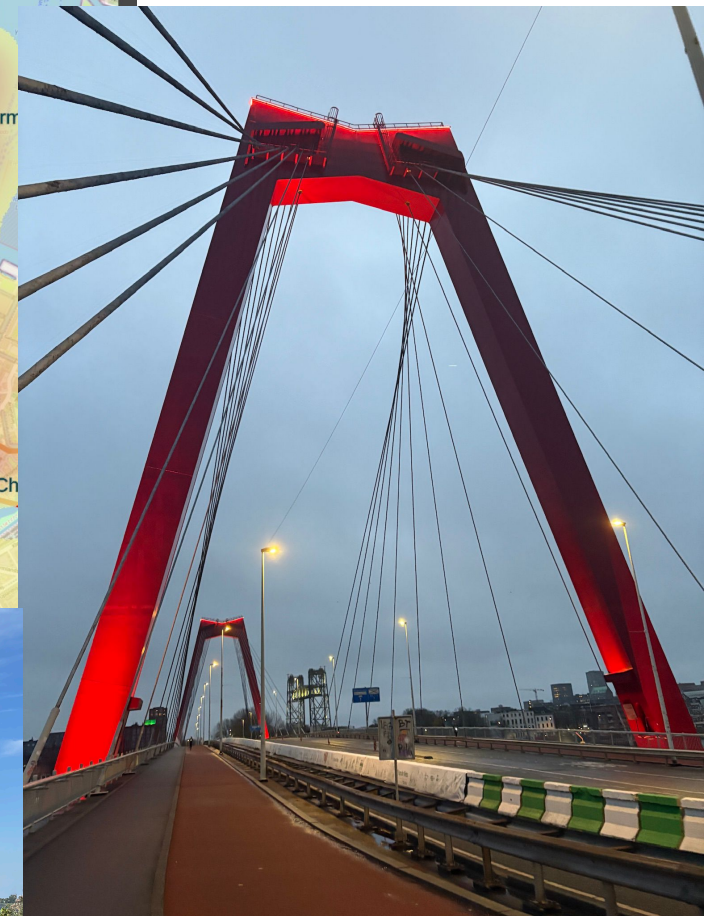
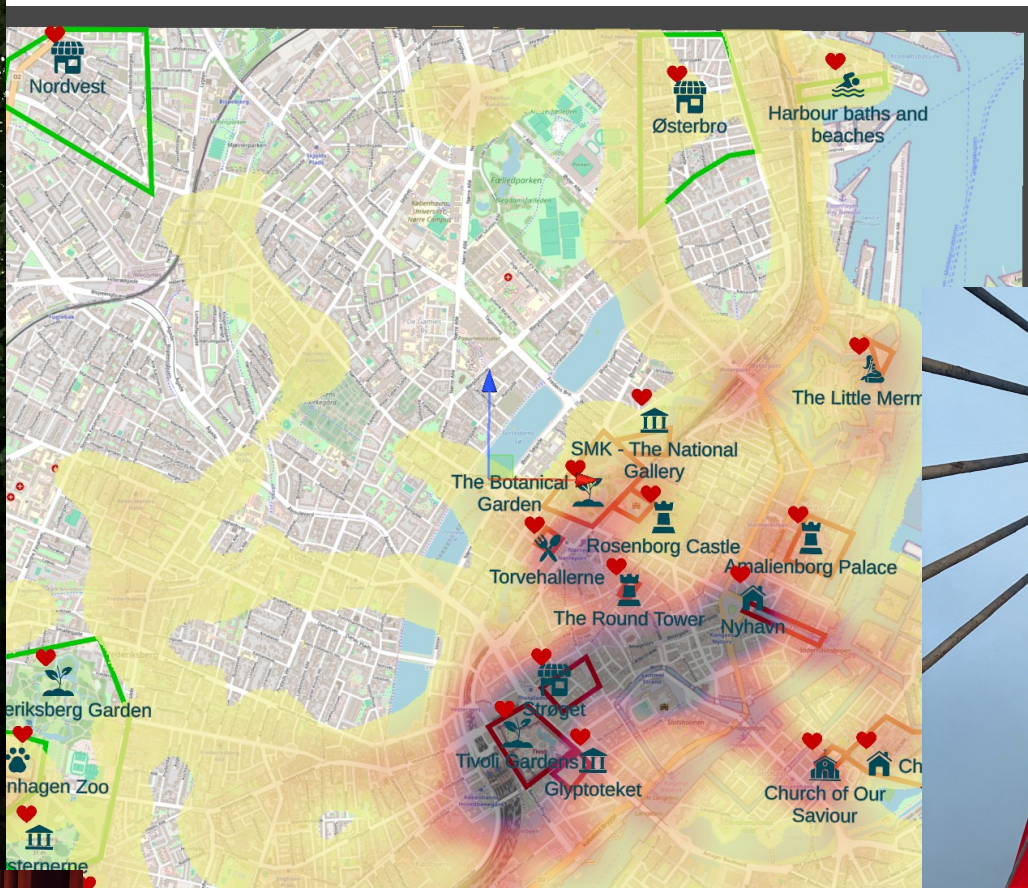

A flexible vacation is a happy vacation



Vacation planning is complex



Vacation planning is complex

- * Numerous studies uncovered the many considerations going into the vacation decision (e.g., Grigolon et al 2013)
- * Others point out that also many people's perspectives go into planning each vacation (Decrop & Snelders 2004, Blichfeldt 2008)
- * High stakes (Mitas et al 2024)
- * Simpler would be better; certainly isn't worse (Mitas et al 2024)

Useful theory: Self determination theory

- * We should count **autonomy**, **relatedness**, and **competence** as basic human needs; essential for wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2013)
- * Vacations planning involves relatedness (from family/friends/work) and competence (from the travel industry; people must feel **competent** in their search & booking)
- * But the **autonomy** must come from society: the freedom to choose when and where you want to vacation

Society constrains the **autonomy** of vacation planning

- * Cultural norms about vacationing (intrapersonal)
- * Expectations of others; keeping up with neighbors (interpersonal)
- * Leave from work and whether it's paid (structural)
- * Costs, affordability (of vacations and life in general), taxes (structural)
- * Transport networks available (structural)
- * Scheduling around school commitments of children (structural)

These constraints highlight the importance of **flexibility**

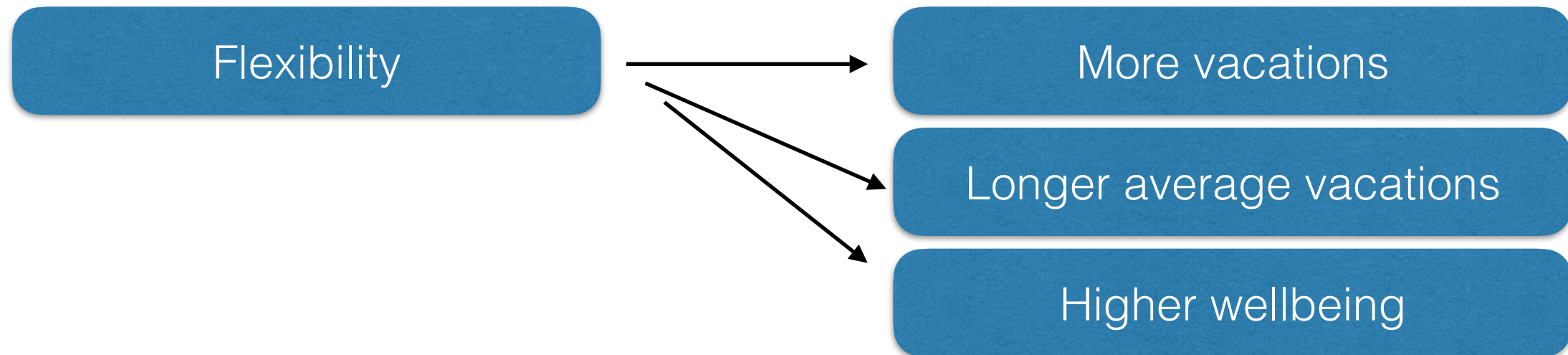
Seems obvious that **more flexibility** would be **better**, as it facilitates autonomy...

...but this assumption has been **completely untested**, until now.

Thus, we hypothesize...

People with more...

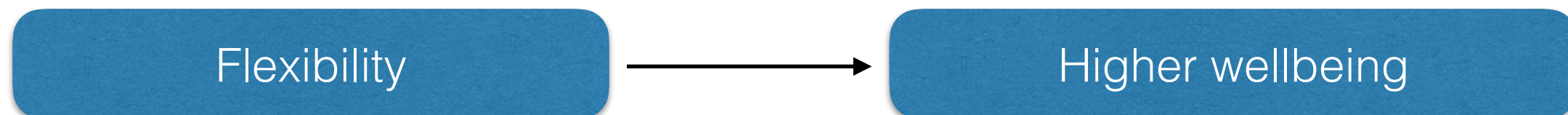
...also have more:



[while controlling for age, gender, & employment]

Months with more...

...also end with more:



To clarify: What do we mean by wellbeing?

The mind comprises
FEELING... and THINKING...

Feeling that you are well

- Positive feelings in daily life
- Negative feelings in daily life

Thinking that you are well

- Life satisfaction
- Domain (vacation) evaluation

WELLBEING

...and we take wellbeing to be **subjective**, meaning it is up to each individual person to feel if they are well and think if they are well

Sample

- * Collected via Bilendi (commercial panel) from Dutch general population convenience sample ($n = 94$) and Sterrenscholen ($n = 3$)
- * Quota of 50% of households with children sought; 63% achieved (compared to approx 30% in general population)
- * 57% female
- * Mean age 48 ($SD = 11$)
- * 67% working, most others retired, volunteering, or homemakers

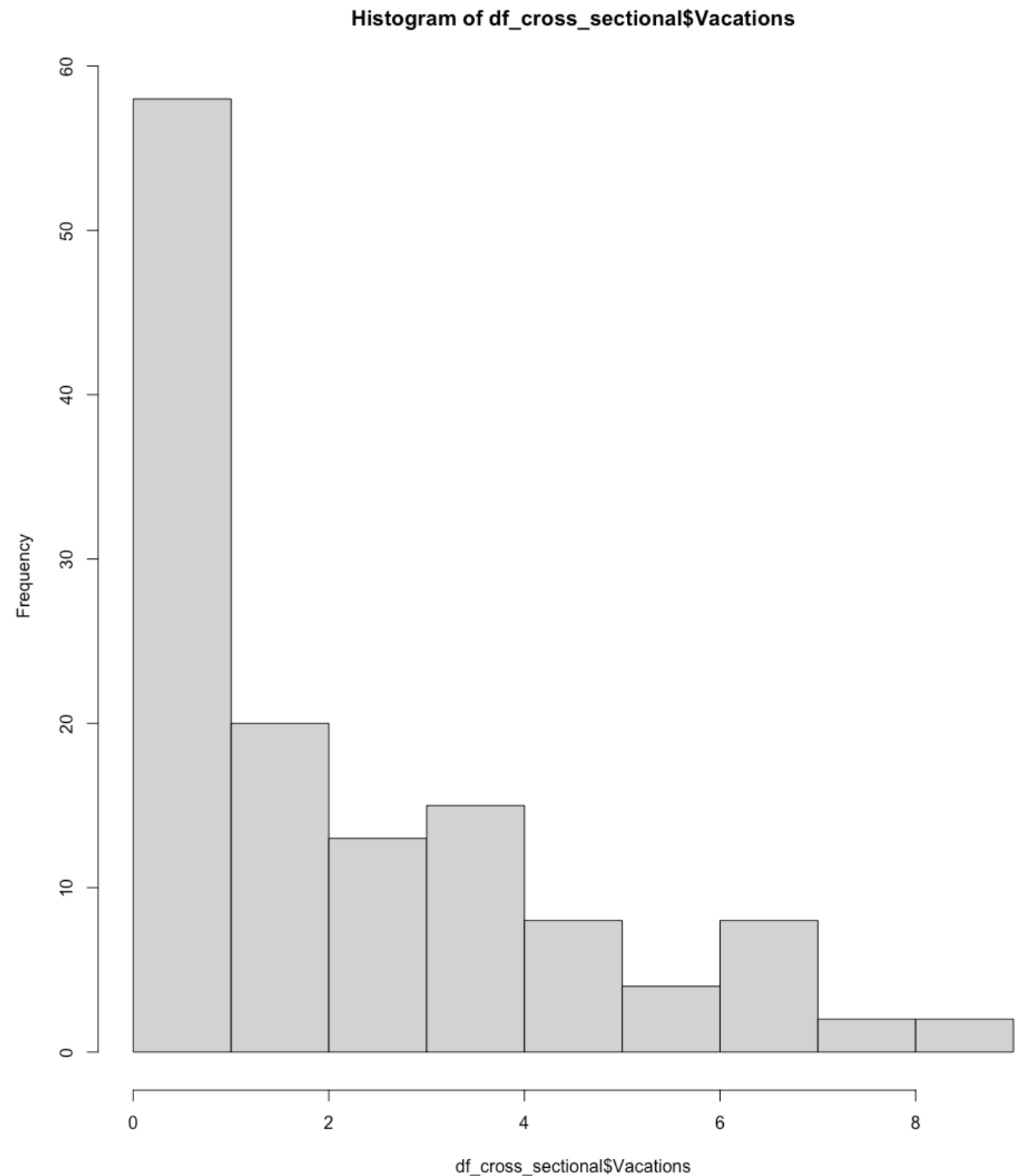
Monthly questionnaires

- * June - September 2025; between 1st and 10th of each month
- * *All* vacations in past month recorded in terms of destination, duration, flexibility
- * Most recent vacation also evaluated (“grade” from 0 = very poor to 10 = excellent)
- * Life satisfaction
- * Positive and negative emotions in daily life

Vacationing

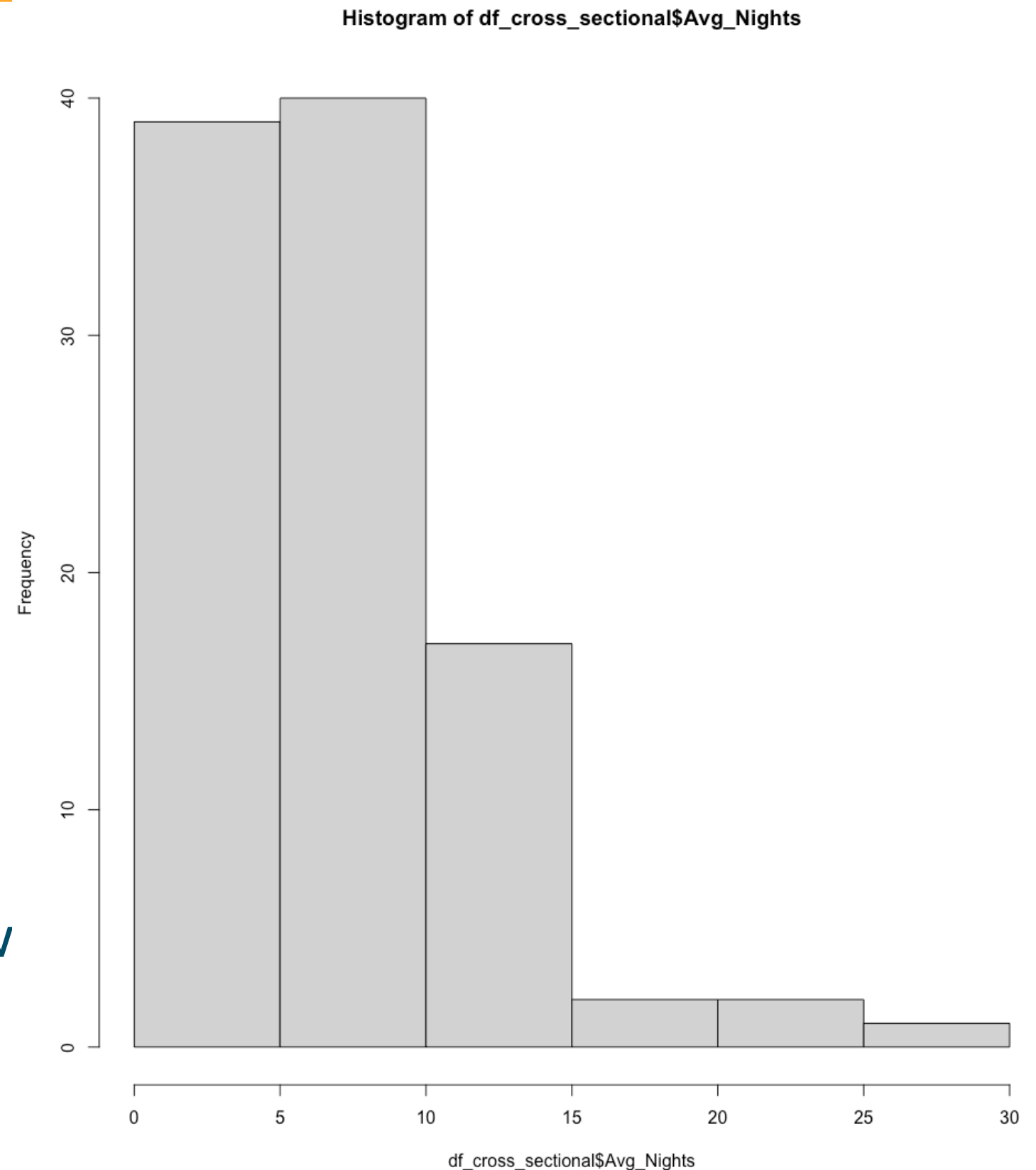
* Most (76%) took vacations between June and September

* Of those, average number of vacations: 3.19 (sd=2.16)



Vacation duration

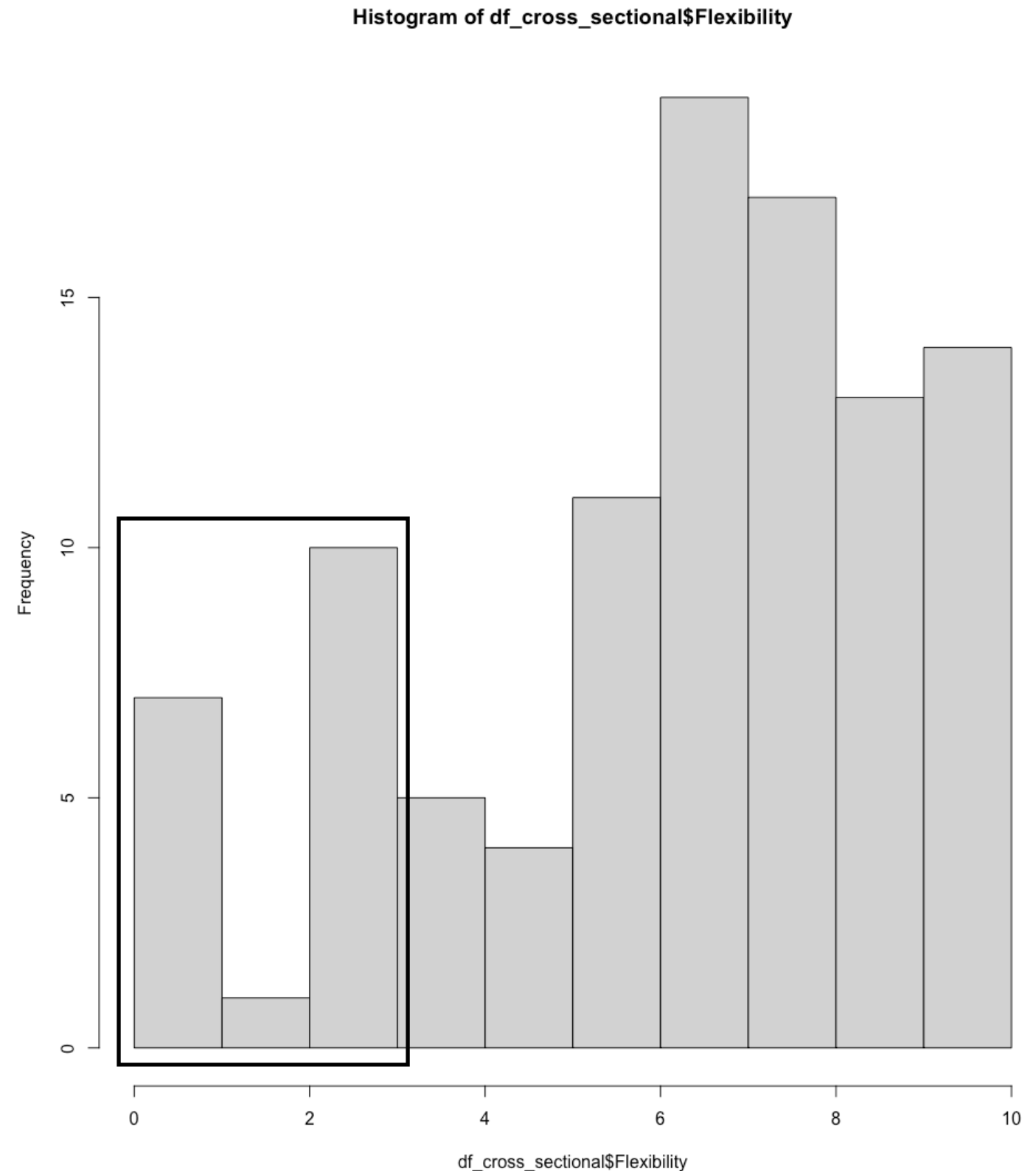
- * Average: 7.19 night (sd=3.88)
- * Basically, a lot of long weekends and weeks; some two-week vacations and very few longer



Flexibility

* Somewhat flexible (0-to-10 scale; mean = 6.37; sd = 2.68)

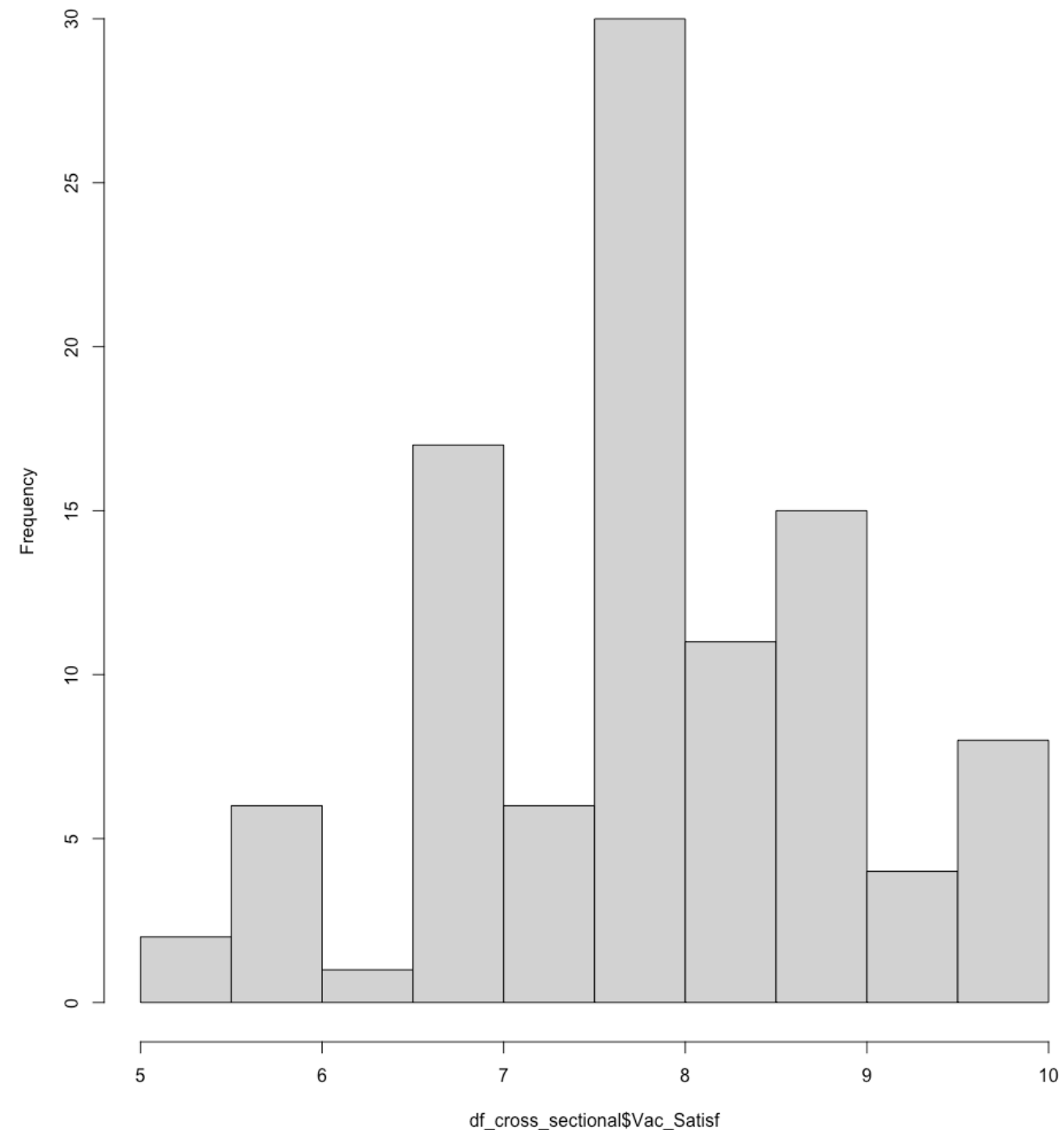
* But note **bimodal** distribution, about 1 of 5 people experience **very low flexibility**



Vacation evaluation

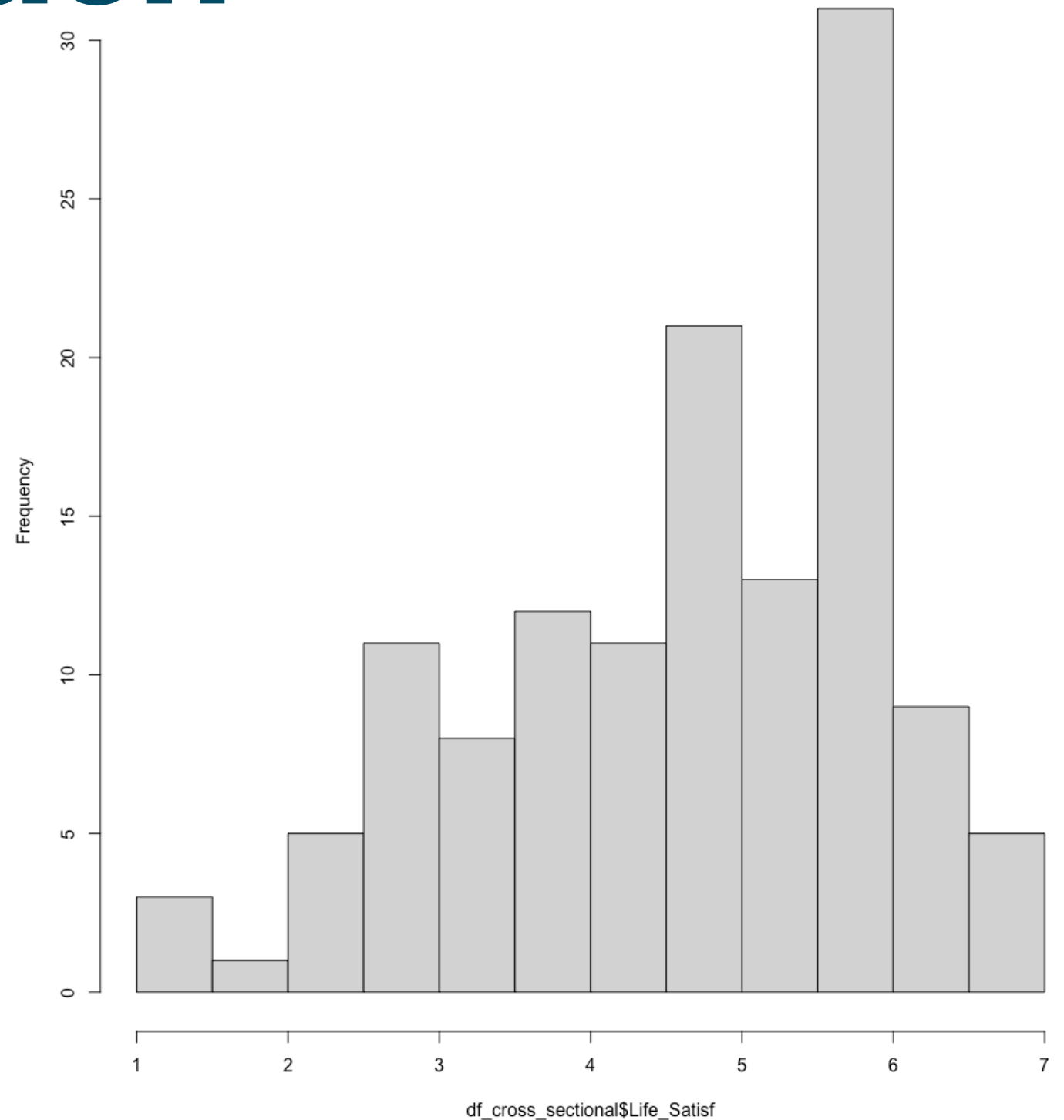
* Almost all vacations are reasonably well evaluated; 8 is most common, nothing below 5

* Mean = 7.98 (sd = 1.1)



Life satisfaction

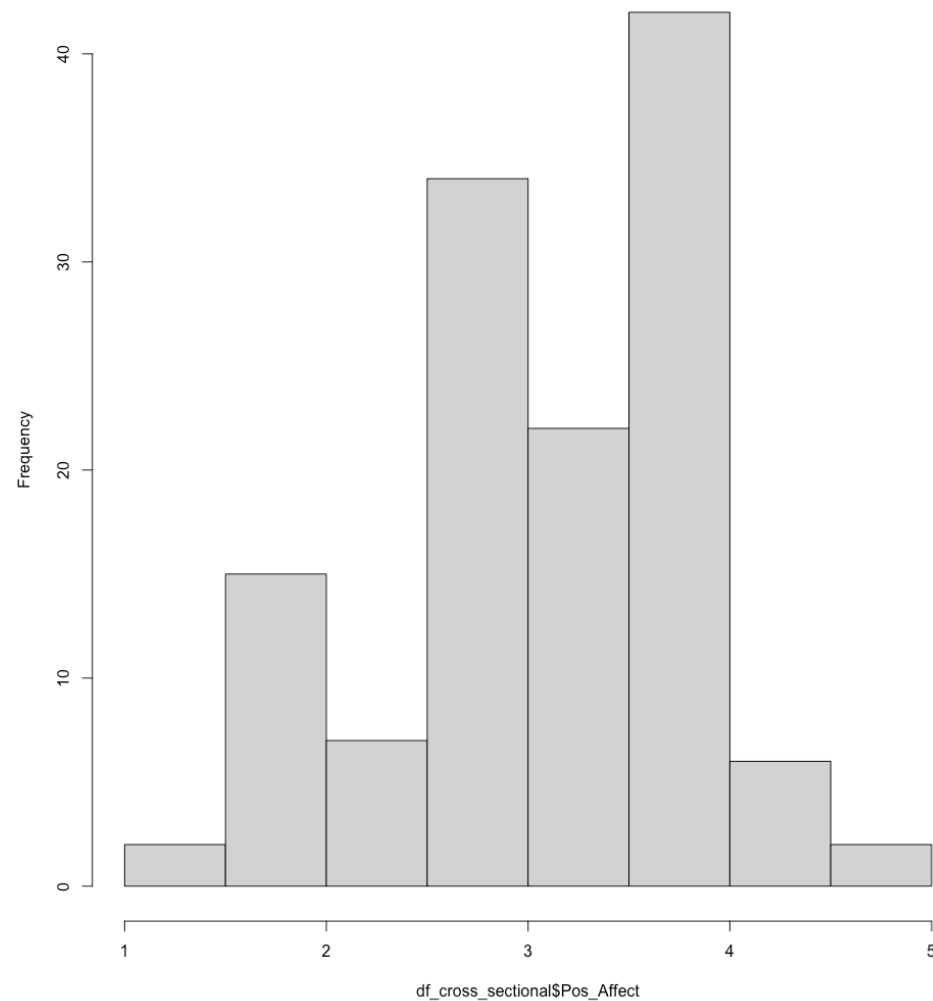
Histogram of df_cross_sectional\$Life_Satisf



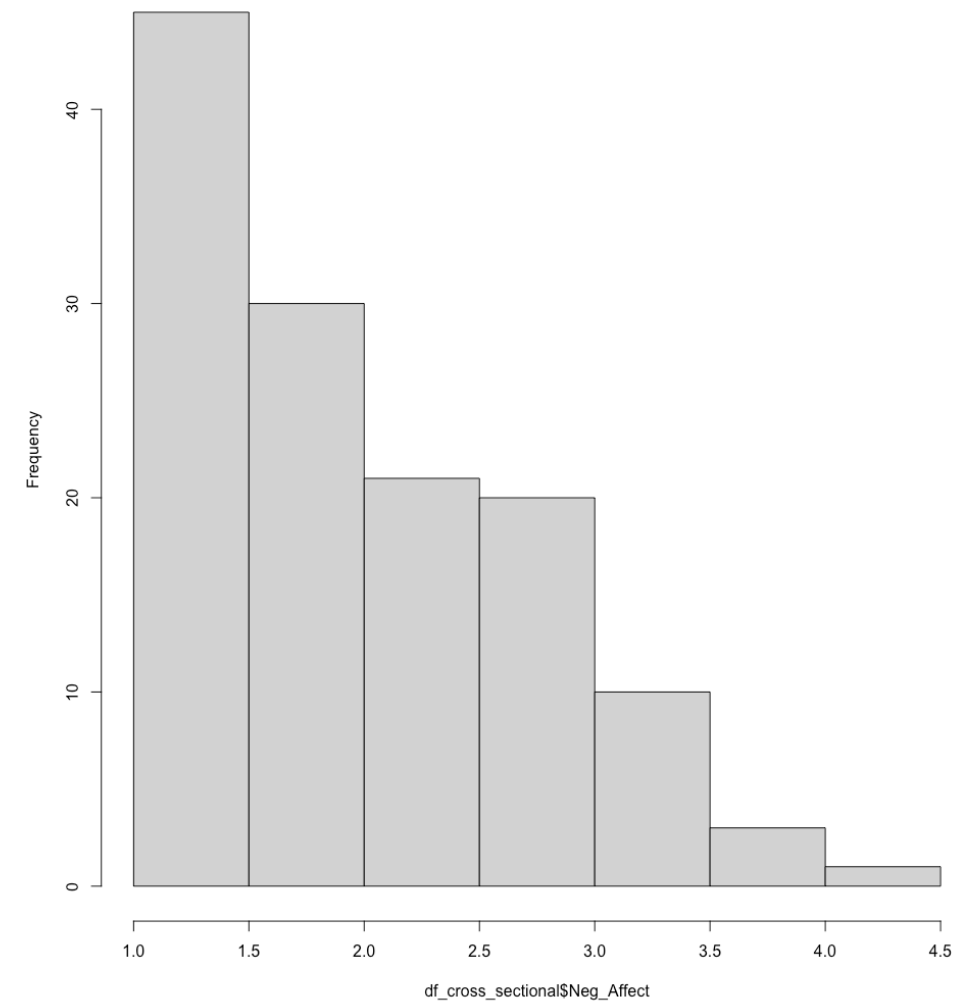
* Generally satisfied with life; distribution fits many other surveys we have done in various Dutch / Dutch-centered EU samples

Positive and negative daily emotions

Histogram of df_cross_sectional\$Pos_Affect

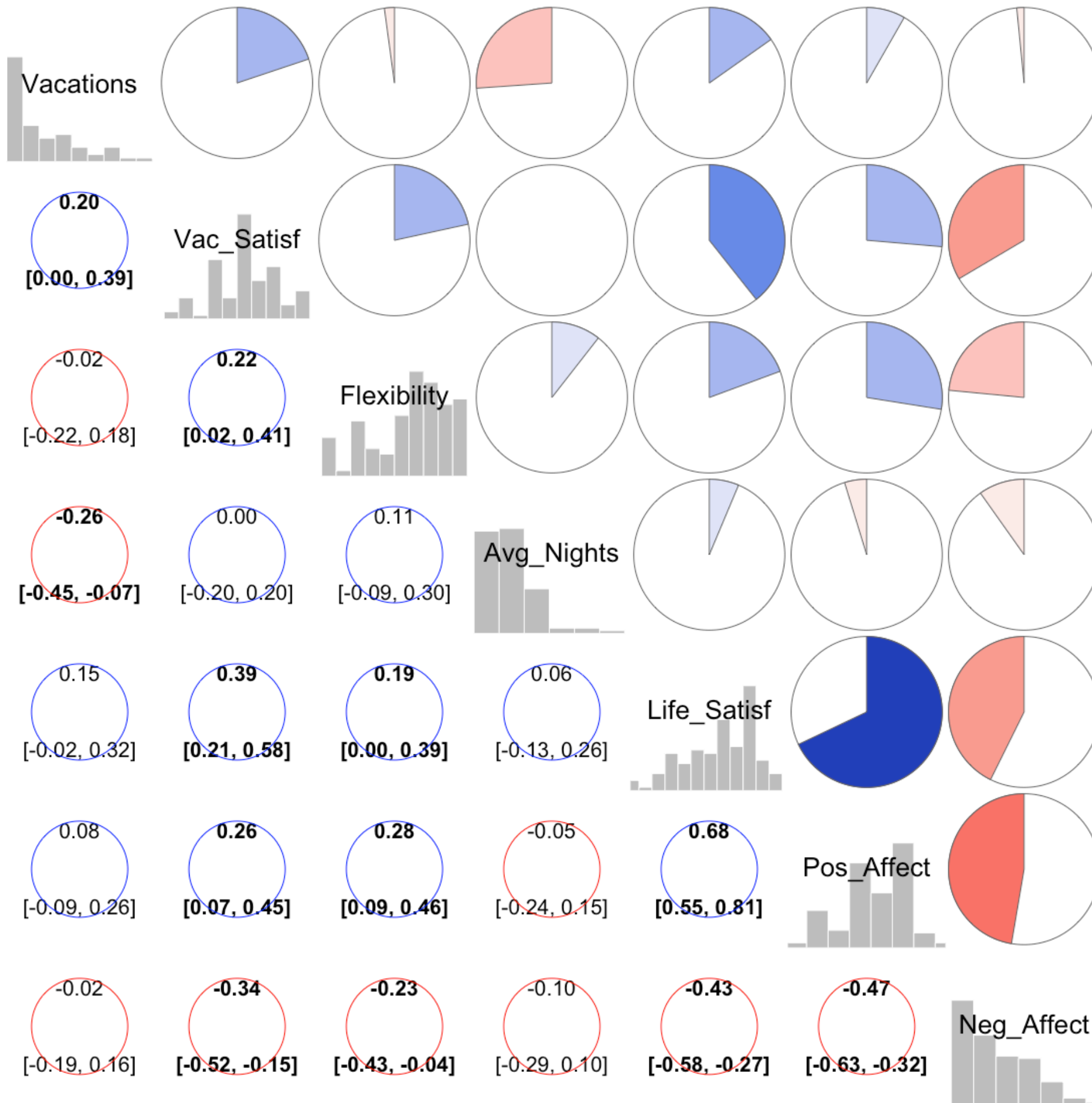


Histogram of df_cross_sectional\$Neg_Affect

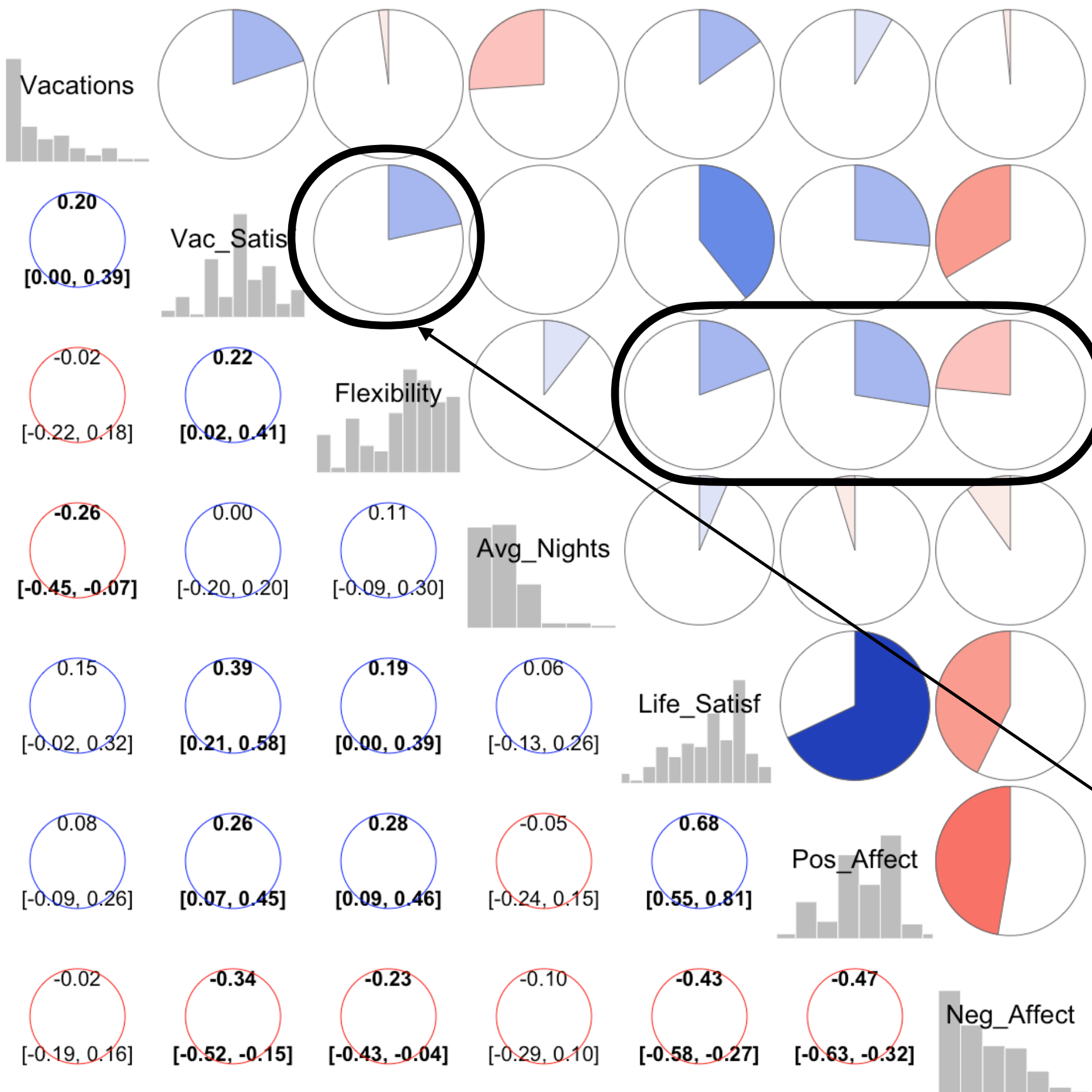


- * A somewhat less cheerful picture than life satisfaction, but still mostly healthy sample
- * A lot of folks choosing the middle of each scale; middling-unhappy or just unemotional?

What is related to what else?

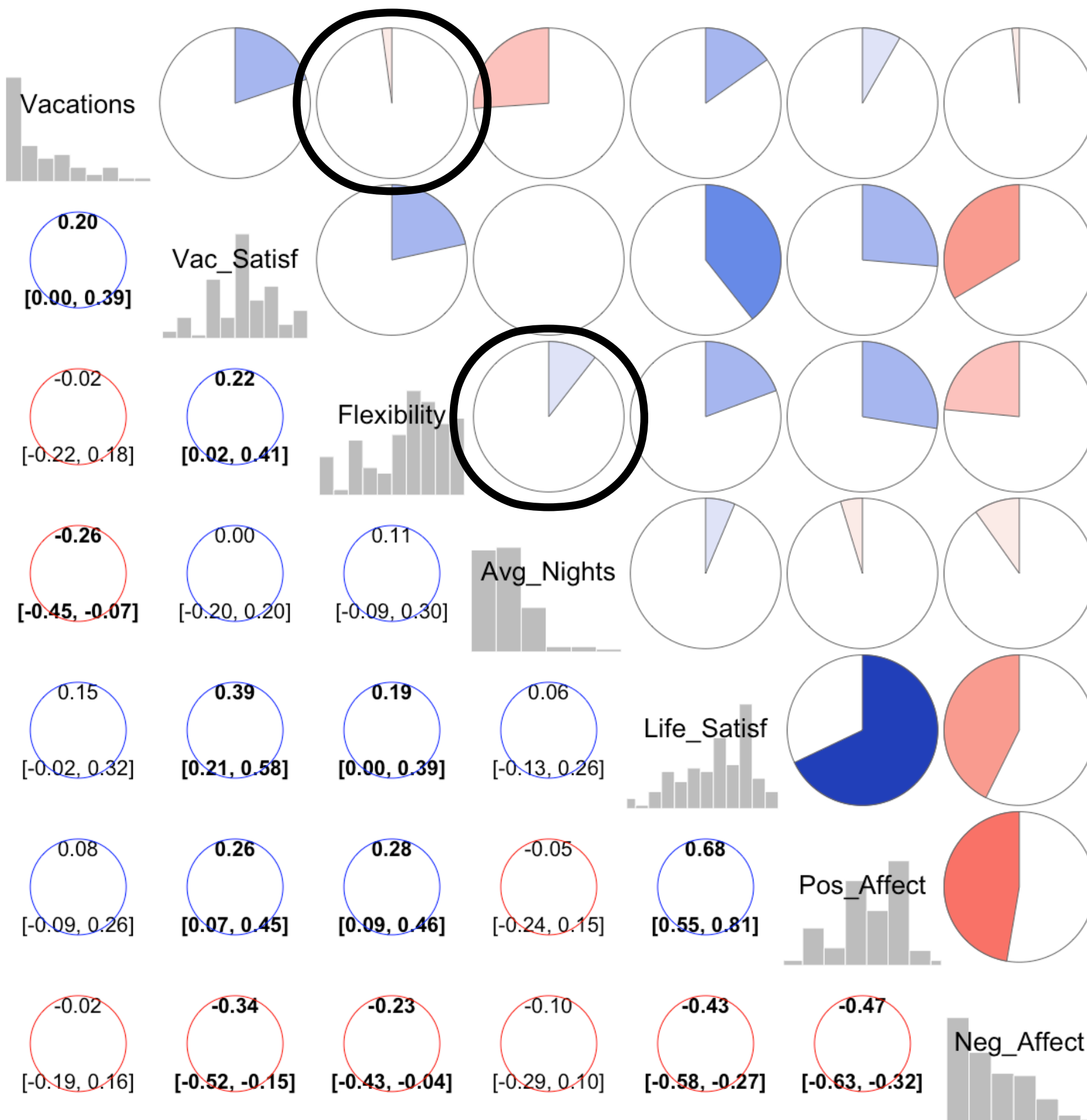


Vacation flexibility
is significantly
related to
wellbeing...



...including
evaluation of
most recent
vacation

Flexibility is **totally unrelated** to vacation frequency and duration



With more sophisticated models, we found that:

People with more...

Flexibility

...also have more:

More vacations

Longer average vacations

**Higher positive emotions in
daily life**

[while controlling for age, gender, & employment]

Months with more...

Flexibility (of most recent
vacation in month)

...also end with more:

**More positive evaluation of
vacation(most recent in month)**

With more sophisticated models, we found that:

People with more...

Flexibility

...also have more:

More vacations

Longer average vacations

**Higher positive emotions in
daily life**

[while controlling for age, gender, & employment]

Months with more...

Flexibility (of most recent
vacation in month)

...also end with more:

**More positive evaluation of
vacation(most recent in month)**

Is school the problem?

- * There was plenty of variation in both (household and flexibility) to detect this effect.
- * Yet, it appears not to be. There is **no difference** (not even a tiny bit) between people with and without school-age children in vacation flexibility.

Takeaways

- * People want to vacation, and during the summer, a majority do. Low flexibility doesn't mean less vacationing.
- * Vacation flexibility *is* related to wellbeing, especially feeling positive in daily life (comparing people to one another)...
- * ...and to vacation evaluation (comparing one month to another).
- * A **flexible vacation** appears to be a **happy vacation**, on average

The message for the travel industry

- * Think of customers' autonomy, competence, and relatedness. They plan their vacations most enjoyably with overseeable choices, easy-to-use interfaces, harmonious negotiations with those around them, and a **feeling of free choice**.
- * Continue lobbying for **more flexibility**. **A flexible vacation is a happy vacation**. Even if schools aren't the problem, they should be part of the solution.
- * For data-driven decision making, use validated instruments to **measure both the *planning* and the *traveling experiences***.

Be in touch.

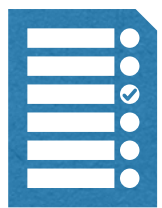
ondrejmitas@gmail.com



The Science of Traveling Well



The Science of Traveling Well



bit.ly/bredatourismpanel

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