

# Summary of UUSM Congregational Survey

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## Executive Summary

This document was generated by AI, using the congregant responses, and then edited by the search committee.

Snapshot: UUSM is a values-driven, musically strong, socially engaged congregation with a highly committed volunteer base. Respondents skew older, are predominantly White/European descent, highly educated, and long-tenured. Worship, music, community, and social justice are the most frequently cited reasons people attend. The congregation prefers collaborative governance and seeks a minister who preaches well, provides pastoral care, partners with music leadership, and advances youth engagement and DEI work.

Top priorities for applicants:

- Inspiring worship and strong preaching that connects to diverse spiritual perspectives.
- Pastoral care and relational presence across age cohorts.
- Commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) with willingness to move from awareness to structural change.
- Youth and family engagement to address an aging membership profile.
- Collaborative leadership style that partners with lay leaders, staff, and music leadership.

Key metrics applicants should note:

- Age profile concentrated in 60–80+ cohorts; fewer households with children.
  - Predominantly White/European descent respondents.
  - High educational attainment (many Masters, Doctoral, and professional degrees).
  - Strong volunteer engagement: many report 1–5+ hours/week and active committee participation.
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# Full Report

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose

This report is written for ministerial search applicants considering service at UUSM. It synthesizes survey data into a narrative profile, visual summaries of key demographics, thematic findings from open responses, and practical recommendations. The goal is to give applicants a clear, usable picture of the congregation’s identity, expectations, and strategic priorities.

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## 2. Demographic Profile

Overview: The congregation’s survey respondents show a strong concentration of long-term members, older adults, and highly educated individuals. Volunteer engagement is robust. The visuals below are embedded as images; each image caption includes the exact data source and the Google Sheets steps used to create it.

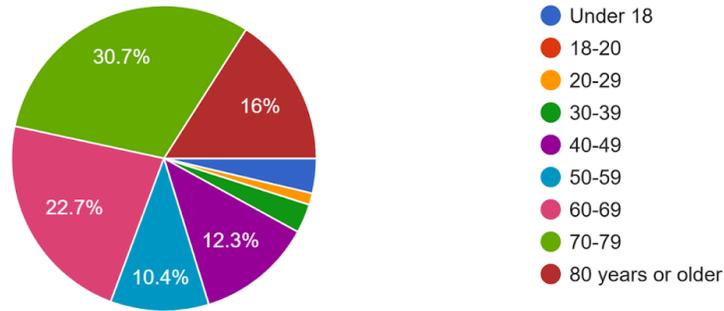
### Visual A — Respondents (e.g. member, friend, staff, youth, visitor)

I am a  
166 responses



## Visual B - Age

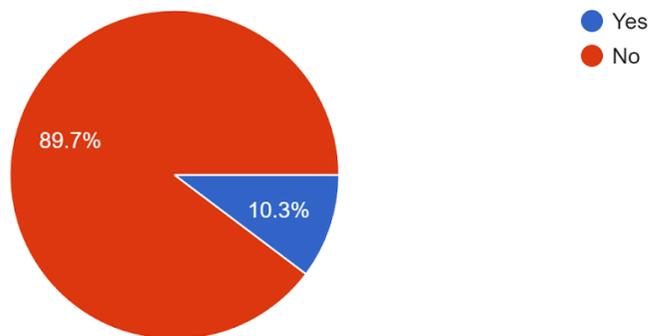
My age is:  
163 responses



- **Implication:** Expect a congregation with deep institutional memory and many retirees; plan programming that engages older adults while creating pathways for younger adults and families.
- 

## Visual C — Race / Ethnicity

I identify as BIPoC (Black/Indigenous/Person of Color)  
146 responses

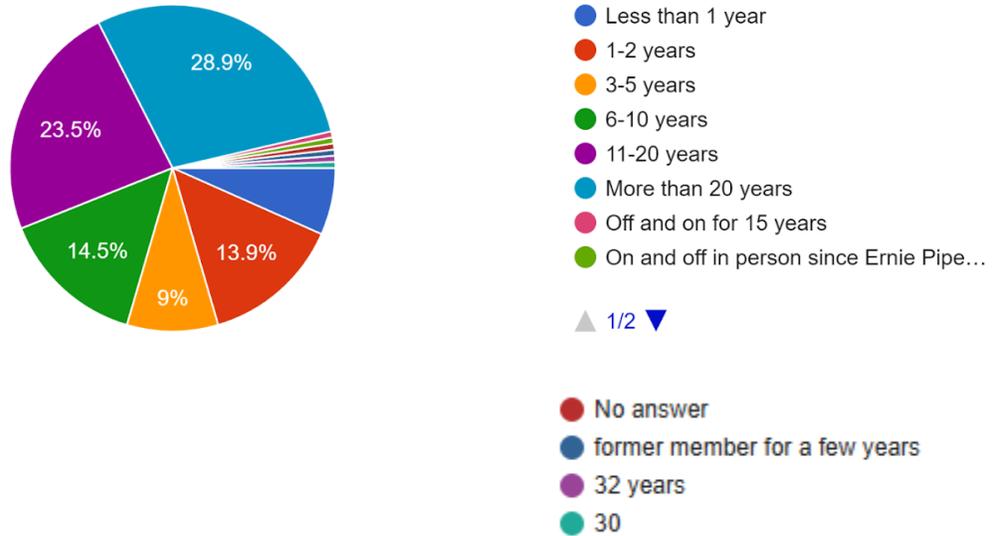


- **Implication:** The congregation is relatively homogeneous racially; applicants should be prepared to lead intentional outreach and inclusion efforts.
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## Visual D — Tenure With Congregation

I have attended this congregation for

166 responses

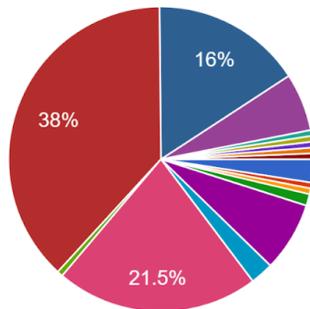


- Implication: Long tenure suggests strong institutional continuity and volunteer leadership rooted in history; new ministers should balance honoring tradition with thoughtful innovation. (>75% 5+ Years.)
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## Visual E — Highest Education Level

### The highest level of formal education I have completed:

163 responses



- Some elementary school
- Some junior high
- Some high school
- High School/ GED
- Some college
- 2-year college (Associate Degree, e.g....)
- 4-year degree (BA, BS, etc.)
- Trade school or apprenticeship

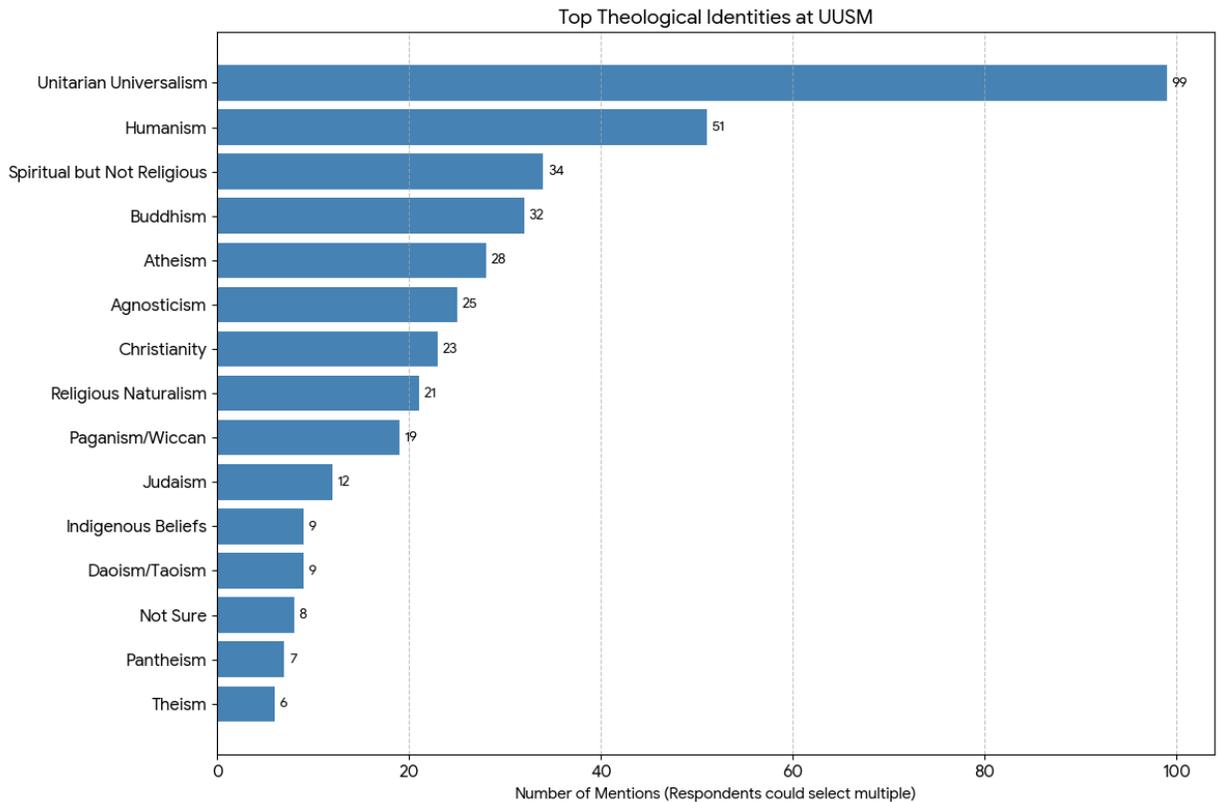
▲ 1/2 ▼

- Masters degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
- Doctoral degree (Ph.D, Ed.D, ect.)
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, D...)
- 3 years collage
- Post graduate fellowship
- Additional varied professional degrees
- Some college and extensive training i...
- Some college and trade school/appre...

- Implication: Expect an intellectually engaged congregation that values thoughtful sermons and programming.
- (38% Masters Degree, 22% Doctoral Degree, 60% advanced degree)

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### Visual F — Prevailing Theology/Philosophy



**Theological Identity Frequency Chart-** This chart reflects the number of times each theological label was selected by respondents. Note that because most members identify with multiple labels (e.g., "Humanist" *and* "Buddhist"), the total count exceeds the number of individual members.

### **Who We Are Theologically: A Community of Skeptics, Seekers, and Pluralists**

The theological identity of the UUSM community is defined not by a single creed, but by a profound theological hybridity. The vast majority of congregants identify with multiple theological labels simultaneously, blending secular philosophy with spiritual curiosity and religious heritage.

### **A Community of Converts**

We are largely a community of ex-Christians, cultural Jews, and those who have left their faith of origin. We are united by what we *chose* (Unitarian Universalism), not just what we were born into. With two-thirds of our members having grown up in other traditions, we function as a sanctuary for those who are skeptical of dogmatic institutions but deeply committed to the mystery of life and social justice.

### **The Core Triad: Humanism, Atheism, and Agnosticism-**

The strongest theological thread running through our congregation is a secular, reason-based approach to life.

- The "Skeptic" Bloc: Approximately 53% of respondents identify with Humanism, Atheism, and/or Agnosticism.
- The Wider Net: When expanding this group to include those who identify as "Spiritual but not Religious," "None," or "Not Sure," this figure rises to nearly 72%.
- Interpretation: This confirms that while the community is "multi-faith," it is also foundationally rooted in Enlightenment values, scientific inquiry, and secular ethics.

### **The "And" Factor: Multi-Religious Identity-**

Our members rarely fit into single boxes. The raw data reveals that very few members choose just one label; instead, they practice intersectionality, frequently pairing secular worldviews with wisdom traditions.

- Common Combination: *Humanism + Buddhism* (A secular approach to ethics paired with a practice of mindfulness).
- Common Combination: *Unitarian Universalism + Atheism + Religious Naturalism* (Finding awe in nature without a supernatural deity).
- Common Combination: *Paganism + Christianity + UU* (Blending earth-centered spirituality with cultural roots).

A minister at UUSM will lead a congregation of "religiously non-religious" people—seekers who have retained the "best parts" of their heritage or spiritual practices (meditation, ritual, community) while discarding the supernatural or dogmatic elements that no longer serve them.

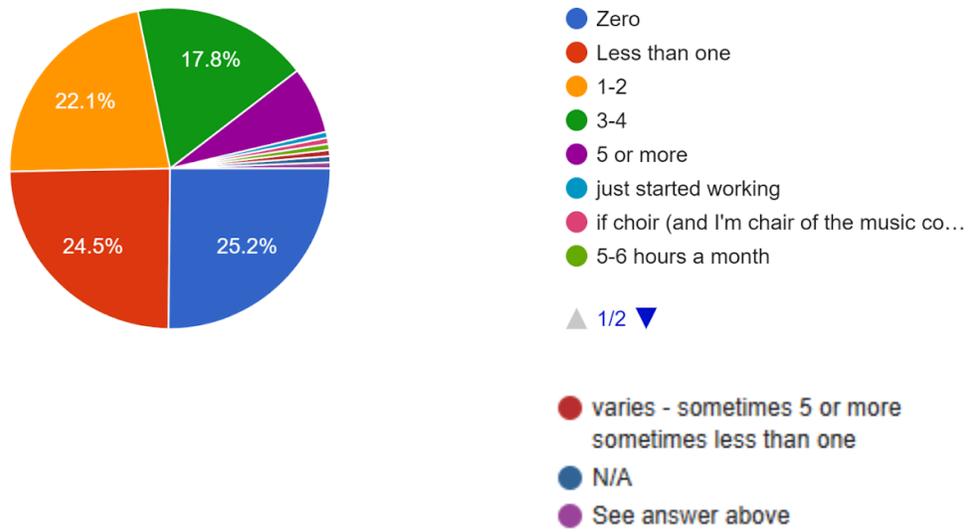
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### 3. Participation and Attendance

#### Visual G — Weekly Volunteer/Participation Hours

In the last year, I have committed approximately \_\_\_ volunteer hours to the work of the congregation each week

163 responses



- Implication: Strong volunteer base; new ministers will find experienced lay leaders and committees to partner with.

## Visual H — Frequency of In-Person Sunday Attendance

Approximately how many times per month do you come in person on Sundays?

166 responses



- None
- Zero
- Since COVID, my attendance has bee...
- As needed
- 3-4 times per month
- 2x yearly (I was an employee, now liv...
- Because of being I'll it has been inter...
- 2-3 times per year
- Currently i live too far to attend in pers...
- Generally do not attend anymore.
- have not been attending this year
- almost never
- Recently I have not been attending se...
- I am an out of state student so I atten...
- NOT AT ALL, [DON'T DRIVE]
- depends
- When I'm able to. Sometimes work prevents me from attending as much as I would prefer
- When I'm not there, I check in online. I usually attend in person 1-2x/month.

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## 4. Why People Attend: Core Motivations

Recurring themes from open responses:

- **Worship & Music:** Choir, music leadership, and inspiring sermons are repeatedly cited as primary draws.
- **Community & Fellowship:** Coffee hour, small groups, and a sense of belonging are central.
- **Intellectual & Spiritual Growth:** Many attend for intellectual stimulation, diverse spiritual perspectives, and personal reflection.
- **Social Justice & Service:** Engagement in social action (Green Living, Hunger Task Force, UU the Vote) is a core identity marker.

Applicant guidance: Emphasize experience in intergenerational ministry, collaborative governance, DEI action planning, and partnership with music and lay leaders.

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## 5. Expectations for the Minister

Top roles named by respondents:

- Leading inspiring worship services.
- Offering pastoral care and connecting personally with congregants.
- Fostering a sense of community and developing volunteers/lay leaders.
- Engaging children and youth.

Visual I — Most Important Roles of the Minister



## 6. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

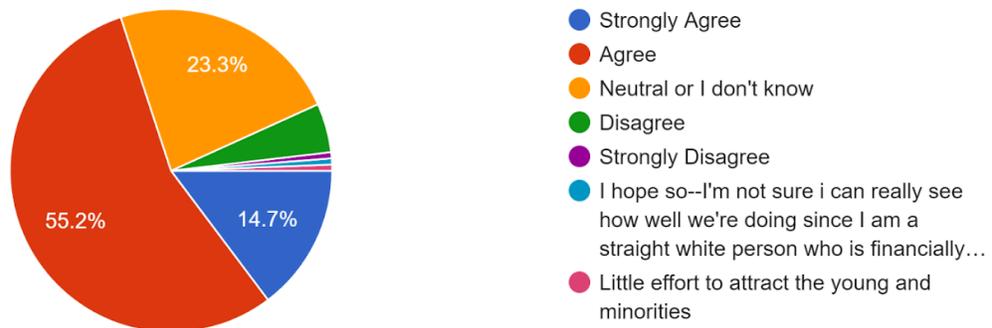
Perceptions: Respondents generally feel the congregation is making progress on DEI but note that deeper structural work is needed. Suggested actions include establishing intersectional anti-racism structures, continuing Beloved Conversations, and adopting clearer DEI goals.

Applicant guidance: Candidates should present concrete DEI experience and a plan for moving from awareness to measurable action (recruitment goals, leadership diversification, culturally responsive programming, newcomer listening sessions).

### Visual K — Our Progress Towards Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Inclusion

I feel this congregation is making progress in its work toward diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion.

163 responses



## 7. Strengths, Risks, and Opportunities

### Strengths:

- High volunteer capacity and institutional knowledge.
- Strong music and worship program that draws people.
- Clear social justice identity and active committees.
- Educated, engaged membership that supports thoughtful programming.

### Risks:

- Aging membership and limited youth presence.
- Racial/ethnic homogeneity that may limit growth and cultural vitality.
- Potential volunteer burnout among long-tenured leaders.

#### Opportunities:

- Intentional youth and family outreach to diversify age profile.
- DEI structural initiatives to broaden membership and leadership.
- Leadership development programs to cultivate new lay leaders and reduce burnout.

## Appendix: Word Clouds, Themes, and Sample Language from Respondents

#### Sample verbatim excerpts:

- Concerns about change: Kikanza's status; music program; communications; pace of change; collaborative governance; decreasing support for RE;
  - "The music program. Also I would be very disturbed if the new minister did not get along with current staff. I want someone who brings us together and values the contribution of each of us."
  - "To make changes without consulting others, made comments that were negative about a different belief system."
  - "Too quickly (and without taking time to listen first)"
  - "Our openness to explore the wisdom and common principles of the world's great religions."
  - "how welcoming UUSM is to lgbtq+ people"
  - "our getting to see Kikanza enough!"
  - "Commitment to families"
  - "our board or worship associate structure in a way which those involved don't agree with"
  - "The pro-human rights or pro-animal rights orientation, or arbitrarily changed the staff without consultation of the board"
  - the music program. Also I would be very disturbed if the new minister did not get along with (or felt threatened by) current staff, including Saundra, Kikanza, Jessica, or Alfie. I want someone who brings us together and values the contribution of each of us."
  - "the children's involvement in the Sunday service"





- "Get our congregation involved in the home building project called, 'Esperanza'"
  - "To recruit more young people, especially young people at colleges or universities. And how best to teach spirituality to young people, something that is very much needed. "
  - "the age distribution to include more children, 20-, 30, and 40-somethings; added singles meet-ups with other UU congregations and/or faith communities"
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Visual N — We Are...

You should choose us because we are:





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