

24:14 Goal

Movement engagements in every unreached people and place by 2025 (62 months)

1% of the World: A Macroanalysis of 1,369 Movements to Christ

BY **JUSTIN D. LONG**

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For over 25 years, I have been involved in mission research, working mostly on the global documentation of unreached places, peoples and efforts to reach them. During that time, I have worked with a variety of projects, from the second edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* in the late 1990s to my current work documenting movements.

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For over a decade, I have met various people in the missiological community who have talked about rapidly multiplying Church Planting Movements. Until a few years ago, most of those familiar with the global situation thought there were perhaps as many as 100 active movements. In and around 2015, out of curiosity, I began collecting case studies and quantitative data on movements. This effort gathered steam in advance of meetings in 2017 to discuss the formation of what would become the 24:14 network. Several advocates encouraged others to share information beyond their own networks and movement(s) for the first time. I aggregated the data while adhering to the security and confidentiality requirements of each data submitter.

By the time of the meetings, we had documented nearly 1,300 engagements and 600 movements. These totals were significantly more than what most expected, which inspired the meeting participants. The evidence of the geographic and ethnographic spread of movements throughout the world's clusters and affinity blocks encouraged many that the possibility of "a movement team for every people and place" might become possible in the near future. Since that time, I have continued to collect and share updated data on movements around the world, in order to encourage practitioners and provide information on the remaining gaps.

It should be obvious, but I want to state clearly: we gather data to document the total global numbers and regional trends and identify gaps. I do not claim credit for these movements. Further, much of what movements share with me is provided in confidence and is very sensitive. I lead this research effort and hold this movement data in trust for the 24:14 network. Obviously, various movements and teams do much of the research. Globally, a research team and a leadership team help make decisions on how to use and protect this data. We do not share or publish information below the regional level (e.g. at the country or people group level). We point interested people toward the various regional networks, which internally determine processes for connecting people and sharing information, based on the security requirements of the region's situation.

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Families of Movements

The largest amount of movement data comes to me from various networks. We don't just accept any report published on the web or delivered to me. Our network examines new reporting organizations to confirm their reliability. The movements whose data we trust and use have webs of accountability and reporting (see <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/how-movements-count1> for a fuller discussion of the methodologies the various movements use).

Some 53% of the disciples and churches in movements are in **36 “families”** or networks of movements. Some are quite large, numbering in the millions; others are quite small, numbering a few thousand. Some are centered on specific regions of the world, while others are multi-regional and even multi-continental in scope. Nearly all the movement families, no matter how widely spread, have “concentrations of focus” on specific peoples or specific religions. Outside these concentrations, the methods they have developed seem less effective. Movements focused on former Muslim radicals, for example, are less effective among agnostic or secularized non-religious people.

Global Totals

We can count each “family's” presence in a country as a single “national movement” akin to a denomination. This methodology is similar to how the *World Christian Encyclopedia* counts denominations: the Assemblies of God, or Southern Baptists, or Roman Catholics. Each count as “one denomination” in each country where they have congregations. Measured this way, **we currently know of 516 national movements.**

As part of the 24:14 effort, all the organizations or movements report on their work using a scale, the *CPM Continuum*, which measures the level of activity of an existing team. This scale ranges from “1” (a single team just getting started) to “5” (a full movement), to “6” (local leadership) and “7” (movements that send workers to start new movements).

Teams report their efforts by a specific place (country, province, city) and, typically, people group, people cluster or language. Some agencies, due to their security requirements, may only report activity in a specific country (e.g. Austria, Australia, or Armenia). Others might report activity among a specific language group or cluster (such as “Turks” or “Kurds” or “Chinese students”). Still others might report activity coded with Joshua Project's people group ID codes (PEO1-3).

All the reported data is aggregated and coded, then totaled to the regional level. This data is useful for telling us where gaps in effort likely exist. But to actually understand the scope, the “national movement” totals above may be more useful.

We count **engagements** as a team or group of teams focused on starting a movement among a specific people group, cluster or language, at any level on the CPM Continuum (1 to 7). Counting this way, we know of **4,500 engagements.**

An engagement is counted as a **movement** when it consistently sees four generations of disciples gathered in churches, in multiple streams. Although not every movement has a minimum measure of total disciples, most use the 1,000 disciple minimum. Even if they don't use that measure, four generations in multiple streams means a movement would normally be close to or greater than 1,000 disciples. Counting this way, we know of **1,369 movements.**

Once movements reach the four-generation threshold, they tend to *grow consistently* until they reach larger sizes (around 100,000 and into the millions). At this point they may plateau or shift into starting



new movements (if they have not already begun doing so). While many teams have engaged, failed to see anything start, and returned home (I do not track that data), once a movement reaches four generations, it rarely ends. I have found only **18 examples** of such endings (which I have, in the past, referred to as “fizzles”). In each of these, the disciples in the movements have either transitioned into more traditional churches or gone on to start new movements. So even in the few cases where movements have ended, the growth has not been lost.

Every movement involves numerous disciples and churches. Arriving at a total is somewhat complicated, given the differences in the ways various movements count. (I’ve also previously written about this in <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/how-movements-count1>) Based on what we’ve documented, movements currently include *at least 77 million disciples in 4.8 million churches.*

« More is happening than anyone knows; only God sees the full scope. »

I need to emphasize our awareness that what we have documented so far is limited. Our numbers constitute the “floor,” not the “ceiling.” Some movements intentionally report smaller numbers than they have measured, in order to be more confident in their figures (given the human element of reporting). Most of the movements have patterns for double-checking their numbers. We are aware of some reports that we have not included in our numbers, because we haven’t been able to fully document them.

We hear tantalizing rumors of growth that still await adequate documentation. More is happening than anyone knows; only God sees the full scope.

Nevertheless, these numbers are inspiring:

- More than 1 out of 100 people in our world today are part of a rapidly-multiplying movement to Christ.
- The number of house churches in movements exceeds the number of organized churches in all other denominations in the world’s Christian traditions.
- The numbers of house churches and disciples are growing exponentially.
- Some movements are starting to plant new movements, which we expect will lead to even more exponential growth.

Some Movements are Big, but Most are Fairly Small

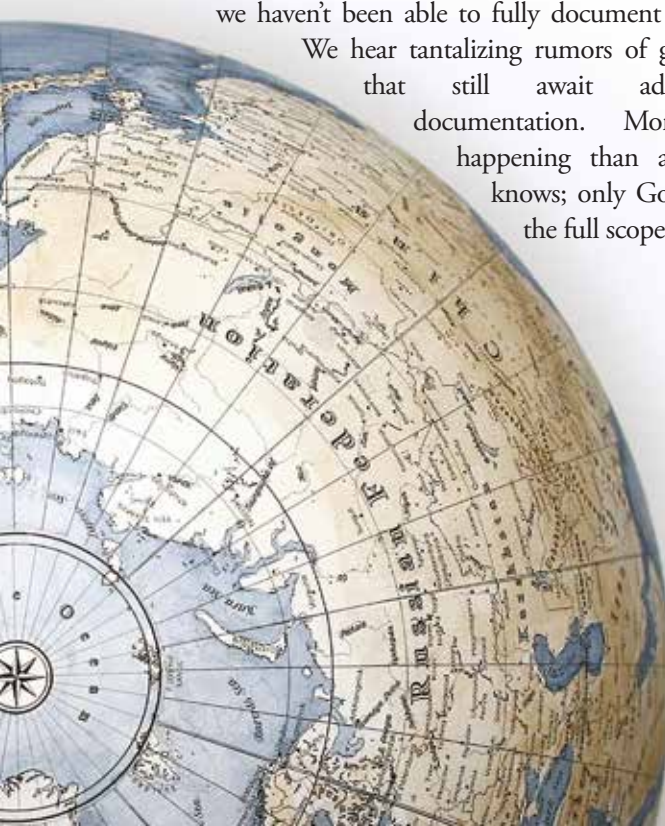
The average size of most individual movements (bounded by people cluster and country) is 56,000 people. Due to small disparities in the way movements report members, comparing some movements to other movements isn’t always “apples to apples.” However, generally speaking, most movements are in the size range of 1,000 to 10,000 people; a handful of movements are larger than one million members.

A better approach is to look more broadly: within the 36 “families” of movements, just four families account for over one million people each. Another 10 account for over 100,000 each. The remaining 22 each account for fewer than 100,000 people.

With 77 million people in 4.8 million churches, the average size of a house church is about 16. This seems to be a fairly common average in countries. However, some of the larger movements, in slightly more open countries, do see house groups grow into larger churches with as many as 200. Some smaller movements in more dangerous places see house churches as small as 3 or 4 (but they are connected to other churches in the movement through leadership).

Movements Can be Found in all UN Regions

Unsurprisingly, most of the world’s movements are found in Asia: 45 in Central Asia, 51 in East Asia, 208 in South Asia, 154 in Southeast Asia, and 224 in West Asia. Together, these represent the vast majority of the disciples in movements: over 52 million. While this is an enormous number, it represents just slightly more than 1% of Asia’s total population of 4.8 billion. While I am pleased to see these enormous movements, I also recognize they are a drop in the bucket compared to the need.



The second largest grouping of movements is found in Africa: 155 in East Africa, 71 in Middle Africa, 110 in North Africa, 14 in South Africa, and 140 in West Africa. Together, these represent over 11 million disciples. These numbers make up slightly less than 1% of Africa's total population of 1.26 billion.

Europe has the third largest grouping of movements: 42 in Eastern Europe, 16 in Northern Europe, 33 in Southern Europe; 27 in Western Europe. Together, they have 2.6 million disciples. Many of these movements are among diaspora peoples. Very few of these movements are large; most are a few thousand disciples, with a few numbering over 10,000. All operate very much under the radar. They total about one-third of one percent of Europe's total population of 742 million.

South and Central America combined have a handful of movements: 5 in the Caribbean, 4 in Central America, 6 in South America. Together they comprise about a million disciples. This makes them about one-quarter of one percent of South and Central America's total population of 693 million.

North America has 31 movements, numbering in total less than half a million people. Most of the movements are very small groups among diaspora peoples. This constitutes about one-tenth of one percent of North America's 382 million.

Finally, there are a half-dozen movements in the Pacific, comprising about 70,000 people. This also makes up about one-tenth of one percent of the Pacific region's 45 million people.

Over half of 229 countries have movement engagements

While we don't reveal specifics of engagements, we do note that out of 229 countries, 113 have no movements and 74 have no engagements.

If we evaluate countries according to their "Stage of Christianity," we can see that movements tend to occur at by far the highest percentages (86% to 95%) in countries that are less than a third Christian. However, half of countries between 32 and 90% Christian have movements, and there are even movements in 20% of the countries that are 90% (heavily cultural) Christian. Broadly speaking, movements have been shown to happen in every kind of place, but movement practitioners are

inclined to work in largely non-Christian places.

Stage	# Countries	# With Movements	% With Movements
0 <0.1% Christian	2	2	100
1 0.1–2%	23	19	82
2 2–8%	24	24	100
3 8–32%	16	14	87
4 32–90%	97	50	51
5 Over 90%	80	20	25

Stage	# Countries	# With Engagements	% Engagements
0 <0.1% Christian	2	2	100
1 0.1–2%	23	20	86
2 2–8%	24	24	100
3 8–32%	16	14	87
4 32–90%	97	68	70
5 Over 90%	80	40	50

Movements have mostly engaged Muslims and Hindus

It is somewhat challenging to estimate the number of disciples with a background in other religions. Many movements end up affecting more than one religious group, and it's nearly impossible to know the distribution of focus. Nevertheless, I have estimated which movements are "majority focused" on a specific religion (e.g. Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism) and some order of magnitude differences can be seen.

Movement focus	Total disciples (millions)
Cultural Christians	1.78
Ethnoreligionists	1.71
Muslims	29.56
Hindus	30.49
Nonreligious	1.72
Buddhists	2.40
Jews	<0.1

Movements tend to concentrate in rural areas, but are expanding into urban ones

We've only just begun to fine tune the amount of information we have on where movements are engaging within specific countries, provinces, and districts. Most of what we know is very broad. It's difficult to discern what percentage of movements are in urban areas, and what percentage are in rural areas.

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By examining the historical data we have in the database and in the collected case studies, it appears the majority of movements began in rural areas and continue to operate mostly in those situations. Even when they are present in towns and cities, many of these areas have a rural flavor.

Nevertheless, movements are more and more reporting intentionally engaging peoples in cities, and seeing fruit there. The idea that movement methodologies can't work in cities is being challenged in many places. Movements like those among the Bhojpuri in India, other movements in India, a variety of movements in West and East Africa, and various movements in Eurasia are engaging many people groups and geographical areas within the major cities of those nations. Some of those cities have a more rural feel to them, but many are very large megacities. In addition, much of the work among Muslims is taking place in cities. At the same time, while the data is not comprehensive, it seems not many efforts focus on cities as a whole (versus focusing on specific peoples within certain cities). This is an area for development in the future.

Movements currently engage over 1,000 people groups and 2,000 languages

As with geographic locations, we are just beginning to gather good information on all the peoples and languages being engaged. From our limited data, we know of 1,140 people groups that are engaged, and 2,188 languages in different countries. This means that if Kazakh in Germany, Kazakhstan, and China were all engaged, it would count as "3" toward the total number of engagements. We also know of at least 255 provinces that have movement-focused teams. We have just recently started gathering this dataset so we expect this reported number to grow significantly as more data becomes available. Again, this data should be understood as the "floor," not the "ceiling."

Virtually all of the Joshua Project Affinity Blocs are engaged

We have a better view of people group engagement when we look more broadly. Joshua Project has categorized the world's 16,000 people groups into 272 clusters, which in turn are grouped into 16 affinity blocs. Fifteen of the 16 have movements. The sixteenth is the Deaf, and while there are certainly deaf disciples in movements, as of this writing we don't know of movements specifically engaging this group.

The three affinity blocs with the greatest number of **engagements** are the Arab World, South Asian peoples, and Sub-Saharan peoples. The reason is fairly simple: people trying to start movements have worked the longest in these three blocs. Many movement efforts in other blocs have sprung out of the initial fruit in these blocs.



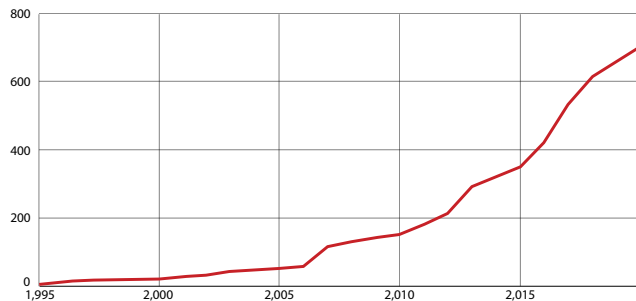
One-third of Joshua Project's People Clusters are Engaged

Of Joshua Project's 272 clusters, 93 are presently heavily engaged, meaning there are 10 or more teams working in the clusters. This doesn't necessarily represent a fully adequate engagement yet, since many of these clusters number in the millions of people. Efforts in these locations should be undertaken in collaboration with existing field work, which in many places is being done by near-culture workers.

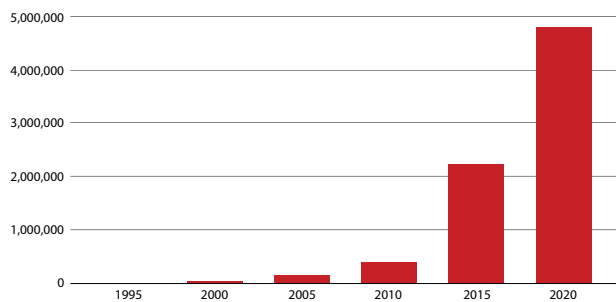
There are, on the other hand, 123 clusters with fewer than five engagements among them. Of these, 57 clusters are less than 5% Christian. They include well-known clusters like the Afar, Beja, and Luri. Much work remains to be done.

Conclusion: Movements as a Focus for the Future of Missions

We have been gathering information about each movement's beginning date and its growth in five-year increments. About half of all known movements have reported this data. This analysis has led us to the conclusion that the *number of movements* is currently growing incrementally, not exponentially.



However, the number of churches in these movements *has* been growing exponentially, as shown on this graph of growth over five-year increments:



Further, as movements begin focusing on sending out workers to start new movements, we anticipate seeing the first signs of exponential growth in numbers of movements in the next five years.

Rapidly multiplying movements to Christ have been sowing seed and steadily growing, out of the limelight, in the spiritually darkest places of the world for nearly three decades. While they remain a small percentage of the world, they are not insignificant. Disciples in movements make up 1% of our world's population, and many movements have emerged in some of the most spiritually hungry regions. We know of 1,369 movements today, but another 2,000 teams are steadily and passionately working to catalyze movements in their own spheres. Within the next five to 10 years we could easily see the current 1% become 2% of the world, and almost certainly significantly more within specific areas of focus. Movements are not a passing fad but a significant topic for the future of our missiological discourse. There is much to be excited about, but still much to be learned. As the Body of Christ, we must continue to collaborate and refine our research in order to steward this knowledge responsibly. 