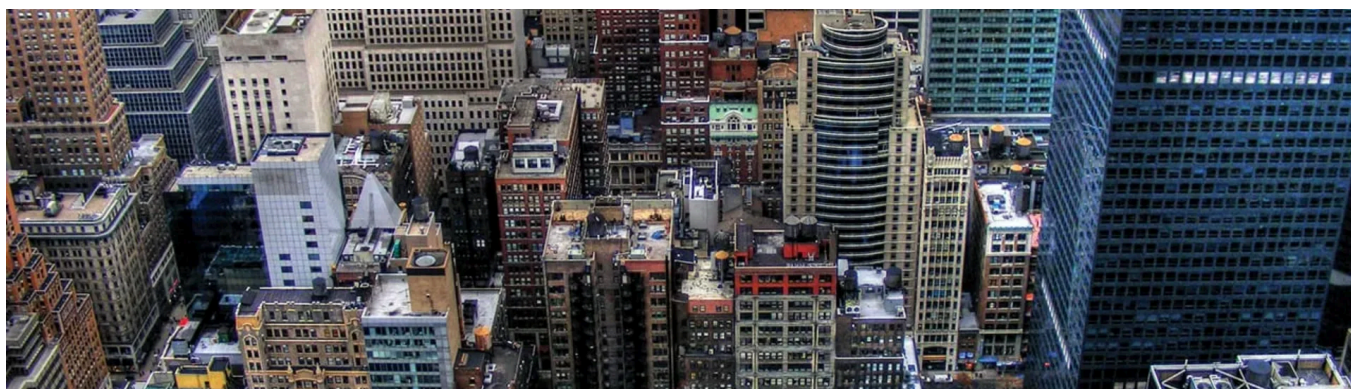


Church Culture May 1, 2016 From the Archives

Churchless Cities: Where Does Your City Rank?

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Churched and unchurched adults are not evenly distributed across the country—attendance varies widely from city to city and region to region. Many cities outpace the overall U.S. population when it comes to church avoidance. Barna’s latest report ranks the nation’s largest cities by unchurched population. Barna’s latest report ranks the nation’s largest cities by unchurched population.

The U.S. has a reputation for being exceptionally religious—and it is true that, historically speaking, churchgoing has played an outsized role in American identity. Still, millions of Americans have little to no connection to local congregations.

Currently, about four in 10 U.S. adults qualify as “unchurched” under Barna’s definition (38%). Unchurched adults have not attended a church service, except for a holiday or special occasion, at any time within the past six months.

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For example, the San Francisco metro area tops the list of America's most churchless cities: Six in 10 Bay Area residents meet the Barna definition of unchurched (61%). A full list of the nation's largest metro media markets is shown below, ranked by unchurched population.

Barna tracks not only overall churchlessness, but also what proportion of unchurched adults are “dechurched”—that is, who used to attend regularly but have not attended at all in the past six months—and what proportion are “never churched”—meaning they have never in their lives regularly attended a church. Among the general U.S. population, 29% are considered dechurched and 9% are never churched, for a combined total of 38% unchurched. (For a deeper dive into the substantial differences between these two groups, read ***Churchless*** by George Barna and David Kinnaman.)



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While San Francisco is number one overall when it comes to churchless residents, it ranks sixth on the never-churched list (14%), outpaced by:

1. West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce, FL (17%)
2. Santa Barbara-Santa Maria-San Luis Obispo, CA (16%)
3. New York, NY (15%)

4. Harlingen-Weslaco-Brownsville-McAllen, TX (15%)
5. Chico-Redding, CA (15%)

However, the California Bay Area takes the top spot when it comes to dechurched adults (48%), ahead of:

2. Seattle-Tacoma, WA (44%)
3. Portland-Auburn, ME (43%)
4. Boston-Manchester, MA (42%)
5. Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY (41%)

AMERICA'S TOP CHURCHLESS CITIES

	%		%
1. SAN FRANCISCO / OAKLAND / SAN JOSE, CA	61	60. JACKSONVILLE, FL	34
2. BURLINGTON / PLATTSBURGH, VT	55	61. FRESNO / VISALIA, CA	34
3. BOSTON, MA / MANCHESTER, NH	53	62. RICHMOND / PETERSBURG, VA	34
4. PORTLAND / AUBURN, ME	52	63. TYLER / LONGVIEW / LUFKIN-NACOGDOCHES, TX	34
5. CHICO / REDDING, CA	52	64. LANSING, MI	34
6. LAS VEGAS, NV	51	65. ATLANTA, GA	33
7. SEATTLE / TACOMA, WA	50	66. HOUSTON, TX	33
8. ALBANY / SCHENECTADY / TROY, NY	50	67. BALTIMORE, MD	33
9. PHOENIX / PRESCOTT, AZ	49	68. WILKES BARRE / SCRANTON, PA	33
10. NEW YORK, NY	48	69. FT. WAYNE, IN	33
11. WEST PALM BEACH / FORT PIERCE, FL	48	70. MOBILE, AL / PENSACOLA / FORT WALTON, FL	32
12. TUCSON / SIERRA VISTA, AZ	48	71. CHARLESTON / HUNTINGTON, WV	32
13. PORTLAND, OR	46	72. MADISON, WI	32
14. LOS ANGELES, CA	45	73. YAKIMA / PASCO / RICHLAND / KENNEWICK, WA	32
15. PHILADELPHIA, PA	45	74. INDIANAPOLIS, IN	31
16. HARTFORD / NEW HAVEN, CT	45	75. OKLAHOMA CITY, OK	31
17. FLINT, MI	45	76. TULSA, OK	31
18. DENVER, CO	44	77. GREENVILLE / NEW BERN / WASHINGTON, NC	31
19. SACRAMENTO / STOCKTON / MODESTO, CA	44	78. DALLAS / FORT WORTH, TX	30
20. PROVIDENCE, RI / NEW BEDFORD, MA	44	79. ROANOKE / LYNCHBURG, VA	30
21. SANTA BARBARA / SANTA MARIA SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA	44	80. PADUCAH, KY / CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO / HARRISBURG, IL / MT VERNON, IL	30
22. ORLANDO / DAYTONA BEACH / MELBOURNE, FL	43	81. TRI-CITIES, TN-VA	30
23. SPOKANE, WA	43	82. SAN ANTONIO, TX	29
24. ROCHESTER, NY	43	83. NORFOLK / PORTSMOUTH / NEWPORT NEWS, VA	29
25. BUFFALO, NY	42	84. KNOXVILLE, TN	29
26. FORT MYERS / NAPLES, FL	42	85. JOHNSTOWN / ALTOONA / STATE COLLEGE, PA	29
27. DAVENPORT, IA / ROCK ISLAND / MOLINE, IL	42	86. SALT LAKE CITY, UT	28
28. BOISE, ID	42	87. CINCINNATI, OH	28
29. WAUSAU / RHINELANDER, WI	42	88. MEMPHIS, TN	28
30. TOLEDO, OH	40	89. CHARLESTON, SC	28
31. SYRACUSE, NY	40	90. SOUTH BEND / ELKHART, IN	28
32. CHICAGO, IL	39	91. LOUISVILLE, KY	27
33. DETROIT, MI	39	92. LITTLE ROCK / PINE BLUFF, AR	27
34. TAMPA / ST. PETERSBURG / SARASOTA, FL	39	93. WACO / TEMPLE / BRYAN, TX	27
35. MIAMI / FT. LAUDERDALE, FL	39	94. EVANSVILLE, IN	27
36. SAN DIEGO, CA	39		

37. BAKERSFIELD, CA	39	95. TALLAHASSEE / THOMASVILLE, FL	27
38. CLEVELAND / AKRON / CANTON, OH	38	96. LEXINGTON, KY	26
39. PITTSBURGH, PA	38	97. COLUMBIA, SC	26
40. DES MOINES-AMES, IA	38	98. MYRTLE BEACH / FLORENCE, SC	26
41. HARLINGEN / WESLACO / MCALLEN / BROWNSVILLE, TX	38	99. LINCOLN / HASTINGS / KEARNEY, NE	26
42. EL PASO, TX	38	100. RALEIGH / DURHAM / FAYETTEVILLE, NC	25
43. FORT SMITH / FAYETTEVILLE / SPRINGDALE-ROGERS, AR	38	101. GREEN BAY / APPLETON, WI	25
44. WASHINGTON, DC / HAGERSTOWN, MD	37	102. SPRINGFIELD, MO	25
45. ST. LOUIS, MO	36	103. MACON, GA	25
46. GRAND RAPIDS, MI	36	104. NEW ORLEANS, LA	24
47. ALBUQUERQUE / SANTA FE, NM	36	105. JACKSON, MS	24
48. CORPUS CHRISTI, TX	36	106. CHARLOTTE, NC	23
49. COLUMBUS, OH	35	107. BIRMINGHAM / ANNISTON / TUSCALOOSA, AL	23
50. AUSTIN, TX	35	108. GREENSBORO / HIGH POINT / WINSTON SALEM, NC	23
51. DAYTON, OH	35	109. WICHITA / HUTCHINSON / DODGE CITY / SALINA, KS	23
52. OMAHA, NE	35	110. MONTGOMERY / SELMA, AL	23
53. CHAMPAIGN / SPRINGFIELD / DECATUR, IL	35	111. BATON ROUGE, LA	22
54. COLORADO SPRINGS / PUEBLO, CO	35	112. HUNTSVILLE / DECATUR / FLORENCE, AL	21
55. CEDAR RAPIDS / WATERLOO, IA	35	113. SHREVEPORT, LA	21
56. MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL, MN	34	114. NASHVILLE, TN	20
57. KANSAS CITY, KS-MO	34	115. GREENVILLE / SPARTANBURG / ANDERSON, SC-ASHEVILLE, NC	20
58. MILWAUKEE, WI	34	116. CHATTANOOGA, TN	19
59. HARRISBURG / LANCASTER / LEBANON / YORK, PA	34	117. AUGUSTA, GA / AIKEN, SC	13

The data reported in this table are based upon telephone and online interviews with nationwide random samples of 62,896 adults conducted over a ten year period, ending in August 2014. The maximum margin of sampling error associated with the aggregate sample is ± 0.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Respondents who say they have not attended church within the past six months are classified as "Churchless."

The data were analyzed by DMA. The label "DMA" stands for Designated Market Area and represents a unique geographic area that also serves as a commonly accepted media market as defined by The Nielsen Company. DMAs have been configured so that the entire U.S. is assigned to one – and only one – of 210 DMAs in the country and are based on the television viewing habits of the residents in each county. While there are 210 DMAs, this table contains data for just 117 of them. Those are the areas in which we had a sufficient number of completed surveys with people from a given market (a minimum of 150 or more).

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About the Research

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Since 1984, Barna Group has conducted more than two million interviews over the course of thousands of studies and has become a go-to source for insights about faith, culture, leadership, vocation and generations. Barna is a private, non-partisan, for-profit organization.

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