



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

Pastoral Research Office



Pastoral Research Online

Issue 31

May-June 2016

Young adult Mass attenders—Part 2

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

As reported in the previous edition, Mass attenders aged between 15 and 34 years had the lowest rate of Mass attendance in 2011. But for those young adults who were at Mass, what were their attitudes to certain aspects of the Mass? Were their attitudes similar to that of attenders in general in the importance they place on music during Mass? Which styles of music do Mass attenders prefer as part of congregational worship? What do they think of their priest's style of presiding at Mass? Pages 2 and 3 provide a short analysis of some of the data from the 2011 NCLS.

And on the subject of NCLS, planning for the 2016 survey, to be conducted in October and November, is well underway with parishes now being asked to register and submit their orders for survey forms. Those lucky parishes selected as part of the national sample should have already received information about the process.

Further information about the 2016 NCLS can be found at: www.2016ncls.org.au. The website contains all the details about participation and how to register. Parishes in the national sample who have questions or concerns can contact Stephen at the Pastoral Research Office.



NATIONAL COUNT OF ATTENDANCE

The 2016 National Count of Attendance took place over four weekends in May, and over the last few weeks there has been a flurry of activity online as many parishes submit their counts via the internet. Many parishes haven't chosen to post or email their forms, and—while some may say facsimiles have been succeeded by more modern technologies—the PRO fax machine has again had a good workout.

If you know of a parish which has not yet submitted their figures they can do using the online link: 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.



The Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research, the advisory body for the Pastoral Research Office, has accepted Bob Dixon's notice of retirement.

Bob will finish up as the Director of the office at the end of this year, which will be just shy of 21 years in the role.

However, while we may envisage Bob sitting in a deck chair on a tropical beach sipping cocktails while the waves roll in during his retirement, he will continue a number of his honorary roles.

These roles include coordinating the *International Society for the Sociology of Religion* Conference in Melbourne (happening in July 2017), being a member of the *Asia-Pacific Catholicism and Globalisation* project, and continuing membership of bodies such as the University of Divinity Research Committee.

One wonders if Bob will find time to be retired!

More details in future newsletters.

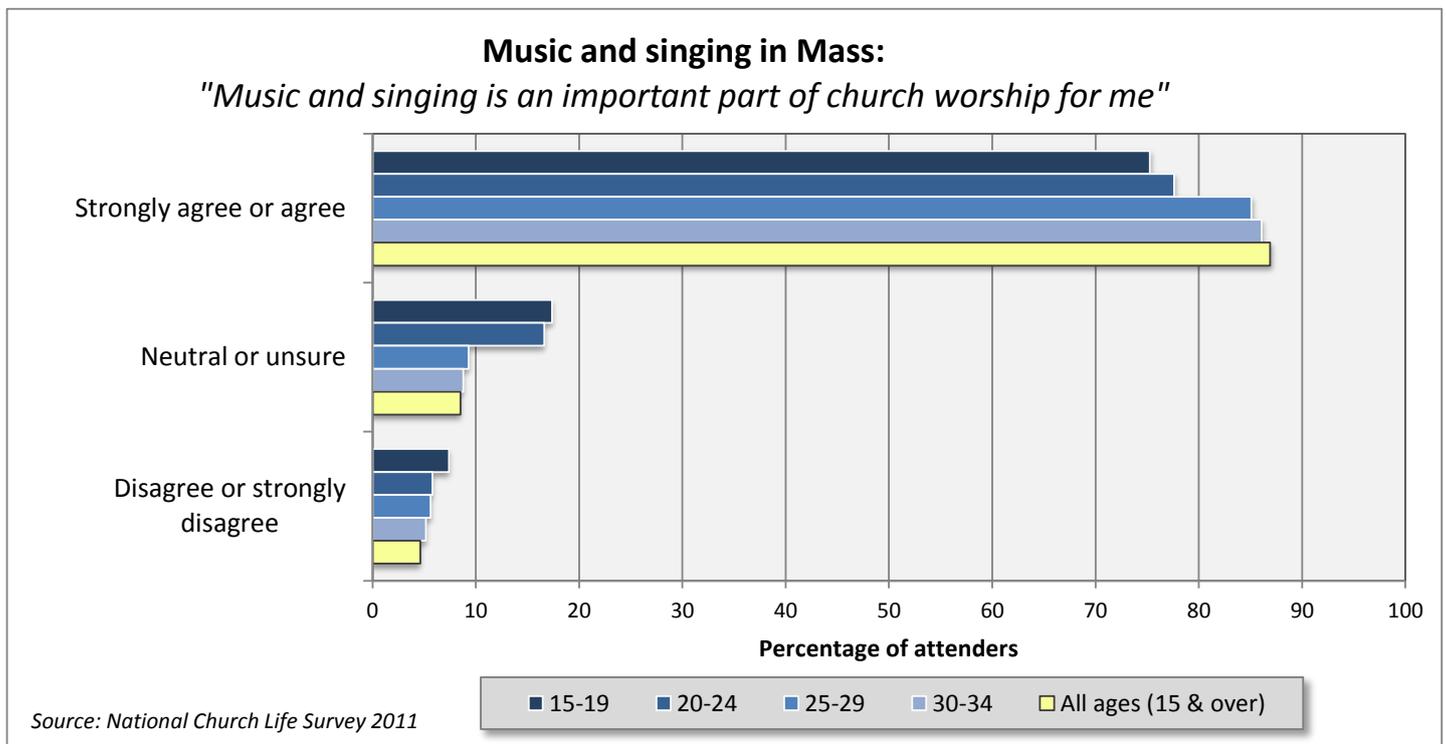


Young adult attenders attitudes to Mass

In the 2011 National Church Life Survey, Mass attenders were asked to what extent they agreed that music and singing was an important part of church worship for them.

Overall, music and singing was considered an important part of Mass, with the vast majority of attenders either agreeing or agreeing strongly with the statement. Those aged 15-19 and 20-24 were the least likely to consider music and singing an important part of church worship, with between 75 and 78 per cent agreeing to some extent. Among young adults aged 25-34, about 85 per cent considered music and singing important at Mass. The main differences in the attitudes of the various age groups of young adults was in those who were unsure or neutral in their attitudes, with around 17 per cent of 15-24 year olds unsure, compared with around five to six per cent of those aged 25-34. There were significant differences between female and male young adults, with 85 per cent of females considering music and singing important, compared with 76 per cent of males.

The attitudes of young adult attenders (aged 15-34) toward singing and music in church worship was similar to the attitudes of Mass attenders in general, with the vast majority agreeing to some extent that it was important.



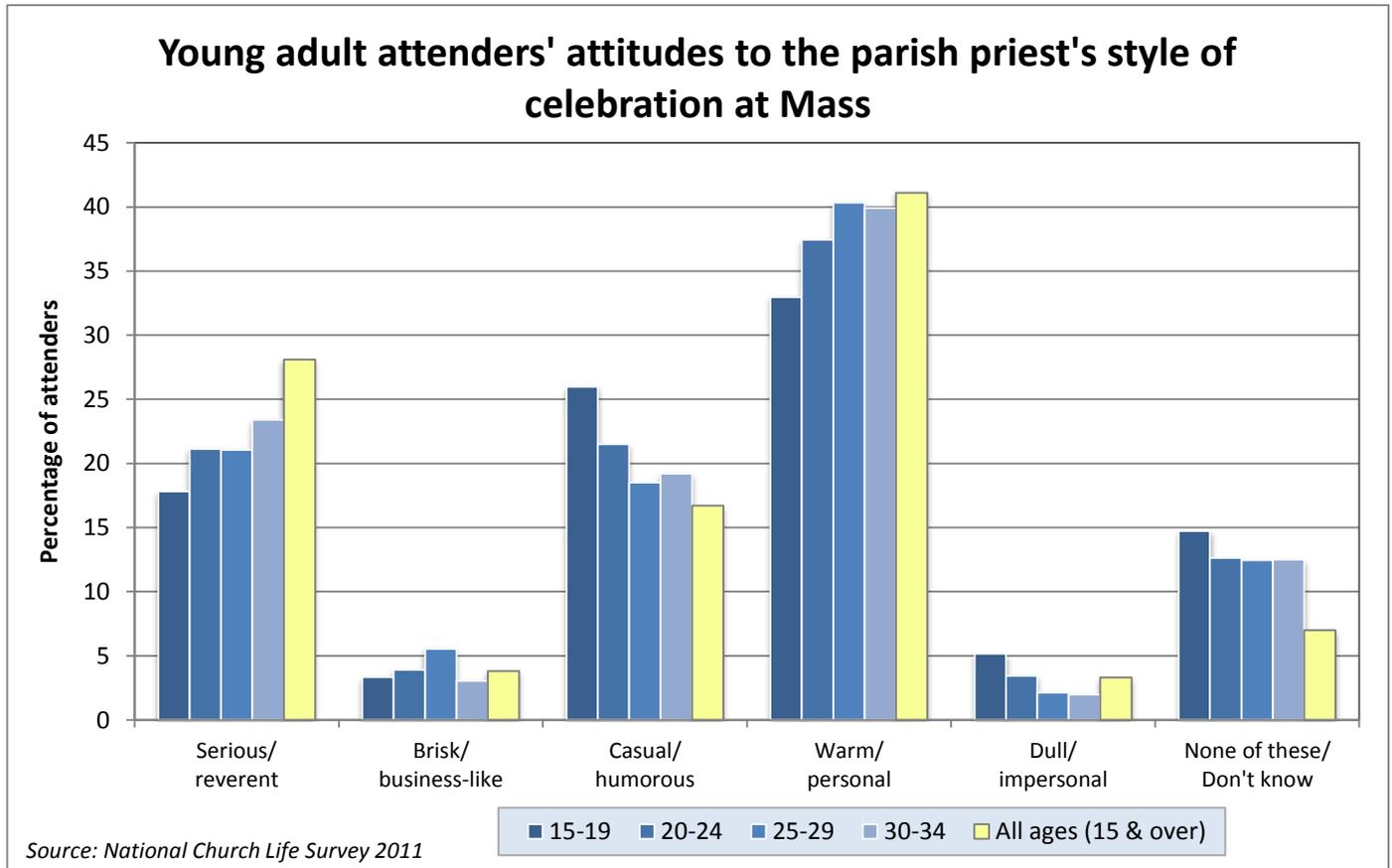
It should be noted that attenders were not asked in that version of the questionnaire about which style of music and singing was important to them, so we have no way of knowing if they appreciated the style their parish offered. It may be that young attenders, for example, considered music important at Mass, but would actually like to experience more contemporary styles during church worship. On the other hand, older people may have considered music important and were more than happy with the music their parish offered at Mass.

However, in a variant questionnaire answered by a sample of around 400 attenders in Catholic parishes, Mass attenders were asked which style of music they felt was most helpful to them during congregational worship. While the results were not statistically reliable because of the small numbers of young adults in the sample, it does provide some indication of the styles of music attenders in general prefer as part of the Mass. Attenders could select up to two of the following responses: traditional hymns, praise music/choruses, contemporary hymns, other contemporary music or songs, music or songs from a variety of cultures, contemplative chants, African-American gospel music, no music or songs, classical music or chorales, or sung responsorial psalms.

Overall, attenders young and old felt that traditional hymns were the most helpful in worship, with around three in five attenders selecting that response. Almost one-third of attenders indicated that 'praise music' was helpful, while one-quarter preferred contemporary music or songs. Young adult attenders were similar in their preference of styles of music in Mass to that of attenders of other ages.

Young adult attenders attitudes to Mass

Another question in the 2011 NCLS asked attenders about the parish priest's style of celebration at Mass. Attenders were asked to select a characteristic style which best described their priest. The following graph shows the responses for each of the four young attender age groups, as well as the responses for attenders in general (the yellow column).



Other research undertaken by the Pastoral Research Office found that the priest's style of presiding at Mass affects people's sense of belonging to a parish. The report (which can be downloaded at: pro.catholic.org.au/what-makes-people-feel-they-belong) stated:

Priests adopting either style [serious/reverent, warm/personal] are much more effective in fostering a sense of belonging than those who preside at Mass in a style which is 'brisk and business-like', 'casual, often humorous', or 'dull and impersonal'.



NEWS:

Director of ACBC Pastoral Research Office receives Life Membership of the Christian Research Association

At a recent retirement function for the out-going Director of the Christian Research Association (CRA), Rev Dr Philip Hughes, Bob Dixon was recognised for his contribution to the organisation by being awarded Life Membership of the association

Bob originally joined the CRA board as a co-opted member in 1992, and since 2004 has been the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference representative. Bob has been the secretary and public officer of the CRA for the past 15 years, and since 2005, has chaired its Research Committee.

Rev Dr Hughes publicly thanked Bob for his contribution and support over the many years.

Congratulations Bob!

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

Stephen Reid
Research Officer

s.reid@pro.catholic.org.au
(03) 9953 3457



Reports from the Building Stronger Parishes project are now available for purchase, in hard-copy or as E-versions.

Reports can be ordered from the ACBC website at www.catholic.org.au/shop/acbc-shop. Use the search function to search for 'Stronger Parishes'. You may purchase single reports, or the entire set of reports.

Reports available for order are:

- Building Stronger Parishes Project Report
- 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



WITH THANKS!!

We extend our appreciation to Genevieve Inatey and the Diocese of Bathurst for the donation of two directories which were missing from our collection.

If you do 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 *Official Catholic Directories* collection are:

* 1950 * 1951 * 1952 * 1954 * 1955 * 1983-84

The missing years from the *Directories of Australian Catholic Clergy* collection are:

* 1978 * 1984 * 1987 * 1997

NEW BOOK: *Charting the Faith of Australians: Thirty Years in the Christian Research Association*

by Philip Hughes, contributing editor

Over the past 30 years, the Christian Research Association (CRA) has charted the rapid changes which have occurred in Australian society. It has done so through the examination of census and survey data and through interviews with thousands of individuals. It has examined these changes in youth culture and rural culture and has explored the impact of migration and the rise of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. It has suggested ways in which churches and schools might respond to these changes.

Part 1 of this new book tells the story of these changes and how the CRA has charted them. Part 2 contains contributions from various researchers discussing how the CRA has served the churches. Part 3 explores some extensions of and parallels to the work of the CRA in relation to religious institutions, migration and other research.

The story told in this book is a personal story for Rev Dr Philip Hughes, the senior research officer of the Christian Research Association from 1985 to 2016. But it is also a story of global significance as Christian and other religious institutions grapple with changes to their place in society and their roles in changing perceptions of life.

To order a hard-copy or E-book contact the CRA on (03) 8819 0123, or go to: www.cra.org.au/products-page

