



Podlet Guide to South Africa 2008/09  
**SOUTH AFRICA'S PEOPLE**

South Africa is often called "A World in One Country" because of the contrast in its technologically advanced cities, its unspoilt, wide natural beauty and the many cultures that make up the South African nation.



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## **SOUTH AFRICA'S PEOPLE**

### **People**

According to the *Community Survey 2007*, there are 48 502 063 people in South Africa. Of these, 79% classified themselves as African; 9,6% as white; 8,9% as coloured; and 2,5% as Indian/Asian.

Africans are in the majority (about 38 million) and constituted 79% of the total South African population at the time of the survey. The white population was estimated at 9,6 million, the coloured population at 4,2 million and the Indian/Asian population at 2,6 million.

The South African population consists of the following groups:

- Nguni people (the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi)
- Sotho-Tswana people (including the Southern, Northern and Western Sotho [Tswana])
- Tsonga
- Venda
- Afrikaners
- English speakers
- coloureds
- Indians
- those who have immigrated to South Africa from the rest of Africa, Europe and Asia and maintain their own strong cultural identities
- a few members of the Khoi and the San.

### **Languages**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 states that everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of his/her choice, but no one may do so in a manner inconsistent with any provision of the Bill of Rights. Each person also has the right to instruction in the language of his/her choice, where this is reasonably practicable.

### **Official languages**

To cater for South Africa's diverse peoples, the Constitution provides for 11 official languages, namely Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.



Recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages, the Constitution expects government to implement positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.

In 2003, Cabinet approved the National Language Policy Framework (NLPF) to promote the equitable use of the 11 official languages and to ensure redress for previously marginalised indigenous languages.

The Languages Bill provides for the promotion and development of all indigenous languages.

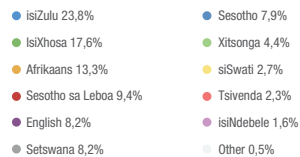
The National Language Service (NLS) provides a range of language services for official documentation, develops and promotes national language policy, and advises on standardising and disseminating information on a range of terminology. The NLS, which was allocated R50 million in 2007/08, is responsible for implementing the NLPF.

The National Strategy for Human Language Technologies (HLT) has been completed.

Projects to be implemented between 2008 and 2010 include:

- full implementation of the HLT strategy
- open-source HLT software for tasks such as speech recognition and speech synthesis in the South African official languages
- trained HLT developers, including fluent speakers of all of the South African official languages

#### Mother tongues



Source: *Census 2001*



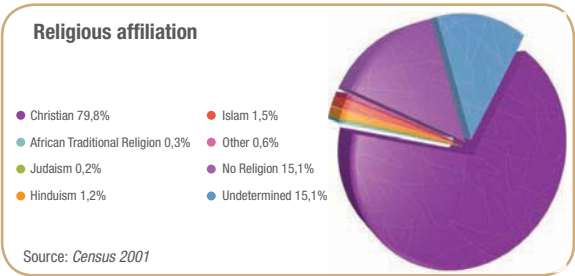
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- a machine-aided translation system optimised for the 11 official languages
  - promulgation of the South African Language Practitioners Council Act
  - establishment of the South African Language Practitioners Council
  - establishment of language units within government departments.
- The Telephone Interpreting Service for South Africa provides telephone-interpreting services to people who need to access government information and aims especially to improve verbal communication between citizens and government agencies, thus allowing citizens to exercise their right to use the language of their choice when dealing with government.

The service was installed at over 300 sites in government departments as a pilot project, and the project has begun to set up Sign Language sites to enable the deaf community to access the project's services.

**Religion**

Almost 80% of South Africa's population is Christian. Other religious groups include Hindus, Muslims and Jews. A minority of South Africa's population do not belong to any of the major religions, but regard themselves as traditionalists or of no specific religious affiliation. The Constitution guarantees freedom of worship.





### **Christian churches**

Churches continue to play a critical role as agents of social change and transformation in pursuit of equality and the creation of a human-rights culture.

### **African independent churches (AICs)**

The largest grouping of Christian churches is the AICs, and one of the most dramatic aspects of religious affiliation has been the rise of this movement.

There are 4 000 or more independent churches, with a combined membership of more than 10 million. Most are regarded as Zionist or Apostolic churches. The Zion Christian Church is the largest of these churches in South Africa and the largest church overall, with over four million members.

### **Afrikaans churches**

The Dutch Reformed family of churches represents some 3,5 million people. The Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk has about 1 200 congregations countrywide. The other churches are the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa and the smaller Reformed Church in Africa. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk are regarded as sister churches.

### **Roman Catholic Church**

In recent years, the Roman Catholic Church has grown strongly in numbers and influence, even though South Africa is predominantly Protestant. It works closely with other churches on the socio-political front.

### **Other Christian churches**

Established churches in South Africa include the Methodist Church, the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Anglican Church), and various Lutheran, Presbyterian, Congregational and Baptist churches. Together, these churches form the nucleus of the South African Council of Churches.

The largest traditional Pentecostal churches are the Apostolic Faith Mission, the Assemblies of God and the Full Gospel Church, but there are numerous others.



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A number of charismatic churches have been established in recent years. Also active in South Africa, among the smaller groups, are the Greek Orthodox and Seventh Day Adventist churches.

### **African Traditionalists**

Because the traditional religion of the African people has a strong cultural base, the various groups have different rituals, but there are certain common features.

A supreme being is generally recognised, but ancestors are of great significance. As a result of close contact with Christianity, many people find themselves in a transitional phase somewhere between Traditional African Religion and Christianity.

### **Other religions**

Two thirds of South Africa's Indians are Hindus.

The Muslim community in South Africa is small but growing strongly. The Cape Malays, who mostly descended from Indonesian slaves, make up most of this group, with the remaining 20% being of Indian descent.

The Jewish population is less than 100 000. Of these, the majority are Orthodox Jews.

### **Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities**

The Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities is a constitutional body, which became active in January 2004.

The commission is funded through transfers from the Department of Provincial and Local Government. Its mission is to develop and promote peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance and national unity among cultural, religious and linguistic communities.

This will be achieved by facilitating the development of programmes to foster sensitivity, respect and understanding for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and also by mediating in intercommunity conflict situations and facilitating harmonious co-existence.