

MISSIONAL INSIGHTS

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Missional Resources for Making a Difference

In the coming decade all of us will be called upon to make a difference in transitioning congregations and transforming communities.

The ASBOM has partnered with IICM to make a number of research reports available to Alabama Southern Baptists at a nominal cost.

1. **MISSIONVIEW** – a report for churches to view their church and their community.
2. **MISSIONSITE** – a report for associations and church planters to identify church planting locations.
3. **MISSIONCRAFT** – a report “power point” for associations to understand their missional situation.

Links to order forms will be available through the ASBOM website.

In partnership with the:



Transforming Communities

Over the last decades, Alabama communities have dramatically changed: culturally, spiritually as well as demographically. Today, the buckle of the “Bible Belt” is dotted with 20 Mosques, 3 Hindu Temples, 14 Buddhist Centers, 1 Confucius Institute, 16 Jewish Synagogues, 1 Sikh Temple and 49 Wicca / Pagan groups.

Ninety-two different languages are spoken at home in Alabama. While many of these groups are small in number, the largest language groups include: Spanish, German, French, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic, Japanese, Italian, Tagalog, Hindi, and Greek.

Across the state of Alabama six very different social environments may be found. Each social environment produces its own cultural context, cultural practices and cultural values. Each social environment

faces different spiritual issues, fosters very different lifestyles, creates unique social enclaves, and produces unique ministry settings. In order to see our communities transformed by the gospel, we will need to bring the gospel to bear upon these social environments. Community transformation begins with four key actions on our part:

- Identifying the social & cultural dynamics of each community.
- Creating customized ministry approaches that addresses the lifeworlds & spiritual issues that are embedded in the community.
- Embodying a biblical faith community whose identity is based on our relationship to God and one another through Jesus Christ.
- Demonstrating God's love and compassion to those who are in need around us.



With over 64% of the state unreached, Alabama Baptists are becoming *Difference Makers* in their communities and their congregations.

Evangelical believers have become a minority voice in our communities across the state. However, by God's grace, Alabama Baptists can be used by God to see real community transformation occur through the power of the gospel.

Transitioning Congregations

Someone once said that Southern Baptists have been very successful at reaching those who are like them, but the problem today is that the number of people who are “like us” is shrinking. This appears to be true not only nationally but here in Alabama. From 2003-2007, only 8.59% of the Alabama population worshiped in an ASBOM church on Sunday. If we are going to reach Alabama for Christ, congregations will need to make significant transitions in the years ahead.

Churches will need to make transitions to reach various types of ethnic, lifestyle, lifestage, and socio-religious groups. This means that churches will need to develop contextual ministries (1 Cor 9:21-24) – culturally appropriate for

the groups they are trying to reach. The days of a “one size fits all” approach are over.

Churches will need to transition to equipping lay missionaries to reach out to different types of people (Eph 4:11-16). Based on the missional roles that God has given them, lay missionaries will need to be trained in culturally appropriate methods to: start new ministries and congregations, present the gospel in ways that specific groups can understand and respond, nurture new believers in the faith, train believers to become ministry and missional leaders, and understand community and congregational cultures.

Churches will need to transition from church growth to church multiplication. Church growth was all about “growing your church” by adding programs, buildings and budgets. Church multiplication comes through the multiplication of spirit-led lay leaders (1 Tim 2:2). Through multiplying lay leadership, growing churches will multiply ministries, plateauing churches will become revitalized, declining churches will arrest their inertia, and new churches will be started.

The 21st century signals significant cultural shifts lay ahead. Today all churches need to rise to meet the challenge.



The northern region of Alabama is known for its high tech corridor centered in Huntsville.

EVANGELSCAPE™ Estimates

Unreached	61.07%
Religious Not Evang.	14.59%
Spiritual Not Religious	8.47%
Not Interested	38.08%
Active Evangelical	25.98%
Inactive Evangelical	12.91%
SBC Resident Members	19.69%
SBC Worship Attendance	10.11%

Northern Alabama Region

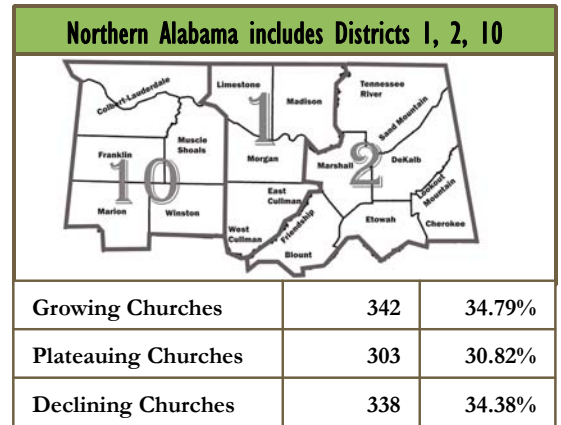
Northern Alabama is the mountains region of the state that provides one spellbinding landscape after another. It's laden with shimmering lakes, waterfalls, caverns and tree-crested mountaintops. Residents and tourists enjoy a myriad of outdoor activities or visit historic attractions in cities like Florence, Gadsden, Huntsville, Madison, Decatur and Cullman.

Penetrating Lostness. In this region nine hundred eighty three ASBOM churches in nineteen associations have the opportunity to share the gospel with 760,242 people in the Northern Alabama Region who have not been reached yet.

Reaching Lifestyle Groups. The rural history of this region continues in the Country Communities of one third of its population. Nearly 20% of Northern Alabama households are considered "Hinterland Families" -- lower middle income, blue collar, rural families. Urban Communities include struggling societies that make up nearly 15% of the households -- primarily African-American single and single parent households in struggling city centers. On the fringe of metro areas are Working Communities where a third group that represents another 15% of the region's households may be found. Here "Steadfast Conservatives", a group of diverse, empty-nest homeowner couples, live in working class neighborhoods. Custom approaches are needed to reach each group in culturally appropriate ways.

Reaching Language Groups. The northern region has an estimated 31,112 Spanish language speakers over the age of 5. Rounding out the top three language groups are the following non-English languages: German speakers (4,023) and French (2,828).

Top Church Planting Locations. After a careful evaluation of the active SBC and evangelical presence within a three mile radius of the center of each of the 271 census tracts within the region, seventeen locations have been identified.



The north central region of Alabama is known for its urban centers like Birmingham.

EVANGELSCAPE™ Estimates

Unreached	65.89%
Religious Not Evang.	18.73%
Spiritual Not Religious	8.72%
Not Interested	38.85%
Active Evangelical	22.79%
Inactive Evangelical	11.34%
SBC Resident Members	33.21%
SBC Worship Attendance	8.96%

North Central Alabama Region

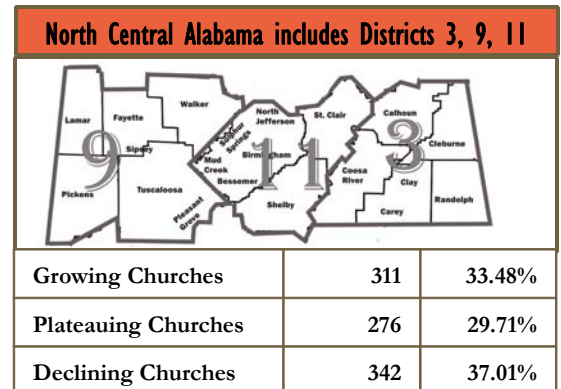
North Central Alabama is a diverse slice of the state. You'll find speed at Talladega Superspeedway, big-city living in Greater Birmingham, peaches like no others in Chilton County, the roar of water rushing over Noccalula Falls and M-Class cars easing along assembly lines at the Mercedes plant in Vance. Attractions, activities and events await residents and tourists in places like Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, and Anniston.

Penetrating Lostness. However, in this region of the state 841,840 people have not yet been reached with the saving power of the gospel. This is the shared task of nine hundred twenty nine ASBOM churches in twenty associations.

Reaching Lifestyle Groups. The dominant lifestyle groups in North Central Alabama are similar to those that populate northern Alabama. However here Country Communities are home to more than 35% of the population with more than 25% of the households considered "Hinterland Families." Nearly 25% of the region's households appear in Urban Communities -- and half of these are in "Struggling City Centers" -- a group the SBC usually does not reach well. Diverse, empty-nest couple homeowners, the "Steadfast Conservatives" in working class neighborhoods, represent nearly 13% of this region's households. Lay missionaries will be needed to effectively reach out to these groups.

Reaching Language Groups. The top three groups of language speakers over the age of 5 in the north central region include: 24,461 Spanish speakers, 4,440 French speakers, and 4,229 German speakers.

Top Church Planting Locations. After a careful evaluation of the active SBC and evangelical presence within a three mile radius of the center of each of the 325 census tracts within the region, fifty one locations have been identified.



South Central Alabama Region

The South Central Region is home to much of Alabama's Black Belt, part of the larger Black Belt Region of the Southern United States, which stretches from Texas to Maryland. The term referred originally to the region underlain by a thin layer of rich, black topsoil. However, today descendants of freed slaves make up the largest proportion of the population in most Black Belt counties. Thus, the term "Black Belt" is understood both as a demographic characterization as much as a geologic one. Urban centers in this region include: Alexander City, Auburn, Demopolis, Montgomery, Opelika, Phenix City and Selma.

Penetrating Lostness. Five hundred twenty seven ABSOM churches and sixteen associations dot the South Central Region landscape with the mission of penetrating the lostness of 480,651 people who are unreached.

Reaching Lifestyle Groups. In the south central region the number of households in Urban Communities is more than double any other group. The black mid-city families in the "African American Neighborhoods" and the black singles and single parents of "Struggling City Centers" together represent 20% of the households in this region. Country Communities, led by "Hinterland Families," represents less than 17% of households. The empty-nest homeowner couples of "Steadfast Conservatives" in metro fringe areas are less than 12% of the region. Each represents a unique missional challenge to reach them effectively.

Reaching Language Groups. The top three groups of language speakers over the age of 5 in the south central region include: 13,639 Spanish speakers, 2,248 French, and 2,061 German speakers.

Top Church Planting Locations. After a careful evaluation of the active SBC and evangelical presence within a three mile radius of the center of each of the 221 census tracts within the region, forty five locations for new church plants have been identified.



The south central region of Alabama is known for its rich soil and African-American heritage.

South Central Alabama includes Districts 4, 8, 12

Growing Churches	151	28.65%
Plateauing Churches	172	32.64%
Declining Churches	204	38.71%

EVANGELSCAPE™ Estimates

Unreached	66.15%
Religious Not Evang.	20.62%
Spiritual Not Religious	8.41%
Not Interested	37.76%
Active Evangelical	22.59%
Inactive Evangelical	11.20%
SBC Resident Members	14.31%
SBC Worship Attendance	6.93%

Southeastern Alabama Region

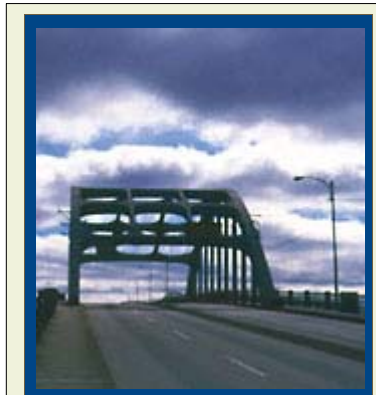
Southeastern Alabama is the "River Heritage Region" of the state. The history and beauty of this area of Alabama is a must-see for residents & tourists alike. Highlights include the recreation areas near Andalusia, the ferry at the Alabama river near Camden, the home of George Washington Carver in Dothan, and the aviation monuments and museums in Enterprise and Fort Rucker. Urban centers in this region include: Camden, Dothan, Eufaula, Enterprise, Greenville, Ozark, Troy and Union Springs.

Penetrating Lostness. Reaching the 490,289 people in southeastern Alabama who are unreached is the mission of the four hundred seventy four ASBOM churches and their sixteen associations in this region.

Reaching Lifestyle Groups. Southeastern Alabama shifts away from rural lifestyles to a mixture of Urban Communities, Upscale Communities, and established, small town, "Mainstay Communities." African-American families are predominate in more than 30% of this region's households – mostly appearing in Urban Communities. With nearly 10% of the region's households appearing in "Prime Middle America" neighborhoods, this region becomes a haven for Anglo dual-income couples with no children at home. Together with the empty-nest couples in "Steadfast Conservative" neighborhoods, more than 20% of the region's households are childless couples. Each of these groups need to be more effectively reached.

Reaching Language Groups. The top three groups of language speakers over the age of 5 in the southeastern region include: 12,575 Spanish; 2,768 German, and 2,132 French speakers.

Top Church Planting Locations. After a careful evaluation of the active SBC and evangelical presence within a three mile radius of the center of each of the 134 census tracts within the region, four locations for new church plants have been identified.



The river heritage region of southeastern Alabama is known for its rivers and bridges.

Southeastern Alabama includes Districts 5, 6

Growing Churches	147	31.01%
Plateauing Churches	139	29.32%
Declining Churches	188	39.66%

EVANGELSCAPE™ Estimates

Unreached	62.24%
Religious Not Evang.	17.53%
Spiritual Not Religious	8.29%
Not Interested	36.86%
Active Evangelical	25.38%
Inactive Evangelical	12.63%
SBC Resident Members	20.75%
SBC Worship Attendance	10.42%



The gulf coast of Alabama is known for its world class beaches.

EVANGELSCAPE™ Estimates

Unreached	66.01%
Religious Not Evang.	19.44%
Spiritual Not Religious	8.66%
Not Interested	38.42%
Active Evangelical	22.73%
Inactive Evangelical	11.34%
SBC Resident Members	14.02%
SBC Worship Attendance	5.71%

Gulf Coast Alabama Region

The Gulf Coast Region's most famous attractions are the sugar-white sandy beaches of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach. In addition to the world-class beaches, you'll find the Old Courthouse Museum in Monroeville, Dauphin Island's Historic Fort Gaines and Fort Morgan and the USS Alabama in Mobile. The metro Mobile area dominates the population centers of this region.

Penetrating Lostness. In this region of the state 434,794 people have not yet been reached with the saving power of the gospel. This is the shared task of two hundred seventy three ASBOM churches in five associations.

Reaching Lifestyle Groups. The top two lifestyle groups in the gulf coast region are evenly split between Urban Communities and Country Communities – about 30% of the households in each type. While nearly 17% of households are rural “*Hinterland Families*,” another 14% of households are African-American singles and single parents who live in “*Struggling City Centers*.” Empty-nest homeowner couples in the “*Steadfast Conservative*” neighborhoods represent

7% of the region's households. “Minority Metro Communities” represent an additional 7% of predominantly African-American households with higher levels of education than some of the other neighborhoods. The gulf coast region provides a diverse mission field needing special attention to developing culturally appropriate, indigenous congregations.

Reaching Language Groups. The top three groups of language speakers over the age of 5 in the gulf coast region include: 11,064 Spanish speakers, 2,424 German, and 2,369 French speakers.

Top Church Planting Locations. After a careful evaluation of the active SBC and evangelical presence within a three mile radius of the center of each of the 153 census tracts within the region, forty five locations for new church plants have been identified.

Gulf Coast Alabama includes District 7



Growing Churches	94	34.43%
Plateauing Churches	68	24.91%
Declining Churches	111	40.66%



We conduct research and produce publications, tools and training for ministry decision makers that enables evangelical churches, denominations, mission agencies and para-church organizations to integrate missiological principles in their proclamation of the gospel and in their ministry practices so that they minister more effectively interculturally among the peoples within their own sociocultural context.

To order additional *Missional Insights* and request other information contact:

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Notes

- (1). **Research Reports:** These research reports are compiled by the staff of IICM and are made available to you at a reduced rate on behalf of ASBOM. For more info, please see MissionalContext.org.
- (2). **Lifestyle Groups:** The names of lifestyle social groups and enclaves are based on the MOSAIC segmentation of Experian. For definitions please go to: MissionalCyclopedia.org.
- (3). **Social Environments:** The six social environments in Alabama include Upscale, Mainstay (established), Working, Country, Aspiring, and Urban Communities. For definitions and explanations about the cultures of these six social environments please go to: MissionalCyclopedia.org.
- (4). **Missional Roles:** To better identify your missional role, please take the APEPT Missional survey, based on Ephesians 4:11, at: APEPT.org.
- (5). **Growing, Plateauing, Declining Churches:** Growing churches are those who have an average increase in resident membership, worship attendance, and Sunday school attendance more than 10% from 2003-2007; declining churches are those who have an average decrease in these three areas by more than 10% from 2003-2007; and plateauing churches are those whose average in the three areas are between +10% and -10% during the years 2003-2007.
- (6). **Top Church Planting Locations:** these locations are based on a 3 mile ring around the center of each census tract in the state which, because of the density of population need additional churches in order to attain one Southern Baptist church for each 2000 households in the 3 mile ring.
- (7). **Evangeliscope™ Estimates:** The Evangeliscope is an IICM dataset based on the cross-referencing of survey data from Simmons Market Research Bureau, church attendance from the Glenmary study, data from TheAmericanChurch.org, and ACP data from the Alabama State Board of Missions.

Additional Resources

- (1). **Mapping Your Mission:** You can map more than 200 demographic, lifestyle, and church variables to help you understand your mission field by subscribing to: MissionalCulturescape.org.
- (2). **Networking Your Mission:** You can network with others in Alabama and across the US and see additional information about your Zip Code by being part of the Missional Corp – a unique group of people dedicated to reach their communities: MissionalCorps.org.
- (3). **Identifying Community Lifestyle Groups:** You can obtain a Mission Insights Catalogue about a specific lifestyle group in your zip code at: MissionalZipCode.org (coming soon).