



Pew Internet
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The civic and community engagement of religiously active Americans

Those who are active in church, religious, or spiritual organizations are often more deeply involved in their communities than those who are not members of such groups. And their tech use helps them tie to all kinds of groups

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<http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-side-of-religious.aspx>

Overview

Religiously active Americans are more trusting of others, and they are more involved in groups and in their communities – they also feel better about their locales.

Some 40% of Americans say they are active in a church, religious, or spiritual organization. Compared with those who are not involved with such organizations, religiously active Americans are more trusting of others, are more optimistic about their impact on their community, think more highly of their community, are more involved in more organizations of all kinds, and devote more time to the groups to which they are active.

- 53% of religiously active Americans believe that other **people are generally trustworthy**, compared with 43% of those not involved with religious groups
- 45% of religiously active view their **community as an excellent place to live**, compared with 34% of those not active with religious groups
- 38% of religiously active Americans believe that they can have a **major impact on their communities**, compared with 27% of those not active with religious groups

A survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project asked people about their membership in 28 different kinds of organizations and clubs. Religious and spiritual organizations topped the list, and those who were active in such groups were more active in all kinds of groups. The average number of groups that religiously active Americans are active in is 5.61, and those who are not involved with religious groups participate in 2.11 groups.

Those who are active in religious groups spend an average of 7.5 hours per week in group activities compared with 5.4 hours for those not active in a religious group.

In many types of groups, the religiously active are involved in considerable greater percentages compared with the non-religious. For example:

- 35% are active in sports or recreation leagues for themselves or for their children (versus 17% for the non-religious).
- 34% are active in charitable or volunteer organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or the Humane Society (versus 15% for the non-religious).
- 30% are active in community groups or neighborhood associations (versus 11% for the non-religious).

With regard to technology, religiously active Americans use the internet, email, broadband, cell phones and social media platforms at similar rates to other Americans.

Americans who are members of religious groups are also engaged with core technology at levels similar to or higher than the overall population. Asked about their technology usage:

- 79% of Americans who are active in religious groups are **internet users**, compared with 75% of those not involved with religious groups
- 86% of Americans who are active in religious groups are **cell phone users**, compared with 80% of those not involved with religious groups
- 75% of religiously active Americans are **email users**, compared with 68% of those who are not involved with religious groups.
- 46% of these religiously active Americans **use social networking sites** such as Facebook, compared with 49% of those who are not involved with religious groups.
- 9% of these religiously active Americans **use Twitter**, compared with 10% of those not involved with religious groups

Asked about their own personal involvement with all kinds of groups, those who are religiously active often have good things to say about the role of the internet with those groups. Still, the religiously active are somewhat less likely to salute the internet's impact on their own groups than their non-religious counterparts. For example:

- 49% of the religiously active view the internet as having a major impact and 34% having a minor impact on the ability to **keep up with news and information from the groups in which they are active** (compared with 59% and 25% for the non-religious).
- 38% of the religiously active view the internet as having a major impact and 37% having a minor impact on the **ability to organize group activities for their groups** (compared with 46% and 28% for the non-religious).
- 34% of the religiously active view the internet as having a major impact and 38% having a minor impact on the ability to **find interesting groups to join** (compared with 42% and 28% for the non-religious).
- 22% of the religiously active view the internet as having a major impact and 43% having a minor impact on the ability to **volunteer their time to groups in which they are active** (compared with 27% and 37% for the non-religious).
- 20% of the religiously active view the internet as having a major impact and 38% having a minor impact on the ability to **contribute money to groups** (compared with 28% and 31% for the non-religious).

When people are asked about their group activities, it is clear that they believe the internet is having a wide-ranging impact on their own engagement within civic and social groups. This is true for all Americans, including those who are active in religious groups and organizations. Asked to assess the overall impact of the internet on group activities:

- 68% of Americans who are active in religious groups (internet users and non-users alike) said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **communicate with members**.
- 62% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **draw attention to an issue**.
- 57% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **connect with other groups**.

- 58% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **impact society at large**.
- 57% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **organize activities**.
- 46% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **raise money**.
- 44% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **recruit new members**.
- 46% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **impact local communities**.
- 30% of Americans who are active in religious groups said the internet has had a major impact on the ability of groups to **find people to take leadership roles**.

Part 1: Background and basics on the importance and implications of religious and spiritual activity

The rise of the internet, high-speed connectivity, and cell phones has focused interest among scholars, journalists, and cultural observers on the status of Americans' social lives, their ties to communities, and the vigor of the organizations to which they belong. There are those who have argued that these technologies are more likely to bind users even more closely and to enrich their social lives.¹ There are others who worry that digital technologies are pulling people away from communities and richer social spheres and drawing them into virtual realms where communication is stunted and inferior and where social interactions are a pale shadow of the "real world."²

To assess the status of Americans' social involvement, the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project conducted a national phone survey between November 23 and December 21, 2010. Many of the overall findings are reported in **The Social Side of the Internet**.³

That report notes that religious and spiritual organizations are by far the most popular groups among Americans, with 40% of American adults stating they are active in such groups. This is considerably higher than the next most popular organizational types, which are sports and recreation leagues (in which 24% of adults are active) and far outpaces other kinds of groups. That makes religiously active Americans a particularly interesting group to explore.

In all, respondents to the survey were asked about their possible membership in 28 different kinds of groups. Findings were:

- 40% of adults say they are active in church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations
- 24% are active in sports or recreation leagues for themselves or for their children
- 24% are active in consumer groups such as AAA or coupon-sharing groups
- 22% are active in charitable or volunteer organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or the Humane Society
- 20% are active in professional or trade associations for people in their occupations
- 19% are active in community groups or neighborhood associations
- 18% are active in support groups for people with a particular illness or personal situation
- 17% are active in hobby groups or clubs
- 15% are active in national or local organizations for older adults such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
- 15% are active in political parties or organizations

¹ Matej, S. and Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2001) Real and Virtual Social Ties: Connections in the Everyday Lives of Seven Ethnic Neighborhoods. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 45(3), 550-564.

² Putnam, R. (2001). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster: New York.
Rheingold, H. (2000) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. The MIT Press: Reading, MA.

³ Rainie, L., Purcell, K., and Smith, A. (2011). The social side of the internet. (18 January). Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/The-Social-Side-of-the-Internet.aspx>

- 14% are active in alumni associations
- 13% are active in parent groups or organizations such as the PTA or local parent support groups
- 11% are active in literary, discussion, or study groups such as book clubs
- 10% are active in performance or arts groups, such as a choir, dance group, or craft guild
- 9% are active in fan groups for a particular sports team or athlete
- 9% are active in youth groups such as the Scouts, YMCA, or 4-H club
- 8% are active in labor unions
- 8% are active in social or fraternal clubs, sororities or fraternities
- 7% are active in environmental groups
- 7% are active in sports fantasy leagues
- 7% are active in veterans organizations such as the American Legion or VFW
- 6% are active in gaming communities
- 6% are active in fan groups for a particular TV show, movie, celebrity, or musical performer
- 5% are active in ethnic or cultural groups
- 5% are active in travel clubs
- 4% are active in farm organizations
- 3% are active in fan groups for a particular brand, company, or product
- 3% say they are active in another kind of group that was not mentioned in the Pew Internet list

Given that religious groups drew by far the most members, we decided to explore more deeply the characteristics of those Americans active in religious organizations and spiritual groups, including their technology profile.

We were especially interested in these findings because there is a significant debate about the role of religious believers in public life. Some commentators have pointed to an increased polarization in America between religious conservatives and secular liberals at the edges of partisan divides, with a dwindling grouping of religious moderates in the middle.⁴ There are also concerns about how this might affect community cohesion and whether religious believers are so focused on their beliefs and spiritual lives that they might not have the inclination or energy to participate in other parts of community life. We wanted to shed some insights on these concerns.

It is important to note at the outset that this survey was conducted to take a broad reading on group activity in America and on the potential impact that technology has on group activities of all kinds – mainly secular. We were anxious to know about how those in religious groups act in their communities, but we did not probe in depth for people’s religious affiliations. Thus, we cannot produce findings comparing those connected to different faiths – for instance, how evangelical Protestants are similar to or different from Roman Catholics. We do look at the differences between those who are active in religious groups and those who aren’t; and we look at those who are serious practitioners of their faiths compared with those who are less-frequent church goers.

⁴ Putnam, R. D. and Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. Simon & Schuster: New York.

The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a sample of 2,303 adults, age 18 and older. Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by landline (1,555) and cell phone (748, including 310 without a landline phone). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. For results based on internet users (n=1,811), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Who is active in religious groups?

In the survey, we asked if respondents were active in a religious or spiritual organization. We inquired about a variety of demographic information. We also queried for a variety of viewpoints on other people, organizational impact, and communities. We then asked respondents a series of questions on their use of and view of technology.

Findings for those active in religious organizations and spiritual groups show that:

- Women (43%) are more likely to be involved than men (37%)
- Blacks (49%) are more likely to be involved than whites (40%) or Hispanics (28%)
- College graduates (47%) are more likely to be involved than those with lesser educational levels
- Involvement is positively correlated with age (i.e., 53% of those 65+ years are involved with a religious organization or spiritual group, compared with 29% of those ages 18-29)
- Involvement in religious groups is positively correlated with household income (i.e., 47% of those earning \$75,000+ are involved with a religious organization or spiritual group, compared with 34% of those who live in households earning less than \$30,000)
- Parents (43%) are slightly more likely to be involved than non-parents (39%)

Some of the other key traits and civic attitudes of those who are involved in religious organizations and spiritual groups are listed below:

- 79% are internet users – which is not meaningfully different from the 75% of non-religiously active Americans who use the internet
- 58% of those who participate in religious groups and are on the internet use social networking sites, such as Facebook or LinkedIn, while 11% use Twitter, compared with 68% of non-religiously active American internet users who use social networking sites and 13% who use Twitter
- 65% have lived in their locality for more than 5 years, compared with 55% of non-religiously active Americans who have lived in their communities that length of time
- 53% believe other people are generally trustworthy, compared with 43% of non-religiously active Americans who think that
- 50% of the religiously-active live in the suburbs, with 30% coming from urban and 20% coming from rural areas. For the non-religious, 39% live in urban areas, 47% in the suburbs, and 14% in rural areas

- 49% say they are conservative, with 35% being Republican (53% lean Republican), compared with 30% of non-religiously active Americans who are conservative
- 45% view their community as an excellent place to live, compared with 34% of non-religiously active Americans who believe that
- 41% devote a significant number of hours per week (6 hours or more) to the organizations to which they belong, compared with 28% of non-religiously active Americans who do the same
- 38% believe that they can have a big impact on their communities, compared with 27% of non-religiously active Americans who believe that
- 26% are involved with a high number of organizations (8-28 groups) and 53% are involved with a medium number of organizations (3-7 groups) compared with 6% and 27% respectively

Table 1 shows the basic demographic composition of those who are active in religious groups in America compared with those who are not are active in such groups:

Table 1. Those who are currently active in church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults in each demographic group. For instance, 37% of men are active in religious or spiritual groups.

Demographics	% of those in each group who are active in religious or spiritual group	Those not active
Gender		
Male	37%	63%
Female	43	57
Race		
White	40	60
Black	49	51
Hispanic	28	72
Age (at time of survey)		
18-29	29	71
30-49	39	61
50-64	42	58
65+	53	47
Education		
Less than high school	31	69
High school	36	64
Some college	42	58
College graduate or more	47	53
Household income		
< \$30,000	34	66
\$30,000 - \$49,999	40	60
\$50,000 - \$74,999	43	57
\$75,000+	47	53

Table 1. Those who are currently active in church groups or other religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults in each demographic group. For instance, 37% of men are active in religious or spiritual groups.

Demographics	% of those in each group who are active in religious or spiritual group	Those not active
Parent of minor child living at home		
Parent	43	57
Not a parent	39	61

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including 748 reached via cell phone.

From Table 1, we see that women (43%) are more likely than men (37%) to be active in church groups. In fact, 55% of those in religious or spiritual groups are women, and 45% are men.

African-Americans (49%) are the most likely to be active in church groups, much more than their white (40%) or Hispanic (28%) counterparts. However, most of those active in religious or spiritual groups are white (70%), with 14% being black, 9% Hispanic, and 7% other.

Older Americans are the most likely to be active in church groups, with a positive correlation between age and involvement in these religious and spiritual groups.

Participation in religious or spiritual groups is highest among adults with a college education (47%) and those with the highest incomes (47% of those with household incomes of \$75,000+).

Finally, parents (43%) are more likely than non-parents (39%) to be involved in a religious or spiritual group. However, perhaps counter to commonly held expectations, the difference is not statistically significant.

Locality of those active in religious or spiritual organizations

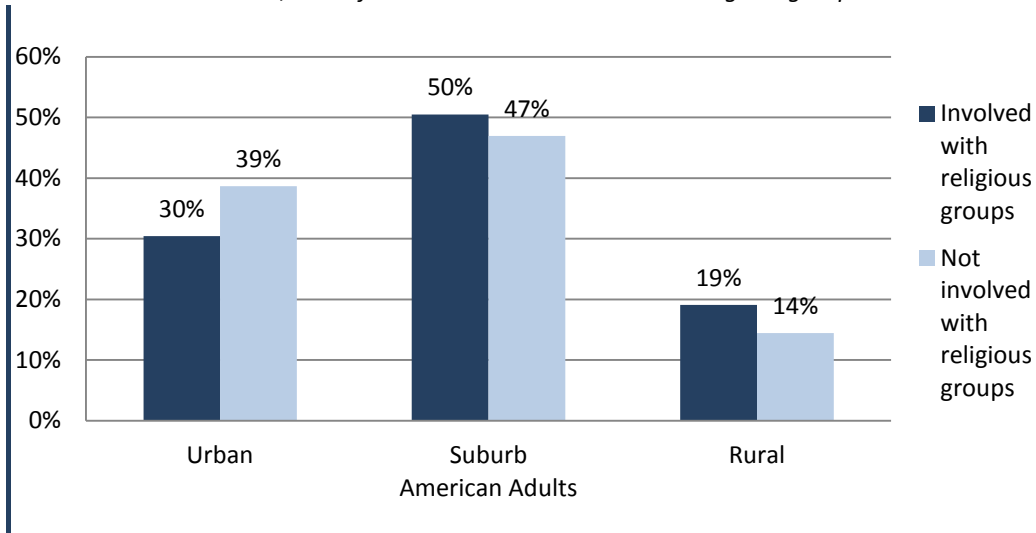
We examined where the people active in a religious or spiritual organization live.

As we noted in our earlier report, **The Social Side of the Internet**,⁵ those who live in rural areas (49%) were more likely than others to be involved with church and spiritual groups. However, when we look at the distribution based on involvement in these organizations, we see that at an absolute level, suburbanites outnumber urban and rural areas in religious or spiritual organizations.

⁵ Rainie, L., Purcell, K., and Smith, A. (2011). The social side of the internet. (18 January). Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/The-Social-Side-of-the-Internet.aspx>

Figure 1: Locality of those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults. For instance, 30% of adults who are involved with religious groups live in urban areas.

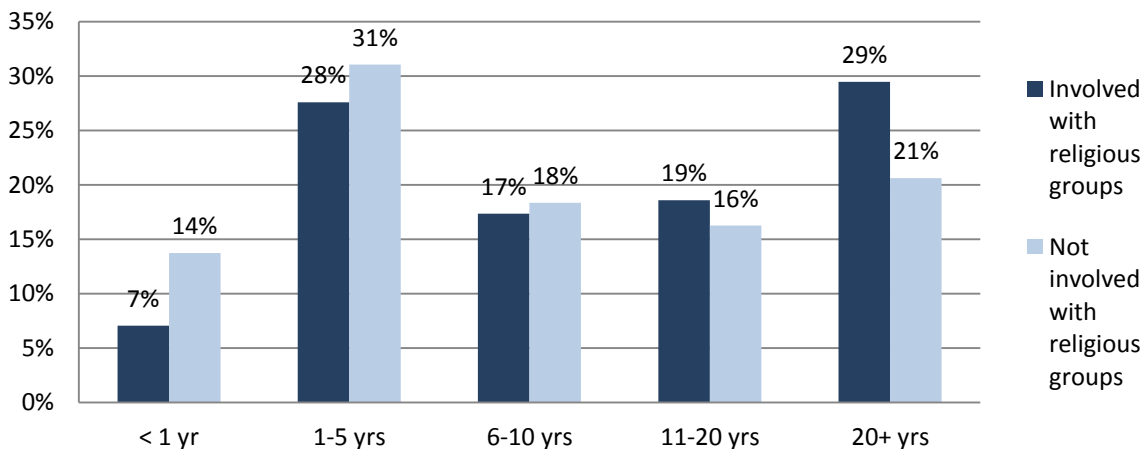


Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=1,811 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

We also examined the length of time a person lived in a particular location, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Length of time in locality based on involvement in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults. For instance, 7% of adults who are involved with religious groups have lived in their locality less than one year.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 2, we see that there is little difference among each of our categories between those active in religious or spiritual organizations and those not when a person has been in a locality from 1 to 19 years. However, those active in religious or spiritual organizations are more likely to have lived in a community for 20 years or more, while those who have lived in a community for less than a year are less likely to be active in religious or spiritual organizations.

A technology portrait of religiously active Americans

Those who are active in religious groups are just as engaged with many major technologies as those who are not active in religious groups, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The state of technology among those who are and aren't are active in religious organizations

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 76% of all adults are internet users, compared with 79% of those who are active in religious groups.

	All adults	Those who are active in religious groups	Those who aren't active in such groups
Internet users	76%	79%	75%
Email users	71%	75%	68%
Broadband at home	63%	64%	62%
Cell phone owners	81%	86%	80%
Use text messaging	60%	60%	60%
Social networking site users	47%	46%	49%
Twitter users	9%	9%	10%

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, Social Side Survey - November 23-December 21, 2010. N=2,303 national adults ages 18 and older, including 748 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

From Table 2, for all American adults (not just internet or cell phone users), we see for members of religious groups, 79% are internet users, 75% are email users, , 64% have broadband at home, 86% are cell phone users, and 60% have used text messaging on their phone.

In the social area, 9% of those in religious groups have used Twitter and 46% are users of a social networking site, such as Facebook.

Part 2: The group involvement, engagement, motivations, and views of those in religious or spiritual organizations

After getting the basics about those who are active in religious organizations, we examined their broad patterns of involvement in groups by looking at the number of groups that a person was active in and the number hours devoted to these groups.

The average American adult is active in 3.51 groups of the various types queried in the survey, and the average person spends 6.54 hours per week in group activities.⁶

By comparison, the average number of groups that members of religious or spiritual organizations are active in is 5.61, and those who are not involved with religious groups participate in 2.11 groups.

Exploring this involvement more, we classified people into four categories, depending on how many groups they were involved with (remember, the survey covered 28 different kinds of groups):

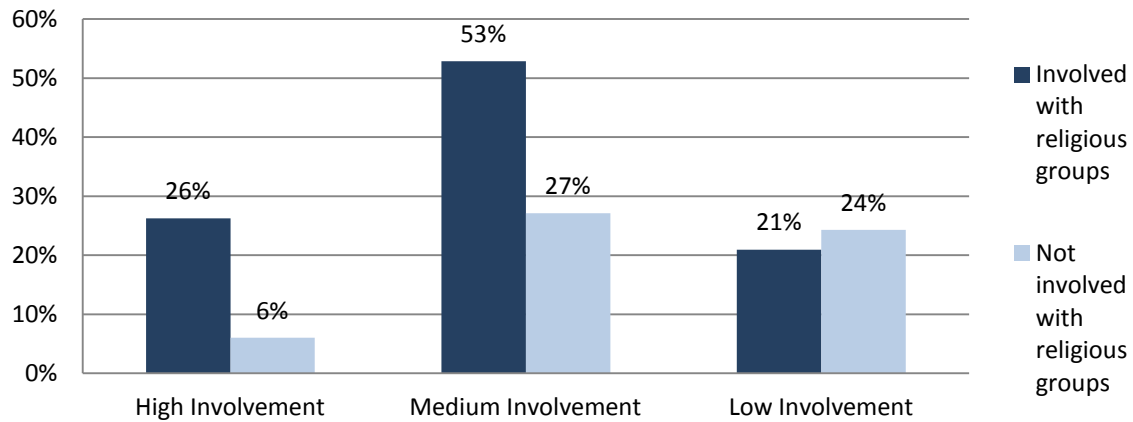
- **High Involvement:** those who participate in 8-28 groups
- **Medium Involvement:** those who participate in 3-7 groups
- **Low Involvement:** those who participate in 1-2 group(s)
- **No Involvement:** those who participate in 0 groups

We then compared those active in religious or spiritual organizations with those not active in such organizations, with results shown in Figure 3.

⁶ Pew Internet & American Life Project Survey, December 2010 – Social Side of the Internet. November 23 to December 21, 2010. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Shared-Content/Data-Sets/2010/December-2010--Social-Side-of-the-Internet.aspx>

Figure 3: Involvement level of those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adult. For instance, 26% of those involved with religious groups have high involvement and 53% have medium involvement with several other groups.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

Those involved with religious groups tended towards high or medium involvement, while those who are not members of religious groups tended toward medium or low involvement. From Figure 3, we see that for those involved with religious groups, 26% have high involvement and 53% have medium involvement with several other groups.

Comparatively, only 6% of those not involved with religious groups have a high involvement. Some 43% of those not connected to religious groups have no connection to any of the other types of groups that were involved in this survey.

In addition to involvement by number of groups, we also examined engagement by number of weekly hours devoted to all groups and organizations.

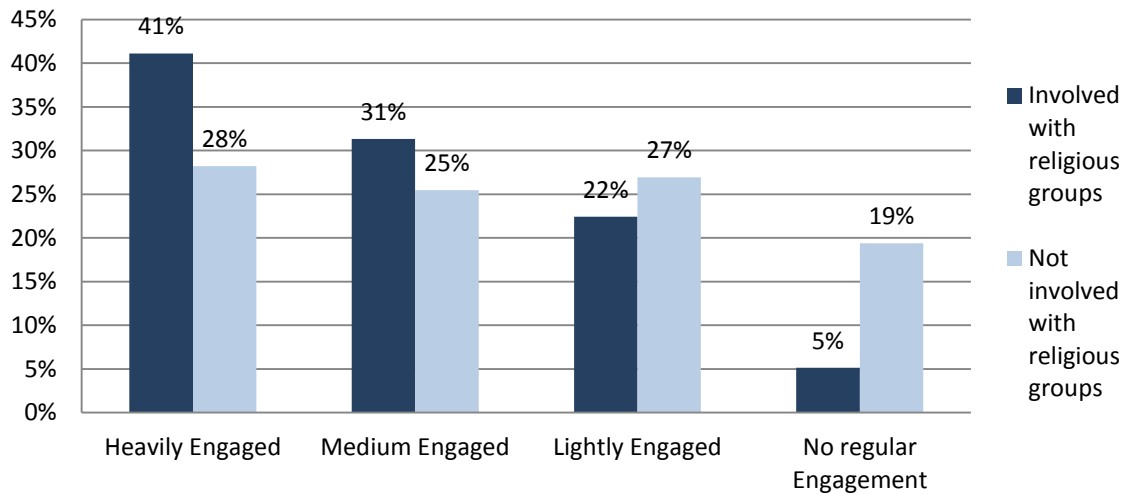
To examine this aspect, we classified people into four categories:

- **Heavily engaged:** those who devote 6 or more hours per week
- **Medium engaged:** those who devote 3- 5 hours per week
- **Lightly engaged:** those who devote 1-2 hours per week
- **Not engaged:** those who devote 0 hours per week

We then compared those active in religious or spiritual organizations with those not active in such organizations, with results shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Engagement for those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults. For instance, 41% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization are highly engaged with organizations or groups.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

As shown in Figure 4, we found that 41% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization are highly engaged, devoting 6 or more hours per week to various organizations or groups. Additionally, another 31% are intermediately engaged, devoting 3-5 hours per week. Only 5% of these respondents devote no weekly time to their organization or groups. Those who are involved in religious groups spend an average of 7.5 hours per week in group activities compared with 5.4 hours for those not members of a religious group.

Other organizations to which religiously active Americans belong

Of the 28 groups that we surveyed, religiously active Americans are involved in greater percentages in every type of group save one (gaming groups) than their non-religious peers.

- 35% are active in **sports or recreation leagues** for themselves or for their children (versus 17% for the non-religious).
- 34% are active in **charitable or volunteer organizations** such as Habitat for Humanity or the Humane Society (versus 15% for the non-religious).
- 32% are active in **consumer groups** such as AAA or coupon-sharing groups (versus 18% for the non-religious).
- 30% are active in **community groups or neighborhood associations** (versus 11% for the non-religious).
- 30% are active in **support groups** for people with a particular illness or personal situation (versus 11% for the non-religious).
- 29% are active in **professional or trade associations** for people in their occupations (versus 14% for the non-religious).

- 23% are active in **hobby groups** or clubs (versus 13% for the non-religious).
- 23% are active in **national or local organizations for older adults** such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) (versus 10% for the non-religious).
- 22% are active in **political parties or organizations** (versus 10% for the non-religious).
- 20% are active in **alumni associations** (versus 10% for the non-religious).
- 20% are active in **parent groups or organizations** such as the PTA or local parent support groups (versus 8% for the non-religious).
- 19% are active in **performance or arts groups**, such as a choir, dance group, or craft guild (versus 5% for the non-religious).
- 18% are active in **literary, discussion, or study groups** such as book clubs (versus 6% for the non-religious).
- 16% are active in **youth groups** such as the Scouts, YMCA, or 4-H club (versus 5% for the non-religious).
- 14% are active in **fan groups for a particular sports team or athlete** (versus 8% for the non-religious).
- 12% are active in **social or fraternal clubs, sororities or fraternities** (versus 6% for the non-religious).
- 11% are active in **veterans organizations** such as the American Legion or VFW (versus 4% for the non-religious).
- 10% are active in **labor unions** (versus 6% for the non-religious).
- 10% are active in **environmental groups** (versus 6% for the non-religious).
- 9% are active in **ethnic or cultural groups** (versus 3% for the non-religious).
- 8% are active in **sports fantasy leagues** (versus 6% for the non-religious).
- 8% are active in **fan groups for a particular TV show, movie, celebrity, or musical performer** (versus 4% for the non-religious).
- 8% are active in **travel clubs** (versus 3% for the non-religious).
- 7% are active in **farm organizations** (versus 2% for the non-religious).
- 5% say they are active in **another kind of group that was not mentioned** in the Pew Internet list (versus 3% for the non-religious).
- 4% are active in **fan groups for a particular brand, company, or product** (versus 3% for the non-religious).

The *only* group for which the religiously active do not participate in greater percentages is **gaming communities**, where 5% of the religious are active versus 6% for the non-religious.

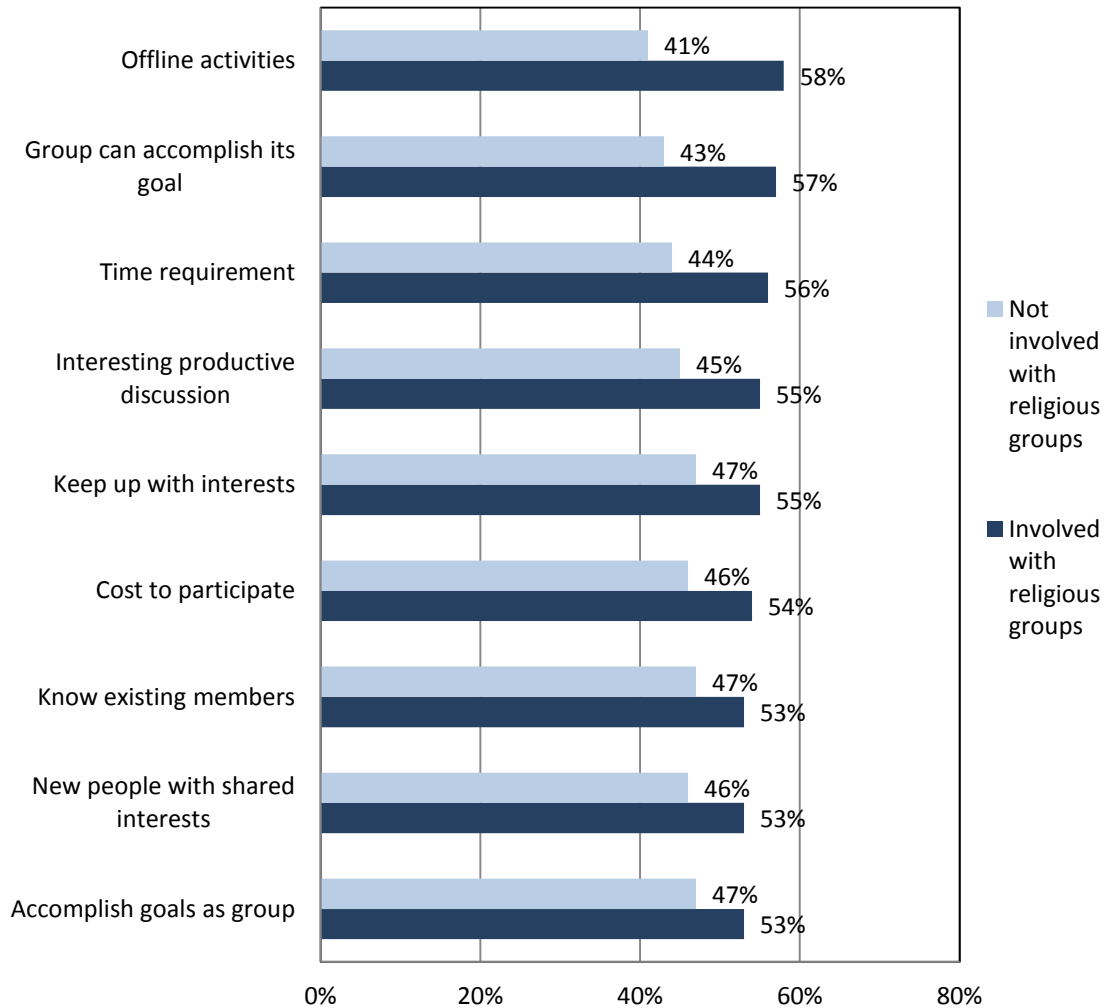
What motivates group membership by those in religious organizations

With this background on involvement and engagement, we were interested in what motivated these people to become active in their groups and organizations. We asked a series of questions about possible motives that might drive people to participate in organizations. The results are reported in Figure 5. It is important to note that respondents' answers reflected their views about membership in **all the groups** they participate in, not just the religious groups.

The pattern is clear: Those who are religiously active are more likely than others to see that the organizations of which they are members are more personally rewarding and have greater impact, especially off-line.

Figure 5: Reasons for belonging to group or organization

% of American adults who are involved in a group organization. For instance, 41% of those who are not active in a religious or spiritual organization cite the conduct of at least some activities off line and in person as a major reason for joining the groups that matter to them



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

Some 58% of those who are active in a religious or spiritual organization cite the conduct of at least **some activities off line and in person** as a major reason for joining the groups that matter to them. This was closely followed by a belief that **the group can accomplish its goal** (57%) and **the time required for participation** (56%).

In contrast, those who were not members of religious or spiritual organizations said these reasons were the most important for joining their groups: **knowing existing members**, **keeping up with interests**, and **accomplishing something** as part of a group that one can't accomplish individually (all at approximately 47%).

Religion and politics

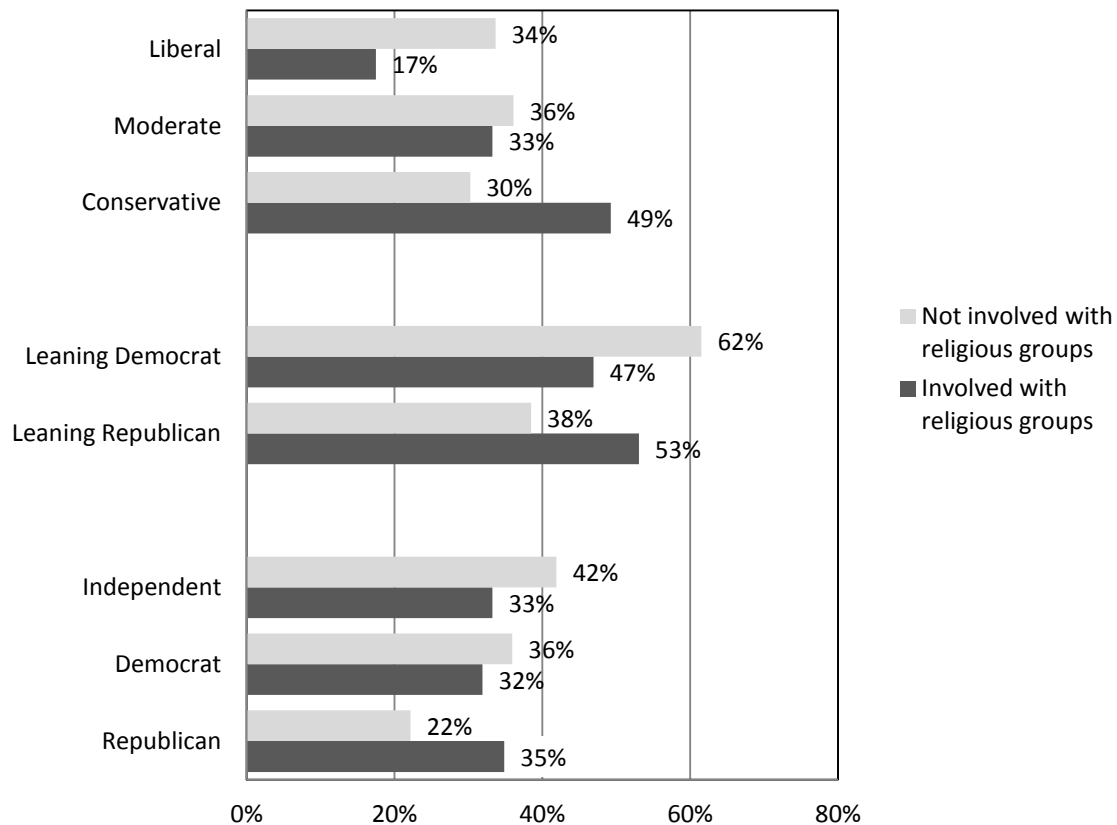
We wanted to gauge the political affiliations of those active in religious or spiritual organizations. Since such political positions can sometimes be nuanced, we explored this matter in three different ways:

- what political party they belonged to
- whether they leaned politically toward one party or another
- where on the political spectrum they placed themselves

Results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Political affiliations of those in religious organizations

% of American adults in each group who have these beliefs. For instance, 34% of those not active in a religious or spiritual organization are more likely to consider themselves Liberal



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 6, we can see that 35% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization are more likely to consider themselves Republican, with slightly less percentages for both Democrat (32%) and Independent (33%). It is interesting to note the political alignment of those not active in religious or spiritual organizations, with 22% considering themselves Republican, 36% Democrat, and 42% Independent.

When also asked which party they leaned toward versus aligned with, 53% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization leaned Republican and 47% leaned Democrat. The “Leaning Republican” and “Leaning Democratic” are the sum of those who say they support that party and those who say they lean toward that party.

As for where they placed themselves on the political spectrum, 49% of those in a religious or spiritual organization considered themselves Conservative, with 33% being Moderate and 17% being Liberal.

So, these survey findings confirm to a degree the analysis by Robert Putnam and David Campbell,⁴ who have argued that religious sensibilities are an important factor leading to political polarization as religious group members skew conservative and non-religious group members trend liberal.

However, in contrast to the arguments of Putnam and Campbell, our survey found that there appears to be a substantial middle of both religious and secular moderates (33% of those who are active in religious groups). We also found notable percentages of religious liberals (17% of those who are active in religious groups) and, conversely, secular conservatives, as shown in Figure 6 (i.e., those conservatives who do not are active in any religious group).

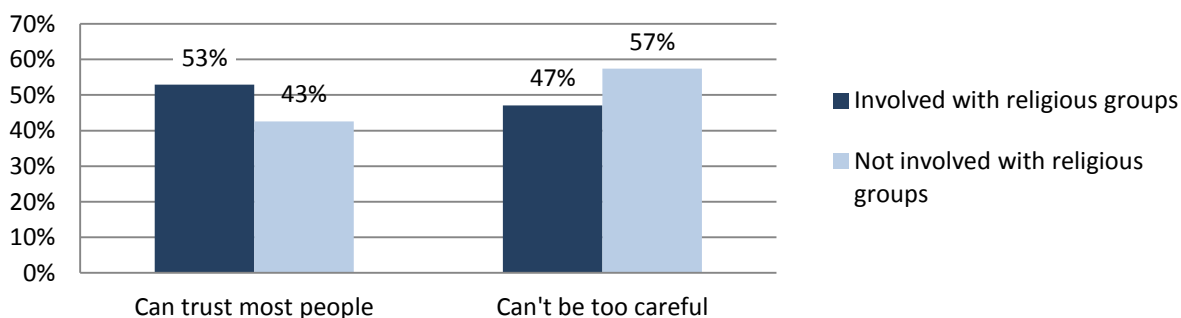
The trust, efficacy, and community view of the religiously active

We wanted to measure how those active in religious groups view others, themselves, and their communities.

For insight into people’s sense of trust, we asked, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” The results are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Trust in others by those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 53% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization believe that most people can be trusted.



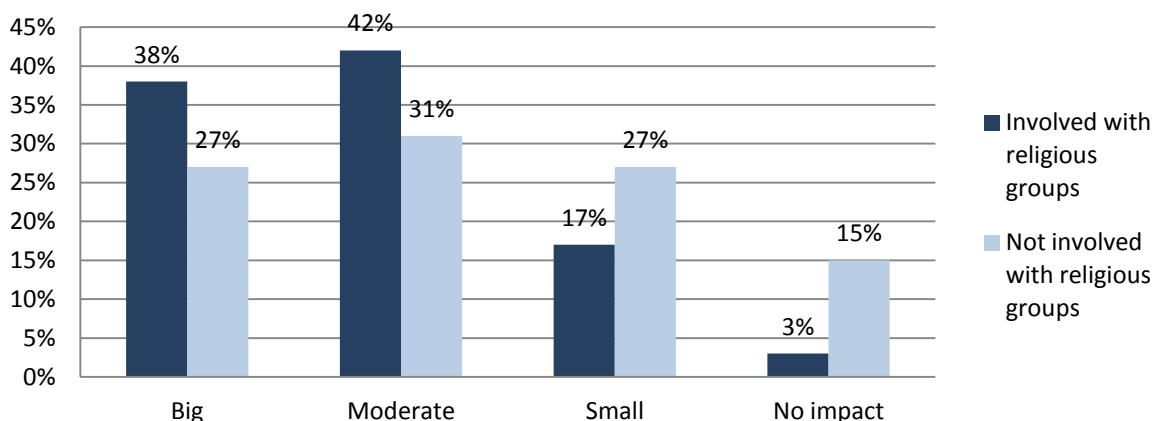
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 7, 53% of those active in a religious or spiritual organization believe that most people can be trusted, significantly higher than those not active in such organizations (43%).

On the issue of personal efficacy, we asked respondents, “Overall, how much impact do you think people like you can have in making your community a better place to live — a big impact, a moderate impact, a small impact, or no impact at all?” Results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Ability to make an impact on my community

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 38% of those active in religious or spiritual organizations said they felt they can have a big impact on their community.



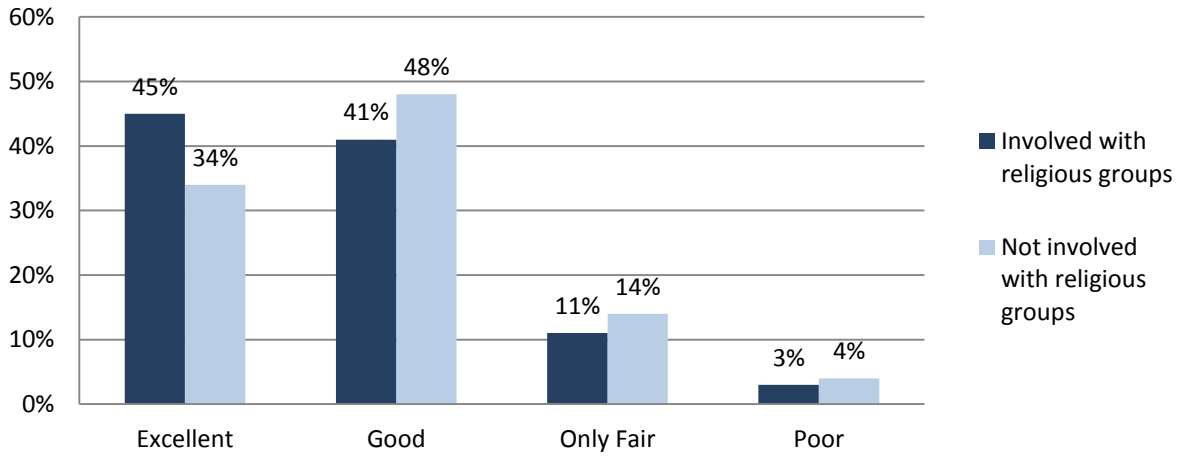
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 8, some 38% of those active in religious or spiritual organizations said they felt they can have a big impact; 42% said they can have a moderate impact; 27% said they have a small impact; and 3% said they felt they have no impact. The belief in having a big or moderate impact is substantially higher than those not involved in a religious organization.

We were also interested in how people view the communities in which they live (Figure 9).

Figure 9: View of the quality of their communities

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 45% of those active in religious or spiritual organizations have an excellent view of their community



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

As one can see from Figure 9, 45% of those active in religious or spiritual organizations have an excellent view of their community compared with 34% of those not active in these organizations, again substantially higher.

Part 3: Technology and religious group members

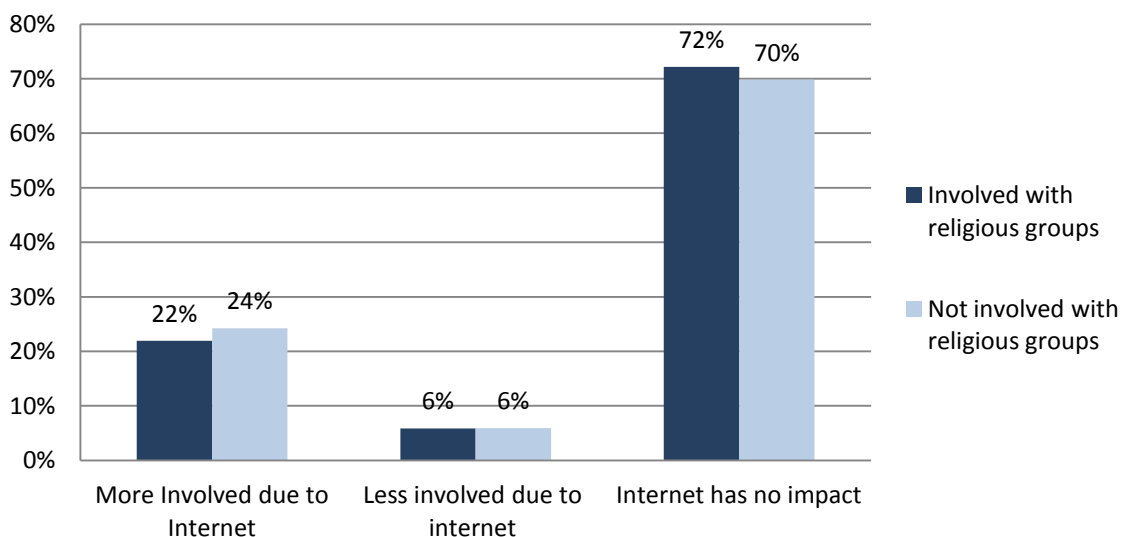
Results from the overall Pew Internet survey³ show that technology users are generally more likely than non-users to be involved in almost all the kinds of groups. In the survey, 76% of adults reported being internet users; 81% said they had cell phones; and 59% said they connect to the internet wirelessly either through their laptop computer or through their smart phone. Results also showed that the internet is deeply embedded in group activities and in how people create, join, participate in, and sustain groups.

To start, we note that 79% of those who are active in religious and spiritual organizations use the internet. That is not statistically different from the internet use of those who are not part of such organizations (76%).

Their view of the internet's impact on their overall group involvement – not just their involvement with religious and spiritual organizations – is also in line with overall population averages, as pictured in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Impact of internet by those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 22% of those involved with religious groups say they are more involved due to the internet.



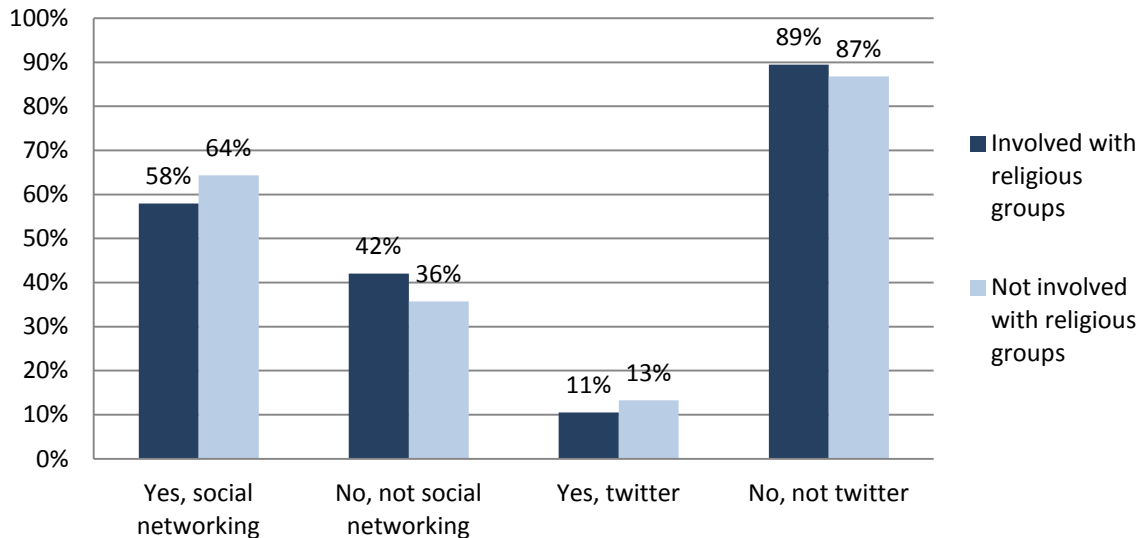
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=1,811 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

As shown Figure 10, 22% of those active in religious or spiritual groups reported that the internet propels them to more involvement with the groups that matter to them, with 72% saying the internet had no impact. These percentages are similar to those from respondents not active in religious or spiritual groups.

When we examined the use of social network services, however, there were some minor differences between those internet users in religious or spiritual groups versus other groups.

Figure 11: Use of social networking by those in religious or spiritual organizations

% of American adult internet users. For instance, 58% of the internet users who are active in religious groups use social network sites.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=1,811 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

As shown in Figure 11, 58% of the internet users who are active in religious groups use social network sites compared with 64% for the online Americans who are not active in religious or spiritual groups. This lower usage level may be correlated with age. Older Americans tend to use social networking sites less than younger Americans⁷, and those active in religious or spiritual groups tend to be older (average age of 49 versus 43 years for those not active in religious organizations).

There was no significant difference concerning the use of Twitter among those active in religious or spiritual groups (11%) and those not (13%).

So, it appears that those active in religious or spiritual groups embrace digital technology more or less at rates similar to the overall population, once one accounts for the age difference. This is in line with other research that has examined technology usage around religion and the internet⁸, finding no significant difference.

⁷ Madden, M. and Jones, S. (2008) Networked Workers (24 September). Pew Internet & American Life Project, Pew Research Center. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2008/Networked-Workers/1-Summary-of-Findings/Summary-of-Findings.aspx>

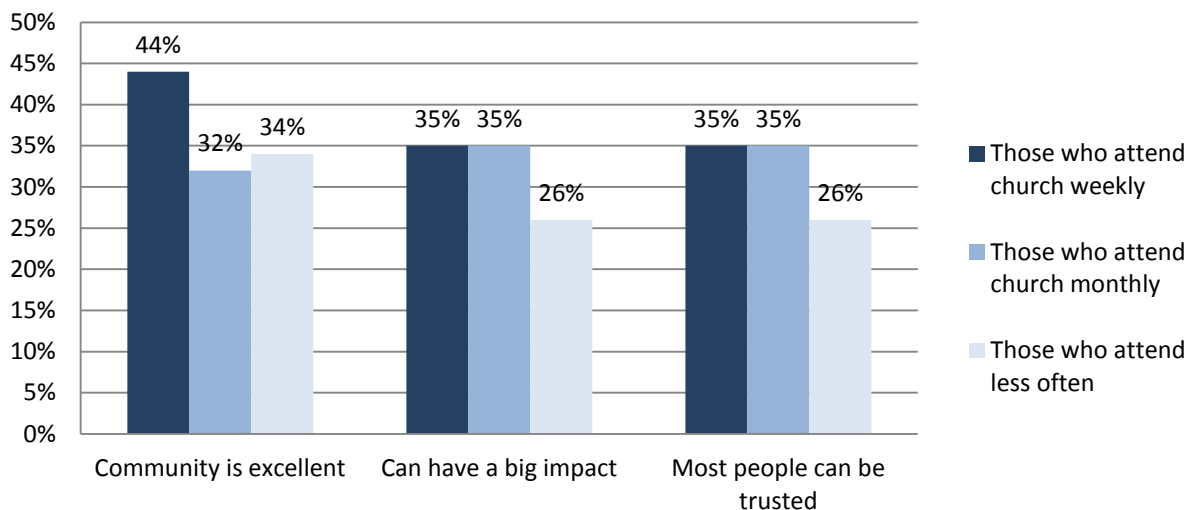
⁸ Jansen, B. J., Tapia, A. H., and Spink, A. (2010) Searching for salvation: An analysis of US religious searching on the World Wide Web, *Religion*. 40(1), 39-52.

Differences in levels of religious involvement

Since being active in a religious group can cover a range of commitment levels, we examined those who are engaged with religious organizations often (i.e., weekly), those who are less frequent attendees (i.e., monthly), and those who don't connect at all (i.e., less often than monthly or never). Specifically, we asked "Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?" Based on the responses to this question, we examined several key aspects based on attendance rate at religious services. Figure 12 shows a comparison based on attendance at religious services and several measures of engagement and well-being.

Figure 12: View of locality, impact, and trust by attendance rate

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 44% of those who attend religious services weekly have an excellent view of their community.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 12, those that attend religious services weekly are significantly more likely to have an excellent view of their community (44%) relative to those who attend monthly (32%) or do not attend at all (34%).

Those attending religious services weekly or monthly are significantly more likely to believe that they can have a major impact (35%) and that most people can be trusted (35%) relative to those who do not attend religious services (26%).

We looked at involvement level (i.e., number of groups belonged to) by attendance at religious services.

Again, we classified people into four categories, depending on how many groups they were involved with based on the 28 different kinds of groups covered in the survey:

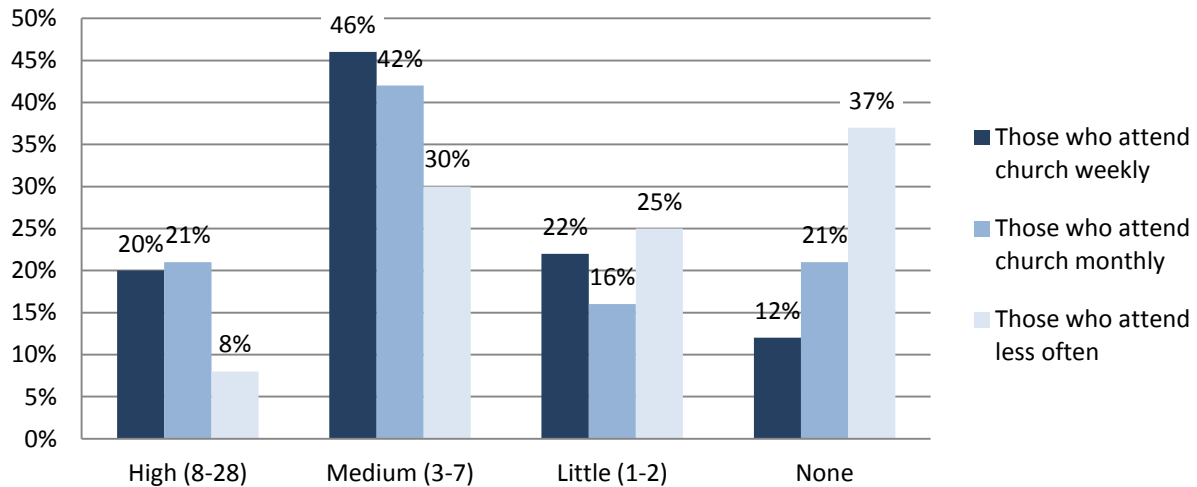
- **High Involvement:** those who participate in 8-28 groups

- **Medium Involvement:** those who participate in 3-7 groups
- **Low Involvement:** those who participate in 1-2 group(s)
- **No Involvement:** those who participate in 0 groups

Findings are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Involvement level in groups by attendance rate

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 20% of those who attend religious services weekly are involved in a high number of groups (8-28).



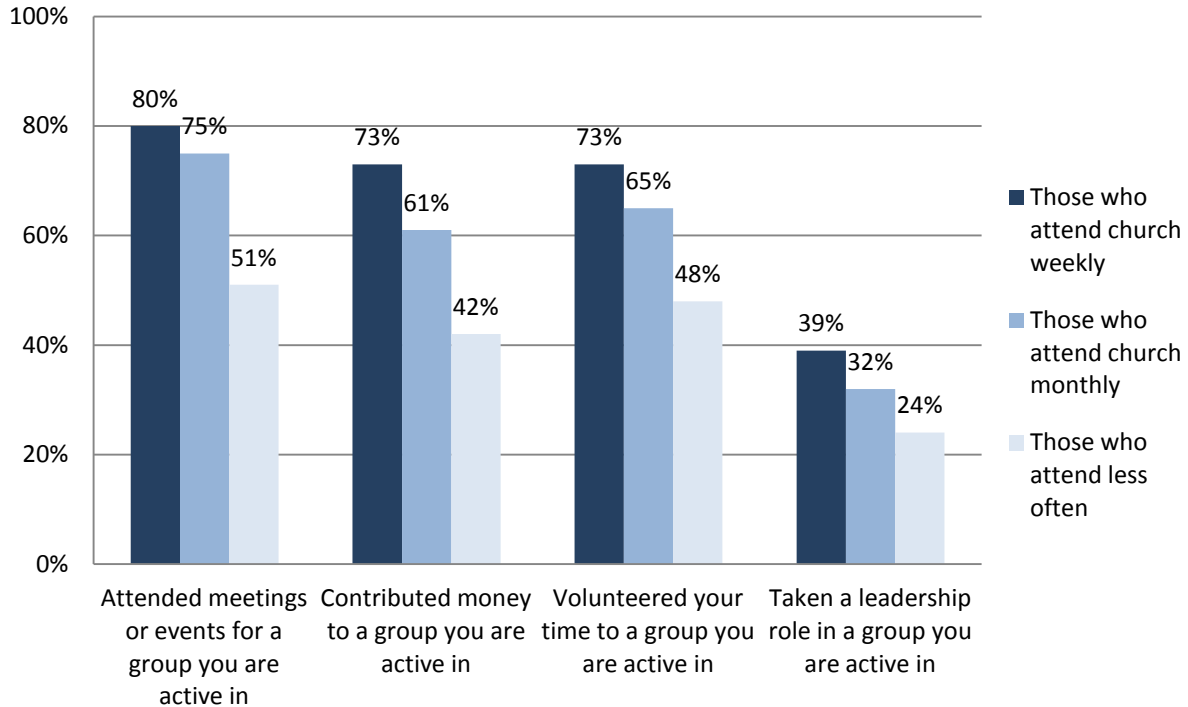
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

As shown in Figure 13, there is a definite correlation between attendance at religious services and general involvement with groups. Those that attend services either weekly or monthly are significantly more likely to be involved in a high or medium number of groups relative to those that do not attend religious services. Only 8% of those who do not attend religious services are involved in a high number of groups.

We also looked at the rates of participation in certain types of group activities by attendance at religious services, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Activities within a group by attendance rate

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 80% of those who attend religious services weekly attend group meetings.



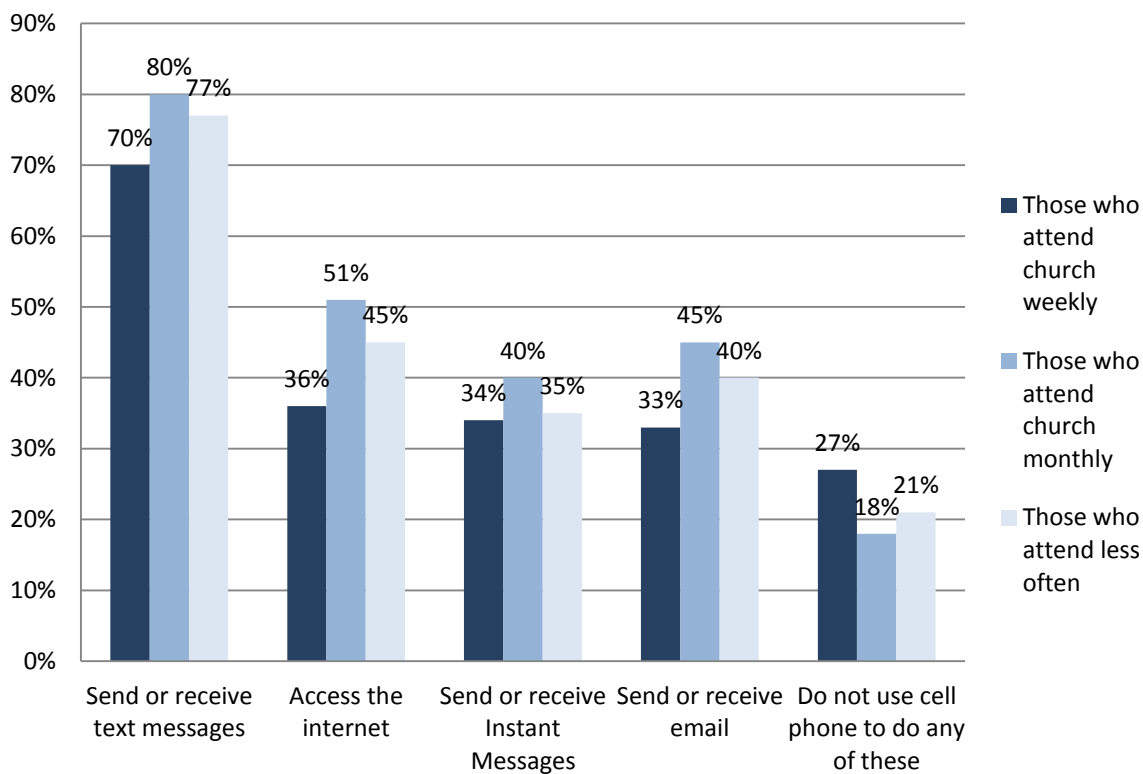
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 14, there is again a correlation between frequency of attendance at religious services and participation in key group activities. Those that attend religious services weekly are much more likely to attend group meetings (80%), contribute money (73%), volunteer time (73%), or take a leadership role (39%) relative to those who attend monthly church or not at all.

Findings for cell phone usage by attendance at religious services are shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Use of cell phone by attendance rate

% of American adult cell phone users in each group. For instance, 70% of cell phone owners who attend religious services weekly send or receive text messages.



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

From Figure 15, we see that the cell phone owners who attend religious services monthly were heavy users of their cell phone in a variety of tasks, including texting (80%), accessing the internet (51%), instant messaging (40%), and emailing (45%). Only 18% of the cell owners who attend monthly religious services did not use their cell phones for any of these tasks.

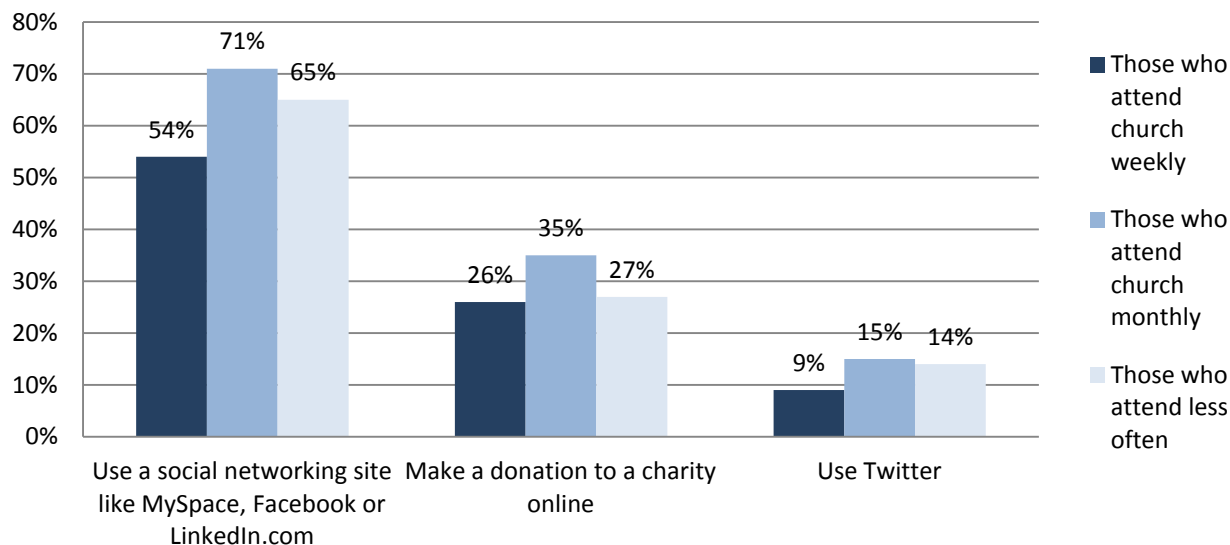
So, in terms of technology usage, those who attend religious services monthly were heavier users of cell phone services than those who attend more frequently or less often.

For all tasks we surveyed, those with cell phones who attended weekly services were less likely to engage in such tasks, and 27% of these Americans did not use their cell phones for any of these tasks.

We also examined the use of social networking sites by those who attend religious services, with results shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Social networking site usage by attendance rate

% of American adult internet users in each group. For instance, 54% of online Americans who attend church monthly use a social networking site like MySpace, Facebook, or LinkedIn.com



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=1,811 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

In Figure 16, we see a similar pattern as cell phone usage and technology ownership with the online Americans who attend religious services monthly more likely to use Facebook (71%) and Twitter (15%) those attending weekly services (54% for Facebook and 9% for Twitter) or those not attending any religious services (65% for Facebook and 14% for Twitter).

As noted earlier, age may be a factor in these lower usage levels for frequent church attendees.

In Table 3, we show percentages for the impact of the internet on a variety of group activities based on attendance rate at religious services.

Similar to the usage patterns of some technologies, we see that those who attend monthly religious services generally have stronger views of the internet having a major impact.

Table 3. Impact of the internet, comparing those who attend church with different frequency

% of those who agree that the internet has a “major impact” when asked about the following statements: “The internet has had major impact on the ability of social, civic, professional, religious or spiritual groups to...”(by religious service attendance)

	Attend church weekly	Attend church monthly	Less often/never
Communicate with members	67%	73%	69%
Draw attention to an issue	62%	67%	62%
Connect with other groups	57%	62%	64%
Impact society at large	57%	61%	62%
Organize activities	56%	60%	63%
Raise money	46%	54%	56%
Impact local communities	46%	51%	51%
Recruit new members	44%	54%	56%
Find people to take leadership roles	33%	33%	36%

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including 748 reached via cell phone.

Comparison of those active in religious or spiritual organizations, those in other organizations, and those belonging to no organizations or groups

There are 25% of American’s who are active in no group or organization. So, we were interested in separating these people out, comparing those who are:

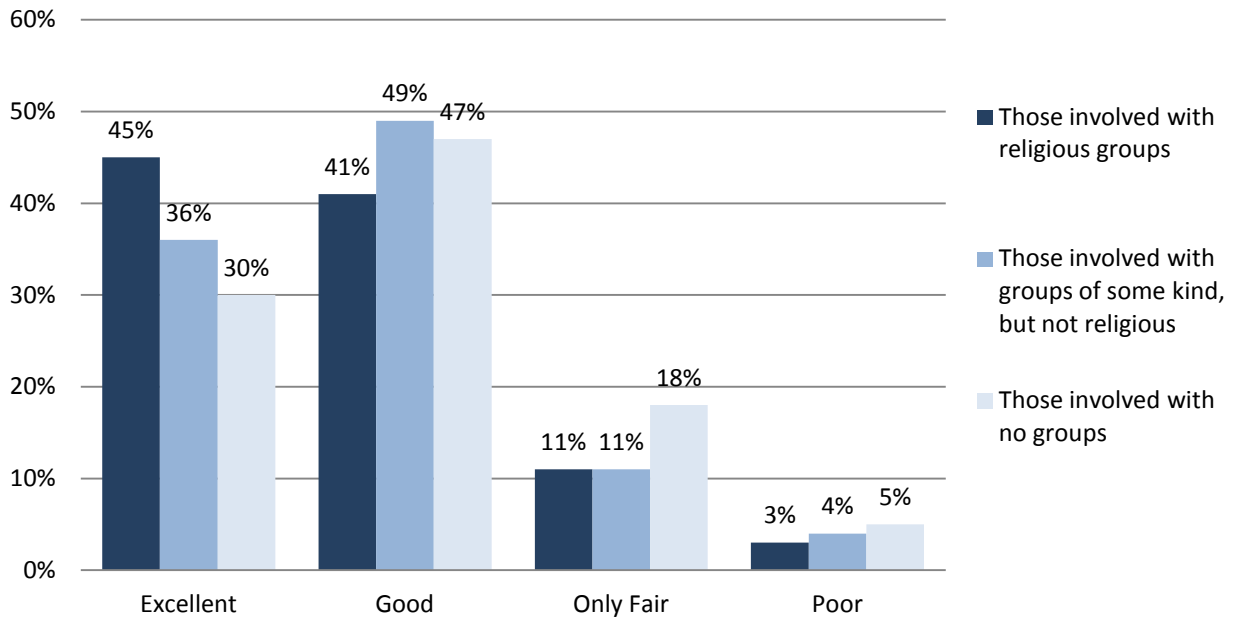
1. Active in religious or spiritual organizations
2. Active in organizations but not religious or spiritual groups
3. Not active in any organization

We examined three key aspects, (a) view of community, (b) whether others can be trusted, and (c) use of the internet.

Looking first at how respondents view their community in Figure 17, we see that there are significant differences among the three groups.

Figure 17: How different groups view their communities

% of American adults in each group. For instance, 45% of those involved in religious or spiritual organizations have an excellent view of their community.



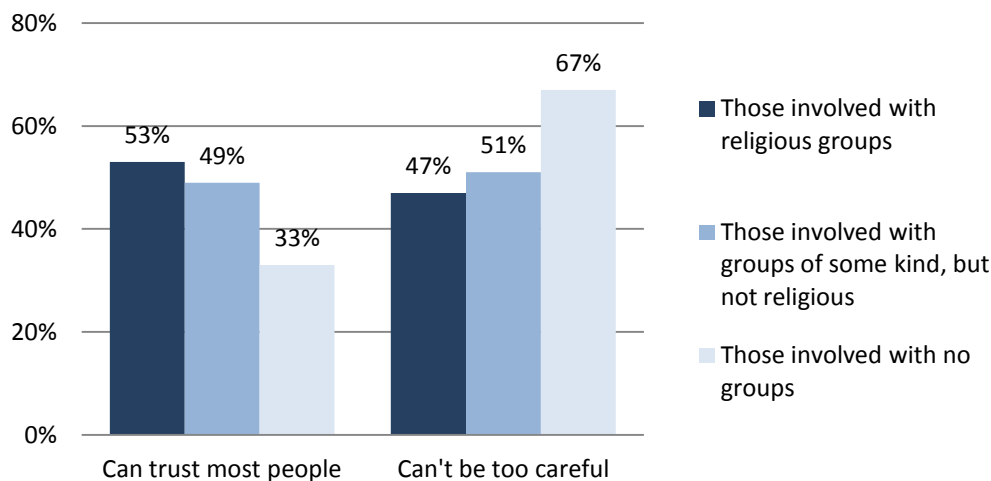
Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

We see in Figure 17, 45% of those involved in religious or spiritual organizations have an excellent view of their community, compared with 36% of those active in groups or organizations (but not religious groups) and 30% of those active in no groups at all.

We see a similar trend in people's view of the trustworthiness of others (Figure 18).

Figure 18: How different groups trust others

% of American adults. For instance, 53% of those Americans involved in a religious or spiritual organization believe that most people can be trusted



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 23-December 21, 2010 Social Side of the Internet Survey. N=2,303 adults 18 and older, including both cell phone and landline.

In Figure 18, 53% of those Americans involved in a religious or spiritual organization believe that most people can be trusted. This compares to 49% of those who are active in non-religious groups and 33% for those who are do not are active in any organization.

The social side of the spiritually and religiously active: Summary and Implications

Given the impact of religion on many aspects of our society, we set out to examine aspects of the social ties of the religious and spiritual in American. Our results show that 40% of Americans active in a religious or spiritual organization, by far the largest percentage membership for any type of group or organization.

Americans active in these religious or spiritual organization are generally older, more educated, and with higher household incomes than those not involved in such organizations.

While there is a correlation between group involvement and positive outlook (in general, regardless whether or not the group is religiously-related), there appears to be something unique about those involved with religious or spiritual organizations. These people are active in more organizations and devote more time to these organizations than their counterparts who are not involved in religious or spiritual groups. So, demographically, these appear to be individuals that one would want to recruit or get involved in group, organizational, or community activities.

Additionally, these religious or spiritual group members are more likely to believe others are trustworthy, more likely to say they like the communities in which they live are excellent, and more likely to believe they can make a positive impact on their communities. They are also the most likely to have lived in their communities for an extended period.

Politically, about half are conservative, with the other half being moderate or liberal. So, the view proposed by some that the religious are an overwhelming conservative block is not evident in this survey, though they do trend conservative.

Concerning technology usage, those active in religious or spiritual organizations use the internet in the same percentages as the general population. More than half of the religiously active who are on the internet are users of social network sites. They own cell phones in percentages greatly than the overall population. So, it appears that members of religious organizations embrace technology like their non-religious counterparts, although there are some controlling factors such as age and income that do come into play.

Naturally, in complex situations like social interactions and involvement, it is rare that a single variable is totally responsible for explaining the nuances of an individual's decision or course of action. However, from this analysis, involvement in church, religious, or spiritual organizations appears positively correlated with a variety of attitudes, technology usage, and behaviors, including increased trust, increased belief in impact, online and offline participation, and time commitment or groups or organizations.

Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International from November 23 to December 21, 2010, among a sample of 2,303 adults, age 18 and older. Telephone interviews were conducted in English and Spanish by landline (1,555) and cell phone (748, including 310 without a landline phone). For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.3 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1,811), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

A combination of landline and cellular random digit dial (RDD) samples was used to represent all adults in the continental United States who have access to either a landline or cellular telephone. Both samples were provided by Survey Sampling International, LLC (SSI) according to PSRAI specifications. Numbers for the landline sample were selected with probabilities in proportion to their share of listed telephone households from active blocks (area code + exchange + two-digit block number) that contained three or more residential directory listings. The cellular sample was not list-assisted, but was drawn through a systematic sampling from dedicated wireless 100-blocks and shared service 100-blocks with no directory-listed landline numbers.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 7 attempts were made to complete an interview at a sampled telephone number. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each number received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone available. For the landline sample, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult male or female currently at home based on a random rotation. If no male/female was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest adult of the other gender. For the cellular sample, interviews were conducted with the person who answered the phone. Interviewers verified that the person was an adult and in a safe place before administering the survey. Cellular sample respondents were offered a post-paid cash incentive for their participation. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for sample designs and patterns of non-response that might bias results. A two-stage weighting procedure was used to weight this dual-frame sample. The first-stage weight is the product of two adjustments made to the data – a Probability of Selection Adjustment (PSA) and a Phone Use Adjustment (PUA). The PSA corrects for the fact that respondents in the landline sample have different probabilities of being sampled depending on how many adults live in the household. The PUA corrects for the overlapping landline and cellular sample frames.

The second stage of weighting balances sample demographics to population parameters. The sample is balanced by form to match national population parameters for sex, age, education, race, Hispanic origin, region (U.S. Census definitions), population density, and telephone usage. The White, non-Hispanic subgroup is also balanced on age, education and region. The basic weighting parameters came from a special analysis of the Census Bureau's 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) that

included all households in the continental United States. The population density parameter was derived from Census 2000 data. The cell phone usage parameter came from an analysis of the July-December 2009 National Health Interview Survey.⁹

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

Table 4. Sample Disposition		
Landline	Cell	
37,781	14,999	Total Numbers Dialed
1,759	360	Non-residential
1,843	40	Computer/Fax
6	—	Cell phone
17,607	5,722	Other not working
1,716	129	Additional projected not working
14,850	8,748	Working numbers
39.3%	58.3%	Working Rate
572	43	No Answer / Busy
2,832	1,891	Voice Mail
79	10	Other Non-Contact
11,367	6,804	Contacted numbers
76.5%	77.8%	Contact Rate
648	802	Callback
8,965	4,528	Refusal
1,754	1,474	Cooperating numbers
15.4%	21.7%	Cooperation Rate
87	51	Language Barrier
—	623	Child's cell phone
1,667	800	Eligible numbers
95.0%	54.3%	Eligibility Rate
112	52	Break-off
1,555	748	Completes
93.3%	93.5%	Completion Rate
11.0%	15.8%	Response Rate

⁹ Blumberg SJ, Luke JV. Wireless substitution: Early release of estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December, 2009. National Center for Health Statistics. May 2010.

The disposition reports all of the sampled telephone numbers ever dialed from the original telephone number samples. The response rate estimates the fraction of all eligible respondents in the sample that were ultimately interviewed. At PSRAI it is calculated by taking the product of three component rates:

- **Contact rate** – the proportion of working numbers where a request for interview was made
- **Cooperation rate** – the proportion of contacted numbers where a consent for interview was at least initially obtained, versus those refused
- **Completion rate** – the proportion of initially cooperating and eligible interviews that were completed

Thus the response rate for the landline sample was 11.0 percent. The response rate for the cellular sample was 15.8 percent.