

Segment **D15: Sports Utility Families**

Upscale, middle-aged couples with school children living active lifestyles in outlying suburbs

Resource: Mosaic by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious perspective: *“Generally speaking, God is often among our higher priorities”*

Common Spiritual Issues: *Feeling lost or lonely, anxieties over emptiness and meaninglessness*

Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group D Suburban Style	Frequent Neighbors
I30 Stock Cars and State Parks	D15 Sports Utility Families	E21 Unspoiled Splendor
H29 Destination Recreation	D16 Settled in Suburbia	H27 Birkenstocks and Beemers
B09 Family Fun-tastic	D17 Cul de Sac Diversity	O51 Digital Dependents
	D18 Suburban Attainment	

General Comments

Family is very important to *Sports Utility Families*, but the church may or may not be very central to their family activities. The church has to compete with many other social clubs, sports teams, and family outings ... in addition to the work schedules of parents and other members of the extended family. This generation has learned to be somewhat skeptical of organized religion, and their boomer parents may not have modeled an active or deep faith.

Sports Utility Families tend to be brand loyal to their evangelical or Protestant denominations, but are distancing themselves from small, aging, declining churches. They are shifting to medium to large (but not necessarily huge), conservative, independent churches with modest institutional expectations, and multiple options for different generations. Churches reinforce traditional values about marriage, family, parenting, and hard work. They avoid churches with high debt, but connect with churches that have practical visions to improve the community.

Sports Utility Families may be enthusiastic about church plants. They can be relatively content with cross-generational congregations worshipping in rented, multi-purpose, spaces. If they eventually build a church building, it will be inexpensive and serviceable, and they may help build it themselves. As a church plant transitions from informal, intimate, and creative community to a more formal, bureaucratic, stable institution, they may drop out and search for something new.

General Comments

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How do I, as a leader, perceive the spiritual expectations of people in our community?

How can we, as a board, research and understand our community better?

How can we, as a church, build closer relationships with this lifestyle segment?

Color Key

High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority
---------------	-----------------	--------------

Leadership Preferences

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

THE CONSTANT LEADERS		THE ORGANIC LEADERS		THE EXTREME LEADERS	
	Caregiver	x	Discipler		Visionary
x	Enabler		Guru		Mentor
	CEO				Pilgrim

For *Sports Utility Families*, the credibility of the church largely depends on the wisdom and lifestyle of the pastor. The pastor's family situation is compatible with that of the neighborhood surrounding the church. Pastors often drive a truck or used car while their spouses have the mini-van. They may be educated in a seminar or a Bible College and are usually ordained. They are expected to model Christian values, and communicate faith in common language. They are usually "doers" as well as a "thinkers", and are humble enough to do small jobs. *Sports Utility Families* prefer to see the pastor in the community rather than in the office.

Pastors don't need to be expert administrators, since people like to keep the organizational model simple. Pastors do need to be intentional about mentoring youth and young adults, and helping adults mature in their Christian faith. They help people in this segment live intentionally as Christians at work, home, and play. They are often strong mentors to a core group of lay leaders. Pastors have strong (usually more conservative) moral principles, but avoid being confrontational. They tend to seek common ground, build partnerships, and cooperate with other organizations for the good of the community.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your pastor now?

How might your pastor adapt to be more empathic in the future?

How can you equip, train, and/or support your pastor in any transition?

Hospitality Preferences

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

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
x	The Basics		Multiple Choices		Take-Out
			Healthy Choices		

Sports Utility Families like to eat together, but prefer convenience food. Pot luck suppers, barbecues, fish fries, and other informal, low cost, social occasions are great ways for a church to connect with them. They often come to church through a special event and a personal invitation; and stick with a church because of the friendly atmosphere and program opportunities. Greeters are usually untrained, spontaneous, casual, and extroverted. Ushers aren't necessary, and seating may be chaotic.

Families with very young children will choose on the spur of the moment whether to use the nursery or keep the kids in church. There are no reserved seats. After worship, people in this segment are content with basic coffee and tea (hot or cold), and cans of pop, and snacks and sweets purchased in bulk from a discount store. Paper tablecloths, plastic silverware, and Styrofoam cups are usually acceptable ... although they may be keen to recycle. Give away leftovers as an outreach in the local community; or invest in a big freezer to store them for another day.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your hospitality ministries now?

How should hospitality ministries change to be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What additional training do greeters, ushers, and servers need to be more empathic?

Worship Preferences

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

TRADITIONAL		MODERN		POSTMODERN	
	Care-giving Worship	x	Inspirational Worship		Mission-Connectional Worship
	Educational Worship	x	Transformational Worship	x	Coaching Worship
	Healing Worship				

Among *Sports Utility Families*, worship may not be the most important part of the church experience, and these hectic households may miss worship services due to amateur sports leagues or family activities. They rarely pay attention to the Christian Year, but often observe "holy" days like Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, and Halloween. Worship is usually upbeat, with contemporary music and instruments; with very simple orders of service and refreshments close at hand. However, it is stylistically blended enough so that multiple generations in the household can feel comfortable to worship together.

They tend favor thematic preaching that coaches practical Christian living (e.g. Christian marriage, family, parenting, work, sports, and private devotion). The pastor often speaks without pulpit or notes, in casual dress, and emphasizes teaching through scriptural references and video or internet illustrations. Personal transformation is the one thing that may be unique to Christian worship, which they can't find in other social or school situations. Transformational worship may be miraculous with healings, ecstasies, or conversions, but it is often experienced through infant or adult baptisms, and confirmed by lay witness and testimonies. The Eucharist can be very meaningful, but the focus is on radical acceptance and unexplainable grace, rather than doctrine or dogma.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe your worship service(s) now?

How should you customize one or more worship services to be relevant to this segment?

What additional training do preachers, musicians, readers need to meet expectations?

Education Preferences

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

FORM		CONTENT		GROUPING	
	Curricular	x	Biblical	x	Generational
x	Experiential		Topical		Peer Group

Sports Utility Families lead busy lifestyles and this impacts Christian education on Sunday morning. Families may miss several Sundays in a row, so every session needs to stand on its own as a learning experience. If there is a topic or Bible study that requires several sessions, it will be helpful to provide a recap each week. People in this segment are not great readers, and prefer more experiential (non-curricular) classes. You can use a video on line to focus discussion, and some absent participants will subsequently follow the link on internet.

Sunday school is otherwise fairly traditional. Classrooms tend to be quite utilitarian, and divided into age groups that parallel the public school. They are not often integrated with the coaching of the worship service, but do often observe the "holy" days of the year (see above). Teachers are often busy parents (and occasional grandparents), and they appreciate basic training and ongoing coaching. Sunday school, like worship, is really not about learning information. It's about shaping a lifestyle, or learning how to live day by day as a better person.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe children, youth, and adult education in your church now?

How would education strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What changes in leadership selection and training would make education more effective?

Small Group Preferences

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

LEADERSHIP		CONTENT	
x	Trained Leaders	x	Curriculum Study
x	Rotated Leaders	x	Shared Affinity

Sports Utility Families value small groups. Their busy schedules require time flexibility. Groups can be organized for men, women, or couples; with a single or multiple generations. The more innovative and unique the group, the more attractive it might be. These folks are crazy about sports, which often become group affinities. Credibility is crucial to people in this segment, and the key to credibility is accountability. Training and evaluation, ongoing coaching and guidance to learn from inevitable mistakes should be part of the plan.

Concentrate on short term commitments. Provide basic training and ongoing coaching for small group leaders. Small group process can become quite sophisticated. There may be introductory and more advanced groups; or specialized groups for recovery, crisis intervention, personal support, and so on. Groups are often highlighted in worship, and group leaders are often commissioned with prayer.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How would you describe the Small Group strategy in your church now?

How would Small Group strategies need to change to be relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What changes in leadership and content would make Small Groups more effective?

Outreach Preferences

Resource: Strategic Thinking by Thomas Bandy (Abingdon Press)

	PERSONAL NEED	READINESS TO VOLUNTEER
Basic Survival		X
Health and Wellness		X
Quality of Life	X	X
Addiction Intervention		
Interpersonal Relationships	X	X
Human Potential	X	
Salvation and Human Destiny		X

Sports Utility Families often have a big heart for struggling families. They become involved in famine relief, medical missions, health clinics, and wellness centers; and often contribute to food banks, blood drives, and collections for emergency relief. They can respond with short bursts of extreme energy to help victims of natural disasters or unexpected family tragedies. They are best at short term, hands on projects. They tend to help others by gathering commodities or offering practical service, rather than financial donations.

They are not particularly interested in self-improvement, although they can be very interested in personal destiny. They have above average educations and incomes, and are reasonably content with the lives. However, they are increasingly anxious about debt and their financial future; paying for college educations for their children; and securing their retirement in uncertain economic times. They tend to accumulate credit card debt, and already carry loans for homes, automobiles, and recreational equipment. They are interested in improving quality of life, particularly their long term security in their communities. Christian family financial counseling, debt management, and other programs appeal to them.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What outreach categories does your church emphasize now?

What outreach categories would be more relevant to this lifestyle segment?

What outreach priorities and tactics should change for the church to bless this segment?

Facility Preferences

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

PROPERTY		TECHNOLOGY		SYMBOLISM	
	Ecclesiastical		Modern	x	Classic Christendom
x	Utilitarian	x	Postmodern		Contemporary Post–Christendom

Experian suggests that *Sports Utilities Families* tend to be conservative and practical. They may consider ornate church properties as a useless extravagance. They often resist hiring an architect when designing church buildings, believing that a simple engineering design for a multi-purpose building will do. Church facilities are often multi-purpose, and the design and construction is similar to schools, community centers, and sports complexes.

Utilitarian facilities often include postmodern technologies. Worship includes computer generated images, flat screens, special effects lighting, and great sound systems. The building is wireless, and classrooms are apt to be equipped with computers and large monitors. Church leaders equip themselves with smart phones and use all the features. Electronic keyboards are standard in the sanctuary, and the stage area often includes a drum set (usually surrounded by an acoustical Plexiglas screen) and microphone stands. Symbols are easily recognized as clearly Christian. They are often portable, and may be designed and created by talented church members.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What renovations and/or upgrades need to be made in our church facility?

What symbols of faith would be most relevant to this lifestyle segment?

If we started another site of ministry for this segment, how should we design it?

Financial Preferences

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

GIVING TARGET		GIVING METHOD	
	Unified Budgets and General Funds		Informed Philanthropy & Pledging
x	Designated Programs & Mission Projects	x	Lifestyle Coaching & Family Financial Planning

Sports Utility Families have a relatively strong sense of wellbeing, but increasingly feel a financial pinch, worry about credit and mortgage debt, and scramble to save for the future. They are not particularly disciplined about budgets. They may participate in lotteries (especially sports lotteries), looking for a small windfall. They appreciate coaching that helps them shape a Christian lifestyle. They may opt to meet as a small group with a Christian "investment counselor" who can help them develop an overall plan that helps them retire debt, save, and give to the church what they would have given in interest payments to the bank.

They tend to prefer designated giving as a means of controlling their charitable donations and ensuring that they don't waste money supporting needless administrative overhead. They prefer a narrative budget that connects every dollar spent with an essential ministry or practical mission result. They shy away from traditional pledging. They give as much as they can, when they can, and may wait until the end of the year to assess their financial state and make a big donation at Christmas.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

What options in giving methods and giving targets do we offer now?

How do we design our annual stewardship campaign(s) now?

How should we revise our financial strategy to be more relevant to this segment?

Communication

Resource: Mosaic E–Handbook by Experian

CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC COMMUNICATION				TRADITIONAL CHURCH COMMUNICATION			
Direct Mail Receptive		Mobile Telephone		Online Computer	Newspaper	Corded Telephone	Verbal Announcements
Email Receptive	x	Broadcast Cable TV	x	Internet Radio	Print	AM/FM Radio	Personal Visits

Sports Utility Families are hard to reach. Television and internet radio are important, but churches usually can't afford advertising spots. They often aren't home to answer a household telephone, and may not notice voice messages. They are easily distracted and often do not listen to verbal announcements. However, they often follow social media. They eventually read printed church newsletters and other mailings. Repetition is important, so send them reminders.

AM radio and cable television are important ways *Sports Utility Families* connect with religion. They may watch religious broadcasting and prioritize television programs that clearly reflect traditional family values. Radio talk shows can have more influence on their thinking about God, family, country, or the world than church preaching.

Note: See the list of definitions at the end of this report to explain key terminology.

Discussion Questions:

How do we communicate among church participants now?

How do we communicate beyond our church to the community now?

How should we adapt communication strategies to be more effective for this segment?

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

POTENTIAL INFLUENCE

Lifestyle Compatibility	Daily behavioral habits overlap with common activities and similar priorities
Family Group	Grouping by key demographic factors like age, income, culture, family status, etc.
Frequent Neighbors	Often live near each other with shared recreational, health, or emergency services

LEADERSHIP

Constant Leaders	Traditional clergy focused on sustaining ministries & increasing members
Organic Leaders	Innovative leaders focused on church growth, new starts & multiplying followers
Extreme Leaders	Non-Institutional leaders focused on spiritual disciplines, high accountability, and pursuing perfection
Caregiver	Focus on visitation, counseling, pastoral prayer
Enabler	Focus on facilitating meetings, lay empowerment, mediation, liturgy
CEO	Focus on staff development, administration, fund raising, expository preaching
Discipler	Focus on seeker sensitivity, adult faith formation, guidance for Christian living
Guru	Focus on religious insight, holistic personal growth, spirituality, enlightenment
Visionary	Focus on big picture, major social change, motivational speaking
Mentor	Focus on self-awareness, individual meaning and purpose, vocational clarity
Pilgrim	Focus on cross-cultural sensitivity, inter-religious dialogue, strict spiritual discipline

HOSPITALITY

The Basics	Friendly untrained greeters, basic coffee and creamer, packaged food or sugary snacks
Multiple Choices	Trained greeters, multiple serving stations, great coffee, varieties of food
Healthy Choices	Trained greeters mirroring lifestyle diversity, healthy food options, allergen alerts
Take-Out	Coffee-to-go, bagged food, exit door hospitality, text message and social media

EDUCATION

Curricular	Printed books or study guides. Passive, intellectual, classroom. Maturity measured by acquired knowledge
Experiential	Activities. More music, images, movement, interaction. Maturity measured by behavior patterns, attitudes.
Biblical	Focuses on the Old and New Testaments. Maturity means Biblical literacy
Topical	Focuses on contemporary issues. Maturity means ethical integrity and enlightened behavior
Generational	Gathers people by age or grade in separate classrooms with age-appropriate resources.
Peer Group	Gathers people sharing affinities or common interests regardless of age.

SMALL GROUPS

Rotated Leaders	Participants take turns hosting and leading the group. Requires limited expertise and training.
Designated Leaders	Single leader guides the group from start to finish. Requires significant maturity and training.
Curriculum	Focus on a book, workbook, or structured program to guide structured discussion
Affinity	Focus on shared interest, enthusiasm, or activity to inspire informal discussion.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS (cont.)

WORSHIP

Educational	Consistent liturgy, expository preaching, focus on doctrine, ethics, and history
Inspirational	Uplifting music, motivational speaking, focus on joy, optimism, and encouragement
Transformational	Spontaneous, expectant, personal transformations, Higher Power interventions
Coaching	Informal, dialogical, topical, practical coaching on how to live better & faithfully
Caregiving	Slow, meditative, family–feel with pastoral prayer, children’s time, senior celebrations
Healing	Quiet, prayerful, expectant of physical, mental, relational healing and hope
Mission–Connectional	Unity of action/reflection, all about outreach, volunteer empowerment

OUTREACH

Survival	Basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, jobs, basic health care
Recovery	Addiction intervention, 12 step support, and counseling services
Health	Mental and physical fitness, disease prevention, rehabilitation, therapy
Quality of Life	Social wellbeing, neighborhood safety, environment, immigration, peacemaking
Human Potential	Personal/vocational fulfillment, education, career help, human rights advocacy
Interpersonal	Intimacy, sexuality, family & marriage counseling, healthy friendships
Human Destiny	Repentance, conversion, witnessing, alignment with God’s purposes

FACILITIES

Ecclesiastical	Facility must “look like a church” with traditional architecture and furnishings
Utilitarian	Facility must be “user–friendly” and multi–purpose for public use
Christendom	Indoor/outdoor symbols associated with church history or denominational identity
Contemporary	Indoor/outdoor symbols from nature, indigenous cultures, alternative spiritualities
Modern	Technology primarily enhances print and oral communication
Postmodern	Technology primarily enhances multi–sensory interaction, internet, social media

FINANCES

Unified Budgets	Stability first. Give to a single general fund to pay staff and manage overhead costs
Designated Giving	Effectiveness first. Give to specific funds or causes by personal preference
Informed Philanthropy	Informed, independent, confidential financial commitments for a tax benefit
Lifestyle Coaching	Individual & household coaching for Christian family financial management

COMMUNICATION

Direct Mail Receptive	Pay attention to mass mailings to postal addresses.
Email Receptive	Pay attention to information delivered digitally to personal email addresses.
Mobile Telephone	Regularly rely on cell phones and smart phones for calling, texting, surfing, banking etc.
Broadcast Cable TV	Regularly rely on cable television for news, advertising, and entertainment.
Online Computer	Regularly go online by personal computer to surf websites, shop, bank, and use other services.
Internet Radio	Regularly subscribe to internet services for music, sports, and topical discussions.
Newspaper	Pay attention to printed newspapers for updates about church news or local, national, global events.
Print	Pay attention to printed church newsletters, bulletin inserts, brochures, and other handouts.
Corded Telephone	Regularly use ordinary telephones to communicate from home.
AM/FM Radio	Regularly use traditional radio to listen to music, commercials, and talk.
Verbal Announcements	Always rely on verbal announcements from the pulpit about church events or items of interest.
Personal Visits	Always expect personal visits at home by a representative of the church to share information.