



The changing faith landscape of Australia

mccrindle

The changing faith landscape of Australia report is produced by:
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Introduction

Almost invariably a community's strength flows from its stories and traditions, while its future rests in its relevance and innovation. The extent to which Australia's Christian organisations can carry with them the timeless gospel and unchanging truth as they adeptly navigate the shifting cultural and demographic landscape will determine their place in the decades to come.

As this research makes plain, the future is no longer a destination to which we are travelling, but rather something that is coming at us, from various directions, and at an increasing velocity. Generationally, culturally, socially, and spiritually, Australia is transforming and the speed of the change, even from five years ago, as represented in the percentages herein, is astonishing, and perhaps unsettling.

But surely such times present a unique opportunity for the Australian church. Indeed, the needs of Australians can be effectively met by no other institution but the church. The story that this data tells is of a society that is blessed with unequalled levels of education, technology, material wealth and consumer options, yet is in want.

More than one in six Australians has never felt part of a flourishing community, and around the same number report feeling lonely "often". More than half of Australian teen and twentysomethings say they are living with a long-term mental health condition such as anxiety or depression. Less than half of this age group report strong satisfaction in their life in measures such as a sense of purpose, contentment, personal growth and spiritual wellbeing. This is the options generation, with unlimited pathways but we do them no favours if we set them up with endless opportunities, yet no purpose.

However, this research reveals much hope. Most Australians are open to spiritual conversations that may include different views to their own, most are warm towards Christianity, of those who know something of churches in their area, most have a positive view of their local impacts, and of the 9 in 10 Australians who know a Christian, the top ten attributes that they attribute to them are all positive.

We trust that this research will be an encouragement to those feeling disheartened in ministry, a guide to those perplexed amidst massive change, and a support to those wanting to best engage with the next generation.



Mark McCrindle

Founder and Principal
McCrindle



“People and realms of every tongue dwell on his love with sweetest song, and infant voices shall proclaim their early blessings on his name.”

—
Isaac Watts 1719

Changing faith snapshot



46%

Christianity

16%

At least monthly church attenders

6%

Active practisers (extremely involved with practising my religion)

13%

I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any religion

6%

Other religions

33%

None - I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief

WHAT THOSE IDENTIFYING WITH NO RELIGION BELIEVE

33% of Australians

I prefer a scientific and rational, 'evidence-based' approach to life

45%

I think that religions and spirituality are outdated and traditional approaches to life

30%

I think that religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on

25%

WHAT THE SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS BELIEVE

13% of Australians

I believe there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life

44%

I believe in my self-developed beliefs

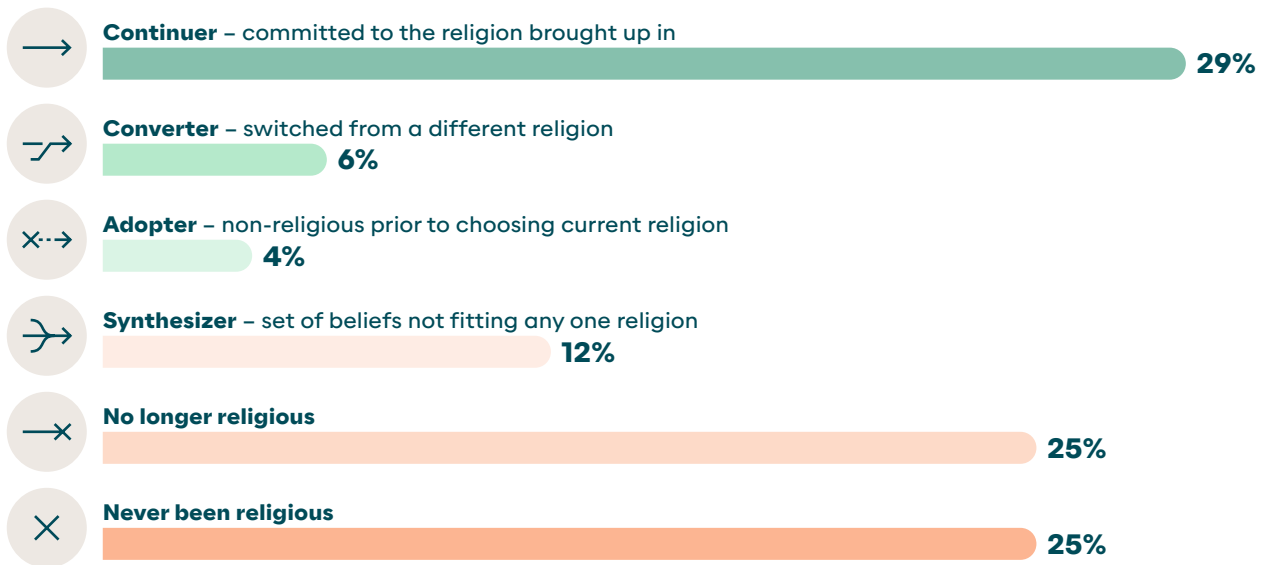
39%

I believe in the inward journey of discovering the inner person

38%

Household upbringing influences religious identity

OUTGROWING RELIGION?



Australians are open to spiritual conversations



Almost half of Australians (46%) are extremely or very open to being in a spiritual conversation that may involve different views to their own



Gen Z (77%) are more likely than Baby Boomers (53%) to believe social media is an appropriate space to talk about religion and spirituality

Top four prompts to think about spirituality and religion



1

31%

A death in the family



2

26%

Conversations with people



3

25%

Health issues of a family member or friend



4

24%

Personal unhappiness

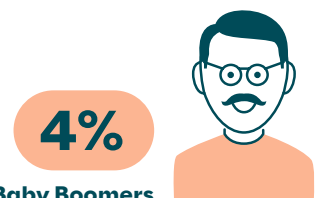
Gen Z (26%) are **6.5x as likely** as Baby Boomers (4%) to be prompted by social media to consider spirituality and religion



26%
Generation Z

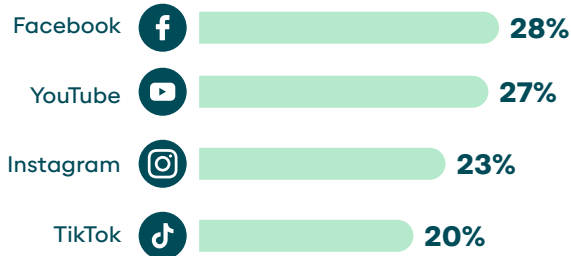


6.5x



4%
Baby Boomers

Top platforms Australians go to at least weekly to help them grow in their spiritual life



46%

TikTok is the number one platform for Gen Z with almost half (46%) engaging with it at least weekly to help them in their spiritual life

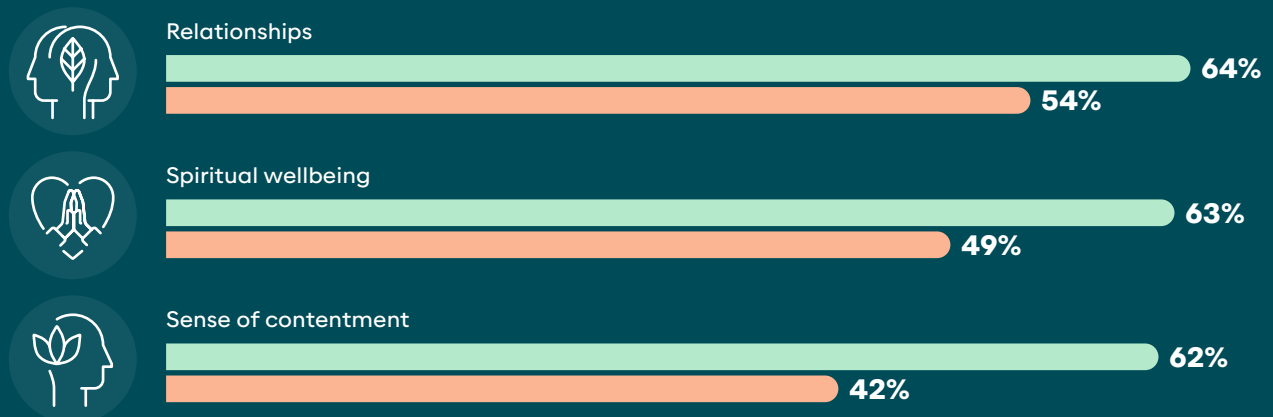
Top attractors to religion and spirituality



Faith has a positive impact on life satisfaction

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF YOUR LIFE?

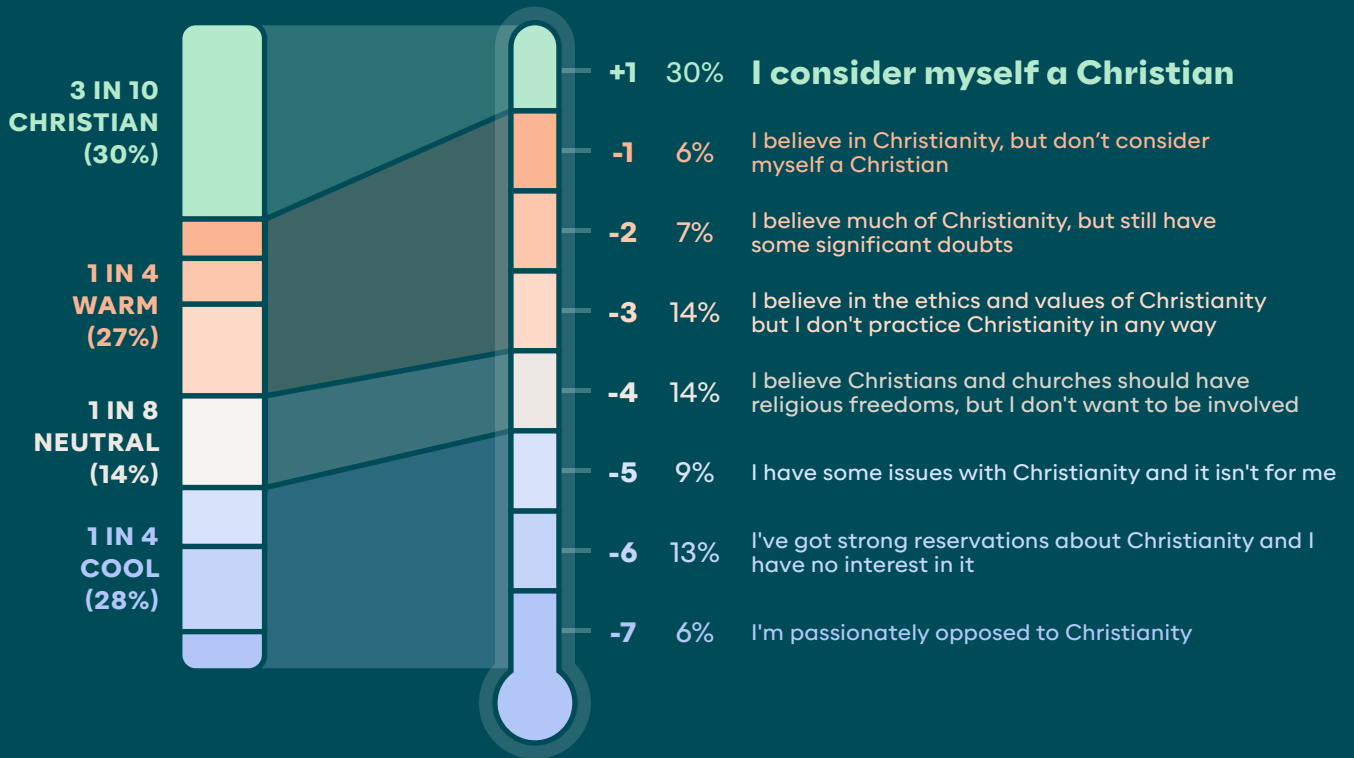
- Regular church attenders
- No religion



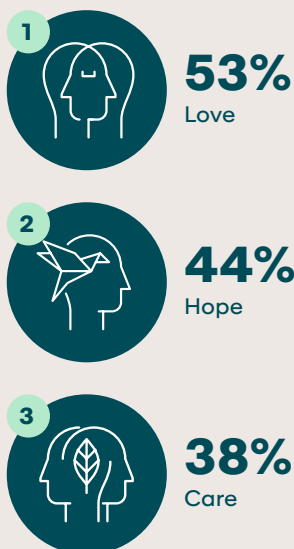
Attitudes towards Christianity

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY?

McCrindle Faith Barometer (based on the Engel Scale)

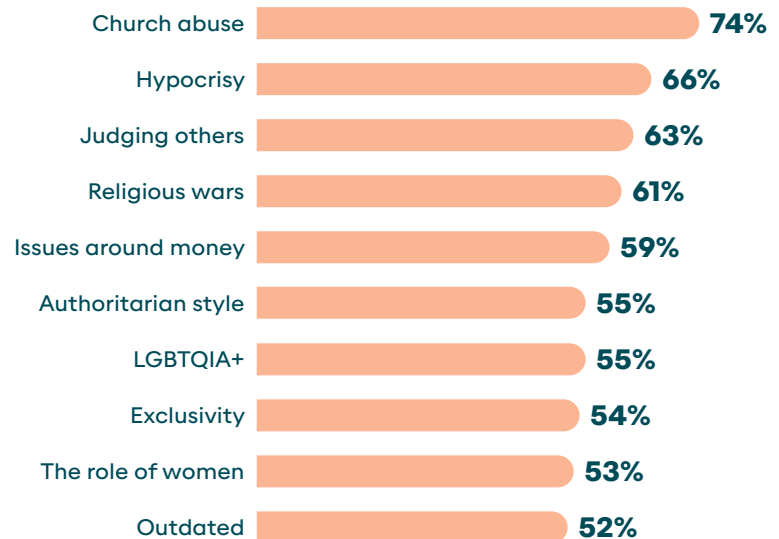


Attributes of Jesus' life Australians connect with in a positive way



Top 10 negative influences on perceptions of Christians and Christianity

Massive/significant negative influence



Australians know more about Jesus than they do about the Church in Australia

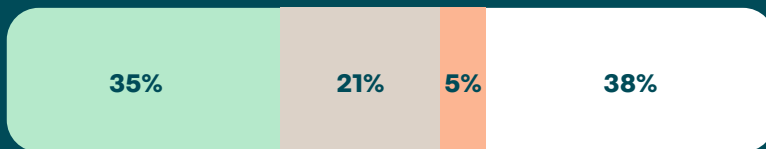
68% know a significant or moderate amount about Jesus' life compared to just one in four (24%) who know a great deal or a lot about the Church in Australia.



68%
vs.
24%



The impact of the local church is more likely to be positive than negative



● Positive ● Neutral ● Negative ● I don't know well enough to answer

Australians are likely to attend church if invited



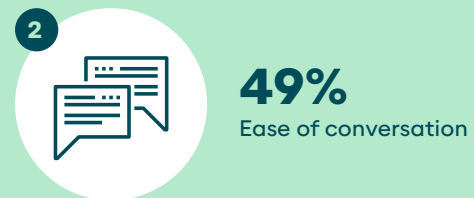
68%

68% of Australians would be at least slightly likely to attend a Christian church service or event if they were personally invited by a friend or family member.

What Australians value about the local church



Top three elements of thriving communities





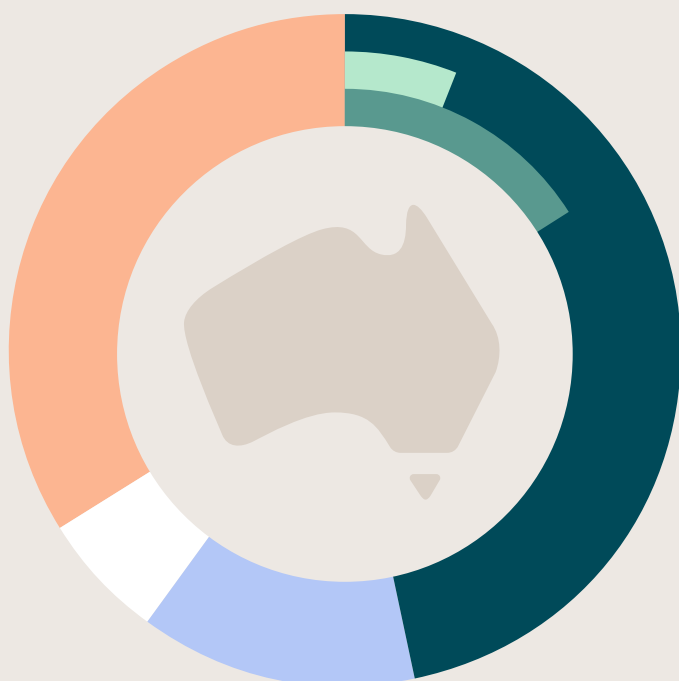
The future is no longer a destination to which we are travelling, but rather something that is coming at us, from various directions, and at an increasing velocity.

Religion in Australia

Australian society has experienced unprecedented change over the past few years with pandemics, bush fires, floods, polarisation influencing public discourse and cancel culture. It is in this environment that faith leaders are navigating the emerging cultural narratives and the changing faith landscape. It is our desire and passion at McCrindle to equip leaders with insights that can shape and strengthen communities that empower human flourishing, so this study seeks to unpack the faith landscape and Australians' attitudes and perspectives towards faith, Christianity, and the Church in Australia.

Historically, Australia has been influenced by Christianity in its establishment of public laws, hospitals, education, and societal norms. For the first time in Australia's history, however, the proportion of Australians identifying with Christianity has dropped to below half (44% cf. 52% 2016). At the same time, Australians identifying with no-religion has been rising (from 30% in 2016 to 39% in 2021)¹.

AUSTRALIA'S RELIGIOUS IDENTITY



46%

Christianity

16%

At least monthly church attenders

6%

Active practisers (extremely involved with practising my religion)

13%

I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any religion

6%

Other religions

33%

None - I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief



While it is true that the proportion of Australians identifying with Christianity is declining, this is just one question in the census. This study, therefore, aims to unpack the broad sentiment and perceptions towards not just religious identification, but also faith, spirituality and Christianity in Australia today. To explore this area in richer detail, rather than asking ‘What is the person’s religion?’ this study asks, ‘What religion is the person currently practising or identifying with?’ This study also provides the additional option, ‘I have spiritual beliefs, but I don’t identify with any religion’. The insights from this question largely match the census data, which indicates that 46% of

Australians identify with Christianity (compared to 44% census), while a third (33%) do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief (compared to 39% census). Just over one in ten (13%), however, have spiritual beliefs but don’t identify with any religion while 6% identify with other main religions.

While the overall proportion of Australians identifying with Christianity is decreasing, monthly church attendance is largely remaining stable, highlighting a decline in cultural Christianity more so than a decline in the practise of Christianity.

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

	Gen Z 18 - 27	Gen Y 28 - 42	Gen X 43 - 57	Boomers 58 - 76	Builders 77+
Christianity	38%	35%	46%	56%	73%
Spiritual beliefs but don't identify with any main religion	21%	13%	14%	11%	4%
None – I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	36%	40%	33%	28%	20%
Other main religions	5%	9%	7%	2%	1%

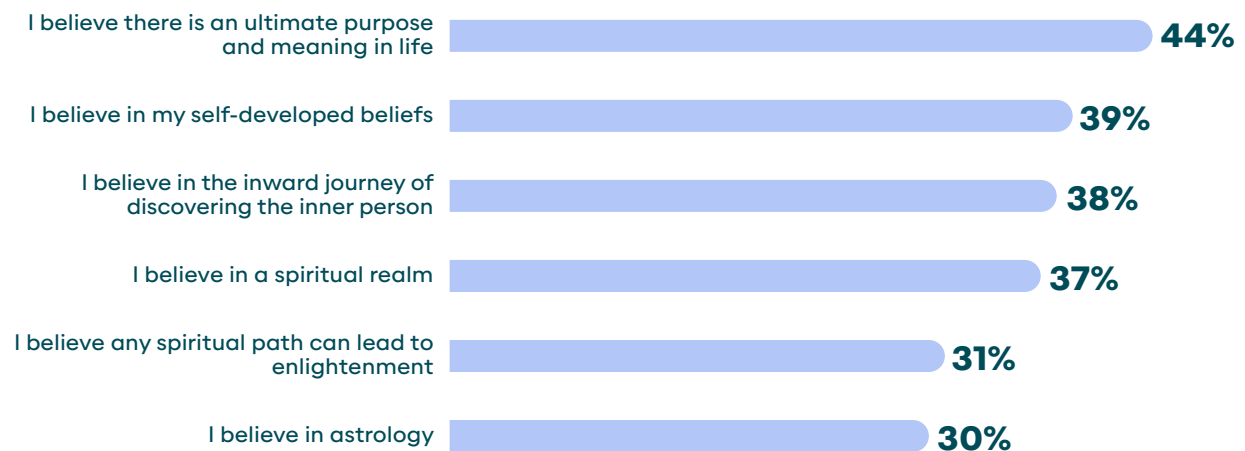
Younger Australians increasingly spiritual but not religious

While younger Australians are less likely to identify with Christianity than their older counterparts, they are not writing off faith and spirituality entirely. One in five Gen Z (21%) have spiritual beliefs but do not identify with any main religion, making them the most likely generation to fall into this category. This association has also increased over the past five years from 13% in 2017 to 21% today.²

Australians who identify as spiritual but not religious are most likely to believe there is an ultimate purpose and meaning in life (44%) or to have developed their own beliefs (39%). For some it is about the pathway to growth with two in five describing their spiritual beliefs as the inward journey of discovering the inner person (38%) and a belief in the spiritual realm (37%).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS DESCRIBE YOUR SPIRITUAL BELIEFS?

Top 6 - Spiritual but not religious n=268



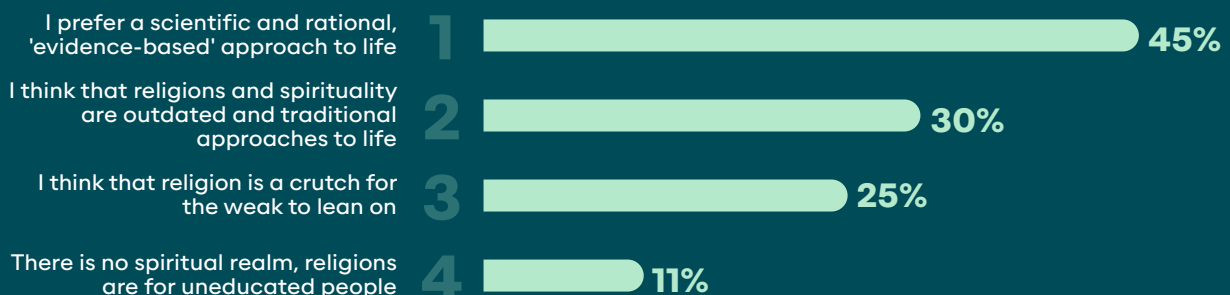
Non-religious Australians prefer a scientific and rational 'evidence-based' approach to life

When exploring the perspectives of Australians who do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief, it is the preference for a scientific and rational 'evidence-based' approach to life (45%) that best describes their thoughts about religions. Almost a third (30%), however,

believe that religions and spirituality are outdated and traditional approaches to life, while one in four (25%) think religion is a crutch for the weak to lean on. Just one in ten (11%) believe there is no spiritual realm and that religions are for uneducated people.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR POSITION AND THOUGHTS ABOUT RELIGIONS?

Top 4. No religion (n = 665)



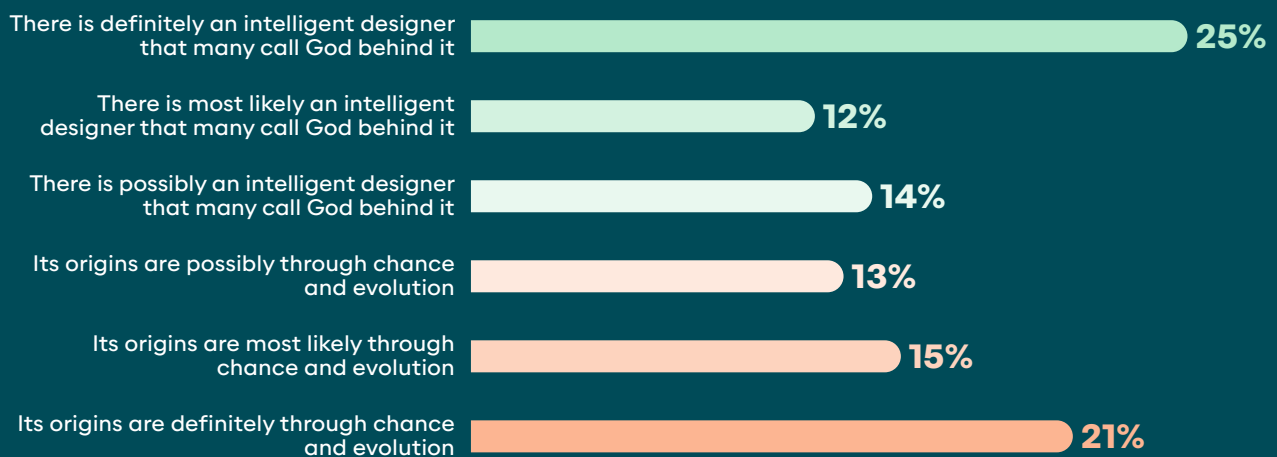
Intelligent designer or chance?

When posed with the question around observing the world around them and what makes the most sense, an intelligent designer or evolution and chance, Australians are equally split. Half of Australians (51%) believe that there is an intelligent designer who many call God behind the solar system and the world, while 49% believe that chance and evolution makes the most sense to them.

There is a connection between faith and Australians' viewpoint on evolution or design. More than seven in ten Australians who identify with Christianity (71%) believe there is an intelligent designer who many call God behind the solar system and the world. Similarly, four in five Australians who identify with other main religions (80%) hold this perspective too. Unsurprisingly 81% of non-religious Australians believe that chance and evolution make the most sense.



WHEN YOU OBSERVE THE SOLAR SYSTEM AND THE WORLD AROUND YOU, WHAT MAKES THE MOST SENSE TO YOU?



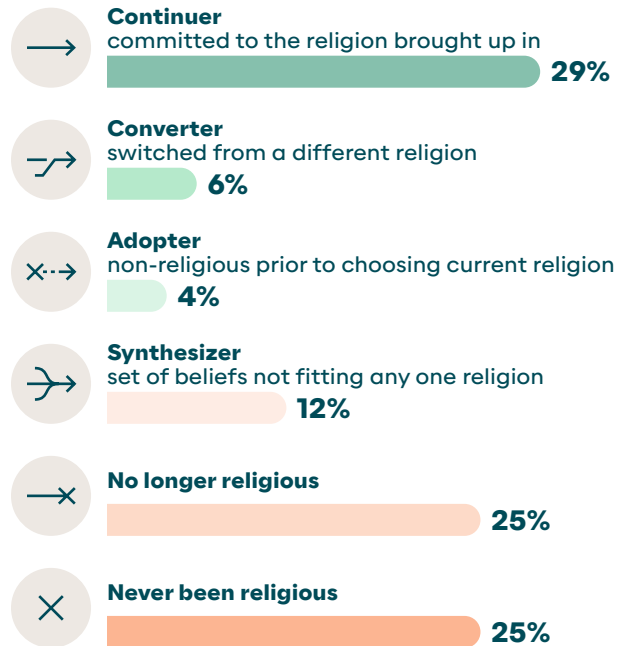
Household upbringing influences religious identity

Australians are most likely to remain committed to the religious views of their household, whether that be continuing in the religion their parents or family brought them up in (29%) or remaining non-religious (25%). One in four (25%), however, are no longer religious, where they may have been shaped in a religious household or had a connection with religion in their past but are now no longer religious.

The key reasons for many who no longer follow their religion are that they drifted away or lost interest. For others they were disillusioned by the hypocrisy and greed, believed the religion to be outdated or no longer believed in the teachings or values of the religion.

Half of Australians who identify with Christianity (51%) have remained committed to the religion their parents/family brought them up in, and this is also consistent with Australians identifying with other main religions (50%). Interestingly, almost three in five Australians (58%) who identify with no-religion were shaped in a non-religious household and have continued in that, highlighting the impact of upbringing on faith journeys and beliefs. While household upbringing plays a significant part, it still comes down to an individual's personal choice. A third (33%) of non-religious Australians were shaped in a religious household or had connection with religion in their past but do not anymore.

OUTGROWING RELIGION?

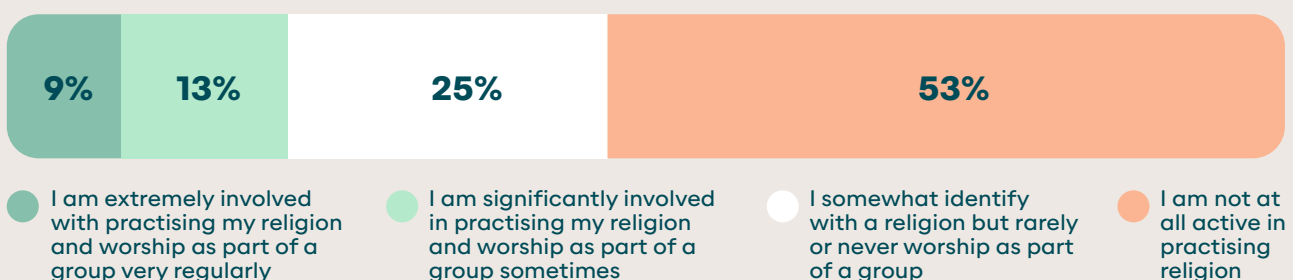


Many Australians identify with religion in name but not practise

While 67% of Australians have some identification with religious or spiritual beliefs, just one in five (22%) are extremely or significantly involved in practising their religion. Australians identifying with main religions other than Christianity are the most active in their faith.

Three in five Australians identifying with other main religions (59%) are extremely or significantly involved in practising their religion compared to just over a third of Australians identifying with Christianity (34%).

HOW ACTIVE ARE YOU IN YOUR RELIGION?





A third of Australians identifying with Christianity attend church at least monthly

Of those Australians identifying with Christianity, one in three attend church at least monthly (34%), while almost one in five (19%) attend quarterly or annually. Almost half of Australians identifying with Christianity (47%), however, never attend church (less than annually/do not attend church).

Gen Y Australians who identify with Christianity are the most likely to attend church at least monthly (50%) followed by Gen Z (40%) and Builders (34%). Baby

Boomers, however, are the least likely to attend church monthly (23%), despite being more likely to identify with Christianity than younger generations.

Regular churchgoers are active in their faith

While Australians identifying with Christianity broadly are less active in their faith than Australians identifying with other main religions, regular church attenders are more likely to be active. Almost nine in ten who attend church at least monthly (85%) are extremely or significantly involved in practising their religion.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE OF AUSTRALIANS IDENTIFYING WITH CHRISTIANITY



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

	Gen Z 18 - 27	Gen Y 28 - 42	Gen X 43 - 57	Boomers 58 - 76	Builders 77+
At least monthly	40%	50%	30%	23%	34%
Quarterly/annually	22%	20%	18%	17%	18%
Never	39%	30%	52%	60%	47%

Openness to spiritual conversations

In an increasingly polarised society, where it can seem like the ability to have conversations where you can agree to disagree is decreasing, it is positive that Australians are open to having a spiritual conversation that may involve different views to their own. Almost half are extremely or very open (46%) seeing it as essential or important to discuss and understand another's viewpoint. Just one in five (21%) are not at all open, holding the perspective that discussing another's viewpoint doesn't change anything so there is no point in the conversation.

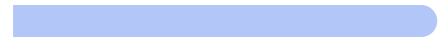
Younger Australians are more likely than older Australians to be extremely or very open to a spiritual conversation that involves different views to their own. (53% Gen Z, 53% Gen Y cf. 47% Gen X, 34% Baby Boomers, 41% Builders).

YOUNGER AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OLDER AUSTRALIANS TO BE EXTREMELY OR VERY OPEN TO A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION THAT INVOLVES DIFFERENT VIEWS TO THEIR OWN



53%

Gen Z



34%

Baby Boomers



HOW OPEN WOULD YOU BE TO A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION THAT MAY INVOLVE DIFFERENT VIEWS TO YOUR OWN?



● Extremely open - It is essential to discuss and understand another's viewpoint

● Very open - It is important to discuss and understand another's viewpoint

● Somewhat open - It can be helpful to discuss and understand another's viewpoint

● Slightly open - It makes me uncomfortable to discuss and understand another's viewpoint

● Not open at all - Discussing another's viewpoint doesn't change anything so there is no point

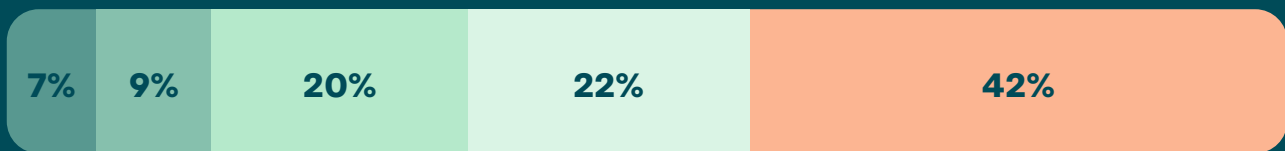
If presented with the right circumstances and evidence, Australians are open to changing their religious views

Further than just engaging in a conversation, if presented with the right circumstances and evidence, almost three in five Australians (58%) are at least slightly open to changing their current religious views. One in six (16%) are extremely or significantly open.

Youth can often be a time of exploration, with younger Australians being more likely to be at least slightly open to changing their current religious views if given the right circumstances or evidence (73% Gen Z, 70% Gen Y cf. 54% Gen X, 45% Baby Boomers, 36% Builders). Baby Boomers, however, are twice as likely to be strongly committed to their current religious views and would not consider other religions (55% Baby Boomers cf. 27% Gen Z).



GIVEN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES AND EVIDENCE, HOW OPEN WOULD YOU BE TO CHANGING YOUR CURRENT RELIGIOUS VIEW?



● Extremely open – I am very interested in exploring different religions and practices

● Significantly open – I am quite open to investigating religious views

● Somewhat open – I am not actively exploring other religious views but would consider other view points

● Slightly open – I am generally happy with my current religious views and am unlikely to consider other religious views in the future

● Not open at all – I am strongly committed to my current religious view and would not consider other religions

Australians are more likely to see public spaces which they are less personally connected to as appropriate for talking about spirituality and religion.

Over the past few years society has increasingly recognised that it is not just physical, but social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing that contributes to overall individual and societal health. While this recognition is growing, it can at times be difficult to discern where to speak about spirituality, particularly with the rise of cancel culture.

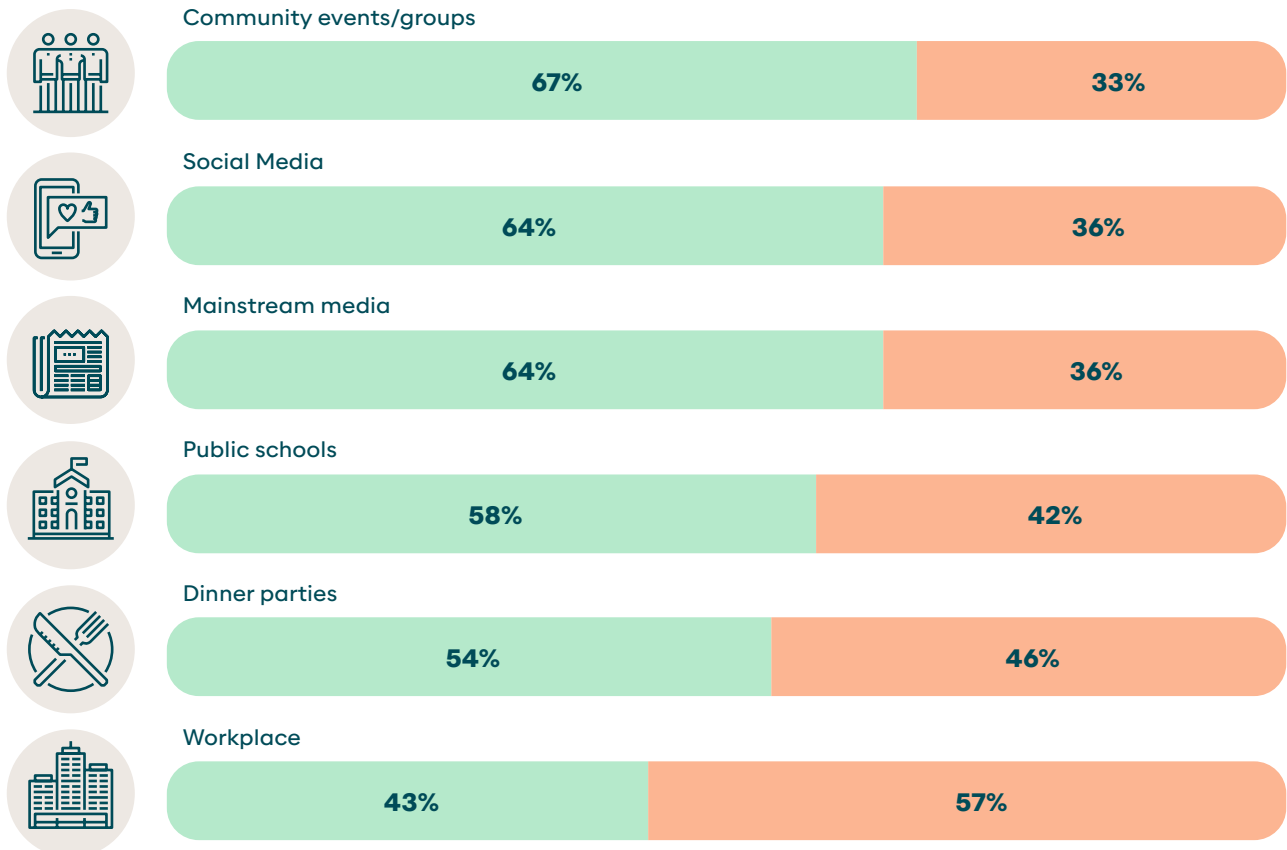
Australians are more likely to see public spaces which they are less personally connected to as appropriate to talk about spirituality and religion. The most appropriate spaces are community events/groups (67%), social media (64%) and mainstream media (64%). The most inappropriate spaces to discuss religion and spirituality are seen to be the workplace (57%) and dinner parties (46%).

Younger Australians are more open to the discussion of spirituality and religion

Likely connected to the value they place on authenticity and bringing their whole selves to life, younger Australians are more likely to believe that all spaces are appropriate to talk about religion. More than three in four Gen Z (77%) believe social media is an appropriate space to talk about spirituality and religion, compared to just over half of Baby Boomers (53%). Similarly, Gen Z are more likely to believe dinner parties are an appropriate space to talk about religion and spirituality than their older counterparts (66% Gen Z cf. 45% Baby Boomers).

HOW APPROPRIATE IS IT FOR PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN THE FOLLOWING PLACES?

● Appropriate ● Inappropriate



SPACES TO TALK ABOUT RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY – VERY/SOMEWHAT/SLIGHTLY APPROPRIATE



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42









Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Boomers	Builders
 Social media	77%	72%	61%	53%	50%
 Dinner parties	66%	63%	51%	45%	41%
 Workplaces	53%	49%	39%	35%	36%
 Community events/groups	76%	69%	67%	59%	60%
 Mainstream media	69%	67%	64%	61%	63%
 Public schools	62%	57%	56%	59%	62%



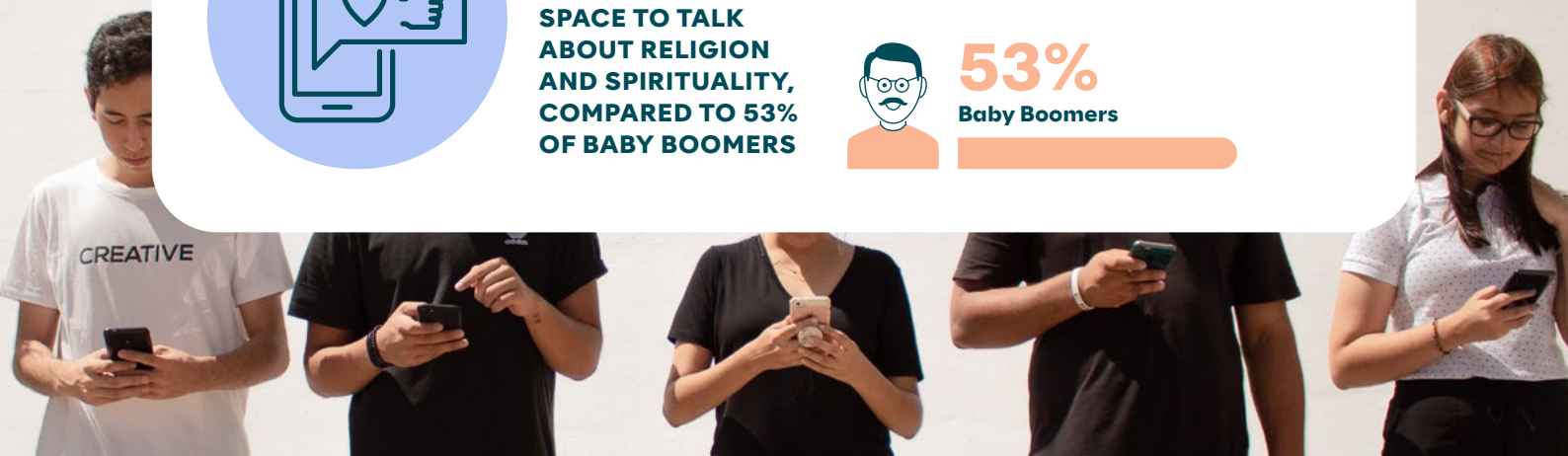
77% OF GEN Z BELIEVE SOCIAL MEDIA IS AN APPROPRIATE SPACE TO TALK ABOUT RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY, COMPARED TO 53% OF BABY BOOMERS



77%
Gen Z



53%
Baby Boomers



Family tragedy prompts Australians to think about spirituality and religion

While many Australians can seemingly go through life without a focus on spirituality and religion, there may be times when it is brought to the fore. Australians are most likely to be prompted to think about spirituality and religion by a death in the family (31%), followed by conversations with others (26%). Health issues of a family member or friend (25%) and personal unhappiness (24%) are also key prompts for Australians.

Interestingly, since 2017 the proportion of Australians prompted to think about spiritual and religious things because of a death in the family or health issues of a family member or friend has grown. This is likely due to the pandemic and the widespread media coverage of health uncertainty that many Australians have been exposed to over the past few years.

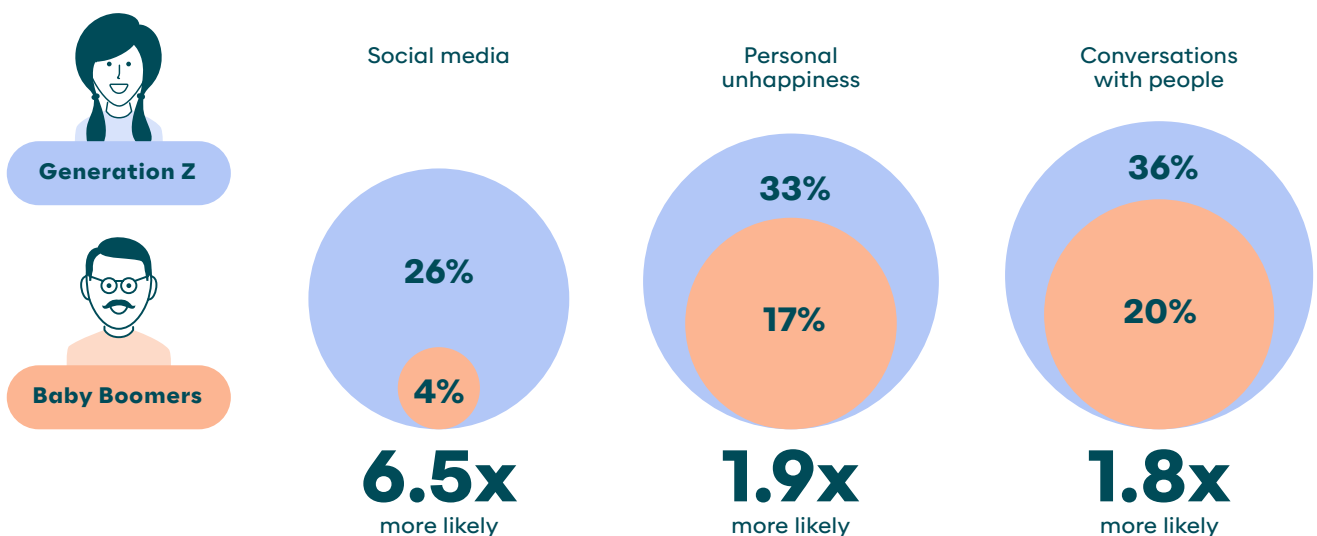
In keeping with Gen Zs higher usage of social media, it plays a significant role in prompting Gen Z to consider spirituality and religion. Gen Z are 6.5 times as likely as Baby Boomers to be prompted by social media to consider spirituality and religion.



6.5x
more likely

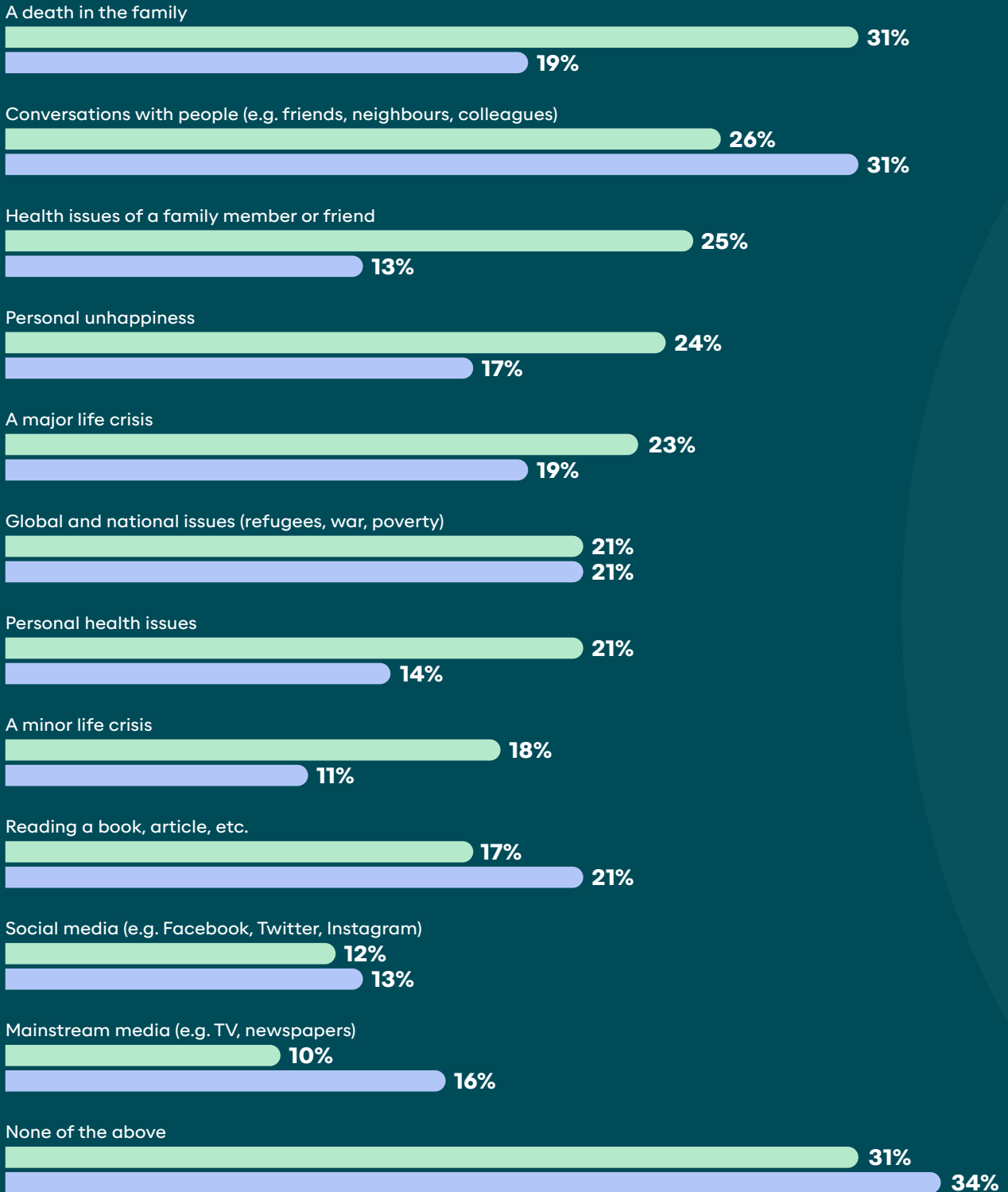
GEN Z (26%) ARE 6.5X AS LIKELY AS BABY BOOMERS (4%) TO BE PROMPTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA TO CONSIDER SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

PROMPT TO THINK ABOUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING INFLUENCES HAVE PROMPTED YOU TO THINK ABOUT SPIRITUAL, RELIGIOUS THINGS?

● 2021 ● 2017



Australians are turning to Facebook to help them grow in their spiritual life

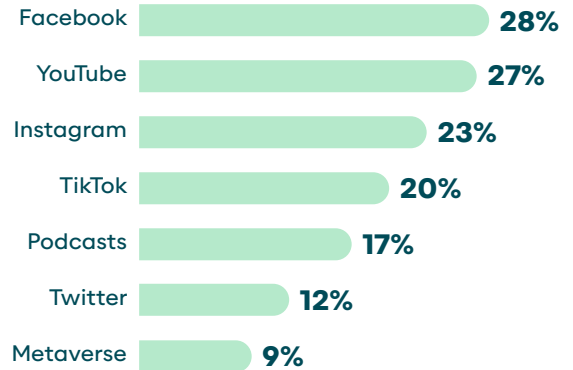
With social media prompting many young Australians to think about spirituality and religion it is helpful to understand which platforms Australians are accessing to help them in their spiritual life. This allows faith leaders to develop appropriate digital content, distributed on the platforms Australians are turning to, to help people on their faith journey. The platforms Australians are most likely to use at least weekly to help them in their spiritual life are Facebook (28%), YouTube (27%), Instagram (23%) and TikTok (20%).

Younger Australians are turning to TikTok for their spiritual growth

Unsurprisingly, younger generations are significantly more likely to engage with social platforms to help them in their spiritual life. For Gen Z, the social platform they most use to help with their spiritual life is TikTok (46% use it at least weekly), followed by Instagram (44%) and YouTube (39%). Although to a lesser extent, almost one in five Gen Z (18%) engage with the Metaverse at least weekly to help them in their spiritual life – an emerging space to watch over the coming years.

HOW FREQUENTLY ARE YOU ACCESSING THE FOLLOWING PLATFORMS TO HELP YOU IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?

At least weekly



46%

TikTok is the number one platform for Gen Z with almost half (46%) engaging with it at least weekly to help them in their spiritual life

PLATFORMS USED TO HELP IN AUSTRALIANS' SPIRITUAL LIFE – AT LEAST WEEKLY



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

Platform	Gen Z (18 - 27)	Gen Y (28 - 42)	Gen X (43 - 57)	Boomers (58 - 76)	Builders (77+)
TikTok	46%	32%	15%	2%	1%
Instagram	44%	37%	16%	6%	4%
YouTube	39%	37%	27%	11%	12%
Facebook	38%	38%	27%	16%	16%
Podcasts	26%	28%	13%	5%	5%
Twitter	21%	20%	11%	3%	4%
Metaverse	18%	14%	7%	1%	1%

Attending a Sunday service is helping regular church attenders grow spiritually

Regular church attenders are most likely to strongly/somewhat agree that the following have helped them grow spiritually:









Interestingly one in four (25%) regular church attenders have not experienced intentional mentoring, attending conferences (26%) or serving on a team (16%).

Experiencing personal trauma or significant life change is the greatest attractor to investigating faith and religion further

The greatest attractors to investigating faith and religion further are the experience of a personal trauma or a significant life change (66% attract) and seeing firsthand people who live out a genuine faith (64%). For almost three in five Australians philosophical discussions and debating ideas (58%) and hearing stories/testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith are key attractors (57%).

Miraculous stories, however, are almost equally likely to attract Australians (52%) as they are to repel them (48%). Hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith are more likely to repel (54%) than attract (46%).

	Attract	Repel	Diff.
 Experience a personal trauma or significant life change	66%	34%	32
 Seeing first hand people who live out a genuine faith	64%	36%	28
 Philosophical discussion and debating ideas	58%	42%	16
 Stories/testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith	57%	43%	14
 Miraculous stories e.g. stories of people being healed or supernatural occurrences	52%	48%	4
 Hearing from public figures and celebrities who are examples of that faith	46%	54%	-8%

The impact of spirituality on life

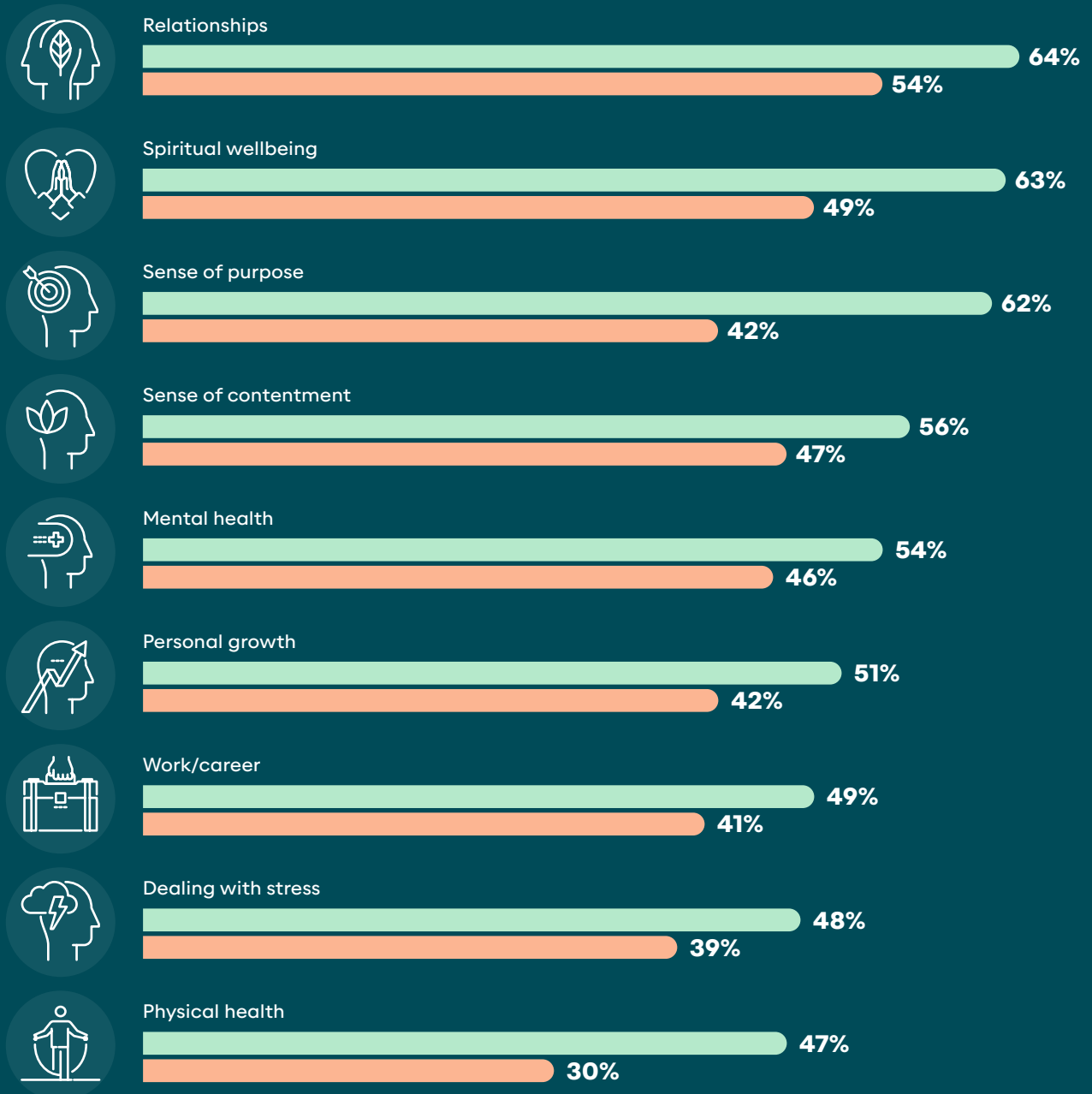
While the cultural tide is shifting to a focus on no religion, there is a link between active practicing of faith and satisfaction with life. Across all areas, Australians identifying with Christianity who regularly attend church (at least monthly) are more likely to be extremely or very satisfied than non-religious Australians. The areas regular church attenders are most likely to be extremely or very satisfied in are their relationships (64% cf. 54% non-religious), spiritual wellbeing (63% cf. 49%) and sense of purpose (62% cf. 42%). Sense of purpose is also the area of greatest difference with regular church attenders 1.5 times as likely to be extremely or very satisfied with their sense of purpose than non-religious Australians.



REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDERS (62%) ARE 1.5X AS LIKELY TO BE EXTREMELY OR VERY SATISFIED WITH THEIR SENSE OF PURPOSE THAN NON-RELIGIOUS AUSTRALIANS (42%)

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF YOUR LIFE?

● Regular church attenders ● No religion



Gen X are the least satisfied with their life

Gen X are the least likely to be extremely or very satisfied across six of the nine areas. Just a third are extremely or very satisfied with their physical health (30%), how they deal with stress (33%), and their work/career (34%). Relationships is the area where there is the greatest difference between Gen X and other generations, with only half (50%) being extremely or very satisfied in this area of life compared to 71% of Builders.

Dealing with stress is a key area for younger generations with less than three in ten Gen Y (28%) and Gen Z (29%) feeling extremely or very satisfied in this area compared to more than half of Baby Boomers (52%) and two in three Builders (65%).

EXTREMELY/VERY SATISFIED



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

	Gen Z 18 - 27	Gen Y 28 - 42	Gen X 43 - 57	Boomers 58 - 76	Builders 77+
Sense of purpose	44%	39%	40%	55%	66%
Physical health	35%	34%	30%	35%	38%
Mental health	40%	38%	41%	61%	75%
Spiritual wellbeing	45%	43%	42%	55%	66%
Relationships	61%	57%	50%	59%	71%
Work/career	42%	38%	34%	45%	54%
Personal growth	48%	38%	37%	48%	59%
Dealing with stress	29%	28%	33%	52%	65%
Sense of contentment	45%	45%	39%	52%	65%

8 million Australians aged 18+ living with a long-term mental health condition

Two in five Australians (40%) are living with a long-term mental health condition which may include anxiety or depression. For 27% this has been professionally diagnosed, while for 13% this has not been professionally diagnosed. Of those who are living with a long-term mental health condition more than half (53%) are receiving professional treatment for this, while one in five (22%) aren't yet, but intend to do so.

The experience of long-term mental health conditions is consistent across different religious perspectives. Two in five regular church attenders (42%), Australians identifying with other main religions (40%) and non-religious Australians (42%) are living with a long-term mental health condition. Spiritual but not religious Australians, however, are slightly more likely to have a long-term mental health condition (54%).

Younger Australians are more likely to self-diagnose long-term mental health conditions

Overall, younger Australians are more likely to say they are living with a long-term mental health condition. More than half of Gen Z (55%) and Gen Y (51%) are living with a long-term mental health condition compared to 27% of Baby Boomers and 11% of Builders. What is interesting, however, is the level of self-diagnosis between the generations. More than one in four Gen Z (26%) say they are living with a long-term mental health condition, but that this has not been professionally diagnosed, while one in five Gen Y (19%), one in ten Gen X (11%), and one in twenty Baby Boomers (5%) say the same.

ARE YOU LIVING WITH A LONG-TERM MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION WHICH MAY INCLUDE ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION?



● Yes, and this has been professionally diagnosed

● Yes, but this has not been professionally diagnosed

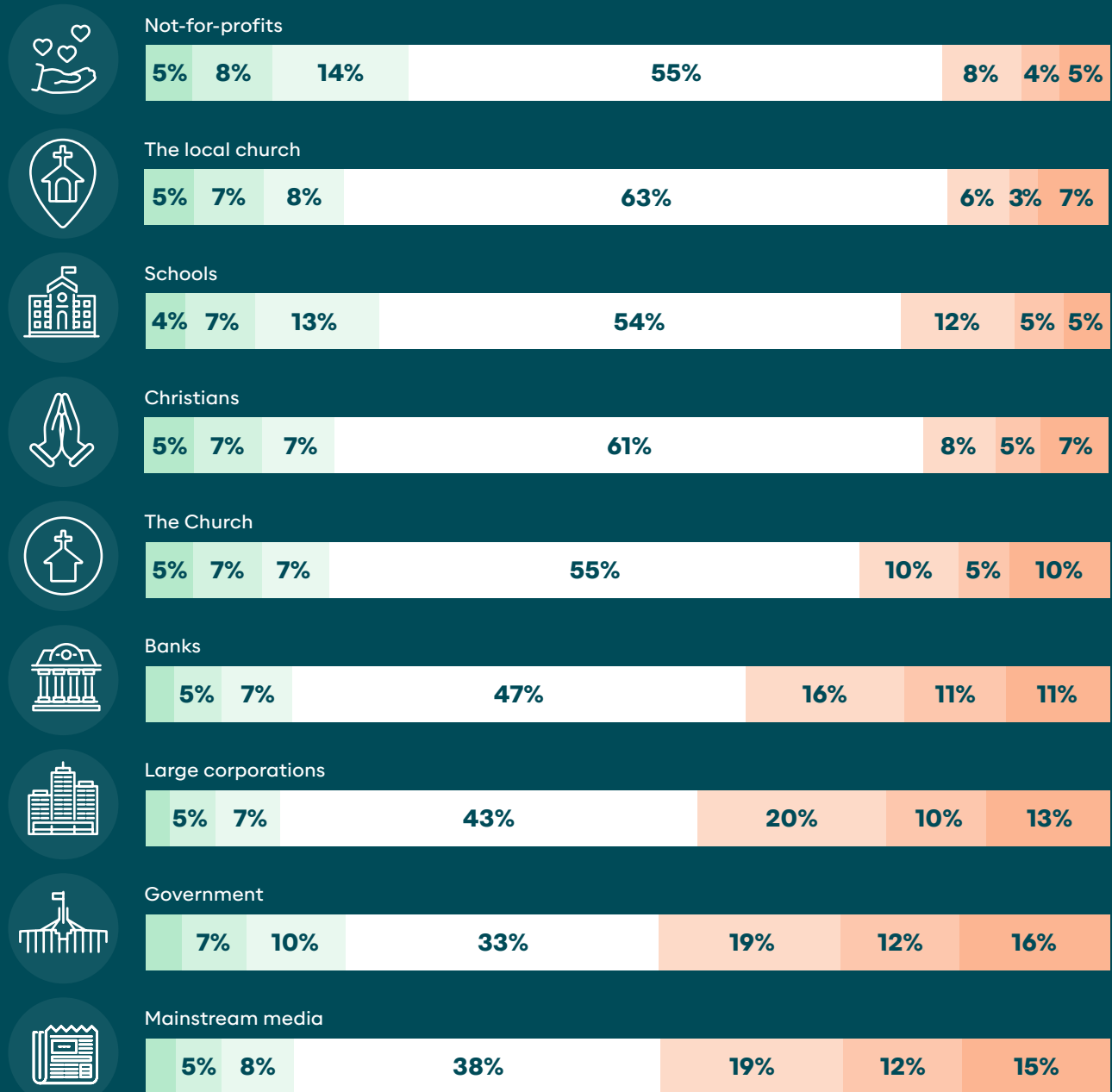
● No I am not living with a long-term mental health condition

Attitudes towards Christianity

The past few years have been a time of global upheaval and uncertainty, which paints a very different landscape and context for churches to be operating in. Positively, however, public sentiment towards the local church (63%), Christians (61%) and the Church (55%) have largely stayed the same over the past three years. In fact, for one in five Australians, trust in the local church (21%), Christians (20%) and the Church more broadly (19%) has increased. The areas where Australians have lost the most trust over the past three years are government (47%), mainstream media (47%) and large corporations (43%).



COMPARED TO THREE YEARS AGO, HOW DO YOU THINK YOUR TRUST IN THE FOLLOWING HAS CHANGED?












- Significantly increased
- Stayed about the same
- Slightly decreased
- Somewhat increased
- Somewhat decreased
- Significantly decreased
- Slightly increased



Younger Australians are more likely to be losing trust in the local church

While the overall story is positive, the generational differences shed a different light. Younger Australians are more likely than their older counterparts to have decreased trust in the local church, the Church, Christians and mainstream media. While the difference between the generations is highest for the local church (17), it is the areas that are more public and less personally connected that Gen Z are more likely to have lost trust in overall, such as mainstream media (46%) and the Church broadly (35%). That which is far off is always easier to criticise than that which is close and known, which highlights the importance of relationship and personal connection for building and maintaining trust.

TRUST HAS DECREASED OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS – AREAS OF GREATEST DIFFERENCE

	 Gen Z 18 - 27	 Gen Y 28 - 42	 Gen X 43 - 57	 Boomers 58 - 76	 Builders 77+	Difference
 The local church	25%	18%	16%	14%	8%	17
 The Church	35%	25%	24%	26%	19%	16
 Christians	26%	20%	19%	16%	11%	15
 Mainstream media	46%	44%	43%	51%	54%	11

Australians are more likely to be warm or neutral towards Christianity than cold

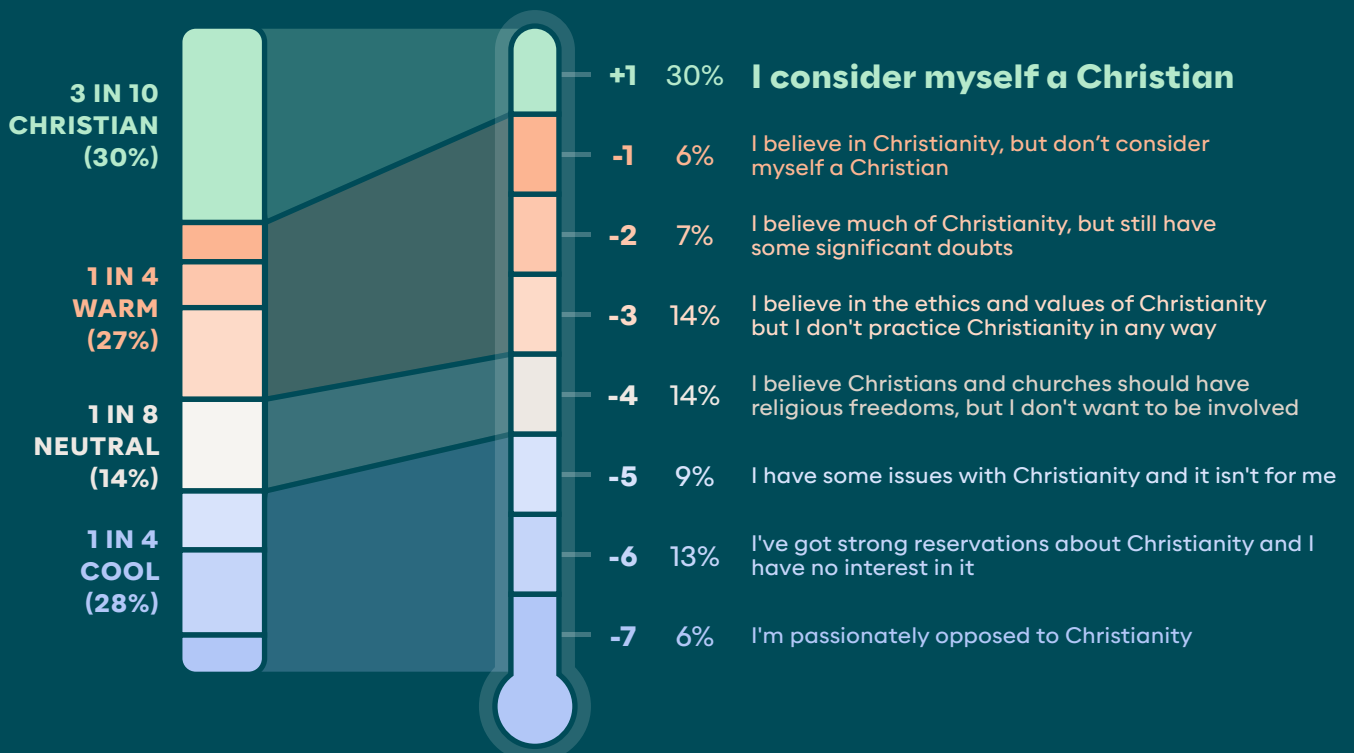
Australians vary in their attitudes towards Christianity. Three in ten consider themselves a Christian (30%), while 27% are warm to Christianity. Those who are warm to Christianity might believe in it but not consider themselves a Christian (6%), believe much of Christianity but still have some significant doubts (7%) or believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but don't practise it in any way (14%).

Three in ten Australians (28%), however, are cold to Christianity. Which means they are passionately opposed to Christianity (6%), have strong reservations about Christianity and have no interest in it (13%), or have some issues with it and Christianity isn't for them (9%).

Since 2017, the proportion of Australians considering themselves a Christian has decreased from 38% to 30% today. Those who are warm to Christianity have grown slightly (28% cf. 24% 2017), as has the proportion of those who are cold to Christianity (28% cf. 26% 2017). Largely, however, the landscape has remained similar to five years ago.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY?

McCrimdle Faith Barometer (based on the Engel Scale)





Younger Australians are allowing space for others to follow Christianity

Older Australians are more likely to consider themselves a Christian than their younger counterparts (56% Builders cf. 20% Gen Z). What is most interesting, however, is that while younger Australians may not be choosing to be Christians themselves, they are not all cold to Christianity.

Almost one in five Gen Z (17%) and Gen Y (18%) believe that Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms, but they don't want to be involved. So, while they aren't themselves choosing to follow, they believe in allowing space for others to do so.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHRISTIANITY



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

	Gen Z 18 - 27	Gen Y 28 - 42	Gen X 43 - 57	Boomers 58 - 76	Builders 77+
I consider myself a Christian	20%	23%	28%	40%	56%
Warm	32%	26%	29%	28%	22%
Neutral	17%	18%	13%	8%	9%
Cold	31%	33%	30%	24%	14%

Church abuse has the largest negative influence on Australians' perception of Christians and Christianity

While there is an openness to Christianity in Australia there are negative influences on Australians' perceptions of Christians and Christianity. The number one negative influence is church abuse – from priests abusing children to church leaders involved in scandals (74%), followed by hypocrisy – Christians not practising what they preach (66%), and judging others – Christians acting self-righteously and pointing out the faults in others and in society (63%). These are the top blockers across every generation and for non-religious Australians.

The Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality has a massive negative influence for young Australians

When exploring the generational differences that have a massive negative influence on their perception of Christians and Christianity, the area with the largest difference is LGBTQIA+ - the Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality. For almost half of Gen Z (45%) and two in five Gen Y (40%) this is a massive negative influence compared to less than three in ten Baby Boomers (28%).

Younger Australians are also more inclined to say the role of women and issues of gender inequality in Christianity, alongside the belief that the Church in its practises and beliefs is not aligned with the world today, are massive negative influences on their perceptions of Christianity. Interestingly, issues around money – asking for it and the misuse of it are more likely to be a massive negative influence for Baby Boomers.

MASSIVE NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON PERCEPTIONS OF CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY



Gen Z
18 - 27



Gen Y
28 - 42



Gen X
43 - 57



Boomers
58 - 76



Builders
77+

Difference

	Gen Z 18 - 27	Gen Y 28 - 42	Gen X 43 - 57	Boomers 58 - 76	Builders 77+	Difference
LGBTQIA+ – The Church's stance and teaching on homosexuality	45%	40%	35%	28%	26%	19
Issues around money – asking for money and misuse of money	26%	31%	31%	35%	20%	15
The role of women - I think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity	34%	29%	27%	27%	20%	14
The Church in its beliefs and practices is not aligned with the world today	31%	29%	29%	23%	17%	14

WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY, TO WHAT EXTENT DO THE FOLLOWING NEGATIVELY INFLUENCE YOUR PERCEPTIONS?

Massive/significant negative influence

Church abuse – From priests abusing children to church leaders involved in scandals

74%

Hypocrisy – Christians not practising what they preach

66%

Judging others - Christians acting self righteously and pointing out the faults in others and in society

63%

Religious wars – How could adherence to a true religion cause such violence, from the crusades of old to religious clashes today

61%

Issues around money – asking for money and misuse of money

59%

Authoritarian style – The church seem to apply a lot of rules and regulations

55%

LGBTQIA+ – The church's stance and teaching on homosexuality

55%

Exclusivity – The church seem to act separate from society and superior

54%

The role of women - I think there are issues of gender inequality in Christianity

53%

Outdated – The church in its beliefs and practices is not aligned with the world today

52%

Suffering – How could a good God allow so much evil and pain?

49%

Hell and condemnation – How could loving God allow people to go to hell?

49%

Science and evolution – How does science and Christianity fit together?

42%

The Bible – How reliable and valid is the Bible?

42%

Supernatural elements – Miracles, angels and demons, resurrection

39%



This is the options generation, with unlimited pathways but we do them no favours if we set them up with endless opportunities, yet no purpose.

Perceptions of Jesus and Christians

Knowledge of Jesus across Australia is strong, with nine in ten (90%) knowing at least a few things about his life. Just 4% of Australians have never heard of Jesus.

With a cultural shift away from Christianity over the past few decades, it is younger Australians who are the most likely to have never heard of Jesus (6% Gen Z, 5% Gen Y, 5% Gen X, 1% Baby Boomers, 1% Builders). Builders, meanwhile, are the most likely to say they know a significant amount about Jesus' life (54% Builders cf. 44% Baby Boomers, 41% Gen X, 37% Gen Y, 33% Gen Z).



90% OF AUSTRALIANS HAVE HEARD OF JESUS AND KNOW AT LEAST A FEW THINGS ABOUT HIS LIFE

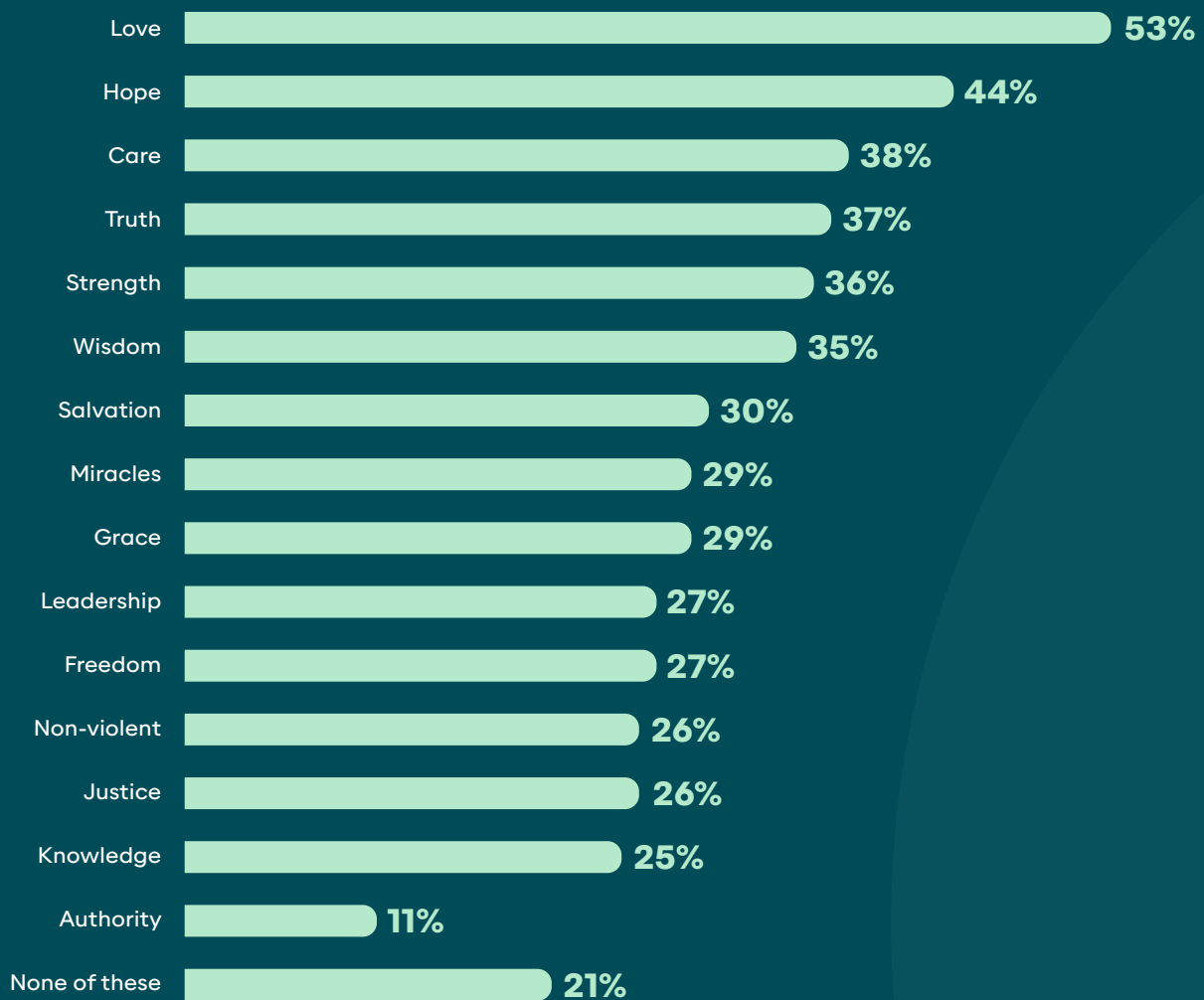




Love is the attribute of Jesus that Australians connect with most

The attribute of Jesus that Australians most connect with is love (53%), followed by hope (44%) and care (38%). Truth (37%), strength (36%) and wisdom (35%) are also key attributes of Jesus Australians connect with.

WHAT ASPECTS AND ATTRIBUTES OF JESUS' LIFE DO YOU MOST CONNECT WITH IN A POSITIVE WAY?



Australians use the same attributes of Jesus to describe Christians

The attributes of Jesus Australians most connect with, are also what they use to describe the Christians that they know. Almost nine in ten Australians (89%) know at least one Christian. While this is positive, it does mean that 2.2 million Australians do not know any Christians. Gen X are the most likely to fall into this category with more than one in six Gen X (16%) not knowing any Christians.

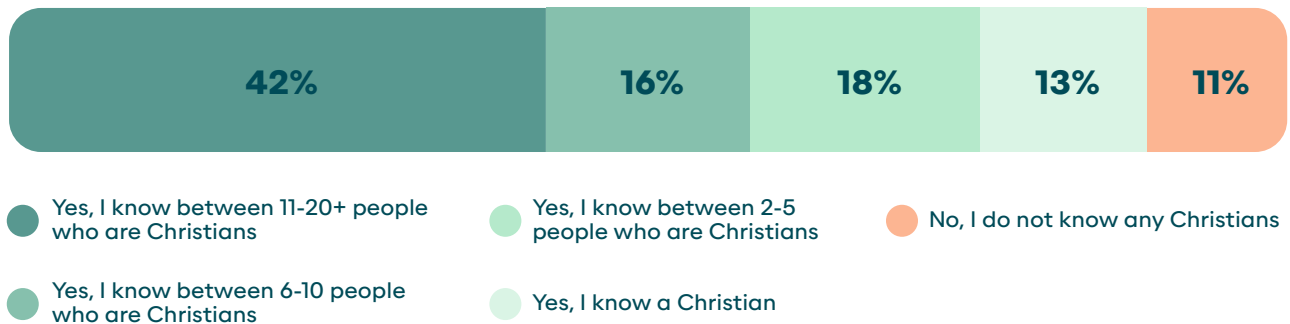
Christians are seen as caring, kind and loving

For Australians who know at least one Christian, they are most likely to describe them as caring (53%), kind (50%) and loving (46%). From the list of 20 characteristics provided the first 10 Australians use to describe Christians are positive, while the bottom 10 are negative. This highlights that Australians' overall experience of the Christians they know is more likely to be positive than negative.

While it is helpful to understand the perspective of Australians overall, it is also helpful to understand the experience of non-religious Australians. The top five words Australians identifying with no-religion use to describe the Christians they know are caring (39%), kind (35%), old-fashioned (32%), faithful (31%) and loving (28%). While this is a largely positive experience, it does begin to shift to judgemental (25%) (6th place compared to 12th overall), honest (24%), hypocritical (24%) and opinionated (23%).

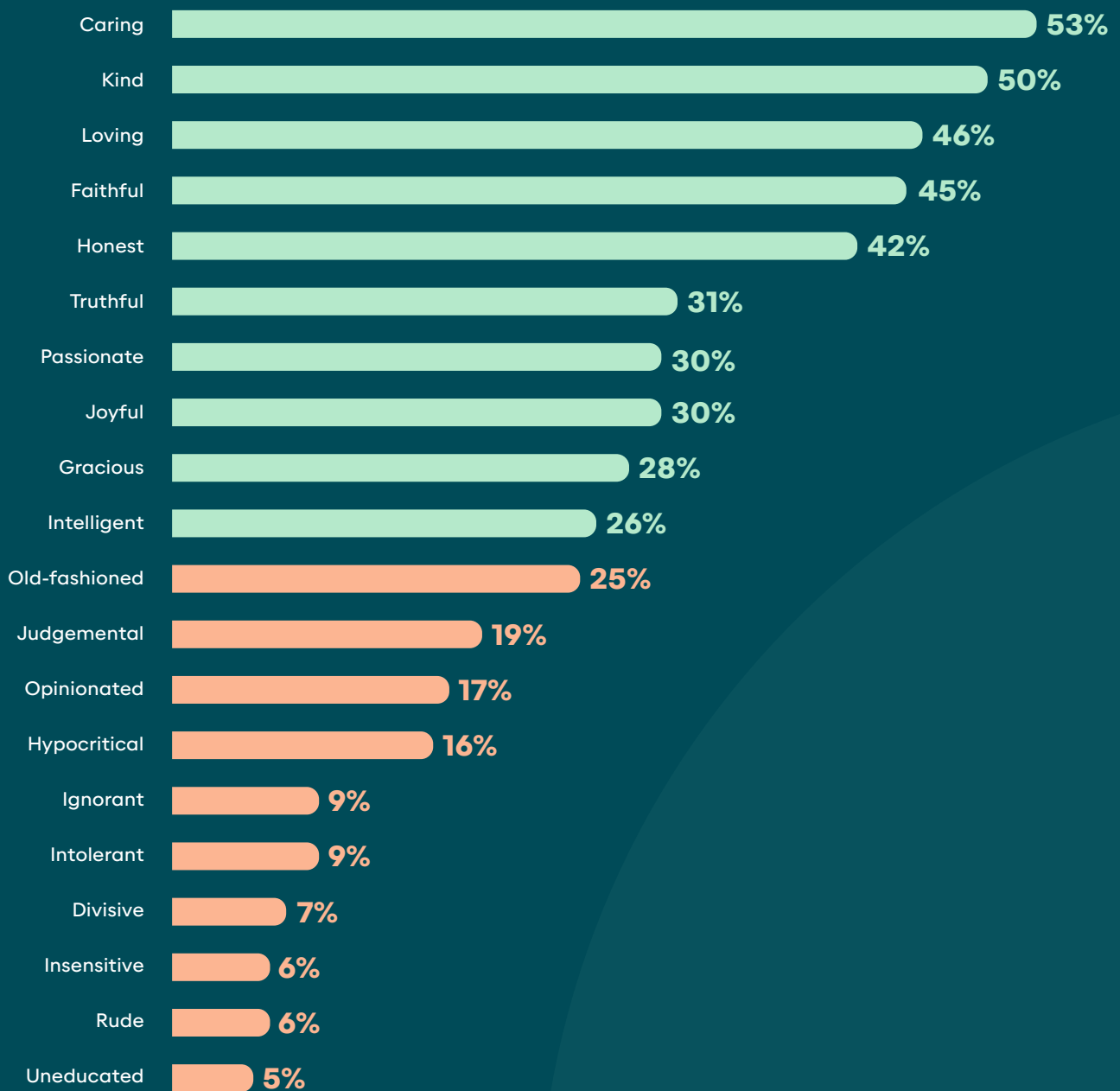


DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?



HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CHRISTIANS YOU KNOW?

Australians who know a Christian (n = 1,797)



The value of the Church in Australia

Australians have a greater knowledge of Jesus than they do of the Church. Almost seven in ten Australians (68%) know a significant or moderate amount about Jesus' life compared to just one in four (24%) who know a great deal or a lot about the Church in Australia. Three in ten (30%) know a moderate amount about the Church in Australia, while one in four (25%) know a little. This highlights an opportunity for better communicating the work of the Church across Australia. Particularly with one in five Australians (22%) knowing nothing at all about the Church in Australia.



AUSTRALIANS KNOW MORE ABOUT JESUS THAN THEY DO ABOUT THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Australians value the work churches do to look after the homeless

While not all Australians know a lot about the Church, they do value the work of the Church and Christian organisations in Australian society. Australians most value the work of the Church and Christian organisations in looking after people that are homeless (75%), offering financial assistance/food relief programs (73%) and providing aged care facilities (71%). Almost two thirds of Australians value the work to abolish modern slavery (64%), meeting practical needs of refugees (64%), youth and children's work (63%) and chaplaincy (62%).

HOW MUCH DO YOU VALUE THE WORK OF THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN ORGANISATIONS IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

Highly/somewhat value





Opportunity to educate Australians on the local church

Australians have a similar level of understanding about their local church as they do of the broader church. One in five Australians know their local church extremely or very well (19%), while almost three in ten (28%) know it moderately or slightly well. For more than half of Australians (53%), however they do not know their local church well at all.

When asked about the impact of the churches in their local area, almost two in five Australians didn't know well enough to answer (38%). For more than a third (35%) the impact has been positive, while for one in five (21%) it has been neither positive nor negative.

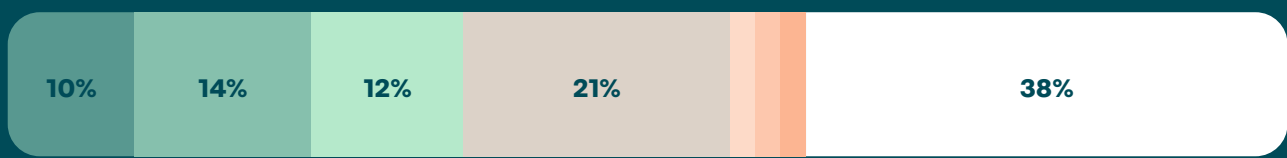
Contrary to perceptions that Australians are against the Church, just 5% of Australians believe the impact of the churches in their local area has been negative. With perception largely being positive or unknown this highlights the opportunity for churches to better tell the story of the work they are doing and the impact they are having in their local community.



53%

MORE THAN HALF OF AUSTRALIANS (53%) DO NOT KNOW THEIR LOCAL CHURCH WELL AT ALL

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE CHURCHES IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?



- 10% - Extremely positive
- 14% - Somewhat positive
- 12% - Slightly positive
- 21% - Neither positive nor negative
- 2% - Slightly negative
- 2% - Somewhat negative
- 38% - I don't know well enough to answer

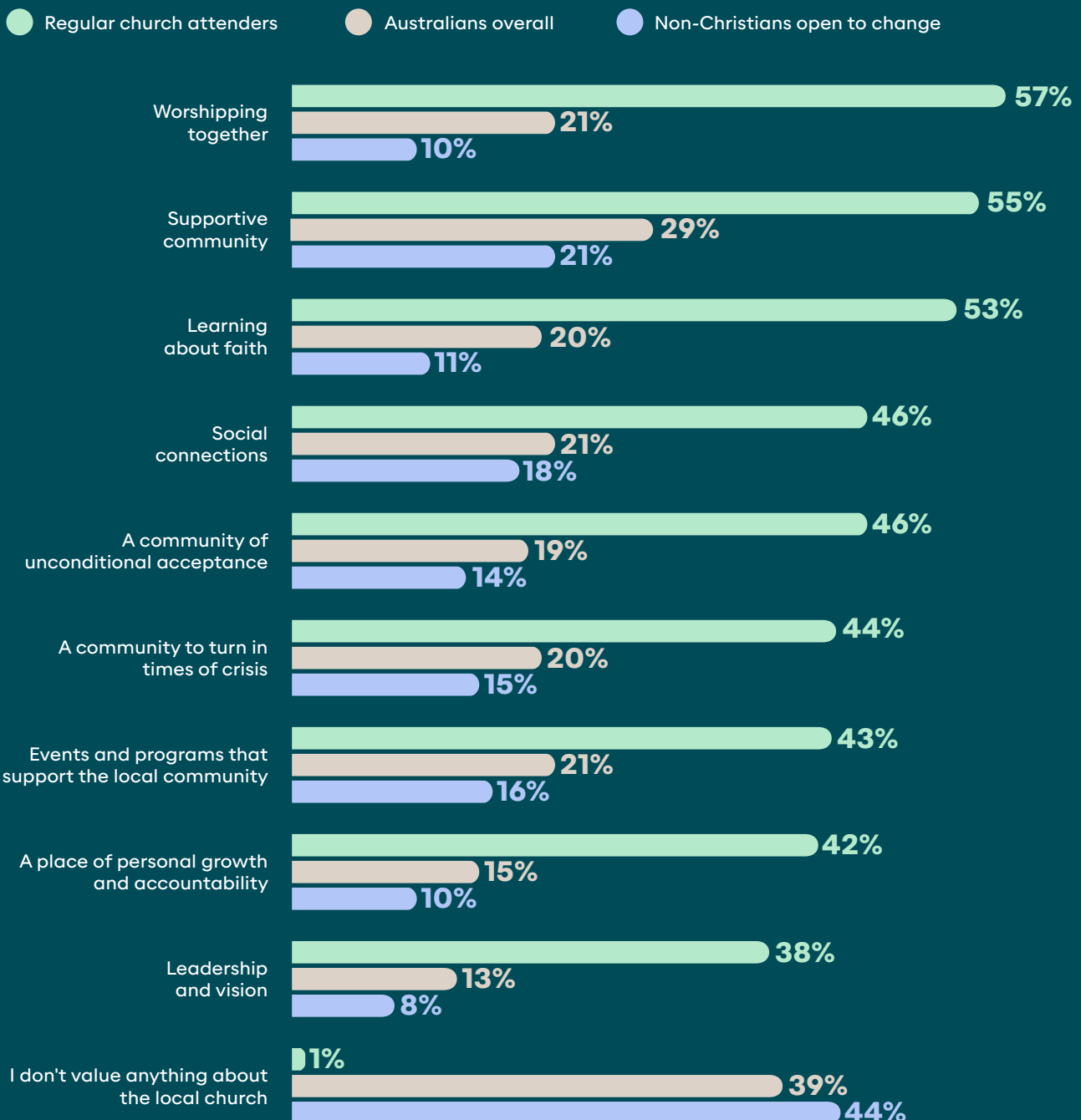
Supportive community connections are most valued

Australians most value the supportive community of the local church (29%) followed by the social connections (21%) and the events and programs that support the local community (21%). One in five also value worshipping together (21%), learning about faith (20%) and having a community to turn to in times of crisis (20%). To a lesser degree it is about leadership

and vision (13%) and a place of personal growth and accountability (15%).

The aspects that regular church goers value most about the local church is worshipping together (57%), the supportive community (55%) and learning about faith (53%).

WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT THE LOCAL CHURCH?





Personal invitations to church are effective

More than two in three Australians (68%) would be at least slightly likely to attend a Christian church service or event if they were personally invited by a friend or family member. With almost three in ten Australians (29%) being extremely or very likely to attend.

Positively, two in five (44%) non-religious Australians would be at least slightly likely to attend a Christian church service if personally invited by a friend or family member.

The key reasons non-religious Australians would be at least slightly likely to accept an invitation would be out of curiosity or to support the person who is asking

them and to honour the friendship. One non-religious Australian expressed it as, 'If it was for a friend/family member, I would go out of respect to that person not for his/her religion'. This highlights the importance of personal relationships when it comes to inviting friends or family members to a church service or event.

Non-religious Australians who said they would turn down an invitation gave reasons including not being interested or feeling like it would be hypocritical to go considering their beliefs don't align. A small proportion felt they would not be accepted because of their sexual orientation.

IF YOU WERE PERSONALLY INVITED BY A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER TO ATTEND A CHRISTIAN CHURCH SERVICE OR EVENT, HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT YOU WOULD ATTEND?



● Extremely likely ● Very likely ● Somewhat likely ● Slightly likely ● Not at all likely

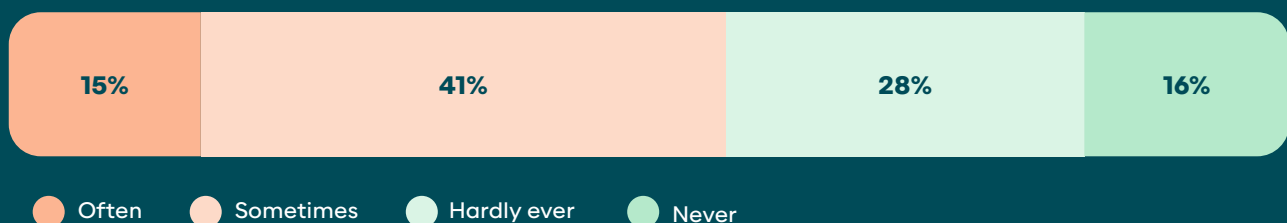
Building thriving communities



Churches have a unique opportunity to provide a sense of community, connection and care across Australia. With this in mind, how do churches build thriving communities? This is particularly important because more than half of Australians (56%) often or sometimes feel lonely.

Younger Australians are the most likely to feel lonely, with three quarters of Gen Z (75%) often or sometimes feeling lonely. Almost seven in ten Gen Y (68%) and three in five Gen X (58%) feel the same. Baby Boomers (38%) and Builders (26%), however, are much less likely to often or sometimes feel lonely.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU FEEL LONELY?



Fun and laughter set flourishing communities apart

An important aspect of flourishing communities is that people are able to experience joy. When Australians reflect on flourishing communities they have been a part of, the number one experience they have had is laughing often and having fun together (51%). These flourishing communities also had an ease of conversation (49%) and were spaces that were inclusive and accepting of others (44%). Australians also felt seen, known and valued (40%) in these communities and said they were characterised by generosity (40%). Sadly, almost one in five Australians (17%) have never felt part of a flourishing community.

Interestingly, while older Australians are less likely to feel lonely, Baby Boomers (23%) and Gen X (22%) are more likely than Builders (14%), Gen Y (12%) or Gen Z (9%) to have never felt part of a flourishing community.



BABY BOOMERS (23%) AND GEN X (22%) ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO HAVE NEVER FELT PART OF A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY.

Older Australians are also slightly different in their experience of a flourishing community with ease of conversation being a higher priority for them above laughing often and having fun together.

TOP THREE EXPERIENCES OF FLOURISHING COMMUNITY



Gen Z
18 - 27

58%
Laughing often and having fun together

49%
Feeling seen, known and valued

47%
Inclusive and accepting of others



Gen Y
28 - 42

51%
Laughing often and having fun together

47%
Ease of conversation

45%
Inclusive and accepting of others



Gen X
43 - 57

44%
Laughing often and having fun together

44%
Ease of conversation

37%
Inclusive and accepting of others



Baby Boomers
58 - 76

55%
Ease of conversation

50%
Laughing often and having fun together

46%
Inclusive and accepting of others



Builders
77+

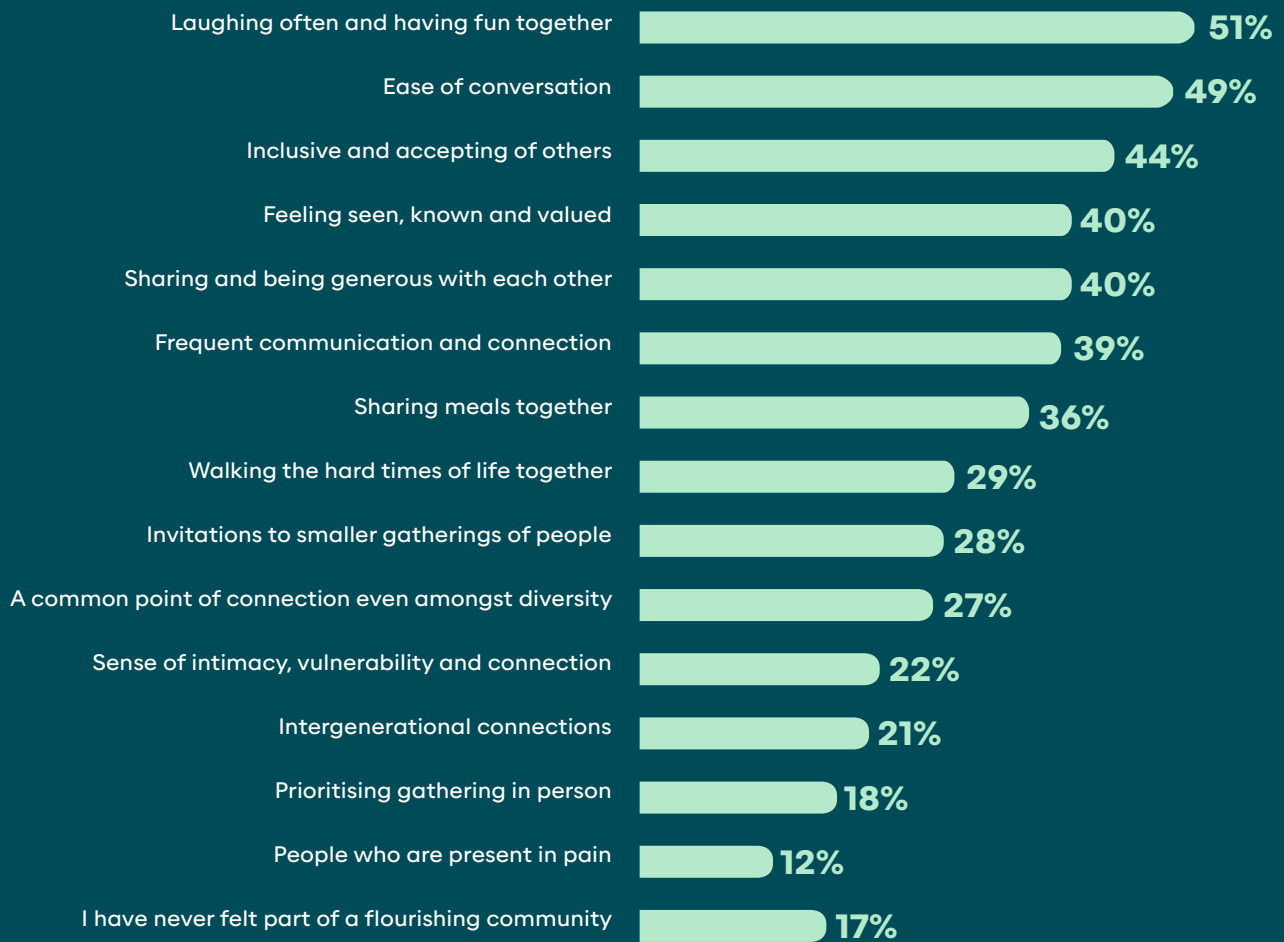
70%
Ease of conversation

61%
Laughing often and having fun together

52%
Inclusive and accepting of others



WHEN THINKING ABOUT A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY THAT YOU HAVE BEEN A PART OF, WHAT DID YOU EXPERIENCE?



Feeling too busy to connect is the greatest barrier to forming community

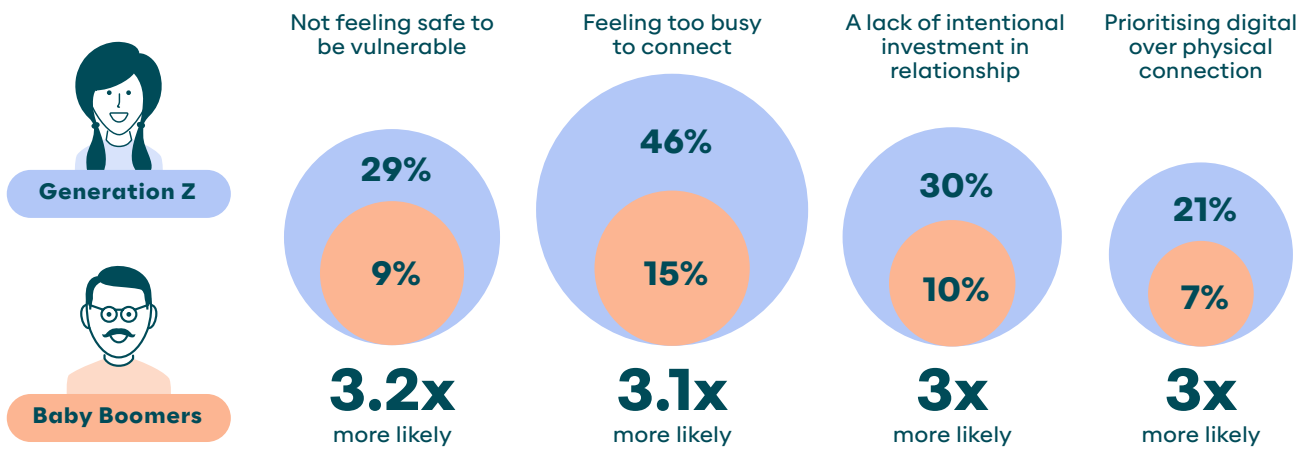
When it comes to Australians forming community, the largest barrier is feeling too busy to connect (32%), followed by not feeling accepted (27%) and cliques (26%).

Positively, for a quarter of Australians (26%) they haven't experienced any barriers to forming community with others. This is much more likely to be for older Australians with almost three in five Builders

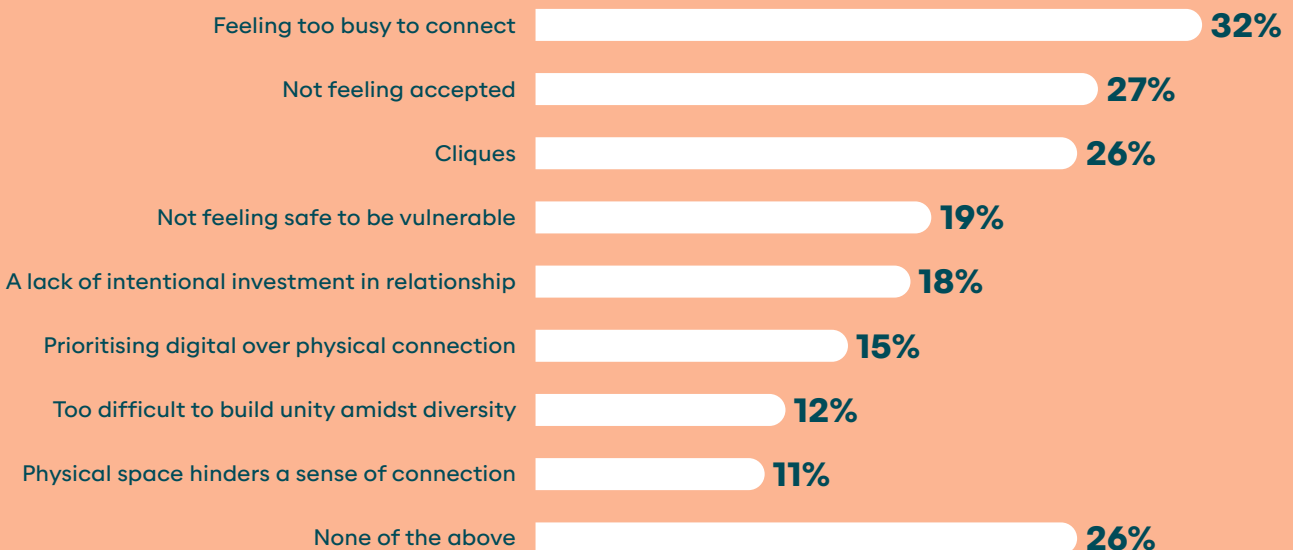
(57%) not experiencing barriers to forming community whereas just 7% of Gen Z feel the same (11% Gen Y, 27% Gen X, 45% Baby Boomers).

Gen Z are 3.2x as likely as Baby Boomers to highlight not feeling safe to be vulnerable as a barrier to forming community. They are also 3.1x as likely to feel too busy to connect.

BARRIERS TO FORMING COMMUNITY



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN A BARRIER FOR YOU IN FORMING COMMUNITY WITH OTHERS?



Intergenerational connections are vital to healthy communities

Churches are one of the few remaining intergenerational gathering points in Australian society. While historically there has been a shift to focusing on the nuclear family, Australians are increasingly recognising the importance of community. In fact, two thirds of Australians (67%) strongly or somewhat agree a healthy community is one with strong intergenerational connections. Regular church attenders even more so recognise the power of an intergenerational community, with three in four (75%) strongly or somewhat agreeing a healthy community is one with strong intergenerational connections.

Church is a space that can help facilitate these intergenerational connections. Currently three in five regular church attenders (61%) strongly/somewhat agree they have strong connections with others outside of their own age group compared to two in five non-religious Australians (44%).

There is an opportunity to do more, however, with regular church attenders looking for investment from those older than them. More than two in five regular church attenders (41%) strongly/somewhat agree they would like to be intentionally mentored by someone older than them, compared to 25% of Australians overall. Similarly, regular church attenders (48%) are more likely than Australians overall (30%) to strongly/somewhat agree they would like the opportunity to intentionally mentor someone younger than them.

It is a good question for faith leaders to ask themselves of how they can more effectively create an environment that facilitates intergenerational connections rather than age and stage silos.



75% OF REGULAR CHURCH ATTENDERS STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT AGREE A HEALTHY COMMUNITY IS ONE WITH STRONG INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS



A community's strength flows from its stories and traditions, while its future rests in its relevance and innovation.

Key considerations for leaders

In light of all of this information, what is important for faith leaders to take away and consider? Firstly, the religious landscape of Australia is not as negative towards Christianity as it sometimes may feel. While the proportion of Christians may be declining, those who are cold to Christianity are not growing significantly. If anything, the proportion of those neutral to Christianity and believe in creating space for religious freedoms is growing.

There are still significant opportunities for faith leaders in Australia to engage with Australians around faith and Christianity. It is important, however, to keep in mind the generational nuances.

Meet the generations where they are at

While it is true that younger generations are less likely to be engaged with Christianity and the Church than older generations, it is also true that younger Australians are more likely to believe faith and religion can be publicly discussed and creating space for others to hold their perspectives. Older Australians, however, are more likely to consider faith and religion to be something private and individual. As Australia's generational mix continues to shift, understanding these generational nuances and meeting the different generations where they are at will be essential to engaging future generations.

Invest in building trust and relationships

Although less people are identifying with Christianity than years prior, there is still an openness to engaging with faith and church. An important part of this is for people who do not believe, to see firsthand those in their life who live out a genuine faith. Trust is built where there is connection, so investing in relationships and creating healthy communities are key.

Tell your story

As the cultural narrative shifts away from Christian values and foundations, it is more important than ever for faith leaders to be telling the story of their positive impacts. Two in five Australians don't know enough about the Church in their local area to rate if it is having a positive impact. Being present, building community and doing everything from a place of love is a great way to connect with those in your community.



How we can help

Get a demographic snapshot of your community

As you can see we love using data to better understand the world around us. Big reports like this are great for understanding the big picture trends, but there's a lot more to explore within your specific communities.

Our demographic snapshot infographics are a great resource to understand your community and discover what makes it unique. Great to use with leadership teams for strategic decision making and planning ministry initiatives.

In a community infographic you'll get key insights on:

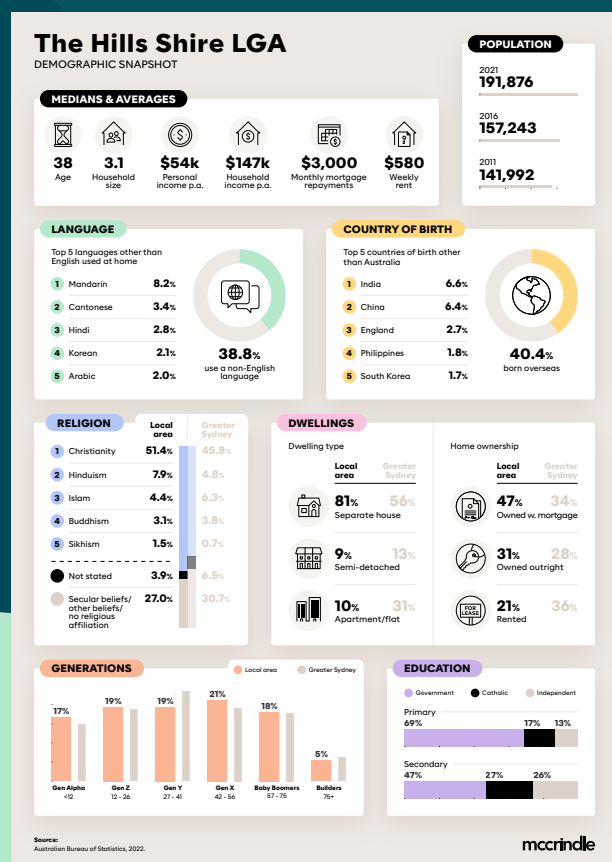
- Local population size
- Average household income, size and age
- Cultural diversity
- Religion
- Generational breakdown

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Just email info@mccrindle.com
or call 1800 873 637

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Visual data at a low price

Get your infographic starting at just \$990+GST with these variables, if you want additional data included we'd love to explore your ideas and discuss a custom infographic for your community!



Research methodology



The Changing faith landscape of Australia report is the collation of quantitative data collected in a nationally representative survey of 2,008 Australians aged 18+. The survey was in field from the 19th to the 30th of August 2022. Throughout this report, these respondents are referred to as 'Australians'.

Graphs and rounding

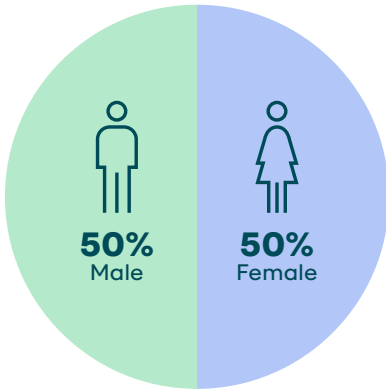
Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded and may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels on the graph) which have then been rounded once combined.

References

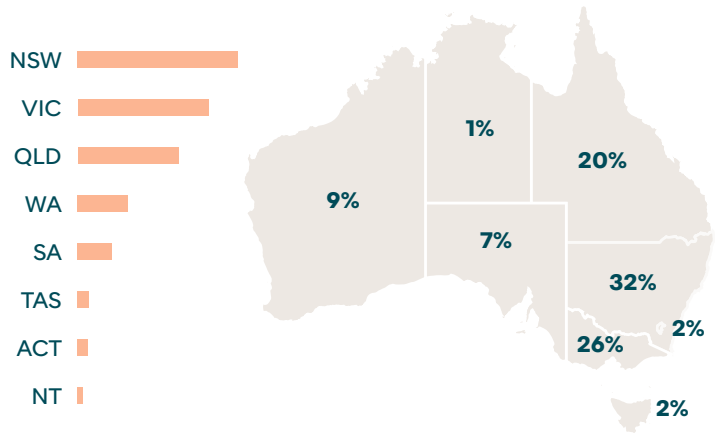
- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, 2021
- 2 McCrindle, Faith and Belief in Australia, 2017

Demographics

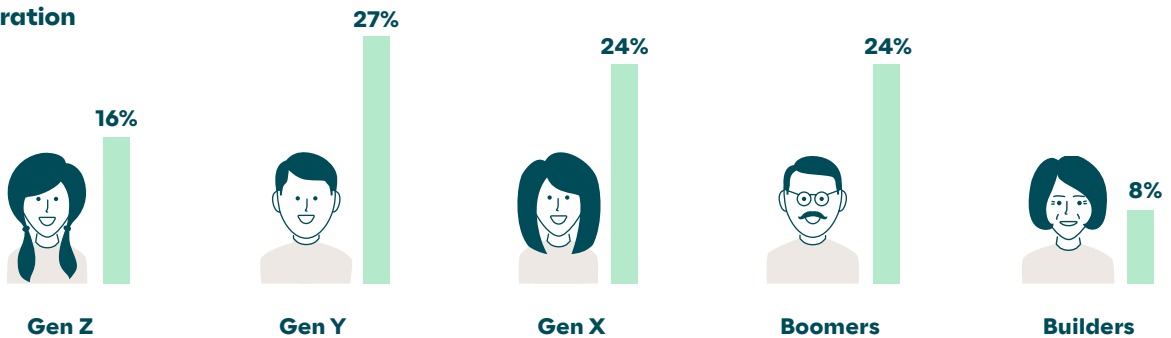
Please select your gender



Where do you usually live?



Generation



Religious segmentation

	Count	%
Australians identifying with Christianity	932	46%
Spiritual but not religious	268	13%
Other main religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism)	113	6%
Australians identifying with no-religion (non-religious)	665	33%

Church attendance

Regular church attenders
(Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly)

34%

of Australians identifying with
Christianity (n = 317)

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