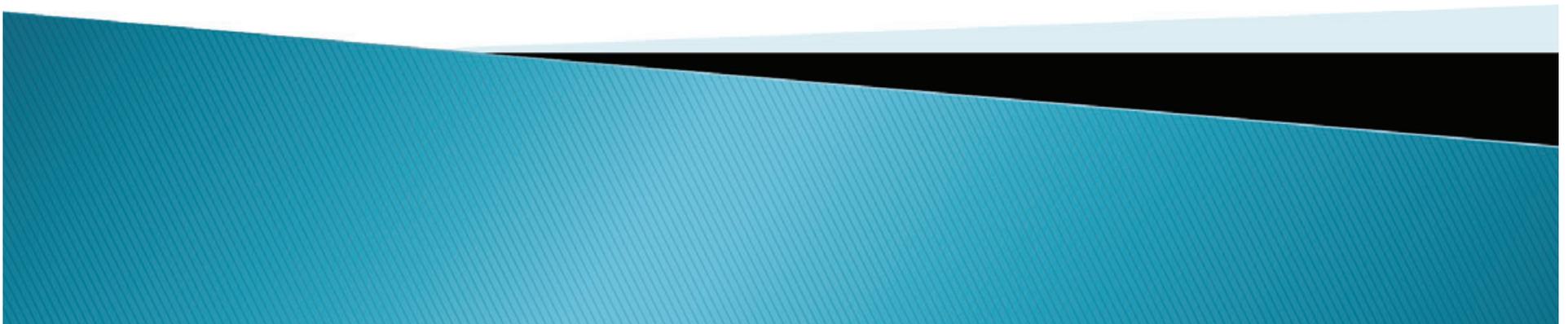


Tithing, Commitment and Retention of Members:  
Demographic Challenges Revealed in Research in  
Australia, Brazil, the United Kingdom and the  
United States

Robert K. McIver, PhD  
Loma Linda University /  
Avondale College of Higher Education



# Outline

- ▶ Starting point: Tithing, Commitment and Retention of members
- ▶ Research data: Northern California Conference, São Paulo Conference, South England Conference, Western Australian Conference
- ▶ Conclusions



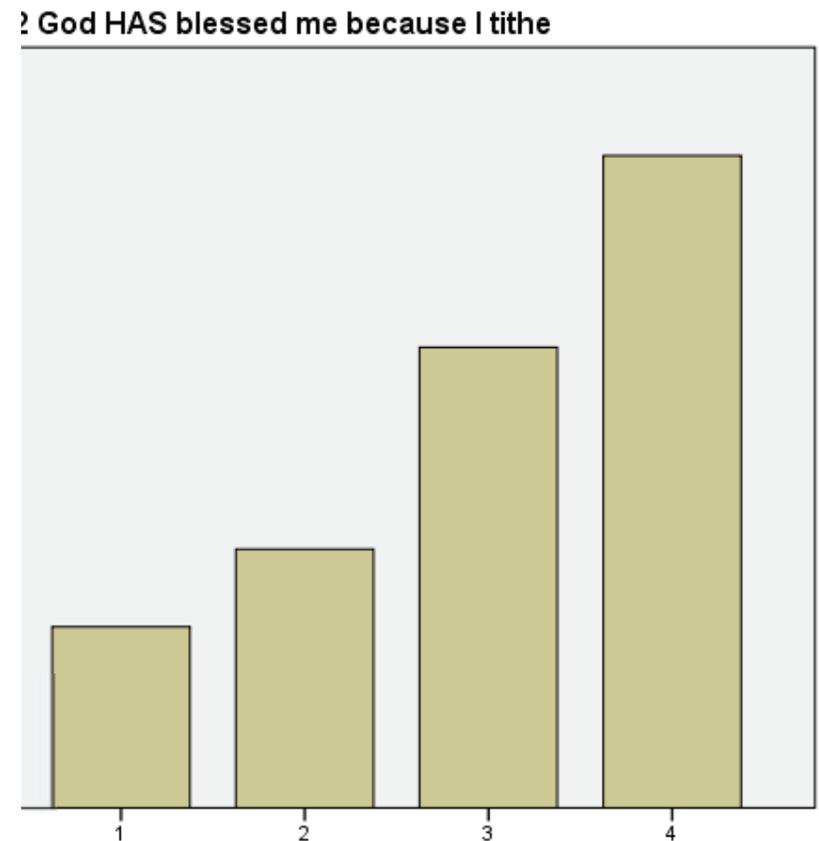
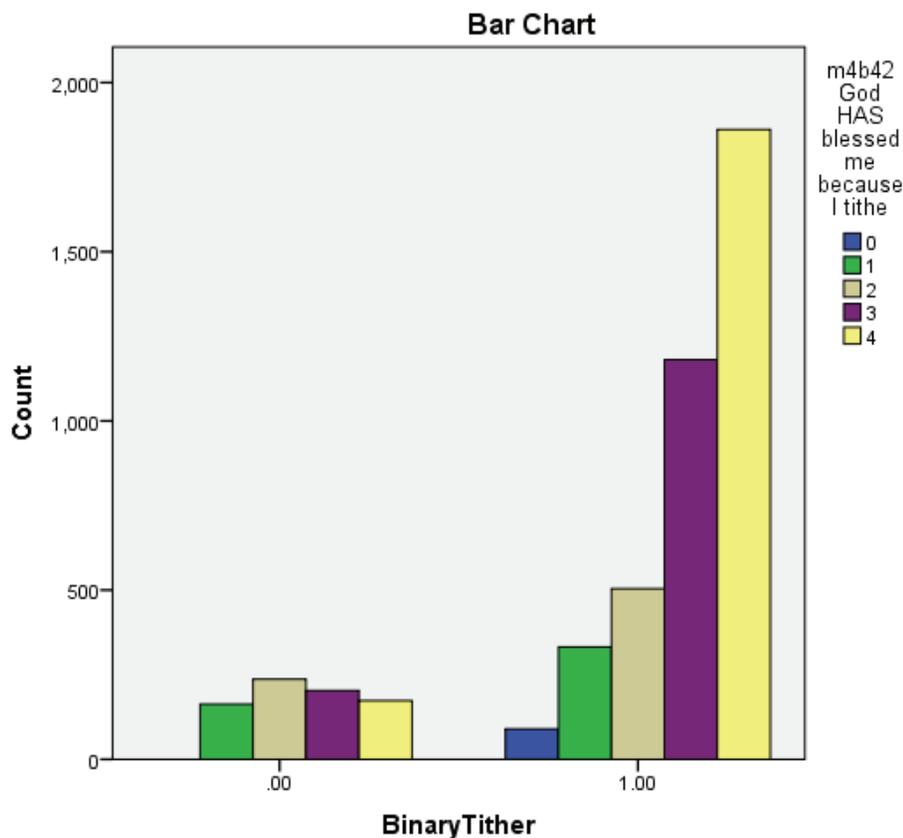
# Starting point: Tithing, Commitment and Retention of members

- ▶ Tithing is where most members most clearly see the hand of God in their lives



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# Starting point: Tithing, Commitment and Retention of members

- ▶ Tithing is where most members most clearly see the hand of God in their lives
- ▶ It's more about mission than it is about money
  - “People do not give to sinking ships. ...The church is the only nonprofit I know of that seems to believe that the more you cry that you are sinking, the more people will give to you. The exact opposite is true. No nonprofit I know of would ever send out a donor letter stating that they are running a horrible deficit and they just want the donors to help balance the budget. They know that such a letter actually discourages giving rather than motivates it. A non-profit board will deal with budget matters in a board meeting but never publicize such to its donor base. The church goes out of its way to do just that.” J. Christopher Clif [correct spelling], *Not your Parent's Offering Plate* (Nashville, Abingdon: 2008), 28.



# Starting point: Tithing, Commitment and Retention of members

- ▶ Tithing is where most members most clearly see the hand of God in their lives
- ▶ It's more about mission than it is about money
- ▶ One experiences greater commitment and attachment to those things on which / to which money has been spent / given



One experiences greater commitment and attachment to those things on which / to which money has been spent / given

- ▶ “Membership has five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of identification, **personal investment**, and a common symbol system.” “Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 14 (1986): 6, emphasis supplied.
- ▶ “The findings also confirmed a strong difference in voter satisfaction depending on voter involvement.” Aron O’Cass, “A Micromodel of Voter Choice: Understanding the Dynamics of Australian Voter Characteristics in a Federal Election,” *Psychology & Marketing* 19 (2002), 1025.



One experiences greater commitment and attachment to those things on which / to which money has been spent / given

- ▶ [Vacation destinations] “The idea that decisions alter preferences has had a considerable influence on the field of psychology and underpins cognitive dissonance theory. Yet it is unknown whether choice-induced changes in preferences are long lasting or are transient manifestations seen in the immediate aftermath of decisions. ... We found that choices altered preferences both immediately after being made and after the delay. These changes could not be accounted for by participants’ preexisting preferences, and they occurred only when participants made the choices themselves. Our findings provide evidence that making a decision can lead to enduring change in preferences.” Tali Sharot, et al, “Is Choice-Induced Preference Change Long Lasting?” *Psychological Science* 23 (2012): 1123.

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- ▶ [Purchase of car]: “brand attitude is strongly related to purchase behavior ... just after 48 months, or at the time when a typical car loan expires. Buyers’ brand attitudes appear to decline up until the point of deciding if they are going to get a new car or not after paying off their loan. This data shows that those who have kept their cars beyond 48 months have more positive brand attitudes than those whose car purchases were within the past 12–48 months, and begin to approach the level of brand attitudes of those whose purchases were made within the past 12 months.” “Social Influence on Post Purchase Brand Attitudes,” *Advances in Consumer Research* 31 (2004) 745



# Starting point: Tithing, Commitment and Retention of members

- ▶ Tithing is where most members most clearly see the hand of God in their lives
- ▶ Those that tithe experience greater commitment to the church, a predictor of their long-term retention as members



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# Research Data Base

	Conference	No. individual tithers (Tithe Receipts)	Surveys
Australia	Western Australia	1,879	3,572
Brazil	Sao Paulo	2,935	2,410
England	South England	1,884	1,170
United States	Northern California	3,802	1,851
Total (n)		10,500	9,003

Quality of data: e.g. Northern California:

Number of receipts analysed: 38,038

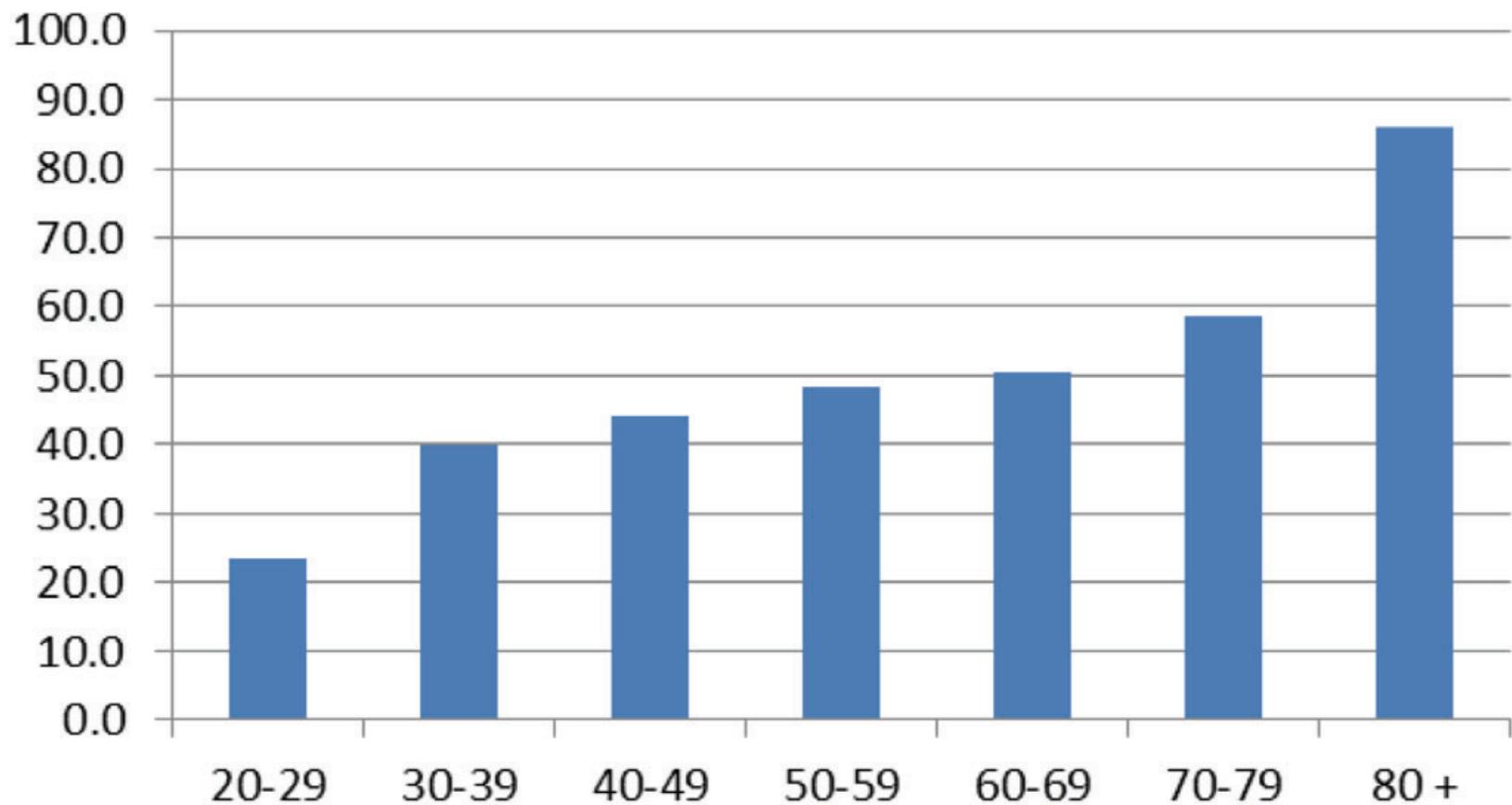
Represented donations totalling: \$10,061,210

Number of individual tithers: 3,802



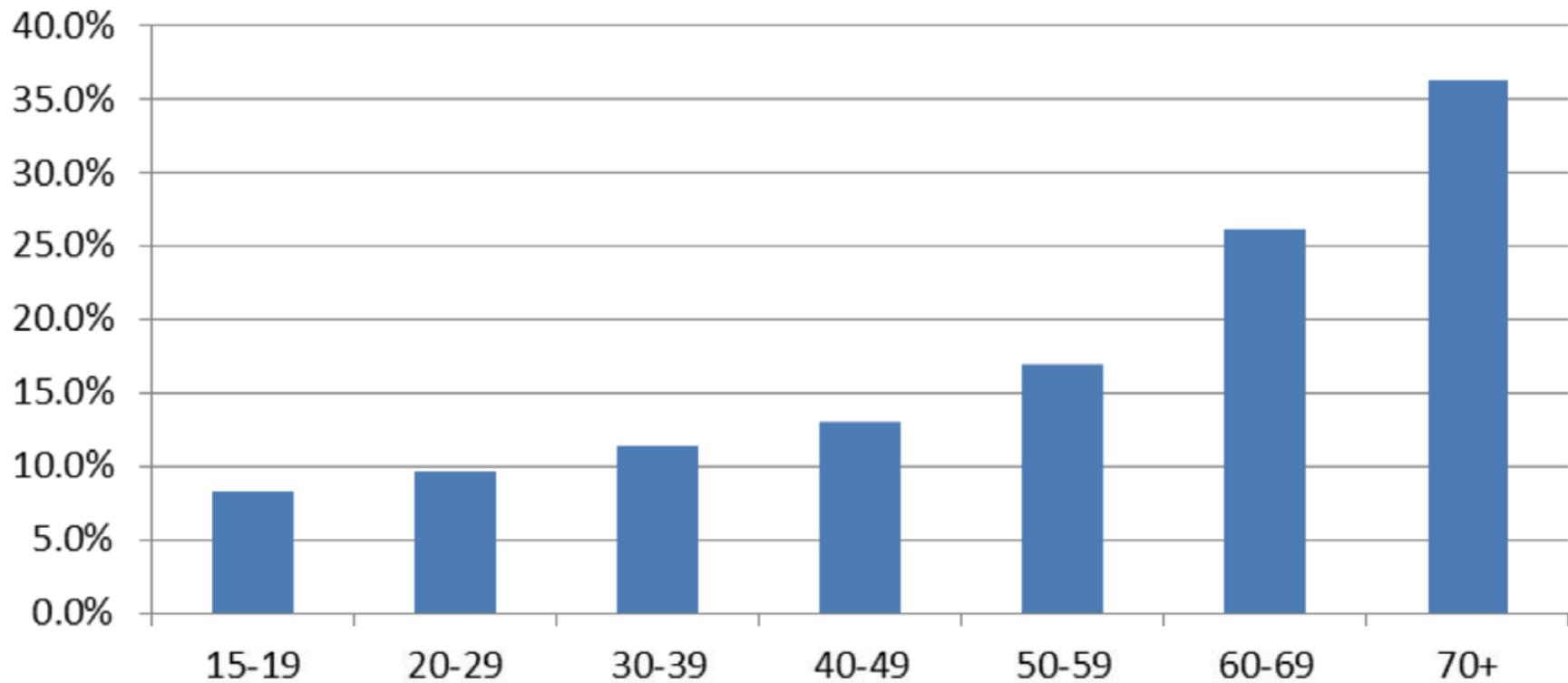
# Northern California Conference

**Age vs Per capita tithe (attenders) as % of  
0.1 pc income USA (NCC)**

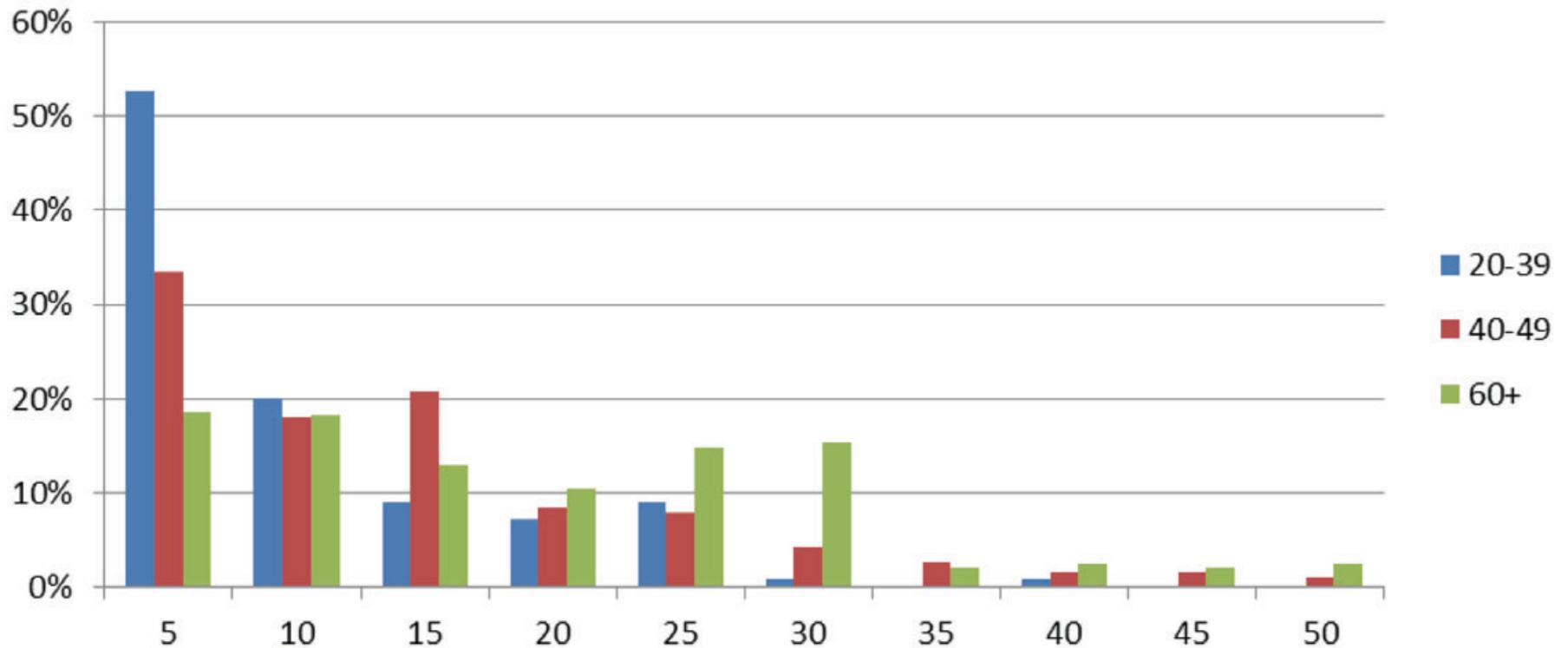


# Western Australia Conference

## Per Capita Tithe Receipts as % of 0.1 Survey Income



## Frequency of Giving (Tithe Receipts) WA -- By Age (As %)



# Tithing frequency by age band

**Table 4: Country \* b46 I try to return tithe Crosstabulation Count**

		b46 I try to return tithe					Total
		Weekly	Semi-Monthly / bi-weekly / fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly	Yearly	
Country	Australia (WAC)	395	745	69	147	175	1531
	England (SEC)	211	34	610	39	16	910
	Brazil (SPC)	116	122	1452	43	7	1740
	USA (NCC)	210	521	1126	258	122	2237
Total		932	1422	3257	487	320	6418

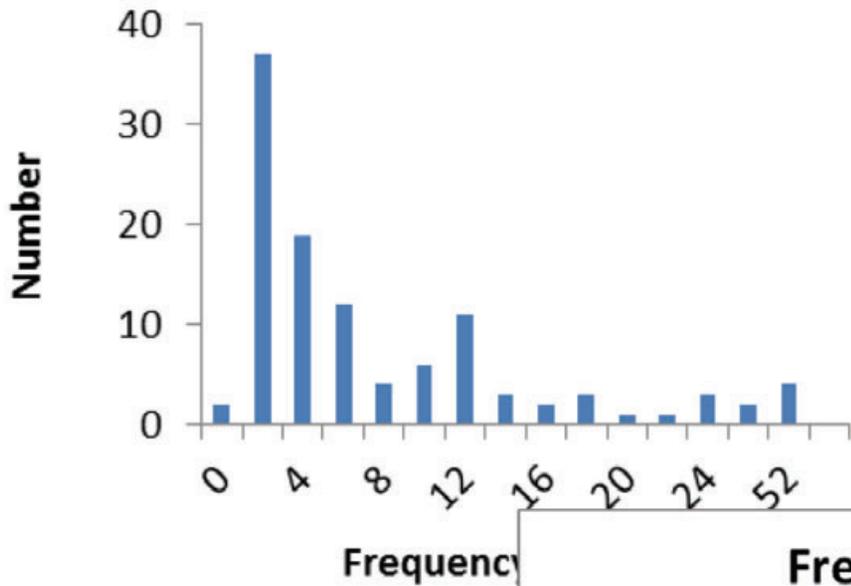


(Listing only those who intend to tithe Monthly) Age band \* b47b Number of times contribute tithe each year Crosstabulation

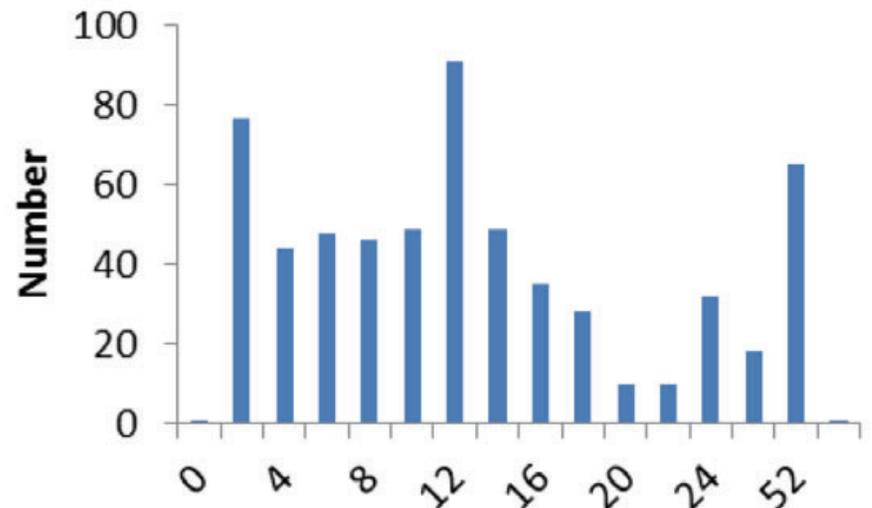
		b47b Number of times contribute tithe each year							Total
		1-3 times	4-6 times	7-11 times	12-17 times	18-24 times	25-29 times	More than 30 times	
Age band	20-39	140	94	130	106	16	9	23	518
	40-59	113	89	127	166	29	20	34	578
	60+	75	48	101	126	20	14	28	412
Total		328	231	358	398	65	43	85	1508



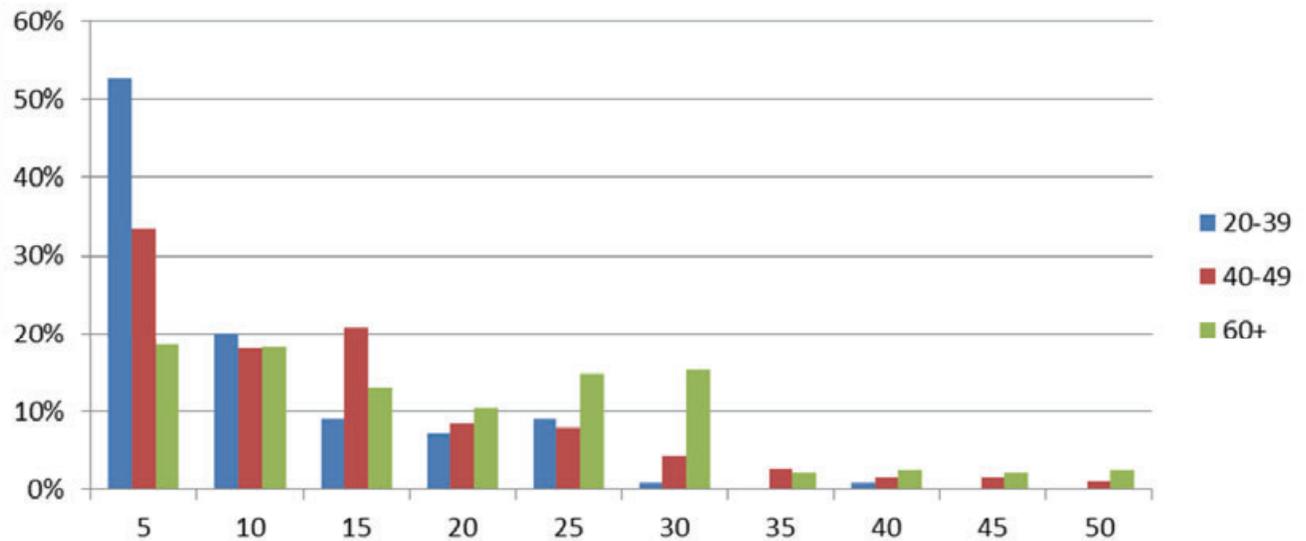
**Frequency of Tithing  
20-29 yr USA (NCC)**



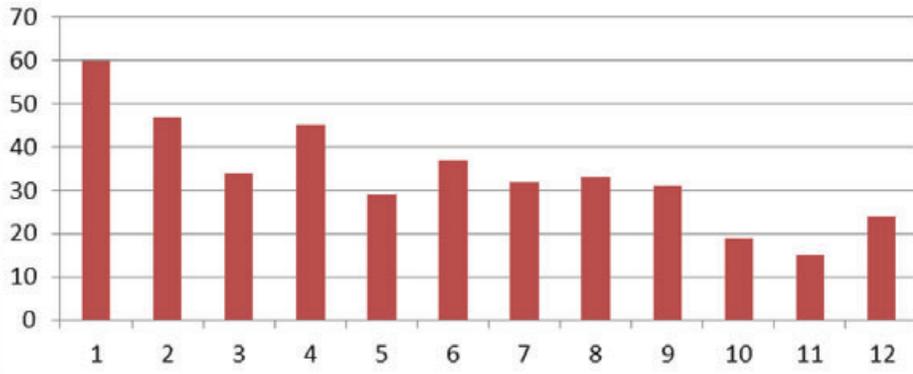
**Frequency of Tithing  
60-69 yr USA (NCC)**



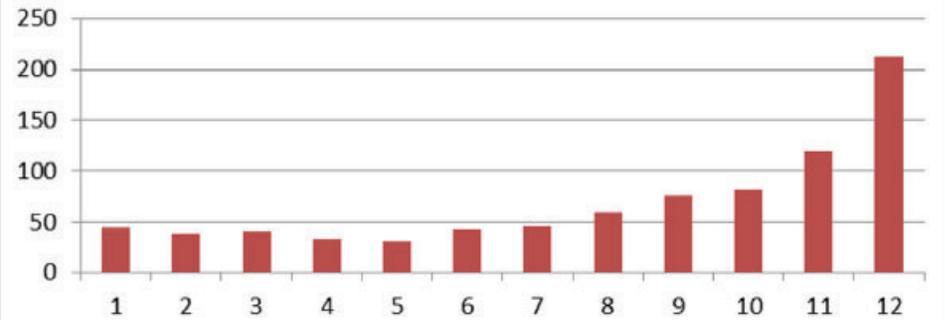
**Frequency of Giving (Tithe Receipts)  
WA -- By Age (As %)**



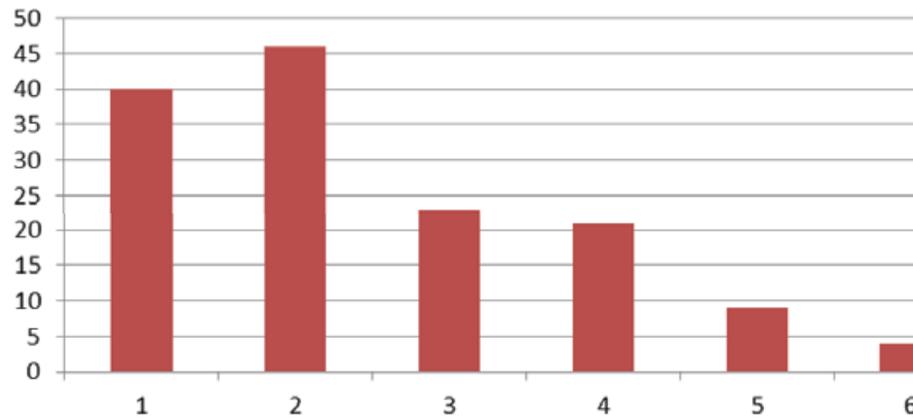
**São Paulo Conference  
Frequency of Giving  
20-29 yr-olds**



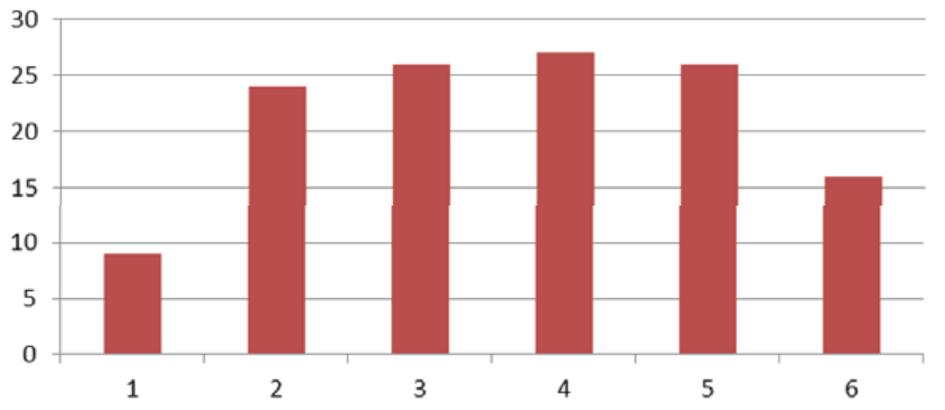
**São Paulo Conference  
Frequency of Giving  
60+ yr-olds**



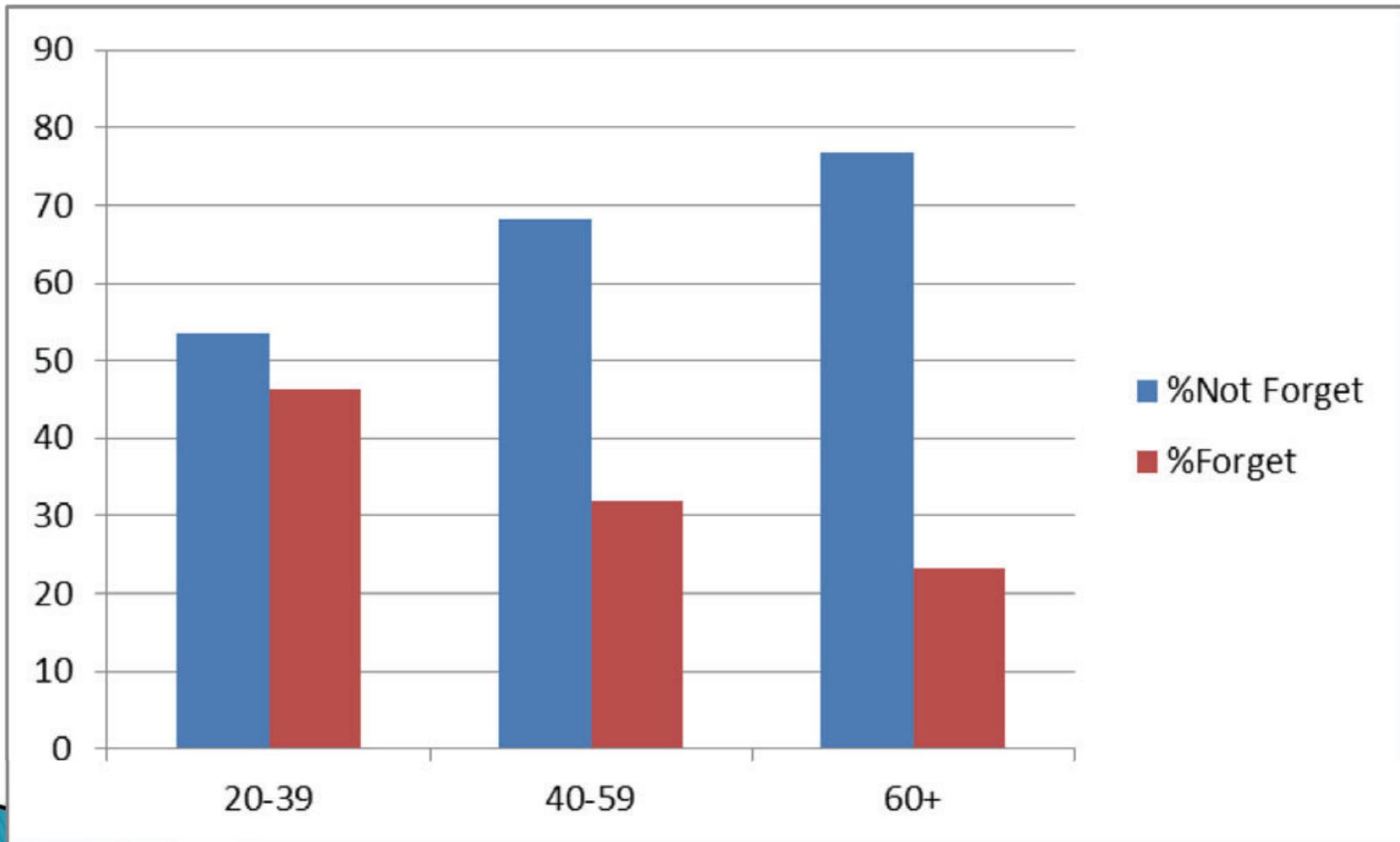
**S England Conference  
Frequency of Giving Gift Aid vs Number  
20-29 yr olds**



**S England Conference  
Frequency of Giving Gift Aid vs Number  
60-59 yr-olds**

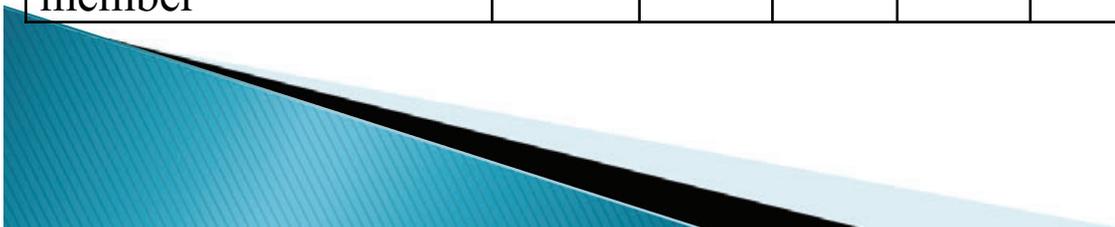


# b47a Sometimes I forget to Tithe



**Table 1: Demographic Factors that are Positively Correlated to Tithing in SDAs (Survey Data)**

	All data		Northern California		São Paulo		South England		Western Australia	
		Sig.		Sig.		Sig.		Sig.		Sig.
<b>Significant Correlations Most Countries</b>										
Baptized Member	Yes	0.000	Y at 5%	0.027	Yes	0.000	Del		Yes	0.000
Never forgets to tithe	Yes	0.000	Yes	0.000	No	0.183	Yes	0.000	Yes	0.000
Number of times contributes each year	Yes	0.000	Yes	0.000	Yes	0.000	No	0.222	Yes	0.000
Age	Yes	0.001	Y at 5%	0.026	No	0.288	Yes	0.002	Yes	0.001
<b>Correlations Some Countries</b>										
Attendance frequency	No (?)	0.178	Yes	0.011	Yes	0.000	Y at 5%	0.045	Almost	0.069
Works for SDA church	Close	0.066	No	0.376	Y at 5%	0.048	Del		No	0.461
Number of years a member	No	0.228	Del		Y at 5%	0.011	Del		No	0.479



# Demographics *not* related to tithing behaviour (survey data)

- ▶ Credit Card used for \$10 to \$49 purchases
  - ▶ Education
  - ▶ Employed
  - ▶ Employed by self /wage-earner ft/pt
  - ▶ Follow personal budget
  - ▶ Frequency of tithing intended
  - ▶ Gender
  - ▶ GYC Conference attend
  - ▶ Income
  - ▶ Married
  - ▶ Parents SDAs
  - ▶ Parents worked for SDA Church
  - ▶ Partner attends same congregation
  - ▶ Sermons on tithe last 2yrs
- 

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# We conclude

- ▶ Tithing connects people to the Church in a very powerful way
    - Through tithing, they see the hand of God in their everyday lives
    - We are more committed to and engaged by things in which we have a commitment, especially a financial commitment
  - ▶ There are demographic challenges across every conference in which research has been conducted – the younger cohorts are not as engaged with tithing
  - ▶ Tithing promotion (sensitively and appropriately done) is likely to show very positive results in the retention of groups that might otherwise be lost to the church
- 