



**Homeschool Alumni Reaching Out**  
presents

**A Complex Picture:**  
Results of a 2014 Survey of Adult Alumni of the Modern Christian Homeschool  
Movement  
Installment 5: Religion  
August 1, 2015

Data analysis provided by:



**Coalition for Responsible Home**

**Education**

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Read the first installment, which includes a description of the survey methodology, [here](#). The second installment, which focuses on demographic variables, can be found [here](#). The third installment, which discusses academics and other non-academic educational aspects, is [here](#). The fourth installment, focusing on food and health, is [here](#). *Note that this survey should not be used to make any generalized statements about homeschoolers as a whole; the only people it can be used to make claims about are the 3,702 people who took the survey.*

## **0. Introduction to Installment 5: Religion**

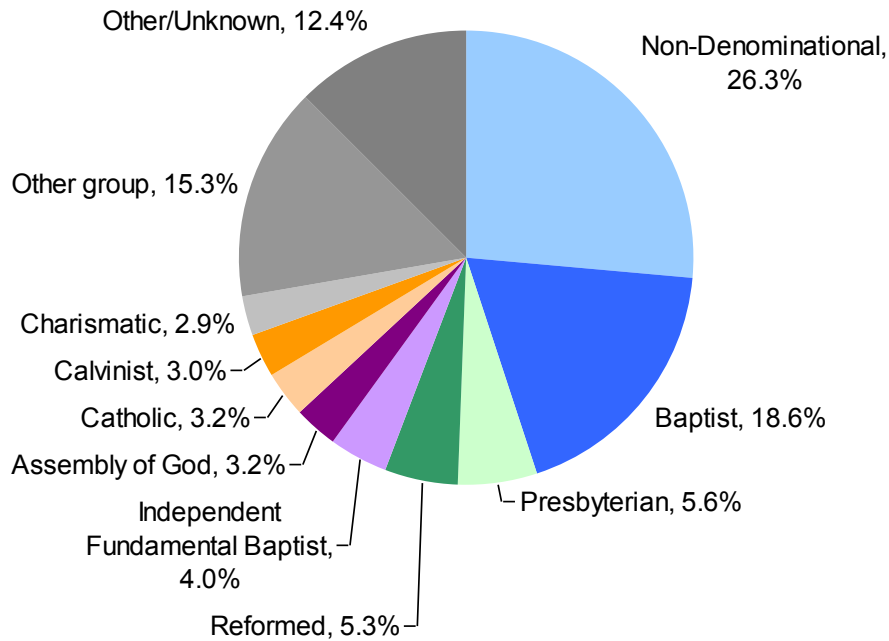
In this installment, we discuss respondents' religious denomination, as well as how religion played a role in the teaching of science, politics, and economics. More than half of our respondents characterized their upbringing as fundamentalist; this variable had highly salient correlations with a variety of other factors, including academics, abuse, and attitudes towards homeschooling. Finally, we examine respondents' current religious beliefs and their relationship to the religious character of their homeschool environment.

### **1. Types of Christianity**

This section includes respondents' reports of the denomination they were raised in, both in the home and in the homeschooling community. In general, most respondents were not part of a homeschooling community that shared their family's religious denomination; however, few reported experiencing prejudice because of this.

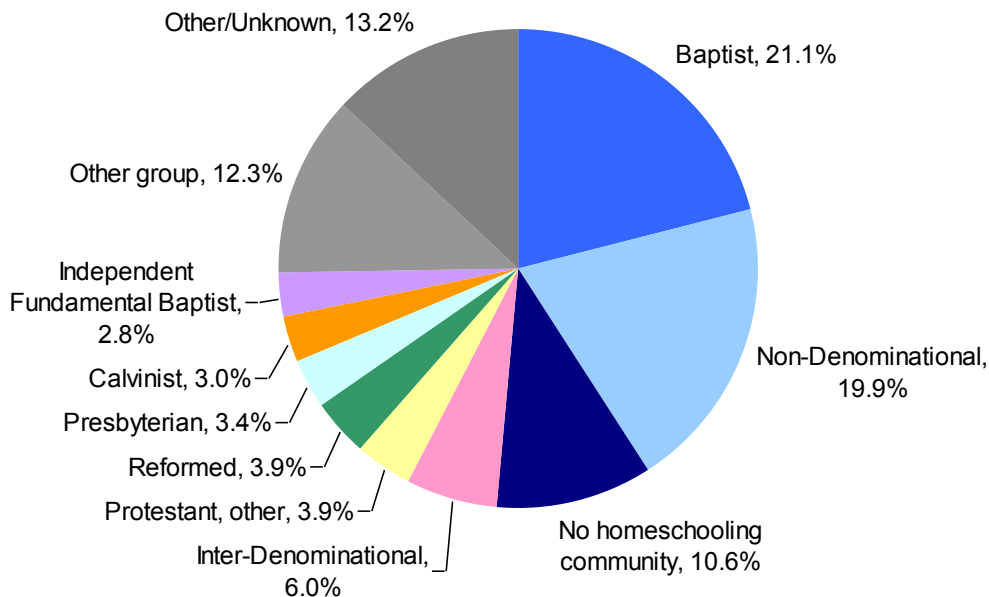
Our respondents were from very diverse groups within Christianity (see Figure 1). The largest identifiable groups were Non-Denominational (26.3%), followed by Baptist (18.6%), Presbyterian (5.6%), Reformed (5.3%), Independent Fundamental Baptist (4%), Assembly of God (3.2%), Catholic (3.2%), Calvinist (3%), and Charismatic (2.9%). 15.3% of the sample was composed of smaller identifiable groups (each less than 3% of the sample), and 12.4% of respondents chose 'Other/Unknown' as their family's religious tradition. These respondents were commonly from mixed-denomination households, had switched denomination frequently, or were home-churched.

**Figure 1: What type of Christianity did your family practice for the majority of your homeschool experience?**



Because of the limited answer choices, it is difficult to determine how many respondents' families belonged to so-called mainline Protestant denominations; however, it is clear that at least a quarter of respondents' families belonged to independent churches unaffiliated with a denomination. In the homeschooling communities to which respondents' families belonged (Figure 2), Baptist (21.1%) and Non-Denominational (19.9%) were the most common identifiable groups, and again a sizeable portion of respondents either belonged to a denomination composing less than 3% of the sample, or selected 'Other/Unknown'.

**Figure 2: If you had a homeschooling community other than your family, what type of Christianity was dominant? If you were involved in multiple communities, answer for the one in which you spent the most amount of time.**



As Figure 2 shows, other common identifiable groups were Inter-Denominational (6%), Protestant (other) (3.9%), Reformed (3.9%), Presbyterian (3.4%), Calvinist (3%), and Independent Fundamental

Baptist (2.8%). Interestingly, nearly 11% of our respondents chose the option “I did not have a homeschooling community other than my family.”

Despite the similarities between Figure 1 and Figure 2, only about one-third (34.5%) of respondents identified the same denomination for their family and their homeschooling community<sup>1</sup>, meaning that most of our respondents were not part of a community that shared their family’s religious affiliation. Fortunately, the majority of respondents (72.6%) disagreed with the statement “I experienced prejudice within my homeschooling community due to my family’s religious beliefs.”

## 2. Trends in Christianity

In this section, we focus on the overlap between the religious beliefs of respondents’ families and their scientific, political, and economic ideologies. In general, creationism and the politicization of religious beliefs played a very large role in our respondents’ religious lives.

### *Creationism*

The vast majority of respondents (nearly 80%) were taught Young Earth Creationism as part of their science curriculum (Figure 3). Only 2% were taught evolution.

Figure 3: Which of the following did your science curriculum primarily emphasize as the correct way of explaining the origin of the universe?

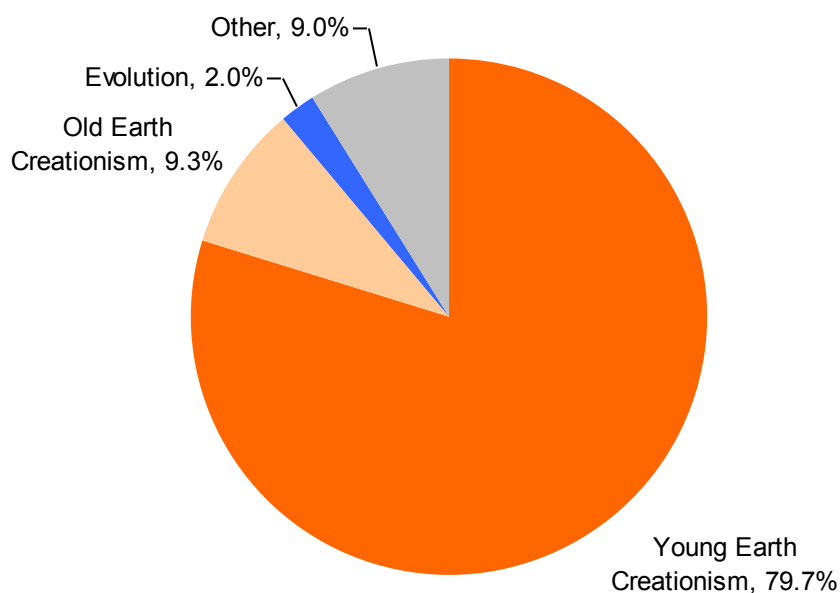


Figure 3 shows that around 9% of respondents were taught primarily Old Earth Creationism, and 9% were taught with a science curriculum that did not fit easily into one of these categories. According to the free responses in this section, most of those who replied ‘Other’ were taught a variety or mix of cosmologies.

Furthermore, there is a correlation between the type of instruction received and the overall quality of science instruction (Figure 4).

<sup>1</sup> Note: this figure excludes cases where respondents said ‘Other/Unknown’ for both their family of origin and their homeschooling community.

Figure 4: Average rating of respondents' quality of instruction in science

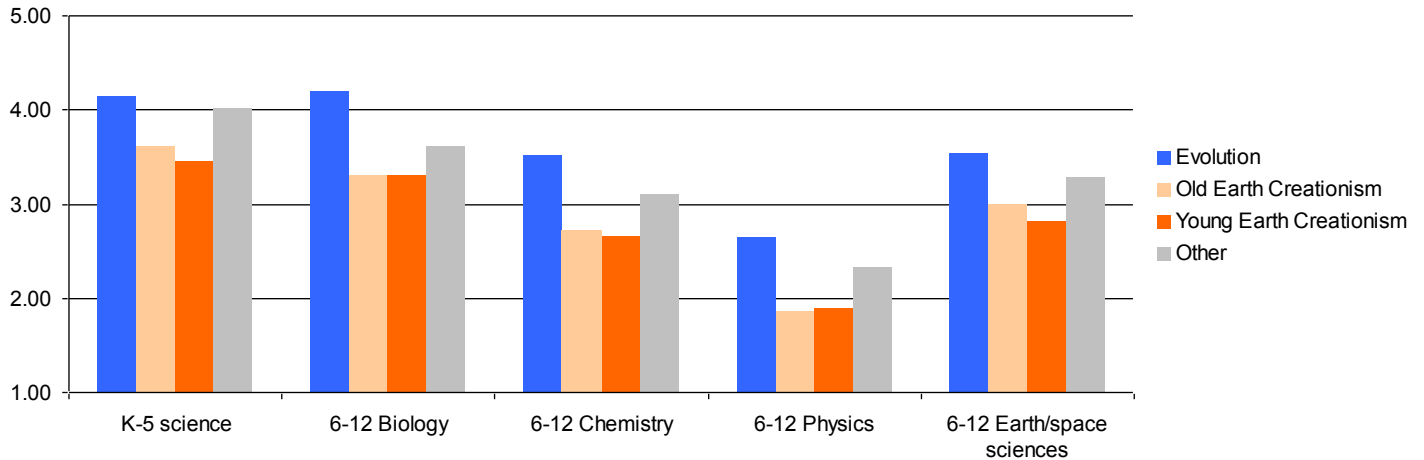
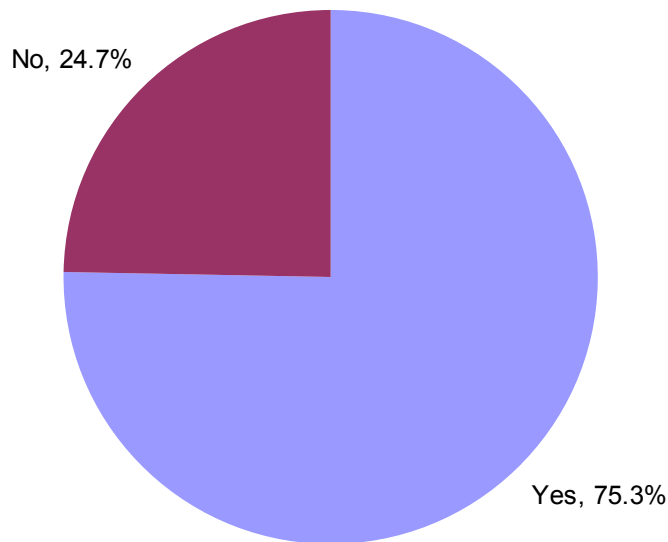


Figure 4 shows that respondents who were taught evolution, or who were taught other or combined cosmologies, rated the quality of their science instruction higher than did those who were taught a form of creationism.

### *Politics and economics*

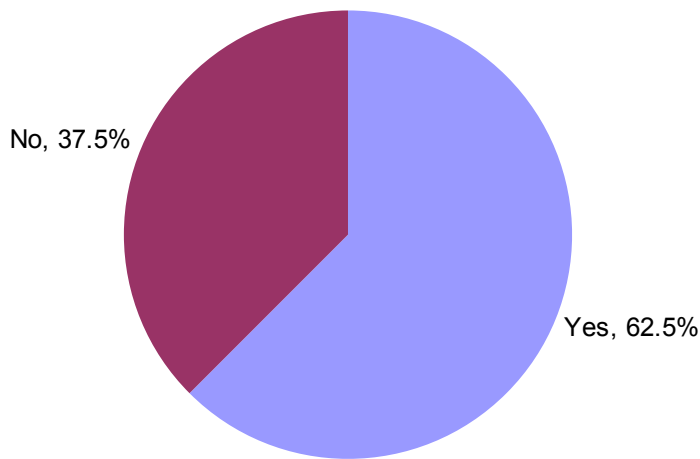
The majority of respondents' religious upbringing was politicized. Fully three-quarters were raised with emphasis on a particular political ideology (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Did the type of Christianity you were primarily raised with emphasize the superiority of a particular political ideology (e.g., conservatism or libertarianism)?



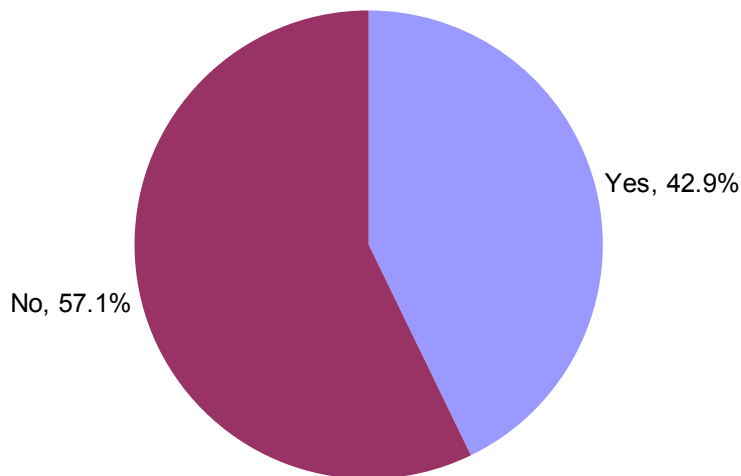
Nearly two-thirds were raised with emphasis on a particular political party (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Did the type of Christianity you were primarily raised with emphasize the superiority of a specific political party (e.g., Republican or Constitution Party)?**



Respondents were less likely to be raised with emphasis on a particular economic theory; less than half (42.9%) reported this (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Did the type of Christianity you were primarily raised with emphasize the superiority of an economic theory (e.g., Laissez-faire capitalism or Austrian anarcho-capitalism)?**



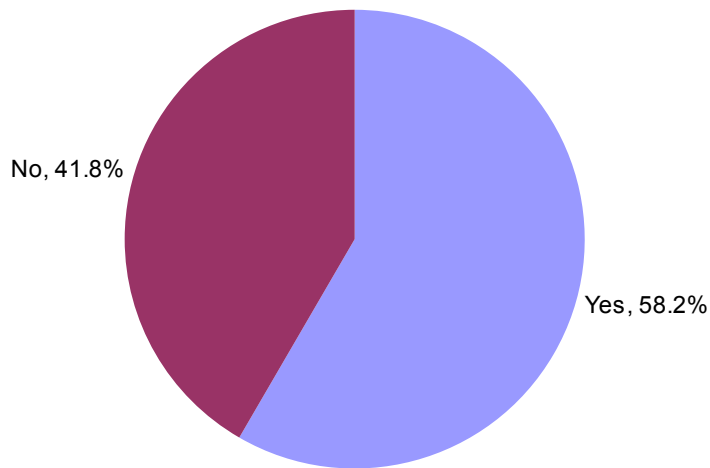
### 3. Fundamentalism

In this section, we discuss the correlation of fundamentalism with a variety of other factors and outcomes. “Christian Fundamentalism” was presented in the survey in the following way:

“Christian Fundamentalism” is defined here according to historian George M. Marsden (Marsden, George M., 1991, “Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism”) as a “militantly anti-modernist” form of “evangelicalism.” Christian Fundamentalism includes, but is not limited to, the following ideologies: Christian legalism, Quiverfull, young earth creationism, anti-LGBT rights, Christian Patriarchy, modesty and purity culture, betrothal and/or courtship, stay-at-home daughter movement, Dominionism, and Christian Reconstructionism. It is not limited to Protestantism and can also be seen in Catholic, Mormon, and other subcultures.

More than half of the survey respondents (58.2%) reported that they considered their religious upbringing to be fundamentalist (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Would you consider the type of Christianity you were primarily raised with to be (more often than not) a form of Christian fundamentalism?**



### ***Experiences***

Respondents raised in a fundamentalist home reported a variety of negative academic and social experiences. In every single academic and non-academic subject, respondents raised in non-fundamentalist homes rated the quality of the instruction they received as better than that of respondents raised in fundamentalist homes (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Average rating of the quality of instruction: K-5 subjects; 6-12 subjects; and non-academic subjects

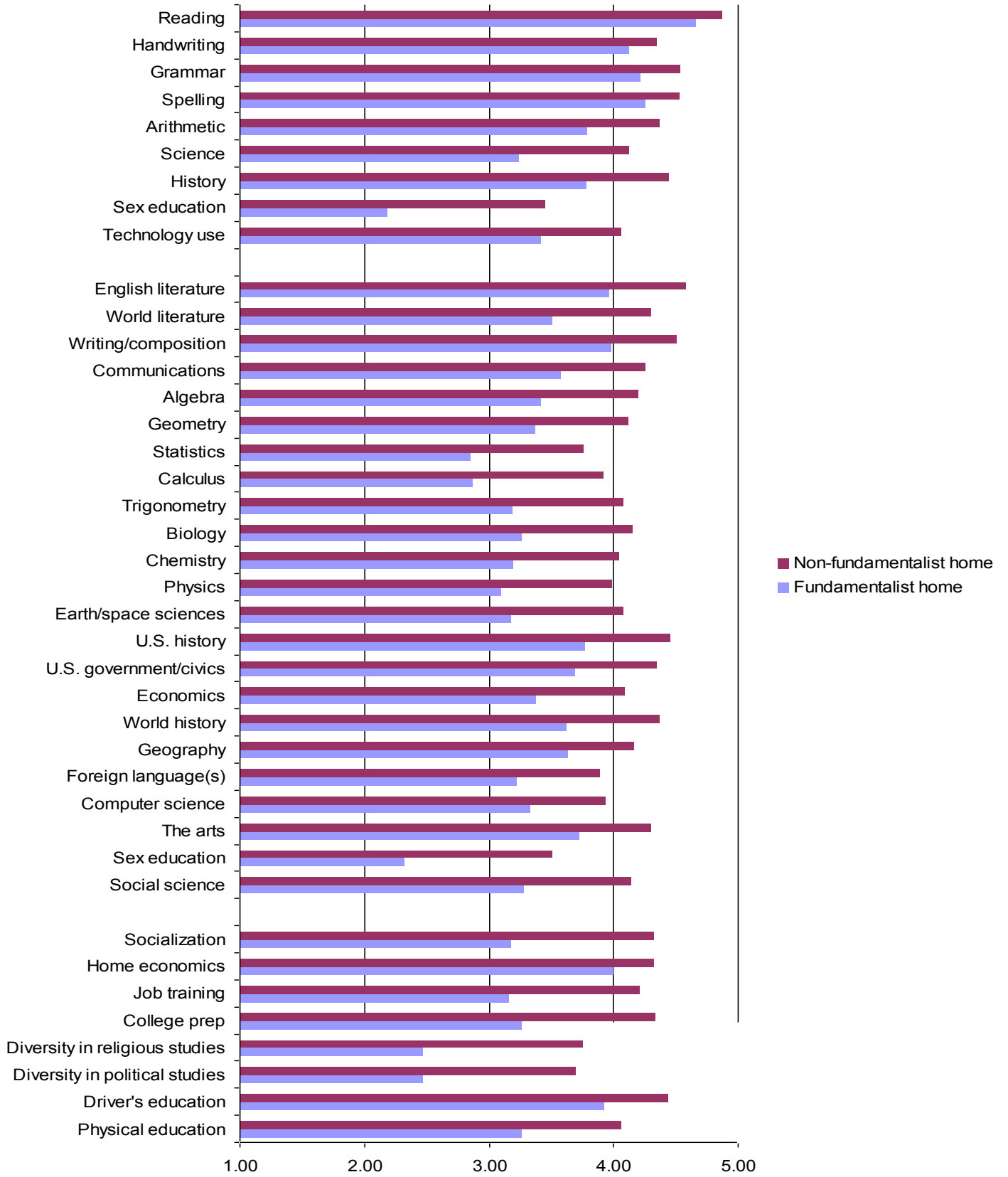




Figure 9, which is divided into K-5 academic subjects, 6-12 academic subjects, and non-academic subjects, shows that respondents raised in non-fundamentalist homes rated their experiences of these subjects as an average of 0.76 points higher on a 5-point scale.

Furthermore, abuse was vastly more common among respondents who were homeschooled in a fundamentalist home. While 60% of respondents raised in a fundamentalist home reported experiencing some kind of abuse, only 17% of respondents raised in a non-fundamentalist home did so (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Experiences of abuse

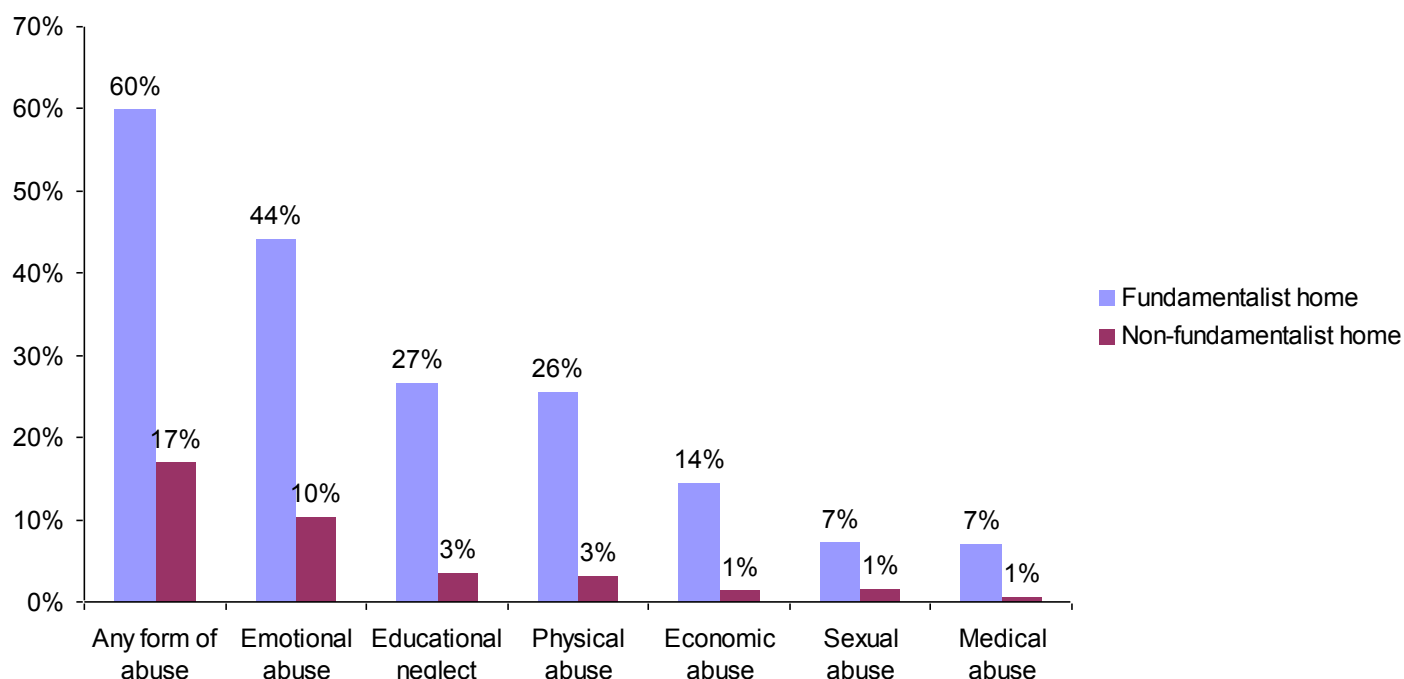
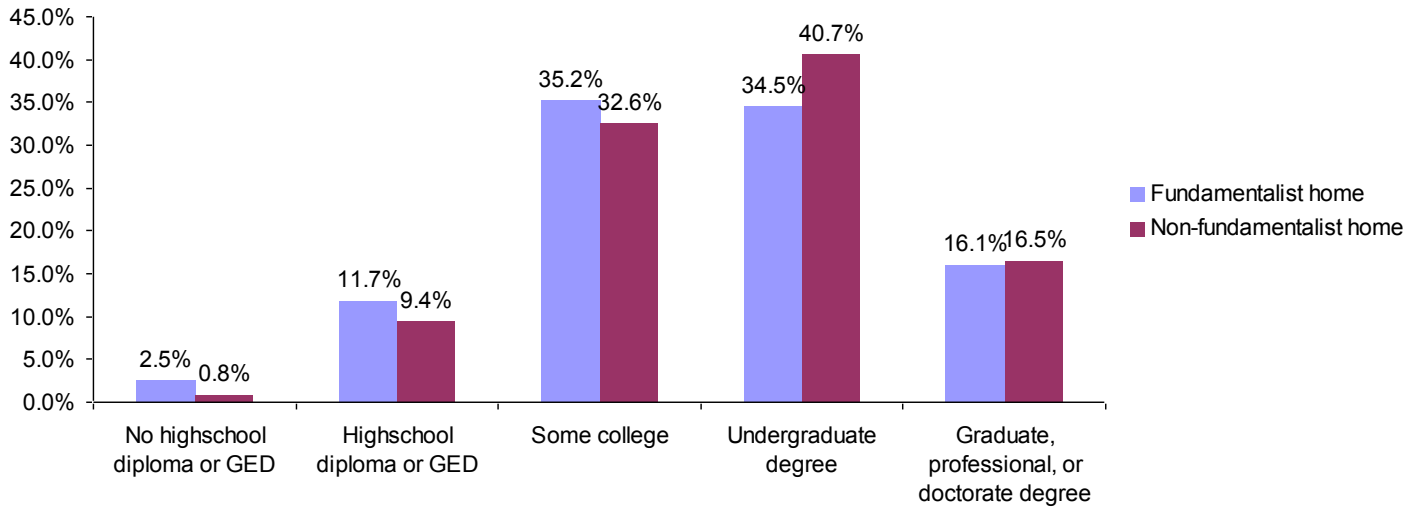


Figure 10 shows that 44% of respondents raised in fundamentalist homes reported experiencing emotional abuse, 27% reported experiencing educational neglect, 26% reported experiencing physical abuse, 14% reported experiencing economic abuse, 7% reported experiencing sexual abuse, and 7% reported experiencing medical abuse. These percentages were much lower for respondents raised in non-fundamentalist homes.

### Outcomes

Respondents raised in a fundamentalist home were also less likely to succeed in higher education and more likely to suffer from mental illness. Figure 11 shows that only 50.6% of respondents raised in a fundamentalist home had achieved at least an undergraduate degree, while 57.2% of those raised in a non-fundamentalist home had done so.

**Figure 11: Highest level of education achieved**



Respondents raised in a fundamentalist home were also much less likely to say that their homeschooling experience prepared them for the future (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: My homeschooling experience prepared me for the future.**

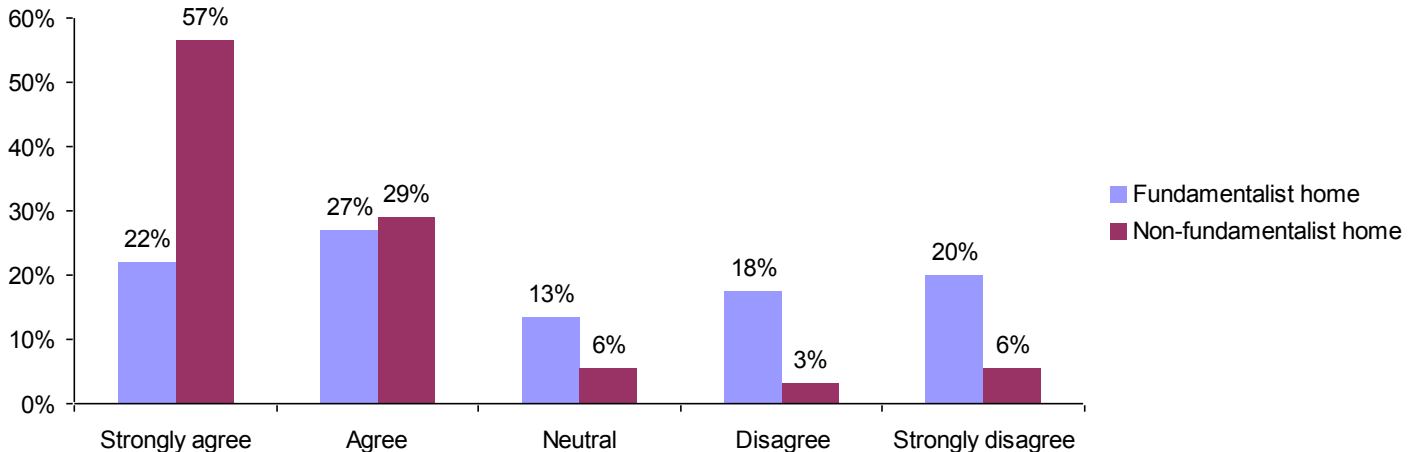


Figure 12 shows that, while 85% of those homeschooled in a non-fundamentalist home agreed that their homeschool experience prepared them for the future, only 49% of those raised in a fundamentalist home did so. Respondents raised in a fundamentalist home were also nearly twice as likely as non-fundamentalist to have been diagnosed with a mental illness by a mental health professional (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Respondents diagnosed by a mental health professional with any mental illness**

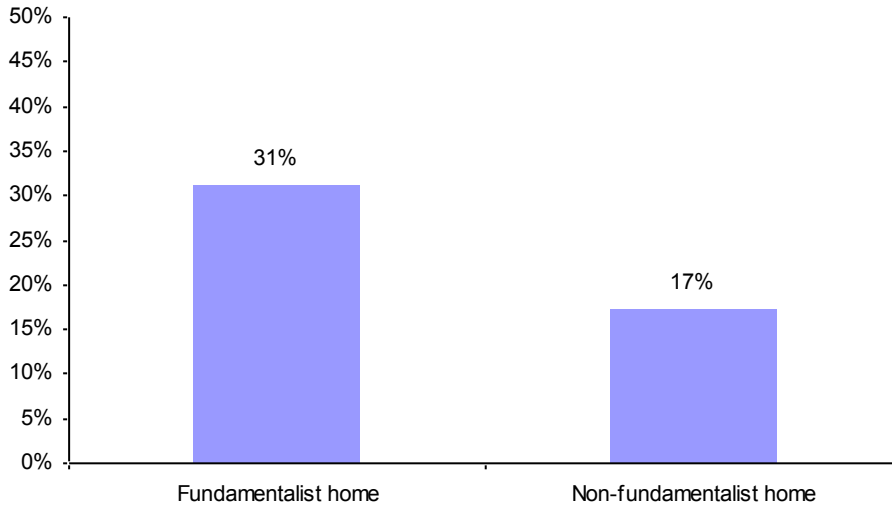


Figure 13 shows that while 31% of respondents who characterized their upbringing as fundamentalist had been diagnosed with a mental illness, only 17% of respondents raised in a non-fundamentalist environment had been similarly diagnosed.

Finally, respondents raised in a fundamentalist home were much more likely to report that they were not currently Christians (Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Do you consider yourself a Christian today?**

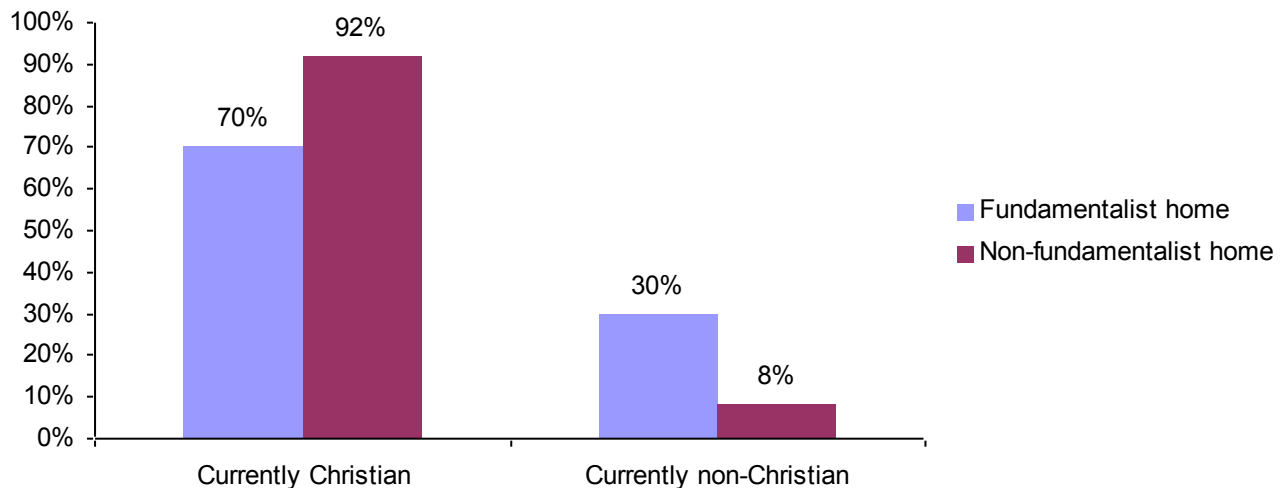


Figure 14 shows that while only 8% of respondents homeschooled in a non-fundamentalist home had left Christianity, 30% of those homeschooled in a fundamentalist home had left Christianity.

#### 4. Current religious beliefs

This section will discuss respondents' current religious beliefs and their attitudes towards their religious upbringing. In general, respondents had positive attitudes towards their religious upbringing and still considered themselves Christian, if not the same variety of Christian as their families of origin were.

Respondents were strongly affected by the religious environment of their upbringing: 78% agreed or strongly agreed that their upbringing had influenced their current beliefs (Figure 15). These figures did not differ markedly depending on whether the respondent was raised in a fundamentalist (74%) or non-fundamentalist (85%) home.

**Figure 15: The religious environment of my upbringing had a strong influence on my current beliefs.**

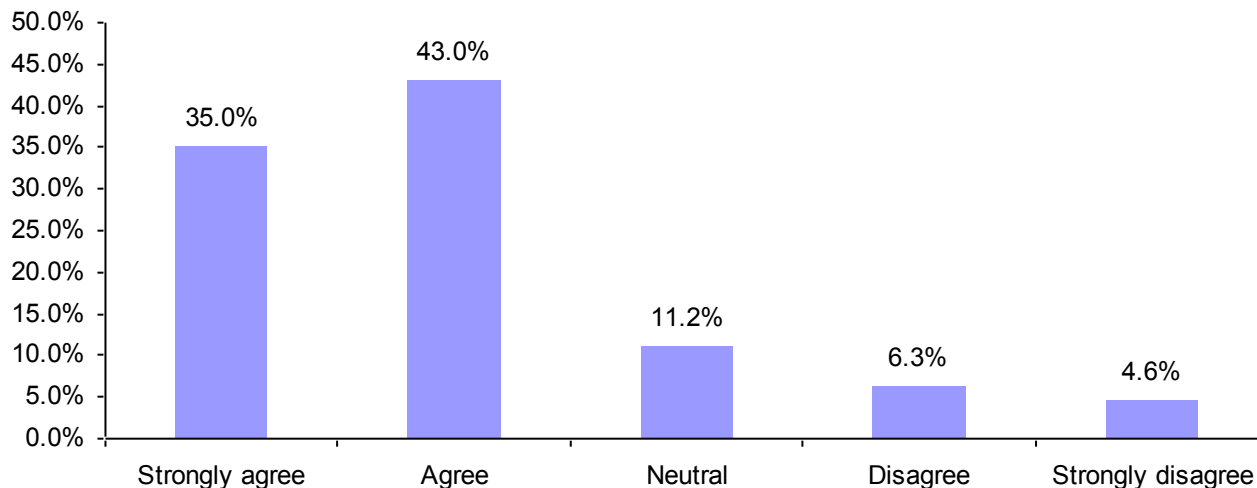


Figure 16 below shows that, while the majority of respondents raised in non-fundamentalist homes (86.3%) described their religious upbringing as a positive influence on their lives, the same was not true of those raised in fundamentalist homes—only 41.8% agreed with this statement.

**Figure 16: The religious environment of my upbringing had a positive influence on my life.**

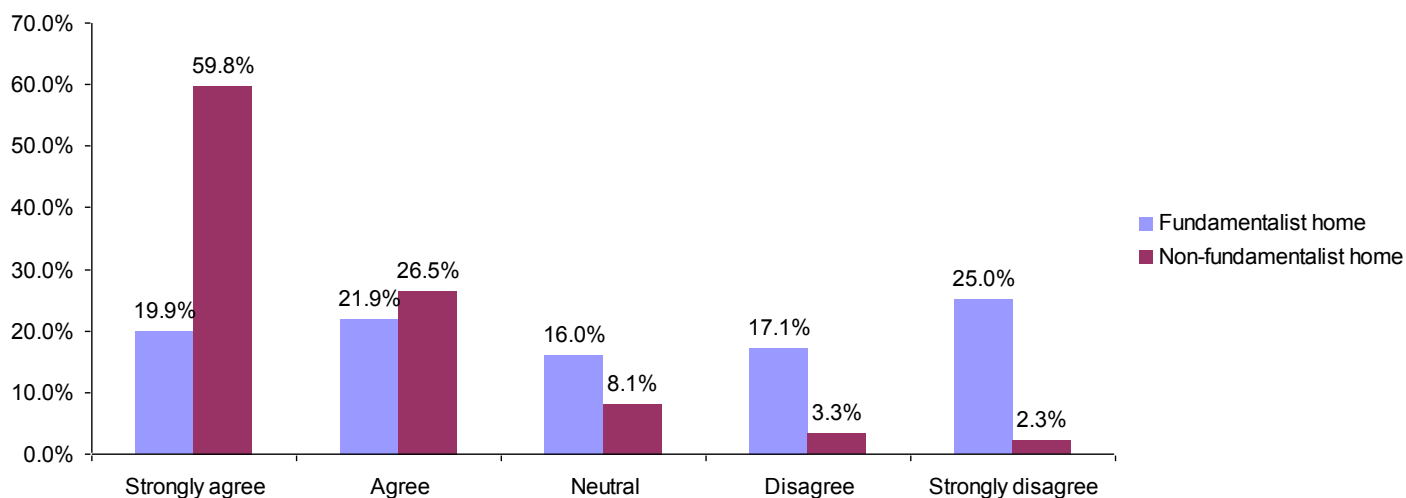
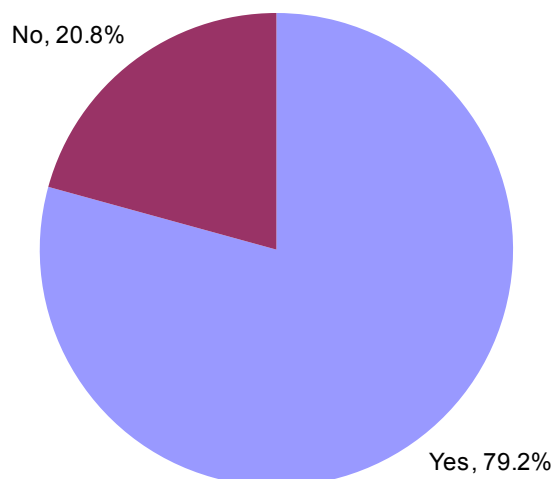


Figure 16 demonstrates that respondents' mean rating of their upbringing differed depending on whether their home environment was fundamentalist or not—the average rating for those raised in a non-fundamentalist home was 4.38 (between 'Strongly agree' and 'Agree'), while the average rating was 2.94 (between 'Neutral' and 'Disagree') for those raised in a fundamentalist home. Still, a large majority of survey respondents (79.2%) consider themselves Christian today (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Do you consider yourself a Christian today?



Of the respondents who still consider themselves Christian, more than a quarter (28.4%) belong to independent, Non-Denominational churches, while a sizeable portion either belonged to small identifiable groups composing less than 3% of the sample or selected 'Other/Unknown'. (Figure 18).

Figure 18: If you consider yourself a Christian today, what type of Christianity do you practice?

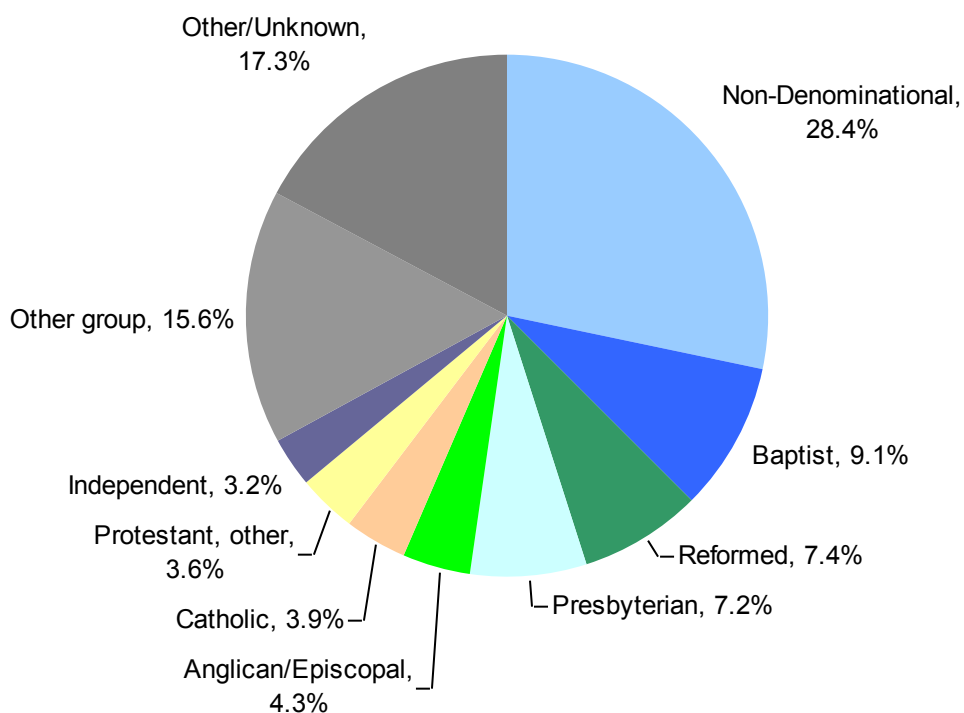
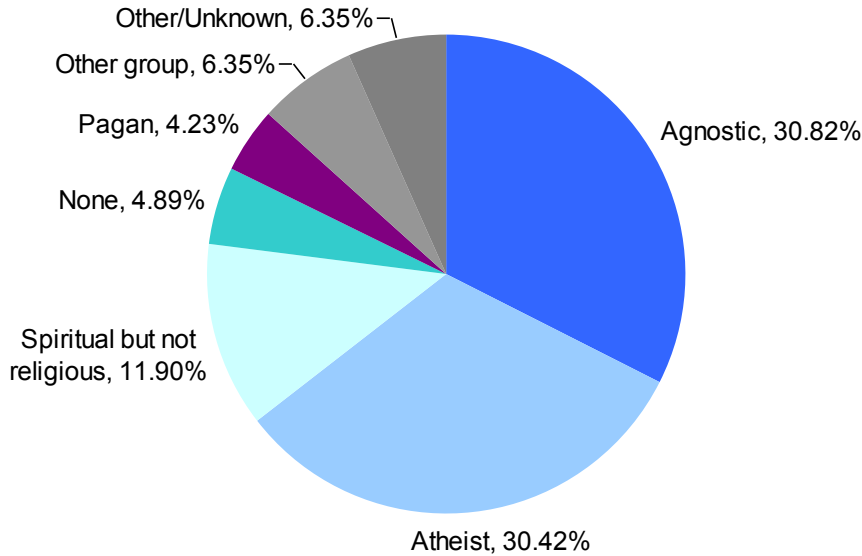


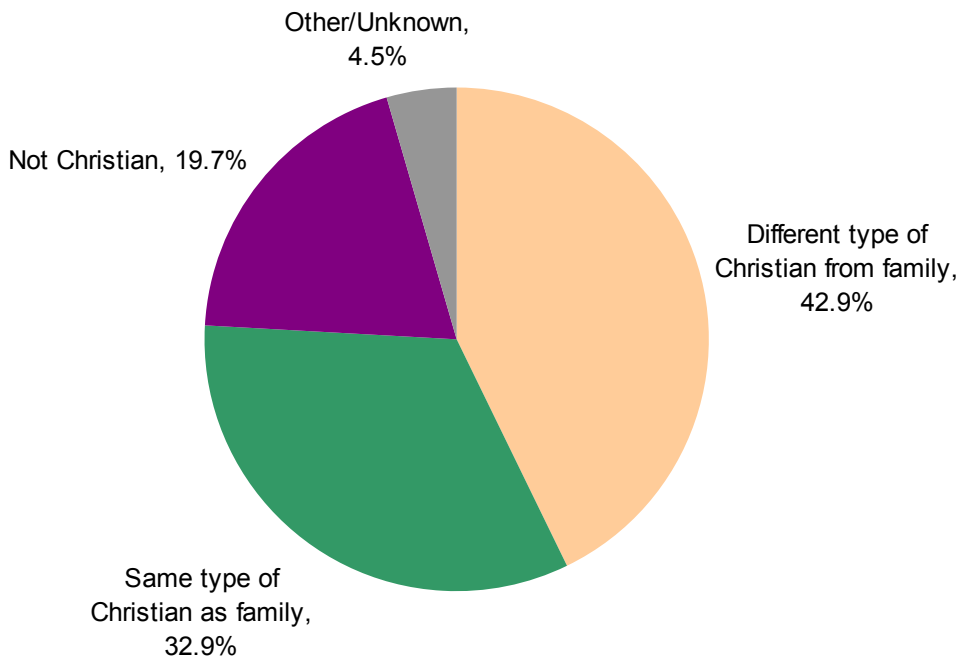
Figure 18 also shows that, while respondents who consider themselves Baptists still make up a sizeable portion (9.1%) of those who are currently Christian, mainline denominations are more common among the homeschool alumni who responded to the survey than among their parents: Reformed (7.4%), Presbyterian (7.2%), Anglican/Episcopal (4.3%), and Catholic (3.9%) were among the more common identifiable groups, as were Protestant (other) (3.6%) and Independent (3.2%). Figure 19 shows respondents who do not currently identify as Christian; about one third of these (30.42%) identified as atheists, one third (30.82%) as agnostics, and the rest as having other beliefs (Figure 19).

**Figure 19: If you do not consider yourself a Christian today, what do you consider yourself?**



When comparing respondents' religious beliefs today with the religious beliefs of their family, a little less than one-third (32.9%) of respondents identified their current faith as the same as the one they were raised in (Figure 20). The majority of respondents (62.6%) currently followed a different faith from that of their families, either as a different type of Christian (42.9%) or as a non-Christian (19.7%)<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 20: Comparison of religious upbringing and current religious beliefs**



<sup>2</sup> Note that this percentage, 19.7%, differs from the 20.8% shown in Figure 10. This is because these percentages are drawn from different questions; Figure 10 shows the responses to a yes/no question, while Figure 13 is based on responses to a multiple-choice question.

## 5. Conclusion

Respondents' religious upbringing tended to take place in families belonging to independent or unaffiliated churches, and though respondents' homeschooling communities often espoused different religious beliefs from their family, respondents did not experience a great deal of prejudice in general. Most respondents were taught Young Earth Creationism and their religion was highly entwined with certain political ideologies. More than half of respondents were raised in fundamentalist homes, where they experienced inferior academic instruction and vastly more abuse; these experiences were correlated with lower educational attainment, increased incidence of mental illness, and increased abandonment of Christianity. Most respondents raised in non-fundamentalist homes felt positively towards their religious upbringing, but those raised in fundamentalist homes had a much more mixed experience. Still, most respondents considered themselves Christian at the time of the survey, albeit often of a different flavor than that of their parents.