

MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA

MANY FINDING FREEDOM IN CHRIST



WHAT DOES ISLAM LOOK LIKE IN AUSTRALIA?

The number of Muslims in Australia increased after its immigration laws were changed in 1975 to accept non-white immigrants. As of 2016, 604,000 Muslims make up 2.6% of the population. Most of the Muslims in Australia live in New South Wales and Victoria. Sydney (5.8%) and Melbourne (4.2%) have the highest proportion of Muslims.

Over a third of Muslims in Australia were born there. The largest groups of Muslim immigrants were born in Lebanon (10%) and Turkey (8%). Muslims have also come from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iraq, Bangladesh, Iran, and Fiji. Most of the Lebanese (more Christians than Muslims) arrived during the Lebanon civil war (1975-1990). Most Australian Muslims are Sunni, though there are small communities of Shias, Sufis, and Ahmadiyya.

There are a variety of Islamic associations in Australia. Hizb ut-Tahrir, a terrorist-linked Islamist group outlawed in many Muslim nations, functions legally in Australia. Several foreign terrorist organizations have cells in Australia, including Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jemaah Islamiah and Al-Shabaab. A number of Islamic book shops are known to promote jihadism. Australia's multi-cultural policy appears to leave freedom for Islamists to radicalize and recruit. Jihadists have carried out attacks in Australia, and the police have thwarted dozens more.

WHAT ARE MUSLIMS' GREATEST STRUGGLES IN AUSTRALIA?

Generally, Muslims earn significantly less than non-immigrant Australians, and it appears they are not given opportunities like other immigrants. Muslims often struggle to support their families and give their children a decent future. Muslims are over-represented in jails in New South Wales and Victoria. Many appear to be struggling to integrate.

Anti-Muslim attitudes have grown significantly among Australians since the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and the 2005 bombings in Bali, which killed 82 Australians. People frequently oppose the building of mosques. Some veiled Muslim women have been harassed by those who see the practice as opposed to Australian cultural values of gender equality and individual freedom.

In some polls, as many as ten percent of non-Muslim Australians show hostile attitudes towards Muslims. As a result, some Muslims are fearful of being mistreated in public and say that they are concerned about becoming victims of anti-Muslim violence.

WHAT IS GOD DOING AMONG MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA?

Australian churches vary in their responses to Islam – from opposition to and suspicion of Islam to an open welcome of Muslims. In recent years many Muslims have responded to the Gospel in Australia. Thousands of former Muslims attend churches in the major cities. Former Muslims are baptized every week.

Churches run many of the social services used by Muslims, such as food distribution, helping with accommodation and job searches, and offering English classes. Specific outreach activities focus on Muslims, and there are some Muslim-Christian debates and discussions. Iranians exhibit high levels of interest, but new believers in Christ come from many countries.

The tendency for Muslims to live in their own social and cultural communities creates barriers. The Islamic law of apostasy and fears of reprisal from family members still living in Islamic countries discourage Muslims from investigating Christianity or openly declaring themselves Christians.

PRAYER POINTS

“IF YOU ASK ME ANYTHING IN MY NAME, I WILL DO IT.” JOHN 14:14

- ❖ Pray for Muslims to find their identity in Jesus, not material wealth, opportunity, or security.
- ❖ Pray for Muslims to be drawn to the love of Jesus made manifest through His Church.
- ❖ Pray for new believers to become ambassadors for Christ to their home nations.