



WHAT EVERYONE GETS WRONG ABOUT THE UNCHURCHED







THE NEW RESEARCH PROJECT:





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- ESRI demographics + 25 years of Church Answers data on the unchurched





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- **Who are the unchurched within 15 minutes of your church?**





THE UNCHURCHED SCALE:





THE UNCHURCHED SCALE:

- **U1 – Highly Receptive**





THE UNCHURCHED SCALE:

- U1 – Highly Receptive
- **U2 – Moderately Receptive**





THE UNCHURCHED SCALE:

- U1 – Highly Receptive
- U2 – Moderately Receptive
- **U3 – Neutral / Passive**





THE UNCHURCHED SCALE:

- U1 – Highly Receptive
- U2 – Moderately Receptive
- U3 – Neutral / Passive
- **U4 – Resistant**





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- **U5 – Highly Resistant**





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A man with a surprised expression, arms outstretched, against a dark background with a red banner.

WHAT DOES EVERYONE GET WRONG ABOUT THE UNCHURCHED?





ETHNICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES: The Paradox of Being Highly Unchurched and Highly Receptive



Diverse metro areas show high unchurched percentages, but also the highest concentrations of those highly receptive to church.



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- Diverse communities have the highest rates of unchurched people.
- But diversity dramatically increases openness to the gospel.
- **Diverse communities represent the best blend of challenge and opportunity for outreach.**





THE RURAL MYTH: **Why Rural Areas Aren't as Churched** **as You Think**



Pastors frequently assume rural regions contain largely churched communities, but that is not always the case.



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- Rural areas are more unchurched than expected, often mirroring suburban rates.
- Receptivity is high in rural communities, making them fertile fields for evangelism.
- **Don't confuse traditional values with church engagement. They are not the same.**





AGE: The Most Powerful Predictor of Religious Engagement



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- Older adults stabilize religious behavior. Attendance and giving climb with age.
- **Churches in retirement areas have an unusual opportunity for strong volunteer cores.**



Our data shows that age, not income, is the single strongest predictor of lower unchurched rates. Retirement-heavy communities are the most religiously active populations in America.

- **Don't overlook older adults in revitalization. They are often the backbone of church engagement.**





RENTERS: The Hidden Driver of America's Unchurched Growth



One variable consistently spikes unchurched percentages: renters. High renter concentrations (>40%) correlate with high mobility, low community roots, and episodic church attendance.



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- Renters form the fastest-growing unchurched segment in every metro area.
- **Mobility weakens social, relational, and spiritual ties, suppressing church engagement.**



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- **Every renter-heavy area is a missionary opportunity, especially for relational ministries.**





THE MOST RECEPTIVE GROUP IN AMERICA TO CHURCH: Young Adults in Transition



Young adults who are movers, transplants, new professionals, and college grads consistently rank as among the most receptive people to church.



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- Life transitions create openness; change accelerates spiritual curiosity.
- Young adults are not hostile. They're reachable, especially through relational ministry.
- **Churches that build pathways for newcomers outperform churches that ignore transitions.**



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QUESTIONS?





THANK YOU!





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