RE: Denise, AJ for endorsement by COB Wed 09/07/09: 2026 Census Content Finalisation - Cultural diversity, Population, Location and internal migration [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to:)
2026 Census Content Development WDB S22 09/07/2025 11:55 AM

Basics

S22 09/07/2025 11:55 AM

Send	To S22 @abs.gov.au> S22 cc < S22 @abs.gov.au>, S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au> bcc
Subject	RE: Denise, AJ for endorsement by COB Wed 09/07/09: 2026 Census Content Finalisation - Cultural diversity, Population, Location and internal migration [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy Caveat ☐
Categories	03. Topic Review\13. Population\05. Stakeholder engagement

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Happy to sign off the topics for which BRASS is a custodian as per discussions involving relevant EL2. Our most significant concern remains the aggregated picklist used for religion which is unlikely to support detail enabled by the recently updated classifications.

S22

Thanks

S22
a/g Program Manager
Business Register And Statistical Standards Branch
T S22 E S22 @abs.gov.au W www.abs.gov.au
@absstats ABSstatistics Australian Bureau of Statistics

From: S22 @abs.gov.au> on behalf of S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, July 7, 2025 1:08 PM
To: Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>; AJ Lanyon <AJ.Lanyon@abs.gov.au>
Cc: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: Denise, AJ for endorsement by COB Wed 09/07/09: 2026 Census Content Finalisation - Cultural diversity, Population, Location and internal migration [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Denise & AJ

Thank you for your engagement with the Census topic process.

We are now focusing on finalising the question design for the 2026 Census main event.

What do we need from you?

We are seeking your review and endorsement of the final content for the 2026 Census for the applicable topic(s) in the Cultural diversity, Population, and Location and internal migration themes.

A few things to note:

- S22
- S22 , and religion have been flagged for priority ORE analysis. If significant concerns are identified out of ORE and questions require change, we will consult with you in late August/early September. If no updates are required your endorsement here will be considered final for Main Event.

For all topics included in the table below, the recommendation and final question design(s) has been endorsed by the topic custodian at the EL2 level. These have been informed by previous discussions with SMAs, findings from testing activities, anti-discrimination risk, external stakeholder engagement, and operational factors. If you would like to review the final question design(s) for each topic yourself, a link has been provided in the table below. Note that no changes have been made to the topics requiring your endorsement here since PM and GM sign-off for ORE :

Can you **please provide your endorsement by COB Wednesday 9 July.** We will then proceed to seek endorsement from the Census Senior Responsible Officer.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out.

			Final content	

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Program Manager	Topic custodian	Topic	recommendation for the 2026 Census	Question desig topic custodia endorsement
Denise Carlton & AJ Lanyon	Migrant Statistics & SSI	[redacted]		
		Religious affiliation	Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census. The proposed change includes: • Updates to instructional text to improve inclusivity and data quality. This includes the addition of 2 examples (Macedonian Orthodox and Sikhism) and removal of 1 example (Atheism) and updates to the More information text.	Link: [redacted]

[redacted]

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S22 ---17/09/2024 11:35:32 AM---Denise, AJ & Mark for endorsement by COB Mon 23/09: 2026 Census Content Finalisation - Cultural diversity, Population, Location

Denise, AJ & Mark for endorsement by COB Mon 23/09: 2026 Census Content Finalisation - Cultural diversity, Population, Location and internal migration & Transport [SEC=OFFICIAL]

S22

*

Basics

S22

Send

To: "Denise Carlton" <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>, "A
"S22 @abs.gov.au>, S22

	S22 @abs.gov.au>, S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>, S22 S22 S22 S22
Subject	Denise, AJ & Mark for endorsement by COB Mon 23/09: 2026 Census Conten
Protective Mark	
Information management markers	
Categories	03. Topic Review\13. Population\05. Stakeholder engagement, 03. Topic Rev
Visibility	
Editors	
Document Usage	Statistical Development & Support -
Document Id	

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Hi Denise, AJ & Mark,

Thank you again for all your support for the 2026 Census topic review process so far. We are aware there has been some uncertainty and changes to the content finalisation process for the 2026 Census recently, and we have been very appreciative for all your flexibility at this time.

We are now focusing on finalising the first group of topics for the 2026 Census.

The first group of topics that will be finalised include:

- Topics with no change since the 2021 Census,
- Topics with minor changes that occur every Census (to update instructional text wording and ordering of response categories), and
- Topics with a proposed change that have a strong evidence base from testing to date and/or a lower risk that changes will negatively impact data quality or public perception in the absence of a large-scale test.

What do we need from you?

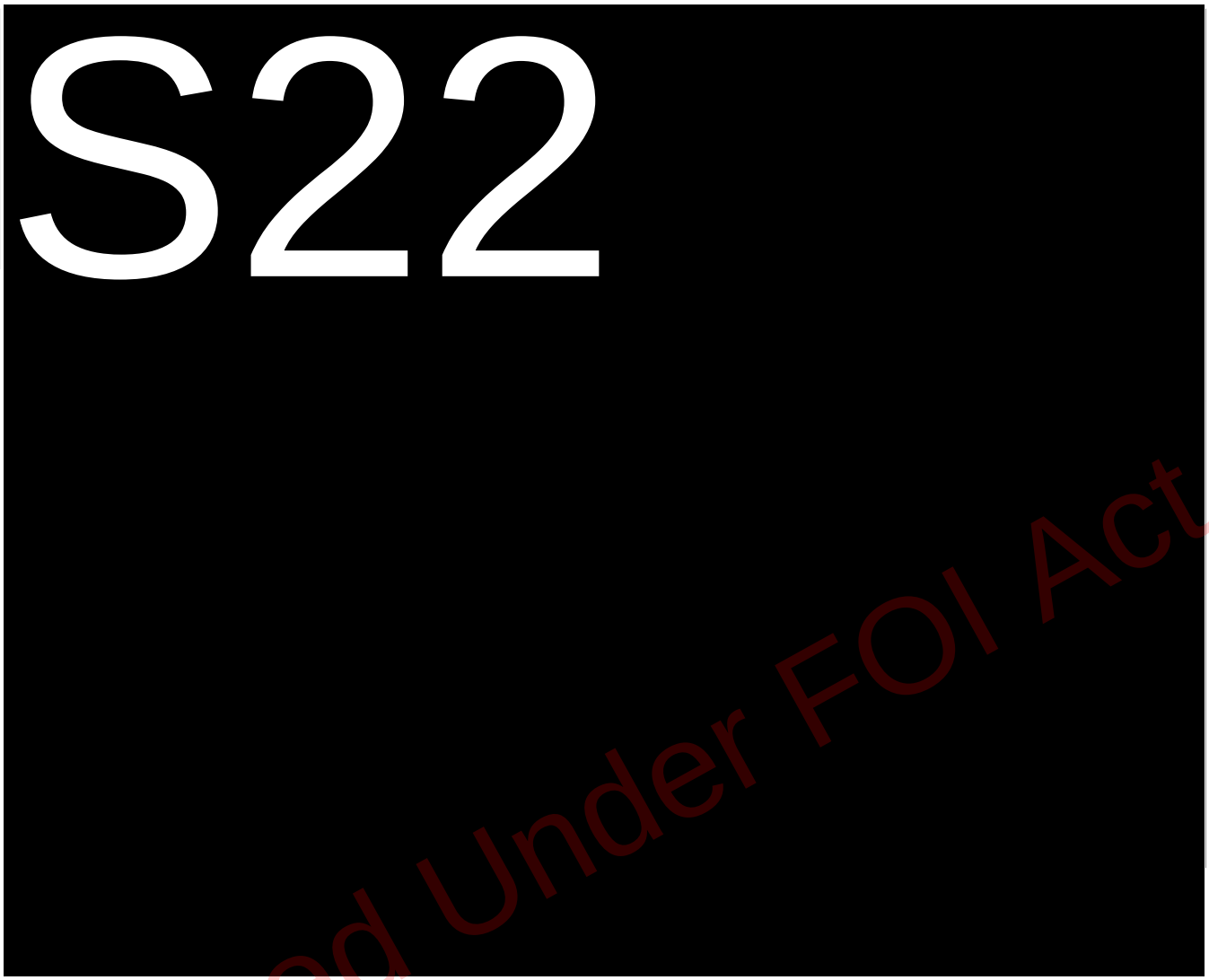
I am seeking your review and endorsement of the final content recommendation for the applicable topic(s) in the Cultural Diversity, Population, Location and internal migration, and Transport themes.

The recommendation and final question design(s) has been endorsed by each topic custodian. These have been informed by previous discussions with SMAs, findings from testing activities to date, anti-discrimination risk, external stakeholder engagement, and operational factors. If you would like to review the final question design(s) for each topic yourself, a link has been provided in the table below.

Can you please provide your endorsement by **COB Monday 23rd September?** We will proceed to seek endorsement from the Census Senior Responsible Officer.

Program Manager	Topic custodian	Topic	Final content recommendation for the 2026 Census	Question design(s) and topic custodian endorsement
S22				

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What will happen next?

For the above topics, this concludes the 2026 Census topic review process for the Household Form, Personal Form and Interviewer Household Form.



For the Cultural Diversity and Population themes, we will continue to work with your teams on the testing and outcomes of outstanding topics (Country of birth of parents, Religious affiliation, Sex and Number of children ever born) prior to seeking endorsement.

If you have any questions at all, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Kind regards,

S22
a/g Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
(E S22 **@abs.gov.au (P)** S22 **(W) www.abs.gov.au**

Census 2026 Content Finalisation: ROUND 3 Cognitive Testing - S47E(a)

1. Introduction

Round 3 of 2026 Census Content Development - S47E(a)

Trained ABS staff completed 25 face-to-face Cognitive Interviews, 15 were conducted using the Census Digital Service (CDS) Webform, and 10 were the CDS Paper form. All forms were self-completed except one which was interviewer administered at the participant's request.

The population of interest included the general Australian population, S22 and those with religious beliefs S22 S22

People who participated in the interviews had the following characteristics:

S22

S22

S22

Other characteristics	Total
S22	
Has a religious belief	16

1.1. Testing Materials

Round 3 materials can be found in the following locations:

S22

More information on CF testing, including the testing objectives can be found in the Content Finalisation Testing Plan & Round 3 Testing plan

S22

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S22

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3. Round 3 Testing Aims

3.1 Broad Aims

As in previous rounds, the **broad aims** of Round 3 testing included:

- Testing with the general Australian population and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- Determine whether concepts are well understood.
- Determine whether questions are clear and correctly convey their intended meaning.
- Identify questions that are cognitively burdensome.
- Identify what a specific question or term means.
- How comfortable respondents are to answer for themselves, and/or for others, including children.
- Identify how easy or difficult they found specific questions to answer.
- Identify questions that have concepts or topics that are sensitive.
- Check questions and terminology are appropriate
- Understand if the instructional text appropriate.
- Identify whether additional prompts are required to assist respondents in understanding and answering the question.
- Test how easy or difficult it is for respondents to navigate through the questionnaire – does the order of topics make sense.
- Determine how well the Slalom online form performed

3.2 Specific Aims by Topic

S22

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Religion – PAPER ONLY

- Explore impact of reverting question wording back to: ‘What is [Person X]’s religion?’
- Explore impact of instructional text, and updated list of examples
- Explore confidence in answers and respondent burden
- Explore answering by proxy

S22

4. Results

4.1 General Outcomes

	Discussion	Recommendations
Interview locations	S22 & S47E(a)	
Instrument		

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Participant recruitment	S22
Length & Content	
Debrief	
Reimbursement	

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4.2 Question Specific Results

- Included below is a table for each topic tested in Round 3 cognitive interviews.
- Recommendations from the debrief for the next round of testing have been provided to be discussed with SMAs and the Census 2026 team

Question	Findings/Quotes	Discussion/summary	Recommendations
S22			

S22

S47E(a)

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Religion ONLINE

Does [Person X] have a religion?
- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Yes (specify religion) _____

Answer	Total
Catholic	S47E(a)
Church of England	
Christian	
Evangelical Church	
Greek Orthodox	
Anglican Church	
Islam	
Baha'i	
No religion	

ONLINE
- The majority of participants answered this question quickly and correctly.
- S47E(a) participants probed indicated they found the question easy/comfortable.
- A small number of participants appeared to note some difficulty, relating to their spirituality or beliefs not being easily defined or "don't exactly fit in the exact" response options.

S47E(a)

Specificity of responses
- Most participants said they were comfortable in the level that they had provided.
- S47E respondents said they were comfortable in the broad level response they had provided. Several respondents said that, with a conceptual understanding of denominations or sects, the broad level specification was more appropriate for describing their affiliation.

Ensure updated version is in the CDS instrument for round 4.

Note changes will be made to the free text field name. This will be updated to "Provide more detail' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list." to explore respondent behaviour.

	S47E(a)	• A small number of participants provided high level responses such as ‘Christian’ or ‘Islamic’ noted the examples and chose to report a high-level religion. **Answering on behalf of others** • Some difficulty or discomfort was observed when participants were answering on behalf of others. In some cases, this was related to some uncertainty in how they thought their proxy would define their beliefs. S47E(a)	

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[redacted]

Religion PAPER

What is the person's religion?

- ☐ No religion
- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Anglican Church of Australia
- ☐ Islam
- ☐ Hinduism
- ☐ Uniting Church
- ☐ Buddhism
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ Greek Orthodox
- ☐ Baptist
- ☐ Other_____

Answer	Total
Catholic	[redacted]
Church of England	
Christian	
Evangelical Church	
Greek Orthodox	
Anglican Church	
Islam	
Baha'i	
No religion	

[redacted]

PAPER

- The majority of participants were able to respond to this question quickly and correctly.
- Of those probed on difficulty, the majority said this question was easy to answer.
  - Those that did not respond quickly indicated that their religion was not in the response option list.

Instructional Text

[redacted]

- When probed some noted that they had not read or did not think they had needed the instructional text to assist in their understanding.

Specification

[redacted]

Answering on behalf of others

- Some participants appeared to easily and confidently answer this question.

[redacted]

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	S47E(a)	S47E(a)	

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S22

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4.3 Overall Feedback & End of Interview

Question	Findings/quotes	Discussion/summary
Thinking about all of the questions we asked today, did anything in particular stand out to you? *Feedback grouped by theme and may reflect more than one participant's response*	S22	S22 S47E(a) S22

	S22 **Religion** S47E(a) S22	S22
Overall, how easy or difficult was it to answer those survey questions? *Feedback grouped by theme and may reflect more than one participant's response*	S22	

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S22

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Australian Bureau of Statistics

MHHF Content Finalisation Cognitive Testing - Round 3

Sex, Gender & Family Characteristics and Overseas Migration and Migrant Statistics

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Agenda

- Round Overview
- Findings and next directions
  - Religion

[redacted]

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Round 3 Overview

S47E(a)

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Round 3 Participants

S22

Religious Affiliation	Total
Catholic	S47E(a)
Church of England	
Christian	
Evangelical Christian	
Greek Orthodox	
Anglican Church	
Islam	
Bahai	
No religion	

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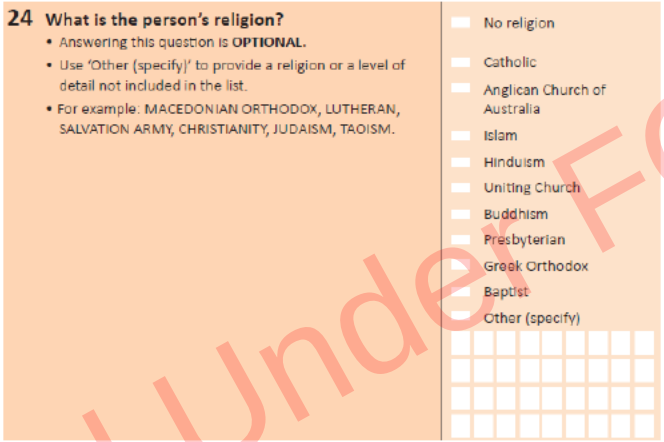
FINDINGS

- Religion
- S22 [redacted]

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Religion findings

- **Paper form:** reversion to 2021 question design
  - Updated question wording, response options, instructional text and examples



- **CDS webform:** 2024 Test question design
  - No updates included due to timing.
  - Updates to match paper form design to be included in Round 4.



Religious Affiliation	Total
Catholic	S47E(a)
Church of England	
Christian	
Evangelical Christian	
Greek Orthodox	
Anglican Church	
Islam	
Baha'I	
No religion	

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Religion findings

Overall findings

- The majority of people reported they were comfortable to answer this questions and also reported that they found the question easy to answer.

Findings

S47E(a)

A small number of people reported religion at a broad level eg 'Christianity' 'Islam' despite seeing the examples and noting Sunni, Anglican. Note this was on the online form.

A number of people expressed concern that their religion was not included in the pick list or made comments on the religions in the pick list.

S47E(a)

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RECOMMENDATIONS & DIRECTIONS

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Round 4 CF Testing

- The final round of CF testing will be conducted from S47E(a) S47E(a)
- S47E(a) concurrent testing locations and additional capacity for online interviewing.
- Face to face interviews will use both the CDS Webform and paper form. Online interviews will use the Confirmit instrument.

S47E(a)

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Recommendations

- Religion

S22

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Thanks!

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MHHF Content Finalisation Cognitive Testing - Round 4 Findings

Sex, Gender & Family Characteristics and Overseas Migration and Migrant Statistics

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Agenda

- Round Overview
- Findings and ORE decisions – Religion, S22

S22

S22

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Round 4 Overview

- Total of S47E(a) interviews held between S47E(a)
  - S47E(a)
    - S47E(a) interviews with S47E(a) respondents, S47E(a) Paper forms, S47E(a) CDS forms, S47E(a) Confirmit form
    - All face to face
  - S47E(a)
    - S47E(a) interviews, S47E(a) paper forms, S47E(a) Confirmit forms
    - S47E(a) face to face, S47E(a) online
- Target populations: S22 , religious/spiritual population, S22 S22
- Recruitment:
  - S47E(a)
  - S47E(a)

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Round 4 Overview – Instrument

- S47E(a) – CDS form and Paper form used
- S47E(a) – Confirmit form and Paper form used
  - Confirmit form - contained all latest changes
  - Paper form - contained all latest changes
  - CDS online form
    - S22
    - Contained all latest changes for other questions

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Round 4 Participants - S47E(a)

S22

Religious Affiliation	Total
Skipped	S47E(a)
No religion	
Catholic	
Church of England	
Christian	
Lutheran	
Presbyterian	
Anglican Church	
S47E(a)	
Provide more detail: S47E(a) S47E(a)	

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Round 4 Participants - S47E(a)

S22

Religious Affiliation	Total
No religion	S47E(a)
Catholic	
Anglican Church	
Hinduism	
Other: Adventist	
Other: Evangelista	
Islam	
Other: description	

S47E(a)

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FINDINGS

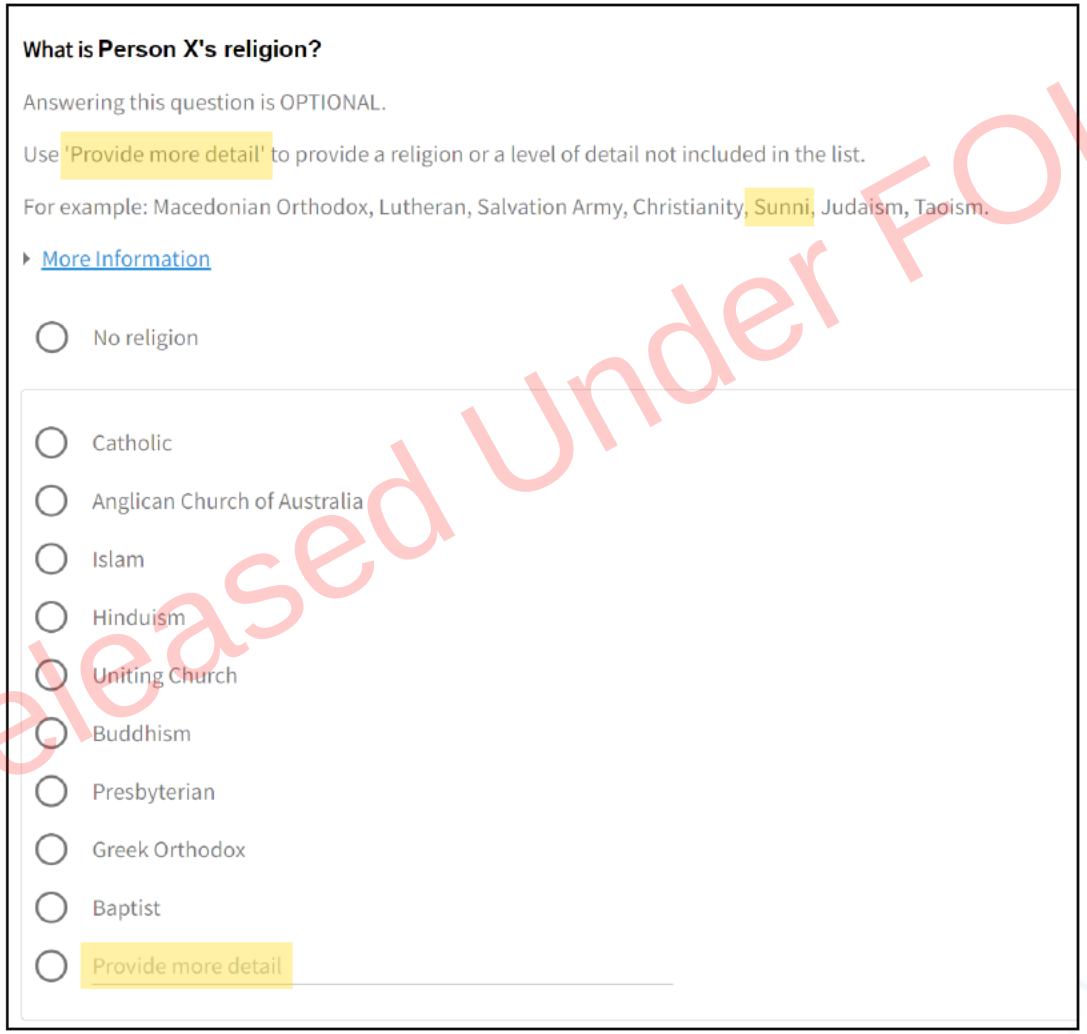
- Religion

S22 [redacted]

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Round 4 Religion – Changes: Web

Confirmit/CDS forms - Round 4



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Round 4 Religion – Changes: Paper

Round 3

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, CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM, TAOISM.

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

Round 4

24 What is the person's religion?

- Answering this question is **OPTIONAL.**
- Use 'Provide more detail' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.
- For example: MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX, LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, CHRISTIANITY, SUNNI, JUDAISM, TAOISM.

- No religion
- Catholic
- Anglican Church of Australia
- Islam
- Hinduism
- Uniting Church
- Buddhism
- Presbyterian
- Greek Orthodox
- Baptist
- Provide more detail

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Round 4 Religion – Findings: S47E(a)

Overall findings

- S47E(a)
- Most participants followed a religion
- Of participants that recorded 'no religion', many stated they were "christened", "baptised" or grew up religious households
- S47E(a)
- Some participants noted the absence of 'Christian' in the response options
  - Some noted or alluded that this was intentional
  - S47E(a)
- S47E(a)

S47E(a)

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Round 4 Religion – Findings: S47E(a) - continued

Overall findings - continued

Confusion surrounding the 'provide more detail' free text field:

- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)

S47E(a)

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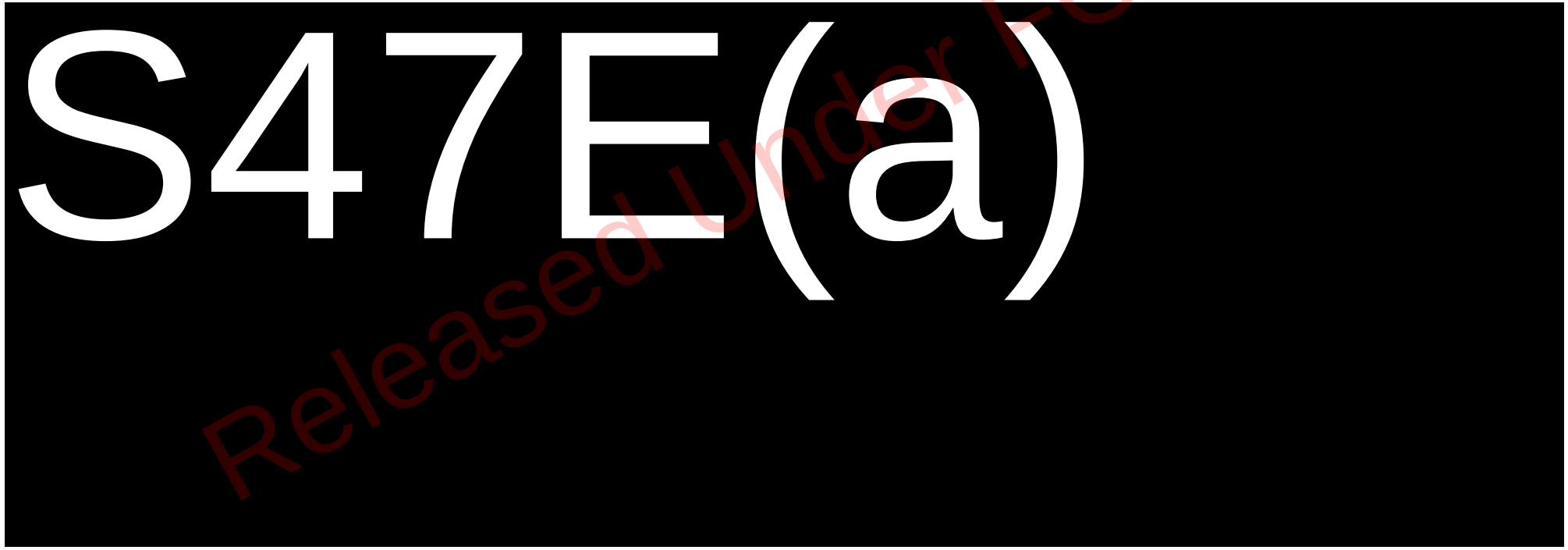
Round 4 Religion – Findings: S47E(a)

- The majority of participants selected 'No religion'.
  - Many of these participants had been baptised or raised with a religion but selected 'not religious' as they no longer practiced or held religious beliefs.
- S47E(a)
- S47E(a)
- The majority of participants found this question easy to answer.
  - S47E(a)
- S47E(a)

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Round 4 Religion – Findings: S47E(a) - continued

- 'Provide more detail' category:
  - Most participants said this category would be for a religion not on the list.
  - Multiple participants commented on the 'Provide more detail' terminology.



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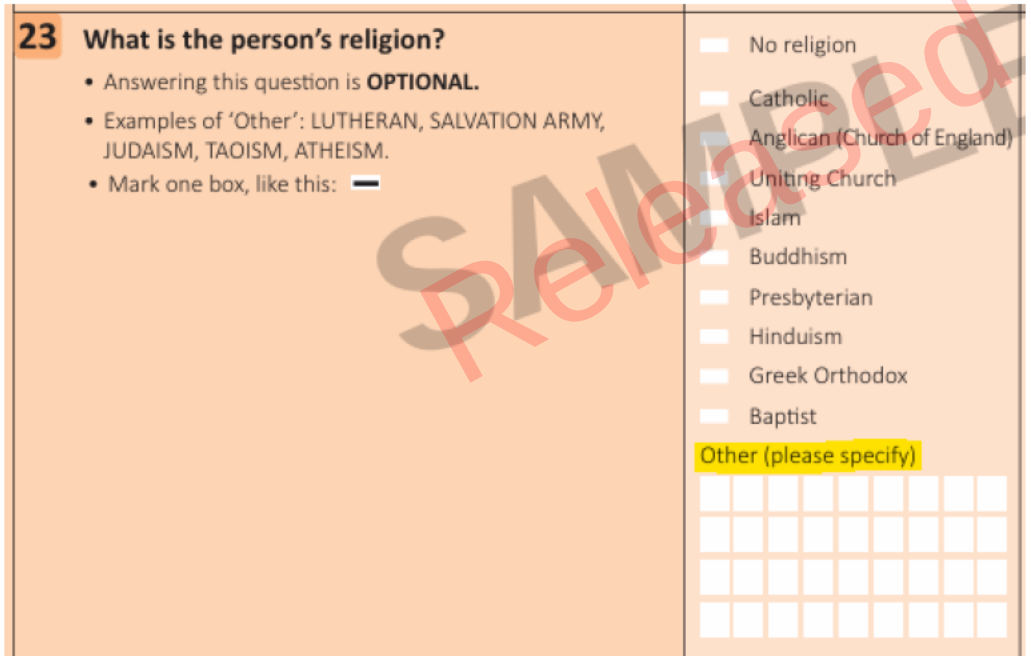
ORE directions - Religion

- Decision needed - free text label

  Suggestion for ORE: 'Other religion (specify)'
  - 'Please' terminology has been removed throughout the form

- Examples

2021 version:

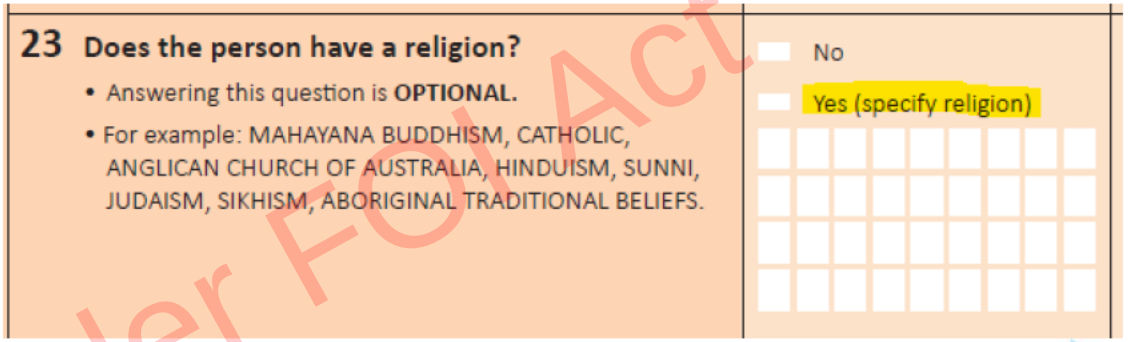


23 What is the person's religion?

- 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)

2024 Test version:

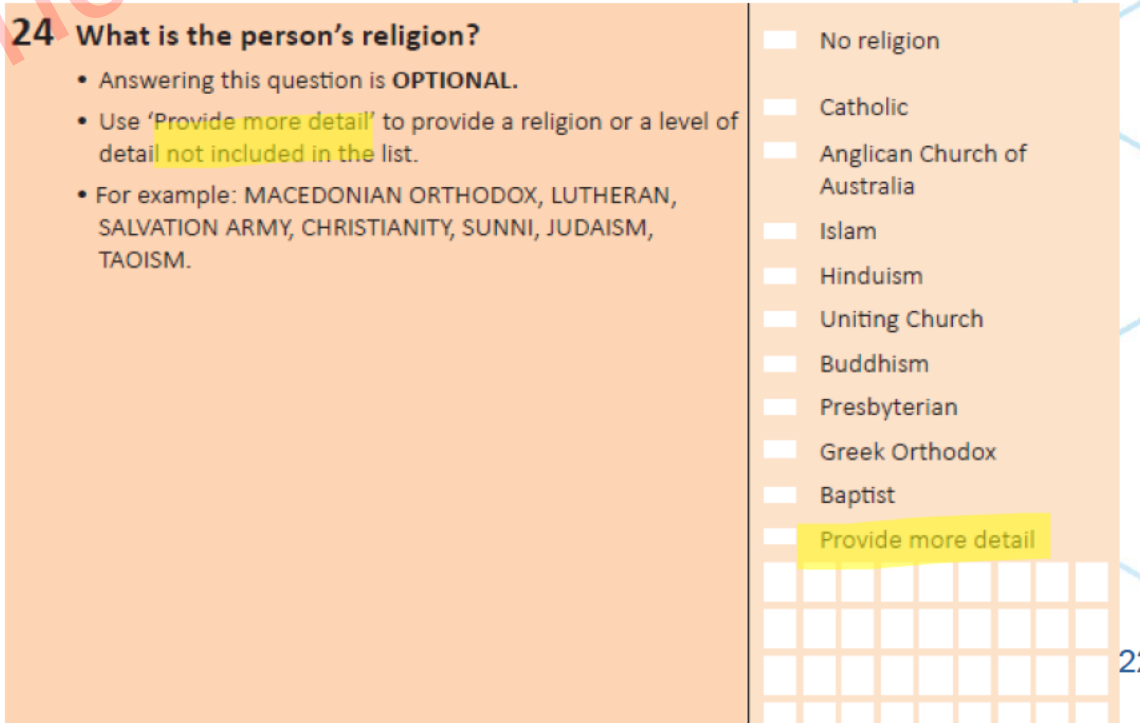


23 Does the person have a religion?

- Answering this question is **OPTIONAL.**
- For example: MAHAYANA BUDDHISM, CATHOLIC, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA, HINDUISM, SUNNI, JUDAISM, SIKHISM, ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL BELIEFS.

No
Yes (specify religion)

CF Round 4 version:



24 What is the person's religion?

- Answering this question is **OPTIONAL.**
- Use 'Provide more detail' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.
- For example: MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX, LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, CHRISTIANITY, SUNNI, JUDAISM, TAOISM.

No religion
Catholic
Anglican Church of Australia
Islam
Hinduism
Uniting Church
Buddhism
Presbyterian
Greek Orthodox
Baptist
Provide more detail

SAMPLE
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Thanks!

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CFS Testing - Round 3 Findings MEETING MINUTES [SEC=OFFICIAL]

S22 [redacted] S22 [redacted] 19/11/2024 05:57 PM

OFFICIAL

Basics

S22 [redacted] 19/11/2024 05:57 PM

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Subject	CFS Testing – Round 3 Findings MEETING MINUTES [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy
Caveat	☐ NATIONAL-CABINET
Categories	07. Instrument design and testing\Household form\Content Finalisation\Cognitive Interviews and Focus Groups\Round 3

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Hi all,

Thank you for meeting with us on Thursday the 7th to discuss the findings and next steps following the round 3 CFS Testing.

Below are the minutes for the discussion. Please review and offer any feedback, otherwise we'll be proceeding as written below.

CFS round 3 SMA meeting minutes	
Time and date	7/11/2024 3:30pm - 4:38pm AEDT
Attendees	S22

Action items

	Owner	Action
1	Census content team	• Census content to organise daily on-ground communication method for the CF round 4 testing to provide real time feedback to leadership.
2	Census content team	S22
3	Census content team	

Summary of discussion

Theme	Discussion points

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Proposed changes to the Religion, S22 [redacted] questions for round 4 of testing	Census content team: *Religion* ● **Paper and online**: Question wording, instructional text, examples, and response option list will stay the same for round 4 of CF testing. ● An update will be made to the label for the free text box to 'Provide more detail'. Census Content have been asked to test an approach that allows people to provide more detail regarding religion, although this hasn't been identified in previous rounds of testing. This has been driven by feedback received through engagement with stakeholders. ● **SMAs**: No objections to proposed change [redacted] S22

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S22 [redacted]

Kind regards,

The Census Content Testing Team

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Re: For comment by COB Thurs 26th June: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL] [redacted]

[redacted] 01/07/2025 03:40 PM

To: [redacted]
Sent by: [redacted]
Cc: [redacted]

From: [redacted]
To: [redacted]@abs.gov.au@M365
Cc: [redacted]

1 attachment
pic07245.gif

Hi [redacted],

Also happy to endorse from the NMSU perspective.

Sorry for missing last weeks deadline!

Cheers,
[redacted]

[redacted]" ---26/06/2025 03:06:56 PM---Re: For comment by COB Thurs 26th June: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to:)

Re: For comment by COB Thurs 26th June: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to:)
[redacted] [redacted]

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*

Basics

S22

Send	To S22 abs.gov.au>, S22 @abs.gov.au>, S22 @
	cc S22 @abs.gov.au>, " S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject	Re: For comment by COB Thurs 26th June: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Protective Mark	
Information management markers	
Categories	03. Topic Review\04. Cultural diversity\05. Stakeholder engagement
Visibility	
Editors	
Document Id	

Hi S22 ,

Thanks for sending this through. I'm happy to endorse.

Kind regards,

S22

From: S22 @abs.gov.au> on behalf of S22 @abs.gov.au>

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Sent: Monday, June 23, 2025 11:40 AM
To: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>
Cc: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: For comment by COB Thurs 26th June: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi everyone

Thank you again for your continuing contribution to the 2026 Census topic review.

As we head into the final stretch of the Content process we are now looking towards signing off material for ME.

What do we need from you?

In order to meet our form development timeframes we are seeking early endorsement of the Cultural Diversity topics. Note that Religion, S22 have been flagged for priority ORE analysis. If significant concerns are identified out of ORE and questions require change, we will consult with you in late August/early September. If no updates are required your endorsement here will be considered final for Main Event.

For the Cultural diversity topics, we have included the final recommendation for the topic and a copy of the final question design(s) for the 2026 Census below. No updates are proposed from what was endorsed for ORE by the Topic custodian PM [redacted].

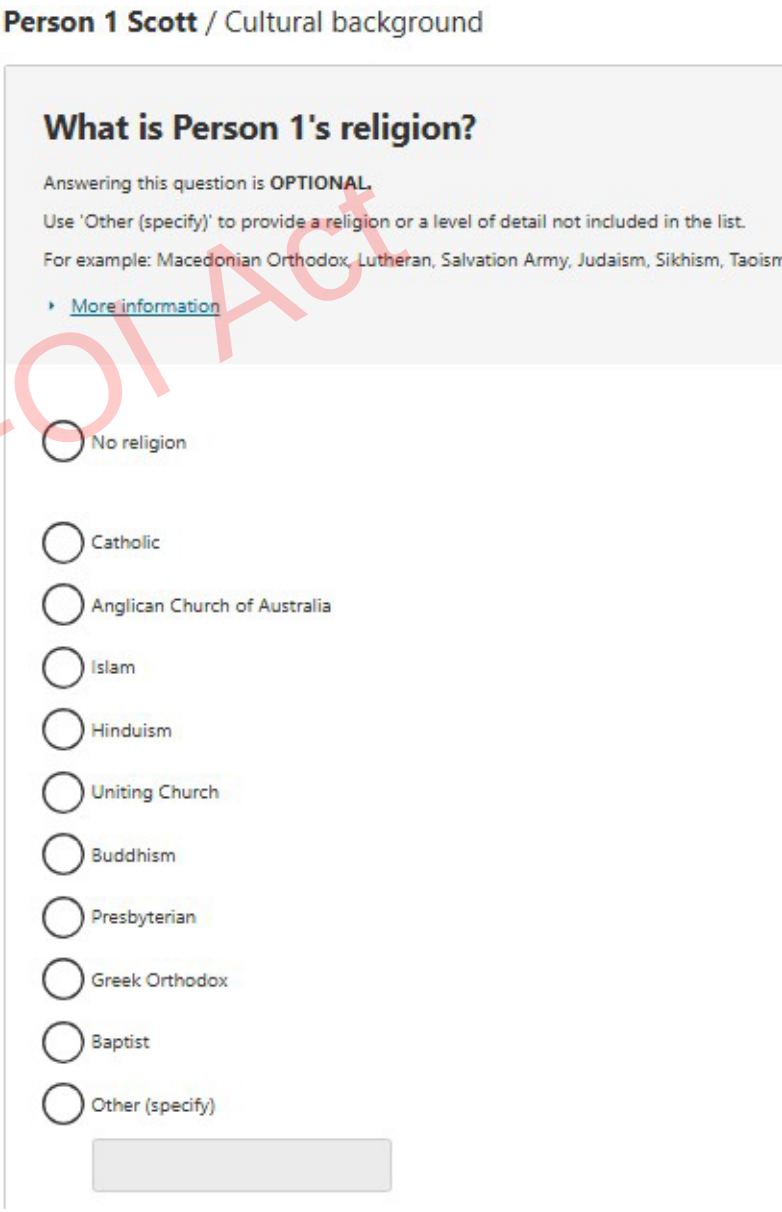
Can you please review this recommendation and provide your endorsement by **COB Thursday 26th June.**

We will then proceed to seek endorsement by the topic custodian PMs (Denise Carlton & AJ Lanyon) and the Census Senior Responsible Officer.

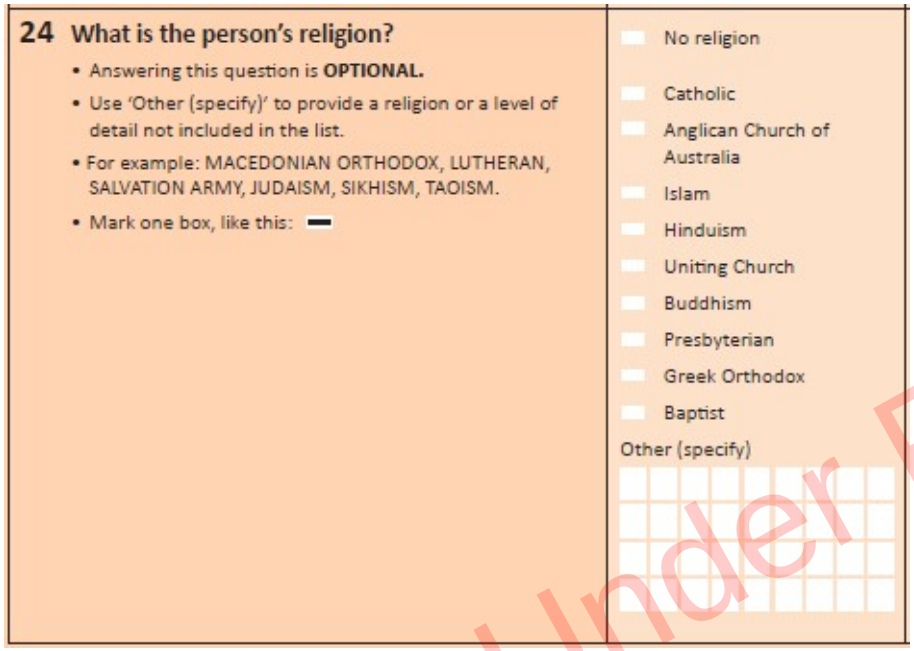
Topic custodia Topic n	Final content recommendation for the 2026 Census	Question design (HHF & PF)	Online
Migrant Statistics & SSI			

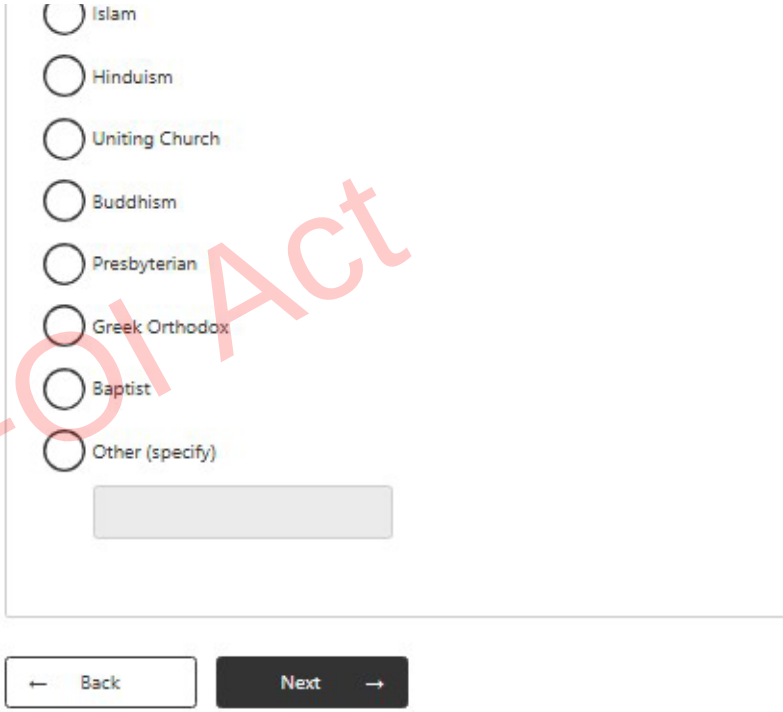
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Religious affiliation	Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census.



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More information

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

If the person wants to provide more detail on their Catholic religion, provide the full nam the religion in the 'Other (specify)' box. For example, Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Cathol 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 th full name of the religion in the 'Other (specify)' box.

People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies can provide thei 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 Rationali

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If you have any questions at all, please reach out to S22 or myself.

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Content designer
Census Content Development | Census Data Operations Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**
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S22 ---03/09/2024 12:30:28 PM---For comment by COB Monday 09/09: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

For comment by COB Monday 09/09: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

S22 S22 03/09/2024 12:30 PM

*

Basics

S22 03/09/2024 12:30 PM

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Subject For comment by COB Monday 09/09: Cultural diversity - 2026 Census Content Finalisation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Information management markers	**Caveat**

Categories	03. Topic Review\04. Cultural diversity\05. Stakeholder engagement
Visibility	Public
Editors	[Wkgroup]
Document Usage	Statistical Development & Support - determines recordkeeping action
Document Id	DCOO-D8R4ZH

Hi all,

Thank you again for contributing to the 2026 Census topic review process so far.

We are aware there has been some uncertainty and changes to the content finalisation process for the 2026 Census recently, with the announcements from Government and the cancellation of the 2024 Test. We have been very appreciative for all your patience and flexibility at this time.

There are still some things we can progress, and we are now focusing on finalising the first group of topics for the 2026 Census.

The first group of topics that will be finalised include:

- Topics with no change since the 2021 Census,
- Topics with minor changes that occur every Census (to update instructional text wording and ordering of response categories), and
- Topics with a proposed change that have a strong evidence base from testing to date and/or a lower risk that changes will negatively impact data quality or public perception in the absence of a large-scale test.

The recommendation has been informed by previous discussions with SMAs, findings from testing activities to date, anti-discrimination risk, external stakeholder engagement, and operational factors.

What do we need from you?

For the Cultural diversity topic theme, I have included the final content recommendation for the applicable topics and a copy of the final question design(s) for the 2026 Census below.

Can you please review this recommendation and the final question design(s), and provide your endorsement by **COB Monday 9th September**.

We will then proceed to seek endorsement by the topic custodian PMs (Denise Carlton & AJ Lanyon) and the Census Senior Responsible Officer.

Topic	Topic	Final content recommendation	Question design (HHF & PF)	Question design (IHF)

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What will happen next?

We will continue to work with your teams on the testing and outcomes of topics for S22 and Religious affiliation. This includes both the Household form and Interviewer Household Form, and how much change we can introduce between the form types.

S22

If you have any questions at all, please reach out to S22 or myself.

Kind regards,

S22
a/g Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
(E) S22 **@abs.gov.au (P)** S22 **(W) www.abs.gov.au***(See attached file: oledata.mso)*

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Australian Bureau of Statistics

Ref: EC25-000417

EXECUTIVE BRIEF – FOR ACTION

Brief title	**2026 Census Content: 2026 Census Main Event content and paper form endorsement**
To	Brenton Goldsworthy – DAS, Insights and Statistics Group and 2026 Census SRO
From	Jenny Telford – General Manager, Census and Population Statistics Division
Through	Annette Kelly – Program Manager, Census Data Operations Branch Mark Harding – Program Manager, Census Field Operations Branch S22 – Director, 2026 Census Content S22 – Director, Census Digital Service S22 – Director, Census Communication
Cc	Bindi Kindermann – General Manager, People and Place Division
Action required by 25 September 2025	**Reason:** Timely delivery of approved questions within timeframes for the 2026 Census Main Event.

Recommendations

1. That you **note** the question designs for 2026 Census ME content remain unchanged from what was endorsed for the Operational Readiness Exercise (see EC24-000585, EC25-000162 and Attachment A), with the exception of Religious Affiliation, and the content noted for enhancements set out in Attachment B and Attachment C.	**Noted**
2. That you **approve** the enhancements to the Front of Form (FOF), Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), the household set up and the back of form.	**Approved**
3. That you **approve** the recommended questions design for 2026 Census Main Event.	**Approved**

Signature: S22 **Date: 25 September 2025**

Executive comments

Clearing Officer	Brenton Goldsworthy	Deputy Australian Statistician Insights & Statistics Group	Ph: 02 6252 5613 Mob S22
Date Cleared	25 September 2025		
Contact Officer	S22	Director 2026 Census Content	Ph S22 Mob: S22

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KEY POINTS

- This brief seeks Senior Responsible Officer endorsement for the question designs for the 2026 Census Main Event (ME), as well as endorsement for non-content related enhancements to the paper form.
- The disallowance period for the amendment (F2024L01356) to the Census and Statistics Regulations concluded on the 25 March 2025. This confirmed the topics for inclusion in the 2026 Census.
- This brief follows on from SRO and Census General Manager approval of:
  - 2025 Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) phase 1 question designs (Attachment A)
  - ORE question designs for S22, Religious affiliation, S22 (see EC24-000585)
  - ME questions design for the S22
- Endorsement for question designs on the Interviewer Household Form and the Special Short Form will be sought later in the year.

S22

- ORE analysis discussed in this brief is based on analysis conducted as of the 8th of September. This includes analysis of approximately S47E(a) paper forms and S47E(a) online forms. As paper form scanning and data verification is still underway, not all paper forms were available for analysis, however the number included is considered a sufficient sample for the analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Census Content team are recommending enhancements to 19 question designs for the 2026 Census ME from what has been endorsed for ORE. All enhancements have been assessed as low risk. For new or existing topics with question change[1]:
  - 1 question is recommended for significant change. See Attachment B
  - 9 questions are recommended for moderate change. See Attachment B
  - 9 questions are recommended for minor change. See Attachment C
  - 43 questions are recommended for no change. See Attachment C

- S22 Religious affiliation, S22 were identified as high priority items for ORE analysis.

S22

[1] S22

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- An update to the response option from 'Anglican (Church of England)' to 'Anglican (Church of Australia)' for Religious affiliation was endorsed for ORE. This update aligns with the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the official name used by the Anglican Church. Analysis of ORE data for both the online and paper forms identified approx. S47E(a) of people coded to 'Anglican' wrote in 'Church of England' instead of selecting 'Anglican (Church of Australia)' from the response options. This indicates an increase in respondent burden, and is likely to have minor overall impact on data, however it's not possible to fully understand the effect on data quality and statistical impact. Further consultation with key stakeholders to fully understanding the impact on their use of the data is recommended, but this will not be possible for 2026 within current paper form deadlines. During initial consultation, key stakeholders emphasised the importance of consistency in data, therefore it is recommended that this response option is reverted to the 2021 label of 'Anglican (Church of England)'.

- All other recommended updates are detailed in Attachment B.

CONSULTATION

- All question designs for ME have been signed off by the Domain Program Manager, and where different, the Program Manager with responsibility for the Standard. Census Content have undertaken an extensive validation process, supported by Respondent Collection Methodology, Domains and Census Data Quality and Coverage.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Brief: 2026 Census topic review: Operational Readiness Exercise question sign-off – medium and low-risk topics
Attachment B: Topics recommended for moderate and significant change
Attachment C: Topics recommended for minor and no change

Attachment A:

2026 Census ORE Questions for GM si

Attachment B: Topics recommended for moderate and significant change [(a)(b)(c)]

Topic	Driver	Proposed enhancement	Level of change	Recommendation for 2026 Census	Details
S22					

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- The attached specifications contain the final question design for 2026 Census Main Event for both the paper form and the online form. These can also be viewed in this link: 2026 Census Content - Finalised question design by topic (HHF)

2026 ME HHF Web form questionnaire	2026 ME HHF Paper form questionnaire	2026 ME PF Paper form questionnaire	2026 ME PF Web form questionnaire

- Specific changes to FOF, FAQ's, household set up and back of form can be viewed in this link: Paper form non-content design updates

Attachment C: Topics recommended for minor and no change

Topic	Change from 2021	Change from 2025 (ORE)
S22		

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RE: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
(Response to:)

S22 [redacted] S22 [redacted] 16/10/2024 12:12 PM

Basics

S22 [redacted] 16/10/2024 12:12 PM

Send	To S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au> S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>, " S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>, S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>. S22 [redacted] S22 [redacted] cc < S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>, S22 [redacted] < S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>, ' S22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au> bcc
Subject	RE: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024 [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy — Caveat
Categories	03. Topic Review\04. Cultural diversity\05. Stakeholder engagement\Religious affiliation

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Thanks S22 [redacted] for the detailed information on the emerging religions. I can't recall what was mentioned about Judaism, but if anyone else does please share.

Similar to the approach we did prior to the Test, I'll pull together a document with the review of the examples and more information text (as this contains numerous examples) to inform the recommendation on the ORE question. This will outline whats been considered and the recommendation of what to include for ORE so that it can then be signed off at the SES level.

As the question/examples for R4 testing needs to be locked down pretty soon, this review is unlikely to be completed prior to that so its likely there may be differences between the R4 and ORE versions.

I'll keep you posted.

Regards

S22

Assistant director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
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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: S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, October 16, 2024 11:43 AM
To: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>
Cc: S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024

S47C & S22

From: S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, October 16, 2024 10:28 AM
To: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 <S22 @abs.gov.au>
Cc: 2026 Census Content Development WDB <S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024

Hi S22,

Thank you for looking into this so quickly and appreciate all the detail, it helps to give us all a picture of where you have landed. The suggest seems sensible from my end, but am keen to hear others thoughts.

I wanted to flag an addition to the examples will likely need sign off by PM/GM and potentially SRO. S22 will lead this work.

In terms of testing- we will consider if this is included in R4. It would be good to see if there are any reactions from different groups, but unlikely that we would see anyone from this group (but who knows!)

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Kind regards

S22
S22
2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics **(P)** S22
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From: S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 15 October 2024 7:21 PM
To: S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au> S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 @abs.gov.au>; S22 < S22 @abs.gov.au>
Cc: 2026 Census Content Development WDB <S22 @abs.gov.au >; S22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024

Hi folks,

To close of our action of - Does post-Census migration data show growth in any countries of birth that could drive emerging religions? (Action 6 for SRO decision point – migrants).
We had a look at Census data and of Australia's Population by Country of Birth, Jun 2023 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au) (aka Country of birth ERP) to see whether any post Census migration was **driving emerging** religions.

S47C

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S47C [redacted]

Happy to discuss further.

S22 [redacted]
Assistant Director
National Migrant Statistics Unit | Overseas Migration and Migrant Statistics Section | Population Statistics
Australian Bureau of Statistics
(P) S22 [redacted] (E) S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au

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From: S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, October 10, 2024 6:03 PM
To: S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>; S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>
Cc: 2026 Census Content Development WDB <S22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>
Subject: Notes and actions from meeting on next steps with Census religion question - 9 Oct 2024

Hi everyone,
Thanks for your time yesterday to discuss next steps with the Census religion question. For completeness, I've copied below the feedback that Denise circulated to some of us after the exec discussion last Thursday.
This email is to summarise key discussion points and actions. S22 [redacted] and I will separately talk about how to feed these plans back to exec both through the formal decision process and more casually with Denise.

Pick list

The feedback from exec was to revert to a pick list like 2021. The number of categories will remain at 9 (plus no religion and other – specify).
Only action required here is for SSI to advise of any changes to the inclusions or order to reflect reported rates in the 2021 Census. **(Action 1 not required for cog testing, but needed for ORE form spec - SSI)**

Provide more detail

Feedback from exec was to explore alternative wording to the 'other, please specify' instruction, including encouraging respondents to multi-mark with a pick list response e.g. tick 'Catholic' and also write 'Maronite Catholic' or tick 'Islam' and also write 'Sunni Islam'. Data from previous Censuses shows that respondents already provide extra detail when applicable to them.
We have concerns with this approach and agreed not to progress further in testing. This will be fed back formally through the SRO decision point and informally with Denise. **(Action 2 for SRO decision point – content topic review)**
Specific comments about data and respondent behaviour:

- SSI – without a large-scale test, it will not be possible to understand the statistical impact of this change. We will also not be able to understand respondent behaviour in the limited

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rounds of cognitive testing that remain, especially as it can be difficult to recruit participants who identify as religious. The direction from exec is taking a conservative approach towards data stability over time, this change is not consistent with that.

- Migrants SMA – agree with SSI. The exec decided to be close to 2021, so we should keep the question as stable as possible.
- RCM – it would be confusing to modify the text-box label, and we won't know what the impact on respondent behaviour will be. Could add instruction text to guide that respondents can provide the level of detail in the other box that applies to them.

To enable a respondent to both tick a box and write in more information would require a functional change to the online form and to the data model. We will get more information from the affected areas to include in the topic summary and recommendation to the SRO, but it's unlikely that this will be feasible. Initial areas of feasibility concern include:

- Census Digital Service - the development period for the ORE online form before code freeze is limited and it's unlikely that the CDS will have capacity to introduce new functionality without descoping other priorities.
- Data Design – business rules define how responses are coded. The Data Design and Dissemination teams working on the metadata project are determining the rules now for the ORE content. There is an opportunity to change how different combinations of tick boxes and text responses are processed, but this will have an unknown statistical impact that won't be seen until ORE data is being processed. There could be a change to time-series which is inconsistent with the intent to not change too much from 2021.
- Dissemination - some respondents already want to provide two or more religions. If we were to enable this, or actively encourage it, the data model would have to change. There would also be impacts on how data is output with a multi-response question, as is currently the case with the health and ancestry questions. In addition to having an impact on time-series, this is not feasible without descoping other priorities.
- Coding/machine learning – SSI will continue to work with the coding teams to develop the coding index and determine the training model for the machine learner. There is a tension between consistency over time and accuracy of code, however this is separate to the current discussion around the question design.

<u>Examples of other religions</u>

Feedback from exec included a few points about the examples of other religions given in the instruction text that could be tested: Sunni pending meeting with the S22 ; Macedonian Orthodox; and Christianity.

We need to have evidence to support changes to the examples given. This is driven by data need as well as the need for representation or mitigation against discrimination risk.

We discussed that we would include Christianity and Macedonian Orthodox in the next round of testing. **(Action 3 for round 3 testing – content testing)**.

There was general caution about changing the example list because of its unknown impact on data quality. It is possible that a respondent

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will write in Christian instead of ticking Catholic, Anglican or another more specific denomination. Is this desirable from a data perspective? Engagement would be needed with various Christian groups to consider their perspectives. We are also cautious about the defensibility of including one example over another, S47C [redacted]. **(Action 4 for SRO decision point – content topic review)**
Are there any other examples that need to be considered from a discrimination perspective? **(Action 5 for SRO decision point – content topic review)**
Does post-Census migration data show growth in any countries of birth that could drive emerging religions? **(Action 6 for SRO decision point – migrants)**
Remove 'atheism' from the list of examples and don't replace with another secular belief. **(Action 7 for SRO decision point – content topic review)**
Instruction text
Develop a new dot point for the instructions to give guidance that the respondent should provide the level of detail that they wish to. The inclusion of the pick list and the examples suggests that the different levels are acceptable, but can we come up with a generic statement to support this? **(Action 8 for round 3 testing – content testing/RCM)**.

Please let me know if you've got any questions about these notes and the next steps.
Cheers,
S22 [redacted]

S22 [redacted]
Director - Census Content Testing
Census and Population Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**
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Turrbal & Jagera Country (Brisbane area, Queensland)

Meeting date: 3 October

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Attendees: David Gruen, Brenton Goldsworthy, Duncan Young, Denise Carlton, AJ Lanyon

The meeting covered off on the material contained in the attached slides in order to confirm the broad approach to be taken, so that question design can be refined and finalised in the final two round of cognitive testing. Outcomes were:

1. Noted that further consultation had highlighted a diversity of (sometimes competing) requirements among stakeholders, but that comparability of data series was a key consideration for many. No approach will be able to meet the priorities of all stakeholders.
2. Reconfirmed that on balance the cost, opportunity cost and relative priority associated with implementing targeted supplementary questions or other digital solutions such as point of contact coding, means this will not be implemented for 2026. S22 [redacted]
3. On balance the decision was made to retain the picklist approach for 2026. This reflects feedback received from a number of stakeholders around the importance of comparability, and the significant impact the change would represent. There is also more significant burden associated with the free text box – some of this may be mitigated in a future Census if some of the initiatives outlined in 2 above were implemented. S22 [redacted]
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 (note we will reconfirm the position on Islam at a follow up meeting S22 [redacted]). Consider examples in the instruction text which encourage the more granular options now available in the classification, e.g. Sunni.
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.
6. We will not test adding Christianity to the picklist given it is not mutually exclusive with other existing picklist options (in a picklist that has always been mutually exclusive). We will test its inclusion as a an example in the instructional text.
7. Options to support respondents wanting to provide more (or less) granular data will explored through testing of alternative wording to ‘Other,

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please specify' to include something like 'please provide more detail' and consider different coding options for those respondents who want to do this (i.e. alongside choosing a picklist option).

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. S22 [redacted]

Regards,

Denise Carlton s22 [redacted]

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RE: Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to:)

S22 S22 12/11/2024 03:02 PM

Basics

S22 12/11/2024 03:02 PM

Send	To cc bcc	s22		
Subject	RE: Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs [SEC=OFFICIAL]			
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL			
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy		Caveat	☐ NATIONAL-CABINET
Categories	03. Topic Review\01. Topic Review process			

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S47C & S22

In terms of sign-off for the decision for the design of this question (which will cover the instructional text and list of examples) it sits across a number of areas. The religion topic custodian PMs (Denise and AJ) endorse it, before Brenton as Census SRO endorses. This would be with the support of Jenny T, and Dr Gruen will at a minimum have visibility of it if not part of the formal sign-off process (delegations are still being worked through). So there are a number of SES involved.

We certainly would want CoATSIS support on the inclusion or non-inclusion of this as an example, and would take your advice on what level would provide sign-off for it in CoATSIS.

We are looking to provide an announcement on the final question design to external stakeholders, including something on the website, by the end of the year. Whether this question will be changed for the 2026 Census is of keen interest to many stakeholders, and Dr Gruen has publicly stated that a decision on the question design will be made late this year. We are currently working through our comms plan and the level of detail (including on the examples and what was considered) that will be shared publicly.

Regards

s22 [redacted]

Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
s22 [redacted] 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: s22 [redacted]
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 2:11 PM
To: s22 [redacted] .au>; s22 [redacted]
<s22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>; s22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs

Hi s22 [redacted]
s22 [redacted]

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S22

We think it would be beneficial to get some feedback from the engagement managers on the religion question, if you support that.

Cheers,
S22

S22
Director - Census Content Testing
Census and Population Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**
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From: S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 12 November 2024 11:26 AM
To: S22

Subject: RE: Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs

Hi S22

My initial thought is that this is a decision that sits across areas in the ABS. Which SES are involved in the decision?

S22

S22 I'll get back to you S22 on how we can be involved.

S22

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s22
Director, Centre of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics
Community, Wellbeing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics Branch
People and Place Division
Australian Bureau of Statistics
s22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

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From: s22 >
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 7:51 AM
To: s22
Cc: s22
Subject: Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs

Hi s22 ,

We are getting close to finalising the religion question for the Household Form (HHF), and I wanted to check in with you on who would be in the best position to provide guidance/advise on whether we should proceed with inclusion of 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' as an example in the religion question.

For background, earlier in the year we reviewed the list of examples included in the question on the HHF, alongside changes being considered to the question (update to question wording and removal of picklist). The example of 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' had been flagged for consideration to provide guidance and align with the IHF. s22 provided some insights and advice from a cultural context to inform a decision on what was being tested, noting that there are complexities and likely different interpretations with the example. See 2026 Census Content Development WDB - RE: For comment: Review of religion examples [SEC=OFFICIAL]

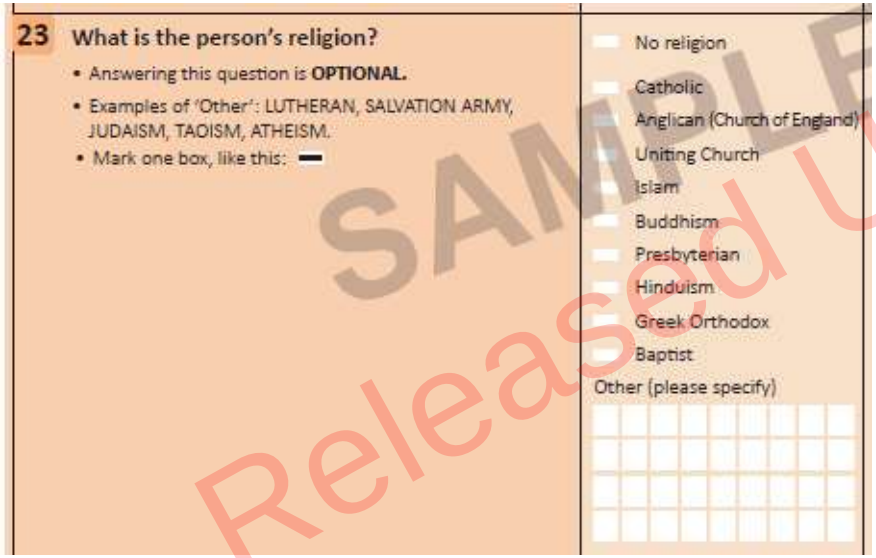
This example was included in the 2024 Test question, however on advice from CoATSIS we did not engage with any organisation regarding the example at the time, and the intention was to review the data following the Test to see if there were any data quality concerns. Given limitations with cognitive testing, we have not been able to probe on this example or gather any insights from HHF testing.

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A decision has been made to retain the 2021 question wording and picklist, and we are now making final refinements to the instructional text and examples. We need to make a recommendation on whether it is included as an example (or not), for endorsement by SES. As we haven't been able to extensively test this, there could be risks to respondent burden (i.e. people being confused or having to choose between writing 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' and selecting another religion such as Catholic, Anglican in the picklist) or data quality (i.e. people misreporting) which we don't have a full understanding of, but on the other hand there could be benefits from the perspective of respondents seeing themselves in the question or inclusivity. This question is also an optional question so people don't need to respond if they don't want to.

I'm not aware of any examples of how counts of people with Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions are used or the importance of this data for stakeholders. S22 [redacted]

2021 HHF question



SAMPLE
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Also, thought I'd mention that 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' is an example on the IHF - we are not looking to make changes to that.

We'd like to get CoATSIS's thoughts on how to proceed with the example and at this stage are aiming to

finalise the question by the end of the month/early Dec. I'm more than happy to talk through it and provide more detail on the considerations, or s22 are also across it and can chat further (in person) if there is time this week ?

Hope Round Table goes well!

Regards

s22

Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
(s22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au
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RE: Religion, Ancestry, CoB of Parents round 3 discussion [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to: RE: Religion, Ancestry, CoB of Parents round 3 discussion [SEC=OFFICIAL])
s22 s22 27/11/2023 08:18 PM

Basics

s22 27/11/2023 08:18 PM

Send	To	s22
	cc	
	bcc	
Subject	RE: Religion s22 [SEC=OFFICIAL]	
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL	
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy	Caveat ☐ NATIONAL-CABINET
Categories	07. Instrument design and testing\Household form\Decision registers\Cultural diversity\Stakeholder engagement	

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Hi s22

Thanks for the chat, appreciate your understanding here.

S47C

Appreciate your offer to keep this moving over the coming days, we can look at adding this into round 4b, starting the 11th Dec. Can you bring s22 into conversations as they evolve, she is taking the lead on this round. We'd need a final decision on the 5th of Dec to build into the instrument.

In terms of the examples, s22 thank you for your advice, I've added some comments into your email in blue. Below is the list we will test noting that this will need to be refined. s47C

Roman Catholic, Sunni, Mahayana Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Presbyterian, Taoist.

Once again thank you for the input everyone.

Kind regards

s22
s22
2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics (P) s22
(E) s22 gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

From: s22
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 7:38 PM
To: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Hi there,

Thanks for this last chance to yell out on the testing approach for these topics.

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Sorry for late response!

S47C & S22 [redacted]

S47C & S22 [redacted]

s22 [redacted]

Good luck!

s22 [redacted]

s22 [redacted]
Director
Overseas Migration and Migrants Statistics
Australian Bureau of Statistics
s22 [redacted]
[redacted] www.abs.gov.au

From: s22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 4:25 PM
To: s22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Religion, s22 [redacted]

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Regards

s22

Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
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From: s22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 2:23 PM
To: s22 @abs.gov.au>
Cc: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Hi s22

s22 s47C

s22

Kind regards,

s22

s47C & S22

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[redacted]

Anglican groups in the ASCRG (Under the Anglican Narrow group – 3 digits)

2012	Anglican Church of Australia
2013	Anglican Catholic Church
2019	Anglican, nec

s22 [redacted] s47C [redacted]

From: s22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 1:16 PM
To: s22 [redacted]
Subject: RE: Religion, s22 [redacted]

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Hi Everyone,

Just trying to catch up with all the decisions. So we are all on the same page.

s47C & S22

s22

Kind regards
s22
2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics **(P)** s22
(E) s22 **@abs.gov.au** **(W)** **www.abs.gov.au**

From: s22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 8:01 AM
To: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Thanks all and apologies for not getting back to this on Friday, although I did have a couple of conversations about this to inform my thinking.

To summarise the conversations and direction:

1. We won't be putting anything in the publication as we don't mention any changes to instructional text for any of the other minor changes.
2. We don't want to rush anything here into testing, and we don't need to make any decisions yet. So we won't make any changes for Rounds 4 or 5 of cog testing.
3. This means we do have more time to engage with stakeholders if we are looking at making any changes.

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s22 mentioned that there is a meeting on Monday afternoon on this – I don't have it in my calendar and am heading to the airport about 3pm – but happy for the above to be discussed for those that are there.

Cheers
s22

From: s22
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 9:20 AM
To: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Thanks for the explanation s22

Regards

s22

Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
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From: s22
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 9:14 AM
To: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Morning s22 ,

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s47C & S22

Cheers
s22

s22
Director
Statistical Standards & Infrastructure | Statistical Infrastructure Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**
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(W) **www.abs.gov.au**

From: s22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 8:54 AM
To: s22
Subject: RE: Religion, s22

Hi All,



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s22 [redacted]

Regards

s22 [redacted]

Assistant Director
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
s22 [redacted] **@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: s22 [redacted] @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 8:07 AM
To: s22 [redacted]
Subject: RE: Religion, s22 [redacted]

Apologies, for not being present yesterday.

S47C & S22 [redacted]

s22 [redacted]

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From: S22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2023 7:00 AM
To: S22

Subject: RE: Religion, S22

Thanks S22 and everyone for the great discussion today. I have some follow-up thoughts and suggestions and two. I have direct questions and actions are for: S22 . But I would like other people's thoughts too.

S22

S47C

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S47C & S22

s22

s22
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From: s22 abs.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, November 23, 2023 5:57 PM
To: s22
Subject: Religion, Ancestry, s22

Hello,
Thank you again for the discussion today. As we agreed there were a few things that we needed to take off line, which I hope I have captured below. If not please reach out.

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Religion

Update instructional text on paper to tell people to skip past ‘what is the persons religion’.

Questions remain over the examples

Question 1 – do we include examples knowing that that they cause some people to not put any religion (only an issue on paper) . S47C & S22

S47C [redacted]

Question 2 – if we keep examples do we change to be less specific ie remove ‘Western’

Again we’ll need a decision on this early next wk.

Question	Response option
Does the person have a religion? Answering this question is **OPTIONAL.** If religion is unknown, GO TO XYZ	Yes No
What is the person’s religion? Answering this question is **OPTIONAL**. Examples include: WESTERN (ROMAN) CATHOLIC, SUNNI, SHIA, MAHAYANA BUDDHIST, GREEK ORTHODOX, MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX, PRESBYTERIAN, SALVATION ARMY, TAOIST.	Free text Prefer not to answer

Kind regards

s22 [redacted]

2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics **(P)** s22 [redacted]

(E) s22 [redacted] **(W)** www.abs.gov.au

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Review of examples included in instructional text - Religious affiliation [SEC=OFFICIAL] (Response to: Review of examples included in instructional text - Summary [SEC=OFFICIAL])

s22 [redacted] s22 [redacted] 16/01/2024 09:32 AM

OFFICIAL

Basics

Protective Mark	OFFICIAL		
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy	Caveat	☐ NATIONAL-CABINET

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Recommendations following the review of the Religious affiliation instructional text (including examples)

The Census Content project team have undertaken a review of the examples used in the instructional text for the Religious affiliation question as part of the 2026 Census topic review process. The review of the examples has been informed by the feedback received on the question design from two public consultation processes on 2026 Census topics and the public consultation on updating the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS), as well as engagement with peak religious organisations during 2024. Updates to the ASCRG classification have also been considered as part of the review of the examples. The recommendations are based on the earlier direction provided by the Australian Statistician to retain the 2021 Census question design for the 2026 Census and investigate changes to the label of the free text field and the instructional text (including examples). See

Recommendation for 2026 Census

In addition to retaining the 2021 Census question design (with updates to ordering of response options based on 2021 data), there are **three** recommendations for minor updates to the question design to reflect updates to the ASCRG, improve guidance provided to respondents and promote accurate reporting. These are:

Recommendation 1:

Include additional instructional text to encourage people to use the free text field if their religion or level of detail is not included in the picklist. This may help to promote more accurate reporting. The additional instructional text would be:

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

Recommendation 2:

Include 'Sikhism' and 'Macedonian Orthodox' in the list of examples and remove 'Atheism' as an example. See '2026 Census: Options considered and recommendations' section for the rationale for these recommendations. The updated list (with change from 2021 Census highlighted) would be:

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

Recommendation 3:

Update the 'More information' text in the online form to accommodate changes to the instructional text, better align with the ASCRG and address concerns with the text identified during engagement and consultation. The updated online 'More information' text (with change from 2021 Census highlighted) would be:

> The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 20~~16~~21 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~~ wants to provide more detail on their Catholic religion, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (specify)' box. For example, ~~such as~~ Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic, ~~or~~ Ukrainian Catholic or Western Catholic.~~, provide the full name of the religion in the 'Other (please specify)' box.~~
>
> If the person~~'s religion is~~ wants to provide an Orthodox religion such as ~~Macedonian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox or Armenian Orthodox,~~ 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 (~~please~~ specify)' box.
>
> People who have non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies ~~should record~~ can provide their response in the 'Other (~~please~~ 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.
>
> ~~If the person identifies with no religion at all, select the 'No religion' response.~~

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Considerations (including stakeholder and testing feedback)

A number of factors were considered, on balance, when reviewing the instructional text and examples, such as:

- 2021 data quality
- Feedback from stakeholders and testing
- Amount/length of text, including number of examples
- Reasons to add/remove examples
- Coverage of religions in ASRCG across both picklist and example list
- Alignment with naming/ordering in ASCRG
- 2024 ASCRG updates
- Confidence in change with limited testing
- Potential statistical impact of change.

See '2026 Census: Options considered and recommendations' section below for further details on considerations for specific religious group examples.

Data quality

2021 data was analysed and investigations completed to support the review of the examples.



Census article - Religious affiliation in Australia_Top religions.xlsx

Stakeholder feedback

Feedback received through consultation was considered when reviewing the instructional text. Differing views and perspectives were provided, some conflicting with other feedback received.

2026 Census content consultation (see summary in Topic Summary [redacted])

A range of feedback was received, some of which related to the picklist but could inform examples. This included:

- Inclusion or exclusion of certain religions in the check box options, such as
- Inclusion of a non-denominational Christian option
- 'Greek Orthodox' should not be singled out, but an option for Orthodox included instead.
- Macedonian Orthodox , Russian Orthodox , Arabic Orthodox like to be known as Orthodox not Greek orthodox.

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- Lack of Macedonian orthodox option is discriminatory
- Sikhism should have its own check box option
- Judaism should have its own check box option
- Many other religions note that their religion should be included as a response option
- 'No religion' is not a religion.
- Atheism is not a religion and so should not be an example for the 'other religion' free text.
- Do not treat non-religions such as 'atheism' differently to 'no religion', doing so is misleading and results in inconsistent choices and inaccurate data.
- Atheism/ Agnosticism should be grouped under 'no religion' to improve data quality
- Humanism is also not a religion
- Improve clarity so that people can identify religions (e.g., Sunni or Shi'a for people of the Muslim faith)
- Current check box options fail to capture the nuance in religion beyond "anglo-centric Anglican and Roman Catholic" religions
- Respondents should be able to identify more world views
- Include a category s47E(a) to separate out people who do not believe in religious institutions receiving any government funding (No Religion), from those who do
- Questions/feedback on why a religion is included or excluded from the picklist, such as Judaism, as well as queries on why 'Atheism' was included as an example when its not a religion were commonly received by 2021 Census Dissemination. See User support and engagement standard responses for common queries/response relating to Religion ([redacted]).

Engagement with key stakeholders during 2024

A number of examples were suggested for inclusion in the examples or picklist (if retained). This included:

- Eco-spiritualism
- Pentecostal
- Eastern Orthodox
- Christianity

Testing feedback/outcomes

The below table provides a summary of findings relevant to the included examples. The examples included, and question design tested, was refined each round. For more detailed testing outcomes see [redacted].

Cognitive testing round	Detail
S22	[redacted]

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Round 3	● Included text "Examples include: Western (Roman) Catholic, Sunni, Mahayana Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Presbyterian, Salvation Army, and Taoist." ● See Decision register 'Round 2 (16 - 20 October 2023)' section for discussion on the list of examples, including reasoning for the examples used for testing purposes (■). ● No specific feedback noted by participants on the examples included/excluded
Round 4	● Included updated text "Examples include: ~~Western (~~Roman~~)~~ Catholic, Sunni, Mahayana Buddhist, Greek Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Presbyterian, ~~Salvation Army,~~ and Taoist." ● Agreed to test a reduced number of examples. Need to be aware of balance in the examples but can consider that further. ● See Decision register 'Round 3 (13 - 17 November 2023)' section for further discussion on the list of examples (■) and confirmation of final list of examples for Round 4 (■) Findings: ● Change of example list in this round did not have noticeable impact ● Some respondents noticed examples, others didn't require any guidance (particularly for Catholics) s47E(a)
CFS Round 1	● Included 2024 Census Test question design with text "For example: Mayahana Buddhism, Catholic, Anglican Church of Australia, Hinduism, Sunni, Judaism, Sikhism, Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs." ● Multiple participants said they would put 'atheist' or 'agnostic' if they were in the examples, but left their answer as 'no religion' since they were not on the list. ● Many participants referenced or queried the examples when answering the question.
CFS Round 2	● Same question as CFS Round 1 ● Examples were heavily referenced by participants
CFS Round 3	● Paper form: 2021 question design with updated examples list to include 'Macedonian Orthodox' and 'Christianity' ● Online form: 2024 Test question (same as CFS round 1-2) Findings: ● A small number of respondents provided a high level response such as 'Christian or 'Islamic' and made mention to examples however chose to report a high level response (online form) ● A small number noted that their religion was not in the pick list. (paper form) s47E(a)

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	s47E(a) [redacted] • See S22 [redacted] for further discussion on the list of examples ([redacted])
CFS Round 4	• 2021 question design with updated examples list to include 'Macedonian Orthodox', 'Christianity' and 'Sunni'. Additional s47E(a) [redacted] • Several participants noted the absence of 'Christian' in the response options - and said this was intentionally excluded by the government.

2026 Census: Options considered and recommendations

Notes:

- Picklist retained from 2021 question design, with updates to ordering of response options based on 2021 Census data
- Migrant Statistics, SSI, RCM, CoATSIS and Census Data quality have been consulted when reviewing the instructional text, including examples list.
- Consistent with the 2021 Census, guidance materials will be provided to religious organisations and other stakeholders where required to support their communities to accurate respond to the question.
- Updates to online functionality of the question to allow a respondent to deselect and not provide a response (after a response option has been selected) will not be made given current constraints and ability to properly test an alternative within current time frames. See [redacted]

Recommended changes to instructional text (including online More information)

Note: excludes minor grammatical changes

Text	Recommendation
Instructional text	• Include additional sentence to encourage people to report a level of detail (i.e more or less granular example) thats relevant to them. • 'Use 'Other (specify)' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.' Notes • Updates to the label of the free text field were also tested in one round of testing to encourage respondents to provide more detail in the free text field, however testing did not provide sufficient confidence in this change and understanding of impact to respondent behaviour so this was not recommended.
	• Example list - see 'Review of examples' section below

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More Information text	• Update Catholic examples to reflect all Catholic religious groups in the ASCRG and reorder to align with the classification more closely: • Chaldean Catholic, Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Syriac Catholic, Syro Malabar Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic, or Western Catholic. <u>Notes</u> • Chaldean Catholic was the only religion under the 'Catholic' narrow group in the classification that was missing (and unsure why) and Syriac has been added to the ASCRG. Including these two would be good for completeness. • Recommended changes to the processing rules will result in a mark-box selection of 'Catholic' being coded to 'Catholic, nfd' and no longer to 'Western Catholic'. If a person wants to specify Western Catholic, this should be provided in the write-in field. Therefore, it is recommended that Western Catholic is added as an example.
	• Update Orthodox examples to include all Orthodox religious groups in ASCRG (except Greek Orthodox already in picklist, and Macedonian Orthodox included in examples list) and reorder to align with the classification more closely: • Antiochian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox or Syrian Orthodox. <u>Notes</u> • Recommended changes to add Macedonian Orthodox to the examples list means the example should be removed from the 'More information' text to reduce duplication. • Addition of Antiochian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox and Syrian Orthodox to reflect all Orthodox religious groups in the ASCRG would be good for completeness. • Including only the top 3 Oriental Orthodox and top 3 Eastern Orthodox was also considered, however this would leave out some religious groups and it is recommended to include all for completeness.
	• Include 'Humanism' as an example of non-religious beliefs so that all secular beliefs in the ASCRG are listed. <u>Notes</u> • Humanism was included in the list of examples previously and was removed in 2021 at the request of stakeholders and replaced with Atheism. • Engagement with a stakeholder representing Humanism supported its inclusion as an example for completeness.

Other updates considered, but not recommended:

- Whether 'religious groups' wording should be replaced with 'responses' or 'options' to acknowledge that 'No religion' was one of the most commonly reported responses and is therefore an option on the picklist. However, using 'responses' would not be accurate as Christianity (coded to Christianity nfd) was also one of the top 10 responses in the 2021 Census but is not included in the picklist, therefore no change to the wording is recommended.
- The inclusion of Buddhism examples (3 religious groups) to reflect updated ASCRG was considered, however not recommended based on stakeholder

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feedback (see Review of examples section).

- The inclusion of Islam examples (5 religious groups) to reflect updated ASCRG was considered, however not recommended based on stakeholder feedback (see Review of examples section).

Recommended changes to examples (from 2021 question)

- Feedback from consultation, and engagement with key stakeholders, identified a range of examples for inclusion in the examples list (and in some cases requests to be included in the picklist). This includes, but is not limited to: Christianity, Macedonian Orthodox, Pentecostal, Yezidi (via a news article). Feedback also highlighted that Atheism is not a religion and should not be included as an example of a religion.
- Further consultation with Islamic stakeholders was undertaken to seek feedback on the inclusion of a more granular example for Islam, to ensure views from the Muslim community were considered as the ASCRG has been updated to include a further breakdown for Islam.
- Updates to the example list were included in cognitive testing. Testing showed that some participants notice the examples, while for others guidance isn't required. A small number of participants comment on what examples have been included, make suggestions for other examples to be included (such as their own religion) or despite seeing the examples listed, still want to report at a broader level.
- Adding or removing examples is likely to impact the data. This was observed with the removal of 'Humanism' from the examples list in 2021, where counts for Humanism decreased from 2016 despite increases being observed for other secular beliefs. Further, investigations into ancestry data issues in 2021 showed that changes to the ancestry examples likely impacted the counts for ancestries that were removed from the examples list.
- Examples considered and not recommended for inclusion:
  - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs: This was explored to provide additional guidance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and align with the example included on the IHF. CoATSIS support the recommendation to not include 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' as an example due to the challenges identified in previous testing with people wanting to report a belief as well as a religion and the need for further consultation to better understand this which us not possible within the remaining timeframes to finalise the question. To raise community awareness, CoATSIS support a similar approach to 2021 with the use of fact sheets.
  - Sunni: Inclusion of an Islamic example (such as Sunni) was explored, however feedback from stakeholders and testing suggest a more specific Islamic example would not be required and may cause concern selecting one over another. S22 [redacted]
  - Mahayana Buddhism: Inclusion of a Buddhism example was considered, alongside the inclusion of an Islamic example, due to ASCRG updates that have resulted in new religious groups for Buddhism and Islam.

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- Christianity: Inclusion of ‘Christianity’ as an example is not recommended as this is expected to have a significant impact on comparability of data for other Christian denominations, and respondent behaviour has not been extensively tested. The 2026 Census testing program was not designed to measure statistical impact and the scale of impact from inclusion of 'Christianity' as an example is unknown. Further, a large number or respondents (688,440) provided a response coded to ‘Christianity nfd’ in the 2021 Census without an example or picklist option prompting them. The rise in non-denomination Christianity has also been a key point of interest for data users, and introducing this as an example would impact the ability to understand real world change.
- Pentecostal: Inclusion of 'Pentecostal' as an example is not recommended as it is expected to have an impact on comparability of data, and respondent behaviour has not been tested to understand the impact if including 'Pentecostal' as an example. A large number of respondents were coded to the 'Pentecostal nfd' category (228,916) in the 2021 Census without prompting through a picklist option or example, greater than the number of people in other religious groups in the Pentecostal narrow group.

Recommendation:

Action	Example	Justification
Retain	Lutheran	• Maintain consistency – added to examples list in 2016 after dropping off the picklist. Had previously been on picklist since its introduction in 1991 Census question.
Retain	Salvation Army	• Maintain consistency – included as an example since examples were introduced in the 2001 Census question. • Example of a smaller, less common religion.
Retain	Judaism	• Maintain consistency - included as an example since examples were introduced in the 2001 Census question. • Stakeholders requested inclusion as a picklist option, however Judaism in not one of the nine most commonly reported religious groups.
Retain	Taoism	• Maintain consistency – included as an example since the 2016 Census. • Example of a smaller, less common religion from the ‘Other religions’ broad group in the ASCRG.
Remove	Atheism	• Feedback from consultation has highlighted it should not be included as an example as it is not a religion and all secular beliefs should be grouped together as ‘no religion’. S22 [redacted]

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		• Names of secular beliefs are included in the 'More information' text, and if a response of 'Atheism' is provided this will still be coded to the ASCRG as Atheism.
Add	Macedonian Orthodox	• Feedback from consultation has highlighted concerns with the inclusion of only one Orthodox option (i.e. 'Greek Orthodox' in the picklist) and potential respondent behaviour impacting on counts for other religious groups. • Analysis of 2021 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 'More information' online text also provides additional guidance to Orthodox respondents, and is recommended for retention with minor refinements. Additional information relating to Macedonian Orthodox
Add	Sikhism	• Emerging religion that has almost tripled since the 2011 Census, with increases largely a result of recent migration. • Due to the increase in numbers, Sikhism has been elevated to the broad group level with a new broad group created in the 2024 ASCRG update. Therefore, the inclusion of Sikhism as an example will result in at least one religious group being included from each broad group in ASCRG as either an example or picklist option in the question design. • Feedback from consultation requested inclusion as a picklist option, however as Sikhism is not one of the nine most commonly reported religious groups the addition of this group as an example is recommended.

Review of examples

Example lists considered

Optio	Aims	Examples	2021 Comparison	Details	Breakdown by ASGRG	Notes

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n					**broad groups (Religions) - Examples and picklist options combined:**	
Option A	• Consistency of examples with 2021 Census (including smaller/less common examples), except removal of 'Athesim'.	For example: Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Taoism.	**Examples removed:** Atheism **Examples added:** None	**Number of examples:** 4 **Order:** Classification order **Characters:** 55 characters (with spaces), 2 lines (paper form)	o Buddhism: 1 o Christianity: 8 o Hinduism: 1 o Islam: 1 o Judaism: 1 o Sikhism: 0 o Other religions: 1 o Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs, and no religious affiliation: 1	
Option B	• Consistency of examples with 2021 Census (including smaller/less common examples), and • addition of emerging/growing religion.	For example: Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism.	**Examples removed:** Atheism **Examples added:** Sikhism	**Number of examples:** 5 **Order:** Classification order **Characters:** 64 characters (with spaces), 2 lines (paper form)	o Buddhism: 1 o Christianity: 8 o Hinduism: 1 o Islam: 1 o Judaism: 1 o Sikhism: 1 o Other religions: 1 o Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs, and no religious affiliation: 1	• At least one example included as either a picklist option or in example list for each broad group (including no religion).
Optio	• Top 14 religious	For example:	**Examples**	**Number of**	o Buddhism: 1	• Examples of 'Christianity'

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n C	groups represented (picklist or example list), and 'no religion'	Lutheran, Pentecostal, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism.	**removed:** Atheism, Salvation Army, Taoism **Examples added:** Pentecostal, Christianity, Sikhism	**examples:** 5 **Order:** Classification order **Characters:** 67 characters (with spaces), 2 lines (paper form)	o Christianity: 9 o Hinduism: 1 o Islam: 1 o Judaism: 1 o Sikhism: 1 o Other religions: 0 o Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs, and no religious affiliation: 1	and 'Pentecostal' represent nfd categories in ASCRG ● 'Christianity' and other Christian religious groups/denominations listed are not mutually exclusive ● Inclusion of 'Christianity' and 'Pentecostal' likely to impact on counts of other Christian religious groups, and potentially 'no religion'. This requires extensive testing to understand scale of impact.
Optio n D	● Some consistency of examples with 2021 Census, ● addition of more granular examples; ● for religions included on picklist (Buddhism and Islam) ● addition of another Orthodox	For example: Mahayana Buddhism, Macedonian Orthodox, Lutheran, Christianity, Sunni, Judaism, Sikhism, Aboriginal Traditional beliefs	**Examples removed:** Atheism, Salvation Army, Taoism **Examples added:** Mahayana Buddhism, Macedonian Orthodox, Lutheran, Christianity, Sunni, Sikhism, Aboriginal	**Number of examples:** 8 **Order:** Classification order **Characters:** 132 characters (with spaces), 4-5 lines (paper form)	o Buddhism: 2 o Christianity: 9 o Hinduism: 1 o Islam: 2 o Judaism: 1 o Sikhism: 1 o Other religions: 1 o Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs, and no religious affiliation: 1	● Removed smaller/less common examples (Salvation Army and Taoism) to reduce length of list. Scale of impact of this change unknown ● Mahayana Buddhism and Buddhism (in picklist) not mutually exclusive ● Sunni and Islam (in picklist) not mutually exclusive ● 'Christianity' and other Christian religious groups/denominations listed are not mutually

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	example (Macedonian Orthodox) ● addition of Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs to support First Nations people in answering, ● addition of broader example of 'Christianity', and ● addition of emerging/growing religion.		Traditional Beliefs			exclusive ● Inclusion of 'Christianity' likely to impact on counts of other Christian religious groups, and potentially 'no religion'. This requires extensive testing to understand scale of impact. ● Inclusion of Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs may increase burden if a respondent needs to choose between a religious group listed and Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs as they may have connections with more that one religion/spiritual belief. This requires extensive testing to understand scale of impact.
Option E (RECOMMENDED)	● Consistency of examples with 2021 Census (including smaller/less common examples) ● addition of emerging/growin	For example: Macedonian Orthodox, Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism.	**Examples removed:** Atheism **Examples added:** Macedonian Orthodox, Sikhism	**Number of examples:** 6 **Order:** Classification order **Characters:** 85 characters (with	o Buddhism: 1 o Christianity: 9 o Hinduism: 1 o Islam: 1 o Judaism: 1 o Sikhism: 1 o Other religions: 1 o Secular beliefs and other spiritual beliefs,	● At least one example included as either a picklist option or in example list for each broad group (including no religion). ● Inclusion of a second Orthodox religion, Macedonian Orthodox as the next largest in 2021

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	g religion, and • addition of another Orthodox example			spaces), 2 lines (paper form)	and no religious affiliation: 1	data, to improve quality of reporting of Orthodox religions.

Details of potential examples to add/remove

Example	Broad group (Religion)	Details
Potential additions		
Aboriginal Traditional beliefs	Other religions	• 7,887 people reported 'Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions' in 2021. This was the 6th largest religious group under the 'Other religions' broad group. • The number of people reporting 'Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions' in 2021 slightly decreased from 8,078 in 2016. • In 2021, responses were more common on the IHF. S22 [redacted]) • Reporting behaviour with 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' as an example has not been extensively tested.
Christianity	Christianity	• 'Christianity' is a broad group in the 2024 ASCRG. • 11,148,814 people were recorded as 'Christian' in 2021. • 'Christian nfd' is rapidly growing - up from 612,371 in 2016 to 688,440 in 2021. • The use of 'Christianity' as an example (and/or picklist) was requested by several stakeholders during consultation. • Reporting behaviour with 'Christianity' as an example has not been extensively tested. This example is not mutually exclusive with other Christian denominations in the picklist/example list.
Macedonian Orthodox	Christianity	• 52,311 people reported 'Macedonian Orthodox' in 2021. This was the 18th largest religious group. • The most prevalent Eastern Orthodox groups reported in 2021 were: Greek Orthodox (390,963), Macedonian Orthodox (52,311), Serbian Orthodox (48,287) and Russian Orthodox (22,631).

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		• The inclusion of 'Macedonian Orthodox' as a picklist option was requested by stakeholders during consultation. 'Eastern Orthodox' was also suggested as an alternative, though this is a narrow group that encompasses 'Greek Orthodox', 'Macedonian Orthodox' and 'Russian Orthodox' among others. • 'Eastern Orthodox' is the 8th largest narrow group. • The most prevalent 'Oriental Orthodox' group reported in 2021 was 'Coptic Orthodox Church' with 33,091 people.
Mahayana Buddhism	Buddhism	• 615,823 people reported 'Buddhism' in 2021. This was the 7th largest religious group. • At the narrow group level (2 digit), Buddhism was the 4th most common response for persons who were born overseas and arrived in Aust between 2017 and 2021. • 2021 Census included 'Buddhism' as a pick list option as it was one of the 10 most common responses from the 2016 Census. • 2024 update to ASCRG provides further breakdown of Buddhism into 3 religious groups: Mahayana Bhuddism, Theravada Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism • Mahayana Buddhism is likely to be the most prevalent stream of Buddhism, based on SSI's analysis of data and discussion with the Buddhist community. • Stakeholder feedback indicated concerns (with a free text field only, however still may apply) with people using competing classifications within Buddhism/ethnoreligious identification, reporting sub-school instead of schools and dual religious identification.
Pentecostal	Christianity	• 'Pentecostal' is a narrow group under the 2024 ASCRG. • There were 255,838 people in narrow group 'Pentecostal' in 2021, with most being recorded as 'Pentecostal, nfd' (228,916). • The inclusion of 'Pentecostal' as an example (or in picklist) was requested by stakeholders during consultation. • Stakeholder requested Pentecostal being included in the list of examples to prompt parishioners (and improve data quality), and suggested that Pentecostal affiliation is much higher than what Census captures based on metrics from National Church Life Survey and the Australian Christian Churches own Census. (Note, if the 2024 Test question did not proceed, stakeholder requested Pentecostal being in the picklist moving forward) • There is a likely interplay with Pentecostal and Christianity, with stakeholder noting that parishioners commonly wrote "Christian" or their name of their local church rather than "Pentecostal". It should be

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		noted that if a church name is provided this would be coded to the relevant category in ASCRG if included in the coding index or as Pentecostal, not elsewhere classified.
Sikhism	Sikhism	● 210,400 people reported 'Sikhism' in 2021. This was the 11th largest religious group. 'Sikhism' was the largest religious group under the 'Other religions' broad group. ● At the narrow group level (2 digit), Sikhism was the 5th most common response after Hinduism, Catholic, Islam and Buddhism for persons who were born overseas and arrived in Aust between 2017 and 2021. ● There has been an increase in the number of people affiliated with Sikhism in Australia particularly over the past ten years. The number of people who affiliate with Sikhism has almost tripled since the 2011 Census. Increases were largely a result of recent migration. ● A new broad group for 'Sikhism' has been included in the 2024 ASCRG update. 'Sikhism' is the only religious group in this broad group.
Sunni	Islam	● 813,392 people reported 'Islam' in 2021. This was the 3rd largest religious group. ● At the narrow group level (2 digit), Islam was the 3rd most common response for persons who were born overseas and arrived in Aust between 2017 and 2021. ● 2021 Census included 'Islam' as a pick list option as it was one of the 10 most common responses from the 2016 Census. ● 2024 update to ASCRG provides further breakdown of Islam into 6 religious groups: Shia, Sunni, Ahmadiyya, Alawaite, Alevi, Islam, nec ● Sunni is likely to be the most prevalent stream of Islam, based on SSI's analysis of data. ● Key stakeholders (representing Sunni) provided feedback that the use of the term 'Islam' promotes unity and including a specific example would be unhelpful for the community as it would necessitate the selection of one example over another.
Yezidi	Other religions	● 4,123 people reported 'Yezidi' in 2021. This was up from 63 in 2016. ● Media article requesting Yezidi's be included as a response option (Yazidis campaign for 2026 census recognition in efforts to preserve their culture - ABC News).
2021 examples - potential removals		
Atheism	Other religions	● 37,797 people reported 'Atheism' in 2021. This is an increase of more than 5,000 from the 2016 Census.

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		• All responses of 'Atheism' were written in. • Feedback received during consultation outlined that 'Atheism' should not be included as an example as Atheism is not a religious belief.
Judaism	Judaism	• 99,956 people reported 'Judaism' in 2021. This was the 13th largest religious group. • Stakeholder engagement indicated that many people who identify as ethno-culturally Jewish would indicate secular beliefs or 'no religion' (up to 20%). • 'Judaism' is the only religious group within the 'Judaism' broad group. • 'Judaism' been included as an example since 2001 when examples were first introduced.
Lutheran	Christian	• 145,868 people reported 'Lutheran' in 2021. This was the 12th largest religious group. • Lutheran was a picklist option prior to the 2016 Census when it was replaced by Hinduism. • Lutheran has been included as an example in 2016 and 2021. • Lutheran is the only option under the narrow group 'Lutheran' and falls within the broad group of 'Christianity'
Salvation Army	Christianity	• 35,356 people reported 'Salvation Army' in 2021. This is the 17th largest Christian religious group • 'Salvation Army' is the only religious group within the narrow group of 'Salvation Army' • 'Salvation Army' has been included as an example since 2001. This represents a smaller less common group.
Taoism	Other religions	• 6,149 people reported 'Taoism' in 2021. This was the 48th largest religious group. Taosim was the 8th largest 'Other religion'. • 'Taoism' has been included as an example since 2016. This represents a smaller less common group. • 'Taoism' is an example of an 'Other religion', which people may not tend to see as a religion. Examples of 'Other religions', in order of most commonly reported, include Sikhism (now a separate broad group after 2024 ASCRG update), Paganism, Baha'i, Mandaean, Spiritualism, Australian Aboriginal Traditional Religions, Wiccan (Witchcraft) and Taosim.

S22 [redacted]

Feedback/discussion

Detail	Feedback

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S47C s22

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2024 Census Test: Options considered and recommendations

Appendix 1: Comparison of response categories and examples

Response categories (HHF)

	1991*	1996	2001**	2006	2011	2016	2021
1	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	No religion	No religion
2	Anglican (Church of England)	Anglican (Church of England)	Anglican (Church of England)	Anglican (Church of England)	Anglican (Church of England)	Catholic	Catholic
3	Uniting Church	Uniting Church	Uniting Church	Uniting Church	Uniting Church	Anglican (Church of England)	Anglican (Church of England)
4	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Presbyterian	Uniting Church	Uniting Church
5	Greek Orthodox	Greek Orthodox	Greek Orthodox	Greek Orthodox	Buddhism	Presbyterian	Islam
6	Baptist	Baptist	Baptist	Buddhism	Greek Orthodox	Buddhism	Buddhism
7	Lutheran	Lutheran	Lutheran	Baptist	Islam	Islam	Presbyterian
8	Other (please specify)	Other (please specify)	Islam	Islam	Baptist	Greek Orthodox	Hinduism
9	No religion	No religion	Buddhism	Lutheran	Lutheran	Baptist	Greek Orthodox

10			Other (please specify)	Other (please specify)	Other (please specify)	Hinduism	Baptist
11			No religion	No religion	No religion	Other (please specify)	Other (please specify)

*In 1991, a picklist was introduced (previously a free text field only in 1986).
**In 2001, the question wording was updated from 'What is the person's religious denomination?' to 'What is the person's religion?'

Examples (HHF)

	1991	1996	2001*	2006	2011	2016	2021
1	n/a	n/a	Salvation Army	Salvation Army	Salvation Army	Lutheran	Lutheran
2			Hinduism	Hinduism	Hinduism	Salvation Army	Salvation Army
3			Judaism	Judaism	Judaism	Judaism	Judaism
4			Humanism	Humanism	Humanism	Taoism	Taoism
5						Humanism	Atheism

*Examples were included in the instructional text from 2001 onwards

Form images and changes

2021 Census	
2021 Census question	• Household paper form: "Examples of 'Other': LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, ATHEISM." • Household online form: "Examples of 'Other': Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Taoism, Atheism." • IHF: "Examples of 'Other': ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, ANGLICAN, CATHOLIC, UNITING CHURCH, LUTHERAN, BAPTIST, ABORIGINAL EVANGELICAL MISSION, ATHEISM." • In 2021 Census, 'Humanism' was removed from the list of examples and replaced with 'Atheism'. 2021 Census household paper form: 2021 Census household online form: 2021 Census Interviewer Household Form:
2021 information/links	• Humanism decreased in number between 2016 and 2021. This was removed from the examples in 2021.

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Previous Censuses	
2016 Census question	• Household paper form: "Examples of 'Other': LUTHERAN, SALVATION ARMY, JUDAISM, TAOISM, HUMANISM." • Household online form: "Examples of 'Other': Lutheran, Salvation Army, Judaism, Taoism, Humanism." • IHF: "Examples of 'Other': ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, ANGLICAN, CATHOLIC, UNITING CHURCH, LUTHERAN, BAPTIST, ABORIGINAL EVANGELICAL MISSIONS, HUMANISM." • 'Lutheran' was removed from the picklist and added to the list of examples for the household form • 'Hinduism' was added to the picklist and removed from the list of examples for the household form • 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' was updated from 'Traditional beliefs' for the IHF • 'Anglican' was updated from 'Anglican (Church of England)' for the IHF • 'Humanism' was added to the list of examples for the IHF 2016 Census household paper form: 2016 Census Interviewer Household Form:
2011 Census question	• Household paper form: "Examples of 'Other - please specify' are: SALVATION ARMY, HINDUISM, JUDAISM, HUMANISM." • IHF: "Some examples are: TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, ANGLICAN (CHURCH OF ENGLAND), CATHOLIC, UNITING CHURCH, LUTHERAN, BAPTIST, ABORIGINAL EVANGELICAL MISSIONS." • No changes to examples from 2006 2011 Census household paper form: 2011 Census Interviewer Household Form:
2006 Census question	• Household paper form: "Examples of 'Other - please specify' are: SALVATION ARMY, HINDUISM, JUDAISM, HUMANISM." • IHF: "Some examples are: TRADITIONAL BELIEFS, ANGLICAN (CHURCH OF ENGLAND), CATHOLIC, UNITING CHURCH, LUTHERAN, BAPTIST, ABORIGINAL EVANGELICAL MISSIONS." 2006 Census household paper form: 2006 Census Interviewer Household Form:

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Other	• 1996 had no examples given, but every tickbox was Christian. • 2001 Census was the first year that introduces both examples and tickboxes for other religions. Notes S22 [redacted] For background, the 2001 Census saw the first example of “Humanism”, along with other examples of “Other” religions at that time such as Salvation Army, Hinduism and Judaism. Humanism continues as an example until the 2016 Census form. In the 2021 Census, this was replaced with Atheism. At that time, there was quite a bit of correspondence from groups S22 [redacted] about the Religion question. Historically, the Census Guides that accompanied each paper form had the instructions to include “non-theistic religious beliefs or other life philosophies” in the “other” write-in box. This continued with the online form and help info in more recent censuses, including the 2021 Census. More recent Censuses have included additional examples in the further information such as Agnosticism, Atheism and Rationalism. S47C [redacted]

S22 [redacted]

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FW: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census [SEC=OFFICIAL]
S22 s22 19/11/2024 03:11 PM

OFFICIAL

Basics

s22 19/11/2024 03:11 PM

Send	To s22 @abs.gov.au> cc S22 s22 @abs.gov.au> bcc
Subject	FW: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census [SEC=OFFICIAL]
Protective Mark	OFFICIAL
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy Caveat ☐
Categories	07. Instrument design and testing\Household form\Decision registers\Cultural diversity\Stakeholder engagement

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2 attachments

religious affiliation question design.pptx s22 image001.png

Kind regards

s22

2026 Census Content Development | Household Surveys Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics (P) s22

(E) s22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

From: s22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 9 October 2024 3:39 PM
To: s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 <s22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census

Regards

s22

Co-Director (a/g)
2026 Census Content | Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics
(P) s22 **(E)** s22 @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: Denise Carlton <Denise.Carlton@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 2:28 PM
To: s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 @abs.gov.au>; s22 @abs.gov.au>; Mark Harding <Mark.Harding@abs.gov.au>
Cc: Duncan Young <Duncan.Young@abs.gov.au>; AJ Lanyon <AJ.Lanyon@abs.gov.au>
Subject: Summary of meeting outcomes: Question on Religious affiliation in the 2026 Census

Hi all,

please find a summary of outcomes from yesterday's meeting below.

Meeting date: 3 October
Attendees: David Gruen, Brenton Goldsworthy, Duncan Young, Denise Carlton, AJ Lanyon

The meeting covered off on the material contained in the attached slides in order to confirm the broad approach to be taken, so that question design can be refined and finalised in the final two round of cognitive testing. Outcomes were:

1. Noted that further consultation had highlighted a diversity of (sometimes competing) requirements among stakeholders, but that comparability of data series was a key consideration for many. No approach will be able to meet the priorities of all stakeholders.
2. Reconfirmed that on balance the cost, opportunity cost and relative priority associated with implementing targeted supplementary questions or other digital solutions such as point of contact coding, means this will not be implemented for 2026. s22
3. On balance the decision was made to retain the picklist approach for 2026. This reflects feedback received from a number of stakeholders around the importance of comparability, and the significant impact the change would represent. There is also more significant burden associated with the free text box - some of this may be mitigated in a future Census if some of the initiatives outlined in 2 above were implemented. s22
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 (note we will

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reconfirm the position on Islam at a follow up meeting [redacted]). Consider examples in the instruction text which encourage the more granular options now available in the classification, e.g. Sunni.

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.
6. We will not test adding Christianity to the picklist given it is not mutually exclusive with other existing picklist options (in a picklist that has always been mutually exclusive). We will test its inclusion as a an example in the instructional text.
7. Options to support respondents wanting to provide more (or less) granular data will explored through testing of alternative wording to 'Other, please specify' to include something like 'please provide more detail' and consider different coding options for those respondents who want to do this (i.e. alongside choosing a picklist option).
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. [redacted]

Regards,

[redacted]
Denise Carlton [redacted]

Program Manager Population Statistics Branch | Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Executive assistant: [redacted]
[redacted]*@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.

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Basics

Protective Mark	OFFICIAL		
Information management markers	☐ Personal privacy ☐ Legal privilege ☐ Legislative secrecy	Caveat	☐ NATIONAL-CABINET

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2026 Census Content Topic Decision Register - Religious affiliation

(Household form)

Purpose of the Document:

To document and track the development and outcomes of testing during the 2026 Census topic review process. This includes: Summary of testing; Topic background and information; Details for each testing round including key findings and recommendations; and Final question(s) used in the Main Event.

This is a living document that will be updated iteratively throughout the testing process. It is not for external distribution.

Summary of testing										
Round 1 Cognitive Interviewing	**Round 2 Cognitive Interviewing**	**Round 3 Cognitive Interviewing**	**Round 4 Cognitive Interviewing**	**Round 5 Cognitive Interviewing**	**CFS Round 1 Sept 2024**	**CFS Round 2 Sept 2024**	**CFS Round 3 Oct 2024**	**CFS Round 4 Nov 2024**	**Operational Readiness Exercise Aug 2025**	**Main Event Aug 2026**
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Topic background and information	
Topic Summary link	[redacted] (Subject: Topic Summary: Religion [SEC=OFFICIAL]; Database: s22 ; Author: s22 ; Created: 27/04/2023; Doc Ref: LGIE-CR9SVY)
Summary of topic	• Existing topic: Religion or religious denomination [of persons] • Proposed change 1: Update question wording and response categories • Proposed NEW topic: Involvement/Practice in Religion
2021 Census question(s) relating to this topic	2021 Census household paper form: 2021 Census household online form:
2021 Census testing (if applicable)	
Testing objectives identified in phase two	• The phase two assessment is to **keep existing topic (Religious affiliation).** • The phase two assessment is that there is a **moderate case** for **proposed changes (question wording and response categories)** to proceed to the next stage of testing and review.
Final testing	Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census. The proposed change includes:

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outcome	• **Updates to instructional text to improve inclusivity and data quality. This includes the addition of 2 examples (Macedonian Orthodox and Sikhism) and removal of 1 example (Atheism) and updates to the More information text.**

Main Event (August 2026)

Final question(s)				
Questionnaire specifications (24/09/2025): paper form	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~~ England) - Islam - Hinduism - Uniting Church - Buddhism - Presbyterian - Greek Orthodox - Baptist Other (specify)	Slightly larger space between 'No religion' and 'Catholic' No mark box for 'Other (specify)' Examples need to be wrapped so that words between commas stay on one line
Questionnaire specifications (2/10/2025): web form				

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	20 QReligion New page	**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	○ No religion ○ Catholic ○ Anglican (Church of England ~~Australia~~) ○ Islam ○ Hinduism ○ Uniting Church ○ Buddhism ○ Presbyterian ○ Greek Orthodox ○ Baptist ○ Other (specify)	Extra spacing between first and second categories Examples need to be wrapped so the words between commas stay on one line **More information** M_RELG **Edits** E_RELG **Wordsubs** Person X

M_RELG	Question 20	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.

Instrument: paper form	paper form:

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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 England)
- ☐ Islam
- ☐ Hinduism
- ☐ Uniting Church
- ☐ Buddhism
- ☐ Presbyterian
- ☐ Greek Orthodox
- ☐ Baptist

Other (specify)

Instrument: online	web form:

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What is Person 1'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.

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◯ No religion



Stakeholder	Update to response option (endorsed by SRO EC25-000417)

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engagement	An update to the response option from 'Anglican Church of England' to 'Anglican (Church of Australia)' for Religious affiliation was endorsed for ORE. This update aligns with the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the official name used by the Anglican Church. Analysis of ORE data for both the online and paper forms identified a small number of people coded to 'Anglican' wrote in 'Church of England' instead of selecting 'Anglican (Church of Australia)' from the response options. This indicates an increase in respondent burden, and is likely to have minor overall impact on data, however it's not possible to fully understand the effect on data quality and statistical impact. Further consultation with key stakeholders to fully understanding the impact on their use of the data is recommended, but this will not be possible for 2026 within current paper form deadlines. During initial consultation, key stakeholders emphasised the importance of consistency in data, therefore it is recommended that this response option is reverted to the 2021 label of 'Anglican (Church of England)'. PM endorsement for Main Event, 8/7/25 • Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census. **SMA endorsement for Main Event 27/6/25, 1/7/25** • Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census.

Operational Readiness Exercise (5 August 2025)

ORE testing plan	
ORE testing dashboard	

s47C

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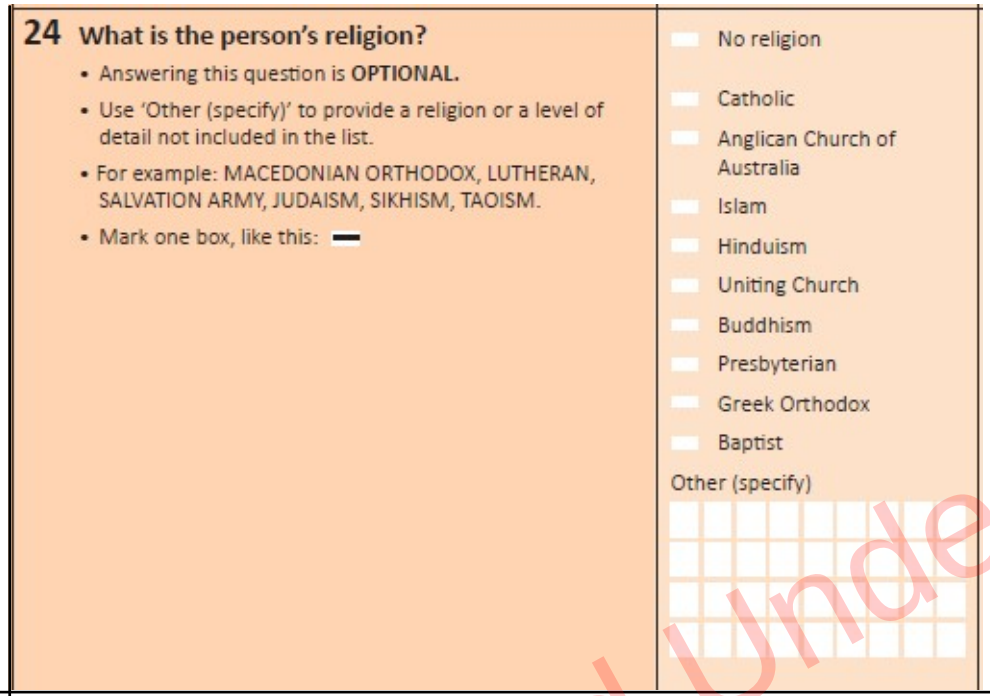


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Instrument : paper form	



Instrument : web form	
Key findings	DQ&C analysis
Stakeholder engagement	s22 [redacted] **Religion - 'Other' mark box sign-off by Jenny Telford, 7/3/25** • Removal of mark box for 'Other (specify)' to realign with 2021 approved • The reasoning for change seems very sensible to me **[redacted]Religion - 'Other' mark box, 29/1/25** • Noticed that in most recent specs that we are providing a mark box option for 'Other (specify)' in the HH Paper form this time

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- The justification given in 2021 was that the paper form did not have a selectable box for 'Other (please specify)' to dissuade respondents from selecting the box only without specifying a religion
- Agreement that not having a tick box on the religion question on paper is the agreed way forward

[redacted]Paper Personal Form - Ancestry and Religion spacing, 16/1/25

- S22 and Religion questions do not fit in the same column for the Paper PF in their current state
- Decision made not to remove instructions regarding marking boxes or links to seek more information
- Religion will be placed in the next column, and each subsequent column will be shifted accordingly

[redacted]Updates to instructional text and recommended changing to coding rules, 16/12/2024

- All new text for More Information section

S22 [redacted]

[redacted]Meeting summary - Statistician & SRO briefing on question design (10 December 24), 19/12/24

- Discussed feasibility of extended picklist, however acknowledged it would not be possible to understand impacts on comparability of data
- Noted that there will be a communications plan to announce the decision on the final design in 2025

[redacted]AJ & Denise for endorsement by COB Thurs 5/12: 2026 Census Question finalisation – Country of birth of parents and Religious affiliation, 5/12/24

- Approved. I note further that coding rules for Religious Affiliation are still to be confirmed.

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Religious affiliation PM custodian: AJ Lanyon and Denise Carlton	Retain 2021 question design with minor updates for the 2026 Census. The proposed change includes: • Updates to instructional text to improve inclusivity and data quality. This includes the addition of 2 examples (Macedonian Orthodox and Sikhism) and removal of 1 example (Atheism) and updates to the More information text.	Online and paper form: **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. o No religion o Catholic o Anglican (Church of Australia) o Islam o Hinduism o Uniting Church o Buddhism o Presbyterian o Greek Orthodox o Baptist o Other (specify) Online form only: **More information (online form)** The religious groups listed were those most commonly reported in the 2021 Census. 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 'Other (specify)' box. If a person selects 'Catholic', this will be considered 'Western Catholic' religion. If the person's religion is an Orthodox religion such as Macedonian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Coptic 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 the 'No religion' response. Examples of non-religious beliefs include Agnosticism, Atheism, Humanism and Rationalism. *Note: minor refinements to the 'More information' text may still be made.*

[redacted]Religion more info, 5/12/24

- Noticed that some text is duplicated in the Instructional text and More info (see highlights). I'm not sure whether it needs to be in more info anymore since we have raised it up to the instructional text? There is a lot of text in more info and it might be good to de-clutter
- S22 I'm happy to remove it given that we've raised it up to instructional text
- Final outcome after a conversation with S22 s to remove

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	Updates to religion - More Info and Language, 5/12/24 • Remove 'If a person selects 'Catholic', this will be considered 'Western Catholic' religion.' Further consideration will be given to this and instructions for Islam and Buddhism to align with the change in the output classification **Religion question example (HHF) - Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs, 18/11/24** • Will not be including 'Aboriginal Traditional Beliefs' as an example in the religion question • Will have have a similar approach to 2021 with factsheets to support community awareness. **Review of religion examples/More info text, 13/11/24** • We will need to consider how it looks if a second Orthodox group is included as an example and this is treated different to Catholic/other groups and balance this against the feedback/data quality concerns raised. • All Eastern Catholic religious groups and a number of Orthodox examples, including Macedonian Orthodox, are in the More information text as everything can't be included in the examples list. I realise this is online only, and is only visible by clicking on the More info section though. S47C
Additional links	

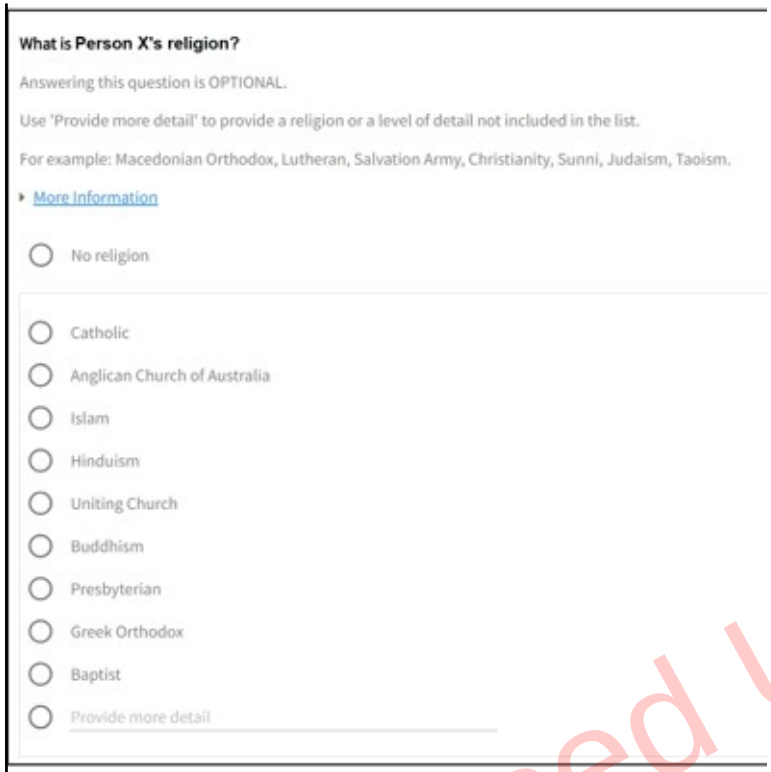
CFS Round 4 (25 - 28 November 2024)

CFS Rd 4 testing plan	
CFS Rd 4	

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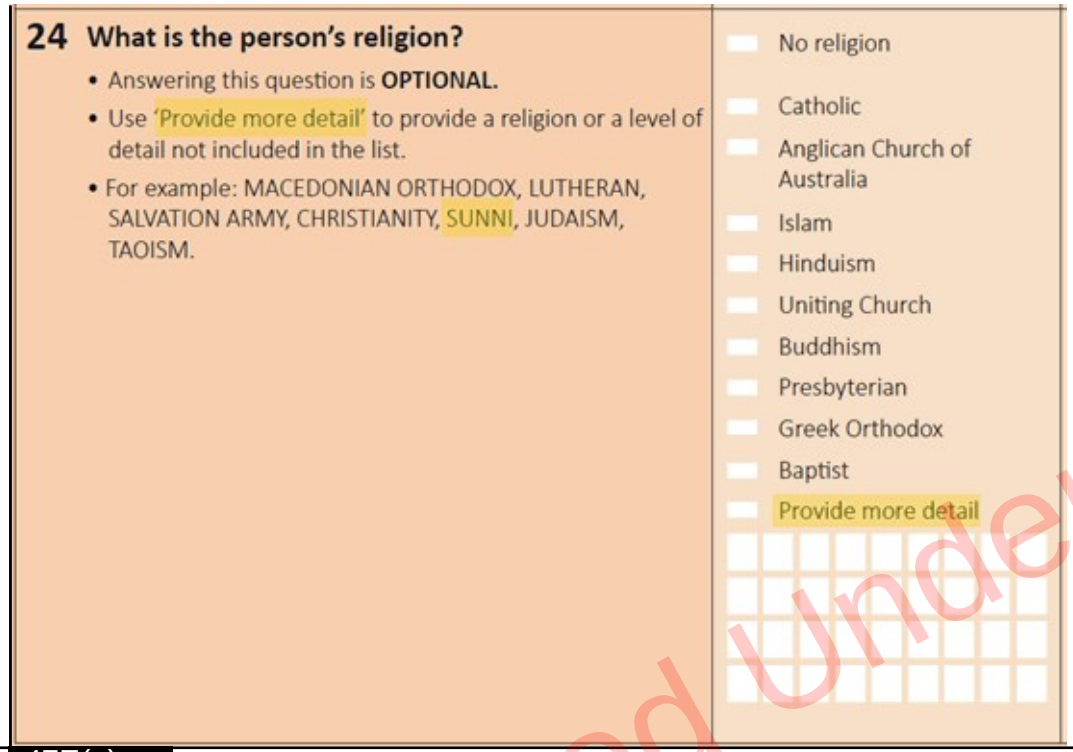
testing dashboard	
Number of participants	s47E(a) o [redacted] interviews with [redacted] respondents, [redacted] Paper forms, [redacted] CDS forms, [redacted] Confirmit form o All face to face s47E(a): o [redacted] interviews, [redacted] paper forms, [redacted] Confirmit forms o [redacted] face to face, [redacted] online
Target groups	• s47E(a) • s47E(a) • s47E(a) • s47E(a)
Question(s) used in testing	Confirmit/CDS:

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Paper:

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Key findings

s47E(a)

- Of participants that recorded 'no religion', many stated they were christened, baptised or grew up religious households, but do not practice.

s47E(a)

- Some participants noted the absence of 'Christian' in the response options
- Some participants noted or alluded that this was intentional

s47E(a)

Provide more detail free text field

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- Several participants used this field correctly. The most common write-in response was ‘Christian’.

s47E(a)

- Interpretation of the ‘provide more detail’ terminology amongst participants that did not use it included the following:

s47E(a)

- s47E(a) s47C

s47E(a)

- The majority of participants selected 'No religion'.
- Many of these participants had been baptised or raised with a religion but selected 'not religious' as they no longer practiced or held religious beliefs.

s47E(a)

- The majority of participants found this question easy to answer.

s47E(a)

'Provide more detail' category:

- Most participants said this category would be for a religion not on the list.
- Multiple participants commented on the 'Provide more detail' terminology.

s47E(a)

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s47E(a)

s47E(a) s22

s47E(a)

Stakeholder engagement	**Summary of outcomes from CF round 4 testing, 5/12/24** • SSI will update the s22 and Religious Affiliation Standards (along with the Language standards where necessary) prior to the 2026 Census. • A decision has not yet been made regarding whether the updated standards will match what has been endorsed for Census, or whether Census will need a departure. As s22 notes, there are many users of some of these standards, and the update (if any) will need to take into account their requirements as well as Census' (and evidence which can be provided). • These issues will be considered during the update process and I don't want to preempt anything here. • The timeframe for this work is between the release of the updated ASCL in March 2025 and early 2026. SSI also needs to fit in a 'light touch' review of ASCCEG in parallel to the standards work. **Summary of outcomes from CF round 4 testing, 4/12/24** This email outlines the agreed updates that will be made to Religion, s22 . Unless detailed below all other question wording, response options, instructional text will be what was tested in round 5.

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Online spec updates, 2/12/24

s47C

- Change the free text field label – this will be discussed at the SMA playback Wednesday
- Instruction text will be included and finalised pending outcomes of the free text label- 'Use '<free text label>' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list'
  - s22 is drafting up the recommendations here, this include the more information

Paper form spec's for CFS Round 4, 20/11/24

s47C

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s47C

Confirmit specifications for CFS Round 4, 20/11/24

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Not to progress - Religion deselect, 24/10/24

- PM; I approve retaining the 2021 approach given current constraints, including the limited ability to properly test an alternative within the current timeframes.
- Our recommendation is to not develop a deselect function

	● There is a bit of back and forward about risks to introduce change with insufficient testing opportunity and legal concern **Draft religious affiliation question for Round 4 of cognitive testing, 23/10/24** ● After careful consideration of the risks associated with all three options, we have decided to **retain the 2021 Census functionality** of radio buttons with no 'on-click' and deselection requirements. I have used the strikethrough effect to remove reference to this in the previously provided question below. s47C **Religion updates R4 testing, 17/10/24** ● *Options to support respondents wanting to provide more (or less) granular data will explored through testing of alternative wording to 'Other, please specify' to include something like 'please provide more detail' and consider different coding options for those respondents who want to do this (i.e. alongside choosing a picklist option).* s47C
Additional links	
Recommend	Update free-text label to 'Other (specify)'

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ndation(s) for next round	

CFS Round 3 (21-24 October 2024)

CFS Rd 3 testing plan	
CFS Rd 3 testing dashboard	
Number of participants	s47E(a)
Target groups	s47E(a)
Question(s) used in testing	

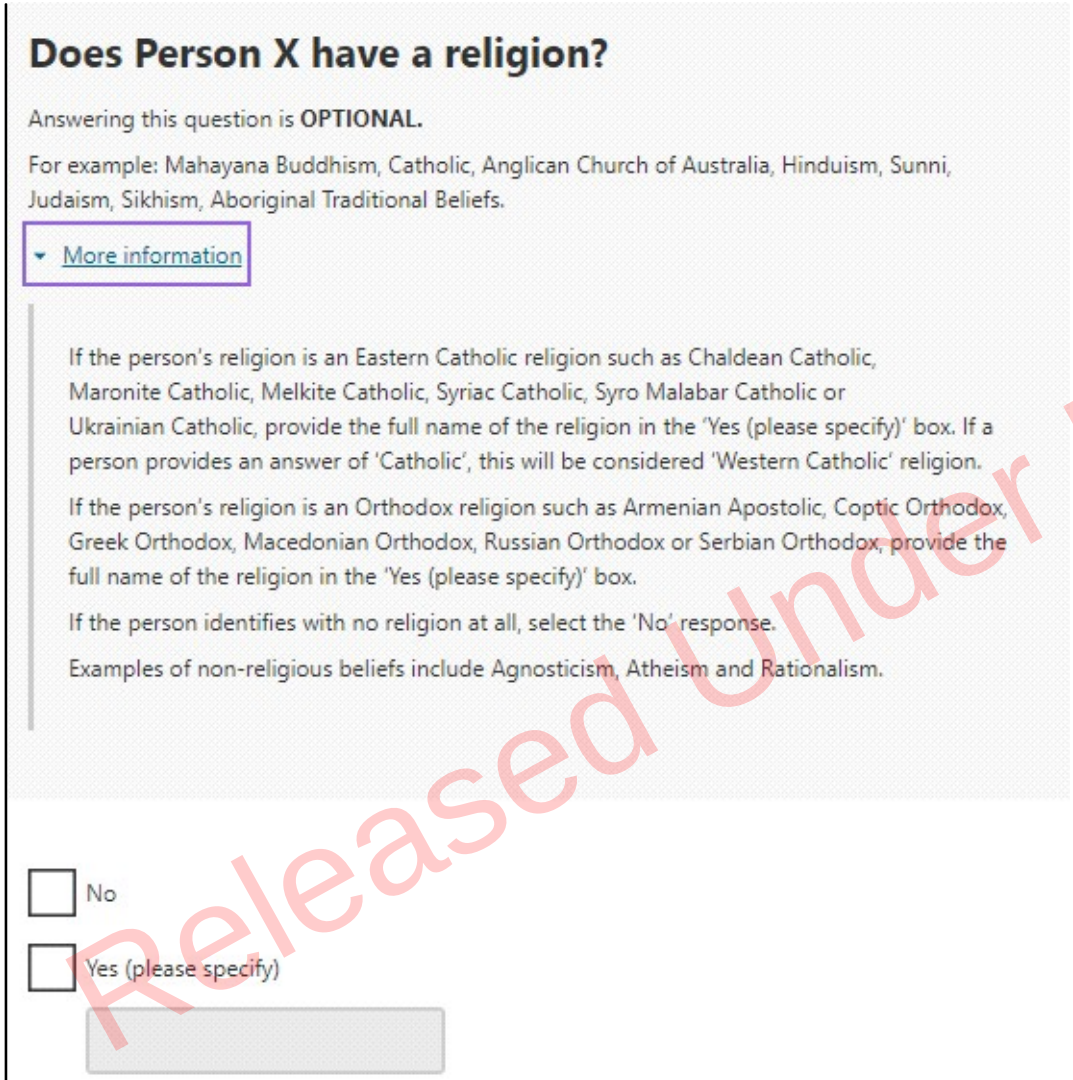
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24 What is the person's religion?

- 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, CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM, TAOISM.

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

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*Note CDS online form included old version of religion due to time constraints and competing content priorities for build

Key	ONLINE

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findings	• The majority of participants answered this question quickly and correctly. • s47E(a) participants probed indicated they found the question easy/comfortable. • A small number of participants appeared to note some difficulty, relating to their spirituality or beliefs not being easily defined or "don't exactly fit in the exact" response options. s47E(a) **Specificity of responses** • Most participants said they were comfortable in the level that they had provided. • s47 respondents said they were comfortable in the broad level response they had provided. Several respondents said that, with a conceptual understanding of denominations or sects, the broad level specification was more appropriate for describing their affiliation. • A small number of participants provided high level responses such as 'Christian' or 'Islamic' noted the examples and chose to report a high-level religion. **Answering on behalf of others** • Some difficulty or discomfort was observed when participants were answering on behalf of others. In some cases, this was related to some uncertainty in how they thought their proxy would define their beliefs. s47E(a)
Stakeholder engagement	**Recommendations for round 4 testing, 8/11/24** • Paper and online: Question wording, instructional text, examples and response option list will stay the same. • An update will be made to the label for the free text box to 'Provide more detail'. Census Content have been asked to test an approach that allows people to provide more detail regarding religion, although this hasn't been identified in previous rounds of testing. This has been driven by feedback received through engagement with stakeholders. **CF Testing – Round 3 SMA meeting minutes, 7/11/24** • **Paper and online**: Question wording, instructional text, examples, and response option list will stay the same for round 4 of CF testing. • An update will be made to the label for the free text box to 'Provide more detail'. Census Content have been asked to test an approach that allows people to provide more detail regarding religion, although this hasn't been identified in previous rounds of testing. This has been driven by feedback received through engagement with stakeholders. • **SMAs**: No objections to proposed change **SMA agreement on instructional text *'Other (specify)* wording for CFS Rd 3 testing, 14/10/24** • Happy to test the below noting that this maybe tricky to gather evidence on in cog testing and we would really only understand impact from a large scale test. *Use 'Other (specify)' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.*

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CDS delivery dates for question changes, 14/10/24

- Final changes will need to be delivered to CDS by [redacted] date, or else there will be no changes as the eform rolls back to the 2024 field test form after the round 3 testing.
- Any outstanding questions confirmed and signed off by Friday 6/12 – We are expecting this to only be final tweaks to s22 [redacted], Religion and the s22 [redacted] questions by the 6th December 2024.

SMA endorsement for Religion question on HHF for Rd 3 CFS, 10/10/24

- The 2021 question has been used as the base
- The response options have been updated based on the most common responses in 2021

s47C [redacted]

SMA meeting notes - next steps for Religion question, 9/10/24

- Discussion with NMSU around religion examples to be used in picklist
- Review of the examples and more information text (as this contains numerous examples) to inform the recommendation on the ORE question
- As the question/examples for R4 testing needs to be locked down pretty soon, this review is unlikely to be completed prior to that so its likely there may be differences between the R4 and ORE versions.

Additional

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links	
Recommendation(s) for next round	• No change to question wording. Free text field label will be updated to 'Provide more detail'. • Instructional text will now read 'Use 'Provide more detail' to provide a religion or a level of detail not included in the list.' • Provide spec's to CDS to update for round 4. Continue to test in final round of CF testing.

