

Segment J34:

Suburban Sophisticates

Established sophisticates living comfortable suburban lifestyles

Resource: Mosaic 2021 by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective:

God's mission, our community, my church

Spiritual Issues:

Feeling one's age and lonely, anxieties over death and estrangement

Common Church Presence

- Long-time resident members
- Loyal to the denomination

- Policy makers
- Harmony and homogeneity

- Disciplined stewardship
- Cautious about innovation



Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group J <i>Autumn Years</i>	Frequent Neighbors
E20 No Place Like Home I30 Potlucks and the Great Outdoors L42 Rooted Flower Power Q62 Enjoying Retirement	J34 Suburban Sophisticates J35 Rural Escape J36 Settled and Sensible	E21 Unspoiled Splendor H28 Everyday Moderates L43 Homemade Happiness Q64 Established in Society

General Comments:

Suburban Sophisticates are gracefully aging in place. They love their own church (although they may be increasingly skeptical about the denomination to which it belongs). They sink deep roots in the community but may not always “see” the diversity that is encroaching on their neighborhoods. When it comes to change, they are more anxious about losing old friends than gaining new members. *Experian* suggests that they like smooth cruising automobiles with excellent suspension ... and they like “smooth cruising” and harmonious churches that don’t make too many waves. Their children and grandchildren consider their church as a spiritual “home”. If they join a church somewhere else, then this church is the one to which all others are compared.

They have traditional tastes and moderate to conservative family values. Their church is well established, and very likely part of a denomination. They are “brand loyal”, but quite open to ecumenical cooperation. They often serve on church boards and committees, sing in choirs and support youth ministries. Sunday morning is the center of church activity. Worship is predictable and profound, structured, and reasonable, without too many surprises or paradoxes. The church is a primary center for socializing, and preservation of harmony is important. They pride themselves on being a “friendly church”. However, newcomers are generally expected to adapt to the customs of their church rather than expect the church to adapt to their expectations. The church maintains continuity with the past, focuses their charitable giving, and provides multiple opportunities for fellowship.

Color Key	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
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High Priorities also marked with “X” for churches photocopying in black and white.

Leadership PreferencesResource: *Spiritual Leadership* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Traditional		Progressive		Radical	
x	Caregiver		Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler		Guru		Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

Suburban Sophisticates expect clergy to be approachable and friendly, with an open-door policy to the office. They are trained in a well-known seminary and ordained by an established denomination. They usually wear robes on Sunday morning, except perhaps for the summer schedule. They consider themselves true professionals, and often have advanced practical degrees (M.A. or D. Min.) in counseling or preaching. If extra staff is added, he or she is often a generalist “associate pastor” who specializes in education or visitation. The second most influential leader in the church is often the organist or choir director.

Clergy are excellent preachers and worship leaders, and particularly adept in leading prayer. They are expected to be excellent written and verbal communicators in all three areas of form (grammar), content (substantive information), and import (focusing significance and urgency). They are best described as teachers than visionaries. They are constant visitors to hospitals, nursing homes, and residences. They are balanced and learned Bible study teachers, and capable (but fiscally conservative) administrators. They facilitate parliamentary procedure but may not chair the board. They have a good reputation in the denomination and serve on regional committees.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They post sermons on the website and make thoughtful comments in newsletters. Their online presence is less important than personal presence. Clergy carry cell phones, and messages are relayed through the church office.

Hospitality Preferences Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

Traditional		Modern		Postmodern	
	The Basics	x	Multiple Choices		Take-Out
		x	Healthy Choices		

Greeters are warm and friendly, and often include long time members. The traditional small narthex assumed that people would go right on into the sanctuary, and that tradition is followed today. However, people tend to chat quietly with their friends in the pews rather than meditate silently. Ushers may still escort people to their places, and hand them printed bulletins. Many have sat in the same place for years and have practically memorized the order of service. The bulletin often has several inserts with announcements and appreciations. They enjoy passing the peace, which may take several moments. Many people stay for refreshments. They don't mind walking downstairs or hallways to get to the refreshment center (although elevators and accessible washrooms are essential). Provide two or more serving lines. Provide variety, with a mix of sugary treats and healthy foods. Refreshments do not need to be elegantly served, but coffee and tea should be truly hot or cold and options for cream and sugar should be available. The pastor or priest is often sidetracked for counseling or meetings following worship but should circulate among people in the refreshment area and build relationships.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Suburban Sophisticates are used to arriving to the sound of chimes or carillons, and they may be upset if new community noise bylaws limit their use. Pressure to lower the median age of the congregation will force clergy to learn to use smart phones and social media even though it is not a priority for members.

Worship Preferences Resource: *Worship Ways* by Thomas Bandy and Lucinda Holmes (Abingdon Press)

Traditional		Modern		Postmodern	
x	Caregiving Worship		Inspirational Worship		Mission-Connection Worship
x	Educational Worship		Transformational Worship		Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

Suburban Sophisticates prefer “traditional” worship, by which they mean a blend of caregiving and educational worship. They also think of this worship as “inspirational” because it builds trust and confidence (but not necessarily vision and boldness). Worship is a local adaptation of standard denominational worship that seminaries often call “good worship”. This is a blend of educational content based on lectionary preaching, standard prayers, and historic creeds. Worship includes caring prayers for individuals and celebrates lifecycle events. Holy Communion bonds the family together, but it is also a deeply personal experience of the holy.

They like to bring their grandchildren to worship so that they can learn traditional spiritual practices and religious values. The Children’s Story Time is important. Music is an important part of worship, and people may applaud a good performance. Music relies on an authorized or familiar hymnbook, but there may be a second “contemporary” songbook in the pews with more lyrical and upbeat music. Anthems tend to be classical accompanied by organ or grand piano. It is not uncommon for participants to be emotionally moved by the music and worship, and it is helpful to station lay leaders around the sanctuary and in the narthex to console or protect people who are embarrassed by their emotion and step out of the sanctuary. The best outcomes of worship are memorable points from the sermon, personal consolation, and a sense of belonging and hope.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Livestream worship is a welcome short-term strategy if health concerns block physical attendance but will be frustrating long-term. Provide coaching to help them use computers and access web links. Be sure to recognize virtual attendees and offer prayers for absent members.

Education Preferences Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Form		Content		Grouping	
x	Curricular	x	Biblical	x	Generational
	Experiential		Topical		Peer Group

Suburban Sophisticates prefer traditional Sunday schools, and they are particularly troubled by its general decline. Sunday school may be before or in between worship services. Children are usually divided into age groups and use printed curriculum endorsed by the denomination. The church may use the same curriculum for several years. Christian education is generally Bible-based. Children may study Bible stories, and adults may study the Bible as history, biography, and theology. Increasingly, however, curricula may broaden to include ethical issues and contemporary events. Changing Sunday school timing, organization, and content can be controversial.

Adult classes attract seniors. Participants have often been together a long time and may have a special title for their class (e.g., “Homebuilders Class”). People in this segment expect the educational leader to have some basic training in communication or facilitation and have some degree of familiarity or expertise with the topic. This is often a veteran church member who is held in high regard. Teacher training is often an annual retreat.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Supplement curricula with DVDs that introduce participants to missionaries, theologians, and experts, or that provide case studies, dramas, or illustrations. They are less likely to rely on livestream video or go online for resources. Use printed (not digital) books and workbooks from respected religious publishers.

Small Group Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Leadership		Focus	
	Trained Leader	x	Curriculum Study
x	Rotate Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Suburban Sophisticates enjoy the fellowship of both large and small groups, either to deepen and perpetuate longstanding friendships or to make new friends. Large groups are often based on gender or marital status. Small groups use study guides to focus conversation, but this is often just a way to help people open up and share their lives with one another. It is not necessarily important to finish an agenda, so long as people have a good time and build trust. Group affinities can include crafts, music, hobbies, etc. Leadership is often rotated so that no one person is unduly burdened. The host or hostess is often the leader for that session. Training usually takes the form of ongoing coaching by the pastor or priest, associate pastor, or key lay leader. Accountability for spiritual growth or group behavior is not always easy. People generally avoid conflict and do whatever they can to promote harmony. Coaching to overcome personality conflicts is perhaps the greatest challenge.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Groups often meet in homes rather than in the church building. Occasionally a small group might travel together on a cruise or retreat center or join a tour of religious sites. Conversations may continue informally face-to-face over coffee or lunch. Social media interaction and email exchanges are less common.

Outreach Preferences

Resource: *Strategic Thinking* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	Personal Need	Readiness to Volunteer
Basic Survival		x
Health and Wellness	x	x
Quality of Life	x	x
Addiction Intervention		
Interpersonal Relationships	x	
Human Potential		
Salvation and Human Destiny		x

Suburban Sophisticates are often retired professionals (former teachers, health care workers, police, fire, and emergency response personnel), along with educated businesspersons and some lawyers. They are particularly anxious about any emerging threats to the wellbeing of their neighborhood or community. Education and advocacy programs for safety, crime prevention, environmental cleanup, race relations, family counseling are all relevant to them. They will also support municipal efforts to control alcohol and marijuana use, limit abortions, and prosecute child abuse. *Suburban Sophisticates* often have a big heart for the disadvantaged, and volunteer for ecumenical ministries that provide food, clothing, and household items. They also volunteer for programs like “Meals on Wheels” or special campaign for health care or to improve hospital services.

Fellowship and fun events are also seen as a form of mission because they help deepen interpersonal relationships. They want to share the Gospel and assimilate new members to both community and church. There may be an increasing number of singles (spouses lost to death, extended care institutions, or divorce). Dinners, special musical concerts, and winter and summer socials are all seen as forms of outreach.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Rental space is a form of outreach. Information about mission partners is usually shared in brochures, newsletters, or other printed media. Volunteers are coordinated via announcements in worship or telephone trees.

Facility Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Property		Technology		Symbolism	
x	Ecclesiastical	x	Modern	x	Classic Christendom
	Utilitarian		Postmodern		Contemporary Post-Christendom

Suburban Sophisticates prefers ecclesiastical looking church buildings. However, many of these buildings were products of the church growth movement of the and 60s and 70s and have a somewhat more modern architecture (laminated wood beams, curved ceilings, padded pews, more open chancel areas, and wider aisles) than older churches. Sanctuaries are often designed for presentational worship and organ pipes rather than dialogical worship and band ensembles. Symbols are classically Christian. Some may depict Biblical stories and events, but images will also be associated with Christian doctrines, saints, historical events like the Reformation, and missions. Symbols may often represent memorials to former church members. Education wings often resemble similar school and municipal service buildings in the community.

Lifestyle Connectivity

The Property Committee tends to focus on defending past tactics rather than adapting new technologies. Video screens in the sanctuary are a distraction, but they will readily update audio systems. Classrooms will often have a television and DVD player. Offices will have computers, but the hardware and software may be a bit dated. People in this segment are slow to see the advantages that justify the costs of such upgrades. Change to property, or upgrades to technology, is often very stressful to consider.

Financial Preferences

Resource: *See, Know, and Serve* by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

Giving Target		Giving Method	
x	Unified Budgets & General Funds	x	Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
	Designated Programs & Mission Projects		Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

Suburban Sophisticates tend to be fiscal conservatives. They like to avoid debt and maintain high reserve funds. They don't like to risk investing in a new ministry or creative idea unless there is ample assurance that it will be successful and eventually become self-sustaining. They often rely on occasional bequests to pay for necessary repairs and encourage members to remember the church in their wills. They generally trust the finance committee, but they like to see a detailed annual financial statement and ensure that the books are audited regularly. People in this segment are often skeptical of professional capital fundraisers. They usually prefer traditional stewardship campaigns that allow them to pledge a percentage of their net income to a unified budget for the church institution. Their choices may be limited to operations, memorials, and debt relief, although many traditions will also include opportunities to pledge toward denominational missions. Local missions are often supported by a discretionary fund provided to the pastor or priest, or by occasional fundraising.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Suburban Sophisticates may authorize automatic withdrawals to support cash flow during summer months, but special fund raisers are common throughout the year (bazaars, dinners, special offerings). They are more likely to write a big check than make an e-transfer.

Communication

Resource: *Mosaic E-Handbook* by Experian

Communication in Daily Living				Communication in Church Participation				
Broadcast/Streaming TV	x	Direct Mail	Radio	Live/Recorded Video	x	Print and Paper	x	Announcements or Visits
Mobile SMS		Email	Social Media	Text Message		Email		Social Media

Suburban Sophisticates prefer printed newsletters. The church often provides mailboxes for every church member in the narthex to avoid postage costs. Verbal announcements in gatherings, and printed announcements in the bulletin, keep everyone informed. External advertising is often limited to the newspaper; a changeable, illuminated sign on the front lawn; and posters in local stores, restaurants, and public buildings. Telephone trees help remind members of emerging prayer concerns or important events. Communication is often assumed to be a form of consensus decision making. Any changes or new initiatives are vetted through various communication methods, to all members, over several weeks or months. This allows ample time to raise questions and concerns before any idea gets implemented. Complaints about poor communication often suggest lack of trust in leadership. Slow communication may mean missed opportunities for mission and outreach.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They view a church website as a kind of static brochure that might be used by newcomers, but members are unlikely to access a website or download resources. Younger generations may be frustrated by what they consider to be inefficient communication methods that slow down decision-making.