

Comparing Member & Leader Assessments of *Adventist World*

Conducted for the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

By the Center for Creative Ministry

2013

Introduction

Surveys were conducted among Seventh-day Adventist Church members and attenders around the world and denominational leaders. Both were conducted in the fall of 2012 to get assessments of *Adventist World* magazine. The completed samples included 1,414 respondents to survey of members and 986 respondents who were church administrators and department heads at the General Conference, Division, Union and Conference/Mission levels. The two surveys included a total of 2,400 respondents.

The initial responses from church leaders involved a questionnaire that was handed out in paper form at the 2012 Annual Council. Both surveys involved the use of online questionnaires translated into several languages. To supplement that questionnaires collected at Annual Council, an Email was sent to a list of the union officers and they were asked to share it with their department heads, key institutional administrators and conference/mission officers. A relatively new sampling method was used to get responses to the survey of members. It is called *network sampling* and has been used in recent years by a number of research organizations with good results. The sample started with an Email list of Adventist Church members who were selected randomly from a random set of local church membership lists collected in 2010 by the Center for Creative Ministry for a different research project. More than 700 Emails were sent to this list as well as another 200 to pastors outside North America who have taken the class *Field Research for Ministry* (GSEM730) at the Seventh-day Theological Seminary since January of 2007. Each of the individuals sent an Email was asked to forward it to no more than five individuals in their Email list which they knew to be Adventist Church members. The pastors were reminded of the techniques they had been taught in the class as to how to select a random sample from their church list. The resulting sample represents a significant share of the membership of the Adventist Church and includes responses from all world divisions. There is a skew in the sample that is the result of the online survey methodology. Only respondents who were able to get access to the Internet could respond in this survey. In addition, it should be kept in mind that the standard allowance for sampling error in samples of the size of these is two percentage points, plus or minus.

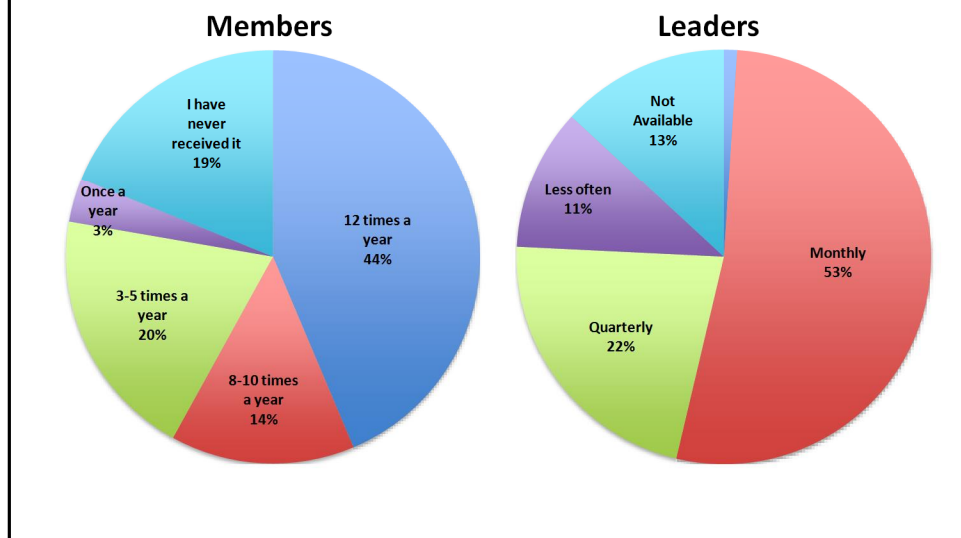
The surveys were conducted under a contract with the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics and Research by the Center for Creative Ministry, a research organization affiliated with the North American Division church resources network which has conducted many other survey research projects for the NAD and other Seventh-day Adventist Church organizations over the last two decades.

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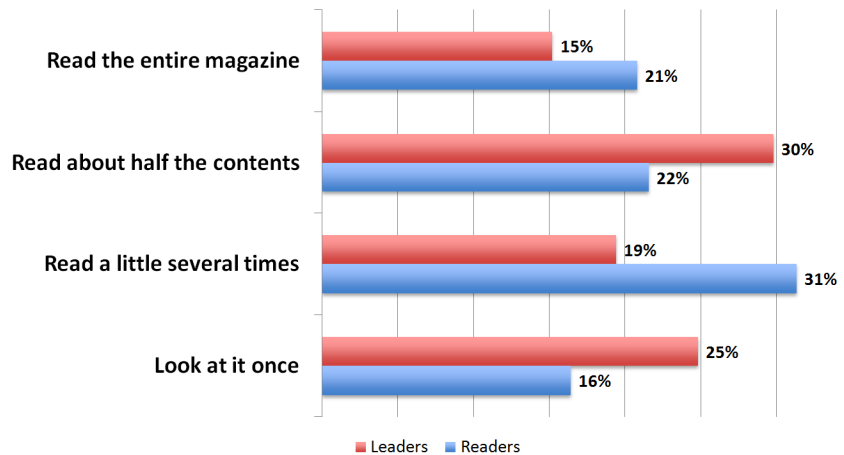
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Frequency of Receiving *Adventist World*



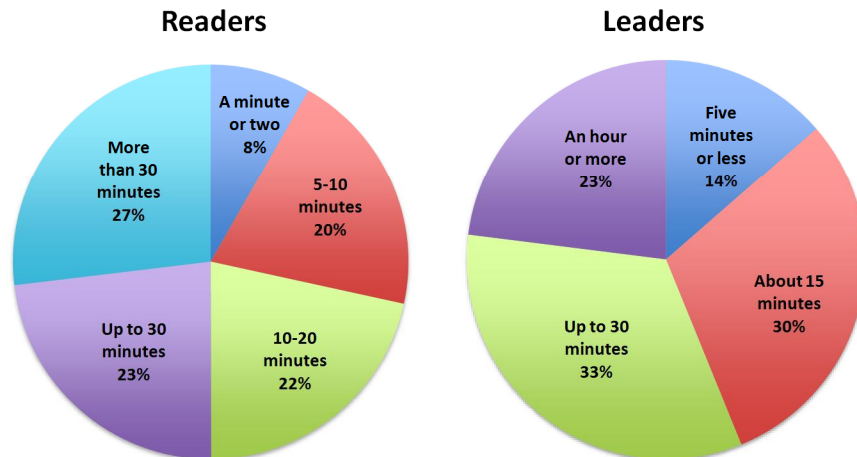
Although the questions on this item in the two surveys are not precisely the same, it appears that church administrators may receive *Adventist World* a little more regularly than do the members. This may be, in part, due to different methods of distribution in many parts of the world. Church leaders may be more likely to get a copy of each issue delivered by mail or to their desks, while church members in many places get a copy at church or from a relative or friend. The differences in frequency of access are not great, but perhaps they do highlight the need to improve the circulation of the periodical in some parts of the world.

When I Look at *Adventist World*



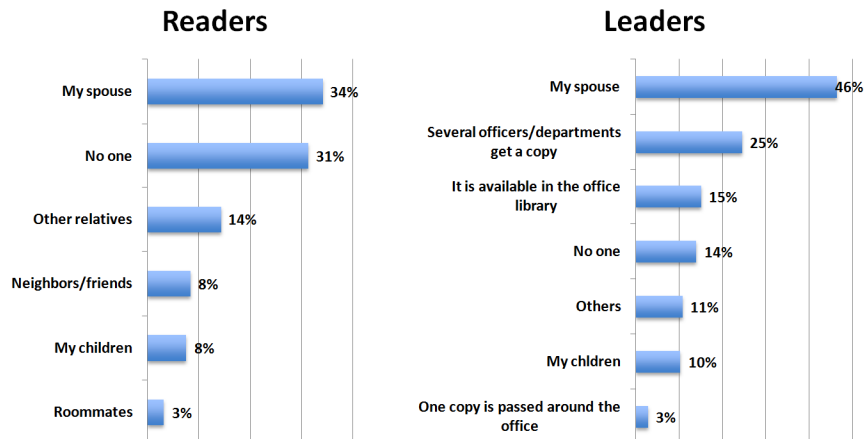
Church members who read *Adventist World* reported giving somewhat more attention to reading the magazine than did church administrators. The leaders may feel greater time pressures than some readers, although a number of readers are also busy professionals and business people. It is also possible that church leaders often feel that they are already familiar with information in the magazine and therefore do not need to give it as careful a reading. Since the primary purpose of the journal is to communicate with church members, it is good that members are spending more time consuming the materials published in it. If there were an attention gap in which church members seemed less interested in the material than church leaders, that would be cause for concern.

Time spent with each issue of *Adventist World*



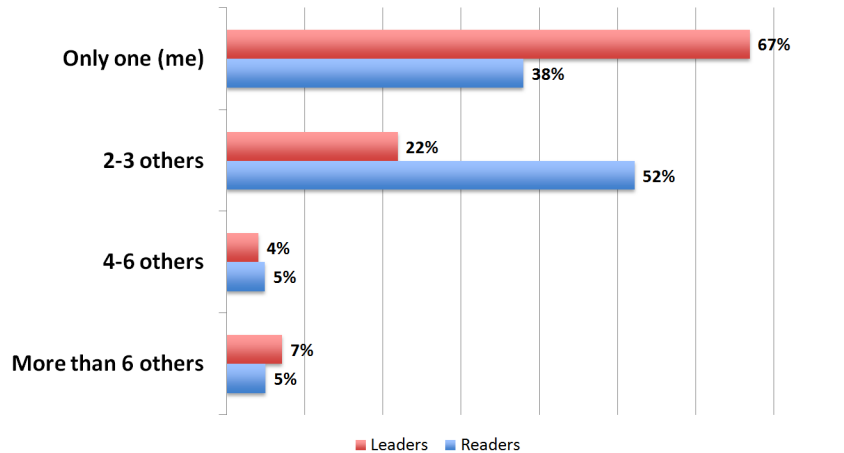
In general, church administrators were somewhat less likely to spend as much time as church members with the magazine. The difference is marginal and somewhat blurred by the different structure of the questions in each survey. The overall reality is consistent with the responses in the previous question.

Who else also looks at your copy of *Adventist World*?



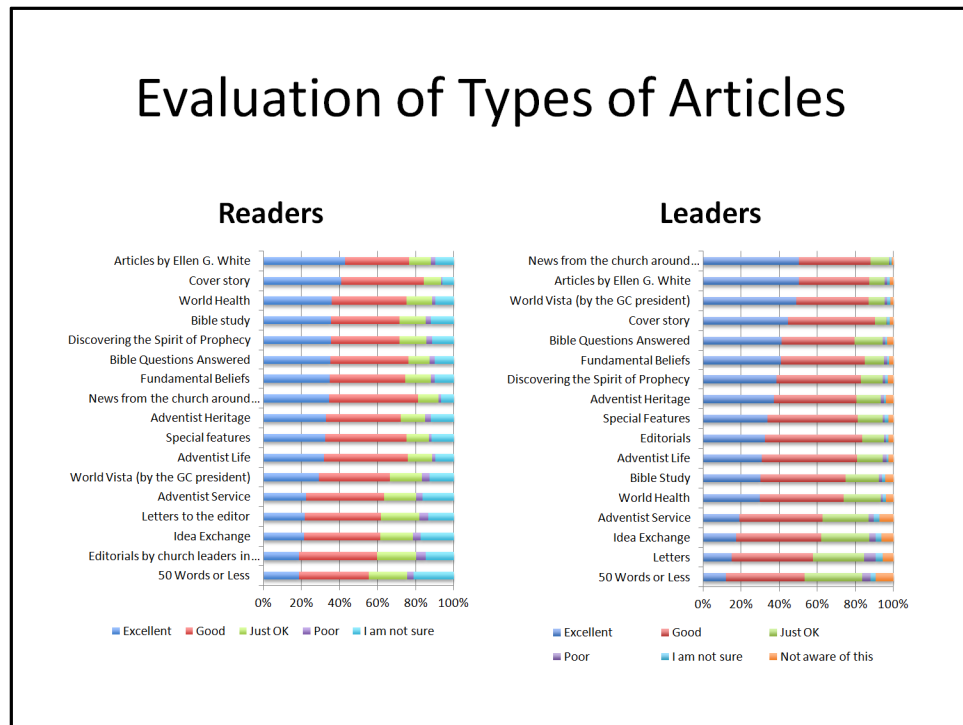
Church administrators were more likely to report sharing *Adventist World* with family and others than were church members. In part, this is very likely due to the fact that they may have access to more copies to share. It is also true that church leaders know that the purpose of *Adventist World* is to communicate with church members and as leaders they are interested in achieving that outcome.

How many people touch, see or reach my copy of *Adventist World*?



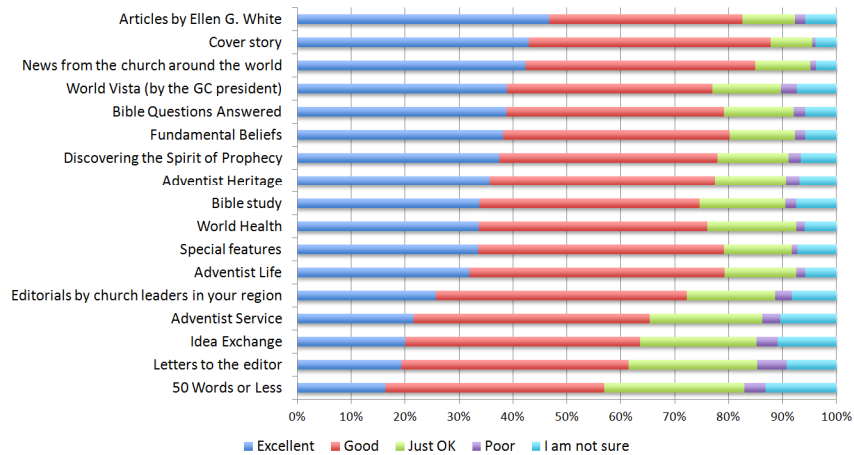
In the report on the reader survey it was pointed out that very conservatively the circulation data for *Adventist World* can be multiplied by a factor of two or more to get an accurate estimate of the actual readership of the magazine. People in the pews who read the magazine are particularly likely to share it with other family members, neighbors and friends. Many of the church leaders arrange for copies of the magazine to be distributed in the offices of their church organization or on the campus of their institution. This is a very important aspect of the overall impact of *Adventist World* and study should be given as to how to support this factor through appropriate announcements and sidebar items in the periodical on a regular basis.

Evaluation of Types of Articles

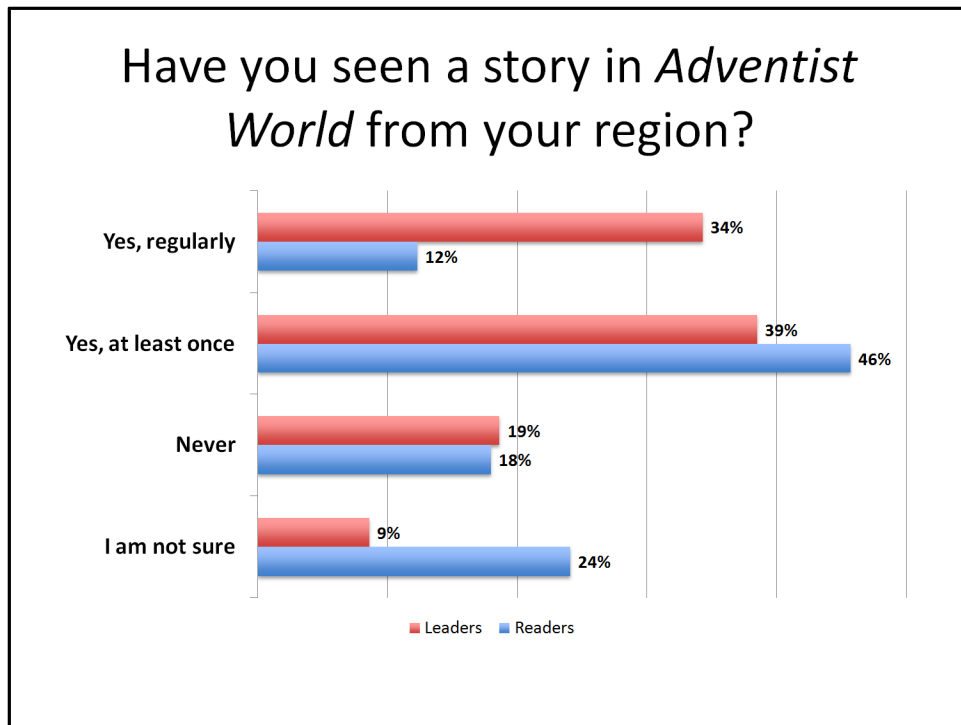


A comparison of the evaluation of content by members who read *Adventist World* and church leaders reveals some differences in the ranking of the types of articles and the fact that church administrators are somewhat more positive about the journal. News and the articles by the General Conference president rank higher in the evaluation of leaders than that of readers. Health, Bible study and Spirit of Prophecy materials received a stronger evaluation from readers than church leaders. A number of other kinds of articles were quite similar in ranking, although in general somewhat higher percentages of leaders rated various kinds of content as “excellent” or “good” than did church members. The differences are not large in most cases, but often statistically significant.

Evaluation of Types of Articles



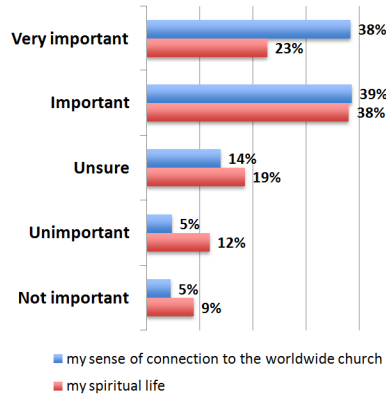
The combined responses of all 2,400 church administrators and members provides a somewhat different perspective about *Adventist World* than the comparison of the two surveys. Articles by Ellen White and the cover stories rank higher than do the organizational topics mentioned in the news reports and the articles by the General Conference president. Yet, in no instance do a majority of the respondents rate any type of material as “excellent,” nor is any feature evaluated negatively by a majority of respondents.



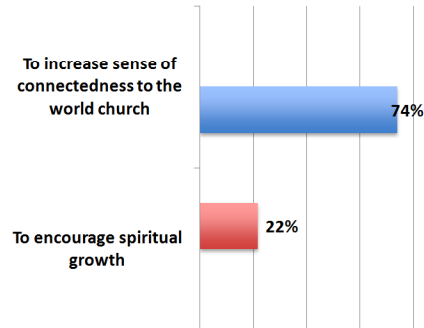
Church members who read *Adventist World* are less likely to have reported seeing a story from their area than are church administrators. This may simply reflect the way in which the average member has a much more local perspective than do administrators who work throughout wider territories. The word “region” in this question may mean the territory of a union conference or even a world division to administrators, while at the same time mean simply a metropolitan area or smaller territory to many laity.

On the Primary Mission of *Adventist World Magazine*

**Readers: The importance of
Adventist World Magazine to...**

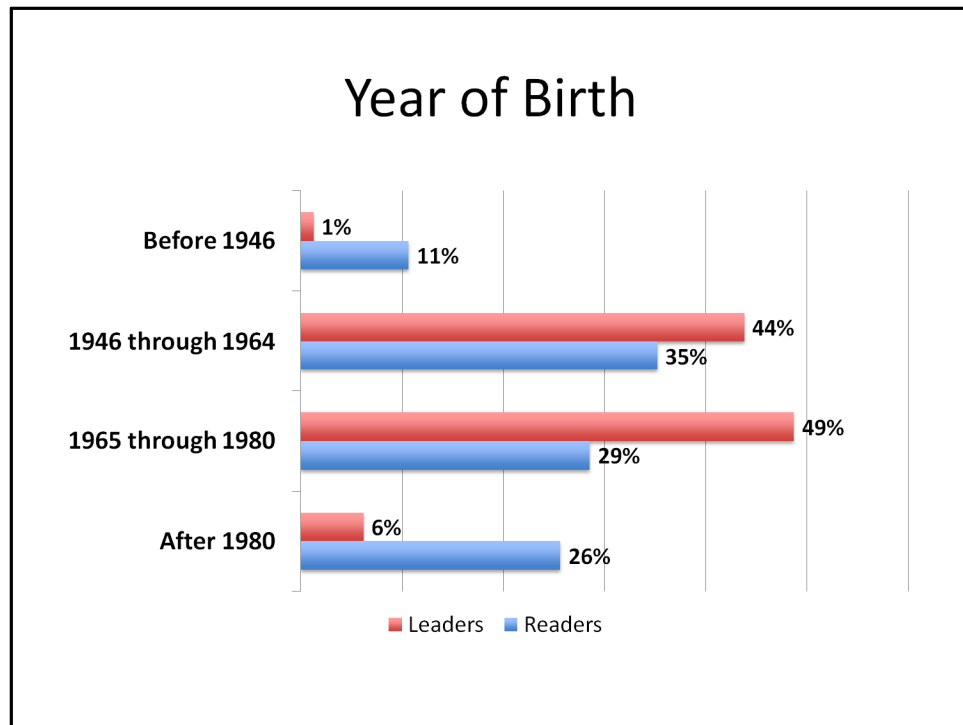


**Leaders: The primary mission
of *Adventist World***

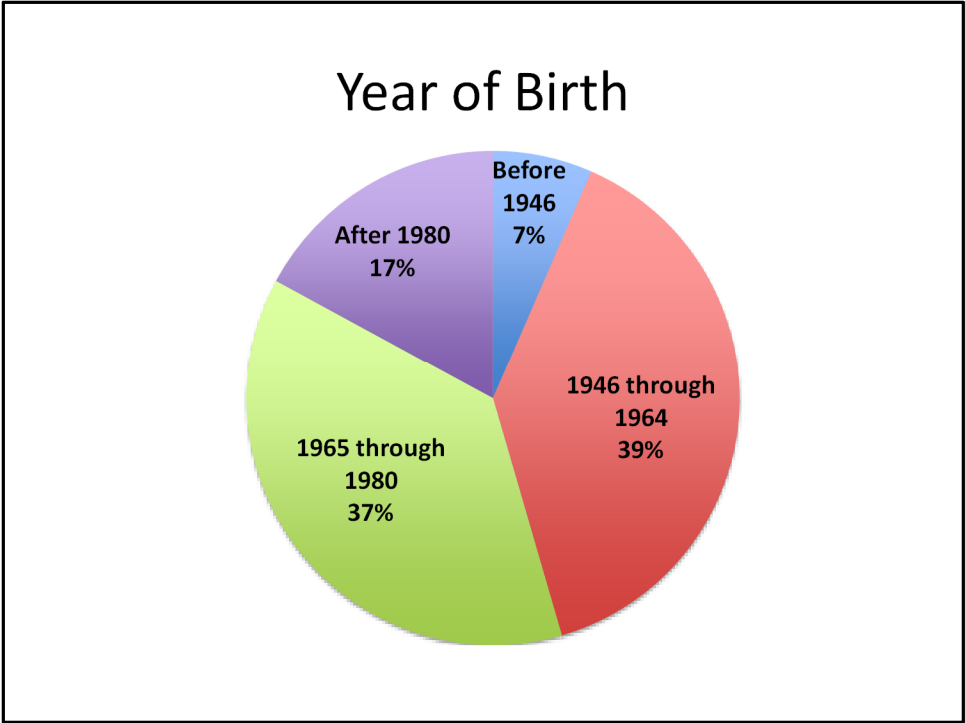


The percentage of church members who indicated that *Adventist World* was “very important” or “important” to “my sense of connection to the worldwide church” is about the same as the percentage of church administrators who said that the primary mission of the publication is “to increase the sense of connectedness to the world church”—77 percent of readers and 74 percent of leaders. Readers confirm that *Adventist World* is achieving the goal that church leaders believe is most important.

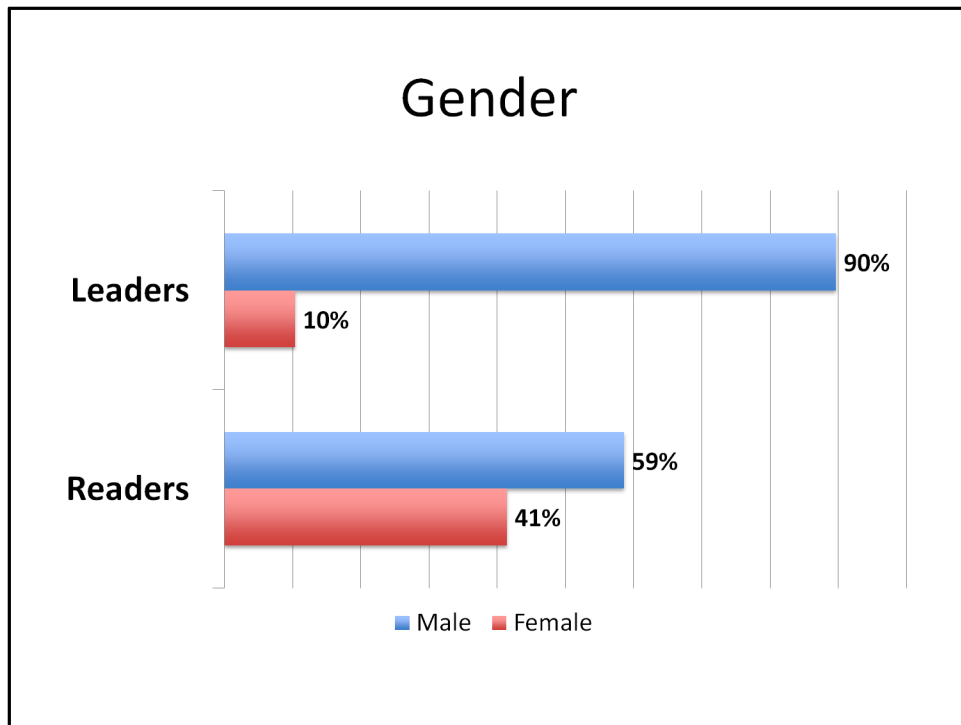
On the other hand, the percentage of church members who indicated that the publication was important to their spiritual life was nearly three times that of the percentage of church administrators who said that it was the primary mission of the publication “to encourage spiritual growth”—61 percent for readers and 22 percent for leaders. It should be kept in mind that the questions were structured differently. Readers were asked to answer separate questions on both items while leaders were asked to select from a short list of possible answers.



The age profiles of the church members who read *Adventist World* and of church administrators and department heads who responded to the Leadership Survey are different in predictable ways. Church leaders are concentrated in the middle years with 93 percent 32 to 66 years of age in 2012. Church members have a more natural age profile, including significantly larger percentages of young adults and senior citizens.



The combined samples, including church members and church leaders, results in an overall profile dominated by middle-aged adults. This profile is very likely not representative of the entire worldwide adult membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church simply because it includes a much higher percentage of denominational employees.



It is not surprising that the gender profile of church administrators and department heads is predominantly male. It is surprising that the sample of church members who read *Adventist World* has more men than women in it. A strong majority of the people in the pews are women. Both the perspective of the leadership of the church and the reader sample reflect a strong male skew. This is a key factor that must be kept in mind when considering the information in this report. It particularly highlights the importance of women serving on the editorial staff.