NCLS Report

Messy Church in Australia - Mapping the Landscape

Results from Messy Church Network 2018 Survey
and the 2016 National Church Life Survey

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2   About This Report

This report contains information about churches in Australia which have used the Messy Church format. It draws on data from both the 2016 National Church Life Survey, and a number of data sources provided for analysis to NCLS Research by the Australian Messy Church Network.

2.1   Data used for this report

This report draws on data from five sources.

Five Sources of Data about Messy Church in Australia
- The Australian Messy Church Network has supplied data to NCLS Research for the following:
  o   2018 Survey Responses
  o   2019 Church Listing
  o   2020 Church Listing
- The 2016 National Church Life Survey asked participating churches to indicate if they used Messy Church as a format.
  o   2016 NCLS Operations Survey, with Messy Church listing and weighted results.
  o   2016 NCLS Aggregated Church Attender Data.

3   Distribution of Messy Churches

Examination of the NCLS and Messy Church Network datasets has shown that Messy Churches exist across a wide range of denominations, church size categories, and locality types.

3.1   Denominational Distribution - which denominations are starting Messy Churches?

Australian Messy Church Network Listings
Listings provided by the Australian Messy Church Network for 2019 and 2020 shows around 200 member churches
- 197 in 2019
- 201 in 2020

The breakdown by denomination for the Messy Church Network 2020 listings is shown in table 1.

Table 1: **Messy Church Distribution by Denomination - 2020 Network List**

Denomination	Number
Anglican	72
Australian Christian Churches	1
Baptist	10
Catholic	2
Churches of Christ	1
Independent	2
Lutheran	4
Salvation Army	14
Seventh-day Adventisty	1
Uniting	94
Total	**201**

Source: 2020 Australian Messy Church Network listing (n=201)

National Church Life Survey Listing

The 2016 National Church Life Survey, which draws on a wide group of denominations and regions in Australia, found a total of 151 churches which indicated they use a Messy Church format. Of the 151 churches identified in the NCLS data, 103 were not found on the 2019 or 2020 Australian Messy Church Network listings.

The National Church Life Survey is not a census; local churches choose to participate based on denominational encouragement or the individual benefit they anticipate to their evaluation and planning for mission and ministry. Therefore while 103 churches not known to the Messy Church Network indicated they were using a Messy Church format, there would potentially be many other churches also using the Messy Church format which have not been identified. Data from the 2016 NCLS can be weighted to better simulate the true picture of results for the total population of Australian churches. Weighting data is a way of producing a total estimate or projection. It takes into account the distribution of churches in the NCLS sample by size category and denominational affiliation, and compares that to the actual distribution of churches in Australia (using the best size and distribution estimates available). Published NCLS national results are weighted where possible. Weighting the results for the 151 churches suggests that there are in the vicinity of 520 churches across Australia making use of the Messy Church format. While this figure is an estimate only, it suggests there could be many local churches using the Messy Church format which have not yet connected to the Australian Messy Church Network. Table 2 shows the possible denominational distribution for Australian churches using the Messy Church format, according to projections using 2016 NCLS data.

Table 2: Projected Messy Church Distribution by Denomination - 2016 NCLS Estimates

Denomination	Number
Anglican	158
Baptist	51
Catholic	17
Lutheran	4
Presbyterian	12
Salvation Army	28
Uniting	227
Total (estimate only)	*520*

Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (n=151)
Note: Results in this table are weighted projections, based on 151 responses

Comparing tables 1 and 2 shows that small numbers of Messy Church use in some denominations (e.g. Australian Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist) has not been detected in the NCLS data due to the non-census nature of the survey. Therefore, while the numbers above are only an estimate based on participation, the use of Messy Church in other denominations may mean the true number is even higher.

3.2 Distribution by Size of Church - are Messy Churches more common in certain-sized churches?

Using the NCLS data it is possible to estimate the distribution of churches using the Messy Church format by other features as well. Figure 1 shows that in the NCLS data the distribution Messy Churches is spread somewhat uniformly across different size groupings.

**Figure 1: Projected Messy Church Distribution by Church Size**
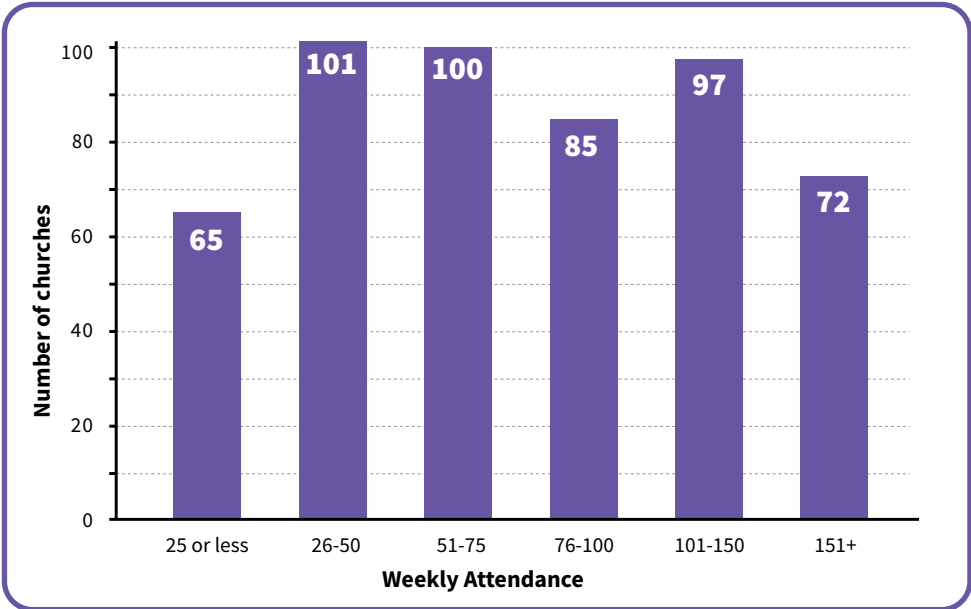
Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (n=151)
Note: Results in this figure are weighted

3.3 Distribution by Locality Type - are Messy Churches more common in certain types of localities?

In 2016 Messy Churches were more common in urban areas according to the NCLS data, with almost two-thirds (62%) there. About one quarter were in regional areas (large country towns and regional centres), while 15% were in rural areas. The comparison in figure 2 shows the Messy Church distribution across localities does not match the general distribution of churches across different localities in Australia.

**Figure 2: Projected Messy Church Distribution by Locality Type**
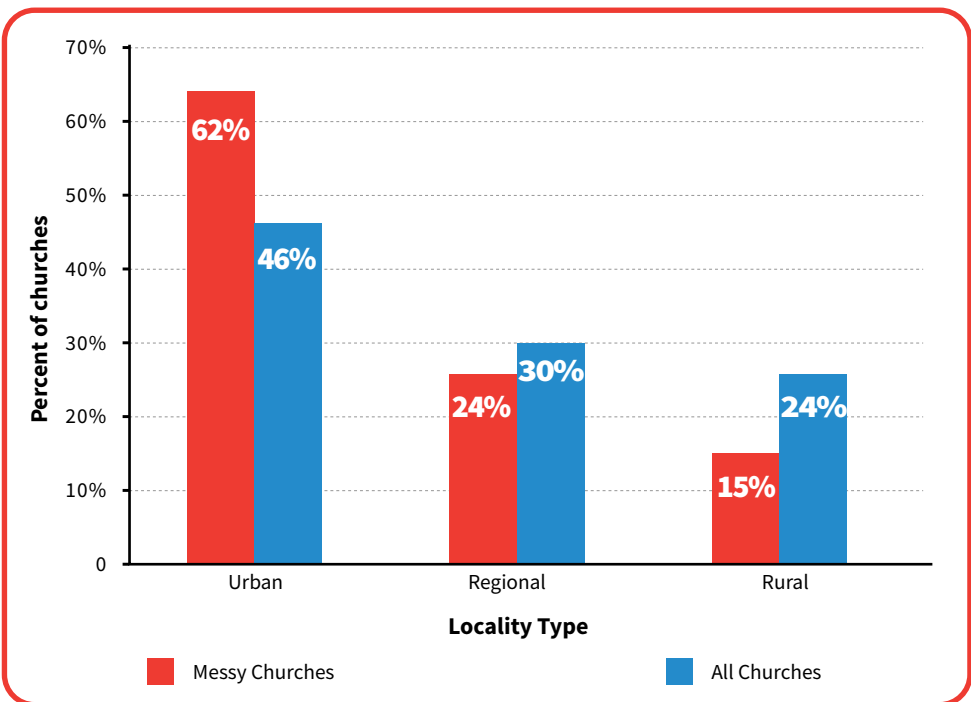
Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (Messy Churches n=151, All churches n=2,523)
Note: Results in this figure are weighted

4   Frequency of Meeting

The most common frequency of gathering for Messy churches is monthly. In the 2018 survey results from the Messy Churches Network survey, 64% of Messy Churches met monthly, and 2% weekly. See Figure 3 for the full results.

Figure 3: Frequency of Messy Churches Meeting
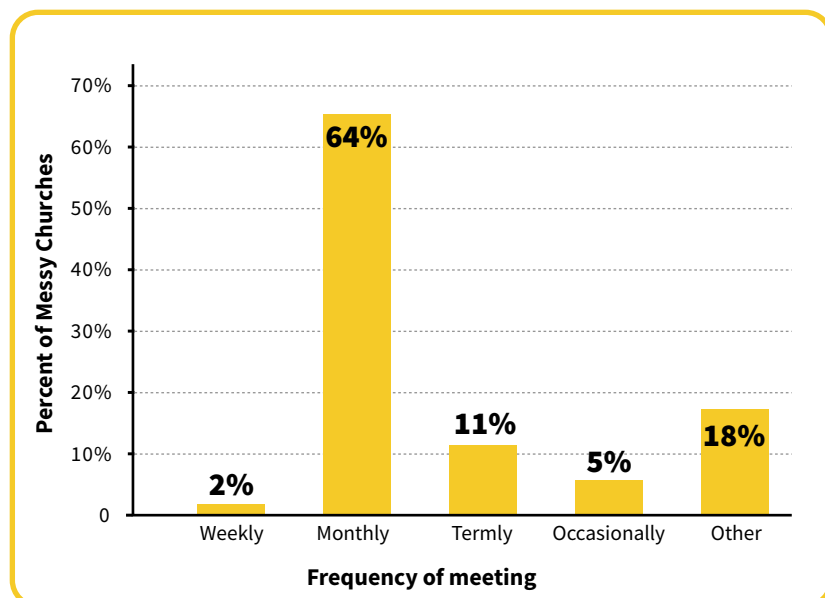
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=97)

Other responses to this question

Within the 'other' category, five people indicated their group met bi-monthly and five also that they met roughly twice a term. The full set of responses is shown in the appendix (question 2).

Do large groups meet less often?

Of the seven Messy Churches which indicated they have 80 or more people in attendance, four of them met either weekly or monthly, and three others indicated either termly or twice a term. Therefore in this sample larger messy churches are not meeting less often, although this sized sample is too small to generalise from.

5   Meeting Times

Almost all Messy Churches meet in an afternoon or evening, with Sunday afternoon/evening being the most popular time followed by Saturday and Friday. Full results are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Meeting Times for Messy Churches
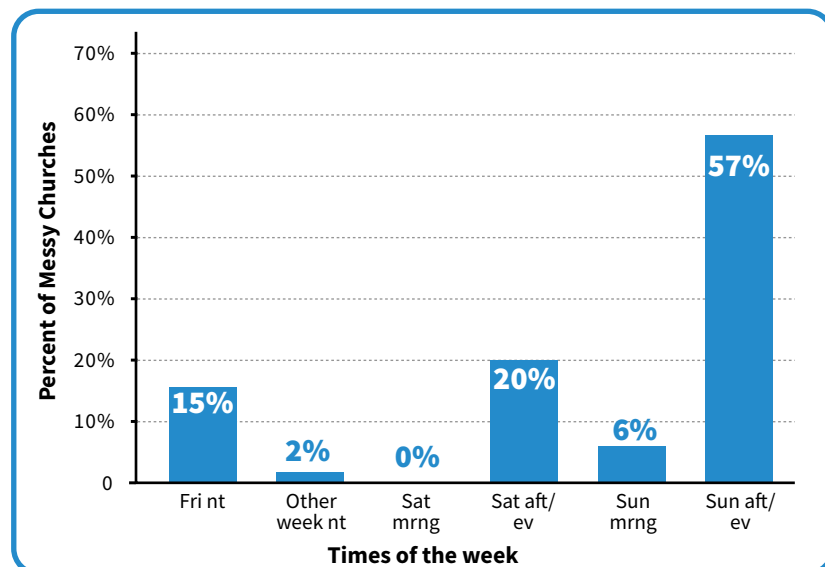
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=96)

Other meeting times

Within the 'other' category, a number of other times were indicated, including three people who indicated their group met in the afternoon (Thursday and Friday), and one whose group met in the morning on a school day (during school hours). The full set of responses is shown in the appendix (question 3).

# 6 Activities and Special Events of Messy Churches

Messy Church activities that have a parallel with other church gatherings, such as a Baptism or Communion/The Lord's Supper are practiced by a minority of Messy Churches. The most common practice was Communion, which was practiced by about 1 in 5 Messy Churches (18%). These results are shown in figure 5. Just over a quarter practice special events, referred to as 'Messy Extras' - such as Christmas/Easter, or non-regular activities that don't necessarily have a parallel with other churches activities. A separate question was asked about such activities, with the results shown in figure 6.

Figure 5: Activities for Messy Churches
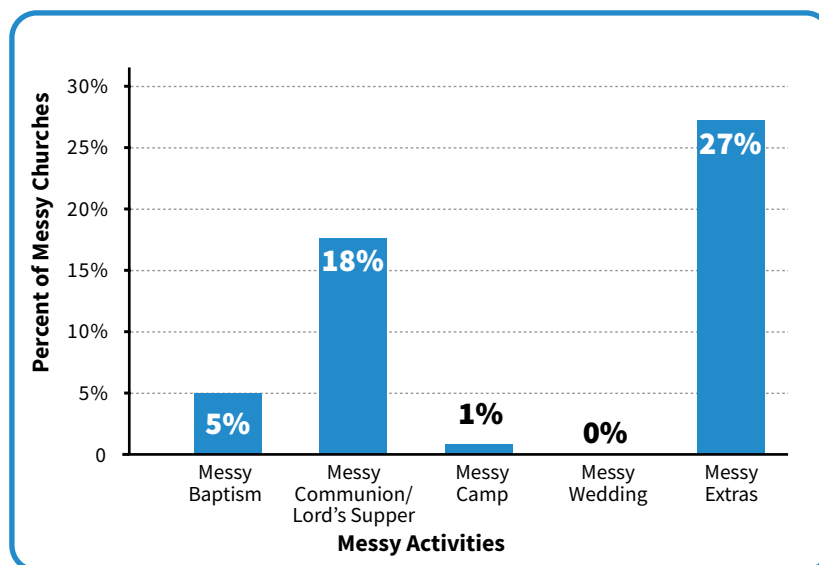
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=113)

Figure 6: Activities for Messy Churches
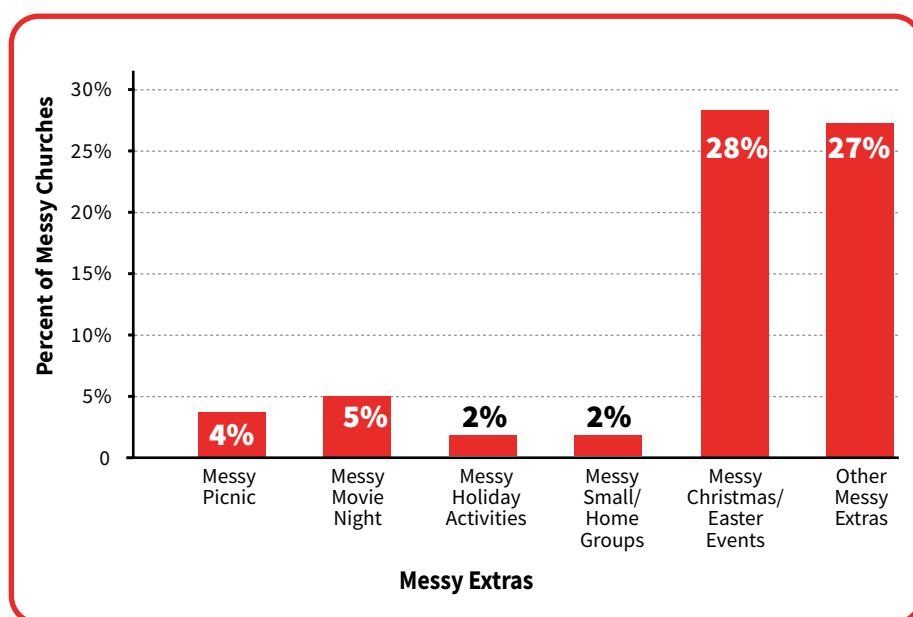
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=113)

Other Messy Extras

A total of 27 people indicated in text a 'Messy Extra' activity not covered by the options of this question (see question 5 in the appendix for full details). Among these other Messy Extra activities were a bonfire, holiday camp, picnic, puppets activity, dinners, Mothers day, pudding making, water slide, and Science week.

7 Attendance Levels, Change, and Intergenerational Mix

Attendance levels and change over time

About two thirds of Messy Churches (65%) had average attendance of under 50 people, with the most common size being 20-49 (49%). About one in twelve Messy Churches (8%) had an attendance of 80 people or more (figure 7).

Figure 7: Typical Attendance Level at Messy Church
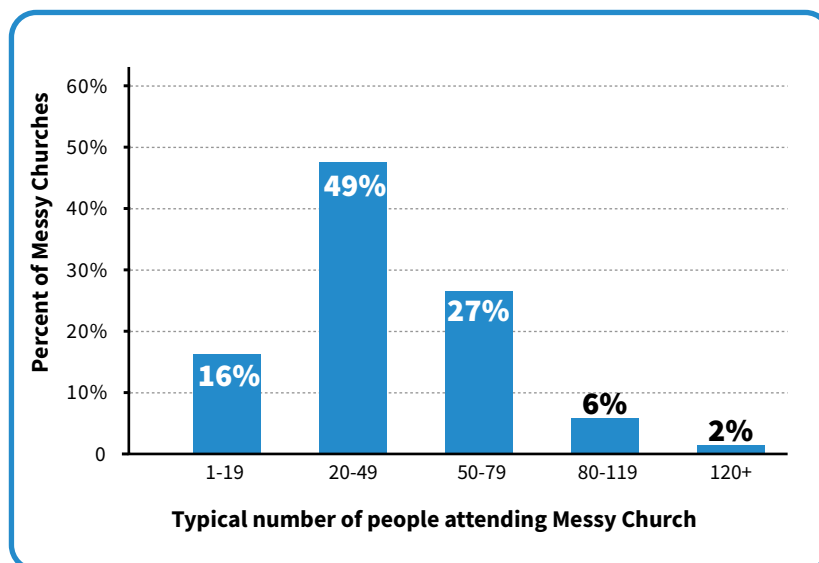
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=89)

Over one third (36%) indicated they were continuing in 2018 with about the same attendance levels as 2017, while just over a quarter (28%) indicated they were increasing in size, and just under a quarter (23%) indicated they were decreasing (figure 8). About 1 in 8 Messy Churches (13%) indicated they had commenced in (2018).

Figure 8: Change Over Time in Attendance at Messy Church
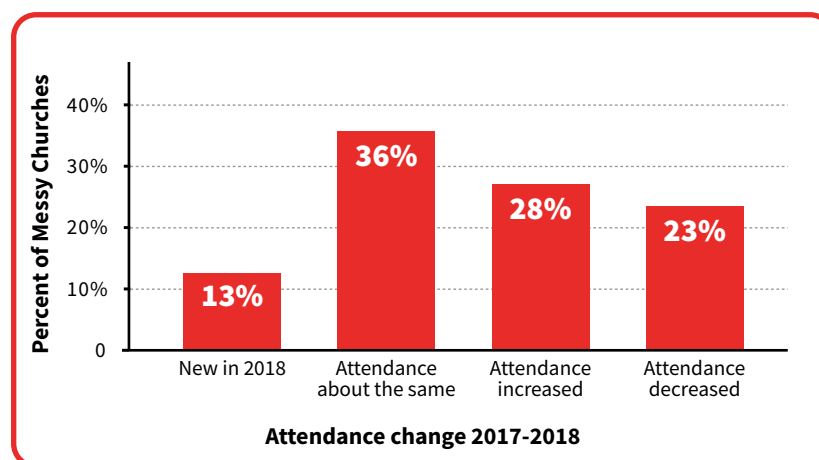
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=97)

Intergenerational Mix

Messy churches have a wide range of intergenerational mixes, from those with 75% or more adults to some with less than 20%. In just over half of the 2018 Messy Churches the adult proportion of attendance is over 50% (i.e., there are more adults present than children). Ten percent of the 2018 Messy Churches had attendances where less than 20% were adults (figure 9).

Figure 9: **Percentage of Adult Attenders at Messy Church**
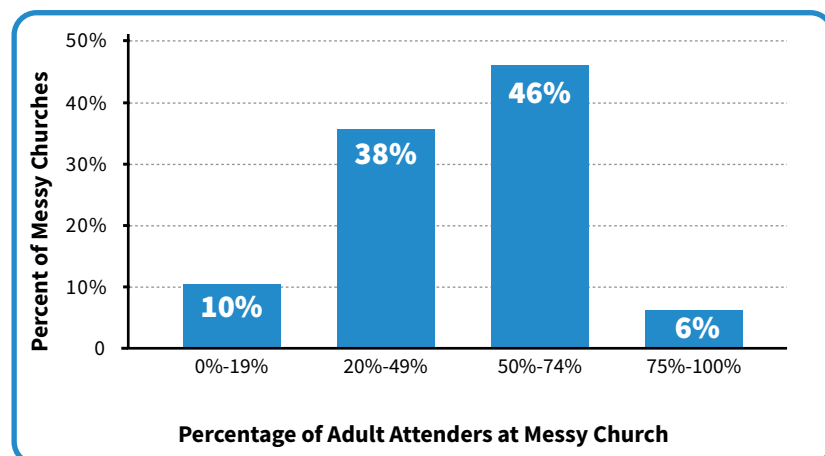
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=94)

8   Methods of Promotion Used for Messy Church

The primary ways Messy Churches were promoted in 2018 were personal contact (91%) and in-church promotion (89%), which were both used by about nine out of ten Messy Churches. Other popular forms of promotion used by around two-thirds of Messy Churches were external signage, social media, the church website, and email. Flyers were used by about half of all Messy Churches (49%) while

connecting through local schools and kindergartens was used by one third. Other forms of connection into the wider community were less commonly used, such as through local newspapers, or at community events or places. Texting was used by some churches, presumably as reminders of times, confirming events, etc to those for whom the church had contact details.

Figure 10: **Promotions Used by Messy Churches in 2018**
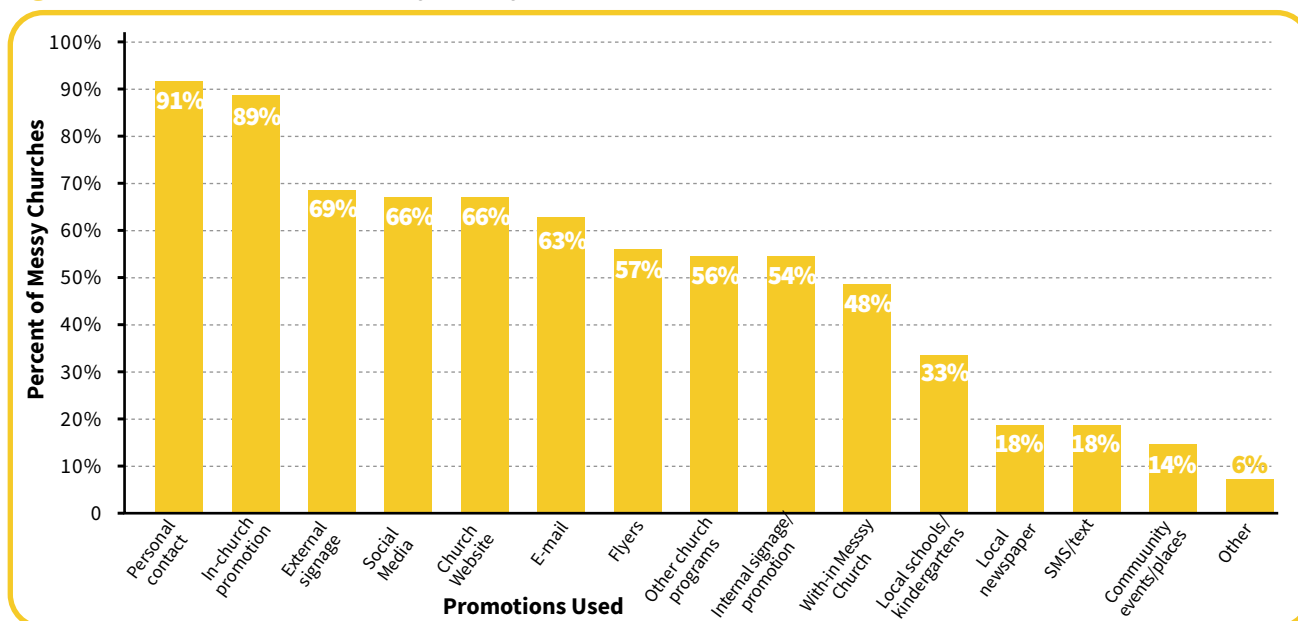
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=97)
Note: More than one option could be chosen, so results will add to more than 100%

Other methods of promotion
Within the 'other' category, a small number of promotions were cited, including using local radio and producing magnets with dates on them, and distributing them at the Christmas services. The full set of responses is shown in the appendix (question 7).

9 Resourcing and Training for Messy Church

9.1 Resources used by Messy Churches

Respondents were asked which Messy Church resources they had used and found useful in 2018. The most commonly used resource, used by almost two-thirds (63%) was the 'Get Messy!' magazine. Other commonly used resources were the Messy Church Australia newsletter, used by over half (55%), and the UK Messy Church Website (46%). Full results are shown in figure 11.

Figure 11: **Resources used and found useful in 2018**
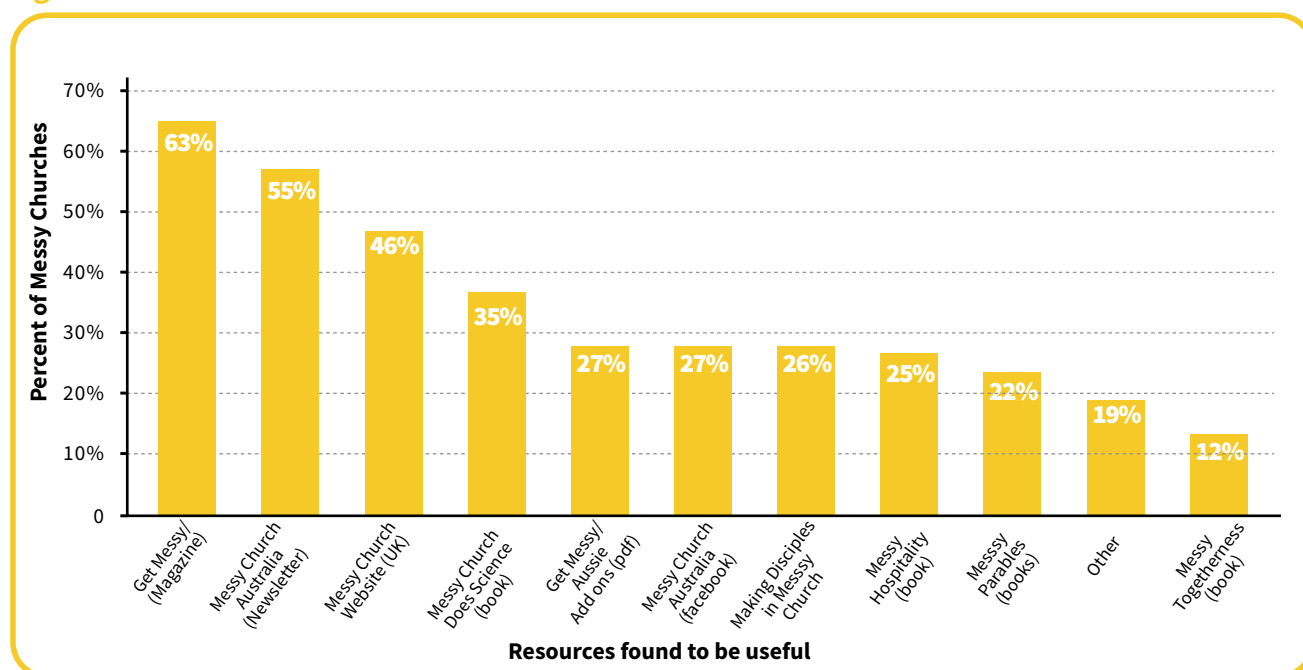
Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=97)
Note: More than one option could be chosen, so results will add to more than 100%

Other useful resources
Two respondents indicated they found the three original resource books helpful, and nine other Messy Church branded resources were cited by nine different respondents (see appendix for full results, question 8).

9.2   Training Events and Topics

Two questions on training were also asked: interest in attending an event, and possible topics of interest. Interest in attending a regional gathering was strongest, with 71% indicating they would be interested in attending, while a state-based was also of interest to about half (49%). These results are shown in figure 12.

Figure 12: Training Events of Interest

Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=98)
Note: More than one option could be chosen, so results will add to more than 100%

Figure 13: Training Topics of Interest
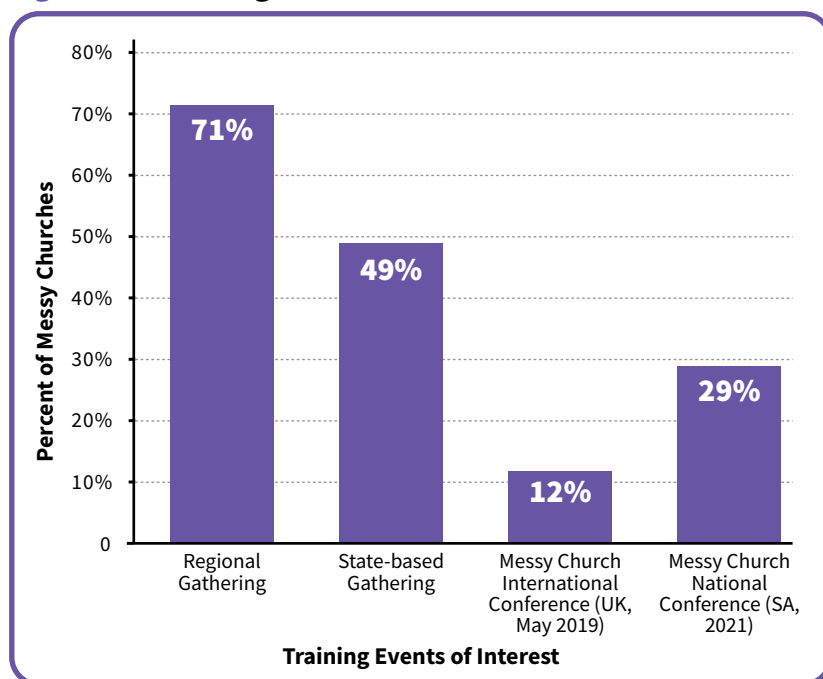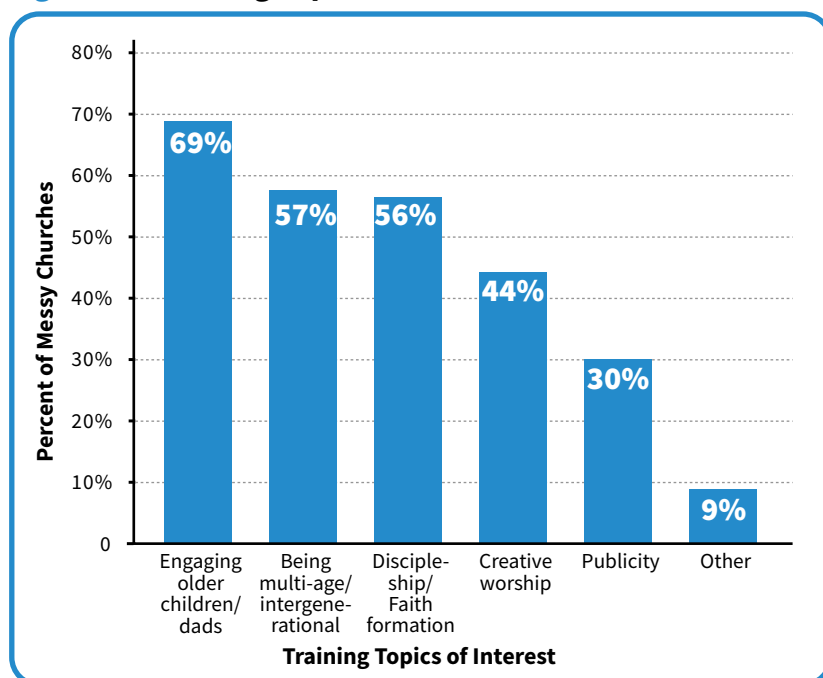

Source: 2018 Messy Church Network Survey (n=97)
Note: More than one option could be chosen, so results will add to more than 100%

The topic of most interest as being helpful to their team was 'Engaging older children/dads', indicated by over two-thirds of respondents (69%). Also very popular, indicated by over half, were 'Being multi-age/inter-generational' (57%) and 'Discipleship/Faith formation' (56%). How to do creative worship was indicated by almost half of respondents (44%).

Other topics of interest
A small number of other topics were cited by no more than one respondent each, including how to connect with the wider community, have meaningful conversations as table leaders, get more church attenders involved, team building, and cater for young people as they progress into high school. The full set of responses is shown in the appendix (question 10).

10 Church Vitality and Other Features of Churches using Messy Church

Using the 2016 NCLS dataset, churches using the Messy Church format as part of their ministry could be examined on a range of other church features:

- Faith Identity
- Church Vitality Indicators
- Other programs and features of churches using Messy Church

10.1 Faith Identity

Faith identity categories in the NCLS data correspond to different faith traditions and theological emphases among churches. Because the NCLS asks individual attenders about their faith identity, the uniqueness of each church becomes evident with the mix of different faith identities present among church attenders.

Some churches have a predominance of one faith identity, but most are mixed. Faith identity categories have proven useful in NCLS analysis because they are more nuanced than denominational groupings, and can be important to take into account when considering indicators of church vitality. Churches using the Messy Church format can be examined in terms of faith identity of their attenders by adding aggregated church attender data to the results.

Churches which provide Messy Church have a variety of faith identities and traditions.

Most churches in the 2016 NCLS which used the Messy Church format were mixed in their attenders' faith identity (85%), with no one predominant faith identity in the church. In other words these churches contained a mixture of people who might identify as 'Catholic/Anglo-Catholic', 'Traditionalist', 'Moderate', 'Liberal', 'Evangelical', 'Charismatic', etc. About one in eight (13%) were made up primarily of attenders who identified with being evangelical or reformed in their faith identity. Full results are shown in figure 14.

Figure 14: Predominant Faith Identities in Churches using Messy Church
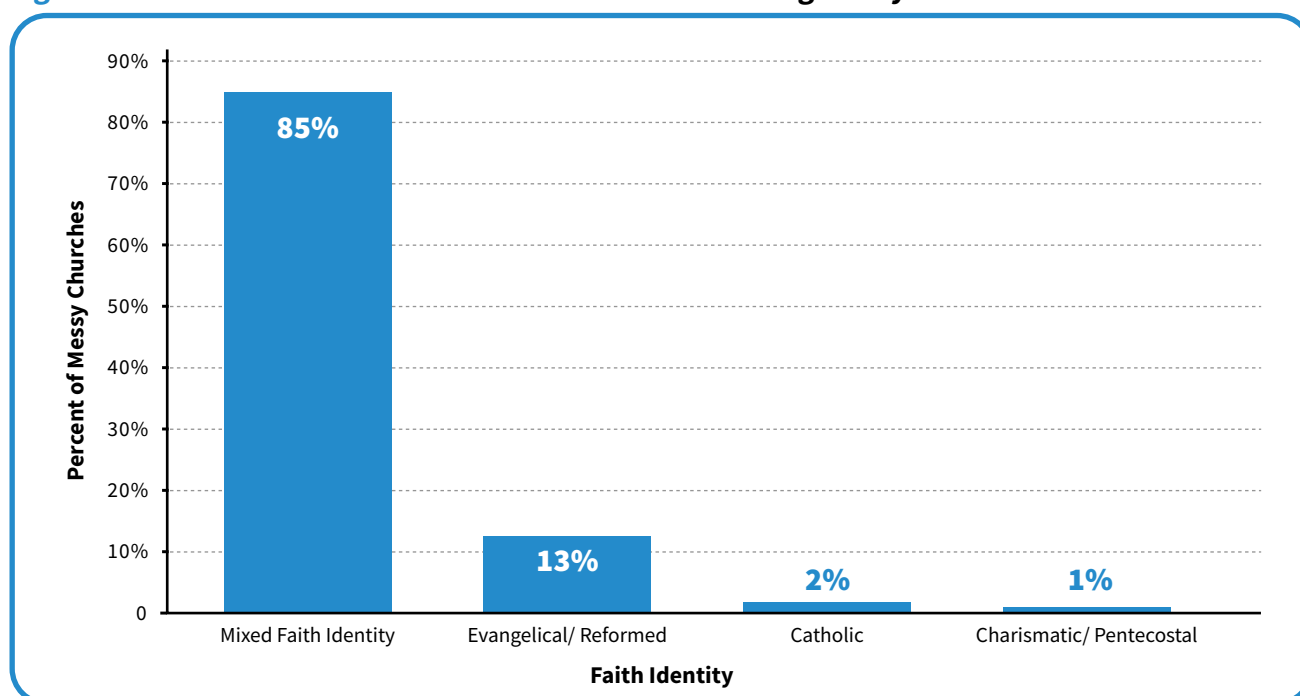
Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (n=151)
Note: Results in this table are not weighted.

10.2 Church Vitality Indicators

Because aggregated attender data can be added to the information about churches using Messy Church it is also possible to examine them in terms of church vitality indicators developed by NCLS. Church vitality indicators cover a range of areas:

- an **inspirational leadership culture**, which builds vision, encourages gifts, and inspires confidence and action
- a **high individual faith commitment**, where people are growing in their faith, regularly practice private devotions, and consider God the most important reality in their life.
- a **high involvement and relational connection within church**, evidenced in involvement in groups and programs, valuing relational aspects of church, and acts of care and support for one another.
- **vital and nurturing worship gatherings** at church, with helpful preaching, inspiration, growth in understanding, music that is appreciated, and a sense of God's presence.
- **newcomers to church life**, who have joined the church and were not attending some where else immediately before.

Are churches using Messy Church more vital?

Comparing the churches which use the Messy Church format with other churches in the 2016 NCLS showed some significant differences, with the former being lower on two of the indicators of church vitality. This comparison was done using only churches in the mixed faith identity categories, to give the fairest comparison. It should be borne in mind that these results are not for the Messy Church meetings, but for the churches overall that use the Messy Church format as one of their activities. The results are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Church Vitality Comparison for Churches using Messy Church

Church Vitality Indicator	Differences for churches using Messy Church
Inspirational leadership culture	No difference
High individual faith commitment	**Lower**
High involvement and relational connection within church	No difference
Vital and nurturing worship gatherings	**Lower**
Newcomers to church life	No difference

Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Survey (Messy churches n=106)
Note: comparison of means using Analysis of Variance, mixed faith identity category only.

Are churches using Messy Church more innovative?

A separate analysis was conducted on the proportion of church attenders who agreed or strongly agreed 'This church is always ready to try something new'. This showed that churches using the Messy Church format are more often perceived as innovative by their attenders than churches which do not.

Overall, it appears that churches using the Messy Church format are not higher in church vitality, but may in fact be lower on some features. They are more often perceived by their attenders as more willing to innovate.

10.3 Other programs and features of churches using Messy Church

Conducting Messy Church is not generally preventing other activities from also taking place

In relation to other activities that incorporate children, churches that conduct Messy Church were <u>not</u> less likely to conduct other kinds of activities (e.g. Sunday school, kids clubs, holiday programs) suggesting that conducting Messy Church is not taking resources that might otherwise have been used on other activities. They are also more likely to conduct:
- play groups
- 'Godly play'

Churches conducting Messy Church tend to hold other outward focused activities as well

Other features of local church life programs and status were also examined, and several significant differences were found. Churches in the 2016 NCLS which indicated they were using the Messy Church format were also more likely to:
- Own the building being used
- Share the building with non-church community groups
- Hold social events designed for families to attend together
- Hold faith discussion or Bible study groups
- Hold adult general education courses/seminars/workshops (at least occasionally)
- Hold arts, music, or cultural activities (at least occasionally)
- Hold regular hobby or craft groups
- Hold other social/recreation/leisure activities

11   Appendix

This appendix shows question wording and results from the 2018 Messy Church survey conducted by the Messy Church Network and finalised in early 2019. Other record-keeping questions were also in the survey (e.g. collecting contact details) which are not shown in this report.

2.   Which statement best describes the frequency of your Messy Church gathering?

☐   Weekly

☐   Fortnightly

☐   Monthly

☐   Termly

☐   Occasionally

☐   Other (please specify)

Option	% response
Weekly	2%
Monthly	64%
Termly	11%
Occasionally	5%
Other	18%

Other (text)	Responses (count)
6 times a year	1
6 times per year	1
6 weekly	1
bi-monthly	2
Bi-monthly	3
every second month	1
In 2018 twice a term. In 2019 once a term	1
Monthly during school term	1
Not happening currently	1
Seven times per year	1
This year, 1x term 1, 2x term 2 and 3, 1x outreach Christmas event	1
Twice per school term	1
We are starting in December	1
We meet the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Sunday of the month	1

3. When does your Messy Church gathering usually take place? [mark all that apply]

☐ Friday night
☐ Another week night
☐ Saturday morning
☐ Saturday afternoon/evening
☐ Sunday morning
☐ Sunday afternoon/evening
☐ Other (please specify)

Option	% response
Fri nt	15%
Other week nt	2%
Sat mrng	0%
Sat aft/ev	20%
Sun mrng	6%
Sun aft/ev	57%

4. Which of the following has your Messy Church experienced in 2018? [mark all that apply]

☐ Messy Baptism
☐ Messy Communion/Lord's Supper
☐ Messy Camp
☐ Messy Wedding
☐ Messy Extras (ie Messy activities in addition to your regular gatherings)

Option	% response
Messy Baptism	5%
Messy Communion/ Lord's Supper	18%
Messy Camp	1%
Messy Wedding	0%
Messy Extras	27%

5. What, if any, Messy Extras took place in addition to your regular gatherings? [mark all that apply]

☐ Messy Picnic

☐ Messy Movie Night

☐ Messy Holiday Activities

☐ Messy Small/Home Groups

☐ Messy Christmas/Easter Events

☐ Other (please specify)

Option	% Response
Messy Picnic	4%
Messy Movie Night	5%
Messy Holiday Activities	2%
Messy Small/ Home Groups	2%
Messy Christmas/ Easter Events	28%
Other Messy Extras	27%

Other (text)	Responses (count)
9 Lessons and Carols	1
A group for messy women met very informally a few times throughout the year for a coffee and catch up.	1
Australia social activity - sports, games and BBQ	1
Bonfire in July	1
Each child received a Christmas story book at our Christmas Messy Church and the parents received a calendar with the psalms on it. We used these gifts to talk about the greatest gift of all!	1
Every Sunday morning worship service now incorporates Messy interactive prayer stations and meditative colouring	1
January Messy Holiday Camp - for two weeks where families came and went as they needed	1
Messy Advent ... We plan a Messy Picnic in January	1
Messy afternoon for Messy Church team	1
Messy Beach Front activities - puppets	1
Messy Church people invited to the annual St Andrews U C camp	1
Messy dinners	1
Messy Good Friday	1
Messy Mothers - mother's day	1
messy Pentecost	1
Messy Pudding Making for Christmas	1
Messy Water Slide	1
Nil	2
none	3
None of the above	2
Nothing special	1
Only our Messy Church program	1
planting in church garden	1
Science Week in August	1
Scripture Union Fine Edge Theatre at Christmas	1
Talent night	1
we are aiming to do something over th christmas break - a bbq?	1

6. Which of the following statements applies to your Messy Church?

☐ We did not run Messy Church in 2017, we started in 2018

☐ In 2018, our attendance numbers were about the same

☐ In 2018, our attendance numbers increased

☐ In 2018, our attendance numbers decreased

Option	% response
New in 2018	13%
Attendance about the same	36%
Attendance increased	28%
Attendance decreased	23%

7. How do you promote/encourage participation in your Messy Church? [mark all that apply, please add extras]

☐ External banner/signage

☐ Facebook/other social media

☐ Personal contact/invitation, word of mouth

☐ In church promotion (eg. newsletter, notice time)

☐ Local schools/kindergartens

☐ E-mail

☐ Through other church programs (eg. playgroups, community outreach)

☐ Local newspaper

☐ Signage/promotion with-in church facilities

☐ Church website

☐ SMS/text

☐ With-in Messy Church gathering

☐ Community events/places (eg. Festivals, libraries)

☐ Flyers

☐ Other (please specify)

Option	% response
Personal contact	91%
In church promotion	89%
External signage	69%
Social media	66%
Church website	66%
E-mail	63%
Flyers	57%
Other church programs	56%
Internal signage/promotion	54%
With-in Messy Church	48%
Local schools/kindergartens	33%
Local newspaper	18%
SMS/text	18%
Community events/places	14%
Other	6%

Note: results in this table are shown in order of size of response

Other (text)	Responses (count)
A monthly brochure is circulated via email, facebook and put up in the church notice boards	1
Flyers left at local Bunnings, indoor swimming pool and shopping centre community notice board	1
Local community radio	1
Magnets giving Messy Church dates are given out on Christmas Eve at the family service	1
No action this year	1
Our banner should be ready early next year.	1

8. Which of the following Messy Church resources have you found helpful, read or utilised in 2018? [mark all that apply]

☐ Get Messy! (Magazine)
☐ Messy Church Australia (Newsletter)
☐ Get Messy! Aussie Add ons (pdf)
☐ Making Disciples in Messy Church (book)
☐ Messy Hospitality (book)
☐ Messy Togetherness (book)
☐ Messy Parables (book)
☐ Messy Church Does Science (book)
☐ Messy Church Website (UK)
☐ Messy Church Australia (facebook)
☐ Other (please specify)

Option	% response
Get Messy! (Magazine)	63%
Messy Church Australia (Newsletter)	55%
Messy Church Website (UK)	46%
Messy Church Does Science (book)	35%
Get Messy! Aussie Add ons (pdf)	27%
Messy Church Australia (facebook)	27%
Making Disciples in Messy Church (book)	26%
Messy Hospitality (book)	25%
Messy Parables (book)	22%
Other	19%
Messy Togetherness (book)	12%

Note: results in this table are shown in order of size of response

Other (text)	Responses (count)
Being Mess, Being Church (book), Messy Church Books 1, 2 & 3 craft ideas from websites	1
Messy Church 1,2 & 3. Some of the email information	1
Messy Church Book 3	1
Messy Church Christmas	1
Messy Church food book	1
Messy Church Lucy Moore	1
Messy Church online sites	1
Messy Church South Australia (facebook) & UCA Intergen resources	1
Messy cooking and art/craft books	1
No shortage of resources	1
Not happening this year	1
The three original books plus barnabas in churches	1
The three original resource books	1
Use own ideas mainly from internet	1
We also contacted another church for ideas and that was helpful	1
We have only just started and are still exploring resources	1
You were meant to send me some books i ordered after the workshop	1

9. Which of the following would you be interested in attending? [mark all that apply]

☐ Regional Gathering (eg with nearby Messy Churches)

☐ State based gathering (eg Messy Muster, Messy Meet up, Make it Messy)

☐ Messy Church International Conference (UK, May 2019)

☐ Messy Church National Conference (SA, 2021)

Option	% Response
Regional Gathering	71%
State-based gathering	49%
Messy Church International Conference (UK, May 2019)	12%
Messy Church National Conference (SA, 2021)	29%

10. What training/topic areas would be most helpful for your team in 2019? [mark all that apply]

☐ Being multi-age/intergenerational

☐ Discipleship/Faith formation

☐ Engaging older children/dads

☐ Creative worship

☐ Publicity

☐ Other (please specify)

Option	% Response
Engaging older children/ dads	69%
Being multi-age/ inter-generational	57%
Discipleship/ Faith formation	56%
Creative worship	44%
Publicity	30%
Other	9%

Other (text)	Responses (count)
Connecting with broader community. Networking with people outside church community	1
Having meaningful conversations - table leaders	1
How to get church members more involved in helping with Messy Church	1
More Messy Science	1
Not planning to offer Messy Church in 2019 at this stage	1
Particularly interested in how to cater for young people as they move into junior high	1
Team building	1
Ways to celebrate Holy Communion etc	1

12. What is the typical attendance (all participants, including team, cooks, admin., etc.) at your Messy Church gatherings?
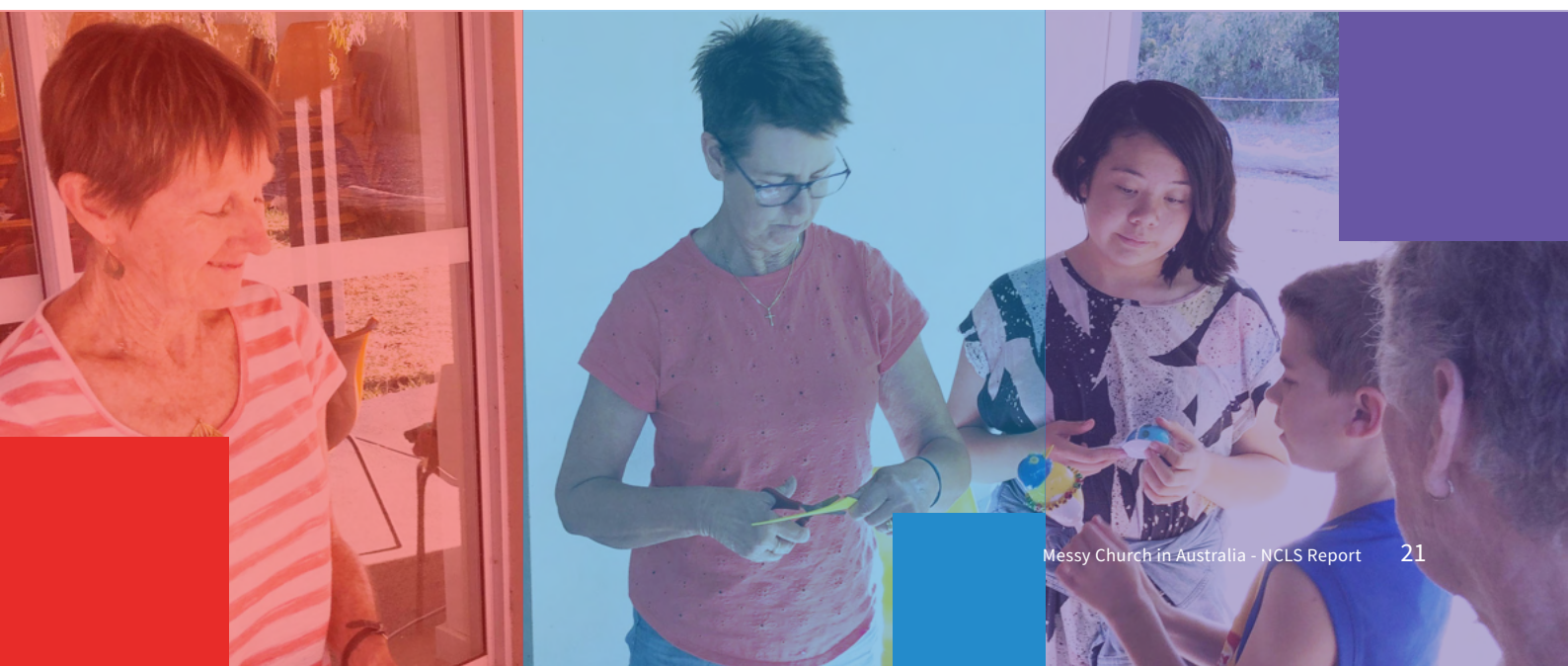
☐ 1-19
☐ 20-49
☐ 50-79
☐ 80-119
☐ 120+

Option	% response
1-19	16%
20-49	49%
50-79	27%
80-119	6%
120+	2%

13. Of the total typical attendance, please estimate the % of people who are adults (18+)

☐ 0%-19%
☐ 20%-49%
☐ 50%-74%
☐ 75%-100%

Option	% response
0%-19%	10%
20%-49%	38%
50%-74%	46%
75%-100%	6%

12 About NCLS Research

NCLS Research is a joint project of several denominational partners. Established in the early 1990s, it is a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities. The most well-known project is the five-yearly National Church Life Survey.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) is a quantitative survey of hundreds of thousands of church attenders, thousands of church leaders and thousands of churches in more than 20 Australian denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Protestant denominations) every census year since 1991. The survey covers a wide range of areas of religious faith and practice and social concern. The NCLS includes three major survey types:

1. Attender Surveys (comprising a main survey variant and multiple small sample survey variants);
2. Several variants of a Leader Survey which is completed by local church leaders; and
3. An Operations Survey audit of local church activities.

13 Citation

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Messy Church in Australia - Mapping the Landscape

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NCLS research

NCLS Research is a leading research organisation whose research aims include studying Australian spirituality, church health, effective and sustainable leadership, and the connections between church and community. The National Church Life Survey is a collaborative project involving millions of participants in over 20 denominations since 1991.