



**Helping Churches Grow.**

## **FAITH PERCEPTIONS CHURCH INDEX**

*Date: June 1, 2013*

### **About the Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Program:**

The Mystery Guest Program helps church leaders better understand what a first-time guest thinks and feels when attending a church service. A person who returns is obviously available and usually willing to tell you why they returned. Guests who do not return deny church leaders the opportunity to learn why they didn't come back and if by chance they are asked, they might not be as forthcoming with the answer for fear of offending. Faith Perceptions can tell you why someone would (or would not) return to your church.

The Mystery Guest Program provides these valuable insights both to individual churches and groups of churches organized in a conference, circuit, presbytery, diocese, district, etc. We work with churches throughout the United States and across all denominations. At this writing, we have evaluated 2,538 worship services and have approximately 6,500 mystery guests across 49 states.

A church participating in the Mystery Guest Program will have multiple services attended by our mystery guests with each service attended by a different individual. Our mystery guests are typically “unchurched” - a term we use to describe people who do not have a home church that they regularly attend. Each mystery guest rates their experience as a first time guest in great detail with both numerical scores and written feedback. Once the study is complete, we provide our clients with a comprehensive written report that can be used to better understand what each guest perceived. That information, in turn, helps churches craft a better experience for future guests resulting in growth and retention.

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## **About the Faith Perceptions Church Index:**

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Between early 2008 and June 1, 2013 Faith Perceptions' mystery guests have surveyed 2,538 separate and unique church services using identical questions and criteria. This index is a compilation of all those visits and is designed for church leaders who seek to better understand how their own church compares both to churches of similar size and our overall national averages. An individual church will likely find that they compare favorably in some categories and unfavorably in others. All numbers are on a 10-point scale with 10 being the most favorable score.

In addition to this index, we also publish an Annual Findings Report which provides tremendous detail in the comparing and contrasting of the type of worship service, time of day, and day of the week. It also shows how responses vary by mystery guests' age, gender, belief system, upbringing, etc.

Each category is explained on page 4 and a glossary of terms used in this report can be found on page 7.

## **Our Methodology:**

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We send primarily "unchurched" mystery guests to church services with a different person at each service. A person cannot attend the same church more than once in a six month period as a part of our program. We find mystery guests by advertising in a church's local market and pay \$45 for each completed survey. Individuals log on to FaithPerceptions.com and apply to become a mystery guest. If their application is approved, we send them a username and password to the site where they can apply for services we have available. Faith Perceptions screens each visit application to ensure that we are sending a wide variety of individuals from a demographic perspective.

After attending a church service, each guest completes a survey online at FaithPerceptions.com describing their experience and perceptions both on a 10-point scale and in writing. They also submit their bulletin as proof of having attended the service. Once the contracted visits have been completed, we compile the results into a detailed report and discuss the results with our client. We suggest that only a few church leaders are aware of the study because observed people behave differently. We want to examine "church as usual." We also generally suggest a follow up study to determine whether suggested areas for improvement have been implemented successfully and to ensure that there were no unintended consequences related to any changes made. Some churches opt to send mystery guests year-round so they can compare and contrast different times of the year.

## **Our Categories:**

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Faith Perceptions measures 16 different categories that are important to churches:

1. **DIRECTIONS:** Rates the community awareness of the church.
2. **SIGNAGE:** Rates the effectiveness of church signage.
3. **PRE-SERVICE GREETING:** Rates the mystery guest's welcoming by the official greeters or ushers.
4. **PRE-SERVICE ATMOSPHERE:** Rates how the congregation and/or pastor interacts with the mystery guest and each other before the service begins.
5. **SEATING:** Rates the seating options and arrangement.
6. **MUSIC:** Rates the overall music of the service.
7. **IN-SERVICE GREETING:** Rates the greeting by the congregation and/or pastor of the church during the service.
8. **SERMON:** Rates the delivery of the main message. It does not address theology or whether the mystery guest agrees or disagrees with the content of the sermon.
9. **SPEAKER:** Rates the public speaking skills of the person leading the service including any video, props, images, etc.
10. **POST-SERVICE ATMOSPHERE:** Rates how the congregation and/or pastor interacts with the mystery guest and each other when the service is concluded.
11. **CONNECT-RESOURCES:** Rates the availability, clarity, and thoroughness of the church's website, pamphlets, and other printed literature.
12. **FRIENDLINESS:** Rates the friendliness of church.
13. **CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES:** Rates the overall impression of the children's ministry.
14. **DIVERSITY:** Rates how diverse the church is and how it connects with its community with respect to age, socioeconomic status, gender, and various ethnicities that live in the area.
15. **RETURN:** Mystery guests indicate whether or not they would return to this church for a second visit based on this initial experience.
16. **OVERALL EXPERIENCE:** Mystery guests summarize the experience as a whole and may also provide suggestions or feedback on anything not covered by other categories.

## **Consolidated Index Statistics as of June 1, 2013 (includes numerical ratings for all churches measured to date)**

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2,538 unique mystery guest visits

251 churches included

Average weekly attendance per church is 336

61% of mystery guests were female; 39% male

61% of services were traditional; 31% contemporary; 8% blended

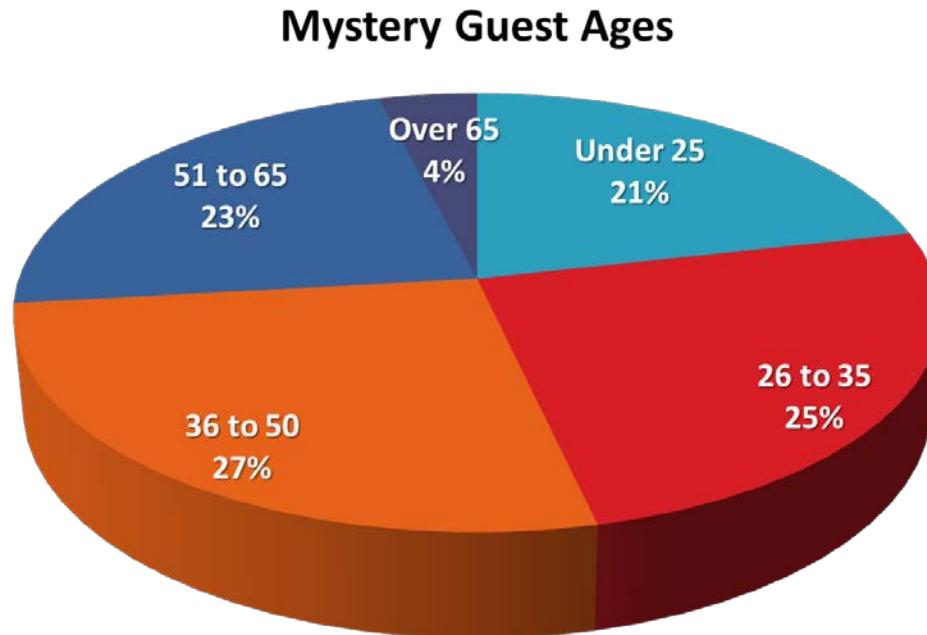
96% of mystery guests believe in God or some higher power

24% of mystery guests do not identify with any formal denomination

23% of mystery guests were not raised with any formal denomination

78% of mystery guests were “unchurched”

Average age of mystery guests is 40 and 73% are age 50 or under



# FAITH PERCEPTIONS CHURCH INDEX

As of June 1, 2013

TOTAL US AVERAGES: CONSOLIDATED AND BY CHURCH SIZE (JUNE 2008 – MAY 2013)							
Index Category	Consolidated	Micro	Small	Medium	Large	XL	Mega
Church Size (Attendance)	All Sizes	0 – 80	81 – 150	151 – 300	301 – 500	501 – 1,000	1,000+
Number of Churches	251	23	82	71	40	22	13
Number of Unique Visits	2,538	160	744	730	446	319	139
Directions <i>(Community Awareness)</i>	6.65	6.59	6.62	6.75	6.66	6.37	6.90 ★
Signage	7.22	6.72	7.10	7.38 ★	7.35	7.28	7.12
Pre-Service Greeting <i>(Greeting Upon Arrival)</i>	7.80	8.09 ★	7.97	7.78	7.64	7.71	7.32
Pre-Service Atmosphere	7.28	7.51	7.62 ★	7.26	7.11	6.92	6.66
Seating	7.82	7.53	7.80	7.79	7.81	7.92	8.18 ★
Music	7.02	6.43	6.86	7.03	7.04	7.37	7.67 ★
In-Service Greeting	7.29	7.06	7.61 ★	7.34	7.29	6.94	6.43
Sermon <i>(Message)</i>	7.45	6.97	7.30	7.52	7.41	7.69	8.07 ★
Speaker	7.60	7.13	7.46	7.57	7.65	7.84	8.32 ★
Post-Service Atmosphere	6.99	7.70 ★	7.51	7.17	6.73	6.18	5.10
Connect-Resources <i>(Information)</i>	7.52	6.34	7.27	7.41	7.84	8.23 ★	8.17
Friendliness	7.69	8.07	8.12 ★	7.75	7.52	7.09	6.56
Children's Ministries <i>(Children's/Youth)</i>	6.51	5.51	6.33	6.48	6.47	7.28 ★	7.07
Diversity* <i>(Diversity and Outreach)</i>	6.29	6.31	6.27	6.36	6.01	6.36	8.38 ★
Return	6.85	6.11	6.76	7.00 ★	6.90	6.96	6.96
Overall Experience	7.15	6.94	7.13	7.15	7.20	7.27 ★	7.20
All Category Performance	7.23	6.94	7.23	7.23	7.16	7.21	7.26 ★

## Color Legend:

All numbers are on a 10 point scale where 1 is the least favorable score and 10 is the most. A blue star indicates the best score in each category.

<6.50	6.51 – 7.00	7.01 – 7.50	7.51 – 8.00	>8.00
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good

★ = Best in Category

Source: Faith Perceptions Mystery Guest Surveys from June 2008 through May 2013. Includes 2,538 unique mystery guest visits. Category names in parenthesis reflect new category names implemented in 2013. \*Diversity tracked starting in June 2012.

## **Our Terminology:**

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- **Client:** An individual person, church or church governing body who hires Faith Perceptions to implement the Mystery Guest Program.
- **Faith Perceptions Annual Findings Report:** A highly detailed document that provides much more information and insight than the Index.
- **Faith Perceptions Index:** A document that provides a way for churches to compare their scores against the scores of all other churches measured and against churches of like size.
- **Mystery Guest:** A person, generally unchurched, who has signed up to visit churches through the Faith Perceptions program. They do not identify themselves as mystery guests when they visit a church.
- **Regular Attendance:** Attending any one church more than twice a month.
- **Unchurched:** A person who does not have a home church that they attend regularly. This person may or may not believe in God.

## **Learn More:**

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Faith Perceptions can help YOUR church find out how it compares to the numbers in this Index. When you use the Mystery Guest Program, you will gain valuable insight that guides your church to being a more welcoming place for people searching for a church. Contact us today to learn more.



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## Annual Findings Report



## ANNUAL FINDINGS REPORT

As you were reading this Church Index, did you wonder how Sunday services compared with Saturday services? What about how the mystery guests' religious beliefs may have impacted how they rate a certain category? Our **Annual Findings Report** provides much more detail about the numbers provided in this Church Index. It provides insights that can only be found through Faith Perceptions, the largest firm of its kind in the United States. The **Annual Findings Report** (to be published in July 2013) compares and contrasts:

- Types of services (traditional, contemporary, and blended)
- Services held at different times of the day
- Services held on different days of the week
- How mystery guests of different ages rate services
- How mystery guests of different genders rate services.
- Differences in ratings between those who believe in God (or a higher power) and those who don't.
- How a mystery guest's faith background plays a role in how they perceive services

**Investment:** \$79.00



Contact Faith Perceptions today to access information in the Annual Findings Report that will help you better understand the first-time guest experience.