

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

21/06/2019 05:24 PM

<b>Send</b>	To Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, "Chris Libreri" cc <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Re: Comment from David on Census content doc [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>For-Official-Use-Only</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi Teresa

We have included some new material in the full Census topic review document. See page 21 "Procedures followed in the 2016 Census", included as a subsection in 8.3 Non-binary sex.

For ease of reading, I have also attached the new material as a separate document below.

Happy to discuss.

Justine



2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 210619.docx



Sex and gender in the 2016 Census (section 8.3).docx

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Teresa Dickinson

Hi folks I have shared your document with David...

20/06/2019 05:47:49 PM

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 20/06/2019 05:47 PM  
Subject: Comment from David on Census content doc

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Hi folks

I have shared your document with David this afternoon and he has had a very quick preliminary look. [REDACTED] S47F [REDACTED], however he has given me a preliminary comment: could you add a paragraph or two in the non-binary sex section on how this was handled in 2016 (paper form request etc.)

Thanks

T

**Teresa Dickinson**

---

*Deputy Australian Statistician*

**Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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[attachment "SSA\_2023.png" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

# Recommendations on 2021 Census topics

October 2019 field test analysis

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**  
Informing Australia's important decisions



- ▶ Non-binary sex
  - Findings from analysis of field test data
  - Operational considerations of a non-binary response category
- ▶ Chronic health conditions
- ▶ Australian Defence Force service
- ▶ Next steps
  - Critical dates for paper form finalisation
  - Parliamentary process
  - Risk mitigation planned

# Non-binary sex - acceptability

Item non-response to sex question (paper)		End of form comments (2019 test)	
2019 field test	S2P2D2	Sex/gender	S2P 2D2
S22		<i>Positive</i>	
		<i>Negative</i>	
		<i>Neutral/confused</i>	
		S22	
		Total comments	S2P2D2

# Non-binary sex responses

		2019 test
Total population	S  22	S2  P2  D2
Non-binary responses		
Deliberate misreporting		
Mistake online		
Mistake on paper		
Valid and intentional		
<b>Additional information</b>		
Multi-mark with M/F		
Additional text (online)		

Estimate of non-binary response:

S2P2D2

S22

S22



# International comparison

Country	Non-binary sex	Gender/trans status
Canada	No	Yes
England and Wales	No	Yes
Scotland	No	Yes
Northern Ireland	No	No
Republic of Ireland	No	No
United States of America	No	No
New Zealand (2023)	Yes	Yes

S22

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S22



## SES discussion of proposed new topics for 2021 Census

<b>When</b>	Monday 10 February 2020 10:00 – 10.45 am - Canberra
<b>S22</b>	
<b>Invitees</b>	<p>Teresa Dickinson, Deputy Statistician, Census &amp; Data Services  Paul Jelfs, General Manager, Population &amp; Social Statistics Division  Chris Libreri, General Manager, Census Division  Denise Carlton, Program Manager, Population Statistics  Mark Harding, Program Manager, 2021 Census Data Operations Branch  Bindi Kindermann, Program Manager, 2021 Census Field Operations Branch  Nick Stathis, Program Manager, Communication &amp; Parliamentary  S22 [REDACTED], Director, Census Content &amp; Dissemination  S22 [REDACTED], Director, Census Data Quality &amp; Statistical Risk  S22 [REDACTED], Director, Census Communications</p>

**Background**

The October 2019 Census field test included new questions on chronic health conditions and services with the Australian Defence Service. It also included a non-binary response option to the sex question.

The purpose of this meeting is to share the findings from the field test and discuss the next steps with these three variables for the operational readiness exercise and the Census main event.

This discussion will inform our drafting of a detailed analysis report. The slide deck for discussion will be circulated just prior to the meeting.

**S22****Non-binary sex key findings****S2D2P2**

- For discussion:
  - Proceed with collecting a non-binary sex option online?
  - Proceed with collecting a non-binary sex option on paper?
  - S22 [REDACTED]
  - Risk that non-binary response option implies gender not sex

**S22**

S22

MEETING NOTES: SES briefing on new topics from October field test 10 Feb 2020 [DLM=Sensitive] (Response to: Content recommendations on implementation of non-binary sex February 2020 <header> [DLM=Sensitive])  
2021 Census Content Development WDB S22 10/02/2020 12:33 PM

**Sensitive**

Basics

<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>Sensitive:</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

Documents circulated prior to the meeting:



New topics analysis for discussion.pptx



SES discussion - findings and directions on new Census topics 10 Feb 2020.pdf

# S22

S22

## Decision Pro-forma



Topic for decision	Content plan for October 2019 field test
<b>Stream Lead</b>	S22 [REDACTED], 2021 Census content review
Purpose	The purpose of this decision pro-forma is to seek Census leadership agreement on the two content options for the October 2019 field test.
Is this a data quality improvement priority?	The October field test will be the main quantitative test of new and changed content for the 2021 Census. It will be an experimental design with two samples. Analysis of the data from the test will support assessment of the statistical impact of the content and decisions on what should be included in the Census and thus contribute to data quality.
Key Issues and assumptions	<p>There is a need to finalise the paper form for the October test by mid-July. There is uncertainty around what topics the Government will decide should be included in the 2021 Census and this decision is unlikely to be confirmed until later in the year.</p> <p>In the absence of a clear decision on what potential new content will be included in the Census, the Census SRO has requested that the question wording for the potential new topics under consideration be tested in October, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term health conditions</li> <li>• Service with the Australian Defence Force</li> <li>• Gender identity</li> <li>• Sexual orientation.</li> </ul> <p>An element of the content change that isn't required to be part of the recommendation to the Minister is collecting sex in a non-binary way, to meet the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act, and this question will also be tested.</p> <p>The proposed direction for inclusion of the new topics for the test is:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Sample A – non binary sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, long term health conditions, service with the ADF</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Sample B – non binary 'sex', long term health conditions, service with the ADF</p> <p>This design will enable assessment of the new health and ADF questions across the whole sample and gender identity and sexual orientation across half a sample.</p> <p>Since sex is a critical variable collected in the Census, assessing the impact of providing non-binary response options is a key objective of the field test. The sex question and response categories will vary depending on whether it is asked with gender identity. The sample design will enable comparison of the data received in the sex variable when it is combined with gender identity and when it is alone.</p> <p>The non-binary 'sex' question on sample B reverts to the 2016 Census wording where the term 'sex' is not used and respondents may interpret the question in either a sex or gender way.</p>

# S22

There will be a high level of interest by LGBTI stakeholders in the Census topic decision. This is likely to play out by political and media advocacy.

## Implications

An implication of the proposed direction is that the test will be conducted after the Minister's decision is provided but before it is made public through tabling the regulations. There are three broad outcomes in relation to the LGBTI topics.

1. If the Minister decides not to collect gender identity and sexual orientation, these topics will still be included in the test. This has risks and benefits:
  - Appearance of the test being inconsistent with the Government decision.
  - LGBTI stakeholders in particular may be encouraged by the inclusion of the questions in the test and then confused when the regulations don't include these topics.
  - An advantage is that the results of the test can be used to inform collection of these topics in future Censuses and in the household survey program.
2. If the Minister decides to collect gender identity and sexual orientation in the Census, the test will provide data on the performance of these questions and may give an indication of impact on Census response of their inclusion.
3. If the Minister decides to collect gender identity and not sexual orientation, the test will not reflect this and any interplay between the two topics may obscure the results. Alternative testing will be required.

## Options considered

The option for sample A to collect non-binary sex and gender identity without sexual orientation was considered however, it was felt that all potential new topics needed to be tested. Additional splits of the sample to cater for additional variations was not considered affordable

The deadlines for paper form finalisation in particular doesn't allow the test to be delayed.

## Change analysis log

Change Analysis log attached (~~Yes~~/No) A change analysis log is being developed for all Census content changes.

## Consultation

Initial planning for the October test design for all new topics except sexual orientation involved representatives from Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk, Census Digital and Paper Service, Demography, Household Characteristics & Social Reporting NSC and Respondent Collection Methodology.

The change to include sexual orientation was a more recent decision and further consultation will be undertaken as part of the instrument certification process.

Alternate views on recommendations	
<b>Decision outcome</b>	
Decision reached and reasoning	Decision outcome and reason for decision.....
Decision sign off/date	Who signed off on the decision and date
Decision register	Date recorded in 2021 Census Decision Register

**Decision Proforma October field test content test**  
2021 Census Content Development WDB

Justine Boland 28/06/2019 12:40 PM

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS 28/06/2019 12:18 PM

<b>Send</b>	To Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS cc <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Decision Proforma October field test content test
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	7. Instrument Design and Testing\Oct 2019 Field Test\Form development

Paul, for discussion with you at 1.45pm. And then once you are comfortable, we are looking for you to send this to Teresa.  
Justine



Decision Proforma October field test content test V3.docx

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

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----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 28/06/2019 12:13 PM -----

From: S22/Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 28/06/2019 10:43 AM  
Subject: Re: Decision Proforma October field test content test V1.0.docx



Thanks Justine, I have added information regarding 'sex' on sample B as I think it's important to point out that there are different questions on each sample.  
My changes are still in track comments.

cheers,

S22

[attachment "Decision Proforma October field test content test V3.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

S22

*Director - 2021 Census Content Review*

Population and Social Statistics Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS will handle any personal information that you provide to us.

Justine Boland

S22

I have included two comments in the d...

28/06/2019 09:04:51 AM

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS  
To: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 28/06/2019 09:04 AM  
Subject: Re: Decision Proforma October field test content test V1.0.docx

S22

I have included two comments in the document. Can you please advise?

Justine

[attachment "Decision Proforma October field test content test V2.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

**Justine Boland**

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S22

Thanks Bindi, good suggestions. I've accepted t...

27/06/2019 03:45:21 PM

Bindi Kindermann

Hi S22 Thanks for the opportunity to comm...

27/06/2019 03:29:45 PM

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
To: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 27/06/2019 03:29 PM  
Subject: Re: Decision Proforma October field test content test V1.0.docx

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on an early draft. I have made some suggested changes and discussed briefly with Chris.

This should go to Teresa from Paul.

[attachment "~1749854.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

Happy to discuss.

B

**Bindi Kindermann**

Program Manager, 2021 Census  
Australian Bureau of Statistics

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**Executive Assistant:** [REDACTED]

(P) [REDACTED] (E) [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au

[REDACTED]

Hi Bindi, Here is a rough first go at the decision...

27/06/2019 01:27:07 PM

## Census topic evaluation strategy - October 2019 field test (draft)

2021 Census Content Development WDB

S22

09/07/2019 11:53 AM

## Basics

Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED		
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy
	Caveat		<input type="checkbox"/> NATIO

## Census topic evaluation strategy

### October 2019 field test

#### 1. Purpose

This document outlines the strategy that will be undertaken to evaluate the topics and questionnaire from the 2019 field test. This analysis will be performed by Data Quality and Statistical Risk and the 2021 Census Content Review section.

The 2019 field test is the first major quantitative test of the 2021 testing program and follows identification of potential new topics through a public consultation process and development, assessment and refinement of those topics through a qualitative testing program. These activities are documented elsewhere ([link here](#)). Further development and evaluation of the proposed new topics as part of the Remote Area Strategy is not within the scope of this document. This document also does not cover evaluation of non-topic related test objectives.

#### 2. Background on field test

The primary objectives of the field test detailed in the decision register on 15 April 2019 (■) are:

- Does the collection of sensitive information impact response?

# S22

### 3. Topic test objectives

The topic test objectives can be considered in four broad parts:

1. S22
2. Proposed new topics
3. Proposed changes to existing topics
4. External factors or potential interplay of influencing existing topics

The evaluation will include:

- Analysis of the data acquired in the test
- Respondent feedback provided via comments on the test forms
- Respondent feedback provided via the contact centre
- Community sentiment as measured through social media monitoring

Decisions on whether to include the proposed new questions in the 2021 Census will also be based on operational feasibility and overall statistical impact.

### 3.2 Proposed new topics

The purpose of this analysis will be to determine if the proposed new topics should be included in the 2021 Census. It will include analysis of responses to the new questions, comparison with other sources and measures of operational feasibility such as multi-marks and write in responses.

The proposed new topics to be included in the field test are:

- S22 [REDACTED]
- S22 [REDACTED]
- Non-binary sex

Proposed new topics analytical plans

# S22

S22

# S22

## Non-binary sex

The form will include a version of the sex question with a third response option. It will also have an online confirmation edit and provide respondents with an opportunity to provide more information. This question is asked of all respondents and is mandatory on the online form.

In addition to the item non-response and respondent comments from end of form analysis, specific analysis on the performance of the sex question will include:

- Number of people responding male, female and non-binary. Expected and acceptable values will be set by the NSC
- Respondents by demographics including age, Indigenous status, marital status, country of birth, education, and employment
- Number of multi-marks of male with the third option and female with the third option
- Number of people selecting the third response option who then select prefer not to provide additional information or provide a write in response
- Analysis of the write in responses to determine if they provide descriptive information that was sex or gender related. This analysis will be undertaken by the Household Characteristics and Social Reporting NSC.
- Analysis of scanned paper images for the Sex question to determine respondent sentiment
- Where applicable, all analysis will be compared to the 2016 Census.

- Where applicable, all analysis will compare online to paper.
- Dependent on the level of data available, non-binary specific end of form comments, contact centre logs, and social media monitoring will be assessed

2019 Paper form		2019 Online form
<p><b>Is the person:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul> <p><a href="https://censustest.abs.gov.au">Go to censustest.abs.gov.au</a> for more information.</p>		<p><b>Is Amy:</b></p> <p><a href="#">+ More information</a></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-binary</p> <p><b>You have indicated that Amy identifies as non-binary. Please provide more information below. Or select 'Previous information', or select 'Prefer not to provide additional information'.</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <p>100 characters remaining.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to provide additional information</p>

# S22



S22

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Re: For info: Update from discussion between Census General Manager and Mike Xanthis and ABS contact information [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only] Chris Libreri to: Justine Boland, Teresa Dickinson 09/09/2019 04:06 PM

Cc: Bindi Kindermann, S22, S22, S22, Mark Harding, S22, Paul Jelfs, Policy & Legislation Section WDB, S22

2 Attachments



Census 2021 topics TSY v1 MS19-001997.docx Draft letter to PM Census 2021 topics v1TSY.docx

Hi Justine and thanks for this.

S22 and I were just discussing this and ostensibly landed in the same place. My advice would be that in responding to Treasury that we are clear that we are responding to their advice by providing the revised Attachment A to support the letters that they have drafted.

# S22

## Chris Libreri

General Manager Census Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

## Australian Bureau of Statistics

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**Executive Assistant:** S22

(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au

\* Justine Boland---09/09/2019 03:57:54 PM---Hi Teresa and Chris We have received the attached email from Treasury, containing a draft Minister's

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Policy & Legislation Section WDB@ABS

Date: 09/09/2019 03:57 PM

Subject: For info: Update from discussion between Census General Manager and Mike Xanthis and ABS contact information [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Teresa and Chris

We have received the attached email from Treasury, containing a draft Minister's Brief for the Treasurer, and a draft letter to the PM outlining the proposed change to regulation.

We will give this a thorough review and arrange for a new Attachment A (which lists out all the Census topics) to be incorporated. (In Attachment A, we will remove reference to non binary sex in relation to the sex topic, [redacted], and add the two new topics). I will get this back to you later today for your review and clearance.



Note also the request to sign off on the date of the Census.

Justine

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 09/09/2019 03:44 PM -----

From: [redacted]/Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Policy & Legislation Section WDB@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 09/09/2019 03:22 PM  
Subject: Fw: Update from discussion between Census General Manager and Mike Xanthis and ABS contact information [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Justine and [redacted]

As discussed with Justine this afternoon, Treasury have send through a draft Ministerial Brief and draft letter to the Prime Minister relating to the Census legislation package.

There are a few actions required:

1. [redacted]
2. Provide an updated Attachment A (attached to ABS MB19-000039) that shows the proposed regulation changes
3. [redacted]
4. [redacted]

The ABS will need to move swiftly to meet the proposed timetable included in the MB.

[redacted]

S22

Thanks in advance for your assistance.

Kind regards,

S22

S22

A/g Assistant Director

Policy and Legislation Section | Risk, Planning and Policy Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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(E) S22 [@abs.gov.au](mailto:S22@abs.gov.au) or (E) S22 [@protected.abs.gov.au](mailto:S22@protected.abs.gov.au)

Please direct all emails to the [Policy & Legislation Section WDB](#)

S22

----- Forwarded by S22 /Staff/ABS on 09/09/2019 03:02 PM -----

From: S47F S22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU  
To: S22 @abs.gov.au  
Cc: S22 @abs.gov.au, "Policy & Legislation Section WDB" <freedomofinformation@abs.gov.au>  
Date: 09/09/2019 11:53 AM  
Subject: RE: Update from discussion between Census General Manager and Mike Xanthis and ABS contact information [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

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

Hi S22

As discussed, please find attached draft Ministerial Brief and draft letter to the Prime Minister seeking authority to make the regulation changes and proclamation for your comments.

Can you please provide an updated Attachment A (attached to ABS MB19-000039) that shows the proposed regulation changes (ie remove reference to “non binary option” and remove deletion of text on the “garaging of motor vehicles”).

S22

Regards

S47F

S47F

Manager  
Macroeconomic Modelling and Policy Division | Department of the Treasury  
Phone: S47F | mobile: S47F

[www.treasury.gov.au](http://www.treasury.gov.au)

S22

**From:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 3 September 2019 3:06 PM  
**To:** [S47F] <[S47F]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>  
**Cc:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>; Policy & Legislation Section WDB <freedomofinformation@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FYI: Update from discussion between Census General Manager and Mike Xanthias and ABS contact information [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi [S47F],

# S22

[S22]  
Director, Policy and Legislation Section  
(P) [S22]  
(E) [S22] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[S22]@abs.gov.au)

[S22]  
A/g Assistant Director, Policy and Legislation Section  
(P) [S22]  
(E) [S22] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[S22]@abs.gov.au)

\*It's worth noting that I work part time so will not be available Thursday's from 2pm or Fridays (all day).

I spoke with [S47F] yesterday and flagged that the General Manger of Census, Chris Libreri was intending to speak with Mike Xanthis regarding Census topics. Just to provide you an update from that conversation, it is anticipated that the Minister will not be reviewing the Census topics before Tuesday next week as he is travelling (noting next week is a sitting week).

In terms of specific Census topics/content, the current discussions appear to be:



# S22

Please let me know if I can assist in any way. Looking forward to working with you.

Kind regards,

[S22]

[S22]

*A/g Assistant Director*

Policy and Legislation Section | Risk, Planning and Policy Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Please direct all emails to the [Policy & Legislation Section WDB](#)

*Please note I have flexible working arrangements and am offline Thursday afternoons and Fridays*

---

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*(See attached file: Census 2021 topics TSY v1 MS19-001997.docx)(See attached file: Draft letter to PM Census 2021 topics v1TSY.docx)*

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Re: Census content rec to the Minister - where are we at? (Especially as we now have a Minister) [DLM=Sensitive] Chris Libreri to: Teresa Dickinson 19/07/2019 03:17

PM

Cc: S22, Justine Boland

4 Attachments



DRAFT ABS minute 19-MXX - 2021 Census Topic Recommendations 11072019 TD2.docx



Attachment B Proposed topics for inclusion in the 2021 Census.docx



DRAFT ABS minute 19-MXX - 2021 Census Topic Recommendations - attachment A - topic briefs\_TD.docx



SSA\_2023.png

# S22

**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census and Statistical Services Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**(E) [chris.libreri@abs.gov.au](mailto:chris.libreri@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)**

**Executive Assistant:** S22

**(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au**

\* Teresa Dickinson---19/07/2019 01:21:49 PM---Hi folks You must all be wondering what black hole this has fallen into.

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>  
Date: 19/07/2019 01:21 PM  
Subject: Census content rec to the Minister - where are we at? (Especially as we now have a Minister)

Hi folks

S22

David provided a set of comments on the draft which were extensive. [redacted]

S22

In essence here's what David wanted:  
1. Minister to specifically agree to each topic decision. [redacted]

S22

3. Some additional material in the Risks and Sensitivities section

S22

- 5. More material in (current) Attachment A on gender identity and sexual orientation:
  - will the proposed advantages be able to be realised?
  - other data sources currently available or could be available soon (I made up some stuff on this, but it sounds plausible to me!)
  - more on the sensitivities of the topics and implications of that (I've added a bit)

S22

T

# S22

**Teresa Dickinson**

---

*Deputy Australian Statistician*

**Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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*(See attached file: SSA\_2023.png)*

Document 227

Re: Fwd: Fw: FOR ACTION: Statistician's meetings with Minister on 6 June  
 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]Justine Boland to: Nick Stathis 06/06/2018 08:05 AM  
 Thanks Nick.

**From:** Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 6 June 2018 at 8:03:01 am AEST  
**To:** S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Fwd: Fw: FOR ACTION: Statistician's meetings with Minister on 6 June  
 [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

S22, some additional info for DKs meeting with minister

**From:** Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 5 June 2018 at 8:40:25 pm AEST  
**To:** Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>, Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>, Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, S22  
 S22 <S22>  
**Subject:** Re: Fwd: Fw: FOR ACTION: Statistician's meetings with Minister on 6 June

Hi Nick,

Please see attached paras in my email below on the Census 2021 content consultation. Subject to Chris's OK, could you please incorporate in David's information - if we are not too late? The final briefing is also attached.

Justine

*(See attached file: MB18-000044 2021 Census Consultation\_for info.pdf)*

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)**

Paul Jelfs---05/06/2018 08:10:29 PM---From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS

From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS  
 To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Cc: [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Date: 05/06/2018 08:10 PM  
 Subject: Re: Fwd: Fw: FOR ACTION: Statistician's meetings with Minister on 6 June [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

---

All ok with me to be attached to the briefing

PJ

---

**From:** Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 5 June 2018 at 6:51:13 pm AEST  
**To:** Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Fwd: Fw: FOR ACTION: Statistician's meetings with Minister on 6 June

Thanks PJ. [REDACTED] is on leave for most of this week, so I've quickly pulled together the following summary. If this is what you are looking for, I will forward it onto Nick. The final brief is also attached. I don't think the content requires any update for new developments; this is still current.

Justine

Summary of 2021 Census topic consultation process and emerging themes:

A review of Census topics is underway in preparation for the 2021 Census. Topics have not changed since 2006. A broad set of stakeholders have been consulted across government; business; industry; peak bodies; universities and researchers; and community groups. Emerging themes include: new questions on [REDACTED] modification of sex and gender identification to comply with Australian Government guidelines; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Additional questions would be balanced by some removals: [REDACTED] are being considered with administrative data providing an alternative source for this information.

The process to support ABS making a recommendation on Census topics to Cabinet includes finalisation of the current public consultation process (due to close end June 2018); publication of preliminary topic recommendations in November 2018; question testing and refinement of recommendations to aid a submission to Government in June 2019. [REDACTED]

*(See attached file: MB18-000044 2021 Census Consultation\_for info.pdf)*

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

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Paul Jelfs---05/06/2018 05:41:42 PM---From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS,  
S22/Staff/ABS@ABS

# S22

S22



S22

Document 228



Question from the Minister on census Topics Nick Stathis to: Chris Libreri, Bindi Kindermann, S22, Justine Boland 06/08/2019 05:01 PM  
Cc: Lane Masterton

1 Attachment



ABS Minute MB19-00039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics.002.pdf

Hi all,

the MO has asked the following question about para 9 from our brief (copied below)...

Was this requirement in place on the last Census and if so, why wasn't it applied.

*To comply with the Australian Government Guidelines on the recognition of sex and gender, established by the Attorney General's department, response options for sex will be changed to include non-binary option in addition to male and female. This will not be explicit in the regulation, that only includes reference to the topic.*

*(See attached file: ABS Minute MB19-00039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics.pdf)*

Appreciate your advice on what happened last time round. A response by tomorrow morning is OK.

Nick

**Nick Stathis**

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Document 231



Minister's circular - dot point re Census consultation  
Justine Boland to: Stephen Collett  
09/05/2018 10:37 AM

Stephen,

See below for a point on Census topic consultations.... Decided to focus only on those in scope.

JB

### Justine Boland

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 09/05/2018 10:36 AM -----

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS  
To: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS,  
Date: 09/05/2018 09:31 AM  
Subject: Minister's circular - dot point

---

Hi S22, how's this sound for the minister's circular?

JB

### 2021 Census topic consultations

At the end of our first month of the Public Consultation for the 2021 Census topics, 24 in scope submissions have been received. Sex and gender and cultural diversity are currently the themes of strongest interest.

### Justine Boland

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Document 234

Fwd: Discussion with Mike Xanthis [DLM=Sensitive]Justine Boland to: Paul Jelfs 22/08/2019  
04:43 PM  
1 Attachment



SSA\_2023.png

Paul, fyi - [REDACTED] is working with Teresa on this.  
JB

---

**From:** Teresa Dickinson <teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 22 August 2019 at 3:25:07 pm AEST  
**To:** Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** David Kalisch <david.kalisch@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Discussion with Mike Xanthis

Part 1 has now been had.

[REDACTED] - could we book in a time for Part 2 tomorrow. I would like [REDACTED] to also attend, and would like a few minutes with her before we speak with Mike.

There are also a couple of actions from Part 1:

1. Mike would like to see a mock up of how our Option B on non-binary sex would look. He doesn't need exact wording of the 'pass through to the non-binary option'

S22

4. Main issue is sexual orientation and gender - as suspected he was trying to get us to commit one way or another. I told him [REDACTED] why I believed it was a decision for the Minister. To be continued.

[REDACTED]

T

**Teresa Dickinson**

---

*Deputy Australian Statistician*

S22

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*(See attached file: SSA\_2023.png)*



Fw: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]Justine Boland to: S22 15/08/2019 11:15 AM

Latest email in this trail....

## Justine Boland

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 15/08/2019 11:14 AM -----

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
 To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Cc: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Date: 15/08/2019 10:29 AM  
 Subject: Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

Hi S22 my question about AGs was not what was our interpretation of the guidelines but rather had we explicitly discussed this with them, sought their advice and are acting on their advice.

If we haven't then my comment is not relevant.

## Bindi Kindermann

Program Manager, 2021 Census Field Operations  
 Australian Bureau of Statistics

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**(E)** [bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au](mailto:bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au) **(W)** [www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census)

**Executive Assistant:** S22  
**(P) (02) 6252 6900 (E)** S22@abs.gov.au

\* Chris Libreri---15/08/2019 10:23:22 AM---However, we produce other estimates when we know for numerous reasons there is an undercount - Sexua

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS  
 To: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Date: 15/08/2019 10:23 AM  
 Subject: Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

However, we produce other estimates when we know for numerous reasons there is an undercount - Sexual Assault comes to mind.

## Chris Libreri

General Manager Census Division

Head of Brisbane Office

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Executive Assistant:** S22

(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au

▪ S22 ---15/08/2019 10:21:37 AM---Hi everyone, Thanks for your prompt feedback. In the interests of time, are you happy for me to inco

From: S22/Staff/ABS

To: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS

Date: 15/08/2019 10:21 AM

Subject: Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

Hi everyone,

Thanks for your prompt feedback. In the interests of time, are you happy for me to incorporate your suggestions and pass on to Teresa?

A couple of specific responses:

- Bindi - we'll revisit the AG guidelines so we're confident of our position (Justine - could you get S22 or S22 to get on to that from a SMA perspective? May need S22 view from P&L)
- Chris - I'll remove the para that you suggest, but it is worth noting that a survey won't collect accurate intersex data for a number of reasons.
  - Although the estimated rate of intersex at birth is about 1 in 1500, a number of people won't know that they have a variation until they approach puberty and others may not ever know.
  - Some people with a variation may choose to identify exclusively as male/female
  - Other people with a variation may not be willing to respond with this on a government form, particularly in a household context.

Advice from Intersex Human Rights Australia is that the best way to determine intersex status is to ask a question of all respondents specifically about being intersex and separate from the sex question. This still doesn't address the first group who don't know of their variation.

cheers,

S22

S22

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

Population and Social Statistics Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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\* Bindi Kindermann---14/08/2019 07:55:47 PM---Thanks [redacted] The brief raised a question for me around AGs advice. I know we engaged with them,

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
To: [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 14/08/2019 07:55 PM  
Subject: Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

Thanks [redacted]

The brief raised a question for me around AGs advice. I know we engaged with them, what was their advice and are we acting on their advice? We should tie this off.

I agree with the feedback on doability - we still have time, it is tight and will mean work/ cost that we hadn't anticipated.

The rest of my feedback is dangerously close to word smithing and I will leave it with you to take or leave as you see fit:

- I think its important to be very factual and flat in our advice. I think it would help the discussion if we can reflect we understand that there are many different stakeholder perspectives on this issue but that our testing to date indicates that people can respond to the questions, perhaps reflecting that third categories are becoming more common place. [redacted]  
[redacted]
- 
- Perhaps we could also bring in the international perspective - that they are asking gender negating the need to worry about intersex?
- 
- [redacted]  
[redacted]

Regards

Bindi

**Bindi Kindermann**

Program Manager, 2021 Census Field Operations  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
(P) (02) 6252 6512 (M) [redacted]  
(E) [bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au](mailto:bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census)

**Executive Assistant:** [redacted]  
(P) [redacted] (E) [redacted]@abs.gov.au

\* [redacted]---14/08/2019 07:27:30 PM---From: [redacted]/Staff/ABS To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS



From: [S22]/Staff/ABS  
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 14/08/2019 07:27 PM  
Subject: Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

---

Thanks [S22]

A couple of data quality comments:

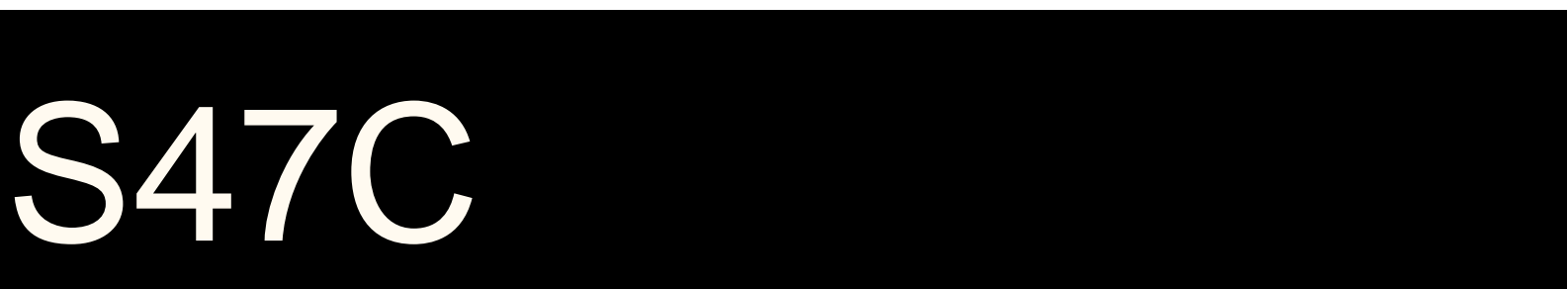
- we know from option C in 2016 that it understates the intersex population
- option B doesn't give us the back up mitigation of collecting male/female in addition to intersex
- option B is also likely to result in broader non-binary gender responses, and result in more misreporting than A (ie more impact on quality of binary sex responses)

[S22]

---

**From:** Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 14 August 2019 at 5:59:07 pm AEST  
**To:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, Bindi Kindermann <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

Thanks [S22] it looks pretty good but [S47F] :



**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Executive Assistant: [redacted]  
(P) [redacted] (E) [redacted]@abs.gov.au

[redacted] ---14/08/2019 05:20:29 PM---Hi all, As you are aware, Teresa has been in contact with the Minister's office about the sex questi

From: [redacted]/Staff/ABS  
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 14/08/2019 05:20 PM  
Subject: Draft material for Teresa and MO on non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive]

Hi all,

As you are aware, Teresa has been in contact with the Minister's office about the sex question. Specifically the Minister's adviser has indicated that the Minister does not want ABS to collect sex in a non-binary way on the mainstream form and has suggested that we do the same as we did in 2016. Both Teresa and David have fed back that decisions on question wording are a matter for the ABS and not the Government. Teresa has asked for some information on alternative approaches that could be discussed with the MO. Following is a covering note to Teresa and a brief that can be sent to the MO. [redacted]

**S22** [redacted] Justine and I have talked through the document and I have incorporated her suggestions in this version.

Hi Teresa,



S47C

# S47C

S22

S22

*Director - 2021 Census Content Review*

Population and Social Statistics Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Discussion with Mike Xanthis re Census Content [DLM=Sensitive:Statistics] Chris

Libreri to: S22, Teresa Dickinson 03/09/2019 09:18 AM

Cc: S22, Paul Jelfs, Justine Boland, S22

Hi

I have just now spoken with Mike and these are the key points :

# S22

- in terms of specifics this is where he thinks we are at :

# S22

> non-binary sex option - Mike was looking at paper options sent through by Teresa and will put them in front of the Minister

> gender identity and sexual orientation will be out - this sounded like a fait accompli

S22

# S22

**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Executive Assistant:** S22

**(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au**

From: [redacted] ---03/09/2019 02:11:07 AM---From: [redacted] /Staff/ABS To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS

From: [redacted] Staff/ABS  
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 03/09/2019 02:11 AM  
Subject: Fwd: Fw: Census Content - reminder contact with MO [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi Chris,

S22

Can you please contact Mike to get the specific responses to each recommendation on the brief? [redacted] has provided her understanding of some of the topics below and you should confirm these with the MO. We have not received direction on sexual orientation or gender identity. We have also not heard further about non binary sex following the additional information provided, noting that this wasn't a specific recommendation. We need clear direction on the recommendations in order to provide the briefing to treasury for the letter.

S22

Cheers, [redacted]

From: [redacted] [redacted]@abs.gov.au>  
Date: 2 September 2019 at 8:26:44 pm AEST  
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@abs.gov.au>, [redacted] [redacted]@abs.gov.au>  
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@abs.gov.au>  
Subject: Re: Fw: Census Content - reminder contact with MO [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

Hi [redacted] and [redacted],

S22

Treasury will be drafting a minute and a letter to the PM for approval of Census topics which they anticipate will be drafted and sent to the ABS for input towards the end of this week. They will be basing these documents on the recommendations put forward in MB19-000039.

S22

In terms of topic recommendations, it is understood that:

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

- S22

No explicit conversation has been had with Treasury and further clarification should be sought regarding:

- Changing the existing topic - non-binary sex
- Potential topic - gender identity
- Potential topic - sexual orientation

I hope this was helpful.

Kind regards,

S22

S22

*A/g Assistant Director*

Policy and Legislation Section | Risk, Planning and Policy Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Please direct all emails to the [Policy & Legislation Section WDB](#)

S22

# S22

# S22

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS  
To: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 30/08/2019 10:32 AM  
Subject: Census Content - reminder contact with MO

---

# S22

**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Executive Assistant:** [REDACTED]  
**(P) [REDACTED] (E) [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au**

Bindi Kindermann---30/08/2019 10:29:35 AM---Hi [S22] Teresa said yesterday that she would like Chris to follow up gently early next week if w

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
To: [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 30/08/2019 10:29 AM  
Subject: Re: Fw: Australian Bureau of Statistics Daily Briefing Friday 30 August 2019

# S22

B

**Bindi Kindermann**

Program Manager, 2021 Census Field Operations  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
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**Executive Assistant:** [S22]  
(P) [S22] (E) [S22]@abs.gov.au

[S22]---30/08/2019 10:25:35 AM---Will do - thanks for reminding me that you're heading off soon.  
Do you know if Teresa is planning on

From: [S22]/Staff/ABS  
To: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 30/08/2019 10:25 AM  
Subject: Re: Fw: Australian Bureau of Statistics Daily Briefing Friday 30 August 2019

# S22

cheers,

[S22]

[S22]

*Director - 2021 Census Content Review*

Population and Social Statistics Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Deputy Australian Statistician  
Census and Data Services Group**

**MB18-000044**

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP  
Assistant Minister to the Treasurer

cc: The Hon Scott Morrison MP, Treasurer  
John Fraser, Secretary to the Treasury

## **2021 Census Consultation**

### **For information**

- 1 The purpose of this Minute is to provide information on the 2021 Census topic review process which is currently underway.
- 2 The next Census is scheduled for August 2021. Following engagement with key stakeholders, the ABS is currently conducting a public consultation process into the topics to be collected in the Census. This process opened on 3 April and closes on 30 June 2018.
- 3 Updates on the number of submissions received are included in the fortnightly circular; as more submissions are received the key themes will be identified.
- 4 The ABS will be meeting with the Minister's Office on 29 May to discuss the emerging themes in the public submission process and next steps.

### **Current Census content**

- 5 The Census has not had any significant changes since 2006 due to a number of circumstances; however demand from stakeholders has demonstrated a need for some change to ensure Census content remains contemporary and relevant.
- 6 The 2016 Census contained 60 questions across a range of topics, summarised in Attachment A. It is anticipated that following the consultation and assessment process for the 2021 Census there will be only a small number of questions removed and a small number added in their place as the majority of topics are considered essential to retain to support key decisions and provide an understanding of change over time. Early indications of likely areas for new, modified or removed content are summarised in Attachment B. We are also exploring options to enhance information collected via use of the eCensus or through greater use of administrative data alongside the Census.
- 7 The Census data is critical for the setting of federal, state and territory electoral boundaries and provides key data for demographic estimates, data at small geographic levels and key information to support a range of policy developments, evaluation and monitoring.

# S22

## S47F

25 Teresa Dickinson  
May 2018

The Deputy Australian Statistician has reviewed/been consulted on this Minute

ABS contact: Paul Jelfs p: (02) 6252 6690 or e: [paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au](mailto:paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au)

S22

## **Attachment B: Additional information on potential areas of content change for the 2021 Census**

Based on the 2016 Census consultation process or early advice from stakeholders, the following topics are likely to be considered for change in the 2021 Census.

# S22

## Sex and gender identification – modify

The ABS is expected to comply with the Australian Government guidelines on the recognition of sex and gender. Changes to procedures to collect non-binary sex were introduced in 2016 but further work is needed to consider how improvements can be made in this area for the 2021 Census. Discussions with stakeholders have revealed both an interest in collecting non-binary sex and also in collecting gender data.

# S22



Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

27/05/2018 03:15 PM

<b>Send</b>	To Luise Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS cc Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Fw: ABS Minute MB18-000044 2021 Census Consultation - for information 📎
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance

Luise, FYI - given this sits in our portfolio....

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) [S22] (F) (02) 6252 6870**

**(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)**

----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 27/05/2018 03:14 PM -----

From: Secretariat WDB  
 To: AMTDLO@treasury.gov.au  
 Cc: Michael.Xanthis@treasury.gov.au, [S47F] @treasury.gov.au, [S47F] @treasury.gov.au, TsrDLOs@treasury.gov.au, [S47F] @treasury.gov.au, [S47F] @treasury.gov.au, Samantha Palmer/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S47F] @TREASURY.GOV.AU, [S47F] @treasury.gov.au, David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Randall Brugeaud/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Date: 25/05/2018 04:04 PM  
 Subject: ABS Minute MB18-000044 2021 Census Consultation - for information  
 Sent by: [S22]



Good afternoon

Please find attached a briefing which provides information on the 2021 Census topic review process which is currently underway.



MB18-000044 2021 Census Consultation\_for info.pdf

Regards

S22

*Assistant Director*

Parliamentary and Partnerships | People, Capability and Communication Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**


(P) S22 (M) S22  
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The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS handles any personal information you provide to us.

Basics

Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS

25/05/2018 10:23 AM

<b>Send</b>	To Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS cc <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	FYI: Minute for Minister on content - FINAL 
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance

Dear Teresa and Chris

Paul has cleared the following Minute to go to the Minister's Office before Paul and Chris meet with the Minister's Chief of Staff next Tuesday.



Census content Minute MB18-000044 v2.0.docx

For your information.

Regards

Bindi



Deputy Australian Statistician  
Census and Data Services Group

MB18-000121

The Hon Stuart Robert MP  
Assistant Treasurer

cc: The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Treasurer  
Philip Gaetjens, Secretary to the Treasury

### Publication of the Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021

#### For information

- 1 This purpose of this Minute is to provide you with a copy of the publication *Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021* (cat.no.2007.0.55.001) being released on 14 November 2018. This publication gives an indication of the current ABS views on what information could be collected in the Census. A copy of the publication is available at **Attachment A**.
- 2 While most topics remain entirely or largely unchanged from Census to Census, for each Census the ABS seeks input from stakeholders, including the public, as to changes they may consider valuable. These are assessed against a range of criteria, including need for the data for decision making and suitability of the Census as the vehicle to collect the data. On the basis of that initial assessment a smaller set of topics are considered in greater depth.
- 3 The topics will continue to be explored over the next several months to inform the ABS recommendation to Government in mid-2019. This will include discussions with key stakeholders and data users to further refine the data needs; an assessment of costs and operational implications; further development and testing of the questions; and assessment of statistical quality.
- 4 Ultimately the topics for the Census are decided by Government following endorsement by Cabinet.
- 5 As recently advised in MB18-00082, the ABS will continue to engage with your office during 2019 to develop the recommendations to Government.
- 6 The ABS will write to key stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the publication release and next steps in the process. This includes a letter to Ministers whose portfolios made a submission to the consultation process (**Attachment B**) and an email to all MPs and Senators.

7 The publication will be accompanied by a media release; promotion through social media; proactive communication with key stakeholders; and a live streamed webinar targeting data users and those who made submissions during the public consultation process.

8 Talking points will be provided to your office prior to the release.

**S47F**

Teresa Dickinson  
8 November 2018

The Australian Statistician has reviewed/been consulted on this Minute: Yes/No

## **2007.0.55.001**

### **Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions, 2021**

To be released 11.30am AEDT Wednesday 14 November 2018 at abs.gov.au

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HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

INCOME AND WORK

UNPAID WORK AND CARE

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

DISABILITY AND CARERS

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## **PREFACE**

### **INTRODUCTION FROM THE AUSTRALIAN STATISTICIAN**

The Census of Population and Housing is a critical source of information collected every five years about Australians and the way we live.

The next Census will be held in 2021. Consultation and planning to ensure a successful Census is already underway.

Public consultation on the range of topics to be included in the 2021 Census occurred between 3 April and 30 June 2018. More than 400 submissions were received from a range of sectors including: all levels of government, academia, community and advocacy groups, industry bodies, businesses and individuals. This report summarises the outcomes of this consultation and outlines the next steps in determining the topics for the 2021 Census. Ultimately the topics for the Census are decided by the Australian Government, informed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) recommendations.

The ABS is required to run a 5 yearly Census by law. The information is used to shape our country's services and infrastructure needs; to locate health, education and transport services where they are needed. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas.

The Census also provides long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Many Census topics will be retained to continue this important trend data.

Decisions to change the questions asked in the Census are not made lightly. While changes improve the data available to inform planning for a modern and changing population, they may reduce the value of data trends that have been collected for decades. The Census has always had to move with the times. In 1947 the Census form included questions on running water and flushing toilets. In the 1960s, Australians were asked if their house had a television set.

There is a limit to the number and type of questions that can be reasonably asked through a Census - due to the burden on respondents in answering questions and the cost of collecting and analysing the information collected. Within these constraints there is opportunity for some changes in the questions to be asked in the 2021 Census.

Over the next two years the ABS will continue to explore areas of innovation and change to ensure a simple, secure and easy Census experience. We are drawing on the lessons from the 2016 Census and recommendations from a range of reviews to continually improve our delivery of the Census.

I thank those who have invested time and effort to make submissions on the topics for the 2021 Census. With this input we can be confident that our recommendations to Government have been informed by a wide range of views obtained through an open consultative process.

David W. Kalisch - Australian Statistician  
14 November 2018

## INTRODUCTION

Australia's Census of Population and Housing is one of the most important statistical collections undertaken by the ABS. The data collected every five years through the Census provides an important source of information that underpins decisions impacting every aspect of the lives of Australians. Information is used for a range of purposes, including planning, administration, policy development and evaluation for governments and other users.

In late 2017, the ABS began consulting with key users of Census data to determine whether there should be changes or additions to the topics to be included in the 2021 Census. Between April and June 2018, a formal consultation process invited all interested parties to contribute their views on the topics that are important to be collected in the next Census. Submissions have been received from across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors and from members of the public.

This paper presents a summary of the views collected and the key themes that emerged. It also provides a brief overview of the:

- process to review and assess the suggestions received
- current thinking for each of the topics
- next steps to determine the final topics for the 2021 Census.

The final decision on topics for the 2021 Census will be made by the Australian Government. This report does not include final decisions about Census topics, or the final recommendations that will be put to the Government for a decision. Recommendations will be refined through further engagement with key stakeholders and experts, reviews of operational feasibility and testing of questions in a Census context.

Recommendations will be presented to Government in mid-2019 for decision on the 2021 Census topics. The final list of topics to be included in the Census will be published by the ABS in an information paper (cat. no. 2008.0) expected to be released in late 2020.

## BACKGROUND

The first Census was undertaken in 1911. Before every Census the ABS has reviewed procedures and topics to ensure that the Census delivers high quality, timely and relevant information that Australia needs.

Reviewing topics is a fundamental part of planning for each Census. Some topics have been included in every Census, creating a valuable time series of critical information. However, the number and range of topics has changed over time to reflect contemporary views and emerging needs, with topics being included or excluded depending on relevance and importance at the time. With the increasing availability of administrative data, the possibility of using information from alternative sources is also considered in determining Census topics.

For both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census there was no change in the list of topics. In effect, topics have not changed since the 2006 Census.

In preparation for the 2021 Census topic review, the ABS considered the recommendations from the 2016 consultation process. Discussions were held with various government agencies and non-government Census data users to identify emerging data needs. The data needs identified were used as the basis for the discussion on topics during the consultation. These emerging data needs were outlined in a publication released at the beginning of the consultation ([cat. no. 2007.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Consultation on Topics, 2021](#)).

## OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### SUBMISSION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The ABS ran a submission process seeking views on the topics to be included in the 2021 Census. This consultation ran from 3 April to 30 June 2018.

The submission process was supported by an information paper ([cat. no. 2007.0](#)), media release and online briefing (including a live question and answer session). The briefing was recorded and made available online for those unable to attend the original presentation.

The submission process was promoted through email alerts sent through various networks and weekly posts through various social media channels.

Submissions were made directly into the ABS Consultation Hub (<https://consult.abs.gov.au/>) or sent to the ABS via mail or email.

Participants were invited to make suggestions to keep, change, add or remove Census topics. Those who were making submissions were asked to include a summary of their suggested changes and to provide support for each suggested change against the following assessment criteria:

- the topic is of current national importance
- there is a need for data from a Census of the whole population
- the topic can be accurately collected in a form which the household completes themselves
- the topic would be acceptable to Census respondents
- the topic can be collected efficiently
- there is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic in the following Census
- there are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the data need.

### OVERVIEW OF SUBMISSIONS

In total, 450 submissions were received, with 315 published with consent on the ABS Consultation Hub (<https://consult.abs.gov.au/>).

Around 90 submissions suggested changes to standards, classifications or Census procedures and have been referred to the relevant sections of the ABS for further consideration. A small number of submissions also suggested changes already adopted in Census design.

The remaining 355 submissions addressed changes to Census topics.

#### Who made submissions?

Submissions were received from a range of private, public and community sector organisations including government departments across all levels of government, businesses, community groups, industry bodies/associations, and educational institutions (including academics and researchers). Fifty-eight submissions were received from individuals. A summary of the source of submissions is provided at Table 1.



Table 1: Number of submissions on the 2021 Census topics by submitter type

<b>Submitter type<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>No of submissions</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Local government	104	29.3
Individual	58	16.3
State/territory government department	58	16.3
Commonwealth government department	38	10.7
Community group	27	7.6
Educational institution	19	5.4
Industry body/association	19	5.4
Business	11	3.1
Other	21	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>355</b>	

### What did the submissions say about Census topics?

Submissions suggested changes or additions to 37 of the 47 topics that were included in the 2016 Census and nominated 36 new topics to be included in the 2021 Census.

All topics, proposed and existing, have been aligned within 13 Census themes. The number of submissions received on Census topics grouped within these themes is provided at Table 2.

Table 2: Number of submissions received for Census themes

<b>Topic themes<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>No of submissions</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Transport	95	18.7
Income & work	48	9.4
Cultural diversity	43	8.5
Housing	43	8.5
Health	41	8.1
Disability & carers	39	7.7
Population	38	7.5
Unpaid work & care	27	5.3
Households & families	25	4.9
Location	24	4.7
Education & training	23	4.5
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples	12	2.4
Other topics <sup>3</sup>	50	9.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>508<sup>4</sup></b>	

<sup>1</sup> As reported by submitter.

<sup>2</sup> Themes include new topic suggestions if they relate to other topics already on the Census.

<sup>3</sup> Other topics include Australian Defence Force indicator, sexual orientation and several topics with one submission.

<sup>4</sup> This number is higher than the number of submissions received. This figure reflects that some submissions addressed more than one Census topic and have been recorded against each separate topic.

## First assessment of the submissions

Each submission has been reviewed against the assessment criteria. The suggested changes for Census topics have also been reviewed to determine if needs could be met from existing data sources. Together, these assessments have resulted in a preliminary priority list of Census topics for further investigation.

Eight of the proposed new topics have been determined to warrant further consideration as outlined in Next Steps. These topics, listed below, are discussed in detail later in this report (see Topic Directions).

- Non-binary sex and/or gender identity
- More contemporary descriptions of household and family relationships (including those with shared care of children)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- Journey to education (including mode of transport, and name and address of educational institution)
- Chronic health conditions
- Smoking status
- Australian Defence Force service
- Sexual orientation.

Five of the proposed new topics (listed below) are discussed in more detail later in this report although preliminary assessments have determined that they will not be further considered for inclusion in the 2021 Census.

- Sources of income
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation
- Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling
- Other languages spoken
- Other health related topics.

Some new topic suggestions did not provide strong cases when assessed against the criteria. For some topics, the data can be obtained from existing surveys or administrative sources. These topics, listed below, are not discussed in more detail and will not be considered further for inclusion in the 2021 Census.

- Access to, and experiences with, health services
- Allergies
- Child protection and youth justice
- Child support
- Dental health
- Experience of racism
- Food security
- Future aged care intentions
- Health and well-being indicators
- Household assets
- Internal migration over a lifetime
- Nutrition
- Personal safety (including experiences of domestic violence)
- Pets or companion animals
- Physical activity
- Place of birth in Australia
- Short term accommodation
- Subjective well-being
- Superannuation status
- Swimming ability
- Vacant land

- Veganism
- Wood heating.

Suggestions for changes to existing topics that will be further assessed for the 2021 Census are described in the Topic Directions section.

Two topics are proposed to be removed. They are 'Household internet access' and 'Number of motor vehicles garaged'. These topics are discussed under the themes of Housing and Transport respectively.

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## NEXT STEPS

The public consultation has closed.

The ABS will make recommendations to Government on the topics to be included in the 2021 Census in mid-2019. The final Census topics are a decision for the Australian Government.

To inform the recommendations to Government, the ABS will continue to explore the suggestions made through this consultation process. The sections below describe the steps in further detail.

### **DISCUSSIONS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND DATA USERS TO REFINE THE DATA NEEDS**

Discussions with stakeholders are underway and are targeted to explore the data needs and seek any clarifying information required on proposed topics. Further support is welcome from data users on any of the directions expressed in the following sections.

### **AN ASSESSMENT OF COSTS AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

Assessment of the cost and feasibility of topics will consider all aspects of the Census cycle including design, build, collection, processing and dissemination.

The number, complexity and sensitivity of questions asked in a Census can impact the quality of responses and consequently, the quality of the data collected. So not all suggested topics, including those assessed as providing valuable information, may necessarily be included in the 2021 Census.

### **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING OF THE QUESTIONS**

Questions will be tested through focus groups, individual interviews using cognitive testing techniques, and large scale tests. Question testing will ensure, as far as reasonably possible, that quality data can be obtained for the proposed new and amended topics. Large scale quantitative testing will be undertaken to refine the wording of questions and to ensure that new and amended questions do not impact on the overall quality of response to the Census.

### **GOVERNMENT DECISION**

When the Government has decided the 2021 Census topics, an amendment to the *Census and Statistics Regulation 2016* will be tabled in both houses of Parliament in late 2019 to give effect to that decision, if required.

The ABS will publish an information paper outlining the 2021 Census topics (cat. no. 2008.0) after the final decision is made.

## TOPIC DIRECTIONS

Topics have been organised into the following broad themes.

- Population
- Households and families
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Income and work
- Unpaid work and care
- Education and training
- Disability and carers
- Housing
- Location
- Transport
- Cultural diversity
- Health
- Other topics

Each theme includes further discussion on topics, both current and proposed, which generated significant interest from stakeholders. Information is provided on the case for change and plans for additional work with stakeholders, research and testing to assist in prioritising final recommendations for topics for the 2021 Census.

Two proposed topics, 'Australian Defence Force service' and 'Sexual orientation', are discussed under the Other topics theme.

Topic suggestions which did not present a strong case for inclusion when assessed against the criteria are listed in the Overview of public consultation section. There will be no further work on these topics.

## POPULATION

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Population, Sex and gender](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Name	Retain existing topic without change.
Sex and/or gender identity	Retain existing topic, with change to be tested. Further testing and discussion will be undertaken to explore when male or female are too limiting in response to questions on sex or gender.
Date of birth or age	Retain existing topic without change.
Number of children ever born	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested, including review and testing of gendered language.

Key questions on population have been asked in the Census since 1911. They provide information for the ABS to estimate the size, age and sex profile of the population across Australia as required under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. This information remains relevant for decisions made by governments, businesses and local community groups.

Alongside this information, the ABS requests names to help people answer the right question for each person in the household, and to help us process the form correctly. The collection of names and addresses in the Census is a critical part of ensuring the quality and value of the Census. Name will continue to be collected in the 2021 Census.

The ABS protects personal privacy by removing names and addresses from other personal and household information after data collection and processing.

## SEX AND/OR GENDER IDENTITY

The consultation process revealed strong interest from a range of sources regarding the collection of information on sex and gender identity through the Census. Submissions noted that the current practice of offering only male and female response options does not allow some people to provide accurate responses.

The complexities of collecting information on sex and gender identity were acknowledged; submissions identified the range of variations possible in sex characteristics and the diversity in gender identity. Sex has been considered a critical topic for measuring and projecting the population, so proposed changes in collection will be assessed for potential impacts on data quality.

While submissions noted a need for data to better understand the characteristics of transgender individuals and people with intersex variations, there were concerns that collecting this data is complex, with the potential for questions to produce data that misrepresent the population. Care is needed in the design of potential questions.

Current ABS standards for information on sex and gender recommend collection of 'male', 'female' and 'other' categories. It was noted by stakeholders that this classification of sex assumes intersex people are not male or female, which is not the case. The diversity of gender identity is not easy to define, but is also not well represented by the current standard. Stakeholders have encouraged the ABS to be clear about what could be collected and what the data would and would not represent.

The ABS will continue to consult with stakeholders, advocacy groups and data users to determine a way forward. Testing will include exploring options for collecting data on sex, gender identity and a combination of both concepts.

Next steps will include focus groups, interviews and field testing to explore options and understand the statistical impact of any change.

## **NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN**

In the background information to the consultation, the ABS noted that this topic is likely to be moved back to collection on a ten yearly cycle, commencing in 2021 to align with international reporting. This topic will be considered for removal in the 2026 Census.

Suggestions were also received for collection of the number of children ever born for males, both to estimate the number of fathers in Australia and also to acknowledge that individuals who do not identify their gender as female may have given birth. While this data need was not considered as high priority, new instruction language will be tested to recognise that non-female identifying people may have given birth.

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## HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Households and families](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Household and family relationships	Retain existing topics, with change to be tested. Current methods for analysing relationships in a household will be reviewed to identify ways to better represent diverse family structures and improve alignment with user requirements.
Registered marital status	Retain existing topic without change.
Persons temporarily absent on Census night	Retain existing topics, with minor change to be tested. The questions related to persons temporarily absent will be updated in line with other topic changes.
Shared care of children (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Will discuss with key stakeholders to confirm key concepts to be included. Questions will be developed and tested.

### HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Submissions received from all levels of government as well as community and academic groups highlighted the need to review and contemporise the way the Census captures data about families. Improvements in reporting of multigenerational family households; blended families; kinship care; shared care arrangements for children; and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and/or Intersex (LGBTI) household relationships were suggested.

Next steps include a review of the ways the ABS analyses and processes data on relationships to identify changes that would be required to reflect a more diverse range of household and family structures.

The ABS will review international approaches and test options for changes to questions, instructions or guidance that improve the relevance of family data.

### PERSONS TEMPORARILY ABSENT ON CENSUS NIGHT

The current Census questions about people temporarily absent from the household include name, sex, date of birth or age, student status, relationship to others in the household and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

This detail is important to determine the usual household composition. It supports accurate identification of the number of children or dependents, number of students, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

Few submissions addressed this topic. However, questions may need to be amended to reflect any changes in other topics that would be relevant, for example sex/gender and household and family relationships.

### SHARED CARE OF CHILDREN

Some submissions identified a need for better information on children that live across multiple households as part of shared care arrangements. Submissions identified that there is no data captured which specifically identifies shared care arrangements or the amount of time spent in each household.

This information would inform understanding of economic consequences and potential disadvantage in shared care arrangements. While there is some survey data available, it does not provide sufficient geographic or socio-economic detail. Having specific information collected on the Census would inform policy development and the delivery of services to affected families.

The next steps will include testing options to capture details of shared care arrangements and will leverage off reviews of other topics, including household and family relationships and persons temporarily absent. These are complex topics with a lot of detail derived from a small number of questions. Changes will be considered within the context of additional burden on respondents and operational complexity.



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status	Retain existing topic without change.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Will discuss with key stakeholders to understand data needs and test with the community.

Prior to the submission process, the ABS sought advice from representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups on how to improve participation in the Census. In 2016, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people missed in the Census was considerably higher than for the rest of the population. Advice was received that participation may be improved if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people felt that the Census was more relevant to them, noting that this might be achieved by adding a question about cultural identity or amending existing questions to facilitate responses from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The concept of cultural identity was described as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group, or groups, a person identifies with or feels that they belong to. Examples of such groups were described as mob, clan, nation or language group. Early discussions have indicated that this may be a difficult topic to collect due to sensitivity, respondent understanding of the topic, and complexity if the respondent identifies with multiple groups. Further discussions with stakeholders including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will occur and the operational feasibility of collecting this information will be assessed.

Feedback also identified that revising response categories for existing Census topics to have more relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, could improve engagement and participation without adding questions to the Census. Suggestions included topics such as ancestry and main language other than English spoken at home.

The ABS will continue to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory groups and representatives during the testing phase, and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are involved throughout the process.

## INCOME AND WORK

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Income and work](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Income	Retain existing topics, with minor change to be tested.
Sources of income (NEW)	Limited case for new topic. Won't be further considered for collection in the Census; data integration options will be explored.
Labour force status	Retain existing topic without change.
Status in employment	Retain existing topic without change.
Hours worked	Retain existing topic without change.
Self-employed - Number of employees	Retain existing topic without change.
Occupation	Retain existing topic without change.
Main tasks in occupation	Retain existing topic without change.
Industry of employment	Retain existing topic without change.

### INCOME

Submissions confirmed the value of this topic and the need to maintain the level of detail provided through the Census. The question currently includes response options as ranges with equivalent amounts of weekly and annual income. Suggestions for change included expanding the number of response options, increasing the upper level, and collecting income against each source.

While there is strong interest in maintaining the current question, further testing and research will be undertaken to investigate options for respondents to enter their actual income rather than select from a range.

There will be no further investigation into adding a new topic on sources of income to the 2021 Census, but this information might be available through data integration work (i.e. securely combining information from more than one source) or existing comprehensive income surveys such as the Survey of Income and Housing. Internationally, a number of comparable countries are either exploring or now making use of integrated administrative data sources to address the needs around income and sources of income. The ABS is investigating the quality of additional income variables such as main source of income and previous financial year income with the possibility of adding these as experimental items to the 2016 Census.

### WORK

The work topic encompasses a number of questions on the Census form and produces a range of data outputs, including industry of employment, occupation, hours worked and status in employment.

Knowing how many people in small areas work in different jobs and industries provides information on skill shortages and training needs. Consultation has confirmed that the work data from the Census is vital information and should continue to be collected.

Some submissions identified the need for a better understanding of people with secondary or multiple jobs, distinguishing between casual and permanent employment, and better indicators of underemployment or long-term unemployment. Many of these topics are too complex to measure accurately on the Census. These data needs are better met through other sources such as labour force surveys and the linked employee-employer database (LEED).

New approaches to coding industry and occupation data are being considered. These aim to improve the accuracy of information about a person's occupation and industry of work with minor impact on the comparability of this information over time. The ABS will provide advice about these impacts to support interpretation.

Submissions suggested a review of the occupation classification (ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations). The ABS recognises that this is desirable, however, as co-owners, the ABS and Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ) have decided not to undertake this review in the short term. ABS and Stats NZ will reconsider this position in coming years. This

classification is used in several surveys beyond the Census, so any review would need to consider the impact on a range of surveys and statistics programs. The suggestions have been captured and will be taken into consideration when the classification is next reviewed.

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## UNPAID WORK AND CARE

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Unpaid work and care](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Unpaid work - domestic activities	Retain existing topic without change.
Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested (see Disability and carers theme).
Unpaid care of children	Retain existing topic without change.
Unpaid work - voluntary work for an organisation or group	Retain existing topic without change.

Submissions noted that the topics under this theme provide a rich picture of the contributions Australians make to society outside of the paid work environment. Continuing the inclusion of the unpaid work and unpaid care topics in the Census was well supported.

### UNPAID CARE OF CHILDREN

Suggestions for improvements to the questions on unpaid care of children included asking about the number of hours spent caring for children and recognising the contribution of grandparents in providing unpaid child care.

### UNPAID WORK - VOLUNTARY WORK

There were also suggestions to expand the detail captured to distinguish between formal and informal volunteering, hours spent, and type and frequency of volunteering. Capturing this level of detail is complex and will not be further explored for the Census. However, this information is available through the ABS General Social Survey.

### UNPAID WORK - DOMESTIC ACTIVITIES

Some submissions noted that information on unpaid domestic activities was less important and could be removed from the Census.

The ABS recommends keeping all four topics on the Census due to the economic, social and cultural value of these items, and the collective picture they paint. No changes are proposed to unpaid care of children, unpaid work - voluntary activity, unpaid work - domestic activities.

Amendments to data collection regarding unpaid carers are proposed under the Disability and carers theme.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Education and training](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Attendance at an educational institution	Retain existing topic, with minor change to response categories to be tested.
Highest year of schooling	Retain existing topic without change.
Highest non-school qualifications	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested (includes collection of the year the qualification was completed).
Journey to education (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic (see Transport theme).

Feedback from stakeholders confirms that education and training topics should continue on the Census. Measures of participation in education and training enhances understanding of different population groups and helps governments and businesses make decisions like planning the size and location of educational institutions.

### ATTENDANCE AT AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Submissions indicated that there are concerns with respondents' understanding of the 'attendance at an educational institution' question, particularly with those attending preschool or participating in vocational education and training. The wording of these response categories will be reviewed to ensure that the data collected meets the needs of users.

Testing will also explore improving identifying people who do not attend an institution in person, for example undertaking distance education or home schooling.

### HIGHEST NON-SCHOOL QUALIFICATION

Submissions noted that the data from this topic is coded using the [Australian Standard Classification of Education 2001](#). There were significant changes in classifying qualifications after 1998, resulting in a current question asking if the highest non-school qualification was obtained prior to 1998.

Submissions identified an opportunity to enhance this topic by asking the respondent to record the year the qualification was obtained. With this amendment, the ABS would be able to identify the age of qualifications.

The ABS will test the value and quality of data resulting from this change, noting that it may be more difficult for some respondents to recall the year of completing their qualifications when compared to ticking a box about completing the qualification prior to 1998.

## DISABILITY AND CARERS

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Disability and carers](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Need for assistance	Retain existing topic, with major change to be tested. Testing and review will focus on exploring more outputs on reasons for needing assistance, and the use of aids or equipment for assistance.
Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested. Question testing will focus on asking this topic of all people, to allow identification of care being given by younger carers.
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation (NEV)	Limited case for new topic. Will not be further explored.

Census topics on the need for assistance or care provide data on the needs of some of the most vulnerable populations across Australia. The consultation feedback supported this topic, but recognised that there are enhancements to the existing questions and output that could better identify the needs of people with disability and their carers.

### NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

The Census currently has four questions on the need for assistance which are used to derive a single measure of people living with a core need for assistance. Submissions supported expanding the outputs to show the activities for which assistance is needed (i.e. self-care, body movement and communication).

Submissions also focused on the need for data on people who need assistance with core activities from an aid and/or equipment, rather than a person.

Feedback from stakeholders has confirmed that the current measure of a core need for assistance is still important. Both new concepts will be taken forward for further testing, while recognising the importance of maintaining the time series for the current topic.

### UNPAID CARE, HELP OR ASSISTANCE OF ANOTHER PERSON DUE TO DISABILITY, LONG TERM ILLNESS OR OLD AGE

Some submissions noted that children (carers less than 15 years old) often provide care, help or assistance to another person but are excluded from providing this data on the Census due to the age cut off applied in the Census.

The ABS will test changing the sequencing or flow of the questions to remove the age restriction from this question, including whether there is an impact on other data collected.

### NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) PARTICIPATION

Some submissions suggested adding a question about whether the person is receiving support through the NDIS to provide information on the sections of the population using and not using the scheme. Many felt it was important to understand the circumstances of participants who access NDIS to help with planning of services and delivery related to the scheme.

Based on the potential availability of this data from administrative sources that can be linked with Census data, the ABS assessed this was not a priority topic for collection in the 2021 Census.

## HOUSING

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Housing](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Number of bedrooms	Retain existing topic without change.
Type of tenure (including ownership and rental)	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested regarding affordable housing and social housing.
Landlord type for rented dwellings	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested regarding affordable rentals and renting of community or social housing.
Housing costs	Retain existing topic without change.
Other private dwelling information (including structure, type, location and residential status)	Retain existing topic without change.
Other non-private dwelling information (including name, address, type, number of persons resident and their residential status)	Retain existing topic without change.
Measures of homelessness	Minor change to be tested to content to improve estimates of homelessness.
Internet access	Remove existing topic. Limited case for additional topics regarding internet use and access. Will not be further explored.

The consultation process confirmed that housing topics remain important to be collected in the Census. Submissions offered suggestions to amend questions to develop a better understanding of home ownership such as changes in tenure, length of time at current dwelling and future intentions for housing. Many of these topics were considered too complex to explore in detail in the Census. However, minor changes to topics on social housing, affordable housing support and measures of homelessness will be explored further.

### TENURE AND LANDLORD TYPE

Submissions supported a need to measure the number and growth of housing purchased under affordable housing schemes or rented through affordable rental programs. There were also suggestions to improve the accuracy of information on the prevalence of different types of social housing (i.e. public and community housing). These suggestions will be reviewed regarding broader housing standards, and the existing questions on tenure and landlord type will be tested to determine what additional detail may be possible to collect through the Census.

### MEASURES OF HOMELESSNESS

While homelessness itself is not a characteristic that is directly collected in the Census, estimates of the homeless population may be derived from the Census using analytical techniques based on both the characteristics observed in the Census and assumptions about the way people respond to Census questions. Key stakeholders provided feedback that they would like to see improvement in capture of 'couch surfing' (staying temporarily in other households without a usual residence), family homelessness, and transitions to and from homelessness. Stakeholders also noted requirements to better understand homelessness for vulnerable population groups like Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and/or Intersex (LGBTI) individuals and veterans.

Each of these data needs will require consideration against a range of current topics (including tenure/landlord type, usual address, address one and five years ago) and potential new topics (including gender identity, sexual orientation and Australian Defence Force service). Where these topics are being reviewed, they will be done in consultation with stakeholders and with consideration of these additional data needs.

### INTERNET ACCESS

The current Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions suggested that with the growth in internet access on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access has less relevance.

A number of suggestions were made to replace this topic with another individual internet access and use-based question, including measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy. While these topics are considered important in understanding the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population, they are considered too complex to be collected in the Census.

It is unlikely that ABS will recommend to Government that this topic remain on the 2021 Census.

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## LOCATION

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Location](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Address on Census night	Retain existing topic without change.
Usual residence at Census time	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested to provide clearer guidance for temporary visitors without a usual address.
Internal migration - 1 year (address one year ago)	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested as per usual residence.
Internal migration - 5 year (address five years ago)	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested as per usual residence.
Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling (NEW)	Limited case for new topic. Will not be further explored.
Address of workplace attended	Retain existing topic without change (see Transport theme).

## USUAL RESIDENCE AND INTERNAL MIGRATION

Questions about usual residence and past residences are critical for population estimates and projections. To acknowledge circumstances where an individual may not have a usual address currently (or one and five years ago), instructions are provided asking them to write 'none' rather than an address. Responses to these questions are valuable for deriving estimates of 'couch surfing' (those people staying temporarily in other households without a usual residence).

Stakeholders interested in data on homelessness requested improvements in the identification of couch surfing by enabling respondents to select the option of 'no usual address'. As questions on addresses are critical for population data, changes will only be considered with a view of the potential impact on quality of population estimates. Options to improve estimates of couch surfing will be explored, including improved guidance on the Census form relating to these topics. Any options will be further discussed with stakeholders.

## SECOND RESIDENCE AND/OR OWNERSHIP OF OTHER DWELLING

Some submissions indicated that information on second residence would be helpful in planning with particular relevance for:

- Coastal towns, towns at or near resource industry activity, and rural and remote areas where population numbers are small, and part time or seasonal residents may impact housing affordability and infrastructure needs.
- Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where short term mobility impacts on service provision and access.

This topic was extensively researched and tested in the lead up to the 2016 Census, and found to be difficult for respondents to understand. The topic also introduced cost and complexity in processing additional addresses. Initial assessment has determined that these challenges still exist and that it would be very difficult to collect data of sufficient quality. Therefore, this topic is not considered suitable for collection in the 2021 Census.

Related to the use of second residences, questions were also raised around understanding complex family structures including children in shared custody arrangements. This topic is addressed in more detail under the Households and families theme.

## TRANSPORT

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Transport](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Mode of travel to work	Retain existing topic without change.
Name and address of workplace attended	Retain existing topic without change.
Mode of travel to educational institution (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Questions will be developed for testing and operational feasibility assessed.
Name and address of educational institution (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Questions will be developed for testing and operational feasibility assessed.
Number of motor vehicles garaged	Remove existing topic.

Information about where people work and how they get to work helps inform policy and planning of road infrastructure and public transport. Submissions supported the importance of transport topics, with these topics receiving strong interest through the process.

Ideas included expanding the reasons for travel beyond work, reporting the time to travel to work, and adding or enhancing the modes of travel, with specific interest in recording the use of motor cycles as a mode of travel. The Census topic currently collects the use of motorcycles and motor scooters as an option for travel to work. However, as the proportion of people selecting this category is relatively low, it is not always displayed in published Census output tables and graphics.

Some submissions identified the limitation of the 'walked only' transport category and suggested that people may walk in combination with other modes of transport and they should be able to report this. This has been previously tested but it is difficult to clearly distinguish between a significant walk and shorter walks (e.g. from a car park to public transport). The current question and 'walked only' category focuses on instances where walking is the primary method of travel and will be retained.

### MODE OF TRAVEL TO EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AND NAME AND ADDRESS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Some submissions suggested including journey to education (combining mode of travel and name and address of institution) to complement the data collected for journey to work. It was noted that travel for education makes up a significant portion of the reasons for travel during peak hours and combined with journey to work data would provide an improved understanding of traffic flows and transport patterns in towns and cities. Details of the educational institution attended for students would also provide information to improve the quality of data collected on the type of educational institution attended.

Early investigations raised concerns about the burden on respondents to recall another address (educational institution). Journey to education may also generate complex responses for tertiary students with irregular study schedules, and parents dropping off school students on multi destination journeys.

Processing data for journey to work is complex. Introducing new topics for journey to education may add significant cost, which needs to be understood and assessed.

Testing will seek to explore options for the collection of this topic, the potential for impact on the current journey to work topic, and the potential costs incurred to collect, process and present data on this topic.

### NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLES GARAGED

Previous discussions over the past two Census cycles have noted the declining requirement for data on the number of motor vehicles garaged, given that administrative data sources may provide this information.

Some submissions supported retaining this topic and expanding it to include motor cycles. However,

administrative data, including state and territory vehicle registrations by location, have been assessed as appropriate alternatives to collecting this data through the Census. It is unlikely that ABS will recommend to Government that this topic remain on the 2021 Census.

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## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Cultural diversity, Religion](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Australian citizenship	Retain existing topic without change.
Country of birth	Retain existing topic without change.
Year of arrival in Australia	Retain existing topic without change.
Country of birth of parents	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested (review for gender neutral language).
Main language other than English spoken at home	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested regarding the capture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (also see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples theme).
Other languages spoken (NEW)	Limited case for new topic. Will not be further explored.
Proficiency in spoken English	Retain existing topic without change.
Ancestry	Retain existing topic, with minor change to be tested regarding the capture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry (also see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples theme).
Religious affiliation	Retain existing topic without change.

Submissions indicated that cultural diversity remains a relevant and important topic. Specifically, submissions supported most cultural diversity topics on the Census to remain without change but noted opportunities for minor changes on some topics to better understand new and emerging priorities.

### COUNTRY OF BIRTH OF PARENTS

Some submissions requested removal of 'mother' or 'father' from the country of birth of parents question to be more inclusive of non-traditional family structures.

Feedback from key stakeholders indicated there is a data need for the collection of gender (mother and father). The ABS will test options to provide more guidance through instructions to accommodate non-traditional family structures, while still identifying the gender of parents in questions where required.

### MAIN LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH SPOKEN AT HOME

Representatives of the deaf community have suggested the wording of this question needs to be updated to reflect that people who communicate in sign language *use* rather than *speak* that language. Testing of the impact of wording changes will occur.

As noted under the theme of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, there will be further review and testing of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are captured and whether there are ways to encourage more detailed responses for this topic.

Some submissions suggested expanding the concept of the current 'main language other than English spoken at home' to capture other languages used and proficiency in all languages. A core use of the current topic is to identify needs for translation services, language assistance and English language programs for individuals without proficiency in English. While other language proficiency would provide valuable information on the diversity in Australia, it has not been assessed as a priority over the current 'main language other than English spoken at home'.

### ANCESTRY

Some submissions suggested that taking a different approach to the collection of data on ethnicity would be a better indicator of cultural inclusion and participation than ancestry. There were also a number of suggestions indicating that the ABS should collect information on 'race'. The importance of the existing ancestry topic was emphasised by data users, and it is unlikely that any change to this concept will occur in the 2021 Census.

Submissions however noted a need to improve the question on ancestry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The ABS will consult and investigate changes to this question to improve the relevance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION**

The current Census question collects information on religious affiliation rather than religious involvement.

Some submissions suggested that a question on religious involvement would give a better picture of how actively people participate in their religious activities. However, collecting information on religious affiliation is consistent with international Census practice and is better aligned with planning for services delivered by religious organisations such as education, health and aged care. The ABS will continue to collect information on religious affiliation in the Census.

Some submissions challenged the way in which the religious groups or denominations are presented in the question and commented on the structure of the [standard classification of religious groups](#).

The order of the response options will be reviewed in the lead up to the 2021 Census based on analysis of the 2016 data. Feedback on the standard and the associated classification will be considered as part of an upcoming review.

CONFIDENTIAL

## HEALTH

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Other topics](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Chronic health conditions (NEW)	Strong case for new topic. Will discuss with key stakeholders to confirm concepts and health conditions to be included and test performance of questions through cognitive testing.
Smoking status (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Will discuss with key stakeholders to confirm concepts to be included. Questions will be tested.
Other health related topics (NEW)	No further action. No strong case presented and/or data can be obtained through current national health surveys.

Currently, there are no questions regarding health asked in the Census, but for some years health topics have been of interest to stakeholders.

### CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS

There was strong support through consultations and from submissions outlining a need for data on the health status of Australians, with particular interest in being able to analyse data on chronic health conditions against geographic and socio-economic variables.

Stakeholders supported the inclusion of a new chronic health conditions topic (this term was used interchangeably with 'long term health conditions'). Further engagement with stakeholders and testing will refine data needs and identify the health conditions that could be included in a Census question.

### SMOKING STATUS

Some submissions presented a case for collecting data on the smoking status of individuals, noting that smoking continues to be one of the biggest risk factors contributing to ill health in Australia, and the proportion of smokers is significantly higher in some population cohorts.

Further testing will explore options to collect data on current and previous smoking behaviours. This will include testing questions similar to those used in the New Zealand Census and from the ABS' National Health Survey, which has a comprehensive module on smoking behaviours.

While there was interest in both health topics (chronic health conditions and smoking status), many submissions gave higher priority to including a chronic health conditions topic over a topic on smoking status. Stakeholders noted the greater value that a chronic health conditions topic would provide for service planning. This preference will be a factor in determining the recommendations for the final list of Census topics.

### OTHER HEALTH RELATED TOPICS

Other submissions proposed that data be collected on a number of health related topics and indicators including: weight; body mass index; amount of physical activity; nutrition; allergies; access to and use of health services; veganism; and swimming ability. These suggestions were not supported by strong evidence in the submissions, and often relevant information is collected through a number of ABS health surveys. These suggestions will not be explored further for inclusion in the 2021 Census.

## OTHER TOPICS

Further information from the public consultation phase can be found here: [Other topics](#)

Topics	Proposed actions
Australian Defence Force service (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Will discuss with key stakeholders to confirm concepts to be included and questions to be tested.
Sexual orientation (NEW)	Moderate case for new topic. Further discussion and testing will be undertaken to explore the suitability of collecting this topic in the Census.

### AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE SERVICE

Some submissions indicated a need for data on people who have served, or are currently serving, in the Australian Defence Force, including Reserves.

While records exist for current service, they are not maintained for previous service, and limited historical data is available. A question on current or past Australian Defence Force service has been included in several ABS health surveys. Collecting the data in the Census would allow stakeholders to more accurately estimate numbers of people who have served and to learn more about the veteran population based on age, sex, geographic distribution, and employment status.

Submissions identified veterans as a vulnerable group with potential to experience homelessness and to have specific health and disability needs. This topic would provide information to enable better delivery of services and support for veterans.

The ABS will continue to explore this topic through testing, engagement with key stakeholders and reference to international best practice.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

A range of submissions noted the lack of information available on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and/or Intersex (LGBTI) individuals in Australia. Please note that LGBTI is respectfully being used as an umbrella term to refer collectively to a wider range of people than just those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex. The use of this acronym is not intended to exclude people that may not be specifically represented by these or other terms.

It was noted in submissions that LGBTI individuals are diverse based on sexual orientation, gender identity and variations in sex characteristics. The review of options for collecting sex and/or gender identity (see the Population theme) has potential to provide some data on LGBTI individuals, depending on how collection is approached. To provide a more complete picture of the LGBTI communities in Australia, submissions suggested collecting data on sexual orientation as well.

By gathering statistics on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, government and non-government organisations would be able to plan, legislate and provide resources to support LGBTI people. Submissions noted that there is a need to effectively evaluate national programs such as the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan and the Aged Care Diversity Framework, which include the LGBTI communities as vulnerable priority groups for action.

The ABS recognises the sensitivity of the topic and concerns regarding the quality of the data that would be obtained, including where individuals respond on behalf of others in their household.

The ABS will engage with stakeholders on this topic. Concepts will be discussed at focus groups and questions tested to understand the potential opportunities and risks in collecting this data. Information from testing, advice from stakeholders and guidance from other national statistical agencies will be considered to determine suitability for the 2021 Census.

S22



Basics

Secretariat WDB

08/11/2018 02:09 PM

Sent by [redacted]

<b>Send</b>	To ATDLO@treasury.gov.au Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]@treasury.gov.au, cc [redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU, [redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU, Samantha Palmer/Staff/ABS@ABS, David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa bcc [redacted]/Staff/ABS
<b>Subject</b>	ABS Minute MB18-000121 Publication of the Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021 [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	For-Official-Use-Only
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance

Good afternoon

**For information**

Please bring the attached minute to the attention of the Assistant Treasurer, the Treasurer and the Secretary to the Treasury. It provides a copy of the publication *Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021* (cat.no.2007.0.55.001) being released on 14 November 2018.



ABS Minute MB18-000121 Publication of the Census of Population and Housing- Topic Directions 2021.pdf

Thanks

[redacted]

Ministerial Liaison Officer

Parliamentary and Partnerships Section

Australian Bureau of Statistics




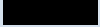
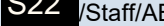
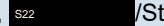

(P) S22 [REDACTED]

(E) S22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

07/11/2018 05:52 PM

<b>Send</b>	To  /Staff/ABS@ABS cc  /Staff/ABS@ABS,  /Staff/ABS@ABS,   /Staff/ABS@ABS,  /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Fw: FOR SIGNATURE: Minister's brief with copy of Census content directions pub 
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance

Hi 

As per Teresa's email below, I have incorporated the changes. Here is a clean version for Teresa's electronic signature.

I can arrange to have this lodged through PDMS once you have added the signature.

Thanks,  
Justine



MB\_Brief re copy of Census content directions publication.docx



Att\_A Census of Population and Housing\_Topical Directions, 2021 publication.pdf

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 07/11/2018 05:42 PM -----

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 07/11/2018 05:33 PM  
Subject: Re: FOR SIGNATURE: Minister's brief with copy of Census content directions pub

Hi Justine

With the additions in the version below this is cleared - with thanks.

Teresa

[attachment "DRAFT MB\_Copy of Publication 2 TD comments.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

**Teresa Dickinson**

---

*Deputy Australian Statistician*

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[attachment "SSA\_2023.png" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

Justine Boland

Teresa, Chris spotted a typo in the earlier versi...

07/11/2018 05:14:43 PM

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS  
To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 07/11/2018 05:14 PM  
Subject: Re: FOR SIGNATURE: Minister's brief with copy of Census content directions pub

Teresa, Chris spotted a typo in the earlier version and reworded the opening slightly. Newer version attached.

Justine

[attachment "DRAFT MB\_Copy of Publication 2.docx" deleted by Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS]

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

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Justine Boland

Hi Teresa, As discussed, the proposed brief to t...

07/11/2018 03:41:24 PM



**2021 Census Program, including work on Census content and major procurement,  
Program testing, Valuing the Census and ABS response to NZ Census review**

**Key speaking points**

# S22

3. Content recommendations have been submitted to the Minister, and included proposed new and changed topics.

# S22

**Census Division**

**DAS responsible:** Teresa Dickinson  
**Telephone:** 02 6252 5590

**Other contact:** Chris Libreri  
**Telephone:** [REDACTED]

# S22

**Census Division**

**DAS responsible:** Teresa Dickinson  
**Telephone:** 02 6252 5590

**Other contact:** Chris Libreri  
**Telephone:** [REDACTED]  
**Page 2 of 2**

## 2021 Census Topics and decision process

### Key speaking points

- 1 An extensive consultation and a public submission process has been undertaken on potential topics to be included in the 2021 Census. The Government will ensure that the information collected in the next Census reflects Australia's priority information needs, while also being mindful of the burden on the community to complete the Census.
- 2 The Government will decide on the topics for the 2021 Census and will issue a Census regulation, with the list of topics. This is expected to be tabled in Parliament in early 2020.
- 3 Field testing of some questions which may be included in the 2021 Census is currently underway in the areas of Wagga Wagga and surrounds and south of Brisbane. The test Census forms include new questions on chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force, as well as some changes to existing questions on ancestry, language and education.

### Background information

- 4 The ABS has engaged in extensive community consultation, has received hundreds of submissions, and undertaken some statistical testing of possible Census topics.
- 5 There is a limit to the number and type of questions that can be reasonably asked through a Census, due to the burden on respondents, the space limitations of a paper form, and the cost of collecting and analysing the information collected. While a number of new topics would be of value, it is not feasible to add them all to the 2021 Census.
- 6 Determining which topics should be asked in a Census requires choices between competing alternatives, while also being mindful of the overall burden placed on the community to complete such a comprehensive Census as we have in Australia.

### Additional information

- 7 The Census provides a contemporary picture of Australian society every five years. As the Census is collected from the entire population in Australia, it is a critical source of information on the population, allowing for an understanding of small areas and small groups in ways that surveys do not provide. The total number of topics and range of subjects has changed over time, and Australia has one of the longest and most comprehensive Census collections.

Census Division

**DAS responsible:** Teresa Dickinson

**Telephone:** 02 6252 5590

**Other** Chris Libreri

**contact:**

**Telephone:** S22



8 There has been no change in the list of topics for both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census, meaning topics have not changed since the 2006 Census. The ABS has recommended changes that aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with considerations of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. There is a strong case to maintain a large number of questions from past Censuses to produce reliable trends over time.

9 Last year the ABS released a short-list of eight topics that were being tested for inclusion:

- Chronic health conditions
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- Current or previous service with the Australian Defence Force
- Smoking status
- Non-binary sex and/or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- More contemporary measures of household and family relationships including shared care of children.

Census Division

**DAS responsible:** Teresa Dickinson

**Telephone:** 02 6252 5590

**Other** Chris Libreri

**contact:**

**Telephone:** S22

Basics

Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS

01/10/2019 01:44 PM

<b>Send</b>	To <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS cc Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Re: CHRIS FOR APPROVAL > Senate Estimate Briefs
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <span style="float: right;"><b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/></span>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance

Approved and thanks!

**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**(P) (02) 6252 5234 (M) S22 (F) (02) 6252 0000**

**(E) [chris.libreri@abs.gov.au](mailto:chris.libreri@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)**

**Executive Assistant:** S22

(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au

S22

Hi Chris See below two senate estimate briefs r...

01/10/2019 01:22:29 PM


From: S22/Staff/ABS  
 To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Cc: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS  
 Date: 01/10/2019 01:22 PM  
 Subject: CHRIS FOR APPROVAL > Senate Estimate Briefs

Hi Chris

See below two senate estimate briefs requiring your clearance. [REDACTED]

S22 [REDACTED]

Huge thanks for PMO and [REDACTED] for drafting under short notice.

Brief title	Status	Brief #	Attachment
S22			
2021 Census Topics and decision process	New content created.	SB19-000056	 SB19-000056.docx

[REDACTED]  
S22

*Assistant Director, 2021 Census Branch*

Census of Population and Housing | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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(E) [REDACTED] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Teresa Dickinson 21/08/2019 04:06 PM

Basics

Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS

21/08/2019 02:34 PM

<b>Send</b>	<b>To</b> S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS <b>cc</b> Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, <b>bcc</b>
<b>Subject</b>	Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations

David - For discussion when you've had a moment to absorb. I want you to be comfortable with the proposed answers.

S22 - for alerting David that this is waiting for him, noting that Mike Xanthis wants me to ring him about this when convenient

S22 - many thanks for the quick turnaround

T

---

**From:** S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>

**Date:** 21 August 2019 at 1:59:15 pm ACST

**To:** Teresa Dickinson <teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au>

**Cc:** Bindi Kindermann <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>, Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, Lane Masterton <lane.masterton@abs.gov.au>, S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>, Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>, Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>, Secretariat WDB

<secretariat@abs.gov.au>

**Subject:** Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics

Hi Teresa,

Thanks for the quick response and the explanation of the capitals! Here is the suggested response to go to David for his review before we get back to the MO. We are aiming for COB today, but could potentially stretch that out to early tomorrow if required. Instead of marking up the original text, I've drafted a clean copy here and deleted all but the initial correspondence to make it easier for David to review.



# S22

- If you could also clarify why the wording of recommendations 2 and 3 is different to the wording of recommendation 4 (in MB19-000039)

The wording of recommendation 4 is intended to directly seek the Minister's advice on the inclusion of 4.a gender identity and 4.b sexual orientation because the case for inclusion of these topics is not as clear as those in recommendation 2. From a data perspective, the consultation identified a need for information on gender identity and sexual orientation, however there are a range of considerations around these topics, which are outlined in the attachment to minute MB19-00039. The Minister's guidance is sought because of the heightened community sensitivity to these topics and the risk of adverse reactions from some parts of the community, which ABS believes are likely to result whether or not these topics are included.

cheers,

S22

S22

*Director - 2021 Census Content Review*

Population and Social Statistics Division | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(P) [REDACTED] (M) [REDACTED]

(E) [REDACTED] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)

[The ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS will handle any personal information that you provide to us.

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>  
To: "Nick Stathis" <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>  
Cc: "Xanthis, Michael" <Michael.Xanthis@TREASURY.GOV.AU>, "Secretariat WDB" <secretariat@abs.gov.au>  
Date: 20/08/2019 05:34 PM  
Subject: FW: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Nick,

As discussed, some further questions about the ABS Minute on Census topics, appreciate a response as soon as practicable so the brief can be signed as soon as possible.

S22

- If you could also clarify why the wording of recommendations 2 and 3 is different to the wording of recommendation 4 (in MB19-000039)

Thank you again for your assistance

[REDACTED]

**From:** Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 7 August 2019 8:56 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>  
**Cc:** Secretariat WDB <secretariat@abs.gov.au>; [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** RE: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi [REDACTED],

further to our discussion yesterday about para 9 in the Census Topics brief.

The Attorney General's guidelines were updated in November 2015 with an expectation that Australian Government Departments would progressively align their business practices from July 2016. The development cycle for the Census is very long and there was limited opportunity to fully develop, test and then implement the addition of a non-binary option to the sex question in August 2016. Given this constraint and the criticality of the sex variable in estimating the population, special procedures were introduced in the 2016 Census to allow people to respond as other than male or female but the option wasn't available on the mainstream forms.

- A special online form was developed that contained three response options (male, female and other - please specify). This was available on an opt in basis by contacting the Census Inquiry Service. This procedure was implemented because of uncertainty about how the general public would respond with an explicit 'other' option.
- The Census paper forms were printed before procedures were finalised and the paper form contained only male and female response options.

'How to Answer' instructions were developed which were available on the ABS website and distributed as a fact sheet through stakeholders. People wanting to respond as other than male or female on paper were instructed to leave both boxes unmarked and write a response alongside these boxes.

By providing these procedures, the ABS enabled inclusion in the Census of people who wanted to respond as other than male or female. However this required knowledge among respondents that procedures existed and an extra step to participate online. It was not expected that the approach would produce an accurate count of sex and/or gender diverse people in Australia, but was introduced as an important step on a journey to collect these statistics. A pilot test was also conducted during the 2016 Census to test responses among the wider population.

The findings from the 2016 Census have greatly informed our approach to the 2021 Census and we have undertaken significantly more testing and worked closely with stakeholders to develop questions which we'll include in the upcoming field test.

Here is a summary of the 2016 approach in a special article that was published on sex and gender diversity in the 2016 Census ([catalogue 2071.0](#)).

If you have any further questions about this please contact [redacted] our Director of Census Content and Review on [redacted], [redacted] or [redacted] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@abs.gov.au)

Nick

**Nick Stathis**

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

P: (02) 6252 6546 M: [redacted] [nick.stathis@abs.gov.au](mailto:nick.stathis@abs.gov.au)

W [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) F: [@absstats](https://twitter.com/absstats) T: [@ABSStats](https://twitter.com/ABSStats)

[redacted] ---06/08/2019 03:49:20  
PM---\*\*\*\*\*

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>  
To: "Nick Stathis" <[nick.stathis@abs.gov.au](mailto:nick.stathis@abs.gov.au)>  
Date: 06/08/2019 03:49 PM  
Subject: RE: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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

Hi Nick,

I had a quick question about the brief – if you could call me back when convenient – not urgent.

Thank you

S47F

**From:** Nick Stathis <[nick.stathis@abs.gov.au](mailto:nick.stathis@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 5 August 2019 5:24 PM  
**To:** S47F <S47F> <[S47F@TREASURY.GOV.AU](mailto:S47F@TREASURY.GOV.AU)>  
**Cc:** MHAT DLO <[ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU](mailto:ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU)>; 'secretariat@abs.gov.au' <[secretariat@abs.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** Re: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi S47F, we are pulling together a timetable so next steps and dates are clear. We aim to get this to you tomorrow.  
Nick

**Nick Stathis**

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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S47F ---05/08/2019 01:53:50  
PM---\*\*\*\*\*

**From:** S47F <S47F> <[S47F@TREASURY.GOV.AU](mailto:S47F@TREASURY.GOV.AU)>  
**To:** "Nick Stathis" <[nick.stathis@abs.gov.au](mailto:nick.stathis@abs.gov.au)>  
**Cc:** "MHAT DLO" <[ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU](mailto:ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU)>, "secretariat@abs.gov.au" <[secretariat@abs.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@abs.gov.au)>  
**Date:** 05/08/2019 01:53 PM  
**Subject:** ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

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Hi Nick,

Thanks for re-sending the brief – what is the date you need this actioned by?

Thanks

S47F

S47F

Departmental Liaison Officer  
Office of the Hon Michael Sukkar MP  
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600  
P: +61 S47F  
M: +61 S47F



**From:** Nick Stathis <[nick.stathis@abs.gov.au](mailto:nick.stathis@abs.gov.au)>  
**Sent:** Monday, 5 August 2019 11:50 AM  
**To:** MHAT DLO <[ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU](mailto:ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU)>  
**Cc:** Secretariat WDB <[secretariat@abs.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@abs.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** ██████████, here is the brief as discussed.... [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

*(See attached file: ABS Minute MB19-00039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics.pdf)*  
Nick

**Nick Stathis**

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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[attachment "ABS Minute MB19-00039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics.pdf" deleted by Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS]

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**Minutes: SES workshop on Census content assessment findings and to shape preliminary recommendations (Response to: SES workshop Census content assessment findings and shape preliminary recommendation (strawman workshop) [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only])**  
2021 Census Content Development WDB S22 25/02/2019 01:02 PM

Basics

<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>		
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege	<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy
	<b>Caveat</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> NATIO

**SES workshop on Census content assessment findings and to shape preliminary recommendations**

18th February 2019

**Attendees:**

Teresa Dickinson, Paul Jelfs, Sam Palmer, Siu-Ming Tam, Chris Libreri, Justine Boland, Bindi Kindermann, S22, S22, S22

**Slides**




- SES Workshop - 2021 Census topic Investigations.xps

**Supporting paper**



DRAFT V1.2 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations version sent to SES.docx

Circulated via email here:  (Subject: Paper for Monday's meeting [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: Justine Boland; Created: 25/02/2019; Doc Ref: DCOO-B9Q43R)

**General**

- Noted that the paper needed a section up front about the combined picture for new topic recommendations.
- It was noted that the package of new topics in consideration are personal in nature and should be considered and assessed in terms of the overall impact on response.
- The new additions need to also be considered in reference to the perceptions of affordability of the total package of new content.

- Communications strategy should look for support and advocacy for the topic from key stakeholders who are willing to stand up publicly in support of the new topics.

# S22

# S22

## **Non-binary sex**

- General acceptance of change to this topic with acknowledgement and exploration of error risk through testing.
- There was also discussion about the need to be clear with stakeholders about how the non-binary categories will be processed and what they can expect to see available in the output data.

## **Gender identity and Sexual Orientation**

- General support for proceeding with the recommendation to add, although concerns were raised about the sensitivity of these questions and the need to test the impact on overall data quality.
- There was some discussion about the topics being voluntary, and exploring the potential for only including them in online forms.
- It was noted that these topics would need strong support from stakeholders on the need for data and the potential uses.

# S22

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

04/03/2019 01:23 PM

<b>Send</b>	<b>To</b> Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, <b>cc</b> Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Samantha Palmer/Staff/ABS@ABS, Siu-Ming Tam/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, <b>bcc</b>
<b>Subject</b>	Re: Notification: Minutes: SES workshop on Census content assessment findings and to shape preliminary recommendations [redacted]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations

Thanks Bindi

I was wondering whether it is worth splitting these two topics into two; ie. separate out gender identity from sexual orientation to reflect differing comfort levels with them? I understood from our discussion that there was, to some extent, greater acceptance of gender identity than sexual orientation.

Given our current direction of including a sex question and on the paper form allowing for non-binary answers only via special procedures, there is an additional argument for the inclusion of an optional gender question. From my perspective, the inclusion of an optional gender question provides greater evidence of compliance with the Attorney General's guidelines, particularly if we don't have an overt approach to non-binary sex.

Justine

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Bindi Kindermann Hi [S22] and [S22] A good set of notes, with...

28/02/2019 07:02:08 PM

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
To: 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS  
Cc: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Samantha Palmer/Staff/ABS@ABS, Siu-Ming Tam/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 28/02/2019 07:02 PM  
Subject: Re: Notification: Minutes: SES workshop on Census content assessment findings and to shape preliminary recommendations

Hi [S22] and [S22]

A good set of notes, with one exception. Chris and I are suggesting the first part of the following sentence be deleted to more accurately reflect the nature of the discussion:

### Gender identity and Sexual Orientation

- ~~General support for proceeding with the recommendation to add,~~ although concerns were raised about the sensitivity of these questions and the need to test the impact on overall data quality.

Regards

Bindi

**Bindi Kindermann**

Program Manager, Census of Population and Housing  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
(P) (02) 6252 6512 (M) [S22]  
(E) [bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au](mailto:bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au) (W) [www.abs.gov.au/census](http://www.abs.gov.au/census)

Executive Assistant: [S22]  
(P) [S22] (E) [S22]@abs.gov.au

# S22

S22

Topic for decision	Implementation of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census
Stream Lead	S22 [REDACTED]
Purpose	<p>The decision proforma discusses options and challenges associated with collecting non-binary sex in the 2021 Census. It presents a series of recommendations for endorsement and decisions to be made. To inform these actions, evidence is presented throughout the implications section of this paper under the relevant headings.</p> <p>The SRO and Statistician will be asked to endorse recommendations that are public facing – online implementation, paper form implementation and wording in question, explanatory text and response categories (sections A, B and C).<sup>1</sup></p> <p>The GMs will decide on the operational matters of derivation and imputation (sections D and E).</p> <p>This decision pro-forma does not cover recommendations on output plans as these will be considered in the future as part of release planning.</p> <p><b>A. Wording in question, explanatory text and response categories</b></p> <p><u>Recommendation 1:</u></p> <p>Statistician to endorse the draft question wording, explanatory text and the change of the third response option on the sex question to ‘non-binary sex’.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>B. Online implementation</b></p> <p><u>Recommendation 2:</u></p> <p>Statistician to endorse the proposed online implementation of the sex question using a click through to the third response category.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><b>C. Paper form implementation</b></p> <p><u>Recommendation 3:</u></p> <p>Statistician to endorse the proposed paper form implementation of the sex question with three response categories.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agree <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>      Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>

---

<sup>1</sup> Key elements of the issues, assumptions and implications have been extracted from this decision proforma into a briefing paper for the SRO to discuss the recommendations with the Australian Statistician. The outcomes of this discussion will be reflected in this decision proforma for completeness.



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**You have indicated that Fiona identifies as non-binary. If you would like to, please provide more information below. Otherwise, select 'Prefer not to provide additional information', or select 'Previous' to change your response.**

Document 402 J

100 characters remaining.

Prefer not to provide additional information

Previous

Next





**Deputy Australian Statistician  
Census and Data Services Group**

**MB19-000049**

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP  
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

cc: The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Treasurer  
Philip Gaetjens, Secretary to the Treasury

**Government decision on 2021 Census topics – further information requested by Minister’s Office**

**For information**

1 This Minute provides additional information on the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ (ABS) recommendation to Government on Census topics detailed in MB19-000039. The information was requested during phone meetings between Teresa Dickinson (ABS) and Mike Xanthis (Minister’s Office) on Thursday 22 August and Friday 23 August.

# S22

3 The following documents are attached:

- A. S22
- B. Information previously provided to the Minister’s office on collecting non-binary sex.
- C. S47C

Teresa Dickinson

23 August 2019

The Australian Statistician has reviewed/been consulted on this Minute: Yes / No

**ABS contact:** Teresa Dickinson **p:** (02) 6252 5590 **e:** teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au



## **Attachment B – ABS Recommendations on the Collection of Non-Binary Sex Data in the 2021 Census**

**15 August 2019**

- 1 This brief provides information to the Minister’s Office on the recommended collection of sex with a non-binary response option in the 2021 Census. This supplements the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ recommendation to Government on Census topics detailed in MB19-000039.
- 2 In this minute, the ABS noted that the existing Census sex question would be modified to provide a non-binary option in addition to male and female. This was to enable compliance with the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender* (the Guidelines), established by the Attorney General’s Department and implemented progressively from July 2016.
- 3 The topic ‘sex’ is prescribed in the *Census and Statistics Regulation* and no change is required to collect it in a non-binary way. Unlike the addition of new topics or the removal of existing topics, this change does not require Government or Parliamentary approval.
- 4 However, there are a variety of approaches that could be adopted to collect information on Australians’ sex, and the Minister’s Office has requested ABS provide information on options.

### Background

- 5 The term ‘sex’ refers to a person’s biological characteristics. These characteristics could be male, female or another variation that means that neither the male nor the female categories apply. People with a variation in sex characteristics are sometimes referred to as intersex. The Guidelines require the ABS to provide an option for ‘any person who does not exclusively identify as either male or female’.
- 6 As part of the 2021 Census topic review program, there has been comprehensive development and testing of question options to collect sex in a way that is acceptable to both respondents who identify as non-binary and the broader population. Testing to date has shown that the questions perform well with the public, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There appears to be an increasing community expectation that forms provide three response categories. This testing has been qualitative and included about 150 participants.
- 7 The large-scale Census field test in October 2019 will include two versions of the non-binary sex question and will measure any impact on data quality of this approach. Community and respondent reaction will also be measured. See attachment A for question wording of the two versions being tested.
- 8 Discussions with stakeholders have emphasised that collecting non-binary sex on the Census is a journey that started with a set of special procedures in 2016 and may take a couple of cycles to produce reliable data. It is worth noting that there are many different perspectives among stakeholder groups on this topic and no easy solution.

9 In the international context, comparable National Statistical Organisations will not be including a non-binary option for sex in their next Censuses. Several are likely to include a question on gender identity to supplement the sex question.

#### 2016 Census approach

10 The Attorney General's guidelines were updated in November 2015 with an expectation that Australian Government Departments would progressively align their processes from July 2016.

11 The Census held in August 2016 introduced special procedures to allow people to respond as other than male or female but this wasn't available on the mainstream forms. A special online form was developed that contained three response options (male, female and other - please specify). This was available in an opt in basis by contacting the Census Inquiry Service. This procedure was implemented because there was insufficient time to test this option during development and therefore no understanding of how the public would respond to an explicit 'other' option.

12 The Census paper forms were printed before procedures were finalised and the paper form contained only male and female response options. 'How to Answer' instructions were developed which were available on the ABS website and distributed as a fact sheet through stakeholders. People wanting to respond as other than male or female on paper were instructed to leave both boxes unmarked and write a response alongside these boxes.

13 A pilot test was also conducted during the 2016 Census to test responses among the wider population. In this test 29,000 dwellings received the special online form with the three response options for the sex question. Analysis of the test results showed no real difference in response rate compared to the rest of the population and some reporting of the other option in error.

# S47C

S47C

## Appendix A: October 2019 Test Questions (Online Version)

### SAMPLE 1

#### What is <name's> sex?

Sex may be different from gender. A question on gender will be asked later in the form.

[+ More information](#)

- Male
- Female
- Variations in sex characteristics  
(also known as intersex)

**You have indicated that <name> has variations in sex characteristics, also known as intersex. If you would like to, please provide more information below. Otherwise, check the box and continue or select back to change your response.**

- Prefer not to provide additional information

### SAMPLE 2

#### Is <name>:

[+ More information](#)

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary

**You have indicated that <name> identifies as non-binary. If you would like to, please provide more information below. Otherwise, check the box and continue or select back to change your response.**

- Prefer not to provide additional information

# S47C



## Welcome to the Census Test 2019

The ABS is conducting a Census Test in the areas of Wagga Wagga and surrounds, and areas south of Brisbane. Some residents will receive a letter asking them to participate either online or via paper form. If you don't receive a letter, you won't need to participate in the Test.

If your household has been selected to complete online, you will receive instructions including an entry code to access the online form. Letters will be sent between 8-11 October.

We recommend using a **desktop, laptop or tablet device** and not a mobile phone to complete the online form. Click the button below to get started once you have your unique entry code.

Start your **Census Test** online 

We take your privacy very seriously. All information you provide in the Census Test is collected under the authority of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* and is protected under the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. The Census Test asks questions about health, education, cultural background, employment and living situation. The ABS is legally required to keep data secure and make sure it does not disclose identifiable information about a person or household. See the [ABS Privacy Policy](#) for more information.

See [About the Census Test 2019](#) for more information.

[Contact us if you need further assistance.](#)

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## About the Census Test 2019

The Census Test helps us to prepare for the next Census in 2021.

Before each Census, it's important to test how we will run the Census to ensure our processes work and that the Census form captures the right data, in the right way.

This test will focus on our operational processes, including how we manage Census field officers, deliver letters and forms, frame questions to ensure they are understood and answered, and better understand when and how people prefer to complete their Census Test form.

After the Census Test, we will evaluate our processes to ensure the 2021 Census is easier for people to participate, cheaper to run, and produces quality data. It's important to note the questions asked and the processes and systems used in the test are not necessarily what will be used for the 2021 Census.

[Where will the Census Test take place?](#)

[What do I need to do?](#)

[How do I identify an ABS field officer in my area?](#)

[How do I complete my online form?](#)

[What do I do if I lose my Census number or entry code to access the online form?](#)

[What do I do if I've lost my paper form?](#)

[I prefer to keep my information private. How do I request my own Census Test form?](#)

### Where will the Census Test take place?

The areas of Wagga Wagga and surrounds, New South Wales and areas south of Brisbane, specifically Logan and Scenic Rim in Queensland have been selected for the 2019 Census Test as these regions both represent characteristics of the national population.

From 7 October, residents in these areas may receive a letter, inviting them to participate in the Census Test. Some households will be invited to participate using our online form, and others will receive a paper form.

Not everyone in these areas will be invited to participate. If you don't receive a letter, don't worry, there's nothing you need to do.

### What do I need to do?

You may receive a letter with instructions on how to participate in the Census Test. Households invited to participate online will receive a unique Census number and entry code to access the online form. Households invited to complete a paper form will receive a form and reply paid envelope to return their completed Census paper form. Regardless of whether you complete online or on paper, you must include everybody who stayed in your house on Census Test night, Tuesday 15 October, including visitors and newborns.

If we don't receive your Census Test response, you may receive a reminder from us or a visit from a Census field officer to see if you need assistance.

Although the Census Test is voluntary, it is important that everyone who is invited to participates. This will ensure that it reflects a broad cross-section of the community.

### How do I identify an ABS field officer in my area?

All ABS field officers will carry identification and a bright yellow Census satchel at all times.

### How do I complete my online form?

The Census Test form works best on desktop, laptop or tablet devices, rather than mobile phones. We also recommend using Google Chrome or Internet Explorer to complete your form.

If your form times out, or closes unexpectedly, please call the Census Contact Centre on 1300 214 531 between 10am and 8pm (local time).

[Paper forms can be requested](#) for residents who don't have access to complete the Census Test online, or would simply prefer to complete a paper form.

### What do I do if I lose my Census number or entry code to access the online form?

Call the Census Contact Centre on 1300 214 531, between 10am and 8pm (local time) and we can provide you a new Census number and entry code to access the online form.

### What do I do if I've lost my paper form?

Call the Census Contact Centre on 1300 214 531, between 10am and 8pm (local time) and we will issue you a new one.

### I prefer to keep my information private. How do I request my own Census Test form?

If you would prefer to keep your information private from others in your household you can request your own Census Test form.

If you've been invited to complete your Census form online: Call the Census Contact Centre on 1300 214 531 who will issue you with your own unique entry code to complete your form online.

If you've been invited, or would prefer to complete a Census paper form: Call the Paper Form Request Service on 1800 130 250 (Freecall within Australia) and have your Census number ready. You will find your Census number on the letter you received.

If you have lost your Census number, call the Census Contact Centre on 1300 214 531 and we will issue you a new one.

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## Questions in the Census Test

The 2019 Census Test will test potential new Census questions, as well as changes to some existing questions, to ensure they are understood and answered. Information collected from these questions could be beneficial to inform services, policy and research and how questions may be designed for future Censuses and other ABS surveys.

It's important to note that not everyone will be asked all of these questions. More information on new or changed questions being asked in the 2019 Census Test is below.

All information you provide in your Census Test form is kept secure, confidential and is protected under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*, and the *Privacy Act 1988*. See the [ABS Privacy Policy](#) for more information.

If you would prefer to keep this information private, you can request your own Census Test form by calling 1300 214 531.

[Sex](#)

[Long-term health conditions](#)

[Australian Defence Force service](#)

[Number of babies ever born](#)

[Ancestry](#)

[Any work at all in a job, business or farm](#)

### Why am I being asked about my sex?

Almost all decisions made by governments, businesses and local community groups depend on understanding the different demographic information of people and where they are located across Australia. Along with age, sex is one of the key demographic variables. This information is often related, in particular ways, to a person's other experiences such as health and employment.

In line with the Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, the Census question offers a third category for people who don't identify exclusively as male or female. There may be a difference between a person's sex and their gender. For the purposes of the Census the sex question is referring to someone's biological sex. A person's gender is how someone identifies themselves which may be the same as their sex or different.

### Why am I being asked about my long-term health conditions?

The health conditions topic includes conditions that have a long-term impact on the health of individuals and can be diagnosed by a doctor or nurse. The specific conditions have been identified based on prevalence and how the data collected can inform services, policy and research.

The 2019 Census Test asks people to report whether they have ever been diagnosed by a doctor or nurse with a health condition(s) that they have experienced over a period of six months or more. You can mark as many conditions that apply to you.

### Why am I being asked about my Australian Defence Force service?

During the [Census 2021 topic consultation](#) it was identified that there was a need for data on people who have served, or are currently serving, in the Australian Defence Force, including Reserves, to better understand the number of people who have served and to learn more about the veteran population based on age, sex, geographic distribution and employment status. While records exist for current service, they are not maintained for previous service, and limited historical data is available.

This question applies to anyone who has served one day or more of service in the Royal Australian Navy, the Women's Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Women's Royal Australian Air Force, or their recognised reserve services including the Regional Force Surveillance List and local observer elements, the Second Australian Imperial Force, national service and the Citizen Military Forces.

### Why am I being asked about the number of babies ever born?

Information obtained from this question is used to calculate measures of lifetime fertility, including average number of children born to females and childlessness. This information will assist with calculating future population projections for Australia and for studies into fertility of groups of women in Australia. This question provides information about the impact of fertility trends on social issues, such as the aging of the population. Please do not include adopted, foster or step children. This question only applies to people aged over 15 years.

### Why am I being asked about my ancestry?

Over the past two centuries people have come from all parts of the world to live in Australia. An understanding of the origins of all the people who call Australia home, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, plays an important role in developing policies and services that reflect the needs of our diverse society. It is an important opportunity to collect comprehensive social and demographic information on everyone living in Australia.

Ancestry relates to the cultural groups that people most closely identify with, and does not necessarily relate to the country where the person was born.

If more than two ancestries apply, provide the two ancestries the person most closely identifies with.

### Why am I being asked about my work history over the last week?

Information on how many people are working or looking for work tells us a lot about what is happening in society and the economy.

This question relates to the one week period leading up to Tuesday 15 October 2019.

'Yes, worked for payment or profit' refers to people who did one hour or more of paid work, including casual, temporary or part-time.

'No, was absent on holidays, on paid leave, on strike, or temporarily stood down' refers to people on paid leave, such as annual leave, paid maternity leave or paid personal leave in the week before Tuesday 15 October 2019.

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## Is Fiona: Document 4021

[+ More information](#)

Male

Female



Non-binary


Background information on development and communication of non-binary sex option (Response to: Content recommendations on implementation of non-binary sex February 2020 <header> [DLM=Sensitive])  
 2021 Census Content Development WDB S22 27/05/2020 04:13 PM

Basics




<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED		
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy	<b>Caveat</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> NATIO



# S22

What	When	Link
<b>Government and Parliament</b>		
Recommendation from the ABS to the Minister on Census topics - para 9 refers to a non-binary option	24 July 2019	 <a href="#">MB19-000039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics.docx</a>
More information provided	23 August 2019	 <a href="#">MB19-000049 final more info for ministers office.docx</a>

to the Minister on the recommendation to collect non-binary sex	9	 MB19-000049 Att B - ABS Recommendations on the Collection of Non-Binary Sex Data -in the 2021 Census.docx  MB19-000049 Att C Example Images of Non-Binary Sex Response Options.pdf	
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**October 2019 field test**

Screen shots from the material available on the ABS website to support the October 2019 field test	Live from 1 October to 23 December 2019	<p><b>Landing page</b></p>  <p>Census Test 2019 27-09-2019.jpg</p> <p><b>About the Census test</b></p>  <p>Census Test 2019 - About the Census Test 2019 27-09-2019.jpg</p> <p><b>'Why' and 'what' of the key questions in the Census test, including the non-binary option to sex</b></p>  <p>Census Test 2019 - Questions in the Census Test 27-09-2019.jpg</p>
--	---	---

Screen shots of the sex question from the October 2019 field test	Available with the online form from 1 October to 15 November	<p><b>Online question - first page</b></p>  <p>Sex question.png</p> <p><b>Expanded online question when non-binary is selected on first page</b></p>  <p>Sex question more information for non-binary.png</p> <p><b>Paper form version</b></p>
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**7** Is the person:

- Mark box, like this:
- Go to [census.abs.gov.au](https://census.abs.gov.au) for more information.

Male  
 Female  
 Non-binary

# S22

S22


S22



Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

15/02/2019 11:24 AM

<b>Send</b>	To <span style="background-color: black; color: white;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS cc <span style="background-color: black; color: white;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS, <span style="background-color: black; color: white;">S22</span> /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Paper for Monday's meeting [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only] 
<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>For-Official-Use-Only</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi S22, as discussed. JB

Please find attached a draft of the Census content investigations paper which we will be working through with you at our meeting on Monday afternoon.

Our key objectives for the meeting on Monday are:

1. discuss each of the eight major changes proposed in the topic direction publication and get feedback on the recommendations:
  - assessment of each in terms of the data/policy need, respondent implications, operational feasibility and statistical impact
  - initial recommendation
  - next steps for testing and evidence gathering
2. briefly discuss the status of other changes and get any early feedback
  - topics to remove
  - other changes to current topics
  - topics not being recommended for addition or change
3. get direction on the impact of the overall package of recommended changes
  - what is the appetite for change?
  - of particular concern is the number of personal topics that are being recommended and the potential data quality impact and community response to this.

The first two discussion points have supporting information in the paper, starting from Section 7. The third will emerge from the issues raised during the meeting and will help us shape the section to be included in the final version of the paper due in March.

Justine



- DRAFT V1.2 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations.docx

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**


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Basics

Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS

08/04/2019 12:34 PM

<b>Send</b>	To Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	For input into discussion: Draft Census content recommendations to SRO 
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi Teresa

We are meeting with you and Paul, Justine et al tomorrow to discuss their draft content recommendations to the Census SRO. Chris and I have discussed and thought you might be interested in receiving our draft "Census line advice" before the meeting. We have also copied our PaSSD colleagues to this draft advice.

S47C

# S47C

# S22

We look forward to the discussion tomorrow.

Regards

Bindi

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

05/04/2019 01:59 PM

<b>Send</b>	To Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS cc [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
<b>Subject</b>	Census Content Recommendations meeting - background material for Tuesday 9 April, 10am [DLM=Sensitive]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>Sensitive:</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Colleagues,

We have prepared some background material to support our discussions on Tuesday, at 10am. Attached below are:

- The full draft of the 2021 Census Topic recommendations document. You will have seen earlier drafts of this document when we have met before. It contains a full description of the review work program and results of investigations.
- A shorter extract from the 2021 Census Topic recommendations document is also attached to guide discussion at our meeting on Tuesday. It is the recommended pre-reading for the meeting; it includes the new executive summary and recommendations section from the larger document.

[REDACTED]

Justine



EXTRACT - Draft V2.2 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations.docx



DRAFT V2.2 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations.docx

**Justine Boland**

*Program Manager*

Health and Disability Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Re: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED] (Response to:)**  
2021 Census Content Development WDB Teresa Dickinson 05/06/2019 04:25 PM

Basics

Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS 05/06/2019 04:25 PM

<b>Send</b>	<b>To</b> Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS <b>cc</b> Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, "2021 Census Content Development WDB" <census.content@abs.gov.au>, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, <b>bcc</b>
<b>Subject</b>	Re: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

S22

T

---

**From:** Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 5 June 2019 at 4:01:44 pm AEST  
**To:** Teresa Dickinson <teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** Bindi Kindermann <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, 2021 Census Content Development WDB <census.content@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland

<justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>, Luise Mcculloch  
<luise.mcculloch@abs.gov.au>, Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Re: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa

# S22

**Chris Libreri**

General Manager Census and Statistical Services Division

*Head of Brisbane Office*

**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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**Executive Assistant:** S22

(P) S22 (E) S22@abs.gov.au

Teresa Dickinson---05/06/2019 01:49:27 PM---From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS To: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS  
To: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, "2021 Census Content Development WDB" <census.content@abs.gov.au>, Luise Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 05/06/2019 01:49 PM  
Subject: Re: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Many thanks for this Paul - I've been looking forward to receiving it.

I have a clear way that I'd like to proceed from this point.

In this order:



1. Census to provide me with a second briefing indicating their views on the recs made in the PaSSD.

2. Once that is received I will read all the material together and either  
- form a conclusion that, as SRO, I will put to David as a recommendation. This may involve recommending that David put 2 options (no more) with potential implications to the Minister  
- seek further input/clarification from either Paul, Chris or both. I'll make it clear whether I want this in writing or verbally, separately or together, before I finalise my recs

I'm aware that on a couple of propositions there is not complete agreement between PaSSD and Census about the best way forward, and I want to manage how I receive info and opinions from here on in (given that there have been a number of good conversations I'm now not desperately interested in being petitioned in informal meetings - I need a thoughtful and disciplined feed of info, together with enough time to reflect personally).

Just as a reminder, my 'lenses' on this rec to David are:

- what is going to give the best result against the three aims of the Census (high quality data, strongly supported, user experience). This is my Census SRO hat.  
- given that perspective does my 'answer' lead to unacceptable risk (statistical, cost, reputation) to the ABS and so needs to be moderated. This is my ABS EB hat.

Chris - can you and Bindi give me some sense of when you might be able to get me the Census briefing?

Cheers - and many thanks to all for the work on this. It's great to see it land.

T

---

**From:** Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>

**Date:** 5 June 2019 at 12:26:33 pm AEST

**To:** Teresa Dickinson <teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au>

**Cc:** Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Bindi Kindermann

<bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>, S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>, S22

<S22@abs.gov.au>, S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland

<justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, 2021 Census Content Development WDB

<census.content@abs.gov.au>, Luise Mcculloch <luise.mcculloch@abs.gov.au>

**Subject:** Fw: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa

Dear Teresa,

Luise (FYI)

Please find attached a paper containing the recommendations for 2021 Census topics. The paper outlines the program of consultation and research led by the Population and Social Statistics Division and documents the recommendations for changes to the 2021 Census topics.

The attached briefing provides an overview of planned next steps and a timetable to support the recommendation to Government. We'd be happy to meet with you to walk you through the recommendations and next steps.

We would also be happy to bring this to the attention of the Census Delivery Board or the Census Executive Board should you consider this necessary as well.

As part of the briefing process engagements with the Minister will be needed, we would be able to assist in the briefing process (papers and meetings) should you and David need that support.

*(See attached file: FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 4 June 2019.docx)(See attached file: 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 040619.docx)*

Cheers,

Paul

**Dr Paul Jelfs**

*Senior Reconciliation Champion and  
General Manager, Population and Social Statistics Division*

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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 and present.*

2021 Census views on the Recommendations made to the Census SRO on 2021 Census Topics

Topic	Recommendation to SRO	Census view	Impact / risk assessment (by exception)
<h1>S22</h1>			
Sex (non-binary response)	Change topic response options	Agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets requirements of Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (and AG Guidelines)</li> <li>The current proposed question wording changes the long-standing concept of the current question from a Sex/Gender question (i.e. a broadly inclusive question) to a strict 'Sex' question and presupposes collection of gender in a separate question. If gender was not collected there would be other implementation options.</li> <li>The latter collection of a gender question is primarily as a risk mitigation to the statistical quality of the sex question but this premise needs a lot more stress-testing and discussion with Demographers (e.g. the low likelihood that a later question on the form will improve the quality of an earlier question).</li> <li>Statistical impact plans would be required to ensure quality of male / female options for binary sex outputs.</li> <li>Expectations around any outputs of third response option would need to be carefully managed given analysis of write in options and quality assurance activities are likely to be expensive and lower priority than other outputs.</li> <li>Issues management will be required to manage groups opposed to this question.</li> <li>Note there is no precedent amongst ICF countries for this change.</li> </ul>

Topic	Recommendation to SRO	Census view	Impact / risk assessment (by exception)
Gender identity	Add new topic	Disagree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistical need from major stakeholders still not clear even though Census have repeatedly asked for this. Given Census outputs are unlikely to meet demand for data, including for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ small geographic areas or small population groups due to need for confidentiality;</li> <li>○ the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual sub-populations of the LGBTI population will not be in-scope of this question.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Issues management would be challenging for the ABS given the potential for the topic to be perceived as controversial, sensitive or offensive; the divisiveness of current identity politics in Australia; and the risk of major campaigns or boycotts against completing the Census.</li> <li>• Trans are widely considered a vulnerable population and there would be privacy concerns in providing this data to the Government, particularly for those who are responding on the behalf of others in the household.</li> <li>• The target population for this question is miniscule but the potential for confusion amongst the non-target population is likely to be very high, and / or the question is likely to be perceived as repetitive / duplicative.</li> <li>• The intentions to use this question as a quality check on a non-binary sex question may not be feasible given the reliance on analysing free text responses within the tight window for producing binary sex outputs for PES and 1<sup>st</sup> release of Census data.</li> <li>• The cost (\$150K) does not reflect the full testing and implementation cost, particularly in relation to issues management, quality assurance and potentially more investment in non-response follow-up. If recommended, additional funding should be requested.</li> <li>• No international precedent, although UK and Canada are still testing.</li> </ul>
Sexual orientation	Do not add new topic	Agree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note that if Gender identity is included and sexual orientation is excluded, the ABS will need to defend the selective approaches to data needs of groups within the LGBTI community.</li> </ul>

# S22

Topic	Recommendation to SRO	Census view	Impact / risk assessment (by exception)
			

**To:** Teresa Dickinson  
Deputy Australian Statistician

**Through:** Paul Jelfs  
General Manager – Population and  
Social Statistics

**Date Due:** 14 June 2019

**Purpose:** For action:   
For information:

**Contact Officer:** Justine Boland, <sup>S22</sup>

To seek approval on the 2021 Census Topic Recommendations to be put to the Australian Statistician prior to preparing for discussions with the Minister.

### Recommendation(s)

R1. Endorse the 2021 Census topic review recommendations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>S22</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
<b>Comments:</b>				

### Overview and proposed timetable

1. The attached paper contains the recommendations for changes to 2021 Census topics formed through a program of consultation, research and review. It is presented to you in advance of anticipated ABS discussions with the Government and Ministerial staff.
2. We are seeking your endorsement of the recommendations and provision to the Australian Statistician for approval.

# S22

# S22

## Background

7. The review of topics for the 2021 Census has involved consultation internally and externally, research and testing. The recommendations presented in the attached paper will best meet data user needs and can be delivered with reasonable quality and a manageable amount of risk.

# S22

9. A detailed set of supporting documents covering the content development work program has been maintained. Noting that cognitive testing is still underway, documentation of this work will be updated in consultation with relevant Census staff.

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Justine Boland  
Program Manager Indigenous and Social  
Information Branch  
30 May 2019

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Paul Jelfs  
General Manager Population and Social Statistics  
Division  
June 2019

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## Attachments

- A. 2021 Census topic review investigations



## 2021 Census Topic Review - Investigations for changes to topics (internal paper) – Version 4 – For approval

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## 1 Executive summary

The topics included on the Census have not changed since the 2006 Census. Commencing in 2017, a Census Topics review program was conducted in preparation for the 2021 Census. This review program included public consultation and engagement with key external stakeholders. The public consultation received over 400 submissions which were assessed against criteria to determine potential new topics, changes to existing topics and topics for removal.

Further research, including qualitative testing of questions, was used to determine the most feasible topics to recommend for the 2021 Census. This paper summarises the findings of investigations and the recommendations being put forward to the Senior Responsible Officer for approval within the ABS. Once approved, the recommendations will be discussed with the Minister and may be put to Cabinet for a decision (if the Minister chooses). We are aiming for the final decision by Government in 2019, including tabling the changes to the Census and Statistics Regulations before Parliament. This will allow time for finalising the forms and setting up operations for processing data. Testing of questions will also continue throughout 2019 to refine wording and determine processing requirements.

The recommended changes to 2021 Census topics include:

- Adding a topic on chronic health conditions
- Adding a topic on Australian Defence Force service (15 years and over)
- Changing response options to collect non-binary sex
- Adding a topic on gender identity (15 years and over)

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The new topics not being recommended following testing and consideration of risks involved in implementation are:

- Sexual orientation

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## 2 Purpose of this document

This document provides an overview of the Census topic review project, and summarises the case for topic recommendations to be endorsed by the Senior Responsible Officer, Teresa Dickinson. It will provide detail to be referenced in shorter approval documents, up to and including the final Cabinet Submission and minister briefs.

ABS recommendations for change to 2021 Census topics are outlined in this document. Details include summarised recommendations, the process to determine change, and assessments for all the key topic changes suggested through external consultation (including topics that are not included in final recommendations).

Some risks associated with new content are discussed in the detail of this document. A more comprehensive review of risks, and a plan for external communication, will be undertaken when the decisions on new content are final.

# S22

## 4 Background

The Census of Population and Housing is a critical source of information collected every five years about Australians and the way we live. The next Census will be held in 2021.

Reviewing topics is important for the Census to remain relevant and reflect contemporary Australia. Some critical topics have been included on every Census. The total number of topics and range of subjects has changed over time. There was no change in the list of topics for both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census, meaning topics have not changed since the 2006

Census. Prior to the public consultation for 2021, the ABS considered the recommendations from the 2016 consultation process.

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Eight new topics were identified through this process to be tested and explored:

- Chronic health conditions
- S22
- S22
- Current or previous service in the Australian Defence Force
- S22
- Non-binary sex and/or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- S22

While not published, the internal assessment of the topics listed against each assessment criteria was as follows (H = High; M = Medium; L = Low):

Topic	1 DATA NEED	2 WHOLE POP	3 ACCURATE	4 ACCEPT	5 EFFICIENT	6 FUTURE	7 OTHER SOURCE
Chronic health conditions	H	H	M	M	H	H	H
S22							
Australian Defence Force indicator	M	H	H	M	H	M	H
S22							
Sex (non-binary response)	H	H	H	M	H	H	H
Gender identity	M	H	M	M	M	H	H
Sexual orientation	M	H	M	M	H	M	H
S22							

Changes to a number of existing topics were flagged for exploration based on consultation feedback. S22

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## 6 Developing recommendations

To inform the recommendations to Government, the priority changes have been investigated through:

- discussions with key stakeholders and data users to refine the data needs
- assessment of costs and operational implications
- development and testing of the questions.

The number, complexity and sensitivity of questions asked in a Census can impact the quality of responses and the quality of the data collected. Not all suggested topics, including those assessed as providing valuable information, are able to be included in the 2021 Census.

The majority of testing and research has focused on expanding the assessment of topics against the criteria on accuracy, acceptability and efficiency of collection.

Questions were tested through focus groups and individual interviews using cognitive testing techniques. Question testing will improve the quality of data that can be obtained for the new and amended topics. Large scale quantitative testing in October 2019 will assess the understanding of questions and will ensure new and amended questions do not affect the overall quality of Census response. Testing will continue beyond making the submission to Government. It will refine and adapt questions to ensure the best quality outcomes can be achieved.

To support the recommendations, the main topics are summarised in four parts. Each part aligns with the original assessment criteria and includes additional information from the topic review program of testing and research. The sections are as follows:

- **Data/policy need** – Based on the assessment of submissions, this provides an overview of the data need for this topic in terms of the current gap and the potential use. It also outlines key agencies with an interest in the topic being included on the next Census. The section draws from consultation evidence given about *current national importance* and potential policy uses. It also considers the *need for data from the whole population*, the *continuing need for data* to be updated every five years, and the existence of suitable *alternative data sources*.
- **Respondent implications** – This section explores the *acceptability* criteria from the public consultation. It includes an outline of the types of questions required to collect the topic, and key findings from qualitative testing on the complexity, accuracy and feasibility of collecting the topic (including sensitivities and potential public reaction).
- **Operational feasibility** – This explores the *efficiency* criteria and outlines the operational and cost implications to collect, process and disseminate new data.
- **Statistical impacts** – This section notes the *accuracy* considerations in regard to quality concerns with collecting new topics, or changing existing topics. The discussion includes reference to potential causes of non-response for the topic, as well as the risk of affects including non-response or accuracy shifts for other topics or the entire Census form.

Form snips of questions that have been tested have been included for reference. Note that these are not the final proposed versions and are included to help explain the proposed topic.

Discussion on other topics will draw from the above structure where necessary.

## 7 Recommendations to the Senior Responsible Officer

### 7.1 Recommendation summary

There is a limit to the number and type of questions that can be reasonably asked through a Census, due to the burden on respondents, and the cost of collecting and analysing the information collected. While a number of new topics would be of value, it is not feasible to add them all to the 2021 Census.

Based on the topic review program of assessment, recommendations for the new topics identified in the public consultation are as follows:

Topic	Recommendation
Chronic health conditions	Add new topic
Australian Defence Force indicator	Add new topic
Sex (non-binary response)	Change topic response options
Gender identity	Add new topic
Sexual orientation	Do not add new topic

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Evidence to support the recommendations above is outlined in detail in section 8 of this paper. A short summary is also available in Attachment A.

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Exploring changes to the questions asked on existing topics provides opportunities to make the topic more valuable to data users. However, the value of the current topic, disruption to time series, and the risk to the quality and relevance of the topic are critical considerations. A number of changes raised during the public consultation are being further investigated.

# S22



## 7.2 Implementing the package of new topics proposed

Enacting the recommendations in this paper will result in the following new topics being collected on the 2021 Census:

- Chronic health conditions (all persons)
- Australian Defence Force service (15 years and older)
- Non-binary sex (all persons)
- Gender identity (15 years and older).

A program of qualitative testing was used to assess the respondent acceptance of all of the new topics proposed. This included focus group discussions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander topics and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) topics. A series of

cognitive interviews were held using mock up questionnaires with members of target and non-target groups to better explore reactions to questions and potential challenges with accuracy of response. Further research has included internal assessments of operational feasibility and efficiency of processing new topics, as well as consideration of findings from testing and development of similar topics internationally. Where necessary, there has been targeted engagement with external stakeholders to understand and refine data needs.

# S47C

The personal nature of the package of proposed new topics is noted. Testing will continue to focus on the interaction of topics and assess any impact on public participation or the quality of Census response overall. Conversely, public expectations of content and the importance of a Census that reflects a contemporary picture of Australia may bolster support for the inclusion of some topics. In particular, recognition of sex and gender consistent with the Attorney General's guidelines, may be expected as a way of recognising gender diversity as part of contemporary society.

Community support will be essential to high response rates and good quality data. Further testing to refine questions will continue throughout 2019 including a field test in October. The field test will aim to measure the acceptance of new topics as a package; the accuracy of the proposed new topics; the impact on critical Census variables such as sex and location; the impact of new topics on overall Census response rate; and community and respondent reaction to the new topics.

# S22

A number of the topics noted for further investigation are also either currently included, or in consideration to be included, by a number of our international National Statistical Office counterpart's Censuses:

- The United Kingdom has recognised the need for decision makers to be able to monitor fairness and equality in society and are proposing the addition of topics on service in the UK Armed Forces, gender identity and sexual orientation. Canada is also exploring the same topics.
- USA currently asks a question on defence force service on the American Community Survey (the ongoing large-scale survey that exists in conjunction with the 10 yearly short US Census).
- New Zealand assessed topics on gender identity and sexual orientation and chose not to add them on their recent 2018 Census. There were challenges in the media against this decision and Stats NZ has moved quickly to include these topics in their social surveys.

The ABS continues to be in discussions with the above National Statistical Offices to monitor their progress on testing and development of each of these topics.

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## 8 New topics - Individual topic assessments

### 8.1 Chronic health conditions

<b>Topic Definition</b>	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
<b>Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Add new topic to the 2021 Census</b> This topic would be of value to a range of stakeholders and could benefit a large portion of the population with various health conditions. There are no significant concerns about accuracy, acceptability or operational feasibility of collecting this topic.

#### Data or policy needs

There is a high demand for chronic health conditions data at the local level for health service planning and to monitor change under the National Health Reform Agreement, and various other reporting frameworks and initiatives at the local level. While the National Health Survey can provide information on prevalence at the national level and broad sub-state areas, it cannot provide data at more detailed sub-state levels.

There are currently no health topics on the Census. There is strong value in being able to cross tabulate a health topic with other Census information including demographics and cultural diversity information. The addition of this health topic will also expand the usefulness of linking Census data with other data through the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project (MADIP) and other future data integration opportunities.

Key stakeholders supporting the addition of a chronic health conditions topic were the Department of Health, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Indigenous Affairs Group, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) - National Institute for Dementia Research. Other interested stakeholders included academics, community and industry group organisations, state and local government.

#### Respondent implications

The topic can be collected with one additional question to be asked of all respondents, with a list of prevalent health conditions for response options. Health conditions have been determined in consultation with key stakeholders based on prevalence and consistency with other health surveys. There will not be any free text capture, but respondents will be able to select multiple responses and there will be options for 'other health conditions' and 'no health conditions'. An example of the question currently being tested on the paper form is as follows:

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

- Include health conditions that have lasted or are expected to last for 6 months for more.
- Include health conditions that:
  - may recur from time to time, or
  - are controlled by medication, or
  - are in remission
- Exclude non-melanoma skin cancers.
- Mark all that apply, like this:

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Cancer (including remission)
- Dementia (including Alzheimer's)
- Diabetes (excluding gestational diabetes)
- Heart disease (including heart attack or angina)
- Kidney disease
- Lung condition (including COPD and emphysema)
- Mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)
- Stroke
- Any other long term health condition
- No long term health condition(s)

A chronic health conditions question has been tested through a range of cognitive interviews. The question has tested well, and the participants have been able to identify their condition(s) from the response options provided. There is some potential for non-response from people concerned about disclosing their conditions. Participants from cognitive interviews noted no sensitivities answering this question for themselves, but did note some sensitivities and accuracy concerns answering on behalf of others – particularly those living in share households. Among test participants, mental health conditions have been the most commonly selected condition. This is consistent with findings in the National Health Survey and there has not been any sensitivity noted in participants selecting this condition.

### Operational feasibility

Responses will be processed based on the conditions listed in the question. There is a requirement to output aggregate data on persons with multiple conditions. All output will be new content, but will not require significant coding or classification development, as it will be based only on the conditions provided in the question.

Effort for processing single response questions with no free text options is relatively straight forward, but multiple response questions create additional complexity. There may be further work required to determine the output classifications covering different combinations (e.g. prevalence of single conditions, prevalence of people with multiple conditions). Quality assurance in editing would require additional effort to determine business rules for edits. There may be a need for additional documentation to explain any differences between Census data and the National Health Survey.

### **Statistical impacts**

Self-reported responses may over or under estimate prevalence of certain conditions in comparison to proportions reported in other health surveys. Question design and testing will aim to minimise this, but there may be some requirement to explain large differences in reporting from the Census and other ABS published health surveys.

Due to the private nature of disclosing health conditions, there is potential for impact on other Census topics if respondents do not wish to associate their health condition with details of their name, date of birth and address. Through testing undertaken to date, this has not been identified as a problem, but it will continue to be assessed through cognitive interviews and the field test in October 2019.

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## 8.2 Australian Defence Force service

<b>Topic Definition</b>	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and/or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular and/or reserve).
<b>Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Add new topic to the 2021 Census</b> Beyond the key agencies raising the data need, this topic will be of interest in a range of social policy areas. It is believed the topic will have general public support and will generate positive interest from the media. The topic is fairly straight forward to implement with relatively low risk.

### Data or policy needs

A range of published health studies show that ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members have distinct characteristics and health needs (e.g. muscular skeletal, mental health, access to services) that require special consideration due to their military training, service and deployments. Surveys estimate the population of ADF veterans at 3-5% of people aged 18 years and over. Recent public attention has also focused on non-health issues, such as employment outcomes post-separation, homelessness and the challenges faced by families of veterans.

The key agency submitting for this topic was the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), with support from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG). Support was also provided by the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL). The submissions note that Australian Government has funded the DVA under the Veteran Centric Reform Program, to modernise, become more proactive, become data driven and, ultimately, improve the client experience. Data from the Census would enable government, non-government groups and medical providers to target the supply of health and financial support services where needed.

While DVA is aware of the population who currently engage in their services, there is a lack of data to measure the size, and understand the full living circumstances, of veterans who do not currently engage with DVA. Extensive work to explore potential alternative sources of this data has been undertaken by DVA and found to be inadequate. The ABS assessed this work as part of the topic review program. DVA investigations have included research and/or integration of data from ComSuper and Medicare, as well as payroll data and nominal rolls prior to the early 1970's. There are significant gaps in time and detail which mean that no other single or combined sources of data are suitable for planning and services provision. Collection of this topic on the Census will fill gaps and allow for cross tabulation with other Census variables to plan in current circumstances, as well as changes in circumstances over time.

The Department of Defence did not make a submission, but they have indicated their support for the topic and question proposed. There have been discussions in the media supporting this topic as an addition to the Census, as well as bipartisan letters of support

from Ministers at State and Federal level. This appears to have been an organised activity to garner support through media and political channels.

### Respondent implications

The topic will require a single question with a closed set of response options covering regular and reserve service. The question will only apply to people over 15 years old and will allow for marking multiple response options. An example of the question currently being tested on the paper form is below:

<b>53</b> <b>Has the person ever served in the Australian Defence Force?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force and Australian Navy, Second Australian Imperial Force and national service.</li><li>• Exclude service for non-Australian defence forces.</li><li>• Mark all that apply, like this: <input type="checkbox"/></li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> No Regular Service <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, current service <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, previous service Reserves Service <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, current service <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, previous service
---	--

Cognitive interviews were used to test the topic with in scope and out of scope respondents. There have not been any major concerns identified through testing. Respondents have understood the topic and are able to identify how to respond accurately. There do not appear to be any sensitivities or concerns regarding this topic.

Some respondents not in the in-scope population have made unprompted favourable comments about the value of this topic.

Canada and the United Kingdom have both indicated intentions to add a similar topic to their next Census. Feedback from the progress of their testing has been used where applicable to guide the development of the question above.

### Operational feasibility

This topic will require input and output classifications developed as well as edit rules to ensure quality data. The development work will not be significant beyond that required for any new topic. Overall the topic has strong operational feasibility.

### Statistical impacts

There may be some non-response from those not wanting to identify their service, or those who may not be able to for security reasons, however this is believed to be a small proportion. Testing so far has not found evidence of this risk. There is not expected to be an impact on overall response caused by this topic.



### 8.3 Non-binary sex

<b>Topic Definition</b>	For all persons, collect sex with non-binary response options.
<b>Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<p><b>Change existing topic to collect sex with non-binary response options.</b></p> <p>The Attorney General’s guidelines require the inclusion of non-binary response options for sex to align with changes to the <i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984</i>. The approach to changes will need to consider potential quality implications for the topic which is critical for generating population estimates.</p>

#### Data or policy needs

Sex (biological) is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance and is used in generating population estimates which are then used as denominators for a wide range of reporting and analysis. The recommendation is to move beyond male and female only responses to a third non binary option to reflect variations in biological sex in the population. There is risk in any changes to how sex data are collected as the consequences of poor or mis-informed response are significant. There were no submissions in support of maintaining a binary response option for sex, however engagement with demographers has emphasised the importance of the outcome binary data for population statistics (requiring a methodological allocation of the third category to the main two binary options for this purpose).

The intent of adding a third response option to the sex question is to improve the ability for the whole population to be able to answer the question accurately. The term ‘sex’ is defined as referring to a person’s biological characteristics. A person may have male characteristics, female characteristics, or a variation in sex characteristics. Respondents with a variation in sex characteristics may also be referred to as being intersex. It is possible for a person to have a variation in sex characteristics that means neither the male or female categories apply, this may include having a legal status that is neither male nor female. The current question with binary response options of male and female cannot be answered accurately by these people and they may feel excluded or discriminated against by the question. Accurate data on the size of the population with variations in sex characteristics does not exist. Intersex Human Rights Australia suggest the size of the population could be up to 1.7% from international estimates based medical births data, although they note there are several challenges and assumptions with using this figure.

The requirement for change comes from the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*, which were established by the Attorney General’s Department to complement changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. The changes to the Act allow new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. The guidelines note the distinction between sex and gender and outline where sex and/or gender information is collected, individuals should be given the option to select male, female or a third option. The third category “refers to any person who


does not exclusively identify as either male or female". All Australian Government departments and agencies maintaining personal records and/or collecting sex and/or gender information were expected to align with these guidelines by 1 July 2016. The introduction of the guidelines has led to more government data sets including options for non-binary responses, however it is not consistently or comprehensively applied.

Many submissions on this topic noted the importance of distinctions between collecting gender in comparison to sex at birth. In both instances there was support for non-binary response options for sex and gender. However, it was noted that in regard to sex, responses to a third option should not be considered an accurate measure of intersex people as they do not represent a category distinct from male and female.

The need for inclusivity has the support of the Australian Human Rights Commission, although they noted that they were unable to make a submission during the public consultation due to other priorities. Many submissions sought data on LGBTI individuals, which would require changes beyond a non-binary response option to the sex question. Additionally a gender and sexual orientation question would be required. The assessment of the gender identity and sexual orientation questions follows in the next two sections.

### Respondent implications

It is proposed that this question be changed to ask specifically for sex and offer a third non-binary response option. Development of this question is continuing through discussions with stakeholders and respondent testing. The following example represents the currently preferred option noting that further testing with non-English speaking respondents and discussions of feasibility with the Census program and demography will continue during June 2019.

<p><b>7</b> <b>What is the person's sex?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sex may be different to gender. A question on gender will follow later in the form.</li><li>• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/></li></ul> <p> Go to <a href="https://census.abs.gov.au">census.abs.gov.au</a> for more information.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Male</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Variations in sex characteristics (intersex)</p>
---	--

The third category is intended to provide response options which are more inclusive for the respondent. The label above uses contemporary terminology to describe intersex people (or people with variations in sex characteristics). Stakeholders have cautioned that intersex people are also male or female, and therefore the opportunity to provide multiple responses is required. The statistical impact of this will need to be carefully considered for the paper form in particular. Stakeholders also note that a person identifying as intersex may be a man or woman, with variations in their sex characteristics which make them intersex, but they do not consider themselves to be a "third sex". The choice in how to respond will depend on the person's circumstances and life experience and the number of responses to the third option should not be assumed to be representative of the intersex

population in Australia. The limitation of the scope of the data would need to be communicated on release and there is considerable concern in advocacy groups that the data will be misused.

This question has tested well with target and non-target population in qualitative testing. Some intersex respondents have expressed satisfaction that the Census is asking this question. Some non-target population have commented that they see this commonly in forms now and don't find it confusing. There were a couple of respondents who made comments about 'political correctness' and asserted that people can only be male or female. This didn't stop them answering the question and when prompted they indicated that it wouldn't change their participation in the Census. Their comments were interpreted as a reflection on broader changes in the community. Some testing was occurring at the same time as the gender on birth certificates discussion in the Tasmanian parliament which may have increased awareness of the issue.

A risk with including a third response option is that people who identify as non-binary gender or a different gender from their sex at birth may use the third option to report this. The inclusion of a question on gender identity later in the form appears to mitigate this risk to a reasonable extent, especially when the instruction text on the sex question refers to this. The inclusion of both a non-binary sex and gender identity question is recommended to reduce the number of trans and gender diverse people selecting the non-binary option to the sex question. Given the importance of the sex variable in population estimates, higher rates of non-binary responses requires more imputation to a binary sex output and consequently greater error in the estimation process. A discussion of the gender identity question follows in the next section.

Another risk is respondents selecting the third option in error or facetiously. To mitigate this risk, it is proposed that the online form contain a follow up message inviting the person to provide more information on their response if desired. Various messages and implementation options have been tested with members of both the intersex and trans communities. The tone of the following message was considered to be the least offensive. Language that directly required the person to "confirm" their response invoked strong, often physical, reactions including the assertion that the person would not participate in the Census. The operational feasibility and cost impact of allowing write in responses for intersex people is still to be further explored.

[← Back](#)

**You have indicated that Billy has a variation in sex characteristics. If you would like to, please provide more information below. Otherwise, please continue, or select 'Back' to change your response**

Prefer not to provide additional information.

[Continue](#)

The major field test will be used to assess the impact of any sensitivities or the risk of error for the wider population due to changes to this question. The option to enable a non-binary response through special procedures will remain the fall-back position.

Significant research and testing has been done by the other NSOs on asking both sex and gender identity. Lessons from this work will inform the next stages of ABS testing.

### Operational feasibility

The Census Operational Managers agreed that the inclusion of non-binary sex would be feasible, but would require effort to ensure that it did not affect the quality of a key variable. The major concern raised was about sensitivity of the topic and statistical impact on other topics or overall response.

The non-binary responses will be imputed into a binary variable to enable the Post Enumeration Survey (PES), facilitate family coding and streamline processing. This is similar to the approach taken with sex data from the 2016 Census. If the gender identity question is included, responses to this could be used in the imputation process. The impact of this is still to be further considered by demography.

This approach will allow processing and analysis of the non-binary variable, as well as derivation of a binary variable. The binary sex variable will be analysed and output in the usual way, while further consideration and consultation will identify the best way to analyse and disseminate data from the non-binary variable.

Given the small size of the population, reporting of the non-binary response is not likely for small geographic areas or small population groups. But options to produce state and territory level data may be possible and will be carefully considered with respect to the quality of the data and input from stakeholders.

### Statistical impacts

As indicated in the respondent implications section, the biggest concern with including a non-binary sex response as part of mainstream procedures is the risk of inadvertent error,

protest or facetious responses reducing the quality of the male/female count, which is critical to estimating the population. As this variable is used to provide population estimates in small geographic areas, errors which may seem small at a national level, can have a larger impact at the lowest geographic or demographic levels.

There is a possibility that providing non-binary options for sex may cause offence to some respondents and impact on their willingness to respond to other questions accurately. Cognitive interviews so far have not found this to be a problem and it will be assessed in the field test in October.

International testing of similar topics has been mixed. New Zealand conducted testing prior to their 2018 Census where they followed up with respondents who selected the third response to the sex question. It was found that there was a higher proportion who selected the option as mistake or as an act of vandalism, than the proportion who accurately and intentionally selected it. Sex was collected in a binary way in the 2018 Census.

Other NSOs including Statistics Canada, Office of National Statistics, National Records of Scotland and the US Census Bureau have decided not to proceed with collecting sex in a non-binary way in their 2020 or 2021 Censuses. The decisions were made with concern for the accuracy of the sex data for population estimates. All but the US Census Bureau are proceeding with gender identity and sexual orientation.

## 8.4 Gender identity

<b>Topic Definition</b>	For all persons aged 15 years and over, collect gender.
<b>Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<p><b>Add new topic to the 2021 Census.</b></p> <p>Stakeholders have identified a need for data from the Census on trans, non-binary or gender fluid populations in Australia. This population is seen as vulnerable and would benefit from targeted support services. The topic can be collected with relative ease, but there are noted sensitivities and potential risks with asking the gender identity of the wider population. The inclusion of a gender identity question in combination with the changes to the non-binary sex question is recommended to maintain the quality of the sex data.</p>

### Data or policy needs

A gender question would allow gender diverse individuals to identify as a gender other than their sex at birth. As discussed in the previous section, inclusion of a gender identity question mitigates the risk of trans or gender diverse people selecting the non-binary response option to the sex question.

In addition to this data quality benefit, stakeholders note that there is a significant lack of data available on LGBTI people. Australian national evidence on the health and wellbeing of LGBTI populations relies upon a growing but limited number of smaller scale studies that target LGBTI populations, or part thereof. The lack of information available has led to inaccuracy in reporting and significant underestimates that have left LGBTI people relatively invisible in mental health and suicide prevention policies, strategies and programmes.

From the research available, stakeholders shared that compared to the general population, transgender people can be nearly eleven times more likely to attempt suicide, and nearly eighteen times more likely to have had thoughts of suicide. Transgender and gender diverse people were also noted to have been nearly five times more likely to be diagnosed with depression in their lifetime. Research also shows these vulnerabilities are higher than those for the gay, lesbian and bisexual population.

A key data driver for the collection of gender would be to inform service providers, such as Department of Health, on the population they are servicing. There are specific needs relating to the provision of aged and health care, including mental health, for gender diverse individuals, which have been recognised by the Department of Health, National Mental Health Commission and the Department of Social Services. In particular, the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy and the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Plan highlight the importance of understanding the health risks for this vulnerable population and the reasons to focus a targeted approach for support services. Support for a gender topic was also received from the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG), and a

range of state departments, local government authorities and community and advocacy groups.

Collection of gender identity on the Census is considered important for analysis of both small geographic areas and small population groups. A known concern of service providers is where there is an intersection of vulnerability due to gender diversity and other potential vulnerabilities such as CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, disability and homelessness.

The ABS will engage with key stakeholders to identify those willing to express publically, and to Government, their need for this data to be collected on the Census.

### Respondent implications

The sex question used in the 2016 Census did not specify that it is asking for sex (asking 'Is the person male or female?'). LGBTI stakeholders have noted the importance of clarity in the concept being collected, acknowledging that currently a combination of sex and gender responses are given.

The gender identity topic requires a single question, with a pre-defined list of response options, and a free text option. The question will be distinct from the sex question at the beginning of the form, although the sex question will include instructions that a question on gender follows later in the form. This has been found to be useful in discouraging people of non-binary gender identification responding in a non-binary way to the sex question.

Due to the potential sensitivity of the topic, the gender question will only be asked of people over 15 years old and will be placed later in the form. The question will also allow people to respond with 'prefer not to answer'. An example of the question currently being tested is below:

**57** What gender does the person identify as?

- Gender refers to current gender which may be different to sex and may be different from what is indicated on legal documents.
- Mark all that apply, like this:

**i** Go to [census.abs.gov.au](https://census.abs.gov.au) for more information.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transgender
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binary
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gender fluid
<input type="checkbox"/>	Another gender (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer

This question is intended to support inclusivity and help in estimating the population of trans, non-binary and gender fluid people in Australia. Testing and development will continue to explore the appropriate labels and the need for allowing multiple response (e.g.

male and another identity or female and another identity). The instruction text has tested well with respondents in the target population and will be overtly tested with other respondents for acceptability and comprehension.

This question has performed well in qualitative testing of both target and non-target populations. A few respondents expressed confusion about 'haven't you already asked me this' but this was limited and didn't stop them completing the question. Cognitive interviews so far have not found problems with sensitivity, offence or non-response. Further testing with both the target and the non-target population will occur by June 2019.

### **Operational feasibility**

The write-in option for 'please specify' in a gender question would require additional capture and processing effort. There would be work involved in creating an output classification to code free text responses. However, the responses provided from the 2016 Census and General Social Survey testing would inform this, alongside stakeholder input.

Where a person provides a response to gender, this could potentially be used to assist with informing imputation for a non-binary response in the sex question. As people may write additional information alongside their response on paper forms, there will also be quality assurance activity looking at these details in the test to determine if it's relevant to interpreting their response or reflects sensitivities associated with the question.

There would need to be considerations around output of data from this variable, reporting of non-binary responses may not be possible for small geographic areas or small population groups due to confidentialisation. Options to produce state and territory level data are going to be explored further.

### **Statistical impacts**

The biggest concern with including a gender question is confusion of the purpose of this question for the non-target population. The question could be seen as repetition of the sex question, however the data quality benefit of separating the concepts of sex and gender may be higher than this risk. This will be assessed in the October field test.

In the target population, responses may be affected by a lack of trust of government and privacy concerns, which will reduce the representation of results. The limitations of the data would need to be communicated on release but could be seen positively by stakeholders as a step in the journey to more complete collection of LGBTI data in the 2026 Census.

Adding a question on gender identity could be perceived as controversial, sensitive or offensive, which may impact on responses to other questions. It is also believed that non-response or inaccuracy may be increased when responding on behalf of others in a household.

The ONS tested this topic with a split sample test of their Census. One sample included gender identity and sexual orientation questions, the other sample did not. The test did not



show any impact on the overall response rate between the two samples. A similar approach will be applied by the ABS to test these topics in the October field test. Statistics Canada and the UK NSOs are conducting further quantitative testing during 2019 including both gender identity and sexual orientation topics. Discussions will continue with NSOs to share learnings and inform options.

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## 8.5 Sexual orientation

<b>Topic Definition</b>	For persons over 15 years old, current sexual orientation
<b>Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<p><b>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</b></p> <p>A data need has been highlighted for the collection of sexual orientation (along with gender identity and intersex status) to allow for the development and delivery of services for the LGBTI community. This topic presents a risk to Census response due to the controversial nature of the topic. If it is considered for inclusion in the 2021 Census, then it will need to be assessed in the field test.</p> <p>In recognition of the data need, qualitative testing will continue to explore and identify ways to collect this topic in case direction is given to add this topic at a future date.</p>

### Data or policy needs

Stakeholders note that collecting sexual orientation in addition to non-binary sex and gender identity is needed to give a more complete picture of the LGBTI community.

Submissions expressed that experiences of marginalisation, stigma, isolation, prejudice, social exclusion, discrimination, abuse and violence in parts of the LGBTI community result in heightened mental health diagnosis, psychological distress, self-harm, suicide ideation, suicide attempts and experiences with homelessness. Impacts can span the LGBTI community and their families.

The lack of visibility of this population group in data means that they are omitted from being identified in reports, particularly those profiling vulnerable and priority populations. There is an identified need from organisations such as the Department of Social Services, Department of Health, National LGBTI Health Alliance, and a number of state and local government agencies for a reliable evidence base to inform better decision making on legislation, policies, budgetary investments and programs directly affecting the health and well-being of LGBTI people and their children/families.

Stakeholders highlighted a need to effectively evaluate national programs such as the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, Aged Care Diversity Framework, Ageing plan. Currently many of the programs and initiatives developed by governments and organisations supporting the LGBTI community are informed by anecdotal evidence, research outcomes from overseas, or research which is insufficient due to sampling, reach and scope.

Submissions indicated that a new Census topic on sexual orientation would have strong value across all levels of government and would allow targeted support to be developed nationally and in small areas.

## Respondent implications

This topic would require a single question, with a pre-defined list of response options, and a free text option. The question would only be asked of people over 15 years old and placed later in the form due to the potential sensitivity of the topic. If included, it is felt that the question would need to allow people to respond with 'don't know' or 'prefer not to answer' due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

During testing, versions of this question were well received by the target population. They were able to report their sexual orientation using the options provided, or the write in field. The majority of non-target population also responded well to the question in testing, although there was some surprise expressed about the question being asked on the Census. This was mostly by older respondents and they indicated that they would be unlikely to answer this question. When prompted they indicated that it wouldn't change their participation in the Census. An example of the question currently being tested is below:

**61 Does the person consider themselves to be:**  
• Mark all that apply, like this:

- Straight (Heterosexual)
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Different identity (please specify)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

The 'Different identity' option includes a grid for text entry:


The question used in testing needs further development to finalise terminology but the response options were clear. The majority were able and willing to provide a response, including on behalf of family members. In some cases, they indicated that they would check with their family member before responding.

## Operational feasibility

This topic has received in principle support from the Census operational managers, as being feasible to implement. With the concern raised around the sensitivity of this question and the potential effect on statistical impact.

There are considerations around the use of a free text response, specifically, that this would have data capture, repair, processing and coding effort attached.

There will be some orientations reported which have small numbers, consideration would need to be made about what output is intended/required for dissemination. This decision would impact on coding and editing rules.

There is currently a proposal to offer these questions with a multi-mark response option, this causes some complexity but can be addressed by carefully thinking through the required output variables and editing rules.

### Statistical impacts

There has been concern raised that in the target population, responses may be impacted by a lack of trust of government and privacy concerns, which would reduce the accuracy and representation of the results. This was expressed in testing mainly by older gay community, with younger people embracing the inclusion as important for their community.

More broadly, it is possible that members of the general public may take offence to being asked their sexual orientation. A recent report by the OECD notes that no census has ever asked questions on sexual orientation, and only a few nationally representative surveys contain such questions (15 OECD countries including Australia on the General Social Survey). General practice across these countries has been to administer the questions through interviews and to include a 'refuse to answer' or 'prefer not to say' response option. It is believed that the 'self-complete' nature of the Census may increase the risk of personal offence leading to non-response to this and other questions.

As noted in the discussion on gender identity, the ONS conducted a Census test with a split sample to identify an impact on response of asking questions on gender identity and sexual orientation. The test did not identify any significant impacts on response between the two samples.

It is also possible that groups against the inclusion of a sexual orientation topic on the Census, may lobby against the ABS, and affect participation in the Census. This tactic was seen during the 2016 Census in regard to the plans to retain name and address information. The risk of this occurring in regard to sexual orientation would be harder to measure through Census testing.

LGBTI advocacy groups have already indicated their intention to lobby the Government for the inclusion of this topic in the Census. Key messages will be developed for this situation.

The risk of statistical impact is considered too high at this point to include this topic in the recommendations. There will however continue to be some qualitative testing to prepare in case decision makers feel the risk is manageable, and that the topic should be included in the October field test.

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## Attachment A: 2021 Census new topic assessment summary

### Investigation summary of topics recommended for inclusion

	Data or policy need	Respondent implications	Operational feasibility	Statistical impacts
<p><b>Chronic health conditions</b> (diagnosed; lasting six months or more; list of most prevalent conditions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High demand for small area and small population group health conditions data</li> <li>Support from key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing well for accuracy and acceptability</li> <li>Some concern in reporting for others</li> <li>Some conditions, such as mental health, may have greater privacy implications, particularly in combination with other new topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant coding effort or dissemination demands</li> <li>QA against other sources such as the National Health Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be considered a personal topic in combination with other proposed additions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Australian Defence Force service</b> (current or previous service in ADF; regular and reserve forces)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium to high demand for data on veteran population to inform health &amp; mental health service delivery; understand employment outcomes &amp; experiences of homelessness</li> <li>Considered a vulnerable population group</li> <li>Strong support from stakeholders and bipartisan push</li> <li>No administrative data exists for veterans not currently accessing DVA services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would be asked only of 15+</li> <li>Testing well for accuracy and acceptability</li> <li>Positive response from non-ADF respondents on value of topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No significant coding effort or dissemination demands</li> <li>Minimal space on paper form required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not significant</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-binary sex</b> (third option for those born with variations in sex characteristics unable to respond male or female)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender</li> <li>Note this will <b>not</b> provide an accurate count of intersex people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing okay for accuracy and acceptability in qualitative testing</li> <li>More testing planned to refine wording of third option</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need further consideration of imputation, coding and dissemination</li> <li>Considered feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure impact on quality of male/female data in field test</li> <li>Implementation to consider how to minimise error and vandalism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender identity</b> (male, female, trans, gender diverse, other specify, prefer not to say)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to support these vulnerable groups</li> <li>Gender diverse seen as more vulnerable than lesbian/gay/bi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would be asked only of 15+, would have a 'prefer not to say' option and appear late in the form</li> <li>Current testing has shown understanding and response accuracy for both LGBTI and non-LGBTI participants</li> <li>Some concern in reporting for others</li> <li>More testing planned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort</li> <li>Considered feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say</li> <li>Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables such as name to be measured in field test</li> </ul>

Investigation summary of topics not recommended for inclusion

	<b>Data or policy need</b>	<b>Respondent implications</b>	<b>Operational feasibility</b>	<b>Statistical impacts</b>
<b>Sexual orientation</b> (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other specify, prefer not to say)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to vulnerable groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although this would be asked only of 15+ and have a 'prefer not to say' option, there are still concerns that people will take offence and there will be impact to the Census response rate.</li> <li>• Testing has not identified concerns with the topic in the target population.</li> <li>• Some reaction to the question by general population, mainly among older respondents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort</li> <li>• Considered feasible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say</li> <li>• Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables.</li> </ul>

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Basics

Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS

11/06/2019 08:24 AM

<b>Send</b>	To Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, cc Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Luise Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa bcc
<b>Subject</b>	For consideration: Census views on Topic recommendations [DLM=Sensitive] 
<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>Sensitive:</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <span style="float: right;"><b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/></span>
<b>Categories</b>	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Dear Teresa

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a second briefing providing a 'Census' perspective on the PaSSD recommendations on 2021 Census topics.

The attached table outlines whether Census agrees / disagrees with each of the recommendations based on our own impact / risk assessment based.



- 2019-06 - Census views on Topic recommendations - Final.docx

In considering the Census context, and in particular the backdrop of the privacy debate surrounding the 2016 Census (and previous Censuses) and the totality of impacts on respondent support for completion of the Census, two areas of disagreement are highlighted for your consideration. We would be happy to provide further information or clarification if required.

Chris and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the leadership provided by PaSSD during this review.

Regards

Bindi (and Chris)

**Bindi Kindermann**

Program Manager, 2021 Census  
Australian Bureau of Statistics

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**Executive Assistant:**

(P) [REDACTED] (E) [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au

Paul Jelfs

Dear Teresa, Luise (FYI)

05/06/2019 12:26:33 PM

From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS  
To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine  
Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, Luise  
McCulloch/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 05/06/2019 12:26 PM  
Subject: Fw: Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa

Dear Teresa,

Luise (FYI)

Please find attached a paper containing the recommendations for 2021 Census topics. The paper outlines the program of consultation and research led by the Population and Social Statistics Division and documents the recommendations for changes to the 2021 Census topics.

The attached briefing provides an overview of planned next steps and a timetable to support the recommendation to Government. We'd be happy to meet with you to walk you through the recommendations and next steps.

We would also be happy to bring this to the attention of the Census Delivery Board or the Census Executive Board should you consider this necessary as well.

As part of the briefing process engagements with the Minister will be needed, we would be able to assist in the briefing process (papers and meetings) should you and David need that support.



FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 4 June 2019.docx 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 040619.docx

Cheers,

Paul

**Dr Paul Jelfs**

*Senior Reconciliation Champion and  
General Manager, Population and Social Statistics Division*



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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 and present.*

# S22

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From: S22 /Staff/ABS To: Justine Bol...

11/06/2019 09:13:17 AM

From: [S22] /Staff/ABS  
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS  
Cc: [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS  
Date: 11/06/2019 09:13 AM  
Subject: Fw: For consideration: Census views on Topic recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]

**From:** Bindi Kindermann <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>  
**Date:** 11 June 2019 at 8:00:17 am ACST  
**To:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>  
**Cc:** [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>, [S22] <[S22]@abs.gov.au>  
Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Fw: For consideration: Census views on Topic recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]

Hi [S22]

You will see that our advice to Teresa suggests that to implement a gender question we would need to seek additional funding.

# S22

Bindi

## Bindi Kindermann

Program Manager, 2021 Census  
Australian Bureau of Statistics  
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**Executive Assistant:** [S22]  
(P) [S22] (E) [S22]@abs.gov.au

----- Forwarded by Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS on 11/06/2019 08:25 AM -----

From: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS  
To: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Luise Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS  
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*(See attached file: FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 4 June 2019.docx)(See attached file: 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 040619.docx)*

Cheers,

Paul

**Dr Paul Jelfs**  
*Senior Reconciliation Champion and  
General Manager, Population and Social Statistics Division*

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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 and present.*



2019-06 - Census views on Topic recommendations - Final.docx



FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 4 June 2019.docx2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 040619.docx

**Senate Economics Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Treasury Portfolio**

Supplementary Budget Estimates

2019 - 2020

**Division/Agency:** Australian Bureau of Statistics

**Question No:** 94

**Topic:** SBT94 - ABS - Sexual Orientation Census Data

**Reference:** Written *or* Hansard page (23 October 2019)

**Senator:** Janet Rice

**Question:**

1. Given that a number of national health and wellbeing policies, strategies and programs rightly identify LGBTI people as a priority population for action, how does the ABS justify the decision to not include the census questions about sexual orientation and gender identity?
2. How does the ABS expect to get an accurate data set when it deliberately leaves out questions that would enable the collection of vital data on key population groups?
3. What measures will the ABS be taking to collect data on these populations to better inform government decisions affecting LGBTIQ+ people, including healthcare and social services planning?
4. What was the text of the questions in relation to gender and sexuality that was included on the 20,000 unused census test forms?
5. The ABS publication 2089.0 Planning the 2021 Census, Australia refers to the role of the Census in collecting data on “the number and key characteristics of people in Australia on Census night”. Does the ABS consider that gender and sexual orientation are key characteristics?

**Answer:**

1. The final selection of topics for inclusion in the 2021 Census is a decision for Government informed by recommendations made by the ABS.

Determining which topics should be asked in a Census requires choices between competing alternatives. There is a limit to the number and type of questions that can be reasonably asked through a Census due to the burden on respondents; the ability of respondents to answer accurately; the space limitations of a paper form; and the cost of collecting and analysing the information collected.

The ABS held a public consultation on topics for the 2021 Census and received over 450 submissions. A paper was published in November 2018 outlining directions for new and existing topics resulting from the public consultation and stakeholder engagement. Several new topics were identified in this publication for further testing and exploration, including gender identity and sexual orientation.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2007.0.55.001main+features12021>





Basics

<b>Protective Mark</b>	UNCLASSIFIED
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <span style="float: right;"><b>Caveat</b></span> <input type="checkbox"/> NATIO

# Draft Topic Summary

## Chronic health conditions (NEW)

**Purpose of this document**


**Instructions for sign off by subject matter Program Manager**

<b>Questions relating to this topic:</b>	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC
<b>Census regulation wording</b> 📄	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC

<b>Contacts for this topic</b>	
<b>Subject matter areas: (primary and secondary)</b>	Health Outpost - Department of Health <span style="color: red;">CoEATSIS?</span>

**Topic summary**

<b>Initial direction from</b>	There are currently no health questions collected on the Census,
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<p><b>publication (2007.0 ) released prior to public consultation</b></p>	<p>however the inclusion of a health question has long been raised as a potential information need. A number of possible topics were suggested including long-term health conditions, self assessed health status and smoking status, with most stakeholders preferring the long-term health conditions question.</p> <p>While comprehensive health data is collected regularly through sample surveys, a continual information gap noted is the need for information on the health status of Australians for small geographic areas and for smaller population groups. This information would enable more precise targeting of programs and resources to assist in the prevention and treatment of chronic disease.</p>
<p><b>Summary of consultation topic suggestions</b></p>	<p>Stakeholders proposed a number of different health related topics and indicators for inclusion in the 2021 Census including weight, BMI, physical activity, nutrition, allergies, access to, and use of, health services, prevalence of veganism and swimming ability. These topics have been ruled out based on the fact that they were either not supported by sufficiently strong submissions against the criteria, are already collected in existing ABS health surveys, and/or have been identified as lower priority for collection than a chronic health conditions topic.</p> <p>Stakeholders agreed that a chronic health conditions topic collected in the 2021 Census would be beneficial as it would allow for cross-classification with other Census items, and would enable output for sub-populations (e.g. CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations) and at lower geographic levels than can be achieved through existing health collections. Stakeholders raised a broad range of conditions for consideration for inclusion in this topic including arthritis, diabetes, asthma, cancer, osteoporosis, chronic kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), mental health conditions, dementia, allergies, low prevalence chronic conditions (e.g. multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease and cerebral palsy), back pain etc. and these will need to be prioritised.</p>
<p><b>Summary of submissions and engagement</b></p> <p> All 2021 submissions received on - Chronic health conditions</p>	<p>Key stakeholders supporting the addition of a chronic health conditions topic were the Department of Health, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet - Indigenous Affairs Group, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) - National Institute for Dementia Research. Other interested stakeholders included academics, community and industry group organisations, state and local government.</p> <p><b>Engagement discussion outcomes:</b>  <b>2021 Submissions or related submissions:</b></p>

**Topic assessment against criteria**

<p>The topic is of <b>current national importance</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data is required for an electoral or legislative purpose</i></li> <li>• <i>data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring</i></li> <li>• <i>data is used for research purposes</i></li> </ul>	<p>There is a high demand for chronic health conditions data at the local level to monitor change under the health reform agreement, and various other reporting frameworks and initiatives and to measure changes in disease prevalence at the local level. While the National Health Survey can provide information on prevalence at the national level and broad sub-state areas, it cannot provide data at more detailed sub-state levels.</p> <p>The National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions (the Framework) conservatively estimates chronic conditions incur direct health care costs of at least \$27 billion or 36% of allocated health expenditure in 2008-09. The Framework identifies 'Data and information' as a specific enabler to give effect to successful policies, actions and services to achieve better health outcomes. One of three objectives of the Framework is to 'Target priority populations'. This objective recognises that "Chronic conditions impact all Australians, but some populations are disproportionately affected" (p.42).</p> <p>Nationally consistent, local level, quality data are required to support policy development, planning and service delivery, and program monitoring for these smaller priority populations across urban, regional, rural and remote locations. These include, but are not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; older Australians; carers of people with chronic conditions; and people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>According to the 2014-15 National Health Survey, one in every two Australians (50%) have at least one chronic health condition (i.e. arthritis, asthma, back pain, cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes or mental health). Nearly a quarter of all Australians (23%), and three in every five Australians (60%) aged over 65 years, had two or more chronic conditions. Disease burden from chronic conditions is significant for the Australian population and their management is a major challenge within the health system. The importance of this burden is reflected in the development of the Framework and various current national and state based strategies, policies and programs. During consultation to develop the Framework, feedback highlighted the need for progress against the Framework to be monitored in a consistent manner and informed by a nationally agreed set of performance measures which, where possible, align with Australia's international reporting commitments.</p> <p>Link to the Framework can be found here:  <a href="http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/A0F1B6D61796CF3DCA257E4D001AD4C4/\$File/National%20Strategic%20Framework%20for%20Chronic%20Conditions.pdf">http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/A0F1B6D61796CF3DCA257E4D001AD4C4/\$File/National%20Strategic%20Framework%20for%20Chronic%20Conditions.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - data has a specific</li> </ul>	<p>The collective submissions provide strong support for this data need. This addition is considered to meet the national importance criterion to a <b>high</b> extent.</p>

<p>legislative purpose and/or is used across policy domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium -data is used to inform some policy or program or in important research</li> <li>• Low - data is used to a limited extent in policy or program development or research</li> </ul>	
<p>There is a <b>need for data</b> from a Census of the <b>whole population</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data is needed for small population groups</i></li> <li>• <i>data is needed for small geographic areas</i></li> <li>• <i>the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the Census</i></li> </ul>	<p>Inclusion of a chronic conditions topic in the 2021 Census would provide improved information on the prevalence of chronic conditions at the local level and for particular population groups. This would also lead to an improved ability to develop effective policies and programs to target health services to areas of need and to evaluate their outcomes. It would also assist with better understanding the social determinants that increase the likelihood of developing a chronic condition.</p> <p>Data on prevalence of chronic conditions from a Census would support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Health Networks (PHNs) which are focusing on the health of the populations within their regions, including whether some groups are more at risk of poor health outcomes than others. PHNs have a key role in ensuring that health services are more accessible and tailored to their community's needs, supporting general practitioners and other health professionals to deliver high quality care, and improving care coordination for those at risk of poor health outcomes;</li> <li>• Local, regional and national targets that are determined by the Closing the Gap refresh, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have access to effective health care services in urban, regional, rural and remote locations; and</li> <li>• Stronger remote, rural and regional health outcomes by informing planning for health workforce distribution and health care infrastructure.</li> <li>• Delivery to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities of targeted services where interpretation services and culturally appropriate care are required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - critical need for data at the small population or</li> </ul>	<p>This topic meets the criteria on the need for data from a Census of the whole population to a <b>high</b> extent.</p>

<p>small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - some need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables</li> <li>• Low - no significant need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic can be <b>accurately collected</b> in a form which the <b>household completes themselves.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic is likely to be easily understood by respondents</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions</i></li> <li>• <i>respondents will easily know the answer to the question(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>the question(s) is easy and quick to answer</i></li> </ul>	<p>Short question modules on health conditions are currently collected in a number of ABS and non-ABS surveys using a range of collection modes including face to face personal interview and self enumeration. Cognitive testing from these surveys indicates a high level of ease of understanding for self completion of questions of this nature. Timing from dress rehearsals indicates that the question is quick to answer.</p> <p>A lot of testing on a potential chronic health conditions question was done in the lead up to the 2016 Census and this can be reviewed to inform testing.</p> <p>Conditions of particular interest to the Department of Health were noted as dementia, arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, chronic kidney disease, diabetes and mental health conditions (depression and anxiety). Allergies was also added as a topic of interest by other submitters. Work will need to be done to explore the best way to present questions in a way that encourages accurate response.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - almost all applicable respondents</li> </ul>	<p>The topic is considered to meet the accuracy criterion to a <b>medium</b> extent.</p>

<p>are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question; development work may be required to explore concept.</li> <li>• Low - a significant proportion of applicable respondents are either unable to understand or know the answer to the question.</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic would be <b>acceptable to Census respondents</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic is not likely to be considered intrusive, offensive or controversial</i></li> <li>• <i>respondents are likely to be willing and able to answer accurately</i></li> <li>• <i>are there other considerations for specific groups?</i></li> </ul>	<p>Evidence from national health collections indicates there is wide spread acceptance and understanding amongst the Australian population of the importance of high quality health statistics. Feedback received from stakeholders indicated that the inclusion of a health question may increase participants' willingness to complete the Census as they can see the purpose of such a question. At the same time, it is noted that the collection of data on chronic conditions may have some limitations e.g. the potential sensitivity of the topic for some individuals, some individuals may be unwilling or unable to identify as having a particular condition, family members may identify household members as having a condition without a formal diagnosis, or alternatively in the case of a group household, members of the household may not elect to share this information with others in the house.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 4:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - the question is not</li> </ul>	<p>The topic is considered to meet the acceptability criterion to a <b>medium</b> extent.</p>

<p>offensive or controversial and the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able and willing to answer it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - the question may be offensive to some applicable respondents or may cause some controversy</li> <li>• Low - the question is likely to be offensive to a significant proportion of respondents or is highly controversial.</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic can be <b>collected efficiently</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic or question will not present major difficulties for coding the information</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic or question will not require extensive processing</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic will not require a lengthy instruction or explanation</i></li> <li>• <i>the collection of data on the topic will not</i></li> </ul>	<p>While testing will be required, it is expected, based on findings from other surveys collecting similar information, that this question will be easy to code and process and will require only a few lines of additional explanation. It is estimated that around eight response categories will be included.</p>

<p><i>require a large number of response categories or multiple questions</i></p>	
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 5 subject to closer estimation of cost impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● High - the topic won't require detailed explanatory text and can be collected in a single question with tick box response options.</li> <li>● Medium - the topic may require some explanatory text, multiple questions, or need to be collected in a form that will require some coding</li> <li>● Low - the topic requires significant explanatory text, multiple questions or require the data to be collected in a free text field that will need coding.</li> </ul>	<p>The topic is considered to meet the efficiency criterion to a <b>high</b> extent.</p>
<p>There is likely to be a <b>continuing need for data</b> on the topic in the following Census.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>there is a need</i></li> </ul>	<p>There is a continuing need for data on chronic conditions to provide ongoing information about the provision of services given the high proportion of expenditure on health services and impact on quality of life. The longitudinal data arising from this time series will provide another powerful tool in assessing health outcomes arising from policies and programs, directing further policy development, and providing warning signs of emerging issues.</p>



<p><i>for time series data on the topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future</i></li> </ul>	<p>Integration with other sources of information would also contribute to the value of longitudinal data collection.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 6:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - critical current need for time series data and/or certain need for data in 2026</li> <li>• Medium - significant current need for time series data and/or likely need for data in 2026</li> <li>• Low - no significant current need for time series data and/or unlikely that data will be needed in 2026</li> </ul>	<p>The topic is considered to meet the continuing need criterion to a <b>high</b> extent.</p>
<p>There are <b>no other suitable alternative data sources</b> or solutions that could meet the topic need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data which is collected for administrative purposes</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic is collected in an ABS survey or by another organisation</i></li> <li>• <i>data is produced through integration of existing data sources</i></li> </ul>	<p>Data on long term health conditions is collected via a number of ABS surveys, particularly the ABS National Health Survey and the ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. These will continue to be important in providing high quality information at the broad level and to allow the data to be correlated with other detailed health information including risk factors and use of health services. However, being sample surveys they do not provide disaggregated data at the finer geographic area level or sub-population level.</p> <p>A range of public and private sector data sources exist including disease registers, Medicare Benefits Schedule, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and hospital records, each of these has limitations relating cross classification or limited information on health conditions. Is it also worth noting that most of this existing data provides information about the 'treated' or 'serviced' population but that health need (the health status of individuals who are receiving treatment and those who are not) is currently not addressed through current survey and administrative data sources.</p> <p>While some information on chronic health conditions is available at the local level from modelling of national-level health collections, these</p>

	concentrate on a limited set of sub-state geographies only and do not include data for small population groups such as culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The inclusion of a chronic conditions topic in the Census would provide greater flexibility for producing information for a wider range of geographies as well as for specific population groups within Australia.
<b>Preliminary rating for criterion 7:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - no suitable alternate data source available</li> <li>• Medium - suitable alternate data source available</li> <li>• Low - highly suitable alternate data source available</li> </ul>	This topic is considered to meet the no suitable data sources criterion to a <b>high</b> extent.

## Assessment for preliminary recommendation of topic

<p><b>Explanation of the preliminary recommendation section of this document.</b></p> <p>The preliminary recommendations from the submission and engagement phase of the topic review will be published in late November 2018. The preliminary recommendations are those that are undergoing further investigation, testing and proceeding to question development for possible inclusion in the set of final recommendations that will go to the Australian Government in mid 2019. Minor changes to question wording do not require Government approval and testing of these will continue as needed.</p> <p>All topics will be assessed at the close of submissions in July 2018. The assessment categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep existing topic</li> <li>• strong/limited/insufficient case to proceed with the topic to the next stage of investigation, testing and review (for proposed new topic or changes to existing topic)</li> <li>• remove existing topic</li> </ul> <p>For topics that do proceed to the next stage, their assessment at that stage will be noted. It is expected that some topics that start as a 'limited case' will develop to a 'strong case' as more discussions are held and research undertaken. Other topics will develop to an 'insufficient case'. The former will continue to be assessed for inclusion in the preliminary recommendations. The latter will no longer be considered for inclusion.</p>	
<b>At close of submissions, what is the rating of the topic to proceed to the next stage of review</b>	The preliminary assessment of direction is <b>strong case to proceed</b> with a new topic. It is recommended that this assessment is discussed at the peer review workshop and moderated against other topics to determine whether further exploration of the data need with users and testing of the proposed change is

for inclusion in the 2021 Census?	recommended.  <b>This assessment of direction and ratings of the topic against each criterion at close of submissions is endorsed by Justine Boland on 6 August 2018</b>
Feedback from external fora - PSSAG, SSF and ASAC (19 July and 1 August 2018)	PSSAG members discussed this proposed topic as having an appropriate administrative data alternative in the My Health Record. This is not a valid alternative, but indicated a need to prepare talking points on this ahead of the preliminary paper release.  ASAC 1/8 - 📄 Chronic health condition - good run; number of people supported. PJ made case around modelling data and connected with other data source combination. No real worry about.
First internal peer review feedback and rating (8 August 2018)	📄 2021 Census Topic Review - Peer Review 8 August 2018 [key documents]  Discussion at the peer review resulted in a rating of <b>strong case to proceed</b> with this topic. Next stage will be further engagement and testing (details to be captured here: 📄)
ABS Executive Board feedback and rating (13 August 2018)	
Census Delivery Committee feedback and rating (14 August 2018)	
Census Executive Board feedback and rating (11 September 2018)	
Second internal peer review feedback and rating (October 2018)	<i>[to be reviewed by subject matter Program Manager]</i>
Final feedback from ASAC (14 November 2018)	
Recommendation in Preliminary Recommendation publication	

**Final recommendation to Cabinet**

Is this topic recommended for inclusion in 2021?	
Comments	



Basics

<b>Protective Mark</b>	<b>UNCLASSIFIED</b>
<b>Information management markers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy <b>Caveat</b> <input type="checkbox"/> NATIO

# Draft Topic Summary

## Australian Defence Force indicator (NEW)

**Purpose of this document**

**Instructions for sign off by subject matter Program Manager**

**Instructions for sign off by subject matter Program Manager**  
Program Managers are asked to review the rating of high/medium/low for each assessment criteria.  
Program Managers are asked to review the overall assessment of:

- keep existing topic
- strong/limited/insufficient case to proceed with the topic to the next stage of investigation, testing and review (for proposed new topic or changes to existing topic)
- remove existing topic

All fields requiring review in this document appear in yellow boxes for ease of reference. If you have any questions about the assessment, see the NSC Director/outpost in the first instance. If you have any questions about the process, see S22 in the 2021 Census topic review team.

<b>Questions relating</b>	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC - New question would need to be developed and
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<b>to this topic:</b>	tested in a Census context
<b>Census regulation wording</b> 📄	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC - This would be a new topic to add to the regulation.

<b>Contacts for this topic</b>	
<b>Subject matter areas: (primary and secondary)</b>	Mental Health and Disability

## Topic summary

<b>Initial direction from publication (2007.0) released prior to public consultation</b>	A data need which has continued to be raised is gaining an understanding of the population who have previously served, or are currently serving in the Australian Defence Force. Understanding the demographic characteristics of this population, including where they live and their social and economic circumstances would allow for better service planning and delivery.
<b>Summary of consultation topic suggestions</b>	<p>Submissions have indicated a need for data on people who have served, or are currently serving, in the Australian Defence Force in Australia. The Census would allow stakeholders to accurately estimate numbers of people in the Australian population who have ever served, and to learn more about the veteran population based on age, sex, geographic distribution, employment status etc. There also needs to be further consideration on how to include reservists.</p> <p>Suggestions included additional follow ups on whether someone who has served is a client of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and whether they have served overseas (including where). It is felt that both these needs are more complex and would be secondary to the initial data need. Hence, the assessment below has focused only on the Defence Force indicator as a new topic.</p>
<b>Summary of submissions and engagement</b>  📄 All 2021 submissions received on - Australian Defence Force indicator	<p>Three submissions were received including from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL). DVA notes that the submission was developed in consultation with, and has the support of, the Department of Defence ("Defence") and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare ("AIHW"). The Homelessness Statistics Reference Group support the proposal outlined by DVA to identify veterans experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>DVA has clarified the need to include reservists in the ADF identifier and ideally would like there to be further clarification of reservist category:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Only ever served in the Reserves, no Continuous Full Time Service (CFTS)</li> <li>● Served in the Reserves before and/or after a period of CFTS</li> </ul>

- Never in the Reserves, only had CFTS  
DVA are keen to work with the ABS to test/consider options/practicality of wording

**2021 Submissions or related submissions:**

**Topic assessment against criteria**

<p>The topic is of <b>current national importance.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data is required for an electoral or legislative purpose</i></li> <li>• <i>data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring</i></li> <li>• <i>data is used for research purposes</i></li> </ul>	<p>Against the criteria of national importance, this topic primarily meets the criteria for the purposes of policy development, planning or program monitoring. The information would also be of value for research purposes to better understand characteristics and outcomes for people with current or previous service in the Australian Defence Force.</p> <p>Some of the policy drivers are linked to recognition of veterans' "special needs status" under the Aged Care Act 1997 which was granted by the Australian Government in 2001. The provision is extended to persons that served in the ADF, their partners, widows/ers and dependents based on the sacrifices and hardships endured by their service and the service of their partners. A range of published health studies show that ex-serving ADF members have distinct characteristics and health needs (e.g. muscular skeletal, mental health, access to services) that require special consideration due to their military training, service and deployments. Recent public attention has also focused on non-health issues, such as employment outcomes post-separation, homelessness and the challenges faced by families of veterans.</p> <p>The "special needs" status relates to planning and allocation of aged care facilities, specialist medical and mental health support, the data collected will be an invaluable tool to government, non government groups and medical providers. Data would enable targeted deployment of important assets to provide welfare and support services to serving and ex-serving members of the ADF and their families.</p> <p>The Australian Government has funded DVA to undertake its single biggest change since its inception in 1918; the Veteran Centric Reform Program, which was initiated in 2015 and commenced in 2017. The Government are driving the change with expectations for DVA to modernise, become more proactive, become data driven and, ultimately, improve the client experience. To do so, reliable and comprehensive data about veterans' life circumstances at each stage after leaving the ADF is critical to enable better planning and modelling for new service development and delivery.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - data has a specific legislative purpose and/or is used across policy</li> </ul>	<p>The national importance of this topic is rated as <b>medium</b>. There are national policy drivers for supporting those who have served with the Australian Defence Force, and having this data would aid in the delivery and monitoring of services against this policy.</p>

<p>domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium -data is used to inform some policy or program or in important research</li> <li>• Low - data is used to a limited extent in policy or program development or research</li> </ul>	
<p>There is a <b>need for data</b> from a Census of the <b>whole population</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data is needed for small population groups</i></li> <li>• <i>data is needed for small geographic areas</i></li> <li>• <i>the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the Census</i></li> </ul>	<p>Against the criteria of needing data from a Census of the whole population, the population of interest would be spread across a range of geographic regions and small population groups. There is currently no comprehensive data on the total number of veterans in Australia. Estimates by DVA based on historical modelling and data, and from research using ABS surveys, vary from around 600,000 to as many as 780,000 veterans. A Census of the whole population would, first and foremost, be able to definitively answer the critical question "how many veterans are there?".</p> <p>In addition, it would build from there to provide other essential information such as the age structure of the whole veteran population, how they are geographically distributed across Australia, whether that distribution varies by any particular characteristics (for example age, sex, employment status or household structure), and whether it coincides with the current availability of services and support.</p> <p>While DVA has some demographic information about the veterans who are clients, this is estimated as perhaps only 20 per cent of all veterans from contemporary conflicts. Anecdotal evidence currently indicates that there are many ex-ADF members in remote locations and the data gathered will provide information on where specialist professional support is required.</p> <p>RSL note that since 1999 there has been a significant increase in the number of people serving in the ADF, many with Overseas Operational and Peace Keeping Service and as such, having accurate data to demonstrate the need for veteran services or assistance, at both local and state level, would be extremely beneficial to the government, care providers and ex-service organisations.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - critical need for data at the small population or small area level or for</li> </ul>	<p>In terms of the need for data from the whole population, this topic is rated as <b>high</b>. It is anticipated that the in scope population would be spread across multiple regions and would have representation from a number of small population groups.</p>



<p>cross-tab with other Census variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - some need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables</li> <li>• Low - no significant need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic can be <b>accurately collected</b> in a form which the <b>household completes themselves</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic is likely to be easily understood by respondents</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions</i></li> <li>• <i>respondents will easily know the answer to the question(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>the question(s) is easy and quick to answer</i></li> </ul>	<p>Current or previous service in the ADF is included in ABS household surveys including the NHS.</p> <p>Other NSOs including the ONS and Stats Canada have done extensive testing of this topic and developed questions that have performed well and will be included in their next Censuses.</p> <p>It is felt that questions could be developed which are easily understood and capture accurate information, however testing would be required to refine wording, response categories and instruction.</p> <p>Information from other NSOs and ABS collections can be used to inform testing 📄.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - almost all applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily</li> </ul>	<p>The topic is rated <b>high</b> in terms of the ability to accurately collect details in a form that households complete themselves.</p>

<p>understand and answer the question</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question; development work may be required to explore concept.</li> <li>• Low - a significant proportion of applicable respondents are either unable to understand or know the answer to the question.</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic would be <b>acceptable to Census respondents</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic is not likely to be considered intrusive, offensive or controversial</i></li> <li>• <i>respondents are likely to be willing and able to answer accurately</i></li> <li>• <i>are there other considerations for specific groups?</i></li> </ul>	<p>DVA quote that testing by the ONS found 88 per cent of those answering the test question thought it was acceptable to ask on their 2021 Census, and 81 per cent thought it was acceptable to answer an armed forces question on behalf of someone else in the household (ONS 2017). DVA feels that veterans are commonly proud of their service and asking people about whether they have ever served in the ADF is unlikely to be perceived as being intrusive or offensive.</p> <p>Questions could cause some concern for those having served in the defence force in other countries feeling they can't report their service. There may also be Veterans who do not wish to remember or be associated with their service.</p> <p>Concerns have been raised with the ONS about security risk associated with currently serving members identifying. While including the currently serving response option in the question leads to better data quality, they are testing options without in case there is a heightened security risk prior to the next Census and they need to modify the question based on political pressure.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 4:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - the question is not</li> </ul>	<p>This topic is rated as <b>medium</b> against the criteria of being acceptable to Census respondents. While there are some instances where individuals may be sensitive about responding, the questions are generally considered acceptable.</p>

<p>offensive or controversial and the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able and willing to answer it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medium - the question may be offensive to some applicable respondents or may cause some controversy</li> <li>• Low - the question is likely to be offensive to a significant proportion of respondents or is highly controversial.</li> </ul>	
<p>The topic can be <b>collected efficiently</b>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the topic or question will not present major difficulties for coding the information</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic or question will not require extensive processing</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic will not require a lengthy instruction or explanation</i></li> <li>• <i>the collection of data on the</i></li> </ul>	<p>The topic would not require extensive coding or processing. A data linking exercise to add flags for DVA clients could take more processing, but would save on the number of questions required.</p>

<p><i>topic will not require a large number of response categories or multiple questions</i></p>	
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 5 subject to closer estimation of cost impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - the topic won't require detailed explanatory text and can be collected in a single question with tick box response options.</li> <li>• Medium - the topic may require some explanatory text, multiple questions, or need to be collected in a form that will require some coding</li> <li>• Low - the topic requires significant explanatory text, multiple questions or require the data to be collected in a free text field that will need coding.</li> </ul>	<p>The topic would be collected efficiently and is rated as <b>high</b> against this criteria.</p>
<p>There is likely to be a <b>continuing need for data</b> on the topic in the following Census.</p>	<p>DVA note that changes in the tempo of Australian deployments can significantly influence the number and characteristics of those leaving the ADF so the size and characteristics of the veteran population changes over time, making regular updates important. Changes in mortality rates over time also mean regular updates will be needed. A time series would be very valuable for understanding the life journey of those who have</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>there is a need for time series data on the topic</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future</i></li> </ul>	<p>ever served in the ADF in the years and decades after separation.</p> <p>It should be considered whether there would be significant enough change within the Census five year cycle to warrant collection on every Census. Having the additional capture of information could help significantly with planning of services, however snapshots every ten years may assist with keeping service delivery current and monitoring changes and improvements over time.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 6:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - critical current need for time series data and/or certain need for data in 2026</li> <li>• Medium - significant current need for time series data and/or likely need for data in 2026</li> <li>• Low - no significant current need for time series data and/or unlikely that data will be needed in 2026</li> </ul>	<p>While there is likely to be a continuing need to understand changes and shifts in this population, it may be sufficient to capture a snapshot once every ten years. Hence this topic has been rated as <b>medium</b> against the criteria of having a continued need.</p>
<p>There are <b>no other suitable alternative data sources</b> or solutions that could meet the topic need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data which is collected for administrative purposes</i></li> <li>• <i>the topic is collected in an ABS survey or by another organisation</i></li> <li>• <i>data is produced through integration of</i></li> </ul>	<p>Data relating to veterans who have left the ADF and are not engaged with DVA are particularly scarce and even for DVA clients the available data are mostly related to health service use, not broader aspects of a person's wellbeing. DVA's examination of alternative data sources or solutions, including nominal rolls, administrative data, surveys and data integration, has been extensive and highlighted the significant data gaps that still exist that cannot be filled using other data sources.</p> <p>Alternate sources noted and considered inadequate by DVA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defence Administrative Data</li> <li>• ABS Surveys</li> <li>• Comsuper Military Superannuation schemes data matched with National Deaths information.</li> <li>• Nominal rolls</li> <li>• Medicare enrolments database - mainly includes those currently in contact with DVA.</li> </ul> <p>It is felt that there is currently no suitable alternative data sources that</p>

<p><i>existing data sources</i></p>	<p>completely fulfil the needs outlined. Capturing data on the Census may also support the potential for integrating with other data sources and providing more robust detail to assist with planning, monitoring and service delivery.</p>
<p><b>Preliminary rating for criterion 7:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High - no suitable alternate data source available</li> <li>• Medium - suitable alternate data source available</li> <li>• Low - highly suitable alternate data source available</li> </ul>	<p>This topic has been rated as <b>high</b> against the criteria as there are no <i>suitable</i> alternative data sources.</p> <p>It's noted that none of the alternative sources completely deliver against the data needs, as those not accessing services are the data gap. The admin data does however provides useful information that assists service delivery.</p>

## Assessment for preliminary recommendation of topic

Explanation of the preliminary recommendation section of this document.	
<p><b>At close of submissions, what is the rating of the topic to proceed to the next stage of review for inclusion in the 2021 Census?</b></p>	<p>The preliminary assessment of direction is <b>limited case to proceed</b> with investigating the addition of this topic. It is recommended that this assessment is discussed at the peer review workshop and moderated against other topics to determine whether further exploration of the data need with users and testing of the proposed change is recommended.</p> <p><b>This assessment of direction and ratings of the topic against each criterion at close of submissions is endorsed by Justine Boland on 6 August 2018</b></p> <p><b>Justine - based on <span style="background-color: black; color: black;">S22</span> feedback we have reviewed the assessment of criterion 7 to high, but still believe that the medium rating against criterion 1 makes this as a limited rather than a strong case for a new topic. Noting my clarification that we will still continue to investigate and develop options for this topic, I am happy with the rating.</b></p>
<p><b>Feedback from external fora - PSSAG (19 July), SSF (25 July) and ASAC (1 August 2018)</b></p>	<p>PSSAG members did not support the collection of topics such as ADF service and NDIS support as they felt that this information should be sourced from administrative data and shouldn't occupy valuable real estate on the Census. <b>PSSAG discussions did not address the historical gap associated with this data. (That's my understanding - and I think it is worth nothing this point.)</b></p> <p>There was no discussion of this topic at SSF.</p>

	ASAC 1/8 - 📄 Little appetite for this as it was felt admin data should be utilised.
<b>First internal peer review feedback and rating (8 August 2018)</b>	📄 2021 Census Topic Review - Peer Review 8 August 2018 [key documents] Discussion at the peer review resulted in a rating of <b>moderate case to proceed</b> with this topic. Next stage will be further engagement and testing (details to be captured here: 📄)
<b>ABS Executive Board feedback and rating (13 August 2018)</b>	
<b>Census Delivery Committee feedback and rating (14 August 2018)</b>	
<b>Census Executive Board feedback and rating (11 September 2018)</b>	
<b>Second internal peer review feedback and rating (October 2018)</b>	<i>[to be reviewed by subject matter Program Manager]</i>
<b>Final feedback from ASAC (14 November 2018)</b>	
<b>Recommendation in Preliminary Recommendation publication</b>	

<b>Final recommendation to Cabinet</b>
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<b>Is this topic recommended for inclusion in 2021?</b>	
<b>Comments</b>	