

Campaigning for global justice: attender attitudes

Influencing a changing world

Our world is increasingly connected. Technology, communications, and travel have brought about heightened awareness of how others live around the globe. Church attenders are part of this cultural shift. Awareness of inequality, and of popular responses to poverty such as charity giving and mass advocacy campaigns, has grown significantly since the late 1990s.¹

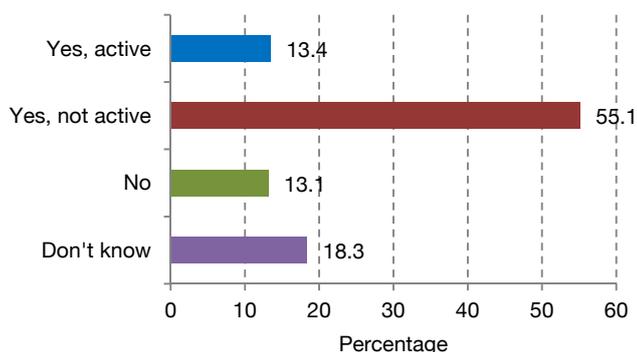
What are church attenders' views concerning support for, and participation in, these responses to poverty? Should the church campaign for global justice?

The question and overall response

In late 2011 as a part of the 2011 National Church Life Survey, a sample of Catholic, Anglican and Protestant church attenders were asked the following question:

“Do you believe it is a Christian responsibility to take part in mass campaigns designed to address issues of global poverty or injustice (e.g. Make Poverty History, Micah Challenge)?”

Figure 1: Church attender views about campaigning for global justice



Source: 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,306).

¹ Significant majorities of publics in all developed countries support development assistance for poor countries. See Council on Foreign Relations, Chapter 7: World Opinion on Economic Development and Humanitarian Aid, *Public Opinion on Global Issues*, January 26, 2012. www.cfr.org/public_opinion

When asked this question in 2011, a large majority (69%) thought that Christians have a responsibility to take part in mass campaigns to address global poverty or injustice. This represents a significant commitment to forms of political engagement that attempt to bring about social change. However, the survey reveals that only 13% have been actively engaged in a recent campaign. A minority remained unconvinced (13%), with 18% undecided. It would appear that the challenge for churches and Christian NGOs is to enable those who support campaigning to take action or to remain active.

Pentecostals and young activists

Pentecostal churches are mobilizing the largest proportion of those who are active on this issue with 20% of their attenders recently active. Youth and young adults are the most likely to be active in campaigning generally, with a quarter of people under 30 actively engaged. The Pentecostal churches, who have a large young adult demographic, appear to be effectively channeling the commitment of this age group.

The Baptists and Churches of Christ have the second most active memberships, and the largest combined group (76%, slightly larger than the Pentecostals) who are affirmative and/or active on this issue. Some 70% of Anglican attenders are affirmative of Christian action for global justice, but they have the smallest proportion (9%) who have been active in a recent campaign. Is action on global poverty acceptable as part of Christian faith for these Anglicans, but not a priority? The relatively low level of activity among Anglicans may also be due in part to the older age profile of Anglicans.

Table 1: Views about campaigning by denomination

	Angli- can	Baptist/ Church- es of Christ	Cath- olic	Luth- eran	Pente- costal	Unit- ing	Other Prot- estant
	Percentage						
Campaigning view							
Yes, active	9	18	11	15	20	16	11
Yes, not active	61	58	55	54	55	51	51
No	14	9	13	14	17	16	12
Don't know	16	16	22	16	8	18	27

Source: 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,306).

A question of time and age?

Youth and young adults (inclusive of those 30-39 years of age) appear to be part of a new activist generation. The survey results emphasize that younger generations are currently the most likely to take some form of action. Perhaps this is the result of a mix of their good social media skills, and the fewer time constraints that enable engagement in forms of direct campaigning and lobbying. Of those who were actively involved in a recent campaign, 25% of 15-19 year olds and 24% of 20-29 year olds were in this category. Perhaps schools and youth groups have also been a fertile ground for church attenders to become involved in mass campaigning? Responding to global injustice may also be part of the rapid build up of social media and the online accessibility of world news.

Gen X and Baby Boomers, in turn, are the most likely to be theoretically supportive of the responsibility of Christians to engage in global campaigns, with 63% of 40-49 year olds and 62% of 50-59 year olds in favour of campaigning. However, they are underrepresented in recent campaign activity. Could this be because they were busy juggling family, work commitments, and maintaining life balance issues? Or were the current mechanisms of campaigning difficult or off-putting for these church attenders to engage in or utilize?

Table 2: Views about campaigning by age

	15-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+
Campaigning view	Percentage							
Yes, active	25	24	17	12	12	12	10	9
Yes, not active	49	53	57	63	62	55	45	50
No	4	7	11	9	11	15	23	16
Don't know	22	17	15	17	15	18	23	25

Source: 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,299).

Does locality make a difference?

Table 3: Views about campaigning by locality

	Rural	Regional	Urban	Total
Yes, active	8	9	17	14
Yes, not active	58	60	55	57
No	14	13	11	12
Don't know	20	19	16	17

Source: 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,013).

Attendees living in urban areas were more likely than attendees living in regional and rural areas to be actively involved in campaigning (17% versus 8%). This difference may well be a reflection of the age profile of different localities – urban areas have the highest proportion of attendees under 40 years old, the age group who are the most active campaigners.

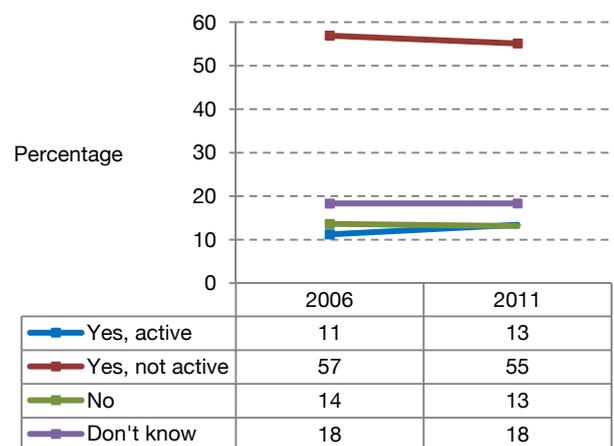
Previous surveys

A sample of church attendees was also asked about their views regarding mass campaigning in the 2006 National Church Life Survey. There is little difference between the 2006 and 2011 results. Whether the small increase in the proportion of active attendees becomes a trend would need to be tested over time.

Summary

Overall, there is strong agreement that Christians should take part in mass campaigns for global justice, although actual involvement is a minority activity. Young adults are the most actively engaged, and denominational and locality differences in involvement may be a reflection of this demographic.

Figure 2: Church attender views about campaigning for global justice, 2006 and 2011



Source: 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,306), and 2006 NCLS Attender Sample Survey J (n=2271).

NB. The wording changed slightly between 2006 and 2011, with no mention of Micah Challenge in the 2006 question.

References

- Castle, K., (2006) [computer file], 2006 NCLS Attender Sample Survey J, NCLS Research, Sydney.
 Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N, NCLS Research, Sydney.

Citation

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About NCLS: The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attendees, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations every census year since 1991.