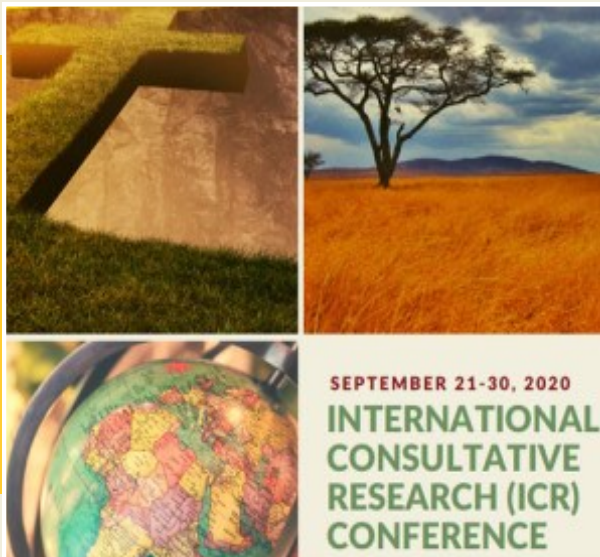


Pastoral Research Online

Issue 51

December 2020



NCPR staff presented papers at two virtual conferences recently. More details about these on page 6.
PC Credits: cara.georgetown.edu and apto.asn.au

Dear Readers,

As we come to the end of what has been truly challenging year for everyone, we are immensely grateful for the many blessings we have received. As a team, we were challenged by disrupted work schedules, travel restrictions and new work environments at home, yet we were able to discover new ways of connecting online and collaborating across the distance. We thank the staff at the Bishops Conference who helped make this possible and our families for their patience and support.

We've had an extremely busy year, with a series of reports published in many projects. Key among these were the Social Profiles for parishes and dioceses and a number of special reports from the National Church Life Survey. In this newsletter, we bring you additional findings on Mass Attendance, the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes on Religion and the ACBC Gender Equality Report. Also included is information on a number of smaller research projects commissioned during the year and our upcoming research activities in 2021.

Thank you to all those who support our team and our work. We rely on you greatly to continue our mission to support the Church through pastoral research. We wish you many blessings this Christmas and through the new year. God bless you and your loved ones!

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- Mass Attendance Report
- New Reports on the NCPR Website
- Plenary Council update
- Women in the ACBC—Gender Equality Report
- Recent Research & Conferences
- Upcoming 2021 Research Projects

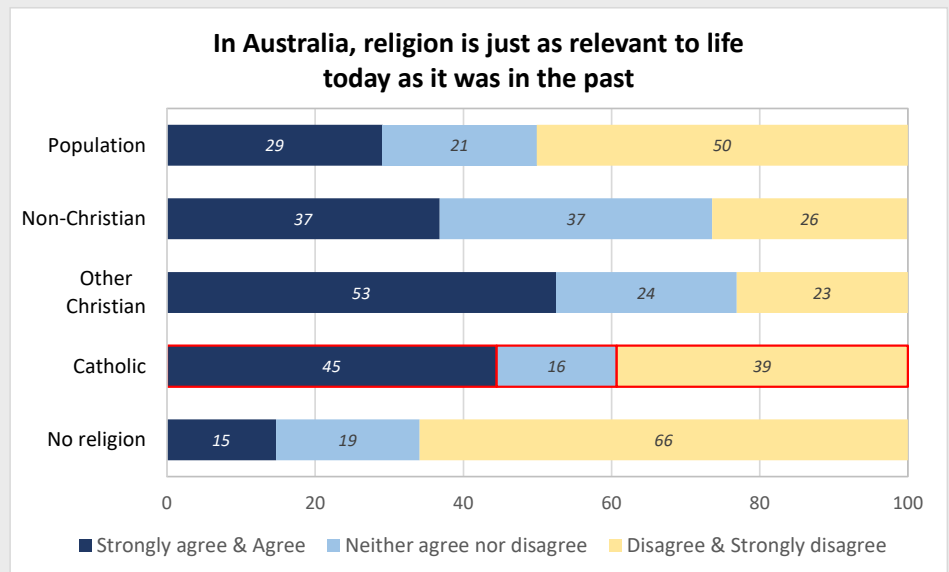
Australian Survey of Social Attitudes On Religion

Australian Catholics' Attitudes to Religion Today

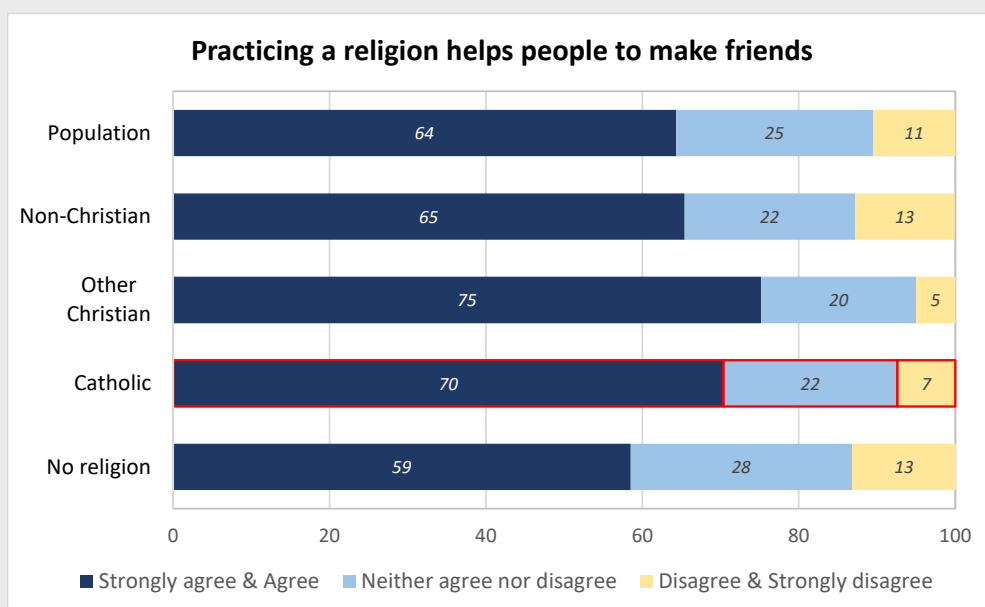


The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes is a nationally representative sample survey conducted every year. In the 2018 survey, a series of questions was asked about people's attitudes to the relevance and benefits of religion in society today. Additional demographic questions included religious identification, so we are able to compare the responses of various religious groups. In the following analysis, 'Other Christians' include all people who identified with a Christian denomination other than Catholic, while 'Non-Christian' includes only those who identified with other non-Christian religions.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that religion is just as relevant to life today as it was in the past. Overall, around 29 per cent of the population agreed or strongly agreed with that statement, while 21 per cent were unsure and half disagreed or strongly disagreed. Not surprisingly, those who identified with a religion were more likely to agree with the statement



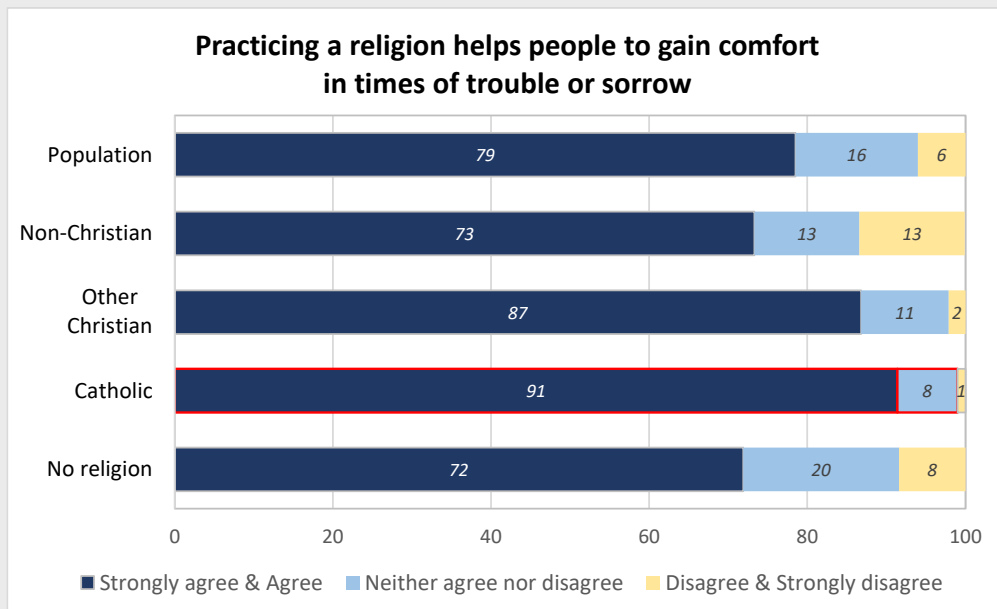
than those who did not have a religion. Forty-five per cent of all Catholics agreed to some extent that religion was as relevant today as in the past, while 39 per cent disagreed to some extent.



When asked whether practicing a religion helped people to make friends, almost two-thirds of Australians (64%) agreed or strongly agreed, while just 11 per cent disagreed to some extent. Among Catholics, 70 per cent agreed that religion helped people make friends, while seven per cent disagreed.

An associated question then asked respondents if they thought that practicing a religion helped people to gain comfort in times of trouble or sorrow. Almost four out of five Australians (79%) agreed with the statement to some extent, while 16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. Six per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Just over nine in every

ten Catholics (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that practicing a religion brought comfort during trouble or sorrow, while the remaining nine per cent were unsure or disagreed to some extent.



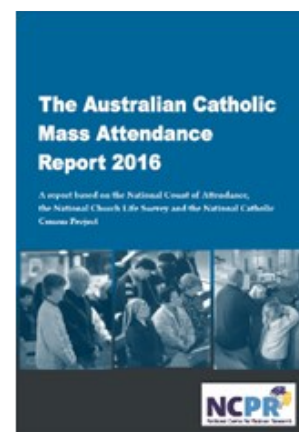
Source of data: Evans, Anne, 2019-05-14, Australian Survey of Social Attitudes 2018.

Mass Attendance Report

2016 Mass Attendance Report released

A new report has just been completed on Australian Mass attenders, based on data from three NCPR projects: the 2016 National Count of Attendance, the 2016 National Church Life Survey and the 2016 National Catholic Census Project. The report provides a detailed review of the demographics of Mass attenders, as well as changes in attendance patterns over the last two decades.

While most findings in the new report have been reported in other NCPR publications, this one brings it all together to provide a comprehensive picture of contemporary Mass attendance in Australia. The report contains numerous tables, graphs and charts, along with simple commentary, providing an exhaustive summary of the current situation in Catholic dioceses and Australia as a whole.



The Australian Catholic Mass Attendance Report 2016 is available for download from the NCPR website: <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/national-count-of-attendance/>

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS REPORT

- In 2016, the number of people at Mass in Australia on a typical weekend was about 623,400, or 11.8 per cent of the Catholic population.
- The percentage of Mass attenders born in non-English-speaking countries has risen from about 18 per cent in 1996 to almost 37 per cent in 2016.
- Over the last 20 years, the number of attenders born in Australia and in other English-speaking countries has almost halved.
- Almost one third of Mass attenders (32.5%) are currently aged between 60 and 74 years, and attenders overall are ageing.
- Over three in every five attenders are women; this ratio has remained unchanged over five successive surveys.

New Reports on the NCPR Website

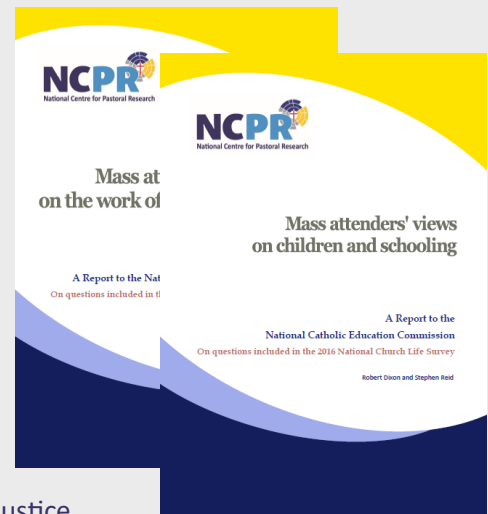
New NCLS Reports now available online

A number of reports prepared from data gathered during the 2016 National Church Life Survey have now been released on the NCPR website. Catholic parishes have participated in the last four National Church Life Surveys in 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016. Attenders of participating parishes were asked to complete a questionnaire which investigated a wide range of topics. The information provided was able to be compared across demographic characteristics and, where possible, comparisons with previous surveys were also made.

A list of the most recently released reports are as follows:

- Special Report 6: Mass attenders' views and involvement in social justice
- Special Report 7: Mass attenders' views of Parish Pastoral Councils
- Special Report 8: Mass attenders' attitudes and practices on public policy and voting
- Special Report 9: Mass attenders' views on children and schooling
- Special Report 10: Mass attenders' opinions on selected social issues
- Special Report 11: Mass attenders' thoughts on the work of Catholic Mission
- Special Report 12: Mass attenders' awareness and impressions of the work of Caritas

For copies of the reports, go to <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/national-church-life-survey-ncls/>



Journey to Plenary Council 2018-2022 Update

New Timeline for Plenary Council

COVID-19 has presented us with many challenges, some of which have resulted in the postponement of the first Plenary Council assembly. However, just as we find time and time again in the Scripture readings, challenges present us with opportunities to learn, grow and connect closer to God.

To this end, the Plenary Council Facilitation Team have taken the opportunity of this extended period to put together a reflection guide for responding to the Thematic Discernment Papers. This can be accessed at this link: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Reflection-Resource-2020.pdf>

Discernment is a critical component of the preparation stage of the Plenary Council. This Reflection Guide is an invitation, and another opportunity, to engage in the discernment process and to listen deeply to the voice of the Spirit and to one another.

The reflection guide also allows for communities to gather together and reflect on the events of this year and how COVID-19 has affected people both personally and spiritually. We, at the NCPR, could not think of a better time than at Advent for local Church communities to come together, either in person or online, and reflect both on the journey of the past 12 months and on the road ahead, as we look to the first gathering of the Plenary Council in October 2021.



Women in the ACBC - Gender Equality Report

Women in the Bishops Conference

The Women as Church conference organised by Broken Bay Institute was held virtually in November this year. One of the papers at this conference was presented by Mrs Louise Zavone (Executive Secretary for two Bishops Commissions and two Episcopal Panels) and Dr Trudy Dantis on the topic, “Women who make a difference in the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC)”. A part of this presentation reported findings on the employment of women in the ACBC over five years. This data comes from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Public Report submitted by the ACBC to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency every year.

Table 1: Manager Occupational Categories by Sex , 2020

| | Females | Males | Total employees |
|------------------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|
| CEO/Head of Business in Australia | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| Key management personnel | 10 | 13 | 23 |
| Office executives/General managers | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Senior managers | 6 | 8 | 14 |
| Other managers | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Total managers | 30 | 27 | 57 |
| Total non managers * | 71 | 35 | 106 |
| Grand total - all staff | 101 | 62 | 163 |

* Note: nearly all of the non-manager employees were professionals or clerical/administrative workers

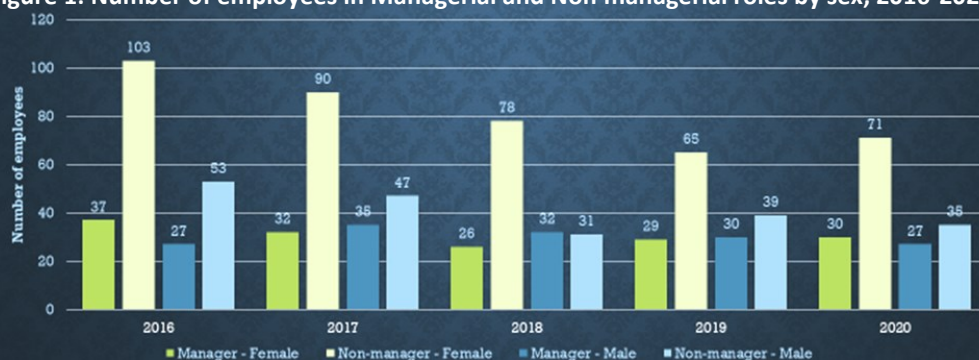
Source: Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) Public Report, 2020

Table 1 shows the manager occupational categories by sex. Overall, in 2020, there were more women (62%) working in managerial and non-managerial roles as compared to men (38%). More women than men also held key managerial roles in occupational categories such as Heads of businesses or CEOs, Office Executives or General

managers and Other Managers. The WGEA report indicated that during the year, 67 per cent of employees awarded promotions were women and 33 per cent were men. On the other hand, similar percentages of both men and women resigned from their positions during the year.

The chart below shows the number of employees in managerial and non-managerial roles over five years between 2016 to 2020. There is a striking preponderance of women in non-managerial roles, although a larger proportion of these are professionals, while others are clerical or administrative workers. The managerial category is more equally balanced, with more women than men in 2016 and 2020, while men outnumber women in other years.

Figure 1: Number of employees in Managerial and Non-managerial roles by sex, 2016-2020



* Note: nearly all of the non-manager employees were professionals or clerical/administrative workers

There are two important points to note about this data. *One*, employment roles within the ACBC largely depend on the structures of the Conference. As these structures change—some departments or agencies cease operations and others are established—new

roles emerge and existing ones cease. This could explain the fluctuating changes in numbers over time to some extent. *Two*, the figures represented in this report are only of those employed by the Conference. There are many men and women in advisory capacities who volunteer their service on Councils, Commissions and other advisory bodies. Their roles are not represented here. More information on these women, who they are and what they do can be accessed by contacting Louise Zavone at louise.zavone@catholic.org.au.

Research Projects in 2020

Review of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival

This project was commissioned by the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry to study the impact of the Australian Catholic Youth Festival on participants, particularly in areas of faith, vocation and youth leadership. The methodology for this project was secondary research. This involved the analysis of registration data collected at previous ACYF events and also data from five key research projects, including the 2017 *Bishops Youth Survey* and the *Plenary Council Phase 1: Listening and Dialogue*. The final report of this project will be published in the coming months.

Professional Development for Bishops Survey

This survey was undertaken by the Centre in response to an invitation by the Permanent Committee to investigate the needs for formation and professional development for bishops. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What are the particular needs for formation of bishops in their first years of episcopal ministry?
- What are the needs of bishops for ongoing professional development?
- What is the length of time annually for formation and ongoing professional development, and the preferred period(s) of time in each year when this might occur?

Data collection was carried out through means of an online survey developed in Qualtrics and all bishops in Australia were invited to participate. The findings of the survey were used to inform a discussion at the bishops' Plenary Meeting and guide the development of suitable programs for formation and professional development.

Bishops Conference COVID-19 Staff Survey

The Leadership Group at the General Secretariat invited the Centre to run a short survey to help understand how those working for the Bishops Conference fared during COVID-19. This "point in time" online survey was developed in Qualtrics and all ACBC staff were invited to participate. The findings of the survey were reported back to the Leadership Group and used to inform their understanding of how Conference staff could be best supported during this period.

Recent Conferences

International Consultative Research (ICR) Conference

Held over two weeks between 21 and 30 September 2020, the ICR Conference was focussed on developing an international network of Catholic research centres through which religious life was studied. Trudy Dantis from the NCPR presented on Day 2 of the conference on *Catholic Religious Institutes in Australia: Results of the 2018 survey of Religious Institutes*. For more information go to: <https://cara.georgetown.edu/cara-africa/consultativeconference/>



APTO Conference

The 2020 conference of the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania (APTO) was held online on 2-4 December. Both Stephen Reid and Trudy Dantis from the NCPR presented.

Stephen presented on *Encountering God through Sport: The Sports Chaplain's Role in Bridging the Cultural Chasm between Church and Local Community* and Trudy presented on *Reimagining the Future: Emerging changes in Catholic Women Religious Institutes in Australia*. For more information go to: <http://www.apto.asn.au/>



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IN OCEANIA

Upcoming Research Projects in 2021

2021 National Count of Attendance

The NCPR will be coordinating the five-yearly National Count of Attendance in May next year. This provides valuable information on the numbers of people attending Mass in each parish. This can then be cross-referenced with other sources such as the Australian Census.

2021 National Catholic Census Project

Every five years the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) undertakes a nationwide Census of the population. Part of the data gathered includes information on religious affiliation. The NCPR orders customised data to build social profiles that report on the demographics of the Catholic population in the whole of Australia, within each diocese and also within each parish. Australia's next national Census will be held on Tuesday 10 August 2021 and the process for creating the 2021 *Social Profiles* will begin the following year.

National Catholic Education Commission Project

In association with the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), the NCPR will be beginning research into the lessons learned about remote learning in Catholic schools around Australia. This project will provide information about the positive outcomes and new developments in pedagogy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do you have research needs for your organisation in 2021?

In addition to managing research projects on behalf of the Bishops' Conference, the NCPR is able to undertake further research, analyse data and provide customised reports, depending on the needs of your parish, diocese or organisation. We also offer our expertise to independent researchers and students working on individual projects. To find out more, please contact Dr Trudy Dantis on (02) 6201 9812 or at ncpr@catholic.org.au.

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

From the National Centre for Pastoral Research



*Glory to God in the
Highest Heaven
and on Earth, Peace.*

Luke 2:14

Photo by Zeferli @ Bigstockphoto.com

*From the staff at the NCPR:
Trudy, Stephen, Paul, Leith, Marilyn and Lavina.*

CHRISTMAS SHUTDOWN NOTICE



The NCPR office will have limited staff from Monday 21 December 2020 until Friday 8 January 2021, and the office will be closed from 24 December 2020 until 4 January 2021 (inclusive). During this entire period we will be unable to process any urgent data requests.

We thank you for your cooperation.