



2013 Uniting Church Census of congregations and ministers

Headline Report
March 2014

Citation: Powell, R., Pepper, M., Hancock, R., Sterland, S. and Mollidor, C., (2014) 2013 Uniting Church Census of Congregations and Ministers Headline Report. NCLS Commissioned Report. Sydney: NCLS Research.

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Executive summary

Goal and method: The purpose of the census was to collect up to date information about ministers, staffing, church size and other features.

Method: A hard copy/online census of congregations and an online census of ministers were conducted from August 2013 to January 2014, using Synod databases of contact details.

Response rates: The response rate for congregations was 72% and for ministers was 66%.

Key findings: There are 2,078 congregations, 97,200 weekly worship service attenders (including 12,500 children) and 2,475 ministers in the Uniting Church.



Key findings

Congregations Census

How many congregations are there and how are they distributed?

Number of congregations	2,078
% change since 1990	-31%
% of congregations in rural areas	41%
% of congregations founded since 1980	11%

How many people go to church?

Estimate of total national weekly worship service attendance (all ages)	97,200
% change since 1991	-40%
Estimate of total national weekly worship service attendance (children)	12,500
Median worship service attendance per congregation (all ages)	35
Median worship service attendance per congregation (children)	3



Key findings

Congregations Census

How are congregations organised and led?

Median number of staff per congregation	1
% of congregations with a single weekly worship service	64%
% of congregations running Sunday Schools	40%
% of congregations running youth groups	20%
% of congregations running faith discussion groups	61%

How do congregations relate to their surrounding communities?

% of congregations providing emergency relief services	50%
% of congregations engaging in evangelistic activities	48%
% of congregations with direct relationship with ATSI people	13%

How do congregations relate to the wider Church?

% of congregations provide support through UnitingWorld	60%
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Key findings

Ministers Census

How many ministers are there?

Number of ministers	2,475
% of active ministers ordained as Ministers of the Word	75%
% of active ministers ordained by another denomination	7%

What are their demographics?

% of active ministers who are female	32%
% of active ministers at least 60 years of age	35%
% of active ministers under 40 years of age	6%
% of active ministers with a language other than English as their first language	12%



Key findings

Ministers Census

What placements are ministers in?

% of non-retired ministers in placement	89%
% of ministers in placement in single placement with multiple parts	21%
% of ministers in placement in multiple placements	8%
% of ministers in placement in Chaplaincy roles	12%
% of ministers in placement in Presbytery ministry	6%
% of ministers in placement in Synod roles	5%
% of ministers in placement in Assembly roles	1%
% of retired ministers providing Supply Ministry	33%



Part 1: Census methodology



Congregations Census methodology

A locations-based survey was provided both in both paper and online versions.

1,471 UCA churches completed the Census (72% response rate).

Response rates for each Synod were similar, except for the Northern Synod, where 14/44 churches (13 from the Pilgrim Presbytery) returned a form.

Conventions used

National worship service attendance figures for adults and children and numbers of staff were calculated. Missing data was dealt with by:

- 1) Using estimates from previous 2012 and 2011 NCLS surveys
- 2) Where previous data was unavailable mean scores were imputed.

Results for all other questions are based solely on the churches that responded.

(Note: % missing at bottom of slides are % who participated in the Census but are missing on the particular question.)

Limitations

Congress and minority migrant ethnic churches are under-represented in the results.





Ministers Census methodology

All ministers listed in UCA Synod databases were sent an online survey to complete. 1,645 ministers completed a census form (66% response rate).

Conventions used

Results are presented based only on ministers who participated in the Census. No results have been imputed.

(Note: % missing at bottom of slides are % who participated in the Census but are missing on the particular question.)

This report shows results for **“active” ministers** - those either in a placement or looking for a placement.

Some results are shown for **all ministers who responded** to the census and for **retired ministers**.

Limitations

Retired and elderly ministers are under-represented in the results.

Low participation for UAICC ministers.

People on Synod databases who don't label themselves as “ministers” may be under-represented.





Part 2: Congregations Census results



Number of churches

Number of congregations: There are 2,078 Uniting Church congregations/locations and 416 clusters.

The Synod of Victoria/Tasmania has the largest number of church locations/congregations and clusters.

Change in congregations: The number of locations/congregations has declined by 31% since 1990

Table 1: Number of churches by Synod

	National	NSW/ACT	NS	QLD	SA	Vic/Tas	WA
Total locations/ congregations 2013	2078	615	44	333	296	646	144
Total clusters 2013	416	108	2	72	48	156	30
Total congregations 1990	3019	825	28	518	443	967	238
% change 1990-2013	-31%	-25%	57%	-36%	-33%	-33%	-39%

Source: For 2013 figures: NCLS Admin database. Based on 2,078 locations.
For 1990 figures: General Secretary's report to the 6th Assembly



Locality of churches

Rural churches: 41% of Uniting Churches are in a rural area or small rural town (< 2000 people). 17% are in larger rural towns.

Regional churches: 11% of Uniting Churches are in regional centres.

Urban churches: 31% of Uniting Churches are in a capital city.

Table 2: Percentage of churches by locality

Locality	%
Rural area (less than 200 people)	17
Small rural town (200 to 2,000 people)	24
Rural service centre (2,000 to 10,000 people)	13
Large rural centre (10,000 to 20,000 people)	4
Regional centre (more than 20,000 people)	11
Suburbs of a State or Territory capital city	28
Centre of a State or Territory capital city	3

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,438 locations (2.2% missing).



Year churches were founded

Almost three quarters of UCA churches were founded before 1950.

Just 11% of churches were founded since 1980 (after Union).

Table 3: Percentage of churches by year founded

Year started	%
After 2011	0
2007-2011	1
2002-2006	2
1997-2001	1
1990-1996	3
1980-1989	4
1970-1979	5
1960-1969	5
1950-1959	7
1900-1949	31
Before 1900	41

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,418 locations (3.6% missing).





National attendance figures

Affiliation: Over a million Australians affiliate with the Uniting Church

Attendance: 97,200 attend Uniting Churches on a weekly basis
Nearly one in ten (9.1%) of UCA adherents attend church on a weekly basis

Change in Attendance: The number of weekly attenders in the Uniting Church has declined 23% since 2001 and 40% since 1991.

Table 4: National estimates of Uniting Church adherents and attenders: 1991 to 2013

Type	1991	2001	2013
Weekly attenders (all ages)	162,800	126,600	97,200
UCA adherents (thousands)	1,387.7	1,248.7	1,065.8*
UCA adherents (% of Australian population)	8.2%	6.6%	5.0%
% of UCA adherents who attend weekly	11.7%	10.1%	9.1%

* This figure is for 2011, not 2013.





National attendance by Synod and locality

Attendance by Synod: Nearly a third (31%) of all UCA attenders are in NSW/ACT churches in NSW and ACT. A quarter of attenders are in churches in Victoria and Tasmania. A fifth of attenders are in churches in Queensland

Attendance by locality: nearly half of all UCA attenders are in urban churches (47%).

Figure 1: National attendance by Synod

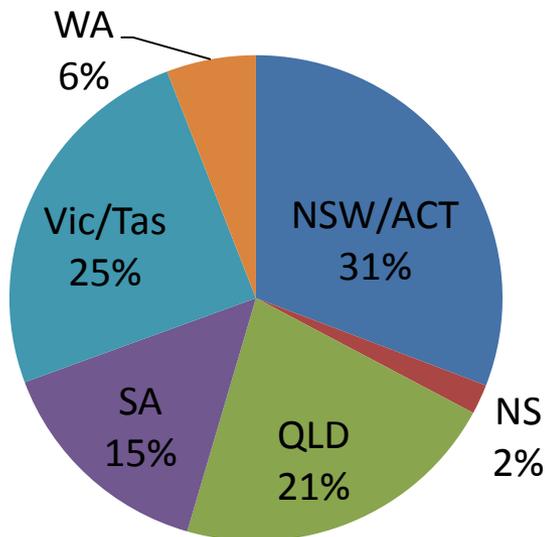
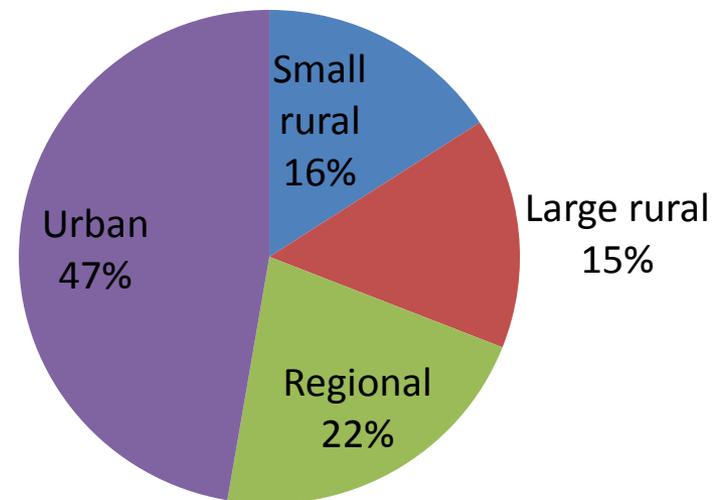


Figure 2: National attendance by locality



Note: Only 32% of churches in the Northern Synod (NS) took part. Estimates for NS have been calculated only to contribute to the national total, and are the best available to NCLS Research.

Sources. Figure 1: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 2,078 locations. Figure 2 ; 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,438 locations (2.2% missing).





Church size

Size of congregations

The median size (midpoint) for Uniting Churches is 35 people, which includes three children

46% of all UCA churches have between 20 and 49 people.

A quarter (25%) of churches have fewer than 20 attenders in a typical week.

8% of churches have more than 100 attenders.

Figure 3: Number of churches by size category

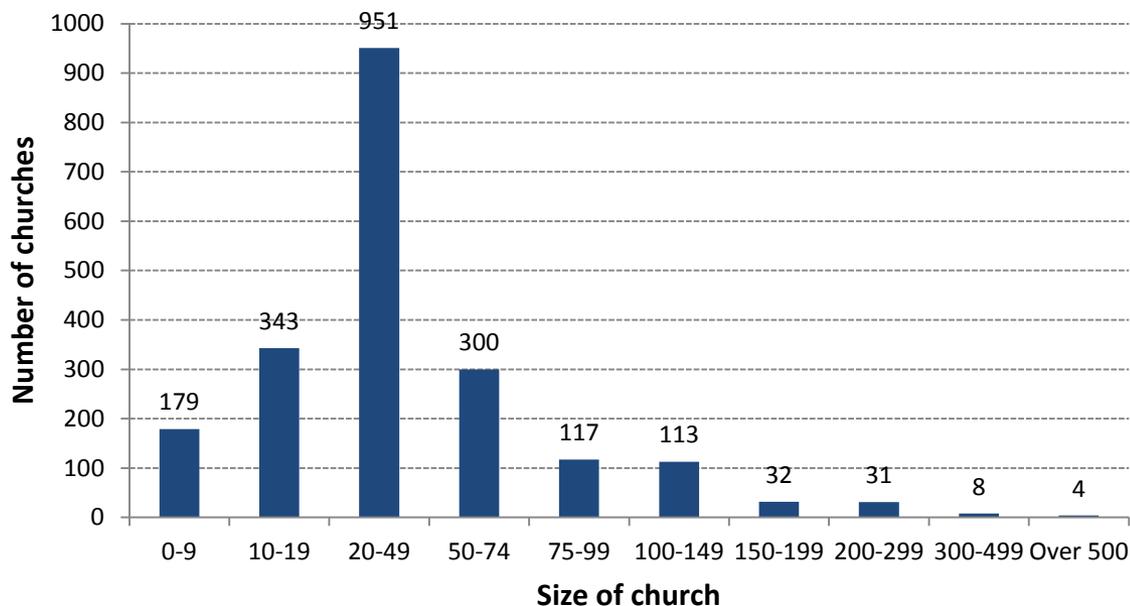


Table 5: Percentage of churches by size category

Size of church	% of churches
0-9	8.6
10-19	16.5
20-49	45.8
50-74	14.4
75-99	5.6
100-149	5.4
150-199	1.5
200-299	1.5
300-499	.4
Over 500	.2

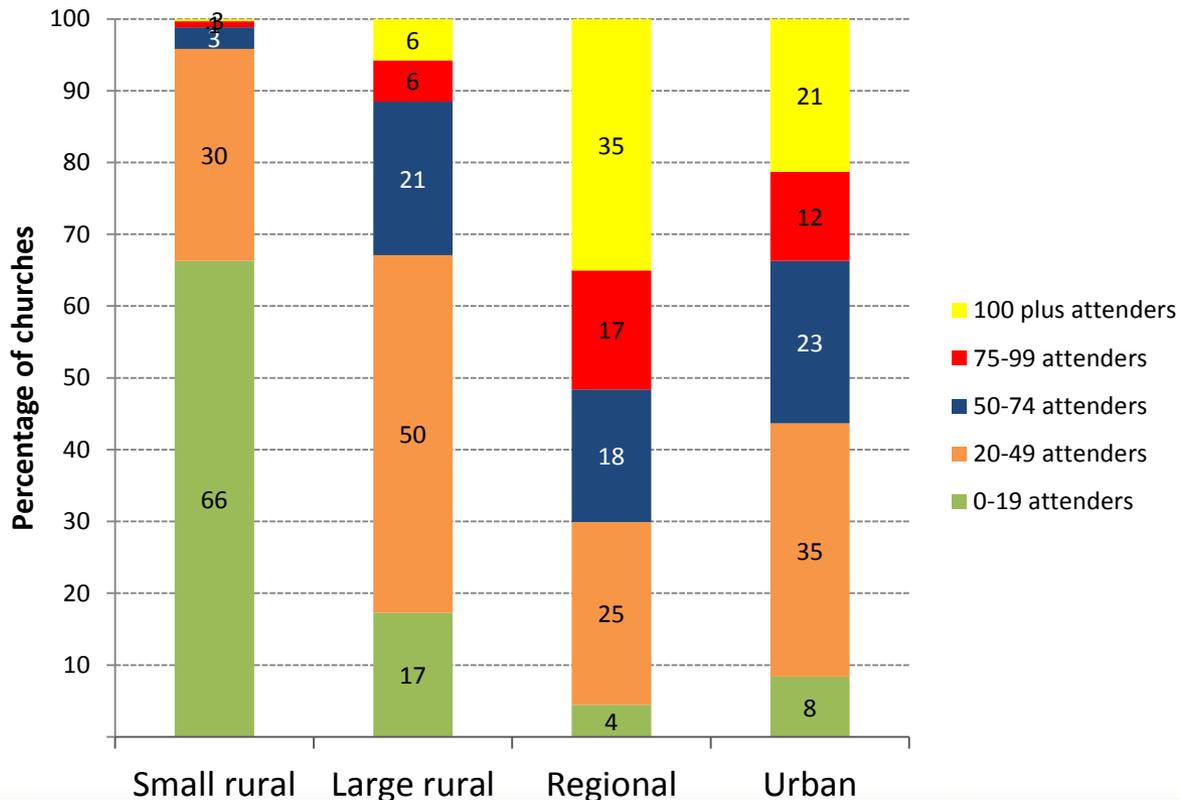


Church size by locality

Smallest churches: in small rural areas 66% of churches have less than 20 attenders.

Largest churches: in regional areas 35% of churches have 100 plus attenders

Figure 4: Size of churches by locality



Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,438 locations (2.2% missing).



Children in churches

More than a quarter of churches (542) have no children in the congregation and more than half of all churches have fewer than ten children.

Figure 5: Number of churches by number of children

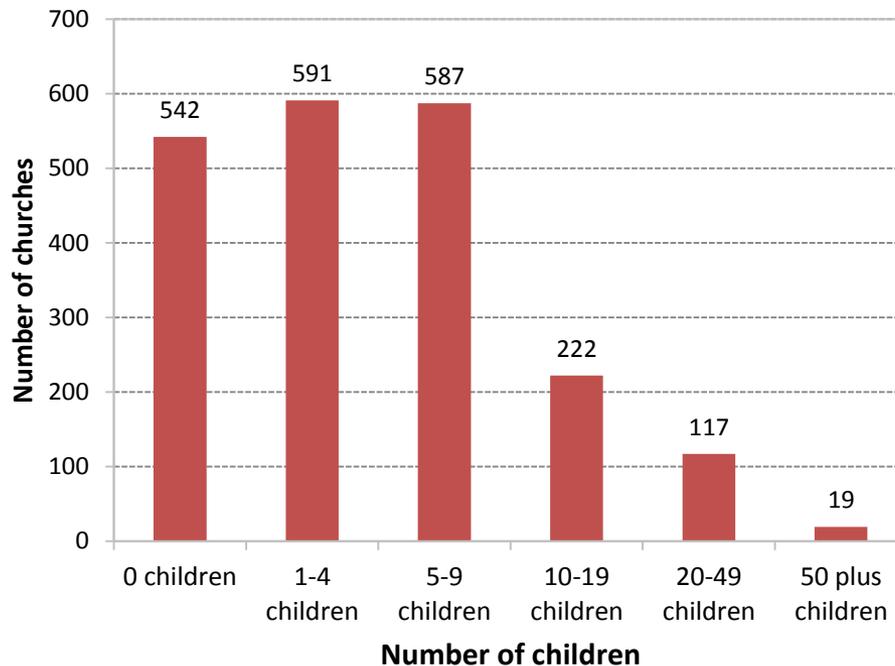
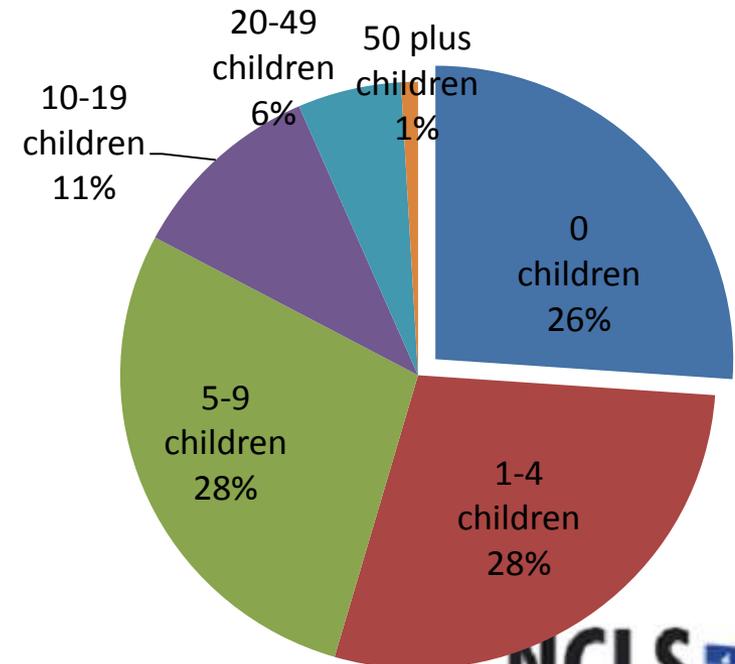


Figure 6: Percentage of churches by number of children



Sources. Figure 5: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 2,078 locations.

Figure 6: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,438 locations (2.2% missing).



Most common ethnic groups

Table 6: Most common ethnic group in churches

Ethnic group listed as one of 5 most common in church	% of churches	Ethnic group listed as one of 5 most common in church	% of churches
Anglo-Celtic/Australian	96.1	Indonesian	2.4
ATSI	5.0	Korean	6.5
New Zealander	1.2	Chinese	6.6
Tongan	5	Vietnamese	0.7
Fijian	4.5	Filipino	3.7
Rotuman	0.3	Indian/Sri Lankan	7.7
Samoan	3.3	Other Asia	8.0
Niuen	0.1	Italian	0.2
Papua New Guinea	1.6	Greek	0.2
Solomon Islands	0.1	Other Southern Europe	0.3
Other Pacific Islands	5.3	Northern or Western Europe	3.6
British	1.8	Eastern Europe/former USSR	0.5
		Middle East, North Africa	1.3
		Republic of South Africa	3.8
		Other Africa	7.1
		USA	0.3
		Central or South America	0.3

Table 7: Ethnic group listed first by churches

Ethnic group listed first by churches (top 10 groups)	# of churches
Anglo-Celtic/Australian	1358
Korean	15
Fijian	8
Tongan	7
European	6
Indonesian	6
Samoan	5
ATSI	4
Chinese	4
Vietnamese	3

NB. Some figures are likely to be under-estimates. Results suggest that low numbers of migrant-ethnic and ATSI churches responded to the Census.

Sources. Table 6: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,433 locations (2.6% missing). Table 7: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,433 locations (2.6% missing).





Churches in relationship with ATSI people

13% of local Uniting Churches have a direct relationship with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people.

By Location: The location of churches with the highest proportion of connections of this kind is in large rural areas (20%)

Table 8: Churches with direct relationship with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people by locality

Direct relationship with Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander people	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
Yes	13	10	20	16	13
No	87	90	80	84	87



Staffing

There are a total of 2,702 people working as staff in UCA local churches.

Churches gave details of up to four staff working at their location. Of these staff:

- 84% are paid
- 40% are full-time
- 53% are ordained
- 48% are aged 40-59
- 53% are male

Figure 7: Age of staff

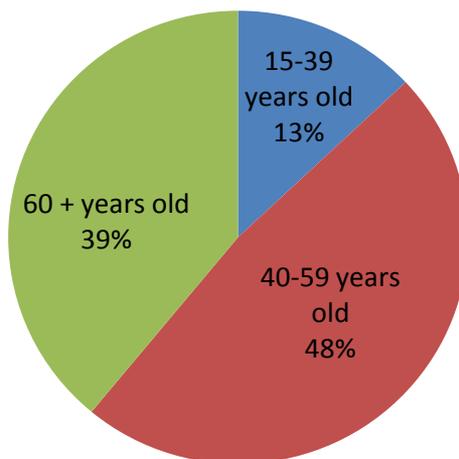


Figure 8: Gender of staff

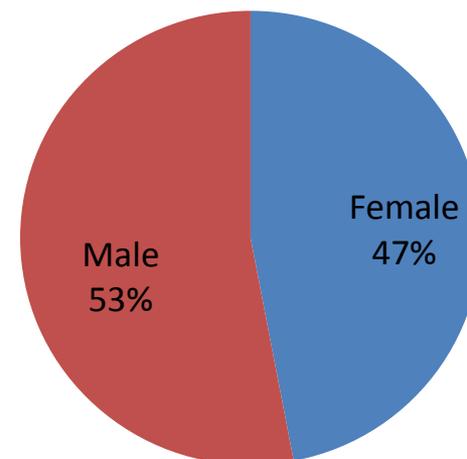


Table 9: Median (Mean) number of staff per location

	National	Small rural	Large rural	Regional	Urban
Median (Mean) number of staff per location	1 (1.30)	0 (0.55)	1 (1.11)	2 (2.24)	1 (2.18)

Sources. Figures 7 & 8 2013 UCA Census. Based on up to 1,065 locations (21.6% missing).

Table 9: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 2,078 locations.





Worship services

Number of weekly services

64% of churches hold a single weekly church service

18% of churches two or more weekly services

Services by locality

Four in 10 churches in small rural areas hold services less often than weekly (3% in regional and urban areas).

Four in 10 regional churches hold two or more weekly services.

Table 10: Weekly worship services by locality

How many church worship services are held here?	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
None	18	40	5	3	3
One	64	56	84	56	65
More than one	18	3	12	40	32

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,415 locations (3.8% missing).



Special occasions

In the previous year...

Most churches: The majority of churches (at least 50%) had no infant dedications, adult/child baptisms, confirmations or weddings.

Highest numbers: The highest numbers for rites of passage within a single church were 78 infant baptisms, 85 weddings and 63 funerals.

Table 11: Occurrence of rites of passage and other special occasions in churches in the last 12 months

Occasion	Average per church (mean)	% of churches with no such occasions (%)	Highest number in any one church (n)
Infant baptisms	2.04	43%	78
Infant dedications	0.16	92%	10
Adult/child baptisms	0.51	81%	40
Confirmations	0.57	86%	40
Weddings	1.25	60%	85
Funerals	3.66	23%	63

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,415 locations (3.8% missing). NB. Total numbers cannot be provided due to missing data from churches.



Provision of groups and activities

Most churches run small groups (68%)

The most common activity for children is Sunday School (in 40% of churches)

20% of churches run youth groups

Table 12: Provision of groups and activities in past 12 months

In the past 12 months, has this local church provided or run any of the following?	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
Small groups	68	46	81	81	84
Creche	15	4	10	31	29
Playgroups	22	6	14	47	36
Pre-schools	4	2	2	3	9
Sunday School	40	17	37	62	62
Kids club	15	10	15	24	19
Mainly Music	7	4	5	12	10
Messy Church	11	5	12	25	15
Godly Play	4	1	4	8	7
Youth groups	20	7	17	34	34
Other youth activities	5	3	3	6	8
Young adult activities	11	2	3	18	24
None of the above	21	40	12	8	6

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,382 locations (6.1% missing).



Social services

Half of all churches provided visiting (52%) and emergency relief (50%) services in the previous 12 months.

A quarter of churches did not provide social services or social action activities.

Table 13: Social services or social action activities in churches

Social services or social action activities	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
Visiting	52	36	66	71	58
Emergency relief	50	28	61	72	64
Counselling services	17	7	18	32	25
Political or social justice activities	12	2	10	20	24
Migrant support activities	11	2	7	15	25
Aged care services	9	7	12	18	8
Community development	9	5	9	7	15
Care for the disabled	6	2	5	10	9
Other accommodation	6	1	8	11	8
Children or youth support	5	2	4	11	9
Activities for unemployed people	5	1	7	5	8
Animal welfare/environmental	3	1	3	3	5
Accommodation for aged/infirm	2	1	2	7	3
Other service activities	23	16	27	30	28
No such activities	25	45	14	11	11

Source: 2013 UCA Census; 2011 NCLS. Based on 1,385 locations (5.8% missing).



Evangelistic activities

In the last 12 months...

Around half of congregations carried out evangelistic activities (48%).

Evangelistic church services/events and other unspecified evangelistic/outreach activities were most common (23-24%)

Evangelistic Bible studies took place in one in ten (11%) of churches.

Other activities, such as drop-in centres, street evangelism, doorknock programs occurred in less than 10% of Uniting Churches.

Table 14: Evangelistic activities in past 12 months by locality

Activity	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
Evangelistic church services/events	23	16	25	27	28
Evangelistic Bible studies	11	5	9	16	17
Drop-in centre	9	3	11	11	16
Street evangelism	4	2	4	5	8
Doorknock programmes	1	1	2	1	1
Other evangelistic/outreach activities	24	18	31	29	27
No such activities	52	67	45	44	40



Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,331 locations (9.5% missing).



Faith formation activities

In the last 12 months...

Faith discussion groups were the most common faith formation activity provided by churches.

Rural churches were least likely to provide any faith formation activities.

Table 15: Faith formation activities by locality

Activity	National %	Small rural %	Large rural %	Regional %	Urban %
Faith discussion groups	61	37	69	80	81
Formal Christian education	6	1	9	10	10
Faith-sharing training	6	3	8	7	9
Other activity	14	5	15	24	22
None of the above	35	58	27	16	15



Overseas mission

Commitment to developing countries: churches offer regular financial (43%) and prayer (35%) commitment.

Support of overseas mission: support is provided through UnitingWorld (60%) % through other mission agencies (59%) and directly (42%).

Mission trips: in the last 2 years the average number of people per church who have gone on mission trips is as follows:

- mission trip in Australia - 0.88 people
- short term overseas mission trip (1-6 wks) - 1.06 people
- medium term mission trip - 0.11 people
- long-term overseas mission trip (>2 years) - 0.06 people

Table 16: Commitment by churches to people in developing countries

Commitment to people in developing countries	%
Regular financial commitment	43
Regular prayer commitment	35
Personal relationships	30
Poverty/justice campaigns	26
Another kind of link	13
No links of this kind	27

Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,404 locations (4.6% missing).



Part 3: Ministers Census results



Participation in 2013 UCA Ministers Census

2,475 ministers were listed in databases provided by six Synods.
1,645 ministers completed the census, an overall response rate of 66%.
The response rate for ministers with working email addresses was 82% (in NSW). Ministers without email addresses (mainly retirees) are mostly absent from the results.

Table 17: Participation in the 2013 UCA Ministers Census

Synod	Ministers participating	Total ministers	Response rate %
NSW/ACT	428	707	61
Northern Synod	24	45	53
Qld	197	292	67
SA	279	382	73
Vic/Tas	577	861	67
WA	136	184	74

Source: 2013 UCA Census and databases provided by Synods.



Demographic profile of active ministers

Of all active ministers...

Gender:

Some 68% are male.

Age:

- 6% are 20-39 years old
- 59% are 40 to 59 years
- 35% are 60 to 79 years old
- 0% are 80 years and over.

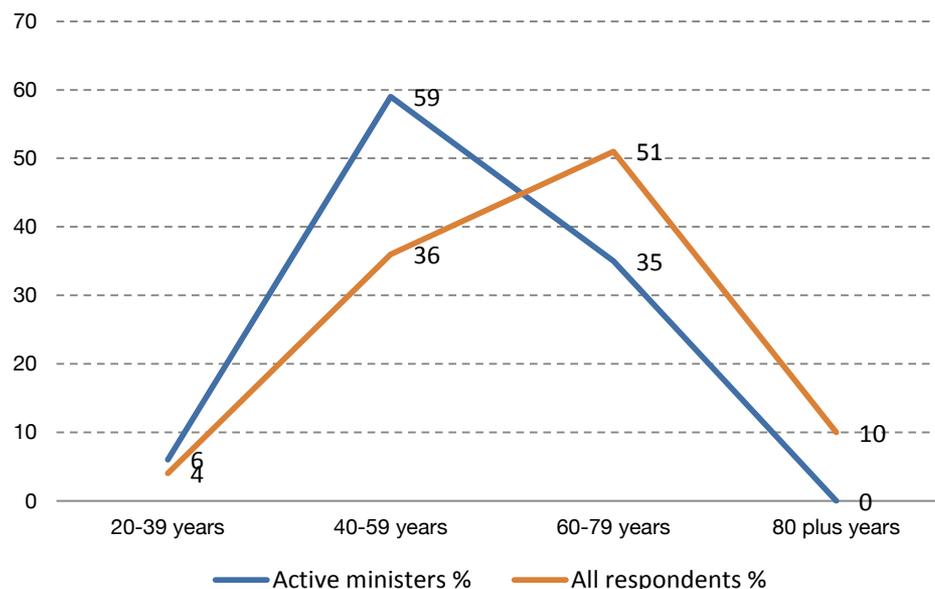
Ethnicity:

- 72% born in Australia
- 14% born in an English-speaking country
- 14% born in a non-English speaking country

Languages:

- Nearly a quarter (23%) speaks a language other than English
- 12% don't have English as their first language.

Figure 9: Age Profile of UCA Ministers





Education of active ministers

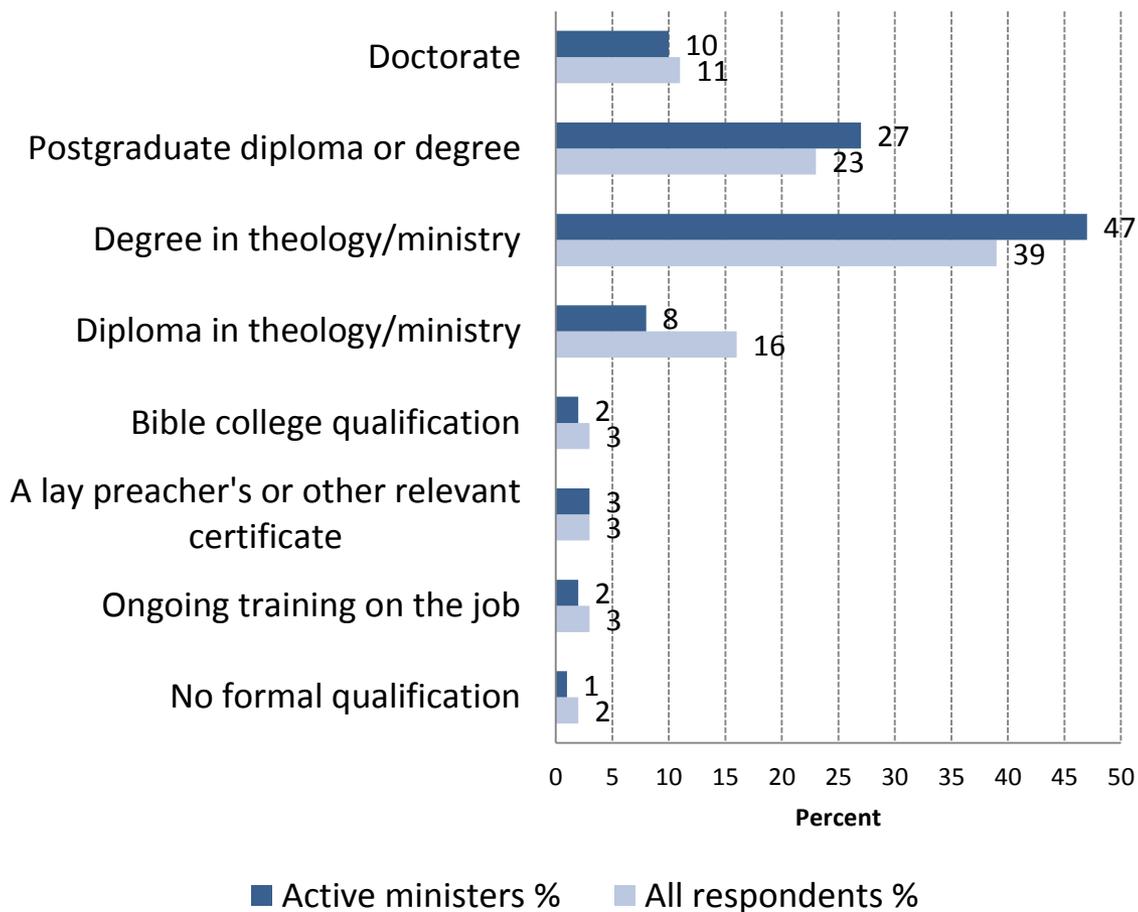
Figure 10: Theological Education of UCA Ministers

Education:

87% of active ministers have completed a university degree.

Theological education:

Almost three quarters (73%) of active UCA ministers have a degree or higher in theology/ministry.





Ordination of active ministers

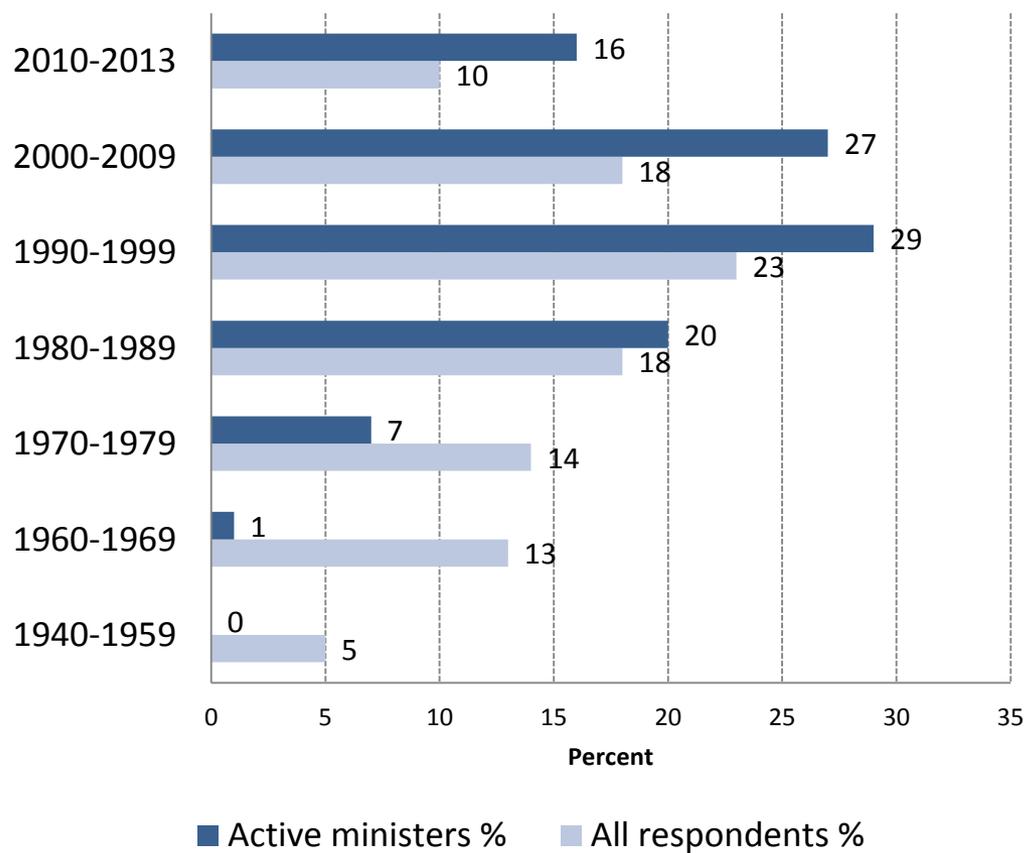
Ordination/commissioning:

Almost 8 in 10 ministers (75%) have been ordained as Ministers of the Word in the United Church. Some 7% have been ordained by another denomination.

Table 18: Type of Ordination/Commissioning of UCA Ministers

Ordination/commissioning/recognition	Active ministers %
Minister of the Word	75
Deacon	6
Youth Worker	0
Pastor	5
Lay Preacher	1
Ordained by another denomination	7
Not been ordained	2

Figure 11: Year of Ordination/Commissioning of UCA Ministers



Sources. Table 18: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,638 ministers (0.4% missing).

Figure 11: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,545 ministers (0.2% missing).



Placements and ministries

Placements

58% of United Church ministers are either in placement or looking for one, leaving the other 42% 'inactive'.

92% of those not retired are in placement or looking for one.

7 in 10 ministers in placement are in a single placement.

Non-placement types of ministry

33% of retired ministers provided supply ministry in the previous 12 months.

Table 19: Participating ministers not retired and retired

	National %	Not retired %	Retired %
In placement	54	86	2
In placement, looking for new placement	2	3	0
Not in placement but looking for one	3	4	1
"Active" total	58	92	4
Not in a placement and not looking ("inactive")	42	8	96

Table 20: Non-placement types of ministry by active and retired

	National %	Active %	Retired %
Minister in association	6	4	10
Supply ministry	18	8	33
Intentional interim ministry	2	1	2
None of the above	78	88	61

Sources. Table 19: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,615 ministers (1.8% missing).

Table 20: Source: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 1,585 ministers (3.6% missing).



Placement details

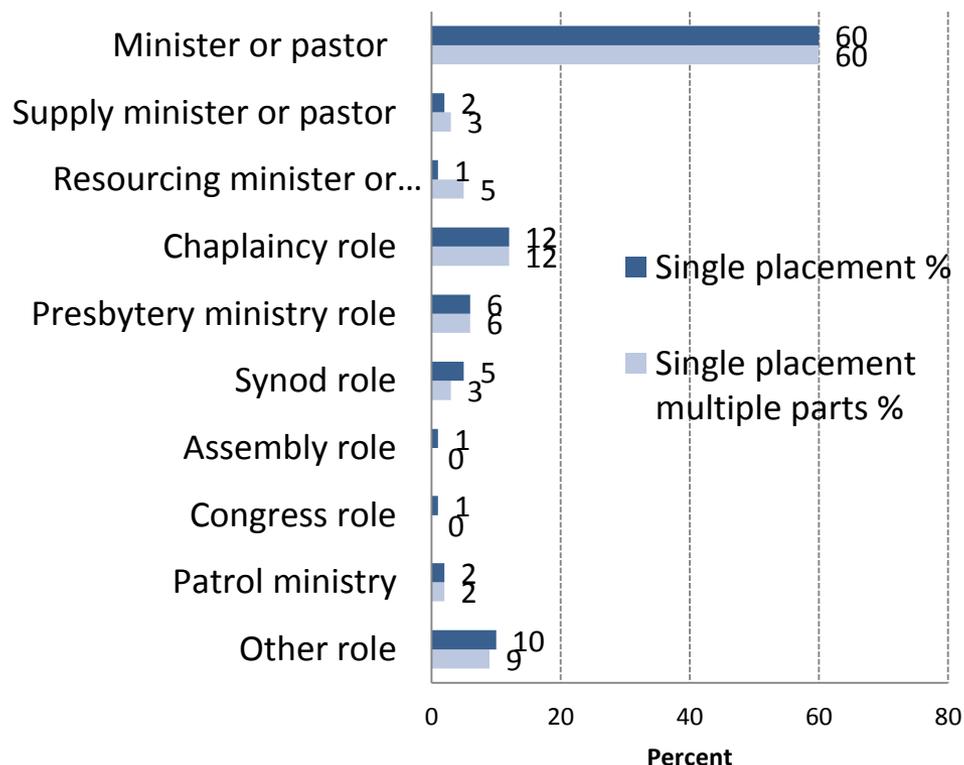
Placement type

12% of all ministers in placement are in a Chaplaincy role, 6% are in a Presbytery ministry role, and 1% are in an Assembly role.

Payment

85% of ministers in a single placement and 91% in multi-part placement receive full payment.

Figure 12: Type of placement for UCA Ministers



Sources. Figure 12: 2013 UCA Census. Based on 822 ministers (1.6% missing).



Part 4: Considerations for future census rounds



Considerations for future census rounds

To improve response rates and inclusion:

Phone call follow-ups of non-responding congregations.

Postal follow-ups of ministers without email addresses.

Strategy to maximise participation by minority migrant ethnic congregations.

Strategy to maximise participation by UAICC congregations and ministers.

To better map the contribution of retired ministers:

Increase the scope of ministry activities in the Ministers Census.

To facilitate the keeping of national statistics:

A common database of congregations and ministers, or databases that are consistently formatted across Synods.



About 2013 UCA Census and NCLS Research

The 2013 ACC Census was conducted by the NCLS Research team:

Dr Ruth Powell (Director) with Dr Miriam Pepper, supported by Nicole Hancock, Sam Sterland, Dr Claudia Mollidor, Chandrika Chinnadurai, Amelia Vaeafisi, and Allison Forrest, with the support of Uniting Church Assembly staff including: Rev Professor Andrew Dutney (President) , Annette Latham, and Matt Pulford.

NCLS Research is a joint project of several denominational partners. Established in the early 1990s, it is a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities. The most well-known project is the five-yearly National Church Life Survey. The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attenders, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations) every census year since 1991. The survey covers a wide range of areas of religious faith and practice and social concern.

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Citation for this report:

Powell, R., Pepper, M., Hancock, R., Sterland, S. and Mollidor, C., (2014) 2013 Uniting Church Census of Congregations and Ministers Technical Report. NCLS Commissioned Report. Sydney: NCLS Research.

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