

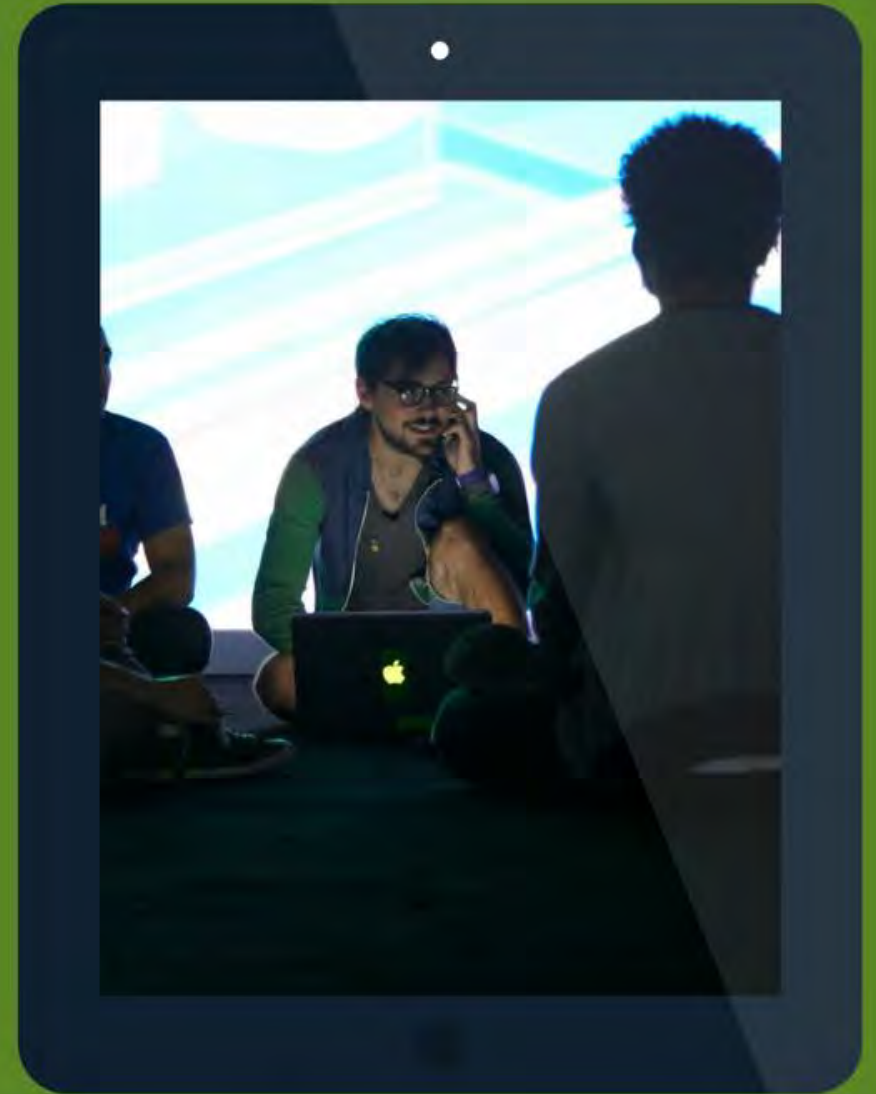
Retention of Lutheran Millennials

2017 LCMS Study of Young Adults

Full Study Report

*LCMS Research Services and
LCMS Youth Ministry*

LCMS Youth Ministry - #lcmস্যaresearch



Background: About this Study

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- LCMS Youth Ministry partnered with LCMS Research to conduct an unprecedented study of young adult retention.
- The study consisted of two phases
 - LCMS Confirmation Survey – Spring 2017
 - LCMS Young Adults Survey –Summer 2017

Primary Researcher

Ryan Curnutt – Senior Research Analyst – LCMS Research Services

Research Team

Rev. Mark Kiessling – Director Youth Ministry, LCMS Office of National Mission

Julianna, Shults, DCE – Program Manager – LCMS Youth Ministry

Kevin Borchers, DCE, Ph.D. – Associate Professor of Christian Education, Concordia University, Chicago

Dave Rueter, DCE, Ph.D. – Associate Professor of Christian Education, Concordia University, Irvine

Cover Photos:

Picture courtesy of LCMS Communication

LCMS Research Services
& LCMS Youth Ministry

Goals of this Study

- Provide church leaders and ministers with a better understanding of the retention of young people in the LCMS
 - Statistics on actual rates of retention
 - Demographic comparisons of those who stayed vs those who left
 - Quantitative and qualitative data
- Equip the church to be better engage and minister to today's young adults, both inside and outside of the church.
 - Identifies and measures the broad spectrum of beliefs, passions and values.
 - Identify obstacles that may stand in the way of young adults returning to the LCMS.
 - Find intersection points between today's Millennials and the church to engage their interests and values.
- Inform the church as it develops strategies for improving retention of future generations.
 - Better equip parents, churches, and young people to face opposing views and pressures from the culture.
 - Learn from both the positive and negative experiences and that affected the older generation in their youth.

Background: Who are Millennials

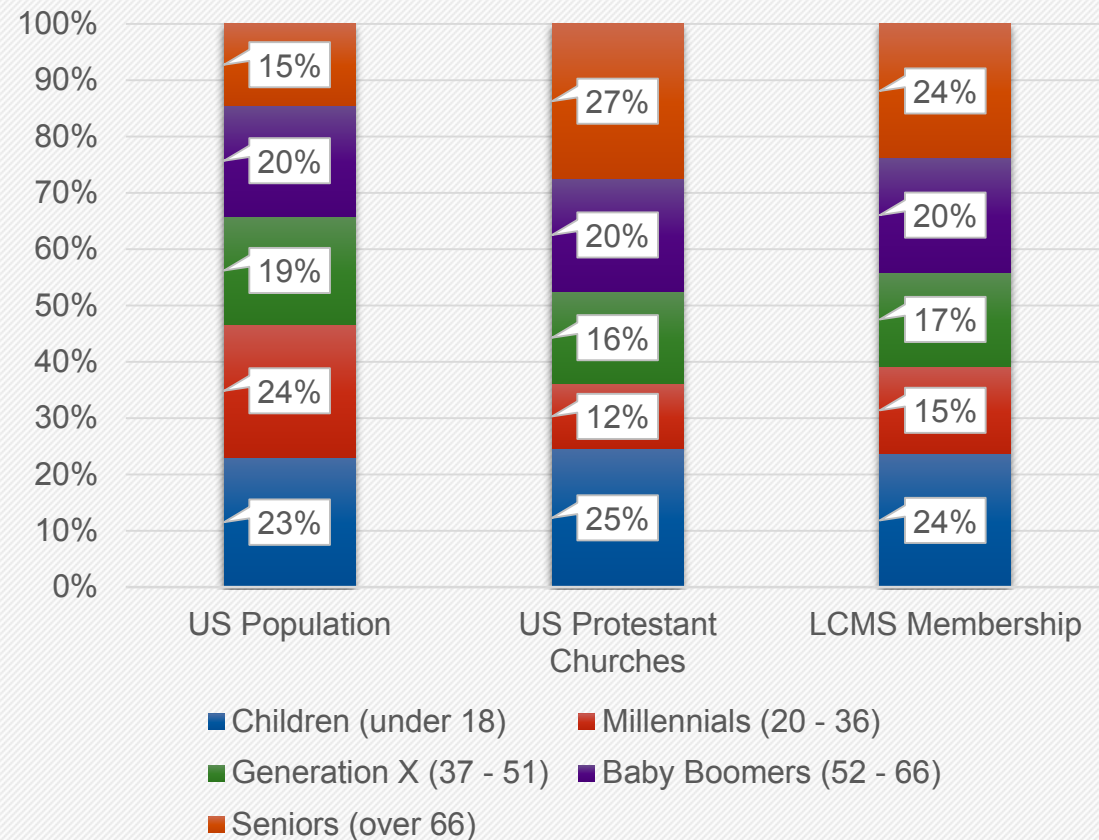
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- Born in 1983 -1999 – Millennials in 2017 are 18-34 years old.
- Primarily children of the Baby Boomer generation, they now outnumber that generation.
- The most diverse generation of adults in terms of race and ethnicity.
- Changing everything from corporate cultures, to traditional business practices, to the way we communicate.
 - Social media | Crowd-funding | Gig economies | Meal kit delivery
 - Social clubs, institutions and venues that once thrived are struggling to attract young adults...and so is the church

Background: Missing from the Pews

5

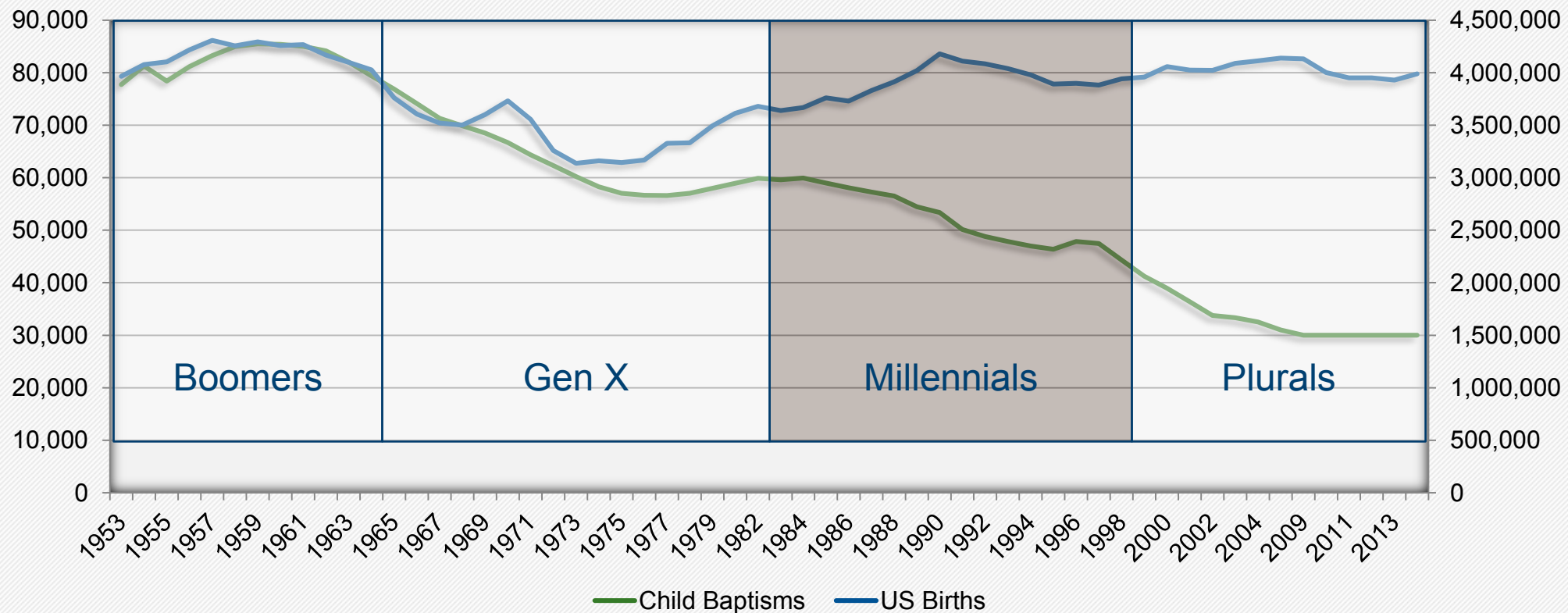
- Millennials make up a quarter of the U.S. Population, but make up only 12% of U.S. Church membership.*
- The LCMS fares slightly better with 15% of members being Millennials (approximately 300,000 of the Synod's 2 million members).



*Faith Communities Today 2015 (www.faithcommunitiestoday.org)

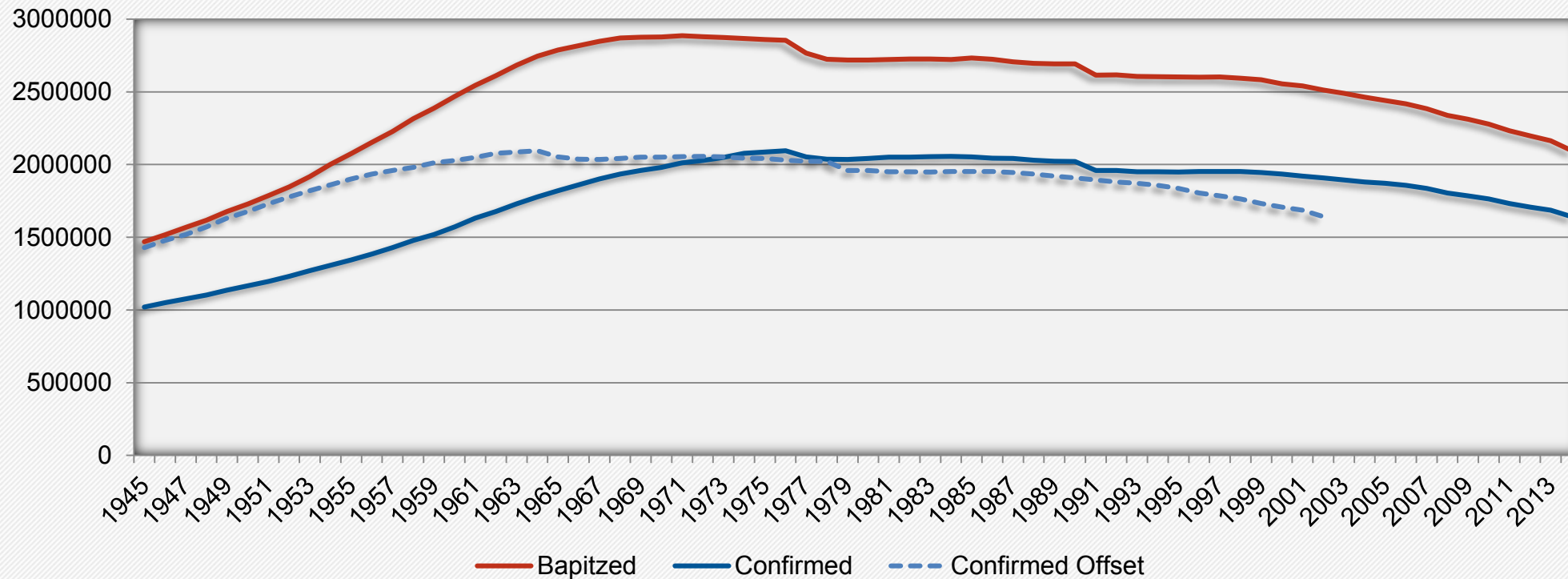
Background: Millennials were Never Here in Large Numbers

6



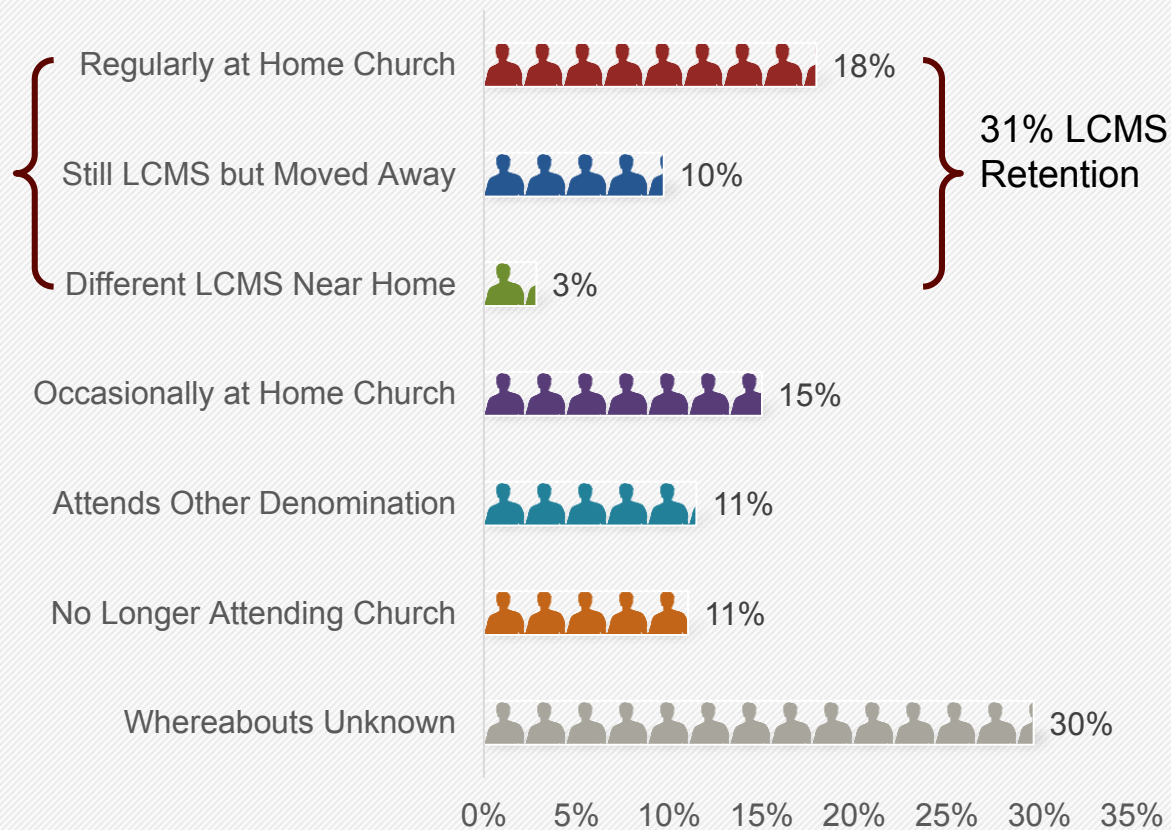
Background: Low Retention of Baptized Babies to Confirmation Started with the 1950's Baby Boom

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Background: 1-in-3 Rate of Retention of Millennials

8



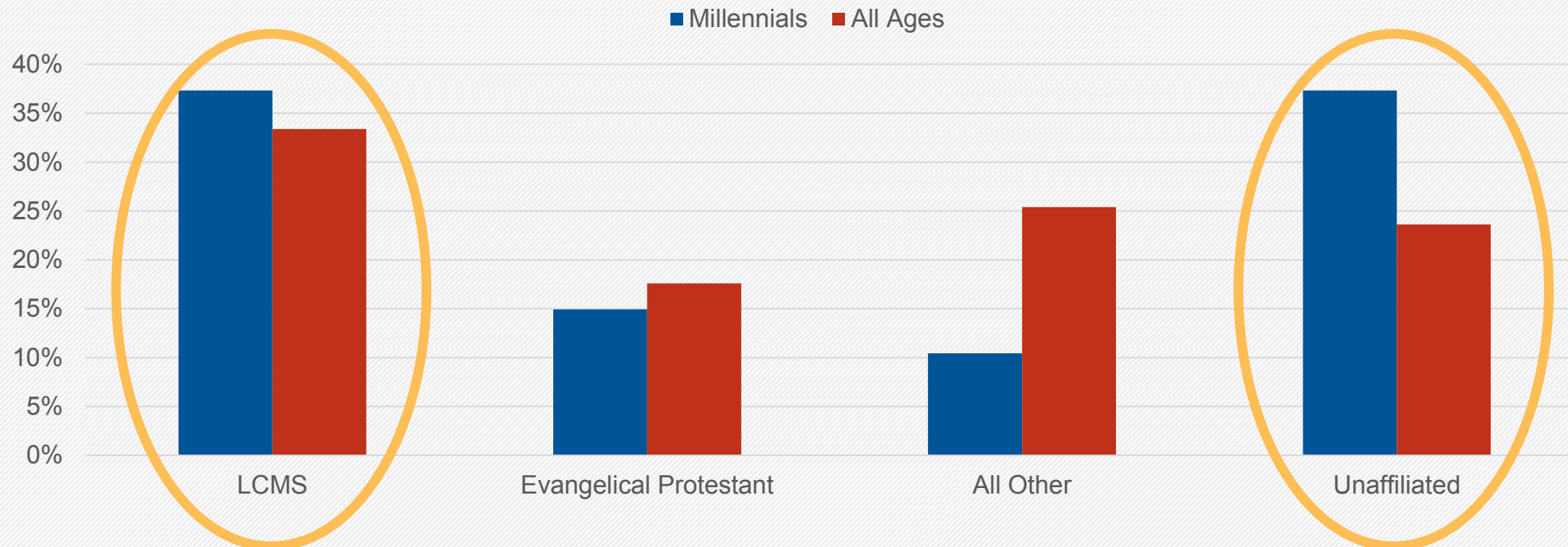
- 2017 Confirmation Survey identified around a 1-in-3 rate of retention for individuals after confirmation.²
- The large number of young people whose whereabouts are unknown are those who have lost contact with their home church, and likely are not attending church at all.
- This retention rate does not take into account baptized children lost prior to confirmation.

2. Specifically the survey asked congregations about individuals confirmed in 2004-2006. Approximately half of the respondents to the survey being pastors who were not present those years, which is one reason why the "whereabouts unknown" category is so high.

Background: Pew Religious Landscape Survey (2014) Data Shows Similar Retention

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Pew RLS 2014: Current Church Membership of Those Raised LCMS



Source: <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

LCMS Research Services
& LCMS Youth Ministry

Background: Retention Must be Addressed

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- The Synod's rate of retaining children into adulthood (1-in-3) has not changed in the past three generations of adults
- Low retention of Baby Boomers into adulthood, led to lower rates of babies being born in the Synod (hence, fewer infant baptisms)
- Already beginning with low numbers, poor retention of Millennials has made them the smallest segment of Synod's confirmed membership.
- As Millennials now start families of their own, the cycle could potentially continue as a smaller proportion of their children are born in the church.
- Retention rates are not likely to change on their own, therefore, for the sake of Millennials and the generations to come, retention must be addressed.

Unique Contributions of this Study

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- Focused on young adults who raised as LCMS Lutherans.
- Gathered information regarding their personal and spiritual lives and experiences as well as current attitudes, viewpoints and values.
- Specifically targeted the broad spectrum of individuals who grew up in the church from those who are highly active, to those who left and want nothing to do with the church.
 - We received direct feedback from over 350 young adults who left the LCMS

Quotations Used in this Presentation

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- This report presents quotations from Young Adults that were provided in open-ended questions on the Young Adult survey.
- All quotations are provided verbatim, including any grammatical or spelling errors from the source material. All emphasis is original unless specifically stated otherwise.
- Except where noted, all survey quotations are from Young Adults who grew up and were confirmed in LCMS congregations – if known, their current religious affiliation is provided.

Disclaimer

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It is well-known that many in our culture, especially young people, hold views that are opposed to the Bible and the church. This study seeks to help the church learn more about these differences. This is not in any way to suggest the church is considering changing its stance or turning away from sound Biblical teaching. Rather, this study is an exercise in careful listening so that church leaders and ministers are equipped to defend doctrine while compassionately engaging the whole spectrum of view points found throughout this diverse generation.

2017 LCMS Confirmation Survey

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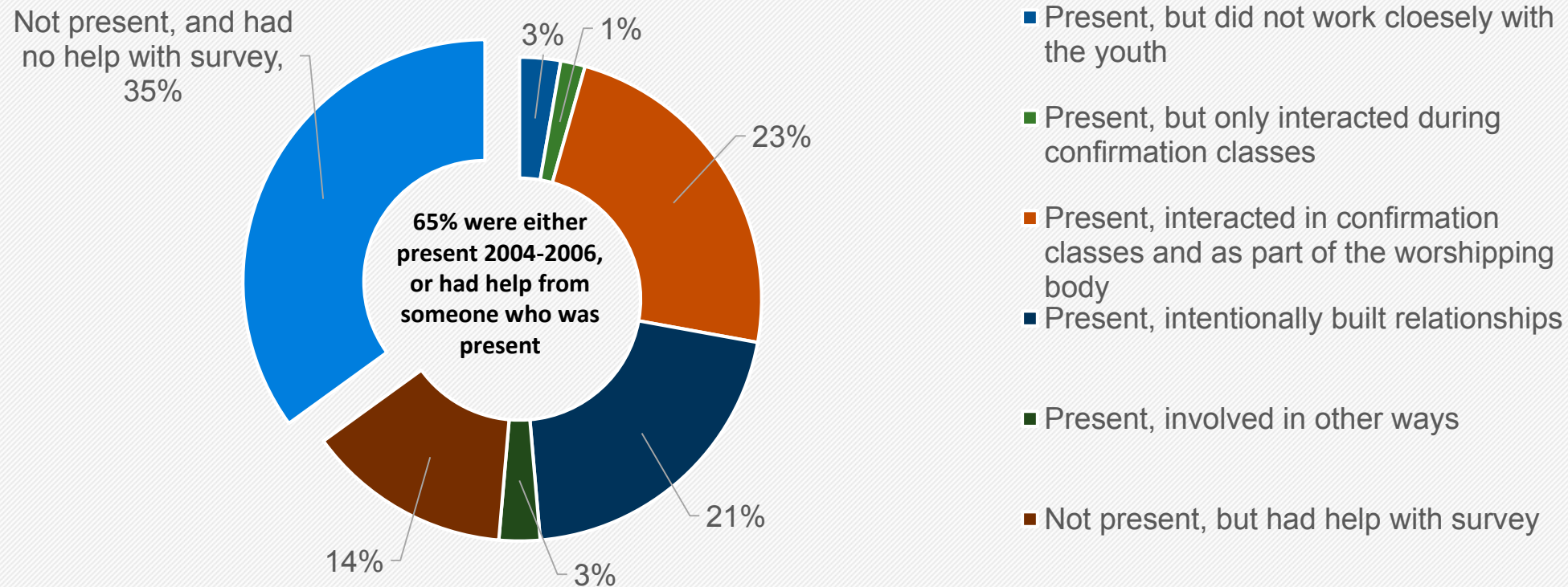
About the Confirmation Survey

15

- 184 congregations provided responses
 - 10% of the 1,800 selected
 - Margin of error +/- 6%
- Respondents were typically the pastor (86%)
- Reviewed confirmation records from 2004-2006
 - Assuming the standard confirmation age of 12-14, these young people would now be 23-27 years old
 - Nearly a quarter (23%) did not have useable records from those years.
- Since many pastors were not at the same congregation a decade ago, respondents were encouraged to recruit help from staff or parents who might know more about these young people.

2/3 of Respondents were either at the Congregation in 2004 – 2006 or Sought Help from Someone

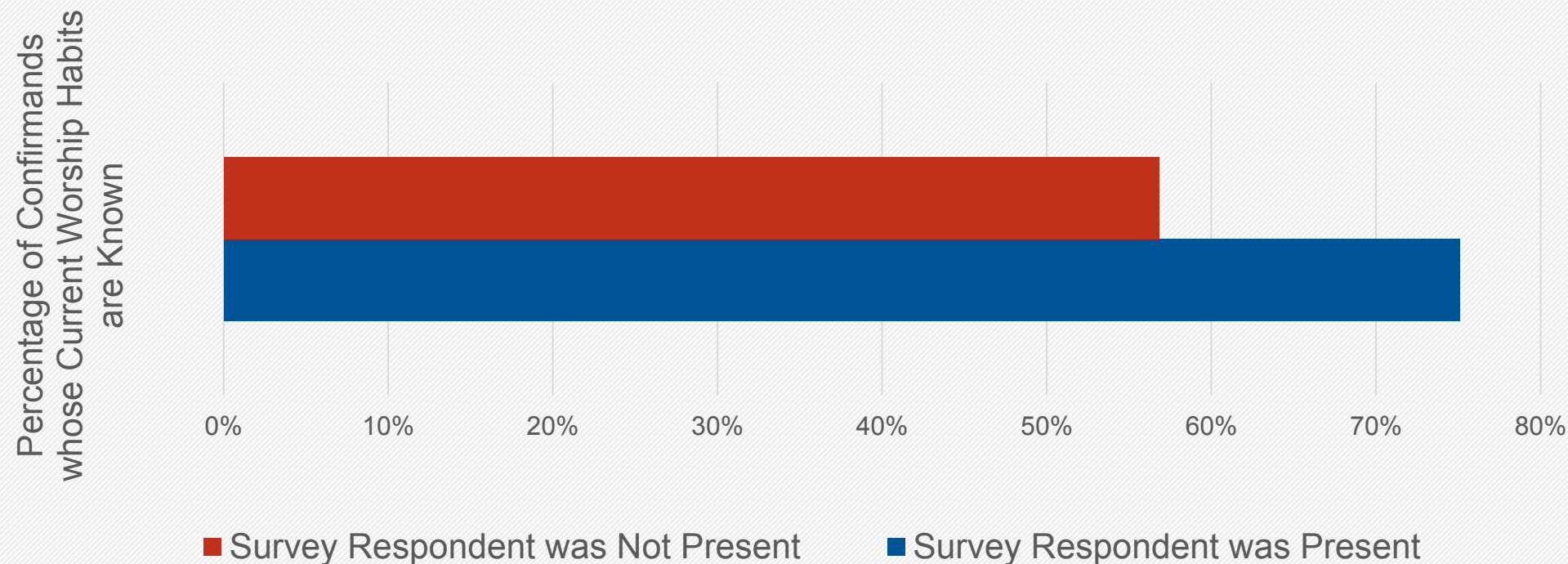
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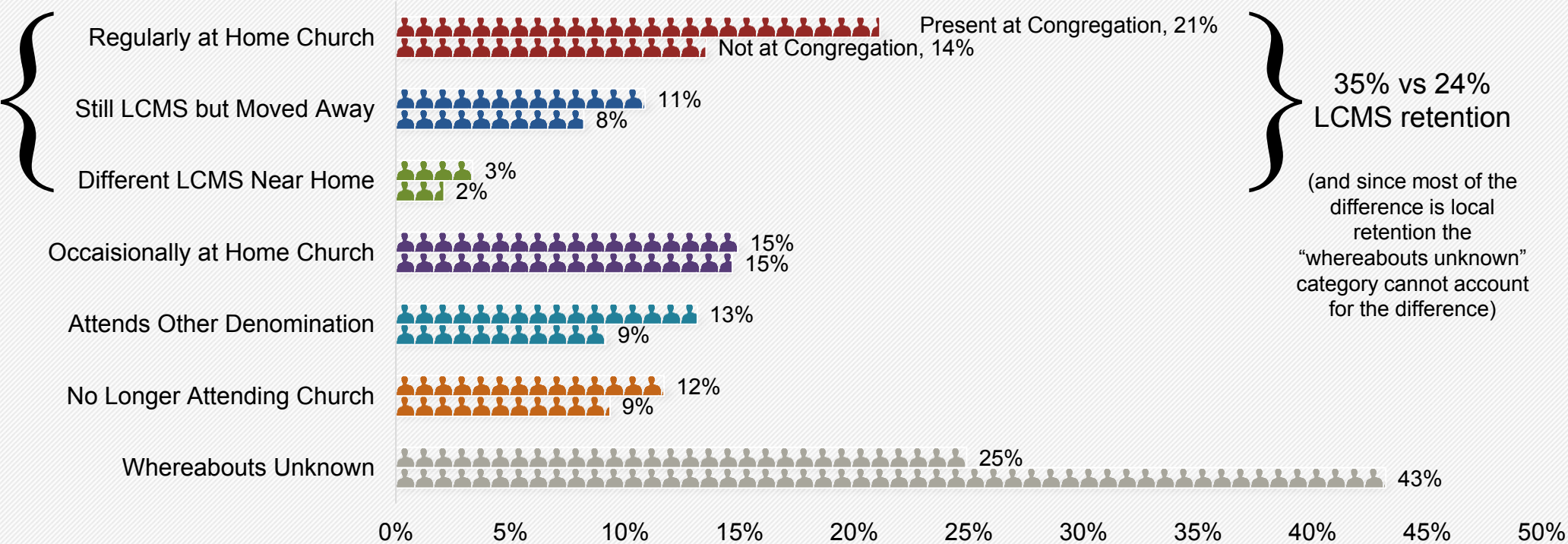
* All of the respondents who were not at the congregation in 2004-2006 were pastors, except for 7 who were DCEs.

Pastors Not at the Congregation in 2004-2006 were Less Likely to Know the Confirmands Today

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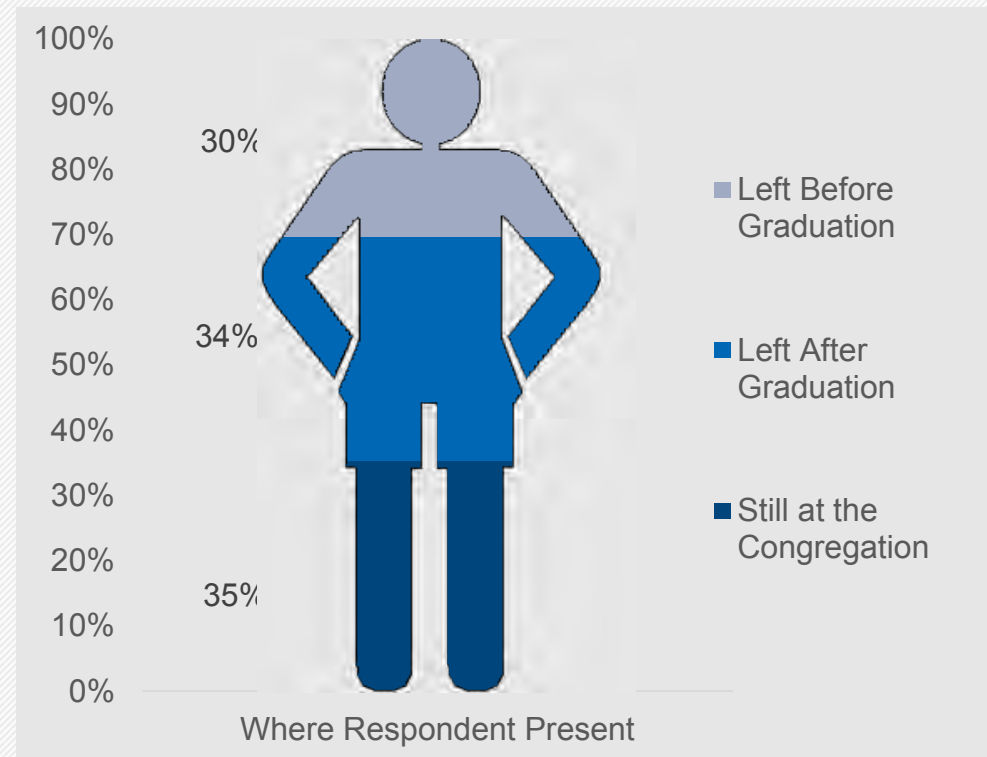
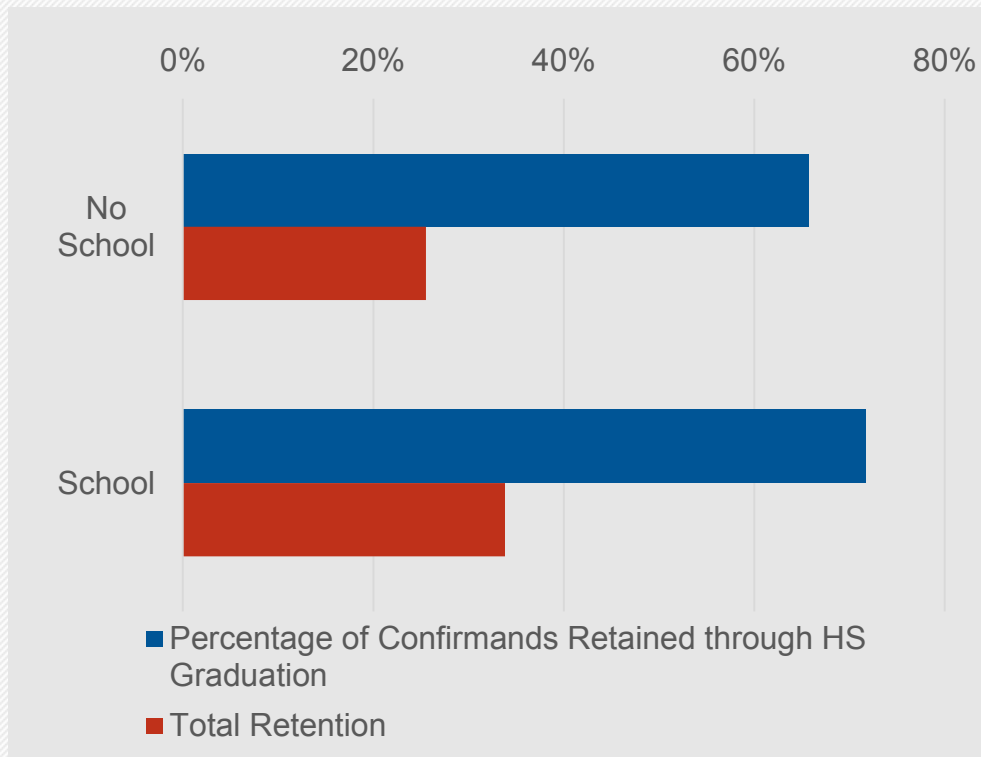


Retention Rates Better in Congregations where the Pastor in 2004-2006 is Still Present



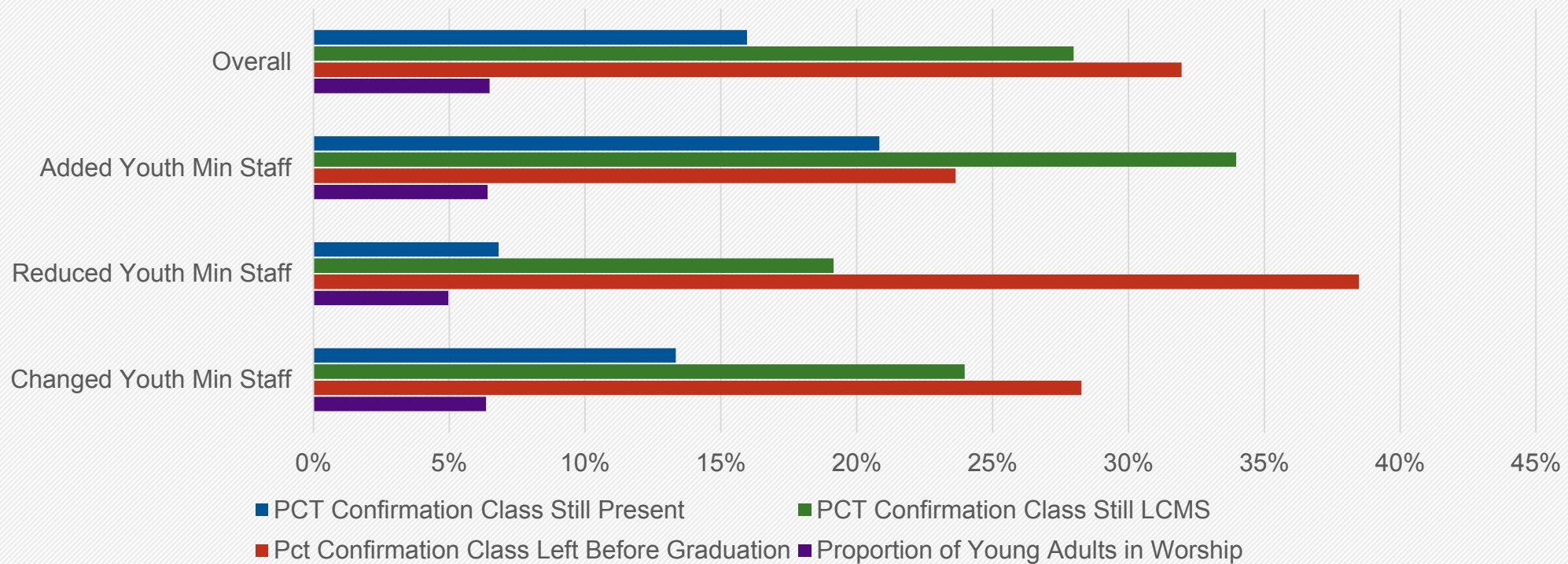
Congregations with Schools Retain More Through Graduation (though most losses occur afterwards).

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Adding Youth Ministry Staff Helps Retention, while Reducing Staff can be Detrimental

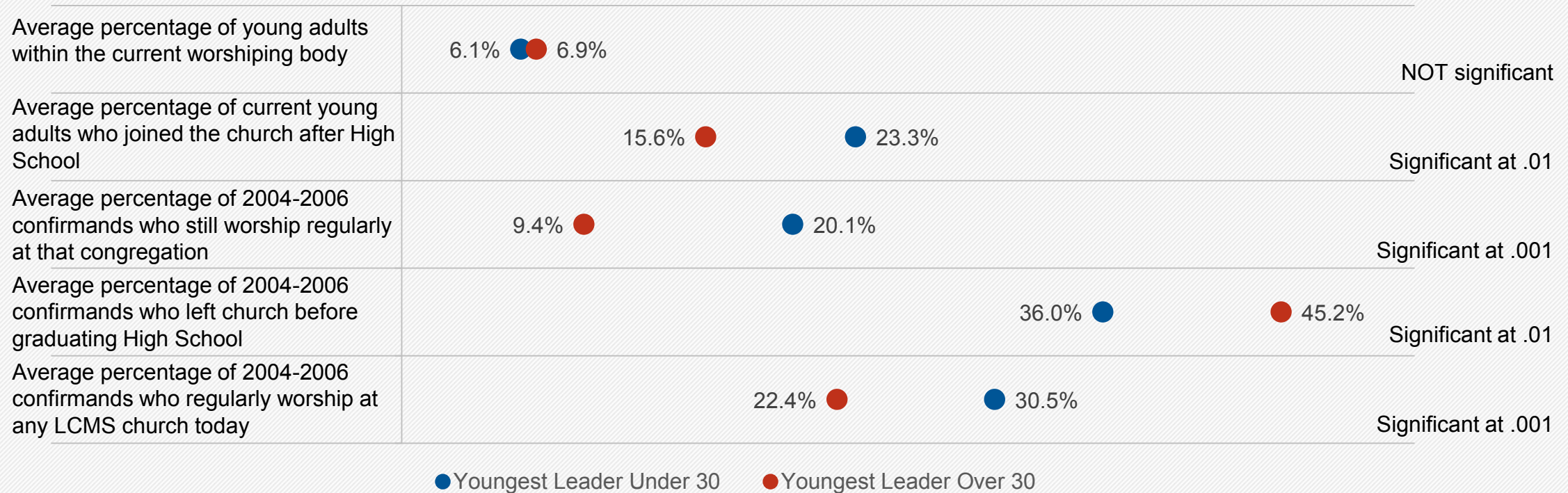
20



This effect is controlled for size of congregation and number of young adults present. Those factors are not influencing the effect. The question asked if there had been any of these changes in the past 15 years. While these correlations are significant, they did not show up in regression analysis.

Clear Link Between Having Young Church Leaders and Retaining/Attracting Young Adults

21



This effect is controlled for size of the congregation, so that is not influencing the correlation. Also, the percentage of young adults in the current worshiping body is statistically not a significant factor, so it is not influencing the other elements as well.

“None of the church leaders asked me to help serve in the church at all. No one asked me to teach Sunday school when I had just gotten out of college studying to be a DCE.

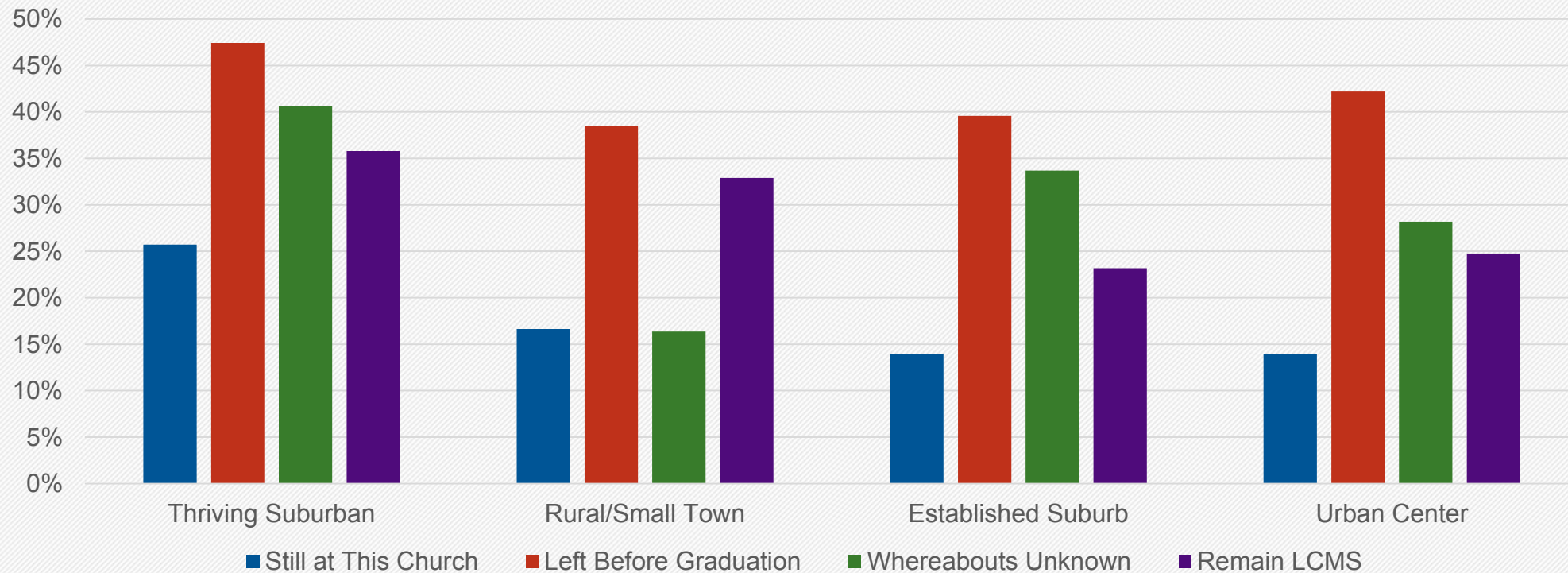
...[the church] is dying because no one wants to ask for help with ministry from someone my age, 28.”

28 year old female
Currently considers herself a non-denominational Christian

Young Adults need to feel that they can get plugged in.
They need to be given roles and responsibilities.

Thriving Suburbs Retained More Over Time but Rural and Small Town Churches Stay Better Connected

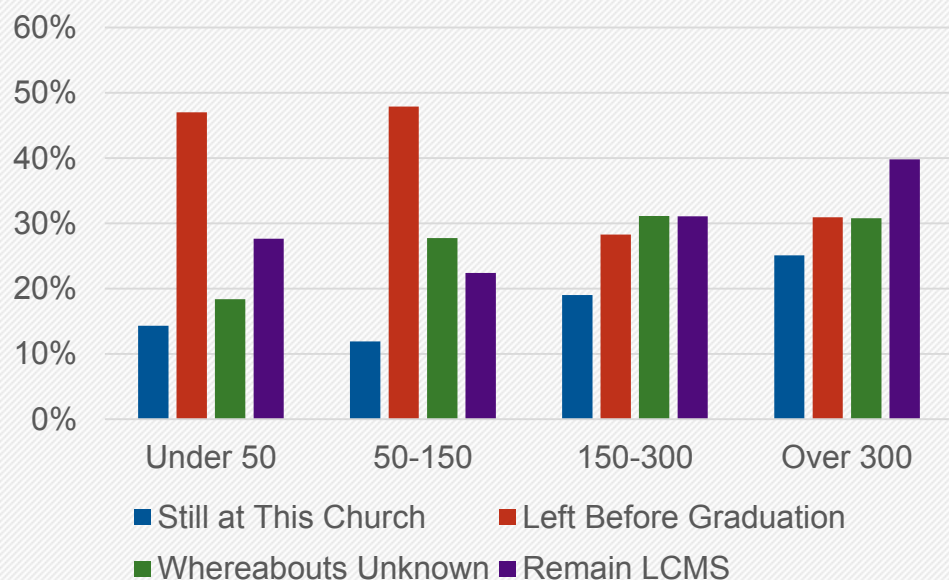
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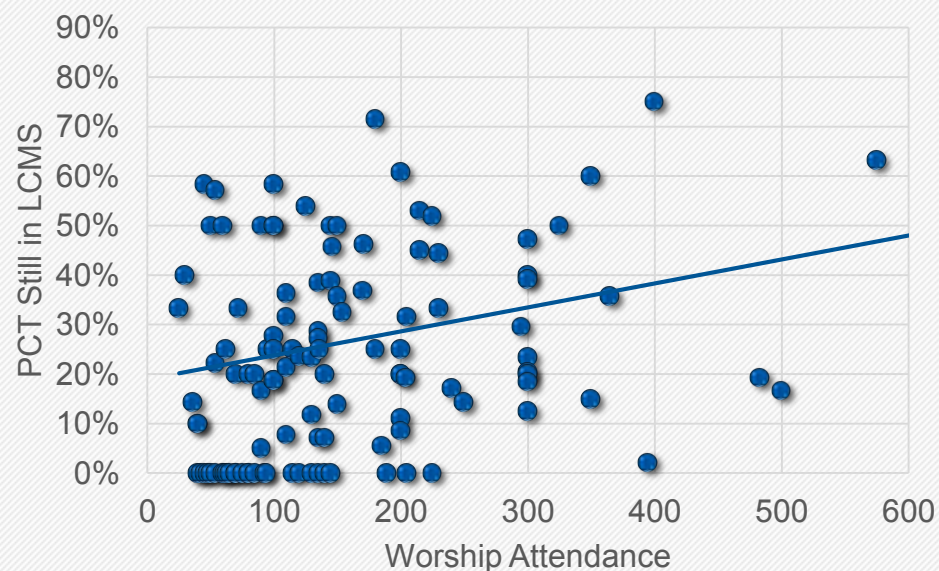
Congregation Size Makes a Difference, Even with Those who Leave Their Home Church

24

LARGE CONGREGATIONS LOST FEWER PEOPLE PRIOR TO GRADUATION AND RETAINED MORE OVERALL



YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LARGE CONGREGATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO REMAIN IN THE LCMS



Four Predictors of High LCMS Retention

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- **Having a large number of young adults who joined after high school**
 - This is an interesting link, because it links young adult behavior at the congregations at different times (confirmed teens who remain in the Synod and young adults that were attracted to that congregation after high school).
 - In other words, congregations that produced lasting Lutherans, also did well in attracting other young adults
- **Having a reduced number of confirmands who leave before graduation**
 - This may seem somewhat tautological, but it is important to point out – churches that lose more young people prior to graduation also see more young people leave into adulthood
- **Being a larger congregation**
 - Based on average weekly attendance, large congregations are more likely to produce young people that remain LCMS regardless of whether they stay in their home congregation
- **Having younger adult leaders (specifically, younger than 32 years old)**
 - This may be the most important of all the above factors, especially as can be acted upon. Putting young adults in leadership roles is something tangible that congregations can do to improve retention.

Other Variables with No Direct Impact on Retaining/Attracting Young Adults

26

- Age of senior pastor – despite the importance of having young leaders, there appears to be no difference based on the age of the senior/sole pastor. Additionally, in only 14 of the congregations surveyed was the senior/sole pastor of the congregation the youngest leader, and only two of those was he under age 32.
- Changes to confirmation process or youth ministry, other than staff changes. Most congregations made one or more changes to ministry or programs related to youth, but these changes had no measurable impact on retention.
- Presence of local colleges – there is slight positive impact on attracting new young adults (it is debatable whether it is statistically significant), but if even so, the effect is not as much as might be expected.

“ I go to [a major public university]. There are a ton of churches here, and one LCMS Lutheran Church. I spent my first semester going there...There were maybe 20 people in the congregation and not one said hi to me the entire time I was there. The pastor never learned my name, even though I would shake his hand and talk to him before and after church every week. I went to 2 college group events and maybe 5 people showed up (including the pastor). The church makes me feel very uncomfortable.”

20 Year Old Female
Currently attending a Methodist church

Multiple comments from frustrated Young Adults that churches in college towns are not making an effort to reach students

“

My home church is in a college town, but to my knowledge, there is minimal if any college outreach. ...there are few if any people close to my age.

”

23 Year Old Female
Currently attending a Christian Missionary Alliance church

Multiple comments from frustrated Young Adults that churches in college towns are not making an effort to reach students

Conclusions

29

- Confirmed LCMS Millennials: 1/3 LCMS retained; 1/3 Left; 1/3 Unknown
 - At least 11% of those who left are worshipping in another Christian denomination.
 - Most who left their home church did so after they graduated from high school.
- Every size and community has different benefits and struggles.
 - Rural communities demonstrate more connectedness
 - Suburban churches were better at retaining young adults within the LCMS.
- Staff and leadership make a difference
- A profile of a typical congregational with Higher Retention
 - Large congregation in a new suburban community
 - Operates or is associated with a school which helps retention until graduation
 - Has added ministry staff with responsibilities for young people in the past decade
 - Has had a consistent pastor for over a decade
 - Has incorporated young people into leadership roles in the church
 - Continues to attract young adults

Dr. Kevin Borchers, DCE, Concordia University Chicago
(Video Embedded)



Unintentional Neglect

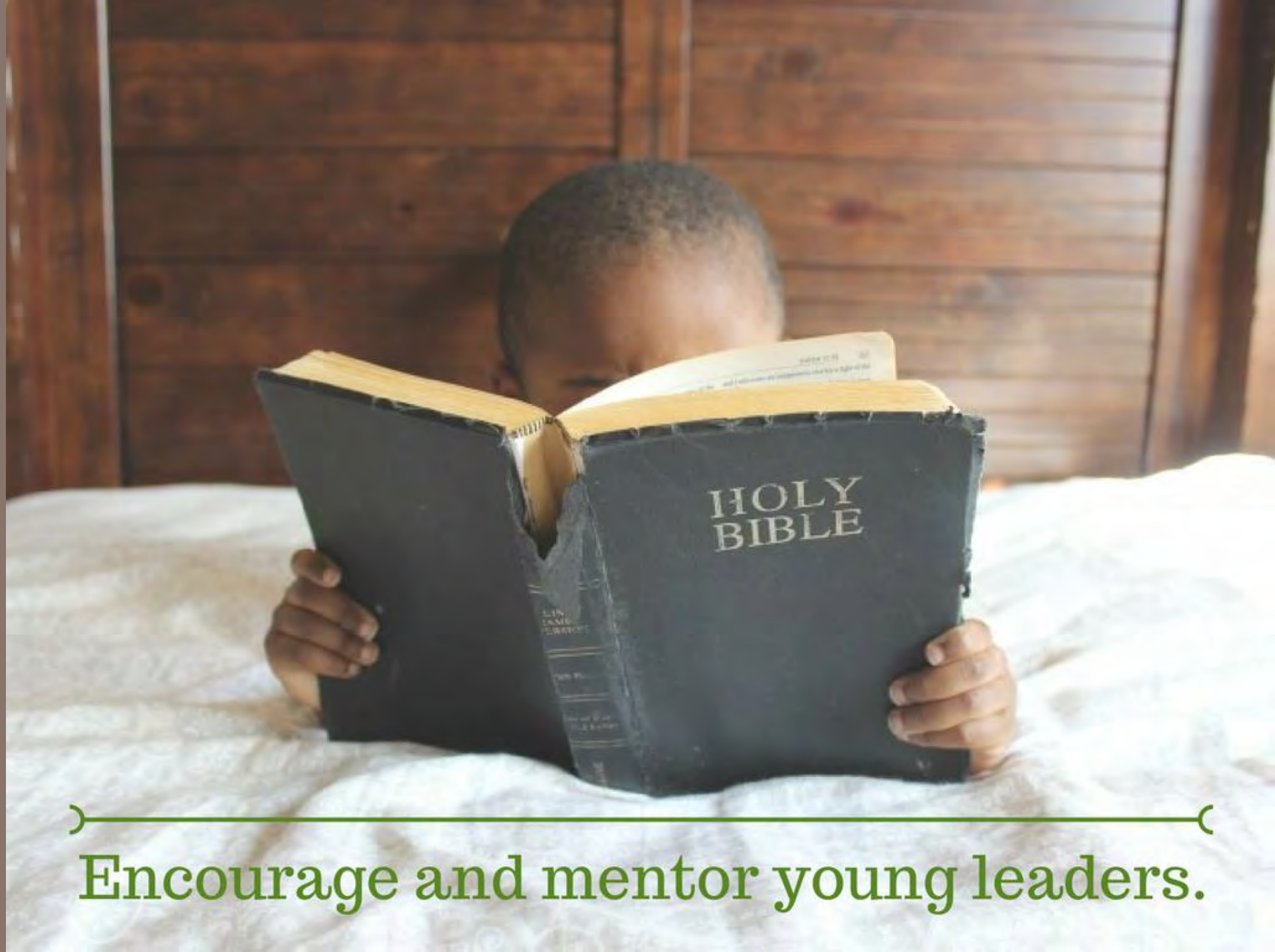


Dr. Dave Rueter, DCE, Concordia University Irvine (*Video Embedded*)



Adding staff and staff longevity





— — — — —
Encourage and mentor young leaders.

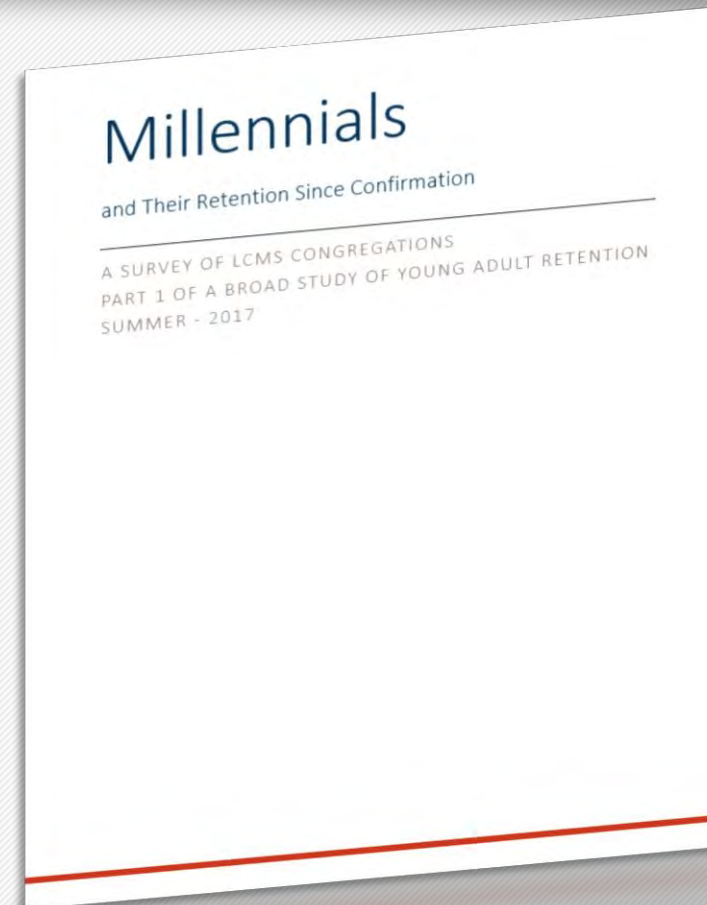
More Details Available in the Complete Report

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For more information on the findings of the 2017 Confirmation Survey, refer to the report “Millennials and their Retention Since Confirmation”.

Follow the DropBox link on the Facebook page.

Also included on the Dropbox is this PowerPoint and a discussion guide.



2017 Survey of Young Adults

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The Main Question Behind the Survey

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We want to hear from young adults who grew up LCMS. Who are they? Where are they now? Are they still in the LCMS? What do they believe about the God, the Bible and the church? What do they believe about the world and social issues? *If they left the LCMS, **why did they leave the church...and what was different for those who did not leave?***

Who took the Survey?

38

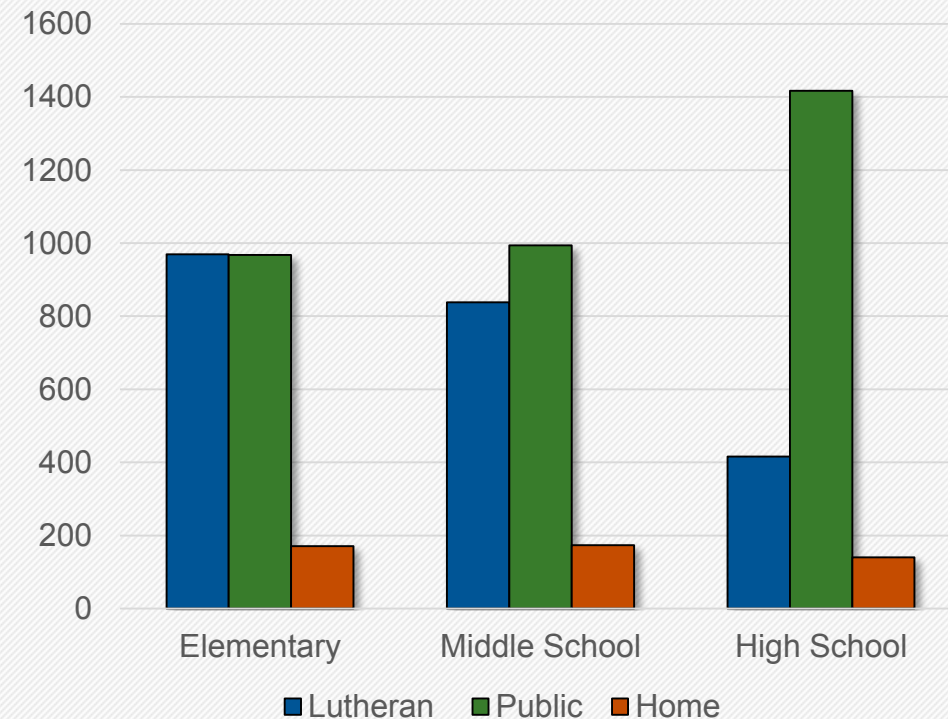
- 2,046 Young Adult Responses (2,086 from all ages)
- Average Age: 24 years old (when limited to 18-35 year-olds)
- Nearly twice as many women as men (F:66% M:34%)
- Most (72%) were confirmed in the LCMS in 8th grade
 - 88% were confirmed between 6th-9th grade
 - 105 (5%) respondents were never confirmed in the LCMS
 - 60 (3%) were confirmed after High School
 - Of those confirmed, 70% say the process was multiple years, with another 17% saying it was a full year.

Lutheran and Public Schools both Represented Well in the Sample

39

	Lutheran	Public	Home
Elementary	969	968	171
Middle School	838	994	173
High School	416	1417	140

	Lutheran	Public	Home
Elementary	47%	47%	8%
Middle School	41%	49%	8%
High School	20%	69%	7%



Totals can exceed 100% of respondents because some attended multiple types of schools.
Other private schools (including other Christian schools) account for less than 5% and are not included in the charts above.

Majority in the Sample were College Graduates

40

- Around two-thirds (67%) have graduated college, and over 20% have done at least some graduate study.
- While the LCMS bias in the survey sample boosts alumni from Concordia Universities, over half of those in the sample who attended college, attended a public university.
 - Public 51%
 - Lutheran 36%
 - Other Private 19%

Growing Up LCMS

41

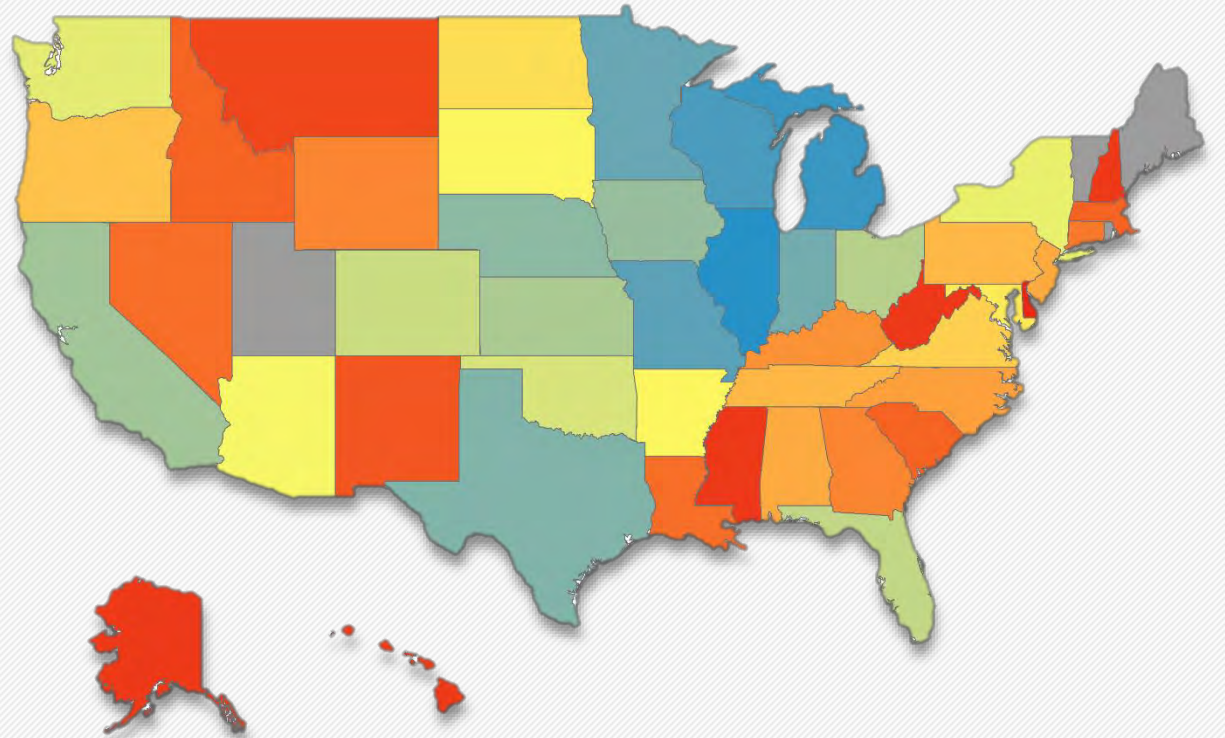
- Being an LCMS-based sample, the vast majority of respondents grew up in the Midwest.
 - 40% grew up around the Great Lakes
 - 32% in the rest of the Great Plains

Map Legend:

Blue = high response

Red = low response

Gray = no response



The Migrating Millennial

42

- Barely a third of these Young Adults still live in the same general area where they graduated High School.
 - Nearly half (48%) live farther than a two-hour drive from home
 - However, 60% still live in the same state where they grew up
- There is a nearly perfect split (51% to 49%) among the young people who grew up in Rural / Small town communities, versus Urban / Suburban neighborhoods
 - But now that they are grown, 61% live in either urban or suburban neighborhoods
 - Fewer than 10% grew up in urban neighborhoods, but today over 30% of them describe their community as urban.

These classifications (urban/suburban/small town/rural) are based on each respondent's own subjective determination. This means this cannot directly be compared with other studies, but it does mirror the general findings that young people are moving toward cities, especially city centers.

How Does Their Migration Compare with Trends in the General Population

43

Millennial Population

(Change from 2000-2016)*

Highest Millennial Increase

Texas	Florida
California	North Carolina
Colorado	

Highest Millennial Decrease

Michigan	Ohio
Illinois	New Jersey
Louisiana	

Current Largest Millennial Populations

California	Texas
New York	Florida
Illinois	

Young Adult Survey

(Change from “Grew up” to “Live now”)

Highest Millennial Increase

Texas	New York
Missouri	Alabama
Florida	(Washington DC)

Highest Millennial Decrease

Illinois	Michigan
Minnesota	Iowa
Kansas	

Highest Millennial Response Volume

Illinois	Missouri
Michigan	Indiana
Texas	

*US Population data from 2000 US Census and 2016 American Community Survey, <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Individuals Confirmed in the LCMS Classified in Six Categories Based on Current Affiliation

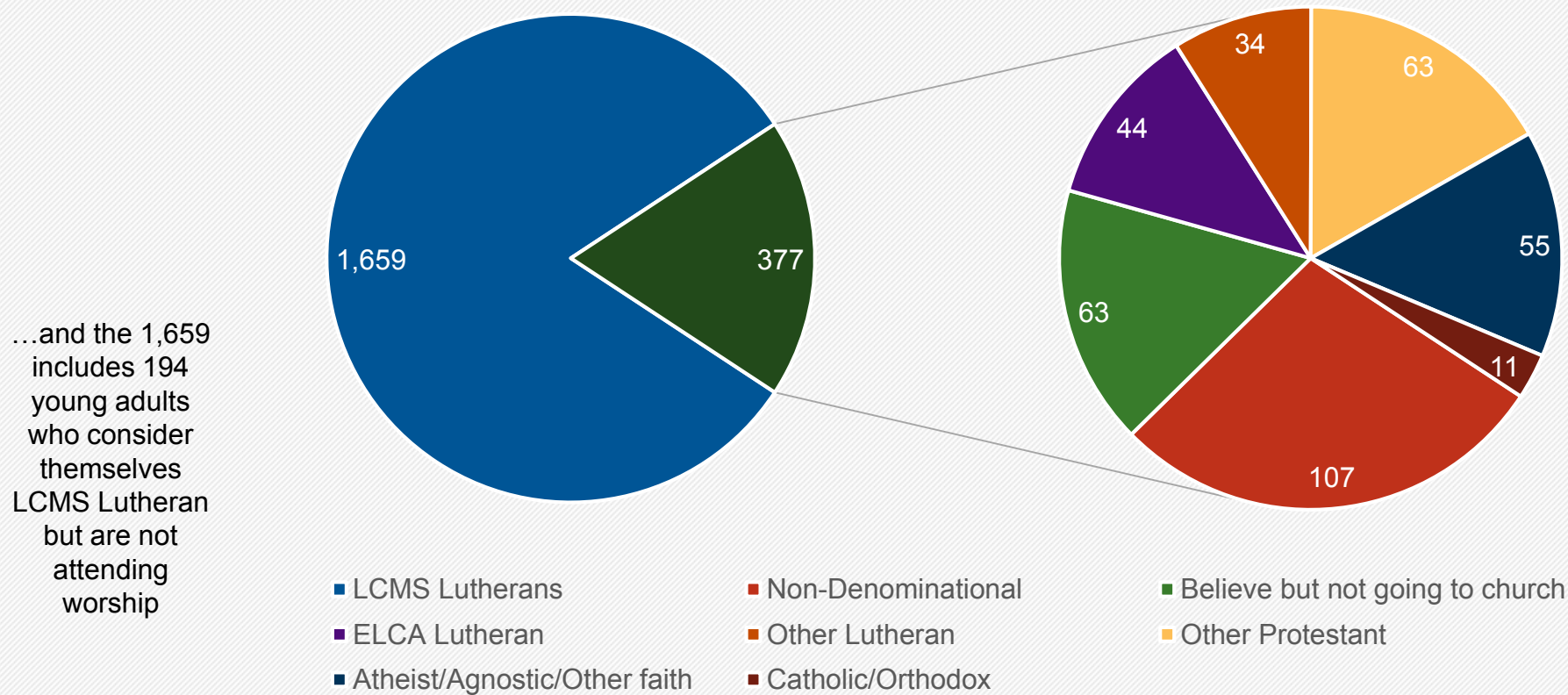
44

- LCMS – (1,576)
 - Active LCMS (1,393) – those who worship at an LCMS church at least once a month
 - Nominal LCMS (186) – those who do not attend worship monthly, but still consider themselves LCMS Lutherans
- Not LCMS Today – (355)
 - Evangelical Protestant (163) – those attending evangelical protestant denominations (WELS, SBC, PCA, etc.), or a non-denominational church
 - Mainline Protestant (63) – those in mainline denominations (ELCA, PCUSA, UMC, etc.)
 - Non-Protestant Christian (11) – those who are now Catholic or Orthodox
 - Unaffiliated (92) – those who identified themselves as atheists, agnostics, spiritual but not religious (SBNR) with not church activity, or belonging to a different faith
 - Unclassifiable (26) – these people indicated they were “Spiritual but not religious”, but reported active church attendance and did not fit statistically with other groups.

**The above counts only include young adults (18-35 years old) who were at one time confirmed in the LCMS.*

We Heard From 377 Young Adults Who Do Not Self-Identify as LCMS Lutheran

45



How to Survey Those Who Left the Church?

46

- Social Networking
 - Social media
 - Relatives still in the church
 - Friends from school or confirmation class

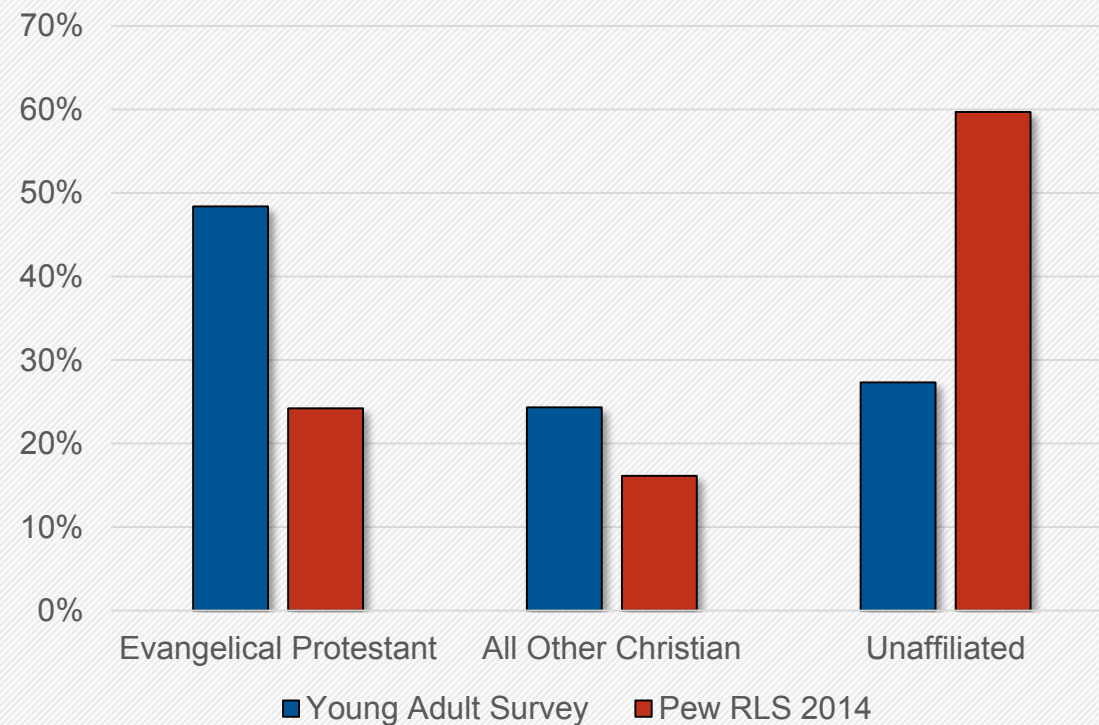
Essentially no
difference!

How Did you Hear About the Survey?	All Respondents	Non-LCMS or Inactive
Invited by a pastor or teacher:	6%	6%
Saw the post on social media:	59%	55%
Invited by a family member:	14%	15%
Invited by a friend:	19%	22%
Other (most 'other' responses were combination of social media and a friend)	3%	2%

Limitations Because of the Sampling Method

47

- The Pew Religious Landscape Survey (RLS) 2014 has a large enough sample to inform us about the distribution of Young Adults who left the LCMS.
- Our sample was somewhat biased in that it drew fewer from “unaffiliated” and more from evangelical denominations.
- This means the survey data should not be used to measure how many LCMS Lutherans are now atheists or non-denominational, etc. (the Pew data is more appropriate for that)
- However, our data is reliable to inform us about the opinions and preferences of the Young Adults in those groups.



These were Quality Responses of Substance

48

The 377 non-LCMS respondents and 44 of the “nominal LCMS Lutherans” provided over 55,000 words in open-ended questions about their spiritual journey and their thoughts on the LCMS.

Consistent with Findings in Other Research

49

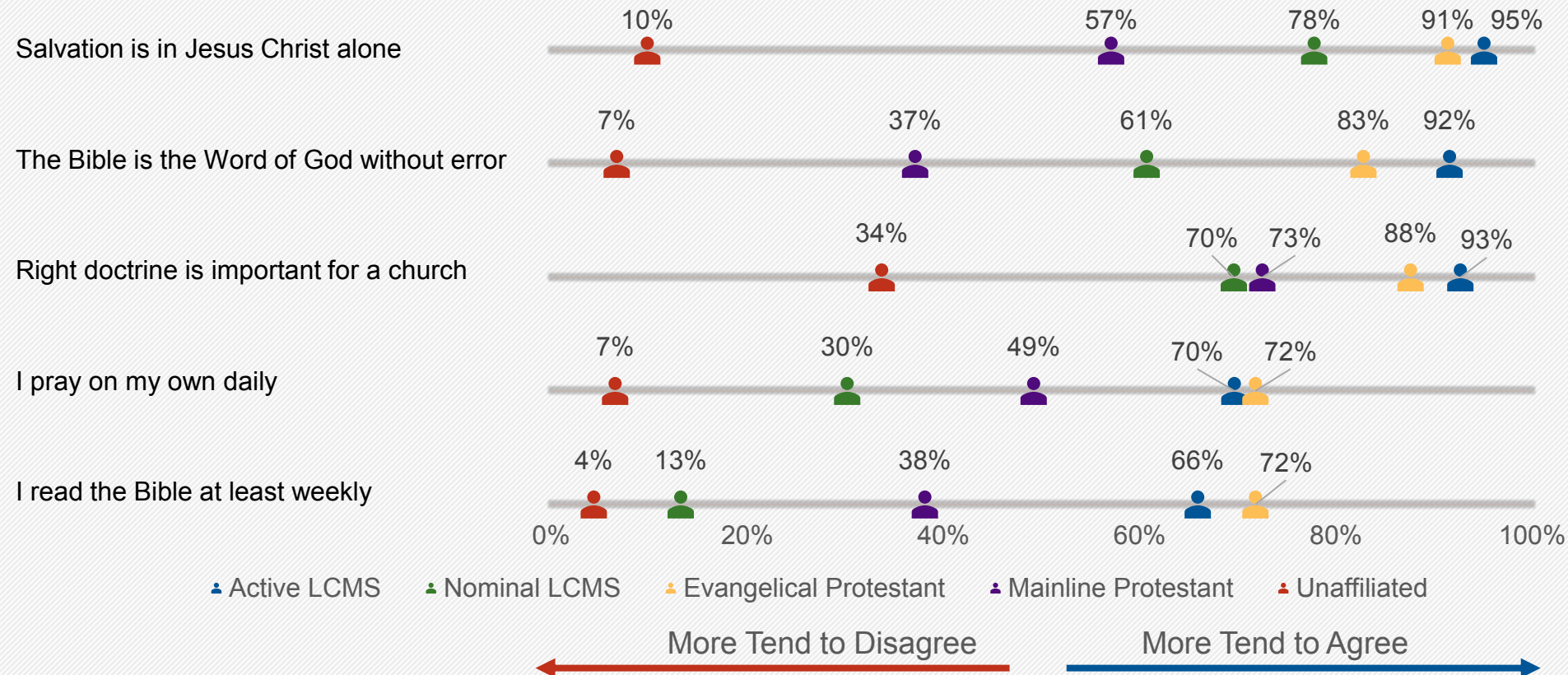
- Barna Group
 - “unChristian”, “Churchless”, “You Lost Me”, David Kinnaman
- Fuller Youth Institute
 - “Growing Young”, Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Giffin
- Lifeway Research
 - “The Millennials” by Thom Rainer and Jess Rainer
 - Additional Research by Rob Phillips
- Notre Dame - Youth and Religion (NSYR), Christian Smith
 - “Lost in Transition”, “Souls in Transition”
- Pew Research Center
 - Religious Landscape Survey (2014)
- We reached consistent results despite major differences in our approach:
 - We asked these questions in different ways and came to the same conclusion.
 - We specifically targeted those who were raised and confirmed as LCMS Lutherans, and came to the same conclusions found among the general population.
- This has two important implications:
 - Findings from other research are demonstrated to be sound
 - Conclusions of other research are relevant and applicable to Lutheran contexts

Young Adult Survey Results

50

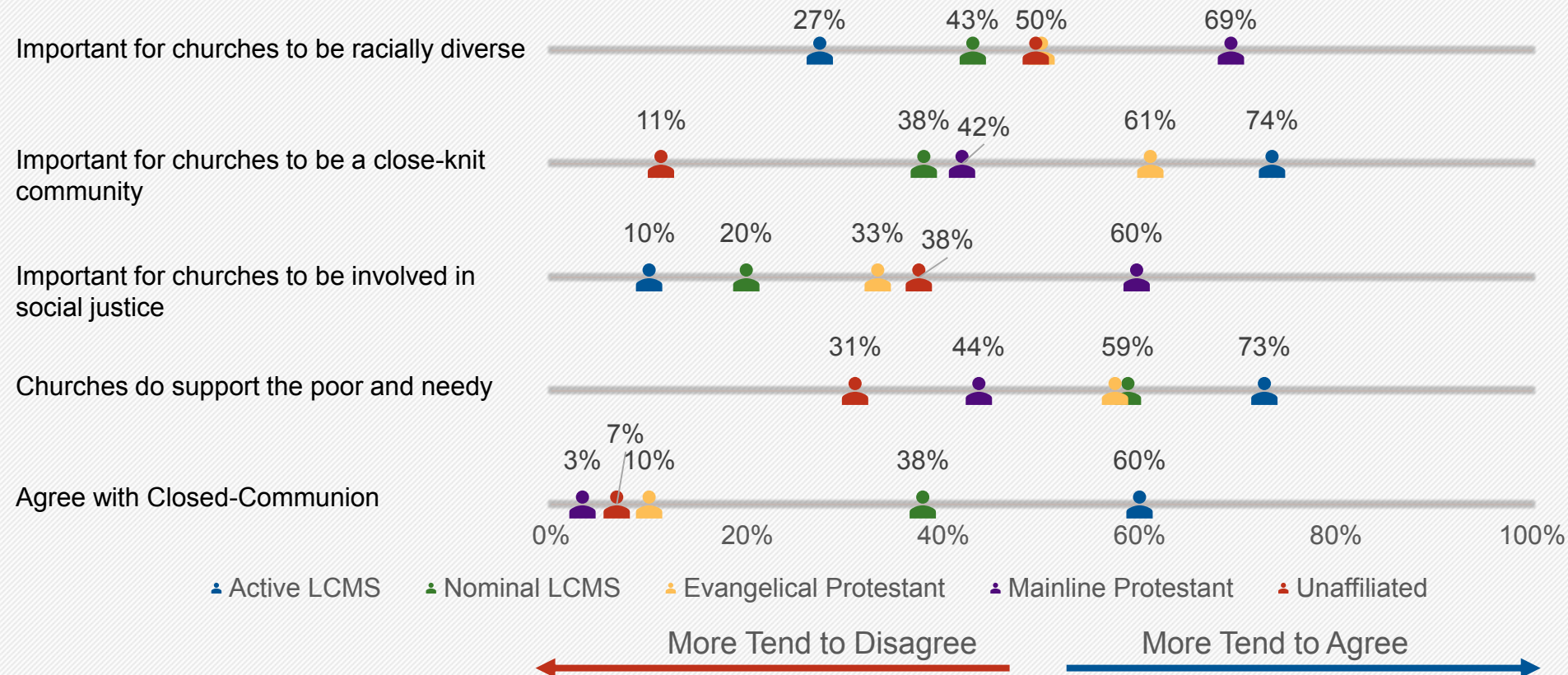
Comparing Active LCMS of Views and Practices of the Faith with Others

51



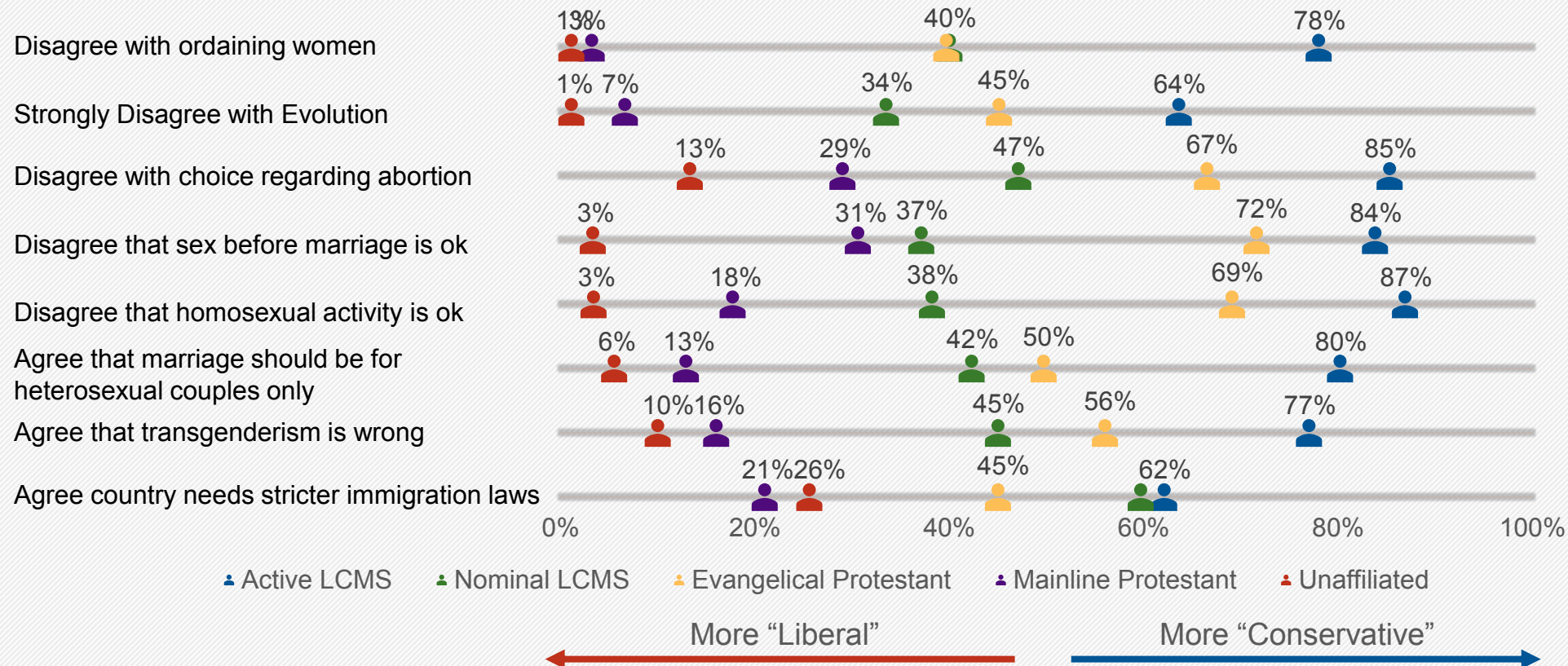
Comparison of Opinions about the Church

52



Comparison of Views on Social Issues

53



Frequently Mentioned Reasons for Leaving the LCMS (regardless of affiliation)

54

Feel the LCMS excludes people or is unwelcoming	160
Personally felt judged in the LCMS	56
The LCMS is “closed-minded”	40
Disagree with the LCMS stance on social issues	144
Issues related to homosexuality or gender	56
Ordination of women	38
Churches had too few young adults or no support for young adults	75
Prefer contemporary worship (mostly from evangelicals)	53
LCMS has gotten too involved in politics	40
People in the LCMS are “inauthentic”	37

Out of 359
Commenters

(that is 95% of
the sample of
those who left
the LCMS)

Comments can
be counted in
multiple
categories, if
applicable.



Compare and Contrast the Different Groups in the Survey

Individuals Confirmed in the LCMS Classified in Six Categories Based on Current Affiliation

56

- LCMS – (1,576)
 - Active LCMS (1,393) – those who worship at an LCMS church at least once a month
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Unique Factors of Active LCMS Lutherans

57

- Childhood/Youth
 - Not any more or less likely to have attended Lutheran schools.
 - More likely to have seen a higher level of faith practiced by their parents (prayer and Bible reading at home, regular church attendance, serving or leading at church).
 - Had healthy relationships with parents where they were comfortable talking about their faith and even doubts.
 - Even if they were not in a youth group, they felt that their pastor cared about them personally, and that their church ministered to them through major life transitions.
 - They very likely attended an LCMS Youth Gathering.
- Young Adulthood
 - They likely have not moved away from home (the effect becomes even more prominent if those who became church workers are excluded).
 - They attended an LCMS Campus Ministry while in college.
 - They may likely be single, but if not, their spouse or significant other is most likely and LCMS Lutheran as well.

Significant Predictors of Retention in the LCMS (*active or nominal*)

58

- Childhood/Youth
 - Comfortable talking with their parents about faith
 - Felt as though the church handled issues of mental health well
 - Felt there was a minister or church leader who was “safe” to talk openly with
 - Least likely to describe their home community as “urban”
- Young Adulthood
 - Less likely to pursue advanced degrees beyond a Bachelor’s Degree
 - Participated in a campus ministry, especially if an LCMS ministry
 - Did not move away from their home community

*Results based on regression analysis, $R^2 = 0.619$

Unique Factors of Nominal Lutherans

59

- Childhood/Youth
 - Were likely to have attended a public high school.
 - Their parents were not involved much at church – low worship attendance, did not have a specific leadership or service role.
 - Not very likely to read the Bible at home.
 - Were uncomfortable talking with their fathers.
 - Unlike those who unaffiliated, they had a mostly positive view of their home church.
- Young Adulthood
 - Were less likely to pursue a higher education.
 - If they did go to college, they most likely did not attend a campus ministry.
 - Very likely married or dating someone of a different faith or denomination.
 - Unlike those who unaffiliated, nominals mostly still live in the same general area where they grew up.

Understanding Nominal Young Adults

60

- They are “low hanging fruit” and do not have negative feelings about the LCMS
- They had a good experience at their home church, but they just don’t feel it is right for them
- While they are drifting away from church and practicing the faith, they have not rejected their church or their beliefs
- They are very likely not feeling satisfied with their life right now

To Bring Back Nominal Young Adults

61

Capitalize on

- Their faith and self-identification, they still believe and identify as LCMS
- Their generally positive relationships with their parents and their home church
- They very likely still live near home, which means lots of relational connections
- Their lack of satisfaction in life, they sense something is wrong or missing

Obstacles

- Their parents likely did not establish or model good practices of the faith, and this seems to have had a profound effect
- They already feel judged by the church, be gracious as it may take time to adjust beliefs and practices

Unique Factors of Those Who Became Evangelical Protestants

62

- Childhood/Youth
 - The least likely to have attended a Lutheran elementary school.
 - The most likely to have been involved in a youth group.
 - Had negative views of their home church, and especially did not feel comfortable inviting their friends to come with them.
 - Also were more likely to have had a strained relationship with their father.
- Young Adulthood
 - If they went to college, they attended a campus ministry, but not an LCMS one.
 - They have very likely moved away from home.
 - They probably got involved in another church that has a Young Adult Ministry.
 - If they are not single, they are likely with someone who is also in the same Protestant denomination (or is also non-denominational).

Understanding Those Who Left for Evangelical Churches

63

- They have largely left the church for what they believe are spiritual issues: fellowship, worship, theology
 - Fellowship – they value community and it has been easiest for them to find it in churches with “programs” they can get involved in
 - Worship – though they may often describe their preference as “contemporary” the words authentic and intentional more accurately describe what the generation as a whole seems to value
 - Theology – some have theological differences that have led them to leave the church
- Many of them had a bad experience with the LCMS
 - Including many who felt judged or condemned because they left

To Bring Back Evangelical Young Adults

64

Capitalize on

- Robust Lutheran theology – they believe the Bible and are seeking Truth
- Robust liturgy – they see the liturgy as boring, show them how it is alive
- Active service – they don't just want head knowledge, they want to put the Gospel in action

Obstacles

- They are likely part of a church with a strong community and it will be difficult to pull them away
 - Likewise, they very likely have a spouse who does not want to leave that church or denomination
- They also may be resistant because of bad experiences as a result of their leaving the LCMS
- They may have an adverse reaction to formal worship services that they cannot see beyond

Unique Factors of Those Who Became Mainline Protestants

65

- Childhood/Youth
 - This group was the most likely to have attended public schools.
 - Unlikely to have had a father who was a pastor.
 - Bible reading was similar to Active LCMS Lutherans, but parents' worship attendance was not as high.
 - They were not involved in a youth group, though their churches likely had a staff person over youth.
 - Like the unaffiliated, they have negative views of their home church, including feeling as if they had no one they could open up to.
 - Unlike the unaffiliated, they were not any more likely to have had a strained relationship with parents.
- Young Adulthood
 - If they went to college, they likely attended a campus ministry, but not an LCMS one.
 - They likely moved away from home.
 - They probably got involved in a church that has a Young Adult Ministry.
 - They are the least likely to be single and are likely with someone who has different religious views than they do (or possibly is not even religious at all).

Understanding Those Who Left for Mainline Churches

66

- They value diversity and inclusivism, and see the LCMS as moving in the wrong direction
- They fundamentally disagree with the church's conservative stance on several controversial topics, and in many cases these are the reasons they left the LCMS.
- Now, their beliefs in traditional orthodoxy (including salvation and the Bible) are starting to slip as well
- However, a handful of them have only drifted to ELCA churches because they could not find an LCMS church in their new neighborhood

To Bring Back Mainline Young Adults

67

Capitalize on

- Reaching out - some just need to be shown a local LCMS church where they can belong
- The Bible's radical inclusivism of race and gender (as well as the beauty of Biblical teachings on gender)
- Biblical ethics of humble servanthood, caring for the poor and needy
- Preach the truth – even though their beliefs have shifted some, they still believe in God and see value in faith

Obstacles

- Many have strong negative opinions about the LCMS that will be difficult to overcome
- Teach the church not to recoil at the term “social justice” but fight for Biblical aspects of social justice

Unique Factors of Those Who are Now Unaffiliated

68

- Childhood/Youth
 - Were just as likely as the Active Lutherans to have attended Lutheran schools.
 - Were just as likely as Active Lutherans to have been a pastor's kid.
 - Were only slightly less likely to have prayed or read the Bible at home.
 - Were more likely to have had a strained relationship with their parents, especially their father.
 - They tend to have strong negative feelings about their home church.
 - They were the least likely to have attended an LCMS Youth Gathering.
- Young Adulthood
 - They were the most likely to pursue advanced degrees.
 - In college, they likely did not attend a campus ministry.
 - They very likely moved away from home.
 - They are dating or married to someone who is also not religious.

Understanding Those Who Left the Church Altogether

69

- They no longer believe in God or the Bible and see little value in faith or Christianity
- They have very negative views of the church
- They struggled deeply with doubts and questions while in the church, and felt dismissed when they tried to bring them up
- They have very poor relationships with parents or leaders in the church

To Bring Back Those Who Left the Church Altogether

70

Capitalize on

- Community - they are not part of a church, and many see a value getting “plugged in” with others
- Speaking the truth in love – they need to see Truth, and they need to see grace
- Demonstrate humility – apologize for and validate their hurts, authentically seeking their forgiveness
- Listen well – they do not think the church can or will listen to them

Obstacles

- They are the most hardened toward the church, and will doubt sincerity of many efforts
- Their belief system (toward faith and cultural issues) is radically different

Effect of Parents on Young Adults



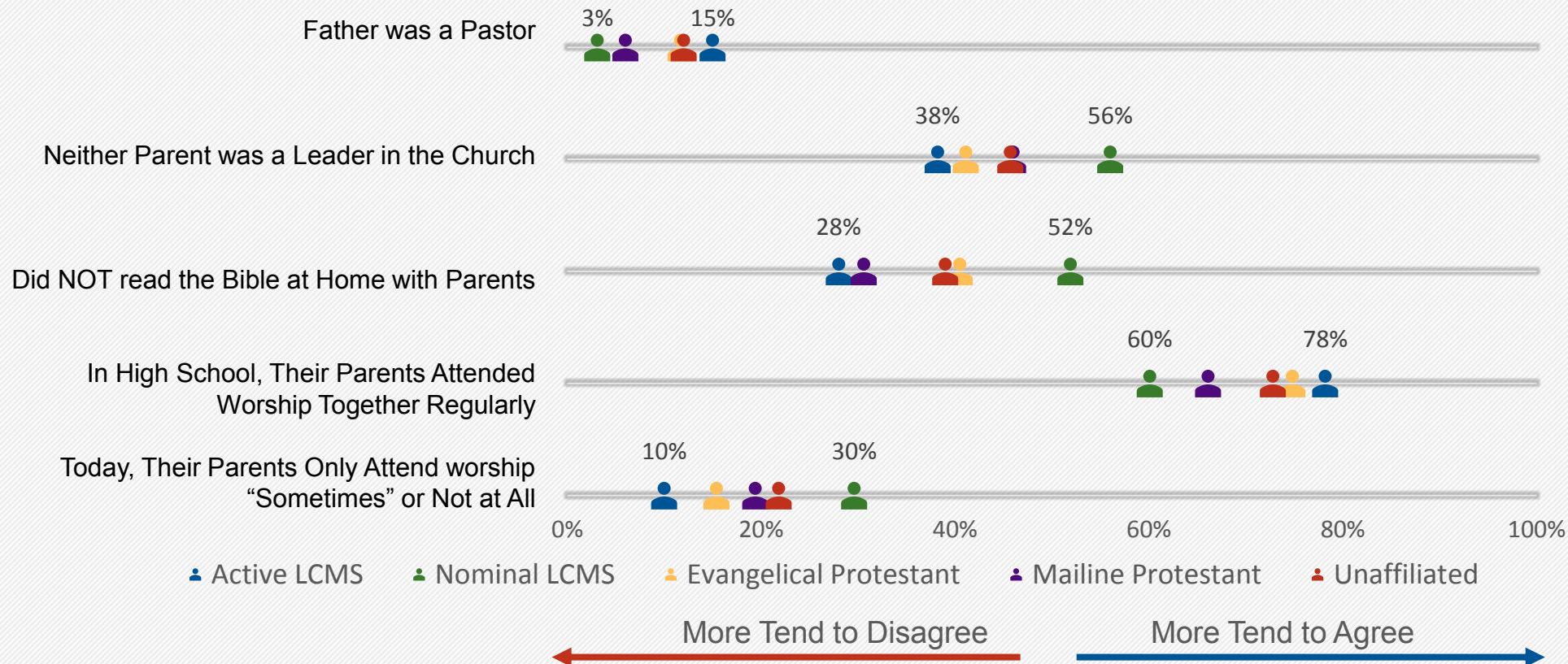
Young Adults Cite their Parents as Major Influences

72

- Nearly 1-in-3 young adults listed a parent as one of the most influential people in their lives
 - While that influence was usually positive, those who left the LCMS were more than twice as likely to say a parent had a negative influence (13% vs 5%)
- Parents ranked in the Top 10 of major components of accounts of their “pivotal moments”
 - Parents were specifically mentioned as a crucial part of the pivotal moment narratives 46 times (roughly 4% of comments regardless of current affiliation)

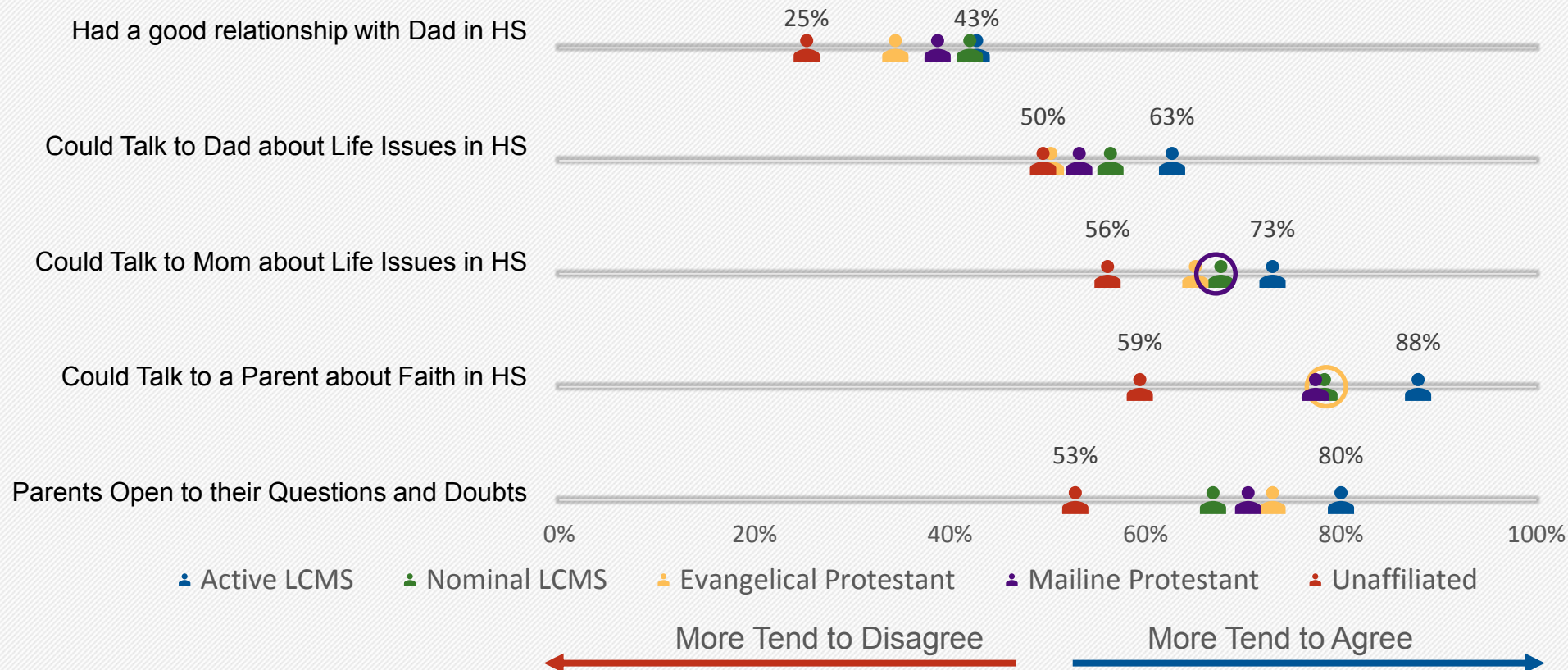
Impact of Parents' Involvement with Church and Faith Practices – Especially Strong with Nominals

73



Impact of Their Relationship with Parents During High School – Especially with the Unaffiliated

74



Numbers on those with Liberal Views

75

- Respondents were divided into conservative or liberal views based on their responses to a series of questions on social topics.
- Below is a tally of the most “liberal” responders to the survey by their church affiliation grouping.

	Active LCMS	Inactive LCMS	Evangelical Protestant	Mainline Protestant	Unaffiliated	All Groups
Total with Liberal Views	52	38	23	14	63	190
Percent in Group Overall	3.6%	9.8%	50.8%	25.8%	75.0%	10.0%
Percent of Liberal Views	27.4%	20.0%	12.1%	7.4%	33.2%	100.0%

Though They Hold Liberal Views on Social Issues, LCMS Liberals are More Likely to Have Traditional Views on Faith

76

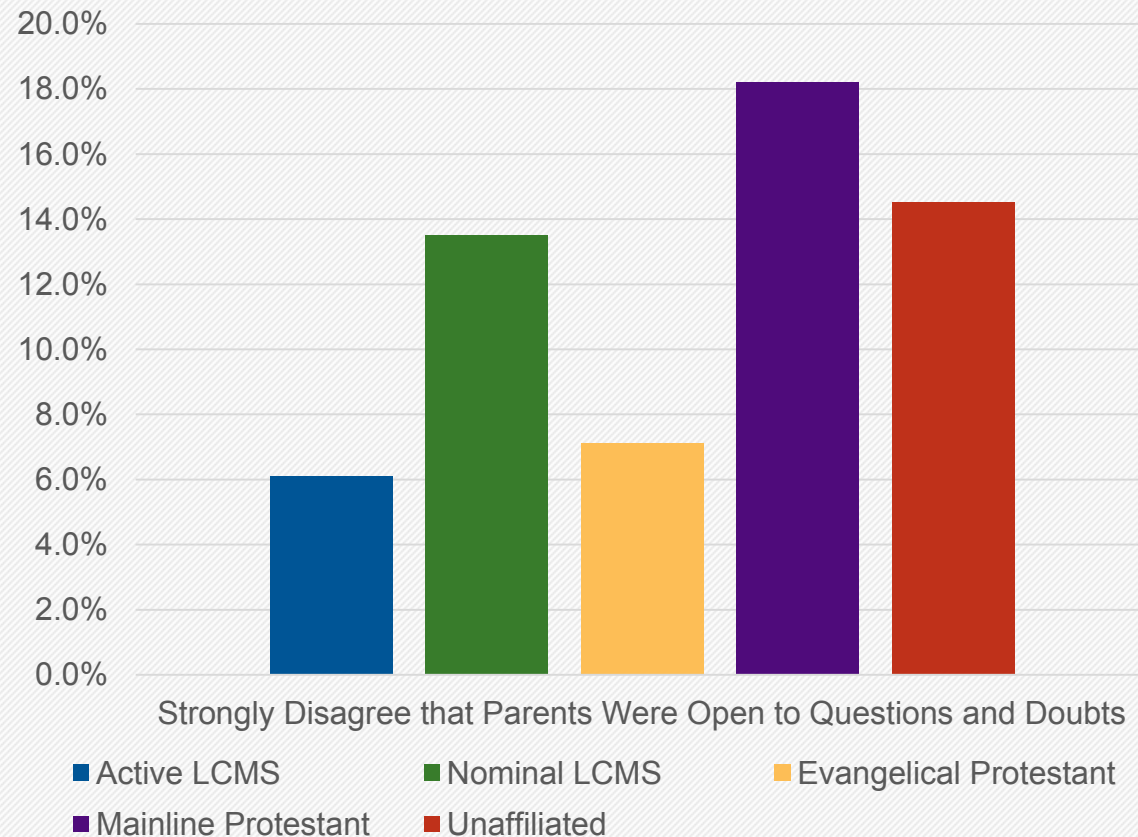
Among Those with the Most Liberal Views,
Percentage Who Agree (at least somewhat) with the Following Statements

	Active LCMS (52)	Inactive LCMS (38)	Evangelical Protestant (14)	Mainline Protestant (23)	Unaffiliated (62)	“Liberal” Sample (189)
Bible is the Word of God	63.5%	57.8%	50.0%	26.0%	6.4%	38.0%
Salvation in Christ Alone	57.7%	63.2%	50.0%	34.8%	6.3%	38.4%
I Rely on God...	94.3%	84.3%	78.5%	91.0%	20.6%	66.1%
I Feel Judged by Church	56.8%	63.2%	57.2%	77.3%	87.3%	70.7%
I Don't Need Religion	3.8%	21.1%	7.1%	8.6%	66.6%	28.9%

Among Those with Liberal Views, Being Free to Talk Openly with Parents Made a Difference in Adherence

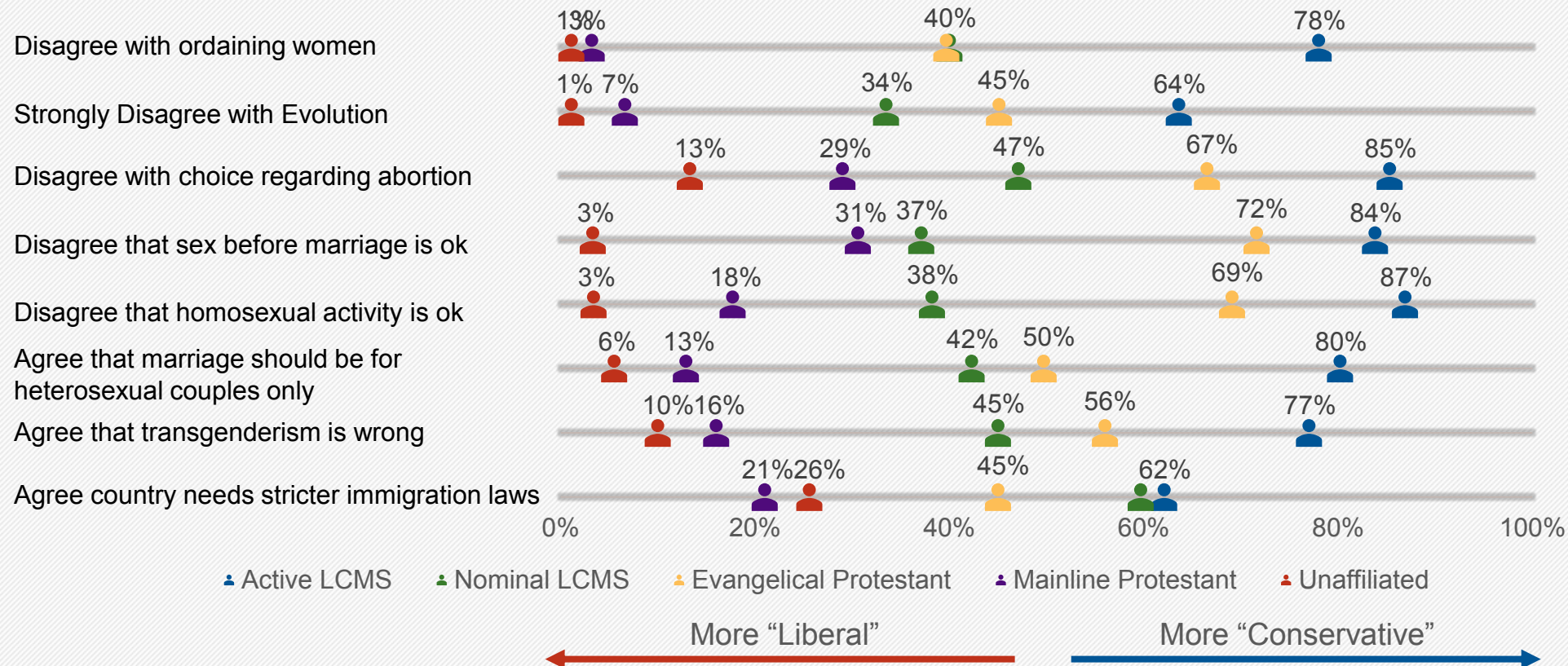
77

Young adults with liberal views are much more likely to remain an Active LCMS member today if, when they were in High School, they felt that they could talk openly about their questions and doubts with their parents.



Comparison of Views on Social Issues

78



We Also See Signs that Relationships with Parents Impact the Liberal Views of Young Adults Today

79

- Those whose parents are not currently actively attending church, are twice as likely to hold liberal views today
 - Parents active in church = 20.5% liberal
 - Parents not attending church = 41.9% liberal
- Young Adults who did not attend worship regularly in high school are twice as likely to hold liberal views today
 - Attended worship weekly = 22.6% liberal
 - Attended less than monthly = 48.6% liberal
- Those who were homeschooled for high school are much less likely to hold liberal views today
 - Homeschoolers = 7.9% liberal
 - Any other school types = 26.2% liberal

Dr. Dave Rueter, DCE, Concordia University Irvine
(*Video Embedded*)



Parental Factors Contributing to Active Adherence

81

Today's Active LCMS Young Adults...

- Were the most likely to see a high level of faith practiced by their parents
 - Frequent Bible reading at home
 - Prayed with parents at home
 - Regular church attendance of both parents together (continuing even today)
 - At least one parent having a service or leadership role in the church
- Were the most likely to have a good relationship with parents in High School
 - Felt they related well in general, specifically with dad
 - Felt they could talk to both parents about life issues
 - Felt they could talk openly with at least one parent about faith
 - Felt safe bringing up their questions and doubts to their parents

The effect is most pronounced when combined. Over two-thirds of Active LCMS claimed 5 or more of these were true, whereas nearly half all other respondents claimed only 4 or fewer were true for them.

Impact of the Home Church

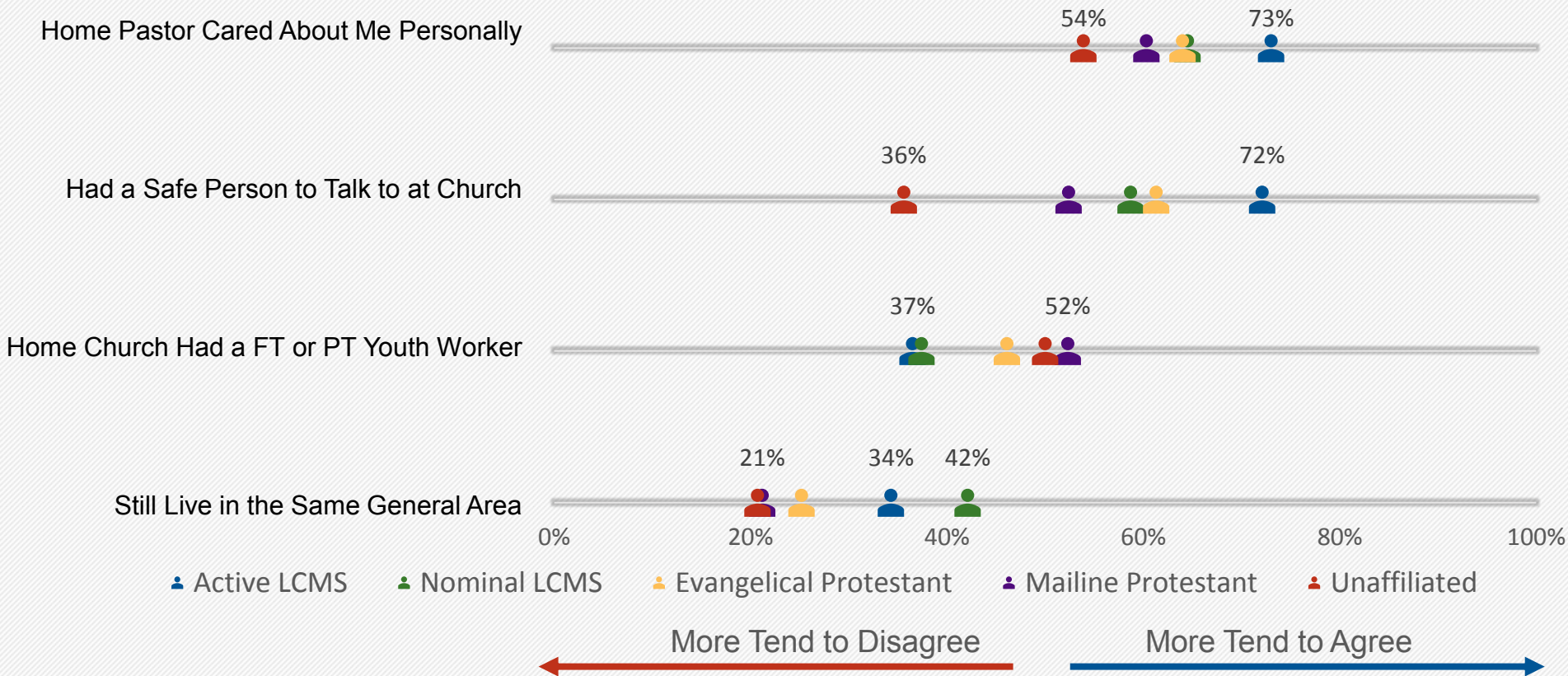


Other Adults, Especially Those Associated with the Home Church, are Also Highly Influential

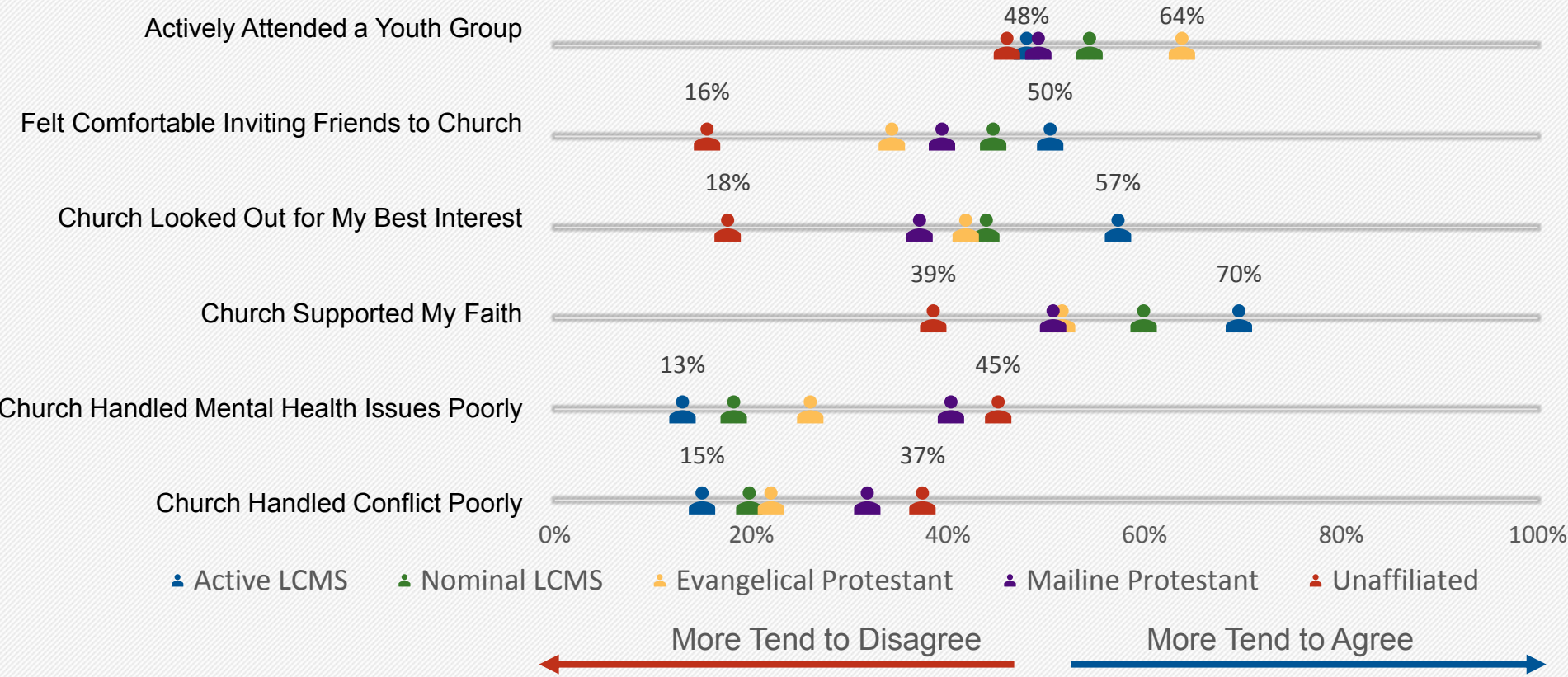
83

- Who Young People Cited as the Influential People in their Lives
 - Parents 29%
 - Home church pastor 13%
 - Other family members 12%
 - Teacher 12%
 - Other pastor 11%
 - Youth Minister 10%
- However, not all of these were positive influences
 - More than 1 in every 5 times a pastor was mentioned, the young person cited him as a negative influence (especially from those who left the LCMS).
 - By comparison, among teachers and family members, less than 5% were negative.

Relationships within the Home Church Matter



Impact of the Home Church



“ I went through a difficult time in college and Christianity could not give me comfort or answers, only further judgment.

[The LCMS] was not welcoming to me. I faced too much judgment. I have a mental illness and it was judgmental to me. I was raped and mostly just blamed for it. I am lesbian and am not welcome there. I ask a lot of questions and am interested in philosophy and other religions and that was taboo. I am a feminist and that was frowned upon.

”

22 year old female
Agnostic

Sometimes it all comes down to one bad experience or series of experiences. Young People have expectations that the church will keep them safe and comfort them in need. When a church fails at that young people are devastated.

So Much Depends Upon Relationships

87

- One of the largest effects on adherence shows up in the question of whether they felt there was a “safe person” to talk to at church
 - Even though those who are still LCMS Lutherans (active or nominal) had the lowest reporting of having a dedicated Youth Worker, they were the most likely to report that their pastor cared about them and that there was a safe person to talk to at church.
 - Nearly 1 in every 10 of the “pivotal moments” comments from those who left mentioned an experience where their questions, concerns or doubts were ignored or dismissed.
- There is a definite correlation with moving away from one’s home town and leaving the LCMS
 - This may be even more dramatic than the data suggestions when we consider the number of rostered church workers in the sample who likely moved away because of calls.
- Other significant factors from the home church that influence retention are more relational than institutional in nature
 - Active LCMS feel the church supported their growth and looked out for their best
 - Active LCMS were much more likely to feel comfortable inviting friends to church
 - Active LCMS did not see much of a problem in the way their home church handled conflict and mental health issues

“

my freshman year of high school...I was seriously sexually abused by a young man... [My] youth group spread rumors about me and no adults listened to me or noticed the change in me. I felt abandoned and unwanted. This lead to be being assaulted multiple times in the next two years because of the isolation and lack of trust in authority. ...I still feel stressed when I go into the church I grew up in.

”

28 year old female
Currently considers herself non-denominational

When major issues are not taken seriously, young people stop looking to the church for help and go elsewhere.

'Relational' and *'Authentic'* are Not Just Buzz Words

89

- Young People Are Looking for Real Relationships
 - They want to feel cared for on a personal, individual level
 - They want to be able to ask deep questions or raise concerns without being ignored or dismissed
 - They need to have open discussions about complicated issues where there can be room for dissent without being judged (especially in politics)
 - They need to feel safe enough to confide major issues such as abuse, mental illnesses and doubts
 - If they move away, they need support from their home church in finding any connective community like the one they are leaving
 - They want people to acknowledge the world is a broken and hard place, that there are not always easy answers, but within that broken world that there are people who care about them personally no matter what happens

“ I didn't feel safe asking questions and having doubts about my faith/the denomination. I felt like when I brought up issues, I was answered with condescension. ...I felt like there was a fear whenever I brought up other ideas. Since no LCMS friends wanted to talk about the things that mattered to me, I slowly found new friends to talk with and connect with.”

29 year old female
Agnostic

When doubts and questions are not heard, young people have to look for answers and support outside the church

“ When I was 9 my pastor at the time told me I could talk to him about difficult issues and he wouldn't tell my parents. I never took him up on it, but I needed to hear that in my life. I figured if God put people like that on Earth, he must be here for me and love me. I never doubted that again. ”

23 year old transgendered LCMS Lutheran

This person indicated a very poor relationship with their parents, especially with mother
But strongly agreed that their pastor cared for them
They cited their home church pastor was the number one positive role model.

“ I still feel at home in a church pew - I enjoy the music, the fellowship, and the community, probably more so now that I live in a big city. And, honestly, my busy schedule isn't an excuse to not go to church - I have the time on Sunday mornings. I'd think about coming back if I got a sense that they would welcome skeptics to church and not dismiss my skepticism out of hand. ”

24 year old male
Spiritual but not religious

When doubts and questions are not heard, young people have to look for answers and support outside the church

“ I do not like many of the attitudes of the people who attend... To be completely honest, my husband is Mexican. He doesn't even feel comfortable walking into most Lutheran churches due to the kind of people mentioned above. I don't blame him, either. Seeing how they have felt about him has really made me feel that they are accepting...to a point.

Perhaps if there was a small community meeting with other diverse young adults, or open minded people, where you could meet on Sunday evening, or weekday evenings. ...I like the idea of a community but I don't like the strict/conservative environment that often comes along with LCMS

”

23 year old female
Currently considers herself religious but unaffiliated with any church

Many do not feel welcome because of what their own perceptions (which may or may not be valid).

Dr. Kevin Borchers, DCE, Concordia University Chicago
(Video Embedded)



Home Church Factors Contributing to Active Adherence

95

- Personal Relationships
 - Feeling cared for personally strongly correlates with long term retention while feeling dismissed or ignored strongly correlates with leaving
 - While there is so much talk about mistrust of the institution in this generation, so much of their opinion about the “institution” is based on relationships with key people
- Young People Sense the Overall Environment in the Church
 - How are conflicts, controversies and struggles handled? – young people watch and observe
 - What about the political atmosphere of the church?
 - Is the church welcoming and open to diversity?
 - Or does it allow certain strong opinions to create an environment that feels toxic?

One Final Observation about Home Churches

96

- Young Adults who hold conservative views today, were much more likely than others to feel that their home church did not prepare them well to defend their faith
 - Felt unprepared = 34% conservative
 - Felt prepared = 19% conservative
 - This likely has to do with expectations – those whose views matched the views of their church expected to get more help from their congregation than they actually did.

Final thoughts for Home Churches

97

- Empathize with young people and challenges in today's cultural
 - Grow in understanding of young people's cultural context related to economics, relationships, educational opportunities, and moral foundations.
 - If you don't know, or are unsure, ask young people about the challenges they face and LISTEN.
 - Be slow to blame them for the culture they daily have to navigate.
- Although nothing new, walk alongside young people as they “carry their cross” as a disciple of Christ.
 - Empathize with the difficulties of making a public witness of Christ while living in many and complex contexts.
 - Understand the struggles of living a moral and faithful life in a cultural that often provides little support for the Christian faith.

Importance of Christian Community and Congregation Involvement



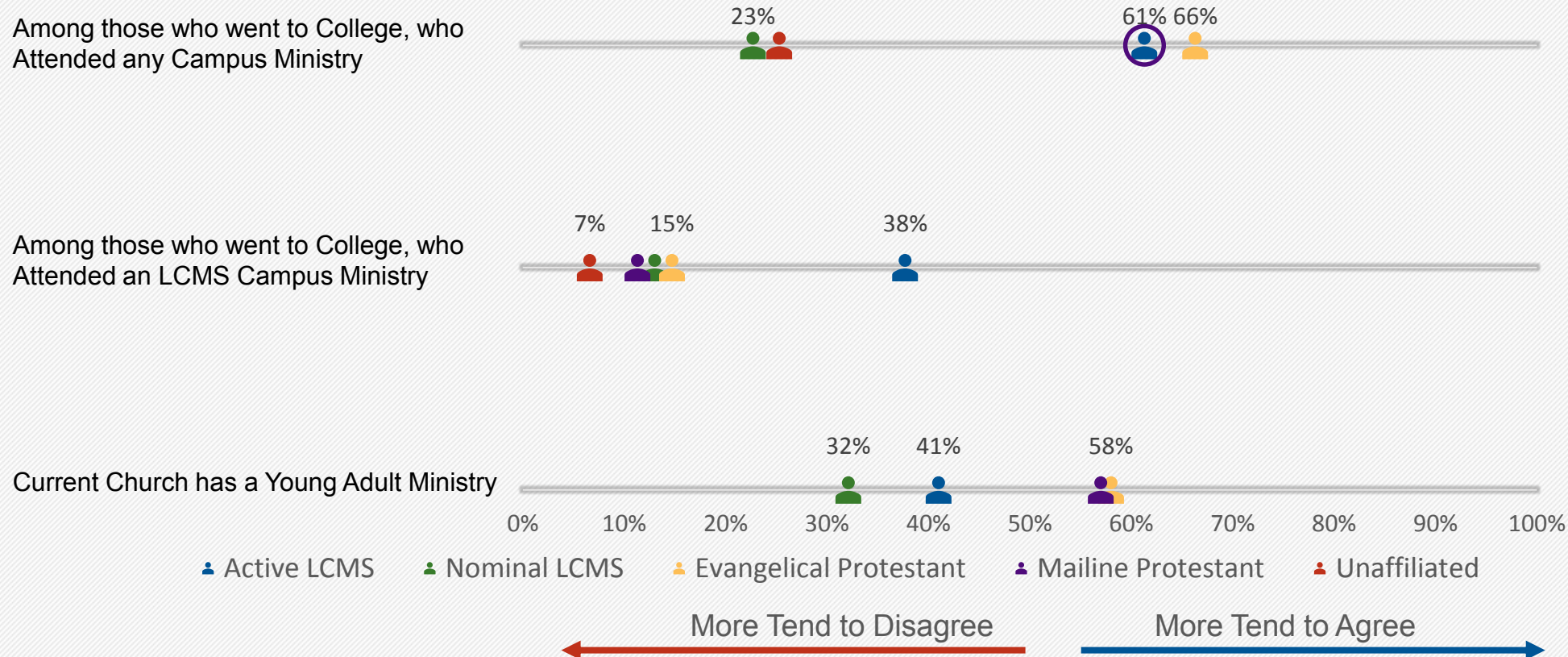
“ People stay in the church, in my experience, because of the innate sense of belonging. If you find that you no longer need that stable community, having found it elsewhere, there is not much incentive for members to stay. ”

25 year old female
Atheist

Young Adults look to church as a source of community.

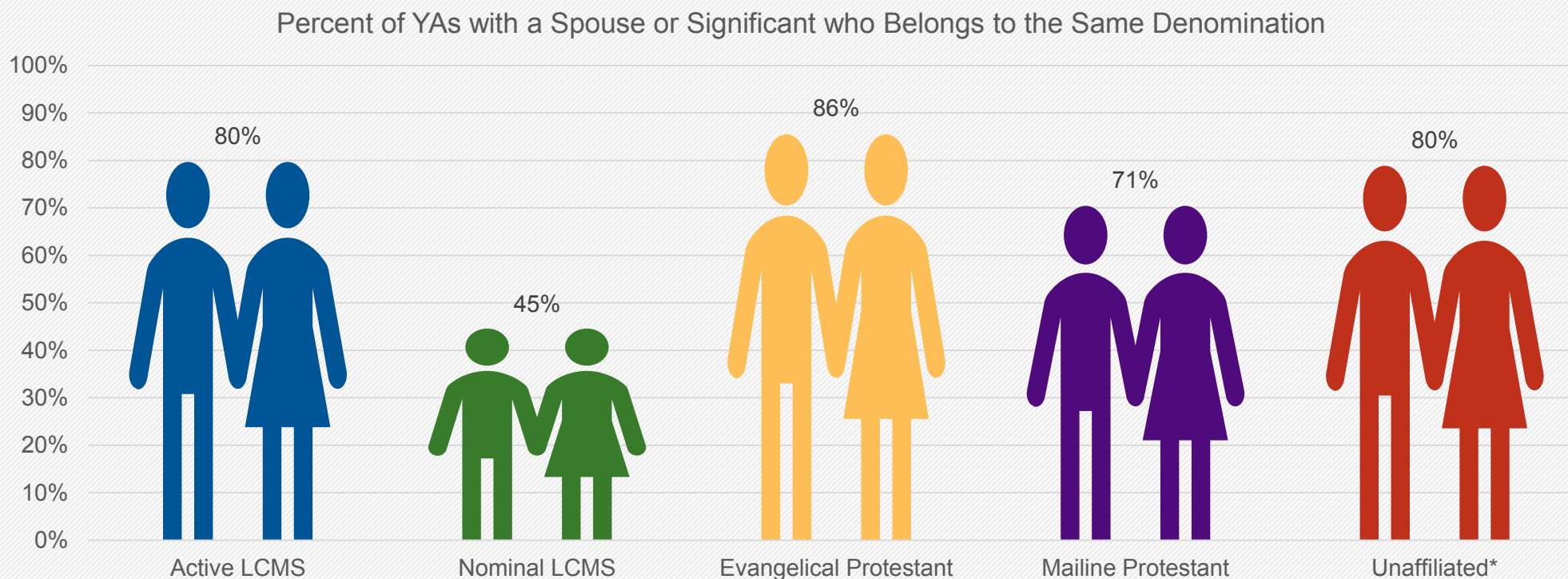
Involvement in Peer Ministries Correlates Strongly with Religious Affiliation

100



Who They Date and Marry is Another Major Component of Affiliation

101



Active and Nominal LCMS were the most likely to report being single (46% and 42%, respectively). Compared to roughly one-third in the other groups.

*Unaffiliated total includes those who indicated their significant other was also not religious.

“ ...every LCMS congregation I have been to lacks a young adult group which is becoming a forgotten part of the church (probably hence this survey). Being a young adult in a new city, I find the church a great place to meet people who share my values and if there is no dedicated young adult group, I feel left out and don't know where to begin to meet peers with my values. A young adult group that is open and welcoming to new people AND has structure is the first thing I look for in a church combined with sound doctrine, of course.”

24 year old female
Currently considers herself non-denominational

Those going to evangelical or non-denominational churches are very likely drawn to churches that have an active young adult ministry.

“ [In my home church] there were not many ways to get connected. ...my church never made me feel welcome. There were not opportunities to connect with my age group after high school and the sermons were not relevant. ...*I feel more connected in my Nazarene church because I am able to volunteer, serve, connect with twenty-somethings, reach out to my pastor.* I feel wanted and loved and my faith is stronger than ever. But there are many from my former LCMS youth group who have left the church altogether or become atheist. I feel that my Lutheran church could have done more but just didn't care. ”

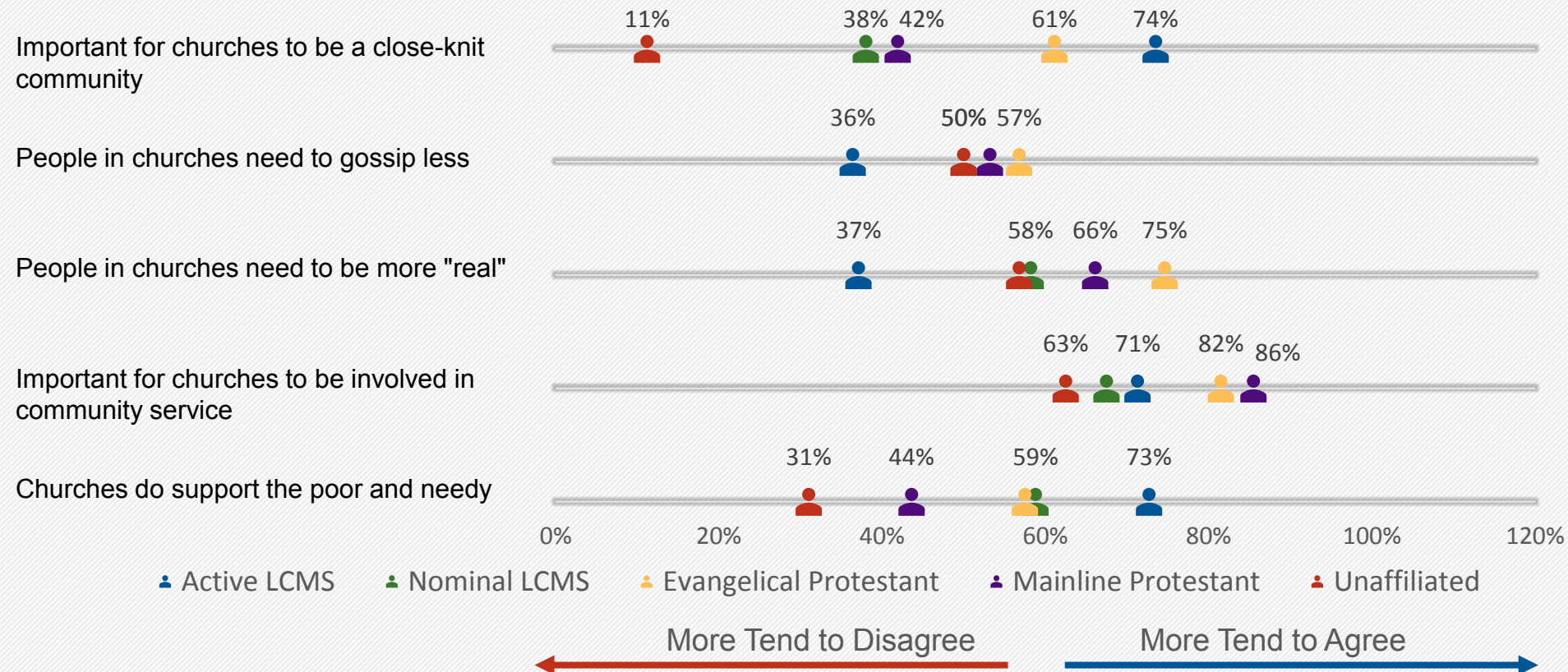
24 year old female
Currently attends a Nazarene church

*Emphasis added

Young Adults need to feel that they can get plugged in.
They need to be given roles and responsibilities.

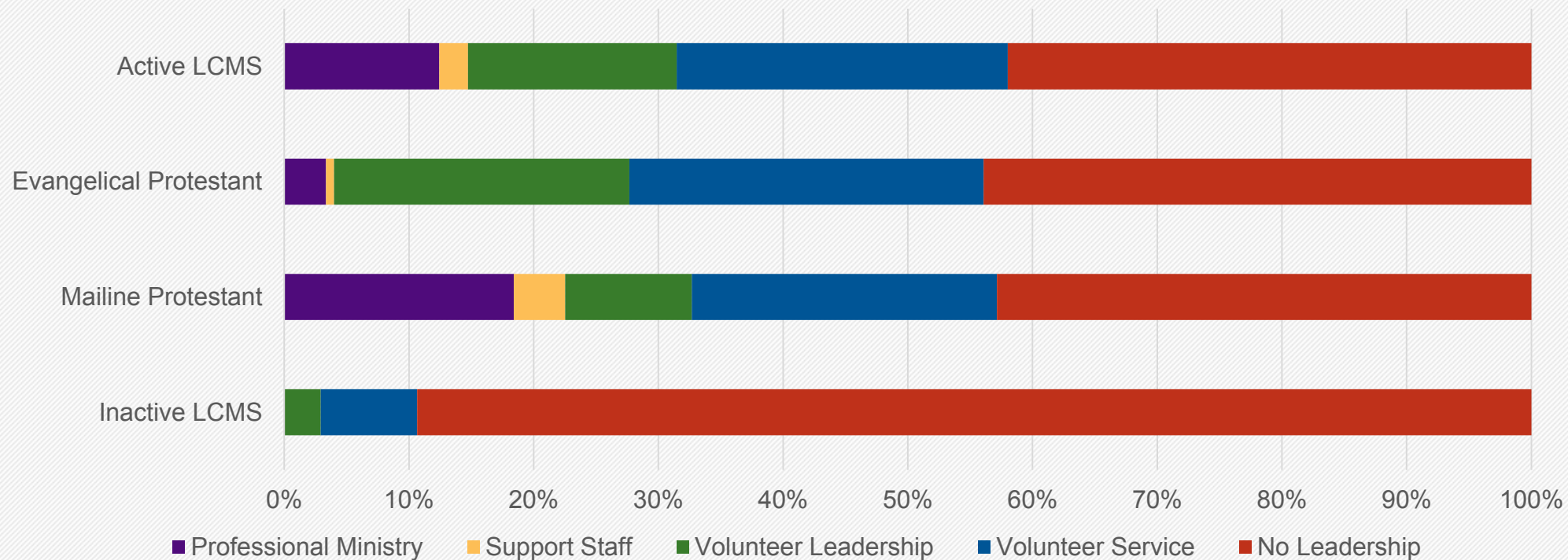
Attitudes and Opinions about Congregation Life and Involvement

104



Having Opportunities to Serve Greatly Reduces the Chances of Young Adults Leaving the Church

105



*The above data also does not include many Mainline (22%) and Inactive LCMS (34%) who indicated they are currently not tied to a specific congregation.

Community and Involvement Factors Contributing to Active Adherence

106

- Dating and Marriage
 - LCMS Lutherans who date or marry someone of a different denomination or faith are much more likely to wane in church attendance, or attend with their significant other.
- Campus Ministries
 - For those who go to college, connecting with other Lutherans in a campus ministry setting is very likely to keep them connected to the church
- Close-Knit Communities
 - Many Young Adults are drawn to churches that have active YA ministries, even if that means leaving the LCMS
 - Young Adults crave authenticity – being vulnerable around other people, relationships that are “real” and no gossip
- Opportunities to Serve and Lead
 - Young Adults want to be involved in ministry and service.

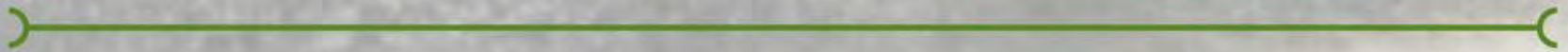
Congregations can consider...

107

- Naturally "hand-off" graduating seniors to LCMS college ministries or congregations in college towns.
- Stories of congregations who have effectively created atmospheres where young adults are welcomed into the Christian community.
- Equipping congregations and parents to have authentic conversations with young people about faith, dating, and marriage.

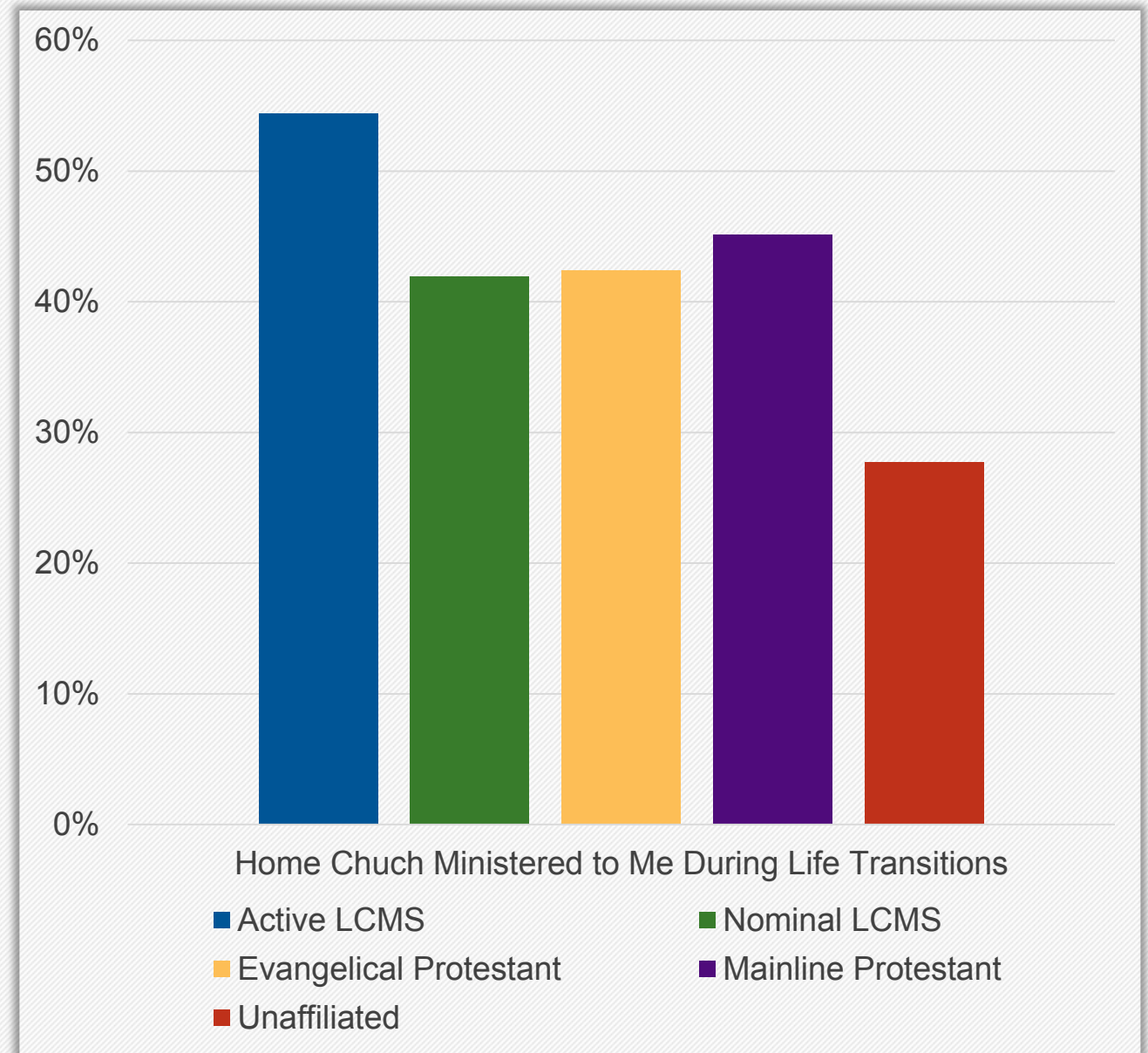
A photograph of a person standing on a city street, with their legs and feet visible in the foreground. The background shows a blurred city street with buildings and cars. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Ministering through Pivotal Moments and Life Transitions



The Importance of Staying Connected After Graduation

Young Adults whose home churches stay connected are much more likely to remain Active in the LCMS.



Graduation from Highschool and the Years Following are When Most Left the Church

110

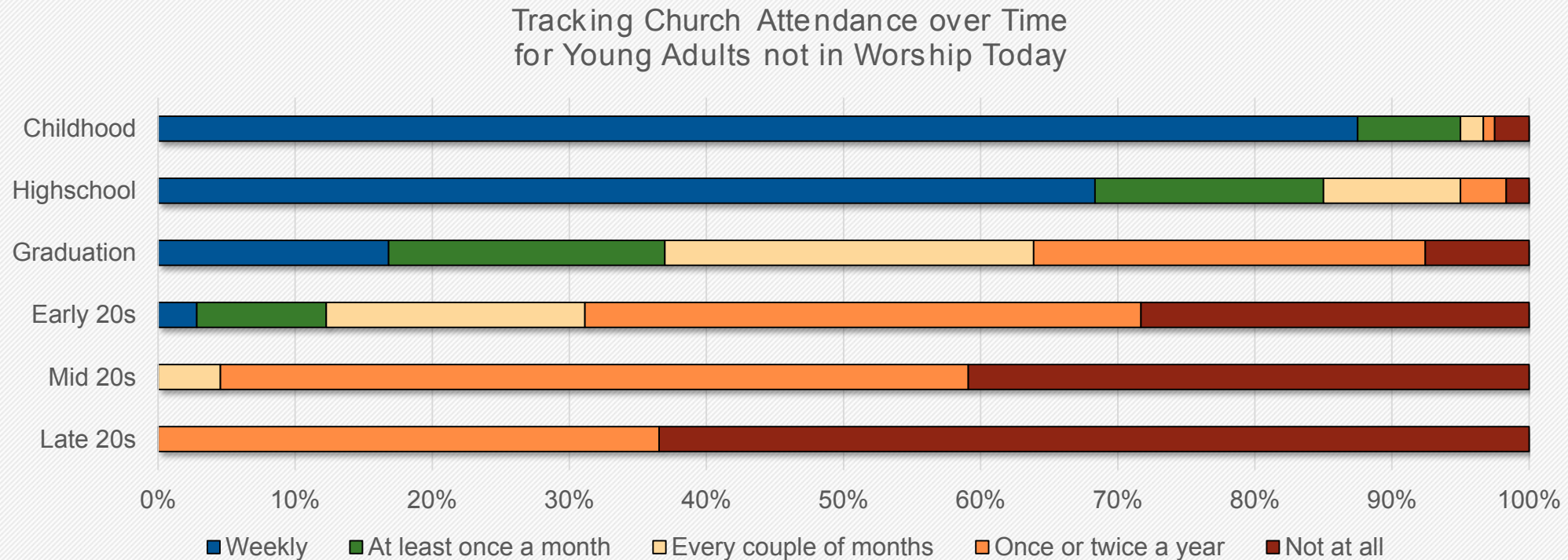
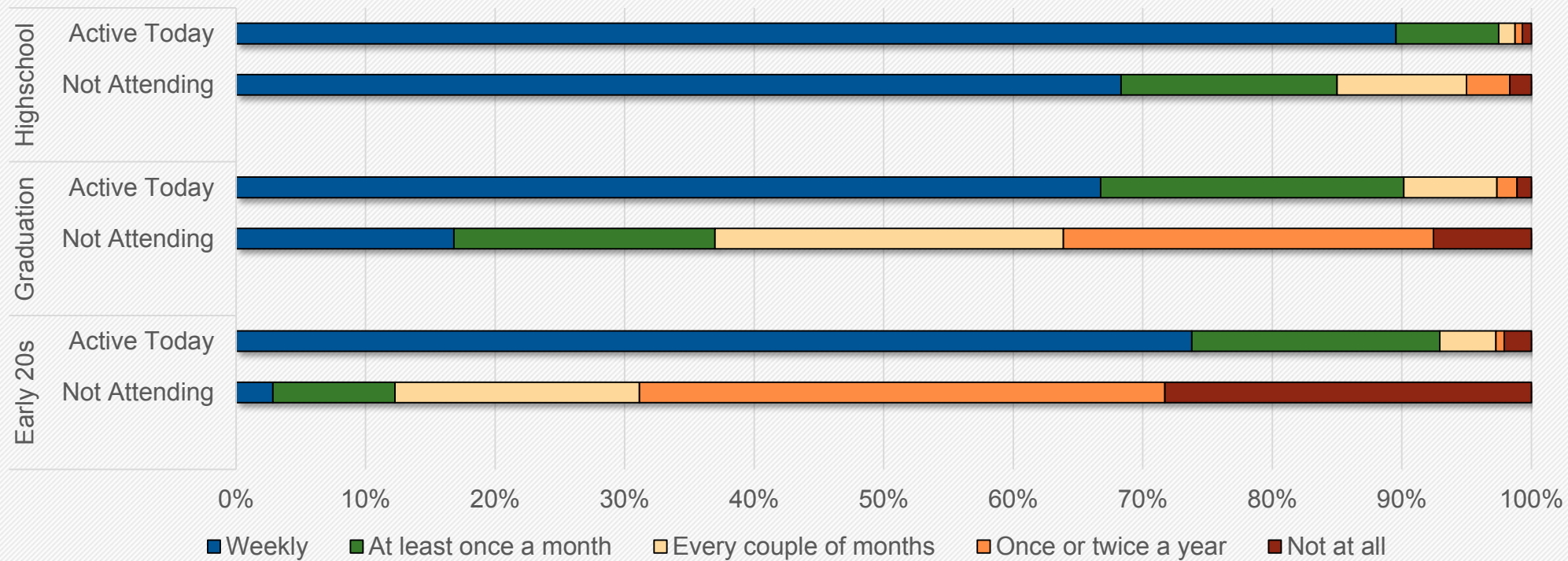


Chart includes all young adults who attended worship less than three times in the past year, regardless of denomination affiliation.

Comparing Church Attendance Over Time By Their Current Worship Attendance

111



“Active Today” includes all who attend worship at least monthly, regardless of church affiliation. “Not Attending” includes all others.

“

There is not [an LCMS church] close to where I am currently living/attending school. I emailed a leader of our congregation inquiring of the nearest church and never received a reply. I have also reached out regarding simple things like receiving offering envelopes and never got an answer.

”

20 Year Old Female
Currently attending an ELCA church

Here is one example of a young person currently attending an ELCA church merely because she moved away and her home church did not stay with her during life transitions.

“ Leaving college I was unable to find a Lutheran church with a young adult ministry (or even many young adults that attended for that matter). I believe church is supposed to be a community that befriends you and challenges you and commits to each other rather than just a Sunday morning ritual. ... I'm growing here [in my new church] in a way I don't think possible without community. ”

27 Year Old female
Currently considers herself non-denominational

Transition Points are Critical – Young Adults Look for New Community

Frequently Mentioned Reasons for Leaving the LCMS (regardless of affiliation)

114

Feel the LCMS excludes people or is unwelcoming	160
Personally felt judged in the LCMS	56
The LCMS is “closed-minded”	40
Disagree with the LCMS stance on social issues	144
Issues related to homosexuality or gender	56
Ordination of women	38
Churches had too few young adults or no support for young adults	75
Prefer contemporary worship (mostly from evangelicals)	53
LCMS has gotten too involved in politics	40
People in the LCMS are “inauthentic”	37

Out of 359
Commenters

(that is 95% of
the sample of
those who left
the LCMS)

Comments can
be counted in
multiple
categories, if
applicable.

Pivotal Moments in their Faith

115

- Did you ever experience a “Pivotal Moment” in your faith life? If so, briefly describe when it occurred and the impact it had on your faith.
- 1,091 responses
 - 838 from Active LCMS
 - 253 from Nominal LCMS or non-LCMS

“Pivotal Moments” in the Spiritual Lives of Young Adults

116

- Nearly 1-in-5 of all answers (and nearly 1-in-4 of the non-LCMS answers) specifically cited a moment that took place during their college-age years
 - Far fewer cited a time during high school (6% if Youth Gathering-related responses are excluded)
- Over 7% percent of pivotal moments were linked to a relationship with an adult(s)
 - Something related to the influence of parents 4%
 - Influence of a non-parent adult (pastor, mentor, etc.) 3%
 - These are just likely to negative as they are to be positive
- Pivotal moments often occurred in association with programs or events
 - 1-in-10 answers refer to an experience at a camp or retreat setting (no difference between LCMS or non-LCMS respondents)
 - Servant Events (or Mission Trips) were also frequently mentioned (7%)
 - Those who remain LCMS Lutherans were twice as likely to mention an experience at an LCMS Youth Gathering (nearly 1-in-10 LCMS answers mention it)

Common Types of Pivotal Moments

117

Crisis event (often related to health or death of a loved one)	15%	No difference by affiliation	Out of 1,091 Comments
A moment of realization or epiphany	7%	15% among non-LCMS	
Faith was challenged or seriously questioned	6%	No difference by affiliation	
Mentioned involvement in Christian community (such as youth group, campus ministry, or church leadership)	6%	No difference by affiliation	
Cited baptism into the faith	5%	Only LCMS responses	
Cited a mental health struggle (personal or loved one)	3.6%	7% among non-LCMS	Out of 253 non-LCMS responders.
Cites a specific personal experience at church	8.7%	*of non-LCMS responses (22/30 were non-LCMS)	
Having doubts or questions ignored or “dismissed”	9.1%	*of non-LCMS responses (23/24 were non-LCMS)	

“

After my friends were in the car crash when I was 16 I started questioning. After my youth group told me not to come back if I wasn't going to attend regularly, I quit God. I came back by the grace of God and strong friends in college. None of the people who helped me were Lutheran.

”

22 year old male
Active LCMS Lutheran

Numerous accounts from young people about how a major crisis left them feeling alone and abandoned by the church when they needed it most.

“ I was diagnosed with cancer my senior year of high school. My diagnosis challenged everything I'd been taught about what it meant to suffer as a Christian. I grew angry with God and with my church community because I didn't feel my questions were being answered or my experience validated. I was hurt and confused and tired. That season in my life has made me reluctant to attach myself to a church community again. ”

22 year old female
Currently considers herself spiritual but not affiliated with any church

Numerous accounts from young people about how a major crisis left them feeling alone and abandoned by the church when they needed it most.

“ I am a strong believer in christ and wish a church home that alined with my beliefs was more accessible. I genuinely wish it could be the LCMS as that is the church I grew up in and am familiar with. I believe many of my peers feel the same way. We would like to participate but feel largely forced out and unwelcome. ...I have never had a church leader ask me of my opinions or get to know me. There has been little effort made to reach the millennial population. ...After I was confirmed in 8th grade and went to high school I was never reached out to, or included in any church meetings despite technically being a member. I wanted to participate but had very few options to do so. ”

20 year old female
Currently worships at an ELCA church

Many respondents felt abandoned by their church as they entered young adulthood.

Ministering through Pivotal Moments Contributing to Active Adherence

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- Data from both surveys confirm overwhelmingly that the transition at graduation (whether to college or not) is crucial
 - Even if – especially if – young adults move away, home congregations should actively and intentionally continue to minister to these young people
- Listen well to young people
 - Whether they bring up a personal crisis or doubts and struggles – if they can't bring it to the church or their parents where will they go?
 - Friends, media...Google?
 - They want relationships that are “real” and “authentic” –be vulnerable. Listen without fixing.
- Apologize and seek forgiveness
 - Many of these young people have real hurts, often related to being dismissed and ignored by the church, we must acknowledge the reality of their pain and the church's missteps.

Congregations should consider...

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- Creating a plan for young people and families in the time of crisis. What is the response from the Body of Christ? What community resources are needed in terms of counseling, financial support, etc.?
- Giving thanks and praise to God for those who take time to listen to young people and point them to the promises of Christ. Can we increase our capacity for empathy and the ability to listen?



Ministering through Pivotal Moments and Life Transitions

Dr. Dave Rueter

Enter into their World and Confusion

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- When facing moral choices during pivotal moments in their lives, we may see the issue with a clear black and white (two choice) set of options.
- However many youth, see nothing but a confusing array of bewildering possible options running in any number of directions.
- Before we are going to move the young people we care for into the clearer understanding that we have of the situation, we need to enter into their thinking on the subject to truly understand the struggles they are in.

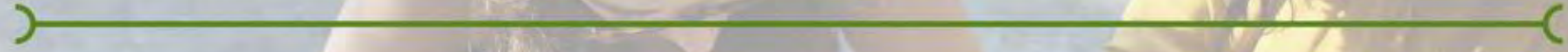
Your Approach Matters

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- If how you present a biblical response to a pivotal moment is what causes offense, rather than the cross itself, the wrong offense is likely to have been given.
- We ought not be the source of offense that keeps someone away from the cross.

A background image showing two people sitting at a dark wooden table outdoors. They are looking down at books and papers, appearing to be studying or working. A clear plastic water bottle is on the table. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

Summary of Major Findings



What do we know?

What can we do to fix it?

What do we still need to learn?

Their Issues, Doubts and Questions Matter

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- When young people have questions and doubts they need to be taken seriously
 - Over and over in the comments young people told stories of how they were ignored, dismissed, or written-off by parents or church leaders.
 - This is not just for those with doubts or major questions, but also for those going through major traumas or life transitions
 - On the other hand, those who were able to talk openly with someone were incredibly touched by that experience, and most likely remain in the church today.
 - The data itself showed that most young adults who left the church do not think it is a safe place to ask questions or discuss doubts.
 - Finally, many of the comments raise the question of how should the church address controversial topics

Social Issues Matter

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- For those who left the church altogether, or for those in mainline denominations, views on social issues are a major roadblock.
- What is not clear is the causal relationship – in other words, which came first, their liberal views or them drifting from faith...or something else that cause both?
- Still, many commend the church, even while disagreeing with it, for being true to what it believes and not changing because the culture demands it.
 - Yet, many feel overwhelmed as if the church focuses on these issues over and above the gospel.
 - They see the church as standing for truth, but not speaking the truth in a loving manner.
- Ultimately, these issues devolve into claims of “bigoted” or “closed-minded” and lead to the tension that the church is “unwelcoming”.

Fellowship with Peers Matters

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- Attending the LCMS Youth Gathering is correlated with retention, and it is often cited as a powerful and memorable experience specifically because it is a chance to “see all sorts of other Lutherans my age worshipping God.”
- Involvement in an LCMS Campus Ministry is another key predictor of active adherence.
- Churches with Active Young Adult Ministries are much more likely to attract and retain young adults.
- But even more simply, just making sure young adults are given opportunities to serve in the church is vital.
- There were many comments left where young adults stated their love and preference for the LCMS, but how the lack of a young adult community ultimately lead to them to go elsewhere.
- Overall, young adults want to feel that they belong

Relationships Matter

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- Parents
 - Young Adults who remain in the church were the most likely to say they were comfortable talking with both their parents.
 - Young Adults who remain active in worship most likely had parents who were not just regularly attending worship, but had a role in the church and lived out their faith at home.
- Church
 - Young people observe (and evaluate) how the church handles difficult issues such as conflict and mental health
 - Young people want to be cared for personally by those in their church
 - Young people need their churches to stand by them during life transitions, even if (especially if) they are not in town anymore.
 - Young adults who move away from home are much more likely than those that stay to leave the church – and many of the comments suggest a major reason is because they cannot find an LCMS church in their new community.

What Can We Do?

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- Build up parents
 - It is essential that young people feel comfortable talking with their parents
 - This means parents must also feel comfortable talking with their kids
 - It is also essential that young people see their parents live out their faith
 - Not just occasional church attendance
 - Parents need to be actively involved in church and remain involved even after the kids leave home
 - Also, parents should promote regular Bible reading and prayer at home

What Can We Do?

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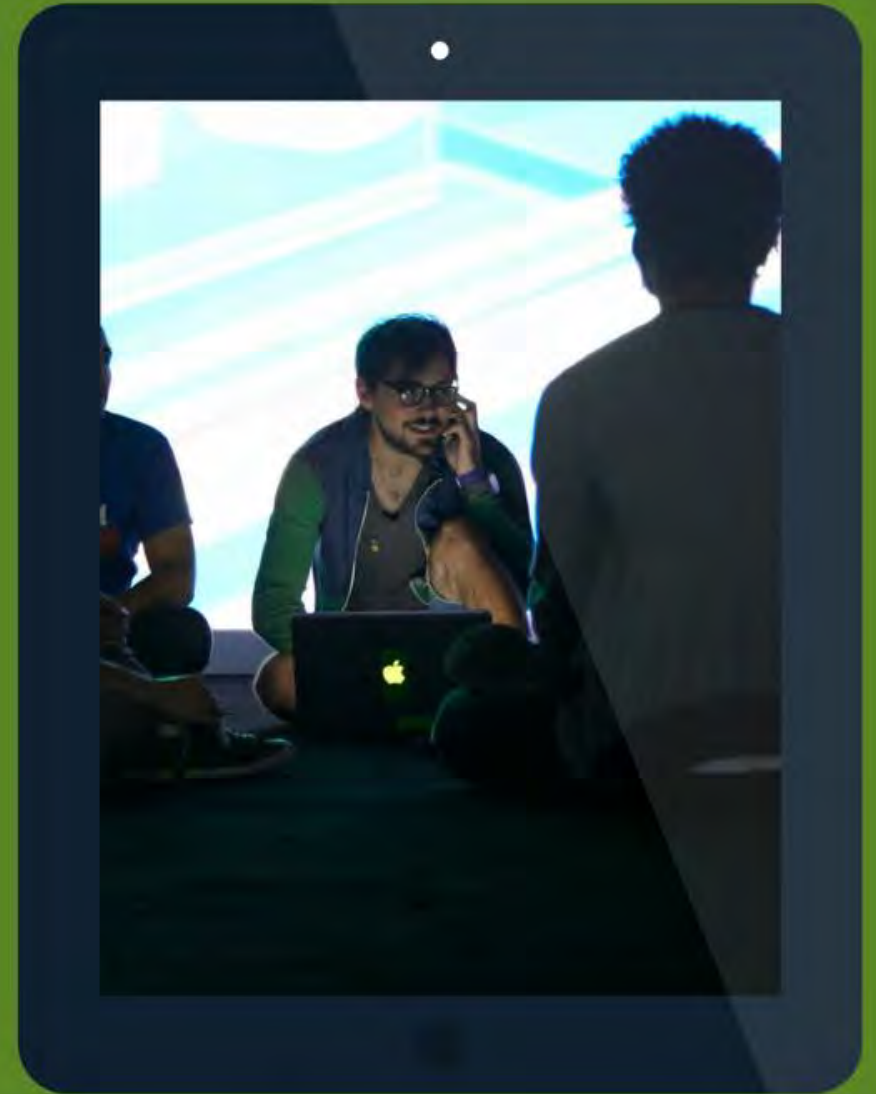
- Build “Real” Relationships with Young People
 - Young people want to feel cared for personally.
 - They want to be able to ask questions without being dismissed or ignored.
 - They need to feel safe enough to confide difficult issues such as abuse, mental illnesses and doubts.
 - They need to know their home church still cares for them when they go off to college or move away.
 - They need to be included in all levels of leadership and service roles in the church.

What Can We Do?

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- Build Community
 - Reach out to young adults – they are out there, and many of them do love the LCMS.
 - They want to belong – they want to be part of a family
 - Be “real” – young adults value authenticity and want an atmosphere where they feel safe to be authentic.
- Equip young minds to be able to wrestle with difficult issues
 - As the culture continues to move away from Biblical values, the struggle over controversial issues is going to intensify.
 - Nearly 1-in-3 conservative active LCMS Lutherans told us that their home church did not prepare them well to defend their views.

THANK YOU
**for caring for &
serving young
people!**



LCMS Youth Ministry - #lcmsyaresearch