

Local Churches in Australia

Research Findings from NCLS Research



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2016 AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (ACS)

NEW RESULTS FROM A SURVEY OF AUSTRALIANS

2016 Australian Community Survey by NCLS Research. A survey of a representative sample of Australians via an online research panel (n = 1,258).

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS



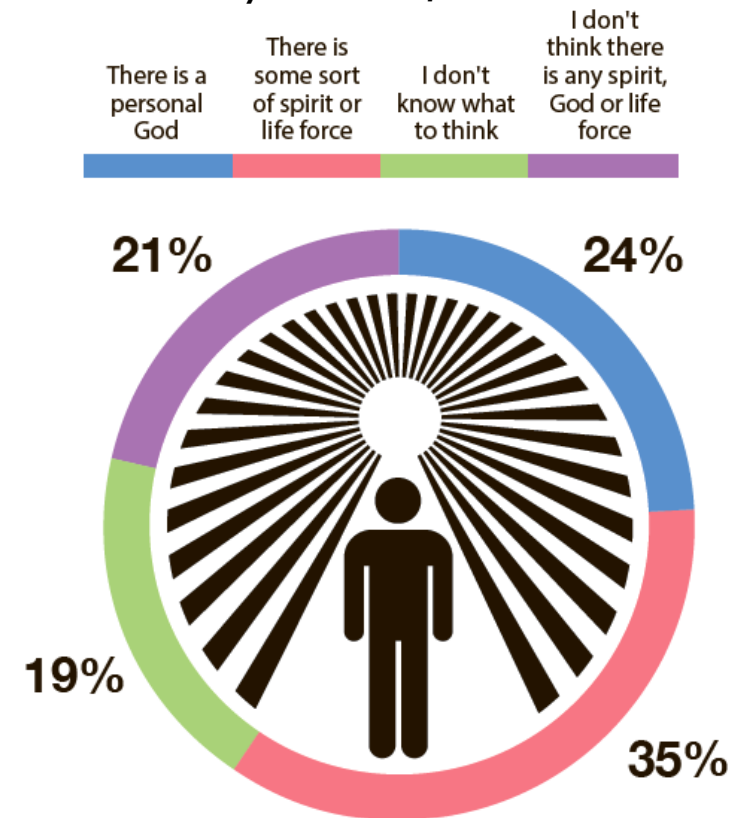
Nearly six in ten of all Australians believe in God or a higher power

Believers: In 2016, 59% of Australians said they believed in a personal God (24%), or some sort of spirit or life force (35%).

Agnostic: Nearly one in five (19%) said 'I don't really know what to think'.

Atheistic: One in five (21%) Australians said 'I don't really think there is any sort of spirit, God or life force'.

Q. Which of these statements comes closest to your belief?



Graphic by Edi Sizgoric

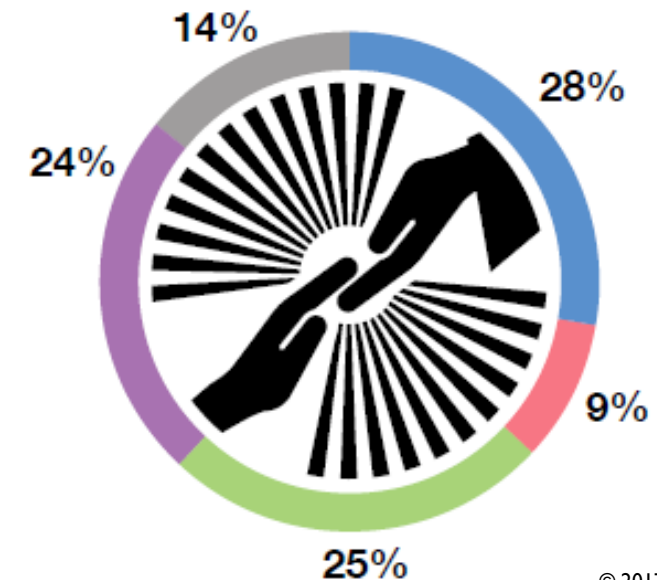
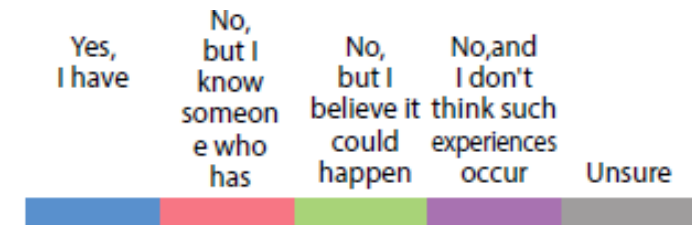
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE



Over a quarter of Australians (28%) report having had a mystical or supernatural experience.

A further third either know someone who has had this type of experience or believe it could happen.

Q. Have you ever had a mystical or supernatural experience, either positive or negative, about which you have no doubts it was real?



Source: 2016 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research. (n = 1,258)

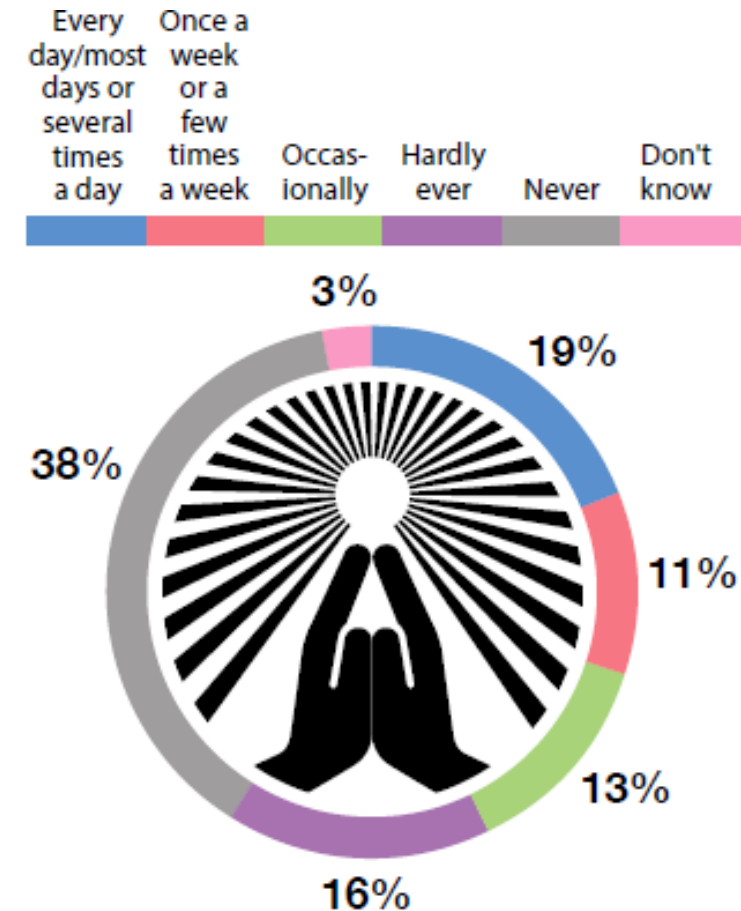
PRIVATE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES



Three in ten Australians say they pray or meditate at least once a week.

Private religious or spiritual practices are a part of the week for a significant minority of Australians.

Q. How often do you pray or meditate?



Graphic by Edi Sizgoric

Source: 2016 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research. (n = 1,258)

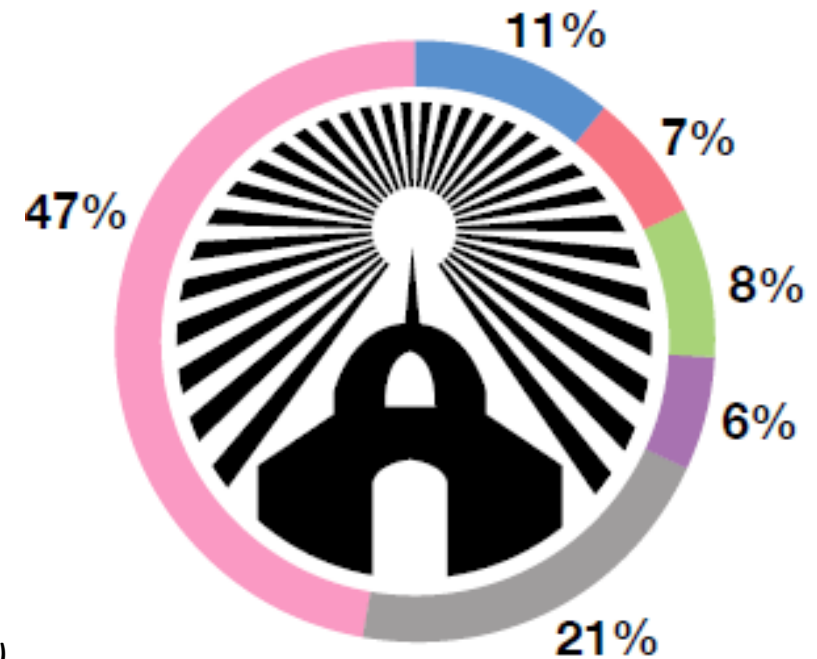
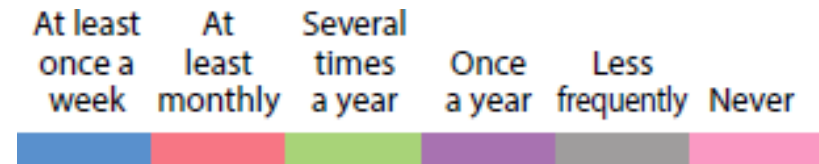
PUBLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICES



Less than one in five Australians attend religious services at least monthly.

Church attendance rates have been declining for decades. In late 2016 around 18% reported that they attended religious services at least monthly. Some 47% say they never attend.

Q. Apart from special occasions, how often do you attend religious services?



Graphic by Edi Sizgoric

Source: 2016 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research. (n = 1,258)

RELIGION – GOOD FOR SOCIETY?



Around four in ten Australians (39%) agreed that religion is good for Australian society.

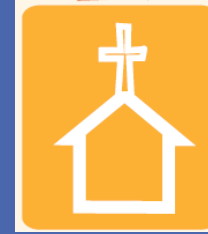
A similar proportion (40%) were neutral or unsure.

Two in ten (21%) disagreed.



Graphic by Edi Sizgoric

NUMBER OF LOCAL CHURCHES

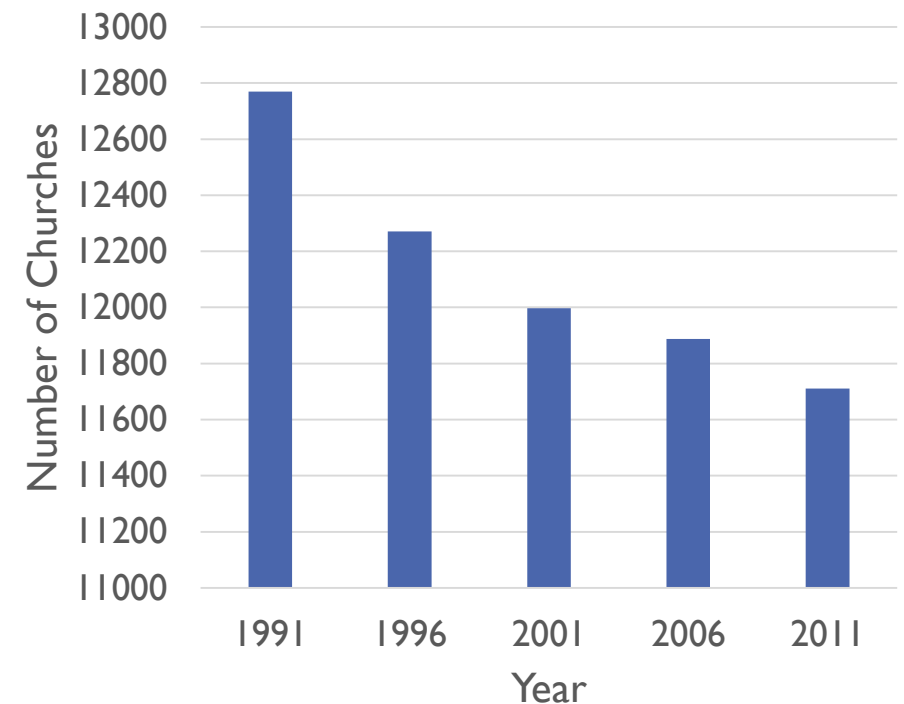


In 2011 the estimated number of church locations was around 12,400.

Between 1991 to 2011 there was a net decrease of at least 1,000 churches.

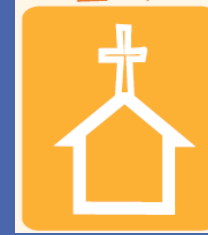
It is made up of a decrease in mainstream Protestant church locations partly offset by an increase in Pentecostal and other Protestant locations.

Number of Local Churches: 1991 to 2011



Source: NCLS Research Churches database. NB. To track changes over time, only parish counts (not Mass centres) are included for the Catholic Church, as Mass centre counts are not available back to 1991.

SIZE OF LOCAL CHURCHES



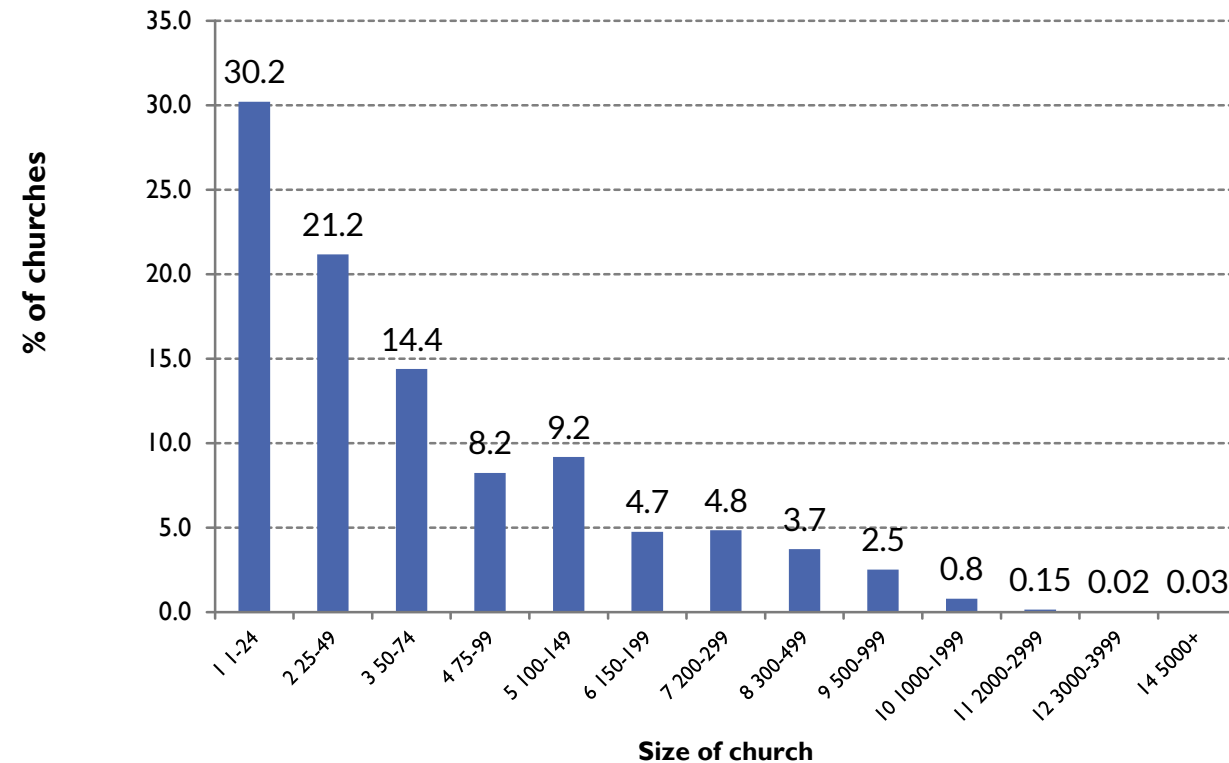
The average size of churches in Australia is 121 people attending in a typical week.

Average size per denomination

Largest: Catholic parishes (360), ACC (115), Baptist (119) and Reformed (141).

Smallest: Anglican (55), Presbyterian (50), and Uniting (51) – reflecting their presence in many small rural towns.

Figure: Size of local churches estimated weekly attendance in 2011 (%)



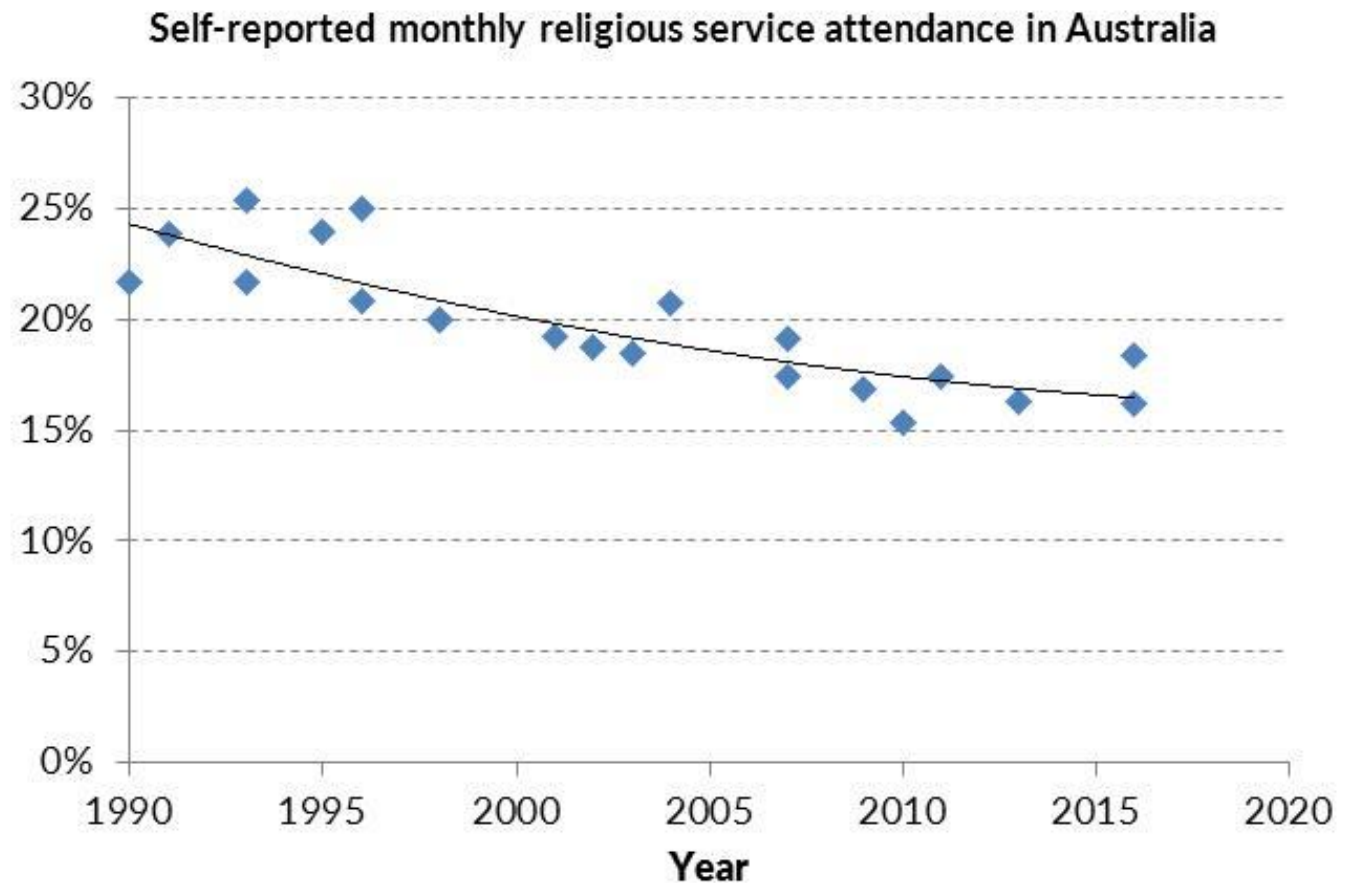
Source: NCLS Research Churches database.

MONTHLY RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDANCE

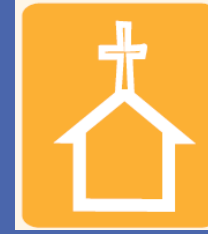


Decreasing levels of self-reported attendance at religious services have been tracked through sample surveys of the Australian population over several generations.

The decline has continued since 1990, but at a slowing rate.

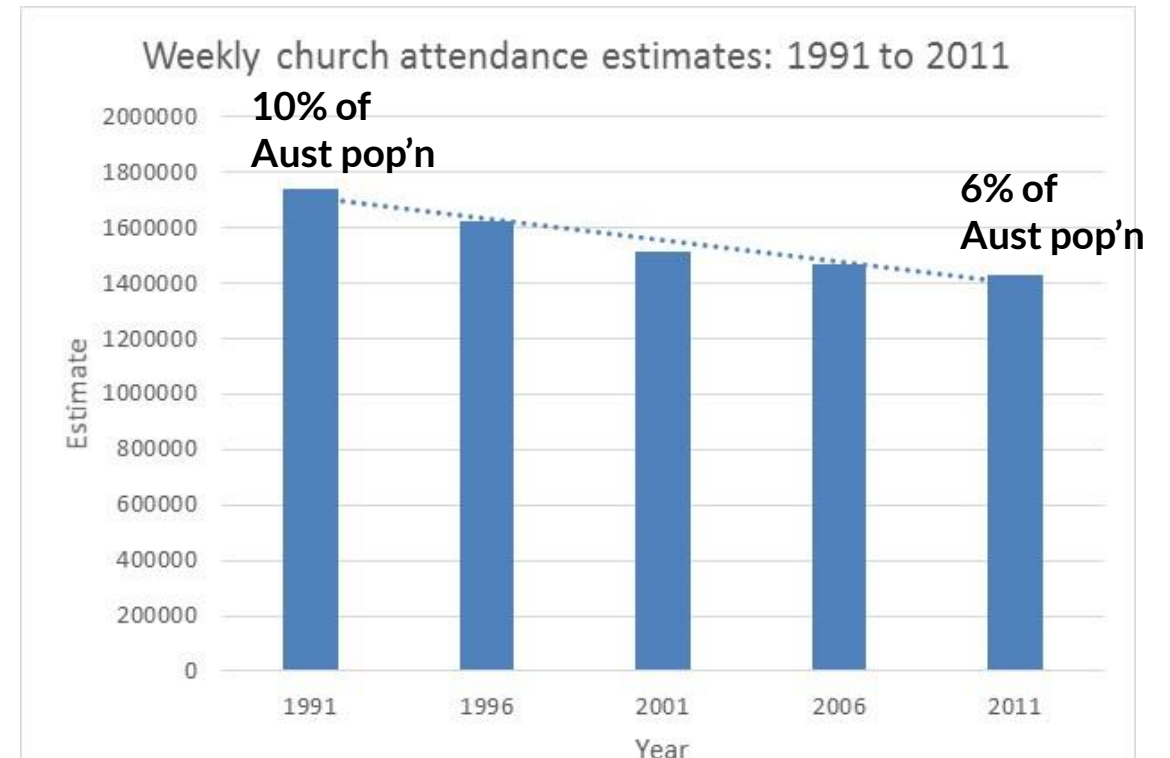


WEEKLY CHURCH ATTENDANCE ESTIMATES



In 2011 the estimated weekly church attendance was 1,432,000 (or 6% of the Australian population).

Based on current best estimates, overall church attendance declined by around 13% over 20 years from 1991 to 2011.



Source: NCLS Churches Estimates of Attendance Database. Based on estimates collected through National Church Life Surveys (as reported by church leaders and administrators). NB: Self-reported attendance rates obtained from sample surveys tend to be inflated compared to head counts and estimates from church leaders and administrators.



A selection of research findings from the 2016 ACS and the 2011 NCLS will be available in the NCLS Research magazine

Local Churches in Australia: Scanning the landscape.

Spirituality & wellbeing

Mapping the church landscape

Who goes to church

Church & community connections

Healthy churches

First People and church

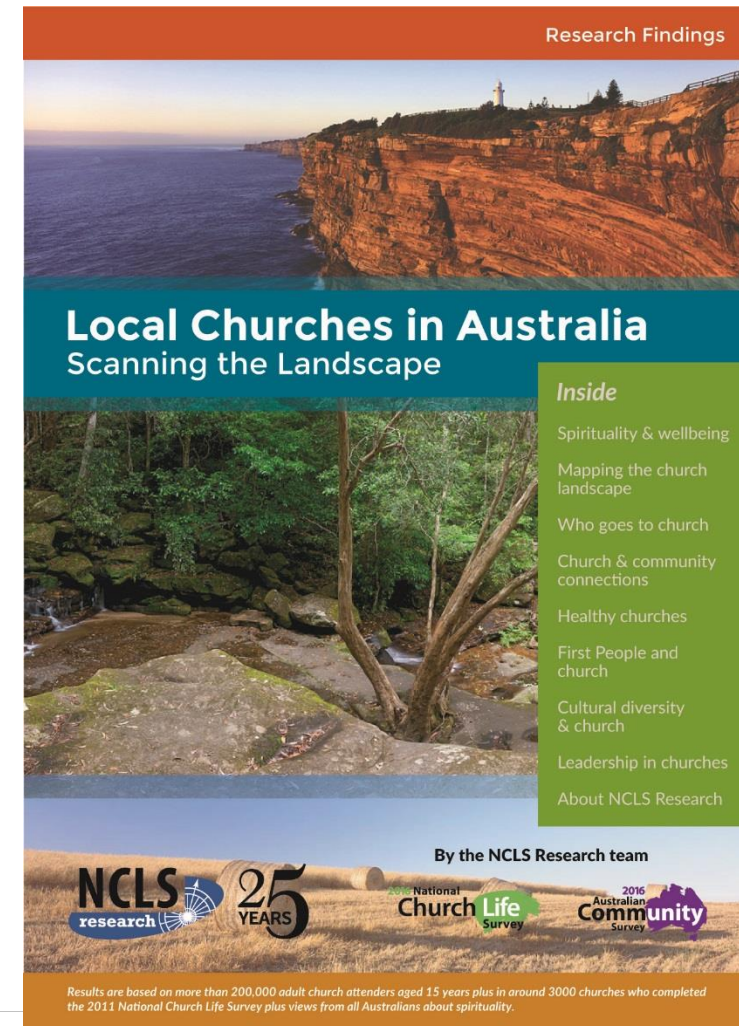
Cultural diversity and church

Generations and church

Leadership in churches

About NCLS Research

References



Research findings in this presentation are based on more than 260,000 adult church attenders aged 15 years plus in around 3000 churches who completed the 2011 National Church Life Survey plus views from all Australians about spirituality.

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