



# Diocese of Grafton

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CHURCH ATTENDANCE  
RETURNS

2020-2024

# Since 2020 - more descriptive data in the Annual Returns

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Average Sunday Attendance



Average Weekday Attendance



Attendance at outcentres Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly



Online Participation



Easter and Christmas Attendance trends



Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals



Admissions to Holy Communion, Receptions and Confirmations

## Sources

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**Annual Returns** of the Diocese of Grafton  
2020-2024

All 2024 Returns had been lodged at the  
time of analysis

Census material: **Census Anglicans in  
Australia**, Colin Reilley 2022 and  
@AustralianAnglican X Account

**National Church Life Survey (NCLS)**  
2021/2022 and NCLS Church Pulse Check  
2021-2024



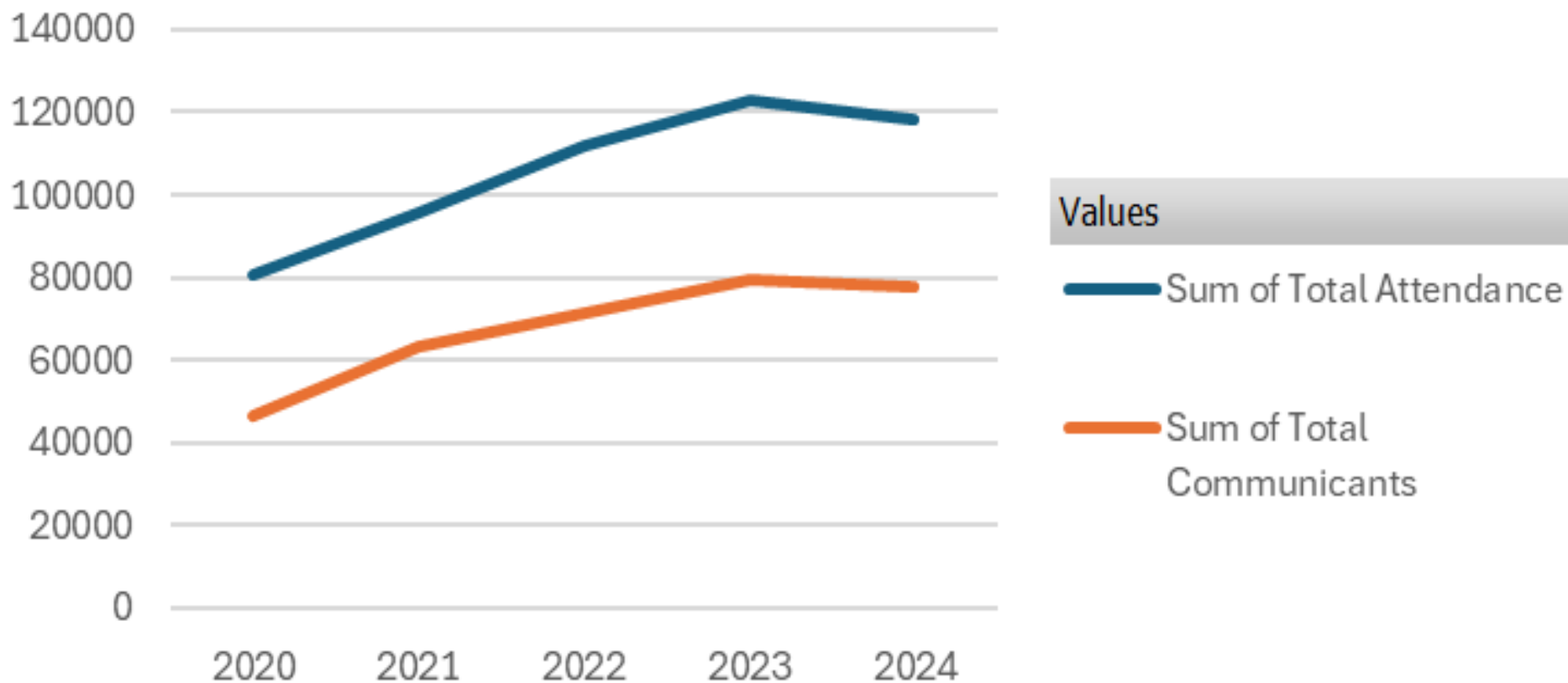
	<b>2021</b>	<b>change from 2016</b>		<b>2016</b>	<b>change from 2011</b>		<b>2011</b>
Sydney	5,382,463	422,336	8.51%	4,960,127	445,098	9.86%	4,515,029
Melbourne	5,226,394	477,805	10.06%	4,748,589	512,099	12.09%	4,236,490
Brisbane	4,172,363	412,962	10.98%	3,759,401	333,984	9.75%	3,425,417
Perth	2,094,765	157,444	8.13%	1,937,321	197,727	11.37%	1,739,594
Adelaide	1,191,416	79,284	7.13%	1,112,132	60,734	5.78%	1,051,398
Newcastle	1,139,769	85,951	8.16%	1,053,818	57,289	5.75%	996,529
Canberra-Goulburn	798,411	82,658	11.55%	715,753	54,683	8.27%	661,070
North Queensland	715,841	29,888	4.36%	685,953	29,423	4.48%	656,530
Tasmania	557,571	47,606	9.34%	509,965	14,611	2.95%	495,354
Grafton	523,661	36,880	7.58%	486,781	23,704	5.12%	463,077
The Murray	428,512	23,744	5.87%	404,768	19,131	4.96%	385,637
Bunbury	403,520	28,446	7.58%	375,074	39,391	11.73%	335,683
Bendigo	347,442	22,681	6.98%	324,761	17,206	5.59%	307,555
Ballarat	331,267	21,488	6.94%	309,779	12,097	4.06%	297,682
Wangaratta	328,442	25,742	8.50%	302,700	18,862	6.65%	283,838
Gippsland	320,785	33,250	11.56%	287,535	16,946	6.26%	270,589
Bathurst	278,974	10,772	4.02%	268,202	10,178	3.94%	258,024
Rockhampton	253,063	7,877	3.21%	245,186	7,412	3.12%	237,774
Northern Territory	232,605	3,772	1.65%	228,833	16,888	7.97%	211,945
Armidale	190,642	3,151	1.68%	187,491	4,745	2.60%	182,746
Willochra	158,212	1,322	0.84%	156,890	435	0.28%	156,455
North West Australia	155,455	-2,585	-1.64%	158,040	-761	-0.48%	158,801
Riverina	146,843	6,240	4.44%	140,603	-378	-0.27%	140,981



Sum of Total Attendance

Sum of Total Communicants

## Total Church Attendance - 2020-2024



Year

Total Church Attendance  
in Grafton Diocese each  
year 2020-2024

Includes attendance at all  
services of worship in the  
parish.

Attendance at School  
services is only included if  
held on a Sunday eg  
Lindisfarne Chapel.

2020: 80,644  
2021: 95,869  
2022: 111,737  
2023: 123,393  
2024: 117,895

*This figure in the Annual  
Returns form does not  
include online attendance.*



# Church Pulse Check 2021 to 2024

Estimates of Australian church attendance, faith commitments  
and churches across denominations

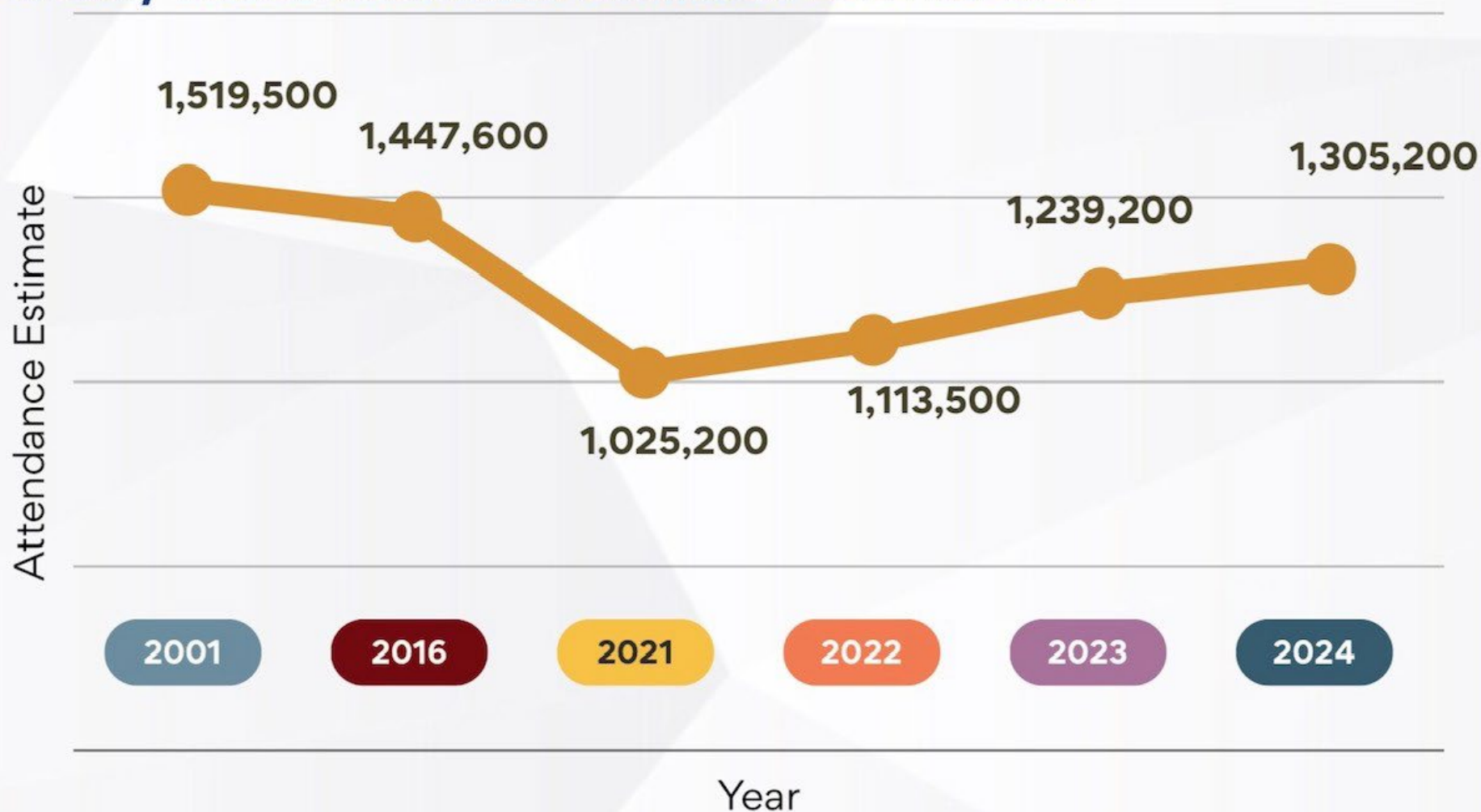
Ruth Powell, Sam Sterland and Miriam Pepper



**May 2025**

NCLS Research | [ncls.org.au](https://ncls.org.au)

# Weekly church attendance estimates: 2001 to 2024



Weekly attendance for 21 denominations across Australia (NCLS Database)

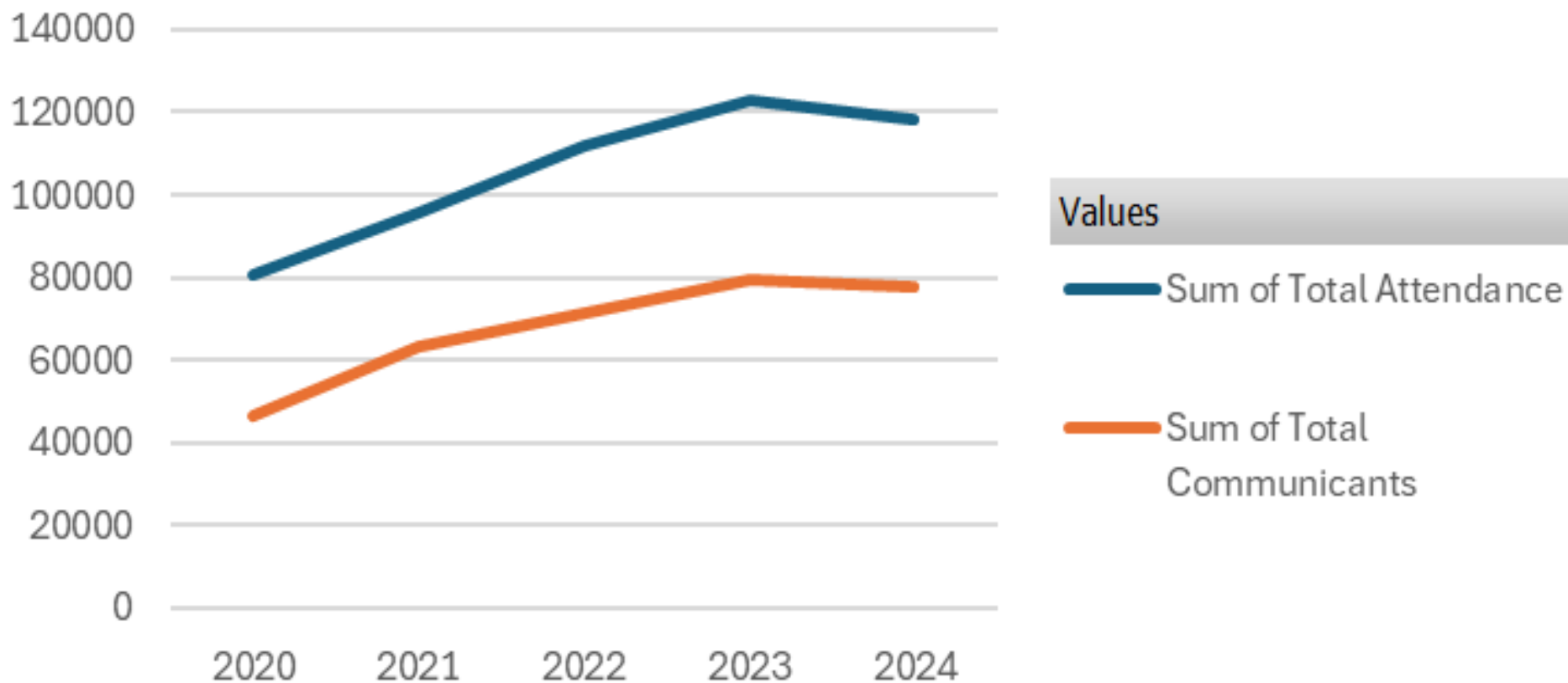
Source: NCLS Churches Estimates of Attendance Database. Based on estimates collected from 21 denominations through National Church Life Surveys and also provided by denominational/regional partners.



Sum of Total Attendance

Sum of Total Communicants

## Total Church Attendance - 2020-2024



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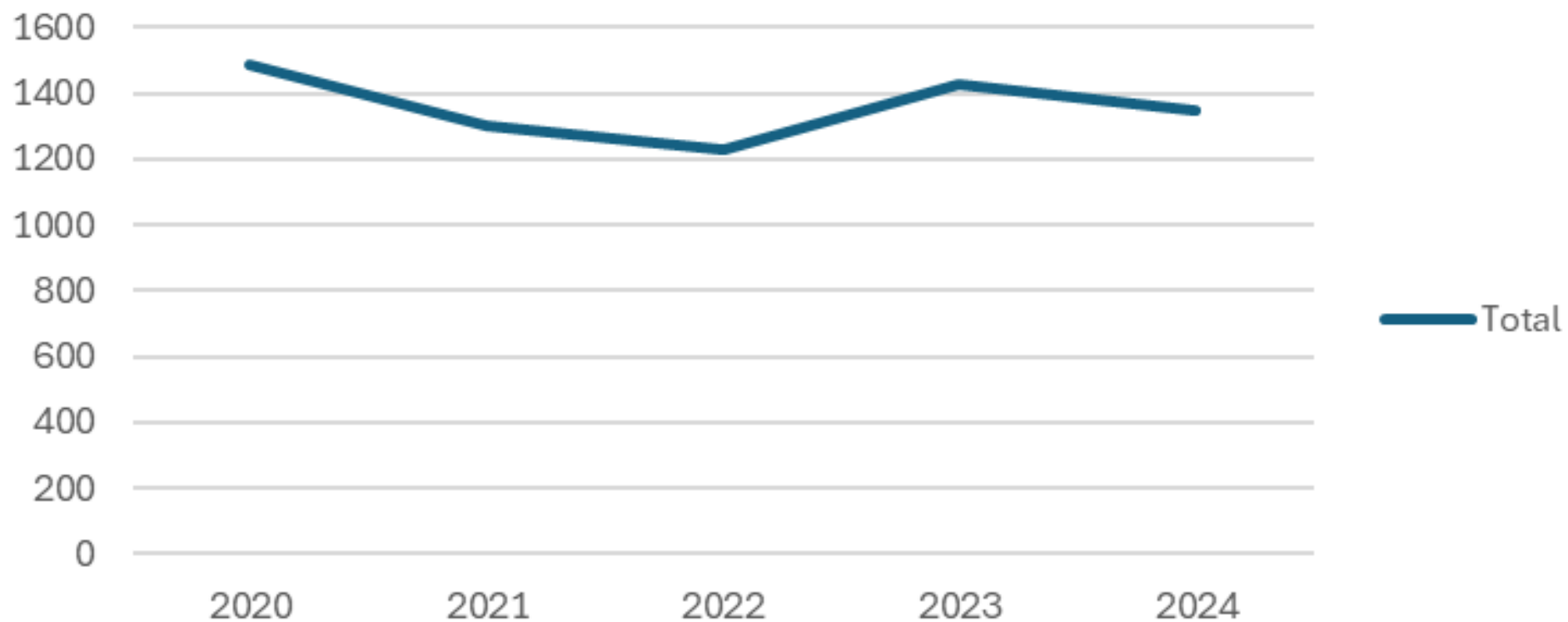
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## Sum of Total Average Sunday Attendance

### Average Sunday Attendance - 2020-2024



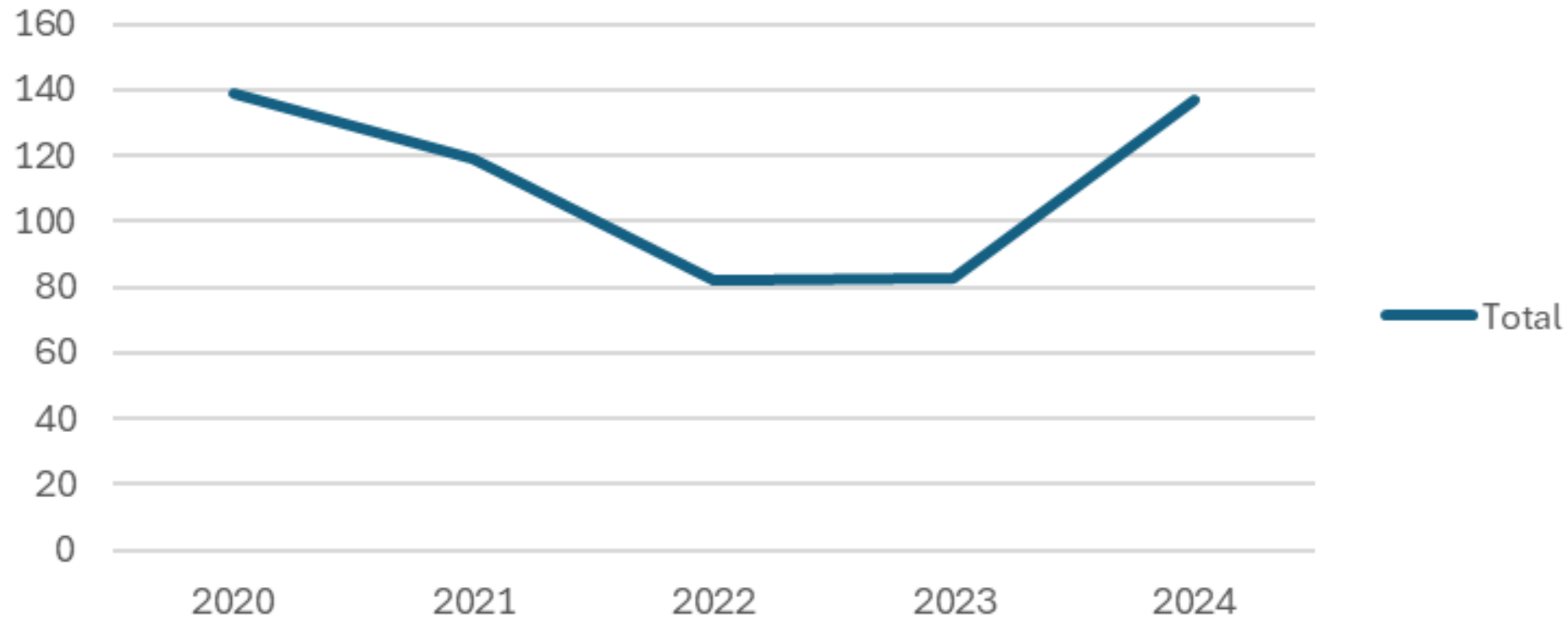
Year ▼


Includes attendance for the whole Ministry Unit but only if it is held every Sunday.

Average Sunday Attendance has only been reported since 2020

Sum of Outcentres Fortnightly

## Average Fortnightly Attendance - 2020-2024

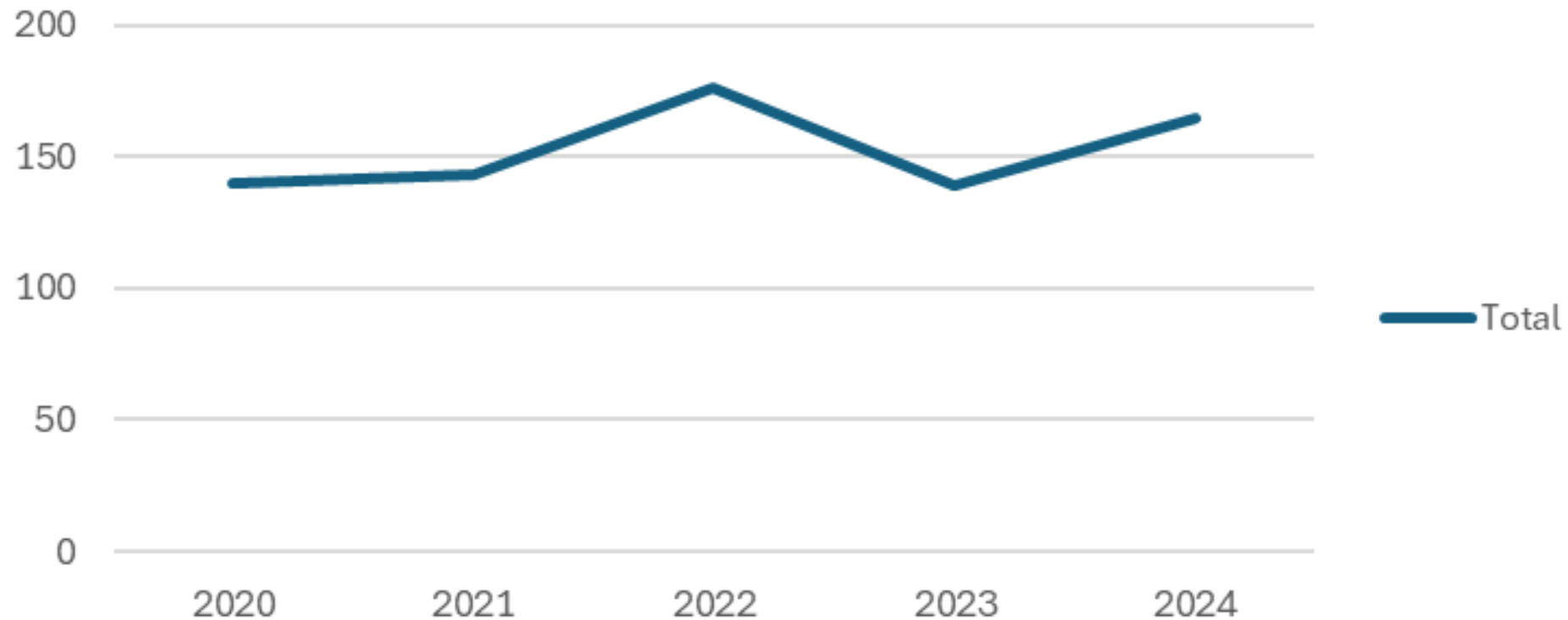



Year 

Attendance at worship centres where there is only a service once a fortnight.

Sum of Outcentres Monthly

## Average Monthly Attendance - 2020-2024

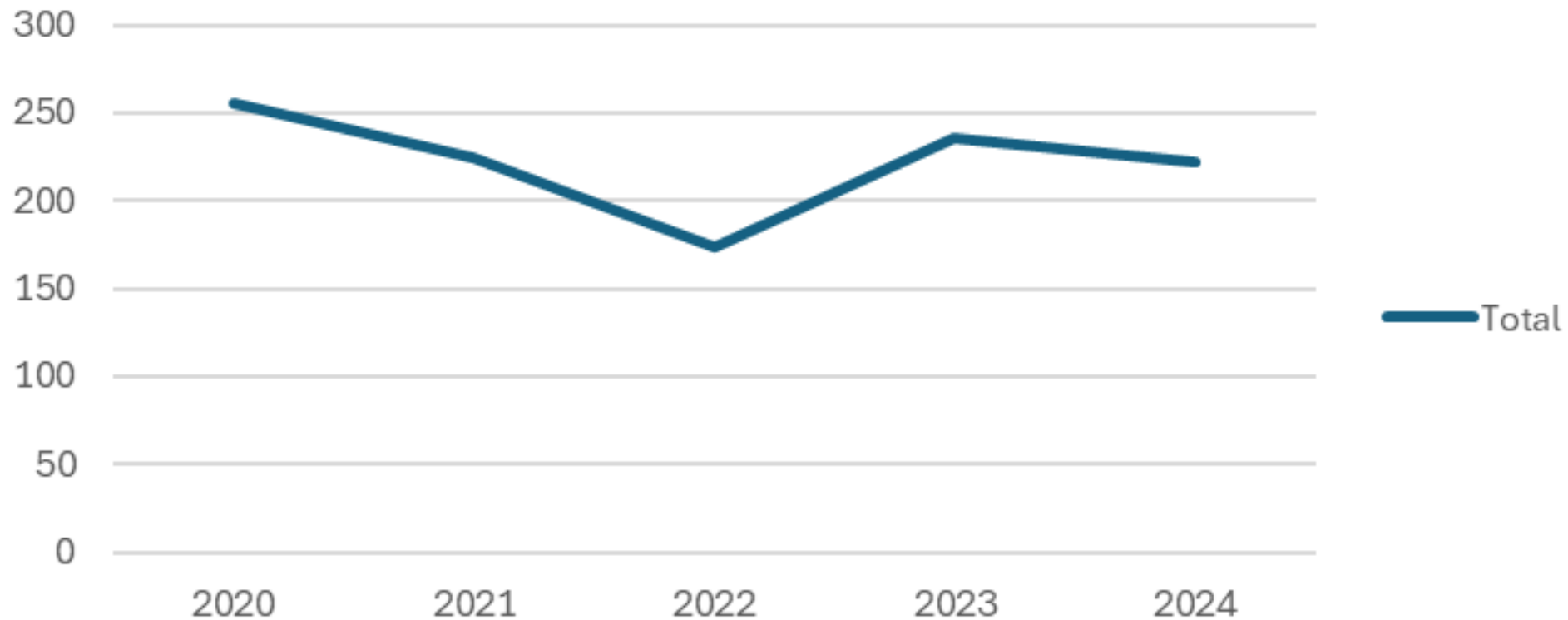



Year 

Attendance at worship centres where there is only a service once a month.

## Sum of Average Weekday Attendance

### Average Weekday Attendance - 2020-2024



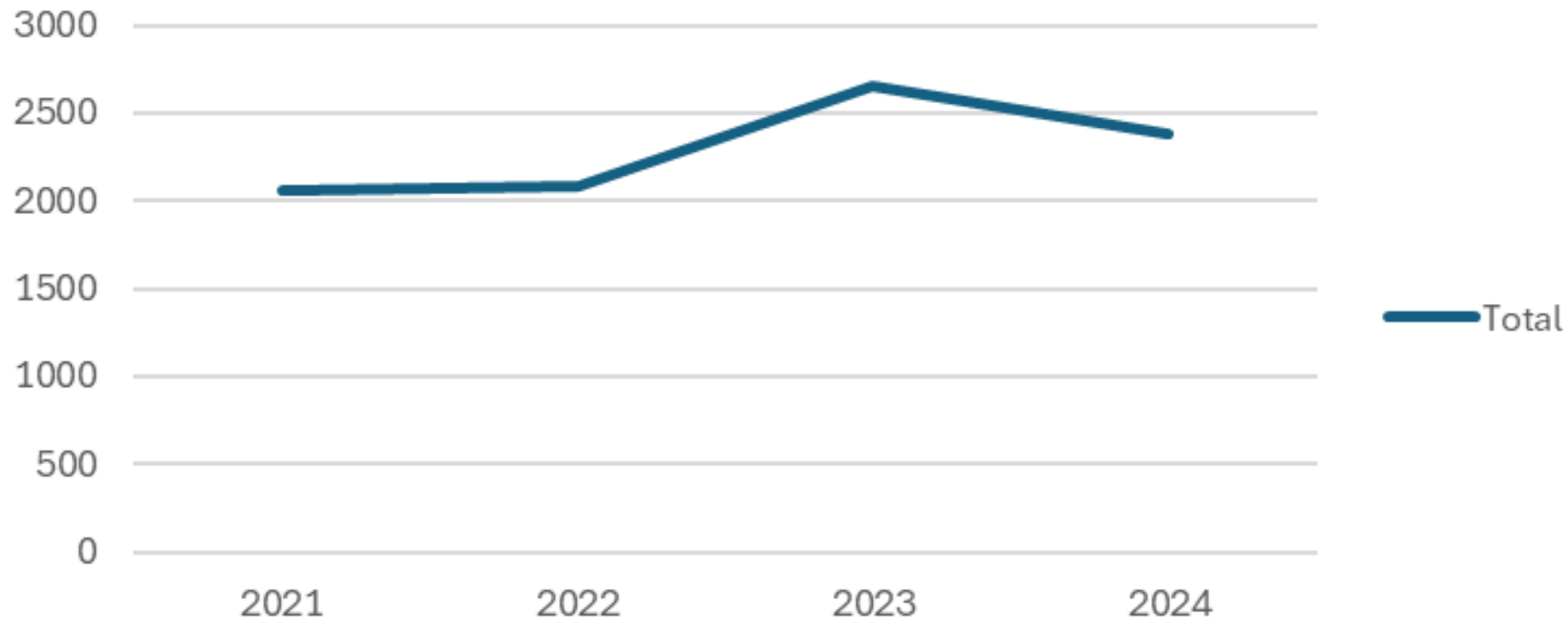
Year 

Average attendance at services held on a weekday.



Sum of Easter Attendance Total

## Total Easter Attendance - 2021-2024



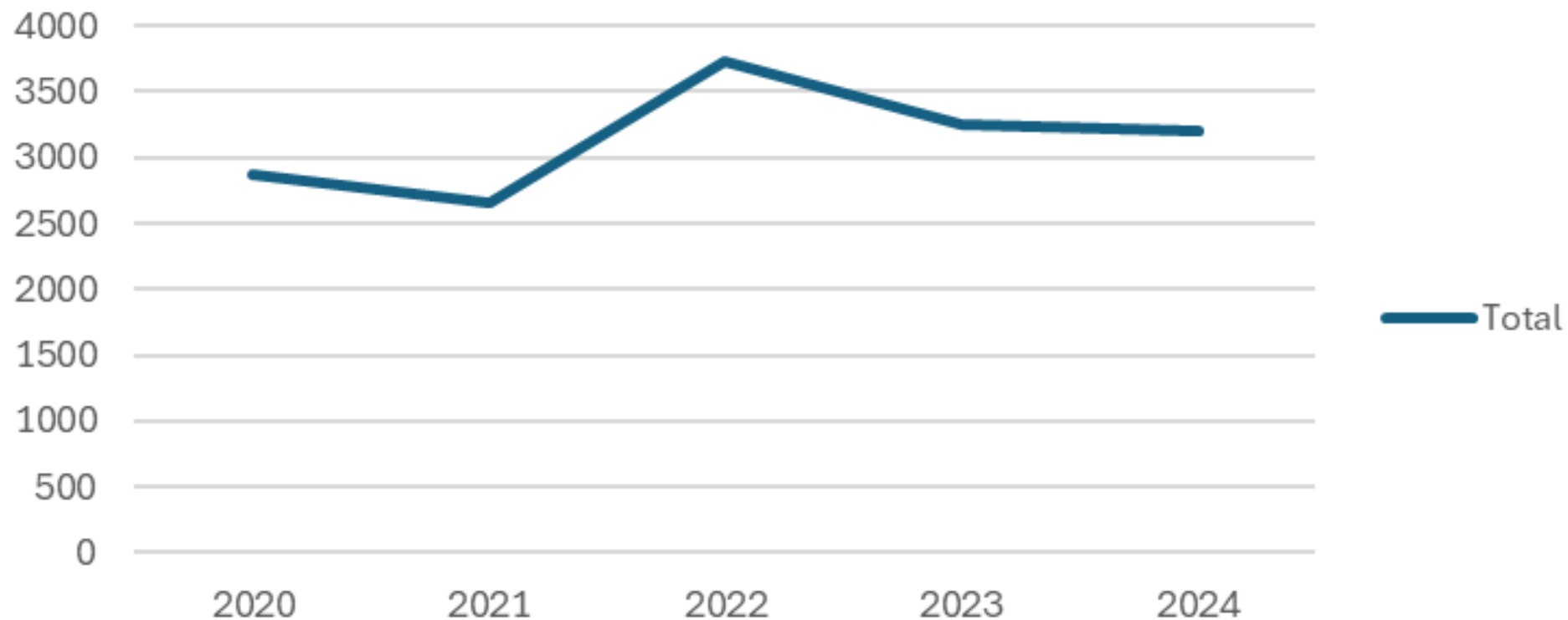
Year


Attendance at all services in the Diocese on Easter Eve & Easter Day.

At Easter 2020 churches were closed to public worship.

## Sum of Christmas Attendance Total

### Total Christmas Attendance - 2020-2024

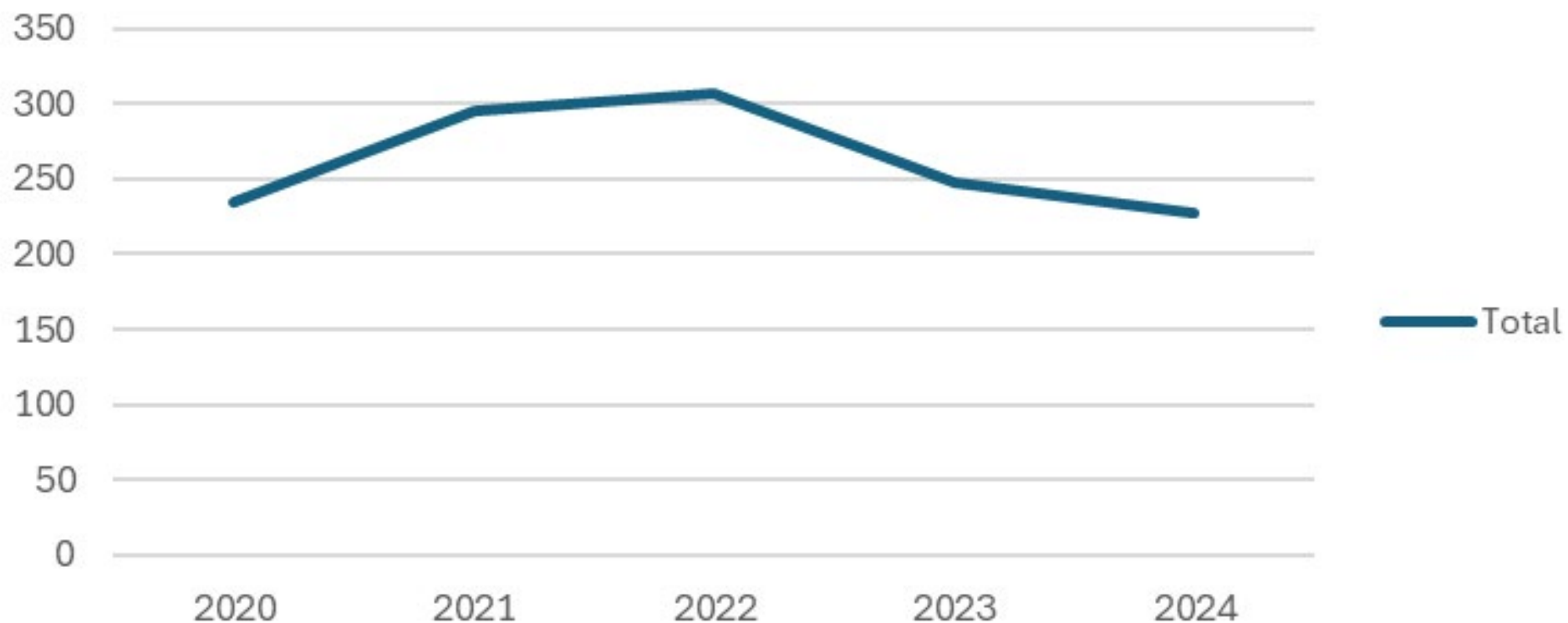


Year  

Attendance  
at all  
services in  
the  
Diocese on  
Christmas  
Eve &  
Christmas  
Day.

Sum of Funerals

## Total Funerals - 2020-2024

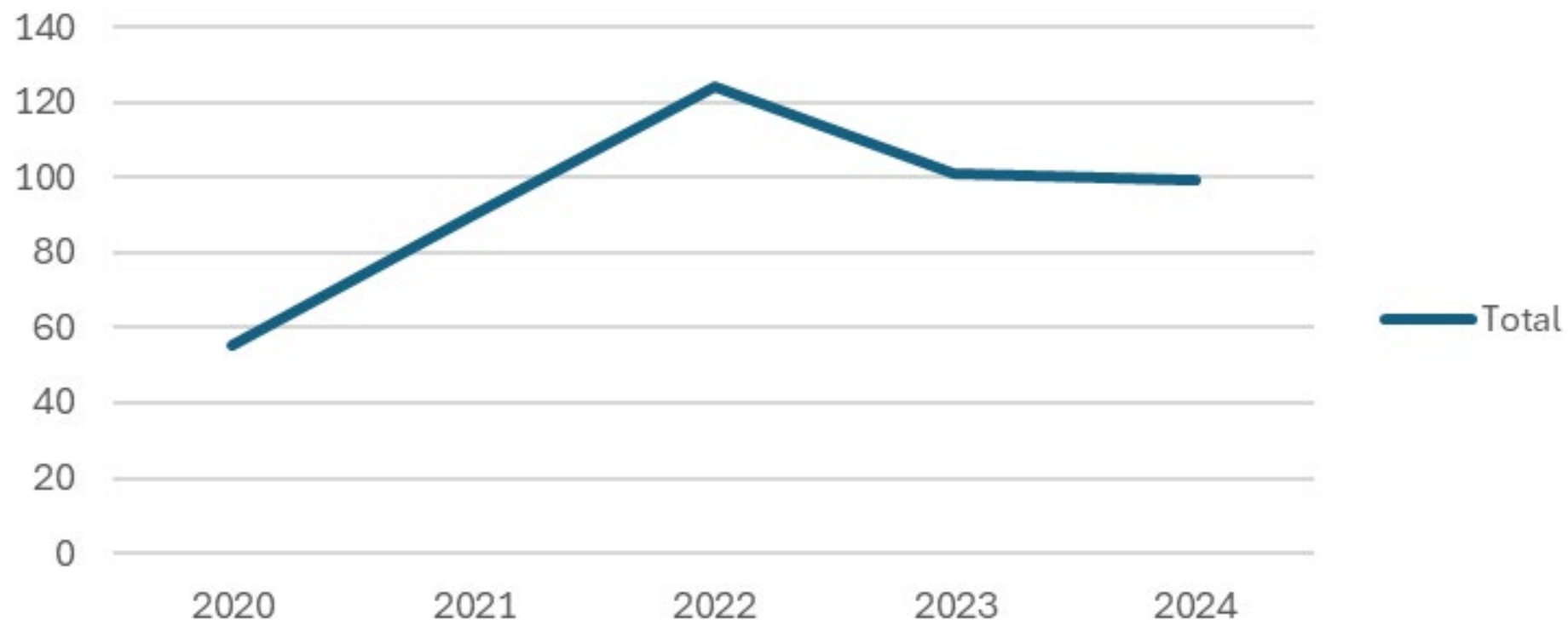


Year

Total number of Funerals in the Diocese each year for the years 2020-2024.

Sum of Baptisms

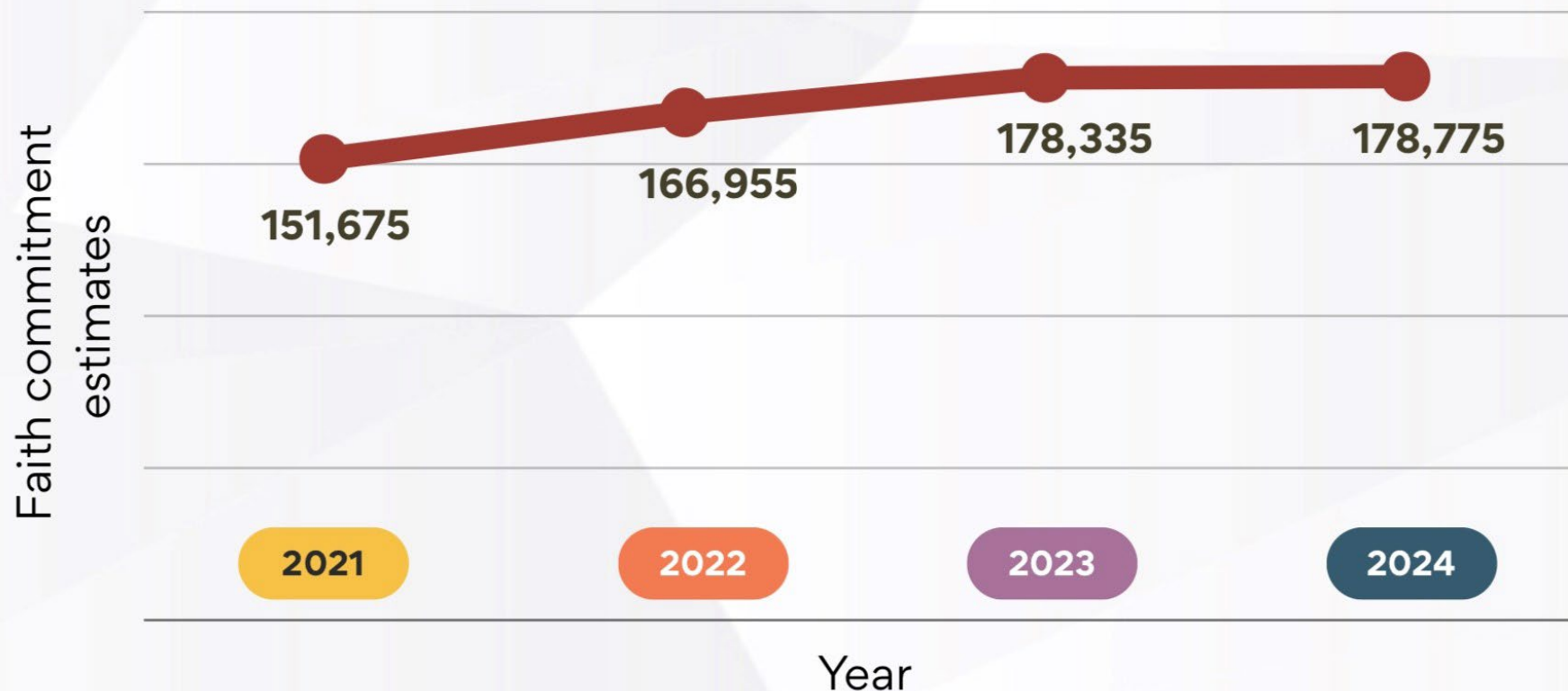
## Total Baptisms - 2020-2024



Total number of Baptisms in the Diocese (including in churches & schools) each year for the years 2020-2024.



## Faith commitment estimates: 2021 to 2024



Estimates of Christian ‘faith commitments’ vary across faith traditions and include infant and adult baptisms, confirmations and other public professions of faith.

*Source: NCLS Churches Estimates of Attendance Database. Based on estimates collected through National Church Life Surveys and also provided by denominational/regional partners.*

## TABLE 1: TOTAL CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN 2024

*Please answer with combined figures for all centres of the parish. Please use your Register entries and do not estimate numbers.*

### Number of communicants for 2024

*This is the total number of acts of Holy Communion at all services in your church(es) during the year - Eucharists, Baptisms, Marriage, Funerals, Home Communions, Aged Care Services etc.*

### Total church attendance for 2024

*This is the total number of people attending all services in your church(es) during the year - Eucharists, Morning and Evening Prayer, Baptisms, Marriage, Funerals, etc. Do **not** include online viewers/participants here.*

## CHURCH SERVICES

*Total number for the year including services at nursing homes, schools and sub-centres. Only include services of Public Worship - do not include services where there were no in-person attendees.*

### Number of Eucharistic Services

### Number of Non-Eucharistic Services

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR TABLE 3 BELOW** (*please read before completing the Table below*).

**Please include:**

- All attendees (not just communicants) at Sunday/Saturday worship including adults and children across all services and sites in your parish.
- Attendance at Saturday evening services as well as Sunday services
- All adults and children present, not just people who receive communion
- Clergy and other ministers attending or leading services
- Adults and children attending Sunday Schools or equivalent activities on Sunday
- Include attendance at Baptisms, including visitors. If the Baptism was held as a separate service, use the row entitled: "Baptism Service if held as a separate service". If the Baptism was held as part of the Sunday Eucharist, for example, include the attendees under that service
- Include any other church based activities on Sunday or Saturday evening at which worship is the primary purpose and predominant feature
- Include Easter Eve and Easter Day but not Maundy Thursday or Good Friday

**Please do not include:**

- Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, even if they fall on a Sunday
- Do not include online participants in this table. Include them at Tables 4 and 5.
- Do not include Home Communion or Nursing Home/Aged Care Services
- Do not include weddings or funerals
- Do not include weekday services apart from a main Mid-Week service
- Do not include the same person multiple times. If someone attends more than once during the Sunday/Saturday, please only count them once if possible

**TABLE 3: AVERAGE ATTENDANCE PER SERVICE ON SUNDAY/SATURDAY**

*Please answer for each Worship Centre. Check the notes above before completing. Please use Register entries and where possible avoid estimating the figures. Do not include online participants.*

Service	Time/Name of Service and of Worship Centre	Frequency <i>Eg. Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly</i>	Total attendance adults and children inc. clergy at that service for the whole year	Number of times held in one year	Average attendance for that service
Example	St Mark's 9am Sunday	weekly	5,200	52	100

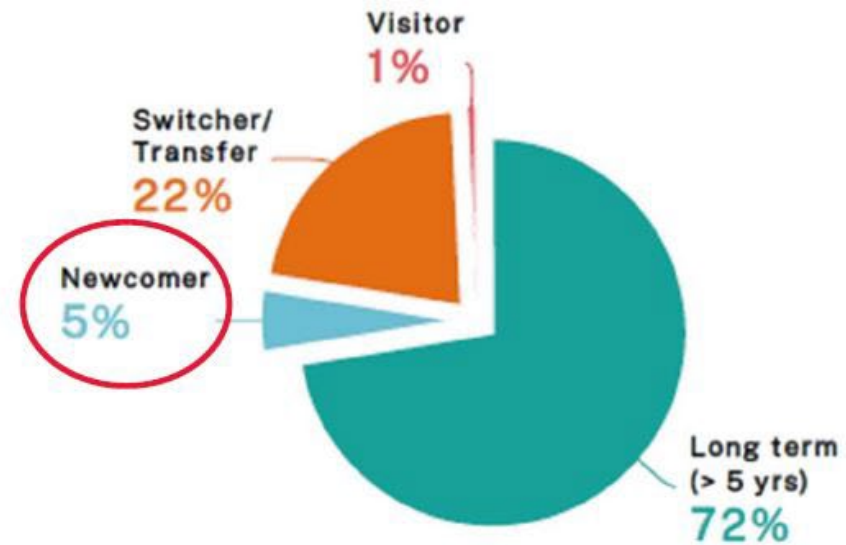
## Attendance background

**28%** of attenders are new arrivals to their local church in the past 5 years

**13%** are transfers from other Anglican churches

**9%** are switchers from other denominations

**5%** are newcomers without a recent church background



Source: 2021/22 NCLS, Anglican Grafton Church Attender Survey (n=744)





# Acknowledgements

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Thanks to those who completed the Annual Returns

Also, thanks to:

Maree Collett and Kaytrina Jessup (data entry)

Noah Klane (production of graphs)



# Conclusions

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The collection of more detailed attendance figures is allowing us to better track trends in church attendance

We should be encouraged by a gradual increase in church attendance post-pandemic

2023 saw the highest attendance, indicating a return to or even surpassing pre-pandemic levels

2024 has seen a levelling out of Total Attendance and Average Sunday Attendance

Grafton attendance trends compare well with national attendance trends and do not support a narrative of declining attendance

Ministry Units have used missional opportunities (such as those offered by the restructure of worship centres) to try new things and to grow and have also shown resilience and adaptability in challenging times