

Polling brief: Australia Day

Key Results

The Australia Institute surveyed 1,417 Australians about Australia Day between 5th and 17th of December 2017. Survey respondents were asked first about their knowledge about Australia Day, then about their attitudes relating to when Australia Day should be held.

// Was Australia Day always held on 26 January?

- 77% of respondents said yes
- 12% said no
- 11% said they did not know.

26 January was adopted by all states only in 1935.¹ Only since 1994 have all states and territories held the Australia Day public holiday on this date instead of on the nearest Monday.²

// What historical event happened on 26 January?

Respondents were given a randomised list of 11 options.

- 38% selected the correct answer: the First Fleet landing in Sydney Cove.
 - 11% said it was the First Fleet establishing the NSW colony. In fact this formally occurred on 7 February 1788, while British Parliament had established the colony in law in previous years.³
 - Only half (49%) selected options relating to the “First Fleet”.
- Half of respondents did not choose the First Fleet.
 - 14% said they did not know.
 - 19% chose events that occurred prior to the First Fleet, including

¹ <https://www.australiaday.org.au/about-australia-day/history/>

² <https://theconversation.com/australia-day-invasion-day-survival-day-a-long-history-of-celebration-and-contestation-70278>

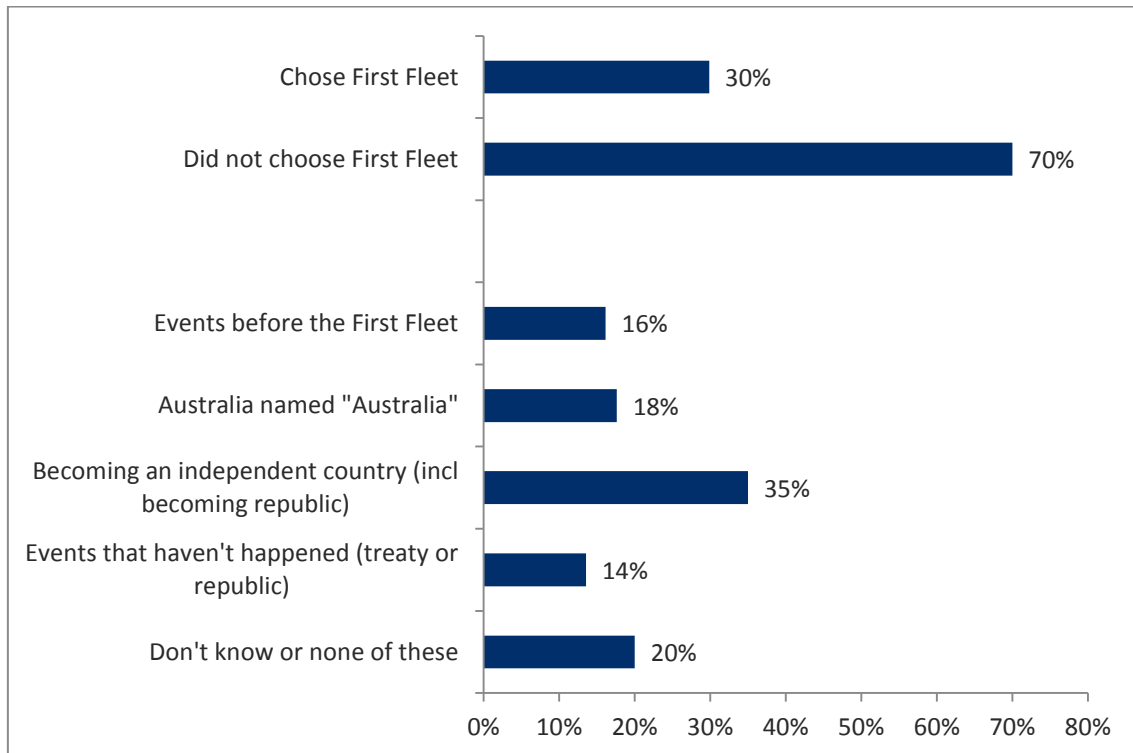
³ https://www.statusquo.org/aru_html/html/ausday.html

- the first Europeans to setting foot in Australia (8%), which occurred many times prior to the First Fleet,
 - Captain Cook first sighting Australia (7%), and
 - Britain first claiming possession of Australia (4%).
- 12% chose events relating to becoming an independent country, including
 - 5% choosing the Constitution being signed,
 - 5% who chose independence from British Parliament and Courts,⁴ and
 - 1% choosing Parliament sitting for the first time.
- 4% chose events that have not happened, including becoming a republic and a signing a treaty with First Australians.

// What is the best day to hold Australia Day?

Given the same list of options, respondents were asked to select the best days for Australia Day. They could select up to three; the average was 1.4. (For this reason the totals here include some overlap). Figure 1 summarises the results, detailed below.

Figure 1 – When is the best day to hold Australia Day – polling responses



⁴ http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/num_act/aa1986114/

- 30% chose either the First Fleet landing in Sydney Cove or establishing the NSW colony. 70% did not choose the First Fleet and 50% chose other options.
 - Only 23% chose landing in Sydney Cove.
 - Many who said the First Fleet arrived or established NSW on 26 January did not think this was the best day on which to hold Australia Day.
- More respondents thought dates relating to becoming an independent nation were a better option (35%) than dates relating to the First Fleet. This includes
 - when the Australian Constitution was signed (17%),
 - when Australia became independent from British Parliament and courts (14%),⁵
 - when Parliament sat for the first time (6%), and
 - Australia becoming a republic (10%).
- 16% chose events occurring *before* the First Fleet arrived.
- 18% chose when Australia was named “Australia”.
- 5% said ‘none of these’ and 15% said they did not know.

// Attitudes about Australia Day

- Nearly all respondents (84%) agreed that it was important to them that Australia has a national day.
 - Nearly half (47%) strongly agreed.
- At the same time a majority (56%) agreed they didn’t really mind when we hold Australia Day, as long as we have a day to celebrate being a nation.
 - A third disagreed (36%).
- Half (49%) agreed that Australia Day should not be on a day that is offensive to Indigenous Australians, while 36% disagreed.
- But only 37% agreed that the current date of Australia Day is offensive to Indigenous Australians, while 46% disagreed.
- Attitudes were split over whether Australia Day should always be on a Friday or Monday to give Australians a long weekend, with 43% agreeing and 44% disagreeing.
- Nearly half (47%) agreed that local councils should not be forced to hold citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day, with around a third (35%) disagreeing. (The Australian Government has removed the ability of some councils to hold

⁵ http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdb/au/legis/cth/num_act/aa1986114/

citizenship ceremonies, in response to those councils deciding not to hold these ceremonies on 26 January.)

Method

The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1,417 people between 5th and 7th of December 2017 online through Research Now with nationally representative samples by gender, age and state and territory.

Results are shown only for larger states. Income crosstabs show household income.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the lower house. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs, but results are also shown separately for undecideds. "LNP" includes separate responses for Liberal and National. "Other" includes Nick Xenophon Team and Independent/Other.

Detailed results

The following question is about Australian history. Please answer to the best of your knowledge. We will tell you the correct answer afterwards.

Has Australia Day always been held on 26 January?

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Vic	Qld
Yes	77%	76%	79%	81%	74%	77%
No	12%	13%	11%	12%	13%	9%
Don't know / not sure	11%	12%	10%	7%	13%	13%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
Yes	82%	78%	72%	85%	65%	72%
No	10%	12%	16%	10%	15%	9%
Don't know / not sure	9%	10%	12%	5%	20%	18%

What Australian historical event occurred on 26 January? (Options randomised)

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Vic	Qld
The Australian Constitution was signed	5%	6%	5%	5%	7%	5%
Australian Parliament sat for the first time	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%
The First Fleet established the colony of New South Wales	11%	11%	11%	12%	12%	10%
The first Europeans set foot on Australian soil	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%
British colonists signed a treaty with the first Australians	1%	1%	2%	1%	2%	2%
Captain Cook first sighted Australia	7%	6%	8%	8%	8%	7%
Britain first claimed possession of Australia	4%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
The First Fleet landed in Sydney Cove	38%	40%	36%	43%	31%	37%
Australia was named "Australia"	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Australia became independent of British parliaments and courts	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	9%
Australia became a republic	2%	4%	1%	1%	3%	3%
Don't know / not sure	14%	12%	16%	12%	18%	13%

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
The Australian Constitution was signed	5%	6%	8%	4%	3%	4%
Australian Parliament sat for the first time	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%
The First Fleet established the colony of New South Wales	12%	12%	9%	12%	8%	6%
The first Europeans set foot on Australian soil	6%	8%	10%	9%	9%	7%
British colonists signed a treaty with the first Australians	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Captain Cook first sighted Australia	6%	8%	7%	10%	4%	6%
Britain first claimed possession of Australia	4%	4%	4%	1%	4%	3%
The First Fleet landed in Sydney Cove	41%	34%	40%	41%	39%	31%
Australia was named "Australia"	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%
Australia became independent of British parliaments and courts	6%	6%	3%	4%	6%	4%
Australia became a republic	3%	3%	3%	0%	1%	2%
Don't know / not sure	13%	13%	11%	16%	23%	33%

Which of the following do you think are the best day on which to hold Australia Day celebrations? Please select up to three. When

(Options randomised)

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	Vic	Qld
The Australian Constitution was signed	17%	18%	17%	16%	22%	17%
Australian Parliament sat for the first time	6%	7%	6%	6%	9%	5%
The First Fleet established the colony of New South Wales	9%	11%	7%	11%	10%	8%
The first Europeans set foot on Australian soil	7%	9%	6%	8%	6%	6%
British colonists signed a treaty with the first Australians	5%	5%	4%	4%	6%	3%
Captain Cook first sighted Australia	8%	7%	8%	7%	8%	10%
Britain first claimed possession of Australia	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	3%
The First Fleet landed in Sydney Cove	23%	25%	22%	30%	18%	21%
Australia was named "Australia"	18%	17%	19%	15%	18%	20%
Australia became independent of British parliaments and courts	14%	17%	12%	14%	15%	17%
Australia became a republic	10%	11%	8%	10%	10%	10%
None of these	5%	4%	7%	6%	5%	3%
Don't know / not sure	15%	13%	16%	12%	15%	16%
<i>Average selected</i>	1.41	1.48	1.33	1.42	1.44	1.39

	LNP	ALP	GRN	PHON	Other	Undec
The Australian Constitution was signed	20%	18%	17%	14%	14%	13%
Australian Parliament sat for the first time	5%	8%	10%	1%	6%	4%
The First Fleet established the colony of New South Wales	14%	8%	3%	13%	5%	5%
The first Europeans set foot on Australian soil	10%	7%	5%	8%	4%	3%
British colonists signed a treaty with the first Australians	4%	6%	6%	4%	2%	2%
Captain Cook first sighted Australia	10%	7%	4%	11%	8%	8%
Britain first claimed possession of Australia	4%	4%	3%	1%	0%	0%
The First Fleet landed in Sydney Cove	30%	20%	11%	31%	23%	16%
Australia was named "Australia"	16%	17%	26%	23%	13%	12%
Australia became independent of British parliaments and courts	13%	16%	20%	9%	14%	14%
Australia became a republic	7%	12%	15%	5%	8%	8%
None of these	4%	4%	13%	2%	7%	7%
Don't know / not sure	11%	15%	12%	16%	22%	33%
<i>Average selected</i>	1.47	1.42	1.44	1.38	1.25	1.27

Do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Total agree	Total disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / unsure
It is important to me that Australia has a national day of commemoration and celebration.	84%	9%	47%	38%	6%	3%	7%
I don't mind when we hold Australia Day, as long as we have a day to celebrate being a nation.	56%	36%	20%	35%	18%	18%	8%
Local governments should not be forced to hold citizenship ceremonies on Australia Day.	47%	35%	15%	32%	17%	18%	18%
The current date of Australia Day is offensive to indigenous Australians.	37%	46%	14%	23%	23%	23%	17%
Australia Day should always be on a Friday or a Monday so we get an Australia Day long weekend.	43%	44%	20%	23%	24%	20%	12%
Australia Day should not be on a day that is offensive to Indigenous Australians	49%	36%	21%	29%	18%	19%	14%