

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS ACT 1975: subsection 6(3)

2026 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING; and 2026 POST CENSUS REVIEW

In accordance with subsection 8(1) of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, (C&S Act) the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) intends to conduct the nineteenth national Census of Population and Housing on Tuesday 11 August 2026. Pursuant to subsection 8(3) of the C&S Act, the *Census and Statistics Regulation 2016* (the Regulation), as amended in 2024, prescribes the statistical information that must be collected by the Census.

The information collected is used to estimate Australia's population, distribute government funds, and plan services for communities around Australia. The Census provides information for the entire country, including small geographic areas and small population groups. Census data informs planning for schools, health care, transport and infrastructure. It's also used to help plan local services for individuals, families and communities.

Who Participates

The Census is compulsory. Everyone in Australia on Tuesday 11 August 2026, including Norfolk Island, the Territories of Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island, must be included on a Census form. This obligation is subject to limited exceptions set out in section 6 of the *Census and Statistics (Population and Housing) Notice 2016*, including foreign diplomats and their families living in Australia who are not Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents. Australian residents out of the country on Census night are not included in the Census unless they have left the country without being required to undertake departure formalities (for example Australian navy personnel serving on Australian ships abroad).

Census Topics

The 2026 Census will include a new topic on gender and sexual orientation for people aged 16 years and older. Other information that will be collected includes demographic particulars including age, sex and marital status; usual address; ethnicity data including birthplace, ancestry and whether of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin; religion; education; income; labour force status, industry and occupation; need for assistance; long-term health conditions; service with the Australian Defence Force; unpaid and volunteer work; and method of travel to work. Questions will be asked of each household on characteristics of the dwelling occupied and tenure of occupation. The 'Number of children ever born' topic will return to being included every 10 years and will not be included in the 2026 Census.

Extensive testing using a range of techniques including focus groups, interviews and large-scale field tests has shown a high level of community acceptance of the 2026 Census questions.

How to participate

Prior to Census night, around 88% of households will get a letter with instructions to complete the Census online. The option of a paper form is also available on request. A paper Census form will be delivered to the remaining dwellings by Census field staff. The paper form includes clear instructions on how to complete the Census online if preferred. For the first time, people will have the option to subscribe to get updates

and access the Census through myGov. Some people living in remote areas and people experiencing homelessness will have help to complete their form from Census staff. People who would like to complete a separate form from the rest of their household for privacy reasons can submit a request online or by phone.

Protecting people's data

Census data is protected by the *Privacy Act 1988* and the secrecy provisions of the C&S Act.

The C&S Act requires the Australian Statistician to publish and disseminate results or abstracts of results in a manner that is not likely to identify a particular person or organisation.

In accordance with section 8A of the C&S Act, people can choose to have their information archived. If chosen, the information provided on the Census form will be transferred to the National Archives of Australia as part of the Census Time Capsule and preserved for 99 years.

This information will not be made available for any purpose until 2125 and cannot be accessed, altered or retrieved before that time.

Post Census Review

As with each Census since 1966, a post-enumeration survey, the Post Census Review, will be conducted immediately after the 2026 Census to estimate the number of people missed or included more than once in the Census. In 2026 it will survey around 57,000 households, selected to be representative of the whole country. The short survey is conducted via interview, either over the phone or in person, and asks for basic demographic information as well as questions about where the person usually lives. Data obtained through the survey is used to determine the 'net undercount' which is a key contributor to the production of accurate population estimates at the state and territory level.

Data Release

Data from the 2026 Census will be released progressively from June 2027.

Data and outcomes from the 2026 Post Census Review will be released in June 2027.

The 2021 Census was conducted on 10 August 2021 and was previously tabled in Parliament as Proposal No. 3 of 2021.

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