

Census of Pentecostal Churchgoers in Nigeria

NPCRC Technical Report #N1104

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9 July 2012

Executive Summary

The Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre collected information from Pentecostal Churches across Nigerian with the intent of identifying the personal characteristics of Pentecostal churchgoers and their personal involvement in the churches they attend. A questionnaire was distributed to a representative sample of Pentecostal churchgoers across Nigeria. Analysis of the questionnaire found the following:

- **Gender.** Slightly more females (53%) than males (47%) attended Pentecostal churches.
- **Age.** Predominately youth attended the Pentecostal services with 65% of attendees being 37 years and younger.
- **Marital Status.** A slight majority of Pentecostal churchgoers are married (54%) with only 1% report being divorced.
- **Educational Status.** Slightly less than half of the sample have completed more than a secondary school certificate, though 17% of the sample reported still being students.
- **Socioeconomic Status.** Most Pentecostal churchgoers tend to have lower socioeconomic status.
- **Zone of Origin.** Most Pentecostal churchgoers in northern Nigeria trace their ancestry from southern Nigeria.
- **Church Attendance.** Most Pentecostal churchgoers currently attend service every Sunday and during the week (87%). They reported attending church more frequently at their current Pentecostal church than they did at their previous church.
- **Length of Involvement.** The average length of time that Pentecostal churchgoers attended their current church was 12.4 years.
- **Religious Background.** Most Pentecostal churchgoers attended a Pentecostal church growing up (61%). Only 5% of Pentecostals converted from either Islam or African Traditional Religion. Most Pentecostals who previously attended mainline churches came from either the Anglican or Catholic denominations.
- **Introduction to the Church.** Most Pentecostals were introduced to the church through a personal relationship, predominantly a family member.
- **Church Media.** Almost half of Pentecostal churchgoers watch religious television every week. Religious DVDs and books were used with approximately the same frequency, whereas visiting religious websites is still relatively uncommon among Nigerian Pentecostal churchgoers.
- **Church Activities.** The most frequent factor that drew an individual to a Pentecostal church was that the individual grew up within the church. Lively worship was a strong contributing factor, as well as being invited to a service or church program. In terms of church ministries, a majority of the respondents indicated benefitting from the teaching of the church (61%), followed by counseling (23%).

Introduction

The Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre collected information from Pentecostal Churches across Nigeria with the intent of identifying the personal characteristics of Pentecostal churchgoers and their personal involvement in the churches they attend. The research was also aimed at developing accurate statistics for the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in the country. The research questions comprising of the following variables were adapted into a questionnaire that was administered to Pentecostal churchgoers to develop a better understanding of Pentecostals.

Research Questions. What are the demographic characteristics of Pentecostal churchgoers according to the following variables?

- Gender
- Age
- Marital Status
- Educational Status
- Socioeconomic Status
- Zone of Origin
- Church Attendance
- Length of Involvement
- Religious Background
- Introduction to the Church
- Church Media
- Church Activities

Methods

Participants

The population for this study consisted of individuals ages 18 and over who attended a Pentecostal church on a given Sunday. To collect information from a representative sample of Pentecostal churchgoers, a multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. The 36 states in Nigeria were divided into the 6 geopolitical zones in the nation. One state from every geopolitical zone was randomly selected using a random number table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Randomly Selected States

| Geopolitical Zone | Randomly Selected State | Number of Churches Sampled | Number of Participants |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| South South | River | 12 | 492 |
| South East | Anambra | 2 | 71 |
| South West | Ogun | 7 | 94 |
| North Central | Nasarawa | 3 | 85 |
| North East | Adamawa | 6 | 126 |
| North West | Katsina | 4 | 70 |
| Total | | 34 | 938 |

Each state in Nigeria is divided into Local Government Areas (LGA). Therefore, the second stage of sampling consisted of sampling three LGAs within each selected state. In each state, the state capital LGA was automatically selected because the state capital is typically the most urban LGA within the state. Since Pentecostal churches tend to cluster in urban areas, this was judged to be appropriate. Then two additional LGAs were randomly selected within the state.

The next stage of sampling consisted of selection of churches. Once the LGAs were selected, researchers met with church officials from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) within the state to compile a comprehensive list of Pentecostal churches in the selected LGAs. From this list, individual Pentecostal churches were selected based on stratified sampling. The researchers made an effort to select both urban and rural churches, large and small churches, and churches from the various types of Pentecostal churches (e.g., classical Pentecostal, neo-Pentecostal, etc.)

Once the churches were selected, 25 percent of all people attending service that Sunday, including visitors, were selected through systematic sampling. To achieve this, the researchers distributed questionnaires to every fourth person attending the service.

The participants had to be aged 18 years and above. After coding the questionnaires, any questionnaire completed by a respondent under 18 years was excluded from analysis. A total of 22 questionnaires were removed because the respondent was under the age of 18. The final sample consisted of 938 Pentecostal churchgoers in 34 Pentecostal churches in six states distributed throughout Nigeria.

Instrument

The questionnaire was designed to collect information from Pentecostal churchgoers across Nigeria to develop an accurate understanding of the individuals who attend Pentecostal churches. The questionnaire was made up of 4 sections. The first section of the questionnaire asked about the background information of respondents such as their age, sex, marital status, and educational qualification. The second section asked about participants' church membership and church participation with questions asking how long they had been attending their current church, their religious background growing up and the other churches they had attended in the past. The third section asked about the use of church media such as whether they listen to religious CD's or DVDs, read Christian books, etc. The final section was developed to find out the factors that attracted participants to the Pentecostal church and what kept them attending that church.

Procedure

In order to distribute the questionnaire in the selected sampled churches, the research assistants attended a Sunday morning service. The research assistants arrived at the church 30 minutes before the service to meet with the ushers to enlist their assistance in distributing the questionnaires. Generally, when it was time to distribute the questionnaires, the church pastor introduced the researcher to the congregation and allowed the researcher to explain the research study. In collaboration with the ushers, every fourth person in the church over the age of 18 received the questionnaire.¹ The questionnaire was completed on the spot and returned to the researcher and/or ushers at the end of the church service.

Results

The purpose of the research study was to determine the demographic characteristics of Pentecostal churchgoers. Figures 1, 2, 3, 4 illustrate the distribution of churchgoers by gender, age, marital status, and education respectively.

¹ A few alternate distribution procedures were used depending on the particular church needs, such as directing every fourth churchgoer to stay after service to complete the questionnaire. Regardless, systematic sampling was followed in every church whereby every fourth churchgoer was given a questionnaire to complete.

Figure 1. Gender of Pentecostal Churchgoers.

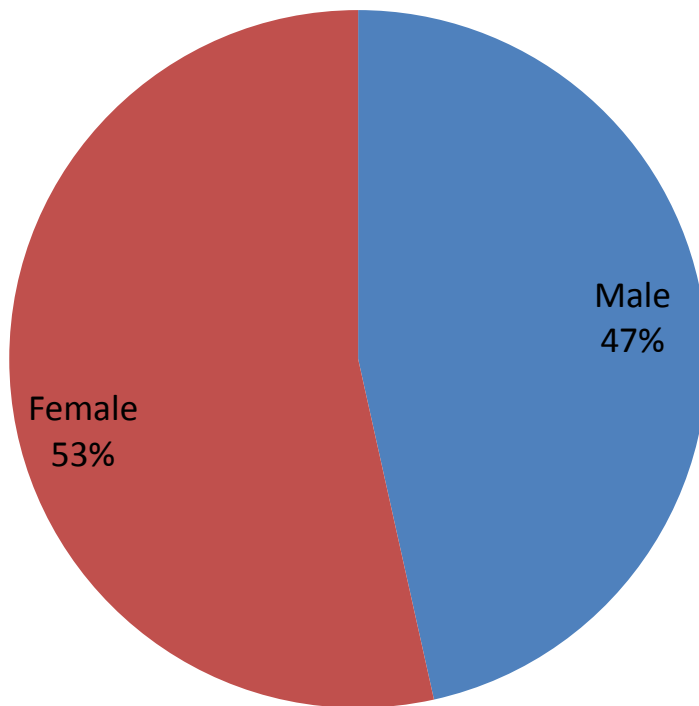


Figure 2. Age of Pentecostal Churchgoers in years.

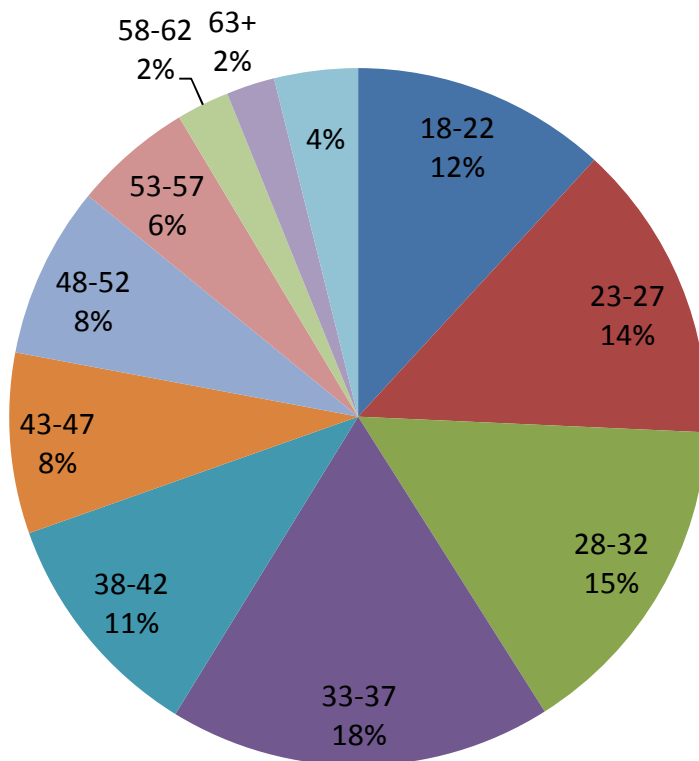


Figure 1 demonstrates that slightly more females attend Pentecostal churches than males. Figure 2 reveals that the typical Pentecostal churchgoer is rather young. Approximately 65% of Pentecostal churchgoers are 37 years and below, what would be considered a youth in Nigeria.

In terms of marital status, Figure 3 shows that the sample is rather evenly split between being married and single, though there are more married individuals. Considering that almost two-thirds of the sample is considered a youth, many of the Pentecostal churchgoers are still within the typical age-range of getting married in Nigeria. Of interest, only 1% of the participants reported that they were divorced or separated. (The nine participants who indicated being divorced were all from southern Nigeria.) As marriage is acknowledged as a sacred institution and should not be broken, the lack of divorced individuals in the sampled Pentecostal churches may be because of the stigma attached to being divorced.

Of those Pentecostal churchgoers who are married, 83% report attending the same church with their spouse. When asked who joined the church first, 43% of the respondents indicated the husband, 28% reported the wife, and 29% reported joining the church at the same time.

Figure 3. Marital status of Pentecostal Churchgoers.

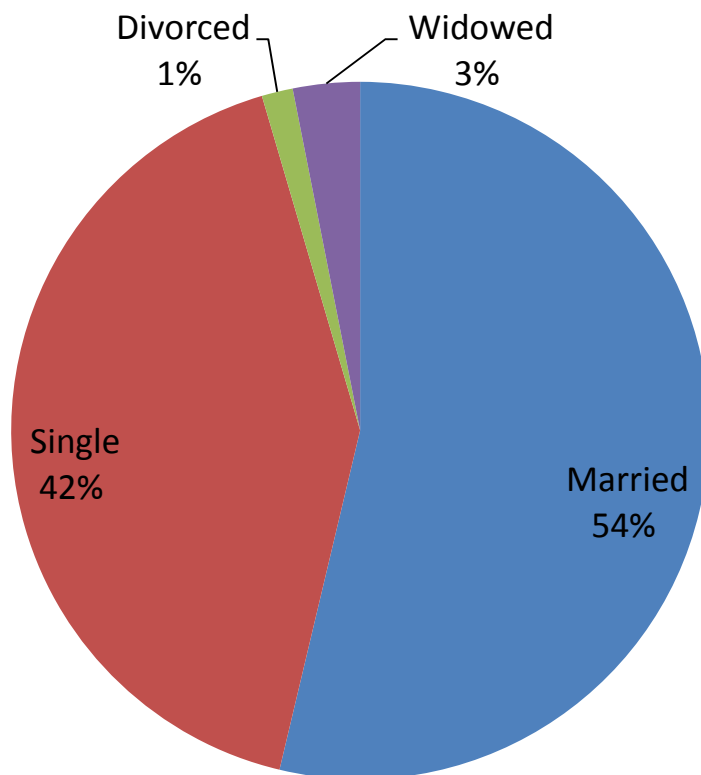
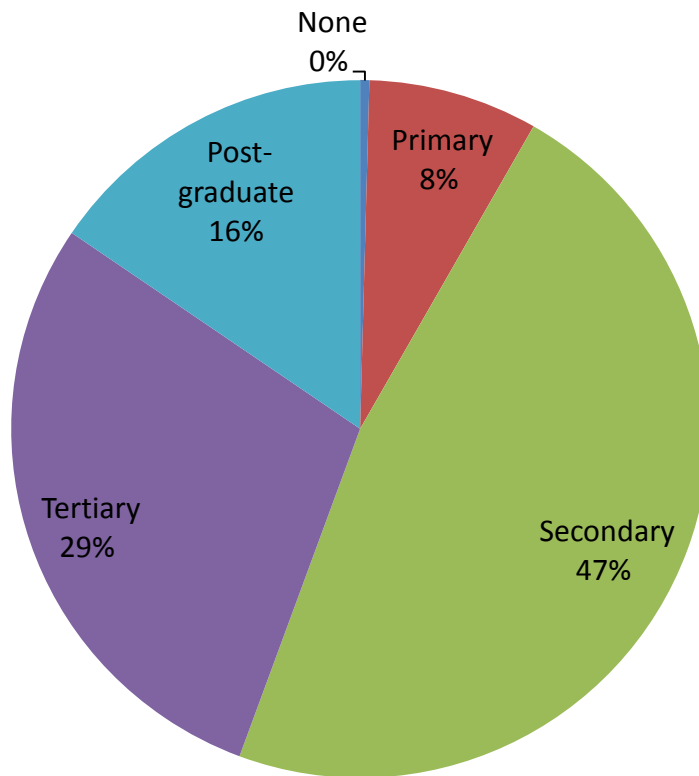


Figure 4. Level of Education Completed by Pentecostal Churchgoers.



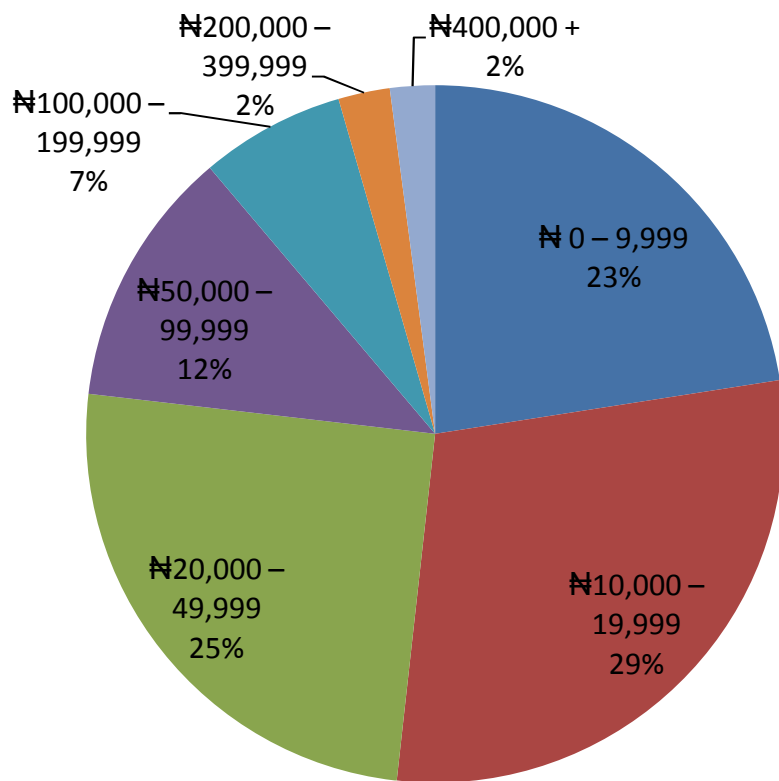
The educational qualifications in Figure 4 reflect the level of education that has been completed. Slightly over half of the sample had either completed primary or secondary school. However, when examining occupational data, 17% of the sample reported that they are currently a student. Therefore, many of the participants who indicated completing secondary school may be in the process of pursuing a tertiary degree.

Socio-Economic Status

Socio-economic status of Pentecostal churchgoers is difficult to exactly identify. An item on the questionnaire asked participants to indicate their monthly income. However, 33% of the participants skipped this item. Figure 5 reports the percentage of individuals in each income bracket among the 626 participants who indicated their monthly income. Figure 5 highlights that over half of the sample who reported their income earned less than N20,000 per month. However, this figure is biased because one out of every three participants did not indicate their monthly income.

Other ways to measure socioeconomic status is a person's living situation and mode of transportation. In Nigeria, the continuum of living situations generally ranges from the poorest individuals living with friends or relatives, to renting, to owning land for building a house to living in a personal home. Mode of transportation ranges from taking public to owning a motorcycle to owning one car to owning multiple cars. The living conditions and transportation of Pentecostal churchgoers are depicted in Figures 6 and 7, respectively. (Korb and Kumswa (2011) established a significant relationship between monthly income and both mode of transportation and living conditions. Therefore, both of these variables can be used as a proxy for average monthly income when analyzing socioeconomic status.)

Figure 5. Monthly Income of Pentecostal Churchgoers.



Note. ₦10,000 = \$65. ₦20,000 = \$129. ₦50,000 = \$323. ₦100,000 = \$645.

Figure 6. Living Conditions of Pentecostal Churchgoers.

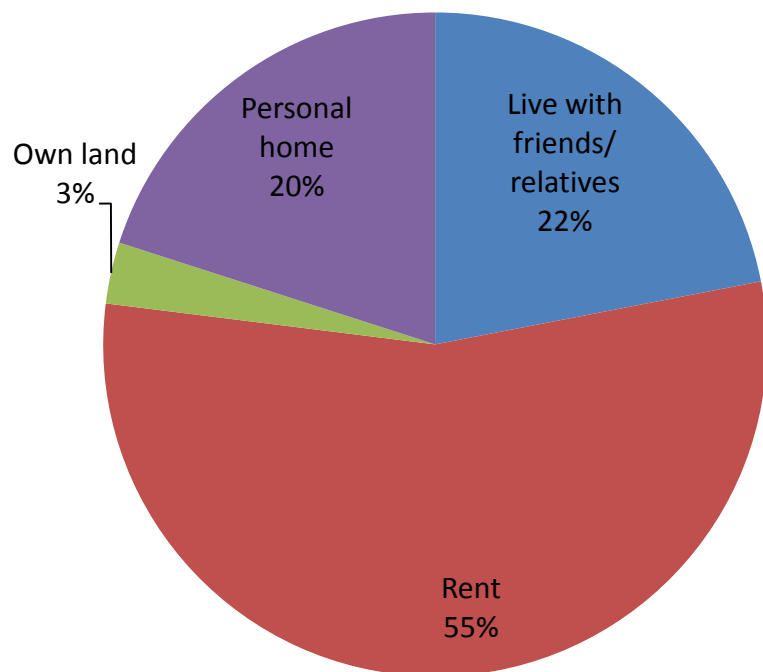
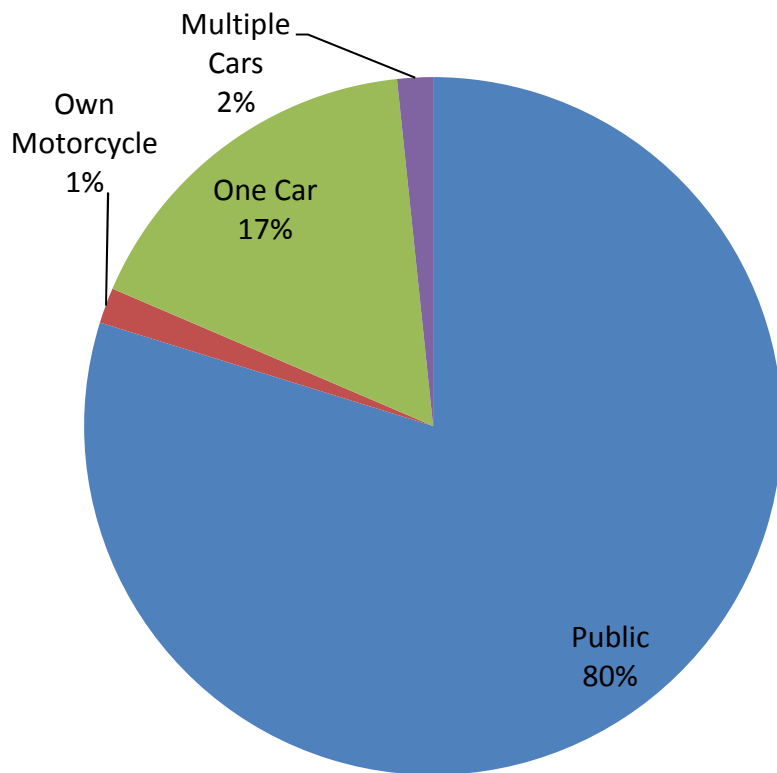


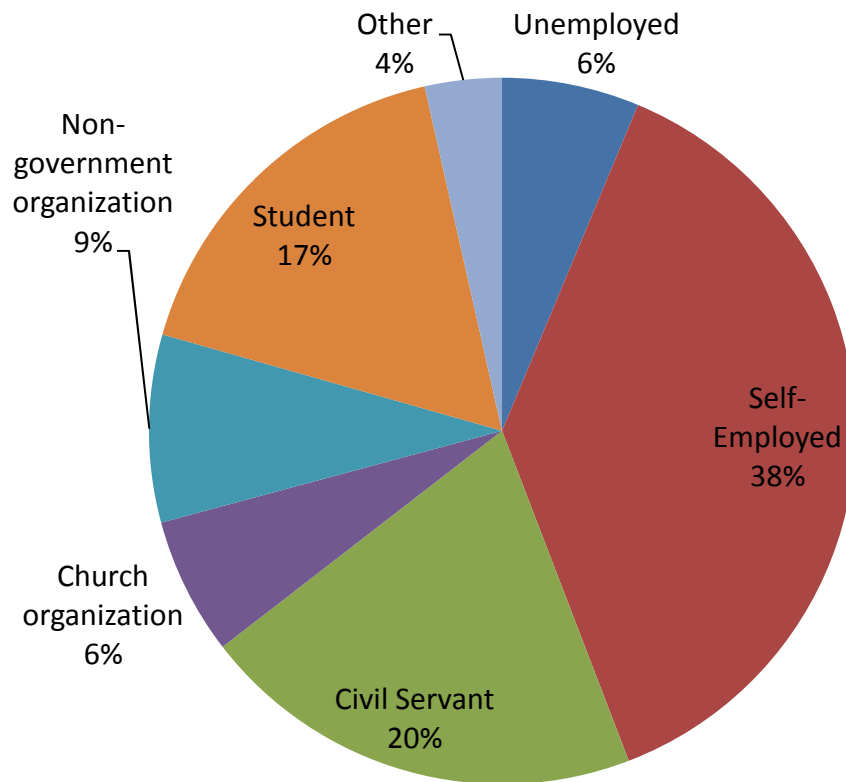
Figure 7. Mode of Transportation of Pentecostal Churchgoers.



Both the living conditions and the mode of transportation variables highlight that Pentecostal churchgoers tend to be lower in socioeconomic status. About 77% of Pentecostal churchgoers either rent a house or live with friends or relatives. A similar 80% use public transportation.

The occupational data is presented in Figure 8. Over half of Pentecostals in Nigeria are either self employed or civil servants. A moderate portion of Pentecostals are students (17%).

Figure 8. Occupation of Pentecostals in Nigeria.



Zone of Origin

The Nigerian constitution differentiates between an *indigene* of a particular Local Government Area, an individual who traces their patrilineal ancestry back to the land, and a *settler* (Ostein, 2009). Therefore, we were interested in whether Pentecostalism has spread to the indigenes of each geopolitical zone in Nigeria, or if Pentecostals tended to come from one particular region and had simply migrated throughout Nigeria. The zone of origin of a Nigerian is the geopolitical zone where they have their indigene certificate.

Figure 9 presents the zone of origin of Pentecostal churchgoers across Nigeria (labeled Origin) versus the percentage of individuals we sampled at churches within each zone (labeled Church). In other words, 52% of the sample we collected questionnaires from attended a church in the South South. However, only 40% of the sample of Pentecostals traced their ancestry from the South South. Again, only 8% of our sample attended church in the South East. However, 27% of the sample reported the South East as their zone of origin.

Figure 9. Zone of Origin

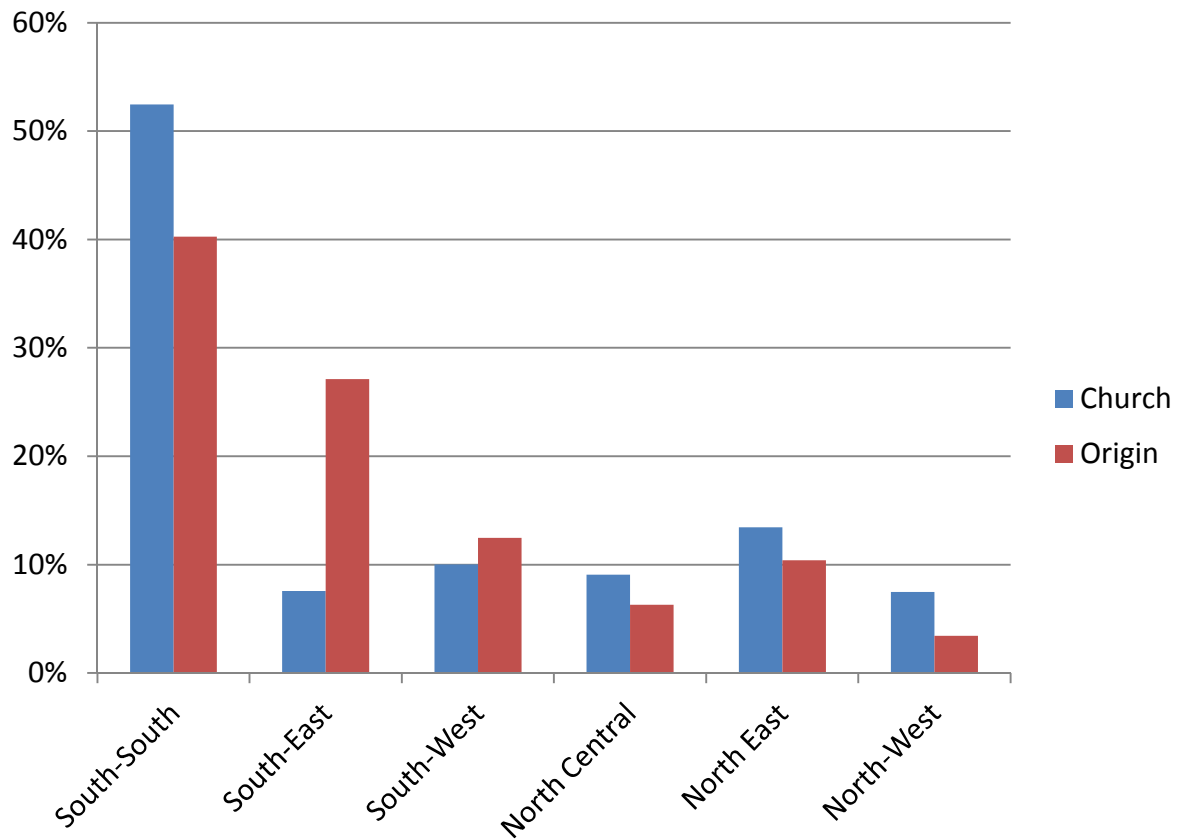


Table 2 presents the zone of origin data in more detail. This table demonstrates that most of the Pentecostal churchgoers in the three northern regions are predominantly from southern Nigeria, the South East zone in particular.

Table 2. Zone of Origin by Zone of Church Attendance

| Zone of Origin | Zone of Church Sampled | | | | | |
|----------------|------------------------|------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| | South-South | South-East | South-West | North Central | North East | North-West |
| South-South | 68% | 6% | 8% | 7% | 10% | 13% |
| South-East | 20% | 78% | 8% | 48% | 27% | 20% |
| South-West | 7% | 3% | 46% | 1% | 11% | 35% |
| North Central | 1% | 4% | 7% | 18% | 12% | 19% |
| North East | 3% | 3% | 17% | 22% | 32% | 10% |
| North-West | 2% | 0% | 13% | 4% | 7% | 3% |

Note. Bolded cells are those where the zone of origin and zone of church-going are the same.

Language spoken in the home

Many Nigerians are either bilingual or trilingual. English is the national language of communication in school and government. The languages of the largest Nigerian tribes (Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba) are widely spoken in their respective regions of the country. Individuals from minority tribes oftentimes speak their tribal language in addition to either or both of English and that of a larger Nigerian tribe in the region.

The highest proportion of respondents (73%) reported speaking both their tribal language and English at home. Next, 17% of the participants indicated that they speak only English at home and 10% indicated that they speak only their native language at home.

Compared to the typical Nigerian's language use at home, it is surprising that so many Pentecostals speak exclusively English or English with their tribal language. It is possible that Pentecostal churches cater mostly to English-speaking individuals as all of the services that the research assistants attended were conducted in English. (In one church, the English service was also translated into a local tribal language.) Indeed, when examining language spoken in the church, 57% of the respondents reported that their church only used English, while 43% reported that their church used both English and a tribal language. Less than 1% reported that their church used only a tribal language.

Church attendance

We were also interested in how often participants attended church, both in the current Pentecostal church and in the church they attended immediately previously. Only 3% of the individuals reported being a visitor to the church on the Sunday that the researchers collected data. A further 15% reported that the Pentecostal church that they were attending was the only church they had ever attended in their lifetimes. Current and previous churchgoing attendance is reported in Table 2.

Table 3. Church Attendance of Pentecostal Churchgoers.

| Church Attendance | Previously ¹ | Currently ² |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Every Sunday and Weekly | 64.2 | 86.8 |
| Every Sunday | 29.7 | 11.8 |
| Once per month | 4.3 | 1.3 |
| Once per year | 1.8 | 0.1 |

¹ The percentage of previous church attendance is based only on those who have previously attended another church. 15% of the respondents indicated that they have only attended the church they attended that Sunday. A further 4% indicated only attending the previous church once or twice.

² Of those currently attending the church, an additional 3% indicated that they were just visiting.

A high majority of the respondents indicated that they currently attend every Sunday and weekly activities. Comparing this to previous church attendance, the participants indicated attending church more frequently at the current church than at the previous church.

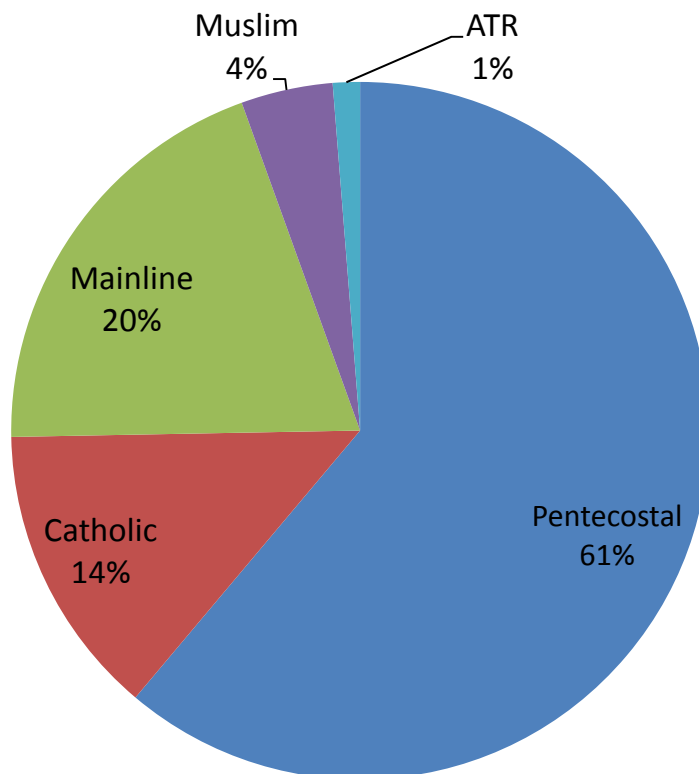
Length of Involvement

Participants were also asked to indicate how long they had been attending the church. Of the participants that completed the questionnaire, 3% indicated that they were visitors at the church. Only 7% said they had been attending that church for less than a year. The mean (average) length of time that participants had been involved with the current church was 12.4 years (standard deviation = 9.90 years).²

Religious Background

We were interested in the religious background of Pentecostals as they were growing up. The results are in Figure 10. A majority of Pentecostals grew up in a Pentecostal church. Only 5% of Pentecostals are converts from either Islam or African Traditional Religion (ATR).

Figure 10.



Previous Denomination

One item asked participants to indicate all Catholic or mainline churches they had attended for more than six months. On this item, 57% of the sample indicated that they attended a Catholic or mainline church for more than six months prior to the Pentecostal church. Figure 11 provides the frequency with which Pentecostal churchgoers previously attended specific Catholic or mainline churches. A second question asked how many Pentecostal churches that they had previously attended. Here, 59% of the sample reported previously attending another Pentecostal church for more than six months. Figure 12 provides information about the number of Pentecostal churches that churchgoers had previously attended.

² This item had three options: a) I am a visitor; b) Less than 1 year; c) More than 1 year: write number of years _____. In calculating the average, the participants who indicated attending the church for less than a year were counted as attending for 0.5 years.

Figure 11. Mainline Churches that Pentecostal Churchgoers Previously Attended for Six Months or More.

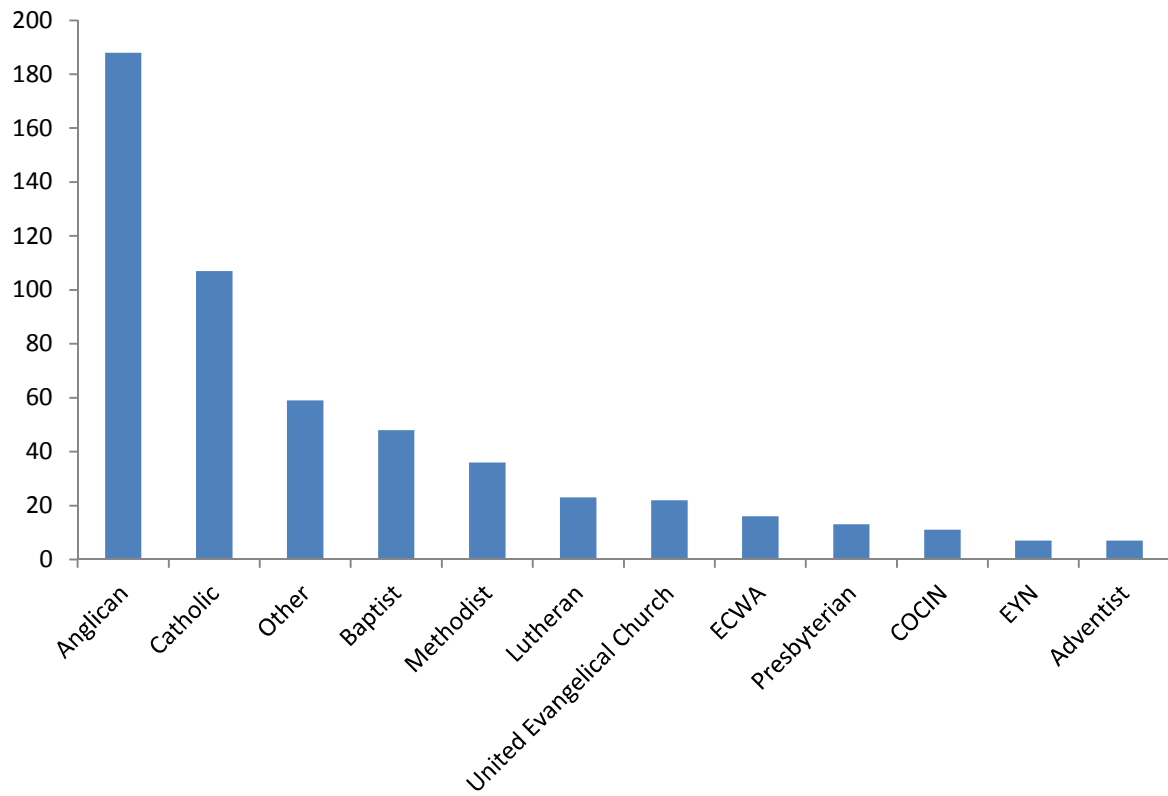
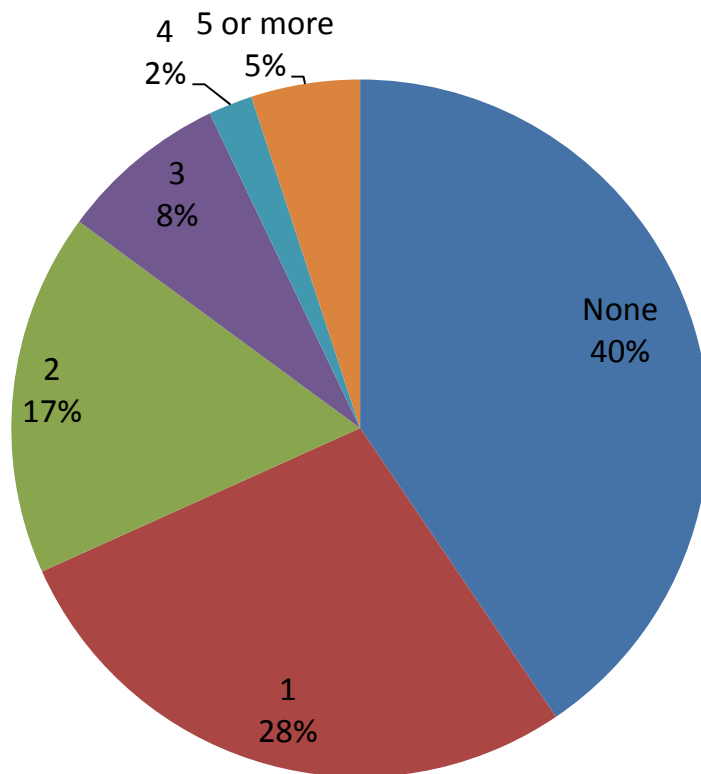


Figure 12. Number of Pentecostal Churches Previously Attended for Six Months or More.

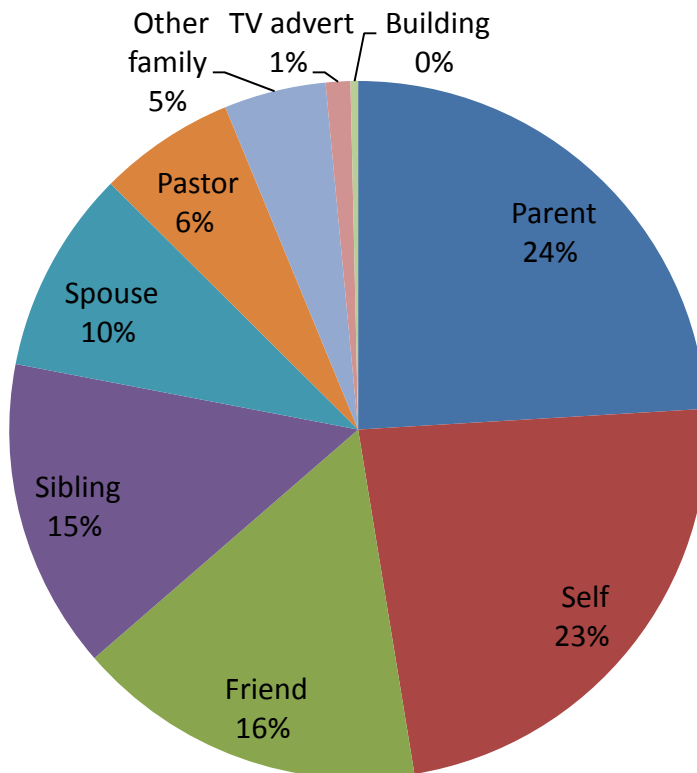


Introduction into the Church

We asked participants to indicate who or what introduced them to the church on a forced-choice item. The results are presented in Figure 13. Of the categories presented of who or what introduced the respondent to the church, parents had the highest frequency. This likely includes those who were born in the church. The next highest frequency item was that they introduced themselves to the church, indicating an independent decision to join a church. Friends, siblings, and spouses also encouraged participants to attend the particular church. Other categories included in the questionnaire that were not as successful in attracting churchgoers included a TV advertisement (less than 1%) and the church building (0%). This indicates that attending a Pentecostal church is largely influenced by personal relationships.

A substantial number of the write-in options included spiritual direction to the church, with statements such as “God, by the help of the Holy Spirit” and “Holy Spirit” as introducing individuals to the church.

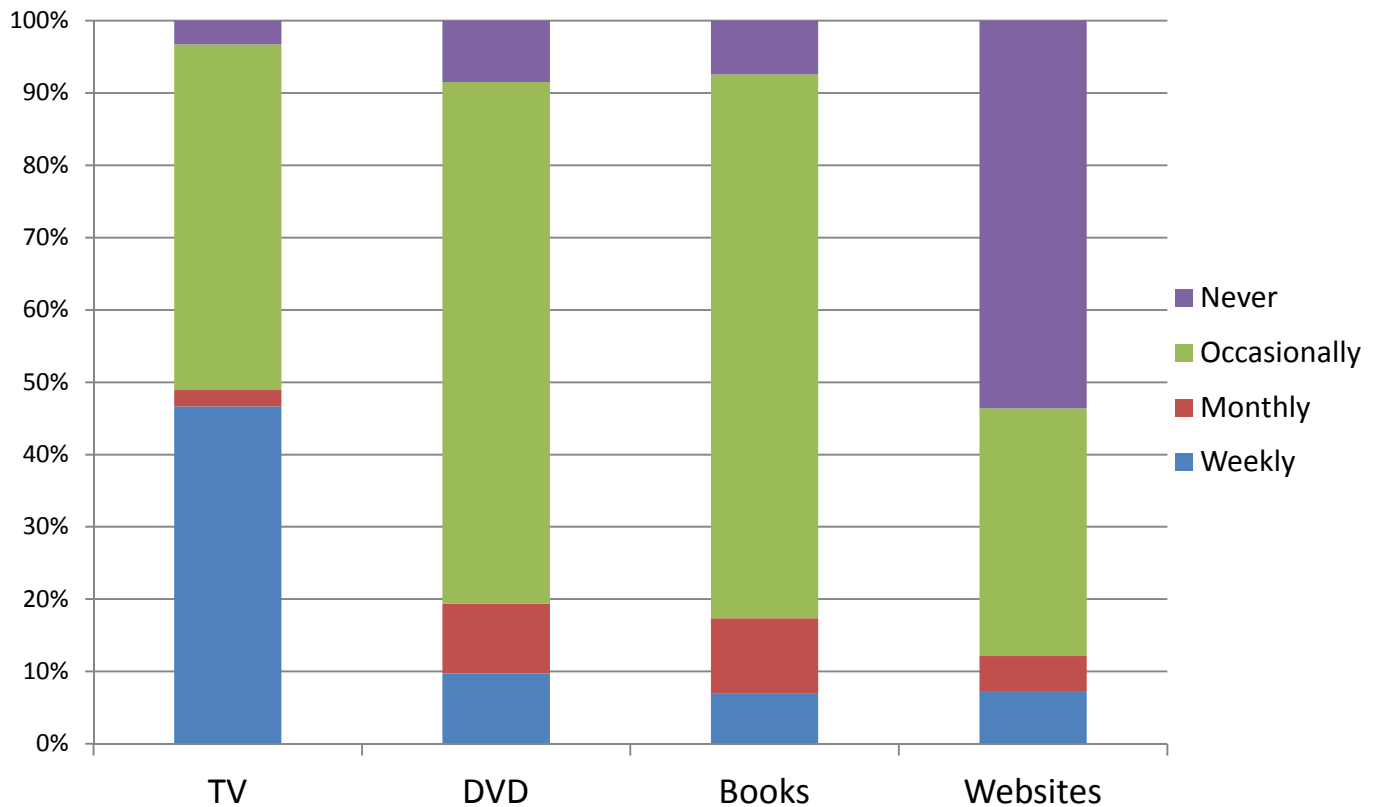
Figure 13.



Church Media

Participants were asked how frequently they used church media, including religious television, religious DVDs or CDs, religious books, and religious websites. The combined data is presented in Figure 14. As can be seen in Figure 14, Pentecostals spend the most time watching religious television. Religious DVDs and books are used with about equal frequency. On the other hand, a majority of Pentecostals never visit religious websites.

Figure 14. Pentecostal Media Usage



Church Activities

Participants were asked, “The first time you came to this church, what was the most significant factor that attracted you?” The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Factors that attracted Pentecostal Churchgoers

| Factor | Percent |
|---|---------|
| God led me. | 22% |
| I grew up in this church. | 19% |
| The church had lively worship. | 13% |
| I was invited to a normal church service. | 9% |
| I was invited to a special programme by the church. | 8% |
| Other | 7% |
| The person I married attended this church. | 7% |
| The church had testimonies of answered prayers. | 7% |
| I heard preacher teach outside of church (i.e., TV, CD, conference, book) | 5% |
| The church had a good youth group. | 1% |
| The church posters were attractive. | 1% |
| The church was modern. | 1% |
| Church members were prosperous. | 0% |

According to Table 4, the most frequent factor that drew Pentecostal churchgoers was the leading of God. However, this does not help researchers and Pentecostal leaders understand the mechanism by which God led churchgoers to the church. The next most frequent factor was that the individual grew up within the church. Lively worship was a strong contributing factor, as well as being invited to a service or church program. Note that only 4 individuals indicated that they attended a Pentecostal church because the church members were prosperous, which was 0.45% of the sample.

Participants were also asked what ministries they have benefitted from by the church. Participants could circle multiple options. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Ministries that Pentecostal Churchgoers have Benefitted From

| Ministry | Percent |
|---|---------|
| I have benefitted from the teaching of the church. | 61% |
| I have received counselling from the church. | 23% |
| I have receive welfare assistance from the church. | 14% |
| I have received health and medical benefits . | 12% |
| My children attend this church's school . | 4% |
| I have received economic empowerment from the church. | 4% |
| I have received assistance after a disaster/crisis . | 3% |
| I have enjoyed a scholarship from the church. | 2% |
| I have been made more politically aware from the church. | 2% |

Table 5 illustrates that over half of Pentecostal churchgoers have benefitted from the teaching of the church. Another large percentage has benefitted from counseling. Some have benefitted from welfare assistance (meaning money or material goods) or health and medical benefits. The percentages of the remaining ministries are negligible.

References

- Korb, K. A., & Kumswa, S. K. (2011). Pentecostal census: Preliminary report of Pentecostal churchgoers in Northern Nigeria (NPCRC Technical Report No. N1103). Jos, Nigeria: Nigerian Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Centre.