



# Pastoral Research Online

Issue 24

July 2015

## MASS ATTENDERS' ATTITUDES TO ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES PART 3—CLIMATE CHANGE

This 24th edition of *Pastoral Research Online* is the third edition focusing on Mass attenders' attitudes to environmental issues. Using a sample of 474 Mass attenders who completed a variant questionnaire in the 2011 National Church Life Survey, we look at their attitudes towards climate change.

The sample of Mass attenders (N=474) were asked about how important personally they considered climate change to be. Overall, almost half of the attenders (47%) said that climate change was very or extremely important. Just under one-third of the attenders said that it was somewhat important, while around 20 per cent

Have important is the issue of climate change to you personally?	% of attenders
Extremely important	19
Very important	28
Somewhat important	32
Not too important	13
Not at all important	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey.

said that it was not at all or not too important to them. There were no differences between males and females, between those with a tertiary degree or not, nor between attenders born in Australia or overseas.

Mass attenders were asked if they considered that they had a moral duty to

act on climate change. Fifty-five per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they did have a moral duty to do something about it, while around 14 per cent disagreed or disagreed strongly with the statement. Just under one-third of attenders (31%) were unsure if they had a moral duty or not. Again, there were no differences between the sexes, between those with a degree or not, or between those born in Australia or overseas.

Do you agree or disagree: 'I feel a moral duty to do something about climate change'?	% of attenders
Strongly agree	12
Agree	43
Neutral/unsure	31
Disagree	10
Strongly disagree	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey.



The Building Stronger Parishes project report is now available for order from the Pastoral Research Office.

The cost of the hardcopy report is \$20 (including postage and handling, excluding GST), and there are also plans for an 'e-copy' to be made available.

Contact the office on (03) 9953 3459 or via email [office@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:office@pro.catholic.org.au)



## Mass attenders' views about climate change

The same sample of Mass attenders were asked to identify from four statements which best described their own view on climate change. Forty-three per cent of attenders believed that climate change is a reality and that humans

Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about climate change?	% of attenders
I don't think that climate change is happening	8
I have no idea whether climate change is happening or not	10
I think that climate change is happening, but it's just a natural fluctuation in Earth's temperatures	39
I think that climate change is happening, and I think that humans are largely causing it	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey.

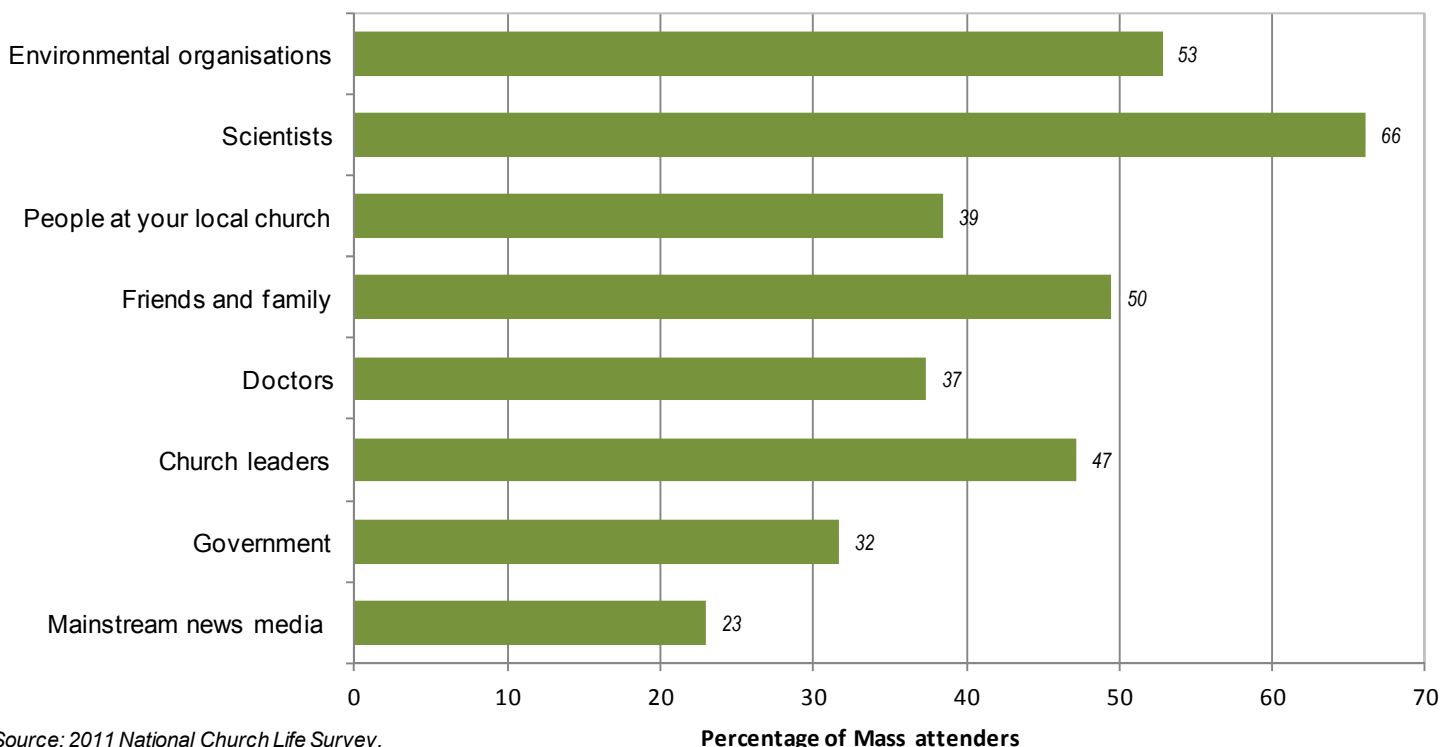
are largely causing it. Slightly fewer attenders (39%) said that climate change is happening, but believed it to be just a natural fluctuation in the Earth's temperatures. Around one in ten attenders indicated that they did not know if climate change is happening or not, while eight per cent did not think that climate change is happening.

Mass attenders who responded to the variant questionnaire were asked to rate how much they trusted various organisations or people to tell them the truth about climate change. Scientists were trusted most by attenders, with two-thirds (66%) somewhat trusting them or trusting them a lot. Just over half of the attenders (53%) said they could somewhat trust or trust a lot environmental organisations. A similar proportion of attenders (50%) felt friends and family could be trusted somewhat or a lot, and slightly fewer (47%) felt they could trust church leaders somewhat or a lot. The sample of attenders trusted least the mainstream news media, with just under one-quarter of attenders (23%) trusting them somewhat or a lot. In fact, almost half of the attenders (46%) *distrusted* the media somewhat or distrusted them a lot.

Mass attenders born in non-English speaking countries were much more trustworthy of all the organisations or groups listed than those attenders born in Australia or in other English speaking countries. For example, 68 per cent of the sample of attenders born in non-English speaking countries said they trusted church leaders somewhat or a lot, compared to around 41 per cent of attenders born in Australia or overseas in English speaking countries. However, whilst the differences were significant the number of attenders responding to the questionnaire was relatively small.

### Trust in others to tell the truth about climate change

Percentage of Mass attenders who said they could 'somewhat trust' or 'trust a lot' others to tell the truth about climate change



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## Airport chapels and chaplains . . .

**QUESTION:** What do airports at Adelaide, Alice Springs, Bankstown, Darwin, Hobart, Jandakot, Launceston, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney have in common?

**ANSWER:** Each airport has at a least one chaplain working in it!

In fact, throughout the world, there are some 173 known airport chaplaincies in 43 countries ([www.iacac.info](http://www.iacac.info)). Many airports also have dedicated prayer rooms or chapels. For example, the US has chapels in at least 18 of their airports, some offering Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Islamic worship services.

To read more about the Pew Research Center's research of US airport chapels, go to:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/06/most-of-the-busiest-u-s-airports-have-dedicated-chapels/>



## Mass attenders' feelings about climate change

Additionally, the sample of Mass attenders were asked how the issue of climate change made them feel. Attenders were fairly evenly divided in most of their feelings, as shown in the graph below.

The feeling which the highest proportion of attenders felt about climate change was that of fear, with 43 per cent of attenders strongly agreeing or agreeing that that is how they felt. Around one-third of attenders (34%) indicated that they felt powerless, although a slightly higher proportion (36%) said that they felt hopeful. Few attenders (12%) said they felt excited or bored (17%).

Between 28 per cent and 42 per cent of the sample of attenders were unsure about how they felt or had neutral feelings about the issue of climate change.

## Feelings about the issue of climate change

"How does the issue of climate change make you feel?"

