

BIBLE READING NOT DEAD IN AUSTRALIA

Easter 2014 – Analysis of the latest Australian data from Biblegateway.com, the world’s most visited Christian website (generating 1.5 billion views in 2013), along with ABS, NCLS and McCrindle survey data reveals how Australian cities compare in their engagement with Christianity based on online Bible reading patterns.

Bible Reading in Australia’s Largest Cities

Rank	Australian Cities by Population Size	Population Size ('000)	Bible reading in Australia’s Top 10 Cities	Biblegateway.com Page views per resident per year
1.	Sydney	4,819	Sydney	2.67
2.	Melbourne	4,423	Brisbane	2.54
3.	Brisbane	2,293	Adelaide	1.62
4.	Perth	2,021	Canberra	1.55
5.	Adelaide	1,309	Perth	1.55
6.	Gold Coast	620	Melbourne	1.52
7.	Newcastle	431	Hobart	1.45
8.	Canberra	427	Newcastle	0.53
9.	Sunshine Coast	299	Gold Coast	0.47
10.	Wollongong	289	Wollongong	0.32

Table 1: Bible Reading in Australia’s 10 Largest Cities

Sydney and Brisbane most Bible-reading cities

Sydney and Brisbane top the list for Bible-engagement across Australia’s largest cities, with Biblegateway.com recording 2.67 page views per Sydney resident and 2.54 page views per Brisbane resident.

Cities with above average Bible engagement

While Adelaide is Australia’s fifth-largest city in terms of population, in terms of its Bible-reading it rises to third overall. Canberra is similarly strong in its rank, rising from 8th in terms of population to 4th in Bible reading engagement. Hobart also rises significantly in its ranking, from 11th to 7th overall.

Cities with below average Bible engagement

Cities less engaged with Bible reading include Melbourne, Perth, Newcastle, the Gold Coast, and the Sunshine coast. Melbourne shows the most significant drop (2nd in population but only 6th for Bible reading), followed by Gold Coast which drops 3 places and the Sunshine Coast which drops 2 places.

Australia's Top 20 Most Bible-Minded Cities

Richmond and Cranbourne, both suburbs of Melbourne, bear the Australian record for Bible engagement (sporting 3.86 and 3.15 page views per resident, respectively).

Other locations outside of Australia's Top 11 Largest Cities that make it into the Top 15 Bible-Engaged Locations in Australia include Victoria Point, QLD, Armidale, NSW, Launceston, Tas, Moe, Vic, Murray Bridges, SA, and Gawler, SA.

1. Richmond, Vic	11. Armidale, NSW
2. Cranbourne, Vic	12. Launceston, Tas
3. Sydney, NSW	13. Moe, Vic
4. Brisbane, Qld	14. Murray Bridge, SA
5. Adelaide, SA	15. Gawler, SA
6. Canberra, ACT	16. Warrnambool, Vic
7. Perth, WA	17. Echuca, Vic
8. Melbourne, Vic	18. Toowoomba, Qld
9. Hobart, Tas	19. Geelong, Vic
10. Victoria Point, Qld	20. Craigieburn, Vic

TABLE 2: Australia's Top 20 Bible-Minded Cities

Longest amount of time spent on BibleGateway.com

The location in which Australians spend the most time on the BibleGateway website per visit are Warrnambool, VIC (13 minutes 40 seconds) and Albany, WA (11 minutes, 13 seconds).

Australians who access BibleGateway.com spend an average of 6 minutes and 57 seconds on the site per visit.

Shortest visits were recorded in Wagga Wagga, NSW, and Gladstone, QLD, with only 4 minutes 14 seconds and 4 minutes 20 seconds per visit, respectively.

Highest percentage of new visits

The proportion of Australians who accessed the scriptures for the first time was the highest in the cities of Mildura, Gawler, Bundaberg, Lismore, and Echuca, from where 40% or more visitors to BibleGateway were new visitors, compared to a national average of 31.6%.

Rank	Location	% New Visits
1.	Mildura, VIC	45.5%
2.	Gawler, SA	45.3%
3.	Bundaberg, QLD	41.6%
4.	Lismore, NSW	40.7%
5.	Echuca, VIC	40.1%

Cities with the highest proportion of returning visitors are Gladstone, QLD (79.3%), Melton, Vic (77.0%), Armidale, NSW (75.7%), Taree, NSW (74.49%) and Tamworth, NSW (74.48%).

How Australia compares to the US and UK

Australians are less engaged with their Bible reading than residents of the US and residents of the UK. The Top 10 online Bible-reading cities in the US have an average of 14.2 page views per resident and the Top 10 in the UK an average of 11.5 page views per resident, compared to Australia's Top 10 cities that average just 2.1 page views per resident.

In fact, if Sydney – with the highest page views per resident in Australia at 2.67 – was to be placed on the US map, it would not have enough page views per resident to make it into the Top 100 Bible reading cities of the US.

Both US and UK residents also spend longer (10 minutes, 35 seconds and 8 minutes, 53 seconds) on each Bible Gateway visit than Australians (6 minutes, 57 seconds) per average.

Most popular passages of Scripture for Australians

The most commonly searched chapter was Matthew 6, which is a portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that discusses giving to those in need, prayer, fasting, treasures in heaven, and instructions not to worry.

Rank	Top Chapters	Theme
1.	Matt 6	"Sermon on the Mount"
2.	1 Cor 13	"Love"
3.	Matt 5	"The Beatitudes"
4.	John 3	"Born again"
5.	Rom 8	"More than conquerors"

The most-searched Bible verse in Australia in 2013 was John 3:16, followed by Jeremiah 29:11.

Rank	Top Verses	
1.	John 3:16	For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
2.	Jer 29:11	For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.
3.	Phil 4:13	I can do all this through him who gives me strength.
4.	1 Cor 13:4-8	Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
5.	Rom 8:28	And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Most searched-for keywords

The Top 5 most searched-for terms on Bible Gateway are love, faith, joy, peace and hope.

Rank	Top Keywords Australia	Top Keywords All Countries
1.	Love	Love
2.	Faith	Peace
3.	Joy	Faith
4.	Peace	Children
5.	Hope	Heart
6.	Grace	Hope
7.	Holy Spirit	Joy
8.	Wisdom	Prayer
9.	Children	Strength
10.	Marriage	Pray

Bibles in Australian homes

While Bible passages are increasingly being accessed online, Bibles can still be found in Australian homes today with 3 in 5 Australians indicated they have access to at least one Bible in their home, and 45% of Australians owning a Bible themselves.

Females are more likely to own a Bible than their male counterparts (51% compared to 39%). With Christianity's rich, traditional history, older Australians are more likely to own a Bible than those in younger generations. While over half of Australians aged over 50 own their own bible, less than 1 in 3 Generation Ys and Generation Zeds own a Bible.

Age	18-19	20-34	35-49	50-68	69+
% own Bible	32%	32%	39%	54%	64%

Strong affinity with Christianity but declining activity

Christianity remains the dominant religion in Australia, with 61.1% of Australians identifying their religion as Christianity in the 2011 Census, while all the other religions combined comprise 7.3% of the population. However the practice of Christianity is less than identity with Christianity, with only 45% of the population owning their own Bible and just 15% attending church once a month or more.

Sources: Biblegateway.com, ABS, NCLS, McCrindle Research 2014

