

A 2018 Study of the:

Faith Views of Bow Valley Millennials

By: Caylee LaBranche in partnership with St. Michael Anglican Church of Canmore



Photo by Caylee LaBranche

This survey project was conducted in 2018 between the months of July and August, and the first week of September. Survey responses were collected through an online survey most prominently advertised through Facebook, between August 10th, 2018 and September 3rd, 2018. The survey targeted those ages 18-40, however, survey data was collected for those older than the target age range and although their data is not included in this report, St. Michael's does have that information.

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Desired Outcomes of the Survey:

These outcomes were created by St. Michael's Anglican Church to structure the focus of the survey.

3 over-arching outcomes:

1. Understand the views of young adults/parents (ages 18-40) on religion/faith and or spirituality.
2. Understand if young people are searching for spiritual development.
3. Understand what churches in the Bow Valley can do to better meet the spiritual needs of young adults.

Outcomes Expanded:

1. Understand the views of young adults/parents on religion

- a. What was their spiritual upbringing?
- b. What is their current spiritual identity?
- c. Do they have overall positive or negative views of faith and/or religion?
 - i. If negative, what about religion makes this so?
- d. Do they have overall positive or negative views of Christianity?
 - i. If negative, what about Christianity makes this so?

2. Understand if young people are searching for spiritual development

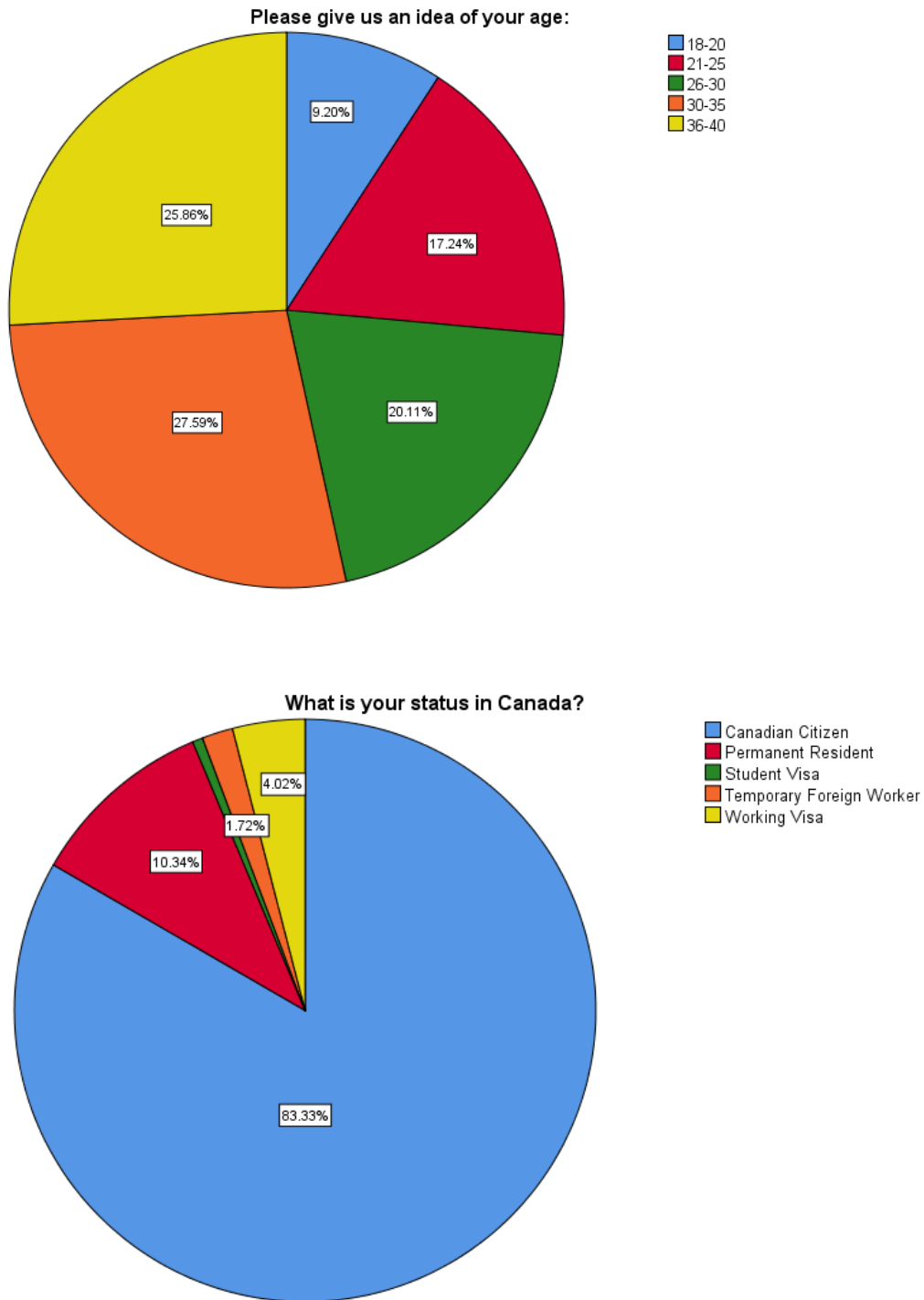
- a. Do they have a desire to attend church?
 - ii. If yes, then what barriers are keeping them from attending currently?
 - iii. If no, how do they view their spiritual needs, how do they meet these needs?
- b. How does the outdoor-focused nature of the Bow Valley impact their view of spirituality and how young people meet their needs?
- c. What role do parents want faith and religion to play in their child's life/upbringing of their child(ren)?

3. Understand what churches in the Bow Valley can do to better meet the spiritual needs of this demographic

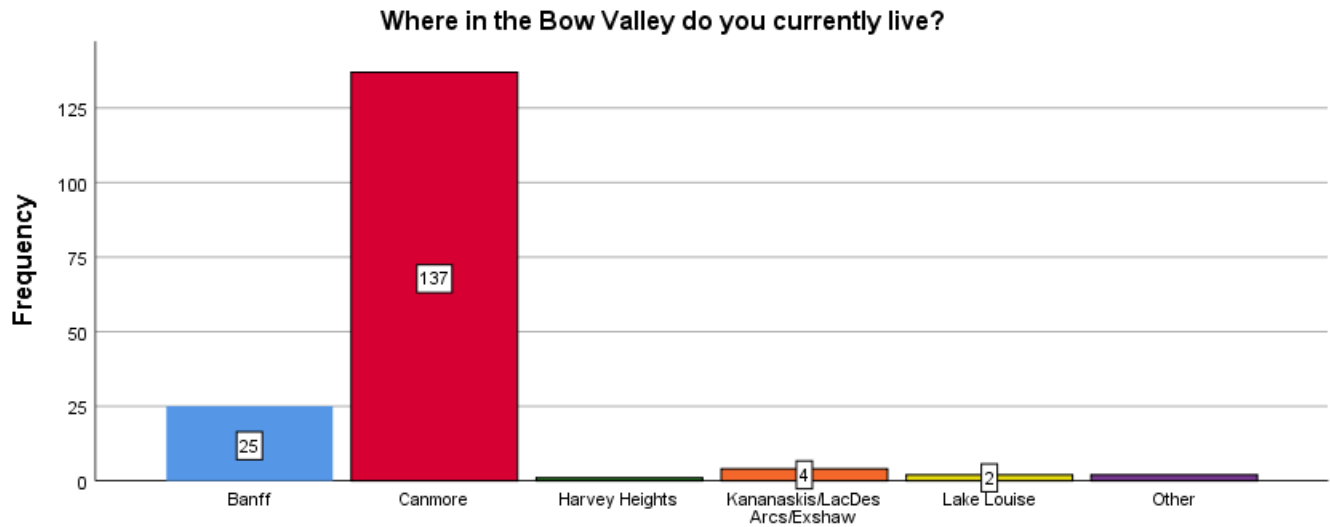
- a. Are there non-denominational programs young adults/young families want from the church?
- b. Are there denominational programs young adults/young families want from the church?

Section 1: Demographics:

Those in the 30-40 age range make up more just over half of the survey respondents.

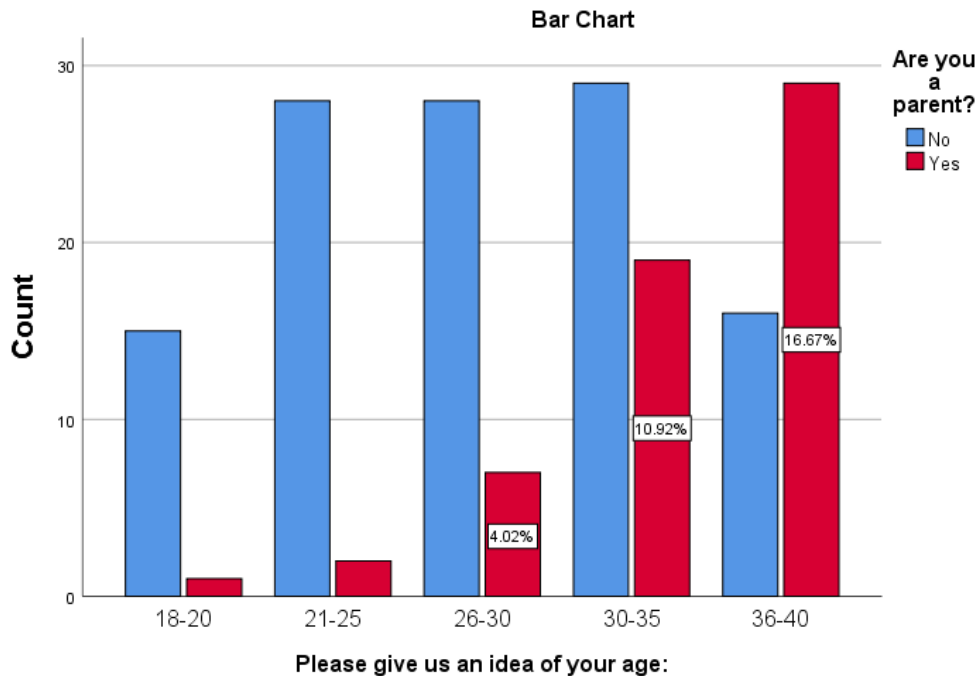


Where they answered from:



Where in the Bow Valley do you currently live?

There are a high percentage of responses from Canmore. This is likely because of the even more transient nature of Banff, where this survey was advertised in Facebook groups that transient community members may not be as aware of. Also, because St. Michael's runs Food and Friends in Canmore, that allowed us better access to Canmore's young adults than Banff's young adult population.



The questions above help us distinguish 3 clear groups.

Group 1: those ages 18-25. This age group is general single, looking for partners (or enjoying being single) and may be transitioning to look to settle down but not necessarily ready yet. They do not have kids.

Group 2: Is those in the 26-35 age range who do not have kids yet. They are more mature than group 1, generally have set careers and have either settled down or are working towards settling down. They may be thinking about children but do not have kids yet. Some will be single, some will not be.

Group 3: Those between ages 26-35 WITH children and those ages 30-40. This will allow us to focus on groups for those with children, as well as events just for adults in similar age ranges.

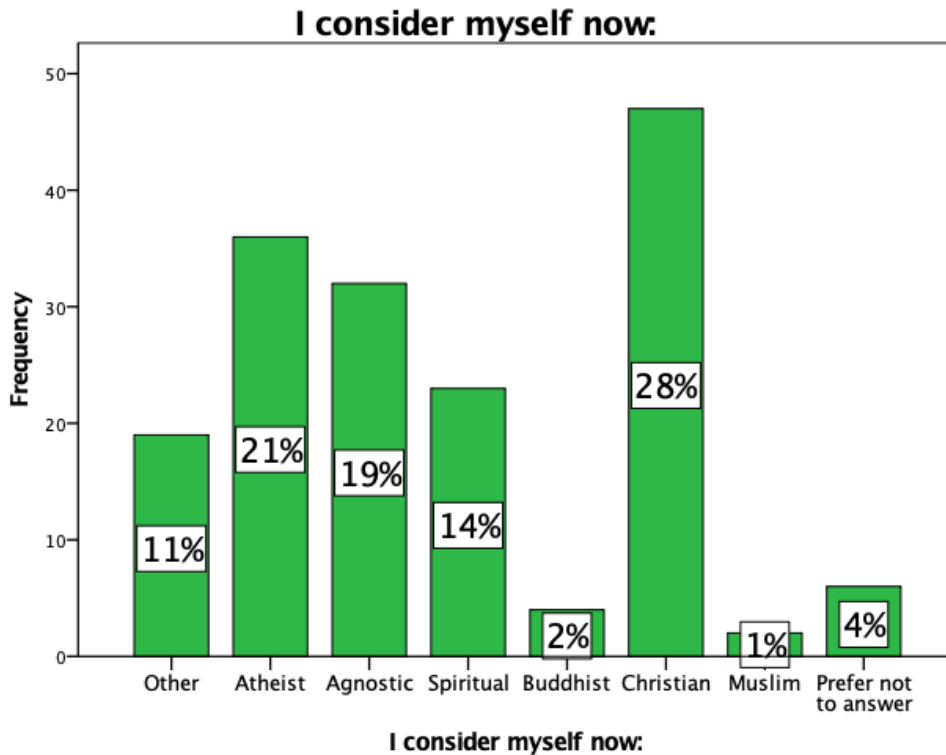
Group	Number of People:	Percent of Total:
Group 1:	46	26%
Group 2:	57	33%
Group 3:	71	41%
Total:	174	100%

The point of distinguishing these groups is that funding for programming is limited and the interests will differ for these three groups. Therefore, planning for each group separately will allow the church to better create programming that attracts their target population while running successful events. 18-25-year-old adults without children are unlikely to want to attend the same events as those ages 30-40 who's conversation mostly surrounds their children and set livelihoods, and vice versa. Therefore, creating events that are designed for a specific age group better meet the needs of that demographic while enticing them to attend future programming. For these reasons, the survey data was then cross-analyzed with these 3 groups and the below data shows how they responded to each survey question. It is important that we be careful when comparing *between* the 3 groups as there are different amounts of people in each group. Therefore, just because it seems like many more people in group 3 respond positively to something than group 1, it might just reflect the fact that there are many more people in group 3.

* 252 people took the survey in total. However, this report only focuses on those between ages 18-40 and only people who answered more than just the demographic section of questions.

Section 2: Personal Spirituality:

It is important to consider when analyzing the following questions is what current faith perspectives young adults were answering from:

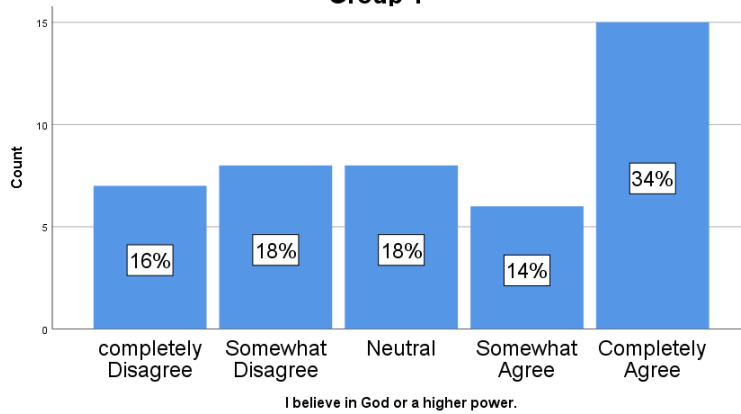


All persons who took the survey, regardless of their faith beliefs/if they have children or not (which will later on be used to ask different questions) answered the following questions:

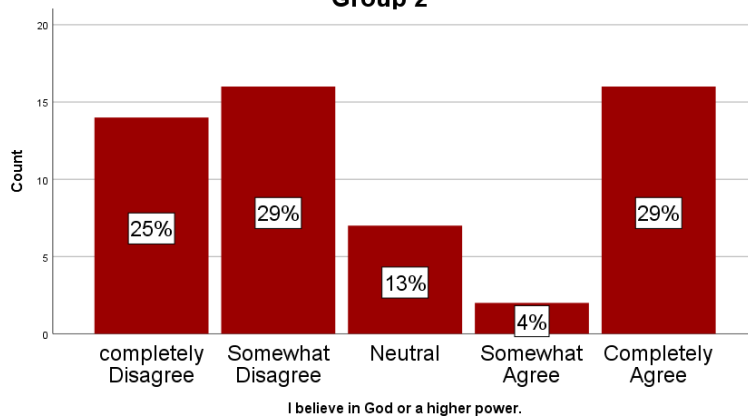
Please rate on a scale of 1 strongly **disagree**, to 5 strongly **agree** the following statements: (if you are not sure, or feel like you can't answer, please skip).

1. I believe in God or a higher power

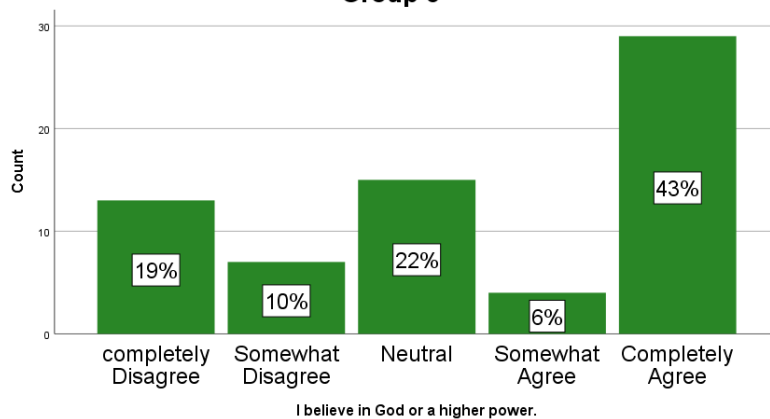
Group 1



Group 2

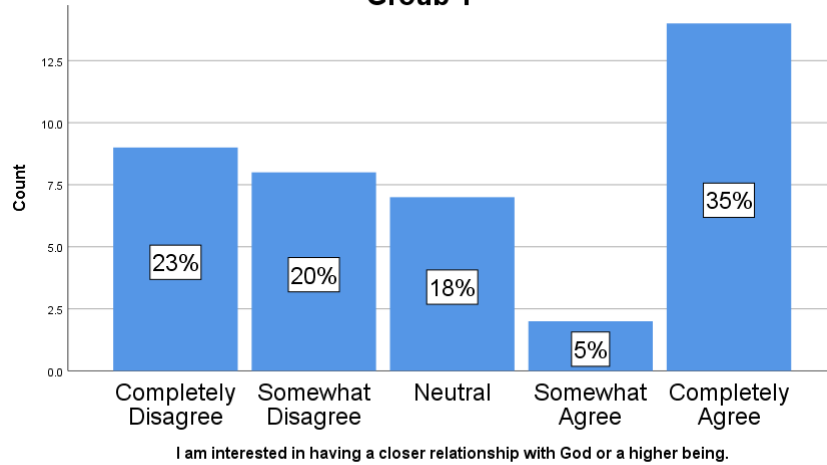


Group 3

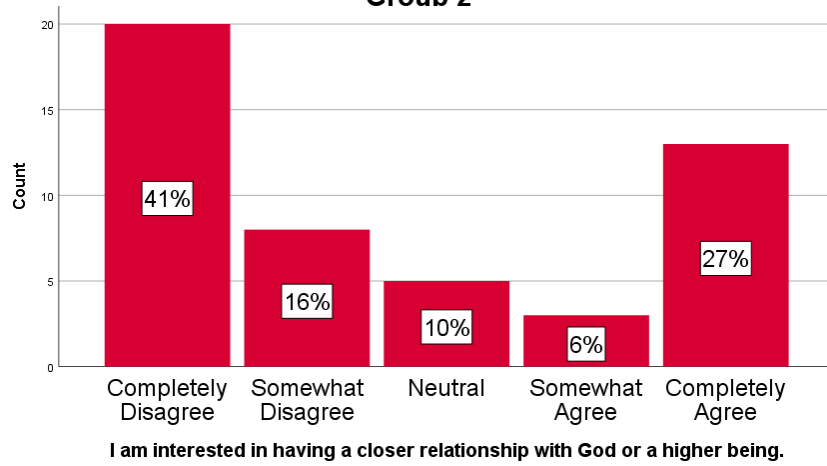


2. I am interested in having a closer relationship with God or a higher being.

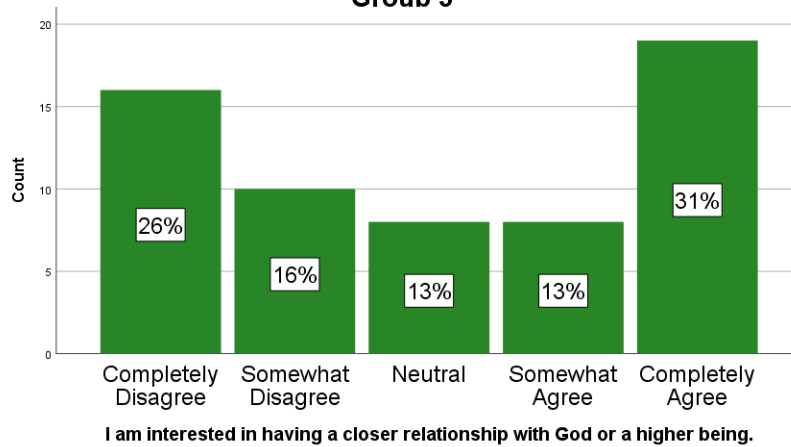
Group 1



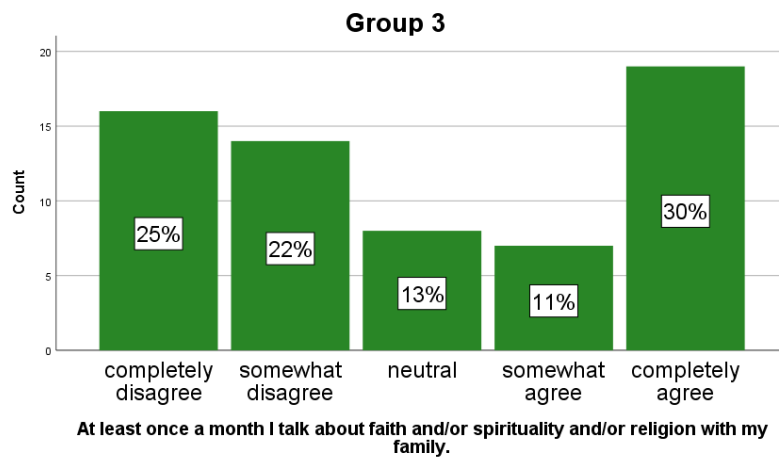
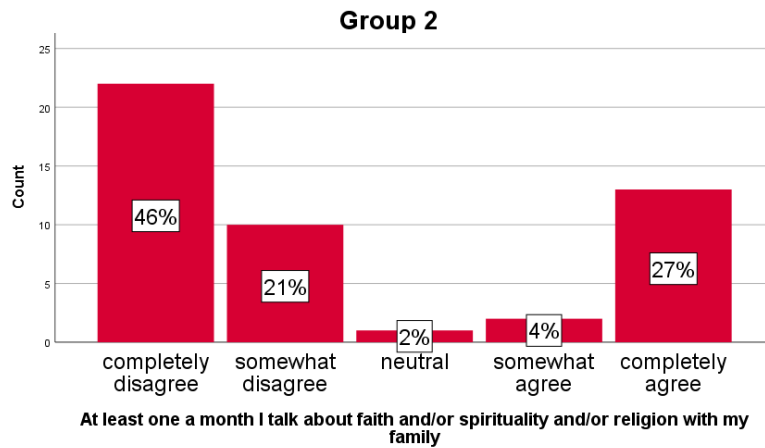
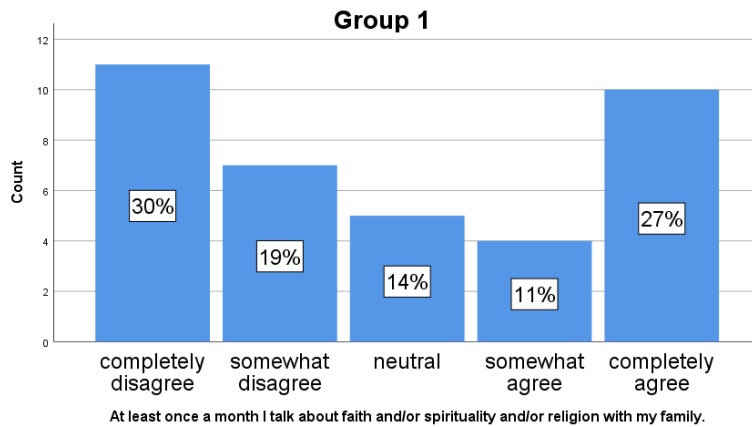
Group 2



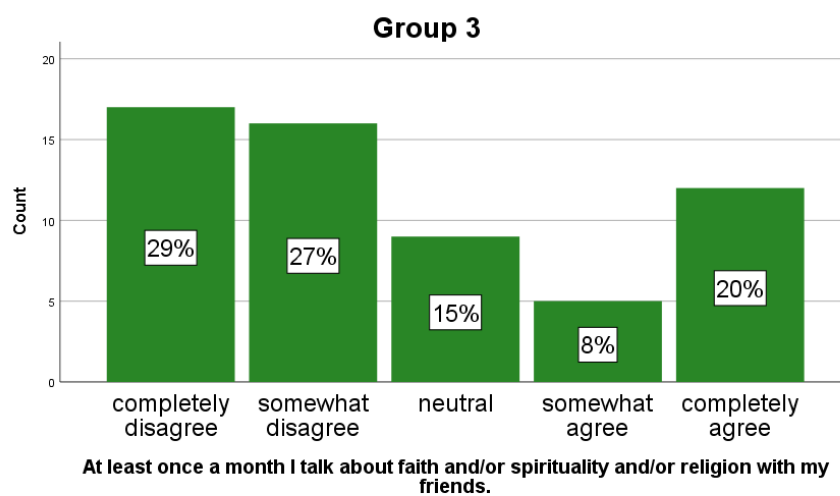
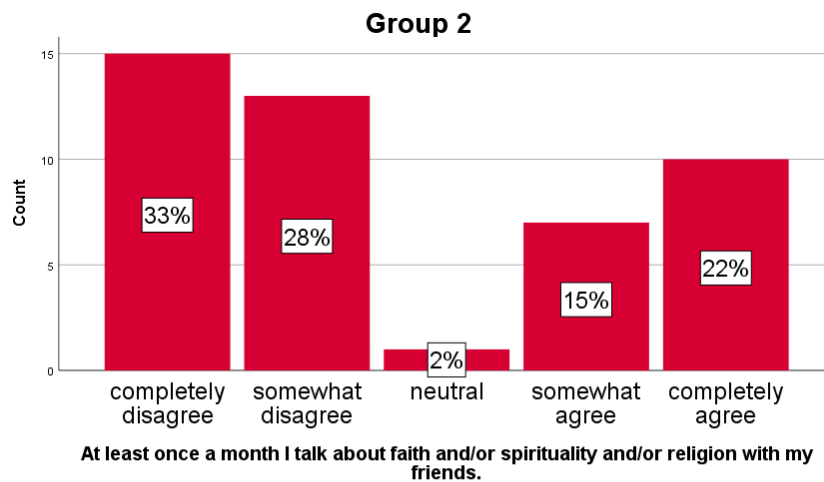
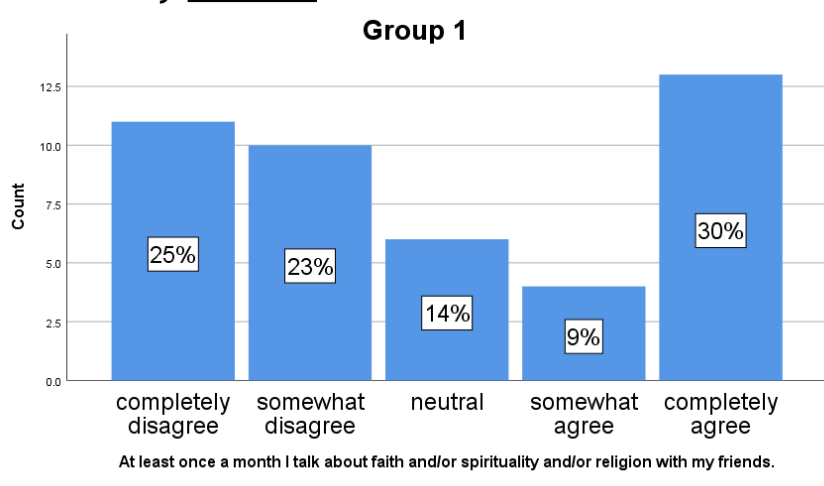
Group 3



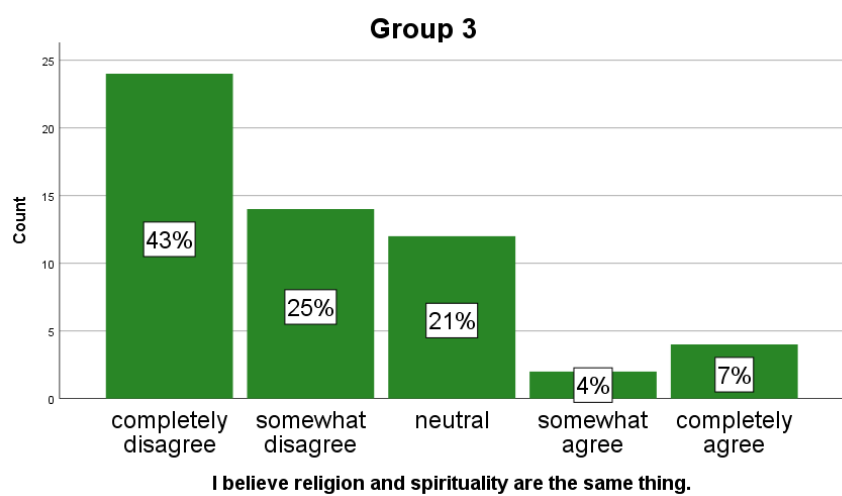
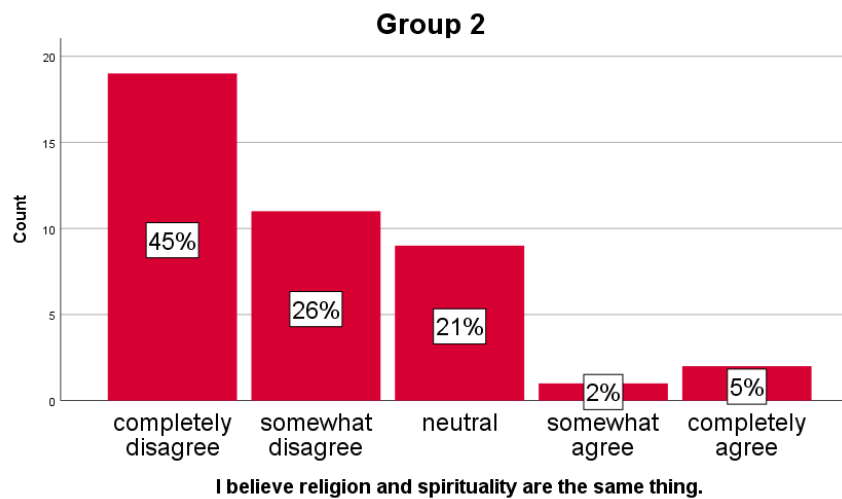
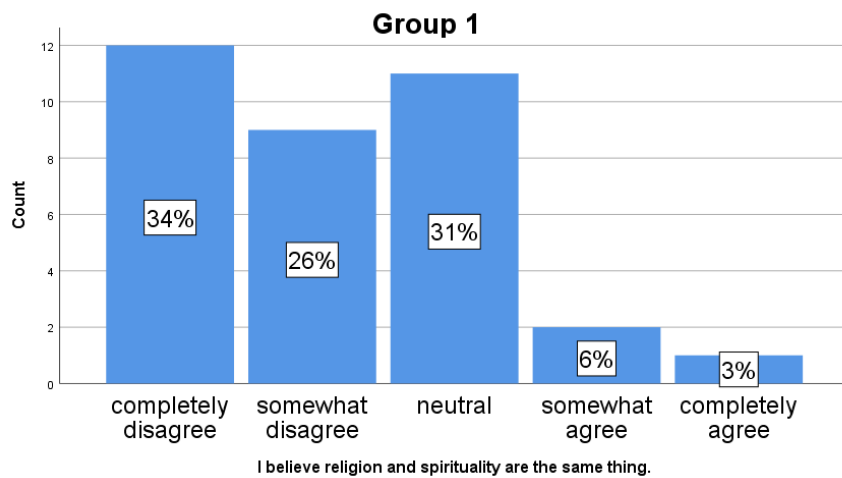
3. At least once a month I talk about faith and/or spirituality and/or religion with my family.



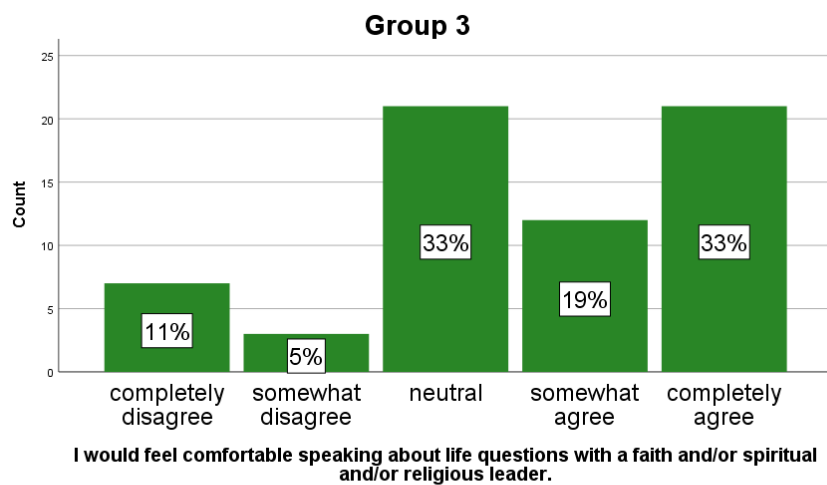
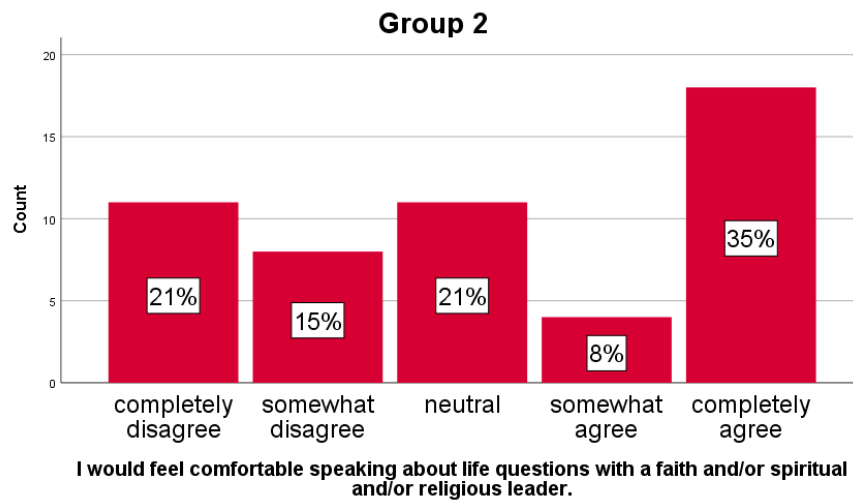
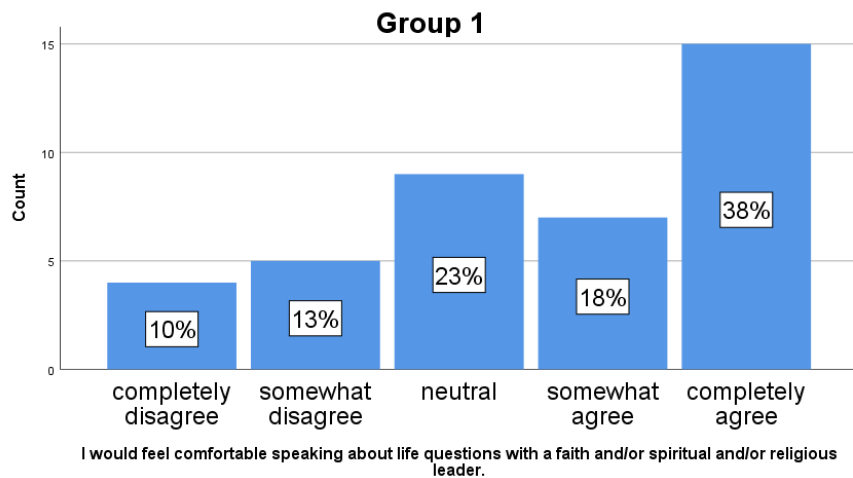
4. At least once a month I talk about faith and/or spirituality and/or religion with my friends.



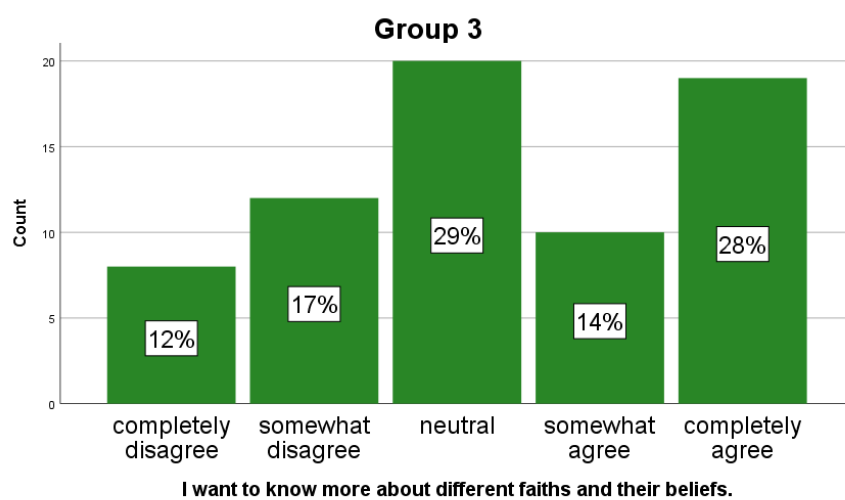
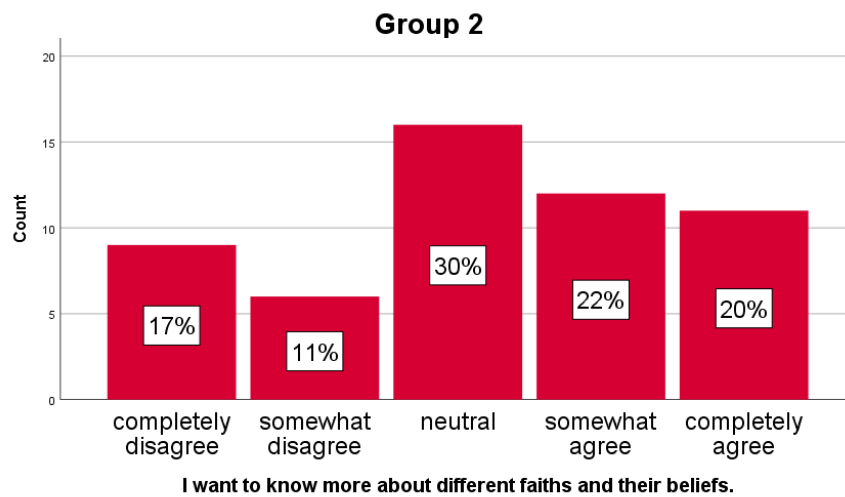
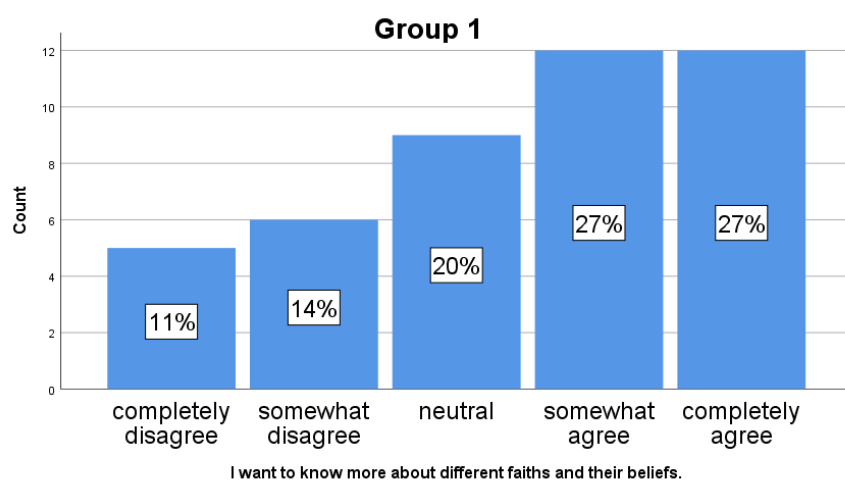
5. I believe religion and spirituality are the same thing.



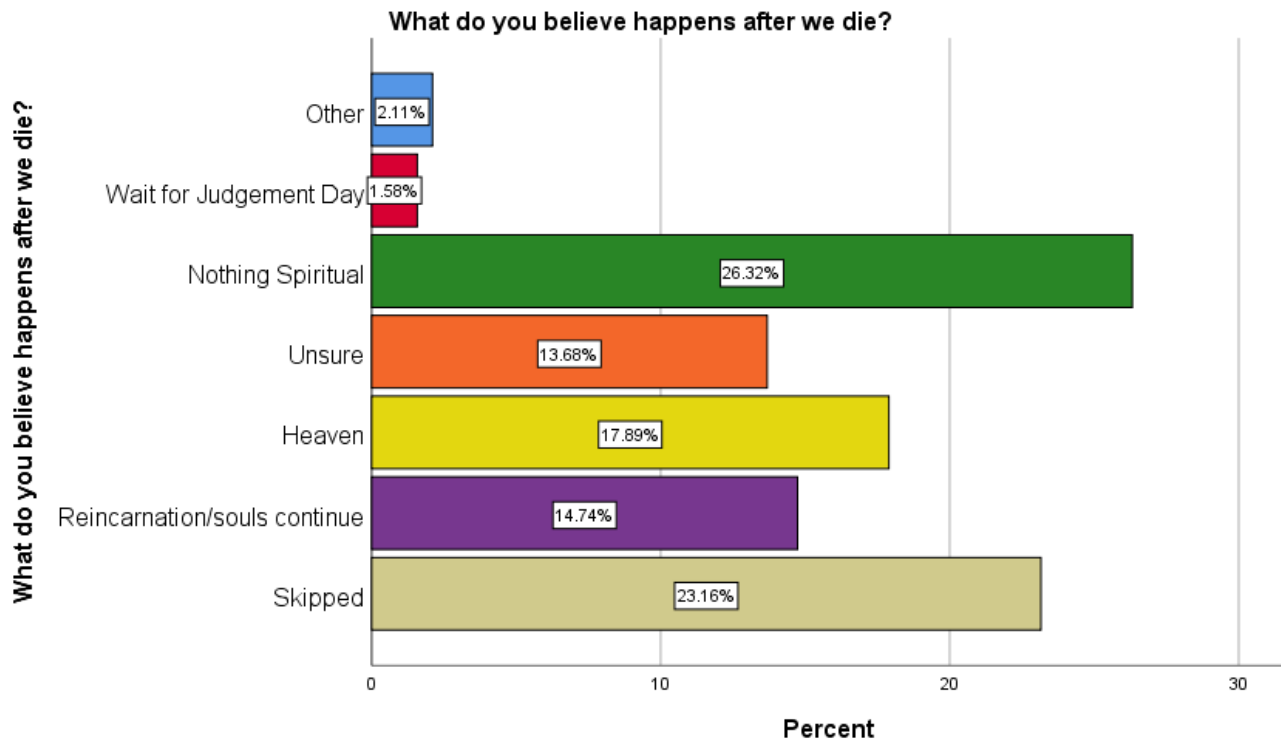
6. I would feel comfortable speaking about life questions with a faith and/or spiritual and/or religious leader.



7. I want to know more about different faiths and their beliefs.



8. What do you believe happens after we die?



Examples of responses for each:

Reincarnation:

“We transfer to another world. Called the hereafter”

Heaven:

“We face our Creator, and the consequences of our choices to believe and follow him or not.”

Unsure:

“I believe I have no idea. I'm banking on reincarnation, because I want to be an otter.”

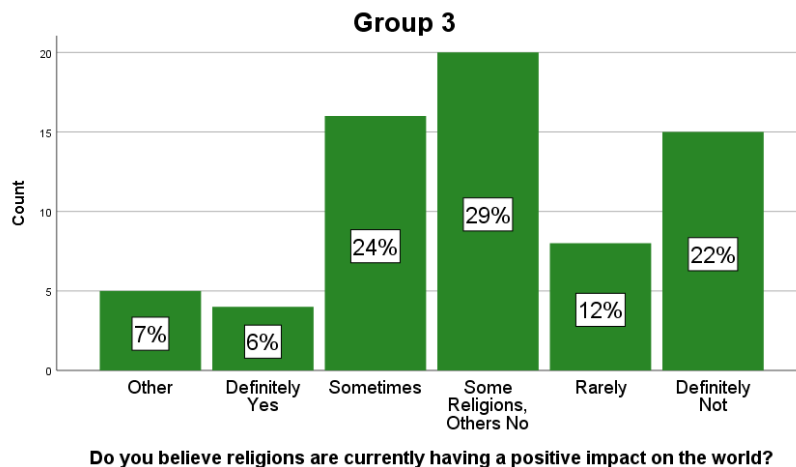
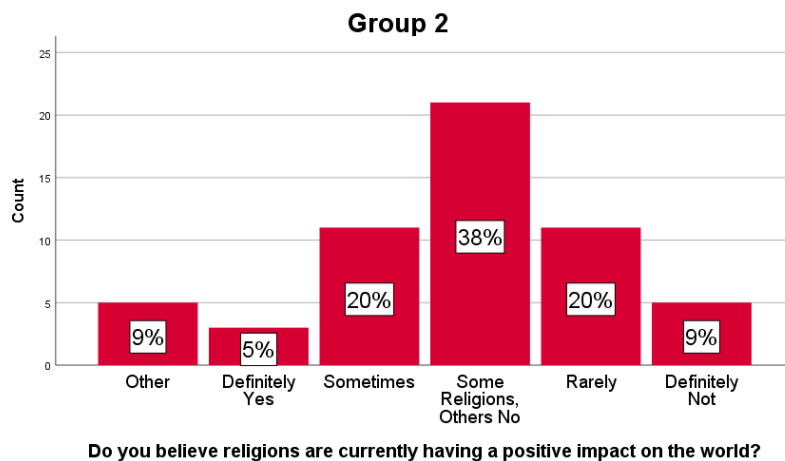
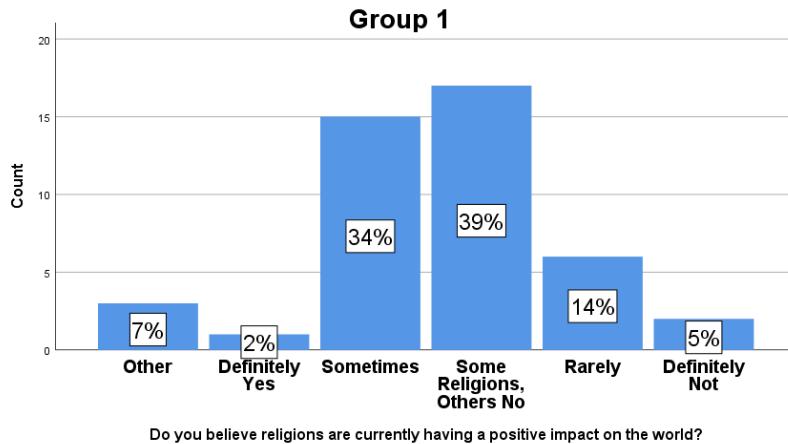
Nothing Spiritual:

“Worm food”

Identifying faith:

Please answer this section to help us understand your personal views on religion and relationship with faith.

9. Do you believe religions are currently having a positive impact on the world?



Samples of the answers for “other”:

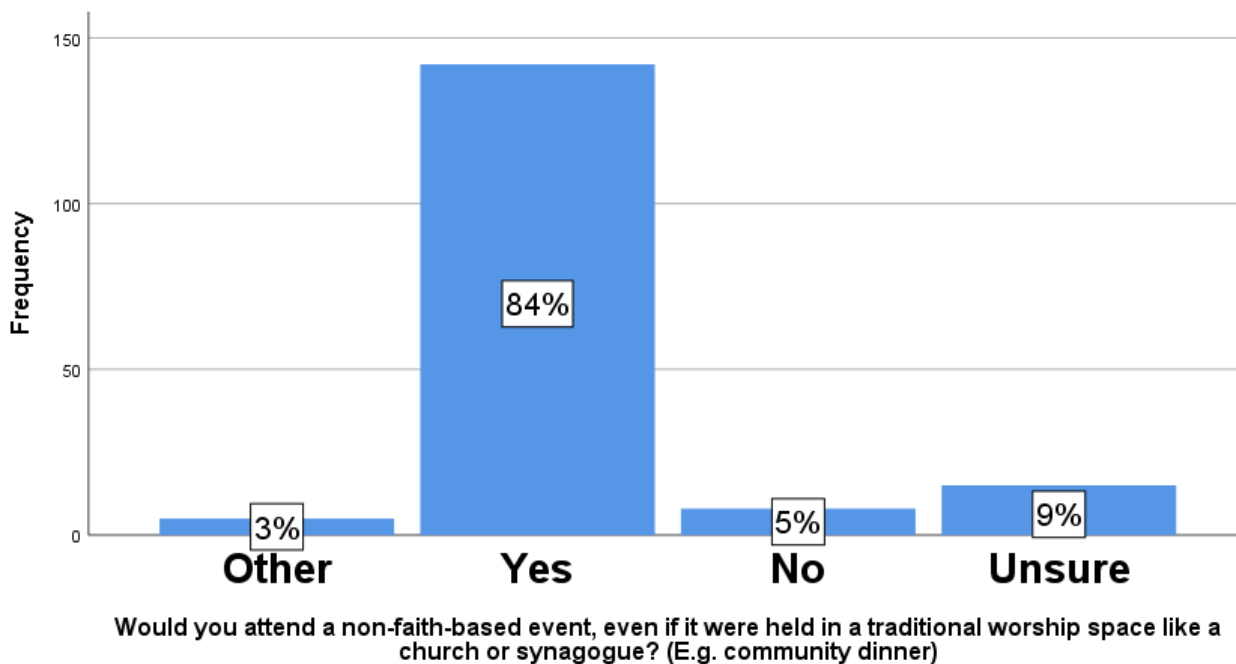
“I do not like the idea of saying “some religions yes, some religions no” I think all religions do some level of good. But it is how some people portray religion to wind it to meet their needs/ideas “

“Kinda a grey area- People of various faiths can do amazing things for the world, or make the world a more difficult place for others. Depends more on the individual rather than the religion in my mind.”

“I believe that Christianity, which is a relationship with Jesus Christ and not religion does have an impact on the world”

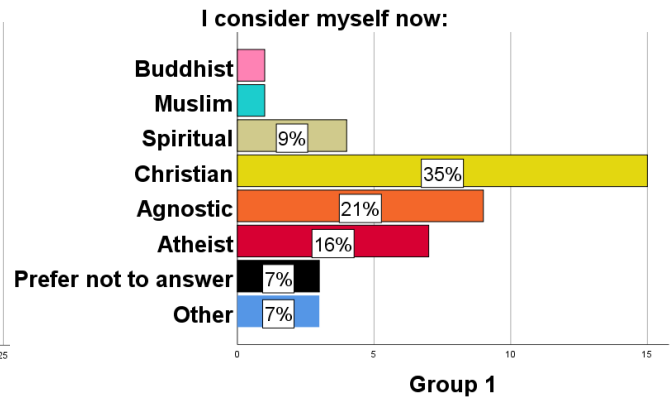
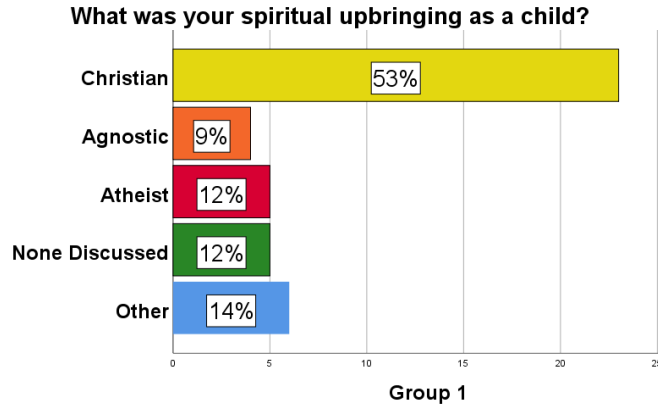
“they are the root cause of most of the world’s problems”

10. Would you attend a non-faith-based event, even if it were held in a traditional worship space like a church or synagogue? (E.g. community dinner)

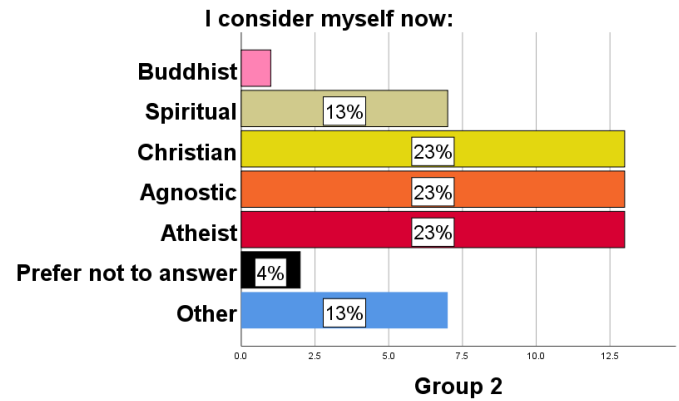
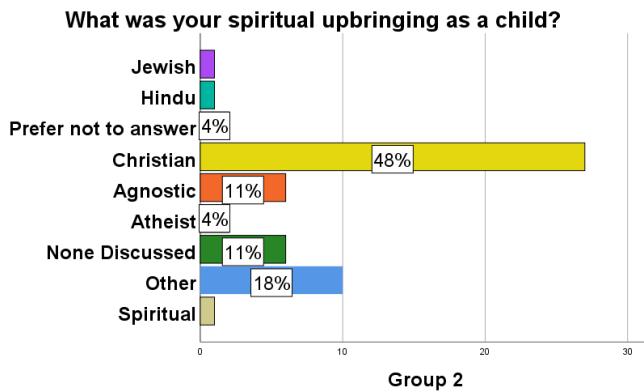


11. What was your spiritual upbringing as a child versus what faith do you currently identify with? (no numbers shown for categories with less than 4%).

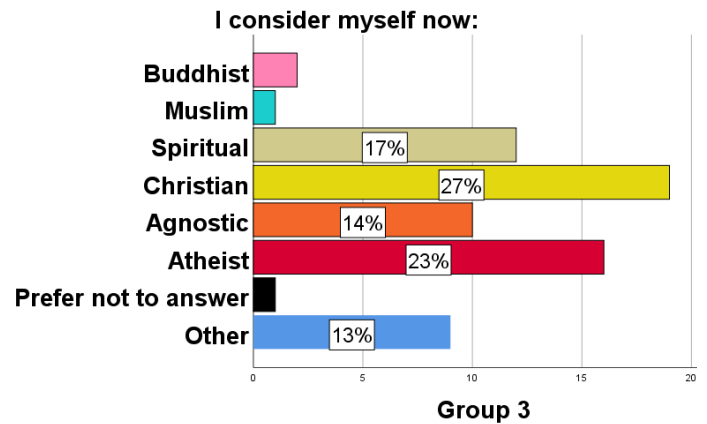
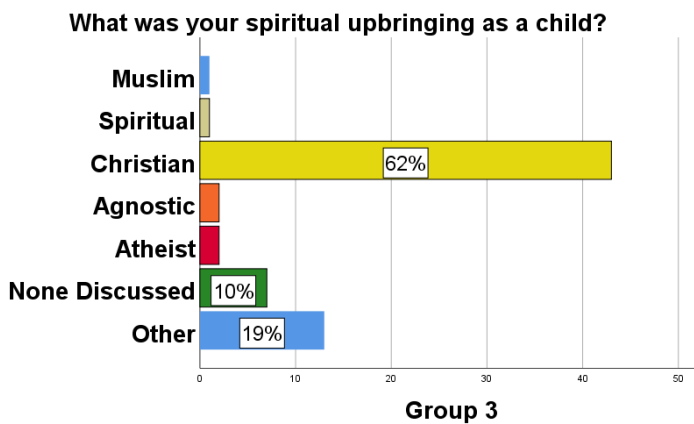
Group 1:



Group 2:



Group 3:



Some of the answers for other:

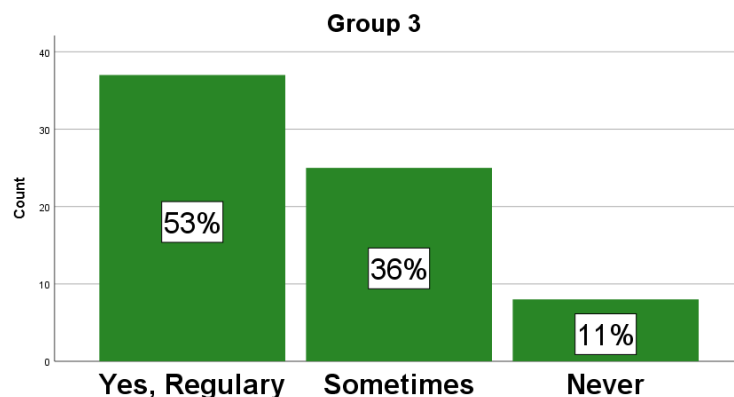
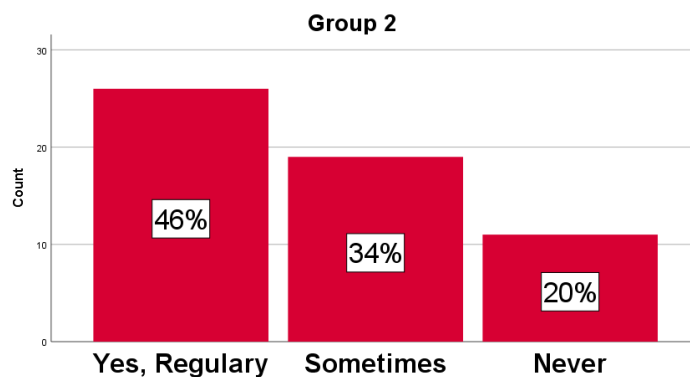
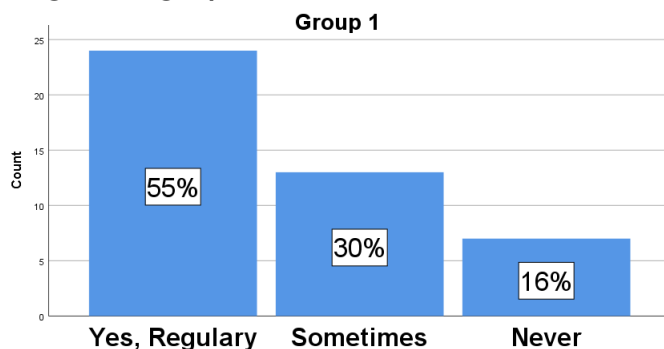
“Majority of other answers were ‘Catholic’”

“Orthodox”

“Parent had negative experience as a child in Catholic school. Was taught to be skeptical of organized religion”

“My parents brought me to church to experience religion. And then I could decide on my own”

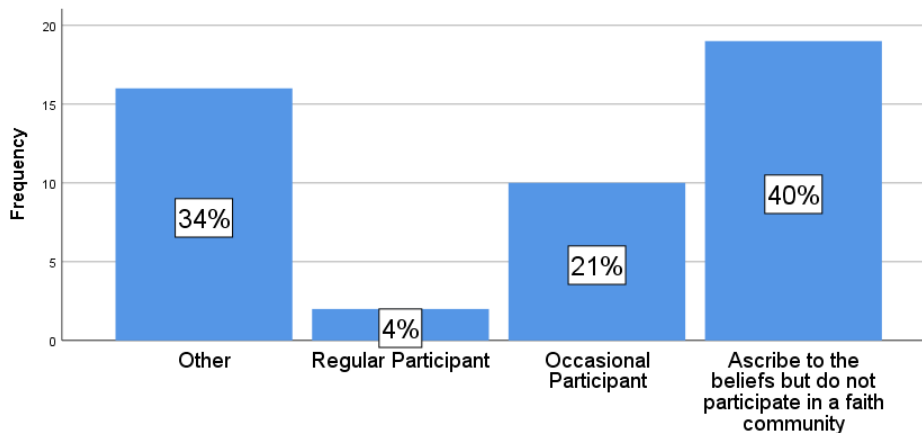
12. Did you participate in a faith and/or spiritual and/or religious community growing up?



Section 3: Participant in a Faith Community Other than Christianity

Only people who self-identified with a religion or spirituality, other than Christianity, answered this section. These questions help us understand if people's spiritual needs are being met in their preferred faith. As this category had so few participants, it was not broken down into groups based on age groups.

1. Which of these describes your participation in your faith community?



Which of these describes your participation in your faith community?

Examples of other responses:

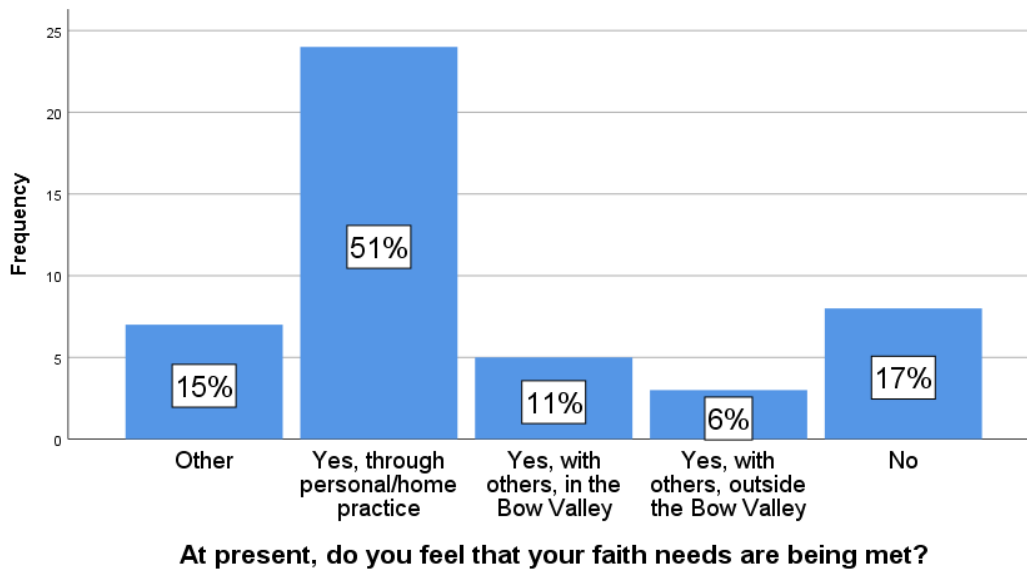
“I don’t have a faith community”

“Continue to participate in activities outside on Sundays with my family”

“No longer participating”

“Participate during holidays”

2. At present, do you feel that your faith needs are being met?



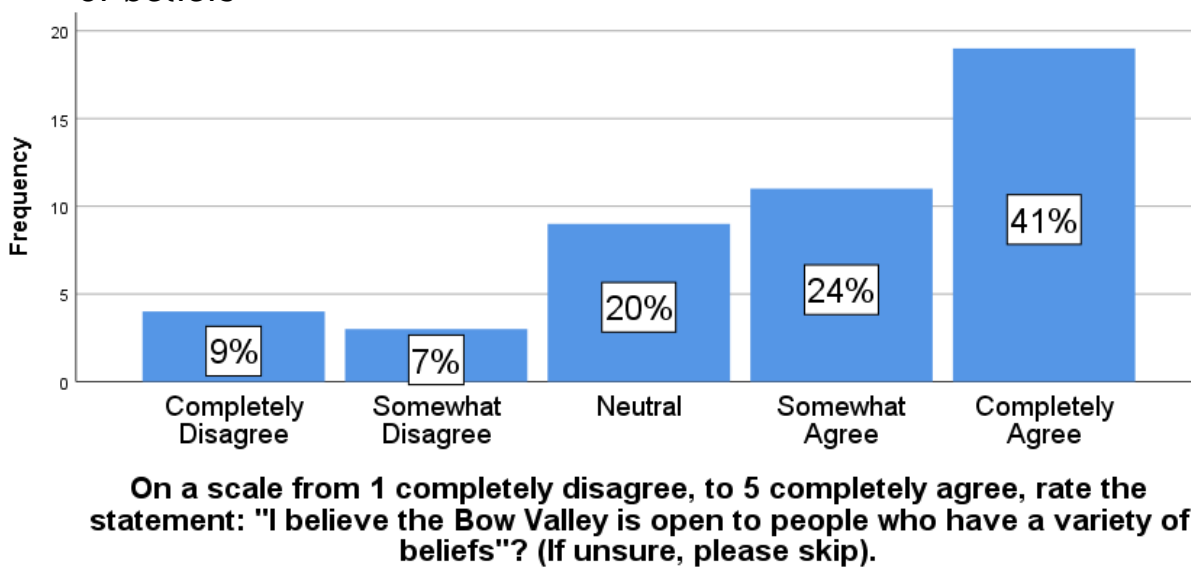
Examples of other responses:

“Relationships difficult to grow when housing insecure”

“There is no Buddhist church here”

“Don’t have any faith needs”

3. On a scale from 1 completely disagree, to 5 completely agree, rate the statement: “I believe the Bow Valley is open to people who have a variety of beliefs”



4. If you'd like to explain your reasoning for the above question, please explain:

"not overly religiously diverse I think"

"we were not welcome at a local church when my son was born out of wedlock. It was very disheartening"

"I find some people think that their religion is the one true religion and won't accept other people's beliefs on religious views"

"we do not have places of worship for a large variety of religions/belief"

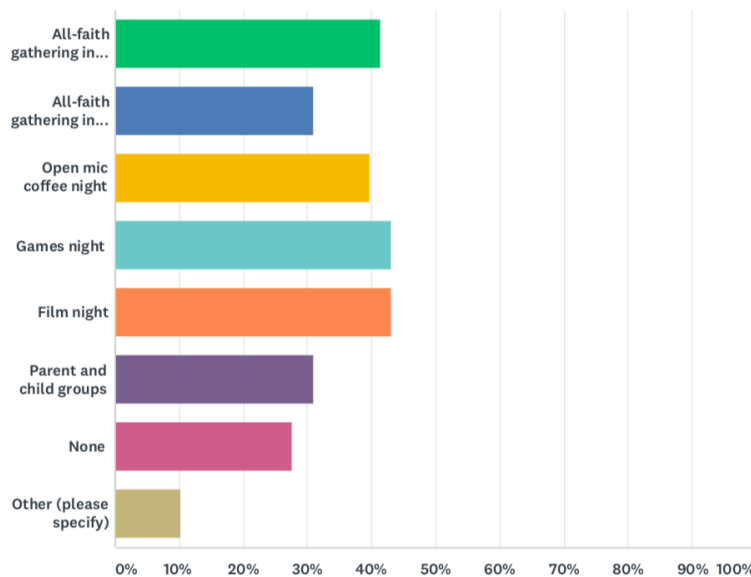
"I find Christians pretend to be open minded but just want to convert you to their particular brand of Christianity"

"Canmore is a high 'white' community and as a non-white person people are not so welcoming. I've been in several racism situations, definitely related with how welcoming it is about something 'different' in general"

"I think it is open to white faiths. But I think other faiths are ignored or mocked because they tend to be practiced by non-white people. I also think that in some cases new Canadians are being taken advantage of in their Canadian churches"

5. In which, if any, all-faith focused programs would you be willing to participate? (Please check all that apply and add other ideas in the “other” section). All-faith: meaning events that have a faith focus, but do not focus on any one faith in particular.

** (Due to the fact that people could choose multiple answers, I was unable to analyze this information separately for different age groups. That means the below answers include responses from those ages 40+ as well).



ANSWER CHOICES

- All-faith gathering in a public space
- All-faith gathering in a tradition worship space
- Open mic coffee night
- Games night
- Film night
- Parent and child groups
- None
- Other (please specify)

Other examples:

- all-faith gathering in an outdoor space
- art and craft nights
- knitting or poetry
- all faith organized teen nights
- skills learning in creative thinking, interpersonal communication
- group or individual bible study
- Theatre

6. In your opinion, what activities, spiritual and/or non-spiritual, could churches offer to improve your life in the Bow Valley ? (For example, Food and Friends, the free non-religious dinner every Monday night at St. Michael's).

Top 5 activities people chose: (this question was open ended. Meaning people came to these conclusions without any prompting).

1. Either said they supported the continuation of Food and Friends or wanted more community meals
2. Music nights/concerts
3. Movie nights
4. Game nights
5. Child based activities/play groups for parents and children to meet

Less popular but still re-occurring ideas included:

Cultural events

Art nights (like paint nights)

Community beautification opportunities (litter/graffiti cleaning and gardening)

Examples of responses:

“Activities such as Food and Friends are an excellent way to foster a sense of community in the Bow Valley. I would like to see more events such as this that encourage young people in the valley to get together.”

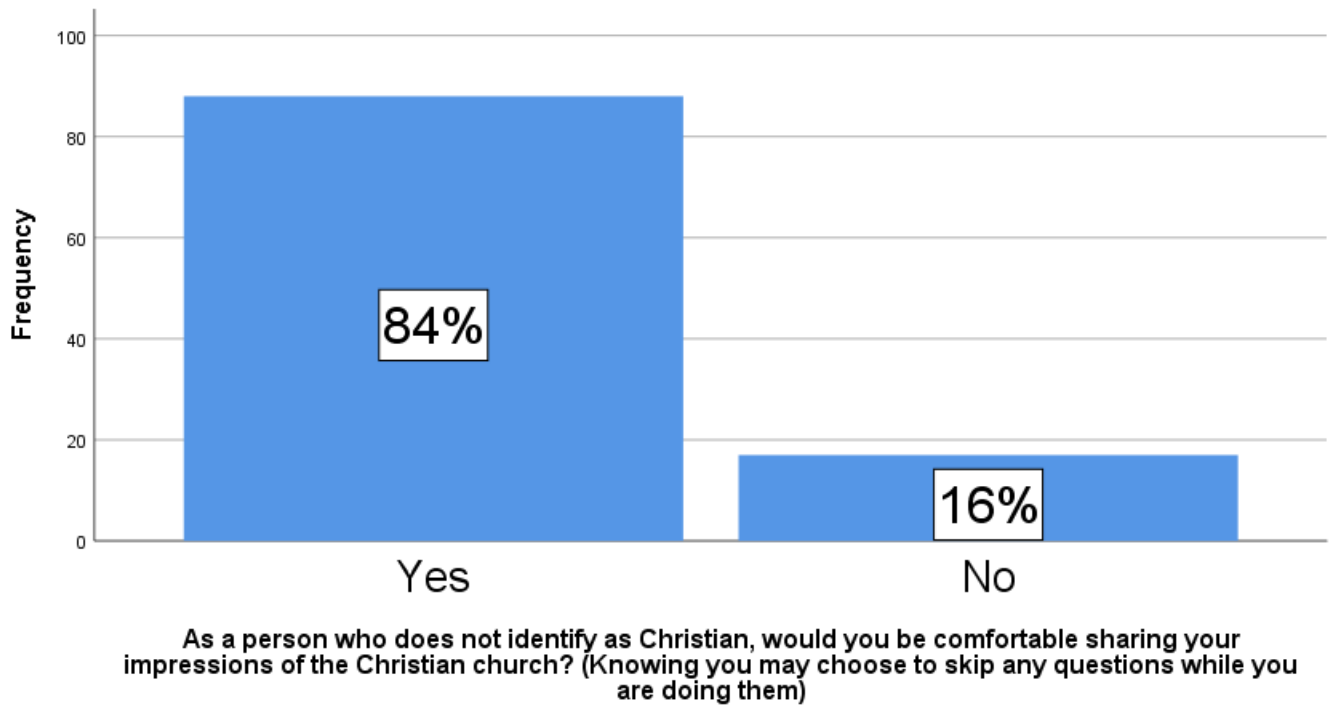
“Anything that helps bring people together. Food and Friends is a wonderful program. Maybe a monthly concert with local talent or a family movie night. Also, financial planning courses would be very helpful.”

” I just had this idea last night. Going on a hike and stopping at some point for a small shortened service, then continuing the hike. Not sure what to call it. Hike and Serve?”

“Food and friends is amazing! I think advocating for affordable housing is a big one for folks in that age group.”

“Baby item exchange and meet and greet for young parents.”

6. As a person who does not identify as Christian, would you be comfortable sharing your impressions of the Christian church?



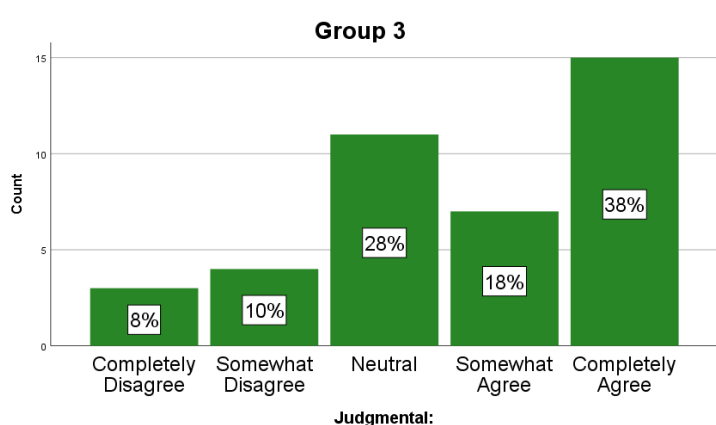
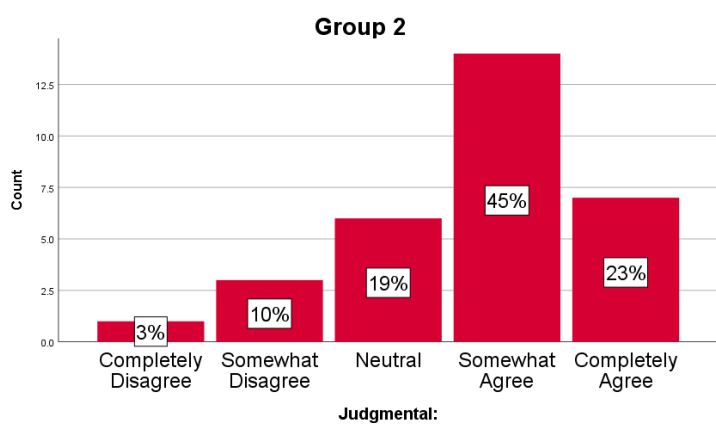
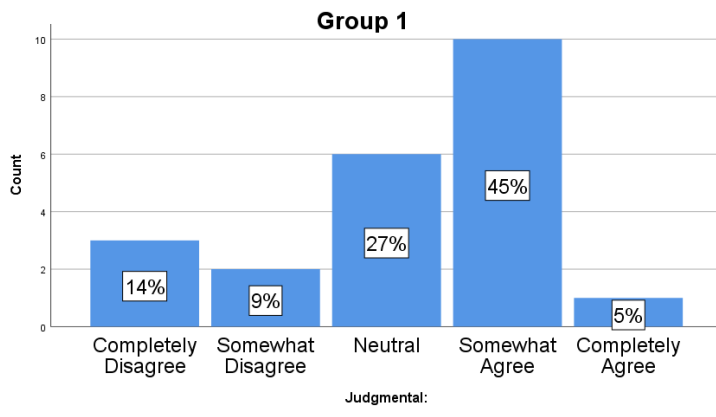
Section 4: Non-Christian Views of Christianity

Answered by All Non-Christians Who Chose “Yes” to #6 (above question):
Please rate on a scale of 1 totally **disagree**, to 5 totally **agree**, the following statements: (if you are not sure or think it completely depends on which denomination is being discussed, please skip).

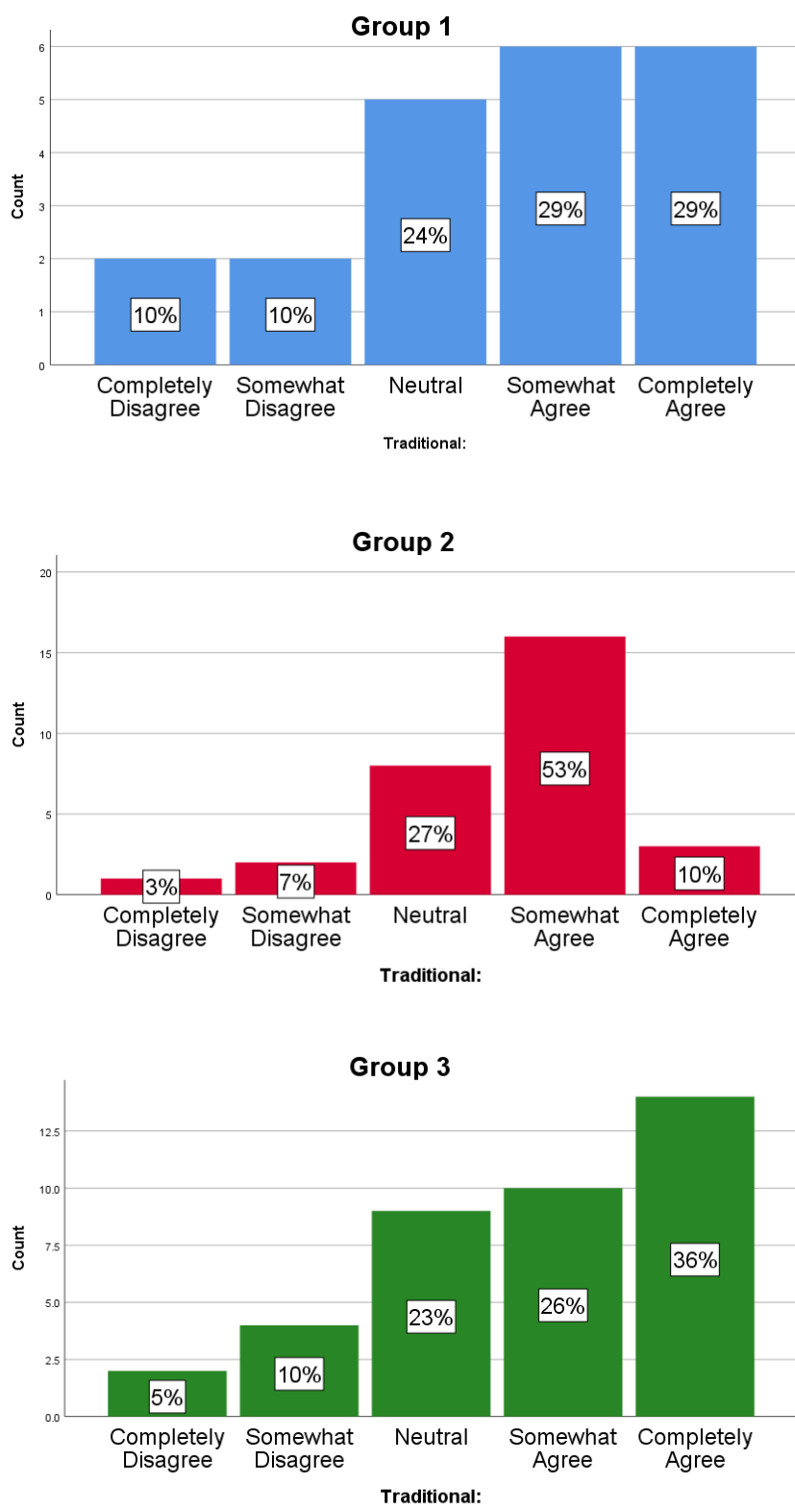
From your experience, do you feel Christianity is:

1. Judgemental:

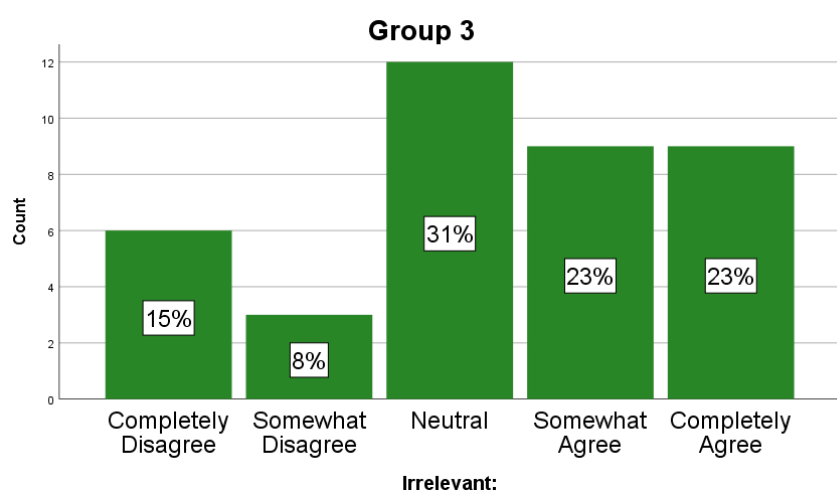
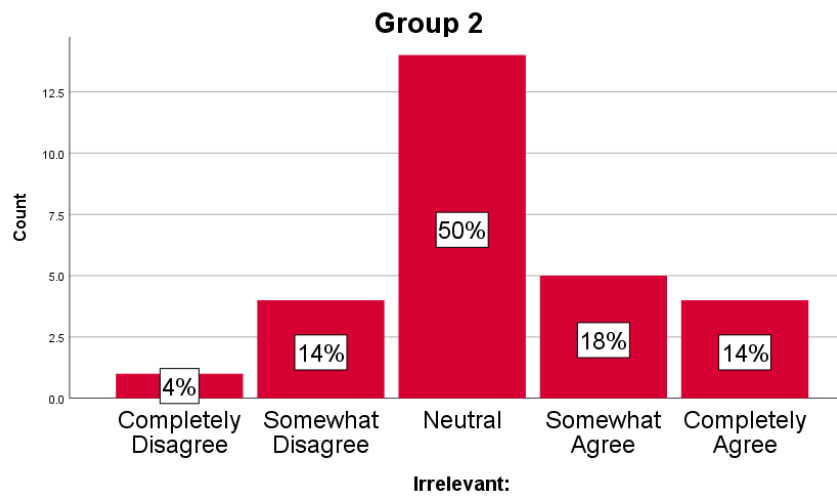
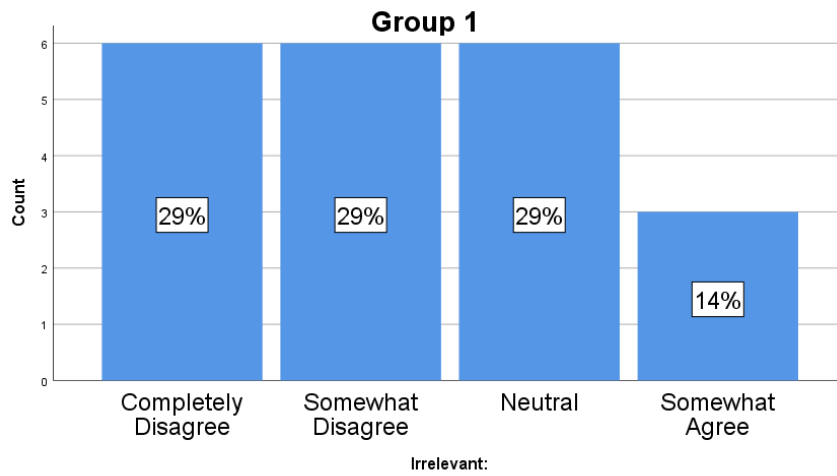
I would recommend analyzing not just how to change the perceptions of external members, but what attitudes and actions exist within the internal members that give the majority of the external community the impression that Christianity is judgemental



2. Traditional: (note this may or may not be viewed as a negative description by respondents)

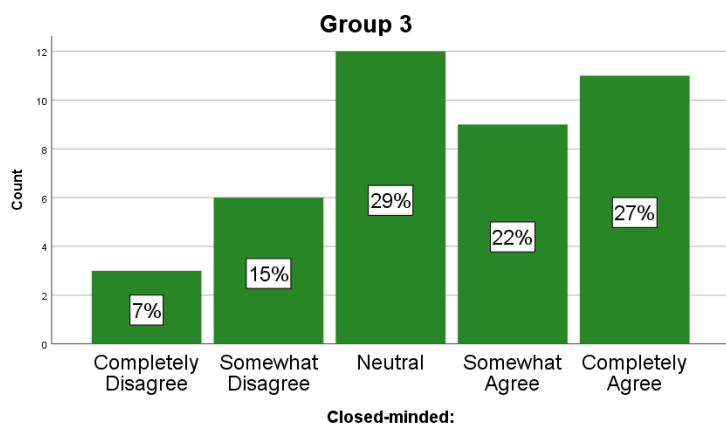
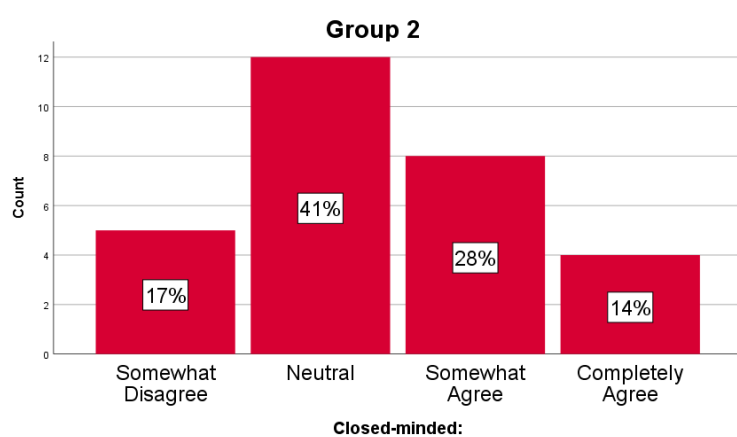
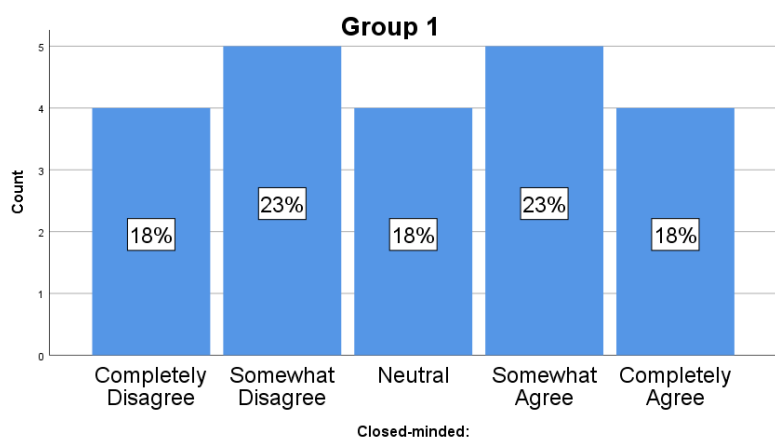


3. Irrelevant:



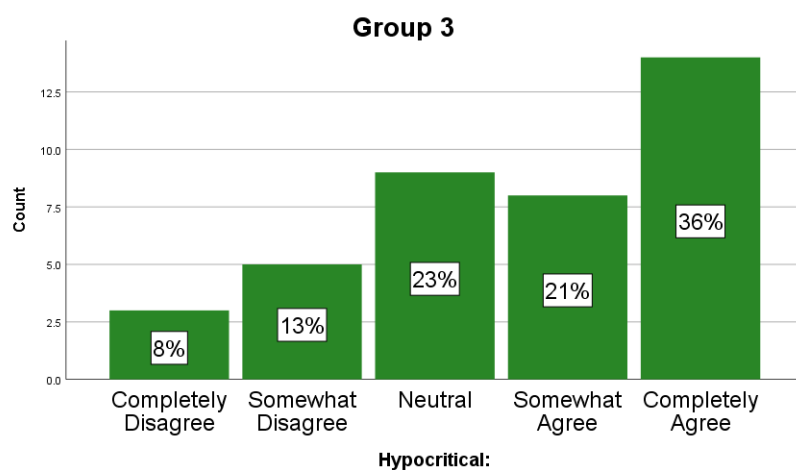
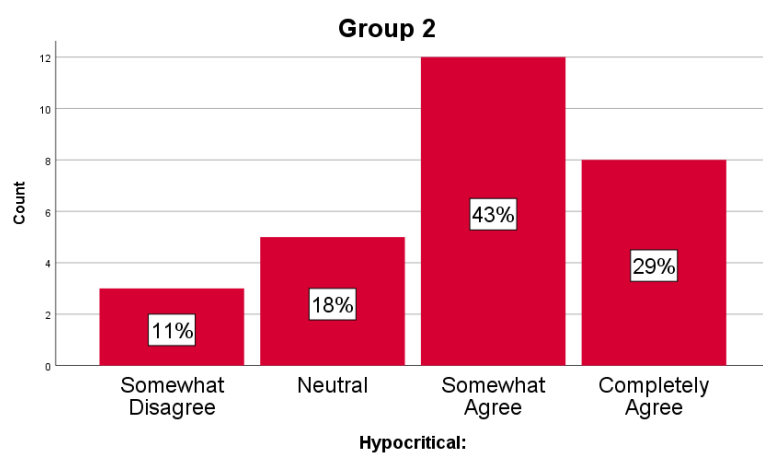
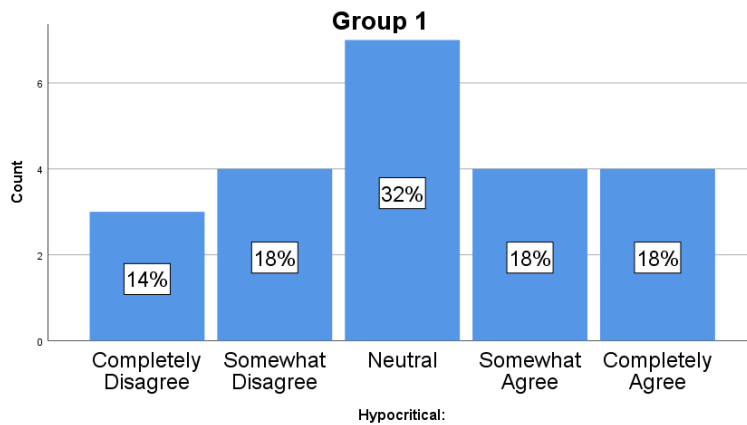
4. Closed-minded:

The majority of members of the external community believe that Christianity is close-minded. I would ask in what ways are we close-minded that external members are seeing?



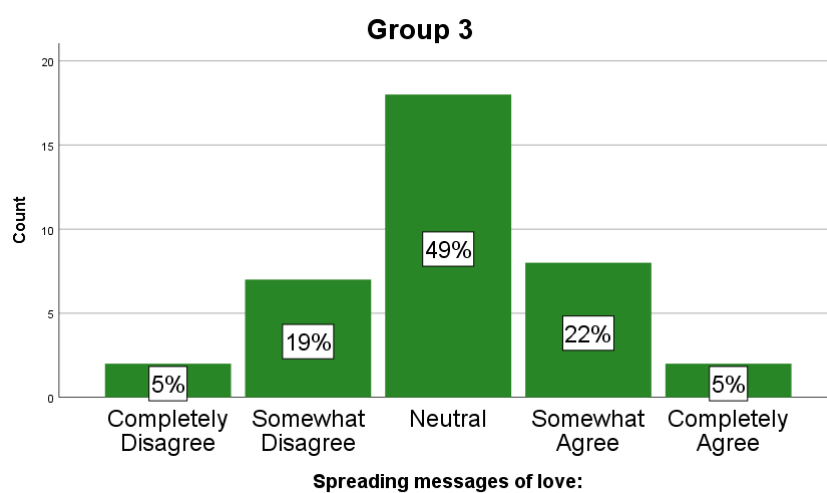
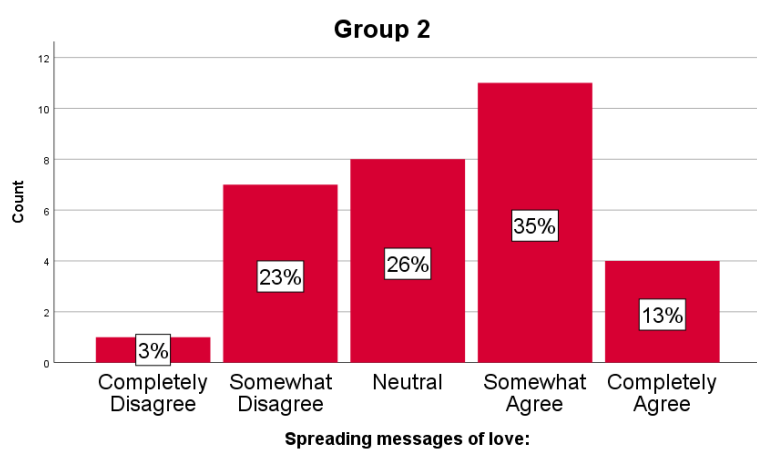
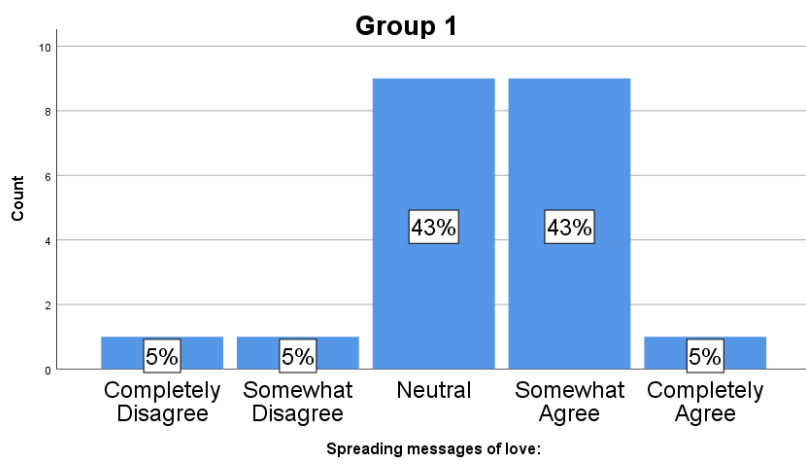
5. Hypocritical:

The majority of external community members feel that Christianity is hypocritical. In what areas are Christians not “practicing what they preach” that the nonChristian community is picking up on?



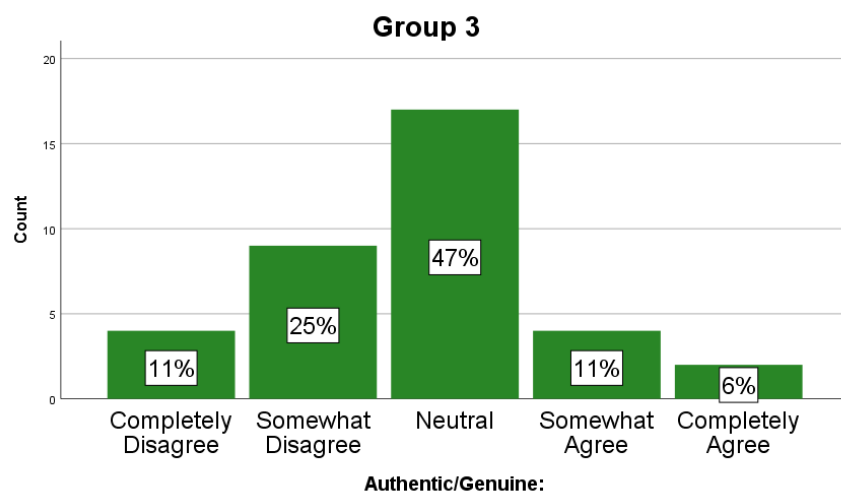
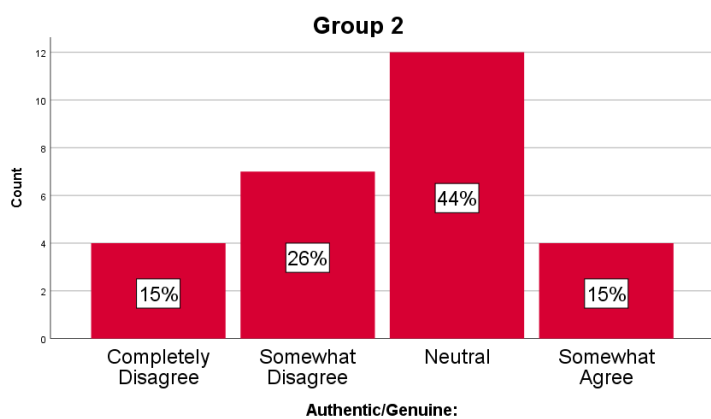
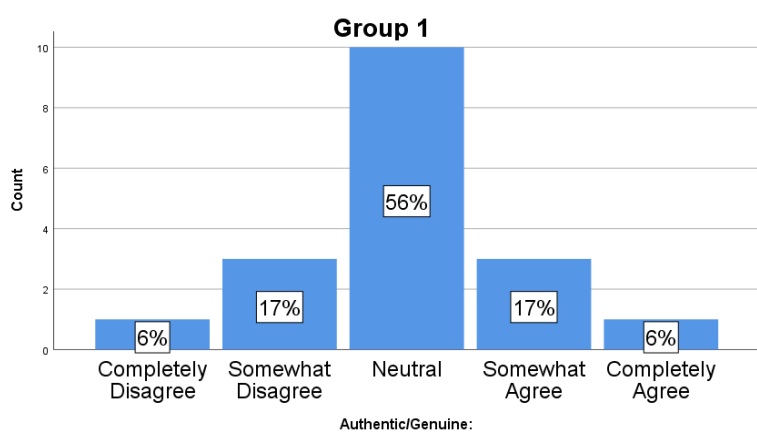
6. Spreading messages of love:

The majority of respondents do believe Christianity spread messages of love. However, many indicated in in-person interviews that it was difficult to say because it depended on which branch of group of Christians were being discussed>



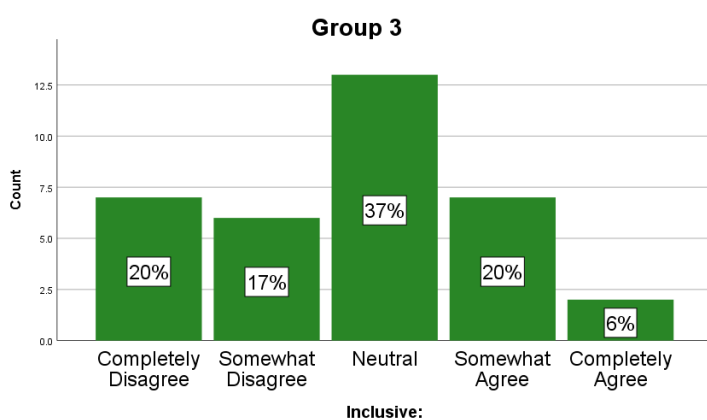
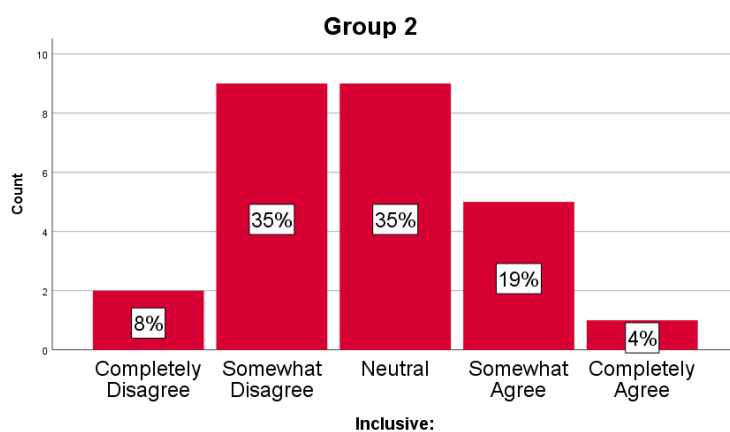
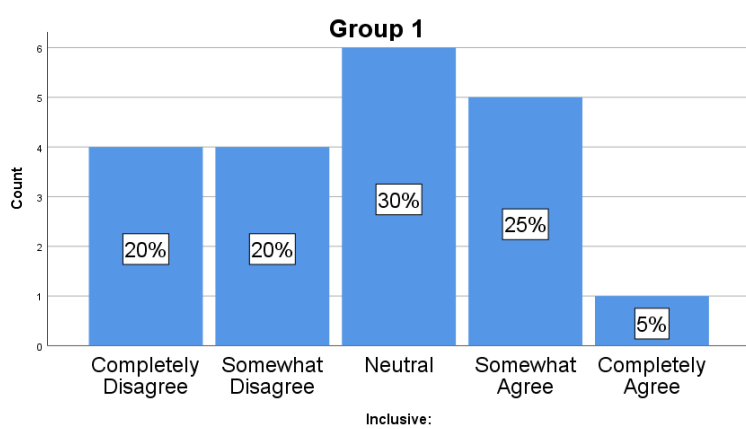
7. Authentic/Genuine:

(Can see here that non-Christians do not have strong opinions for or against this statement.)

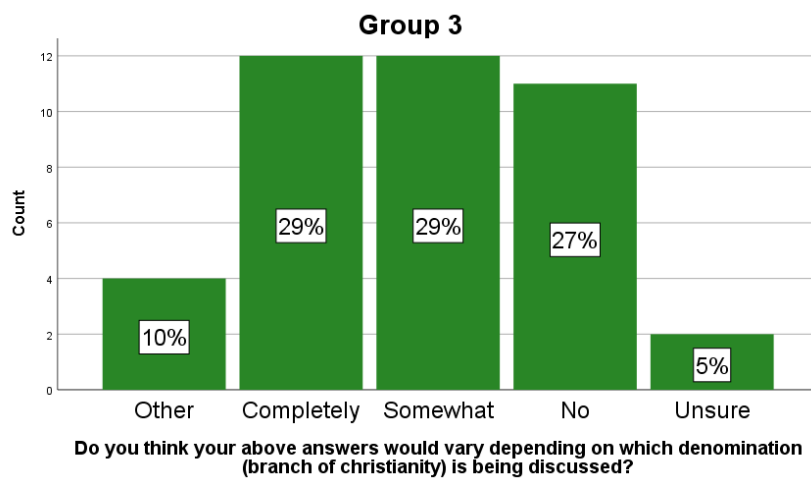
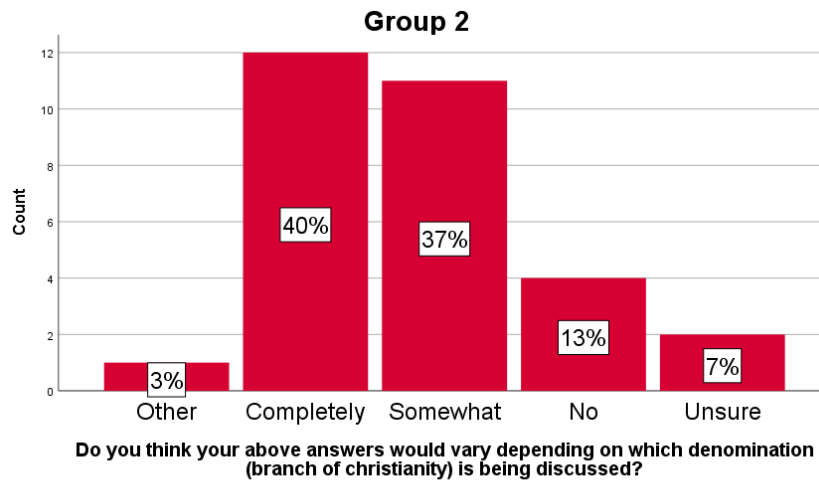
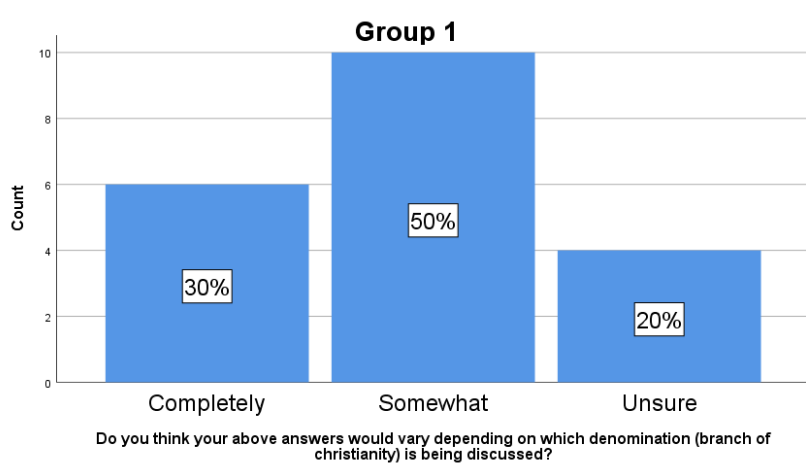


8. Inclusive:

More respondents see Christianity as non-inclusive than those who see it as inclusive. Therefore, if a church is interested in having a diverse group of people attend their events they must think of how to spread the message that their events are inclusive, as indicated here the Majority of people do not naturally associate being inclusive with Christianity.



9. Do you think your above answers would vary depending on which denomination (branch of Christianity) is being discussed?



Examples of Responses for “other”:

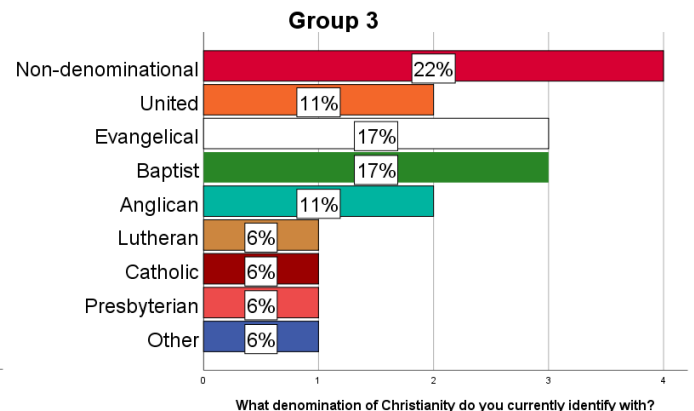
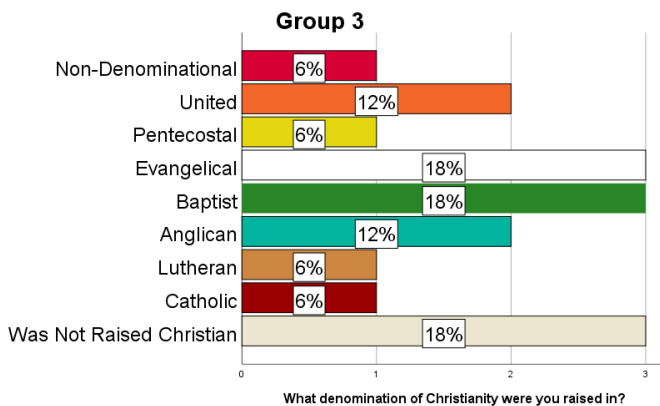
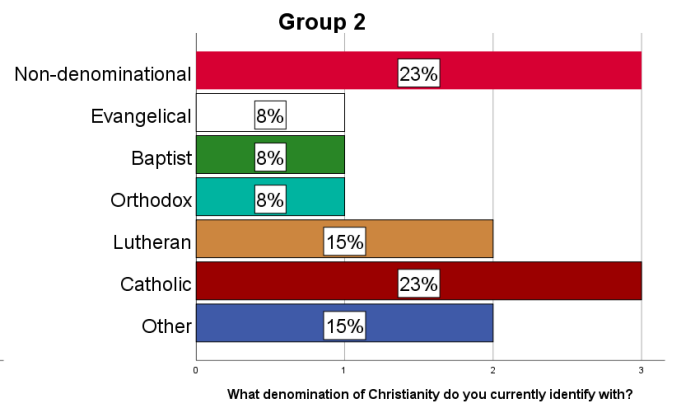
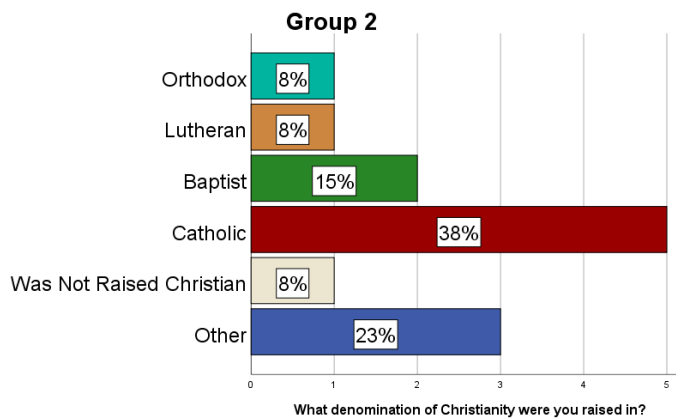
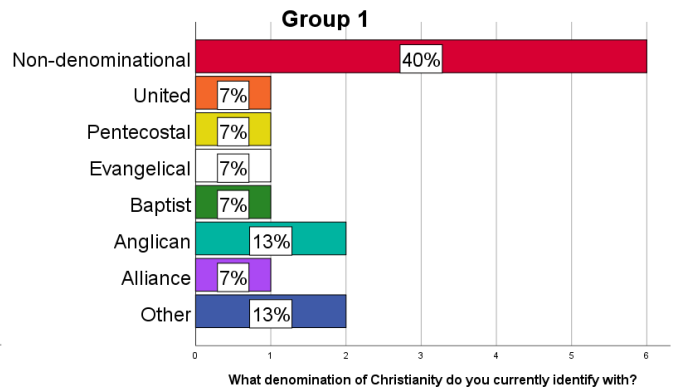
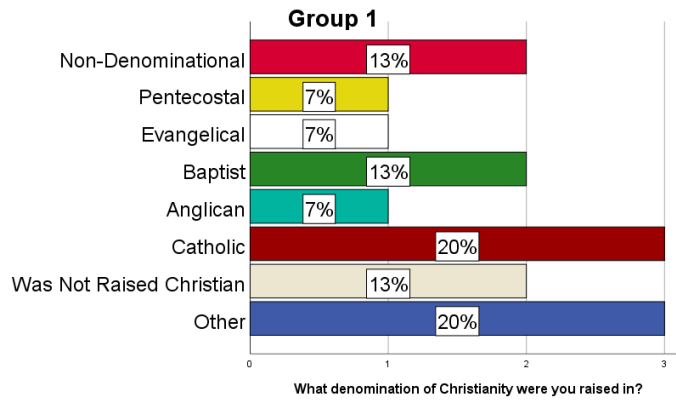
“It’s about the people, not about the religion”

“I don’t know enough about the branches to comment on that”

“I feel the problem with all faith lies when the people practicing it are not open to other faiths, when they are not open to other people because of differing religious beliefs”

Section 5: Christians-only Responses:

1. Which denomination of Christianity were you raised versus which do you currently identify with? (If it is not listed it is because it was not chosen by anyone in that group)



It is interesting to note the increase in those who self-identify as “non-denominational” versus how many were actually raised that way.

All answers for “other”:

“I Follow Jesus not a man-made denomination”

“been to a few different churches”

“several bible teaching denominations”

“reformed (kind of non-denominational”

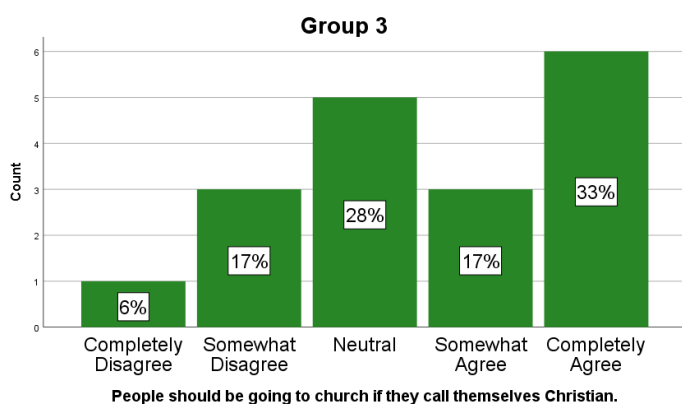
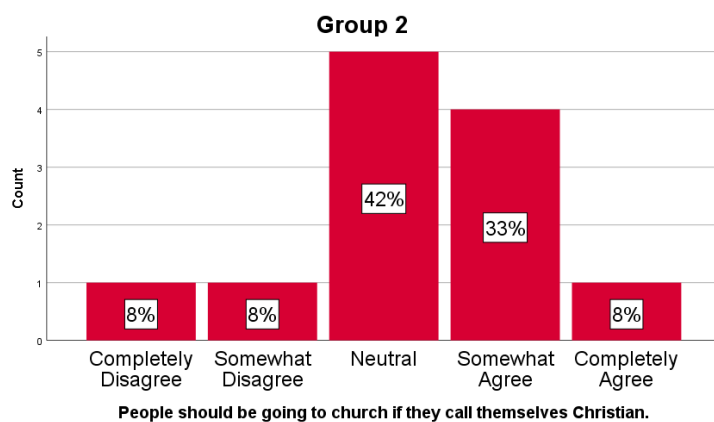
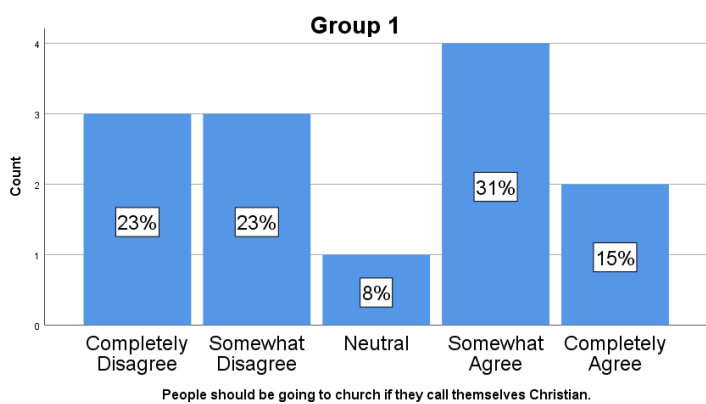
“uncertain”

“Associated Gospel Church (Trinity)”

Please rate on a scale of 1 strongly **disagree**, to 5 strongly **agree**, the following statements: (if you are not sure or feel like you can't answer, please skip).

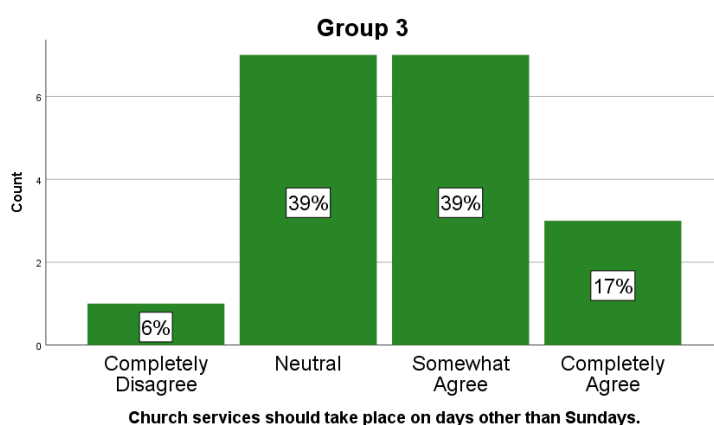
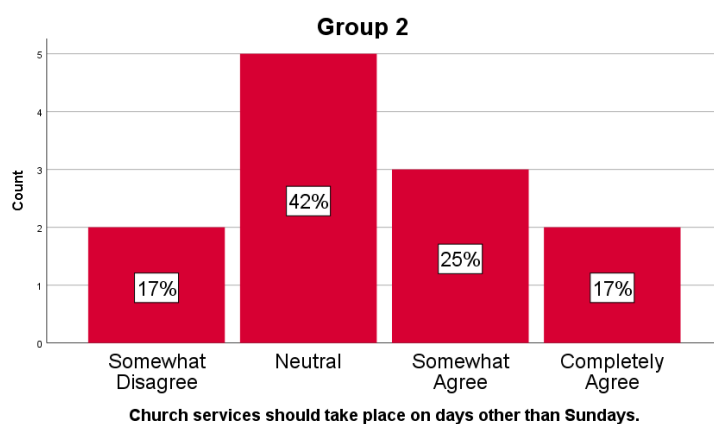
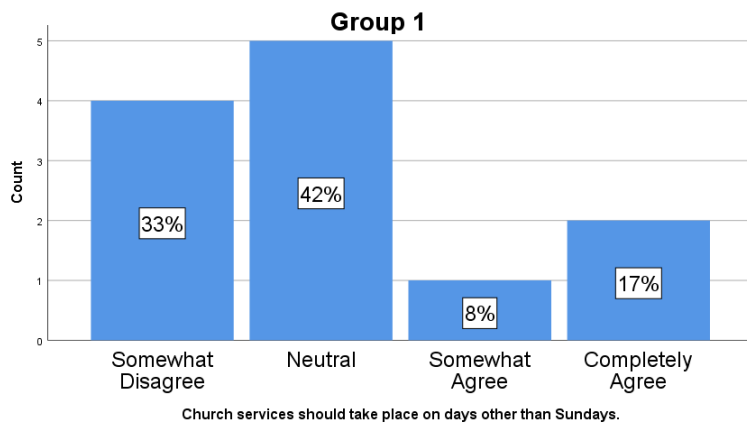
2. People should be going to church if they call themselves Christian:

Despite concern that young adults may not see the value in church, it seems like many still do believe that attending church is integral to the Christian faith. Can also see that beliefs vary greatly.

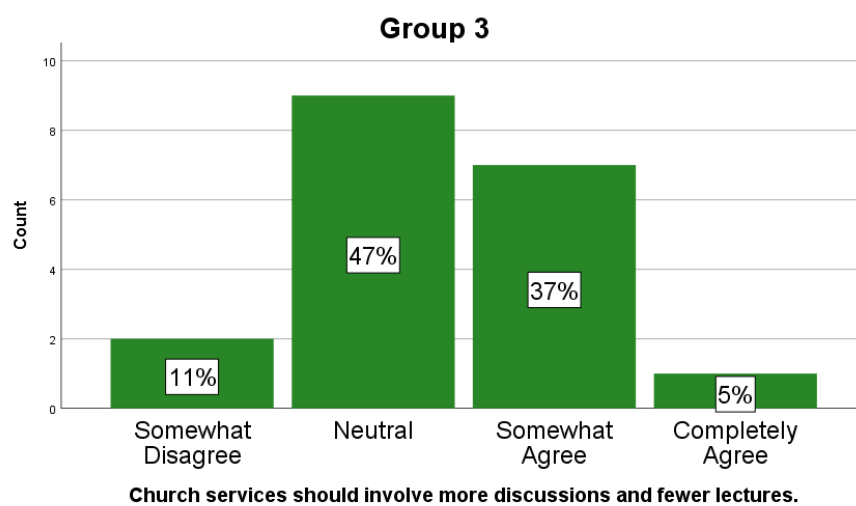
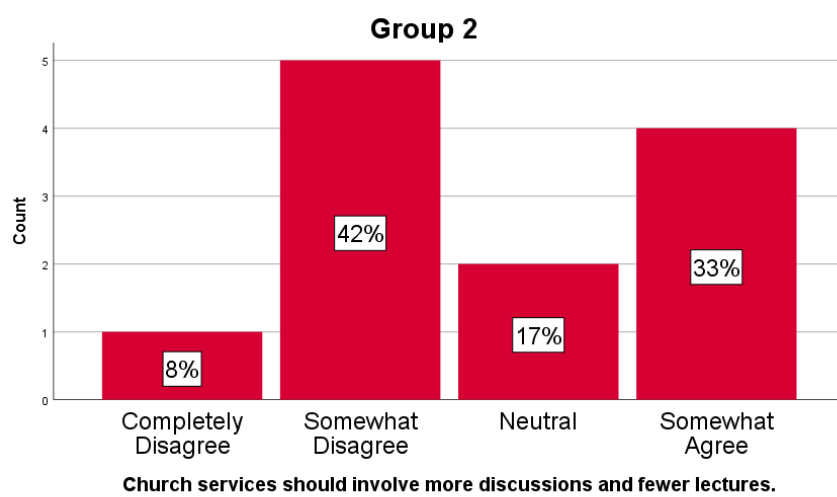
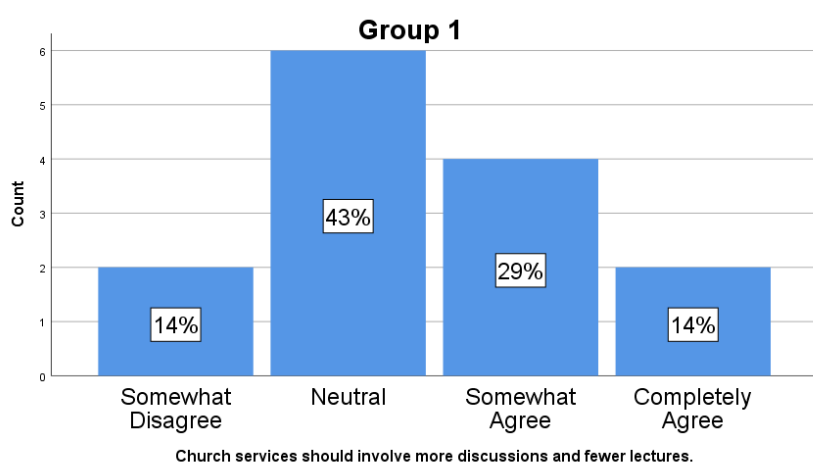


3. Church services should take place on days other than Sundays:

There is not a strong preference for church services to be held on Sunday. The “completely disagree” category is missing from the first two groups because no one chose this as a response.

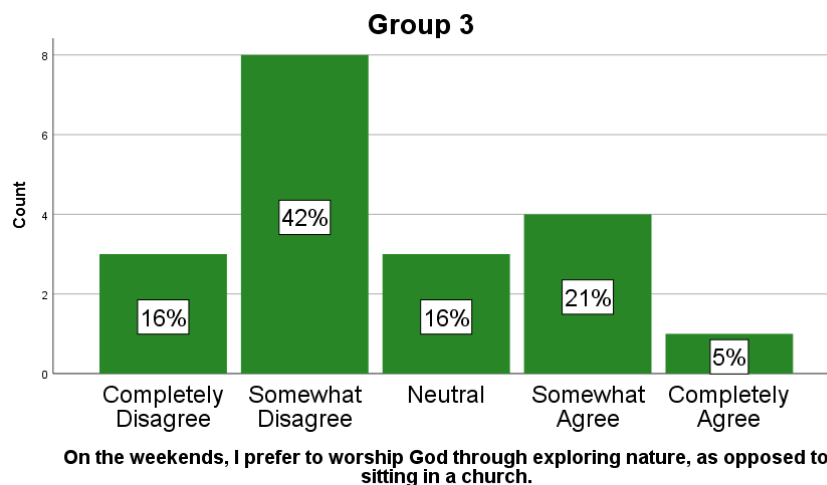
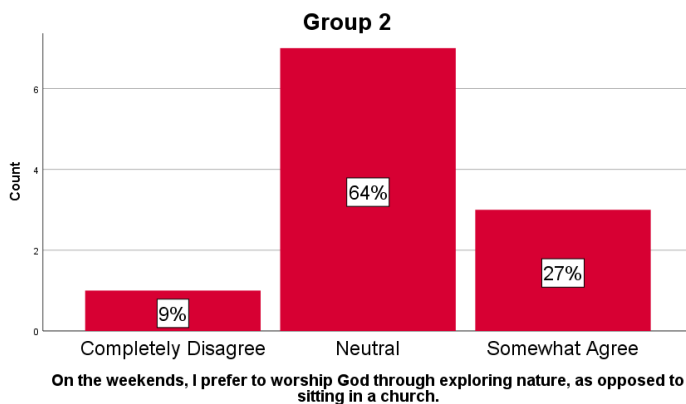
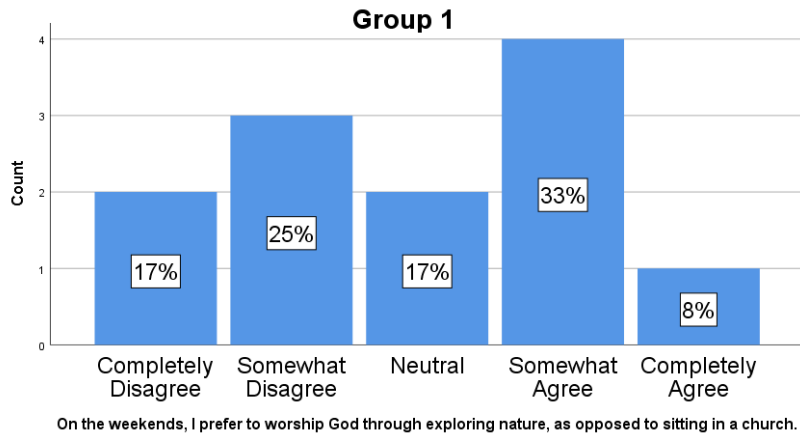


4. Church services should involve more discussions and fewer lectures.
5.

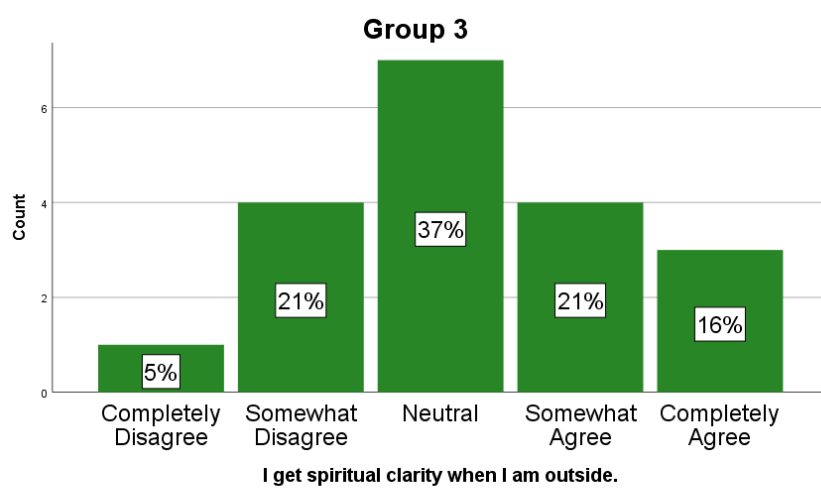
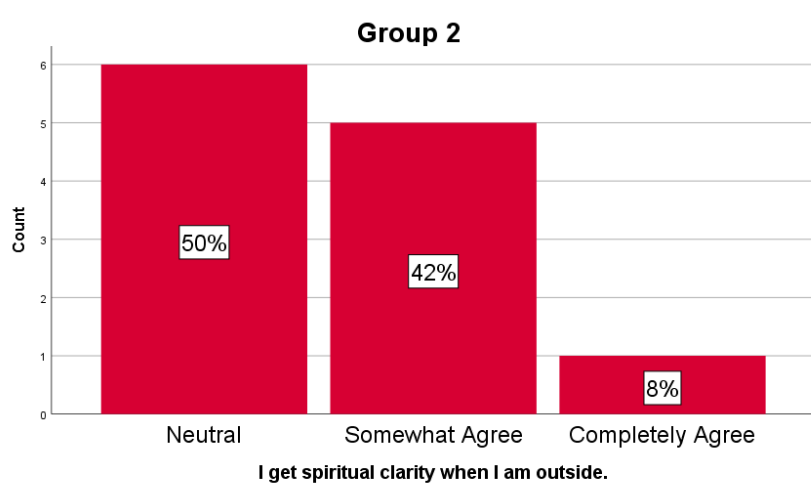
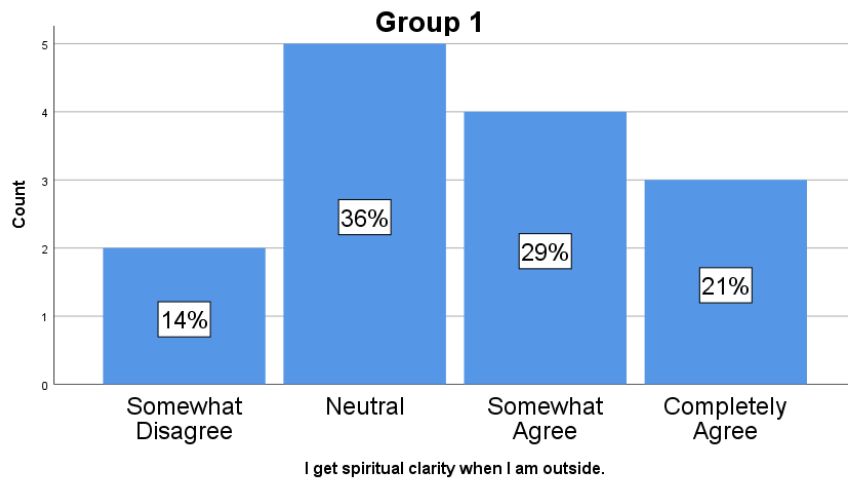


6. On the weekends, I prefer to worship God through exploring nature, as opposed to sitting in a church:

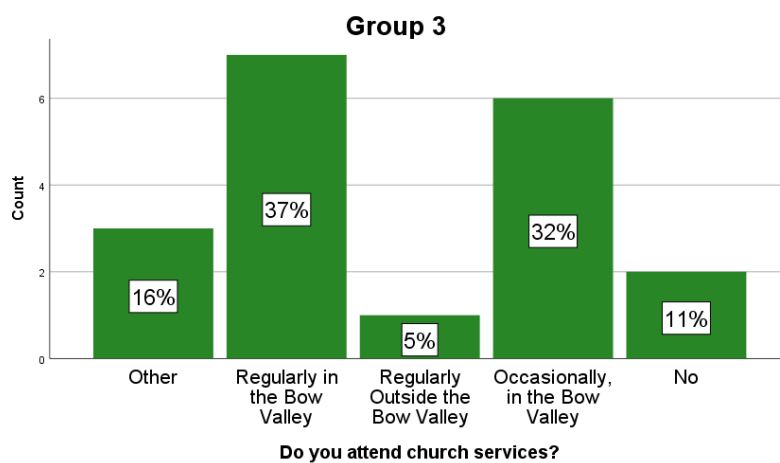
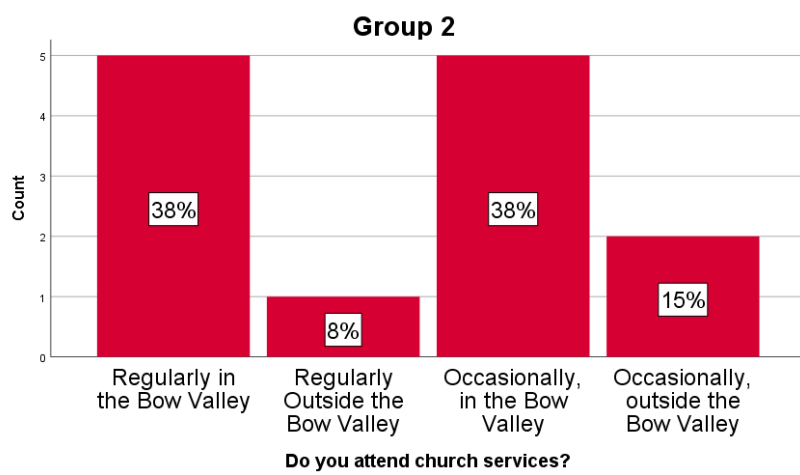
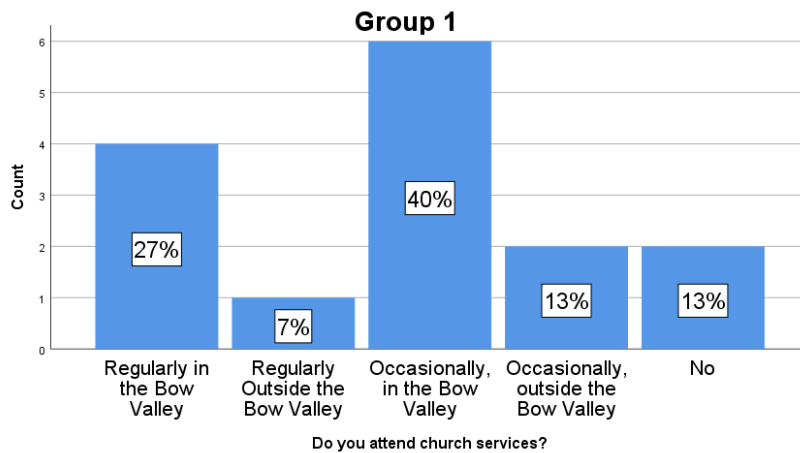
Younger age groups without children seem to have a higher preference for spending weekends in nature as opposed to in church



7. I get spirituality clarity when I am outside:



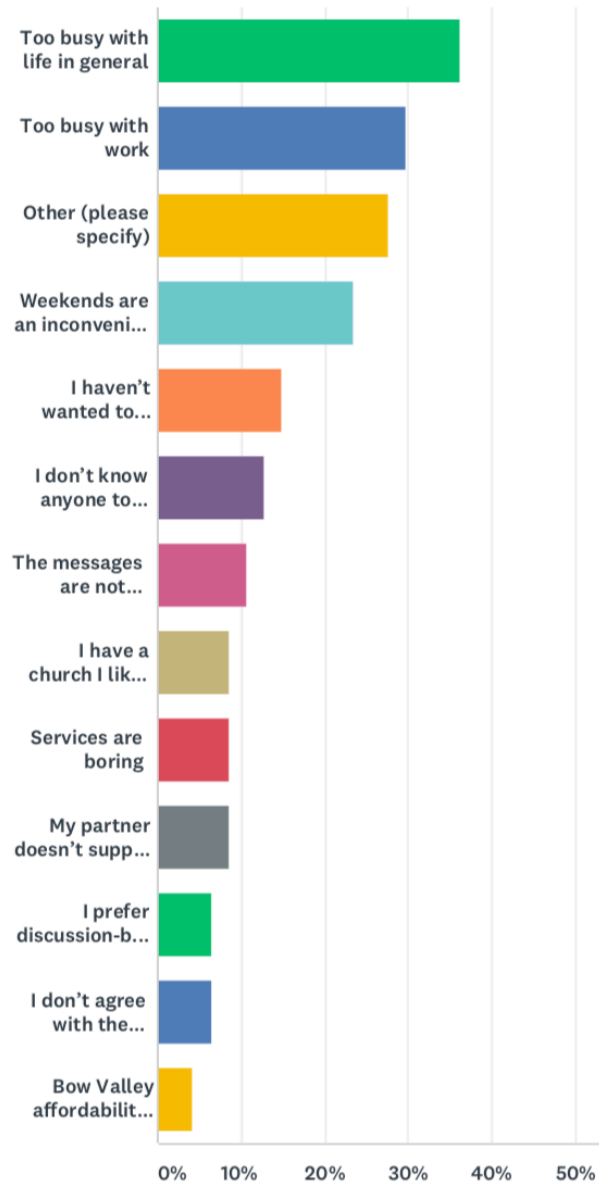
8. Do you attend church services?



Examples of “Other” options: “Holidays only” and “between churches at the moment”

9. If you have wanted to attend a church service in the Bow Valley, but haven't, or have wanted to attend more often than you currently do, what barriers have kept you from doing so?

** (Due to the fact that people could choose multiple answers, I was unable to analyze this information separately for different age groups. That means the below answers include responses from those ages 40+ as well).



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Too busy with life in general	36.17%	17
Too busy with work	29.79%	14
Other (please specify)	27.66%	13
Weekends are an inconvenient time for me to attend	23.40%	11
I haven't wanted to attend more church services	14.89%	7
I don't know anyone to attend with	12.77%	6
The messages are not relevant to my life	10.64%	5
I have a church I like attending outside of the Bow Valley	8.51%	4
Services are boring	8.51%	4
My partner doesn't support my beliefs	8.51%	4
I prefer discussion-based learning over lecture-based learning	6.38%	3
I don't agree with the messages preached	6.38%	3
Bow Valley affordability issues make it difficult to make time for worship	4.26%	2

All "other" responses:

pastors just need to be real and teach the Truth.
No Orthodox church
Times that services are
I believe my spirituality comes from within and with personal conversations with God. Not a fan of organized "religion"
I was looking for a relaxed church, and I have now found one
I do go to church, but I find a lot of church's to judgmental over the lives that you live and have a certain expectation. My opinion is that worship, fellowship and spreading the love of Jesus is done by people not buildings. "Church structures facilitate the role of Gods people, but they do not fulfill it. Every day is a ministry, the church is the body of Christ is followers so gathering of two even at work or the soccer field is a church a place where we should show Gods love and be an example
Having babies and young children make it a bit tricky to commit and make it once again a regular habit of going to church
Childcare (lack of)
I have small children that find it hard to sit still
Not feeling welcomed
Away from home
Just haven't found a church that feels like my "home" in the valley.
managing family and work doesn't leave time

10. Is there anything churches could do to make their services more appealing, or make them more valuable to you?

Saw repeated support for (in no particular order):

- a) More contemporary music
- b) More relevant/relatable services to “every day” life and all generations
- c) Be community minded, not just focusing on membership within the church
- d) Opportunities/activities to build relationships amongst each other and community

Examples of responses:

“be more relevant in worship, Be real, not just Sunday Christians”

“preach the gospel”

“Youth masses. The choir was what always resonated with me during mass. I connect to lyrics”

“larger bands, contemporary catchy music”

“I really look for lively music & a solid young crowd”

“I think they have to promote their churches because I am not sure what churches are in town”

“Include more of the word of God and less opinionated lecture. Also cautiously stating Gods truth instead of crowd pleasing”

“Be more about activities, living in the community, serving the community, and less focused on Sunday gatherings. Encourage people to dress as they please. Incorporate lots of humour. Be more circular in discussion”

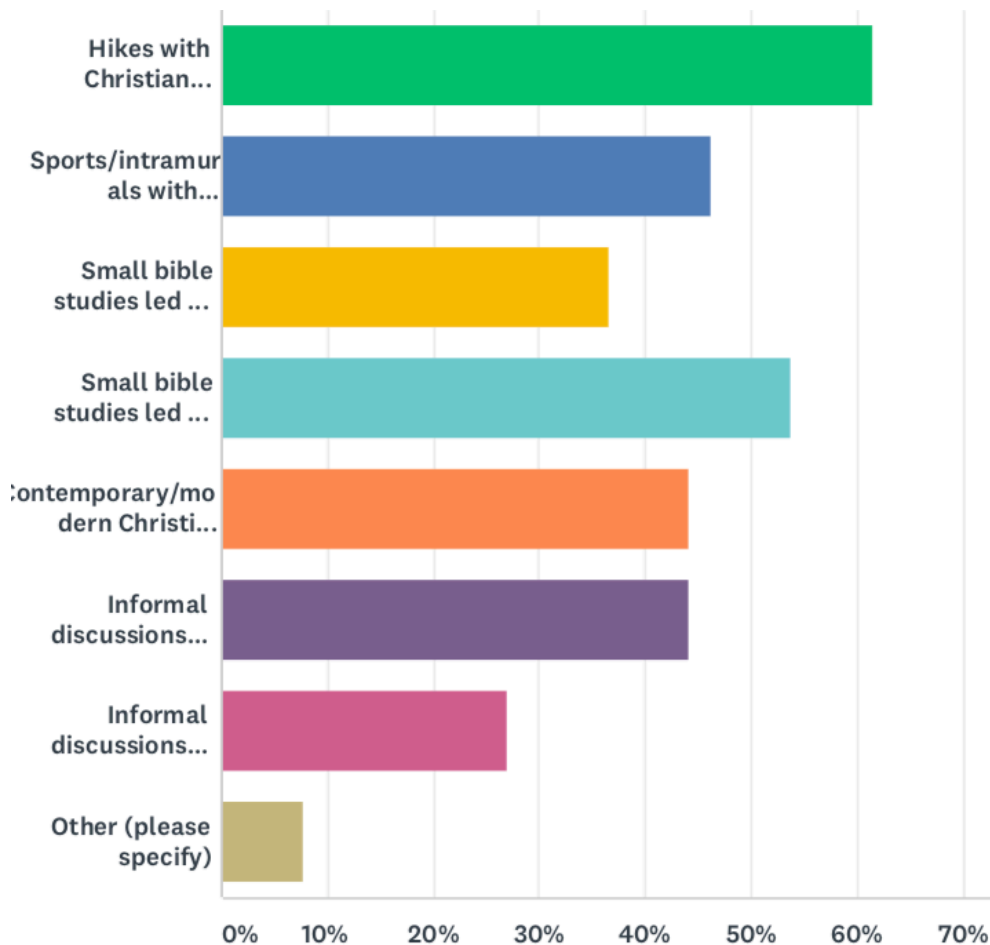
“Churches need to stop focusing on persecution & end times tribulation and focus on applicable, real-life application of faith principles to family & personal & work life. we need to focus on the joys of knowing God, not on the depravity around us. we shouldn't be another news agency just talking about the tragedies in the world”

“I would love to join small groups, but often find them either hard to find without attending the church, or intimidating to go to when I don't know anyone there”

“Having a young adults group. Often there are youth groups but not something for adults between 25-35”

10. Are there any ways in which you be would interested in growing your faith, other than through traditional church services?

******(Due to the fact that people could choose multiple answers, I was unable to analyze this information separately for different age groups. The answers below include responses from those ages 40+ as well).

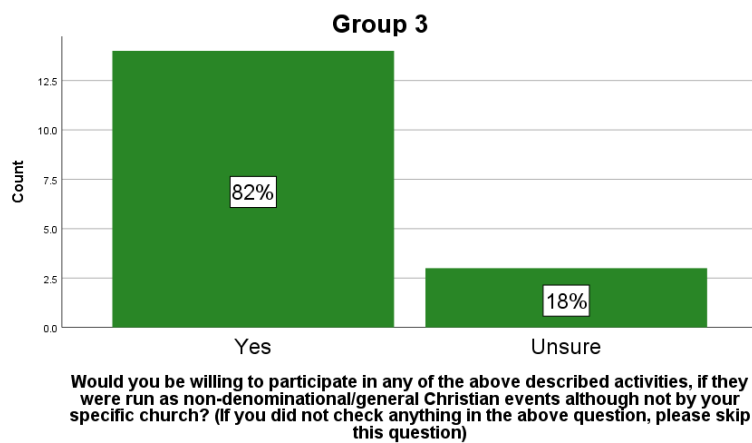
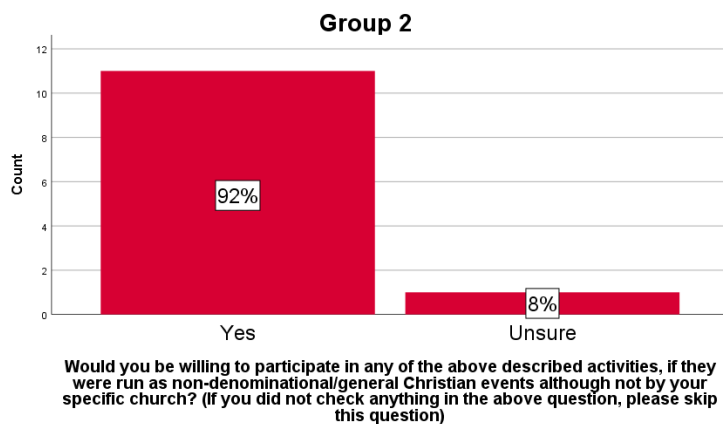
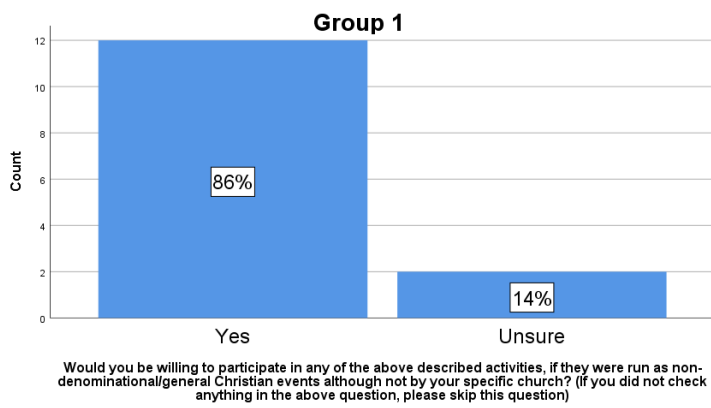


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Hikes with Christian groups	61.54%	32
Sports/intramurals with Christian groups	46.15%	24
Small bible studies led by non-church leaders	36.54%	19
Small bible studies led by church leaders	53.85%	28
Contemporary/modern Christian music nights (either playing in the band or singing in the crowd)	44.23%	23
Informal discussions with a Christian perspective on modern topics	44.23%	23
Informal discussions with a Christian perspective held in pubs	26.92%	14
Other (please specify)	7.69%	4

“Other” response: “A moms group, held weekly with childcare provided (at my old church, moms who’s kids have flown the coop volunteered to provide childcare)”

11. Would you be willing to participate in any of the above described activities, if they were run as non-denominational/general Christian events although not by your specific church?

****("No" was an option, but no one chose it and therefore it does not show up in the graphs)**



12. What advice would you give Christian churches trying to reach young adults/young families in the Bow Valley?

Most frequent responses:

- a) Be welcoming to everyone without judgement
- b) Offer events to create community amongst church goers outside of masses
- c) Teach according to the gospel (be real), not just what is popular

Other repeated (though less common) responses:

- a) Be genuine/love people
- b) Offer child care
- c) Do community outreach
- d) Incorporate modern music

Examples of responses:

“Christian leaders and Christians live out what they believe... love God and love people, genuinely... people will come and want what we have. they will see, hear the Word and desire a relationship with Jesus Christ”

“Be real! Don’t compromise the message in order to be relevant. Be relevant in truth. Kids are attracted to what is real. This comes from 22 years of youth ministry.”

“One important thing is that many of the young people that live in the Bow Valley come from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, it is essential to make them feel welcomed and that all of us, regardless of where we come from, believe in one God”

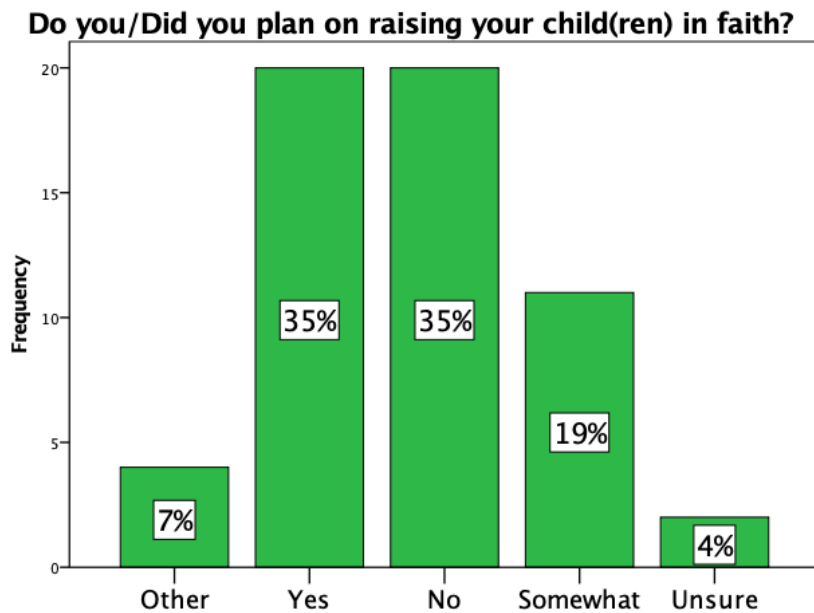
““Keep your websites up to date so that information found on them is accurate. Make sure activities are posted clearly and somewhere they are easy to find. Also, especially for Sunday mornings, it’s helpful to know how to dress to feel comfortable (e.g. super casual, business casual, semi- formal?).” - could do this using Facebook as well

“Gospel centered teaching; welcoming hospitality; develop meaningful community among believers that is attractive to those not yet saved. Be willing to ask deep and hard questions”

“There are tons of new and modern Christian bands and songs out there that young adults are familiar with and can buy into over the slow and acoustic music of previous generations. Songs like those definitely still need to be present and are wonderful, but a good mix of upbeat and modern music would be great! Also a good young adult program outside of bible studies for young adults to get to meet each other in fun settings”

Section 6: Parents-only Responses:

1.



Other responses:

OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)

I wanted my son to decide for himself. He attended the United Church in BC and decided after a year that he didn't want to attend anymore.

These mountains are temples

What you do speaks so loudly that children do not often hear what you say.

They have an unbiased education on many religions, from friends family and reading and are free to practice any religion should they choose too

I share my spiritual beliefs with my children and welcome and support any questions they have about others beliefs, and will support their participation choices

My wife will impart Catholicism.

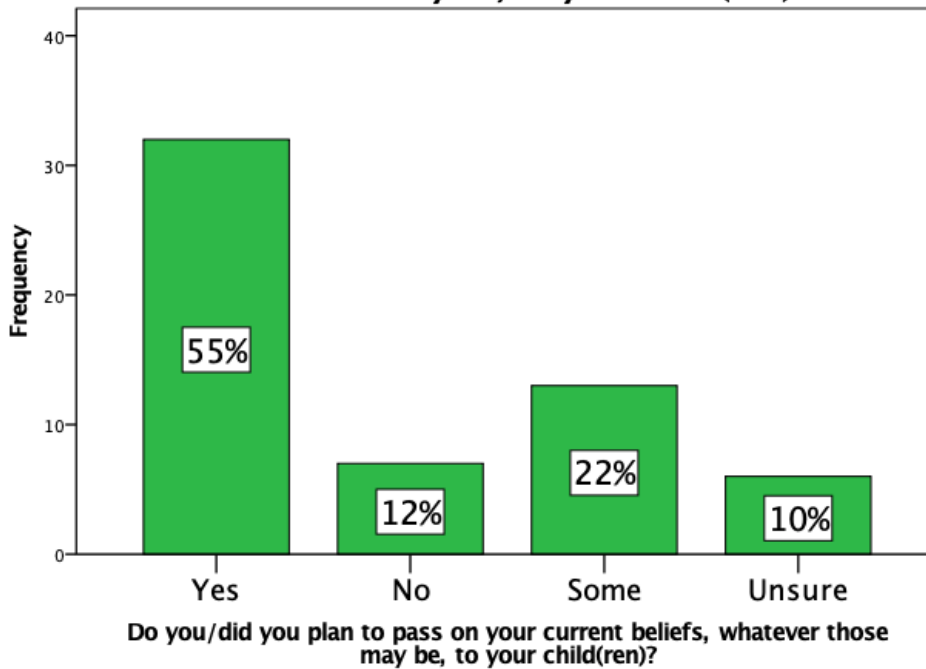
I have made sure my kids know of my spirituality and how that has given me strength in my life but allow them to choose for themselves where their beliefs fit

They will know about it so they can avoid being fooled by them (or anyone that is promoting a belief that is not based on facts.(religions, sects ect.)

i want them to know about other faiths so they are more understanding of how faith can imbed itself in culture and when I am able to find an interesting world religion class/book that is relevant and unbiased I will share it with them.

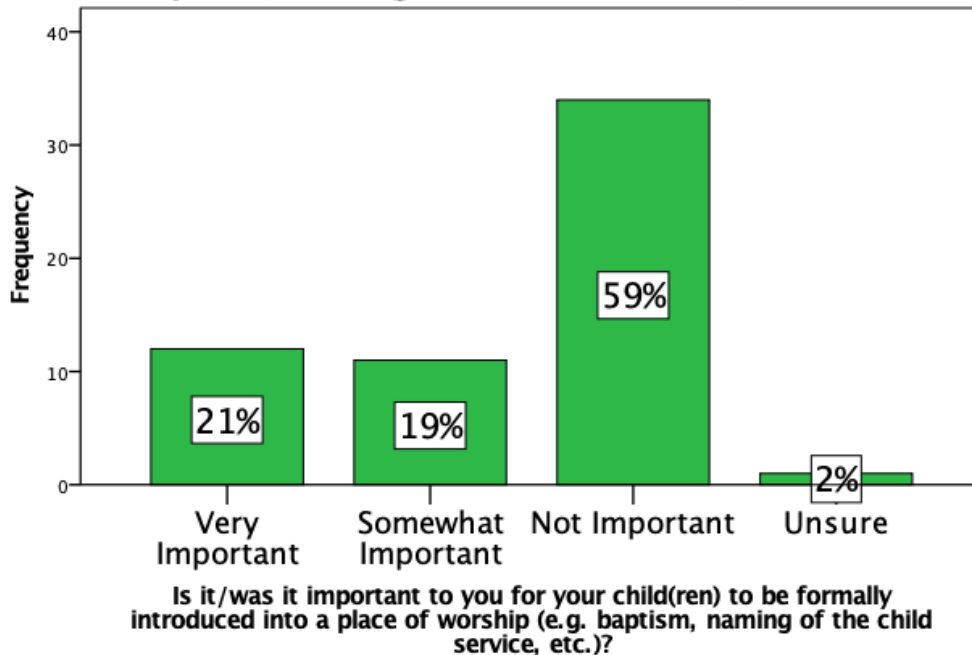
2.

Do you/did you plan to pass on your current beliefs, whatever those may be, to your child(ren)?



3.

Is it/was it important to you for your child(ren) to be formally introduced into a place of worship (e.g. baptism, naming of the child service, etc.)?



4. What faith-based or non-faith-based activities or programs might churches provide that would enhance life for you and your child(ren)? Please describe: (E.g. activities for parents to meet, parent-child activities, etc.)

Most frequent responses:

- a) Parent and child (or family) activities such as bouncy castle events, games nights, playground meet-ups and movie nights.
- b) Activities where parents get to connect and meet other parents
 - a. There was support for this in the form of events where children are present and also asking for childcare support during the event so just parents could connect without interruption.
- c) Affordable childcare. A huge need in the Bow Valley community is an affordable childcare option and many brought that forward as an area they would like church support.

Other repeated (though less common) responses:

- a) Camps or VBS
- b) Dinners and/or potlucks
- c) Craft/music drop in activities

Examples of responses:

“Moms group with childcare provided by volunteers. Sylvan lake alliance church has an amazing program and I’m sure they would provide information on how they do it!”

“Maybe a volunteer-based (or volunteer-style co-op), perhaps partly church funded daycare. It would really help a lot of low-income parents, as there aren’t enough child-care options available.”

“Interfaith dialogues, meetings/coffee dinner etc”

“Non-faith based [activities] would be great”

“I think the church should participate to already established events. Connect with the community, then maybe people would attend their programs.”

“Events for children, family/small children mass or bible study time”

“My kids will only go to church if they choose to be interested, I would prefer they not be christians but would never stop them and would help them if they needed to be.”

“Community BBQ, fundraisers for good causes, baby/mom workout classes.”

“A mom’s and tots group, Family movie night, family hiking group,”

Section 7:

Suggestions Based off Data:

Changing the views those outside the church hold of the church needs to be a Bow Valley wide effort. Regardless of a single church's efforts to try and distinguish themselves from others, if people have a bad experience with one church, they are likely to associate that negativity with either a) all religions, or b) all churches within the branch (ex. all Christian churches). I have a few suggestions based off the data above intended to help those in the young adult demographic (18-40) who are searching for a spiritual experience or spiritual guidance connect with Bow Valley churches in a meaningful way.

- 1) Church media campaigns - increase young adult's awareness of who you are, what you believe, what you offer. Young adults have this very stereotypical view of churches and need to see if and how your beliefs fit with theirs. Becoming more active on Facebook is one way to do this. Picture messages (a picture with words on it) are great ways to communicate with young adults. Messages about acceptance and who is welcomed at masses and church events should be a central focus of this campaign. As well as sending messages that you accept people who can only come once in a while. Additionally, if you have options for children during services, make those known.
- 2) create groups that meet outside of mass. These groups need a trial period (come out and try, no pressure to join, no pressure to go to mass). Based off the survey data, I would recommend two groups to start with.
 - a) A parent group. I would recommend interviewing some of the parents within St. Michael's and St. George's congregation about what would work best for them. Something like a bible study that they can attend which is interactive for their kids, or a playground meetup for parents who want to interact with other parents without having to organize and pay for child care.
 - b) young adults church group: see recommendation 4 on collaboration, get spiritual young adults from around the Bow Valley (I would recommend one in Canmore to start that Banff young adults can come to and then if there's enough interest from Banff people, running one there). This group may meet bi-weekly or monthly and does fun activities together whether it be hiking, bowling, or watching a movie you may want to have the first half an hour to be a spiritual based discussion, and then the rest of the time non-spiritual focused where young adults have the option to come to either or both.

3) Community outreach: the vast majority of people who responded to the question “do you think your answers [about how Christianity is perceived] would vary depending on which denomination (branch of Christianity) is being discussed?” said either “completely” or “somewhat”. Therefore, people are open to the idea that churches are not all the same, and that negative beliefs they may hold about one religion or religious group is not necessarily a belief they hold for all. Reaching out to the community may be one way to help establish your organization as a community orientated church. Having a float in the Canmore parade was one way to do this. The Food and Friends Dinner is another. Having more posters with information about your church and the programs offered can be one way to take advantage of the young demographic who attends Food and Friends, and eventually having the young adults group volunteer occasionally may be another way to attract attention from their peers.

4) Collaborate: due to the small population of the Bow Valley, young adults and parents are spread very thinly throughout the various churches. Therefore, collaborating and creating spaces where all spiritual young adults can come together, not feel judged, or not feel like they are being converted, would likely increase participation to a sustainable level. It is very inefficient to have each Christian church for example, run their own young adult nights because of detailed differences. Focusing on the similarities, allowing for non-judgmental conversations, and using team building ice breakers and activities are ways that can help create cohesion in a group that may have different views. Additionally, not all activities have to have a spiritual focus. It is clear that regardless of faith, people are looking for opportunities to make connections with others. Food sharing, board games nights, movie nights, and music nights were popular answers amongst different faith groups of how they wanted churches to help them meet their needs. Young adults can meet needs such as feelings of belonging through making connections with like-minded people in their demographic. Churches should consider becoming the vessel through which these connections are made.