



# Christian Reformed Church North America Report

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Flourishing in Ministry | University of Notre Dame





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We thank you for collaborating with us on this important study of wellbeing at work. This comprehensive survey of wellbeing is just the first step in what we hope will be a long and mutually-beneficial partnership between the Wellbeing at Work/Flourishing in Ministry team and The Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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This report provides a summary of the information we collected in the survey of the wellbeing of members in your organization or network. Most importantly, it provides a comprehensive assessment of members' wellbeing.

We break wellbeing into two core components and assess each component with a battery of measures. The first component is *daily wellbeing*, or what scientists sometimes refer to as *happiness*. This captures the quality of our daily lives, our experiences of burnout, and our capacities to be resilient in the face of stressors and challenges. We used the following battery of measures to assess *daily wellbeing*:

- Person-work fit
- Satisfaction with Work Life
- Job satisfaction
- Burnout
- Resilience
- Satisfaction with life
- General Happiness
- Experienced stress

The second component of wellbeing is *flourishing*. Researchers are still searching for more precise answers to what flourishing is, but there is strong consensus that it includes at least four elements: (1) an overarching system of beliefs, values and virtues that provides structure and guidance to life (meaning system), (2) a sense of contributing toward important purposes or goals in life (purpose in life), (3) an experience of being positively connected to others in mutually caring relationships (positive connectedness), and (4) a positive self-concept and a sense of being one's true self (positive identity & authenticity).



We used the following battery of measures to assess *flourishing*:

- Authenticity at work
- Job Engagement
- Thriving
- Quality of social support and relationships
- Spiritual wellbeing
- Work-family balance
- Work as a calling

We also collected data about some *personal factors* that are directly related to wellbeing. These personal factors are related to individuals' sense of self-worth and their capacities to adapt and deal with challenges, stressors, and change. We used the following battery of measures to assess *personal factors*:

- Emotion regulation
- Proactivity
- Self-control
- Financial worries
- Core self-evaluations

Each of these measures is described in more detail in the report and in the Measure Definition Section. You may also find more information about our research on these dimensions of wellbeing at our project websites: [wellbeing.nd.edu](http://wellbeing.nd.edu) and [flourishing.nd.edu](http://flourishing.nd.edu).

### Additional Analyses

In the weeks and months ahead the research team will conduct additional analyses of this survey data. These analyses will break down the data, where possible, by age group, work tenure, race and ethnicity, and other important demographic comparisons. We will also analyze the relationships among wellbeing factors. For example, we will analyze how personal factors such as core self-evaluations and emotion regulation are related to the different components and measures of wellbeing. We will provide these reports to you as soon as they are completed.



## Continuing Our Collaboration

There are several ways we can continue to support your efforts and to foster wellbeing among the members of your organization. Individuals may return to their account on our website and update their wellbeing profile. They will be able to track changes in their wellbeing and continue to receive insights from our research to help them. When a sufficient number of members of your organization have updated their wellbeing profiles, we can provide updated reports such as this one to your organization.

In 2017, we will launch a smart device app that will track the daily ebbs and flows of wellbeing. This app can be downloaded to smart phones and tablet devices. It will provide a way for individuals to learn about the

factors in their daily life that foster or diminish their wellbeing. Many individuals are unaware of the true nature of the stressors at work nor do they often understand the positive and life-enriching aspects of work. This app will provide a scientific way for them to gain personal insights into their work experiences.

That app will help us to learn a lot more about the daily hassles, stressors, and uplifts that shape wellbeing. When sufficient members participate, data from this app will also provide benefits for organizations. For example, it can create a platform for assessing the effectiveness of new wellbeing programs and initiatives.

We will also launch thematic surveys that focus in greater depth on specific topics such as work-family life, work and non-work relationships, and characteristics of work contexts. We will notify your organization as each of these thematic surveys are available, and we can invite all of the individuals who have participated in this baseline survey to join the new thematic surveys. We will provide comprehensive reports to your organization for each of these thematic surveys.

We look forward to our continued collaboration as we work together to support and enhance the wellbeing of caring and helping professionals.



### Our Research Project

The Wellbeing at Work Program (WAWP) is a team of researchers who are exploring what makes work a life-enriching versus life-depleting experience. We focus on the helping and caring professions. Our goal is to learn how to help these individuals flourish in the important work they do. The WAWP has three key elements:

- Flourishing in Ministry is our research on the wellbeing of clergy. We study the lives and ministries of women and men in Christian ministry spanning Roman Catholic, Mainline, Evangelical, and Historically Black religious traditions.
- Caring for Caregivers is our research on international humanitarian and global health professionals. We travel around the globe to study wellbeing in action among the men and women who serve poor, vulnerable, and marginalized people.
- WorkWell is the practice-oriented part of the Wellbeing at Work Program. Here, we strive to provide research-based insights and tools that organizations, leaders and helping professionals can put to good use in their daily work lives.



### **The Wellbeing Survey**

This report is part of collaborations between The Christian Reformed Church in North America and the University of Notre Dame Wellbeing at Work Research Project, the Lilly Foundation and Templeton Religion Trust. The purpose of this project is to learn more about the well-being of the Christian Reformed Church in North America pastors and ministers.

We asked a variety of questions about both life in general, as well as life at work. The results of the survey are not intended to be exhaustive. We hope this report provides an overview of what it means to flourish and sacrifice.

Our survey questions are research-based and include questions about life satisfaction, self-evaluation, social support, resilience, and faith.



### DAILY WELLBEING MEASURES

- **Fit**
  - A measure of the respondent's knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully fit the demands of the work role
- **Satisfaction with Work Life**
  - A measure of the respondent's global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with his/her life
- **Job Satisfaction**
  - The respondent's global level of satisfaction with his/her work life
- **Burnout**
  - A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity
- **Resilience**
  - A measure of bouncing back in response to adversity, as well as having the capacity to choose a vital and authentic life
- **Satisfaction with Life**
  - This scale measures global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life
- **General Happiness**
  - A measure subjective happiness relative to self and peers
- **Experienced Stress**
  - This measure assesses the degree to which a person experiences negative challenges, fatigue, and mental exhaustion at work. It captures a person's overall assessment of the stressfulness of their work.





### FLOURISHING MEASURES

- **Authenticity at Work**
  - This is a measure of unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise.
- **Job Engagement**
  - This measures positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption
- **Thriving**
  - Respondent's self-perceived success in important areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism
- **Relationships**
  - This series of questions intends to develop an understanding of respondent's amount and type of social support they receive from family, friends, and work colleagues and supervisors
- **Spiritual Wellbeing**
  - This series of questions asks questions about your experiences of transcendence, and focused in particular on the extent you feel your core life values and beliefs shape your daily life
- **Work Family Balance**
  - This measure captures the extent to which a person feels their work has a negative impact on their home life and also the extent to which home and family issues tend to spill over negatively into work
- **Work as a Calling**
  - A measure to assess if individuals feel called, hard-wired, or destined to live into their current work role



### PERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO WELLBEING

- **Emotion Regulation**
  - This measures the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed
- **Proactivity**
  - Measures a personal disposition toward proactive behavior
- **Self-Control**
  - These questions assess a person's willpower which is their capacity to control their thoughts, feelings, and actions
- **Core Self-Evaluation**
  - This measures a basic, fundamental appraisal of one's worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person
- **Financial worries**
  - We have found that actual levels of income and debt are less important for wellbeing than are a person's sense of their financial condition. These questions assess the extent to which a person experiences worries and stress related to their income and personal finances

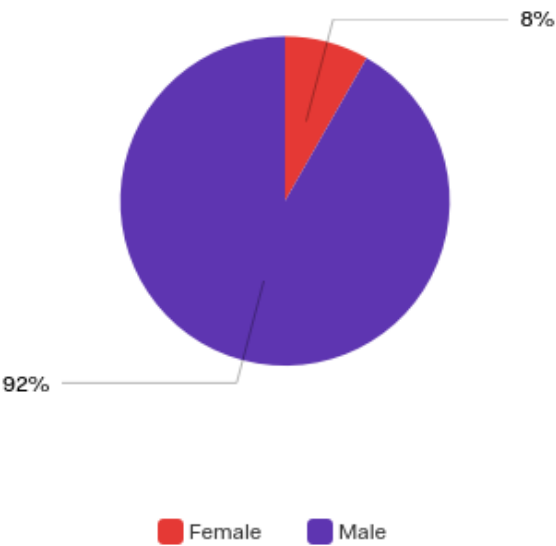


# Demographics & Other Specifics

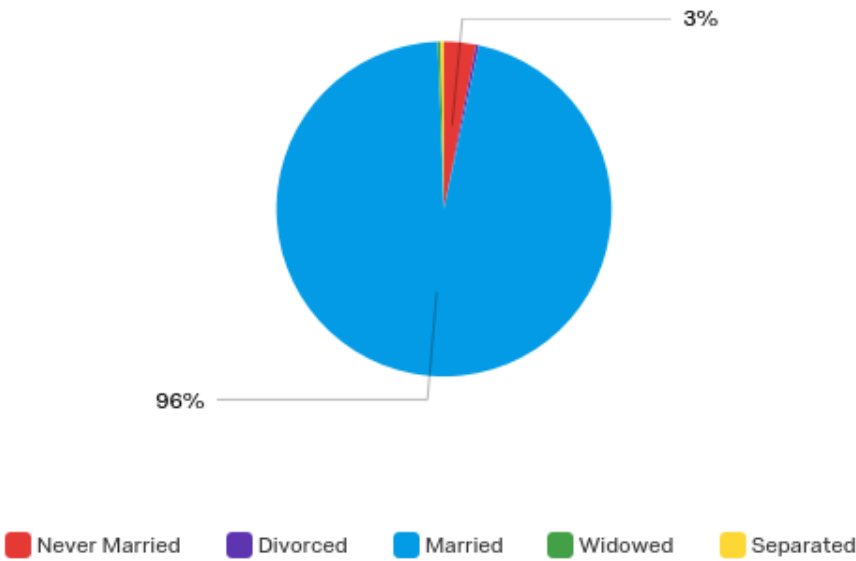


DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

Gender

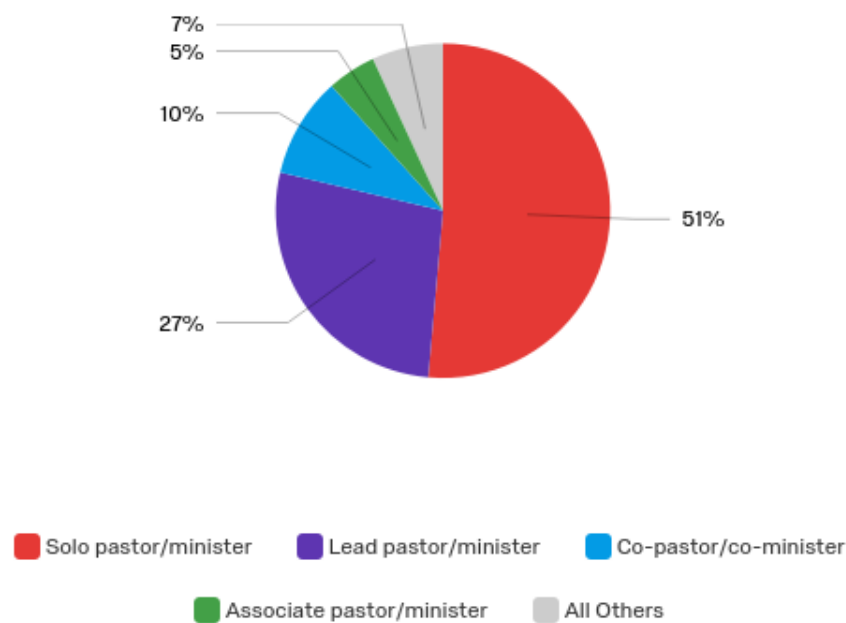


Marital Status

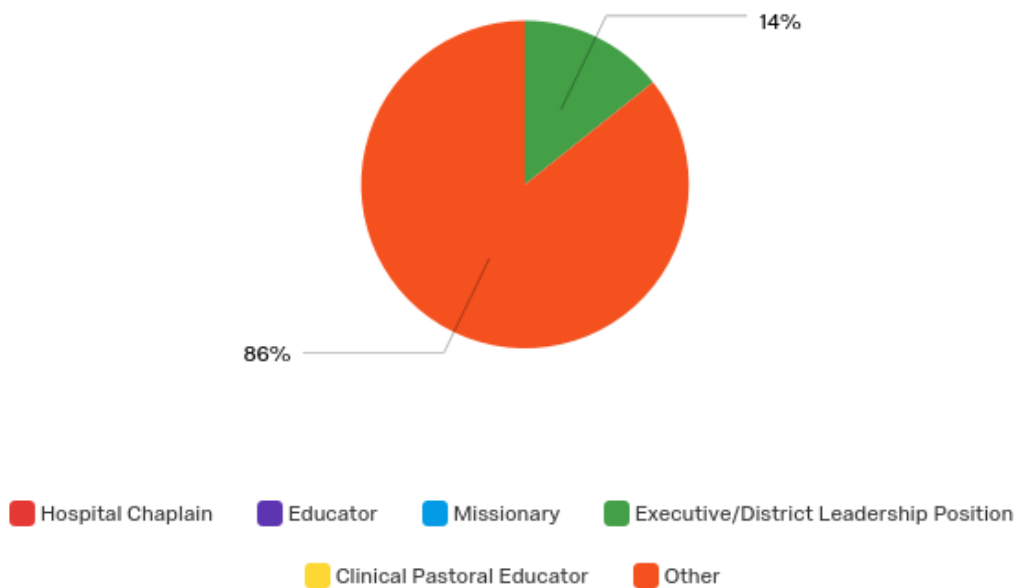




What best describes your current position if serving in a local church?

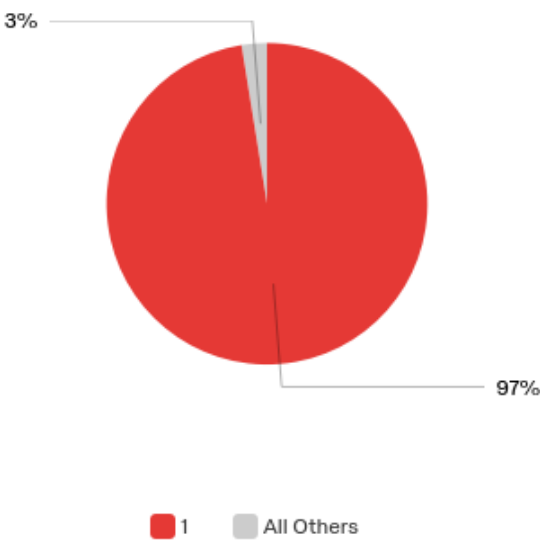


Which best describes your ministry position if not serving in a local church?



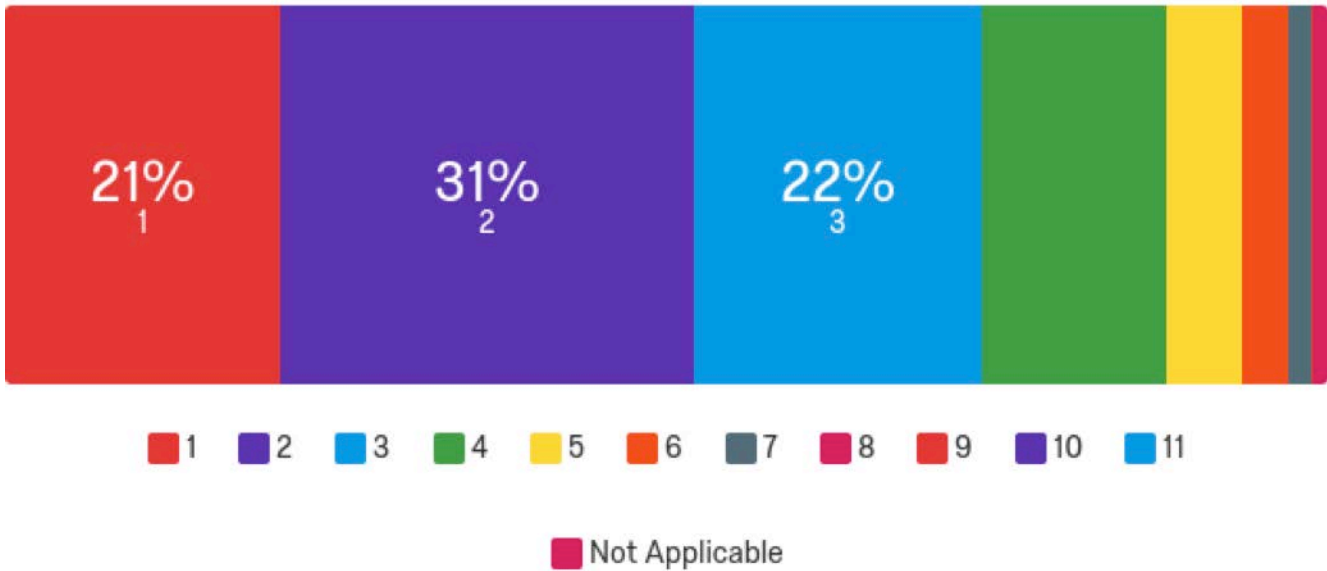


How many different churches do you serve at this time?



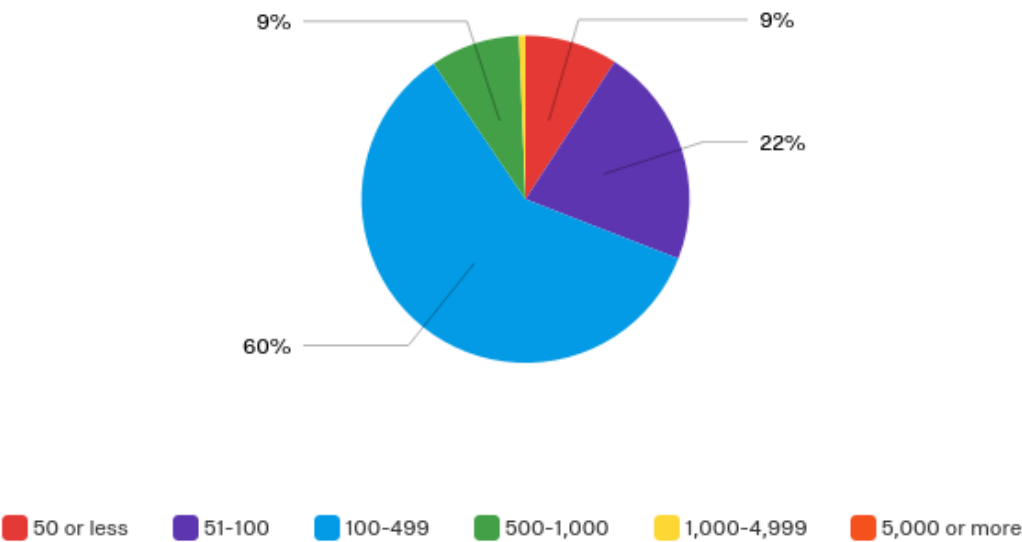
How many different churches have you served?

Number of Churches

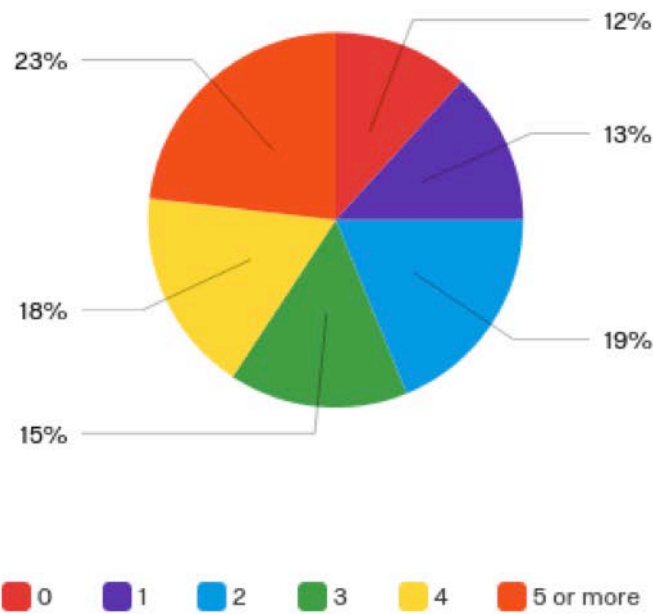




What is the size of your church in terms of average attendance at worship? Please indicate the size of your largest church if you serve more than one local congregation.

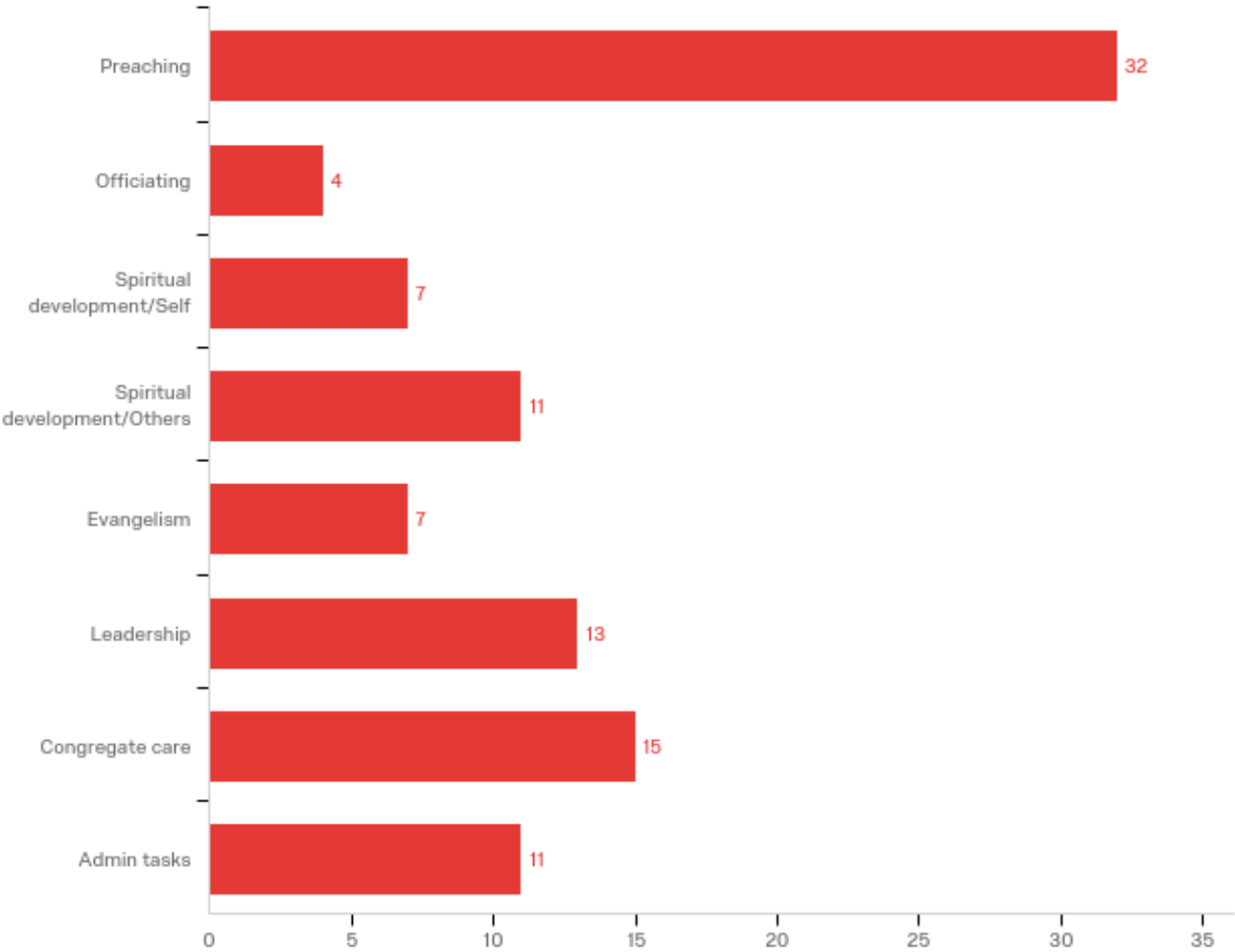


Other than you, how many paid staff, full- or part-time, are employed by your congregation?





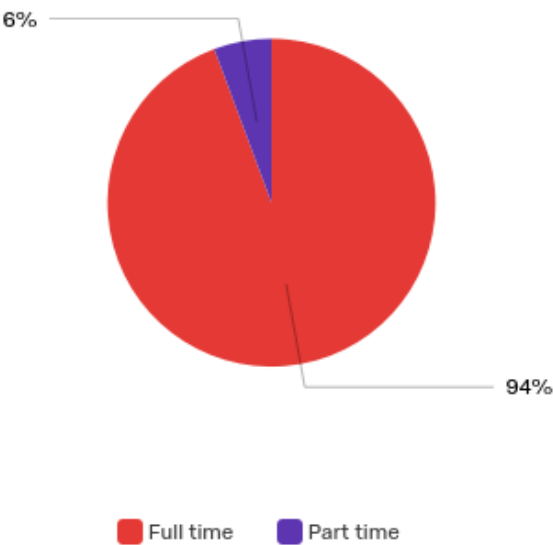
What percent of the total time you spend on ministry activities is allocated to each of the following activities? (Percent of time spent on each task, total = 100%)



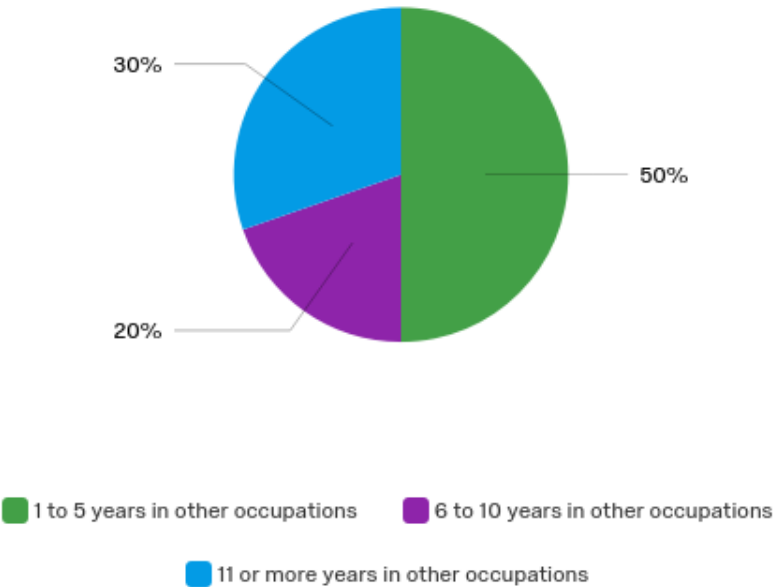




Do you consider your work in ministry full time or part time?

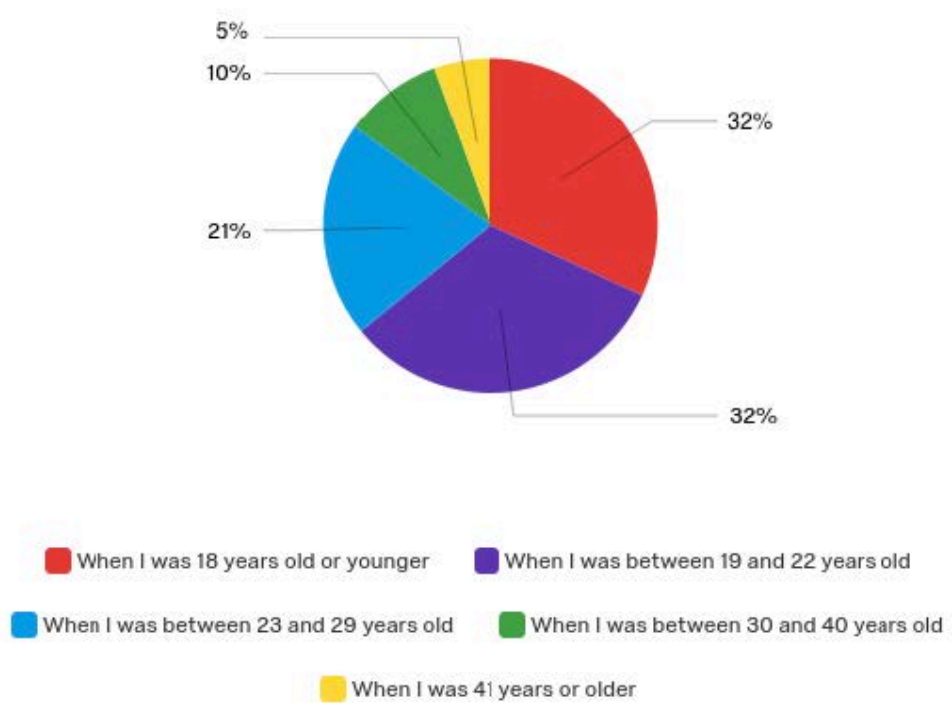


Length in Ministry

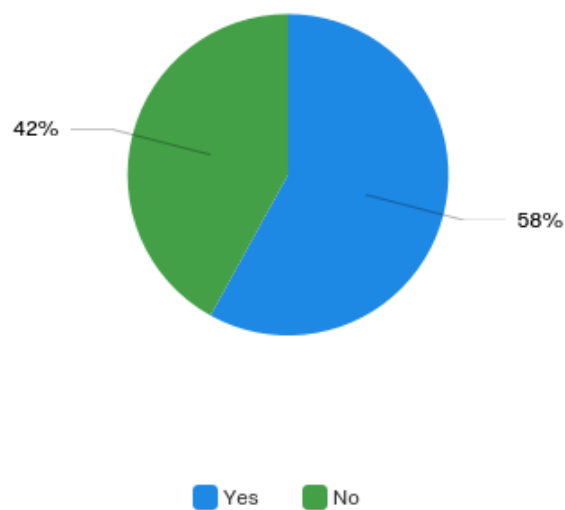




When did you first seriously consider that you were called to ministry?

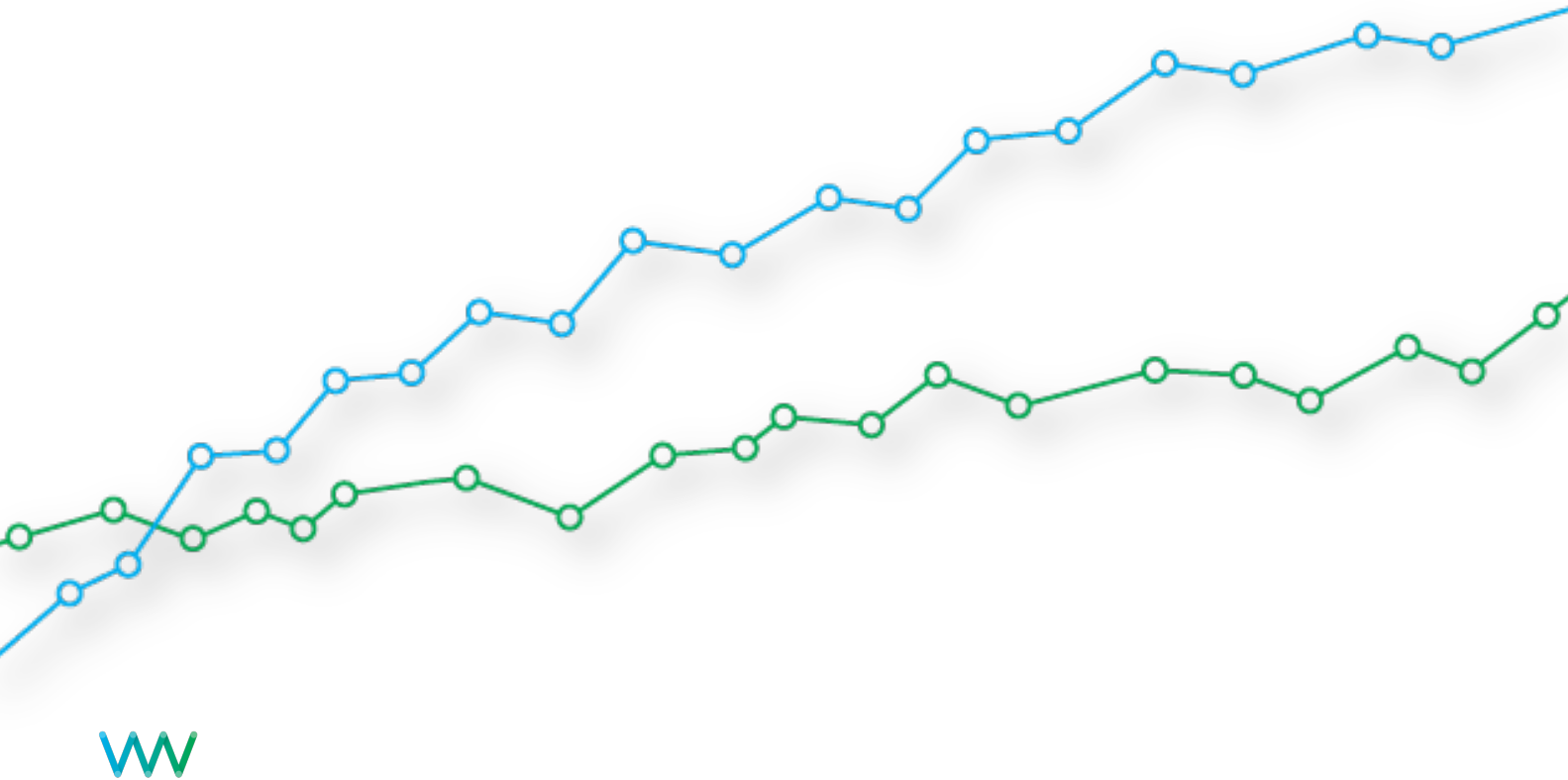
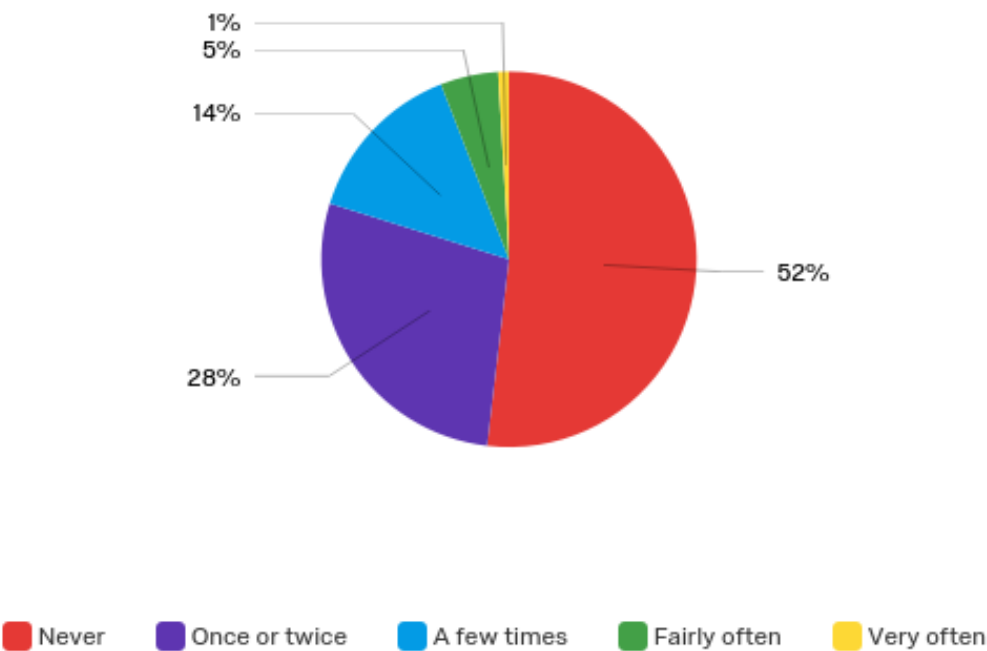


Did you work full-time at other occupations before entering your ministry position?





In the past year, how often have you seriously considered leaving pastoral ministry?





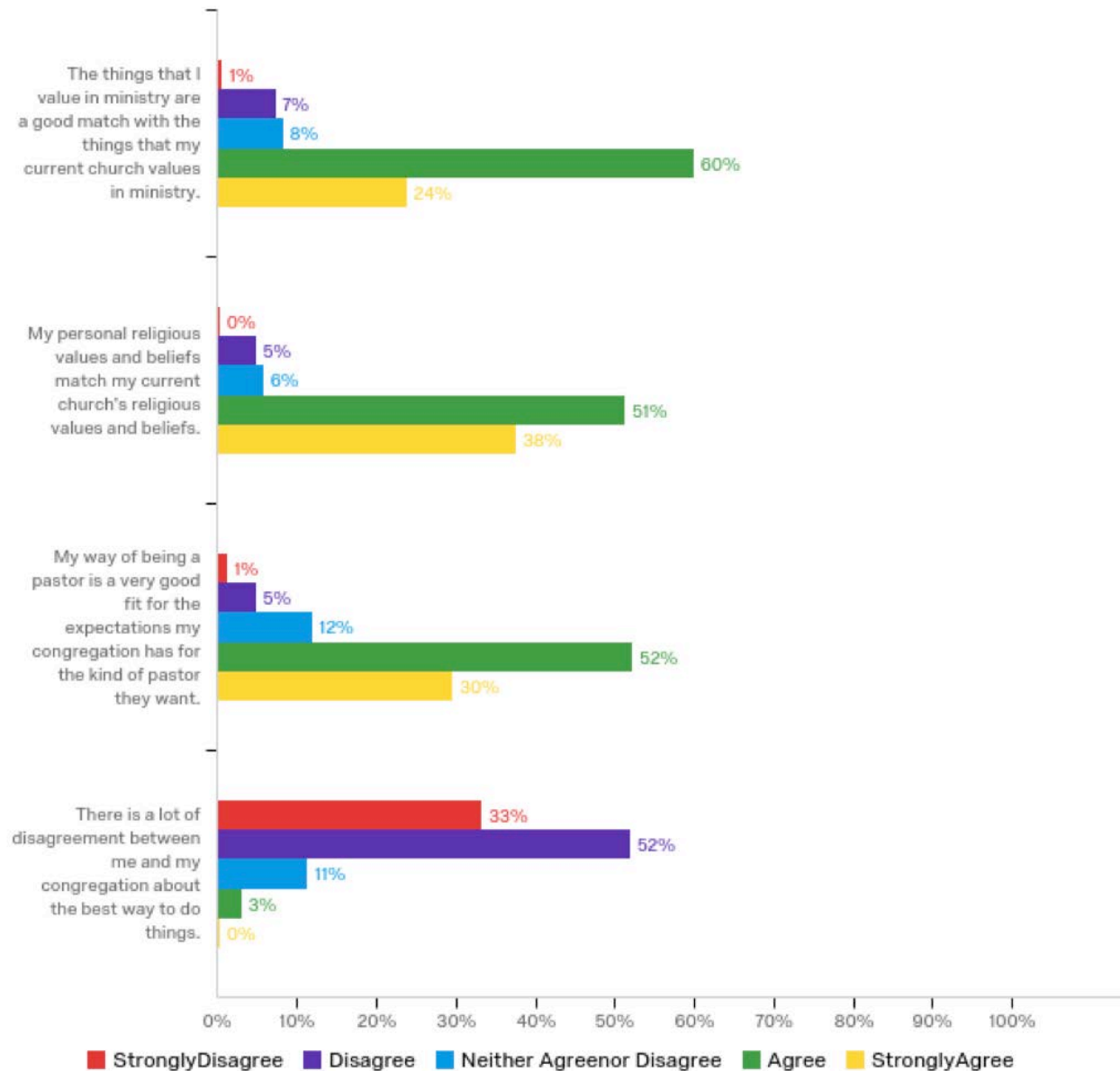
# Daily Wellbeing Analysis



## MINISTRY FIT AND CHALLENGES

### Ministry Fit and Challenges

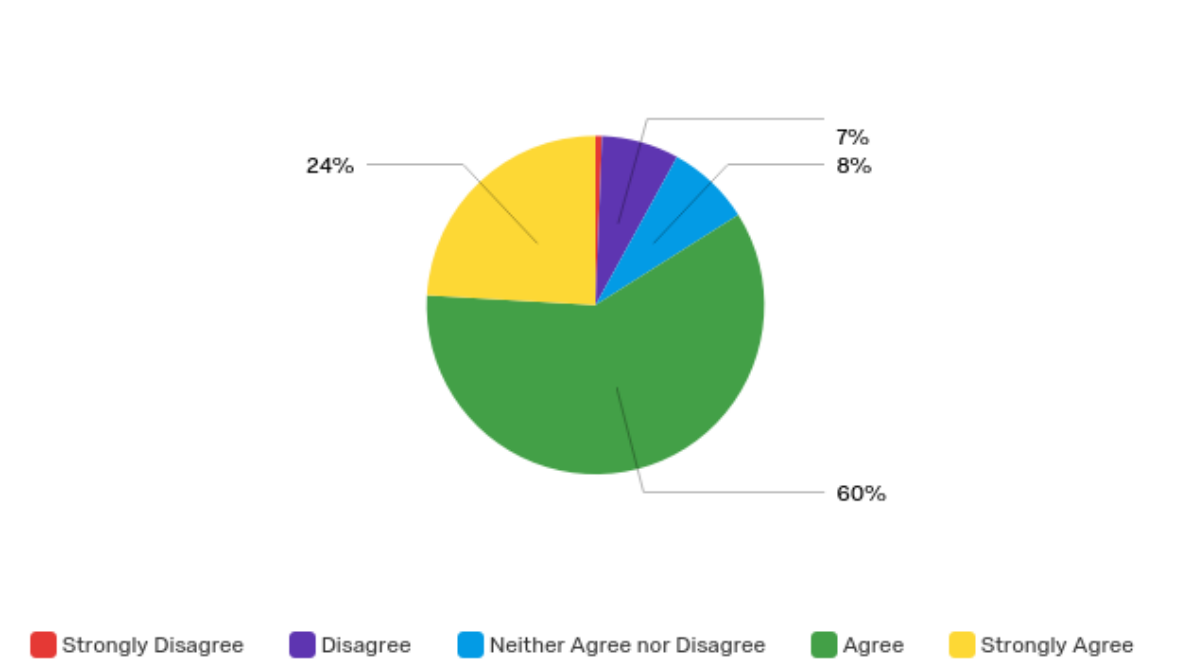
Thinking about your current church and your current role as a pastor, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



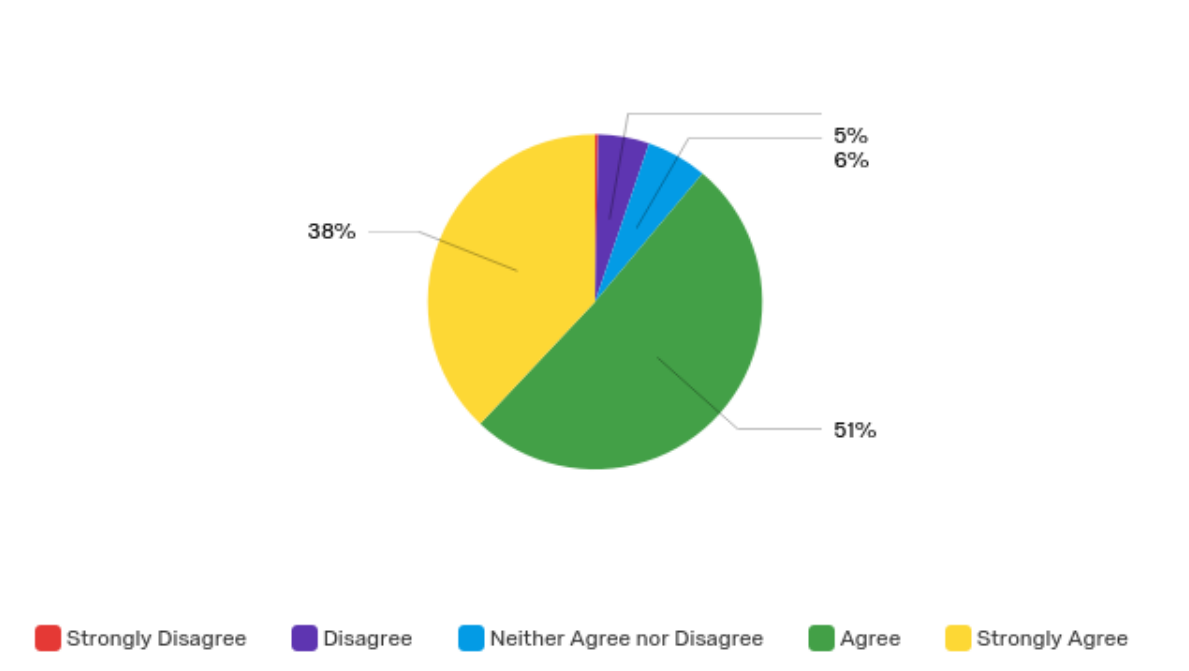
\*For the full description please see individual graphs below



The things that I value in ministry are a good match with the things that my current church values in ministry.

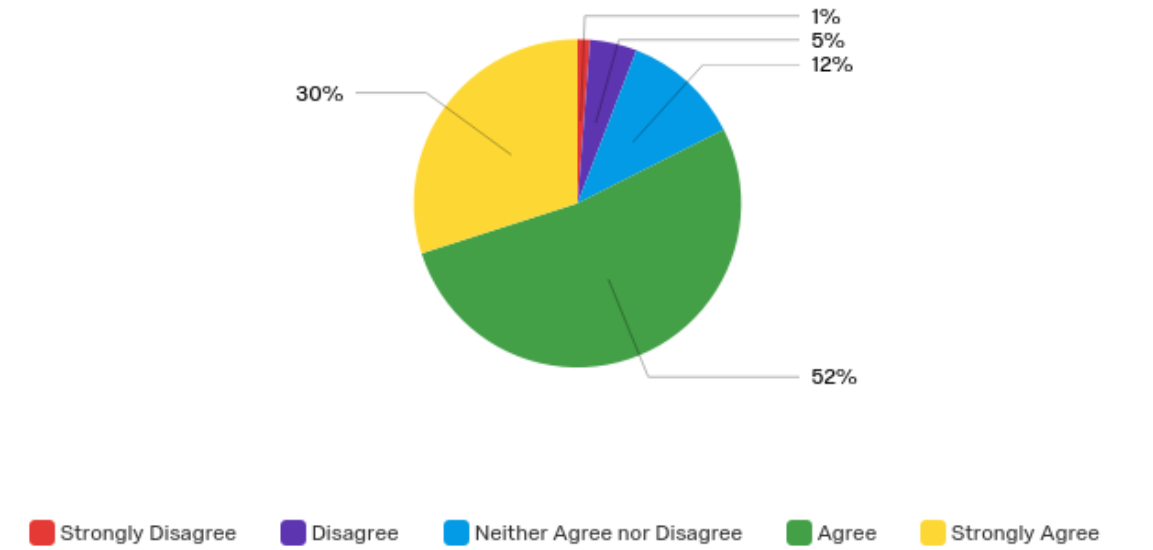


My personal religious values and beliefs match my current church's religious values and beliefs.

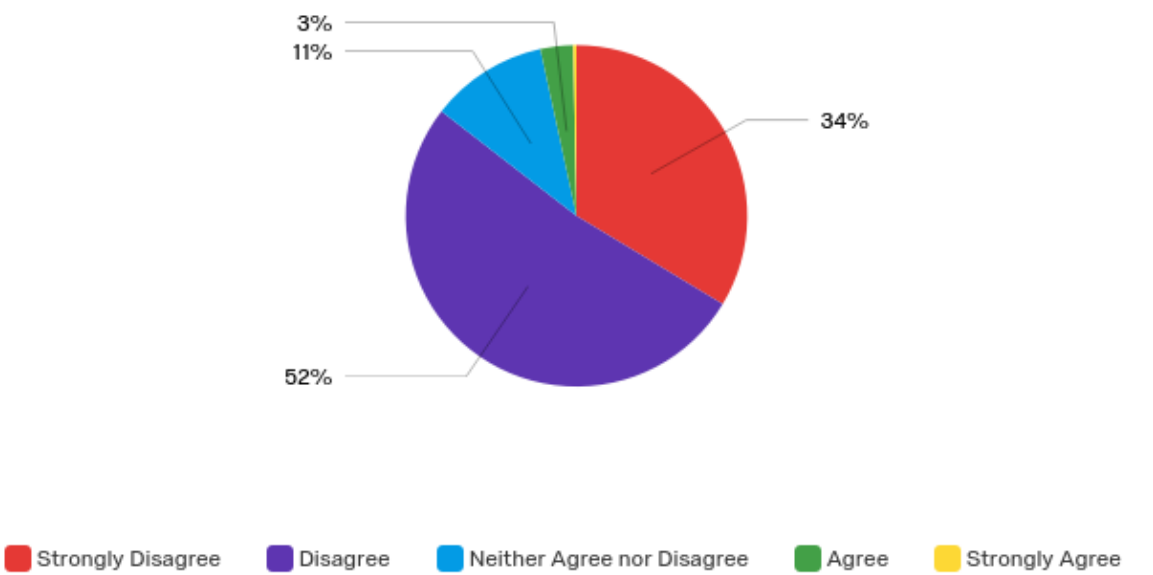




My way of being a pastor is a very good fit for the expectations my congregation has for the kind of pastor they want.



There is a lot of disagreement between me and my congregation about the best way to do things.

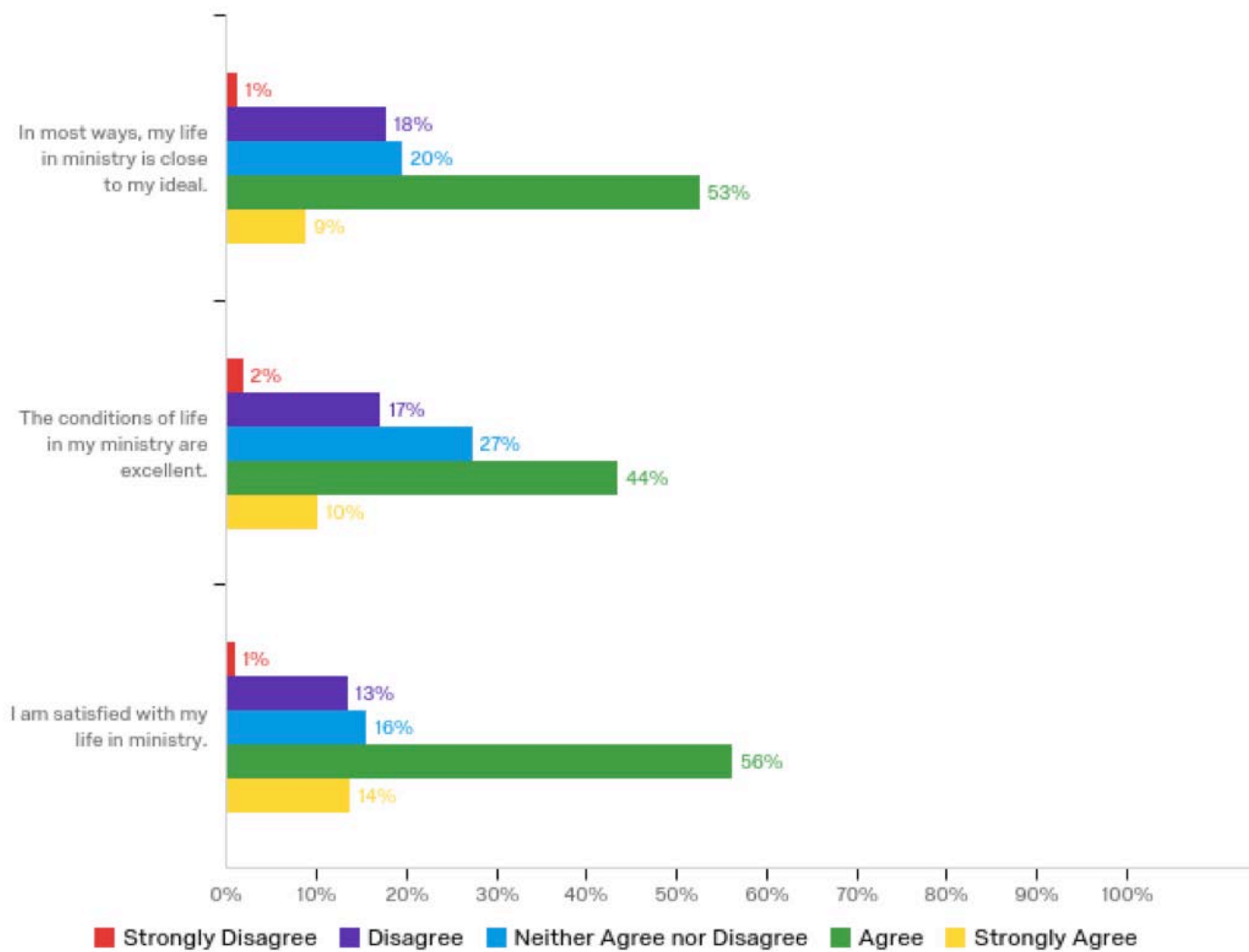




SATISFACTION WITH WORK LIFE

Satisfaction with Work Life scale represent your current experiences at work. We also asked you to compare your current experiences to your ideal of work-at-its-best.

Satisfaction with Work Life: Focusing only on your experiences in your ministry and the work aspects of your life, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

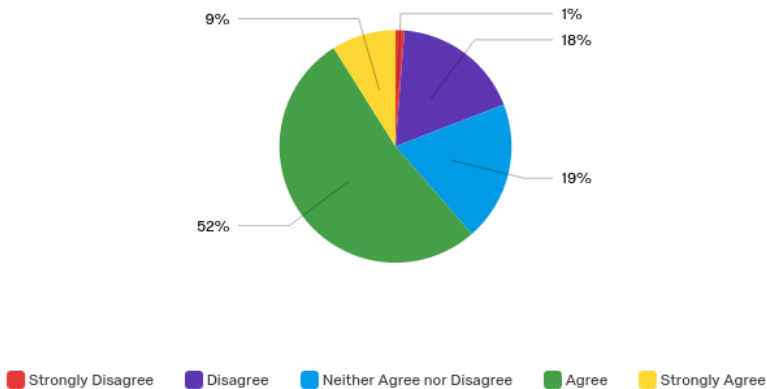




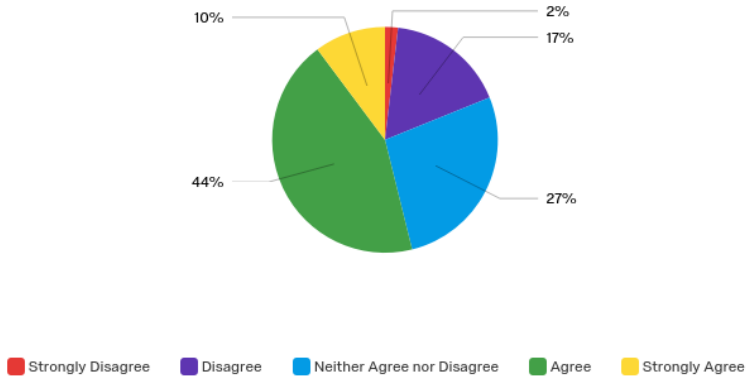
# DAILY WELLBEING ANALYSIS



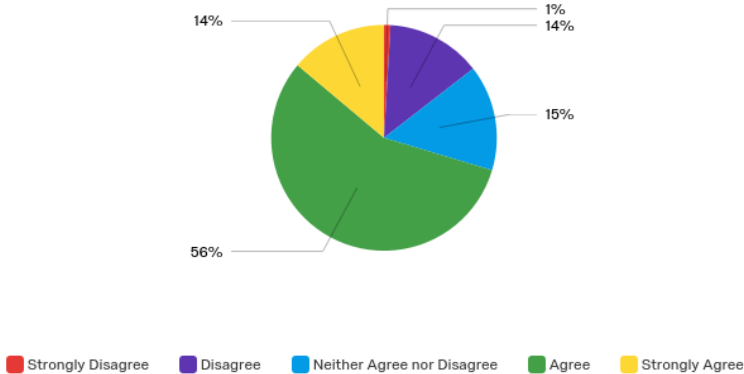
In most ways, my life in ministry is close to my ideal.



The conditions of life in my ministry are excellent.



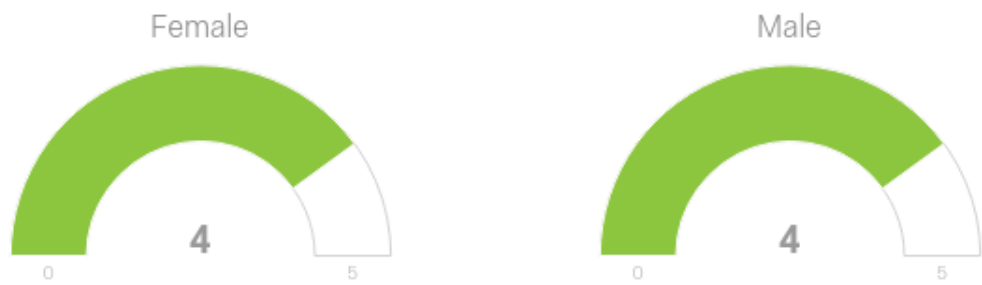
I am satisfied with my life in ministry.



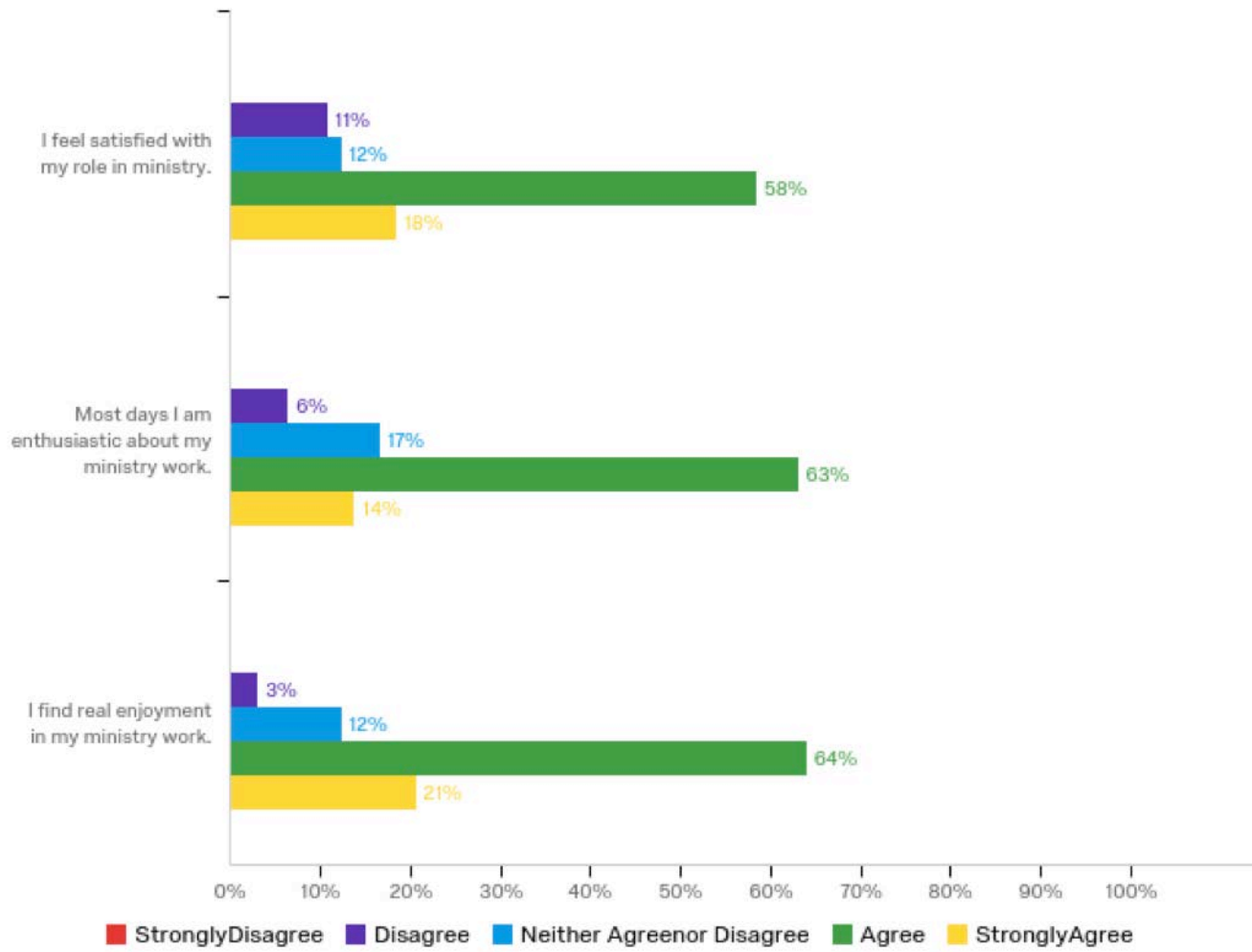


Job Satisfaction is the measure of respondent's global level of satisfaction with their work life.

Job Satisfaction Mean By Gender

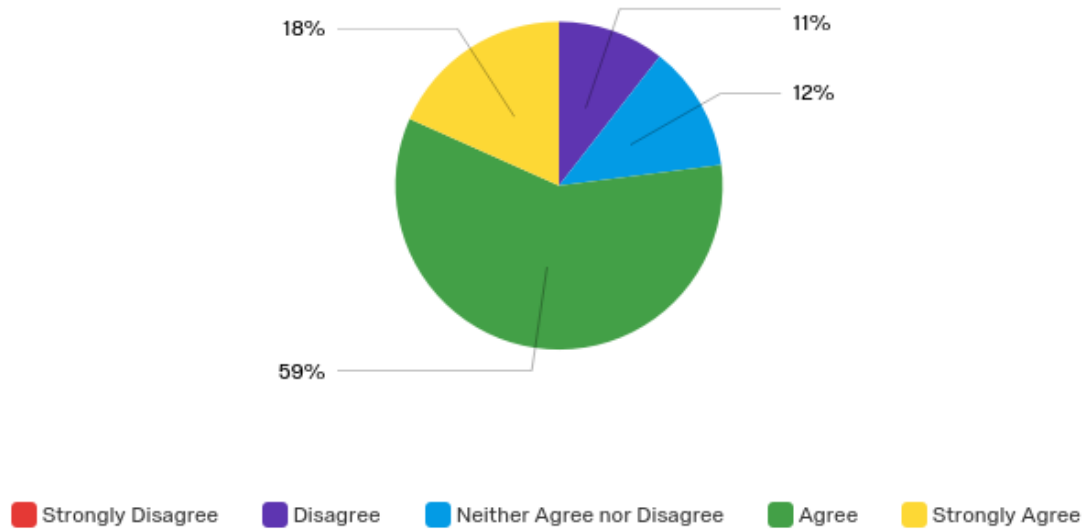


Job Satisfaction: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

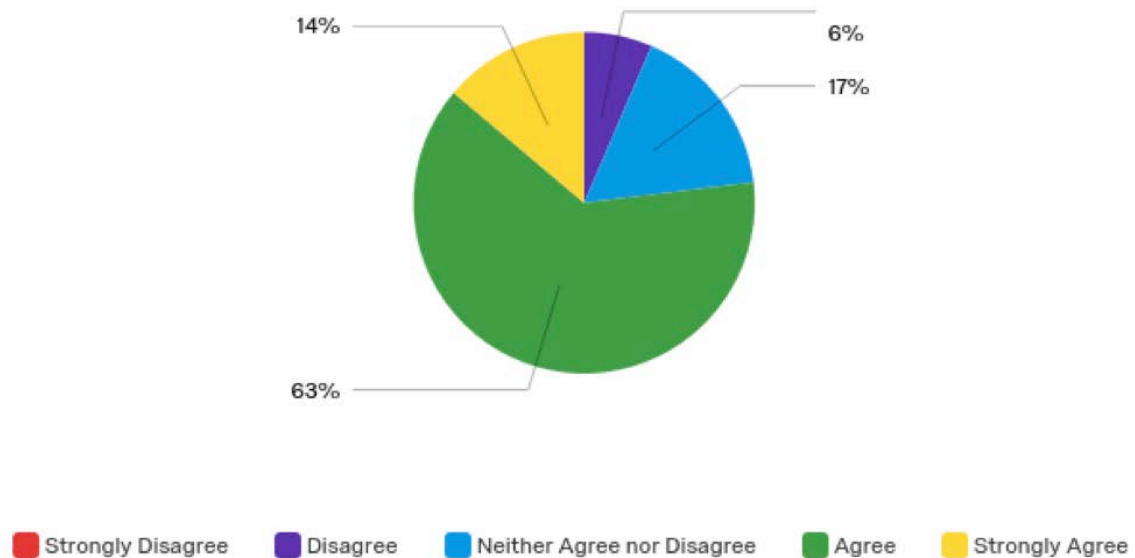




I feel satisfied with my role in ministry.

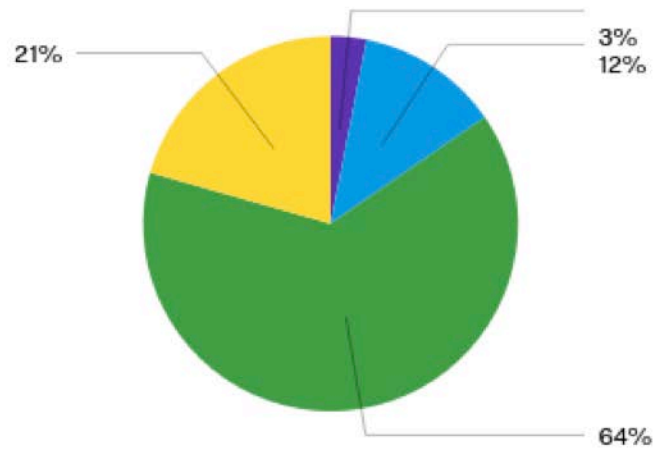


Most days I am enthusiastic about my ministry work.





I find real enjoyment in my ministry work.



 Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neither Agree nor Disagree     Agree     Strongly Agree



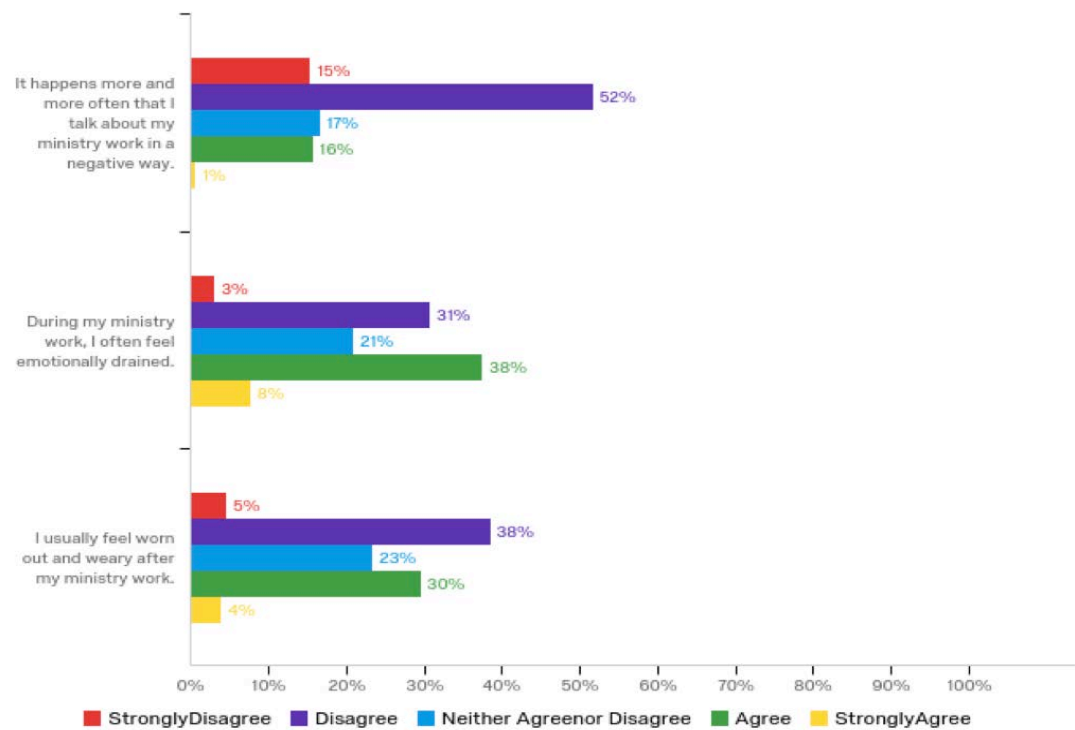
BURNOUT

Burnout measures a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity

Burnout Mean by Gender



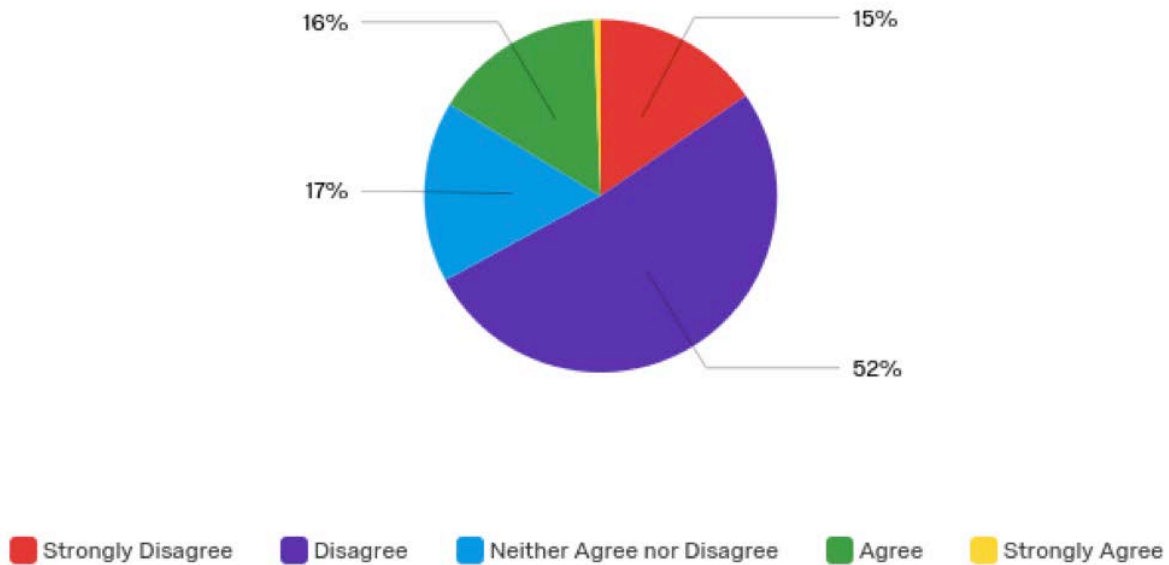
Burnout: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



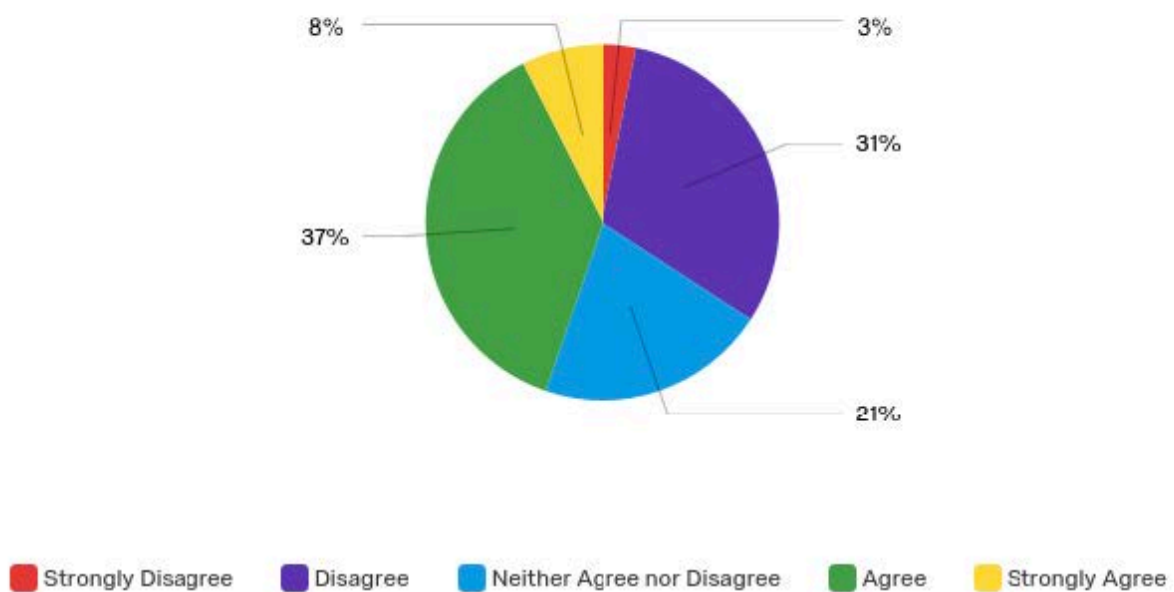
\*For the full description please see individual graphs below



It happens more and more often that I talk about my ministry work in a negative way.

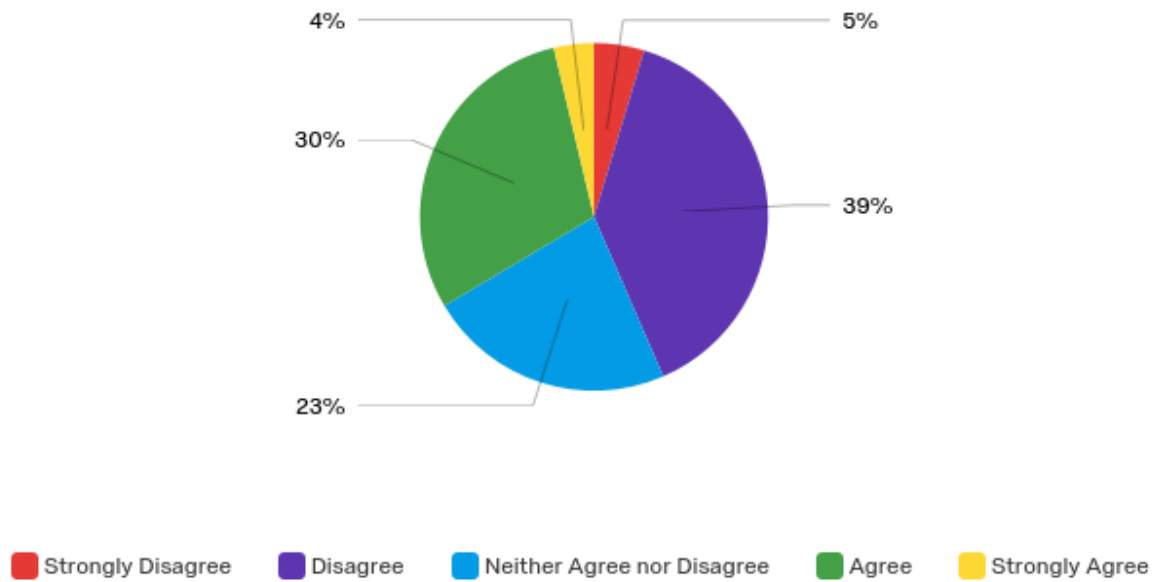


During my ministry work, I often feel emotionally drained.





I usually feel worn out and weary after my ministry work.

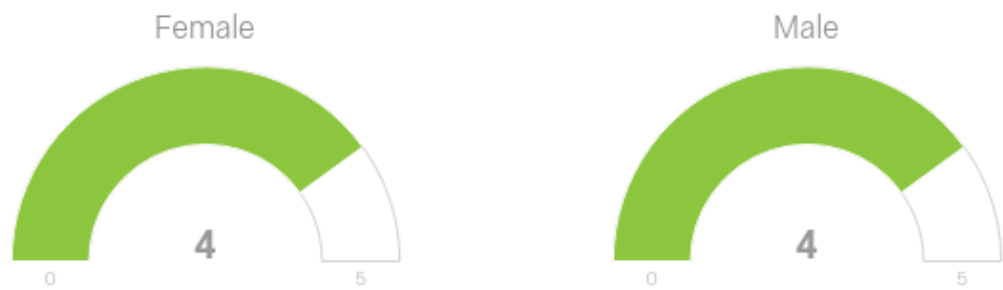




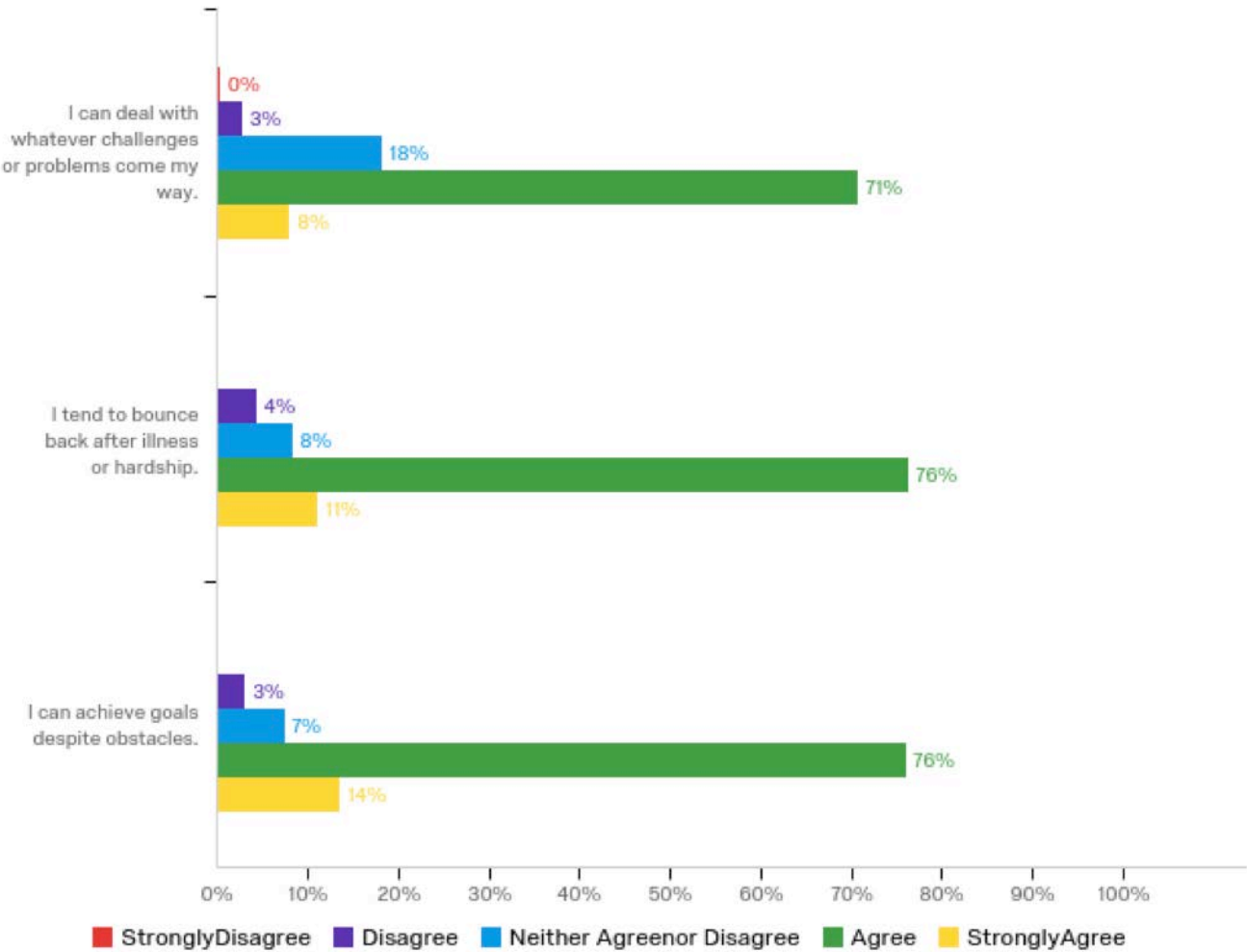
RESILIENCE

Resilience is a measure of bouncing back in response to adversity, as well as having the capacity to choose a vital and authentic life.

Resilience Mean By Gender



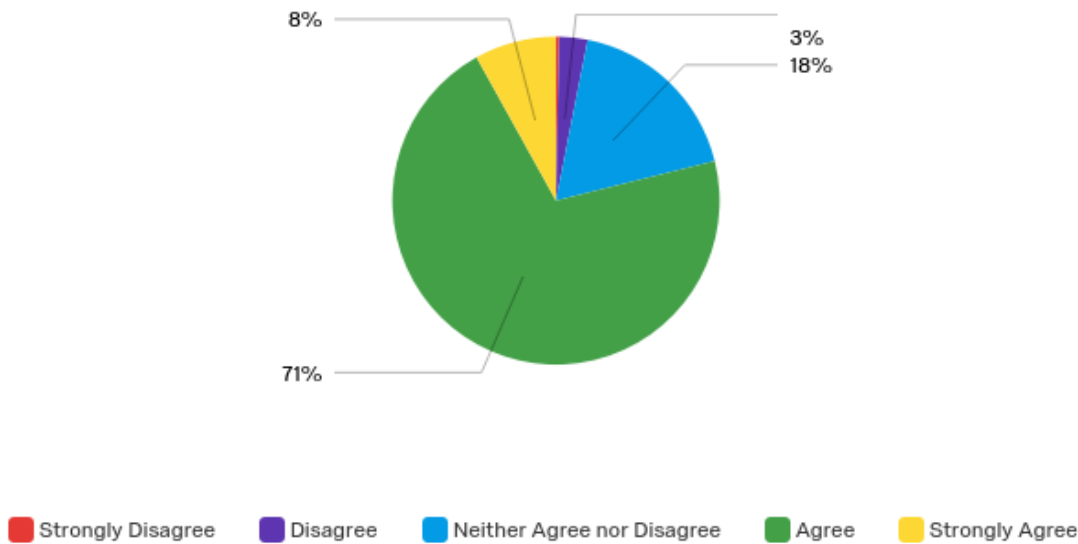
Resilience: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



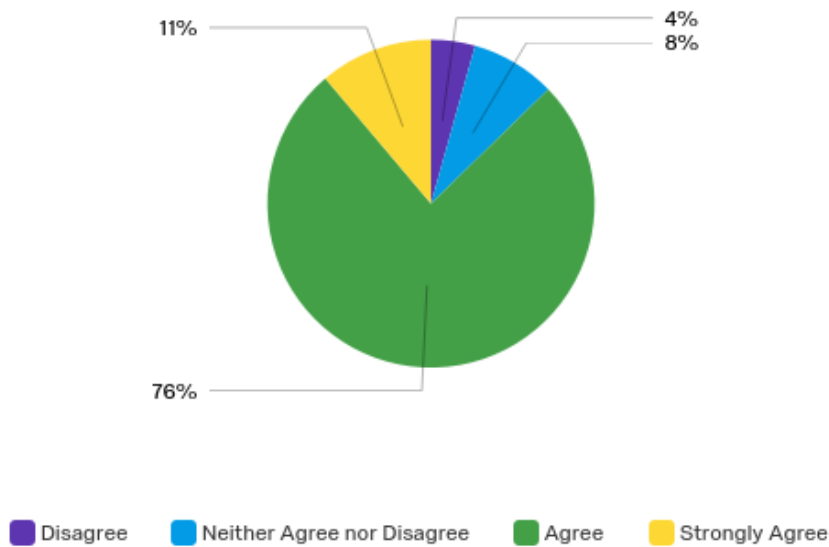




I can deal with whatever challenges or problems come my way.

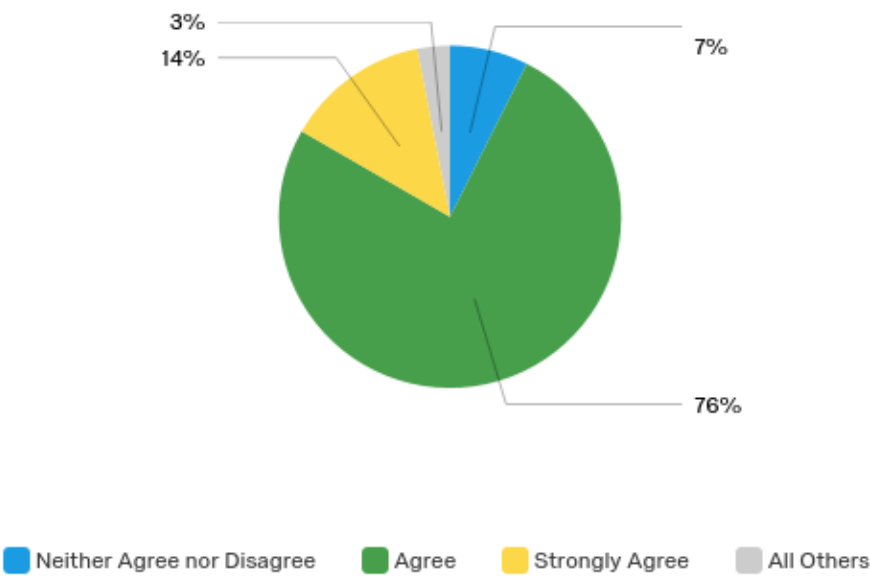


I tend to bounce back after illness or hardship.





I can achieve goals despite obstacles.

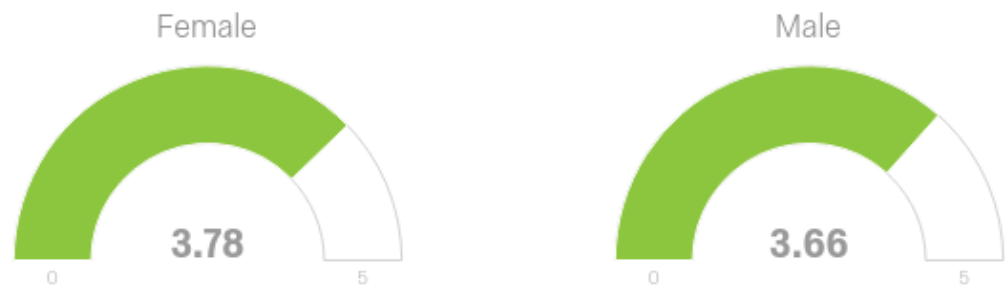




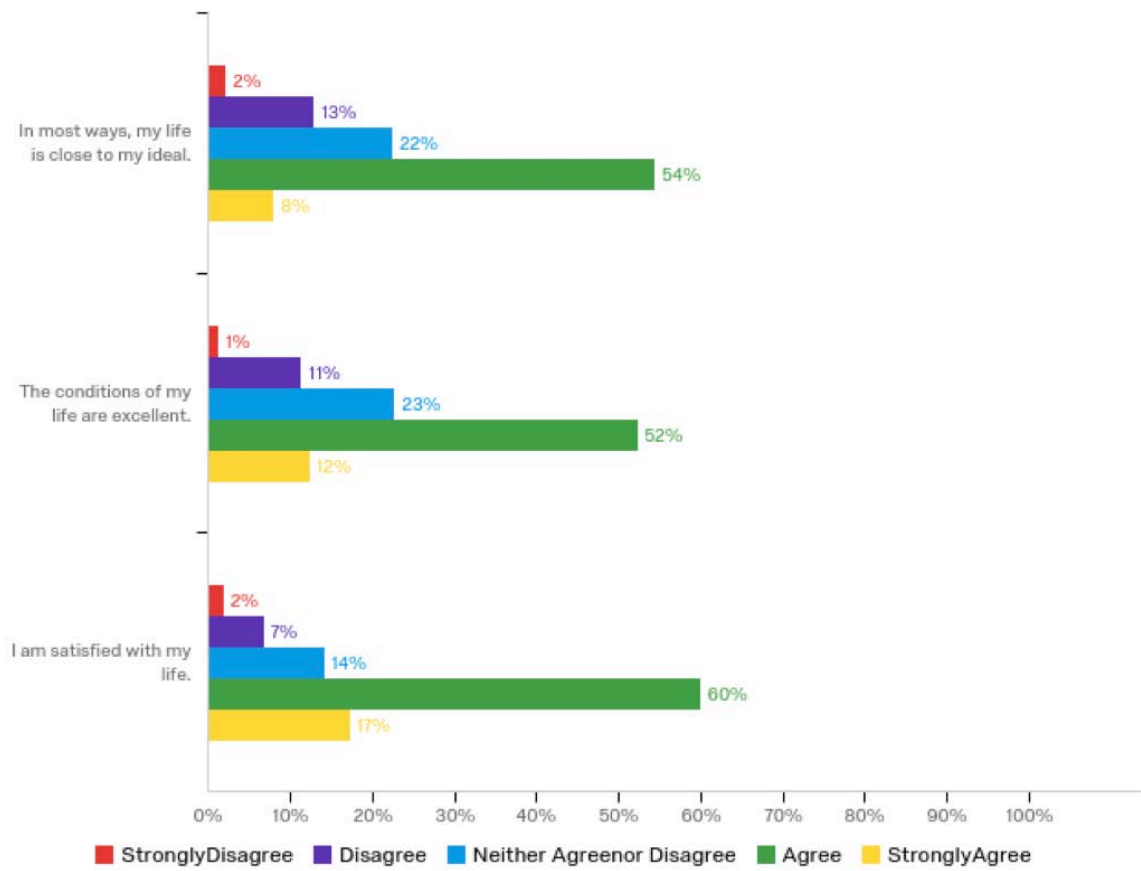
SATISFACTION WITH LIFE

Satisfaction with Life measures global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life.

Satisfaction with Life Mean by Gender

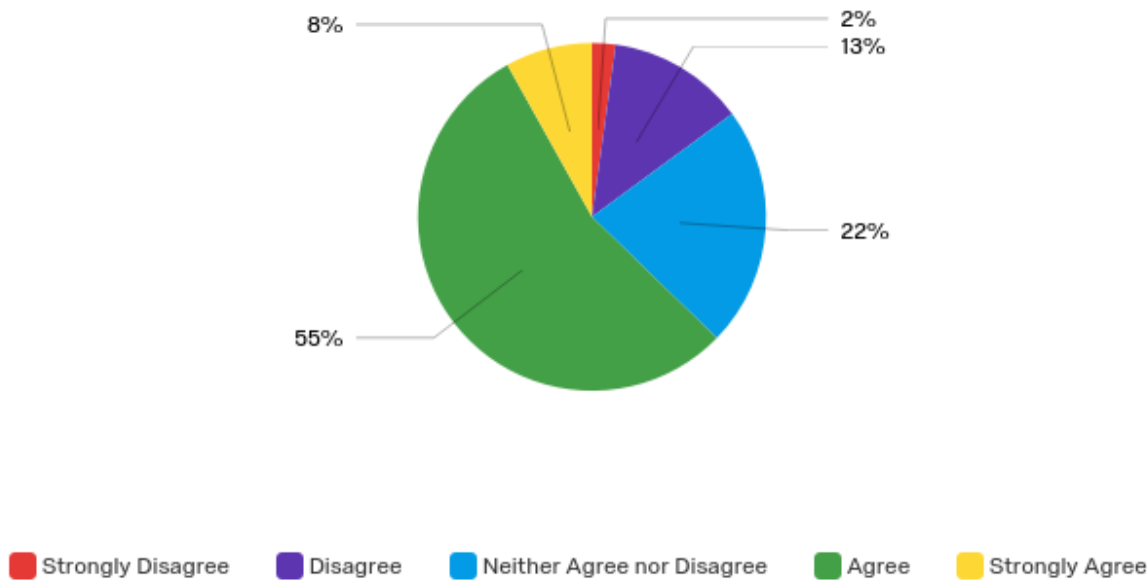


**Satisfaction with Life:** This next series of questions asks you to step back and think of your overall life, including work experiences and your life outside of work, your home life and the other, non-work, aspects of your life. As you consider your overall life or your life in general, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

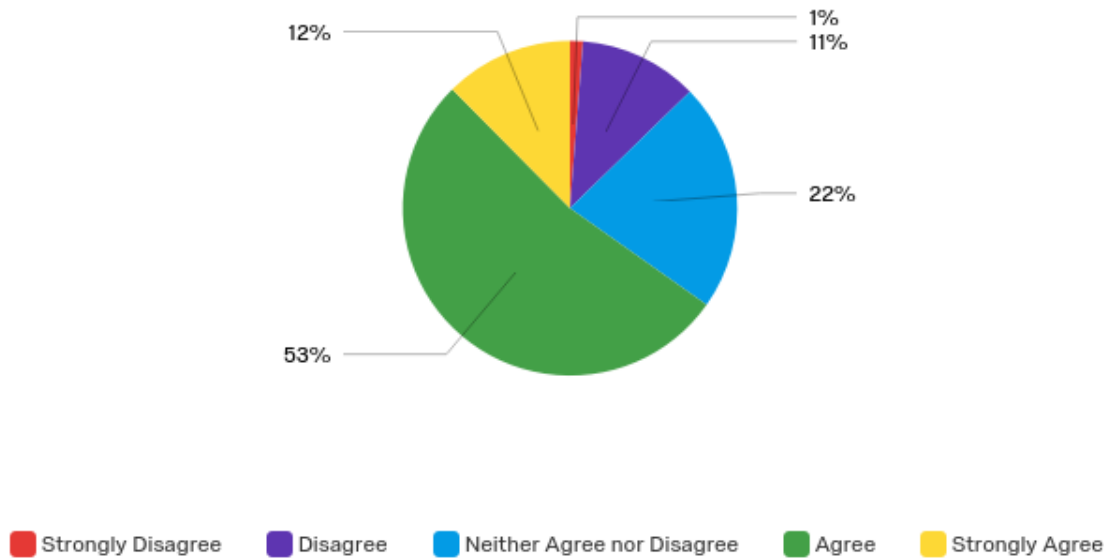




In most ways, my life is close to my ideal.

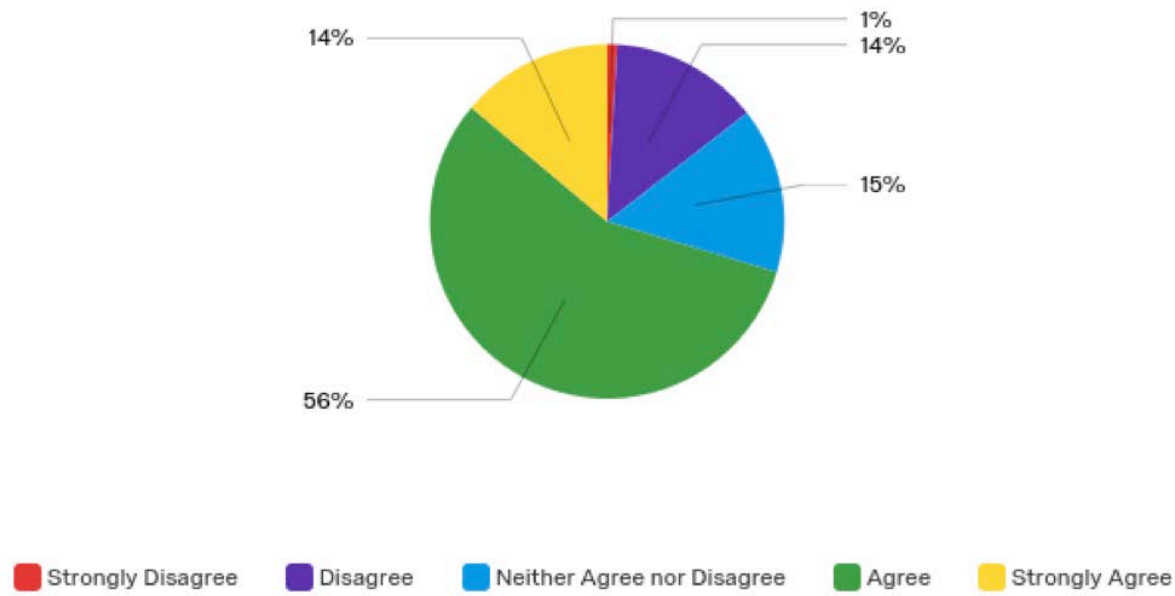


The conditions of my life are excellent.





I am satisfied with my life in ministry.

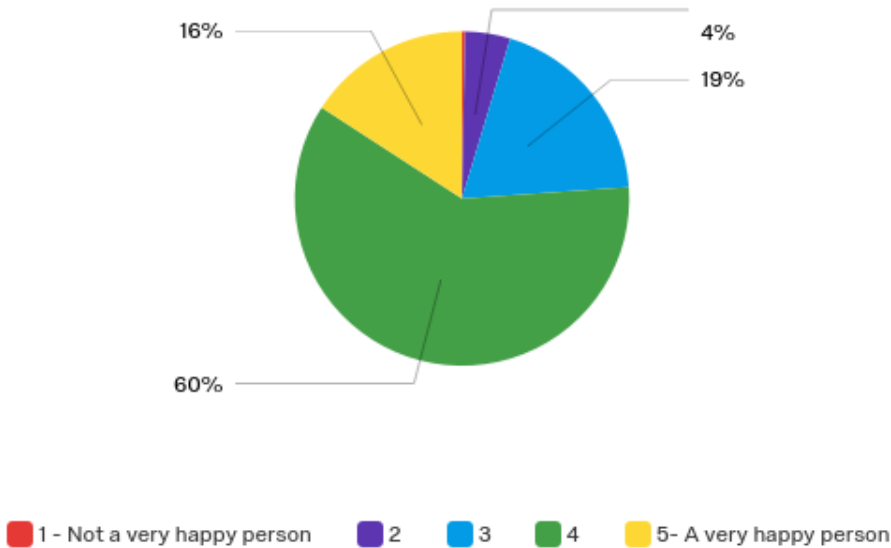




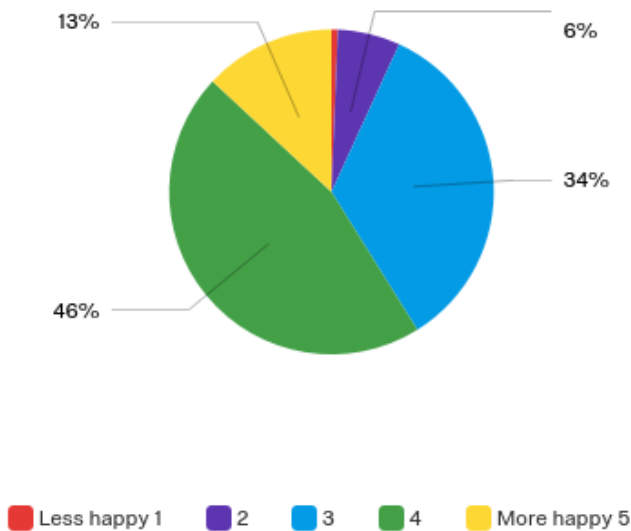
GENERAL HAPPINESS

General Happiness is a measure of subjective happiness relative to self and peers

Happy - In general, I consider myself:

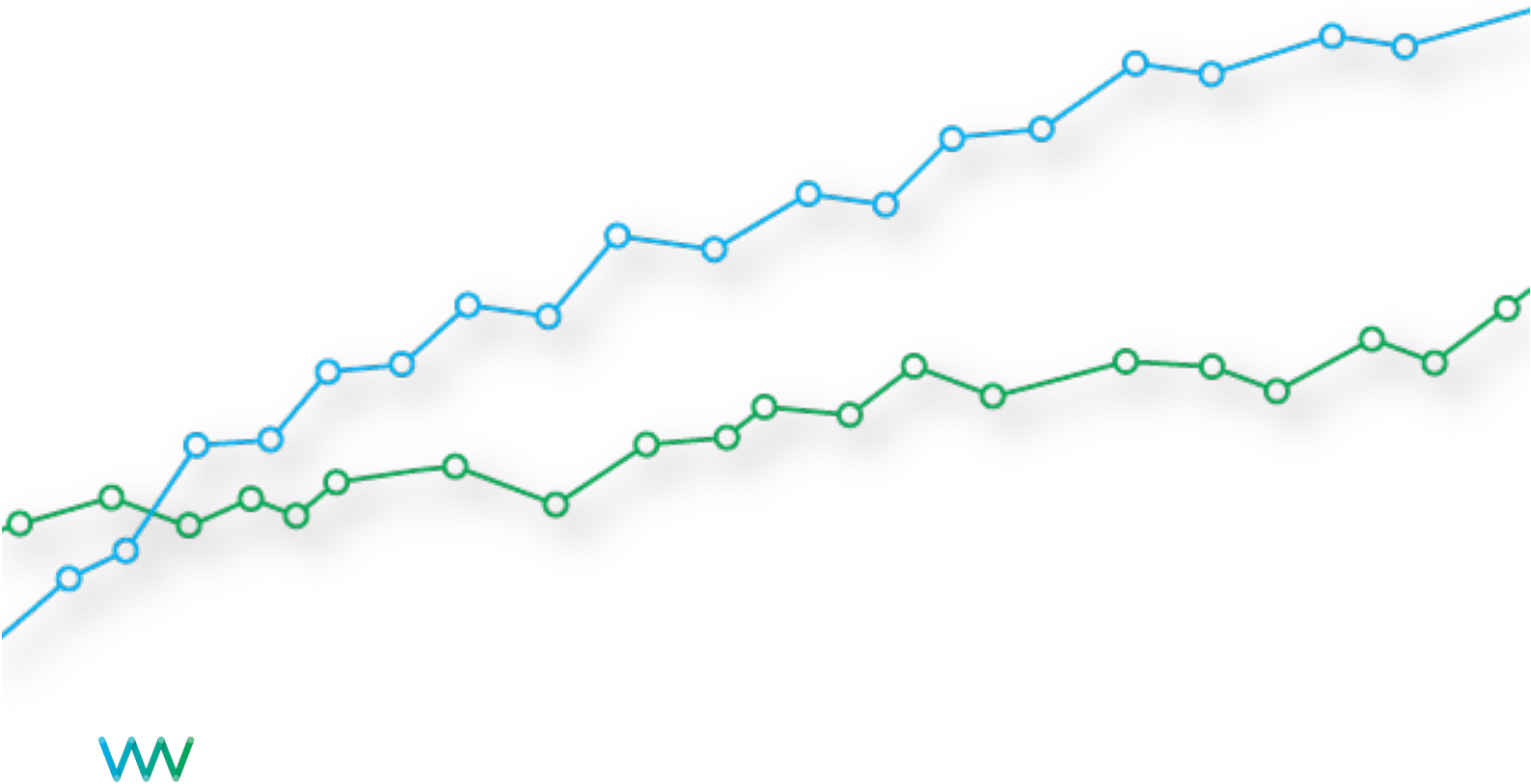
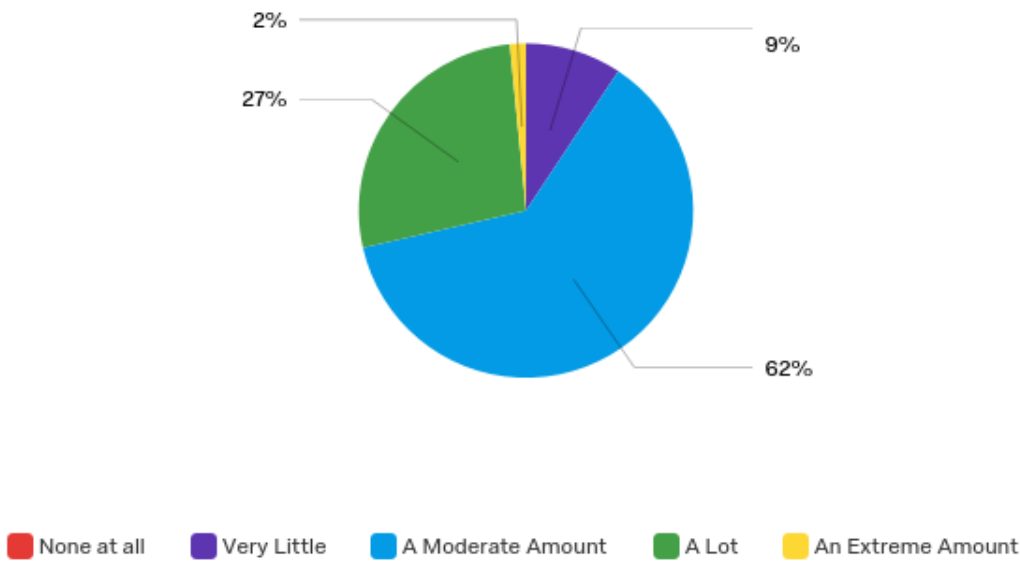


Happy - Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:





Stress - Overall, how much stress do you experience in your ministry work.





# Flourishing Analysis

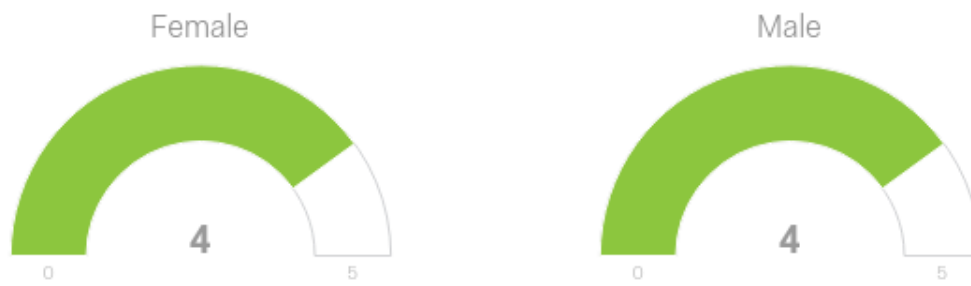




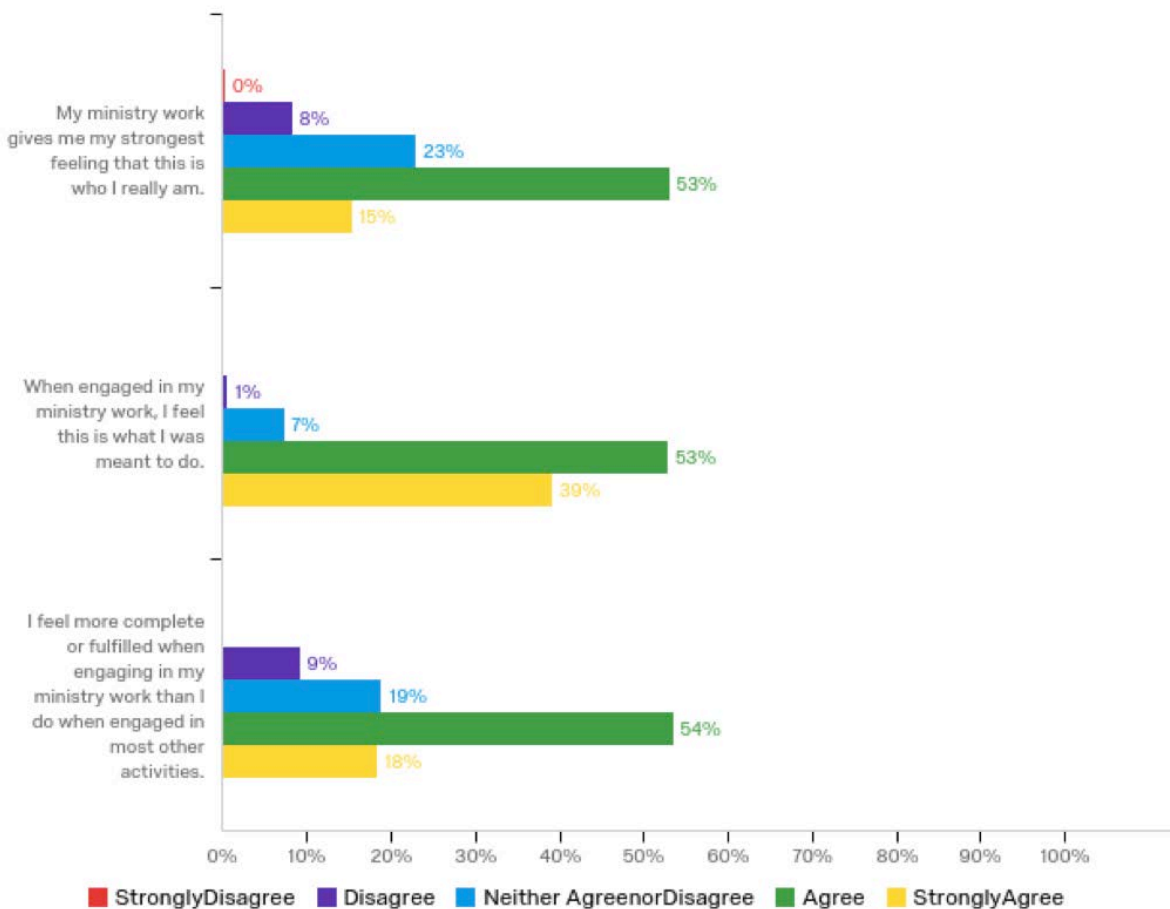
## AUTHENTICITY AT WORK

**Authenticity at Work – This is a measure of unobstructed operation of one’s true or core self in one’s daily enterprise.**

Authenticity at Work Mean by Gender



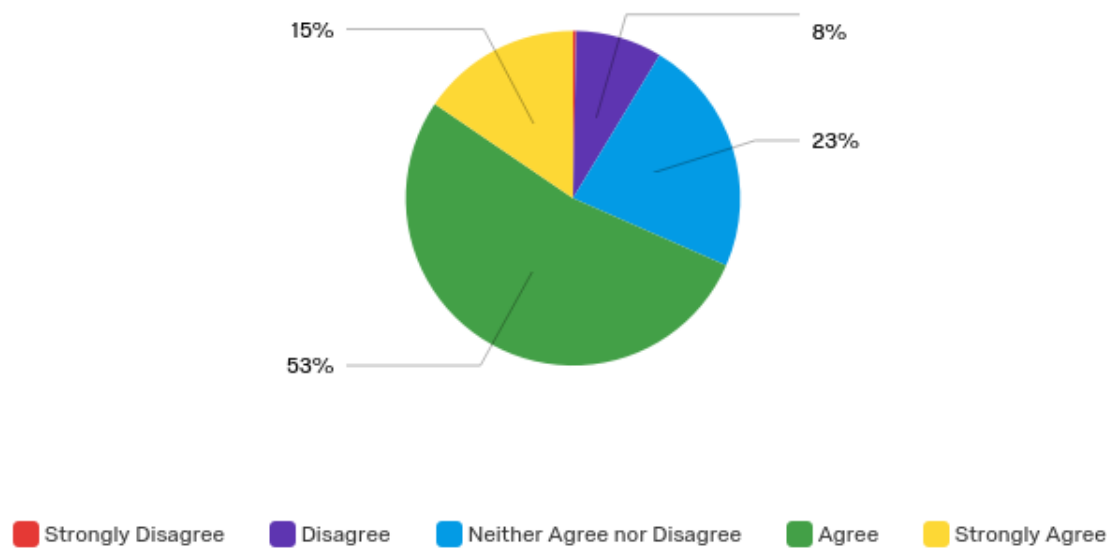
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following



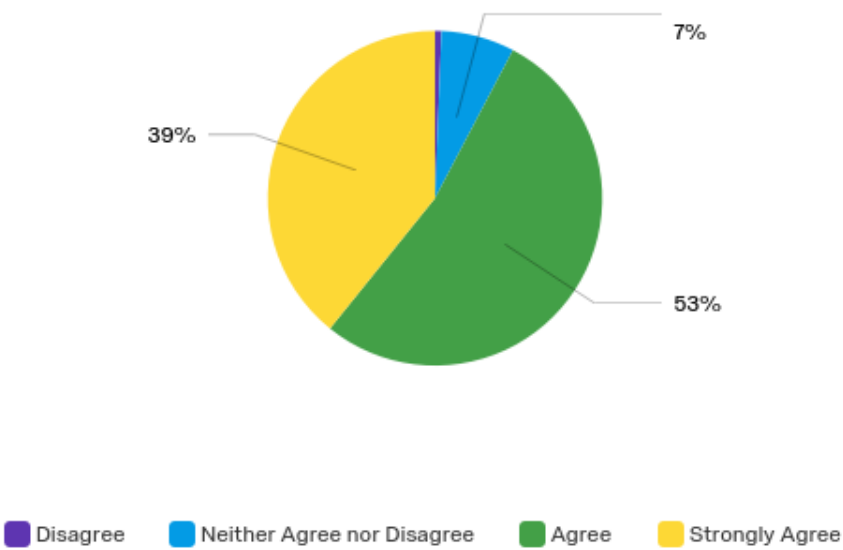
\*For the full description please see individual graphs below



My ministry work gives me my strongest feeling that this is who I really am.



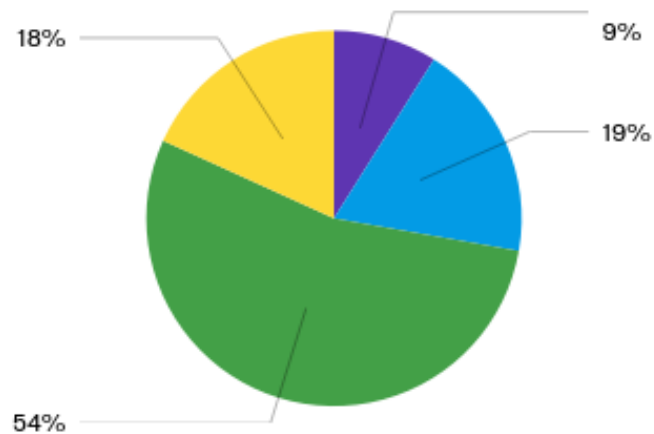
When engaged in my ministry work, I feel this is what I was meant to do.



## FLOURISHING ANALYSIS



I feel more complete or fulfilled when engaging in my ministry work than I do when engaged in most other activities.



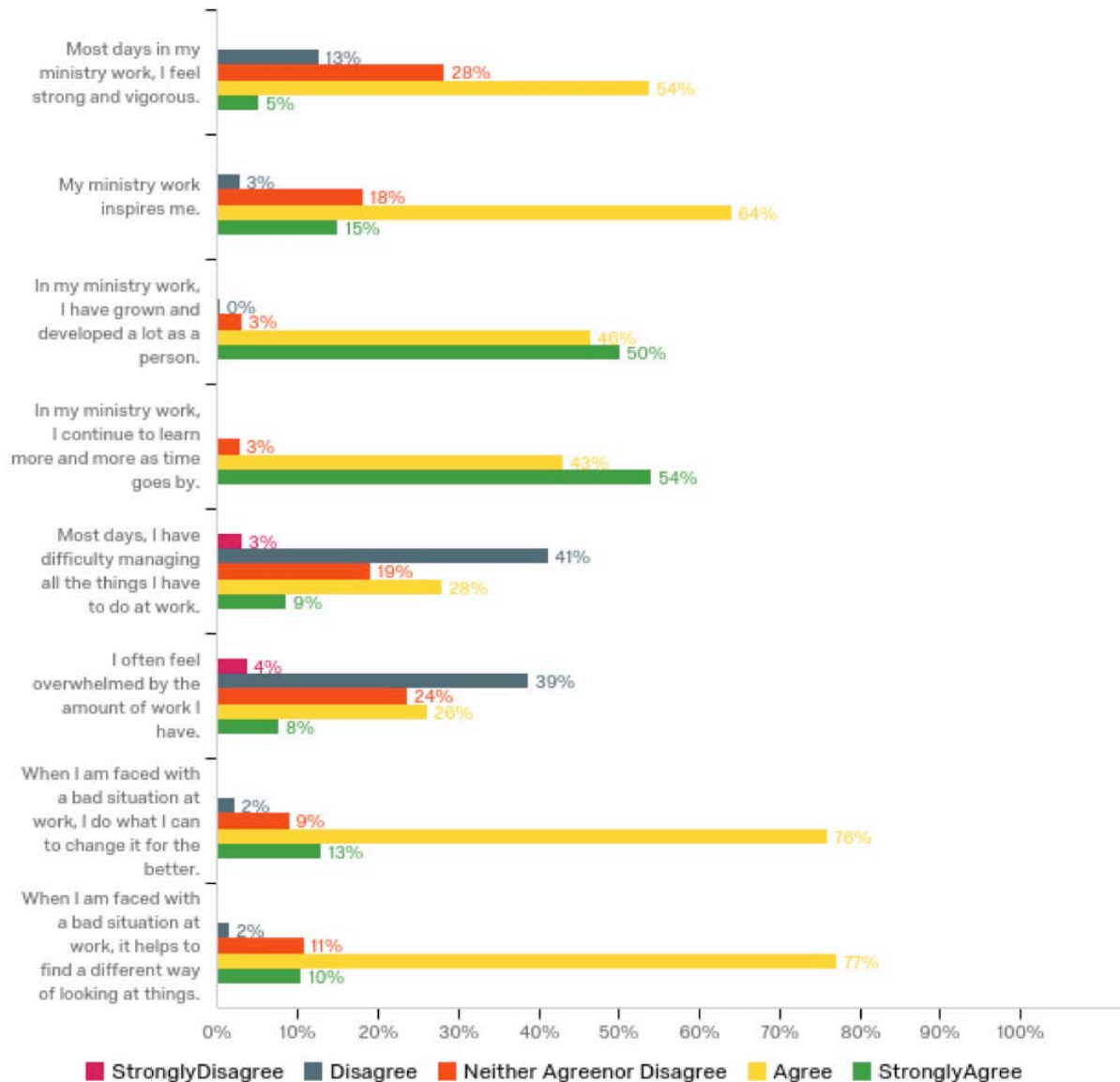
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree



## JOB ENGAGEMENT

Job Engagement measures positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.

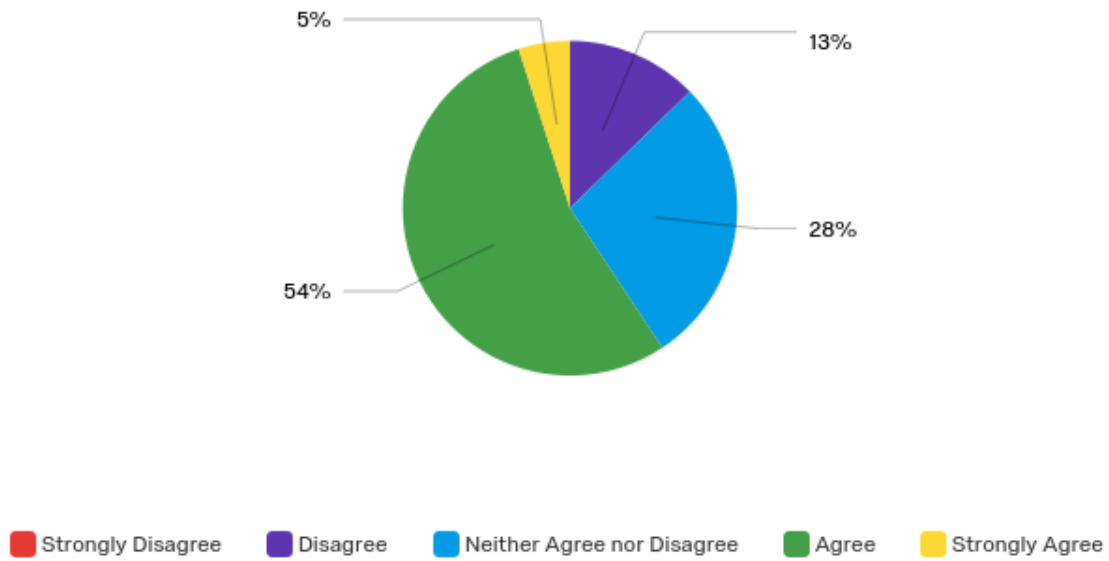
Job Engagement: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements



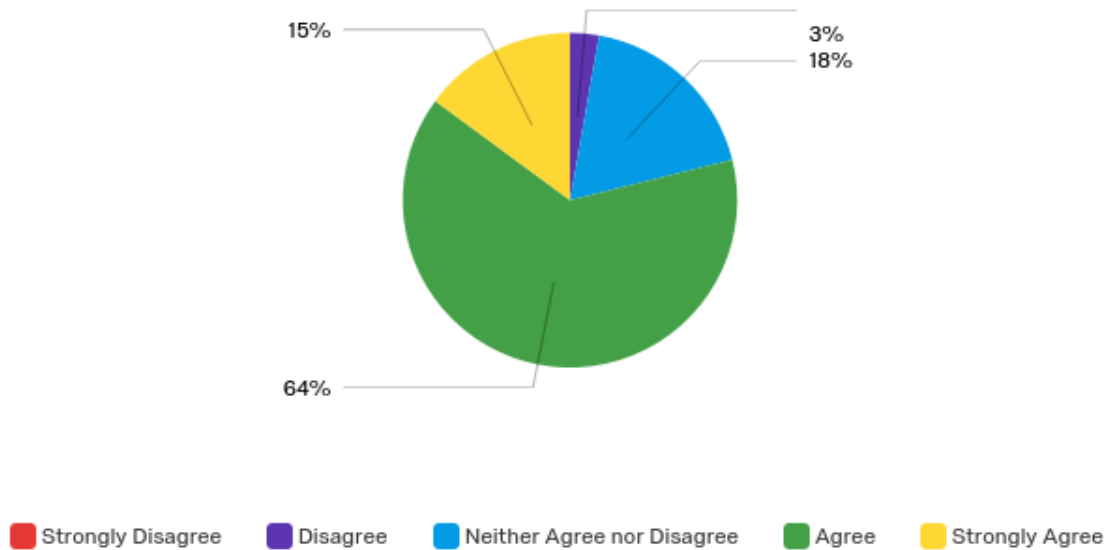
\*For the full description please see individual graphs below



Most days in my ministry work, I feel strong and vigorous.

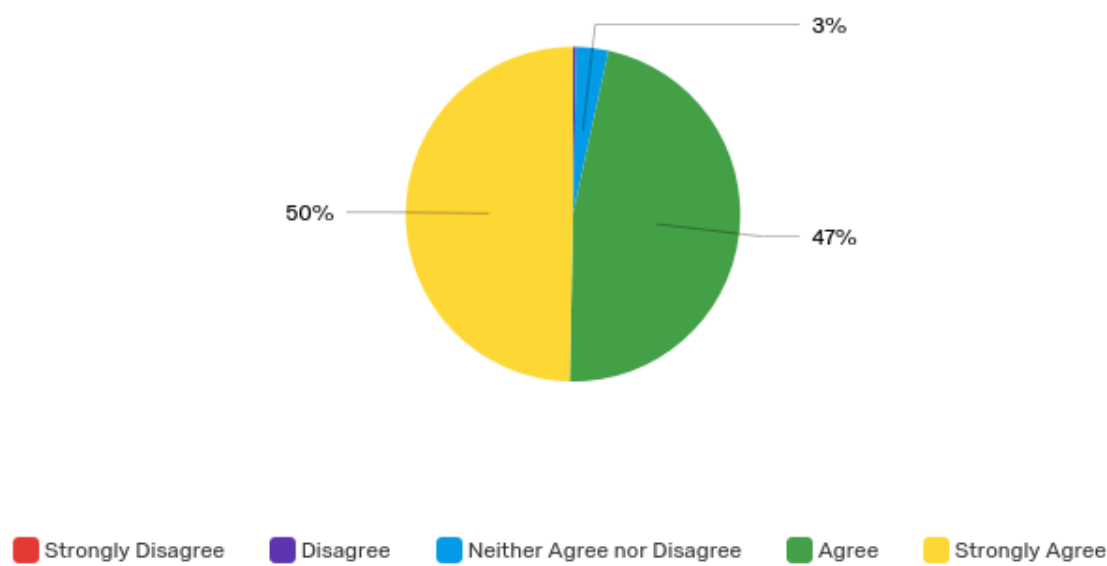


My ministry work inspires me.

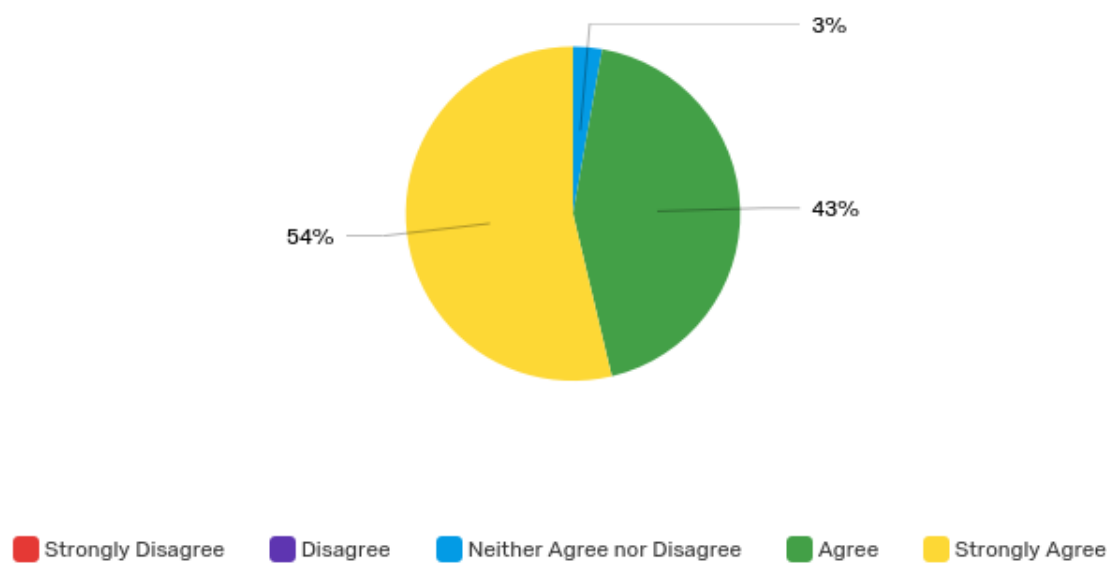




In my ministry work, I have grown and developed a lot as a person.

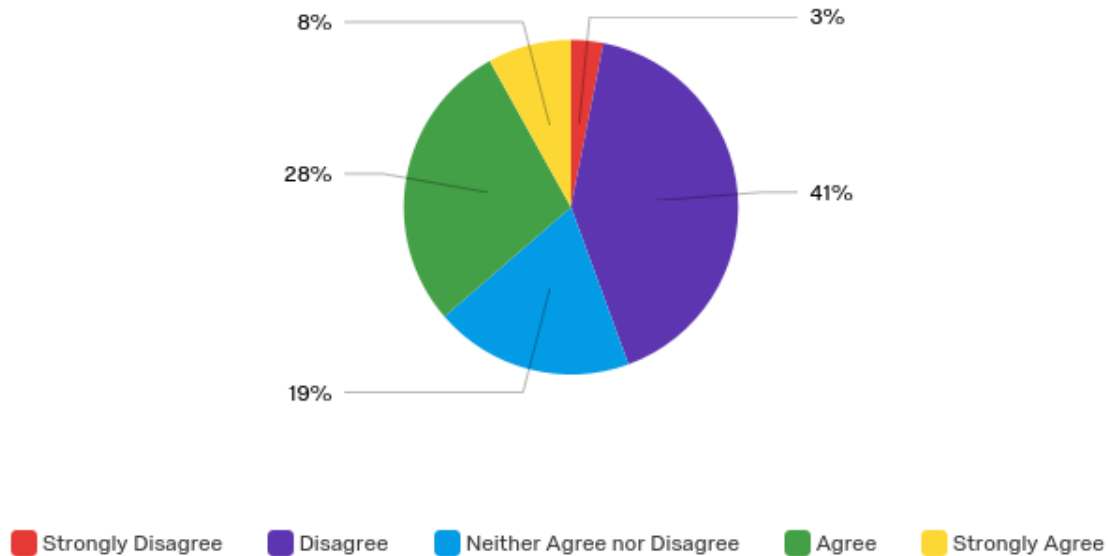


In my ministry work, I continue to learn more and more as time goes by.

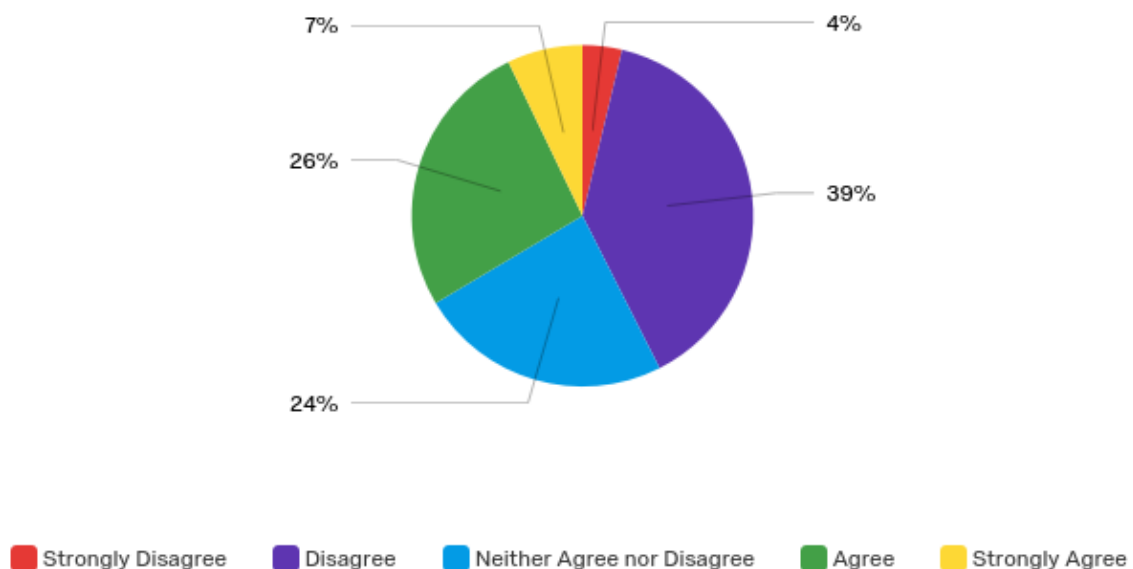




Most days, I have difficulty managing all of the things I have to do at work.

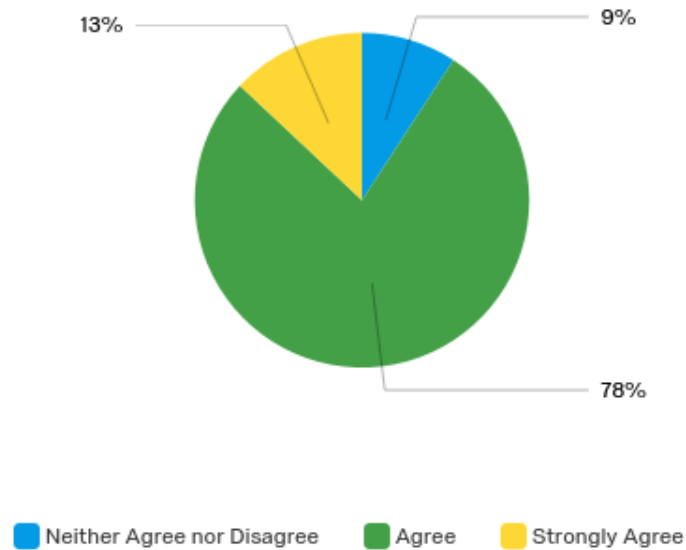


I often feel overwhelmed by the amount of work I have.

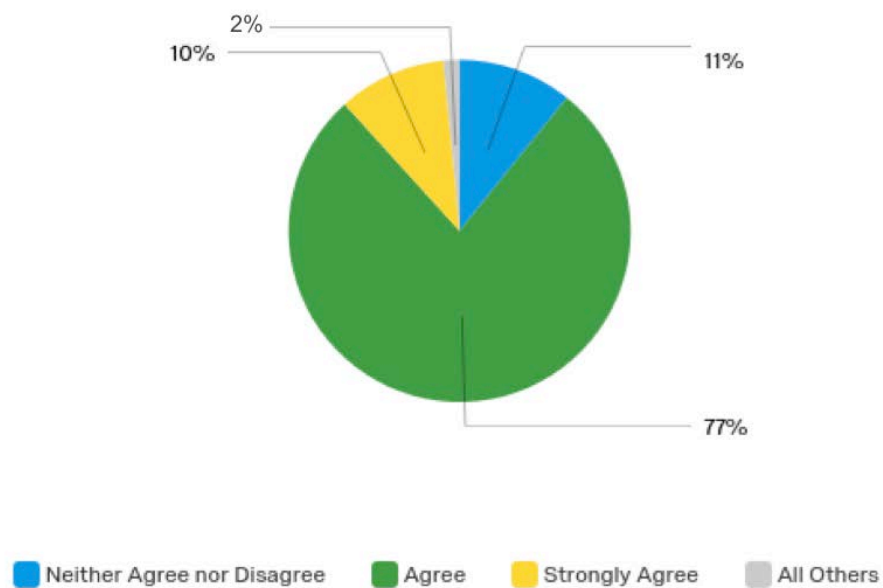




When I am faced with a bad situation at work, I do what I can to change it for the better.



When I am faced with a bad situation at work, it helps to find a different way of looking at things.



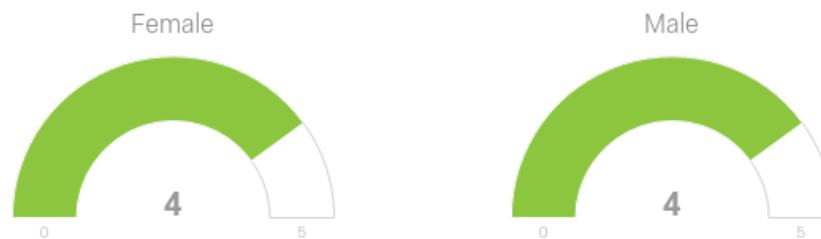




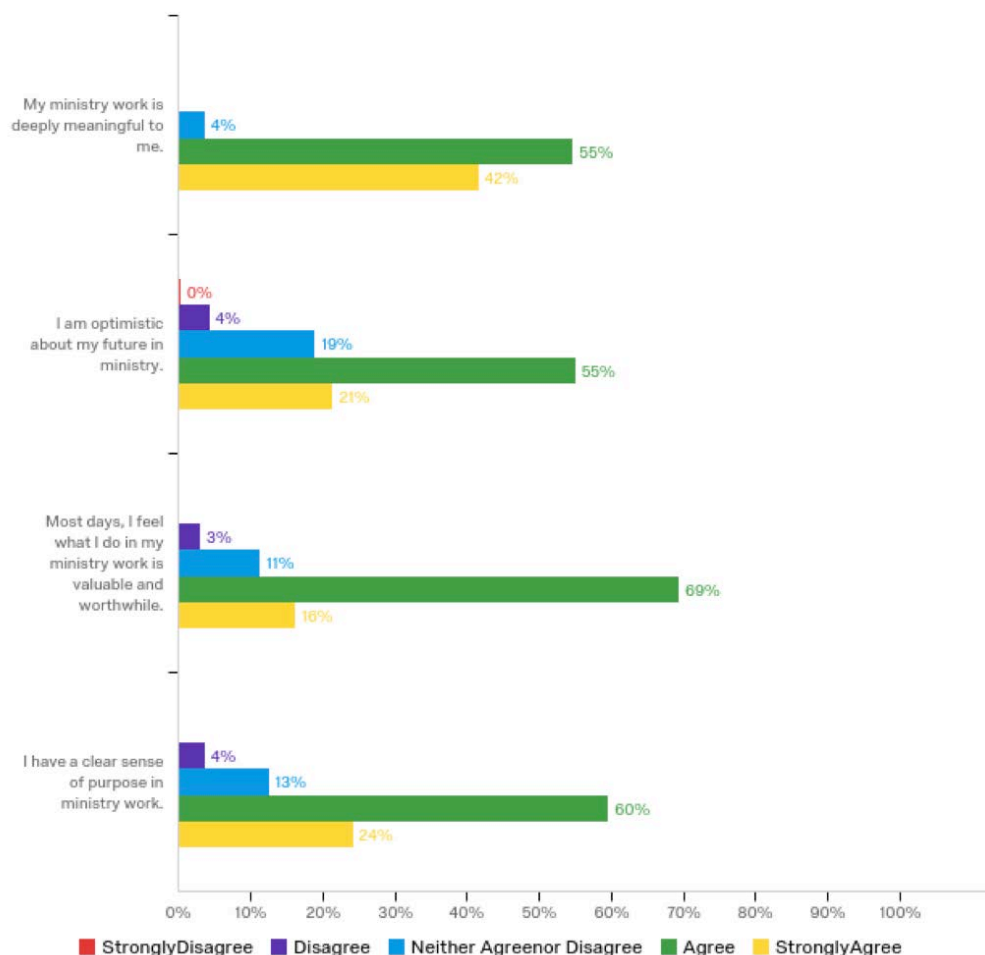
## THRIVING

Thriving measures essential aspects of psychological wealth including the extent to which you feel that you have strong, positive, supportive relationships; whether you feel a rich, spiritual dimension in your life; and the degree to which you experience work or other major life activities as positive and fulfilling.

Thriving Mean By Gender

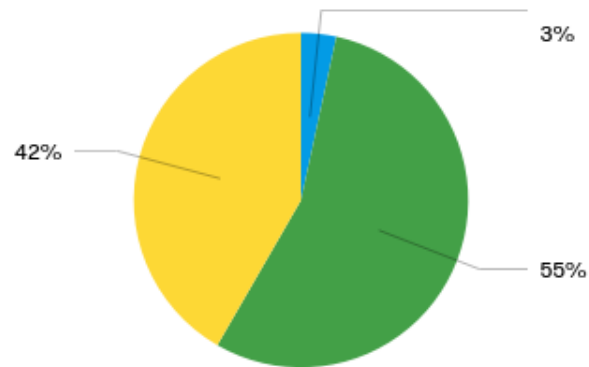


Thriving: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



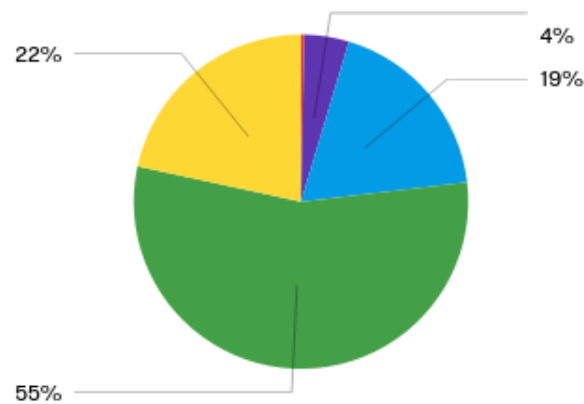


My ministry work is deeply meaningful to me.



Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree

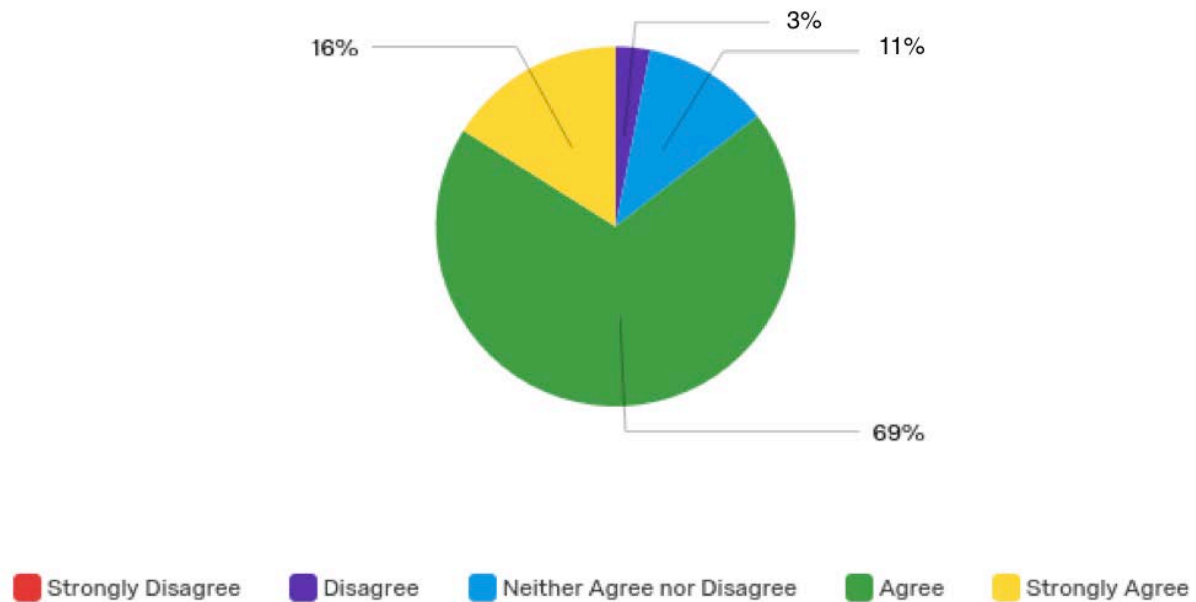
I am optimistic about my future in ministry.



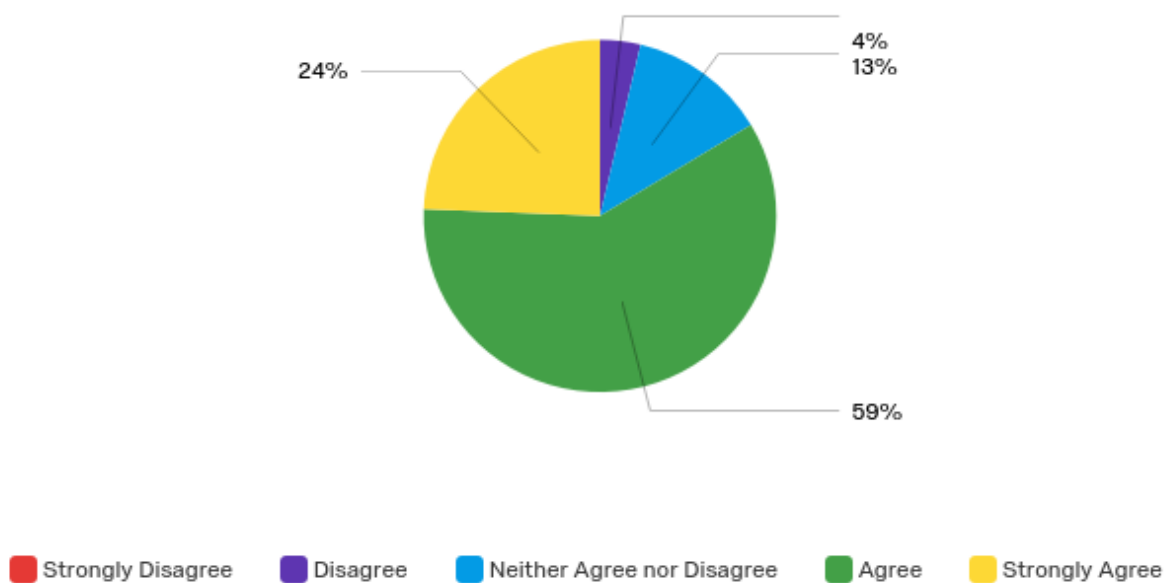
Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Agree
Strongly Agree



Most days, I feel what I do in my ministry work is valuable and worthwhile.



I have a clear sense of purpose in ministry work.

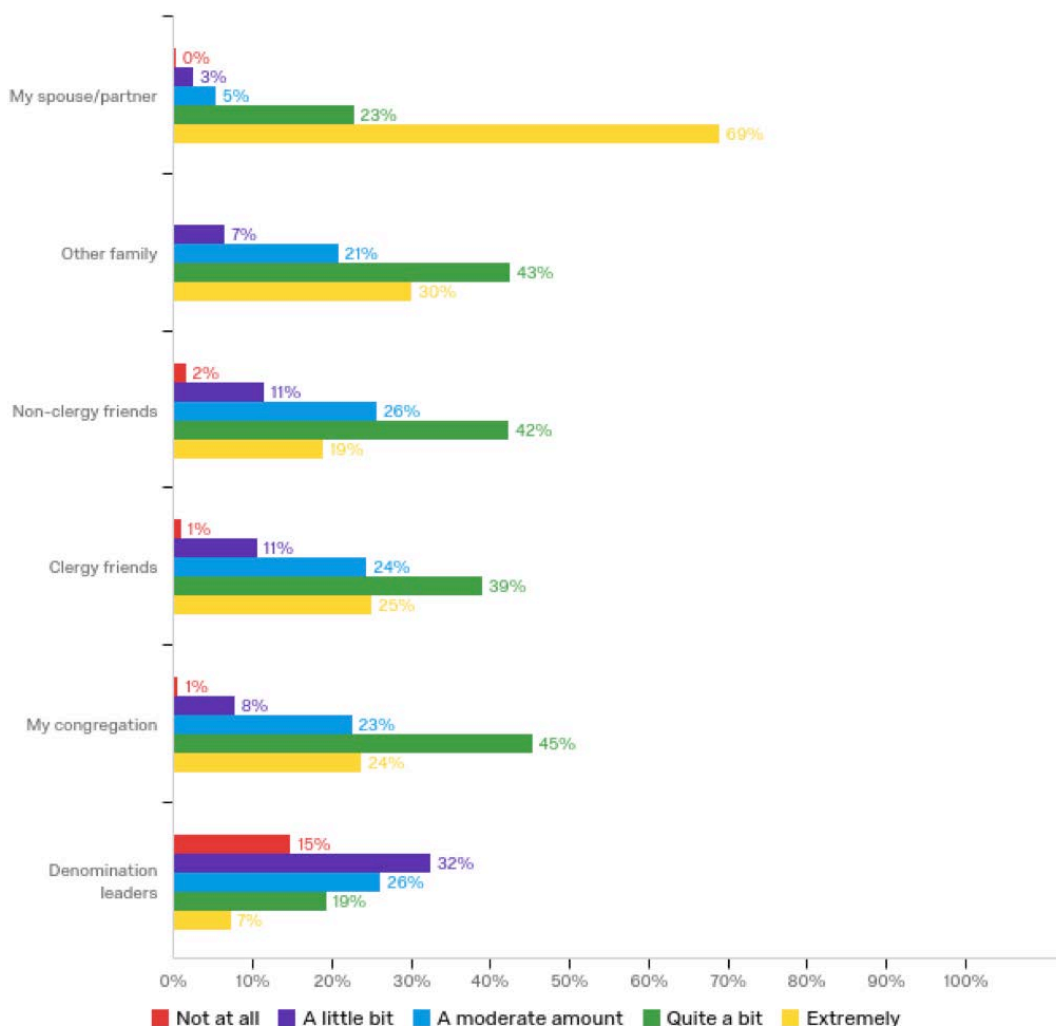




## QUALITY OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND RELATIONSHIPS

**Relationships** - The next question asks about the kinds of social support you experience, both those that are related to your ministry, and those that you might think of outside your ministry life. Please think about your overall experiences with each of the different kinds of social support. Please indicate the extent to which you feel truly cared for, accepted and supported by each of the following relationships. Some relationships may fit in multiple categories.

Relationships measures the respondent's amount and type of social support they receive from family, friends, and work colleagues and supervisors.

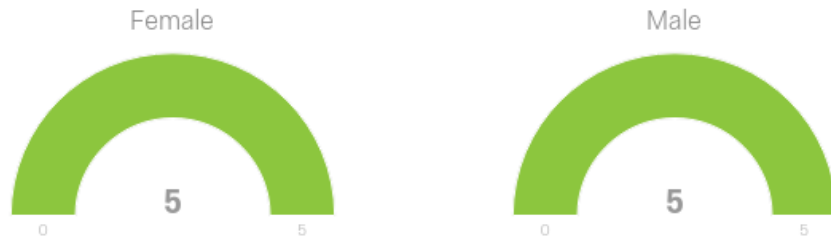




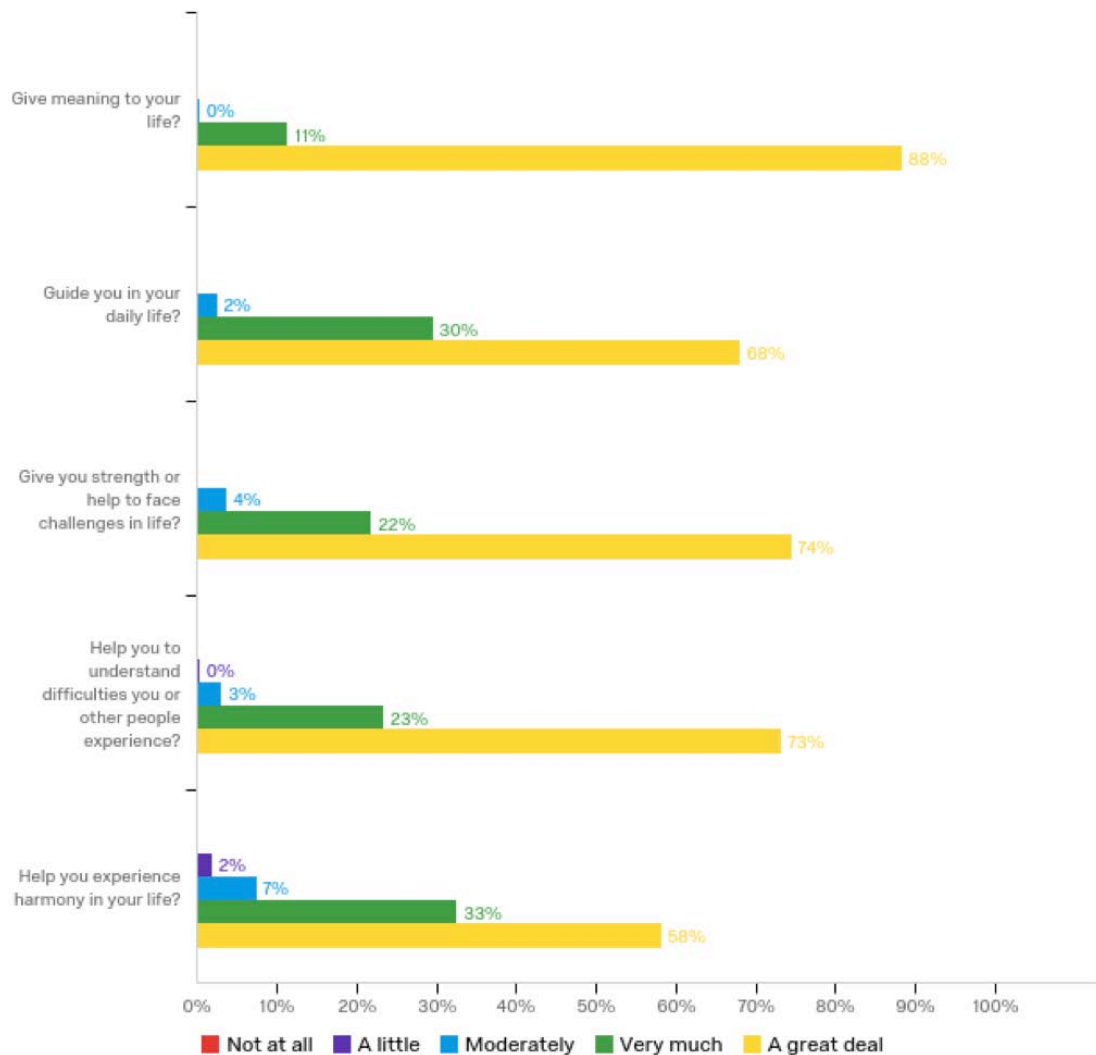
## SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

### Spirituality, Religious, Personal Beliefs

Spirituality Mean By Gender

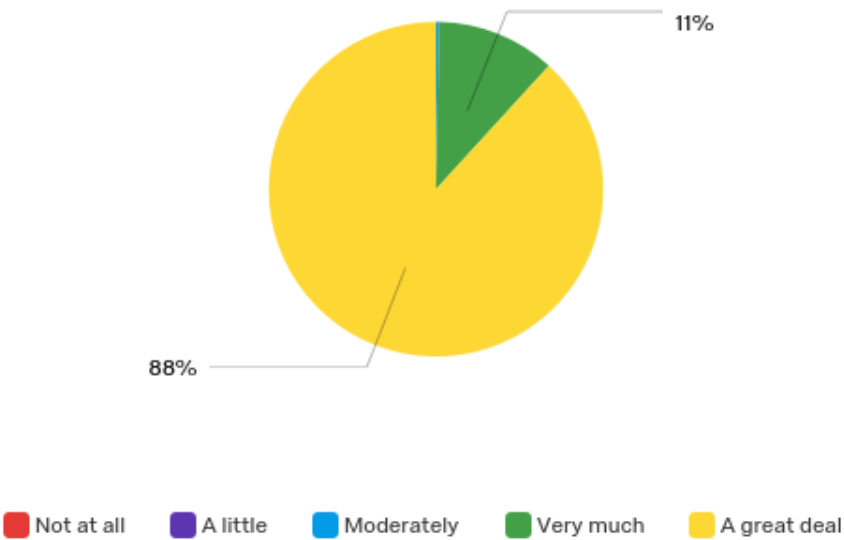


### Spirituality, Religious, Personal Beliefs: To what extent do your spiritual, religious, or personal beliefs:

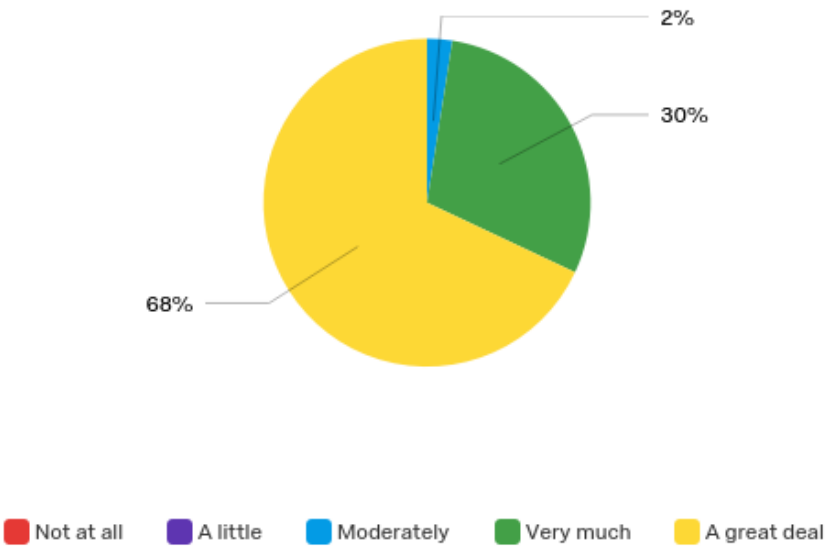




Give meaning to your life?

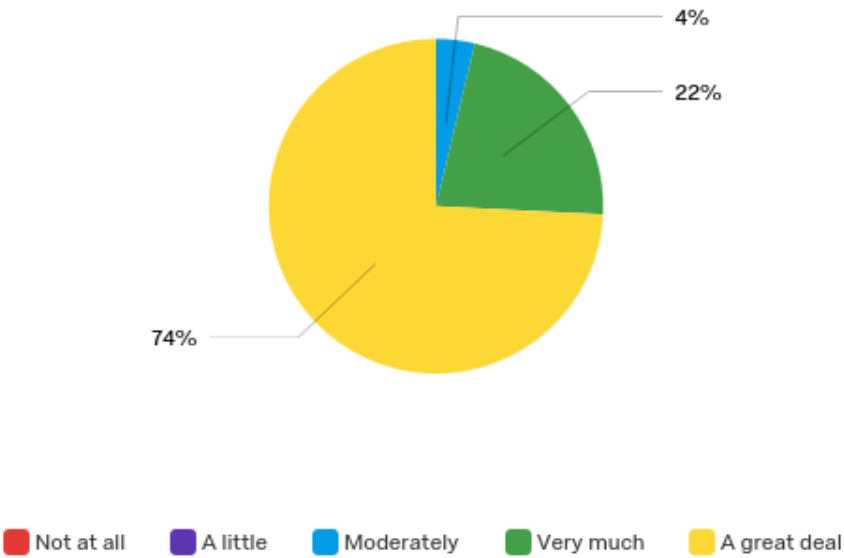


Guide you in your daily life?

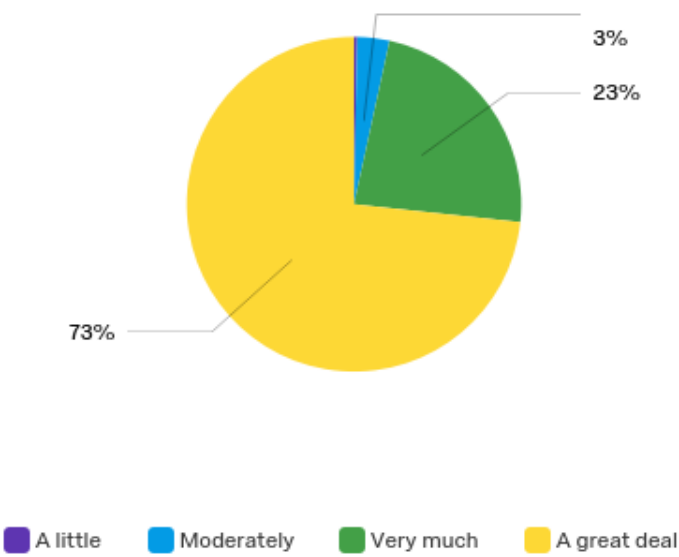




Help you to understand difficulties you or other people experience?

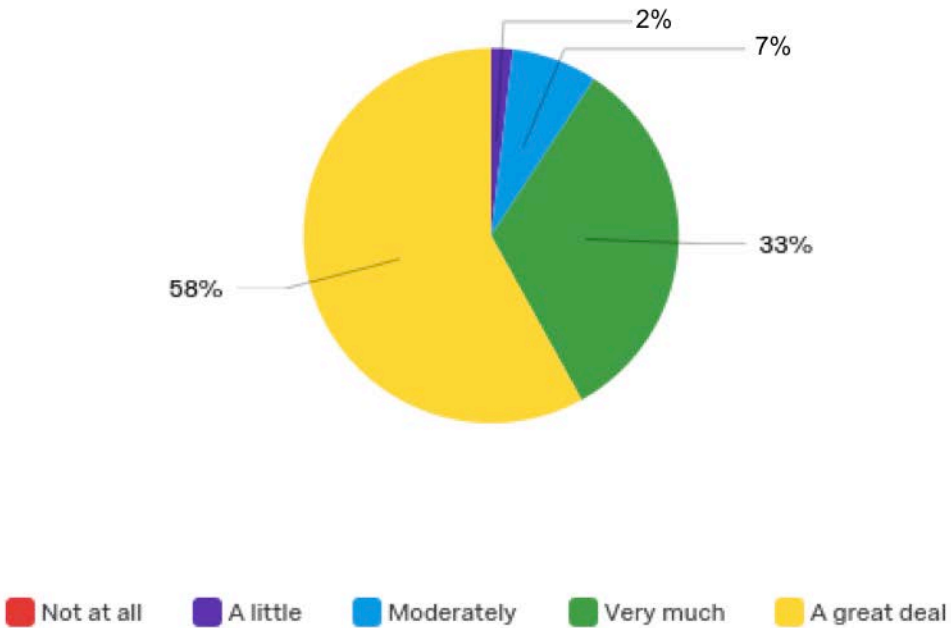


Help you to understand difficulties you or other people experience?





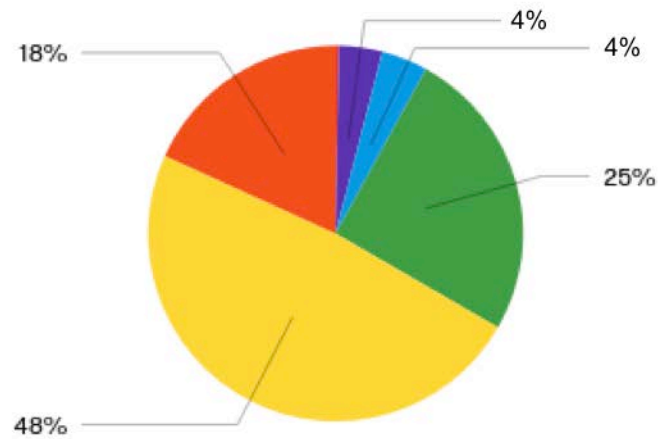
Help you experience harmony in your life?







How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or Bible study?

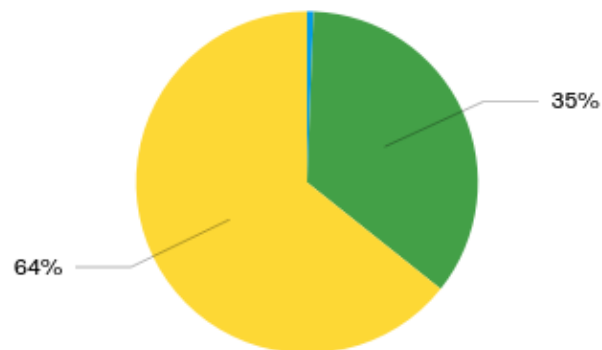


■ Rarely or never ■ A few times a month ■ Once a week ■ Two or more times/week ■ Daily  
■ More than once a day



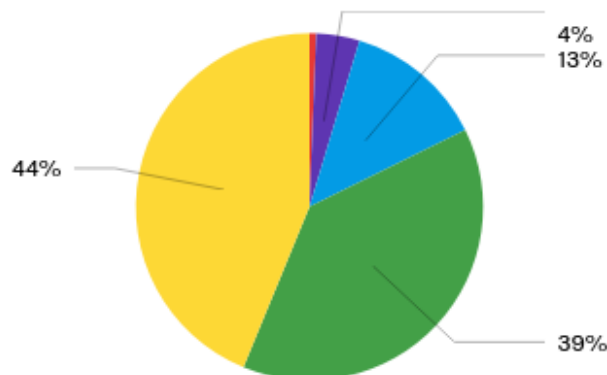
**Intrinsic Beliefs:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.



Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

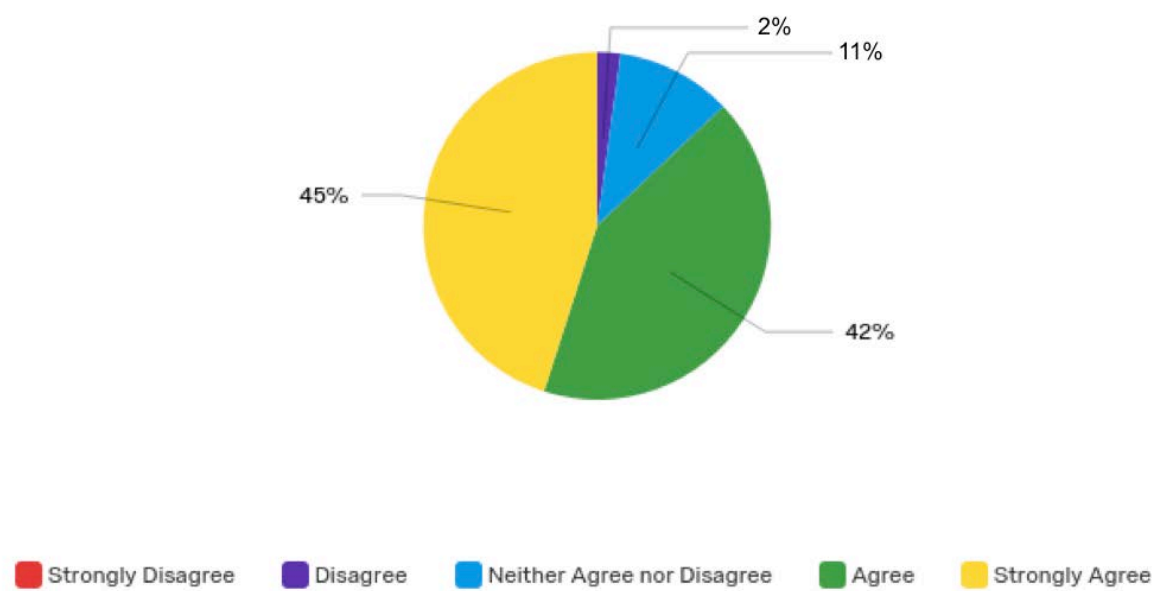
The prayers I say when I am alone carry as much or more emotional meaning as those said by me during services.



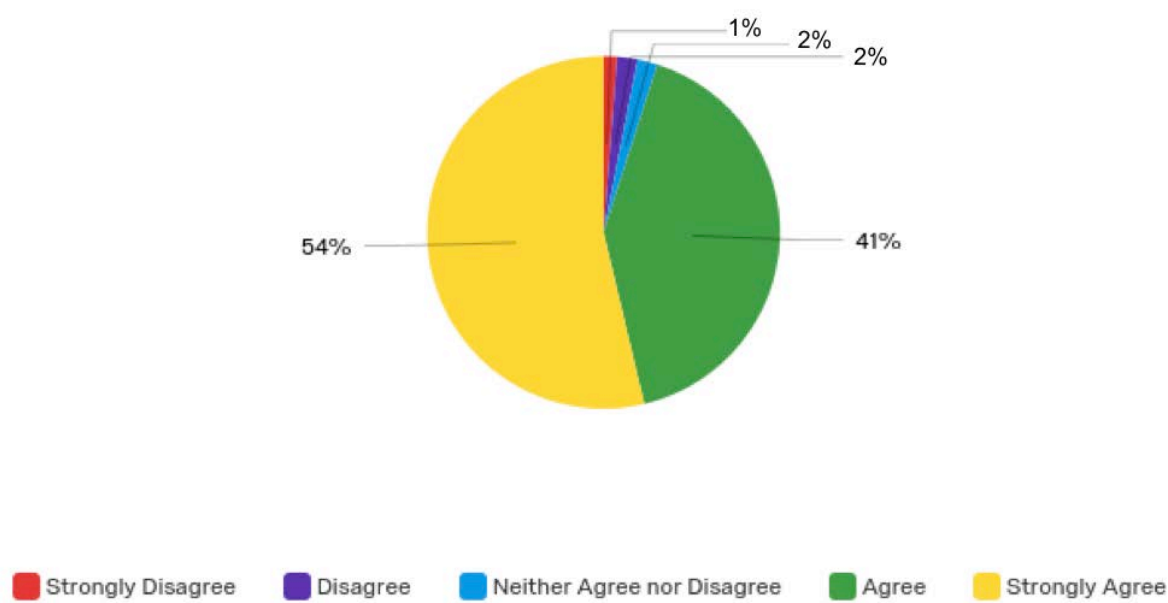
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree



It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious meditation.



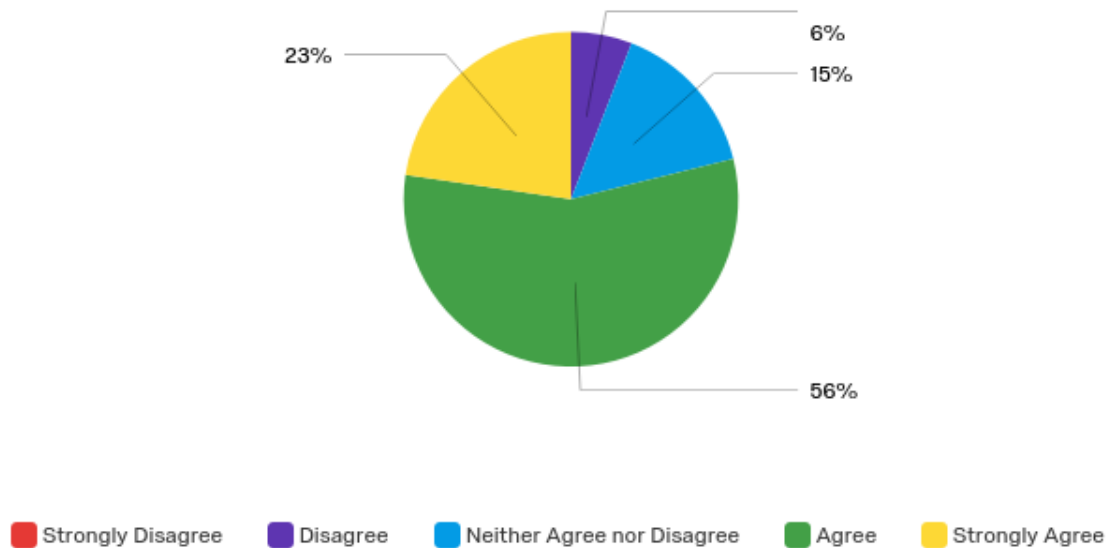
I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life.



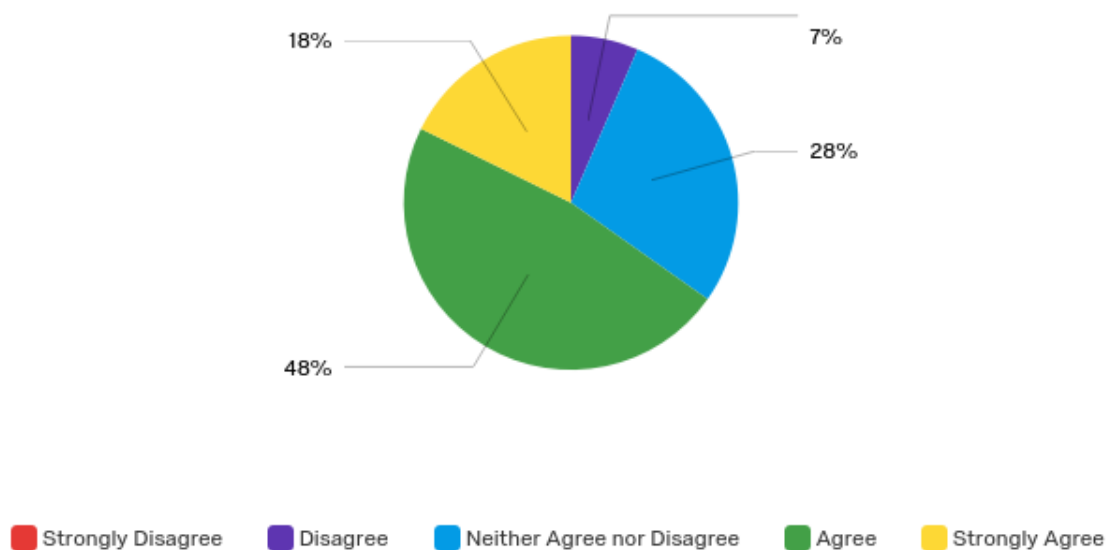


**Transcendence:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

I often experience awe or wonder in my life.

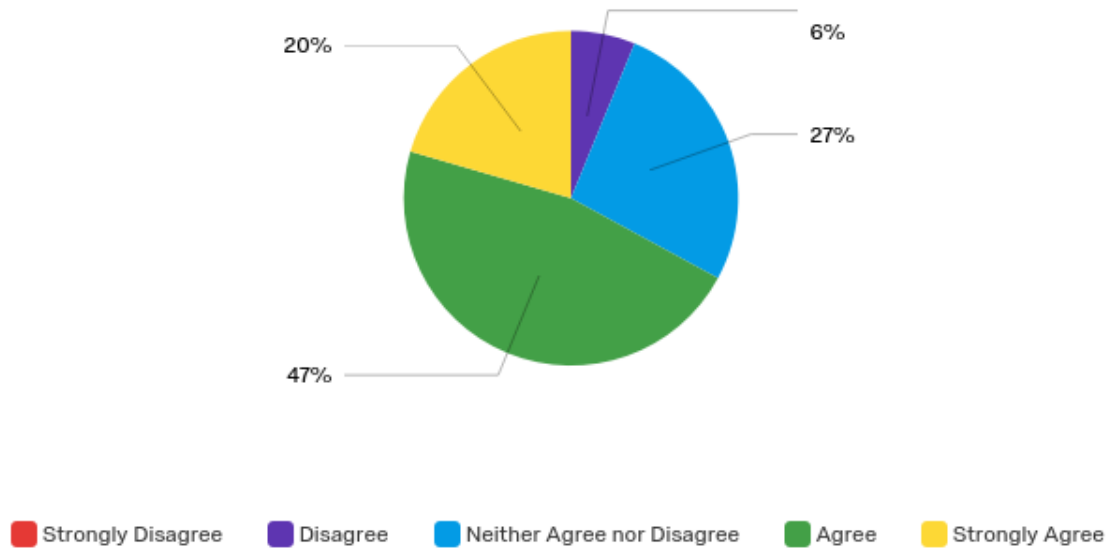


I experience a connection with all of life.

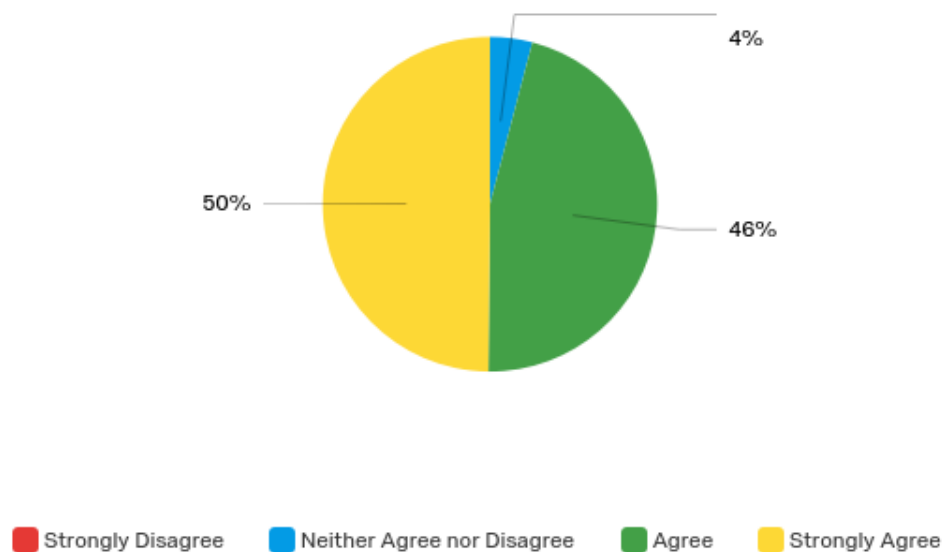




I believe that on some level my life is intimately tied to all of humankind.

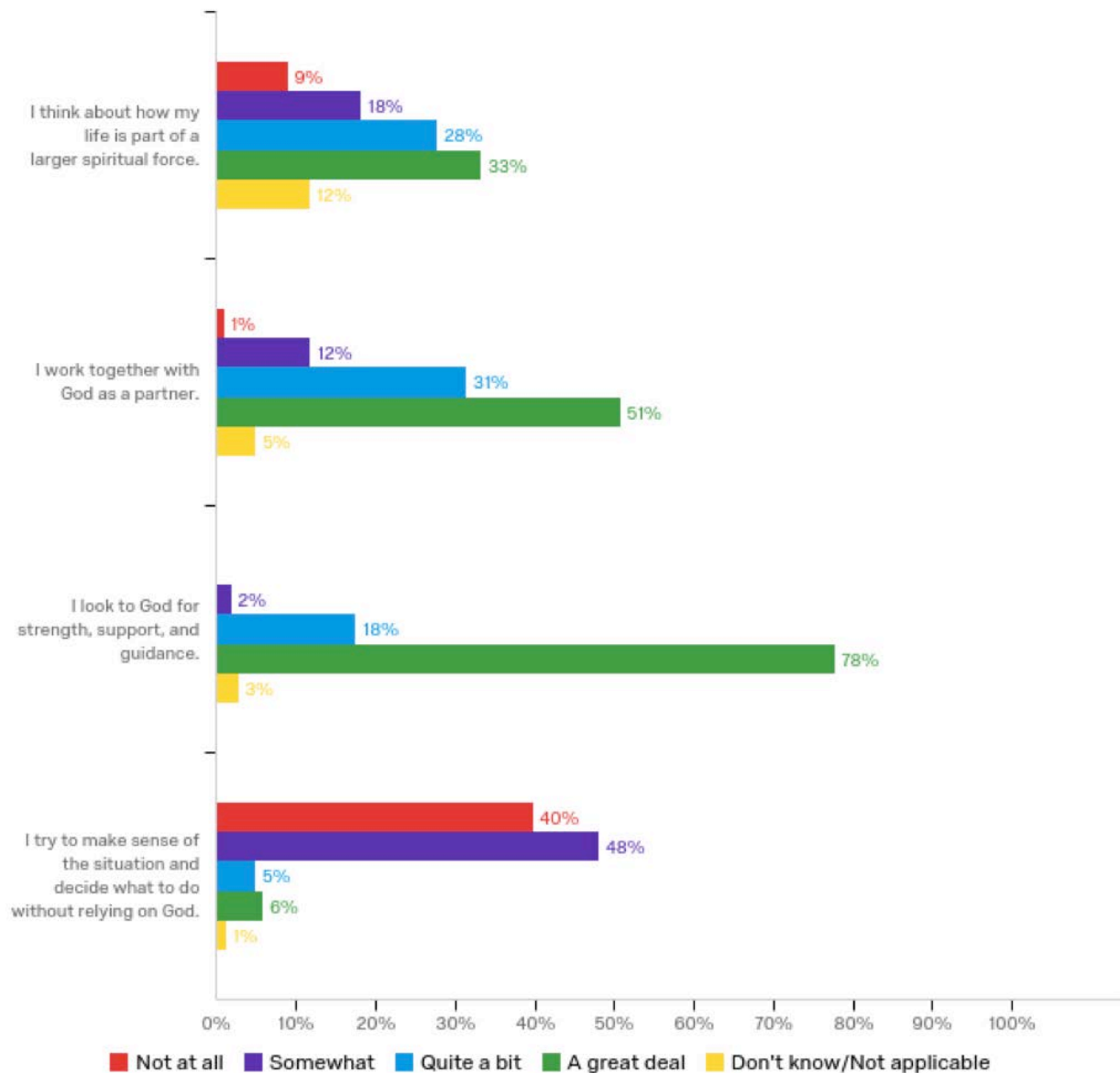


I experience the presence of God, a higher power, or a spiritual essence.





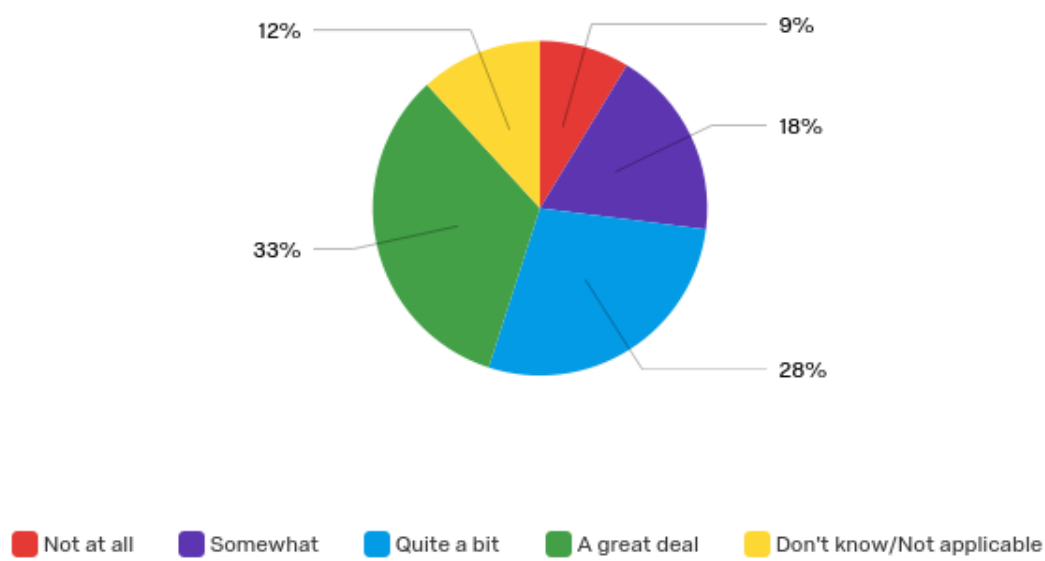
**Religious Coping:** Think about how you try to understand and deal with major problems in your life. To what extent is each of the following involved in the way you cope:



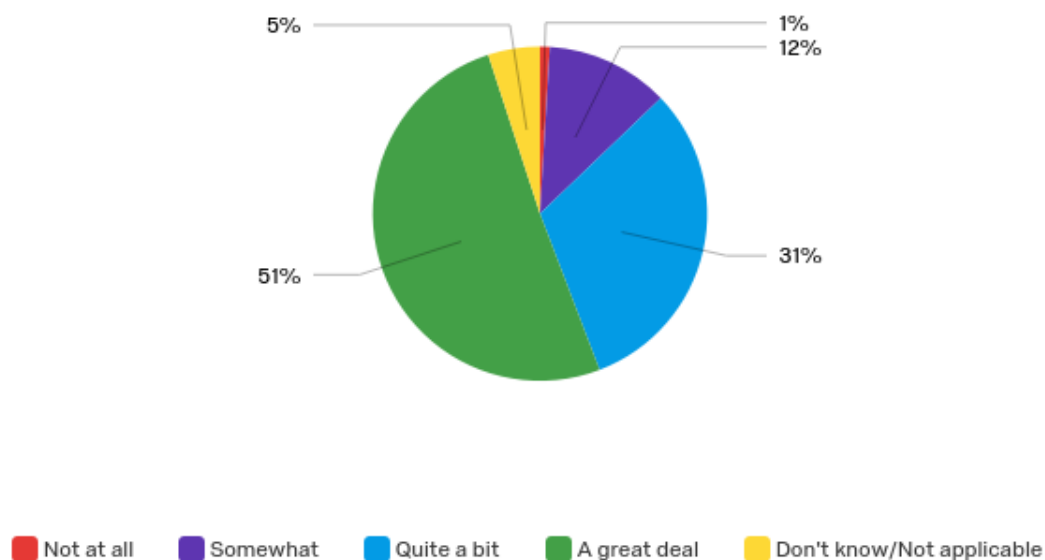
\*For full description please see individual graphs below



I think about how my life is part of a larger spiritual force.

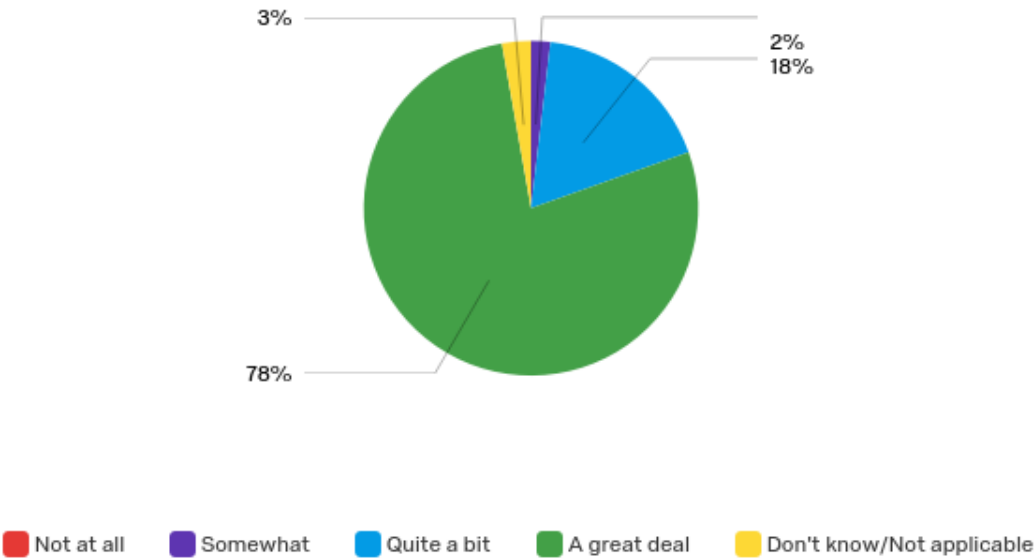


I work together with God as a partner.

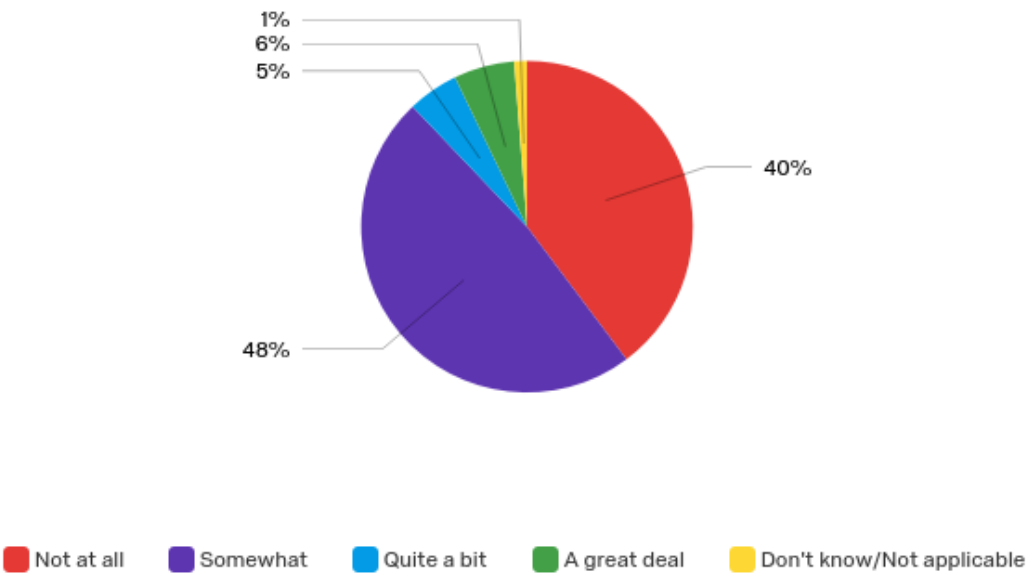




I look to God for strength, support, and guidance.



I try to make sense of the situation and decide what to do without relying on God.

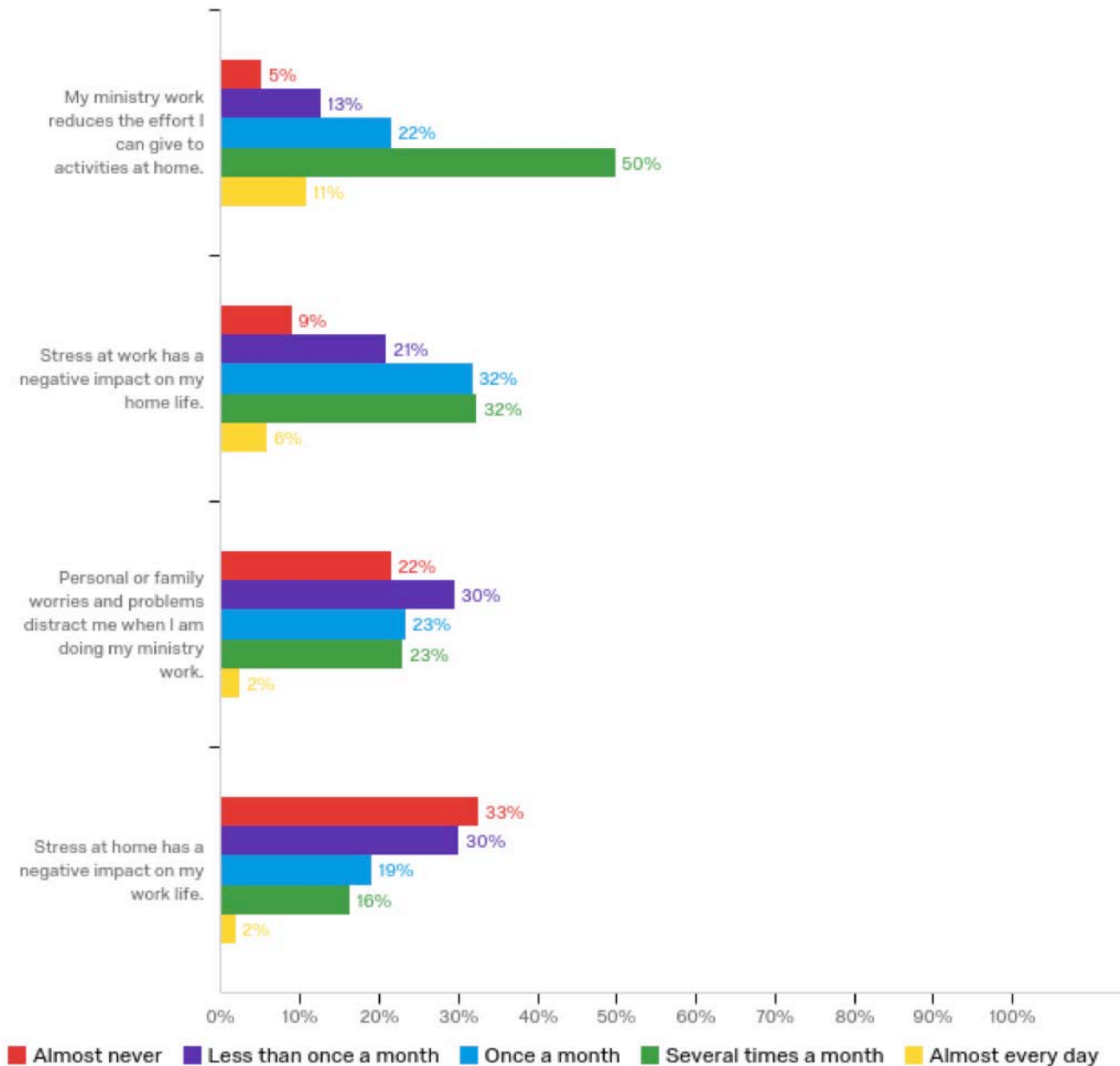






## WORK FAMILY BALANCE

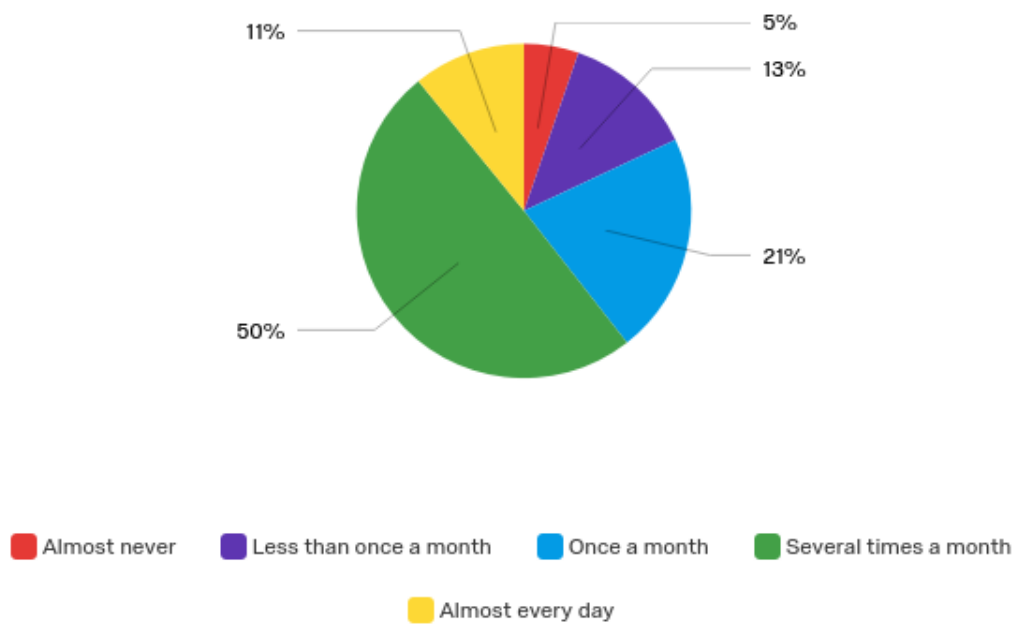
Work Family Balance: How often have you experienced the following over the past year?



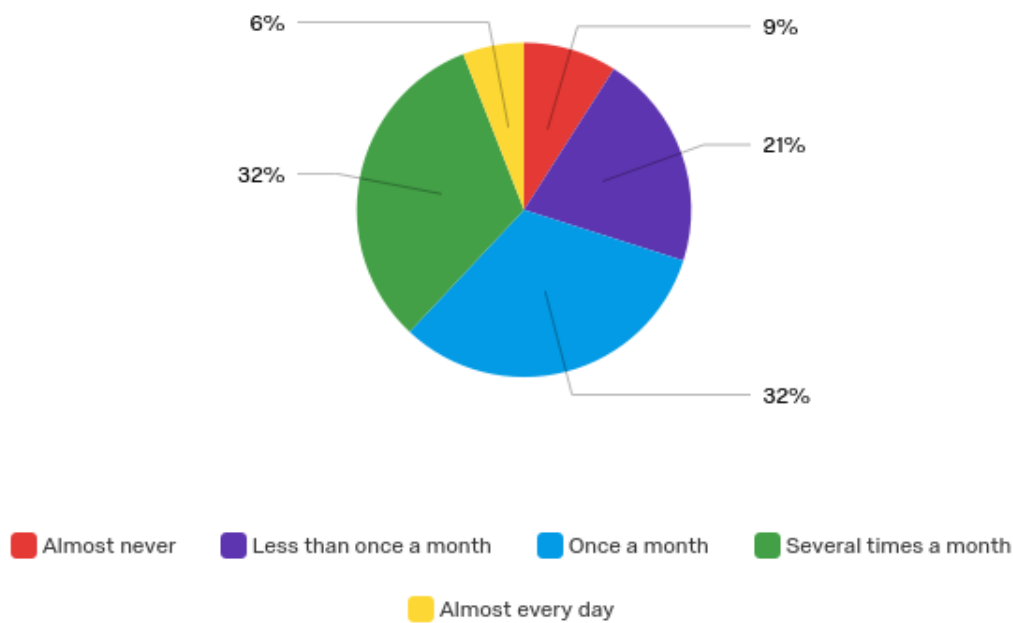
\*For the full description please see individual graphs below



My ministry work reduces the effort I can give to activities at home.

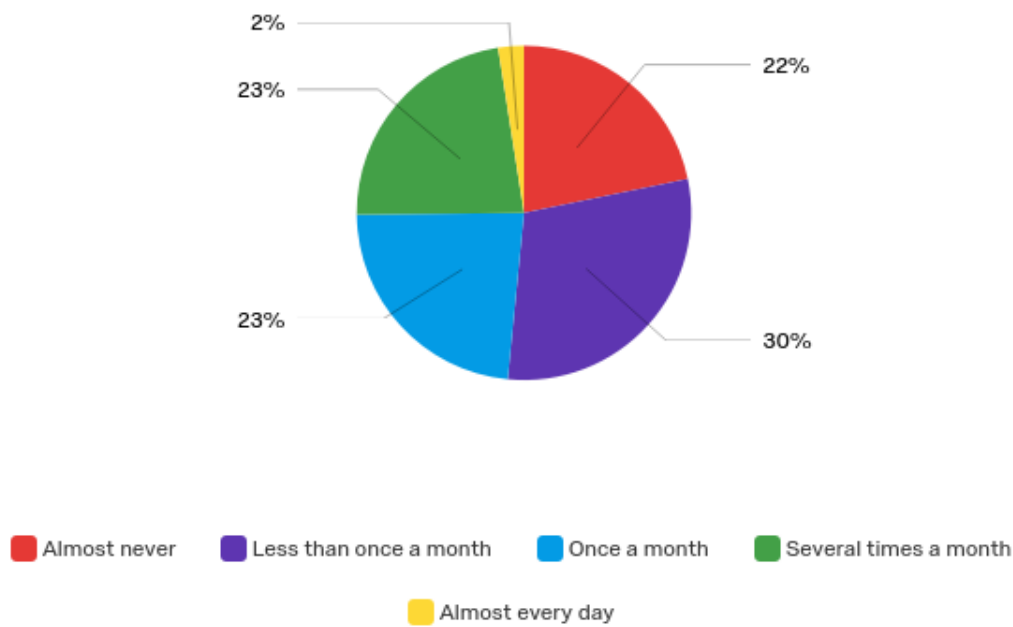


Stress at work has a negative impact on my home life.

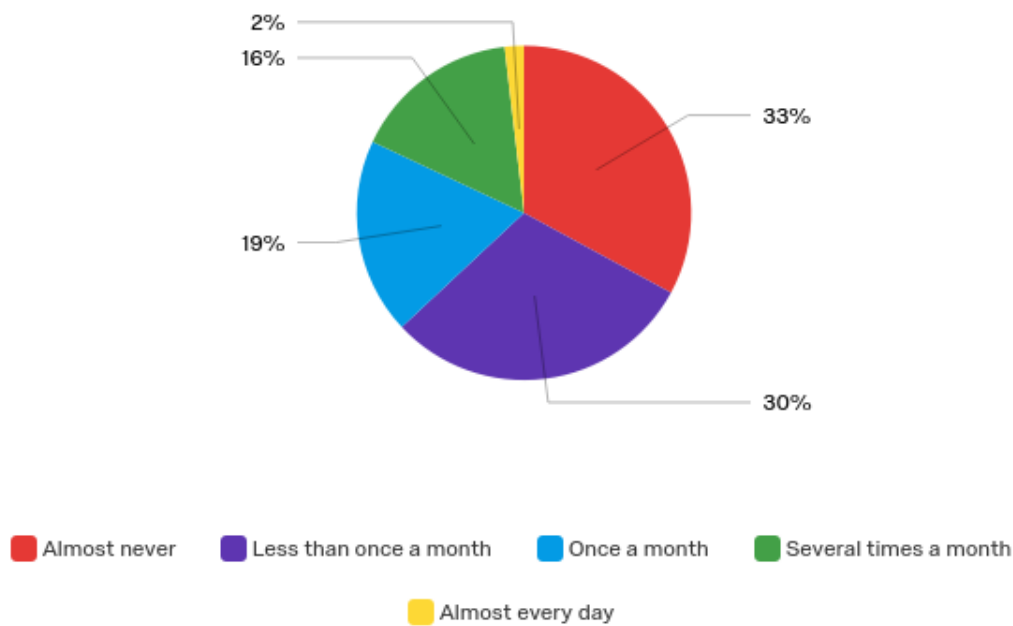




Personal or family worries and problems distract me when I am doing my ministry.



Stress at home has a negative impact on my work life.

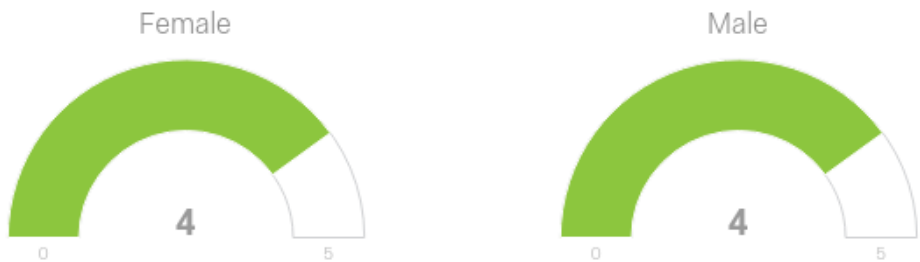




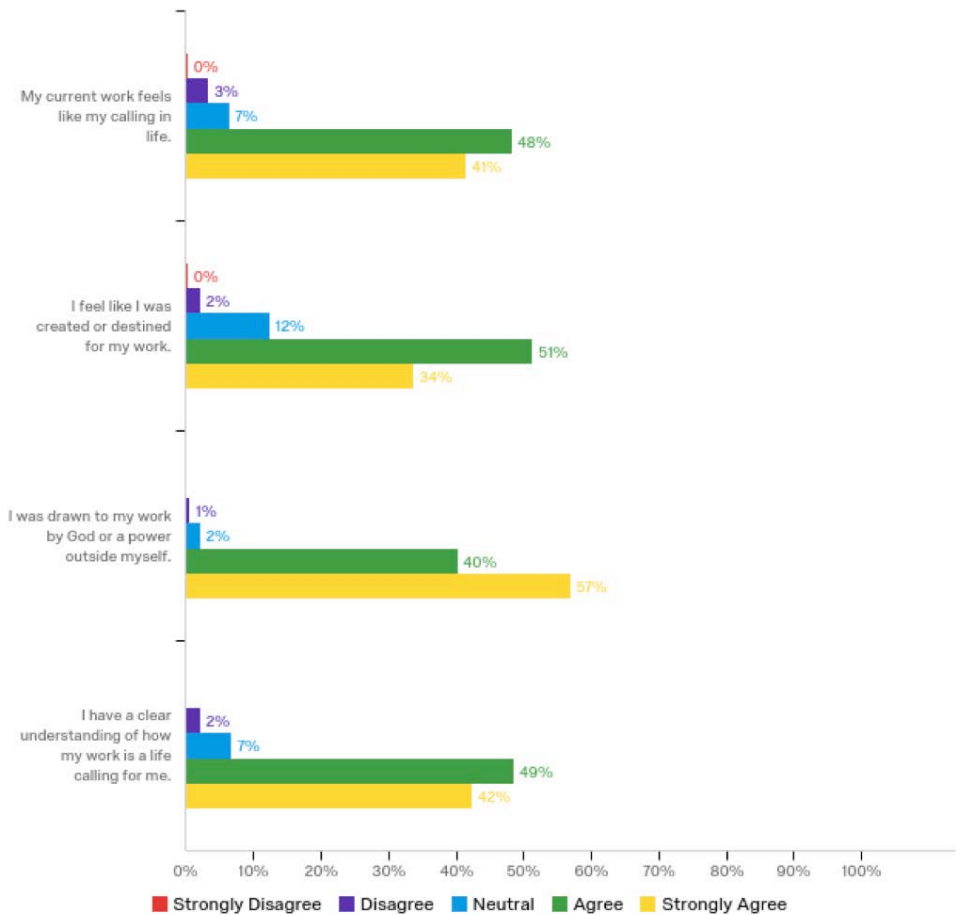
WORK AS A CALLING

Work as a Calling is a measure to assess if individuals feel called, hard-wired, or destined to live into their current work role.

Work as a Calling Mean by Gender

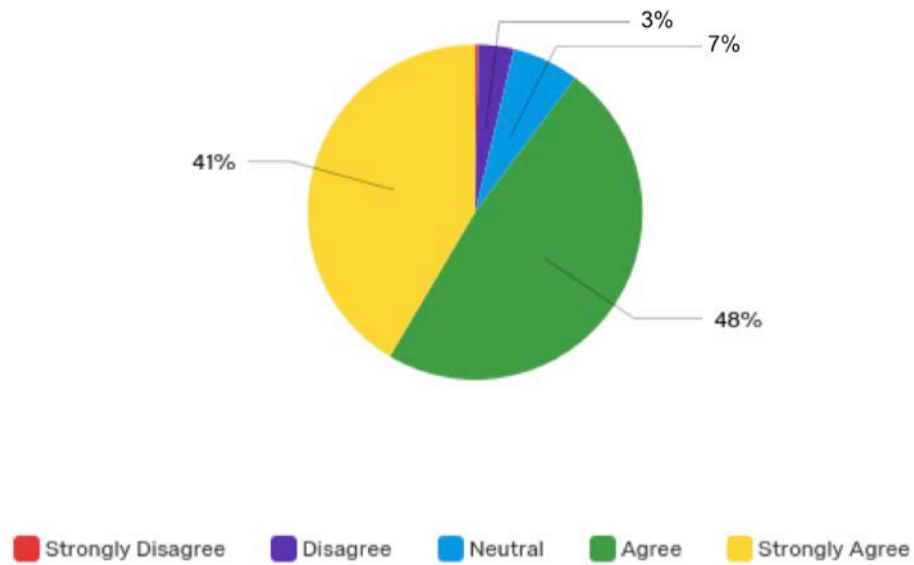


Work as a Calling: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

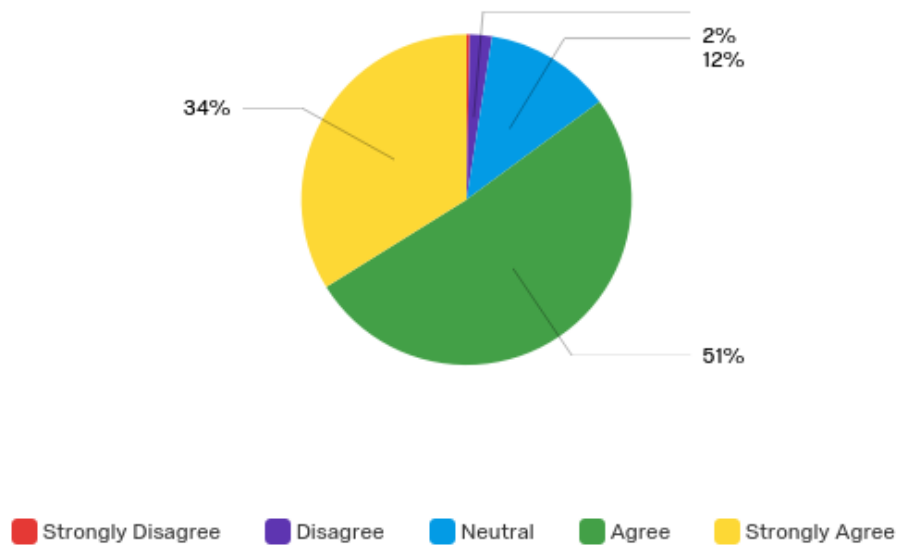




My current work feels like my calling in life.

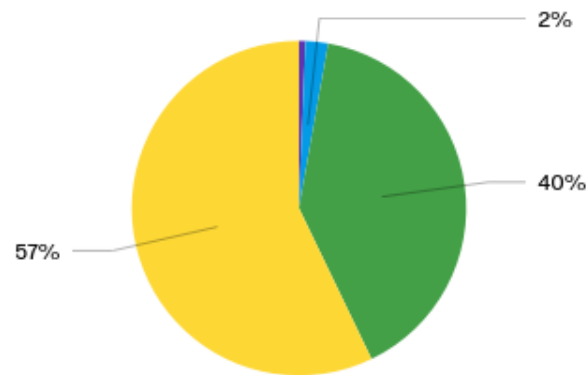


I feel like I was created or destined for my work.



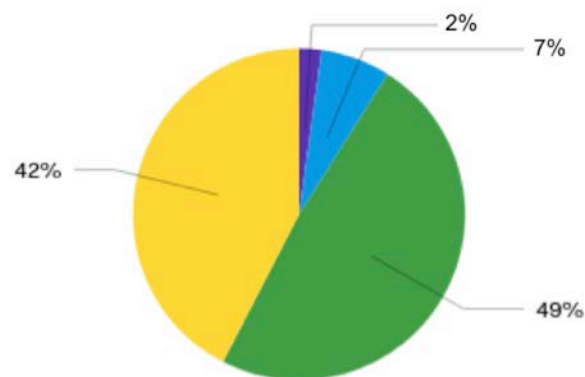


I was drawn to my work by God or a power outside myself.



Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

I have a clear understanding of how my work is a life calling for me.



Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

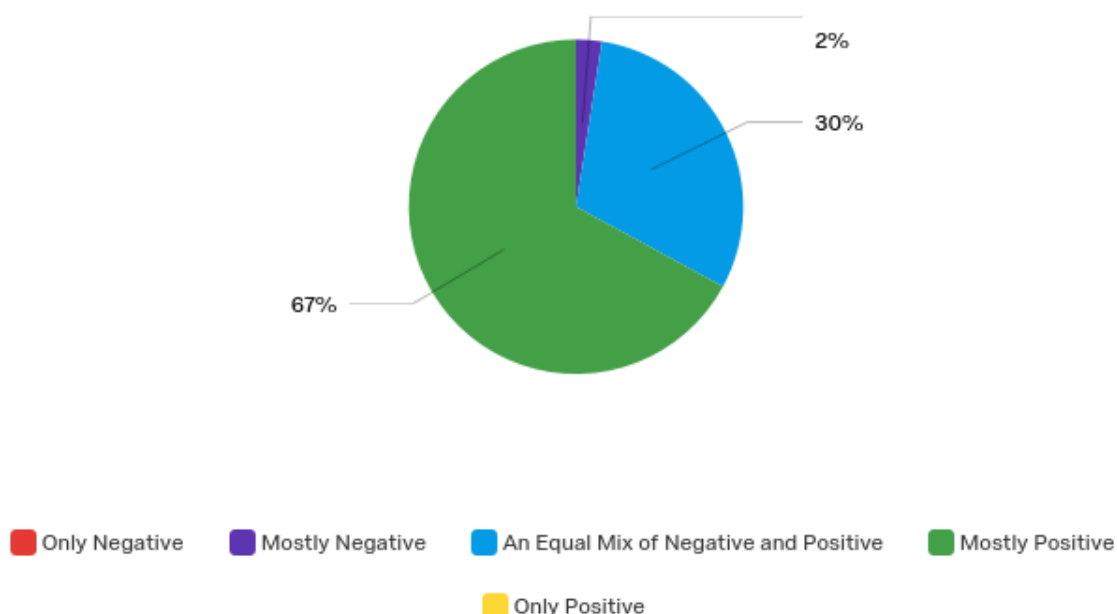


# Personal Factors Related to Wellbeing



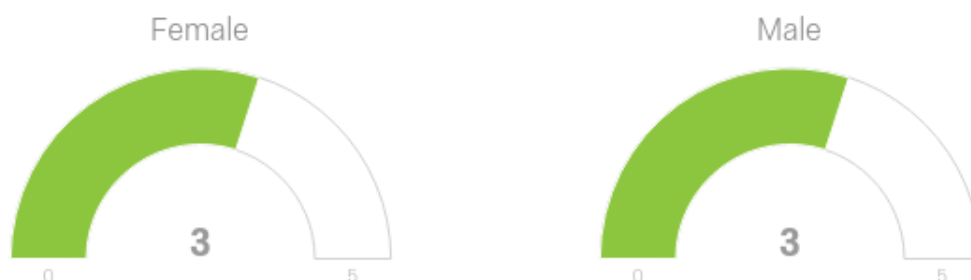
## EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Emotions - Overall, how would you characterize the feelings and emotions you experience most days in your ministry work.



Emotion Regulation measures the ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed.

Emotion Regulation Mean by Gender

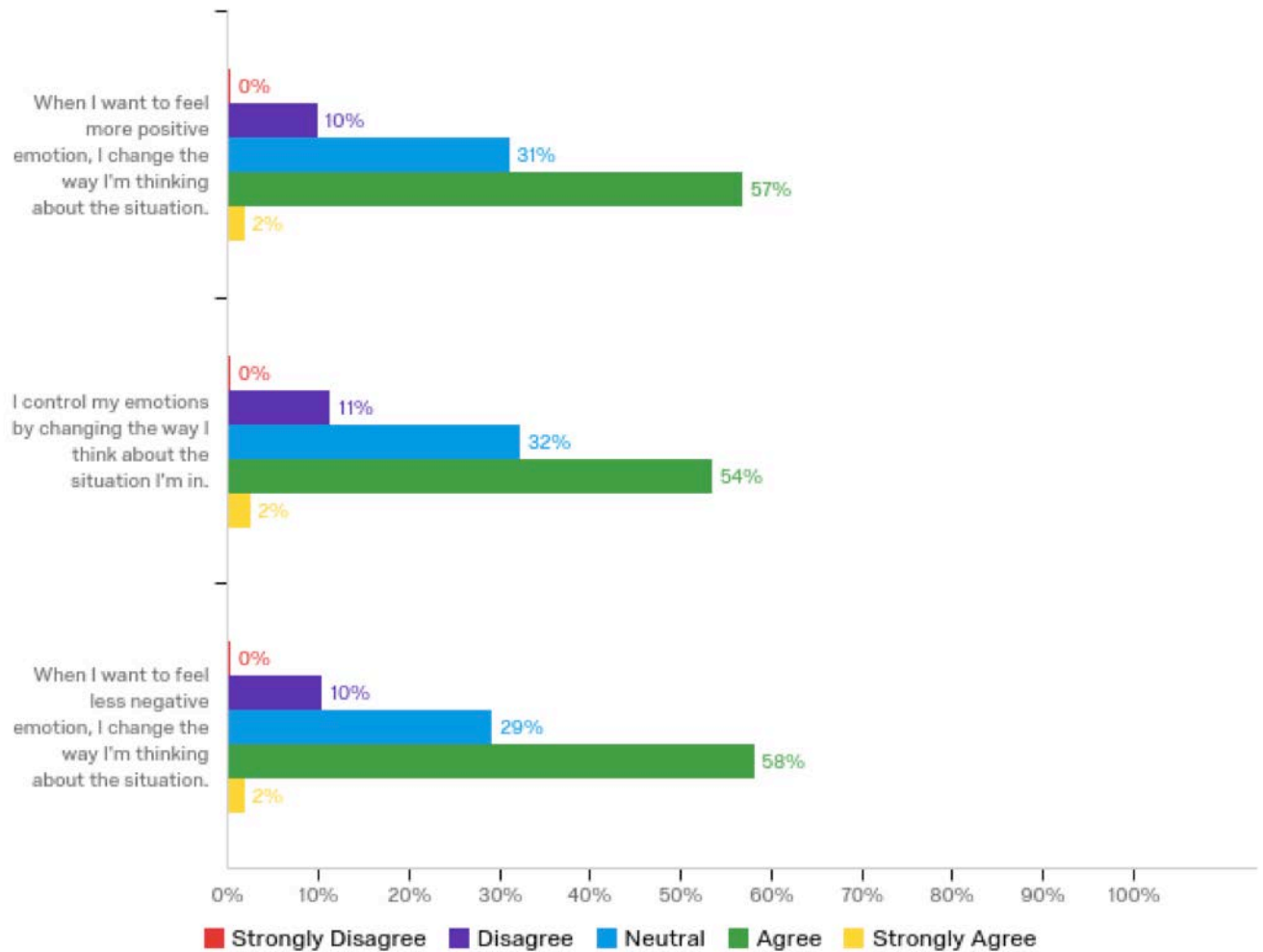




## PERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO WELLBEING



Emotion Regulation: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

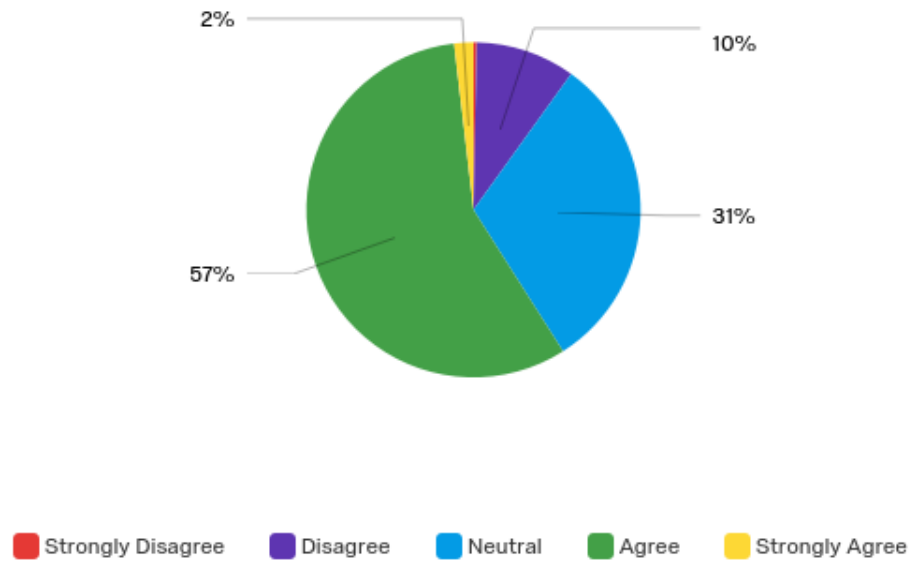


\*For the full description please see individual graphs below

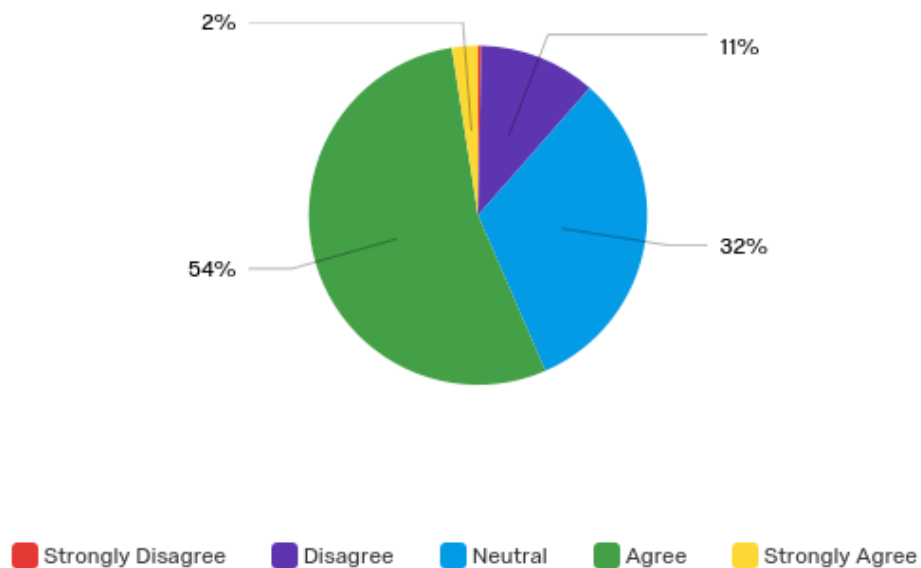
## PERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO WELLBEING



When I want to feel more positive emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.



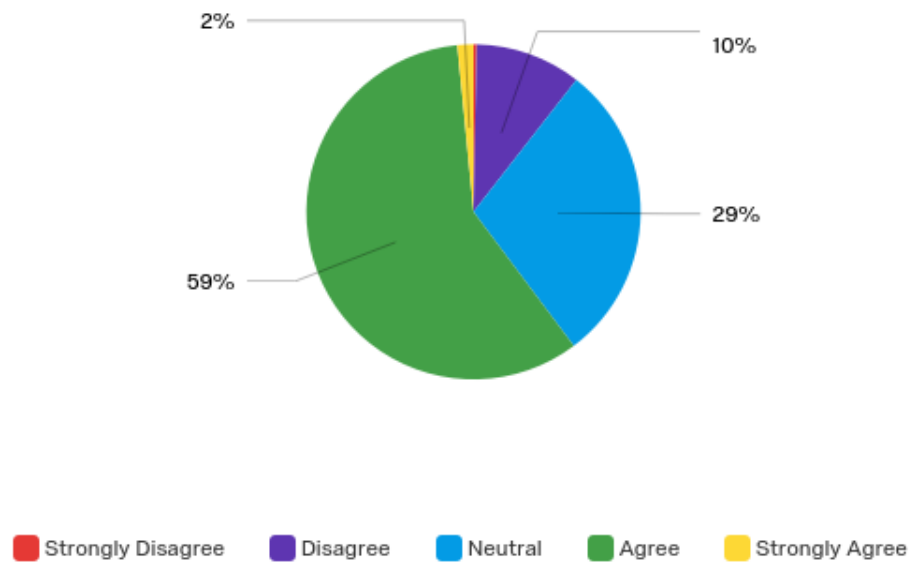
I control my emotions by changing the way I think about the situation I'm in.



## PERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO WELLBEING



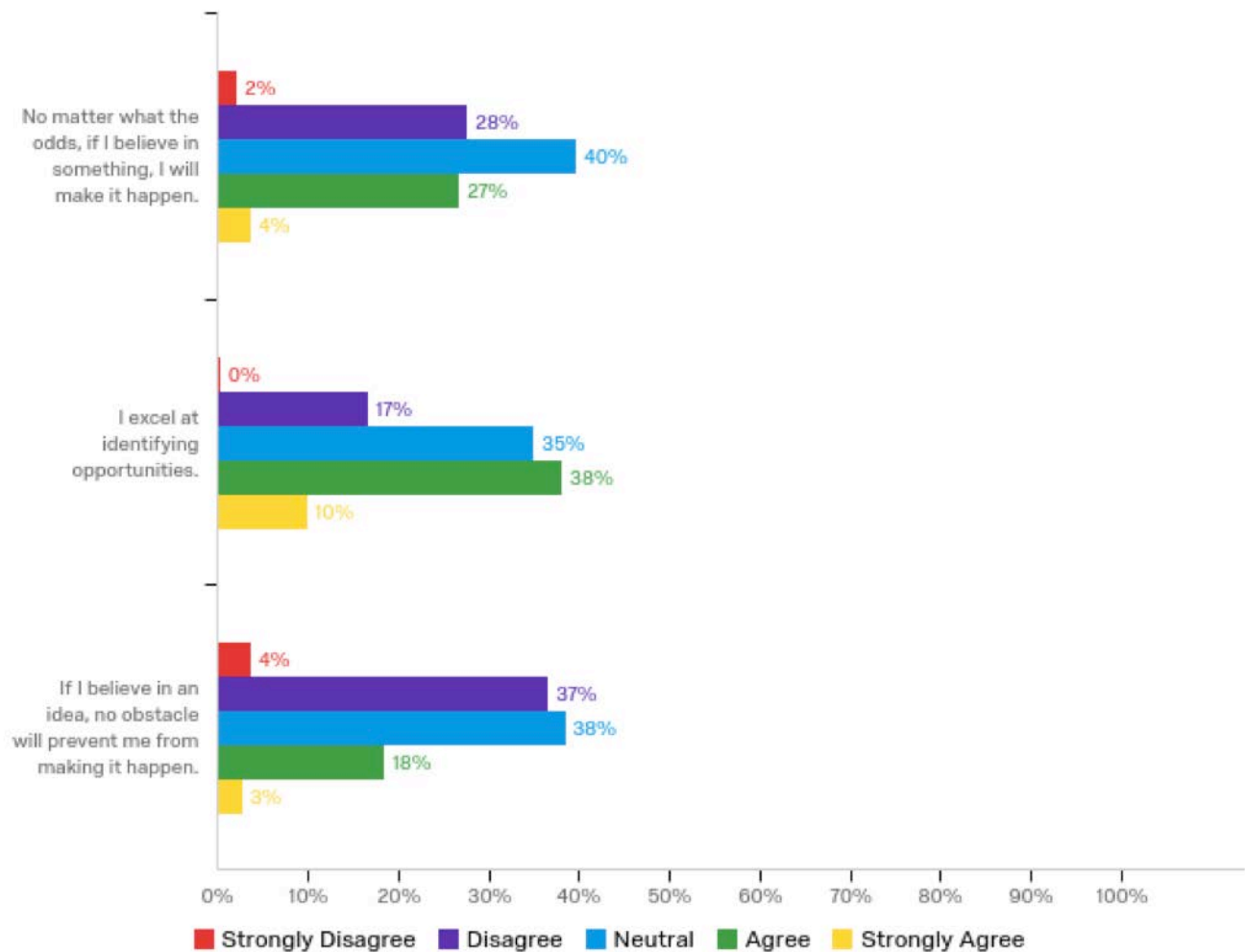
When I want to feel less negative emotion, I change the way I'm thinking about the situation.





## PROACTIVITY

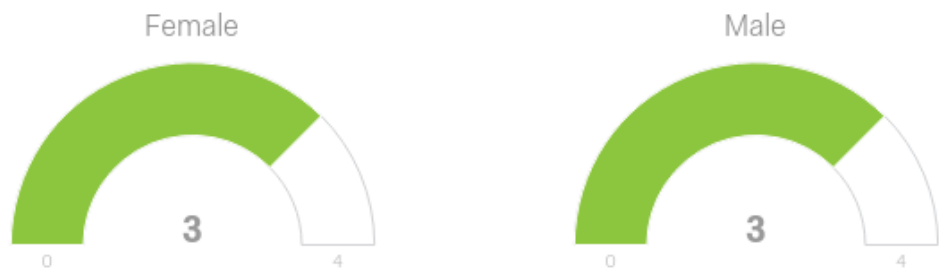
**Proactivity:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



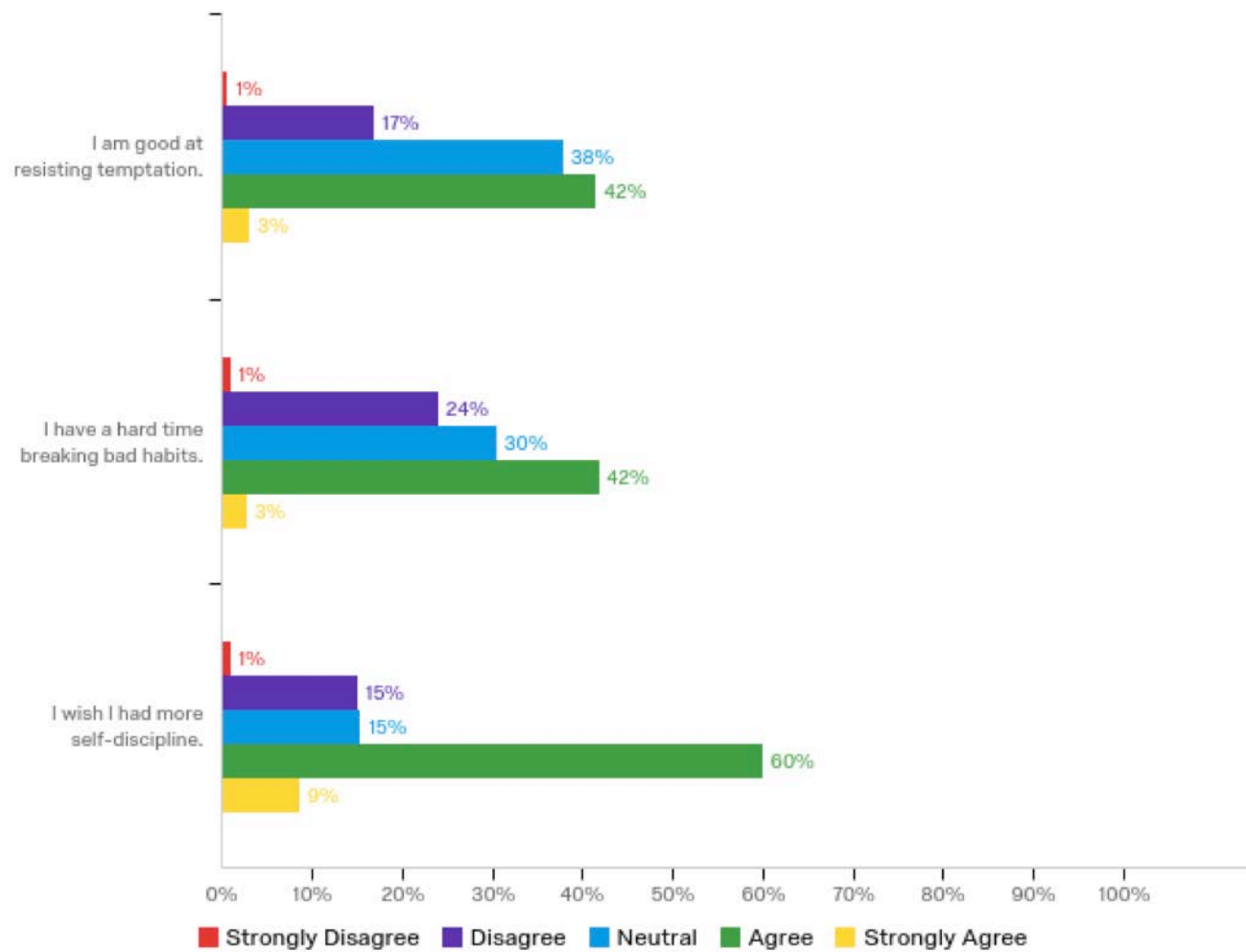


SELF – CONTROL

Self Control Mean By Gender



Self Control: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

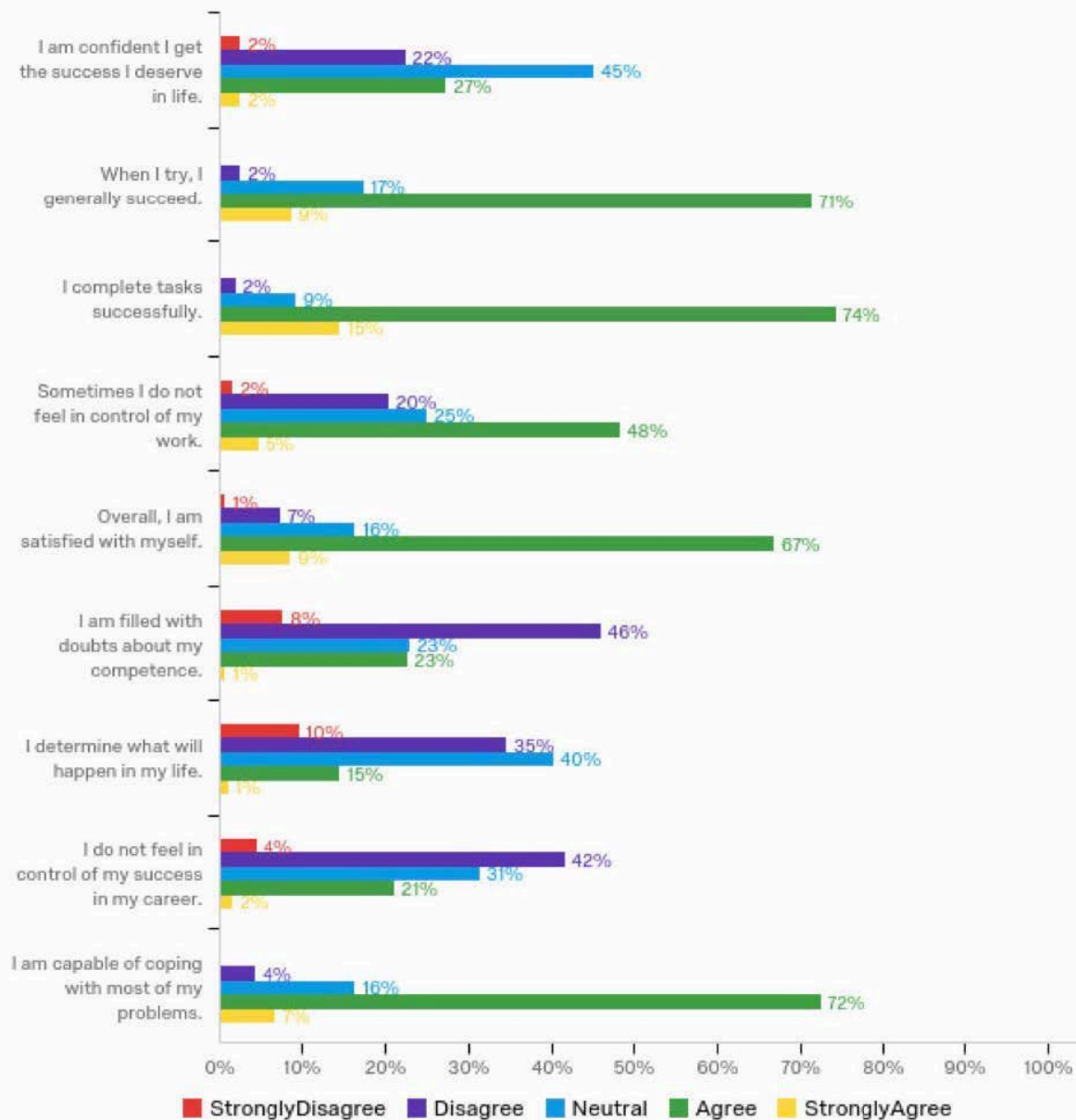




## CORE SELF – EVALUATIONS

Core Self Evaluation is a measure of basic, fundamental appraisal of one's worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person.

Core Self Evaluation: Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.



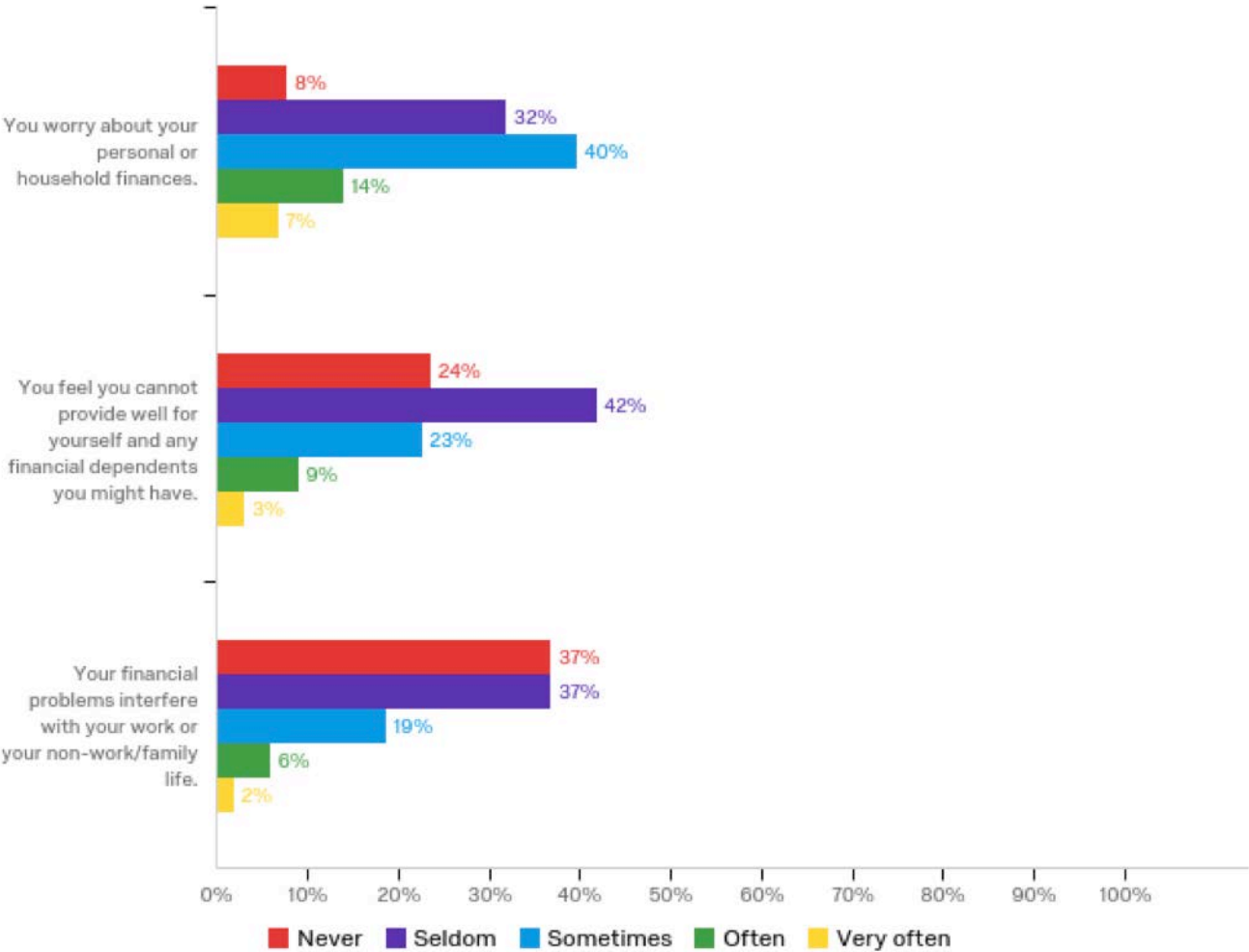


FINANCIAL WORRIES

Financial Worries Mean By Gender



Financial Worries: Please think about your current financial situation. How often would you say...

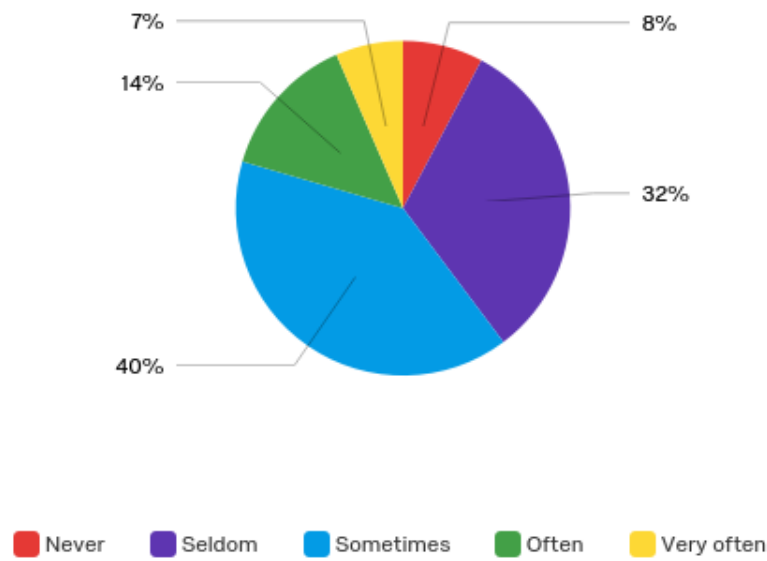


\*For the full description please see individual graphs below

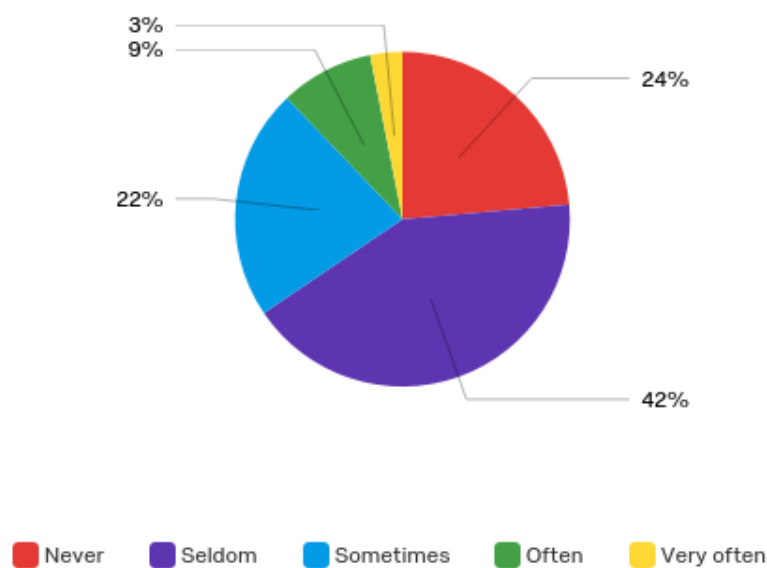
PERSONAL FACTORS RELATED TO WELLBEING



You worry about your personal or household finances.



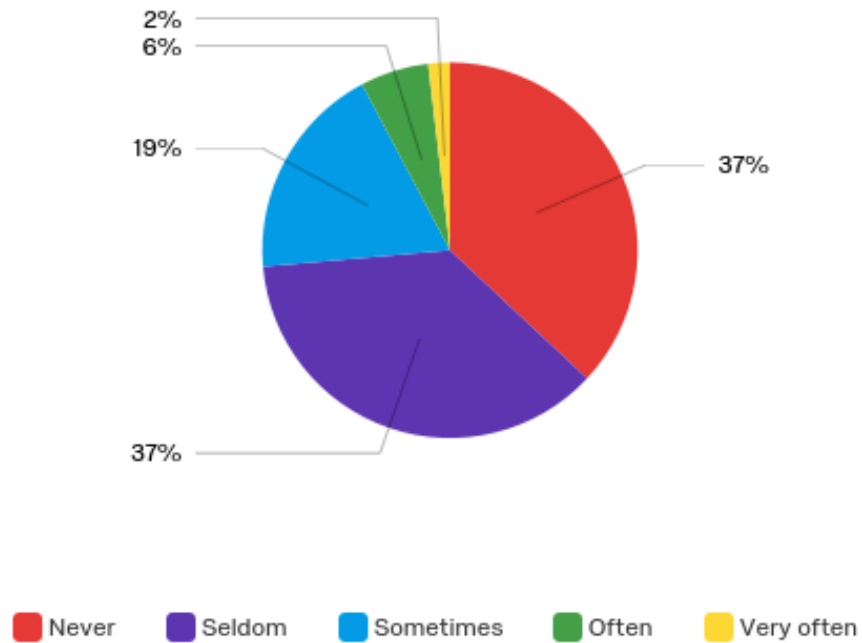
You feel you cannot provide well for yourself and any financial dependents...







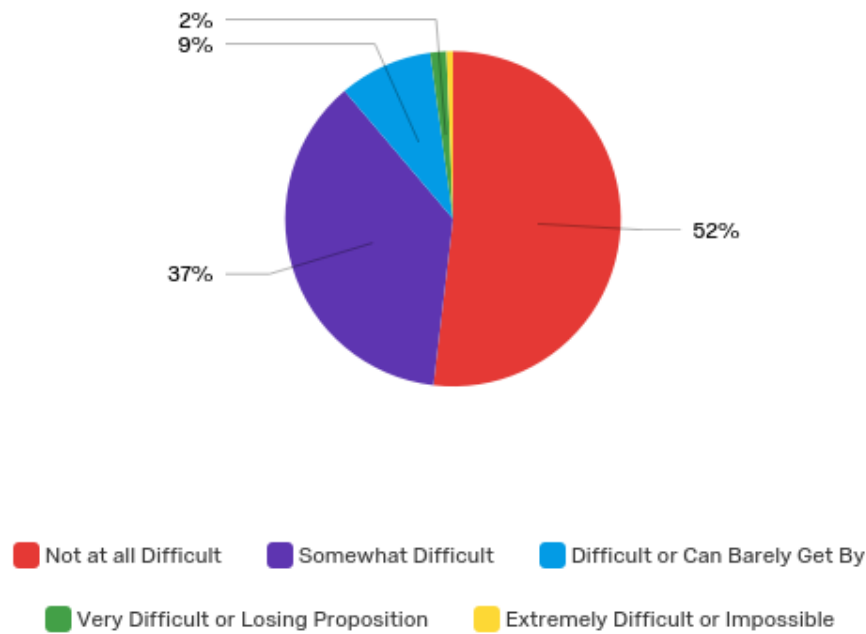
Your financial problems interfere with your work or your non-work/family life.



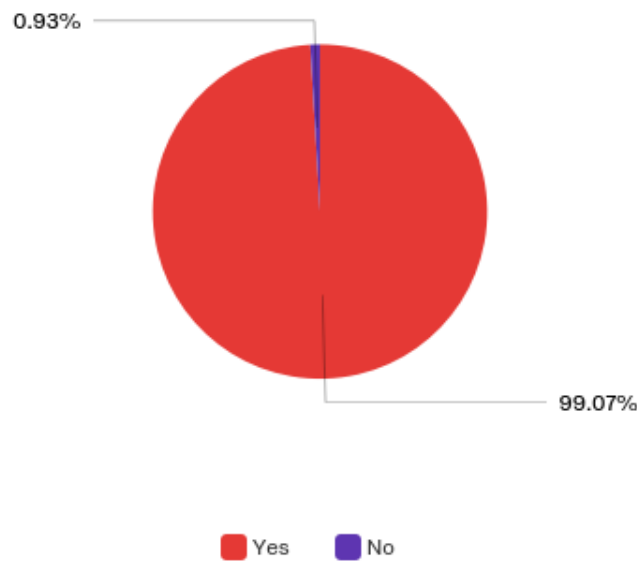


How difficult is it for you to live on your total household income right now?

Financial Strain



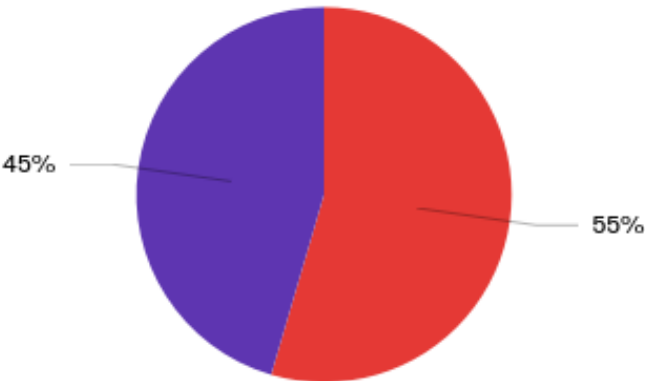
Do you receive income from your ministry work?



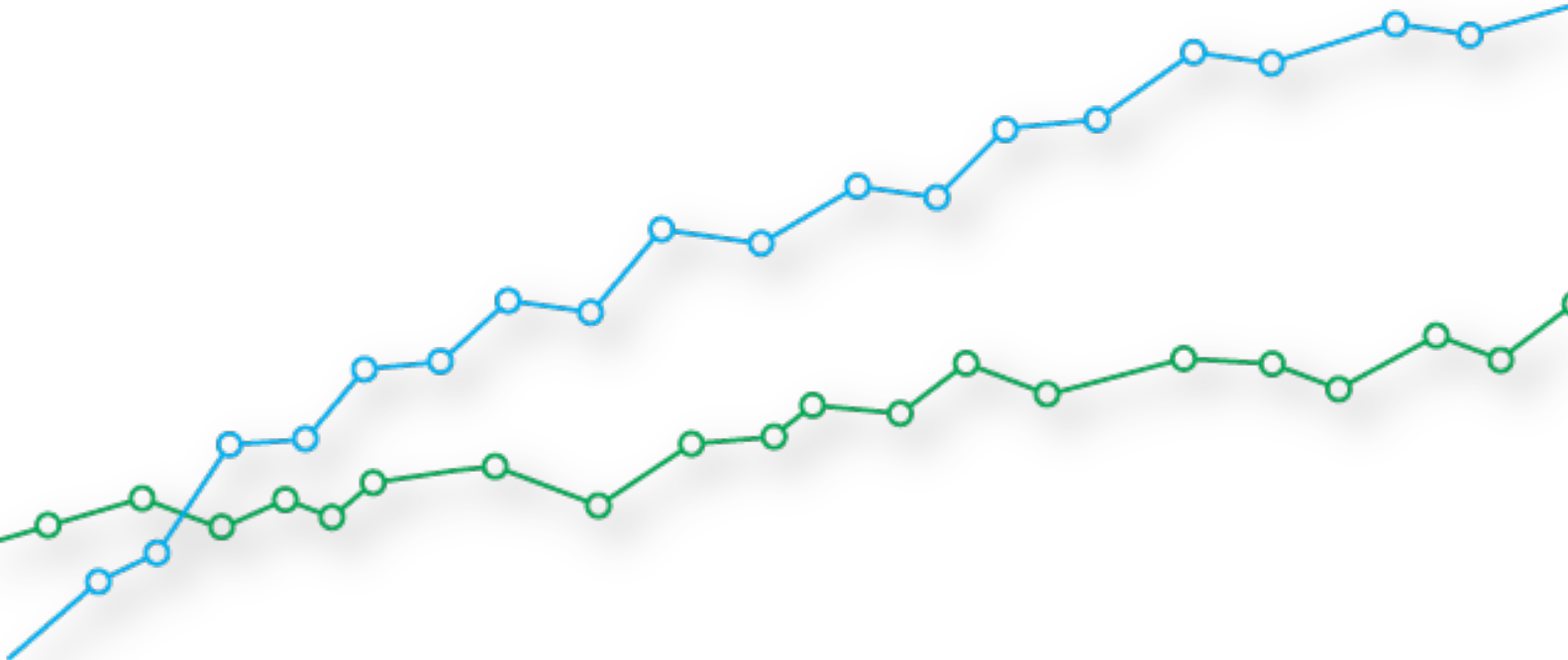


Is the income from your ministry work alone sufficient to meet your family needs?

Financial Needs



Yes No





# Wellbeing Measure Averages



## WELLBEING MEASURE AVERAGES

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Wellbeing Measure	Average for CRCNA	Average for all (PASTORS)
<b>FIT</b>	4.10	4.09
<b>Satisfaction with Work Life</b>	3.54	3.62
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	3.90	4.00
<b>Burnout</b>	3.21	3.36
<b>Resilience</b>	3.93	4.07
<b>Satisfaction with Life</b>	3.67	3.69
<b>General Happiness</b>	3.76	3.93
<b>Authenticity At Work</b>	3.94	4.08
<b>Job Engagement</b>	3.80	3.87
<b>Thriving</b>	4.09	4.16
<b>Relationships</b>	3.75	3.87
<b>Spiritual Wellbeing</b>	4.68	4.62

A score 3 or lower is of concern – action should be considered.

A score above 3 – 4 is moderate.

A score above 4 is good and considered flourishing



# Qualitative Analysis

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In analyzing the qualitative responses to the surveys, we noted five reoccurring themes.

Our report here is the pure, objective, grounded theory approach to analyzing the responses.



We leave it to further conversation between the Christian Reformed Church in North America leadership and our core team of researchers to implement positive changes that may lead to lasting positive change among Christian Reformed Church clergy and their families.

---

experience financial continue  
difficult ago congregation stress feel income sense  
leave call life work wife lead  
love job ministry serve  
live church answer  
find its pay good  
make time god child  
pastor family provide  
great support situation because full  
health people question  
retirement present different school  
financially



## **THEME 1: Financial Strains**

Many pastors who responded to the survey reported having suffered from financial strain or stress. This is often due to already existent financial stresses on the church as a whole, and is considered a problem by pastors only in so much as it prevents them from fulfilling their calling to the fullest.

### **Research in Practice**

What are some ways that church can support pastors and their families? While a church cannot suddenly change a salary, perhaps there are ways to inspire congregations to support pastors in qualitative or indirect ways, like buying groceries and making dinners. Money is a difficult subject, but plays a huge role in the effectiveness of a pastor.

---

“While we make enough for a living, we remain moderately concerned about our long-term financial situation since we can’t afford to buy a home and we worry we are not saving enough for retirement/ old age.”

“The amount the congregation can afford to provide me as a monthly income places a great financial burden on myself and my family on a monthly bases. (Living expenses, insurance, mortgage, personal debt)”

“If I were the sole or primary breadwinner, finances would be a big stressor.”

“Current compensation could fulfill needs, but not in a life giving way that includes who God has created us to be. It could provide for the basics...but would demand significant sacrifice from us.”

---

## THEME 2: Relationships

The well-being of a pastor's partner, children, and extended family seem to have a high correlative relationship with that of the pastor himself/herself. Stresses on these relationships can usually be attributed to three factors: health, finances, and work/life balance.

### Research in Practice

What is the best way for a pastor to manage outside relationships?

Relationships are key to the occupation of a minister, but oftentimes a pastor's personal life can become a hindrance to his/her vocational life. Is there a tangible way to separate these two "lives"?

---

"My income is okay but it helps to have a spouse who also has income. Our two adult children are having a hard time becoming independent, one of whom endured recent illness which adds stress and anxiety to my life."

"Despite everything seemingly going well on the outside, and ministry being very successful, the stress of ministry and life leaves me often overwhelmed, anxious, and somewhat depressed. My personal relationships, including with God and with my spouse and children, suffer significantly because of this."

"I'm a co-pastor with my wife, and that has its own particular challenges regarding work/home boundaries and, in our case, working more than we're getting paid for."

"There are several areas of stress for me – many of which overlap. There is marital stress – some of which is due to areas in life that we used to partner in but now do not. In the beginning, my wife was my church partner. That's not longer the case. She no longer attends church. That's created a distance that I can't work through or get past."

"My wife and I delayed having children due largely to my financial concerns. We have done a great job preparing for the future and I believe my income in ministry will rise, but right now we have gotten used to being dual income no kids and I worry a little bit about the adjustment of having a baby on the way as our income will be split in half when my wife stays home a few years."

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## THEME 3: Calling

We have seen that all ministers feel “called” to their work in some way or another. Ministry is a vocation in the truest sense of the word. However, events often take place that cause pastors to question their calling, and whether they want to continue their work. This seems to be a natural, but temporary phase of thought in ministry work.

### Research in Practice

What causes a pastor to question his or her calling? Are there resources that can be provided to pastors to encourage them in their ministry and strengthen their sense of purpose?

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“God has provided in a wonderful way. I have felt His presence, his guiding hand and strength granting me all that I stood/stand in need of each and every day. In looking back on these 25 plus years in fulltime church ministry I can truly say that I have been richly blessed and continue to enjoy working in parish ministry.”

“My work sometimes wearies me but I feel I’m doing what God has called me to and that often re-energizes me.”

“I certainly feel called to the work I do - and I truly love it - but pastoring a small church is a challenge. I am at the point in my calling where I think God is nudging me out of my comfort zone, but to leave my congregation now would probably mean its closing. That's a hard burden to bear and I'm not sure what to do with it.”

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## **THEME 4: Congregation**

The nature of a minister's congregation plays a huge role in his or her sense of enjoyment, success, and potency. When a pastor has a good, strong relationship with his congregation, he feels a higher sense of job satisfaction than if he's struggling to connect or provide for the congregation.

### **Research in Practice:**

How can ministers in the Christian Reformed Church in North America better connect with their congregations? How can congregations forge better connections with their ministers?

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“I love my work in ministry. I feel incredibly well supported by the congregation I serve (financially, spiritually, developmentally, etc.) This congregation goes out of its way to take care of its pastors and I'm incredibly thankful for that.”

“As a solo pastor of a fairly large rural congregation, I find it hard to live up to the expectations of the workaholic people I serve. I fail all the time because it seems the church sees me only as an employee.”

“I am very content serving in a wonderful church who accepts me as I am and allows me to be who I really am. I am supported and encouraged by godly elders. I am prayed for by the congregation on a constant basis.”

“The support and care that I receive from the current congregation that I serve has made an enormous difference in my wellbeing.”

“The congregation where I am on ministry staff journeyed with difficult conflict last year and many members left. The membership continues to decline. I enjoy the work and relationships of ministry I am a part of with pastoral care and education ministries.”

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## **THEME 5: Stress and Mental Health**

While mental health issues (e.g., depression, loneliness, isolation) do not apply to all pastors, we noted a recurring theme that the life of a pastor is difficult and it feels that there is sometimes nowhere to turn.

### **Research in Practice**

Do pastors have access to mental health resources through the Christian Reformed Church in North America? If so, are there any factors that may inhibit a pastor or his/her spouse from accessing the resources?

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“I struggle with seasonal depression in the winter months and it has been a long winter in the NW this year.”

“Just coming out of a two year battle with cancer. Currently in remission, but struggling to regain energy and healing.”

“I suffer with depression, ADHD, and a chronic neck/shoulder pain.” The problem with ministry is the sense that one can always do more, that the work is never done. It leads me to an unhealthy sense that I'm failing, when others probably sense otherwise.

“Overall I am very content in ministry and feel that this is what God has called and created me to do. However, the work is difficult and stressful, and it often leaves me feeling quite lonely.”

“The problem with ministry is the sense that one can always do more, that the work is never done. It leads me to an unhealthy sense that I'm failing, when others probably sense otherwise.”

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