

Chinese church attenders – aspects of faith

Introduction

The 2016 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) surveyed over 6,000 churchgoers with a Chinese background. This fact sheet analyses aspects of their faith. 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

Frequency of church attendance

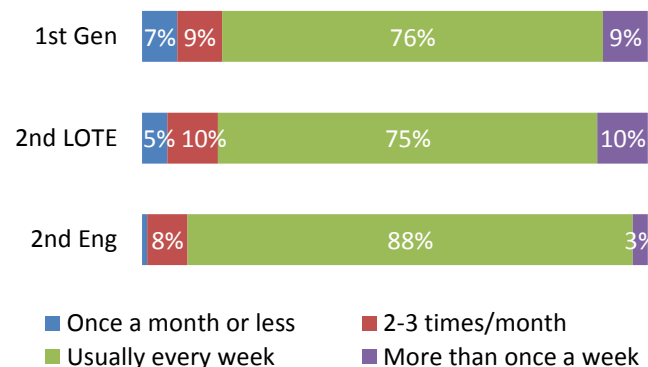
The patterns of church attendance of 1st Gen and 2nd LOTE were more diverse than that of 2nd Eng. More 1st Gen and 2nd LOTE than 2nd Eng attended churches more than once a week or attended once a month or less. Most 2nd Eng (nearly 90%) attended churches usually every week (see Figure 1).

Growth in Christian faith over the last year

Almost half of the attenders in all three groups had experienced much growth in faith in the previous year. The 2nd Eng group was distinctive from the others in that a lesser proportion reported much growth through churches or groups other than their local church (4%, compared with 11% of 1st Gen and 14% of 2nd LOTE), and a greater proportion through their own private activity (12%, compared with 7% of 1st Gen and 5% of 2nd LOTE) (see Figure 2).

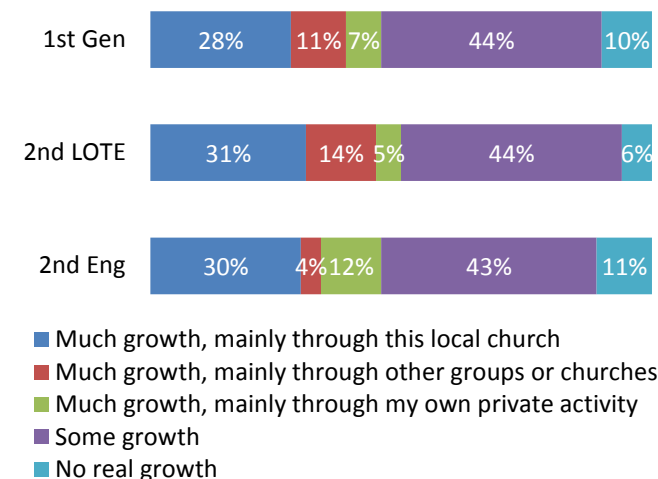
¹ Data in this fact sheet are weighted to account for different levels of NCLS participation from 1) different denominations/movements, and 2) local churches of different sizes. Attenders from the following denominations/movements are represented in the results: Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian,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

Figure 1: Frequency of church attendance 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.

Figure 2: Growth in faith 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.

Identification with approaches to faith

A large proportion of church attenders with a Chinese background identified as evangelical (40% 1st Gen, 39% 2nd LOTE and 53% 2nd Eng). Around a quarter of 1st Gen and 2nd LOTE indicated that they did not identify with such descriptions, and around a quarter (27%) of 2nd Eng identified as Pentecostal (and 16% as charismatic) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Approaches to matters of faith of churchgoers with Chinese background

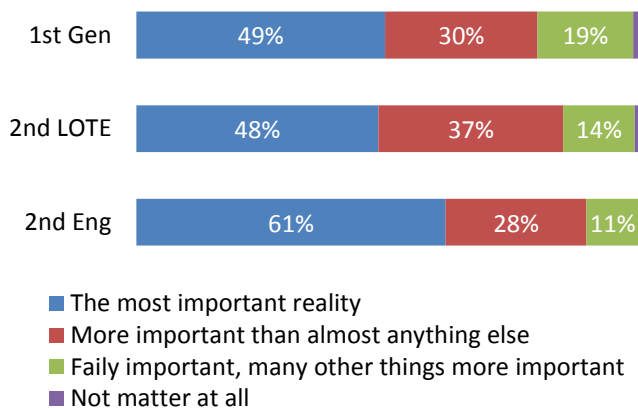
	1st Gen	2nd LOTE	2nd Eng
Catholic /Anglo-Catholic	21%	23%	12%
Charismatic	7%	6%	16%
Evangelical	40%	39%	53%
Pentecostal	8%	11%	27%
Reformed	6%	8%	8%
Traditionalist	8%	8%	7%
Don't identify	25%	23%	16%

Note: Attenders could choose up to two options from a list of 11. 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.

Importance of God

More churchgoers in 2nd Eng viewed God as most important in their life than the other two groups. Figure 3 shows that 61% of 2nd Eng viewed God as the most important reality in their life (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Importance of God to 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.

Church activities

Table 2: Church activities of churchgoers with Chinese background

	1st Gen	2nd LOTE	2nd Eng
Small groups	44%	51%	52%
Fellowships/social	36%	37%	34%
Evangelistic/outreach	23%	22%	26%
Service/justice/welfare	19%	17%	21%

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.

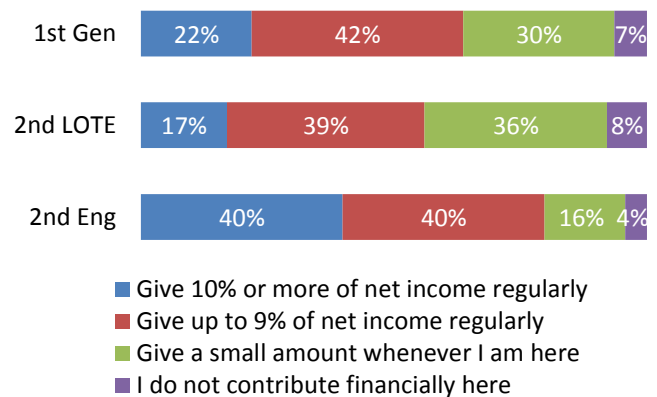
Compared to the 1st Gen (44%), second generation church attenders with a Chinese background (over 50% in both groups) engaged regularly in small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups at their church. Levels

of participation in evangelistic/outreach activities and community service/social justice/welfare activities of the local church did not differ greatly between the groups (see Table 2).

Financial giving

Around 4 in 10 Chinese churchgoers regularly contributed up to 9% of their net income to their local churches. The 2nd Eng who contributed 10% or more of their net income (40%) was nearly double that of the 1st Gen (22%) and 2nd LOTE (17%) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Financial giving 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.

Summary

Churchgoers of second generation Chinese/Hong Kong background who speak only English at home were distinct from both second generation churchgoers who spoke another language at home and first generation migrants in the 2016 NCLS. They attended churches more frequently, perceived God as more important and contributed more of their income to their churches than the other groups.

Data sources and references

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

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