



Australian Government

Department of Immigration and
Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

Religions in Australia

In the 2001 Census, around 74 per cent of people in Australia said they belonged to a religion.

About three million people or 15.5 per cent of the population identified themselves as having no religious affiliation.

Major religious affiliations

Religion	% of population in 2001
Christianity	68.0
Buddhism	1.9
Islam	1.5
Hinduism	0.5
Judaism	0.4

Source: ABS 2001 Census

Note: Answering the question on religious affiliation in the Census was optional

Religious diversity



There are many religious faiths practised in Australia today.

The Australian Constitution, which came into effect in 1901, guarantees our right to practise any religion.

Here are the words, in Section 116 of the Constitution, covering religious freedom:

"...the Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth..."

Classroom activities

1 Can you match the symbols with the religions?

Christianity
Hindu
Islam

Sikh
Judaism
Buddhism



a.



b.



c.



d.



e.



f.

You'll find the answers on page 16.

Australia's history of religious diversity

Australia's religious make-up reflects its patterns of settlement.

At the time of European settlement, the Aboriginal inhabitants followed their own religions involving belief in ancestral spirit beings.

Between 1901 and 1954, migrants mostly came from England and Ireland. In 1954, 89 per cent of the population identified themselves as Christian.

Migration from Europe after World War II led to increased membership of the Orthodox Churches and growth in the number of Catholics (largely from Italian migration) and followers of many other Christian denominations.

More recently, immigration from South East Asia and the Middle East has increased Buddhist and Muslim numbers, and increased the ethnic diversity of existing Christian denominations.

