

## I. Methodology

**Survey Distribution Period:** May 21 - June 11, 2018

**Recipients:** Congregants of Arizona Yagé Assembly who attended ceremonies from June 2015 until the survey was distributed in May and June of 2018.<sup>1</sup>

**Number of questions:** 80

**Average time to complete:** 20 minutes

**Delivery Method:** Email link to online survey

**Total Number of Emails:** 1,430

**Responses:** 253 (17.7%)

The results of this survey offer a snapshot of the AYA congregation, the results of which are detailed in this report. The survey was conducted anonymously online to encourage both honesty in participant response as well as to address concerns raised by congregants of including their names in an application to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

## II. Demographics

Male: 58%

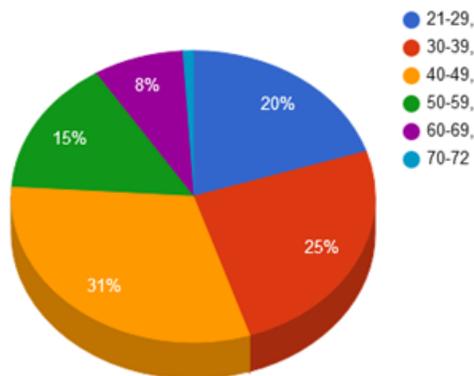
Female: 41%

Cross-gender: 1%

71% of AYA Congregants are over the age of 30, and 46% are over 40 years of age.

Ranges: 21-29: 20%; 30-39: 25%; 40-49: 31%; 50-59: 15%; 60-69: 8%; 70-72: 1%.

Age Ranges of AYA Congregants



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<sup>1</sup> The survey email list was drawn from the AYA attendee roster and cleared of duplicates.

### III. Highlights

#### A. AYA Congregants are Religious Practitioners

96% of respondents pray or meditate.

#### B. Ayahwasca Is Central to the Spiritual Practice of AYA Congregants

97.6% consider the use of Ayahuasca essential to their ceremonial experience.

93.12% feel preventing them from drinking ayahuasca would deprive them of spiritual communion

#### C. AYA Congregants Use Ayahuasca as a Sacrament

96.7% have only used Ayahuasca in ceremonial practice.

91.1% participate in AYA ceremonies as a religious or spiritual practice.

#### D. AYA Ceremonies Are Sincere Religious Practices

97.8% consider AYA a bona-fide church.

98.8% consider participation in ceremony beneficial to their spiritual growth.

94.4% see themselves returning to AYA ceremonies.

98.4% felt AYA facilitators were capably performing their ceremonial duties.

98.4% felt physically safe inside ceremony.

98.4% felt emotionally safe inside ceremony

#### E. Congregants Are Strongly Affiliated With AYA

90.3% believe AYA connects them with a community that views Ayahuasca use as sacred.

85.7% are interested in meeting with other congregants outside of ceremony.

71.25% are interested in volunteering with the AYA outside of ceremony.

64.1% connect with other church members between ceremonies.

48.7% have interest in becoming facilitators with the AYA

#### F. Congregants Limit Their Speech About AYA

69.7% are hesitant to tell others of their experience because of questions surrounding the legality of Ayahuasca.

53.9% are hesitant to tell family or close friends or associates about ayahuasca because of questions surrounding its legality.

#### **IV. Personal Comments**

The survey also addressed a range of personal issues with area for comment. Congregants' comments express strong positive feelings about the sacrament and the ceremony, including numerous accounts of improvements in life experience and social relations post-ceremony, including a sense of having reconciled accounts with God, deepening of empathy towards others, increased acceptance of self, relief from addictive compulsions, guilt, and self-judgment, and various other favorable changes in perception, attitude, and behavior. Following are some of the responses as to how the church members feel they benefit from ceremony and why people participate in Ayahuasca ceremonies with the AYA as a spiritual practice:

1. "I, like everybody, have searched for meaning, purpose, God, and guidance in my life. This sacred sacrament, and ritual practice, which is thousands of years old, has given my life meaning, clarity, and healing. There is no better way to get in touch with one's heart and spiritual life."
2. "Prior to my first ceremony, I had a very bleak outlook on life and death. These ceremonies have shown me my purpose and that death, as scary as it is, is just another chapter, not the finale."
3. "For me, the Aya experience is for healing and spiritual growth."
4. "I was in search of spiritual growth and didn't feel or find it with the Catholic Church."
5. "I am not a Christian but I believe in the Christ-like vibratory state that speaks to me through Ayahuasca: Love, Kindness, Compassion and Forgiveness."
6. "I feel that ayahuasca brings us closer to what other religions would consider to be "God". It is an extremely religious and spiritual experience for me."
7. "Because it connects you with divine love."

Summary  
AYA June 2018 Survey of Congregants

8. "Oneness with the creator."

9. "It has opened my eyes to the God of the universe and allowed me to connect."

10. "From the root to the fruit. It brings me clarity and roots me to living with intent. It makes me a more present person and fortifies my moral compass."

11. "I learned to accept and love parts of myself that I do not always like, because I was shown that God loves me despite my flaws. Though I was sad about certain ways I have conducted myself, I was able to sit within that sadness and learn from it."

12. "I was in a cycle of self-medication. The ceremony helped me to recognize this and the root causes for it. I now have accepted my shortcomings, recognized my weaknesses, and been able to move towards a more positive outlook on life."

13. "Aya teaches us to deal with our pain, learn from it and grow. Many personal insecurities and doubts were resolved due to sitting in ceremony."

14. "I can sit with my negative feelings, listen to the message contained in them, without the same degree of mental agony."

15. "I was shown that I am loved even when I do things wrong. I feel more okay experiencing negative feelings if it leads to greater acceptance and improvement of myself."

16. "I've recommitted myself to earning a degree. I now face every new day with a positive outlook, ready to face challenges because I know that this life, this experience is a small part of something much greater. I am truly thankful to have had a spiritual experience."

17. "As a mental health counselor I feel I experience my clients on a much deeper level."

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18. "Ayahuasca has improved every dimension of my life. But mostly I'm no longer consumed with anxiety and so I function better at everything."

19. "The experiences have exceeded any possible expectation I may have had before attending a ceremony."

20. "Two years ago I wanted to die every day. I daydreamed about ways to do it 4-5 times a day. I am so grateful not to feel like that anymore. I never dreamed that life could be so amazing. The only thing that really changed was my perspective. I truly believe I would be dead without ayahuasca and AYA. I did all the work but they helped save my life. Literally."

21. "There were parts of myself I was afraid of before the ceremony, particularly I was afraid God hated me for this. I learned through the ceremony that I could grow and improve but that God loves me as I am."

22. "It was a beautiful, safe and structured experience. They did not stand between me and my experience; they created a safe environment for it."

23. "Until I found AYA, my only option was to go to Peru (or somewhere else where it is legal). I researched the cost, and it was prohibitive. I had no options for ceremony, except to create it myself. I had several solo experiences, and then I found AYA. The ceremony environment allowed my soul to expand to a much higher level. I am so grateful to AYA."

24. "Just like everything I have said before, aya has improved so much in my quality of life and has shown me how to live in love and made me feel sure of my place on this planet again. I don't know that I would've been able to feel the way I do now without the help of aya."

25. "I am beyond blessed to have come across this ceremony and special group of people. It has changed my life so profoundly. I look forward to learning more and deepening my aya experience."

26. "Saved my life from an opiate addiction and continues to help me heal and grow."

Summary  
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27. "Beautiful people, beautiful place. Holy people, sacred space."

28. "It changed my life. I'm a more patient loving person not only with my family, but with myself as well."

29. "I believe this is a major movement for spiritual freedom all around the world. I believe this should be legal in the United States, for it is all organic and non-toxic. It is more of a gift from God, in my eyes, than just something that makes the brain 'overactive'."

30. "AYA is providing a safe space to participate in a spiritual sacrament despite the uncertain legal status of Ayahuasca and for this reason I am very grateful."

31. "I just feel really lucky to have had the experience so early on in life."

32. "The ceremony was safe and accessible. Information provided for preparing was complete and informative, facilitators and community was open and available. Communication was honest, experienced, educated and friendly."

33. "It has changed my life."

34. "Overwhelming gratitude for AYA and the facilitators that make it happen! They have shown me the light and the way to be the best person I can possibly be and I'm forever grateful for that!"

35. "It saved my life. I was using \$300 worth of Heroin a day before the ceremony. I had a detox period after ceremony, but I did not go through the pain of kicking cold turkey. I have been successful in my recovery so far. Before the ceremony I tried methadone and suboxone and none of it addressed the core issues of my addiction. Today I feel relieved of my obsessive compulsive self destruction."

36. "Connection with a deep and universal sense of caring that I have not felt in my life outside of ceremony."

37. "I am truly at peace with myself and I had a blissful experience. So much love and laughter and light in my life to appreciate and embrace."

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38. "I've learned that life itself is a ceremony. There are going to be times that are great and times where you just want it to end. But even those times where you're not enjoying the experience, there is a lesson to learn from it."

39. "The Aya experience can be a profoundly emotional one. I experienced a level of awe that I had never experienced before."

40. "I learned acceptance of my most uncomfortable emotional states -- emotional states I'd built up entire edifices of habit and routine to defend against. When I simply accepted them, they let go of their hooks."

41. "I was astonished to discover emotional wounds that I thought either didn't exist or had been dealt with years ago, and learned to integrate, accept, and overcome them."

42. "I noticed parts of my body had darkness and other sides light. It corresponded to previous injury and emotional trauma. I also noticed that I could heal myself with my divine light."

43. "I was experiencing depression and anxiety in my everyday life before I participated in an AYA ceremony. While my experience with AYA has not completely solved my depression, it has shown me a way towards happiness and fulfillment in life."

44. "I value what I learned through ceremony in ways almost inconceivable to express. I've learned the deep importance of love, acceptance, and forgiveness -- lessons that continue to unfold in my daily life."

45. "Without legal access to plant medicines I cannot practice my religion. I have attended many types of religious gatherings. Though there is merit to such gatherings, they do not lead to the same kind of connection with God or personal transformation that plant medicines such as Yagé allow."

46. "AYA has helped me battle and defeat my alcohol addiction. Each ceremony give me more insight into who I truly am and helps heal all the damage I've done physically and psychologically to myself in the past."

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47. "Aya is literally saving my life. I would not be here without its lessons and guidance."

48. "Strengthens my mind, body, and spirit. Establishes a deep connection with other people. Inspires me creatively. Helps me understand who I am better. Brings me in touch with God and the divine."

49. "I think it's important for everyone to have access to ceremony, a safe environment with like-minded individuals. It's a place to grow and heal. But I don't believe it's the only way to gain insights, we must do the work! Aya is just a powerful tool."

50. "I feel that drinking Ayahuasca has made me a better person in my daily life. Reflecting on the divine in all experiences and all people, I have come to live my life with higher levels of respect for all beings."

51. "I can think of no other way to get the level of insight and healing I have had since."

52. "I continue to learn and grow through the process personally and I thoroughly enjoy connecting with others inside and outside of ceremony."

53. "I feel it has opened my heart and helped me find meaning."

54. "I feel a calling and it feels right."

55. "These ceremonies help my body heal from a childhood trauma. They bring a sense of well-being that lasts beyond the experience."

56. "The ceremony that I've had has been one of the most sublime and transformative single experiences of my life. It answered some of the questions I had about how I engage with my own humanity, but in the process opened up many more questions about what it means to engage that humanity in my relationships with other people."

57. "This is my spiritual practice, for now and the foreseeable future."

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58. "I'm able to focus on what I can do and not become paralyzed by all the things I can't affect."

59. "I feel more myself. I love more and I accept things better. I trust in myself."

60. "Before the ceremony I had put in notice at my job following being sexually assaulted. I returned from the ceremony with the understanding that I needed to stay at my job and forge through the pain to create a workplace of communication, understanding and healing. This is already starting to happen, because the medicine showed me that I needed to stay."

61. "My experience led to a breakthrough in honest communication, something I continue with presently. Speaking openly about things with family, even if they are things my family may not agree with or disapprove of such as engaging with ayahuasca for healing."

62. "I have doubled my income from last year, and I have infinitely more patience with my family."

63. "Aya has improved my life in every way. I'm a better coworker, student, friend, lover..."

64. "I find myself committed to spiritual growth. I try to take time out every day to meditate and reflect on my life."

65. "I quit an almost 10 year opiate addiction as well as bad habits and actions."

66. "I've been told that I seem more grounded, centered and balanced."

67. "I have less fear!"

68. "I quit my job; now I found my path, and I don't feel like it's work anymore because I love what I do so much. I learned to let go so the issue that haunted me doesn't haunt me anymore. I'm so positive that it helps others to be better. I'm sharing my light and my fire with everyone around me."

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69. "I am patient, understanding, and so full of love. I respect myself and am happy."

70. "Aya gave me my own personal guidelines for how to live."