

the Confirmation



PROJECT

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May 2017 Erfurt, Germany

www.theconfirmationproject.com

#iConfirm

The Confirmation Project Team

PrincetonTheological Seminary, May 2014



The Confirmation Project Team

PrincetonTheological Seminary, May 2016



The Confirmation Project Team

PrincetonTheological Seminary, February 2017



Qualitative Research

24 Congregational Visits

Five Denominations:

- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: 6
- United Methodist Church: 5
- Presbyterian Church (USA): 5
- Episcopal: 5
- African Methodist Episcopal: 3

Congregational Size:

Small (50-125): 8

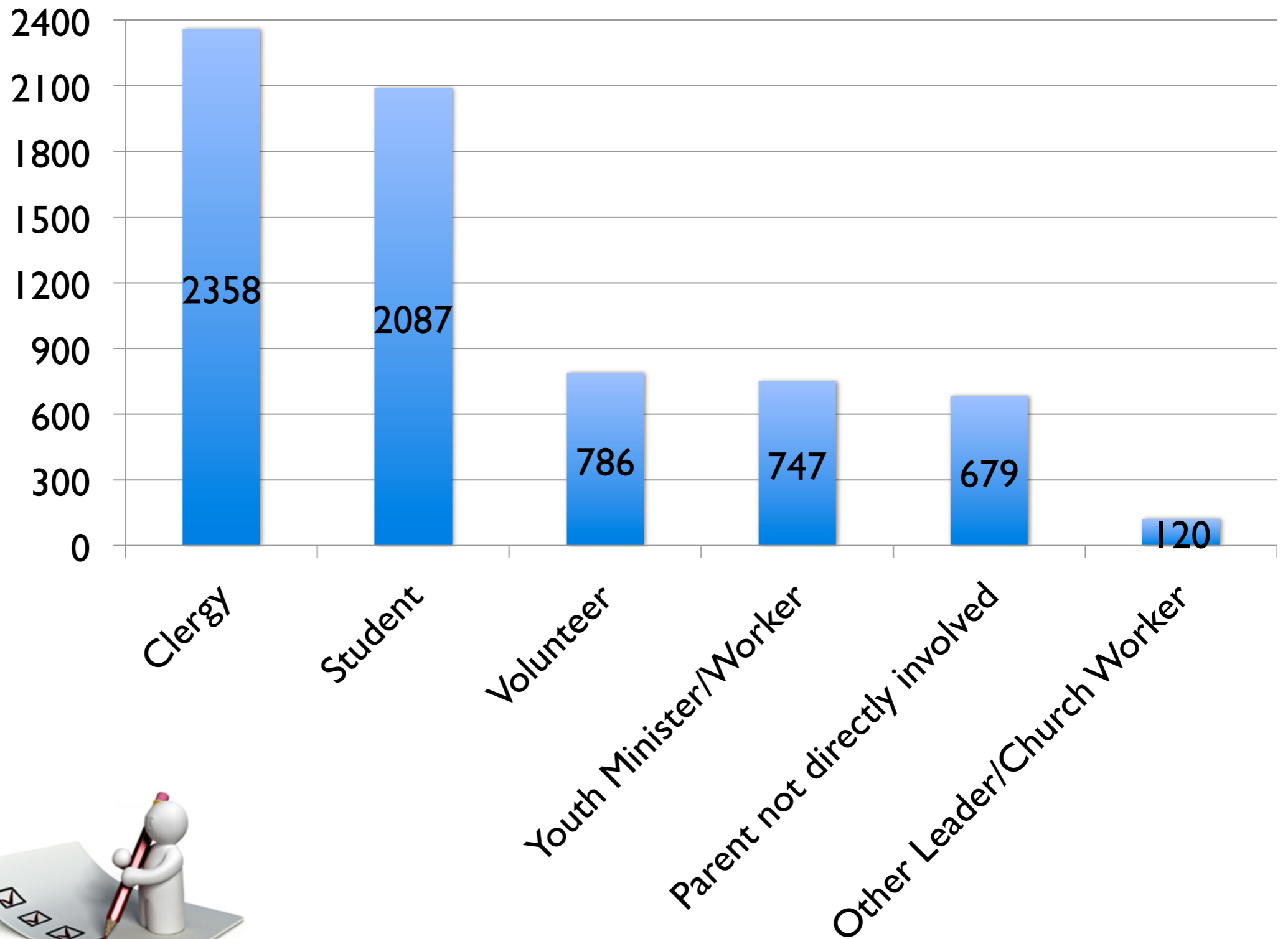
Medium (230-300): 5

Large (900-20,000): 5


Camps: 6

Quantitative Research

6777 Survey Respondents
representing 2000 congregations



Size of Confirmation Classes

	ELCA n=505	PC n=248	Episc. n=319	UMC n=678	AME n=40	TOTAL N=1790
None	4.4%	14.1%	15.7%	18.1%	5.0%	13.0%
1-5	24.1%	42.4%	40.1%	39.1%	7.5%	34.8%
6-10	23.6%	29.0%	25.1%	23.2%	30.0%	24.6%
11-20	23.9%	8.9%	13.1%	12.0%	27.5%	15.5%
21-50	15.1%	5.2%	4.7%	6.5%	17.5%	8.6%
More than 50	8.9%	0.4%	1.3%	1.0%	12.5%	3.5%
Average # students	19.25	7.60	9.19	9.01	25.76	12.48
Median # students	10	5	5	5	12	6

Key Insights

The Confirmation Project



Key Insights

The Confirmation Project

- Time for faith risk-taking
- Mentoring Relationships
- Connected Parents
- Strong Leadership
- Camps and Retreats
- Integrated into Congregational Life

The Confirmation Project and *Confirmation Work in Europe*





Comparison of Participants



Europe	United States
1st study: 7 countries 2nd study: 9 countries	5 denominations
1st study: 467,195 potential confirmands	170,000 + potential confirmands
language translation necessary	denominational translation necessary “Confirmation and Equivalent Practices”



Comparison of Research Method



Europe	United States
<p>2007 Study: t0 - leaders t1 - confirmands, workers, leaders t2 - confirmands, workers, leaders, parents</p> <p>2012, 2013, 2015 Longitudinal Study: t1 - confirmands, workers, volunteers t2 - confirmands, workers, volunteers t3 - confirmands</p> <p><i>t1 - beginning of confirmation time t2 - end of confirmation time t3 - 2 years after confirmation</i></p>	<p>2014-2016 Study: t0 - phone interviews - ministers 2013 t0 - focus group - AME seminarians 2013</p> <p>t1 - confirmands, parents, leaders (fall 2014 - spring 2015 & fall 2015- spring 2016)</p> <p>t2 - confirmands (summer 2015 & summer 2016) ** 25% of t1 youth took t2</p>

Important Contextual Differences

- * “there is a clear lacuna concerning youth and religion in Europe” (Schweitzer, 2015, 17)
- * *Youth and Religion is getting significant attention and \$\$\$ in the US*
- * “confirmation is the largest educational program of most Protestant Churches in Europe” (Schweitzer, 2015, 17)
- * *Confirmation fits within a larger ecology of faith formation in the US*
- * Their “far reaching aim” is “to improve the practice of confirmation work.” (Schweitzer, 2015, 18)
- * *The aim of confirmation in the US is connected making disciples of Jesus Christ, however, there is a lack of agreement as to what this entails even within a congregation*

General US Findings

- * American confirmands are “Highly Devoted”
- * History of congregational participation
- * Confirmands “Like” church

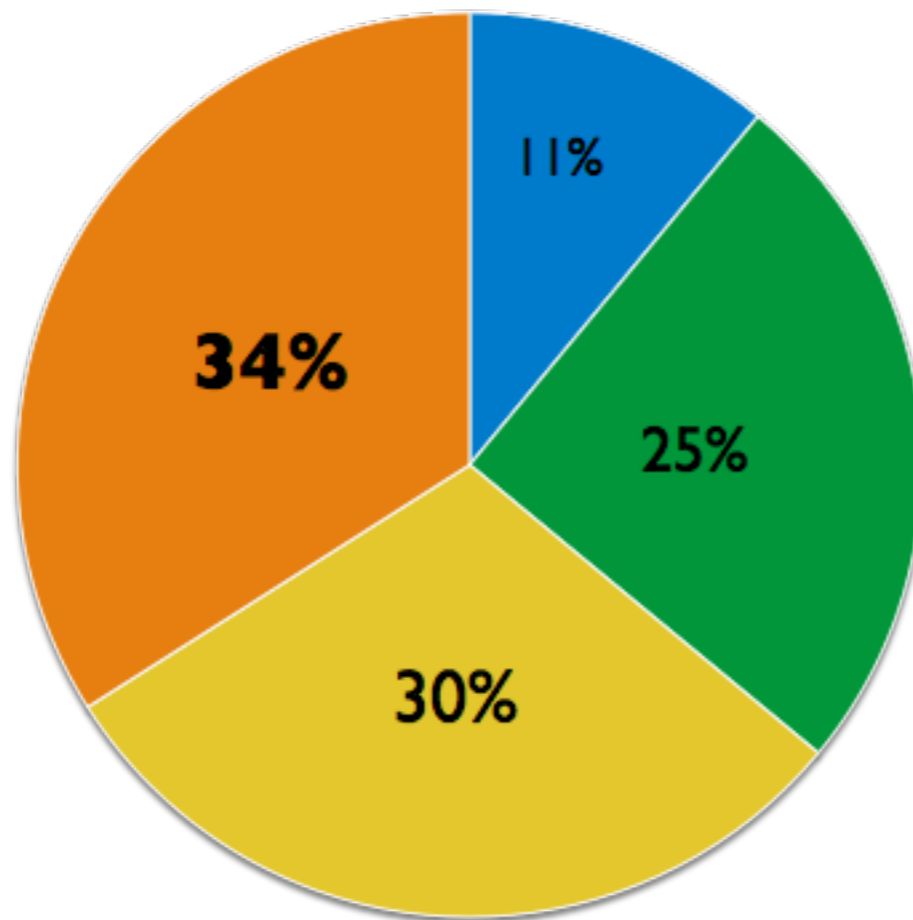




How do youth participating in confirmation
compare with American youth generally?

Devotion of American Youth

All Teens (NSYR, 2003)



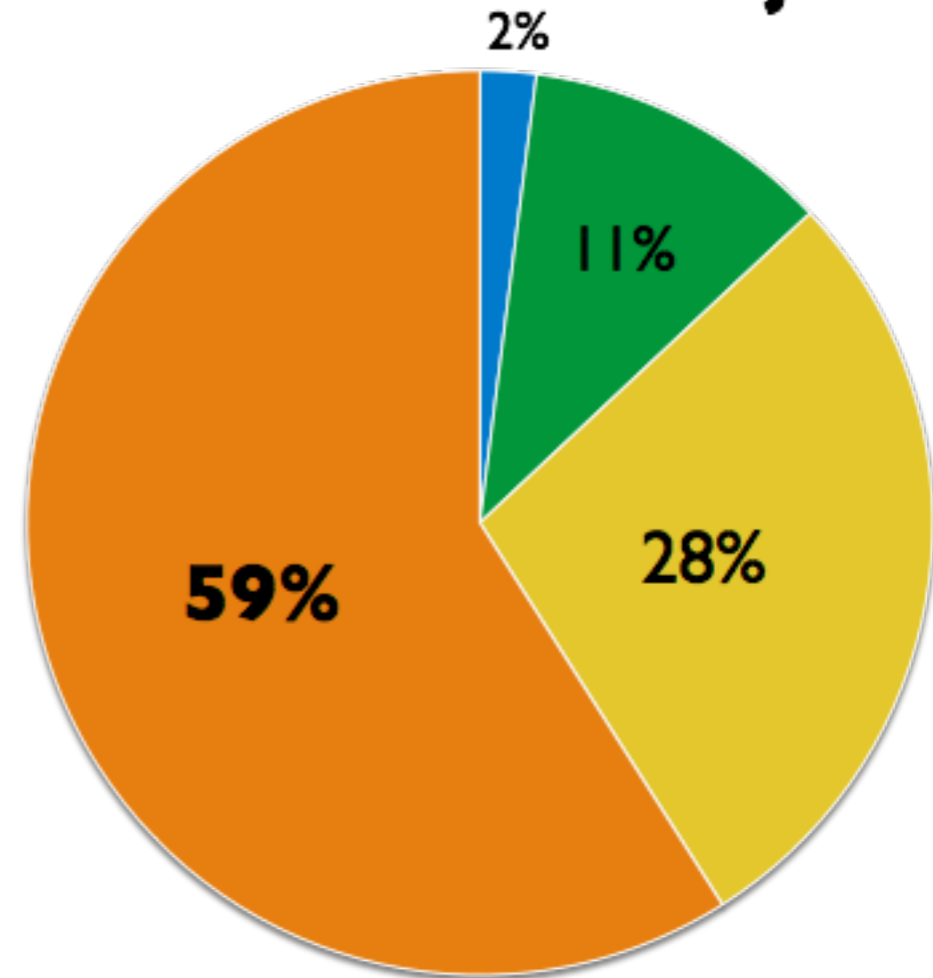
■ Lowest

■ Minimal

■ Moderate

■ Highest

Confirmation Project



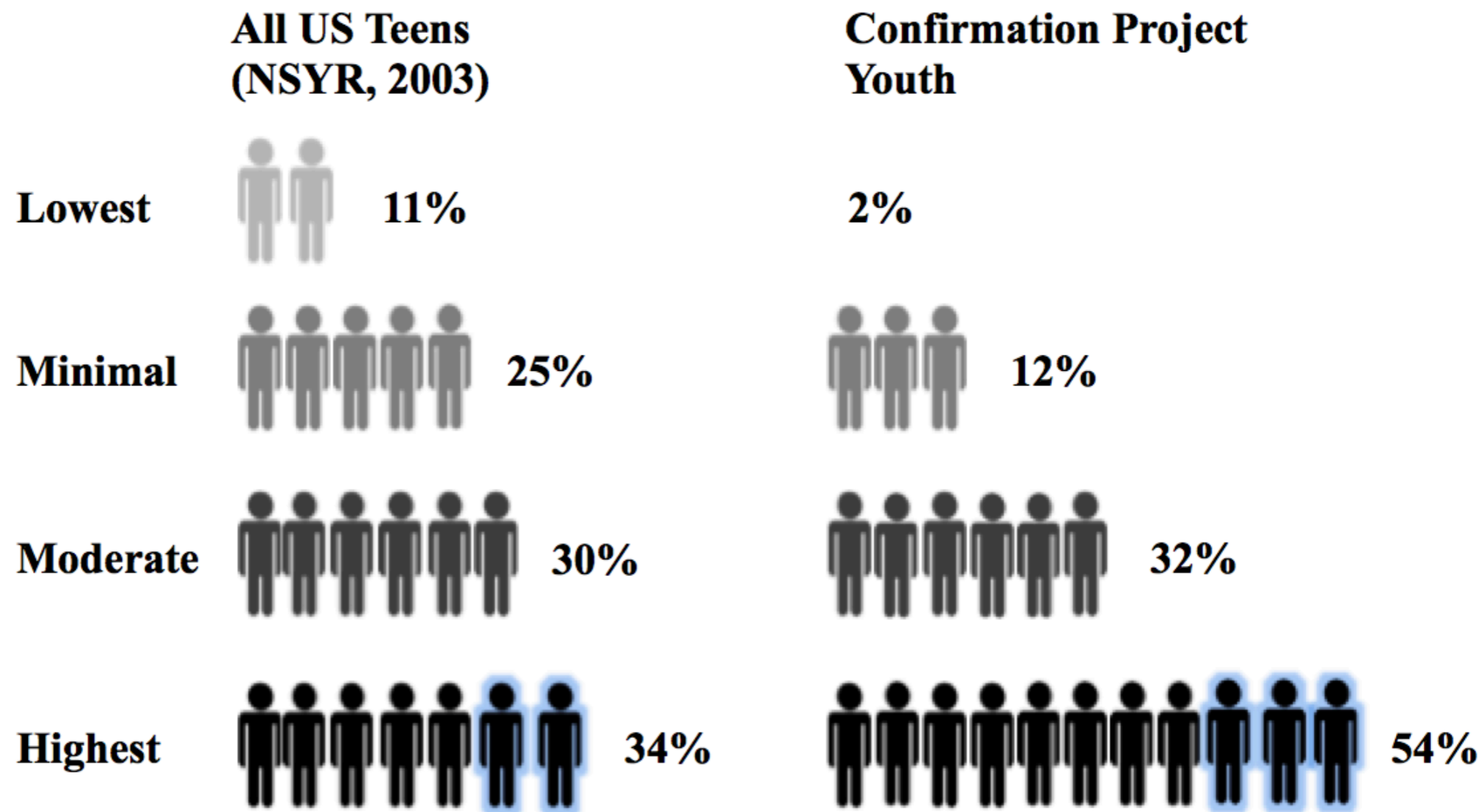
■ Lowest

■ Minimal

■ Moderate

■ Highest

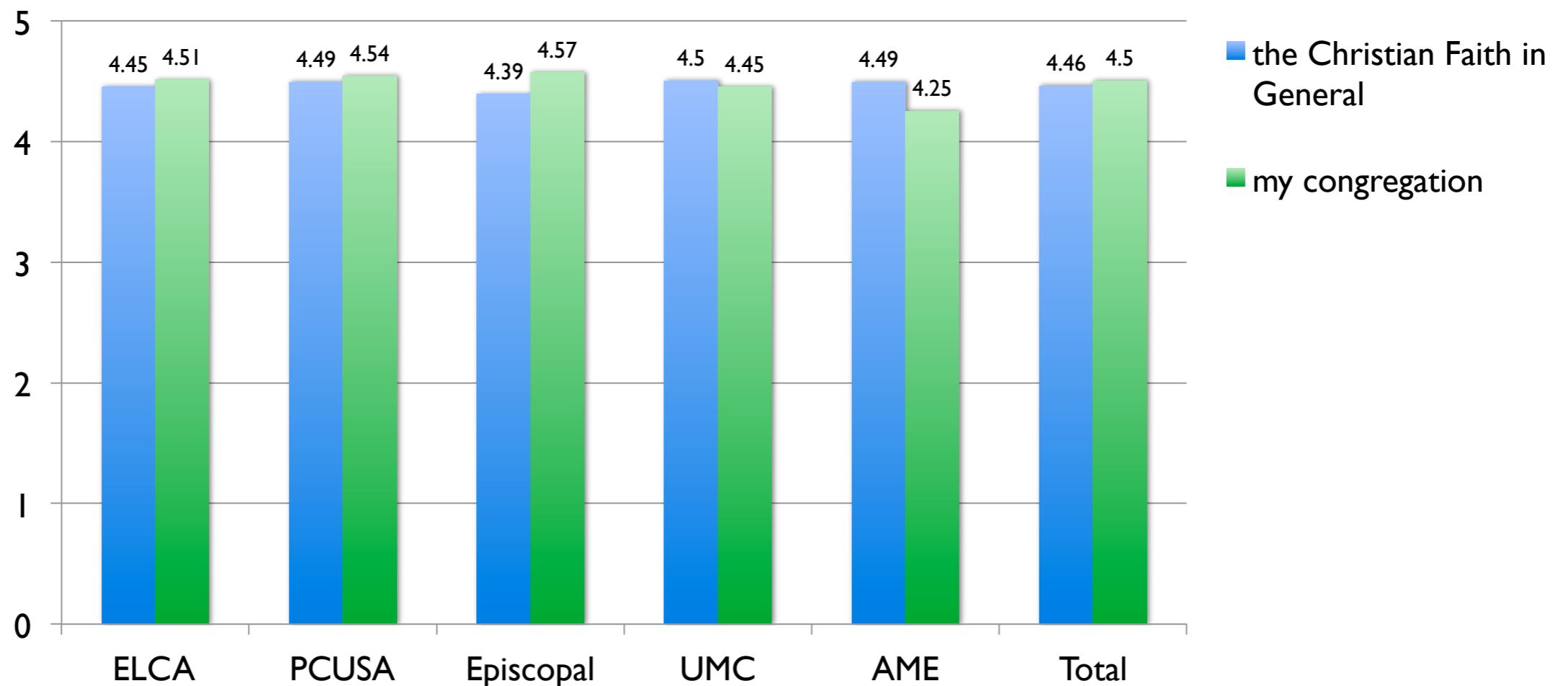
National Study of Youth and Religion vs. The Confirmation Project



Attitude toward Christian Faith and Church

Question 14: How would you describe your attitude towards...?

- Average Likert scores are given on a scale of 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).



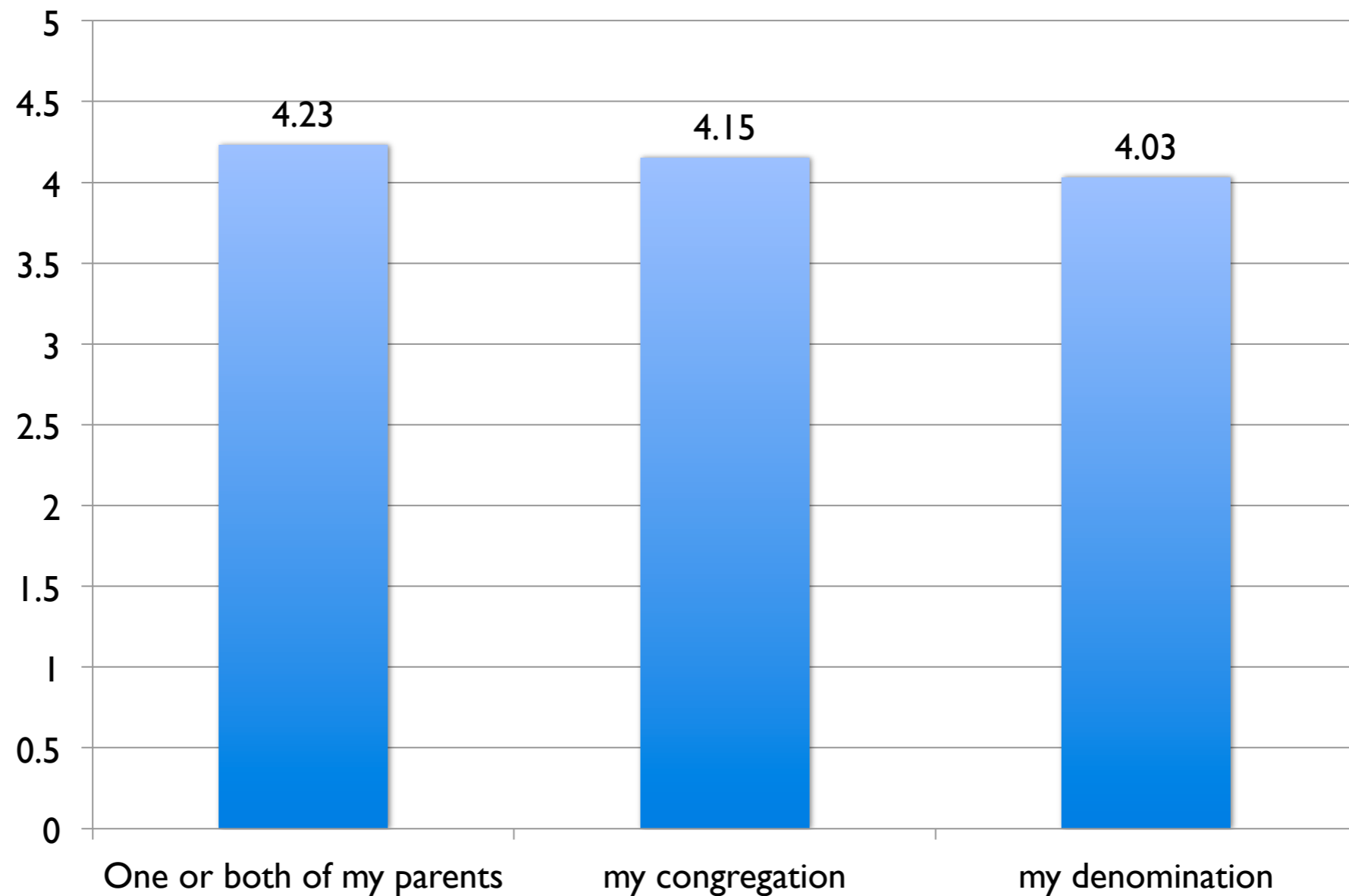
Belonging

- Strong sense of belonging
- Likely due, in part, to past participation in congregational life...

Beliefs

Question 26: My beliefs are the same as...

Average Likert scores are given on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



Beliefs

- **Not Religious Rebels**

Youth report that their faith is more similar to their parents than their own congregation or denomination

- **Mostly the “Regulars”**

Parents who have taken their kids to past church events (Sunday worship, Sunday school, youth ministry) are now signing their kids up for confirmation

- **Participation is a Personal Choice**

YET, youth believe they are internally motivated



- **Is this “all good”?**

Is confirmation supposed to be for “insiders” only, or is this a moment for evangelism?

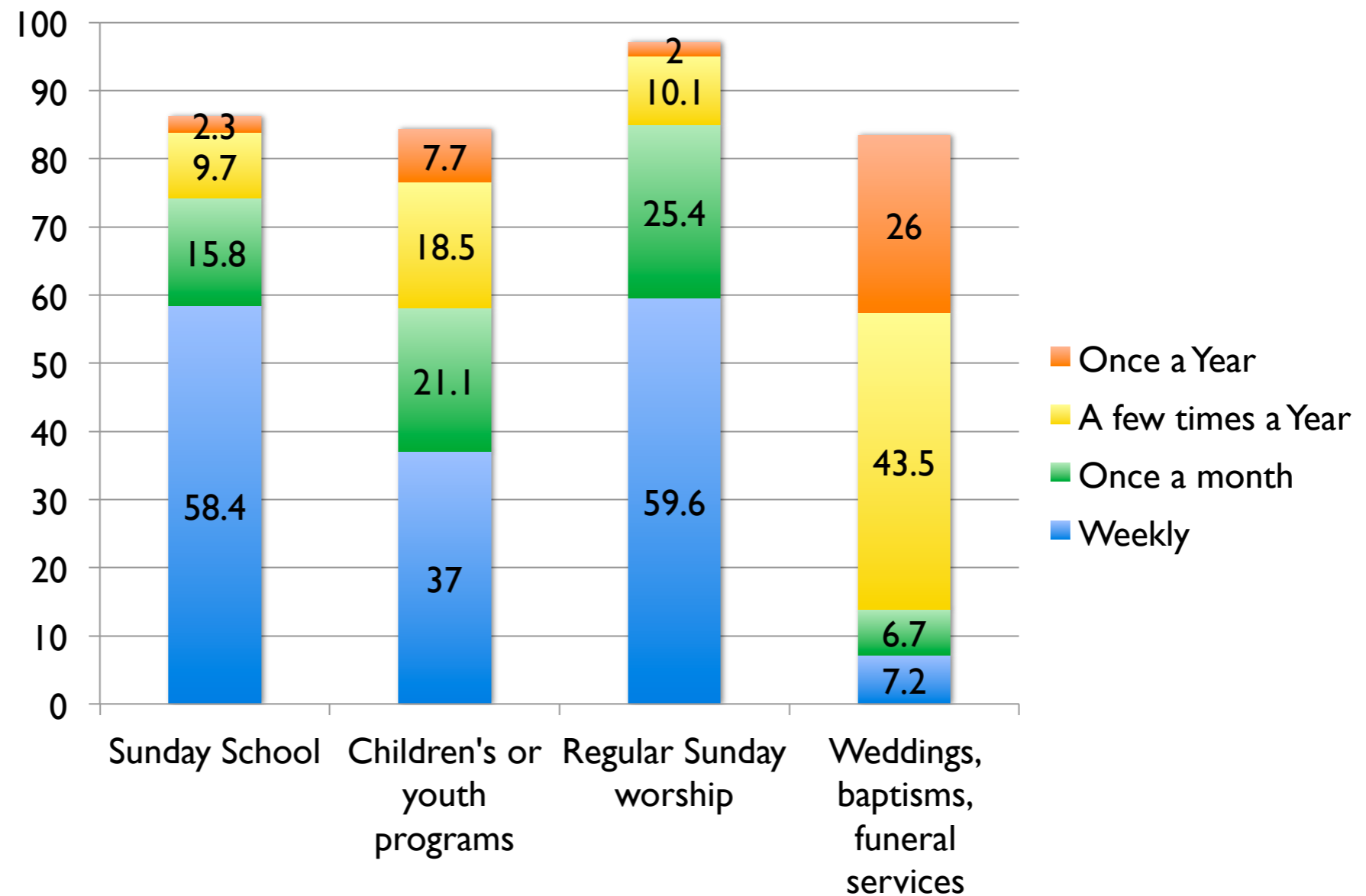
Is confirmation a time to “afflict the comfortable”? Or Raise hard questions?

Congregational Participation

Question 16 (all youth):

Before confirmation, or an equivalent practice, I attended...

Numbers indicate the percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers



Congregational Participation

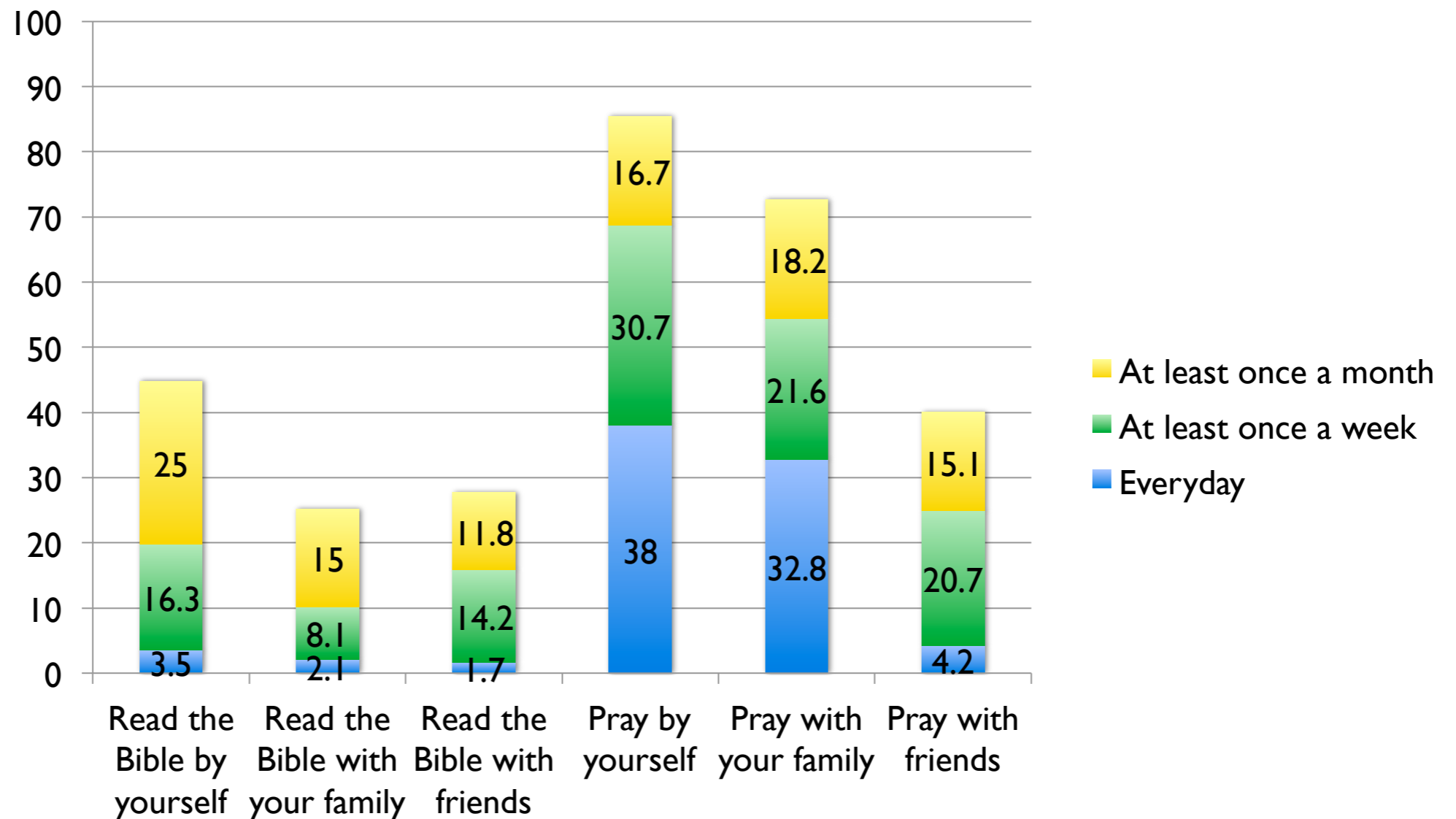
- Nearly 85% of confirmands participate in worship services monthly
- How are confirmands acknowledged, leading, or included in worship?
- Over 80% attend a wedding, baptism, or funeral every year.
- Are these “life events” included in the content of what is covered in confirmation?

Bible Reading and Prayer

Questions 18-19 (ALL YOUTH): How often do you read the Bible AND How often do you pray?

- Numbers indicate percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers.

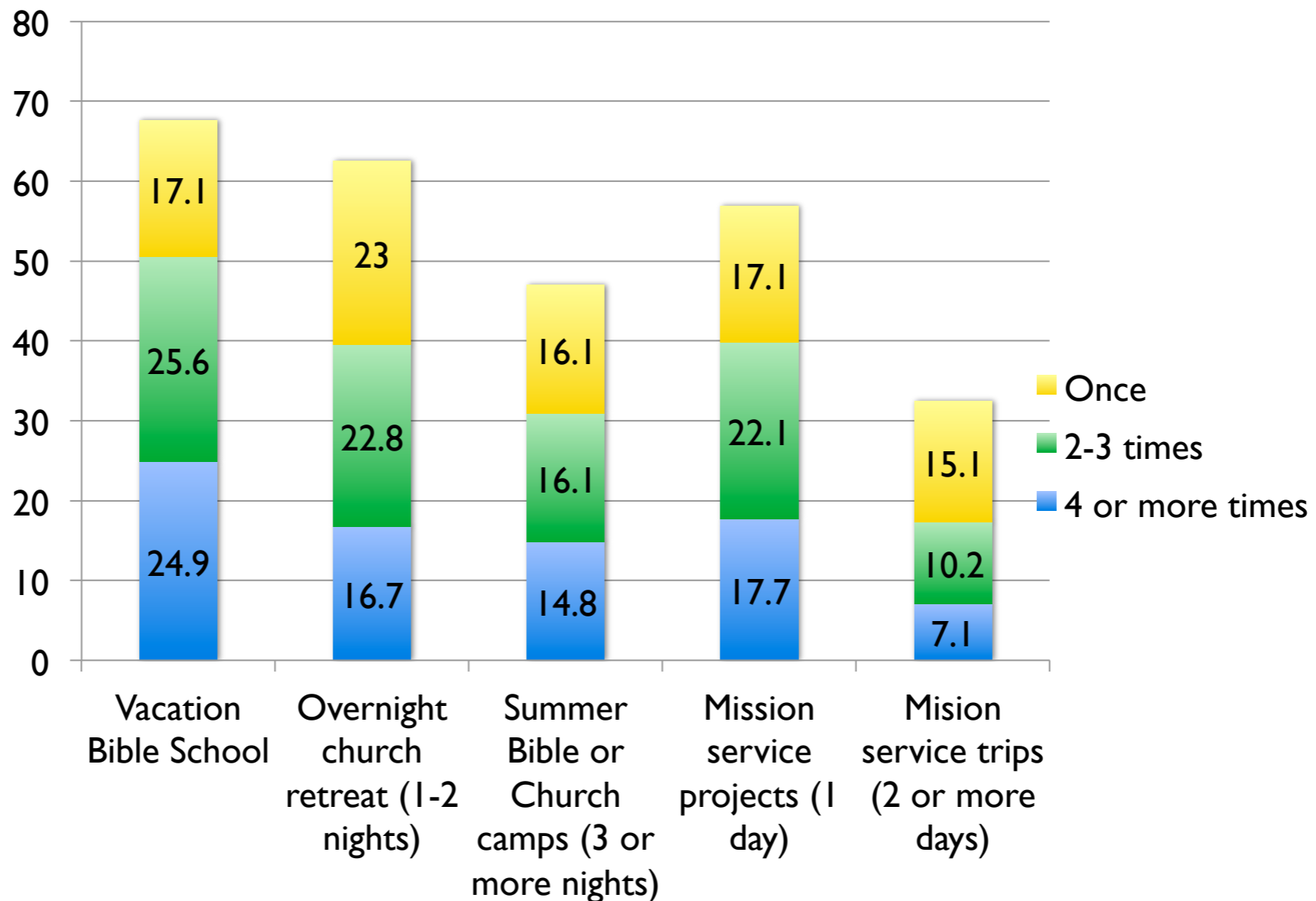
Table 18A, 19A



Camps and Retreats

Question 20 (ALL YOUTH): How many times in the last 5 years have you participated in the following activities?

Numbers indicate percentages of respondents who selected the particular answers.



Behaviors and Practices

- **Biblical Reading**

Almost 45% of youth reported reading the Bible at least once a month by themselves.

Is this good or bad?

How might participating in confirmation affect this?

- **Prayer**

Almost 85% of youth report praying at least once a month by themselves.

Is this good or bad?

How might participating in confirmation affect this?

- **Camps and Retreats**

The age of 12 or 13 seems to be when youth experience their first “overnight away from home” experiences.

How might leaders prepare families for “first time away”?

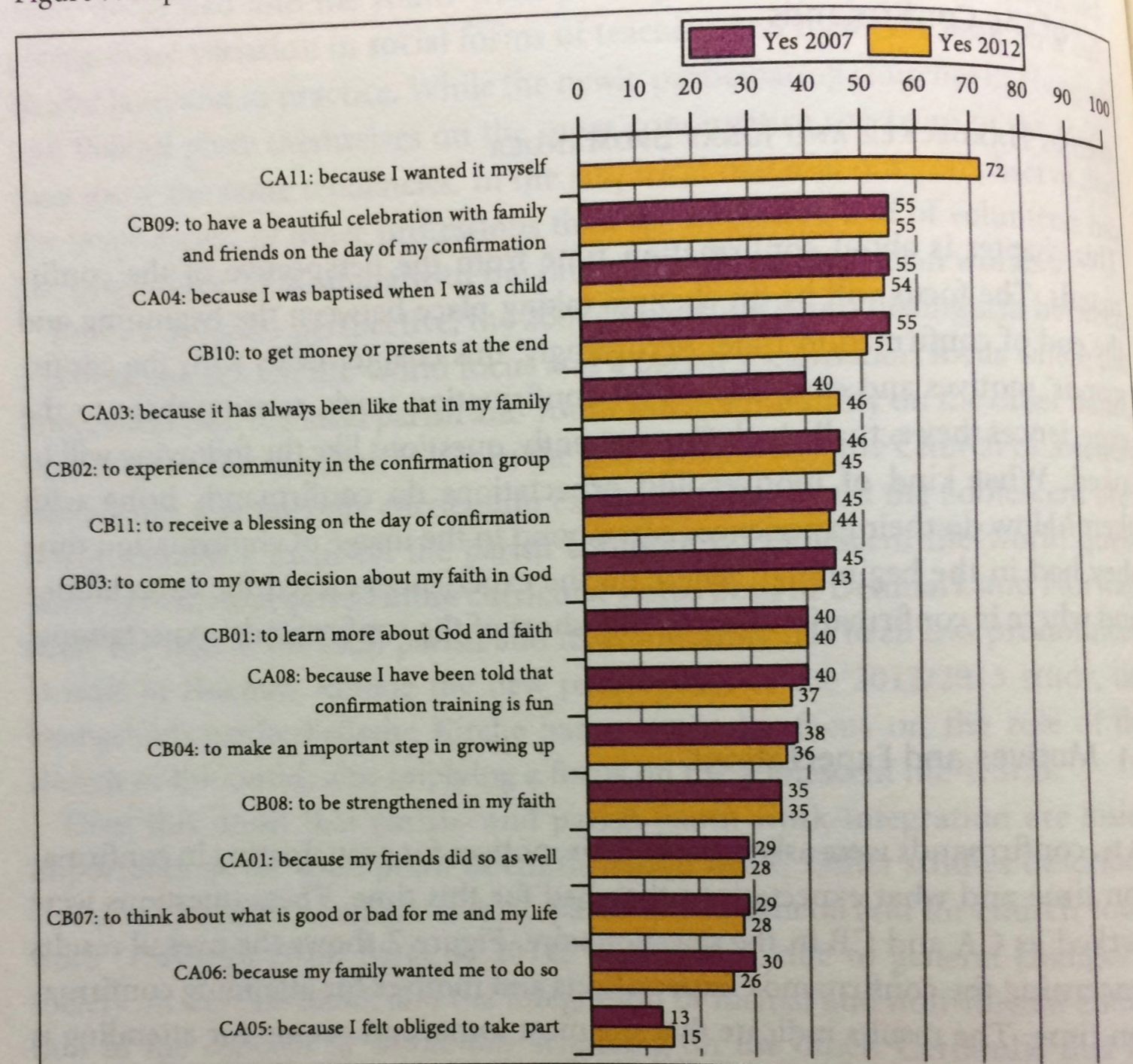
Bible Reading and Prayer

- How central are Bible reading and prayer to the Christian life?
- What are ways to increase Bible reading in families?
- Are prayer and Bible reading practices that are taught about OR experienced during confirmation?
- What strategies do you have for teaching youth and families to pray or read the Bible?

Motivation for participation: European Youth

(1 = not applicable; 7 = very applicable)
 (Schweitzer, 2015, 60)

Figure 7: Expectations and motives for attending confirmation in 2007 and 2012 (%)



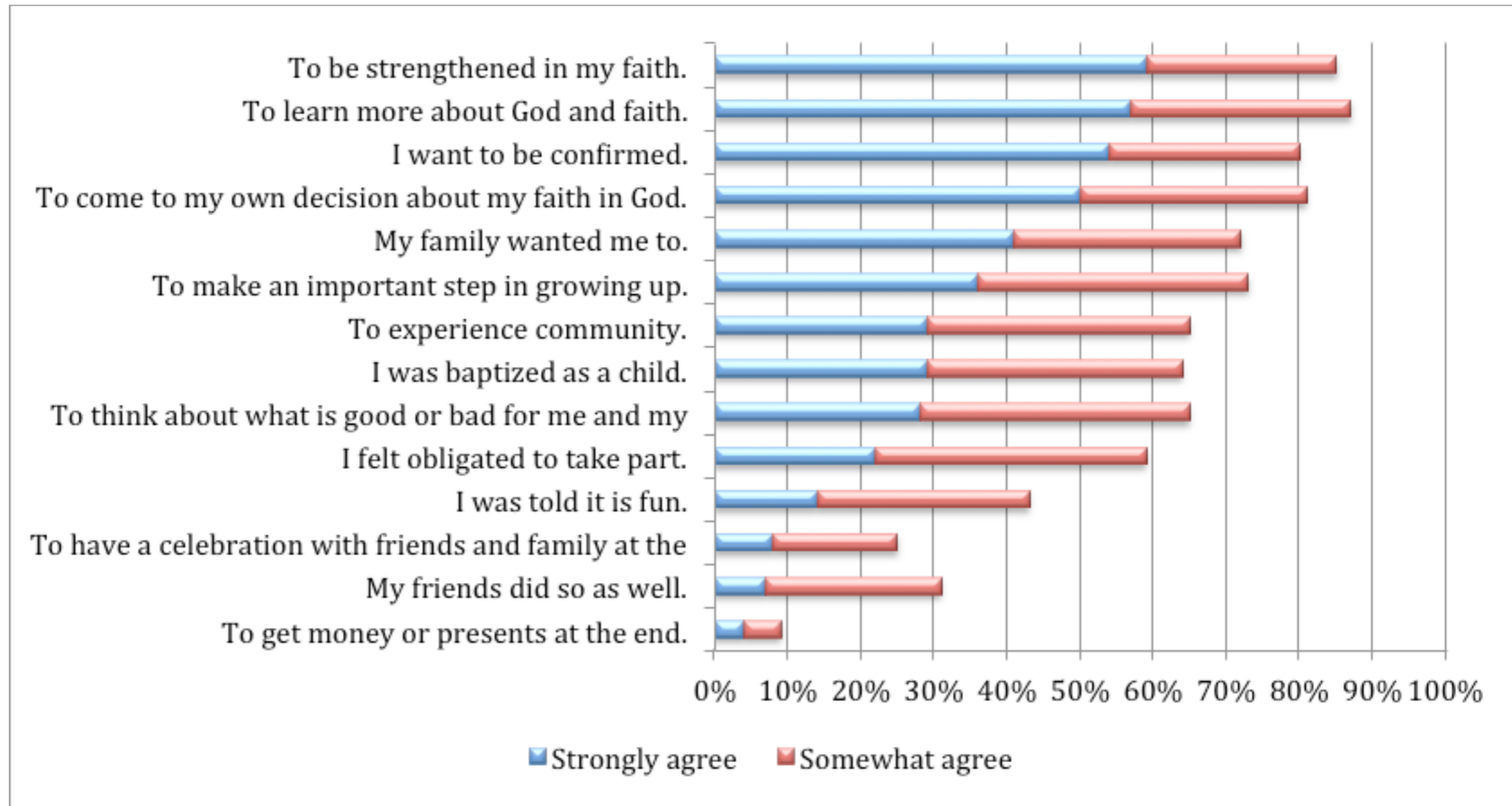
N = 19189-19208 (2007), N = 25950-26023 (2012); scale: 1 = not applicable at all; 7 = total

Motivation for participation: American Youth

Chart 2C: Youth Motivation for Participating in CEP

(1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree)

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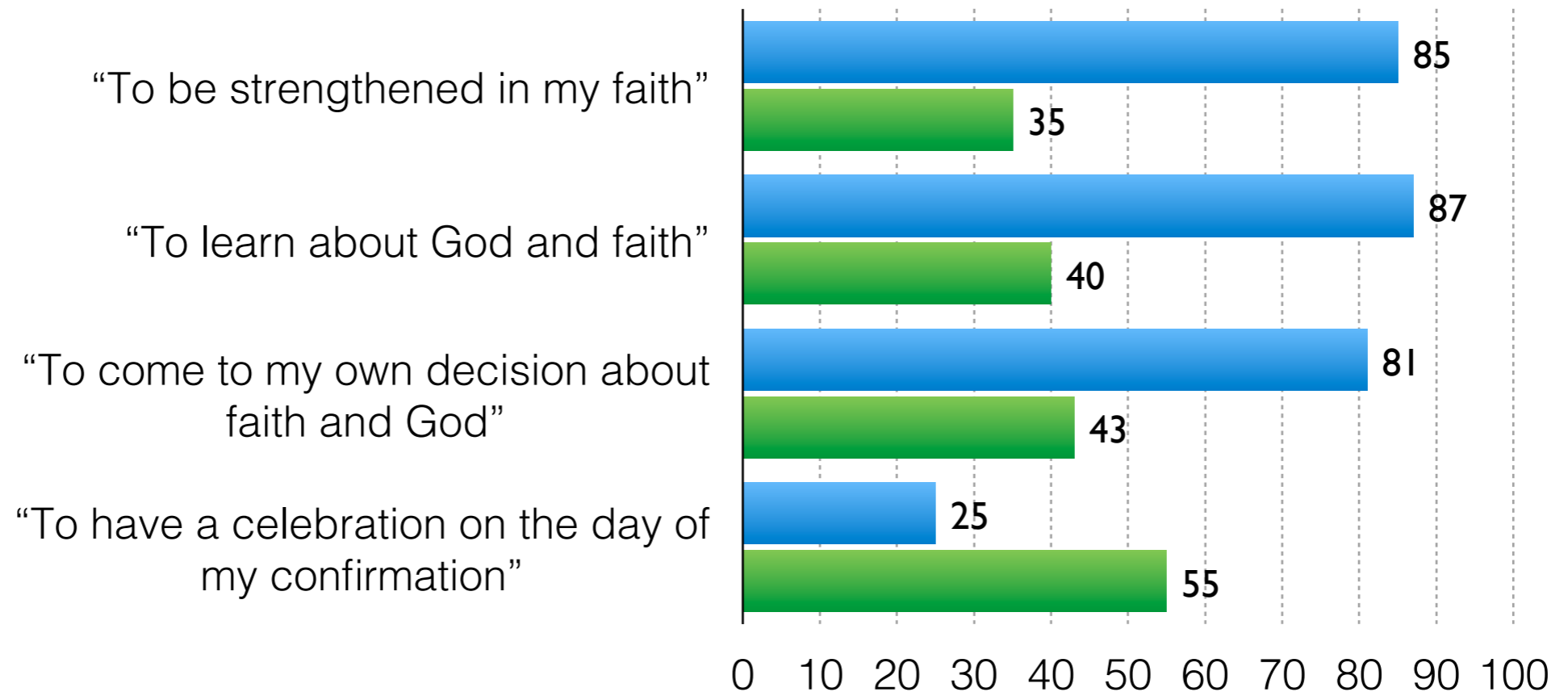
Comparison of Motivations and Expectations

United States 2013

Europe 2012

US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7

Combined total of highest categories (4 & 5 and 5, 6, &7, respectively).

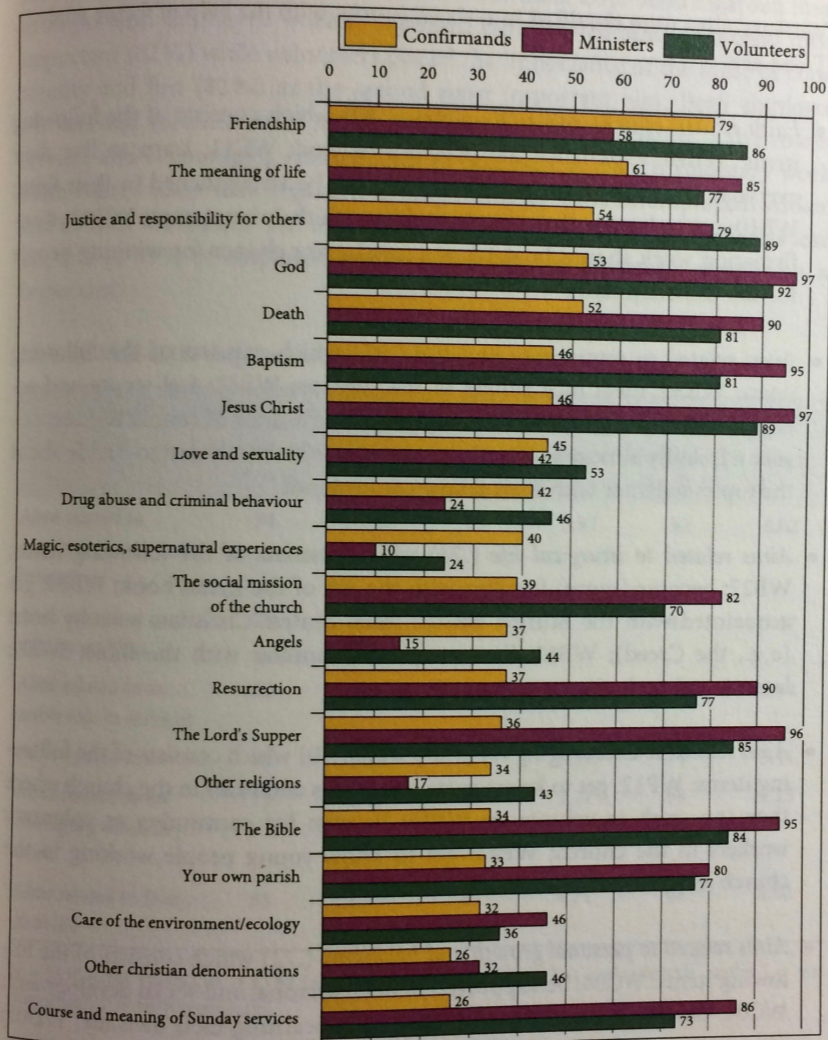


How interested are you in these topics?

(1 = not interested; 7 = very interested)

(Schweitzer, 2015, 75/369)

Figure 13: Interest in topics at the beginning of confirmation time (t_1) among ministers, volunteers and confirmands (%)

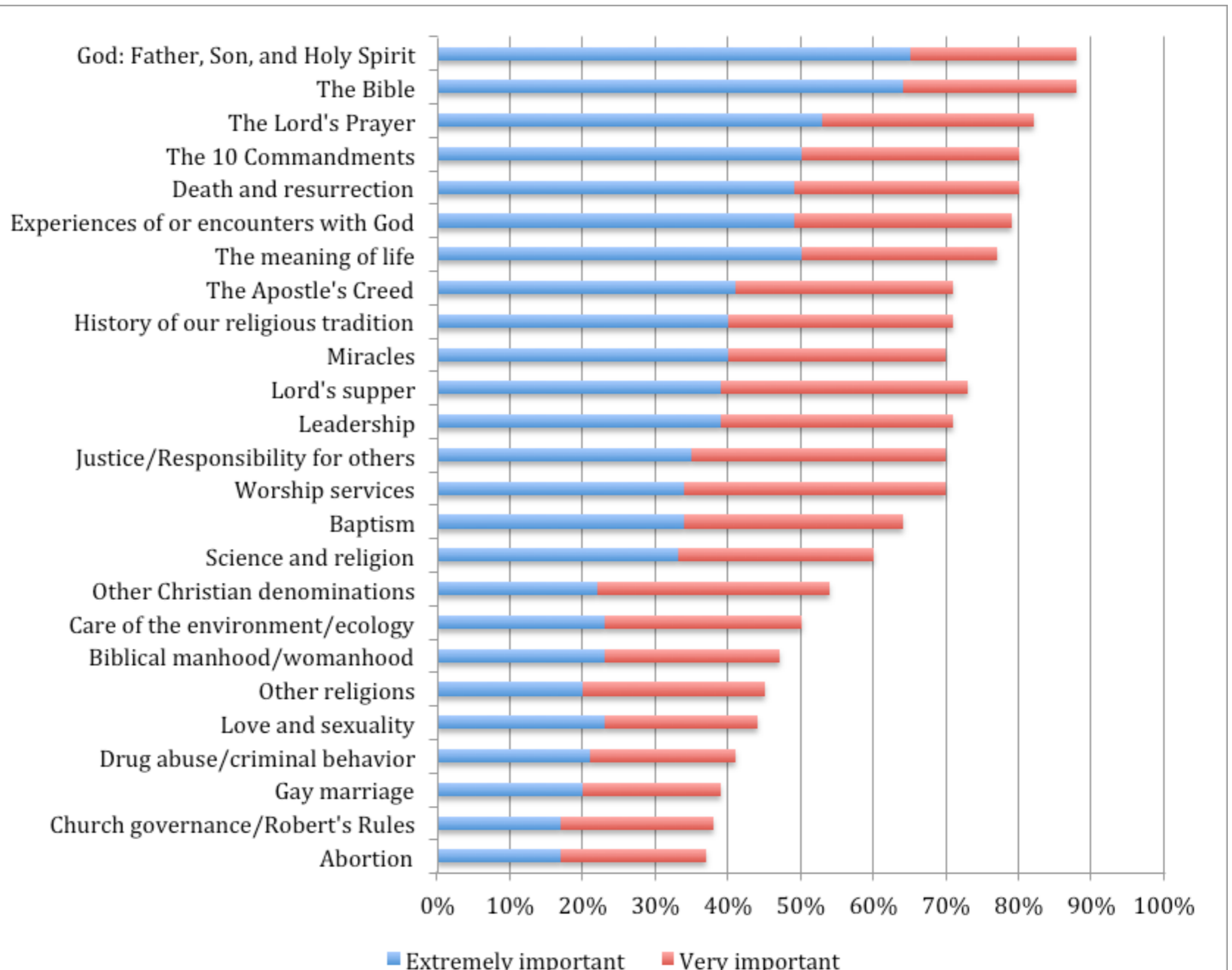


N = 18676-26019 (confirmands); N = 905-1380 (ministers); N = 1385-1541 (volunteers); 7-point-scales were used; the share of positive responses (5, 6, 7) is reported. Items: CL01-CL25 and WA03-WA26. No data was collected for WA12/CL16 (Care of the environment/ecology), WA23/CL22 (God), and WA26/CL25 (Angels) in Switzerland. The items are sorted according to the interest among confirmands.

How interested are you in these topics?

(1 = not interested; 5 = very interested)

(Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)

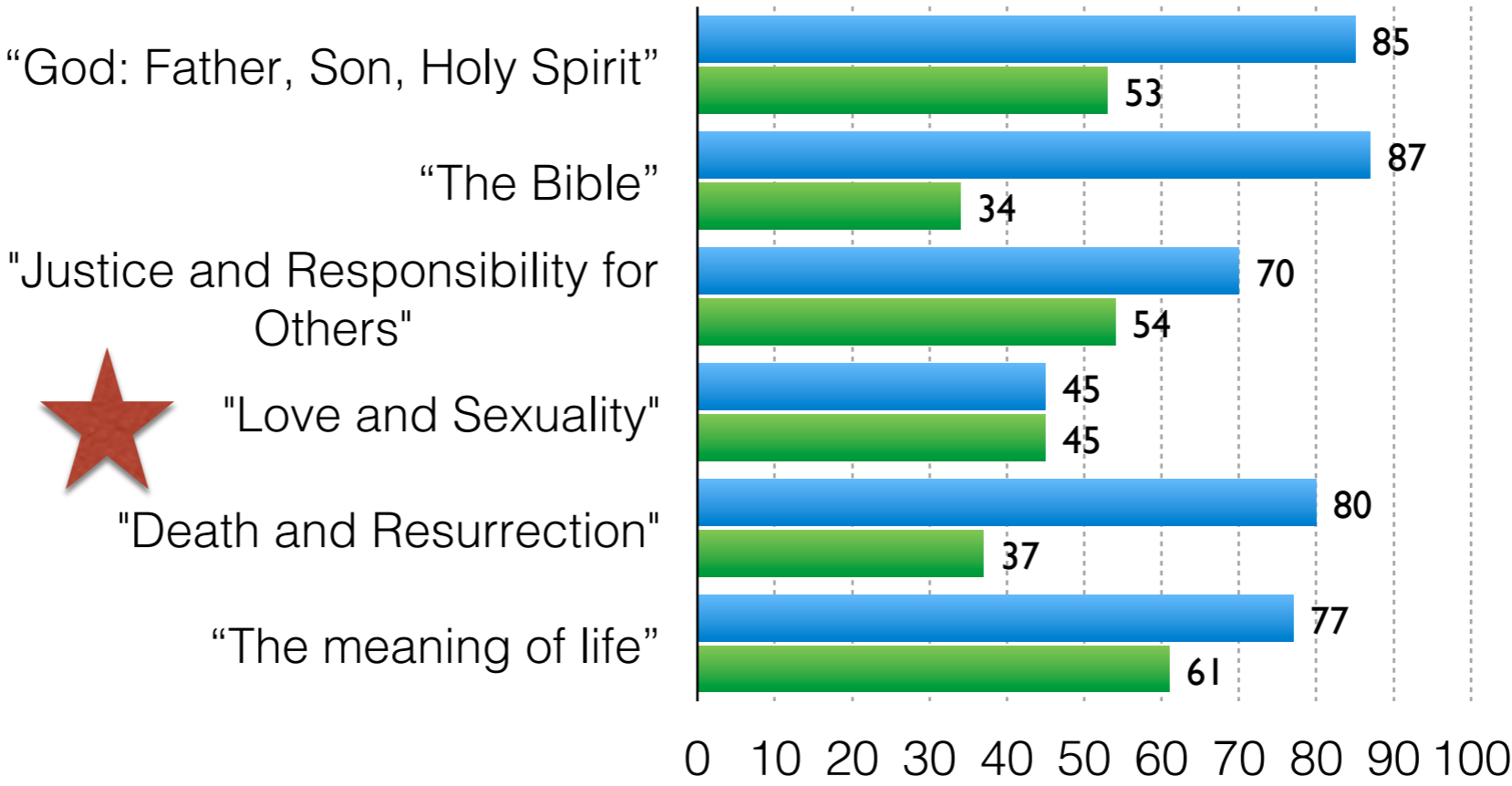


Comparison of Topics of Interest

United States 2013

Europe 2012

US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7
Combined total of highest categories.



Volunteering

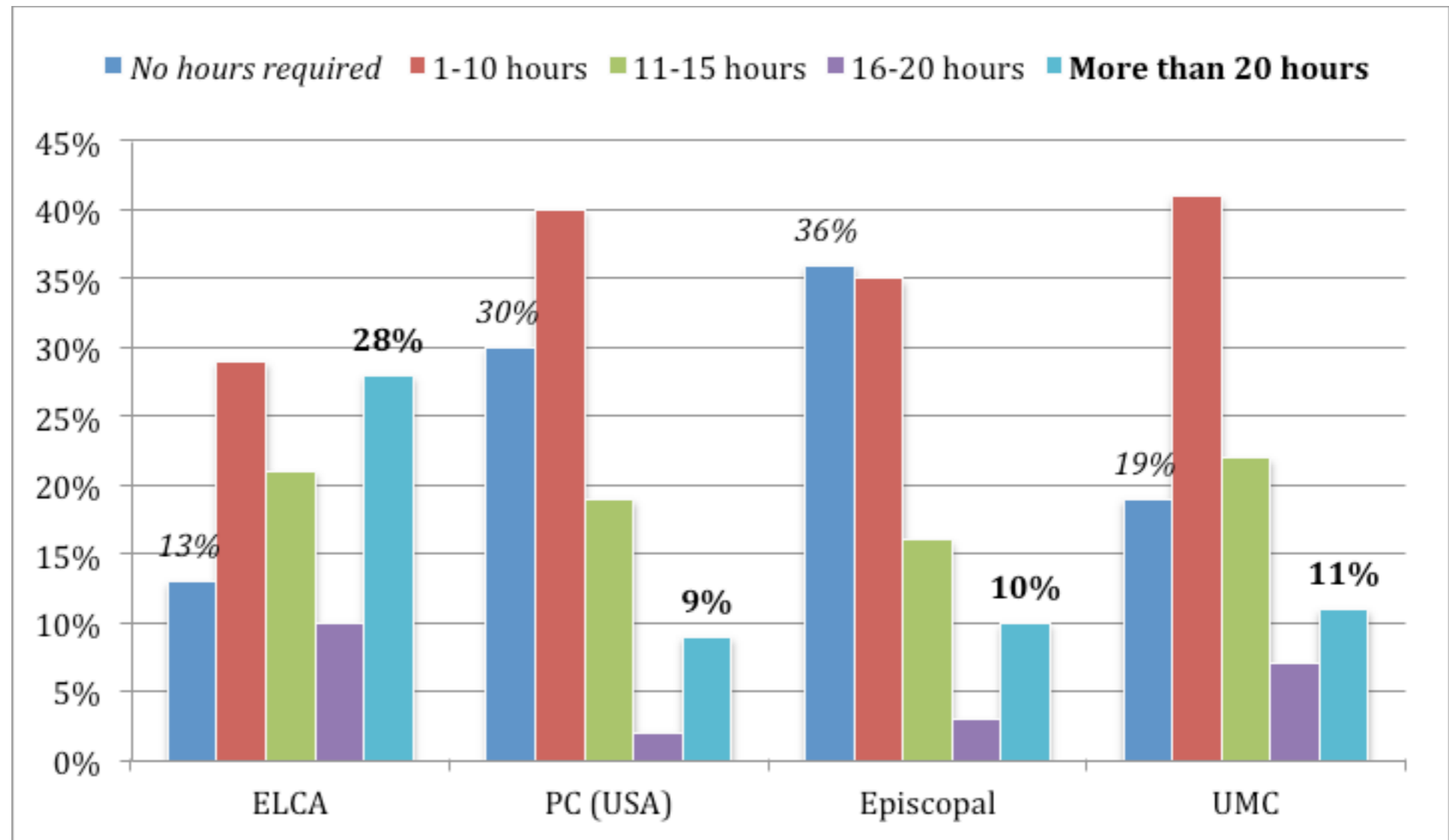
(Schweitzer, 2015, 93-102,369)

What do you think about the following statements? (1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable)	M Total	DE EKD	AT	CH	DK	FI	NO	SE	PL	HU	DE EmK	Yes Total in %	DE EKD in %	AT in %	CH in %	DK in %	FI in %	NO in %	SE in %	PL in %	HU in %	D in %
KP01 I can imagine working in the church as a volunteer after confirmation time (for example in youth work or confirmation work).	3.47	3.56	3.67	3.00	2.47	4.27	3.11	3.75	4.47	4.46	4.40	30	32	36	21	11	45	23	36	49	49	50
KP03 The church gives young people possibilities to become a voluntary worker.	5.13	5.27	5.57	4.95	4.50	5.28	4.88	5.14	5.51	5.19	5.19	64	68	73	61	46	68	57	62	70	66	68

Volunteering

Chart 5B: Volunteer Hours Required, by Denomination

This chart indicates the percentages of programs in each denomination requiring volunteer hours inside or outside the church. (Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)



Comparison on Volunteering

US:

“I can imagine myself volunteering in church during confirmation this year”
78% (t1) and 90% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree

“I can imagine myself volunteering outside of church during confirmation this year”
81% (t1) and 90% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree

European:

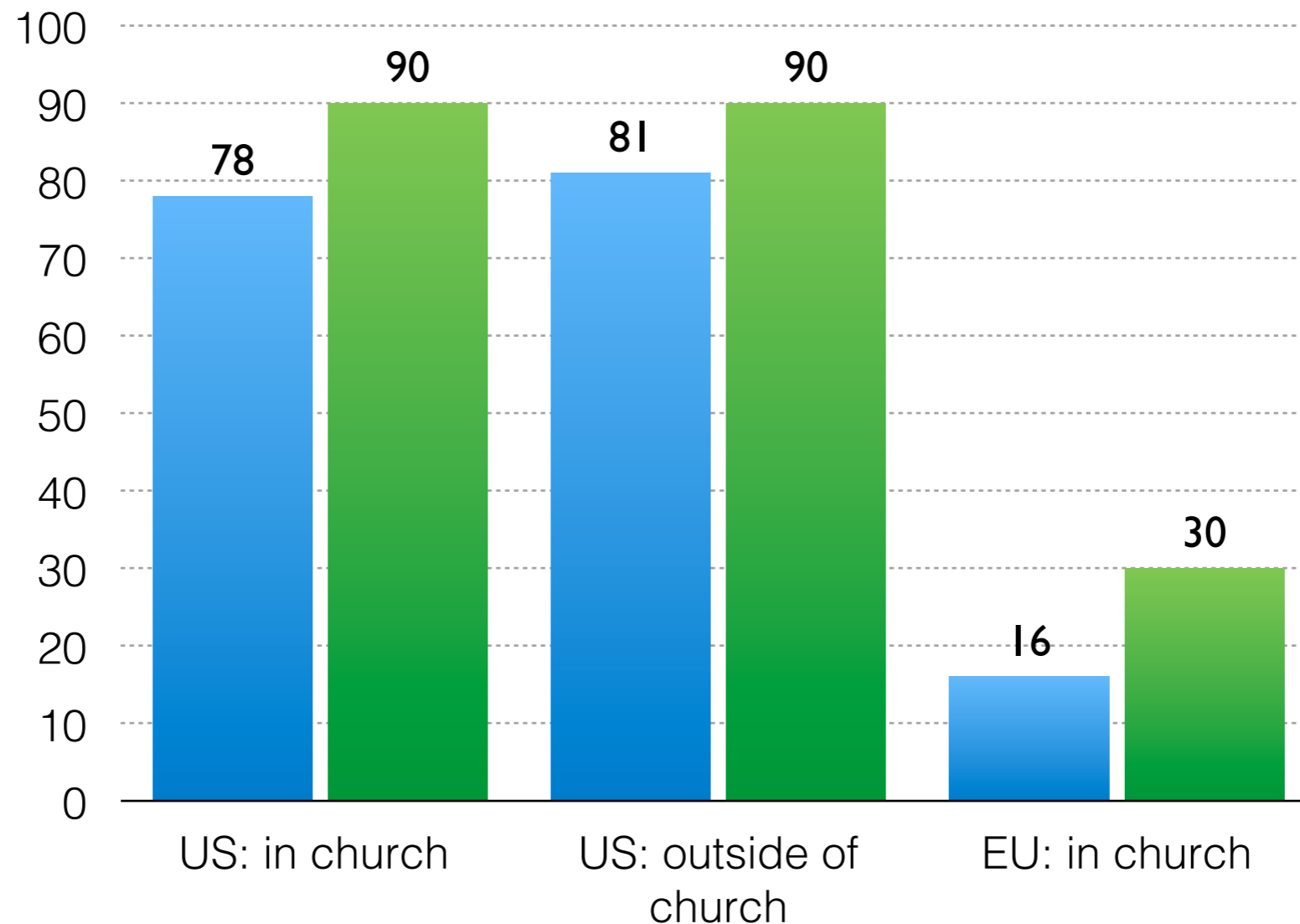
“I can imagine working as a volunteer in the church during confirmation time”
16% (t1) and 30% (t2) somewhat or strongly agree

Comparison on Volunteering

“I can imagine working as a volunteer in the church during confirmation time”

“Paired” t1 and t2 for US results, 329 respondents

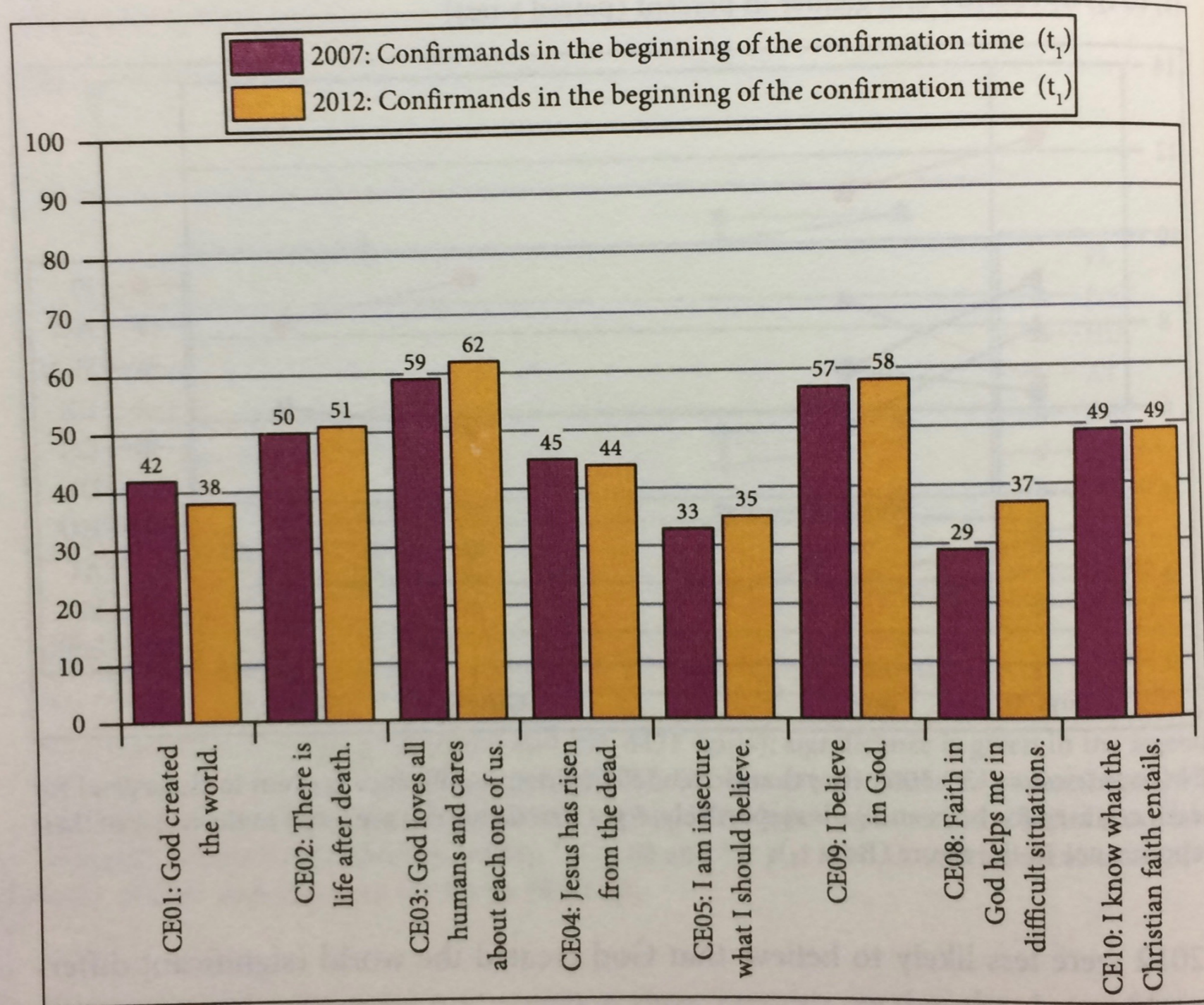
US scale: 1-5, European scale: 1-7
Combined total of highest categories.



Beliefs t1

(Schweitzer, 2015, 42)

Figure 5: Religious beliefs in the beginning of confirmation time (t_1) in 2007 and 2012 (%)



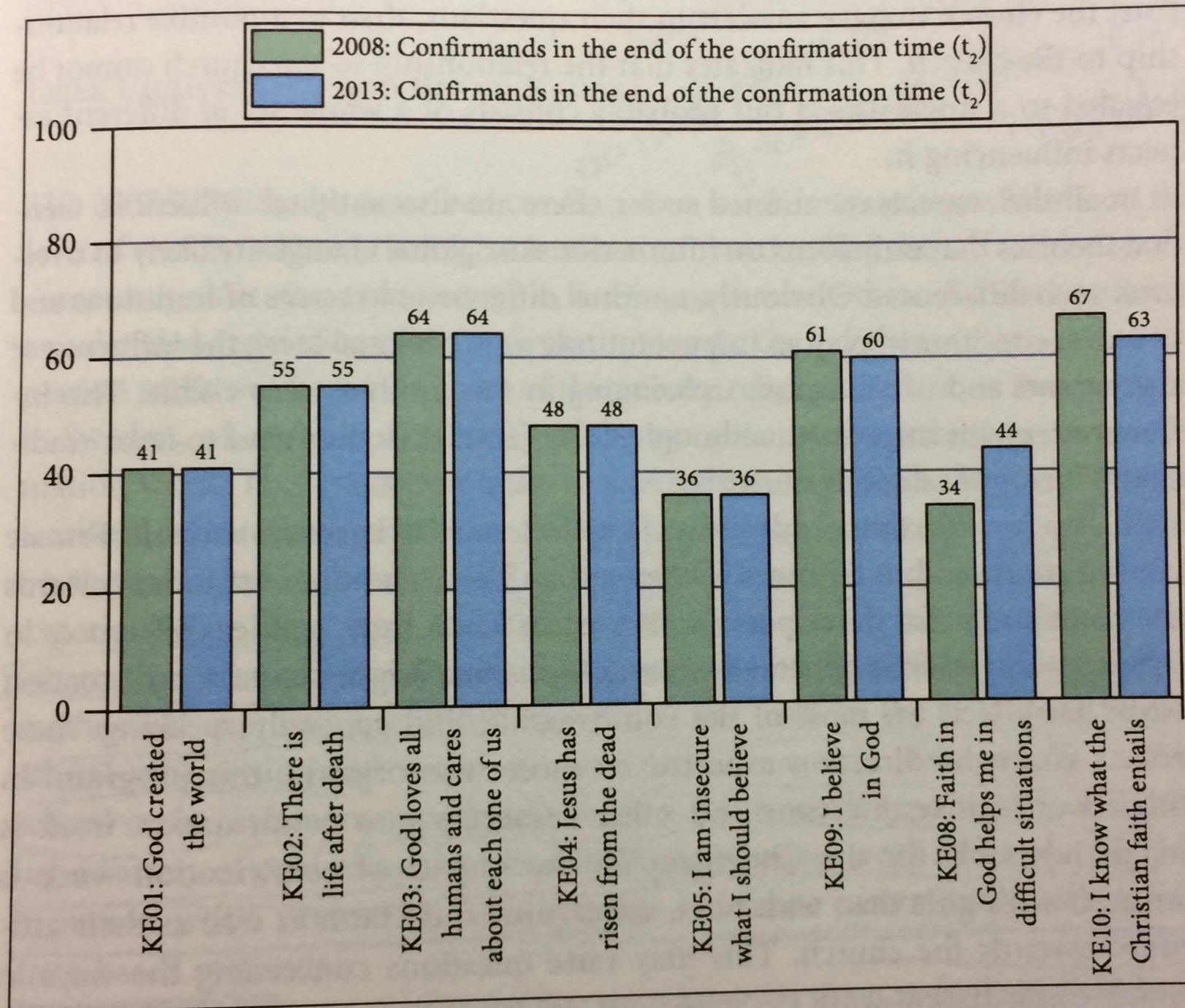
N = 19046-19239 (2007), N = 26637-26895 (2012); scale: 1 = not applicable at all;

... applied to the share of those with a positive response (5, 6, 7)

Beliefs t2

(Schweitzer, 2015, 43)

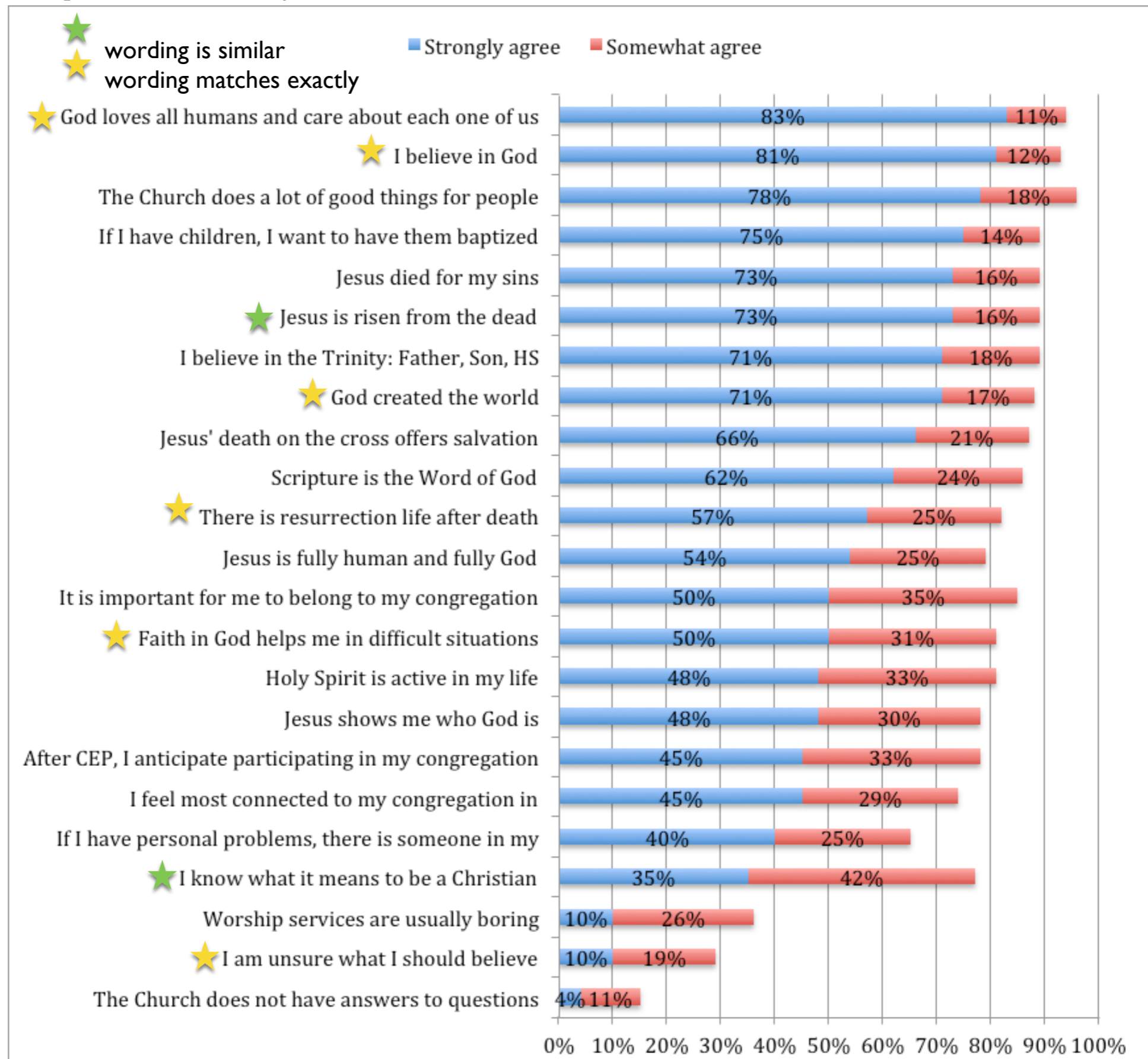
Figure 6: Christian beliefs in the end of confirmation time (t_2) (%)



N = 17641-17808 (2008), N = 22496-22677 (2013); scale: 1 = not applicable at all; 7 = totally applicable; the share of those with a positive response (5, 6, 7).

Beliefs

Chart 4C: Level of Agreement with Faith Statements (Confirmation Project Charts and Graphics.docx, 2017)

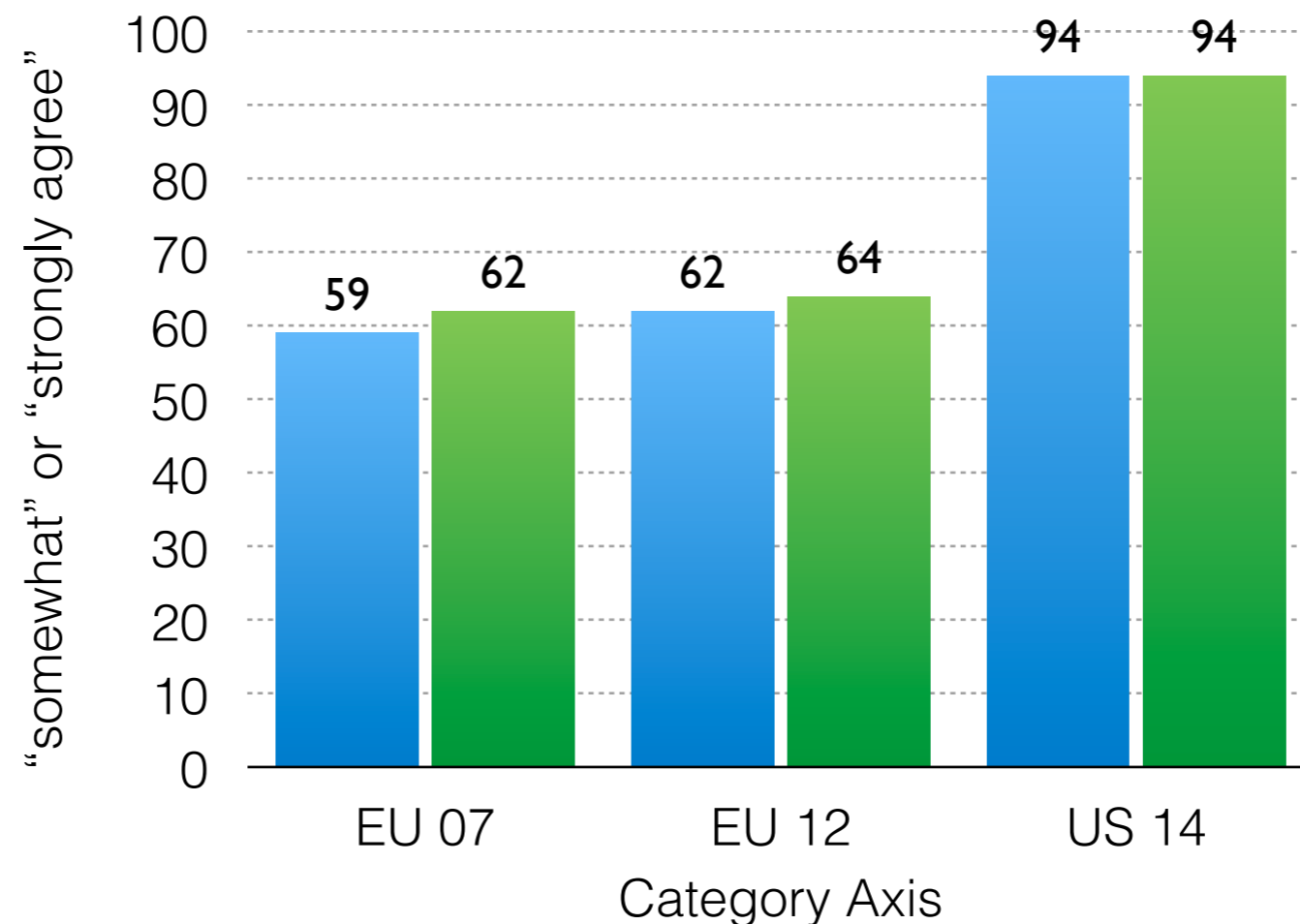


Comparison of Youth Responses to Questions About Beliefs

American youth participating in confirmation and equivalent practices self-report higher levels (almost double in some categories) of belief than European youth

“God loves all humans and cares about each one of us”

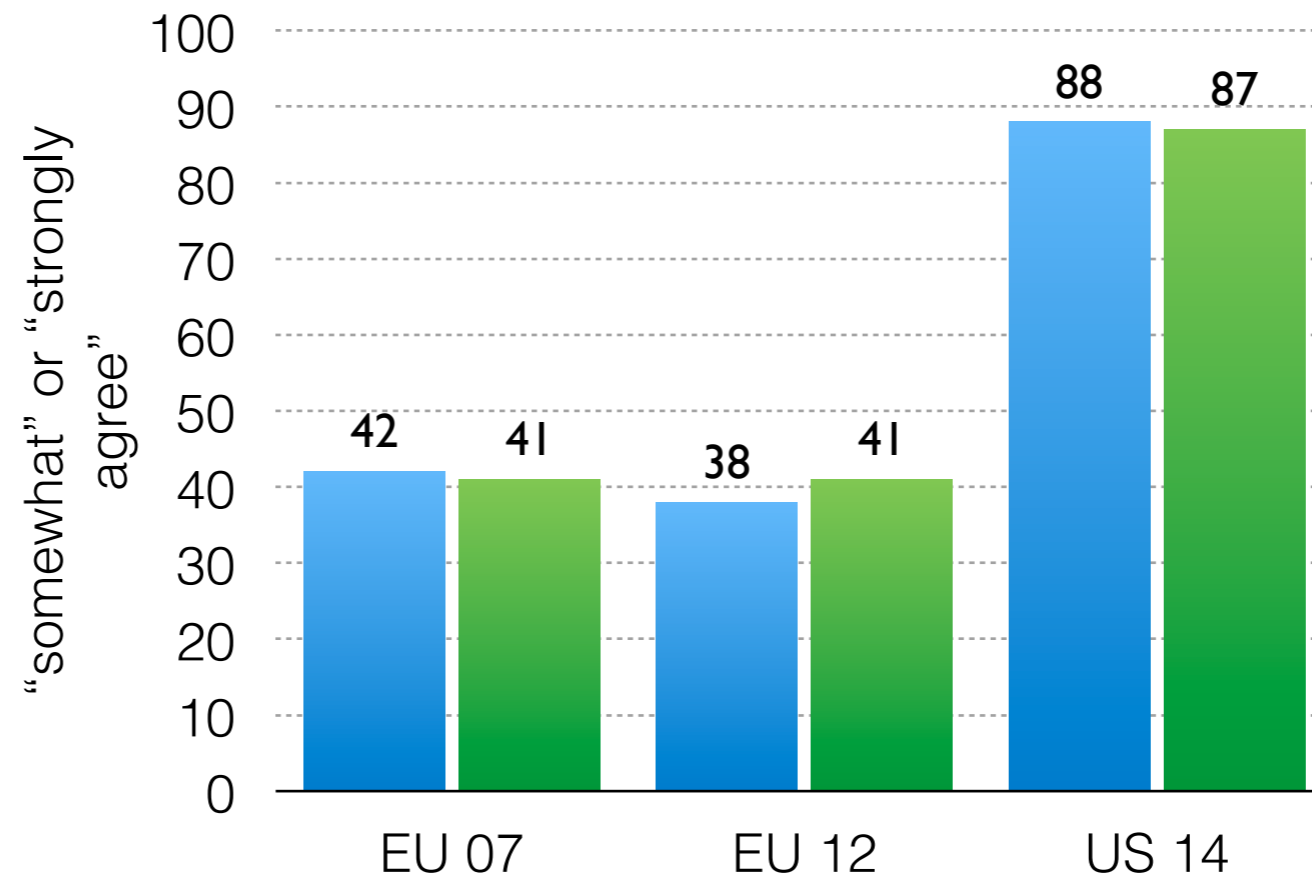
- Europe 2007: 59% (t2, 64%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 62% (t2 64%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 94% (t2 94%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Youth Responses to Questions About Beliefs

“God created the world”

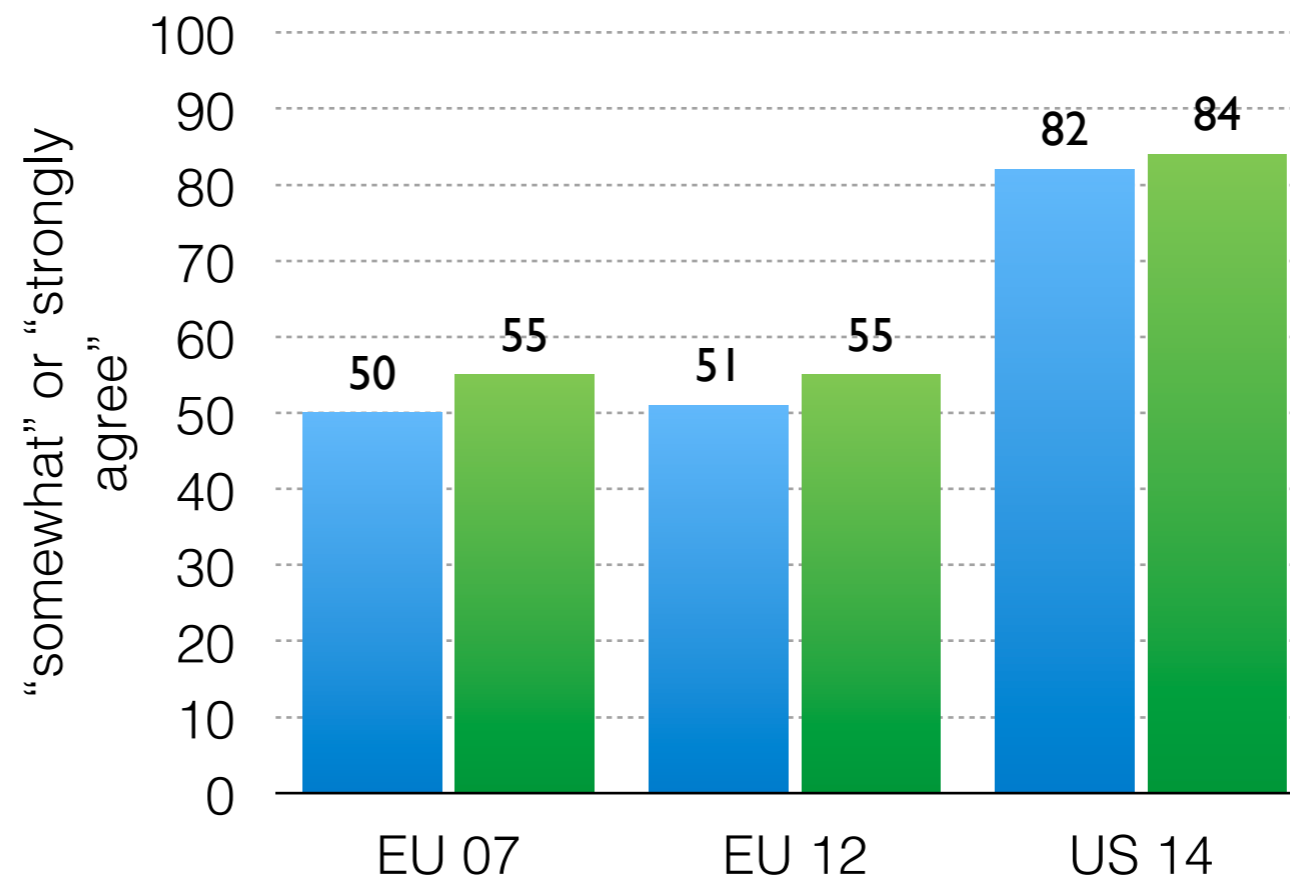
- Europe 2007: 42% (t2, 41%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 38% (t2, 41%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 88% (t2, 87%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs

“There is [resurrection] life after death”

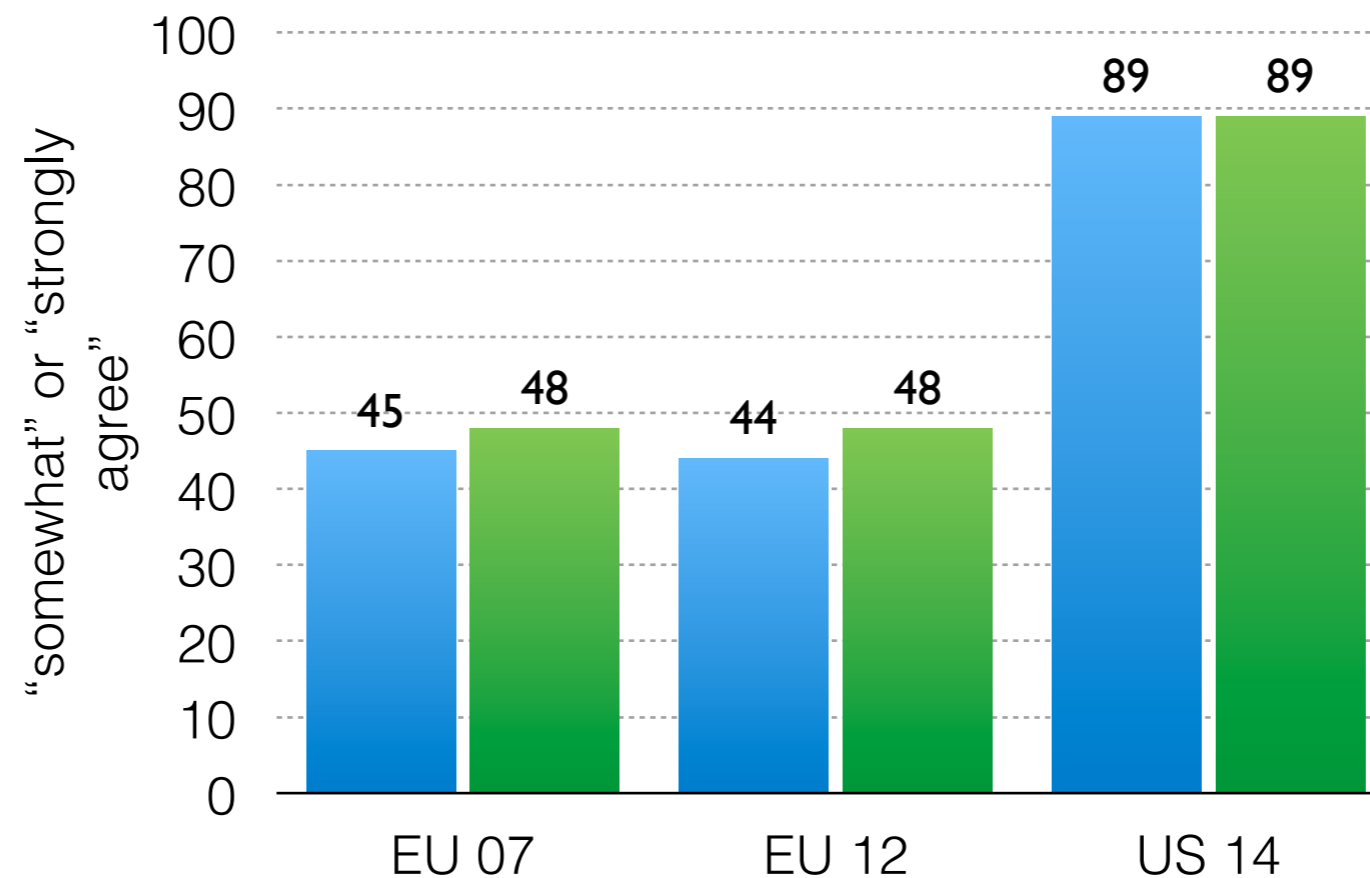
- Europe 2007: 50% (t2, 55%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 51% (t2, 55%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 82% (t2, 84%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs

“Jesus has [is] risen from the dead”

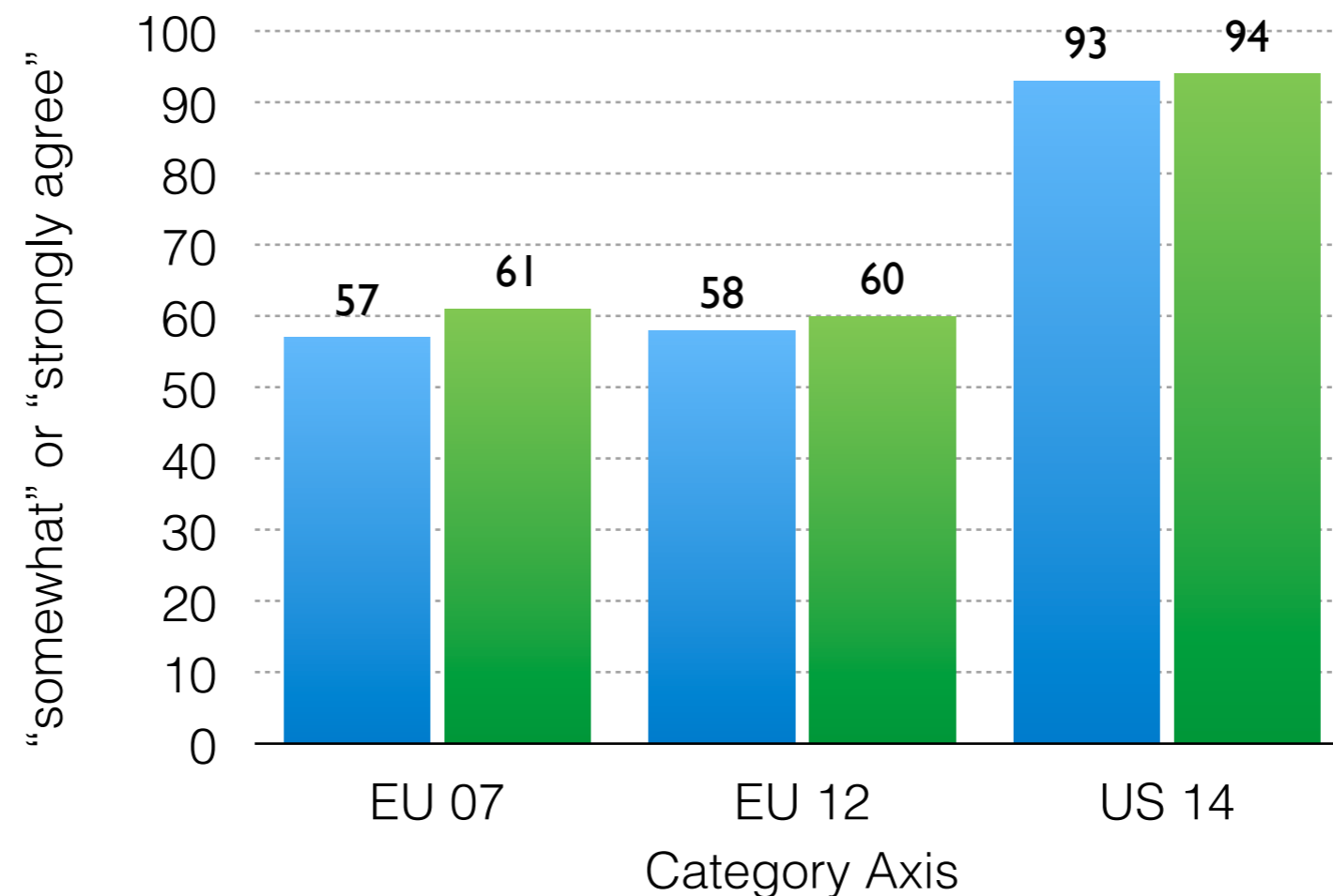
- Europe 2007: 45% (t2, 48%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 44% (t2, 48%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 89% (t2, 89%) answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs

“I believe in God”

- Europe 2007: 57% (t2, 61%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 58% (t2, 60%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 93% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs: General US Population

“Which statement comes the closest to expressing what you believe about God?”

General Social Survey 2012, Accessed thearda.com Feb 22, 2017

Age (I-AGE)

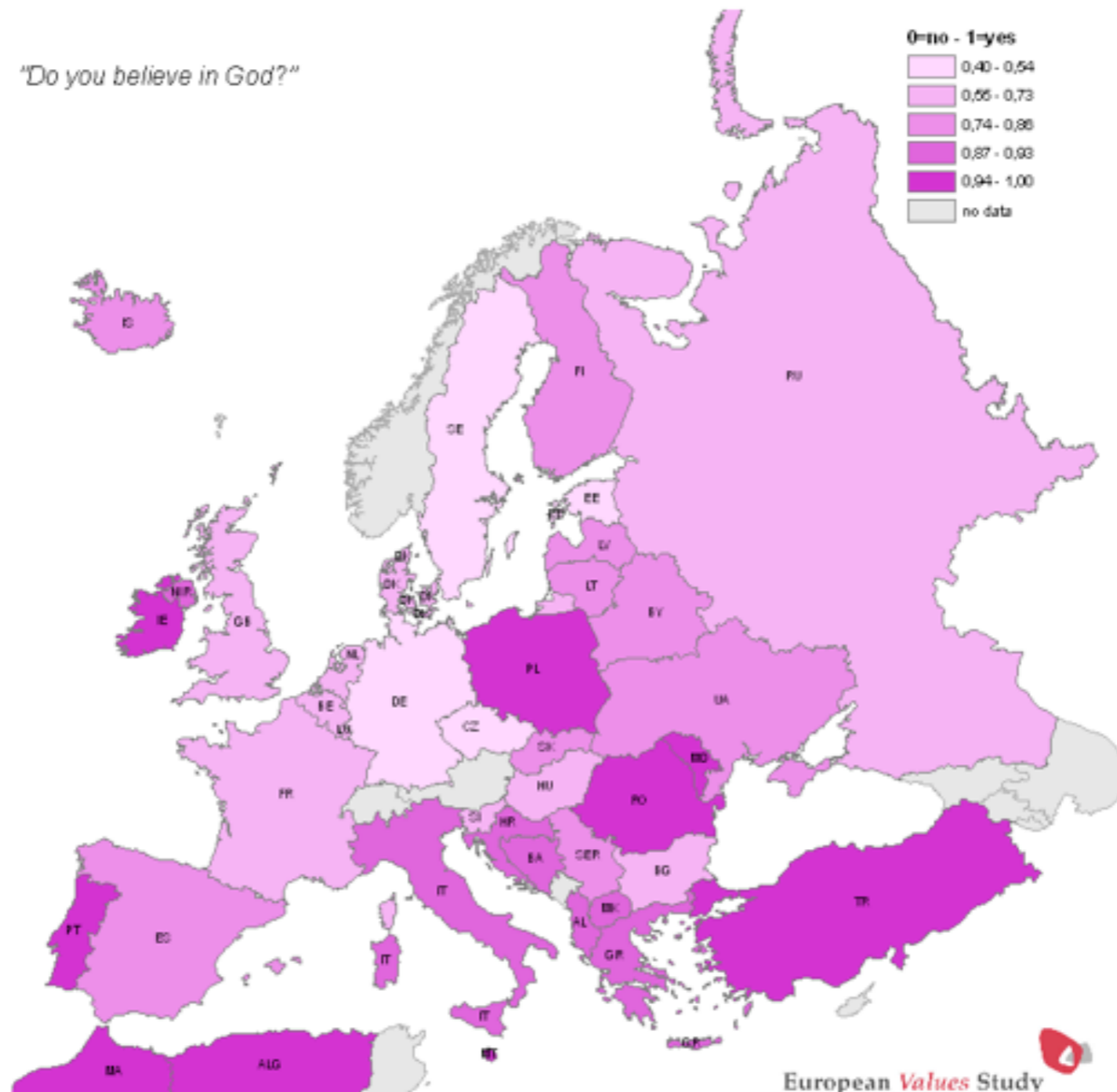
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75 or older
I don't believe in God	5.1% 34	3.7% 49	3.0% 41	4.2% 43	1.4% 6
I don't know whether there is a God, and I don't believe there is any way to find out	8.8% 59	5.5% 73	5.0% 67	5.2% 53	3.6% 15
I don't believe in a personal God, but do believe in a Higher Power of some kind	15.1% 101	12.7% 167	9.2% 124	10.0% 102	7.9% 33
I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others	5.5% 37	3.6% 47	4.2% 57	3.8% 39	3.8% 16
While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	20.7% 138	15.8% 208	16.1% 217	16.2% 165	14.7% 61
I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it	44.3% 296	58.1% 766	62.0% 837	59.9% 610	66.8% 278
Don't know	0.3% 2	0.4% 5	0.3% 4	0.1% 1	0.2% 1
No answer	0.1% 1	0.2% 3	0.1% 2	0.5% 5	1.4% 6
TOTAL	100.0% 668	100.0% 1318	100.0% 1349	100.0% 1018	100.0% 416

Comparison of Beliefs: General European Population

“Do you believe in God?”

European Values Study 1999-2004,

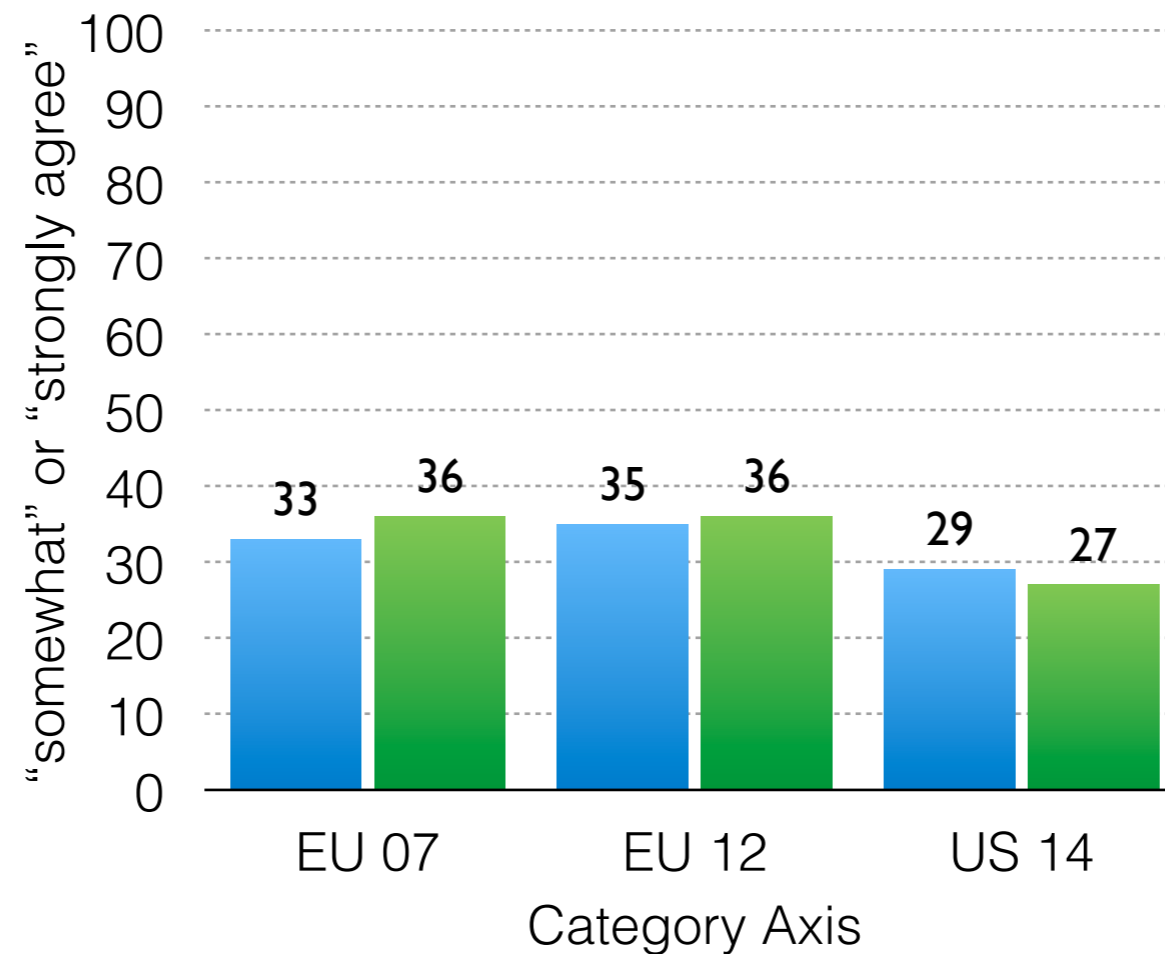
<http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/lesmateriaal.php>, Accessed Feb 22, 2017



Comparison of Beliefs

“I am insecure [unsure] about what I believe”

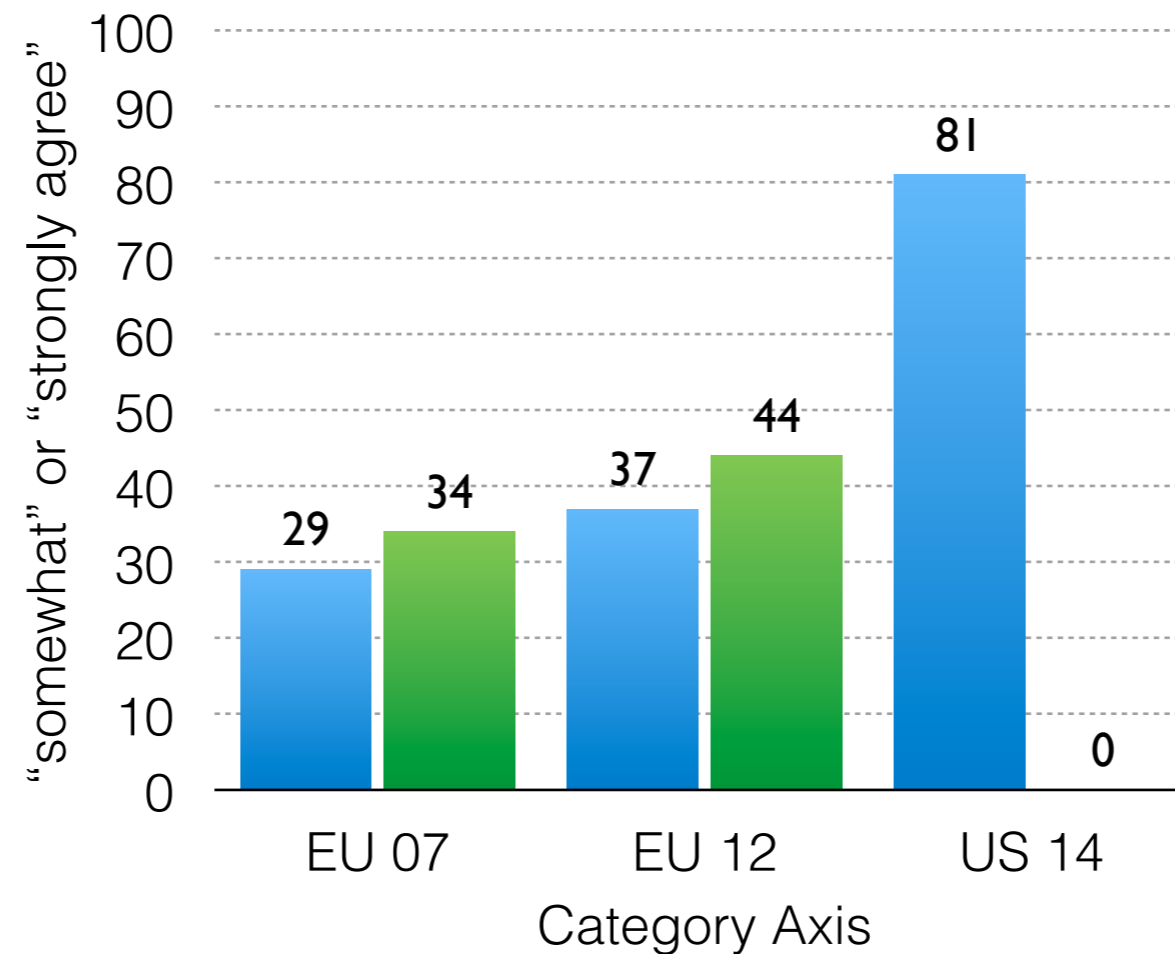
- Europe 2007: 33% (t2, 36%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 35% (t2, 36%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 29% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs

“Faith in God helps me in difficult situations”

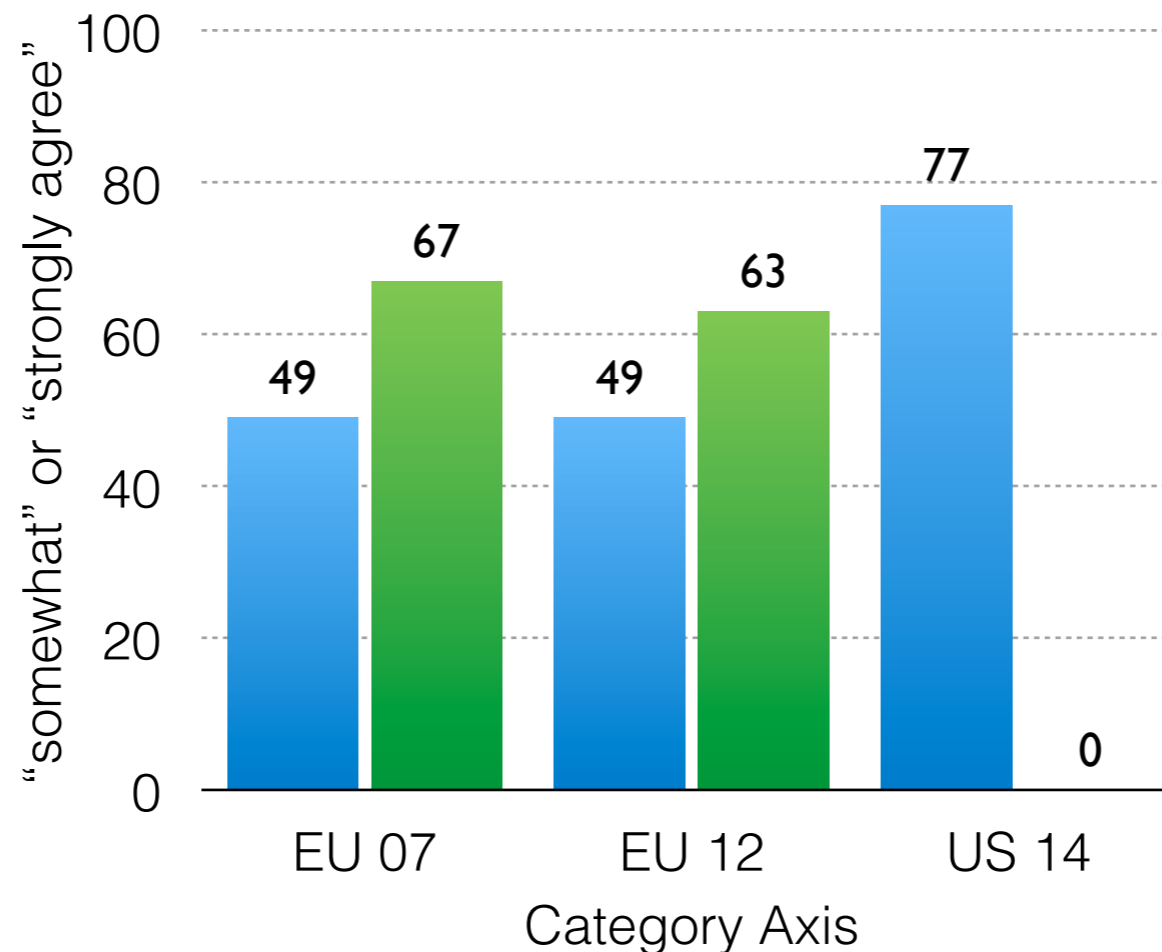
- Europe 2007: 29% (t2, 34%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 37% (t2, 44%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 81% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



Comparison of Beliefs

“I know what the Christian faith entails” European
“I know [what it means to be a Christian]” US

- Europe 2007: 49% (t2, 67%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- Europe 2012: 49% (t2, 63%) answered 5, 6, or 7, based on a 7 point scale
- US 2014/15: 77% answered 4 or 5 based on a 5 point scale



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