

Cultural Diversity in Australia

Australia has a unique history that has shaped the diversity of its peoples, their cultures and lifestyles today.

Three major contributors to Australia's demographic make up are

- a diverse Indigenous population,
- a British colonial past
- and extensive immigration from many different countries and cultures.

Today, Australia's population of about 20 million is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world.

Diversity of Birth Place

The birthplace of overseas-born residents gives **some** indication of the diversity of ethnicity of a population. When Australian born residents with one or both parents born overseas are combined with overseas born a fuller picture of cultural diversity emerges.

The following data is derived from the 2006 Census:

- 22.2% of Australians were born overseas and 70.9% were born in Australia.
- 14% of people were born in non-English speaking countries compared to 11.5% who were born in English speaking countries other than Australia.

Top 10 Countries by birth by state/territory 2006

ACT	NSW	NT	Qld
United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)
New Zealand	China (b)	New Zealand	New Zealand
China (b)	New Zealand	Philippines	South Africa
India	Vietnam	United States of America	Germany
Vietnam	Philippines	East Timor	Philippines
Germany	India	Greece	Netherlands
Italy	Lebanon	Germany	China (b)
United States of America	Italy	Indonesia	Italy
Malaysia	Hong Kong	Papua New Guinea	Vietnam
Philippines	Greece	India	Papua New Guinea

Tas	Vic	WA	SA
United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)	United Kingdom (a)
New Zealand	Italy	New Zealand	Italy
Netherlands	New Zealand	South Africa	Germany
Germany	Vietnam	Italy	New Zealand
United States of America	China (b)	Malaysia	Greece
South Africa	Greece	India	Vietnam
Italy	India	Singapore	China (b)
China (b)	Sri Lanka	Vietnam	Netherlands
Malaysia	Malaysia	Netherlands	India
Philippines	Germany	Germany	Poland

(a) Comprises United Kingdom not further defined; Channel Islands, England; Isle of Man; Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

(b) Excludes Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

Refugees

Refugees and people seeking residency in Australia for humanitarian reasons make up an important and sizeable component of the overall migrant intake. The Humanitarian Programme, a component of Australia's immigration program, assists people affected by international humanitarian crises including refugees and other people suffering human rights violations.

Since World War II, over 675,000 refugees and people in humanitarian need have been resettled in Australia including people from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, Central America, the Middle East and Africa.

According to Humanitarian Programme statistics for 2005-06

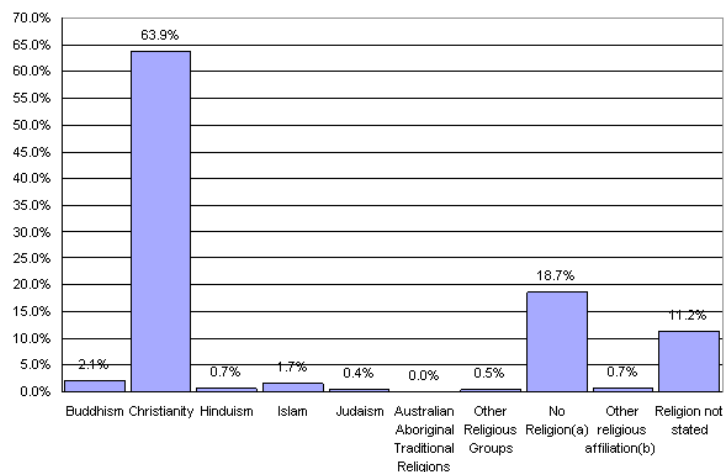
- 14,144 visas were granted, the highest number of visas granted in ten years.
- Of these, 12,758 visas were granted to persons overseas and 1,386 visas were granted to people in Australia.

- 55.65% of visas were granted to people from Africa, 33.98% were granted to people from the Middle East and South West Asia and 9.88% were granted to people from the Asia/Pacific region. A small number of visas were also granted to people from Europe and the Americas.

Diversity of Religion or Spiritual Beliefs

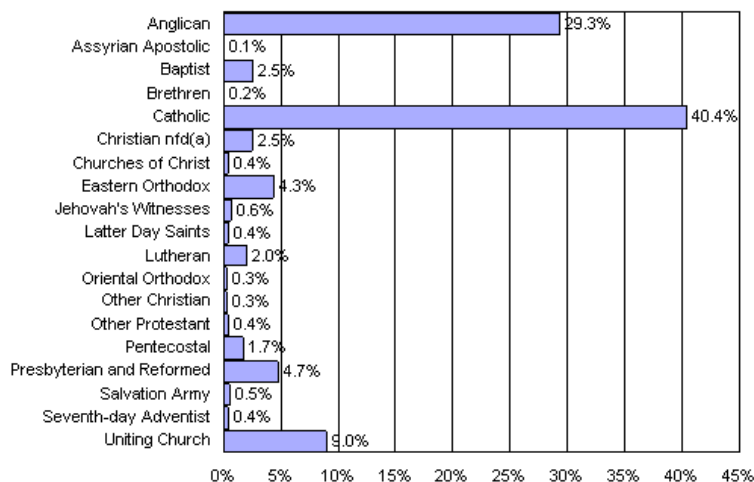
Religions span national, geographic, cultural and ethnic boundaries and may be the focus of individual and family identification. Religious institutions and observances play an important role in catering for people's social, psychological and cultural needs as well as their spiritual needs.

In the 2006 Census, Christians represented 64% of the population. Non-Christians represented about 6.2% of the population. About 30% of the population stated they had no religion or did not state their religion. The 2006 Census recorded over 120 different religious denominations each with 250 or more followers. The religious composition of the States and Territories varies.



Christianity

Australia's major religion is Christianity with the major denominations including Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Presbyterian and Reformed, Eastern Orthodox, Baptist and Lutheran. The two major denominations, Anglican and Catholic, account for 44.5% of the Australian population.



Diversity of Language

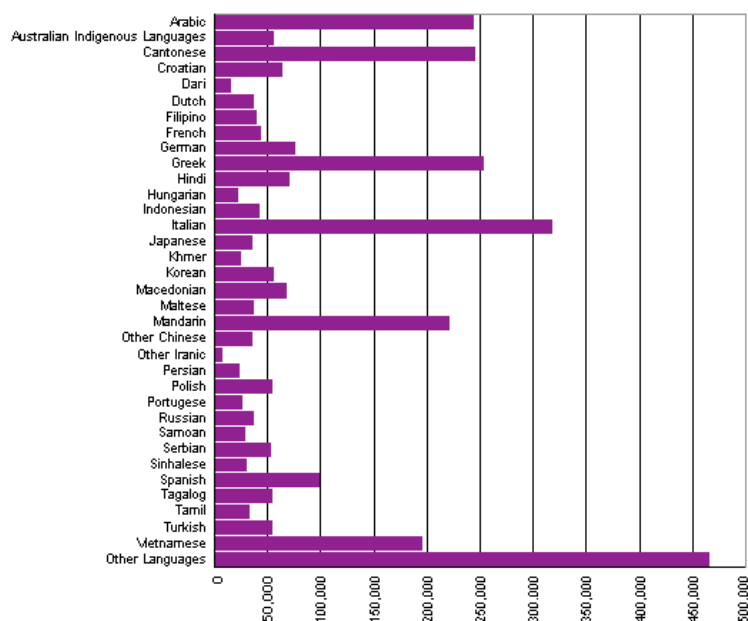
Language is a key marker of membership of an ethnic group. Language allows communication of values and beliefs of a particular culture and allows participation in family and community life. The majority of Australians speak English as a first or other language, however a significant number of people also speak languages other than English. About 78% of Australians speak only English.

Languages other than English

While English is the dominant language in Australia, many people speak a language other than English within their families and communities. This linguistic diversity is an asset for Australia and makes us more competitive in trade as well as fostering international ties and cultural exchange.

The following data is derived from the 2006 Census:

- Collectively, Australians speak **over 200 languages**. Of these, about 50 are Australian Indigenous languages.
- About **16% of Australians speak a language other than English**. Australian Indigenous languages are spoken by about 0.3% of the total population.
- The most common languages other than English are: **Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese**. Collectively, Chinese languages (including Cantonese, Mandarin and other Chinese languages) have the greatest number of speakers after English, accounting for approximately 2.5% of the total population.
- The languages other than English spoken at home vary between the states.



Top 10 languages other than English spoken at home in 2006 by state/territory

NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	ACT	NT	Tas
Arabic	Italian	Mandarin	Italian	Italian	Mandarin	Australian Indigenous	German
Cantonese	Greek	Italian	Greek	Mandarin	Italian	Greek	Italian
Mandarin	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Vietnamese	Indonesian	Greek
Italian	Cantonese	Vietnamese	Mandarin	Vietnamese	Cantonese	Vietnamese	Mandarin
Greek	Mandarin	German	German	Australian Indigenous	Greek	Tagalog	Dutch
Vietnamese	Arabic	Australian Indigenous	Cantonese	Arabic	Croatian	Italian	Polish
Spanish	Macedonian	Spanish	Polish	German	Spanish	Cantonese	Cantonese
Hindi	Turkish	Greek	Arabic	Indonesian	German	Chinese languages	Arabic
Korean	Spanish	Japanese	Serbian	Polish	Arabic	Filipino	Spanish
Tagalog	Croatian	Samoan	Croatian	Croatian	Hindi	German	French