



Pastoral Research Online

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Young adult Mass attenders

This edition of *Pastoral Research Online* looks at young adults who attend Mass, according to the National Church Life Survey.

In 2011, 14 per cent of Mass attenders were aged between 15 and 34 years. This was the age group which had the lowest rate of Mass attendance, with only about five or six per cent of Catholics with groups attending Mass on a typical Sunday. So, what is the demographic make-up of these younger attenders, and what do they say they experience when they do go to Mass? Turn to pages 2 and 3 to find out more.

We will continue looking at young adult Mass attenders in the next edition of Pastoral Research Online.



This past weekend past saw the commencement of the 2016 National Count of Attendance. First held in 2001, this is the fourth time the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has conducted the count at a national level.

The Count consists of a simple headcount of all attenders of all ages in all parishes and other Mass centres throughout the whole of Australia over the first four weekends in May. Information collected, in addition to the number of people in attendance, includes the language and frequency of celebration. The Count is conducted both for Masses and Sunday Assemblies in the Absence of a Priest.

Again this year, the National Count of Attendance is being conducted electronically, and most parishes will submit their counts online, rather than using paper forms.

The link for the Count is: tinyurl.com/2016AttendCount

Any queries regarding the ACBC National Count of Attendance can be directed to the ACBC Pastoral Research Office on (03) 9953 3457 or by email s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au.

2nd REQUEST WANTED: OLD CATHOLIC DIRECTORIES



Can you help? The Pastoral Research Office has a collection of Official Catholic Directories (OCD) and Directories of Australian Catholic Clergy (DACC). However, we are missing a number of editions which we would very much like to obtain to complete the collection.

Some years ago, we received a set of Official Catholic Directories, covering the period from 1948 to 1990, from Fr Eric Hodgens of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Some editions were lost during our most recent change of office location here at ACU. It is those we are now seeking to replace.

If you have any of the following which you no longer need, and would like to donate them, please contact one of the staff at the Pastoral Research Office.

The missing years from the OCD collection are:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| * 1950 | * 1951 | * 1952 |
| * 1953 | * 1954 | * 1955 |
| * 1960-61 | * 1983-84 | |

The missing years from the DACC collection are:

- | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| * 1978 | * 1984 | * 1987 | * 1997 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|

Demographic characteristics of young adult Mass attenders

According to the 2011 National Church Life Survey (NCLS), about 14 per cent of all Mass attenders were aged between 15 and 34. As a group, these attenders had very different characteristics from attenders aged 35 and over. However, there were also differences *between* attenders of different ages within these groups. This article focuses on the various characteristics of Mass attenders in this younger age group, as reported in the 2011 NCLS.

Demographic characteristics of Mass attenders aged 15 to 34, 2011

Characteristic	Age group				All attenders aged 15-34
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	
Sex					
Female	55	59	61	59	58
Male	45	41	39	41	42
Birthplace					
Born in Australia	72	55	41	39	52
Born in other English speaking country	6	7	7	6	6
Born in non-English speaking country	22	38	53	55	42
Education					
Completed bachelor degree	3	44	49	43	33
Completed post-graduate degree	0	5	20	23	12

Source: National Church Life Survey 2011

Sex

Males were under-represented in all age groups of Mass attenders, with females accounting for 55 per cent of attenders aged 15-19, increasing to between 59 and 61 per cent of attenders in the 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 age groups.

Ethnicity

A striking fact of parish life today is the increasing numbers of overseas-born Catholics from non-English speaking countries attending Mass, particularly in many urban parishes. In 2011, 22 per cent of attenders aged 15-19 were born in a non-English speaking country. The proportion increased dramatically in the 20-24 age group to 38 per cent, and again in the 25-29 age group (53%). In the 30-34 age group, 55 per cent of Mass attenders were born in non-English speaking countries. The main countries of birth of young adult Mass attenders, other than Australia, were India and Sri Lanka (accounting for 12.3 per cent of attenders aged 15-34), Philippines (9.7%), Vietnam (2.5%) and New Zealand (2.3%). Overall, in the 15-34 age group, Mass attenders born in an Asian country represented one-third of all attenders.

There were very few young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Mass attenders, with less than one per cent of attenders of Indigenous origin.

Education

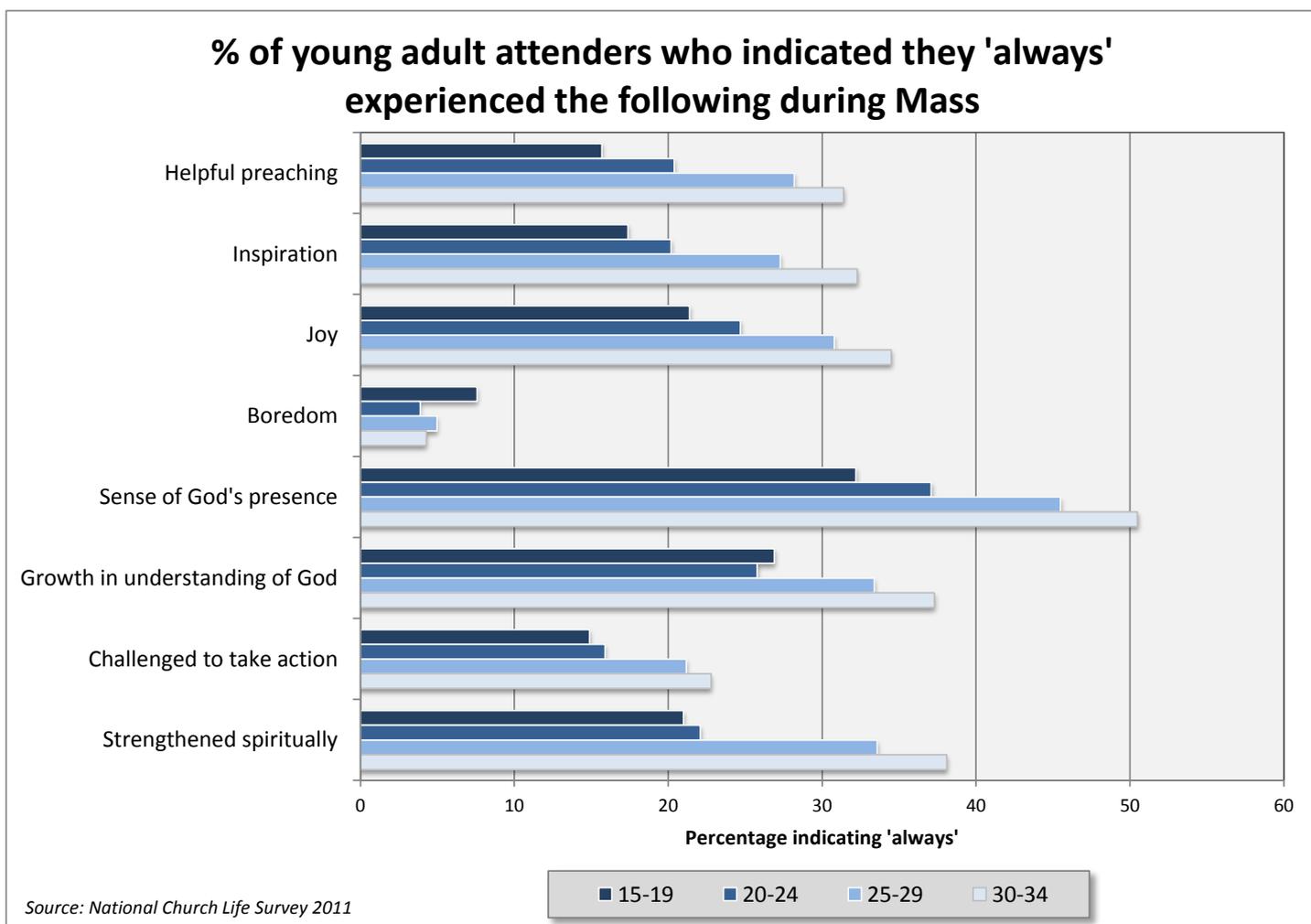
In 2011, young adult Mass attenders were extremely well educated, with one-third having completed a bachelor degree and a further 12 per cent having completed a post-graduate degree. These figures were despite the fact that most attenders aged 15-19, and some aged 20-24, would still have been undertaking their secondary or university studies. Overall, 45 per cent of 20-34 year old Mass attenders had completed a university degree, while a further 15 per cent had completed post-graduate level studies.

Marital Status

As expected, a large proportion of young adult Mass attenders were unmarried, with 64 per cent indicating they had never been married. Twenty-nine per cent of young attenders were in their first marriage, while a further 0.4 per cent had remarried after divorce or widowed. Just under two per cent of young adult attenders were separated, divorced or widowed, and around five per cent were in a de facto relationship.

Young adult attenders' experiences of Mass

In the 2011 National Church Life Survey, attenders were asked how often they had experienced certain things during services in the parish. Attenders could select one of four responses: Always, Usually, Sometimes or Rarely/Never. The following graph shows the responses of attenders aged 15-34 who indicated that they had 'always' experienced such things during Mass.



Older attenders were much more positive in the experiences they had had during Mass than younger attenders, with higher proportions of 30-34 year olds responding with 'always' to every question, with the exception of 'experiencing boredom'! Attenders in the four age groups were most likely to say they always experienced God's presence during Mass, with between 32 per cent (15-19 year olds) and 51 per cent (30-34 year olds) indicating that. Well over one-third of older attenders (aged 30-34) said they always experienced being strengthened spiritually (38%) and always experienced growth in understanding of God (37%) during Mass. Attenders aged 25-29 had similar experiences, although in slightly lower proportions (34% and 33% respectively). Around one-quarter of 20-24 year olds had always experienced growth in understanding of God (26%) and joy (25%) during Mass. Twenty-seven per cent of the teenage group said they had always experienced growth in the understanding of God in Mass, and 21 per cent had always experienced joy and been spiritually strengthened during Mass.

Mass Attenders were also asked how supportive would they be if innovative change was proposed to the Mass they attended at their parish (such as in the style of music or the seating layout).

Attitudes of Mass attenders aged 15 to 34 to innovative change to the Mass, 2011

	Age group				All attenders aged 15-34
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	
Strongly support or support	53	51	62	64	58
Neutral or unsure	41	42	32	31	36
Strongly oppose or oppose	7	7	6	5	6
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Church Life Survey 2011

Overall, around three-fifths of young adult Mass attenders indicated that they would support or strongly support such changes. In general, older attenders were more likely to support innovative changes than younger attenders, although younger attenders were less sure than older attenders about being supportive of such change. Between five per cent (30-34 year olds) and seven per cent (15-19 and 20-24 year olds) indicated they would likely oppose or strongly oppose any innovative changes to the way Mass is celebrated in the parish.

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The Building Stronger Parishes (BSP) project report is now into a second printing. There is also an E-version of the report.

The cost of the report is \$20 for the hardcopy edition (including postage and handling, excluding GST) and \$10 for the E-version.

Both versions are now available from the ACBC website at www.catholic.org.au/shop/acbc-shop. Use the search function to search for 'Stronger Parishes'.

Other reports available to purchase from the website soon include:

- Report 1: Community Building, Welcoming and Hospitality
- Report 2: Mission, Outreach and Evangelisation
- Report 3: Spirituality and Faith Formation
- Report 4: Liturgy
- Report 5: Leadership
- Report 6: Planning



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DID YOU READ?

Last month, the former religion editor for The Age newspaper in Melbourne, Barney Zwartz, wrote an article for the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA) website about the *Pope Francis effect*. In the article he cites research from the Pastoral Research Office.



The full article can be read at:

<http://globalplus.thearda.com/globalplus-the-pope-francis-effect>

Asia-Pacific Catholicism and Globalisation Workshop

This week, PRO Director Dr Bob Dixon will be participating in a workshop on Asia-Pacific Catholicism and Globalisation at ACU.

Bob has been invited to be part of a group of 14 experts on different regional and thematic aspects of Asian and Pacific Catholicism that has been brought together to examine the historical development of Catholicism in major countries in Asia and Oceania, and the changing role of the Catholic Church in relation to the state and to civil society in the various countries. The group will also analyse the incipient formation of Pan-Asia-Pacific Catholic institutions, networks, theologies, and identities from Vatican II to the present.

The group will gather at three consecutive workshops, beginning with this weekend's meeting in Melbourne, followed by a second meeting in November at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, and a third in early in 2017 in Manila. The project will then conclude with a conference open to the public at ACU Melbourne in June or July 2017.

The project is a research collaboration of the Institute for Religion, Politics and Society at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, under the direction of sociologist José Casanova and theologian Peter Phan.

You are invited to attend a Panel Discussion entitled "Asian/Pacific Catholicism and Globalisation: an interdisciplinary and transnational research project" at ACU on Friday.

When: Friday 6 May 2016, 5.00pm – 6.30pm

Where: Christ Lecture Theatre, Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy

Chair: Professor José Casanova.

For further details, and to register, click this link: <http://elink.acu.edu.au/m/1/31156163/t10316-fdb54bd7-8cbd-41e3-9e24-235e4218a913/0/1/1>