ShortTermMissions.com
Search Summary Report,
Spring 2010

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Table of Contents

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Introduction

Since launching ShortTermMissions.com in 2000, Mission Data International (M-DAT) has tracked searches made on the website for the purpose of understanding what search criteria people use to look for a short-term mission opportunity. This is a follow-up report to our 2007 and 2009 reports.

The graphs in this report are based on 106,702[1] "basic" searches[2] made on ShortTermMissions.com from January through April of 2010.

In order to understand the data contained in this report, it is important to first know who uses the website. Start by reading the section titled, "Demographics of ShortTermMissions.com" on the next page. It may also be helpful to take a moment to visit www.ShortTermMissions.com and try a few searches to familiarize yourself with the method through which the data was collected.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact David Armstrong. Email: davida@mdat.org, Phone: 479-524-9110

New reports as well as corrections or updates to information contained in this report will be posted at: http://www.mdat.org/reports/

Mission Data International is an innovative non-profit mission mobilization ministry. M-DAT creates websites that help believers move forward in their mission involvement. Our vision is that every believer desiring growth in mission involvement would obtain the practical assistance necessary to realize significant, life-long involvement in the Great Commission.

ShortTermMissions.com is a service of Mission Data International. The website was developed in 2000 to help youth and adults take the step of serving on a short-term mission opportunity. It features current details of mission opportunities from one hundred sending organizations and sees 14,000 unique visitors each month.

A special thanks to all of our friends involved in the Fellowship of Short-Term Mission Leaders (www.fstml.org) and the Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions (www.stmstandards.org) for their encouragement over the years and consistently striving toward excellence in what they do. We genuinely appreciate you!

Demographics of ShortTermMissions.com

ShortTermMissions.com's primary target audience is US believers who tend toward the Evangelical side of the Christian spectrum. The opportunities posted are primarily from US-based, inter-denominational sending organizations and have an evangelistic component to them.

A demographic survey of website visitors who viewed at least one short-term mission opportunity from April 1 – 25 in 2008 revealed the following characteristics about those searching on ShortTermMissions.com:

- 3/4 female and 1/4 male
- 14% high school aged (14-17), 31% college aged (18-21), 53% adults (22-65)
- 65% describe themselves as having a "high interest in missions"
- 78% want to go on a mission trip within the year
- 36% are considering long-term missions (i.e. serving on a short-term trip to explore whether or not becoming a career missionary is for them)

While this was not a fully scientific survey, the results give a consistent picture of the website's users. On most points, the results of the survey in 2008 were quite similar to the surveys performed in 2005 and 2007 with most of the same questions. The main differences are that in this latest survey the percentage of college students has risen 7%, the percentage of adults has dropped 8%, and the percentage considering long-term missions increased 10% over 2007.

Search Activity

ShortTermMissions.com has three kinds of search forms: "Basic", "Advanced" and "Directory." The data in this report is for "basic" searches, which is used the majority of the time. There were 106,702 "basic" searches made on ShortTermMissions.com from January through April of 2010. The graph below of traffic over an 11 month period shows that this is the time frame when search activity is at its highest:
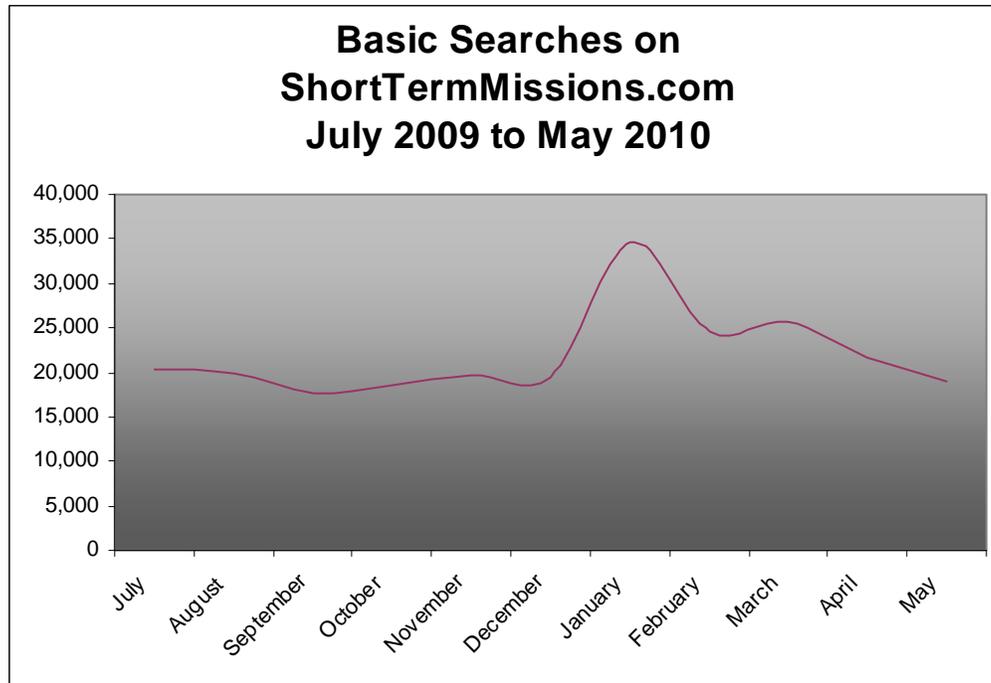

Figure 1   © 2010 Mission Data International

The Fall-Spring traffic pattern seen above is very similar to the one we have seen each of the last eight years.

While January through March are peak months for searching, there is significant search activity ALL year long. Organizations wanting to get the most visibility for their trips should start making details about their short-term mission opportunities for the following year available in July or August of this year. We recommend to our listing organizations to post a skeleton description of their next year's trips late in the summer with the exact date and cost "to be announced" and then fill out the rest of the information as it becomes available later in the year.

Search Criteria Popularity

The basic search includes nine possible search criteria: participant type, age, ministry activity, region, country, length, start month, start year, and keyword. By default, all of these criteria are set to "any" or left blank except participant type which is set to "individuals." Below is a chart showing how often the different search criteria were used in the 106,702 basic searches:

Search Criteria Popularity by %

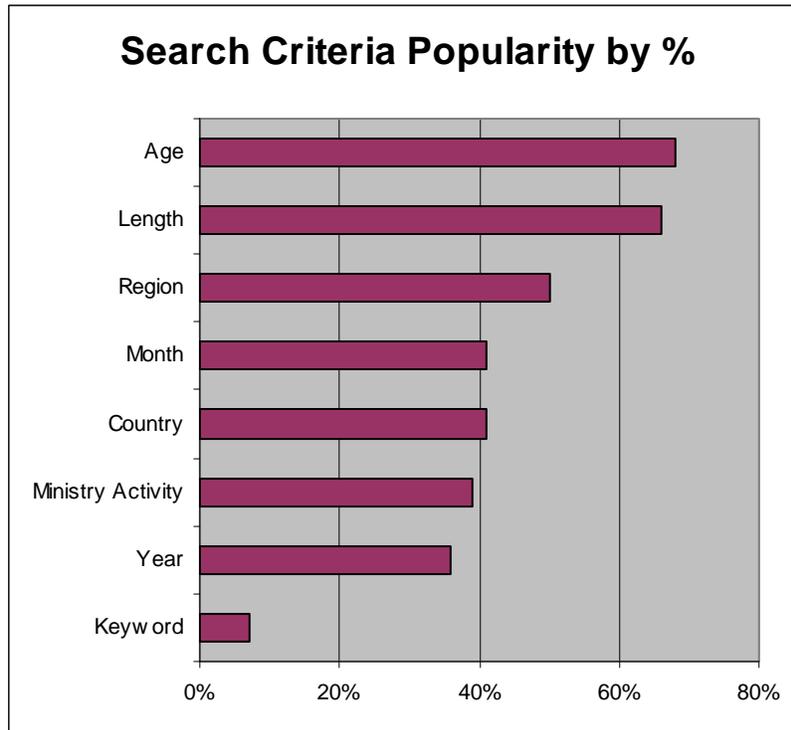| Criteria	Percentage
Age	~68%
Length	~66%
Region	~50%
Month	~41%
Country	~41%
Ministry Activity	~39%
Year	~36%
Keyword	~7%

Figure 2   © 2010 Mission Data International

A closer look at each of these search criteria is provided in the pages that follow with the exception of start month and start year.

Over the last two years, most criteria have increased slightly in usage compared to the previous year except for "Ministry Activity", which has decreased slightly in importance.

The average person searching on www.ShortTermMissions.com specifies 3.5 criteria in addition to the participant type, which all searches include by default. This is up slightly from 3.2 in 2007 and 3.4 in 2009.

The Most Searched for Countries

Searches specified a country 41% of the time this Spring. Below is a graph of the twenty most searched for countries:
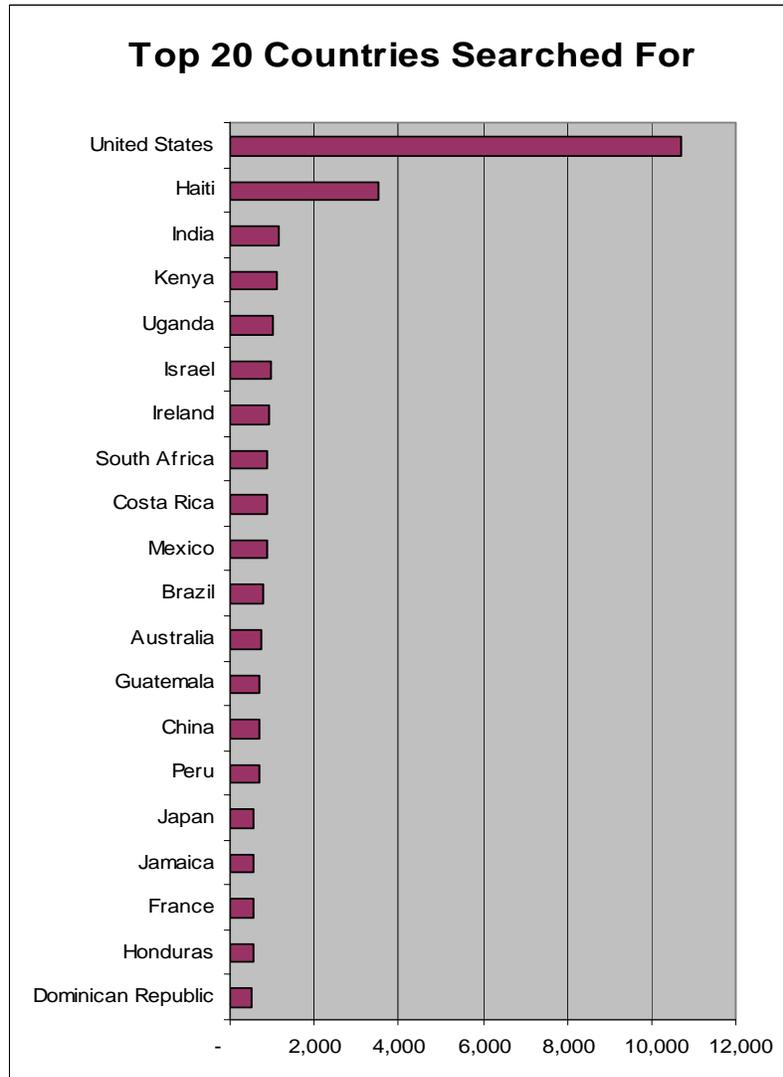
Top 20 Countries Searched For

Figure 3   © 2010 Mission Data International

The most searched for "Country" is the only search criteria that changes significantly over the years. The "Length of Trip", "Age of Participant", and "Preferred Ministry Activities" all remain about the same. The specific countries most searched for each year are more dynamic, changing over the years. Natural disasters often result in an increase in interest for certain countries.

Over the last 4 years, the percentage of people specifying a country has increased from 34% to 41% (2007: 34%, 2008: 36%, 2009: 38%, 2010: 41%). This year Israel moved up from 15th place to 6th place on countries most searched for.

For the first time in eight years, Mexico moved out of second place in terms of popularity. Each year the distance between it and the third place country has decreased, but this year we were surprised when Mexico dropped all the way to tenth place. It was replaced by Haiti, which experienced a destructive 7.0 magnitude earthquake on January 12, 2010.

Uganda continues to rank as the fifth most searched for country, with Kenya ranking fourth.

China has moved down the list, dropping from eighth place to fourteenth place this past year. For several years it was in 3rd or 4th place.

From the fact that people coming to our web site search so much for the US, and from Barna's Oct 2008 survey[3] which states that "33% of the mission trips were to locations in the US", one would conclude that the Christian public sees the phrases "mission trips" and "short-term missions" to mean any service trip, whether in the US or outside the US. Originally it was a term referring to trips overseas. As people discuss and study short-term missions, it would be helpful for them to state whether their study and conclusions refer to all mission trips or just those outside the US.

The Most Searched for Regions

Searches specified a particular region of the world 50% of the time. Below are graphs of how this breaks out by region and by broader areas:

Comparison by Region

Region	
Northern America	~10,700
Caribbean	~6,100
Central America	~5,600
Southern America	~4,800
Western Europe	~4,300
Eastern Africa	~4,300
Southern Africa	~3,600
Eastern Europe	~2,300
Western Africa	~2,000
Oceania	~1,800
Southeastern Asia	~1,700
Eastern Asia	~1,400
Middle East	~1,300
Northern Africa	~1,300
Southern Asia	~1,200
Central Asia	~500

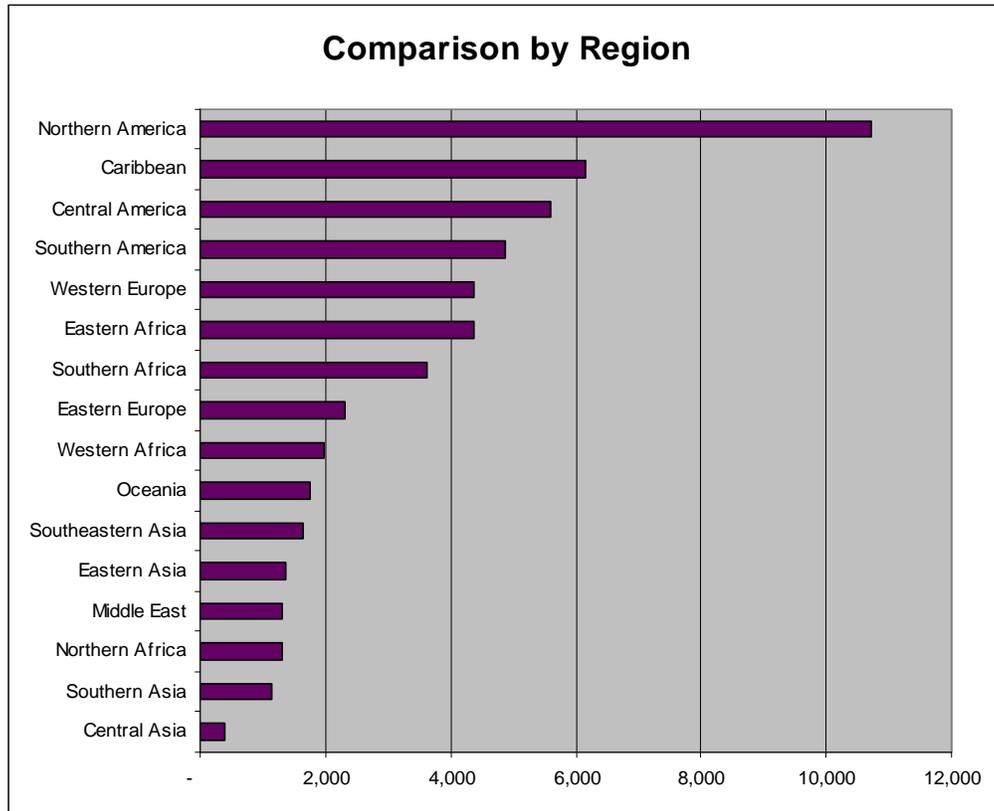**Figure 4**   © 2010 Mission Data International

On ShortTermMissions.com, the regions are defined as follows:

Figure 5   © 2010 Mission Data International

The regions used on our map and in our data correlate with the regions and sub-regions used by the UN, except for the Middle East.
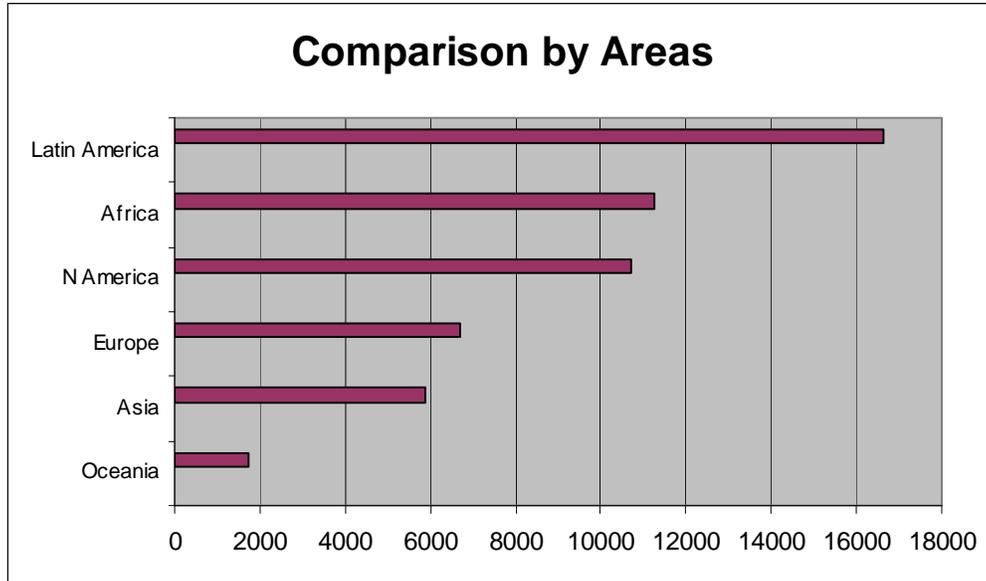
Comparison by Areas

Area	Value
Latin America	~16800
Africa	~11300
N America	~10700
Europe	~6600
Asia	~5800
Oceania	~1700

Figure 6   © 2010 Mission Data International

Latin America is a broader designation than a continent, but to make a more helpful comparison between the regions, for the above chart we have grouped together "South America", "Central America" and "The Caribbean" as "Latin America" while "N America" refers to the United States and Canada.

Because of the high interest in Haiti this year, the Latin America area increased in popularity at the expense of the North America area.

The Most Searched for Ministry Activities

Searches specified a ministry activity 39% of the time. Below is a graph showing the relative popularity of the thirty-nine ministry activity options on ShortTermMissions.com:
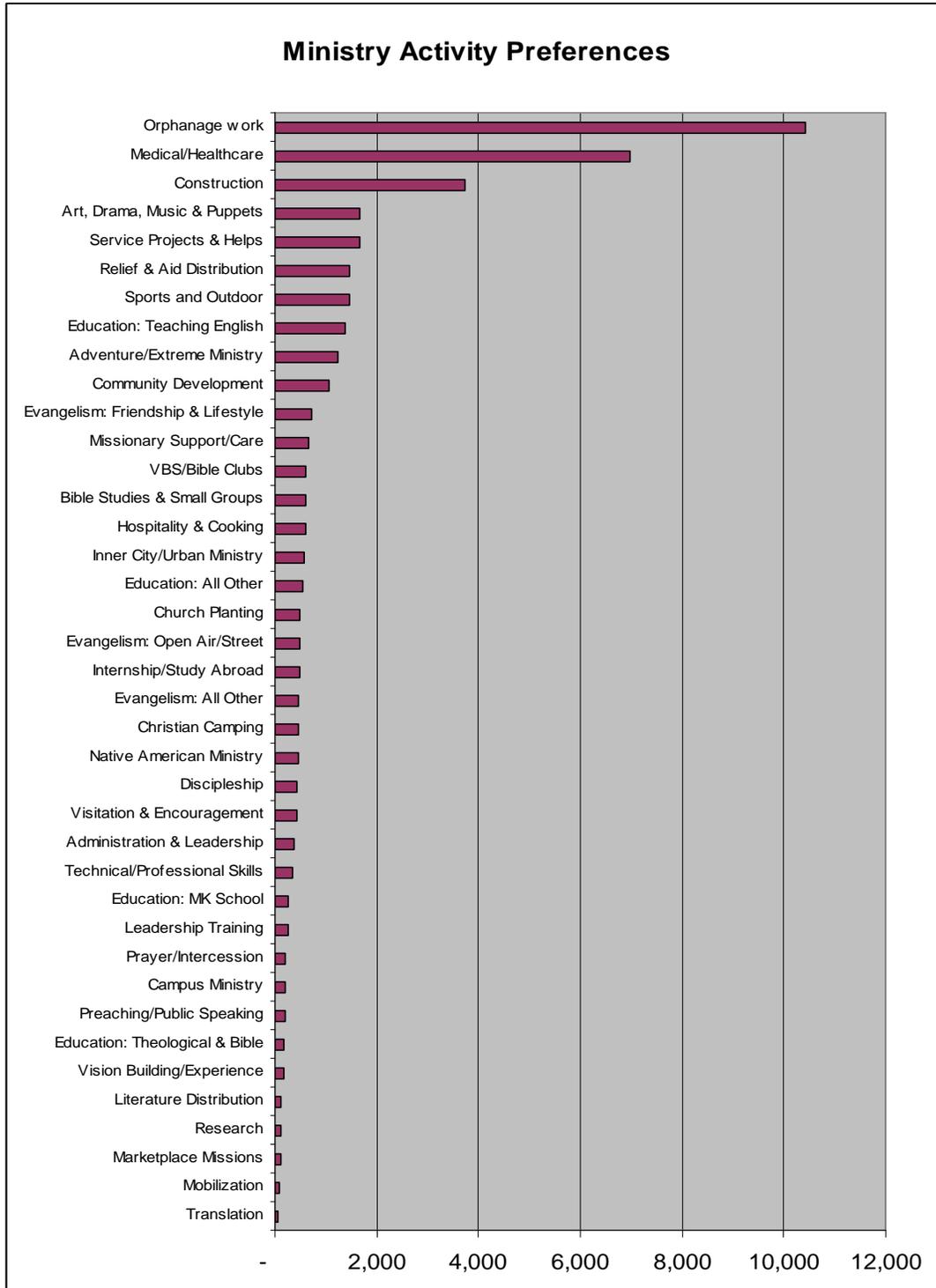

Ministry Activity Preferences

Ministry Activity	
Orphanage work	
Medical/Healthcare	
Construction	
Art, Drama, Music & Puppets	
Service Projects & Helps	
Relief & Aid Distribution	
Sports and Outdoor	
Education: Teaching English	
Adventure/Extreme Ministry	
Community Development	
Evangelism: Friendship & Lifestyle	
Missionary Support/Care	
VBS/Bible Clubs	
Bible Studies & Small Groups	
Hospitality & Cooking	
Inner City/Urban Ministry	
Education: All Other	
Church Planting	
Evangelism: Open Air/Street	
Internship/Study Abroad	
Evangelism: All Other	
Christian Camping	
Native American Ministry	
Discipleship	
Visitation & Encouragement	
Administration & Leadership	
Technical/Professional Skills	
Education: MK School	
Leadership Training	
Prayer/Intercession	
Campus Ministry	
Preaching/Public Speaking	
Education: Theological & Bible	
Vision Building/Experience	
Literature Distribution	
Research	
Marketplace Missions	
Mobilization	
Translation	

Figure 7   © 2010 Mission Data International

Surprisingly, there are three ministry activities that consistently appear way above all others: orphanage work, medical\healthcare, and construction, always in that order. The next six activities have remained the same over the last three years, but have moved around some relative to one another. They rank about twice as high as all the remaining options. "Community Development" has remained tenth in the rankings over the last four years.

The top ten activities account for almost 76% of the searches which specified an activity.

If all the forms of evangelism and church planting were grouped under "Evangelism, church planting" and all the forms of education were totaled under "Education – all forms" and community service types of ministry were grouped together, the order would shift some. Since some activities are both "Evangelism, church planting" and "Community Service Projects," or "Community Service Projects" and "Construction", it is difficult to group a number of the specific ministries.
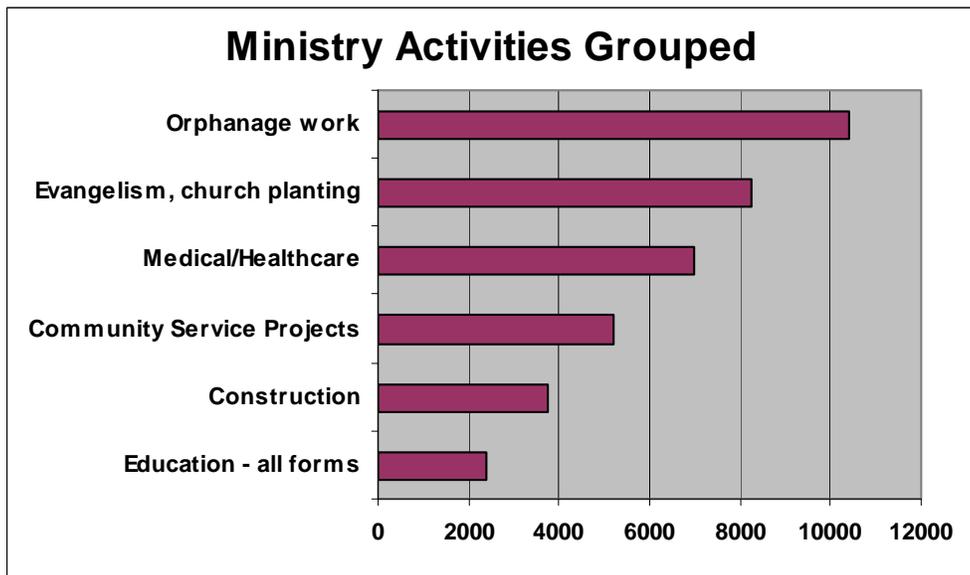

Figure 8   © 2010 Mission Data International

Participant Types

ALL searches are set to specify a participant type in the search criteria. By default the choice is individual. A person must change it in order to search for the other three categories. Below is a graph of how this breaks out:
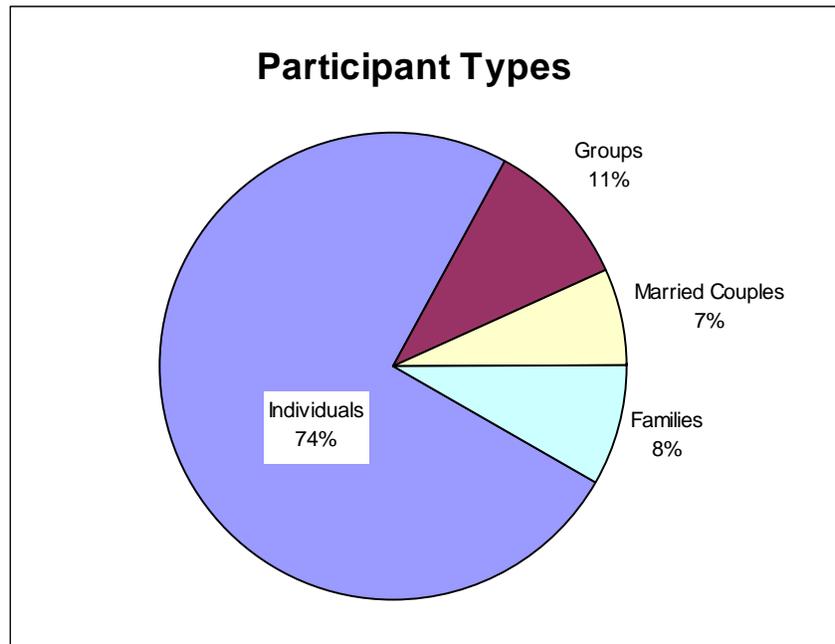

Figure 9   © 2010 Mission Data International

Over the last four years, this graph has remained the same.

Why the lower representation of groups? One reason for this is that, participant type is pre-set to "individuals." Another key reason is that for a group of ten, twenty or even one hundred youth, only one person does the searching to find the opportunity. So, while just 11% of the searches were looking for group opportunities, it likely represents more total people than those searching for opportunities for individuals (It may be helpful to note here that in the end almost all mission trips are "group mission trips". The only difference is that some groups are formed by the church or school sending them, while others are formed by the mission organization out of individuals who do not previously know each other.)

Participant Age Groups

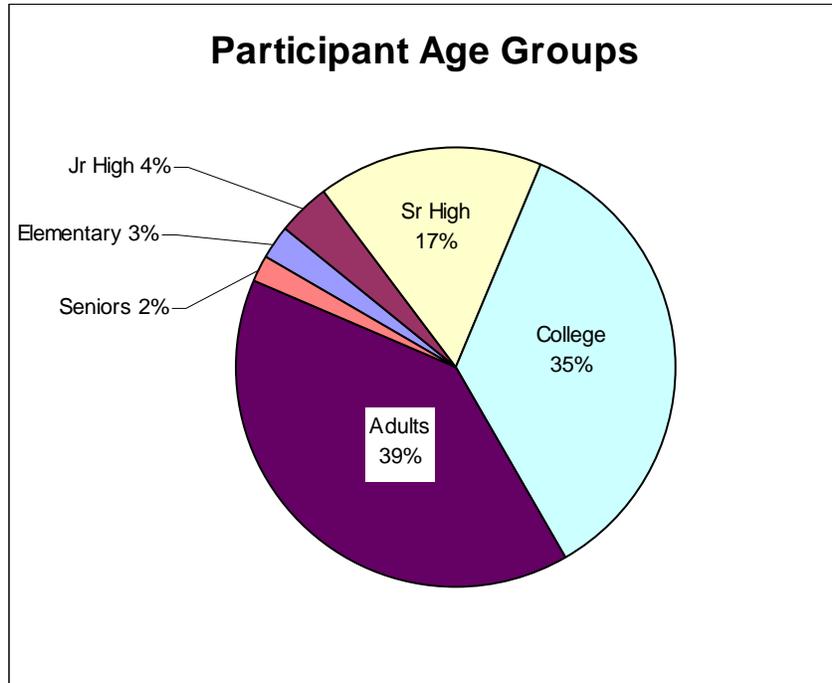Searches specified a participant age group 68% of the time. Below is a graph of how this breaks out:

Figure 10   © 2010 Mission Data International

Note: *This graph shows the age requirement of the opportunity, not the age of the searcher. In other words, high school youth leaders would be looking for "Senior High" even though they themselves would fall in the "Adult" category. Individuals searching for an opportunity for themselves, would search for their own age.*

Concerning the percentages of people searching for junior and senior high student mission trips, most go with their church youth group. In many cases these are *church coordinated mission trips directly arranged with supported missionaries,* which are not represented on ShortTermMissions.com. In addition, for church groups going on *mission agency coordinated mission trips,* only the youth pastor does the leg work of finding a short-term opportunity--one person searching, but ten to twenty junior or senior high students going.

Over the last three years the split out between the various ages has not changed significantly.

Length of Short-Term Mission Trip

Searches specified a trip length 66% of the time. Below is a graph of how this breaks out:
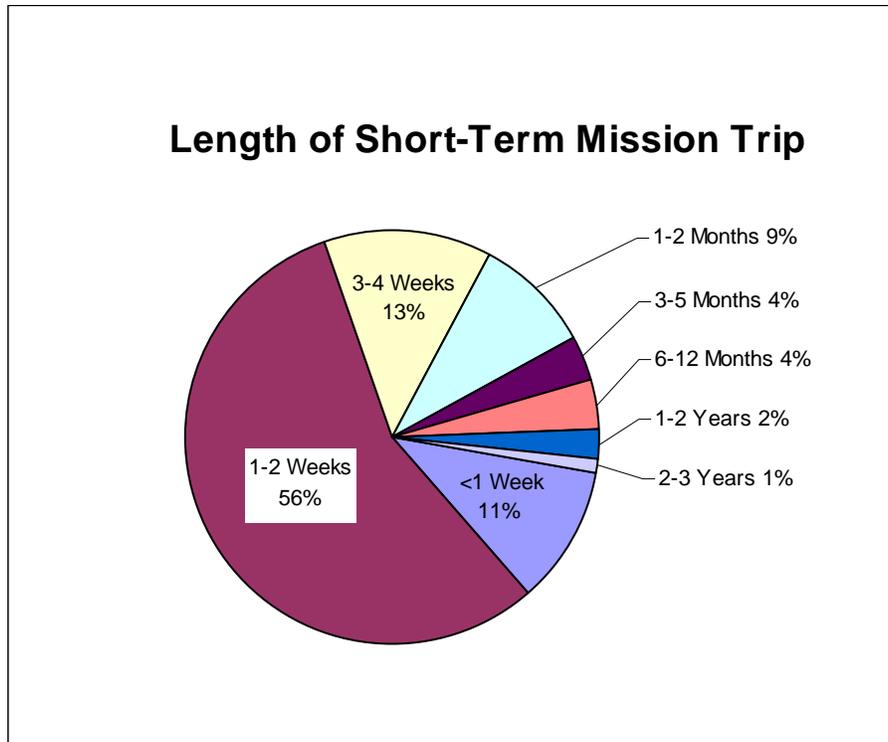

Figure 11   © 2010 Mission Data International

While two thirds of those specifying a length of opportunity selected two weeks or under, this graph shows significant levels of interest in longer opportunities as well: 13% searched for three to four weeks, 9% for one to two months, and another 11% searched for three months or longer (11% translates to about 1,936 searches per month).

The one-to-two week category is the length that most people think of when they hear the terms "short-term missions" or "mission trips," and two thirds of the searches made on ShortTermMissions.com are for this length of trip. Because of the considerable difference between two week service trips and two month internships, various people have tried to differentiate between them in their studies and presentation of data.

In the summary at the beginning of the <u>2007-2009 Mission Handbook</u>[4], Dr. Scott Moreau uses the term "short-term" to refer specifically to "two weeks to one year". Those shorter than two weeks are referred to as "mission trips". Michael Jaffarian, Senior Research Associate for Operation World, also made that distinction in his webinar presentation[5] Feb 12, 2009 to The Mission Exchange.

Common Keywords

Searches specified a keyword 7% of the time. Below is a chart showing the most commonly typed in words during the months of January through April 2010:

Rank	Summary	Searches
1	haiti	320
2	africa	198
3	alaska	174
4	children	166
5	build	151
6	medical	114
7	dental	97
8	orphanage	82
9	nurse	79
10	christian	56
11	appalachia	53
12	water	42
13	new orleans	42
14	new york	40
15	catholic	40
16	orphans	40
17	mexico	39
18	spanish	38
19	texas	35
20	california	34
21	free	33
22	french	33
23	india	33
24	stem	32
25	spring break	32

This year, Africa and Alaska continue to be at the top of the list, but not surprisingly, Haiti took first place. New Orleans continues to be in the top 25. Children and orphanages and medical types of ministries continue to rank solidly in the keywords being searched for.

End Notes

[1] ShortTermMissions.com employs a variety of methods to filter out non-human search activity from search data; however, due to the complex and ever-changing nature of robot and spider activity it is impossible to achieve 100% accuracy. Our current methods filter out at least 95% of all non-human activity on the website.

[2] The analysis of the data in this report does not attempt to filter multiple searches made by the same person for the same or similar search criteria.

[3] Barna Group. "Despite Benefits, Few Americans Have Experienced Short-Term Mission Trips". Oct 6, 2008. Barna Group. www.Barna.org.

[4] Weber, Linda and Dorsey Welliver. Mission Handbook, 2007-2009, 20th ed. Wheaton: EMIS, 2007

5 Jaffarian, Michael. "The North American Missions Movement: Key Facts and Trends". February 12, 2009. The Mission Exchange. www.TheMissionExchange.org