



*An invitation for  
the Church to a  
new conversation  
about climate  
change*

**They Shall  
Inherit  
the Earth**

**2022 Tearfund Climate Report**

**tearfund**

They Shall Inherit the Earth is a report produced by Tearfund Australia outlining research into views of Millennial and adult Gen Z Christians<sup>1</sup> and church leaders in Australia towards climate change and the role of the Church in taking action to address it.

They Shall Inherit the Earth is authorised by Matthew Maury  
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# Contents

<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Endorsements</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Background</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>The invitation</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>The findings</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>How to start the conversation</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>70</b>

<sup>1</sup> Aged 18 to 40 years in 2021

# Acknowledgement of Country



## The starting point Pastor Ray Minniecon

Genesis is a starting point for theology from an Indigenous perspective. Its first few chapters reveal that it is not only the land that is created, but also the animals and fish, the trees and all the environment, even the stars, the moon and the sun. He put humans in the centre of His creation and authorised them to be co-creators with Him and be co-custodians of His creation.

If we are going to understand climate change and creation justice we need to understand God's original design. We must start in Genesis 1 because that is where God started. God created everything good, everything connected, everything in harmony. And for Indigenous people these things are still important to us. The sacredness of life is relationship-centred rather than centred on some institution or object. God has created for us this great sense of community, with our elders, families, our neighbours, ancestors and all of His creation.

God's law is written in the whole of creation. The ceremony of Jubilee in the Bible helps us to understand this. God knew full well that we would exploit and misuse His creation, especially the land. We would do sinful things to our neighbours. So every 50 years God provided an opportunity to reset the relationships between humans, land and His creation. Whether you were perpetrator or victim, it was an invitation to come back to the equity, harmony, sacredness and stability of Genesis 1.

As First Peoples we understand climate change in the context of how extractive industries have destroyed so many environments and the communities of people who live there. I think of the Marcopper mining disaster in the Philippines in 1996. The mine's drainage tunnel broke and released tailings and chemicals into a river basin. The Indigenous people of Marinduque had lived in the area for millennia. They could no longer fish or use the river water. Their traditional farming land was destroyed. There was no hope for restoration. The rivers there are dead. These causes of poverty are actually an act of criminality against those people from outsiders, which they do not have any power to overcome. You can't call it poverty when it is done to people with no capacity to fight back.

The Church must humbly learn what it means to be in right relationship. The cross of Jesus, at its most fundamental level, is about restoring right relationship with the Creator, the creation and with each other. That is what Jesus died for. The restoration of relationship defines the parameters of the Gospel.

Yes, we've done the wrong thing in the Garden of Eden, but God has given all of humanity an opportunity to make things right with our Creator, and to heal the relationships between ourselves, creation and each other.

*Pastor Ray Minniecon is a descendant of the Kabi Kabi nation and the Gurang Gurang nation of south-east Queensland. He is also a descendant of the South Sea Islander people, with deep and abiding connections to the people of Ambrym Island. He leads Scarred Tree, an Aboriginal, Torres Strait and Australian South Sea Islander ministry based in St John's Glebe, Sydney. We are thankful to have Pastor Ray journey with Tearfund to share his love for Jesus, theological insights and deep wisdom.*

**Tearfund acknowledges the Elders of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, past, present and emerging, on whose unceded land the national office stands. More broadly we acknowledge Elders and leaders who have, and continue to, care for Country in all of the areas of Australia we work in. We acknowledge the leadership of First Peoples here in Australia and from around the globe who have been dispossessed and oppressed while carrying out their God-given duty of caring for their land.**

# Foreword

By Matthew Maury,  
CEO Tearfund



## An opportunity for the Church to truly be ‘ambassadors of reconciliation’

The Beatitudes paint a picture of a Kingdom that can feel quite foreign, certainly challenging, but perhaps also liberating. Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

The quality of meekness is not one our culture often celebrates or desires. It is associated with weakness or powerlessness. The translation from the original language is gentle. But it was also a word that was used to describe the willing and loyal submission of power to authority. This is the upside down economy of the Kingdom of God we repeatedly find in the Bible, challenging our culture’s definitions of success and worth.

My experience as CEO of Tearfund has shown me how much we can learn from scriptures like the Beatitudes when we seek God’s heart for justice and care for the vulnerable. By listening to our Tearfund global partners, and learning from their reading of these verses, our perspective can be liberated from the cultural filters that unhelpfully blur our picture of God’s Kingdom.

Part of that listening leads us to consider how the Gospel speaks to one of the biggest justice issues of today - the disproportionately negative impact climate change is having on our global brothers and sisters and, in many places, entrenching the challenges of poverty. What does it mean for us, as Christians, as the Church in Australia, to wrestle honestly with this reality and the ways in which

we are contributing to the problem, and then to respond with meekness? How might we tread more gently on this earth and hold our own power with restraint and in submission to God?

It is in this context that Tearfund is excited to release this report. We believe it is filled with the potential for a hopeful future – the breaking in of the Kingdom of God through the way that Christians young and old respond to the challenges of a changing climate. After decades of what has at times seemed like inaction by many generations in the Church – the research we are sharing in this report reveals a deep commitment to creation care by the next generation of younger Christians and what we believe will be significant shifts to which church leaders will want to respond.

We recognise that in a highly polarised and politicised context there are bridges that need to be built in order to respond to these research findings. Tearfund is committed to journey with the Church and its leaders as together we learn, discern and pray our way across the divides. We believe this is an opportunity for the Church to truly be ‘ambassadors of reconciliation’ and for us all to discover what it means for the meek to inherit the earth.

Matthew Maury,  
Tearfund’s CEO

# Endorsements

## Pastor Ray Minniecon

Leader, Scarred Tree Indigenous Ministries

“Humanity was given the responsibility of joint custodianship of all of our Creator’s creation. We have failed. Tearfund is one of those important voices that take this serious threat seriously. I encourage all responsible peoples to embrace Tearfund’s research to help us make the choices necessary to protect and save Mother Earth for future generations.

## Rev Tim Costello AO

Executive Director, Micah Australia Senior Fellow, Centre for Public Christianity

“Any serious discipleship in these days needs to take climate change seriously. We are stewards of a beautiful but threatened creation. I encourage all churches and their leaders to embrace this good research undertaken by Tearfund, and to engage with the dialogue and campaign it opens up.

## Canon Dr Ruth Valerio

Global Advocacy and Influencing Director, Tearfund UK

“May what you read in this report inspire you to keep responding to the climate crisis, rooted in the Trinitarian God: our God of justice, the Lord of all creation, and the eschatological Spirit who moves us forwards in hope.

## Kuki Rokhum

Director of Training and Mobilisation, EFICOR India

“This research by Tearfund confirms many things I have often spoken about. It is exciting to see how engaged and passionate the younger generation is, how eager they are for the Church’s leaders and community to do what God has mandated us to do. These findings clearly show the tasks ahead, the gaps and misunderstandings. I hope the Church in Australia and around the world will heed to this.



# Introduction

**God's vision for a flourishing creation encompasses all people and the whole of creation. Yet, climate change is robbing the vulnerable of their peace and hope for the future. Now is the time for a new conversation about climate change and what it means for the Church.**

They Shall Inherit the Earth details the findings of the most comprehensive study to date of Australian Christians' attitudes towards climate change.

This seven-part study, led by Tearfund and conducted by leading research agency NCLS Research, examined the views of Millennial and adult Gen Z Christians<sup>2</sup> and church leaders in Australia towards climate change and the role of the Church in taking action to address it. It also looked at how climate change – and creation care more broadly – fit within their understanding of the gospel, the mission of the Church and the living out of their Christian faith.

This report explores the findings of that research through three themes that are keys to unlocking a new and hope-filled conversation about climate change and what it means for the Church: understanding the problem, acknowledging the barriers and embracing the opportunity that awaits. Alongside the findings, this report also includes a number of voices bringing their perspectives on how we might consider and respond to the issues being raised within each of these three themes.

<sup>2</sup>Aged 18 to 40 years in 2021

# Keys to unlocking a new conversation about climate change

## Understanding the problem



More than **3 in 5** 18-40 year old Christian

The younger the Christian, the more likely they are to report being extremely concerned.

More than **50%** 18-40 year olds

think they are more concerned than older generations about climate change.

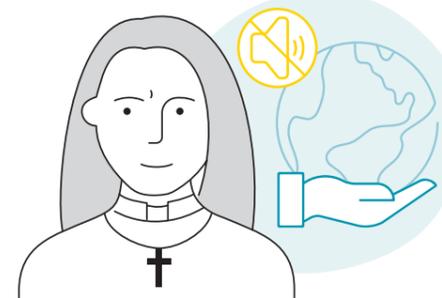


**2 in 3** 18-40 year old

Christians think local churches should be responsible for action to address climate change.



## Acknowledging the barriers

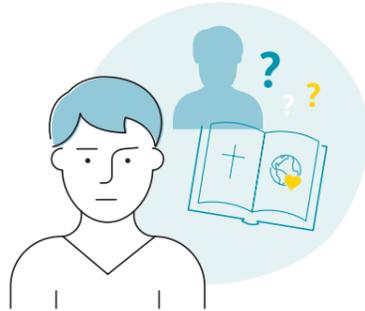


**35%** of Senior Church Leaders say they rarely preach on environmental matters



**47%** of Church Leaders think that their local church is not doing enough to address climate change

## Embracing the opportunity



**22%**  
of 18-40 year olds

who don't attend church regularly say they have 'no one in particular' to support them in matters of creation care



**3 in 4**  
Australians

are concerned about climate change

**85%**  
of Church Leaders

are willing to encourage their church community to take action to tackle climate change.



## We are Tearfund

We're working in partnership to end poverty, challenge inequality and build sustainable communities. Following Jesus, we go where the need is greatest, acting with courage to tackle injustice so that all may experience fullness of life.





## About Tearfund

**Tearfund Australia is a Christian development, relief and advocacy organisation responding to global poverty and injustice. Our vision is for a just and compassionate world in which all people have the opportunity to achieve their God-given potential.**

**We work, partnering with Christians, to show the love of God in some of the world's most difficult places.**

*To overcome poverty, Tearfund focuses on empowering communities to:*

- Grow good food and earn a living
- Achieve basic literacy
- Maintain good health and wellbeing
- Strengthen community harmony and gender equality
- Access clean water and sanitation
- Build climate resilience and environmental sustainability
- Prepare for and have the ability to respond early to emergencies

## Development anchored in partnership

**Across the globe, we work in partnership with locally based Christian agencies who understand the needs of their communities, and are in the best position to develop responses that are relevant and sustainable.**

We support grassroots initiatives where community members, especially those most impacted by poverty and marginalisation, participate at every level of implementation. We tackle the root causes of poverty and injustice, recognising that needs are complex and interrelated.

We intentionally prioritise projects in some of the most challenging contexts around the world because we are called to be where the need is greatest. We approach our partnerships with a biblical understanding: one of shared faith, deep value and mutual respect.

Alongside our passion for Christ-centred development, Tearfund is also deeply committed to helping Christians in Australia make biblically shaped responses to poverty and injustice.

Through church partnership, community fundraising, education, prayer and advocacy, we support Christians in their faith communities to bring transformation to the circumstances and systems that keep people trapped in cycles of poverty.



## Why climate change?

**Tearfund's vision is built upon the Gospel, which, as Jesus proclaimed, is "good news for the poor" and an understanding that his reconciling and restorative work on the cross is good news for the whole creation. Our engagement with climate change is a direct outworking of this gospel foundation.**

Climate change is one of the biggest threats to global efforts to end poverty. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the success of development interventions, more women and men than ever before have had the chance to experience lives free from poverty. However, the deepening climate crisis has started to reverse these gains and put more people at risk of poverty and hunger, as well as threatening to displace millions from their homes.

At Tearfund, we see these impacts on the communities that we work with. We witness the rains become less predictable, crops fail, diseases spread into new areas and the frequency and severity of weather disasters grow.

We hear the plea from our partners around the world and communities in Pacific nations for substantive action to be taken to address what is, for them, an existential threat. Climate change threatens to force large numbers of Pacific communities from their homes and livelihoods. In some cases, there is a real threat that entire island nations will be lost to the sea.

Climate change will affect us all but it is people living in the world's poorest communities who are being hardest hit, despite contributing least to the problem and being the least resourced to adapt. We are compelled, by Christ's love, to speak out and act in response to this injustice and we are longing to see more of the Church come alongside us in this vital work.



## About the research

This research project was undertaken by NCLS Research, a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities. Its most well-known project is the five-yearly National Church Life Survey.

The research that underpins this report comprises seven different studies. These studies examined the views of Millennial and adult Gen Z Christians<sup>3</sup> and church leaders in Australia towards climate change and the role of the Church in taking action to address it, along with a contextual analysis of Australian population attitudes over time. The research drew from a combination of externally published data, existing NCLS data and data from new online surveys. The purpose and methodology of each of these studies is provided in the Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> Aged 18 to 40 years in 2021

## The invitation



Tearfund is committed to speaking up about global justice issues which perpetuate poverty and injustice. This is why it has been a vocal advocate on the issue of climate change for many years, amplifying the voices of our global development partners and highlighting the threat it poses to decades of progress towards ending extreme poverty. What the findings of this research show is that younger Christians in Australia are increasingly concerned about the impact of climate change on their future and they want to see action - including from the Church.

In recent years, much of the broader climate change conversation in Australia has been derailed by political and cultural division but, on a global scale, the consequences of inaction have never been clearer. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Report on Climate Change demonstrates the adverse impacts climate change is already having on people's lives and wellbeing, and on our natural ecosystems.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, the combined commitments of world leaders still fall short of what is needed to limit global heating to within the safer and agreed target of 1.5 degrees.<sup>5</sup>

Through Tearfund's collaboration with others in the aid and development sector and our leadership of community campaigns, we know there are many Christians who share our commitment to see compassion and justice shape the collective response to this threat. Yet for many within the Church, the issue of climate change doesn't connect or sit comfortably with their Christian faith. There is a hesitancy to engage, and silence and inaction results.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/2022/02/28/pr-wgii-ar6/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tearfund.org.au/stories/cop26-may-be-over-yet-justice-isnt-done>



**Climate change will affect us all but how and how much we experience its impacts is greatly influenced by where and when we happen to be born. Those who are poor - who have contributed least to the problem - and those who are young will bear the heaviest burdens. Silence and inaction risk being perceived as apathy to this injustice and exacerbate a geographical and generational divide.**

Now is not the time for silence. Now is the time for the Church to be speaking up with even greater conviction. And, for some, this means being willing to overcome whatever barriers there might be to engage in a new – humble and gracious – conversation about what climate change means for the Church. Encouragingly, this research indicates that the necessary willingness is there. The divide we need to heal is more a matter of perception than it is attitude.

God's vision of a flourishing creation encompasses all people and the whole of creation. Just as the whole creation has been subjected to sin, so the whole creation is saved through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (Romans 8). Any conversation about climate change and the Church needs to start from this perspective. And not only start from this perspective, but be shaped by it in its entirety.

Science can help us to understand the problem of climate change and what we can do to mitigate its impact. Technology and innovation can help get us there. But it is only the saving work of Jesus Christ that will restore the broken relationships that are at its root. And praise God who is faithful and mighty to save! The profound hope in this message is exactly what our 18-40 year olds and our communities desperately need to hear.

The findings of this research offer us better understanding of ourselves – those within the Church and on its fringes – along with ideas for the kind of action that the Church can take in response to the challenges and complexities climate change presents. As Tearfund, it is our prayer that these insights will help to unlock a new conversation about climate change within the Church and play a part in healing the generational and geographical divides that have emerged around the issue so that, together, we can be a voice of hope.

## The findings

### Understanding the problem

Across the Church in Australia there are mixed levels of engagement with the issue of climate change and a concern that its relative silence is alienating younger people from mainstream church. A first step towards overcoming that silence is understanding how younger Christians are engaging with climate change and their views about the role of the church in taking action.



# Finding #1



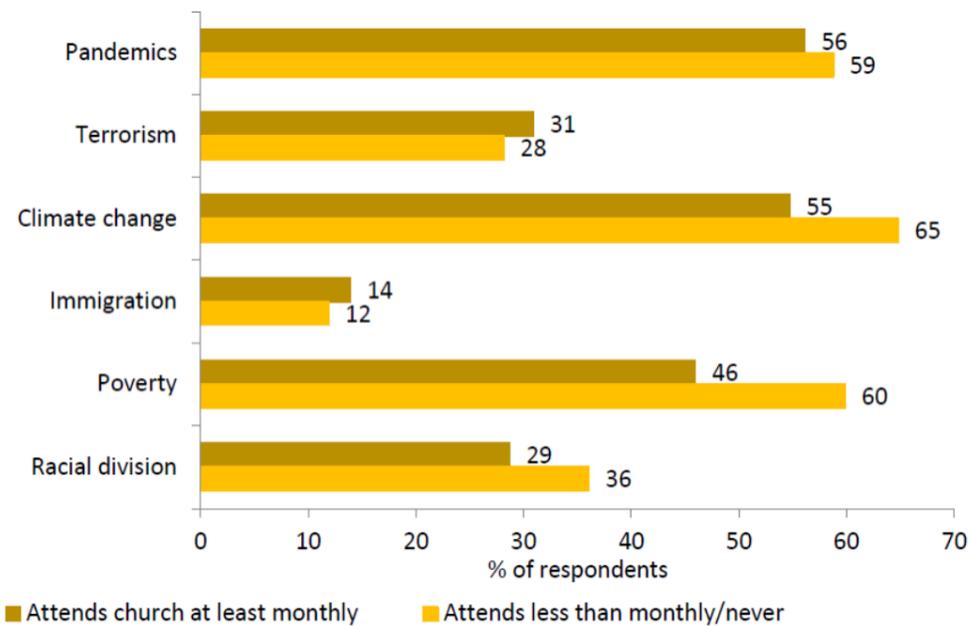
**Christians aged 18 to 40 years are highly engaged with climate change and increasingly concerned about its impact.**

*The majority of Christians aged 18 to 40 years say that climate change is one of the most important global issues facing the world today. The younger the Christian the more concerned they are likely to be and there is the perception amongst many 18 to 40 year old Christians of a generational divide on the issue.*

From a given list of the most important global issues facing the world today, climate change was the most frequently selected issue by Christians aged 18 to 40 years, ahead of pandemics and poverty.

Statistical tests showed that the younger Christians within the 18 to 40 year old age group were significantly more likely to select climate change.

Most important global issues facing the world today (Mark up to three)



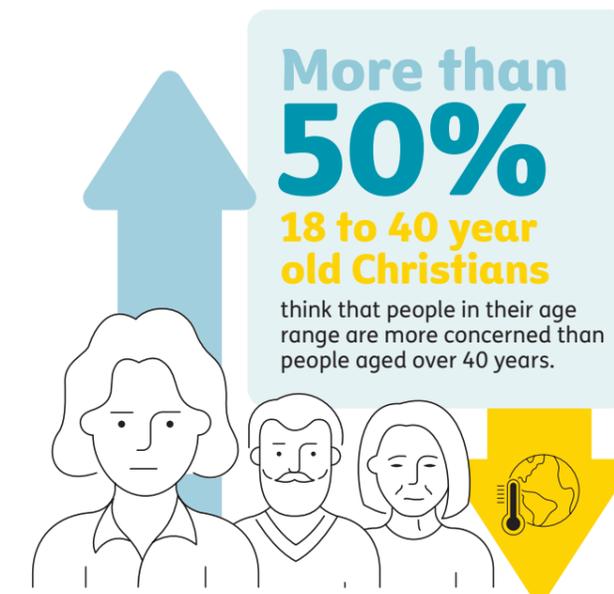
Source: Study 7 Online Survey (n=998 0.0% missing).

Nearly two thirds (62%) of Christians aged 18 to 40 years were either “very” or “extremely” concerned about climate change when they thought about the future. Only 5% were not at all concerned. The younger the Christian, the significantly more likely they were to report being extremely concerned.



**More than 3 in 5**  
**18 to 40 year old Christians**

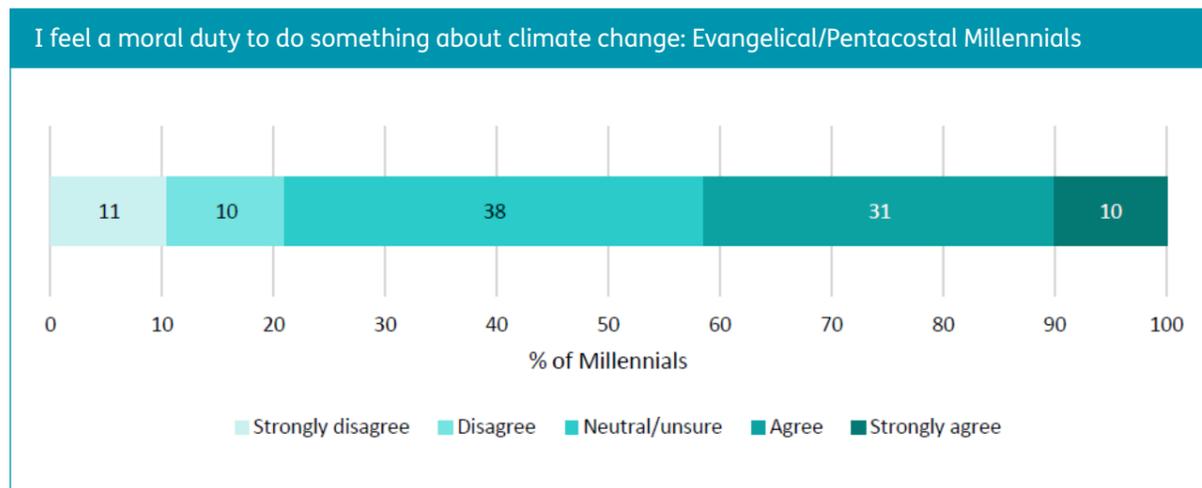
report being very or extremely concerned about climate change.



Statistical tests consistently showed that younger Christians within the 18 to 40 year old age group were more highly engaged with the issue of climate change. Further comparisons with results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey indicate that concern may be greater amongst younger Christians today.

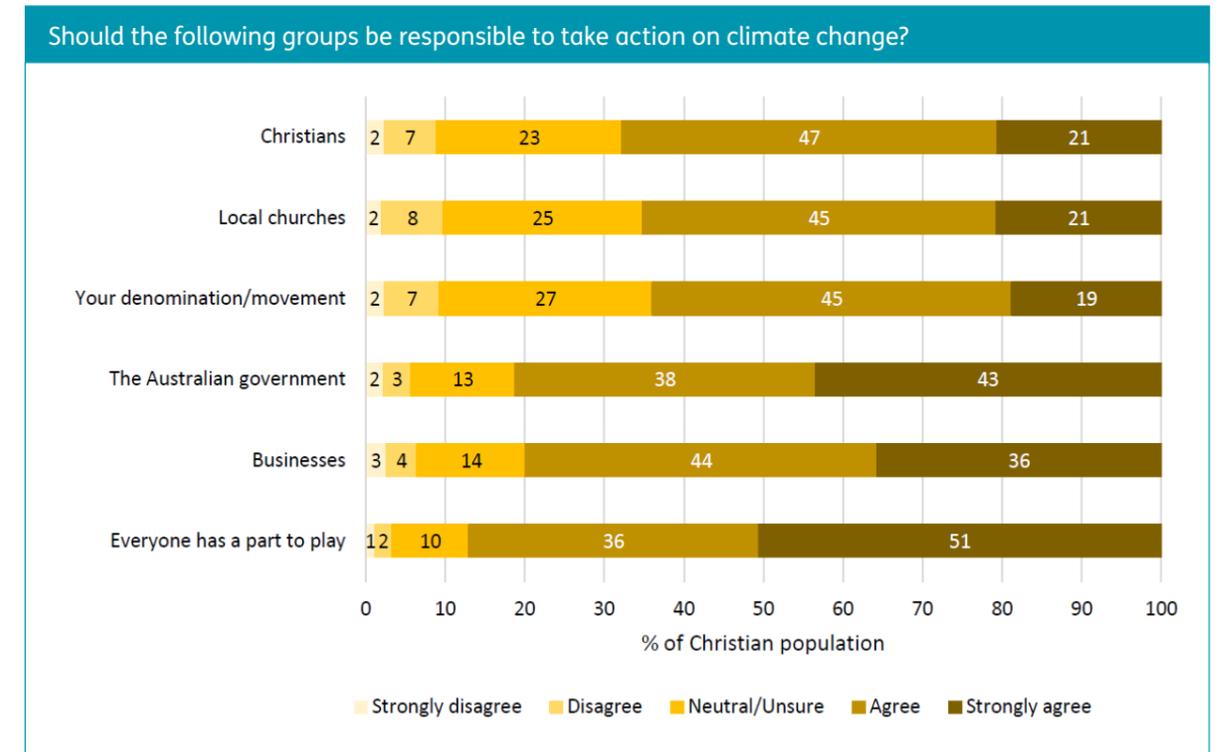
Comparisons across the two studies also indicate a growing sense of Christian personal responsibility to take action to address climate change.

In 2016, evangelical and pentecostal Christians aged 20 to 35 years were asked whether they thought Christians have a moral duty to do something about climate change - 41% agreed and 38% were neutral or unsure.

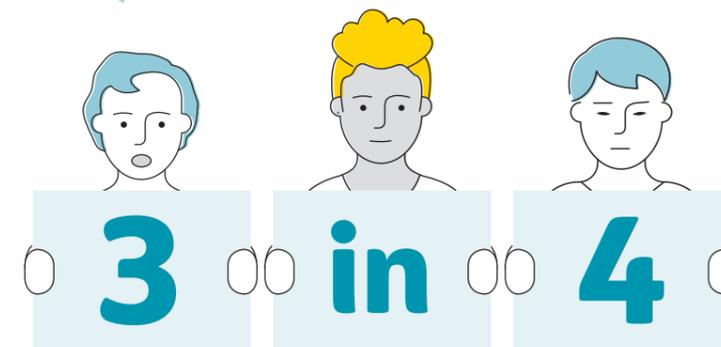


Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey B (n = 141, 0.7% missing).

In 2021, Christians aged 18 to 40 years were asked about the responsibility of various groups for taking action to address climate change. 68% agreed that Christians should be responsible for taking action on climate change while 23% were unsure.



Source: Study 7 Online Survey (n=988, 0.0% missing).



**18-40 year old Christians**  
have taken action to tackle climate change.

The majority of Christians aged 18 to 40 years are acting on this sense of responsibility. The majority of respondents (77%) to the 2021 online survey had taken some action to tackle climate change in the last five years.

## Understanding the problem of climate change and poverty

Climate change is one of the biggest threats we face in the global effort to end extreme poverty. People living in poverty contribute least to the problem of climate change yet are more vulnerable to its effects and the least resourced to adapt. Recent reports estimate that climate change could push an additional 132 million people into poverty by 2030.



Read more here



In the last five years, have you undertaken any of the following actions to tackle climate change?

Spoke to friends or colleagues about climate change	41%
Signed a petition	36%
Took part in an environmental event (eg. Earth Hour, Clean Up Australia)	31%
Donated money to an organisation or cause	30%
Voted in a government election on the basis of policy to tackle climate change	21%
Took part in a conservation activity	20%
Posted on social media about climate change	19%
Took part in a protest or demonstration	10%
Contacted your local MP	10%
Joined a church action group	8%
Other	1%
None of the above	23%

Source: Study 7 Online Survey (n=998, 0.0% missing).

The younger the participant, the more likely they were to have donated money, signed a petition, and spoken to friends or colleagues about climate change. Those under 30 were significantly more likely to have voted in an election based on climate policy, and posted on social media about climate change. Those aged 18 to 24 years were the most likely to have taken part in an environmental

event, while those in their late 20s had the highest rate of contacting their local MP. Christians at the older end of the cohort (30 to 40 years) were more likely to have not done any of the actions listed.

A slightly larger majority (80%) indicated that they were willing to take some type of action in support of tackling climate change in the next 12 months.



# 80%

## 18-40 year old

Christians are willing to take action to tackle climate change in the next 12 months.



## Finding #2

Silence and inaction on climate change fall short of expectations

### “ We’re called to be stewards – Hattie Steenholdt

Hattie Steenholdt was on a Scripture Union beach mission trip when bushfires raged through Mallacoota in the early hours of the new year’s eve 2019. Read her story and why she’d like to see the church doing more on climate change.

[Read more here](#)

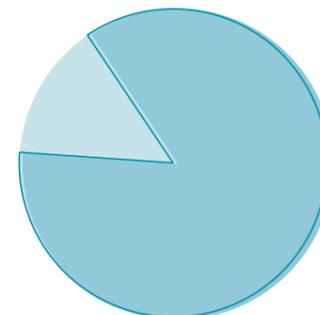


*The majority of Christians aged 18 to 40 years agree that climate change is happening and that humans are largely causing it. They also want to see action to address it - including from the Church.*

# 86%

**18-40 year old**

Christians think that climate change is happening and two-thirds of those think that humans are largely causing it.



**86% of Christians aged 18 to 40 years think that climate change is happening and two-thirds of those think that humans are largely causing it.**

Analysis of the 2021 online survey results shows that Christians under 30 years are significantly more likely to think climate change can be attributed to human activity.

When asked about the urgency of taking action on climate change, half (48%) of Christians aged 18 to 40 years thought immediate action was needed to address climate change, while 38% thought we should do something in the next five years. The younger the participant, the more likely they were to favour immediate action.



# 86%

of 18 to 40 year olds

want action to address climate change now or in the next five years.

The younger the Christian, the more likely they are to favour **immediate action**.



**Around two thirds of Christians aged 18 to 40 years agree that Church denominations (64%) and local churches (66%) have a responsibility to act on climate change. Only one in ten do not think local churches or denominations have a role to play but a considerable proportion – around a quarter – are neutral or unsure.**

Christians aged 18 to 40 years show strong agreement that the Australian government and businesses should be responsible for taking action on climate change, with 81% and 80% agreeing respectively. The vast majority – 87% – agree that everyone has a part to play.

*Who should be responsible for action to address climate change?*

	Yes ✓	No ✗	Not sure ?
The Australian Government	81%	5%	13%
Businesses	80%	7%	14%
Christians	68%	9%	23%
Local churches	66%	10%	25%
Church denominations	64%	9%	27%
Everyone has a part to play	87%	3%	10%

**“ We are in danger of losing our homes – Aunty Rose Elu**

Aunty Rose Elu is a Torres Strait Islander Elder and the 2021 Queensland Senior Australian of the Year. She is also a powerful advocate for Torres Strait communities and the impact climate change is having on their homes. She shares why she thinks Christians need to come together to tackle climate change.



Read more here

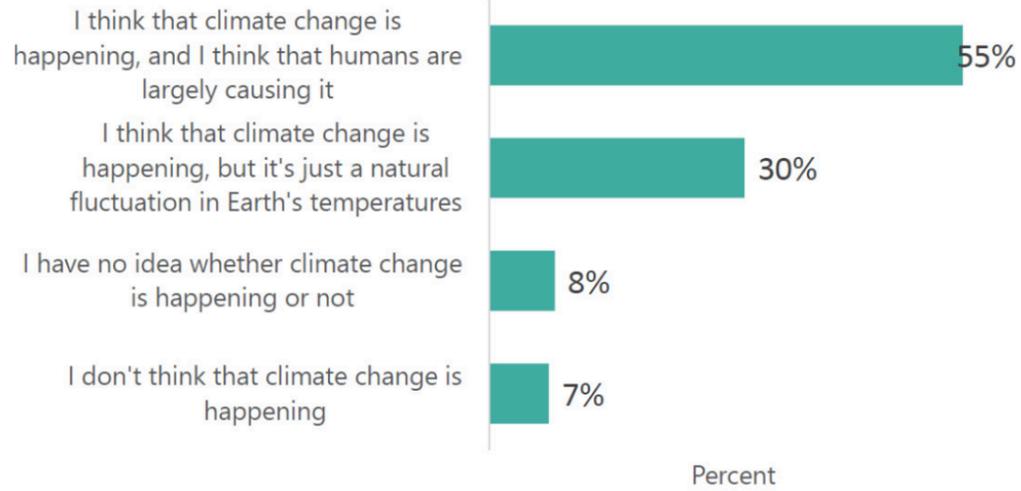


**Most Australians support national leadership and personal action to address climate change**

As understanding and concern about the impacts of climate change grows amongst the wider Australian community, so too does support for action to address the problem, even if it comes at a cost.

The results of the 2020 Australian Community Survey show that the majority of Australians (85%) think that climate change is happening and around two thirds of those (65%) think that humans are largely causing it.

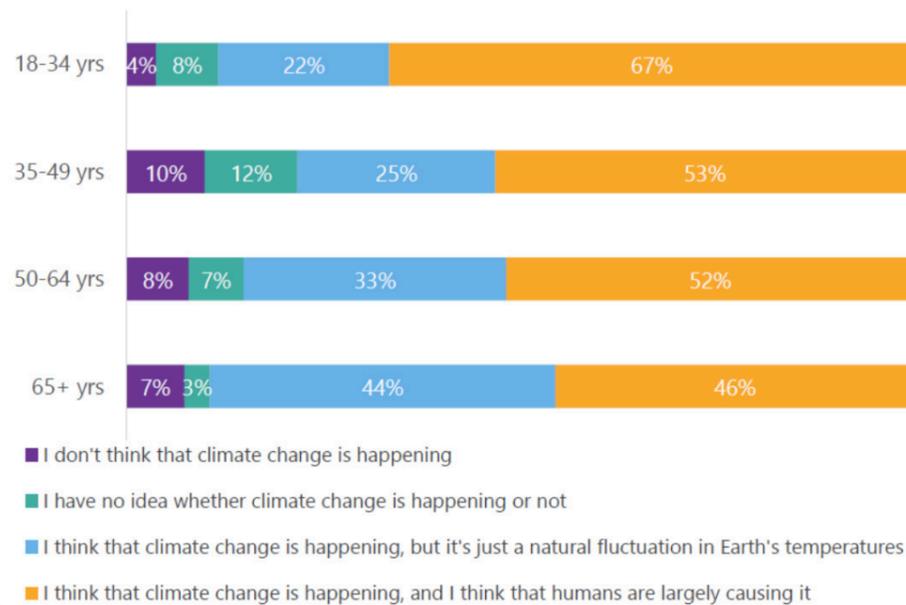
Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about climate change?



Source: 2020 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research (n = 1,306)

These results are even higher amongst younger Australians. Around nine in ten Australians aged 18 to 34 years (89%) think climate change is happening and three quarters of those think humans are largely causing it.

Report 4a, p2: Which of the following statements best describes your thoughts about climate change? Differences between age groups.



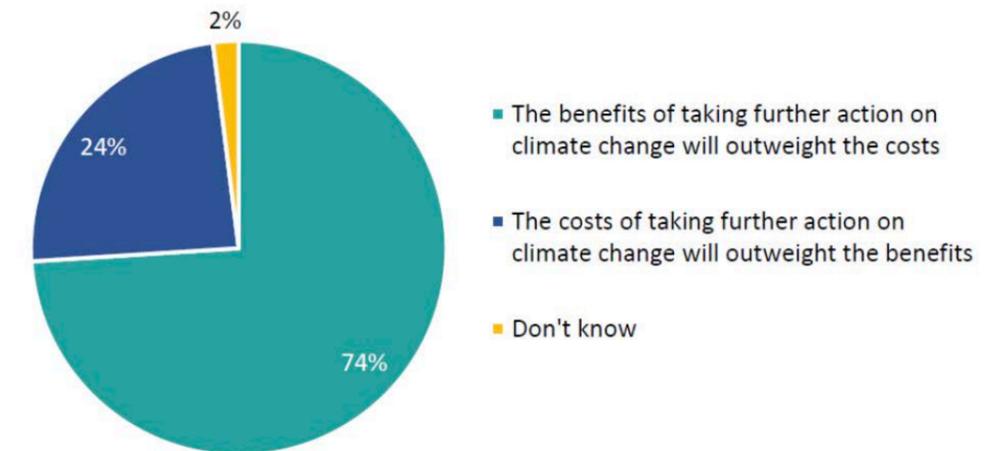
Differences between age groups are statistically significant at p < .000. Source: 2020 Australian Community Survey run by NCLS Research (n = 1,306)



Results from the Lowy Institute Poll show a clear trend since 2012 towards favouring more drastic measures to address climate change. In March 2021, almost three quarters (74%) of Australians thought that the benefits of taking further action on climate change will outweigh the costs.

Costs versus benefits of action on climate change.

"Which statement is closest to your personal view on further action on climate change?"



Source: Lowy Institute Poll, March 2021 (n = 2,222). Chart by NCLS Research

# Acknowledging the barriers

Exploring the views of 18 to 40 year old Christians and church leaders towards climate change and creation care identified three issues that could contribute to the hesitancy of many Christians and leaders across the Church to engage publicly with the issue.



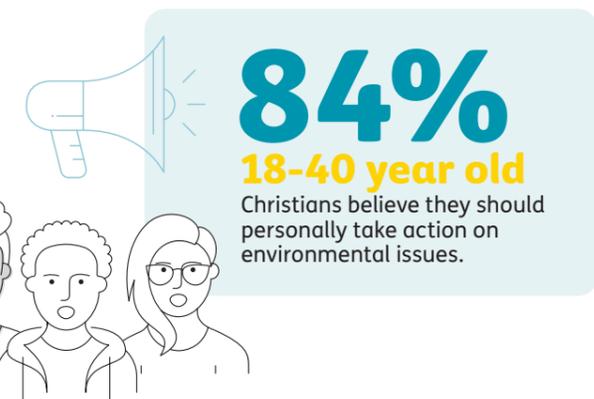
## Finding #3

There is uncertainty about the place of creation in the Gospel and mission

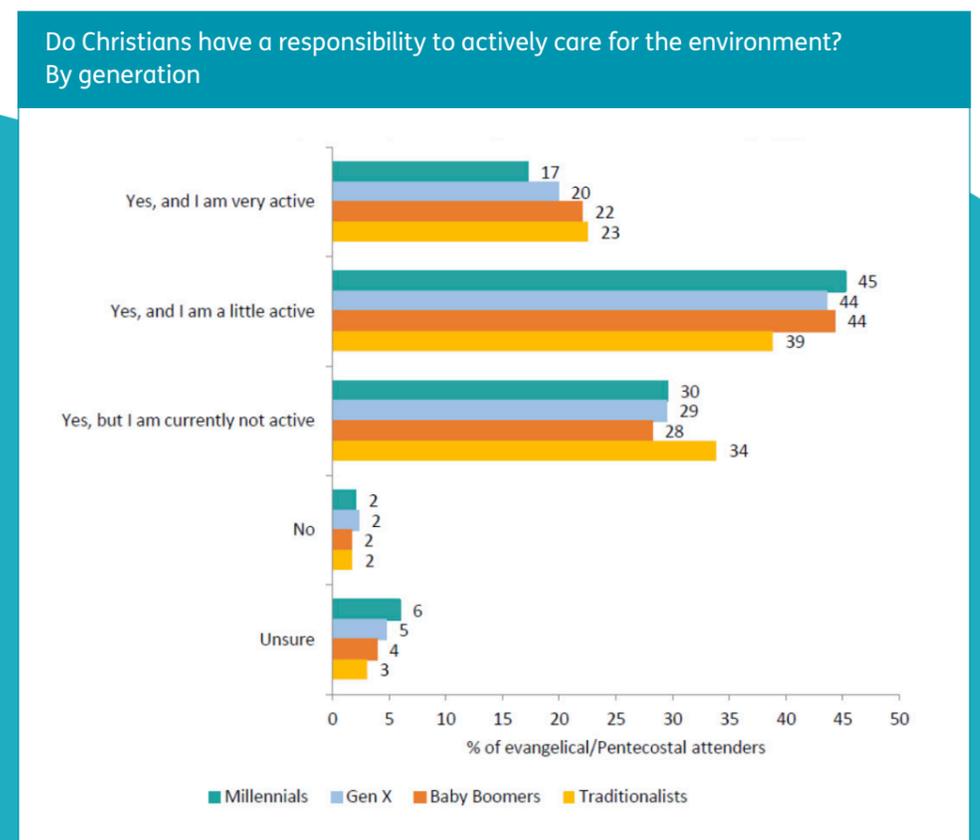


Across generations, Christians agree that caring for creation should play a part in their lives and in the life of the Church. However, there is less agreement or certainty about how caring for creation fits within their understanding of the gospel and the Church's mission.

In 2021, the vast majority (84%) of Christians aged 18 to 40 years agreed they should personally take action on environmental issues.



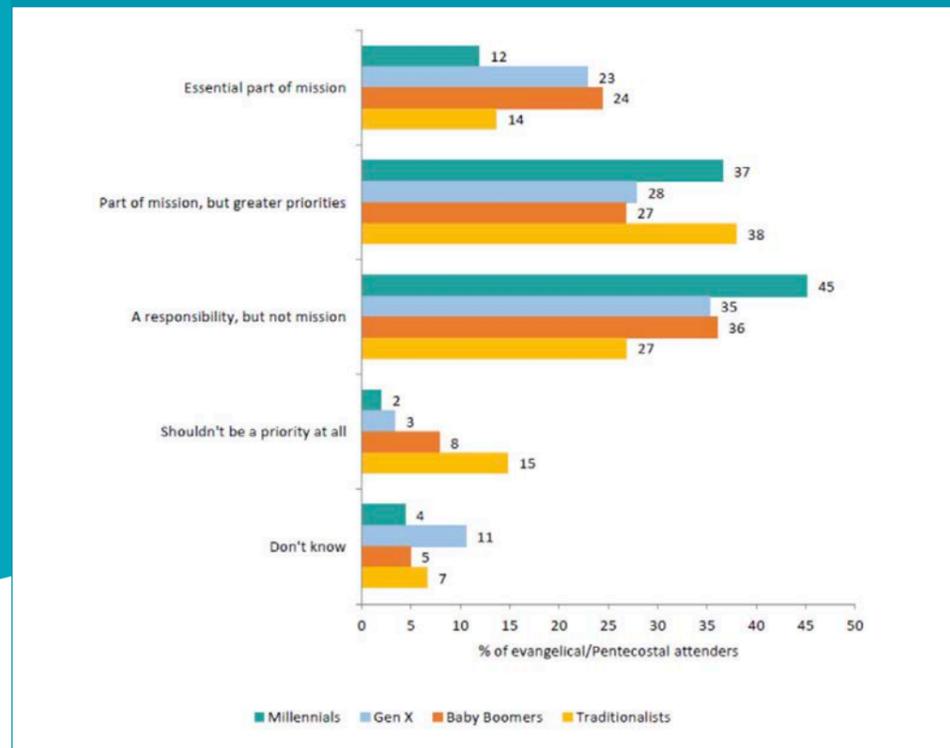
In 2016, a case study of evangelical and pentecostal church attenders across all generations demonstrated a consistently high belief in the Christians responsibility to actively care for the environment.



Source: 2016 NCLS Main Attender Survey (Millennials n = 19,600, 1.5% missing; Gen X n = 24,026, 1.5% missing, Boomers n = 30,062, 2.0% missing; Traditionalists n = 17,130, 4.0% missing).

In 2016, the views of evangelical and pentecostal Christians about the Church's role in caring for the earth differed across age groups. Christians aged 20 to 35 years were most likely to frame the Church's role in caring for the earth in terms of being a responsibility, but not to be understood as mission (45%), while 37% thought it should be part of the mission of the Church but that the Church should have other, greater mission priorities.

The Church's role in caring for the earth, by generation



Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Sample Survey B (Millennials n = 142, 0.0% missing; Gen X n = 2164, 3.0% missing; Traditionalists n = 134, 4.0% missing).

In 2021, there was considerable uncertainty amongst Christians aged 18 to 40 years about the place of creation care in the gospel and mission. 60% agreed the redemption of creation is an essential aspect of the Christian gospel, while 34% were neutral or unsure. Around three quarters (74%) agreed care for creation should be an essential part of the mission of the Church. While 68% thought that care for creation should be an essential part of Christian discipleship, over a quarter (26%) were neutral or unsure. The most uncertainty was expressed with respect to the statement “care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue” with 42% agreeing and 39% neutral or unsure.



**3 in 4**  
18-40 year old

Christians think care for creation should be an essential part of the mission

In 2021, there was considerable uncertainty amongst Christians aged 18 to 40 years about the place of creation care in the gospel and mission.



**1 in 5**  
18-40 year olds  
are not sure.

*“care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue”*

	Yes ✓	No ✗	Not sure ?
The redemption of creation is an essential part of the Christian gospel	60%	6%	34%
Care for creation should be an essential part of Christian discipleship	69%	5%	26%
Care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue	42%	19%	39%

Church leaders play an influential role in shaping the views of their church communities. While there is near universal agreement amongst church leaders that Christians have a responsibility to care for the earth, there is a much broader range of views about how the Church's role in caring for the earth relates to its mission.



**97%**  
of Church Leaders  
believe that Christians have a responsibility to actively care for the environment.

*In 2016, nearly all (97%) evangelical and pentecostal local senior church leaders agreed that Christians had a responsibility to actively care for the environment.*

**26%** of Church Leaders

Say caring for the earth should be an essential part of the mission of the Church.

**26%** of Church Leaders

Say caring for the earth should be part of the mission of the Church, but the Church should have other, greater mission priorities.

**40%** of Church Leaders

Say caring for the earth should be a responsibility of the Church, but not understood as mission.

**5%** of Church Leaders

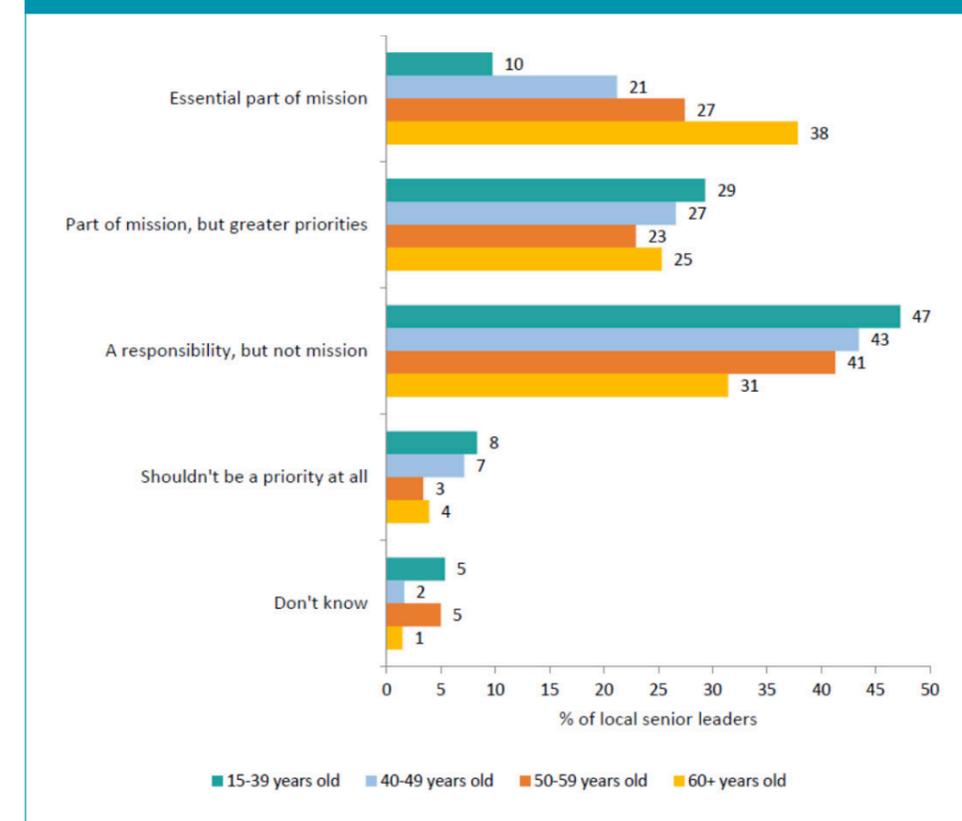
Say caring for the earth should not be a priority at all in the life of the Church.



Answers to this question differed significantly depending on the age of the church leader. The older the leader, the more likely they were to think caring for the earth should be an essential part of the mission of the Church. Thirty-eight percent of senior leaders 60 years and older thought this, while just one in ten senior leaders under 40 years agreed.



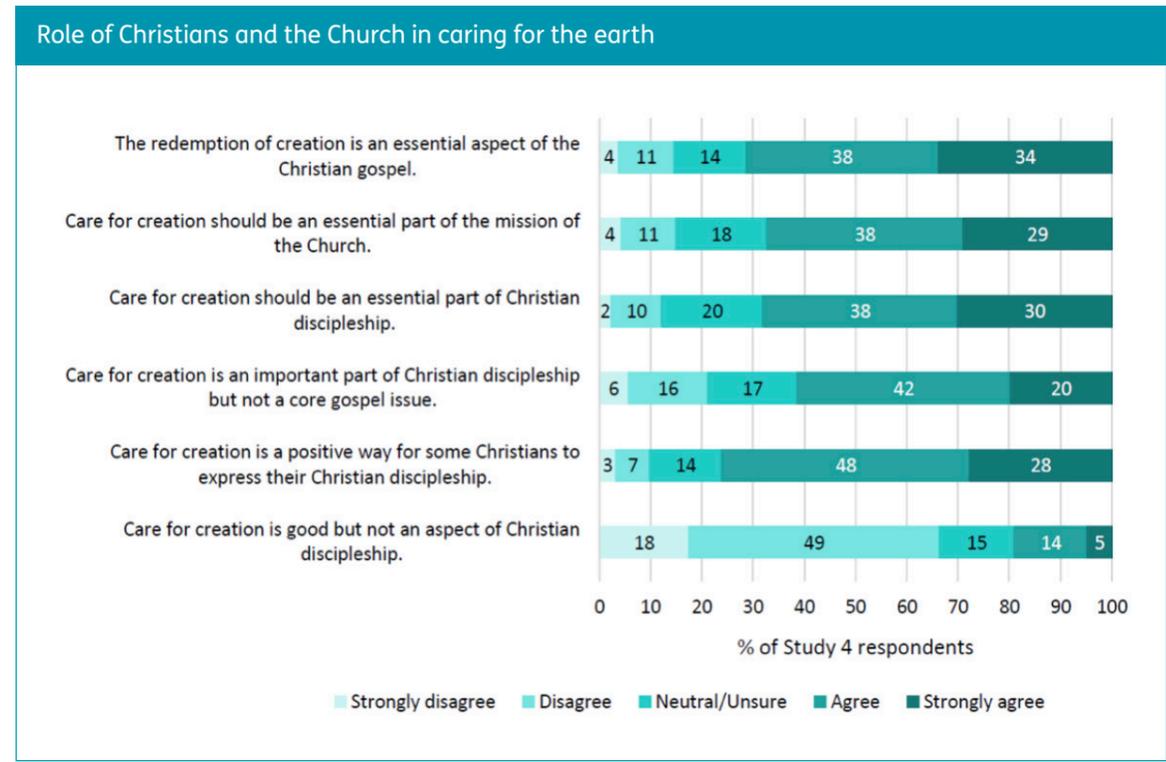
The Church's role in caring for the earth, by age



Source: 2016 NCLS Leader Survey LS1 (15-39 years n = 176, 2.2% missing; 40-49 years n = 294, 3.3% missing; 50-59 years n = 304, 5.3% missing; 60+ years n = 259, 4.4% missing).

**In 2021, church leaders demonstrated notable levels of uncertainty about this and related questions.**

Some 71% of church leaders agreed that the redemption of creation is an essential aspect of the Christian gospel but 14% were neutral or unsure. Two thirds (67%) agreed care for creation should be an essential part of the mission of the Church, with 18% neutral or unsure. Just over two thirds (68%) thought care for creation should be an essential part of Christian discipleship, with 20% neutral or unsure. 62% agreed that care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue, with 17% neutral or unsure. 62% agreed that care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue, with 17% neutral or unsure. 62% agreed that care for creation is an important part of Christian discipleship but not a core gospel issue, with 17% neutral or unsure.



Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 211-214, 5.3-6.6% missing).



Read more here

**The firstborn over all creation**

Colossians 1:15-20 tells us powerfully that we worship the Son, in whom and through whom and for whom all things were created. It is a powerful affirmation that all things are loved and are valuable to God. Yes, people, but not only people. This expands our understanding of the Gospel - the 'good news': Jesus' blood shed on the cross has made peace and reconciled all things in heaven and on earth to God.

**Canon Dr Ruth Valerio**  
Global Advocacy and Influencing Director, Tearfund UK

## Finding #4

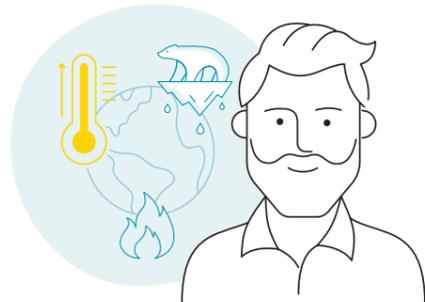
Preaching on creation care is uncommon and more can be done in practice



The majority of church leaders agree that climate change is happening and that Christians have a responsibility to care for the environment. However, most are only preaching on environmental matters rarely or occasionally.

**86%**  
of Senior Church Leaders

think that climate change is happening

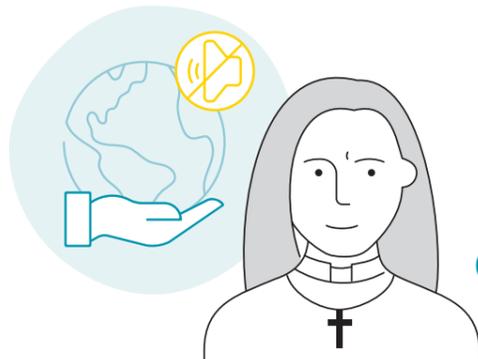


In 2021, it was most common for leaders with roles that included preaching to touch on environmental matters in their preaching “occasionally” over the course of a year (36%), while more than a third of leaders said they did so “rarely” (34%).

**28%**

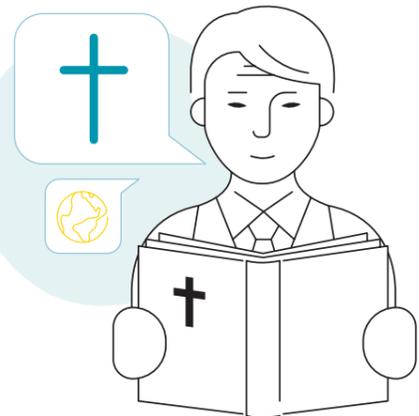
of Senior Church Leaders

say they preach on environmental matters occasionally



**35%**  
of Senior Church Leaders

say they preach on environmental matters rarely



In 2016, it was most common for Senior Leaders (35%) to “rarely” talk about environmental matters in their preaching. Just over a quarter (28%) would “occasionally” talk about environmental matters while 21% did so “sometimes.”

In 2021, most leaders’ churches practised recycling (66%) and the purchasing of environmentally friendly consumables (58%). Around one-third of leaders sampled (33%) said that care for creation themes were included in their worship (for example through songs, prayers and sermons).



**66%** of Church Leaders  
practised recycling

**58%** of Church Leaders  
buy environmentally friendly products

**13%** of Church Leaders

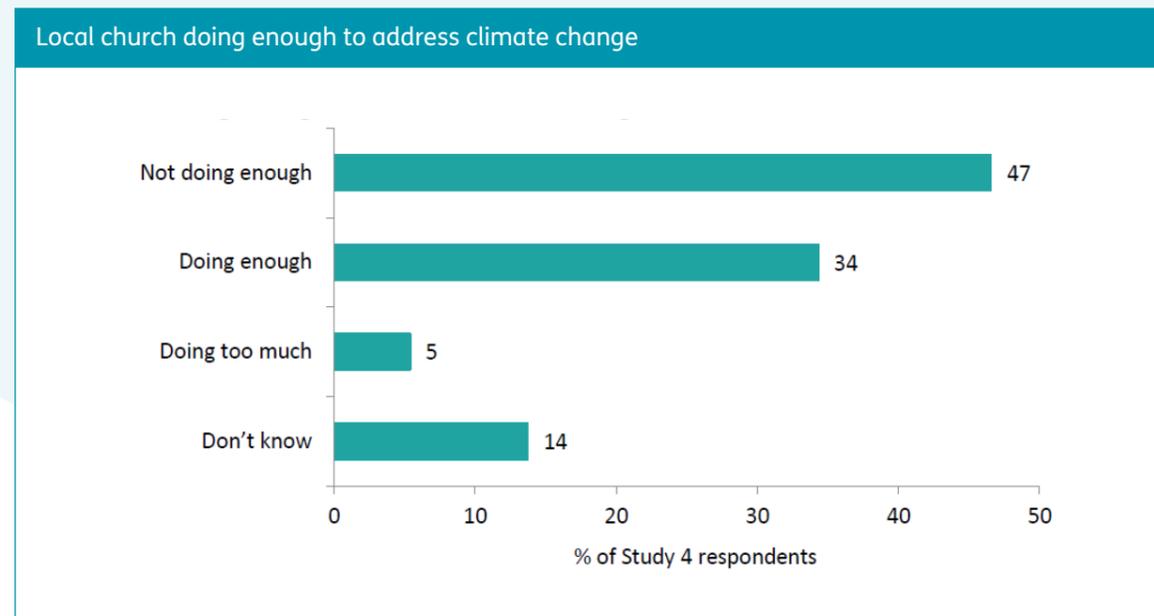
say there are no environmental practices at their church

**47%** of Church Leaders

think that their local church is not doing enough to address climate change



Nearly half of leaders (47%) thought that their local church was not doing enough to address climate change. Around one third believed their church was doing enough.



Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n=204, 9.7% missing)

Church leaders were asked about the alignment of their own views with those of their church community with respect to climate change. Nearly 40% of leaders expressed a desire for their church to do more with regard to climate change but had concerns or questions about doing so.

Which of the following statements best describes the alignment of your views with the general position of your church community with regard to climate change?	% of Study 4 respondents
I would like to do more but my church is not supportive	4.2
I would like my church community to do more in support of tackling climate change but I am deeply concerned about the division that would cause	9.9
I would like my church community to do more in support of tackling climate change but I don't know how	24.5
My views align with general views of my church about how our local church addresses climate change	51.6
Some people in my church want to do more but I am less supportive	9.9

Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 192, 15.0% missing).



## Finding #5

**There is a disconnect between climate change and core issues of faith**

There is a strong theological basis for approaching climate change through the lens of the Gospel, Christian stewardship and love for the poor. However, some church leaders express the view that creation stewardship needs to be separated from the idea of climate change, with the latter not being part of the Church's concern.

Church leaders were asked the question, "What more, if anything, can the Church do in terms of its role in response to climate change?" A number of themes emerged from church leaders' responses, including support for more teaching and practical action on the issue. However, one of the themes was a view that stewardship of creation and taking care of the environment needed to be separated from the idea of climate change, with the latter not being part of the Church's concern.

“ Climate change and stewardship of creation are not the same thing. In response to climate change, nothing, in an increase of stewardship, probably more.

“ Church should only encourage taking care of the earth - not with the climate change narrative.

“ Climate change and caring for the environment are two different things in my understanding.

There were also leaders who, while believing in the existence of climate change, thought it served as a distraction from the greater purpose of the Church to proclaim the Gospel and disciple people.

- “ Saving souls is a far more urgent need.
- “ At its heart, the church is there to disciple people, not tackle socio-political issues. However, if the church discipled people well, they will HAVE to tackle socio-political issues as a natural outworking of their Christian convictions. I do not believe it is the church's role as an institution to directly deal with climate change.
- “ I believe that the primary issue is salvation and as a secondary issue is stewardship, which then is a focus on looking after what we have been entrusted with. Climate change is an area under the wider umbrella of stewardship.

**Similar themes also came through in their responses to the question, "What concerns or frustrates you about the issue of climate change?"**

- “ Looking after the environment is a very different issue to responding to climate change and should be kept distinct.
- “ I think it would be enough to be environmentally considerate rather than focus on climate change.
- “ How much it dominates some people's thinking, such that core gospel issues become marginalised.
- “ Poverty is a more pressing issue - how does the church love the people created in God's image, who need salvation.
- “ The wrong emphasis: it's a compassion thing - I don't believe we will suffer that much. I think a lot of people believe that instinctively, or know it instinctively - we cope with huge variances in temperature from season to season. I believe we are rich, educated, adaptable. Others aren't so fortunate - upheaval is likely in countries less fortunate, and more dependent on fragile ecosystems. I believe protecting the earth is important, but whatever you think about creation care responsibilities, we have to help the poor as Christians.



### Care for creation is love for my neighbour

It has been a journey over many decades for me to come to a deeper understanding of what it means to live as God's people in God's world. Over this time I've wrestled with the theology of creation care, while also witnessing the experiences of

people living in poverty in my home country of India and elsewhere – poverty that is being worsened by the environmental impact of a warming climate.

**Kuki Rokhum**  
Director of Training and Mobilisation,  
EFICOR India



Read more here



### What does the future hold?

Our acceptance of the God-given mandate to care for the earth is an expression of obedience to Jesus' command to "love our neighbours" - not only those down the street but "down time" as well. It's those who live in the years beyond our own who stand to benefit the most from our faithful and responsible stewardship. What does the future hold? In part, only God knows, but to some degree

the immediate future will depend on how faithful we are willing to be to the mandate given to all humans to be wise, loving, faithful and responsible stewards of all that God has entrusted to our care.

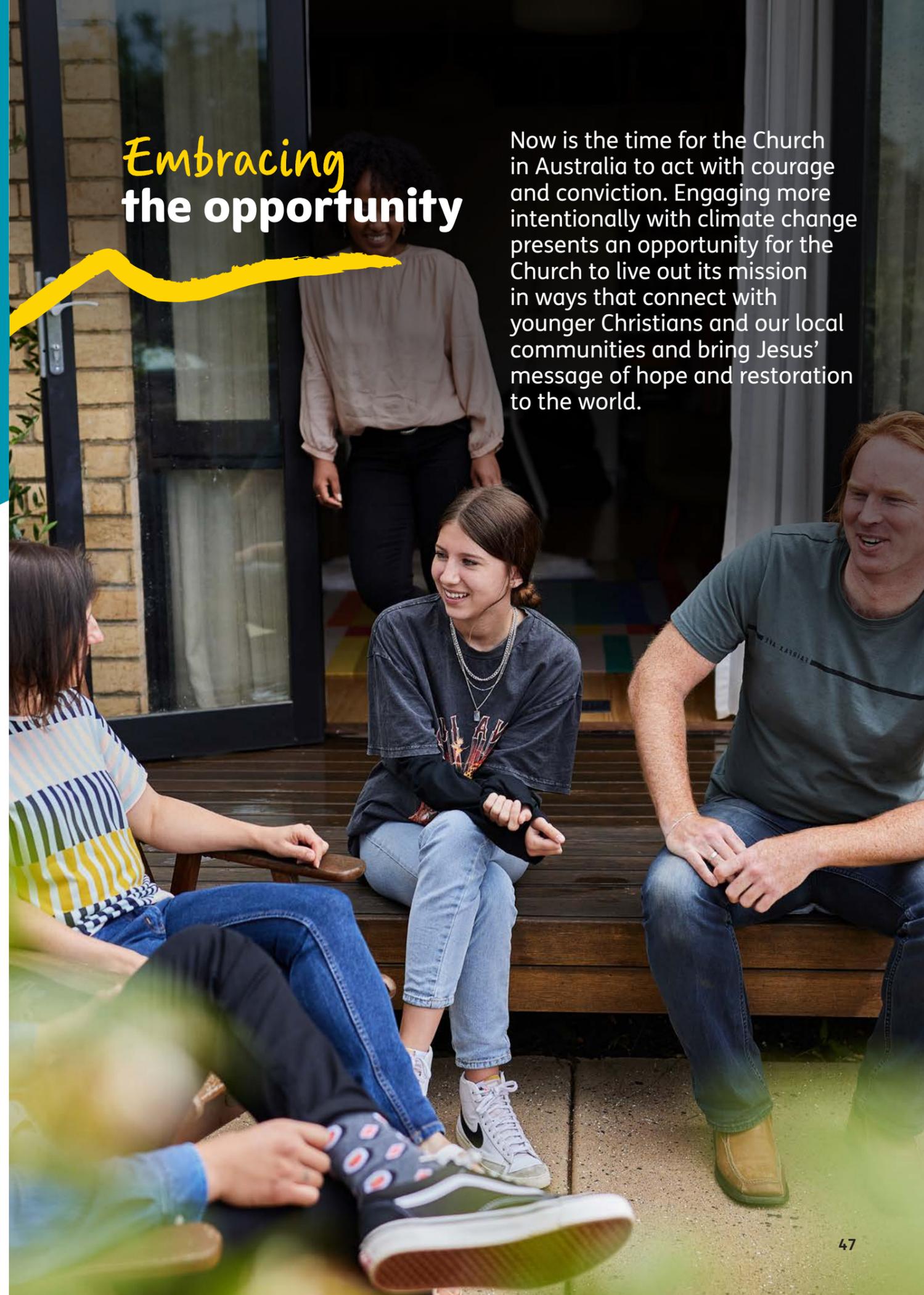
**Tim Healy**  
Associate Lecturer in Theology,  
Ministry and Biblical Studies,  
Alphacrucis College

Read more here



## Embracing the opportunity

Now is the time for the Church in Australia to act with courage and conviction. Engaging more intentionally with climate change presents an opportunity for the Church to live out its mission in ways that connect with younger Christians and our local communities and bring Jesus' message of hope and restoration to the world.



## Finding #6

### There is an opportunity to connect with Christians and communities outside the Church

Christians aged 18 to 40 years who do not regularly attend church are more engaged with climate change compared with those who do. At the same time, levels of concern about climate change across the Australian community have grown to a record high. At a time of unprecedented fear and uncertainty, there is a missional opportunity for the Church to connect with people beyond its walls and bring a much-needed voice of hope.



### What can we do in response to Climate Change today?

The best tool we have is communication. Humans are great at it, unless it becomes conflict – then we're terrible. Authentic, empathetic conversations are needed now – exactly as requested in the research!

The research revealed a consistent trend amongst the results that showed Christians aged 18 to 40 years who did not regularly attend church were much more highly engaged with climate change compared with those who did.

### 18-40 year old Christians who do not attend church are more likely to:

- ➔ Agree climate change is happening
- ➔ Name climate change as a top global issue
- ➔ Want immediate action to address the problem
- ➔ Think Australia is not doing enough
- ➔ Be active on environmental issues
- ➔ Have “no one in particular” as a source of support

Read more here



I wrote a conversation template called 'Climate Justice' in my book *Raising Kids Who Care*. One family spent hours talking, then decided together to buy an electric car. Ask your 18 to 40 year olds what they care about now, before they go elsewhere to find the people who do care. Help them find ways to contribute to the work of the Kingdom, before they walk away in despair. Then we can turn this research around, grow the Kingdom, and help Creation – all at the same time!

Susy Lee  
Author of 'Raising Kids Who Care'



### It's time to be bold

Rohen Snowball says that it's been life-changing to start looking at the issue of climate change through a biblical lens, and he urges Christians to “be bold” in encouraging churches to do more about caring for the earth.

Rohen Snowball

Read more here



**Though the majority of both regular church attending and irregular or non-church attending Christians aged 18 to 40 years think climate change is happening (86%) and is human-caused (57%), Christians who do not regularly attend church are significantly more likely to believe climate change is happening (90%) and human-caused (63%) compared with those who do.**

Almost half (48%) of Christians aged 18 - 40 years think we need to take immediate action on climate change while another 38% think we should take action within five years. Christians who do not regularly attend church are significantly more likely to think immediate action is necessary (54%).

Christians aged 18 to 40 years differ significantly in their views on whether Australia is doing enough to address climate change based on their frequency of attending church. Around two thirds (64%) of Christians aged 18 - 40 years who do not regularly attend church think Australia is not doing enough, compared with 41% of regular attenders.

Regardless of church attendance, the majority (84%) of Christians aged 18 - 40 years believe they should personally take action on environmental

issues. However, Christians aged 18 to 40 years who do not regularly attend church are significantly more likely to be already active, and more likely to be uncertain rather than disagree they have a personal responsibility than regular church attenders.

Family was the most common source amongst Christians aged 18 to 40 years to draw on to help them engage with climate change, regardless of whether or not they attend church regularly. However, Christians aged 18 to 40 years who do not regularly attend church were twice as likely as regular attenders to report they had “no-one in particular” as a source of support.

# Faith and church life

Results from the study of a subset of Christians aged 18 to 40 years who are highly engaged both in church life and with issues of creation care and climate justice offer some insight into how these issues can be integrated with a rich and life-giving experience of Christian faith.

**Four out of five (81%) of this group attend church at least once a week and seven in ten (71%) report that God is the most important reality in their life.**

## Thoughts about climate change

Almost all of this cohort (94%) think climate change is happening and more than two thirds (69%) are in favour of taking immediate action. Three in four (77%) named climate change as one of the three most important global issues facing the world today.

More than half (59%) of this group report feeling “very” or “extremely” concerned about climate change when they think about the future. The vast majority (85%) think that people their age are more concerned about climate change compared with people aged over 40 years and eight in ten (80%) think that Australia is not doing enough to address climate change.

## Personal environmental action

Nine out of ten (92%) believe they should personally take action on environmental issues and three out of four (74%) are actively doing so.

Practically all (99%) report taking action to reduce their environmental impact. A high majority (82%) have taken action to tackle climate change in the last five years and even more (89%) are willing to do so in the next 12 months.

## The Church’s role in addressing climate change

Of all the survey respondents to this question, this highly engaged cohort was the most likely to agree that Christians, local churches and their denomination or movement should be responsible for taking action on climate change.

Their view of creation and caring for creation appears deeply embedded within their understanding of the Gospel, the Church’s mission and Christian discipleship. The majority (84%) understand care for a creation to be an essential part of the mission of the church. A large proportion also agree creation is an essential aspect of the Christian Gospel (75%) and should be an essential part of Christian discipleship (76%).

This cohort is also most likely to say that both their local church and their denomination is not doing enough to address climate change.

## Australians’ views on climate change and the link to their religious affiliation

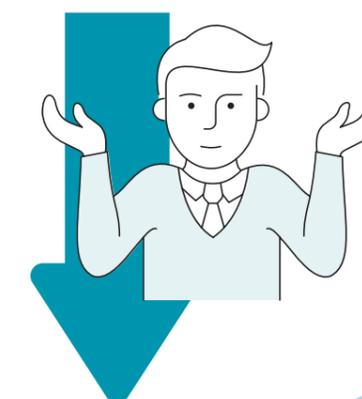
**3 in 4**  
**Australians**

are concerned about climate change



**Fewer than**  
**1 in 10**

say they are not concerned at all



**40%**  
**say they are**  
**very concerned**

a number that is growing

The 2020 Australian Community Survey asked a national sample of Australians about their thoughts on climate change. All age ranges were included in this survey and results indicate a relationship between people’s religious and spiritual profiles and their views about climate change.

In this survey, a majority of Australians of all religious affiliations think that climate change is happening.

Christians who did not attend church were more likely than church-attending Christians to think climate change is happening (91% compared with 76%), and that humans are largely causing it (53% compared with 37%).

The majority of Australians of all spiritual profiles think that climate change is happening. Those who identified as “spiritual but not religious” were the most likely to think that climate change is happening and that it is largely caused by human activity.

# Finding #7

**Inclusive discussion, equipping and practical steps are keys for leadership**



Church leaders were asked what concerned and frustrated them about the issue of climate change. They were also asked what had helped them to engage and what more they thought the Church could do. Their responses provide thoughtful direction for the kind of leadership that is needed from the Church.



**85%** of Church Leaders are willing to encourage their church community to take action to tackle climate change.

**25% of Church Leaders**

want their church community to do more about climate change but do not know how.

**1 in 10 Church Leaders**

want their church community to do more about climate change but are concerned about the division it would cause

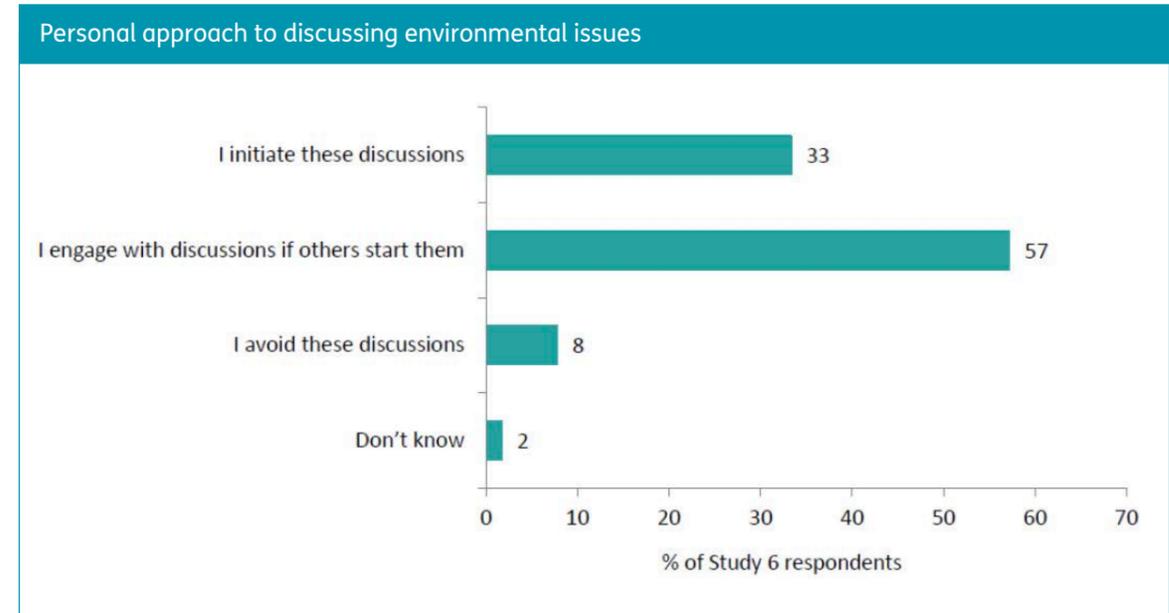


## A gracious and inclusive approach to discussion

It was common for church leaders to lament the politicisation of climate change as an issue and how it had become a source of division within the church. Several leaders expressed not knowing which voices to trust.

A deep concern about the division it would cause was one of the reasons church leaders did not do more amongst their church community with respect to climate change.

A hesitancy to discuss climate change appears to exist amongst 18 to 40 year olds as well. Even amongst the highly engaged cohort of 18 to 40 year olds, participants were more likely to engage in discussions about environmental issues if others started them than they were to initiate those discussions.



Source: Study 6 Online Survey (n = 465, 3.3% missing).

The importance of overcoming this hesitancy, and the fear that may sit behind it, was highlighted by church leaders noting discussion, conversation and the sharing of stories as being helpful ways to engage with the topic.

Many leaders expressed the desire to see the Church be more vocal and clear on the topic both within and outside of the Church community, saying that climate change needed to be talked about more and that open-minded discussion should be encouraged.



### Addressing the knowledge gap

Several leaders said they felt overwhelmed by the many and varied opinions and sources of information on the topic. They expressed not having the time to sift through all of the information in order to understand it more but wanting to be better informed before taking a public position on climate change in their preaching.

When asked about the alignment of their views with the general position of their church community with regard to climate change, 25% wanted their church community to do more but did not know how.

Sources of information that church leaders found helpful in order to do this included good Biblical teaching and theology that integrates creation and redemption, listening to Christians in the field who speak of both science and theology as well as Christian organisations who specialise in this area.

A number of leaders also found practical advice about things that they could do locally as helpful information and an antidote to being overwhelmed by the scale of the global problem.

### Starting to take the small steps

One theme to emerge amongst church leaders was a desire to see the Church pursuing the “many small things” by engaging in sustainable practices such as reducing waste and making their buildings and programs more environmentally friendly.

Most participating leaders expressed a willingness to take these practical steps. When asked what actions they would be willing to encourage their church community to take, around three quarters of leaders were willing to encourage their church community to reduce their waste (74%), and about half would consider providing encouragement to switch energy providers or install solar energy (53%).

Willingness to encourage church community to act on climate change

In support of tackling climate change would you be willing to encourage your church community to take any of the following actions? (Mark all that apply)	% of Study 4 respondents
Reduce their waste	73.6
Switch energy provider or install solar energy	53.2
Take part in a creation care event or activity e.g. Earth Hour, Season of Creation, land conservation	47.8
Shop with businesses that are seen as more 'environmentally friendly'	46.3
Speak to friends/colleagues about climate change	44.3
Sign a petition	30.8
Contact their local MP	28.9
Vote in a government election on the basis of policy to tackle climate change	27.4
Donate money to an organisation or cause	21.9
Attend a march or protest	15.4
Other (please specify)	4.5
None of the above	15.4

Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 201, 11.1% missing).

## Finding #8

Christians aged 18 to 40 years want to see the Church doing more today

Christians aged 18 to 40 years were asked “What would you like your local church to be doing?” Hundreds of responses were provided to this question, with strong and consistent themes emerging.

Like many church leaders, most Christians want to see more conversation and action around this issue in ways that connect with their faith.

“ Actively speaking about climate change and the seriousness of the issue.

“ Preaching the need to care for God’s creation.

“ Remind us that we are responsible to look after God’s creation as well as each other.



### Talk about it

More highly engaged 18 to 40 year old Christians expressed a common desire for more clarity from their local church about its position on climate change and how Christians should be responding. Like church leaders, they wanted to see more open discussion. They also wanted the Church to show leadership on the issue within the local community.

Amongst all 18 to 40 year old respondents there was a desire to see the Church raising awareness, educating Church members and making space for discussion about climate change. A number also showed an interest in hearing more environmental content in preaching and bible studies.

“ At least talk about it more, and ideally run some events.

“ Be more active, make people more aware about the issue, acknowledge that it’s important for the future of the world.

“ I would love it if they could initiate some group discussions with people who attend church regularly.

“ More conversations about climate change.

“ Our church has a lot of older members (60+) so any kind of education to change some of their ways would be great.

“ Providing support, initiating conversation.

“ Provide opportunities for discussion around climate change.

“ Speaking more about climate change and the ways we can be taking action, having an environmental committee/plan.

“ Teaching more about creation and how it should be looked after for future generations.

“ Emphasise that care of creation is an important part of our obligations as Christians.

“ More emphasis on practical measures we can take as Christians.

“ Be clear about our stance, and what we should think and be doing as Christians. What my church believes isn’t clear at all.

“ Be more explicit regarding the reality of climate change and proactively see climate initiatives as a gospel opportunity.

“ Discuss and address climate change as a reality within services and Bible studies, to shape our theology and our actions. Engage experts to discuss what we can be doing as individuals and as a community.

“ Educating the congregation on the biblical reasons for caring for creation and encouraging the congregation to care more/take action together. This could be through a seminar or starting a team or participating in events.

“ Have environmental themes in prayer/worship. Hold seminars, bible studies on creation care. Have a community garden.

“ Speak about environmental themes in worship. Link care for creation and environmental awareness to care for the poor and oppressed.

“ Talk about how it’s important as Christians to care for the environment, including attempting to mitigate extreme outcomes of climate change.

“ Teaching about climate action, worship songs on creation, acknowledging climate change as a justice issue, addressing our own church waste.

## Take practical steps

Many respondents across both studies said that they wanted to see action as well as talk, highlighting specific sustainable practices they would like their church to adopt or conservation initiatives that they would like their church to take part in. These included taking steps to reduce waste and use of plastic, reducing energy use or using renewable energy, installing solar panels, taking part in environmental clean up days, starting community gardens and tree-planting.

A number of respondents saw these as opportunities to connect with the wider community through involvement with the activities of external environmental organisations and local community groups.

“ Participating more in local community events that create awareness, especially for those in my age bracket.

“ Creating less plastic waste and recycling.

“ Thinking about their purchasing choices to be more environmentally friendly.

“ Clean up days and prayer for our environment.

“ Helping out with more local environmental groups and creating awareness.

“ Install solar, plant trees.

“ Less plastic use, more recycling, more talk about the issue.

“ Literally practising what they preach. Less printing on paper, using recycled toilet paper, turning off heating/lighting when not in use.

“ Local clean ups.

“ Organise activities like volunteering to plant more trees at approved parks.

“ Reducing waste, talking more about it.

“ Recycling initiatives.

“ I would love the church to be taking more action internally, and presenting a greater environmental focus in the community.

“ Collaborate with other clubs or organisations.

“ Be more involved in the wider community’s programs for climate.

“ Community gardens sound great!

“ For morning tea, using eco-friendly materials, or even mugs and washing them. Zero waste. Be part of community events where we can help local environmental surroundings.

“ Volunteering with clean up Australia campaigns, tree planting, bush regeneration, recycling programmes, up-cycling, involvement with charities...

“ Reducing waste, sorting waste, educating congregation about our role in caring for creation, auditing environmental sustainability of products/practices.

“ Run a community garden for parishioners to be involved together.



## Just do something!

Alongside the calls for more teaching, discussion and practical action, it was also common for respondents to want their local church to be doing more or be willing to simply try “anything.”

“ Be far more proactive about being environmentally friendly and preaching the same to everyone.”

“ Just more in general! They do not feel relevant to the younger generations and it definitely alienated me from the church.”

“ Act on climate change.

“ I think they are in a position where they could encourage a lot of people - especially older people - to be more aware of the importance of climate change...

“ More talking about environmental issues and doing more.

“ A lot more.

“ Anything they can.

“ Any of the suggestions [the survey] provided would be a great start. I think as a general rule I would be happy if they did more environmental and community care.

“ Especially in a rural area, petitioning the government to provide more support for (and conversations with) farmers and support regeneration projects.

“ More! Solar, recycling, community garden, changing the fluoro lights that are everywhere, more conversation around being good stewards of the earth.

“ Our church doesn't even recycle, it'd be good to start with that. It would also be good for the church to take a stance on creation care and climate change; I have never heard it discussed from the pulpit as a fundamental Christian responsibility.

“ Our church is located in a beautiful hills environment, we could definitely be advocating care for our environment, picking up rubbish, planting trees - demonstrating good stewardship.

“ Recognise that creation care is fundamental to loving your neighbour.

“ All of the above!



“ As much as they can to tackle climate change. That's all any of us can do.

“ Anything. But also being a voice for change.

“ Maybe actively show their interest in the environment to the wider community, not only the church.”





## How to start the conversation

At Tearfund, we want to journey with you in the conversation about climate change and our response as the Church.

For tools to help you pray, learn and take action, go to [tearfund.link/climatereport](https://tearfund.link/climatereport)

For more ideas about how you can start or grow the climate change conversation in your church, please get in touch with a member of our Church and Community Engagement team on **1800 244 986** or at [enquiries@tearfund.org.au](mailto:enquiries@tearfund.org.au).

*We look forward to talking.*



Read more here

## References

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The research findings in this report, *They Shall Inherit the Earth*, were drawn from a series of research reports produced by NCLS Research for Tearfund.

### Project Reports

Powell, R., Ward, N. Weickhardt, H. (2021). *Climate Change, Christians and Churches: Top Line Results*. NCLS Research Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research.

Powell, R., Ward, N. Weickhardt, H. (2021). *Climate Change, Christians and Churches: Views and practices of Australians, local church leaders and attenders*. NCLS Research Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research.

### Technical Study Reports

Powell, R., Ward, N. & Weickhardt, H. (2021) *Australian attitudes towards climate change over time: Study 1 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project*. NCLS Report. NCLS Research.

Powell, R. (2020). *Millennial Australians views on climate change (Nov 2020): 2020 Australian Community Survey*. Sydney: NCLS Research

Powell, R., Pepper, M., & Weickhardt, H. (2020). *Australians' views re most important problems facing Australia (Nov 2020). Question Summary Profile: 2020 Australian Community Survey*. Sydney: NCLS Research

Powell, R., Pepper, M., & Weickhardt, H. (2020). *Australians' thoughts about climate change (Nov 2020). Question Summary Profile: 2020 Australian Community Survey*. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Powell, R., Pepper, M., & Weickhardt, H. (2020). *Australians' satisfaction with the government response to climate change (Nov 2020). Question Summary Profile: 2020 Australian Community Survey*. Sydney: NCLS Research

Powell, R. (2020). *Millennial Australians views on climate change (Nov 2020): 2020 Australian Community Survey*. Sydney: NCLS Research

Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). *Local church leaders' views and practices re climate change: Study 3 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project*. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). *Local church leaders' views and practices re climate change in 2021: Study 4 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project*. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). *Case study of Millennial evangelical and Pentecostal church attenders: Study 5 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project*. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021) *Young Christians and climate change: Studies 6 & 7 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project*. NCLS Commissioned Report. NCLS Research.



# Appendix

## Study 1: Australian attitudes to climate change over time<sup>6</sup>

The purpose of Study 1 was to investigate current and historical attitudes of Australians towards climate change and how these have changed over time, which provides important context for understanding the attitudes of Australian Christians towards climate change.

NCLS Researchers reviewed data and results available in the public domain from a variety of sources including The Australia Institute, Essential Research Poll, Ipsos, Lowy Institute Poll, and Colvin & Jotzo, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University.

## Study 2: Australians' current views about climate change<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of Study 2 was to explore how Australians, young and old, currently view climate change within the context of the Australian Community Survey (ACS), an in-depth study of Australian religiousness and spirituality.

ACS is an annual study conducted by NCLS Research and distributed by Online Research Unit (ORU). ORU meets ISO standards for both market research and panel work. The Australian sample of around 1,300 persons is drawn from a large online research panel and is representative of the adult population on age, gender and location.

## Study 3: Local church leaders' views and practices regarding climate change<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of Study 3 was to examine local senior leader results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey with respect to their environmental attitudes - including their beliefs about climate change, their eco-theological views and how frequently they preached on environmental issues at their churches. This study included a case study on evangelical and pentecostal local senior leaders aged under 40.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attenders, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations. Results from the 2016 NCLS Leader Survey were restricted to a subset of respondents defined as "local senior leaders" and were weighted to adjust for variations in participation levels across denominations and regions.

### Margins, definitions and sample characteristics

The maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 995 (the minimum number of local senior leaders answering one of the questions presented in this report) at a 95% level of confidence is 3.1%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within ±3.1% of the result for the population of local senior leaders in Australia. The margin of error is greater for reported results for subsamples.

### Local senior leaders

Participants in the 2016 Leader Survey were asked to choose the best description of their position out of a number of options. If any of the below options were selected by a leader, they were classified as a 'local senior leader' and included in analysis for this study:

- The minister, pastor or priest of this local church
- The senior minister/pastor/priest of a ministry team here
- A minister, pastor or priest of equal standing with others in a ministry team here
- An interim minister, pastor or priest here
- A layperson serving as the principal leader here

## Sample characteristics

Table 1 shows the overall results for local senior leaders who completed the 2016 LS1 Leaders Survey, on the indicators used throughout this report for crosstabulations: age and faith tradition.

Sample characteristics		
	Study 6 %	Study 7 %
<b>Country of birth</b>		
Australia	82.7	73.6
Another English-speaking country	9.6	8.4
Another non-English-speaking country	7.7	18.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-24 years old	25.4	26.8
25-29 years old	18.9	23.0
30-34 years old	21.4	22.9
35-40 years old	34.3	27.3
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	57.8	52.8
Male	42.2	47.2
<b>State</b>		
NSW/ACT	39.5	35.9
Victoria	31.9	26.2
Queensland	6.3	19.0
South Australia	14.8	6.9
Western Australia	4.2	9.6
Tasmania	2.7	2.3
Northern Territory	0.6	0.2

Source: Study 6 Online Survey (n = 479-481, 0.0-0.4% missing); Study 7 Online Survey (n = 998, 0.0% missing).

<sup>6</sup> Adapted extract from Powell, R., Ward, N. & Weickhardt, H. (2021) Australian attitudes towards climate change over time: Study 1 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Report. NCLS Research.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted extract from Powell, R., Ward, N. Weickhardt, H. (2021). Climate Change, Christians and Churches: Views and practices of Australians, local church leaders and attenders. NCLS Research Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted extract from Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). Local church leaders' views and practices re climate change: Study 3 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

# Appendix

## Study 4: Local church leaders' views and practices regarding climate change in 2021<sup>9</sup>

The purpose of Study 4 was to explore the current views of local church leaders with respect to climate change - including its existence/causes, the urgency of taking action, their own personal environmental actions and their views on the role of the Church in addressing climate change.

Study 4 involved an online survey of local church leaders of all ages, largely from evangelical or pentecostal churches. The online survey was designed and administered internally by NCLS Research using Qualtrics software, with survey questions designed in consultation with Tearfund. The online survey instrument consisted of 41 questions, including three open-ended questions asking respondents for text-based answers. The collection phase for this Study ran from late April to early May 2021.

Recruitment to this survey was done via a 'snowball' method, with the survey promoted on social media, sent out to a specially compiled list of contact churches from the NCLS database, and also directly mailed to Tearfund supporters/contacts, all requesting participation by local church leaders. In total, 226 local church leaders responded.

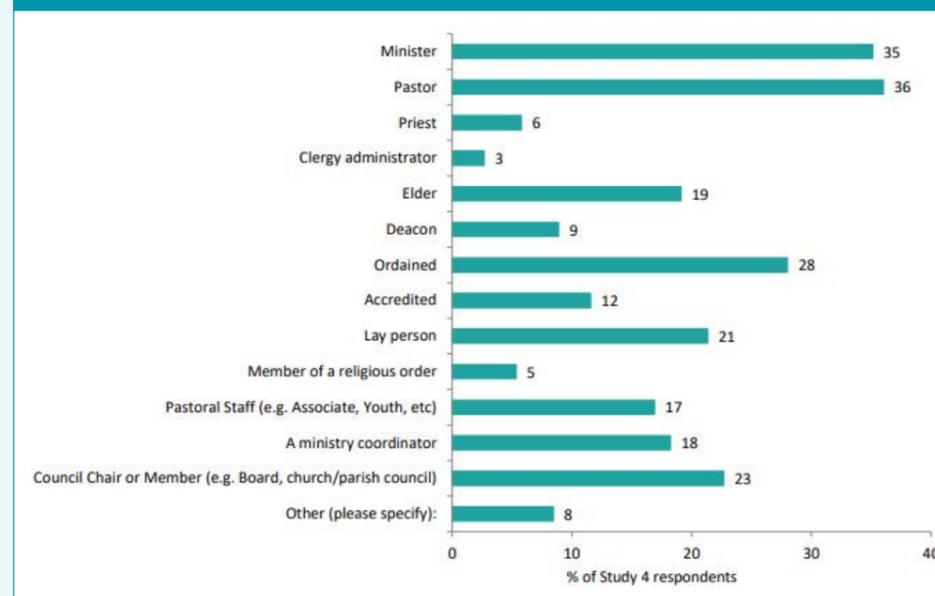
### Sample characteristics

Shows the demographic characteristics of the sample of local church leaders who participated in the Study 4 online survey.

Sample Characteristics	
	% of Study 4 respondents
<b>Country of birth</b>	
Australia	82.7
Another English-speaking country	11.9
Another non-English-speaking country	5.3
<b>Age</b>	
20-39 years old	19.3
40-54 years old	32.7
55-69 years old	32.7
70+ years old	15.2
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	29.3
Male	69.8
Other	0.9
<b>State</b>	
NSW/ACT	70.4
Victoria	9.0
Queensland	8.1
South Australia	4.0
Western Australia	6.7
Tasmania	1.8
Northern Territory	0.0
<b>Highest educational qualification</b>	
No formal schooling	0.4
Some secondary school	0.9
Completed secondary school	6.2
Trade certificate	4.9
Diploma or associate diploma	10.2
Bachelor degree from a university or equivalent institution	36.7
Postgraduate degree or diploma	40.7

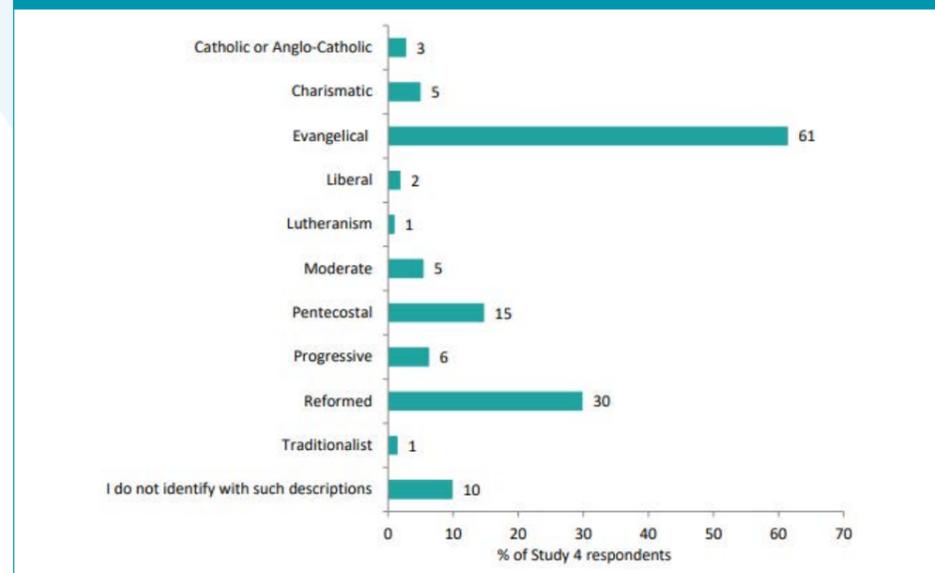
Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 223-226, 0.0-1.3% missing).

### Descriptions of church leadership position (Mark all that apply)



Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 225, 0.4% missing).

### Do you identify with any of the following expressions of faith practice?



Source: Study 4 Online Survey (n = 225, 0.4% missing).

<sup>9</sup> An adapted extract from Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). Local church leaders' views and practices re climate change in 2021: Study 4 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

# Appendix

## Study 5: Case study of Millennial evangelical and pentecostal church attenders<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of Study 5 was to examine results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey with respect to the environmental attitudes and behaviours of Millennial church attenders (born between 1981 and 1996, aged between 20 and 35 in 2016) from evangelical and pentecostal faith traditions and whether these differ from those of older generations.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of 260,000-450,000 church attenders, 6,000-10,000 church leaders and 3,000-7,000 churches in more than 20 Australian denominations every census year since 1991.

This study examined questions both from the 2016 NCLS Main Attender Survey and several small sample surveys. Data was weighted to adjust for variations in participation levels across denominations and regions.

### Margins, definitions and sample characteristics

The maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 19,371 (the minimum number of evangelical/pentecostal Millennial cases for the Main Attender Survey questions contained in this report) at a 95% level of confidence is 0.7%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within  $\pm 0.7\%$  of the result for the population of evangelical and pentecostal Millennial church attenders in Australia.

The maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 128 (the minimum number of evangelical/pentecostal Millennial cases for the small sample survey questions contained in this report) at a 95% level of confidence is 8.7%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within  $\pm 8.7\%$  of the result for the population of evangelical and pentecostal Millennial church attenders in Australia.

The maximum margin of error on a simple random sample of 19,371 (the minimum number of evangelical/pentecostal Millennial cases for the Main Attender Survey questions contained in this report) at a 95% level of confidence is 0.7%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within  $\pm 0.7\%$  of the result for the population of evangelical and pentecostal Millennial church attenders in Australia.

### Definitions

#### Evangelical and Pentecostal church attenders

This analysis only reported results from evangelical and pentecostal church attenders. A church attender was classified as evangelical or pentecostal if they met one of the following criteria:

- They attended a church from one of the following denominations (which were sampled well enough to be included in weighted analysis): Baptist, Churches of Christ, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, or the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. These were classified as 'evangelical' churches.
- They attended a church from one of the following denominations (which were sampled well enough to be included in weighted analysis): C3 Church, Australian Christian Churches, CRC Churches International, or International Network of Churches. These were classified as 'pentecostal' churches.
- They attended a church from a different Protestant denomination, but the attender individually identified with at least one of the following 'approaches to matters of faith': Pentecostal, Charismatic, Evangelical, or Reformed. These 'other' Protestant denominations which were sampled well enough to be included were: Reformed, Lutheran, Uniting and independent churches.

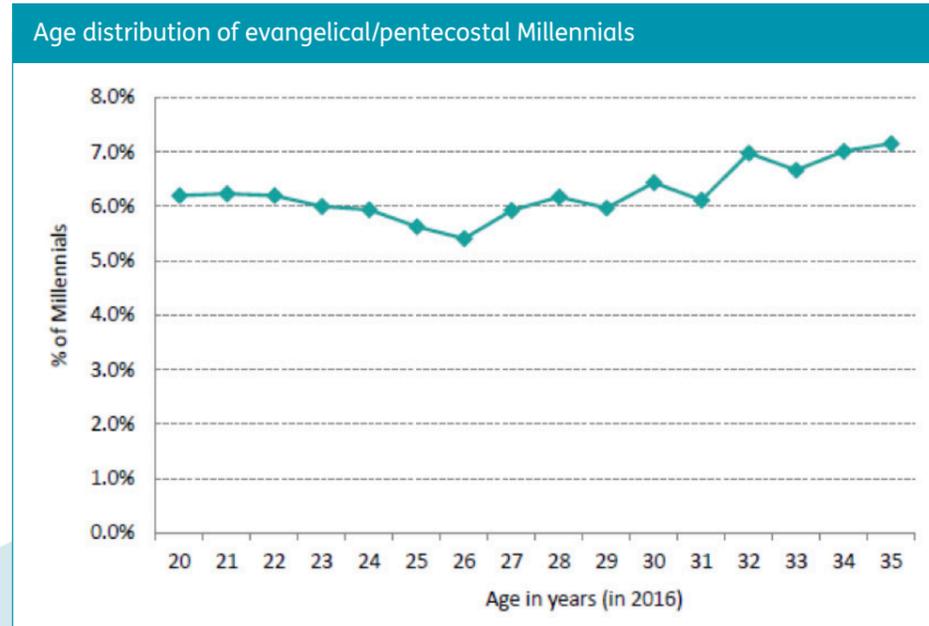
### Millennials and other generational cohorts

Much of this analysis focused on the results of Millennial church attenders, often in comparison with other generations. These cohorts have been defined as follows:

- Millennial: Born between 1981 and 1996
- Gen X: Born between 1965 and 1980
- Baby Boomer: Born between 1946 and 1964
- Traditionalist: Born between 1928 and 1945

The Gen Z cohort (born from 1997 onwards) is not included in generational breakdowns in this report. The NCLS Attender Survey is designed for church attenders aged 15 and over, and so in 2016 most of Generation Z were too young to participate, and those that were old enough to take part constituted too small a sample for analysis.

### Demographics



Source: 2016 NCLS Main Attender Survey (n = 23,079, 0.0% missing).

Gender and ethnicity of Evangelical/Pentecostal Millennials

	% of Millennials
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	56.5
Male	43.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Born in Australia	68.5
Born in other English-speaking country	8.4
Born in non-English-speaking country	23.0
Don't know	0.1

Source: 2016 NCLS Main Attender Survey (n = 22,860-22,906, 0.7-0.9% missing).

<sup>10</sup> An adapted extract from Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021). Case study of Millennial evangelical and Pentecostal church attenders: Study 5 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Research Report. NCLS Research.

# Appendix

## Studies 6 and 7: 18 to 40 year olds and climate change in 2021<sup>11</sup>

**The purpose of Studies 6 and 7 was to explore the current views of Christians aged 18 to 40 years with respect to climate change, their personal environmental actions, and their thoughts on the roles of their local church, denomination, and the wider Church.**

Studies 6 and 7 used identical online surveys of 38 questions, conducted by NCLS Research during April and May 2021, with survey questions designed in consultation with Tearfund.

The Study 6 online survey was designed and administered internally by NCLS Research using Qualtrics software. Recruitment to this survey was done via a 'snowball method', with the survey sent out to contact churches from the NCLS database, promoted on social media, and also directly mailed to Tearfund supporters. In total, 481 participants fitting these criteria responded. The Study 7 online survey was distributed by ORU to a sample of Australians aged 18-40 years who

identified as Christian, drawn from their Australian Consumer Panel. The final sample for Study 7 was made up of 998 cases. Quotas were set for age, gender and location, derived from the 2016 Census of Population and Housing. Results were weighted to reflect the demographic profile of the broader Australian population aged 18-40 on age and gender and can be considered a somewhat representative sample of the 18-40-year-old Australian Christian population.

## Margins and sample characteristics

The maximum margin of error on a random sample of 998 cases at a 95% level of confidence is 3.1%. That is, assuming a simple random sample, there is a 95% chance that a sample result falls within  $\pm 3.1\%$  of the result for the population. The margin of error is greater for subsample results.

## Sample characteristics

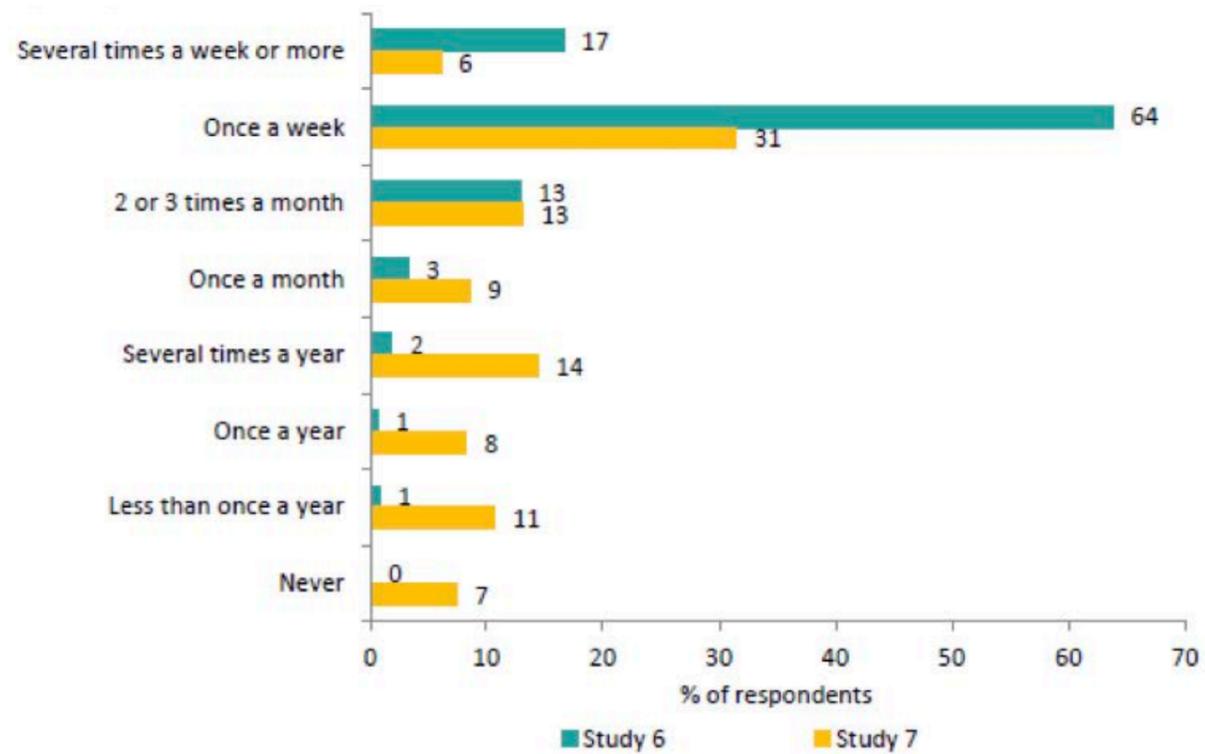
Sample characteristics		
	Study 6 %	Study 7 %
<b>Country of birth</b>		
Australia	82.7	73.6
Another English-speaking country	9.6	8.4
Another non-English-speaking country	7.7	18.0
<b>Age</b>		
18-24 years old	25.4	26.8
25-29 years old	18.9	23.0
30-34 years old	21.4	22.9
35-40 years old	34.3	27.3
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	57.8	52.8
Male	42.2	47.2
<b>State</b>		
NSW/ACT	39.5	35.9
Victoria	31.9	26.2
Queensland	6.3	19.0
South Australia	14.8	6.9
Western Australia	4.2	9.6
Tasmania	2.7	2.3
Northern Territory	0.6	0.2

Source: Study 6 Online Survey (n = 479-481, 0.0-0.4 missing); Study 7 online Survey (n = 998, 0.0% missing).

<sup>11</sup> An adapted extract from Powell, R. & Ward, N. (2021) Young Christians and climate change: Studies 6 & 7 Report for Tearfund Climate Justice Research Project. NCLS Commissioned Report. NCLS Research

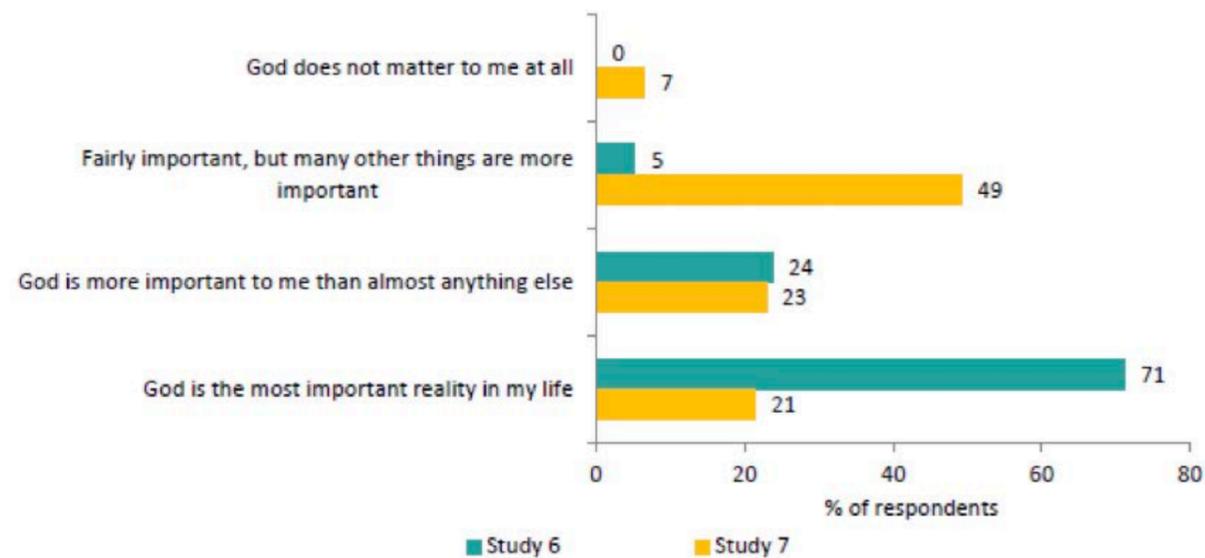
# Appendix

## Frequency of attendance at church service



Source: Study 6 Online Survey (n = 481, 0.0% missing); Study 7 Online Survey (n = 998, 0.0% missing).

## How important is Christian faith to you?



Source: Study 6 Online Survey (n = 481, 0.0% missing); Study 7 Online Survey (n = 998, 0.0% missing).

## **Tearfund Australia**

We are Tearfund. We're working in partnership to end poverty, challenge inequality and build sustainable communities. Following Jesus, we go where the need is greatest, acting with courage to tackle injustice so that all may experience fullness of life.

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