



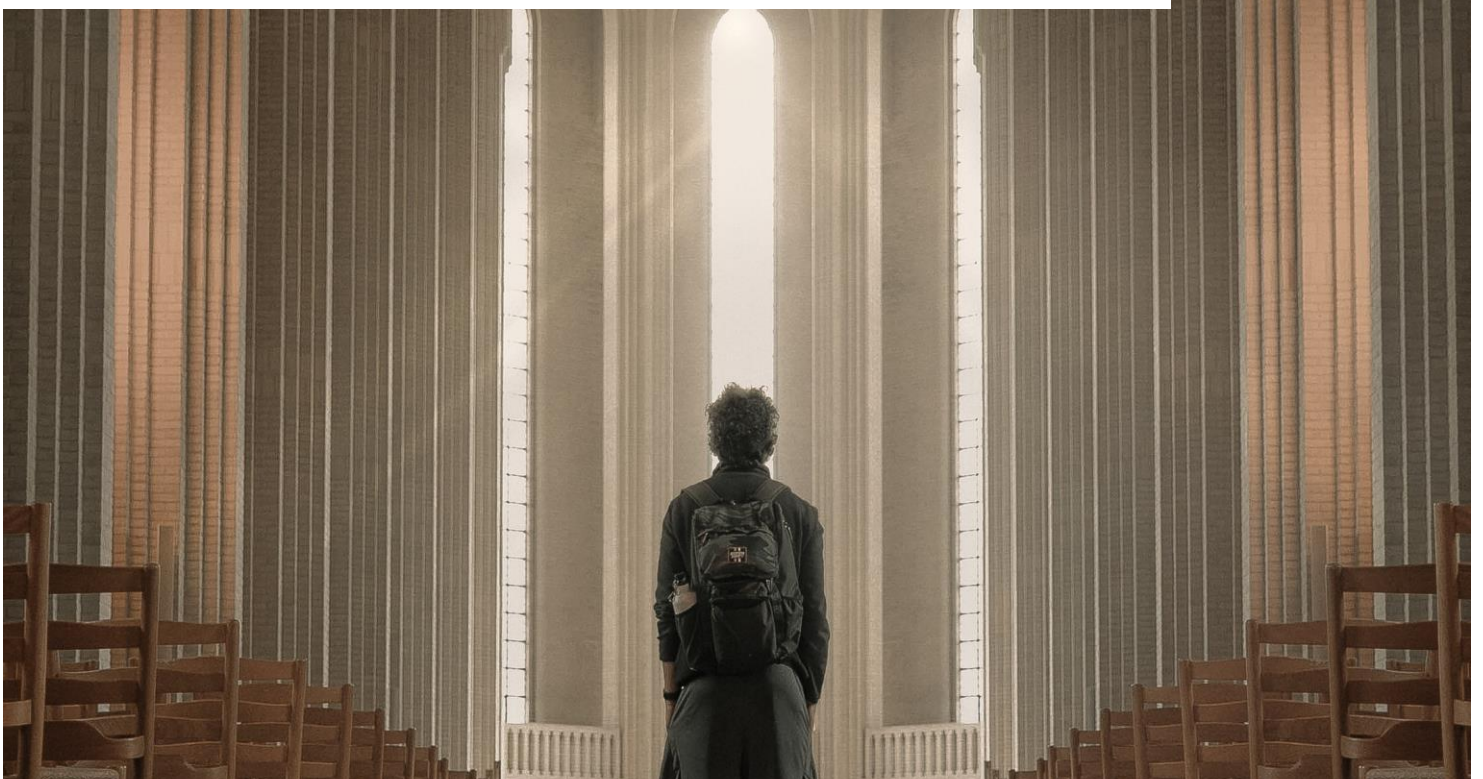
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# Church Perception Study

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Seventh-day Adventist Church South Pacific

May 2022



## Research objectives

In February 2022, Seventh-day Adventist Church South Pacific engaged McCrindle to conduct research into the perceptions of Australians and New Zealanders towards the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This research seeks to understand how individuals perceive the role of the church and their awareness of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in Australia and New Zealand, which will inform a marketing strategy to encourage people to attend their local Seventh-day Adventist church. The objectives for this research are to:

- Gain insight into how Australians and New Zealanders perceive the church
- Explore concepts relating to the role of the church that resonate with everyday Australians and New Zealanders
- Understand individuals' sentiment towards the Seventh-day Adventist church in Australia and New Zealand
- Explore opportunities for the Seventh-day Adventist church to engage with Australians and New Zealanders today

## Research methodology

The Seventh-day Adventist Church 'Church Perception Study' is the collation of quantitative data gathered through an online survey of Australians and New Zealanders, nationally representative by age, gender and state/region. The survey, developed by McCrindle, was in field from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2022 and received 2,748 completed responses in total. 1,501 responses were collected from Australia and 996 responses were collected from New Zealand.

### Graphs and rounding

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded and may, therefore, sum to 99% or 101%. Any calculations where two data points have been added are based on raw data (not the rounded data labels on the graph) which have then been rounded once combined. Many of the graphs in this report indicate which stakeholder group the questions were asked to by noting either *Australia* or *New Zealand* under the graph title. Where this is

not mentioned, stakeholder responses are combined.

### Terminology

Throughout this report, respondents from Australia are referred to as *Australians* and respondents from New Zealand are referred to as *New Zealanders*.

### Segmentation

Where the number of responses allows, segmentation has been provided. These segments group responses with specific characteristics to enable greater insight.

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Segmentation insights for Australia are displayed in breakout sections such as this.

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Segmentation insights for New Zealand are displayed in breakout sections such as this.

# Executive summary

## The religious landscape of Australia and New Zealand is diverse

While Australians and New Zealanders are most likely to identify with Christianity (45% Australia, 36% New Zealand), a similar proportion do not identify with any religion or spiritual belief (35% Australia, 38% New Zealand).

When asked about their stance towards Christianity, a similar proportion of individuals have always identified as a Christian or have never identified as a Christian. In fact, the highest proportion of both Australians and New Zealanders identify as a Christian and always have done (42% Australia, 32% New Zealand) while a similar proportion (30% Australia, 33% New Zealand) have never considered themselves a Christian and still do not.

## More than half of Australians and New Zealanders are not open to attending a religious service

Of those individuals who do not currently attend a religious service, most are not at all open to attending a religious service in the future (61% Australia, 54% New Zealand). Despite Australians being more likely to identify as religious, New Zealanders are more open to attending a religious service (39% Australia, 46% New Zealand).

## Australians and New Zealanders are largely unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination

Overall, Australians and New Zealanders are unfamiliar with many Christian denominations. Australians are most unfamiliar with Pentecostal (54%), Orthodox (45%) and Seventh-day Adventist (43%). Comparatively, New Zealanders are least familiar with Uniting (76%), Hillsong (68%), Orthodox (61%) and Pentecostal (61%).

Around two fifths of Australians (43%) and New Zealanders (38%) are familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination but do not feel positively towards it. Just one in seven are familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist church and feel positively towards it (14% Australia, 13% New Zealand).

## The role of the church is to provide hope and connection to communities

Both Australians and New Zealanders believe a key role the church plays in the community is to help those in need (55% Australia, 57% New Zealand), providing social connection (50% Australia, 60% New Zealand) and providing people with hope (50% Australia, 54% New Zealand).

Australians are less likely to see the benefit of having churches in the community (20% Australia, 14% New Zealand).

## Respect of other people's beliefs is important to Australians and New Zealanders

Three in five individuals believe that respecting others' beliefs and worldviews even if they are different to their own is extremely or very important (64% Australia, 69% New Zealand). However, fewer believe it is important to be willing to learn about what those different views are. Just over half believe an openness to learn about other peoples' beliefs and principles is extremely or very important (52% Australia, 55% New Zealand).

## People struggle to define the core beliefs and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist church

When asked what the key characteristics of the Seventh-day Adventist church are, many are unsure and do not know what defines the beliefs

and practices of the denomination. In fact, individuals are likely to believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is just like other Christian denominations (21% Australia, 24% New Zealand).

For many, the word 'unfamiliar' comes to mind when thinking of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. While Australians and New Zealanders see a key role of the church being to help people in need (55% Australia, 57% New Zealand), just one in ten believe this to be a key characteristic of the Seventh-day Adventist church (11% Australia, 11% New Zealand). Fewer still believe the Seventh-day Adventist church is involved in local community life/events (8% Australia, 9% New Zealand).

### **Australians and New Zealanders question the relevance of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Just one in six individuals strongly or somewhat agree that the Seventh-day Adventist church is relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (17% Australia, 16% New Zealand). Similarly, just one in seven agree that it is relevant to their age group (15% Australia, 16% New Zealand).

Interestingly, younger generations are more likely to recognise the relevance of the Seventh-day Adventist church today. Younger Australians are more likely to believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is relevant to their age group (23% Gen Z, 19% Gen Y cf. 17% Gen X, 10% Baby Boomers, 6% Builders) and is relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (25% Gen Z, 22% Gen Y cf. 17% Gen X, 10% Baby Boomers, 11% Builders).

The same is true for New Zealand where younger generations are more likely to agree the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is relevant to their age group (26% Gen Z, 18% Gen Y cf. 14% Gen X, 12% Baby Boomers, 7% Builders). They are also more likely to agree the church is relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (25% Gen Z, 18% Gen Y cf. 16% Gen X, 12% Baby Boomers, 7% Builders). This highlights a great opportunity for the Seventh-day Adventist

church to investigate how to engage with individuals across a range of age groups.

### **Two in three individuals have never seen any Seventh-day Adventist marketing before**

Overall, Australians and New Zealanders are unlikely to have seen any Seventh-day Adventist marketing or media before (68% Australia, 63% New Zealand). Individuals are most familiar with letter drops (12% Australia, 13% New Zealand), local church signs (9% Australia, 12% New Zealand) or printed materials (10% Australia, 10% New Zealand). However, very few individuals have seen any advertising on TV (6% Australia, 10% New Zealand), social media (6% Australia, 6% New Zealand) or radio (5% Australia, 3% New Zealand).

### **Younger generations are more likely to attend a Seventh-day Adventist activity**

While most Australians and New Zealanders are unlikely to attend a Seventh-day Adventist activity, individuals are more inclined to attend community-focused activities such as a community service activity (35% Australia, 36% New Zealand), family social event (34% Australia, 37% New Zealand) or a social activity (34% Australia, 37% New Zealand).

Overall, younger generations are more open to attending a range of Seventh-day Adventist activities than their older counterparts. Younger Australians are particularly open to attending an online church service (52% Gen Z, 38% Gen Y cf. 24% Gen X, 9% Baby Boomers, 9% Builders) and community service events (56% Gen Z, 45% Gen Y cf. 33% Gen X, 24% Baby Boomers, 16% Builders).

Younger New Zealanders are similar, having a greater openness to attending an online church service (48% Gen Z, 31% Gen Y cf. 19% Gen X, 13% Baby Boomers, 9% Builders) and community service events (58% Gen Z, 45% Gen Y cf. 29% Gen X, 25% Baby Boomers, 14% Builders).

# Key recommendations

## 1. Clearly communicate the core beliefs and principles of the Seventh-day Adventist church

As almost half of Australians and New Zealanders (46%) are unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist church, and a further 35% believe it is just like other Christian denominations, promoting the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination will increase awareness and encourage engagement across all generations.

Clearly communicate the core values of the Seventh-day Adventist church to increase awareness and engagement among all generations.

## 2. Invest in a social media presence

While younger generations are most unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist church, they are more open to learning about the denomination and attending Seventh-day Adventist activities. Being a digital generation, they are highly engaged with social media. However, just 6% of individuals have seen Seventh-day Adventist advertising through social media.

Invest in a strong social media presence by utilising platforms that younger generations frequently use and are familiar with.

## 3. Seek opportunities to make the local church a hub of connection

Many individuals believe a key role of the church is to help those in need (56%) and provide social connection (54%). However, just 12% of individuals believe the Seventh-day Adventist church serves those in need and only 9% believe the church is involved in local community life/events.

Seek opportunities to make the local Seventh-day Adventist church a hub of connection and service in local communities.

## 4. Help Australians and New Zealanders understand the relevance of the Seventh-day Adventist church today

A high proportion of individuals don't see how the Seventh-day Adventist church is relevant to their lives. In fact, just 16% agree that it is relevant to their age group while 4% believe the Seventh-day Adventist church is relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Help individuals understand why the Seventh-day Adventist church is relevant today by communicating how the church provides hope both now and in the future.