

# Survey reveals growing support for changing Australia Day date

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Support for retaining 26 January as Australia's national day of celebration appears to be slipping, according to a new survey that shows growing numbers of people are open to changing the date.

The University of South Australia survey of 559 Australian citizens reveals that 67% do not mind when Australia Day falls, as long as there is a dedicated day for national celebration. Reconciliation Day on 27 May was the most popular alternative date.

This contrasts with a 2019 poll by ANU researchers showing 70% support for 26 January and a subsequent 2022 survey by the Institute of Public Affairs, where 65% of people said Australia Day should be celebrated on 26 January.

The [new study](#), published in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, also drew out some of the factors influencing people's views, suggesting that racism, patriotism, traditionalism and age all play a part.

"Those open to changing the date were in favor of an alternative date that did not offend First Nations' people," says lead researcher, UniSA Psychology (Honors) graduate Eliza Mortimer-Royle.

"The most popular option was moving the current date to 27 May, which is Reconciliation Day. Another possibility was 1 January, marking the date in 1901 when Australia became a nation."

Younger respondents who were taught a different version of Australian history than older survey participants were more likely to support a date change.

"In recent years, the school curriculum has focused on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experienced colonization as an invasion, leading to subsequent oppression and degradation, including major loss of life, land, culture, community and history. That contrasts with the version of history that older Australians learned at school, which was from a European perspective.

"It is not surprising that these different perspectives on Australia's history may affect how people feel towards celebrating 26 January, which marks the arrival of the First Fleet on Gweagal and Gameygal Land."

Australia Day has been commemorated since 1935 and celebrated nationally as a public holiday since 1994, but it's a subject of contention for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, as well as a growing number of non-Indigenous Australians.

In recent years, Australia Day protests have become increasingly commonplace, with many recognizing 26 January as an annual Day of Mourning, Invasion or Survival. The date has been protested by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders since as early as 1938.

"There is a consensus that a date change will improve the inclusivity of Australia Day celebrations and lessen the ongoing negative impact that 26 January has on First Nations communities," Mortimer-Royle says.

The study is the first to investigate predictors of Australians' attitudes towards 26 January, while simultaneously exploring whether interventions could result in a date change.

**More information:** Eliza Mortimer-Royle et al, Pride and prejudice: What influences Australians' attitudes toward changing the date of Australia Day?, *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/asap.12399](https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12399)

Provided by University of South Australia

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