



## Pastoral Research Online

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### Mass Attending Teachers in Catholic Schools

In this edition of Pastoral Research Online we look at characteristics of Mass attending teachers who work in Catholic schools. Are they similar to or different from other attenders? Are they more or less involved in parish life? What of their personal faith and practice? Or their beliefs and attitudes?

In the 2011 National Church Life Survey (NCLS), a question asked attenders if they had any formal roles in the Church. Overall, 1,243 people identified themselves as a lay person employed as a teacher in a Catholic school, or four per cent of all the attenders who answered this question. The data in this newsletter is based on the responses of those teachers. Since they form a sub-sample of the national random sample of Mass attenders, the sub-sample is *statistically representative of all Mass-attending teachers in Catholic schools in Australia*, but not of all teachers in Catholic schools. Where possible corresponding results from earlier surveys are also included. *(cont'd next page)*

## How many people does the Catholic Church employ in Australia?



### *How many people does the Catholic Church employ in Australia?*

*Nobody actually knows the answer to that question.*

The Pastoral Research Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) has been commissioned to undertake a survey of Catholic employment in Australia. The survey is being conducted in collaboration with the Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations, the ACBC's council for advice on employment relations.

#### **What is the project about?**

This survey aims to provide an accurate estimate of the number of Catholic workplaces across Australia and the numbers of people who are employed in those workplaces.

#### **Why is this study important?**

Reliable information collected during the study will assist the Church in its deliberations in a number of ways, including:

- the potential reach of Catholic values and social teachings within the wider employment field in Australia;
- the extent of a Catholic employer presence within various industry sectors;
- the cultural and social impact Church-inspired employment has had on Australian society; and
- an improved understanding of the Catholic workforce composition and therefore workforce planning.

*Every Catholic employer is being approached to complete a survey either in hard-copy or online.*

*If you have responsibility as a Catholic employer and have not yet received a survey, please contact Stephen Reid to obtain one: [s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au](mailto:s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au)*

#### PROJECT SPONSORS



## Demographics of Mass attending teachers in Catholic schools

The age profile of respondents in the 2011 NCLS indicates that some respondents identifying themselves as teachers in Catholic schools most likely answered the question incorrectly. Fifteen respondents gave their age as under 20, while 148 said they were 65 or older. The average age of the teachers was 50 years compared with 55 years for all attenders. It is probable that a number of the older group were former teachers who had retired by the time of the survey.

In 2011, women were over-represented among Mass attenders in general, making up 61 per cent of all attenders, but they were even more strongly over-represented among the teachers (74%). A much higher proportion of teachers than Mass attenders in general were Australian-born (74% compared with 60%).

Teachers were more likely than all Mass attenders to be in their first marriage (68%) and less likely to be widowed and not remarried (5%). Among all Mass attenders, 62 per cent were in a first marriage and 9 per cent were widowed. This difference in the pattern of marital status is indicative of teachers' younger age profile.

### Mass attendance and the experience of being at Mass

There was little difference between teachers and all respondents in their Mass attendance patterns and little change had occurred between 1996 and 2011. However, teachers were less likely to say that Mass *always* strengthened them spiritually (27%) compared with all Mass attenders (31%). Another 68 per cent said it *usually or always* strengthened them spirituality, compared with 69 per cent of all respondents. These figures suggest that, overall, teachers feel a little less spiritually strengthened than other attenders do through their attendance at Mass. This may be because they have a more critical outlook and higher expectations than many other Mass attenders.

Compared with all Mass attenders, teachers were less likely to say they **always** experienced growth and understanding of God (24% compared with 30%), joy (19% : 26%), inspiration (16% : 23%) or helpfulness of the preaching to everyday life (19% : 27%). On the other hand, combining *always* and *usually* results in teachers comparing similarly to other Mass attenders. Thirty per cent of teachers reported the parish priest's style of celebration was serious, reverent, unhurried with an emphasis on sacredness, while a further 42 per cent reported the parish priest's style was warm and personal, with an emphasis on involving all the people present in a communal celebration. The response of teachers was similar to that all attenders.

### Parish involvement

Teachers were more likely to have a leadership or ministry role in their parish than Mass attenders in general were. In fact, only 25 per cent of teachers did not have any leadership or ministry role compared with 64 per cent of all attenders. The top five leadership and ministry roles for teachers were:

1. Reader (lector) or special minister of the Eucharist (38%)
2. Teacher in the parish school (36%)
3. Children's liturgy (21%)
4. Music (14%)
5. Another role, not specified (11%)

Note that not all the respondents who identified themselves as teachers in Catholic schools taught at the school of the parish where they attended

Mass. The majority taught at either Catholic secondary schools or at Catholic primary schools in other parishes. Teachers were also much more likely to be involved in group activities within the parish than other attenders.

Are you regularly involved in any group activities here?	Teachers				All attenders	
	1996 %	2001 %	2006 %	2011 %	1996 %	2011 %
Yes, small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups	25	15	15	17	16	11
Yes, in clubs, social groups or other types of groups	18	31	26	30	11	20
No, we have no such groups	-	-	5	5	-	7
No, I am not regularly involved	-	-	57	53	-	66

*Respondents could choose all applicable options, so columns may add to more than 100%*

*Source: 2001, 2006 & 2011 National Church Life Surveys and 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey.*

## Planning and decision making

Teachers had a greater awareness than other attenders of planning in their parish. They were more likely to say they were committed to the vision, goals or direction of its ministry and mission (48% compared to 38%). Further, they were more likely to say they would support innovative change (73% : 61%). It is perhaps as a consequence of their awareness of parish planning that higher proportions of teachers said they were confident of achieving parish vision or goals (64%) compared with all Mass attenders (61%).

Teachers were more likely to say that the parish leaders put a priority on attenders' gifts and skills, to some or a great extent (52%) than were all Mass attenders (37%). Teachers were more inclined than Mass attenders in general to believe that their parish priest or leader took into account the ideas of the people (65% : 59%).

These results may be due to

teacher's higher levels of involvement and may also account for their being more likely to say that Mass challenges them to take action. Teachers said they wanted greater attention in the next 12 months given to

- Building a strong sense of community in the parish (33%)
- Ministry to children and youth (32%)
- Liturgies that are nurturing to people's faith (29%)

If innovative change was proposed to the Mass you attend at this church, what would your response tend to be? Would you . . .	Teachers	All attenders
	2011 %	2011 %
Strongly support such changes	24	18
Support such changes	48	43
Be neutral/unsure	23	32
Oppose such changes	2	5
Strongly oppose such changes	2	2

Source: 2011 National Church Life Survey

## Involvement in the wider community

Teachers were more likely to be involved in groups not connected to the parish, such as community service, social action, or sporting groups (64% : 42%), while 36 per cent were not involved in such groups, compared with more than well over half (57%) of all Mass attenders.

Are you involved in any community service, social action or other groups not connected to this parish?	Teachers				All attenders	
	1996 %	2001 %	2006 %	2011 %	1996 %	2011 %
Yes, community service, care or welfare groups	-	21	20	21	21	19
Yes, social action, justice or lobby groups	-	8	8	11	7	6
Yes, sports, recreation or hobby groups	-	-	19	20	-	15
Yes, school or youth groups	-	-	34	29	-	8
Yes, another kind of group (e.g. Arts, cultural, political)	-	-	10	9	-	9
No, I'm not involved with such groups	-	-	35	36	-	57

Respondents could choose all applicable options, so columns may add to more than 100%

Source: 2001, 2006 & 2011 National Church Life Surveys and 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey.

Teachers were also much more likely to have helped others on an informal basis in the last 12 months. Compared with other Mass attenders, higher proportions of teachers had visited someone in hospital (59% compared with 48%), helped someone through a personal crisis (50% : 33%) and given possessions to someone in need (46% : 32%). They were also much more likely to have donated money to a charity (87% : 71%).

## Personal faith and practice

Ninety two per cent of teachers had a strong sense of belonging to the Catholic Church. Compared with all Mass attenders (43%), teachers were less likely to see God as the most important reality in their lives (37%). However, they were a little more likely to say they spent time in private devotion at least a few times a week (68%) compared with all Mass attenders (63%), and they were also more likely to say they mostly feel at ease talking about their faith if it comes up (61% : 52%). Three-fifths of teachers felt at ease talking about their faith compared to half of all attenders, possibly because of experience in teaching religious education or leading prayer in the classroom.

The material for this edition of *Pastoral Research Online* was prepared by the following PRO staff:

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## NEW STAFF

We warmly welcome two new staff members to the office.

Dr Francine Hanley will join the Pastoral Research Office team as a new **Research Officer**.

Francine has a PhD in Psychology from Victoria University and has been involved in research programs at Melbourne and La Trobe Universities. She has expertise in both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Francine will commence at the PRO on 9 November.

Since September, **Mrs Wendy Egan** has been undertaking some of the administrative duties in the office on a casual basis, and has now agreed to continue permanently in the role of **Administrative Assistant**.

For more information about the office, or how we can assist you, please contact:

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## Teachers' attitudes to parish life

In 2011, teachers were less likely to rate their parish as very or extremely important in their life (46%) than they were in 1996 (52%). Note, however, that this decline brought teacher ratings of the importance of their parish more into line with those of all Mass attenders.

Despite, or probably because of, their higher levels of involvement in programs for young people, teachers were more likely than all Mass attenders to say they were dissatisfied with what was offered for children (12%) youth aged 12-18 (26%) and young adults (26%).

In the extent to which they valued aspects of their parish, teachers differed from other Mass attenders. For example, they were more likely to say they valued the parish school, wider community care, a contemporary style of worship or music, and ministry to children and youth. On the other hand, all attenders valued most celebrating the Eucharist, praying for one another, traditional styles of worship and the homilies. Teachers more so than all attenders said music and singing were important to them (93% compared with 87%) and were far less likely to value a traditional style of worship or music (13% : 28%).



## Date confirmed for ISSR Conference in Melbourne

It is now confirmed that the 34th Conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion will be held at Australian Catholic University's St Patrick's Campus from Monday 3 July to Friday 7 July 2017. Director of the Pastoral Research Office, Dr Bob Dixon, will be responsible for chairing the local organising committee.

### ***So, what is the ISSR?***

The International Society for the Sociology of Religion (SISR / ISSR) was founded in Leuven, Belgium, in 1948, and is a worldwide scientific organisation devoted to understanding the relationship between religion and society.

It currently has almost 500 members from all over the world, including some of the world's leading authorities on religion as well as some of the field's newest scholars. Though most members are sociologists, others have backgrounds in such disciplines as anthropology, political science, psychology and women's studies. Members are based in universities, denominational research centres, like the PRO, and independent research institutes, like NCLS Research.

The Society holds bilingual (French & English) conferences every two years, and is associated with the international journal *Social Compass*. The 2017 conference will be the first time an ISSR conference has been held in the Southern Hemisphere.



The Building Stronger Parishes project report is now into a second printing, and is available for order from the Pastoral Research Office.

The cost of the hardcopy report is \$20 (including postage and handling, excluding GST). E-copies will be available soon—details in the next newsletter.

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

