

FAITH, BELIEF & CHURCHGOING IN AUSTRALIA

Thursday 24 March, 2016 – While it is a stretch to describe diverse, 21st Century Australia as a Christian country, the national data on religious identity from the 2011 Census shows the majority of Australians (61.1%) identify their religion as Christianity, a slight decline from 63.9% in the 2006 Census. More than a quarter of the population (25.3%) identify as Catholic, with the second most common Christian affiliation being Anglican (17.1%) and third is the Uniting Church (5%).



The most common non-Christian religions were Buddhism (2.5%), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%). Not only is the total proportion of Australians identifying with a Christian denomination 24 times larger than the second most common religion (Buddhism), but Christianity is 8 times larger than all non-Christian religions combined (7.2%).

The rise in *no religion*

The fastest growing religion as identified over the two last census' has been Hinduism, which increased from 0.7% to 1.3%, an increase of 127,410 adherents. However, the biggest growth in total numbers has been the rise in *no religion* from 18.7% in 2006 to 22.3% in 2011, which represents an increase in more than 1 million people over this time from 3.7 million to 4.8 million. Such has been the rise in Australians selecting *no religion*, it is now the most common "belief" category in 5 of Australia's 8 states and territories (Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory). Yet in both Victoria and Queensland, Catholic (26.7% and 23.8% respectively) comes ahead of no religion (24.0% and 22.1%) while in NSW- Australia's most religious state, both Catholic (27.5%) and Anglican (19.9%) are ahead of no religion (17.9%).

Not only is NSW the most religious state but Sydney is Australia's most religious capital city, with those selecting *no religion* (17.6%) significantly lower than is found in Brisbane (22.8%), the city of churches – Adelaide (28.1%), Canberra (28.9%) and Hobart, Australia's least religious capital, (29.4%).

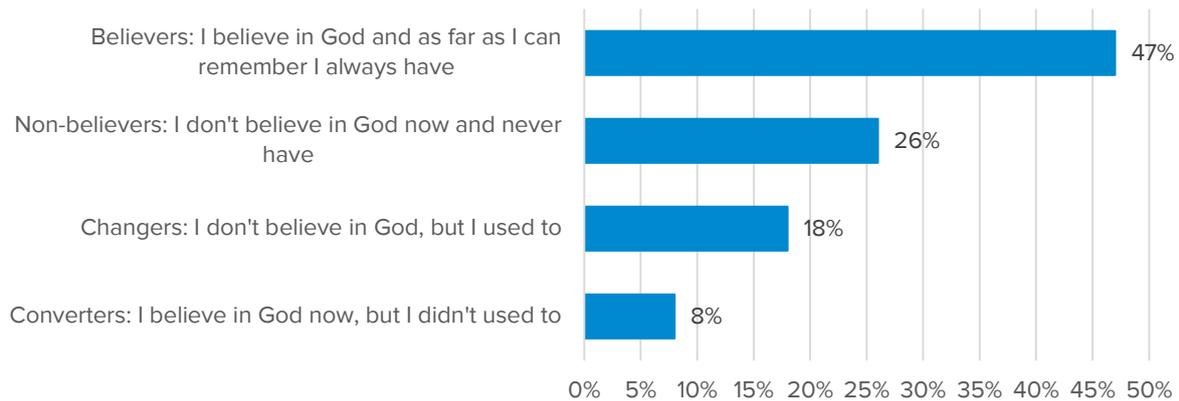
Majority believe in God

Not only does most of Australia identify with Christianity, but more than half (55%) of the population believes in God, as defined as *the Creator of the universe, the Supreme Being*.

However, there are signs of fading belief in God with the majority of the oldest generation aged over 70 believing in God (61%) along with the majority of the fifty and sixty-something Baby Boomers (53%) compared to a slight minority of late thirties and forty-something Gen Xers (46%) and Generation Y (41%) but less than 1 in 3 Gen Z's (31%) who are today's teenagers and early twenties.

The most common category for Australians' belief in God is that they are *believers*, who believe now and always have (47%) and second are *non-believers* who don't believe in God and never have (26%). Although, *changers*, who used to believe and now don't (18%) are twice as common as *converters*, who believe in God now but didn't used to (8%).

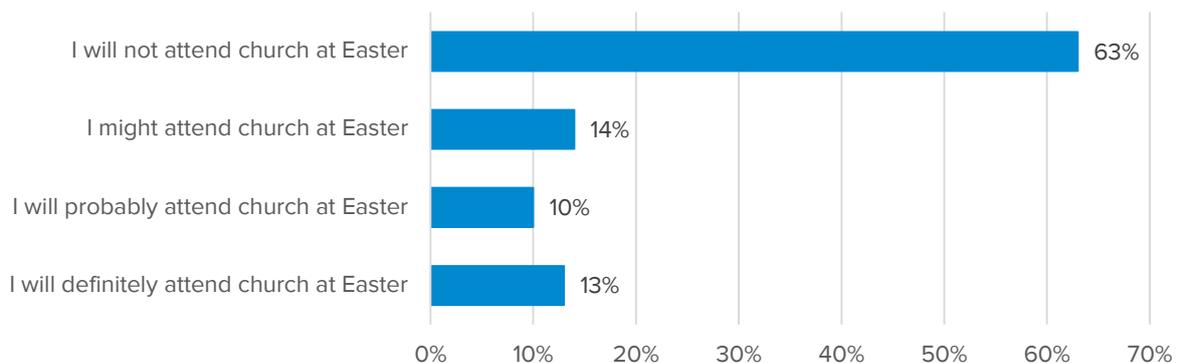
Q. If God is defined as the Creator of the universe, the supreme Being, then which of the following best summarises your belief or non-belief in God?



1 in 6 Australians are church-goers

Regular church attendance has also been declining over the past few generations and has more than halved in around 4 decades from 1 in 3 Australians (36% in 1972) to 1 in 6 currently (15%, National Church Life Survey 2011). While in decline, the total numbers of church goers nationally total around 3.6 million Australians, which makes church much more attended than the other Australian religion - professional sport. In fact, when thinking about this Easter weekend, 13% of Australians say they will *definitely* go to church with an additional 10% stating that they *probably* will- and if they all do, that's more than 4 million adults, plus many kids in tow.

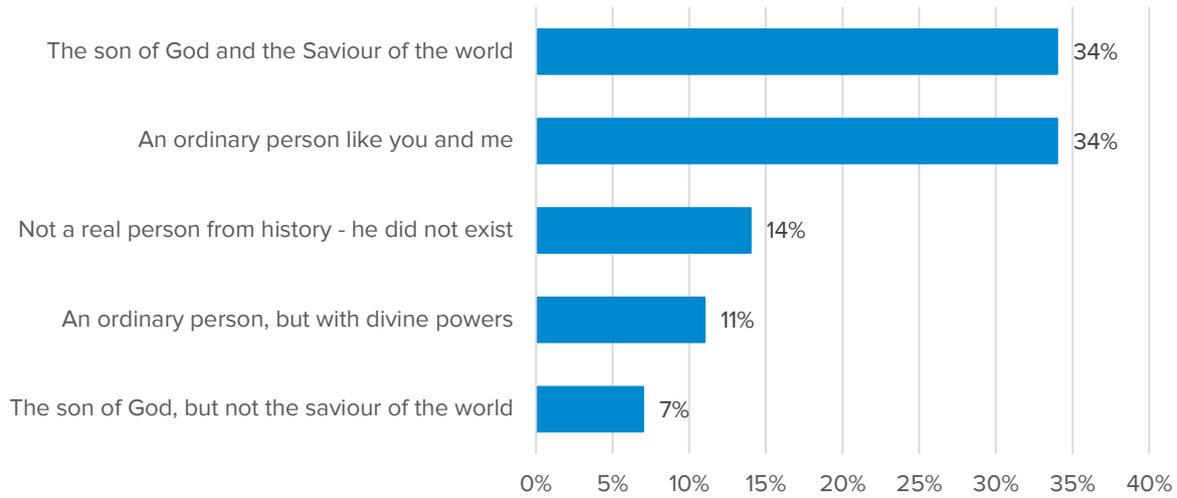
Q. How likely will you be to attend church over the upcoming Easter weekend?



Jesus, the Son of God?

When respondents were asked who they think Jesus was, the vast majority (86%) believe he existed in some capacity. More specifically, a third (34%) believe He was ‘The son of God and the Saviour of the World’. A further third of Australians (34%) think he was an ordinary person, with 11% thinking he was an ordinary person but with divine powers.

Q. Who do you think Jesus was?



About this study

Respondent Demographics

	This survey #	This survey %	National % of population aged 18+
GENDER			
<i>Male</i>	504	50%	50%
<i>Female</i>	511	50%	50%
TOTAL	1,015	100%	100%
AGE			
18-20	41	4%	GEN Z 7%
21-35	283	28%	GEN Y 28%
36-50	253	25%	GEN X 26%
51-69	306	30%	BOOMERS 28%
70+	132	13%	BUILDERS 11%
TOTAL	1,015	100%	100%
STATE			
NSW	328	32%	32%
VIC	256	25%	25%
QLD	204	20%	20%
SA	71	7%	7%
WA	103	10%	11%
TAS	25	2%	2%
NT	11	1%	1%
ACT	17	2%	2%
TOTAL	1,015	100%	100%

Media Contact

For media commentary or interviews with Mark McCrindle please contact us via:

E: ashley@mccrindle.com.au

P: 02 8824 3422