

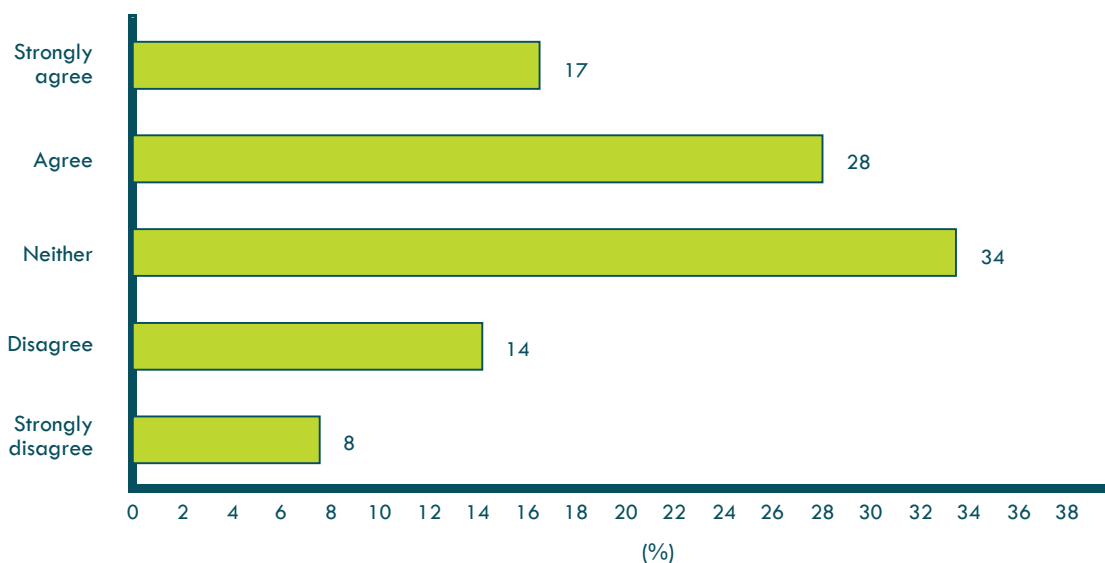
Something beyond this life

Australian Spirituality Fact Sheet 1

Many Australians agree there is something beyond that makes sense of it all

When asked if 'there is something beyond this life that made sense of it all', twice as many Australians agree as disagree (44.6% vs 21.8%). Close to a third of Australians are non-committal; they neither agree nor disagree (33.5%).

Agree or disagree? "There is something beyond this life that makes sense of it all"



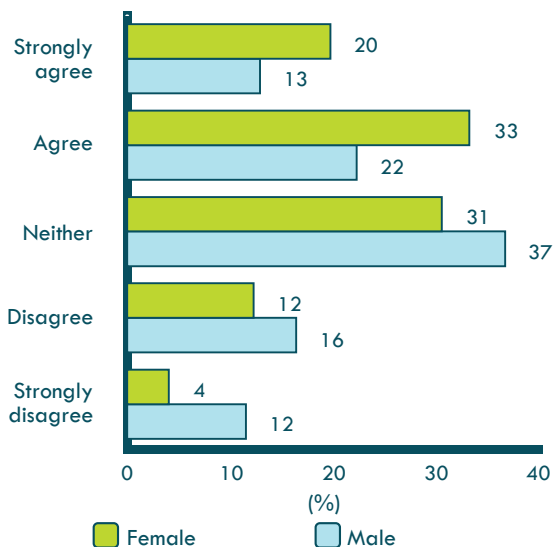
Source: 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes.

As an indicator of a spiritual dimension or a divine presence beyond this life, almost half the people surveyed (44.6%) agree or strongly agree that there is something beyond. A third of Australians neither agree nor disagree (33.5%). In fact more people choose this neutral or uncertain position, than disbelieve that there is something beyond. Around a quarter of Australians (21.8%) disagree or strongly disagree that there is anything beyond that makes sense of it all.

INSIDE...

- More women believe in something beyond
- Young uncertain or non-committal
- Education makes no difference
- Australian-born undecided
- Religious and non-religious views mixed

Agree or disagree: “There is something beyond this life that makes sense of it all”



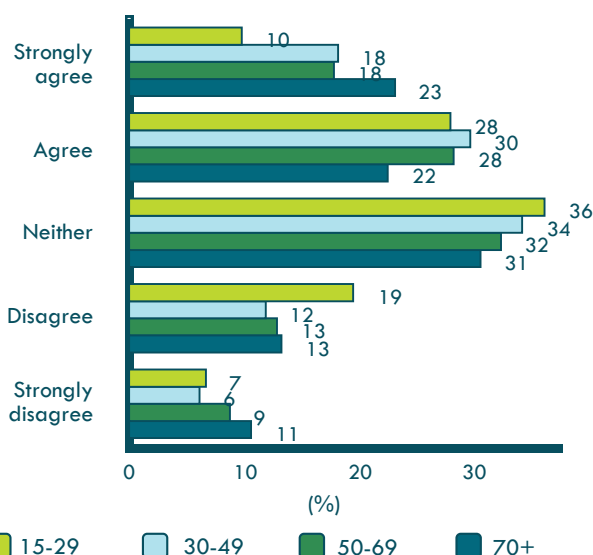
Sex: More women than men believe in something beyond this life (53% of women as compared with 35% of men).

Among women, around three times as many believe there is something beyond than do not (53% vs 16%).

While more men agree (35%) than disagree (28%), the largest group of men remain undecided about a spiritual dimension (37%).

When it comes to strength of opinion on the issue, women are more likely to strongly agree (20% vs 13%) and men more likely to strongly disagree (12% vs 4%) with the idea of something beyond that makes sense of it all.

Sex



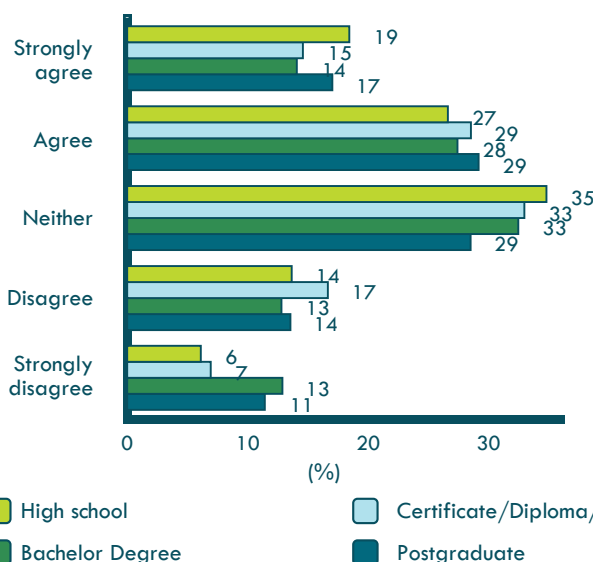
Age: Young people aged 15-29 are least likely to agree there is something beyond that makes sense of it all (38% vs ~47% for those aged 30 plus).

Being uncertain or non-committal is most common for the youngest age group and declines with age (from 36% to 31% of those aged 70+).

Those aged 15 to 29 years are also most likely to reject the statement, which contrasts with 30 to 49 year olds who have the lowest percentage who disagree or strongly disagree (26% vs 18%).

Strength of conviction is more evident in those aged 70+, with that age group being more likely to strongly agree or strongly disagree than other age groups.

Age

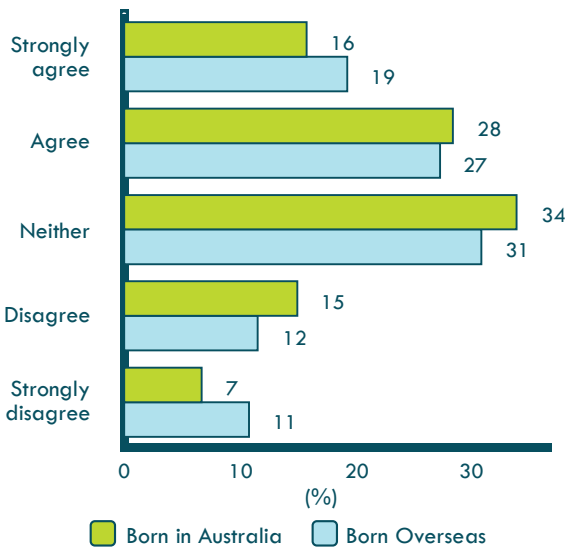


Education: A person's levels of education makes no difference to their view on whether or not there is something beyond.

While the percentages do vary for groups who have achieved different levels of education, further tests found no evidence that these differences were statistically significant.

Education

Agree or disagree: “There is something beyond this life that makes sense of it all”

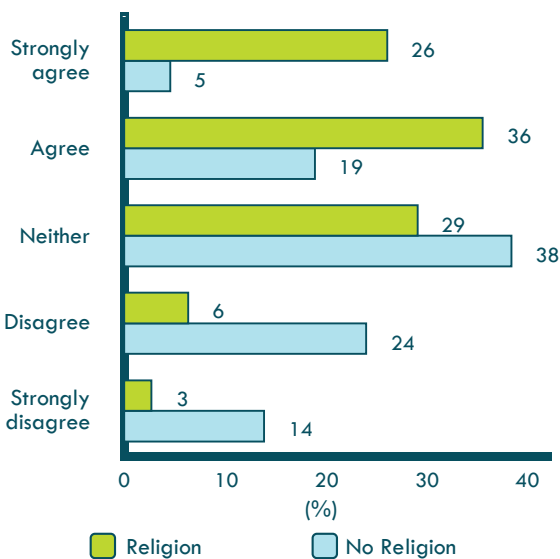


Ethnicity: When comparing people born in Australia and overseas, the patterns are relatively consistent with the whole population. For both groups, more people accept there is something beyond than do not.

Those born in Australia are more likely to be undecided about a spiritual dimension than those born overseas (34% vs 31%).

Those born overseas express firmer opinions, with higher proportions who both strongly agree or strongly disagree.

Ethnicity



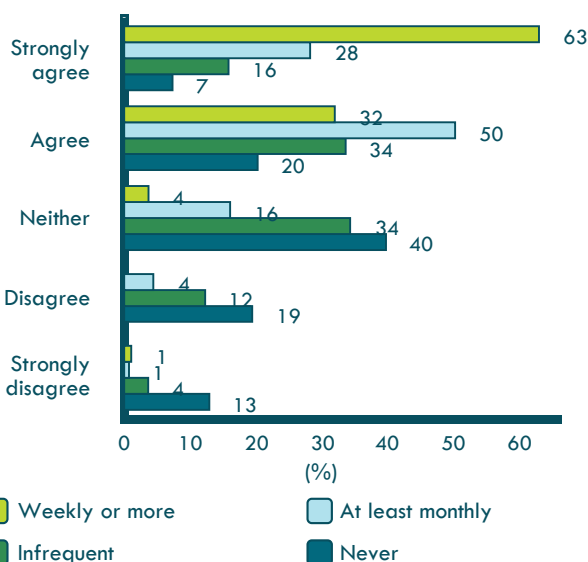
Religion: People who say they 'have a religion' express higher levels of spiritual belief, with 62% of them agreeing that there is something beyond this life versus 9% not.

Interestingly, almost a third of religious people are uncertain about whether there is anything beyond this life that makes sense of it all (29%).

Non-religious people are more likely to believe there is nothing beyond this life (38% do not agree there is anything beyond). However, a significant proportion of non-religious people still do believe in something beyond this life (24%).

This clearly reinforces the notion that many who do not count themselves religious may still consider there to be a spiritual dimension to life.

Religion



Attendance: Church attendance is very strongly related to the belief that there is something beyond that makes sense of it all.

In fact, nearly all those who attend weekly or more often agree (96%), compared with 78% of those who attend at least monthly, 50% of infrequent attenders, and 27% of non attenders.

The less often a person attends church, the more likely they are to be uncertain or non-committal.

However, non-attendance does not automatically mean disbelief. Four in ten people who never attend church adopt the neutral or uncertain position. Some 27% of those who never attend agree there is something beyond that makes sense of it all, while 32% do not agree.

Attendance

AUSTRALIAN SPIRITUALITY RESOURCES from NCLS Research

Available online
www.ncls.org.au/spirituality

Fact Sheets:

- **Something beyond this life**
explores whether Australians believe in a spiritual dimension to life
- **Just believe or question**
examines the degree of critical reflection in religious faith and spiritual beliefs of Australians
- **Philosophies of life**
identifies which philosophies of life have most influence on how Australians live today
- **Guided by faith**
examines the saliency of religious faith or spirituality in shaping life's decisions, such as career, relationships and lifestyle
- **Jesus' resurrection**
reviews Australian beliefs about whether Jesus resurrection was an actual historical event

Each Fact Sheet presents the overall results for Australia and then compares different groups including: sex, age, education, ethnicity, 'having religion' and church attendance.

Data source:

The International Social Survey Program (ISSP) is an ongoing survey designed to monitor changes in society across a range of countries. In 2009 the ISSP was undertaken in Australia by the Australian National University via the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA).

The survey included a standard component on religion, as well as customised questions regarding religion and spirituality which were commissioned by a consortium that included NCLS Research.

The sample comprised 1718 adults across Australia.

Evans, A. (2009) [computer file], The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, Australian Social Science Data Archives, The Australian National University, Canberra.

COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY link to the 2011 NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY

Find out about the spiritual beliefs of people who connect with your church but don't attend regularly.

A new addition to the 2011 NCLS and beyond is a survey of local church contacts. Churches can survey people they have contact with, whether through a play group, soup kitchen, or someone they are related to.

It's an effective way to find out about the beliefs, faith practices and spirituality of those connected with your church, as well as what they think of your activities. This will help your church build stronger connections and serve the community more effectively.

For more details
see www.2011ncls.org.au.



NEW

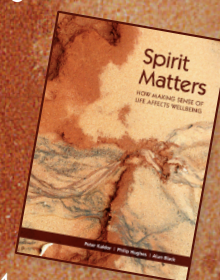
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www.ncls.org.au/spiritmatters