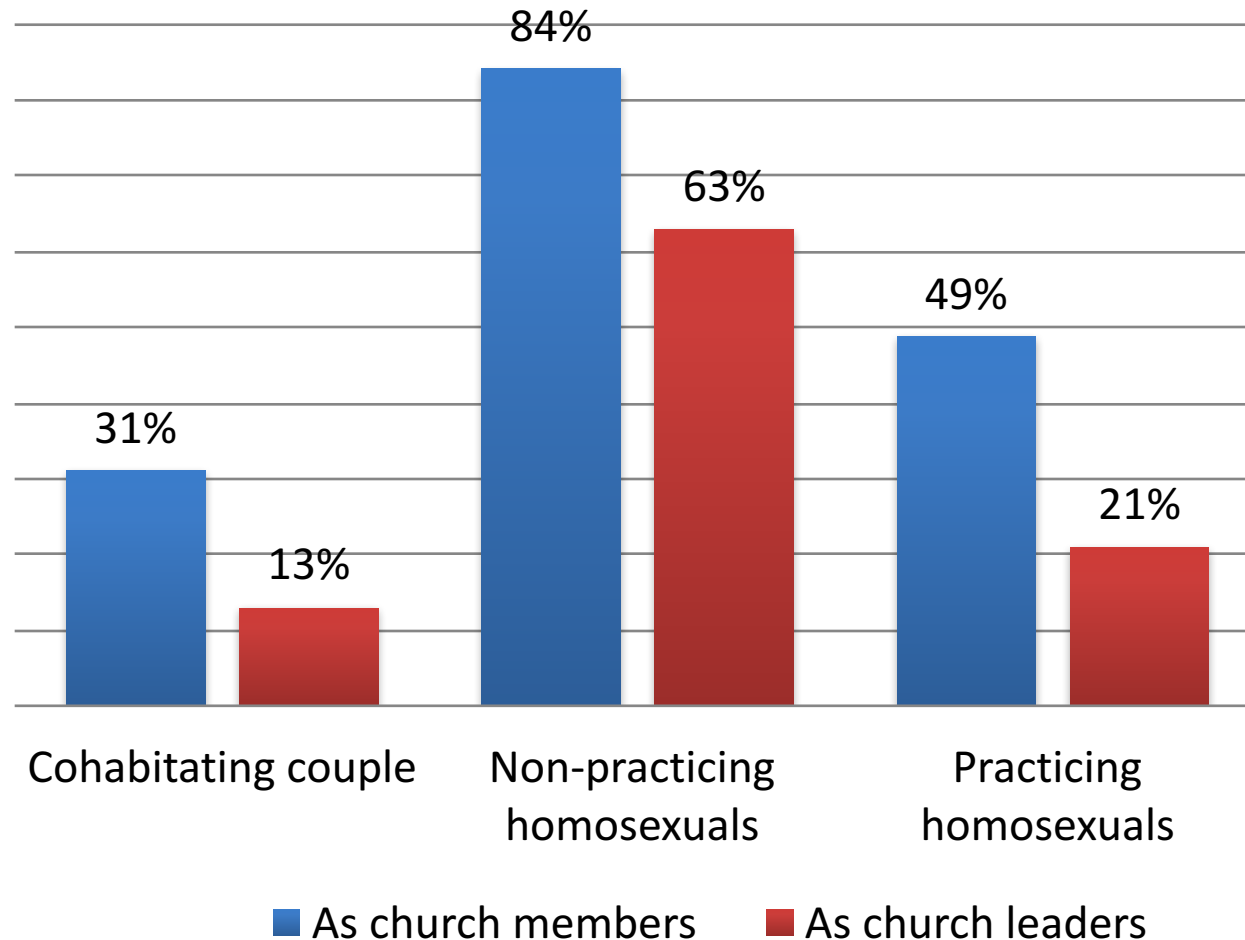


## 21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

- 71% said homosexual relationships were “never” or “rarely” acceptable
- 77% said premarital sex was “never” or “rarely” acceptable
- 72% were against practicing homosexuals as church leaders although 50% were for the inclusion of practicing homosexuals as church members “usually” or “always”
- Only 10% said homosexual relationships were “always acceptable”

# Acceptance\* of non-practicing and practicing homosexuals and cohabitating couples in church

(21<sup>st</sup> CCS)



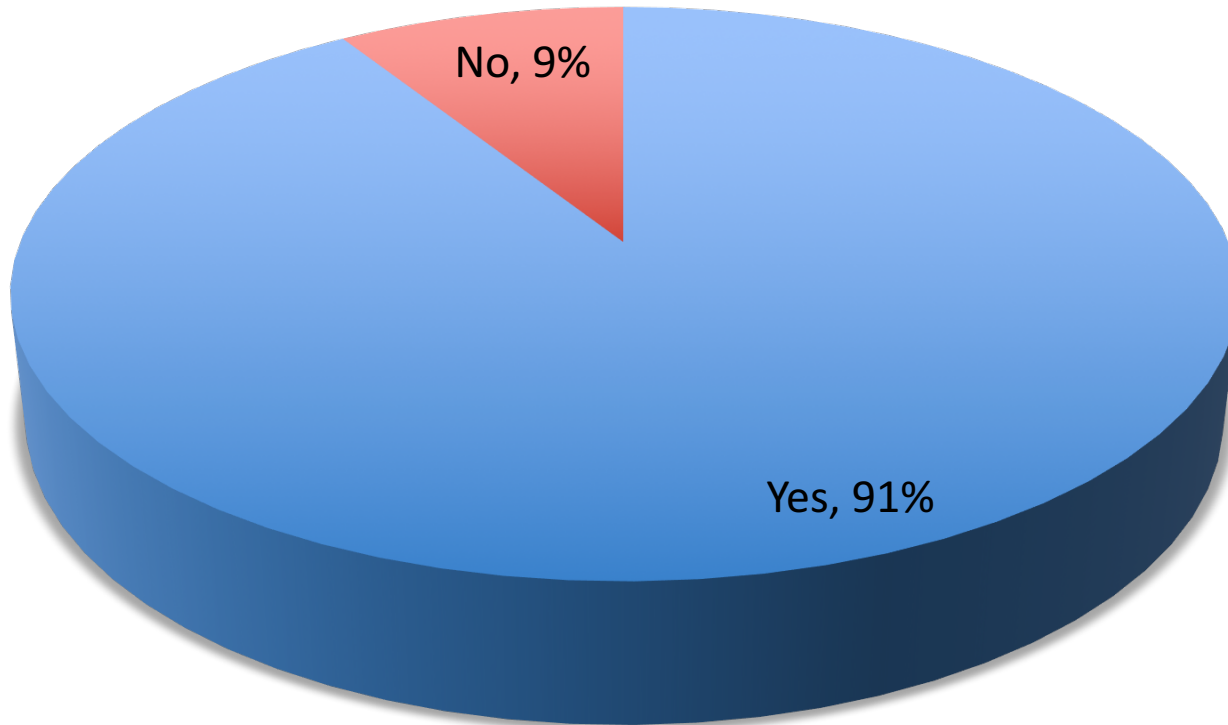
**\*Based on number of responses that said "always" or "usually acceptable"**

# Media

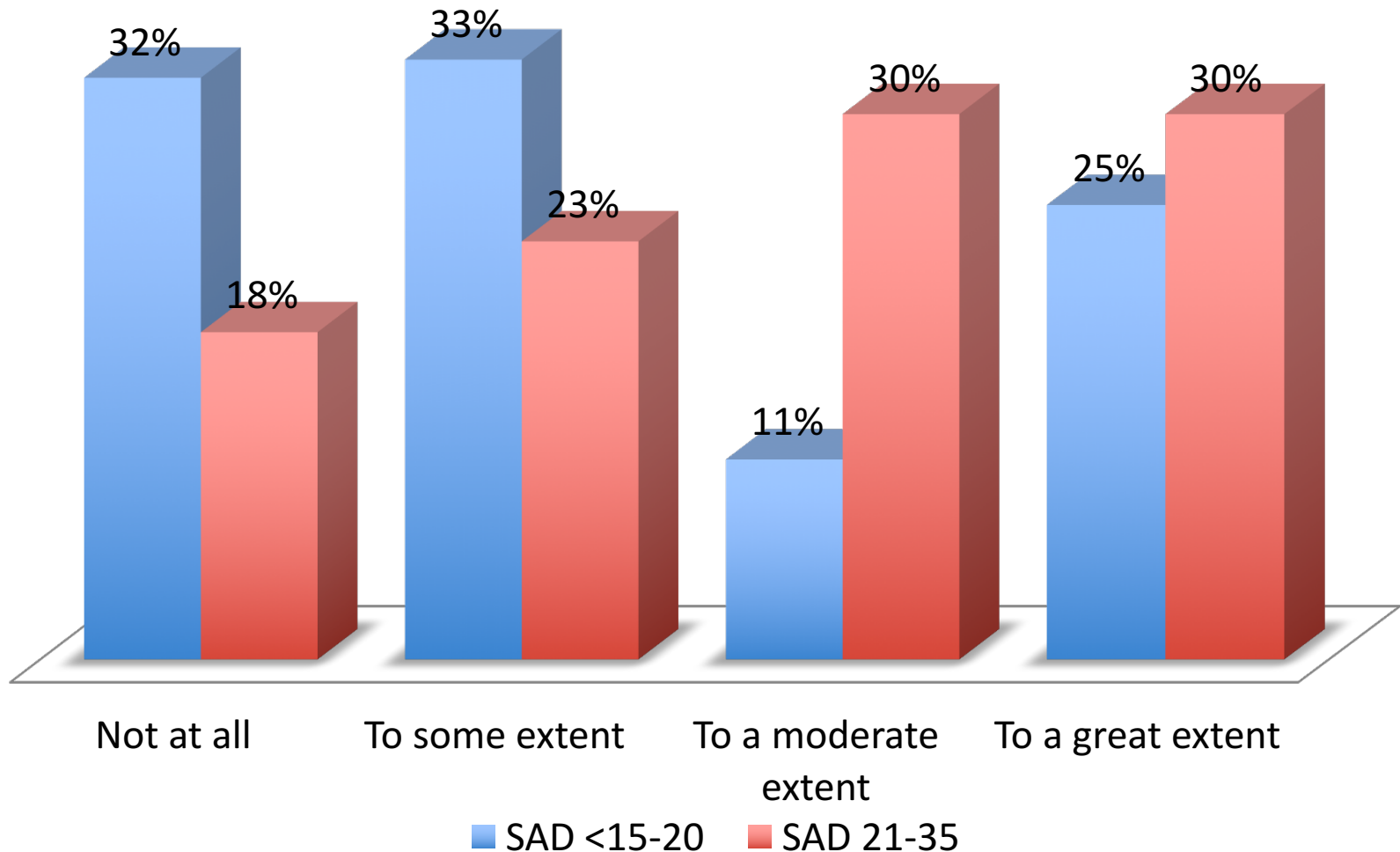
## **Adventist media has little influence on young adults**

- Majority do not interact with SDA TV, magazines, etc.
- Connection point that was not used effectively
- Many do not know about Adventist smartphone apps
- Why SDA media is not reaching young adults?

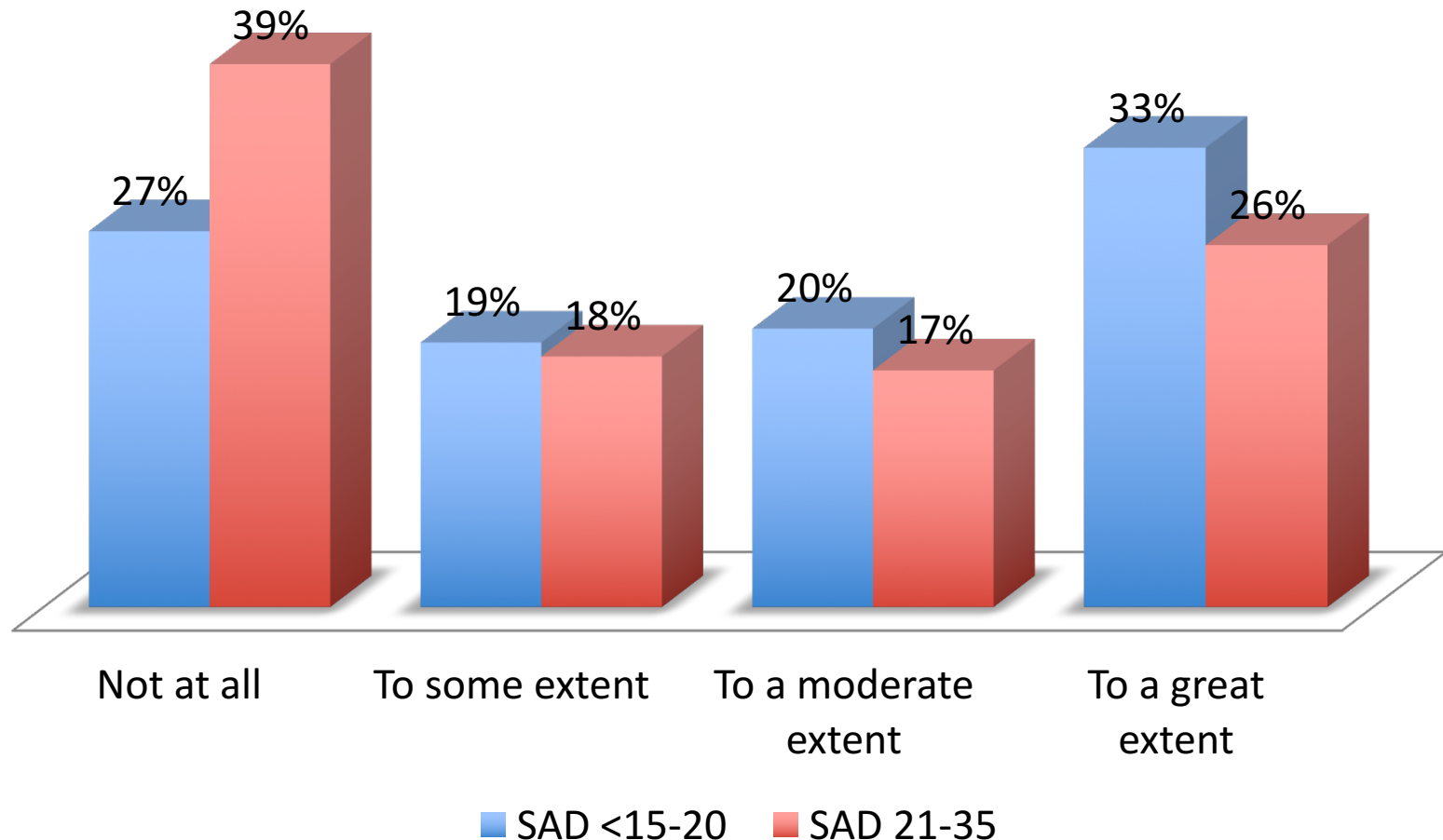
**Do you ever use the Internet or television to search for and view spiritual content? (HCS)**



# I use information from the Internet as a way to grow my faith (SAD Q.2.75)

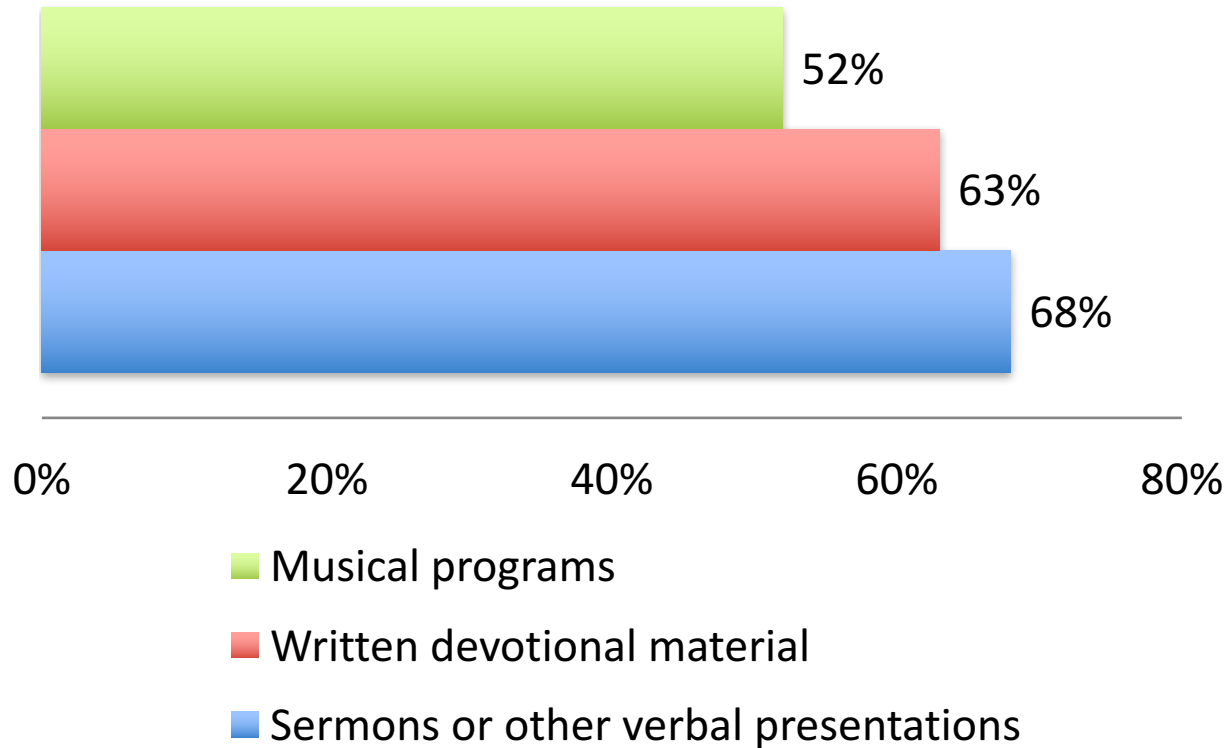


# Without the support of the worship service in my local church, I feel my faith might gradually fade away (SAD: Q. 2.74)

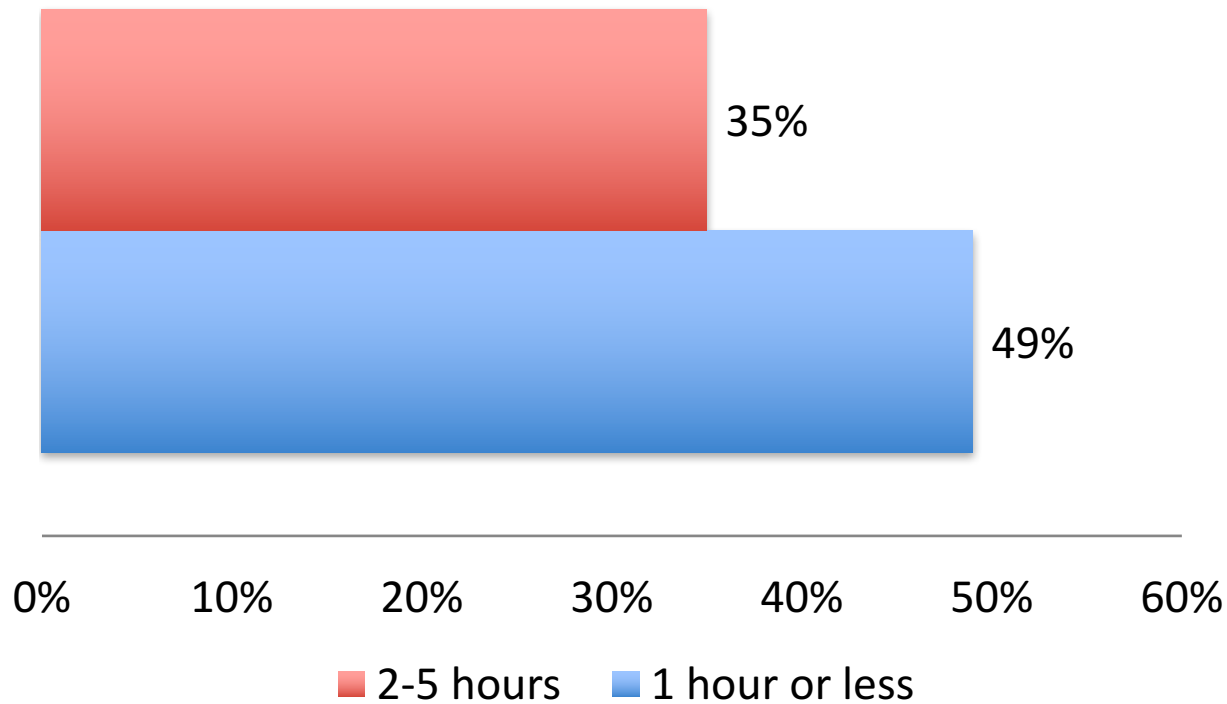


# What content do you typically search for?

(HCS)

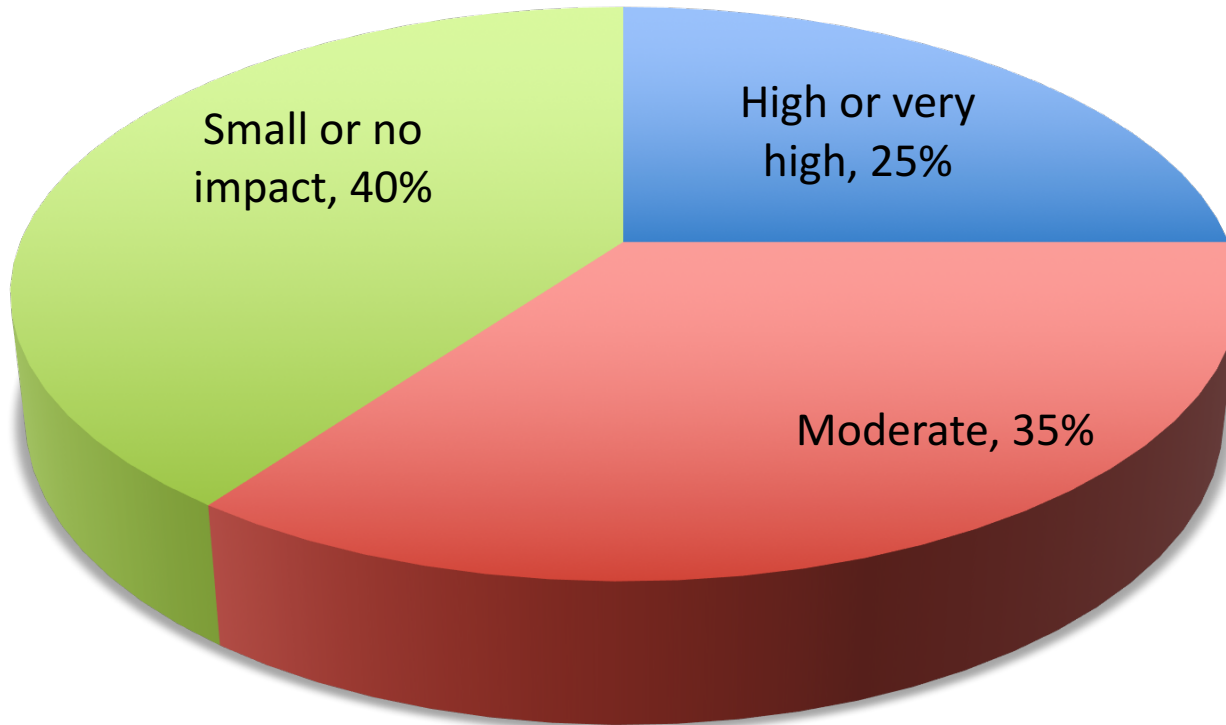


**How many hours of religious programming would you estimate that you generally watch on TV or the Internet in a typical week? (HCS)**

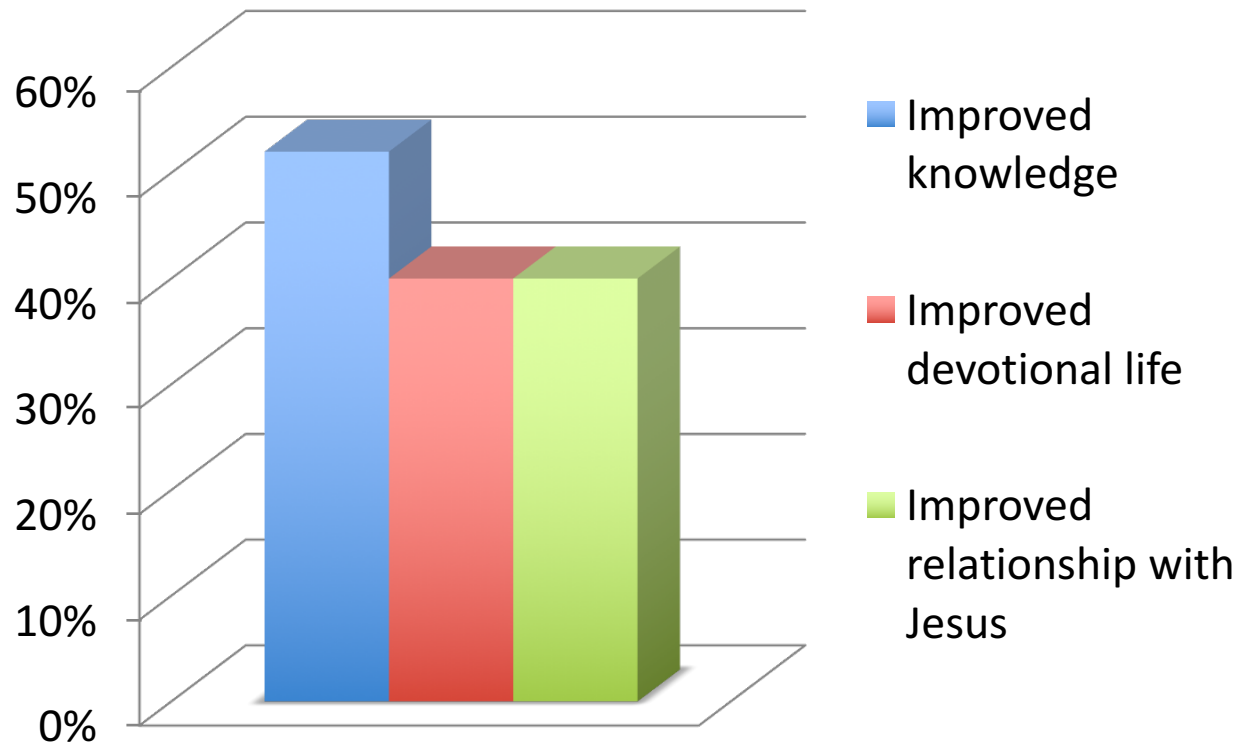




# To what extent has watching Hope Channel programs impacted your life in a positive way? (HCS)



# What areas of your life have been most impacted by Hope Channel programs? (HCS, Q.27)



## 21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

- The less time spent on the Internet or playing games, the more likely the connected with SS classes, felt connected to a local church
- The more media consumes, the less they were to agree with Adventist doctrines and Adventist standards, and have an active personal devotional life

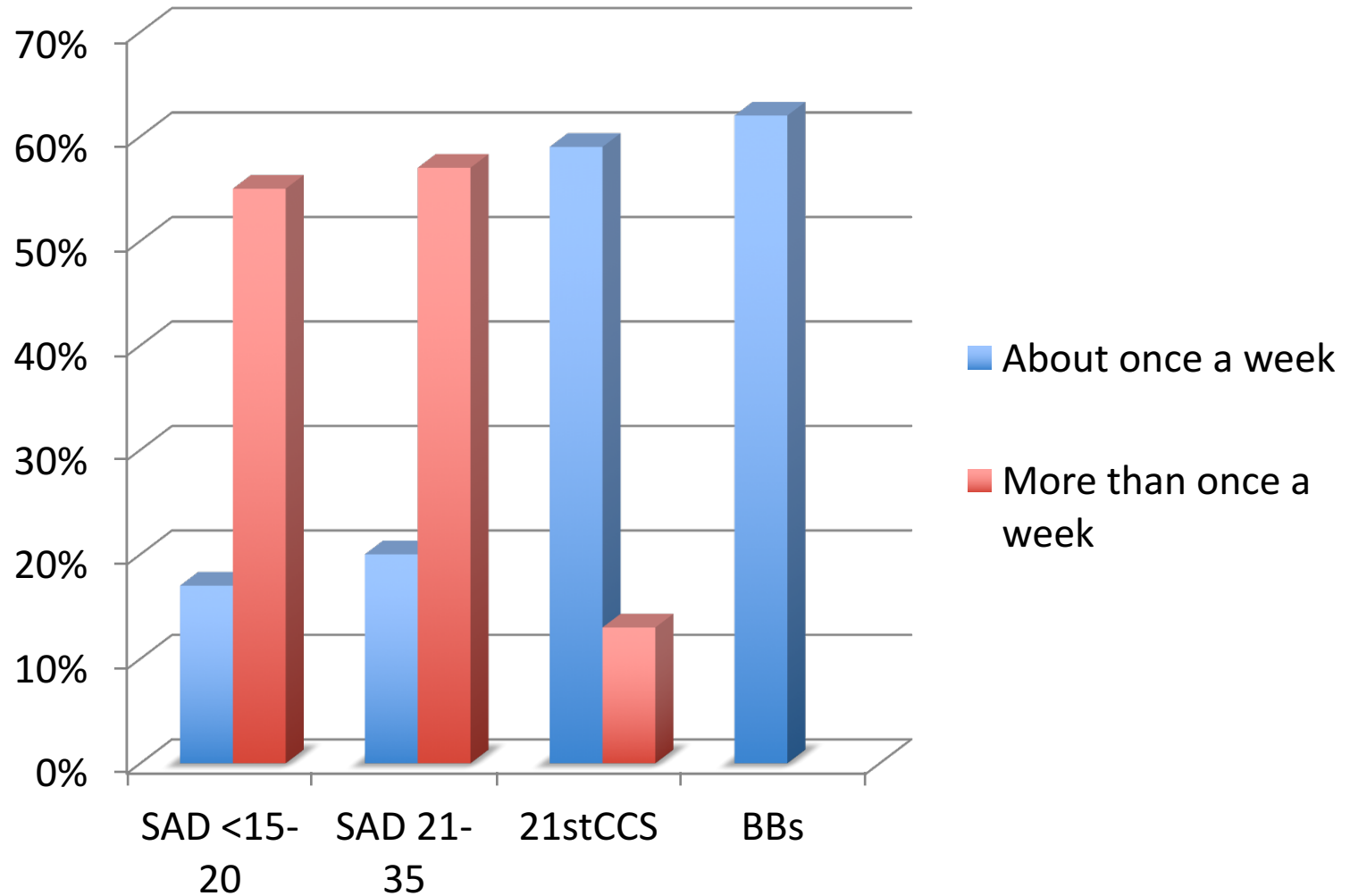
# Church Factor

# How much has it helped you develop your religious life?

(SAD: Q. 3.1-27, often or very much)

- Personal Bible study and prayer (82%/91%)
- Church worship (82%/86%)
- Pastor's sermons (79%/84%)
- Weeks of prayer at church (78%/83%)
- Family (77%/80%)
- Sabbath School (76%/79%)
- Friends (74%/77%)

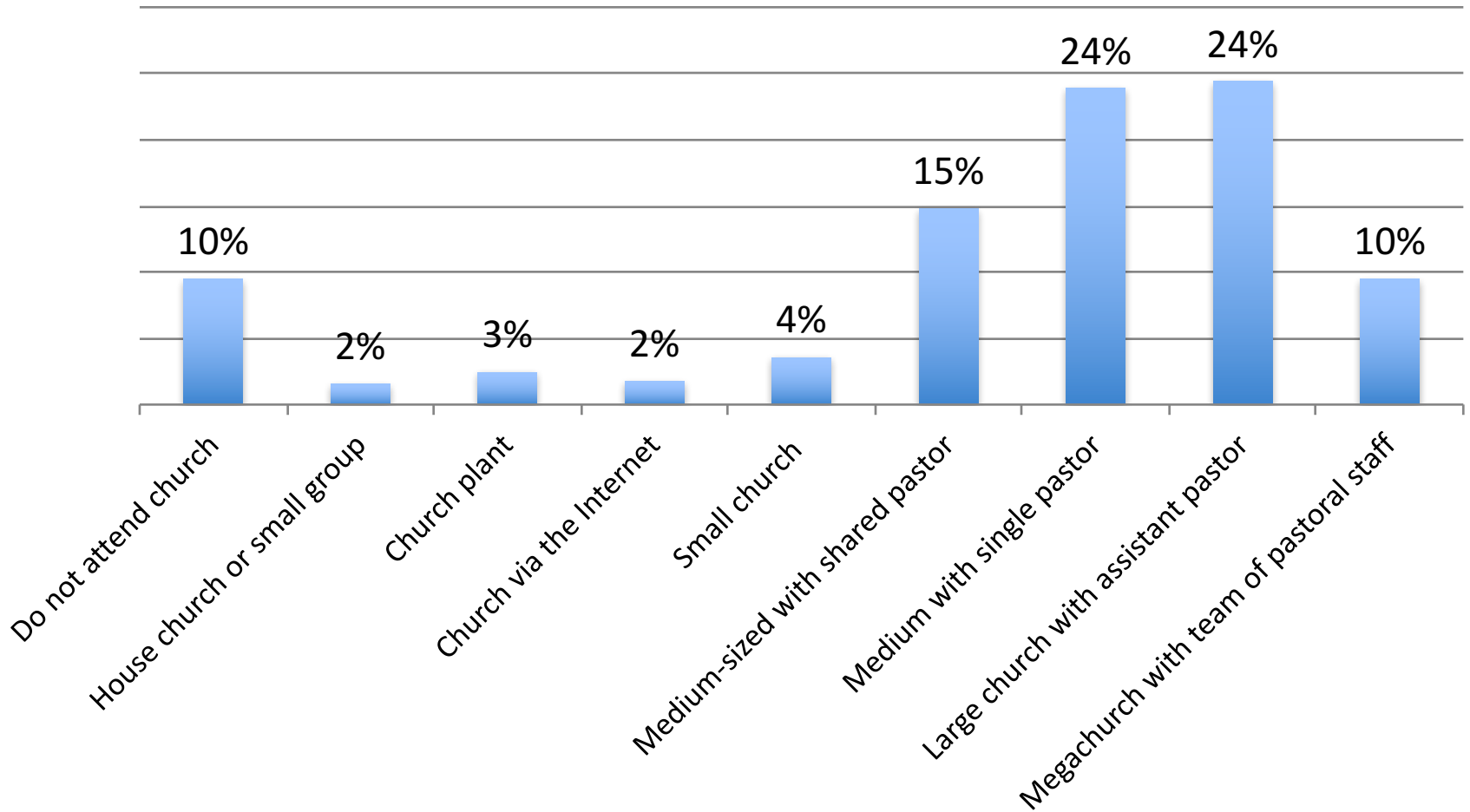
# Regular church attendance



## **Young adults prefer to attend medium-to large-sized churches with full-time pastors – this plays a role in connection of young adults to the church**

- Large church have more resources and programming that can attract young adults
- Barna Group (2009) – majority of young adults attend large churches
- Sadly – 39% of NAD churches have an average attendance of up to 50 and only 6% have it of more than 350 people (Monte Sahlin's profile of Adventist churches (2003))

# Type of Church Attended (21<sup>st</sup> CCM)





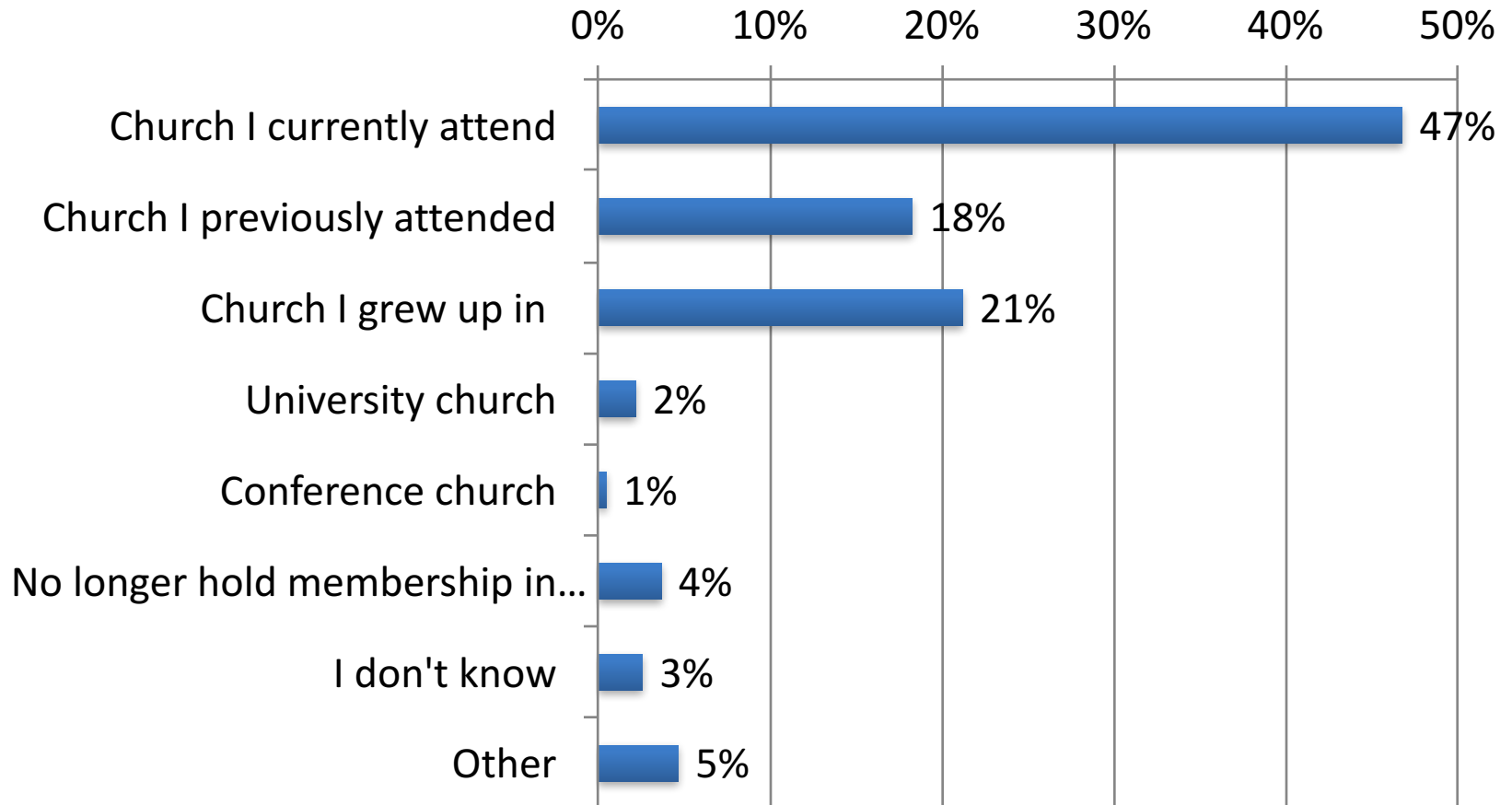
# **Size of the church – a factor in their connectedness to the church**

(21<sup>st</sup> CCS)

- The smaller the church, the more likely they were to connect with activities outside of church and with potlucks
- The larger the church, the more likely they were to choose the sermon style, the sermon relevance, and personality of the pastor

# Transitional lifestyle and Church Membership

(21<sup>st</sup> CCS)



21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

## **Some do not attend church or attend it very infrequently. Reasons why?**

- Have not found the one where they fit in
- They do not see the need or benefit of going
- They disagree with what is being taught at church
- The main reason for those who do not affiliate with the church, the main reason is they do not see a benefit.
- For those who attend very infrequently – they have not found a church where they fit in

# What attracts them to the church? (21<sup>st</sup> CCS)

- Relevance of sermons – 85%
- Having people their age that attend – 66%
- Personality of the pastor – 64%
- The least important characteristic was – having members of similar ethnic background

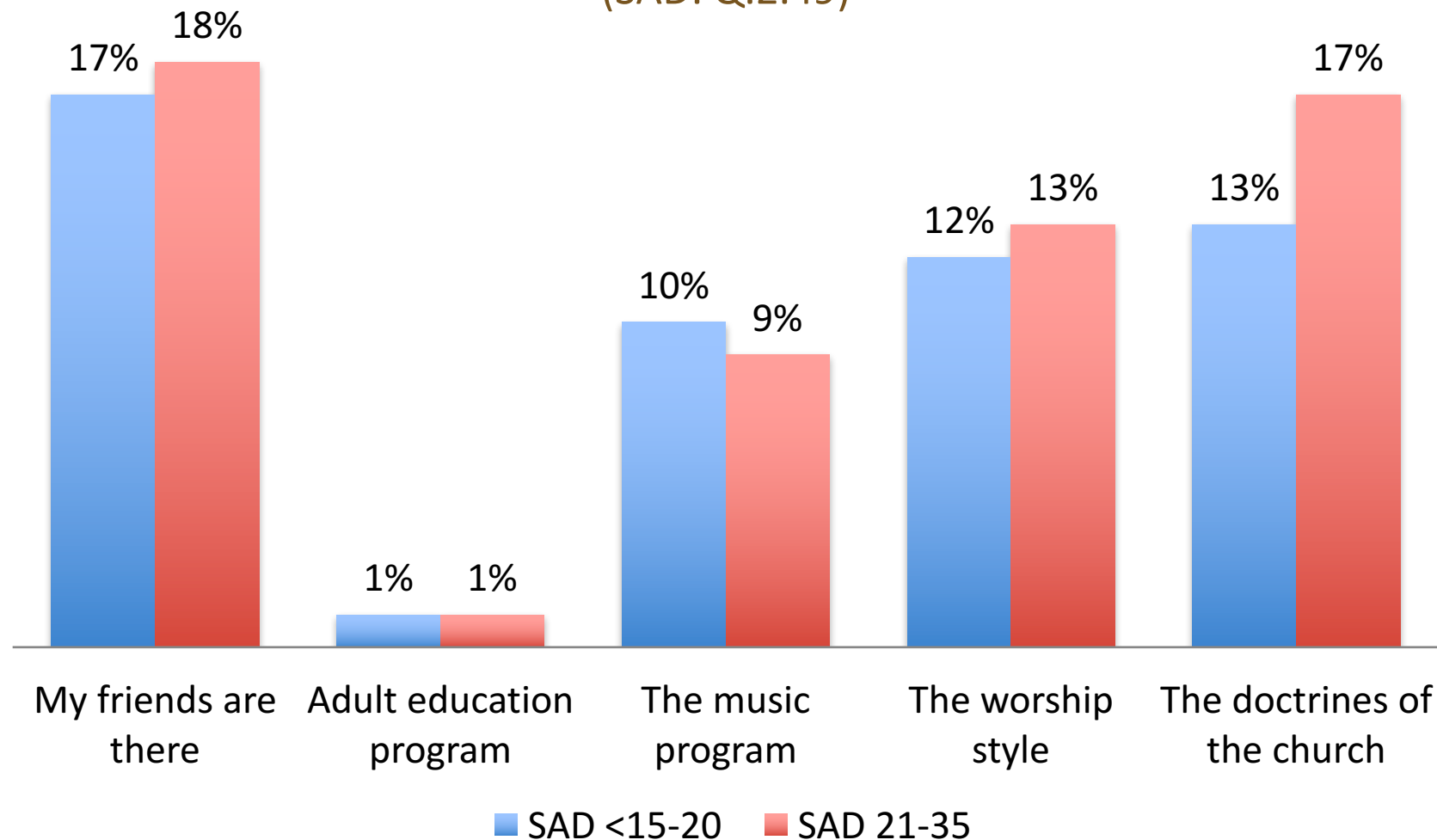
**“Important” or “Extremely important”  
Top three areas of church where they connect were:**

(21<sup>st</sup>)

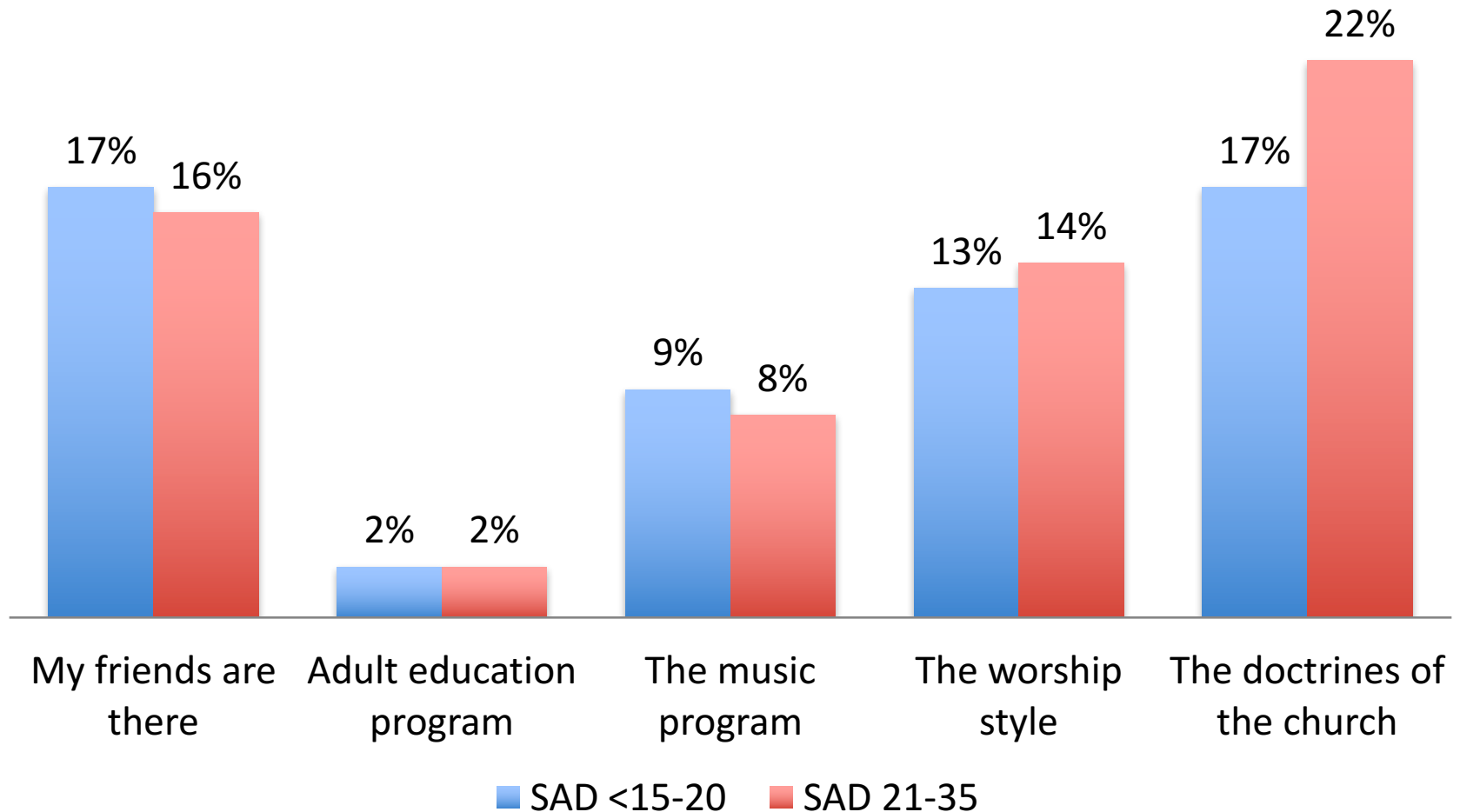
- Music – 49%
- Fellow church members – 45%
- Activities outside of worship service – 42%

# What originally brought you to this congregation, what originally attracted you to attend this congregation?

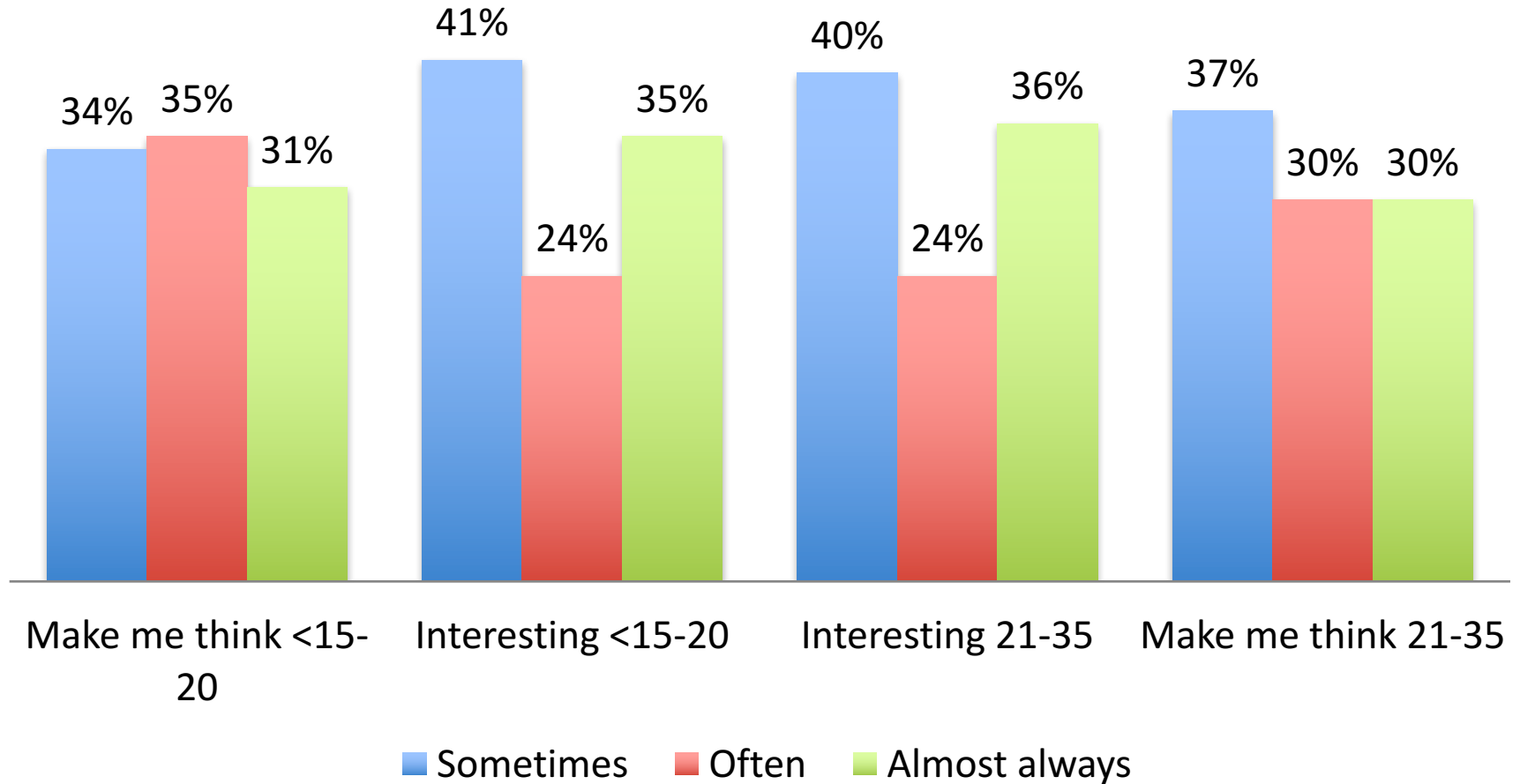
(SAD: Q.2.49)



# What is foremost reason you remain a part of this congregation? (SAD: Q. 2.50)



# Programs at my church make me think, are interesting (SAD: Q.2.8-9)

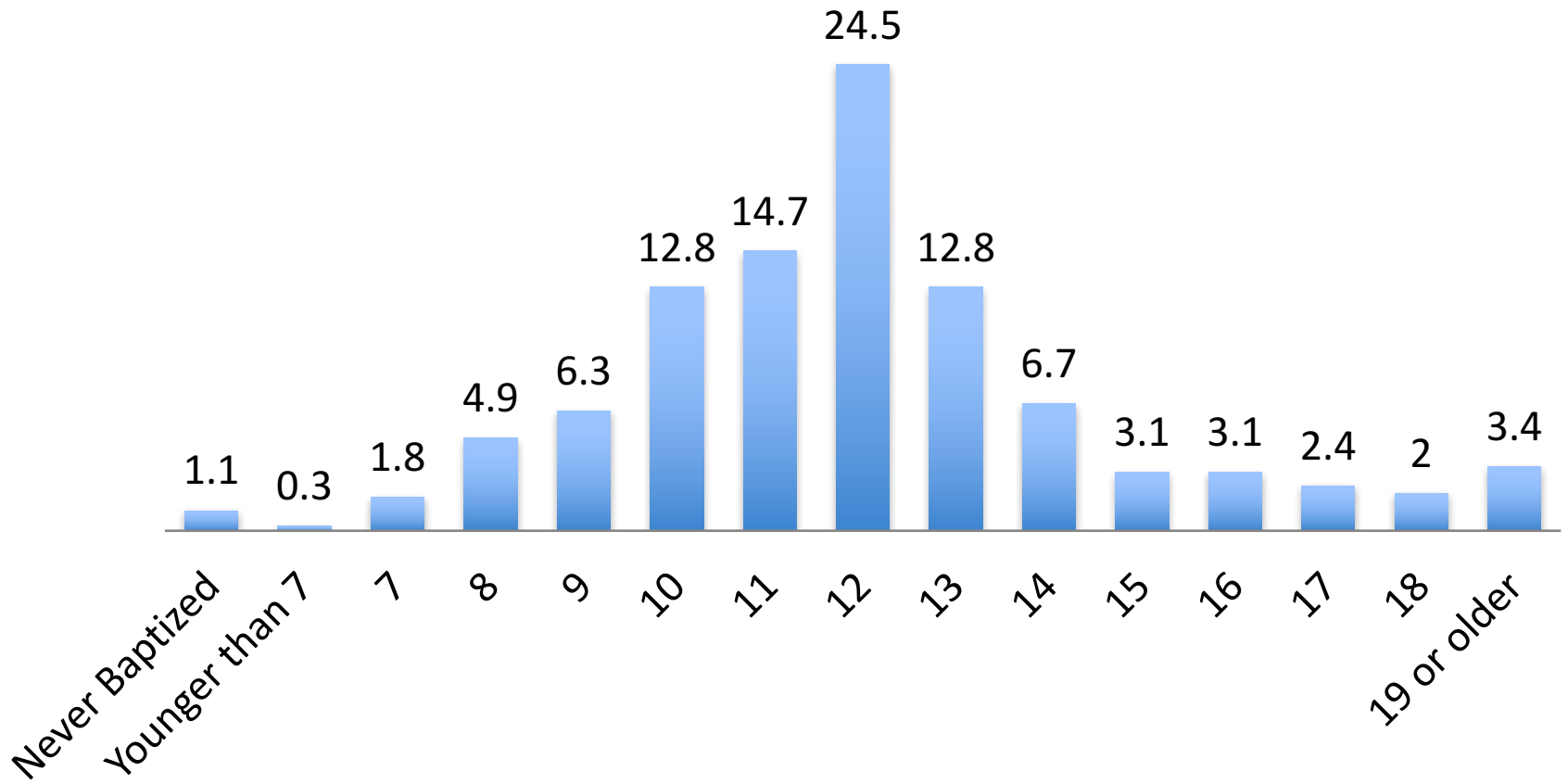




# Important personal traits in pastoral leadership (SAD, QQ.2.51-2.70)

- Biblical preaching and teaching (82%/84%)
- Gives whole self to the church (81%/83%)
- Biblical and theological expertise (74%/81%)
- Emphasis on spiritual growth(74%/81%)
- Works hard to accomplish tasks (73%/73%)
- Maintains a balanced life (71%/73%)
- Advices people what to do (72%/71%)
- Places feelings of others ahead of achieving goals (71%/68%)

# 21<sup>st</sup> CCS - Age at Baptism: 65% before 12 years of age

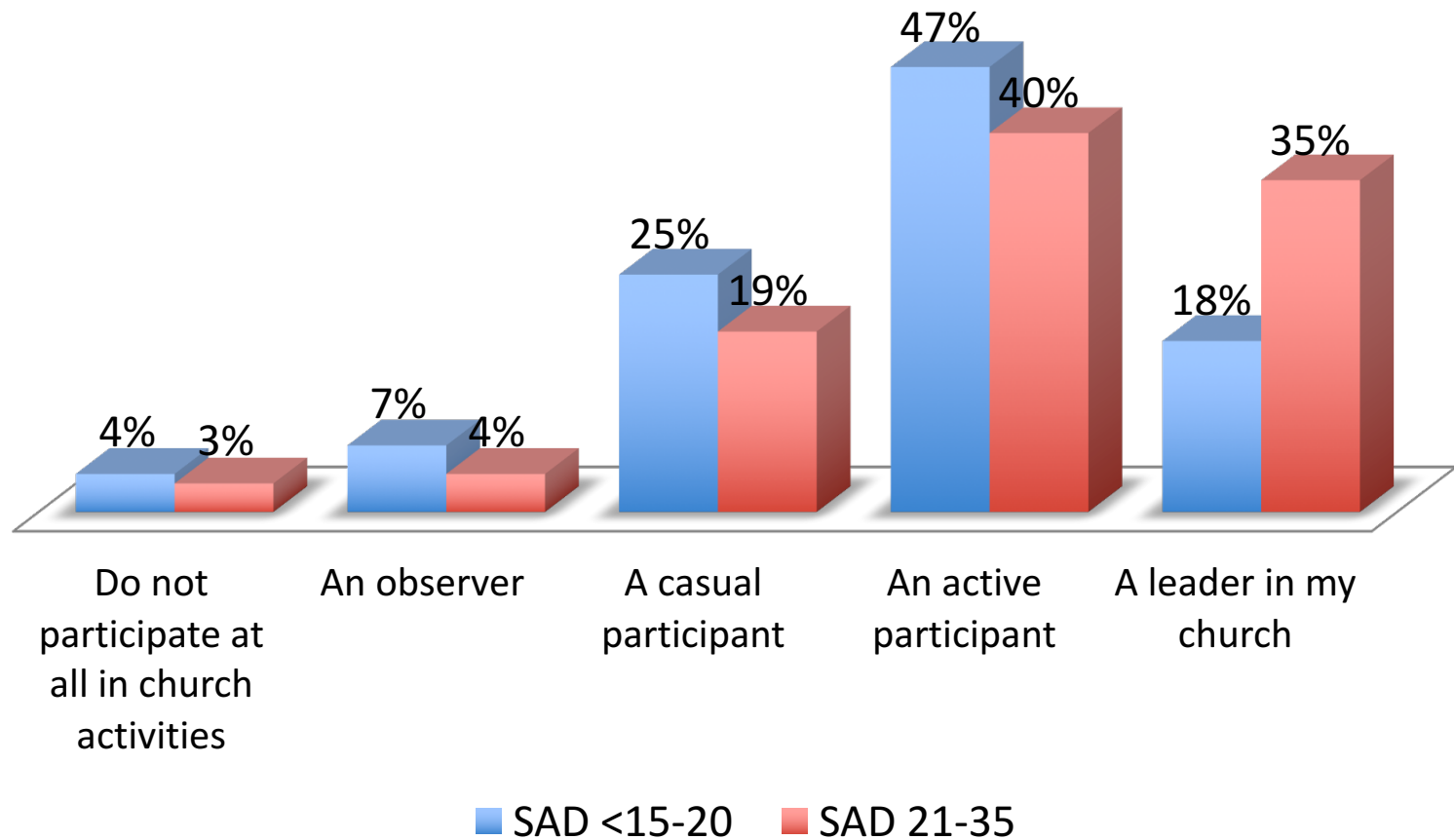


- Those who were baptized before the age of ten reported being more connected to a local church than those who were baptized at later ages
- Those baptized at age ten or younger and above age of 15 had a slightly stronger personal devotional life
- However, participants in BBs reported that there could be different consequences of early baptism

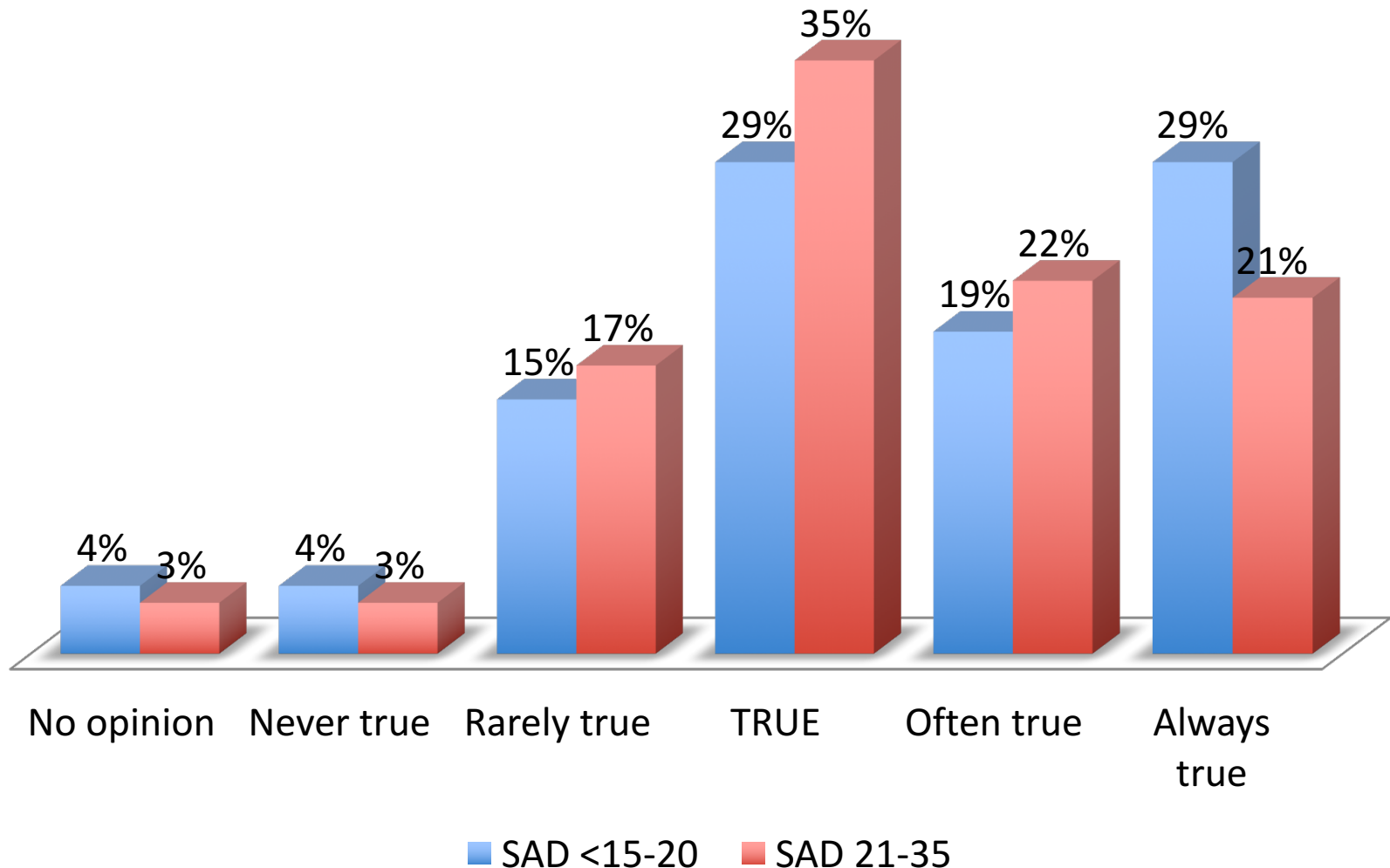
# Church activities with the lowest reported involvement (21<sup>st</sup> CCS)

- church-sponsored mission trips - 75% never or rarely
- music ministry – 59% never or rarely
- evangelistic outreach – 55% never or rarer

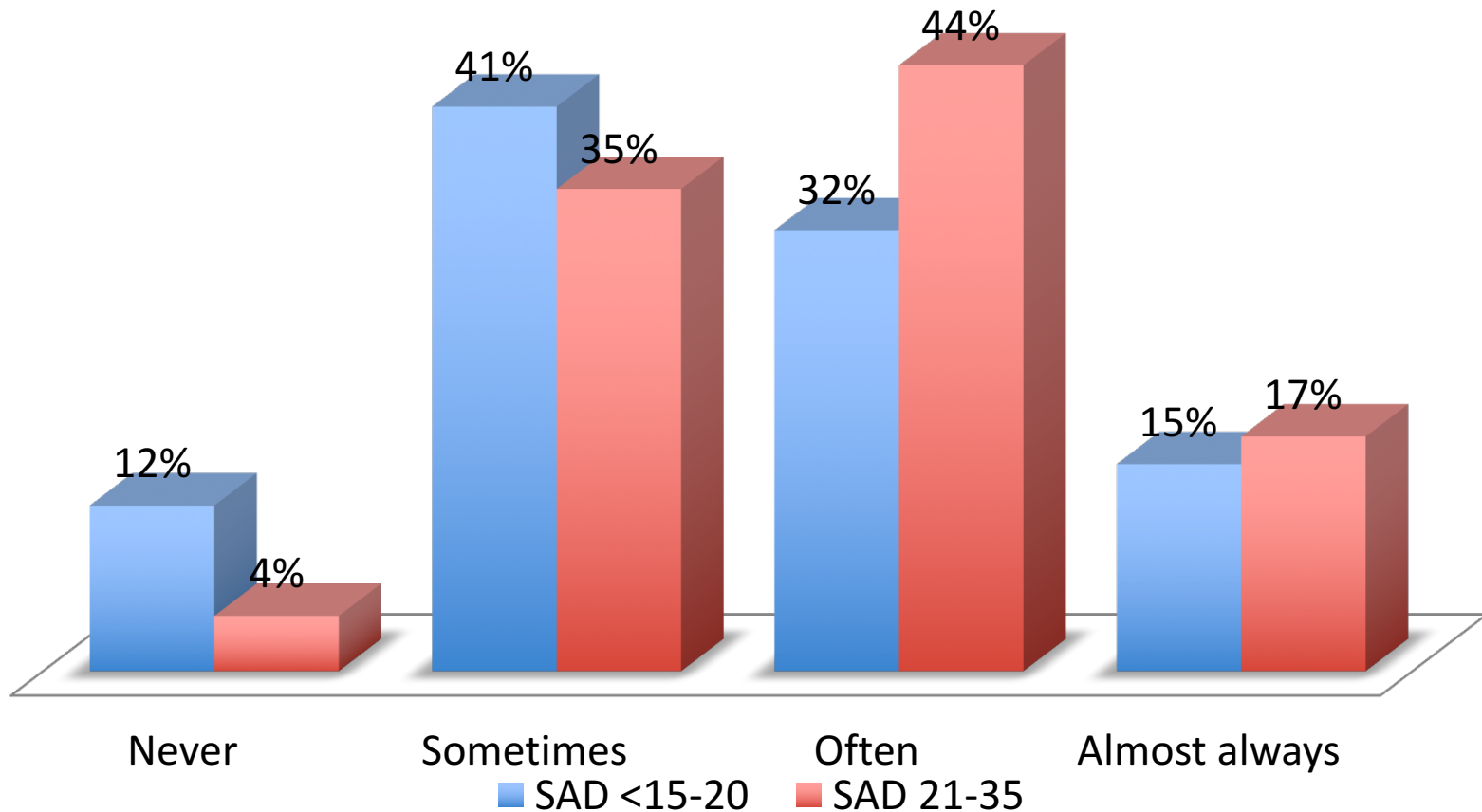
# Your involvement in your church (SAD, Q.2.3)



## Your local church leadership is supportive of involving young people in worship services (SAD: Q. 2.46)



# I feel proud of my church and its role and reputation in my community (SAD: Q.2.20)

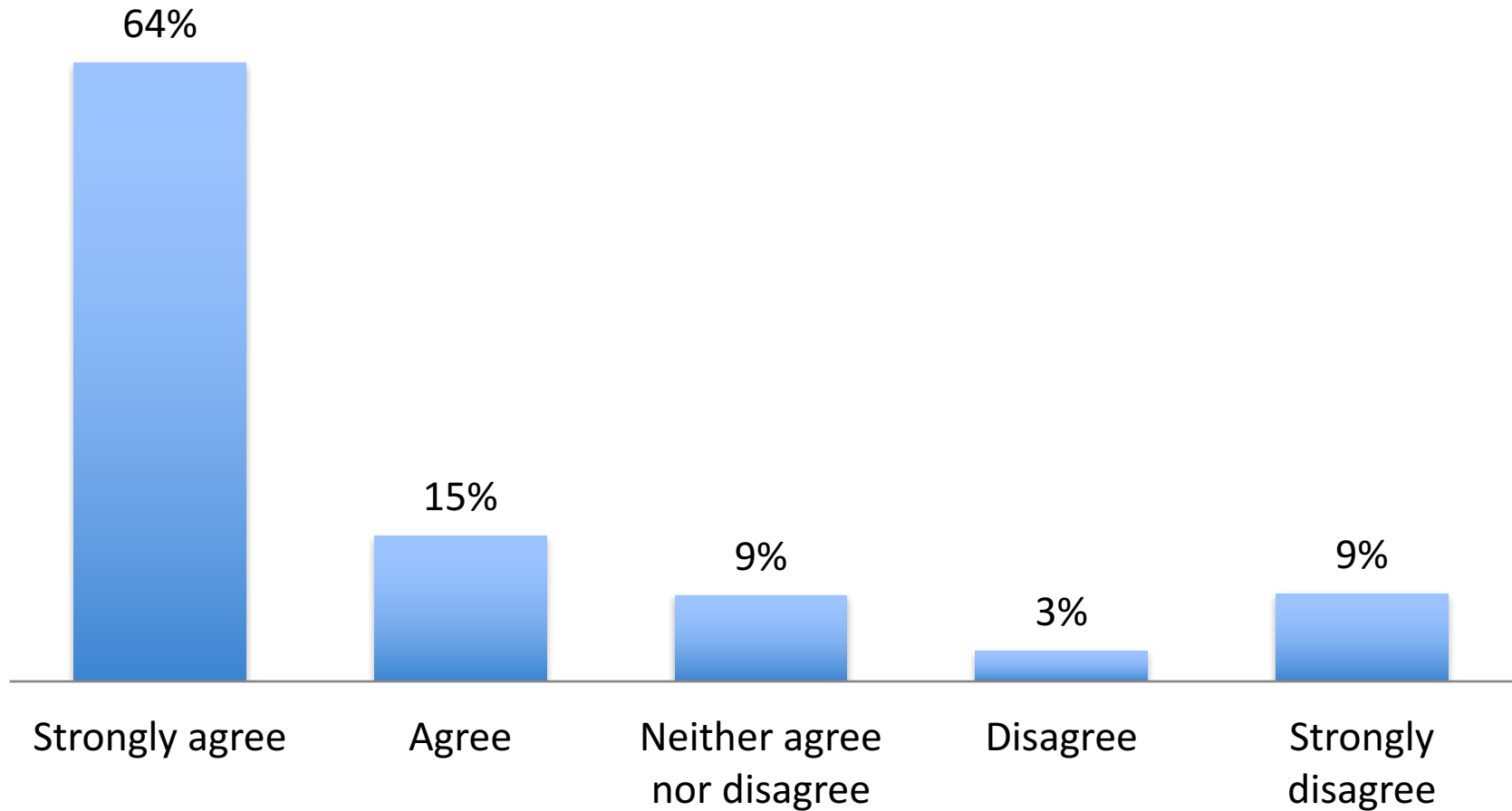


**Commitment**



# Percentage agree with statement “I will be an Adventist 10 years from now”

(21<sup>st</sup> CCS)



## 21<sup>st</sup> CCS:

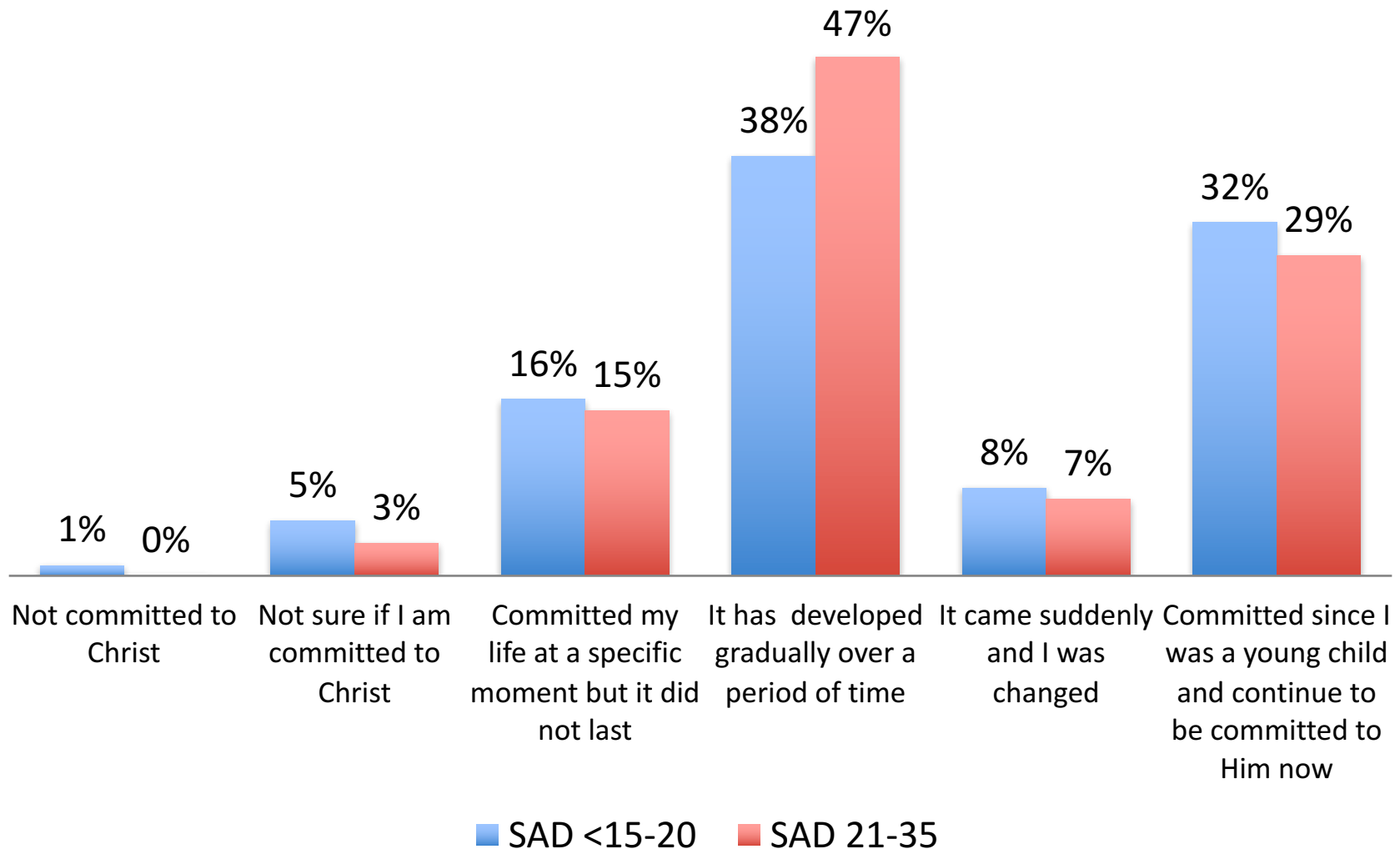
- 77% of those with children or planning to have children plan to pass Adventist beliefs to them
- 93% - they will attend church with their kids
- 80% and above – will have family worship, attend SS and read Bible together

# Personal relationship with Jesus Christ

(21<sup>st</sup> CCS)

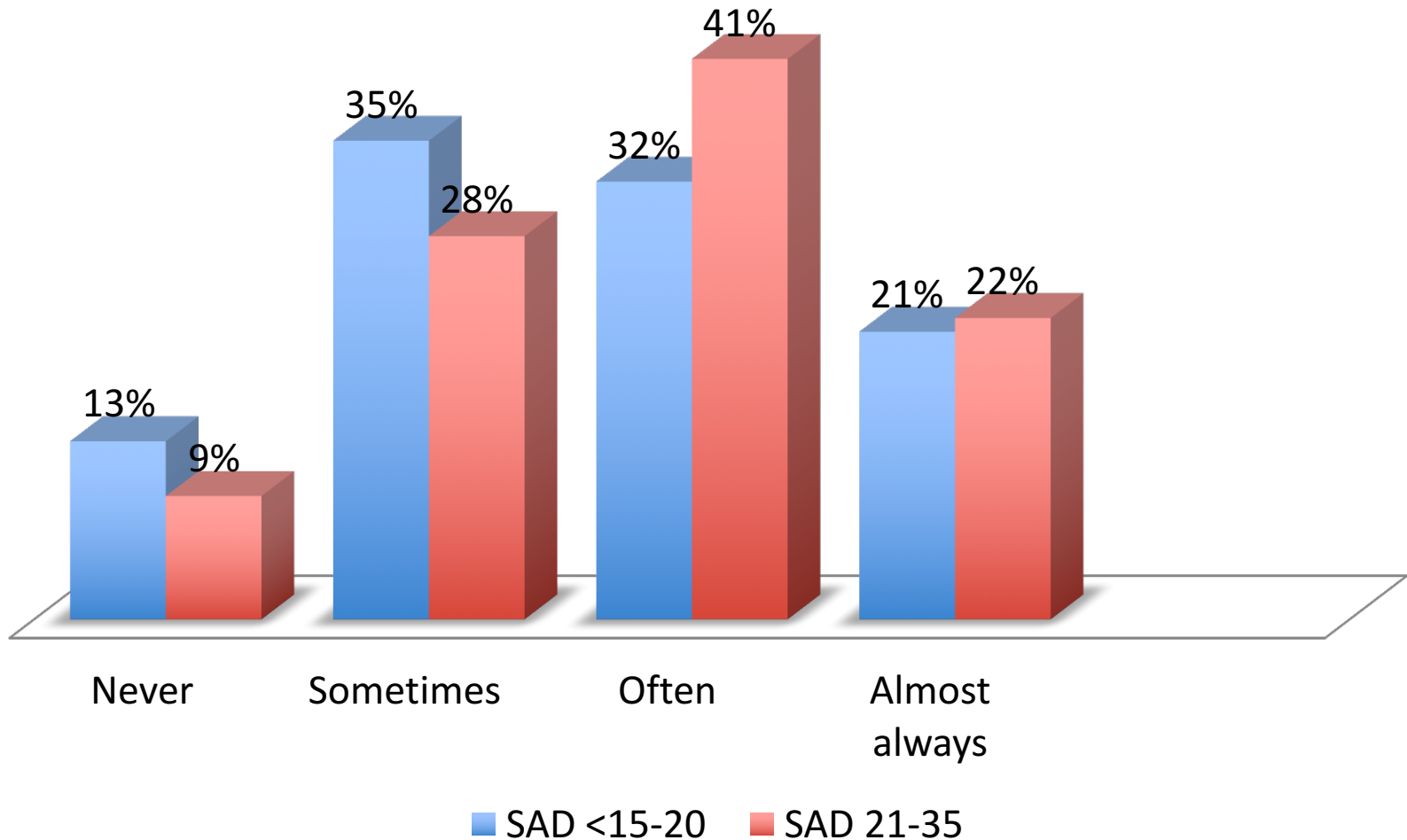
- 87% agree or SA that God is actively working in their lives
- 76% have assurance that they will make it to heaven by God's grace
- But only 59% A or SA that they have a vibrant personal relationship with God

# Your Commitment to Jesus Christ (SAD, Q.3.39)



# My church is helping me grow closer to Christ

(SAD: Q. 2.17)



**“When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages—to officers of the church, ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, “Suffer them to come;” as if He would say, They will come, if you do not hinder them.”**

**(EGW, MN, 42.4)**

**“As the Holy Spirit moves upon the hearts of the children, co-operate with His work. Teach them that the Saviour is calling them, that nothing can afford Him greater joy than for them to give themselves to Him in the bloom and freshness of their years.”**

**(EGW, MH, 44.1)**

# What is one thing they often lack?

- “This ruler had a high estimate of his own righteousness. He did not really suppose that he was defective in anything, yet he was not altogether satisfied. He felt the want of something that he did not possess. Could not Jesus bless him as he blessed the little children, and satisfy his soul want?..
- Christ looked into the face of the young man as if reading his life and searching his character. He loved him and hungered to give him that peace and grace and joy which would materially change his character. “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.”

(EGW, DA, 518-519)