



Church Climate and Its Impact on Church Loyalty Among Adolescents in Parochial Schools

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Research on Youth Religiosity

- Christian Smith, *Soul Searching* (2005) and *Souls in Transition* (2009)
- Explores the religious lives of young adults in the U.S.
 - Interviews with young people tracked over five years
- "**Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**"
 - Shared belief system among American youth
 - Belief in a benevolent but distant God who wants people to be good and happy.
- Key findings
 - Significant influence of parents on religious outcomes
 - Participation in evangelization missions and youth groups does not predict religiosity in young adulthood.
 - Exaggerated notion of sharp religiosity decline in youth.
 - Identification of "**committed traditionalists**" who maintain strong religious faith and practice

Research on Youth Religiosity

- Kenda C. Dean (2010), *Almost Christian*.
- Teenagers' Faith
 - **Generally positive** but often superficial.
 - **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**
 - A distant God
 - Goodness and happiness as life goals
- Committed Christians: Only 8% of teens exhibit deep faith, and key traits include:
 - Personal God stories
 - Strong faith community
 - Sense of vocation and hope
- Church Recommendations:
 - Rediscover mission and purpose
 - Provide tools for authentic faith development

Recent Studies on Youth Religiosity

- *Emerging Adulthood* (Hill, 2016), *Faith & The Twenty-something Soul* (Clydesdale & Garces-Faley, 2019), *Back-Pocket God* (Denton & Flory, 2020), and *The Nones: Emerging Adult Spirituality* (Burge, 2020).
- Characteristics
 - **Fluid Beliefs:** Young adults exhibit diverse, evolving faith, often "spiritual but not religious."
 - **Flexible Spirituality:** Many keep faith "in their back pocket," accessing it when needed
 - **Declining Affiliation:** Traditional religious ties are weakening, and there is increased exploration and switching.
 - **Cultural Influences:** Higher education and delayed adulthood milestones shape spiritual identities.
 - **Individual Engagement:** Faith is more personalized, seeking authenticity and meaning.

Factors & Implications


- Factors Influencing Disaffiliation:
 - Cultural shifts
 - Political polarization
 - Delayed life milestones
- Institutional Implications: Need for **innovative approaches** to connect with emerging adults.

Research on Youth Religiosity

- Youth Pastor and Faith (Ji & Temeifuna, 2011)
- **Youth pastors** impact youth attitudes toward their denomination.
- Developing and maintaining quality programs by:
 - Increasing the **frequency** of youth programs
 - Creating **exciting and thought-provoking** ministry activities
 - Enhancing **youth leadership opportunities** in church services
- **High-quality church programs** increase church satisfaction and loyalty among youth.
- Youth pastors with **caring relationships** with youth foster satisfaction and loyalty to the church.

Youth Perception of Church Climate

- Youth members' collective perception of the church's environment.
- Characteristics
 - **Inclusivity:** How welcoming the church is to youth from diverse backgrounds.
 - **Spiritual Engagement:** The church's role in fostering spiritual growth among young members.
 - **Support Systems:** The perceived emotional and social support church leadership and peers provide.
 - **Youth Participation:** The degree to which youth are involved in decision-making and church activities



Satisfaction & Commitment to Church

- How **content** young members are with the church services, leadership, and sense of belonging.
- **Desire to Stay:** Youth's intention to remain active in the church community long-term.
- Higher satisfaction with the church climate may **correlate** with a stronger desire to stay involved in the church.

Perceived Church Climate (6-point Likert):

Think about the local church or worship place that you attend. How true of your church is each of these statements?

- It feels warm.
- I learn a lot.
- It accepts people who are different.
- It is friendly.
- It challenges my thinking.
- It encourages me to ask questions.
- Strangers feel welcome.
- It expects people to learn and think.
- It provides fellowships.



Church Satisfaction and Loyalty (5-point Likert)

- How satisfied are you with the church denomination you now attend?
- If you moved to another city with many churches from which to choose, would you attend a church of the same denomination as the church you now attend?
- When you are 40 years old, do you think you will be active in the denomination of the church you now attend?



Purpose of Study

- Determinants of youth perception of church climate
 - Demographic variables
 - Faith influence factors and youth perception of church climate.
- Youth perception of church climate and its impact on their satisfaction and commitment to stay in the church.

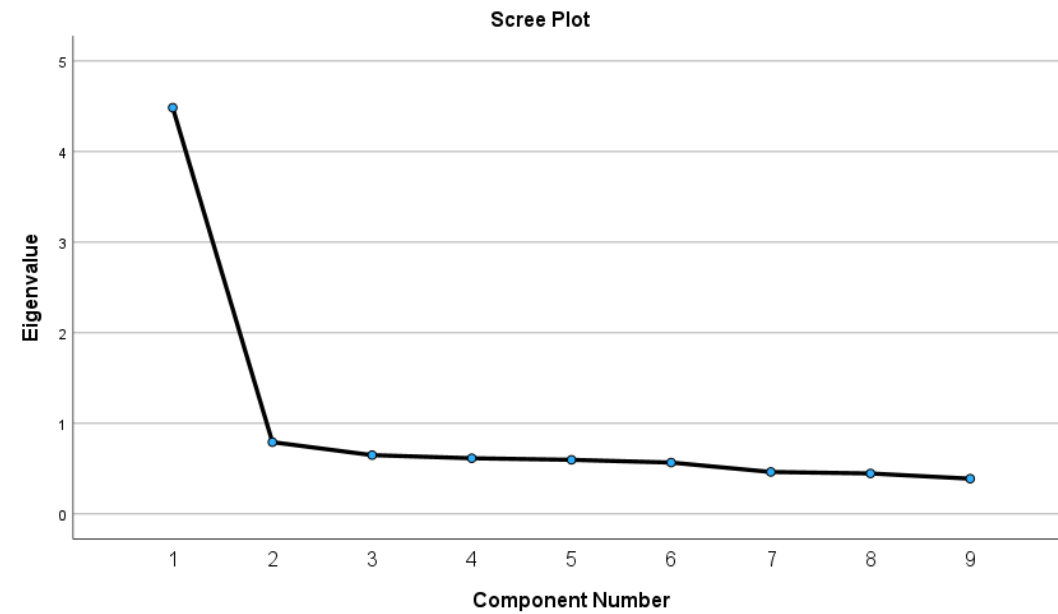
Sampling

- 2021-22 Nationwide Survey
- Seventh-day Adventist School System
- Enrollment
 - 22,988 6th-12th Graders
- Participants
 - N = 9165; 38% of the 22,988 students

Measurements

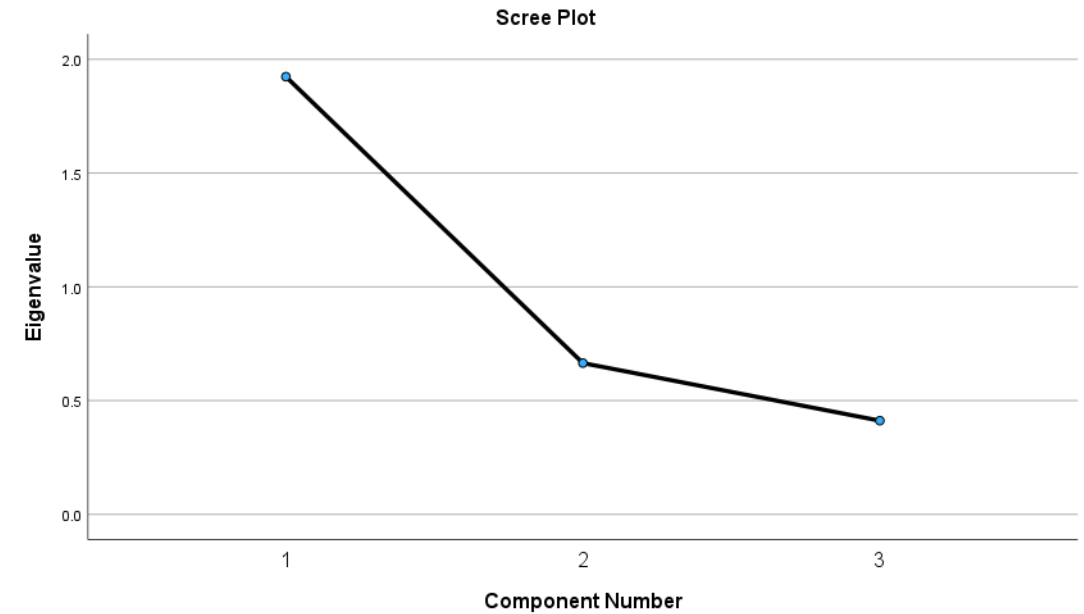
Perceived Church Climate

One-Factor Solution with Exp. Variance of 49.82%



Church Satisfaction & Loyalty

One-Factor Solution with Exp. Variance of 64.12%



Mean Comparison: Gender

	Church Climate		Church Loyalty	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All Samples	4.06	.98	3.67	.89
Male	4.09	.98	3.73	.88
Female	4.10	.90	3.72	.85
Non-Binary	3.66	1.29	3.12	1.03
<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>)	68.71 (2, 8958)		157.45* (2, 8954)	

Note. *N* = 8959; **p* < .01; ***p* < .05;
Church Climate: 6-point; Church Loyalty: 5-point.

Mean Comparison: Ethnicity

	Church Climate		Church Loyalty	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All Samples	4.06	.98	3.67	.89
American Indian	3.47	1.53	3.06	1.07
Black	4.14	.90	3.62	.90
Hispanic	4.14	.84	3.72	.84
Asian	4.05	1.04	3.64	.87
White	4.01	.99	3.74	.91
Multiethnic	4.02	1.04	3.68	.90
<i>F (df)</i>	20.92* (5, 8955)		23.67* (5, 8951)	

Note. $N = 8959$; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$;

Church Climate: 6-point; Church Loyalty: 5-point.

Mean Comparison: Grade

	Church Climate		Church Loyalty	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All Samples	4.06	.98	3.67	.89
Junior	4.09	.99	3.70	.88
Senior	4.02	.95	3.64	.92
<i>F (df)</i>	11.61* (1, 8958)		9.99* (1, 8954)	

Note. $N = 8959$; * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$;
Church Climate: 6-point; Church Loyalty: 5-point.

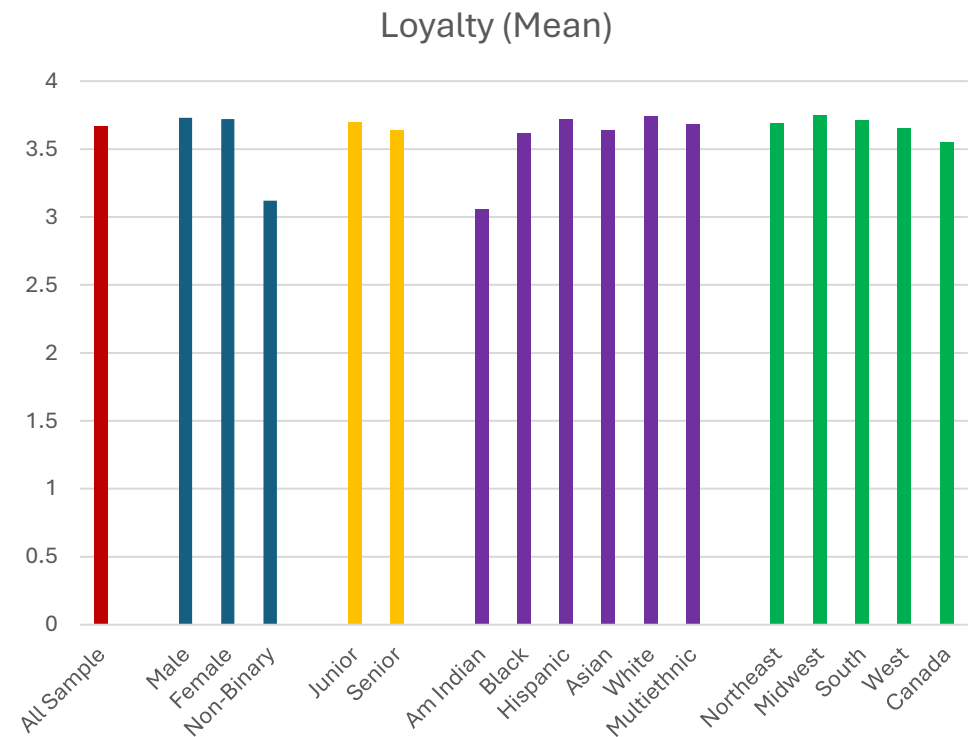
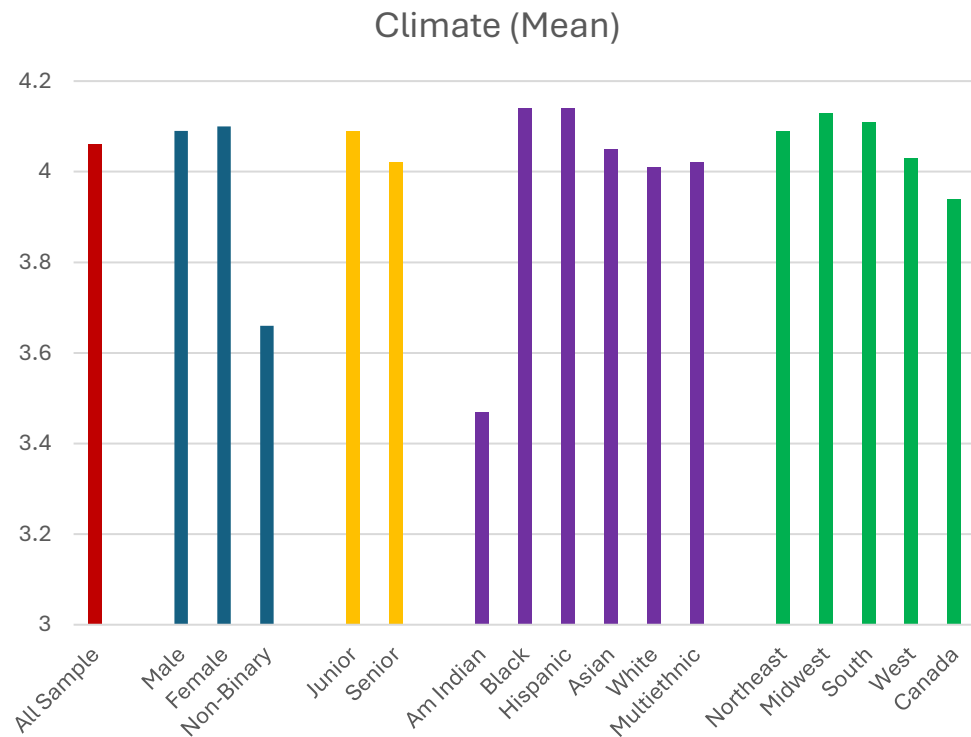
Mean Comparison: Region

	Church Climate		Church Loyalty	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
All Samples	4.06	.98	3.67	.89
Northeast	4.09	.92	3.69	.89
Midwest	4.13	.86	3.75	.87
South	4.11	.91	3.71	.85
West	4.03	1.00	3.65	.91
Canada	3.94	1.17	3.55	.97
<i>F (df)</i>	8.21* (4, 8968)		8.82* (4, 8963)	

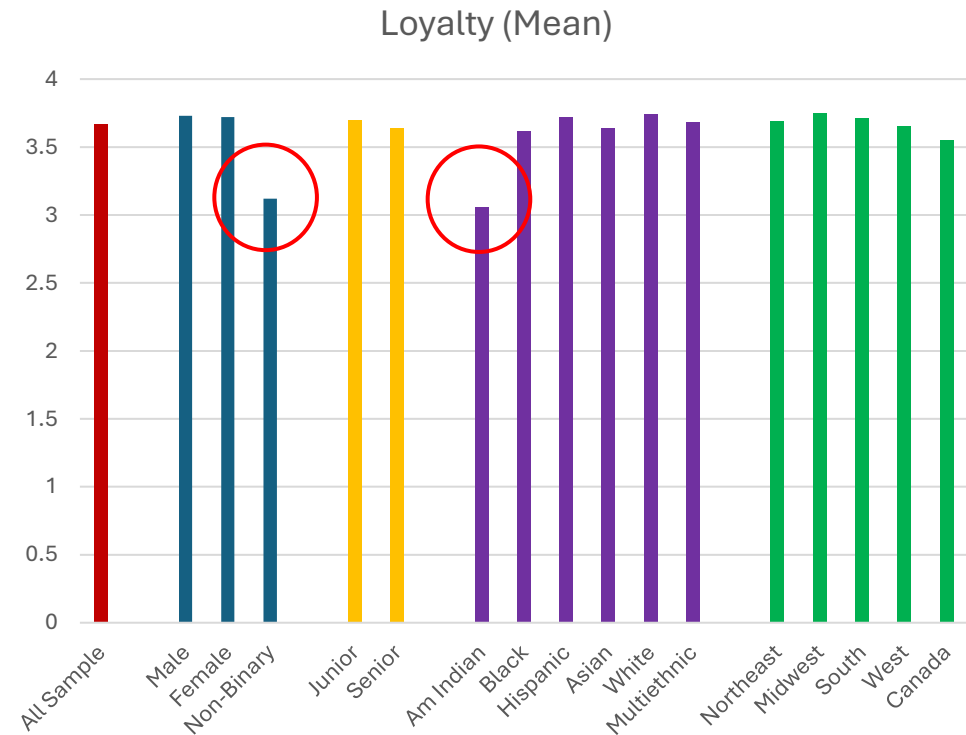
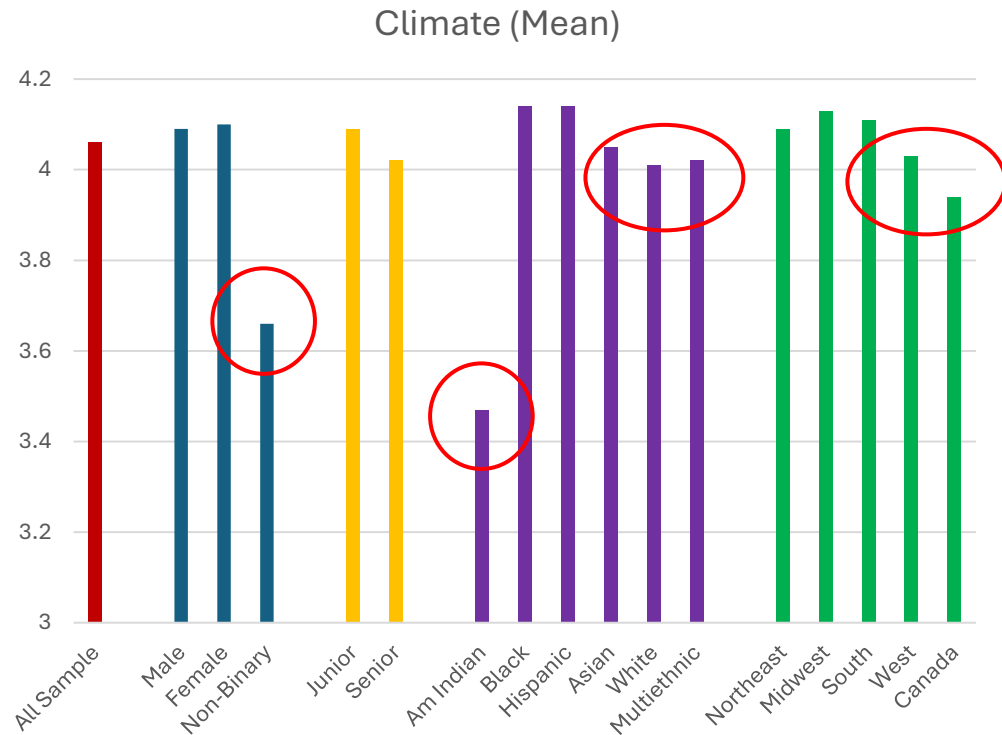
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Church Climate: 6-point; Church Loyalty: 5-point.

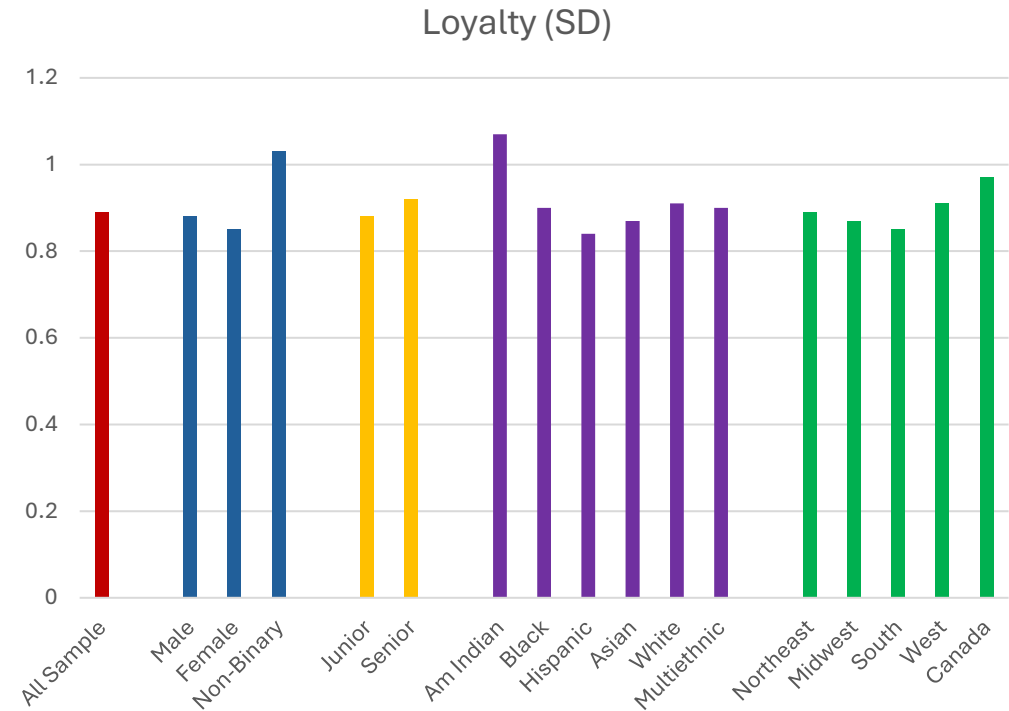
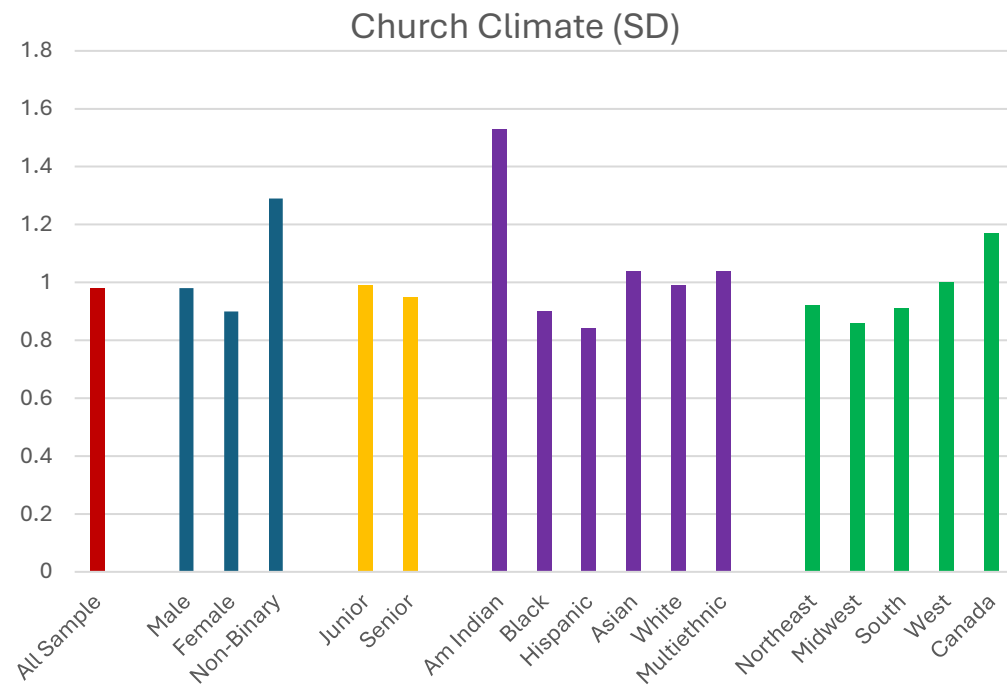
Church Climate & Loyalty Comparison (Mean)



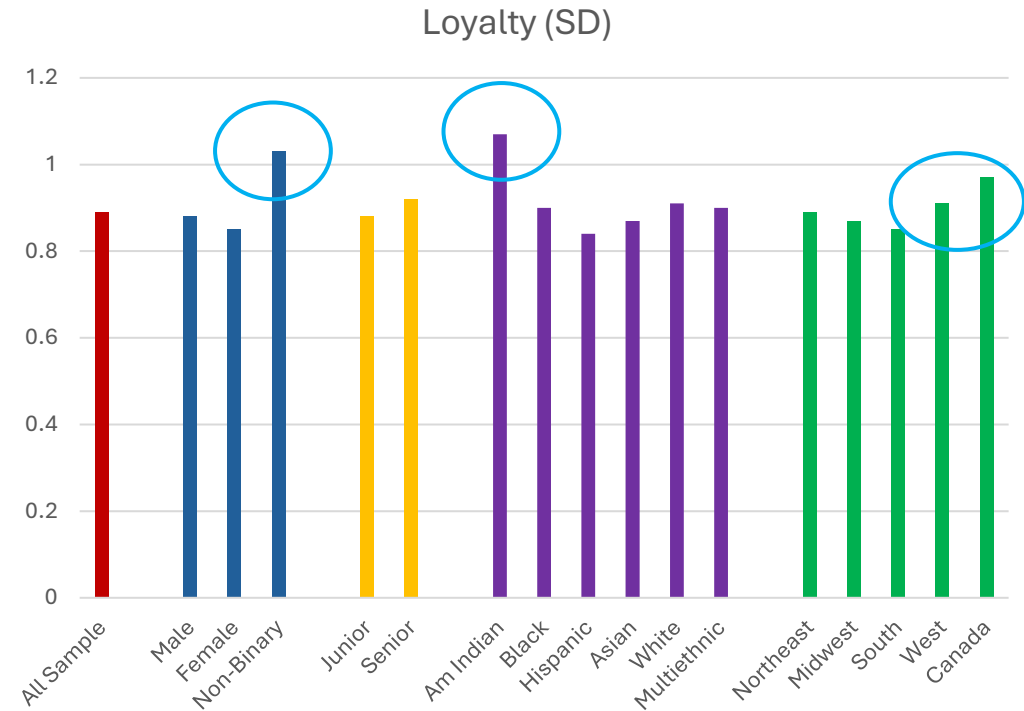
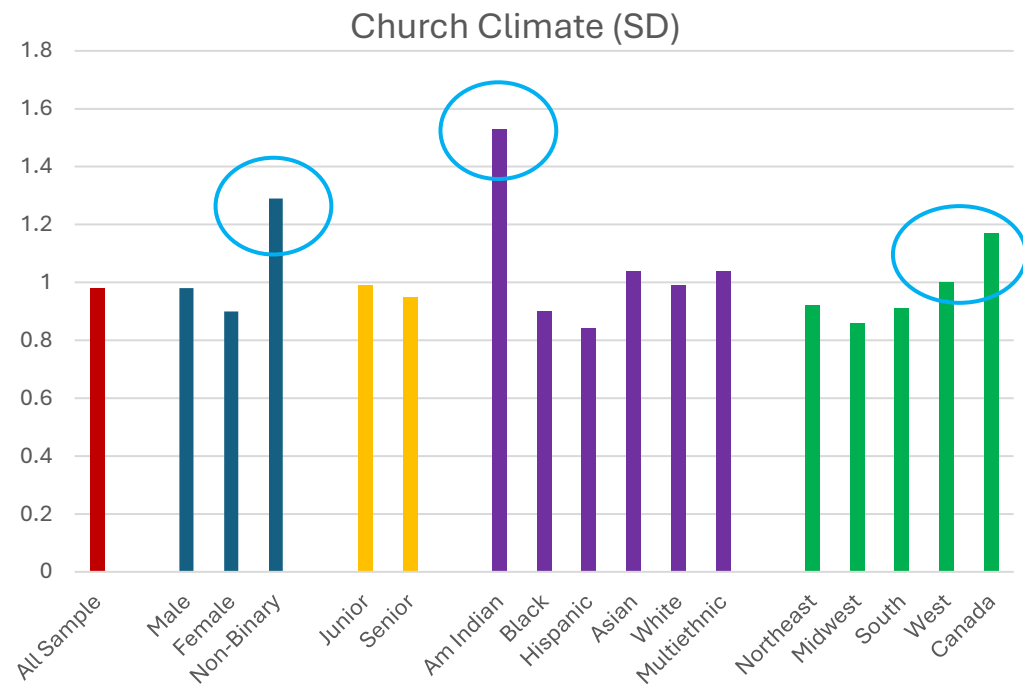
Church Climate & Loyalty Comparison (Mean)



Church Climate & Loyalty Comparison (SD)



Church Climate & Loyalty Comparison (SD)



OLS Regressing Perceived Church Climate to Demographic Attributes

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Constant	3.58*	.05	
Male	.43*	.04	.22
Female	.44*	.04	.22
Senior	-.08*	.02	-.04
Asian	.05*	.04	.02
Black	.11*	.04	.04
Hispanic	.10*	.04	.04
White	-.02	.03	-.01
American Indian	-.53*	.07	-.08
Northeast	.10**	.04	.04
Midwest	.16*	.04	.05
South	.12*	.04	.05
West	.06	.04	.03

Note. *N* = 8959; **p* < .01; ***p* < .05; R square = .03, F (df) = 22.93* (12, 8947)

*OLS Regressing **Church Loyalty** to Church Climate and Demographic Attributes*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Constant	1.74*	.05	
Male	.45*	.03	.25
Female	.44*	.03	.24
Senior	-.04*	.02	-.02
Asian	-.04	.03	-.02
Black	-.11	.03	-.05
Hispanic	-.02*	.03	-.01
White	.06	.03	.03
American Indian	-.40*	.06	-.07
Northeast	.06	.03	.03
Midwest	.08**	.04	.03
South	.05	.03	.03
West	.02	.03	.01
Church Climate	.38*	.01	.41

Note. *N* = 8959; **p* < .01; ***p* < .05; *R* sq = .21; *F* (*df*) = 185.66* (13, 8936)

Results of Nested Hierarchical OLS Regression Predicting Church Loyalty

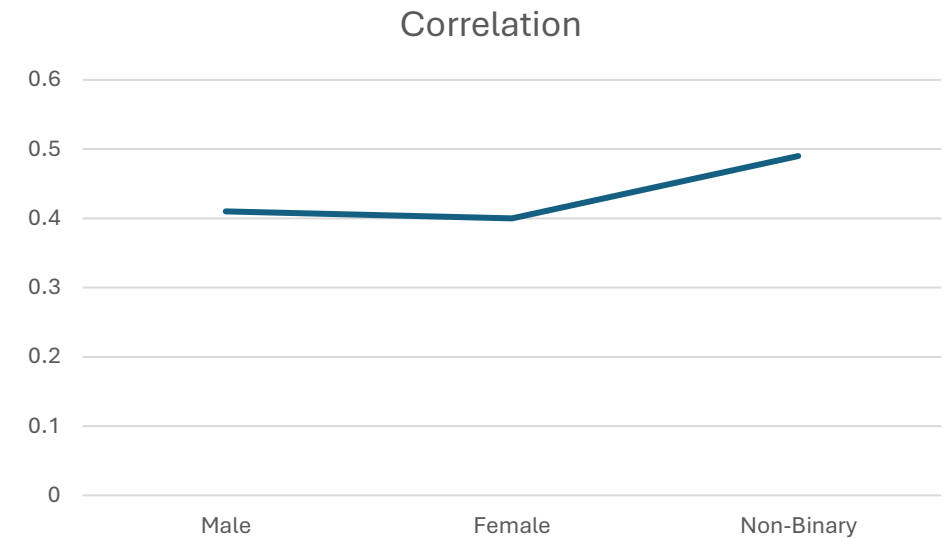
Step	<i>R sq</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\Delta R sq$	ΔF	<i>df</i>
Region	.00	.89	.00	8.84*	4, 8945
Grade	.01	.89	.00	9.53*	1, 8944
Ethnicity	.02	.89	.01	21.15*	5, 8939
Gender	.05	.87	.03	160.12*	2, 8937
Church Climate	.21	.79	.16	1838.75*	1, 8936

Note. *N* = 8959; **p* < .01; ***p* < .05.

Correlation between Church Climate & Loyalty by Gender (Moderating Effects)

	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>
All Sample	.43	8962
Male	.41*	4196
Female	.40*	4036
Non-Binary	.49*	719

Note. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$.



Regressing Church Climate Perception to **Faith Influence Factors** by Gender

	All Sample		Male		Female		Non-Binary	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Sabbath (Sunday) School	.05*	.01	.05*	.01	.04*	.01	.09**	.03
Church Services	.33*	.01	.34*	.02	.30*	.01	.35*	.04
Mission Projects	-.01	.01	-.01	.01	.00	.01	-.01	.04
Youth Organizations	.02	.01	.03	.01	.00	.01	.03	.04
Pathfinder	.04*	.01	.05*	.01	.02	.00	.12**	.03
Youth Camp/Rally	.02	.01	.00	.01	.05**	.01	-.09**	.04
Evangelical Outreach	-.02	.01	-.02	.01	-.02	.01	-.01	.04
My Youth Pastor	.04*	.01	.01	.01	.06*	.01	.06	.04
My Pastor	.20*	.01	.21*	.02	.19*	.01	.17*	.04
<i>R sq.</i>	.30		.30		.26		.37	
<i>F</i>	422.19*		199.69*		156.69*		44.96*	
<i>df</i>	9,8849		9, 4139		9, 3978		9, 705	

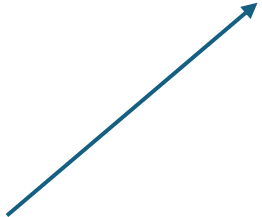
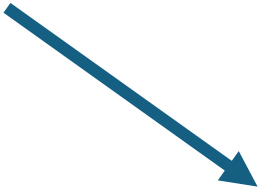
Note. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$.

Church Service
Pastor

Sabbath (Sunday) School
Youth Camp/Pathfinder
Youth Pastor

Perceived
Church
Climate

Satisfaction
Church Loyalty



Church Service
Pastor
Sabbath (Sunday) School



Perceived
Church
Climate



Satisfaction
Church Loyalty

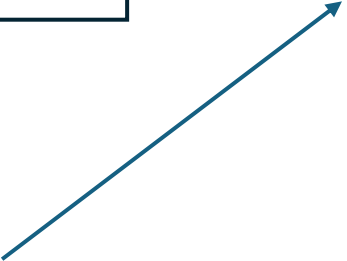
Church Service
Pastor
Sabbath (Sunday) School

Perceived
Church
Climate

Satisfaction
Church Loyalty

Youth Camp/Pathfinder

Male



Church Service
Pastor
Sabbath (Sunday) School



Perceived
Church
Climate



Satisfaction
Church Loyalty

Youth Camp/Rally
Youth Pastor



Female

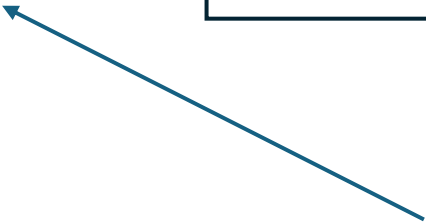
Church Service
Pastor
Sabbath (Sunday) School



Perceived
Church
Climate



Satisfaction
Church Loyalty



Pathfinder
Youth Camp/Rally (-)

Non-Binary

Summary

- State of youth perception of the church
 - 65%: Positive church climate.
 - 73%: Church satisfaction and loyalty
- Some notable effects of demographic attributes
 - Non-binary & American-Indian groups: Low Climate & Loyalty
 - White/Asians/Multiracial: Lower on Climate but High on Loyalty
 - West & Canada: Lower Climate & Lower Loyalty
 - Blacks & Hispanics: Higher on Climate
- Greater variances among non-binaries about church climate and loyalty.

Summary

- Church climate matters for church satisfaction and loyalty.
- Important Factors: Church Worship, Pastor, & Bible/Lesson Studies
- Moderate Factors
 - Bible/Lesson Studies, Youth Outdoor Programs
 - Variance across different demographic groups
 - Importance of youth pastors: Female
- Non-significant factors: Mission, Evangelism, Youth Organizations