

Campaigning for global justice: attender attitudes

Influencing a changing world

Our world is increasingly connected. Globalisation, technology, and travel have brought about heightened awareness of how others live around the globe. Church attenders are part of this cultural shift.

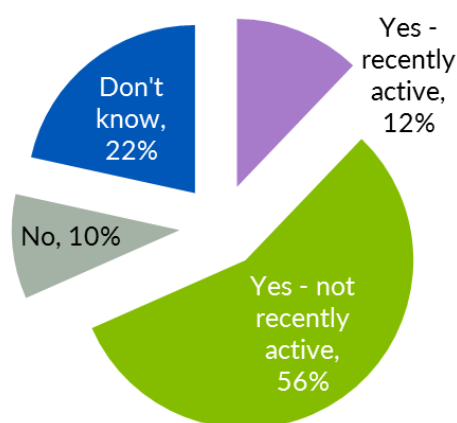
What are church attenders' views concerning support for and participation in responses to global poverty? Should the church campaign for global justice?

In 2016 the National Church Life Survey asked a sample of Catholic, Anglican and Protestant church attenders 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. Campaign for Australian Aid)?

Overall findings

Figure 1: Church attender views about campaigning for global justice



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey G (n=1,250).

A large majority of attenders (68%) believed that Christians have a responsibility to take part in mass campaigns to address global poverty or injustice. However, only 12% had been actively engaged in a recent campaign, indicating that support of Christian responsibility was not being transformed into personal action. Some 10% of attenders were opposed and 22% were undecided.

Demographic differences in views

Most attenders across the various demographic groups supported Christian action although there were some differences in the views between these groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Views about campaigning by demographics

	Yes, active	Yes, not active	No	Don't know
	Percentage			
Gender				
Female	12	55	9	24
Male	12	58	12	18
Age				
15-29yrs	17	56	7	19
30-49yrs	15	53	10	22
50-69yrs	10	62	8	20
70+yrs	10	53	13	24
Education				
School	11	52	11	26
Trade	11	51	11	27
Degree	15	64	9	13
Country of birth				
Australia	13	56	12	20
Other English-spkg	9	60	9	23
Non-English-spkg	11	58	6	25
Locality				
Urban	11	59	10	20
Regional	13	51	14	23
Rural	15	53	6	26

Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey G (n=1,225-1,248).

A higher percentage of women (24%) were unsure compared to men (18%), whilst men were slightly more likely to oppose Christian campaigning (12% vs. 9%).

15-29-year-olds were the most likely age group to have been recently active in a campaign (17%), and activity decreased with age. The oldest cohort (aged 70+) were the most likely age group to be unsure or against Christian action.

Degree holders were more likely than attenders with lower levels of formal education to believe in the Christian responsibility to campaign (78%), with 15% having participated in a recent campaign themselves. Those with a trade qualification held very similar views to those whose highest level of education was school (62-63% support and 11% active).

Levels of support were similar by country of birth. Those born in non-English-speaking countries were the least likely to be opposed to Christians taking part in campaigns (6%, versus 12% of Australian-born attenders and 9% of those born in other English-speaking countries) and most likely to be unsure (25%, versus 20% of Australian-born attenders and 23% of those born in other English-speaking countries).

Some 7 in 10 attenders living in urban and rural areas supported campaigning. The percentage of active rural attenders was however, slightly higher than those living in urban areas (15% vs. 11% respectively). Regional attenders were less likely overall to support Christians campaigning (63%), although 13% were active.

Church life

Differences in view were less affected by denomination than they were by faith-related activities. Some 67% of attenders who engaged in private devotion daily or most days (prayer, meditation, Bible reading alone) supported Christians campaigning. This group had the highest level of active participation (14%). Those in a leadership or ministry role in their local church were also more likely to have participated in a recent campaign (15%), compared to those without a leadership or ministry role (10%, see Table 2).

Table 2: Views about campaigning by denomination, private devotion and leadership in ministry

	Yes, active	Yes - not active	No	Don't know
	Percentage			
Private devotion				
Hardly ever/never	10	38	16	36
Occasionally	9	62	11	18
Once/few times a wk	11	64	8	17
Everyday/most days	14	53	10	23
Leadership/ministry role				
No	10	57	11	23
Yes	15	57	9	19
Denomination				
Catholic	13	55	8	23
Mainstream Protestant	11	57	13	19
Pentecostal	10	54	9	27
Other Protestant	13	60	11	16

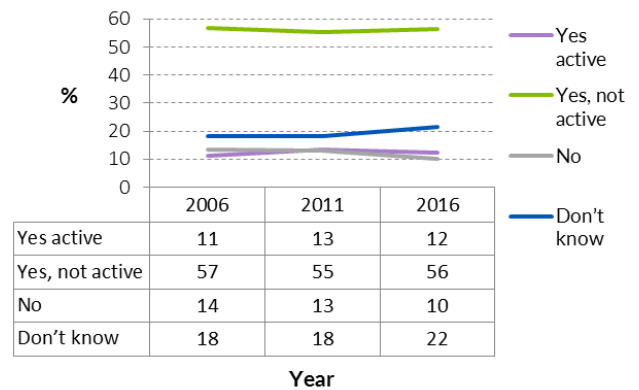
Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey G (n=1,206-1,250).

Previous surveys

A sample of church attenders was also asked about their views regarding mass campaigning in the 2006

and 2011 National Church Life Surveys. Views changed little across the three survey waves.

Figure 2: Church attender views about campaigning for global justice, 2006, 2011 and 2016



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey G (n=1,250), 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N (n=1,306) and 2006 NCLS Attender Sample Survey J (n=2,271).

NB. The wording changed slightly between the surveys, with recent campaigns at the time mentioned in the 2011 and 2016 questions.

Summary

Overall, there is strong agreement that Christians should take part in mass campaigns for global justice, although those who have participated in a recent campaign are in a minority. Small differences can be found between demographic groups with education having the greatest effect on views. From a church life perspective, an increase in active participation in campaigning is linked with an increase in private devotion and among those with leadership roles.

Data sources

Castle, K., (2006) [computer file], 2006 NCLS Attender Sample Survey J. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Attender Sample Survey N. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Powell, R., Pepper, M., Hancock, N., & Sterland, S. (2016) [computer file] 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey G. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Citation

Pepper, M., Gan, C., Hancock, N. & Powell, R. (2017) Campaigning for global justice: attender attitudes, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 17004. Sydney: NCLS Research.