



AUSTRALIANS AND CHURCH

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NCLS Research

Connecting with Your Community

What do the Census figures tell you about your local area?

Use a *Community Connections Pack* to understand the people in your local area and find ways to connect in ministry and mission.



Church Health and Vitality

What do the experiences, hopes and opinions of your church attenders reveal?

Use a *Church Life Survey* to get a picture of the health of your church with practical ways to move forward, whatever your circumstances.



Effective and Sustainable Leadership

How effective and sustainable are the leadership practices at your church?

Use the NCLS *Lead With Your Strengths* resources and our sustainable leadership material to build effective leadership and thrive in ministry.



NCLS Research

Resources for churches to **nurture life and health**



**For God so
loved the world....**

**Love God. Love your
neighbour as you love
yourself.**

Relationship Status'



It's Complicated ↕

1. IT'S COMPLICATED

The relationship between church and community

IS RELIGION 'GOOD FOR SOCIETY'? (Nov 2019)



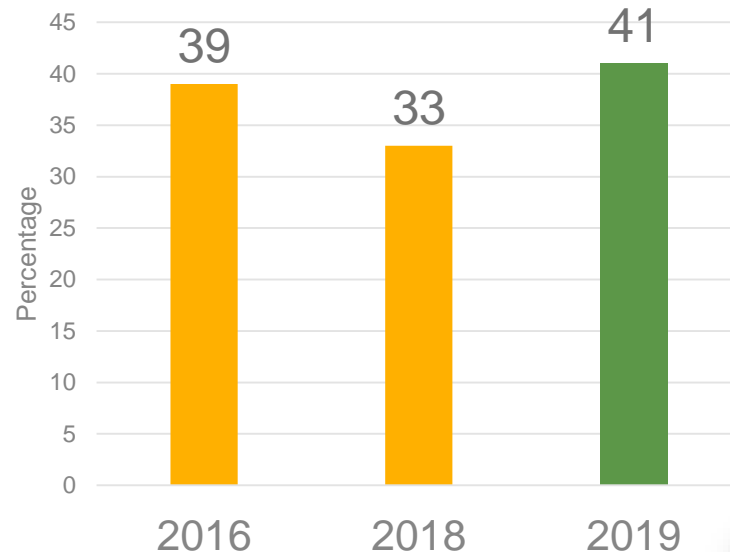
Four in 10 (41%) agree religion is good for society



36% are neutral or unsure.
23% disagree



Strongly agree/agree religion is good for society: 2016, 2018 and 2019



Source: 2016, 2018 and 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n~1,200)

VIEWS OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS & PEOPLE



Confidence in institutions

Some/a great deal/ complete

Schools & education **80%**

Business & industry **72%**

Courts & legal system **61%**

Federal Parliament **42%**

Churches **37%**

“Do you think that churches and religious organisations in this country have too much power or too little power?”

Too much/far too much power **51%**

“Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections”

Strongly agree **64%**

“I have my own way of connecting with God without churches or religious services”

Agree/strongly agree **40%**

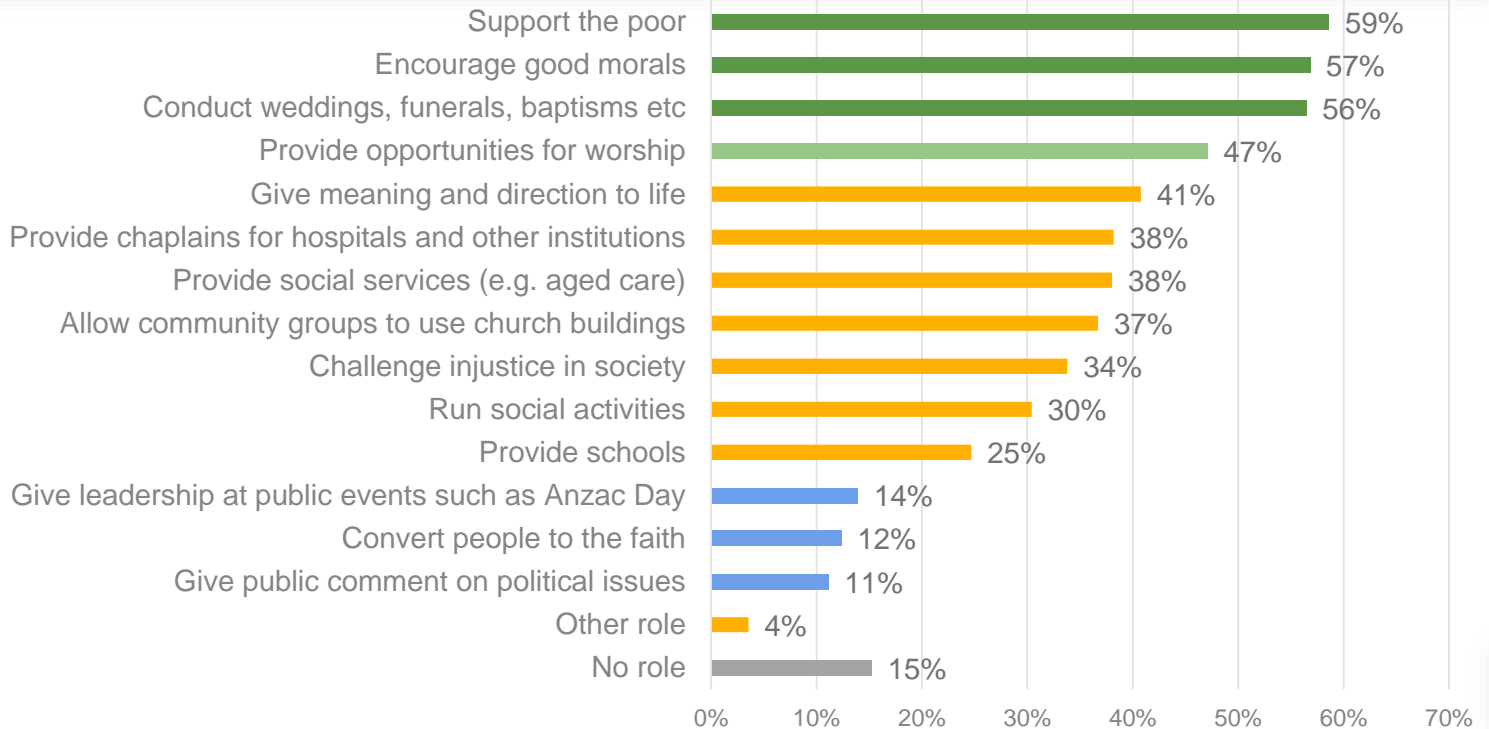
“What is your personal attitude towards members of the following religious groups? – Christians”

Positive or neutral 88%

[Very positive 27%, Somewhat positive 30%,
Neither positive nor negative 31%]

Source: 2018 AUSSA (n=1,260)

ROLE FOR CHURCHES IN SOCIETY (Nov 2019)



Source: 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,272)

An aerial view of a large crowd of people, many wearing colorful clothing, forming a large, irregular shape. The crowd is dense in the center and tapers towards the edges. The background is a plain, light-colored surface. A bright yellow banner is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text.

2. STAND IN THEIR SHOES

Where you stand determines what you see



**Australians are
moderately
religious or
spiritual**

RELIGIOUSNESS INDICATORS (Nov 2019)



22% attend services frequently



32% pray or meditate



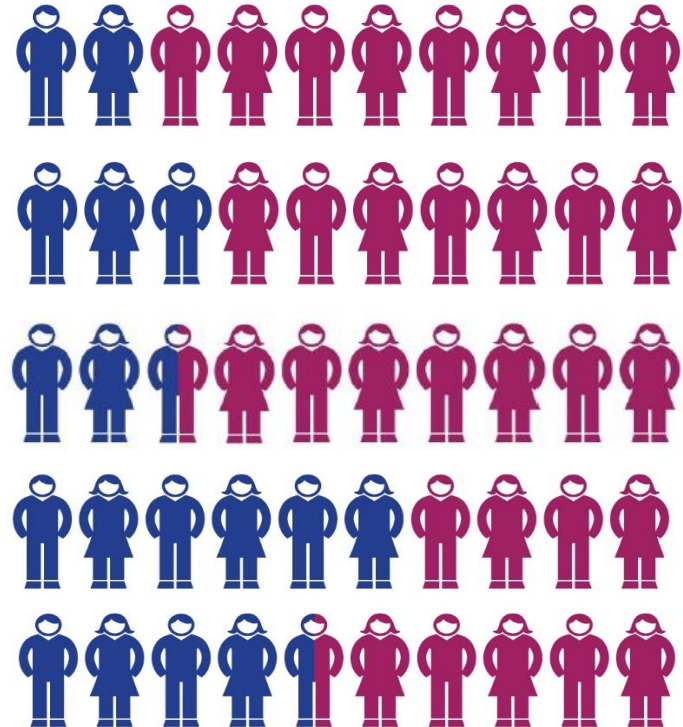
28% had mystical experiences



61% belief in God/higher power



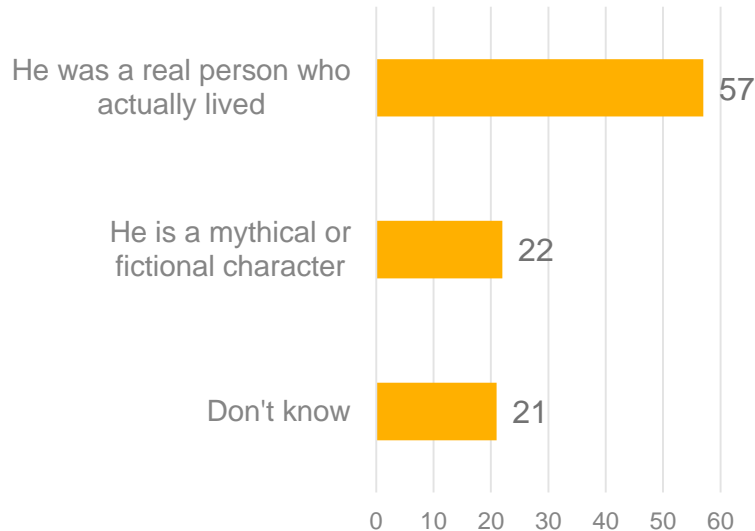
45% say faith or spirituality is important in life decisions



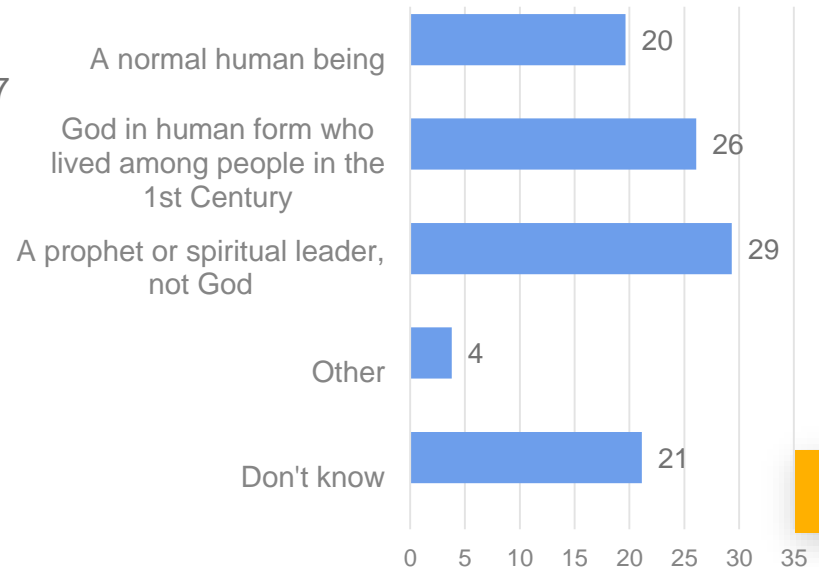
Source: 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,272)

WHAT ABOUT JESUS? (Nov 2019)

Which of the following statements best reflects your understanding of Jesus Christ?



Which, if any, of the following statements reflect your beliefs about Jesus Christ?



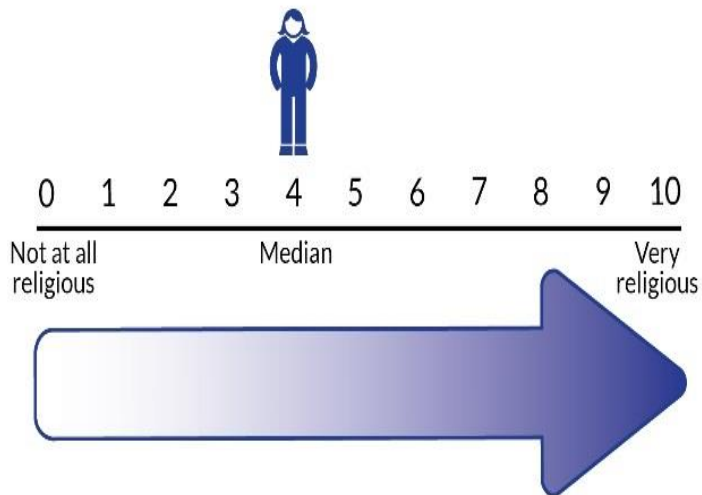
Source: 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,272)

RELIGIOUS? SPIRITUAL? BOTH? NEITHER?



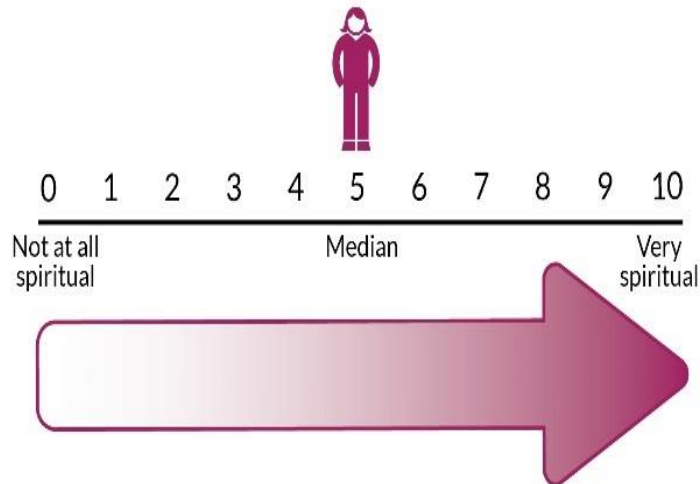
Religious?

To what extent do you see yourself as a religious person?



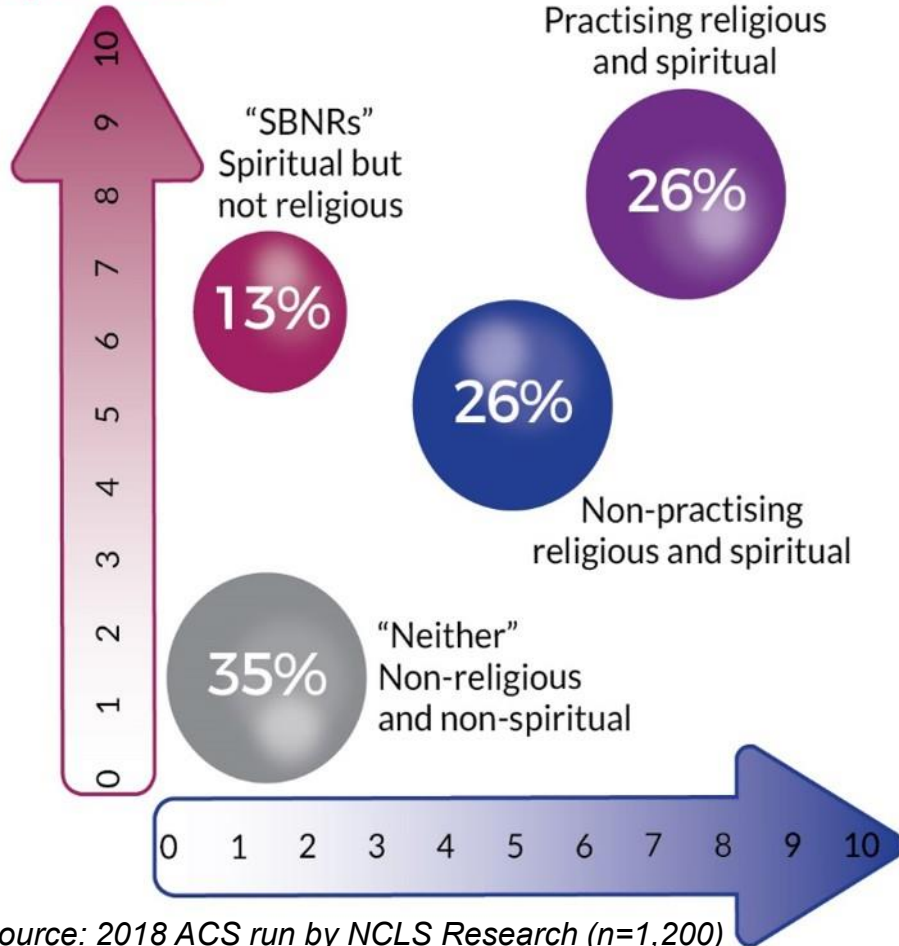
Spiritual?

To what extent do you see yourself as a spiritual person?



Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)

Spiritual



Four approaches

- Neither
- 'SBNR'
- Practising
- Non-practising

Religious

Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)

**CLUES FROM AUSTRALIANS
TO HELP CHURCHES CONNECT**

A large crowd of people, seen from an aerial perspective, is gathered to form a large, irregular shape. The individuals are densely packed in the center and more sparse towards the edges. The crowd is composed of people of various ages and ethnicities, represented by a wide range of colors. The background is a plain, light-colored surface. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a bright yellow rectangular banner with the text "CLUE 1: MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

CLUE 1: MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



The research shows **positive links** between having **at least one close contact** and:

- Being **attracted**, rather than repelled by actions by Christians
- Being **open** to an invitation to attend a Christian event
- **Attending** church services and other events



CLUE 2: TRY INVITING THEM

INVITING IS KEY FOR NEWCOMERS



Wider sociological research confirms it

Inviting outsiders to activities by friends and relatives is the most common way in which people join religious groups.

Australian newcomers confirm it

For newcomers to Australian churches, influential factors in their decision to start attending a new church were knowing people who already attended there or being invited by someone.



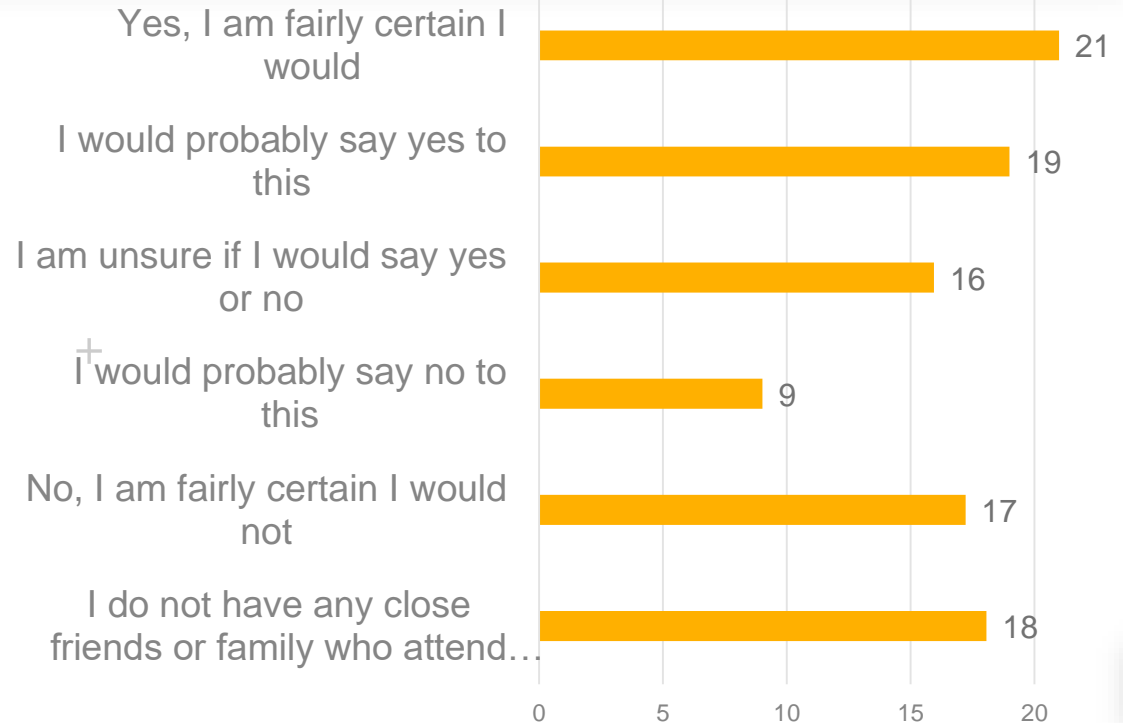
Would Australians go to church if invited by close friends and family? (Nov 2019)



**40% say
'yes'**

**16% are not
sure**

**26% say
'no'**



Source: 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,272)

MOST COMMON REASONS FOR A 'YES'



Relationships

To support or affirm their friend or family member.

"I would attend because it is important to the person who invited you, otherwise they wouldn't have invited you."

Connection

Appreciated the idea of connecting with other people at church

"It's a nice social experience if you go to church and mingle with and get to know other people."

Curiosity

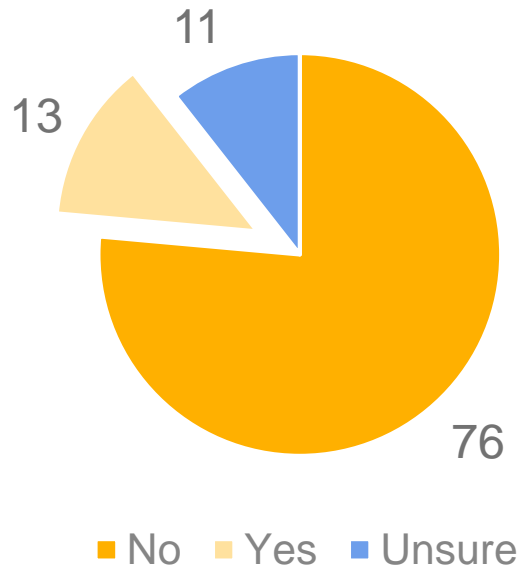
Curious about attending, or open to trying something new or different.

"I would accept as I like to be open minded."

Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)

SOME HAVE TRIED AND DECIDED AGAINST IT

Within the last five years, have you ever gone to a Christian church and been open to getting involved, but decided not to get involved?

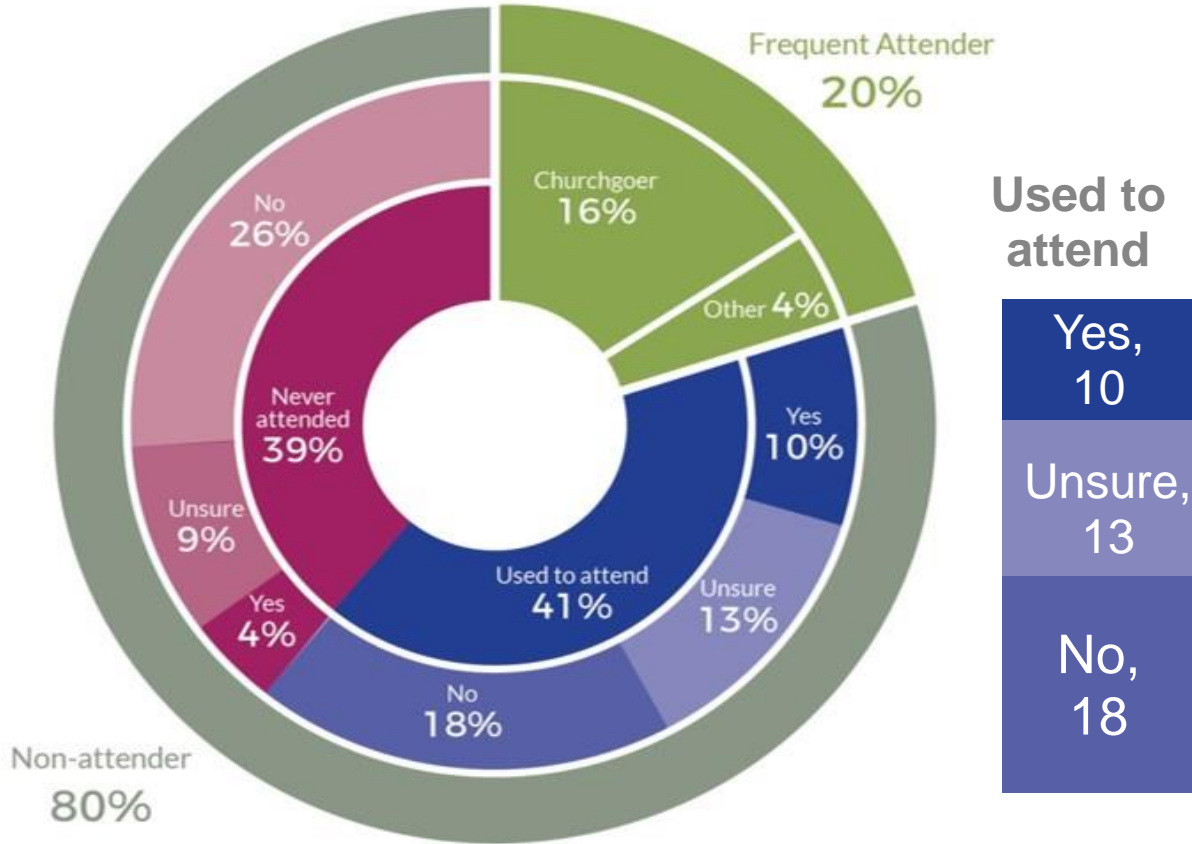


Source: 2019 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,272)

You are
invited

**CLUE 3: INVITE PEOPLE
WHO USED TO ATTEND**

Figure: Would accept an invitation to church



People who used to attend (41%) are more likely be open to an invitation (10%).

Used to attend

Yes, 10
Unsure, 13
No, 18

Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)



**CLUE 4: HAVE FUN WITH
FRIENDS, FOOD AND MUSIC**

ATTENDANCE IS LINKED WITH CLOSE CONTACT

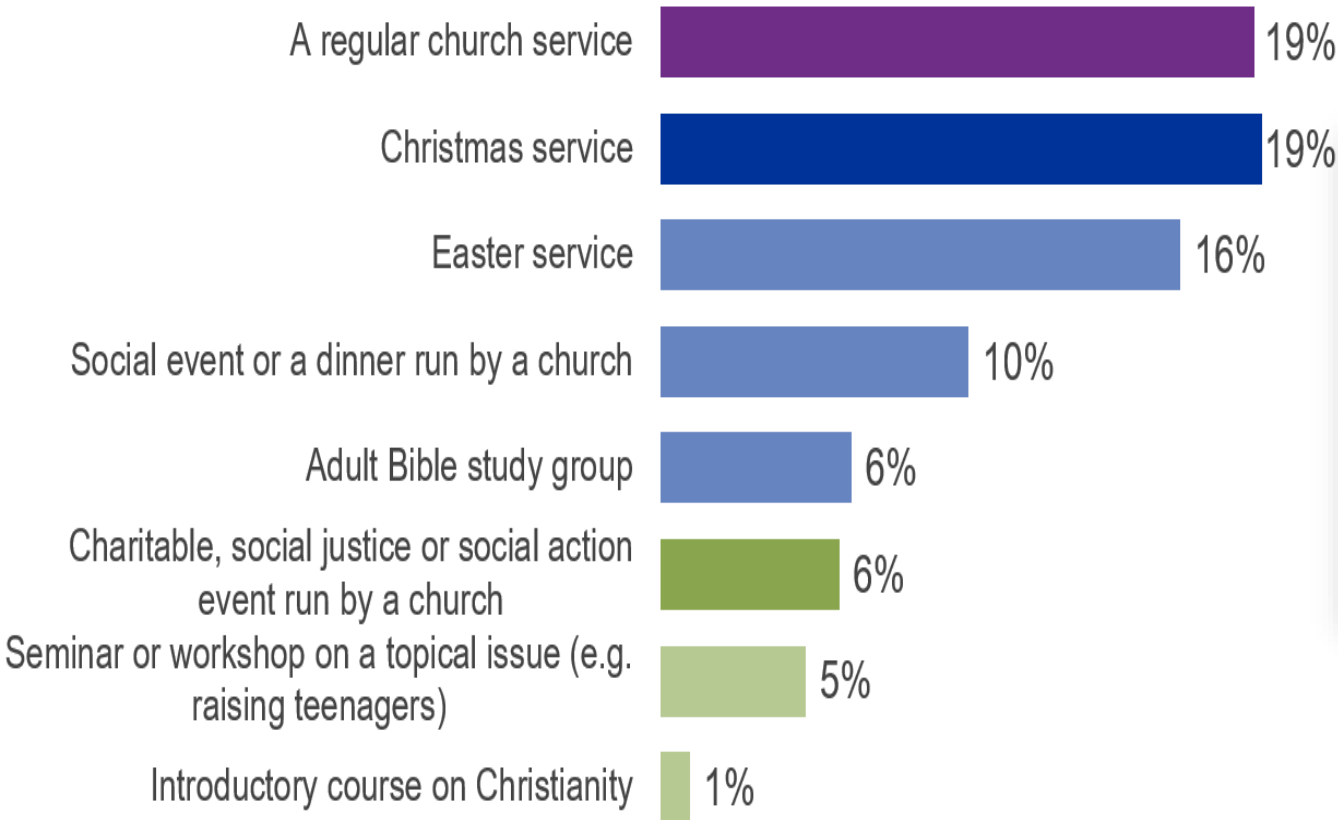


In the previous 12 months...

33% of Australians went to a church event

73% of Australians with **at least one close contact** went to a church event

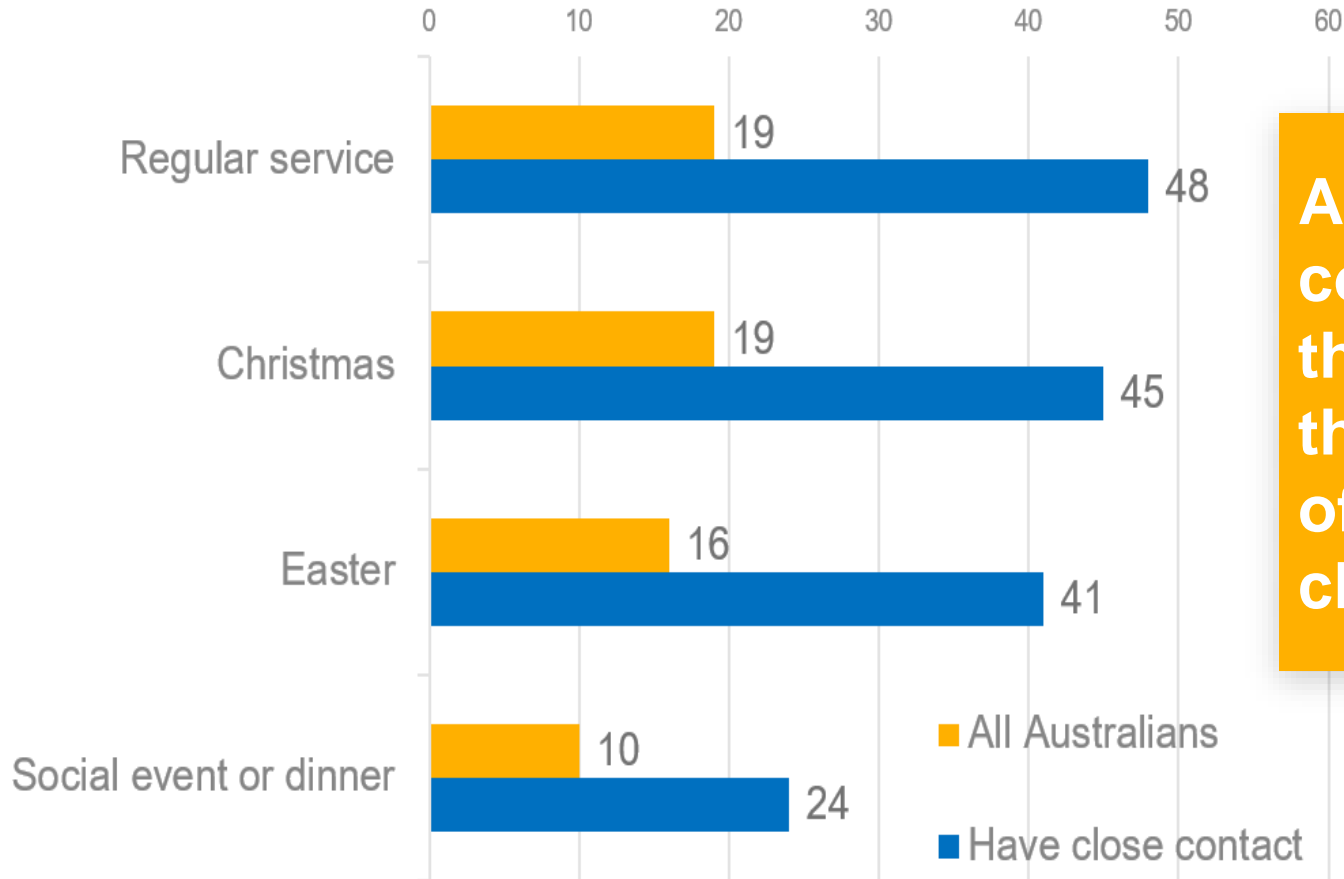
Figure: Attendance at events in preceding 12 months



Regular church services, Christmas, and Easter were most common

Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)

Figure: Attendance at events in preceding 12 months



A close contact more than doubles the likelihood of attending a church event

Source: 2018 ACS run by NCLS Research (n=1,200)

WHAT TYPES OF CHURCH EVENT WOULD AUSTRALIANS ATTEND?



- 1 Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals, etc., would you go to a **regular Christian church service** if invited by close friends or family?
- 2 Would you go to a **musical event hosted by a local church**, if invited by close friends or family?
- 3 And would you go to a **meal hosted by a local church**, if invited by close friends or family?



Multicultural Dinner

Daley Vale Anglican Community Church and Multicultural Township invite you and your family to a multicultural dinner at Daley Vale.



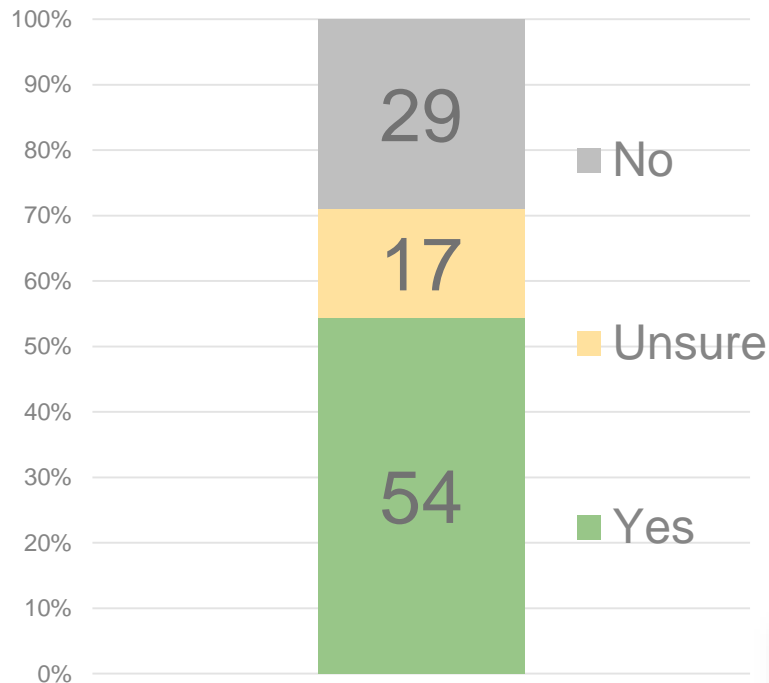
LOCATION

St Augustine's Anglican Church
Cnr Llewelyn and Winsor St, Merewether
RSVP Sunday June 30

CONTACT US



54% WOULD GO TO A MEAL IF INVITED



Church Dinner Celebrating Easter

Thursday, April 2nd
at 6:30 pm
Everyone bring a plate to share.



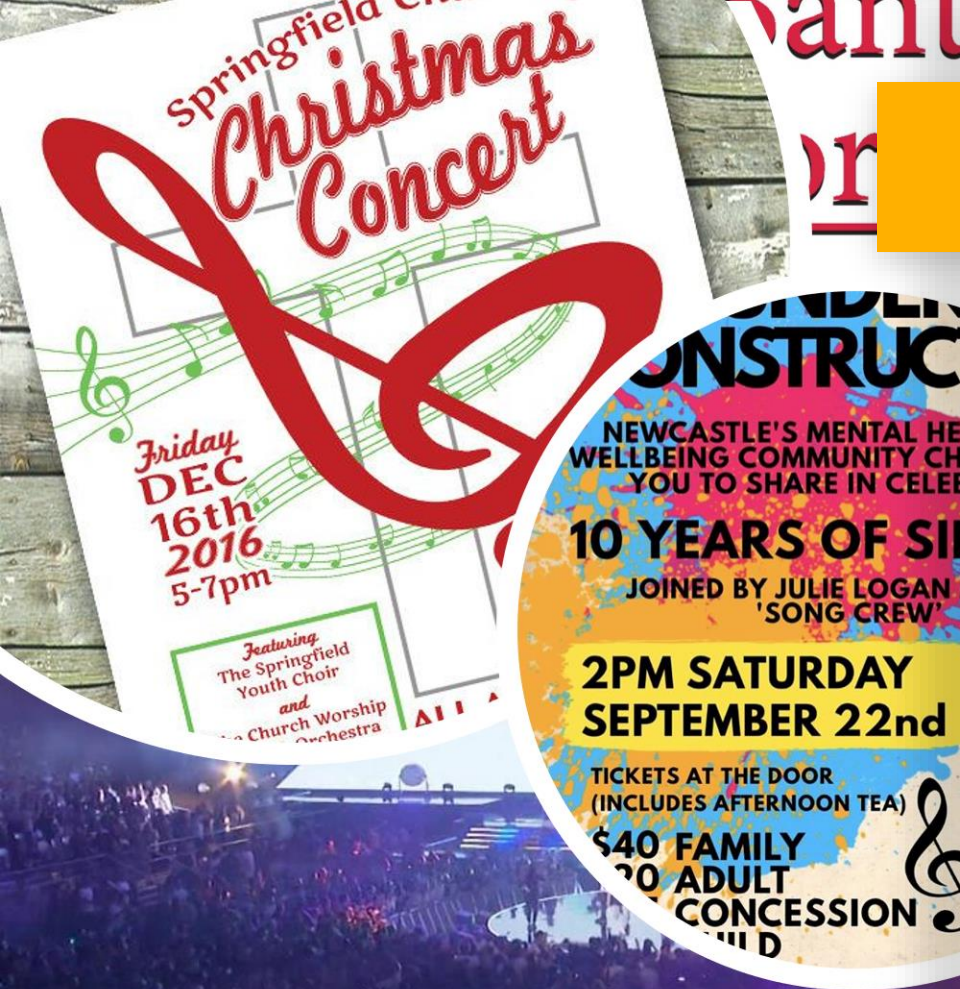
Formal Dinner

@ EAST LISMORE BOWLING CLUB

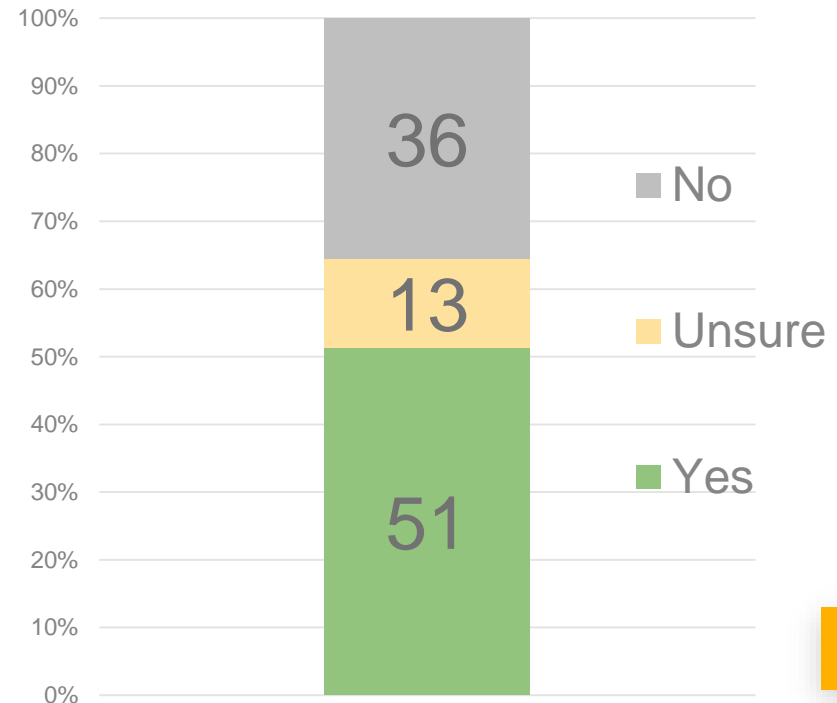
This Friday Night
28th Sep | 7:15 PM



Source: 2019 AUSSA (n = 532, missing = 286)

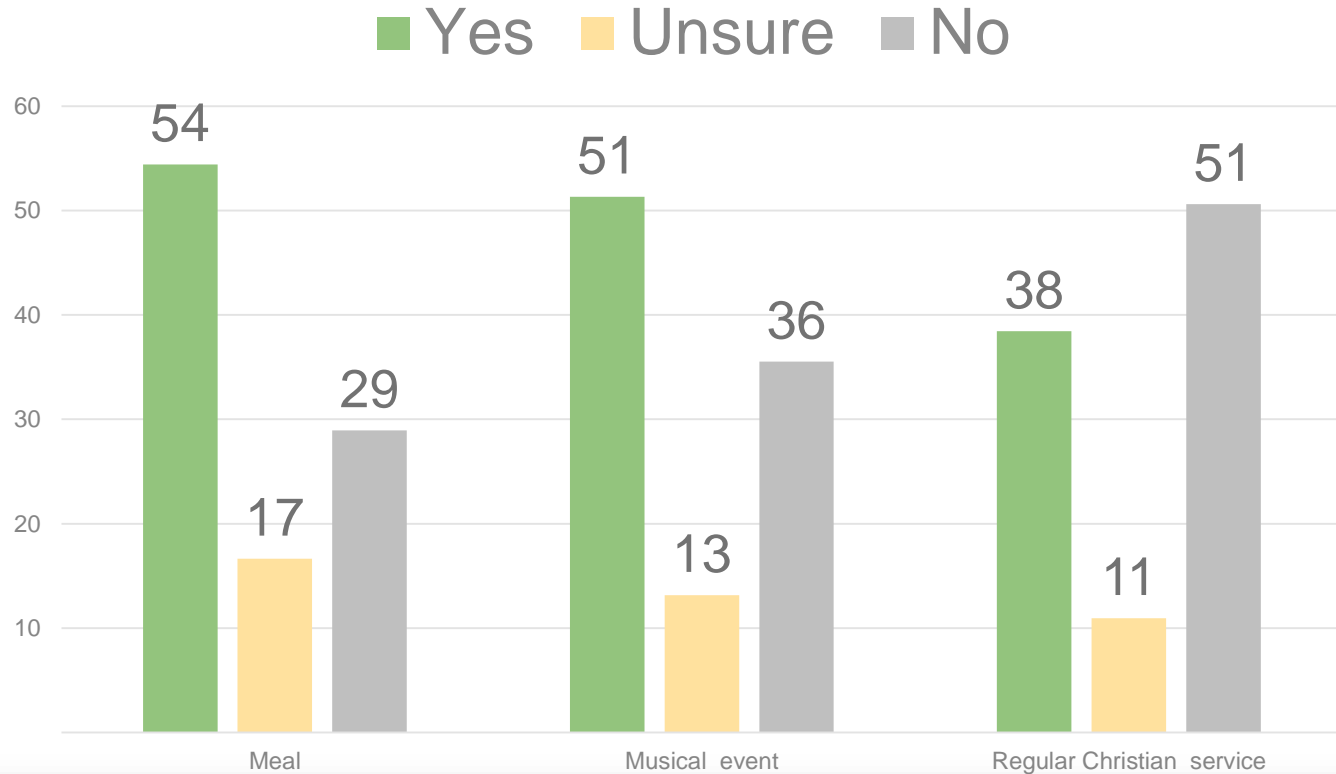


51% WOULD GO TO A MUSICAL EVENT IF INVITED



Source: 2019 AUSSA (n = 532, missing = 286)

Figure: Openness to attending events if invited



Source: 2019 AUSSA (n = 532, missing = 286)

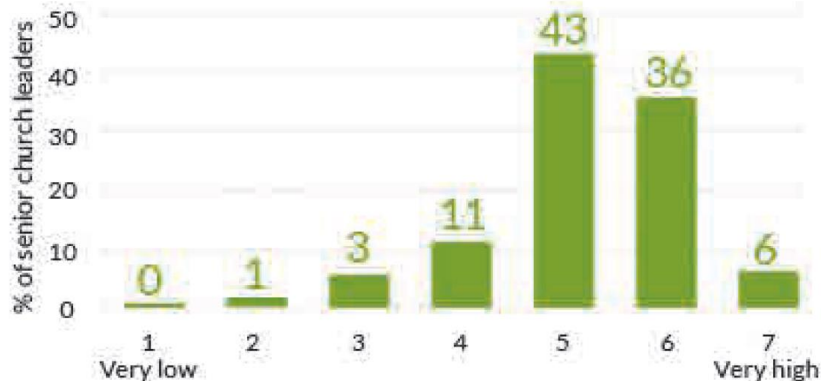
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CLUE 5: BUILD CONFIDENCE

LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS POSITIVE

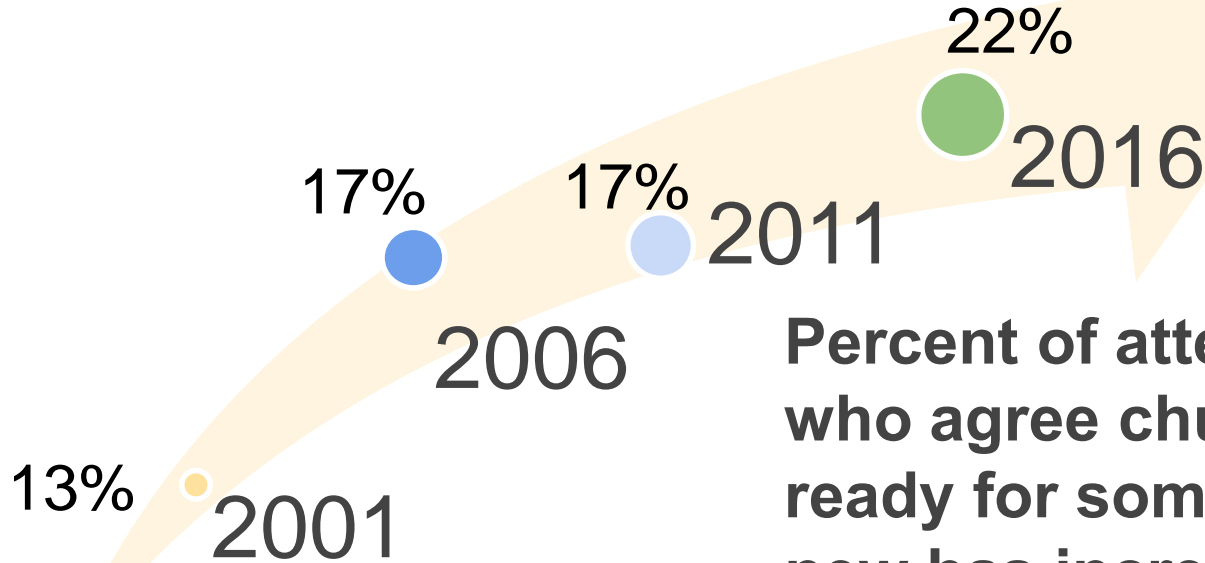
**Local church
leaders
rate their
effectiveness
highly**

How would you rate your overall effectiveness in your present role here over the last few months?



Source: 2016 NCLS Leader Survey (n=2,124).

CHURCH ATTENDERS OPEN TO INNOVATION



Percent of attenders who agree church is ready for something new has increased

Research findings from
National Church Life Survey

1991 National Church Life Survey

1996 National Church Life Survey

2001 National Church Life Survey

2006 National Church Life Survey

2011 National Church Life Survey

2016 National Church Life Survey

NEWCOMERS TO CHURCH ARE POSITIVE



- Newcomers do *not* go 'church shopping'
- Come because 'something missing'
- Stay because they find community
- Belong and behave before belief: Open to learning and growing in faith.
- Positive and confident about future



Clues from Australians to help churches connect

Clue 1

Make and keep friends

Clue 2

Try inviting people to special events

Clue 3

Invite people who used to attend.

Clue 4

Have fun with friends, food and music.

Clue 5

Build confidence among church attenders

Love God.

Love your neighbour as you love yourself

THANK YOU



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Our mission: to use credible research to identify signs of hope, to nurture life in both leadership and churches as well as to encourage the wider community to reflect on its spiritual journey and the churches place within it.

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Sydney: NCLS Research.