

WHY DO YOUTH LEAVE THE CHURCH? PART I

BELIEVE, BEHAVE, BELONG

astr
Office of
Archives, Statistics,
and Research



GALINA STELE, D.MIN.

TED NURTURE & RETENTION SUMMIT

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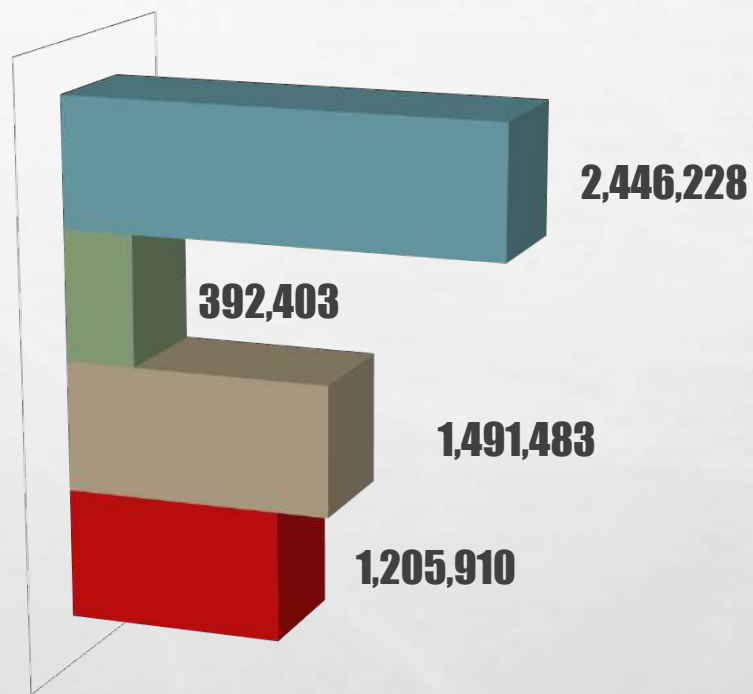
NOVEMBER, 2017

RESEARCH SOURCES

- *21ST CENTURY CONNECTION STUDY (21ST CCS)* – DOUGLAS JACOBS (SAU) & TEAM; 2012-2013; N=1,153 (SAU, PUC, OU); MEAN AGE=28; 77% 3^D, 4TH, AND 5TH GENERATIONS OF SDAS; MORE THAN 50% WERE MARRIED
- *CHURCH MEMBER SURVEY, SAD, (SAD)* – BERNDT DIETRICH WOLTER & TEAM, 2013, (N=4,367), AY N=2,248: <15-20; 21-35 AGE GROUPS
- *HOPE CHANNEL STUDENT SURVEY (HCS)* – DUANE MCBRIDE & TEAM, 2012 (AU), N=453, 57% NEVER MARRIED
- *BEYOND BELIEFS STUDY (BBS)* – JAN A. AND LEANNE SIGVARSTEN, PAUL B. PETERSEN (AU), 2012, N=37, MEAN AGE 20, MAJORITY WERE SINGLE
- *SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST YOUTH ADVISE THEIR CHURCH (CSY, NAD)* – ROGER L. DUDLEY, 2012 (ICM), N=1,215; 37% UNDER 16; 33% - 16-19; 18% - 20-25; 12% - 26-30 YEARS OF AGE
- *HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE SURVEY (H SPD)* – TERRY BUTLER, 2012, AGE GROUPS: N=2,063 (11-18); N=192 (19-29 YEARS OF AGE)

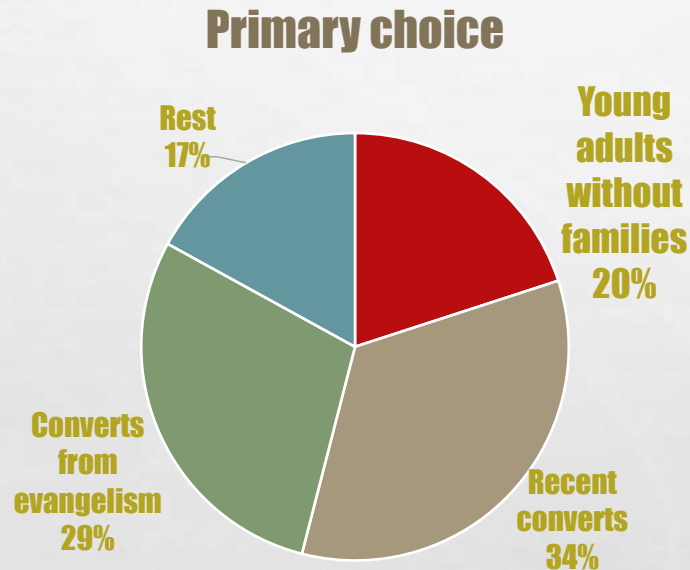
- *VALUEGENESIS II, SPD (VSPD)* – BERRY GANE, 2011, N=3,397 (AT LEAST ONE PARENT SDA N=1,359), AGE GROUPS: 48% - 14 YEARS OLD AND YOUNGER, 46% - 15-17 YEARS OF AGE, 6% - 18 AND OLDER
- *VALUEGENESIS EUROPE (VEU)* – MANUELA CASTI AND TEAM, N=5,415, AGES BETWEEN 14-25
- *SURVEY OF FORMER AND INACTIVE ADVENTIST CHURCH MEMBERS (F&IM)* – PAUL RICHARDSON, MONTE SAHLIN & PETR CINCALA, 2011-2013, N=OVER 925
- *ADVENTIST PASTOR (PS)* – ROGER L. DUDLEY, PETR CINCALA, 2013, N=4,261
- *5TH AND 10TH YEAR LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF YOUTH RETENTION (10 Ys; 5 Ys)* – ROGER L. DUDLEY, 1987-1997, N=783
- *VALUEGENESIS I, NAD (VINAD)* – ROGER L. DUDLEY, 1987
- *LEAVING THE CHURCH (LS)* – RETENTION STUDY, GC ASTR, 2013, N=785

SDA KIDS, YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS AROUND THE WORLD (DATA AS OF 2015, 2017 ASR)

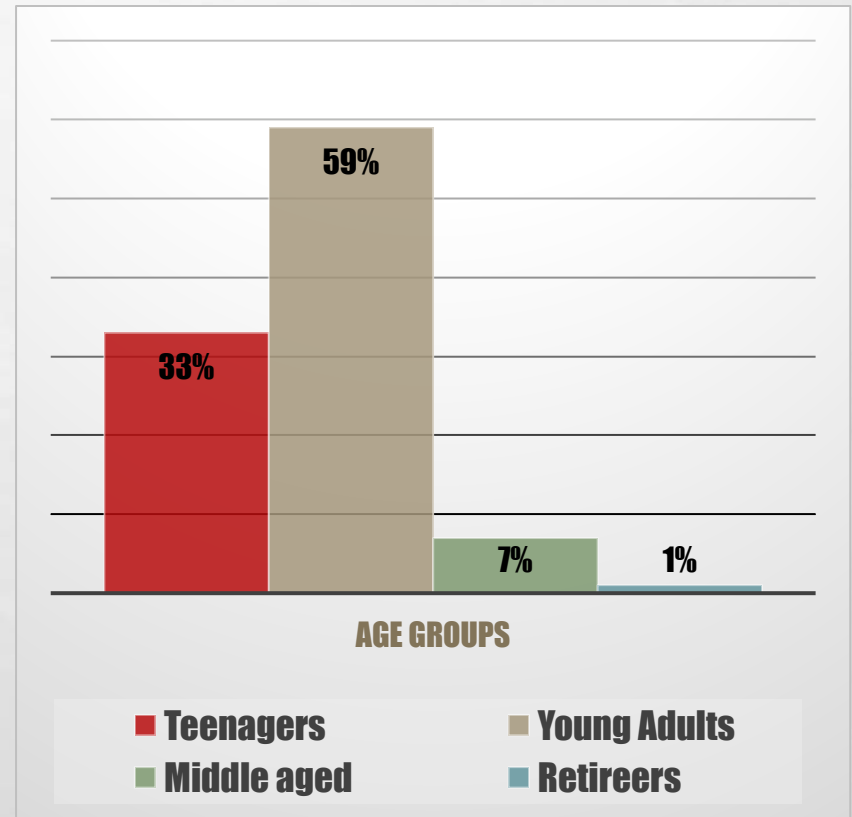


■ AY ■ Ambassadors ■ Pathfinders ■ Adventurers

WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE DO YOU BELIEVE ARE MOST LIKELY TO LEAVE THE CHURCH? (PS)

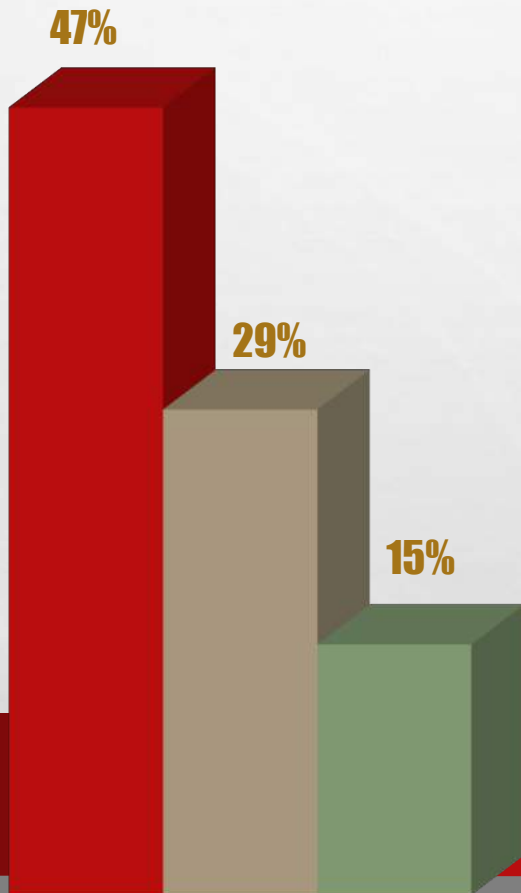


What age group do you believe is most likely to leave the church? (PS)

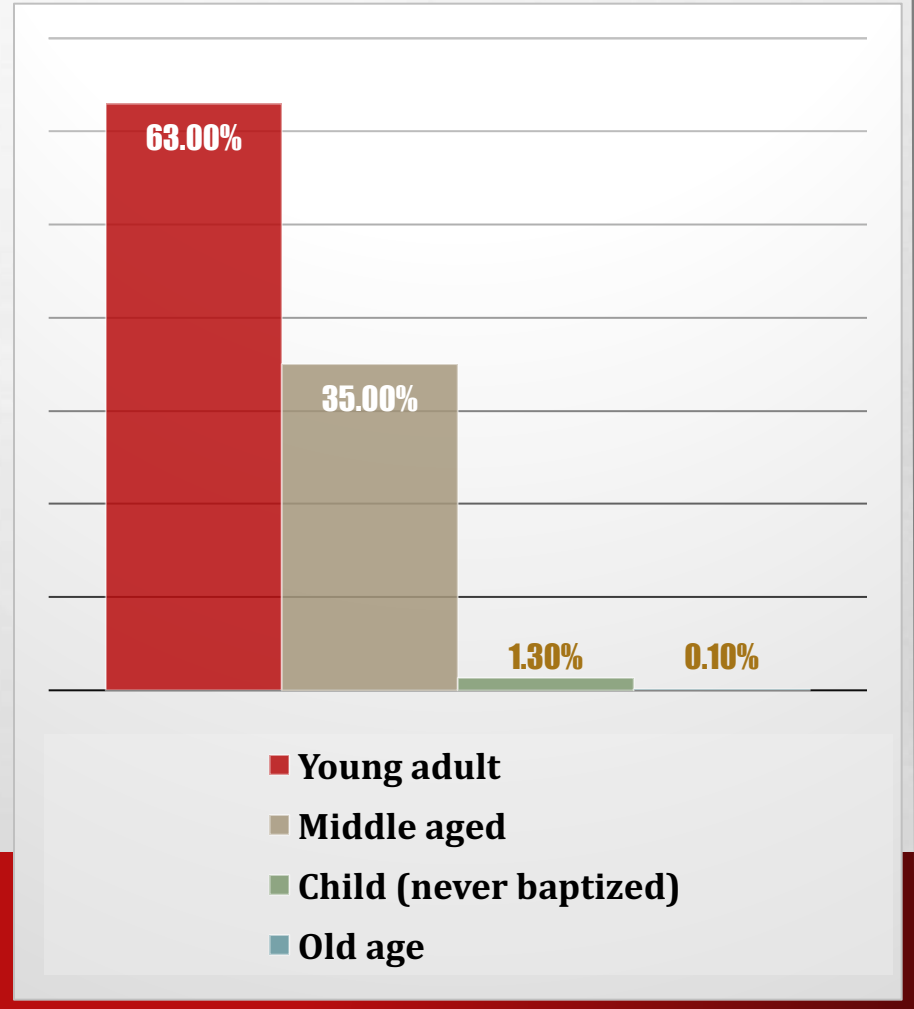


AGE WHEN THEY STOPPED ATTENDING THE ADVENTIST CHURCH (F&IM)

■ 18-29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40 +

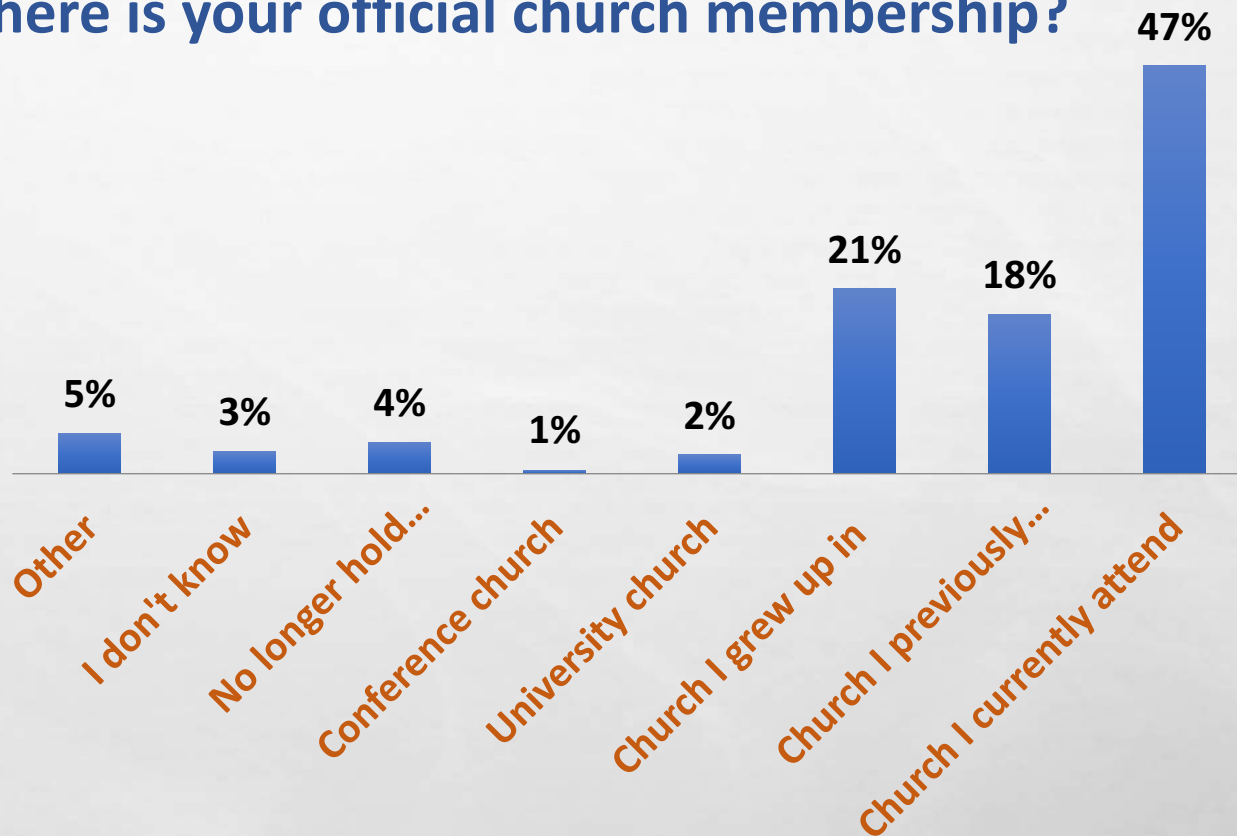


When did you decide to leave the church? (LS)



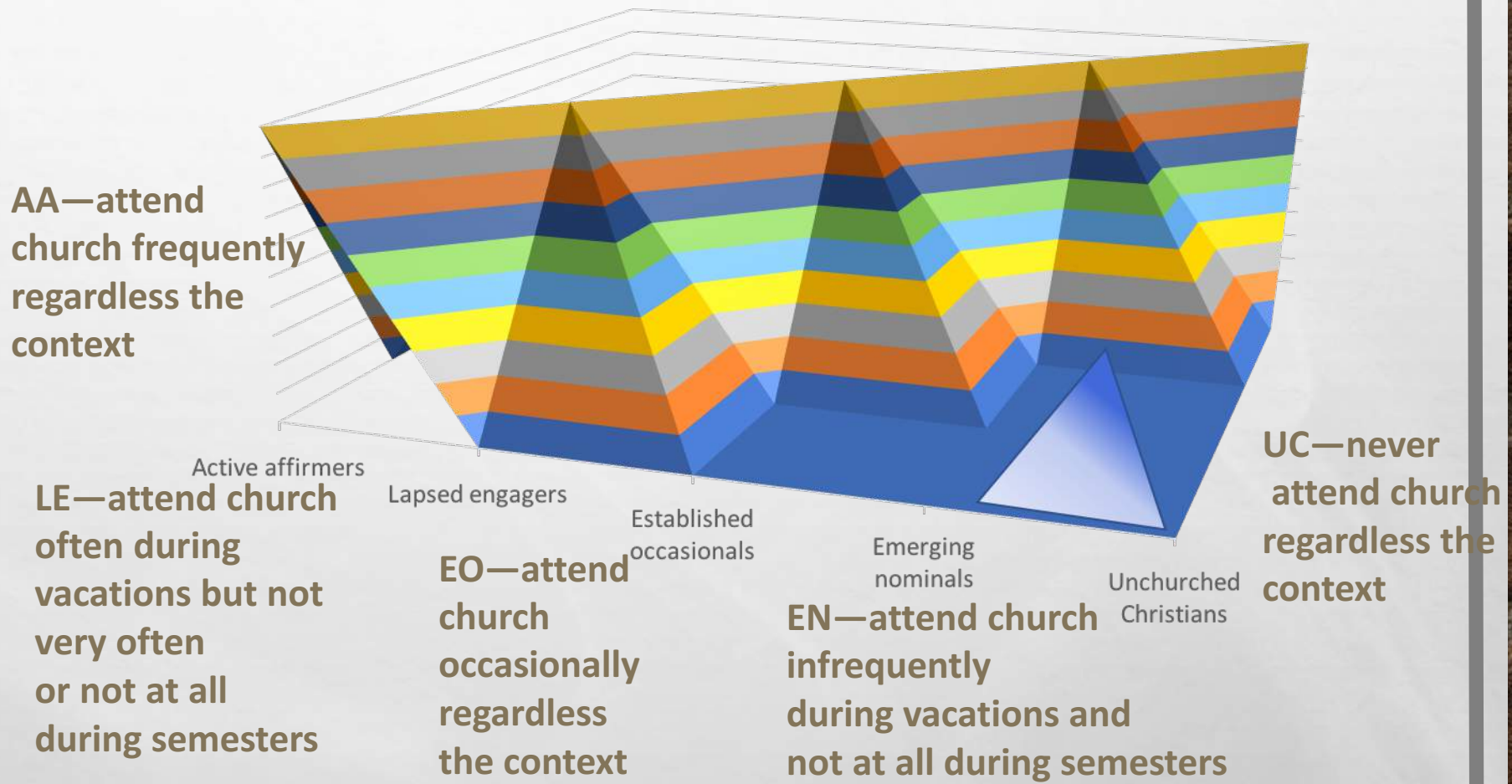
I. TRANSITIONAL LIFESTYLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDANCE (21ST CGS)

Where is your official church membership?



MATHEW J. GUEST

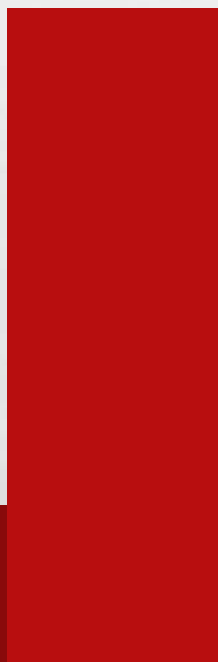
THE HIDDEN CHRISTIANS OF THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS: PUBLIC VISIBILITY AND THE FUTURE OF RELIGION IN THE UK



II. CHURCH FACTOR CHURCHES THEY FIT IN ??? WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS YOU DON'T ATTEND CHURCH REGULARLY? (21ST CCS)

- I haven't found one I fit in
- I think the church is too political
- My job/schedule does not allow time
- I don't see the need or benefit of going
- I don't feel welcome at church

53%



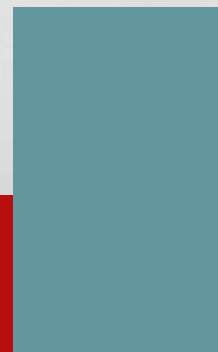
39%



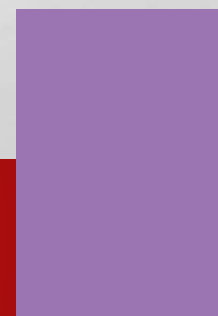
36%



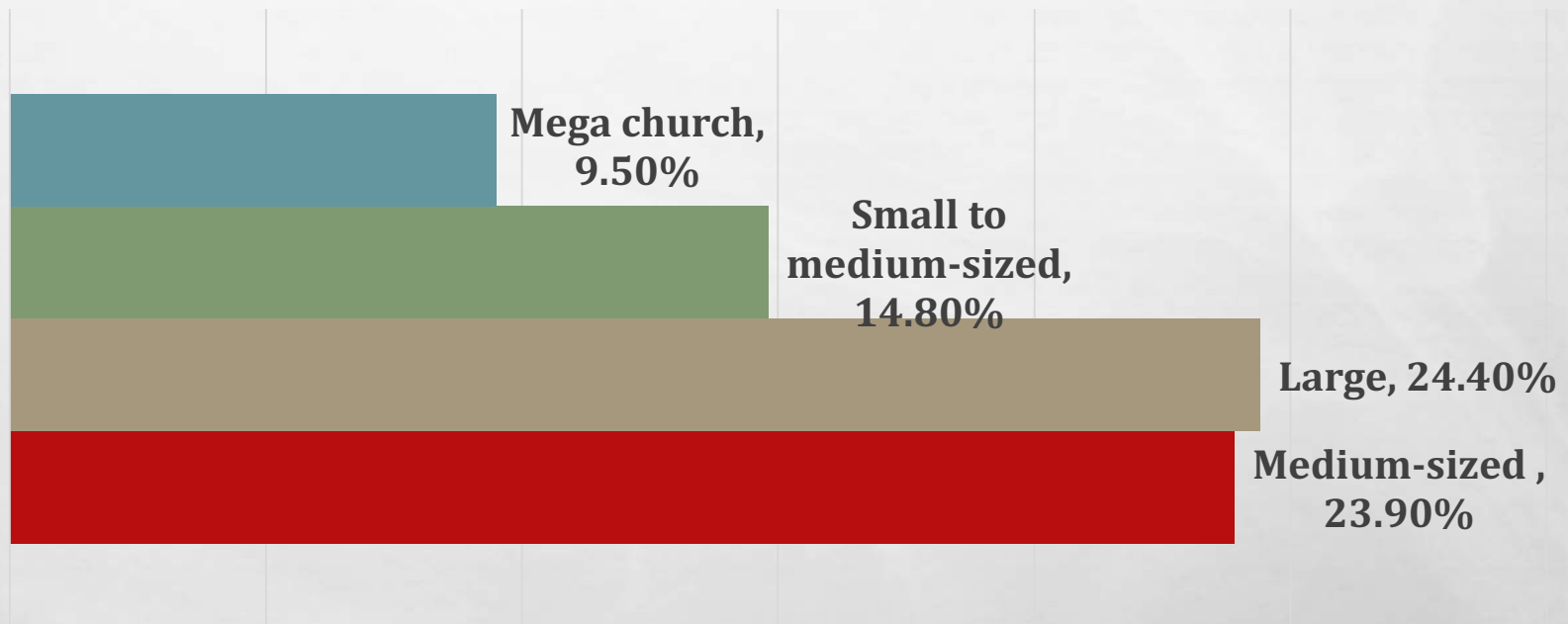
28%



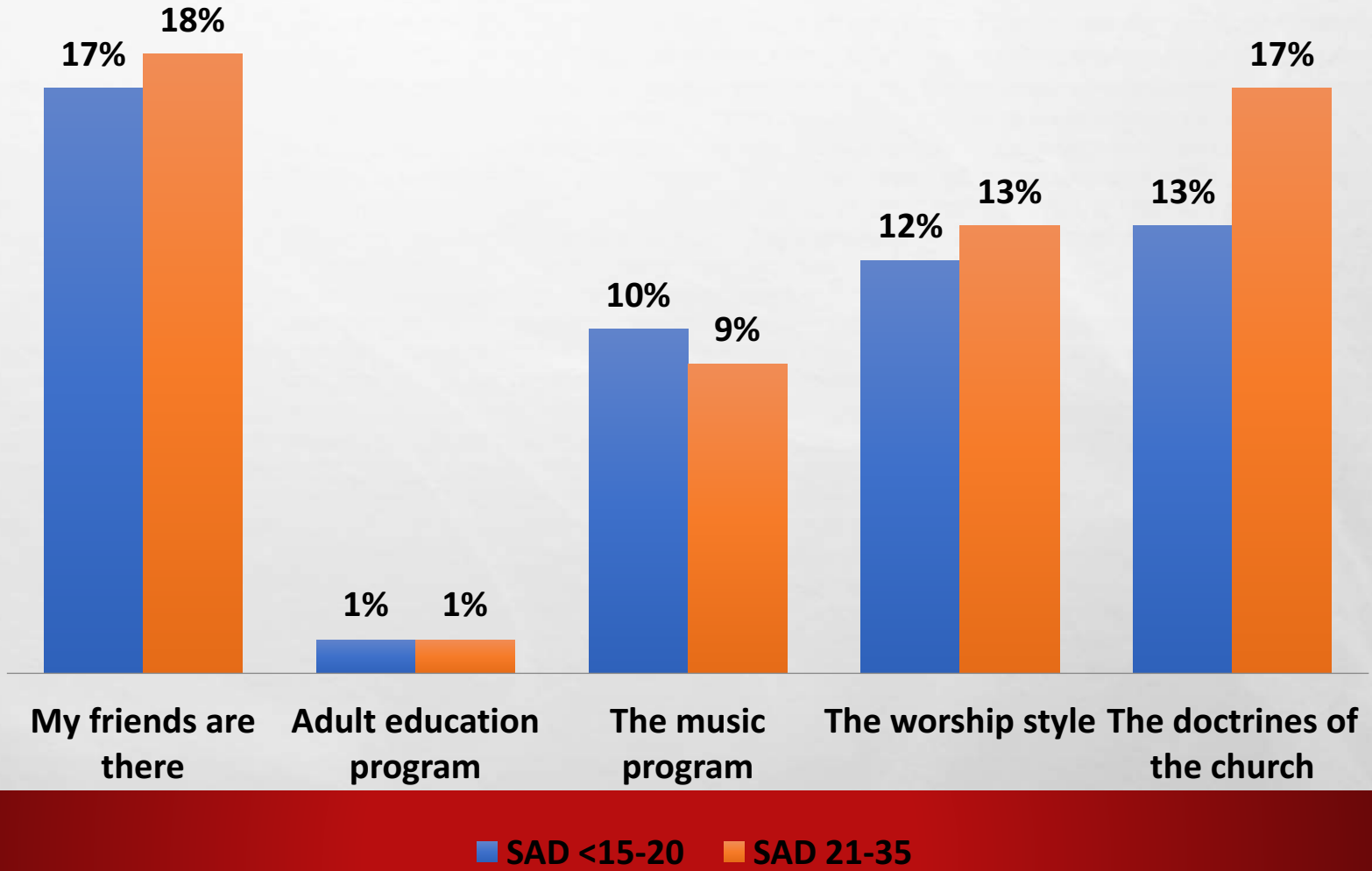
25%



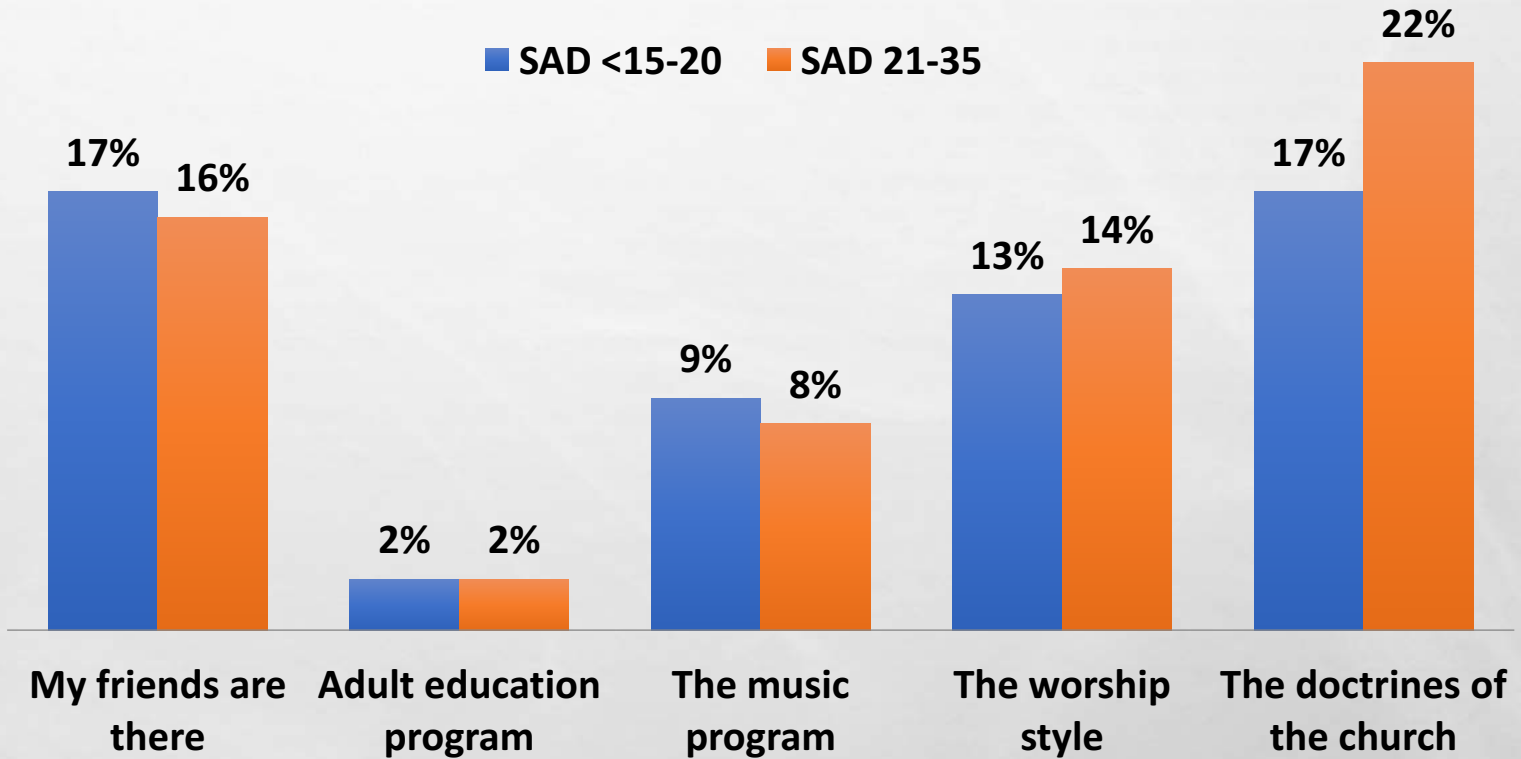
1. CHURCH SIZE (21ST CCS)



2. FRIENDS IN THE CHURCH: 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)

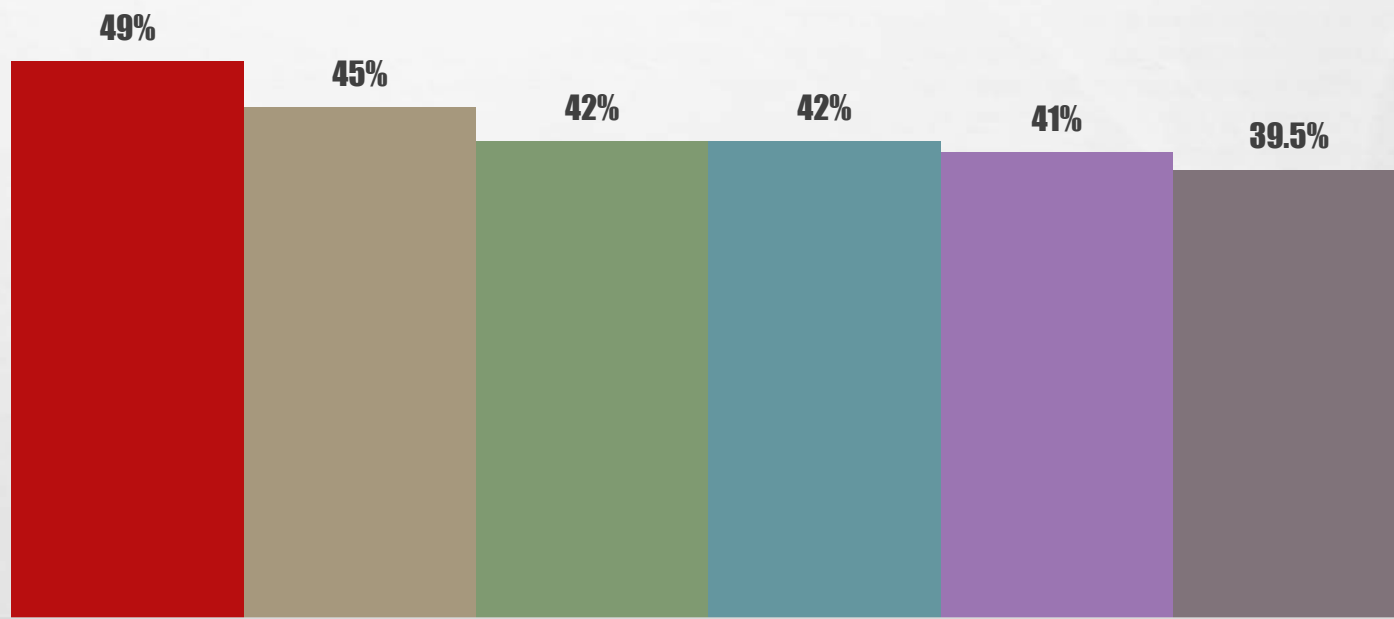


3. MEANINGFUL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND ACTIVITIES AFTER

- 1. MEANINGFUL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE, GREAT ROLE IS PLAYED BY PERSONALITY OF THE PASTOR – 64% AND RELEVANCE OF SERMONS – 85% (21ST CCS)**
- 2. THOSE WHO FOUND PREACHING AT CHURCH RELEVANT OR HELPFUL TO THEIR DAILY LIVES WERE MORE LIKELY TO WANT TO REMAIN ACTIVE IN THEIR FAITH THAN THOSE WHO DID NOT (V EU)**
- 3. ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF WORSHIP SERVICE (42%) (21ST CCS)**
- 4. INVOLVEMENT IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES, MORE SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES (94%) (CSY, NAD)**
- 5. MORE ENGAGING, CONSTRUCTIVE THINGS ON FRIDAY NIGHTS/SABBATH (CSY, NAD)**
- 6. PROGRAMS FOR KIDS AND YOUNG COUPLES**

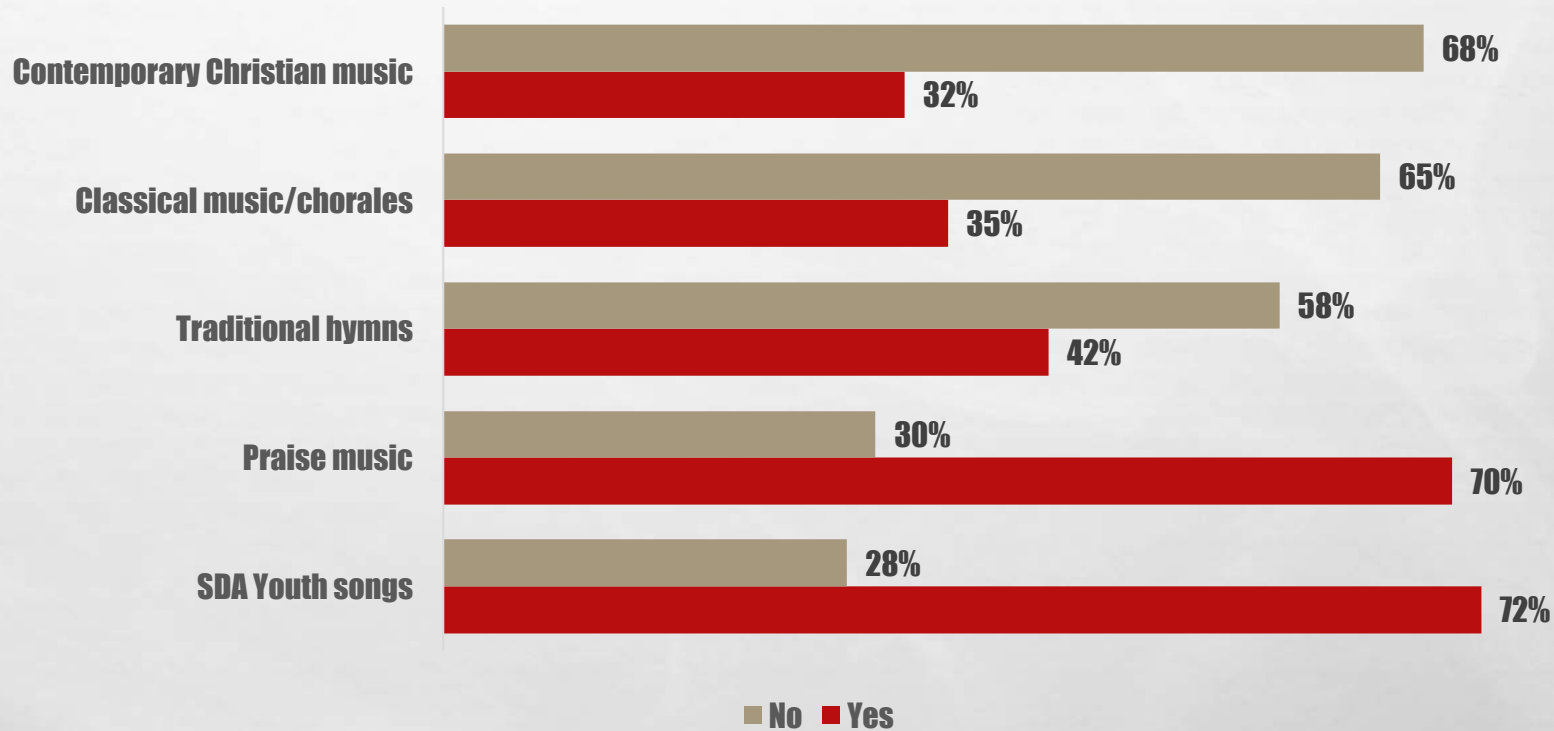
AREAS OF THE CHURCH WHERE THEY CONNECT MOST

(21ST CCS)



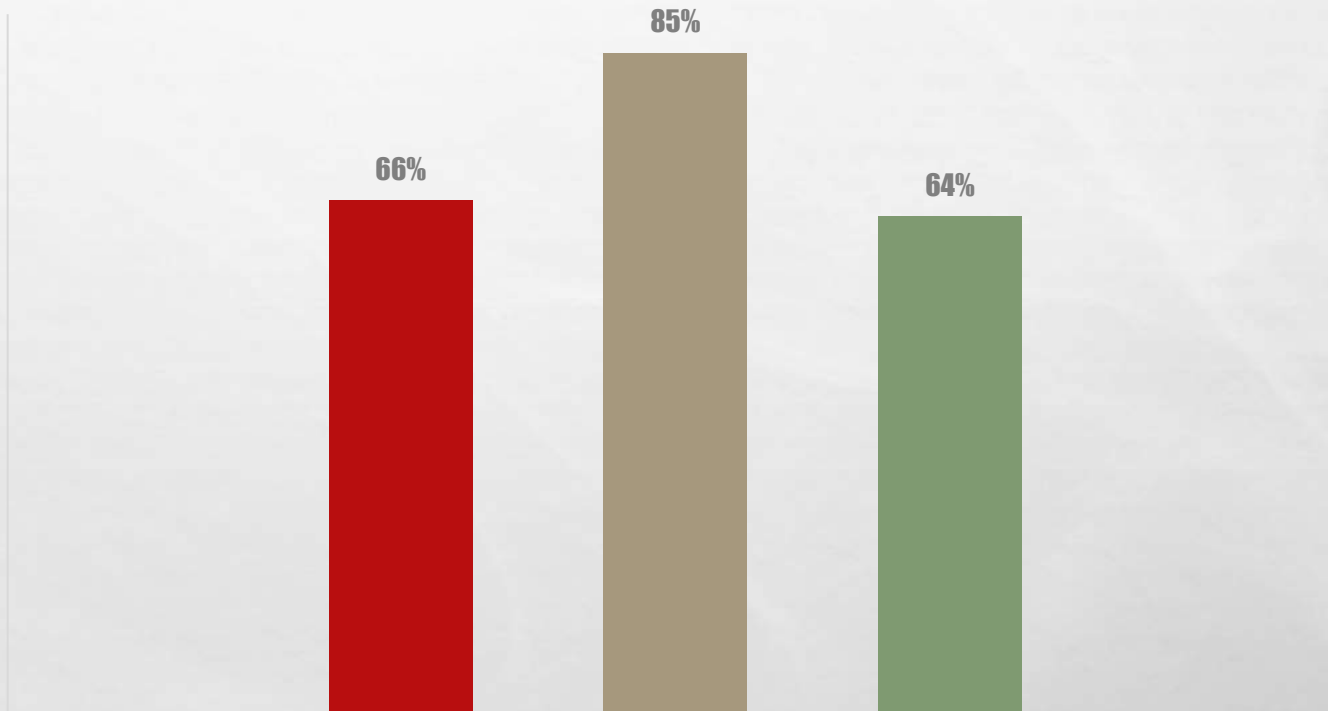
■ Music ■ Church members ■ Sermons ■ Activities outside worship ■ Potlucks ■ Sabbath School

MUSIC STYLES (V EU)



WHAT ATTRACTS THEM TO THE CHURCH? (21ST CCS)

■ Having people of their age ■ Relevance of sermons ■ Pastor's personality



4. CHURCH CLIMATE

- **EACH CONGREGATION HAS ITS UNIQUE ATMOSPHERE OR CHURCH CLIMATE**
- **TWO CRUCIAL COMPONENTS: CHURCH WARMTH AND THINKING CLIMATE**

- **WARM CLIMATE OF ACCEPTANCE**
- **NON-JUDGMENTAL CLIMATE**
- **SUPPORT IN THE TIMES OF CRISIS**
- **COMPASSION FOR HURTING**
- **SUCCESSFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION**
- **THINKING CLIMATE (FRANK, OPEN, TRANSPARENT EXCHANGE OF VIEWS) (HCS, V EU)**

- **CHURCH WARMTH 58% (V EU)**
- **THINKING CLIMATE – 41% (V EU)**

MATURE SCALE FAITH

- **SEARCH INSTITUTE FOR A NATIONAL STUDY OF ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SIX MAJOR PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS (1988-1990) DEVELOPED MATURE SCALE FAITH**
- **IT IS NOT SIMPLY A SET OF RIGHT BELIEFS**
- **RATHER, IT IS A WAY OF LIFE, A SET OF PRIORITIES AND BEHAVIORS WHICH EVIDENCE THAT FAITH IS DEEP, VIBRANT, AND LIFE-CHANGING**

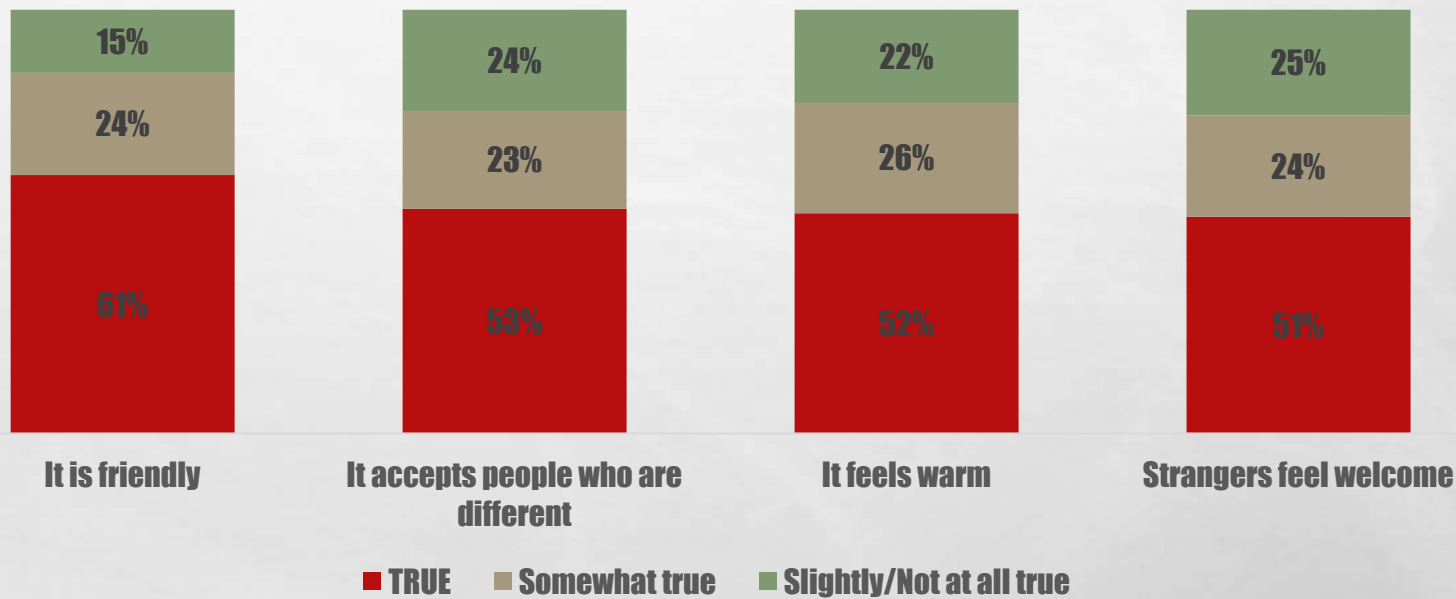
VALUEGENESIS (V I, NAD)

- **THE VALUEGENESIS AVERAGE WAS 54% ON CHURCH WARM CLIMATE, AND THAT WAS CONSIDERED UNACCEPTABLY LOW.**
- **WHEN ADVENTIST YOUTH IN THE VALUEGENESIS STUDY WERE COMPARED WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF FIVE MAINLINE PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS ON THE SAME SCALE, THE ADVENTISTS AVERAGED LOWER AT EVERY GRADE LEVEL, ESPECIALLY IN THE UPPER GRADES.**

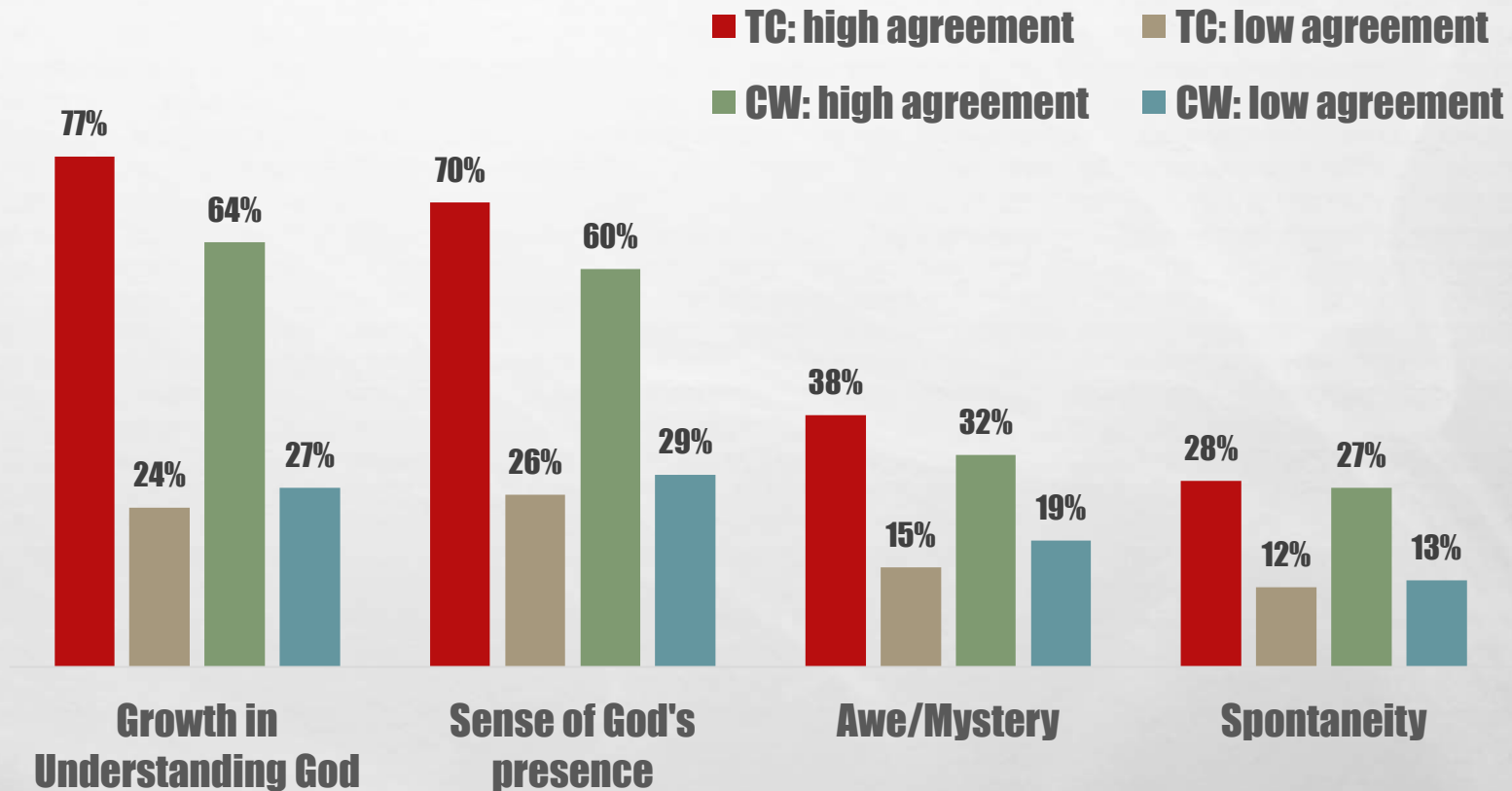
CHURCH WARMTH (VI NAD; 5 Ys)

- **IT FEELS WARM. 44%; 36%**
- **IT ACCEPTS PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT. 60%; 42%**
- **IT IS FRIENDLY. 61% 48% STRANGERS FEEL WELCOME. 49%; 39%**
- **THE AVERAGE FOR THE FOUR ITEMS WAS ONLY 41%.**

THE CHURCH WARMTH SCALE (V EU)

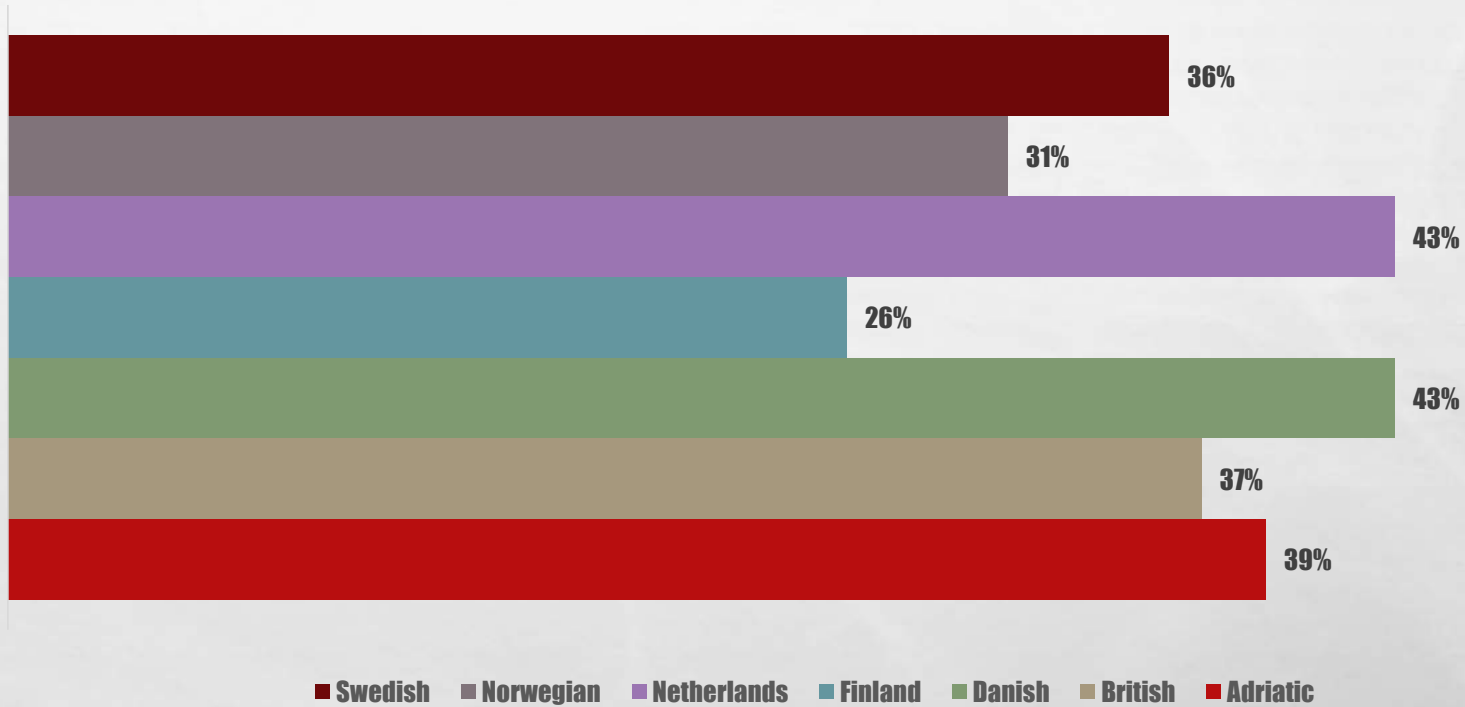


WORSHIP EXPERIENCE AND THINKING CLIMATE (TC)/ CHURCH WARMTH (CW) IN THE CHURCH (V EU)

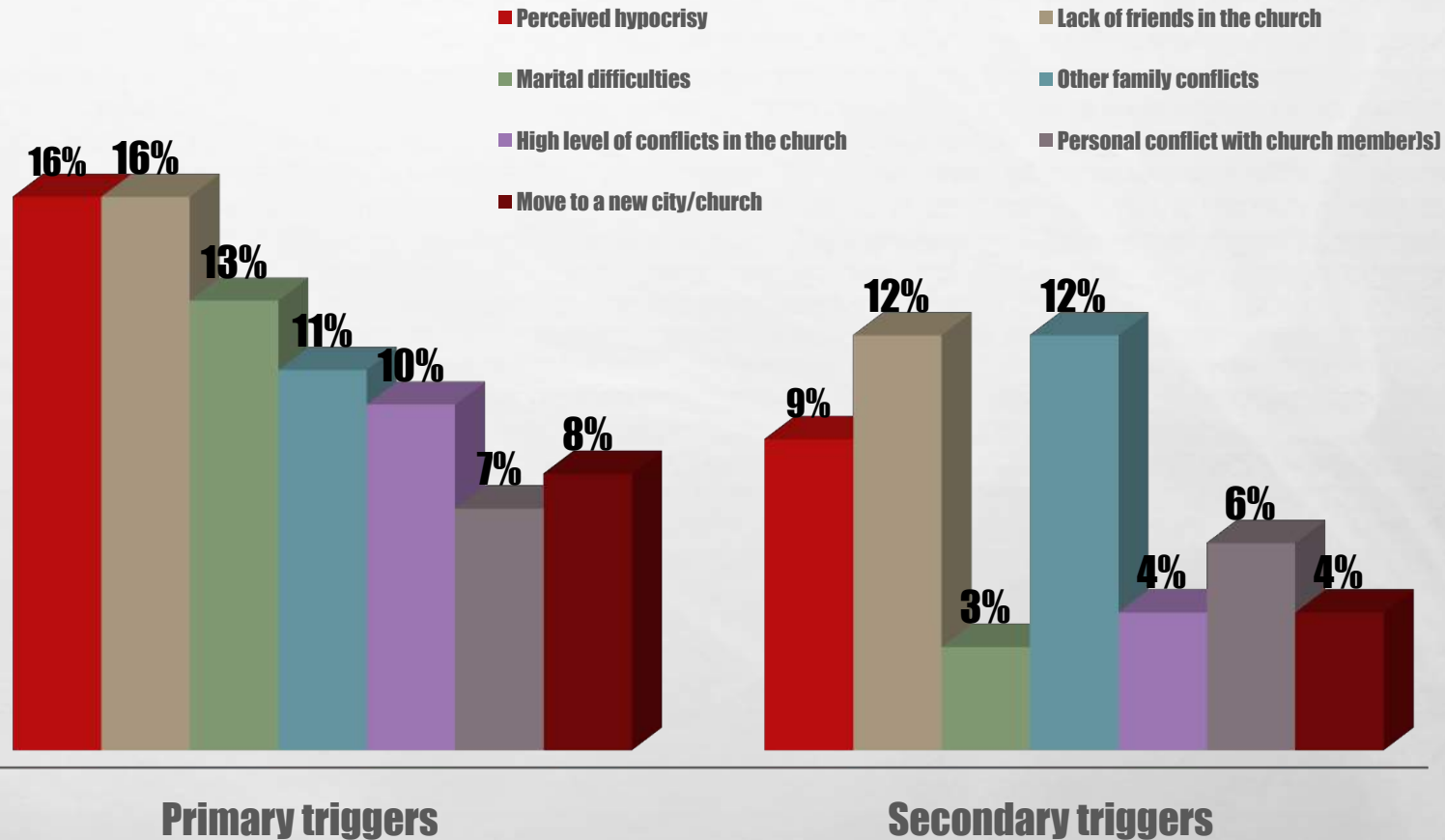


MY SPIRITUAL NEEDS ARE MET IN THE CHURCH

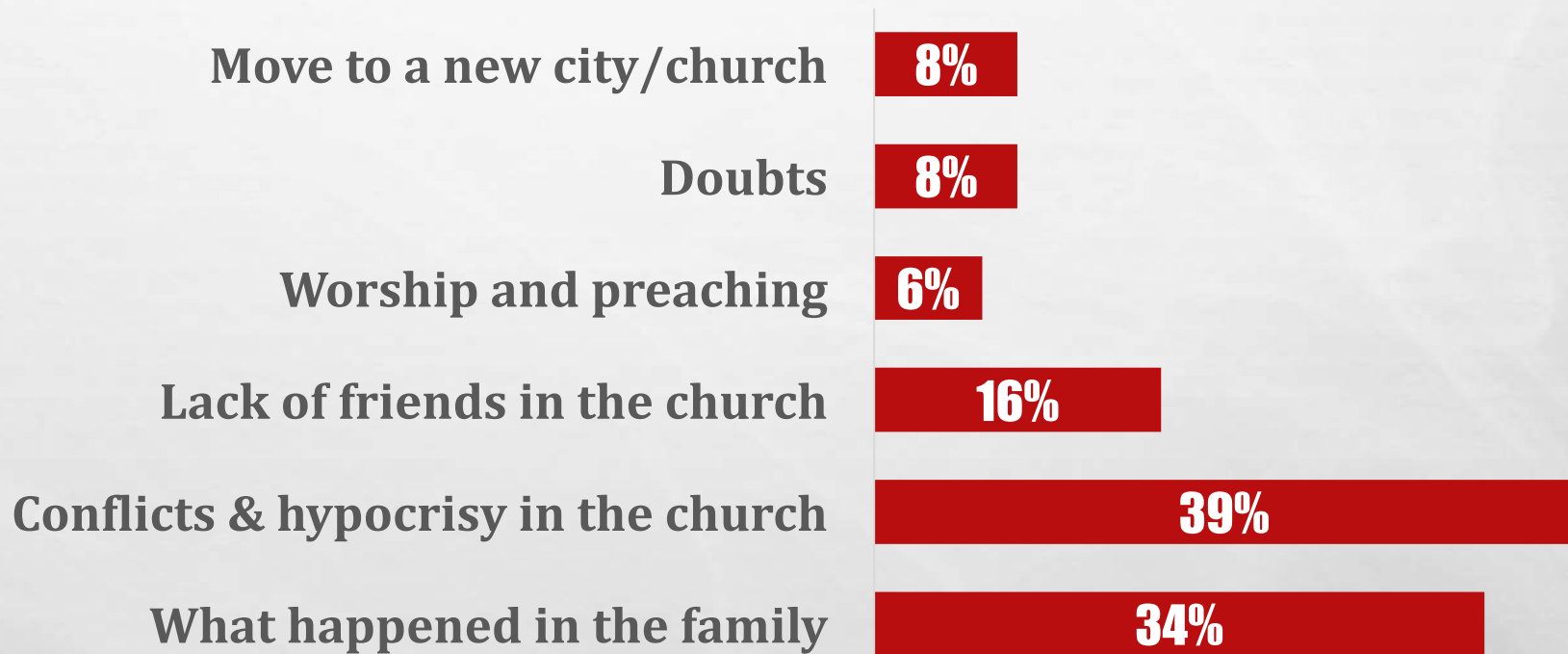
(TOTAL SAMPLE V EU: YES=49%)



WHAT EVENT TRIGGERED YOUR DECISION TO LEAVE? PRIMARY & SECONDARY TRIGGERS (LS, YOUNG PEOPLE)



MAJOR THEMES (LS, YOUNG PEOPLE)



CHURCH CLIMATE – DECISIVE FACTOR FOR INTRINSIC RELIGION (V EU)

- **AVERAGE VALUE WAS 4.02 WITH 5 BEING THE HIGHEST POINT POSSIBLE**
- **“THE HIGHER CHURCH WARMTH WAS PERCEIVED, THE HIGHER THE VALUE FOR INTRINSIC SCORED (UP TO 4.26)”**
- **IF CHURCH WARMTH WAS VERY LOW, A VERY AFFECTIONATE MOTHER COULD STILL MAKE UP FOR IT, SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASING INTRINSIC RELIGION SCORE (4.13)**
- **CHURCH WARMTH COMBINED WITH A GOOD FAMILY CLIMATE COULD CONSIDERABLY ENHANCE INTRINSIC RELIGION**
- **THE HIGHEST SCORE WAS ACHIEVED WHEN HIGH SCORE OF CHURCH CLIMATE WAS COMBINED WITH HIGHLY AFFECTIONATE MOTHER (4.48)**
- **IN FAMILY CIRCLES, OVERALL, A GOOD FAMILY CLIMATE AND AN AFFECTIONATE MOTHER ARE THE STRONGEST FAMILY FACTORS TO FOSTER INTRINSIC RELIGION**
- **CHURCH ATMOSPHERE MAY HAVE MORE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH THAN WE THOUGHT**

THINKING CLIMATE (V I NAD; 5 Ys)

- **I LEARN A LOT. 34%; 28%**
- **MOST MEMBERS WANT TO BE CHALLENGED TO THINK ABOUT RELIGIOUS ISSUES AND IDEAS. 35%; 30%**
- **IT CHALLENGES MY THINKING. 31%; 25%**
- **T ENCOURAGES ME TO ASK QUESTIONS. 28%; 23%**
- **IT EXPECTS PEOPLE TO LEARN AND THINK. 40%; 34%**
- **WITH ONLY AN AVERAGE OF 34% OF VALUEGENESIS RESPONDENTS WITH A GOOD THINKING CLIMATE THAT FOSTER THINKING, THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YOUTH RETENTION 5TH YEAR STUDY SCORED IT LOWER, WITH AN AVERAGE OF 28%**
- **YOUTH FROM THE FIVE MAINLINE PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS AVERAGED HIGHER ON A THINKING CLIMATE IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS THAN DID YOUNG ADVENTISTS. IF YOUNG PEOPLE THINK POORLY OF THE THINKING CLIMATE OF THEIR CONGREGATIONS, THE CHURCH WILL LIKELY LOSE THEM**

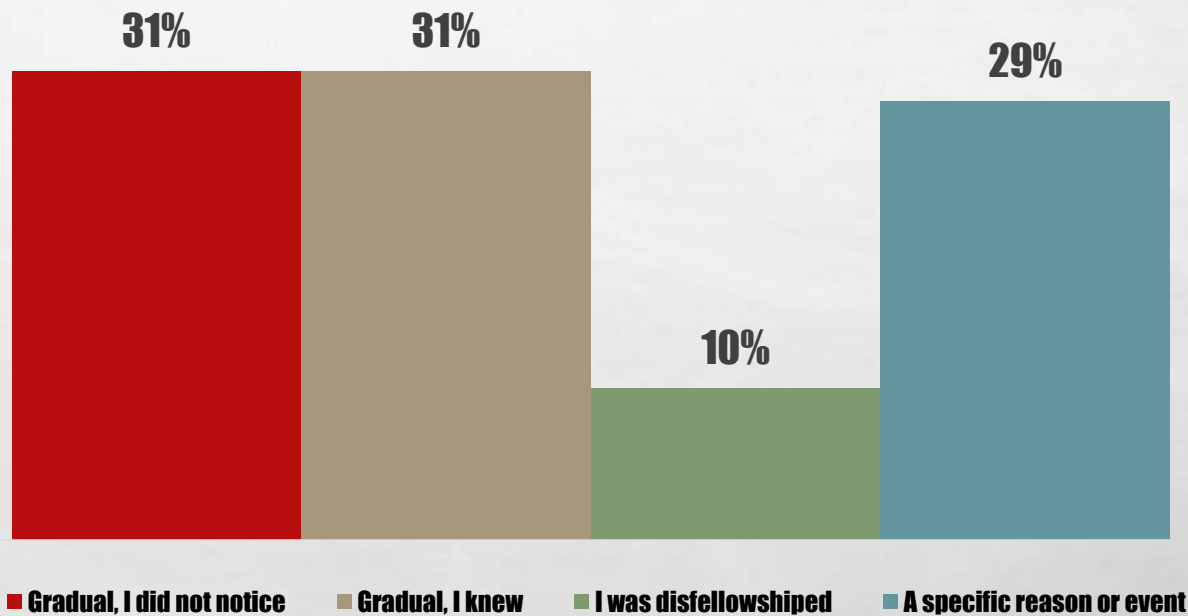
TO REMAIN ADVENTIST FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS

(V EU)

- **8 TIMES MORE LIKELY IF PREACHING IS RELEVANT**
- **5 TIMES MORE LIKELY IF SPIRITUAL NEEDS ARE MET IN THE CHURCH**
- **2.6 TIMES MORE LIKELY IF THEY ARE IN A SUPPORTIVE AND HELPFUL CONGREGATION:
THEY USE THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND ARE INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH MINISTRY**

HOW DID YOU COME TO THIS DECISION?

(TO LEAVE THE CHURCH) (LS, YOUNG PEOPLE)



SUMMARY

- **WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH YOUTH RETENTION**
- **THE PRIMARY REASON FOR PEOPLE LEAVING THE CHURCH IS NOT DOCTRINAL**
- **CLIMATE, ATMOSPHERE, RELATIONSHIPS, SUPPORT, AND WORSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH ARE CRUCIAL**
- **WHAT IS HAPPENING IN PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IS ALSO CRUCIAL**
- **THERE IS A NEED FOR EFFECTIVE SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-UP SYSTEMS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH**

CONCLUSIONS

- **TRANSITIONAL LIFESTYLE**
- **CHURCH SIZES, WORSHIP SERVICES, AND NUMBER OF PEOPLE OF THEIR AGE**
- **RELEVANCE OF SERMONS AND MUSIC STYLE**
- **PERSONALITY OF THE PASTOR**
- **CHURCH WARMTH AND THINKING CLIMATE**
- **LIFE EVENTS**
- **FRIENDS IN THE CHURCH**

“Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?” (Luke 15:4)