



DOCENT
Research Group

**Docent Church Surveys
Proposal and Sample Report**

“Ministry leaders need more savviness when it comes to culture and sociological topics. Brad Vermurlen of Docent Research Group can give you that. He can do research for you. He can come and teach you and your leaders about culture. He’s done it here. He’s great.” -**Dr. Tim Keller**, founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church

“We partnered with Docent’s social science team to get a survey done on our congregation. We wanted the real information about who was out there and who we were trying to reach. I’ve used the survey in my preaching; we’ve used it in our planning. I turn back to it very often. I want to encourage you to think about Docent. They do a super job. It will be a blessing to your church.” -**Gregg Matte**, senior pastor, Houston’s First Baptist Church

“I am thankful not just for the quality of the data produced by Docent’s social sciences team, but their willingness to go above and beyond to make sure we were satisfied with the work they did. I would gladly recommend Docent to any church that is interested in understanding and knowing their people through survey analysis.” -**Scott Hekman**, downtown campus executive pastor, The Austin Stone

“We didn’t know what we didn’t know. So we contracted with Docent Research Group to make a custom survey directly tailored to us getting the information we needed. The end result was we got some great information to make sure the questions we’re answering are questions that are being asked. And it’s moving our church forward. I highly recommend Docent Research Group.” -**Toby Slough**, lead pastor, Cross Timbers Church

I. What is Docent?

Docent Research Group is a Christian non-profit that provides custom research and consulting for Christian organizations. The bulk of our clients are Baptist, Presbyterian, and non-denominational Evangelical churches in the United States, and they tend to be much larger than average churches in terms of weekly attendance.

Docent operates in three divisions: (1) sermon briefs, (2) curriculum, and (3) social science. The church survey at River City Church would be run through Docent’s social science division, which is led by Dr. Brad Vermurlen. Brad has a Ph.D. in sociology from University of Notre Dame.

II. Objective — what do we aim to learn about our people?

Two central ideas animate Docent's church surveys:

First, our social scientists craft custom surveys that measure your church's unique values, vision, mission, and concerns; we take your church's DNA and operationalize it into survey questions.

And second, surveying a church allows church leaders to lead with empirical facts about their people instead of relying on guesswork and anecdotal conversations.

Being completely customizable, what the survey asks is ultimately up to the leadership at River City Church. However, previous church surveys have asked about:

- **Christian beliefs** – including theological beliefs, opinions regarding pressing social and cultural issues, and whether values like evangelism or hospitality are important to your congregants.
- **Christian practices** – Bible reading, frequency of prayer, getting baptized, financial giving, fasting, sharing the Gospel, inviting people to church, and more.
- **Christian profile** – such as what percentage of congregants were previously unchurched or dechurched, preparedness to share the Gospel, comfort sharing one's testimony, spiritual growth, and more.
- **Involvement at the church** – including church membership, volunteering, how regularly people attend services, understanding the church's mission and vision, and breakdowns by campus.
- **A quick assessment** – how satisfied or dissatisfied people are with various aspects of the church, everything from parking to preaching.
- **Demographic information** – including race, age, sex/gender, education, marital status, zip-code, and household income.
- **Special interests** – Docent can write custom survey questions about new training opportunities, interest in a new service, faith and work, sign language needs, or anything else.

Docent's director of social research, Dr. Brad Vermurlen, will work with River City Church to develop a custom survey that captures exactly what you want to capture.

III. Applications — how might we as a church staff be able to use the information?

Docent encourages its church survey clients to celebrate their strengths and creatively address their revealed areas of potential growth. Ways to use the information include:

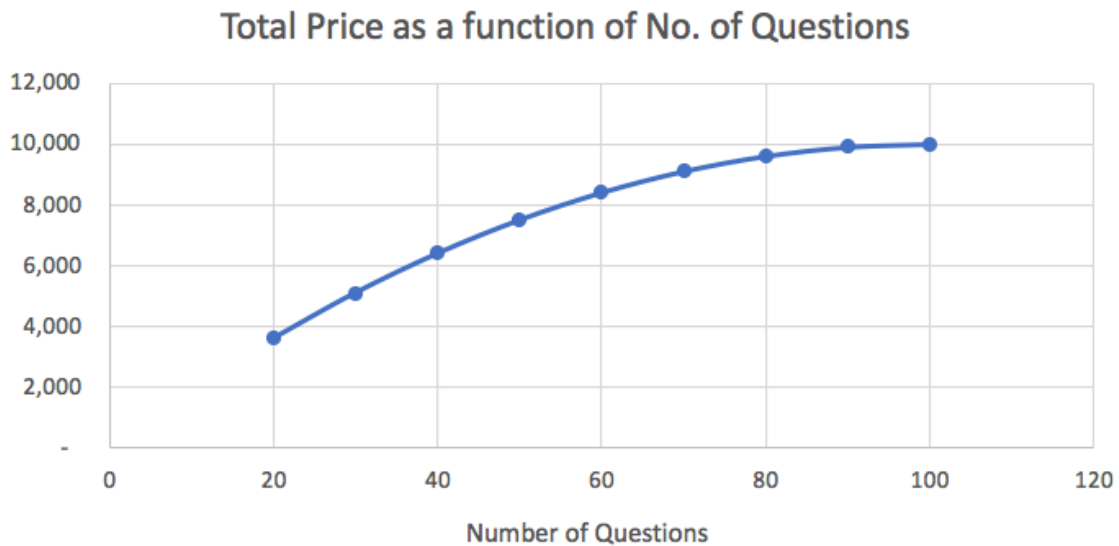
- **Sermons** – Let the survey inform your sermons, such as which topics may need addressing.
- **Programming** – Develop new training opportunities or make other programming changes.
- **Outreach** – Refocus outreach efforts to target the unchurched/dechurched or certain demographic categories.
- **Knowledge** – Generally, have an accurate, empirically grounded picture of how your congregants are doing, and where they still need to grow.

IV. Pricing and Deliverables

Docent’s church surveys are priced based on *the number of questions in your survey*—not on the size of your church. Our survey pricing follows a simple curve such that the more questions, the lower the price per question. A sample of prices are displayed in the table below:

<u>No. of Questions</u>	<u>Price per Question</u>	<u>Total Price</u>
20	\$180	\$3,600
40	\$160	\$6,400
60	\$140	\$8,400
80	\$120	\$9,600
100	\$100	\$10,000

Here is the full pricing curve:



Your price includes:

- Custom survey question consultation and writing
- Building and administering the survey on Docent's online platform
- Real-time results displayed online (password protected)
- An Executive Report with charts and written commentary
- The raw data file

During the data collection process, Docent provides “running” digital results, so your church leadership can watch the findings develop as survey responses come in. These real-time results are displayed online on a password protected site.

Your Executive Report presents the survey findings in charts and tables along with written explanations of the take-home points. This report includes the findings for each question in your survey reported individually as well as up to ten simple statistical analyses (“cross-tabs”), such as how answers break down by gender, age, or attendance; however, more complex statistical analyses of the data may require additional charge.

Docent’s survey clients also receive their church’s raw data file in .xlsx format. This is *your* data, after all, and it is yours to keep. At that point, our survey clients can analyze their data in more granularity and/or reach out to Docent for additional, specialized reports.

Note: Your total price could go up if additional services are requested, such as Spanish language translation or manual data entry for paper surveys.

V. Follow-Up — recommended timeline for future surveys to gauge changes?

Docent normally recommends that a church conduct a churchwide survey every two years. Two years gives enough time for observable, aggregate-level changes to set in. However, some churches opt to conduct a survey annually.

Please respond to Dr. Brad Vermurlen (email: brad@docentgroup.com) with any questions or comments. We would be glad to move forward with you in this important work.

River City Church

River City Church Survey

Sample Report

September 2019

Prepared by



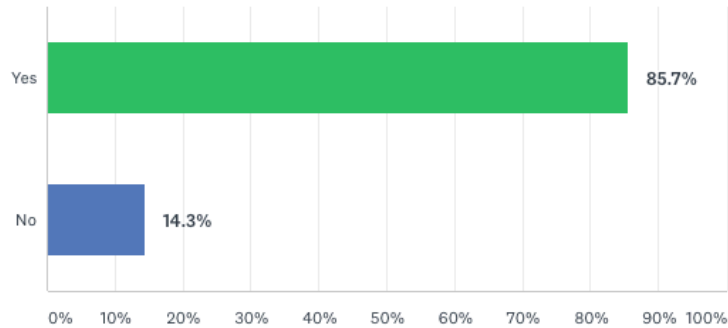
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IV. Christian Profile

Q9. Previously Unchurched or Dechurched

Before you started participating at [redacted], were you involved at another church?

Answered: 2,162 Skipped: 15



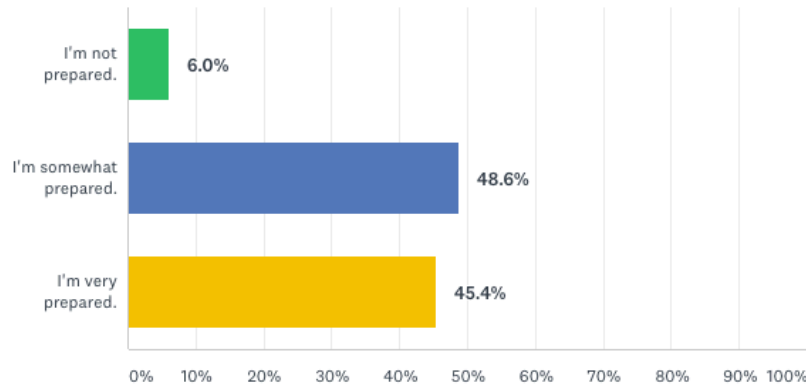
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Yes	85.7%	1,852
▼ No	14.3%	310
TOTAL		2,162

14.3% of adults at River City Church were unchurched or dechurched before they started participating at River City. In contrast, most (85.7%) report they were involved at another church before they started participating at River City Church.

Q13. Preparedness to Share the Gospel

How prepared do you feel to share the message of Jesus (that is, the Gospel) with a friend or neighbor who is not a Christian?

Answered: 2,140 Skipped: 37



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I'm not prepared.	6.0% 128
I'm somewhat prepared.	48.6% 1,041
I'm very prepared.	45.4% 971
TOTAL	2,140

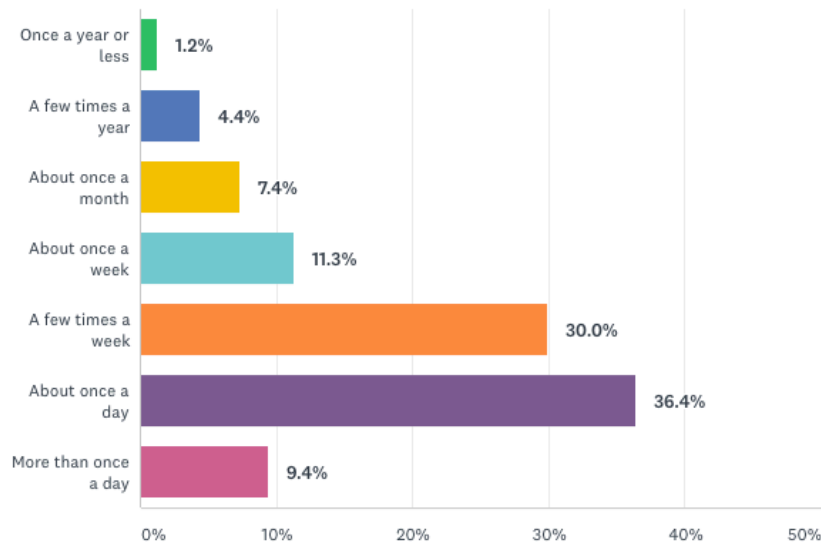
45.4% of adults at River City Church say they are “very prepared” to share the Gospel, and slightly more (48.6%) say they are “somewhat prepared” to share the Gospel. About 6.0% of adults at the church say they are “not prepared” to share the Gospel.

VI. Christian Practices

Q21. Frequency of Bible Reading

How often do you read the Bible (not counting church-organized Bible studies)?

Answered: 2,049 Skipped: 128



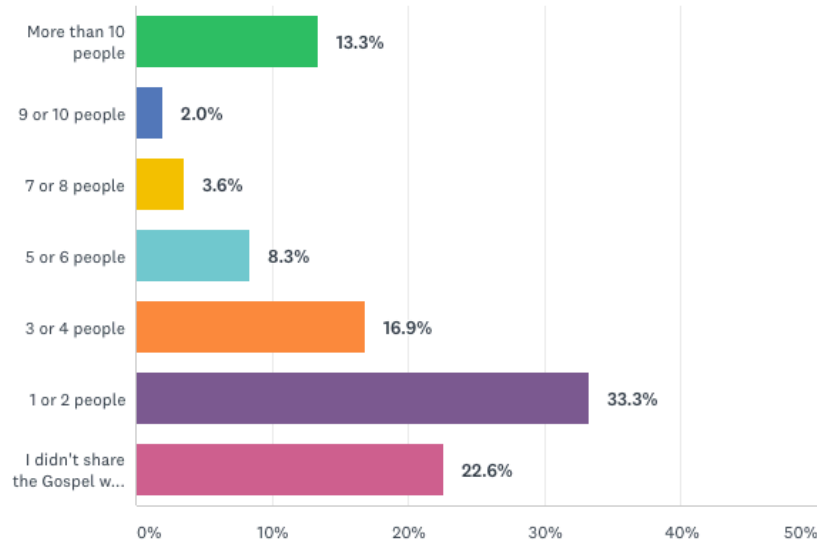
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Once a year or less	1.2% 25
A few times a year	4.4% 90
About once a month	7.4% 151
About once a week	11.3% 232
A few times a week	30.0% 614
About once a day	36.4% 745
More than once a day	9.4% 192
TOTAL	2,049

Three-quarters (75.8%) of adults at River City Church say they read the Bible “a few times a week” or more frequently.

Q26. Amount of Evangelism

Over the past 12 months, with roughly how many people did you share the message of Jesus Christ (that is, the Gospel)?

Answered: 2,031 Skipped: 146



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
More than 10 people	13.3% 271
9 or 10 people	2.0% 41
7 or 8 people	3.6% 73
5 or 6 people	8.3% 169
3 or 4 people	16.9% 343
1 or 2 people	33.3% 676
I didn't share the Gospel with anyone.	22.6% 458
TOTAL	2,031

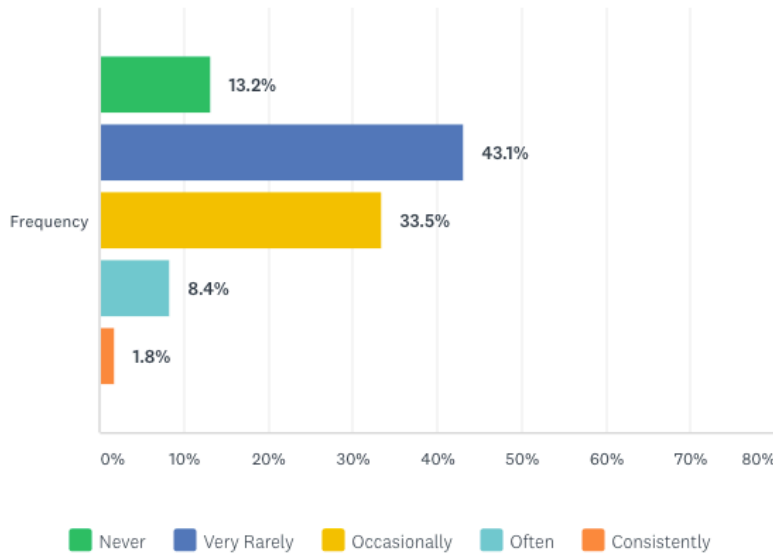
When asked how many people they've shared the Gospel with over the past year, the most common response is "1 or 2 people," with one-third (33.3%) of respondents selecting this answer. About 22.6% of people at River City Church report they "didn't share the Gospel with anyone." And 13.3% say they shared the Gospel with "more than 10 people."

VII. Marriage and Parenthood

Q32. Handling the Challenges of Marriage

How often do you feel ill-equipped or unprepared to handle the challenges of marriage?

Answered: 1,422 Skipped: 755



	NEVER	VERY RARELY	OCCASIONALLY	OFTEN	CONSISTENTLY	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Frequency	13.2% 187	43.1% 613	33.5% 477	8.4% 120	1.8% 25	1,422	2.43

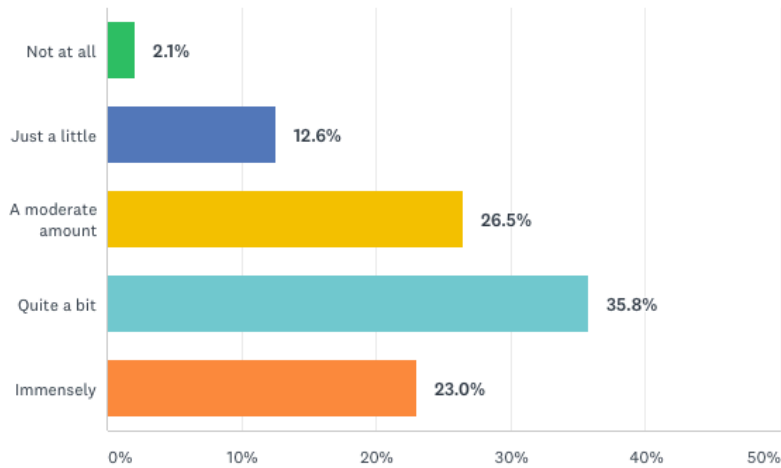
Among people who are married, 43.1% say they “very rarely” feel ill-equipped or unprepared to handle the challenges of marriage, and an additional 13.2% say they “never” feel this way. Just over one-in-ten (10.2%) say they either “often” or “consistently” feel ill-equipped or unprepared to handle the challenges of marriage. The average response to this question was 2.4, which equates (on a five-point scale) to between “very rarely” and “occasionally.”

VIII. Bible Studies

Q37. Bible Study and Growth

How much has your Bible Study contributed to your spiritual growth over the past year?

Answered: 1,688 Skipped: 489



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Not at all	2.1% 36
Just a little	12.6% 212
A moderate amount	26.5% 447
Quite a bit	35.8% 604
Immensely	23.0% 389
TOTAL	1,688

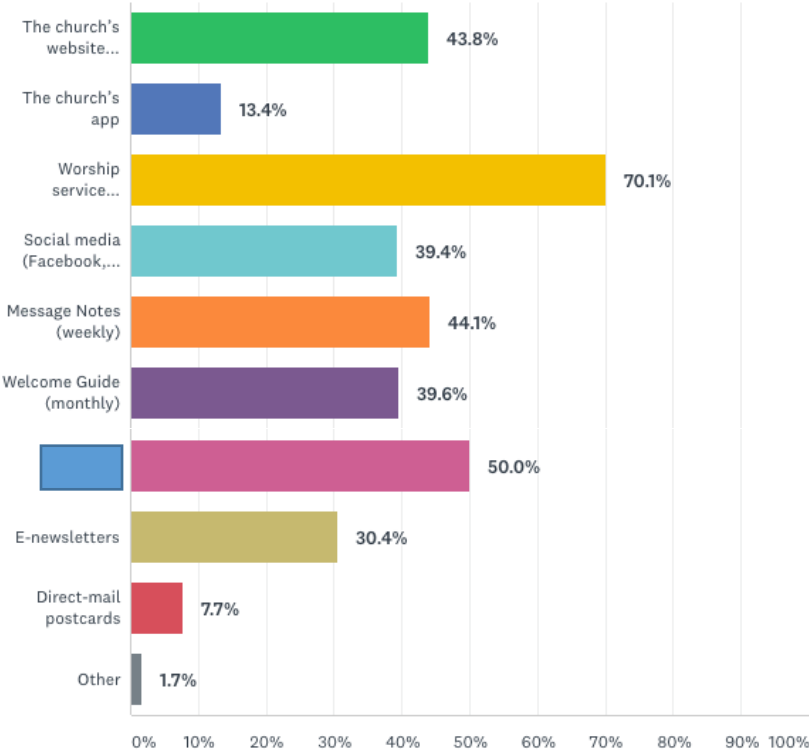
Among respondents who are involved in a Bible Study, 23.0% report it has contributed to their spiritual growth “immensely,” and 35.8% say it has contributed “quite a bit.” Only 2.1% of people in a Bible Study say it has contributed to their growth “not at all.”

X. Communication and Media

Q42. Preferred Communication Channels

From the list below, please select the ways you prefer to learn about events, programs, and opportunities happening at [redacted]. Please select up to four.

Answered: 2,010 Skipped: 167



The most preferred method of communication for learning about events, programs, and opportunities happening at River City Church—by a notable margin—is worship service announcements, with 70.1% of respondents listing it in their top four. The second most preferred method of communication is Bible Study announcements, with half (50.0%) of adults listing it in their top four. The least preferred channels of communication are the church’s app (13.4% list it in their top four) and direct-mail postcards (7.7% list it in their top four).

Communication and Media

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ The church's website [redacted]	43.8% 881
▼ The church's app	13.4% 269
▼ Worship service announcements	70.1% 1,409
▼ Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	39.4% 792
▼ Message Notes (weekly)	44.1% 887
▼ Welcome Guide (monthly)	39.6% 795
▼ [redacted] Study announcements	50.0% 1,005
▼ E-newsletters	30.4% 612
▼ Direct-mail postcards	7.7% 154
▼ Other	1.7% 34
Total Respondents: 2,010	

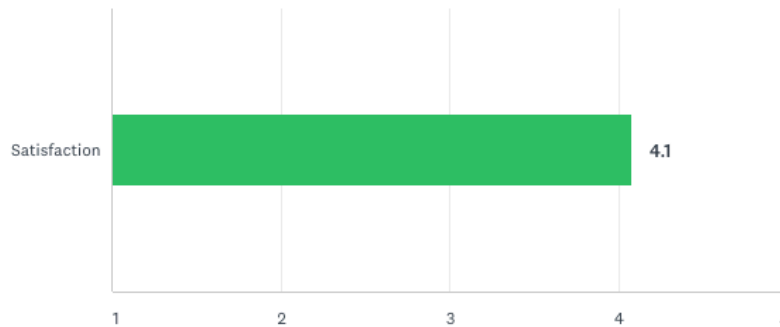
XI. Quick Assessment of River City Church

Lots of different elements come together to make a church thrive. What follows in this section are several different aspects of River City Church. Each aspect was assessed on a scale from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied,” which resulted in an overall average score.

Q47. Satisfaction with the Music During Services

The music during services

Answered: 1,979 Skipped: 198



	VERY DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	MIXED FEELINGS	SATISFIED	VERY SATISFIED	NA	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Satisfaction	3.2% 64	6.3% 124	17.7% 350	25.1% 497	47.4% 939	0.3% 5	1,979	4.08

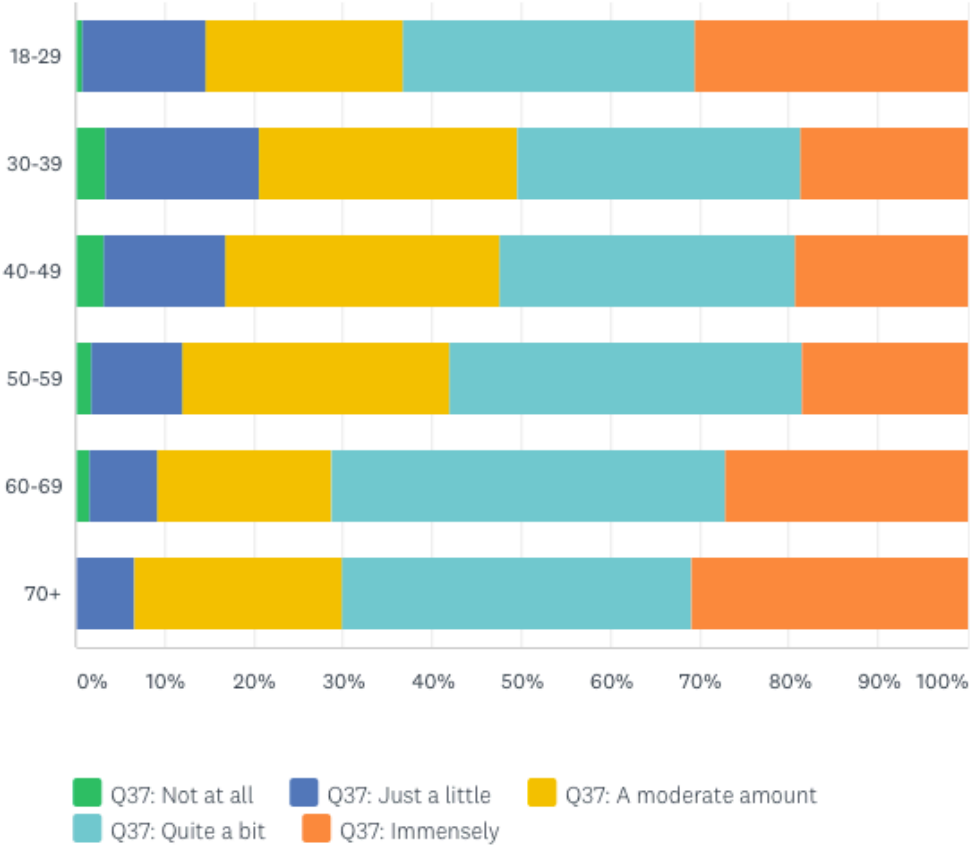
The average rating for music during services is 4.1, which equates to “satisfied.” Just under half (47.4%) of congregants are “very satisfied” with the music, but more than one-quarter (27.2%) of the church has “mixed feelings” or is, to some degree, dissatisfied with the music.

XIII. Analyses Using Multiple Variables**A. Analyses Broken Down by Age Groups***6. Growth via Bible Study by Age*

	Q37: NOT AT ALL (A)	Q37: JUST A LITTLE (B)	Q37: A MODERATE AMOUNT (C)	Q37: QUITE A BIT (D)	Q37: IMMENSELY (E)	TOTAL
18-29	0.7% 2	14.0% 39	21.9% 61	32.7% 91	30.6% 85	17.0% 278
30-39	3.5% 16	17.3% 80	28.8% 133	31.8% 147	18.6% 86	28.3% 462
40-49	3.2% 8	13.7% 34	30.6% 76	33.1% 82	19.4% 48	15.2% 248
50-59	1.8% 4	10.1% 22	30.0% 65	39.6% 86	18.4% 40	13.3% 217
60-69	1.6% 4	7.7% 19	19.4% 48	44.4% 110	27.0% 67	15.2% 248
70+	0.0% 0	6.6% 12	23.2% 42	39.2% 71	30.9% 56	11.1% 181
Total Respondents	34	206	425	587	382	1,634

When it comes to spiritual growth through Bible Studies, once again, people in their 30s are faring the worst and older people are doing the best. About half (49.6%) of people in their 30s say their Bible Study has contributed to their spiritual growth “a moderate amount” or less, while for people 70+ the corresponding figure is 29.8%.

Analyses Using Multiple Variables



B. Analyses Broken Down by Frequency of Participation in Worship Services

1. Inviting Others to Church by Attendance

	MORE THAN 10 PEOPLE	9 OR 10 PEOPLE	7 OR 8 PEOPLE	5 OR 6 PEOPLE	3 OR 4 PEOPLE	1 OR 2 PEOPLE	I DIDN'T INVITE ANYONE TO CHURCH.	TOTAL
Once a week or more	14.5% 153	3.6% 38	6.1% 64	15.0% 158	25.0% 264	24.1% 254	11.8% 125	51.8% 1,056
Practically every week	6.8% 47	2.2% 15	4.8% 33	13.4% 93	23.3% 162	33.7% 234	15.9% 110	34.0% 694
2 to 3 times per month	4.4% 9	1.9% 4	4.9% 10	11.2% 23	26.7% 55	33.5% 69	17.5% 36	10.1% 206
About once per month	7.8% 4	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	9.8% 5	17.6% 9	29.4% 15	35.3% 18	2.5% 51
4 to 10 times each year	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	9.1% 3	27.3% 9	33.3% 11	30.3% 10	1.6% 33
Total Respondents	213	57	107	282	499	583	299	2,040

The more frequently someone attends services, the more likely they are to invite others to services. Among people who attend once a week or more, 64.1% have invited at least “3 or 4 people” to church in the last year—whereas for people attending about once per month, 35.3% say they’ve invited at least “3 or 4 people.”

