

AMSAT Membership Profile 2004

“A Reality Check”

Published Fall 2004

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Produced by Gunther Meisse, W8GSM, with the assistance of the General Membership, members of the AMSAT Board of Directors, Officers, & Senior Advisors

This presentation of the project is for members of the **AMSAT Board of Directors** and associated members of the **Control Group** only, and is not for publication. A “Public” version of the results will be produced for publication

Contents:

- Overview
- Methodology
- Graphical representation of the results
- Selected Comments from respondents
- List of Control Group Members
- Raw tabulations of the respondent’s answers to each question

Overview:

This project was designed to provide the Board of Directors of AMSAT North America with a comprehensive membership Fact & Opinion set for planning purposes during the next few years. There appeared to be a number of myths that needed confirmation or rebuttal and it was felt that it would be generally useful for the Board members to be able to compare their personal views on these issues with those of the general membership and the other policy makers of our organization. To that end, each member of the Control Group is receiving a customized version of this report, illustrating the responses of the membership /vs/ the overall responses of the control group /vs/ that member’s personal response to each question **highlighted in Yellow**. No conclusion is drawn by these relationships. They are simply intended to be a reality check and planning tool for each of us. This material will also be helpful in the ongoing process of developing & maintaining a “Case for Support” designed for fund raising efforts.

Special Attention:

If you have ever wondered if your involvement of time and money in AMSAT made a difference, or if AMSAT really did count in the world of our members and Ham Radio in general: Please read carefully the letter on the next page. We received it in response to our Profile participation letter.

April 12, 2004

AMSAT
850 Sligo Avenue Suite 600
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear AMSAT,

Thank you for your interest in contacting my father about his AMSAT membership. He is a lifetime member and has always been very proud of that fact.

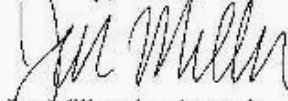
Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's three years ago. He is no longer able to benefit from his AMSAT membership. The first signs of his Alzheimer's revealed themselves when he began having trouble with his ham radio rig about 5 years ago. He no longer has his rig with him, but he cherishes his AMSAT membership plaque. He no longer knows what it is, but remembers that it was important to him.

I have not had the heart to cancel his membership, but I wanted to let you know what you and the camaraderie of amateur radio operators has meant to him during his life.

You no longer need to send correspondence to my father. He can't read it anymore.

Thank you for your concern and dedication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jen Miller".

Jen Miller, daughter of:
Wes Miller
W9LAB

That tells the tale! That letter should serve as motivation to each of us. AMSAT does make a difference in people's lives!

Now, back to the business at hand.

Methodology:

Two data groups were created for this study: *General Membership & Control Group*. The *General Membership* comprises all members of AMSAT-NA, as of December, 2003 including; all Life Members, US current Members, Canadian current Members, & foreign current members. This data base totaled 3888 records. From this database 389 (10%) names were randomly selected for solicitation for participation in the study. While a sample of ten percent is far more than needed for a statically reliable sample, we wished to have 250 in-tab responses to smooth out the waxing and waning that results from small sample sizes.

A three page questionnaire including 49 questions and comment space, was produced after consultation & circulation to the AMSAT board for input. The questionnaire, a cover letter, a \$2.00 stipend, and a return postage paid envelope, were sent to each member selected. Project support did not come from AMSAT funds.

The *Control Group* was composed of members of the Board of Directors, the official officers and the departmental officers and advisors. This sample totaled 20. They received the same materials as the general membership. The results were segregated into the two respondent groups for separate tabulation.

The general membership response rate was 54% within the first few weeks. In order to make the goal of 250 in-tab responses, we mailed a postcard reminder to those who failed to respond to the first mailing. From that effort we met our in-tab goal, cutting off input at 252, or 65% return rate.

From the Control Group we received one shy of a 100% return.

A specific margin of error has not been produced since missing-cases would require extensive calculating, question by question. In general, it is safe to say that the margin of error is well in the low single digits.

In the interest of brevity (Hmmm), I have not done any cross tabulations (Interest / age group etc). That could make a career out of this project. If there are specific interests you would like to have cross-tabulated, please get in touch with me and I will be happy to accommodate you.

The questionnaire was created, tabulated, and analyzed using "Marketing Masters" SurveySaid© software V 11 release 4. The raw survey tabulations are enclosed with this report.

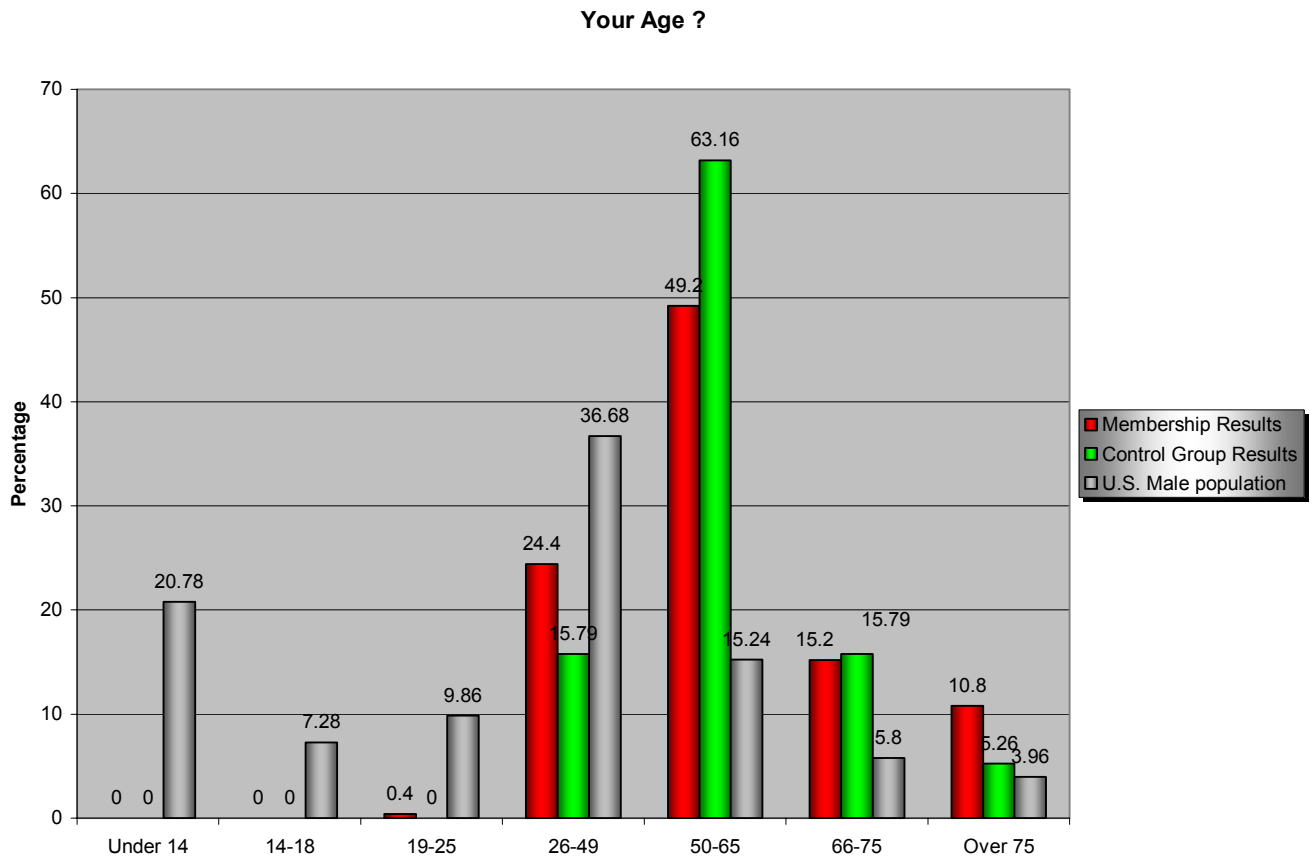
Fact Set

A look at the responses that document the factual demographics of our membership.

Age & Gender

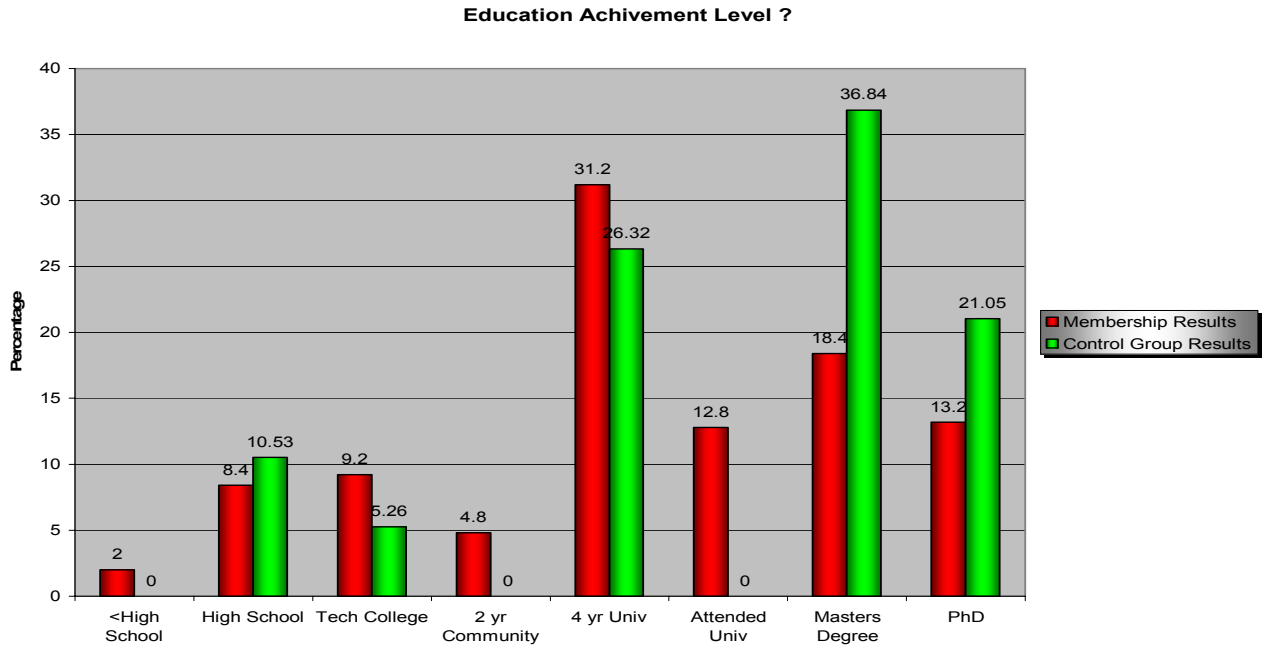
As will be no surprise to any of us, AMSAT is 99.01% male.

The age profile is a bit more surprising. It has been suggested that AMSAT was nothing but a bunch of old men... As you can see, while we definitely do not fit the national age demographics of America, we in fact, are not quite as “old” as many would have thought.

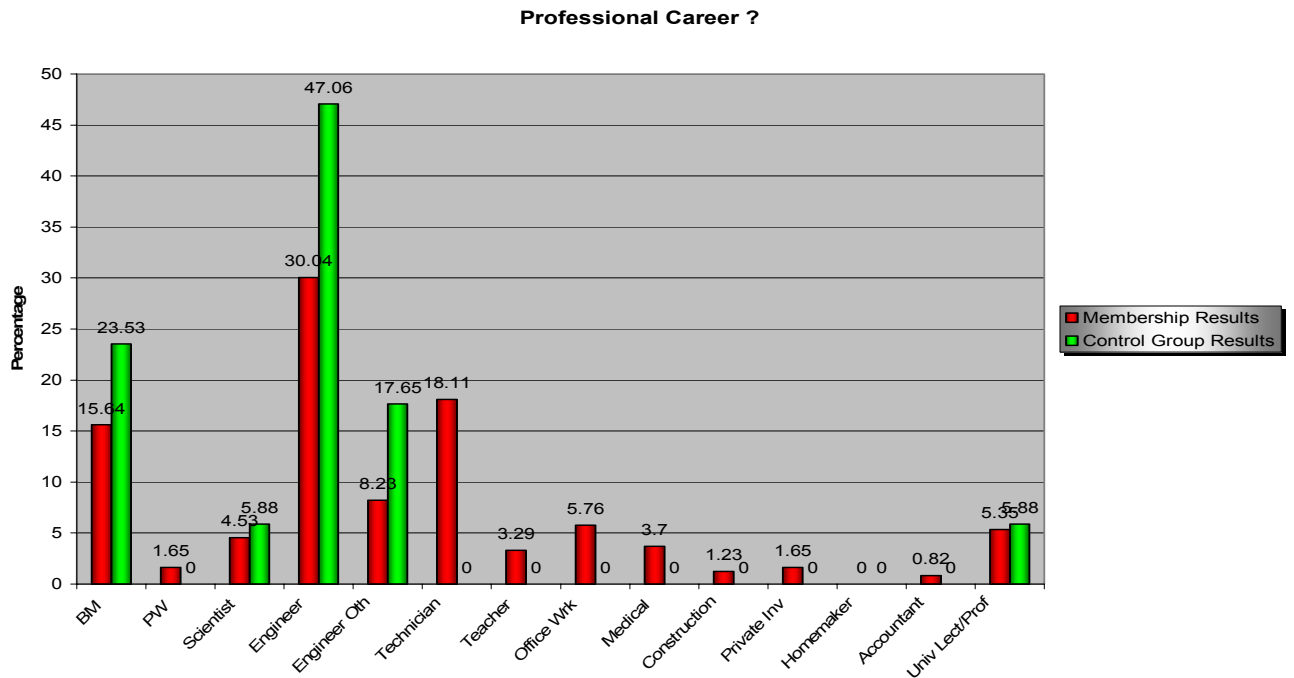


Education & Careers

Our Educational demographics are far above the national profile, featuring a real strength in College graduates and post baccalaureate degrees totaling 76 % of our total membership. The *Control Group* making an even more impressive showing with over 83%.



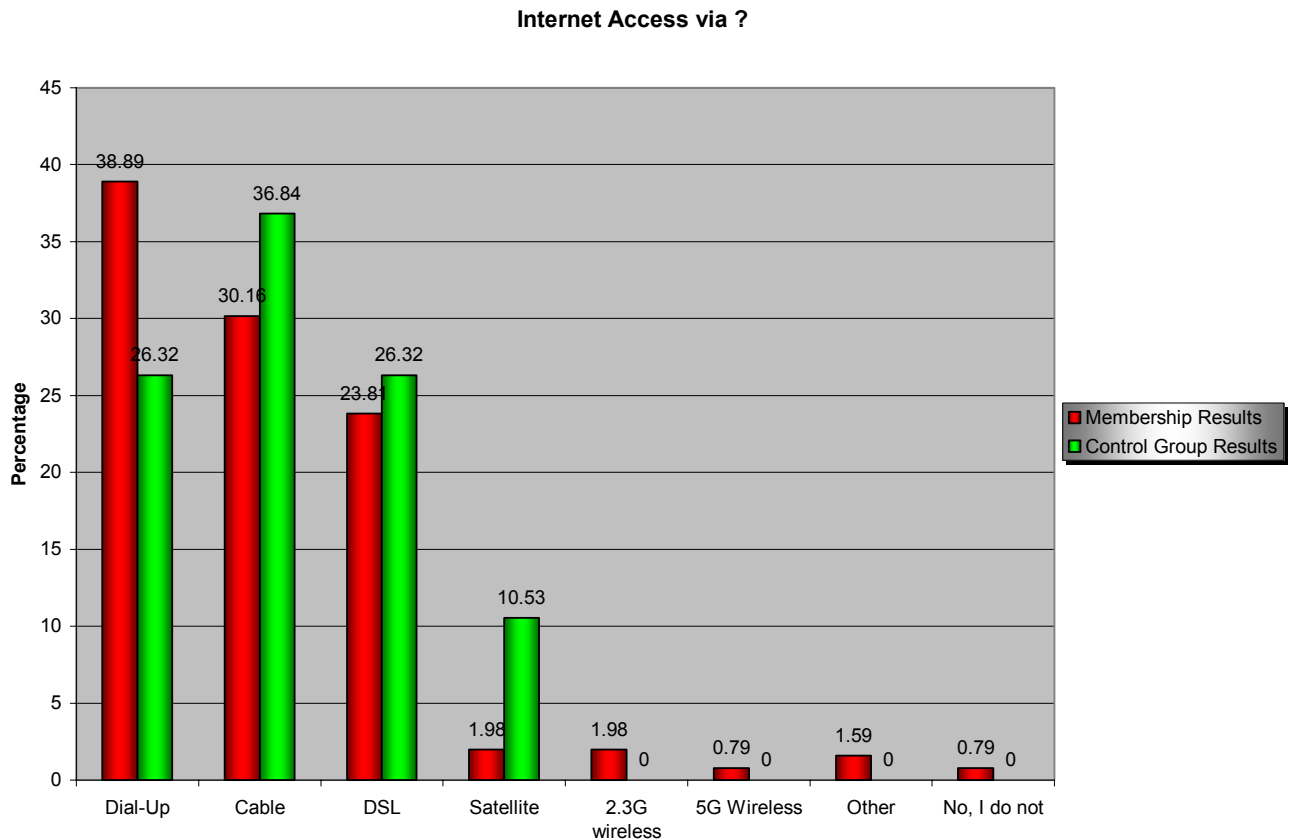
While the *Control Group* is highly concentrated in the Engineering fields, the *General Membership* shows a much broader representation of more generalized occupations. Again, atypical of the American population profile.



The Computer & AMSAT Hams

There has been much talk about how many of our members use computers in their AMSAT hobby and how connected they are to high-speed resources for graphic e-mail services and the internet.

When asked if they use a computer in their AMSAT Ham radio hobby, some 92% said they did. Of those, how were they connected to their ISP? A total of 61% use some form of High-Speed delivery system.



The *General Membership* connects to their ISP: **38%** by Dial-up and **61%** by high speed connections of one description or another. **72%** of the *Control Group* connects via high-speed. The obvious conclusion is that AMSAT can indeed supply member services which include a higher concentration of graphics, while not abandoning the long standing slow-speed products. When cross-tabulating the dial-up members by age it would appear that this method (dial-up) is concentrated in the 65+ age groups.

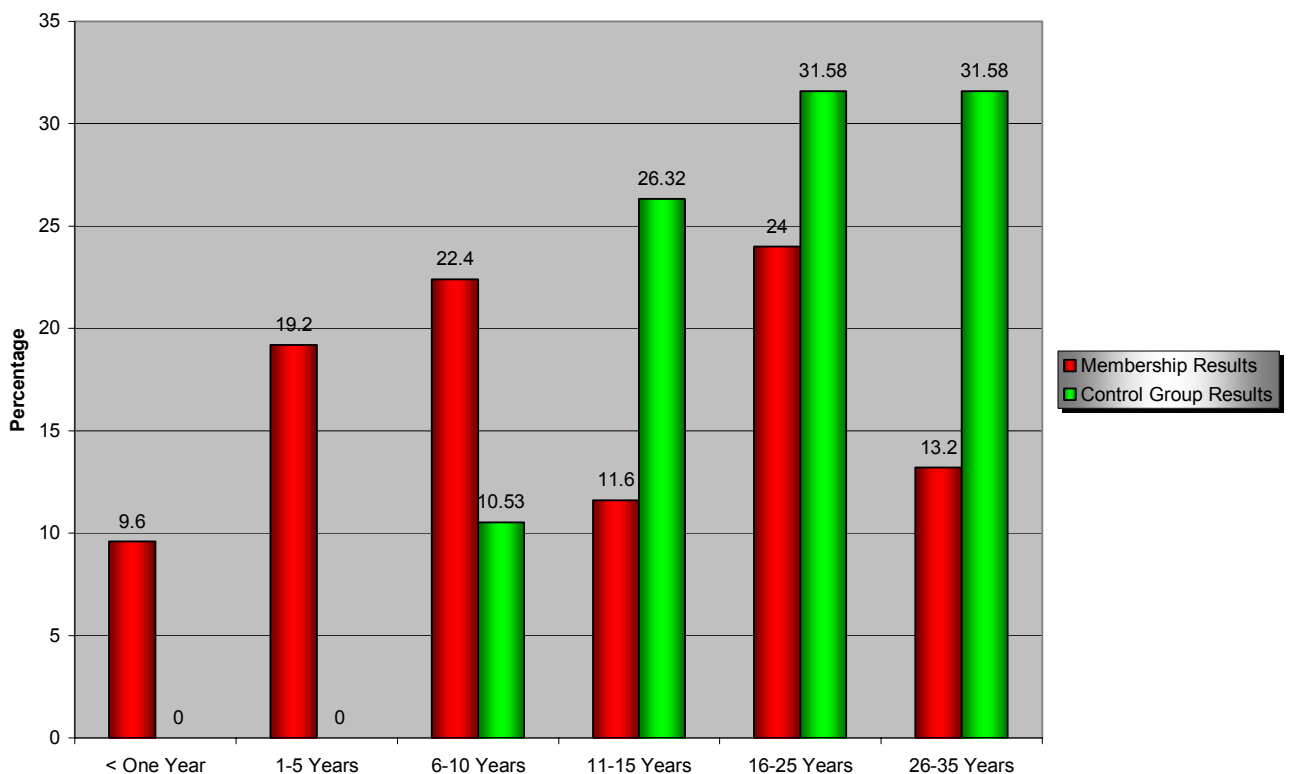
Operating systems among our members are typical with:

- **94% using Windows**
- **28% DOS**
- **12% Linux**
- **7% MacOS. (These are duplicated numbers)**

AMSAT Membership

When asked the generalized question: how long they had been an AMSAT member, we were pleasantly surprised that we, in fact, do have a good number of relatively new members. The bad news in that regard appears to be that while we are generating new members, our total membership rolls are not growing substantially, suggesting that we are seeing a substantial membership churn. The *Control Group*, on the other hand, is a much more seasoned group.

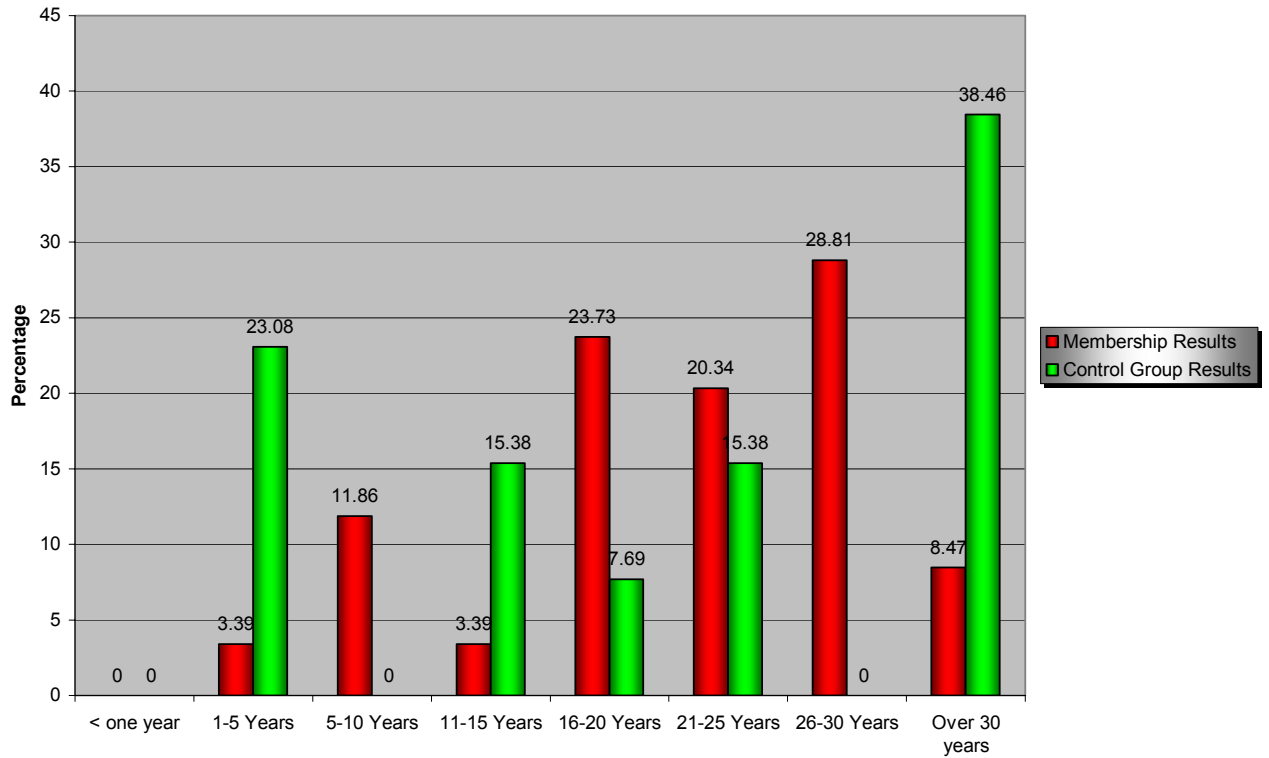
How long an AMSAT Member



Life Membership:

Life Membership is also much more popular among the *Control Group* who boasts **74%** life membership compared to just **24%** among the *General Membership*. A yet undefined bias exists in this response. The audited count of Life Members within our database is 30%. For the moment we will leave this issue as is. More detailed study can be done to isolate those respondents and attempt to see that the problem is. In any event, Life Memberships appear to have been considerably more popular 15+ years ago. Part of that reality can be attributed to a changing price structure for Life Membership. As you can see, within the last five years there has been virtually no activity.

Life Member How Long?



When asking those members who had been Life Members for **ten years or more** if they would be willing to pay a regular, modest amount to meet satellite building costs, while **63%** said no, there is some possibility that the **37%** who said “Yes” could be contributors if approached properly.

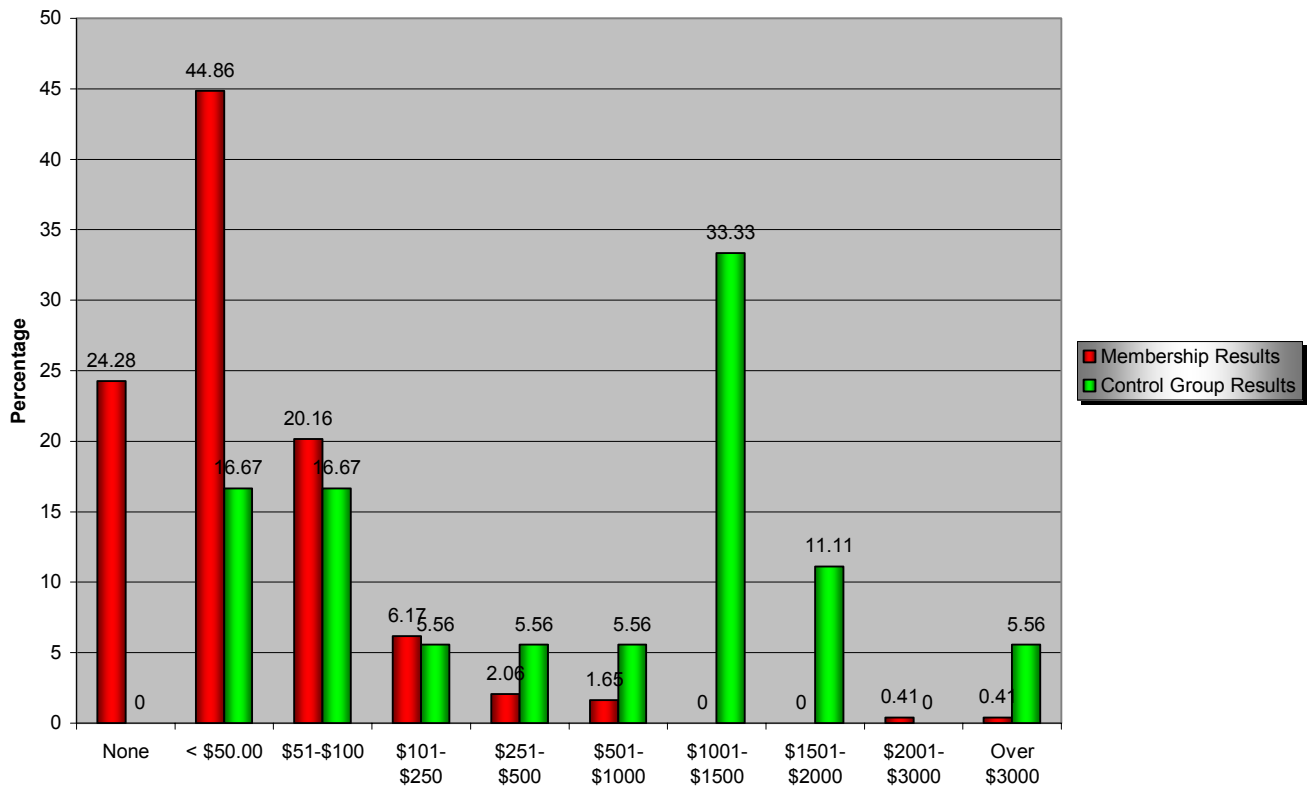
Presidents Club:

Again, the *Control Group* dramatically out paced the *General Membership*, indicating a **56%** President’s Club membership rate, compared to only **8%** within the *General Membership*. Actual auditing of this result indicates that, in fact, some people mistakenly think they are Presidents Club members, when in fact they are not... Actual President’s Club membership only totals 4% of the entire membership. Perhaps there is some confusion by respondents between President’s Club and Life Membership, etc.

Annual Contributions:

Again, not surprisingly, the *Control Group* constitutes a very significant portion of the larger givers. Nearly one half of the *General Membership* pays nothing more than their annual dues. The “none” includes Life Members.

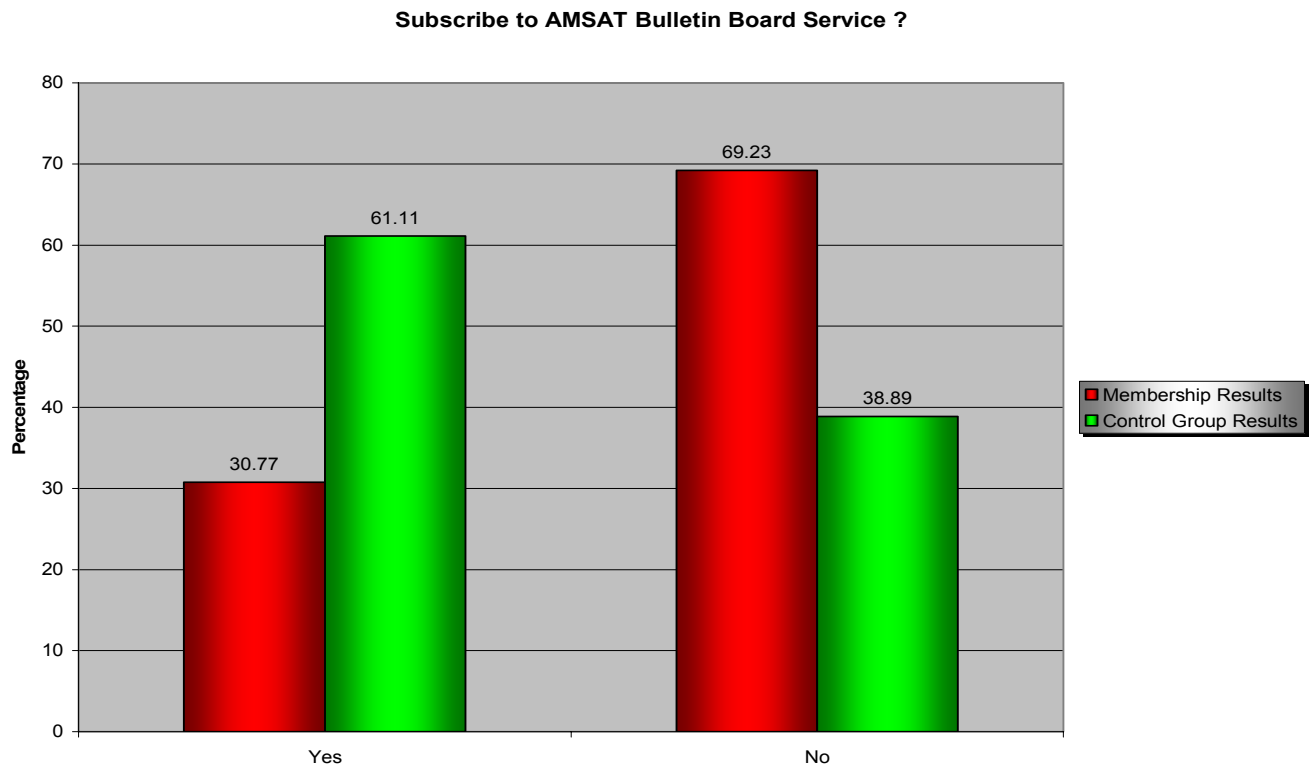
Annual Contribution to AMSAT ?



Member Services

Bulletin Board Service (AMSAT-bb):

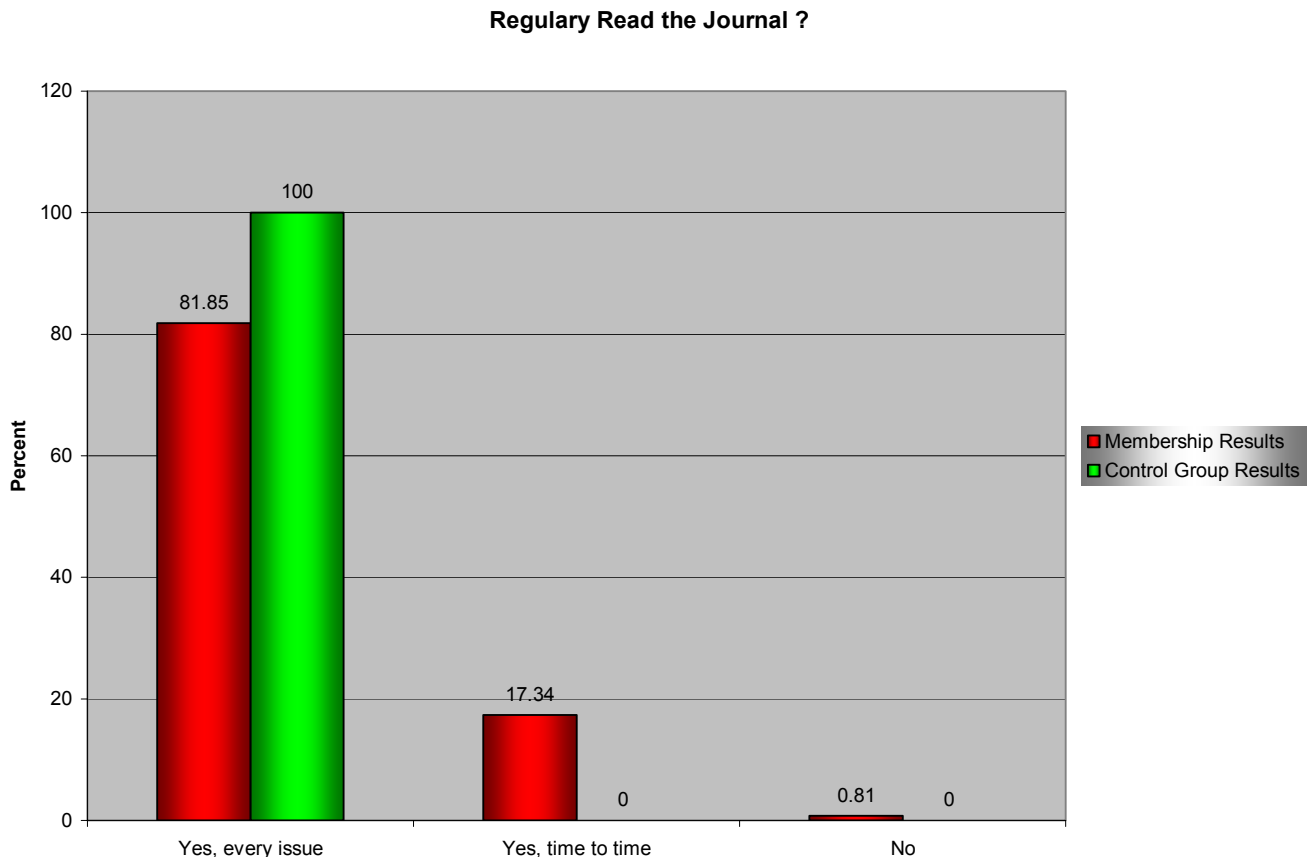
Only **31%** report that they subscribe to this service. That would translate to about 1200 actual members who are subscribers. Given the subscription count of 1524 it would appear that nearly all subscribers are members. Again, the highly involved *Control Group* indicates a **61%** subscription rate.



AMSAT Journal:

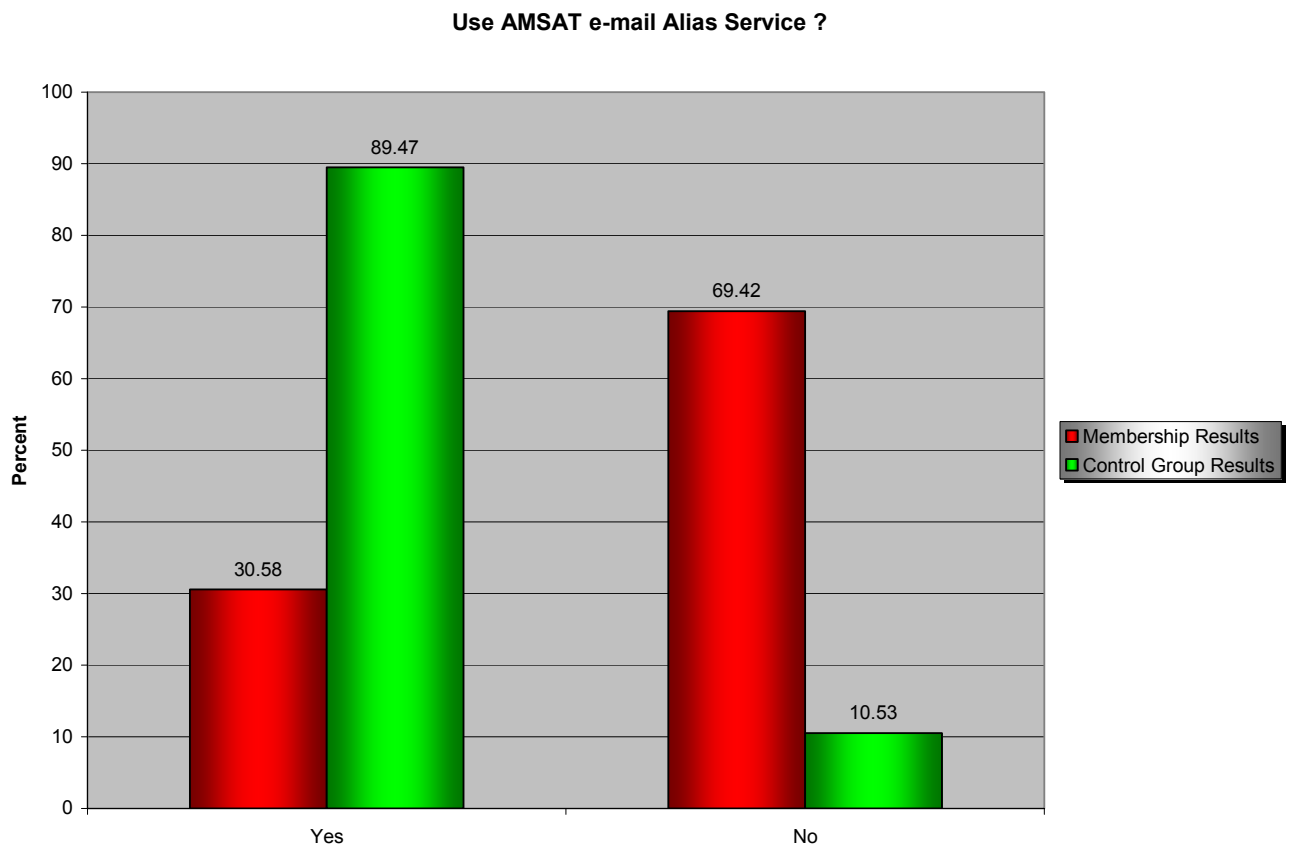
This is a winner!!! The Journal is the most consistently, favorably reported issue or item in our study. 99.5% of our respondents report that they read the Journal to varying degrees. Less than one percent, do not read it. These high numbers suggest that if we do issue an electronic version of the Journal at some future time, we should NOT replace the present traditional printed version. As a matter of fact, we should build on the great following the Journal has and aggressively sell more advertising within, and even consider doing some portion such as the cover wrap in color.

It is an **Institution** in our organization. ARRL has taken a bit of criticism for being a “publishing house”. Aside from the necessity for someone to take that role, it is obviously a strong member link and they figured that out years ago!.



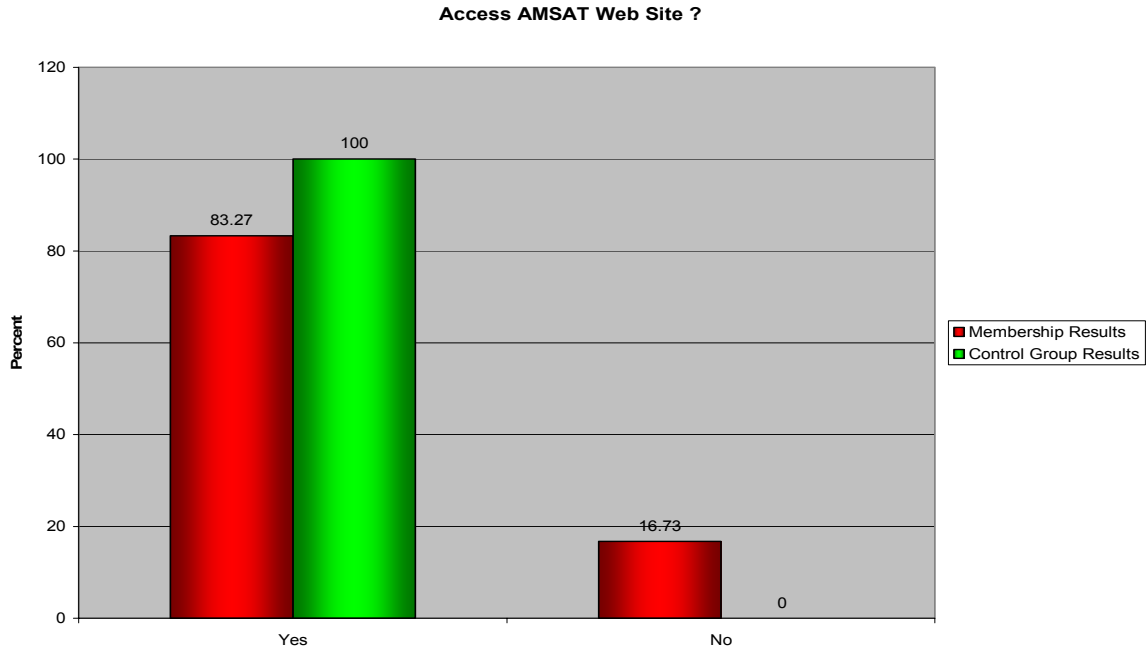
AMSAT e-mail Alias Service:

Only **31%** of our membership report using this service. That translates to about 1200 AMSAT member users. In fact, some 12,824 are registered for this service. 90% of the registered users are not AMSAT members and create traffic and latency for our members as we handle non-member's traffic.

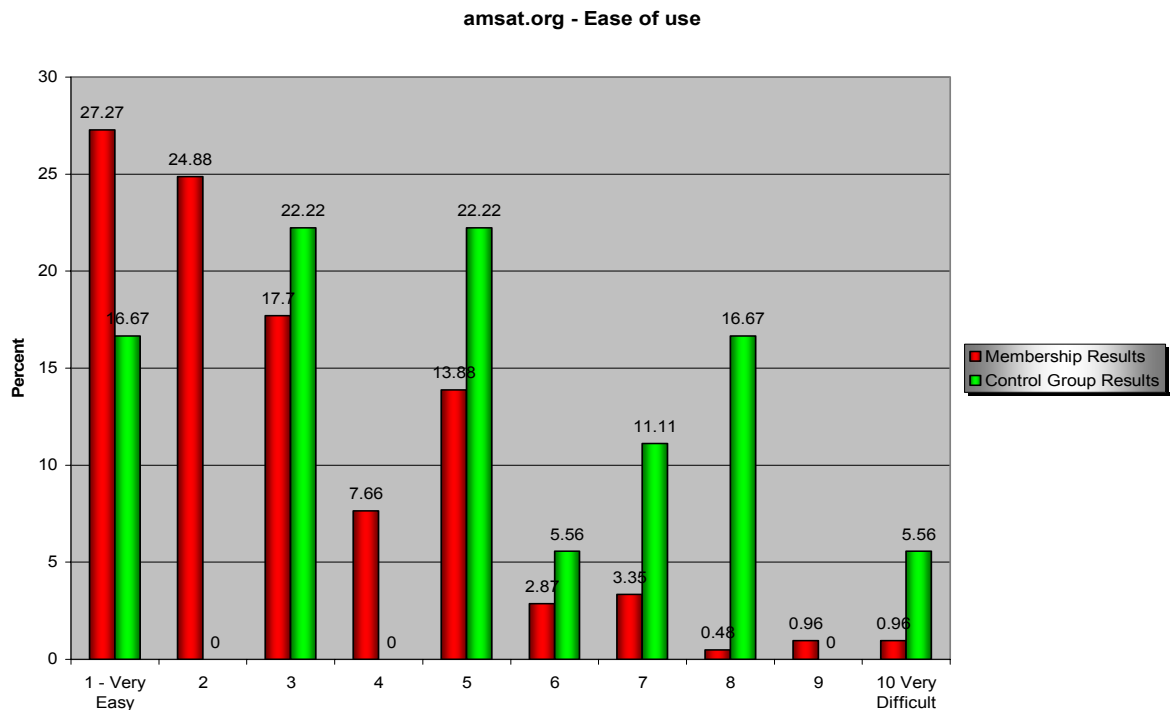


AMSAT Web Site:

The AMSAT Web Site also has a strong following with **83%** of the *General Membership* reporting use of the site, with the site receiving a very favorable “ease-of-use” grade.



A follow-up question asked them to evaluate their “Ease of use”. Generally, the web site was given good marks.



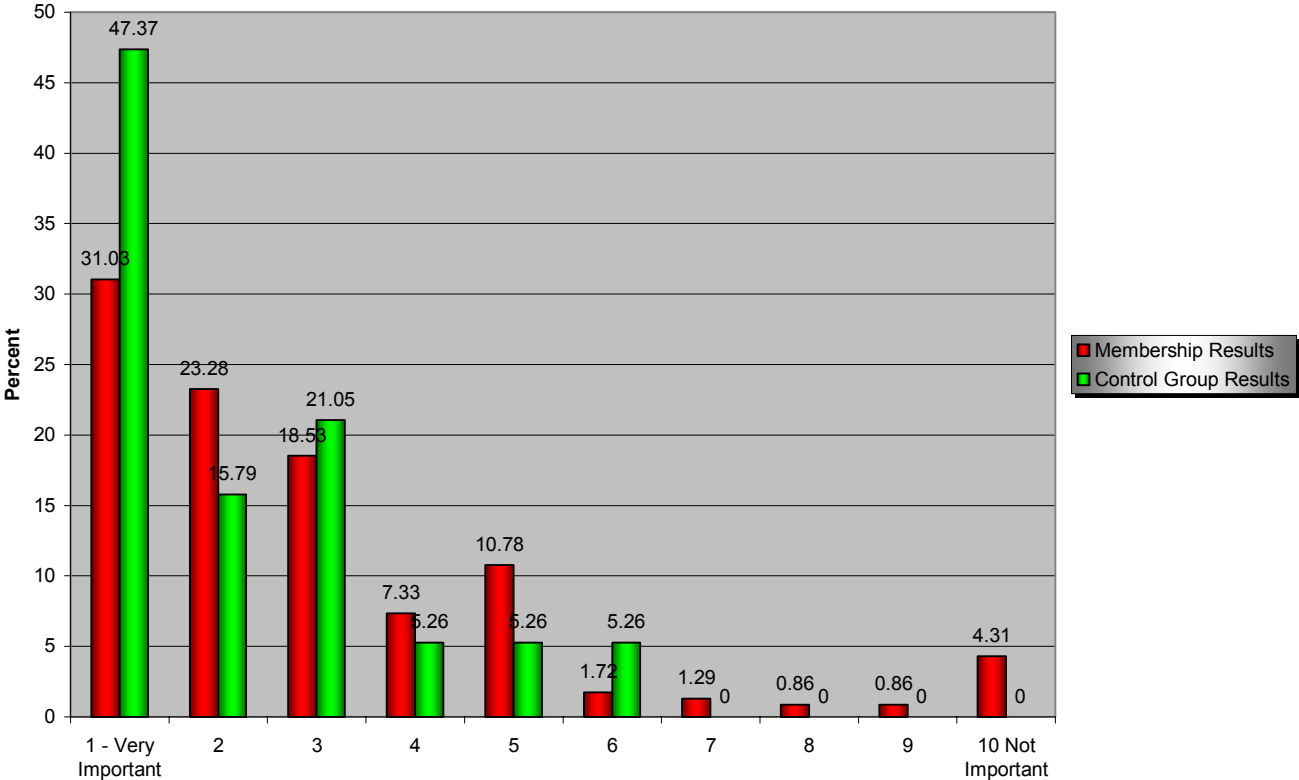
Opinion Set

A substantial number of questions dealt with member's attitudes on choices we have to make over the next few years.

Educational Outreach:

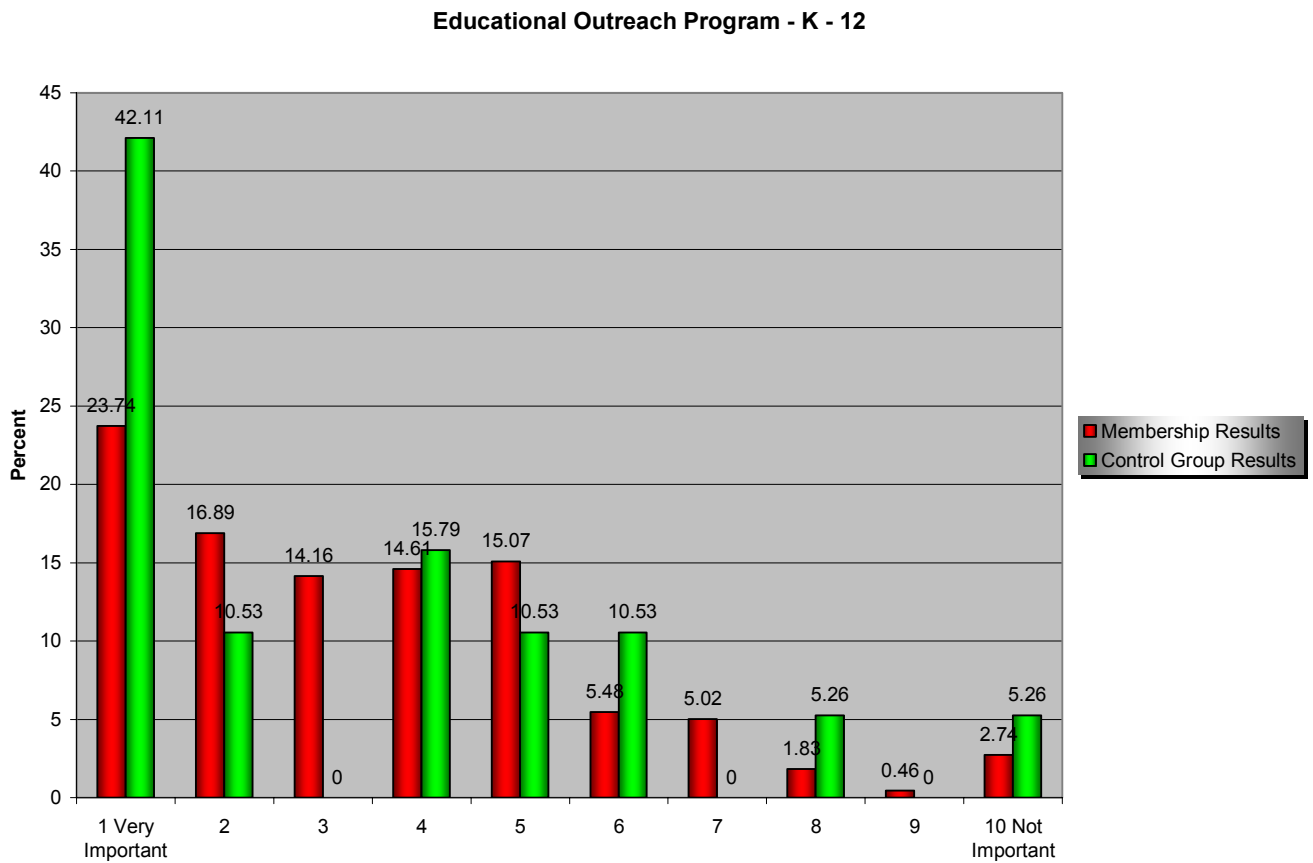
Respondents were asked how important it was for us to have a *University Outreach program*. The overall concentration was toward Very Important (1) with 91% voting neutral (5) or above. This is a strong vote in favor of such activities.

Educational Outreach Program - Universities ?



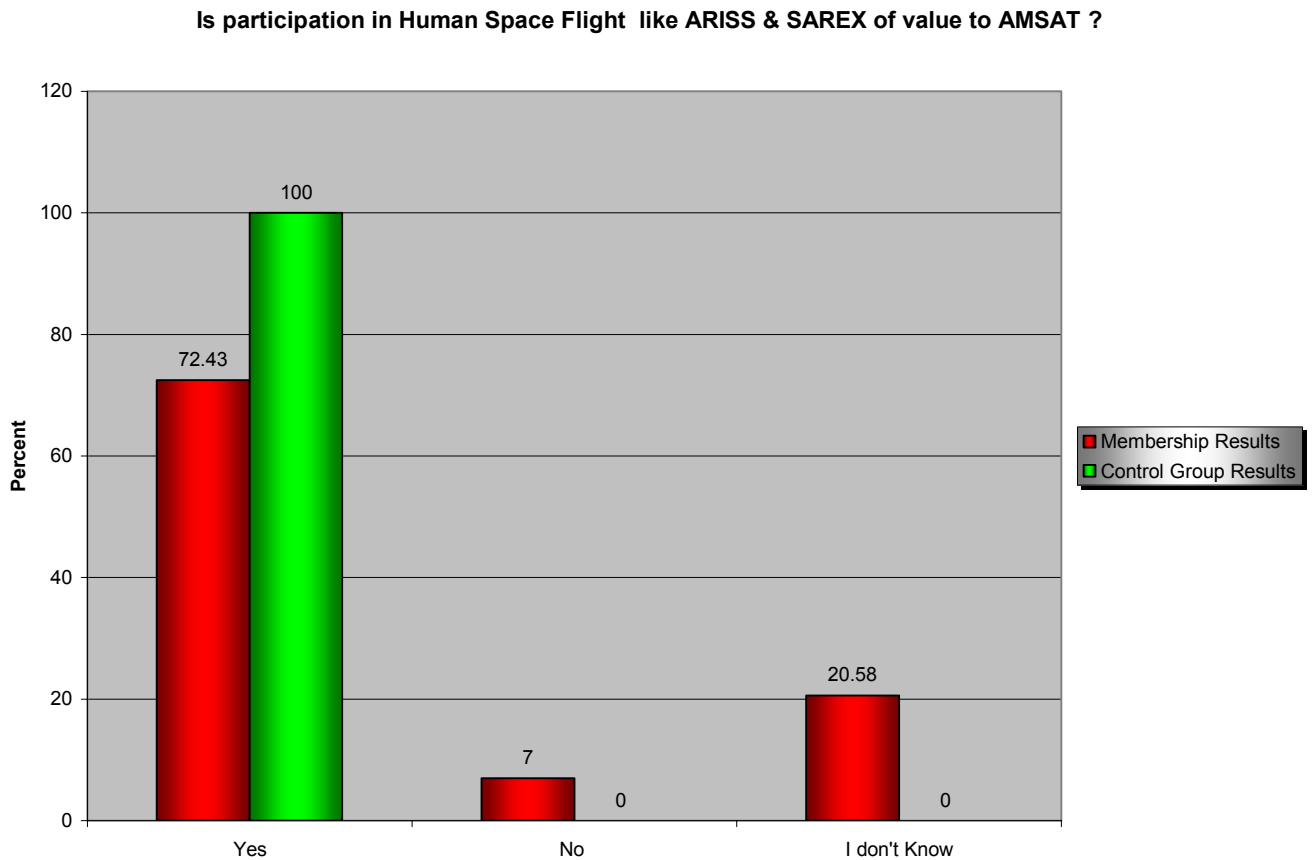
The same question was posed for education *level K – 12*, and it too did very well with an 84% favorable, neutral (5) or above.

In both cases the Control Group agreed with even stronger feelings.



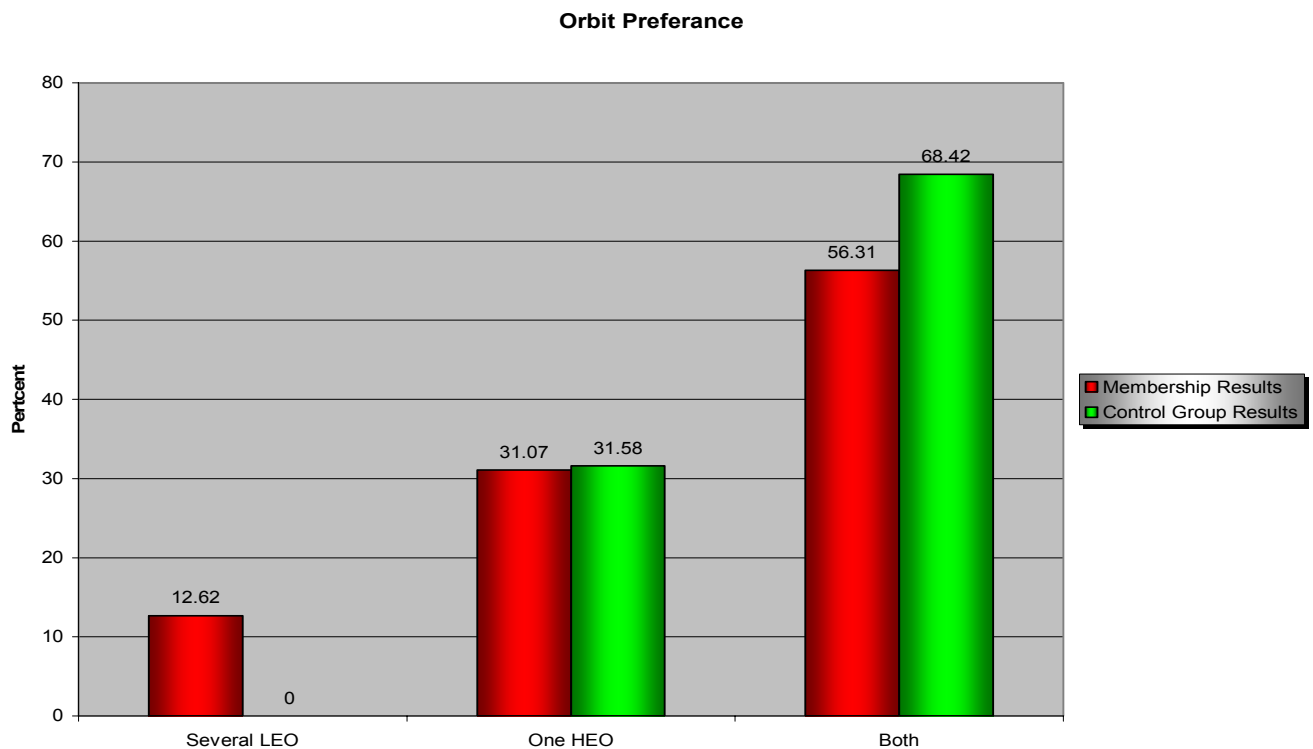
Human Space Flight:

In this case, respondents were required to vote for or against the project. A **resounding 72%** of the *General Membership* said “Yes” to AMSAT’s involvement in these programs, a strong case for continuing support & leadership. The Control Group was unanimous in their support. A minimal 7% voiced specific opposition to the issue, while 20% had no opinion.



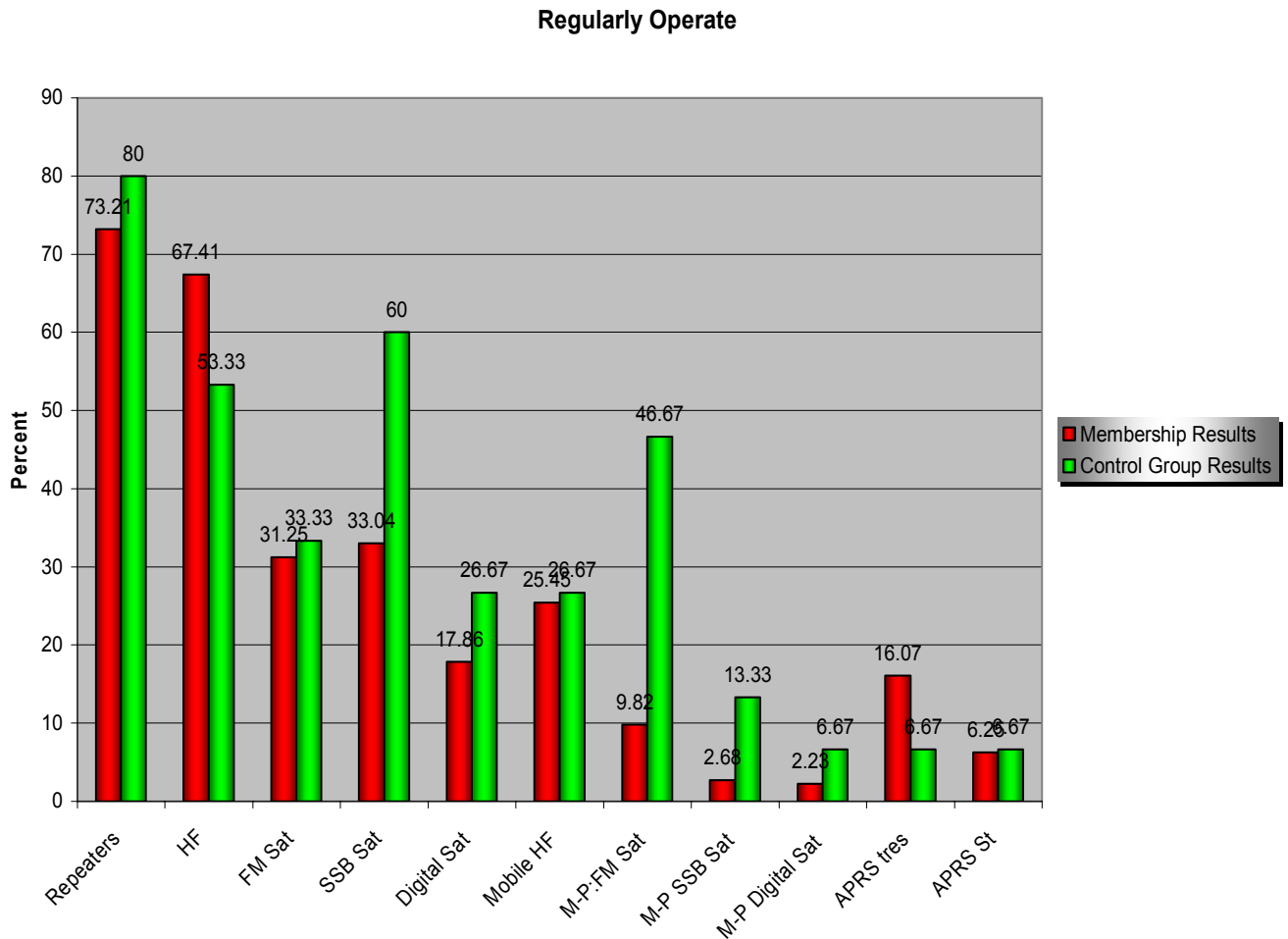
Which Satellites do you prefer? (Orbit Preference)

We specifically asked if you would prefer: several LEO passes per day, one long HEO pass every other day, or both. There is little question that there is a definite market for both. Also, it is apparent that users with strong feelings for one or the other prefer HEO to LEO more than 2:1. Given the higher degree of skill involved with most HEOs, and the additional background information regarding band use, it is apparent that the LEOs continue to have a significant role in AMSAT's future.



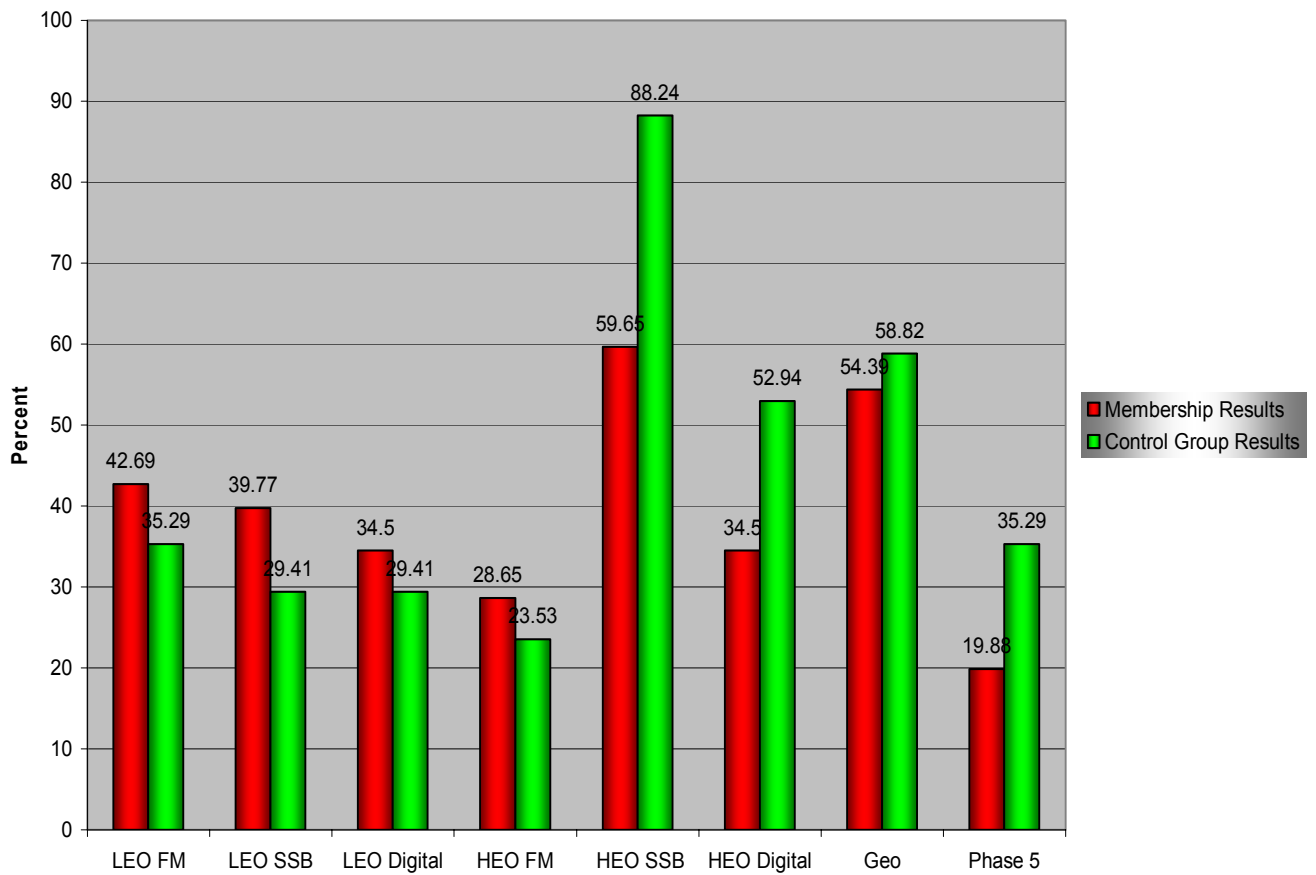
Regular Ham Activities

In the same frame we ask which Ham activities they regularly engaged in. (Multiple selections were accepted.)



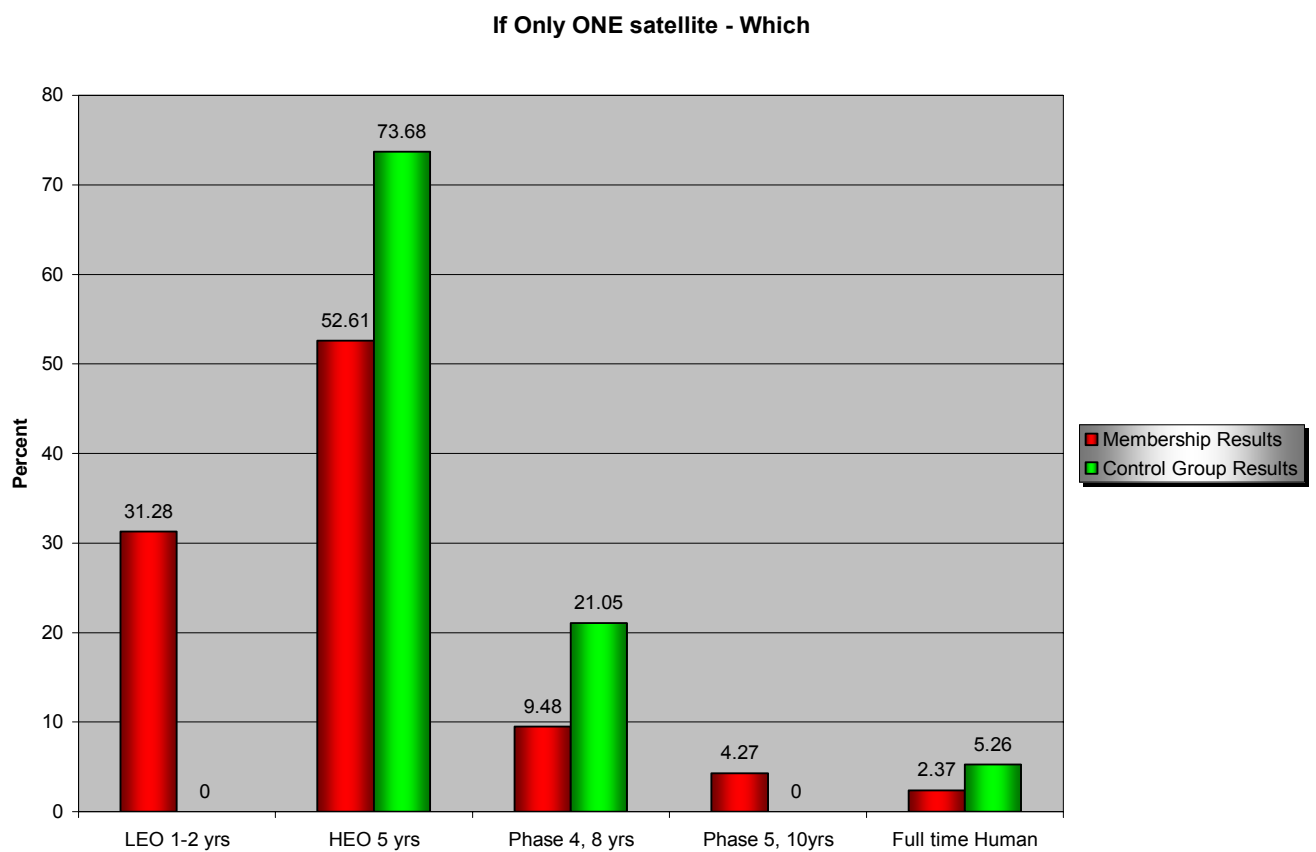
When asked if you would make extra contributions to help build a bird of your liking: **72%** said yes. They were then asked to indicate which birds they would financially support. HEO ssb took the prize with a great deal of interest in GEO, and third place LEO FM. (Multiple selections were accepted.)

If Yes, Which would you support ?



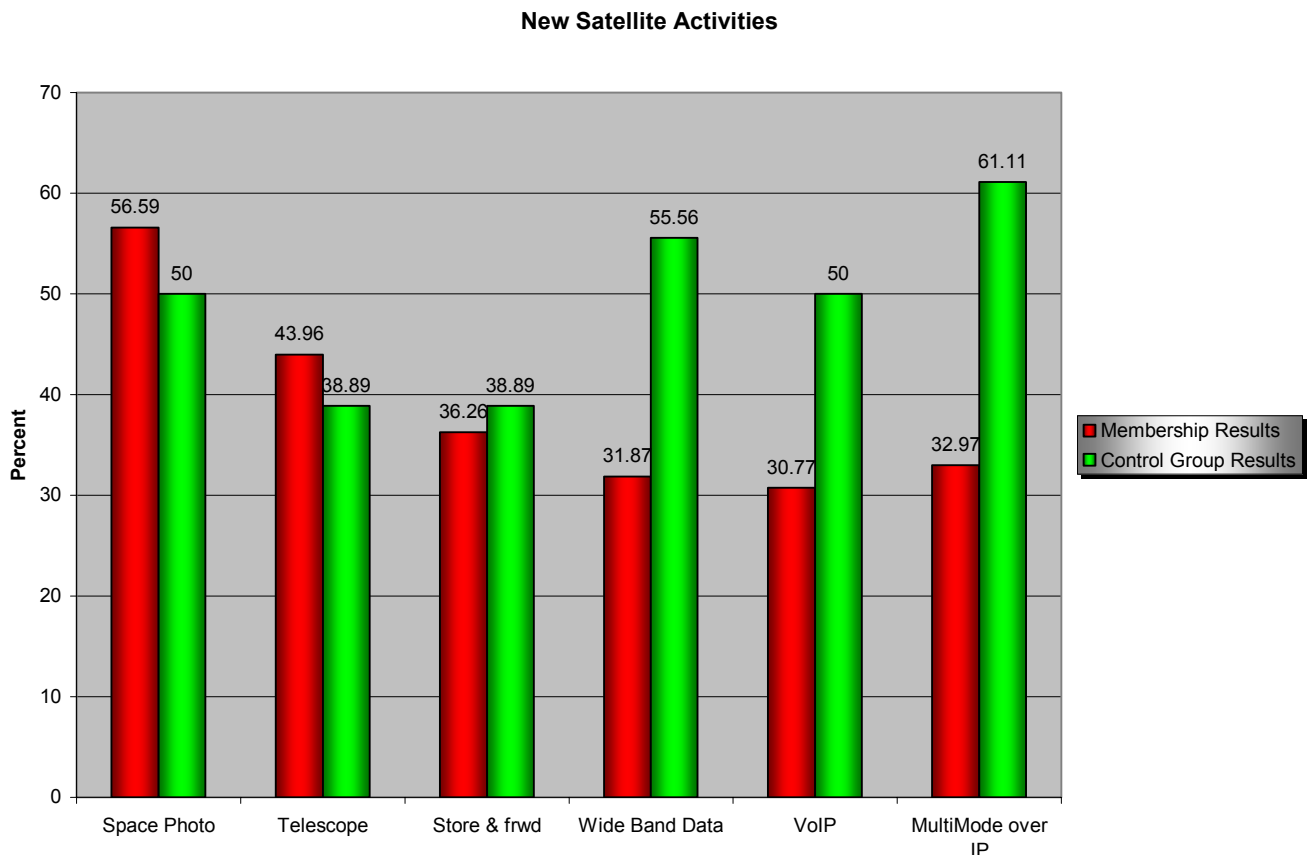
If we could only do one, which should it be?

One LEO – 1-2 years, One Phase 3 HEO every 5 years, one Phase 4 every 8 years, one Phase 5 every 10 years, or full time focus on human flight. By a significant majority, HEO was the winner with LEOs in 2nd place.



New Satellite Activities:

We were interested in our member's interest in activities other than conventional voice exchange (QSOs). Some of the proposals are relatively new, others have flown before. The *control group* leaned toward the transmission of data, while the *General Membership* leaned toward crossover ancillary interests. (Multiple selections were accepted.)



University Experiments using the Ham bands?

Respondents were asked if such use would be acceptable for telemetry & control.

- **51%** said yes
- **21%** no
- **28%** had no opinion.

Purchase commercially built hardware?

When asked if we should buy commercial hardware, if necessary, for the building of new birds:

- 71% said yes
- 5% no
- 24% no opinion.

AO-40 Review:

Along these lines we asked about the effectiveness and pleasure level respondents experienced with of AO-40.

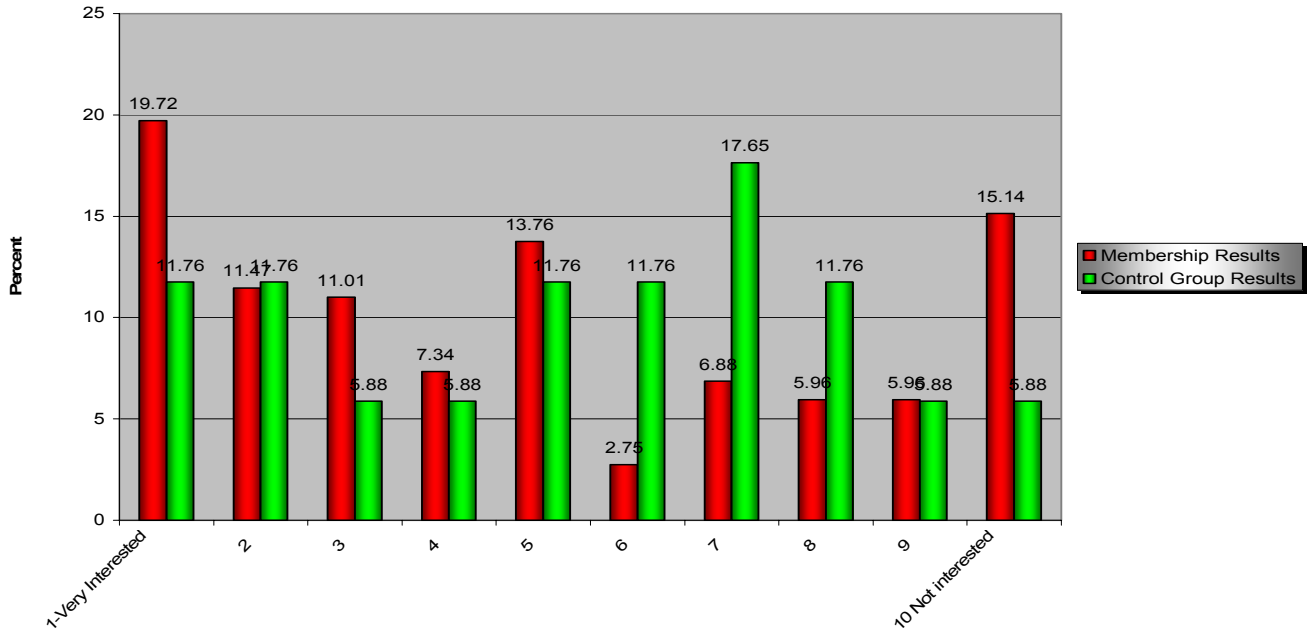
- 26% said they just loved it...
- 10% said it was OK, just another bird,
- 4% tried it and did not like it
- 60% are not equipped to use it. The last response must be balanced with the fact that popular conventional modes did not perform on AO-40.

Strength of feelings toward specific satellites:

We asked a series of questions asking respondents to express their interest in various options on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 = Very Interested / 10 = Not interested)

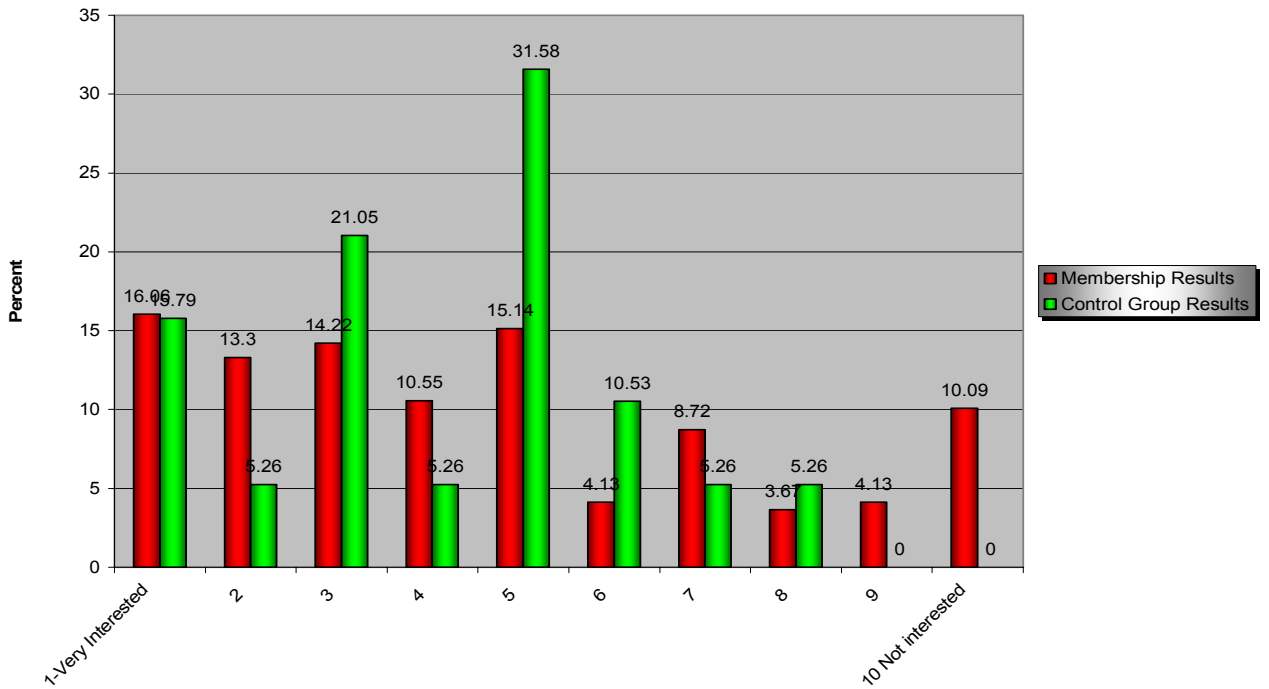
These graphs can often be best viewed by squinting at them. You are looking for the strength of like or dislike. Look for the weight of response. Look for strong views and a preponderance of opinion either side of neutral (5).

FM LEO - Level of Interest



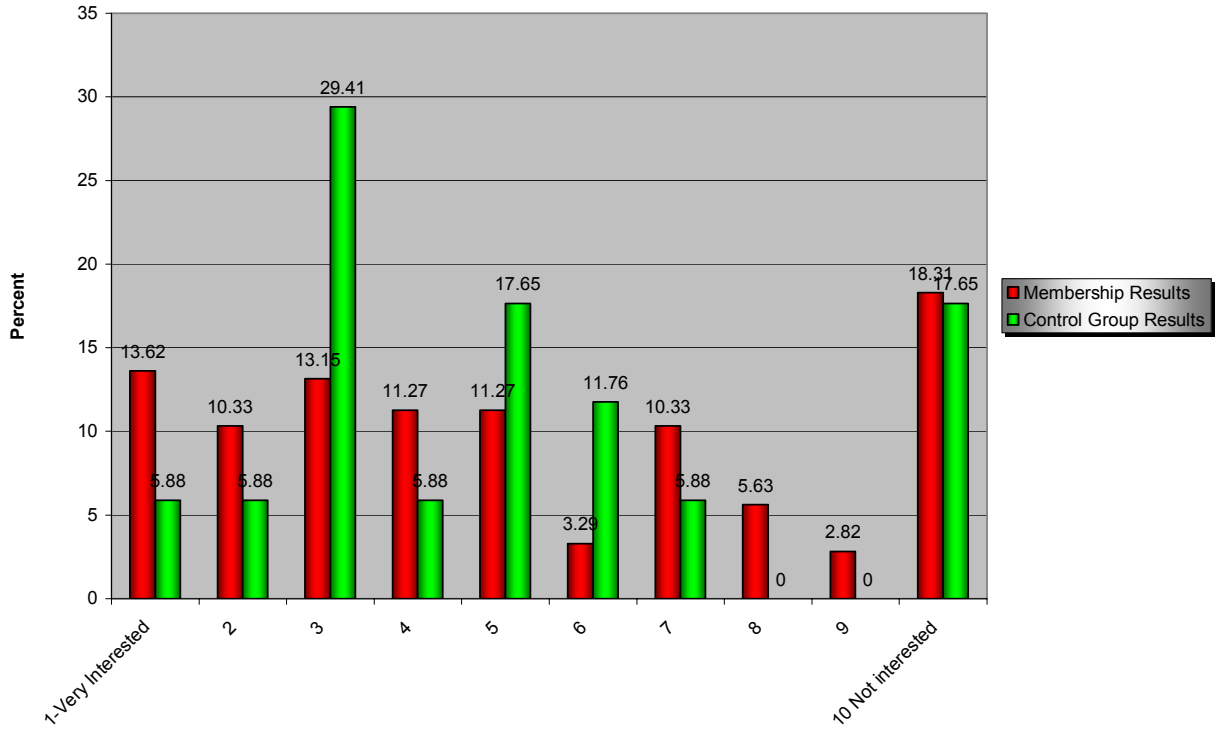
63% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
50% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

SSB LEO - Level of Interest



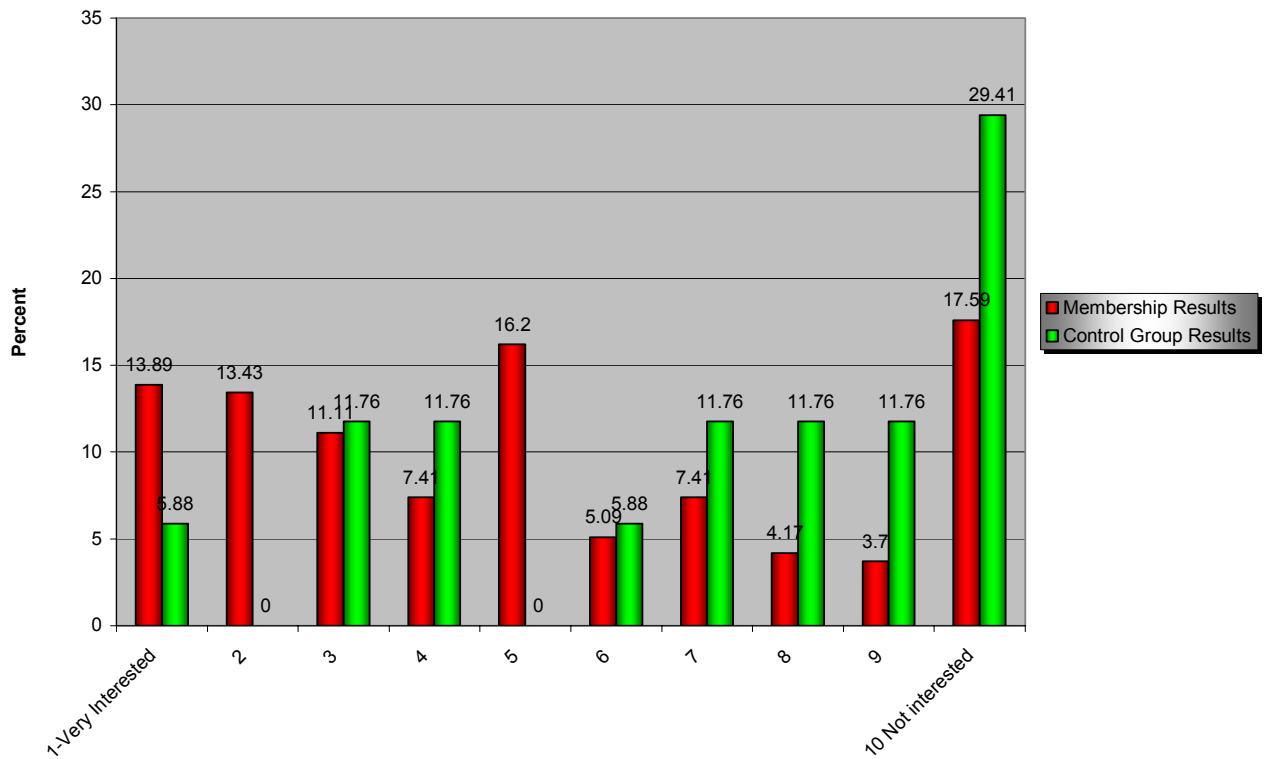
69% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
83% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

Digital LEO - Level of Interest



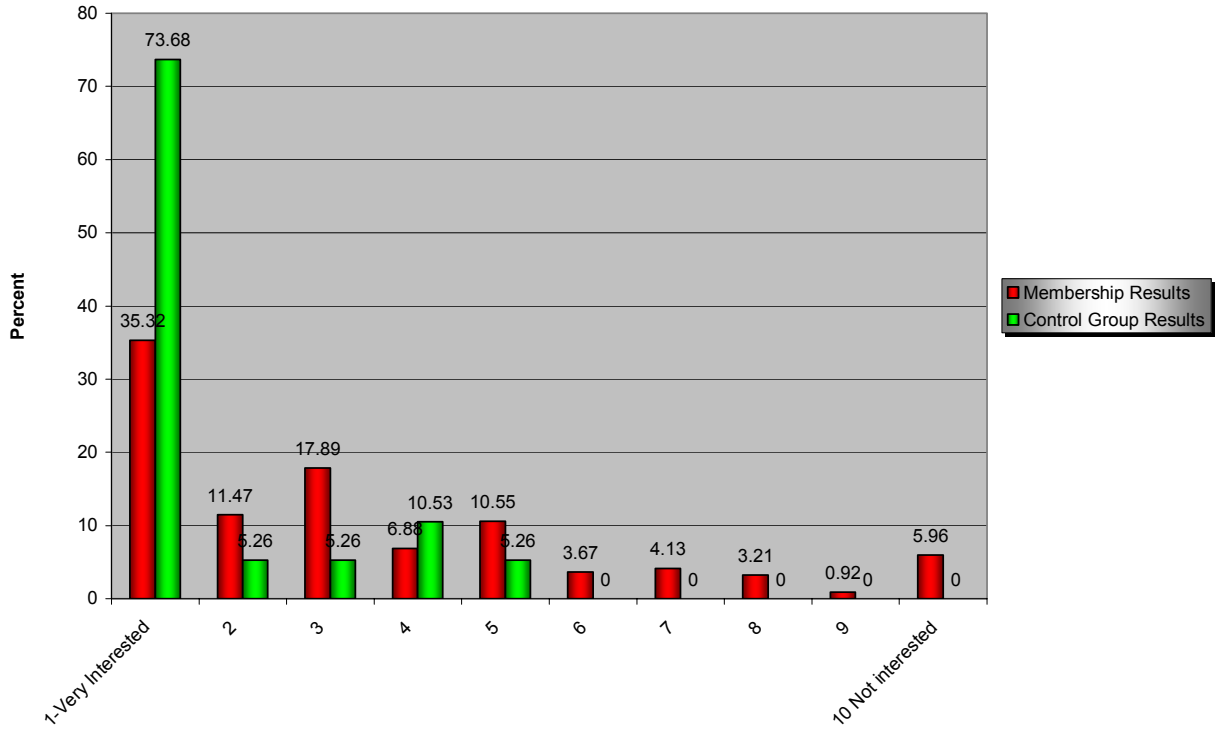
60% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
65% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

FM Phase III - Level of Interest



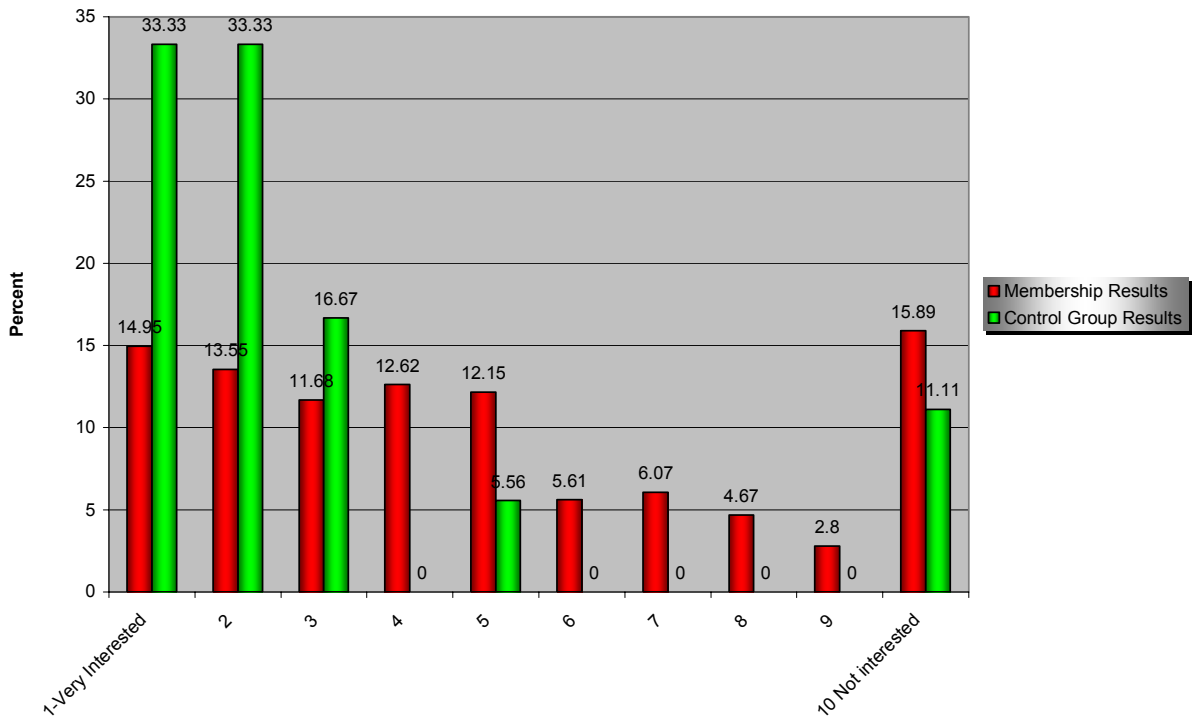
62% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
29% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

SSB Phase III - Level of Interest



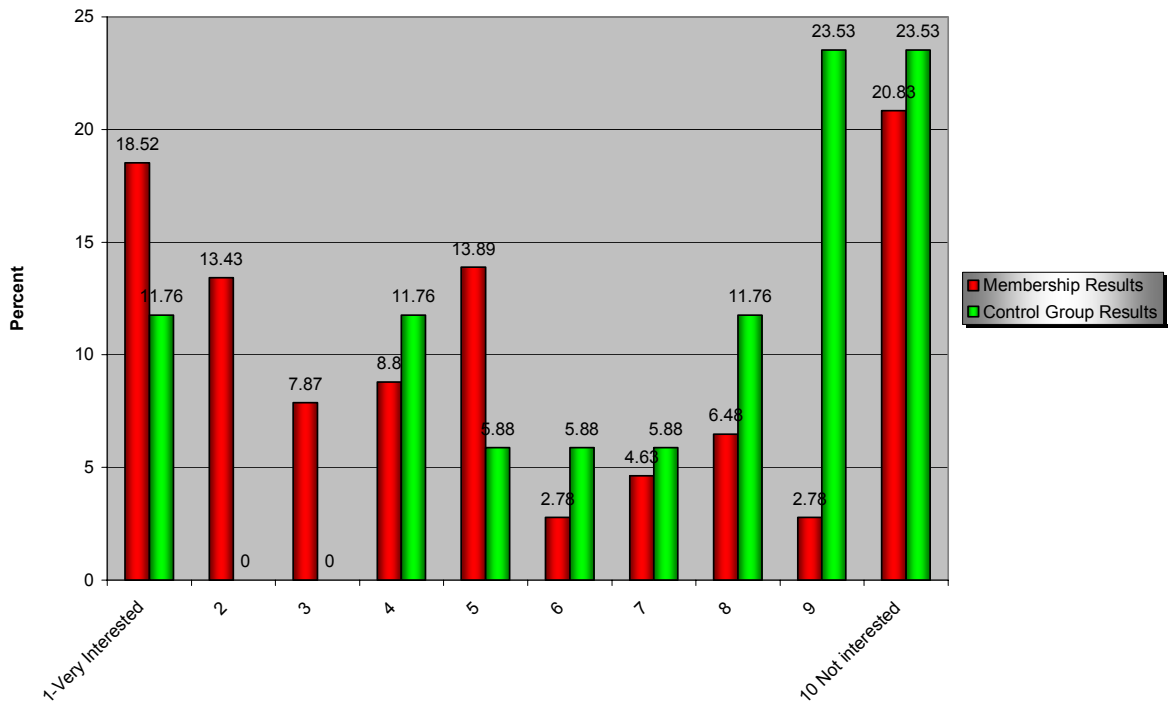
82% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
100% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

Digital Phase III - Level of Interest



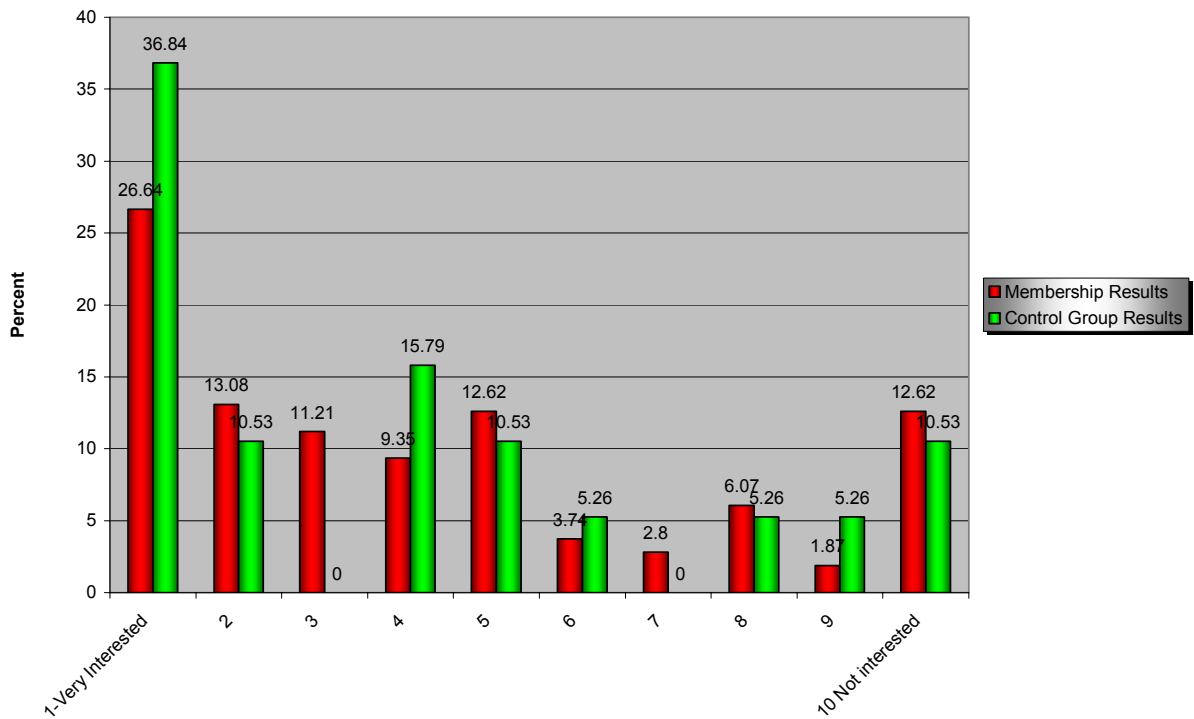
65% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
89% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

FM Phase IV - Level of Interest



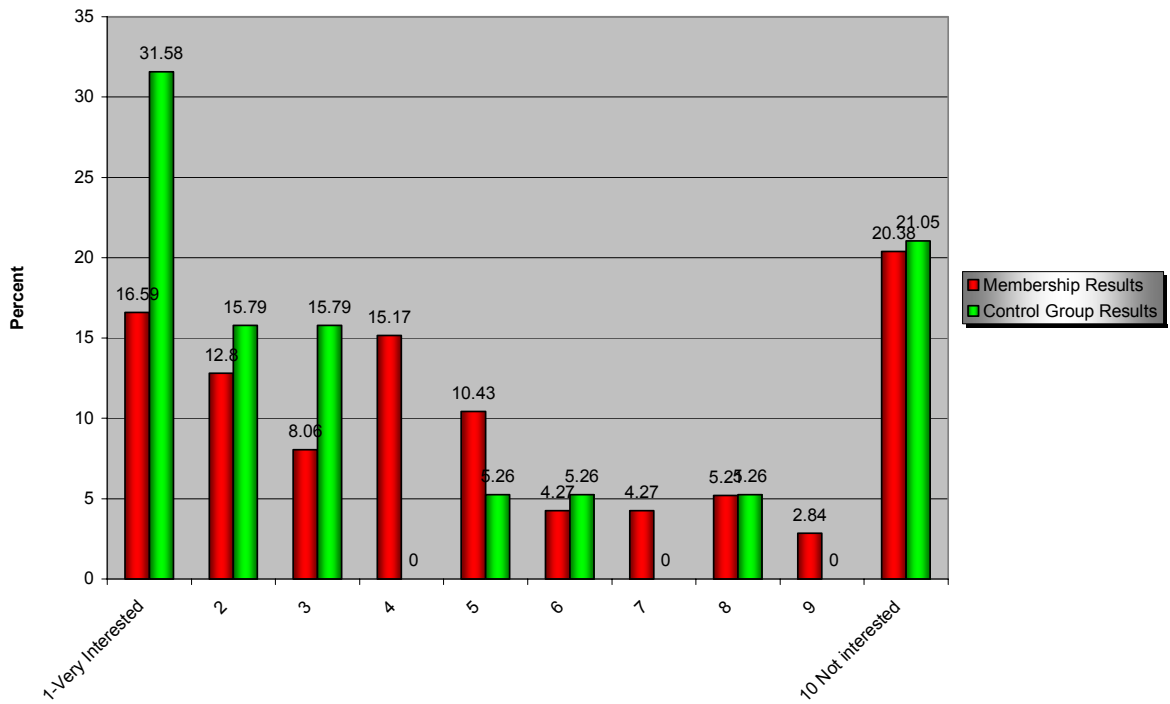
63% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
29% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

SSB Phase IV - Level of Interest



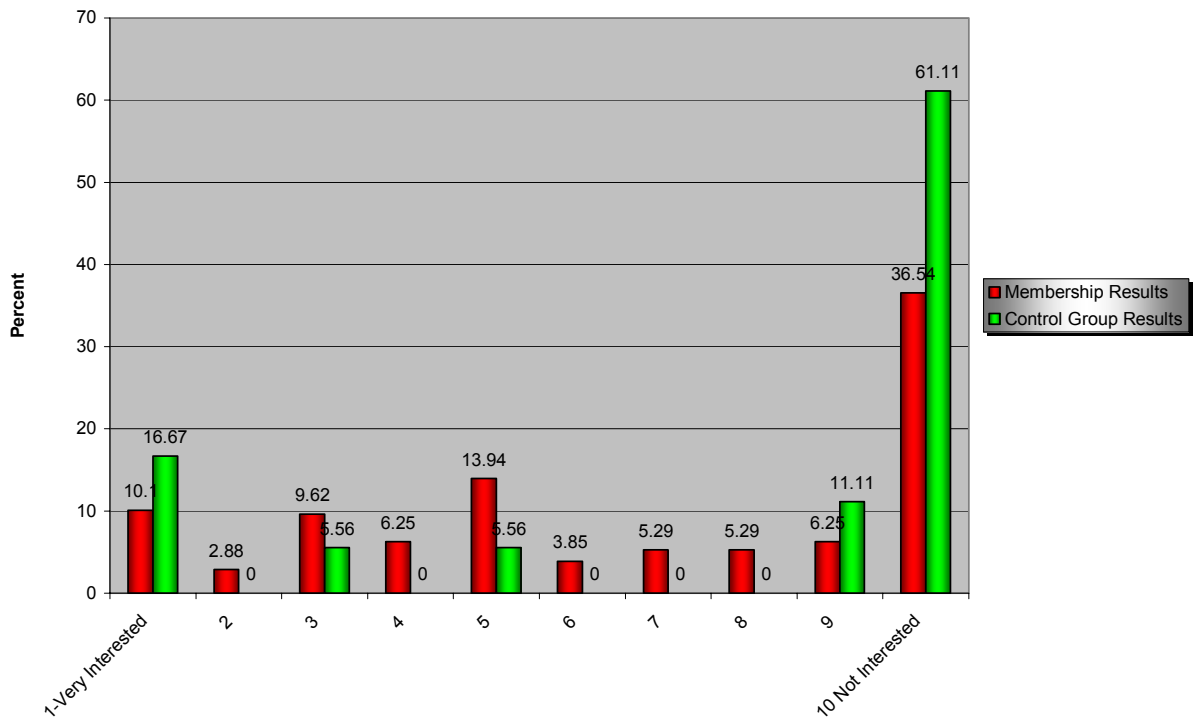
73% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
74% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

Digital Phase IV - Level of Interest



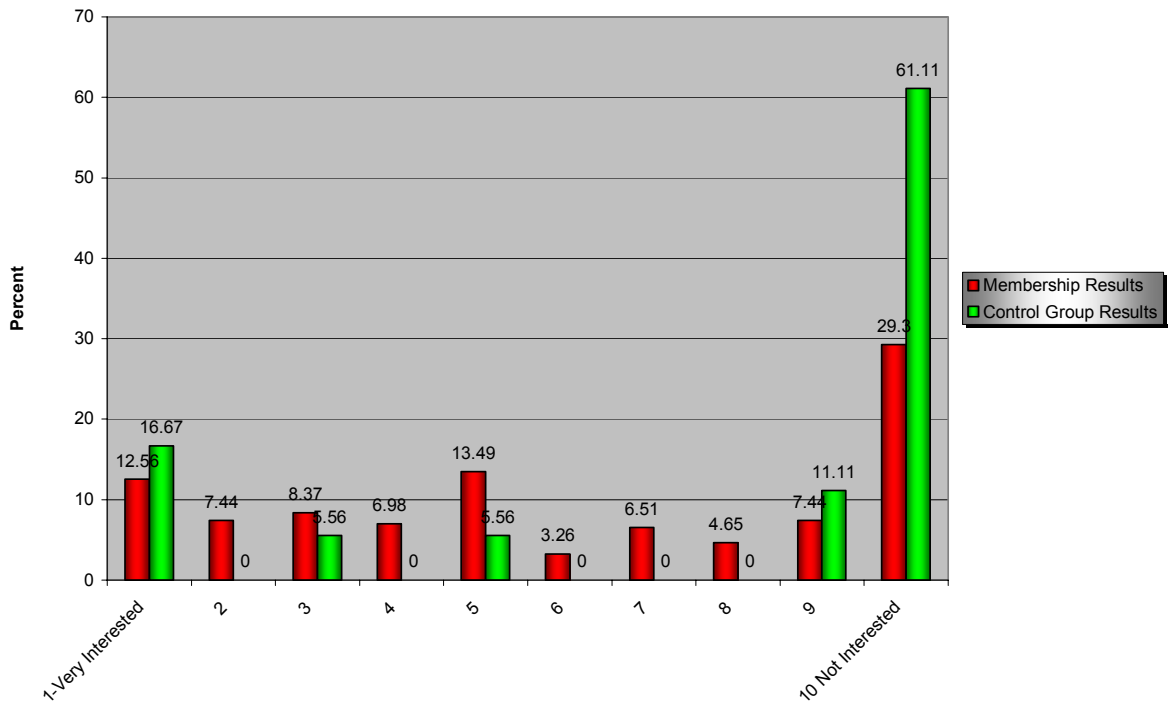
63% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
68% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

FM Phase V - Level of Interest



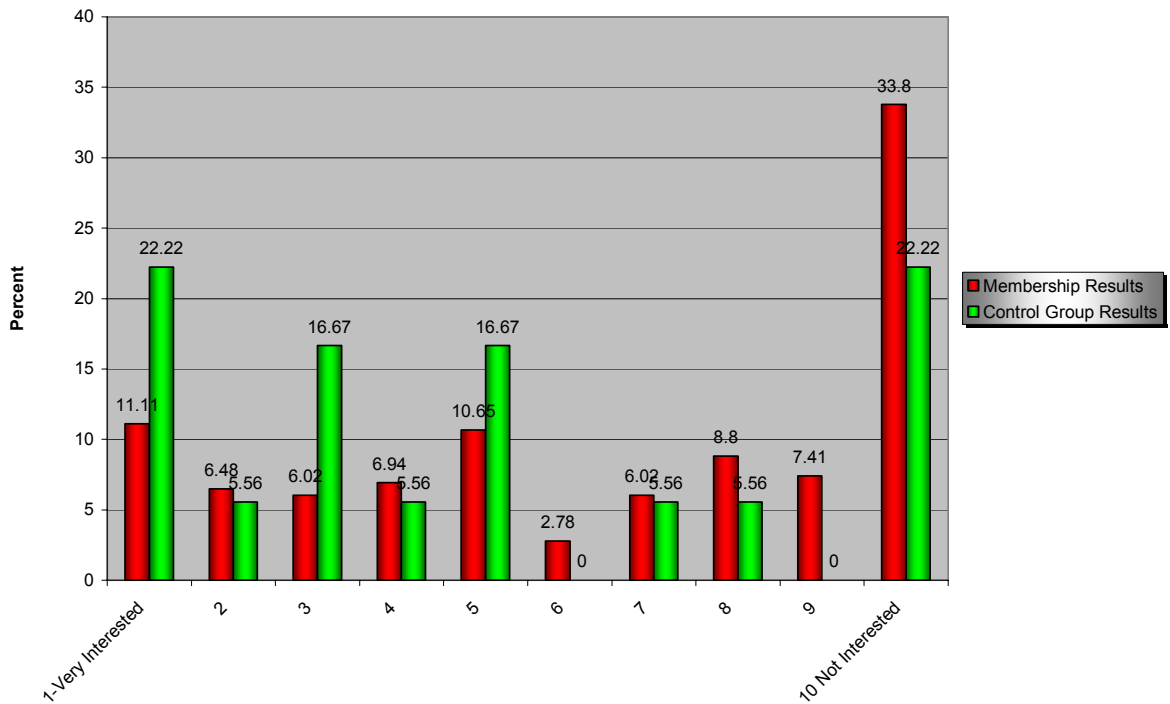
43% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
28% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

SSB Phase V - Level of Interest



49% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
28% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

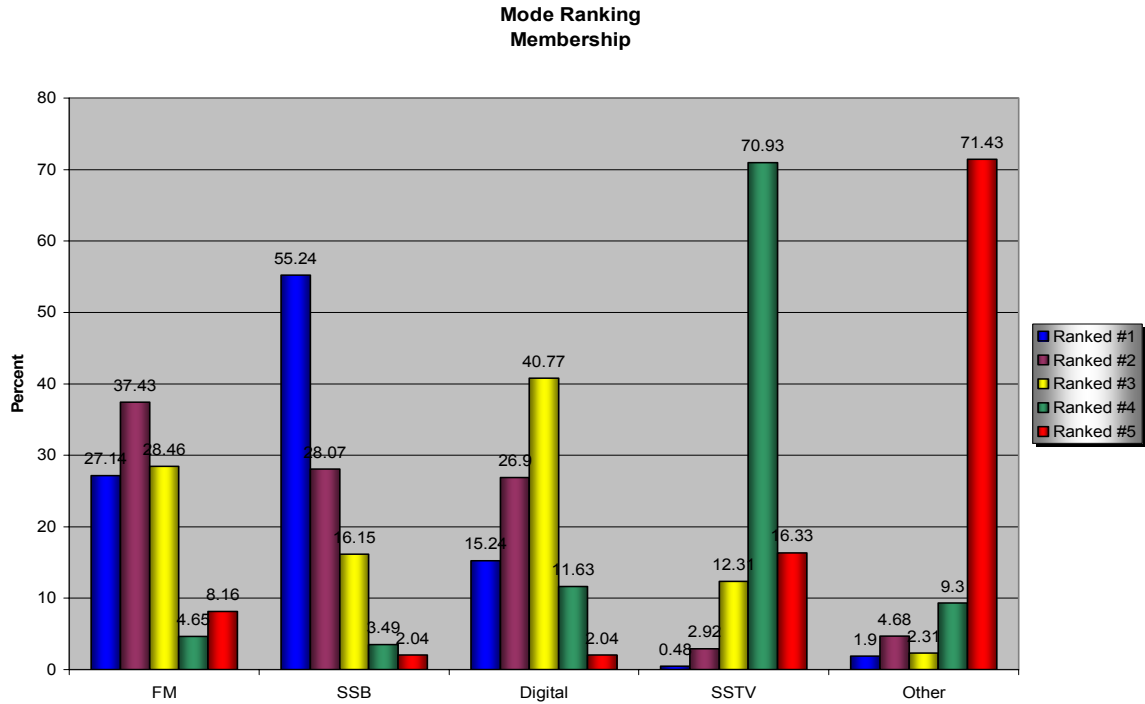
Digital Phase V - Level of Interest



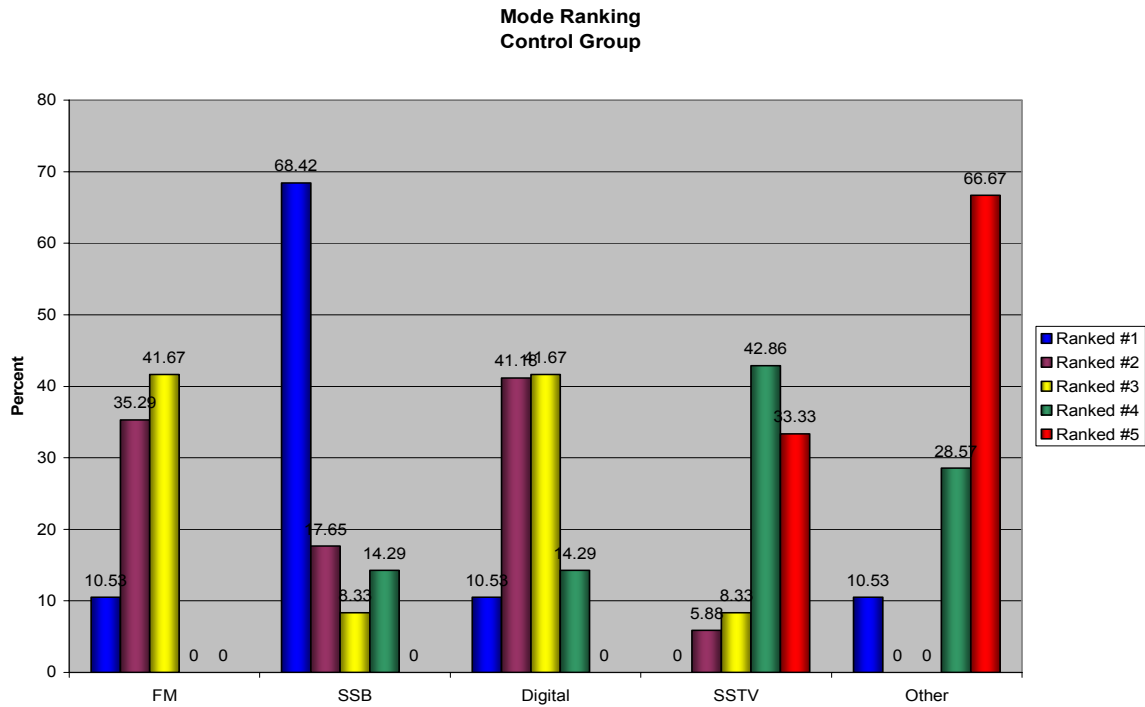
41% Interested neutral (5) and above *Members*
67% Interested neutral (5) and above *Control Group*

Satellite Mode Preferences:

We asked the respondents to **rank** the Mode, #1 being their most favorite.

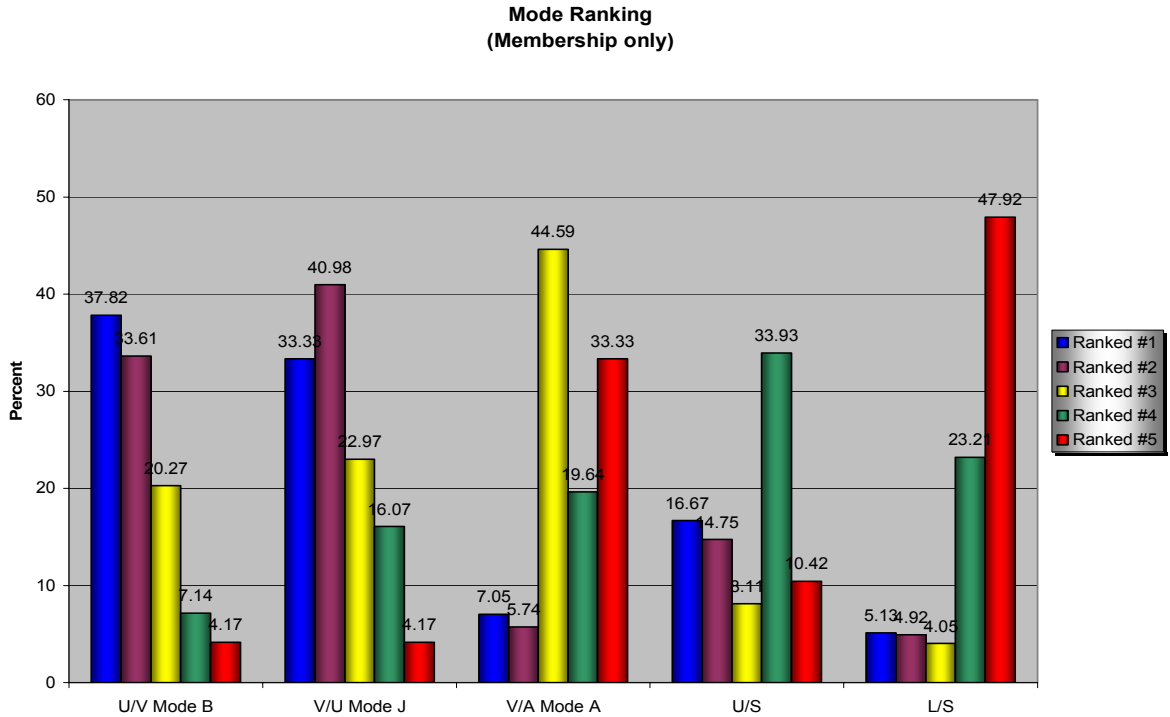


As a **first choice**: SSB ranked 1st with 55% / FM 2nd with 27%
 As a **second choice**: FM ranked 1st with 37% / SSB 2nd with 28%

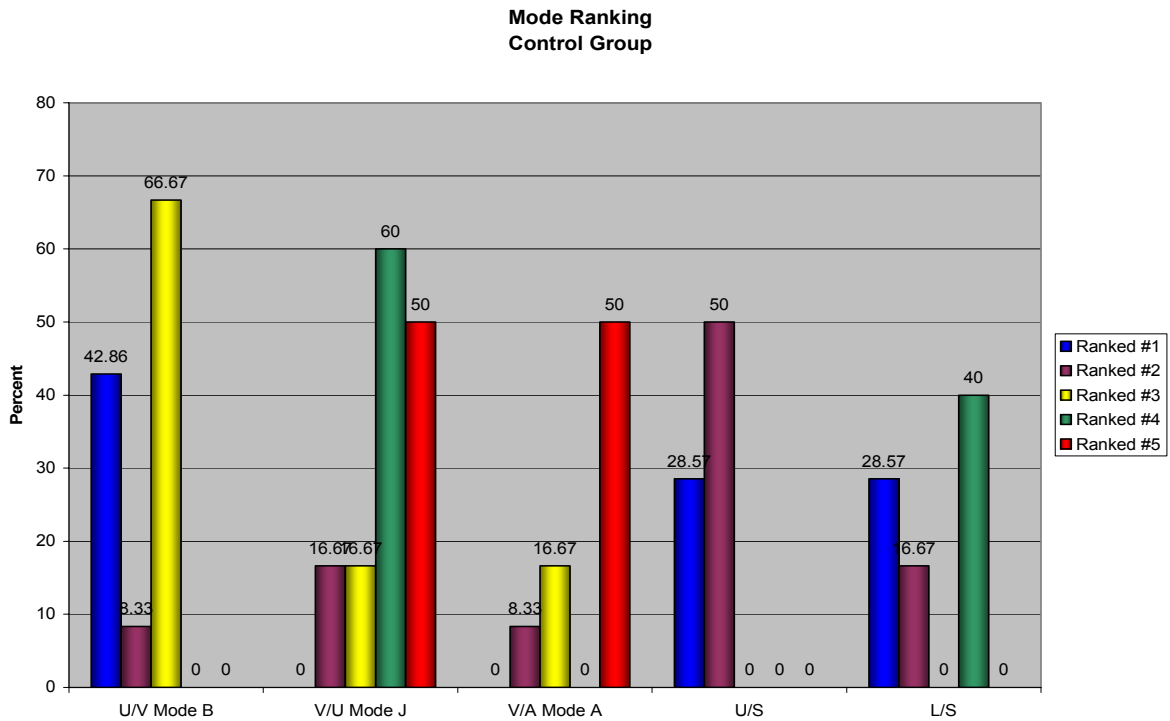


As a **first choice**: SSB ranked 1st with 68% / FM, Digital, & other tied for 2nd with 27%
 As a **second choice**: Digital ranked 1st with 41% / FM 2nd with 35%

We then asked respondents to rank Transponder configurations:



As a **first choice**: **Mode B** ranked 1st with 38% / **Mode J** 2nd with 33%
 As a **second choice**: **Mode J** ranked 1st with 41% / **Mode B** 2nd with 34%



As a **first choice**: **Mode B** ranked 1st with 43% / **U/S & L/S** tied for 2nd with 29%
 As a **second choice**: **U/S** ranked 1st with 50% / **Mode J & L/S** tied for 2nd with 17%

Regional Meetings:

We were interested if members would like more face to face meeting opportunity:

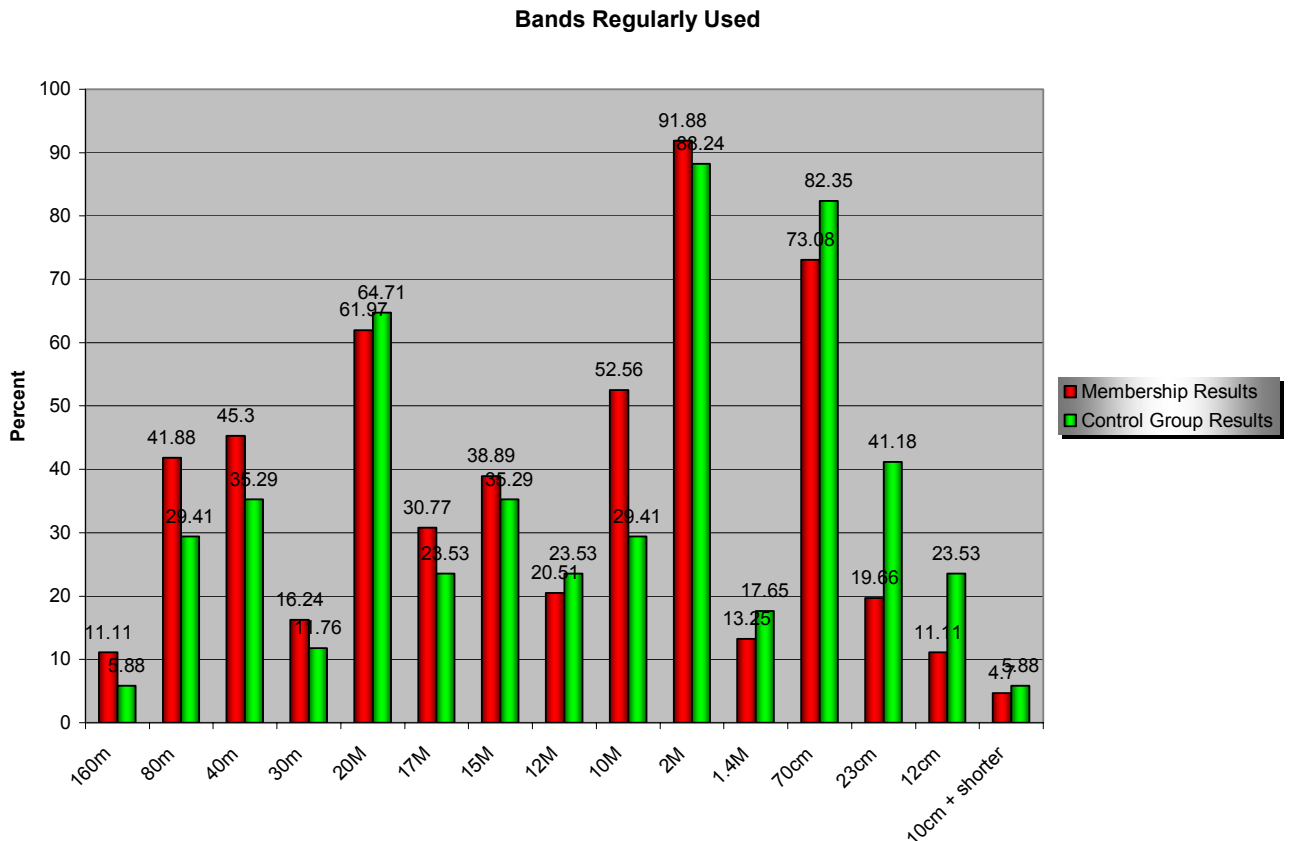
- 53% yes
- 10% no
- 36% did not care.

Bequest to AMSAT:

- 34% said they were willing to think about it.

Ham Bands you regularly use?

We thought it would be of value to see the interest in a number of bands, even though they do not necessarily relate to satellite operations.



In both cases, Members & Control, the first three choices, in order, are 2M / 70cm / 20m

Typical Comments Received:

Below are a number of select comments that were included to generally reflect the broad spectrum of comments received.

"I am returning the \$2.00 as a donation to EAGLE"

"I started off with RS 12/13, progressed to UO-14, AO-7, AO27, FO 20/29. But I enjoyed AO-40 the most."

"FM LEOs are an easy way to bring in new members."

"Keep up the good work! My agenda is to use satellite communications to show young people how exciting and fun science and technology could be."

"I am not currently active on the ham bands, but I have been licensed since 1953 and hope to get back on the air and experiment with the satellite frequencies."

"Have not used sats since Oscar 7 but feel the program most valuable so please accept my 2004 \$ support. - \$100.00"

"On technical matters, the board's judgment should be given more weight than this survey."

"Good Luck"

"This survey is a great initiative and hopefully will provide the B.o.D. with good, positive feedback for strategic planning purposes. AMSAT is a great organization! Very honored to participate in the survey...Thanks."

"Need another AO-10 or 14 type sat. Made more friends around the world than on HF, especially now. Thanks for your interest in the AMSAT members."

"Push the envelope, certainly, but don't ignore the majority who need access to sats with off the shelf equipment that is readily available – Keep It Simple."

"Sats seem to be missing the :Gee-Whiz!" Factor real technical challenges needed! It's the tech people that make this move, not the FM repeater crowd."

"Could not give opinion of satellites as I have never used a satellite. Just don't have the equipment."

"Miss UO-14. Tnx to all who made my multimode & portable AMSAT ops possible over the years."

"The HEO captured my interest & kept me there."

“I would like to be involved in actual construction of the bird if possible / or some small part of the bird, perhaps through and with the help of our local high school or colleges.”

“At my age (78) I now operate very little but still enjoy reading the different magazines.”

“I would like information on how to use and set up equipment for satellites.”

“I support AMSAT because I believe in it – not because I actually use it.”

“I’m very new and have had no success at satellite communications, but like the idea.”

“Would like to be more active but antenna limitations some what restrict me.”

“I’m more interested intellectually than personally involved in sat ops.”

“Keep ARISS going—it is a high leverage program.”

“I have never been able to get a detailed report on what caused the problem with AO-40. What is AMSAT doing to prevent the problem in the future? This has effected my willingness to contribute again.”

I am involved with the University Nanosat program and would be interested in extending this program by assisting AMSAT in design / construction of new projects.”

“I have not yet had the time or equipment to use any sat, but guess I would start with LEOs.”

“The material published in the Journal should include more items for those new to this form of ham radio.”

“Thanks to all the volunteers!! I plan to donate more to keep things going.”

AMSAT Member Profile 2004: “Control Group”

Tom Clark

Robin Haighton

Bruce Paige

Barry Baines

Rick Hambly

Gunther Meisse

Lou McFadin

Lee McLamb

Stacey Mills

Frank Bauer

Paul Williamson

Walter Wittenberg

Bill Burden

Jim Jarvis

Perry Klein

Art Feller

Bill Tynan

Keith Baker

Jan King