



## SOUTH AFRICA'S PEOPLE

The distinctive charm of South Africa comes from its history and also by moments of great change and strides of progress brought about by a people united in a diversity of religious beliefs, cultures and languages.

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## People

According to Statistics South Africa's (Stats SA) *Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2009*, that were released in July 2009, there were 49 320 500 people in South Africa, of whom 52% were female. Of the total population, 79,3% classified themselves as African; 9,1% as white; 9% as coloured; and 2,5% as Indian/Asian. Africans were in the majority (more than 39 million) and constituted 79,3% of the total South African population. The white population was estimated at 4,5 million, the coloured population at 4,4 million and the Indian/Asian population at 1,3 million.

Nearly one third (31,4%) of the population were younger than 15 years and 7,5% (3,7 million) were 60 years or older.

The South African population consists of the following groups: the Nguni (comprising the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi people); Sotho-Tswana, who include the Southern, Northern and Western Sotho (Tswana people); Tsonga; Venda; Afrikaners; English; coloureds; Indians; and those who have immigrated to South Africa from the rest of Africa, Europe and Asia and who maintain a strong cultural identity. A few members of the Khoi and the San also live in South Africa.

**Estimates by population group and gender**

Population group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	% of total population	Number	% of total population	Number	% of total population
African	18 901 000	79,2	20 235 200	79,5	39 136 200	79,3
Coloured	2 137 300	9,0	2 295 800	9,0	4 433 100	9,0
Indian/Asian	635 700	2,6	643 400	2,5	1 279 100	2,6
White	2 194 700	9,2	2 277 400	9,0	4 472 100	9,1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 868 700</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>25 451 800</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>49 320 500</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: *Mid-Year Population Estimates, 2009*

### Mother tongues



Source: *Census 2001*

## Languages

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

## Official languages

The diversity of the unique cultures of South Africa means that there are 11 official languages. These are English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Sesotho sa Leboa, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The Constitution also requires the Pan South African Language Board to promote the use of the Khoi, Nama and San languages, and sign language.

According to Census 2001, isiZulu is the mother tongue of 23,8% of the population, followed by isiXhosa (17,6%), Afrikaans (13,3%), Sesotho sa Leboa (9,4%) and English and Setswana (8,2% each).

The least-spoken indigenous language in South Africa is isiNdebele, which is spoken by 1,6% of the population.

Although English is the mother tongue of only 8,2% of the population, it is the language most widely understood, and the second language of the majority of South Africans. However, government is committed to promoting all the official languages.

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## **Religion**

According to the Constitution, everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

Almost 80% of South Africa's population follows the Christian faith. Other major religious groups are the Hindus, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. A minority of South Africa's population do not belong to any of the major religions, but regard themselves as traditionalists of no specific religious affiliation.

## **Christian churches**

There are various Christian churches throughout the country. There are many official and unofficial ecumenical relations between the various churches. One of the most important of these links is the South African Council of Churches (SACC), although it is not representative of all churches.

The major African indigenous churches, most of the Afrikaans churches, and the Pentecostal and charismatic churches are, as a rule, not members of the SACC, and usually have their own coordinating liaison bodies.

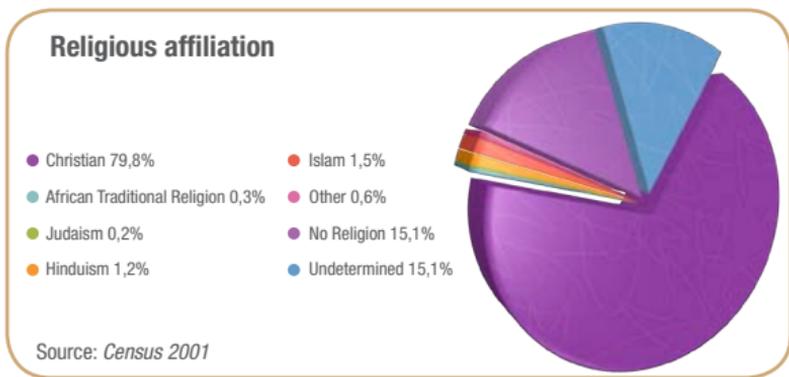
## **African independent churches (AICs)**

The largest grouping of Christian churches is the AICs, represented by the Zionist or Apostolic churches. The Pentecostal movement also has its independent offshoots in this group.

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 Dutch Reformed Church, also known as the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, with its sister churches, the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk, have congregations countrywide. The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the



smaller Reformed Church in Africa, with predominantly Indian members, are some of the smaller churches.

### Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church has grown significantly in number and influence in recent years. It works closely with other churches on the socio-political front.

### Other Christian churches

Other 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 SACC.

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

Hundreds of independent charismatic churches have mushroomed across the country. Also active in South Africa, among the smaller groups, are the Greek Orthodox Church, Church of Scientology, the Seventh Day Adventist churches, the Church of the Nazarenes and the Salvation Army.

### 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.

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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, with a number of people from South Africa's different cultural groups embracing this religion.

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

Buddhism is barely organised in South Africa. However, the Nan Hua Buddhist temple has been built in Bronkhorstspruit near Pretoria.

The number of Parsees has decreased, while there is a small group of Jains in Durban. Followers of the Baha'i faith are establishing groups and temples in various parts of the country.