



Unitarian Universalist Church
of Bloomington, Indiana

Seeking the Spirit | Building Community | Changing the World

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY FULL REPORT

November 2023

Survey Goal

The goal of this survey is to help our future minister, the Ministerial Search Committee, and all of us, understand our congregation.

Survey Background

The UUCB congregational Survey was distributed to the 828 members, friends, and staff of the church via email and physical mail. We received 204 responses between September 11th and October 15th, from 184 members and 18 nonmembers (2 people did not reply to the membership question).

The survey consisted of 51 questions, 35 structured and 16 open-ended. The last open-ended question is not included in this report since it was an opportunity for respondents to add anything additional that had not been asked in the survey but lacks the structure of the other questions. The search committee has taken those comments and they will inform our actions in the future. The text responses to each of the remaining 15 open ended questions have been manually analyzed and categorized by the theme of the response to make the large data volume more accessible. In this report, we have re-organized the questions to present a more cohesive story.

Please contact the Ministerial Search Committee at search@uubloomington.org with any questions about the survey.

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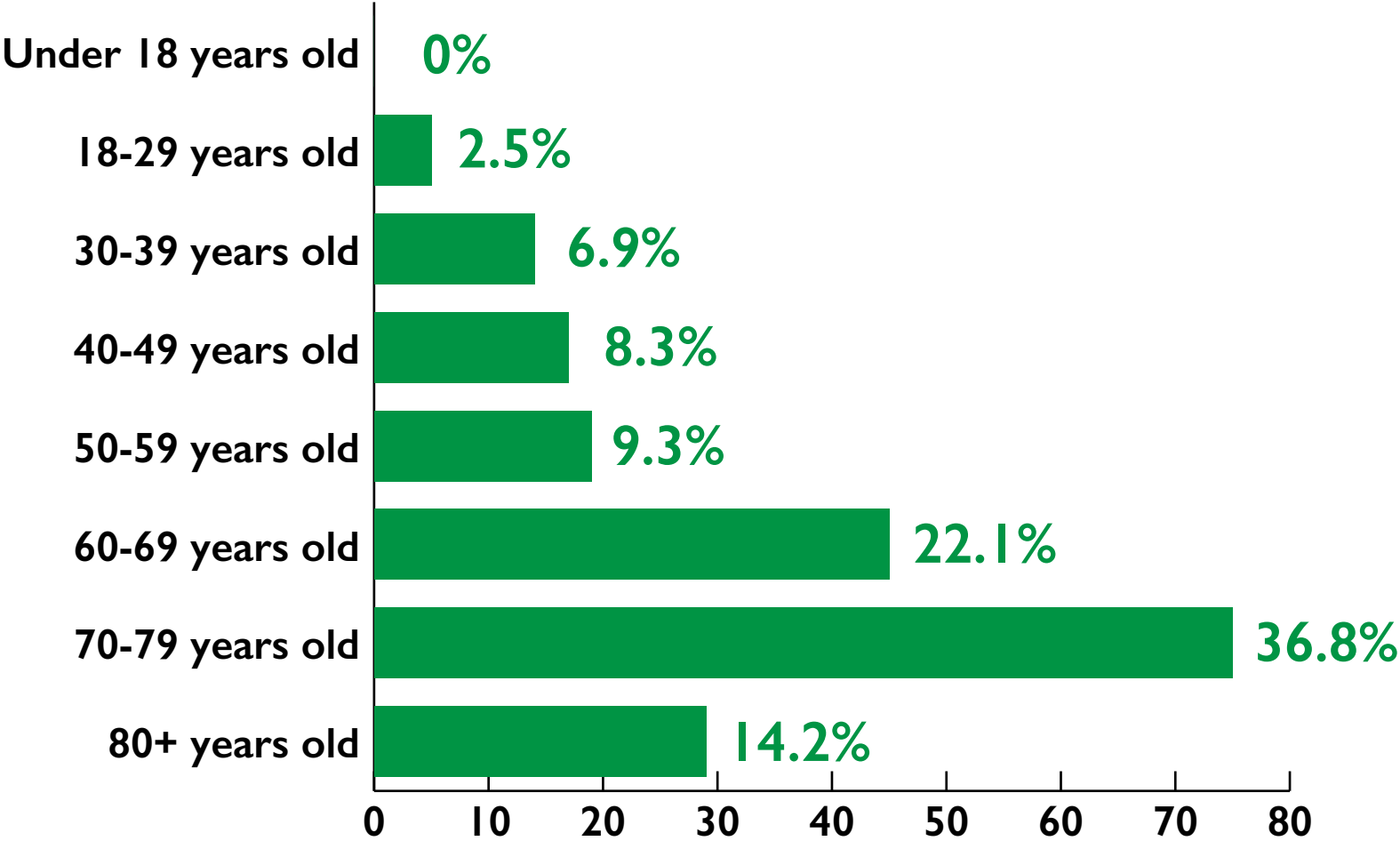
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Closing

What is your age?

204 responses

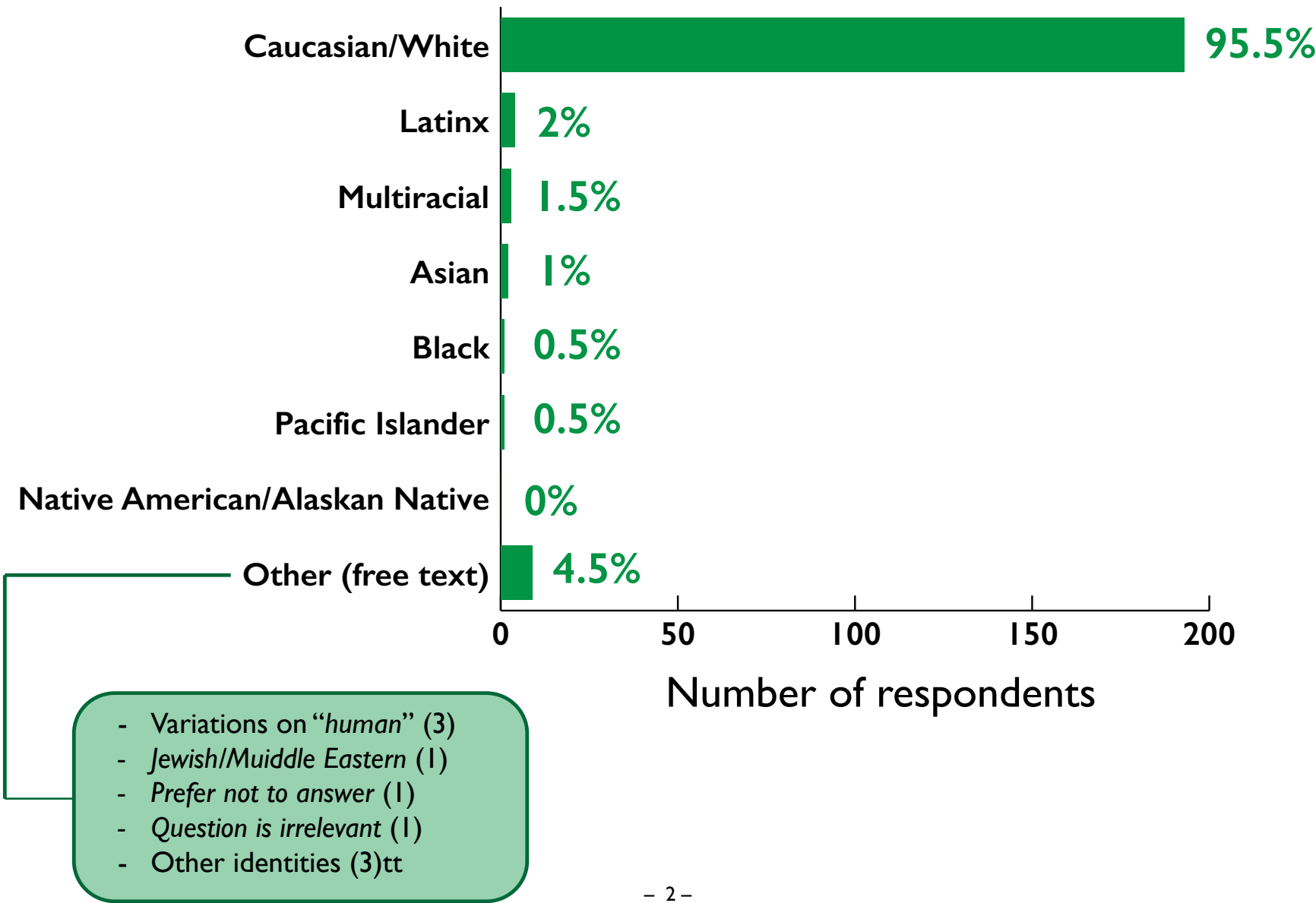


Number of respondents

Which racial or ethnic identity/identities do you hold?

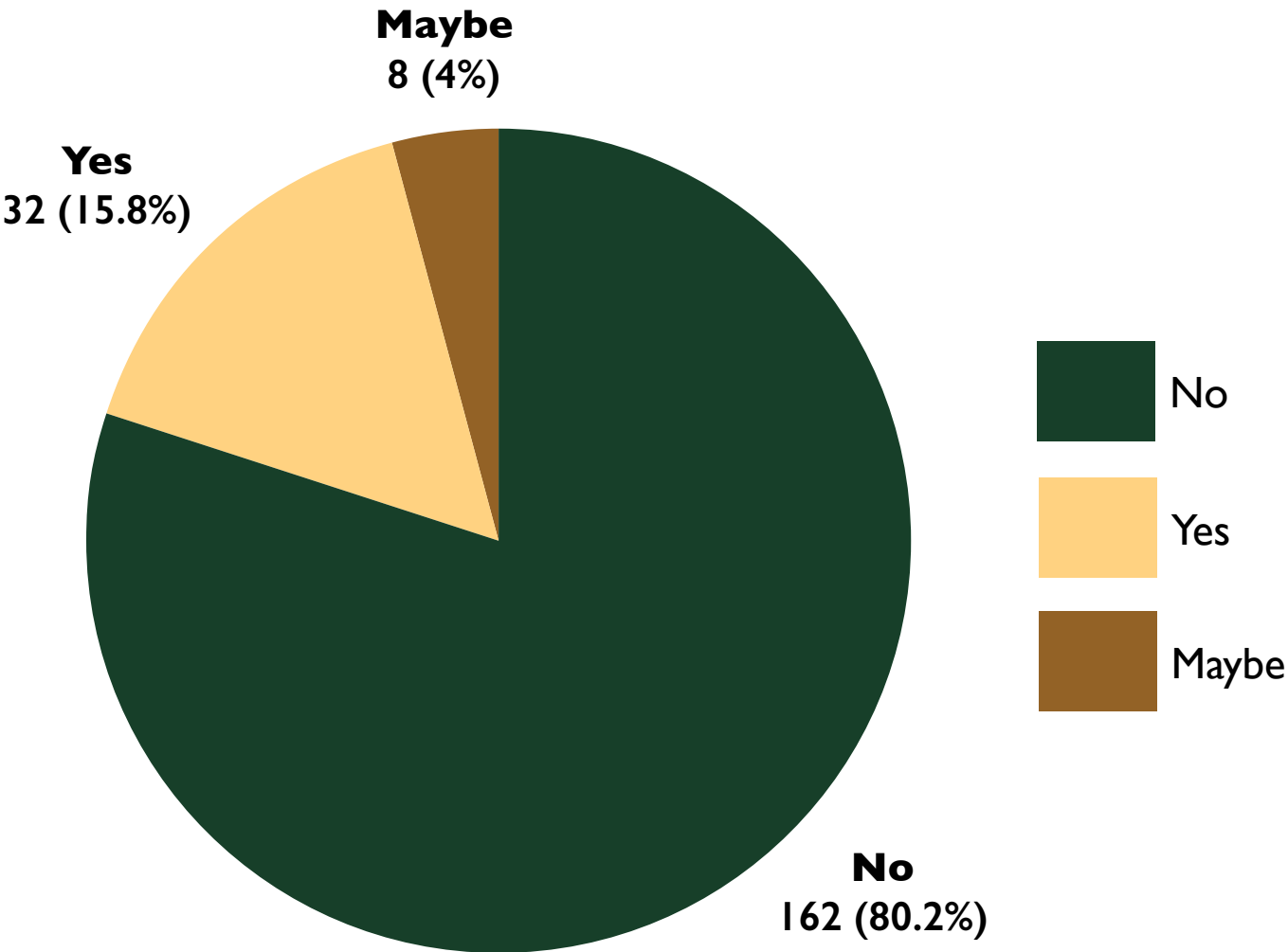
202 responses

Check all that apply



Do you consider yourself part of a multiracial family?

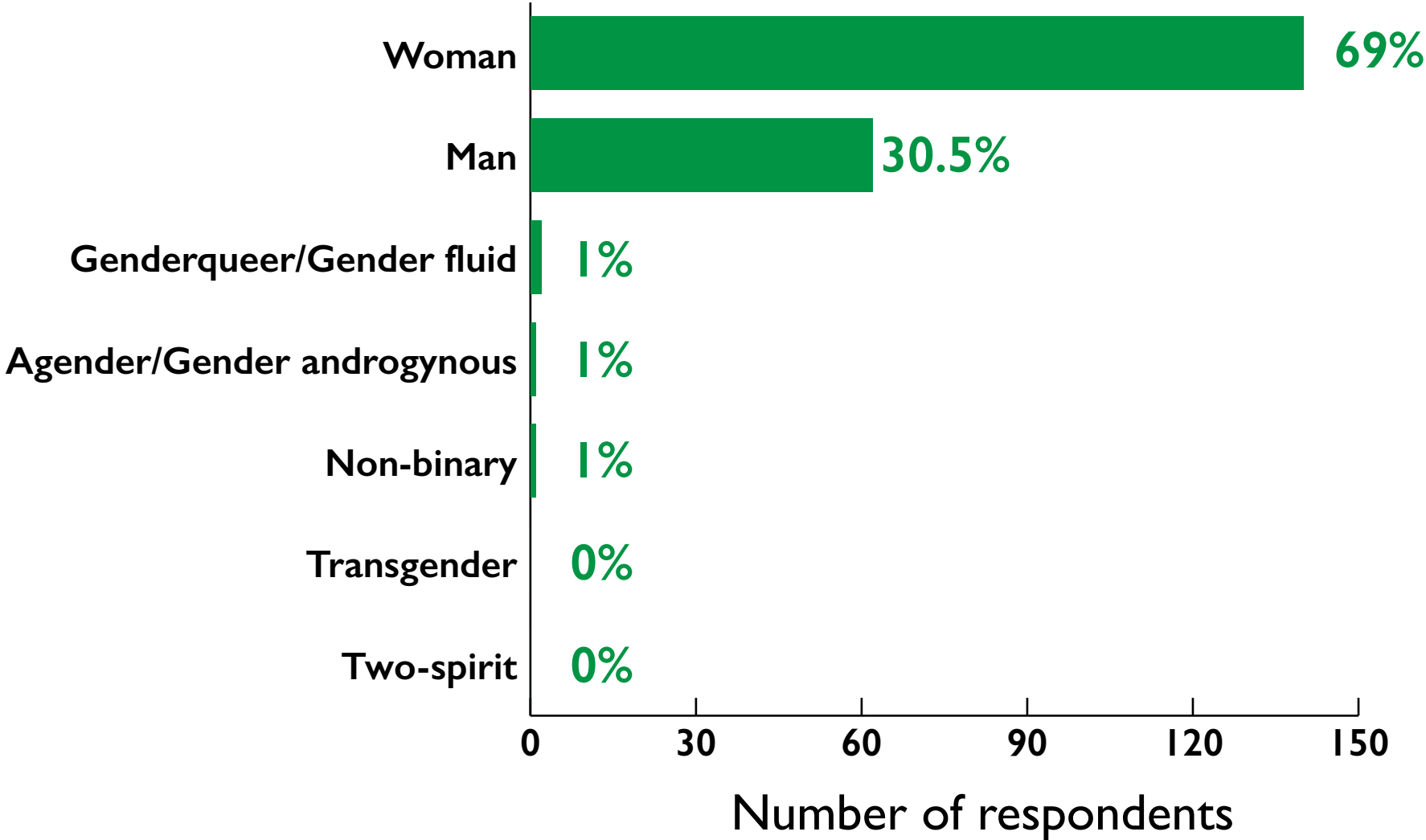
202 responses



Which gender do you most identify with?

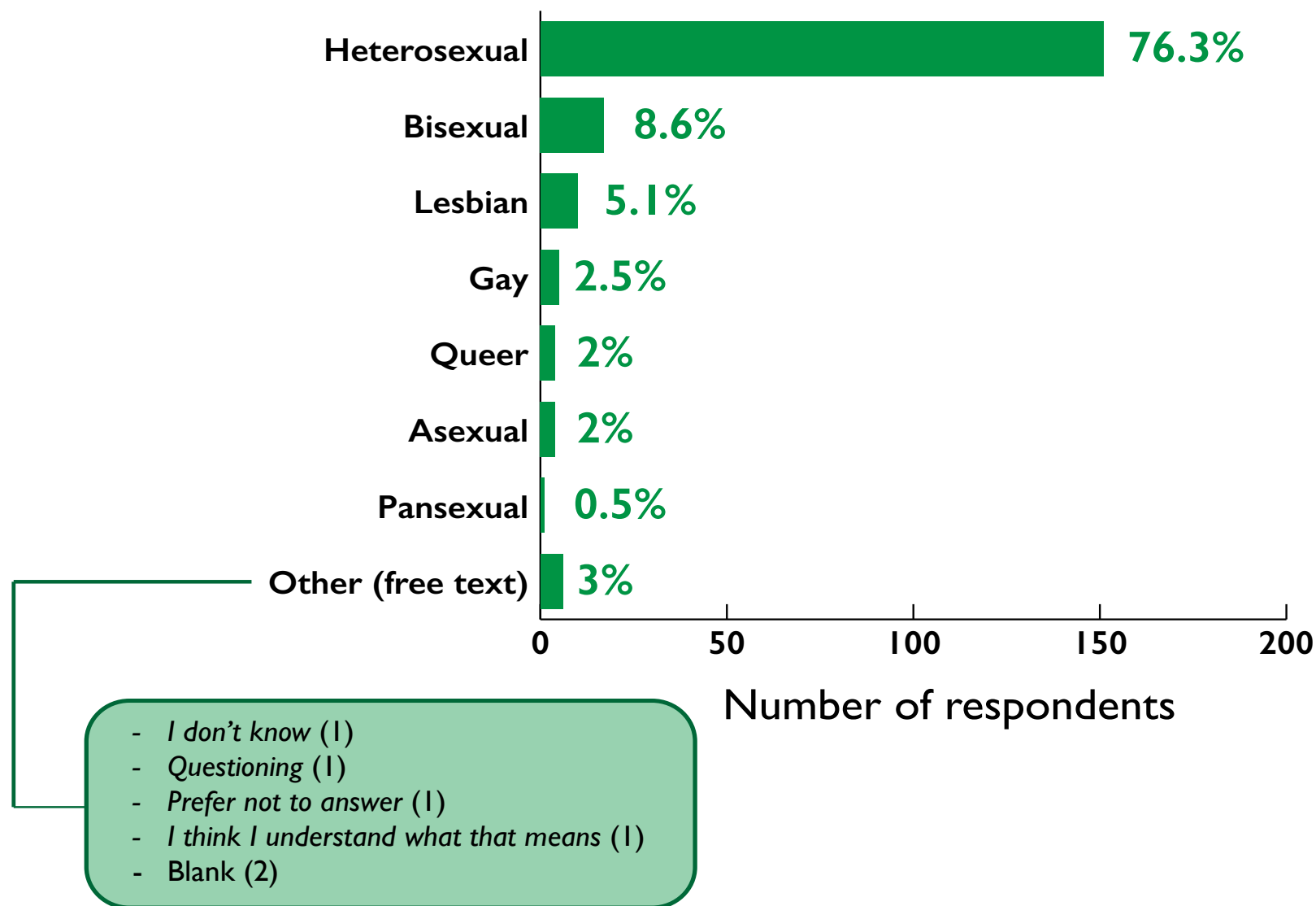
203 responses

Check all that apply



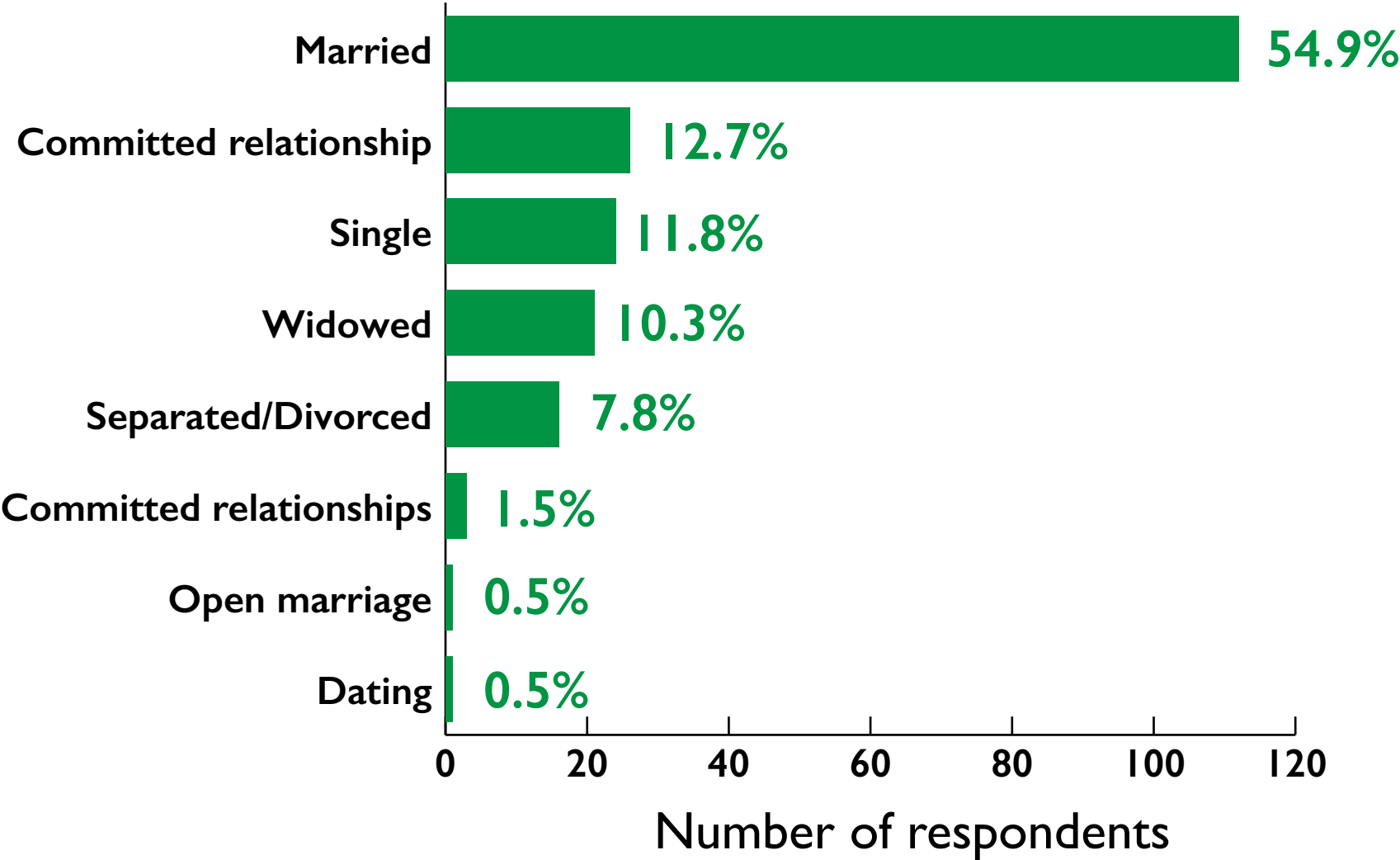
What is your sexual orientation?

198 responses



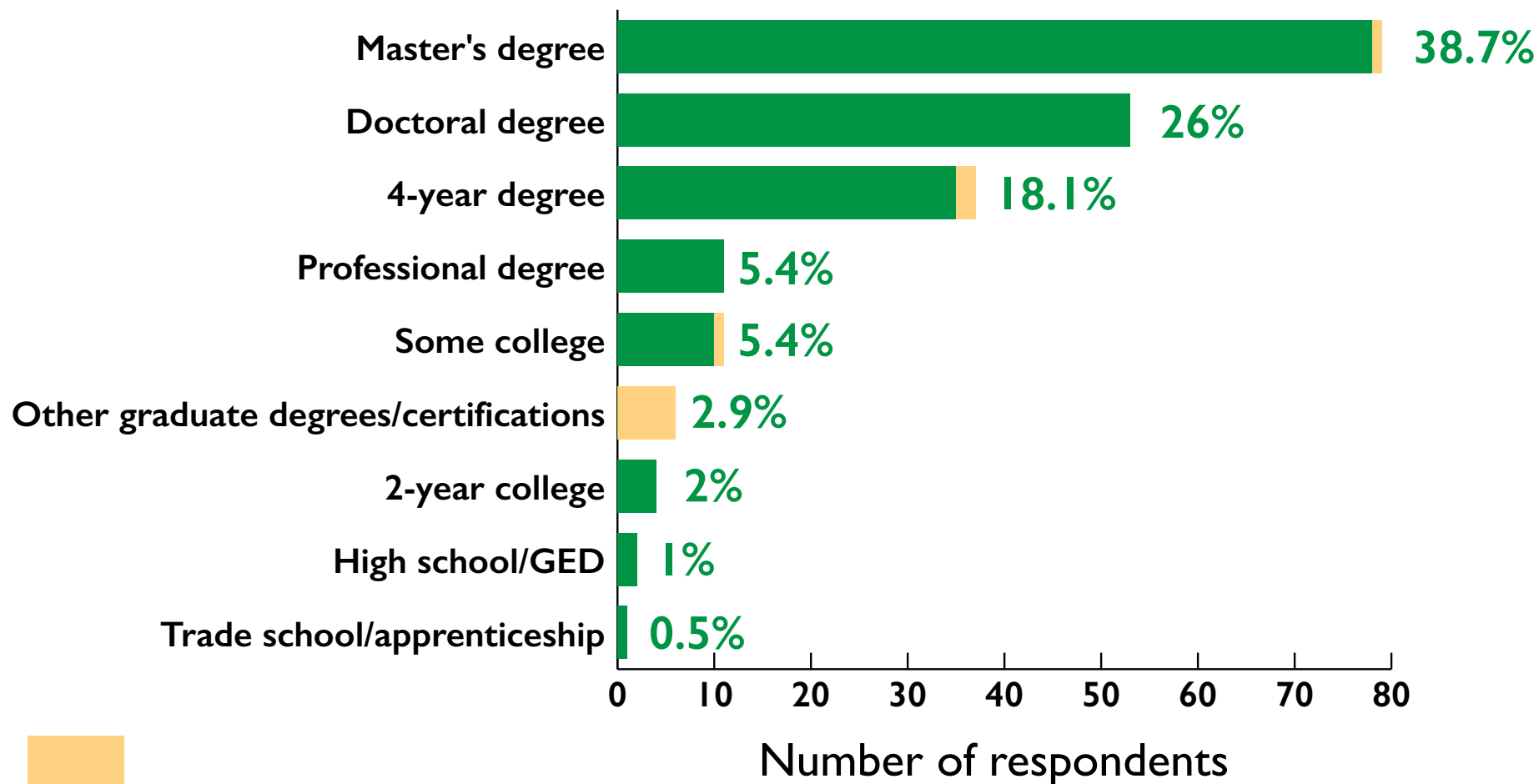
What is your current relationship status?

204 responses



What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?

204 responses



10 respondents included in these results also offered more detail, mentioning diverse educational paths that we have reallocated in the pre-determined categories and a newly created "Other graduate degrees/certifications."

What is your current employment status?

204 responses

Check all that apply

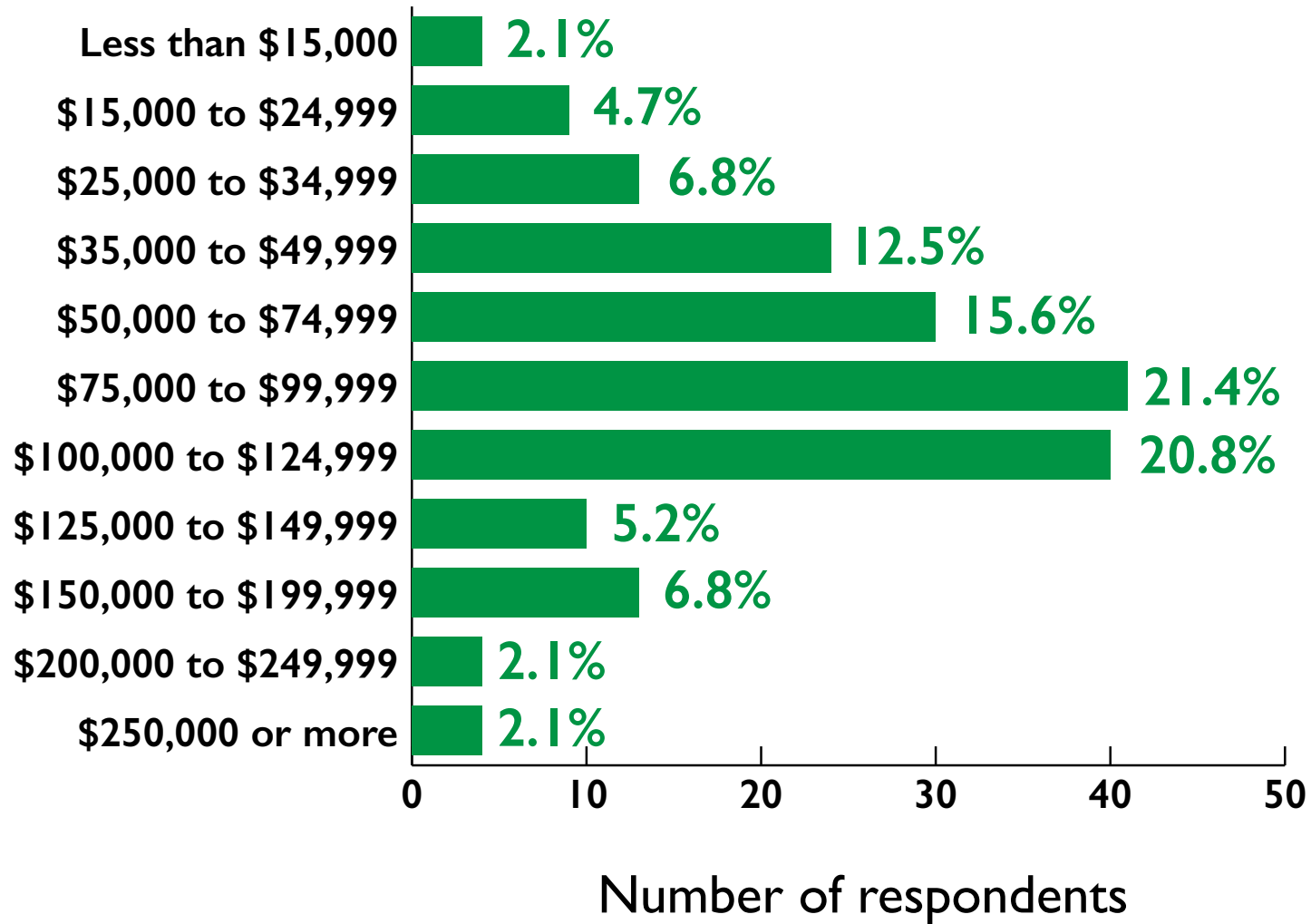


- Gardening (1)
- Work-trade (1)
- Create and sell quilts (1)
- Run non-profit art gallery (1)
- Visiting scholar (1)

Which of the following income categories best describes your total annual household income?

192 responses

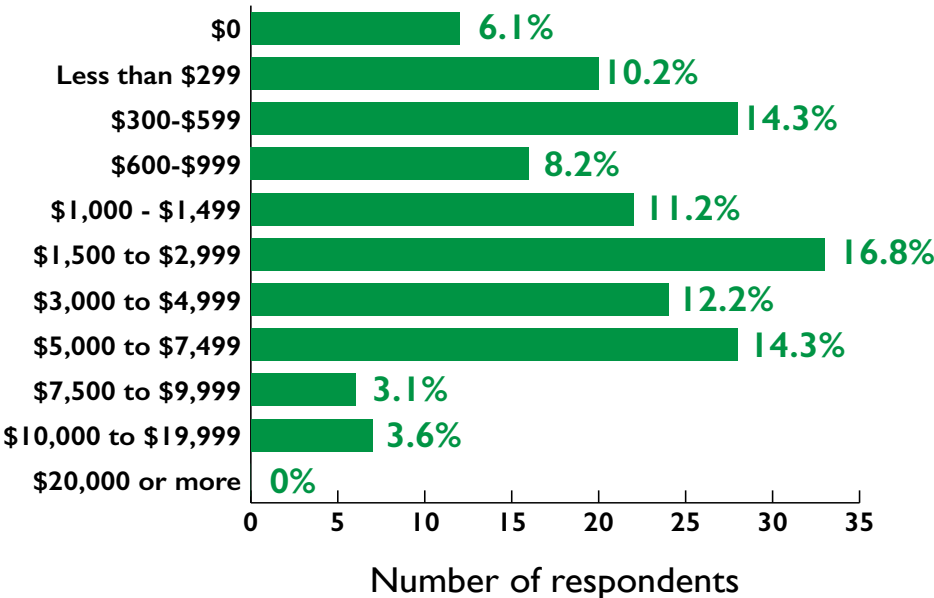
Check all that apply



What is your current household annual giving pledge, whether you pledge as individuals or as a family?

196 responses

Check all that apply



What do you take into consideration when deciding on an amount to give?

184 responses

Open-ended

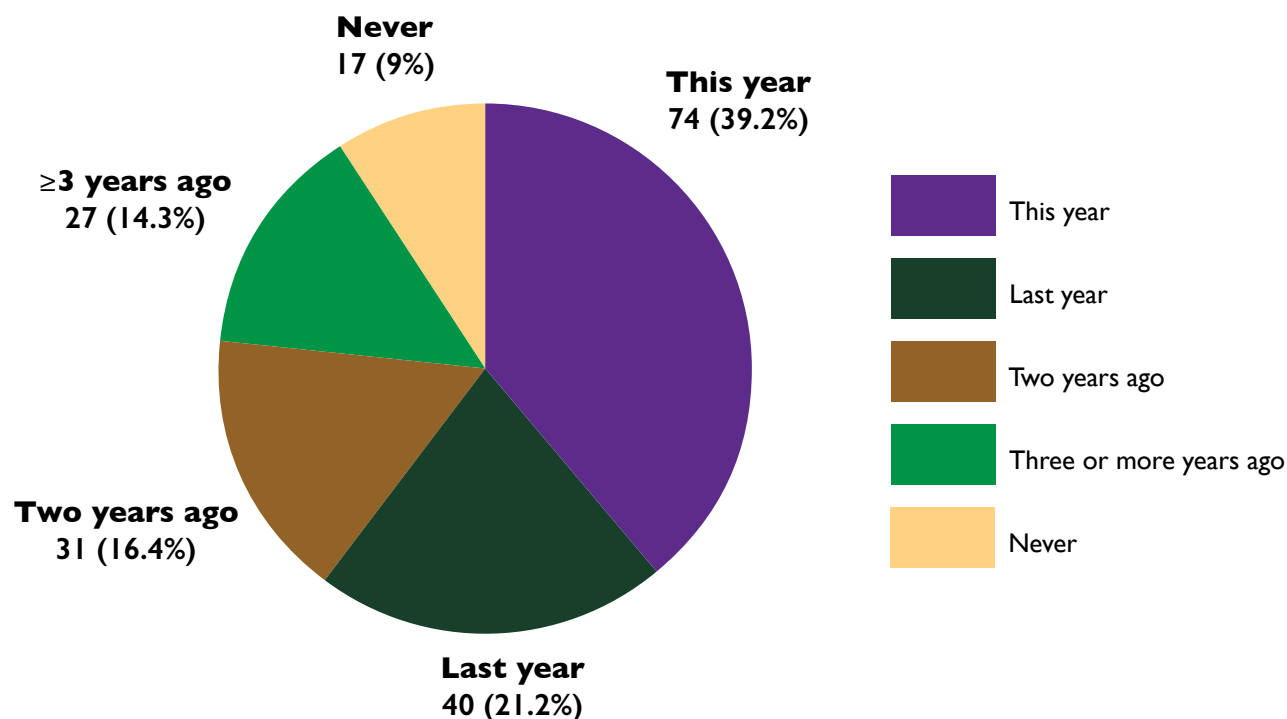
Over 120 responses mentioned **personal finances, family budget, or the ability to donate**. About 20 responses each mentioned **balancing their giving between their budgets and either the needs of the church, how important the church was to them, or their desire to give to other charities**. About 10 responses mentioned a balance between their budgets and their **feelings of belonging, satisfaction, or commitment to the church**.

Of the respondents that did not specifically mention their current finances, about 10 said they considered the **needs of the church**, and several mentioned their **current involvement with the church and the current leadership and their actions**.

Fewer than 5 responses did not directly answer the question.

When was the last time you increased your giving to UUCB?

189 responses



What inspired an increase (or decrease) in giving?

168 responses

Open-ended

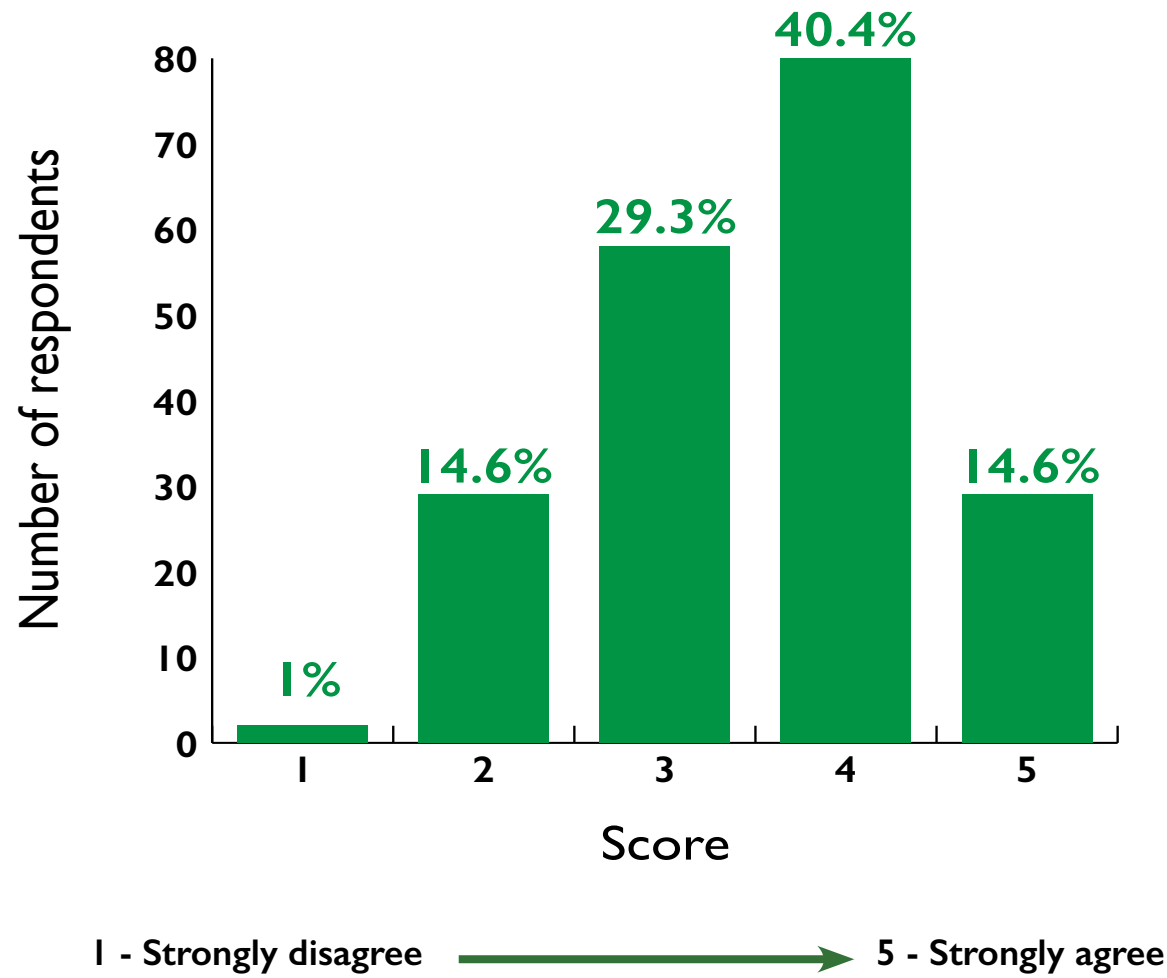
The largest grouping of answers, more than 50, mentioned the **needs of the church** or meeting the church's budget. The second-largest number of responses, just over 40, related to the rise or fall of **personal incomes**. Other categories with ten to fifteen responses include the **actions of church leadership**, both pro and con, **personal involvement** in the church, and **church outreach/begging**.

Other notable answers with more than five responses dealt with the **importance of the church**, **commitment to a yearly increase**, and **inflation**.

Several responses indicated that this question was "not applicable."

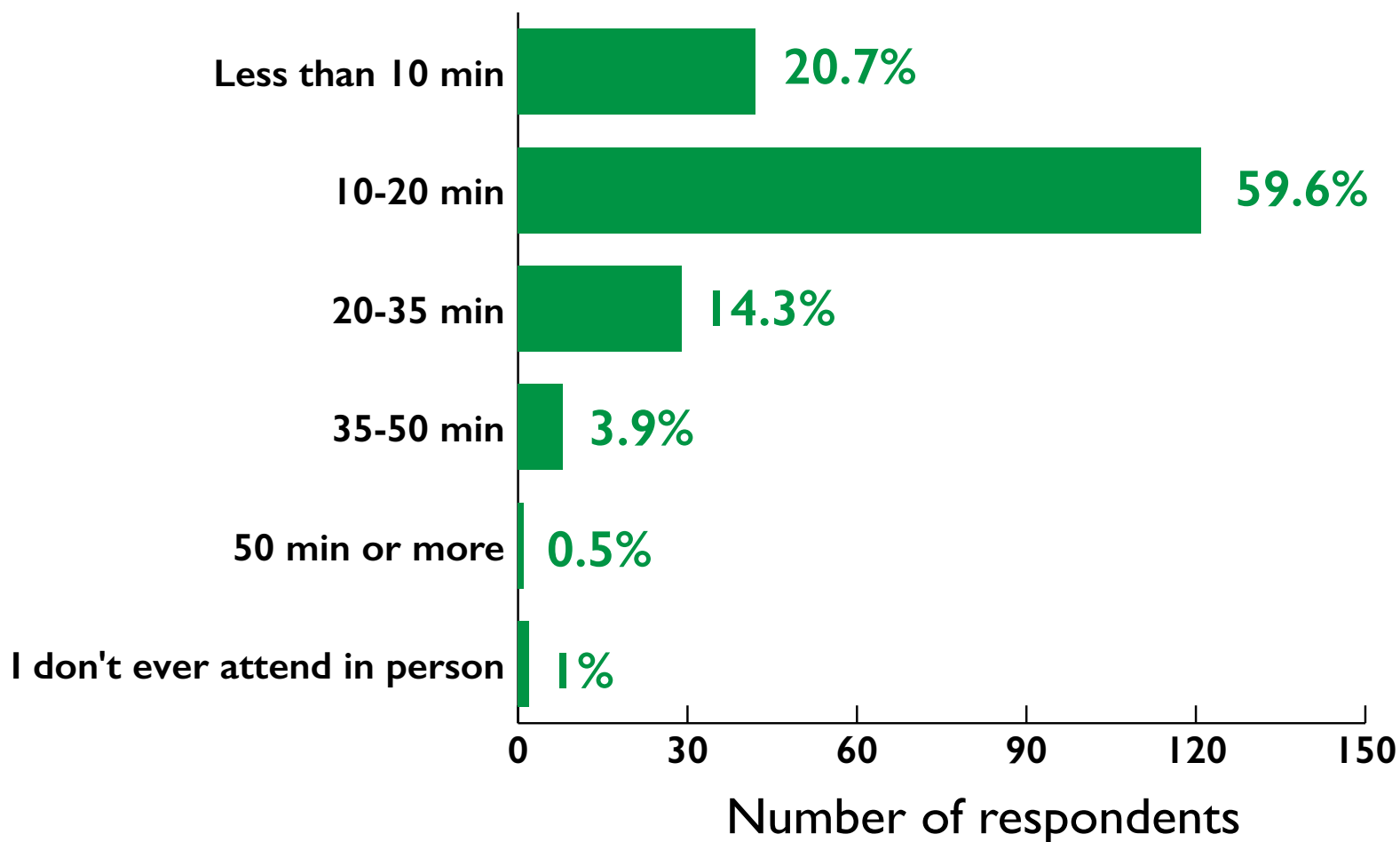
I am confident in this congregation's financial sustainability.

198 responses



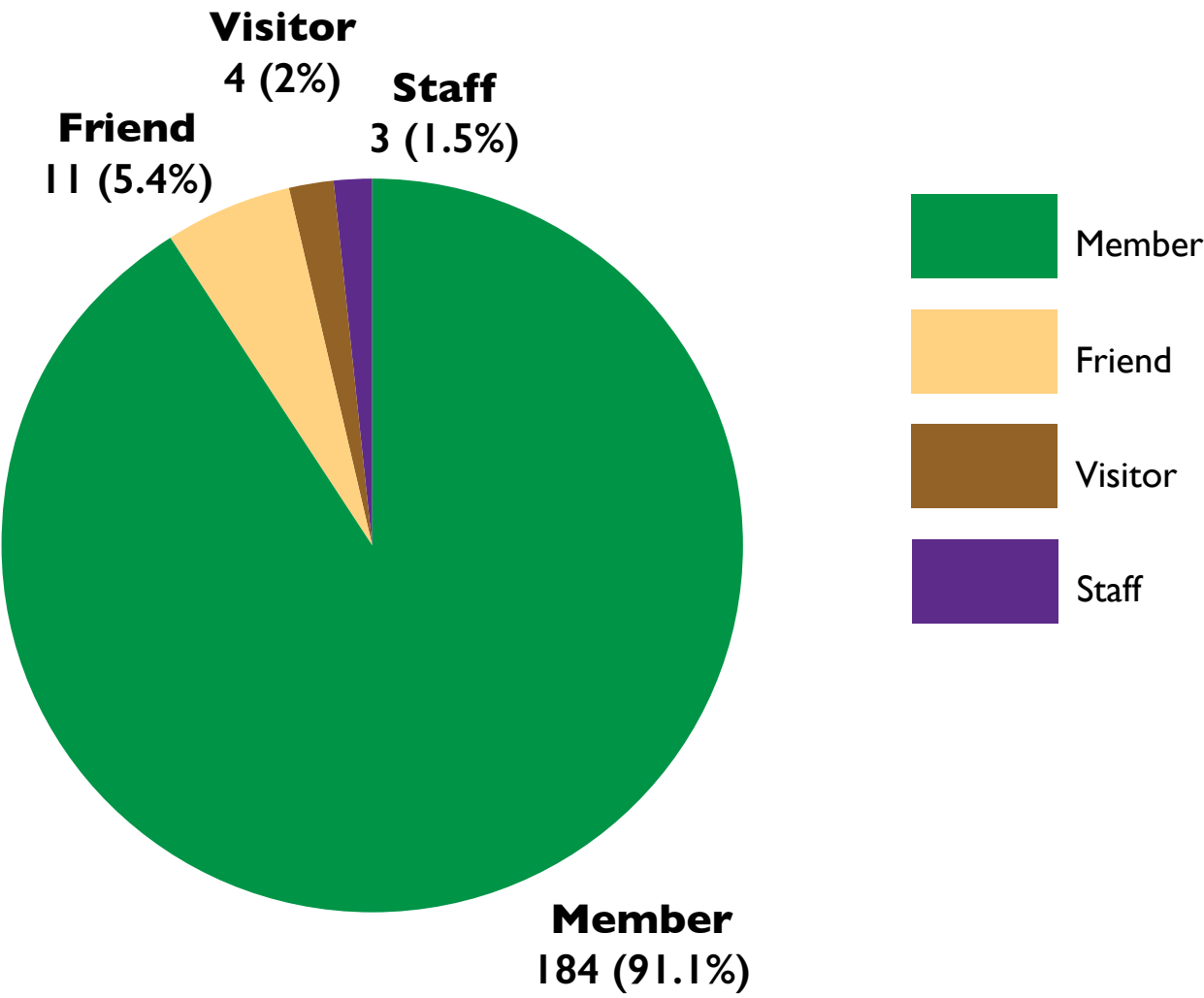
On average, how long does it take you to travel to UUCB from your home?

203 responses



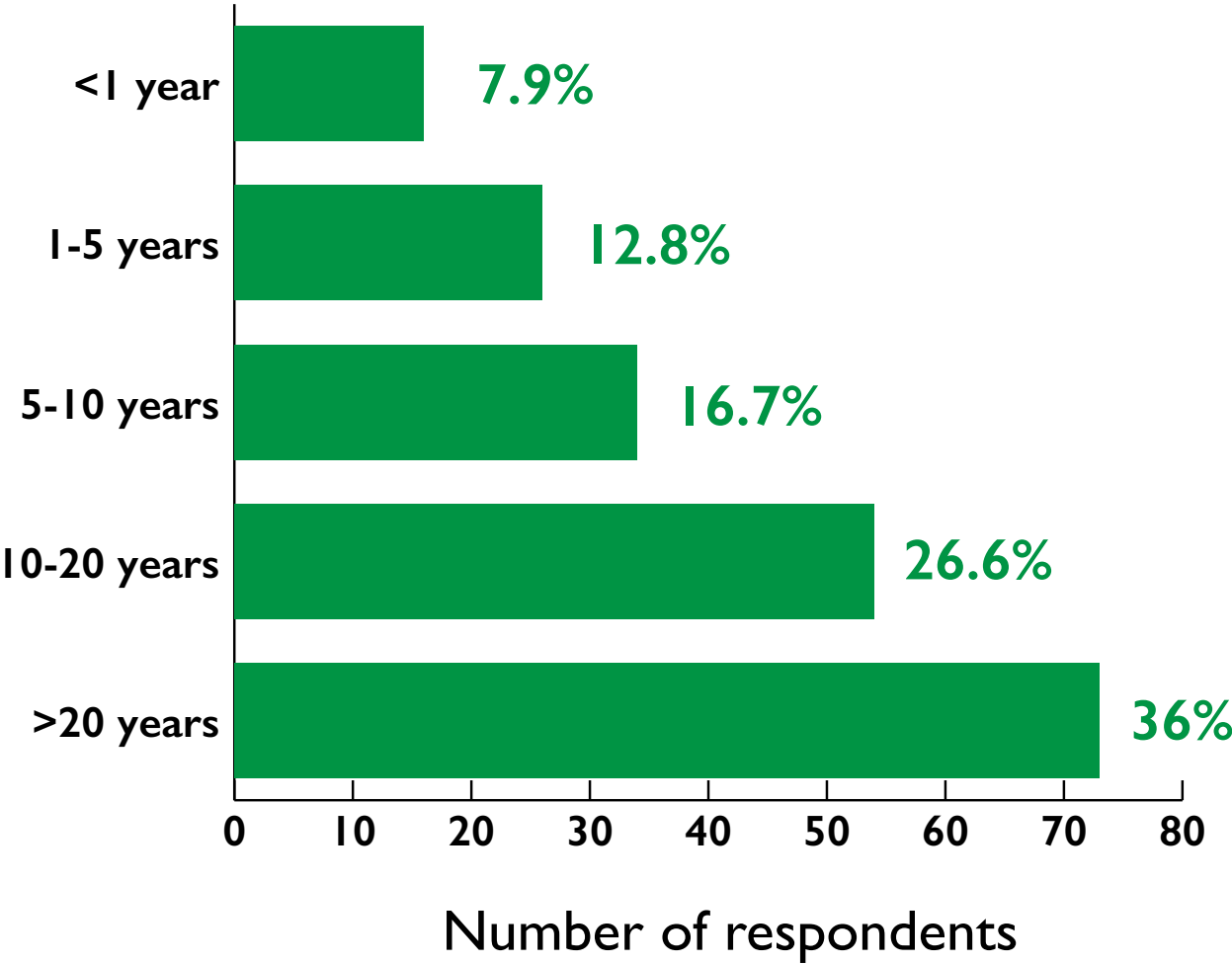
What is your relationship to UUCB?

202 responses



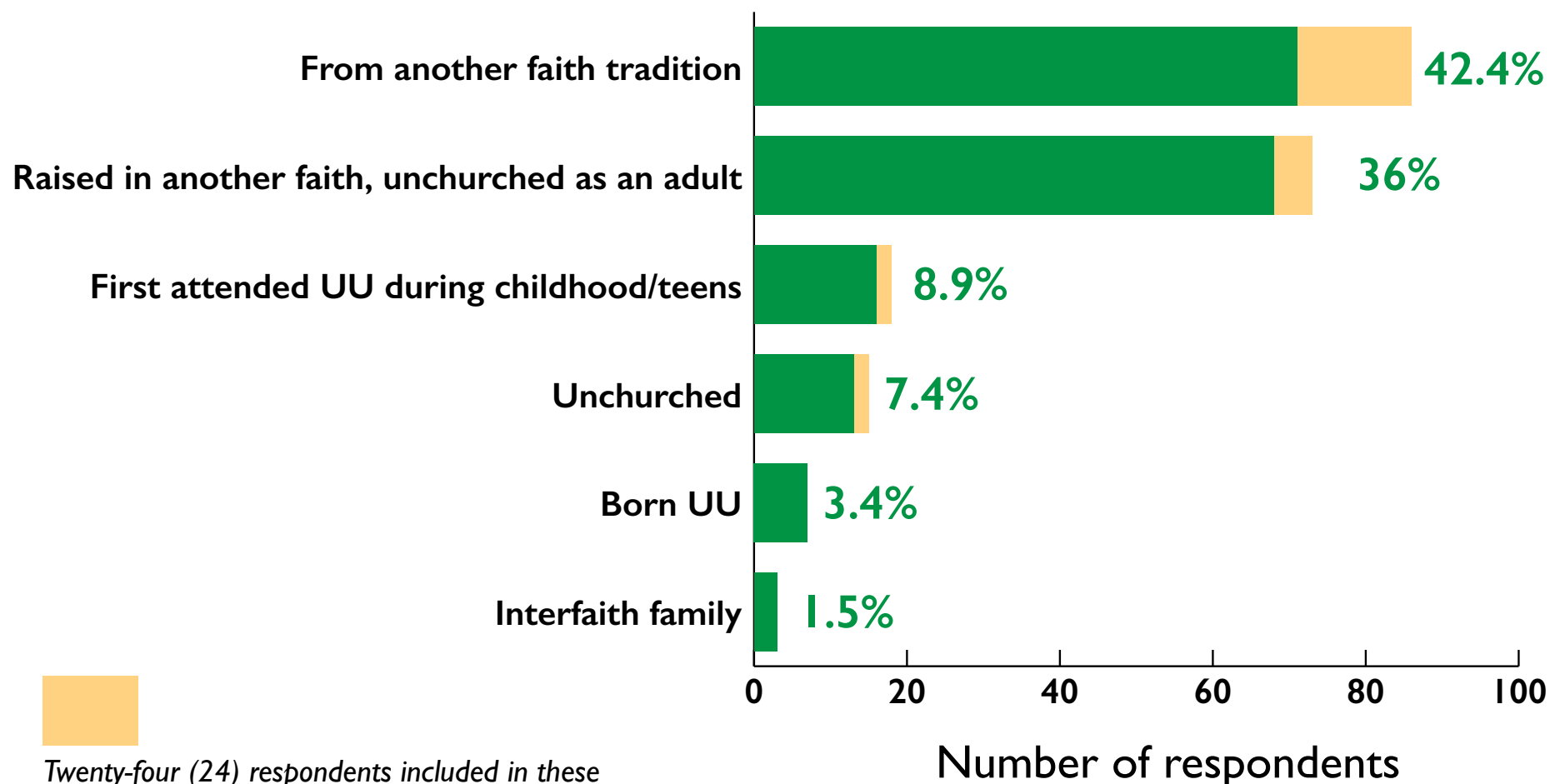
How long have you attended UUCB?

203 responses



What is your faith background?

203 responses

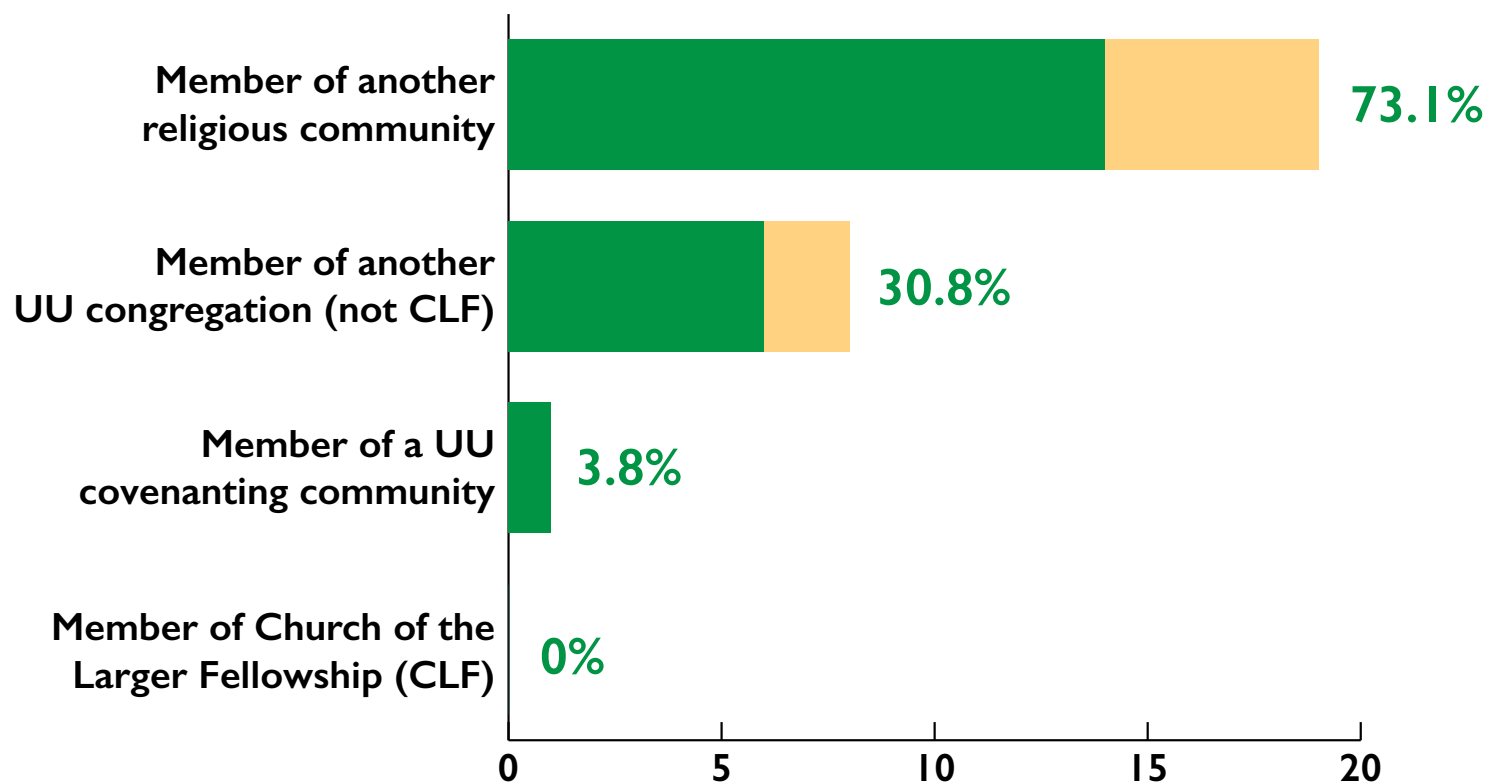


Twenty-four (24) respondents included in these results also offered more detail, mentioning diverse and complex faith histories including Protestant and Catholic churches, Atheism, Judaism, Humanism, Sufism, Neo-Paganism, Buddhism, and Unity. We have manually allocated them in the given categories for ease of presentation.

Besides this congregation, are you a member of another congregation?

26 responses

Check all that apply

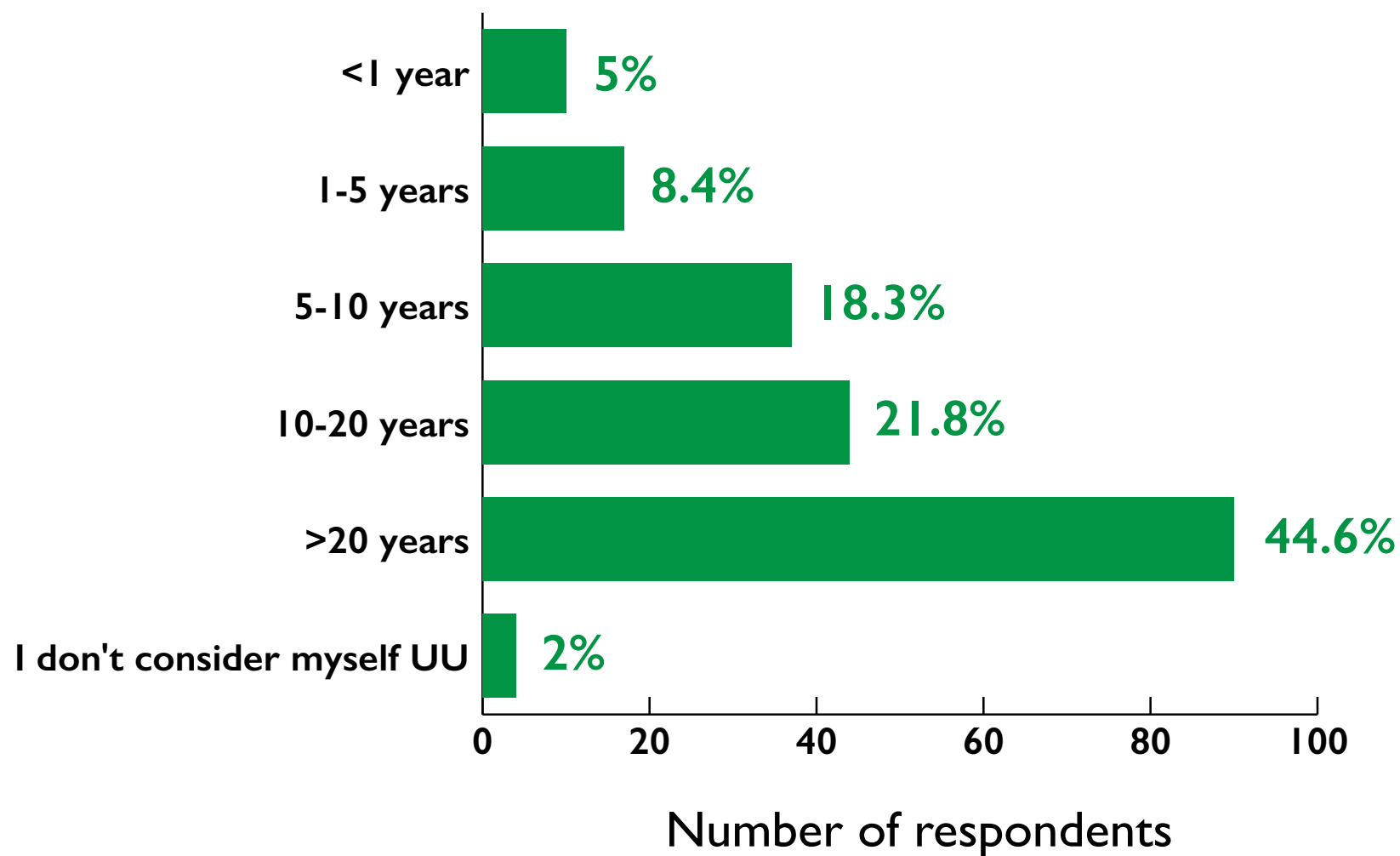


Seven (7) respondents included in these results chose the “Other” free text option, mentioning diverse associations including to the NAUA, Buddhist and Zen groups, Christian churches, and the Midwest UU Summer Assembly. We have manually allocated them in the given categories for ease of presentation. We excluded 3 additional responses that amounted to no other memberships. Fourteen other people wrote “no” and those have not been counted as responses to this question.

Number of respondents

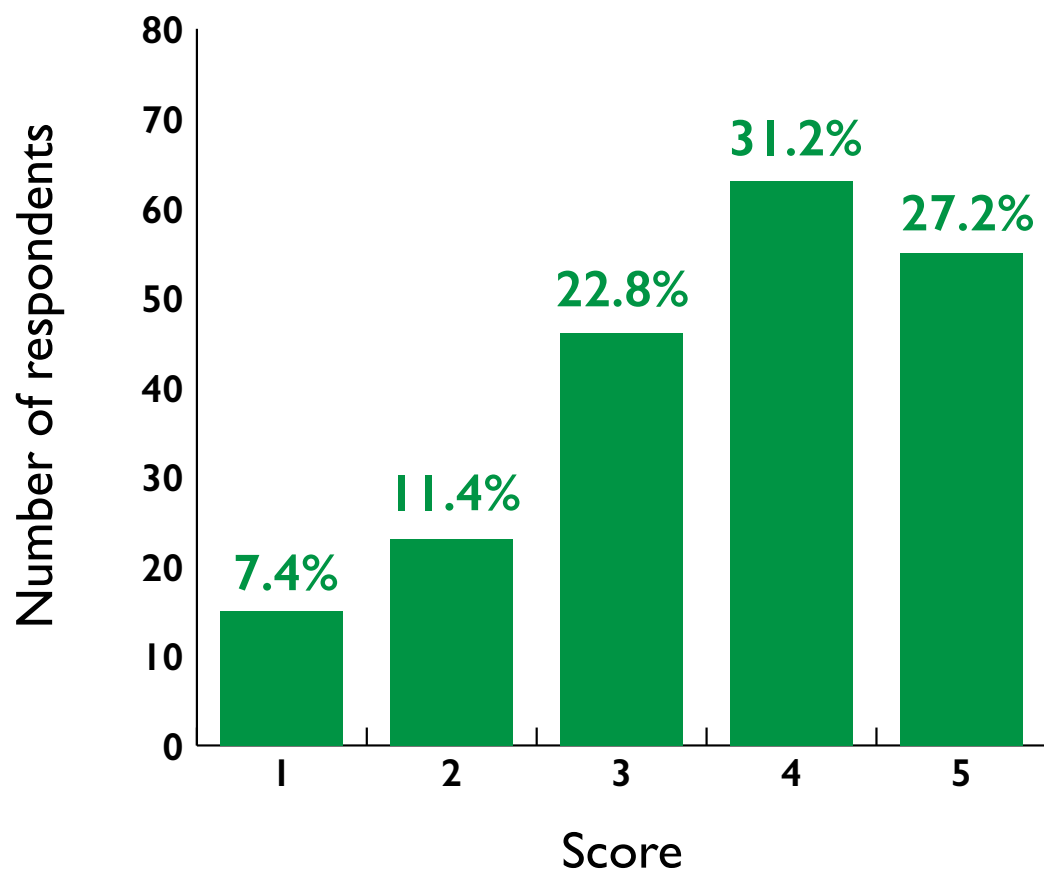
How many years have you been a Unitarian Universalist?

202 responses



How would you rate your spiritual life?

202 responses



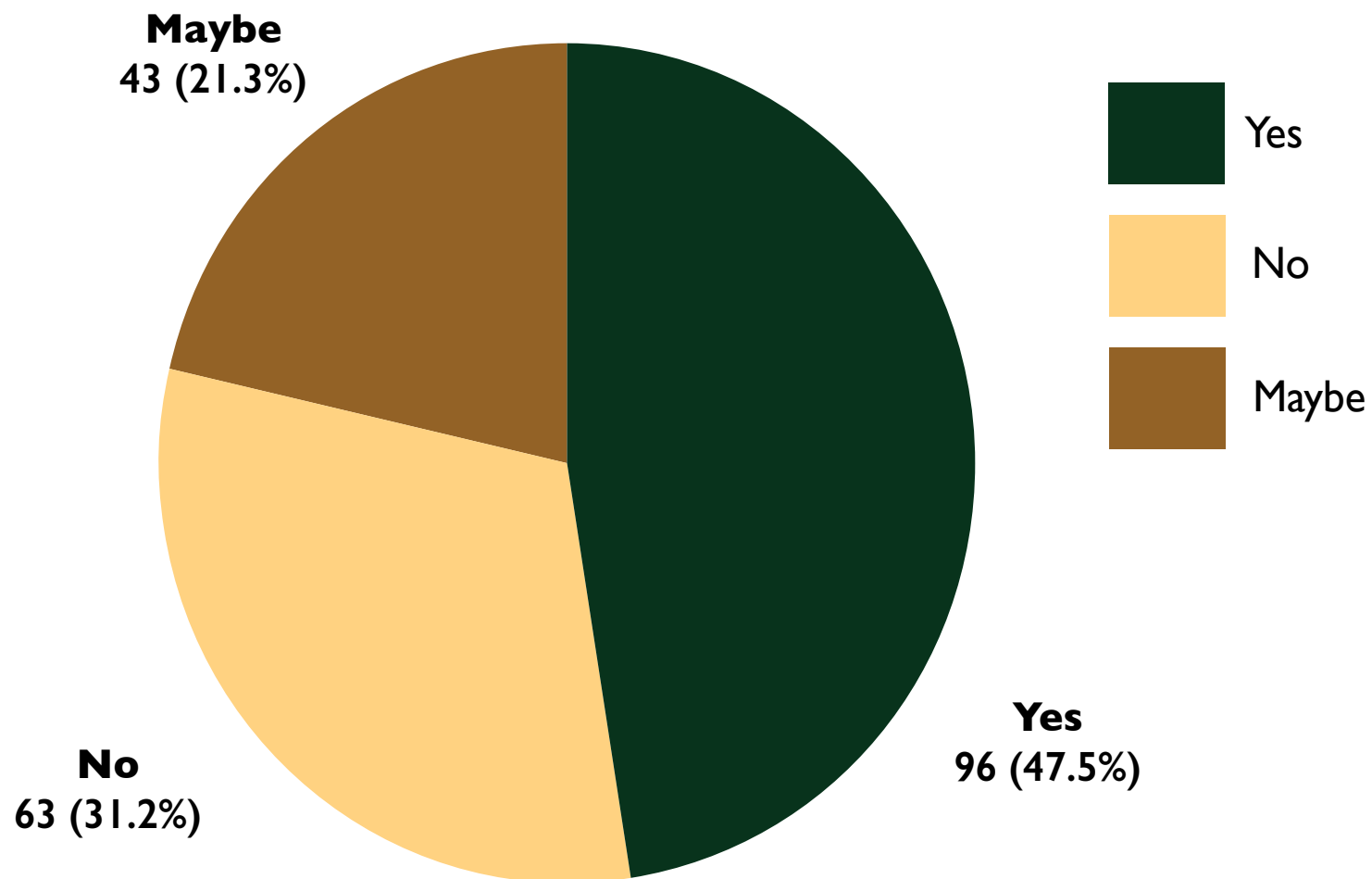
1 - Spirituality is not important to me at all



5 - Spirituality is integrated into all I do

Do you have a regular spiritual practice?

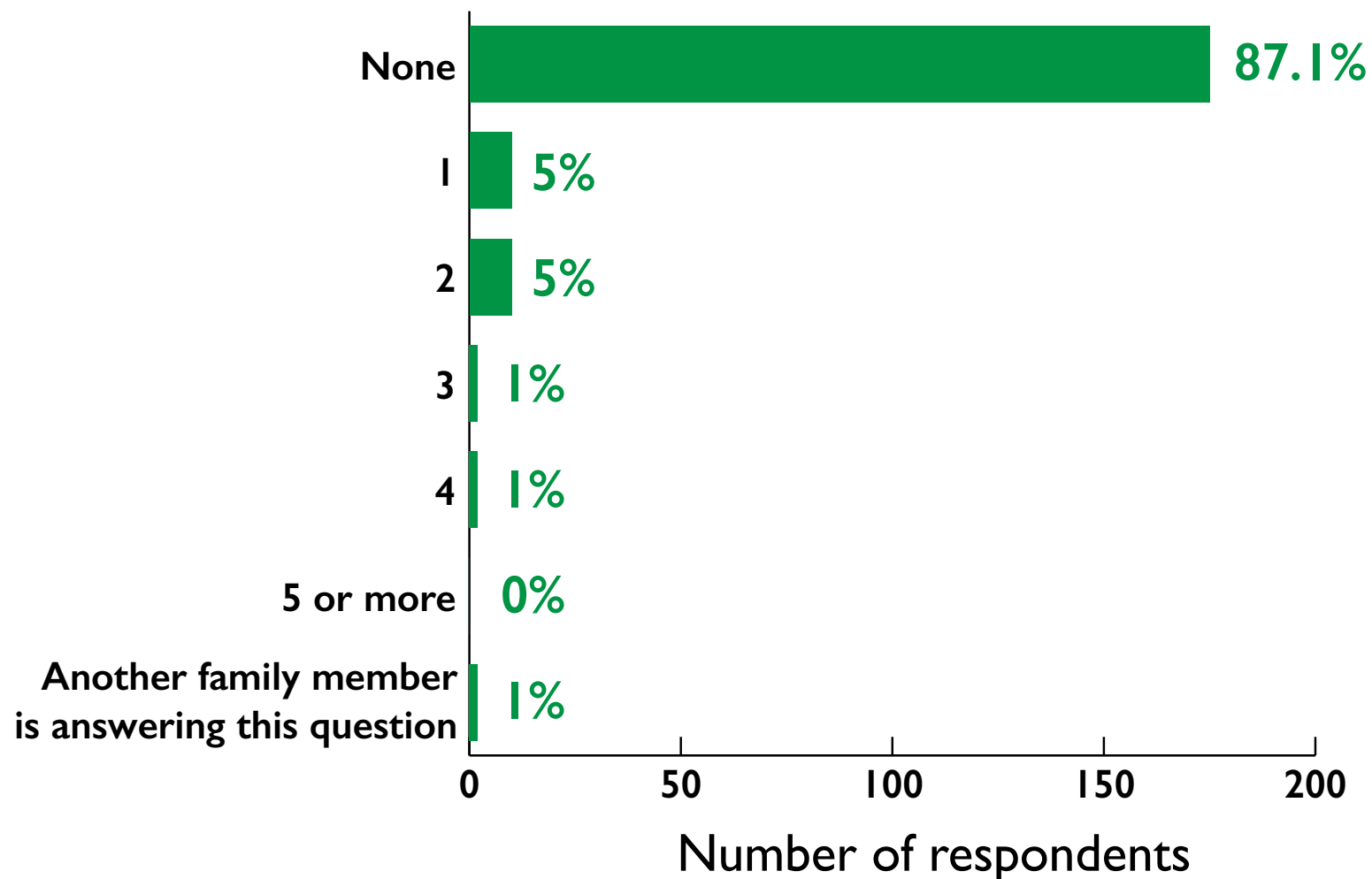
202 responses



How many children under the age of 18 are there in your family?

(If other adult family members are filling out a form, too, please designate one family member to count the children.)

201 responses

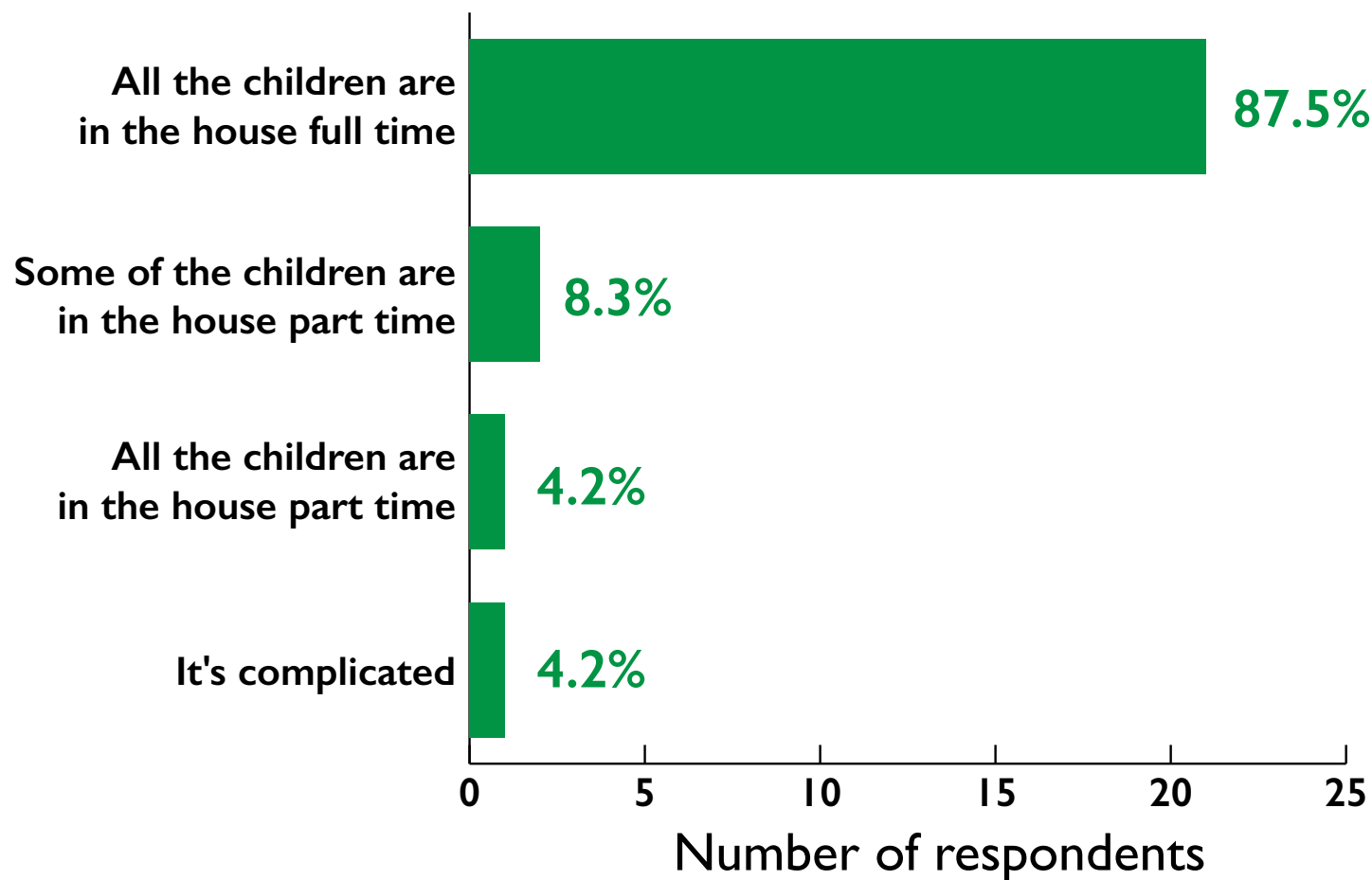


Regarding time spent living in the house...

(Only shown to people who answered 1-5+ children in the “how many children” question.)

24 responses

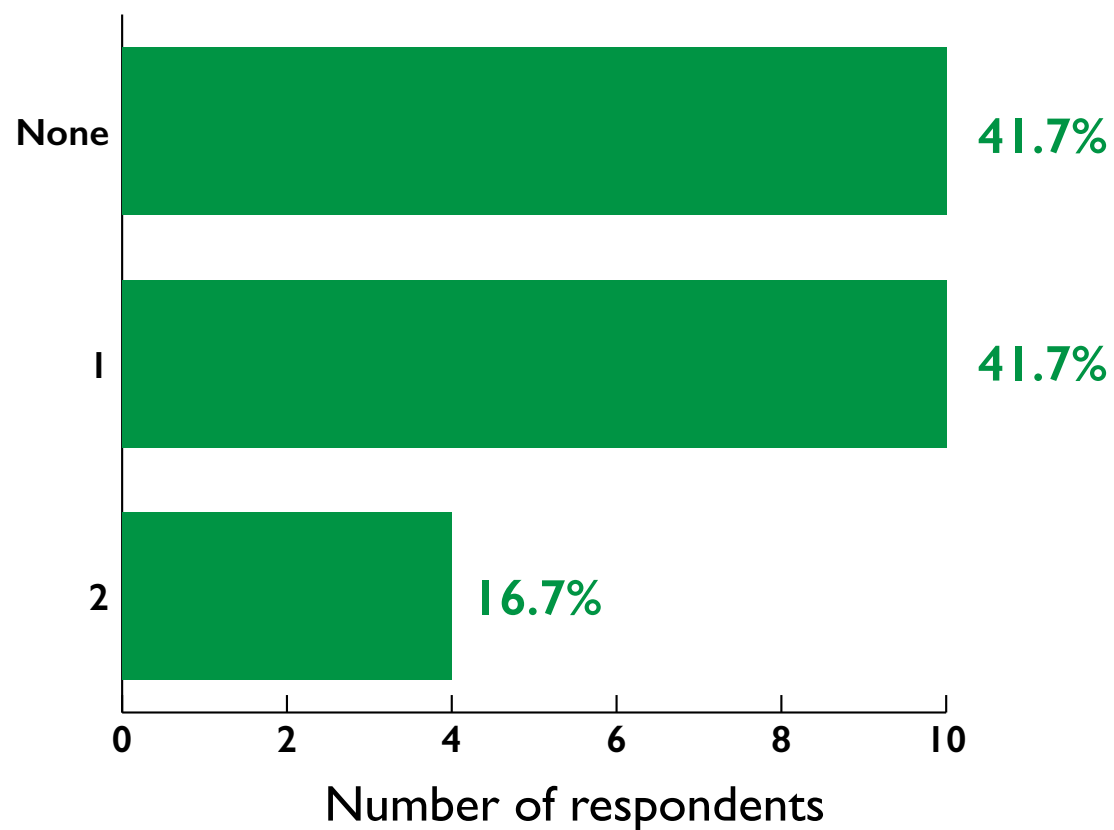
Check all that apply



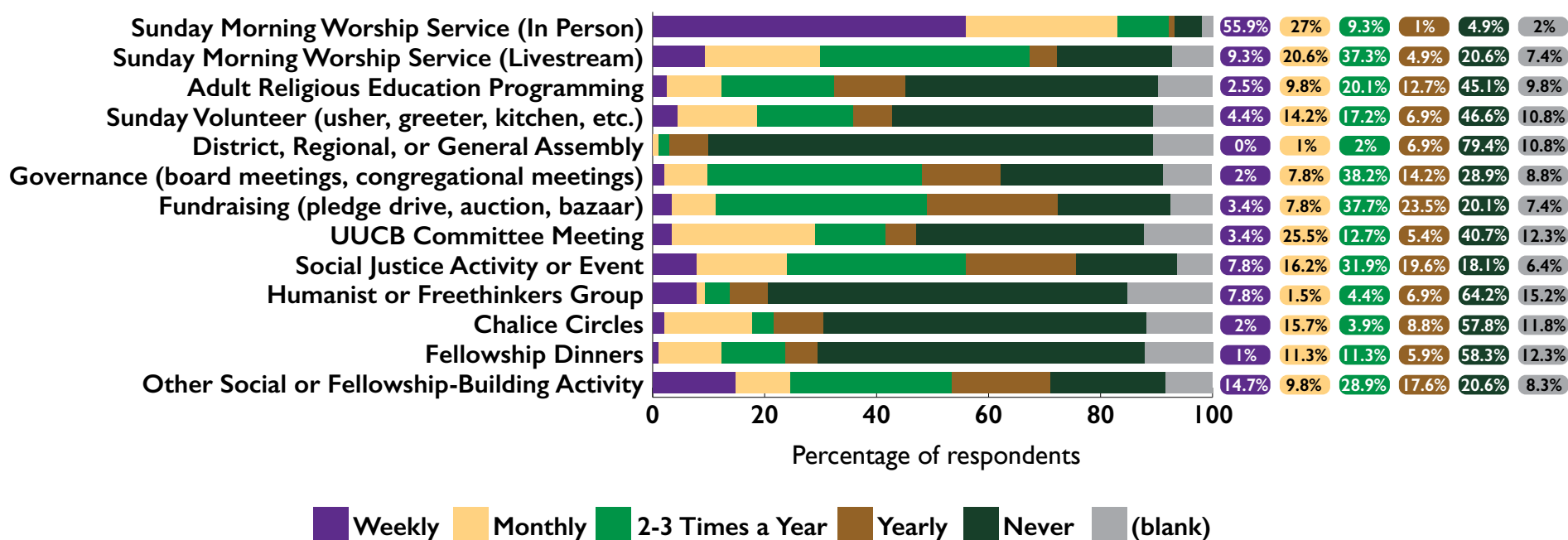
How many of your children under the age of 18 are currently participating in the Religious Education program at UUCB?

(Only shown to people who answered 1-5+ children in the “how many children” question.)

24 responses

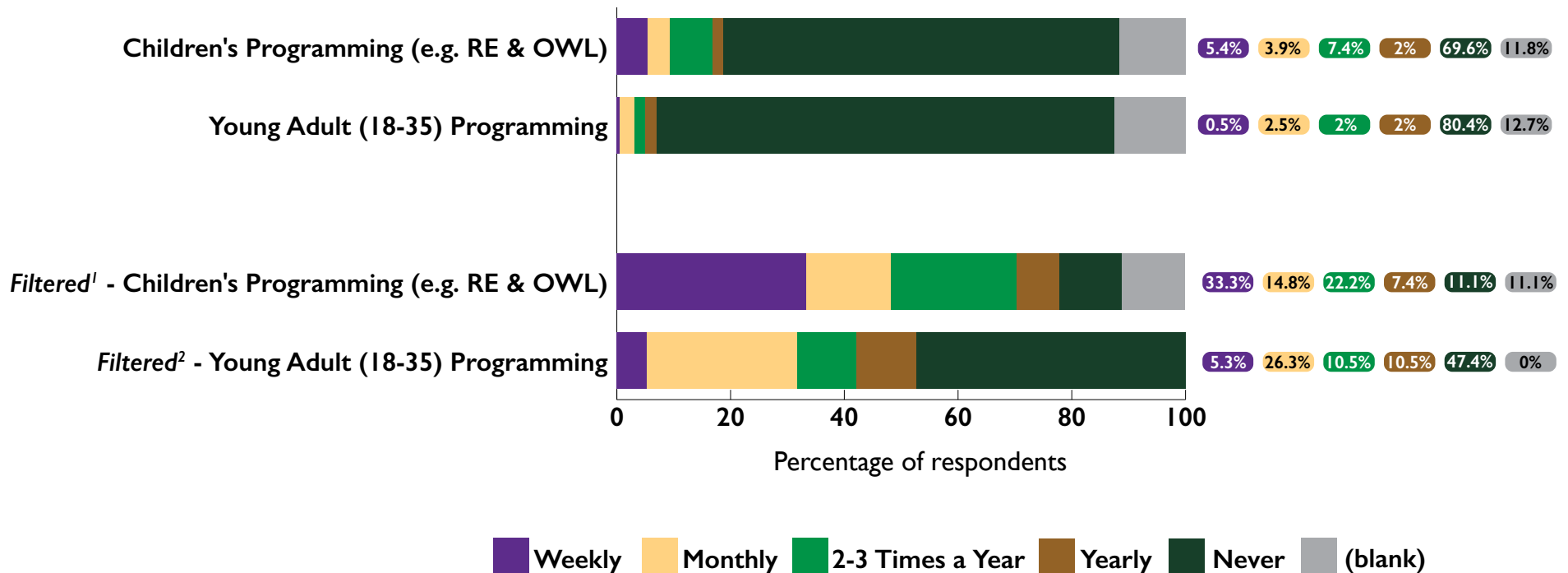


On average, how often did you participate in the following activities during the last year?



NOTE: The Search Committee accidentally omitted the Choir from the list of activities in this question, which also affects the related open-ended questions. Our choir has 60-70 active members, with 20-40 singing on any given Sunday. Several respondents volunteered the information that choir participation is central or important to their church life, and this is clearly true for many.

On average, how often did you participate in the following activities during the last year? (continued)



1 - The data was filtered to select only respondents who have children (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5+) to show the target demographic only. This group represents 13.2% of all respondents (27). We acknowledge that facilitators who do not have children (17) are excluded from this view.

2 - The data was filtered to select only respondents who are in age brackets 18-29 and 30-39 for an age-based breakdown of attendance. This group represents 9.3% of respondents (19). We acknowledge that older facilitators (4) are excluded from this view.

In which program, ministry, or activity do you feel most Unitarian Universalist?

(Instructions to focus on one or two from the list above for their responses)

192 responses

Open-ended

Almost 80 responses mentioned **worship or Sunday Service**, in-person or via live stream. Some specifically mentioned sermons, being a Worship Associate, the Coming of Age program, or gathering as a community.

Nearly 30 responses mentioned **Chalice Circles** and **listening**.

Over two dozen responses mentioned **social justice** activities and the social justice task forces. Specific mentions included the Hunger, Homelessness, Habitat, RISE, Reproductive Justice, Just Peace, Green Sanctuary, and Hope for Prisoners Task Forces.

Over 20 responses mentioned **music**, often specifically the choir or singing.

Nearly 20 responses mentioned **religious education**, both adult and child and both teaching or learning. The Our Whole Lives program was specifically mentioned numerous times.

Over 10 responses mentioned the **Humanist Forum or Freethinkers**, and the discussions in those forums.

Over 10 responses mentioned fellowship, including **Coffee/Community Hour** and meaningful conversations during other events.

Other aspects mentioned included: writing, the Bazaar, committee work, working on fundraisers, our acceptance of all, congregational meetings, theology, the library, chairing the book table, being a welcomer or greeter, hiking, Wellspring, the Women's Alliance, the Lowdown on the Hoedown, facilitating workshops, the Ramadan dinner, General and Regional Assembly, grounds, influencing the community, giving, helping others, Back from the Brink, political demonstrations and the arts.

Several people mentioned they were still too new to UUCB to answer the question.

Which program, ministry, or activity gives you concrete tools to live a dynamic UU life?

179 responses

Open-ended

Over 80 responses mentioned **worship or Sunday Service**, both in-person or via live stream. Many specifically mentioned sermons. Other aspects of service mentioned were the ideas provided, readings, Coming of Age and book recommendations.

Over two dozen responses mentioned **social justice activities** and the social justice task forces. Some mentioned participation while others mentioned knowing they were happening. Specific mentions included the Social Justice moments on Sundays, the Hunger, Homelessness, and Racial Justice Task Forces, the Trip to the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, AL.

Nearly 20 people mentioned **religious education**, both adult and child and both teaching and learning. The Our Whole Lives program was specifically mentioned numerous times. One response mentioned the UU Parents group.

Over 10 responses mentioned each of **Chalice Circles**, the **choir** and the **Humanist Forum or Freethinkers**.

Nearly 10 responses mentioned **fellowship**, including Fellowship Dinners, Coffee/Community Hour and connections to the staff.

Other activities mentioned included: book recommendations, the clothing swap, the summer splash, potlucks, the Pastoral Care Committee, the Leadership Cultivation Committee, committee work

and governance generally, the Women's Alliance, volunteering, fundraising, Writing as a Spiritual Practice, PACTeam, Wellspring, national young adult programming and grounds work.

Several responses indicated they did not understand what the phrase "dynamic UU life" meant and several others indicated they didn't believe they were leading a dynamic UU life. One response lamented the lack of a UU program on campus.

Which program, ministry, or activity inspires you to stretch and grow?

(Instructions to focus on one or two from the list above for their responses)

179 responses

Open-ended

Over 60 responses mentioned **Sunday services**. Over 20 responses mentioned each of **social justice activities** and **chalice circles**. With 10 or more responses each were **choir/music**, **social activities** (such as participating in fellowship hour after the service, or informal groups like hikers, book group, etc.), **adult religious education**, and **Humanist/Freethinkers**. Other activities mentioned were children's RE programming, church governance activities, fundraising activities such as the Holiday Bazaar and participating in Sunday services as a greeter.

Which program, ministry, or activity gives you the deepest sense of belonging?

(Instructions to focus on one or two from the list above for their responses)

184 responses

Open-ended

Over 40 responses mentioned each of **Sunday services** and participating in **community hour** after the service. **Choir** was mentioned over 20 times. And receiving 10 or more responses were **Chalice Circles**, **Social Justice** activities, **children's religious education**, and **Humanist/Freethinkers**. Other activities mentioned include fundraising activities such as the Holiday Bazaar, music, Adult religious education, worship associates or welcoming team, governance, special services such as solstice, earth kin; one person answered memorials, and one more answered pastoral care.

In which program, ministry, or activity have you experienced transcendence?

(Instructions to focus on one or two from the list above for their responses)

156 responses

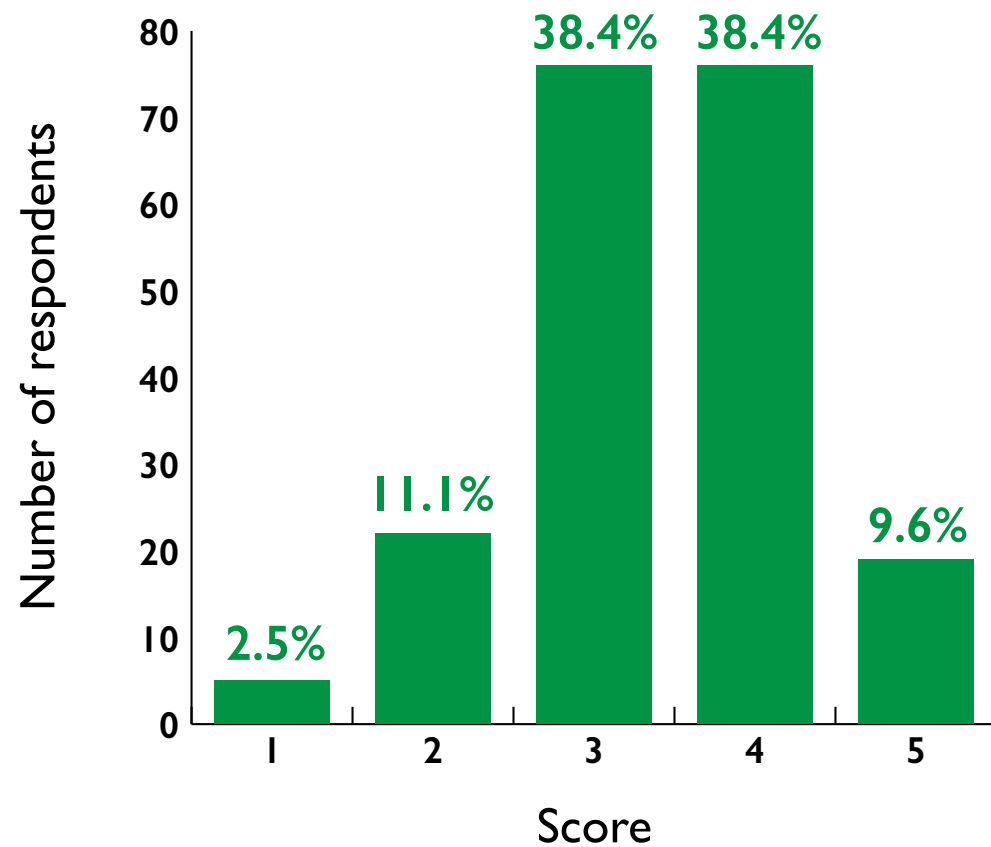
Open-ended

Over 50 responses mentioned **Sunday services**. **Choir** and **music** were each mentioned about 20 times. Other programs mentioned were **Chalice Circles** and **social groups** such as hikers, Adult RE, social justice, seasonal services, memorial services, becoming UU. One person answered each of the following: children's RE, humanists/freethinkers, earth kin, and pastoral care.

It is worth noting that over 20 people answered with a question mark or sarcastic comment.

This congregation is generally open to change.

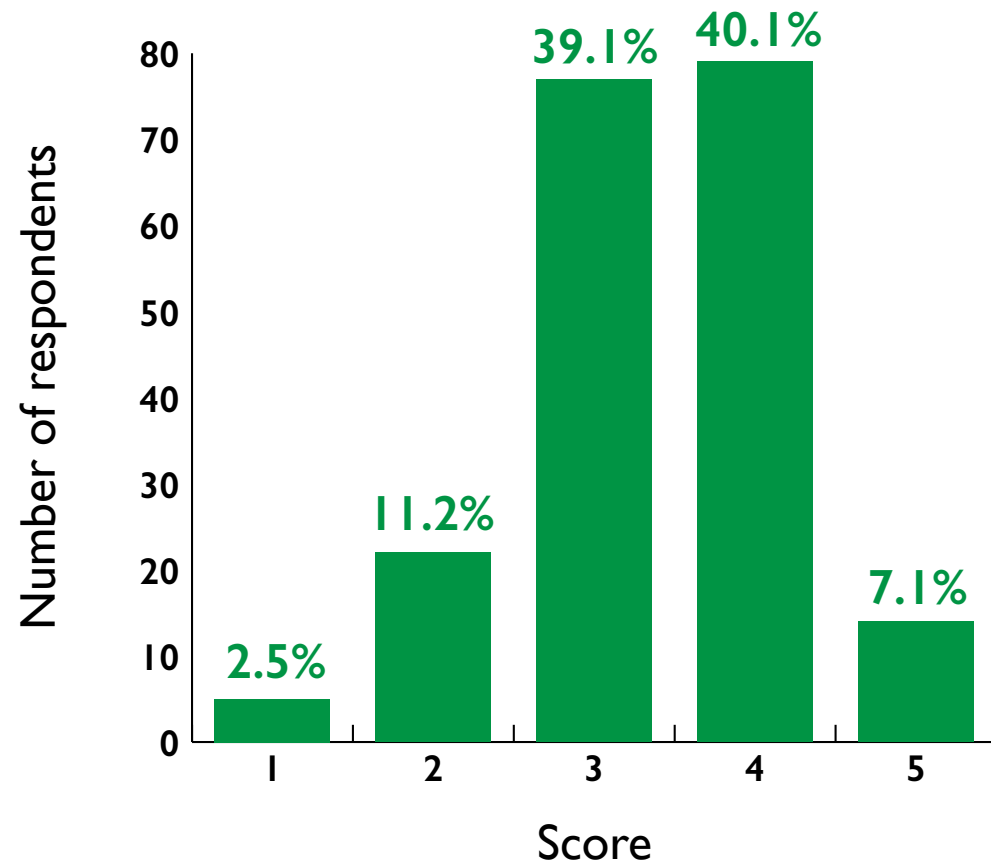
198 responses



1 - Strongly disagree → 5 - Strongly agree

This congregation has a flexible enough structure to implement new ideas easily.

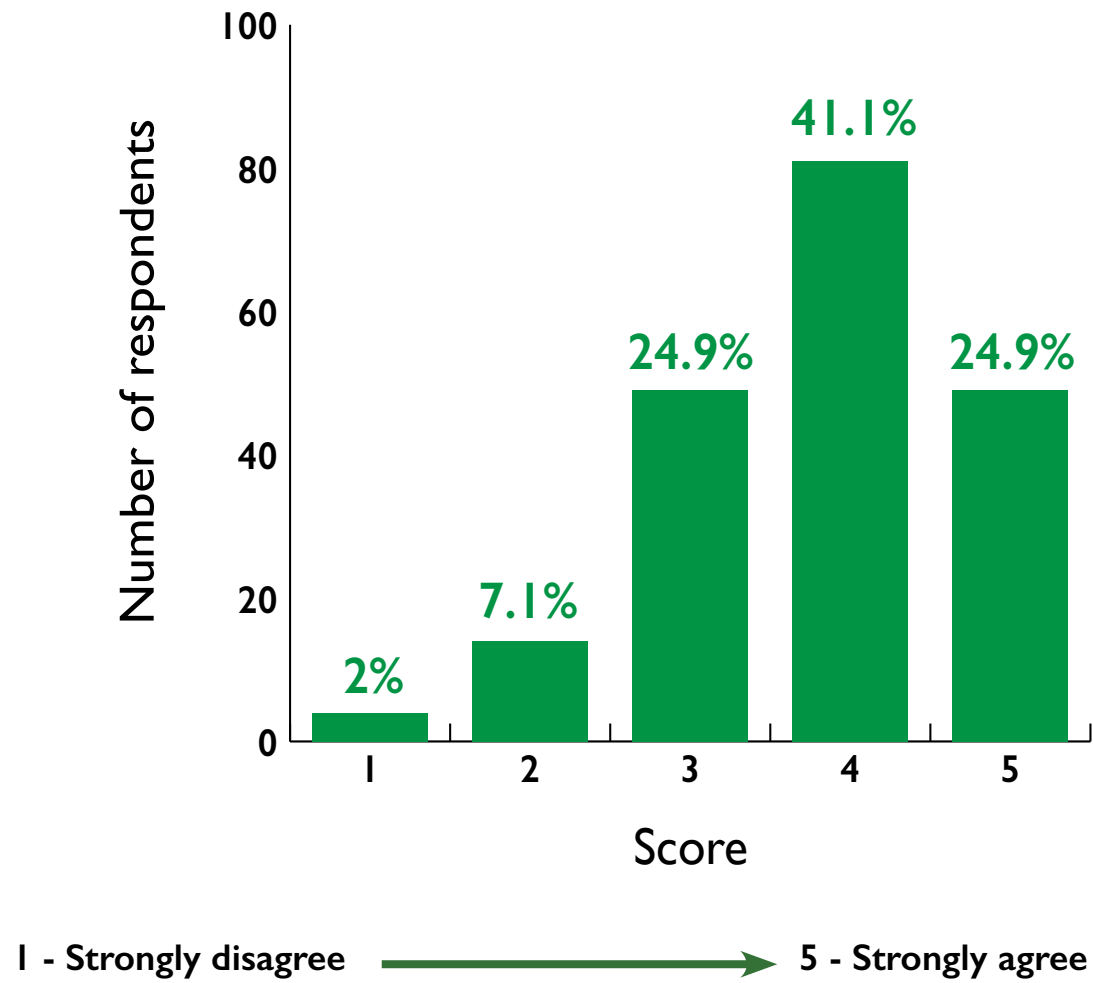
197 responses



1 - Strongly disagree → 5 - Strongly agree

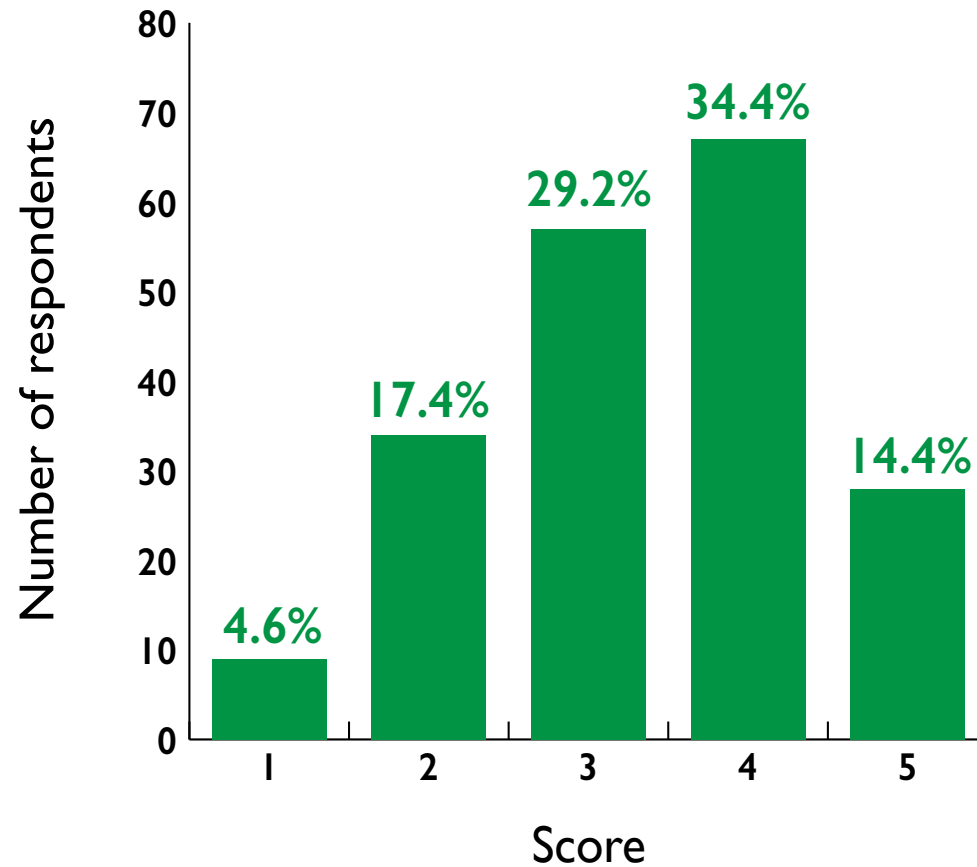
This congregation focuses on mission and the greater good, rather than the strong preference of some individuals.

197 responses



There is a high level of trust in leadership in this congregation.

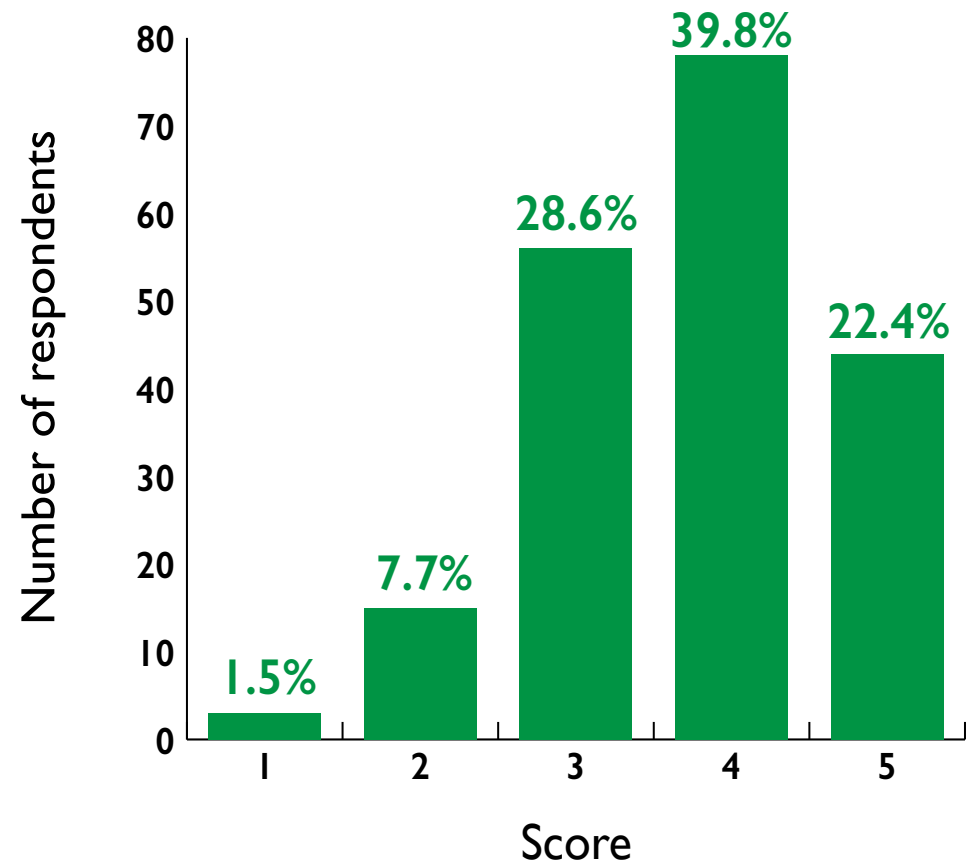
195 responses



1 - Strongly disagree → 5 - Strongly agree

We have a core group of leaders able to lead change in a non-anxious way.

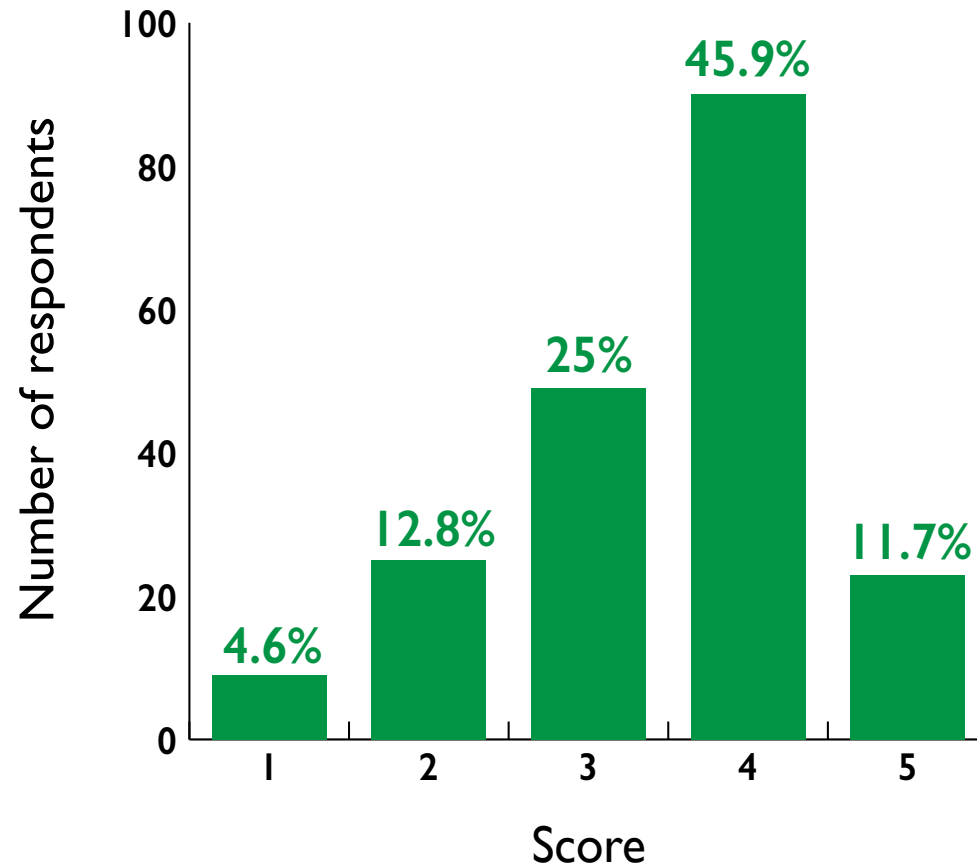
196 responses



1 - Strongly disagree → 5 - Strongly agree

We do a good job of having difficult conversations and staying in relationship.

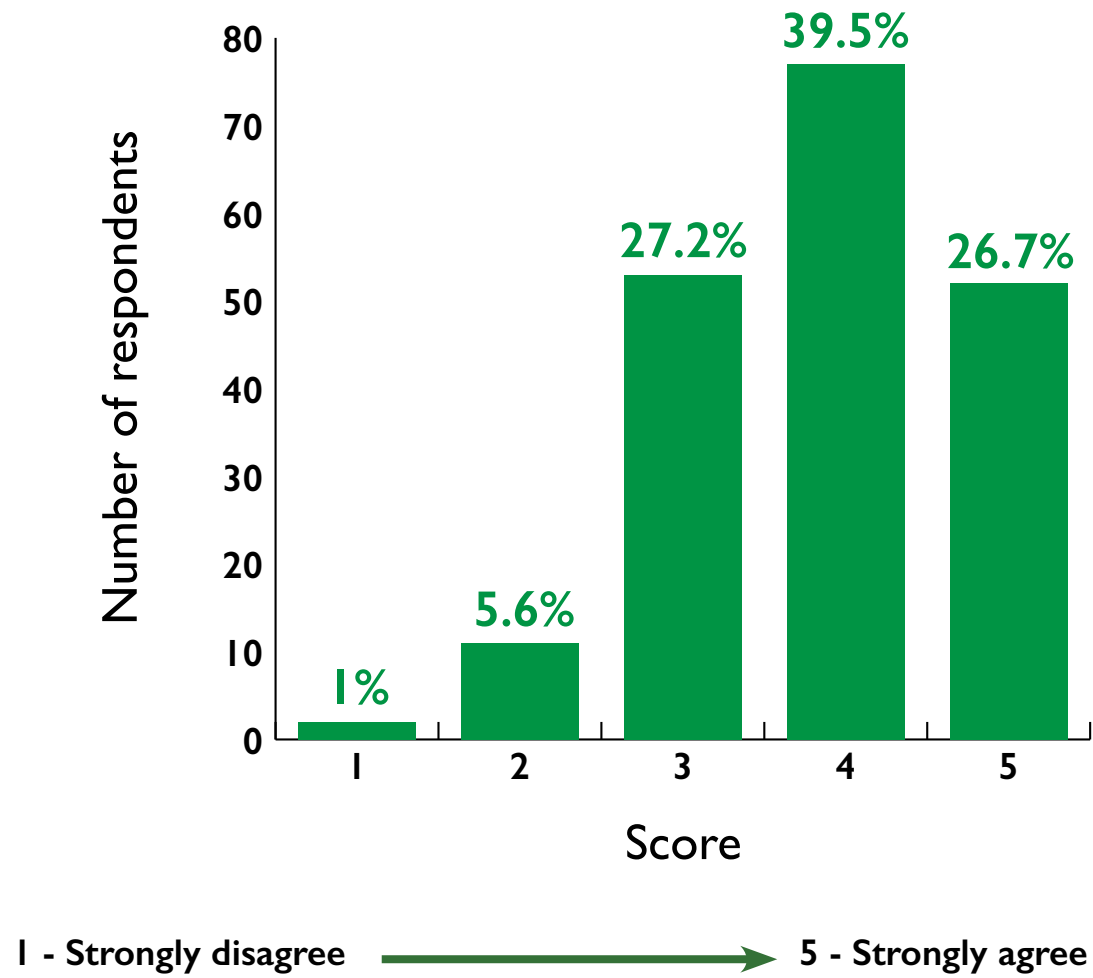
196 responses



1 - Strongly disagree → 5 - Strongly agree

UUCB's mission and ministry continue to adapt to changing conditions in the world.

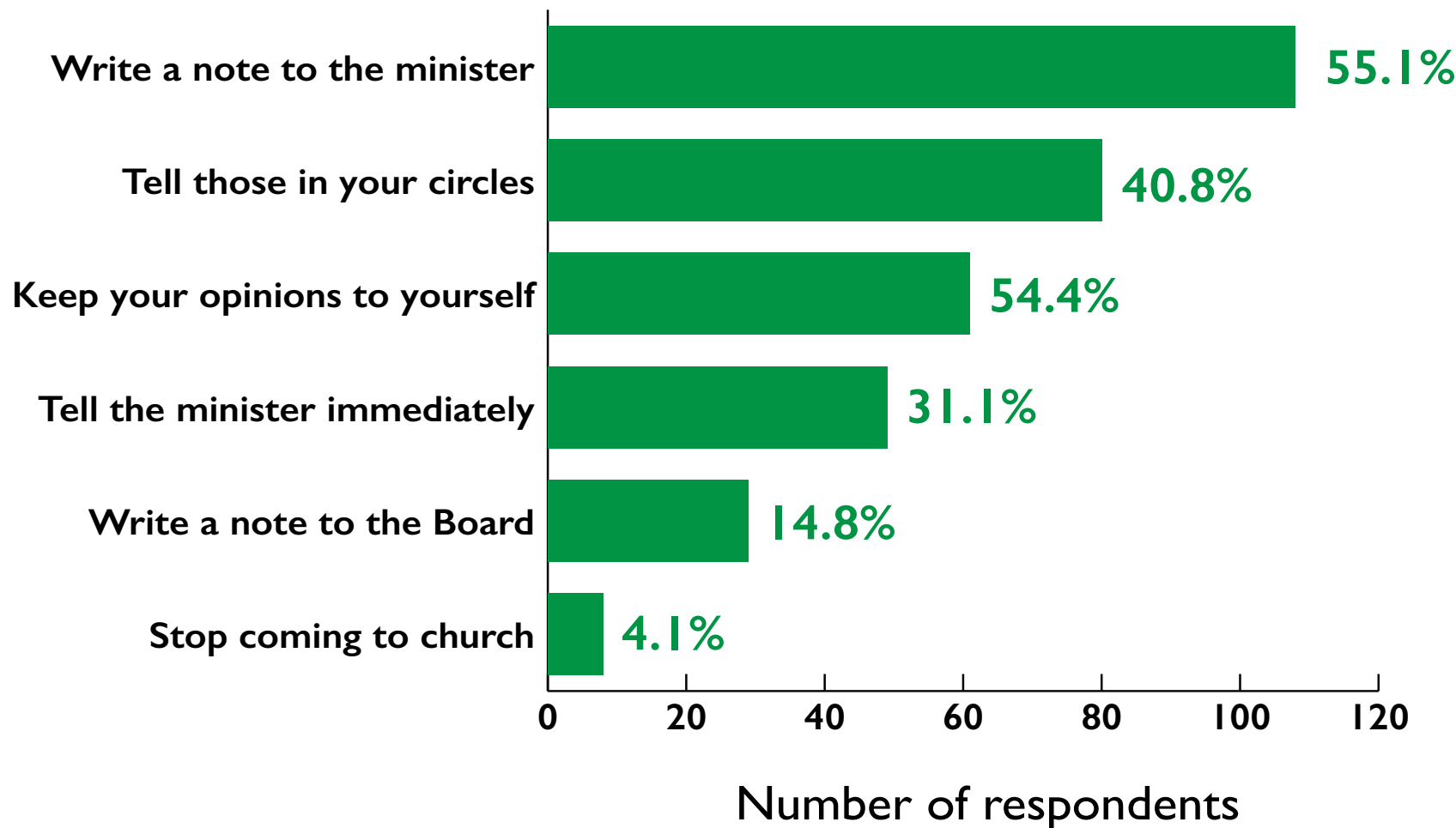
195 responses



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

196 responses

Check all that apply



What is your favorite thing about this congregation?

201 responses

Open-ended

Over 120 responses mentioned **community** being their favorite thing. People enjoy having an accepting and welcoming community of people with similar values who want to make the world a better place. A quarter of these mentions explicitly say the word “friend(s)”.

There were 80 mentions of our **shared values** and outlook on the world being cherished in our congregation. Twenty four (24) of those qualify our views as “liberal”, and 21 call our community open, inclusive or non-judgemental.

There were over 40 mentions of our focus on **helping others**. **Social justice** was mentioned in most of those comments, with some references to getting involved through our task forces.

There were 39 mentions of the importance of **music**, with 12 of those mentioning the **choir** specifically.

There were 19 mentions of **Sunday Service**, including lay involvement and community hour.

There were 10 mentions of **spirituality** both in the context of personal exploration and the openness of the congregation of exploring it in different ways.

Other topics mentioned were: learning (personal growth, RE programs), families (having a community of families and childcare during services), Humanist group, Chalice Circles, the physical space of the church, ritual, and special services.



What do you perceive the top 3 functions of this congregation to be?

200 responses

Open-ended

There were 190 mentions of **community service** and **social justice**. There is a strong sense that the role of the congregation is to work to make the world a better place (with strong emphasis on social justice). There were over 160 mentions of the congregation being a source of **community**, both for collective action and for discussion with individuals with similar values.

There were over 80 mentions of the congregation as a place for learning, personal development and growth. Spiritual growth was brought up in 25 of those. There were 7 mentions of challenging our beliefs and/or intellect. Religious education was only mentioned 5 times. There were over 70 mentions of spirituality, e.g. spiritual connection, a place to find one's spiritual home regardless of the how, spiritual growth.

There were over 60 mentions of our values being a driving force of the congregation. In 18 of those, they were brought up in the context of our community acting as an inclusive and welcoming place.

There were nearly 20 mentions of providing a **place for worship** and, in particular, good Sunday services. Two mentions of member's contributions to service.

There were over 10 mentions of the congregation being a **source of inspiration** in our lives, both intellectually and spiritually.

There were over 10 mentions of **involvement**, the active role of congregants with their contributions of time and/or money.

There were over 10 mentions of the church's vision statement ("**Seeking the spirit, building community, changing the world**") both literally and slightly paraphrased.



What do you perceive the top 3 functions of the minister to be?

200 responses

Open-ended

There were over 120 mentions of **serving the congregation** or the **wider community**. Supporting members and friends came up as pastoral care, counseling, providing comfort and listening. **Social justice** was mentioned 23 times in the context of supporting our task forces, promoting social justice work from the pulpit and being active in different causes.

Over 120 remarks mentioned **leadership**. The minister needs to act as a leader for the congregation and staff both in spiritual and administrative matters. They need to be a team player, collaborating with and managing the different groups, while supporting the church's mission.

There were over 80 mentions of conducting **engaging and thought-provoking Sunday services**, especially through engaging sermons. People want Sunday Service to be an opportunity to learn and be challenged intellectually and foster each person's spirituality. Lay participation and collaborative services were brought up a few times. There was one mention of intentionally including children in the service.

Over 70 comments mentioned the **minister as a source of knowledge** and supporter of spiritual and intellectual learning and growth. This would happen in the form of sermons and workshops.

There were over 50 mentions of the minister being a **source of inspiration** to the congregation through sermons and leadership.

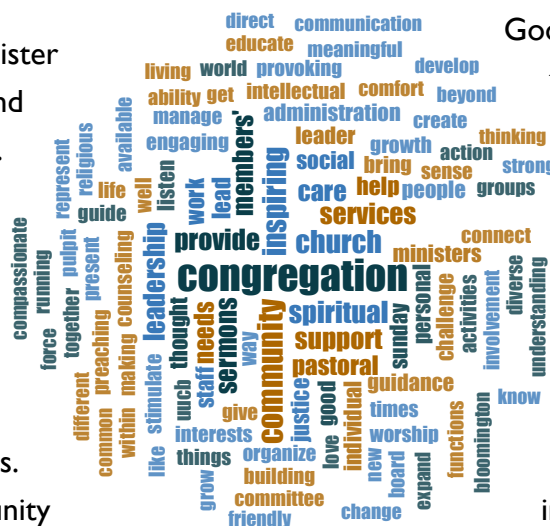
There were over 30 mentions of the minister's role as a cornerstone of **community building** within the congregation, making sure everyone feels included and listened to.

Good **communication skills** were mentioned over 30 times, for example through active listening and honest and engaging speaking.

There were over 30 mentions of different **personality** traits. Examples include a sense of humor, patience, lightheartedness, honesty/authenticity, approachability, vulnerability, compassion, dependability, and generosity.

There were over 30 mentions of the minister interacting with the **outside community** and being the face of the church in relations with other religious organizations or community organizations.

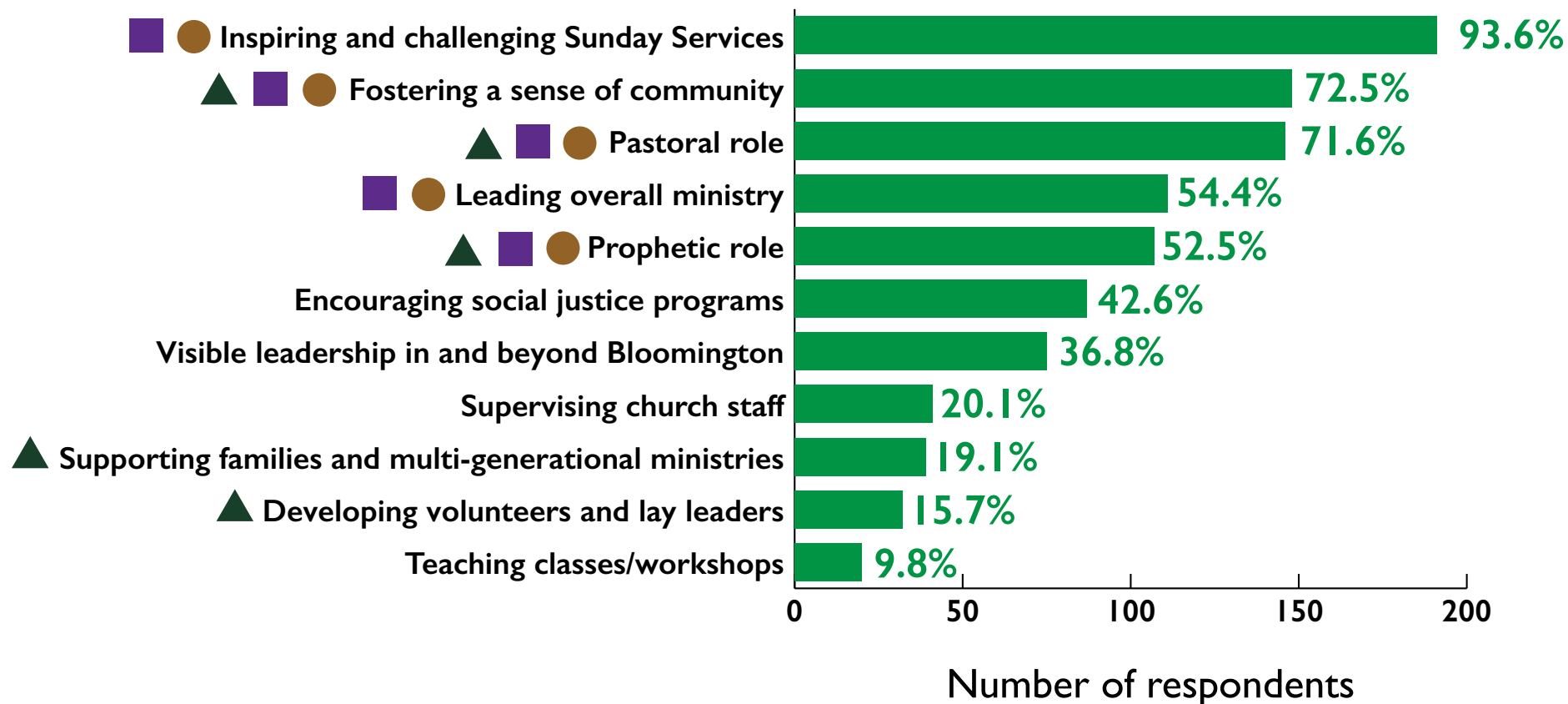
There were 30 mentions of the role of the minister as "manager" or "head administrator" of the church, working and collaborating with the existing team (e.g. Board, staff, lay-leaders). Three responses brought up the issue of money and funding the church.



Top 5 roles of the future minister that are most important to you.

204 responses

Select up to 5

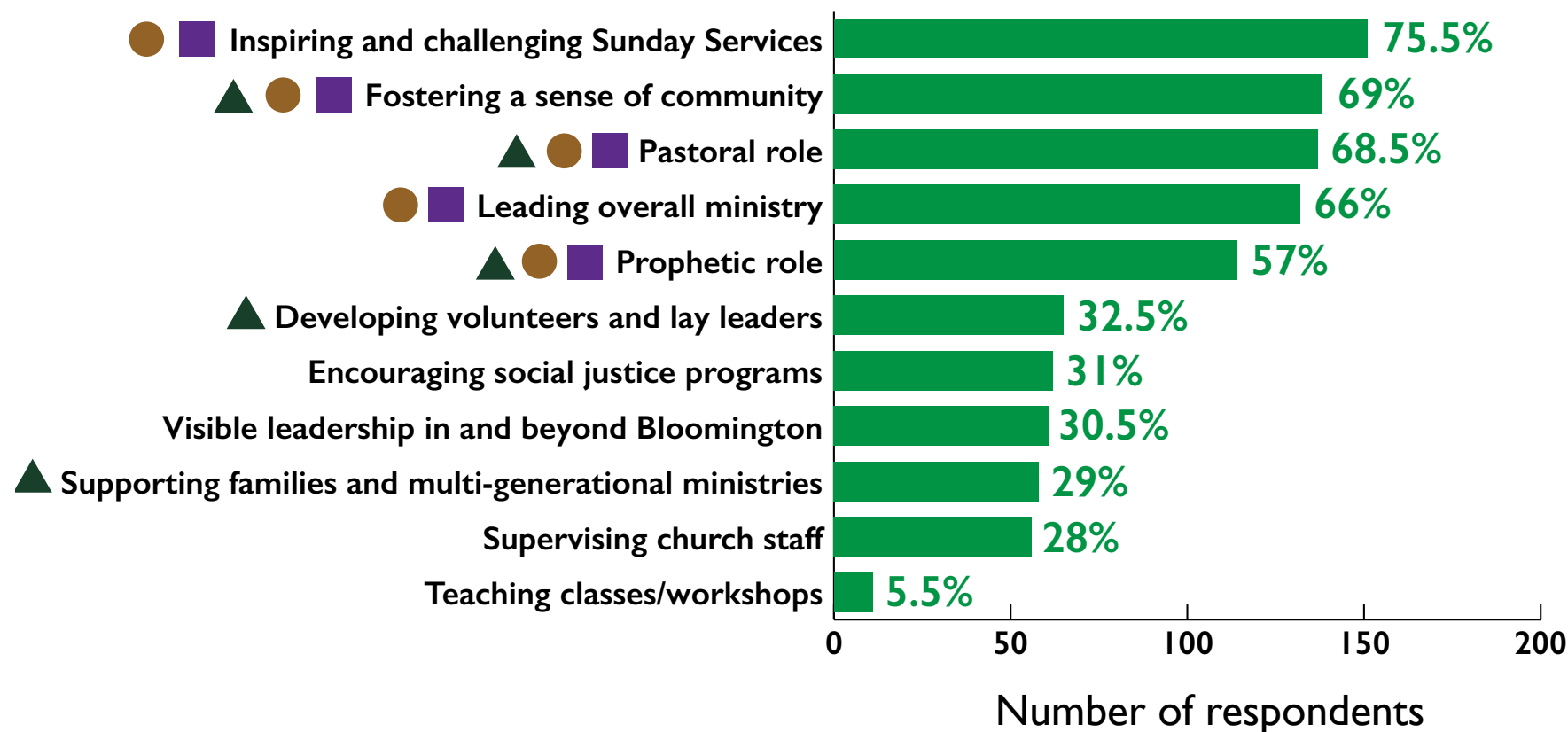


● Role in top 5 “for you”
 ■ Role in top 5 “for congregation”
 ▲ Role in top 5 “for future generations”

Top 5 roles of the future minister that are most important for the good of the whole congregation.

200 responses

Select up to 5

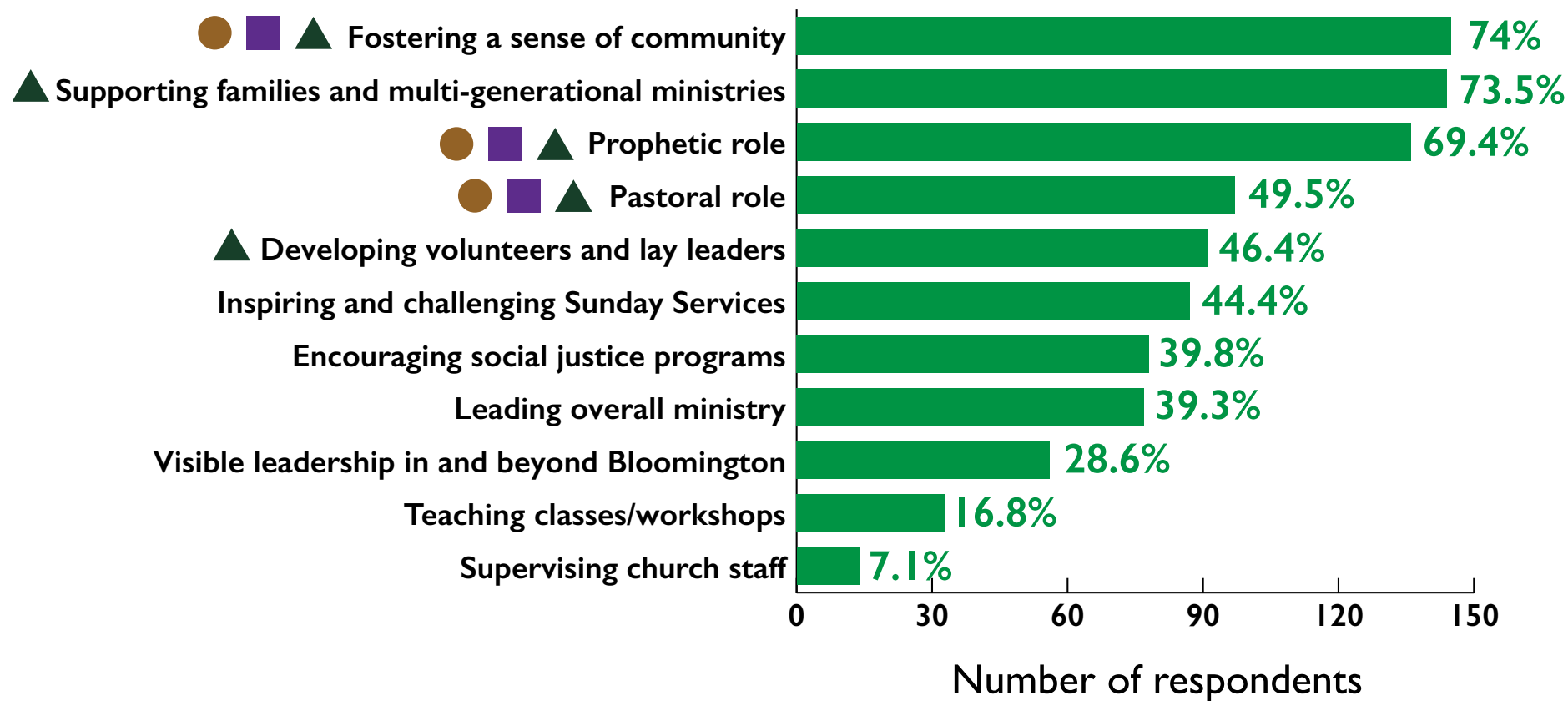


● Role in top 5 “for you”
 ■ Role in top 5 “for congregation”
 ▲ Role in top 5 “for future generations”

Top 5 roles of the future minister that are most important for the good of the next generation.

196 responses

Select up to 5



● Role in top 5 “for you” ■ Role in top 5 “for congregation” ▲ Role in top 5 “for future generations”

It could become contentious if the new minister tried to change:

168 responses

Open-ended

The most-often mentioned subjects (about 25 each) were the **music/choir** program, the church's **commitment to social justice** issues, and our **commitment to traditional UU principles** and **liberal spirit**.

More than 20 responses concerned **church staffing and organization**.

The only other category that received more than 15 responses mentioned changes in **Sunday services** and **church ritual**, with some wanting more spiritual content and others seeking less.

Over 10 responses said just about **any major change** would be contentious if it were done too **quickly and without input** from the Board, staff, and/or congregation.

Several responses said **less support for certain groups**, e.g., children, youth, families, and LGBTQ+ could be contentious.

Around 20 responses were non-specific (e.g., "I don't know," "anything," "maybe").

It could be unifying and energizing if the new minister tried to change:

149 responses

Open-ended

More than 20 responses concerned **better connections and communication**, including connections between the minister and the congregation, the minister and the outside community, and connections among various groups in the congregation.

Another 20 or so responses focused on changes in **Sunday services**. Suggested changes were diverse and often opposites (e.g., more spiritual/less spiritual, more Christian or God focused/no mention of Christianity or God, older hymns/newer hymns); other suggestions concerned the delivery and style of sermons.

More than 15 responses stressed **better integration of families, youth, and college-aged congregants** into church activities and services.

Other categories of answers garnering 10 or so comments included **more focus on social justice**, using **more lay members in services**, **church governance structure**, and efforts to **increase membership** among racial and ethnic minorities and college students.

Other comments focused on improvements to fundraising (e.g., less dependence on Bazaar, bake sales) and better ways to welcome newcomers.

There were around 30 responses that were non-specific (e.g., “yes,” “interesting”).

What brought you to UUCB?

201 responses

Sixty (60) responses mentioned seeking a **spiritual home/community for self**. Folks wrote about finding a good fit for themselves at UU because they sought a liberal religious community, or they liked the inclusive and accepting atmosphere, non-creed based theology, welcoming community, etc.

Over 40 responses mentioned a **recommendation** from family, friends, or others. Family and friends were about equally mentioned. A couple of people mentioned a recommendation from a work colleague leading them to UUCB.

Over 20 responses mentioned seeking a **spiritual home/community for their family**, with similar reasons to those speaking for themselves.

Twenty (20) responses mentioned a **move to Bloomington** as a UU or with prior UU experiences in other places that caused them to explore UUCB. These folks were clearly familiar with UUism and because of that, they sought out UUCB upon moving to Bloomington.

Over 10 people mentioned **religious education**. Most respondents specified RE for youth, but some didn't specify.

Ten (10) people mentioned a **connection to a minister**. People mentioned Bill Breeden the most, followed by Barbara Carlson and Mary Ann Macklin.

Ten (10) people mentioned the **choir and music**. Most often, folks just wrote the one word, "choir" or "music." It wasn't specified if that refers

Open-ended

to participating in choir or the quality of the music.

Other topics mentioned were: being raised in UUCB or another UU church, attending an event at UUCB, coming for solace after September 11th, the pandemic, work, Donald Trump, and A walk in the Sea of Galilee.



What keeps you here?

201 responses

Open-ended

Over 110 responses focused on **people**: members, friends, friendship, people, community, fellowship, relationships, or personal connections. Specifically, the people who make our community.

Over 40 responses were about **music**, mentioning the choir, Sue Swaney, or Ray Fellman.

Over 40 people mentioned **social justice** or **community service**. Many people want service to our community and being involved in making social justice happen.

Over 30 responses mentioned the **Sunday service**, or sermons. Many love being inspired by the Sunday sermon and others say the opportunity to be involved in a social justice opportunity outweighs a less than inspiring sermon.

Nearly 30 responses mentioned the **UU mission**: values, vision, or like-minded people.

Other topics mentioned in responses were: great place to live, focus on inclusivity, everything, extra university community engagement, need for a community that protects our marginalized members of society, writing & spirituality sessions, Libby's Mesa Española, opportunities to participate in many levels, religious activity, spiritual & intellectual stimulation, democratic governance, extraordinary leadership, ministry, love, hope that the next minister may be inspiring/engaging, and I can be honest about who I am.



Why should the future minister consider joining the next chapter of this congregation's journey?

184 responses

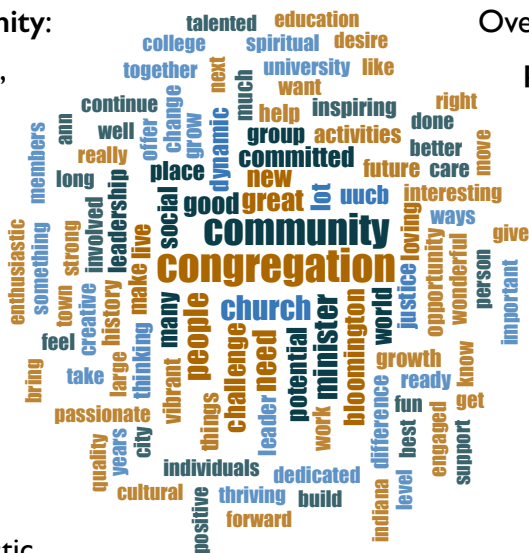
Open-ended

Over 50 people mentioned the **potential of the congregation**: a sense of great possibilities under new leadership, hunger for change and new ideas, readiness to evolve, and an openness to discovering together who we might become.

Over 30 people mentioned **social justice**: pride in our history, strength, and continued engagement in changing the world “beyond our walls”; a sense of relevance and desire to serve; and readiness to continue and expand this work.

Over 50 people mentioned **people and community**:

we describe ourselves and each other as fun, creative, committed, strong, generous, loving, full of humor, able to mourn together, civil, caring, reasonable, talented, educated, thoughtful, effective, dedicated, passionate, strong-minded, interesting, open-minded, good, kind, empowered, curious, diverse, justice-seeking, cool, powerful, compassionate, aware, enthusiastic, involved, adorable, willing to learn, hard-working, awesome, able to disagree well, motivated to change, idealistic, liberal, fantastic, intellectual, courageous, conscientious, active, welcoming, action-oriented, open-hearted, and wonderful.



Over 20 people mentioned **Bloomington** as a great place to live: good qualities include Indiana University, progressiveness, good town spirit, and the beautiful natural environment.

Over 10 people mentioned **the welcome a minister will find here**: we challenge, enrich, appreciate, and respect our ministers.

Over 10 people mentioned the **strong history of the congregation** (comments on specific strengths are also included in those categories; e.g., social justice).

Other themes mentioned in responses were: multigenerational community; financial stability; need for healing, stability, and renewal after recent struggles; diversity; and music.

Over 40 people mentioned the **overall energy** of the congregation:

A sense that good things are happening here; that as an institution we are thriving, vital, and re-emerging, and that being part of it could be rewarding, challenging, and fun.

THANK YOU!

The Ministerial Search Committee is grateful to everyone who completed the survey and to prospective ministers who are taking the time to read our materials. We strove to accurately extract and report the themes from the survey in this report. If you have any questions or concerns, please email the Ministerial Search Committee at search@uubloomington.com.

There is a lot of valuable information in these results that we will be using during the search process. We also encourage the congregation to take the time to evaluate what can be learned from it, and use it to inform our future beyond the search process.

A digital copy of these results is publicly available at the *Congregational Survey* page of the *Ministerial Transition Process* section of the church's website:

<https://www.uubloomington.org/about/ministerial-transition-process/congregational-survey/>

This report was compiled by the Ministerial Search Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington, Indiana in November 2023:

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