

Group J: Autumn Years

Established and mature couples living gratified lifestyles in older homes

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

- Church is an oasis in a stressful world
- Local church loyalty
- Committed to faith formation of grandchildren
- Predictable, traditional worship
- Face-to-face fellowship central to church life
- More open minded than boomer children think



Potential Influence

1 st Tier Group Compatibility	Family Group J <i>Autumn Years</i>	2 nd Tier Group Compatibilities
E Thriving Boomers L Blue Sky Boomers Q Golden Year Guardians	J34 Suburban Sophisticates J35 Rural Escape J36 Settled and Sensible	C Booming with Confidence H Bourgeois Melting Pot S Thrifty Habits

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

General Comments:

Autumn Years includes some of the nation’s oldest lifestyle segments. Now over 65, many of these people led the church growth movements of the 1950’s and 1960’s. Their new housing developments encouraged denominations to add neighborhood churches on quiet side streets under the assumption that families would walk to church, and their growing families encouraged denominations to build Christian education wings.

The segments in this group have chosen to retire in the same houses where they raised their children. They have sunk deep roots in tightly knit communities; supported local clubs, veterans’ groups, and retail stores. They also remain brand loyal to their churches. They attend worship regularly, except for vacations. If they disagree with church policy or do not like the clergy, they may drop out of worship, but still maintain their membership and participate in their large or small group. Children and grandchildren may or may not participate in the church as adults but accompany their parents and grandparents to worship on religious holy days and civic holidays.

Autumn Years are not particularly adventurous and dislike innovation and change. They have deep faith in God's plan to redeem the world and turn to religion for strength in times of trouble. They generally refer to the church as "my church" and feel a strong sense of ownership for its programs, buildings, and technologies. Many would be surprised to discover that the denomination owns the assets, not the local trustees. The facility itself has great symbolic power. It is filled with memories of a growing family and deepening friendships. Memorial funds are important to people in this group, and they may consider leaving bequests to the church. It is difficult for them to make major renovations or technology upgrades to either the sanctuary or the education wings, even though diminishing membership may force the church to mothball a floor of the Sunday school or rent space to outsiders.

The repetition of the Christian Year and the predictability of weekly worship are important for segments in this group. The Common Lectionary as a preaching tool was introduced in the 60's to support their worship expectations, and they appreciate the sense of salvation history that links Old and New Testament history with their life journeys.

Autumn Years are feeling their age. Their faith is now motivated by anxieties over aging, increasing loneliness, and dread for the future. They are increasingly concerned about healthcare and end-of-life planning. They may be caring for spouses or grieving for those who have died. They often feel that culture is passing them by and that they are forgotten by their children. Their loneliness makes fellowship and a sense of belonging in the church even more important. They yearn to experience the God's presence as a promise keeper, rescuer, and gatherer. Indeed, a prominent stained-glass window in many churches is an image of the Good Shepherd.

The durable metaphor of the church as a "rock" of reliability may be a common attitude toward religion. They may sing "*Rock of Ages*" and admire Peter as the patriarchal "rock" of the church (Matthew 16:18). They see the church in general - and their local church in particular - as faithful to the teachings of Jesus and a solid foundation for life during upheavals and changes in society. Things are good the way they are. Why change?

They often seem old fashioned yet have remarkably open minds. Baby boomer church people often claim to represent their opinions in church debates but are often assuaging their guilt about not visiting their parents. In the end, *Autumn Years* are usually more open and less controlling than their children think. They are proud of their independence and expect the church to improve accessibility and audio or visual technologies. They are curious about scripture and willing to experiment in worship if it will attract the youth. They often think of the youth as the future of the church and may look to their grandchildren to become that future.

Autumn Years tend to be conservative, at least in their social values, and have a strong sense of family tradition. They are often puzzled and disappointed that their children are not as active in the church as they are. They explore their ancestry and collect memorabilia, and they want to pass on their values system and general sense of optimism to their grandchildren. They tend to be quite philanthropically minded. Some segments are more affluent than others, and some are better able to donate time and talent than money, but they will be generous toward the operations of a church. They give to a variety of causes, and particularly support mission to help children and families, protect safety and fight crime, preserve the environment, improve health and quality of life, and advocate moral public policies. Their sense of entitlement regarding their church also gives them a sense of responsibility towards people who are disadvantaged or abused.

The church facilitates quality relationships. It is a center for socializing, and many of their friendships involve mutual service and personal support in the programs of the church. They assume the church will be active in community affairs and represent their interests in government, healthcare, education, and legal sectors. Fellowship is emphasized through good food and sit-down dinners; large groups for women and men, singles, and couples; and small affinity groups related to hobbies and crafts.

People in these groups have traditionally trusted clergy and denominational officials to make wise and faithful decisions, but increasingly lack of trust is the biggest barrier to visioning. Churches must work harder to build clarity and consensus over core values (positive, predictable Christian behavior) and bedrock beliefs (foundational convictions people turn to for strength in times of trouble). Accountability is increasingly important for paid and unpaid leaders. *Autumn Years* generally believe that most disagreements can be resolved by a "town meeting". Strategic planning should start with a survey of membership opinions and personal priorities, and only then move on to identify needs and opportunities in the community. When trust is high, their churches can accomplish remarkable things.