

Church & Faith Trends

A Publication of The Centre for Research on Canadian Evangelicalism
// An Initiative of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Evangelism Survey 2007

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The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) undertook the 2007 Evangelism Survey to identify effective means of evangelism. The survey was designed in particular to measure the priority that pastors and church leaders placed on evangelism and to see how that priority played out in evangelistic methods and in evangelistic effectiveness.

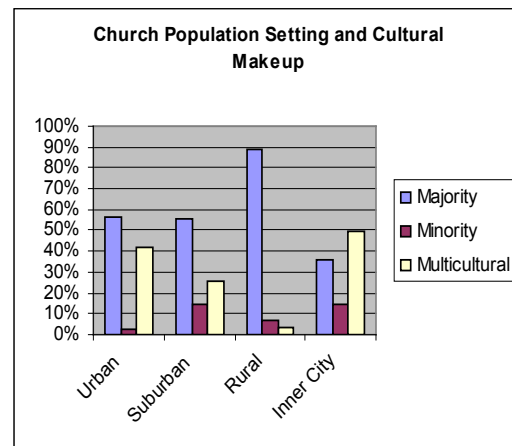
Methods

Data was collected using the online survey tool SurveyMonkey.com. The survey was sent by e-mail to the leaders of denominations affiliated with the EFC. These leaders were asked to forward the survey on to the pastors within their denominations. Responses came from pastors in 32 denominations and 4 independent churches; responses from three denominations made up 42% of the final sample. Between April 24 and June 15, 2007, there were 139 survey responses collected, of which 111 were substantially complete and useful for analysis. Anonymous responses or substantially incomplete responses were not scored, nor were outliers.

Given that the sample size for this survey was small (n=111) and that the computations were based on assignments to ranges of values, the reader is cautioned against drawing conclusions of great precision.

Church Profiles

Figure 1. Church population setting and cultural makeup



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Respondents reported that their churches' population was as follows: majority culture 61%, minority culture 8%, and multicultural 29%. Churches were more likely to be reported as minority culture or multicultural if they were in an urban or inner city population setting (figure 1).

Most of the respondents (64%) reported that their churches had been in existence for more than 20 years (table 2). Just less than half the churches had an average Sunday attendance of more than 100, with the largest churches reporting attendance of more than 500 (table 3).

Table 1. Population settings of churches

	Number of Churches	Percentage
Inner City	14	13%
Urban	41	37%
Suburban	27	24%
Rural	28	25%
NA	1	1%
Total	111	100%

Table 2. Age of church

Years	Number of churches	Percentage
0–5 years	11	10%
6–10 years	7	6%
11–15 years	13	12%
16–20 years	8	7%
20+ years	71	64%
NA	1	1%
Total	111	100%

Table 3. Average Sunday attendance (all ages)

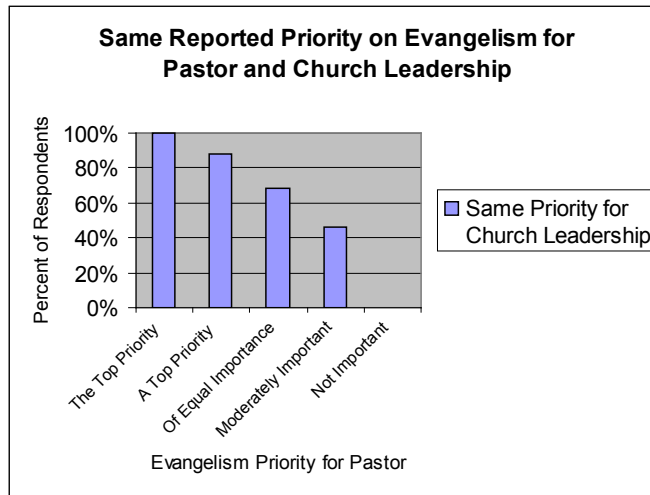
Attendance	Number of churches	Percentage
0–50	28	25%
51–75	15	14%
76–100	16	15%
101–150	19	17%
151–300	19	17%
301–500	7	6%
500+	5	5%
NA	2	1%
Total	111	100%

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Evangelism as a Priority

Figure 2. Equivalent evangelism priority for pastor and church leadership



Respondents were surveyed about the priority they gave to evangelism and the priority given to evangelism by their local church leaders (figure 2). They were given six possible answers: “The Top Priority,” “A Top Priority,” “Of Equal Importance,” “Moderately Important,” and “Not Important.” These terms were not defined for the respondents beyond the relative ranking that is suggested by the order of their presentation. None of the respondents indicated “Not Important” for themselves personally, although 5 indicated it was not a priority for their church leaders.

Pastors reported that where there is agreement on the priority of evangelism between the pastor and church leaders, it occurs most often when the priority on evangelism is high. Most pastors, however, reported placing a higher priority on evangelism than did their church leadership. Evangelism was reported as “The Top Priority” only by pastors in churches that were no more than 10 years old (table 4). Respondents reported that 68% of pastors and 62% of church leaders made evangelism either “A Top Priority” or a priority “Of Equal Importance.” Respondents reported that church leadership was twice as likely as themselves to give only moderate importance to evangelism.

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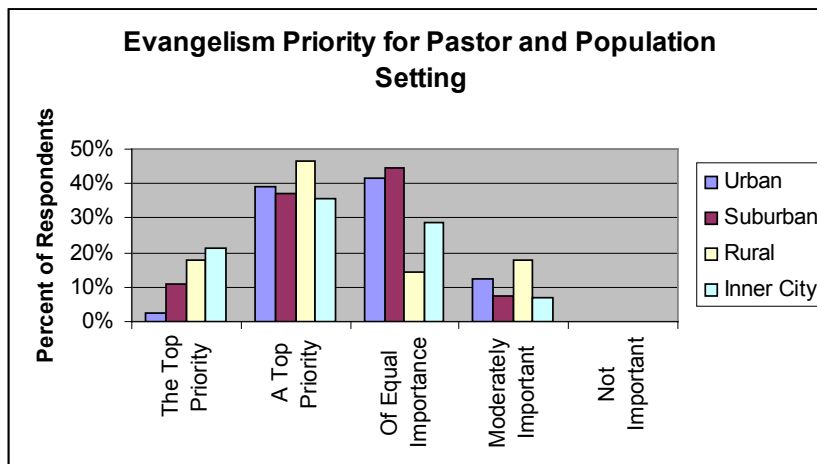
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Table 4. Priority of evangelism for pastors (P) and their church leaders (CL), by age of church

Age of Church (years)	Number of pastors reporting this priority for evangelism for themselves or for their local church leaders											
	The Top Priority		A Top Priority		Of Equal Importance		Moderately Important		Not Important		NA	
	P	CL	P	CL	P	CL	P	CL	P	CL	P	CL
0-5	4	3	2	1	5	5	0	2	0	0	0	0
6-10	4	2	2	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
11-15	0	0	5	3	6	7	1	2	0	0	1	1
16-20	2	0	2	2	3	3	1	3	0	0	0	0
20+	2	0	32	16	17	28	11	20	0	3	4	3
NA	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	12	5	44	24	32	45	13	28	0	4	5	4

Pastors in rural and inner-city population settings were more likely to report placing a high priority on evangelism. Sixty-four percent of pastors in rural population settings reported giving evangelism either “The Top Priority” or “A Top Priority” (figure 3). Pastors in smaller churches were also more likely to report making evangelism “The Top Priority.”

Figure 3. Priority of evangelism for pastor, by population setting



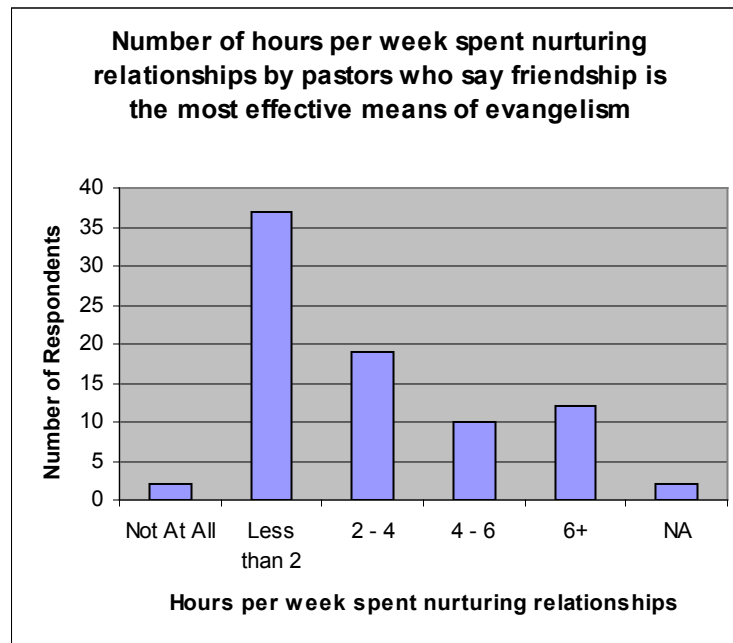
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Friendship

Seventy-four percent of respondents reported that friendship was the most effective means of evangelism. The accompanying graph shows, however, that most of those pastors reported spending little time nurturing relationships (figure 4). Respondents reported that 59% of their congregants spend 2 hours or less per week nurturing relationships and 77% spent 4 hours or less per week. There does not seem to be any positive relationship between the reported number of hours congregants spent nurturing relationships and the number of reported first-time responses to Christ in the last 12 months. Seventy-two percent of respondents reporting ten or more first-time responses to Christ in the past 12 months also reported that their congregants spend 2 hours or less per week nurturing relationships. Curiously, respondents also reported that “relational” evangelism (57%) and “peer-to-peer” evangelism (49%) were the methods most often used.

Figure 4. Hours per week spent nurturing relationships by pastors who say friendship is the most effective means of evangelism



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Methods of Evangelism

There was generally a large discrepancy between the rates at which respondents said methods of evangelism were generally believed to be effective and the rates at which they said they were effective in their church. All methods were reported to be effective in the respondents' churches less frequently than they were reported to be thought to be effective generally. Table 5 lists the top ten methods that were reported to be effective.

Table 5. Perceived effectiveness of methods of evangelism

Method of Evangelism ^a (111 responses)	Number of pastors reporting they believe the method to be generally effective	Number of pastors reporting they believe the method to be effective in their churches
Relational	85	63
Peer-to-peer	92	54
Preaching in church services	58	34
Evangelistic Bible study/Alpha	74	33
Sunday school/Christian education/evangelism clubs	50	26
Lifestyle	85	26
Personal testimony	79	20

^aRespondents were asked to indicate all methods of evangelism they considered effective and all methods that they found to be effective in their own churches.

The most common method reported to be used to give people opportunity to respond to Christ in a worship service was for them to meet either the pastor or a friend after the service (table 6).

Table 6. Opportunities for responding to Christ

Method	Pastors reporting method	
	Number	Percentage
Meet after the service	69	63%
Meet with a friend	42	38%
Go forward (altar call)	41	37%
Raise hand	33	30%
Complete a response card	19	18%
Other	18	16%
Stand publicly	14	13%

^aPastors were asked, "How do you intentionally give opportunity for people to respond to Christ? (Check all that apply)"

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Respondents reported that the most common way of letting people know that someone had responded to Christ was to “verbally announce” it in a service (table 7). Thirty-five percent specified other ways, which included “It’s not something we notify people about,” “this is an icky question,” “we don’t let them know,” “baptism,” “prayers of celebration,” “encourage the person to share” and “at a service where they become members.”

Table 7. Methods of making known a response to Christ

Method	Pastors Reporting Method	
	Number	Percentage
Verbally announce	28	25%
Identify or have person self-identify	25	23%
General note in bulletin	3	3%
Other (please specify)	39	35%
NA	16	14%

^aPastors were asked, “How do you let people in the church know when someone has responded to Christ?”

There was clearly a reported tendency toward making a person’s response to Christ a private event. Close to half of respondents were reluctant to take initiative in letting the congregation know that someone has responded to Christ.

The types of evangelistic outreach that were most commonly reported to be ineffective were literature distribution, door-to-door evangelism, and mass meetings.

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Evangelistic Effectiveness

Responses suggest that on a per capita basis smaller churches are more effective at evangelism than larger churches. The results comparing church size and first-time decisions for Christ in the last 12 months are shown in table 8 below.

Table 8. First-time decisions for Christ, by average Sunday morning attendance

Average Sunday Morning Attendance	First-Time Decisions Reported (Total Number)	First-Time Decisions (Number per Church)	Approximate Average Sunday Morning Attendance per First-Time Decision
0–50 (28 churches)	48	1.7	15
51–75 (15 churches)	59	3.9	16
76–100 (16 churches)	42	2.6	34
101–150 (19 churches)	84	4.4	28
151–300 (19 churches)	94	4.9	45
301–500 (7 churches)	67	9.6	42
500+ (5 churches)	49	9.8	51

^aData are reported for the previous 12 months.

^bThe following assignments were used for numerical computations for church size: “0–50”=25, “51–75”=63, “76–100”=88, “101–150”=125, “151–300”=225, “301–500”=400, “500+”=500.

Fifty-one percent of respondents reported having an evangelist other than themselves in their congregation. On average, churches without an evangelist reported three people making a first-time decision for Christ in the last 12 months and those with an evangelist reported an average of six people making the same decision.

Table 9. First-time decisions for Christ, by frequency of evangelistic messages

How often do you give an evangelistic message in a weekend service?		First-Time Decisions Reported (Number)	First-Time Decisions Reported (Average Number per Church)
Monthly	23%	134	5.2
Occasionally	22%	102	4.2
Every Sunday	20%	111	5.0
Quarterly	12%	47	3.9
Every other week	11%	47	3.6
NA	9%	6	2.0
Never	3%	2	0.7
Once a year	1%	2	0.6

^aData are reported for the previous 12 months.

Based on reported data, giving evangelistic messages “Monthly” and “Every Sunday” are equally effective (table 9).

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Pastors who reported making evangelism “The Top Priority” reported two kinds of results with respect to first-time responses to Christ in the last 12 months. They tended either to report no responses or to report eight or more responses which suggests that a reported high priority on evangelism does not necessarily translate into evangelistic effectiveness. However, most pastors who reported eight or more first-time responses to Christ in the last 12 months also reported making evangelism at least “A Top Priority” or a priority “Of Equal Importance” (table 10).

Table 10. Reported first-time decisions for Christ, by priority of evangelism for pastor

Priority of Evangelism for Pastor	Number of Pastors	First-Time Decisions ^a (Number)	First-Time Decisions ^a (Number per Church)
The Top Priority	12	43	3.6
A Top Priority	44	212	4.8
Of Equal Importance	37	154	4.1
Moderately Important	13	35	2.7
Not Important	0	0	0.0
NA	5	6	1.1

^aData are reported for the previous 12 months

Pastors who reported that evangelism was “A Top Priority” or “Of Equal Importance” also reported greater evangelistic effectiveness than did those who said evangelism was “The Top Priority.”

Pastors reported slightly more baptisms than first time decisions for Christ in the last 12 months (tables 11 and 12).

Table 11. Baptisms during previous 12 months

Baptisms Reported	Pastors Responding	
	Number	Percentage
None	19	17%
1–3	32	29%
4–6	23	21%
7–10	12	11%
10+	14	13%
NA	11	10%

Table 12. First time decisions for Christ in the last 12 months

First time decisions	Pastors Responding	
	Number	Percentage
None	16	14%
1–3	38	34%
4–7	17	15%
8–10	11	10%
10+	18	16%
NA	11	10%

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53% of pastors reported that half or fewer of those who made decisions for Christ were contributing members of their congregations one year later (table 13).

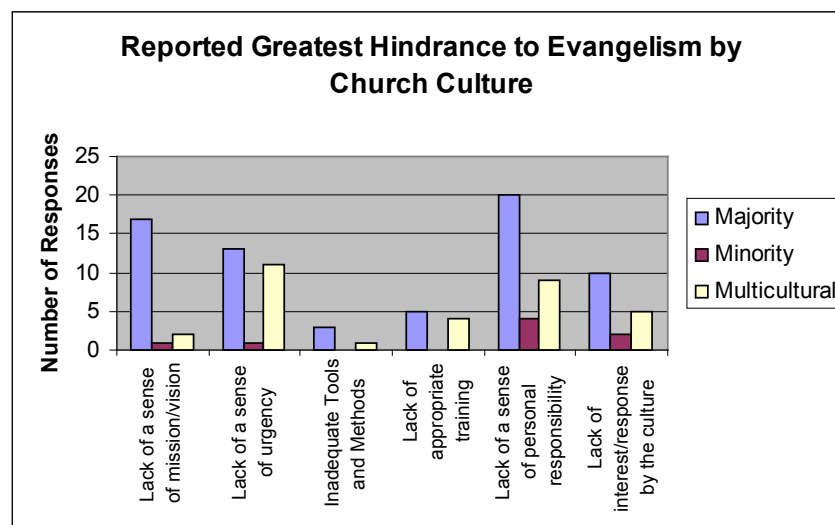
Table 13. One-year follow-through of persons responding to Christ

Percentage of persons responding to Christ who are contributing members after 1 year	Pastors Responding ^a	
	Number	Percentage
Less than 10%	26	23%
11%–25%	10	9%
26%–50%	23	21%
51%–75%	20	18%
76%–100%	14	13%
NA	18	16%

^aPastors were asked, “What percentage of those who respond to Christ through your church’s evangelistic efforts are contributing members of your congregation one year later?”

Respondents reported that evangelism was hindered more by a Christian’s “lack of a sense of vision/mission,” “lack of a sense of urgency” and “lack of a sense of personal responsibility” than any absence of training or interest on the part of the culture (figure 5).

Figure 5. Reported hindrances to evangelism by church culture



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Equipping and Discipleship

Eighty-five percent of respondents believe that evangelism is the responsibility of all Christians, and 84% feel that evangelistic effectiveness in Canada is poor.

Pastors reported motivating their congregations to be involved in evangelism most often through “teaching and preaching” and “arranging opportunities to be involved in the community” (table 14).

Table 14. Methods of motivating congregational involvement in evangelism

Method	Pastors Responding	
	Number	Percentage
Teach and preach vision of evangelism	78	70%
Arrange opportunities to be involved in the community	58	52%
Provide special events and services	47	42%
Allow people to plan and lead their own efforts	39	35%
Regularly share effectiveness of evangelism in your church	35	32%
Develop and communicate our values, mission and vision	20	18%

^aPastors were asked, “How do you mobilize/motivate your congregation to be involved in evangelism? (Check all that apply.)”

Table 15. Perceived effectiveness of methods of equipping for evangelism

Method	Pastors Reporting Method as Most Effective	
	Number	Percentage
Preaching and teaching	37	33%
Mentoring	27	24%
Observation/example	12	11%
Discipleship	11	10%
Seminars / Courses	5	5%
Other	6	5%
NA	13	12%

^aPastors were asked, “What do you find to be the most effective way to equip people for evangelism?”

Pastors reported “preaching and teaching” as being the most effective method of equipping people for evangelism and the method they most often use in equipping (table 15).

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Respondents reported that on average the presence of an evangelist other than the pastor in a congregation doubles the number of first-time decisions in a congregation from three to six. Only 15% of respondents reported equipping people within their congregation to be evangelists (table 16).

Table 16. Identification of evangelists

Method	Pastors Reporting Method	
	Number	Percentage
Observation—they are doing evangelism	54	49%
Through equipping efforts	18	16%
Gift analysis	16	14%
Self-identification	12	11%
NA	11	10%

^aPastors were asked, “How do you identify evangelists in your church?”

Observations

Pastors of small, rural, and younger congregations were more likely to make evangelism “The Top Priority.” Smaller churches seem on a per capita basis to be more evangelistically effective than larger churches. Leadership in a church is more likely to be united in the priority it gives to evangelism if that priority is high.

Most pastors believe that friendship or peer-to-peer evangelism are the most effective means of evangelism. However, neither pastors nor their congregants seem to place a priority on cultivating relationships. Yet it is one-on-one methods of evangelism that respondents reported to be most effective. Furthermore, there is no discernible relationship in the data collected between time spent cultivating relationships and evangelistic effectiveness. The nature and quality of a relationship is hard to determine, of course—not least because the data on time spent nurturing relationship show little differentiation. Respondents reported that most people are not giving attention to developing relationships. We can conclude that respondents believe relational one-on-one evangelism would be effective if Christians took the time to cultivate relationships.

There is a substantial concern that a person be afforded privacy in responding to Christ and that the person who has responded be the one to notify the church that he or she has taken this step.

Methods of evangelism that were reported to fail were most often were those that did not encourage Christians to form personal relationships with people they sought to introduce to Christ.

Most equipping efforts for evangelism are based on preaching and teaching, and evangelists are identified most often through observation. Preaching and teaching is believed to be effective, but our data will not allow us to determine a relationship between this teaching and preaching and the subsequent observation that identifies an evangelist. However, the presence of an evangelist besides the pastor in a church was reported to substantially increase a church’s evangelistic effectiveness.

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Preaching weekly evangelistic messages was not reported to be more effective than preaching monthly evangelistic messages.

Most pastors rate evangelistic effectiveness in Canada as poor. It is motivation that they most often identify as the source of this malaise, not a lack of training and equipping.

Conclusions

The survey could be improved with better initial design and testing. Some of the scales were confusing and some terms such as “urban” and “inner city” needed to be better defined and differentiated. With that said, the survey is still a useful glimpse into the state of evangelism in Canada as seen through pastors’ eyes.

In equipping congregants for evangelism, pastors seem to prefer methods such as “preaching and teaching” that allow them to reach the most people with the least investment of time. Evangelists make a discernible difference in the effectiveness of evangelism in a church, but little effort is reported to be made to actively train and raise up evangelists.

The survey results betray a high level of pastoral frustration with the current state of evangelism in Canada. Pastors report that it is motivation, not training, that is lacking. They seem to be in agreement that peer-to-peer or relational evangelistic methods are the most effective. However, even when evangelism is reported to be a priority and relational evangelism is believed to be the best method, follow-through is low. This result holds true for pastors as well as congregants. A lack of time for evangelism seems to be an overarching theme, but time is allocated according to priorities. If any conclusion is to be drawn from this survey, it is that evangelism is likely to be more effective if Christians make more time to cultivate the personal relationships that lead to opportunities to share the Good News.