

Chinese church attenders – a demographic profile

Introduction

Attending churches is one of the ways for Chinese migrants to incorporate into Australian society. What are the characteristics of church-attending people with a Chinese background?

The 2016 NCLS surveyed over 6,000 churchgoers with a Chinese background. Here three groups of Chinese migrants are compared: first generation migrants who were born in China/Hong Kong (1st Gen), second generation migrants (both parents born in China/Hong Kong) who speak a language other than English at home (2nd LOTE), and second generation migrants (both parents born in China/Hong Kong) who speak only English at home (2nd Eng).

2016 NCLS survey forms were available in several languages, including Chinese. Rates of participation of Chinese church congregations and individuals in the 2016 NCLS from different denominations are not known. No claim can be made about the representativeness of these results.¹

Age

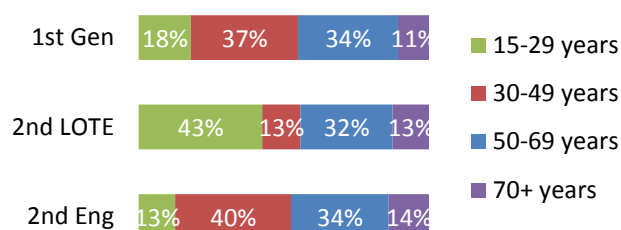
The majority of churchgoers with a Chinese background were under 50 years old. The pattern differed from that in the general Australian churchgoing population in which almost two-thirds were at least 50 years old (Powell, Pepper, Hancock & Sterland, 2016). The proportion of young people aged 15-19 among 2nd LOTE (43%) was more than triple that among 2nd Eng (13%) and more than double that among 1st Gen (18%) (see Figure 1).

Gender

The gender distribution among churchgoers with a Chinese background differed from that among the

general Australian population, in which the female/male ratio was 3:2 (Powell et al., 2016). A more balanced female/male ratio was observed among the second generation groups of churchgoers with Chinese background (63% female in 1st Gen, 56% in 2nd LOTE, 52% in 2nd Eng).

Figure 1: Age of churchgoers with Chinese background



1st Gen=first generation migrants who were born in China/Hong Kong (n=6,202); 2nd LOTE=second generation Chinese migrants who speak a language other than English at home (n=1,075); 2nd Eng=second generation Chinese migrants who speak only English at home (n=300). Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

Denomination

Table 1: Denominations of churchgoers with Chinese background

	1st Gen	2nd LOTE	2nd Eng
Anglican	19%	17%	17%
Baptist	34%	27%	15%
Catholic	15%	23%	14%
Pentecostal	9%	5%	26%
Presbyterian	7%	12%	12%
Uniting Church	6%	5%	8%
Other	10%	12%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%

1st Gen (n=6,202); 2nd LOTE (n=1,075); 2nd Eng (n=300). Please refer to Figure 1 for explanation of 1st Gen, 2nd LOTE & 2nd Eng. Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

Protestants were the large majority among churchgoers with a Chinese background, differing from the general Australian churchgoing population which comprises more than 40% Catholics (Powell et al., 2016). Anglican and Baptist were the largest single Protestant denominations among the Chinese migrants. Baptist was the most common denomination among the 1st Gen

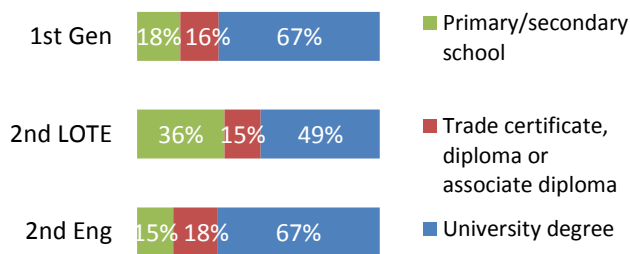
¹ Data in this fact sheet are weighted to account for different levels of NCLS participation from 1) different denominations/movements, and 2) local churches of different sizes. Attenders from the following denominations/movements are represented in the results: Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian,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

(34%) and 2nd LOTE (27%). Pentecostals were much more common among 2nd Eng (26%) than among the other two groups (9% of 1st Gen and 5% of 2nd LOTE) (see Table 1).

Education

While most of the general Australian churchgoing population were not degree holders in 2016 (Powell et al., 2016), the majority of churchgoers with a Chinese background were (See Figure 2). More 2nd LOTE (36%) than the other groups (18% of 1st Gen and 15% of 2nd Eng) had school as their highest level of formal education (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: The highest education qualifications of churchgoers with Chinese background



1st Gen (n=6,202); 2nd LOTE (n=1,075); 2nd Eng (n=300). Refer to Figure 1 for explanation of 1st Gen, 2nd LOTE & 2nd Eng. Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

Employment status

Most of the churchgoers with a Chinese background were employed. Students in the 2nd LOTE group were six times the proportion of those in 2nd Eng and triple those in 1st Gen. Comparing the groups of second generations, more 2nd Eng were in the workforce (67%) than 2nd LOTE (53%) (see Figure 3).

Country of birth

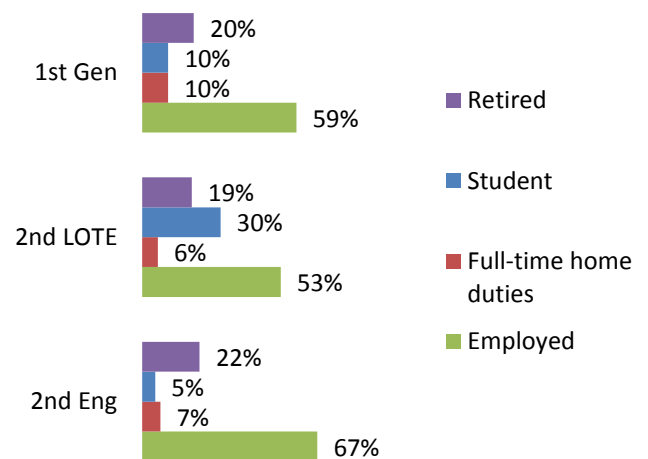
A contrast was observed in terms of the country of birth between the two groups of second generations. Australia-born 2nd Eng composed 62% of the group, whereas the Australian-born proportion in the 2nd LOTE group was 51%. Some 31% of 2nd Eng were born in Asia, compared with 43% of 2nd LOTE (see Figure 4).

Summary

A within-group diversity was observed among churchgoers with Chinese background. The second generation group who speak a language other than

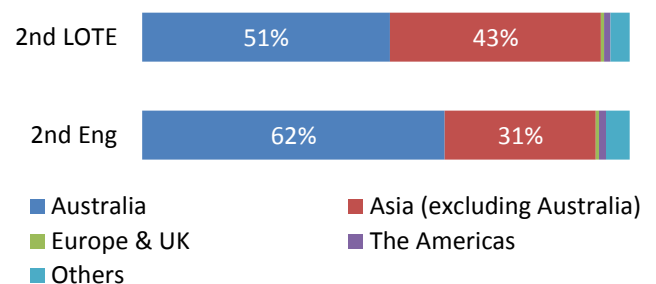
English at home differed from the other groups in terms of age, education and employment status. The demographics of churchgoers with a Chinese background were different from those of the general Australian churchgoing population.

Figure 3: Employment status of churchgoers with Chinese background



1st Gen (n=6,202); 2nd LOTE (n=1,075); 2nd Eng (n=300). Refer to Figure 1 for explanation of 1st Gen, 2nd LOTE & 2nd Eng. Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

Figure 4: Country of birth of second generation churchgoers with Chinese background



Asia included New Zealand, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, India/Sri Lanka, and other Asia; 1st Gen (n=6,202); 2nd LOTE (n=1,075); 2nd Eng (n=300). Refer to Figure 1 for explanation of 1st Gen, 2nd LOTE & 2nd Eng. Source: 2016 NCLS Attender Survey.

Data sources and references

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

Citation

Lo, H.L. & Pepper, M. (2017) Chinese church attenders – a demographic profile, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 17012. Sydney: NCLS Research.