

Faith Communities Today

Diversity in UU Congregations

**The Reverend Charlotte Cowtan
May 2002**

Foreword

It is true that most members and participating friends of UU congregations could be described as being white, wealthy, highly educated, over fifty years old, refugees from other faith traditions. It is also true that this profile accurately describes neither all of the people in any particular UU congregation nor all UU congregations.

The Faith Communities Today survey (1999-2000) provided us with a wealth of information about the culture, finances, leadership, worship styles, leadership and programs of almost one half of all UU congregations, many of which are attracting and including young adults, people of color, ethnic minorities, people with limited financial resources, people whose education comes from sources other than formal educational institutions, and even people who were born and raised in UU congregations.

This is the third in a series of reports linking information from UUA congregational records and Faith Communities Today survey responses to examine differences and similarities among UU congregations. (FCT data alone is most useful for collective comparisons of UU congregations with other faith traditions.) *FCT UU Survey Results: Analysis by Congregation Size* (Nov. 2001) and *FCT: Growth and Decline in UU Congregations* (April, 2002) focused on differences and similarities in UU congregations in relationship to size of congregation and five year membership growth / decline patterns respectively.

As the following report's name suggests, *FCT: Diversity in UU Congregations* (May, 2002) focuses on congregations with more than 10% minority participation. This report compares the activities, cultures and dynamics of UU congregations that reported 11% or more of their regularly participating adults were non-white (European American), from low income households (\$20,000 or less annual household income), and / or people with no high school diploma with congregations that more closely fit the stereotypically white, wealthy and highly educated UU image.

My hope is that the UUA as a body and congregations wanting to provide a religious home for a wider range of people than are embraced by the current UU stereotype will both:

- Be encouraged by congregations that are experiencing some success in this area
- Gain useful information about positive changes and programs they might implement and/or promote.

My goal is simply to do what I can to give all of us the tools we need to become even better at what I believe we are all trying to do:

To provide healthy communities for all people who yearn for the faith, hope and love that abide in our Unitarian Universalist tradition.

Faithfully,
The Reverend Charlotte Cowtan
May, 2002

A Note about the Data used for this report

It is important to remember that FCT data were not collected in a manner that allows formal statistical analysis:

- **The congregations represented by the FCT data are not a random sample.** While all congregations were invited to participate, the ones that responded to the survey were, by definition, self selected rather than randomly chosen.
- **The data are both subjective and provided by key respondents (ministers or congregation presidents) who are likely to have a vested interest in their congregations' appearance and/or reputation.**
- **There are some inconsistencies within the data.** Many of these inconsistencies appear to be due to Key Respondents' differing interpretations of the term "regularly participating adults." Some respondents reported numbers of participating adults that were much larger than their reported adult membership; others reported numbers of participating adults that were much lower than their reported adult membership. For this reason UUA adult membership numbers have been used when describing growth/decline rates or congregation size.
- The diversity data are based on responses to the **Question:** "Of your **regularly participating adults** how many would you estimate are of the following groups?"

For racial minority categories, respondents were instructed to enter the **number** of participating adults (rather than the **percent range** used for other categories of participants). This seems to have caused some problems for the more arithmetically challenged responders. When percentages of ethnic groups were calculated, the totals for all ethnic groups in the congregation varied from 0% to 286%. Closer examination has convinced me that the data are not hopelessly corrupted and are likely representative of our congregations. I say this because:

- The distribution was relatively normal,
 - The mode (most frequent total) was 100% (49% of respondents)
 - 11% of respondents reported over 125% of the total participating adults, and
 - 10% reported under 75% of the total participating adults
- Almost all of the excessive percentages (150 %+) were caused by of many more Euro-Americans than the stated number of participating adults. (It is possible that these respondents entered adult membership rather than participating adults)
- Almost all of the extreme underreporting was caused omitting the euro-American entry. (possibly there respondents thought they were only expected to report the non-euro-American groups)
- Since the data discrepancies appear to be largely contained within the reported number of euro-American participating adults category, and
- Since close examination of the non-Euro American groups' data did not reveal serious anomalies,

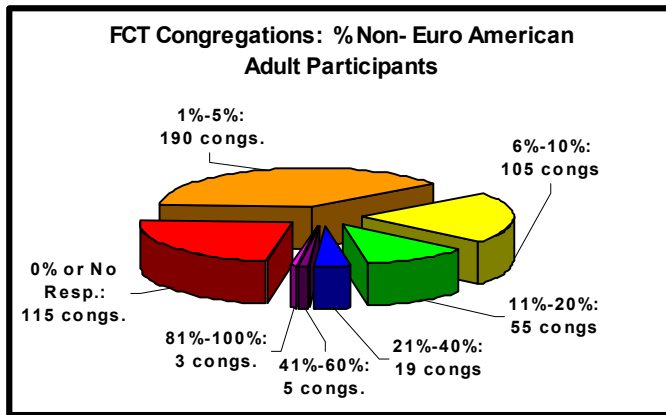
This report uses only the non- European American (non-white) racial/ethnic data.

DIVERSITY AMONG ADULT PARTICIPANTS IN UU CONGREGATIONS

Introduction

Members and participating friends of UU congregations ARE predominantly white, highly educated and upper middle class.

Responses to the Faith Communities Today survey from almost one half of all UU congregations confirm the Unitarian-Universalist stereotype:



Predominantly White:

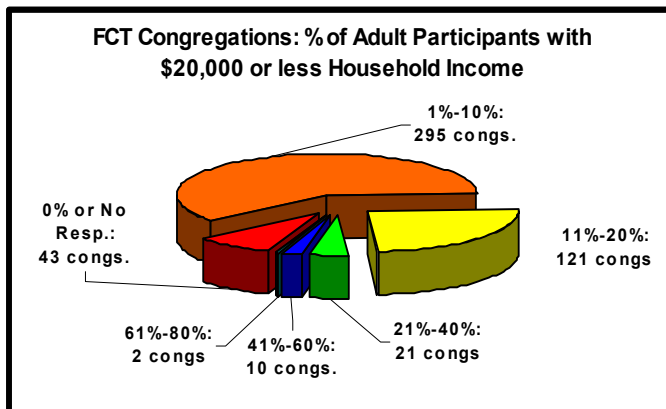
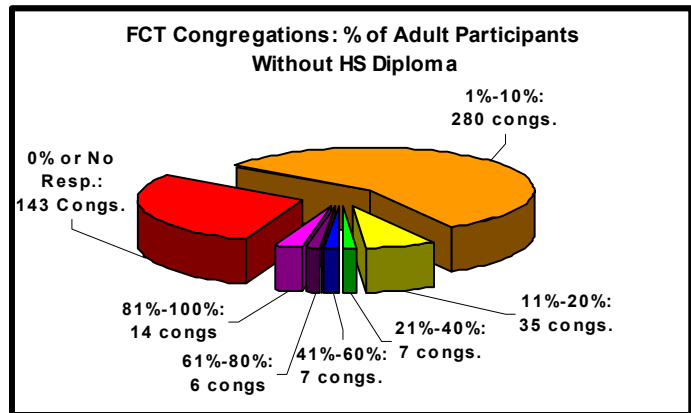
- Only 17% (82) of FCT congregations reported more than 10% participating adults were non-Euro American

The same information tells us that one of every six UU congregations (17%) has learned how to provide a religious home for people of diverse racial and ethnic heritages.

Highly Educated:

- Only 14% (70) of FCT congregations reported that more than 10% of their participating adults had not received a high school diploma.

The same data tell us that one of every seven UU congregation has learned how to make our religious message meaningful to people without a high level of formal education



Upper Middle Class

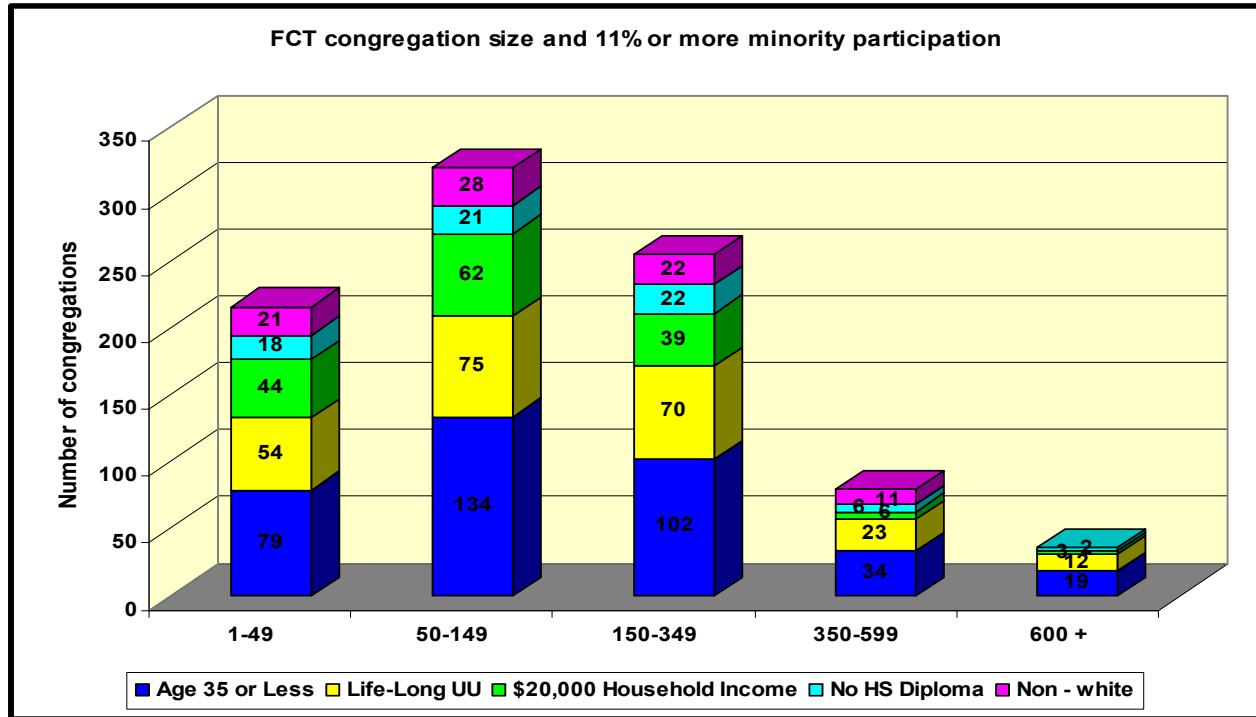
- 69% (154) of FCT congregations reported fewer than 10% of their participating adults had low annual incomes (less than \$20,000)

The same data tell us that almost one in every three UU congregation (31%) has learned how to make people with limited financial resources feel welcome.

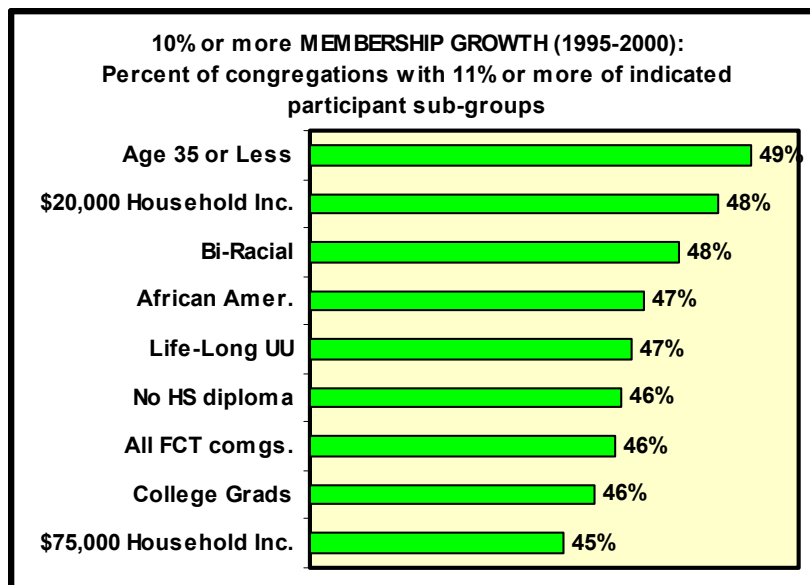
Where are congregations with larger proportions of minority participants found?

1. All sizes of congregations

The following chart indicates that UUs who don't fit the UU stereotype (White, middle-age, wealthy college graduates who found UUism as adults) were found in significant numbers in all sizes of FCT congregations.



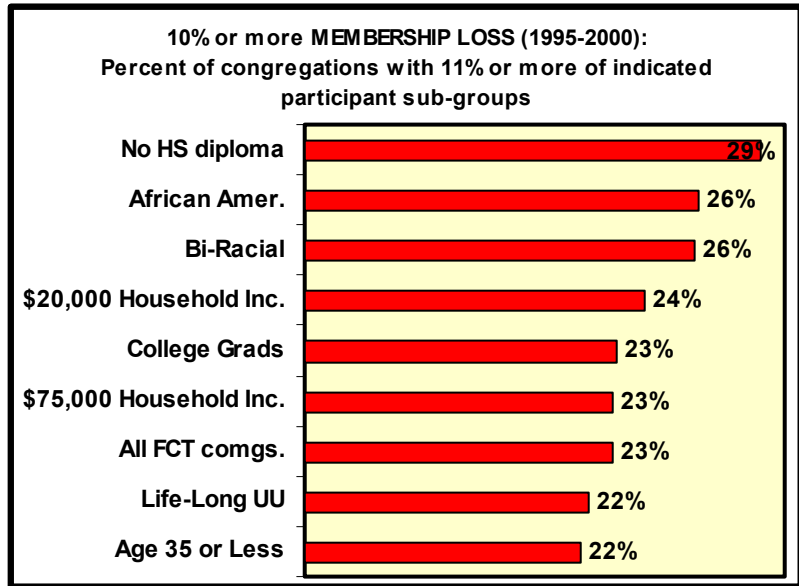
2. Rapidly growing congregations



- FCT congregations with 11%+ young, low income, bi-racial, African American, and/or life-long UU participants were slightly more likely to have GROWN rapidly than those with 11%+ more stereotypical UU participants.
- FCT congregations with 11%+ participants with no HS diploma and those with 11%+ college graduates were equally likely to have grown by 10% or more adult members from 1995-2000.

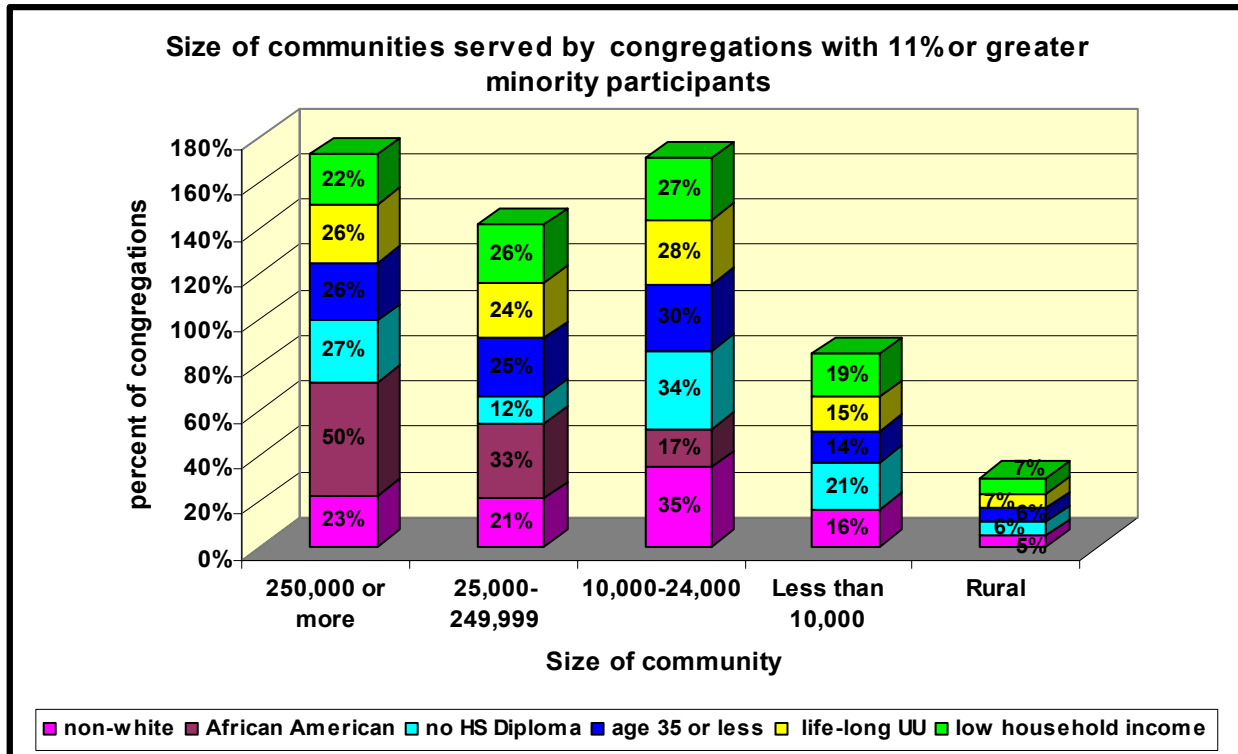
3. Rapidly declining congregations

- FCT congregations with 11%+ low income, bi-racial, African American, and/or participants with no HS diploma life-long UU participants were also slightly more likely to have DECLINED rapidly than those with 11% or greater more stereotypical UU participants.
- Congregations with 11% or more life-long and/or young participants were the least likely to have declined by more than 10%

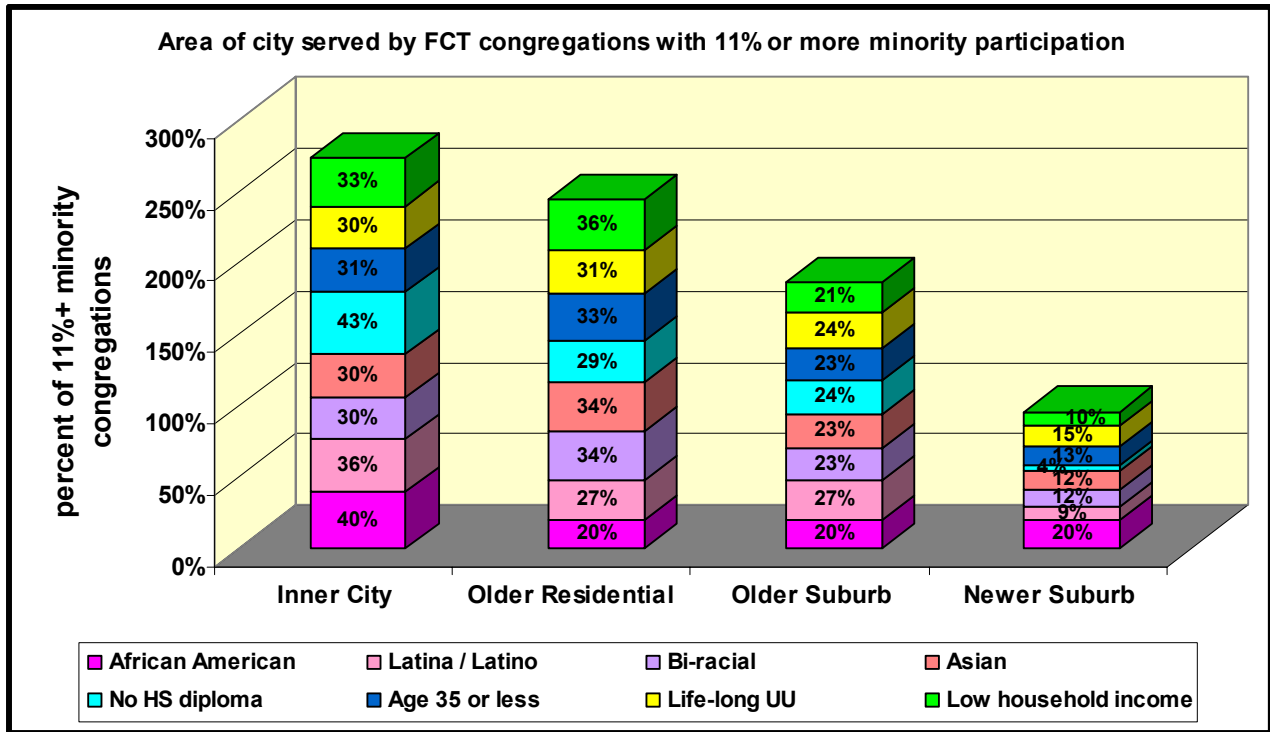


4. All sizes of communities

- FCT congregations with 11% or more low income, non-white, young, lifelong UU and/or participants without HS diplomas were serving all sizes of communities
- No FCT congregations with 11% or more African American participants were located in communities with populations of less than 25,000
- FCT congregations with 11%+ participants without HS diplomas were more often located in larger metropolitan communities (250,000+) and smaller communities (25,000 or less)

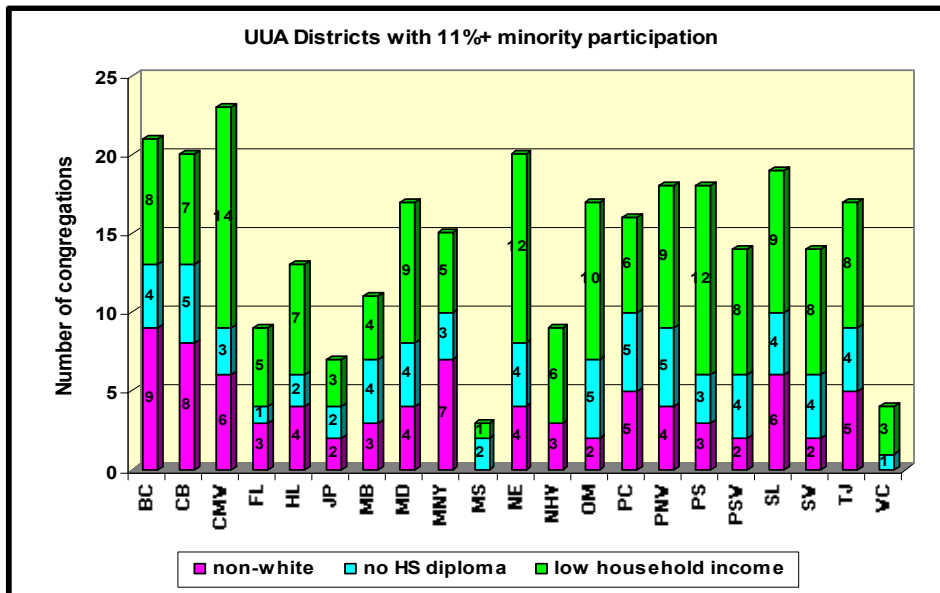


5. All areas of the city



- FCT congregations with 11% or more minority participants were located in all areas of the cities.
- Congregations with 11%+ participants with **no HS diploma** were considerably MORE likely than the FCT congregational norm (30%) to be located in the inner city and MUCH LESS likely than the FCT congregational norm (12%) to be located in newer suburbs
- Congregations with 11%+ **African American** participants were MUCH MORE likely than the FCT congregational norms (30% and 10%) to be located in the inner city AND the newer suburbs respectively.

6. All UUA districts



- Congregations with 11% or more minority participants were located in all UUA districts
- No FCT congs. in NHV reported 11%+ participants with no HS diploma,
- MS and WC districts reported no FCT congs with 11%+ non white participants.

Diversity in UUA Districts

While some congregations in **every** district reported 11% or more minority participation in at least one category, some district had a larger proportion of 11%+ minority participation congregations than would be expected by the total number of congregations that responded to the FCT survey. Other districts reported a lower number of 11%+ minority participation congregations than their proportion of all FCT respondents would predict.

The following UUA district table is color coded as follows:

- **Green** where there were at least **20% more** congregations reporting 11%+ minority participation than the district's overall FCT participation would have predicted
- **Red** where there were at least **20% fewer** congregations reporting 11%+ minority participation than the district's overall FCT participation would have predicted
- **Yellow** where the percent of congregations reporting 11%+ minority participation was **within 20%** of the district's overall FCT percent participation.

UUA districts: percent FCT congregations with 11%+ minority participation

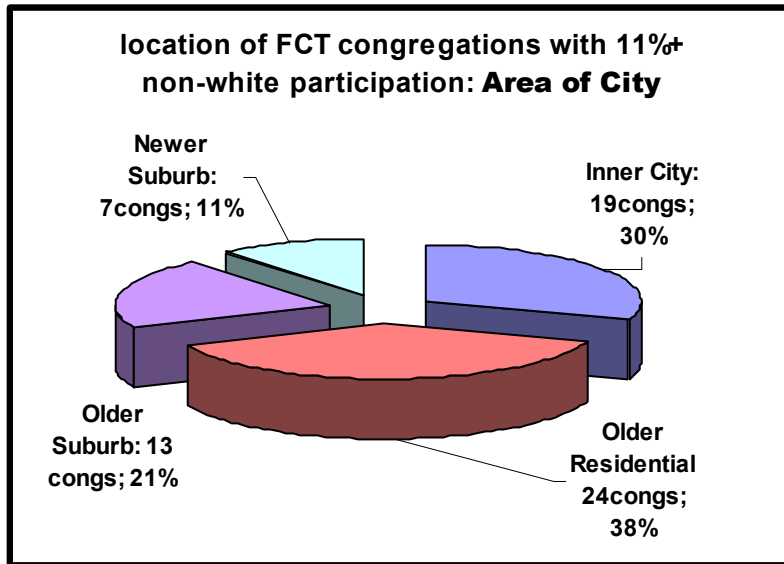
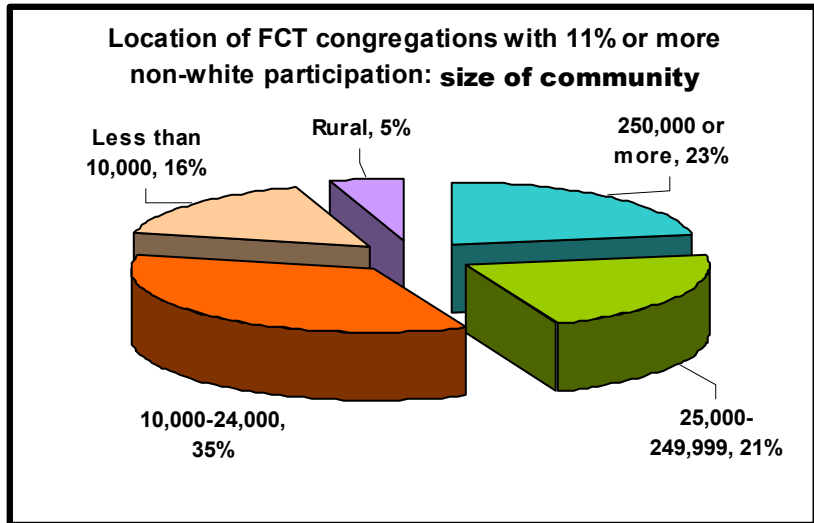
| UUA District | % of all 11%+ non-white congs | % of all 11%+ no HS diploma congs. | % of all 11%+ low household |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| BC | 11% | 6% | |
| CB | 10% | 7% | |
| CMW | 7% | 4% | |
| FL | 4% | 1% | |
| HL | 5% | 3% | |
| JP | 2% | 3% | |
| MB | 4% | 6% | |
| MD | 5% | 6% | |
| MNY | 9% | 4% | |
| MS | 0% | 3% | |
| NE | 5% | 6% | |
| NHV | 4% | | |
| OM | 2% | 7% | |
| PC | 6% | 7% | |
| PNW | 5% | 7% | |
| PS | 4% | 4% | |
| PSW | 2% | 6% | |
| SL | 7% | 6% | |
| SW | 2% | 6% | |
| TJ | 6% | 6% | |
| WC | 0% | 1% | |
| TOTALS | 100% | 100% | |

Racial / Ethnic diversity in UU congregations

Location of FCT congregations with racial/ethnic minority participation

Size of Community

- FCT congregations with 11%+ racial minority participation were **most likely** to be found in small cities with populations of 10,000 – 24,000.
- They were **least likely** to be found in rural communities and towns or cities with populations less than 10,000.

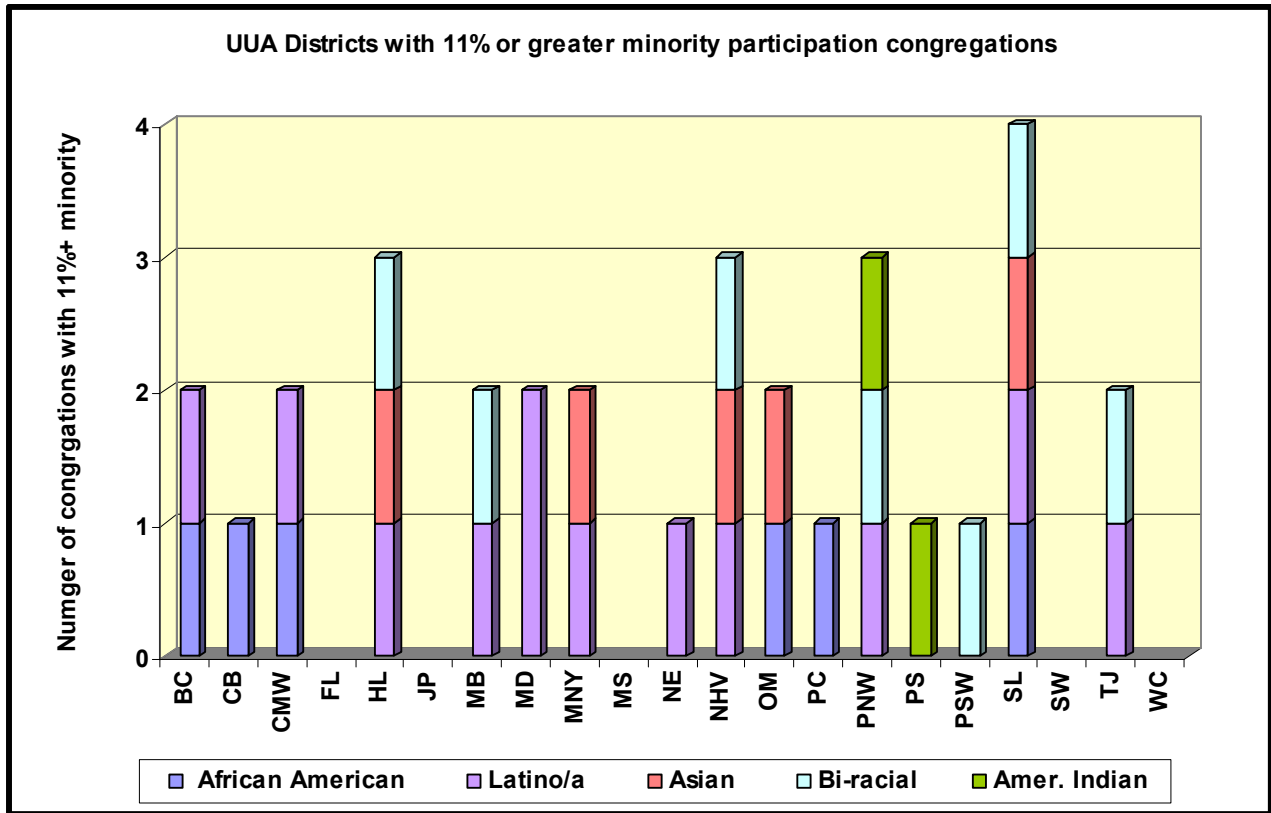


Area of the city

- FCT congregations with 11%+ ethnic/racial minority participation were **most likely** to be found in older residential areas of the city (38%) and
- **Least likely** to be found in the newer suburbs
- **As a group**, 11%+ non-white participant FCT congregations were **more likely** to be located in older residential areas of the city than FCT congregations as a group (34%)

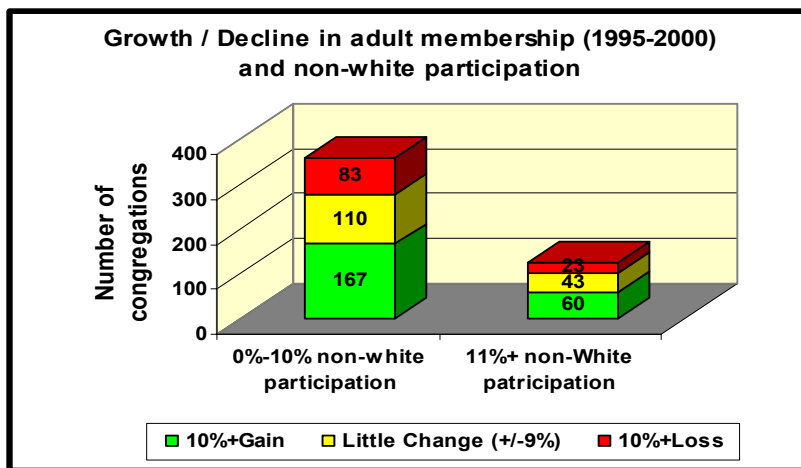
| Location of FCT congregations with 11%+ non-white participation: AREA of CITY | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Inner City | Older Residential | Older Suburb | Newer Suburb | Grand Total |
| 11%+ African American | 40% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 100% |
| 11%+ Latina / Latino | 36% | 27% | 27% | 9% | 100% |
| all FCT congregations | 30% | 34% | 23% | 12% | 100% |

- 11%+ **African American** participant congregations were the **most likely of all** FCT congregations to be located in the inner city **and** in the newer suburbs). They were the **least likely of all** FCT congregations to be located in older suburbs.
- Conversely, 11%+ **Latina/o** participant congregations were **the least likely of all** FCT congregations to be located in newer suburbs and the **most likely** to be located in older suburbs.



While all UUA districts other than Western Canada and Mid South had FCT congregations reporting more than 11% non-white participation (see page 4 of this report), congregations with 11%+ specific racial minority participants were much less common. **Only 31 FCT congregations reported 11%+ participation by specifically identified racial/ethnic participants.**

Membership growth and decline in racially diverse congregations (1995-2000)



FCT congregations with 11%+ non-white participation and FCT congregations as a group had very similar membership growth and decline patterns from 1995-2000:

- 46% of the 11%+ non-white participant FCT congregations grew by more than 10%+
- 23 % declined by 10%

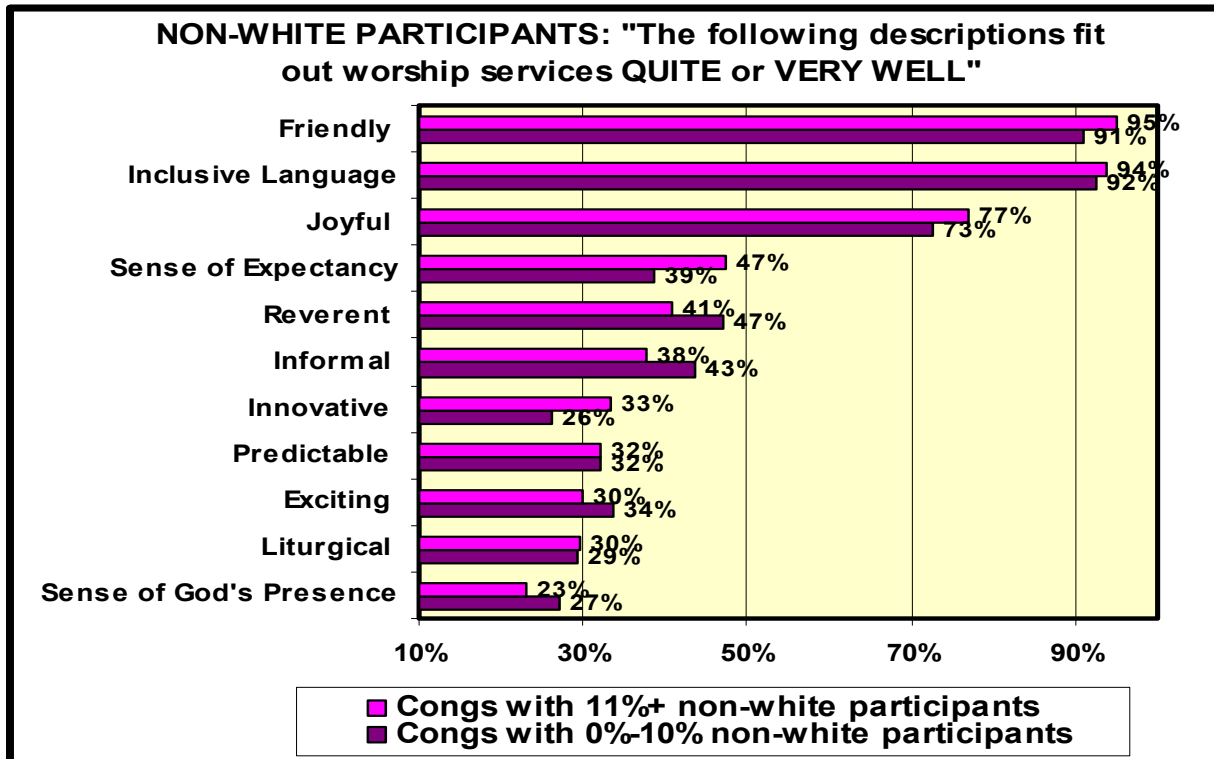
The growth and decline patterns of congregations with 11%+ specifically identified racial/ethnic minority populations show:

| Membership growth/decline:1995-2000 | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Minority participation | 10%+ growth | 10%+ decline |
| 11%+ non-white | 46% | 23% |
| 11%+African American | 47% | 26% |
| 11%+ bi-racial | 48% | 26% |
| 11%+ Asian | 47% | 24% |
| 11%+ Latino/a | 39% | 24% |
| All FCT congs. | 46% | 23% |

- Much **lower likelihood** of rapid growth in high Latino/a participation FCT congregations
- Somewhat **higher likelihood** of BOTH growth and decline in high African American, bi-racial and Asian participation FCT congregations. (less likely membership plateau)

Worship services in racially diverse congregations

Qualities of the worship service



- Congregations with **11%+ non-white participants** were somewhat more likely to describe their worship services as: friendly, innovative, having a sense of expectancy and joyful.
- Congregations with **10% or fewer non-white participants** were more likely to describe their worship as reverent or informal, exciting, and having a sense of God's presence

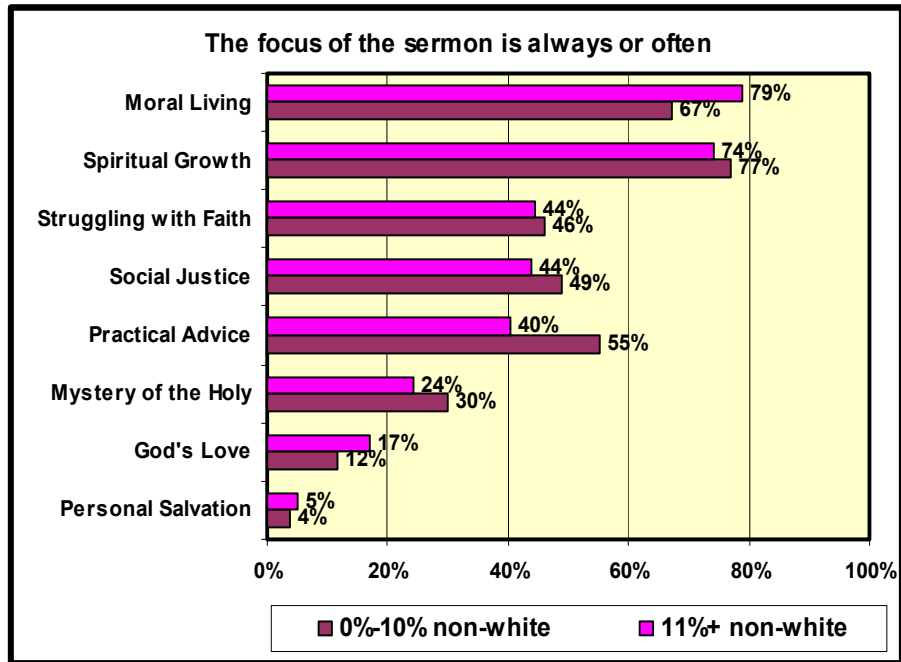
**Focus of the Sermon:
Comparison of congregations with 0-10% and 11%+ non-white participation**

The focus of sermons for FCT congregations with **11%+ non-white participation was more likely** than it was for congregations with 0%-10% non-white participation to be on:

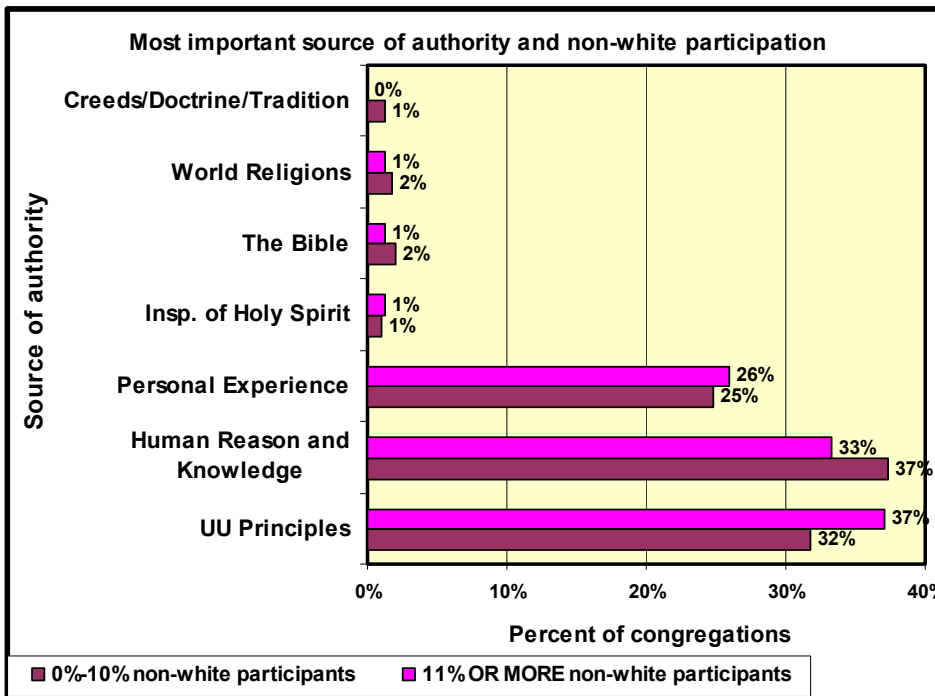
- Moral living, and
- God's love

Sermons for 11%+ non-white congregations were **less likely to focus on:**

- Spiritual growth
- Social justice
- Practical advice
- Mystery of the Holy



**Sources of authority in worship and teaching:
Comparison of congregations with 0-10% and 11%+ non-white participation**

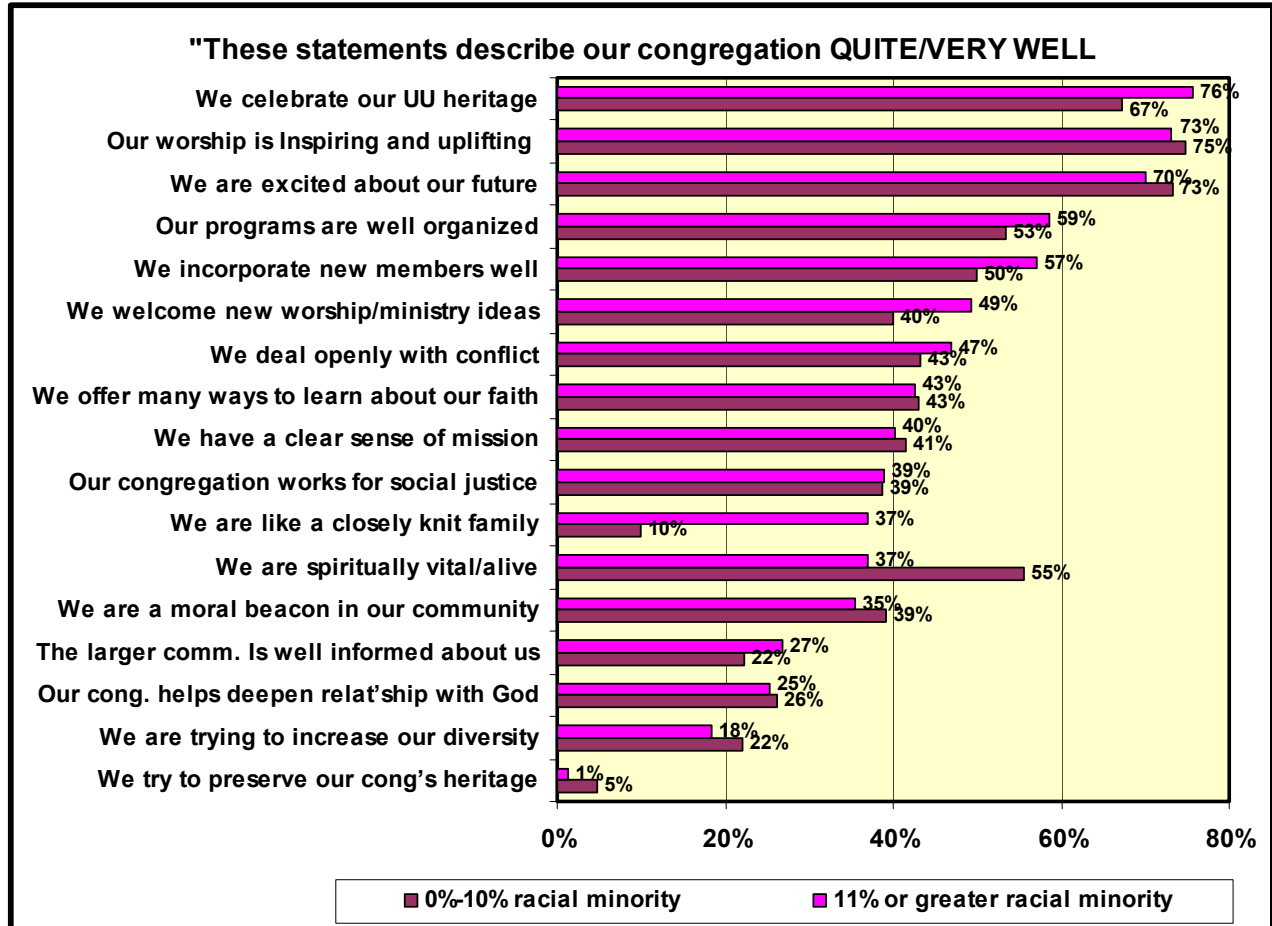


FCT congregations with **11% or more non-white participation** were most likely to name **“UU principles”** as the most important source of authority for worship and teaching

FCT congregations with **0%-10% non-white participation** were most likely to name **“human reason and knowledge”** as the most important source of authority for worship and teaching.

Self image of congregations:

Comparison of FCT congregations with 0%-10% and 11%+ non-white participation



FCT congregations with 11%+ non-white participation were:

- **Much more likely** than those with fewer than 11% non- white participants to see themselves as a closely knit family
- **More likely** than FCT congregations with fewer than 11% non-white participants to describe themselves as
 - Celebrating our UU heritage
 - Having well organized programs
 - Incorporating new members well
 - Welcoming new ideas for ministry and worship
 - Dealing openly with conflict
 - The community at large being well informed about the congregation
- **Less likely** than FCT congregations with fewer than 11% non-white participants to describe themselves as
 - Being a moral beacon in the community
 - Trying to increase their diversity
 - Trying to preserve their congregations' heritage
- **Much less likely** than FCT congregations with fewer than 11% non-white participants to see themselves as spiritually vital and alive.

