

the impact of faith on Australian society

Commissioned by

OLIVETREE  MEDIA

Conducted by McCrindle
Research in 2021



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Research objectives

In February 2021, Olive Tree Media commissioned McCrindle to conduct demographic and quantitative research to understand the role of faith and religion in forming modern day Australia. The key objectives of this research are to:

- Explore current trends and attitudes of Australians about the role of faith and religion in society
- Understand the role Christianity has played in the history of Australia
- Investigate how Christianity has impacted the values of Australians
- Understand Australians' perspectives of Christians and Christianity.

Research methodology

The impact of faith on Australian society report is the collation of demographic analysis and quantitative data gained through an online survey of Australians.

Demographic analysis

Demographic data used in this report is obtained from analysis of the *Australian Bureau of Statistics' Census of Population and Housing 1911, 2006, and 2016*, as well as *National, state and territory population, Historical population, and Migration, Australia*.

Online survey

The survey was in field from the 5th to the 12th of March 2021 and received 2,000 responses. The survey is nationally representative by gender, age (generation) and state.

Terminology

Throughout this report, survey respondents are referred to as Australians.

Reference to the generations throughout this report refer to the following age categories:

- Generation Z: 18-26 year olds (those born from 1995 to 2009)
- Generation Y: 27-41 year olds (those born from 1980-1994)
- Generation X: 42-56 year olds (those born from 1965-1979)
- Baby Boomers: 57-75 year olds (those born from 1946-1964)
- Builders: 76+ year olds (those born from 1925- 1945)

Graphs and rounding

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

Segmentation

In addition to analysis of the overall data, several segmentation filters have been applied to the results. A breakdown of these segments are provided in the tables on the following page.

Q. What religion do you currently practice or identify with?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	%
Australians who identify with Christianity	Christianity (Catholic/Orthodox), Christianity (Protestant/Evangelical)	46%
Non-religious	None – I do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief	32%
Spiritual but not religious	I have spiritual beliefs but I don't identify with any main religion	12%

The 10% who have selected 'Buddhism', 'Islam', 'Judaism', 'Hinduism' or 'Other' have not been included in these segments due to small sample size.

Q. What is your country of birth?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	%
Born overseas	Born overseas	26%
Born in Australia	Born in Australia	74%

Q. Which of the following best describes your current attitude towards Christianity?		
Segment name	Option/s chosen	%
Christian	I consider myself a Christian	37%
Warm/neutral	I believe in Christianity, but do not consider myself a Christian, I believe in much of Christianity, but still have some significant doubts, I believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but I don't practice Christianity in any way, I believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms, but I don't want to be involved	38%
Cool	I have some issues with Christianity and it isn't for me, I've got strong reservations about Christianity and I have no interest in it, I'm passionately opposed to Christianity	25%

Executive summary

Since the establishment of the first colony in 1788, population growth has been a constant demographic force in Australia. Seeing rapid growth through migration, Australia is now one of the most multicultural developed nations in the world, with twice as many residents born overseas (29%)¹ as the United Kingdom (14%)² or the United States of America (14%)³. The diversity of culture is likely to continue growing with almost two thirds of Australia's population growth (62%) coming from net overseas migration.

Christian heritage closely linked to British heritage

With the colonisation of the British came the dominant beliefs and values of the time, centred around Christian practices and customs. As well as values and beliefs, Australian society mirrors the government and legal system of Britain. Many Australians believe that Australian society is shaped by democracy (93%), British heritage (88%) and the influence of Christianity (78%), showing how the way of life brought to Australia by the British continues to be foundational to Australian society today.

Spiritual but not religious

While Australia as a nation is seeing a decline in cultural Christianity, it remains spiritual. Australia's increasing cultural diversity and migration has brought other faiths into society. Interestingly, those who migrate to Australia are more likely to identify as religious and are more likely to remain committed to the beliefs they were raised with (54% cf. 36% born in Australia).

Emergence of modern-day Australia

In thinking about which occasions are key to Australia's history and identity, Australians believe ANZAC Day (83%) and Remembrance Day (77%) are extremely/very important. While Christian

holidays such as Christmas (69%) and Easter (56%) are still important to Australians, they do not play such a central role in our collective identity.

With the concept of the 'fair go' embedded in Australian culture, it is unsurprising that the core value Australians are most likely to associate with Australian society is equal opportunity for all (65%). This is followed by honesty (59%), mateship (59%), freedom and dignity of the individual (59%) and mutual respect (59%).

Christian impact lives on

While Christianity is less front and centre than in times gone by, the impacts of Christianity live on in the underlying morals and values in society. Four in five Australians (80%) agree that the values of Australian society today are influenced by our Christian heritage. Almost all Australians believe they are guided in their decisions by values such as honesty (96%), compassion (95%), integrity (94%) and care for others (94%).

The values that guide Australians in their decisions reflect core Australian values as well as values that are often linked to Christianity and attributed to Jesus.

Christianity has been vital in shaping Australia

While Christianity is declining in practice in modern-day Australia, the role it has played in shaping society is widely recognised. Australians see the impact of our Christian heritage significantly/strongly/somewhat shaping charities (87%), family structure (82%) and education (79%). More than three in four Australians believe it has shaped our courts/law (75%), hospitals and healthcare (74%) and government (72%).

Many Australians recognise that the Christian church has had a positive impact in Australian

society. The area that Australians believe the Christian church has had the greatest impact is caring for vulnerable communities (86%), followed by instilling morals and values (81%) and providing education (81%).

Most Australians know a Christian

Nine in ten Australians (90%) know someone who is a Christian. Australians are likely to consider the Christians they know to be caring (51%), kind (50%) and honest (45%). While Christianity does live on in the underlying values of Australians, it can also be seen in the way Christians live on a day-to-day basis. Two in three Australians (65%) are attracted to explore the Christian faith when they see firsthand someone living out a genuine faith.

Three in four Australians (76%) believe Jesus' life has had some level of importance on the history and culture of Australia. The characteristics Australians are most likely to attribute to Jesus are love (50%), compassion (49%) and peace (47%).

Faith in times of crisis

When faced with times of crisis, Australians are more likely to turn to family and friends (68%) and within themselves (60%) than they are to turn to prayer (24%) and religious texts (12%). Despite this, many Australians are guided in decision making by their faith and spirituality (60%). While modern

day Australia may be moving away from traditional religion, this indicates that it remains spiritual.

Faith is an underlying thread in Australian society

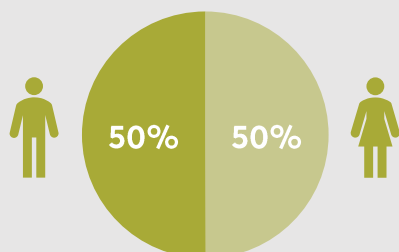
While the Christian Church is not perfect, just over three in four Australians (76%) believe Christianity has had a positive impact on Australian society.

As migration continues to contribute to population growth, it is likely that cultural and spiritual diversity will continue to increase. Australians who are born overseas are bringing another layer of spirituality and diversity to modern-day Australia. It is positive, therefore, that 95% of Australians agree that people have a right to religious freedom (expressing their faith even if it is different from their own). This reflects the growing acceptance of all Australians towards the diverse views and beliefs in society today.

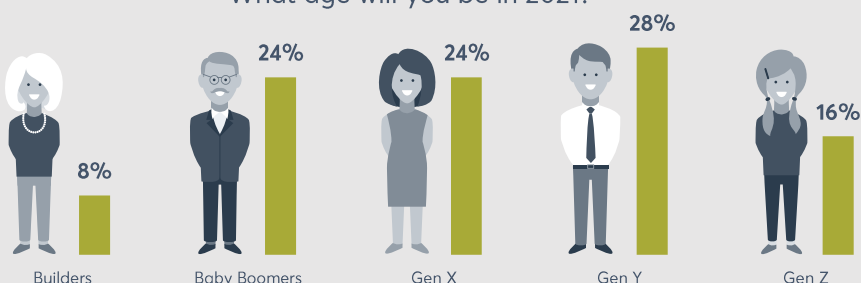
The impact of faith and spirituality on the history of Australia is undeniable. It is also likely to play a role in the future of the nation with seven in ten Australians (71%) agreeing that faith and religion is an important pillar of Australian society.

Demographic summary

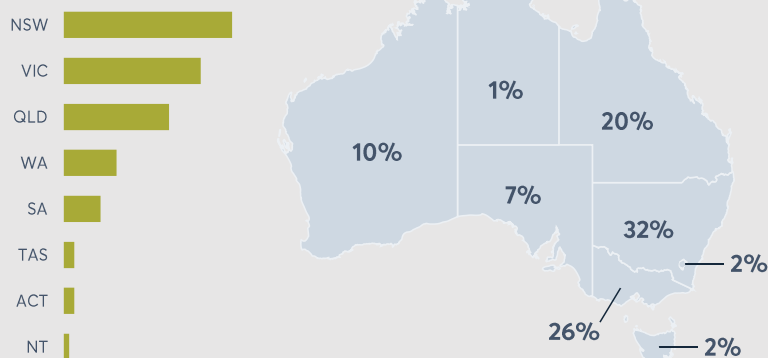
Are you male or female?



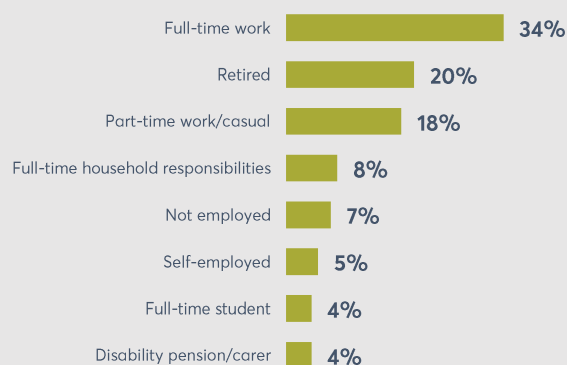
What age will you be in 2021?



Where do you usually live?



Which of the following best describes your employment status?

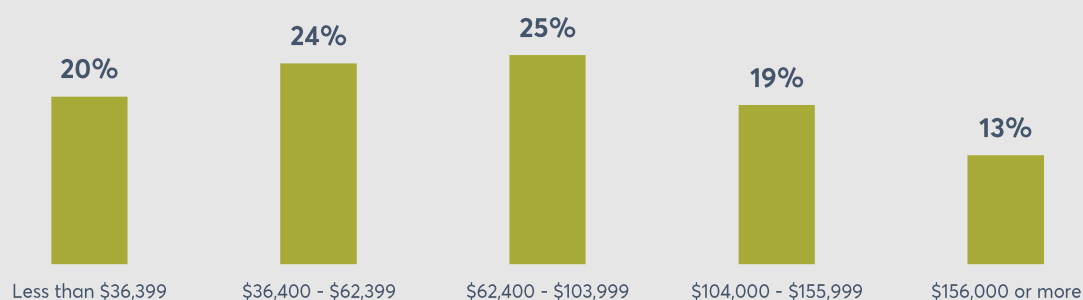


What type of household do you currently live in?



Which of the following best represents your household's combined gross annual income? (i.e. before taxes)

Note: Combined household income refers to the combined income of yourself and any other adults in the household - Include pensions, allowances, overt



Australia – a history of growth

Since the establishment of the first colony in 1788, population growth has been a constant demographic force in Australia.

Over the past 233 years, the population of Australia has recorded a net annual growth for all but four years (1789, 1795, and during the First World War in 1915 and 1916). From an initial population of 859 in 1788 (excluding First Nations people), Australia has grown to a population of more than 25 million today.

Accelerating growth

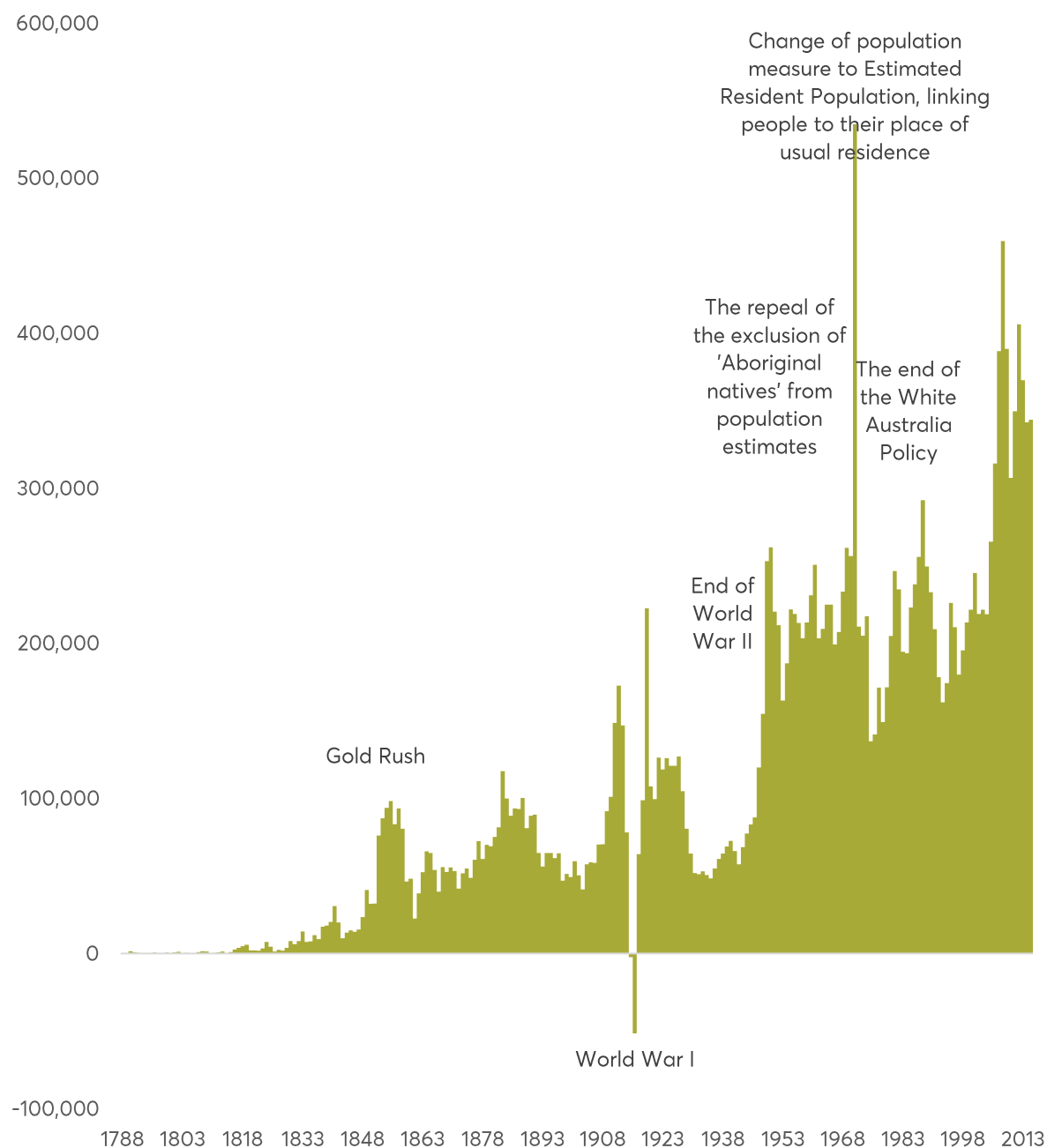
While growth has been constant for Australia, the pattern of growth has been far from steady. In

recent centuries, Australia has increased in size rapidly.

It took 172 years for Australia to become a nation of ten million (1788-1959). The next ten million, however, took just 46 years (1959-2004). In fact, over a quarter of Australia's population growth (26%) has occurred within the past two decades, growing by an annual average of 327,264 since 1999. In essence, Australia has been adding a city almost the size of Canberra (426,704) every year for the past 20 years.

Population of Australia

Annual population growth of Australia, 1788 onwards.¹



¹Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019, Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2016, cat. no. 3105.0.65.001, ABS, Canberra.

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020, Australian Demographic Statistics, Dec 2019, cat. no. 3101.0, ABS, Canberra.

An identity of diversity

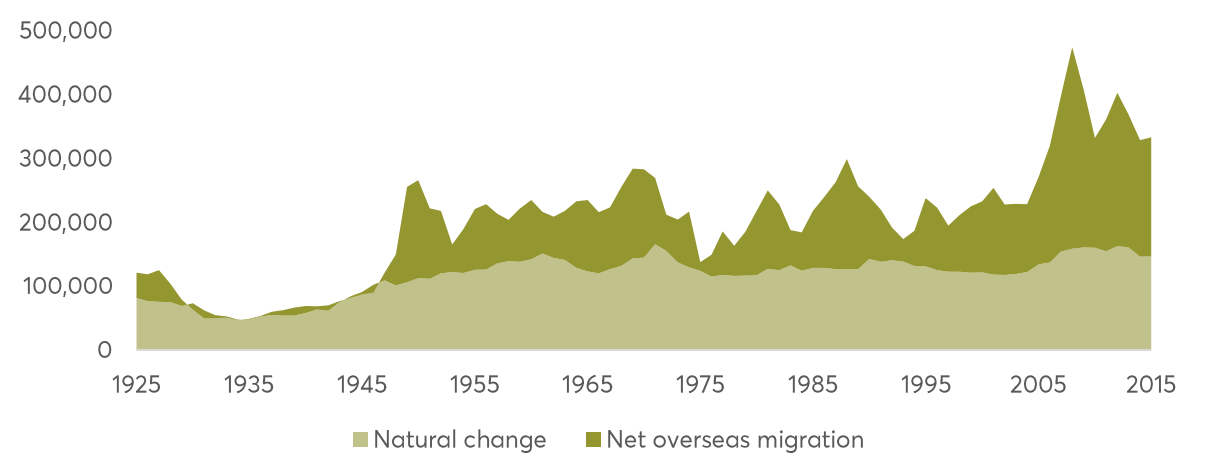
The rapid growth in recent decades has largely been the result of overseas migration.

Over the past 30 years, Australia has experienced more growth through overseas migration (4,673,100) than it has through natural change (4,171,200).

While migration has been a prominent component of Australian society since the very beginning with European settlement, it was the end of WWII that saw migration numbers begin to increase.

Similarly, the end of the White Australia policy and the increased mobility of the global population also caused a shift in Australia’s migration pattern.

Without accounting for First Nations people, Australian and European-born residents have historically comprised the majority of the population in Australia. With the shift in migration pattern from the Euro-centric to countries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas in recent years, the monoethnic composition of Australia has become more culturally and linguistically diverse.



Country of birth by broad region

1911

	% population
Australia	82%
Europe	15%
Asia	1%
New Zealand	1%
America	0.3%
Africa	0.1%

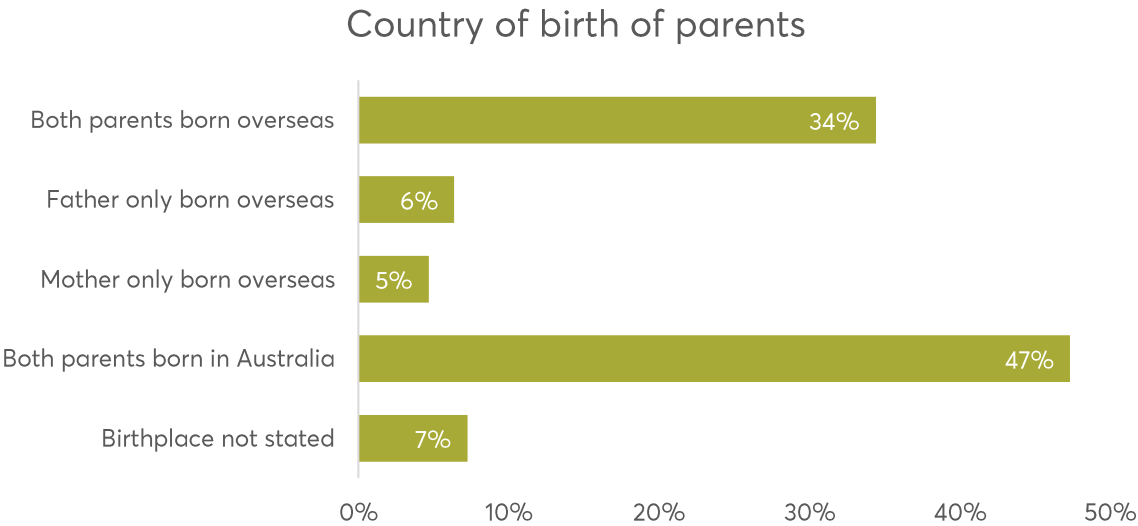
2019

	% population
Australia	70%
Asia	13%
Europe	9%
Africa	3%
New Zealand	2%
America	1%

Almost half of Australians have at least one parent born overseas

While three in four Australians (70%) were born in Australia, almost half (45%) have one or more parent born overseas. As a nation we are increasingly culturally diverse.

Australians believe migration plays a large role in the identity of Australia with nine in ten (90%) agreeing that migration and cultural diversity has shaped Australian society



The changing cultural landscape of Australia

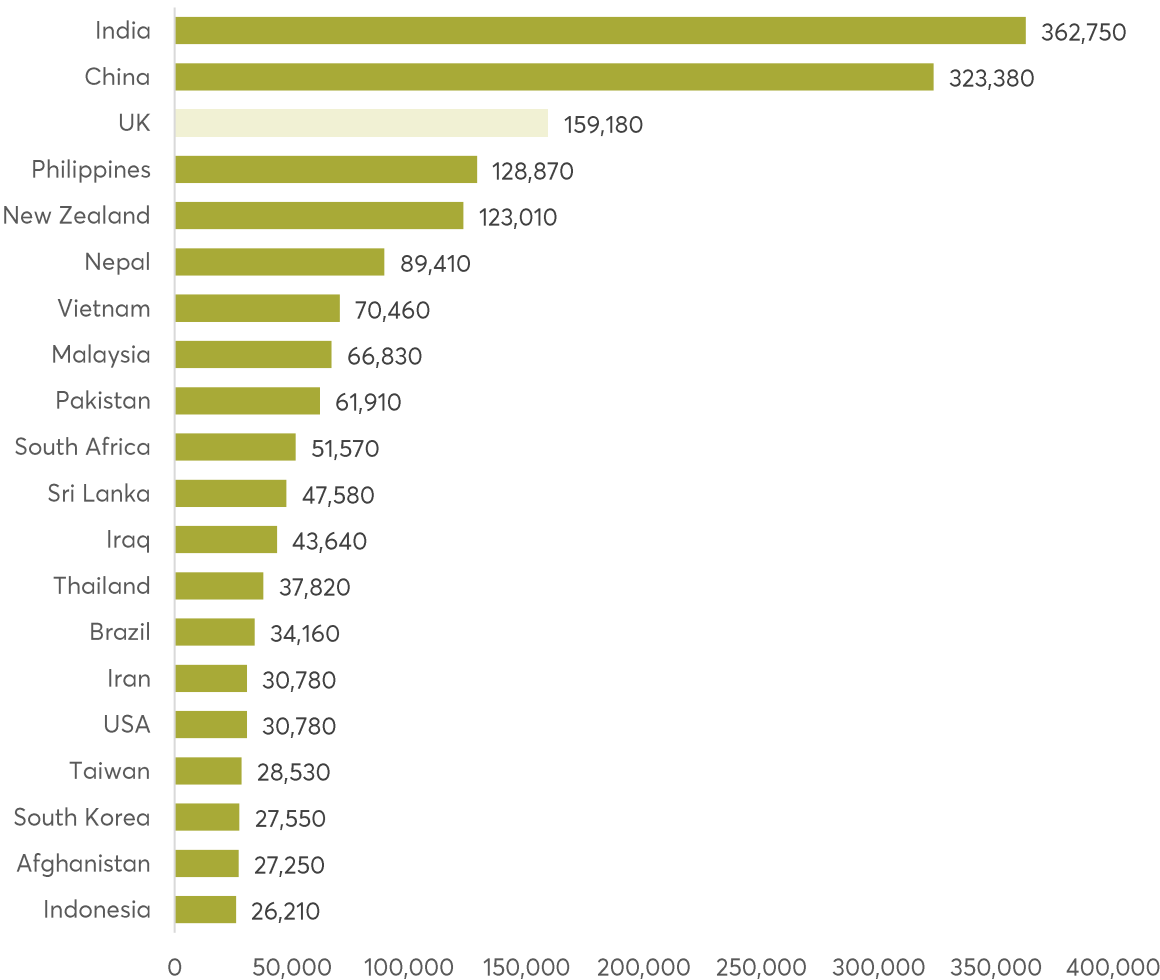
From 2009 to 2019, 4.9 million people around the globe have arrived in Australia. Over the same period, there have been 2.7 million departures from Australia, equating to growth through overseas migration of 2.2 million over the past decade.

In fact, just 14% of Australia's most recent migrant mix are from European countries. Asia (66%), Africa (9%), and America (6%) account for the majority of Australia's migrant community over the past decade.

Of the 20 most common migrant communities over this period, just one is a European country (the UK).

Net overseas migration

Australia's net overseas migration by country of origin, 2009 to 2019.



Net overseas migration

Australia's net overseas migration by region of origin, 2009 to 2019.

	#	%
Oceania and Antarctica	30,870	1%
North-West Europe	227,670	11%
Southern and Eastern Europe	78,790	4%
North Africa and the Middle East	153,050	7%
Sub-Saharan Africa	122,160	6%
South-East Asia	378,160	18%
North-East Asia	410,770	19%
Southern and Central Asia	628,430	29%
Americas	129,350	6%
Total	2,159,250	

The shaping of Australian society

With British rule came the prevailing religion of the time

Australia’s history has undoubtedly been shaped by English customs and values. Colonising Australia in 1788, the British established many of the institutions, cultural practices and systems that are part of Australian life today. With many of these British institutions being underpinned by Christian teaching and values, faith and religion has had a significant impact in shaping Australia into the nation it is today.

Australians believe that democracy (93%), migration and cultural diversity (90%) and our British heritage (88%) have been most influential in shaping Australian society. This is followed by globalisation (85%), First Nations people culture and heritage (80%) and the influence of Christianity (78%).

Many Australians recognise a clear connection between our British and Christian heritages in the fabric and structure of society.

Being colonised by the British has resulted in a society structured around Christian ideology, not necessarily in a bad way.

Basic Laws have been framed from Christian values.

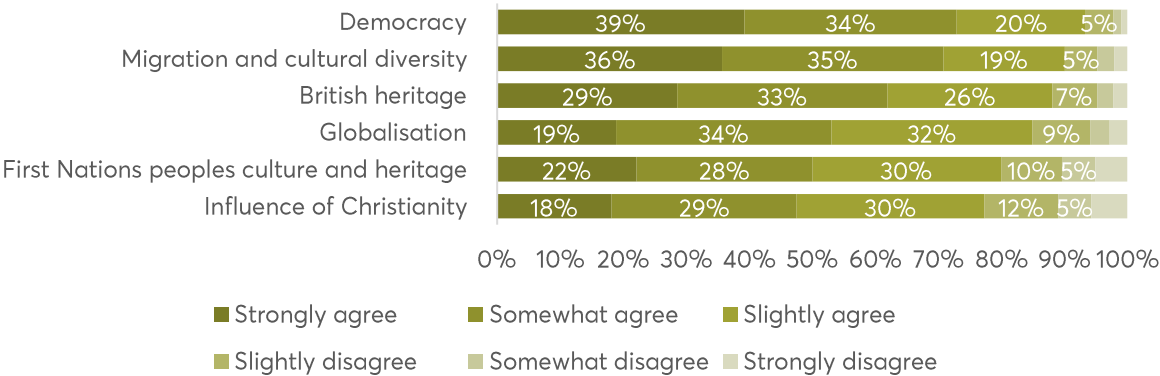
Australia is founded on Christian values, whether these are recognised or not. For example, moral values, laws etc remain shaped by Christian values.

Builders and Baby Boomers are more likely than younger generations to agree that British heritage (95% Builders, 93% Baby Boomers cf. 88% Gen X, 85% Gen Y, 82% Gen Z) and democracy (99% Builders, 98% Baby Boomers cf. 93% Gen X, 92% Gen Y and 86% Gen Z) have shaped Australian society.

Builders (84%) and Baby Boomers (83%) are also more likely to agree that the influence of Christianity has shaped Australian society (cf. 77% Gen X, 78% Gen Y, 65% Gen Z).

Interestingly, those who were born overseas are more likely than those born in Australia to agree that British heritage (91% cf. 87%) and the influence of Christianity (83% cf. 75%) have shaped Australian society.

To what extent do you agree the following have shaped Australian society?



Religion's place in Australia today

While Christianity is still the dominant religion in Australia, in recent years affiliation with the religion has declined. In 2006 almost two thirds of Australians (64%) identified with Christianity. A decade later that proportion has decreased to 52% (2016). Over the same period, the number of Australians identifying with 'no-religion' has risen from 19% (2006) to 30% (2016).

A rise of major world religions can also be seen in the latest Census. Residents identifying with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, or Sikhism now account for almost 8% of the population, an increase from 5% just ten years prior. This is likely a result of growing cultural diversity within Australia.

Declining cultural Christianity

Although Australia is experiencing a decline in the proportion of Australians identifying with Christianity, church attendance remains steady. In 2006, when almost two thirds of Australians identified with Christianity, 17% of Australians attended church. Ten years later, church attendance was steady at 16%, despite a 12-percentage point reduction in Australians identifying with Christianity. The decrease in

affiliation with Christianity is likely the reflection of a decline in cultural Christianity.

As spirituality and religion are increasingly becoming individual choices, cultural Christianity on account of heritage, is becoming a thing of the past. Gone are the days of identifying a Protestant as a person with British heritage, and Catholic as a person with Irish heritage. Christianity today is more diverse and associated more strongly with spirituality than cultural background.

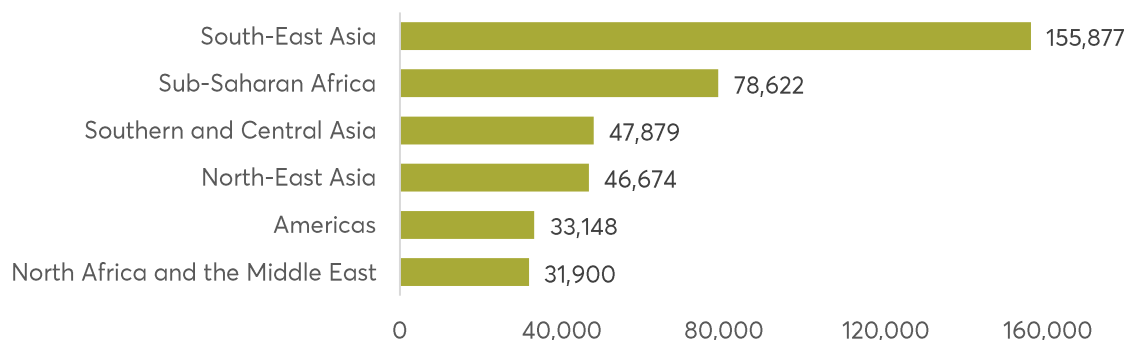
Christianity growing in migrant communities

Indeed, contrary to the European roots of Christianity in Australia, Christianity in modern day Australia is fastest growing in some migrant communities. The Australian Christian community born in South-East Asia (267,470 in 2006 cf. 423,347 in 2016), Sub-Saharan Africa (129,524 cf. 208,146), and Southern and Central Asia (82,417 cf. 130,296) have all increased in size by more than 50% over just ten years.

Those born in the Philippines, India, South Africa, China, and New Zealand are amongst the largest growing groups identifying with Christianity in Australia.

Christianity by region of birth

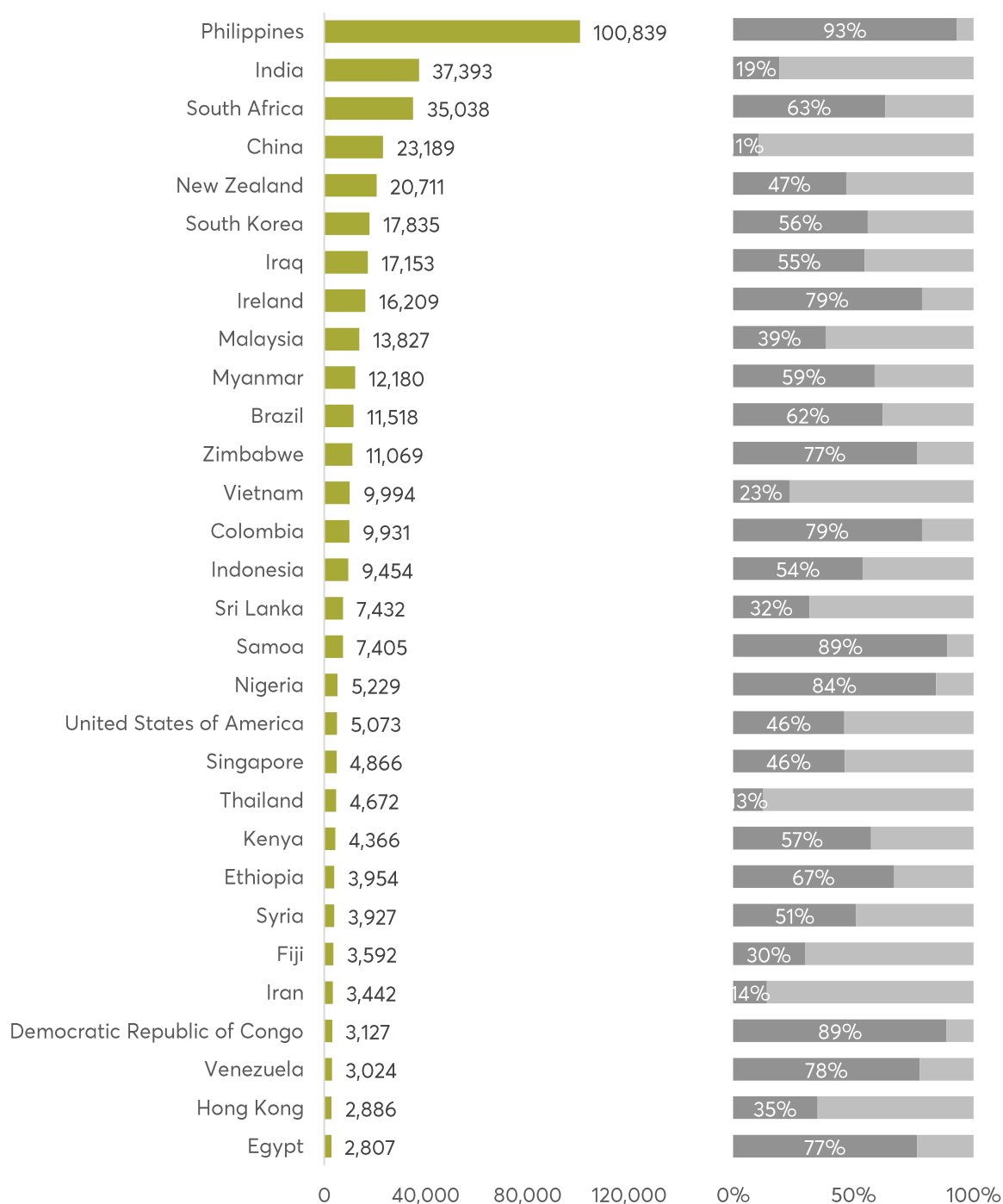
Growing number of Australians identifying with Christianity, by region of birth, 2006 to 2016.



Christianity by country of birth

Left: Growing number of Australians identifying with Christianity, by country of birth, 2006 to 2016.

Right: Proportion of Australians born in each country who identify with Christianity.



Growing diversity of religion

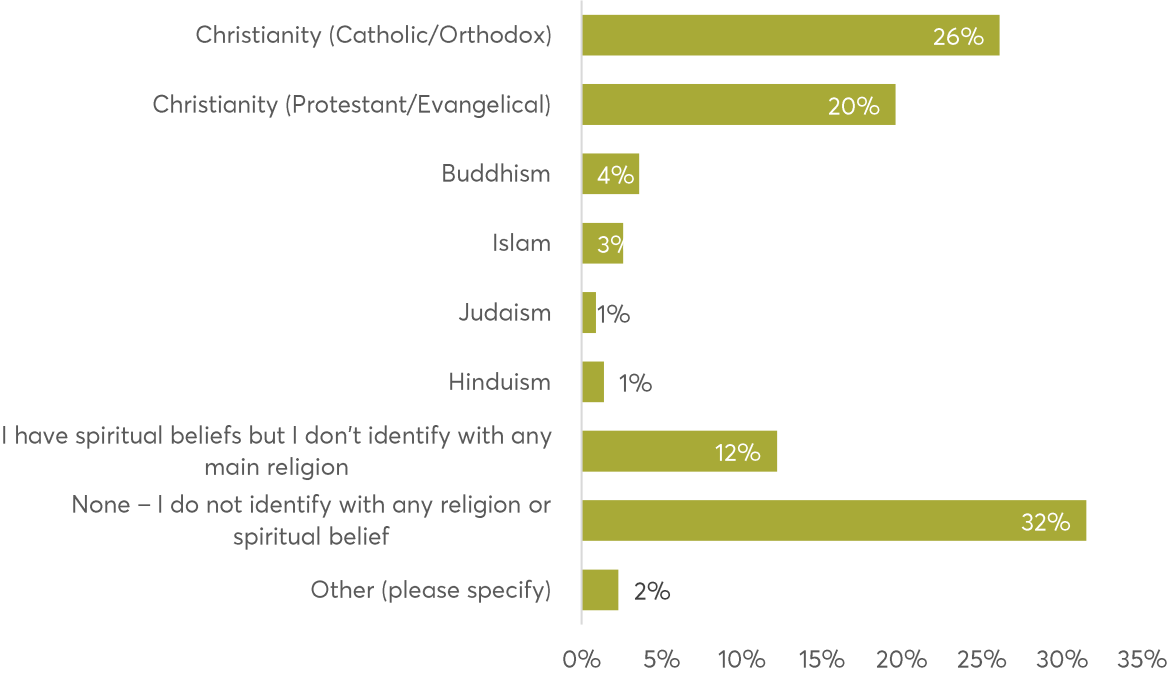
To bring greater insight to the Census question on religion, which asks 'what is your religion?', this study asks a more personalised question, exploring what religion Australians currently practice or identify with. The additional option 'I have spiritual beliefs, but I don't identify with any main religion' was also included to provide an option for Australians who have spiritual beliefs but do not identify with any main religion.

More than two in five (46%) Australians identify with Christianity, while 32% identify with no religion and 12% have spiritual beliefs but don't identify with any main religion.

Builders (69%) and Baby Boomers (58%) are more likely to identify with Christianity than Gen X (44%), Gen Y (39%) or Gen Z (29%). Younger Australians, however, are more likely to identify with other main religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism (11% Gen Z, 15% Gen Y cf. 6% Gen X, 4% Baby Boomers, 2% Builders).

This growing diversity of faith and religion is likely influenced by the growing cultural diversity of Australia. Australians that were born overseas (20%) are five times more likely to identify with a major world religion other than Christianity, than those born in Australia (4%). Similarly, Australians born overseas are more likely to practise or identify with a religion than those born in Australia. More than a third of those born in Australia (35%) are non-religious compared to 21% of Australians born overseas. While cultural Christianity may be declining, faith and religion continue to be important to many Australians, with Australia increasingly becoming a nation of spiritual diversity.

What religion do you currently practice or identify with?



Faith in action

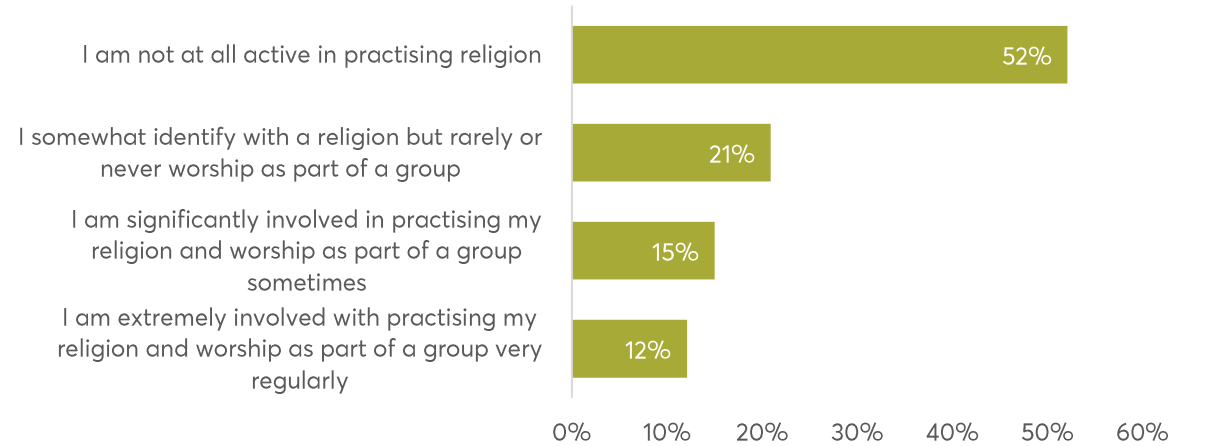
While many Australians have an element of faith in their lives (66%), they are not all active in practising their religion. More than a quarter of Australians (27%) are extremely or significantly involved with practising their religion and worship as part of a group very regularly or sometimes. More than half of Australians (52%), however, are not at all active in practising religion.

When exploring Christianity and church attendance more specifically, of those who identified with Christianity, two in five (39%) attend church at least monthly while 16% attend quarterly or annually. More than two in five Australians who identify with Christianity (45%)

attend church less than annually or do not attend church at all.

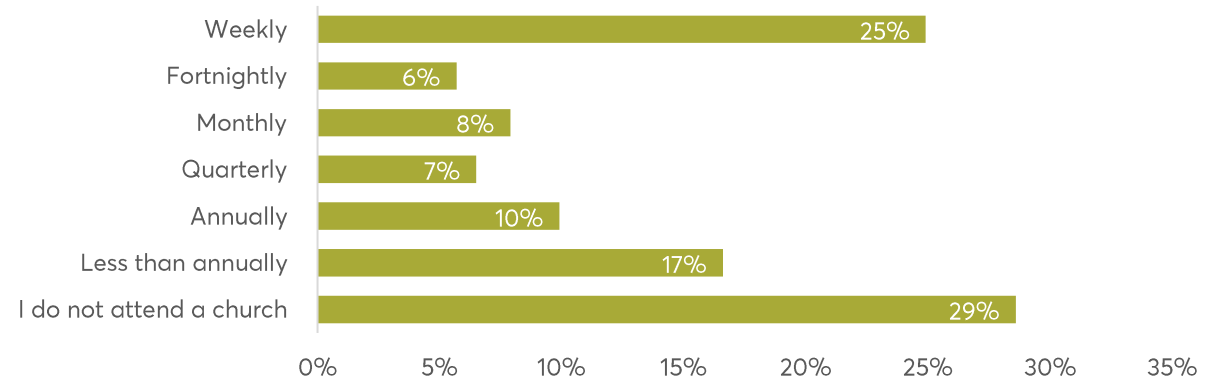
Despite Builders being more likely to identify with Christianity than Gen Z (69% cf. 29%), it is the younger generations who attend church (either in person or online) more regularly. One in two Gen Z (54%) and Gen Y (51%) attend church at least monthly compared to 35% of Builders and 27% of Baby Boomers. This could highlight a decline in cultural Christianity as members of the emerging generations who identify with Christianity may be more likely to live out their faith.

How active are you in your religion?



How frequently do you attend church?

Church attendees = 912



Australians are remaining true to their childhood religion.

Four in five Australians (41%) remain committed to the religion they were shaped in from childhood and three in ten (29%) have never been religious. Almost one in three Australians (31%), however, have changed their religious beliefs at some point. Australians who have changed their beliefs have done so in three ways, they have either chosen to no longer be religious (20%), chose their current religion after switching from a different one (7% – converter), or prior to choosing their current religion they were not religious (4% - adopter).

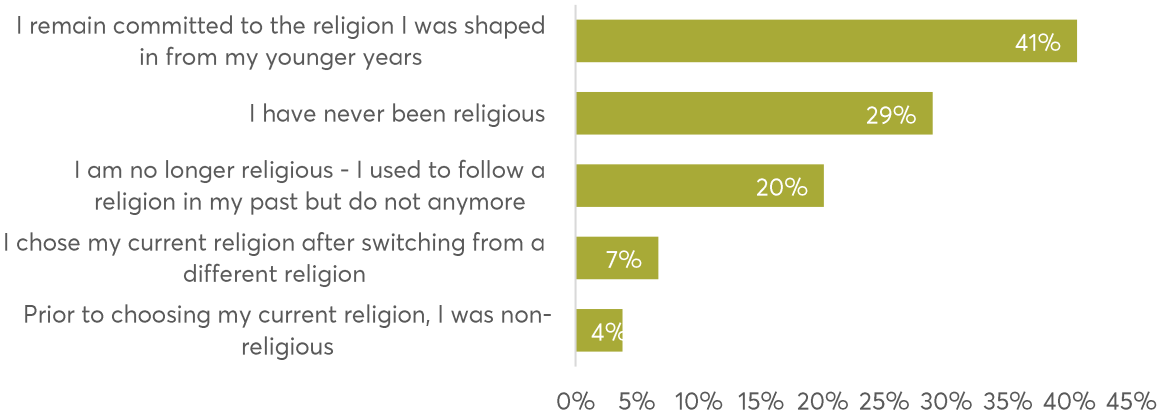
The key reasons Australians have shifted away from religion include a disagreement with the religion’s values and simply a loss of faith. For many, a loss of faith is a result of disbelief in the teachings and practices of both the religion itself and the behaviour of believers. Others have moved away from what they were taught in their

younger years and have formed their own views. Many Australians view religion as the continuation of traditional values that do not reflect the world we live in today. When asked what led them to change their religious beliefs, Australians shared:

- Learning what I truly believe in, and not what others placed upon me.
- It has caused a lot of racism and put a gap in the understanding of different cultures.
- Religion I was raised in is sexist, racist, homophobic and generally toxic.

Interestingly, Australians who were born overseas (54%) are more likely to remain committed to the religion they were shaped in from their younger years than those born in Australia (36%).

Which of the following BEST describes your CURRENT religious status?



Three in four Australians are warm towards Christianity.

In an increasingly spiritually diverse landscape, unity and respect are key elements of a cohesive society.

Almost two in five Australians consider themselves a Christian (37%). This is lower than the overall proportion of Australians who identify with Christianity (46%) which may be influenced by the large proportion of Australians who identify with Christianity but do not attend church (45%).

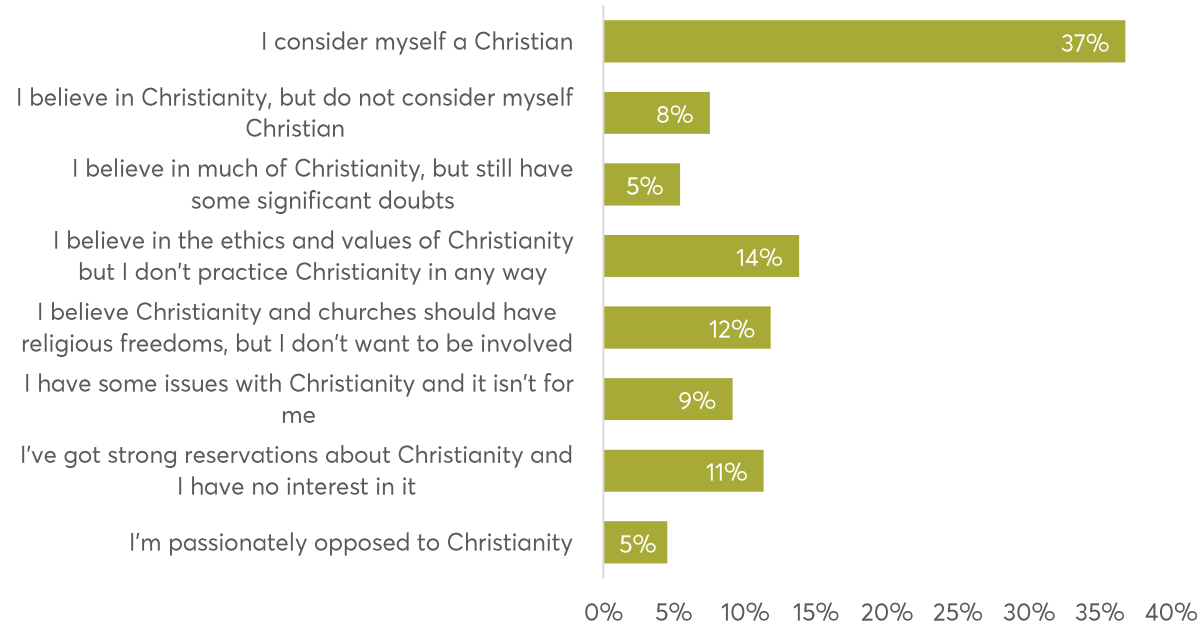
Almost two in five (39%) Australians are warm or neutral towards Christianity. Those who are warm or neutral to Christianity are comprised of those who believe in Christianity but don't consider themselves a Christian (8%), believe in much of Christianity but still have some significant doubts (5%), believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but don't practice (14%), believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms but don't want to be involved (12%), have some issues with Christianity and it isn't for me (9%), have strong reservations about Christianity and no interest in it (11%) or are passionately opposed to Christianity (5%).

(5%), believe in the ethics and values of Christianity but don't practice (14%) or believe Christianity and churches should have religious freedoms but don't want to be involved (12%).

One in four Australians (25%), however, are cool towards Christianity. This group comprises of those who have issues with Christianity, suggesting it isn't for them (9%), have strong reservations and no interest in it (11%) or are passionately opposed to Christianity (5%).

Those who are born in Australia (28%) are more likely to be cool towards Christianity than those born overseas (17%).

Which of the following best describes your current attitudes towards Christianity?



Emergence of modern-day Australia

In thinking about which occasions are key to Australia's history and identity, Australians believe ANZAC Day (83%) and Remembrance Day (77%) are extremely/very important. These occasions are more important to the identity of Australia than Australia Day (68%) and National Sorry Day (39%). Christian holidays have also had an impact on the identity of Australia with 69% considering Christmas and 56% seeing Easter as extremely/very important to the identity of Australia.

While it is the race that stops the nation, Australians are less likely to see the Melbourne Cup (33%) or other sporting events such as grand final days (39%) as extremely/very important to the identity of Australia.

The relationship with First Nations Peoples is possibly more top of mind for younger Australians when they consider how different occasions shape the national identity. Younger generations are more likely to consider National Sorry Day important to the identity of Australia (50% Gen Z, 49% Gen Y cf. 37% Gen X, 31% Baby Boomers, 11% Builders). Whereas older Australians are more likely to consider Australia Day as extremely/very important to the identity of Australia (74% Builders, 76% Baby Boomers, 74% Gen X cf. 65% Gen Y, 53% Gen Z).

Australia the egalitarian nation

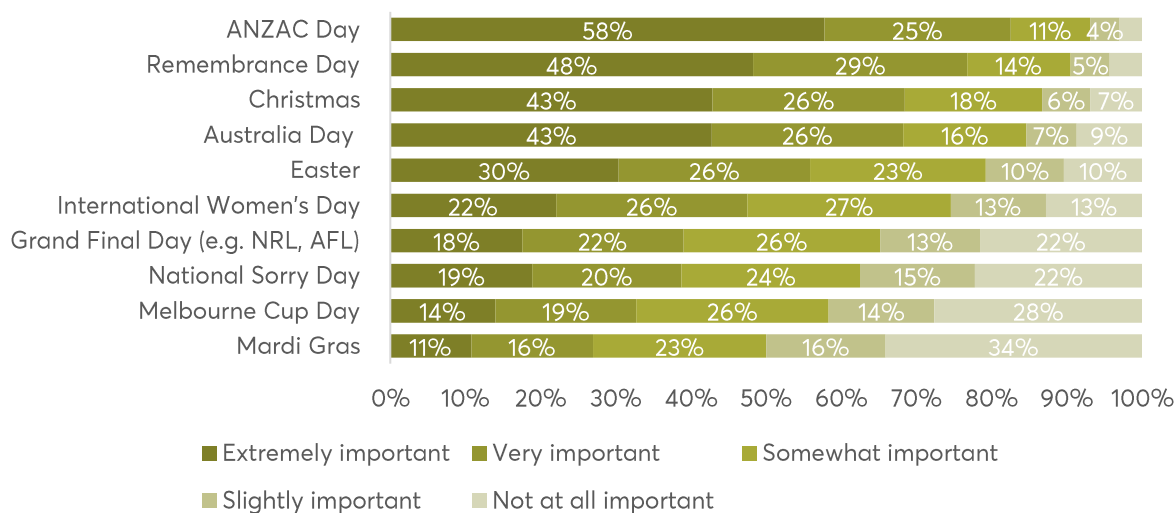
With the concept of the 'fair go' embedded in Australian culture, it is unsurprising that the core value Australians are most likely to associate with Australian society is equal opportunity for all (65%). This is followed by honesty (59%), mateship (59%), freedom and dignity of the individual (59%) and mutual respect (59%).

Australians are less likely to see the rule of law (43%) and integrity (45%) as core values of Australian society, although these are still strong results.

Older Australians are more likely to believe that all of the listed values are core to Australian society. The areas of greatest difference, however, highlight that democracy (75% Builders, 77% Baby Boomers cf. 53% Gen X, 47% Gen Y, 38% Gen Z), the rule of law (67% Builders, 61% Baby Boomers cf. 37% Gen X, 32% Gen Y, 33% Gen Z) and tolerance (58% Builders, 62% Baby Boomers cf. 47% Gen X, 36% Gen Y, 32% Gen Z) are more likely to be considered core values of Australian society by older Australians.

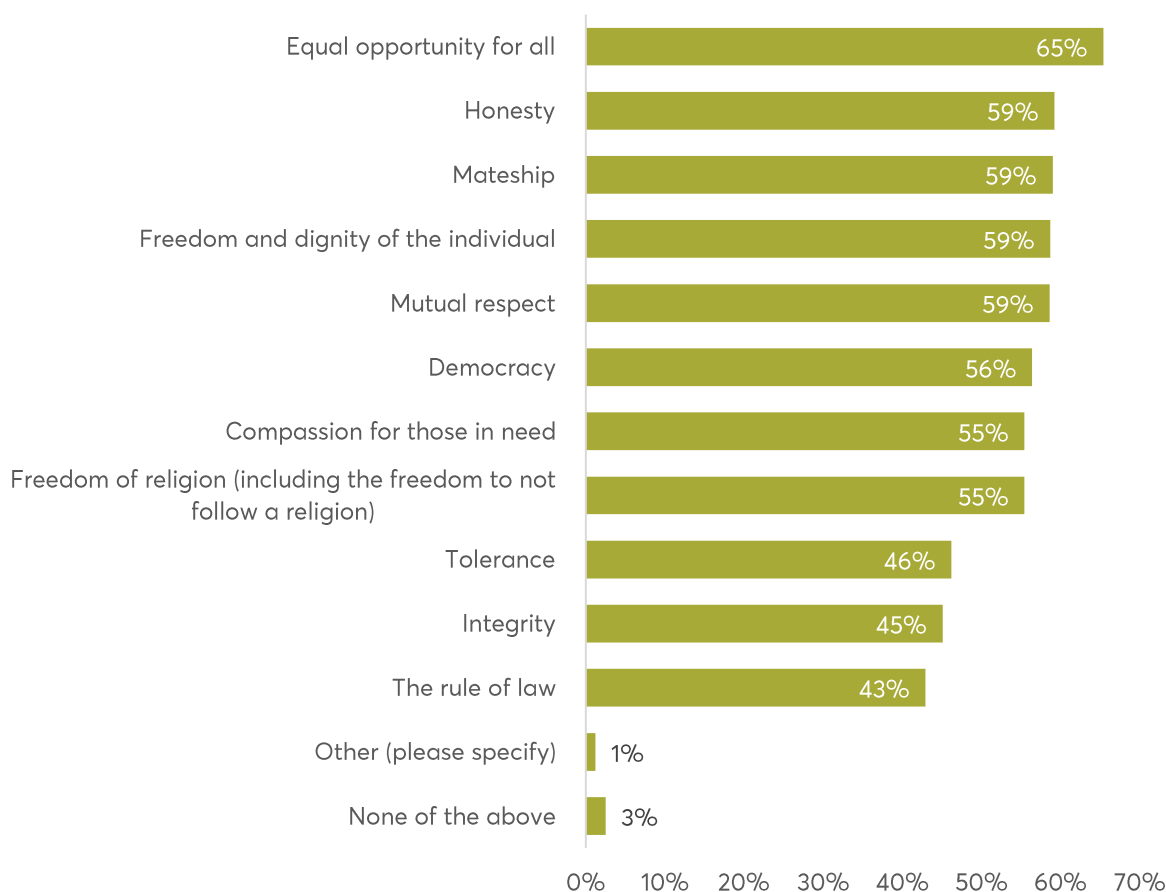
Top three values by generation				
Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Builders
Equal opportunity for all (58%)	Equal opportunity for all (62%)	Equal opportunity for all (64%)	Democracy (77%)	Freedom of religion (75%)/ Democracy (75%)
Freedom and dignity of the individual (53%)/ Honesty (53%)	Mutual respect (54%)	Mateship (61%)	Mateship (73%)/ Equal opportunity for all (73%)	Equal opportunity for all (72%)
Mutual respect (50%)	Honesty (52%)	Freedom and dignity of the individual (58%)	Honesty (71%)	Freedom and dignity of the individual (71%)

How important are the following occasions to the identity of Australia?



What do you believe are the core values of Australian society?

Please select all that apply.



The impacts of Australia’s Christian heritage live on

While Christianity is less front and centre in modern day Australia, its influence lives on. Three in four Australians (78%) agree that the influence of Christianity has shaped Australian society.

Australians believe faith and religion have played an important role in shaping Australian society through our values and morals. Four in five Australians (80%) agree that the values of Australian society today are influenced by our Christian heritage.

Older Australians are more likely than their younger counterparts to believe that the values of Australian society today are influenced by our Christian heritage (91% Builders, 86% Baby Boomers cf. 76% Gen X, 79% Gen Y, 73% Gen Z).

Interestingly, Australians born overseas (85%) are more likely than those born in Australia (78%) to agree that the values of Australian society today are influenced by our Christian heritage.

Unsurprisingly more than nine in ten Australians who consider themselves Christians (93%) believe the values of Australians today were influenced by our Christian heritage.

What is of note, however, is that four in five Australians who are warm or neutral to Christianity (80%) believe the Christian heritage has played a part in shaping our values. While a lesser proportion, three in five of those who are cool to Christianity (61%) still recognise the impact of our Christian heritage on shaping the values of modern-day Australia.

Christian values and core Australian values align

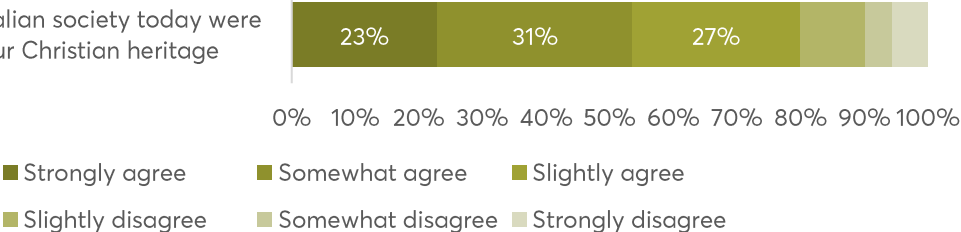
The values that guide Australians in their decisions reflect core Australian values as well as values that are often linked to Christianity and attributed to Jesus (pg. 29-32).

Positively, almost all Australians are guided in their decisions by honesty (96%) and fairness (96%). This is followed by compassion (95%), integrity (94%) and care for others (94%). While Australians are slightly less likely to be led by generosity (90%) and forgiveness (88%), they still have a significant influence on Australians’ decisions.

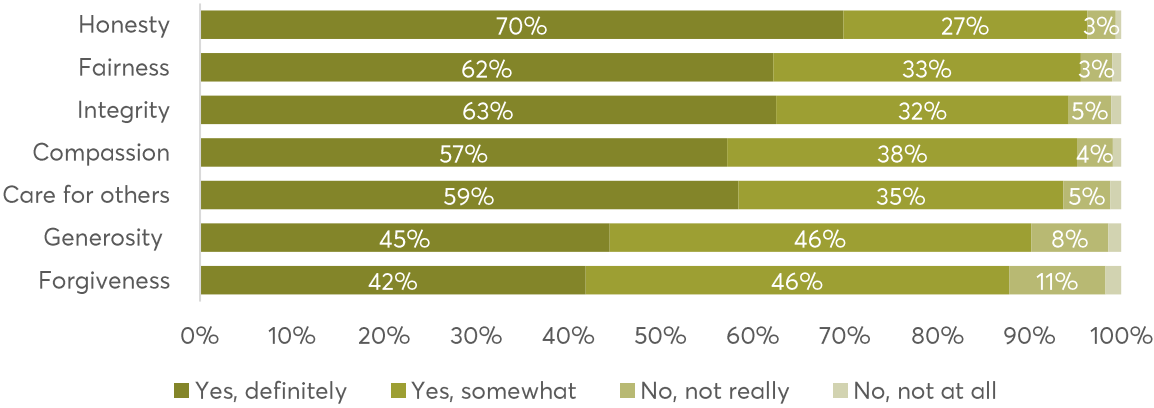
Builders are more likely than Gen Z to be guided in their decisions by honesty (100% Builders cf. 93% Gen Z) and fairness (100% Builders cf. 93% Gen Z).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

The values of Australian society today were influenced by our Christian heritage



Are you guided in your decisions by the following values?



Christianity shaping the pillars of society.

While Christianity is declining in practice in modern-day Australia, the role it has played in shaping society is undeniable. Australians see the impact of our Christian heritage significantly, strongly or somewhat shaping charities (87%), family structure (82%) and education (79%). More than three in four Australians believe it has shaped our courts/law (75%), hospitals and healthcare (74%) and government (72%).

Positively, even the areas least shaped by our Christian heritage; economy (62%) and media (56%), still show how important a role Christianity plays in Australia today.

Once again, all Australians, not just those who consider themselves Christians, recognise the impact of Christianity on Australian society. Those who are cool to Christianity are more likely to believe Christian heritage has shaped charities (76% cool cf. 87% warm/neutral, 93% Christians), education (68% cool cf. 78% warm/neutral, 86% Christians) and family structure (67% cool cf. 84% warm/neutral, 90% Christians).

The role of the church

Many Australians recognise that the Christian church has had a positive impact in Australian society. The area in which Australians believe the Christian church has had the greatest impact is

caring for vulnerable communities (86%). This is followed by instilling morals and values (81%) and providing education (81%).

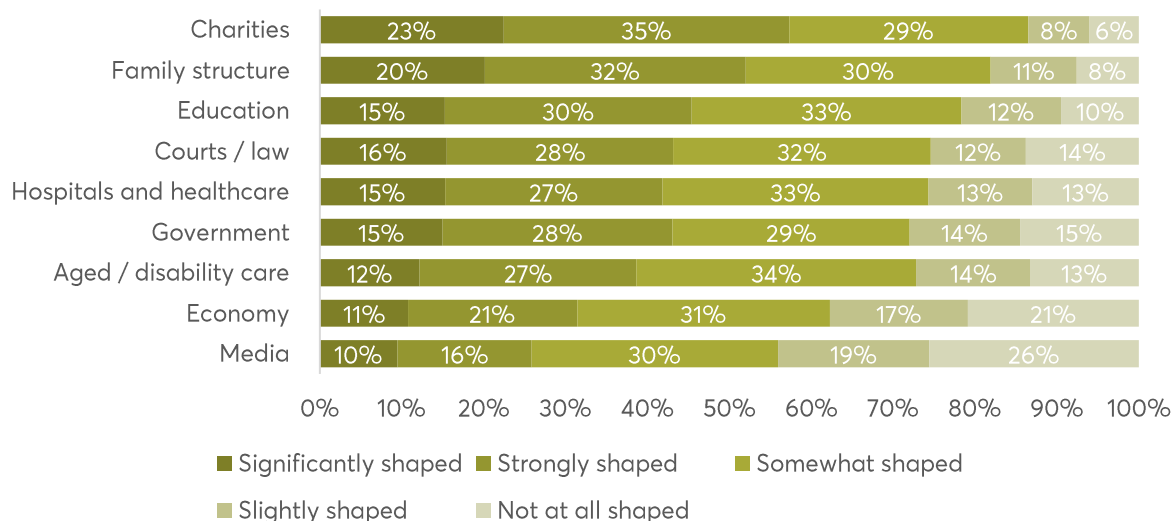
Around three quarters of Australians believe the Christian church has had a positive impact on advocating for social justice (76%) and developing leaders of good character (73%). While still acknowledging the positive impact of the church, Australians to a lesser degree believe the Christian church has had a positive impact on advocating for women's rights (66%) and the relationship with First Nations People (62%).

The area Australians are least likely to believe the church has had a positive impact is in advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights (43%).

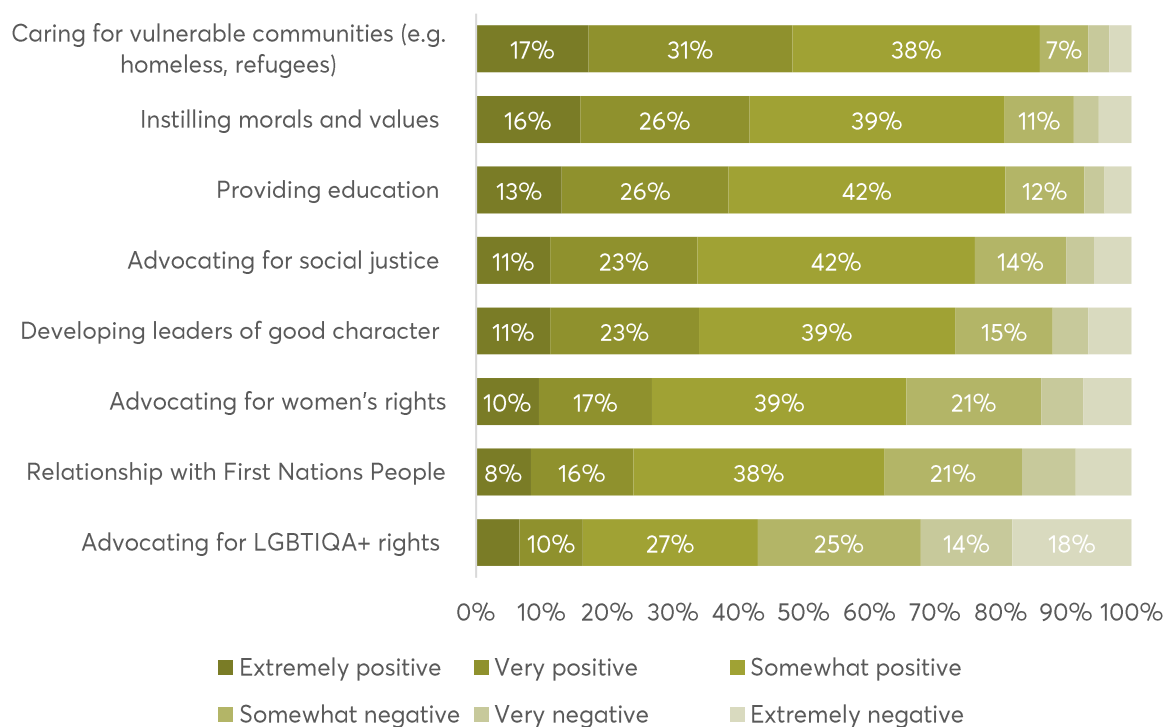
Interestingly Gen Z are more likely than Builders to say a positive impact of the Christian church is advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights (55% Gen Z cf. 36% Builders).

Australians born overseas are more likely to recognise the positive impact of the Christian Church on society. The greatest differences between those born overseas and those born in Australia are in the advocacy of women's rights (73% born overseas cf. 63% born in Australia) and the development of leaders of good character (80% born overseas cf. 71% born in Australia).

To what extent do you believe Australia's Christian heritage has shaped the following areas of society?



What impact has the Christian church had on the following areas of Australian society?



Perceptions of Christians

Most Australians know a Christian

Nine in ten Australians (90%) know someone who is a Christian, meaning only one in ten Australians (10%) do not know a Christian. More than three in five Australians (63%) know more than five Christians, with the largest proportion knowing between 11-20+ people who are Christians (44%).

The characteristics Australians most commonly use to describe the Christians that they know are caring (51%), kind (50%), honest (45%), loving (42%) and generous (39%). The characteristics Australians are least likely to ascribe to the Christians that they know are intolerant (12%), insensitive (9%), authoritarian (8%), exclusive (8%) and rude (7%).

This is interesting, particularly as Australians are more attracted to explore the Christian faith when they see a genuine faith being lived out. Almost two in three Australians (65%) would be strongly/somewhat attracted to explore the Christian faith further by seeing firsthand people

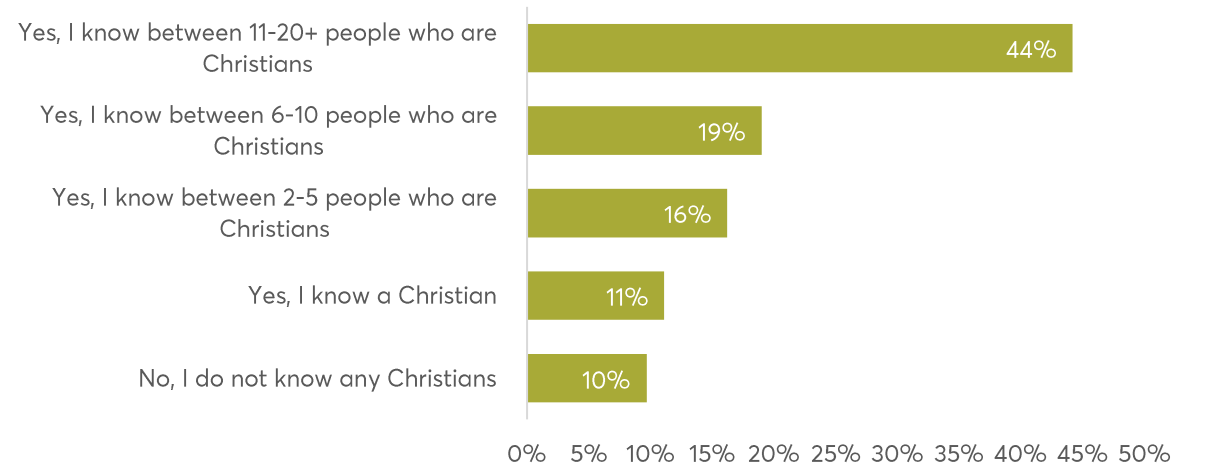
who live out a genuine faith. This is followed by experiencing a personal trauma or significant life event (64%) and stories and testimonies from people who have changed because of their faith (61%).

Builders are more likely than their younger counterparts to describe Christians as caring (66% cf. 45% Gen Z), kind (62% cf. 52% Gen Z), and honest (61% cf. 37%). Gen Z, however, are more likely than their older counterparts to describe Christians as old fashioned (36% cf. 28% Builders), naive (19% cf. 9%) and rude (10% cf. 1%). This is possibly a reflection of the changing perception of the role that faith and religion play in society today.

Males (57%) are more attracted than females (46%) to explore Christianity further by being exposed to the Bible and its teaching.

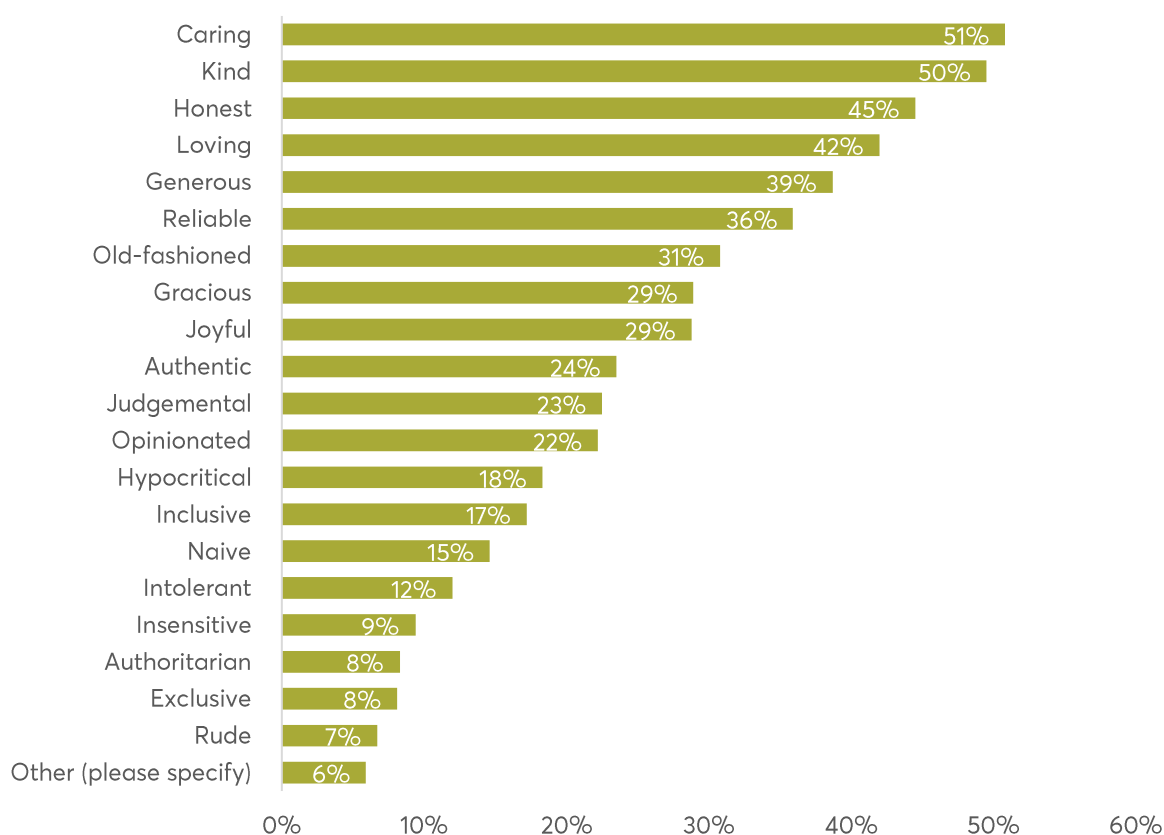
Australians who are warm/neutral to Christianity are most attracted to the Christian faith by seeing firsthand people live out a genuine faith (64%).

Do you know someone who is a Christian?

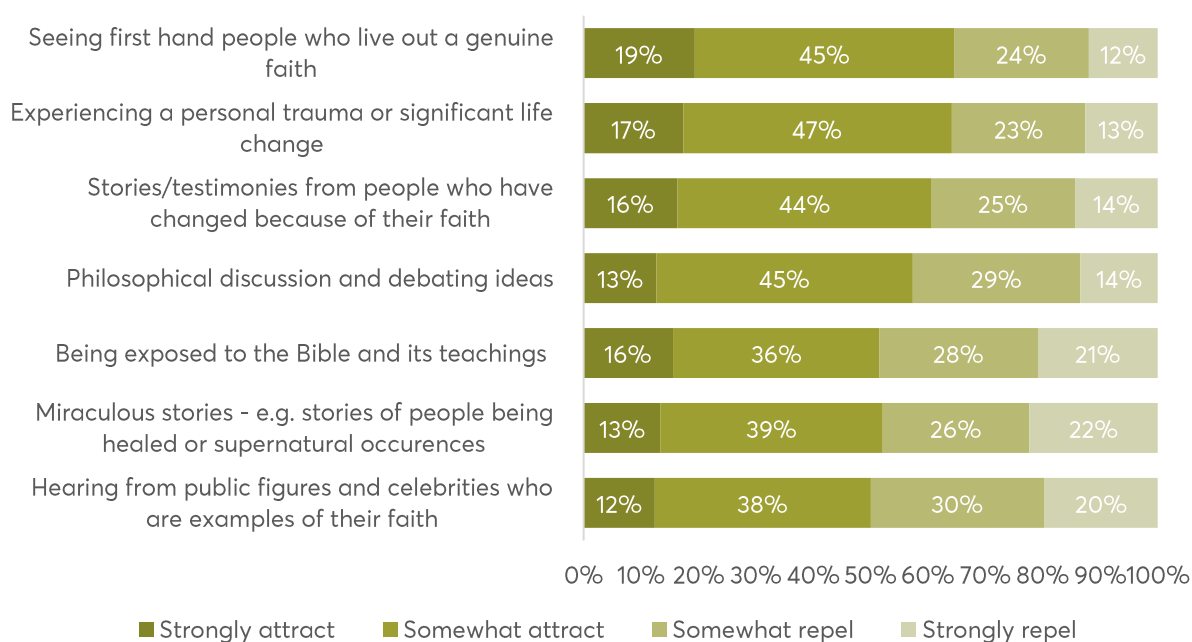


How would you describe the Christians you know?

Please select all that apply.



To what extent would the following attract or repel you from investigating Christian faith further?



Perceptions of Jesus

Three in four Australians (76%) believe Jesus’ life has had some level of importance on in the history and culture of Australia. In fact, more than a third of Australians (37%) believe Jesus’ life is extremely/very important to the history and culture of Australia.

Australians who were born overseas (82%) are more likely than those born in Australia (74%) to believe Jesus’ life has a level of importance to the history and culture of Australia.

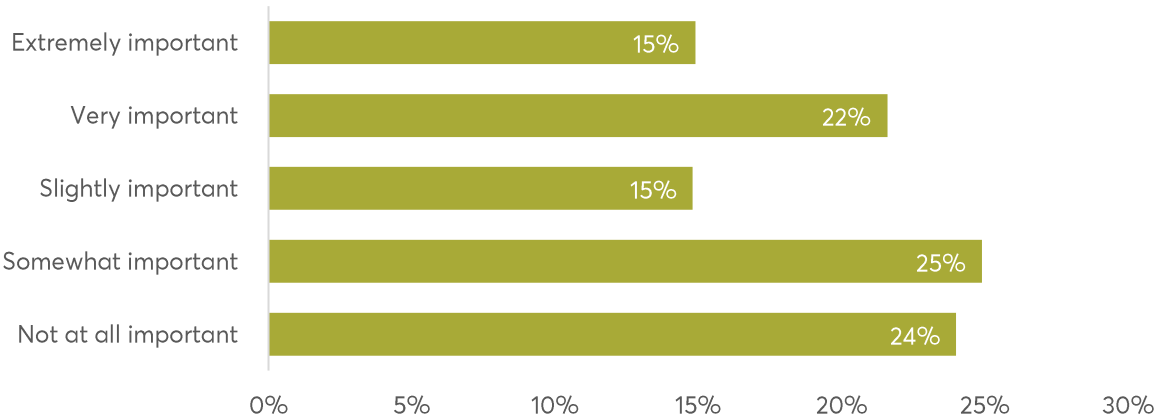
Unsurprisingly, 94% of Australians who consider themselves a Christian believe Jesus’ life is important to the history and culture of Australia. Almost four in five Australians who are warm/neutral to Christianity acknowledge the importance of Jesus’ life. This compares to 47% of Australians who are cool to Christianity.

Jesus associated with love

The top attributes Australians associate with Jesus are love (50%), compassion (49%), peace (47%), hope (45%) and mercy (43%).

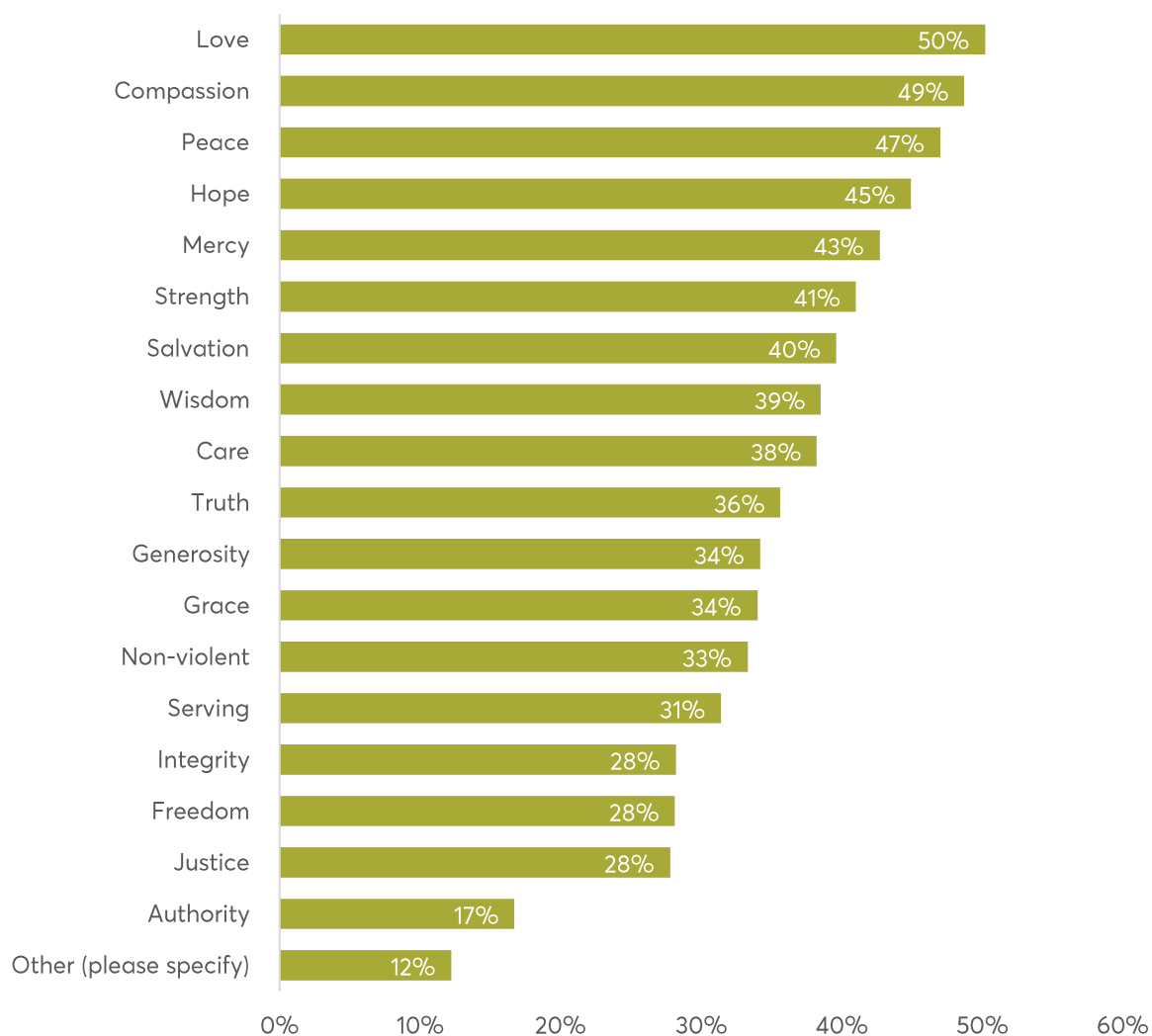
Australians who were born overseas are more likely than those born in Australia to associate Jesus with love (57% cf. 48%), mercy (49% cf. 40%) and care (44% cf. 36%).

How important was Jesus’ life on the history and culture of Australia?



What attributes do you associate with Jesus?

Please select all that apply.



Faith shapes individual identity

Australians are guided by faith and spirituality

Three in five Australians (60%) agree that they are guided by their faith and spirituality when making life decisions. For those who have a faith or belief, faith and spirituality is most likely to provide them with hope (59%), peace (54%) and comfort (50%). One in two (49%) find strength from their faith and spirituality.

While more than a third of Australians who have a faith or belief (36%) believe it provides them with a framework to live by, this is more prevalent in older Australians. Builders (59%) and Baby Boomers (47%) are more likely than younger generations to say faith and spirituality provides them with a framework to live by (cf. 29% Gen X, 26% Gen Y and 27% Gen Z).

Parents' beliefs are becoming less influential

Almost three in five Australians (58%) agree their parents' culture and beliefs have impacted their personal decisions about faith and spirituality. Only two in five Australians (40%), however, consider it extremely/very important to pass on their faith and beliefs to their children. This likely points to the changing role that faith and spirituality play in the lives of younger generations today and in the future.

While many Australians agree that their parents' beliefs have had a role in shaping their own, three in ten (30%) have changed their religious beliefs either by switching religions, becoming religious or leaving their religion (pg. 21). Of the Australians who have changed their belief in some way, many have turned from what they were taught by their parents as they adapt to the changing society of modern day Australia.

I was raised Christian but changed to Buddhism as I never felt aligned to Christianity or any other religions...Buddhism is more philosophy than religion.

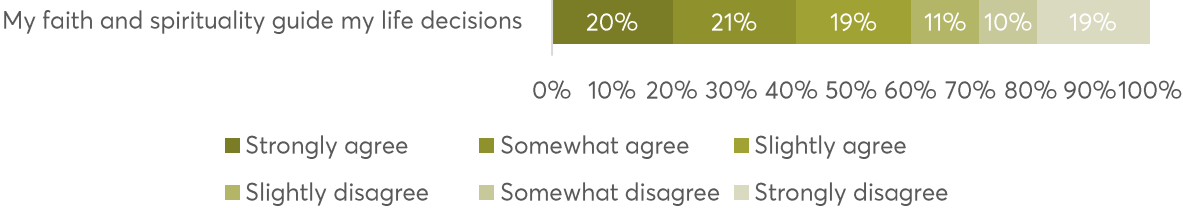
I was continually being forced to go to church as a child, but rebelled once I was in my teenage years.

Growing up and thinking for myself instead of my parent and grandparent telling me what I should believe in.

Those born overseas are more likely to be influenced by their parents' culture and belief when making decisions about faith and spirituality than those born in Australia (66% born overseas cf. 55% born in Australia).

Australians who consider themselves a Christian (79%) are more likely than those who are warm/neutral (55%) or cool (32%) towards Christianity to say their parents' culture and beliefs impacted their personal decisions about faith and spirituality.

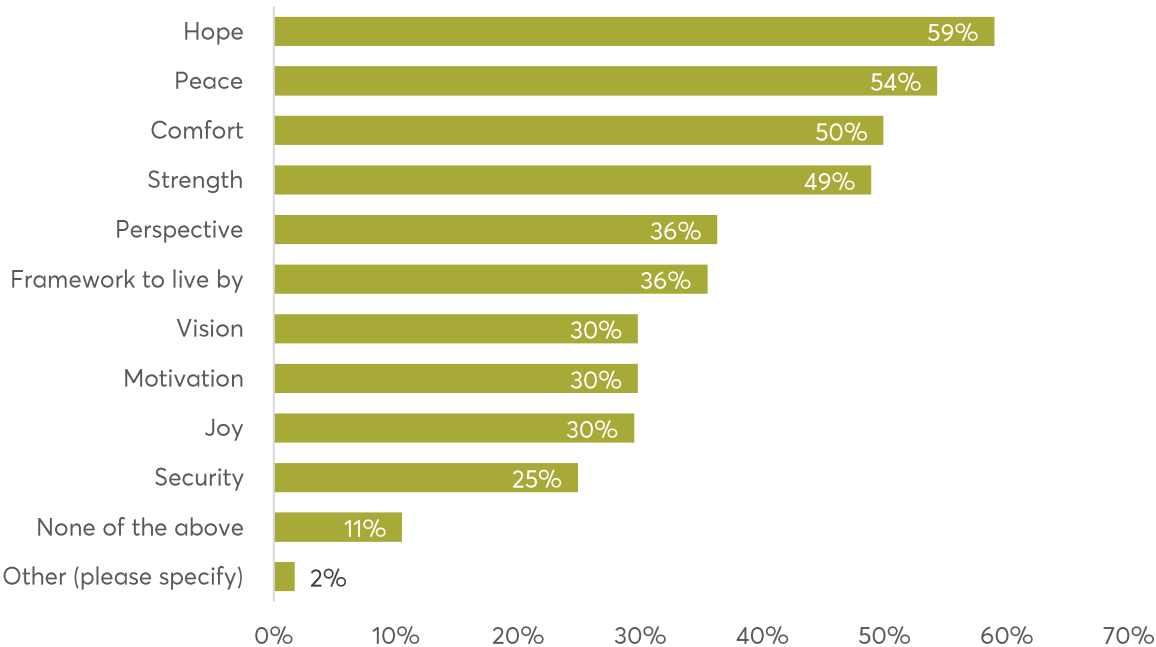
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.



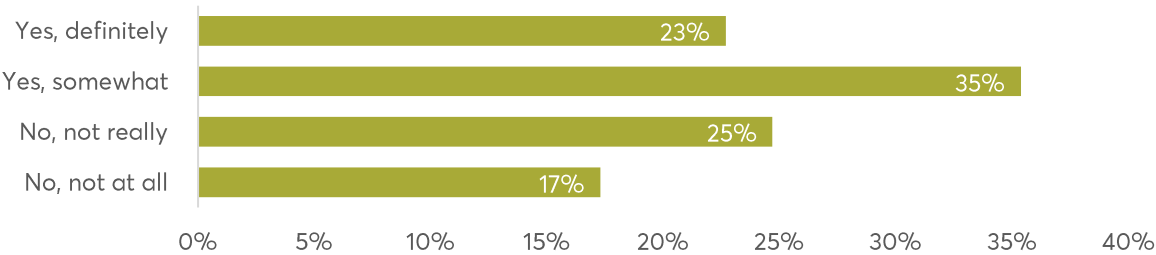
What does faith and spirituality provide you with?

Please select all that apply.

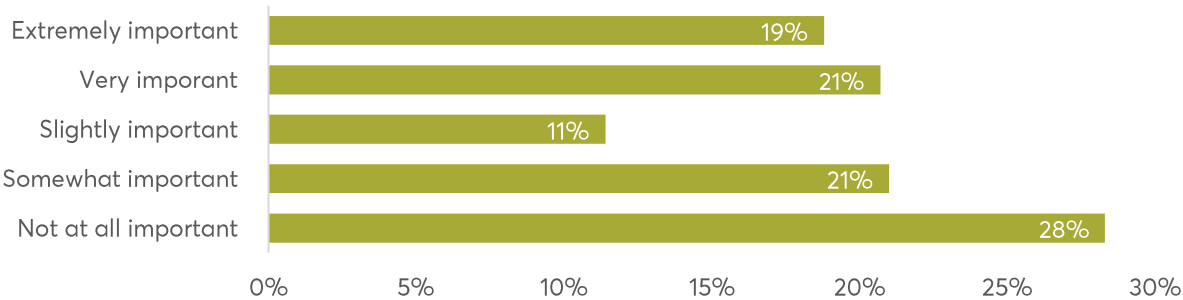
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Has your parents culture and beliefs impacted your personal decisions about faith and spirituality?



How important is it to pass on your faith and beliefs to your children?



Faith in times of crisis

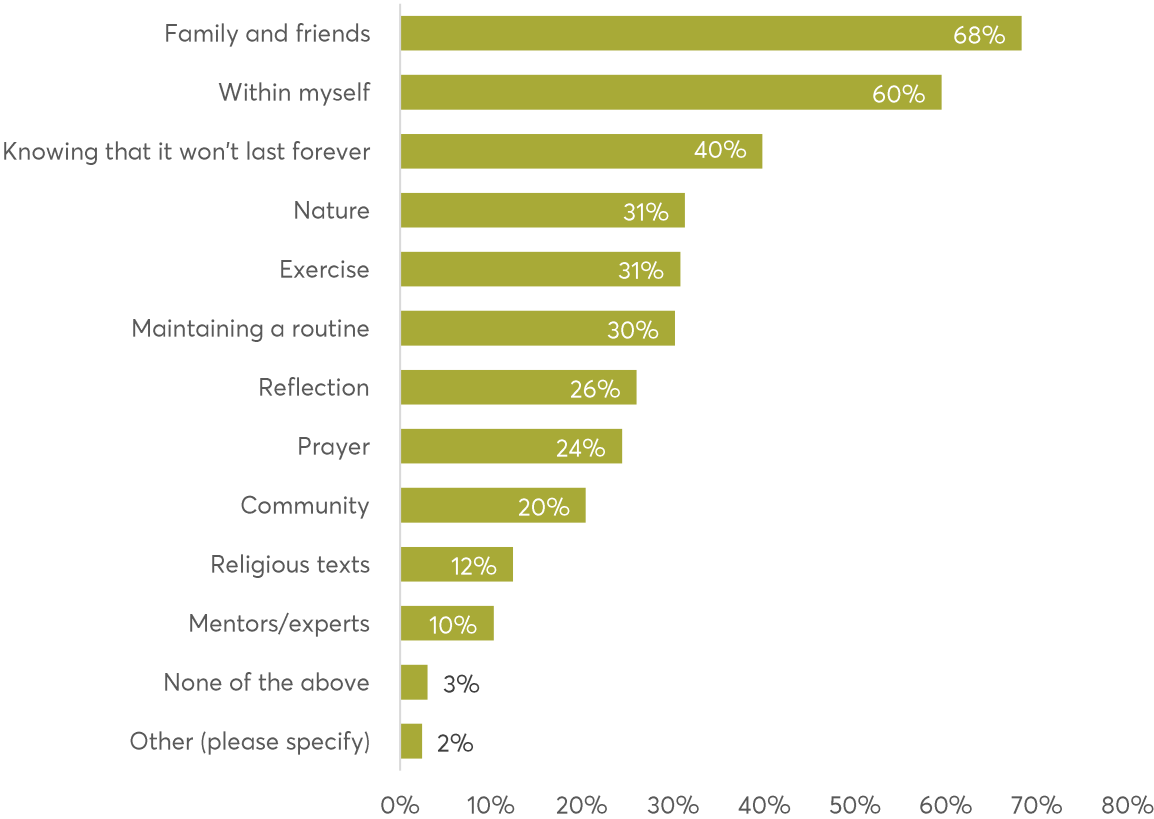
The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many Australians and indeed the world to its limit. While Australia as a nation is becoming increasingly spiritually diverse, the key sources of strength for Australians in times of crisis are their friends and family (68%) or themselves (60%). Three in ten Australians will turn to nature (31%), exercise (31%) or maintaining a routine (30%). This is before reflection (26%) and turning to prayer (24%) or religious texts (12%).

Older Australians are more likely than their younger counterparts to find strength through prayer (40% Builders, 27% Baby Boomers cf. 24% Gen X, 24% Gen Y, 15% Gen Z).

Australians born overseas are more likely than those born in Australia to find strength in prayer (33% cf. 21%), reflection (29% cf. 25%), community (24% cf. 19%) and religious texts (17% cf. 11%). Those born in Australia, however, are more likely to find strength in maintaining a routine (31% cf. 27%).

Where do you find strength in times of crisis?

Please select all that apply.



The thread of spirituality in Australian society

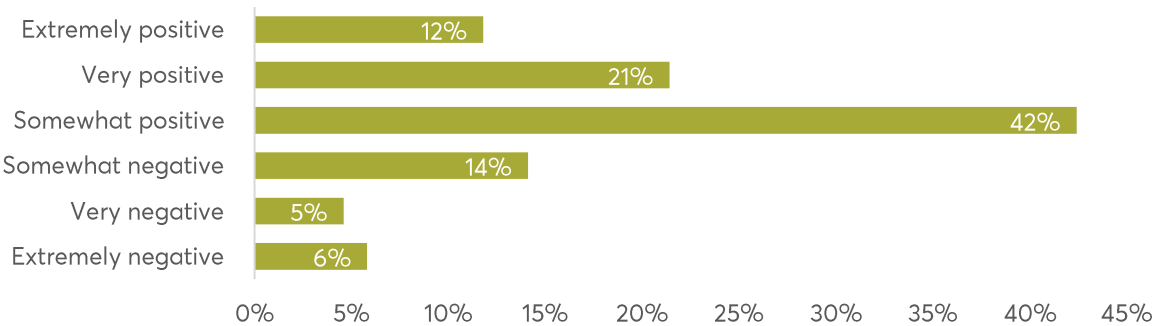
While the Christian Church is not perfect, just over three in four Australians (76%) believe Christianity has had a positive impact on Australian society. This positive impact is mainly seen in caring for vulnerable communities (86%), instilling morals and values (81%) and providing education (81%) (pg. 27-28). While cultural Christianity is on the decline, Australians still recognise the positive impact Christianity has had in shaping modern-day Australia.

As migration continues to contribute to population growth, it is likely that cultural and spiritual

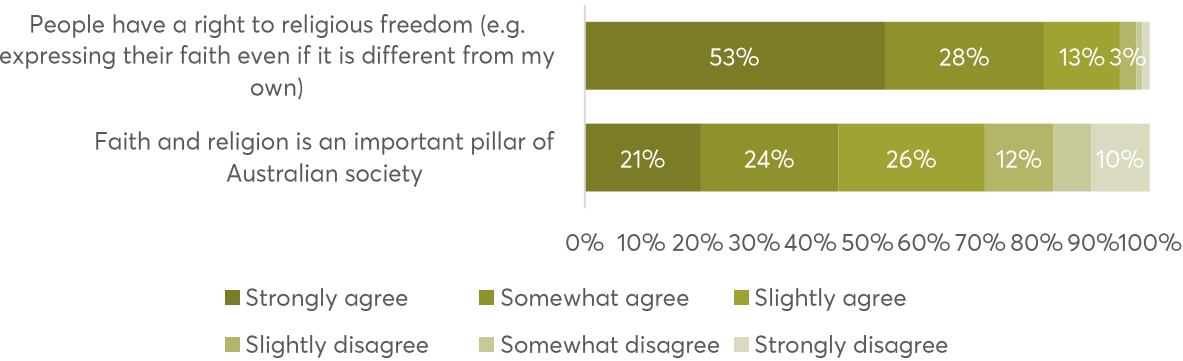
diversity will continue to increase. It is positive, therefore, that 95% of Australians agree that people have a right to religious freedom (expressing their faith even if it is different from their own). This reflects the growing acceptance of all Australians towards the diverse views and beliefs in society today.

The impact of faith and spirituality on the history of Australia It is undeniable. It is also likely to play a role in the future of the nation with seven in ten Australians (71%) agreeing that faith and religion is an important pillar of Australian society.

Overall, do you think Christianity has had a positive or negative impact on Australian society?



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.





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