

BEYOND BELIEFS 2

*Millennial Young Adults
and their responses to the*

ORDINATION OF WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

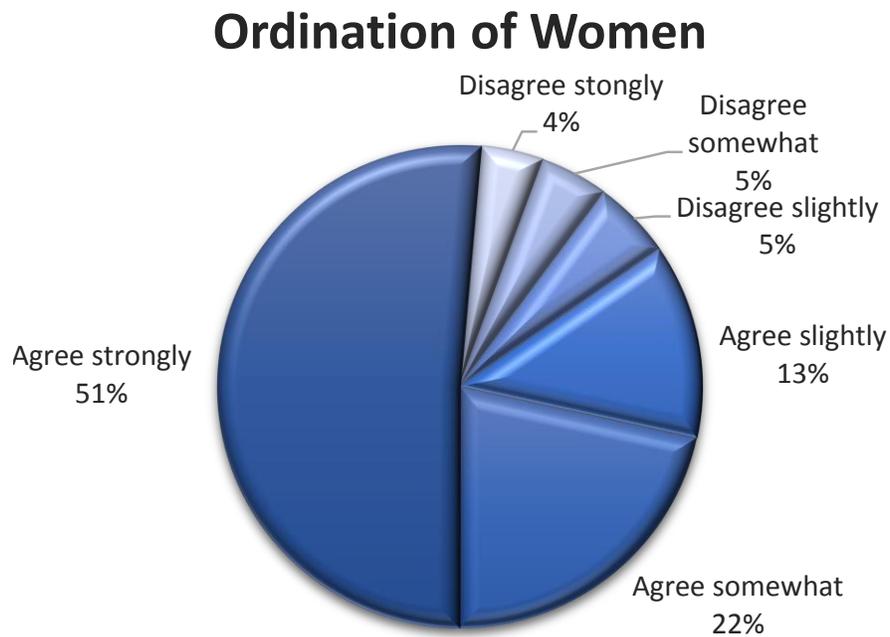
The *Beyond Beliefs* study undertaken by ClergyEd.com and the Religion and Biblical Languages Department at Andrews University investigated responses to the ordination of women clergy within the Seventh-day Adventist Church with a sample of 679 Millennial young adults, approximately a third of which were born outside of the United States. This component of the Beyond Beliefs study asked if Millennial young adults agreed or disagreed with the ordination of women clergy, if the decision to ordain would positively or negatively influence their perception of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and if the decision to not ordain would positively or negatively influence their perception. Participants were also asked if they identified with conservative or liberal ideologies and if they would withhold tithe if the corporate church organization endorsed inequality in hiring practices with regard to female ministers/corporate leaders. While Millennial young adults (18-32 years) largely support the idea of women being ordained to ministry and many would have a positive to very positive response to this action, it would seem the decision to not ordain women, for many, would not be a deal breaker when it comes to their perception of the Seventh-day Adventist church and their willingness to support this church financially.

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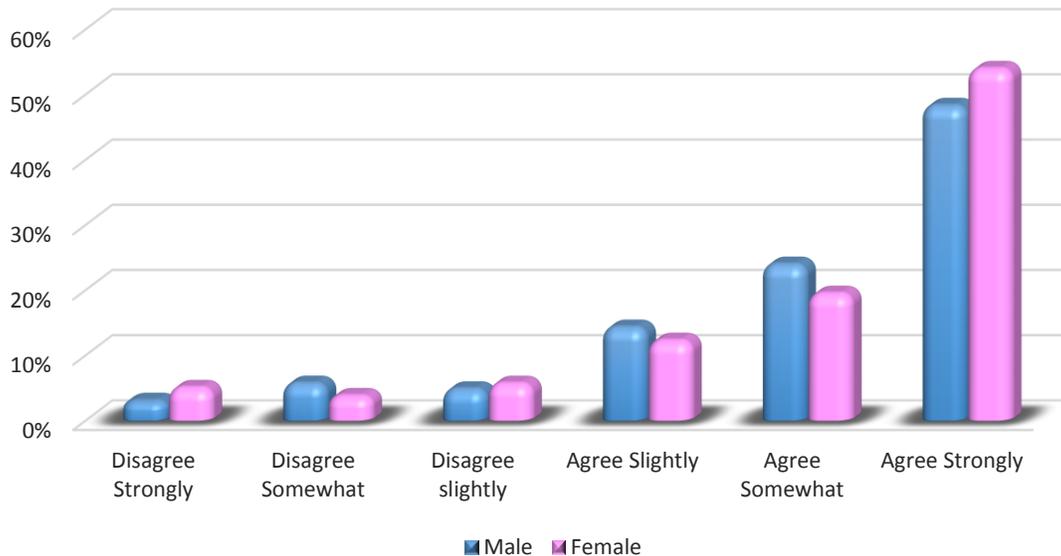
DO MILLENNIALS WANT TO ORDAIN WOMEN?

The *Beyond Beliefs* study is a major research project that sought to investigate what 679 Millennial young adults (ages 18-32) really think of each and every one of the 28 Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist church and 90 other factors that influence their faith. See www.beyond-beliefs.com for more information about this study and to sign up for email updates about current and future publications and free reports.

One of the many other factors investigated in the Beyond Beliefs study was Millennial young adults' attitude towards the ordination of female pastors. When asked if they agreed with the ordination of female pastors, the following responses were obtained.



Ordination of Women - Male and Female Responses

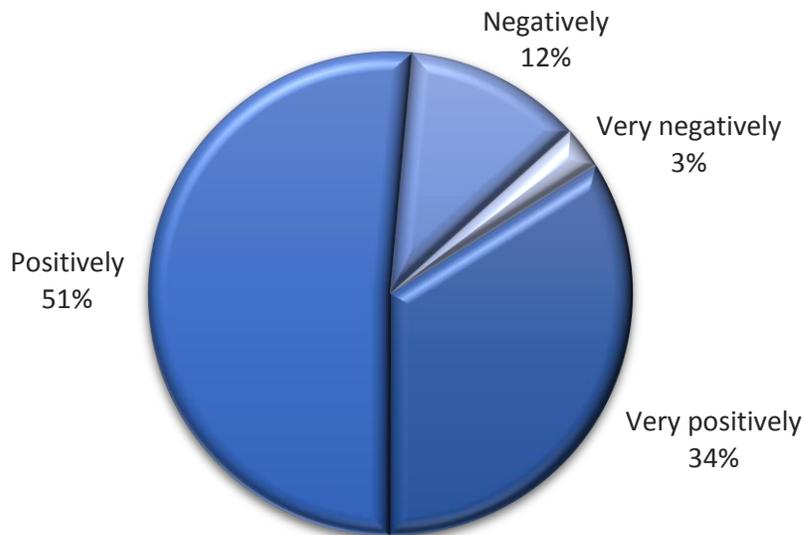


As can be seen in the table above, approximately half (51%) strongly agreed that female clergy should be ordained, 22% agreed somewhat, 13% agreed slightly. Only 14% identified in the disagreement range, with only 4% disagreeing strongly. While very small, it is interesting to note that there is a higher percentage of women than men represented in the disagree strongly and the disagree slightly categories. It could well be that hostility towards women by women exists within the Seventh-day Adventist church or that some women feel that the type of woman who presently enters ministry is one they feel is not suited to this role. Additionally, this result could simply be due to opposition not being gender specific, given females outnumber males both in this study and in the church organization. Further analysis should be undertaken as many more factors other than those mentioned above could be influencing this unexpected result found in Millennial young adult women aged 18-32. The church organization should thoroughly investigate the underlying factors of opposition towards the ordination of women, as there may be some very real and problematic issues that may need to be addressed outside the ordination issue itself. This analysis will be undertaken using Beyond Beliefs data in the near future.

RESPONSE IF ORDINATION WAS ACCEPTED

The *Beyond Beliefs* study also asked participants if the Seventh-day Adventist church decided to ordain women pastors, how would the implementation of this practice influence their attitude towards the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Self-Reported Personal Response if the SDA Church Decided to Ordain Women

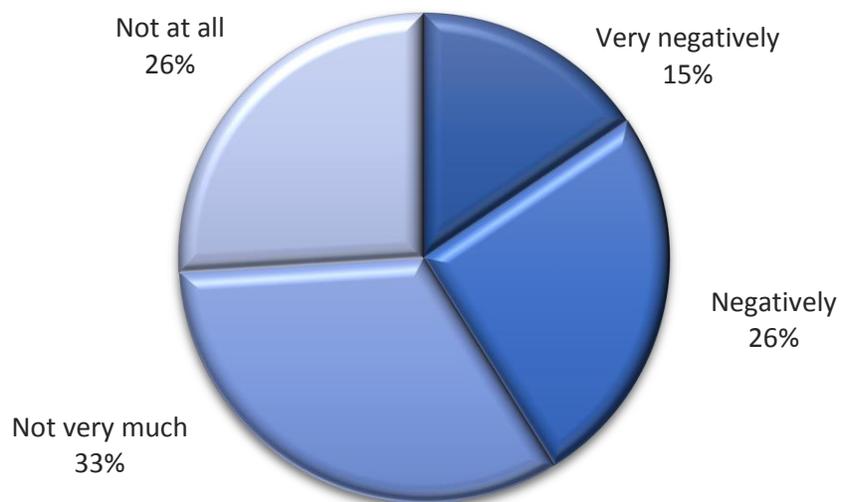


Only 34% stated that it would impact them very positively. The majority (51%) stated it would impact them positively. A further 12% said it would impact them negatively and only 3% stated this action would have a very negative impact on how they perceived the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This seems like good news for supporters for the ordination of women where a combined 85% would have a positive response to some degree to the implementation of ordaining women.

RESPONSE IF ORDINATION WAS NOT ACCEPTED

However, a slightly different picture emerges when participants were asked if they would respond negatively to the Seventh-day Adventist church if they chose not to ordain women.

Self-Reported Personal Response if the SDA Church Decided NOT to Ordain Women

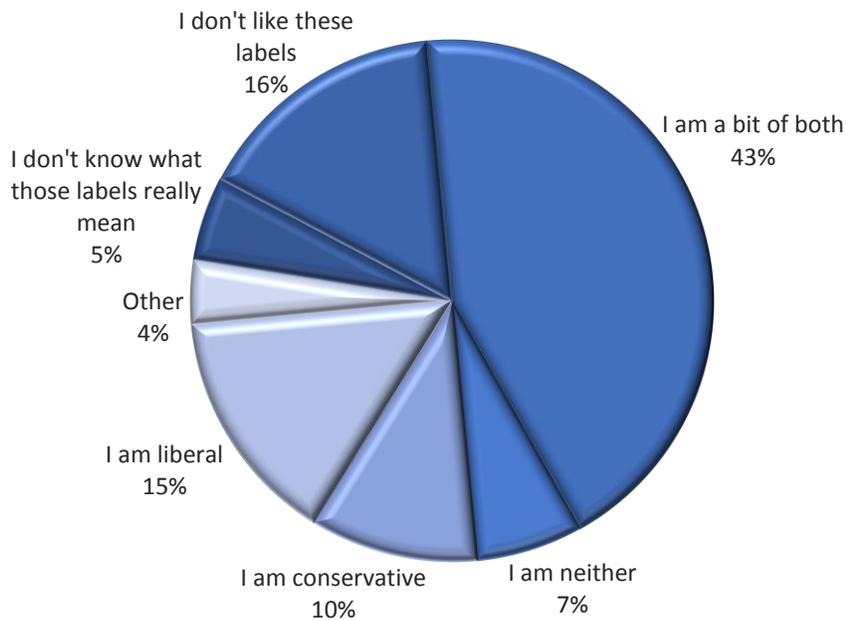


Only 15% said they would respond very negatively, 26% would respond negatively. However, 33% stated the decision not to ordain women would not impact their perception of the Seventh-day Adventist church very much with another 26% stating it wouldn't impact their perception at all. Interestingly, when asked if they would withhold tithe from the Seventh-day Adventist church if the organization endorsed inequality in hiring practices with regard to female ministers/corporate leaders, only 16.4% of all participants said they would. The Beyond Beliefs study also investigated Millennial young adult perceptions of gender roles for men and women, and these results, which are considerably more lengthy, will be explored and reported in detail in a report that will be published in 2015.

ARE MILLENNIALS LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE?

The present findings seem to provide support to both sides of the women's ordination debate and more research needs to be undertaken to fully understand the issues that impact a corporate decision by the Seventh-day Adventist church to ordain women. The Millennial young adults sampled were also asked if they identified as conservative or liberal. Only 10% stated they were conservative, 15% said they were liberal, the remaining 78% stated that they were either both, neither, they didn't really know what those terms meant, or they did not like those terms. This suggests that ideology may not have played a strong part in these findings relating to female ordination. Additionally, conservative and liberal labels may not even be appropriate terminology to apply to Seventh-day Adventist Millennial young adults.

Conservative versus Liberal





CONCLUSION

While Millennial young adults (18-32 years) largely support the idea of women being ordained to ministry and many will have a positive to very positive response to this action, it would seem for many this is not a deal breaker when it comes to their perception of the Seventh-day Adventist church and their willingness to support their church financially.

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