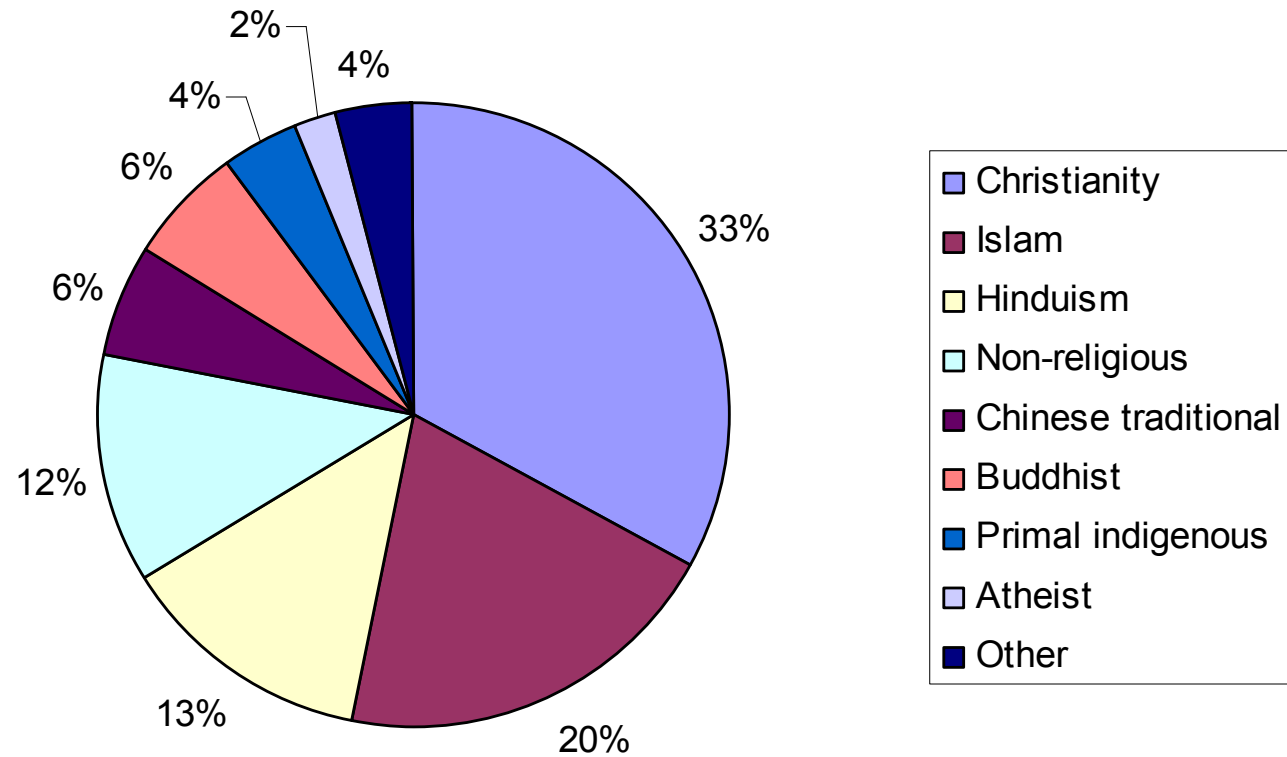
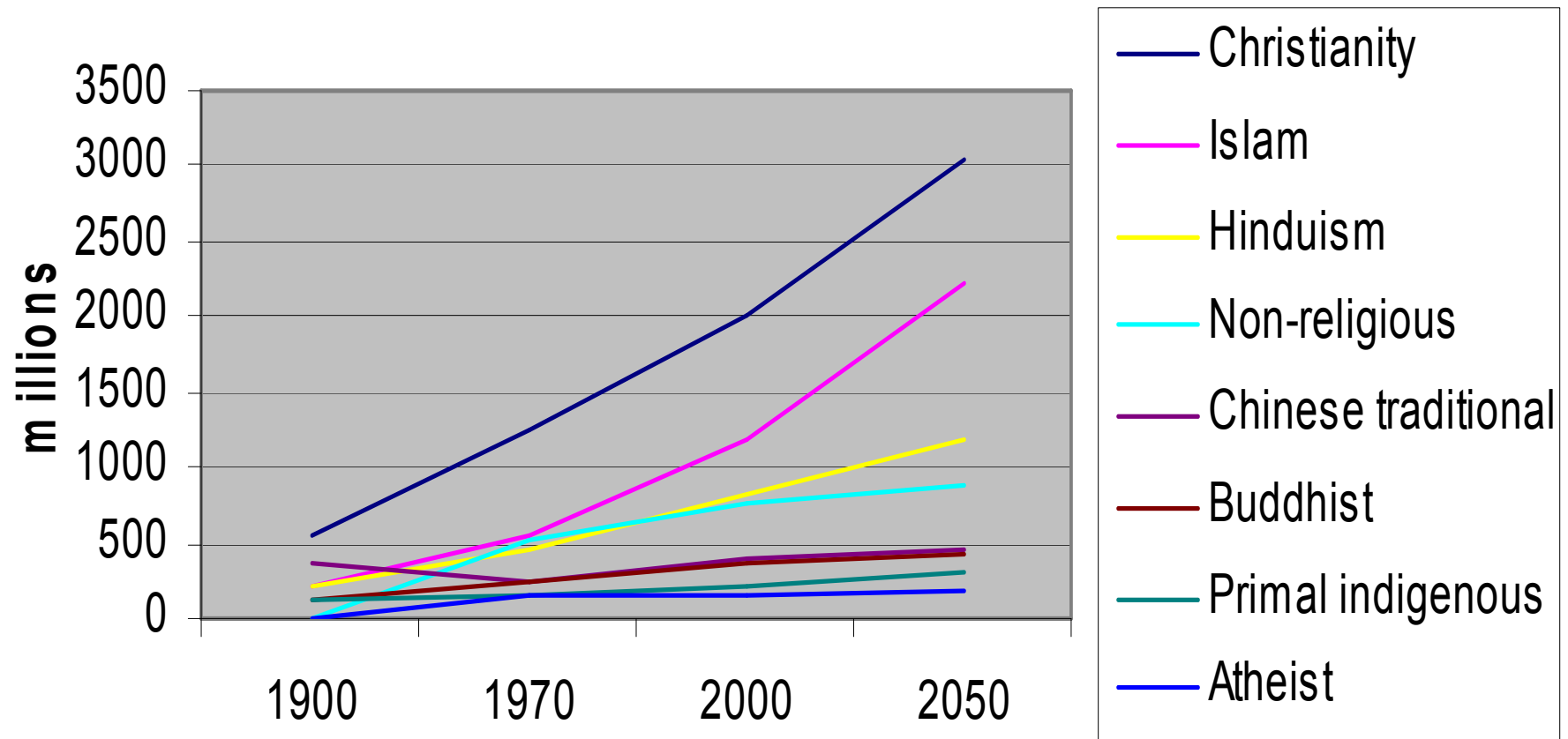


*Does church
make you
healthier?*

The World's Religions (mid 2005)



Trends in religious adherents, 1900-2050



Religious affiliation in Australia

Year	Christianity	Other religion	No religion	Not stated
1901	96.1	1.4	0.4	2.0
1911	95.9	0.8	0.4	2.9
1921	96.9	0.7	0.5	1.9
1933	86.4	0.4	0.2	12.9
1947	88.0	0.5	0.3	11.1
1954	89.4	0.6	0.3	9.7
1961	88.3	0.7	0.4	0.4
1966	88.2	0.7	0.8	10.3
1971	86.2	0.8	6.7	6.2
1976	78.6	1.0	8.3	11.4
1981	76.4	1.4	10.8	11.4
1986	73.0	2.0	12.7	12.4
1991	74.0	2.6	12.9	10.5
1996	70.9	3.5	16.6	9.0
2001	68.0	4.9	15.5	11.7

Spirituality in Australia

- One third of Australian adults say the desire for a spiritual life is very important or the most important principle guiding their lives.
- An additional third say it is 'important'.
- Women value spirituality more than men.
- Education level positively related to valuing spirituality.
- Only 30% of those who value spirituality attend religious services monthly or more.

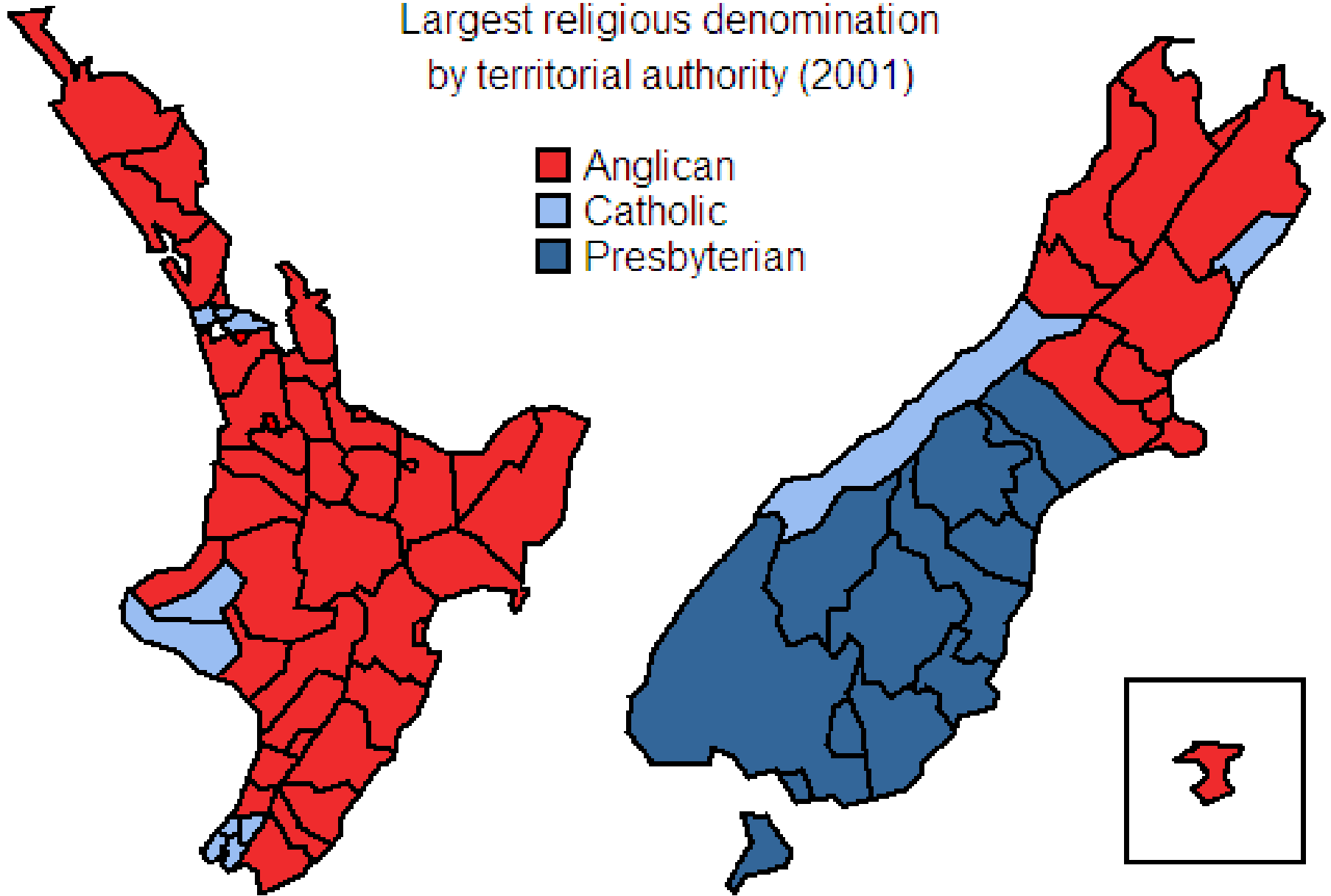
Spirituality in New Zealand

2001 Census:

- More than half the population affiliate with a Christian religion (Anglican – 17%, Catholic – 14%, Presbyterian – 11%).

Largest religious denomination
by territorial authority (2001)

- Anglican
- Catholic
- Presbyterian



Spirituality in New Zealand

2001 Census:

- More than half the population affiliate with a Christian religion (Anglican – 17%, Catholic – 14%, Presbyterian – 11%).
- There has been an increase in people whose religion is non-Christian since 1996 Census (Hinduism – 56%, Buddhism – 48%, Islam – 74%, Spiritualism – 64%).
- Almost 4 out of 10 did not specify a religious affiliation.

Does church make you healthier?

Mortality

- Religious service attendance was associated with a 30-35 percent reduced risk of death over a 7.5 year follow-up period in a national study of 3,617 adults . The effect was stronger for persons under age 60 than for those over 60.
- In a study of 3,851 adults, lack of private religious activity resulted in a 47% increase in the risk of dying.
- In a sample of 3,968 community-dwelling adults, individuals who regularly attended religious services were 46% less likely to die over a 6.3 year period.

Does church make you healthier?

Mental Health

- Among 542 individuals, religious attendance was related to lower depressive symptoms.
- In a study of 4,000 older adults, depression among those who attended religious services once/week or more was about half that of those who attended less than once/week.

Does church make you healthier?

Physical Health

- Religiosity and religious attendance are positively associated with BMI.
- In a study of 455 hospital admissions, patients unaffiliated with a religious community had significantly longer hospital stays (average = 25 days) than those affiliated (11 days).

Does church make you healthier?

The down-side

- In a longitudinal cohort study of 596 medically ill patients aged 55 or older, religious struggle was associated with greater risk of mortality. Specifically, patients who reported that they ‘wondered whether God had abandoned me;’ ‘questioned God’s love for me;’ ‘decided that the devil made it happen’; had a 19% to 28% increase in risk of dying during the 2-year follow-up period.
- Some studies have indicated that religious individuals may forego medical care which can negatively influence their health and wellbeing.

Does church make you healthier?

The consensus

Over the last century 1200+ studies have examined the relationship between spirituality/religious behavior and health. The majority show a positive association between religion and physical and mental health. Few find no association and even fewer a negative relationship.

How does church make you healthier?

3 proposed mechanisms:

1. Religious individuals may have better health practices.

- Religious high school seniors were less likely than their non-religious peers to:
 - Carry a weapon (gun, knife, club) to school
 - Smoke cigarettes
 - Engage in binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a row)
 - Use marijuana or other drugs
- Religious seniors were more likely to:
 - Eat breakfast, green vegetables and fruit
 - Exercise regularly
 - Sleep at least 7 hours per night

How does church make you healthier?

2. Spiritual activities may induce positive physiological effects.

- Eight male meditation teachers performed relaxation meditation. During this meditation-induced change of consciousness, dopamine release increased by 65%. This is the 1st *en vivo* evidence for the regulation of conscious states at a synaptic level.
- Religiously active African Americans had lower blood pressure than non-religious neighbors.

How does church make you healthier?

- 59 breast and prostate cancer patients were enrolled in an 8-week program that incorporated relaxation, meditation, yoga as a daily home practice. Program participation was associated with a change in cancer-related cytokine production, resulting in a shift from an immune profile associated with depressive symptoms to a more normal immune profile.
- In a study of 4,000 subjects, persons who frequently attended religious services had significantly more stable immune systems.

How does church make you healthier?

3. Supernatural intervention.

- Miraculous healings.
- Divine blessings.
- Life meaning.

How can we nurture Spirituality?

- Spiritual health is defined by ‘connectedness’ – balancing spiritual *inflow* with *outflow*.
- *Inflow* strategies:
 - Inspirational literature (bible study)
 - Prayer
 - The arts (music)
 - Nature
 - Connecting with others
- *Outflow* – contribution.