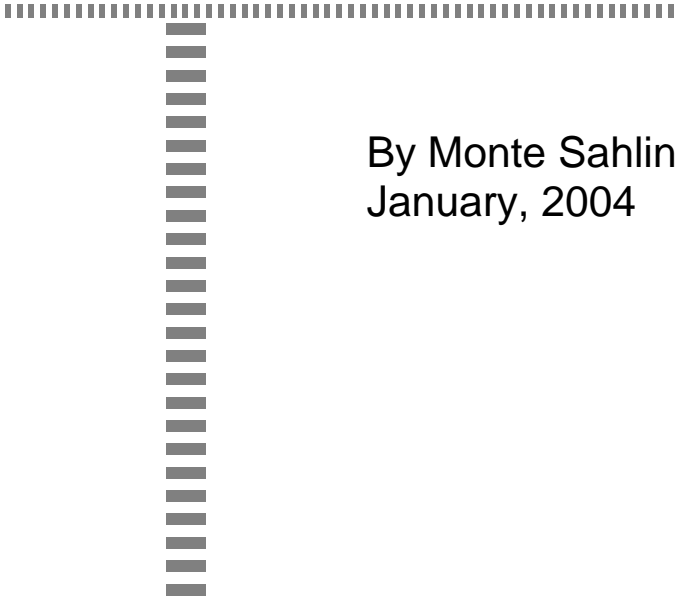




Research Report

Secondary Education Survey for the New Jersey Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church



By Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson
January, 2004

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Design of the questionnaire and data collection were done in collaboration with the members of the survey committee of the New Jersey Conference Christian Education Commission.

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Executive Summary

A study has been conducted for the New Jersey Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in collaboration with the Christian Education Commission. The research was conducted among parents who currently have or have had (in the past) secondary-school aged young people, about half who attend Adventist schools and half public schools. The purpose is to assess attitudes toward the Adventist secondary education system.

In a previous study in 2001, the Center for Creative Ministry conducted a total of 276 random telephone interviews among conference families with school-age children. The focus of that study was Christian education more broadly, while this new study seeks to build on the previous survey with specific goal of understanding the attitudes toward boarding and day academies.

In order to get the views of the church members most directly impacted, the survey committee decided to conduct a series of consumer panels. The "consumer panel" is a relatively new method of market research being used by many commercial research programs today. This method combines techniques from survey research and focus group research. The Center for Creative Ministry has had success in using this method with other church-related organizations.

Eight consumer panels were conducted in November 2001 by members of the Christian Education Commission and conference staff. The locations were Delaware Valley Junior Academy, Garden State Academy, Lake Nelson School, Maranatha Spanish Church, Meadow View Junior Academy, Newark English Church, Parkway South School, and Waldwick Junior Academy. The pastors of a cluster of churches near each site were given instructions on how to randomly select and recruit participants. Every church in the New Jersey Conference was included in one of the eight clusters.

A total of 240 church members were invited to participate. A total of 113 individuals actually attended and returned questionnaires. This is a response rate of 47% which is well within the usual standards for survey research. At the 95th percentile of reliability, the standard allowance for sampling error in a study of this size is ten percentage points, plus or minus. Additional information about probability and sampling is included in the Technical Appendix.

Monte Sahlin, vice president of the Columbia Union Conference, assisted the Christian Education Commission in the development of the instrument used in this study. Together with Paul Richardson, executive director of the Center for

Creative Ministry, he developed the design for the consumer panels and guidelines for those conducting the panels. Center staff complete the data processing, prepared the graphics and this report. Sahlin wrote this narrative report.

Cultural Profile

From self-identification of the participants and a count by the facilitators at each site, 69% of the church members participating in this new survey belong to English-language congregations, 24% to Spanish-language congregations and 7% from French-language congregations. (See Figure 1.) This cultural profile differs somewhat from the ethnic data gathered in the telephone survey in 2001 (Figure 2), but that does not mean there is a significant difference between the two groups of respondents.

It must be kept in mind that in essence two different questions were asked in the 2001 telephone survey and the 2003 panels. Ethnic background and language group are somewhat overlapping concepts, but not entirely the same. For example, there are church members of Hispanic ethnicity who belong to English-language congregations.

In the 2001 survey report it was noted that "three out of four of the parents interviewed belong to what is identified as an ethnic minority group in the United States. The ethnic profile of the respondents is not much different from that of the general population in New Jersey (in the 2000 census), except for the disproportionate Hispanic and 'Anglo' shares. There are three times as many Hispanics among New Jersey Conference families as in the general population, and one third as many non-Hispanic whites."

Generations and Gender

Panel participants were asked to write down their year of birth in the survey instrument. These data make it possible to identify which generation they belong to, using the standard demographic reference. (*American Generations* by Susan Mitchell, 2002, New Strategist Publications, Ithaca NY)

Half of the parents participating in the panels are in the Baby Boom generation, born from 1946 through 1964 and 40 to 58 years of age in 2004. (See Figure 3.) This is the dominate adult segment in America today and it is no surprise that the largest number of New Jersey Conference parents of secondary students come from this generation.

A quarter of the parents in the panels (26%) are over 58 years of age. This is due, in part, to the fact that some participants were included by design who have had children in secondary school in the past few years, but do not currently have children of that age. Obviously, these individuals tend to be somewhat older than parents of younger teens. In some cases the "parent" is actually a grandparent who is raising a grand child. And there are a growing number of Americans who have babies later in life or marry younger spouses.

About a quarter of the parents (24%) are from the Baby Bust generation (widely called "Gen X"), born from 1965 through 1976 and 28 through 39 years of age in 2004. A few of the respondents are just a little younger and have been lumped together with this generation in part because of the fact that demographic experts disagree on where to draw the line at the end of Gen X and the beginning of the succeeding Millennial generation.

A little more than half of the parents included in the panels are women, while 46% are men. (See Figure 4.) This is very close to the gender balance in the general population of the State of New Jersey (2000 Census).

Level of Education

Half the panel participants (49%) have a secondary diploma, but have not completed a college degree. (See Figure 5.) Almost as many (47%) have completed a college degree and one in five have a graduate degree. This is a highly educated group who are likely to place high value on the education of their children.

These New Jersey Conference parents are significantly better educated than the average New Jersey adult. (See Figure 6.) They are 50% more likely than their neighbors to have a college education.

The 2001 survey indicated a strong correlation between education and income. The "respondents with a college degree are more likely to belong to families with an annual income of \$50,000 or more and those with a graduate degree are more likely to belong to families with an annual income of \$75,000 or more. Those with only a secondary diploma or less are more likely to be found in families with an annual income of less than \$25,000." This is consistent with general realities in America, but the socioeconomic profile of the parents interviewed in the 2001 survey is stronger in the lower middle income category than is the general population of New Jersey. (See Figure 7.) The majority of Adventist households have an income of less than \$50,000 per year.

“The share of Adventist families with incomes of \$50,000 to \$74,999 is about the same or slightly more than the general population. But among those households with incomes of \$75,000 or more the share of Adventist families is less than half the rate for New Jersey population. This paints a picture of an Adventist community just beginning to emerge from a dominantly working class position into a dominate middle class.”

These socioeconomic facts clearly frame some of the dilemmas faced by the New Jersey Conference today. Most parents in the conference are highly educated enough to be unwilling to accept anything inferior in their children’s education, while they do not really have the economic resources to pay for private schools.

Marital Status

Four out of five of the parents who participated in the panels (79%) are currently married. (See Figure 8.) Only one in ten (11%) are currently separated from their spouse or divorced and still single. About 8% have never married and 2% are widowed. This profile is not significantly different than the general population in the State of New Jersey where about 76% of parents are currently married, and one in five are single parents. (See 2000 Census.)

Number of Children at Home

The average family among the panel participants is somewhat larger than the average family with children in the State of New Jersey. The average family has 3.6 individuals compared to 3.2 individuals per family in the general population. This demographic fact would tend to provide additional potential enrollment for church schools.

More than a third of the participants (36%) report having two children still at home, while another quarter have only one child. (See Figure 9.) One in ten have three children and 7% of the families have four or more children.

About one in eight of the participants (13%) reported that all of their children are over 20 years of age, and 8% reported no children on the survey questionnaire. It was part of the research design to include both parents who have had children of secondary-school age in recent years, but do not presently have teenagers or younger children in their home, as well as grandparents who may be responsible for providing a Christian education for their grandchildren. It is also probable that at least some of the 8% who

reported no children simply did not wish to supply the information requested in the questionnaire.

Immigration

In the 2001 survey, two thirds of the respondents (68%) were born as citizens of nations other than the United States of America. "Although New Jersey has one of the highest percentages of immigrants throughout the country, this is a much higher percentage than the overall 18% of the general population in the state. It should also be noted that respondents born in Puerto Rico would not show up as immigrants in this item because they were born as American citizens."

No question about immigration was asked in the new study, but the report on the 2001 survey said, "younger parents (those under 35 years of age) are less likely to be immigrants, as are those from middle and upper middle income families (\$50,000 to \$99,999 per year). The same is true for new members baptized in the last five years. Native born parents are also more likely to have a child enrolled in an Adventist school and to plan to send their child(ren) to Garden State Academy, although they are somewhat less likely to have a high level of involvement in the Church."

"About one in five families have one spouse who is an immigrant and one that is native-born. A total of 13% of the respondents who are immigrants report that they are married to a native-born American, while 6% of the native-born respondents indicate they are married to an immigrant."

Tenure as an Adventist

Only 2% of the respondents were baptized or joined the Adventist Church by Profession of Faith during the last year. (See Figure 10.) Another 7% have been baptized Adventists for one to five years. These recent converts are more likely to be younger adults. In the 2001 survey, half of the recent converts were of Hispanic ethnic background, while a third were non-Hispanic whites. Two thirds were women. The majority were immigrants (not born as citizens of the United States), from households where the annual income is less than \$50,000 a year and have not completed a college degree.

About 7% have been baptized Adventists from six to ten years, and another one in five (22%) for eleven to 20 years. The majority of these are adults from the Baby Boom generation without a college degree who live in northern New Jersey. The 2001 survey found that most are Hispanics and from lower

middle and middle income households (\$25,000 to \$74,999 annual household income). Seven in ten are immigrants.

The majority of the panel participants have been baptized members of the Adventist Church for more than twenty years or "all of my life." Most of these are also from the Baby Boom generation and a third were born before 1946. The 2001 survey found that "a significant number are of Asian/Pacific Islander, African American and Caribbean ethnic background, while 40% are Hispanics and 21% non-Hispanic whites. The majority are from lower middle and middle income households (\$25,000 to \$74,999 annual household income), while one in five are from households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more."

Church Attendance

The participants in the new study are all active church members. Nine out of ten report that they had attended an Adventist church three or four out of the last four Sabbaths. (See Figure 11.) The 2001 survey found that "Hispanic and Caribbean respondents are even more likely than Asian/Pacific Islander and non-Hispanic white respondents to be regular church attenders. The same is true for respondents from lower middle income households (\$25,000 to \$49,999 per year) and those with less education than a secondary diploma."

The new study includes very few respondents among the less-active members. Not one panel participant indicated that he or she had not attended church in the last four Sabbaths. The few participants who had attended only one or two out of the last four Sabbaths were all Gen Xers who have been baptized members for five years or less. The 2001 survey found that "Non-Hispanic whites and African Americans are more likely to be among these less-active members, as are those from households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more."

Attendance at Adventist Schools

The majority of the parents who participated in the panel sessions (62%) have never attended an Adventist school themselves. (See Figure 12.) Young parents from Gen X, those more recently baptized and those with no college degree are more likely to give this response.

Two in five respondents (38%) have attended an Adventist school at some point during their education. Older participants are more likely to have done so than are the younger parents. (See Figure 13.) Those with a college degree

are more likely to have done so than are those with no degree. (See Figure 14.) Those living in southern and central New Jersey are more likely to have done so than those in urban, northern New Jersey. (See Figure 15.)

In the 2001 survey it was found that respondents “who have a child currently enrolled in an Adventist school are more likely to have attended Adventist schools themselves, as are those who plan to send their children to Garden State Academy. ... The same is true for parents with an African American or Asian/Pacific Islander ethnic background, while non-Hispanic whites and immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are less likely to have attended Adventist schools.”

The 2001 study also reported “a strong correlation with annual household income on this item. Respondents from families with higher incomes are more likely to have attended an Adventist school, while those from families with lower incomes are less likely to have done so.”

Children in Adventist Schools

Two in five of the families participating in the panels have at least one child enrolled in an Adventist school. (See Figure 16.) Overall 43% of the children in these homes are currently attending an Adventist school. This is a significantly greater percentage of involvement in Adventist education than reported in the 2001 survey. (See Figure 17.)

The 2001 survey found that “one in four of the families with school-age children in the New Jersey Conference have at least one child enrolled in an Adventist school. ... Overall 29% of the children in church-related homes are currently attending an Adventist school.”

This comparison provides clear evidence that the new study attracted the participation of a larger share of the church members most interested in Adventist education. The random telephone interview methodology used in the 2001 survey gave less-interested respondents less opportunity to not participate, and therefore attracted a larger share of the church members who are less interested in Adventist schools. This is an important fact to keep in mind as the opinion data is examined.

Motivations to Attend Adventist Schools

Panel participants were asked, "What are the five most important reasons for children to attend an Adventist school?" Just as in the 2001 survey, religious motivations are clearly the most prominent. (See Figure 18.)

Nine out of ten participants (92%) say, "Because of ***the spiritual emphasis.***" Almost as many (91%) select, "Parents/Guardians ***want their children to grow up as Adventist Christians.***" Panel members with a graduate degree, those who are less active in church attendance and those from southern New Jersey are more likely to express this view.

In the 2001 survey, respondents from upper middle income households (\$75,000 to \$99,999 per year) were more likely to mention spiritual emphasis. So were those with a non-Hispanic white ethnicity and those who plan to send their child(ren) to Garden State Academy. And respondents from families with annual household incomes of \$75,000 were more likely to say, "I want my child to grow up as a Christian" or "as an Adventist." The same was true of native-born church members, those with non-Hispanic white and African American ethnic backgrounds, those who attended an Adventist school when they were young and respondents who plan to send their child(ren) to Garden State Academy.

Nearly three out of four participants (72%) give ***Bible classes*** as one of the most important reasons for children to attend an Adventist school. Recent converts are significantly more likely to select this response, as are less-active church members. The 2001 survey had similar findings.

The majority of participants (56%) also indicate that "excellent ***academic quality***" is a major reason why parents enroll their children in Adventist schools. Less-active church members are more likely to express this view, while those who currently have a child enrolled in an Adventist school are less likely to do so. In the 2001 survey, non-Hispanic whites and native-born church members were more likely to give this response.

Spirituality, religion and academic excellence are the motivations that a majority of church members recognize for Adventist schools. The eight other items on the list were selected by only a third or less of the participants. (See Figure 19.)

A third of the panel participants (35%) say one of the most important reasons for children to attend an Adventist school is its location "***within commuter***

distance." Gen X parents and those with a college degree are more likely to have this opinion.

Nearly a third of the panel participants (31%) see "the *pastor encourages parents to do so*" as an important reason why children choose to attend an Adventist school. Single parents are more likely to express this opinion, while those with a college degree and those who attended an Adventist school themselves are significantly less likely to do so.

More than one in four participants (28%) indicate that the fact that "the *parents ... attended Adventist schools*" is an important reason why children attend Adventist schools. Those who attended Adventist schools as a child, those who are 60 years of age or older, and those who live in central New Jersey are more likely to select this item, while those from northern New Jersey are significantly less likely to do so.

Only one in four participants (26%) mention "*reasonable cost*" as an important reason why parents decide to send their children to an Adventist school. Parents from central New Jersey are more likely to express this view, while those from southern New Jersey and those 60 years of age and older are less likely to do so.

Less than one in five participants (18%) say that *financial aid* is an important motivational element when parents decide to send their children to Adventist schools. Less-active church members and single parents are more likely to see this as an important motivator.

Just one in eight participants (13%) report that the *support and encouragement of grandparents* and other relatives is an important reason for some families in the decision to put their children in an Adventist school. Those from southern New Jersey, those 60 year of age and older, and those with graduate degrees are more likely to express this view.

Almost the same number of participants (12%) say that a *visit to the family from a teacher* or other representative of the school is an important motivational factor. Recent converts are more likely to select this factor.

The percentage of respondents selecting each item in the new survey is consistently greater than in the 2001 survey, but the rank order of responses is the same. This provides significant validation for the findings. The difference in the strength of the responses is largely related to the somewhat different methods used in the two surveys to administer the same basic question. In the

2003 survey, respondents were told to select five items from a printed list while in the 2001 survey, interviewers asked the question in an open-ended fashion and respondents had to come up with the responses on their own. The interviewers listened and made notes on a check-list without reading the list. The respondents were not told how many items to select, although multiple items were checked when mentioned.

Motivations to Not Attend Adventist Schools

Panel participants were asked, "What are the most significant reasons why some children in your local church are not attending an Adventist school?" The most common response is the inability of parents to afford the cost. (See Figure 20.) Again, this is the same finding as in the 2001 survey.

One in seven participants (86%) say the most significant reasons why some children in their local church are not attending an Adventist school is the ***inability of families to afford the cost***. Those who are less active in church attendance are more likely to express this view. The 2001 survey found "a strong correlation between this response and annual household income. The higher the income of the family, the less likely it is that this response is given. [And] immigration has an even stronger correlation with ... lack of finances as a reason for not enrolling one's child in an Adventist school. Church members born outside the U.S. are twice as likely to give this response as are native-born respondents."

Four out of five participants (82%) say one of the most significant reasons why children are not attending is that "the ***Adventist school is too far away***." Those who have joined the church in the last five years are more likely to select this reason, while those 60 years of age and older and less-active church members are less likely to do so. Again, the 2001 survey had similar findings.

A third of the panel participants (32%) listed "***poor academic quality***" as an important reason why children are not attending Adventist schools. Gen X participants, those with a college degree and those who have joined the church in the last five years are more likely to have this opinion, and those 60 years of age and older are significantly less likely to do so. The 2001 survey found that, "parents from middle income households (\$50,000 to \$74,999 per year) are more likely to mention this item."

One in four participants (26%) say that a significant reason why children in their church are attending is because "the ***Adventist school does not offer the***

type of course needed." Those with graduate degrees are more likely to mention this item.

Only one in five participants (21%) indicate that "non-member *spouse will not allow it*" is a significant reason why some children in their church are not attending an Adventist school. Those who have joined the church in the last five years are more than twice as likely to mention this item. Less active church members, those with graduate degrees and those in central New Jersey are also more likely to express this view.

Only one in ten participants (11%) report that some children are not attending Adventist schools because "The Adventist *school is not spiritual enough.*" Those 60 years of age and older are more likely to report this negative motivation, as are those with graduate degrees.

Just 7% of the panel participants say, "There is *no room in the Adventist school* for all the students who want to attend." This appears to be true only in central New Jersey and may, in fact be true in only one or two schools or even just a few classrooms in those schools that are over-crowded.

Again, as in the previous question, the percentage of respondents selecting each item in the new survey is consistently greater than in the 2001 survey, but the rank order of responses is the same. This provides significant validation for the findings. An explanation of the difference in the strength of the responses is given on pages 10 and 11.

Secondary Education Needs

Panel participants were asked to indicate which alternative best meets the needs of their own family for secondary education. They were told to select only one answer among six listed in the questionnaire. All but four of the participants choose one of the listed options. (See Figure 21.)

Only **10% want a boarding academy** to meet the needs of their children. All of the participants who gave this response are over 50 years of age; three out of four are 60 years of age or older.

Half the respondents (**49.5%**) **want a day academy** for their children. There is a strong negative correlation with this item and the age of the participants; the younger the participant is, the more likely they are to select this option.

About one in six participants (**17%**) *want both* a boarding academy and a day academy to meet the different needs of their children. In other words, they have at least one child who they want to send to boarding academy and at least one other child they want to enroll in a day academy. Or, perhaps they have planned with their child for he or she to spend part of their secondary years in a day academy and part in a boarding academy. Participants from southern New Jersey are more likely to pick this option.

Another **17%** say, *"It doesn't matter* as long as my children are in an Adventist school." They would be equally happy if the New Jersey Conference continued to provide a boarding academy or developed a system of day academies instead. Members who have joined the church in the last five years and less-active members are more likely to express this opinion.

Just 4% of the participants selected, "None of the above." It is not clear what option they prefer, perhaps they do not intend to enroll their children in an Adventist secondary school under any circumstances.

A few participants (2%) say, "I don't know." It is likely that they feel they do not know enough about the issues involved to make a choice.

Interest in Boarding School Experience

Panel participants were asked directly, "Is a boarding academy experience for your children of any interest to you?" (See Figure 22.) The largest number, two in five (41%) say, "No." There is a definite negative correlation on this item with how long a person has been a baptized member of the church; more recent converts are more likely to say, "No." Participants from central New Jersey are also more likely to say, "No." So are single parents and those without a college degree.

A third of the participants (34%) indicate, "Yes" they are interested in a boarding academy for their children. Nearly half of these respondents are 60 years of age or older. Those with a graduate degree are also more likely to give this response, as are those from southern New Jersey, those who attended an Adventist school when they were children, and those who have been church members for more than 20 years.

One in four participants say, "Maybe" they would be interested in a boarding academy experience. When these responses are added to the 34% who give a definite, "Yes," there is the potential that a majority of parents could be convinced to send a child to boarding academy, although the probability is

low. Participants with a college degree and those who have been baptized church members for six to 20 years are more likely to say, "Maybe."

Planning to Send Child to GSA

Panel participants were also asked directly, "Do you plan to send your children to Garden State Academy?" (See Figure 23.) The largest number (38%) are undecided at this time. Those parents who are younger than 40 are more likely to give this answer, while those who are 60 years of age and older are less likely to do so.

A third of the participants (35%) say, "No." They have already decided that they are not sending their children to GSA no matter what decisions are made by the New Jersey Conference. Residents of southern and central New Jersey are more likely to express this view.

Only a quarter of the participants (27%) say, "Yes." They plan to send their children to GSA and in some cases they are already doing so. More likely to be found among these respondents are parents 60 years of age and older, those with a graduate degree and those living in northern New Jersey.

The portion of respondents planning to send their children to GSA has declined since the 2001 survey, when 32% said, "Yes." (See Figure 24.) The portion who have decided not send their children to GSA has also declined. It appears that a significant number of parents have moved into the undecided segment which was only 21% in the 2001 survey.

Prefer Teens to Live at Home

Two thirds of the panel participants (65%) believe that "children of academy age should be with their parents, not at boarding academy." (See Figure 25.) Less-active church members and those who have been more recently baptized are more likely to have this attitude. The same is true for residents of southern New Jersey and single parents. Those who disagree are more likely to be older parents and grandparents and respondents with graduate degrees.

In the 2001 survey just 55% expressed this view, so there is a growing trend toward this opinion. This may be evidence of a generational shift which decreases both the need and support for boarding schools.

Believe Adventist Schools are Different

Six out of seven panel participants (86%) believe that there is a significant difference between Adventist schools and public schools. Only 13% agree that there is “no significant difference between Adventist education and public school education in New Jersey.” (See Figure 26.) Only single parents are somewhat more likely to say there is no difference.

Participants who currently have children enrolled in Adventist schools are more likely to say there is a real difference between church schools and public schools. The same is true for recent converts, residents of southern New Jersey, older participants and those with a graduate degree.

The Need for More Financial Aid

Nine out of ten panel participants (92%) say that, “A way must be found to provide more financial aid so more students can afford to attend Adventist schools.” (See Figure 27.) Only 6% disagree. Older parents, those with graduate degrees, residents of central New Jersey and those who attended Adventist schools themselves are more likely to see a need for more financial assistance. Parents in Gen X are somewhat less likely to agree.

In the 2001 survey, financial assistance emerged as a major issue and the same percentage of respondents agreed with this item. All demographic segments were strong on this opinion, although non-Hispanic whites and African Americans were somewhat less likely to agree, as were respondents from upper middle income households (\$50,000 to \$99,999 per year).

The Need for Transportation

Nine out of ten panel participants also see transportation for students as a key issue for Christian education in New Jersey. They believe that “a way must be found to provide transportation so more children can attend Adventist schools.” (See Figure 28.) Again, all demographic segments are strong in holding this view, with less-active church members, recent converts and single parents even more likely to see this need.

The response was similar in the 2001 survey. In that study, the wealthiest parents—those from households with annual incomes of \$100,000 or more—were somewhat less likely to agree, and the same was true in the 2003 study for panel participants with higher education, which is often related to higher-paying jobs.

Willingness to Sacrifice for Christian Education

Each panel participant was asked in the questionnaire, "How much of a sacrifice are you willing to make to have your child attend an Adventist school?" There were six possible answers. (See Figure 29.)

The majority of the parents are willing to sacrifice in order to pay the price for a Christian education. Two in five (39%) say they will do "whatever it takes," while nearly another fifth (18%) say they are willing to make "a significant financial sacrifice" to put their children in an Adventist school.

Participants from southern and central New Jersey are more likely to be willing to sacrifice, as are those who have attended Adventist schools. Both those 60 years of age and older, and Gen X respondents (under 40) are more likely to say they will sacrifice, while Baby Boomers are less likely to agree.

Another two in five of the parents are willing to do only "what we can afford" (28%) or "some sacrifice" (13%) in order to place their children in an Adventist school. These percentages are consistent throughout all demographic segments of the panel participants. The 2001 survey found that those with less education and those from lower-income families are more likely to give these responses.

Only 1% of the participants say they are unwilling to make any sacrifice to place their children in Adventist schools. Twice that number indicate that they would not put their children in an Adventist School no matter how little it cost. Obviously, they have issues other than finances that drive their attitude.

The responses in the 2001 survey and the 2001 study are not significantly different, except that the panels seem to have attracted participants that are, on the whole, somewhat more dedicated than those interviewed by telephone in 2001. The consistent results lend significant validity to the attitudes expressed about willingness to sacrifice.

How Much Should the Parents Pay?

In order to understand more clearly what the willingness of parents to sacrifice means for the economics of secondary education in the New Jersey Conference, in the new study the panel participants were asked to write down very specific dollar amounts that parents should pay toward their children's education. "It currently costs about \$8,000 per year (\$800 for 10 months) to deliver Adventist education to each secondary student (not

including lodging and meals). How much should be charged to the family as tuition?" (See Figure 30.)

Responses ranged from as little as \$150 per month to as much as \$1,000 per month. The median response is \$400 per month or just half the total cost. Two fifths of the participants (38%) did not answer this question.

Nearly a third of the participants (29%) say that families should be expected to pay \$400 to \$500 per month in tuition for secondary school. This is about half the cost, and the other half would need to be funded by the Church. Participants who have been church members for more than 20 years and those 60 years of age or older are more likely to give this response.

One in five participants indicate that the parents should pay less than half the cost of secondary education, or \$150 to \$350 of the \$800 per month cost. Participants under 60 years of age, those who have been baptized members for less than 20 years and single parents are more likely to give responses in this range.

Just 13% of the panel participants believe that tuition should cover significantly more than half the cost of secondary education, or more than \$500 per month. Those who have attended an Adventist school, those with a graduate degree and participants from southern New Jersey are more likely to mention amounts in this range.

If the non-responding participants are removed from the equation (on the assumption that if there had answered the question, their responses would have fallen into the same proportions as those who did), then there is a clear majority who believe that families should be expected to pay only half or less of the cost of secondary education. Considering the small size of the Adventist membership in the New Jersey Conference and the economic context, is this a feasible consensus? Do these data indicate that study should be given to some kind of sliding scale tuition based on household income? (This is a payment model widely used in health care, especially for mental health services.)

How Much are You Able to Pay?

A more personal follow-up question was asked of the panel participants in order to glean even more specific information about the economics of secondary education in the New Jersey Conference. "How much are you able to pay for each of your children?" Participants were asked to write down

in the questionnaire a specific dollar amount either per year or per month. (We have converted all the responses to a monthly figure by dividing the annual amounts by ten as specified in the previous question. See Figure 31.)

Responses ranged from as little as \$120 per month to as much as \$1,000 per month. The median response is \$400 per month again. Two fifths of the participants did not answer this question.

A quarter of the participants (26%) say that they can pay tuition in the range of only \$200 to \$399 per month, or less than half the cost. Church members who were baptized in the last 20 years are more likely to give responses in this range, as are those under 40 years of age, and those who have attended an Adventist school themselves.

Another 23% of the participants report that they can pay tuition of \$400 to \$699 per month, or about half the cost. Participants with a college degree, those 60 years of age and older, and single parents are more likely to give responses in this range.

Just 8% of the participants indicate that they can pay \$700 or more per month in tuition, or essentially the full cost of secondary education. Those who have attended an Adventist school and those from southern New Jersey are more likely to say they can pay a full tuition.

Only 3% of the participants are able to pay tuition of less than \$200 per month, the smallest amount being \$120 per month. Less-active church members are more likely to give responses in this range. Undoubtedly some of these cases are related to family income, an item that was not asked about in the 2003 study. This 3% of the families make up the most likely target group for a student aid plan above and beyond the institutional subsidies provided by the church for its schools. If the non-responses are removed from the equation, it effectively doubles this portion to about 6% or 7% of the constituency.

Interest in Day Academy—Grades 9-10

More than three out of four panel participants (77%) indicate that if Grades 9 and 10 were offered at a church school near them, they would send their children. (See Figure 32.) Those who currently have children attending Adventist schools, as well as the less-active church members, are more likely to be positive about this possibility.

Almost another one in five participants (18%) indicate that they are not sure if they would send their children, at least at the time of the panel sessions in November, 2003. Single parents are more likely to give this response, perhaps because it may require more complicated re-arrangements in schedule and logistics for them.

Only 5% of the participants say they would not send their children to Grades 9 and 10 at a nearby church school. All of these respondents are over 40 years of age and may not, in fact, currently have children in Grades 9 and 10.

Interest in Day Academy—Grades 11-12

Almost the same number of panel participants (76%) would send their children if Grades 11 and 12 were offered at a church school near them. (See Figure 33.) Those who currently have children attending Adventist schools are more likely to say they would do so.

Again, another one in five participants (19%) say they are not sure if they would send their children. And, again, single parents are more likely to give this response.

Only 5% of the participants say they would not send their children to Grades 9 and 10 at a nearby church school. These are the same respondents, all over 40 years of age, who indicated that they would not send their children to a day academy for Grades 9 and 10.

Based on the assumption that there are about 1,258 families of active members in the New Jersey Conference who have school-age children (as presented in the report on the 2001 survey), this 5% means that there about 63 families in the conference who do not want to send their children to a day academy even if it is available. These represent the core need for a boarding academy experience within the constituency.

Day Academy Options

To explore more fully what the response might be if the secondary education program of the New Jersey Conference were to include a system of day academies, several "what if" questions were asked about various options or alternative way of developing such an approach. First, "Would you send your children to a day academy with a less comprehensive program (i.e., few course offerings beyond the minimum required; few, if any, enrichment courses; few extra-curricular activities, etc.) that would have a **lower** tuition

rate than a typical boarding academy?" Panel participants were asked on the questionnaire to "circle the one response that comes closest to your feeling," and given four choices; "Yes, definitely ... Yes, maybe ... Probably not [and] Definitely not." (See Figure 34.)

The majority of the participants (58%) say they would "probably not" or "definitely not" send their children to a day academy that they believed to be down-graded from the quality of program offered at most boarding academies. About 29% of the responses are in each of the two negative categories. Less-active church members are more likely to give one of these responses, as are those 60 years of age and older, and those baptized in the last five years.

Two in five participants—19% "definitely" and 23% "maybe"—say they would send their children to a day academy even if its program were less robust than what is usually offered at a boarding academy. Participants from central and southern New Jersey were more likely to indicate support for this approach.

Combined with the strong support for day academies over boarding academies indicated in their responses to other questions, this item clearly indicates that the majority of participants are not prepared to accept what they perceive as an inferior program. They want a strong day academy experience.

Day Academy Options—Correspondence

One way to make a small enrollment more feasible in secondary education is to use curriculum resources such as those provided by Home Study International. If resources of this kind are used, then a very small faculty can be used in a small secondary school because it is not necessary to have certified instructors in all of the various subjects. This greatly reduces the cost of secondary education, while providing fully accredited secondary courses.

To test this option, participants were asked, "Would you be interested in considering a **correspondence** program (approximately \$3,000 per year)? This program combines class instruction with classes taken by correspondence during the regular school day; correspondence assignments are submitted and graded via the mail."

Seven in ten participants indicate they would "probably not" or "definitely not" be interested in this approach. (See Figure 35.) Participants from northern

New Jersey, those under 40 years of age, and those who have been baptized church members for six to 20 years are all more likely to reject this approach.

Less than a third of the participants have any interest in using the secondary education program offered by Home Study International or similar providers; 23% say “maybe” and only 7% give a definite “yes.” All demographic segments are about equally unlikely to be interested in this approach.

Americans have a long-established bias against “correspondence courses.” This has been built up through many years of widely advertized scam operations, and probably keeps most people from seriously considering the benefits of the high-quality, fully-accredited programs such as Home Study International. For whatever reasons, this appears to be a non-starter for the New Jersey Conference constituents.

Day Academy Options—Distance Learning

Another way to make small secondary schools less costly and more feasible is to use new technology to link teachers with multiple locations. Video conferencing and similar tools can enable a teacher to be shared by several small classrooms across a wide geographic area. For example, Richmond Adventist Academy was able to begin operation in part because the state of Virginia offers a secondary curriculum for small, rural high schools via a satellite network. The North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a similar experimental project underway.

To test this option, participants were asked, “Would you be interested in considering a ***distance-learning*** program (approximately \$5,000 per year)? This program includes a live, interactive broadcast in which your child speaks directly to the teacher via a television monitor and computer; assignments are submitted and graded via the Internet. This program employs only NAD-certified teachers.”

The majority of the participants say they are “probably not” or “definitely not” interested in this approach. (See Figure 36.) Participants from southern New Jersey, those over 60 years of age, and those who have been baptized church members for less than 20 years are all more likely to reject this approach.

About 41% of the participants do have an interest in using distance learning technology to support small secondary schools in the New Jersey Conference; 34% say “maybe” and 5% give a definite “yes.” Participants with

a college degree—especially those who also have a graduate degree—and those under 40 years of age are more likely to have an interest in this approach.

Another way of looking at these data is to observe that two-thirds of the participants are in the middle; 34% say “maybe” they would be interested in distance-learning and 33% say “probably not,” but that leaves open the possibility that they might become interested with more information. It is interesting that some of the demographic segments more likely to be interested in distance learning are also those more likely to be up on new technologies. This approach need not be ruled out without further investigation.

General Direction for Secondary Education

One question asked of the panel participants in the questionnaire was designed to measure opinion regarding the strategic choices which the Christian Education Commission is considering. The participants were asked, “Which of the following statements best expresses your opinion?” And they were asked to “check only *one* answer.” (See Figure 37.)

The largest number of participants (35%) express the view that, “The needs of most families would best be met if the New Jersey Conference put its limited funds into a system of local day academies.” This is consistent with the interest in day academies expressed in several other items in this survey. Participants from central New Jersey and those who have been baptized members for six to 20 years are more likely to hold this view.

The smallest number of participants (7%) believe, “The only way we can afford to provide secondary education in the New Jersey Conference is by operating one boarding academy for the entire conference.” All of these respondents are over 40 years of age, and most have graduate degrees and are from southern New Jersey.

A third of the participants (34%) say, “Some families need a boarding academy and others need local day academies. The New Jersey Conference must provide both.” Single parents are more likely to be in this “both/and” segment of opinion.

About once in seven participants (14%) are of the opinion that, “Some families need a boarding academy and others need local day academies. The New Jersey Conference can provide for those who need a boarding academy by

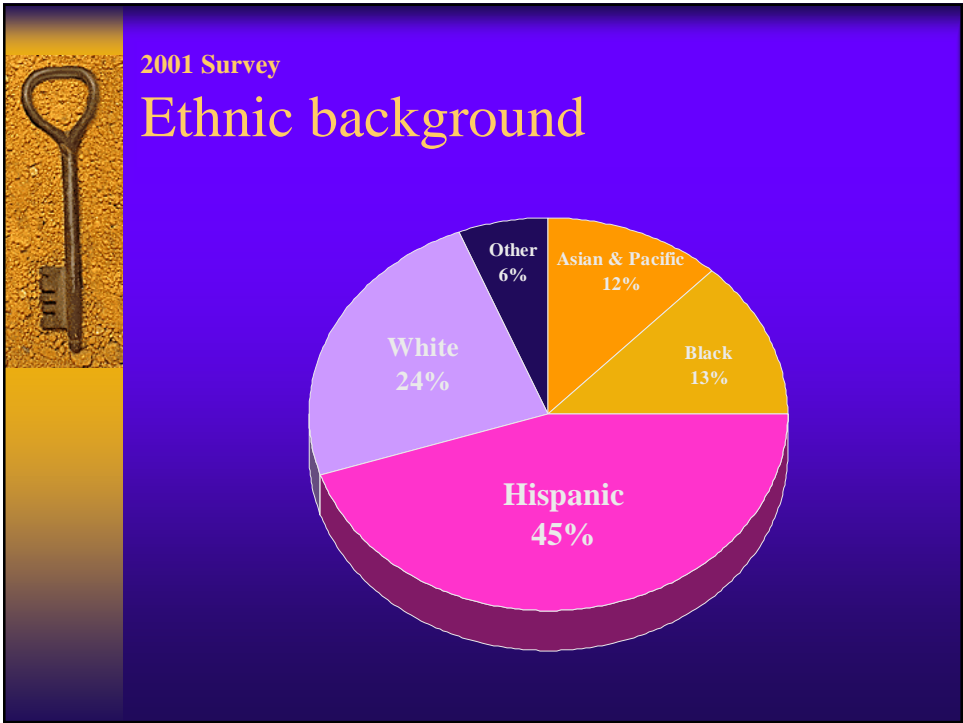
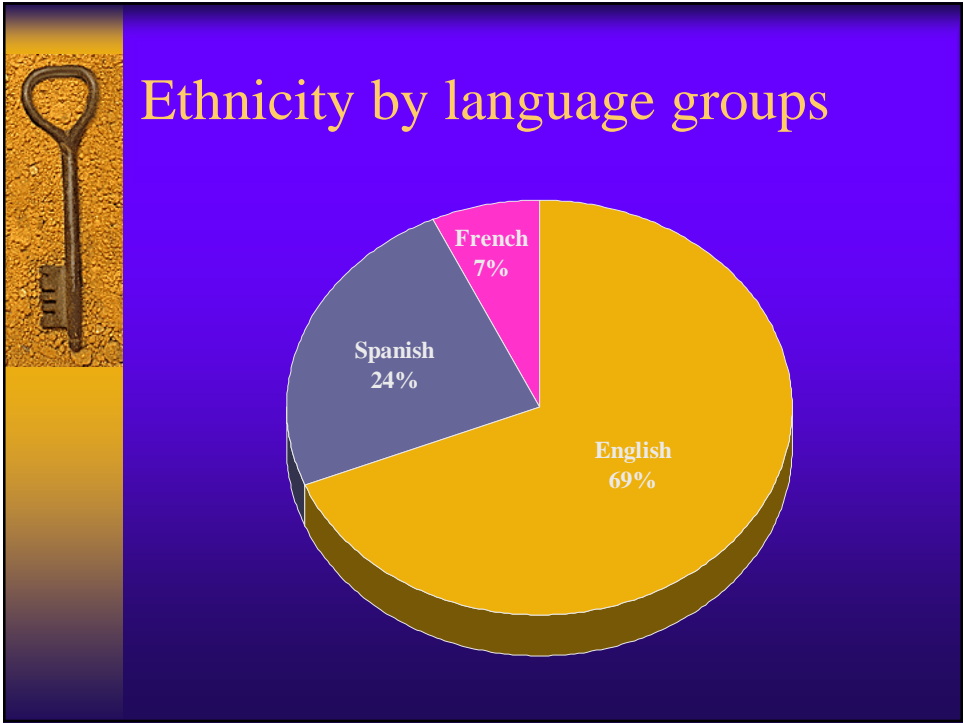
providing assistance for them to send their children to a boarding academy in a nearby conference." Single parents and participants with a college degree are more likely to express this view.

The remaining one in ten would not express an opinion on this question; 9% selected the item, "I have no opinion on this question." And 1% simply did not mark a response at all. Less-active church members, recent converts and participants under 40 years of age are more likely to be in this segment. They may feel unprepared to express themselves on such a complicated and consequential question.

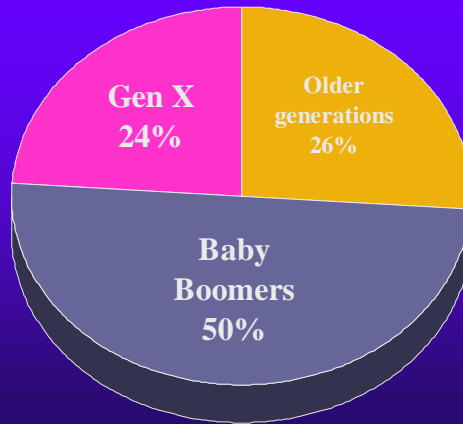
There is another way to look at these data by reducing them to fewer choices. The 35% who want the New Jersey Conference to "put its limited funds into a system of local day academies" can easily be combined with the 14% who say the New Jersey Conference "can provide for those who need a boarding academy by providing assistance for them to send their children to a boarding academy in a nearby conference," while developing day academies for those who need them. This totals nearly half (49%) of the participants in the panel sessions. If two out of the ten percent who are undecided were to embrace these views, then a majority would exist for an approach that combines developing day academies within the conference and a program to subsidize those who need a boarding academy experience at nearby schools.

In the same way, the 7% who believe the only way New Jersey Conference "can afford to provide secondary education ... is by operating one boarding academy" can be combined with the 34% who believe that the conference needs to provide "both ... a boarding academy and ... day academies." This means that fully 41% of the participants support the continued operation of a boarding academy.

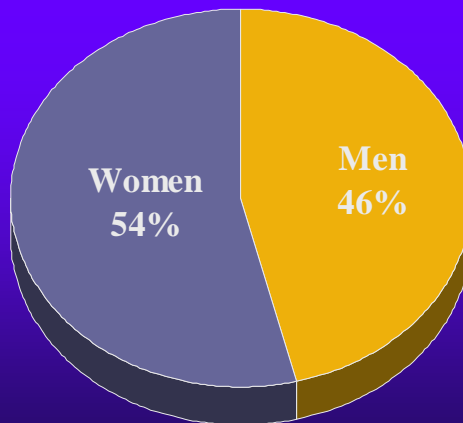
In fact, the overwhelming first priority of the panel participants is the development of several day academies throughout the conference. When the 35% who say "the New Jersey Conference [should] put its limited funds into a system of local day academies," and the 34% who believe that the conference needs to provide "both ... a boarding academy and ... day academies," are combined with the 14% who say the conference "can provide for those who need a boarding academy by providing assistance for them to send their children to a boarding academy in a nearby conference," while developing day academies, fully 83% of the participants want the development of day academies.

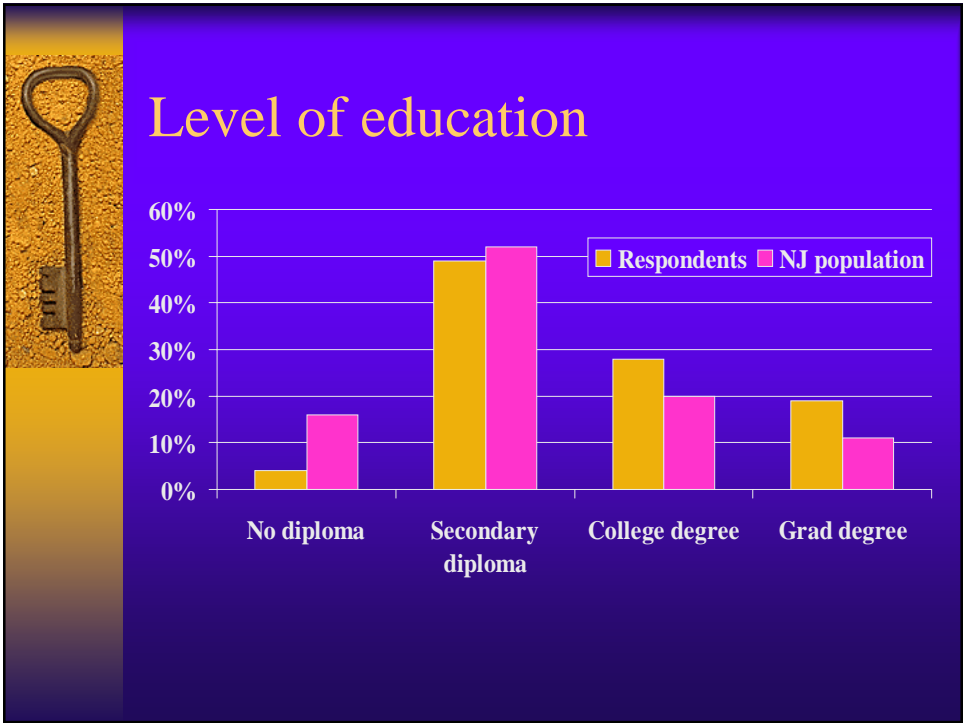
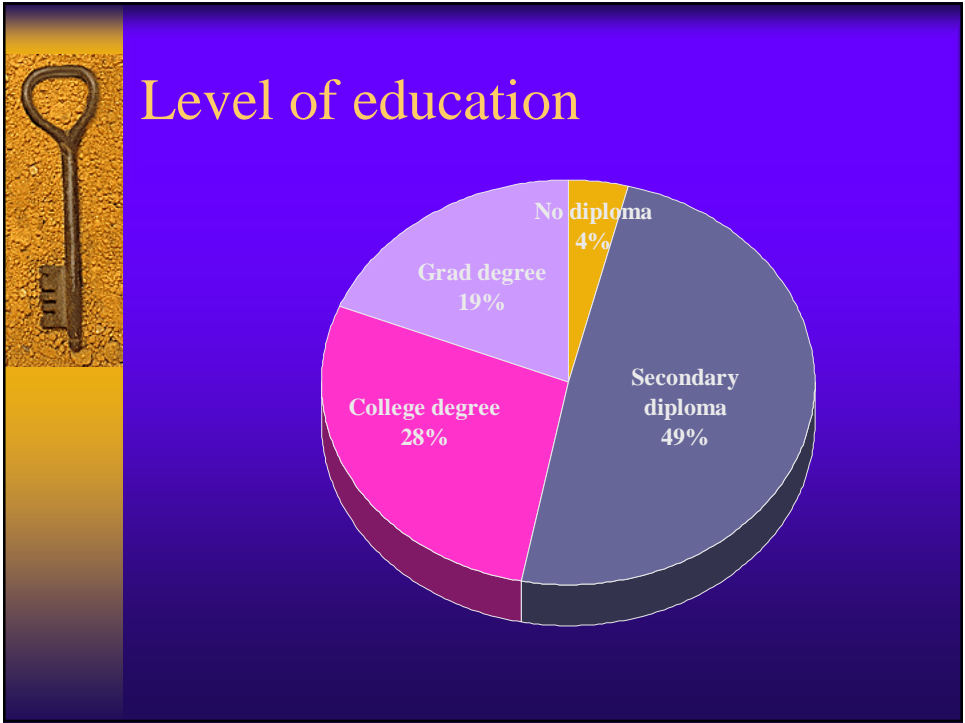


Age by generations



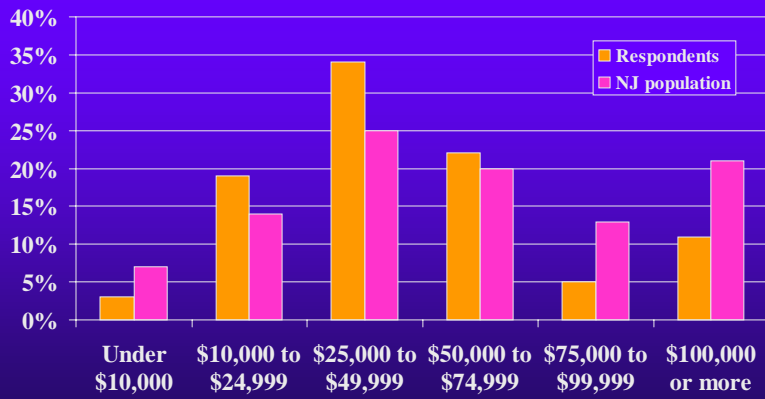
Gender



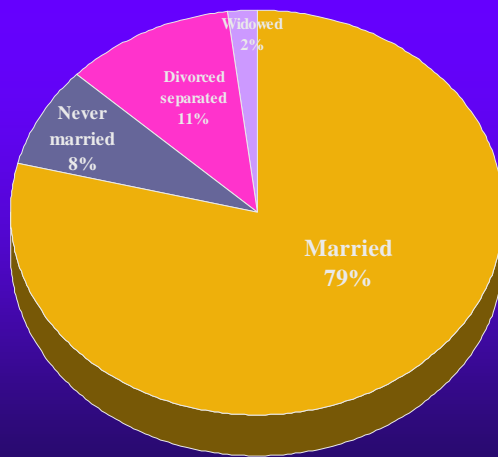


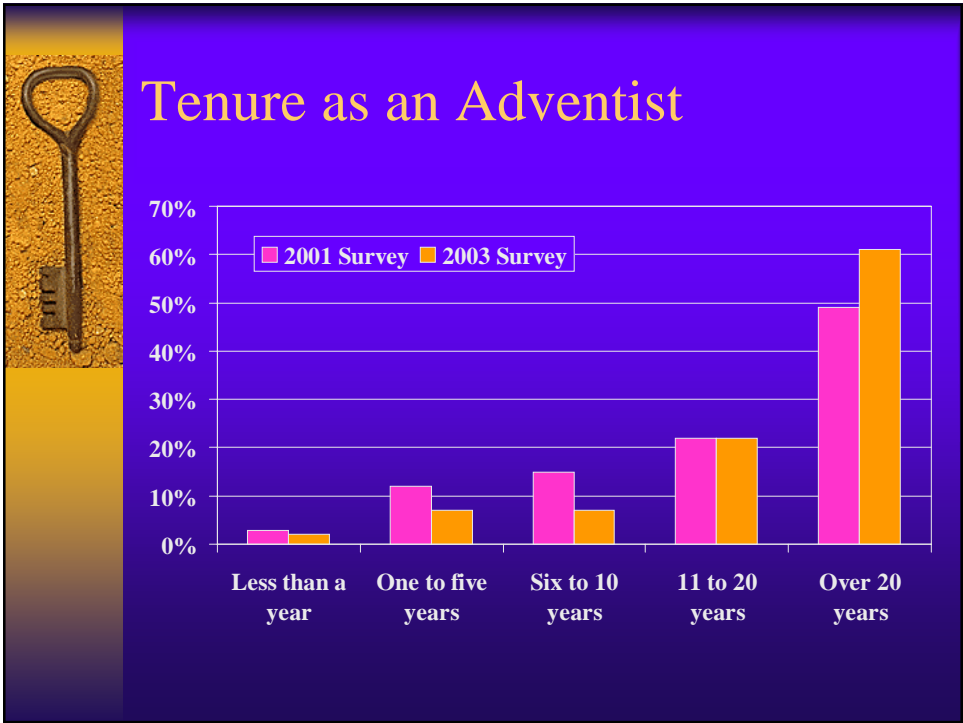
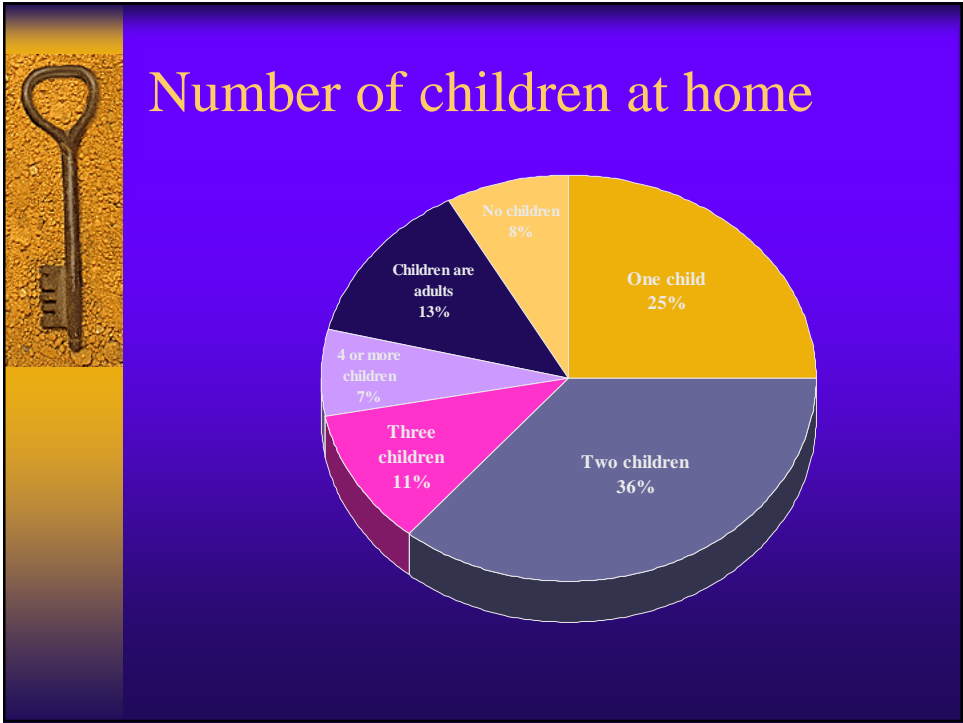
2001 Survey

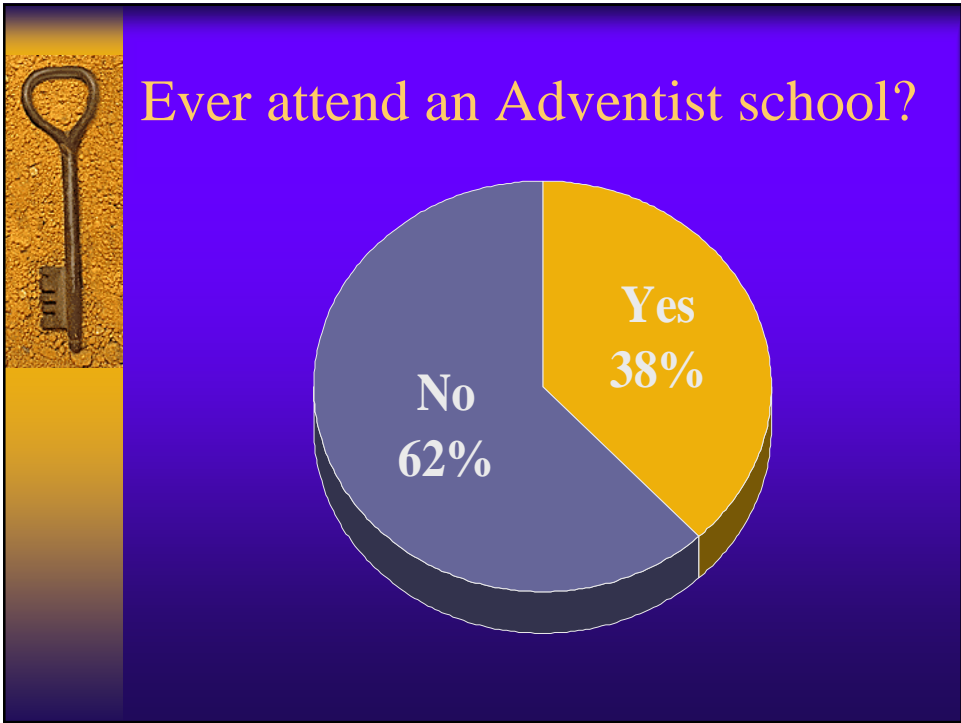
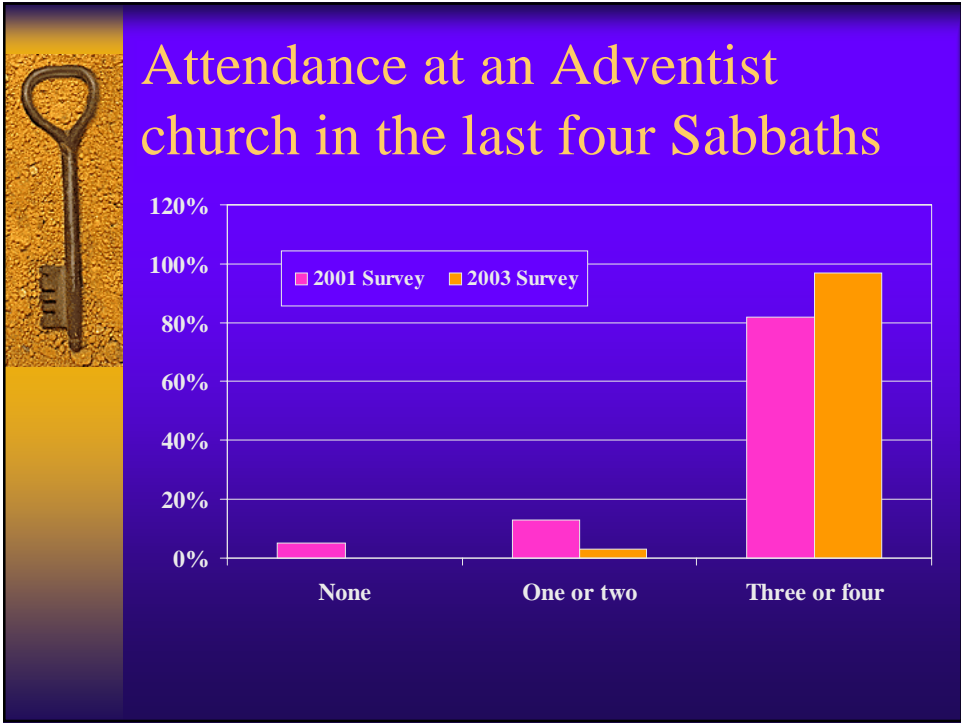
Annual household income

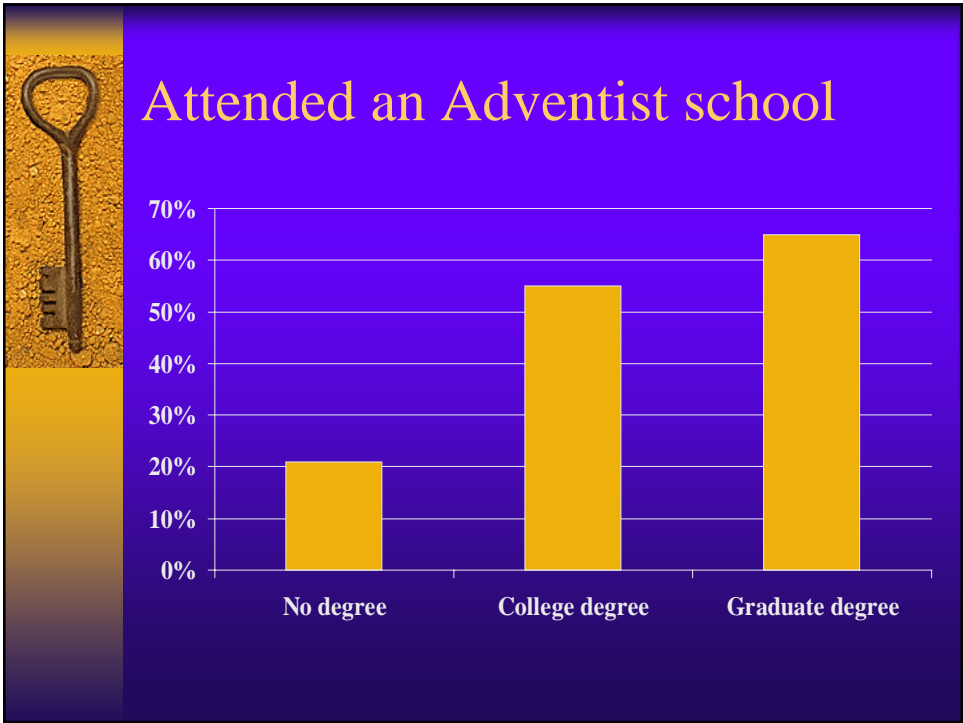
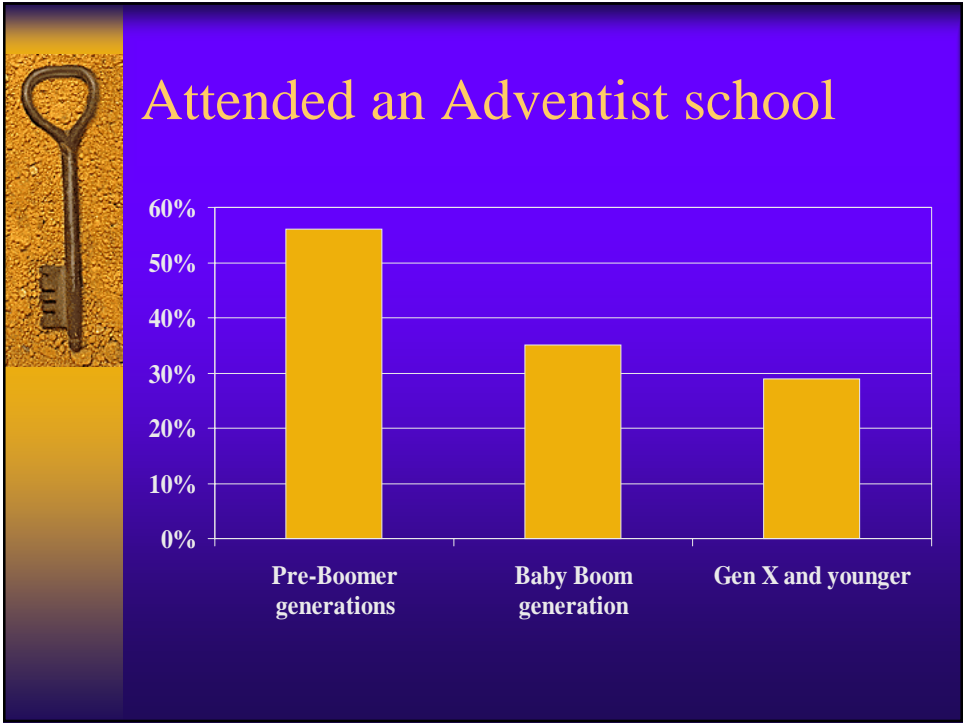


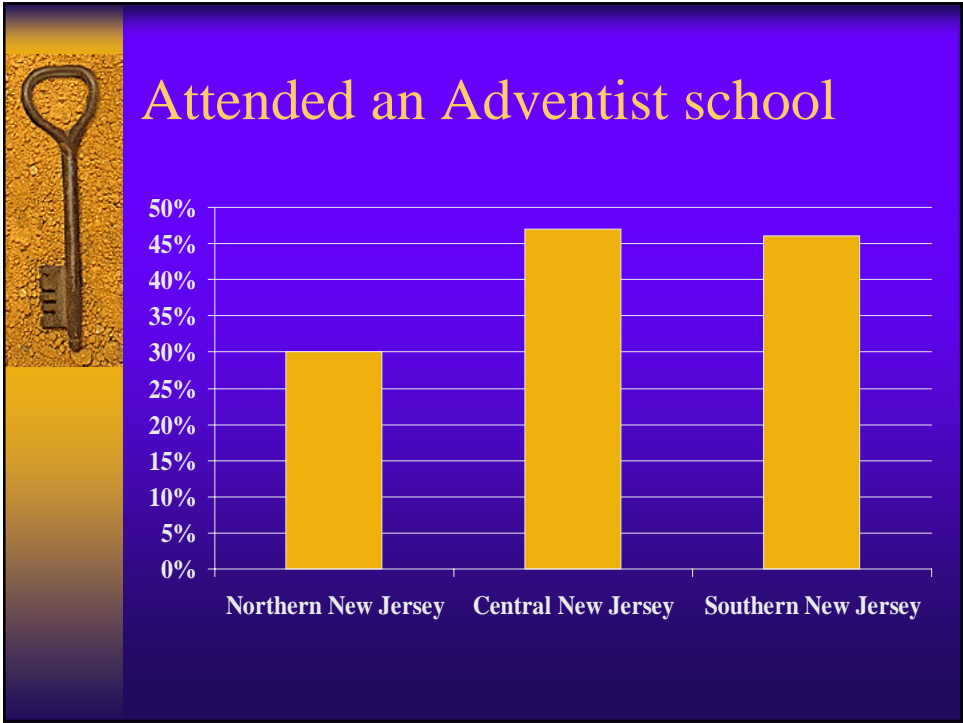
Marital status

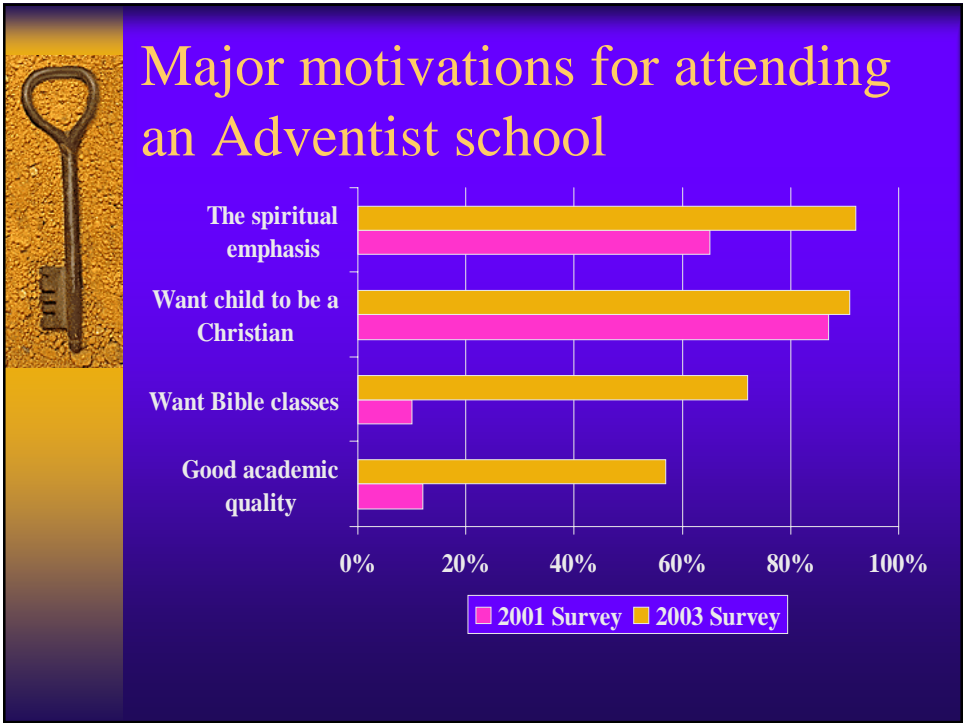
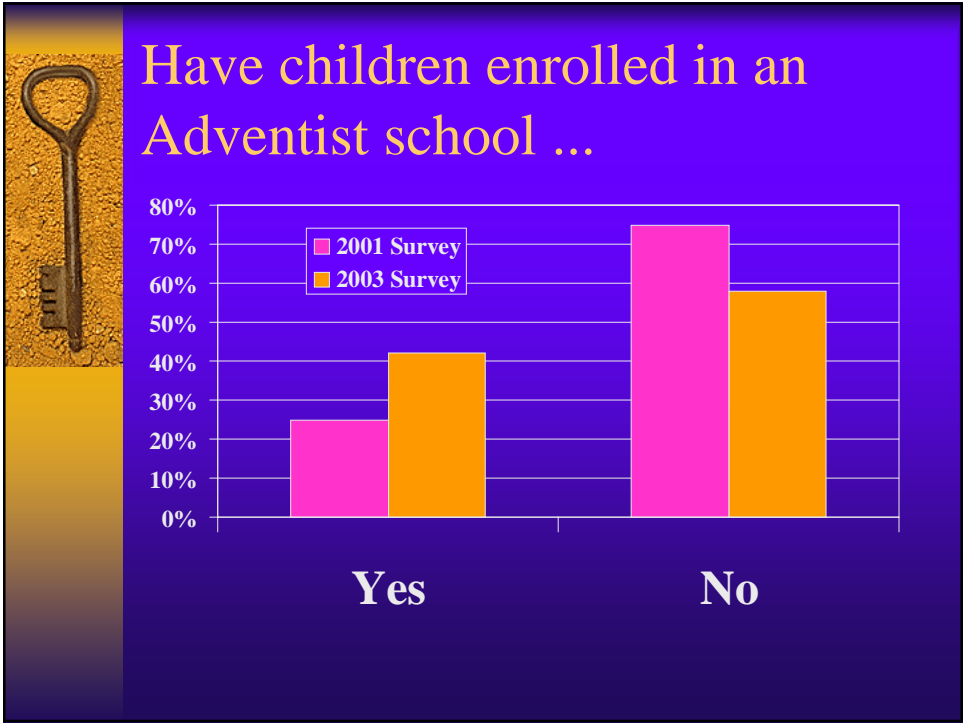


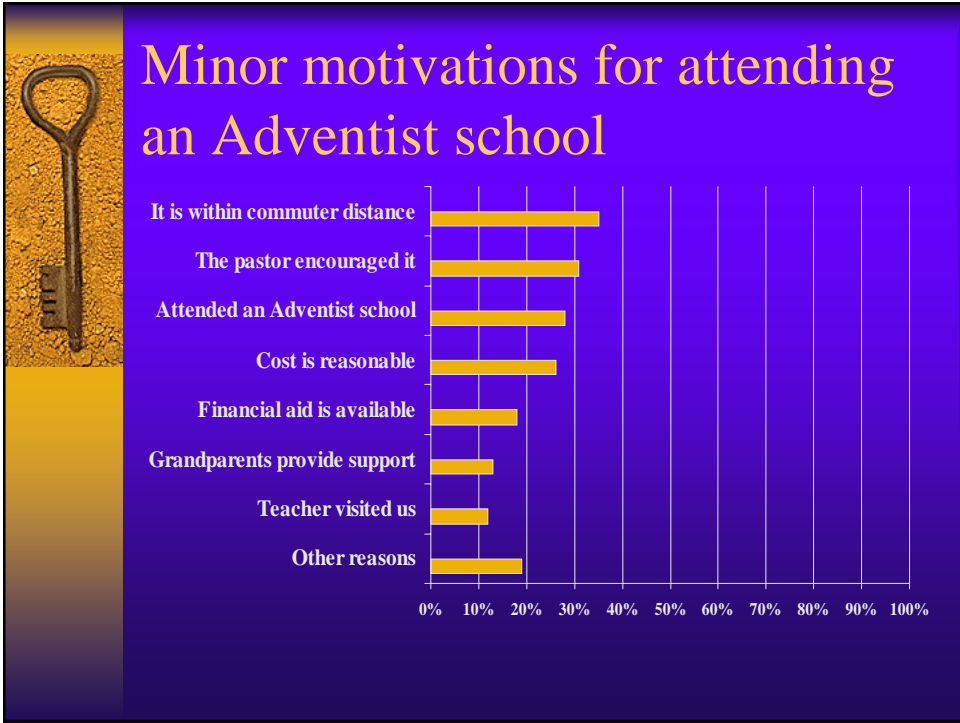


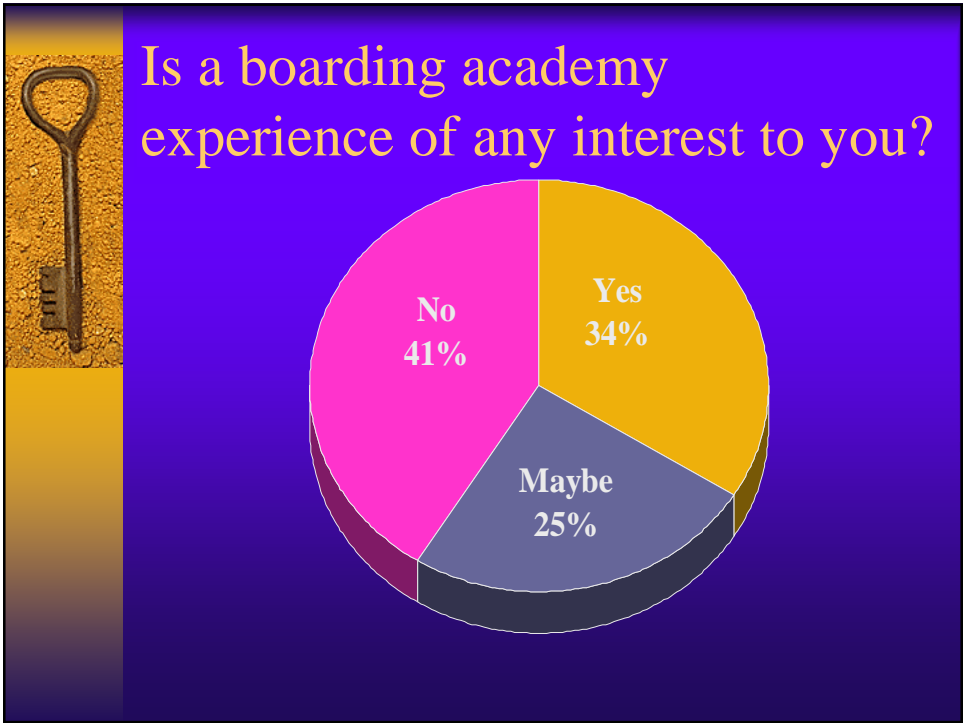
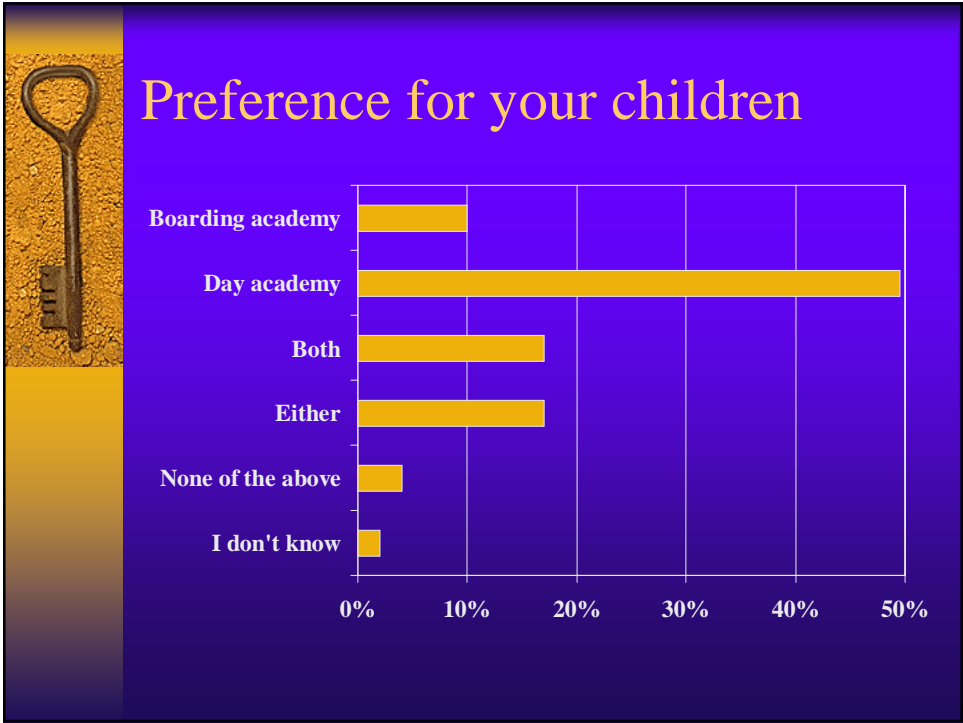


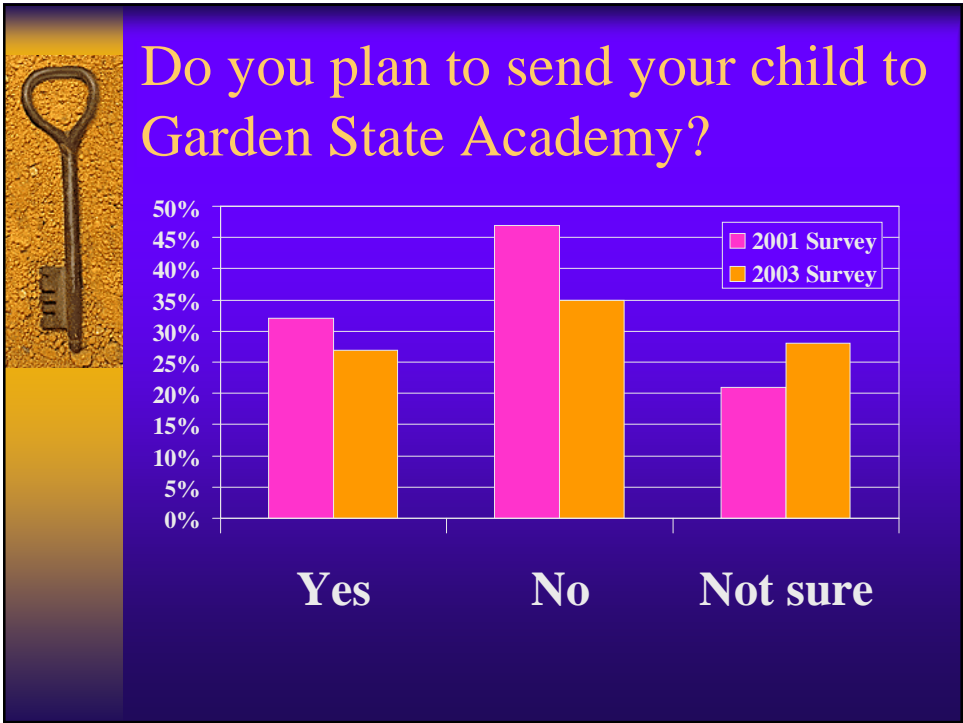
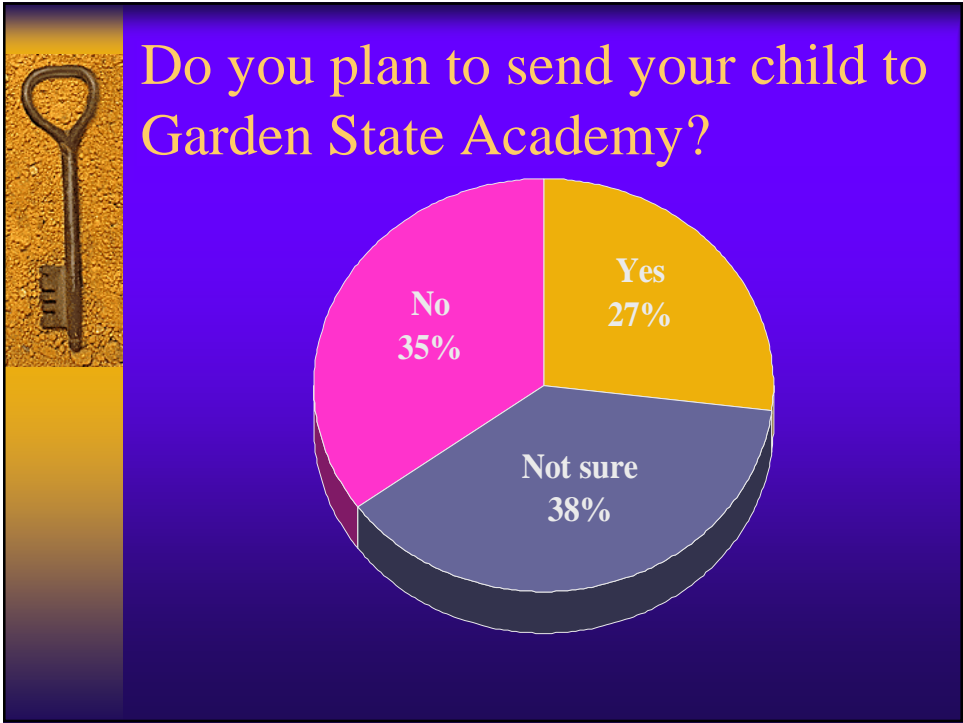


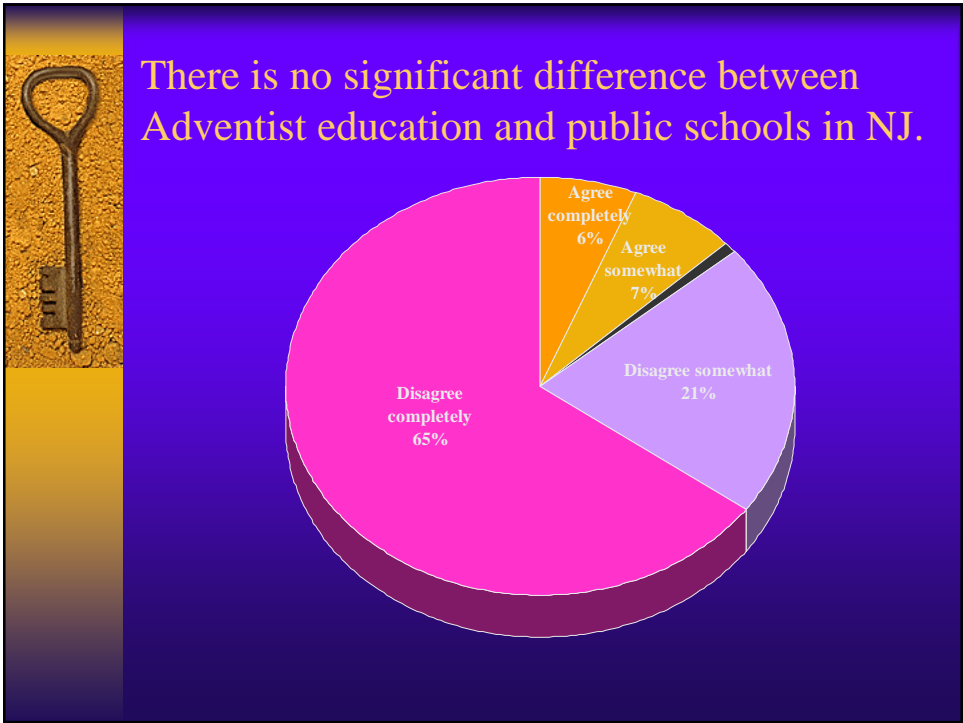
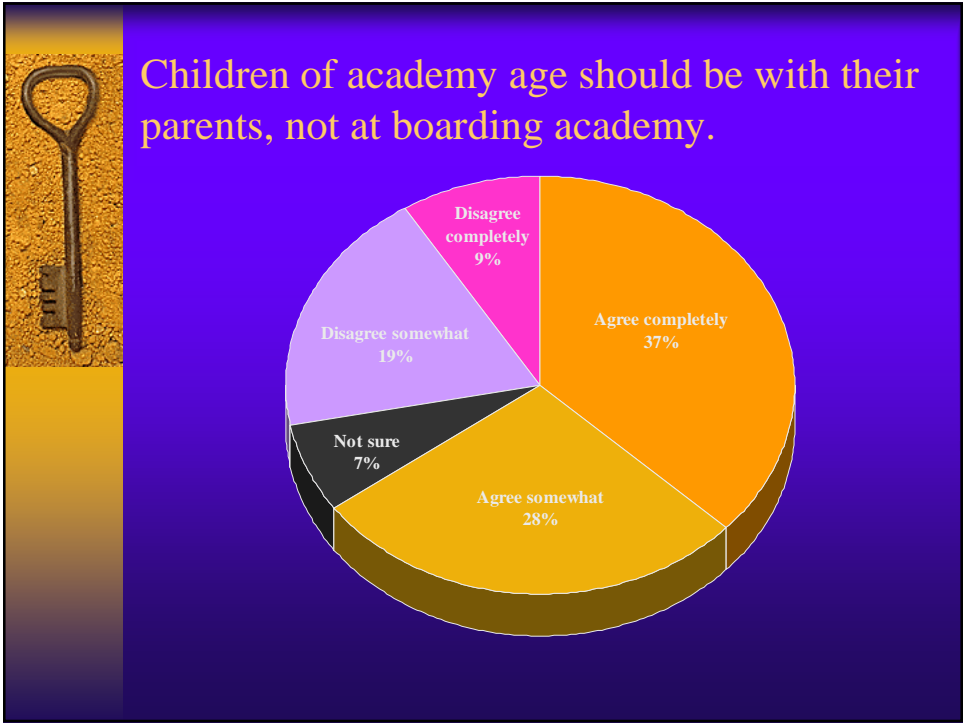


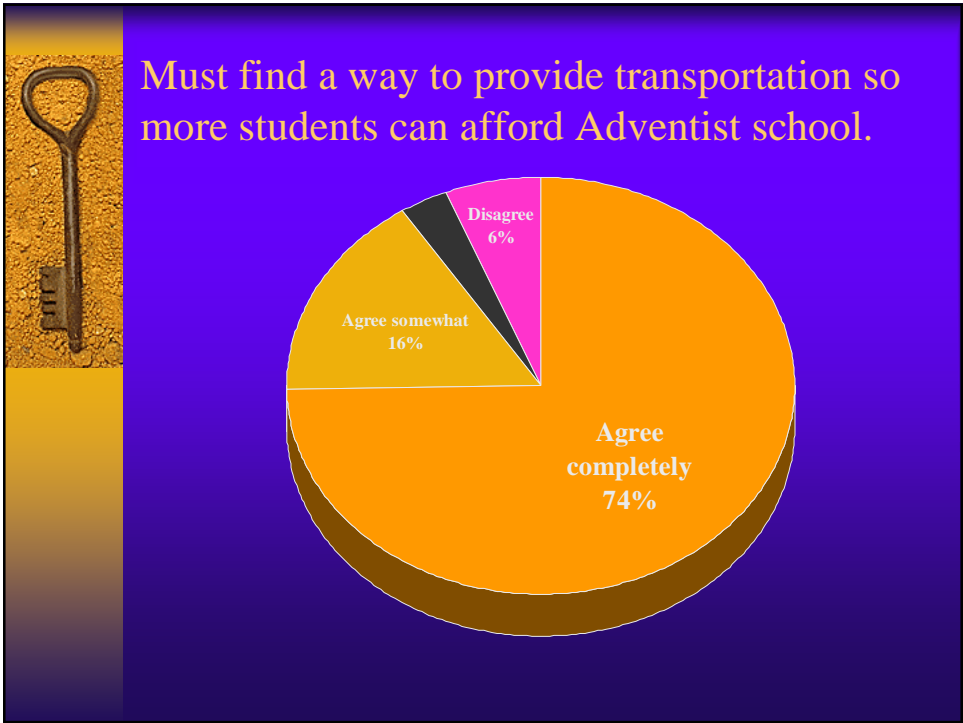
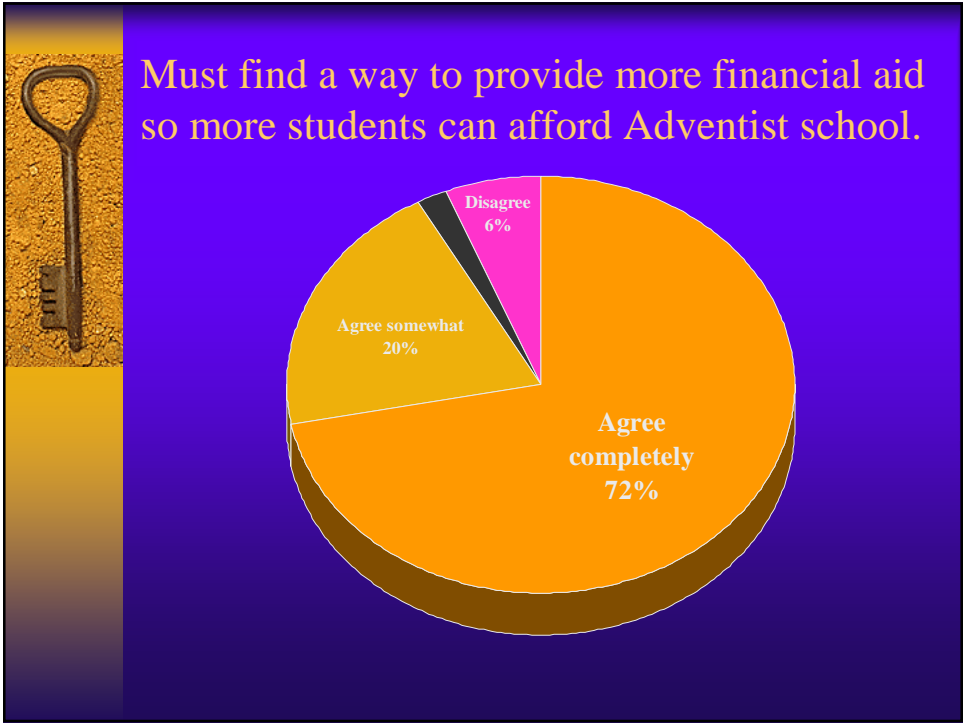


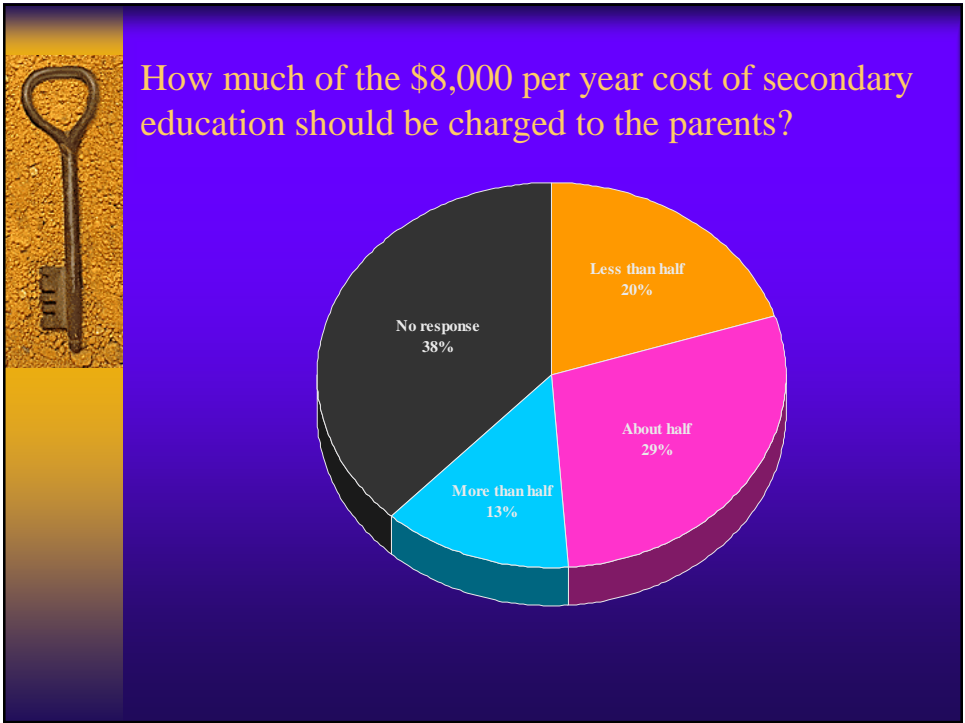




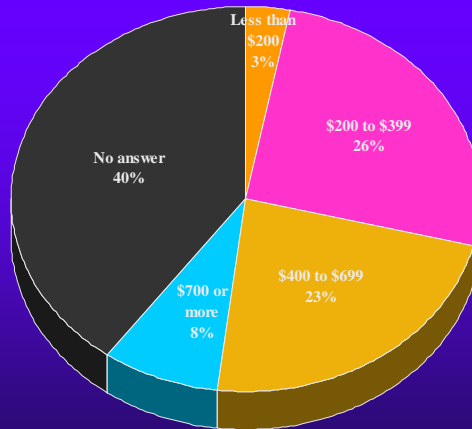




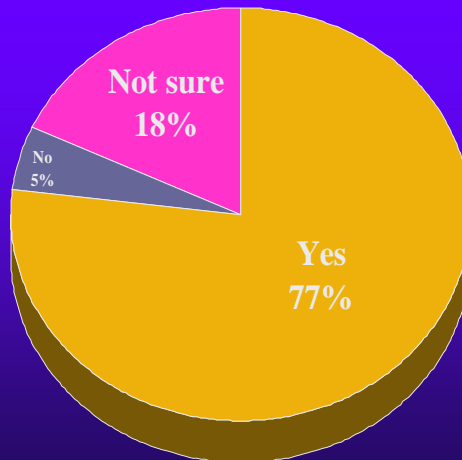


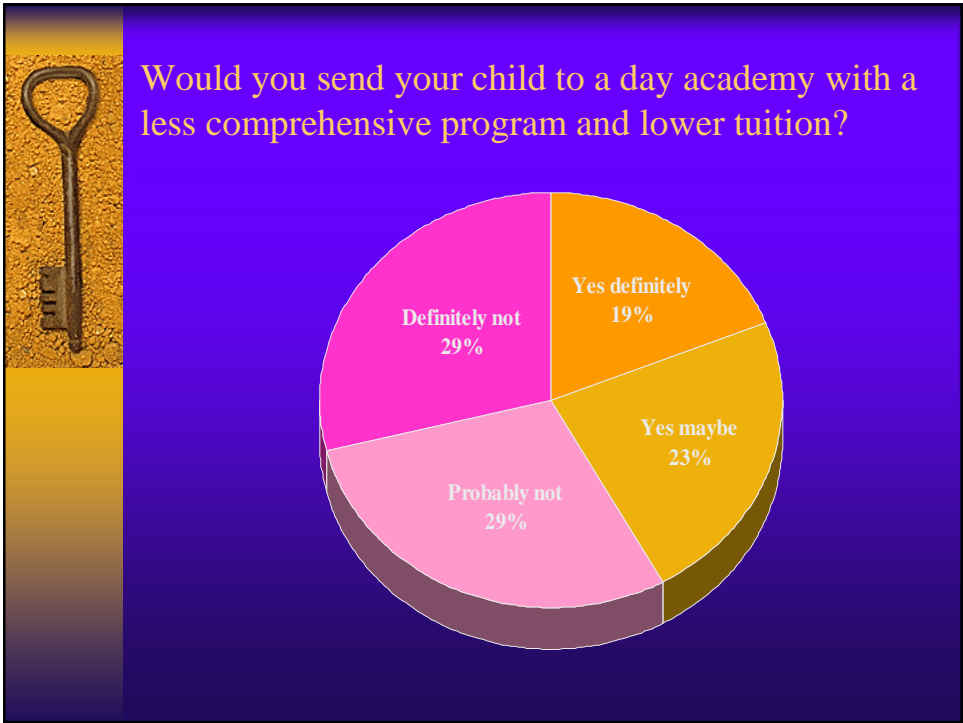
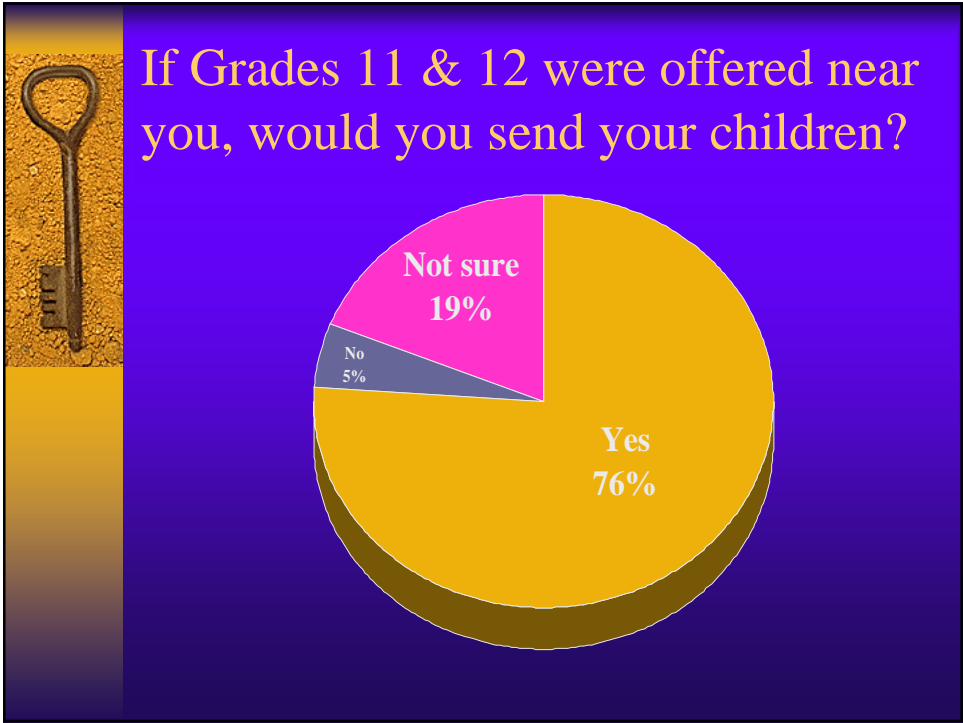


How much are you able to pay in tuition for each of your children?

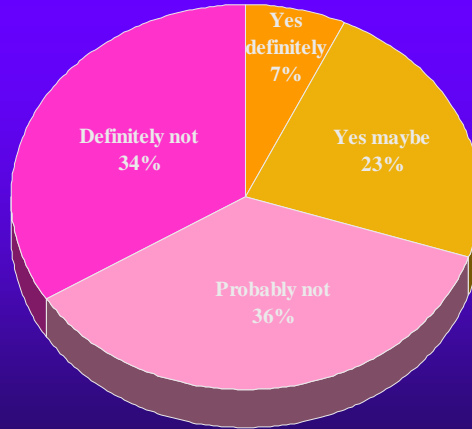


If Grades 9 and 10 were offered near you, would you send your children?

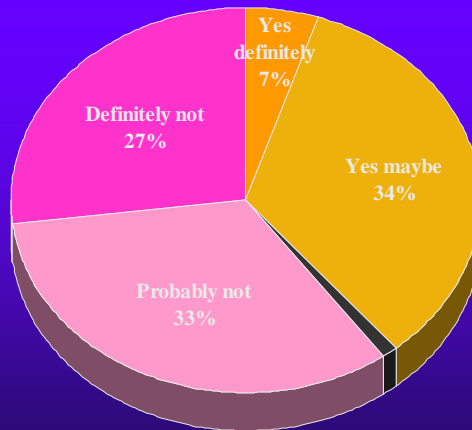




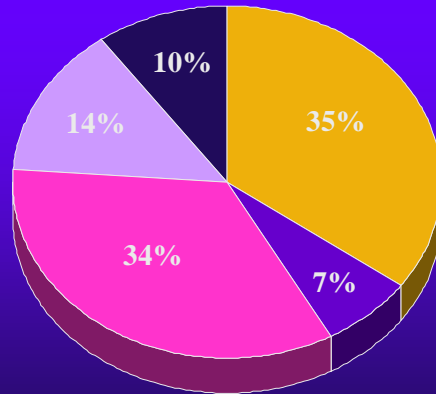
Interested in a correspondence program at about \$3,000 a year?



Interested in a distance learning program at about \$5,000 a year?

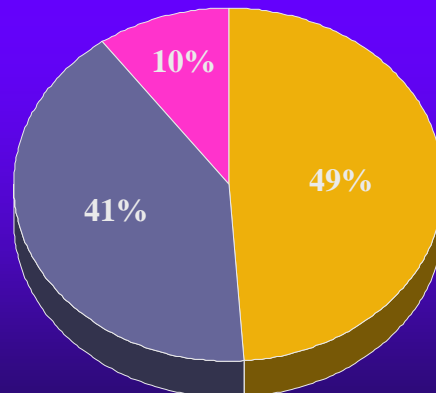


Opinion about secondary education in New Jersey Conference



- Operate a system of day academies
- Operate just a boarding academy
- Operate both boarding & day academies
- Send to neighboring boarding academies
- No opinion

Opinion segments and strategic options for secondary education



- Start day academies & send to neighboring boarding academies
- Continue to operate a boarding academy & start day academies
- No opinion