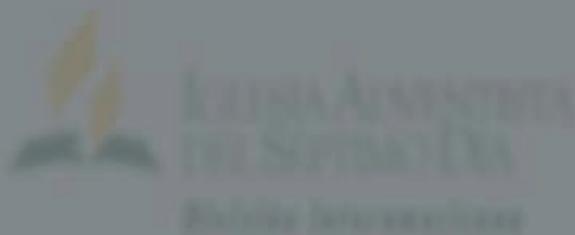


EXPLORATORY STUDY ON RETENTION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN INTERAMERICAN DIVISION



Rodríguez, J. & Collins, E.
Summit on Nurture and Retention, 2013

BACKGROUND

The Church-Members' Survey in the IAD

“Seventh-day Adventist Church-Member Survey:
Faith, Beliefs, Perceptions, Attitudes and Actions”

Administred in April and May, 2013, in 19 of 22
Conferences

Population: 3,612,480 members in 11,471 churches

Stratified clusters and random sample

Sample: 4,043 members in 95 churches

Description of the sample

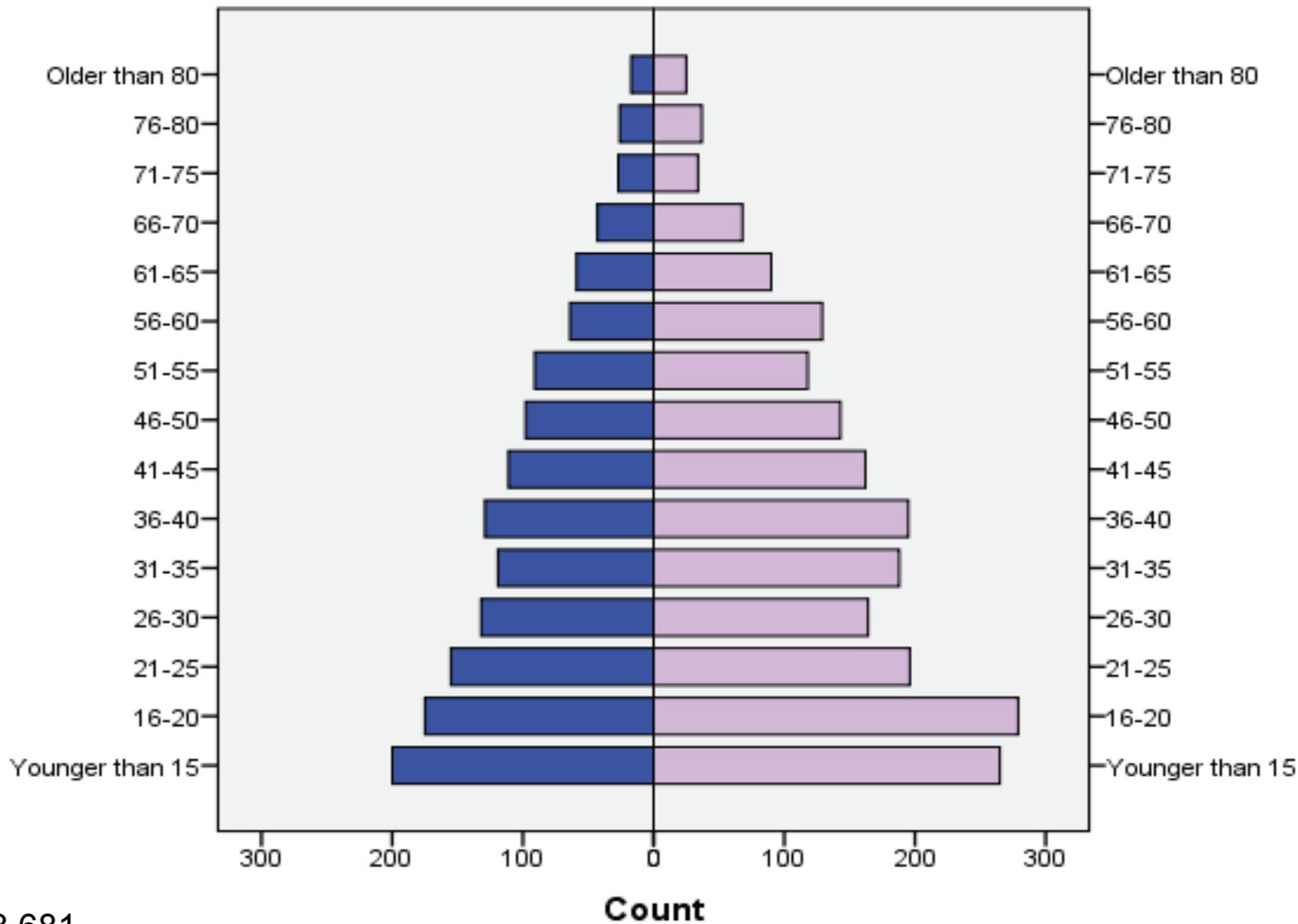
What is your gender?

Male

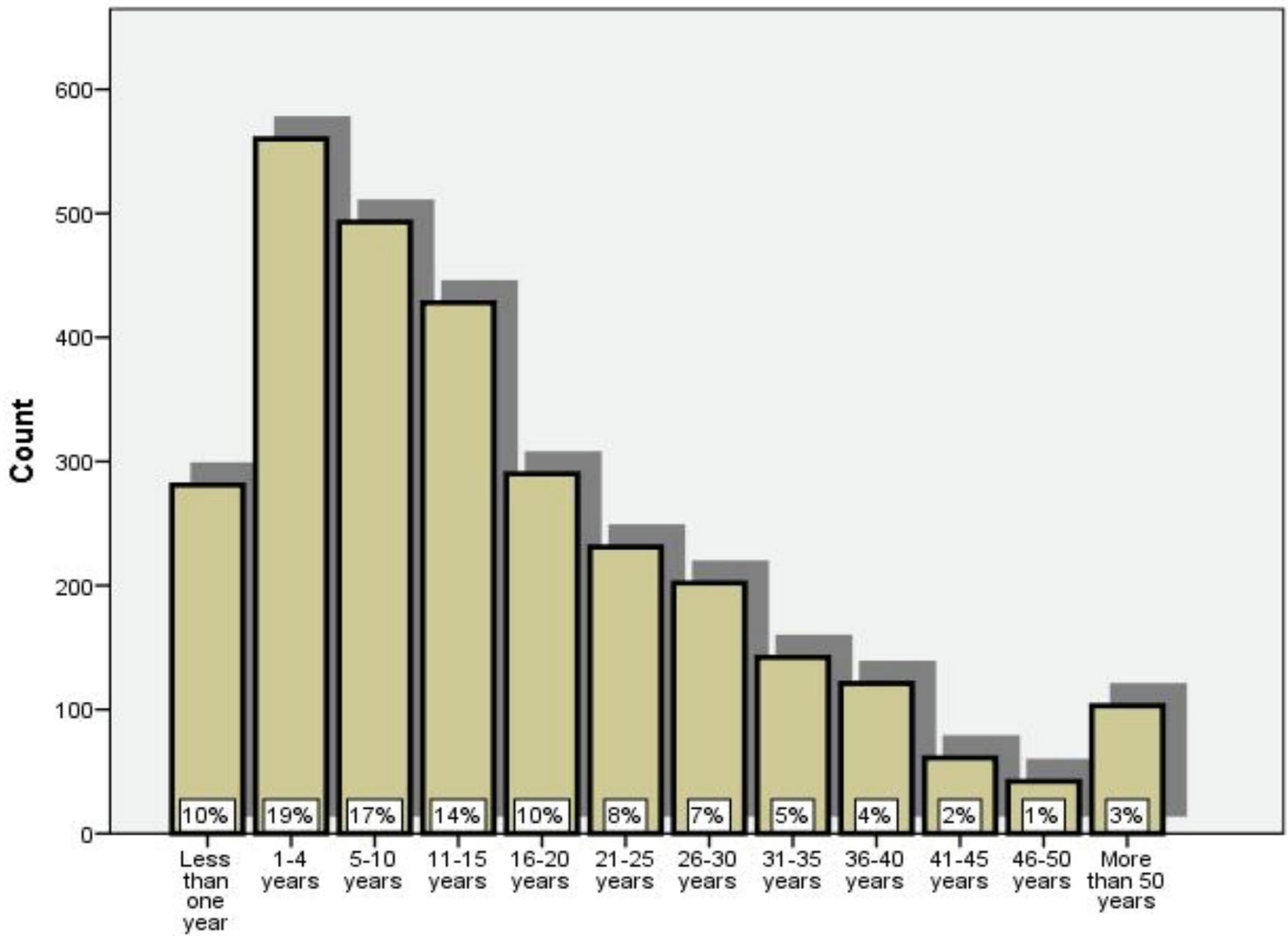
Female

How old are you?

How old are you?



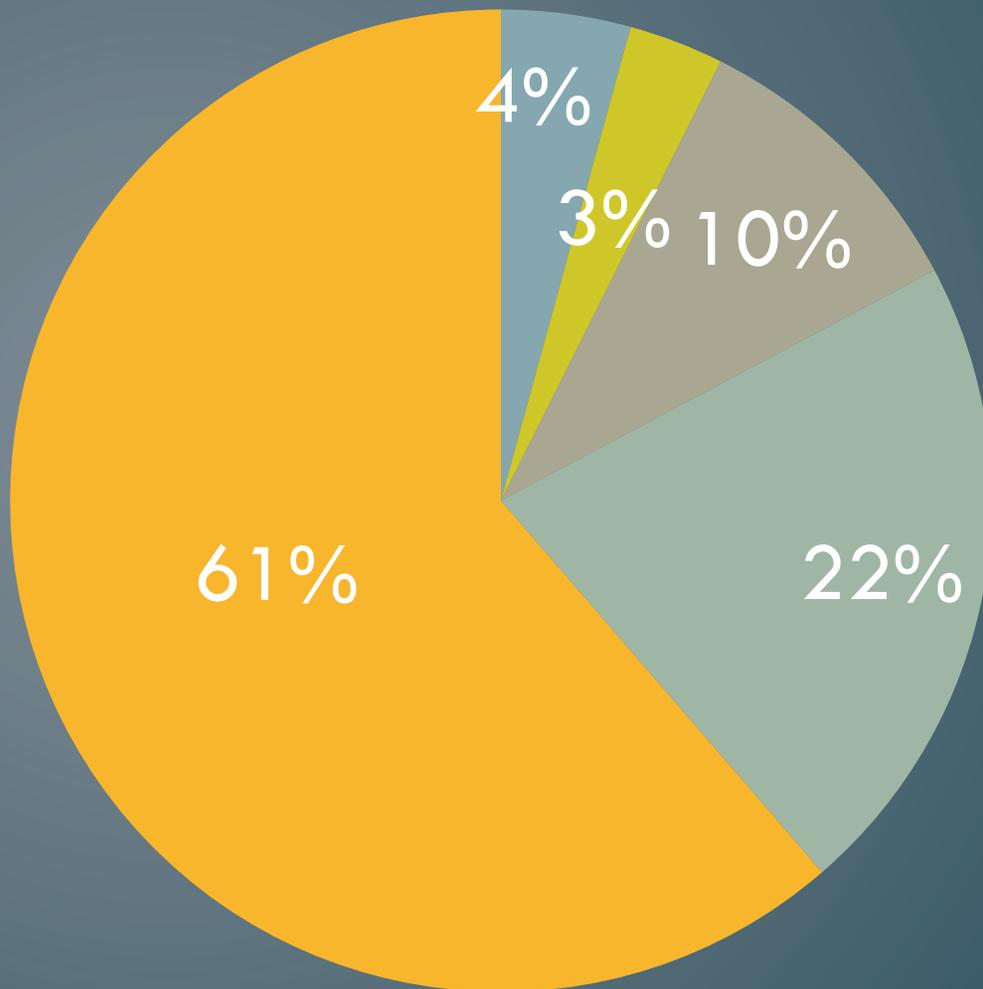
n = 3,681



n = 2,954

How long have you been an SDA?

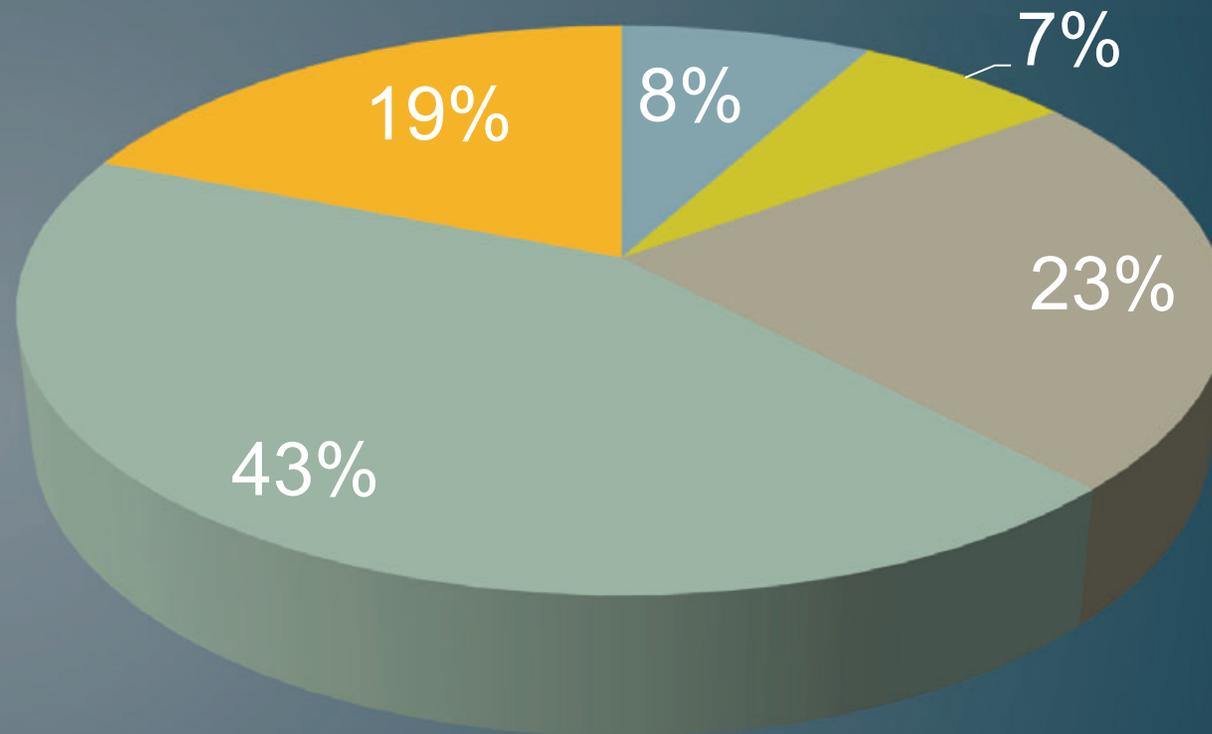
How often do you attend worship services at your church?



- A few times a year or less
- Once every month or two
- Two or three times a month
- About once a week
- More than once a week

n = 3,384

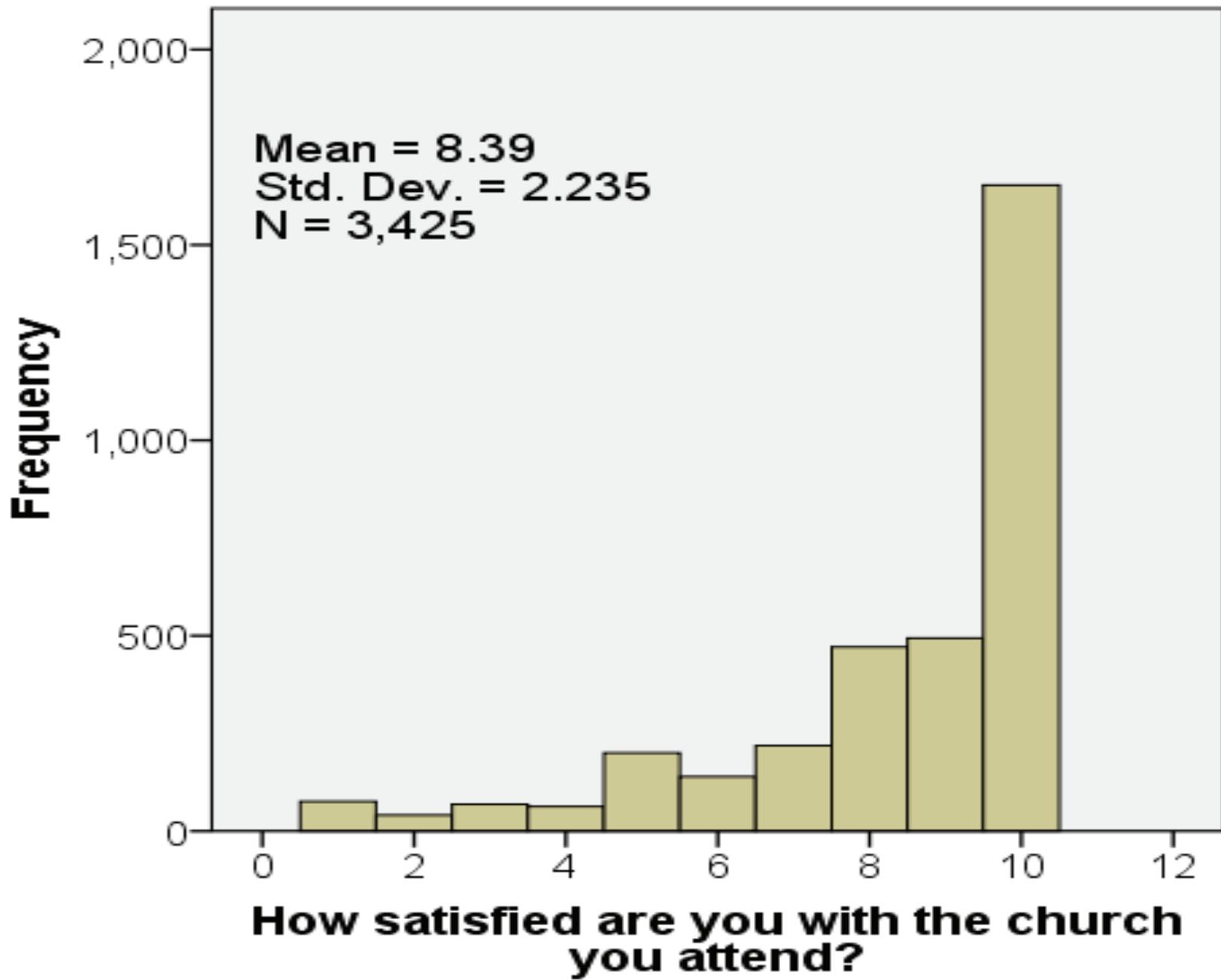
How do you consider your involvement in your church?



- No participation
- Mainly observer
- Casual participant
- Active participant
- Leader in my church

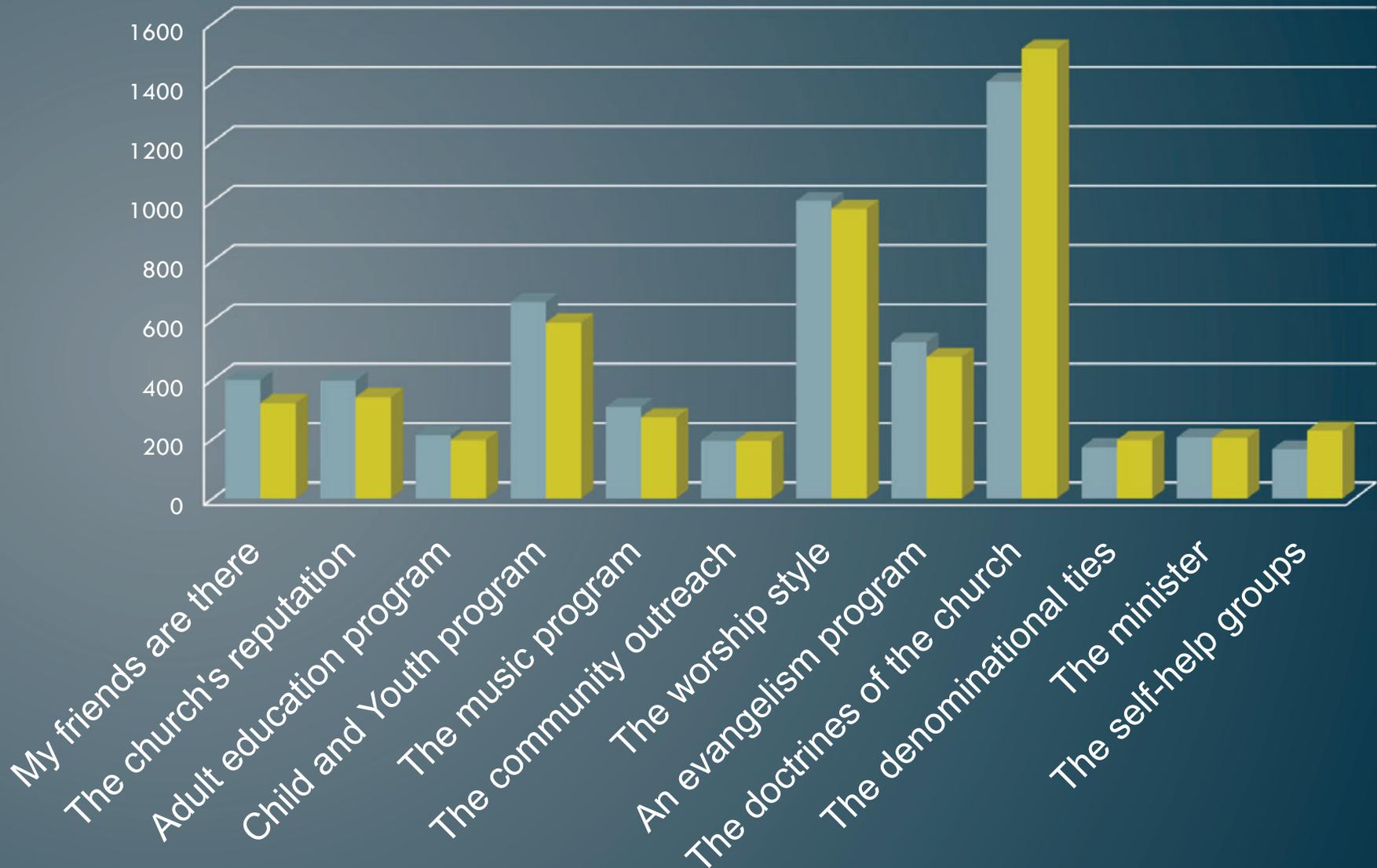
n = 3,419

Satisfaction



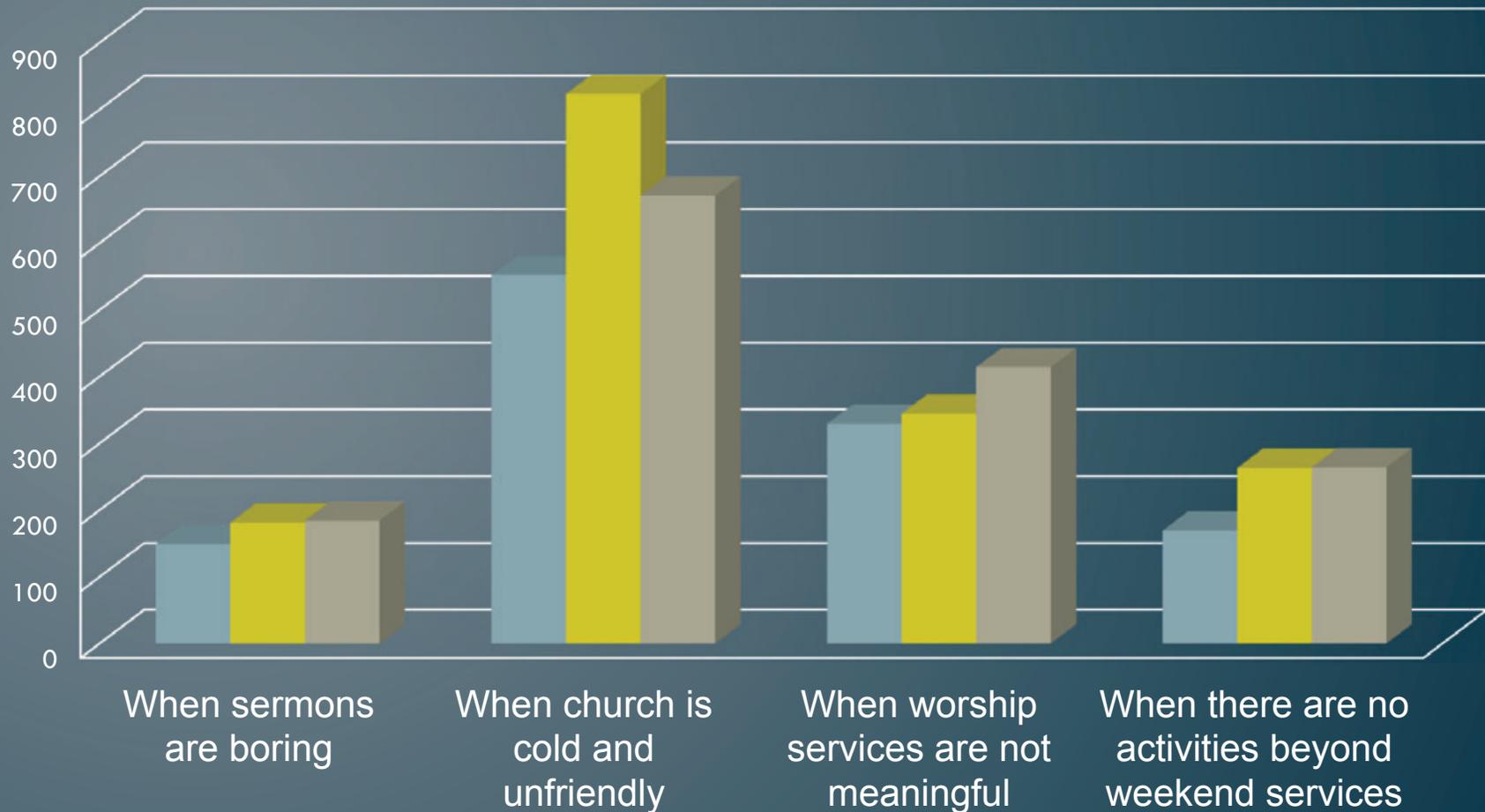
■ What attracted you originally to this congregation?

■ What is your foremost reason for remaining in this congregation?

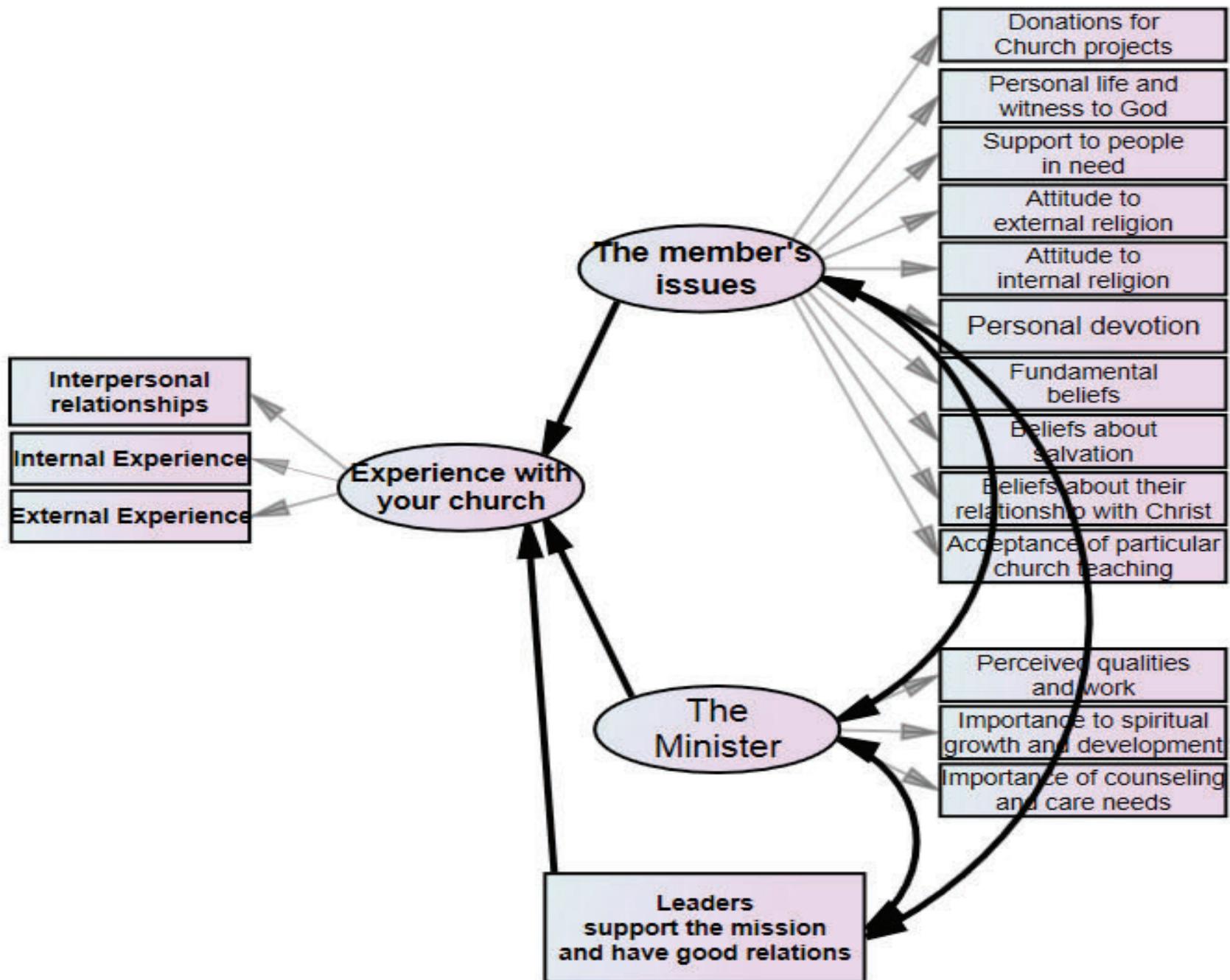


Characteristic of church life that would make you consider leaving your local SDA church to worship in...

■ A non SDA Church n = 3,403 ■ Another SDA Church n = 3,349 ■ Home n = 3,170



Influence of the characteristics of church members, ministers and leaders in their church experience.



Constructs

Statements used for **extrinsic aspects** in the church experience

Item
I can be myself at church.
Programs at my church are interesting.
Programs at my church make me think.
My Sabbath School teachers or leaders know me well.
The leaders in the church are warm and friendly.
The leaders in our church care about me.
My pastor knows me well.

Statements used for **intrinsic aspects** in the church experience

Item
I go to programs at church because I want to.
My church is helping me grow closer to Christ.
I feel proud of my church and its role and reputation in my community.
I look forward to going to programs at my church.
I feel uncomfortable/ guilty when I do not attend church most weekends.
I attend small group meetings organized by the church.

Statements used for **interpersonal relationships** in the church

Item
It stretches me in worship.
It accepts people who are different.
I learn a lot.
Strangers feel welcome.
It provides fellowship.
Most members want to be challenged to think about religious issues and ideas.
It encourages me to ask questions.
It expects people to learn and think.
It is friendly.
It challenges my thinking.
It feels “warm”.

Statements used for **donations** for church projects

Item
Through my tithe.
Local church budget.
The evangelistic projects of the church.
The church building fund.
The mission program of the church.
I provide extra for the 13 th Sabbath offering.
Christian education.

Statements used for commitment to my **personal life and witness** to God

Item
I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation.
I have a real sense that God is guiding me.
I feel my life is filled with meaning and purpose.
I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually.
I feel God's presence in my relationships with other people.
I talk with other people about my faith.
The things I do reflect a commitment to Jesus Christ.

Statements used for commitment to **support the needs** of others

Item
I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing pain and suffering in the world.
I help others with their religious questions and struggles.
I show that I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my country and throughout the world.
I give significant portions of time and money to help other people.
I apply my faith to political and social issues.

Statements used for **attitude toward external religious** experience

Item
I go to church because it helps me to make friends.
Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.
It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good.
I pray mainly because I have been taught to pray.
I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.
Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important to me.
I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends.
Sometimes I have to disregard my religious beliefs because of what people might think of me.

I go to church because it helps me to make friends.

Although I am religious, I don't let it affect my daily life.

It doesn't much matter what I believe so long as I am good.

I pray mainly because I have been taught to pray.

I go to church mainly because I enjoy seeing people I know there.

Although I believe in my religion, many other things are more important to me.

I go to church mostly to spend time with my friends.

Sometimes I have to disregard my religious beliefs because of what people might think of me.

Statements used for **attitude toward internal religious experience**

Item

My religion is important because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.

It is important to me to spend time in private thought and prayer.

I try hard to live according to my religious beliefs.

I have often had a strong sense of God's presence.

I enjoy reading about Seventh-day Adventism.

Prayer is for peace and happiness.

Prayers I say when I am alone are as important to me as those I say in church.

My whole approach to life is based on my religion.

I would rather join a Bible study group than a church social group.

Statements used for activities for **personal devotions**

Item
Read the Bible.
Engage in personal devotions.
Have family worship (Prayers or religious devotions you have together as a family away from church)
Read the writings of Ellen G. White.

Statements used for knowledge and acceptance of fundamental beliefs

Item
The Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ.
The true Sabbath is the seventh day Saturday.
I believe God created the world.
I believe that Jesus was born of a virgin.
I believe in a personal God who seeks a relationship with human beings.
Christianity is about Jesus giving me power to conquer sin in my life.
I am saved the moment I believe and accept what Jesus has done for me.

Statements used for knowledge and acceptance of beliefs about salvation

Item
If I am to be saved, I need to be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church.
If I have been baptized, I will make it to heaven if I remain a good person all my life.
God loves everyone, and I should be all right in the end if I am a morally good person.
The Adventist church believes in “present truth” which means beliefs might change over time.
I expect the world as we know it to end within the next 20 years.

Statements used for knowledge and acceptance of beliefs about the relationship with Jesus

Item
Of all the people on earth, one group has a special relationship with God.
When you get right down to it, there are only two kinds of people in the world: the righteous, who will be rewarded by God, and the rest, who will not.
A relationship with Jesus is important, but I will not get to heaven unless I obey God's law.
There is no body of teaching, or set of scriptures, which is completely without error or contradiction.

Statements used for acceptance of **particular teachings of the SDA church**

Item
The Investigative or pre-Advent judgment began in 1844.
Adventist teachings regarding modesty and simplicity in dress.
Ellen G. White was an inspired messenger to the Adventist church.
The Church's interpretation of end-time prophecies.
Adventist standards regarding healthful living.
Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Statements used for **characteristics of church minister**

Item

A good preacher.

Shows true spiritual leadership in our church community.

Enthusiastic about ministry.

Helpful in times of need.

Inspiring.

Receptive of new ideas.

Thorough in pastoral duties.

Sensitive to the needs of others.

Occasionally visits members of the church in their home.

Statements used for **interested in spiritual** development and growth (Minister)

Item

Biblical preaching and teaching.

Works hard to accomplish tasks.

Strong and decisive decision-maker.

Emphasis on spiritual development and growth.

Encourages lay decision-making.

Expertise in biblical and theological matters.

Thought-provoking and challenging.

New approaches and ideas.

Comforting and reassuring.

Preaching and teaching on contemporary issues.

Statements used for **advises and attends the needs** (Minister)

Item

Outgoing and socially engaging.

Gives whole self to the church.

Maintains a balanced life.

Advises people what to do.

Reflective and reserved.

Places feelings of others ahead of achieving goals.

Helps people figure things out for themselves.

Statements used for **support the mission** (Leaders)

Item

...is active in assisting our local church.

...is supportive of involving young people in worship services.

...clearly communicates the mission of the Church.

...is doing enough to engage members in mission.

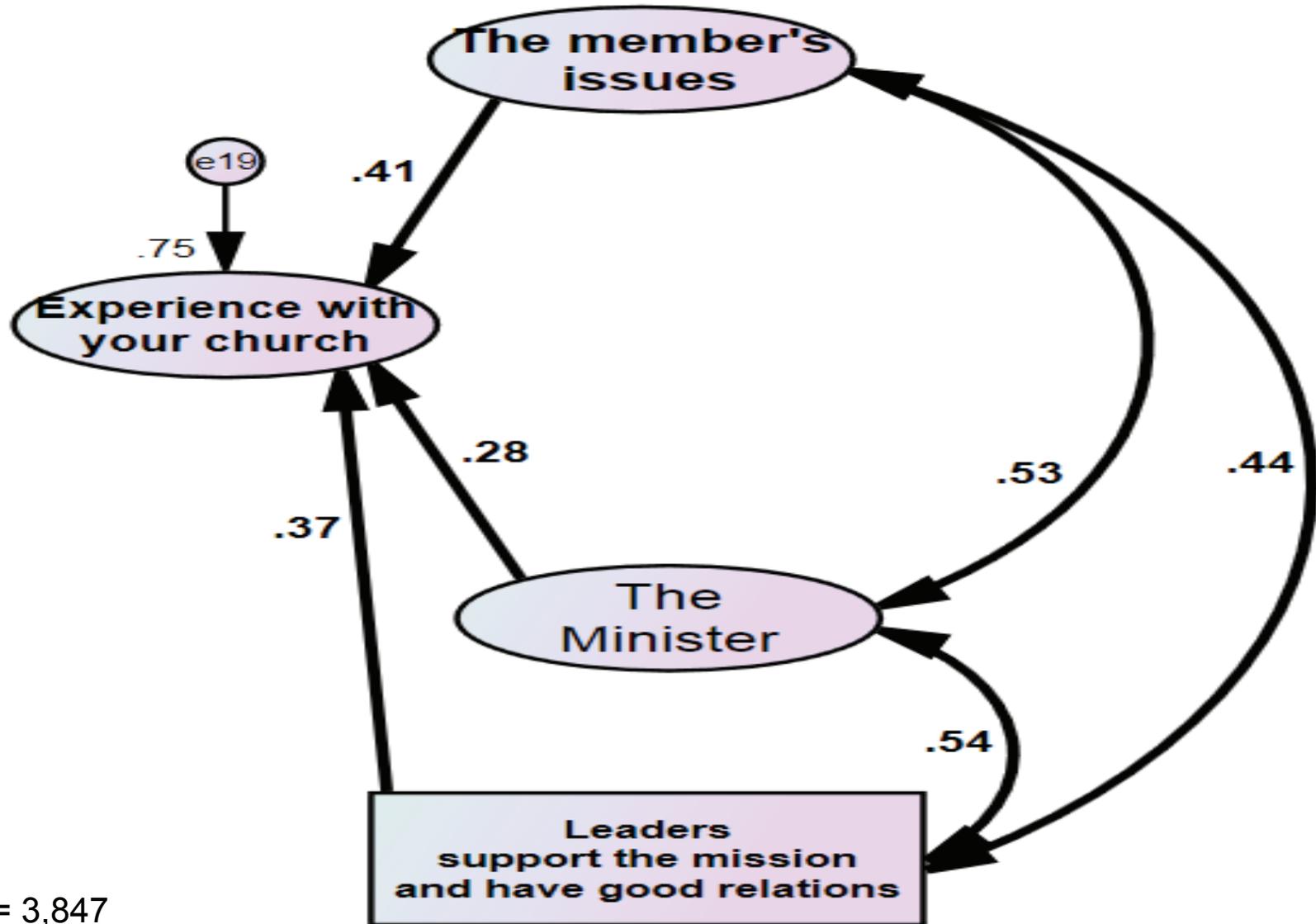
...is easy to talk with.

...is creative.

...is responsive to local community needs.

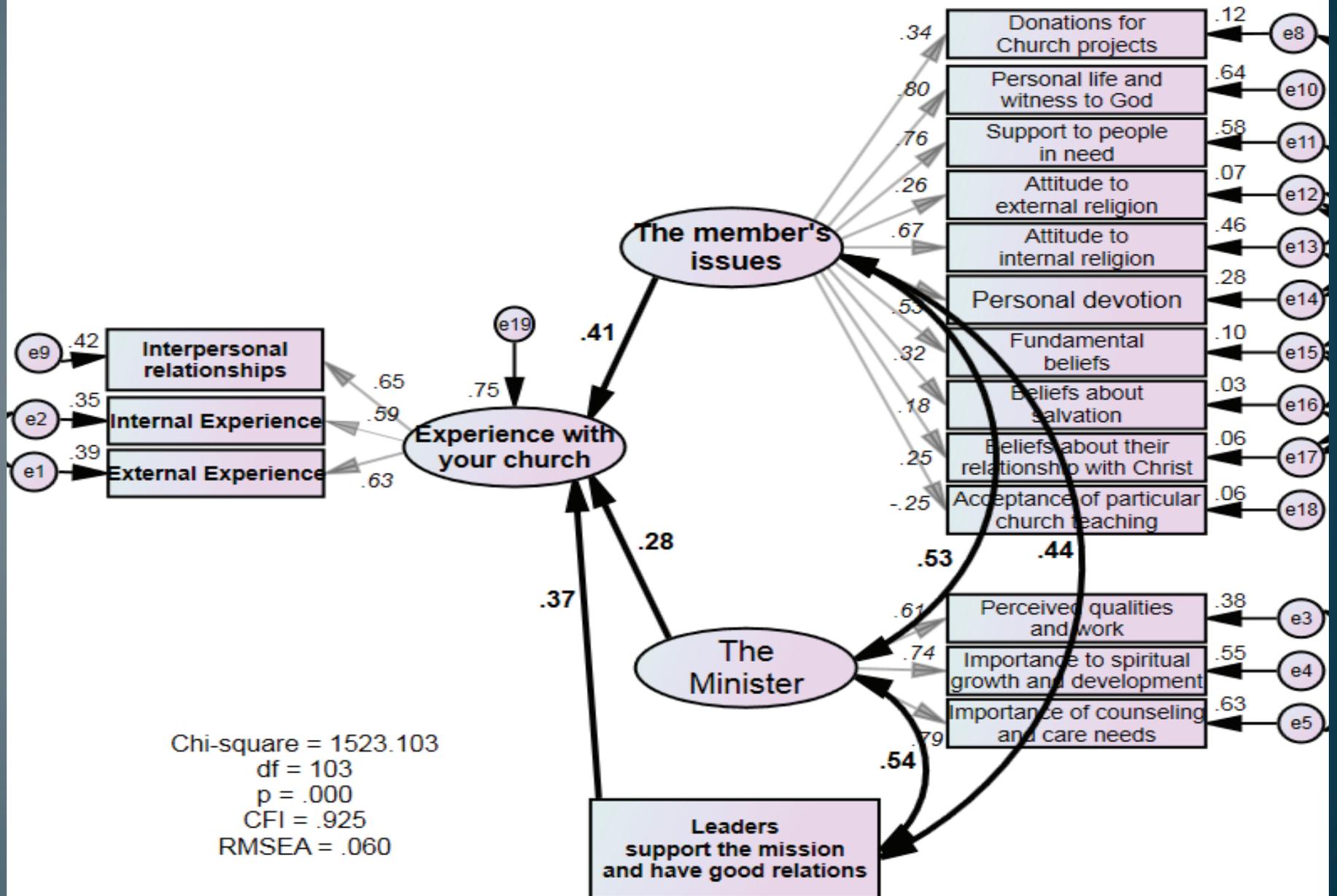
...is open to new ideas.

PRINCIPAL VARIABLES' STRUCTURAL DIAGRAM



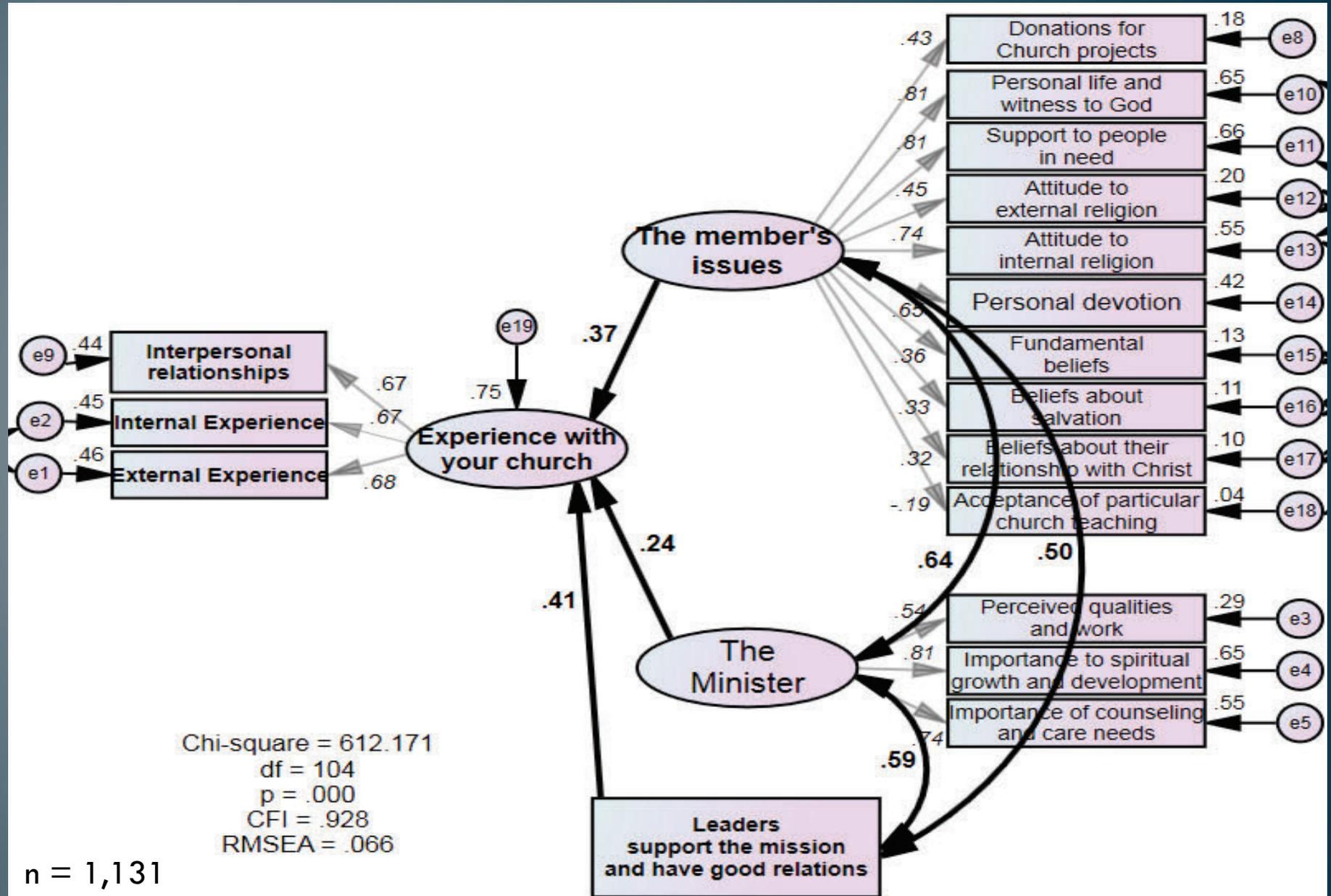
n = 3,847

PRINCIPAL VARIABLES' MEASURING DIAGRAM

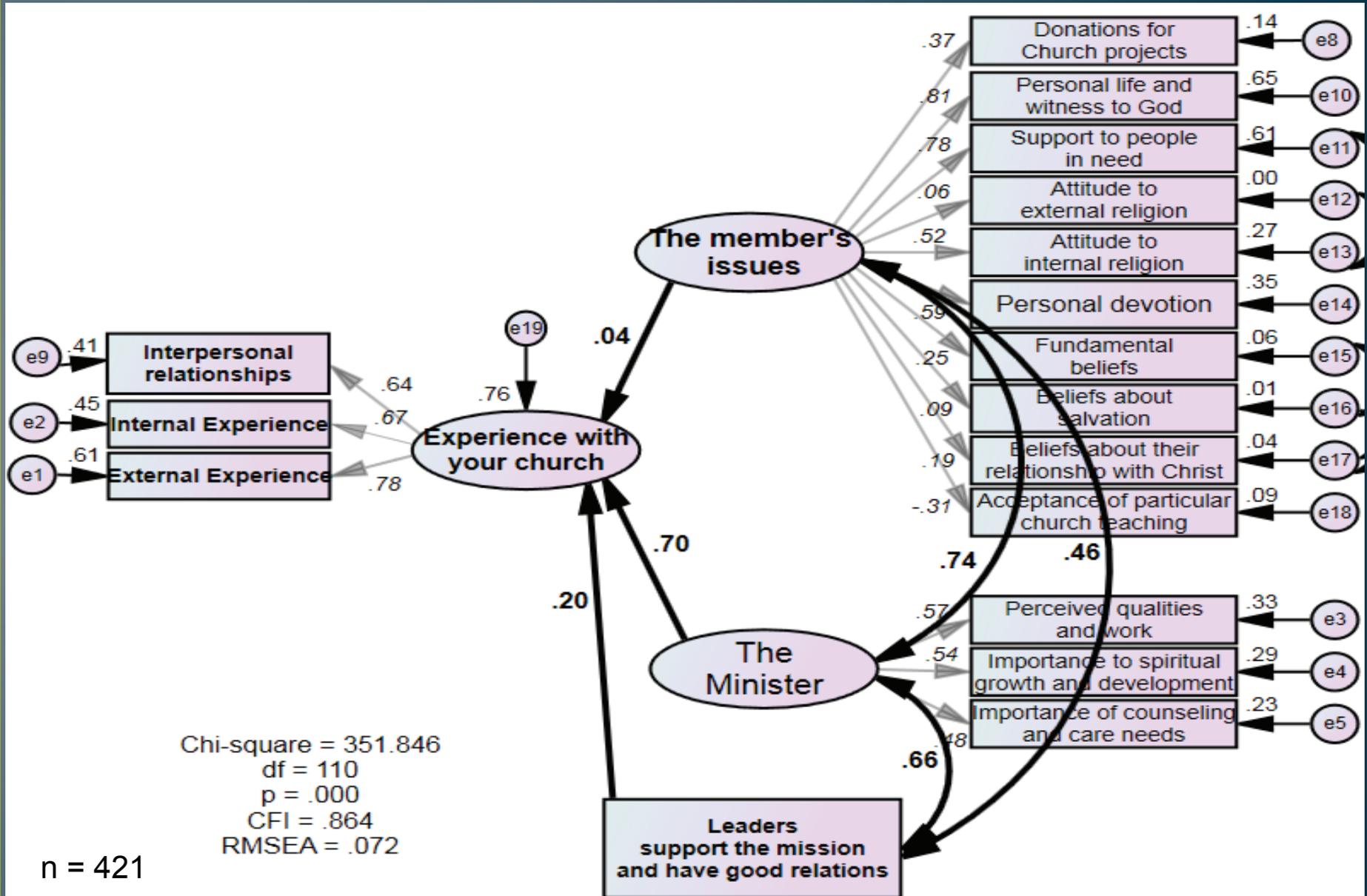


Chi-square = 1523.103
 df = 103
 p = .000
 CFI = .925
 RMSEA = .060

... THAT HAVE STUDIED IN ADVENTIST SCHOOLS



... COLLEGE LEVEL OR MORE



Chi-square = 351.846
 df = 110
 p = .000
 CFI = .864
 RMSEA = .072

n = 421

Conclusions

- ü In the IAD the church members' characteristics play an important role in the church experience, followed by the local leaders' commitment.
- ü Factors that explain the church experience may vary in accordance to different member's personal characteristics.

ü Personal life and witnessing, supporting other people's needs, their attitude towards internal religion, and personal devotion are church member's fundamental characteristics that explain the church experience.

ü The importance of spiritual life development and pastoral counseling are some of the elements that explain the church experience, not their personal traits.