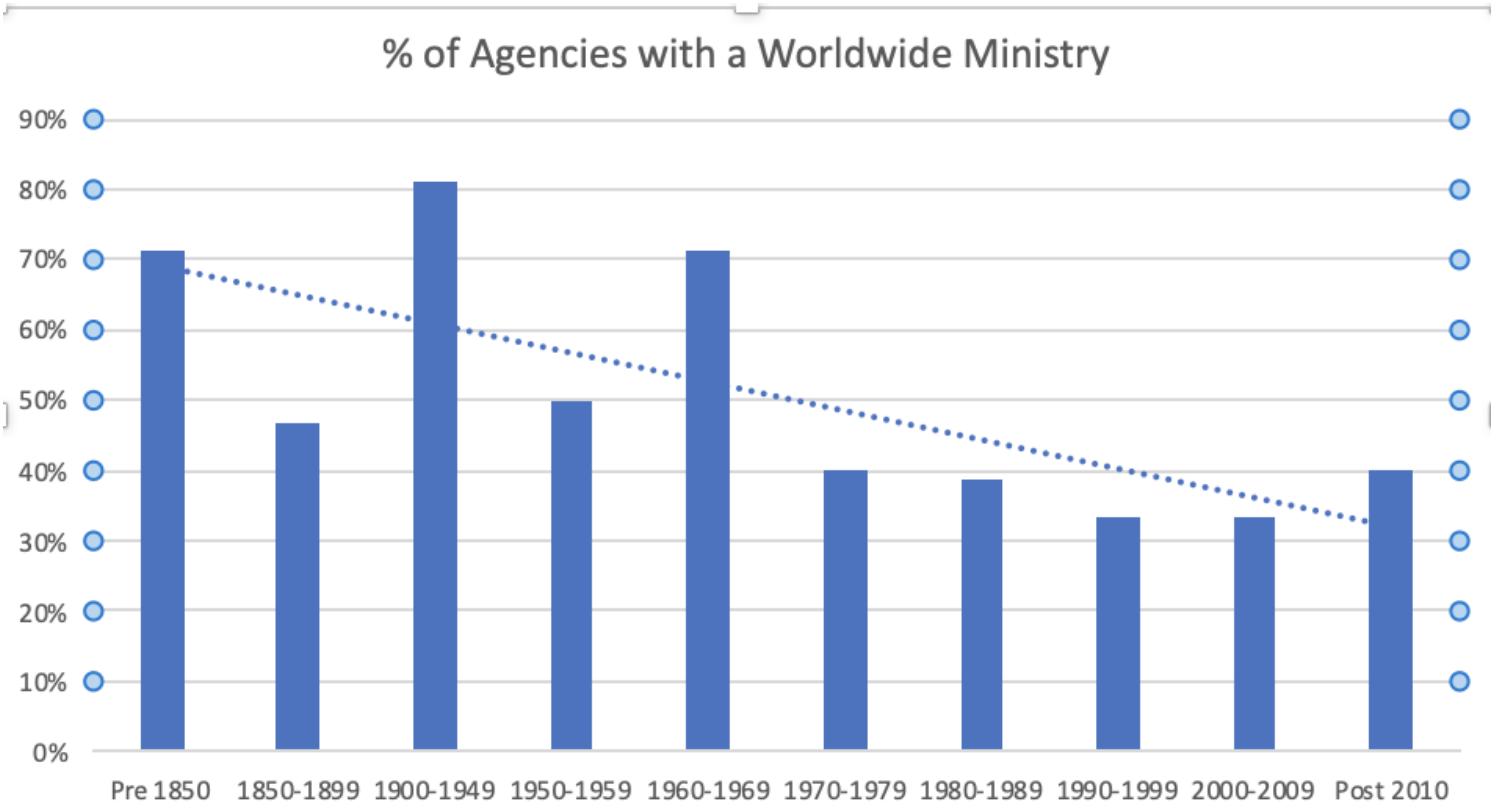
WHERE BRITISH MISSION AGENCIES WORK

Posted on April 12, 2019 by Eddie

A brief look at some statistics about the history and geography of British mission agencies (it's more interesting than it sounds).
Category: Observations

I'm currently working on a chapter for a book which looks at trends in mission agencies according to the date at which they were founded. This is a short taster of the sort of thing I have discovered.

In general, older agencies are more likely to have a worldwide ministry than younger ones. As the following chart shows, this is not a smooth trend.Â



The drop in the proportion of agencies with a worldwide ministry founded in the late 1800s corresponds to Ralph Winterâ€™s second era of mission. At this time, agencies such as OMF with a focus on Asia and Arab World Ministries with a focus on the Islamic world came into being. Likewise, the increase in agencies with a worldwide ministry in the early 1900s corresponds broadly to Winterâ€™s third era, when agencies such as UFM, New Tribes Mission and Wycliffe Bible Translators who focussed on reaching people with no access to the gospel, wherever they were in the world. The 1960s marked the point at which a number of Christian aid and development agencies with worldwide reach came into being.

Looking at the particular countries or regions where agencies work gives a complicated and confusing picture over time, though some general trends can be observed.

- Agencies founded in the last thirty years are more likely than their predecessors to work in one specific country, rather than being regionally or globally based.
- From 1970 onwards there has been a distinct increase in the number of agencies focussing

their work on Asia. It is unclear why this is so.
- There was a distinct spike in the number of agencies working in East Africa in the 1990s. For the most part, these are small agencies working in one country. One explanation of this phenomenon is that visitors, facilitated by increasingly easy travel, to this part of the world formed small charities to meet specific needs that they encountered during their visits.
- Following on from the fall of communism, there was an increase in agencies working in Europe post-1990.
- There has been an increase in agencies working in the Islamic world over the past decades.

Looking at all of the data at my disposal, it is apparent that newer agencies tend to be smaller and more focused on a particular location or ministry compared to their forebears.