

Segment S68:

Small Town Sophisticates

Sophisticated, down-scale singles and couples living in modest, exurban small towns

Resource: Mosaic 2021 by Experian.

Religious Experience in a Nutshell

Religious Perspective:

Hoping that prayer works

Spiritual Issues:

Feeling lonely and frustrated, anxieties about guilt and death

Common Church Presence

- Value local church traditions
- Center for socializing & personal support

- Outspoken but generous volunteers
- Lay leadership raises self-esteem

- Social justice advocates
- Church and patriotism go together



Potential Influence

Lifestyle Compatibility	Family Group S <i>Thrifty Habits</i>	Frequent Neighbors
Q65 Mature and Wise N47 Countrified Pragmatics N48 Rural Southern Bliss N49 Touch of Tradition	S68 Small Town Sophisticates S69 Urban Legacies S70 Thrifty Singles S71 Modest Retirees	J35 Rural Escape L43 Homemade Happiness M45 Growing and Expanding Q64 Established in Society

General Comments:

Small Town Sophisticates are religious and patriotic, with conservative social values and parochial attitudes. The church can be a big part of their lives as a center for socializing and personal support; a bulwark against any further deterioration of their lifestyles; and as an advocate for economic and social justice. They are often as active in a veteran’s organization as they are in the church, and they are often willing to volunteer in the community. They tend to be outspoken, but fair, and are willing to take a risk for what they believe is right. They are increasingly worried about encroaching urbanization, and the growing gap between rich and poor.

Small Town Sophisticates live in quiet, deteriorating neighborhoods in small towns and former industrial boomtowns. Their church buildings tend to be older and in poor repair, but they reflect the faded glory of past Christendom. Parts of the building may be rented to social service agencies or simply mothballed. Nevertheless, church attendance is pretty good. They are proud of the friendliness of their church, and of the worship and outreach ministries they can sustain. Lay leadership and office holding raises their self-esteem. Even if there is a disagreement about church policy or practice, they quickly band together in an emergency and can be remarkably generous with their time and talent. They think of the congregation as an extended family.

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 Preferences

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

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

Small Town Sophisticates are loyal members of a church belonging to a traditional denomination (evangelical, mainstream Protestant, or Roman Catholic). Leaders are respectful of local traditions. The pastor or priest is seminary trained and ordained. These days the lack of availability of clergy challenges these churches. Churches are often served by lay or part-time pastors. They are generally open to a leader from another country provided they speak English well. They welcome clergy young or old, beginners or veterans, but leadership should provide strong pastoral care and preserve church harmony. They respect the clergy for what they are as well as who they are. They value Word and Sacrament equally, but it is really the relationships that matter. Clergy are approachable and friendly, with strong “people” skills. They don’t need to be particularly intellectual or innovative, but they should be reliable, persistent, orthodox, and courageous.

Leaders tend to focus on worship, crisis counselling, and outreach, and delegate responsibility for property, fellowship, and fundraising to committees. Younger pastors often focus their energy on local social issues: crime prevention, safety, economic growth, jobs, emergency support, and the necessities of life. Older pastors often focus on counseling, visitation, care giving, fellowship, and networks of personal support. Both streams of ministry are high priorities, but it is hard to find one minister who can do both. Leaders should be good facilitators and empower committees. Although they are expected to be assertive, they also excel at building consensus.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Clergy rely on face-to face communication: simplicity, sincerity, and conviction. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Clergy are “on-call” 24/7 and should keep regular office hours in the church building.

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		

Small Town Sophisticates lead simple, frugal lives. They dress for convenience rather than style. Basic coffee and tea brewed in big steel urns, milk, or cream straight from the cartons, along with fresh donuts or bulk food store desserts, in quantity, are all they really want. Anything fancier seems pretentious. Greeters don’t need special training, but they do need to be extroverted and friendly. They should accept people as they are and communicate optimism and joy. Being a greeter can convey status in the church, so try to rotate people in teams to give the opportunity to as many as possible. The pastor or priest should greet people at the door as they enter. Don’t linger too long at the door when they leave. Mingle with people during the refreshment time.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Conversations continue in-person. Potluck suppers, barbecues, and fellowship dinners help these older singles socialize with friends, assimilate newcomers, and supplement their diets. Churches often have regular monthly dinners as well as celebrations for special occasions.

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
x	Healing Worship				

Small Town Sophisticates prefer “traditional” worship. This usually means worship that is an informal version of whatever is denominationally normative ... adapted to local customs. Many have been members of the same church for a long time, and value continuity and predictability over change and creativity. They often want to blend worship so that there is something for everyone in each service. However, the constant tone and purpose of worship emphasizes caregiving and belonging. The worship design prioritizes informal welcomes, Passing the Peace, personal announcements, and prayers of intercession and supplication. There are frequent moments of silent mediation, and the pace of worship is rather slow. Laity often share leadership on a rotating basis, and they are always thanked for their efforts. The music usually relies on traditional hymns (accompanied by piano or organ), but they are open to variety in special music (including bluegrass, gospel, and folk genres). The sermon exposites the bible or explains doctrine. These people are social conservatives and patriotic. Flags in the sanctuary express their gratitude to a country that preserves religious freedom, and there are memorials for family members lost to war. The major Christian holidays may be times of melancholy for those who are missing spouses, children, comrades from military service, and friends. A “Blue Christmas” service and other special observances are often appreciated. National or public holidays are great celebrations.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Streaming video doesn’t work. It’s too impersonal, too expensive, and encourages a sense of isolation. If there is a health crisis, it is better to gather households into smaller “pods” or groups to combine fellowship and safety. If someone is homebound (age, disability, or illness) they may watch a televised worship service.

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

Small Town Sophisticates are older empty-nesters and their children have moved away. Nevertheless, they like to serve as Sunday school teachers or helpers. These people believe that the youth are the future of the church and are prepared to volunteer their time to organize and facilitate traditional curriculums. The workbooks and printed material may be recycled over the years, but upgraded with fresh ideas for crafts, games, and other activities. The curriculum is usually centered on bible stories from the Old and New Testaments and is generally organized to follow the Christian year. They want to be family friendly and are eager to attract young families. However, this can lead to conflict over curricula or the timing of Sunday school. They may think experiential education strategies lack sufficient depth. They usually prefer to hold classes *before* worship so that the teachers can join the congregation and the children can learn the liturgy. The adults in this segment may also attend Sunday school classes. Some may be led by a senior who is highly respected for spiritual depth and Christian lifestyle. Other classes may rotate leadership by following a book or curriculum with discussion questions and “fill-in-the-blank” answers.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Sunday school is not high tech. Printed books and workbooks are the norm. Classes may use a projector and screen, but not virtual resources. The teachers are more important than the curricula. Teachers must be role models and mentors for the children, and knowledgeable diplomats among adults.

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

Small Town Sophisticates participate in both traditional large gender and generational groups, and in midweek small groups. Large groups are a blend of fellowship and internal service; small groups are for friendship and mutual support rather than spiritual disciplines, but they may have an occasional external service project. Groups are primarily about friendships and mutual support. Some groups will focus on bible study, often using a curriculum or study book recommended by the pastor. Other groups will gather around a shared activity. Crafts, collections, and hobbies, or hunting, fishing, and sports. Finding small group leadership can be a challenge. Individuals may not feel capable or qualified to lead, and basic training and ongoing coaching by the pastor may be necessary. Leadership responsibilities focus on hosting and some coordination. Small groups and Task groups tend to blur together, often to the detriment of both ministries. Small groups often accept responsibilities for fundraising and maintenance but can then become more burden than joy. Conversely, Task groups may become preoccupied with sharing and mutual support and become less efficient and effective.

Lifestyle Connectivity

The small group can be an important means to attract new church members, since these people will feel comfortable to invite friends. Conversations continue in-person through the week, but not through social media.

Outreach Preferences

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

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

Small Town Sophisticates often live in rather dilapidated homes or low-income housing. They sometimes struggle to make ends meet, especially in an emergency, and often worry about quality of life in their neighborhoods. They both support and benefit from social service ministries that provide food, used household items and appliances, winter clothes, coats, gloves, and boots, and financial assistance in emergencies. Churches often create large discretionary funds for the use of the pastor or priest, in addition to providing food banks, clothing depots, and other services. They regard any kind of fellowship gathering as potential outreach because they are intentionally welcoming to visitors. These economically stressed singles are apt to feel lonely and isolated. They welcome large group activities with food, amateur entertainment, bingo, and card games. They can gather around a large screen TV to watch a football or baseball game. They may also gather in support groups for people with disabilities, chronic illnesses, and addictions. “12 Step” groups are common.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They are willing volunteers: doers rather than planners. Outreach is planned by a committee and organized by verbal announcements and telephone calls. Outreach is often undertaken with non-profit or ecumenical partners, and part of the value of a task group is that it is an opportunity to expand friendships.

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

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

Small Town Sophisticates may change addresses occasionally, but generally remain loyal to the same church. In their personal lives, a good truck may be more valuable than a well-maintained house; and in church, a traditional sanctuary, kitchen, and multi-purpose space may be more important than the exterior and landscaping of the building. Their experience growing up in churches may dispose them toward churches with ecclesiastical architectures, but buildings often have various additions in diverse architectures. The interior may seem like a maze. They find comfort and strength in classic Christian images (cross, open bible, praying hands, and bible scenes), and in Christian talismans (rosaries, prayer beads, pocket crosses, and bookmarks). These people place a higher priority on the relevant programming and useful services that can be provided in a church building. They are willing to make radical renovations if it will serve a good purpose. The building is more of a multi-purpose community center or “launching pad” for useful programs than a theological statement.

Lifestyle Connectivity

These people are not technologically savvy, and cannot really afford computers, internet, and fancy video screens in the sanctuary. Basic audio systems and old-fashioned overhead projectors are more common. Offices, parlors, and classrooms are often an eclectic mix of old, recycled furniture and equipment.

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

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

Small Town Sophisticates have low and often intermittent incomes. They maintain the church on a shoestring. They keep expenses down and to keep enough reserve funds to pay the bills for a month or two in case of emergency. They rely heavily on property rentals and denominational subsidies. They may pledge in traditional church stewardship campaigns but top it up at the end of the year. Year-end deficits are common, and usually addressed by rummage sales or other strategy that combines fellowship and fundraising. If they can create a non-profit agency within the church, they will try to obtain grants that partially cover costs for maintenance, utilities, and even personnel. They are unlikely to launch a capital campaign unless necessary, although they will partner with denominations and government agencies to create low-income housing, assisted living apartments, medical clinics, and continuing education space. If there is significant shortfall, they are forced to reduce personnel costs.

Lifestyle Connectivity

Support for the church is expressed in cash donations, in-kind generosity (food, furniture, handicrafts), and personal service. They are unlikely to authorize automatic withdrawals from their accounts. They want to be informed about financial shortfalls and legacies, debts, and liabilities. However, they usually prefer a narrative budget that explains how money is used, rather than a line budget that explains how money is managed.

CommunicationResource: *Mosaic E-Handbook* by Experian

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

Small Town Sophisticates rely on old-fashioned media. They read newspapers cover to cover, read, and reread magazines, and pick up brochures and flyers. They like printed church newsletters that update prayer concerns, coming events, church finances, and mission projects, plus extra information about service agencies and public policy advocacy. To save money for postage, the church often creates a mailbox in the narthex for every member. They like verbal announcements in church (and other fellowship gatherings), supplemented by inserts in the Sunday bulletin or handouts at the door. Oral repetition keeps them mindful of important dates and special concerns, and it also contributes to the atmosphere of personal support and care giving in worship and congregational life. Exterior signs and interior bulletin boards help people keep up with church news, prepare for coming events, and track the progress of missions.

Lifestyle Connectivity

They do listen to the radio and watch television. Denominational religious advertising gets their attention, but they tend to stick with the same stations and the same sources.