



Census

Submission guide

2026 Census topic consultation phase two

Information to help you prepare your submission for phase two of the 2026 Census topic consultation



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Background

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is undertaking a review to inform our recommendation to the Government on the topics that could be included in the 2026 Census. Earlier this year, the ABS invited the Australian community to tell us what they think should be included.

The ABS has evaluated the value to the public of collecting each new and existing topic and developed a shortlist of topics to be considered further.

The ABS is now seeking public feedback on the impacts of potential changes to topics that were collected in the 2021 Census.

Preparing your submission

Phase two of the 2026 Census topic consultation is open from 27 July until 8 September 2023.

Submissions can be made through a questionnaire on the [ABS Consultation Hub](#).

The topics that the ABS is specifically seeking feedback on are:

- Ancestry
- Ethnic identity
- Language
- Number of children ever born
- Number of motor vehicles
- Religious affiliation
- Work
- Unpaid work – domestic activities

There are specific questions for each of the topics we are seeking more information on. Feedback provided to these questions will help inform our assessment of topics. Questions may include:

- Do you currently use [Topic] data from the Census?
- Would the alternative data source listed meet your data needs if this topic was removed from the 2026 Census? (Please explain why/why not)
- Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if this topic was collected/was changed/was not collected in the 2026 Census.

While the ABS is not requesting specific feedback on all other topics proposed for inclusion, change or removal, there is the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the last page of the Consultation Hub questionnaire.

A high-quality submission should provide evidence explaining why the current data does or does not meet your needs. The 2026 Census topic assessment criteria will be considered when reviewing submissions.

One quality submission with a strong case justifying your position on whether the ABS should change or keep shortlisted topics will be considered more highly than several submissions with limited information. It is important to explain the public value of the data when responding to the questions. We encourage you to connect with other organisations to provide a consolidated submission to strengthen your evidence.

We do not need you to resubmit any information that you provided in your phase one submission.

2026 Census topic assessment criteria

The ABS has developed a set of criteria to help assess which topics should be recommended to the Australian Government. These are based on guidance from the [United Nations](#).

The assessment criteria inform our recommendation to the Government on topics for inclusion, change or removal from the 2026 Census.

In phase one, the ABS reviewed new and existing topics against the assessment criteria on public value (criteria 1-3). Topics with high public value were then assessed against criterion 4.

During phase two, the ABS is seeking specific information on some of the topics being proposed for change or removal to finalise our assessment against criteria 1-4.

Criteria	For example
1. The topic is of current national importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data is required for an electoral or legislative purpose. • data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring. • data is used for research purposes.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data is needed at the national level and/or is required for international comparability. • data is needed for small population groups. • data is needed for small geographic areas. • the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the Census or with administrative data.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a need for time series data on the topic. • the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future. • data collected on the topic will have enduring value.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic need is not met or likely to be met in the near future by an ABS survey or from administrative sources. • data to meet the topic need cannot be produced through integration of existing data sources. • there are extensive barriers to accessing alternate data sources.

The ABS will continue to assess all shortlisted topics to determine if the Census is the most appropriate way to provide data on the topic (criteria 5-6).

Criteria	For example
5. Data on the topic can be collected efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic will not require multiple questions or a large number of response categories. • data collected on the topic will not require extensive processing or coding. • the collection of the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census.
6. A representative of the household would be willing and able to answer questions on the topic for each member of the household.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions using a form that the household completes themselves. • the question(s) will not require lengthy or complex explanation or instruction. • the question(s) is likely to be easily understood. • respondents will easily know the answer to the question(s). • the question(s) is easy and quick to answer. • the topic is not an unreasonable intrusion in the right to privacy. • respondents will be willing to answer accurately.

In addition to assessing the topics individually, the ABS will consider if the combination of topics will maintain a high level of public support for the Census. This includes the overall size and complexity of the Census form, and if collecting data on a topic will impact how the public answers questions on other topics.

Support to participate

If you require assistance to make a submission to the 2026 Census topic consultation, please email us at census.content@abs.gov.au.

A word version of the questionnaire is available on the Consultation Hub and can be submitted via [email](#) or post, addressed to:

2026 Census Topic Consultation
 Locked Bag 10
 Belconnen ACT 2616

Consent to publish

The ABS will publish information about submissions received after the consultation closes.

There is an option for you to have sections of your submission published on the ABS Consultation Hub as part of this process. This means others can see your responses in your own words.

You will be asked in your submission if you consent to the ABS publishing your response and your organisation(s) name(s) on the Consultation Hub.

We will only publish these sections of your submission where you provide your consent.

Your name and email address will not be published.

Collection of personal information

When completing your submission for the 2026 Census topic consultation, the ABS will collect the following personal information:

- Contact name (optional)
- Organisation (if applicable)
- Email address
- Your opinions on information needs (optional).

We collect personal information so we can contact you if we have follow-up questions and to notify you of the outcome of the process.

The [2026 Census Topic Consultation: Phase Two Collection Notice](#) on the ABS website provides further information on the collection and use of your personal information during phase two of the 2026 Census Topic consultation process.

Submissions to Statistical Standard Reviews and other ABS Consultations

The ABS is currently reviewing the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS) and the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG). Submissions on the RAS made during the first round of this consultation have been considered as part of phase one of the 2026 Census topic review. The ABS is seeking further information on Religious Affiliation in the phase two consultation to inform the RAS review. The ABS will consult further on the ASCRG later in 2023.

The ABS is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). Please review the [ANZSCO consultation timetable](#) for their review process if you wish to make a submission to change the ANZSCO. The Census Program will feed any submissions received relating to ANZSCO to the relevant team.

The difference between a topic and the question(s) asked on the Census form

A Census topic is not the same as a question on the Census form. Multiple questions on a topic may need to be asked to address an information need.

For example, information for some topics such as [need for assistance for core activities](#) is captured using a range of questions in the Census:

- Does the person ever need someone to help with, or be with them for, self-care activities?
- Does the person ever need someone to help with, or be with them for, body movement activities?
- Does the person ever need someone to help with, or be with them for, communication activities?
- What are the reasons for the need for assistance or supervision?

Other topics, such as [health](#), are captured using only one question in the Census:

- Has the person been told by a doctor or nurse that they have any of these long-term health conditions?

We consider the number of questions we may need to ask to provide information on a topic when assessing against the following criteria:

5. Data on the topic can be collected efficiently.
6. A representative of the household would be willing and able to answer questions on the topic for each member of the household.