

How disruption, disillusionment and diversity is shaping faith in Australia

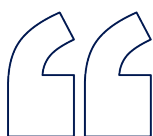


As social researchers we spend our time studying the social and demographic landscape to understand emerging trends and advise organisations on how to adapt for an ever-changing future. So 2020 has kept us on our toes!

We conducted several national studies through the year to understand how Australians have been affected by the challenge and change that the COVID-19 pandemic has created. [Our research shows](#) many Australians have been feeling anxious, frustrated and vulnerable as a consequence of the health, economic and social impacts of COVID-19. We also found that two in five Australians have felt the biggest negative impact of COVID-19 *socially*, missing the human connection to family and friends.

In times of crisis and social and economic disruption people tend to [reflect more deeply on](#)

[what really matters](#). Half of Australians say they have thought more about the meaning of life and their own mortality this year. This deepening of the inner life has seen an [increase in spiritual and faith activities](#), with one in four Australians saying they have engaged in more spiritual conversations and 28% reporting they have been praying more.



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Australians are disillusioned with the Church but are exploring faith

The research showed that Australians have become disillusioned with the church as an institution. They point to public breaches of trust from church leadership and church culture often being detached from the everyday Australian experience as key causes of this disillusionment and apathy.

While the Census data shows a decline of Australians identifying with Christianity (from 64% in 2006 to 52% in the 2016 Census), data collected by the National Church Life Survey shows the proportion of Australians regularly going to church has remained steady in this same period (15% in 2006; 16% in 2016).

Even amidst this context of disillusionment, Australians are exploring their faith. Despite Australia's relative wealth and stability (by global standards), the research showed that people are searching for meaning and fulfilment that isn't being found elsewhere.

The Church and community

While Australia is full of churches large and small, the size of a church is of less importance than whether a church is seeking to truly understand and engage their own local community and bring a unique contribution to their neighbourhood. This means reflecting the diversity of their own geographic context and considering what a church can be doing 'between Sundays' to serve the needs of their community.



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Embracing digital disruption

Just as Australians have shifted to virtual meetings for business and social occasions, churches too have been forced to adapt to new digital technologies. Many have been using platforms like Zoom and livestreams for their services to operate 'church online'. Like the future of the office and events, there is broad recognition that the church of the future will be hybrid, combining a physical gathering with digital platforms to engage as many people as possible.

Contact

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