



MULTISITE:
How Do
Multisite Campuses
and Church Plants
Differ?

By Warren Bird, Ph.D.



Historic Research

North America's largest-ever survey of its kind.

2,702 Participants:

- 2,315 church planters/founding pastors
- 387 multisite directors or campus pastors

Survey Offered in 3 Languages

50+ Denominations/Networks:

- Most responses: Southern Baptists
- Second most responses: ARC (Association of Related Churches)
- U.S. (92%) and Canada (8%)

In 2022, ECFA (Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability) launched a survey titled “The New Faces of Church Planting and Multisiting” under the leadership of Warren Bird, Ph.D., ECFA’s Senior Vice President of Research and Equipping. The survey was over a year in development. Its preparation involved focus groups, numerous reviewers from a diverse community of church leaders, input from many denominations and networks, and comparison against major surveys conducted in recent years.*

ECFA sponsored the survey in an effort to serve hundreds of ECFA members that are involved in church planting or multisite campuses. ECFA is also eager to help a larger number of new churches and campuses lay the right foundation for leadership, board, and financial integrity.

We welcome your feedback and comments at research@ECFA.org.

6 Reports Total (ECFA.org/surveys)



Executive Summary: The New Faces of Church Planting and Multisiting



Funding: What Does It Cost to Launch a New Church or Campus?



Ethnicity/Race: What Trends Are We Seeing with New Churches that Are Multiracial?



Pandemic: Did the Pandemic Change the Trajectory of Church Plants or Multisite Campuses?



Multiplication/Replication: What Are the Best Predictors of a Church’s Ability to Multiply Itself?



Church Plant vs Multisite: Church Planting vs. Multisite Campus Launching: How Do They Differ?

* The survey launched February 22, 2022 via targeted emails and widespread social media. It closed May 30, 2022, with a total 3,286 participants, a number that was narrowed to 2,702 after data cleanup that included removal of duplicate entries from the same church, of survey takers outside of North America, of non-Protestant participants, and of survey responses with too few questions answered. The survey design used extensive skip logic such that each participant received 15 minutes of relevant questions, tailored to their circumstances. Thus, no survey taker responded to every question in the survey.

This report focuses on comparing MULTISITE and CHURCH PLANTS. It tries to answer several questions including:

- How does evangelistic motivation compare?
- How does a vision to multiply compare?
- Does going multisite undercut or fuel the idea of church planting?
- How did the pandemic impact launch size?
- How do size and costs compare between multisite and church planting?
- Are multisites or church plants more likely to own their facility? to be under the founding leader? to have an oversight board?
- What’s the ideal seating at a multisite campus? the ideal distance from other campuses?

The following graphics each follow the format of a headline to show the main idea, a visualization of the research data, and at bottom the actual survey question(s). The N statements (usually bottom right) show the number of survey participants for the questions behind that particular graphic. When possible, medians are featured rather than averages, because medians are less susceptible to distortion by outliers.

Reaching New People with the Gospel Is the Top Motive for Both Multisite Campuses and Church Plants

	“Very much” part of our vision when we first launched	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
1	To reach new people with Jesus’ gospel	97%	92%
2	To take “church” closer to the people you’re trying to reach	71%	53%
3	To help existing believers grow as disciples of Jesus	67%	70%
4	To transform my city into a better place	61%	52%
5	To do church in a different way from what other churches are doing	33%	39%

Table 1

N=398

Question: When your church plant or multisite campus first launched, which of the following were part of your overall church’s vision for ministry?
(8 choices offered)

Both Multisite Campuses and Church Plants Dream of Replicating or Even Multiplying



	“Very much” part of our vision today	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
1	To start additional campuses/sites/locations	80%	29%
2	To become multisite (one church in two or more locations)	75%	23%
3	To launch multiple church services (9am, 11am, etc.)	61%	32%
4	To create a network of multiplying churches	52%	43%
5	To plant other churches	49%	62%

Table 2

N=398

Question: Which of the following are part of your overall church’s vision for ministry today? (5 choices offered, each with 3 levels of response -- not at all, somewhat, very much)

New Churches and Multisite Campuses Are Reproducing Themselves



In the Last Three Years (Since 2019)	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
Multisite churches that have launched	66%	41%
Church plants (0-10 years old) that have launched	12%	25%

Table 3

N=1,387

Question: In which of the following, if any, was your church involved with (if multisite: including any of its campuses/sites/locations) over the last three years (i.e., between early 2019 and the present)?

Directly launched one or more other churches

Indirectly launched one or more other churches

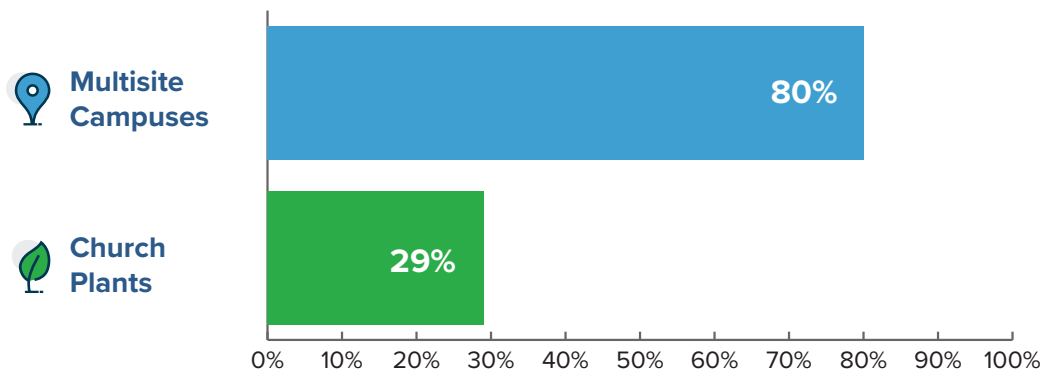
Rejoiced in a “grandchild”—as a church you had previously launched gave birth to another new church

Rejoiced in a “great-grandchild”—as the result of four generations of reproduction

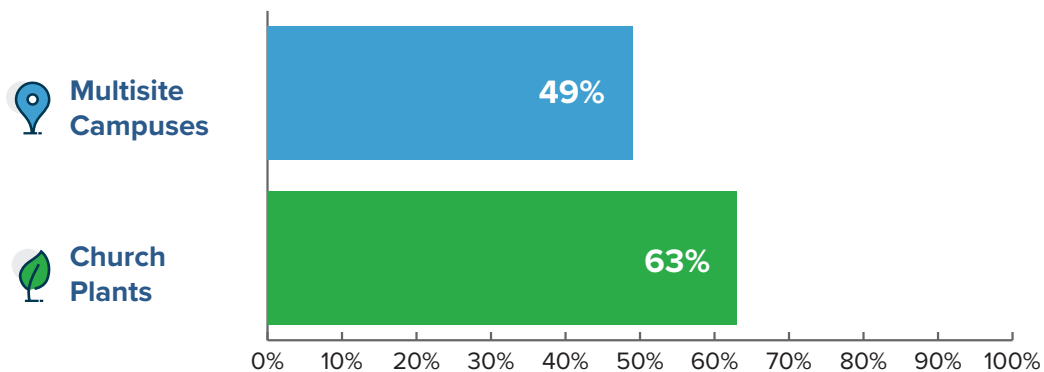
Added a new worship service (one or more)

Added a new campus/site/location (one or more)

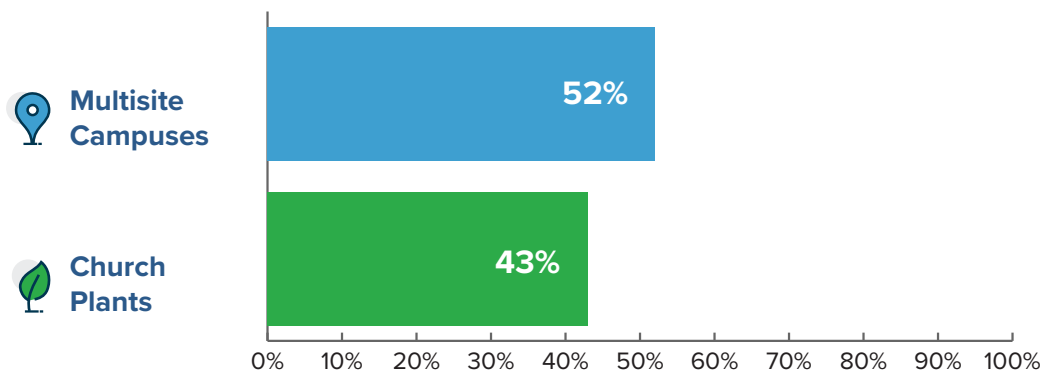
Multisite Churches Fuel Church Planting, and Vice Versa



Have a vision to start (additional) multisite campuses/sites/locations



Have a vision to plant other churches



Have a vision to create a network of multiplying churches

Table 4

N=429

Question: Which [of the following] are part of the vision today? [Three levels of response were offered: Not at all, somewhat, and very much. Responses above are for "very much" only.]

Launch Sizes Were Smaller During the Pandemic (Half the Size for Multisites, Three-Quarters for Church Plants)



Attendance	Launched during the pandemic (2020-2022)	Launched pre-pandemic (2010-2019)
 Multisite Campuses:		
Launch weekend	60	120
End of first year	43	115
Today (early 2022)	48	133
 Church Plants:		
Launch weekend	72	95
End of first year	35	50
Today (early 2022)	42	65

Table 5

N=1,449

Multisite Campuses Are Far More Likely to “Own” Their Primary Worship Site



	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
Own it	62%	36%
Lease/rent it – 24/7	15%	20%
Lease/rent it – with limited hours	23%	44%

Table 6

N=2,055

Question: For the primary place you're currently meeting for worship, do you ...? (Select ONE.)

New Multisite Campuses Start Larger and Cost More than Church Plants



	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
SIZE:		
Size of core team	45	18
Attendance launch day	90	50
Attendance one year later	95	50
COST:		
Start-up costs	\$200,000	\$25,000
First-year costs	\$200,000	\$80,000
Self-sustaining by launch day	7%	20%
Self-sustaining by end of year 3	79%	73%
MEDIAN YEAR LAUNCHED:	2015	2017

Table 7

N=795

Question: Roughly how many people made up your pre-launch core team—staff, volunteer leaders, and committed volunteers?

Question: What was in-person attendance that first week? at the end of your first year?

Question: What was in-person attendance?

Question: What were your total start-up costs—NOT including salaries—through your public launch day?

Question: What were the total operation costs for the first 12 months, including salaries?

Question: When did (or will) your new church or campus/site/location become financially self-sustaining? [5 options]

Founding Leaders Tend to Stay with Church Plants; Multisite Campus Pastors Not As Much



Are you still being led by the founding campus pastor (for multisites) or founding lead pastor (for church plants)?	 Multisite Campuses	 Church Plants
Yes	46%	84%
No	54%	16%

Table 8

N=2,055

Question: Is the current lead pastor the founding (i.e., original) pastor?

Question: Is the current campus/site/location pastor the founding (i.e., original) pastor of this campus/site/location?

Almost All Have an Oversight Board, Although the Timing Varies

	Multisite Campuses	Church Plants
The campus/site/location is under a “parent” church’s board and will likely continue that way	75%	24%
We formed our board prelaunch	10%	20%
We formed our board during Year 1	4%	5%
We formed our board during Year 2 or later	9%	47%
We don’t have a board yet	2%	4%

Table 9

N=411

Question: At what point did you (or will you) form a governance, elder, and/or trustee board to give oversight to your church or campus/site/location(s)? (i.e., a decision-making group, not just an advisory group)

For Multisite Facilities, the Preferred Seating Size Is 201-500

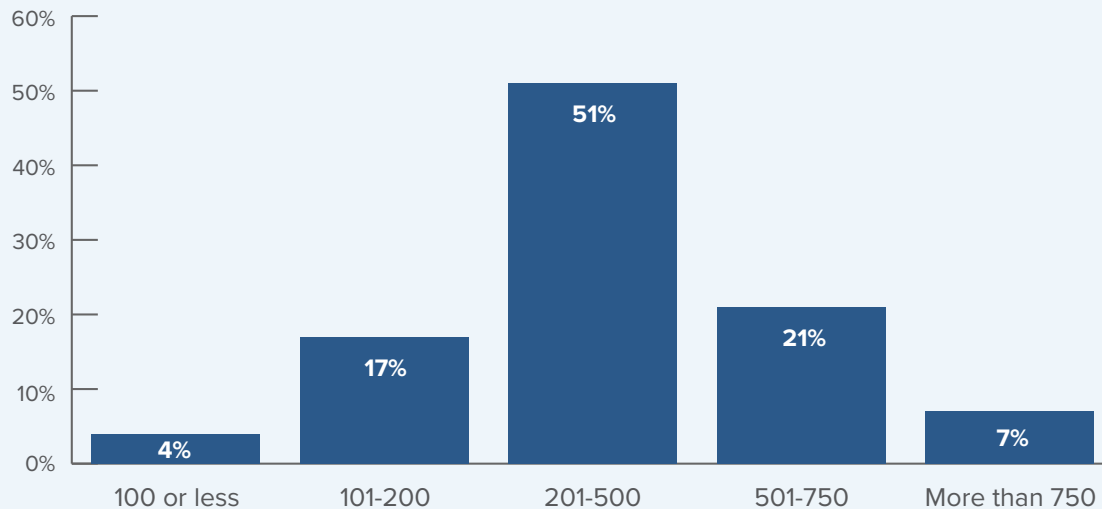


Table 10

N=167

Question: What is your preferred seating size for a multisite facility?

For Multisites, the Ideal Travel Distance from the Sending Campus Is 16-45 Minutes

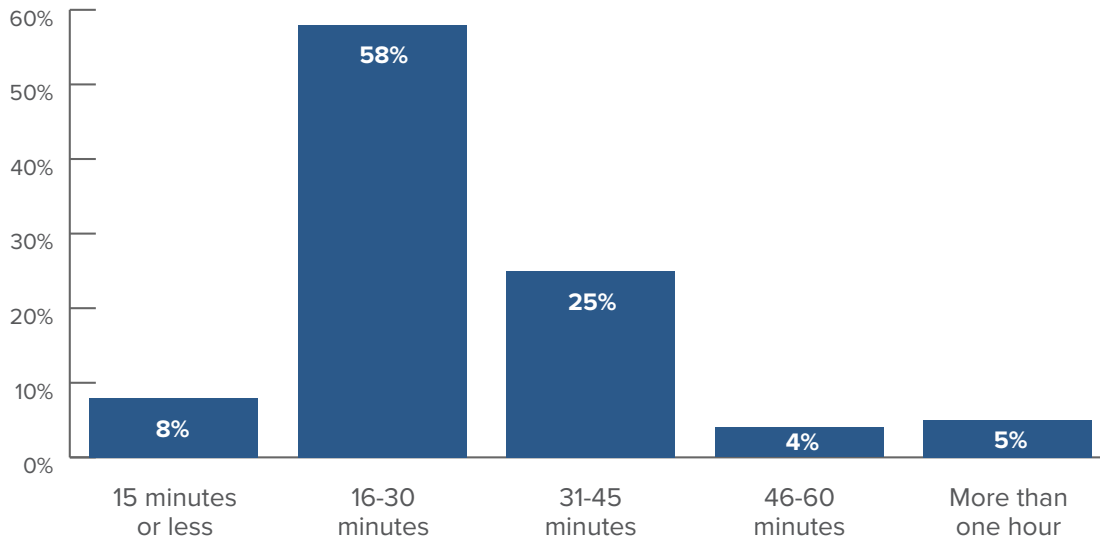


Table 11

N=165

Question: For a new campus, what is the ideal travel distance from the sending campus?

Watch the FREE Webinar Recording!

ECFA WEBINAR

The New Faces of Church Planting and Multisiting

August 30, 2022 • Warren Bird, Ph.D. & Pastor Michael Carrion

ECFA.ORG

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440 W. Jubal Early Dr., Suite 100 • Winchester, VA • 22601

ECFA.org