

Insights from the 2023 Church Life Survey New Zealand

The perspective, character and
values of church attendees across
Aotearoa New Zealand



Foreword

Church life in New Zealand is characterised by a strong sense of personal belonging to local church, an increasing proportion of overseas-born attendees, and a growing realisation of the need to do more to retain and attract young people. These are amongst the key findings of the 2023 Church Life Survey NZ, a nationwide survey of church attendees. While the ageing of the New Zealand church is of concern, young people are growing in their faith at significant rates, and local churches are playing a vital role in their development.

The 2023 Church Life Survey provides a glimpse of the character and values of New Zealand church communities. The survey contains information on demographics, church life, community engagement, spiritual health, and leadership. The COVID pandemic caused much change across the NZ Church and the 2023 Church Life Survey is a post-pandemic snapshot, arming local church and denominational leaders with valuable information on which to base decisions.

As an independent supervisory committee with a deep love for the NZ Church, we have conducted the Church Life Survey since the mid-1990s, broadly every 5 years in line with the NZ Census. This report provides some comparisons with the 2001 survey. The 2023 survey is the largest since 2001 and the 22-year span is long enough for trends to be seen. For the first time, the 2023 survey could be completed online; and local church and denominational leaders benefitted from their results being available immediately.

Our hope is the 2023 Church Life Survey will be valuable to local churches as they plan for the future and that this report will catalyse meaningful and robust dialogue and reflections on the wider NZ Church.

Our thanks to the 500+ churches participating in the survey, and to the 20,357 church attendees who have responded to date.

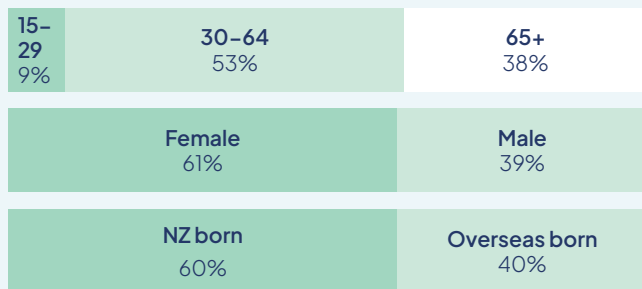
Ngā mihi nui,

Church Life Survey NZ Committee

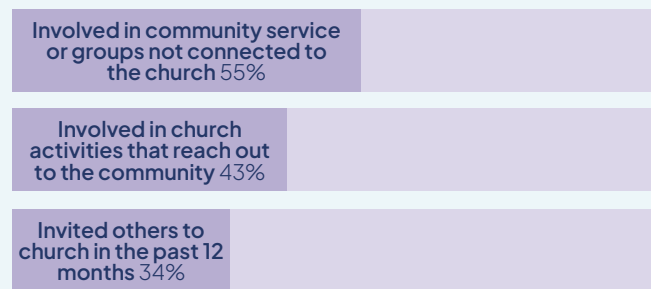
Executive summary

Insights from 20,357 church attendees across New Zealand

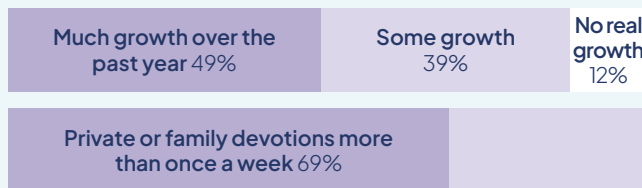
People



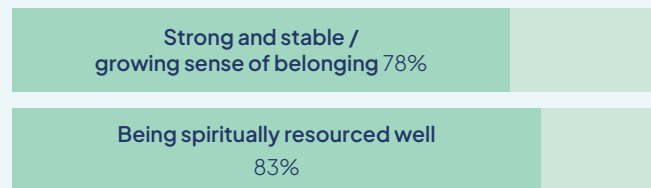
Community service



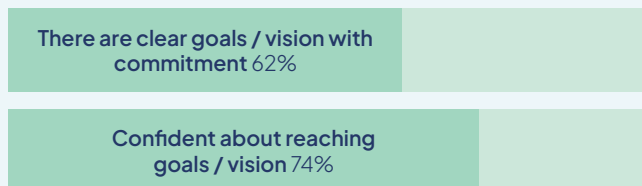
Personal faith



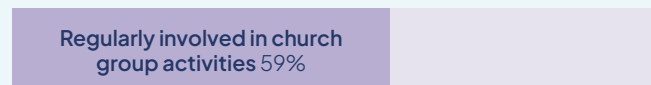
Value and belonging



Church leadership

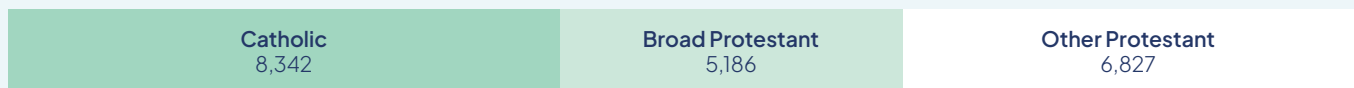


Church involvement



Number of participants by denomination (as at 12 October)

Total: 20,357



Broad Protestant: Each denomination in this group has a broad range of churches and doctrines within it.

Other Protestant: For each denomination in this group, the majority approach to faith is evangelical.

Presbyterian	2,390	Uniting ¹	486	Baptist	3,411	Christian Community Churches of NZ (CCCNZ) ²	387
Anglican	1,881	Methodist	429	The Salvation Army	1,705	Wesleyan Methodist	384
				Confessing Anglicans	500	Independent	440

¹ Most Uniting Churches are Methodist / Presbyterian unions

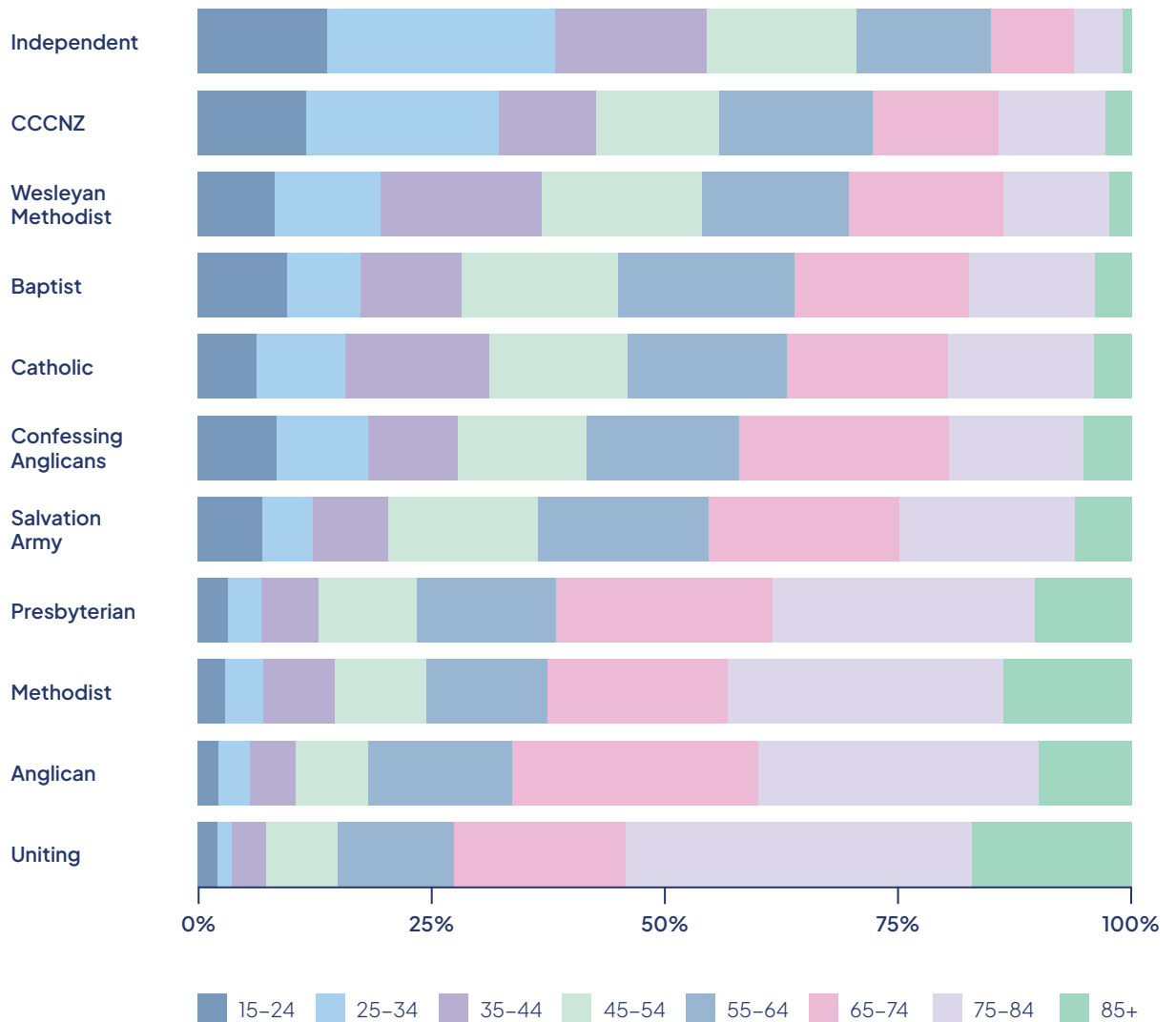
² Most CCCNZ churches are Open Brethren heritage

Church attendees are ageing; yet being revitalised by migration.

The grim news is that by and large, church members are old relative to the wider community. The median age for those aged 15+ in the 2018 Census was 44 years. But church attendees (15+) are significantly older, especially in Broad Protestant churches: Uniting (median age 75),

Anglican (71), Methodist (70), Presbyterian (70). This data is incomplete because very few Pasifika and Asian participated. For the more evangelical Other Protestants, median ages are younger, ranging from 42 (Independents) to 57 (Baptists) and 62 (Salvation Army).

Age distribution by denomination



The median age of NZ-born Catholics (69) is little different from the Broad Protestant denominations, however the overall Catholic age is significantly lower because of migrants, whose median age is 49.

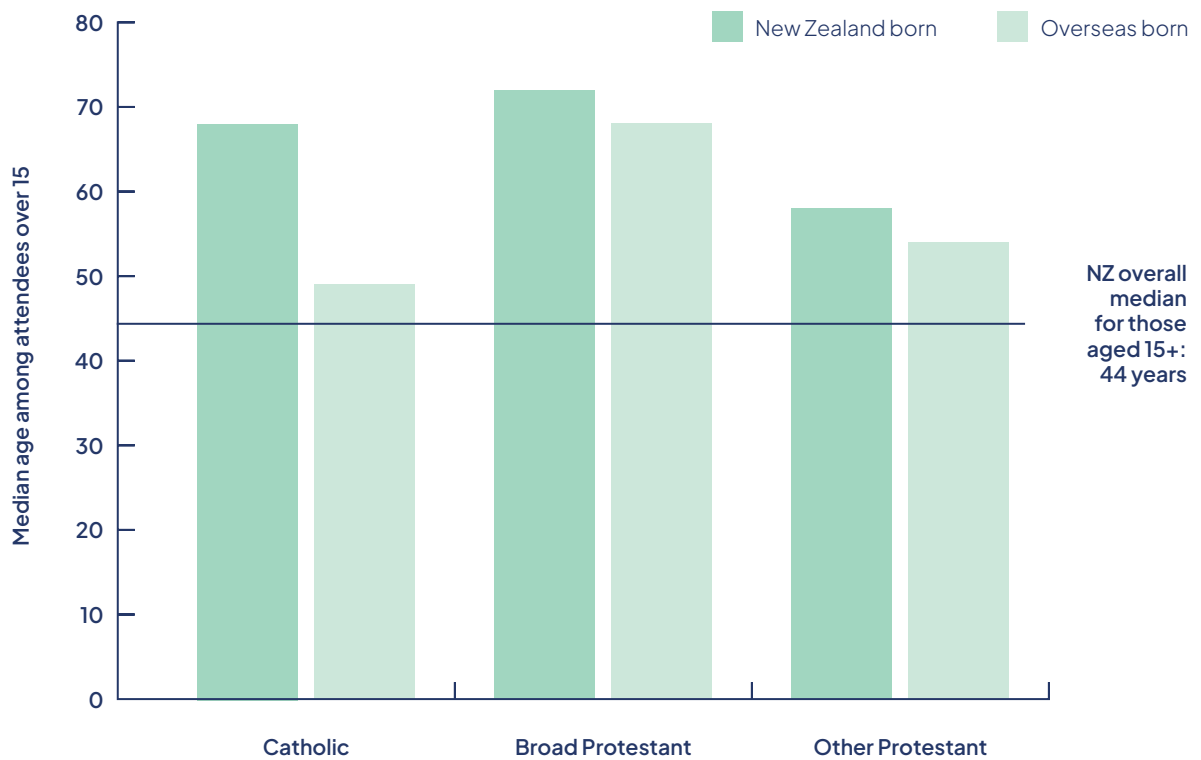
Altogether, 38% of participants are aged 65+ and just 9% are aged 15–29. This is a serious challenge for the future, although it is important to note the

survey had few participants from Pentecostal or Independent churches.

Comparing the church population to the general population in the census, the church is gravely lacking in young people, and massively over-represented in older age groups.



A church getting older revitalised by immigration



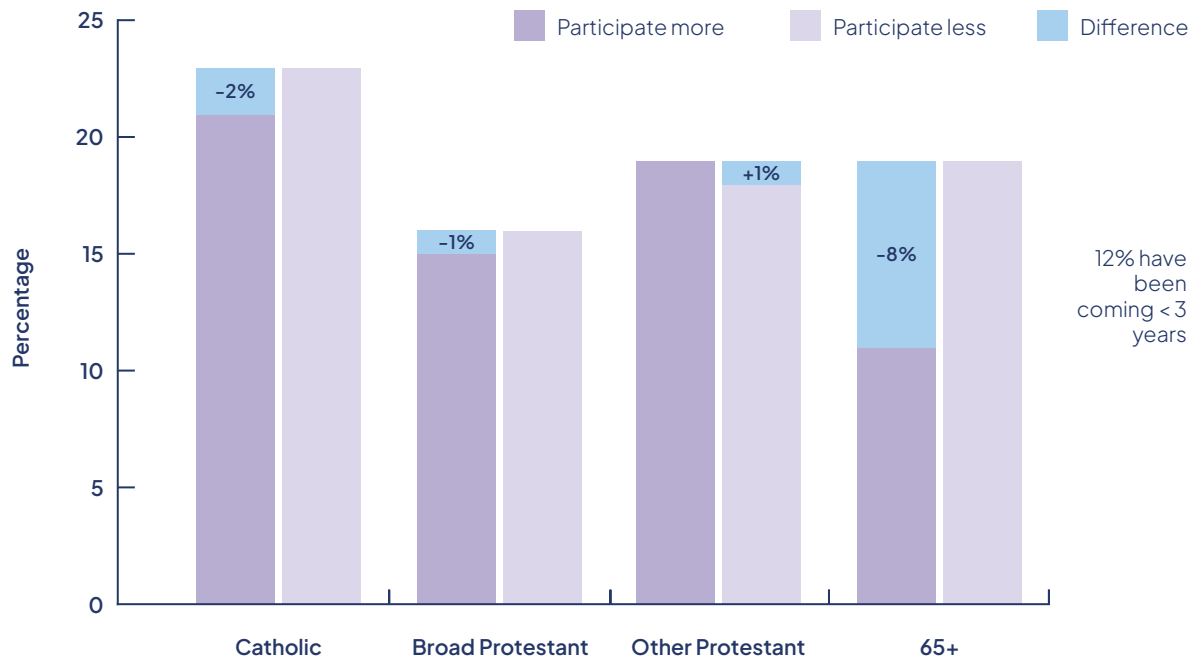
Post-COVID church participation

Church participation in 2023 is similar to pre-COVID levels. The majority (55%) have about the same participation, but 16% say they participate more and 17% say they participate less. Around 12% have been attending less than three years, so their participation cannot be compared with the pre-COVID era.

The denominations suffering the biggest net declines in participation since COVID are Anglicans (-3%);

Baptists (-3%); and Catholics (-2%); and the major net gains are recorded by Independents (9%), CCCNZ (7%) and Confessing Anglicans (5%). A striking result is the significant decline in participation by 10% for those aged 75–84, who are probably more attuned than in the past to the health risks of sitting in close proximity to others.

Since COVID-19 participation has declined for the elderly (%)

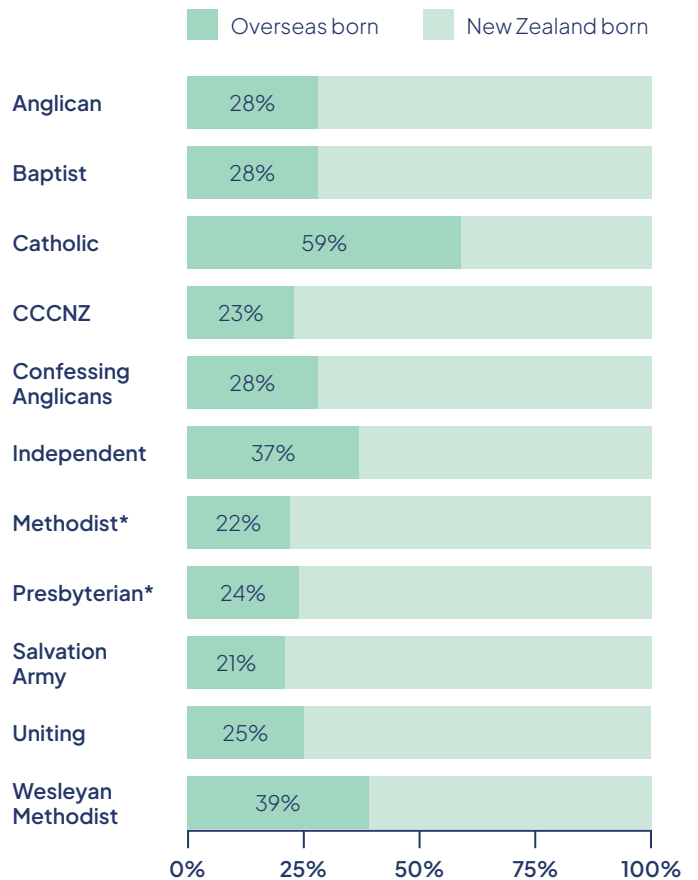


Country of birth

Churches have significant proportions of new migrants in their midst even though in some denominations the ethnic language congregations did not participate. In order to include as many of these as possible, the survey was available in several different languages. Altogether 40% of participants are born overseas. This is a significant indication of the future strengths and profile of the NZ Church. Of the 20357 total respondents, 1523 are born in the Philippines (mostly Catholic), 1294 in the UK, 1241 in the South Asian nations, 899 in Pacific Island nations, 497 in South Africa, 236 in China and Taiwan, 208 in Korea. Auckland churches have far more attendees born overseas than elsewhere (60%). Elsewhere the percentage is around 29% in cities, 23% in the South Island outside of Christchurch, and 24% in the North Island outside of Auckland and Wellington.

* Methodists and Presbyterians have churches with ethnic language services that participated very little in the survey. Therefore, this is the percentage in non-ethnic congregations.

Percent of attendees born overseas, by denomination



Amongst Catholics, the percentage born overseas is 74% in the Auckland Diocese, but 34% in the Wellington Archdiocese and lower elsewhere.

Methodist figures include 6% born in Tonga, 6% born in Fiji and 4% born in Samoa. Note few of the Tongan and Samoan churches took part in the survey, so these are Pasifika who choose to attend integrated Methodist churches. For Anglicans, 15% were born in the UK, while Presbyterians have clusters of Samoans, South Africans and British.

The average age of migrants is significantly lower than the New Zealand born. In the extreme case of Catholics, the median age of the New Zealand-born is 69 and the median age of migrants is 49. This means that the Auckland churches are significantly younger than other regions.

Ethnicity

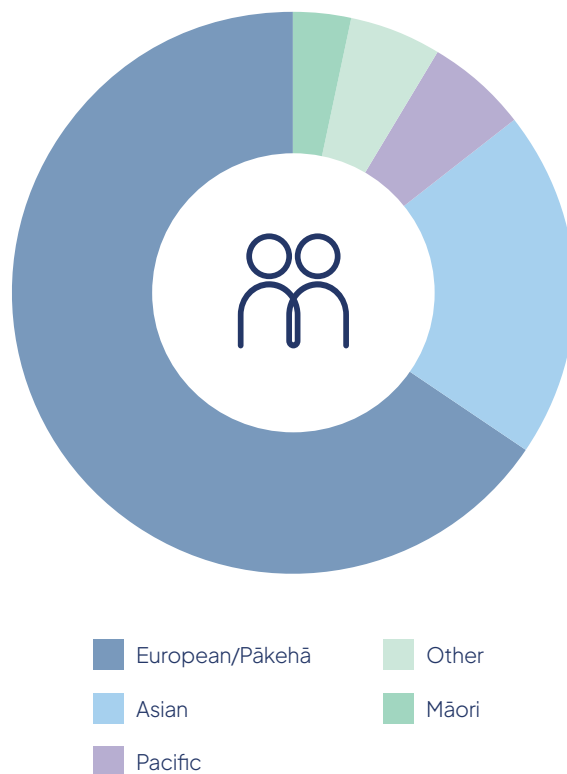
Similar patterns show up with ethnicity. The chart shows Māori are represented far less than we might expect given the numbers in the general population, while Asians are over-represented.

However denominations have very different distributions of ethnicity. The Salvation Army stands out, with 10% of its participants Māori. Amongst Anglicans, just 3% are Māori, however none of the Te Hāhi Mihinare churches took part in the survey. Within Catholic churches some 41% are from Asia, concentrated in Auckland which is 55% Asian. Across Auckland churches, ethnicity is much more varied than in the rest of the country where most churches are predominantly Pākehā.

Education levels

Church attendees are more highly educated than they were 20 years ago, 53% have a university qualification compared with 25% in the 2001 survey. This reflects trends in wider society with the rising demand for education in the new generation and among migrants. Nearly 67% of overseas-born church attendees have a degree compared to 43% of NZ-born respondents. In Wellington only 6% of attendees have no formal qualifications, this figure is 13% in the South Island outside of Christchurch. Compared with the census, church attendees are significantly better educated than the general population, indeed roughly double the level of the general population in most age bands. We may deduce that churches attract middle class people more than working class people.

Percentage of attendees by ethnicity (including multiple ethnicities), across all denominations



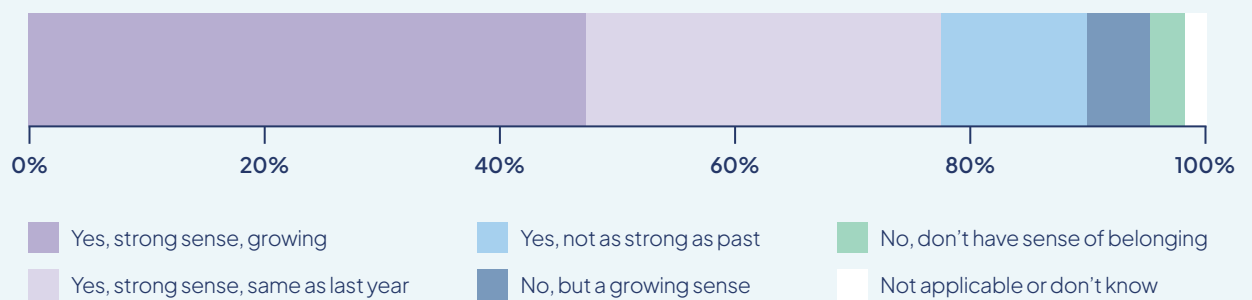
Church attendees have a strong sense of belonging but worry about the next generation

Church leaders want their attendees to feel a sense of belonging. Encouragingly, 78% of attendees have a strong or growing sense of belonging, 13% a weakening sense, and only 3% have no sense of belonging. The results do not vary widely between denominations. Independent churches, Baptists and Catholics have a

lower sense of strong belonging, while the Salvation Army is very strong. Amongst Catholics, Aucklanders have a much stronger sense of growing belonging than elsewhere in the country, perhaps reflecting how many are new migrants.



Do you have a strong sense of belonging to this local church?



Belonging significantly varies according to age group. It is strongest in the middle age group while those aged 65+ have fewer with a strong sense of belonging.

Older people have generally been in the church for many years, so are perhaps less likely to feel a growing sense of belonging.

Sense of belonging by age group - percent of attendees

Age in years	Strong, growing	Strong, same	Not as strong	No but growing	No belonging	NA / don't know
15-29	47	25	12	9	3	4
30-64	50	27	12	6	3	2
65+	44	36	12	4	3	1

The Methodist preference for traditional worship rose slightly to 43%, but sermons rose significantly to 32%, communion declined to 30% while openness to social diversity rose to 21% and was embraced strongly by 40% of the young, at the expense of communion (5%). In contrast Wesleyan Methodists value preaching at 55%, and contemporary worship at 29% but give traditional worship just 13% and social diversity 7%.

Uniting churches are closer in their preferences to Methodist than Presbyterian, with a strong emphasis on traditional worship (40%), befitting the denomination with the highest median age, many of them in country districts, and largely Pākehā. Sermons (38%) were much more highly valued than in 2001.

Baptists placed an even higher value on sermons (52%) compared to 2001 (42%), but their enthusiasm for contemporary worship dropped back from 30% to 21%. There is some evidence of the ageing of Baptists in the higher value (27%) given to practical care, while younger members valued social activities (37%).

The Salvation Army is particularly interesting because it does not hold communion services and has a strong outreach, so it is not surprising to find wider community care (42%) and sermons (36%) at the top, followed by practical care at 24% and contemporary worship at 20%.

Independent churches in the survey are largely evangelical and / or charismatic. Sermons are very highly valued at 75%, Bible study groups at 44%, and practical care at 21%. However this is a very diverse group. Values are similar for CCCNZ.

Overall, about 25% value the wider community care churches perform in their community, with the Salvation Army far higher than anyone else. Social activities and practical care also attract significant support, and small groups in those churches with high levels of

commitment. Protestant churches all placed a 10–22% higher value on sermons / preaching / Bible teaching than in 2001.

Satisfaction with the offering for children & youth & young adults

Young people are the future of the NZ Church, however attendees are only moderately satisfied with what is currently offered to support young people's participation, especially in some denominations.

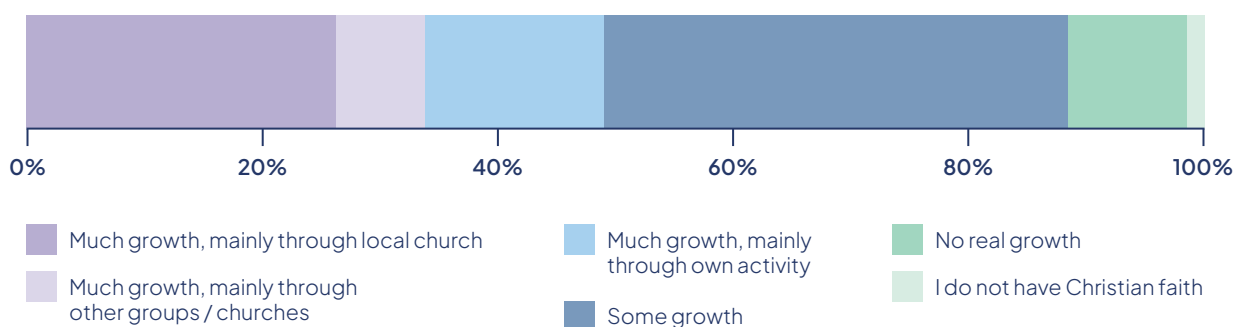
These results suggest many churches have a lot of work to do, if they really want to attract or retain youth. In fact, 15–24 year olds who participated in the survey are more dissatisfied than those older.

Percent satisfied or very satisfied with what is offered for young people

Age group	Children under 12	Youth 12–18	Young adults 19–25
Independent	97	87	84
Confessing Anglicans	96	88	93
CCCNZ	92	88	89
Baptist	92	87	72
Wesleyan Methodist	88	87	74
Uniting	88	69	71
Salvation Army	87	77	75
Anglican	85	67	66
Catholic	83	73	74
Presbyterian	83	76	69
Methodist	83	61	64



Over the last year have you grown in your Christian faith?



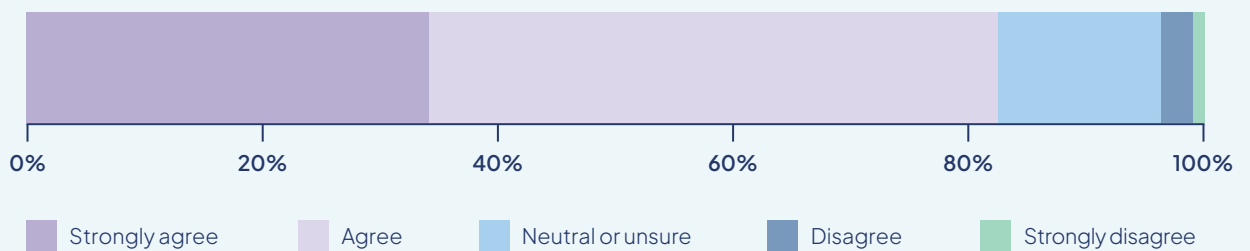
Church attendees are growing spiritually and churches are resourcing their journey well

Overall, 49% of attendees consider they have spiritually grown significantly over the past year, and the local church was attributed as the key factor by around half of them. The highest levels of significant growth (52% and above) is among Catholics, the Salvation Army and Wesleyan Methodists, and the lowest (44% and below) among Uniting, Presbyterian and Anglican attendees.

Those aged 15–29 have the highest levels of growth in faith, except among overseas-born Catholics. Compared with other age groups, that growth comes

from a wider range of influences including personal activity and outside of their local church. Those aged 30–64 are most likely to think they have grown significantly as a result of the work of the local church, although Catholics are as likely to say it was as a result of their personal activity. Those aged 65+ are much more likely to analyse themselves as having some rather than much growth perhaps because of their years of experience. Local churches clearly need to respect the different approaches of different age groups.

This church is resourcing my spiritual journey well



Churches are resourcing the spiritual journeys of their attendees well, right across denominations. The results for Auckland Catholics are particularly strong, especially for those born overseas, who value the church highly for resourcing their spiritual journey. Perhaps there is something in New Zealand Catholicism which really helps migrants. However, local born New Zealanders, both Catholic and Protestant, do not feel so strongly on this question.

Across age groups, 15–29 year olds feel they are not being resourced well, compared to older people.

Value of the sermon

For 42% of attendees the preaching is very helpful to their life, and to another 38% it is usually helpful. The

greatest enthusiasm for the preaching is found amongst Confessing Anglicans, the Salvation Army and CCCNZ, with Independents and Wesleyan Methodists close behind.

Sense of God's presence

Almost half (47%) of attendees say they nearly always feel a sense of God's presence in their local church and another third (34%) say they usually do. In fact, 58% of Catholics say they nearly always feel God's presence, while just 35% of Baptists say the same. That sense of adoration of God curated at Mass seems to powerfully influence attendees perceptions.

Feel sense of God's presence in church usually or nearly always



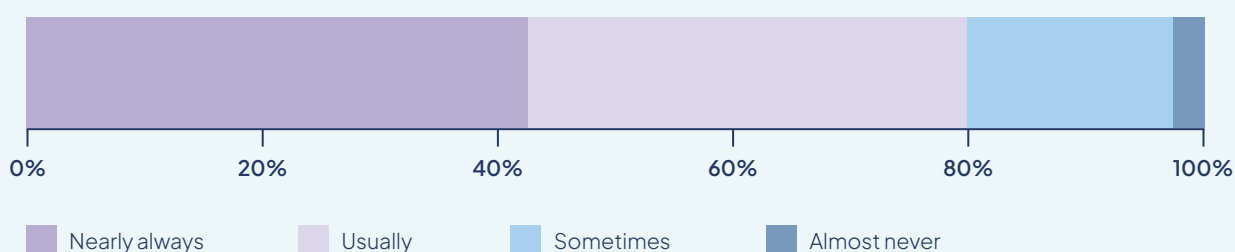
Understanding of God

When asked if the church is helping individuals grow in their understanding of God again the answers are encouraging with 43% saying nearly always and 37% usually. Not surprisingly the Other Protestants score highly with their emphasis on Bible teaching; although Baptist results are more like Anglican and Presbyterian results (around 38% saying nearly always).

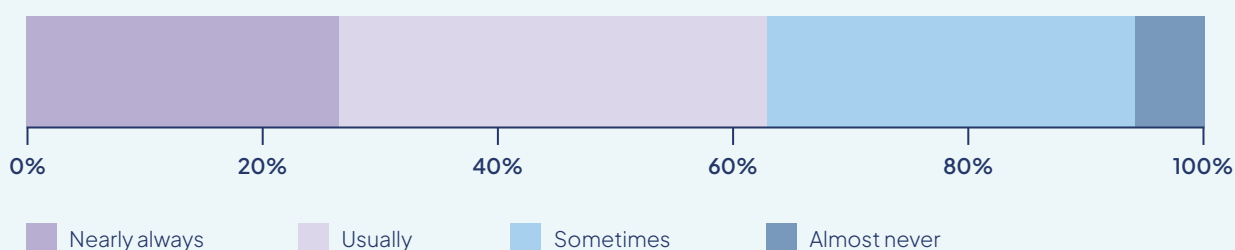
Being challenged to take action

Those in activist and evangelical denominations are being challenged to take action by their local church. In particular, 34%-37% of Confessing Anglicans, CCCNZ, Wesleyan Methodist and Salvation Army members are nearly always challenged, while 22-26% of Methodists, Anglicans, Baptists, Presbyterians and Catholics said the same.

This church is helping me grow in my understanding of God



I am being challenged to take action



Frequency of private devotional activities

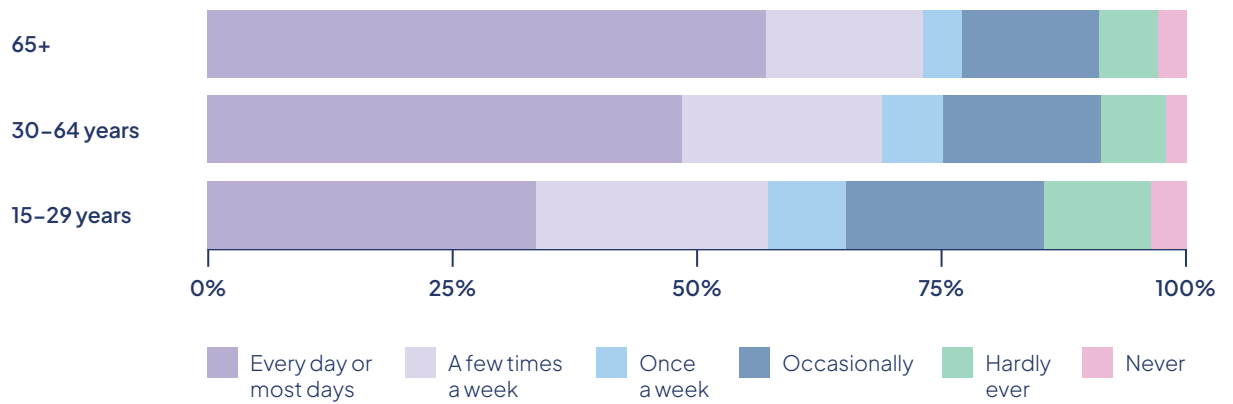
Church attendees have long been taught a basic practice of our faith is to regularly spend time in private or family devotional activities. Half the survey participants (50%) have devotions every day or most days and another 25% do on a weekly basis.

These encouraging numbers mask large variations by denomination and age group. Confessing Anglicans and CCCNZ have the highest frequency of private devotional time, while Uniting and Methodists have the lowest.

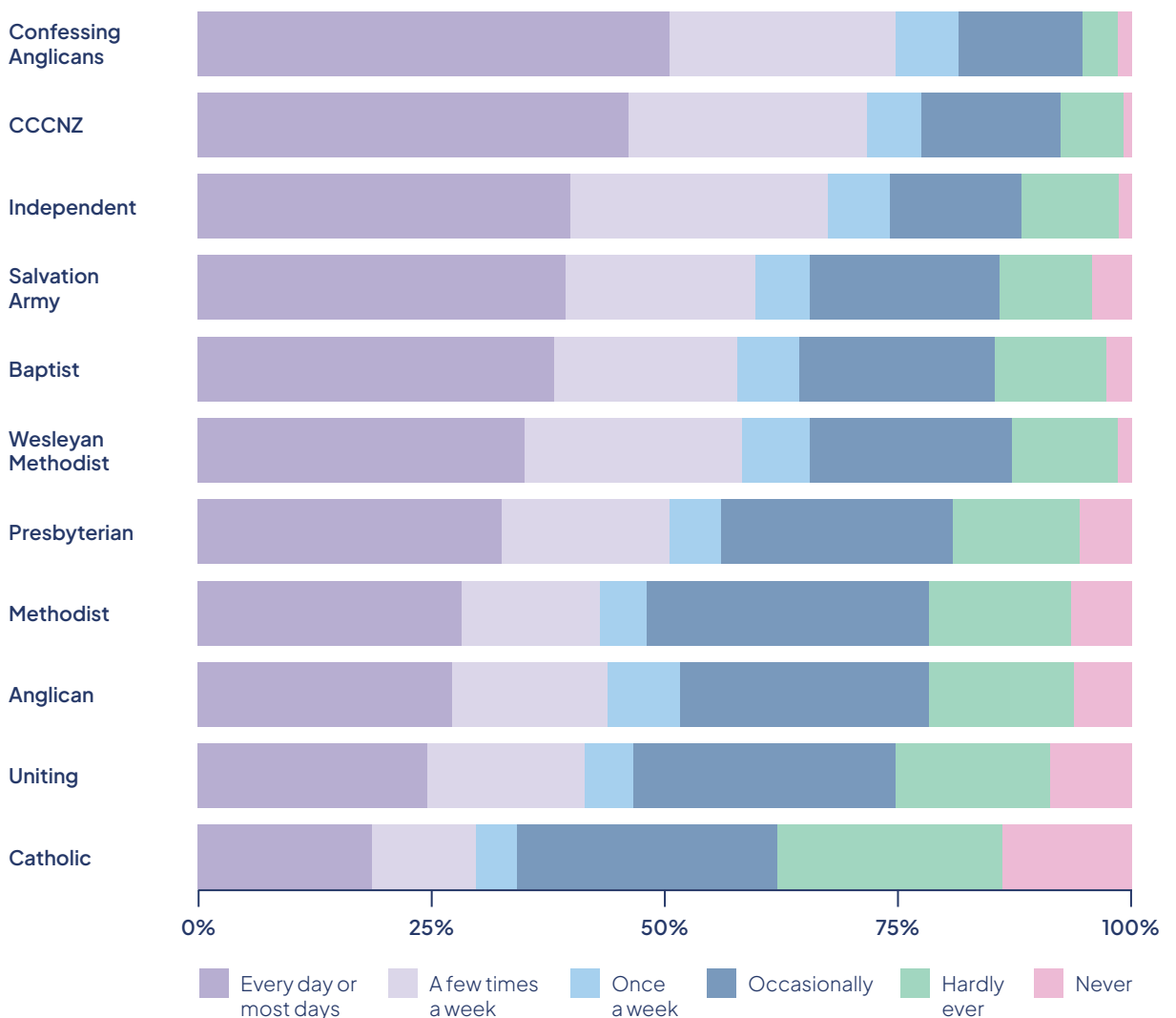
Those aged 65+ have far higher frequency of private devotional time (58% every day or most days) than 30–64 year olds (47%) and particularly 15–29 year olds (concerningly low at 32%). This may reflect young

people having less time in their day than retired people or a lack of focus from churches on teaching their attendees the value of personal spiritual habits.

Frequency of private / family devotions by age group



Frequency of Bible reading by denomination



Reading the Bible alone

Related to this, 28% of attendees read their Bible on their own every day or most days. However, half of attendees read the Bible either occasionally or hardly ever or never. Again, there are striking differences by denomination.

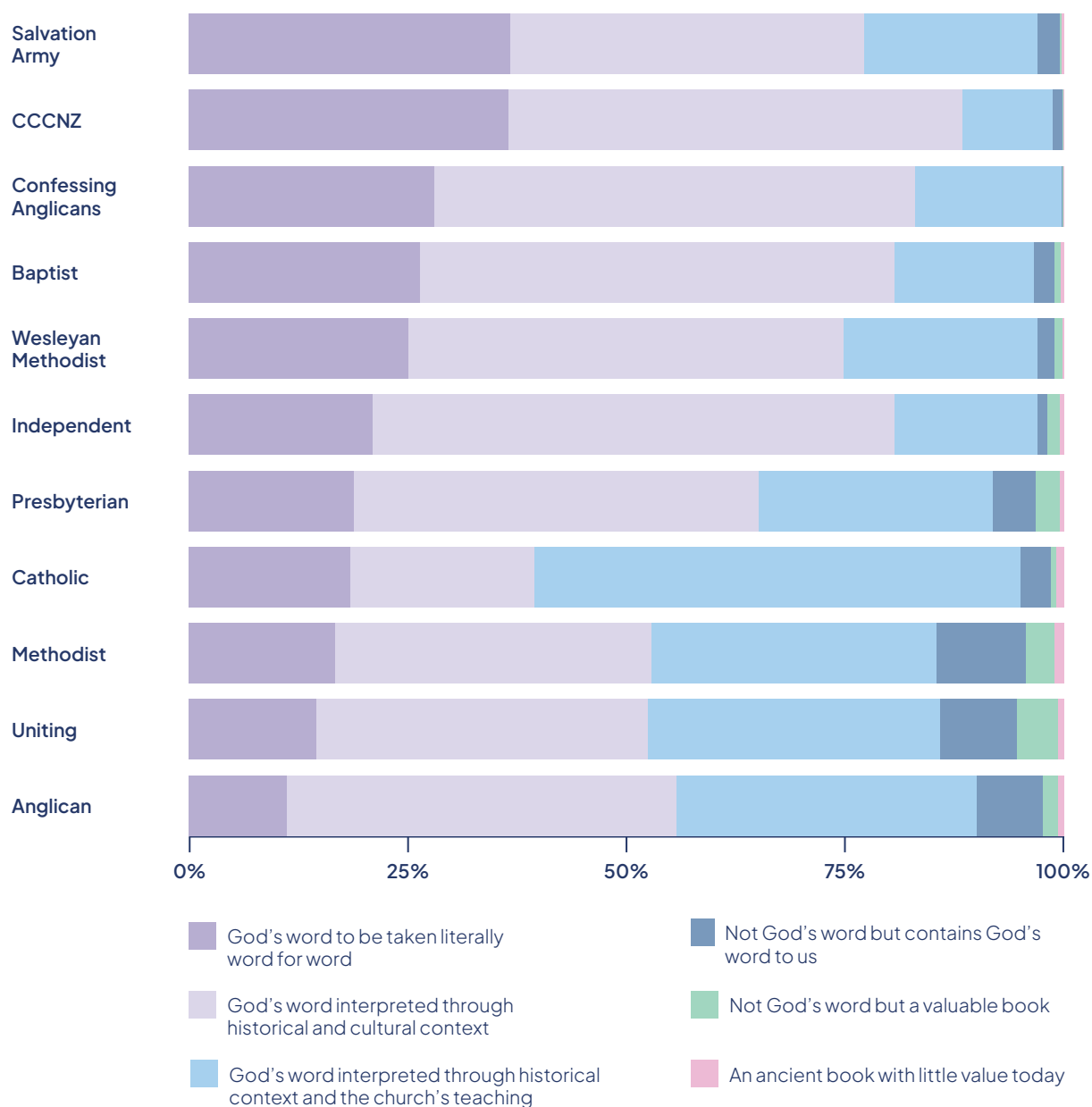
Age range is also a factor, with younger Protestants far less likely to be frequent readers. There may be a correlation between private devotions, Bible reading, and growth in personal faith.

All these results reflect beliefs about the value of the Bible. Altogether, 95% of attendees believe the Bible

to be God's Word. Just over one in five (22%) view the Bible as God's literal word. This is approximately the same proportion as 2001, however there are significant drops amongst Anglicans, Baptists and CCCNZ, while the proportion of Catholics and Methodists saying this has increased.

Most commonly, participants view the Bible as the word of God, to be interpreted in light of its historical and cultural context. However, 56% of Catholics believe the Bible is the word of God to be interpreted in light of its historical context and the church's teaching.

View of the Bible by denomination



Church attendees are kind and helpful to those around them

At its best, the NZ Church is known and appreciated for helping and showing kindness to those around us.

Over the past 12 months, three-quarters of attendees (74%) have donated money to a charitable organisation, with Anglicans the highest at 85%. Additionally, 57% have lent or given money to someone outside their family, a large increase over 2001. This may reflect the emergence of crowdfunding platforms such as Givealittle, or the increase in beggars on our streets.

Altogether, 44% of participants helped someone through a personal crisis, up from 37% in 2001, but there was a sharp drop in the proportion visiting people in hospital, from 54% to 42%.

Younger people are strikingly likely to help someone through a personal crisis, but less likely than other age groups to donate to a charitable organisation. The Salvation Army are more likely than others to help someone in a personal crisis or with addiction, but less likely to involve themselves personally in social action such as attending a public meeting or march; or supporting a campaign.

Percent of attendees who have done various acts of kindness in the last 12 months, by largest participating denominations

	Anglican	Baptist	Catholic	Presbyterian	Salvation Army
Lent money	53	59	61	49	51
Attended meeting	21	19	18	19	18
Supported campaign	38	34	29	31	23
Cared for sick	33	34	34	30	35
Helped in crisis	46	49	40	42	47
Visited hospital	50	41	37	46	45
Gave possessions	46	47	42	41	41
Stopped addict	7	11	9	7	16
Donated to charity	85	76	67	81	69
Contacted MP/council	16	12	8	11	8
None	2	4	4	4	4

Involvement in community-minded groups not connected to church

Many church attendees are involved in community service, social action or welfare groups not connected to their church. Older people are more likely to be involved compared to younger people, who are more likely to be employed. However, that partly depends on the type of group: those aged 65+ are more involved in arts, cultural and political groups (29%), while 15–29 year olds are involved in sports, recreational and hobby groups (27%).

Denominationally, the proportion of Broad Protestants involved in arts, cultural and political groups is striking: 38% of Anglicans, 35% of Methodists and 33% of Presbyterians. These denominations have long played a prominent role in civic life. By comparison, the Baptists have 24% involvement in such groups, Catholics 20% and the Salvation Army 18%. The highest level of involvement in sports or recreational groups are Presbyterians (31%), Uniting and Anglicans.

The denominations with least involvement in outside groups of any sort are Catholics, the Salvation Army and CCCNZ. This could be for a variety of reasons including high levels of church involvement, high proportions of new migrants with few wider links, and Catholics in particular have strong engagement with Catholic-affiliated organisations such as St Vincent de Paul.

Caring for the environment

A vast majority of 95% believe that Christians have a responsibility to care for the environment, and 18% of attendees are very active in these causes.

Church attendees are highly involved in their local church

In many denominations, while the number of attendees may be down, current attendees are involved more than in the past. A majority (59%) are involved outside of Sunday services, about the same as in 2001. So how are they involved?

Almost one-third (32%) are in prayer, discussion or Bible study groups. Wesleyan Methodists have 54% involved in such groups, and Baptists 48%. More general fellowship groups, which attracted the highest level of involvement in 2001 (38%) slipped to 24%, perhaps reflecting the church has less appeal as a social group than it once had. Youth groups attracted about 20% of Anglican and Catholic people aged 15–29, but 50% or more in other denominations.

Leadership roles

Leadership roles are now widely spread in most Broad Protestant churches.

For example, 43% of Anglicans are involved in church service leadership, 16% in pastoral care and nearly 13% in church oversight, i.e. vestry. The Presbyterian proportion in church service leadership is lower than Anglicans at 35%, but the pastoral care level is higher (18%).

Why are there lower levels of involvement among Catholics? They probably learned these habits from the tradition of leaving the work to the priests and religious orders; but another factor today is that Catholic churches are much larger than most other local churches, and so fewer participants can have roles.

Financial giving

Those giving 10% or more of their income dropped from 21% in 2001 to 19% in 2023, while the proportion giving 5–9% dropped from 31% to 24%. These decreases may be due to the 2001 question specifying net income. However, the trend in lower giving is firmed up by the proportion giving a small amount or not at all: 22% in 2001; 31% this year.

Amongst denominations, Confessing Anglicans and Salvation Army have the highest proportion (38%) giving a tenth or more of their income. Almost a third

Percent of attendees involved in various leadership roles by denominational grouping

	All	Catholic	Broad Protestant	Other Protestant
Service leader	30	25	39	28
Adult ministry	12	6	15	16
Children/youth ministry	9	5	9	13
Community ministry	7	5	7	8
Oversight	8	4	13	9
Pastoral care	11	7	18	12
Other role	11	9	13	11
No role	37	44	35	35

of Baptists and a quarter of Presbyterians give at this level; while the proportions of Anglicans, Methodists and Uniting are lower at 13–16%.

Catholics have the lowest levels of giving, with just 5% giving 10% or more. This is driven by the reluctance of younger and overseas-born Catholics to give. Low levels of commitment beyond Mass are more common for new migrants, who are understandably preoccupied with settling into New Zealand.

There are striking differences across age groups. Older church attendees aged 65+ give more (21% give 10% or more of income, and 32% give 5–9%), compared to 30–64 year olds (18% and 20%) and 15–29 year olds (11% and 8%). In fact, just 4% of over-65s do not contribute financially to their church; while 41% of young people gave nothing.

Activities that reach the wider community

It is sometimes said the church is the only organisation that exists for its non-members. Impressively, 44% of church attendees are involved in outreach to the wider community, up from 40% in 2001. Local churches have

a growing awareness of the needs of communities and how to meet them.

More than a quarter of attendees (27%) are involved in community service or welfare activities operated by the church, compared to 18% in 2001. The NZ church is a significant provider of community meals, care for the homeless, and support for city missions. Unsurprisingly, the 65+ age group has the highest rate of involvement. Methodists have 38% involved in welfare, Anglicans and Presbyterians 36%, while the Salvation Army has 35%. Catholics are much lower at 19%, and this reflects a tendency for Catholics to have lesser involvement outside Sunday Mass.

One in ten church attendees are involved in evangelistic or outreach activities, while 6% are involved in social justice activities, which might include engagement with a campaign highlighting a need or issue.

Readiness to talk to others about faith

There is an encouraging lift in the proportion of church attendees who look for opportunities to share their faith, from 13% in 2001 to 20% in 2023. This may be a reflection of a shift in NZ society towards a greater degree of religious tolerance at the grassroots level. Those who feel most at ease are Salvation Army and Independent church attendees. Strikingly, overseas-born church attendees are much more likely to feel at ease talking about their faith. For example, 27% of overseas-born Catholics are, compared to 15% of NZ-born Catholics. It is another signal that the future of the NZ church increasingly sits with overseas-born Christians.

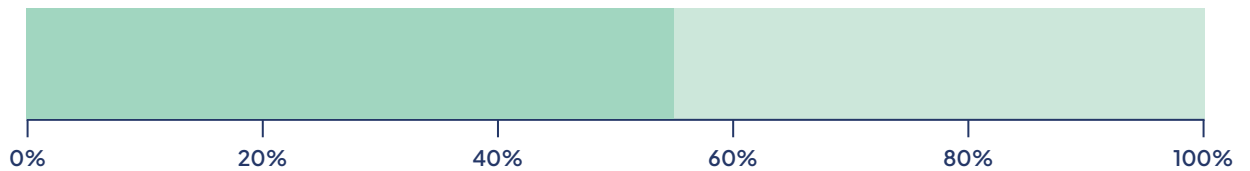


Sharing their faith

20% look for opportunities to share their faith



55% at ease to talk about faith if it comes up



73% have invited friends or family to church (34% in last year)



Church attendees back their leaders in some denominations more than others

The fruitfulness of a church often rises and falls on its leadership and the survey provides quite a unique opportunity for church attendees to give feedback on aspects of leadership.

One third (35%) of church attendees are strongly committed to their church's vision and goals, and another 28% are partly committed; however 16% are not aware of any vision or goals. A church attendee committed to their church vision is likely to be highly engaged.

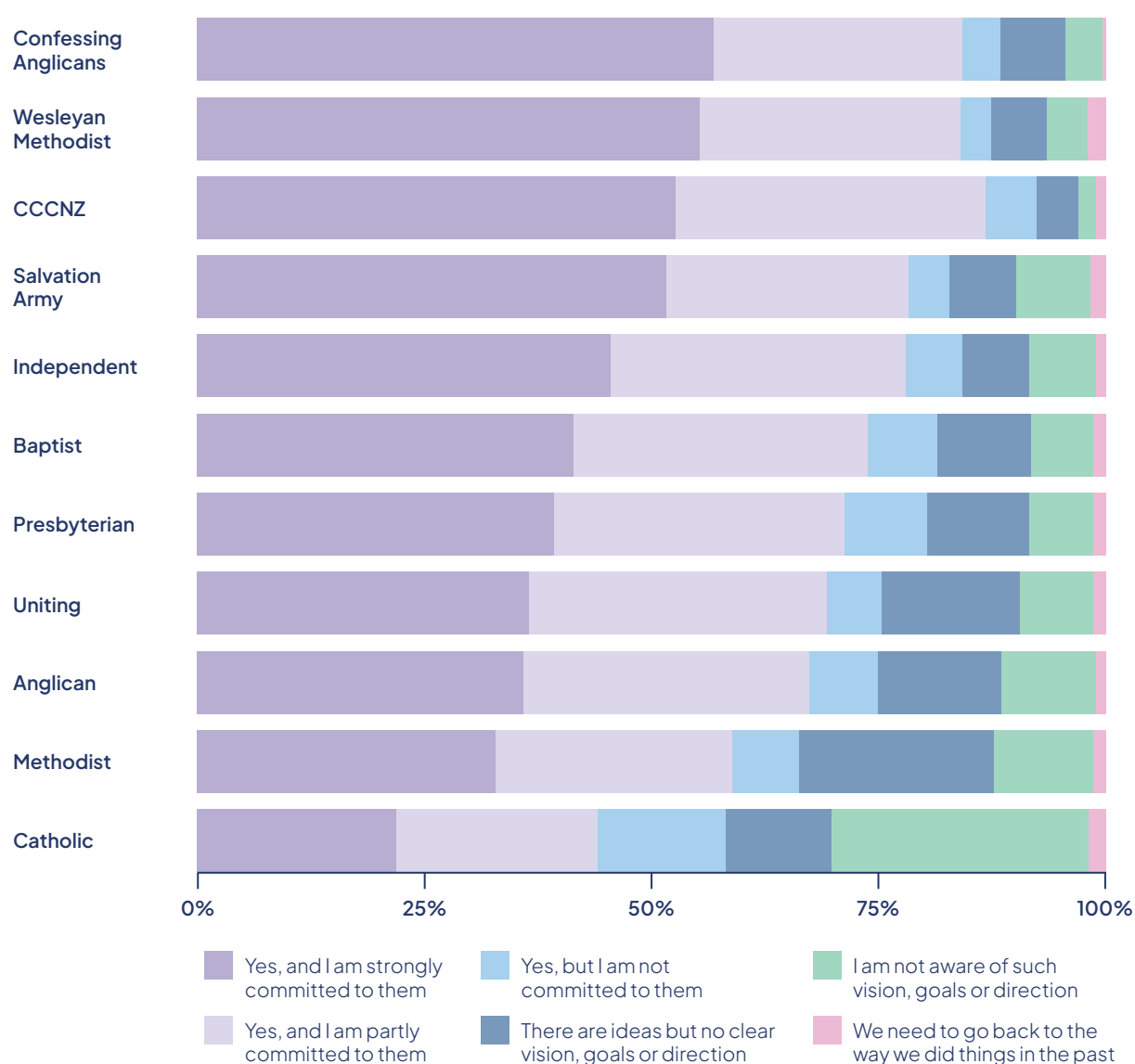
Younger people, who are generally more mobile and transient, have a much lower level of commitment to

their church's vision and goals (27%).

There are real differences amongst denominations. The smaller, newer denominations (Confessing Anglicans, Wesleyan Methodist, CCCNZ) are strongly committed with 55–59% saying this. The Salvation Army, Baptists and Independents are in the 41–51% range. Conversely, just 22% of Catholics say the same. This may reflect the contrast in the traditional Catholic church for continuity with the Protestant demand for reform.

It is one thing to be committed to a vision or goals, but how confident are attendees that they can be reached?

Percent committed to the church's vision for ministry and mission, by denomination



Almost two in five (39%) are fully confident and just under 35% are partly confident. Across denominations, Uniting and Anglican attendees have the lowest level of confidence in their leaders to outwork their vision and goals.

Catholic attendees around the country are divergent in their views. Around one third (35%) are fully confident in reaching the vision or goals. However, there is a contrast between Auckland Catholics (44%) with their high proportion of overseas-born, and Catholics in other parts of NZ (15–21%) with higher proportions of older Pākehā.

Leaders’ willingness to support new initiatives

Church attendees generally believe their leaders are willing to support new initiatives. Just over a quarter

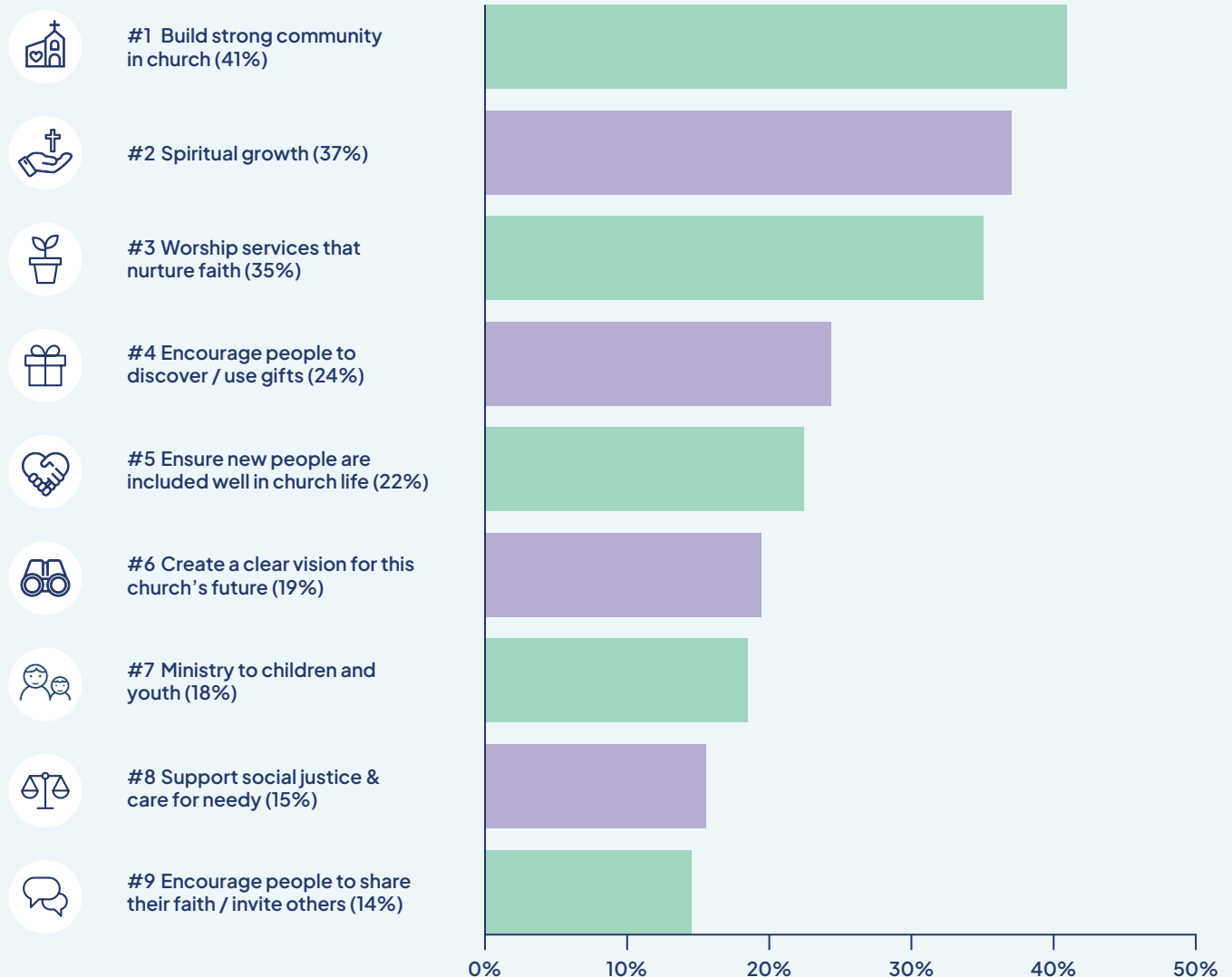
(27%) strongly believe so, another 45% agree, while only 4% disagree. Still, there are intriguing differences by denomination. Independents are not as positive, just 18% strongly believe. Many of these churches are driven by one leader, with a less collaborative decision-making process. Amongst age groups, the 35–44 year olds are those who most strongly agree. They are often a group aspiring to make change, so this is hopeful.

Attendees’ priorities for the next 12 months

A clear picture emerges of church attendees’ desired priorities. Survey participants were able to pick 3 from a list of 12.

What do attendees want to prioritise next year?

Attendees could select 3 priorities



On the whole, church attendees want their local church to build stronger community and a more nurturing environment. More than two in five (41%) prioritise building a stronger sense of community in their church, followed by spiritual growth (37%) and worship services that nurture faith (35%).

These common priorities mask differences by denomination and age group. For example, older Catholics are keen to build community and ensure new people are included well. Younger Catholics are more likely to choose community and spiritual growth. Older Anglicans want nurturing worship services, while younger Anglicans want community and spiritual growth (like young Catholics); but also support social justice and helping people in need. Through many churches, worship services that nurture faith are especially prioritised by older people while younger attendees prioritise a wider range of options.

For participating local church leaders, this feedback from their attendees can help shape their leadership in the coming year.

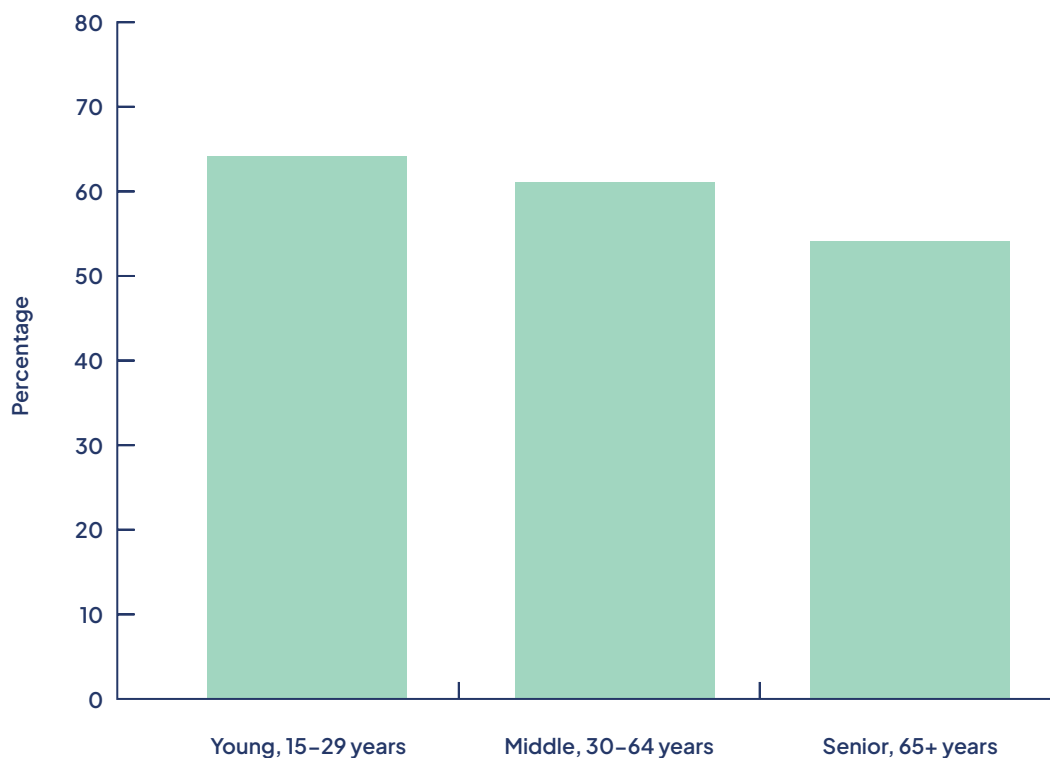
Encouragement to use gifts and skills

Local church leaders play a vital role in encouraging attendees to find and use their gifts and skills within the church. Almost a quarter of attendees (23%) are encouraged to a great extent, and another 36% to some extent. Young people in particular felt their gifts and skills were well appreciated (30% to a great extent), but older people felt this less strongly (19%), maybe because they are encouraged to make room for the young.

The denominations that feel most encouraged are the Wesleyan Methodists, the Salvation Army and the Independents. Conversely, just 18% of Catholics feel greatly encouraged to use their gifts and skills.



Percentage encouraged to find and use their gifts and skills, by age group



An encouragement and challenge for church leaders

This survey is a snapshot of where NZ churches stand in 2023. For church leaders, there is much to be encouraged by - each local church is unique but overall attendees feel a strong sense of belonging, are highly involved in ministry and outreach roles, many are growing in their faith, and the Church is reaching new migrants to our nation. Yet there are also challenges - including that the Church is ageing; younger people in particular are not having frequent devotional time; and some attendees are not aligned with the vision or goals of their church.

The insights in this report suggests much can be done to make our churches more fruitful for both attendees and for the wider community. Integral to this is the role of church leaders. If our leaders can remain faithful to their calling, continue to listen to the voice of their attendees, and see a vision for what the church can be, the NZ Church will be in good health for the season ahead.

[1] Victoria University of Wellington Election Surveys, New Zealand Attitudes and Values Surveys, 2010, 2019.

[2] Statistics Report in Auckland Anglican Diocese Yearbook, 2023. Sheet "Attendance trends per parish, 2000-2022".



Church **Life** survey

