

The Lucky Country

Numbers hold significance for all of us. For many, their significance runs deeper than their connection to anniversaries, birthdays and public holidays. We asked Australians a range of questions on numbers, luck and superstitions.

Very superstitious

56% of Australians consider themselves to be superstitious.

Luck in numbers?

54% of Australians have a number that they consider “lucky” and treat its appearance as a sign of some sort. Two-thirds of this 54% use their lucky number for playing lottery and 10% for passwords, selecting telephone numbers and betting on sporting events.

Only one-fifth of us have numbers we consider to be “unlucky”. Of those who have “unlucky” numbers, half would not take up residence or office space at an address with these numbers, and 12.5% would think twice in situations where these numbers emerged.

DOB: 15% think one’s date of birth is integral to their luck in life.

Friday 13th: One-third of Australians said that, if they or somebody they knew encountered some kind of misfortune on Friday 13th (Black Friday), they would be tempted to see some connection between the misfortune and date. However, most of us would brave visiting a cemetery (90%), and holding an event/party (92%) on Halloween or Friday 13th. We are most likely to postpone events celebrating new beginnings (eg. farewell parties) and least likely to postpone events mourning a passing (eg. funerals) because of an unlucky date.

Number 13: One-third of Australians would be uncomfortable staying on the 13th floor of a building or living in a house number 13 on a street.

The Year 2000: Remember all the doomsday prophecies made in the lead up to the new millennium? Well, one-third of Australians expected something dramatic to unfold, but most of us just joked about ensuing disasters (44%).

September 11: 13% of Aussies would avoid travelling by plane on September 11, no matter what. Only 38.5% are certain the date would not impact on their travel arrangements.

Sayings: We are most familiar with the following sayings about numbers:

1. A four-leaf clover brings luck (98%)
2. Shattering a mirror brings 7 years of bad luck (97%)
3. A series of unlucky events always happens in threes (87%)
4. Most Australians are aware of the Biblical mention of 666 (74%)

"It is interesting that in this era of reason, science, and technology the irrational has such sway over The rational", writes social researcher Mark McCrindle, "While it is not quite a return to the medieval age, there is certainly a rise in the emotive influencers compared to the cognitive influencers. Indeed the 21st Century, compared to the 20th Century, is marked by the rise of the visceral over the cerebral. This is an era where increasingly the head is led by the heart".

Lucky number 8:

In Chinese culture, the number 8 (ba in Mandarin and paat in Cantonese) is considered to be lucky because it sounds like the word for prosperity (fa in Mandarin and faat in Cantonese). And so the Beijing Olympics began on 8/8/08 at 8:08 p.m. While most Australians do not recognise 8 as particularly special or lucky (the number 7 is the most regarded by Australians (see below), 1 in 3 see luck in numeric patterns and are anticipating good luck on 8/8/08.

Unlucky number 13:

The top three "lucky" numbers for Australians, in order of recognition are 7, 13 and 3. Number 13 is also the number one unlucky number, followed by 6. All these numbers hold universal significance.

3: The number 3 holds significance for Christians, Muslims, Jews and Pagans, amongst others. In the Bible there are numerous references to 3 from God being 3 persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) to Peter's 3 denials of Christ.

6: This number is most likely considered an unlucky number because of the association of 666 (the mark of the beast) with the devil in the Book of Revelation (Chapter 13).

7: This number frequently and favourably appears throughout the Bible and is considered to be lucky by gamblers.

13: This number is considered to be unlucky in most cultures. There are many theories as to why this number is considered unlucky in Western cultures. One is that Judas Iscariot, the disciple that betrayed Jesus, was the 13th to sit at the table at the Last Supper. In Chinese culture, 13 adds up to 4 which, in Cantonese sounds like the word for death.

"As Australia's cultural mix changes, so do the numbers and dates considered lucky and unlucky" states Mark McCrindle. "1 in 4 residents of Australian were not born here and our cultural mix is more diverse today than ever before. Thus the rise in the interest in 08/08/08 and next year 09/09/09 – numbers that have traditionally meant little in an Anglo culture but which are meaningful in many Asian cultures."

On this day (8 August):

1588: The Anglo-Spanish naval engagement ends, thus ending the Spanish Armada's attempt to invade England.

1974: Richard Nixon announces his resignation following the Watergate Scandal.

1988: The Burmese 8888 Uprising – 2,500 Burmese students and monks are killed by soldiers for protesting for a return to democracy.

2001: Hollywood golden couple Nicole Kidman and Tom Cruise divorce.

Just another day:

7/7/07: Two men are arrested in Paris for stealing Pablo Picasso paintings from the apartment of his grand daughter.

6/6/06: The Howard government commissions Ziggy Switkowski to lead a commission on the introduction of nuclear energy.

5/5/05: British polls open for the 2005 general election.

Happy birthday:

Vanessa Amorosi turned 27 on 8/8/08; Shane Lee, 35; Dustin Hoffman, 71, and John Laws, 73.

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