

The logo for 'mainstreet' is displayed in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is white and is set against a bright yellow rectangular background. A thin black horizontal line runs beneath the letters 'a', 'i', 'n', 's', 't', 'r', 'e', 'e', and 't'. A short black diagonal line extends downwards from the bottom of the letter 't'.The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large, arched window with a grid pattern. The window is framed by dark wood and is set against a dark, possibly black, background. The light coming through the window creates a grid of bright squares and rectangles. The arch of the window is prominent at the top of the image.

Exploring the spiritual climate

Understanding how to create
safe spaces to talk about
faith and spirituality.

APRIL 2021

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About Mainstreet Insights

Mainstreet Insights, initiative of Reventure and McCrindle, exists to provide insights to build flourishing communities. It seeks to understand Australians as people not just consumers or employees. It explores the big issues of life that are impacting main street

Australia. From family and relationships to education, faith, wellbeing and work, it is a collection of timely insights that speaks into important community conversations to enable leaders to make informed decisions.

Research objectives

This research conducted for Mainstreet Insights endeavours to provide insights into the concerns, behaviours and beliefs of Australians as we explore a new era of technology.

The key objectives of this research are to:

- Explore Australians' attitudes about spirituality and beliefs
- Understand Australians' sentiment towards sharing their spirituality and beliefs
- Explore Australians expectations beyond 2021.

Research methodology

The *Exploring the spiritual climate: understanding how to create safe spaces to talk about faith and spirituality* report is the collation of quantitative data collected via an online panel. The nationally representative survey of Australians aged 18+ was in field from the 2nd to the 5th of April 2021.

Graphs and rounding

Data labels on the graphs in this report have been rounded for simplicity. Some graphs,

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 been rounded once combined.

Terminology

Throughout this report the total sample of respondents are referred to as Australians. In addition to this several segmentation filters are applied to understand the results.

Australians are defined by their beliefs

Gender, ancestry and level of education are key elements of the Australian identity.

The Australian psyche is well defined. From the lucky country to the land of the middle class and the small business nation, Australians are aware of what characterises them as a nation¹. However, what defines Australians as individuals?

For the majority of Australians their gender (89%), their ancestry and culture (85%), their level of education (84%) and sexuality (83%) are key elements of their identity.

For more than three in four Australians their job/career (77%) plays a large role in defining their individual identity while for seven in ten, so too does their faith and spirituality (69%) and their wealth and income (69%).

“Faith in Australia is more than a tradition or practice. This study shows that for most Australians, their faith and spirituality is a key element of their identity, along with

gender, sexuality, ancestry and culture.” – Mark McCrindle

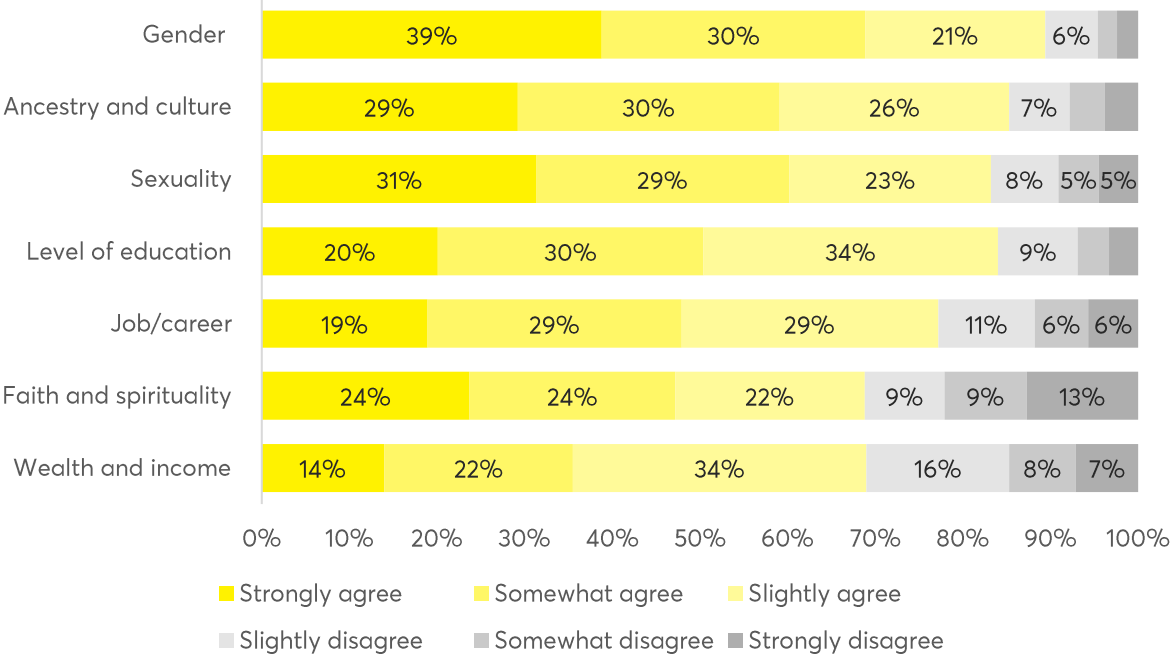
Younger generations are more likely than their older counterparts to believe wealth and income (78% Gen Z, 77% Gen Y, 63% Gen X cf. 63% Baby Boomers, 60% Builders) and their job/career (86% Gen Z, 84% Gen Y, 73% Gen X cf. 70% Baby Boomers, 71% Builders) are key elements of their identity.

Younger generations are, however, less likely than older generations to believe their gender is a key element in their identity (85% Gen Z, 88% Gen Y, 88% Gen X cf. 93% Baby Boomers, 96% Builders).

Queenslanders are more likely than Australians living in other states to believe their faith and spirituality is a key element in their identity (75% cf. 67% NSW, 66% VIC).

¹ Australia's defining traits: McCrindle,2015

To what extent do you agree or disagree the following are key elements of your identity?



Australians are open to expressing faith and spirituality.

Australians are surprisingly open to having spiritual conversations² and are increasingly describing themselves as spiritual³. Not only are Australian's open to expressing faith or spiritual beliefs in their personal interactions (88%), but also in movies, music, and TV shows (87%) and social gatherings (85%).

"The Australian census shows 70% of Australians are religious or spiritual – but interestingly, our research reveals that a large portion of this population aren't comfortable publicly expressing their beliefs." – Dr Lindsay McMillan

Four in five Australians are open to faith and spiritual beliefs being expressed in education (81%) and social media (80%).

Australians are least likely, however, to be open to the expression of faith and spiritual beliefs in politics (29%), sport (25%) and the workplace (24%).

"Our survey found almost a third of Australian feel uncomfortable about faith being expressed in politics, and a quarter are uncomfortable with faith expressed in sport and the workplace." – Dr Lindsay McMillan

Younger Australians are more open to faith and spirituality.

While some Australians might not be fully comfortable with faith and spirituality being expressed in public domains, younger Australians are the most open. Not only are younger generations (Generation Z and Generation Y) more likely to be open to changing their current religious views⁴, but they have also been asking themselves more faith related questions over the past year⁵.

Thinking about when and where younger Australians are open to engaging in spiritual conversations, more than nine in ten Gen Zs (95%) and Gen Ys (91%) are open to faith and spiritual beliefs being expressed in their personal interactions (cf. 87% Gen X, 83% Baby Boomers, 88% Builders). Furthermore 94% of Gen Zs and 83% of Gen Ys are open to faith or spiritual beliefs being expressed in the workplace (cf. 75% Gen X, 63% Baby Boomers, 65% Builders) and during social gatherings (93% Gen Z, 90% Gen Y cf. 82% Gen X, 78% Baby Boomers, 81% Builders).

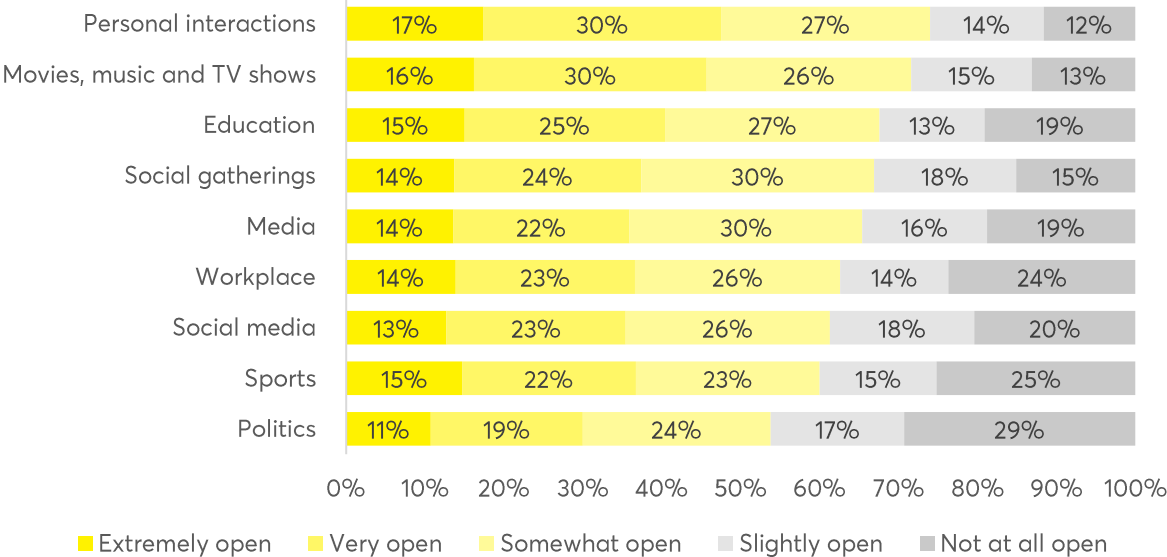
² ALPHA Australia,

³ Australia's changing spiritual landscape: McCrindle 2021

⁴ Faith and Belief Australia, McCrindle, 2017

⁵ The Australian spirit during COVID-19, Mainstreet Insights, 2020

How open are you to faith or spiritual beliefs being expressed in the following domains?



The Australian spiritual landscape is diversifying

All Australians should feel safe to express their faith or spiritual beliefs.

Australians are diversifying in their faith and spirituality, leaving the door open for Australians with religious or spiritual beliefs to share, mostly without fear of judgement. Three in five Australians with religious or spiritual beliefs never feel they need to hide their faith or spiritual beliefs (60%).

While the Australian spiritual landscape appears open and safe, two in five Australians with religious or spiritual beliefs (40%) still feel the need to hide their faith or spiritual beliefs at least some of the time.

One in five (22%) feel they need to hide their beliefs some of the time, while 12% feel they need to hide their beliefs most of the time and 6% feel they need to hide their beliefs all of the time.

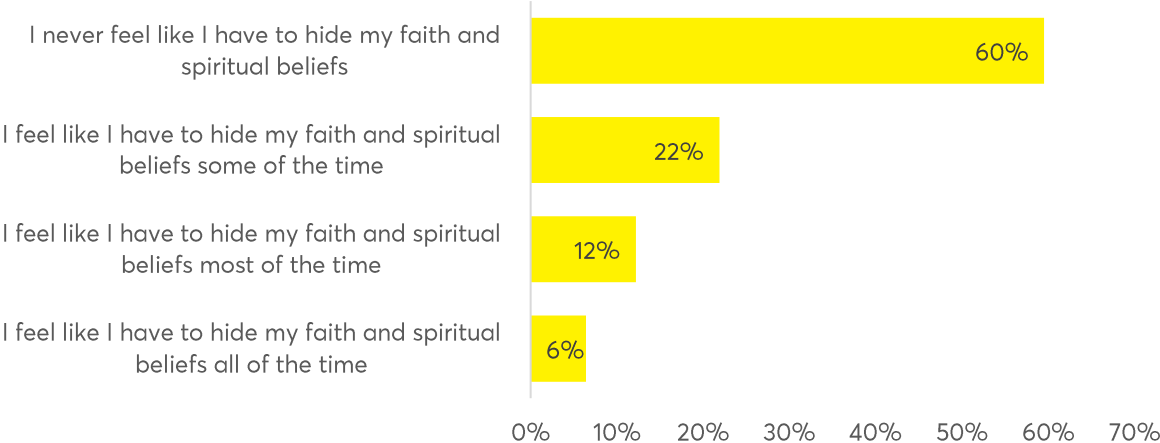
“While faith and spiritual beliefs are a key part of most people’s identity, almost one in five Australians of faith feel that they have to hide their beliefs all or most of the time.” – Mark McCrindle

Despite younger Australians being open to expressions of faith and spirituality, younger generations with faith and spiritual beliefs are more likely than their older counterparts to feel the need to hide their spiritual beliefs at least some of the time (50% Gen Y cf. 44% Gen X, 24% Baby Boomers).

“The older generations are the most likely to identify as people of faith and are twice as likely as young people to feel they never have to hide their beliefs.” – Mark McCrindle

When thinking about expressing your faith and spiritual beliefs, which of the following statements best describes you?

Australians with religious or spiritual beliefs, n=721



Australians with spiritual or religious beliefs are worried about being misunderstood.

When thinking about sharing their faith and beliefs, Australians are worried people may react adversely.

Three in ten Australians (33%) are worried that other people might misunderstand or misrepresent them, while others are concerned with being targeted or harassed (16%).

A similar proportion are kept from sharing their faith and beliefs fearing they may be marginalised or ostracised (15%) or being labelled as an extremist (15%).

Australians feel they are compromising their core beliefs.

Alongside Australians worrying about the reaction of others when sharing their faith and beliefs, they are likely left feeling as though they are compromising their core beliefs (35%).

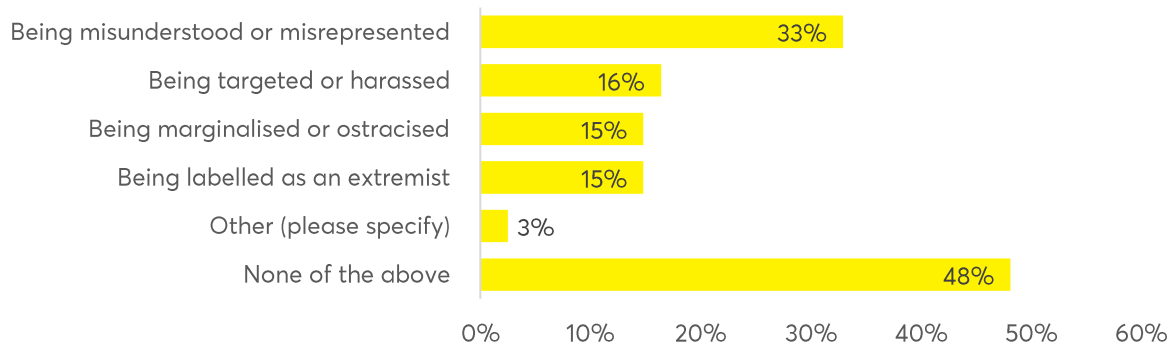
Three in ten Australians (30%) feel like they are not being true to themselves, one in four question the company they surround themselves with (24%) and feel like their voice is being silenced in society (24%).

Interestingly, for one in five (21%) thinking about censoring when and where they share their faith and spiritual beliefs has strengthened their convictions.

When thinking about sharing your faith and beliefs which of the following keep you from sharing?

Please select all that apply.

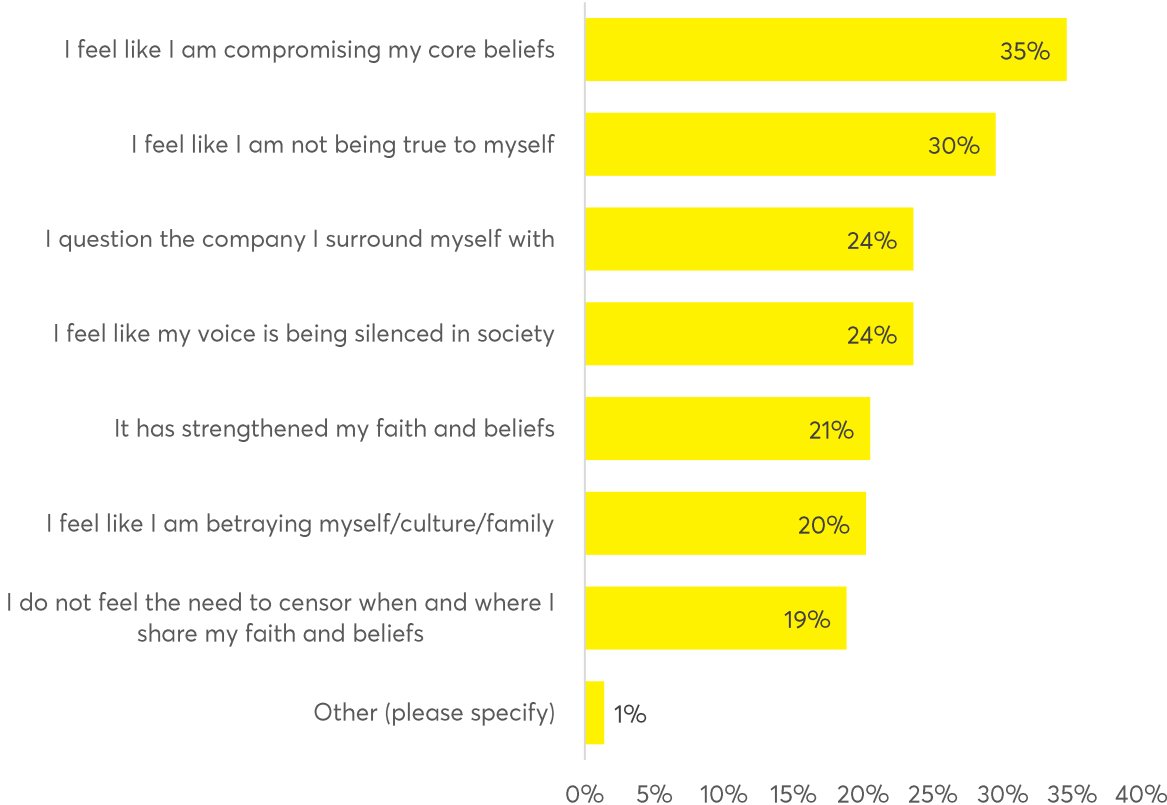
Australians with spiritual or religious beliefs who feel the need to censor when or where they share their beliefs n=347



When thinking about censoring when and where you share your faith and spiritual beliefs, which of the following do you experience as a result?

Please select all that apply.

Australians with spiritual or religious beliefs who feel the need to hide their beliefs



Australians generally experience and value religious freedom

Australian's aren't certain about the future of it's spiritual landscape.

As Australia continues to become more spiritually diverse and Australians are more open to expressing their faith and spiritual views, it comes as no surprise that Australia is considered to have a considerable amount of religious freedom.

Almost half of Australians (46%) believe Australia has more religious freedom now than 10 years ago and think it will have more in 10 years' time.

Not all Australians are convinced religious freedom is increasing.

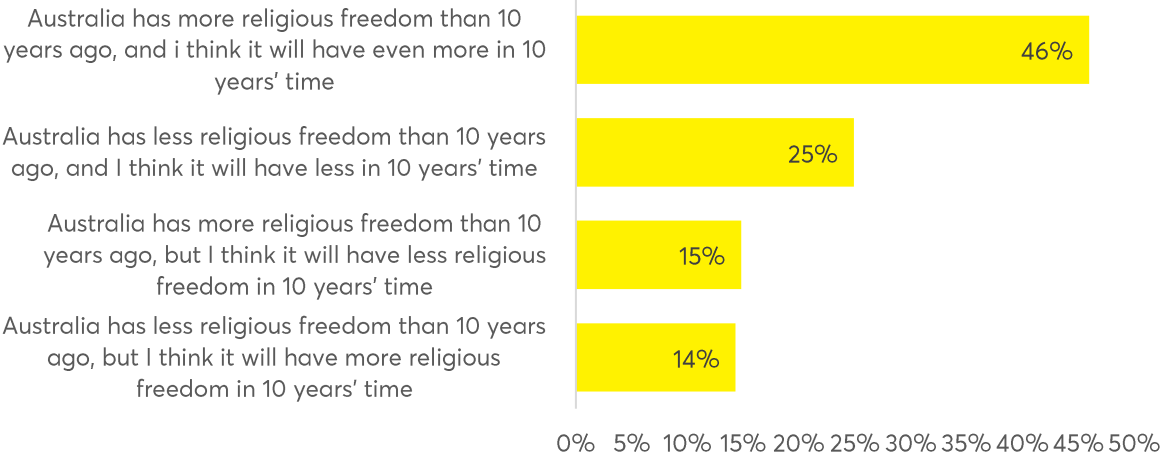
One in four Australians (25%), however, believe Australia has less religious freedom compared

to 10 years ago and that Australia will have less religious freedom in the future.

"It seems that Australians are not convinced on the direction of religious freedom in Australia with two in five stating that we are on a declining trajectory." – Dr Lindsay McMillan

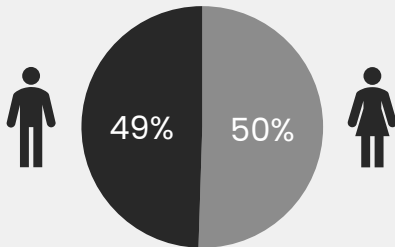
Males (28%) are more likely than females (22%) to believe Australia has less religious freedom compared to 10 years ago and think it will have less in 10 years' time.

How is the level of religious freedom in Australia now, compared to 10 years' ago and where do you think it will be in ten years' time?

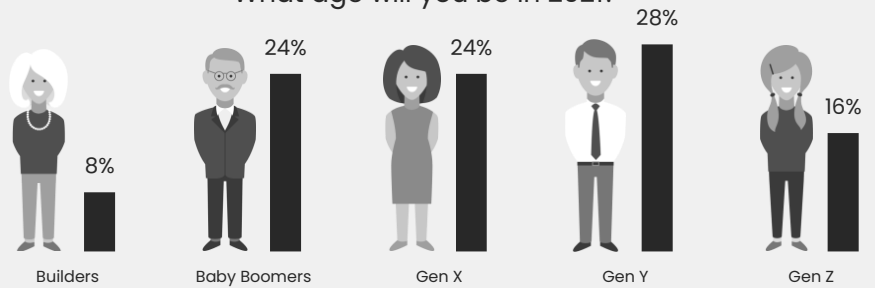


Demographic summary

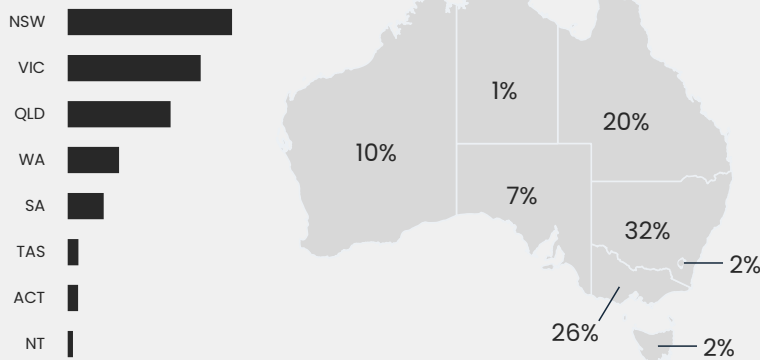
Are you male or female?



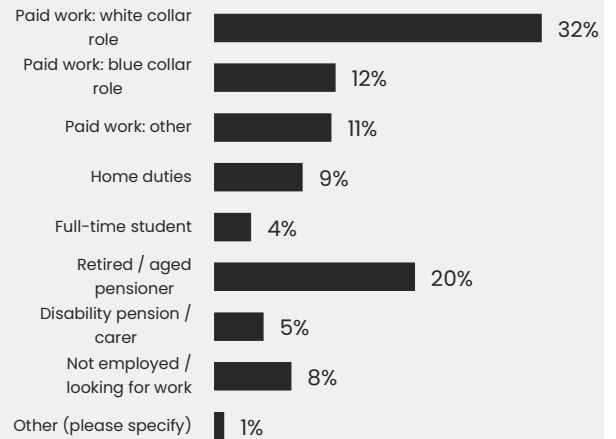
What age will you be in 2021?



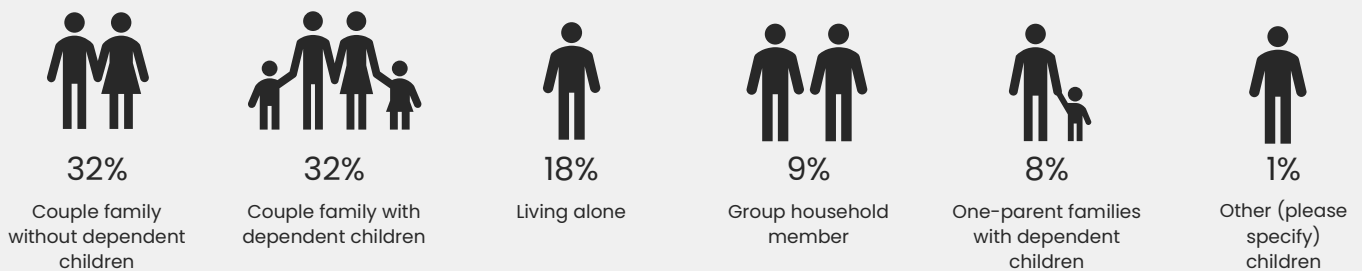
Where do you usually live?



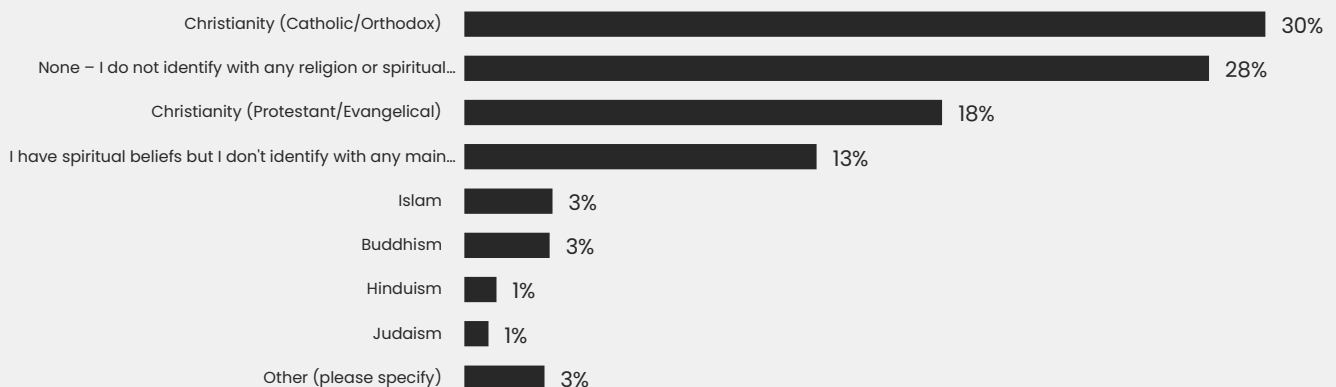
Which of the following best describes your employment status?



What type of household do you currently live in?



What religion do you currently practice or identify with?



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Get in touch.

Phone: 1800 873 637

Email: info@mainstreetinsights.com.au

Website: mainstreetinsights.com.au