

Results of 2023 MST/Congregational Survey  
Unity Church Unitarian

March 17, 2024

# Agenda

- Survey Structure
- From the Annual Congregational Survey Questions
  - Loyalty Tracking
  - Ends Tracking
  - Quadrant Map - Evaluation x Importance (x Inspiration)
  - Program/Activity Evaluation
  - Connection Metric
- From the MST Questions
  - First Attended...Continue to Attend
  - Religious Orientation – 2023 v 2021 v 1999
  - How Much Do You Value...
  - How Much Emphasis...
  - Interest in Content Area for Worship Service
  - Attribute Importance for Ministerial Candidates
  - UCU Characteristics 2023 v 2022
- Demographics
- What Do Comments Tell Us (not yet analyzed)

# Survey Structure

- MST Questions
  - Religious Orientation
  - Why you first attended, why you continue to attend
  - Important qualities in a minister
  - And more
- Annual Congregational Survey Questions
  - Ends Evaluation
  - Loyalty
  - And more
- Demographic Questions

# Key Findings

## Annual Congregational Survey Findings...

- Loyalty drop noted in 2022 continues in 2023. Net Loyalty drop over two years is 25% (slide 6).
- In this time of considerable uncertainty, we still see stability in our ends evaluations. If there is a gain it's in E1 (slide 7).
- End E5 is a signature strength and E4 is a key opportunity (slide 8).
- Music and regular worship continue as programs/activities with the most impact on spiritual well-being (slide 9).
- Connection metric increased slightly from 7.13 in 2022 to 7.50 in 2023. For the Optimism metric, the increase is 7.42 to 7.67 (slide 10).
- The percent not responding to a given demographic question can vary by age, but it can also be relatively indifferent to age (slide 26).

## Ministerial Search Team (MST) Survey Findings...

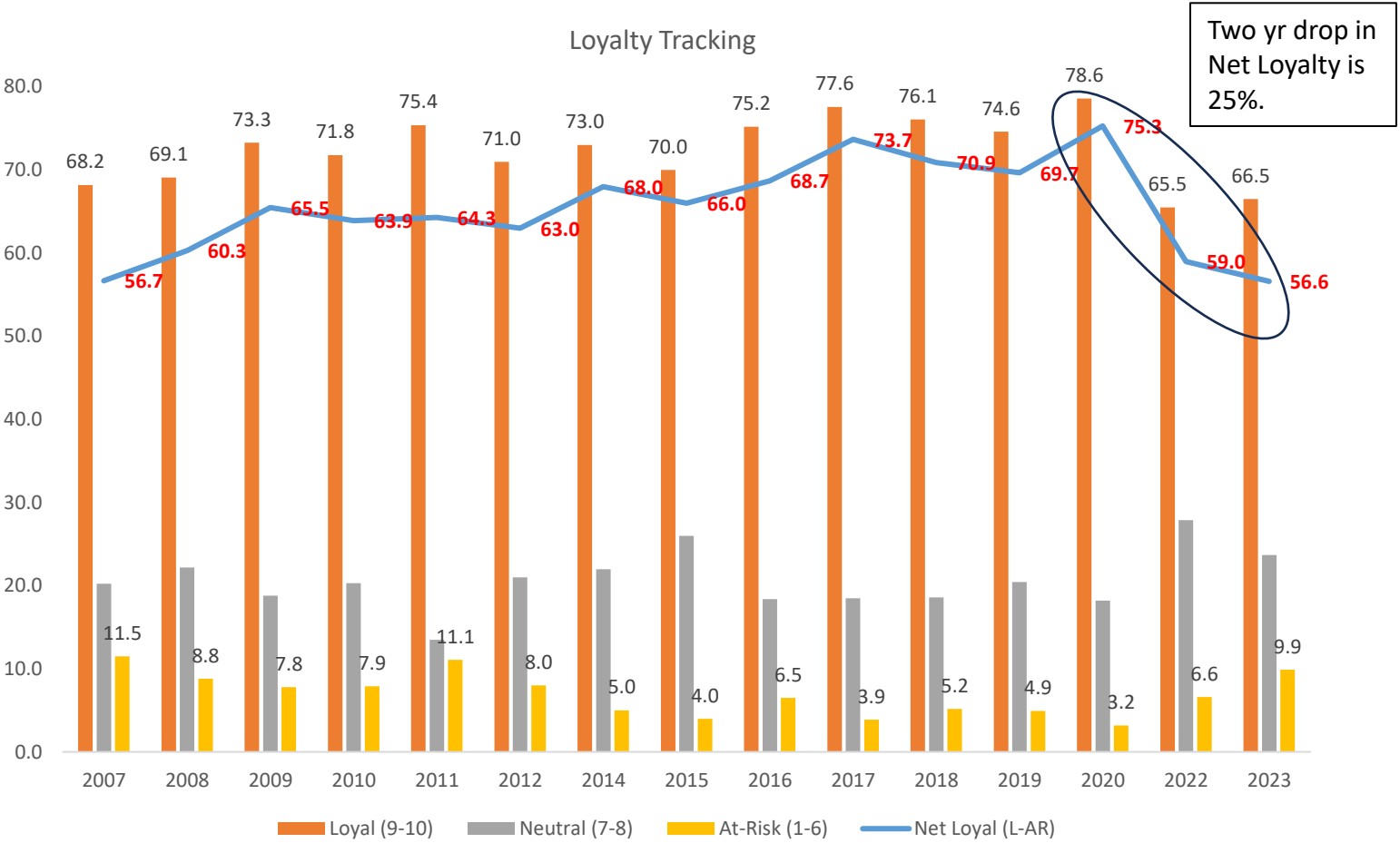
- Essentially no difference in Religious Orientation 2023 v 2021 (correlation = 0.99). RO alignment over a 24 year time interval - 1999 to 2023 - is also high (correlation = 0.91). Major change: Humanism increased from 16% to 30% (slide 13).
- The first three choices for both "First attended because" and "Continue to attend because" are the same: *UU Beliefs* tops both lists. Average number of "first attended" mentions is 3.9; average number of "continue to attend" mentions is 5.5 (slide 12).
- *Fellowship/Community* and *Intellectual Stimulation* top the list of what we value most in congregational life. What we value least: *Denominational Involvement* (slide 14).
- *Congregational community* (among) and *Community/neighborhood involvement* (beyond) stand out in terms of wanting more emphasis, 38.6% and 35.9%, respectively. Area with the highest percent saying less emphasis is *Growth in anti-racism and multiculturalism*, 9.0% (slide 15).
- *Drawing connections between daily living, multiple traditions and universal truths of the human experience/life* sits strongly at the top of the list of worship service content areas of interest, 70.7%. Of least interest: *Judeo-Christian traditions*, 32.6% (slide 16).
- Probably no surprise that *preaching ability/presence* tops a list of what's important when screening ministerial candidates; 80% of respondents rate it a 5 (out of 5). Least important are the *ability to expand membership* and *participates in denominational activities e.g., UUA*. *The same results for both the top and the bottom of the list occurred 24 years ago for the MST survey conducted in 1999* (slide 17).
- In terms of UCU differences 2023 v 2021, the biggest difference is the 9.6 point drop on the item "*There is a high level of trust in leadership at Unity Church-Unitarian*" (slide 18).

## Annual Congregational Survey Questions

# Loyalty Tracking 2007 - 2023

Loyalty: Respondents are asked, “Would you recommend UC to a friend or relative?”

Willingness to recommend is viewed in the business world as a key indicator of degree of loyalty to a brand or company – key metric is **Net Loyalty = (% Loyal - % At-Risk)\*\***



age	net loyalty	percent
22 - 60	61.9	29.0
61 - 75	64.8	38.3
76 +	51.9	24.3
nr	14.3	8.4
		100.0

Note: Even if we adjust the percentage in each age category to make the total sample size younger (percents of [40, 40, 16, 4] as an arbitrary test), we still see a net loyalty of 59.6.

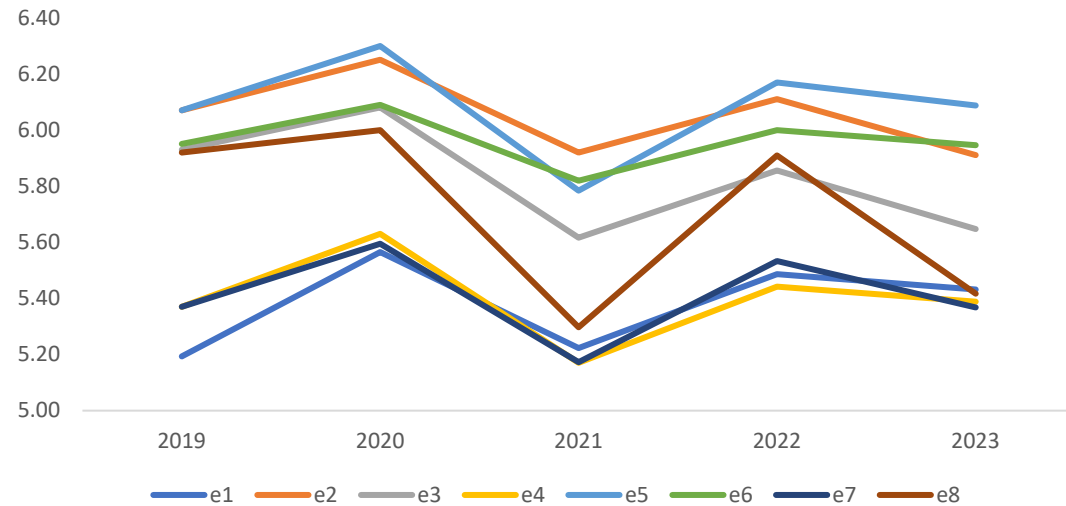
gender	net loyalty	percent
W	60.6	62.65
M	55.3	29.01
nr	33.3	8.33
		100.00

10 point scale: 1-6 = At-Risk; 7-8 = Neutral; 9-10 = Loyal  
Net Loyalty = %Loyal - %At-Risk

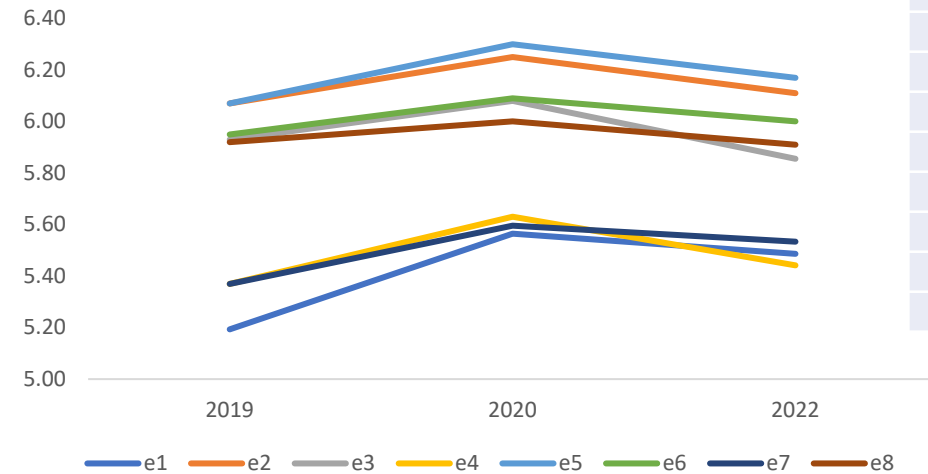
\*\*See “The One Number You Need to Grow,”  
Harvard Business Review,  
2003, Frederick Reichheld

# Ends Tracking 2019 - 2023

Ends Tracking - All Years (2019 - 2023)

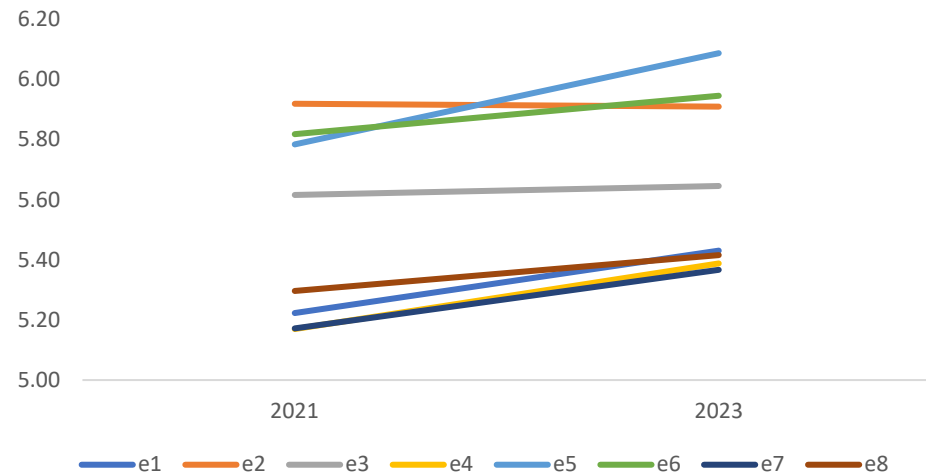


Ends Tracking -ex MST Yrs



	2022-2019
e1	0.29
e7	0.16
e5	0.10
e4	0.07
e6	0.05
e2	0.04
e8	-0.01
e3	-0.07

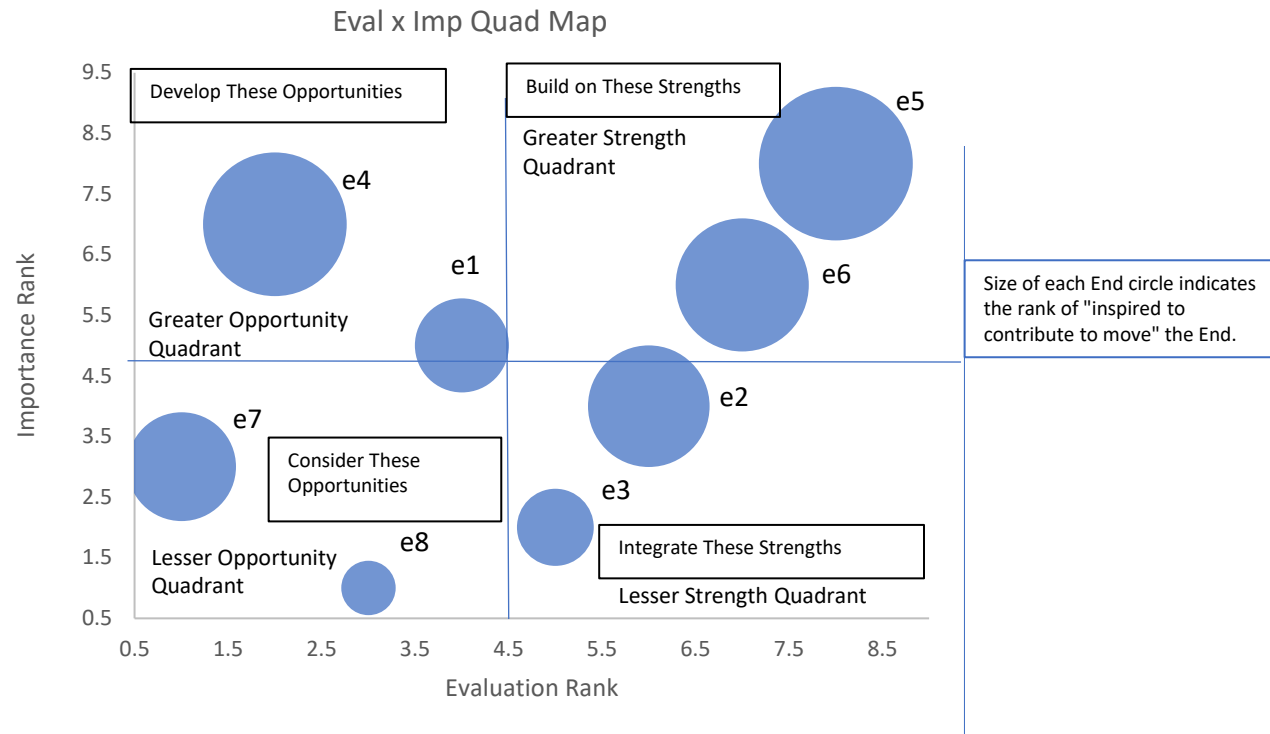
Ends Tracking - MST Yrs



e1 Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.  
 e2 Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.  
 e3 Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.  
 e4 Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.  
 e5 Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.  
 e6 Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.  
 e7 Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.  
 e8 Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.

- In MST years (2021 and 2023), ends evaluations are lower, which we think is because their evaluation came later in MST surveys than in regular surveys.
- If you look at ends tracking in non-MST years, the trend is pretty much flat. The only end that might have improved at a statistically significant level from 2019 to 2022 is end #1 (up 0.29).
- Comparing 2021 and 2023 tracking, most ends evaluations trend upwards.
- **In this time of considerable uncertainty, we still see stability in our ends evaluations.**

# Quadrant Map Evaluation x Importance (x Inspiration to Contribute)



This plot suggests we...

- E5: Build on the the church's strength in and the importance people attach to caring for one another. This is also where the most "inspiration" is.
- E6: Build on the church's strength in and the importance people attach to finding their work for justice.
- E4: Develop our ability to create a wider circle of belonging. We rate the end second lowest but its importance second highest. It is also where the second most "inspiration" is.
- E1: Develop our ability to build the multicultural spiritual home. We rate the end the fifth lowest, but it is forth most important to us.

E1 Create a multicultural spiritual home built on authentic relationships.

E2 Ground ourselves in personal practice and communal worship that grows our capacity for wonder and spiritual deepening.

E3 Articulate our Unitarian Universalist faith identity, teach it to our children, share it with others, and live it courageously in the world.

E4 Know each other in all our fullness and create an ever-widening circle of belonging for all people.

E5 Generously give and openly receive compassionate care in times of joy, sorrow, and transition.

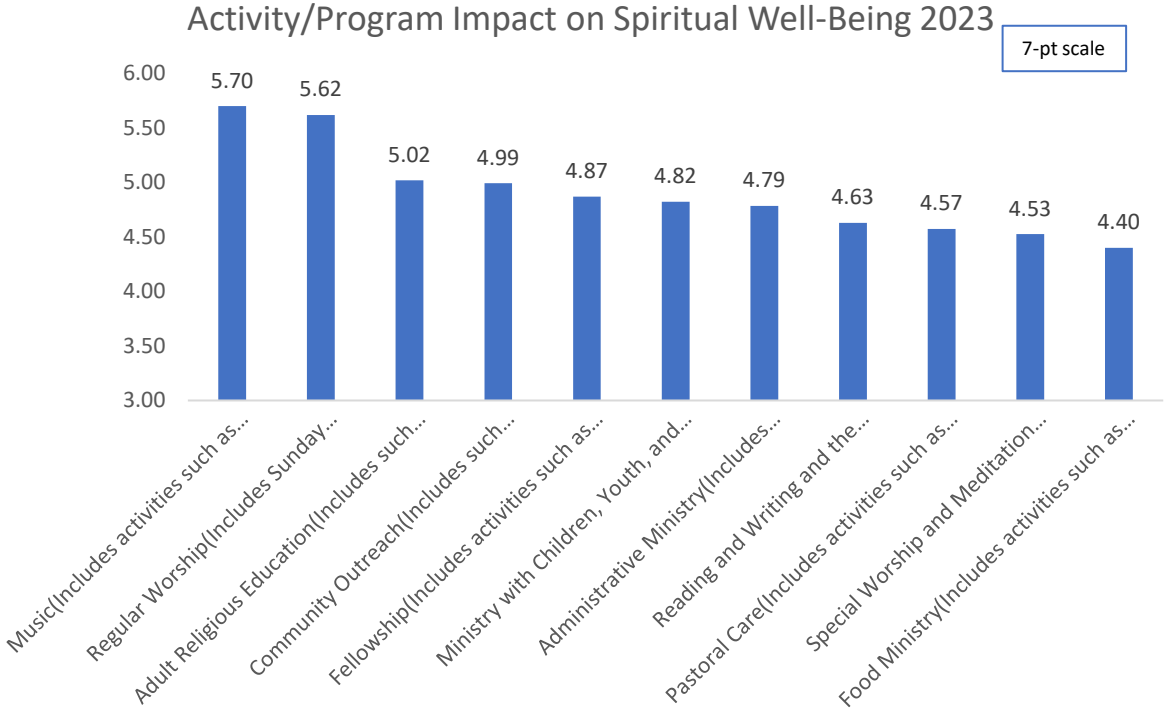
E6 Discover and pursue our individual and collective work to advance justice, wholeness, and equity for people, our Earth, and all life on it.

E7 Create brave space for racial healing and dismantling dominant culture.

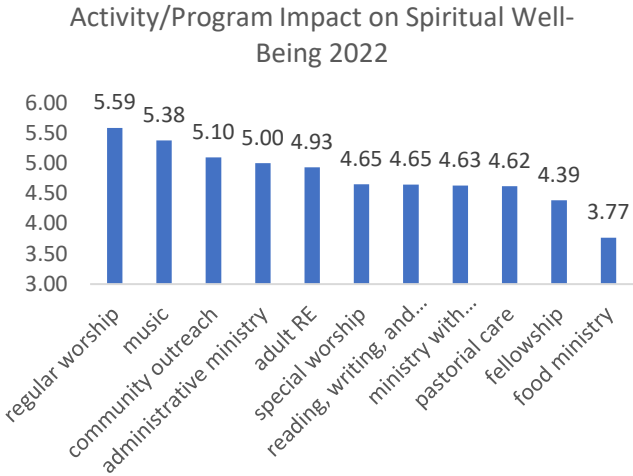
E8 Sustain and steward the church and our larger Unitarian Universalist movement for the future.



Activity/Program Impact on Spiritual Well-Being 2023



% Participation	
92.6	Regular Worship
63.6	Adult Religious Education
48.6	Reading and Writing and the Arts
45.7	Community Outreach
40.6	Special Worship and Meditation Programs
38.0	Fellowship
33.8	Music
33.1	Administrative Ministry
31.4	Pastoral Care
27.9	Food Ministry



## Feeling Connected and Optimism 2023

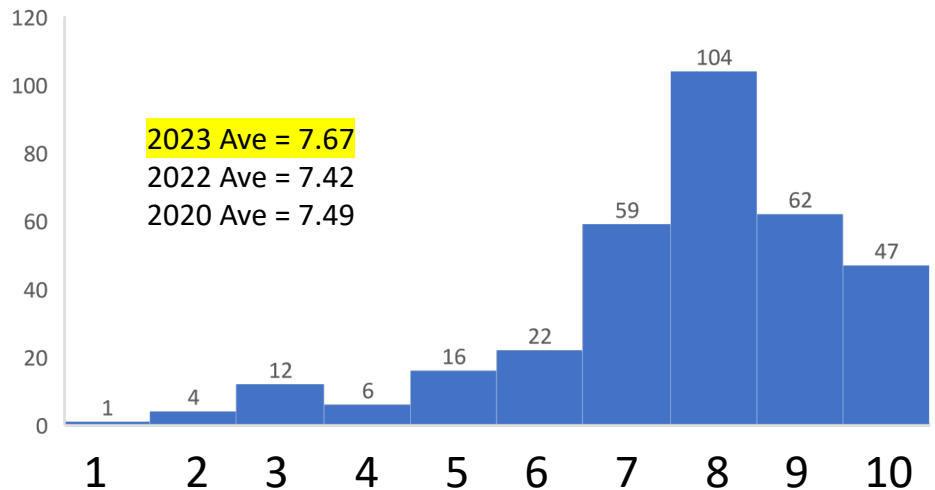
Distribution of "Connection" Responses 2023



The question:

As you know, in recent years (following the pandemic), the church's ministry has included both on-line and in-person components, including live-streamed and in-person worship and on-line, in-person, and hybrid group meetings and programming. To what extent are you feeling connected to the church in this time of opportunities across all platforms? (1 = not at all connected and 10 = extremely connected).

Distribution of "Optimism" Responses 2023

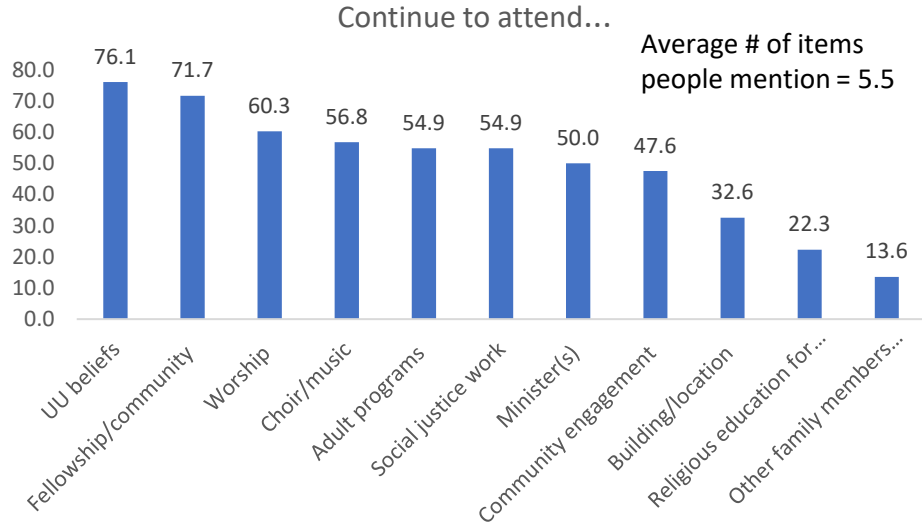
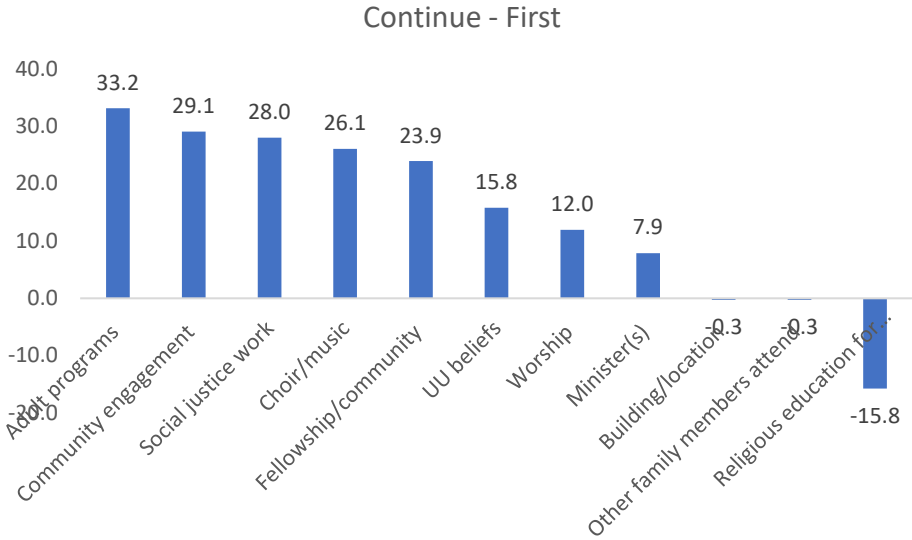
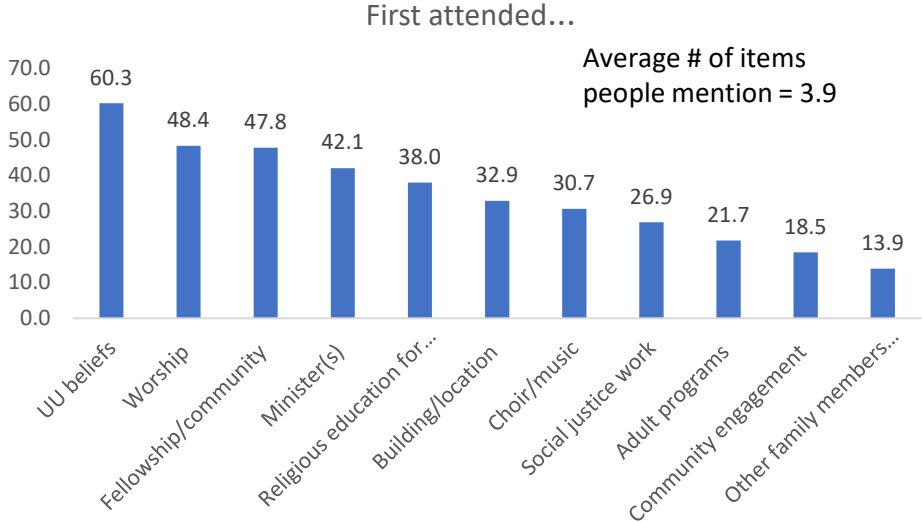


The question:

How optimistic are you about the future? (1 = not at all optimistic and 10 = extremely optimistic).

## MST Questions

# Please indicate why you attend Unity Church-Unitarian

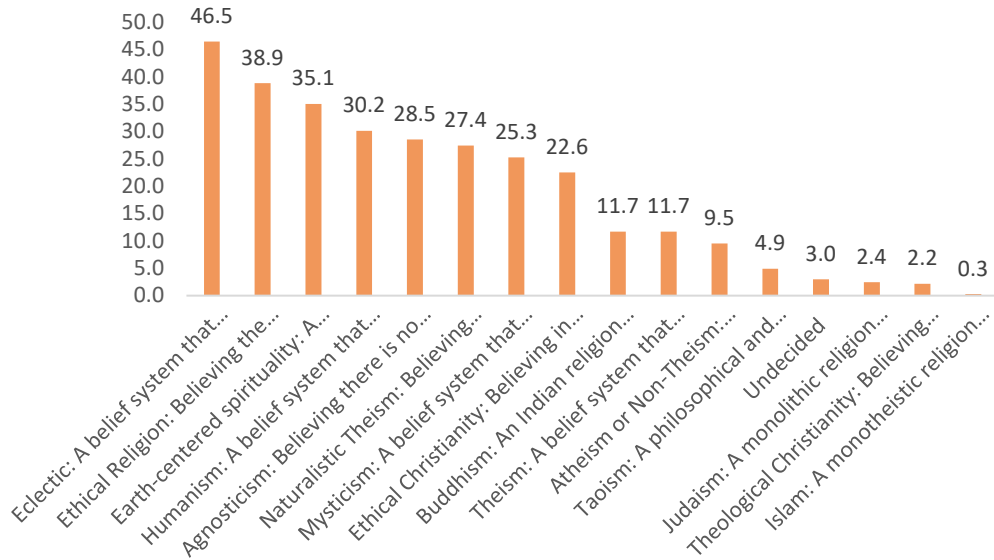


## Notes:

- The first three choices for both “First attended because” and “Continue to attend because” are the same.
- People choose more reasons to continue than to begin.
- The minister was ranked fourth as a reason to first attend and seventh as a reason to continue attending.

# Religious Orientation

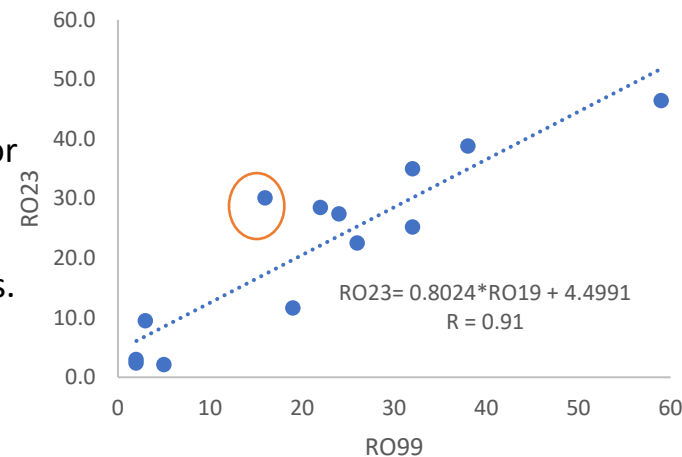
Religious Orientation 2023



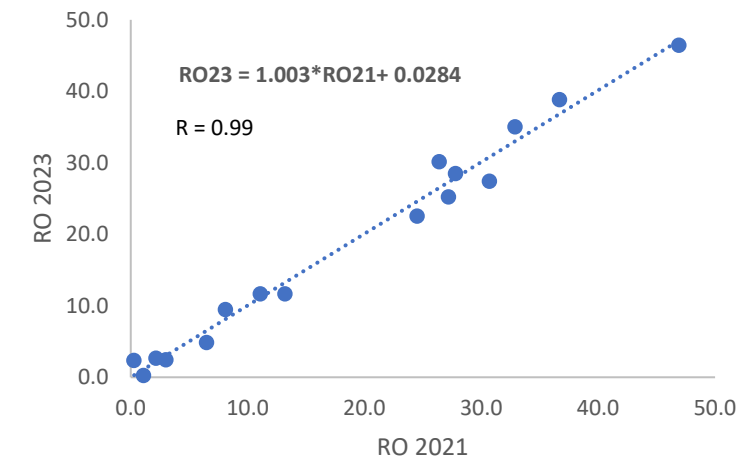
		1999	2021	2023	23-'21	23-'99
Eclectic		59	46.9	46.5	-0.4	-12.5
Ethical Religion		38	36.7	38.9	2.2	0.9
Earth-centered spirituality		32	32.9	35.1	2.2	3.1
Humanism		16	26.4	30.2	3.8	14.2
Agnosticism		22	27.8	28.5	0.7	6.5
Naturalistic Theism		24	30.7	27.4	-3.3	3.4
Mysticism		32	27.2	25.3	-1.9	-6.7
Ethical Christianity		26	24.5	22.6	-1.9	-3.4
Buddhism			11.1	11.7	0.6	
Theism		19	13.2	11.7	-1.5	-7.3
Atheism or Non-Theism		3	8.1	9.5	1.4	6.5
Taoism			6.5	4.9	-1.6	
Theological Christianity		5	2.2	2.7	0.5	-2.3
Judaism		2	3.0	2.4	-0.6	0.4
Undecided		2	0.3	2.4	2.1	0.4
Islam			1.1	0.3	-0.8	
correlation w 2023		0.91	0.99			

- Essentially no difference in Religious Orientation 2023 v 2021 (correlation = 0.99).
- Pretty remarkable alignment in Religious Orientation over a 24-year time interval: 1999 to 2023 (correlation = 0.91).
- Biggest percentage point difference '23 v '99 is for Humanism (14.2 percentage points higher in 2023). Also, a big difference for Humanism in rank order: 4<sup>th</sup> most mentioned in '23 v 9<sup>th</sup> most mentioned in '99. The next biggest difference is for Eclectic, but Eclectic ranks as the most often mentioned RO in both years.

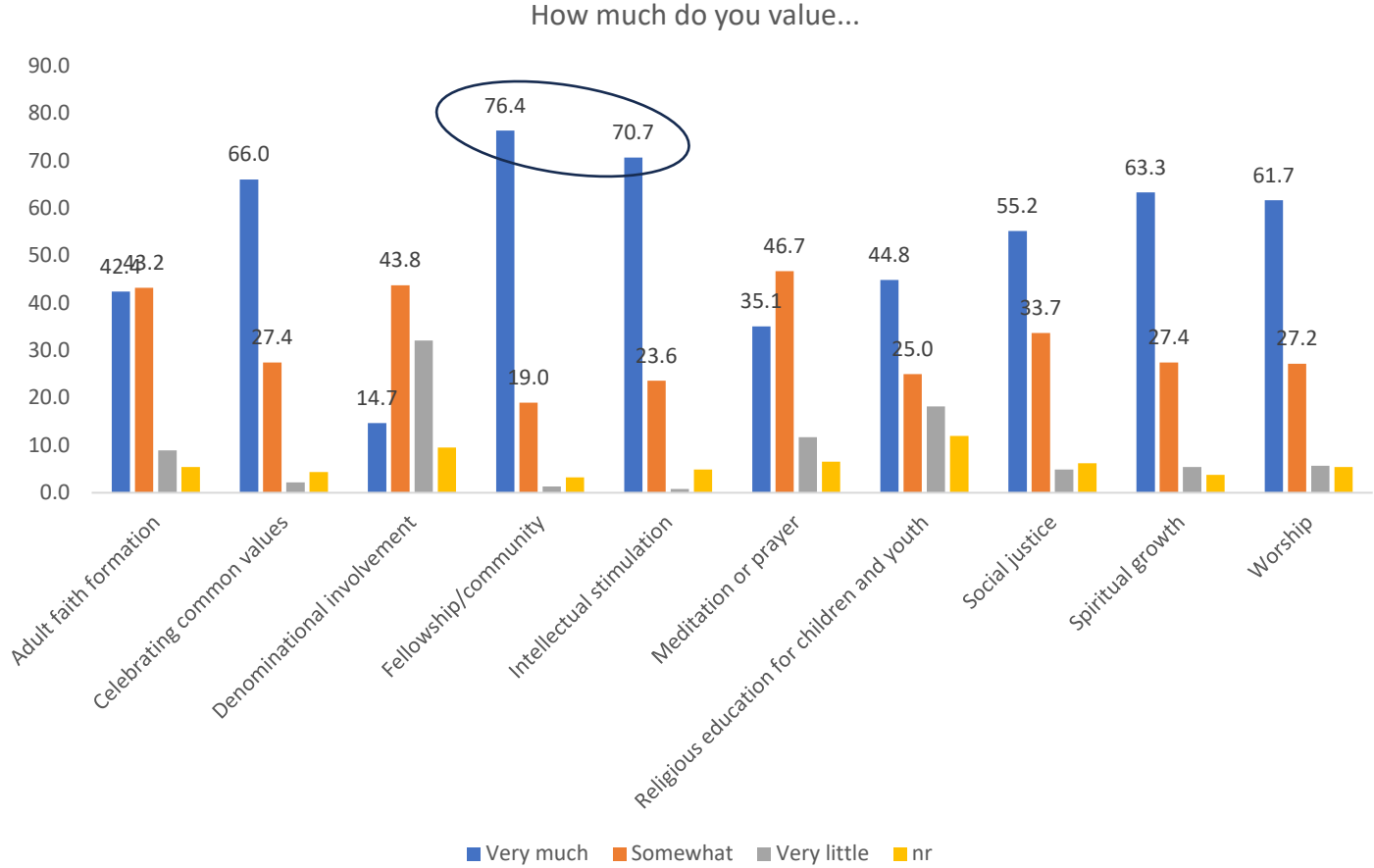
Religious Orientation 2023 v 1999



Religious Orientation 2023 v 2021

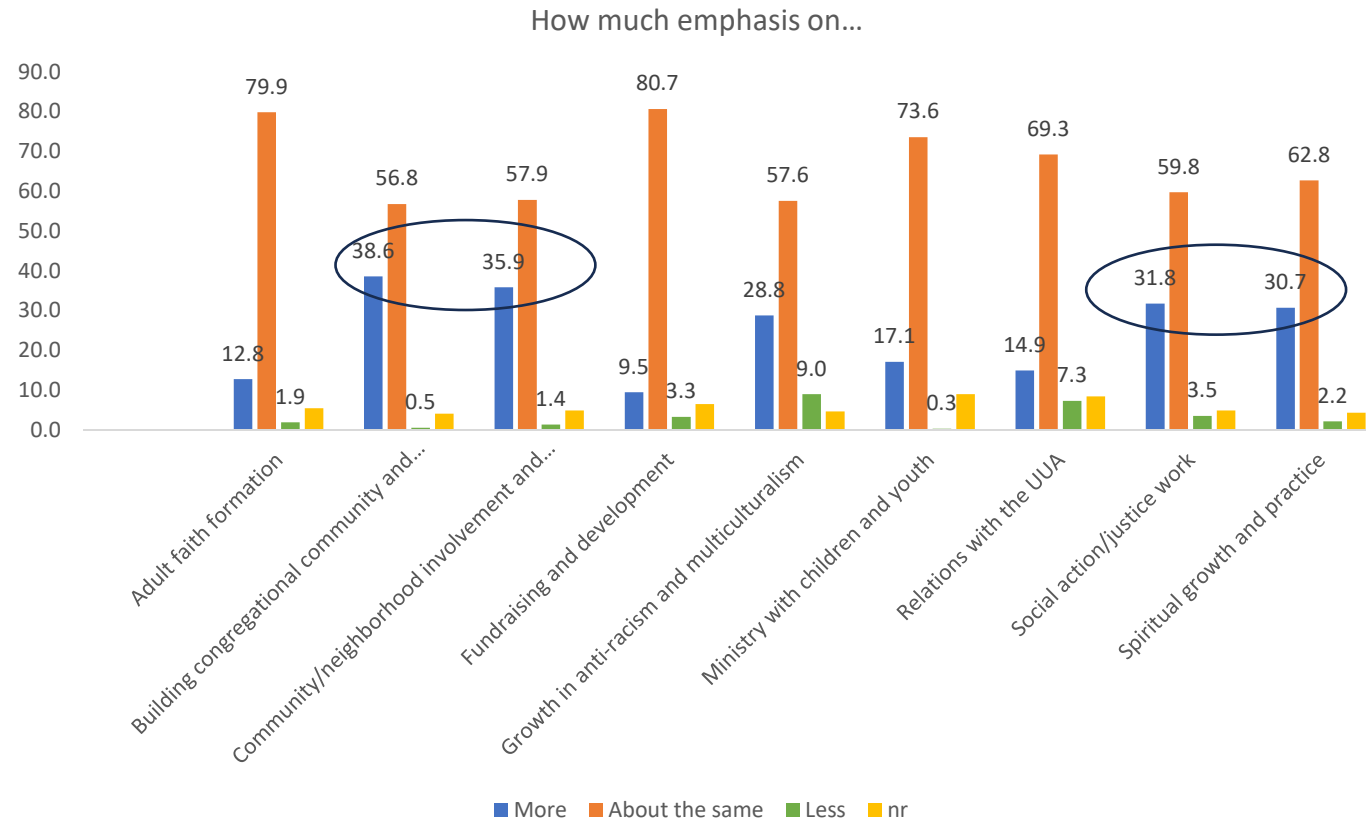


How much do you value the following aspects of congregational life?



- Fellowship/Community and Intellectual Stimulation top the list.
- What we value least: Denominational Involvement.

## How much emphasis should Unity Church place on the following?

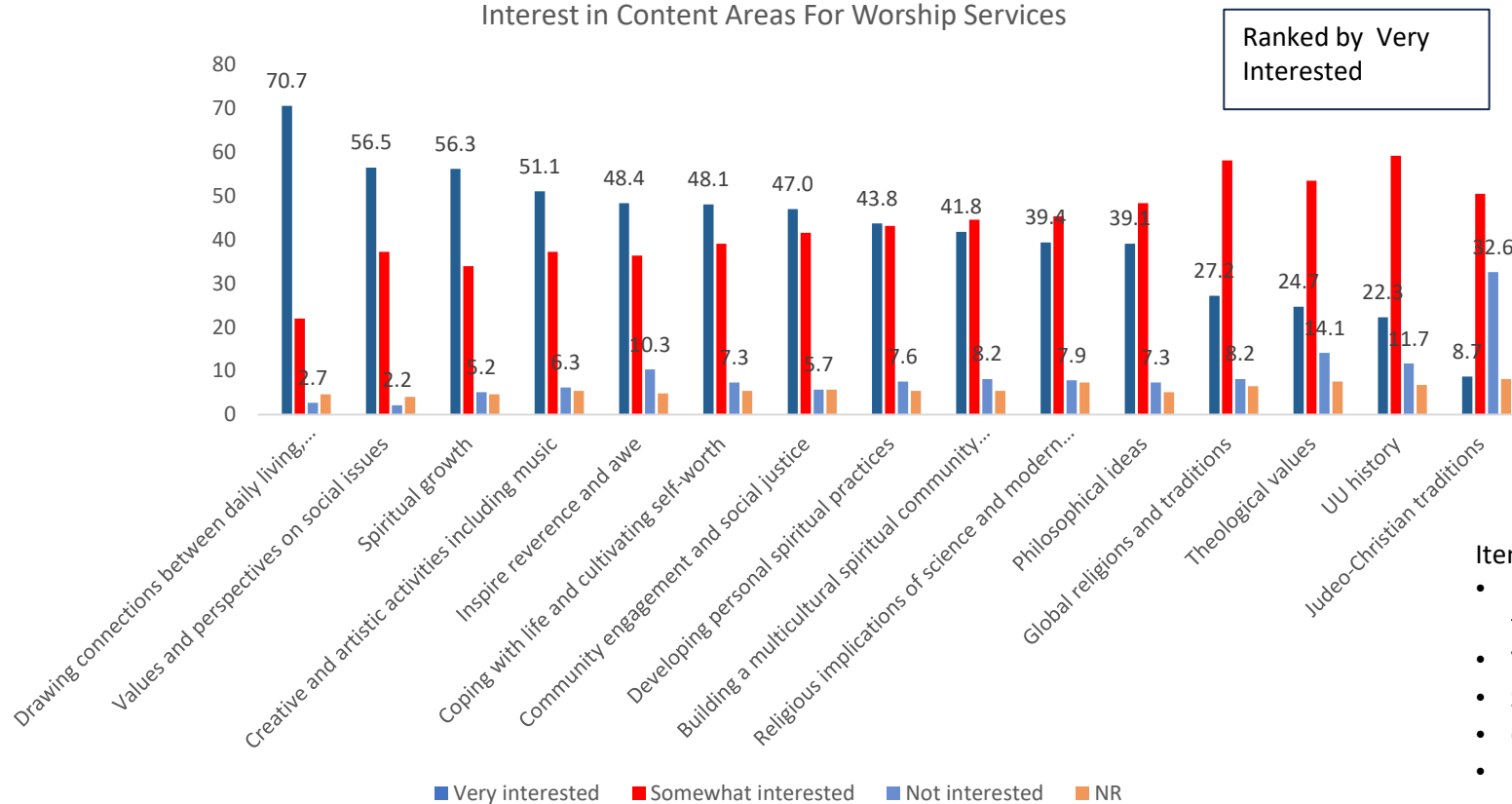


- *Congregational community* (among) and *Community/neighborhood involvement* (beyond) stand out in terms of wanting **more** emphasis.
- *Fund raising/development* and Adult faith formation are just **about right** in terms of emphasis.
- Area with the highest percent saying **less** emphasis (9.0%) is *Growth in anti-racism and multiculturalism*.

### Emphasis areas:

- Adult faith formation
- Building congregational community and connection
- Community/neighborhood involvement and engagement
- Fundraising and development
- Growth in anti-racism and multiculturalism
- Ministry with children and youth
- Relations with the UUA
- Social action/justice work
- Spiritual growth and practice

Indicate your personal level of interest in the following content areas for worship services.



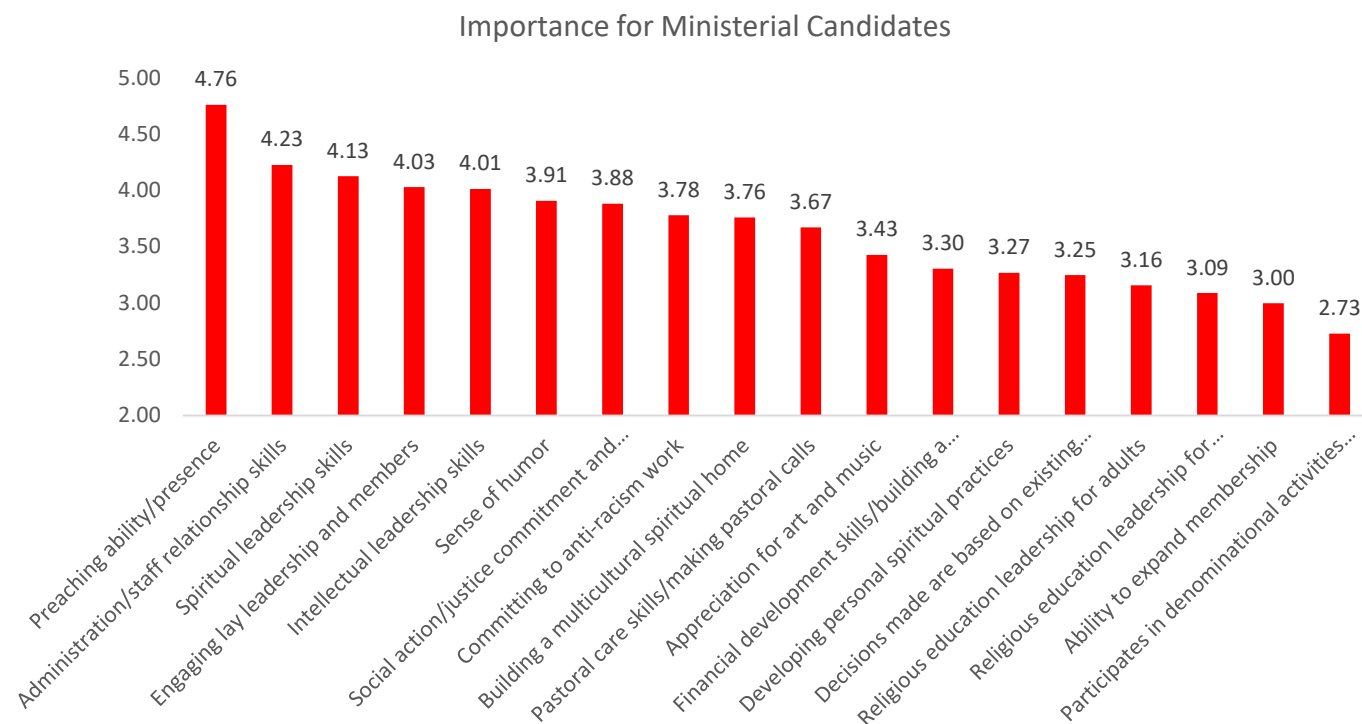
- *Drawing connections between daily living, multiple traditions and universal truths of the human experience/life sits strongly at the top the list of worship service content areas of interest.*
- *Judeo-Christian traditions gets the most not interested votes.*

Items:

- Drawing connections between daily living, multiple traditions and universal truths of the human experience/life
- Values and perspectives on social issues
- Spiritual growth
- Creative and artistic activities including music
- Inspire reverence and awe
- Coping with life and cultivating self-worth
- Community engagement and social justice
- Developing personal spiritual practices
- Building a multicultural spiritual community and/or anti-racism work
- Religious implications of science and modern knowledge
- Philosophical ideas
- Global religions and traditions
- Theological values
- UU history
- Judeo-Christian traditions

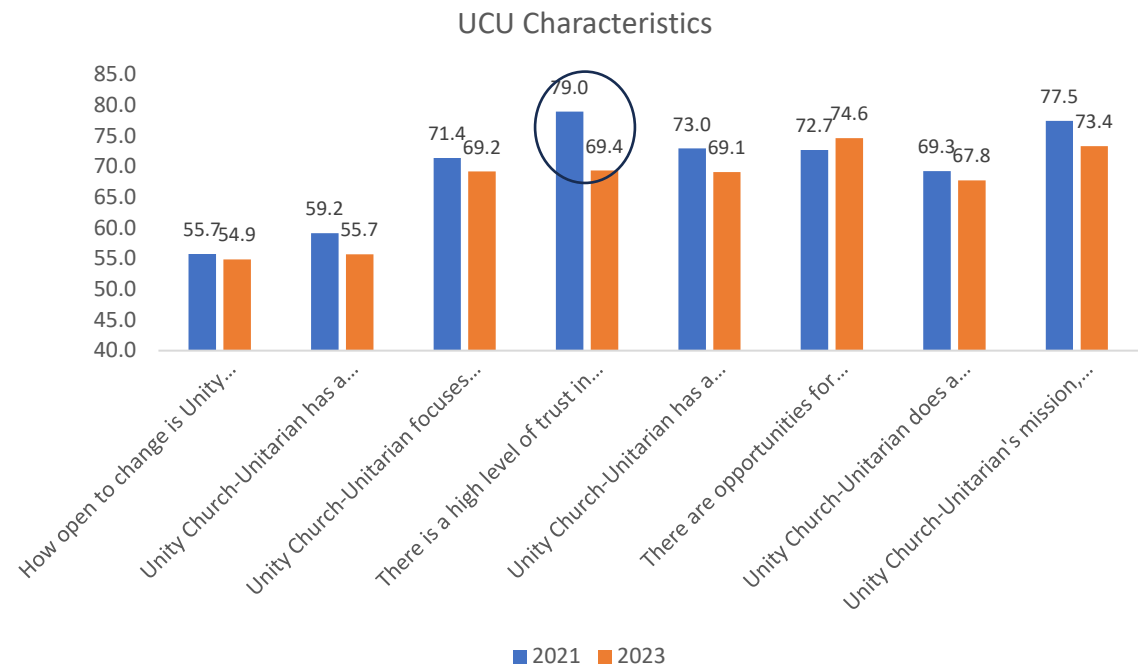


If you were screening ministerial candidates using the following characteristics, how important would each characteristic be to you? (Scale 1 – 5)



- Probably no surprise that *preaching ability/presence* would top a list of what's important when screening ministerial candidates.
- There's also a great deal of agreement about the importance of preaching. 80% of respondents give it a 5 (47% gave a 5 to the next closest characteristic).
- *Ability to expand membership* and *Participation in denominational activities* are least important (least important does not mean unimportant).
- In the MST survey done in 1999, *preaching ability/presence* exhibited the same dominance: 82% assigned a 5. In that survey the same two characteristics were least important.

# Comparison of UCU Characteristics 2023 v 2021 (Scale 0 – 100)

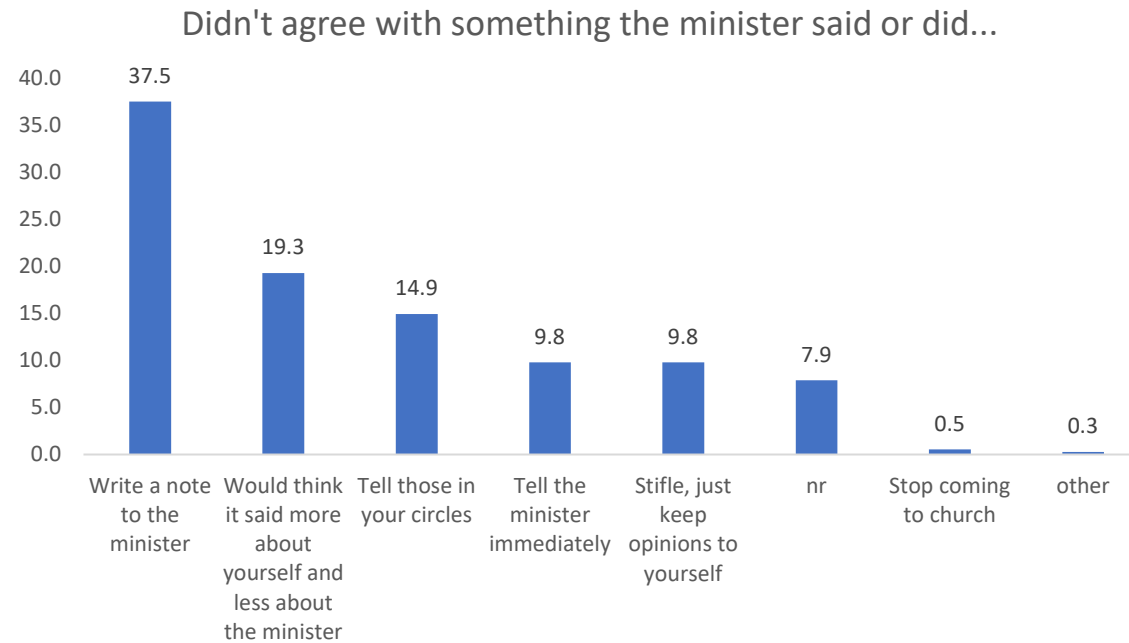


Biggest difference between '21 and '23 is the 9.6 drop y/y in the item “There is a high level of trust in leadership at Unity Church-Unitarian”.

### Characteristics

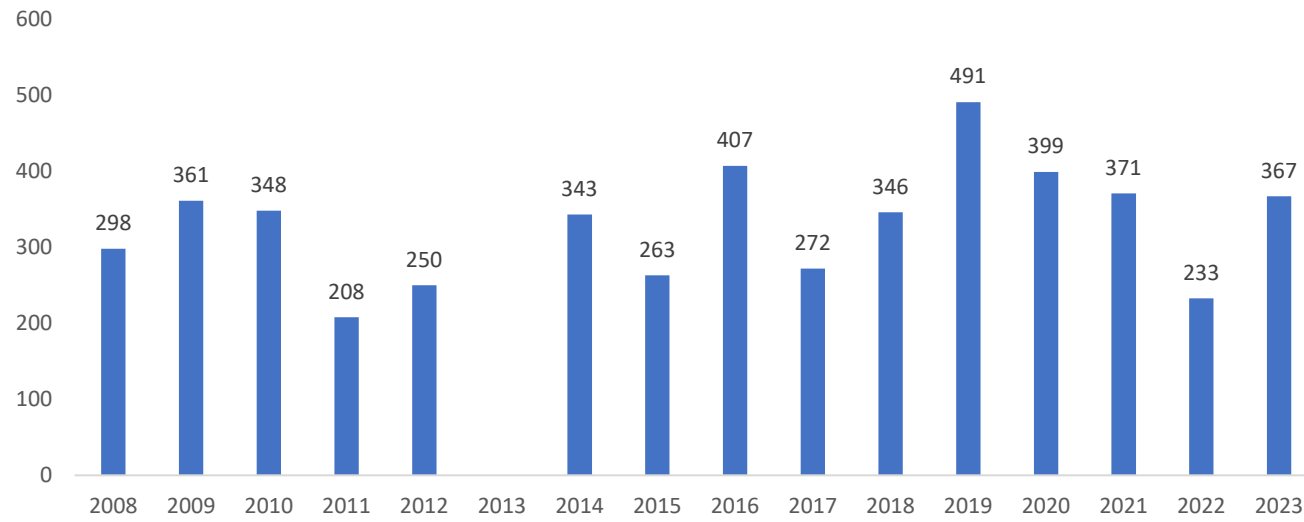
- How open to change is Unity Church-Unitarian?
- Church-Unitarian has a flexible enough structure to implement new ideas easily.
- Unity Church-Unitarian focuses on mission, our Ends and the greater good, rather than the strong preferences of some individuals.
- There is a high level of trust in leadership at Unity Church-Unitarian.
- Unity Church-Unitarian has a core group of leaders able to lead change in a non-anxious way.
- There are opportunities for congregants/me to share leadership of the church in meaningful ways.
- Unity Church-Unitarian does a good job of having difficult conversations and staying in relationship.
- Unity Church-Unitarian's mission, ministry, and Ends continue to adapt to changing conditions in the world.

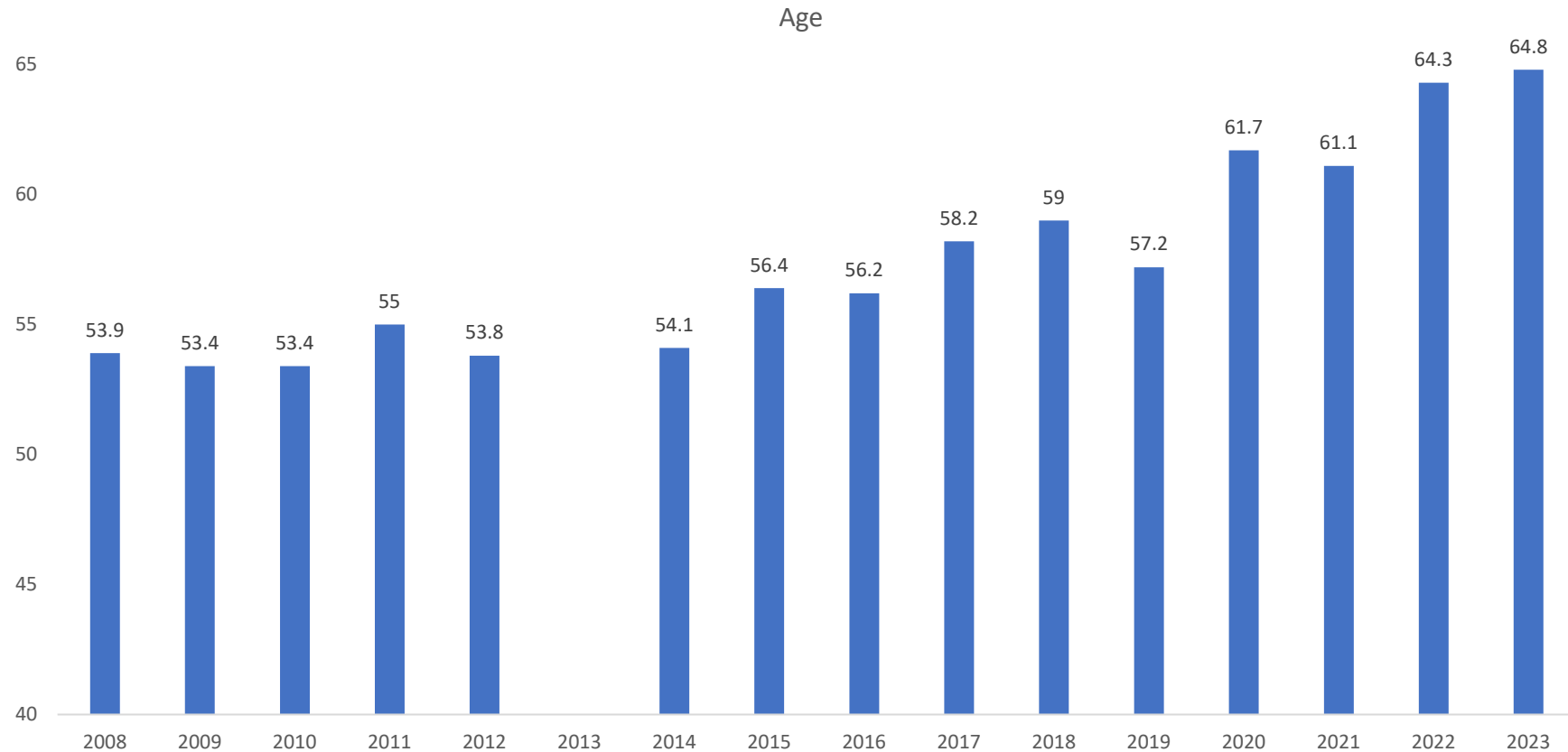
If you didn't agree with something the minister said or did would you...



## Demographics

Sample Size

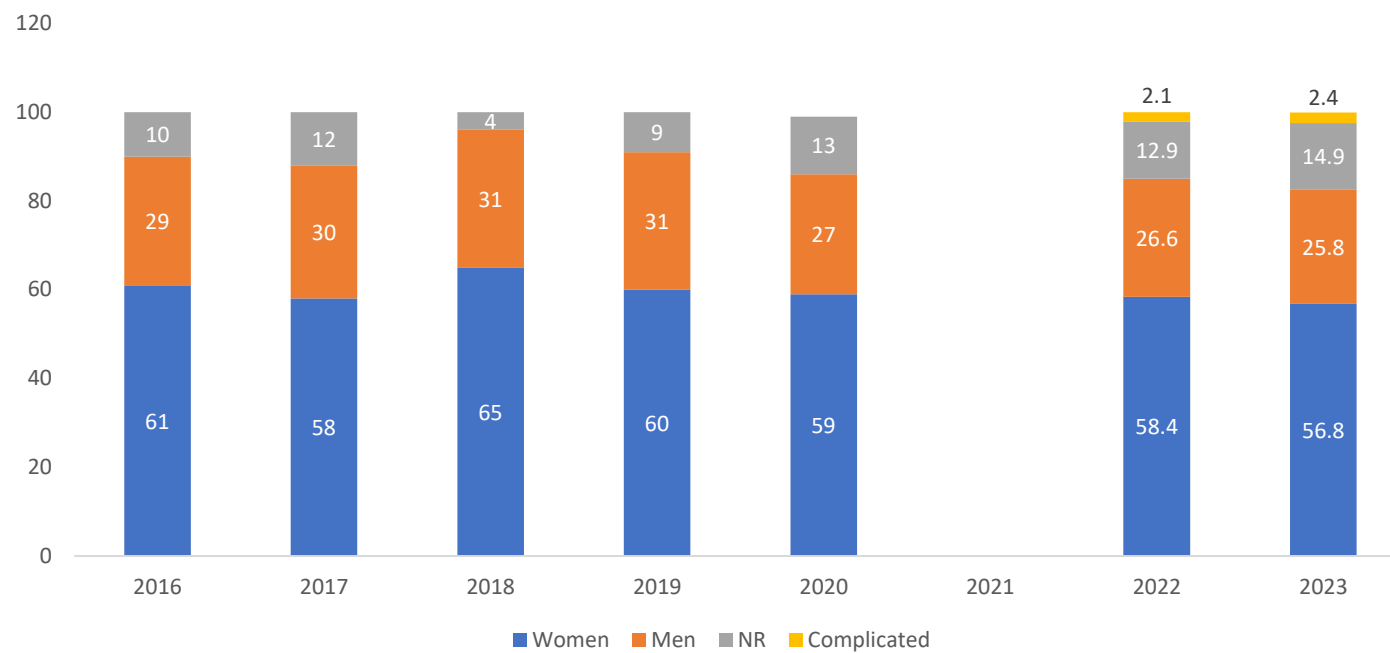




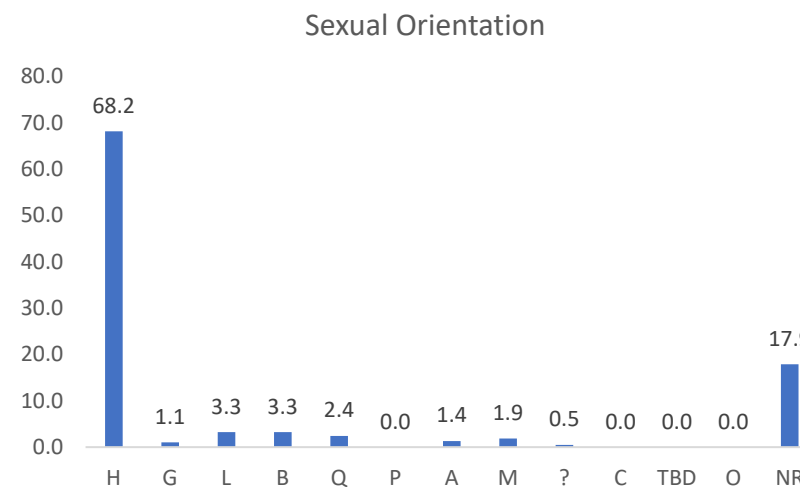
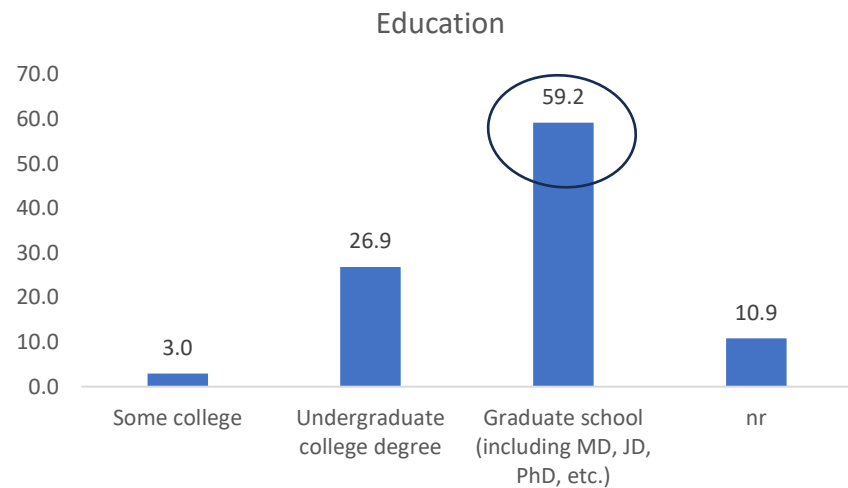
We've changed the way we ask about age in the survey in ways that would lead to a higher average age. In 2018 we added age categories 76-85 and 85+; in prior years the final category was 66+ (the age for those in this category were set at 72). In 2020, 2021, and 2022 we asked directly for birth year.

Even though we've changed how we asked about age in ways that would lead to a higher average age, the trend in survey respondents is clearly older. Does this reflect the congregation's average age as a whole? Or does it reflect the fact that our Religious Education families have not quite returned to church at pre-pandemic levels?

## Gender



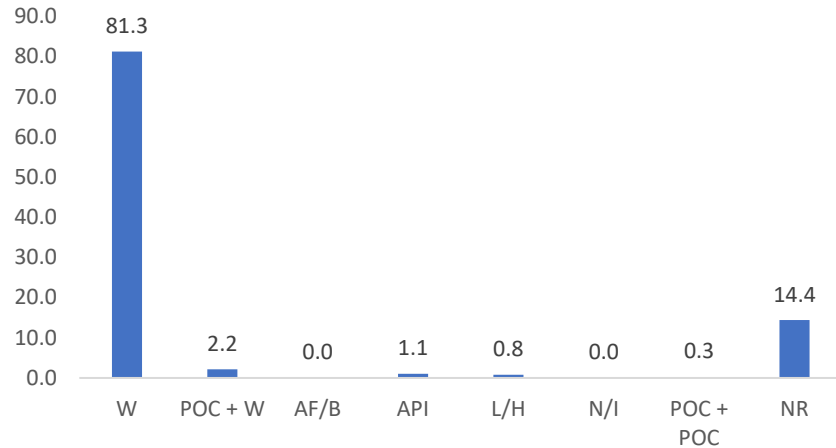
Women continue roughly  
2:1 v Men.



H	Heterosexual
G	Gay
L	Lesbian
B	Bisexual
Q	Queer
P	Pansexual
A	Asexual
M	Multiple
?	Questioning
C	Conflation of gender identity with sexual identity
TBD	Not yet established
O	Omnisexual
NR	No response. Include celibate, sex positive, etc.

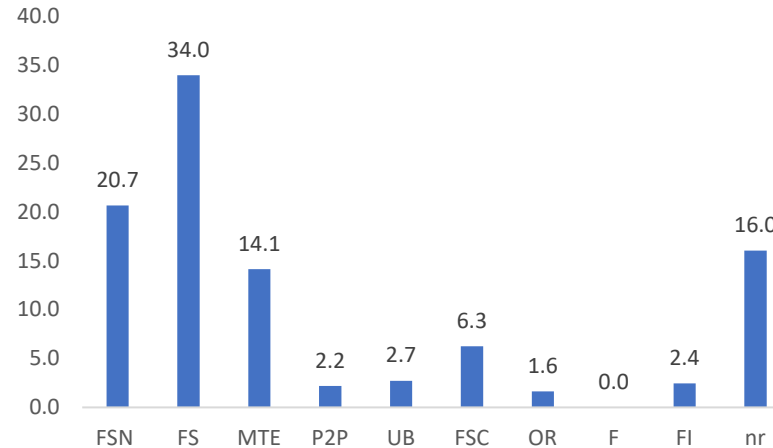


Race/Ethnicity



<b>W</b>	White
<b>POC + W</b>	Part person of color and part white
<b>AF/B</b>	African American, Black, African
<b>API</b>	Asian Pacific Islander
<b>L/H</b>	Latino/a/x and Hispanic
<b>N/I</b>	Native and Indigenous
<b>POC + POC</b>	People whose racial identity includes two different Person of Color identities
<b>NR</b>	No response or unclear response

Financial Situation



<b>FSN</b>	Financially secure for now
<b>FS</b>	Financially secure
<b>MTE</b>	More than enough
<b>P2P</b>	Living paycheck to paycheck
<b>UB</b>	One unexpected bill away from a problem
<b>FSC</b>	Financially secure but concerned
<b>OR</b>	Other responses
<b>F</b>	Fixed income
<b>nr</b>	nr

## A Look at Non Response and Its Relation to Age

- Overall, in this study, 9.8% of respondents did not answer any of the demographic questions.
- Below are two demographics and the % NR by three age categories. For Financial Condition, the willingness to respond increases with age (decreasing NR). For the other demographic – Sexual Orientation – the willingness to respond varies very little by age.

### Financial Condition

age	% NR
22-50	7.14
51 - 70	5.98
71 - 99	3.65

### Sexual Orientation

age	% NR
22-50	5.36
51 - 70	4.27
71 - 99	5.11

This data suggests that NR can vary by age (e.g., FC), but can also be relatively indifferent to age (e.g., SO).

For additional insight into these survey results (including open end commentary) and the Cottage Meetings held to better inform the Ministerial Search Team in their work, we invite you to read the Congregational Record (CR) prepared by the MST and provided to ministerial candidates as a reflection of the history, culture, and present vision of the members of UCU.

The CR can be found on the church website under the Connection/Ministerial Transition tab.