

# Demographics of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander churchgoers

## Introduction

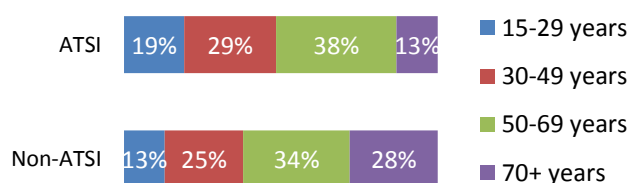
The 2016 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) surveyed around 2,000 churchgoers who were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) origin. This fact sheet compares the demographic profile of this group of church attenders with those attenders who were not of ATSI origin.

These results include church attenders from 14 Australian denominations and movements. Rates of participation of ATSI local churches and ATSI individuals within these denominations in the 2016 NCLS are not fully known but are likely to be lower than for non-ATSI churches and individuals. No claim can be made about the representativeness of the results given in this fact sheet.<sup>1</sup>

## Age

Overall, ATSI churchgoers were younger than non-ATSI churchgoers. Around one-fifth of ATSI church attenders were aged 15-29. The proportion of church attenders aged 70 or above among the ATSI group (13%) was half of that of the non-ATSI group (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Age of churchgoers with ATSI/non-ATSI background**



ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n=2,025); Non-ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n= 169,636).  
Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

<sup>1</sup> Data in this fact sheet are weighted to account for different levels of NCLS participation from 1) different denominations/movements, and 2) local churches of different sizes. Attenders from the following denominations/movements are represented in the results: Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Uniting Church, Australian Christian Churches, C3 Church, International Network of Churches, Christian Revival Crusade, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Christian Reformed, Salvation Army, CityLife Church.

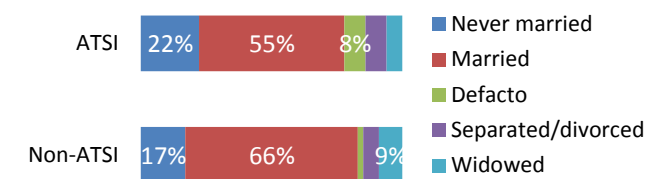
## Gender

The gender distribution among ATSI church attenders reflected broader patterns of gender imbalance among people who are religious, including attending church. In both groups around 60% of churchgoers were female.

## Marital status

The majority of churchgoers in both groups were married. More ATSI churchgoers were never married (22%) and in a defacto relationship (8%) than non-ATSI churchgoers (17% and 2% respectively) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Marital status of ATSI and non-ATSI churchgoers**



ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n=2,025); Non-ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n= 169,636).  
Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

## Denomination

**Table 1: Denominations of ATSI and non-ATSI churchgoers**

	ATSI	Non-ATSI
	%	%
Anglican	11	12
Baptist	6	8
Catholic	36	45
Uniting Church	5	8
Pentecostal	32	16
Presbyterian	2	3
Salvation Army	3	2
Other	5	6
Total	100	100

ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n=2,025); Non-ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n= 169,636).  
Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

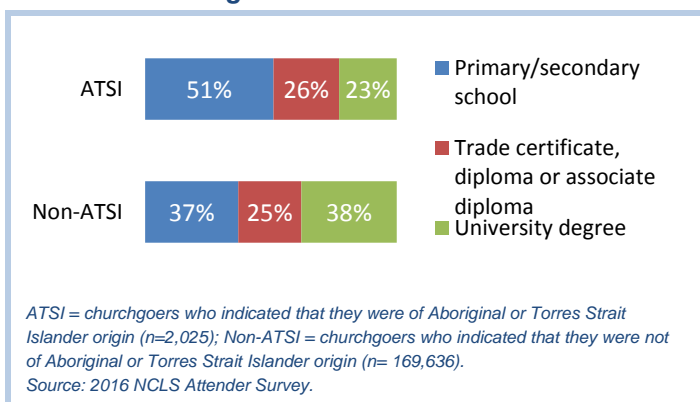
Catholic was the largest denomination among both groups. However, a higher percentage of non-ATSI

churchgoers (45%) than ATSI churchgoers (36%) were Catholic. More ATSI churchgoers (32%) than non-ATSI churchgoers (16%) attended Pentecostal churches. These were followed by Anglican and Baptist, which altogether formed around 20% of both groups (see Table 1).

### Education

Nearly half of the ATSI churchgoers held post-school qualifications. There were more degree holders among the non-ATSI (38%) than ATSI church attenders (23%) (see Figure 3).

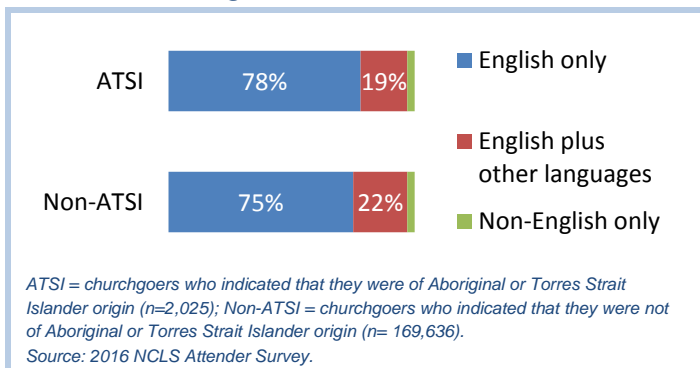
**Figure 3: Highest educational qualifications of ATSI and non-ATSI churchgoers**



### Language(s) spoken

The majority of both groups spoke only English at home, with the ATSI group (78%) and non-ATSI group (75%) having similar proportions of English-only speakers (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Language(s) spoken at home by ATSI and non-ATSI churchgoers**

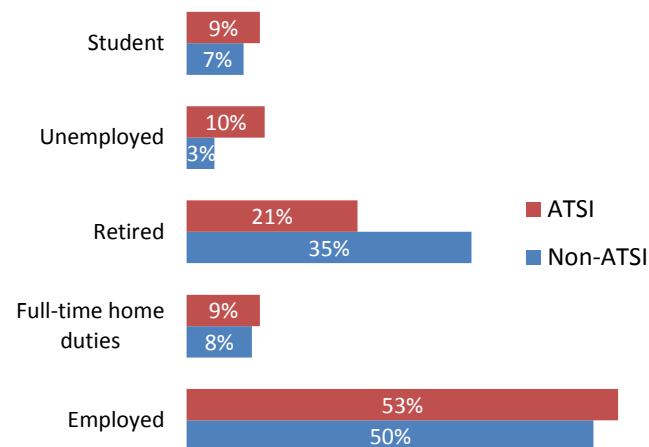


### Employment status

The majority of churchgoers in both groups were employed. Compared to non-ATSI churchgoers, more

ATSI churchgoers were unemployed (10%, versus 3% among non-ATSI churchgoers) and less were retired (21%, versus 35% of non-ATSI churchgoers) (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Employment status of ATSI and non-ATSI churchgoers**



ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n=2,025); Non-ATSI = churchgoers who indicated that they were not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (n= 169,636).  
Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

### Summary

Attendees of ATSI and non-ATSI backgrounds were similar with regard to gender and language spoken at home. However there were differences between the two groups in the distribution of ages, denominations, marital status, educational level and employment status.

### Data sources

Powell, R., Pepper, M., Hancock, N. & Sterland, S. (2016) [computer file] 2016 NCLS Attender Survey. Sydney: NCLS Research.

### Citation

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