

**THE STATE OF THE EVANGELICAL  
CHURCH IN GUATEMALA 2001**



**PRELIMINARY  
REPORT**

Sepal



History

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History and Purpose

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.” — Joshua 1:6

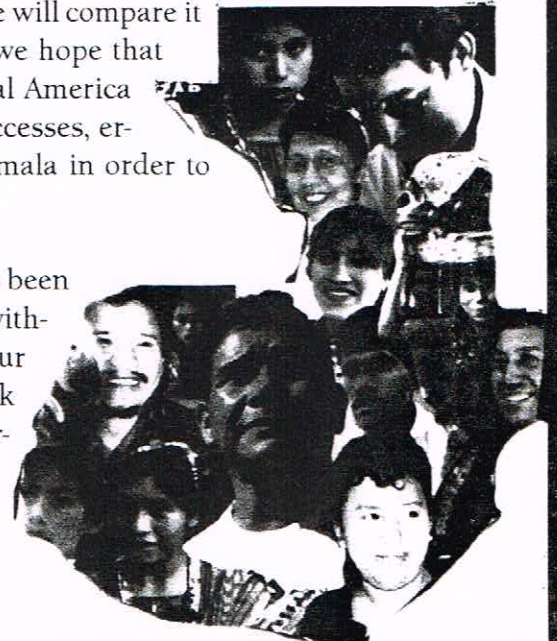
The Evangelical Church has seen tremendous growth in Guatemala since the end of the 70s. In the late 1970's just under 18% percent of the population was evangelical, but in 1989, close to 30 percent of the population was reported to be evangelical. We are hearing today many conflicting reports about the magnitude and the health of the church. Some groups claim that the Evangelical Church makes up 50% of the population and others say as much as 90%. Many of these reports have been based on unrealistic guesses.

We know that there have been great victories for the Church in the past, but today we must prepare the Church so that it can continue growing and positively affect today's society. Because of that, Equipo SEPAL (OC International in Latin America), with the backing and cooperation of the Alianza Evangélica de Guatemala (Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala) created the "Joshua Project", which we present today with satisfaction and thanksgiving.

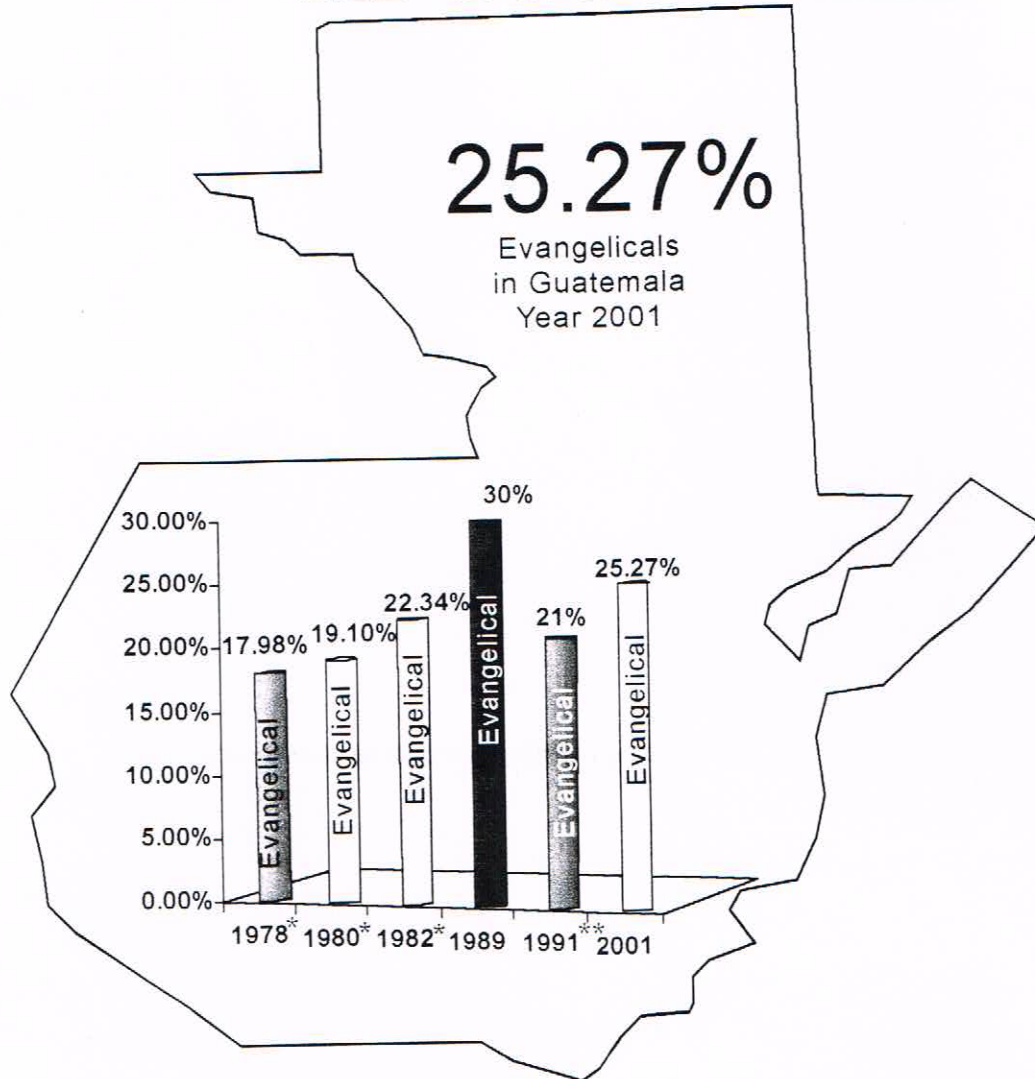
The purpose of this study is to learn about the actual state of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala, what we have learned from the successes of the past and what we can build on from there. In addition, we hope to learn about the weaknesses of the Church, in order to take further action to help correct those deficiencies. What we will learn is the concentration and location of the greatest segments of unreached people, where the gospel has not gone, and the level and effectiveness of training and discipling within the Church. We will determine if the Church is experiencing attrition and its causes. We will understand the level of missions and evangelism within each denomination. We will measure the level of literacy in the general population and we will compare it with the evangelical population. Additionally, we hope that this study will be useful for churches in Central America and Mexico, so that they can learn from the successes, errors and other factors of the Church in Guatemala in order to accelerate missions in Latin America.

The "Joshua Project" is very complete and has been carefully controlled. The results are reported without interpretations and with total objectivity. Our desire is that the Church use this research to look at itself and rejoice in its victories and give priority to the areas that need more attention.

PROYECTO  
JOSUÉ



# What is the reality of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala?



25.27%

Evangelicals  
in Guatemala  
Year 2001

The reality is that through the years the percentage of evangelicals has not grown as many people argue. However, today we can say that in our country there are more evangelical Christians than in any other Latin American country. For that reason, we are responsible to raise up the weak and to take the message to areas still in darkness. There is still much work to be done...

**T**HE REALITY IS that today one out of every four Guatemalans is an evangelical. May God be given the glory! However, pastors and church leaders, your job is not done... Gary Lengkeek, C.A.R.T. Director

\*History of the Evangelical Church in Guatemala, Page 191 - By Virgilio Zapata. Publisher: ServiPress of Central America 1982

\*\*Survey results by Ross Rohde September 21, 1992 - SEPAL.



**Gary Lengkeek**  
**C.A.R.T. Director**

# Pastors and Church leaders...

*--By Gary Lengkeek--*

**I** WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE you on a job well done. You have blessed God in your faithfulness to evangelize Guatemala. Today, one out of every four people living in Guatemala is an evangelical. The last time that Equipo SEPAL did an extensive survey to determine the percentage of those saying they were evangelicals was in the early '90's. At that time, about one out of every five people living in Guatemala said they were an evangelical. May God be given the glory!

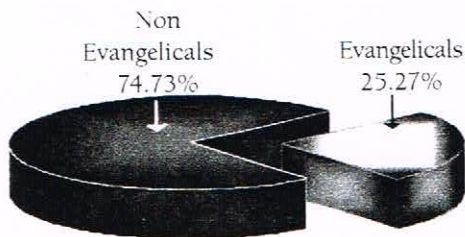
Pastors and church leaders, your job is not done. What can be done with the regiment of believers this large in evangelizing the remaining seventy-five percent of people living in Guatemala? Can this large group of believers be mobilized to evangelize their families, friends, communities and country? If there is one very real challenge still facing you as pastors and church leaders, it is the preparing of your people to finish the task which you have ably begun.

There are more or less 18,000 evangelical churches located here in Guatemala, which means there is one evangelical church for about every 670 people. That means there is one evangelical church for about every two or three square blocks in the larger cities in Guatemala. How many formally Bible trained leaders are there in Guatemala at this time? There are Bible institutes, schools, training programs, etc. in the larger cities but how are the men and women living in rural areas being enabled? How strong can their churches be if the leader have not received sufficient Bible training to stand against an animistic belief system ?

For the past two decades, you have been a part of a church planting movement. For the past two decades, you have had evangelistic campaign after evangelistic campaign. I have heard it said the Guatemala evangelical church is very wide (big) but not at all deep.

If you have not done so already, it is time for you to take on the responsibility of preparing a regiment of trained men and women to fight in this spiritual battle which is ongoing here in Guatemala. Please do not pass on that responsibility to others to do. Discipleship should be central in all that you do in your church. Discipleship is what Christ practiced, what Paul practiced and what we all are to be practicing. Please encourage your pastor and church leader friends to focus more on the mandate of making disciples

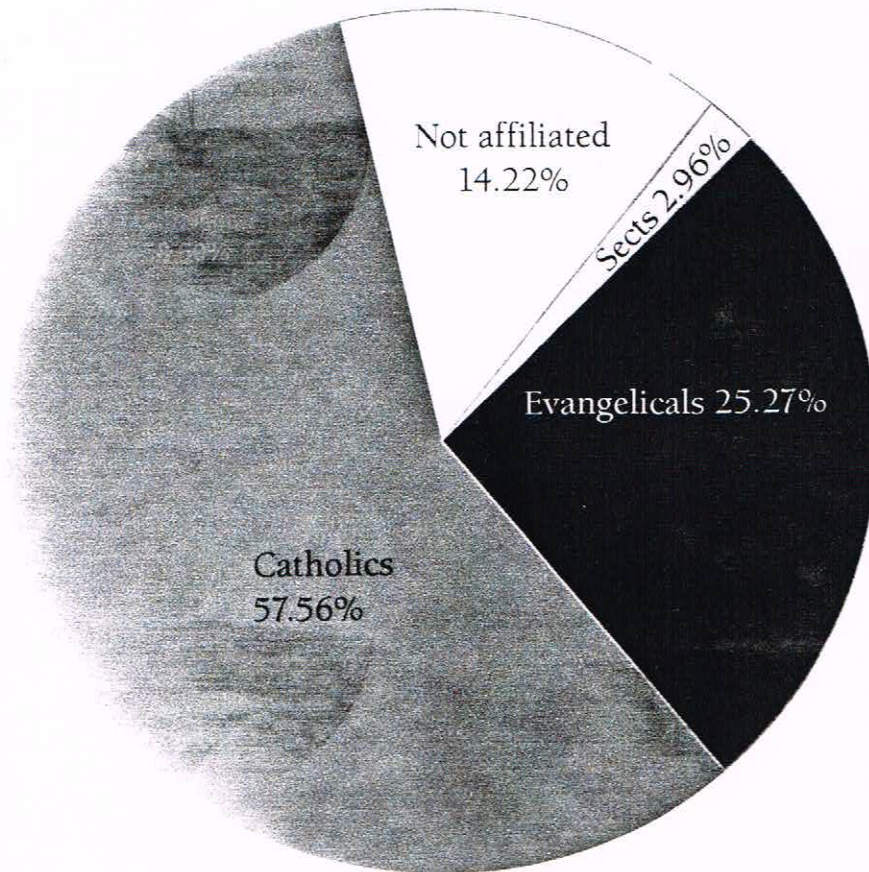
Pastors and church leaders, thank you very much for your participation in this special time today. May it be a blessed and encouraging time for each one of you. May God go with you and bless you.



*... A quarter of the people living in Guatemala identify themselves as evangelicals and there are more or less 18,000 evangelical churches, which means there is one evangelical church for about every 670 people.*



# Percentage of Religions in Guatemala



**T**HE REALITY IS THAT as evangelicals we must intercede before God for those that do not have a personal relationship with Him...

## "MAY ALL BE ONE"

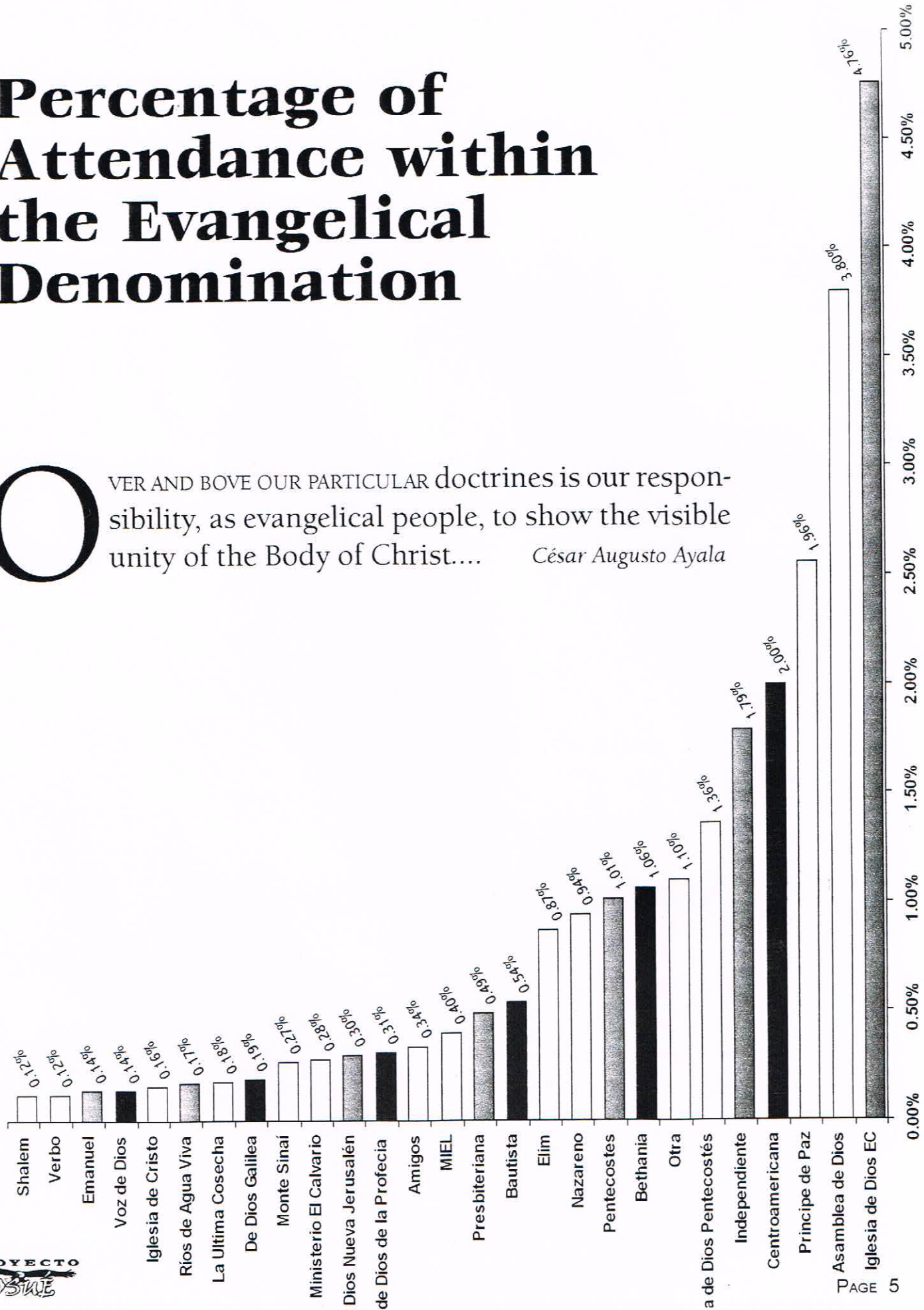
By César Augusto Ayala  
Asst. secretary of Evangelical Alliance of Guatemala and Superintendent with the Nazarene Church

Today is when the unity of the evangelical people in Guatemala must be manifested. Nevertheless, sometimes we forget the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He said: "...That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You: that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent ME... that they may be one just as We are one." (John 17:20-22). The same faith and the same Lord, our Lord Jesus, unites us.

Over and above our particular doctrines is our responsibility, as evangelical people, to show the visible unity of the Body of Christ, expressed in service, justice and love. That together, as one, we can intercede before God for all those who do not have a personal relationship with Him. We have to remember that the doctrines that unite us are greater than the doctrines that separate us. It is necessary that we be tolerant, patient and understanding with one another. That was Jesus prayer. He desires that we be perfect in unity, so that Guatemala and the whole world may know that Christ was sent by God. In Jesus we can have "UNITY IN THE MIDDLE OF DIVERSITY."

# Percentage of Attendance within the Evangelical Denomination

OVER AND ABOVE OUR PARTICULAR doctrines is our responsibility, as evangelical people, to show the visible unity of the Body of Christ.... *César Augusto Ayala*



# General report and regionalization...

--By Roger Grossmann--



Roger Grossmann  
"Proyecto Josué"

"... Although much of the country claims to be evangelical, there are still substantial population groups which are under-evangelized"

**A**S A RESULT OF THE nation-wide study, we have found that much of Guatemala enjoys a high population level of evangelicals with a nation-wide average of 25.3%. The interior of the country has a slightly higher percentage of evangelicals than the Capital, with 27.3% and 25.0% respectively. Although much of the country claims to be evangelical, there are still substantial population groups which are under-evangelized in large areas in northern Huehuetenango (10%-14% evangelical), parts of the Department of Guatemala (12%) and much of the eastern part of the country, particularly the Departments of Chiquimula (11%), El Progreso and much of Zacapa. There is a definite discrepancy between the levels of evangelicals in the *Ladino* and Indigenous populations living in the same proximity. Further, we are concerned that the high level of syncretism in many parts of the country is beginning to compromise the growth rate of Christianity as well as her vitality.

Guatemala is divided into eight regions by the government using cultural and geographic affinities. In the next pages we'll look at each region, and as we study them will help to gain a clearer picture of the state of the church as well as forgotten population groups. Listed below are the regions with their respective departments and the current population. The regionalization of Guatemala is based upon INGUAT. All population figures are based upon the Guatemalan National Institute of Statistics and upon their year 2000 projections.









## Regions of Guatemala

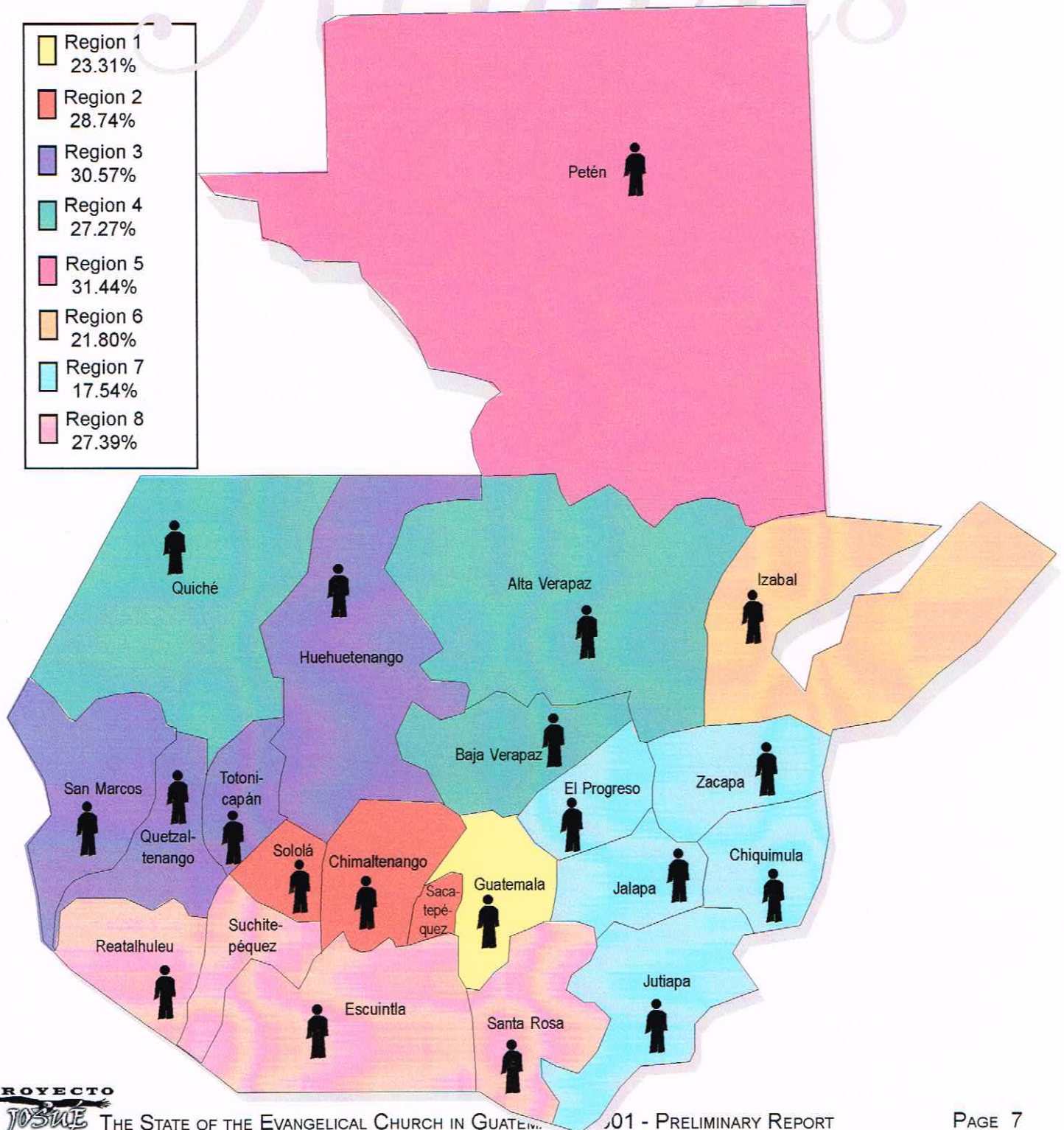


Region	Dept	Population
1	Guatemala	2,578,527
2	Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez, Sololá	994,657
3	Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, San Marcos, Huehuetenango	2,764,026
4	Quiché, Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz	1,606,564
5	Petén	333,390
6	Izabal	333,955
7	Jutiapa, Jalapa, Chiquimula, Zacapa, El Progreso	1,325,105
8	Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Santa Rosa, Retalhuleu	1,449,113
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,385,337</b>

# Percentage of evangelicals by Region

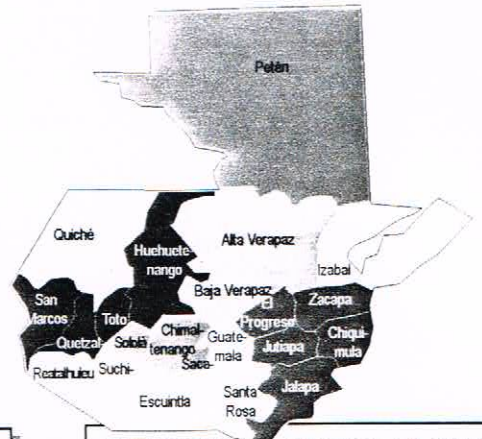
**R**egion number 1 is made up of Guatemala City. Region 2, Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez y Sololá. Region 3, Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, San Marcos y Huehuetenango. Region 4, Quiché, Alta Verapaz y Baja Verapaz. Region 5 the Department of Petén. Region 6 Izabal. Region 7, Jutiapa, Jalapa, Chiquimula, Zacapa y El Progreso. Region 8 is made up of Escuintla, Suchitepéquez, Santa Rosa y Retalhuleu.

	Region 1 23.31%
	Region 2 28.74%
	Region 3 30.57%
	Region 4 27.27%
	Region 5 31.44%
	Region 6 21.80%
	Region 7 17.54%
	Region 8 27.39%



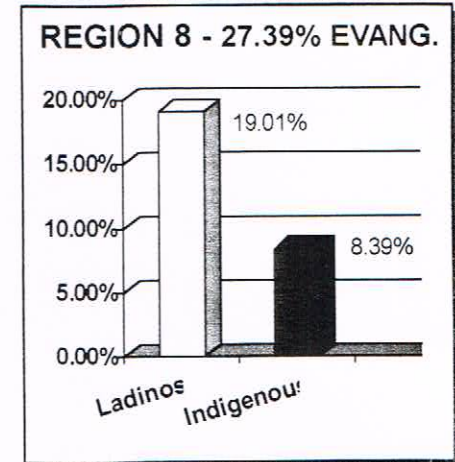
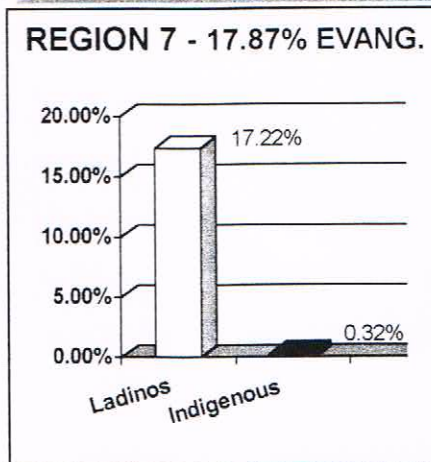
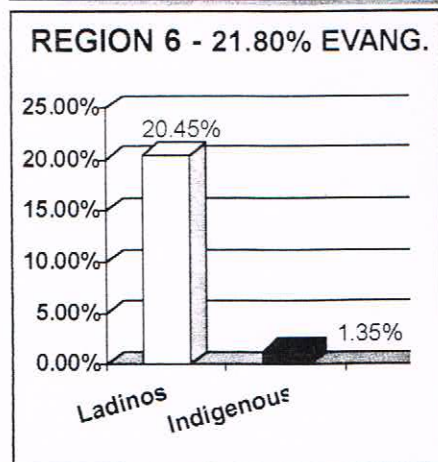
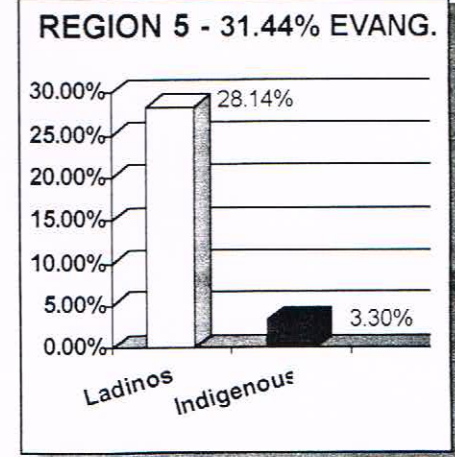
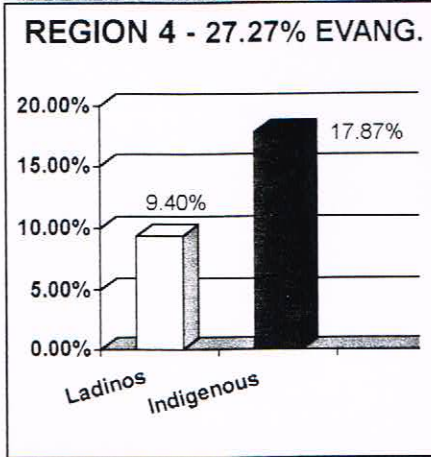
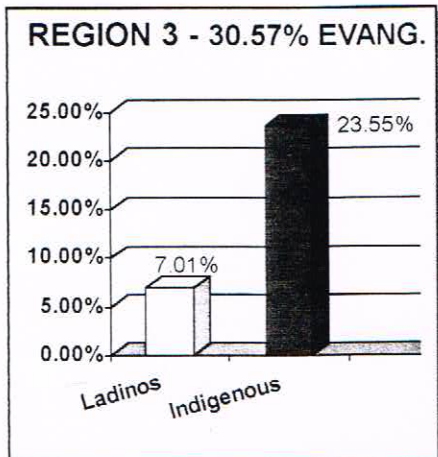
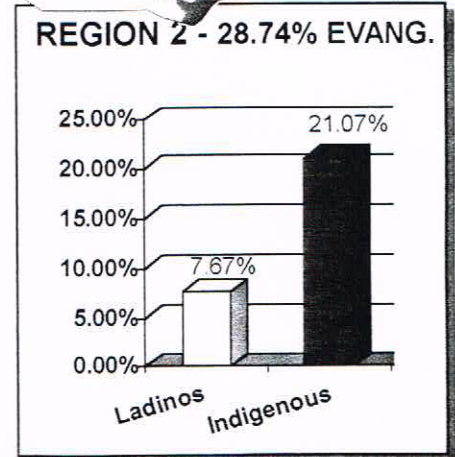
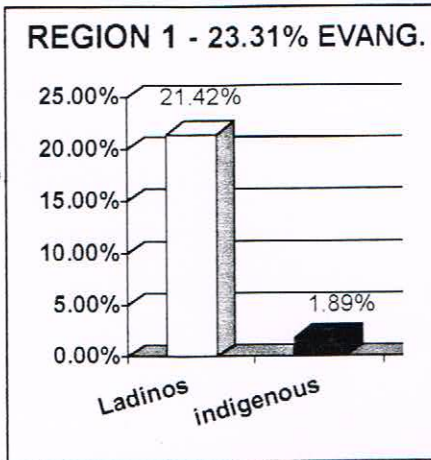


# Comparisons of the Evangelical Population racially And regionally\*



## LIST OF REGIONS

- Region 1- City Guatemala.
- Region 2- Chimaltenango, Sacatepéquez y Sololá.
- Region 3- Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán, San Marcos y Huehuetenango
- Region 4- Quiché, Alta Verapaz y Baja Verapaz.
- Region 5- Petén
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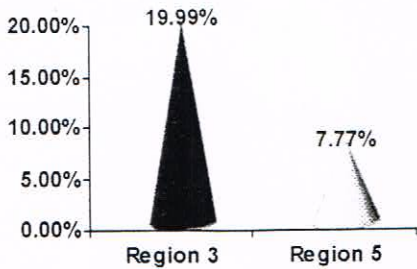


**PROYECTO JOSUA** \*The % of Ladinos plus the % of Indigenous is the total of evangelicals in each region.  
 THE STATE OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN GUATEMALA - 2001 - PRELIMINARY REPORT

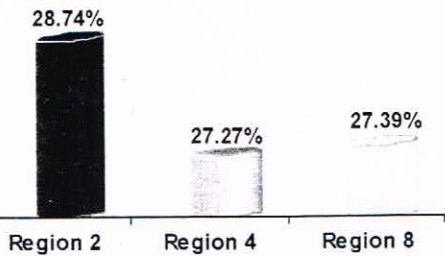
# The General Evangelical Picture...

--By Roger Grossmann--

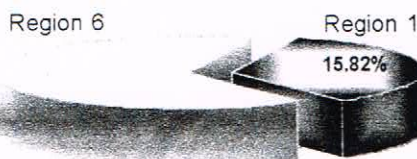
Regions 3 & 5 are different in the level of non-religious people



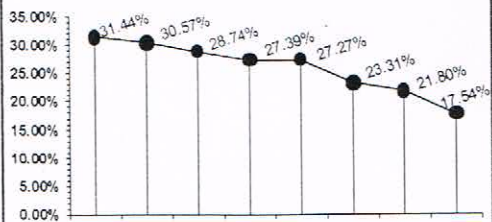
Regions 2, 4 and 8 are over 27% evangelical



Regions 1 and 6 are different in the percent of their population not associated with any religion



Region 7 has the lowest percentage of evangelicals



**R**EGIONS 3 AND 5 stand out as the highest evangelized areas in Guatemala. In these areas there is a vibrant church, which enjoys, in general, good health. Both of these areas are more than 30% evangelical. It is noteworthy that Region 5, or the Petén, has a significantly higher level of non-religious people as compared to the West, 19.99% versus 7.77% respectively. This is attributable to the fact that the Petén is a homesteading area, with many immigrants losing their religious roots as they settle into the area.

The next areas that are similar in the general state of religion are Regions 2, 4 and 8. Their cultures are distinct, with Region 2 and 4 being the central indigenous mountain areas and Region 8 being comprised of a more coastal and mountain *Ladino* population. Nevertheless, they are both evangelized to the level of 27%, each having a similar influence of the Catholic Church culture.

The next grouping of similar levels within the evangelical church is that of Regions 1 and 6 with 23.31% and 21.80% evangelicals, respectively. Although the levels of evangelicals are similar, there are vast cultural differences between these two regions.

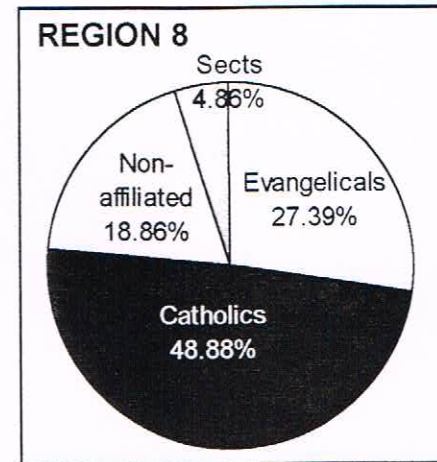
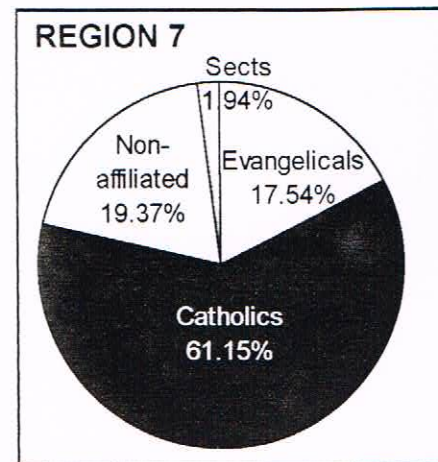
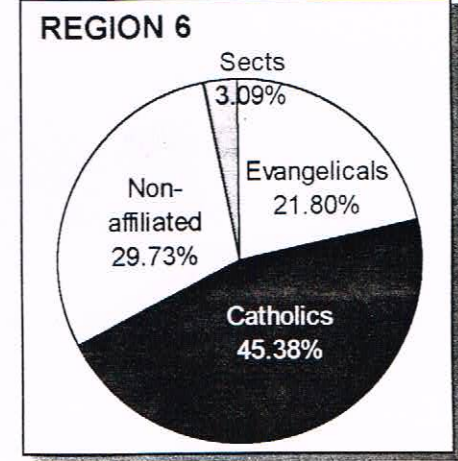
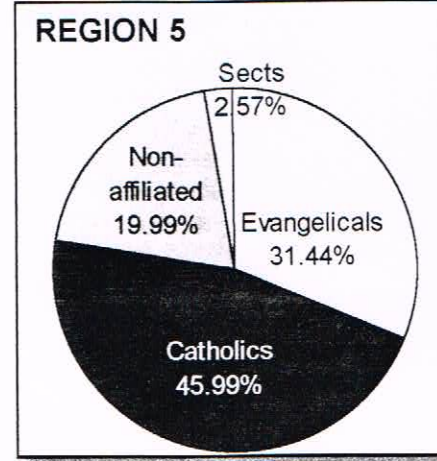
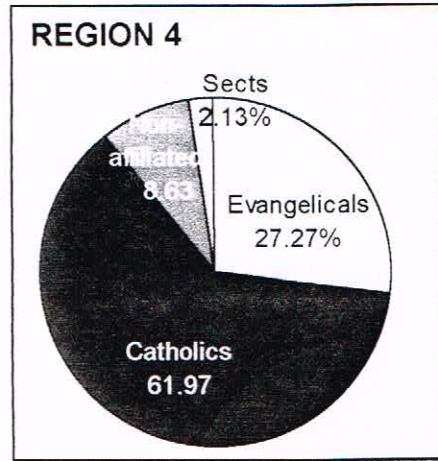
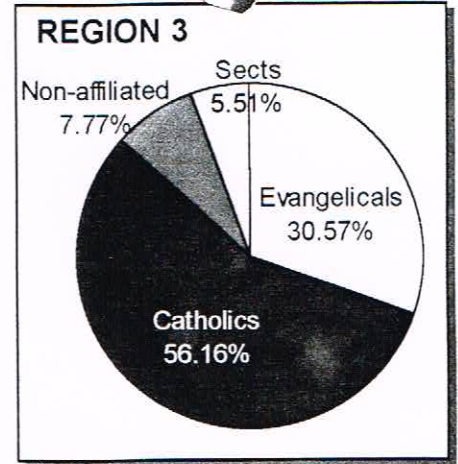
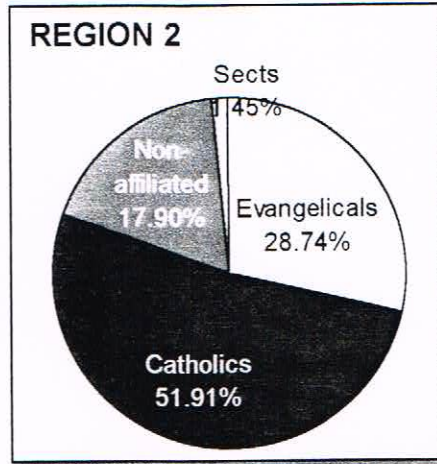
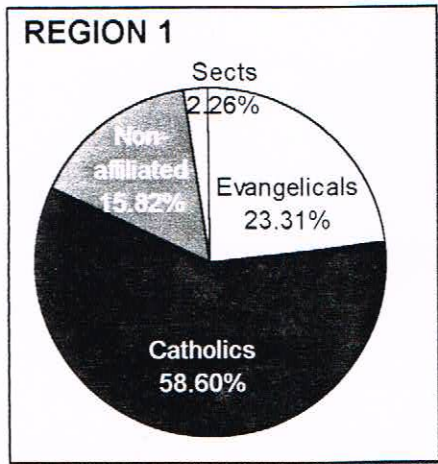
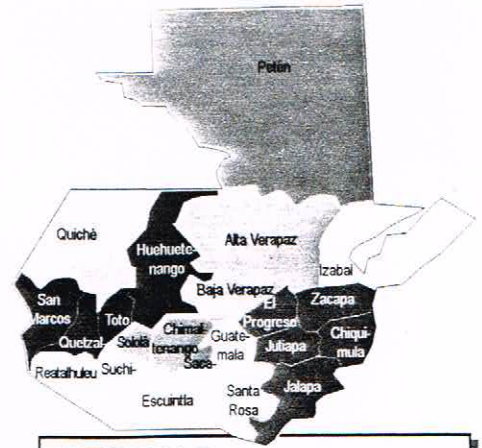
Region 1 is the Capital and its surrounding department, and has a concentration of leadership in the country. The evangelical church in Region 1 is varied in area, socioeconomic classes, traditions and culture.

Region 6, the department of Izabal, is different from the capital area because this region has by far, the largest percentage of population who are not associated with any religion or church at all. The Capital area has 15.82% of their population not associated with any religion, but in Izabal, nearly 30% of the population are not associated with any religion.

The area that stands out significantly from the rest of the country is that of Region 7, which is primarily a *Ladino* area with a small Indian population that is Westernized. In this region, only 17.5% of the population consider themselves to be evangelical.

In the next page we will study each region with it's own graphic, which will give us a clear perspective of the religious situation of each of them.

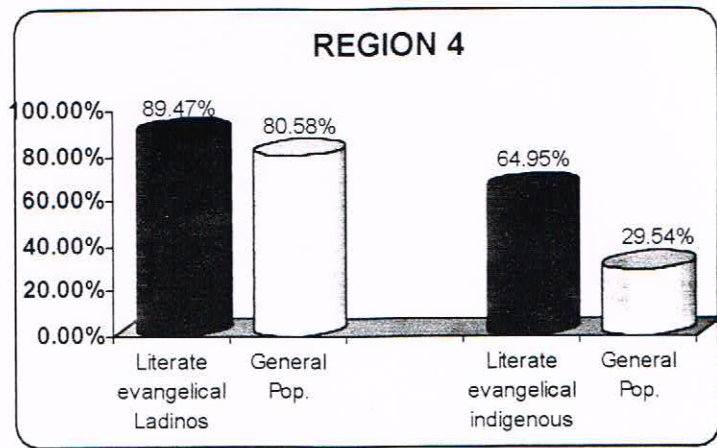
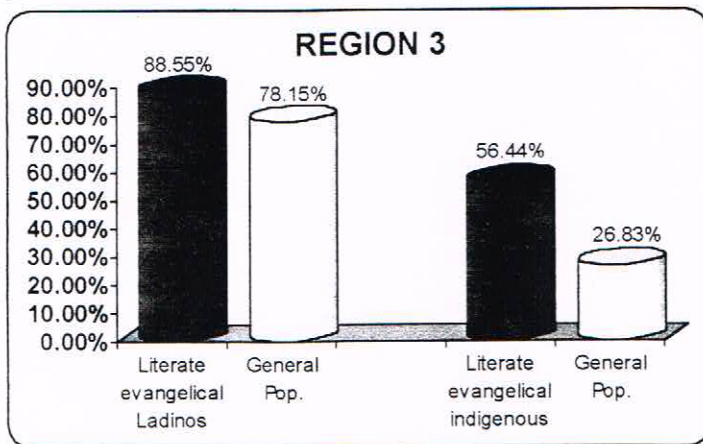
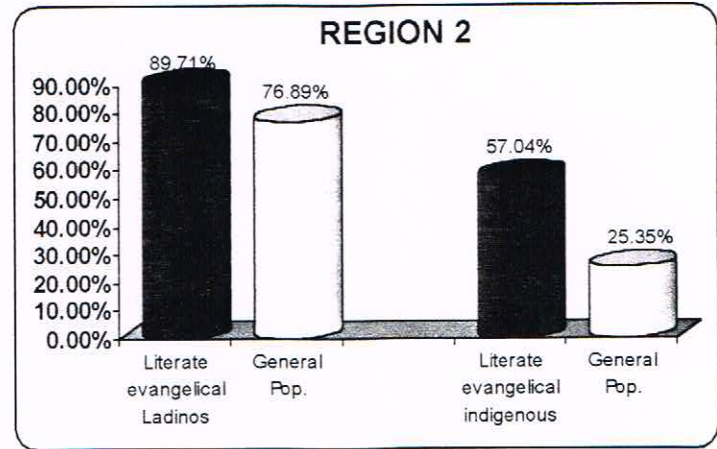
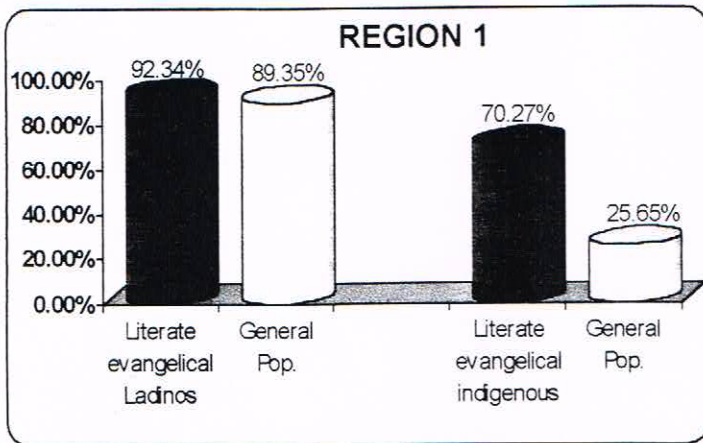
# Comparison Of religions by Regions



**LIST OF REGIONS**

- Region 1- Guatemala City.
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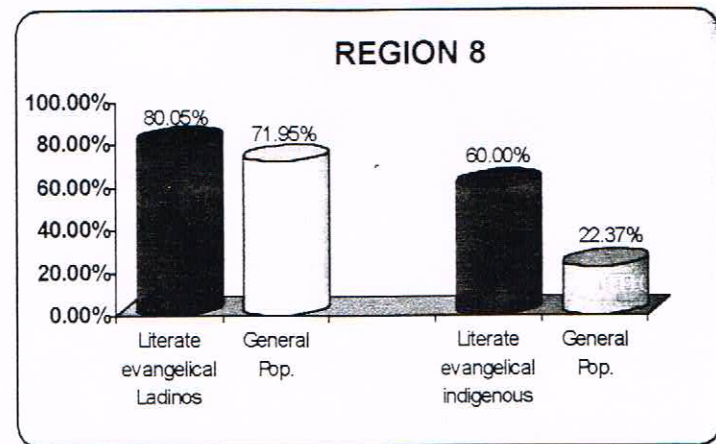
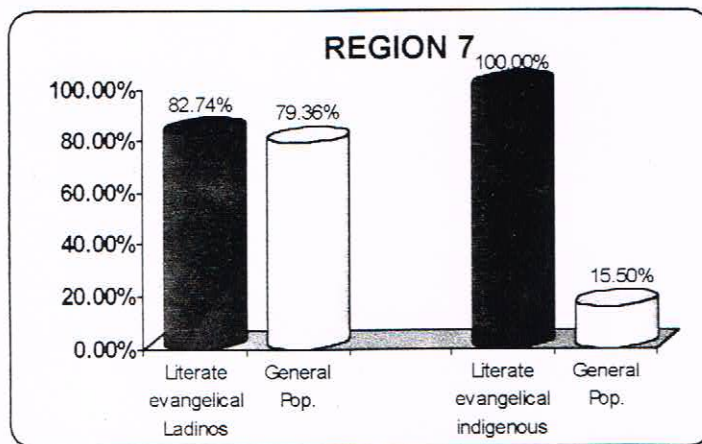
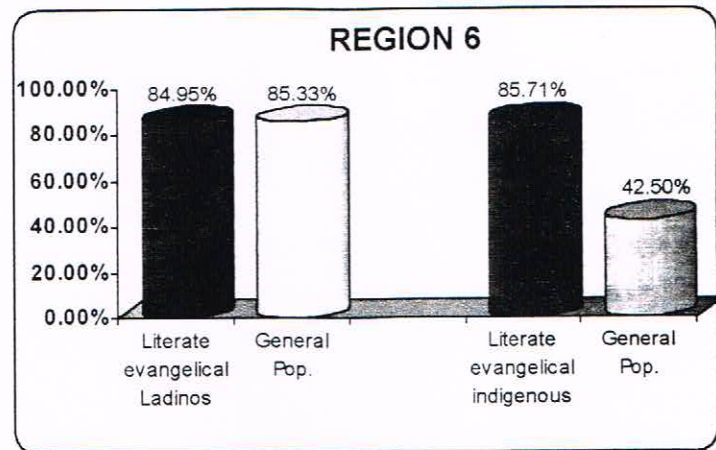
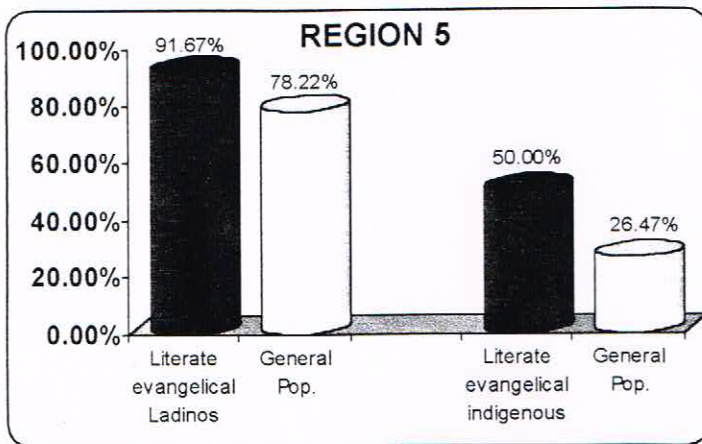
# Comparison Of literacy Level by Regions



**G**ENERALLY, THE INDIGENOUS GROUPS are half as literate as their Ladino counterparts. Interestingly, once an individual becomes part of the evangelical church, their literacy approaches that of the population in general. Presumably, this is due to the desire to read God's Word.

**Note:** If the literacy level of evangelicals [ladino o indigenous], is higher than the literacy level of the general population, it means that evangelicals are more literate.

# Continuation: Comparison of the Literacy level by regions...



**Note:** If the literacy level of evangelicals [ladino o indigeno], is bigger than the literacy level of the general population, it means that evangelicals are more literate.

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# Summary of evangelicals in Guatemala in surveyed areas

## Evangelicals in the Interior of Guatemala

Department	Municipio	%Evangelicals
Guatemala	San Pedro Sacatepéquez	12.16%
El Progreso	Sansare	15.23%
Sacatepéquez	Sumpango	25.73%
Chiquimula	Jocotán	10.86%
Chimaltenango	Zaragoza	19.85%
Escuintla	Tiquisate	38.52%
Escuintla	Palín	23.26%
Santa Rosa	Casillas	11.00%
Santa Rosa	Oratorio	22.05%
Totonicapán	Totonicapán	26.24%
Totonicapán	San Francisco El Alto	45.44%
Quetzaltenango	Concepción Chiquirichapa	15.23%
Quetzaltenango	Cantel	53.70%
Suchitepequez	San Antonio Such.	23.15%
Suchitepequez	San Miguel Panan	41.25%
Retalhuleu	San Sebastian	24.37%
Retalhuleu	El Asintal	30.91%
San Marcos	San Miguel Ixtahuacan	33.92%
San Marcos	Tacaná	15.40%
San Marcos	Pajapita	39.58%
Huehuetenango	San Miguel Acatan	10.00%
Huehuetenango	San Juan Atitán	53.85%
Huehuetenango	San Mateo Ixtatán	11.22%
Huehuetenango	San Juan Ixcoy	29.51%
El Quiché	Santa Cruz El Quiche	32.02%
El Quiché	Nebaj	35.39%
El Quiché	Sacapulas	30.02%
El Quiché	Canilla	29.86%
Baja Verapaz	Rabinal	23.60%
Alta Verapaz	San Cristobal	21.90%
Alta Verapaz	San Pedro Carchá	15.96%
Alta Verapaz	Fray Bartolome de las Casas	31.65%
Petén	San Andres	31.44%
Izabal	Puerto Barrios	24.02%
Zacapa	Zacapa	24.65%
Zacapa	Estanzuela	11.31%
Zacapa	Usumatlán	20.92%
Jalapa	San Pedro Pinula	17.43%
Jutiapa	Yupiltepeque	19.11%
Izabal	Morales	19.59%
Sololá	Santa Cruz Del Lago	37.73%
Sololá	Santiago Atitlán	65.87%
<b>Interior of Coutry average</b>		<b>25.27%</b>

## Evangelicals in the Guatemala City Area

City	Segment/Zone	% Evangelicals
Guatemala	Zona 6 Media/Media	17.63%
Guatemala	Zona 7 Asentamiento	24.16%
Guatemala	Zona 7 Media Baja	25.97%
Guatemala	Zona 12 Asentamientos	30.93%
Guatemala	Zona 12 Baja/Media	24.32%
Guatemala	Zona 11 Media/Media	19.40%
Guatemala	Zona 14 Baja/Alta	14.99%
Guatemala	Zona 15 Media/Alta	13.52%
Guatemala	Zona 18 Alta/Baja	30.18%
Guatemala	Zona 19 Media/Baja	29.21%
Guatemala	Villa Nueva Peta. Colon	32.71%
<b>Country Total</b>		<b>27.25%</b>

## Total Evangelicals in the Country

Area	Population	% Country	Wtd Ev%
Guatemala City	1,015,303		
Villa Nueva	363,574		
Total	1,378,877	12.11%	3.30%
Interior of Guatemala	10,006,460	87.89%	21.97%
<b>Country Total</b>	<b>11,385,337</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>25.27%</b>

All population figures are from the National Census Bureau, Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas. Populations are based upon their year 2000 projections. Religious studies based upon 19,500 personal interviews May, 2001.

**NOTE: Percentage of Evangelicals is ecaluated based on population of region.**

# Percentage of Evangelicals by race and selected *municipios*

Dept	Muni	% of Total Population			Primary Indigenous Group
		%LaE	%In E	%E	
Guatemala	San Pedro Sac.	3.95%	8.21%	12.16%	Cakchiquel Eastern
El Progreso	Sansare	13.64%	1.59%	15.23%	PocomamNortheast
Sacatepéquez	Sumpango	5.96%	19.77%	25.73%	Cakchiquel
Chiquimula	Jocotán	10.34%	0.52%	10.86%	Chorti
Chimaltenango	Zaragoza	15.90%	3.96%	19.85%	Cakchiquel Central
Escuintla	Tiquisate	38.16%	0.36%	38.52%	
Escuintla	Palín	16.62%	6.63%	23.26%	Pokomam South
Santa Rosa	Casillas	11.00%	0.00%	11.00%	
Santa Rosa	Oratorio	22.05%	0.00%	22.05%	
Totonicapán	Totonicapán	8.67%	17.57%	26.24%	Quiche Toto
Totonicapán	San Franc. El Alto	2.21%	43.23%	45.44%	Quiche Toto
Quetzaltenango	Con. Chiquirichapa	0.53%	14.70%	15.23%	Mam Ostancalco
Quetzaltenango	Cantel	4.73%	48.98%	53.70%	Quiche West
Suchitepéquez	San Antonio Such.	18.46%	4.69%	23.15%	Quiche SW
Suchitepéquez	San Miguel Panán	16.74%	24.51%	41.25%	Quiche, Cak, Tzut
Retalhuleu	San Sebastian	10.84%	13.53%	24.37%	Quiche SW
Retalhuleu	El Asintal	18.20%	12.71%	30.91%	Mam, Quiche
San Marcos	San Miguel Ixtahuacan	3.57%	30.35%	33.92%	Mam Central
San Marcos	Tacaná	13.06%	2.34%	15.40%	Mam Central
San Marcos	Pajapita	39.58%	0.00%	39.58%	
Huehuetenango	San Miguel Acatán	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	Akateko (Mam)
Huehuetenango	San Juan Atitán	0.00%	53.85%	53.85%	Mam Northern
Huehuetenango	San Mateo Ixtatán	0.00%	11.22%	11.22%	Chuj, Qanjobal
Huehuetenango	San Juan Ixcoy	3.83%	25.68%	29.51%	Qanjobal
El Quiché	Santa Cruz Quiche	29.13%	2.89%	32.02%	Quiche Central
El Quiché	Nebaj	3.50%	31.90%	35.39%	Quiche Central, Ixil
El Quiché	Sacapulas	4.34%	25.68%	30.02%	Sakapulteco Quiche
El Quiché	Canilla	12.76%	17.10%	29.86%	Quiche Eastern
Baja Verapaz	Rabinal	10.19%	13.42%	23.60%	Achi
Alta Verapaz	San Cristábal	3.16%	18.74%	21.90%	Pokomchi
Alta Verapaz	San Pedro Carcha	3.25%	12.71%	15.96%	Kekchi Western
Alta Verapaz	Fray Bartolome LC	7.85%	23.80%	31.65%	Kekchi Central
Petén	San Andrés	28.14%	3.30%	31.44%	Kekchi Northern
Izabal	Puerto Barrios	20.96%	3.06%	24.02%	Garifuna
Zacapa	Zacapa	24.65%	0.00%	24.65%	
Zacapa	Estanzuela	11.31%	0.00%	11.31%	
Zacapa	Usumatlán	20.92%	0.00%	20.92%	
Jalapa	San Pedro Pinula	17.43%	0.00%	17.43%	
Jutiapa	Yupiltepeque	19.11%	0.00%	19.11%	
Izabal	Morales	19.59%	0.00%	19.59%	
Sololá	Santa Cruz D Lago	1.99%	27.62%	29.61%	Cakchiquel
Sololá	Santiago Atitlán	2.48%	45.35%	47.83%	Tzutuil

# General Comments

The nature of this part of the study only shows who self-identifies themselves as evangelical Christians. We are concerned about the level of syncretism among the evangelical groups, especially in the mountainous indigenous areas. By November of 2001, we will be able to accurately measure this, as well as identify possible causes.

*...Even though the task is not easy, and the challenge and the needs are large, we have the spiritual resources, the power and the strength that God has promised us in the Scripture to progressively meet the needs of our country, to expand the Kingdom of God, and to make disciples who disciple others.*

**PROYECTO**  
*JOSUE*

At this point, we do not have an accurate way to measure how many churches are in the Mayan languages versus Spanish, but our observations are that in *municipios* containing a more bilingual population, the church services are usually held in Spanish. The medium sized churches in the towns attract people from the villages, as these churches are usually more polished with a more experienced leadership. Clearly, those who speak Spanish in the villages are also attracted to this type of church.

As we continue to analyze the data further, it will then be appropriate to make observations and comments about the state of the Church throughout the Republic of Guatemala. At this time, we should know that the data we already have is a great tool to put our hands to work.

In conclusion, our desire is that every Guatemalan have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and to become a disciple of Christ. Even though the task is not easy and the challenge and the needs are large, we have the spiritual resources, the power and the strength that God has promised us in the Scripture to progressively meet the needs of our country, to expand the Kingdom of God, and to make disciples who disciple others. We need to pray, to work together as members of the Body of Christ, and to mobilize and prepare our church members for the ministry. We must persevere and trust in God... FOR with Him all things are possible.



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