

# The Process, Outcome and Impact of State of Our Church Survey and the Joys of Research for the Church

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Duane C. McBride, Karl G. Bailey, & Meredith Carter

# Purpose of Presentation

The basic purpose of this session is to describe a research partnership between the NAD and Andrews University as it applies to one study call the State of the Church Survey

During this session we will:

1. Discuss a vision of Andrews University as a research arm of the Adventist Church
2. Describe the development of the study
3. The negotiation of the MOU
4. Describe an active research partnership between the NAD Presidents office and Andrews Researchers.
5. Describe the research methods used
6. Provide an overview of the presentation processes
7. Present some key findings
8. Report how the data is being used by the NAD
9. Discuss how we will maintain the process through scientific/professional presentations

# The Vision Thing

- A few years ago the GC, the NAD and Andrews University made a deliberate decision to work together to conduct key research projects for the Church. Some would be via RFP's and some directed.
- Has great benefits for the Church, Andrews and students:
  - i. Use our professional skills to advance the church's mission,
  - ii. Research data to analysis, present and publish for faculty and students,
  - iii. Collaboration provides access to study Churches/members/power structure that would be impossible otherwise,
  - iv. Can work into Andrews focus on UG and G research.

# Development of the State of the Church Survey

- The North American Division's motivation for the study
- First discussions between Dr. Brantley & McBride in January of 2014
- Issues faced in developing an MOU:
  - i. The needed research time-line and academic schedules – report was need by mid-May of 2014.
  - ii. Academic commitment to presenting and publishing and Church concerns with publicity.

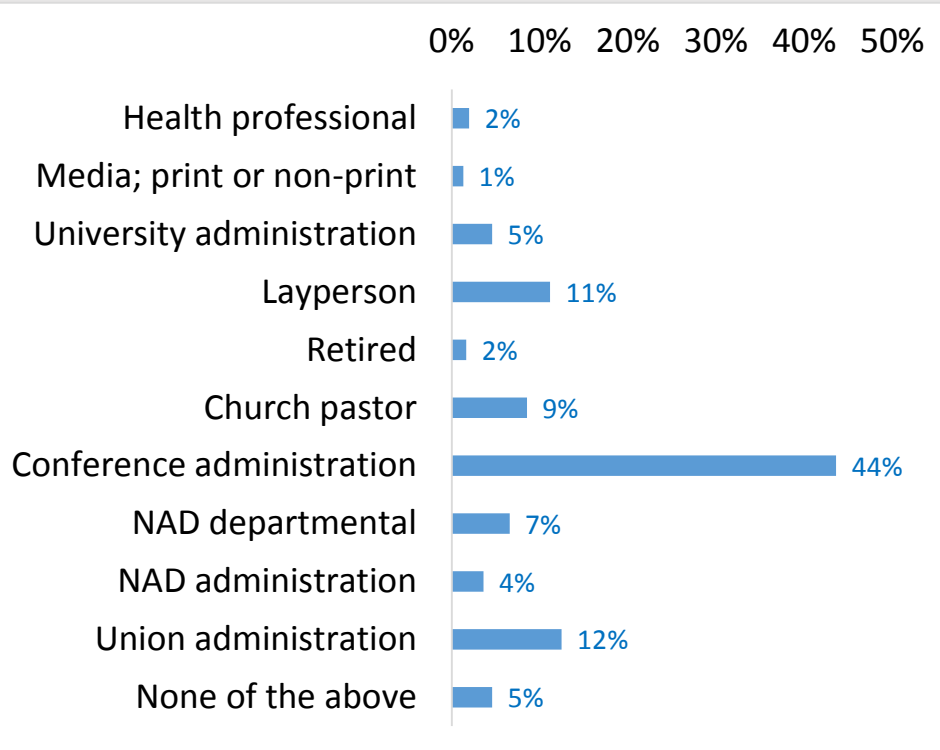
# Methods

**Sample Selection:** The sample was drawn from **470 church leaders**, including those who will attend the NAD May 2014 Administrators' Conference.

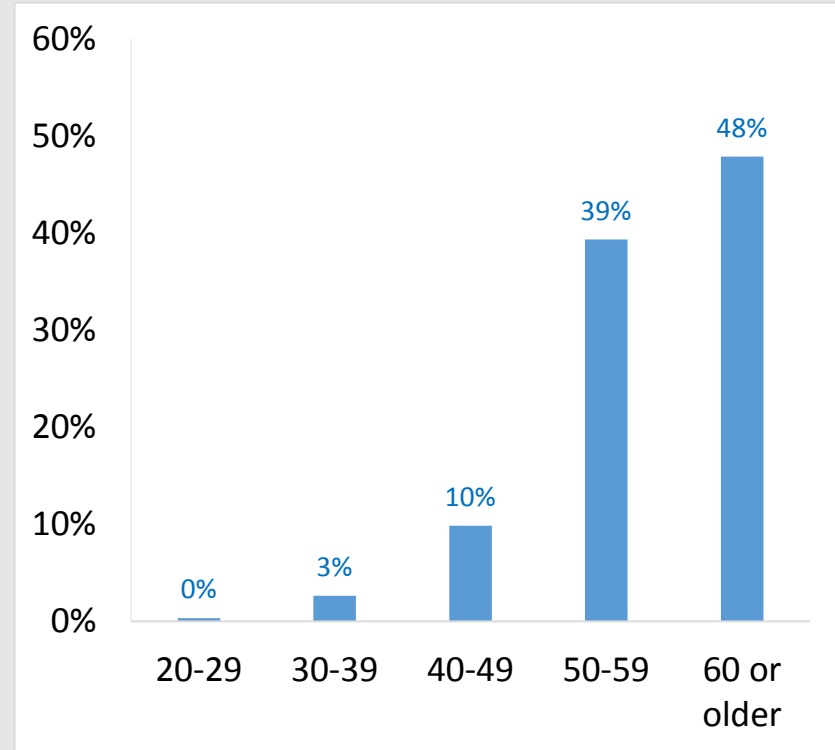
**Survey Distribution:** The questionnaire was presented **online** using a dedicated installation of LimeSurvey 2.05+. An invitation e-mail was sent to potential respondents through the NAD Secretariat who also sent 3 reminders.

**Response Rate:** As of May 8, 2014, **336 respondents** had completed the entire survey. This was a **72%** response rate—considered **excellent** for this type of survey

# Demographics



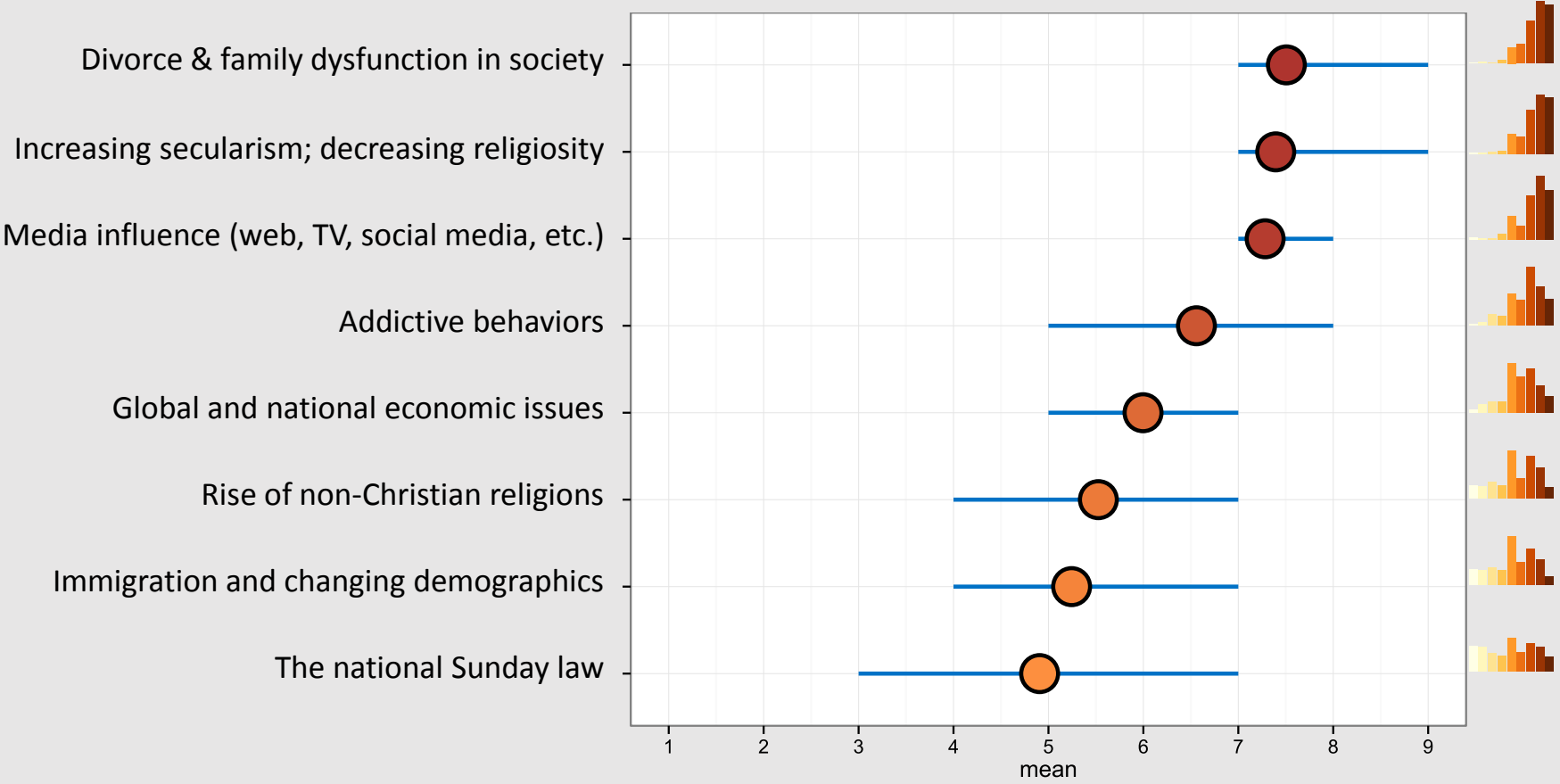
role in the church



age range

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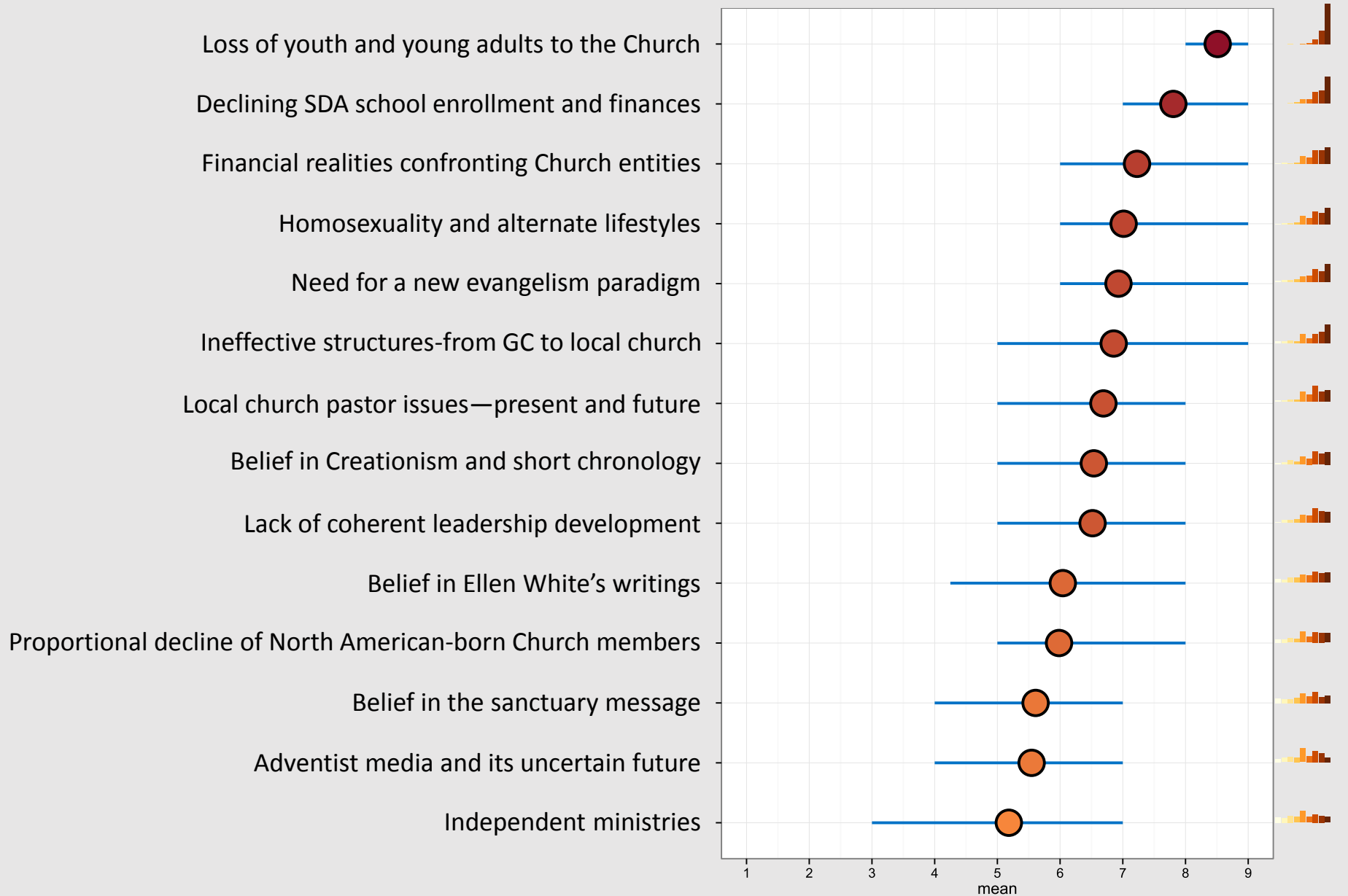
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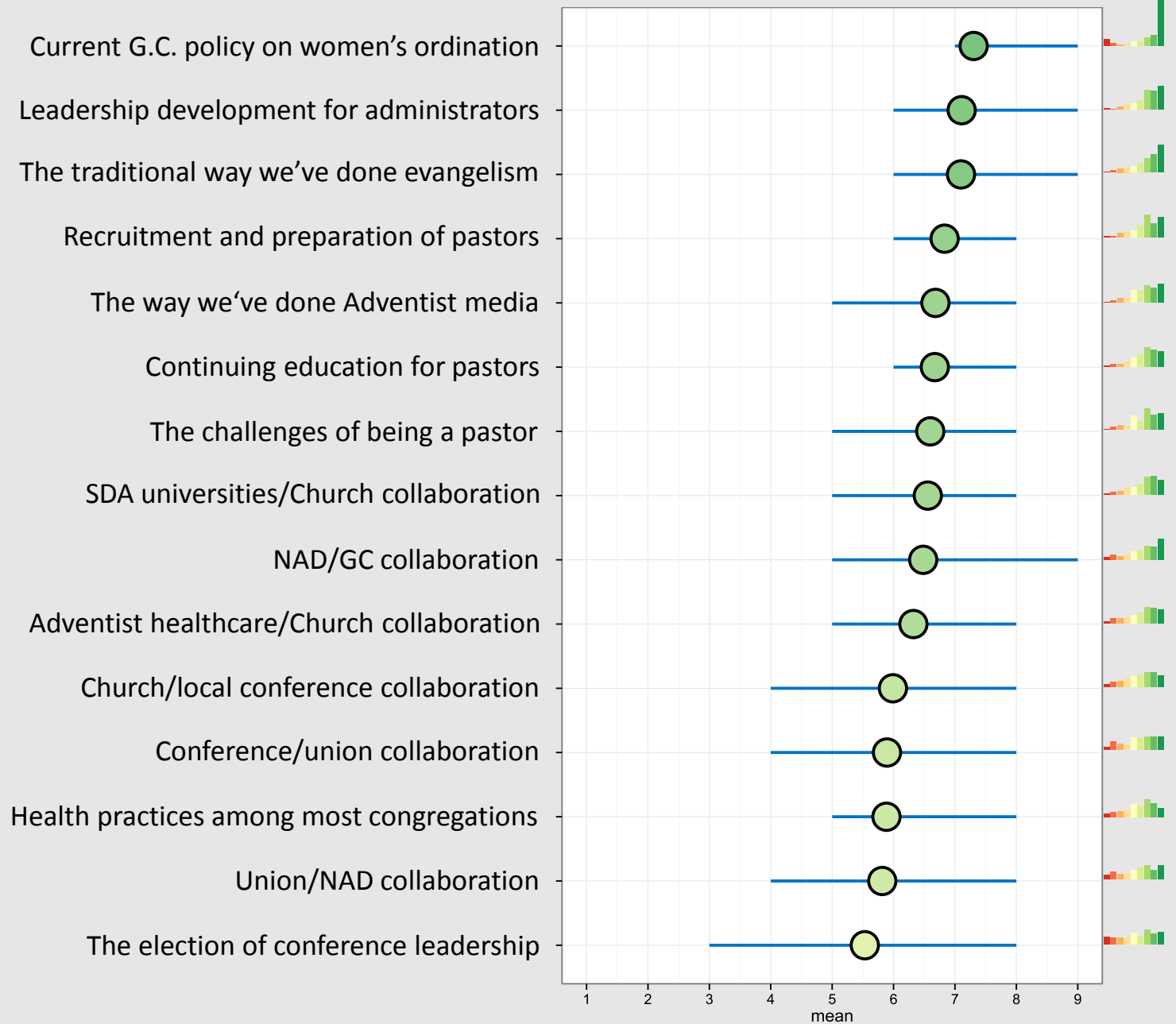
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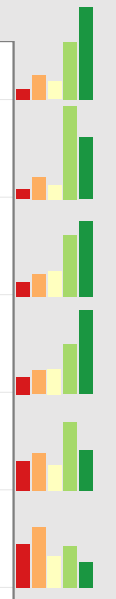
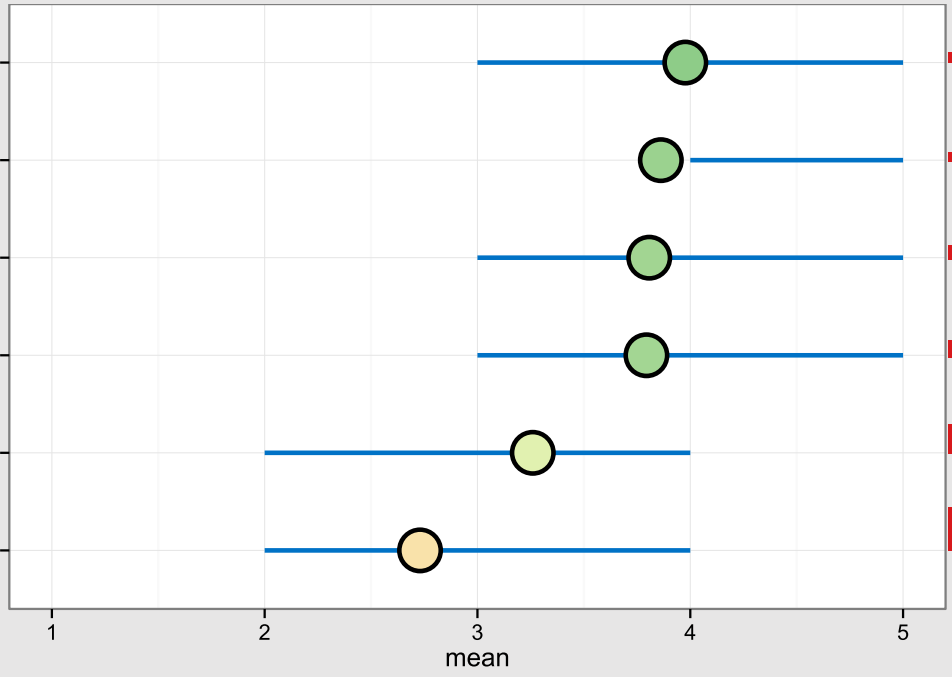
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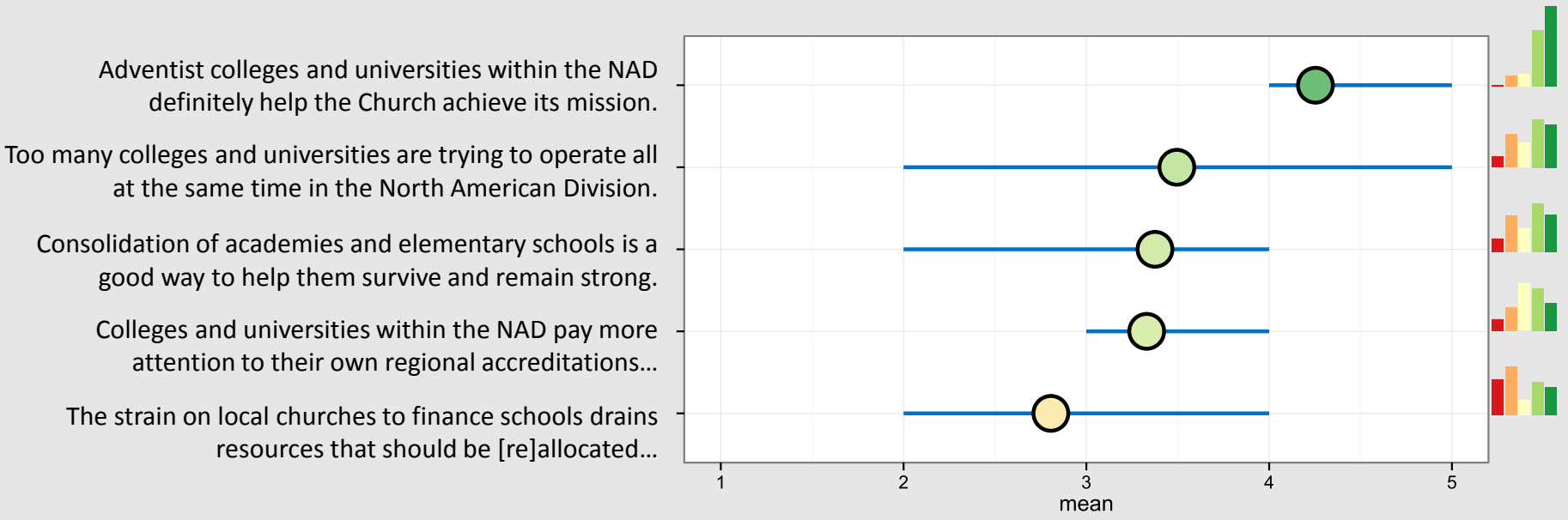
# The basic structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has remained essentially the same for the past 100 years. Do you feel this structure is appropriate for today?

- Presently, there is too much unnecessary duplication in our present Church structure.
- This basic structure of our Church (GC, NAD, unions, conferences) has served us well in the past.
- Unions should function for administration and coordination rather than for departmental ministries.
- The North American Division should be a primary resource center for our Division-wide territory.
- Unions are necessary Church structures and need to remain intact in some form or another.
- The number of local conferences in the NAD is about right; there's no need to merge.



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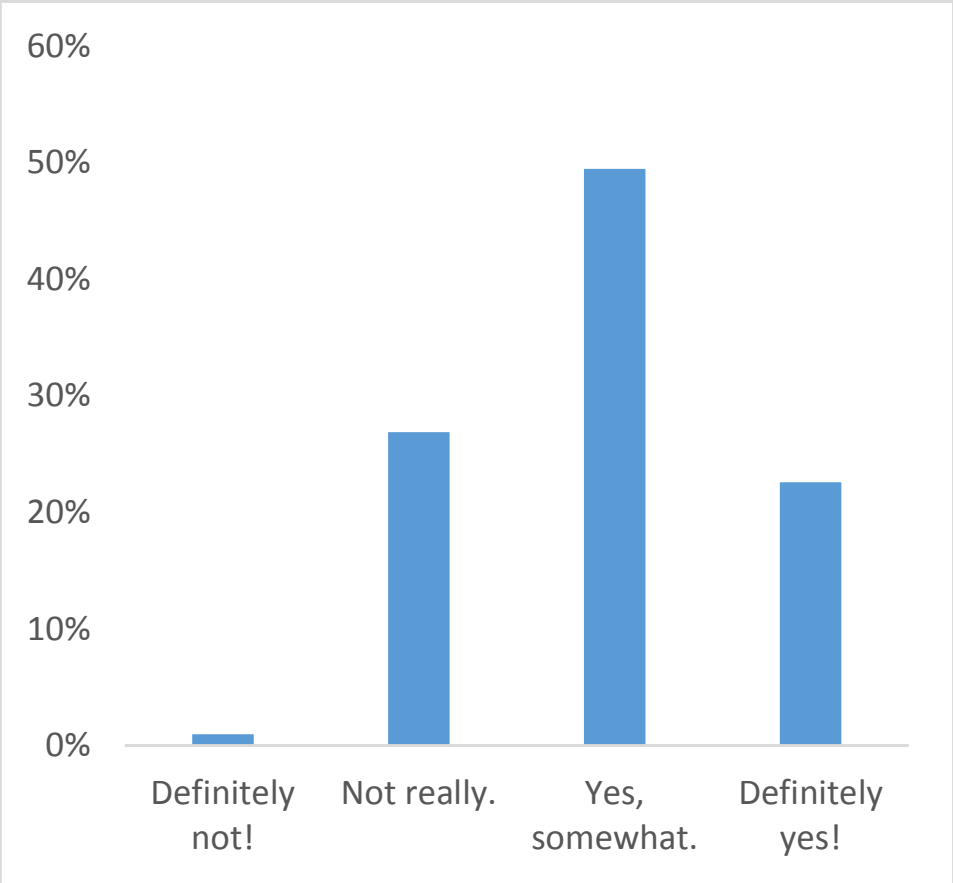
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# Conclusions

1. Societal issues – Trends that impact families and youth, like divorce, media saturation, secularism and addictions are perceived as the external issues of most concern.
2. Internal issues -- The loss of youth and young adults and providing them an Adventist education is the most urgent internal issue facing the NAD.
3. Ordination of women -- A very large majority of the NAD leaders believe that it is urgent that the Church move beyond the ordination of women issues.
4. Structural issues must be faced -- A large majority believe that the NAD must address structural issues such as the numbers and functions of unions/conferences and schools (a lot less certainty as to how.

# Conclusions Continued

5. New forms of evangelism -- There was a strong perception that the NAD must find new forms of evangelism that were more Christ centered, less large event centered and that met the needs of youth.
6. Improving professionalism -- There is a strong interest in improving the professionalism of NAD leadership and having a system to identify potential leaders and providing them the needed training for administrative leadership.
7. Overall, the data suggest a very engaged NAD leadership that places a high level of urgency on:
  - i. Meeting the needs of youth and families
  - ii. Moving beyond the ordination of women issue,
  - iii. Structural changes, collaboration and evangelism approaches that allow the Division to meet these mission needs.

# Experiences of Data Presentation

➤ At Interim Report to officers

➤ At May meeting:

A. Issues of how one presents these types of data.

B. Presentation of data and structuring for action.

# Impact of the State of the Church Survey from the NAD Perspective

- The data has been used to help resolve policy issues.
- Findings helped quantify and add precision to general consensus of church leaders.
- Study results initiated three committees to address:
  1. New approaches to evangelism
  2. Viability of Adventist Education
  3. Analysis of church structure

# Keys to a successful project with the Church

- Collegial respect and cooperation – NAD VP, Dr. Brantley, was a collaborator and co-author.
- Issues of trust , no harm/commitment to the Mission of the Church.
- Listening to each other on purpose, conceptual framework, methods, instrumentation, and analysis
- And it is complex:
  - i. Not “pure research” there are many other questions we would have liked to ask.
  - ii. There is a reduction in the freedom of dissemination, needs to be worked out by project can involved embargo for a time, co-authorship, preapproval.
  - iii. We plan to publish (with full NAD support) in such journals as Adventist Review, perhaps JAE, Journal of Research in Christian Education, Review of Religious Research.

# Getting Involved in Church Based Research

- Join the Association for Adventist Human Subjects Research to see what kinds of research that Adventist scholars are engaging in and to meet those in charge of Church issues Requests for Proposals.
- Partner with the various ministries/departments of the NAD and GC.
- Assess your capacity and church needs/interests.
- Work with Gary Burdick to get on RFP distribution list.