

Support for People in Developing Countries by Australian Churches in 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.

The Australian churches' support of people/ministries overseas

This fact sheet examines the support of Australian churches for people in developing countries, through various means. There is a long tradition of churches supporting the work of 'service' and 'proclamation' in the local community, elsewhere in the country or overseas. Focusing on support in developing countries, what are the levels for different kinds of support, and how much does such support really amount to? Are there large differences between denominational groups?

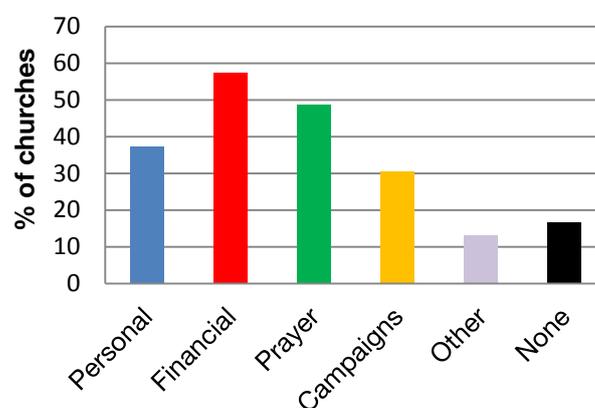
Churches that support people/ministries in developing countries

The following question was asked in the 2011 National Church Life Survey *Operations Survey*¹: "Over the past 12 months, has this local church had a specific commitment to people in developing countries?"²

Figure 1 shows that financial support was the most common form of support (57% of all churches indicated they had a regular form of financial support). The second highest form was 'Prayer' (49% of churches) followed by 'Personal' (37%). Three in ten churches (30%) indicated they have regular support for poverty

and injustice campaigns. Such campaigns would include Micah Challenge, TEAR, Act for Peace, or denominationally affiliated groups such as Baptist World Aid, Caritas, Catholic Mission, and Uniting World. Seventeen percent of churches indicated having no supportive link of any kind.

Figure 1: Forms of local church support for people in developing countries



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

Denominational group differences

The results have also been divided into major denominational groups, as shown in table 1.

While support is widespread across all denominations, there are considerable denominational differences evident in table 1. For the first 3 categories (Personal, Financial, Prayer) where support is most common, the Pentecostal churches hold the top position in each, with Baptist churches holding second position for these three forms of support.

The degrees of support for poverty and injustice campaigns follow a very different pattern, with strongest supporters being the Baptist, Catholic and Salvation Army movements. This perhaps reflects strong and successful denominational agencies for these movements.

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

² 'Yes, a personal relationship with individuals/groups'; 'Yes, a regular financial commitment'; 'Yes a regular prayer commitment'; 'Yes, through campaigns which tackle poverty or injustice'; 'Yes, another kind of link'; 'No links of this kind'. Churches could mark all options.

Table 1: Forms of local church support for people in developing countries, by denominational groups³

	Personal	Financial	Prayer	Campaigns	Other	None
Total	37	57	49	30	13	17
	% of churches					
Anglican	28	52	47	18	14	25
Baptist	62	80	74	44	17	4
Catholic	22	39	24	43	12	20
Lutheran	24	40	37	33	14	21
Pentecostal ⁴	68	91	82	27	11	2
Salvation Army	21	64	36	40	17	9
Uniting	32	45	36	33	13	20

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

The real financial contribution?

Examining these results can reveal something about both the internal culture of each denominational group, and the real contribution. This is because there is a vast difference in the size of these movements.

To illustrate the different internal cultures of support, figure 2 graphs the financial support figures (as a percentage) from table 1. In comparison, showing the actual number of churches in each denominational group who give financial support results in a quite different order of results (figure 3).

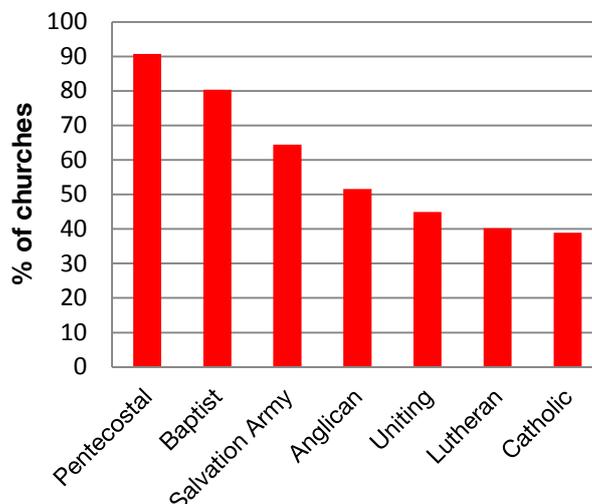
Some of the groups that have less churches proportionally giving support are nevertheless large movements, and therefore make up a large portion of the total churches in Australia providing support (e.g. Anglican, Uniting, Catholic). Some of the 'high percentage groups' correspond to high numbers of churches if they are of sufficient size as movements (e.g. Pentecostal, Baptist), but not if they are smaller groups (e.g. Salvation Army).

These results provide a glimpse into how support for developing countries is distributed among the Australian churches. If it were possible to take into account other factors such as institutional differences the picture might change somewhat. Specific information about the dollar-value of churches' support would give the most detailed picture of all.

³ Fewer denominational categories are given than in the original fact sheet due to different sampling criteria and for comparability with 2016 results.

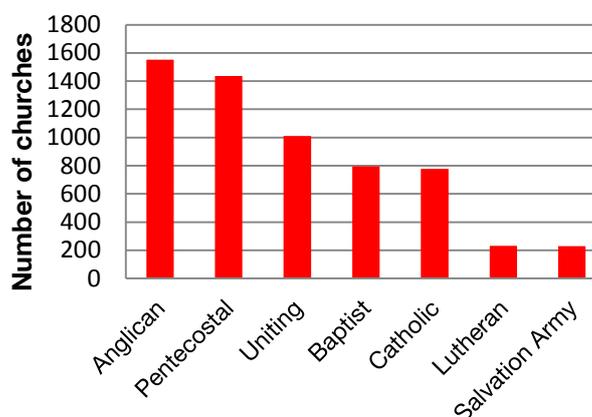
⁴ 'Pentecostal' includes Australian Christian Churches, Apostolic, C3 Church, CRC International, and International Network of Churches.

Figure 2: Percent of local churches giving financial support for people in developing countries - by denominational groups



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

Figure 3: Numbers of local churches* giving financial support for people in developing countries - by denominational groups



Source: 2011 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,347 churches). Results are weighted by denomination and region to estimate national totals. *Catholic results in this graph show the number of parishes rather than local churches because of the method of surveying used.

Data sources

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

Citation

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