Faith Groups Profile

August 2017 update

A significant proportion of the Wyndham population has arrived from overseas (42%), bringing with them many different cultures and religious beliefs. Consequently, trends around religious affiliation have changed considerably over time. In 2016, Wyndham residents were affiliated with over 90 different faiths.

Over the past 10 years there has been a noticeable decrease in the proportion of Wyndham residents affiliated with Christian religions such as Catholicism, the Anglican Church and Baptist. As presented in Figure 1, in 2006 over 64% of Wyndham residents were affiliated with a Christian religion, this fell to 58% in 2011 and to 46% in 2016. Despite the decrease, Christian religions remain the most popular amongst Wyndham residents today.

In contrast, affiliation with non-Christian religions has increased over the same time period. Less than 7% of Wyndham residents were affiliated with a non-Christian religion in 2006, compared to over 22% in 2016. Non-Christian religions popular in the Wyndham community include Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism.

The proportion of Wyndham residents not affiliated with any religion has remained relatively constant over the last 10 years. This is in contrast to the trend seen Australia wide where since 2011, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of the population reporting no religious affiliation.

The increasing diversity of the Wyndham community is highlighted by the growing number of residents affiliated with non-Christian religions, in particular Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. The Hindu community in Wyndham has increased by 170% since 2011, while the Islamic community has almost doubled in size (figure 2). As a proportion of the total population, around 9% of residents are affiliated with the Hindu religion and 7% with Islam. In 2011, less than 2,000 Wyndham residents were affiliated with Sikh religion. By 2016, this number had more than tripled to 7,355 people.

Wyndham’s most recently developed and highly culturally diverse suburbs such as Tarneit, Truganina and Williams Landing, are home to the greatest proportion of residents affiliated with non-Christian religions. A large proportion of residents in these suburbs have emigrated from non-English speaking countries such as India where religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism are popular. Across these three suburbs, Hinduism is the most popular non–Christian religion.

As displayed in Figure 3, in Truganina a much larger proportion of residents are affiliated with non-Christian religions compared to Christian religions (44% and 30% respectively).

In the older established areas of Wyndham, such as Werribee and Hoppers Crossing, and rural communities including Werribee South and Little River, over half the population still report an affiliation with a Christian religion. These areas are less culturally diverse than newer suburbs of Wyndham. In Werribee South 62% of residents are affiliated with a Christian religion, compared to 4% of residents affiliated with non-Christian religions.

Age appears to be a factor in determining whether someone is affiliated with a religion. Figure 4 displays religious affiliation by 5 year age group. A large proportion of residents affliated with non-Chrisitian religions are aged between 30 and 39 years. The second largest group are aged 0-4 years. It is highly likely that parents are selecting their child’s religion based on their own. A similar trend may be occuring for those not affiliated with any religion.

In contrast to those affiliated with non-Christian religions, the largest proportion of residents affiliated with Christian religions is aged 65 years and over (11.4%). Wyndham residents in their 20s and early 60s are the least likely to be affiliated with a Christian religion.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2011 and 2016). *Census of Population and Housing*. Retrieved from <https://auth.censusdata.abs.gov.au/webapi/jsf/login.xhtml>

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