

Mega Focus Cities: Summary of Data

Research Staff

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Summary of Data

This report provides two looks at the statistical progress of Mega Focus Cities (MFC) associations. Tables 1 and 2 provide a recent look at MFC associations. Selected Annual Church Profile items are compared for Mega Focus associations versus non-Mega Focus associations for 1993, 1994, and 1995. There are 68 Mega Focus Cities associations represented in tables 1 and 2. These 68 associations are currently working through the MFC process. In addition, using this list of associations provides comparable data for year-to-year analysis. Because of the change in the process for collecting ACP data, we have been warned not to make comparisons between 1994, 1995, and prior years. Nevertheless, these data are all we have. The presumption is that any change in process would affect all associations, MFC and non-MFC alike, thus giving validity to a comparison of these two groups of associations.

Tables 3 and 4 give a longer historical perspective on the progress of Mega Focus Cities associations, viewing change over the past 14 years, from 1981 to 1995. These tables summarize several key Uniform Church Letter (UCL) and Annual Church Profile (ACP) items for the years 1981 and 1995, comparing Mega versus non-Mega associations. Ninety associations are identified as Mega associations. This is an inclusive list, containing every association that has participated in the MFC process at least once since 1981.

This report also provides charts (figures 1-6) which highlight the key trends in the tabular data for 1981 to 1995. The UCL and ACP data from the Sunday School Board provide the source for these charts.

The number of churches in the 68 current Mega associations comprise 11.9 percent of all Southern Baptist (SBC) churches and 17.4 percent of SBC members. If the larger set of 90 MFC associations (all associations that have been through the MFC process since 1981) is used, 14.8 percent of SBC churches and 22 percent of members are in Mega associations. In 14 years these figures have increased slightly; in 1981 12.3 percent of all SBC churches and 20.8 percent of all SBC members were in the larger group of 90 MFC associations.

Highlights: 1994 and 1995

The data from the past two years show mixed results. In 1994, the 68 current MFC associations reported strong results, comparing favorably to non-MFC associations for 9 of 12 selected UCL/ACP items. In 1995, however, MFC associations posted weaker growth compared to non-MFC associations; Mega associations outpaced non-Megas for only 2 of 12 ACP items (number of churches and Brotherhood enrollment/ participation).

Number of churches: In 1994 and 1995, MFC associations improved significantly in the increase of constituted churches. There were 244 net new constituted churches reported in 1994, a 5.5 percent increase. By comparison, non-MFC associations reported a 1.7 percent growth in the number of constituted churches (a net increase of 586 churches). In 1995 there were 126 new constituted churches, a 2.7 percent growth rate in MFC associations compared to 1.1 percent in non-MFC associations.

Membership: Both MFC and non-MFC associations grew slightly in total membership from 1993 to 1994, and from 1994 to 1995. Megas grew a little faster than non-Megas in 1994, while Megas lagged non-Megas in 1995.

Baptisms: Baptisms increased 15.0 percent in MFC associations from 1993 to 1994, almost three times the increase (5.8%) recorded for non-MFC associations. In 1995, Mega associations reported a 2.8 percent rise in baptisms, compared to a 5.3 percent gain for non-Megas.

Perhaps a better baptism indicator is the ratio of baptisms per 100 resident members (see table 2). Table 2 gives several ratios for selected UCL/ACP items for MFC and non-MFC associations for 1993, 1994, and 1995. Baptisms rates are better in Mega associations than non-Mega associations. Note that the baptism rate (per 100 resident members) for MFC associations was 4.2 in 1995, compared to 3.4 for non-MFC associations. In other words, there was 1 baptism for every 24 resident members in 1995. For non-MFC associations, 1 baptism was reported for every 29 resident members.

Sunday School and Discipleship Training: The 1994 increases in Sunday School enrollment and average weekly attendance were slight for MFC associations. Non-MFC associations, however, reported declines in both Sunday School categories in 1994. Reverse patterns were recorded in 1995. While non-Mega associations showed minor gains in enrollment and attendance, Megas posted declines. Discipleship Training enrollment/ participation declined for Mega and non-Mega associations in both years.

WMU and Brotherhood: WMU enrollment declined overall in 1994 and 1995. The decline in MFC associations was less severe than in non-MFC associations for 1994, but more severe in 1995. MFC associations made considerable gains in Brotherhood enrollment/participation in both years. In both years the gains were significantly higher among Mega associations than non-Megas.

Receipts and missions giving: The rise in total receipts for MFC associations lagged the rate for non-MFC associations in 1994. In 1995, Mega associations reported a slight decrease in total receipts, while non-Mega associations showed a slight increase. A similar pattern is seen for total missions expenditures. MFC associations reported a surprisingly strong growth in Cooperative Program (CP) giving in 1994, posting an 8.7 percent increase, compared to a 2.7 percent gain for non-MFC associations. In 1995, however, the data show an 10.7 percent decline in CP giving for Mega associations, while non-Megas recorded a 3.4 percent increase.

For the years 1993, 1994, and 1995 total receipts per resident member averaged \$113 per year higher than non-MFC associations (see table 2). Total missions giving as a percent of total receipts, however, is consistently lower than non-Megas (by 3 to 4 percentage points per year). Similarly, Cooperative Program giving as a percent of total receipts is weaker in Mega associations than in non-Megas (ranging from about 2 to 2½ percentage points during the years 1993, 1994, and 1995).

While the year-to-year fluctuations in the statistical performance of Mega Focus City associations merit attention, these ups and downs should not cause undue alarm (or elation). It is the record over time that is most important. And that record is overwhelmingly positive. The following section summarizes some key church trends in MFC associations since 1981.

Highlights: 1981 to 1995

Mega associations have clearly outperformed non-Mega associations over the past 15 years. MFC associations compared favorably to non-MFC associations for 8 of 10 UCL/ACP items. The following section highlights the comparison between 90 Mega associations (all associations that have been through the MFC process since 1981) and all other associations.

Number of churches: Mega associations added 1,550 new churches since 1981, a 35.4 percent growth rate. By comparison, non-Mega associations grew 9.2 percent in the number of constituted churches. Mega associations have established a consistent track record of adding new churches at a faster rate than non-Megas.

Membership: Mega associations have added new members (total and resident) at a pace almost double that of non-Mega associations. Total membership growth in MFC associations has been 20.0 percent since 1981 (18.9% for resident membership).

Baptisms: Comparing 1981 and 1995, non-Mega associations reported 5.5 percent fewer baptisms in 1995. Mega associations, however, showed a 5.6 percent *increase* in the number of baptisms. While baptism rates throughout the Convention have declined since 1981, MFC associations consistently report higher baptism rates than non-MFC associations, indicating greater “efficiency” in evangelism (see table 4).

Sunday School and Discipleship Training: Sunday School enrollment grew 3 times as fast in Mega associations compared to non-Megas. MFC associations reversed the trend in average weekly Sunday School attendance, growing 5.3 percent while the rest of the Convention declined 4.1 percent. Changes in the UCL/ACP questions for Discipleship Training have made the 1981 figures statistically incomparable to the 1995 data.

WMU and Brotherhood: Although WMU enrollment declined in Mega associations by 3.0 percent, the 5.0 percent rate of decline among non-Megas was greater. Changes in Brotherhood enrollment/participation are impossible to measure since the UCL/ACP questions have changed over the years. The Brotherhood totals from 1981 are not statistically comparable to the 1995 totals.

Receipts and missions giving: Comparing 1995 to 1981, total receipts were 128.0 percent higher than 1981 for MFC associations, while total receipts were 114.8 percent greater for non-MFC associations. The two UCL/ACP items in which Mega associations lagged all others were total missions expenditures and Cooperative Program giving. For both items, the increase from 1981 for Mega associations was about 75 percent of the increase recorded for non-Megas. The result is a greater deterioration among Mega associations of the percentage of total receipts given to all missions causes, declining from 14.5 percent in 1981 to 11.3 percent in 1995 (compared to 16.3 percent in 1981 and 15.2 percent in 1995 for non-Megas; see table 4). Cooperative Program giving as a percent of total receipts has dropped for both Mega and non-Mega associations; the decline has been worse for Mega associations.

Table 1

**Selected Annual Church Profile Items for Mega Focus City Associations
Compared to Non-Mega Focus City Associations: 1993, 1994, and 1995**

	1993	1994	1995	Change, 1993–1994		Change, 1994–1995	
				Net	Percent	Net	Percent
Number of Churches							
MFC Associations	4,400	4,644	4,770	244	5.5%	126	2.7%
Non-MFC Associations	34,341	34,927	35,328	586	1.7	401	1.1
Total SBC	38,741	39,571	40,098	830	2.1	527	1.3
Total Membership							
MFC Associations	2,698,305	2,716,575	2,720,131	18,270	0.7	3,556	0.1
Non-MFC Associations	12,706,316	12,787,261	12,942,353	80,945	0.6	155,092	1.2
Total SBC	15,404,621	15,503,836	15,662,484	99,215	0.6	158,648	1.0
Resident Membership							
MFC Associations	1,889,919	1,919,881	1,910,125	29,962	1.6	-9,756	-0.5
Non-MFC Associations	9,011,388	9,060,486	9,183,310	49,098	0.5	122,824	1.4
Total SBC	10,901,307	10,980,367	11,093,435	79,060	0.7	113,068	1.0
Baptisms							
MFC Associations	68,442	78,717	80,957	10,275	15.0	2,240	2.8
Non-MFC Associations	280,631	296,916	312,710	16,285	5.8	15,794	5.3
Total SBC	349,073	375,633	393,667	26,560	7.6	18,034	4.8
Sunday School Enrollment							
MFC Associations	1,487,988	1,492,897	1,477,111	4,909	0.3	-15,786	-1.1
Non-MFC Associations	6,758,262	6,707,789	6,726,881	-50,473	-0.7	19,092	0.3
Total SBC	8,246,250	8,200,686	8,203,992	-45,564	-0.6	3,306	0.0
Sunday School Average Attendance							
MFC Associations	626,485	632,011	604,877	5,526	0.9	-27,134	-4.3
Non-MFC Associations	3,164,307	3,097,237	3,137,107	-67,070	-2.1	39,870	1.3
Total SBC	3,790,792	3,729,248	3,741,984	-61,544	-1.6	12,736	0.3
Discipleship Training Enrollment/Participation							
MFC Associations	381,355	363,614	353,785	-17,741	-4.7	-9,829	-2.7
Non-MFC Associations	1,926,727	1,843,543	1,817,681	-83,184	-4.3	-25,862	-1.4
Total SBC	2,308,082	2,207,157	2,171,466	-100,925	-4.4	-35,691	-1.6
WMU Enrollment							
MFC Associations	145,906	141,556	132,888	-4,350	-3.0	-8,668	-6.1
Non-MFC Associations	1,000,546	954,932	928,132	-45,614	-4.6	-26,800	-2.8
Total SBC	1,146,452	1,096,488	1,061,020	-49,964	-4.4	-35,468	-3.2

Table 1 (continued)

	1993	1994	1995	Change, 1993-1994		Change, 1994-1995		
				Net Percent		Net Percent		
Brotherhood Enrollment/Participation								
MFC Associations	87,708	95,345	116,977	7,637	8.7%	21,632	22.7%	
Non-MFC Associations	526,066	546,142	632,146	20,076	3.8	86,004	15.7	
Total SBC	613,774	641,487	749,123	27,713	4.5	107,636	16.8	
Total Receipts (in thousands)								
MFC Associations	\$ 1,110,255	\$ 1,231,798	\$ 1,215,897	\$ 121,543	10.9	-\$ 15,901	-1.3	
Non-MFC Associations	4,273,888	4,803,816	4,852,477	529,928	12.4	48,661	1.0	
Total SBC	5,384,143	6,035,614	6,068,374	651,471	12.1	32,760	0.5	
Total Mission Expenditures (in thousands)								
MFC Associations	\$ 129,479	\$ 137,148	\$ 131,505	\$ 7,668	5.9	-\$ 5,643	-4.1	
Non-MFC Associations	632,161	673,014	727,028	40,853	6.5	54,014	8.0	
Total SBC	761,640	810,162	858,533	48,522	6.4	48,371	6.0	
Cooperative Program (in thousands)								
MFC Associations	\$ 54,881	\$ 59,666	\$ 53,312	\$ 4,785	8.7	-\$ 6,355	-10.7	
Non-MFC Associations	313,339	321,865	332,795	8,526	2.7	10,930	3.4	
Total SBC	368,221	381,531	386,106	13,311	3.6	4,575	1.2	

Source: Annual Church Profiles, Sunday School Board; data compiled for 68 MFC associations by Research Division, Home Mission Board

Table 2**Selected Annual Church Profile Ratios for Mega Focus City Associations
Compared to Non-Mega Focus City Associations: 1993, 1994, and 1995**

	1993	1994	1995
Number of Churches as a Percent of Total			
MFC Associations	11.4%	11.7%	11.9%
Non-MFC Associations	88.6	88.3	88.1
Total SBC	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Membership as a Percent of Total			
MFC Associations	17.5	17.5	17.4
Non-MFC Associations	82.5	82.5	82.6
Total SBC	100.0	100.0	100.0
Resident Membership as a Percent of Total Membership			
MFC Associations	70.0	70.7	70.2
Non-MFC Associations	70.9	70.9	71.0
Total SBC	70.8	70.8	70.8
Baptisms per 100 Resident Members			
MFC Associations	3.6	4.1	4.2
Non-MFC Associations	3.1	3.3	3.4
Total SBC	3.2	3.4	3.5
Sunday School Enrollment per 100 Resident Members			
MFC Associations	78.7	77.8	77.3
Non-MFC Associations	75.0	74.0	73.3
Total SBC	75.6	74.7	74.0
Average Sunday School Attendance as a Percent of Resident Members			
MFC Associations	33.1	32.9	31.7
Non-MFC Associations	35.1	34.2	34.2
Total SBC	34.8	34.0	33.7
WMU Enrollment as a Percent of Resident Members			
MFC Associations	7.7	7.4	7.0
Non-MFC Associations	11.1	10.5	10.1
Total SBC	10.5	10.0	9.6

Table 2 (continued)

	1993	1994	1995
Total Receipts per Resident Member			
MFC Associations	\$ 587	\$ 642	\$ 637
Non-MFC Associations	474	530	528
Total SBC	494	550	547
Total Mission Expenditures as a Percent of Total Receipts			
MFC Associations	11.7%	11.1%	10.8%
Non-MFC Associations	14.8	14.0	15.0
Total SBC	14.1	13.4	14.1
Cooperative Program Giving as a Percent of Total Receipts			
MFC Associations	4.9	4.8	4.4
Non-MFC Associations	7.3	6.7	6.9
Total SBC	6.8	6.3	6.4

Source: Annual Church Profiles, Sunday School Board; data compiled for 68 MFC associations by Research Division, Home Mission Board

Table 3

**Selected Annual Church Profile Items for Mega Focus City Associations
Compared to Non-Mega Focus City Associations, 1981 and 1995**

	1981	1995	Change, 1981-1995	
			Net	Percent
Number of Churches				
MFC Associations	4,379	5,929	1,550	35.4%
Non-MFC Associations	31,291	34,169	2,878	9.2
Total SBC	35,670	40,098	4,428	12.4
Total Membership				
MFC Associations	2,867,746	3,442,198	574,452	20.0
Non-MFC Associations	10,921,834	12,220,286	1,298,452	11.9
Total SBC	13,789,580	15,662,484	1,872,904	13.6
Resident Membership				
MFC Associations	2,076,139	2,467,873	391,734	18.9
Non-MFC Associations	7,828,456	8,625,562	797,106	10.2
Total SBC	9,904,596	11,093,435	1,188,839	12.0
Baptisms				
MFC Associations	94,093	99,366	5,273	5.6
Non-MFC Associations	311,454	294,301	-17,153	-5.5
Total SBC	405,547	393,667	-11,880	-2.9
Sunday School Enrollment				
MFC Associations	1,589,659	1,898,285	308,626	19.4
Non-MFC Associations	5,938,741	6,305,707	366,966	6.2
Total SBC	7,528,400	8,203,992	675,592	9.0
Sunday School Average Attendance				
MFC Associations	741,971	781,542	39,571	5.3
Non-MFC Associations	3,086,999	2,960,442	-126,557	-4.1
Total SBC	3,828,970	3,741,984	-86,986	-2.3
Discipleship Training Enrollment/Participation¹				
MFC Associations	315,195	464,815	...	...
Non-MFC Associations	1,498,984	1,706,651	...	...
Total SBC	1,814,179	2,171,466	...	...
WMU Enrollment				
MFC Associations	189,207	183,585	-5,622	-3.0
Non-MFC Associations	924,070	877,435	-46,635	-5.0
Total SBC	1,113,277	1,061,020	-52,257	-4.7

Table 3 (continued)

	1981	1995	Change, 1981-1995	
			Net	Percent
Brotherhood Enrollment/Participation¹				
MFC Associations	91,481	153,564	...	...
Non-MFC Associations	421,419	595,559	...	...
Total SBC	512,900	749,123	...	...
Total Receipts (in thousands)				
MFC Associations	\$ 688,665	\$ 1,570,457	\$ 881,792	128.0%
Non-MFC Associations	2,093,892	4,497,917	2,404,025	114.8
Total SBC	2,782,557	6,068,374	3,285,817	118.1
Total Mission Expenditures (in thousands)				
MFC Associations	\$ 99,988	\$ 176,893	\$ 76,904	76.9
Non-MFC Associations	341,412	681,641	340,229	99.7
Total SBC	441,400	858,533	417,133	94.5
Cooperative Program (in thousands)				
MFC Associations	\$ 47,107	\$ 74,263	\$ 27,156	57.6
Non-MFC Associations	176,270	311,844	135,573	76.9
Total SBC	223,378	386,106	162,729	72.8

¹The 1995 Brotherhood and Discipleship Training figures include both enrollment and participation, thus multiple counting. The totals are not statistically comparable to 1981.

Source: Uniform Church Letters and Annual Church Profiles, Sunday School Board; data compiled for 90 MFC associations by Research Division, Home Mission Board

Table 4

**Selected Annual Church Profile Ratios for Mega Focus City Associations
Compared to Non-Mega Focus City Associations, 1981 and 1995**

	1981	1995
Number of Churches as a Percent of Total		
MFC Associations	12.3%	14.8%
Non-MFC Associations	87.7	85.2
Total SBC	100.0	100.0
Total Membership as a Percent of Total		
MFC Associations	20.8	22.0
Non-MFC Associations	79.2	78.0
Total SBC	100.0	100.0
Resident Membership as a Percent of Total Membership		
MFC Associations	72.4	71.7
Non-MFC Associations	71.7	70.6
Total SBC	71.8	70.8
Baptisms per 100 Resident Members		
MFC Associations	4.5	4.0
Non-MFC Associations	4.0	3.4
Total SBC	4.1	3.5
Sunday School Enrollment per 100 Resident Members		
MFC Associations	76.6	76.9
Non-MFC Associations	75.9	73.1
Total SBC	76.0	74.0
Average Sunday School Attendance as a Percent of Resident Members		
MFC Associations	35.7	31.7
Non-MFC Associations	39.4	34.3
Total SBC	38.7	33.7
WMU Enrollment as a Percent of Resident Members		
MFC Associations	9.1	7.4
Non-MFC Associations	11.8	10.2
Total SBC	11.2	9.6

Table 4 (continued)

	1981	1995
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Total Receipts per Resident Member		
MFC Associations	\$ 332	\$ 636
Non-MFC Associations	267	521
Total SBC	281	547
Total Mission Expenditures as a Percent of Total Receipts		
MFC Associations	14.5%	11.3%
Non-MFC Associations	16.3	15.2
Total SBC	15.9	14.1
Cooperative Program Giving as a Percent of Total Receipts		
MFC Associations	6.8	4.7
Non-MFC Associations	8.4	6.9
Total SBC	8.0	6.4

Source: Uniform Church Letters and Annual Church Profiles, Sunday School Board;
data compiled for 90 MFC associations by Research Division, Home Mission Board