



The religious significance of the Christmas period may be trending downwards

The topic:

Christmas is a period with multiple meanings for many New Zealanders. For many, it signifies the beginning of the summer holiday period. For others, it is a time when families come together from afar. And for yet others, Christmas has religious significance.

In 2016, we measured the religious significance of the Christmas period in a population survey and found that almost one-half of respondents (47%) stated the period had religious significance for them.

Two years later, we repeated exactly the same question in a similar survey in November 2018. This media release presents the results.

Key results

The key results are as follows:

- ◆ A little over one-third of respondents (38%) stated that the Christmas period had some religious significance for them. In comparison, 57% stated that it did not and the remainder (5%) did not know or provided some other response to the question.
- ◆ The religious significance of the Christmas period differs by gender and age:
 - ◆ Female respondents were significantly more likely than male respondents to state that the Christmas period had some religious significance for them (44% and 32% respectively).
 - ◆ The Christmas period is also more likely to have religious significance for older respondents compared with younger respondents (e.g. 50% of respondents aged 65+ compared with 34% of respondents aged 18-44).
- ◆ Given that, in 2016, a significantly higher percentage of respondents in a similar survey stated that the Christmas period had some religious significance for them, the religious significance of the period may be trending downwards. The general convention is that a trend is established after taking three measurements and, therefore, a further measurement will be required in 2020 before this can be confirmed.



Detailed results:

Respondents were asked, ‘Does the Christmas period have any religious significance for you?’

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, a little over one-third of respondents (38%) stated that the Christmas period had religious significance for them. In comparison, a significantly greater percentage stated that the period did **not** have religious significance for them, while the remainder (5%) did not know or provided some other response.

Table 1: Agreement that the Christmas period has religious significance by gender

	Total 2018	Male	Female
Unweighted base =	1465	704	756
	%	%	%
Yes	38	32	44
No	57	62	52
Other	4	5	4
Don't know	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 2: Agreement that the Christmas period has religious significance by age

	Total 2018	18-44	45-64	65+
Unweighted base =	1465	170	591	704
	%	%	%	%
Yes	38	34	37	50
No	57	60	58	46
Other	4	5	3	3
Don't know	1	1	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Female respondents were significantly more likely than male respondents to state that the Christmas period had some religious significance for them (44% and 32% respectively). Similarly, older respondents compared with younger respondents were also more likely to state the period had religious significance for them (50% of respondents aged 65+ compared with 34% of respondents aged 18-44).

Comment:

“This is an interesting set of results in comparison to those of 2016. It remains to be seen whether or not we will have a trend by 2020”, said Research New Zealand Managing Partner, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

This survey of 1,465 respondents aged 18 years and over was conducted online using the Research New Zealand recruitment panel in November 2018. The maximum margin of error is +/- 3.9 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). The sample has been weighted by gender and age to ensure the results are representative of the population 18 years plus based on these demographic criteria. The survey was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand’s social poll of New Zealanders’ opinions about topical issues.



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