

S22

From: S4 /F
Sent: Monday, 14 October 2024 6:06 PM
To: S4/F >
Subject: RE: Summary of ABS/MCCA meeting 5 August 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi S47F,

I am back from leave today- I can see S47F responded and actioned this in my absence but I wanted to thank you for the clarification and additional feedback.

Have a wonderful week

Regards

S4 /F

Co-Director – 2026 Census Content
 Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(E) S47F @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

The Australian Bureau of Statistics acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, both past, present and emerging.

From: S4 /F @abs.gov.au
Sent: Tuesday, 8 October 2024 12:15 PM
To: S4 /F
Cc: S4 /F @abs.gov.au; S47E @abs.gov.au
Subject: RE: Summary of ABS/MCCA meeting 5 August 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi S47F,

Thank you for the clarification, and providing the additional feedback from your member communities. We'll add this to our notes and take it into consideration.

Kind regards

S47F

Co-Director (a/g)

2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(E) S4 /F @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

The Australian Bureau of Statistics acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, both past, present and emerging.

From: S4 /F
Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 8:53 AM
To: S4 /F @abs.gov.au
Subject: FW: Summary of ABS/MCCA meeting 5 August 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

CAUTION: External email. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

From: S4 /F
Sent: Friday, 4 October 2024 6:52 AM
To: S4 /F [@abs.gov.au'; S4 /F \[@abs.gov.au\]\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\)
Subject: FW: Summary of ABS/MCCA meeting 5 August 2024 \[SEC=OFFICIAL\]](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

Dear S4 /F,

We would like to express our sincere thanks to you, Dr Gruen and Duncan for taking the time to discuss our concerns and to receive our feedback.

The minutes you have forwarded to us appear to be a very good representation of our discussion. However, in red below we have made some minor changes which we feel more adequately present our position.

In relation to the religious question, we have consulted with our member communities and the overwhelming view is that your suggestion of deleting the religious picklist is the fairest and most appropriate option as it gives all religious groups an equal opportunity to respond more accurately with their specific religion.

Regards

S47F
[REDACTED]



From: S47F [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 17 September 2024 9:50 AM
To: S47F [REDACTED]
Cc: Duncan Young <Duncan.Young@abs.gov.au>; S47F [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>;
S47E [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au
Subject: Summary of ABS/MCCA meeting 5 August 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you again for meeting with Dr Gruen, Duncan and myself last month to discuss the religious affiliation question and other cultural diversity topics of interest. Please find the key points from the meeting below and thank you for your patience in getting these back to you. I hope these are of assistance for you when communicating back to the MCCA affiliated organisations. Please let me know if there is anything you would like corrected in the record below or if you have further information to provide.

I am not sure if Duncan has mentioned this to you when you spoke to him on the phone, but following the Government decision on the topics for the 2026 Census, the ABS decided to not proceed with the 2024 Census Test. We are continuing to test a revised question through other testing mechanisms to inform our final decision on the design of the question for the 2026 Census.

Key points from meeting between ABS and Macedonian Communities Council of Australia –
5 August 2024

Religious Affiliation	<p>ABS context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government and ABS have different roles to play in determining the content for the census. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Census topics are determined by the Government and the ABS has no indication that the Government will choose to remove the Religion topic. <i><<Since our meeting the Government has confirmed that the Census will collect data on religion in the 2026 Census>></i> The ABS determines the questions used to collect data on the topics the Government wants included in the Census. The ABS is reviewing the design of the question on religious affiliation for the 2026 Census and advised we will be testing a question without a picklist in the 2024 Census Test to address feedback received on the current question design, including the lack of inclusivity of the picklist. <i><<As noted above, since the meeting, the ABS has decided to not proceed with the 2024 Test>></i> The ABS is still in an information gathering phase to understand what a change in the religious affiliation question design will mean for different interested parties. The ABS is meeting with different religious organisations and other data users to understand the different perspectives. <p>Discussion on question design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The primary concern for the MCCA for the religious affiliation question pertains to the use of “Greek Orthodox,” in the picklist. This is seen as exclusionary for all other Orthodox churches and there is a concern that people of other orthodox religions select Greek Orthodox in the picklist accidentally or as the only or “close enough” option, reducing the numbers for other religious groups. The views of the MCCA are unanimously supported by MCCA affiliated organisations across Australia. The MCCA would like the question design to be as easy for the Macedonian community to feel included and to provide their religious affiliation correctly. The MCCA do not yet have a firm position on the use of only a free text field without a picklist. While a free text field may be comfortable for some, it could cause more difficulty for others. There are challenges in developing an inclusive picklist as it is not possible to have a list with all 139 religions. The ABS raised that if a picklist was retained for the 2026 Census, one option to address the MCCA concerns would be to change “Greek Orthodox” to “Eastern Orthodox Christian” in the picklist. While more inclusive, if the ABS made this change, it would not be possible for people who tick this box to be coded to the different eastern orthodox religious groups (e.g. Greek, Macedonian or Russian orthodox). How the data is used is an important consideration for what level of disaggregation the picklist is at. The ABS sought to understand how the data is used during the meeting. While the MCCA don’t use the data extensively themselves, they expressed a preference to retain the disaggregation of religions as there are other people and organisations who use this data to support analysis of the community. e.g., the MCCA referenced a recent Bernard Salt article on homeownership by migrant communities, including Australian Macedonian homeownership. The MCCA will support the Macedonian community to answer the question and would welcome communications collateral from the ABS so they can prepare and assist their community. Regardless of the final outcome, the MCCA would appreciate being kept informed and in the conversation.
-----------------------	--

S22



S22 [REDACTED] Can you please make sure you cc [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] S47E @abs.gov.au into any emails to ensure they don't get lost.

Thank you again for your time and patience and please let us know if there is anything further you want to add to the above. We will keep you informed of any developments over the coming months.

Regards

[REDACTED] S47F

S47F [REDACTED]

Co-Director – 2026 Census Content
Population Statistics Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(E) [REDACTED] S47F@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

The Australian Bureau of Statistics acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, both past, present and emerging.



Ref: EC24-000312

EXECUTIVE MEETING BRIEF

Meeting Title	2026 Census Topic Review: Meeting with Macedonian Communities Council of Australia
Attendees	<p>Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc (MCCA) (see Attachment A)</p> <p>S47F [REDACTED] Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc</p> <p>S47F [REDACTED] Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc</p> <p>S47F [REDACTED] United Macedonian Organisations of Western Australia (and member of the Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc)</p> <p>ABS</p> <p>Dr David Gruen, Australian Statistician</p> <p>Brenton Goldsworthy, Deputy Australian Statistician, Insights and Statistics Group</p> <p>S47F [REDACTED] Co-Director 2026 Census Content</p>
Date	Monday 5 August 2024
Time	4:30 – 5:00pm
Venue	Microsoft Teams videoconference

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Discuss potential changes to the religious affiliation question on the 2026 Census with the Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc (MCCA), and one of their member organisations, the United Macedonian Organisations of Western Australia.
- Seek to understand whether MCCA support the proposed changes to the question (in part or in full).

S22 [REDACTED]

KEY POINTS S22 [REDACTED]

- Prior to the 2021 Census (March 2020) the United Macedonian Organisations (WA) wrote to the ABS regarding the use of 'Greek Orthodox' in the religion picklist with a suggestion for the use of 'Christian Orthodox' as a preferred option S22 [REDACTED]
- The ABS replied to the United Macedonian Organisations (WA) (March 2020) explaining that 'Greek Orthodox' was an option in the picklist because it was one of the top selected religious groups from the previous Census and that 'Christian Orthodox' was not part of the ASCRG (see S22 [REDACTED])

S22 [REDACTED]

- On 3 June 2024, the MCCA wrote to the Australian Statistician with five requests (see [Attachment E](#)):
 - Religion: suggests that in the next Census the religious group 'Greek Orthodox' listed in the picklist is replaced with the Narrow group of 'Eastern Orthodox' and to have a write in field next to the picklist item so the respondent can specify the Orthodox church they are aligned with.

Clearing Officer	Duncan Young	General Manager Census and Population Division	Mob: S47F [REDACTED]
Date Cleared	02 August 2024		
Contact Officer	S47F [REDACTED]	Co-Director Population Statistics Branch	Mob: S47F [REDACTED]

S22

We acknowledged the letter and advised that we could discuss these matters at the meeting (see [Attachment F](#) for suggested responses)

- We have no stated opinion from either organisation on the removal of the picklist from the religious affiliation question.
- Suggested discussion points regarding religion:
 - How does MCCA use Census data?
 - Would MCCA be concerned if the proposed changes reduced the comparability of data between the 2026 Census and previous Censuses?
 - If the ABS decided to retain the picklist, would MCCA prefer a picklist for “Eastern Orthodox” or to have all Orthodox religious groups responding via the free text field to maintain granularity of data?

RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES

- Prior to the 2021 Census, the United Macedonian Organisation (WA) wrote to the Australian Statistician with their concern that the Census includes Greek Orthodox in the picklist for the 2021 Census. They recommended that Christian Orthodox be used in all future Census documentation S22 **S22**. You responded explaining the rationale for the question design and explained that Christian Orthodox is currently not listed in the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups. You advised that the ABS regularly reviews classifications and that we would advise them when this review was taking place S22.
- The MCCA published a Media release prior to the 2021 Census with advice for Australian Macedonians on how to respond to questions on religious affiliation, S22 **S22** when completing the Census. S22 **S22**
- Almost 600 pieces of feedback were received at the end of the 2021 Census form that related to the theme of Orthodox. Significant feedback centred around the response option of ‘Greek Orthodox’ appearing as the **only** option for orthodox religions. There were also concerns that people from other orthodox religions were ticking this box incorrectly.

S22

- As part of the 2026 Census topic consultation, a small number of submissions (13) expressed concern that the response options for the religion question are not inclusive and an alternative for Greek Orthodox should be considered. One of these submissions was from the **S4 /G** S4 /G **S4 /G**

BACKGROUND

- In the last 15 years, 0.2% of the population have reported an affiliation with the Macedonian Orthodox religion.

Year	Macedonian Orthodox
2021	52,311 (0.2%)
2016	49,683 (0.2%)
2011	52,051 (0.2%)
2006	48,083 (0.2%)

- In September 2024, the ABS will undertake a large-scale Census Test.
- The ABS is considering and testing if it would be better to ask the question “Does the person have a religion?” rather than “What is the person’s religion?”? This question would have a mark box for both “No” and “Yes (specify religion)” (see [Attachment I](#)).
- For those who do indicate that they have a religion, the ABS is testing the use of a write-in box for all responses, rather than a pick list for the most common religions and a write-in box for all others. This makes it a more equitable experience for everyone completing the question and lets people specify the level of detail that is most meaningful to them. In September 2024, the ABS will undertake a large-scale Census Test.
- The question in the 2024 Test will include eight example religions to assist respondents in answering. At least one example from each Broad Group in the revised ASCRG will be included (except for Broad Group 7 “Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs and no religious affiliation”).
- There will be no reference to Orthodox religions in the list of examples, however, the ‘More information’ section on the online form will provide further information for people identifying with an Orthodox religion. The examples are in alphabetical order (see [Attachment J](#)).
- The letter from the MCCA to you on the 3rd of June (see [Attachment E](#)) flagged five issues of interest to Australian-Macedonians. The five issues are briefly referenced in [Attachment F](#) along with suggested responses if they are raised during the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

A. [Attachment A - Biographies](#)

S22

E. [Attachment E – Letter to the Australian Statistician \(2024\)](#)
F. [Attachment F - Suggested responses to issues raised in Attachment E](#)
G. [Attachment G – MCCA Media release prior to 2021 Census](#)

S22

I. [Attachment I – Religion question asked on Census household forms](#)
J. [Attachment J – ‘More information’ on Census online form](#)

Attachment A – Biographies

S47F

United Macedonian Organisations of Western Australia

S47F

S47F

Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc

S47F

S47F

Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc

S47F



Released under FOI Act

Attachment E – Letter to the Australian Statistician (2024)

Perth Adelaide Melbourne Geelong Sydenham Canberra Queanbeyan Wollongong Sydney Newcastle Gold Coast Brisbane
PO Box 8214 Adelaide SA 5000



Dr David Gruen
Australian Statistician
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10
Belconnen, ACT 2616

03 June 2024

Dear Sir,

Re : Australian Census on Population and Housing 2026

1. Introduction

We are an incorporated association which is constituted by Macedonian Community organizations across every major Australian state, territory and city. We represent and advocate for the broad interests of our constituency, Australians of Macedonian origin, which numerically remains one of the larger European-origin groups in Australia. Macedonians in Australia, an ethno-specific, national and cultural group, emanate from across the distinct parts of homeland Macedonia, which transcend current political boundaries, in the Balkan peninsula of south-eastern Europe.

2. Our submission - Various proposals concerning 2026 Census

In the context of the forthcoming 2026 Census, we have been instructed to make the following submission to the ABS about issues of interest and concern to Australian-Macedonians. The following enumerated sub-paragraphs relate specifically to questions which individually form a core component of the Census.

(a) Religion

We bring to your attention an issue which has created considerable angst, confusion and frustration on the part of a significant number of people throughout Australia who identify as Eastern Orthodox Christians, in relation to the reporting of their religion in our nation's Census. Eastern Orthodoxy is one of the three major doctrinal and jurisdictional groups of Christianity. It is characterized by its continuity with the apostolic church, its liturgy, and its territorial churches. Adherents of the Eastern Orthodox religion live mainly in the Balkans, Middle East, and countries which were members of the former Soviet Union. Our religion

has a long history that may be traced back to Jesus Christ and the Apostles. It is recognised that the largest adherents in modern times are the Russian, Ukrainian and Romanian Orthodox churches. Unfortunately, in Australia there is a tendency to wrongly identify the Eastern Orthodox religion with a specific ethnic or national group, namely "Greek Orthodox". This impliedly alienates or excludes the numerous 'other' Eastern Orthodox groups which exist and operate proudly across our nation including Macedonian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ethiopian, Coptic and Syrian.

The problem of exclusivity and offence occurs when a significant event like the quinquennial Census specifies 'Greek Orthodox' as one of the choices for people to identify within your questionnaire, thereby excluding other Eastern Orthodox constituents from rightly ticking the appropriate box for their own specific religious denomination. Impliedly, this ignores the special connections, rights and ecclesiastical obligations of ALL the 'other' Eastern Orthodox parishes and nationalities which commit to and identify with that religion. We therefore strongly submit that in the next Australian Census the question should read:

What is the person's religion?

No Religion
Catholic
Anglican
Uniting Church
Presbyterian
Buddhism
Islam
Eastern Orthodox

(please specify)

Baptist
Hinduism

Other

(please specify)

We request that the appropriate term or reference, being **Eastern Orthodox**, be used in all future ABS Census documentation or in relation to Local, State and National data collection and reporting (on the part of the ABS) with an option for a person to specify which particular orthodox church they are aligned with, be that (but not limited to) **Greek, Macedonian, Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian, Romanian, Syrian Coptic or Ethiopian**.

We recognize that quality data is a valuable asset which must be robust and accessible while also adhering to any privacy and in-confidence or trust commitments in the use of the data. It stands to reason that in addressing the ABS's crucial role in maximising the value of its information assets, consistent with the Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975, the Census and Statistics Act 1905, and the Statistics Act 1956, that the data collection process be streamlined to **better represent and include all persons who identify as Eastern**

Orthodox. In using the all-encompassing title, "Eastern Orthodox" rather than the former reference point of "Greek Orthodox", the ABS will provide confidence to parishioners from 'other' ethnic groups identifying as Eastern Orthodox, that they (and their specific orthodox denomination) are afforded the appropriate respect, recognition and inclusion in their nation's data. We seek to reaffirm that the aim of this letter is to overcome the negativity which arises when one national group is identified as the carrier or custodian of a religion which has almost 250 million worshippers worldwide, regardless of whichever country or ethnic group is used to represent the religion.

Furthermore, by using the more encompassing term of Eastern Orthodox (in public data, documents or forums), we are better placed to promote goodwill and harmony ~~among~~ all Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters rather than creating unhealthy or exclusive divisions.

As the representative body of Macedonian Communities throughout Australia, the Macedonian Communities Council of Australia is committed to valuing, engaging and assisting in the data collection process in partnership with the ABS. We ~~do not~~ seek to offend any members or affiliates of the Orthodox Religion with this ~~correspondence~~ but rather to embrace ALL Eastern Orthodox parishioners who take pride in their unique heritage, whilst recognising and respecting the overarching and broad-based status of the religion to which we adhere.

S22



S22



We look forward to engaging with senior ABS staff members in the ~~near~~ future to further discuss these important matters we have raised and to perhaps clarify anything which may require further enunciation. It would be greatly appreciated if you could please contact ~~S47F~~ to arrange such a meeting.

Yours Respectfully,

S47F



Chairperson, Macedonian Communities Council of Australia Inc.

S47F



Attachment F – Suggested responses to issues raised in Attachment E

(a) Religion

Request:

- *'that the appropriate term or reference, being Eastern Orthodox, be used in all future ABS Census documentation or in relation to Local, state and National data collection and reporting (on the part of the ABS) with an option for a person to specify which particular orthodox church they are aligned with...'*
- Suggests that in the next Census the religious group 'Greek orthodox' listed in the picklist is replaced with the Narrow group of 'Eastern Orthodox' and to have a write in field next to the picklist item so the respondent can specify the Orthodox church they are aligned with.

Response:

- The ABS is considering and testing if it would be better to ask the question "Does the person have a religion?" rather than "What is the person's religion?" This question would have a mark box for both "No" and "Yes (specify religion)" (see [Attachment I](#)).
- There will be no reference to Orthodox religions in the list of examples, however, the 'More information' section on the online form will provide further information for people identifying with an Orthodox religion. This will be at the Religious group level. To guide our decision about which religious affiliations to specify, the ABS uses the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups.

S22

Attachment G – MCCA Media release prior to 2021 Census



ADVICE ON UPCOMING AUSTRALIAN CENSUS 10 AUGUST 2021 MACEDONIAN COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

19 July 2021

Dear Fellow Australian Macedonians,

The Australian Census 2021 will take place on Tuesday 10th August 2021.

As in the past, the Macedonian community is disadvantaged in filling out the census as many of the options for filling out census questions which are afforded to other ethnic groups are denied to Australians of Macedonian descent.

To this end we have prepared some suggestions as to how best to answer some of the pertinent questions in a manner which will truly gauge and reflect how many Australians of Macedonian origin there really are in Australia. In responding to Questions 16, 18 and 19 (your place of birth and place of birth of your father and mother respectively) please do not use the offensive, illegal and unconstitutional term North Macedonia to indicate your place of birth. In addition, even though you may have been born in the Republic of Macedonia during the period that it was a part of Yugoslavia, it is very important that you do not respond to the Questions 16, 18 and 19 with an answer of "Yugoslavia", as a separate category exists for this answer and you will therefore NOT be counted as originating from the Republic of Macedonia.

The recommended answers below will give the Macedonian Community in Australia a fairer and more accurate representation in the Census and we encourage you to use these answers if they are a true reflection of your ancestry, religion and cultural background.

S47F

Chairman, Macedonian Communities Council of Australia

23 What is the person's religion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answering this question is OPTIONAL.• Examples of 'Other': LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, ATHEISM.• Mark one box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/>	<table border="1"><tr><td>No religion</td></tr><tr><td>Catholic</td></tr><tr><td>Anglican (Church of England)</td></tr><tr><td>Uniting Church</td></tr><tr><td>Islam</td></tr><tr><td>Buddhism</td></tr><tr><td>Presbyterian</td></tr><tr><td>Hinduism</td></tr><tr><td>Greek Orthodox</td></tr><tr><td>Baptist</td></tr><tr><td>Other (please specify)</td></tr><tr><td>MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX</td></tr></table>	No religion	Catholic	Anglican (Church of England)	Uniting Church	Islam	Buddhism	Presbyterian	Hinduism	Greek Orthodox	Baptist	Other (please specify)	MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX
No religion														
Catholic														
Anglican (Church of England)														
Uniting Church														
Islam														
Buddhism														
Presbyterian														
Hinduism														
Greek Orthodox														
Baptist														
Other (please specify)														
MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX														

If you identify as belonging to the Macedonian Orthodox religion you should: In the space below the category "Other – please specify" write/type: "MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX". Be aware that if you respond simply with "Orthodox", a separate category exists for this and you will not be counted as "Macedonian Orthodox".

Attachment I – Religion question asked on Census household forms

2024 Test

- Removing the pick-list options.
- Examples include eight religious groups.

24	Does the person have a religion?	
	• Answering this question is OPTIONAL .	<input type="checkbox"/> No
	• For example: MAHAYANA BUDDHISM, CATHOLIC,	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (specify religion)
	ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, HINDUISM, SUNNI,	
	JUDAISM, SIKHISM, ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL BELIEFS.	

2021 Census

2016 Census

- ‘No religion’ option moved to the first mark box.

2001 Census

- Wording changed from religious denomination to religion.

<p>19 What is the person's religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering this question is OPTIONAL. • For example: Salvation Army, Hinduism, Judaism or Humanism. • If no religion, mark last box. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Catholic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Baptist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Islam</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No religion</p>
--	---

1991 Census

- This question was the first time the picklist was introduced.

17	What is each person's religious denomination?	<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic
		<input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England)
		<input type="checkbox"/> United Church
		<input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian
		<input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox
		<input type="checkbox"/> Baptist
		<input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other — please specify
		<input type="text"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> No religion

Attachment J – ‘More information’ on Census online form

- The 2024 Test ‘more information’ content lists additional Eastern Catholic religions than were listed in the 2021 Census.
- Greek Orthodox is now among the Orthodox religions listed in the 2024 Test ‘more information’ content as it is no longer a response option on the form.

2024 Test

More information

If the person’s religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Yes (please specify)’ box. If a person provides an answer of ‘Catholic’, this will be considered ‘Western Catholic’ religion.

If the person’s religion is an Orthodox religion such as Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox or Serbian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Yes (please specify)’ box.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the ‘No’ response. Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

2021 Census

More information

The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 2016 Census. For all other religions, please select the ‘Other (please specify)’ option and enter the details in the box.

If the person’s religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

If the person’s religion is an Orthodox religion such as Macedonian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies should record their response in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the ‘No religion’ response.

Released under FOI Act

From: [S47F] [@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 7:04 AM
To: \[S47F\] \[@abs.gov.au>; S4 /F \\[REDACTED\\] \\[@abs.gov.au>; S4
\\\[REDACTED\\\]
Cc: \\\[S47F\\\] \\\[@abs.gov.au>; S47F \\\\[REDACTED\\\\] \\\\[@abs.gov.au>; S4 /E
\\\\\[REDACTED\\\\\] \\\\\[@abs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Census Content Round 1 Meeting Minutes \\\\\\(4/10/2023\\\\\\) - Religion \\\\\\[SEC=OFFICIAL\\\\\\]\\\\\]\\\\\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\\\\\)\\\\]\\\\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\\\\)\\\]\\\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\\\)\\]\\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\\)\]\(mailto:@abs.gov.au\)](mailto:@abs.gov.au)

Hi again,

S22

On the list of examples, this would ideally include some common items, some that are rare/unusual, and anything likely to otherwise be misreported. Especially if there are belief systems which should be reported which the respondent may not consider to be a religion as such. This is hard for me to judge without better

knowledge of the data. The order of the items is also important, and doesn't have to follow the most common to least format.

On that basis I'd suggest keeping:

Western (Roman) Catholic S22

Sunni S22

Mahayana Buddhism [same re: specificity]

Greek Orthodox

Macedonian Orthodox [if we have one, we need the other one and should present them next to each other]

And maybe the least common of the non-Christian remaining ones.

S22



S47F

From: S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)

Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 7:51 PM

To: S4 / F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)

S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)

Cc: S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S4 / E [@abs.gov.au](#); S4 / E [@abs.gov.au](#)

Subject: RE: Census Content Round 1 Meeting Minutes (4/10/2023) - Religion [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi S47F,

S22



The SMA seems ok if we amend this list, what are your thoughts? Ideally I'd like agreement by COB Wednesday.

Kind regards

S47F

2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics (P) S4 /F

S47F

(E) S47F

@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

S22

From: S4 /F @abs.gov.au

Sent: Monday, October 30, 2023 1:33 PM

To: S4 /F @abs.gov.au; S4 /F @abs.gov.au; S4 /F @abs.gov.au

Cc: S4 /F @abs.gov.au; S4 /E

S47E

@abs.gov.au>; S47E

S47E

@abs.gov.au>; S47F

@abs.gov.au>

Subject: RE: Census Content Round 1 Meeting Minutes (4/10/2023) - Religion [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Thanks S47F

I've sent an email with the questions we're propose for round 3

[@S47F](#) below is what has been suggest for the examples. What are your thoughts here?

e.g. Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican Church of Australia, Sunni, Hinduism, Uniting Church, Greek Orthodox, Mahayana Buddhism, Baptist, Sikhism, Shia, Judaism, Macedonian Orthodox.

Kind regards

S47F

2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics (P) S47F

S47F

(E) S47F [@abs.gov.au](#) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](#)**From:** S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)>**Sent:** Monday, October 30, 2023 9:28 AM**To:** S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)>**Cc:** S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47E &S47E [@abs.gov.au](#); S47E &S47E [@abs.gov.au](#)**Subject:** FW: Census Content Round 1 Meeting Minutes (4/10/2023) - Religion [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi S47F

Following on from our discussion last Thursday, the examples below can be used for the next round of testing of the Religious Affiliation Standard. S22

S22. It might look something like this:

What is the person's religion?

Answering the question is OPTIONAL (sorry, I know you've updated the text here, but I can't remember the exact wording).

e.g. Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican Church of Australia, Sunni, Hinduism, Uniting Church, Greek Orthodox, Mahayana Buddhism, Baptist, Sikhism, Shia, Judaism, Macedonian Orthodox.

Please specify....

Give me a call if you'd like to discuss further, or if this isn't what you are after.

S47F

From: S47F**Sent:** Tuesday, October 24, 2023 9:41 AM**To:** S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)>**Cc:** S47F [@abs.gov.au](#); S47ES47E [@abs.gov.au](#); S47F [@abs.gov.au](#)**Subject:** RE: Census Content Round 1 Meeting Minutes (4/10/2023) - Religion [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi [REDACTED]
S47F

Following discussion with [REDACTED] S47F on Friday, below is a suggestion for instructional information/examples that could be used in the next round of testing. The idea was to provide a range of options that are represented at the lowest level of the classification; include a range of examples from different Broad groups, including some 'spiritual' options and new groups that are likely to be created for the 2024 version of the classification. Both Greek and Macedonian Orthodox groups are included in the examples (other examples from the Orthodox church could also be included if considered necessary); to try to address some of the feedback around these groups.

S22

B. What is the person's religion or spiritual belief?

Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**

e.g. Western (Roman) Catholic, Anglican (Church of England), Sunni, Hinduism, Uniting Church, Greek Orthodox, Mahayana Buddhism, Baptist, Sikhism, Shia, Judaism, Macedonian Orthodox, Spiritualism, Theism.

For additional examples of religious groups and spiritual beliefs, visit
[Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups, 2016 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2016-ASCRG?OpenDocument)

Please specify

Let me know if you'd like to discuss.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]
S47F

S22



RE: For endorsement ASAP: Updated religion example and More info text

From Duncan Young <Duncan.Young@abs.gov.au>

Date Wed 2024-03-20 13:36

To S47F @abs.gov.au>

Cc S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47E

S47E @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F

S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F

S47F @abs.gov.au>; Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>

Endorsed.

Many thanks,
Duncan

From: S47F @abs.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, March 20, 2024 12:27 PM

To: Duncan Young <Duncan.Young@abs.gov.au>

Cc: S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47E

S47E @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F

S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F @abs.gov.au>; S47F

S47F @abs.gov.au>; Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>

Subject: For endorsement ASAP: Updated religion example and More info text

Good afternoon Duncan,

As discussed yesterday, I am seeking your endorsement of a couple of recommendations.

S22

3. **Recommendation 3:** Update the 'More information' text in the online form to more closely align the Catholic and Orthodox examples to the classification, include Greek Orthodox and two more Catholic examples, include an additional sentence about how responses of 'Catholic' are considered and remove instructions on theistic beliefs. The updated 'More information' would be as follows:

If the person's religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Yes (please specify)' box. If a person provides an answer of 'Catholic', this will be considered 'Western Catholic' religion.

If the person's religion is an Orthodox religion such as Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox or Serbian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Yes (please specify)' box.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the 'No' response.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

Background:

- When seeking [your in-principle signoff of the examples](#), we committed to consult with peak religious groups for each of the examples. This is for two reasons: 1. to ensure there is no concern with their religion being listed in the examples, and 2. to confirm how they would like their religion to be articulated in the examples.
- We (SSI and Content) emailed the following peak groups and provided an opportunity to comment (including offering a meeting if they wanted). Our approach was as follows:

S22

- The peak group for Greek Orthodox religion to confirm they are comfortable with how their religion is listed in the 'More information' text alongside other Orthodox religions.

S22

- All updates are supported by SSI, RCM, Data Quality and NMSU.

S22

Proposed changes to the 'More information' text.

- The following updates are recommended:
 - Add a sentence to explain that people who report 'Catholic' will be coded to 'Western Catholic' for transparency of our processes.
 - Add 'Chaldean Catholic' and 'Syriac Catholic' as Eastern Catholic examples. Chaldean was the only religion under the 'Catholic' Narrow group in the classification that was missing (and unsure why) and Syriac is being added to the ASCRG update. I think including these two would be good for completeness.
 - Retain Orthodox examples from 2021 Census, with the addition of 'Greek Orthodox' as it has been removed from the picklist.
 - Reorder the Catholic and orthodox examples to align to the classification order more closely. This is in line with the revised approach for the examples listed below the question. Note, there are other Orthodox religions that have not been listed, and the listed ones are not all the most common, however it is suggested to retain 2021 example for the 2024 Test to minimize changes to this question. The number of Orthodox examples matches the number of Catholic examples.

- Remove the sentence on 'People who have non theistic beliefs...' due to the change to question wording. If people report these beliefs, they will still be coded and output accordingly.
- The changes from 2021 More Information text:

~~The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 2016 Census. For all other religions, please select the 'Other (please specify)' option and enter the details in the box.~~

If the person's religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic ~~Syro Malabar Catholic~~ or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other Yes (please specify)' box. If a person provides an answer of 'Catholic', this will be considered 'Western Catholic' religion. If the person's religion is an Orthodox religion such as Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox or Serbian Orthodox, ~~Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox~~, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other Yes (please specify)' box.

~~People who have non theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies should record their response in the 'Other (please specify)' box.~~

~~Examples of non religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.~~

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the 'No religion' response.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

- Please see the following link for further background on the More information text changes: S47E [- RE: FOR COMMENT BY COB TODAY: Updates to religion 'More information' text \[SEC=OFFICIAL\]](#)

Please let me know if you have any questions before endorsing.

Cheers

S47F

Released under the Freedom of Information Act

S47F

From: [REDACTED] S47F
Sent: Tuesday, 15 October 2024 11:25 AM
To: [REDACTED] S47E; Denise Carlton
Cc: [REDACTED] S47F
Subject: RE: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census

Hi S47F

We had a meeting last week with the SMA, SSI and RCM – I'll send you the notes which cover all the next steps. In short, critical items will be tested in round 3 in next week. Other suggestions have been considered to not be feasible.

Cheers,

S47E

Director - Census Content Testing
Census and Population Division | Australian Bureau of Statistics
(P) S4 / F (M) S47F
(E) S4 / F @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

From: S47F
Sent: Tuesday, 15 October 2024 9:37 AM
To: Denise Carlton
Cc: S47F
Subject: RE: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census

Thanks Denise.

S22 quick questions S22 that S47F might be better placed to answer)

S22

3. S47F I know you are putting thought to examples for the next round so I assume points 4-6 are being considered in this context?

Cheers

S47E

Co-Director – 2026 Census Content
Population Statistics Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(E) S47F **REDACTED** @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

Waters and community. We pay our respects to them.

From: Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@...>

S47F @abs.gov

<Mark.Harding@abs.gov.au>

Cc: Duncan Young <Duncan.Young@abs.gov.au>; AJ Lanyon <AJ.Lanyon@abs.gov.au>

Meeting date: 3 October

The meeting covered off on the material contained in the S22 [REDACTED] in order to confirm the broad approach to be taken, so that question design can be refined

600

4. The picklist most likely to be implemented would be one similar to 2021 (which includes responses at a mixed level of the classification). This is most likely to meet the requirements for comparability but also reflects feedback from stakeholders about both data requirements and sensitivities with particular response options S22 Consider examples in the instruction text which encourage the more granular options now available in the classification S22

5. On balance the response category of Greek Orthodox is to be retained (over the option of Eastern Orthodox) in line with the feedback on the need for separate data on Macedonian Orthodox – the inclusion of Macedonia Orthodox as an example in the question instructional text will be tested and we will need to engage with Macedonian Orthodox stakeholders around communications material / support.

S22

8. It was also decided to retain the 2021 question wording for 2026 as this maximises comparability and we could not quantify the impact of question wording change without extensive testing. Alternative wording should be tested alongside other changes in 2031.

Regards,

S47F

Denise Carlton S4 /F

Program Manager Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5448 (M) S4 /F (E) denise.carlton@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

Executive assistant: S4 /F (P) S4 /F (E) S4 /F @abs.gov.au

The ABS acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders, past and present.

Released under FOIA Act



Ref: EC24-000585

EXECUTIVE BRIEF – FOR ACTION

Brief title	2026 Census topic review: 2026 Census question enhancement recommendations and ORE question sign-off	
To	Brenton Goldsworthy – DAS Insights and Statistics Group and 2026 Census SRO	
From	Jenny Telford – General Manager, Census and Population Statistics Division	
Cc	Bindi Kindermann – General Manager, People and Place Division Denise Carlton – Program Manager, Population Statistics Branch Mark Harding – Program Manager, Census Field Operations Branch Annette Kelly – Program Manager, Census Data Operations Branch S47F [REDACTED] – Co-director, 2026 Census Content S47F [REDACTED] – Co-director, 2026 Census Content	
Action required by	24 December 2024 Reason: Timely delivery of approved questions within timeframes for the Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE).	
Recommendations		
1. That you approve the list of existing topics, shortlisted for consideration following consultation, which will have question enhancements for the 2026 Census (Table 2).		Approved
S22 [REDACTED]		
4. That you note that the questions for the Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) will largely reflect those to be used in the 2026 Census and decisions on question changes after ORE need to consider any risks introduced to the successful delivery of the Census.		Noted
5. That you approve the recommended question designs for the high-risk topics for the ORE (Attachment C).		Approved

Clearing Officer	Jenny Telford	General Manager, Census and Population Statistics Division	Ph: 02 6252 6473 Mob: S47F [REDACTED]
Date Cleared	18 December 2024		
Contact Officer	Denise Carlton	Program Manager Population Statistics Branch	Ph: 02 6252 5448 Mob: S47F [REDACTED]

S47F

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 20 December 2024

Executive comments

Signed following consultation with the Australian Statistician on the four topics assessed to have a high level of risk.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This brief provides an overview of the timeframes and process for finalising 2026 Census content. It also provides visibility of questions which have been proposed for minor change in the 2026 Census which are outside of the scope of the enhancements identified through the public consultation process. It seeks SRO approval for:
 - the existing topics that will have question enhancements for the 2026 Census, [REDACTED]
 - the question designs for the high-risk topics of [REDACTED] Religious affiliation, [REDACTED]

S22

S22

KEY POINTS

S22

- The following outcomes are recommended for the twelve shortlisted topics:

S22

- 2 topics are recommended for a revised enhancement: Due to outcomes from testing, and/or further engagement with stakeholders on the impact of the change.

S22

Table 2 summarises these recommendations, with Attachment A providing further information to support the recommendation.

Table 2: Recommendations on question enhancements for the 2026 Census^(a)

Theme	Topic	Driver	Proposed enhancement	Recommendation for 2026 Census
Cultural diversity	S22			

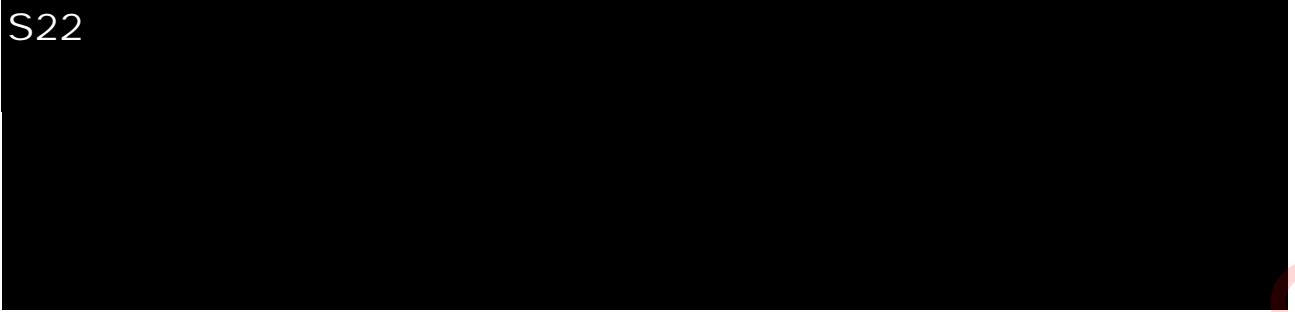
S22

³ Some of these topics will have minor changes to these questions that occur every Census (e.g. instructional text wording or ordering of response categories based on 2021 Census data).

	Religious affiliation	Data quality and inclusivity ^(d)	Update the question wording and using a free text field for responses to support accurate data collection and make question more equitable. ^(e)	Proceed with revised enhancement – Retain 2021 Census question with minor updates to instructional text to improve inclusivity and data quality.
--	-----------------------	---	--	--

S22

S22



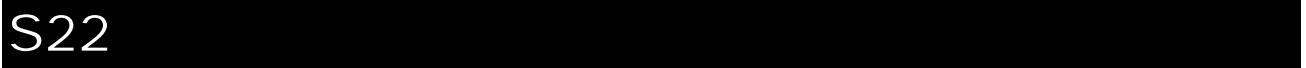
- d. In 2022, the ABS [publicly committed](#) to reviewing the Religious Affiliation Standard in time for the 2026 Census with the aims to make the question more inclusive. Some minor change to instructional text examples will still occur to support this where possible.
- e. Updates to the 2021 Census question design to allow a response category to be selected and a write-in response also provided was also investigated. Complexities with respondent burden, and coding of responses, as well as risk to data quality and impact to comparability of data were identified. For these reasons, this functionality is not recommended for further consideration.

S22

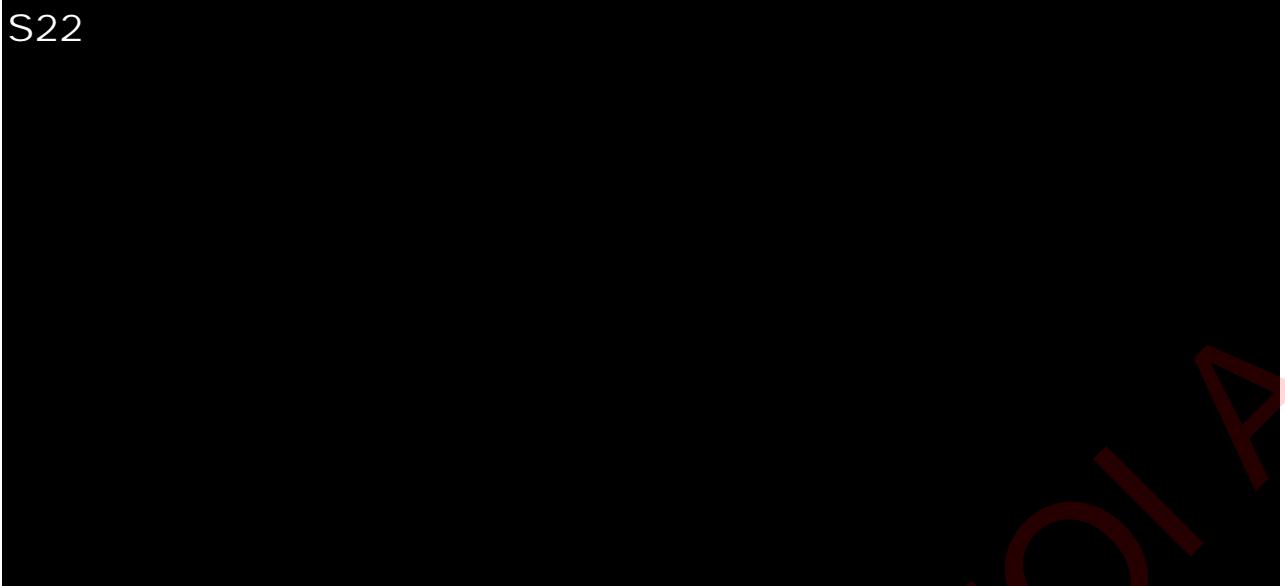


Process and timeframes for finalising ORE questions

S22

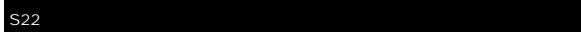


S22



- The questions for S22 topics have a high level of risk for the 2026 Census.

S22

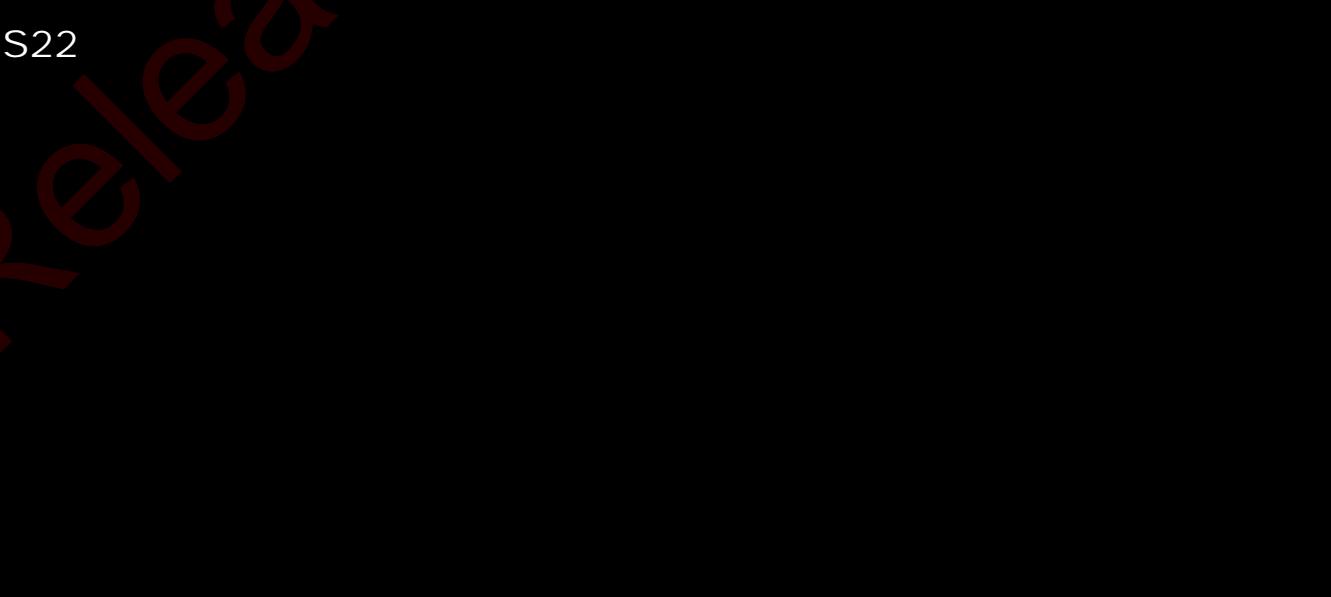


- Religious affiliation

S22



RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES



S22

S22

Released under FOIA

S22

Topics with high levels of residual risk

- There are ^{S22} topics that have questions with a higher level of residual risk following the mitigative activities described above.

S22

- Religious affiliation: Consultation and engagement has highlighted that it is not possible to design a question that will meet the data needs for all users, and address inclusivity and data quality concerns identified with the current question design. The recommendation to retain the 2021 Census question wording and picklist has considered the need for comparability identified by many data users. The 2026 Census testing program is not designed to accurately quantify or confidently surface all statistical impacts of question changes. As such, the ABS would be unable to support stakeholders who have a need for data comparability over time. While not a defining factor, impacts on respondent burden and data quality with the new question design were not able to be assessed in the absence of a large-scale test.

S22

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Recommendations on question enhancements for existing topics in the 2026 Census
- S22
- C. High risk topics - Recommended question designs

Religious affiliation	Update the question wording and using a free text field for responses to support accurate data collection and make question more equitable.	Data quality and inclusivity	Low/Medium	Yes	Proceed with revised enhancement – Retain 2021 Census question with minor updates to instructional text to improve inclusivity and data quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from consultations during 2022 and 2023 and additional engagement during 2024 identified a range of data needs for comparability, granularity and quality of data, and perspectives on inclusivity and burden. This highlighted that it is not possible to design a question(s) that will meet the priorities/views of all stakeholders. During the engagement in 2024, the ABS was presented with strong use cases on the need for comparability of data for the 2026 Census. These were not as evident when decisions on the 2024 Census Test questions were determined. The majority of stakeholders who didn't have a firm position on the proposed changes
-----------------------	---	------------------------------	------------	-----	--	--

						indicated they wanted confirmation that the question could collect quality data and for the ABS to be able to explain the impact of the question change on the data.
						<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2026 Census testing program was never designed to measure statistical impact of question changes.• Given the inability to measure statistical impact, comparability has been prioritised for the 2026 Census.• The ABS will need to consider whether the Standard is updated to reflect changes to examples, or if this will be a departure from the Standard.

S22

Released under FOI Act

Religious affiliation question

Recommended changes from the 2021 Census question:

- **Question wording:** No change⁹
- **Response options:** Retain picklist. Reorder response categories to reflect 2021 Census data.
- **Instructional text:** Include additional instructional text to encourage respondents to use the free text field if their religion or level of detail is not included in the pick list and update the list of examples.
- **More information text (online only):** Update to accommodate changes to the instructional text, better align with the Classification and address concerns with the text identified during engagement and consultation.
- **Question sequence:** No change
- **Processing rules:**
 - Code 'Catholic', 'Islam' and 'Buddhism' response options to respective 'not further defined' categories to better align with the Classification.

⁹ The detail regarding the decision to retain question wording and a picklist is outlined in the body of the brief.

- Introduce a clerical review process for the paper form where the mark box for Catholic, Islam or Buddhism is selected and a text response is also provided so that a more detailed response can be coded where appropriate.

Online Household Form

Recommended 2026 Census question

What is [Person X]'s religion?

Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**.

Use 'Other (specify)' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.

For example: Macedonian Orthodox, Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism.

▼ More information

The religious groups listed in the response options were those most commonly reported in the 2021 Census.

If the person wants to provide more detail on their Catholic religion, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (specify)' box. For example, Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, or Western Catholic.

If the person wants to provide an Orthodox religion such as Antiochian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox or Syrian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (specify)' box.

People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies can provide their response in the 'Other (specify)' box.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select 'No religion'.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism, Humanism and Rationalism.

No religion

Catholic

Anglican Church of Australia

Islam

Hinduism

Uniting Church

Buddhism

Presbyterian

Greek Orthodox

Baptist

Other (specify)

2021 Census question

What is Person 1's religion?

Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**.

Examples of 'Other': Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Taoism, Atheism.

► [More information](#)

- No religion
- Catholic
- Anglican (Church of England)
- Uniting Church
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Presbyterian
- Hinduism
- Greek Orthodox
- Baptist
- Other (please specify)

What is Person 1's religion?

Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**.

Examples of 'Other': Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Taoism, Atheism.

► [More information](#)

The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 2016 Census. For all other religions, please select the 'Other (please specify)' option and enter the details in the box.

If the person's religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (please specify)' box.

If the person's religion is an Orthodox religion such as Macedonian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (please specify)' box.

People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies should record their response in the 'Other (please specify)' box.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the 'No religion' response.

Paper Household Form

Recommended 2026 Census question

24 What is the person's religion?

- Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**.
- Use 'Other (specify)' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.
- For example: MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX, LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, SIKHISM, TAOISM.
- Mark one box, like this: 

- No religion
- Catholic
- Anglican Church of Australia
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Uniting Church
- Buddhism
- Presbyterian
- Greek Orthodox
- Baptist
- Other (specify)

2021 Census question

23 What is the person's religion?

- Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**.
- Examples of 'Other': LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, ATHEISM.
- Mark one box, like this:

- No religion
- Catholic
- Anglican (Church of England)
- Uniting Church
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Presbyterian
- Hinduism
- Greek Orthodox
- Baptist
- Other (please specify)

Evidence that informed this recommendation

Question design

- The order of picklist response options has been updated to reflect the most common religious groups reported in the 2021 Census to reduce respondent burden.
- S22 [REDACTED]
- The inclusion of additional instructional text is recommended to provide further encouragement to respondents to use the free text field if their religion or level of detail is not included in the pick list. The recommended updates to the examples have been informed by feedback received through consultation and engagement, testing, data analysis and updates to the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG). The length of the example list, as well as coverage across the classification was also considered.
- The Census Program recommends the addition of two examples, Macedonian Orthodox S22 [REDACTED], S22 [REDACTED] Table 1 provides the rationale for these recommendations. All other examples included in the 2021 Census question are recommended for retention to maintain consistency in the list and reduce potential impacts on data comparability.

Table 1: Recommended changes to Religious affiliation examples

Action	Example	Justification
S22	[REDACTED]	
Add	Macedonian Orthodox	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultation feedback has highlighted concerns with the inclusion of only one Orthodox option (i.e. 'Greek Orthodox' in the picklist) and potential respondent behaviour selecting the 'closest' option available.• Analysis of 2021 Census data has highlighted likely data quality issues with reporting of Orthodox religions. Therefore, the inclusion of Macedonian Orthodox, the next largest Orthodox religious group, as an example may provide additional guidance to respondents on how to respond to the question.• The online 'More information' text also provides additional guidance to people with Orthodox religions, including listing out all other Orthodox religious groups in the Classification.



Ref: EC24-000315

EXECUTIVE MEETING BRIEF

Meeting Title	2026 Census Topic Review: Meeting with [REDACTED] National Council of Churches in Australia and [REDACTED]
Attendees (See Attachment A for biographies)	S22 [REDACTED] National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) (See Attachment B for a list of Member Churches) [REDACTED] S22 [REDACTED] ABS Dr David Gruen, Australian Statistician Brenton Goldsworthy, Deputy Australian Statistician, Insights and Statistics Group Duncan Young, General Manager, Census and Population [REDACTED], Co-Director 2026 Census Content [REDACTED] S22
Date	Friday 9 August 2024
Time	2:00 - 2:45pm
Venue	Microsoft Teams videoconference

PURPOSE OF MEETING

- Discuss potential changes to the religious affiliation question on the 2026 Census.
- Seek to further understand the impact of any changes on comparability of data between censuses.

KEY POINTS [REDACTED]

S22

[REDACTED]

Clearing Officer	Duncan Young	General Manager Census and Population Division	Mob: [REDACTED]
Date Cleared	8 August 2024		
Contact Officer	[REDACTED]	Co-Director Population Statistics Branch	Mob: [REDACTED]

S22

- Suggested discussion points:

S22

2. Would attendees be supportive of retaining the 2021 Census question wording ('What is the person's religion?'), but using a free text field for all responses if the ABS is satisfied with the data quality from the large-scale Census test? Do attendees have a view on the ordering of 'Yes (specify religion)' and 'No' options, and does this impact on the view of attendees?
3. What is the desired level of granularity for religions? In the test question, we have tried to prompt households to provide as much granularity as they would like to provide. S22

S22

S22

S22

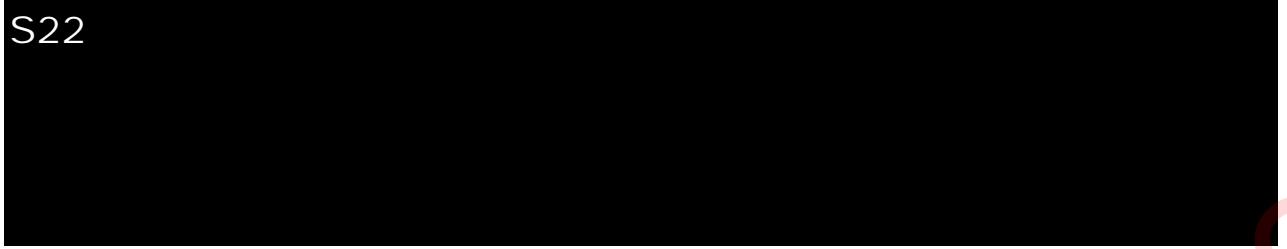
S22 is data on the
S22

S22

RISKS AND SENSITIVITIES

S22

S22



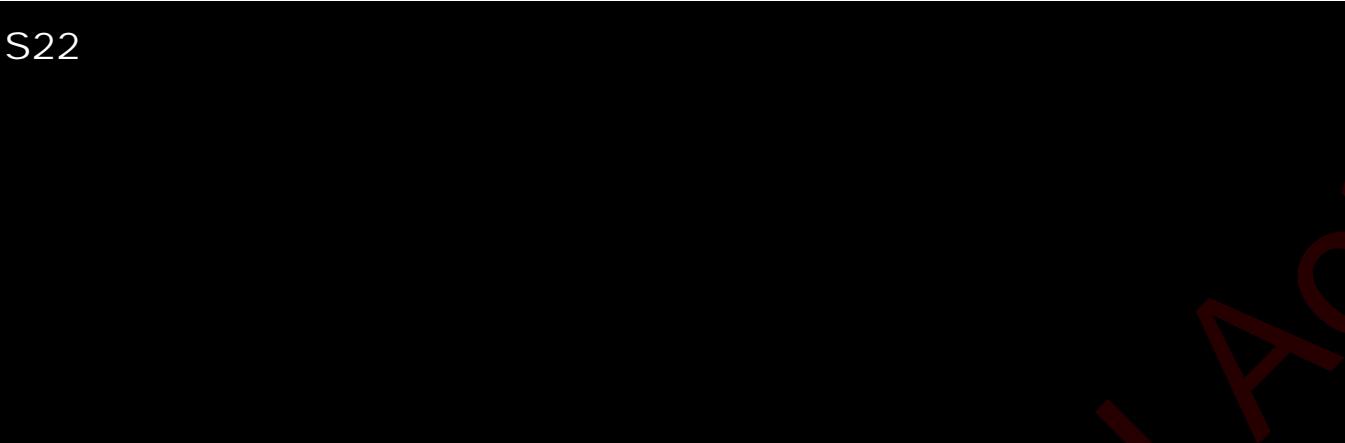
- The ABS has received feedback from the public and peak organisations that the 'Greek Orthodox' picklist option from the 2021 Census question was not appropriate given the range of other Orthodox religions where a picklist option was not provided and request that an alternative term should be considered. The Greek Orthodox Church is a member church of the NCCA.

BACKGROUND



S22

S22



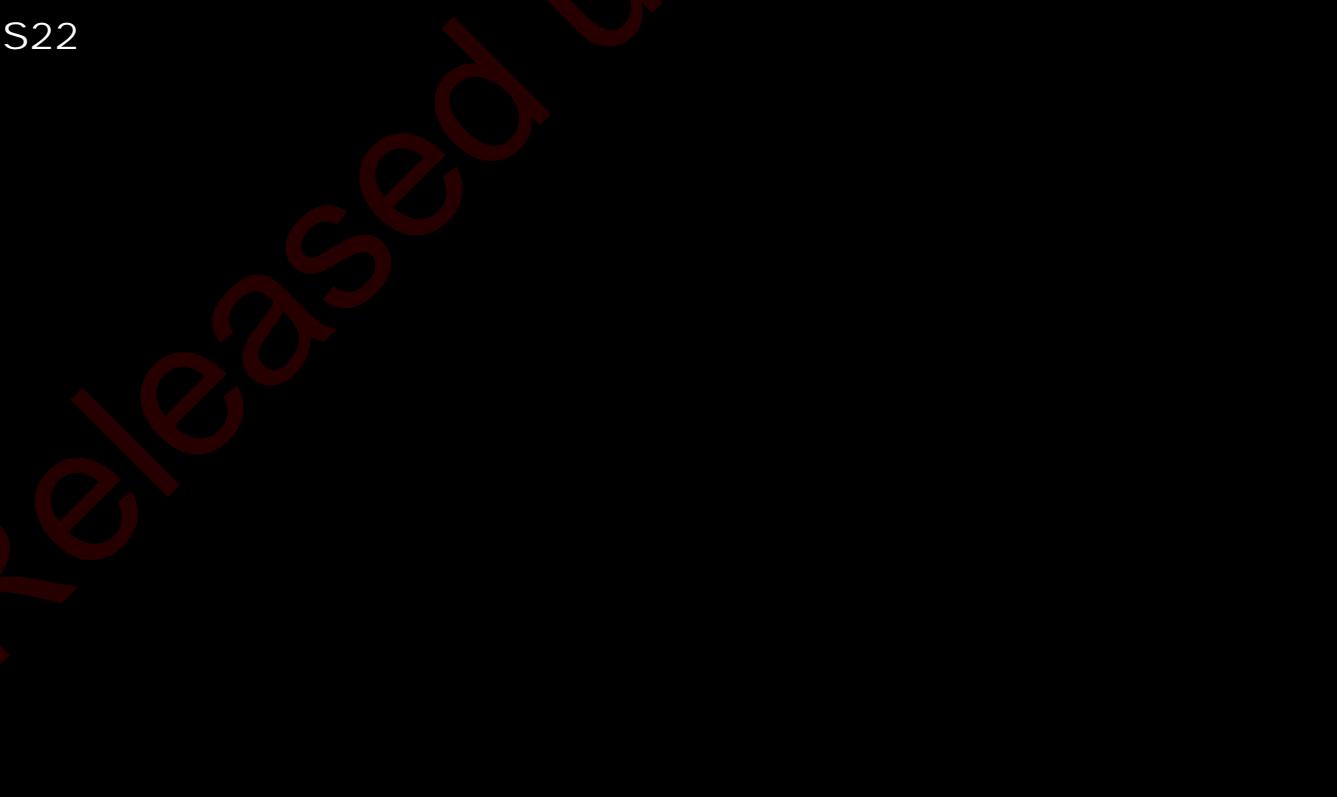
Key points on question design and testing

S22



- The 'More information' section on the online form will provide further information for people identifying with an Eastern Catholic or Orthodox religion. (see [Attachment G](#)).

S22



S22



Released under FOIA

ATTACHMENTS

A. [Biographies](#)

S22

E. [Article in John Menadue's Public Policy Journal, June 8, 2024](#)

F. [Religion question asked on Census forms](#)

G. ['More information' on Census online form](#)

S22

Attachment A - Biographies

S22

S47F [REDACTED] National Council of Churches

S47F [REDACTED]

Attachment F – Religion question asked on Census household forms

2024 Test

- Removing the pick-list options.
- Examples include 8 religious groups.

<p>24 Does the person have a religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering this question is OPTIONAL. • For example: MAHAYANA BUDDHISM, CATHOLIC, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, HINDUISM, SUNNI, JUDAISM, SIKHISM, ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (specify religion)</p>
--	---

2021 Census

23	What is the person's religion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answering this question is OPTIONAL. Examples of 'Other': LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, ATHEISM. Mark one box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> 	
			No religion
			Catholic
			Anglican (Church of England)
			Uniting Church
			Islam
			Buddhism
			Presbyterian
			Hinduism
			Greek Orthodox
			Baptist
			Other (please specify)
			<input type="text"/>

2016 Census

- ‘No religion’ option moved to the first mark box.

19 What is the person's religion?	<input type="checkbox"/> No religion <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic <input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England) <input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism <input type="checkbox"/> Islam <input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
-----------------------------------	--

2001 Census

- Wording changed from religious denomination to religion.

<p>19 What is the person's religion?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering this question is OPTIONAL. • For example: Salvation Army, Hinduism, Judaism or Humanism. • If no religion, mark last box. 		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Catholic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Uniting Church</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Baptist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Islam</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify</p>																																								
		<table border="1" style="width: 100px; height: 40px;"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																																								
		<p><input type="checkbox"/> No religion</p>																																								

1991 Census

- This question was the first time the picklist was introduced.

17	What is each person's religious denomination?	<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic
		<input type="checkbox"/> Anglican (Church of England)
		<input type="checkbox"/> United Church
		<input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian
		<input type="checkbox"/> Greek Orthodox
		<input type="checkbox"/> Baptist
		<input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran
		<input type="checkbox"/> Other — please specify
		<input type="text"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> No religion

Attachment G – ‘More information’ on Census online form

2021 Census

[More information](#)

The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 2016 Census. For all other religions, please select the ‘Other (please specify)’ option and enter the details in the box.

If the person’s religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

If the person’s religion is an Orthodox religion such as Macedonian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies should record their response in the ‘Other (please specify)’ box.

Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the ‘No religion’ response.

2024 Test (draft only)

[More information](#)

If the person’s religion is an Eastern Catholic religion such as Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic or Ukrainian Catholic, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Yes (please specify)’ box. If a person provides an answer of ‘Catholic’, this will be considered ‘Western Catholic’ religion.

If the person’s religion is an Orthodox religion such as Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox or Serbian Orthodox, provide the full name of the religion in the ‘Yes (please specify)’ box.

If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the ‘No’ response. Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism.

