



In the Word

When it comes to reading the Bible, 32 percent of Americans say their most significant frustration is they “never have enough time to read it.”

The second biggest frustration?

21 percent of ages 18-27 say, “I don’t feel excited about reading it.”

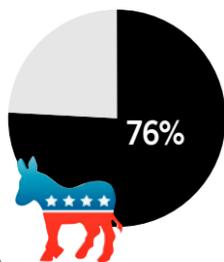
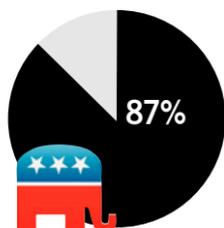
16 percent of ages 28-46 say, “The language is difficult to relate to.”

Source: American Bible Society



Pro abstinence

A majority of Republicans and Democrats are pro abstinence, according to a survey of 1,683 likely voters with children ages 9 to 16 released in October 2012. Eighty-seven percent of Republicans and 76 percent of Democrats support abstinence education, with overwhelming majorities voicing approval of sexual risk avoidance (SRA) education’s major tenets, which, among other things, include:



- encouraging renewed abstinence for the sexually active
- providing contraceptive information within an abstinence context
- providing information on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- informing students of the limitations of condoms
- alerting them to the emotional consequences of sex

Source: National Abstinence Education Foundation

Life Interrupted

Amid a sluggish economic recovery, both the number of unemployed persons (12.1 million) and the unemployment rate (7.9 percent) showed little movement in 2012. Almost half of the current unemployed have been without jobs for 27 weeks or more – some for multiple years. While churches across the nation have felt the effects of layoffs, many are finding ways to help those in their congregations. Here are four ways to help the unemployed in your church:

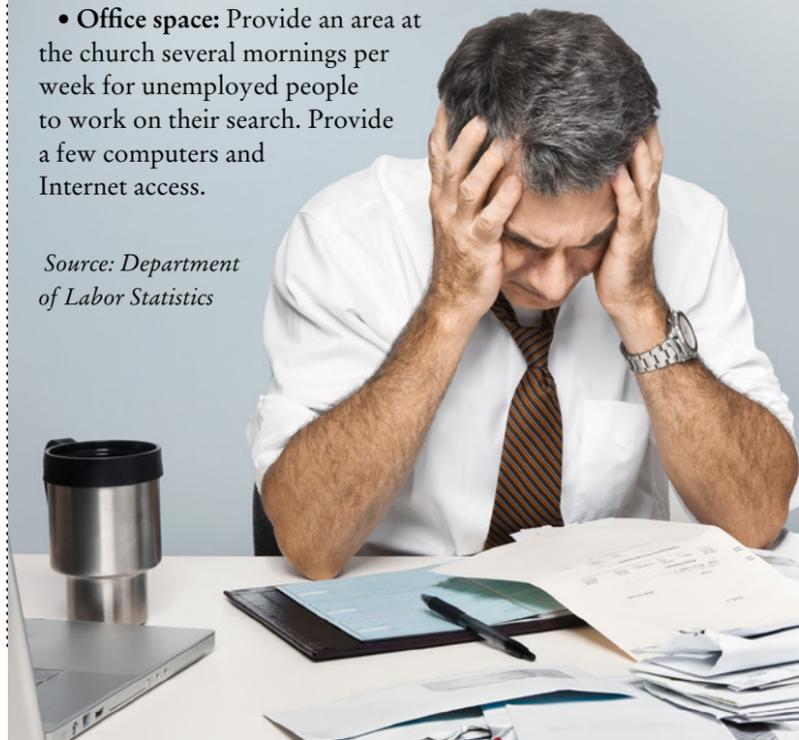
- **Networking:** Sponsor a monthly breakfast or lunch for jobseekers and business leaders in your church. Invite a speaker to give a brief presentation on leadership skills, organizational tactics or team building. Or start a new small group or prayer group especially for jobseekers. Recruit unemployed individuals to lead the ministry to the unemployed.

- **New skills:** Workers released from long-held positions may need a refresher course on job hunting. Invite a career counselor to teach resume writing, online job-hunting and interviewing skills. Offer financial training to families who now are living on a tighter budget.

- **Counseling:** For many, career and job performance is linked to self worth. Those who have been out of work for a long period of time may begin to suffer from self-doubt in areas of their personal lives often leading to severe depression. Consider bringing in a professional counselor to serve your church for limited hours during the week or on weekends.

- **Office space:** Provide an area at the church several mornings per week for unemployed people to work on their search. Provide a few computers and Internet access.

Source: Department of Labor Statistics



QUOTABLES

The church in America has become like a bear fed by tourists, Ed Stetzer said, because of so-called seekers willing to return to church to recapture their childhood religious memories.

“What happens when you feed the bear is eventually it can’t fend for itself,” he said. “I think the people of the church have to learn to fend for themselves by going out and proclaiming the gospel, not counting on a really cool church to preach the gospel for them.”

– Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research

“You know you’re on mission when it gets messy... The gospel is so powerful you can be in the middle of the mess and still be different. That’s how powerful the Gospel is.”

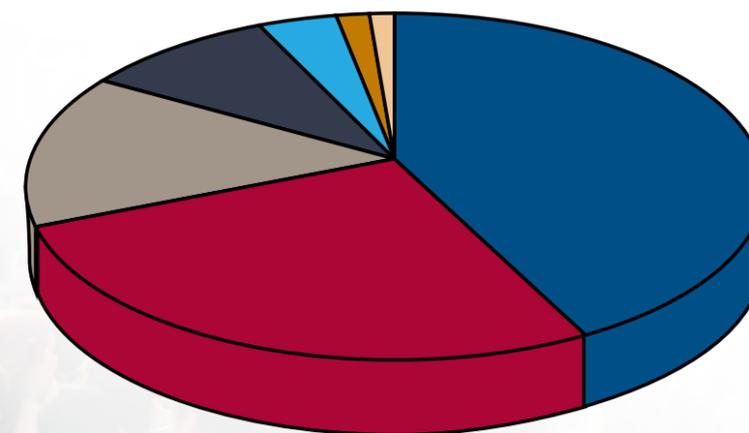
– Jeff Vanderstelt, pastor with Soma Communities, speaking at the Verge Conference



Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths

As the number of Asian Americans rises in the U.S. (now 18.2 million), they contribute to the diversity of the religions landscape. While they have been largely responsible for the growth of Buddhism and Hinduism in the nation, most Asian Americans belong to the country’s two largest religious groups: Christians and those who say they have no religious affiliation.

Percentage of Asian American adults who say they are ...



- Christian 42%
- Unaffiliated 26%
- Buddhist 14%
- Hindu 10%
- Muslim 4%
- Other 2%
- Sikh 1%

Source: Pew Research



Suburbs becoming more diverse

The U.S. is rapidly becoming more diverse says a new demographic study by Brown University. While big cities traditionally have been the nation's melting pots, today it is smaller cities and suburbs that are on the front lines of changing demographics and culture.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau figures, 44 percent of suburban residents live in a diverse community, defined as places that are 20-60 percent nonwhite – up from 38 percent in 2000.

The booming Hispanic and Asian populations are driving today's demographic changes. Hispanics, at 50.5 million, now account for 1 in 6 Americans and constitute the biggest minority group in the nation. Asians account for 6 percent of the total U.S. population.

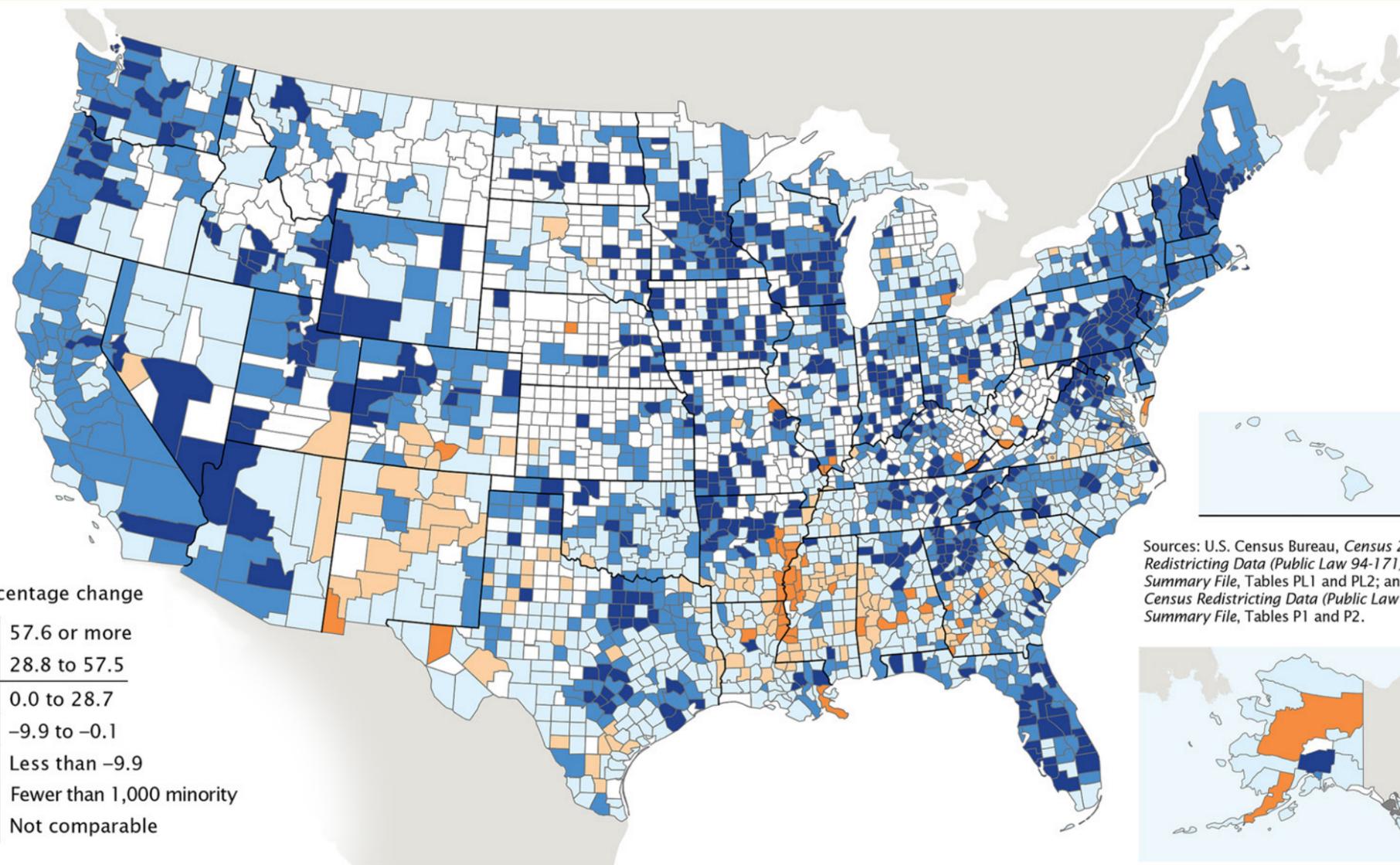
A perfectly diverse city or town would have a population with exactly 20 percent of each category, and would get a diversity score of 100 on the diversity scale.

In 2010, the most diverse metropolitan area in the country was Vallejo, Calif., north of San Francisco. It had a score of 89.3 and the population was 41 percent white, 24 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Asian, 14 percent black and 6 percent other.

Source: Wall Street Journal and U.S. 2010 Project, Brown University

Percentage Change in Minority Population by County: 2000 to 2010

(Counties with a minority population of at least 1,000 are included in the map. Minority refers to people who reported their ethnicity and race as something other than non-Hispanic White alone in the decennial census. For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/pl94-171.pdf)



Highest church attendance Sundays

1. Easter
2. Christmas
3. Mother's Day

Source: LifeWay Research

Increase in Islam

The number of Islamic houses of worship in the U.S. has increased significantly in the past decade. The nation saw a 74 percent increase in the number of mosques from 2000 to 2010, bringing the number from 1,209 to 2,106. With the religious landscape of the United States steadily changing, consider how your church can best reach out to those of other religions living in your community.

Source: USA Today, February 29, 2012

The generous South

Religion plays a major role in how much money Americans give to charity, according to a study by The Chronicle of Philanthropy. The parts of the country that give the highest percent of their discretionary income to charity are also the most religious. Seven out of the top 10 giving states are in the Bible Belt:

Source: The Chronicle of Philanthropy

