

Unitarian Universalist Youth Ministry Survey

for discussion at congregational conversations

The Basics

Number of surveys returned: 1,399

Average age of respondents: 15.2 years old

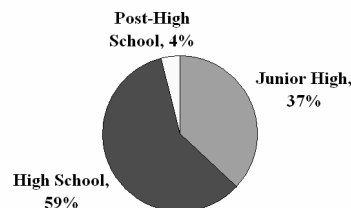
We looked at the responses of three different age groups –

Junior High (age 12-14)

High School (age 15-18)

Post-High School (age 19-20)

Age of Respondents



Raising Lifelong Unitarian Universalists

- **39%** of respondents have been Unitarian Universalist for **more than 10 years**.
- **21%** of respondents have been Unitarian Universalist for **less than 4 years**.
- **5%** of respondents **don't consider themselves Unitarian Universalist** anymore. **Post-High School** respondents tend to be **more likely to no longer consider themselves Unitarian Universalist**.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What do we do now to include youth in the active life of our congregation? What else could we be doing?
- 2) How can we meet the needs of post-high school youth so that they choose to remain Unitarian Universalists?

Prioritizing Youth Ministry

- The vast majority of respondents feel **welcome at worship services (91%)**, believe they are **treated respectfully (89%)**, and that their **opinions are valued (87%)**. A little more than half (**53%**) feel that the congregation is their spiritual home.
- **58%** of respondents agree that youth programs are a priority in their congregation, and **18%** disagree.
- **42%** of respondents who stopped attending RE believe youth programs are NOT a priority in the congregation.

Reflection Question: What priority does your congregation place on youth ministry? What do your youth say?

Youth Perceptions of Support From Adults

	% Reporting Excellent/Very Good Support
Youth group advisors	80%
RE Director	77%
Minister	76%
RE teachers	71%
Other adults	56%
Board members	50%

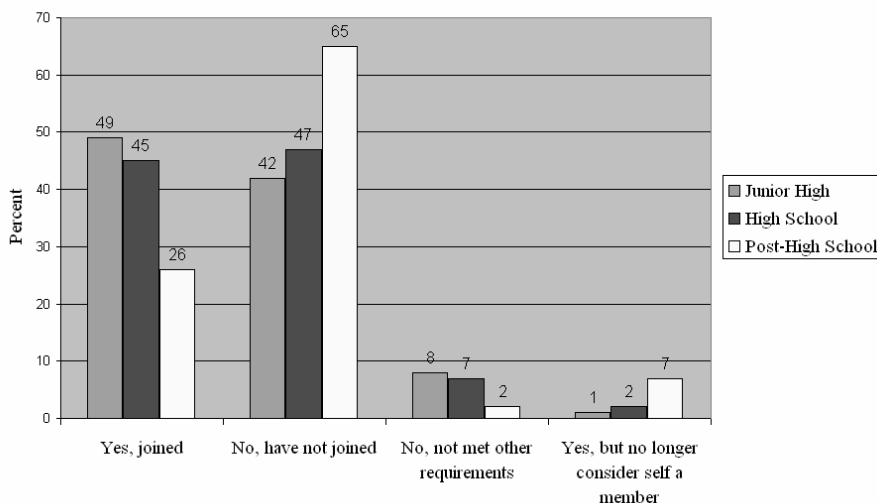
- There is a significant gap between the perceived support from Board members/other adults and the minister/adults associated with RE.
- Respondents who are involved **only in a youth group** rate congregational support lower than youth involved in other areas of the congregation.
- **Post-High School** respondents are most critical about the lack of support they perceive from the congregation.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) What do these perceptions say about the overall congregational support of youth ministry?
- 2) To what extent do you think youth in your congregation are isolated or integrated?

Membership

Youth Who Are Eligible to Join



Just over half of the respondents said youth their age were allowed to join their congregation as members.

44% of all eligible respondents had joined their congregations.

Reflection Question: What are our congregation's requirements regarding youth membership?

Youth Involvement

Congregational activities that youth most commonly participate in:

- *Social action
- *Worship service leadership
- *Help with RE
- *Social or community-building events

Leadership

8% of respondents serve on or chair a committee.
2% serve on a congregational governing board.

Reasons for Leaving the Youth Group and/or RE Program

Mark all that apply	Percent (%)
Got too busy to attend RE/youth group	50
Didn't like other youth in RE/youth group	25
Started attending worship services instead	24
Program didn't answer interest in social action	20
Program didn't address interest in spirituality	17
Other reasons	32

Perceptions of Youth Group and Religious Education Programs

- The percentage of respondents who agree that the RE program or youth group meets their spiritual needs is **58%**.
- **72%** of high school respondents indicate that their youth group helps them explore options and suggestions on how to **deal with life situations**.
- **Transracially adopted youth** (adopted youth who are of a different race than their adoptive parents) **rated the youth group experience lower** than other respondents – they indicated less of a feeling of belonging, more of a sense of pressure to conform to beliefs and attitudes, and less opportunities to address social issues such as racism and oppression.

Reflection Questions:

- 1) How can the congregation improve its youth ministry in the following ways: a) better meeting the spiritual needs of youth, and b) helping youth explore options for dealing with life situations?
- 2) How can congregations be more cognizant and attentive to the unique needs of transracially adopted youth?