

Mission Trips Organised by Australian Churches 2010-2011

The present Fact Sheet, previously published by NCLS Research in 2014, has been reproduced here with an upgraded weighting methodology, altering the results found. In 2016, NCLS researchers designed weights that accounted not only for differing levels of participation across denominations, but also for the size distribution of churches within denominations, to ensure churches of all sizes were being proportionally represented in results. To maximise comparability between 2016 and 2011 results, these new weights have been applied to 2011 data for this Fact Sheet.

Introduction

This Fact Sheet examines Australian churches' support for mission via the organising of mission trips either overseas or elsewhere in Australia. There is a long history of Christian mission organisations working overseas and in other parts of Australia, whether missions of evangelism and ministry training, works of practical service and empowerment, or endeavours comprised of both.

For decades now it has been possible for church attenders to experience a taste of mission work by taking part in a trip, and for those in the field hopefully to benefit from the involvement of more personnel over the period of the trip. Initially such trips were almost exclusively organised by mission organisations, but there may be a growing trend of churches now organising such trips themselves, either alone, with other churches, or in partnership with an organisation. This Fact Sheet shows the overall number of churches involved in this way is large, and denominational differences are also considerable.

Churches that organise mission trips

The following question was asked in the 2011 National Church Life Survey *Operations Survey*¹.

Has this congregation organised any mission trips in the past 2 years, including trips jointly organised with

¹ This is a one-per-church survey used as an audit of objective information such as activities each church runs or supports.

another church or organisation?

	None	One	2 or 3	More than 3
Mission trips to other parts of Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overseas mission trips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The results in this Fact Sheet come from the responses of 2,347 churches from 11 different denominations. Table 1 shows the percentage of churches in each denomination that indicated any of the boxes other than 'None' for the two questions.

Table 1: Churches by percentage of denomination² that have helped organise a mission trip in the 2010-2011 period

	Aust only	O'seas only	Both	Combined
All Churches	4%	15%	7%	26%
Anglican	2%	6%	3%	12%
Baptist	6%	28%	13%	47%
Catholic	5%	12%	3%	20%
Lutheran	6%	9%	2%	17%
Pentecostal ³	3%	44%	23%	69%
Salvation Army	8%	7%	4%	20%
Uniting	4%	4%	2%	11%

Source: 2011 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,347 churches, weighted).

Using weighting that balances the participation of different denominations and regions against what we know to be the actual number of churches in Australia, NCLS researchers have estimated that approximately 26% of churches have been involved in organising a mission trip over the 2010-2011 period. This could translate to 2,500 churches Australia-wide that belong to the 11 denominations included in this analysis (and even more when considering all denominations in Australia).

² Fewer denominational categories are given than in the original Fact Sheet due to different sampling criteria and for comparability with 2016 results.

³ 'Pentecostal' includes Australian Christian Churches, Apostolic, C3 Church, CRC International, and International Network of Churches.

While this result may not reflect 2,500 different trips (as churches will have sometimes jointly organised a trip), it nevertheless represents an enormous amount of resources in terms of time, money and people being invested. It also suggests that mission trips are enjoying considerable support and indeed direct involvement from churches.

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Denominational differences

The Pentecostal churches showed the strongest culture of organising such trips, with 69% of churches indicating they had done so. Baptist churches also showed strong involvement, with almost half of their churches (47%) having organised a mission trip in the past 2 years. The Salvation Army and Uniting churches were notable in having organised mission trips as often or more often in Australia than overseas (6% and 6% respectively for Uniting Churches; 12% and 11% respectively for Salvation Army). Overall 11% of churches had helped organise at least one trip to elsewhere in Australia, 22% to overseas, with an overlap of 7% of churches that indicated both.

Another perspective on these figures is given by considering the actual numbers of churches

represented by the different denominations, and how this makes up the total number, as shown in Figure 1. The Pentecostal movement not only showed a strong culture of support for organising such trips, but because it is a large movement, it represents some 43% of all trips organised by the denominations in this analysis, with an estimated 1,070 churches indicating involvement. Other movements accounting for large numbers of trips were Baptist (445, 18% of all trips) and Anglican (335, 13%), while one in ten trips were done by Uniting churches (225).

Organising mission trips is clearly a widespread activity among Australian churches. Some trips organised by mission agencies independently of local churches are not likely to be accounted for in these figures, making the overall total of mission trips potentially even higher.

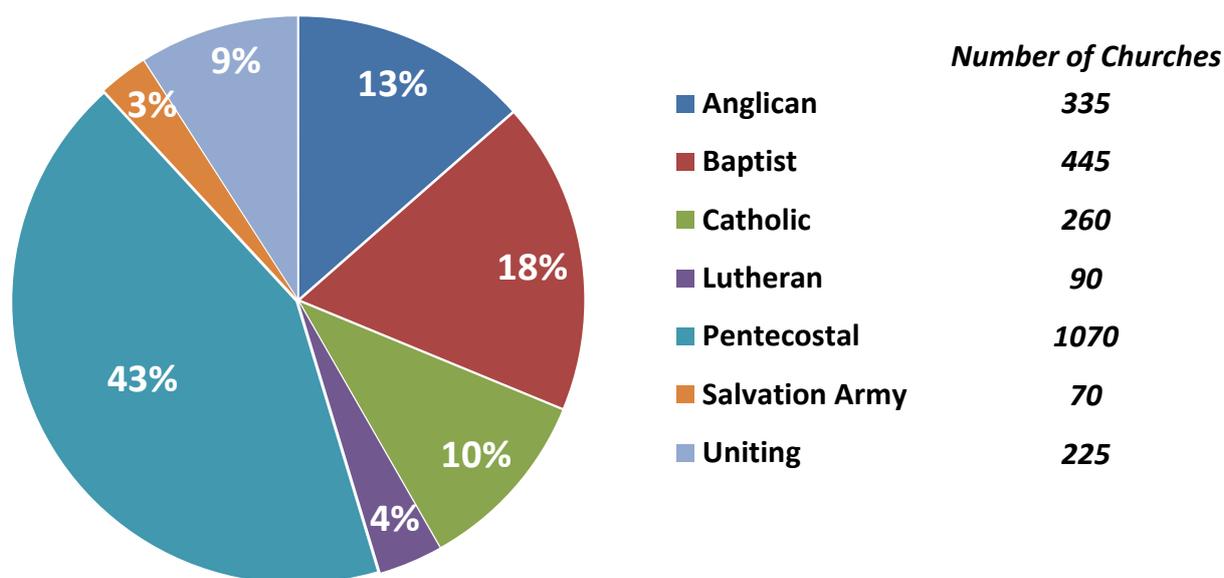
Data sources

Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Operations Survey (Augmented). Sydney, Australia: NCLS Research.

Citation

Sterland, S. & Hancock, N. (2017) Mission Trips Organised by Australian Churches 2010-2011, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 17006. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Figure 1: Mission trips broken down by denomination



Source: 2011 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,347 churches, weighted).

Notes: Figures are rounded to nearest 5 for numbers of churches. Catholic parishes are counted rather than local churches.