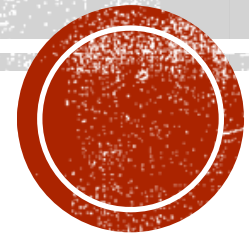


# **WHY DO YOUTH LEAVE THE CHURCH?**

## **PART 2 BELIEVE, BEHAVE, BELONG**



**Galina Steele, D.Min.**

**TED Nurture &  
Retention Summit**

**Montenegro,  
November, 2017**

## RESEARCH SOURCES

- *21<sup>st</sup> Century Connection Study* (**21<sup>st</sup> CCS**) – Douglas Jacobs (SAU) & team; 2012-2013; n=1,153 (SAU, PUC, OU); mean age=28; 77% 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 (V SPD)* – 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 (V EU)* – 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
- *5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Year Longitudinal Study of Youth Retention (10 Ys)* – Roger L. Dudley, 1987-1997, n=783
- *Valuegenesis I, NAD (V I NAD)* – Roger L. Dudley, 1987
- *Leaving the Church (LS)* – Retention study, GC ASTR, 2013, n=785



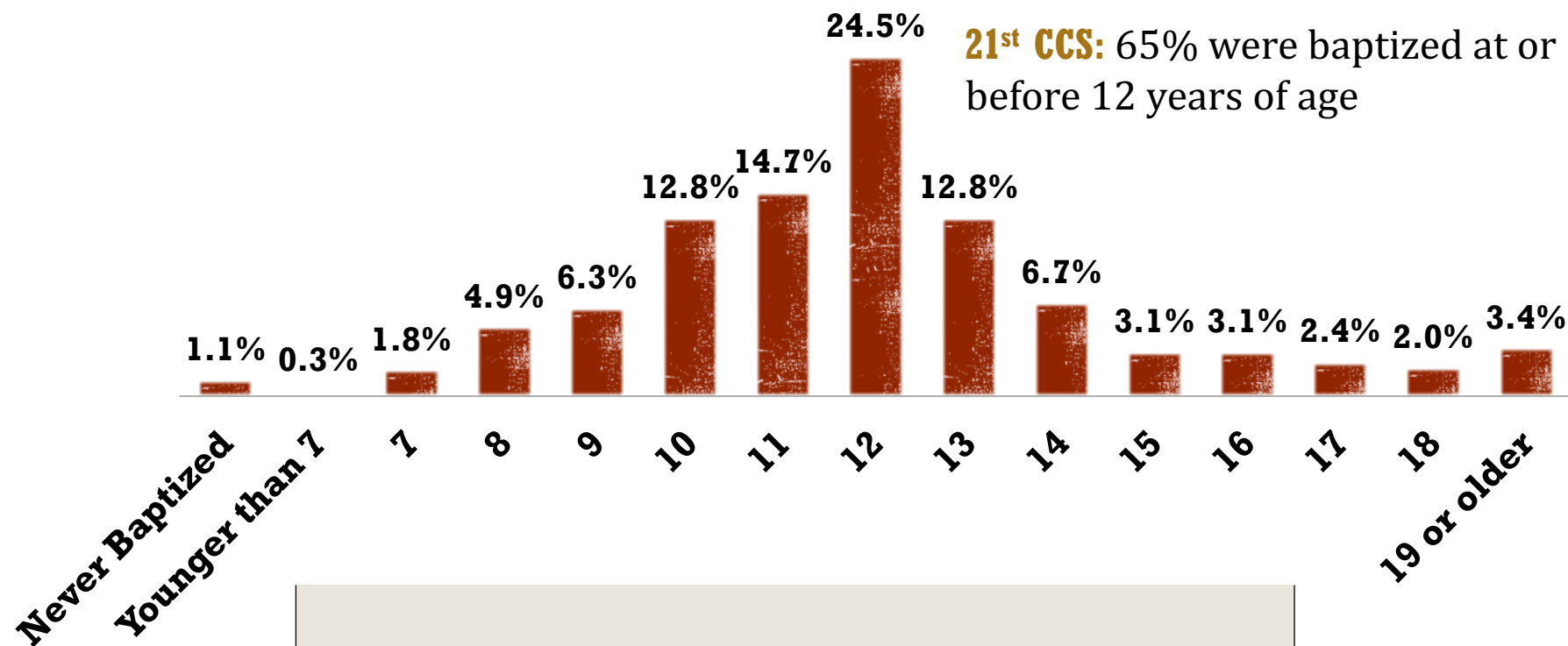
# FOLLOW-UP PROGRAMS AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH ARE CRUCIAL AFTER THEIR BAPTISM

## AGE AT BAPTISM?

**V EU:** In UK, Finland, Denmark more than 13% were baptized before the age of 12

### **V SPD:**

- 24% - at 12 or under (about 14% at 9 or under)
- 14% -- from 13-16 years of age



"I was baptize at the early age so I cannot overcome temptation." (LS)



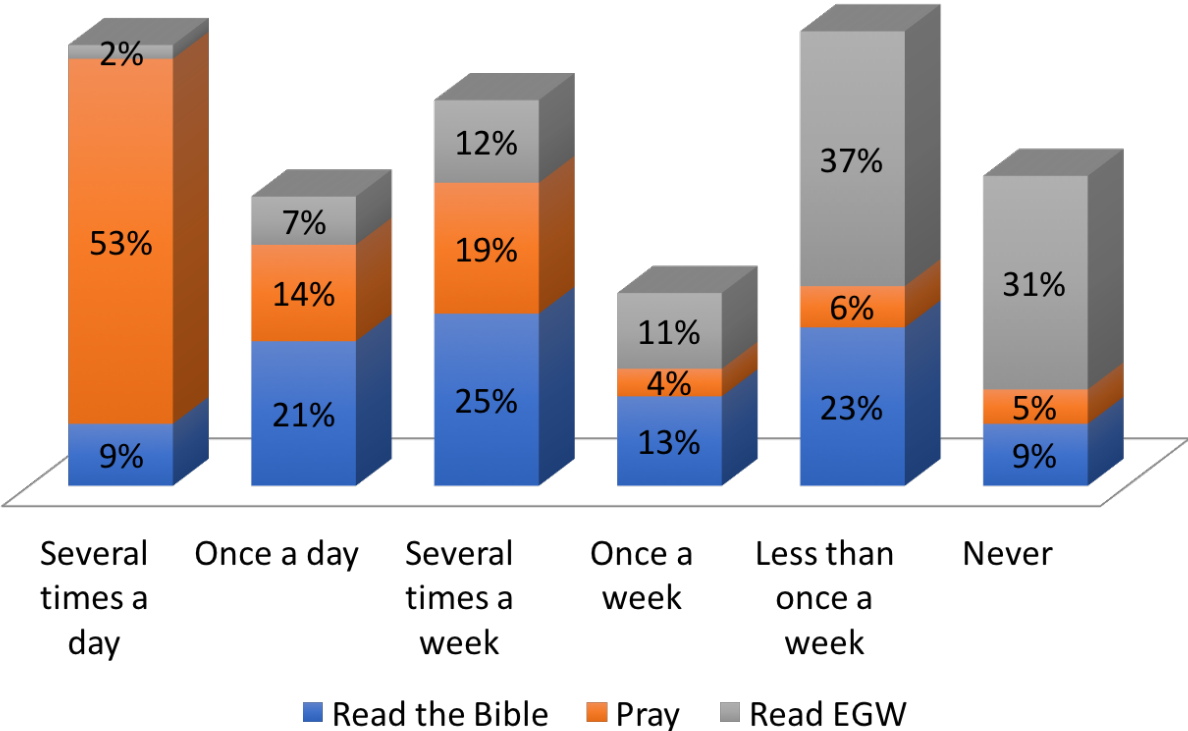
**21<sup>ST</sup> CCS:**

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

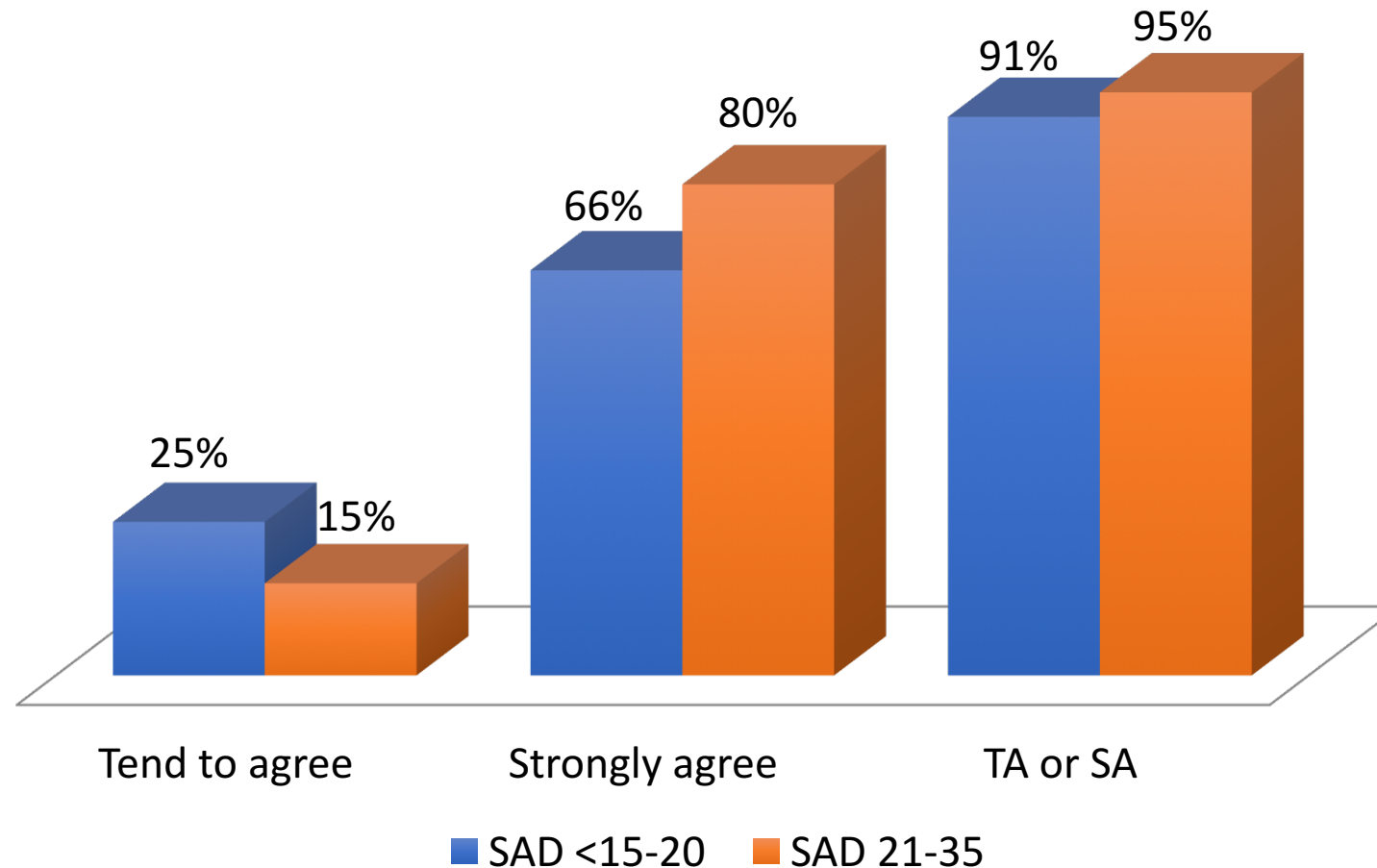
**Is there a problem with the devotional life of young people?**



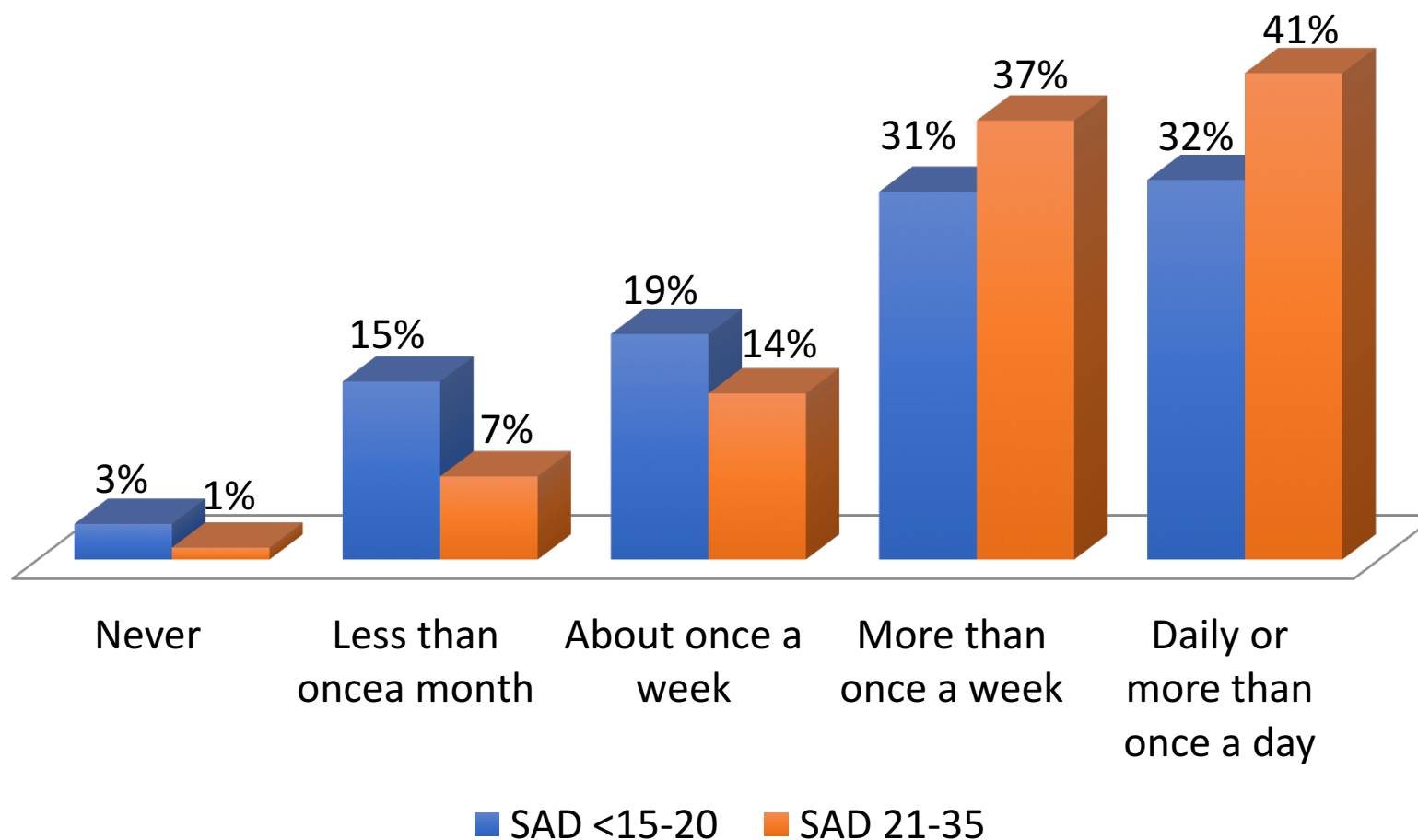
# DEVOTIONAL LIFE (21<sup>ST</sup> CCS)



# IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME TO SPEND TIME IN PRIVATE THOUGHT AND PRAYER (SAD, Q. 3.55)

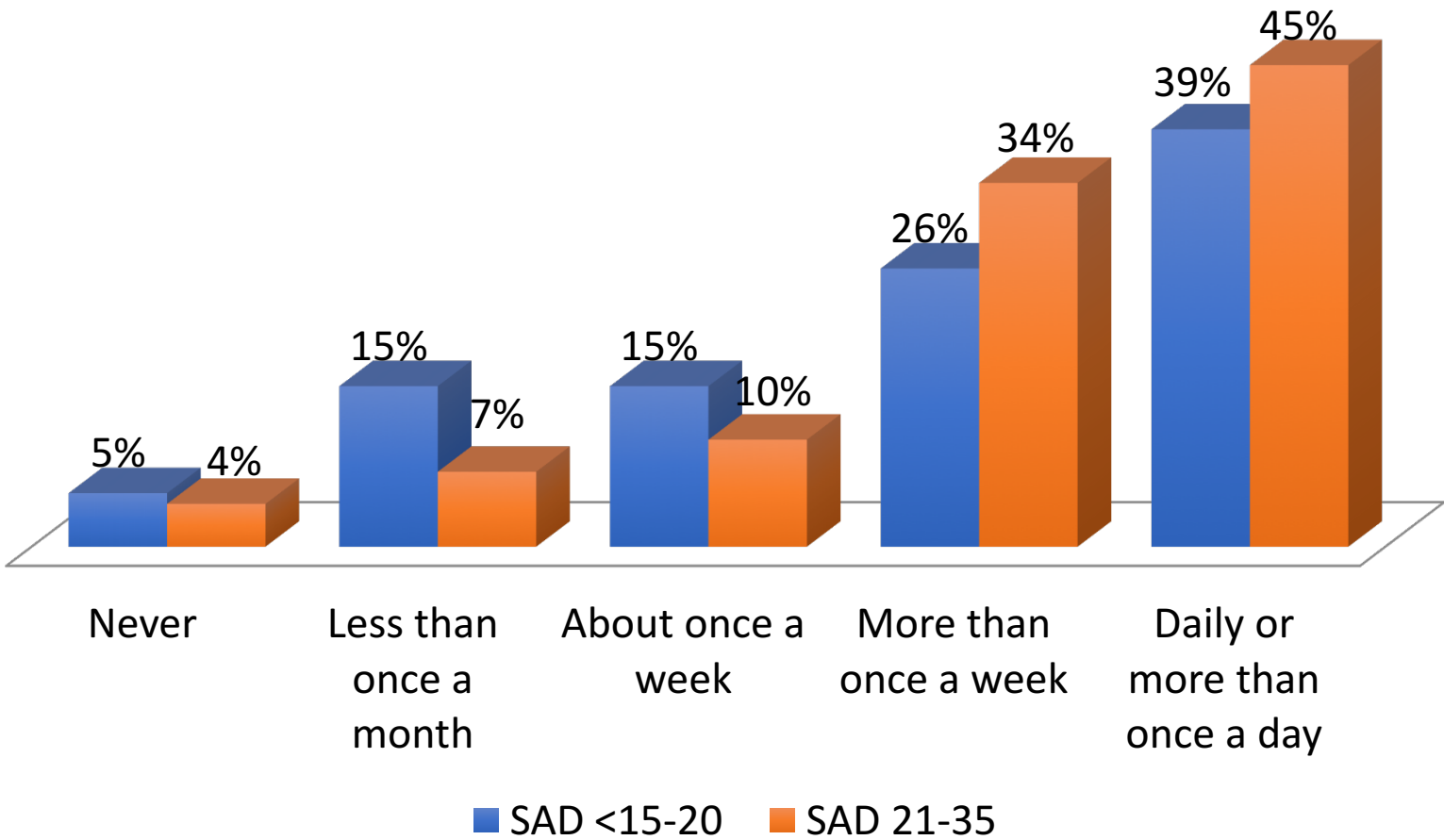


# HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ THE BIBLE? (SAD, Q.3.71)

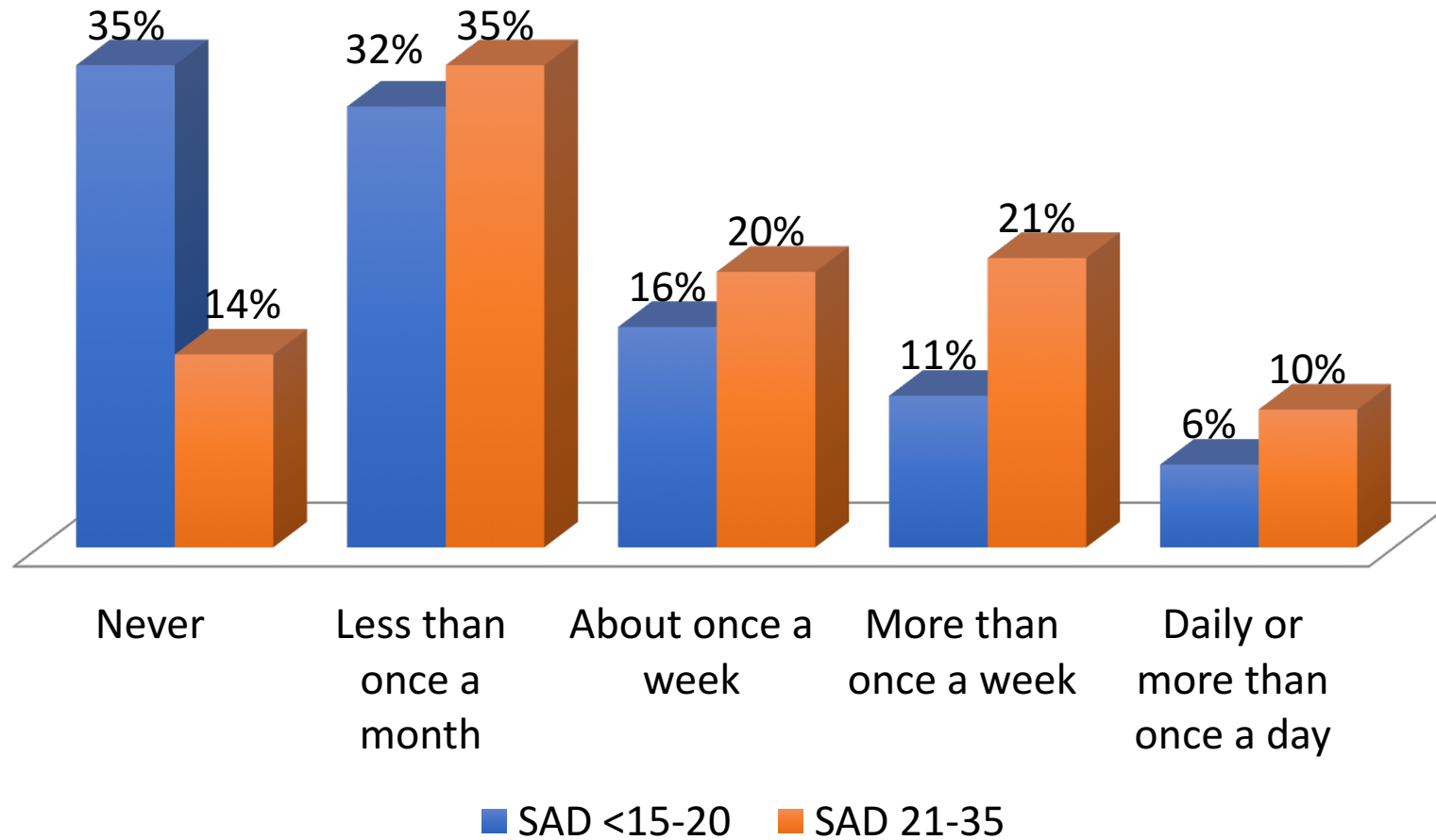




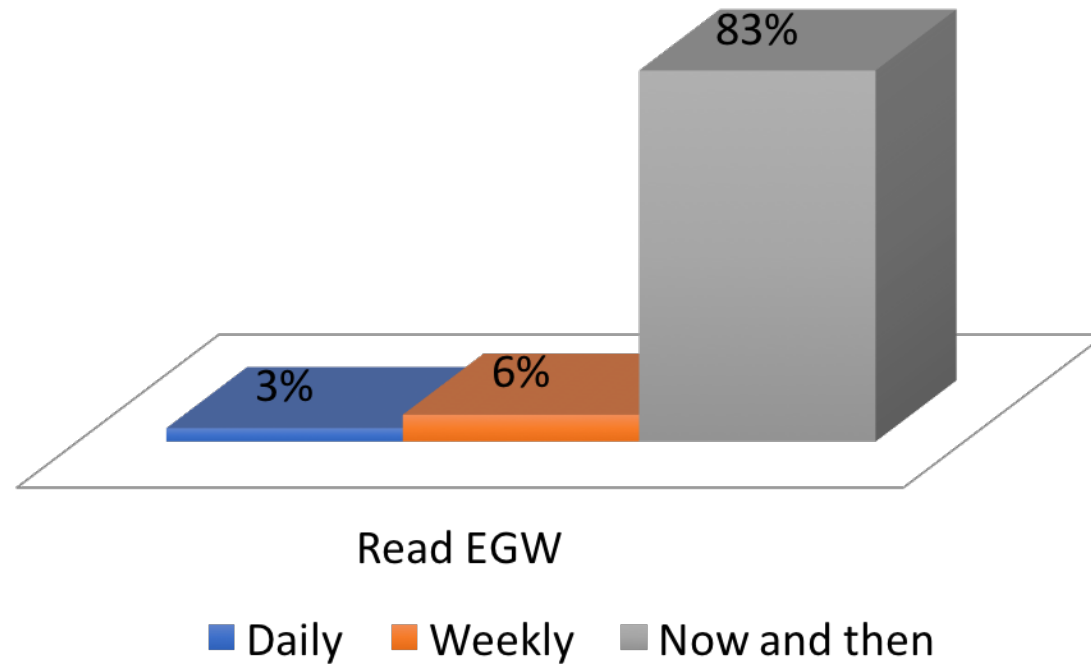
# HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE PERSONAL DEVOTIONS? (SAD, Q.3.71)



## HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ EGW? (SAD, Q.3.71)



# HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ EGW? (BBs)



# SDA DOCTRINES

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

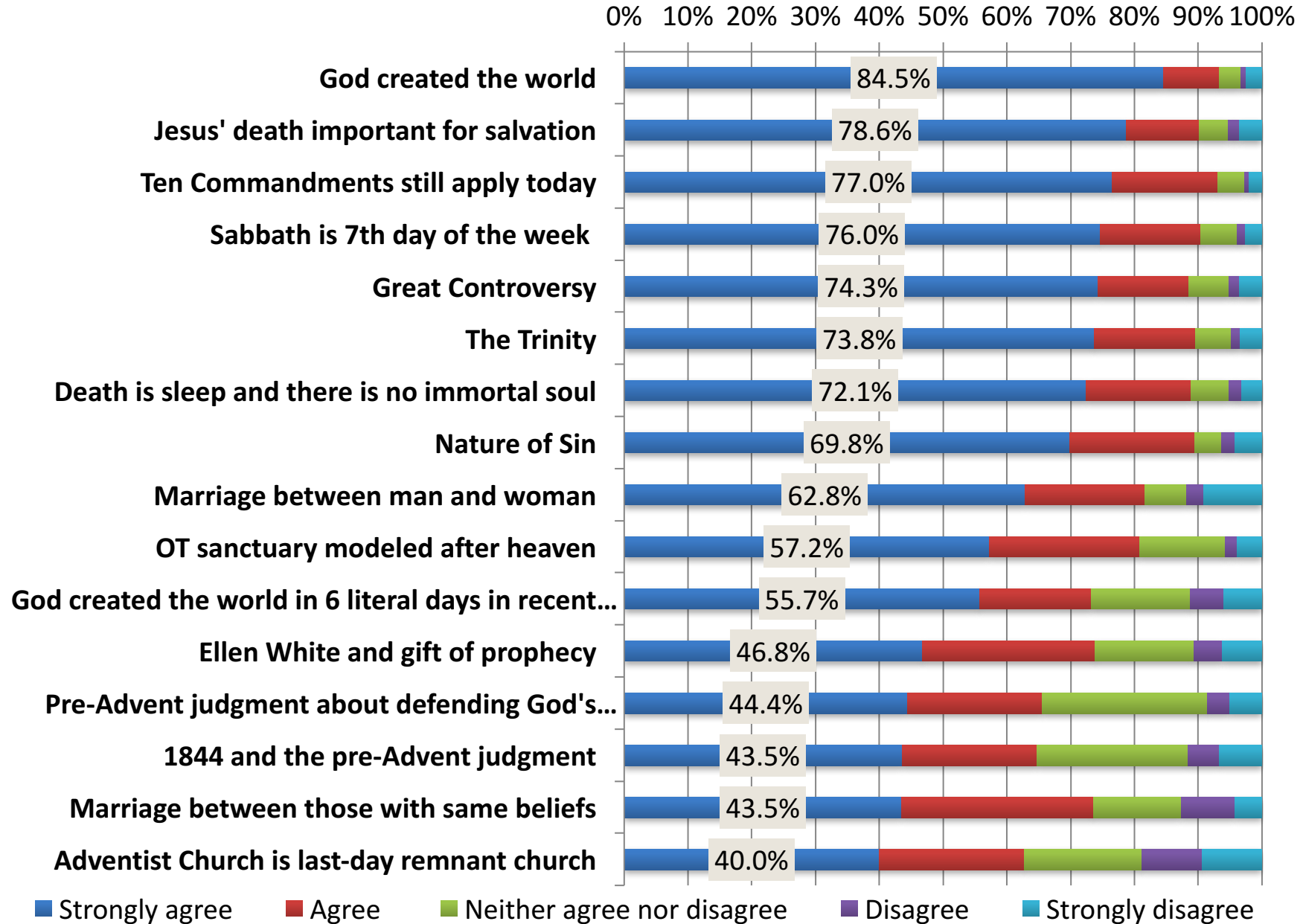
**Overall, there is strong support for SDA doctrines by recent graduates**

- 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

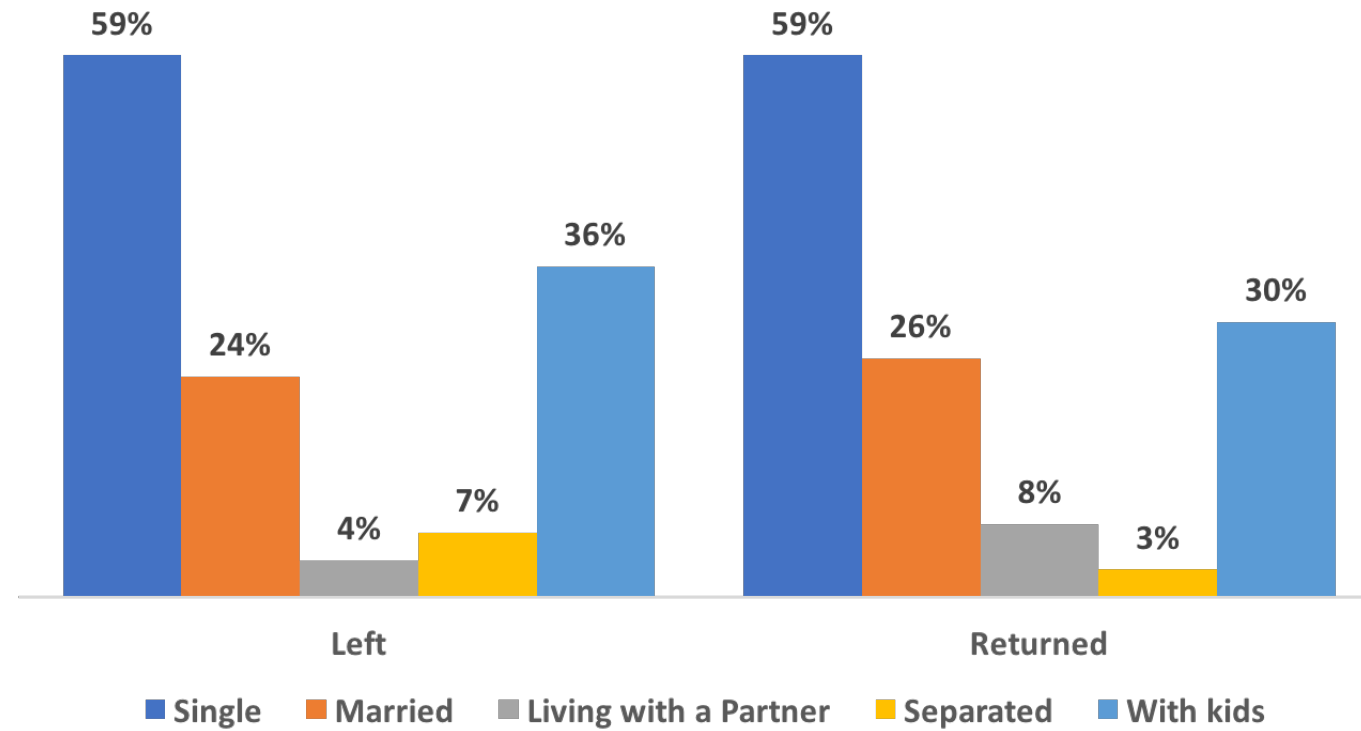


# Agreement with Adventist Doctrines

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



# MARITAL STATUS (LS)



(V SPD)

|                         | <b>Strongly Agree or<br/>Moderately Agree<br/>1992; 2012</b> | <b>Don't know<br/>1992; 2012</b> |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Pre-Advent<br>Judgment  | 52% ; 38%  | 37% ; 37%                        |
| E.G. White              | 78% ; 66%  | 12% ; 22%                        |
| SDA Church's<br>Mission | 86% ; 67%  | 7% ; 15%                         |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Coming  | 93% ; 78%  | 2% ; 8%                          |
| Salvation by grace      | 91% ; 77%  | 4% ; 12%                         |



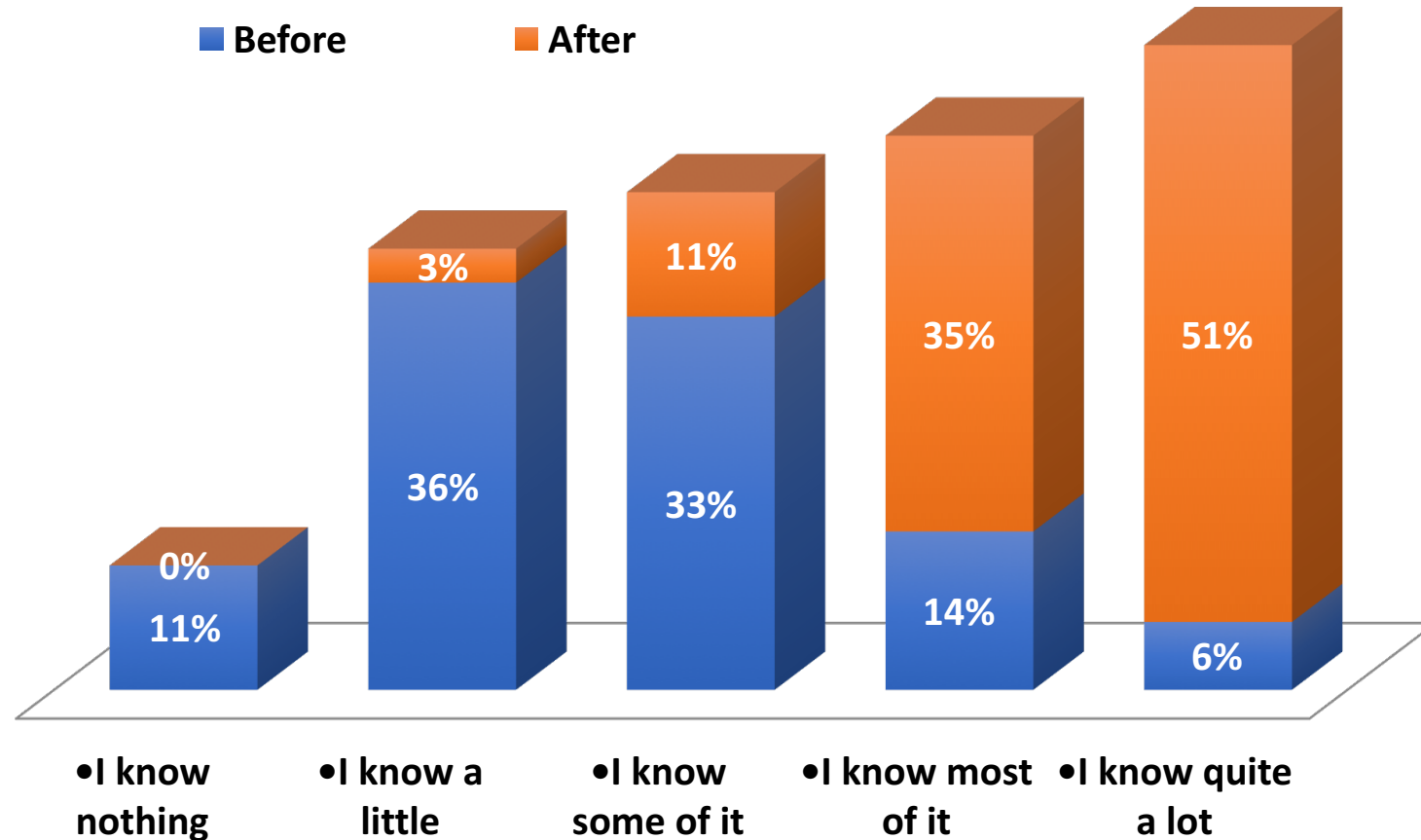
# SDA DOCTRINES (BBs)

- 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 can each belief benefit them and be applied in their lives right now?**
- ✓ **Church needs to use relevant language and explanation of the doctrines that are less accepted by young people**

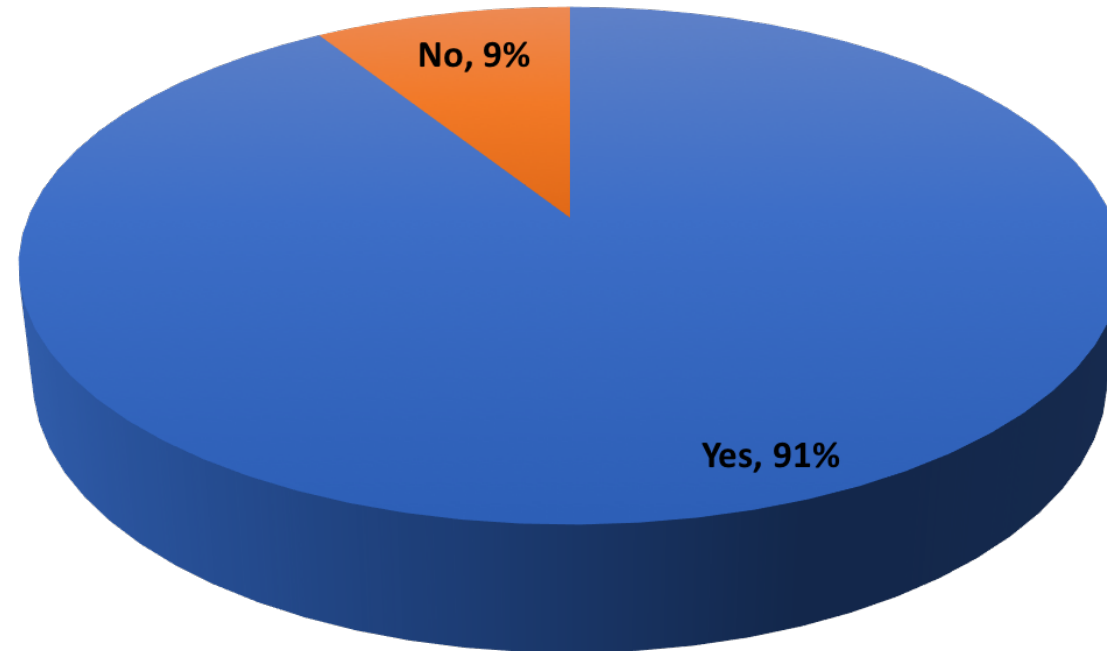




# KNOWLEDGE OF BELIEFS BEFORE AND AFTER THE COURSE (BBS)



# DO YOU EVER USE THE INTERNET OR TELEVISION TO SEARCH FOR AND VIEW SPIRITUAL CONTENT? (HCS)



# WHAT CONTENT DO YOU TYPICALLY SEARCH FOR?

(HCS)



- Musical programs
- Written devotional material
- Sermons or other verbal presentations

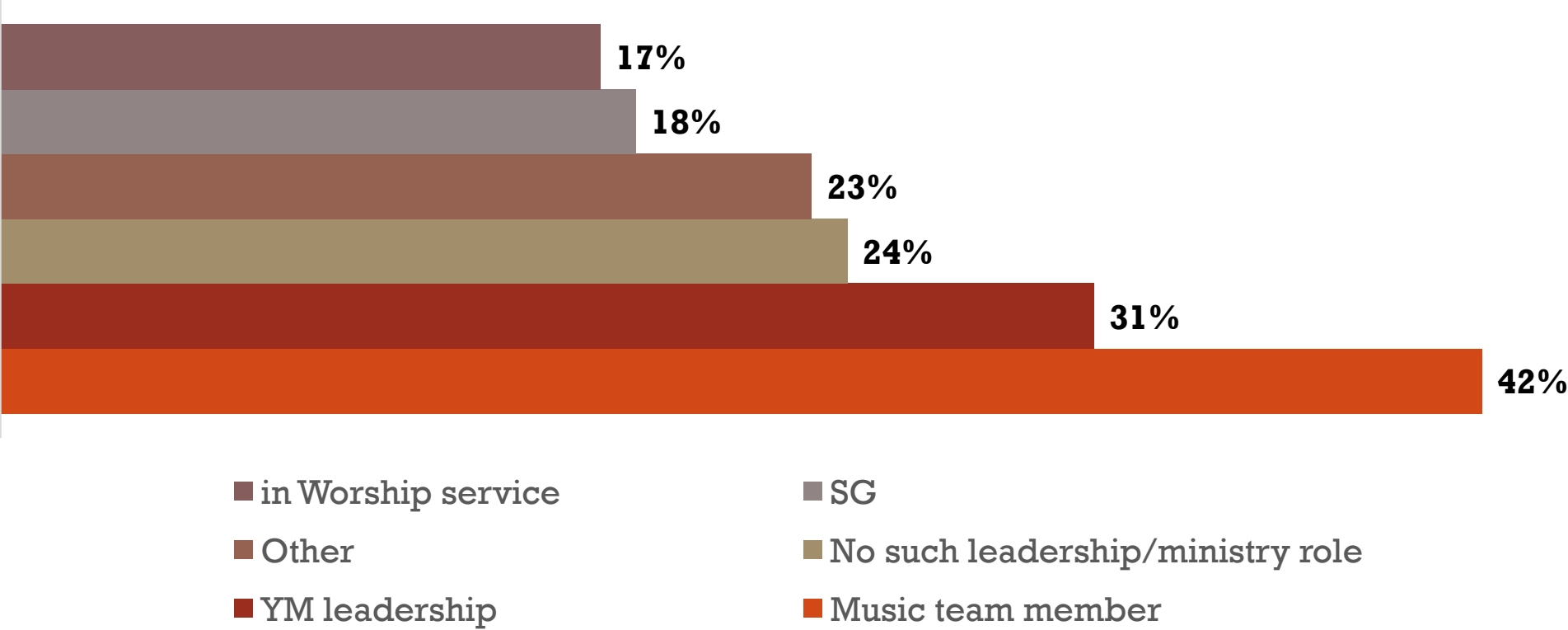


## **Personal involvement of the pastor in work with pathfinders and youth is very important**

- **A young person's decision to be an Adventist is more influenced in the long run by family, a church pastor, and other adults at church than by peers (V EU)**



# INVOLVEMENT (V EU)



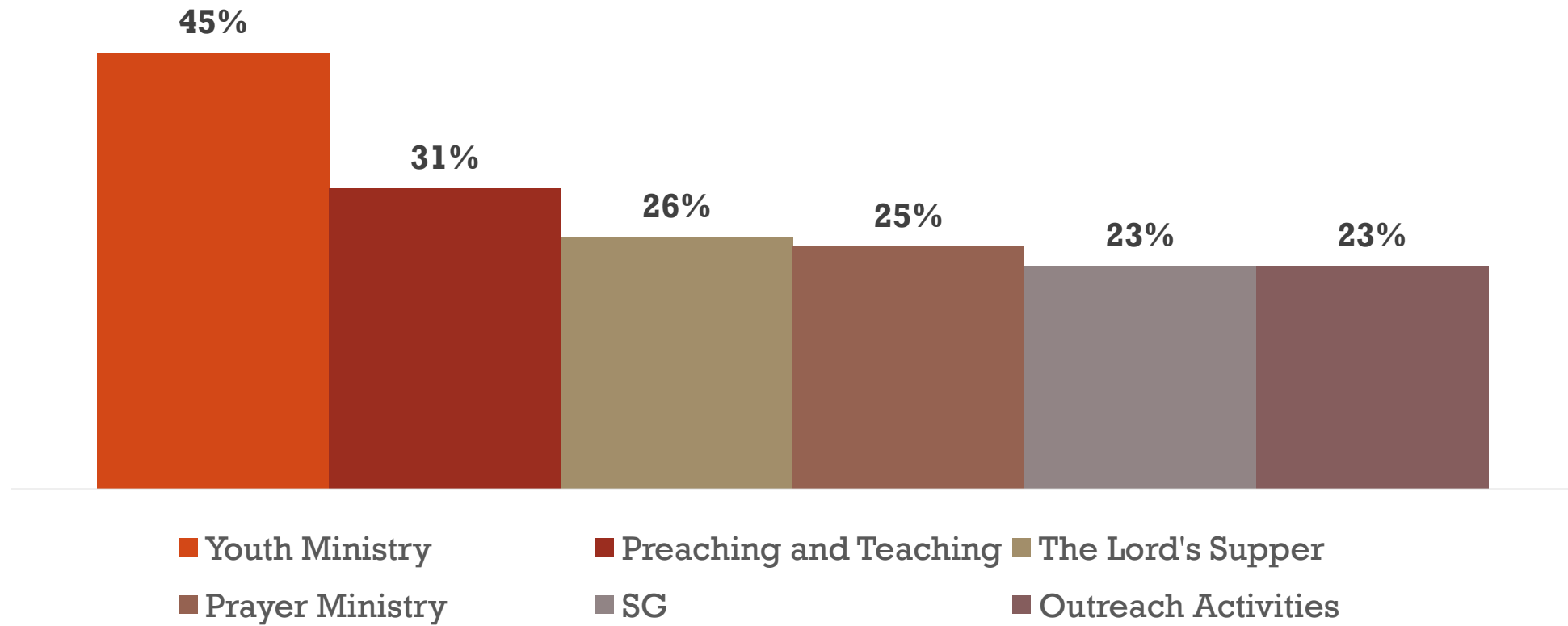
# WHAT WOULD YOUTH APPRECIATE?

(GREAT IDEA OR SEEMS LIKE A GOOD IDEA) (CSY, NAD)

- More social and recreational opportunities (94%)
- More engaging, constructive things on Friday nights/Sabbath pm (89%)
- Youth mission trips overseas/in the country (88%)
- Prayer conferences and youth retreats for spiritual growth (sponsor them) (86%)
- Allow youth/young adults to take more church leadership positions (83%)
- More days when youth lead out in Sabbath worship services (81)
- More innovative, upbeat, interesting worship services (77%)
- Youth in charge of church web and social media services (75%)
- Allow youth/young adults to establish and direct their own ministries (71%)



# GREAT VALUE OF YOUTH MINISTRY ACTIVITIES (V EU)



# A PERSON OF MATURE FAITH INTEGRATES INTO HIS/HER LIFE EIGHT CORE DIMENSIONS OF FAITH

**V I NAD:** 22%  
**10 Ys:** 9%

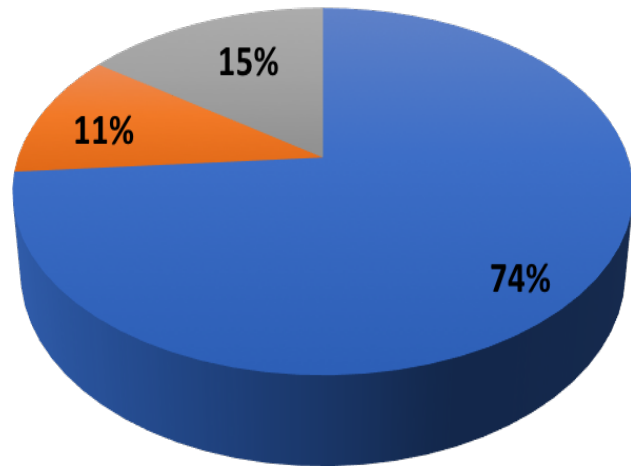
1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity and divinity of Jesus
2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security, and peace
3. Integrates faith and life, seeing work, family, social relationships, and political choices as part of one's religious life
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer, and discussion with others
5. Seeks to be part of a community of believers in which people give witness to their faith and support and nourish one another
6. Holds life-affirming values, including commitment to racial and gender equality
7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice
8. Serves humanity, consistently and passionately, through acts of love and justice





**BBs:**

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



**V EU: Unclean meat:**

- 61% said this was “never justified,”
- 24% said “sometimes” or “rarely justified,”
- 8% said “always/usually,”
- about 7% said “I don’t know.”



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

- 45% did not accept or had major doubts about Adventist teaching on discouraging wearing of jewelry
- Only 62% of them said that drinking alcoholic beverages was “never” or “rarely” acceptable while another 18% reported that it was “sometimes” acceptable, and another 20% said that it was “usually” or “always” acceptable

**BBs:** B. 22– Christian Behavior: don’t connect the same way as older generations (simple dress, etc.)

**V SPD:** One should choose **not to:** (Strongly Agree or Moderately Agree)

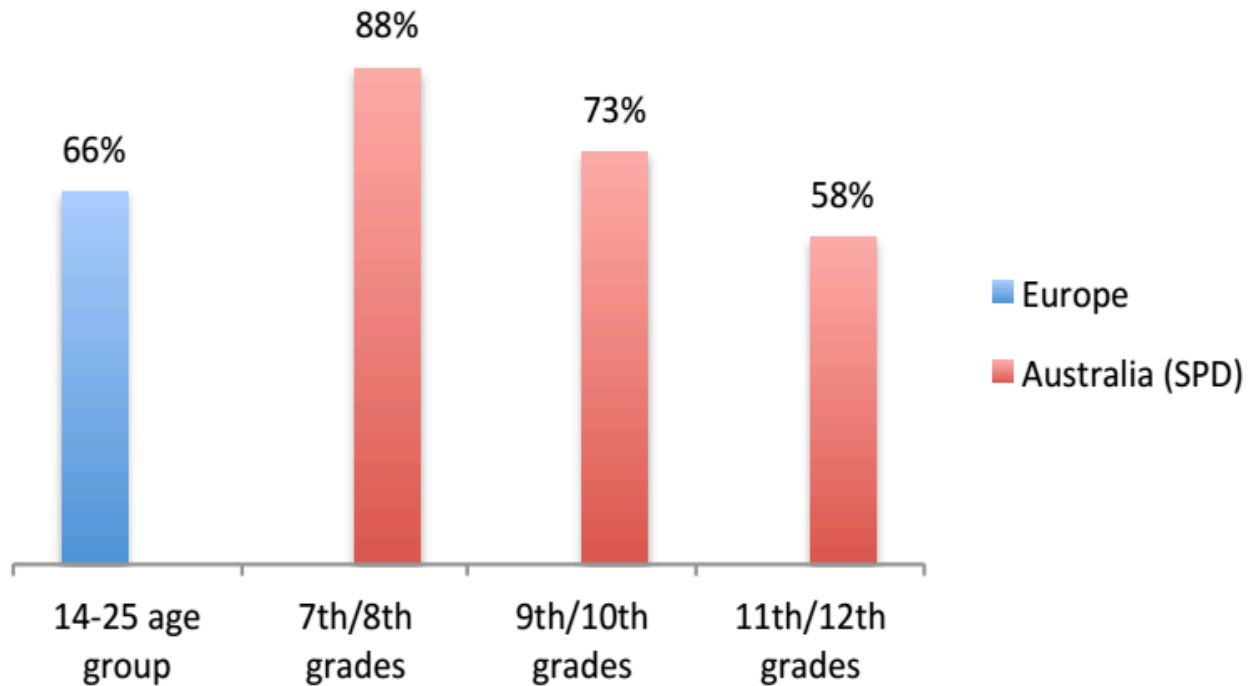
- Use illegal drugs – 81%
- Drink alcohol – 63%
- Sex outside marriage – 60%
- Eat unclean meat – 39%
- Have drinks containing caffeine – 25%
- Dance – 16%

**How often did you do the following during the last 12 months?**

- Drank alcohol while alone or with friends (Never: 66%)
- Went to a party where kids your age were drinking alcohol (Never: 63%)
- Looked at sexually-explicit material (Never: 67%)



## Never Drank Alcohol (Frequency in the Last 12 Months)



**V EU:** 87% also reported they never smoked tobacco in the last 12 months



# PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

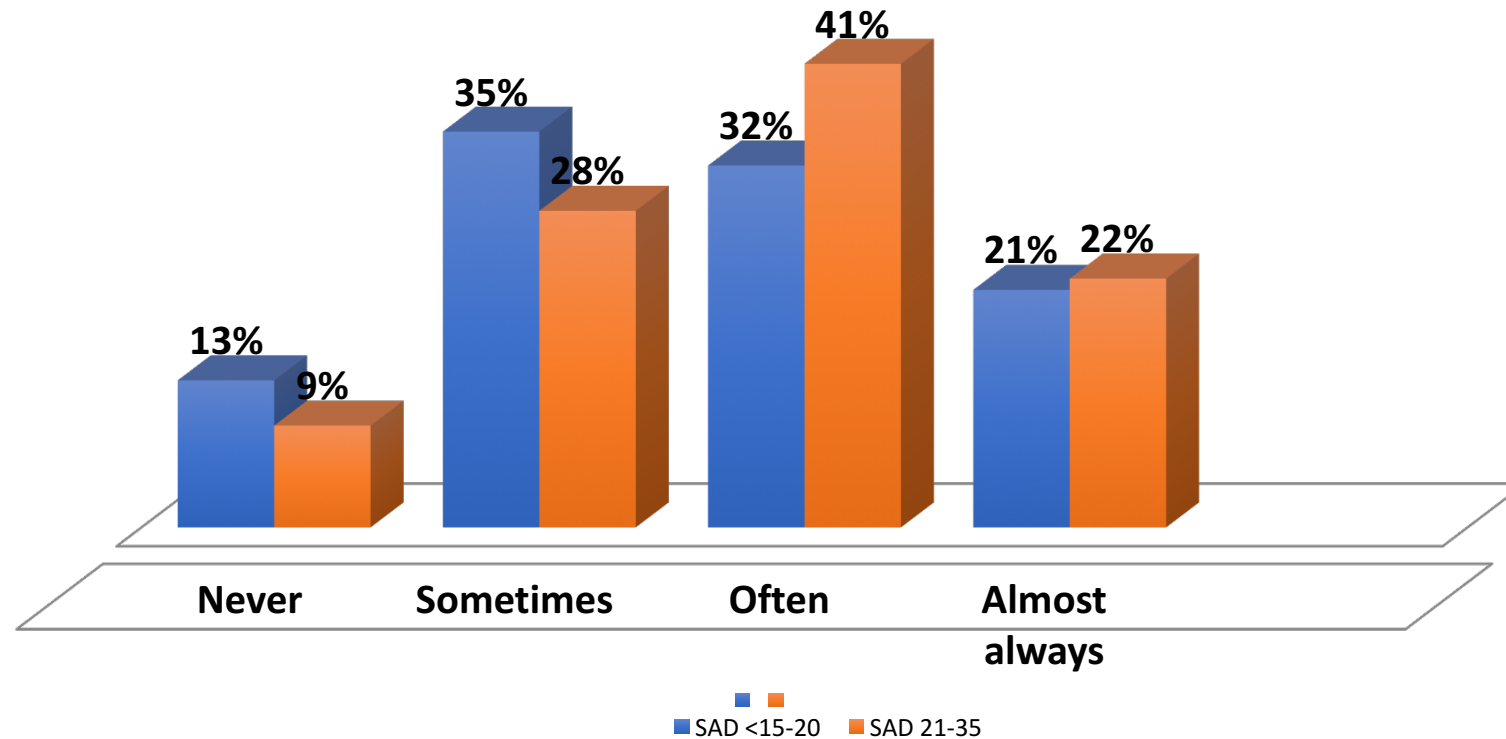
(21<sup>ST</sup> CCS)

- 87% agree or strongly agree 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%** agree or strongly agree that they have a vibrant personal relationship with God

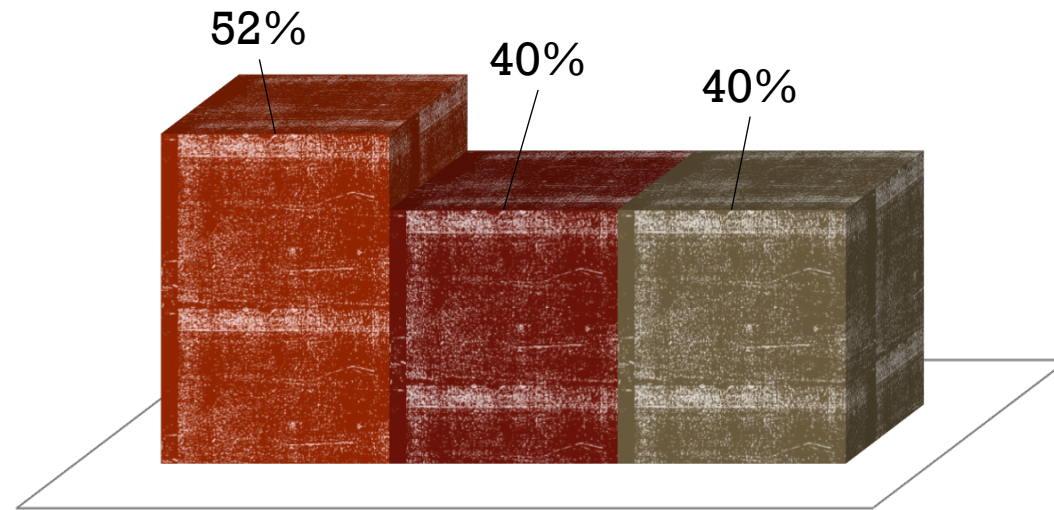


# MY CHURCH IS HELPING ME GROW CLOSER TO CHRIST

(SAD: Q. 2.17)



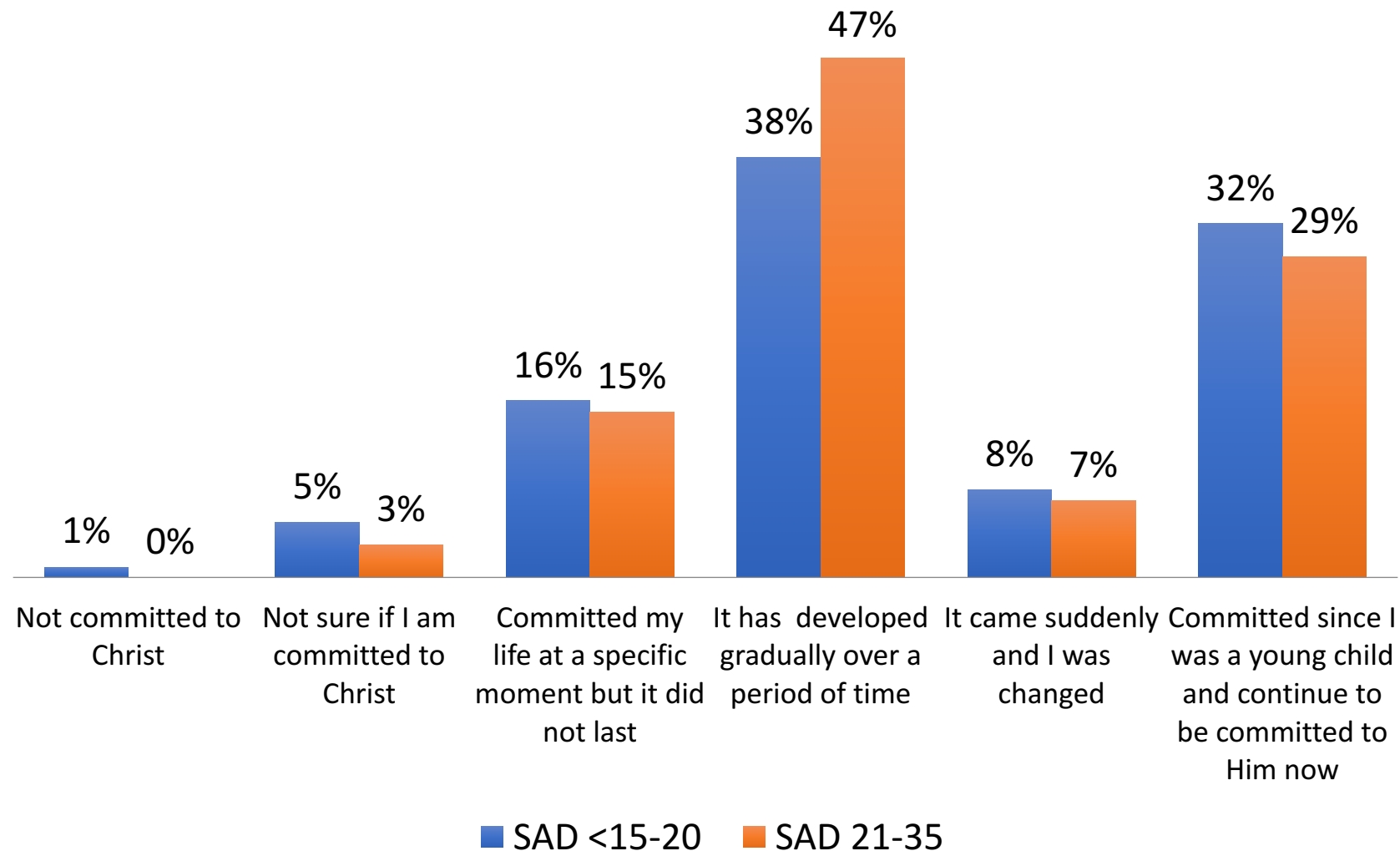
# WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE HAVE BEEN MOST IMPACTED BY HOPE CHANNEL PROGRAMS? (HCS, Q.27)



- Improved Biblical knowledge
- Improved devotional life
- Improved relationship with Jesus



# YOUR COMMITMENT TO JESUS CHRIST (SAD, Q.3.39)

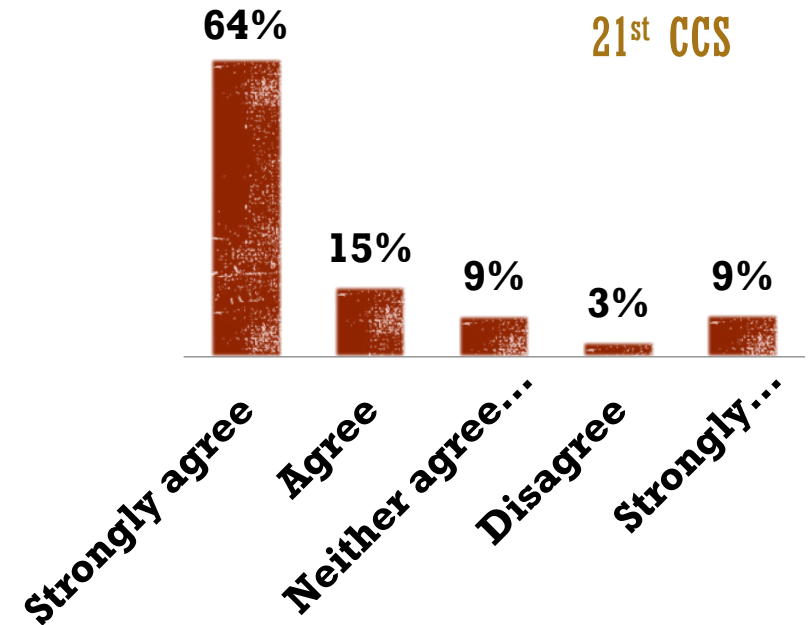
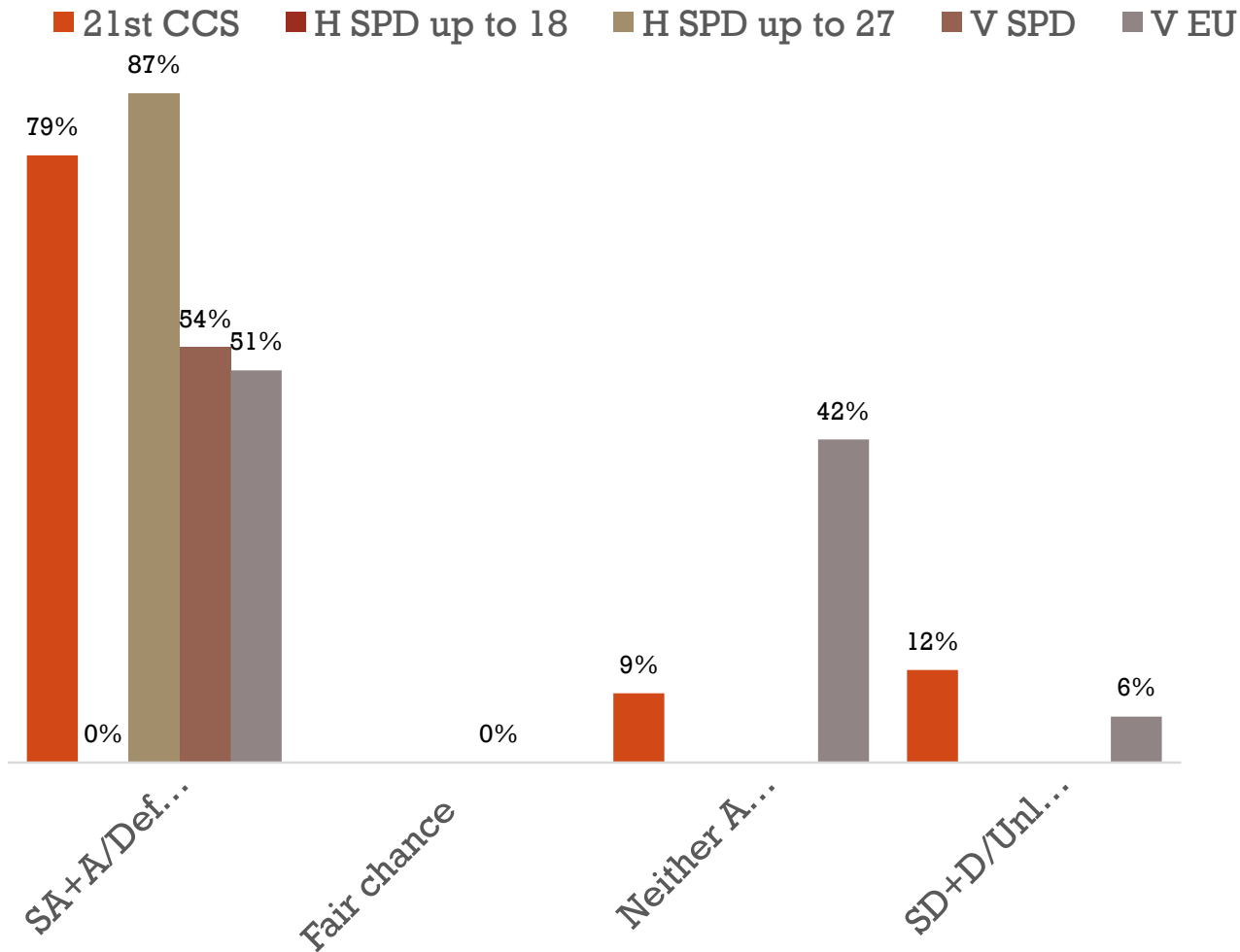


# PERCENTAGE AGREED WITH A STATEMENT:

"I WILL BE AN ADVENTIST 10 YEARS FROM NOW" (21<sup>ST</sup> CCS)

"IN TWENTY YEARS" (V EU)

"FOR REST OF MY LIFE" (H SPD)





## **H SPD:**

- 66% of 11-18 year olds and 87% of 19-29 year-olds believe they would remain a church member for life
- Fewer young Adventists believe they will remain a church member for the rest of their lives

## **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



# DUDLEY'S 10 YEARS STUDY

## **SDA Education vs Public Education:**

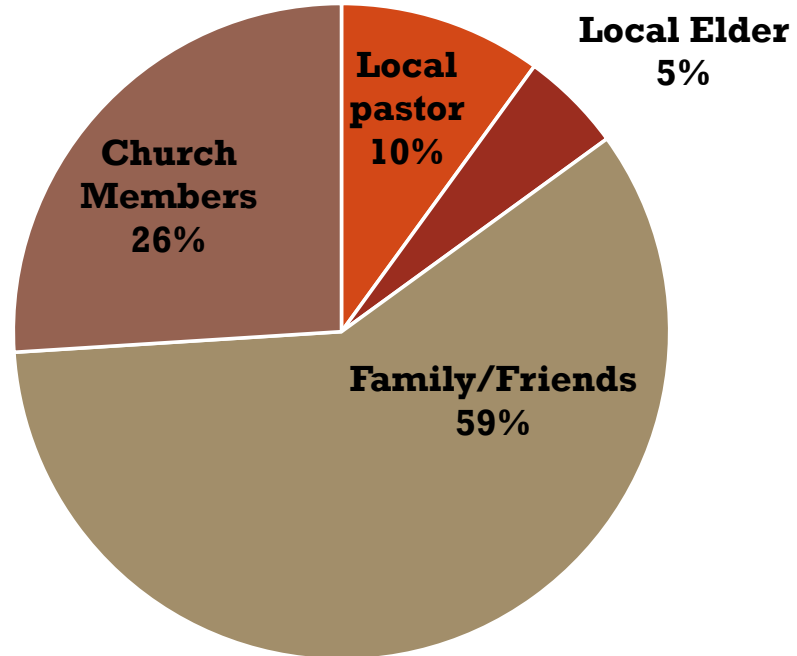
- Factors: church membership vs non-membership; regular attendee vs irregular attendee; dropouts
- More years in SDA elementary school (1-8) and 1-2 years of SDA day academies
- “Those who attended Adventist academies and colleges were, for the most part, much more likely to remain faithful Adventists than those enrolled in secular schools” (R. Dudley)



## LACK OF EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THEY LEFT?

MAJORITY WERE CONTACTED BY SOMEONE (71%) [LS])

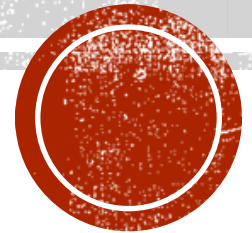
ONLY 39% OF THOSE WHO LEFT AND 48% OF THOSE WHO RETURNED ANSWERED THE Q ON WHO CONTACTED THEM



# RETENTION OF ADVENTIST YOUTH

## Why Young People?

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



# RESOURCES USED:

- Barna Group. *Making Space for Millennials*. 2014.
- Dudley, Roger. *Report: Seventh-day Adventist Youth Advise Their Church*. 2012.
- Dudley, Roger. A Ten-Year Study of Youth Retention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North America. The Fifth Year. <http://circle.adventist.org/files/icm/nadresearch/FIFTHYOU.pdf>
- Dudley, Roger. “Christian Education and Youth Retention in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” *Adventist Education*. February/March, 2000.
- Gane, Barry. *South Pacific Island Nations. Valuegenesis I*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 2012.
- Gane, Barry. *Valuegenesis II*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 2012.
- *Health and Lifestyle Survey 2012 Report. Executive Summary. Adventist Health (South Pacific)*. Avondale College of Higher Education, November 2013.
- Jacobs, Douglas. *Twenty-First Century Seventh-day Adventist Connection Study*. Southern Adventist University, 2013. [http://www.adventistresearch.org/research\\_reports](http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports)
- McBride Duane C., .Curtis J. Vanderwaal, and Desrene L. Vernon. *Hope Channel Report*. Andrews University, 2013.
- PewResearch Center. The Future of World religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050. April 2, 2015.
- Sigvartsen, Jan A., Sigvartsen Leanne M., and Paul B. Petersen. *Beyond Beliefs. What Millennial young adults really think of 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. Andrews University, 2014.
- *Spes Christiana, Valuegenesis Europe*, vol. 24, 2013.
- Wolter, Berndt D. *Seventh-day Adventist Church—SAD. Church Member Research*. Brazilian Mission and Church Growth Institute, 2013.
- <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2010-03-04/why-will-some-adventist-teens-remain-in-church-as-adults/>



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON RETENTION:

- Power Point presentations by David Trim on church members' retention can be found at [http://www.adventistresearch.org/astr\\_presentation](http://www.adventistresearch.org/astr_presentation)
- Summit on Nurture and Retention material and presentations can be found at [http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture\\_home](http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home)
- *Leaving the Church (LS)* – Retention study, GC ASTR, 2013:  
[http://www.adventistresearch.org/research\\_reports](http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports)
- *Survey of Former and Inactive Adventist Church Members (F&IM)* – Paul Richardson, Monte Sahlin & Petr Cincala, 2011-2013:  
[http://www.adventistresearch.org/research\\_reports](http://www.adventistresearch.org/research_reports)
- Summit on Nurture and Retention material and presentations can be found at [http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture\\_home](http://www.adventistresearch.org/nurture_home)

