

FAITH AND BELIEF IN AUSTRALIA

A national study on religion, spirituality and worldview trends

COMMISSIONED BY



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Research objectives

Commissioned by Olive Tree Media, Christian Media and Arts Australia*, Christian Schools Australia, Ministry Training Strategy, and the Titus Foundation, the 2017 *Faith and Belief in Australia* study explores the state of Christianity in Australia. The purpose of this research is to investigate faith and belief blockers among Australians and to understand perceptions, opinions, and attitudes towards Jesus, the Church and Christianity.

*Christian Media and Arts Australia represents 1079 Life FM - Adelaide, Hope1032 - Sydney, 89.9 LightFM - Melbourne, 96five Family Radio - Brisbane, 98five Sonshine FM - Perth, Juice1073 - Gold Coast, ultra106.5 fm - Hobart, 99.7 Rhema FM - Newcastle and 96three - Geelong.

Research methodology

This research employed qualitative and quantitative methods to explore Australian perceptions and attitudes towards Christianity, the Church, and Jesus. These methods included a nationally representative survey of Australians, a series of focus groups with individuals who do not identify as Christians and analysis of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

National survey of 1,024 Australians

This survey was developed and deployed to an online panel and completed by 1,024 Australians, who were representative of the national population by gender, age, and state. The survey was conducted from 13th January to 18th January, 2017.

Focus groups with 26 non-Christians

Three focus groups were conducted to explore the attitudes and experiences of Australians who do not identify as Christians. The purpose of the groups was to understand their perspectives, experiences, and attitudes towards religion and spirituality.

The groups were held in Sydney from 15th March to 16th March, 2017. The 26 participants were segmented by age cohorts with one group for each of the following generations:

Generation	Female participants	Male participants	Total participants
Gen Y (aged 23-37)	4	4	8
Gen X (aged 38-52)	4	5	9
Baby Boomers (aged 53-71)	5	4	9

Throughout this report

Reference to the generations throughout this report refer to the following age categories:

- Generation Z: 7-22 year olds (those born from 1995 to 2009)
- Generation Y: 23-37 year olds (those born from 1980-1994)
- Generation X: 38-52 year olds (those born from 1965-1979)
- Baby Boomers: 53-71 year olds (those born from 1946-1964)
- Builders: 72+ year olds (those born from 1925- 1945)

Focus group participants will be referred to as 'non-Christian participants' throughout the report.

Terminology and segmentation throughout this report

A series of segments are used throughout this report to differentiate participants based on their worldviews.

Q. What religion do you currently practice or identify with?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of Australian population
Australians who identify with Christianity	Christianity (Catholic/Orthodox), Christianity (Protestant/Evangelical/Pentecostal)	45%
Non-religious	None, I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	32%
Spiritual but not religious	I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any main religion	14%
Non-Christians	Non-religious, Spiritual but not religious, 'other', Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism	55%

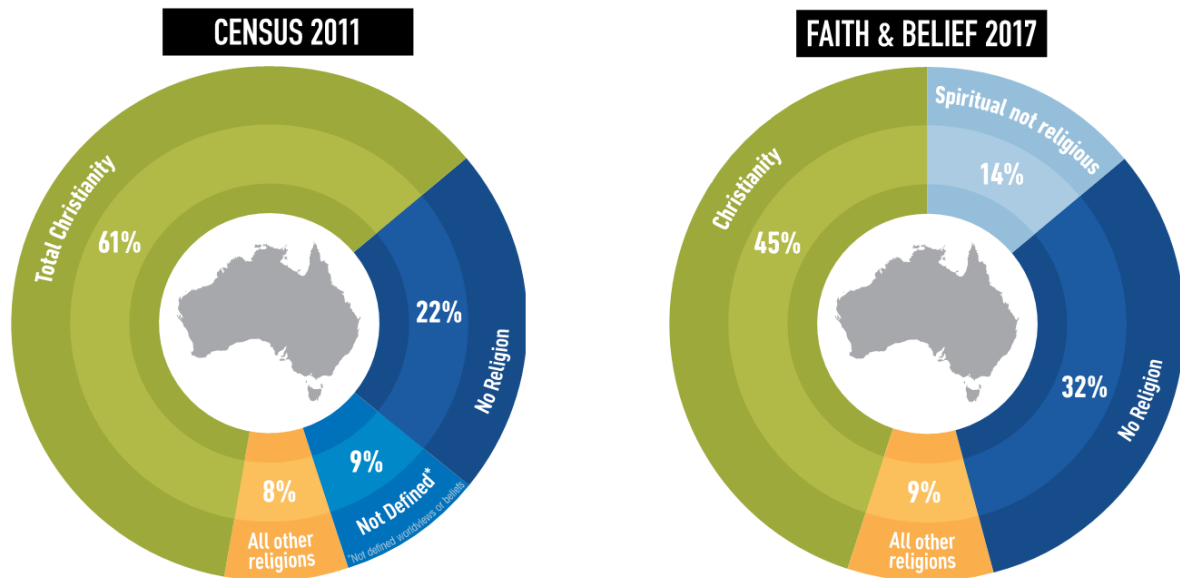
Q. Which of the following best describes your current attitudes towards Christianity?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of Australian population
Non-Christians warm to Christianity	'I believe in Christianity, but don't consider myself a Christian', 'I believe in much of Christianity, but still have some significant doubts' and 'I believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but I don't practice Christianity in any way'	15%
Non-Christians cold to Christianity	'I am passionately opposed to Christianity', 'I've got strong reservations about Christianity and I have no interest in it' and 'I have some issues with Christianity and it isn't for me'	25%

Q. Given the right circumstance and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current religious view?

Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of Australian population
Non-Christians open to change	'Extremely open', 'Significantly open', 'Somewhat open' and 'Slightly open'	26%

Q. How frequently do you attend church?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	% of Australian population
Australians who identify with Christianity who regularly attend church	'Weekly', 'Fortnightly' and 'Monthly'	15%
Australians who identify with Christianity who never attend church	'Less than annually' and 'I do not attend a church'	22%

Faith and belief in Australia defined



The Australian Bureau of Statistics Census question on 'religion' asks Australians to identify their religion through the question, 'What is your religion?' The 2011 Census results showed that 61% of Australians identified with Christianity. A further 22% stated they had 'no religion', 9% remained 'undefined' and 8% indicated they adhered to other religions.

Total Christianity and the 'spiritual but not religious'

One of the purposes of this *Faith and Belief in Australia* study is to add greater delineation and understanding to the 2011 Census 'Total Christianity' numbers. The Census does not collect data on spiritual belief, and those who would opt for a 'spiritual but not religious' option generally select one of the 'Christian' denominations.

While we replicated the Census approach, to gain more meaningful data, the question we asked tightened the identifying criteria, from "What is the person's religion?" (Census) to "What religion do you **currently** practise or identify with?" Additionally, we added an option

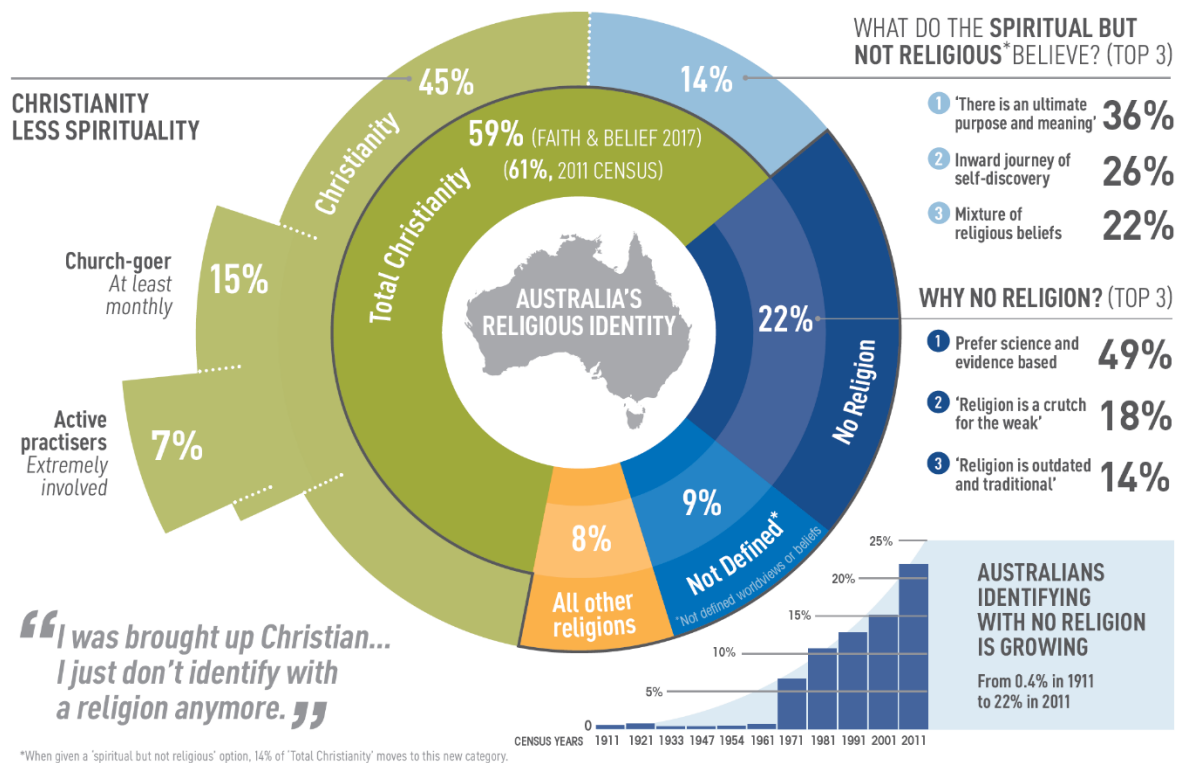
for 'spiritual but not religious'. This had a response rate of 14% among Australians nationally, and the Christianity grouping was 45% (down from 61% in the 2011 Census). When grouping the 'spiritual but not religious' respondents with those identifying with Christianity (45%), this total figure is similar to the Census (59% compared to 61%).

What do the 'spiritual but not religious' believe?

Those who are spiritual but not religious are most likely to believe there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life (36%). One in four (26%) believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person. One in five (22%) believe in a mixture of spiritual beliefs from major religions.

Church-goers

A third of Australians who *identify with Christianity* attend church at least once a month (15%). The active practisers 'extremely involved' in practicing their religion and worshipping as part of a group are rarer still, comprising 7% of the national population.



‘No religion’ and those ‘not defined’ (Census)

The ‘no religion’ option captured in the 2011 Census (22%) includes those who state or select ‘no religion’.

The ‘not defined’ option (9%) largely captures those who choose not to answer this voluntary question (leave it blank). It also includes those who answer the question with a response that cannot be identified as a religion under the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups. Well-publicised examples include ‘Jedi Knight’ and ‘Flying Spaghetti Monster’.

A significant proportion of the 9% ‘not defined’ Census category are comprised of the ‘not stated’ (no response) answers. It can be assumed that many of these adhere to no religion. In this *Faith and Belief* study the religion question was compulsory, and so yielded no ‘not stated’ responses. Therefore, this study’s total (32%) is higher than the Census

response, but more accurately represents the total ‘no religion’ worldview of Australians.

What do those with ‘no religion’ believe?

Half of non-religious Australians (49%) say their position on religion is that they prefer a scientific and rational, ‘evidence-based’ approach to life. One in five (18%) think religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on, and a further one in seven (14%) believe that religions and spirituality are outdated and traditional.

Growth in ‘no religion’ over the past century

There has been a notable increase in the proportion of Australians who identify with no religion over the past 100 years, from 0.4% in 1911 to 22% in 2011.

Note that in the 1971 Census the instructions, ‘if no religion, write none’ was introduced into the Census, explaining the significant rise in ‘no religion’. We expect a similar rise in ‘no religion’ when the 2016 Census results are released, due to a methodology change that has placed ‘no religion’ as the first tick-box option in the latest Census

Executive summary

Religion in Australia

Religion in Australia is not dead. This study shows that two thirds of Australians (68%) currently follow a religion or have spiritual beliefs. The number of Australians who do not identify with a religion or spiritual belief, however, is on the rise. Almost one in three Australians (32%) now do not identify with a religion.

Household upbringing influences religious identity. Almost half of Australians who identify with spirituality or religion in some way remain committed to the religion of their upbringing (47%).

Australians may identify with religious beliefs but are not always active in their religion. Just one in five Australians (20%, across all beliefs) are extremely or very active in practicing their religion or worshipping as part of a group.

More than half of Australians (52%) are open, to some extent, to changing their religious views given the right circumstances and evidence. Younger generations are more likely than older generations to be open to changing their current religious views (20% Gen Z, 19% Gen Y, 12% Gen X, 4% Baby Boomers, and 6% Builders say they are extremely/significantly open).

Conversations with people are the biggest prompt for Australians to think about spiritual or religious things (31% concur).

Discussing spirituality and religion

More than half of Australians (55%) talk about spirituality or religion (often or occasionally) when they gather with friends. Generation Z is the most comfortable of all generations talking (often/occasionally) about spirituality or religion

(65%). Baby Boomers, on the other hand, are the most uncomfortable, with half (51%) never talking about religion or spirituality with friends.

The greatest attraction to investigating spirituality and religion is observing people who live out a genuine faith (61% are attracted by this). Second is experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change (59%).

The top repellent to investigating religion and spirituality is hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith (58% are repelled by this). This is followed by miraculous stories of people being healed or supernatural occurrences (52%).

There are spaces in society that are perceived to be more appropriate than others when talking about spirituality and religion. The two most inappropriate places are suggested to be shopping centres (deemed as very inappropriate by 23% of Australians) and community events or groups (12%).

Christianity

Australians vary in their current attitudes towards Christianity. When asked whether they themselves say that they are a 'Christian', almost two in five (38%) 'consider themselves a Christian' (compared to 45% who identify with Christianity as a religion). A further 24% are 'warm' towards Christianity with 12% neutral towards it. The remaining 26% of Australians are 'cool' (negative) towards Christianity.

Parents and family have the greatest influence on Australians' perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity (57% say they have most influenced).

The biggest blocker to Australians engaging with Christianity is the Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (31% say this completely blocks their interest). This is followed by, 'How could a loving God allow people to go to hell?' (28%).

Perceptions of Christians and Christianity are negatively influenced by the actions and behaviours of Christians in society.

Perceptions of church abuse are the greatest negative influence (73% say this is massive/significant), followed by religious wars (65%). Two thirds (65%) say they are negatively influenced by hypocrisy.

Christians

Australians differ in their knowledge and perceptions of Christians. Four in five

Australians (79%) know two or more Christians. Nearly 1.5 million Australian adults, however, do not know any Christians at all (8%). For those who know at least one Christian, the top words used to describe Christians are:

1. Caring (41% select this word)
2. Loving (35%)
3. Kind (35%)

The Church

Just one in five Australians (22%) know a great deal or a lot about the Church in Australia. Six in ten (60%) know a moderate amount or a little. Almost one in five (18%) know nothing at all. Generation Y are the most likely to suggest they know little or nothing at all about the Church in Australia (52% cf. Builders 34%).

Australians most value the Church and Christian organisations for their work with those in need. Australians highly value the work of the Church in looking after people who are homeless (74% extremely or somewhat value this), offering financial assistance/food relief programs (72%) and providing disaster relief (69%).

The supportive community (38%) is what Australians most value about the local church.

Social connections (24%) and the ability to worship together (21%) are also valued aspects of the local church. Two in five (44%) Australians, however, do not value anything about the local church.

Discussion of religion and spirituality in public education

Australian parents are open to spirituality and religion being discussed in public schools.

Three in ten (29%) parents of school-aged children believe it is inappropriate to discuss spirituality and religion in public schools. 25% say it is 'neither appropriate nor inappropriate' and 46% say it is 'appropriate' to discuss spirituality and religion in public schools (2% gave no answer).

Christian schools are seen as more appropriate spaces to discuss spirituality and religion. Three in four parents of school-aged children (74%) consider discussion of spirituality and religion in Christian schools to be appropriate.

Positively, one in five non-Christian parents (20%) see Christian schools as effective (extremely/very) at making a positive contribution to society.

Jesus

One in two Australians (53%) consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important in the history and culture of the world. Only one in three (31%), however, consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important to them personally.

Love is the attribute of Jesus that Australians connect with the most. The top three attributes of Jesus that Australians connect with in a positive way are:

1. Love (50% connect with this)
2. Hope (39%)
3. Care (34%)

Religion in Australia

Religion in Australia is not dead.

Two thirds of Australians (68%) currently follow a religion or have spiritual beliefs. A large proportion of the Australian population identify with Christianity (45%). The number of Australians not identifying with a religion or spiritual belief, however, is increasing. Almost one in three Australians (32%) now do not identify with a religion, and 14% identify as spiritual but not religious.

Insights into the growth of non-religious Australians. In response to the growing number of non-religious Australians, a non-Christian participant from the focus groups stated:

"[People] not identifying with any religion or spiritual belief will grow. People are searching, people are not believing what their parents believe." (Baby Boomer)

Generation X believe that affluence has had an impact on faith and belief in Australia.

"In Australia, we are quite well off. We have got a good life. People turn to religions when times are tough and I don't think that the times are as tough anymore. People know more about religion so they're not sold on one story, they don't think, 'If I don't pray and ask for forgiveness, I'm going to go to hell.' People don't buy the story anymore. They know too much." (Gen X)

A high proportion of Generation Y non-Christian participants agree with this perspective. In the focus groups they also expressed, however, that in the current climate there is potential for religious beliefs to grow.

"I think that in times of political unrest... people want peace. Any religion that will provide that will grow." (Gen Y)

Location and gender differences in religious beliefs. Religious and spiritual beliefs vary across gender, age and location. South Australia has the highest proportion of respondents who identify as spiritual but not religious (46%). This is consistent with the high proportion of Australians who state they have 'no religion' in the 2011 Census data (see table, *Top 3 religions by state*). Females are more likely than males to identify as spiritual but not religious (18% cf. 10%). Males, however, are more likely than females not to identify with a religion (36% cf. 29%).

Generational differences in religious beliefs Religious beliefs are more prevalent in the older generations. Almost two in three Builders (63%) identify with Christianity, but only one in three Generation Y (32%) do so.

Generation X is the generation most likely not to identify with a religion (38%); slightly more than Generation Y (36%) and Generation Z (34%).

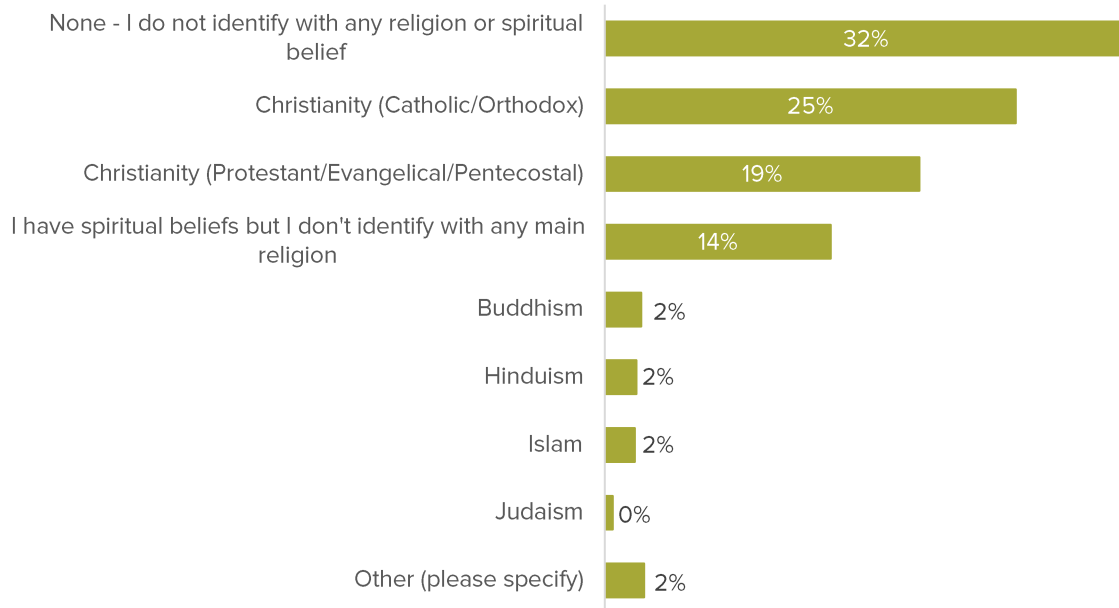
Top 3 Religions by state: The rise of 'no religion'							
NSW		VIC		QLD		WA	
2011	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006
Catholic (27.5%)	Catholic (28.2%)	Catholic (26.7%)	Catholic (27.5%)	Catholic (23.8%)	Catholic (24%)	No religion (25.5%)	Catholic (23.7%)
Anglican (19.9%)	Anglican (21.8%)	No religion (24%)	No religion (20.4%)	No religion (22.1%)	Anglican (20.4%)	Catholic (23.6%)	No religion (22.9%)
No religion (17.9%)	No religion (14.3%)	Anglican (12.3%)	Anglican (13.6%)	Anglican (18.9%)	No religion (18.6%)	Anglican (18.8%)	Anglican (20.4%)

Top 3 Religions by state: : The rise of 'no religion'							
SA		ACT		TAS		NT	
2011	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006	2011	2006
No religion (28.1%)	No religion (24.2%)	No religion (28.9%)	Catholic (28%)	No religion (28.6%)	Anglican (29.3%)	No religion (23.9%)	No religion (23.1%)
Catholic (19.9%)	Catholic (20.2%)	Catholic (26.1%)	No religion (23.4%)	Anglican (26%)	No religion (21.5%)	Catholic (21.6%)	Catholic (21.1%)
Anglican (12.6%)	Anglican (13.7%)	Anglican (14.7%)	Anglican (16.7%)	Catholic (17.9%)	Catholic (18.4%)	Anglican (11.4%)	Anglican (12.3%)

* 2011 and 2006 Census data

Q. What religion do you currently practice or identify with?

n=1,024 (all respondents)



Religious identification	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Christianity	46%	32%	42%	53%	63%
Spiritual beliefs but don't identify with any main religion	13%	14%	14%	14%	16%
None I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	34%	36%	38%	28%	18%

Non-religious Australians prefer an evidence-based approach to life.

Insights into Australians who do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief – 32% of respondents, n=330.

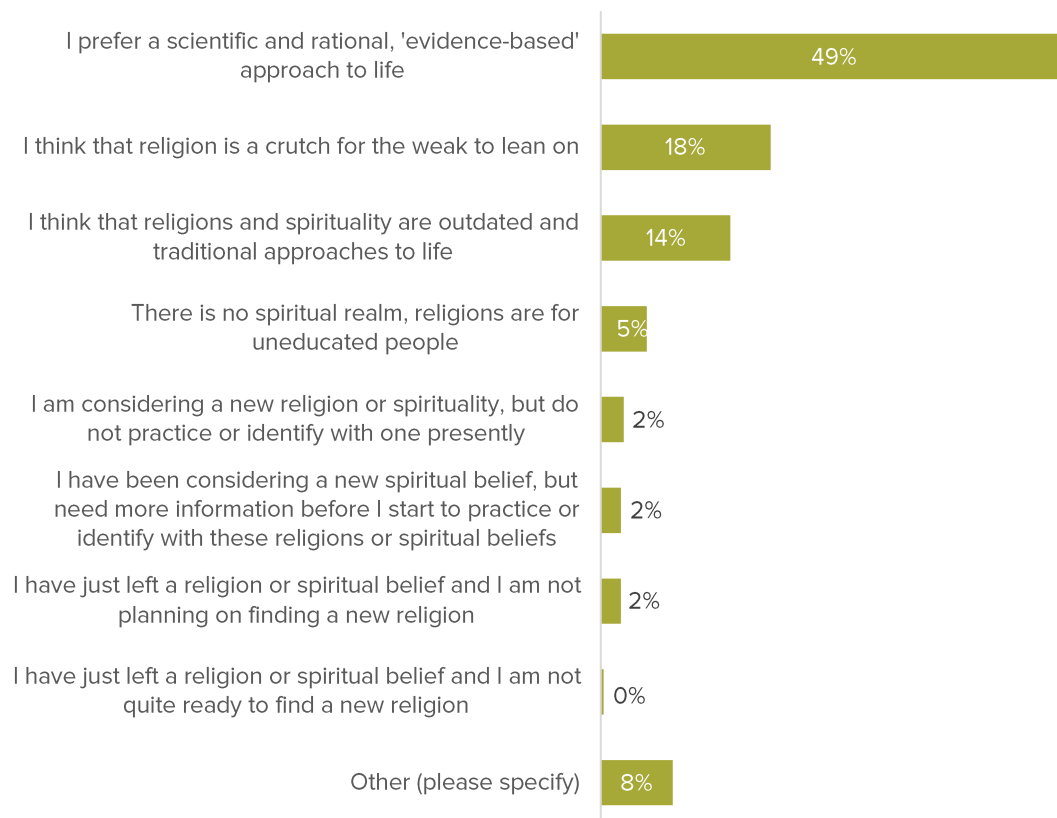
Almost one in two (49%) non-religious Australians prefer a scientific and rational, 'evidence-based', approach to life. Almost one in five (18%) think religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on. Males are almost twice as

likely as females to believe that religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on (22% cf. 13%).

One in seven non-religious Australians (14%) believe that religions and spirituality are outdated and traditional approaches to life.

Q. Which of the following statement best describes your position and thoughts about religions?

n=330 (those 'non-religious')



Household upbringing has influenced the religious identity of Australians.

Insights into Australians who identify with spirituality or religion in some way - 65% of respondents n=669.

Almost half of Australians who identify with spirituality or religion in some way (47%) are committed to the religion their parents or family brought them up in. One in six Australians who identify with spirituality or religion in some way (17%), however, say they grew up in a religious household but have chosen to leave their religious origins behind and pursue a spiritual pathway.

A non-Christian Baby Boomer participant suggested that Australians no longer follow the beliefs of their parents because of the ability to research:

"People can research religions, there is now the wealth of information, the internet... Rather than following mum and dad and their footpath, people can research."

Generation X confirmed this, saying: *"The younger generation have access to research, and they are thinking on their own... I wasn't allowed to think on my own... I was just forced into this religion I didn't want. But my kids aren't forced."*

According to these participants, Generation Y have been given more freedom to make their own choices around their spirituality and religious beliefs.

OUTGROWING RELIGION?

Analysis of all 'religious' and 'spiritual but not religious'

→ **CONTINUER** committed to religion brought up in

47%

→✕ **NO LONGER RELIGIOUS**

17%

↗ **SYNTHESIZER** set of beliefs not fitting any one religion

14%

✕ **NEVER BEEN RELIGIOUS**

10%

↘ **CONVERTER** switched from a different religion

7%

↔ **ADOPTER** non-religious prior to choosing current religion

5%

Q. Please indicate which of the following BEST describes your CURRENT religious status. n=669 (All respondents excluding the 'non-religious')

Just one in five Australians are active in practising their religion

The practice of religion

One in five Australians (20%) are active in the practice of religion (being extremely or significantly involved in worshipping as part of a group). Almost one in four (23%) say they identify with a religion but rarely or never worship as part of a group. More than half (57%) are not at all active in practising a religion.

Religious activity differs across the states.

South Australia (69%) has the highest proportion of Australians not at all active in practising religion. Conversely, Western Australia (24%) has the highest proportion of Australians extremely or significantly involved with practising a religion, followed by New South Wales (22%).

Generational differences in religious activity.

A higher proportion of the younger generations

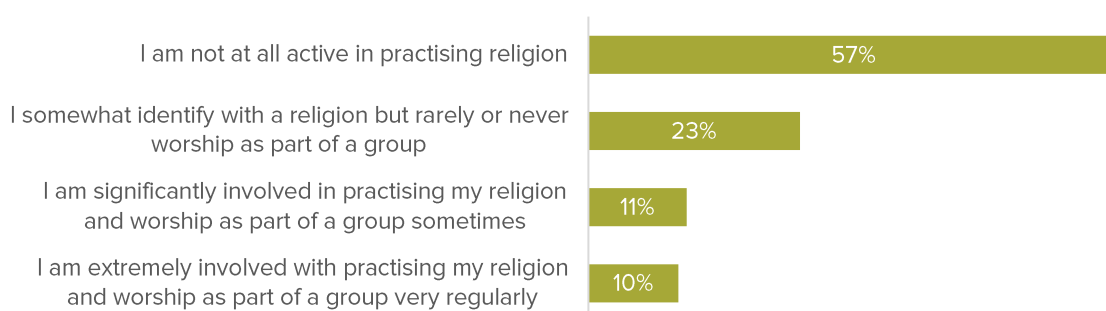
are extremely or significantly involved with practising their religion (35% Gen Z, 25% Gen Y, cf. 14% Gen X, 15% Baby Boomers). The Builder generation is the exception to this with almost one in four (24%) extremely or significantly involved in practising their religion. Generation X (64%) and Baby Boomers (62%) are least likely to be active (not at all) in practising their religion.

Religious practice of Australians who identify with Christianity.

One in three Australians (33%) who identify with Christianity (45% of the overall population) say they are extremely or significantly involved in practising their religion. This is the same proportion as those who say they attend church monthly. One in three (37%) somewhat identify with a religion but rarely or never worship as part of a group. Three in ten (30%) say they are not at all active in practising their religion.

Q. How active are you in your religion?

n=1,024 (all respondents)



More than half of Australians are open to changing their religious views given the right circumstances and evidence.

Openness to other religious views

Half of all Australians say (52%) they would be open, to some extent, to changing their religious views given the right circumstances and evidence. Almost half (48%) are strongly committed to their current religious views.

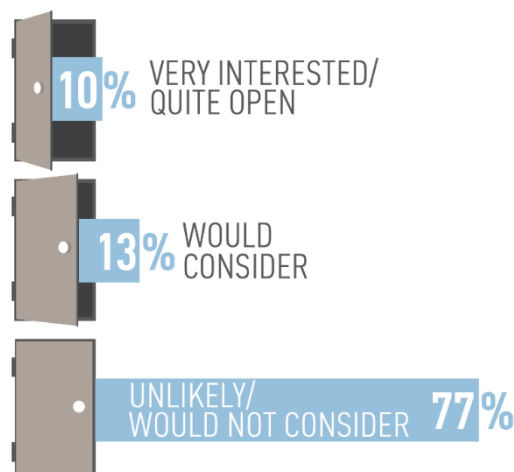
Just 12% of all Australians, however, say they are very interested or quite open to changing their current religious views. Younger generations are more likely to be very interested or quite open to changing their current religious views (20% Gen Z, 19% Gen Y cf. 12% Gen X, 4% Baby Boomers, 6% Builders). Baby Boomers are two times more likely than Generation Z to be strongly committed to their current religious views and would not consider other religions (58% cf. 28%). A Generation Y non-Christian participant stated [in regards to spirituality]:

"I swap day to day, week to week, year to year. Sometimes it might be work-related, or personal... when something isn't going right and I want to go towards a positive path. I think a lot of other people my age do the same."

How committed are Australians who identify with Christianity to their own views? More than half of Australians (57%) who identify with Christianity are open, to some extent, to changing their current religious views given the right circumstances and evidence.

Non-Christians who are cold to Christianity are less open to changing their current religious views (36%). Conversely, two in three **non-Christians who are warm to Christianity** (67%) are open to changing their current religious views..

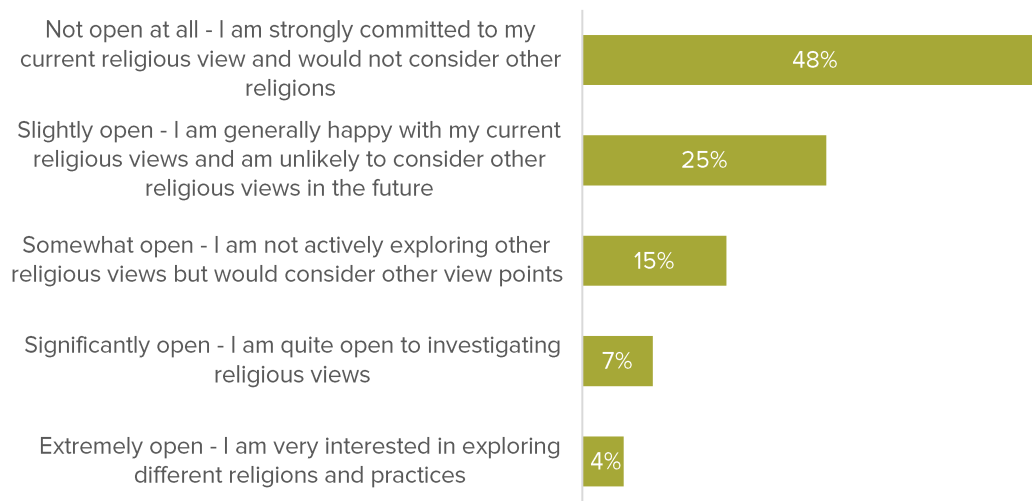
NON-CHRISTIANS' OPENNESS TO EXPLORING RELIGION



Q. Given the right circumstances and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current religious view? n=565 (All 'non-Christians')

Q. Given the right circumstances and evidence, how open would you be to changing your current religious view?

n=1,024 (all respondents)



Openness to change current religious views given the right circumstances and evidence.

Openness to change	Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians cold to Christianity	Non-Christians warm to Christianity
Extremely/significantly/somewhat open	27%	14%	40%

Conversations have the greatest influence on prompting Australians to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things.

Australians are most prompted to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things through conversations with other people (31%). This is followed by reading a book or article (21%) and thinking about global and national issues such as refugees, war, and poverty (21%).

A major life crisis is more likely to prompt females to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things than males (23% cf. 14%).

Key prompts for the generations.

Conversations with people are by far the biggest prompt for thinking about spirituality and religion. Each generation, however, has prompts that are more reflective of their life stage. After conversations with people, social media is most influential for Generation Z (32%), whereas reading a book or article (25%) and personal unhappiness (22%) are next likely

to prompt thoughts in Generation Y. A major life crisis is the second greatest prompt for Generation X (21%). Global and national issues (26%) and a death in the family (24%) are more likely to prompt thoughts in Baby Boomers than other generations, while for Builders, health issues of a family member or friend make it into the Top 5.

Key prompts for different religious perspectives.

Australians who identify with Christianity are most likely to be prompted by conversations with people (33%), a death in the family (26%), and reading a book or article (23%).

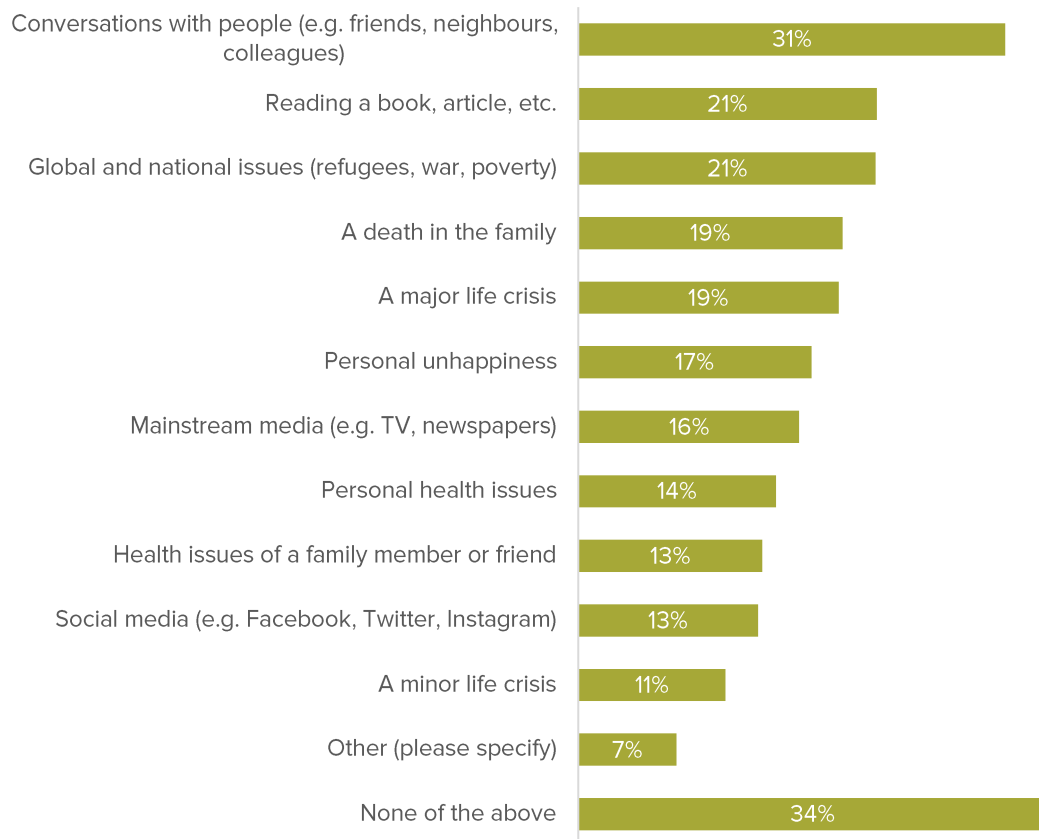
The greatest prompts for **non-Christians who are open to change** are conversations with people (39%), reading a book or article (27%), and personal unhappiness (22%).

Top 5 prompts for the generations to thinking about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things.

Top 5	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
1	Conversations with people (39%)	Conversations with people (39%)	Conversations with people (27%)	Global and national issues (26%)	Conversations with people (28%)
2	Social media (32%)	Reading a book or article (25%)	A major life crisis (21%)	A death in the family (24%)	Global and national issues (22%)
3	Mainstream media (30%)	Personal unhappiness (22%)	A death in the family (19%)	Conversations with people (24%)	A death in the family (18%)
4	A major life crisis (27%)	A major life crisis (20%)	Global and national issues (19%)	Reading a book or article (22%)	Reading a book or article (15%)
5	Reading a book or article (24%)	Global and national issues (20%)	Reading a book or article (19%)	A major life crisis (16%)	Health issues of a family member or friend (15%)

Q. Which of the following influences have prompted you to think about spiritual, religious or metaphysical things?

(Please select all that apply); n=1,023 (all respondents)



Spirituality in Australia

Insights into Australians who are spiritual but not religious – 14% of respondents, n=143.

Meaning and purpose resonate highly with Australians who are spiritual but not religious.

Spiritual beliefs

One in three Australians (36%) who are spiritual but not religious believe there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life. One in four (26%) believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person. One in five (22%) believe in a mixture of spiritual beliefs from major religions.

Purpose was significant for non-Christian participants when discussing spirituality in Australia.

“Whatever religion you follow, you need to know the purpose and meaning of your life.” (Baby Boomer)

“Religions are too politically controlled, brainwashing. Spirituality is about self-awareness, bettering yourself.” (Baby Boomer)

“People gravitate towards purpose and meaning... it helps those who feel quite destitute - to believe that you are here for a reason.” (Gen Y)

Gender differences in spiritual beliefs.

Females who are spiritual but not religious are eight times more likely than males to believe in new age or eastern spirituality (16% cf. 2%). Men who are spiritual but not religious are more likely to believe there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life (43% cf. 33% females). Males are also more likely to believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person (35% cf. 21%).

Non-Christian participants insights into spirituality.

Some non-Christian participants expressed that spirituality in Australia is declining.

“In the modern world, people are caught up in other things rather than taking the time to consider where they are at.” (Gen X)

Other non-Christian Generation Y participants believed, however, that thinking about spirituality will increase as they frequently meet people from backgrounds different to their own.

“I think the younger generation think about it more. You come into contact with so many people in Australia from lots of backgrounds who help you think about something else, outside of normal.” (Gen Y)

Being on a spiritual journey

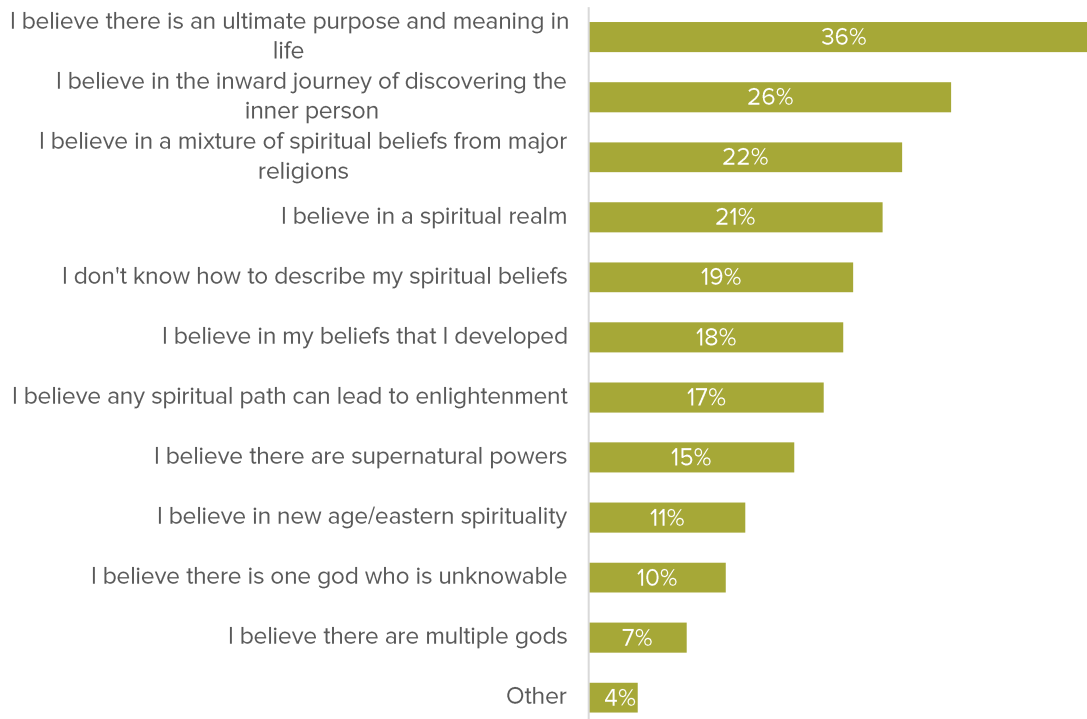
One in two Australians (50%) who are spiritual but not religious do not consider themselves to be on a ‘spiritual journey’. One in four (26%) consider themselves to be growing in their spiritual journey. Females are more likely than males to say they are not on a spiritual journey (55% cf. 39%). Some say Australians are not on a spiritual journey because they lack time. A non-Christian Generation X participant stated:

“I think with everything that’s going on in life, a lot of people don’t have the time to sit down and worry about what is going on, spiritually or personally.”

“The whole concept of being on a spiritual journey [doesn’t resonate with me]. I am just so busy in my day to day life.” (Gen Y)

Q. Which of the following statements describe your spiritual beliefs?

(Please select all that apply) n=143 (the 'spiritual but not religious')



Q. How would you describe your spiritual journey at the moment?

(Please select all that apply) n=143 (the 'spiritual but not religious')



Spirituality is seen as extremely important for mental health.

The importance of spirituality across different areas of life

Almost two in five Australians who are spiritual but not religious (38%) indicated that spirituality is extremely important for their mental health. Almost one in three (32%) believe spirituality is extremely important for their overall wellbeing. A further three in ten (31%) believe it is extremely important for their personal growth.

Males who are spiritual but not religious consider spirituality to be extremely important for overall wellbeing (33%) and finding purpose (33%). Females who are spiritual but not religious identified mental health (42%) and personal growth (34%) as areas of life in which spirituality was important.

Numerous benefits of spirituality were suggested by non-Christian participants;

namely that it can help bring balance, turn one's focus to the present and help one discover oneself.

"[Life is an] emotional rollercoaster, spirituality helps you balance and slow it down." (Baby Boomer)

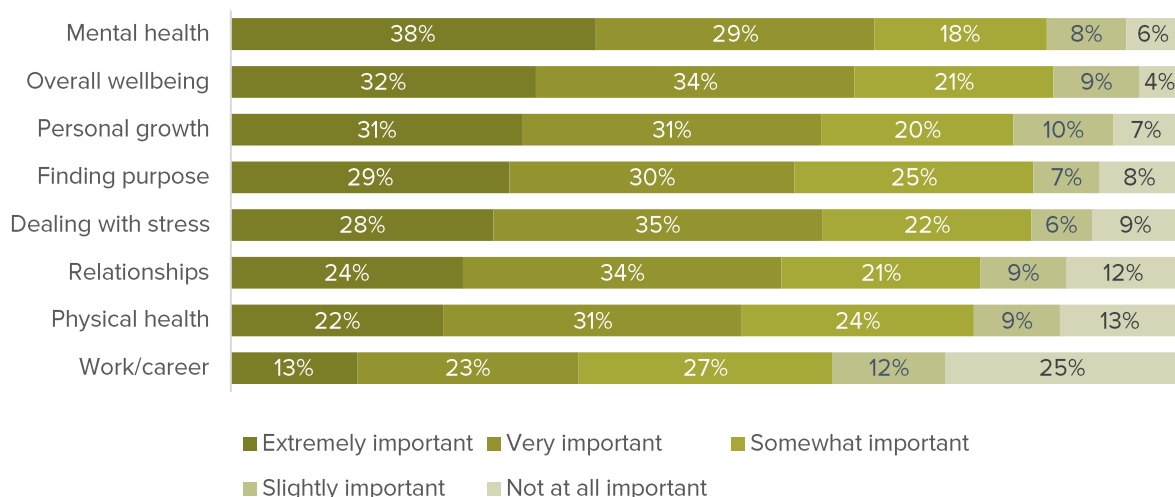
"It brings you inward... you start to notice your thoughts... you remain present and now it relieves stress so you don't worry about things." (Gen X)

"Learning more about yourself gives you some sense of enlightenment." (Gen Y)

A Generation Y participant felt, "[Those who are on a spiritual journey are] generally a bit happier than someone who isn't on a spiritual journey".

Q. How important is spirituality to each of the following areas of your life?

n=143 (the 'spiritual but not religious')



Discussing spirituality and religion

More than half of Australians are comfortable talking about spirituality or religion with their friends.

Conversations about spirituality and religion

More than half of all Australians (55%) talk about spirituality or religion (often or occasionally) when they gather with friends. The remaining Australians (45%) never talk about spirituality or religion with their friends.

Younger generations are more comfortable talking about spirituality and religion.

Generation Z is the most comfortable of all generations talking (often/occasionally) about spirituality or religion (65% cf. 61% Gen Y, 56% Gen X, 49% Baby Boomers, and 52% Builders). Baby Boomers are the least comfortable, with 51% never talking about religion or spirituality with friends (cf. 35% Gen Z, 39% Gen Y, 44% Gen X and 48% Builders).

A non-Christian Baby Boomers participant expressed:

"I avoid talking about religion, it is too contentious. It is not worth raising my blood pressure."

A number of Generation X participants also felt that talking about religion is a private matter.

"It's not discussed amongst my family or my friends, it's a personal thing."

Generation Y tends to have more connections with people from other backgrounds causing religion to come up in everyday life.

"[I talk about religion] daily at work. We are a very tight team, and sometimes we could be joking, and someone might make a reference

to their religion. We laugh about it, we talk about it and make sure we check we didn't offend."

Frequency of conversations about spirituality and religion

Australians do talk about spirituality and religion.

Over the course of a few months, Australians are most likely to talk about spirituality (43%), Islam (41%) and Christianity (38%). The topic of conversation, however, varies by generation. For example, the younger generations are most likely to talk about spirituality (67% Gen Z, 52% Gen Y and 45% Gen X do so at least every few months).

Islam is the most prevalent religion or spirituality topic talked about amongst the older generations (at least every few months) (40% Baby Boomers, 43% Builders).

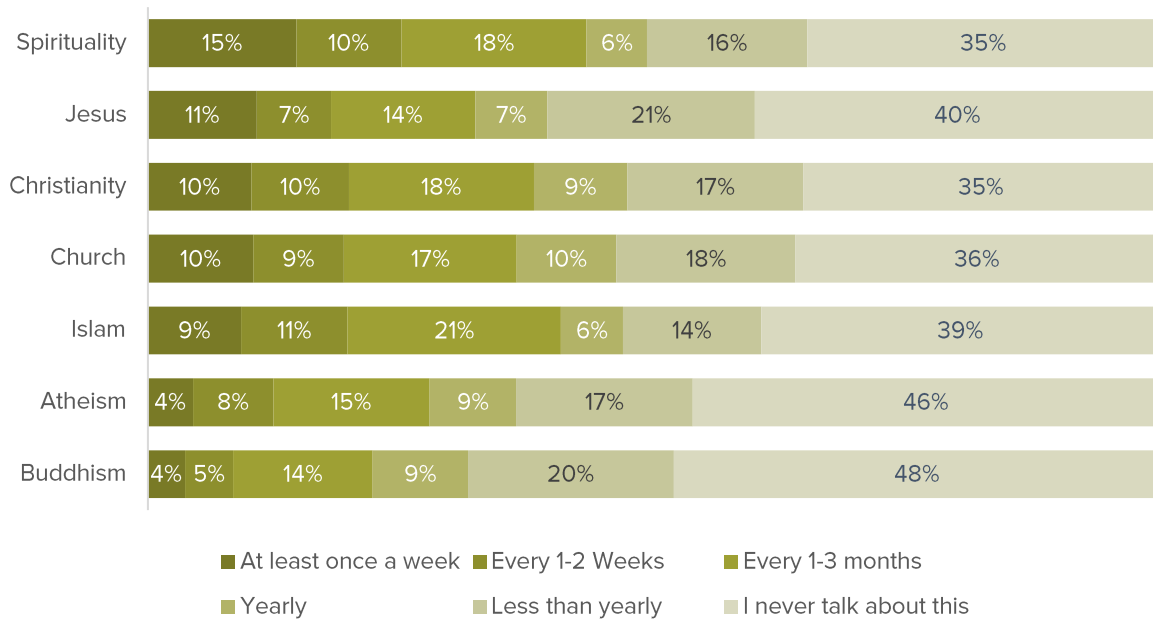
Australians who identify with Christianity are most likely to discuss Christianity (53%), spirituality (52%), the Church (51%), Jesus (48%), Islam (45%), atheism (29%) and Buddhism (23%) in their friendship circles.

The main topics of conversation (at least every few months) for **non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** are Islam (40%), atheism (33%), spirituality (33%) and Christianity (25%).

Non-Christians who are warm to Christianity differ slightly; their key topics are spirituality (43%), Islam (42%), Christianity (33%) and church (31%).

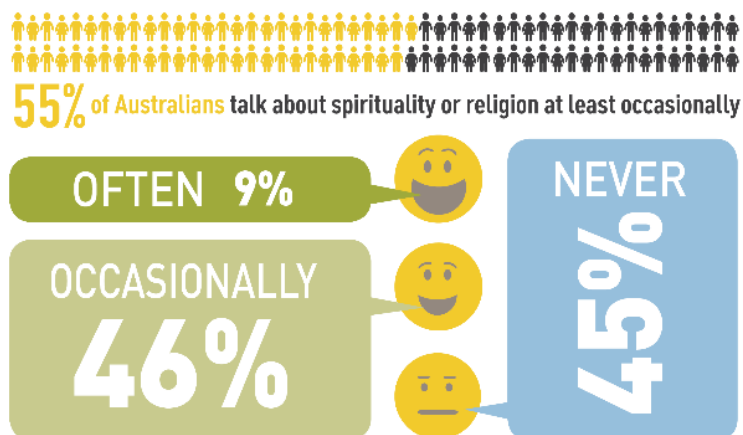
Q. How often do you talk about each of the following with your family, friends, colleagues etc.?

n=1,007 (all respondents)



Top three religions in Australia*	Religions by discussion in Australia (discussed every few months or more)
Christianity (61%)	Islam (41%)
Buddhism (2.5%)	Christianity (38%)
Islam (2.2%)	Buddhism (22%)

*2011 Census data



Q. Do you ever talk about spirituality or religion when you gather with friends? *n=1,204 (All 'non-Christians')*

People living out authentic faith is the greatest attraction to further investigating religion.

Attractions to further investigating religion

The greatest attraction to investigating spirituality and religion is seeing people who live out a genuine faith.

Second is experiencing a personal trauma or significant life change.

Seeing people live out genuine faith is attractive to:

- 44% of **non-Christians**
- 62% of **non-Christians open to change**

Experiencing a personal trauma attracts further investigation into religion and spirituality among:

- 44% of **non-Christians**
- 60% of **non-Christians open to change**

More than half of **non-Christians open to change** also suggest that discussion and debate of ideas (56%) or stories/testimonies from people who have experienced change because of their faith (51%) attract them to investigate further.

Repellents to further investigating religion

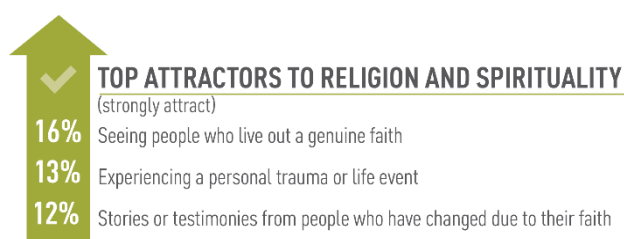
Just as there are attractions, there are aspects of religion and spirituality that act as repellents for non-Christians. The top repellents (which somewhat or strongly repel) are:

1. Hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith (75%)
2. Miraculous stories of people being healed or supernatural occurrences (65%)

The top two repellents are also consistent for those identifying with Christianity, however, they indicate the aspect of Christianity that is third most likely to repel further exploration as 'philosophical discussion and debating ideas' (34%).

Non-Christians who are open to change are most repelled by:

1. Hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith (64%)
2. Miraculous stories of people being healed or supernatural occurrences (53%)



Q. To what extent would the following attract or repel you from investigating religion and spirituality further? n=1,019 (all respondents)

Australians see shopping centres as the most inappropriate place to talk about spirituality and religion.

Appropriate spaces for discussing spirituality and religion

There are spaces in society that are perceived to be more appropriate than others when talking about spirituality and religion. The perceived appropriateness varies based on religious association and openness to religion.

The top two most inappropriate places to discuss spirituality and religion are:

1. Shopping centres (48%)
2. Community events/groups (27%)

Australians who identify with Christianity suggested the third least appropriate place is social media; non-Christians say this is universities. The degree to which Australians identifying with Christianity and non-Christians consider these spaces as inappropriate, however, is significantly different.

Non-Christian participants felt that when it comes to conversations about religion, people need to have the opportunity to opt in or opt out.

“I think it's fine [on Facebook/online] because it's just another outlet and you have options as to whether you want to engage” (Gen Y).

Spaces seen as appropriate to talk about spirituality and religion are those people chose

to place themselves in. Participants were highly against being stopped on the road or in a public place.

Other McCrindle studies show Australians consider their local shopping centre to be the most important gathering place for their community (44%)¹. This is however the key area where to some extent Australians believe religion and spirituality should not be discussed.

Appropriate social media platforms for discussing spirituality and religion

Australians view the most inappropriate social media platforms to talk about spirituality and religion as LinkedIn, Pinterest and Instagram. This is consistent across those who identify with Christianity and non-Christians.

Top inappropriate social media platforms for faith conversations, accordingly to those who **identify with Christianity:**

1. LinkedIn (36%)
2. Pinterest (30%)
3. Instagram (30%)

Top inappropriate social media platforms for faith conversations, accordingly to **non-Christians:**

1. LinkedIn (45%)
2. Pinterest (35%)
3. Instagram (34%)

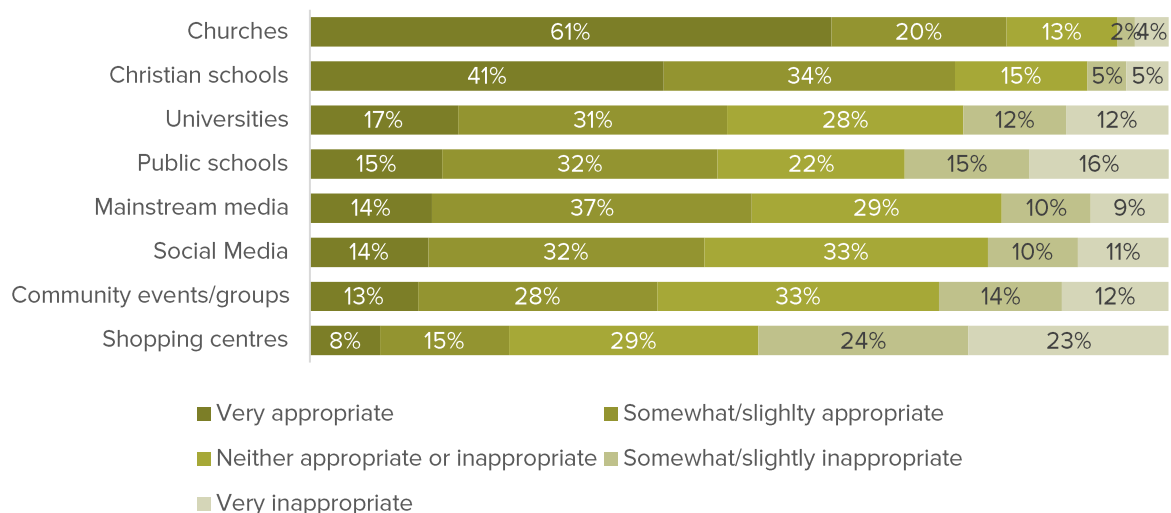
¹McCrindle, *Trolley Trends*, 2016.

Top 3 most inappropriate (% who say these are very and somewhat inappropriate) spaces to talk about spirituality and religion.

Identify with Christianity	Non-Christians	Non-Christians open to change
Shopping centres (23%)	Shopping centres (44%)	Shopping centres (33%)
Community events/groups (9%)	Public schools (37%)	Public schools (27%)
Social media (9%)	Universities (27%) and community events/groups (27%)	Universities (17%) and community events/groups (17%)

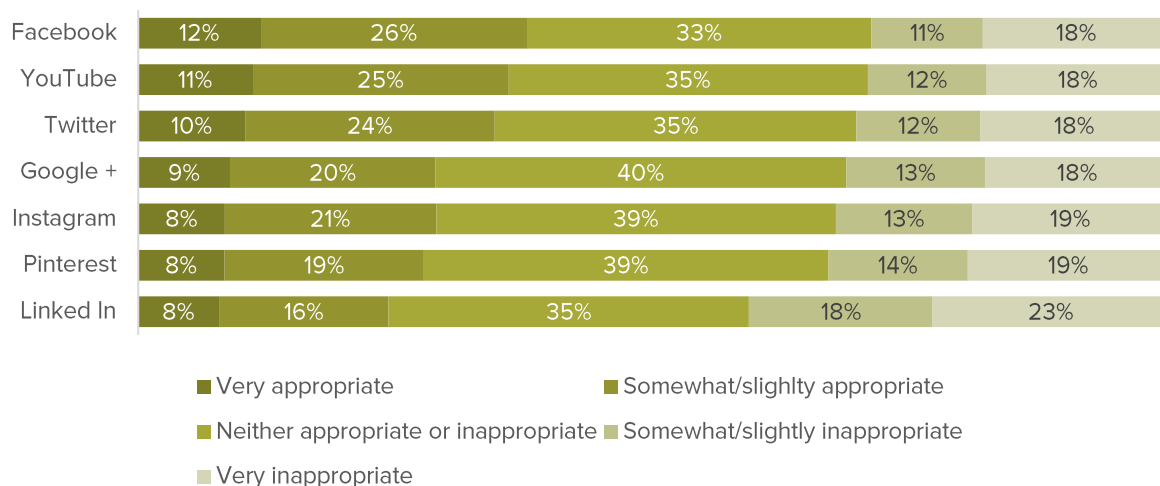
Q. Do you agree that the following spaces are appropriate for people to talk about spirituality and religion?

n=991 (all respondents)



Q. Which social media platforms are appropriate for people today to talk about spirituality and religions?

n=988 (all respondents)



Christianity

Parents and family are the greatest influences on perceptions of Christians and Christianity.

Attitudes towards Christianity

Australians vary in their current attitudes towards Christianity. When asked whether they themselves say that they are a 'Christian', almost two in five (38%) 'consider themselves a Christian' (compared to 45% who identify with Christianity as a religion). One in eight (13%) believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but don't practice Christianity in any way. A further one in eight (13%) have strong reservations about Christianity and have no interest in it.

Australians who **do not identify with a religion** are most likely to have strong reservations about Christianity and have no interest in it (28%). One in five of these individuals (21%) believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms, but don't want to be involved. A further one in six (16%) have some issues with Christianity and believe it isn't for them.

Spiritual but not religious Australians (14% of the population) are slightly warmer to Christianity:

- 21% believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but do not practice Christianity in any way.
- 18% believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms, but don't want to be involved.
- 17% who are spiritual but not religious consider themselves to be a Christian.

Insights into Australians who identify with Christianity and their church attendance

Regular church attenders (at least monthly) tend to identify more strongly with Christianity than those who never go to church (less than annually or never). Almost nine in ten (88%) regular church attenders consider themselves to be a Christian (cf. 64% of those who 'identify with Christianity' but never go to church).

Influences on perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity

Parents and family have the greatest influence on Australians' perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity (57%). One in four Australians (25%) say friends and networks had influenced them most. One in five (22%) are most influenced by books and articles they have read about Christianity.

Non-Christian participant insights into positive and negative impacts of Christianity in Australia.

Positive impacts of Christianity include its ability to "*bring people together*" (Gen Y) and provide a place of "*community*" (Gen Y).

"The sense of belonging that there is when you go through a crisis... I don't have that religious support system. There must be a lot of comfort in that. I envy that." (Baby Boomer)

Providing care and kindness to others "*give(s) the lonely a place to meet and come together in safety*" (Gen X).

"The people who choose to live its philosophy of kindness [have a positive impact]." (Baby Boomer)

Significant educational developments are also identified. *“Education, particularly Catholic education, has been pivotal in Australia,”* said one Baby Boomer.

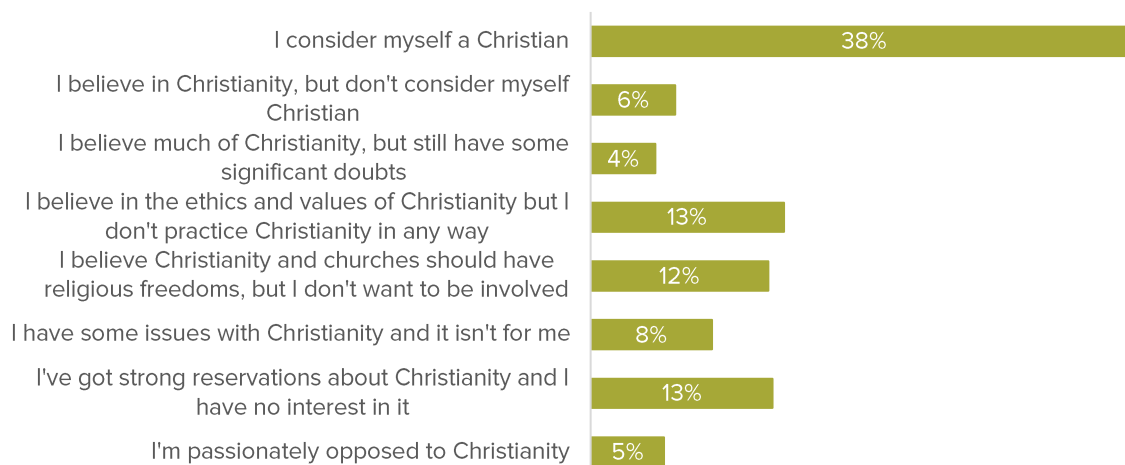
Greed, judgement and outdated beliefs are a few negative perceptions non-Christian participants expressed. Baby Boomers suggested Christianity to be *“the most dominating religion in Australian society”* and to be *“imposing of its beliefs”*.

Generation X participants suggested that *“a lot of bad things have been done in the name of Christianity”* and found some Christians to be *“unaccepting of people that don’t follow the rules”*.

The concept of *“rigid and outdated beliefs”* was also expressed strongly through Generation Y who felt that the *“demonising of normal human emotions and acts such as sexuality”* were a negative impact of Christianity.

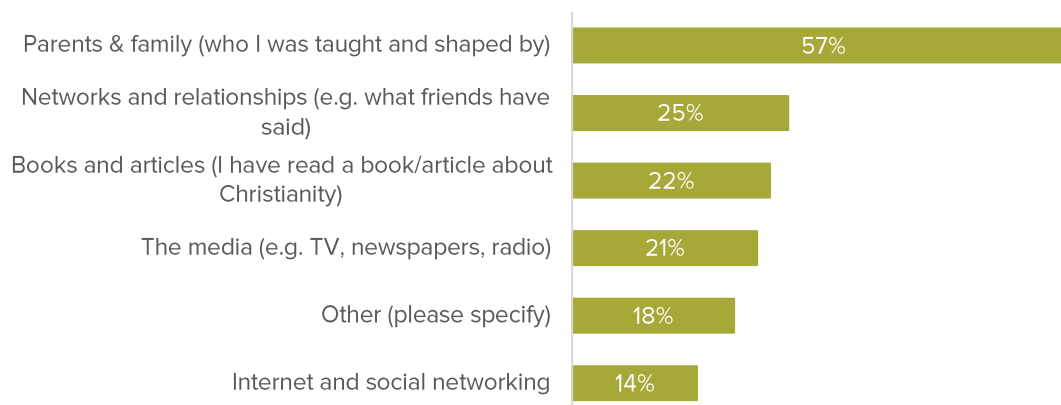
Q. Which of the following BEST describes your CURRENT attitudes towards Christianity?

n=1,024 (all respondents)



Q. Who or what has most influenced your perceptions and opinions of Christians and Christianity?

(Please select all that apply) n= 1,024 (all respondents)



AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY

1 in 4 warm (24%)

1 in 8 neutral (12%)

1 in 4 cool (26%)



Church abuse is the biggest blocker to Australians engaging with Christianity.

Blockers to engaging with Christianity

The biggest blocker that prohibits Australians from engaging with Christianity is the Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality (47% block completely/significantly). This is followed by, 'How could a loving God allow people to go to hell?' (43%). For two in five Australians (39%), supernatural elements (miracles, angels and demons, resurrection) are also blockers.

Insights into the biggest blockers for non-Christians who are cold or warm to Christianity

The Church's stance on homosexuality is the biggest belief blocker for *non-Christians who are cold to Christianity* (75% block completely/significantly) and *non-Christians who are warm to Christianity* (41%). The reliability and validity of the Bible (75%) is also of great concern to *non-Christians cold to Christianity*. That a 'loving God could allow people to go to hell' is of concern for *non-Christians who are cold to Christianity* (72%) and those who are *warm to Christianity* (35%).

The thought that 'a loving God could allow people to go to hell' is the greatest blocker for **Australians identifying with Christianity who never go to church** (34%).

Negative influences on perceptions about Christians and Christianity

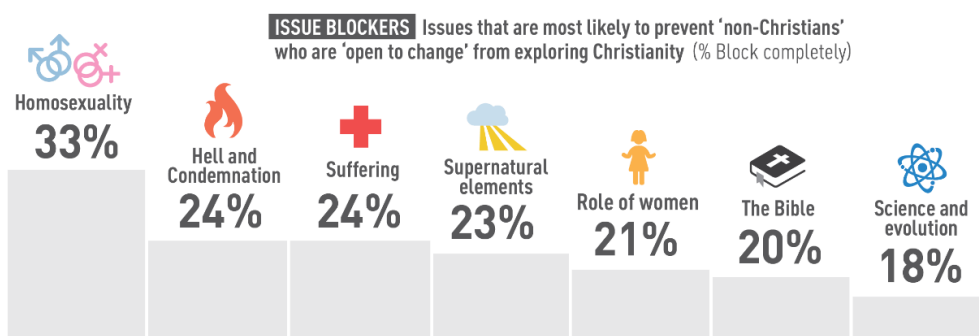
Events and situations around Christianity impact perceptions about Christians and Christianity. From child sexual abuse to church leaders involved in scandals, church abuse is the number one negative influence (73% say massive or significant) on Australian perceptions of Christians and Christianity. Religious wars are second to church abuse (65%). For two in three Australians (65%), hypocrisy is a negative (massive/significant) influence on their perceptions of Christians and Christianity.

Top three negative influences for non-Christians cold to Christianity:

1. Church abuse (83%)
2. Church is outdated (83%)
3. Judging others (83%)

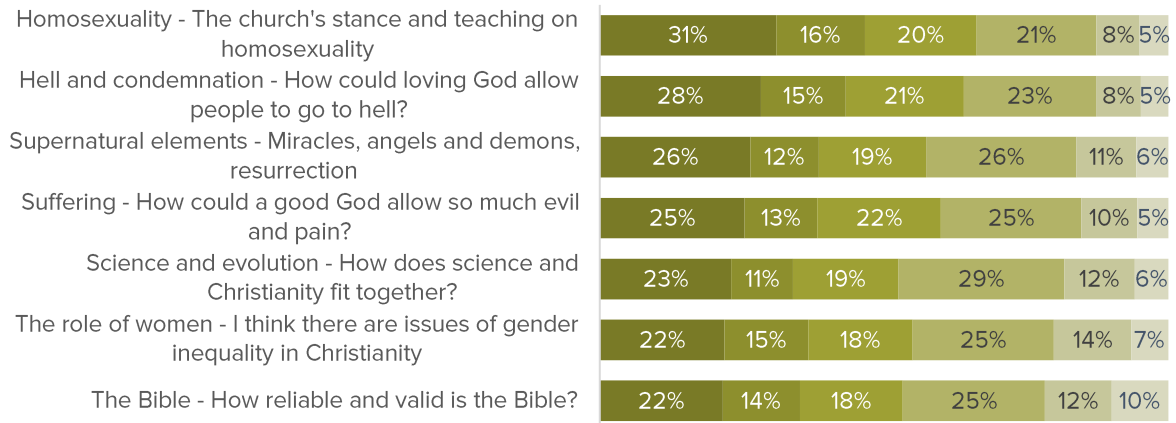
Top three negative influences for non-Christians warm to Christianity:

1. Church abuse (71%)
2. Religious wars (65%)
3. Judging others (62%)



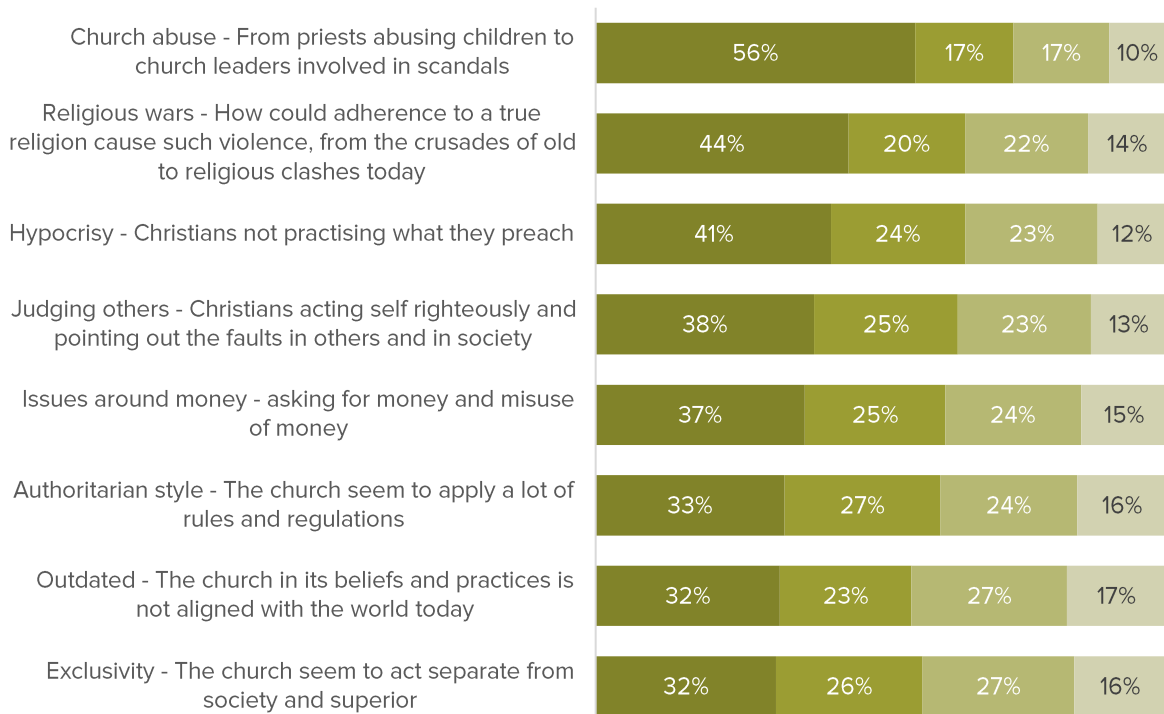
Q. To what extent do each of the following issues and Christianity's stance on them block or engage with your interest in Christianity? n=266 ('non-Christians' who are 'open to change')

Q. To what extent do each of the following issues and Christianity's stance on them block or engage with your interest in Christianity? *n=1,024 (all respondents)*



■ Block completely ■ Block significantly ■ Block slightly
 ■ Engage slightly ■ Engage significantly ■ Engage completely

Q. When you think about Christians and Christianity, to what extent do the following negatively influence your perceptions? *n=1,024 (all respondents)*



■ Massive negative influence ■ Significant negative influence
 ■ Slight negative influence ■ No negative influence

Christians

Australians are most likely to describe Christians as caring.

Knowing Christians personally

Almost four in five Australians (79%) know two or more Christians. Nearly 1.5 million Australian adults, however, do not know any Christians (8%). A further 13% of Australians know only one Christian.

Perceptions of Christians they know

Australians are most likely to associate the word 'caring' with Christians they know (41%). Those who identify with Christianity are most likely to describe their Christian peers as 'caring' (52%), 'loving' (47%) and 'kind' (43%).

The word non-Christians are most likely to use to describe Christians they know is also 'caring' (32%) but 'judgemental' (29%) follows closely behind.

Non-Christians who are cold to Christianity

most use 'judgemental' (40%), 'hypocritical' (33%) and 'old fashioned' (32%). **Non-Christians who are warm to Christianity** most use 'caring' (38%), 'kind' (33%) and 'honest' (33%).

Australians who are *spiritual but not religious* are most likely to use positive words like 'caring' (34%) and 'honest' (34%) to describe Christians, but 'judgemental' (33%) follows these top two words.

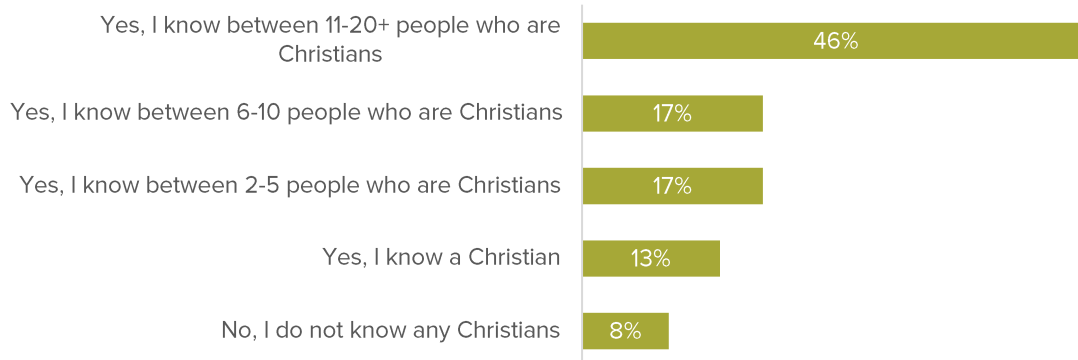
The **non-religious** are more likely to associate negative words like 'judgemental' (30%) and 'old-fashioned' (29%) or 'caring' (29%).

A non-Christian Baby Boomer participant felt that Christians do not always live in line with their religious beliefs:

"I consider myself a kinder, more religious person than some of them [Christians]. They may be church going people, but they are not nice people." (Baby Boomer)

Q. Do you know someone who is a Christian?

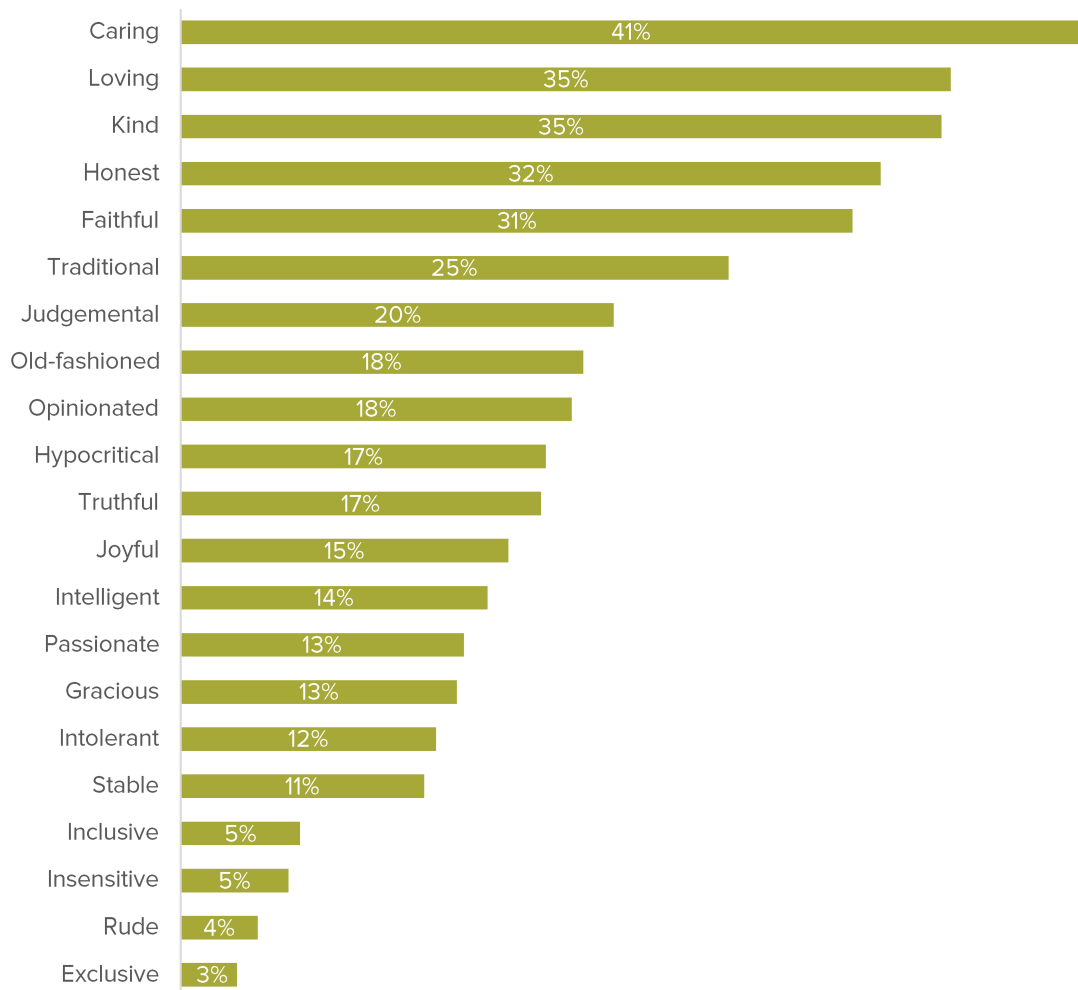
n=1,024 (all respondents)



Q. How would you describe the Christians you know?

(Please select up to five words)

n=932 (those who know at least one Christian)



The Church

Almost half of Australians who identify with Christianity never attend church.

Knowledge of the Church

One in five Australians (22%) say they know a great deal or a lot about the Church in Australia. Six in ten (60%) know a moderate amount or a little. Almost one in five (18%) know nothing at all.

Generation Y are the most likely to suggest they know little or nothing at all about the church in Australia (52% cf. 44% Gen Z, 49% Gen X, 44% Baby Boomers, 34% Builders).

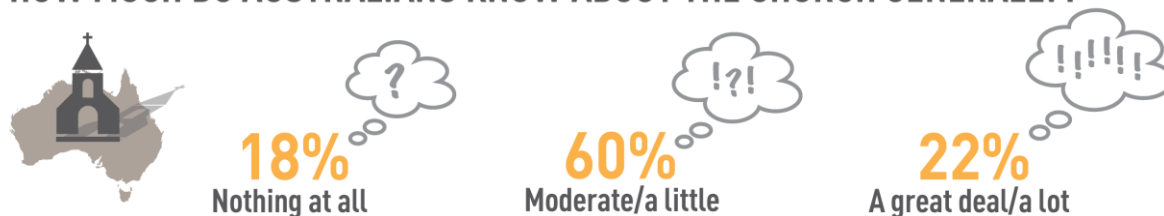
Church attendance

One in three (33%) Australians who identify with Christianity are regular church attenders,

attending at least once a month. One in six (17%) attend every few months to once a year. Almost half of Australians who identify with Christianity (49%) do not attend church (less than annually/never).

Australians who identify with Christianity but never go to church are most likely to be female (55%), Baby Boomers (38%), and committed to the religion their parents/family brought them up in (43%). Jesus' life is not at all or slightly important to them (38%) and they value the supportive community of the local church (42%).

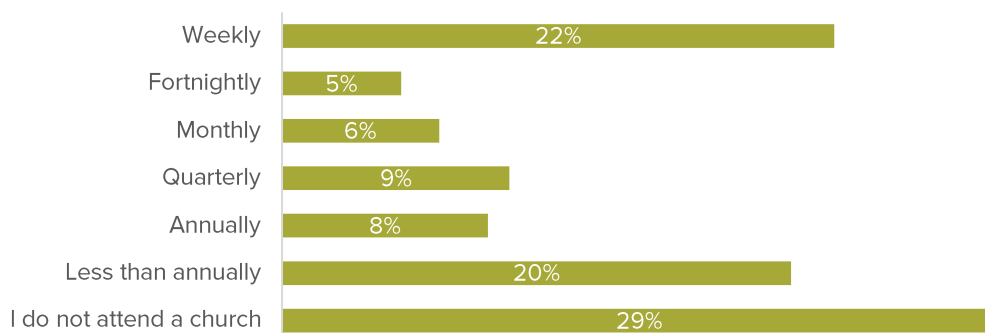
HOW MUCH DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW ABOUT THE CHURCH GENERALLY?



Q. How much do you know about the church in Australia? n=1,019 (all respondents)

Q. How frequently do you attend church?

n=459 (Those who identify with Christianity)



Australians value the Church and Christian organisations for their work with those in need.

Value for the work of the Church and Christian organisations

Australians most value (extremely or somewhat) the work of the church and Christian organisations for the following:

1. Looking after people who are homeless (74%)
2. Offering financial assistance/food relief programs (72%)
3. Providing disaster relief (69%).

Females are more likely than males to value all aspects of the work of the Church and Christian organisations.

Non-Christians are most likely to value that the church looks after people who are homeless (63%). **Non-Christians who are warm to Christianity** are most likely to value the Church's offering of financial assistance/food relief programs (78%).

Non-Christian participant insights into the positives of the Church

Participants identified positives of the Church as a place of belonging, a community, and the provision of help for people in times of need.

"There is support, if you are facing adversity. It is somewhere you can go; a number you can call. I don't remember those in genuine need being turned away. When all else fails [the church] will be there." (Baby Boomer)

"I think they are very good for people who are lonely or lost in their life. They are never going to judge who are coming through their doors. It's a good place to go for that community feel, and for people to be embraced." (Gen X)

"[It] brings the community together." (Gen Y)

Although non-Christian participants expressed some very positive benefits of the church, they felt that they had lost a lot of trust and faith in the Church due to perceived corruption.

"They [the Church] just cover up, they're very corrupt and not transparent. Those who've been convicted should be sent to prison and they're not, they're protected." (Gen X)

"It seems like they are still trying to protect that person [child abuser]. From what I understand that type of thing is totally against their beliefs. It hasn't been handled well. It is a shame it keeps popping up time and time again." (Gen Y)

Some participants even felt at times there is a disparity between the church and the Jesus that the church claims to represent.

"The churches that have come from him (Jesus) do not seem to relate to him." (Baby Boomer).

Media influences

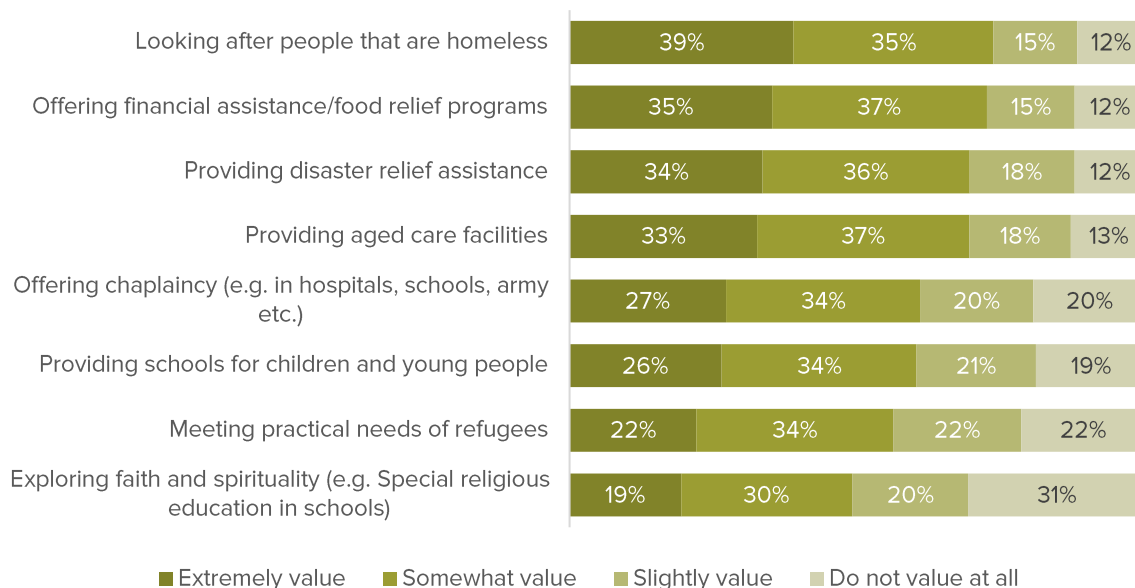
The top media influences on Australians' perceptions of the church and Christian organisations are commercial TV (43%), newspapers (33%) and social media (30%). The influence of media channels, however, vary significantly by generation in line with the adoption of technology.

Top influential media source by generation:

- Gen Z – Social media (59%)
- Gen Y – Social media (45%)
- Gen X – Commercial TV (47%)
- Baby Boomers – Commercial TV (48%)
- Builders – Newspapers (44%)

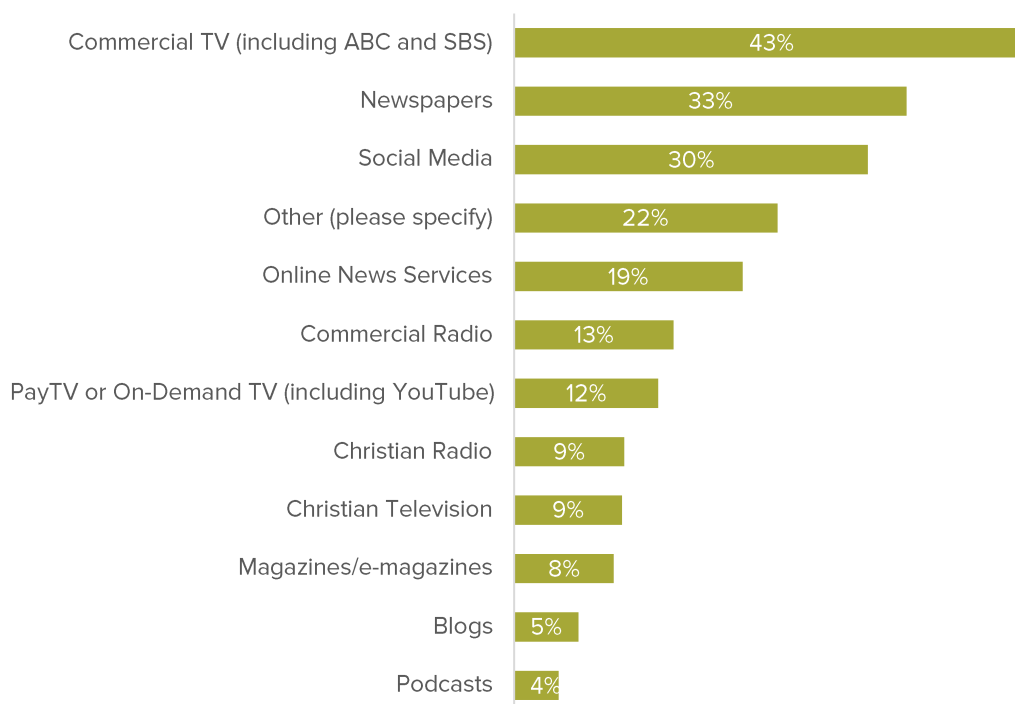
Q. How much do you value the work of the church and Christian organisations in each of the following areas?

n=1005 (all respondents)



Q. What are the top three media sources that have had the largest influence on how you view the role of the church and Christian organisations in society today?

(Please select up to three responses) n=1012 (all respondents)



The local church

Two in five Australians consider the church to have a positive impact in their local area.

Knowledge of the local church

Only 18% of Australians suggest they know their local church extremely or very well (despite 45% of Australians identifying with Christianity). A quarter (26%) know their local church moderately/slightly well (26%). More than half (56%) would suggest they do not know it well at all.

Baby Boomers and Generation X are the generations who know least about their local church (70% and 74% respectively know their local church slightly well/not well at all).

More than four in five (85%) non-Christians only know their local church slightly well or not well at all.

Perceived impact of the local church

Just over two in five Australians (44%) consider the church to have a positive impact in their local area. Less than three in ten (28%) non-Christians believe the church is having a positive impact in their local area. Almost three out of five Australians identifying with

Christianity (63%) believe the church is having a positive impact in their local area.

Perceptions of impact based on church

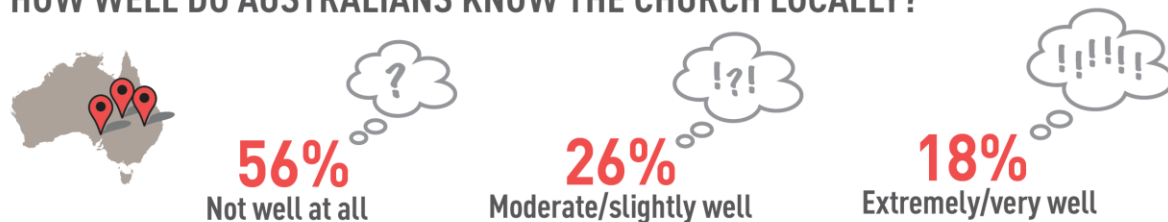
attendance are more positive. Just 17% of Australians identifying with Christianity who do not go to church believe the church is having a positive impact in their local area. Nine in ten (90%) regular church attenders, however, suggest the church is having a positive impact in their local area.

Value of the local church

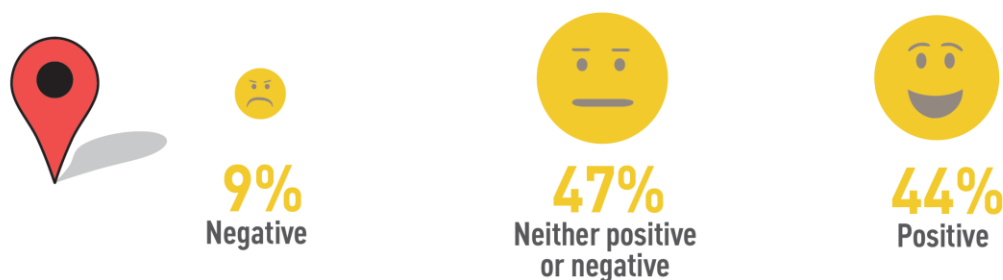
What Australians most value about the local church is its supportive community (38%), social connections (24%) and the ability to worship together (21%). Two in five Australians (44%), however, do not value anything about the local church. Baby Boomers are least likely to value anything about the local church (50%).

The value of the local church decreases amongst non-Christians. Three out of five non-Christians (63%) do not value anything about the local church. Almost a quarter (23%) value the supportive community the local church

HOW WELL DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW THE CHURCH LOCALLY?



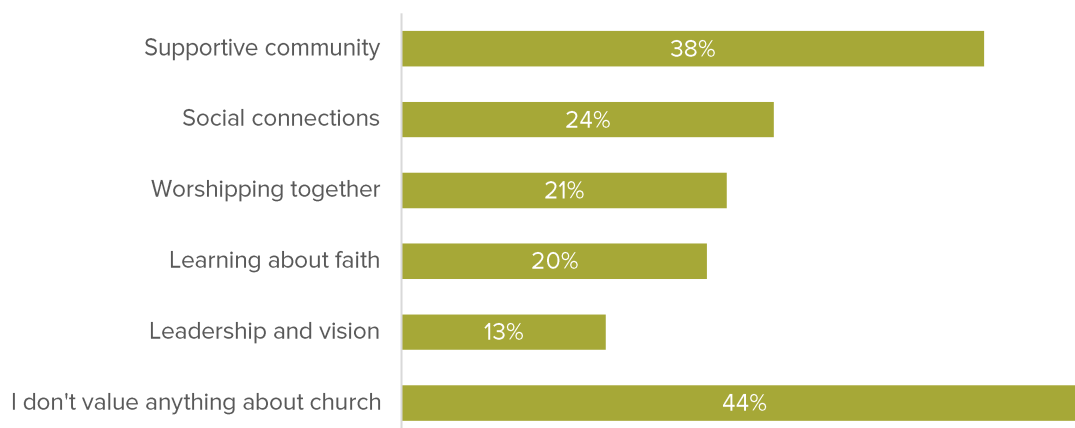
PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CHURCHES IN THEIR AREA



Q. How well do you know your local church? Think about the church closest to you, or a church you recently attended. *n*=1,023 (all respondents) and Q. What is the impact of the churches in your local area? *n*=1,023 (all respondents)

Q. What do you value about local church?

(Please select all that apply) *n*=1,020 (all respondents)



Regular church attenders are highly likely to recommend churches in their local area

Net Promoter Score (NPS) of churches in their local area

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) developed by Bain & Company asks participants to respond to a standard question, “On a scale of 0-10, how likely would you be to recommend (organisation/product/service) to a friend or colleague?”

An organisation’s clients or customers respond on a 0-to-10 point rating scale and are categorised as follows:

- Promoters (score 9-10) are loyal enthusiasts who will keep engaging and refer others, fuelling growth.
- Passives (score 7-8) are satisfied but unenthusiastic stakeholders.
- Detractors (score 0-6) are unhappy stakeholders who can impede growth through negative word-of-mouth.

Q. On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend the churches in your local area to a friend or colleague?

n=153 (Those who attend church regularly)

SCORE: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

NPS = (10+9) - (0+1+2+3+4+5+6)

Regular church attenders are highly likely to recommend the churches in their local area, yielding an NPS score of **+30**.



Discussion of religion and spirituality in public education

Insights into parents of school-aged children – 26% of respondents, n=264.

Australian parents are open to spirituality and religion being discussed in public schools.

The reality that two thirds of Australians (68%) identify with a religion or have spiritual beliefs has significant implications for the relationship between education and religion in Australia. Almost half (47%) of Australians consider it appropriate to talk about spirituality and religion in public schools.

Parent perspectives on the discussion of spirituality and religion in public schools

Three in ten (29%) parents of school-aged children believe that it is inappropriate to discuss spirituality and religion in public schools. This means that 71% of parents believe either it is appropriate (46%) to discuss these topics in public schools or neither think it is neither appropriate nor inappropriate (25%). This is consistent across both parents of primary and secondary school students.

Parents with children in government schools are less likely to deem talking about spirituality and religion in public schools as appropriate. More than two in five (44%), however, consider it to be appropriate and a further quarter (25%) consider it to be neither appropriate nor inappropriate.

Non-Christian participant insights into religious education in public schools

Focus group participants expressed concern around religious education in public schools. The older generations were particularly concerned about the structure and the content.

"I worry that there is no structure to religious education. There is no government standard, it comes down to the volunteer at the church. How do I know what the content is?" (Baby Boomer)

"If someone told my kindergarten child that there are pink elephants in Northern Australia, she would believe them. School is a place to learn facts, not to learn religion. I don't know who the religion teacher is, and I don't know what they're teaching my child." (Generation X parent)

Generation Y also expressed concern around teaching religion in public schools, however more from the perspective that it takes time away from other studies.

"I think it's important to be aware of religions but learning about religion was a waste of time when I could have been doing other studies." (Gen Y)

Non-Christian participants also felt religion in schools should be optional and in line with the individual's religious beliefs.

"Religion should be taught individually. If they are Catholic, they should have Catholic teachers, and Hindus should have Hindu teachers. We should not impose." (Baby Boomer)

A proportion of Generation Y had a slightly different perspective on this. *"I think it is important to teach religion [all religions] from*

an education side, so that people are sensitive to other people's religions and cultures, and not ignorant". This may come from their increasingly multicultural experience of life in Australia, with one Generation Y stating, "Australia is becoming more multicultural, and more religious, home to multiple religions".

Parent perspectives on the discussion of spirituality and religion in universities

When asked about the appropriateness of talking about spirituality and religion in universities, the response from parents with children in school was very similar to their

stance on religion in public schools. More than two in five (45%) believe it is appropriate, 29% believe the discussion of these topics is neither appropriate nor inappropriate and 26% think this is an inappropriate space to talk about spirituality and religion.

The perspectives on the discussion of spirituality and religion varied the most when considering whether university is an appropriate forum. Christian school parents felt it is an entirely appropriate forum to discuss spirituality and religion (only 9% think it inappropriate), but government school parents were more likely to disagree.

Q. Do you agree that 'public schools' are appropriate for people to talk about spirituality and religion? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of appropriateness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Appropriate	44%	53%	57%	55%
Inappropriate	31%	24%	22%	24%
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	25%	22%	22%	21%

Q. Do you agree that 'universities' are appropriate for people to talk about spirituality and religion? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of appropriateness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Appropriate	41%	56%	70%	52%
Inappropriate	28%	22%	9%	14%
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	31%	22%	22%	34%

Christian schooling

Christian schools are seen to be effective at making a positive contribution to society by one in five non-Christian parents.

Parent perspectives on the discussion of spirituality and religion in Christian schools

Three in four parents of school-aged children (74%) consider discussion of spirituality and religion in Christian schools to be appropriate. Just 10% think that Christian schools are an inappropriate space for people to talk about spirituality and religion.

Parents with children in government schools are least likely to consider discussion of spirituality and religion to be appropriate in Christian schools (71%).

Parents' perceived effectiveness of Christian education

Teaching children about Christian values.

Two in five parents of school-aged children (42%) suggest that Christian schools are extremely or very effective at teaching children about Christian values. Only 13% suggest that Christian schools are not at all effective at teaching children about Christian values. Whilst no Christian school parents suggested that

Christian schools are not at all effective in teaching Christian values, only 35% suggested that Christian schools are extremely or very effective at teaching children about Christian values.

Equipping children to live out their Christian faith after they finish at school.

Christian school parents are more likely to believe that Christian schools are extremely or very effective at equipping children to live out their Christian faith after they finish at school.

Making a positive contribution to society beyond their school boundaries.

Catholic and Christian school parents' perceptions align when considering the positive contribution Christian schools make to society beyond their school boundaries (43% say this is extremely/very effective). Positively, one in five (20%) **non-Christian parents** indicated that Christian schools are extremely or very effective at making a positive contribution to society beyond their school boundaries.

Q. Do you agree that 'Christian schools' are appropriate for people to talk about spirituality and religion? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of appropriateness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Appropriate	71%	76%	83%	79%
Inappropriate	9%	16%	9%	3%
Neither appropriate nor inappropriate	19%	9%	9%	17%

Q. How effective are Christian schools at guiding children to live out the basics of the Christian faith? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of effectiveness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Extremely or very effective	34%	45%	35%	41%
Not at all effective	15%	11%	0%	17%

Q. How effective are Christian schools at equipping children to live out their Christian faith after they finish at school? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of effectiveness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Extremely or very effective	28%	35%	39%	28%
Not at all effective	17%	12%	4%	21%

Q. How effective are Christian schools at making a positive contribution to society beyond their school boundaries? (By type of school children of parents are attending)

Level of effectiveness	Government school (n=192)	Catholic school (n=45)	Independent Christian school (n=23)	Independent (other) school (n=29)
Extremely or very effective	29%	43%	43%	31%
Not at all effective	15%	9%	4%	14%

Jesus

3% of Australians have never heard of Jesus.

Knowledge of Jesus

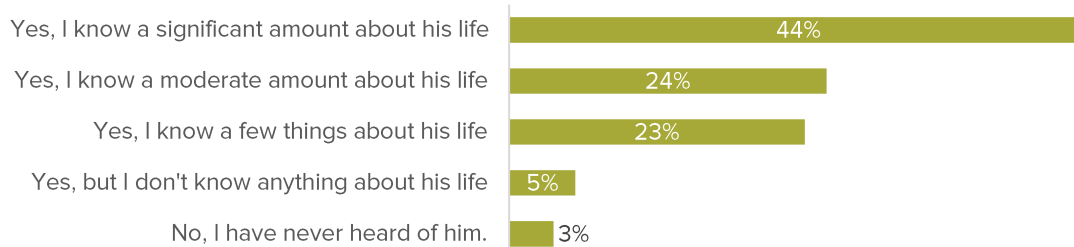
Nine in ten Australians (91%) know at least a few things about the life of Jesus. 5% have heard of Jesus but don't know anything about his life. 3% of Australians have never heard of Jesus.

Knowledge of Jesus is fairly consistent across the generations. Generation Y are least likely to know at least a few things about the life of Jesus (87% cf. 93% Gen X, 93% Baby Boomers, and 95% Builders).

Most **non-Christians who are warm to Christianity** (91%) and **non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** (84%) know at least few things about the life of Jesus. **Non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** are more likely to have heard of Jesus but not know anything about his life (10% cf. 7% warm to Christianity). **Non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** are also more likely than those who are warm to have never heard of Jesus (6% cf. 1%).

Q. Have you heard of Jesus, the central figure in Christianity?

n=1,022 (all respondents)



HOW MUCH DO AUSTRALIANS KNOW ABOUT JESUS' LIFE?



"A great man [Jesus]. I heard about him from the movies."

- Baby Boomer

Australians are more likely to consider Jesus' life to be important historically than personally.

Importance of Jesus in the history and culture of the world

Half of Australians (53%) consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important in terms of the history and culture of the world. Beliefs about the importance of Jesus differ across the generations. The Builder and Baby Boomer generations are more likely to believe Jesus' life is important (extremely or very) in the history and culture of the world (62% & 59% cf. 46% Gen X, 49% Gen Y, and 55% Gen Z).

Nine in ten regular church attenders (92%) consider Jesus' life to be important. Comparatively, two in three (64%) Australians who identify with Christianity but never go to church consider Jesus' life to be important.

Non-Christians who are warm to Christianity are twice as likely as **non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** to believe Jesus' life was extremely or very important on the history and culture of the world (51% cf. 24%).

Importance of Jesus to Australians personally

Whilst half of Australians (53%) consider Jesus' life to be of importance in the history and culture of the world, only one in three (31%) consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important to them personally. A further one in three Australians (33%) consider Jesus' life to be somewhat or slightly important to them personally. Almost two in five Australians (37%)

believe Jesus' life is not at all important to them personally.

Nine in ten (89%) *regular church attenders who identify with Christianity* consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important to them personally. Comparatively, only one in three (33%) *Australians who identify with Christianity and never attend church* believe Jesus' life to be extremely or very important to them personally.

Jesus' life - extremely or very important personally.

- 19% non-Christians warm to Christianity
- 4% non-Christians cold to Christianity

Jesus life – not at all important personally

- 81% non-Christians cold to Christianity
 - 33% of non-Christians warm to Christianity
-

Personal importance of Jesus varies across the generations. The Builder generation is the most likely to consider Jesus' life to be extremely or very important to them personally (41% cf. 29% Baby Boomers, 26% Gen X, 33% Gen Y, 26% Gen Z). Generation Z however, is most likely to consider Jesus' life to be at least slightly important to them personally (50% cf. Gen Y 30%, Gen X 30%, Baby Boomers 36%, Builders 29%). Generation X is least likely to believe Jesus has any personal importance to them at all (44% cf. 29% Builders, 35% Baby Boomers, 38% Gen Y, 24% Gen Z).

HOW IMPORTANT WAS/IS JESUS' LIFE TO...



THE HISTORY AND
CULTURE OF THE WORLD?

14%
Not at all

33%
Slightly/somewhat

53%
Extremely/very



YOU PERSONALLY?

37%
Not at all

32%
Slightly/somewhat

31%
Extremely/very

Q. How important was Jesus' life on the history and culture of the world? n=1,023 (all respondents) and
Q. How important is Jesus' life to you personally? n=1,022 (all respondent)

*"I do believe in the strength behind Jesus, the good, the love, but just pushing the
name of Jesus so hard forms a block for me."*

- Generation X

Love is the attribute of Jesus that Australians connect with the most.

'Love' is the attribute of Jesus that Australians connect with the most. This is consistent across:

- 73% - regular church attenders
- 62% - Australians identifying with Christianity who never go to church
- 56% - non-Christians who are warm to Christianity
- 21% - non-Christians who are cold to Christianity

Second is 'hope':

- 61% - regular church attenders
- 48% - Australians identifying with Christianity who never go to church
- 38% non-Christians warm to Christianity

'Care' is number three for non-Christians who are warm to Christianity (36%) and Australians identifying with Christianity that never go to church (40%). On the other hand, the attribute that regular church attenders are third most likely to connect with is 'salvation' (58%).

After 'none of the above' and 'love' **non-Christians who are cold to Christianity** are most likely to positively connect with Jesus being 'non-violent' (19%).

Across the generations, 'love' is the attribute of Jesus that Australians most positively connect with. Generation Z, however, is the most likely generation to positively connect with Jesus' 'wisdom' (38%) and 'strength' (36%). The older generations are most likely to positively connect with 'truth' (Builders 46%, Baby Boomers 39%, Gen X 30%).

Non-Christian participant perspectives about Jesus

Non-Christian participants vary in their beliefs about Jesus. Generally, they agree that *"Jesus Christ was a great man, we cannot deny that"* (Baby Boomer).

"He's an all-around awesome guy, in his religious beliefs. He's all-around selfless, caring, sacrificing, all good to all people." (Gen X)

"There is nothing negative about him, he was a very moral person. There are so many good traits there, if he does exist." (Gen Y)

Questions arose, however, about his existence:

"He is someone who has been created through fictional stories (like those in the Bible)." (Baby Boomer)

The younger generation is even more cynical about Jesus' ability to carry out all that is claimed in the Bible.

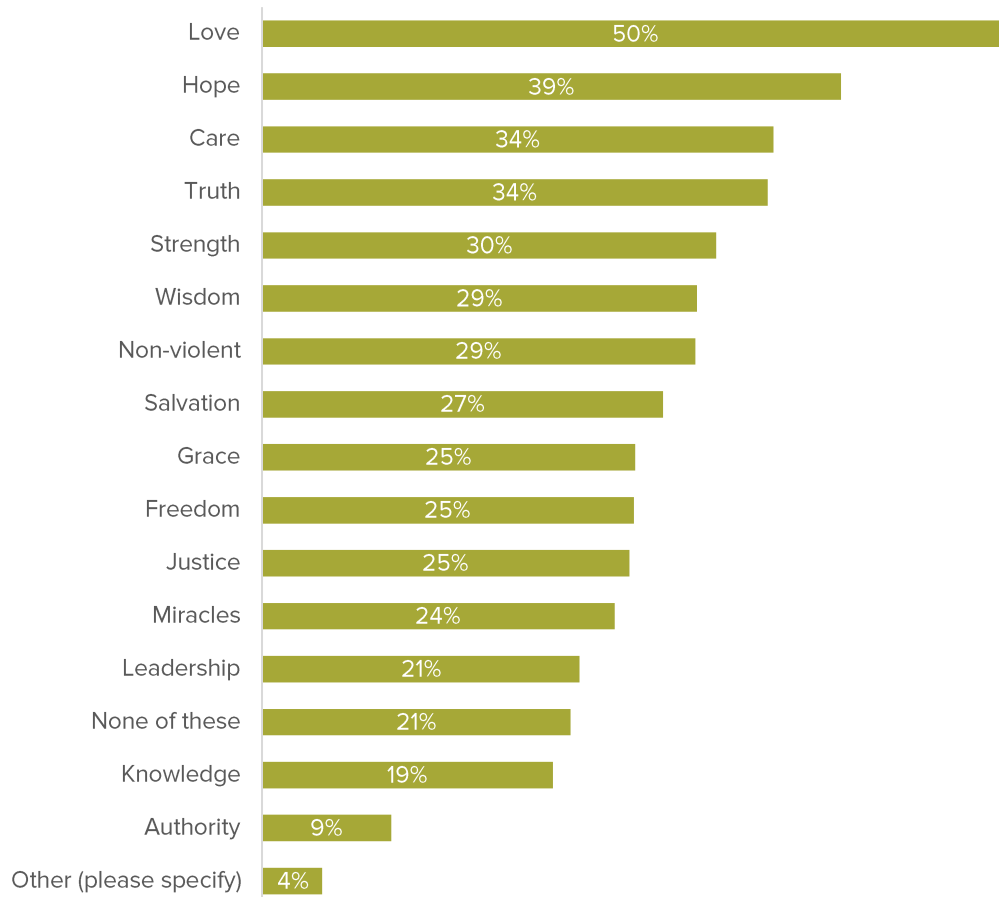
"We think, 'How is it that possible?' Young people are very cynical. When they hear those stories, they (leaning back) move away from it." (Gen Y)

In spite of non-Christian participant doubts towards Jesus, they more positively connected to Jesus than to the Church.

"Negative feelings come from things that happened inside the church or things like that. Maybe try to push the Jesus thing, rather than the 'come to church and learn about Jesus' thing." (Gen Y)

Q. What aspects and attributes of Jesus' life do you most connect with in a positive way?

n=1,020 (all respondents)



Top 3	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
1.	Love (42%)	Love (46%)	Love (45%)	Love (55%)	Love (62%)
2.	Wisdom (38%)	Hope (36%)	Hope (36%)	Hope (42%)	Truth (46%)
3.	Strength (36%)	Care (31%)	Truth (30%)	Care (41%)	Hope (46%)

Demographics

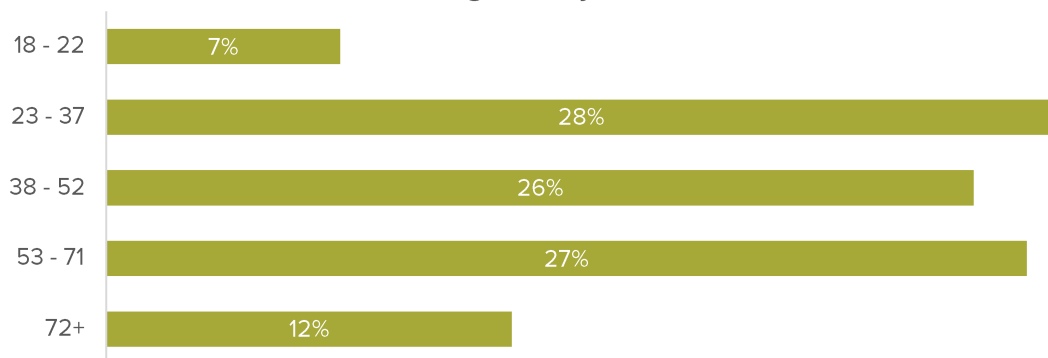
Gender

Q. Are you male or female?



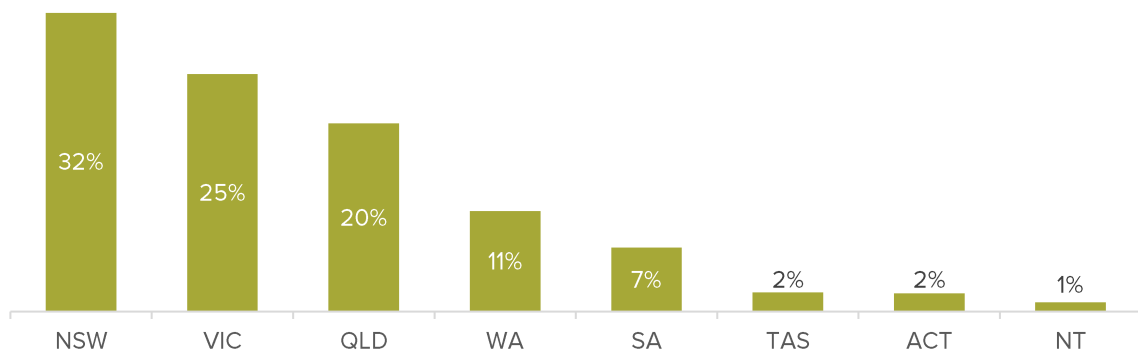
Age

Q. What age will you be in 2017?



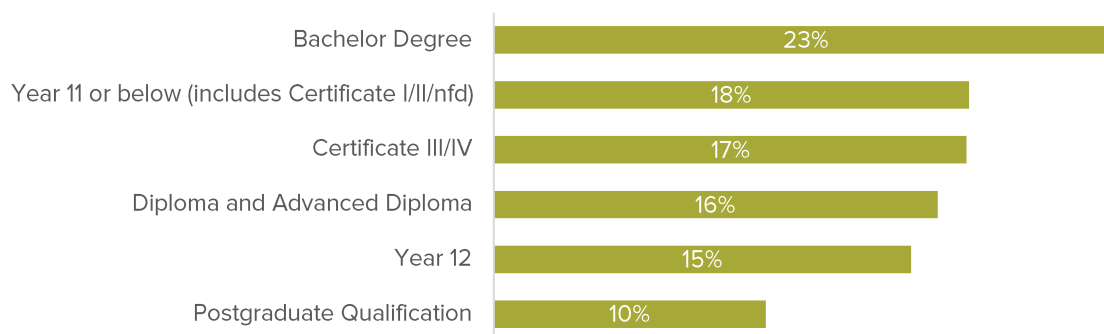
State

Q. Where do you usually live?



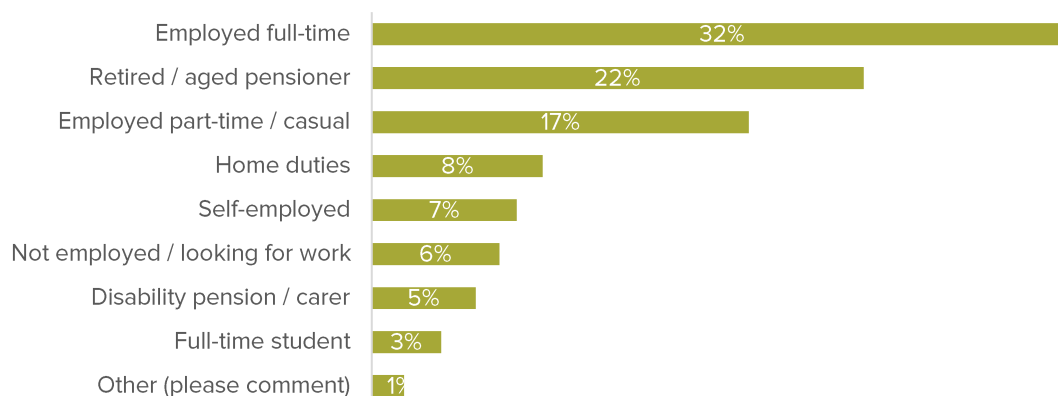
Education

Q. What is your highest level of completed education?



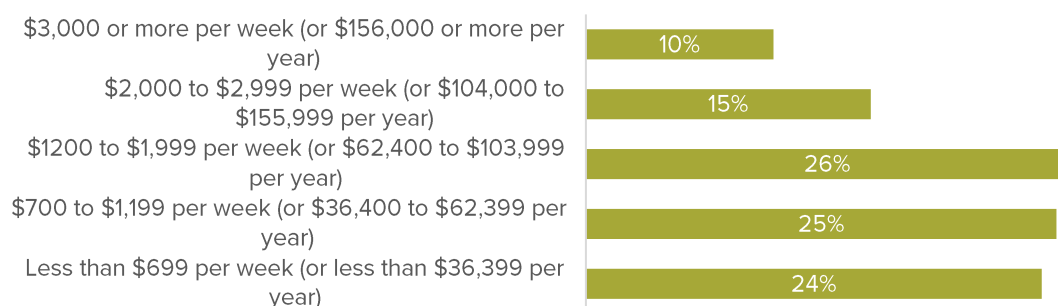
Employment

Q. Which of the following best describes your employment status?



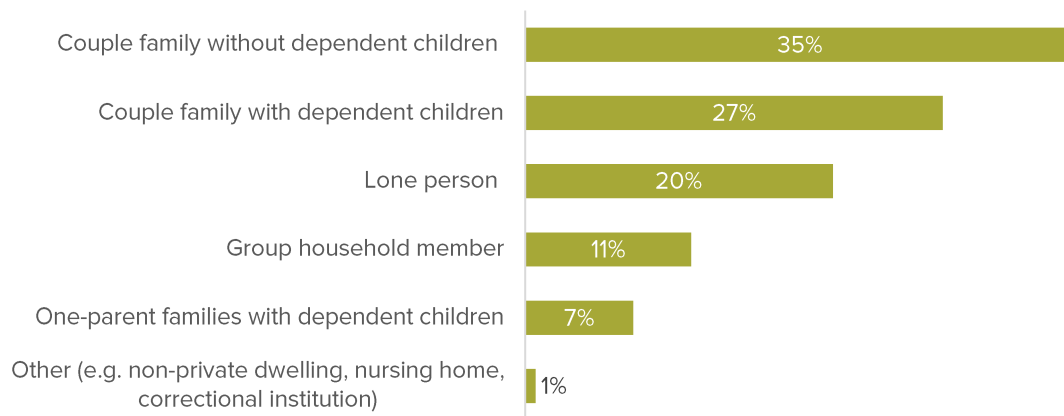
Income

Q. Which of the following best represents your household's combined gross annual income? (i.e. before taxes)



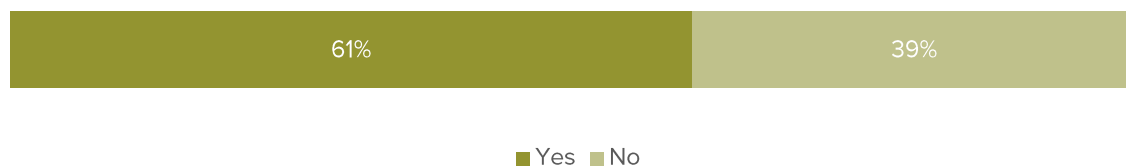
Household

Q. What type of household do you currently live in?



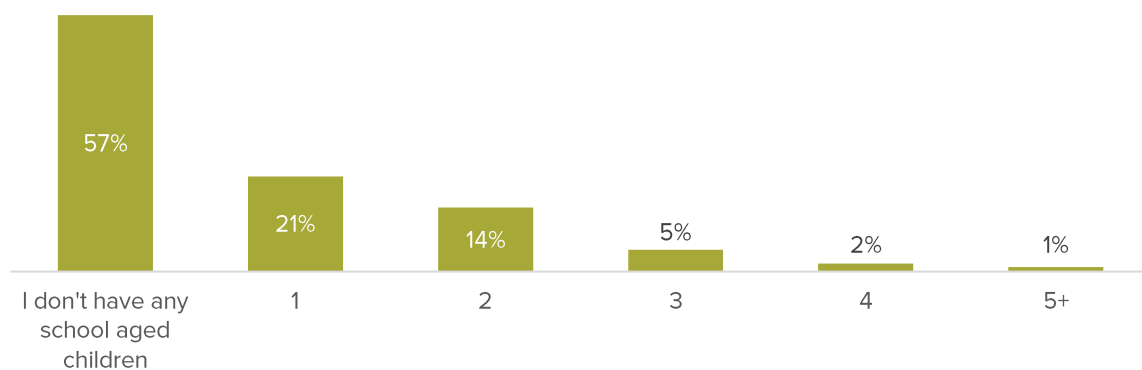
Children

Q. Do you have any children?



School aged children

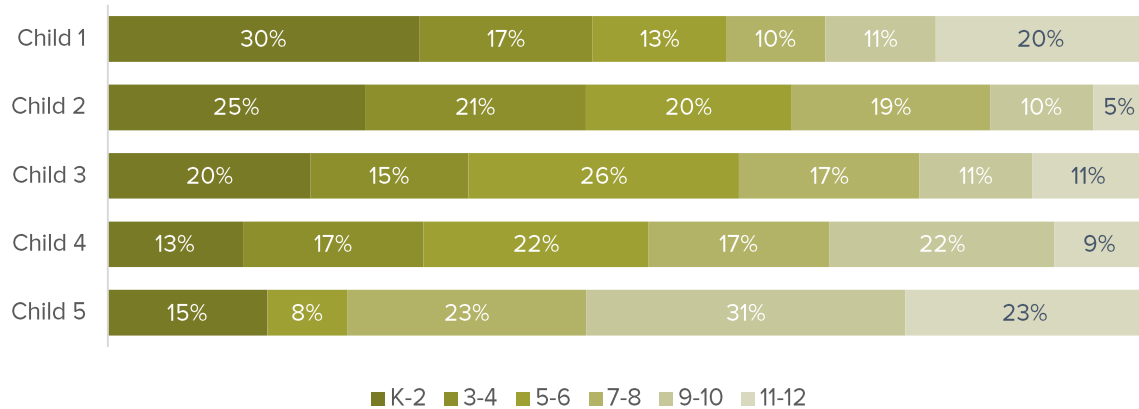
Q. How many children will you have in school during 2017?
n=619



School Grade

Q. What grade is/are your child/ren in?

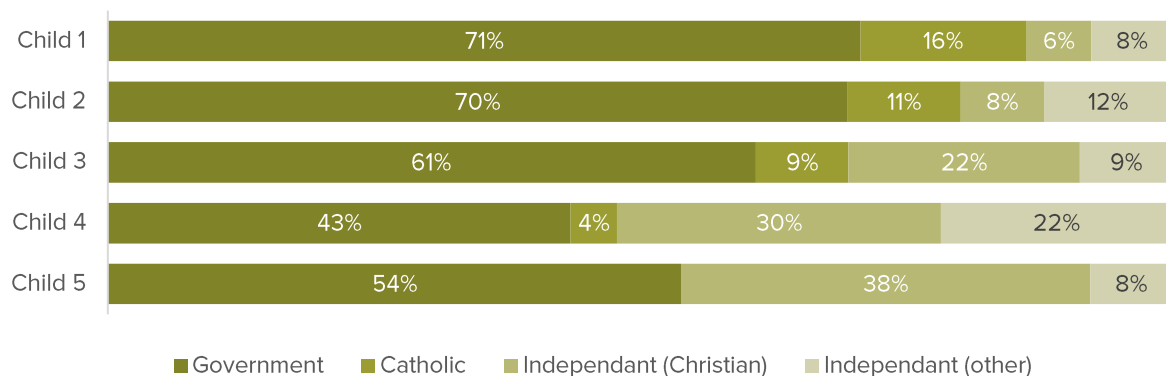
n=263



Type of school

Q. What type of school/s do your children attend?

n=263



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