

Basics

Dean Bowley/Staff/ABS

03/08/2018 12:26 PM

Send	<p>To 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS</p> <p>cc S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS</p> <p>bcc</p>
Subject	Re: FOR ACTION: 2021 Census topic summaries for your endorsement by 3 August (Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Topics) 📎
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"/>
Categories	3. Topic Domains\2021 Topic Summaries

G'day S22,

thanks. You can consider that I have agreed as PM to my areas, and I will get to the forms this afternoon to finalise

Dean
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Kaurna meyunna, Kaurna yerta ngudlu tampendi
 (Recognising Kaurna people and Kaurna land)
 The traditional custodians of the Adelaide Plain

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Hi Dean, Thanks for the...

03/08/2018 11:53:09 AM

From: 2021 Census Content Development WDB
 To: Dean Bowley/Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS S22
S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22
S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 03/08/2018 11:53 AM
Subject: Re: FOR ACTION: 2021 Census topic summaries for your endorsement by 3 August (Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Topics)
Sent by: S22

Hi Dean,

Thanks for the questions.

Regarding the cross cutting reflection of issues, I have made changes to a number of summaries. I've indicated the change in orange text and that it was made after NSC sign off and before PM endorsement.

📎 (Subject: Household/family relationships - topic summary; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created: 10/05/2018; Doc Ref: KGRY-AYLUSW) **to reflect complexity and need for consideration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population**

📎 (Subject: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (NEW) - topic summary; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created: 09/05/2018; Doc Ref: KGRY-AYL37Y) **I had already made a comment about ancestry/language and increasing relevance to this summary after the discussion with Deb on Tuesday. I've added a new statement to the PM endorsement about the undercount and relevance**

📎 (Subject: Unpaid care (of child(ren)) - topic summary; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created: 10/05/2018; Doc Ref: KGRY-AYLV2Z) **added statement about relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population**

📎 (Subject: Unpaid work (volunteering) - topic summary; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created: 10/05/2018; Doc Ref: KGRY-AYLV48) **ditto**

In each of these topic summaries I've modified the governance feedback section to include the round table. I've also done this in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status question, ancestry 📎, main language other than English spoken at home 📎 and religious affiliation 📎 [the cultural diversity ones are in Denise's area of responsibility]

Hope this addresses the questions.

cheers,

S22

Dean Bowley

Good morning, I have discussed and reviewed...

03/08/2018 11:27:56 AM

Basics

Dean Bowley/Staff/ABS

03/08/2018 11:27 AM

Send	To 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Subject	Re: FOR ACTION: 2021 Census topic summaries for your endorsement by 3 August (Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Topics) 📎

Protective Mark	
Categories	3. Topic Domains\2021 Topic Summaries
Visibility	Public
Editors	S22 /Staff/ABS, [Wkgroup]
Last modified	03/08/2018 11:29:24 AM By Notes Agent/SYS/ABS
Document Id	DCOO-B3A3RW

Good morning,

I have discussed and reviewed all these topics with my directors, and am comfortable with them, with two questions.

How do I indicate that there is the cross cutting issue of reducing the indigenous undercount and the Census content is a motivation? For example have we considered "Kinship" care in the unpaid care of children? The complex family relationships in Indigenous culture? Using standard responses to volunteering to identify community work as Indigenous people in their communities?

As S22 has indicated elsewhere, we will be consulting through our Indigenous Round Table, and I would like this identified in the "Feedback from External Fora" part of the documents

Could you provide me advice on how to indicate these concerns in the feedback forms?

regards

Dean

Dean Bowley

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2021 Census Content Development WDB

Dear Dean, FOR ACTIO...










01/08/2018 03:50:06 PM

From: 2021 Census Content Development WDB
To: Dean Bowley/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 01/08/2018 03:50 PM
Subject: FOR ACTION: 2021 Census topic summaries for your endorsement by 3 August (Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Topics)
Sent by: S22

Dear Dean,

FOR ACTION - review and endorsement of 2021 Census topic summaries

Further to the earlier email on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander topic summaries, attached are doclinks to the summary documents for the more of the existing and proposed Census topics that are in your subject matter area. The last one remaining is sex and gender which is still being finalised with feedback from Demography.

Subject	Overall assessment
 Household/family relationships	The preliminary assessment of direction is strong case for change to existing topic.
 Registered marital status	The preliminary assessment of direction is keep existing topic .
 Person temporarily absent	The preliminary assessment of direction is keep the existing topic with recognition of the potential to explore changes in relation to a wider review of household and family relationship topics.
 Shared care of children (NEW)	The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with changes to existing topic/or new topic.
 Unpaid care (of child(ren))	The preliminary assessment of direction is insufficient case for change to existing topic.
 Unpaid work (domestic activities)	The preliminary assessment of direction is that there is insufficient case to retain the existing topic and it could be considered for removal . The stakeholder impact of this will have to be carefully considered and could be discussed in the context of a possible TUS. Although they didn't put in a submission, the Office for Women (PM&C) are important stakeholders, as are DSS. The sensitivity of this topic as a gender issue should also be noted.
 Unpaid work (volunteering)	The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with change to existing topic.
 Sexual orientation (NEW)	The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with investigating a new topic. This is an area of strong community interest evidenced by the number of submissions received. It is also an area where community attitudes are changing rapidly both in Australia and internationally. Although there are some low ratings on some criteria it would be prudent to continue investigation of this area.
 Subjective wellbeing (NEW)	The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with investigating the addition of this topic.

These documents summarise the input that we received from the consultation and submissions process. We have been working with your team to agree on the assessment and ratings for each topic. The assessment is to determine whether the topic continues to be considered for addition or change in the 2021 Census. The next stage of the process is an internal peer review that will sense check the initial ratings. Topics prioritised at the peer review will move on to data need definition and testing.

What we need from you:

What we need from you:

- review the rating of high/medium/low for each assessment criteria

- review the overall assessment, classified as one of the following:
 - keep existing topic
 - case to proceed with the topic to the next stage of investigation, testing and review (for proposed new topic or changes to existing topic)
 - strong - discuss at peer review
 - limited - discuss at peer review
 - insufficient - no further consideration required
 - remove existing topic
- indicate your endorsement in the Assessment for Preliminary Recommendation box at the bottom of each summary.

The topic summary document follows a template that contains all the information that is important for us summarise and assess the topic. This includes links to the submissions and explanatory text, including the assessment criteria and explanation of what high/medium/low indicates. It may look overwhelming at first glance, but there's not a huge amount of material to read. We hope that it will take you no more than 15 to 20 minutes for topics where change is proposed or where we received a lot of submissions, and quicker for the recommendations to 'keep existing topic'.

Could you please complete your review of these summaries by **Friday 3 August**.

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, please contact me.

cheers,
Caroline

S22 [REDACTED]

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) (S22 [REDACTED]) (M) (S22 [REDACTED])

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

To: Teresa Dickinson
Deputy Australian Statistician

Date Due: 14 June 2019

Through: Paul Jelfs
General Manager – Population and
Social Statistics

Purpose: For action:
For information:

Contact Officer: Justine Boland, S22

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
Comments:				
R2. Present the recommendations and planned process for making a recommendation to Government to the Australian Statistician for approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
Comments:				

Overview and proposed timetable

- 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.
- We are seeking your endorsement of the recommendations and provision to the Australian Statistician for approval.
- The following timetable and communications are planned to support recommendations on content to the Government. This timetable accommodates time for finalising the forms and setting up operations for processing data.

Planned activities to support 2021 Census content recommendations to Government	Planned timing
Inclusion of reference to 2021 Census content in the Incoming Government Brief	Late May / early June
Briefing for Minister <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Ministerial briefing recommending 2021 Census content will be prepared for transmission in June 2019. It is anticipated that the Statistician will meet with the Minister in June or July, with Census topic recommendations expected to be discussed as part of the meeting. Briefing material will be prepared. The Minister can approve the recommendations or may choose to put them to Cabinet for a decision. A separate Officer level meeting to discuss content will be sought with Ministerial staff as soon as possible after the election. 	Mid June

<p>Cabinet submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Census Content team will prepare draft content for the Cabinet Submission prior to discussions with the Minister so that it is available for when the formal process is ready to begin. • The formal 20 day preparation phase for cabinet submissions will be undertaken in August 2019. • The Minister will need to request the authority to discuss this matter with Cabinet. • We will aim for the cabinet submission to be discussed in September 2019. 	Aug - Sep 2019
<p>Tabling regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a decision is made by Cabinet, the changes to regulations will be drafted and submitted for approval. • Changes to the regulations will be enacted once approved, however there will be a disallowance period of 20 sitting days in both houses of Parliament. • Regulation changes will need to be tabled by 22 November 2019 for the disallowance period to be completed in time for the paper form printing deadline in March 2020. 	Between Nov 2019 – Mar 2020

- Support for the Cabinet submission will also be needed from Treasury officials. Officers in PaSSD will liaise with relevant Treasury staff concerning the Cabinet Submission from June 2019 (noting that Policy and Legislation team have already highlighted this work with Treasury in recent discussions). It is also recommended that discussions between the Statistician and Secretary of Treasury will be needed to seek support with this planned process. Now that caretaker mode has ended, we will begin engagement again with Treasury in preparation.
- Testing of questions will continue throughout 2019 to refine wording and determine processing requirements.
- Work will also continue to support the management of risks regarding the topics proposed, including preparing talking points and communication strategies.
 - We are anticipating lobbying by LGBTI advocates to coincide with decisions being made by the Minister and the Cabinet. Key advocates have indicated their intent to strongly push for the inclusion of the sexual orientation topic in particular.
 - Talking points for the key topics raised will be prepared prior to discussions the Minister in June.
 - High level risk assessment has begun as part of preparations for the Census Program (including statistical risk assessment through the quality management program). This will be delivered beyond the October test.
 - Topic related risk assessments will be prepared to coincide with testing and the different phases of Census operations. The assessments will include identification of needs for documentation, training and communications to support the new topics.

Background

- 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.
- Other topics that have been raised by data users are also included but not recommended for addition. They have been assessed as having higher risk in regard to the ABS ability to deliver adequate data to meet user needs through the Census. The reasons for not recommending these topics are also discussed.

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.

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

Paul Jelfs
General Manager Population and Social Statistics
Division
June 2019

Attachments

- A. 2021 Census topic review investigations

Derivation considerations for non-binary sex [DLM=Sensitive] (Response to: Content recommendations on implementation of non-binary sex February 2020 <header> [DLM=Sensitive])
2021 Census Content Development WDB [REDACTED] 23/01/2020 11:11 AM

Sensitive

Basics

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

[REDACTED] comments

[REDACTED] comments

[REDACTED] comments

The October 2019 field test included the sex question with a non-binary response option in addition to male and female. Results of the field test are summarised in this presentation. Please note that this data is sensitive and this document has restricted readership.



Non-binary Sex.pptx

The next steps in finalising questions for the 2021 Census is to make a recommendation to the Census Senior Responsible Officer, Teresa Dickinson, in early February 2020. The SRO then may choose to seek endorsement from the Statistician.

In order to progress the decision on how to ask the sex question, additional information and discussion across interested areas is sought. A team including demography, PES, Census processing and data quality & statistical risk has been tasked with progressing this discussion. Other interested areas are the Census content development team, Census data capture and household characteristics and social reporting.

The current thinking on the sex question is outlined below, along with the areas that need further thought.

data collection

Recommendation on whether a non-binary response option is made available on the **paper form**

(see screen snips on slide 6)


- No real errors or deliberate misreporting were seen in the test
- There are always errors in paper form completion that need to be cleaned, will having three response categories increase these errors?
- What is the expected impact on resourcing? On data quality?
- Could there be an increase in deliberate misreporting, for example driven by a social media campaign?
- What is the expected impact on resourcing? On data quality?
- Are there any concerns about the paper form varying from the online form if only binary response options are presented on paper?

It is likely that this decision will be made at the SES level. We probably don't need too much more information or investigation into this area, but welcome initial comments and thoughts.

Statistical impact assessment will be conducted (S22 leading this). Data capture to look at resourcing.

Sex and Gender Statistical Impact Management Plan (SIMP) (under development)

A Sex and Gender SIMP is under development, and will be updated as questions and processes are refined/finalised. The SIMP will cover question development and testing through to processing, imputation and output. The SIMP will outline changes, potential statistical impacts and risks, testing plans and mitigations - along with roles and responsibilities for relevant stakeholders.

Link to Sex and Gender SIMP (to be updated):  (Subject: Statistical Impact Management Plan on Sex and Gender; Database: 2021 Census Data WDB; Author: S22; Created: 02/04/2019; Doc Ref: GADH-BAU4WV)

Slide 5 shows the proposed approach to collecting non-binary sex in the **online form**. This is a change from the field test and seeks to further reduce error and deliberate misreporting. A person wishing to respond in a non-binary way will need to click on a hyper link in the binary sex question to display an expanded version of the question. They will be able to select non-binary on its own or with male or female. Male and female will be mutually exclusive. Selection of non-binary will then present a please specify box for additional information to be provided.

No changes are planned to this approach for the operational readiness exercise in August 2020.

- What data or paradata from readiness should be analysed to inform main event processes?
S22 **to think about**


What data (and paradata) would we need from the Readiness Test to inform decisions?

Changes for the non-binary sex question proposed for the 2021 Census will need to be tested in the Readiness Test, scheduled for August 2020. This (the largest Census Test for the 2021 Census cycle) is our last opportunity to evaluate outcomes and refine question wording and instructions where necessary for the 2021 Census. Later refinements can be tested and tweaked in a more targeted way.

Questions for non-binary should also be tested in the remote area test (using any relevant information from the list below and comparison data).

Data and para data that will be required from the Readiness Exercise include:

- social media information/commentary (if any)
- information from the call centre (queries/commentary)
- information from self-service options (queries/commentary)

- information from field staff (commentary/feedback)
- information about the number of times people clicked for further info or went into that section of the online help
- form comments (including from blank forms returned)
- online form metrics - time taken on the page with sex question by sex response (would need to consider number of people on form) [if you think this would be useful]
- form "drop-out" rates
- dwelling non-response (this will be useful in conjunction with info from call-centre, self-service, field staff)
- by demographics (age, birthplace, language proficiency, need for assistance with communication, etc)
- suggest analysis similar to that performed for the 2016 Census ^(a)  (and slide 3 of Non-binary Sex.pptx). Criteria and categories will need to be updated in line with question changes, including the allowance for multi-marks.
- non-binary by selected item non-response (similar to slide 7 in Non-binary Sex.pptx)
- imputation scenarios, scale and potential impact
- imputation outcomes in conjunction with same-sex marriage counts and considerations related to these
- between form types (paper v's online, household v's personal)
- unsubmitted forms.

(a) The purpose of this investigation is to identify genuine non-binary responses and discriminate these from obvious errors, vandals, etc. Genuine (intended in the absence of evidence to the contrary) non-binary responses would then go on to the specified imputation path for non-binary responses. The only exceptions would be for multi-mark situations where a "male" or "female" box had been selected in conjunction with "non-binary" - it is assumed that these would default to the selected sex.

Requirements for analysis/investigations using this data also include the ability for cross classification with other variables - consequently, identification/linkage of information, outcomes and forms at the dwelling level is assumed.

Comparison sources for outcomes would be:

- 2016 Census overall,
- outcomes from the 2016 Census pilot test,
- outcomes from the Oct test
- area comparisons against 2016 Census for demographics and response rates
- area comparisons against Estimates of the Resident Population (ERP)

processing

If sex is collected in a non-binary way, a binary variable still needs to be produced. The binary variable will be used by demography in ERP, PES and will be the main sex Census output. Explanations of the transformation process will be required to help these areas understand the binary variable and for their own quality assurance.

For item non-response to the sex question, an imputation process is run.

In 2016, non-binary responses were randomly imputed 50/50 to male and female.

It is expected that in the order of 40,000 to 100,000 valid and intentional non-binary responses will be received in the 2021 Census. It is also expected that the majority of these will have no additional information in the sex question to inform the derivation of a binary variable. For example in the field test only 16% selected male or female in addition to non-binary; less than 10% supplied additional text.

How should we derive a binary variable from non-binary input? The view of demography is that we should use other Census variables to inform the derivation. The view of Census processing is that this has limited feasibility and poor optics. The primary task of this group is to explore these issues and provide information to key stakeholder to make the recommendation to the

SRO. Some things to consider:



- how and when the sex variable is derived (processing map): [SEXP_Process-flow - 20200129.pdf](#)
[this shows the flow of different records, their treatment and the counts of people in each group in 2016 \(thanks to S22\)](#)
- at the point of derivation, what other variables are available:
 - name - discuss feasibility
 - family relationship (e.g. sister/brother) - no. Family coding happens later in processing and is informed by the sex variable.
 - children born - no. Respondents answering male or only non-binary are sequenced past this question.
 - comments at end of form - discuss feasibility
 - text responses to the sex question in the other specify box - discuss feasibility
 - any other variables?
- **Multi mark**
- is there any administrative data that could be used to inform derivation? Probably not, demography to comment. **Demography - No**
- if random imputation is applied, should it be 50/50? Anecdotally females may be more likely to identify as non-binary (particularly from a gender perspective) **Demography lead.. Unable to find on the web but Denise is still trying to locate the source.**
- should we use the age/sex structures to vary the 50/50 slightly? Will this skew the population? Is there any modelling that we can do to understand this based on 2016 data e.g. scenario analysis? We can do demographic adjustments as the data is received (but this leads to a variance between and ERP and Census). **Demography lead**
- demography - 1-4% is an okay range for 'other' in terms of ERP (Beidar to confirm discussions - based on registrars' data). What's the small area impact of this? **Demography lead. Correction. 0.1 to 0.4.**

<https://www.allabouttrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/non-binary-gender-factsheet.pdf>

Other considerations (perceptions and justification)

Some other considerations that seem important in terms of decision-making for imputation processes/sex ratios include:


1. public justifiability of any imputation decision that varies from 50:50, particularly when based on other information provided on the form
 2. propensity for this group to be interested in processing procedures, output and interplay with same-sex marriage outcomes
1. [Propensity for this group to seek information regarding processing and changes made prior to output](#)

From previous Censuses, it was evident that advocates/groups interested in non-binary sex were also strong advocates for marriage equality (recognition of same-sex marriages) and sexual orientation questions. In addition to the 2021 Census being the first to more overtly provide options for recording non-binary sex and variations, it is also the first Census to officially output registered same-sex marriage


data (as opposed to only as a "by product" of processing).

The non-binary sex is likely to remain output as a "by product" of processing, so there may be a repeat of campaigns/queries similar to those in prior Census for same-sex marriage.

Example:

"We are seeking this change so that the count of people in same-sex relationships who tick 'Husband or wife of Person 1' at question 5 is processed and published in precisely the same way as the count of people in opposite-sex relationships who tick 'Husband or wife of Person 1', that is, as a standard output, not as a by-product of processing information." from 

from Full list (in chronological order) of email correspondence at that time:

 (Subject: Chronological table of correspondence/decisions - please add to; Database: Census Products and Services WDB; Author: s22; Created: 28/01/2009; Doc Ref: RHAE-7NQ3HH)

2. Sex ratios non-binary

After hearing that there may have been some existing research regarding sex ratios in the non-binary populations, some quick searching was undertaken. This recent (June 2019) article from the ["Demographic and temporal trends in transgender identities and gender confirming surgery"](#) explores some of these aspects (trans population only)

Summary:

In the "Trans" population, there may be more prevalence of male-to-female than female-to-male, especially surgically. However, there are limitations to be considered for all studies. Background, outcomes and limitations are outlined in the twistie below.

Relevant sections and text are within this twistie

Questions/considerations arising in our context::

- What is the proportion of Trans in non-binary? Are there other studies/research? Do other studies/research only refer to the "trans" population or do they consider all non binary? Is there enough evidence to warrant justification of non-random imputation, and how would this be applied? Would this require identification of the "trans" population within the non-binary group?

See the Judicial Commission of NSW [Equality before the Law Bench Book - Gender diverse people and people born with diverse sex characteristics](#): *"Intersex and transgender people are different, their needs are different, and the discrimination they face is different. Both of these communities often face discrimination and it is important our laws reflect their different needs."* ⁱⁱⁱ (from Intro)

- As trans people more likely to have physically had babies are female-to-male, would this question (if used) be to assign biological or as identified sex? How would this be perceived and what are the implications for relationships/same-sex marriages, etc?
- Should we "litmus test" plans for imputation of non-binary (if non-random) for transparency (noting our random method is in line with recommendations from the current [ABS Standard for Sex and Gender Variables](#)).

data assurance

There will need to be a strong focus of data assurance on the derived variable. Some points of

focus will be: **only if info readily available, otherwise** S22 **to follow up**

- impact on family structure
- impact on same sex relationships (are we creating/removing same sex relationships as a result of the derivation?)

Consider quality investigations using synthetic data into the impact of the sex derivation.

At what points will data assurance checks be run?

Will anomalies detected during data assurance be able to correct the unit record data?

Processing to provide data on item non-response to the sex question. This is not a 50/50 derivation, look at relationship etc. This is different from the other sex response. Some of this logic has changed because of the introduction of same sex marriage legislation.

dissemination

It is most likely that the majority of Census output will be based on the binary sex variable. Further work will be required to understand opportunities for using the non-binary sex variable. These range from producing an analytical article to making available in Table Builder Pro to making available in the SuperCross DB for data queries.

other thoughts?

- timetable impact **processing**
- TSD/systems development consideration **processing**
- view of target population S22
- our standards recommend random imputation - if diverge from this will need to provide justification (attach links)
- PES collects non-binary. What are the processes? What are the differences? S22 - 2021 PES asks "What is your sex?" with response options of Male, Female or Other, please specify (write in txt field). As PES is an Interviewer assisted survey, the question is read aloud by the Interviewer but the response options are not, so the respondent will not be aware of the "Other, please specify" option unless they respond in this manner. This was also the case in 2016 PES. Responses for "Other, please specify" remain in this category for linking records back to Census, but are then re-classified to binary for PES processing. This reclassification process is done manually using all available information (as PES is a survey, only a small number of responses to view, so can be done manually).
- anything else?

Timeframe for this work

Meeting with the Data Quality Statistical Working Group on 5 February and with Teresa and other SES on 7 February. Require key thoughts and areas of further investigation by Monday 3 February. Recommend that we schedule a meeting of the core group plus directors at this time to discuss.


For info -


link to overall doc with lots of background info re 2016 Census processes 


S22 email 28 Jan 2020 with links to standard, 2016 imputation process

Hi all

Just thought that these docs may be helpful when considering imputation of non-binary for the 2021 Census.

1. Methods employed for 2016 Census for binary and non-binary imputation  (Subject: 2016 Census Sex Imputation Paper; Database: 2016 Census DOC and Dissemination WDB; Author: S22; Created: 02/09/2016; Doc Ref: RSHA-ADE482)

2. Reasoning for the random imputation for the 2016 Census (see para below) - from  and [ABS Standard for Sex and Gender Variables](#) :

*"15. It is proposed that **all** records where a binary sex has not been provided categorised as 'Other sex or gender diverse' and 'Ambiguous' (see c and d) will be treated consistently and have their sex assigned via random imputation based on a 50:50 ratio for males to females as set out in . This proposal is in line with the recommendation for output categories where there are confidentiality issues in the [ABS Standard for Sex and Gender Variables](#) as supported by the United Nations Statistical Division 2010 [Handbook on Population and Housing Census Editing, Revision 1 \(Sections 346-347\)](#). "*

From our sex variable:

Confidentiality issues may arise at various levels of dissemination if a small number of 'C' responses are recorded. When this issue arises, it is recommended that 'Other' responses are alternately recoded to male and female, as supported by the United Nations Statistical Division 2010, [Handbook on Population and Housing Census Editing, Revision 1, \(Sections 346-347\)](#), with the methodology used clearly articulated in supporting documentation.

From UN Handbook (last doclink)

- (g) When the sex code is invalid and there is insufficient information to determine sex

346. If the editing team does not use dynamic imputation at all, a value for unknown sex must be assigned. Unfortunately, this means that all tabulations would have to carry an extra column or an extra row or sets of columns or rows for persons of unknown sex. Since sex is a binary variable, values can be assigned alternately, starting with either one, using the opposite sex for the second invalid entry and continuing in this fashion.

- (h) Note on imputed sex ratios

347. Female sex is likely to be assigned more often when cold deck imputation is used. Adult females are the only ones with fertility entries and their selection is skewed somewhat from random. For this reason, if insufficient information is available, a person with no information is more likely to be male than female. Consequently, it is important to consider developing imputation matrices that take into account the overall proportions between the sexes.

thanks and best wishes

S22

S22

Assistant Director

Census Data Quality and Statistical Risk | Census of Population and Housing | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**


(P) S22 (M) S22

(E) S22 (W) www.abs.gov.au

S22 - HCSR

As discussed in the meeting on 4/2, there are a number of articles outlining challenges with estimating numbers and characteristics of LGBTI populations. Per the request in the meeting, I've included links to some articles discussing this both locally and internationally below:

Local perspectives:

-  (Subject: White paper: Making the Count: Addressing data integrity gaps in Australian standards for collecting sex and gender information - March 2016; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created: 06/09/2018; Doc Ref: CBRY-B4CAXG)
- People with variations in sex characteristics (Intersex) specific - <https://ihra.org.au/research/>

International perspectives:

-  (Subject: OECD report: The LGBT Challenge: How to better include sexual and gender

minorities?; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22; Created:
18/04/2019; Doc Ref: CBRY-BBC9AU)

Item Non-Response

- The public's reaction to the addition of a Non-binary category was positive
- This was reflected in the low level of item non-response for Sex
- $\frac{S2P2D2}{2}$ out of $S2P2D2$ respondents on the paper form did not provide their sex information
- For comparison, item non-response for Sex was $S2P2D2$ in the 2016 Census and $S2P2D2$ in the 2014 Test
- The total responding sample for the 2019 Test was $S2P2D2$ (Paper + Online)

Item Non-response of Sex (Q7) on the paper form

Non-response

$S2P2D2$

Total Respondents

$S2P2D2$

Non-response rate:

$S2P2D2$

(a) Non-response was not measured on the online form as a response was mandatory

End of Form Comments

- Respondent reaction to the inclusion of Non-binary sex was low as evidenced by End of Form commentary
- In total, ^{S2P2D2} End of Form comments for Non-binary sex were found

Non-Binary End of Form comments

	2019 Test		
	Paper	Online	Total
Opposed to 3rd option	S2P2D2	S2P2D2	S2P2D2
Confusion around 3rd option			
Positive to 3rd option			
Alternative 3rd option wording			
Privacy concerns			
Related topics			
General comment			
Total			

- For context, this accounted for less than ^{S2P2D2} of all End of Form comments received on the Online form

End of Form comment analysis (Online only)

	2019 Test	
	Number	Proportion
Sex/Gender comments	S2P2D2	S2P2D2
Income comments		
Ancestry comments		
Problem with entry code		
Positive user experience		
Total Comments	S2P2D2	


- Contact centre call data, mail correspondence and paper form markings were all reviewed with minimal feedback found





Cleaning Non-Binary Data

- Non-binary responses required manual review to identify and clean dirty data

Non-binary responses

	2019 Test		
	Paper	Online	Total
2016 Pilot Test			
Valid and intentional	S2P2D2		
Other responses			
<i>Deliberate misreporting</i>			
<i>Mistake</i>			
<i>Paper scanning errors</i>			
<i>Recoded to a binary sex</i>			
Total Non-binary responses			
Valid and intentional	S2P2D2		
Other responses			
<i>Deliberate misreporting</i>			
<i>Mistake</i>			
<i>Paper scanning errors</i>			
<i>Recoded to a binary sex</i>			
Total Non-binary responses			

(a) 2016 pilot test values sources from 'Sex and gender diversity in the 2016 census' report
 (b) Only the valid  Non-binary responses were included in subsequent 2019 tables

- For the 2019 Test, about   Non-binary responses required further cleaning
- All 'mistakes' occurred on the Online form. This was due to navigational issues where respondents input the wrong number of people on the form. Non-binary was selected to flag this person did not exist
- Deliberate acts of misreporting were observed in the Online form
- Only clear acts of misreporting were excluded including:
 - 5 person household, all respondents were Non-binary, all ages were zero
 - 4 person household, all Non-binary, all ages 95+
- Respondents who misreported the Sex question also provided non-genuine answers to other questions. This indicates a wider issue of misreporting across the form but it is important to note people intending to misreport were attracted to the Non-binary category
-   of Non-binary responses on the Paper form required cleaning due to issues related to incorrectly scanned forms.

Cleaning Non-Binary Data

- After cleaning the data, S2P2D2 (or S2P2D2) in the 2019 October Test identified as Non-binary
- This was higher than the rate seen in the 2016 Census (S2P2D2) but lower than the rate seen in the 2016 Online Pilot Test (0.26%)
- It is difficult to predict the level of Non-binary responses at a national level. The table below provides a range that can be expected if scaled to a national level:
 - Non-binary responses could range from 433K – 36K
 - Assuming online mistakes and paper scanning issues are controlled, the level of misreporting can range from 43K – 4K
- If Non-binary responses are on the high end of the range, operationally this would represent a high level of forms requiring review for data cleaning and imputation

Scaling up Non-binary responses

	Non-binary rate	Scaled up to Australian population (25,500,000)	Deliberate acts of misreporting (S2P2D2)
Intersex Human Rights Australia			
USA Survey on Transgender population			
2016 Online Pilot Test			
2019 October Test			
2016 Census			
Average			

S2P2D2

Cleaning Non-Binary Data

Considerations & Recommendations

- The Online instrument currently being built for the Main Event will be different to the one used in the October Test.
- The instances of misreporting or mistakes observed in the October test have been addressed in Main Event through:
 - Improved Online navigation to allow users to easily correct the form when a person does not exist
 - Male and Female will appear as standard categories with an expandable third option accessible through a link in the explanatory text (see below)

Default presentation of Sex

Is John:

Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population.

If these options do not describe the person, they can [Select something other than male or female](#).

- Male
 Female

Expanded presentation of Sex

Explanatory text and response options change if the link is clicked. Clicking the new link restores the default presentation.

Optional text field appears when third option is selected. This disappears (and is cleared) if the checkbox is deselected.

Is John:

Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population.

If the person does not wish to select 'Non-binary', they can [Select only male or female](#).

A person may choose to select more than one response (for example, male and non-binary, or female and non-binary).

If 'Non-binary' is selected, there will be an opportunity to provide more information.

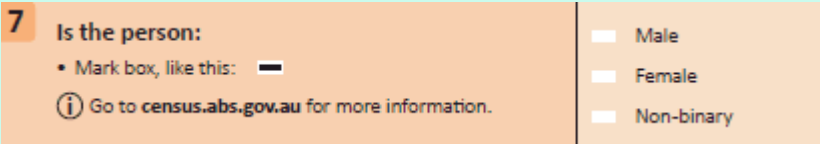

- Male
 Female
 Non-binary

Please specify (optional)

Cleaning Non-Binary Data

Considerations & Recommendations

- Including Non-binary as a visible category on the Paper form requires additional resource to review and clean the data
- For the Paper form, **consider**:

Option A	Option B
<p>Keep Non-binary as a visible category on the Paper form:</p>  <p>7 Is the person: • Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary</p>	<p>Remove Non-binary as a category option and follow the 2016 Census procedure:</p>  <p>3 Is the person male or female? • Mark one box for each person, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p>In 2016 people completing the Paper form were instructed to leave the male and female boxes unmarked and write their response in the space to the right of the response box. This instruction was not included in the Paper form but was available from the Census Inquiry Service and 'how to Answer' instructions on the ABS website.</p>

- Including Non-binary as a category opens the Census up to quality and operational risks.
Consider the resource load required to:
 - impute Non-binary responses if scaled up to a national level (433K – 36K)
 - review Non-binary responses for cases of misreporting if scaled to a national level (43K – 4K)

Responses & Multimarks

- The inclusion of Non-binary does not effect how the majority of people respond to Sex

	2016 SX Census results			2019 Test								
	Paper	Online	Total	Paper	Online	Total						
	Counts											
Male only	S2P2D2											
Female only												
Male and female												
Total Non-binary												
<i>Non-binary only</i>												
<i>Non-binary and a second option</i>												
Not stated	S2P2D2											
Total												
							Proportion					
Male only							S2P2D2					
Female only												
Male and female												
Total Non-binary												
<i>Non-binary only</i>												
<i>Non-binary and a second option</i>												
Not stated	S2P2D2											
Total							100	100	100	100	100	100

(a) 2016 SX values for other sex are expected to be substantially under reported, as discussed in the Census 2016 - Sex and Gender Diversity article

(b) 2019 counts include only valid and intention non-binary responses

- 2019 Male and Female proportions were similar to 2016 Census data for both Online and Paper modes
- As expected, with the inclusion of a Non-binary category, a higher proportion of respondents selected Non-binary in the 2019 October test
- Online respondents were more likely to select Non-binary then Paper respondents in the 2019 Test
- Most Non-binary responses did not select a secondary male/female sex to help with imputation.
- In addition, of the S2P2D2 Non-binary respondents from the Online form, only S2P2D2 chose to provided more information in the following optional text response
- This was similar to the 2019 Pilot test where less than one-fifth provided meaningful text to Sex
- Examples of text comments include:
 - “Born female but feel male”
 - “Biologically female identifying as A-gender”
- Analysis by HCSR of the text comments found S2P2D2 of the S2P2D2 responses to be gender not elsewhere classified. However these text responses are still useful for informing imputation

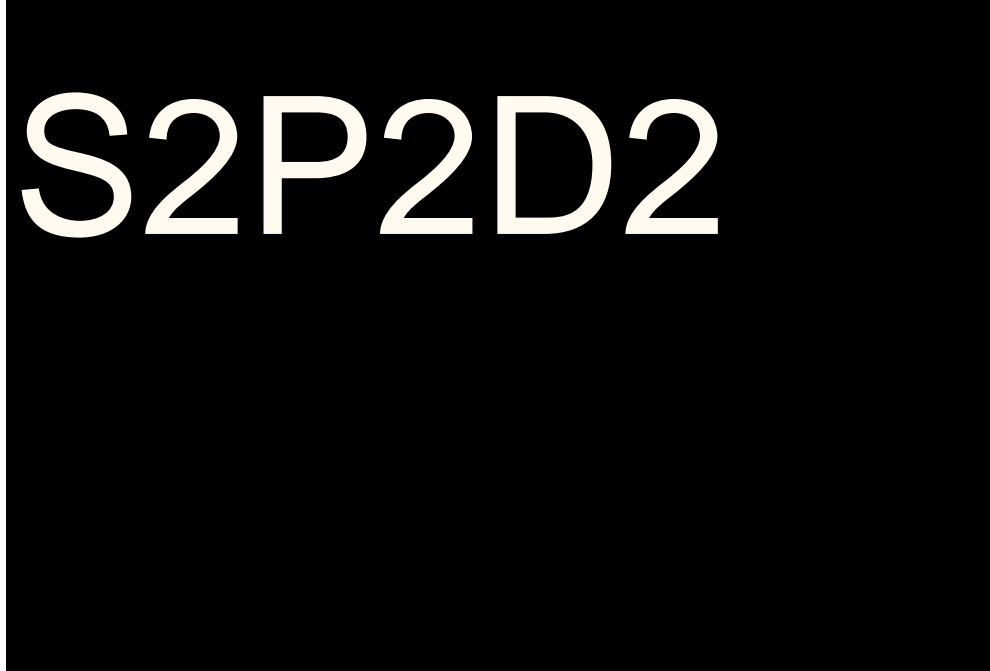
Responses & Multimarks

Considerations & Recommendations

- Although the use of the optional text response was low, there is still value in retaining this function:
 - Provides information to derive a binary sex variable from the non-binary input variable
 - acts as visual reminder to participants if they have answered Sex incorrectly
 - text responses help to identify deliberate acts of misreporting
- **Consider** the resource requirement to manually review text responses to impute Non-binary respondents into a binary sex.

Interplay with Other Items

- Questions around real world vs data quality still remain when looking at Non-binary characteristics



S2P2D2

- '2019 All' population is an older population but still reflects a similar bell curve.
- '2019 Non-binary' population does not have the same age profile as the 2016 census population
- More people age S2P2D2 and under identified as Non-binary but then dips between the S2P2D2 and S2P2D2 age groups. Why?
- 2019 Test had S2P2D2 Non-binary respondents. Likely noise from disaggregating the data down to fine levels
- 2019 Test has a S2P2D2 response rate which may have effected the data quality. These results likely to change with a higher response rate and scaled to a national level
- Could be a real world reflection of the test area
- High proportion of Non-binary respondents did not provide their age. This was seen on both the Paper and Online form
- Even though DOB/age should have been a mandatory field on the Online form, respondents found ways to bypass sequencing rules, further exasperating the proportion of those missing DOB/age

Interplay with Other Items

- There is evidence to suggest people selecting Non-binary are more privacy conscious than others

Proportion of not stated,
For selected 2019 Test questions



All respondents

Non-Binary

- Age/DOB
- Marital status
- Indigenous Status
- Country of Birth
- Highest year of schooling
- Employment

Proportion of not stated,
for selected 2016 questions



All respondents

Non-binary

- Age imputed
- Marital Status
- Indigenous Status
- Country of Birth
- Labour Force Status
- Highest year of schooling

- When compared to the whole population, data from the 2019 October Test suggests Non-binary respondents are more likely to not answer other Census questions
- Evidence from focus group testing supports the notion privacy is important to some within the LGBTI community
- This could also be privacy conscious males/females who are selecting the Non-binary category as a way of not providing their sex
- This pattern for Non-binary respondents isn't as pronounced in the 2016 data and varies between item

Interplay with Other Items

Considerations & Recommendations

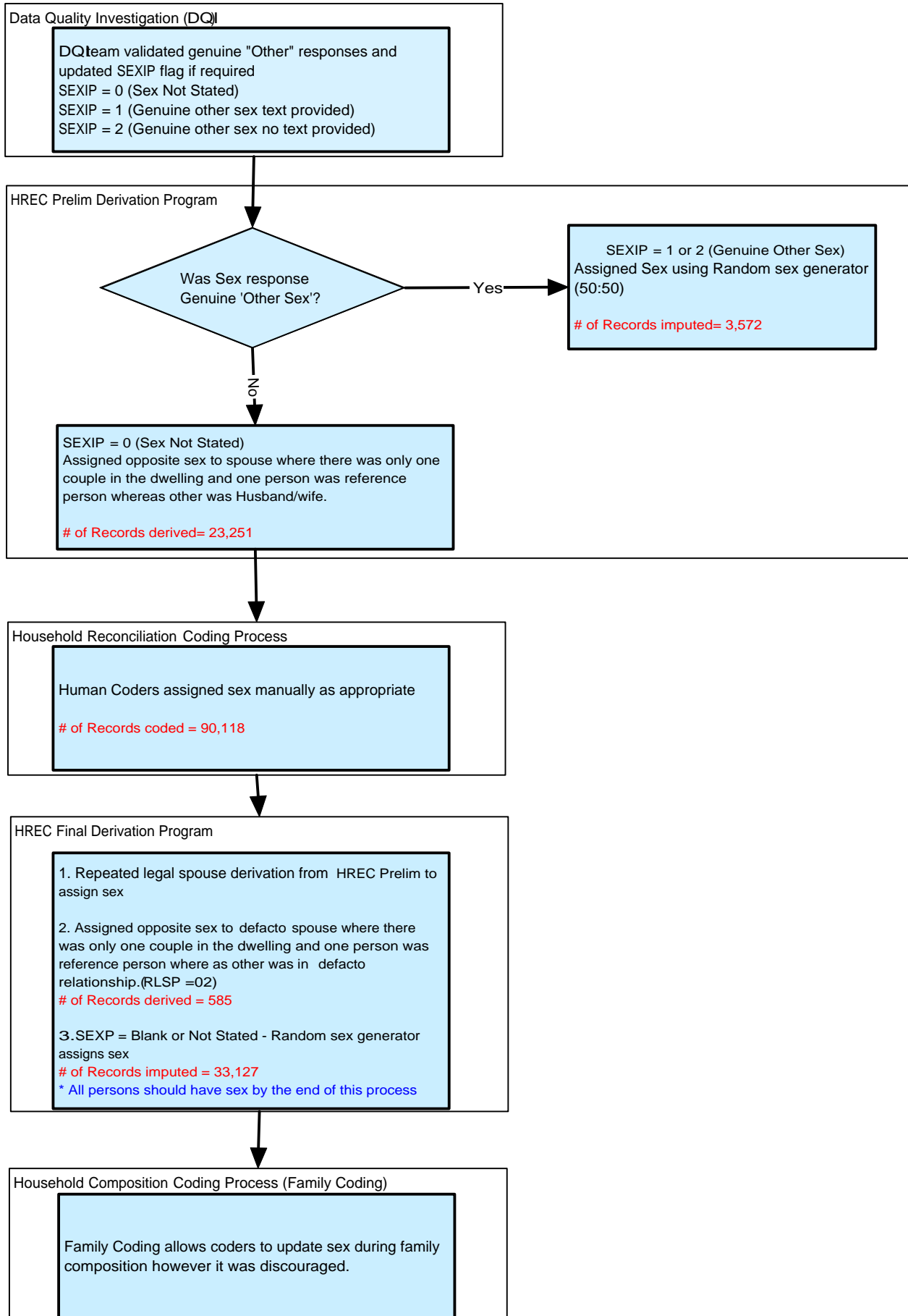
- The Online instrument for the Main Event has been improved so that respondents are not able to bypass mandatory questions such as DOB
- **Recommend** the development of a communication strategy to address public concerns around security and identifiable data to help mitigate item non-response
- **Consider** the impact to data quality and imputation if Non-binary respondents as a population, are more likely than others, to not answer Census questions

Final Considerations

- Public response to the inclusion of Non-binary to Sex was positive as supported by the low levels of item non-response and supporting metadata
- **Are we confident to recommend the inclusion of Non-binary on the Online form?**
 - Navigational and sequencing improvements to the Main Event instrument
 - Expandable third sex option for those wanting to identify as Non-binary
 - Both changes will help to improve data quality, limit deliberate acts of misreporting, and reduce level of resources required to clean the data
- **Should Option A (show Non-binary) or Option B (follow 2016 process) be implemented for the Paper form?**

2016 Process flow - 'Other Sex' and 'Sex Non Response'

Document 5



2021 Census Data Quality Specialist Working Group – Minutes

When	Wednesday 5 February 2020, 2.00 – 3.00 pm – Extraordinary meeting
Location	CBR 4N113 MELB 338 BRIS 104
VC	If unable to attend in persons ring 1800 999 310 followed by S22 FOLLOWED BY a hash (#)
Chair	Mark Harding, Program Manager, Census 2021 Data Operations Branch
Members	Denise Carlton, Program Manager, Population Statistics Branch Linda Fardell, Program Manager, Health and Disability Statistics Branch Bindi Kindermann, Program Manager, Census 2021 Field Operations Bjorn Jarvis, Program Manager, Labour Force Statistics Celia Moss, Program Manager, Data Integration Partnerships Branch Paul Schubert, Program Manager, Statistical Methodology Branch
Invitees	S22, Director, 2021 Census Content and Dissemination
Observers	S22, 2021 Census Content S22 2021 Census Data Quality and Statistical Risk
Apologies	Branko Vitas, Program Manager, International Statistics
Minutes	S22, S22, 2021 Census Data Quality and Statistical Risk

#	Agenda item	Meeting Notes
1	Recommendations on 2021 Census topics: October 2019 field test analysis	<p>S22 introduced this item, noting that the extraordinary meeting had been called to feed into senior ABS content discussions in the following week. The aim of this Data Quality Specialist Working Group is to discuss findings from the October 2019 field test for non-binary sex and operational considerations of a non-binary sex response category.</p> <p>S22 gave an overview of the non-binary sex questions asked in the October 2019 test paper and online forms. There was low item non-response to the sex question and relatively low end of form comments in the October 2019 test. This indicates that the general population did not have issues in accepting the non-binary sex question.</p> <p>Deliberate misreporting of non-binary was identified in about 10% of those with a non-binary response (based on non-binary additional text). Members noted that there would be other deliberate misreporting which would not be detected by text responses (e.g. pattern of unusual responses across the entire form). There also might be some accidental misreporting.</p> <p>Based on results for the October 2019, we would expect a non-binary rate less than 0.3% in the 2021 Census. The expected number of respondents additional text was relatively low (4,000-7,000 people). There was a question about whether any figures on non-binary sex are available from the Australian or New Zealand General Social Surveys.</p> <p>Action item 8.1: S22 to follow up on non-binary sex rates in Australian and New Zealand General Social Surveys</p> <p>S22 outlined ABS plans to derive a binary sex variable for Post Enumeration Survey, demography and key Census outputs. For less than a quarter of respondents, respondent provided information would inform the derivation. For the remainder, there would be 50/50 random imputation to binary sex.</p> <p>A strong preference was expressed by several members to make use of the non-binary additional text to inform the derivation of binary sex. Members concerns included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> respondent-based sensitivities in collecting additional text but not using it when binary sex is derived

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to offset the bias towards females, as we are proposing to use 'children given birth to' in binary sex derivation • the importance of high quality male/female splits - making use of this additional text might be a cautious way of implementing something in a challenging space and with potential statistical impacts • the importance of minimising the number of people with sex imputed on a 50/50 basis. <p>§22 noted that there were very few people in the October 2019 test whose additional text would inform their binary sex derivation. This could be further assessed using the 2016 Census. Mark pointed out that there might not be enough time to review non-binary additional text within the processing timetable as it would be a manual process and would need to happen very early in the timetable (because of the importance of sex for many key processes). There was a member suggestion to streamline the text review process (e.g. select records for review based on pre-identified strings such as male or female).</p> <p>Action item 8.2: §22 to follow up sex additional text in the 2016 Census, to assess the proportion which provided usable binary sex information.</p> <p>Several working group members were also concerned about the planned 50/50 random imputation to binary sex. There were suggestions to use something which would have variability by geography (e.g. hot decking or ERP ratios).</p>
Meeting close		

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Confirmit testing scenarios

2021 Census Content Development WDB

S22

06/08/2019 06:27 PM

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

Population	Household Type- mixture male/female	Description
A S22 Sample A	2 adult and 2 child aged 15-17	1 adult present 1 adult away 1 child present 1 child away 1 adult variations in sex characteristics (Sample A only)
B S22 Sample A	2 adults and 2 child 1 aged 0, 1 child aged >15	All present 1 Adult ATSI
C S22 Sample B S22	2 Adult and 1 child aged 2-6, Child 0 Remove 1 adult	Child goes to preschool Adult no job
D S22	2 adults and 2 child 1 aged 0, 1 child aged >=15	One adult and one child is a visitor 1 adult attending education institution >15 attending education
E S22 Sample B	1 adult, 1 child aged 15, 1 child aged 7,	1. Child aged 7 in primary 2. Child aged 15 in High school 3. Adult defence service yes

F S22	2 adults and 2 child 1 aged 10, 1 child aged >=15	1 adult both children away Rent
G S22	1 adult female S22 - Form type B	Has need for assistance DOB not known, age 42 Occupied under life tenure scheme
H S22	2 adult females (P1 has variations in sex characteristics and is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, P2 needs assistance with self care), 1 child aged 16, 1 child aged 3 Sample A	Child (3, M) goes to pre school Child (16, F) No defence service Dwelling owned outright

Objectives of the Census Tests

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Chris Libreri 07/11/2019 04:58 PM

Basics

Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS

06/11/2019 03:55 PM

Send	To David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, ██████████ cc ██████████/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc	
Subject	Objectives of the Census Tests	
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"/>
Categories	7. Instrument Design and Testing\Oct 2019 Field Test\Test objectives and analytical plans	

David

As we discussed here are some dot points on why we test beyond content :

- The general objectives of our tests are to ultimately ensure that our staff, systems, processes and vendor partnerships are 'match fit' and ready to meet the objectives of the main event
- For the Census the objectives are :
 - Smooth Running
 - Strong Support
 - High Quality Data

- We evaluate 'user journeys' to Census participation to understand gaps and issues. These include testing response material including approach letters, response windows, the various digital and paper service routes and of course accessibility
- We test contact centre and web service arrangements - this allows us to fine tune messaging and to develop training material for the main event
- Of course the Census operates with many partners and vendors and the tests allow us to build their capacity and in particular to understand integration points. For new vendors (such as Adecco for recruitment) it is an opportunity to understand the end to end of a Census, the scale and geographic footprint of our requirements and the dependencies in delivering the main event solution
- A key area for a Census is Communication and the tests allow us an opportunity to examine various options and approaches to reaching various groups and in particular to try different social media approaches. For example we are able to pinpoint follow up messages and target particular populations.
- For the test we have used a dedicated Census Media spokesperson for the first time and this has allowed us to understand the extent of the requirements and optimal use
- Another Communications area is Issues Management where we are applying various treatments and escalations.
- The test has allowed us to tune how we manage Field Operations in a more centralised way yet still having a coordinator type role to assist with groups of Field Officers in areas such as OHS
- How we engage and interact with Field Officers has been a particular focus of the test - we have been using the My Work Application and we have also been testing various approaches to on line training
- Responses to tests allow us to also fine tune procurement as tests provide an indication of take up of various options (eg Paper vs Digital)
- Census is using Quality Gates on a large scale and the test has given us an opportunity to apply the gates and to integrate this into our approval process
- We have also tested a Governance approach (based on AMLPS) and this has allowed us to gain experience operating in an AGILE manner including RAG status and GO/NO GO points
- Tests also allow us to road test critical supporting strategies including Risk, Privacy, and Stakeholder Engagement.

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

Re: Fw: Comments on how the October Test response rate impacts on data quality objectives
 [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Bindi Kindermann 23/10/2019 03:54 PM

For-Official-Use-Only

Basics

Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS

22/10/2019 06:21 PM

Send	To S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS cc S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark bcc
Subject	Re: Fw: Comments on how the October Test response rate impacts on data quality objectives [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Protective Mark	For-Official-Use-Only
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy Caveat <input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	7. Instrument Design and Testing\Oct 2019 Field Test\Test objectives and analytical plans

Hi S22 and team

Thank you for this advice and for the collaborative way you have worked with the people on copy - it is really great to see and I understand has provided some useful insights and learnings for main event.

Before responding to the proposed actions, I wanted to confirm that I have discussed our response progress with Chris and Mark Harding and at an overall level we are all very comfortable with how we are tracking.

In relation to how we might best deploy field resources to meet our objectives, I am comfortable with what has been put forward in the first three dot points, noting that their implementation will be best attempts.

However, as discussed, while I note there will no doubt be further resignations that will not be able to be backfilled, my strong preference would be to let the test play out and for us to capture the learnings along the way. I also note that an ABS reserve panel of field officers was not within the scope of this test even if it would be potentially in play in the readiness exercise or main event.

I am very happy to discuss this further with anyone in this email trail - just give me a call on my mobile.

Have a good evening all and thanks again for all the considered thinking that has occurred today.

Regards

Bindi

Bindi Kindermann

Program Manager, 2021 Census Field Operations
Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Executive Assistant:

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

[redacted] Hi Bindi, There have been several conversation... 22/10/2019 05:05:07 PM

From: [redacted] Staff/ABS
To: [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]
[redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS,
[redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]
[redacted] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] /LTDACC/ABS@ABS
Date: 22/10/2019 05:05 PM
Subject: Re: Fw: Comments on how the October Test response rate impacts on data quality objectives

Hi Bindi,

There have been several conversations occurring in working through this, in particular, establishing further information regarding targets and working through what this means for field based action to give us the best chance at achieving these targets.

In terms of a brief summary of actions to take this forward, [redacted] and I have had a number of conversations, with input from DQSR, Content and Comms; I can advise of the following. I have identified one particular action in bold below which is time critical, related to ensuring we have sufficient field staff numbers to achieve objectives.

- As a priority we will enact the approach of making at least a single visit to all enabled dwellings. This approach was supported through a brief post Stand Up discussion with [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] this morning. With this as a primary priority, we are then able to target second follow up visits which I feel allows us to align with the objectives specified in Annette and Laura's emails.
- We have discussed potential changes to AWAT to enable this approach, however, due to limitations and risks associated with systems based changes, prioritising one visit before a second commences will be implemented by FOM, primarily through monitoring workload progress and targeted FOM-Field communication.
- By prioritising one visit and subsequently targeting of the second, I believe we are best placed to balance the objectives outlined in [redacted] email below - "Objective a" in having multiple visits directed at a limited pool; and "Objective b" and "Objective c" in improving overall response rate and ensuring all dwellings have at least one visit.
- Following on from concerns raised around staff turnover and whether we will have sufficient field officers to meet response targets given DO attrition and current MO resignations (11 to date), I have

tentatively planned what would be required to establish a reserve panel of ABS staff that we can deploy as field officers. Discussions today on AWAT and work undertaken by the Operational Intelligence Team, appear to confirm that we can expect a shortage of field staff (workloads exceed field staff numbers), which will impact our ability to achieve response targets. My feeling is that we can reasonably expect to see more resignations once officers hit the field and we will find the issue of staff shortages worsening over the coming weeks.

- We could either put the call out to Census staff, or go broader, via a note from yourself or Chris to put a call out to other PMs/GMs for any interested staff. My recommendation would be for the PM/GM contact as this could also be used as an opportunistic exercise to expose staff more broadly to Census which may have benefit for us in staffing up in the longer run. While response is currently at 23%, I do feel this would be a worthwhile investment to have on call, and places us much more on the front foot should response fall off. Our timing is quite tight; based on a draft timetable; essentially in order to have the officers trained (commencing 29/10) and allocated a workload (29/10), we would effectively need to put the call out tomorrow to enable consideration and selection of the staff by next Monday (28/10). **Can you please advise if this is something that you would like us to proceed with - if so, we will have the necessary info (draft message, requirements, etc) ready tomorrow morning.**

There have been quite a few moving parts in all of the above, and hopefully I have captured these fairly accurately, however, S22 or anyone else involved in the conversations, please feel free to add/correct any of the points above.

Thanks,

S22

S22

Director, Enumeration

2021 Census Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(P) S22

(E) S22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

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

S22

Hi guys, After talking to S22, we have come u...

22/10/2019 01:00:38 PM



Re: FYI > David's suggested changes to Census topic recommendations QTB Justine Boland to: S22 08/09/2019 05:13 PM

Hi S22

Thanks for making sure we saw these changes and also your work to manage the requested changes!

Justine

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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

(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) S22

(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

* S22 --06/09/2019 10:18:43 AM---Hi, I have just received some suggested changes to the Census content QTB. David suggested a number

From: S22 /Staff/ABS

To: Chris Librieri/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Marcel van Kints/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS

Date: 06/09/2019 10:18 AM

Subject: FYI > David's suggested changes to Census topic recommendations QTB

Hi,

I have just received some suggested changes to the Census content QTB. David suggested a number of changes on the key message and one change to the Coalition action section. In general, David asked that the key message statement be prepared for the Minister and his perspective, rather than the ABS.

Please see the various files below for reference. I will progress the clean copy with the Parliamentary section as David has indicated he doesn't need to see the material again.

David's changes - original	David's changes incorporated - tracked changes	Final, clean version of QTB
[attachment "David's changes to Census QTBs.pdf" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]	[attachment "QTB Census content.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]	[attachment "QTB Census content_clean.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

Any questions, please let me know.

Thank you

Kind regards

S22

S22

Executive Officer to Teresa Dickinson

Deputy Australian Statistician

Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) S22 (M) S22 (E) S22 @abs.gov.au (W) ww.abs.gov.au

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 ---05/09/2019 09:55:27 AM---Thanks all! I will progress up the line for approvals and let you know if there are any further ques

From: S22 /Staff/ABS
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 05/09/2019 09:55 AM
Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

Thanks all! I will progress up the line for approvals and let you know if there are any further questions or comments.

Kind regards

S22

S22

Executive Officer to Teresa Dickinson

Deputy Australian Statistician

Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics

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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.

* Chris Libreri--05/09/2019 09:09:00 AM--All good for me - thanks! Chris Libreri

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
To: S22 Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 05/09/2019 09:09 AM
Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

All good for me - thanks!

Chris Libreri

General Manager Census Division

Head of Brisbane Office

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5234 (M) [redacted] (F) (02) 6252 0000

(E) chris.libreri@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

Executive Assistant:

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

* [redacted] ---05/09/2019 09:05:59 AM---Please find attached an update incorporating Paul's suggestions and referencing Chris as the contact

From: [redacted]/Staff/ABS
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 05/09/2019 09:05 AM
Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

Please find attached an update incorporating Paul's suggestions and referencing Chris as the contact officer. The other details in the footer will be completed by Parliamentary.
Chris and Paul - if you are okay with the changes, can you please advise so that [redacted] can pass through Teresa to David.

cheers,

[redacted]

[attachment "QTB Census content Sept 2019 v2.docx" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

[redacted]

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) [redacted] (M) [redacted]

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

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

* Chris Libreri---05/09/2019 08:22:28 AM---Thanks Paul and I support your suggestions. Chris Libreri

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
To: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 05/09/2019 08:22 AM
Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

Thanks Paul and I support your suggestions.

Chris Libreri

General Manager Census Division

Head of Brisbane Office

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5234 (M) [redacted] (F) (02) 6252 0000

(E) chris.libreri@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

Executive Assistant: [redacted]

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

* Paul Jelfs--05/09/2019 08:20:35 AM--From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS

From: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 05/09/2019 08:20 AM
Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

This is good thanks.

2 considerations

S47C

In the sentence justifying why many changes aren't possible - one key reason not there is that questions need to be accommodated on a physical and electronic format and there are space restrictions. Feel free to play with words to keep it short and sharp.

I'm ok with Chris to make a call on both of these issues

I'm happy with Chris as the contact officer as multiple aspects of Census are likely to come up through any conversation about this QBT

Cheers

Dr Paul Jelfs
General Manager and Senior Reconciliation Champion

Population and Social Statistics Division

Ph: 02 6252 6690

Mobile: S22

paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au

From: Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>

Date: 4 September 2019 at 5:10:20 pm AEST

To: S22 <S22@abs.gov.au>

Cc: Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>

Subject: Re: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

Hi

Looks fine for me - I would drop last line about October Test as there is a separate QTB on that.

I am happy to be Contact Officer with Paul's agreement.

PS - pretty impressive for a first attempt!

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 (W) www.abs.gov.au

Executive Assistant: S22

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

S22 ---04/09/2019 05:04:39 PM---I have been asked to prepare a QTB on Census content for parliament sitting next week. As I haven't

From: S22/Staff/ABS

To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS

Cc: Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS

Date: 04/09/2019 05:04 PM

Subject: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx

I have been asked to prepare a QTB on Census content for parliament sitting next week. As I haven't done

one before, I have attached a rough draft for your review. This is based largely on the Minister brief and includes information published in the topic directions in November 2018. It is from this short-list of topics that the media has been speculating about possible question changes in the Census, most notably in the AFR last week (article attached). I have not included any information on the topics recommended, nor any response to the non-binary sex/gender media coverage.

This needs to be signed off by Chris and Paul and then Teresa and David by Friday.

Let me know of any changes you would like me to incorporate.

Chris - would you like me to add you as the contact officer?

cheers,

S22

S22

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) S22 (M) S22

(E) S22 [@abs.gov.au](mailto:S22@abs.gov.au) (W) www.abs.gov.au

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


(See attached file: QTB Census content Sept 2019.docx)

The [Australian Financial Review](#) reports three quarters of Australian households are expected to complete the 2021 census online. The ABS is waiting for results of an independent assessment of the value of the census and its effectiveness in developing population data. Assistant Treasurer Michael Sukkar said "For the 2016 Census some 63 per cent of dwellings responded to the census online. For 2021 the ABS is expecting that number to be closer to 75 per cent."

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

08/11/2017 07:12 PM

Send	To S22 Staff/ABS@ABS cc bcc
Subject	Meeting with Ministers Office 
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance

S22, for your WDB...

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

----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 08/11/2017 06:12 PM -----

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS
To: S47F@treasury.gov.au,
Cc: Jonathan Palmer/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 08/11/2017 06:09 PM
Subject: Fw: 2021 Census development

Hi S47F

Thanks for the queries on Census content development, which Jonathan has relayed to me. Some further detail follows. Happy to discuss.

1. Stakeholder engagement plan

I've attached a schematic outlining the broad timing for the engagement plan. We propose commencing engagement with external stakeholders late in 2017 to identify data needs and continue through to the point of making a recommendation to the Minister and to the Cabinet.

Within this work, we will prioritise stakeholders into three tiers based on their level of influence and interest in topics which are likely to be added, modified or removed in the Census. Key stakeholders will be refined as work progresses, but will come from across government, academia, NGOs, advisory groups, lobbyists, community representatives and the public. Means of engaging is likely to depend on the type of stakeholder (note emphasis within Tiers below). All stakeholders will be required to make submissions.

Tier 1 stakeholders, who will be our initial focus, are those who have a significant level of influence and strong interest in Census topics. Engagement with these stakeholders will commence in late 2017 with face to face meetings at the officer and senior levels. ABS will provide support to these stakeholders to make submissions. Examples are major Commonwealth agencies like DSS, PM&C, Health and Education; relevant state/territory departments; academics and non-government organisations for issues which will be topical such as the LGBTI Health Alliance for discussion of sex/gender.

Tier 2 stakeholders may include Commonwealth agencies like Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Productivity Commission; bodies like Homelessness Australia, Council on the Ageing, Volunteering Australia; and state/territory departments who are somewhat less invested in the Census content discussion. Engagement will commence with these stakeholders in early 2018 and after initial face to face meetings may move into online consultation depending on the nature of the engagement.

Tier 3 stakeholders broadly include all members of the community with an interest in the Census ranging from community groups, media and members of the public. Activities will be predominantly online including multi media web content and registering for updates/newsletters. This will commence early in 2018 with topic information updated on the website.

The consultation process will be supported by mass media, social media and use of existing networks to create awareness. We will be seeking involvement from a range of stakeholders, including eliciting contrary views and perspectives, in order to understand the broad range of interests and perspectives and to inform the ongoing stakeholder engagement and communications plan. If there are specific stakeholders you want to ensure are included, please let me know.

[attachment "2021 Census content timeline - overview.pdf" deleted by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS]

2. Costs

There are a variety of factors that contribute to the cost of adding to a question to the Census. These include developing and testing the questions; scanning and reading paper form responses; coding responses; and compiling the data into statistics. Less complex questions, such as those that have tick box responses are relatively cheaper than those that have text responses such as address or occupation.

The cost to collect a topic and potential benefits or value that will be gained from collecting the data will be considered as part of the assessment criteria. The expectation is that topics won't be added without the costs being offset elsewhere. With expected improvements in technology and a greater take up of the online form, the costs to process and code data will be less than costs estimated in the lead up to the 2016 Census.

As an example of estimated question costs, the 2016 consultation process identified two topics which were shortlisted for recommendation.

- The estimated cost of adding a question to collect data on the respondent's long term health conditions was \$0.44m of which more than half was associated with release and dissemination costs.
- The estimated cost of adding a question to collect data on the respondent's second residence was \$4.34m of which more than half was associated with coding the address information. Significant costs were also associated with quality assurance and 'repairing' of information provided by respondents.

3. Sensitivity/campaigns

In the preparatory work for the 2016 Census, the topic which generated the most submissions and interest was religious affiliation. There was a strong push from atheist groups to change the order of the response categories to place 'no religion' at the top; religious organisations were strongly advocating the placement of 'no religion' after the list of the nine most commonly reported religions in the previous Census, with an option for 'other, specify'. Interest in these issues was played out in the media and involved active lobbying.

This initial phase of consultation is not intended to cover the issue of name and address retention and related privacy issues. An independent Privacy Impact Assessment and public consultation to inform privacy decisions is planned as a later part of the Census work program, with your office to be consulted closer to commencement of that work. There was significant media debate around privacy concerns of keeping the name and address information from the 2016 Census and such debate may recommence with consultation around the Census topics.

It is also likely that there will be interest again in the religion topic as the consultation commences and this will attract media attention and involve lobbying.

Other areas which might generate more interest and media or political activity include:

- sex/gender - in particular the inclusion of a non-binary option or a push for recognition of same sex marriages
- unpaid work/volunteering activities - in particular from the gender equity perspective
- ancestry/ethnicity topics attract attention of specific groups and these can sometimes be vocal, for example the Australian South Sea Islanders seeking specific recognition of their ancestry
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander - including the potential to identify sub-populations.

To make room for new topics, some that are of lower priority will be recommended for removal which may result in some backlash from stakeholders who are interested in this data. Based on the recommendations at the conclusion of the 2016 consultation process, this could include:

- motor vehicles garaged - affects transport planning bodies at the state/territory and local government levels
- children ever born - this question was recommended to revert to collection every second Census. When included this question is a sensitive one that raises concerns about the ability to include still born babies, fostered and adopted children.

Kind regards,

Justine

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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

(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) [REDACTED] (F) (02) 6252 6870

(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

----- Forwarded by Justine Boland/Staff/ABS on 08/11/2017 06:07 PM -----

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Jonathan Palmer" <jonathan.palmer@abs.gov.au>

Date: 6 November 2017 at 3:25:54 pm AEDT
To: "Paul Jelfs" <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>
Cc: "Bindi Kindermann" <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>
Subject: Fwd: 2021 Census development [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Paul. Can you help me with a response to [REDACTED]. Thanks.

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]@treasury.gov.au>
Date: 6 November 2017 at 2:04:22 pm AEDT
To: "Jonathan Palmer (Unsecure)" <jonathan.palmer@abs.gov.au>
Cc: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]@treasury.gov.au>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>
Subject: 2021 Census development [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Jonathan,

Hope you had a lovely weekend.

As discussed, the Minister seeks some further information on the following

- Further information/background on the stakeholder engagement strategy
- Indicative costs to remove/add questions
- Details about the issues and sensitivities which arose from the last round of Census content consultation (I mentioned a mini campaign last week from the 2016 Census content consultation process)

If you need further information or clarification please let me know.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Adviser

Office of The Hon. Michael McCormack MP

Minister for Small Business | The Nationals' Member for Riverina

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Please Note: The information contained in this e-mail message and any attached files may be confidential information and may also be the subject of legal professional privilege. If you are not the intended recipient, any

use, disclosure or copying of this e-mail is unauthorised. If you have received this e-mail by error please notify the sender immediately by reply e-mail and delete all copies of this transmission together with any attachments.



Deputy Australian Statistician Census and Enabling Services Group

MB17-000124

The Hon Michael McCormack MP
Minister for Small Business

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

2021 Census content development – consultation process and timetable

For information

- 1 The next Census is scheduled for August 2021. The ABS believes there is a strong case for making some changes to the content of the Census; however we would like to ascertain the Government's appetite for change.
- 2 The process for determining the topics for the Census usually includes stakeholder and public consultation undertaken by the ABS followed by a recommendation from the ABS to the Minister and Cabinet consideration. The final decision on Census topics rests with Government. We would prefer not to raise the expectations of stakeholders and the public unless there is likely to be Government support for some change to the content:
- 3 The 2016 Census contained the same topics as the 2006 and 2011 Censuses. This is despite a strong demand for changes to meet new information needs.
- 4 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 a small number of questions removed and a small number added in their place. Early indications of likely areas for new, modified or removed content are summarised in Attachment B. We will also explore options to enhance information collected via use of the eCensus or through greater use of administrative data alongside the Census.
- 5 Clear criteria that relate to relevance, coverage of population, respondent ability to answer, acceptability, efficiency and alternative data sources will be used to assess suggestions for change.

Current Census content

- 6 The Census provides key data for demographic estimates, data at small geographic levels and key information to support a range of policy developments, evaluation and monitoring.

7 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 change to contemporise data collection in some areas. Support for change has been reinforced by the public with nearly 1,000 submissions to the 2016 Census consultation process.

8 Submissions for change from stakeholders and the public will be put through an assessment process using the following 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 suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the data need.

Engagement and consultation process

9 Subject to an expressed appetite by the Government for some change to the Census content, an engagement and consultation process is proposed to gather evidence for change options and to build stakeholder support. The process will emphasise targeted engagement with key stakeholders to understand emerging data needs and policy drivers of national importance, whilst also providing opportunities for a broader range of interested parties and individuals to participate in a formal submission process.

10 The proposed approach and engagement timeline is provided below. The timeline is driven by providing a recommendation to Government by June 2019, which will enable sufficient time for Cabinet and Parliamentary processes and finalisation of the Census form. The formal engagement phase is planned to commence after the Australian Marriage Law Survey.

Late 2017 – Jun 2018	Initial engagement with key external stakeholders
Apr – Jun 2018	Public consultation
Apr – Jun 2018	Submission process open
Oct 2018	Interim content recommendations paper released
Oct 2018 – Jun 2019	Further engagement to refine recommendations
Jun 2019	Topic recommendations to Government
Jul 2019 – Apr 2020	Government and Parliamentary processes
Jun 2020	Paper Census form finalised for printing

11 **External stakeholders:** A broad range of key stakeholders will be identified, with most likely to be data users from all levels of government, business, industry, peak bodies, universities and researchers and community groups. Other stakeholders including advocates, lobbyists and community representatives will also be involved in the engagement process.

12 **Public consultation:** The public consultation phase will be promoted to ensure that members of the public are aware of their opportunity to express their views on the content for the 2021 Census through the formal submission process.

13 **Submission process:** Organisations and individuals wishing to propose changes to the Census content will be required to put in a submission addressing assessment criteria. Submissions will be accepted via Citizen Space, a cloud based consultation platform. Options for hard copy submissions will also be provided.



Jonathan Palmer

18 October 2017

The Australian Statistician has been consulted on this Minute.

Appendix A: 2016 Census topics by domain

Population

Age
Name
Number of children ever given birth to
Person temporarily absent
Registered marital status
Sex

People & Community

Ancestry
Australian citizenship
County of birth
Country of birth of each parent
Year of arrival in Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status
Main language spoken at home
Proficiency in spoken English
Household/family relationships
Religious affiliation

Income & Work

Income
Labour force status
Employment type
Hours worked
Status in employment
Occupation
Industry of employment
Self Employed - number of employees
Unpaid care (of child(ren))
Unpaid work (domestic activities)
Unpaid work (volunteering)

Transport

Mode of travel to work
Name and address of workplace attended
Number of motor vehicles

Education & Training

Attendance at an educational institution
Highest year of schooling
Non-school qualifications

Disability

Need for assistance (self-care, body movement, communication)
Unpaid care (due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person)

Location

Address of usual residence
Address on Census night
Address one year ago
Address five years ago
Address of non-private dwelling

Housing

Type of tenure (nature of occupancy)
Number of bedrooms
Housing costs
Landlord type
Type of non-private dwelling
Name of non-private dwelling
Residential status in a non-private dwelling
Number of persons resident in non-private dwelling
Residential status in a private dwelling
Structure of private dwelling
Dwelling internet access

Appendix B: 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. Complementing the directly collected Census data with administrative data sources to increase the value will also be explored.

Long term health condition – additional topic

The collection of this topic was supported by the Department of Health and other key stakeholders for the 2016 Census. The topic would identify people with certain long term health conditions particularly at the small area level. This would enable targeting of prevention and treatment programs for chronic disease. It would also facilitate integration of Census data with administrative data sources, for example Medicare benefits to analyse the effectiveness of health expenditure and forecast demand. This topic was recommended for inclusion in the 2016 Census.

Second residence – additional topic

The inclusion of a topic collecting second residence would provide an opportunity to understand the size and nature of some service populations for small areas. In regard to the 2016 Census, there was support from a wide variety of stakeholders with interests including fly in fly out and other mobile workers; children in dual custody arrangements; and more mobile retired or semi-retired people. The proposed question was unable to meet all needs for which there is interest, including short stay tourism flows and day populations in business districts. Further testing and understanding of the data need was required before the topic was recommended for inclusion in the 2016 Census.

Identification of veterans – additional topic

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has signaled interest in the inclusion of a veterans' indicator on the Census, to identify the potential number and distribution of the ex-service community in Australia.

Number of children ever born – remove

This data is used by demographers as a measure of fertility. With Australia's fertility now remaining rather stable at a low level, and given that variations in fertility among most small groups of the population have considerably narrowed, it is not essential for data on number of children ever born to be collected every five years. From 2016, it was recommended that this topic be collected every second Census.

Unpaid care of children - remove

A series of four questions on unpaid work were introduced in the 2006 Census. Of the four, the unpaid care of children topic was assessed to provide data of the lowest value. Explicit consultation on this issue with users did not uncover any strong contrary opinion. It was recommended that this topic be removed from the 2016 Census.

Dwelling internet access - remove

This topic was also introduced in the 2006 Census. It was found to be of decreasing relevance due to the high proportion of dwellings with internet access and the increase in mobile rather than dwelling internet access. It was recommended that this topic be removed from the 2016 Census.

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.


Basics

Secretariat WDB

17/10/2019 01:02 PM

Sent by

S22

Send	To ATDLO@treasury.gov.au David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Luise cc Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Jenet Connell/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS. bcc S22 /Staff/ABS
Subject	ABS Minute MB19-000042 - Parliamentary process of Census and Statistics Regulations – risks and impacts 
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance

Good afternoon

For information

Please bring the attached minute to the attention of the Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer, the Treasurer, and the Secretary to the Treasury. It provides information on the process of amending the *Census and Statistics Regulation 2016* for the proposed topics for the 2021 Census.



ABS Minute MB19-000042 Parliamentary process of Census and Statistics Regulations - risks and impacts.pdf

Kind Regards,

S22

Parliamentary and Partnerships Section | Communication and Parliamentary Branch | **Australian Bureau**

of Statistics

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**General Manager
Census and Data Services Division**

MB19-000042

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

cc: The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Treasurer
Dr Steven Kennedy PSM, Secretary to the Treasury

Parliamentary process of Census and Statistics Regulations – risks and impacts

For information

- 1 This Minute provides information on the process of amending the Census and Statistics Regulation 2016 for the proposed topics for the 2021 Census.
- 2 MB19-000041 provides details on the timing of the process. This Minute supplements that information by highlighting the risks associated with this timing and the impact of disallowance. There is a hard deadline of end March 2020 for the Regulations to be passed to enable the quality assurance processes to finalise the paper form in time for printing.
- 3 To meet this deadline, the Regulations will need to be tabled in both houses of parliament in February 2020. This requires approval from the Government by Friday 1 November 2019.
- 4 The Regulations are subject to a 15 sitting day disallowance period. A member in either house can make a motion to disallow the amendments to the instrument whether in full or in part. This provides an additional 15 sitting days for the members of that house to deal with the motion, that is further discuss or seek clarification on the instrument. There are two points of risk that may result in the amendments to the instrument (either in full or in part) being disallowed:
 - the relevant house is unable to deal with the motion within the extended disallowance period; or
 - the majority vote in the relevant house to disallow the amendments either in full or part.

5 A disallowed amendment to an instrument cannot be substantially remade within six months. Given the tight timeframes associated with the Census, there is no possibility of tabling amended Regulations.

6 If the amendments are disallowed in full, the current regulation remains in force and the 2021 Census would collect information on the same topics contained in the 2006, 2011 and 2016 Censuses. In particular, the proposed new topics identified during the consultation process of chronic health conditions and Australian Defence Force service would not be included.

7 Additionally, the household internet access question would not be removed.

8 If the amendments are disallowed in part, the disallowed amendments cease to have effect. Disallowance in this case would result in some, but not all of the proposed changes to the Census topics contained in the 2006, 2011 and 2016 Censuses.

9 The ABS will proceed with developing the paper and online versions of the existing Census topics in case of disallowance. This will need to consider likely possibilities of partial disallowance.



Chris Libreri
General Manager

17 October 2019

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

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

Update on the Census Content process discussion we had today

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Amanda Clark 07/08/2019 02:11 PM

Basics

Amanda Clark/Staff/ABS

02/08/2019 02:24 PM

Send	<p>To S47F [redacted] <S47F [redacted]@infrastructure.gov.au>, "S47F [redacted]" S47F [redacted]@infrastructure.gov.au</p> <p>cc S22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 [redacted] S22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS</p> <p>bcc S22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS</p>
Subject	Update on the Census Content process discussion we had today
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations

Hi S47F [redacted] and S47F [redacted],

Further to our discussion today, I've had a chat to S22 [redacted] and have the following additional information for you:

- The change in process for decision on form content has not yet been made by our Minister. A recommendation has been made by the ABS which is primarily driven by timing. As soon as we know the process, S22 [redacted] and team will provide us with a briefing which we will be able to forward to all stakeholders. We'll send that on to you as soon as we have it.
- S22 [redacted] has recommended that regardless of the decision process, any correspondence to the Treasurer or to the ABS Minister, Minister Sukkar, should be sent as soon as possible.

Happy to discuss further if you have any questions.

Cheers,
Amanda

Amanda Clark

Program Manager A/g, Physical Environment Accounts and Statistics

Statistical Services Group | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

04/07/2019 09:21 PM

Send	To 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS cc [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Re: Notification: DRAFT Assessment of small area utility for New Census Topics 📎
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations

Thanks [S22]. I've added a few thoughts into the doclink. I think it's a good outline. I agree that the Indigenous estimates may not be a good guide; I think we are likely to see a lot more clustering of populations for veterans and for sexual orientation (perhaps like certain migrant groups??).

I think in general you have the balance of detail about right in the points flagged, however we can see how it pans out once drafted. (We don't want it to be a repeat of the earlier document already read by David. I think this need to be focused more on numbers and less on research/caveats.)

Happy to chat tomorrow.

Justine

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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


(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) [S22]

(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

From: 2021 Census Content Development WDB
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 04/07/2019 04:18 PM
Subject: Notification: DRAFT Assessment of small area utility for New Census Topics
Sent by: S22

Hi Justine (and S22),

I thought I'd send through the information I've been gathering today in regard to assessing the small area utility of the new Census topics.

 (Subject: DRAFT Assessment of small area utility for New Census Topics; Database: 2021 Census Content Development WDB; Author: S22 ; Created: 04/07/2019; Doc Ref: CBRY-BDR97Z)

A few thoughts:

- At the moment, this is mostly just a rough information gathering document and we can think about presentation later, as I expect we'd condense this into the one page brief for each topic.
- I've started by trying to outline some thoughts about National estimates (based on current surveys or other sources) and some of the quality considerations in regard to those estimates.
- I then thought we could find topics with similar proportions or characteristics currently on the Census and get feedback on what's possible from a small area perspective.
- I was originally thinking a number of the new topics are similar proportions to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, but I don't know if that makes them comparable in terms of small area data quality, as we have special enumeration procedures and PES to boost the quality of indigenous data.
- I've also done some broad thinking on what data users will want to cross classify the information against, but that's also very rough.

Anyway, can you (and S22) have a look and get back to me on whether you think the points I've raised regarding estimates are relevant and on the right track (or too much detail and off track).

Tomorrow, I will do some restructuring of the draft brief I'd been working on into a 'cover brief' using Paul's notes as guidance, and will then get back to this and preparation of the one page topic briefs.

Happy to discuss.

Thanks,

S22

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

07/12/2018 09:45 AM

Send	To Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, cc Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Re: For advice: Key work program activities to support Census content recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]
Protective Mark	Sensitive:
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy Caveat <input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations

Thanks Chris, will do. We are going to try for something in the week of the 7th of January.

JB

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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

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Chris Libreri

Thanks Teresa. Justine - thanks for the note it is...

06/12/2018 05:19:20 PM

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
 To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS
 Cc: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS
 Date: 06/12/2018 05:19 PM
 Subject: Re: For advice: Key work program activities to support Census content recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]

Thanks Teresa.

Justine - thanks for the note it is very useful. Can we aim for a meeting very early in the New Year - the EAs can sort this out.

Chris Libreri

General Manager Census and Statistical Services Division

Census and Data Services Group

Head of Brisbane Office

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Executive Assistant: [REDACTED]

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

Teresa Dickinson

Hi Justine Thanks for starting to think through th...

06/12/2018 01:12:52 PM

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 06/12/2018 01:12 PM
Subject: Re: For advice: Key work program activities to support Census content recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]

Hi Justine

Thanks for starting to think through the next steps of this process.

I agree we need to meet, but can we let Bindi and Chris call the timing on this one. They are in the thick of preparing an NPP, due 13 December, with more detailed costings due 20 Dec. This will need to take precedence over everything else, so let's leave it up to them to guide when is the most workable time to meet.

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]

Justine Boland

Teresa, Chris, Bindi and Paul, I am writing to se...

06/12/2018 01:07:16 PM

From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS
To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: [REDACTED] S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS
Date: 06/12/2018 01:07 PM
Subject: For advice: Key work program activities to support Census content recommendations [DLM=Sensitive]

Teresa, Chris, Bindi and Paul,

I am writing to seek your advice on the 2019 work program to ABS support decision making for the recommendations to Government concerning 2021 Census topics. If acceptable, I will arrange a short meeting in the next fortnight to bed down these arrangements. I am keen to make sure [REDACTED] S22 and I provide the necessary support and information for decision making regarding Census content recommendations early in 2019.

Our public facing material has noted that we will make a recommendations to the Government in mid-2019. We are expecting that the formal advice and documentation to be prepared will include:

- a brief to our Minister in mid June 2019 (noting we expect to have provided an initial update on 2021 Census content in the incoming Minister's brief)
- a Cabinet submission containing recommendations finalised in August 2019
- Regulations for tabling in Parliament - tabled in September 2019 (but no later than end October 2019).

With these end points, we are proposing the following internal processes:

- Preparation of summary documentation and continued assessment for each short listed topic - now to March 2019, covering:
 - Data/policy need
 - Respondent feedback from qualitative testing incl. cognitive testing and focus groups
 - Operational feasibility assessment / cost implications
 - Statistical impacts of change
- [Meeting with SRO, Census senior leadership team and other key SES to workshop Census content assessment findings and shape preliminary recommendation - late Feb 2019](#)
- Prepare draft EB and/or CEB papers summarising preliminary recommendations for March 2019 meetings (see request below for guidance re governance fora)
- Prepare other governance papers and undertake further investigations as needed during April - May 2019 to confirm the ABS position.

In the new year we will begin working closely with Treasury, via our Policy and Legislation Section, to commence drafting the Cabinet Submission and Regulations.

I'd appreciate your guidance on this timing, your preferred governance mechanisms to discuss recommendation development, and any other information/processes you would like to support decision making within ABS for 2021 Census content. I would propose that the meeting outlined above (in blue), would be a critical activity for this work program, and with your agreement and advice on attendance, would like to get that into diaries.

If acceptable, I would be keen to arrange a short meeting to discuss this proposed program of work.

Justine

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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






(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) S22


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Basics

Denise Carlton/Staff/ABS

01/04/2020 01:38 PM

Send	To 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS cc  Staff/ABS@ABS,  /Staff/ABS@ABS,   ABS@ABS, Stephen Collett/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Re: FOR ACTION: Decision proforma on non-binary sex 
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi  - and thanks for all you are doing to represent our views in this paper. It's a fraught one and we appreciate you efforts.

 captured things well in here comments and I can see how you've responded to that - a couple of remianing comments from me if it's not too late:



Implementation of non-binary sex Decision Proforma V6.docx

(pronouns: she/her/hers)

Denise Carlton

Program Manager, Population Statistics | Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Executive assistant: S22 (P) S22 (E) S22 @abs.gov.au

I am an ABS Gender Diversity Champion. I also work flexibly, which means that you may get emails from me at unusual hours.

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

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Good afternoon, Please f...

31/03/2020 01:53:56 PM

From: 2021 Census Content Development WDB
To: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark
Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: S22 Staff/ABS@ABS, Denise Carlton/Staff/ABS@ABS, Stephen
Collett/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Schubert/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 31/03/2020 01:53 PM
Subject: FOR ACTION: Decision proforma on non-binary sex
Sent by: S22

Good afternoon,

Please find attached the decision proforma on non-binary sex for your review and feedback. It has been developed in close collaboration with teams across PaSSD, Census and methodology as outlined in the consultation section. The next stage is a discussion with Teresa, Paul Jelfs and Anders which has been scheduled for Friday morning. Please let me know if you have got any feedback that you would like incorporated into the version to be circulated to meeting attendees. I intend to send out both a decision proforma and slide deck to meeting attendees on Thursday morning.

cheers

S22

[attachment "Implementation of non-binary sex Decision Proforma V6.docx" deleted by Denise Carlton/Staff/ABS]

Topic for decision	Implementation of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census
Stream Lead	S22
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 by the Senior Responsible Officer and identifies areas where a decision is required. The evidence is presented throughout the implications section of this paper under the relevant headings.</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>A. Online implementation</p> <p><u>Recommendation 1:</u></p> <p>Endorse the proposed online implementation of the question using a click through to the third response category.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>B. Paper form implementation</p> <p><u>Recommendation 2:</u></p> <p>Endorse the proposed paper form implementation of the sex question with three response categories.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>C. Wording, explanatory text and response categories</p> <p><u>Recommendation 3:</u></p> <p>Endorse the draft question wording, explanatory text and the change of the third response option to 'non-binary sex' (subject to further development and engagement).</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>D. Derivation of binary sex</p> <p><u>Recommendation 4:</u></p> <p>Endorse the use of binary multi-marked responses in the derivation process.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Recommendation 5:</u></p> <p>Endorse the decision to not use 'children given birth to' responses in the binary sex variable derivation.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p><u>Decision 6:</u></p> <p>Should the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Decision 7:</u></p> <p>Should name be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>E. Imputation approach</p> <p><u>Recommendation 8:</u></p> <p>Endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is this a data quality improvement priority?</p>	<p>The proposed collection of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census is to adhere to the Australian Government’s guidelines requiring that individuals are able to identify in a way that is not exclusively male nor female and that this is reflected in their personal records held by the Australian Government and its agencies¹. There is also strong demand from the LGBTI community that the Census is inclusive of people who do not identify as male or female.</p> <p>The approach proposed in this decision proforma to collecting non-binary sex is to reduce any data quality impact of providing a response option in addition to male and female.</p>
<p>Key Issues and assumptions</p>	<p>The implications and options presented in this decision proforma are based on discussions with external stakeholders, extensive qualitative testing and findings from the October 2019 quantitative field test. ABS stakeholders involved in the discussion of implications and options are listed in the consultation section.</p> <p>Comprehensive analysis of the evidence will be presented in the Statistical Impact Management Plan. Background information on the concepts and stakeholder input is reflected in previous reports. These include the ABS recommendation to the Government on 2021 Census topics (MB19-000039) and the associated internal document providing advice to the Statistician to inform these recommendations.</p> <p>In 2016, the ABS took a step towards collecting sex in a non-binary way on the online Census form by introducing special procedures for people who wanted to respond as other than male or female. Since 2006, the Australian Census has provided a method to report in a non-binary way on the paper Census form.</p> <p>The development of questions for the 2021 Census is based on the assumption that we will “do at least what we did in 2016”. With greater time for development and changing community expectations, the</p>

¹ Attorney-General’s Department (2013). *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender* (updated November 2015)

proposed direction is that the non-binary sex response option will be available through mainstream procedures while being cognisant of data quality and other risks.

As was the case in previous Censuses, a data quality assurance process will be undertaken to investigate and amend genuine errors in reporting non-binary sex.

The following factors need to be considered in deciding on the appropriate implementation approach:

- The sex variable is one of the most important collected in the Census. It is used as the basis for the estimated resident population and it is critical that the quality of the male and female responses is preserved.
- A binary sex variable will be derived for the Post Enumeration Survey, Demography and key Census outputs. Output plans for the non-binary sex variable are still to be considered noting that there are stakeholder concerns about the quality of the non-binary sex data and whether it will be fit for release.
- The topics of sex and gender can be conflated. The Census output variable is 'sex' although this concept is not specifically collected and it is known that some respondents choose to answer based on their 'gender'.
- There is a risk that adding a non-binary response option to the non-specific sex question, implies that gender is the concept collected rather than sex. This is inconsistent with the Census Regulation that lists the topic to be collected as 'sex'.
- The question wording and response categories used to collect a topic listed in the Regulation is a matter for the ABS, rather than the Government.
- In 2016, the ABS released the standard for sex and gender variables (cat.no. 1200.0.55.012). An updated standard is due to be released in mid-2020. This started with findings from the Census research and was advanced through further standards consultation and finalisation. The Australian Government's guidelines are expected to be updated to align with the new ABS standard in the future.
- There has been significant engagement with LGBTI advocates and testing of potential sex and gender questions with people in this community. This has demonstrated that there is no one best way to collect sex that is appropriate for the diverse range of experiences of these communities.
- User research with respondents not identifying in a non-binary way also presented mixed responses to implementation options, demonstrating the complexity of this question.
- LGBTI advocates are likely to have a keen interest in same-sex marriage statistics from the 2021 Census, noting that this is the first Census following the legal recognition of registered same-sex marriages in Australia. The family coding processes have been

Commented [DC1]: WE need to be careful here – according to the Regulations that what we are allowed to collect and for many years people would have understood this question as pertaining to sex. I'd say something more like "Although the intent of the question is to collect sex, it known...."

	<p>reviewed for this change and there will be a specific review of the impact of collecting non-binary sex on family coding. There will also be close attention on this data through data assurance and macro editing processes, particularly any consequence from the binary sex derivation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on analysis of data from the 2016 Census pilot and the October 2019 field test, the proportion of respondents in the 2021 Census answering with a response other than male or female is likely to be very small (between 0.2 and 0.3). • The content of the paper form needs to be locked down by 4 May 2020 to enable quality assurance processes to occur before printing commences on 30 September 2020.
<p>Implications</p>	<p>As listed in the purpose section, there are a number of endorsements and decisions to make that have their own implications. These will be presented separately in this section and the risks and benefits associated with each outlined.</p> <p>A. Online implementation</p> <p>Attachment A shows the proposed online implementation of the sex question. The key features are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third response option is visible only on click through to reduce the risk of it being selected by deliberate misreporting or error. • Respondent can multi mark non-binary sex with male <u>or</u> female. This satisfies some user need and provides data that may inform the derivation of the binary sex variable. • Further information text field when non-binary sex is selected acts as a quality measure to either dissuade respondents from selecting non-binary sex in error or capture information to determine whether the response was intentional. It also provides an opportunity for respondents to provide more information about their non-binary response. <p>Note that sex is a mandatory variable online and the form cannot be submitted until a response is provided for all household members.</p> <p>The key risk associated with the proposed online implementation is that LGBTI advocates may contend that clicking through to access the third option presents a barrier and sends a message that their community is 'hidden'. This is compounded by the decision to not include the other LGBTI topics of gender identity and sexual orientation in the Regulation.</p> <p>Treating non-binary respondents in an unequal way may expose the ABS to allegations of discrimination under the <i>Sex Discrimination Act (1984)</i>. This Act includes discrimination based on gender identity and intersex status.</p> <p>Recommendation 1: endorse the proposed online implementation of the question using a click through to the third response category.</p>

B. Paper form implementation

Attachment B presents the proposed implementation of the non-binary sex question on the paper form and two alternative approaches that were considered.

The key decision debated was whether the non-binary sex response option should be presented on the paper form. There are a number of risks associated with including a third response option but there are also risks of not including a third response option. On balance the recommendation is to include the non-binary response option.

The risks of including the non-binary sex response option on the paper form are predominately associated with data quality concerns:

- Potential for inadvertent error or deliberate misreporting that compromises the quality of the male/female response distribution, noting that this was not observed in the field test.
- Potential respondent confusion that may increase item non-response or error, noting that this was not evident in the qualitative testing or in respondent feedback from the field test.
- Once the paper forms are distributed, unable to revert to a binary option in the event of a backlash or campaign to vandalise the form.

The risks of not including the third response option on the paper form are associated with community reaction and processing complexity:

- Makes it difficult for non-binary respondents to give this response on a paper form.
- Requiring extra effort to respond in a non-binary way may be construed as discriminatory.
- Additional instructions would be required either on the form or in supporting material directing respondents to write their answer beside the response options or suggesting that they complete the Census online.
- Increased data capture effort to scan, repair and manually review non-binary responses written on the form.
- Increased processing effort to review and analyse written responses.

In both cases there is a risk of inconsistency with the online form. This is acceptable from a data quality perspective but may drive advocates to promote one mode over the other.

If a non-binary sex response option is not presented on the paper form as a tick box, options A and B in attachment B are alternative approaches to enable people to respond.

Attachment B also has a snip from the supporting material from the 2016 Census instructing respondents on how to answer as other than male or female.

Recommendation 2: Endorse the proposed paper form implementation of the sex question with three response categories.

C. Wording, explanatory text and response categories

It is proposed that the question wording is the same as recent Censuses noting that it is not consistent with the ABS standard.

- On the paper form
Is the person:
- On the online form
Is <person name>:

The standard requires that the question specifically mention 'sex'.

Qualitative testing found that this was only acceptable when a separate 'gender' question was included. With the Government's decision to not include gender identity in the Regulation, the less specific question variation continues to be used to enable respondents who wish to provide a gender identity that differs from their biological sex the ability to do so. This particularly applies to respondents who identify as transgender, rather than fluid, agender or non-binary.

Since 1996, the Census hasn't collected sex according to the ABS standard. There is a strong argument to maintain continuity with previous Censuses with question wording that is proven in the self-enumeration and whole population context of the Census.

There is limited space on the paper form for explanatory text. The October test form referred to additional information available online. Instructions may need to be added to the explanatory text if the decision is made not to include the non-binary response category on the paper form.

Online there is scope for more explanatory text and this will guide respondents to the alternative sex question online implementation discussed in recommendation 1 above.

The key decision to make is regarding the terminology used in the response categories. The October test used the non sex specific term 'non-binary' as the third response option. This decision was made after extensive qualitative testing with LGBTI respondents and non-LGBTI respondents including those with lower levels of English proficiency and less familiarity with sex and gender diversity.

Recent advice is that this response option in combination with the non-specific question wording could be interpreted as the Census asking gender not sex. As sex is the prescribed topic in the Regulation, there is a risk that the ABS could face a legal challenge on this issue. The likelihood is low but the consequence could be major.

The proposed way to mitigate this risk and not disrupt the time series is to change the response option to 'non-binary sex'.

Further development work and engagement with stakeholders will occur to refine the wording of the response option in line with the direction shown in the attachments.

Recommendation 3: endorse the draft question wording, explanatory text and the change of the third response option to 'non-binary sex'.

D. Derivation of binary sex

The Population Statistics Branch has confirmed that a binary sex variable (i.e. male and female) is required for the purposes of population estimates. The binary variable is also required for Census processing and coding and will be the basis of key Census output. Deriving binary sex when a person is able to respond as non-binary sex presents a reputational risk. It is critical that the process is defensible and transparent.

There are two types of information that could be used to derive the binary variable:

Multi-mark

Where respondents select a male or female response in addition to non-binary sex, this response can be used to derive the binary variable. This will require changes to the processing business rules but is achievable. Multi mark is a feature of the online form and will be possible on paper if three responses boxes are presented.

Responses to other questions

Various inputs could be used to inform the derivation in cases where only non-binary sex is selected. These include:

- Additional text provided in the other specify box online
- Response to the name question
- Response to the 'children given birth to' question

Note that responses to other questions could be utilised in an automatic or a manual way or some combination of both. The automatic approach would require system changes to apply logic rules. The manual approach would involve presenting the information to coders for them to make a determination on whether to assign the sex as male or female.

The Data Quality Specialist Working Group advised the Census Program that where possible, additional information should be used in the derivation.

Strong concerns were expressed by some members that there may be respondent sensitivities if additional text was collected and then not used in the derivations (noting that it would be used in further analysis for an article on non-binary sex).

It was also argued that using additional information might be a cautious way of implementing the change to collect non-binary sex in mainstream procedures. This could help manage the statistical impact.

The benefits of using additional input to inform the derivation are:

- Consistent with the advice from DQSWG.
- Fully utilises the additional information requested from respondents on non-binary sex.

The risks of using additional input to inform the derivation are:

- Would require changes to the processing and coding systems that are not a priority given the current amber project status and will not be delivered for the Operational Readiness Exercise.

- Cost and timetable impact to implement for the 2021 Census main event are still to be considered, noting that introducing this approach will be at the expense of other planned activities.
- Coding logic to inform how to derive a binary variable from a non-binary response needs to be developed and would be led by the subject matter area.
- Coding logic would require careful consideration on whether to interpret the response as the person's biological sex or the currently identified gender. Applying logic to alter someone's response would need to be both transparent and defensible.
- Organisational risk if the logic is not defensible and possible risk to general Census response if this attracts community backlash.
- Any manual review at this stage involves a degree of judgement by processing staff.
- A manual review process could add unmanageable delays to a very tight stage of the processing cycle.
- An automatic process requires more significant system changes.

Factors specific to the type of information to be used:

- Based on analysis of the October field test, it is possible that only 15% of respondents who select non-binary sex, will also multi-mark male or female.
- Approximately 10% of non-binary respondents provided additional information in both the 2016 Pilot and the 2019 field test. A review of all write in responses from the 2016 Census identified that about 20% contained information that could be useful in derivation. Therefore, this process would add value to only about 2% of non-binary responses.
- There is likely to be some overlap between respondents who multi-mark and those providing additional information.
- Preliminary discussions indicate that a pre-existing list of names with sex and prevalence for sex has potential to be used, although no work on design, testing or implementation has been done to date.
- The Census program uses names in image form. Processes would need to change to use names in text format, including changes to strict name access control.
- Having names stored as text and associated with other response data presents an increased privacy risk as the sensitive data would exist in a searchable format.
- Using the 'children given birth to' response would add a female bias to the estimates.

Recommendation 4: endorse the use of binary multi-marked responses in the derivation process.

Recommendation 5: endorse the decision to not use 'children given birth to' responses in the binary sex variable derivation.

The Census program recommends that the additional information field and name are not used in the binary sex derivation. The effort to change systems and the risk to the delivery of the program outweighs the benefits of this approach. Note that the risk to delivery of systems is higher with an automatic process, but the reputational and privacy risk is higher with a manual process.

Demography do not agree with this recommendation. They state that it is important that the best possible information to support the derivation of male or female is used. For example there are studies that show that particular cohorts (e.g. young females) may be more likely to report a non-binary sex. We should therefore use all possible alternate information to derive the binary sex in order to ensure sex ratios at different ages are as accurate as possible.

Decision 6: should the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?

Decision 7: should name be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?

E. Imputation approach

A majority of records with a non-binary response will not have additional information to inform the binary variable derivation approaches discussed in the previous section. The approach taken in the 2016 Census was to randomly impute the binary sex for these records based on a 50:50 ratio for males to females.

Given the larger number of non-binary responses that are expected in the 2021 Census, alternatives to this imputation approach have been considered. It is possible that the non-binary responses may be clustered by age cohort or geographical area and a non-random imputation process may be warranted.

There is limited evidence supporting the age/geographical distribution of people who may respond with a non-binary sex. Analysis from the 2016 Census suggests that there may be greater rates in the major cities and in younger age cohorts (15 to 34 years of age), noting that this was a small and potentially biased sample.

In terms of implementing this approach, at the time of imputing the binary sex variable, the age data is preliminary. Theoretically different male to female ratios could be applied for different age cohorts.

It is also theoretically possible to vary the male to female ratio for different geographies, for example a particular SA4 might have a 60:40 split rather than 50:50.

Initial consideration by Methodology does not support this approach.

Commented [DC2]: Thanks – the only thing I would add here is that a person indicating they have given births is a strong indication that a person is female in terms of sex

Commented [DC3]: Did I miss a reference to the coding index which assigns sex to names (based on reporting of sex in admin data) that SDID use for data linkage – I think it's useful to know there is a potential solution/tool here....

	<p>The main benefit identified for this approach was to get the imputation 'correct' for what has been reported as a tendency for young females to identify as gender fluid or gender diverse. Errors in population estimates for young cohorts will remain in the estimates for many years as those individuals age.</p> <p>The risks of applying a non-random sex imputation approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using age cohorts to vary the imputation is unlikely to reduce bias. • There are likely to be very small numbers of non-binary respondents in most geographies. The outcomes of a 50:50 and a 60:40 imputation approach may be the same when only a few records are involved. • Significant effort will be required to introduce this change, including benchmark information to be provided by Demography and technical support for the system changes. • There is limited existing data to inform targeted age and/or geography based imputation. • Systems and processes will not be developed prior to the Operational Readiness Exercise, resulting in an untested system being used in the 2021 Census. <p>Recommendation 8: endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available.</p>
Options considered	The major options considered are outlined in the relevant parts of the implications section.
Change analysis log	<p>Change Analysis log attached (Yes/No)</p> <p>This decision will be supported by a Statistical Impact Management Plan which is currently being drafted.</p>
Consultation	<p>5 Feb 2020 Census Data Quality Specialist Working Group</p> <p>10 Feb 2020 Michael Meagher (PM – Risk, Planning and Policy)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Demography)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – 2021 Post Enumeration Survey)</p> <p>4, 10 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Household Characteristics & Social Reporting)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Processing & Coding)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Data Capture)</p> <p>Versions of this decision paper were distributed for comments during March 2020 to:</p> <p>Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk</p>

Commented [DC4]: WE could only support this where all other relevant information has been used (ie our support is dependent on the outcomes of the above recommendations)

	<p>Processing & Coding Data Capture Digital and Paper Services PaSSD Demography Post Enumeration Survey Household Characteristics and Social Reporting Other Household Survey Methodology Respondent Collection Methodology</p> <p>Version 5 was circulated on 25 March 2020 to directors in the Census Leadership Group and PaSSD and Methodology Program Managers.</p> <p>Mark Harding, PM Census Data Operations, will endorse census perspectives. Paul Jelfs, GM PaSSD, will endorse PaSSD perspectives.</p>
<p>Alternate views on recommendations</p>	<p>Household Characteristics and Social Reporting as the subject matter area responsible for the sex and gender standard, have a number of points of disagreement with the recommendations contained in this proforma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-binary sex option should be available to all respondents on the online form without having to click through to the alternative question implementation (recommendation 1). They contend that such an approach could be in breach of the 2013 amendments to the <i>Sex Discrimination Act</i> (1984). The amendments state that discrimination can occur indirectly if someone is required to take action that is different to others based on certain characteristics. There is provision for a 'reasonableness test' in the Act. The ABS defence is likely to be based on the risk to quality if the non-binary sex option is presented up front. Regardless there is a risk of unknown likelihood that the ABS may be challenged on this basis. • This argument also applies to not presenting a non-binary response option on the paper form (recommendation 2). • The term 'sex' should be included in the question, not in the response category (recommendation 4). They reflected feedback from stakeholders that the term 'non-binary sex' is nonsensical. <p>Demography and the Post Enumeration Survey agree that it needs to be clear that the concept being collected is sex. The ABS should not move closer to the collection of gender instead of sex in the Census. They are comfortable with this clarity being provided either in the question wording and/or the response category (recommendation 4).</p> <p>Respondent Collection Methodology also raised the risk of exposure to allegations of discrimination under the <i>Sex Discrimination Act</i> (1984) (recommendation 1).</p>

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

Attachment A: Proposed 2021 Census online form implementation

Note that these are draft versions to be further developed depending on the direction endorsed. Stakeholder input will be sought, including external input from the Gender Statistics Reference Group.

Default view of the question presents only male and female response options.

Is <person>:

If these options do not describe the person, they can [Select something other than male or female.](#)

- Male
- Female

The hyperlink in the explanatory text will change the presentation to an alternative question format. This updates the explanatory text and expands to a three response option format. There is a hyperlink in the text back to the original question presentation.

Male and female are mutually exclusive, but either can be selected with non-binary. When non-binary is selected, a text box appears to allow the respondent to enter in further information about their response.

Is <person>:

If the person does not wish to select 'Non-binary sex', they can [Select only male or female.](#)

A person may choose to select more than one response (for example, male and non-binary sex, or female and non-binary sex). If 'Non-binary sex' is selected, there will be an opportunity to provide more information.

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary sex

Please specify (optional)

Attachment B: Proposed 2021 Census paper form implementation

The proposed paper form implementation of the sex question is to present the three response options. Note that further stakeholder input will be sought on terminology on the third option, including external input from the Gender Statistics Reference Group.

<p>Is the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <p>i Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary SEX
---	---

If non-binary sex is not a response option on the paper form, two alternative versions were developed. Option A includes instructions on the form on how to respond in a non-binary way. Option B relies on instructions provided in supporting material, as was the case in the 2016 Census.

Option A: two response options with instructions

<p>Is the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> • If these options don't describe the person, write preferred response below male and female. <p>i Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--	--

Option B: two response options with no instructions

<p>Is the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <p>i Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
---	--

This approach would be accompanied by engagement activities and guidance material to be distributed through networks and on the ABS website. The following is the material which supported the question in the 2016 Census.


<p>How do I respond on paper?</p> <p>If you have a paper form and the responses of male and female do not apply to you, please take the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leave the Male and Female boxes unmarked. 2. Write your response in the space to the right of the response boxes, using the term you are most comfortable with (see below). 	
<p>3 Is the person male or female?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark one box for each person, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female

WRITE RESPONSE HERE

Basics

Georgia Chapman/Staff/ABS

21/04/2020 05:35 PM

Send	To 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS cc Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS, S22 Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Re: FOR REVIEW: non-binary sex decision proforma and briefing paper [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only] 
Protective Mark	For-Official-Use-Only
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy Caveat <input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi S22

I have had a look at the full DP and also Mark provided me with some thoughts before he went out the door. He sees merit in keeping all in the one decision proforma (and although I was on the fence I do agree on reflection).

In looking at the doc again, I was tossing up with the DP being for GM level where Chris endorses the recommendations with all the detail and for them to going to SRO/Statistician - this way it shows someone senior has endorsed the detail rather than just putting the detail here and saying an abridged version has gone for decision. I didn't put anything to this effect in the doc though as I would be keen for your thoughts on this and what sits most comfortably with you. It really is just something I have been throwing around in my head today. We can discuss at our catch up tomorrow.

Many of the comments in the first part of this doc are the same as the SRO briefing. There are a few new ones (mainly around the extra detail for the first part and then the second half).



- Implementation of non-binary sex Decision Proforma V7 GC comments.docx

This is an epic piece of work and incredibly well synthesised. I am very impressed!!

Perhaps we can get a time in for GMs later next week now so we can make sure these decisions can be made in a timely fashion.

Lets chat through any comments you have tomorrow.

Cheers

Georgia

Georgia Chapman (she/her)

Program Manager (a/g)

Census Data Operations | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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

2021 Census Content Development WDB

Hi both, Following last w...

09/04/2020 06:59:55 PM

From: 2021 Census Content Development WDB
To: Georgia Chapman/Staff/ABS@ABS, Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: S22/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 09/04/2020 06:59 PM
Subject: FOR REVIEW: non-binary sex decision proforma and briefing paper
Sent by: S22

Hi both,

Following last weeks meeting with Teresa, PJ, Bindi and you, I have updated the decision proforma and prepared a briefing paper for Teresa/David.

My approach has been to leave the decision proforma intact to reflect the input that we've had from across the Census program, PaSSD and methodology. I have updated it with key directions and comments discussed in the meeting and clarified at a few points what are the decisions to be made by Teresa/David (via the separate briefing paper) and what are the decisions to be made at the GM level (Bindi/PJ/Anders) via the decision proforma. I anticipate that the Teresa/David decisions when made will be reflected in the decision proforma for documentation purposes.

The briefing paper for Teresa/David is an extract of key points from the decision proforma that pertain to the three public facing decisions to be made. I have kept the main paper to two pages, but have attached one and a bit pages of the issues and assumptions from the decision proforma as background. I have also included the snips of the online and paper forms for reference in an attachment.

I hope this approach satisfies the balance between capturing the strong views expressed by stakeholders during our consultation and the need for the information to be provided to Teresa and David to be tight. Happy to have another look at this if you've got any suggestions on what's extraneous or missing.

Otherwise, leave it for you to progress through Bindi. Remember that the key dates that we're working towards are finalisation of the paper form for ME by 4 May. We are working with S22 team on including the extra info on intersex on the paper form. No other changes are required unless David disagrees with Teresa's endorsement of the term 'non-binary sex'. We have an extra couple of months to incorporate changes into the digital form for ORE, but would prefer to make these as soon as possible to flow through our checking processes. Finally, I don't have clear direction from S22 on when decisions regarding derivations and imputations are required, except that they would need to know ASAP if anything significantly different is being considered. If possible getting agreement from GMs on this during April would be ideal.

Let me know if you want to further discuss. I'm able to be involved in the meeting with the GMs to provide more background if that is beneficial.

cheers,

S22

[attachment "SRO Statistician briefing on non-binary sex on Census for action April 2020.docx" deleted by Georgia Chapman/Staff/ABS] [attachment "Implementation of non-binary sex Decision Proforma V7.docx" deleted by Georgia Chapman/Staff/ABS]

Topic for decision	Implementation of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census
Stream Lead	S22
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 <u>and decisions to be made. To inform these actions, evidence is presented throughout the implications section of this paper under the relevant headings.</u></p> <p>by the Senior Responsible Officer. It also presents areas where a decision is required. Information is presented to enable the decision to be made by the General Managers of Census, Population and Social Statistics Division and Methodology.</p> <p>The SRO <u>and Statistician will be</u> asked to endorse recommendations that are public facing – online implementation, paper form implementation and <u>wording, explanatory text and response categories</u> (sections A, B and C). <u>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.¹ The outcomes of this discussion will be reflected in this decision proforma for completeness.</u></p> <p>The GMs will decide on the operational matters of derivation and imputation (sections D and E).</p> <p>The evidence is presented throughout the implications section of this paper under the relevant headings.</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>A. Online implementation</p> <p><u>Recommendation 1:</u></p> <p>SRO and 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 type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>B. Paper form implementation</p> <p><u>Recommendation 2:</u></p> <p>SRO and Statistician to endorse the proposed paper form implementation of the sex question with three response categories.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Commented [GC1]: As per SRO briefing - should this be "wording IN explanatory text and response categories). The "response categories" may be confused with the two sections above.

¹ 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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	<p>C. Wording, explanatory text and response categories</p> <p><u>Recommendation 3:</u></p> <p>SRO and Statistician to endorse the draft question wording, explanatory text and the change of the third response option to 'non-binary sex'.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>D. Derivation of binary sex</p> <p><u>Recommendation 4:</u></p> <p>GMs (PaSSD, Census and Methodology) to endorse the use of binary multi-marked responses in the derivation process.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Recommendation 5:</u></p> <p>GMs (PaSSD, Census and Methodology) to endorse the decision to not use 'children given birth to' responses in the binary sex variable derivation.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Decision 6:</u></p> <p>GMs (PaSSD, Census and Methodology) to endorse the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><u>Decision 7:</u></p> <p>GMs (PaSSD, Census and Methodology) to decide if name should be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>E. Imputation approach</p> <p><u>Recommendation 8:</u></p> <p>GMs (PaSSD, Census and Methodology) to endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available.</p> <p>Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is this a data quality improvement priority?</p>	<p>The proposed collection of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census is to adhere to the Australian Government's guidelines requiring that individuals are able to identify in a way that is not exclusively male nor female and that this is reflected in their personal records held by the Australian Government and its agencies². There is also strong demand from the LGBTI community that the Census is inclusive of people who do not identify as male or female.</p>

Commented [GC2]: Is this a decision or recommendation

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² Attorney-General's Department (2013). *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender* (updated November 2015)

The approach proposed in this decision proforma to collecting non-binary sex is to reduce any data quality impact of providing a response option in addition to male and female.

Key Issues and assumptions

The implications and options presented in this decision proforma are based on discussions with internal and external stakeholders, extensive qualitative testing and findings from the October 2019 quantitative field test. ABS stakeholders involved in the discussion of implications and options are listed in the consultation section.

Comprehensive analysis of the evidence will be presented in the Statistical Impact Management Plan. Background information on the concepts and stakeholder input is reflected in previous reports. These include the ABS recommendation to the Government on 2021 Census topics (MB19-000039) and the associated internal document providing advice to the Statistician to inform these recommendations.

Since 2006, the Australian Census has provided a method to report in a non-binary way on the paper Census form. In 2016, the ABS took a step towards collecting sex in a non-binary way on the online Census form by introducing special procedures for people who wanted to respond as other than male or female. ~~Since 2006, the Australian Census has provided a method to report in a non-binary way on the paper Census form.~~

The development of questions for the 2021 Census has been based on the assumption that we will “do at least what we did in 2016”. With greater time for development and changing community expectations, the proposed direction is that the non-binary sex response option will be available through mainstream procedures while being cognisant of data quality and other risks.

As was the case in previous Censuses, a data quality assurance process will be undertaken to investigate and amend genuine errors in reporting non-binary sex.

The following factors need to be considered in deciding on the appropriate implementation approach:

- The sex variable is one of the most important collected in the Census. It is used as the basis for the estimated resident population and it is critical that the quality of the male and female responses is preserved.
- A binary sex variable will be derived for the Post Enumeration Survey, Demography and key Census outputs. Output plans for the non-binary sex variable are still to be considered noting that there are stakeholder concerns about the quality of the non-binary sex data and whether it will be fit for release.
- The topics of sex and gender can be conflated. Although the intent of the question is to collect ‘sex’, it is known that some respondents choose to answer based on their ‘gender’.
- Consideration needs to be given to framing. There is a risk that adding a non-binary response option to the non-specific sex question. Some of the possible options imply, ~~implies~~ that gender is the concept collected rather than sex. ~~This is~~ Selecting one of these options would be inconsistent with the Census Regulation that lists the topic to be collected as ‘sex’.

Commented [GC3]: I really like the background points from the SRO briefing – framing as the recommendations strike the best balance between data quality and meeting guidelines/user expectations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question wording and response categories used to collect a topic listed in the Regulation is a matter for the ABS, rather than the Government. • In 2016, the ABS released the standard for sex and gender variables (cat.no. 1200.0.55.012). An updated standard is due to be released in mid-2020. This work was informed by started with findings from the Census research and was advanced through further standards consultation and finalisation. The Australian Government’s guidelines are expected to be updated to align with the new ABS standard in the future. • There has been significant engagement with LGBTI advocates and testing of potential sex and gender questions with people in this community. This has demonstrated that there is no one best way to collect sex that is appropriate for the diverse range of experiences of these communities. • User research with respondents not identifying in a non-binary way also presented mixed responses to implementation options, demonstrating the complexity of this question. • LGBTI advocates are likely to have a keen interest in same-sex marriage statistics from the 2021 Census, noting that this is the first Census following the legal recognition of registered same-sex marriages in Australia. The family coding processes have been reviewed for this change and there will be a specific review of the impact of collecting non-binary sex on family coding. There will also be close attention on this data through data assurance and macro editing processes, particularly any consequence from the binary sex derivation process. • Based on analysis of data from the 2016 Census pilot and the October 2019 field test, the proportion of respondents in the 2021 Census answering with a response other than male or female is likely to be very small (between S2P2D2 and S2P2D2). • The content of the paper form needs to be locked down by 4 May 2020 to enable quality assurance processes to occur before printing commences on 30 September 2020.
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Commented [GC4]: What does this standard say?

Commented [GC5]: This is the first time this is mentioned

Implications

As listed in the purpose section, there are a number of endorsements and decisions to make that have their own implications. These will be presented separately in this section and the risks and benefits associated with each outlined.

The first three sections are recommendations to be endorsed by the SRO and the Statistician. Key information from these sections have been extracted into a briefing paper for the SRO and the Statistician. They are expanded on here for completeness.

Commented [GC6]: I don't know if we need this as it was discussed at the top

A. Online implementation

Attachment A shows the proposed online implementation of the sex question. The key features are:

- Third response option is visible only on click through to reduce the risk of it being selected by deliberate misreporting or error.
- Respondent can multi mark non-binary sex with male or female. This satisfies some user need and provides data that may inform the derivation of the binary sex variable.
- **Provision of a F**urther information text field when non-binary sex is selected acts as a quality measure to either dissuade respondents from selecting non-binary sex in error or capture information to determine whether the response was intentional. It also provides an opportunity for respondents to provide more information about their non-binary response.

Note that sex is a mandatory variable online and the form cannot be submitted until a response is provided for all household members.

The key risk associated with the proposed online implementation is that LGBTI advocates may contend that clicking through to access the third option presents a barrier and sends a message that their community is 'hidden'. This is compounded by the decision to not include the other LGBTI topics of gender identity and sexual orientation in the Regulation.

Treating non-binary respondents in an unequal way may expose the ABS to allegations of discrimination under the *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)*. This Act includes discrimination based on gender identity and intersex status.

Commented [GC7]: Perhaps add in the key benefit too for balance? Similar to paper form

Recommendation 1: SRO and Statistician to endorse the proposed online implementation of the question using a click through to the third response category.

B. Paper form implementation

Attachment B presents the proposed implementation of the non-binary sex question on the paper form and two alternative approaches that were considered.

The key decision ~~debated is was~~ whether the non-binary sex response option should be presented on the paper form. There are a number of risks associated with including a third response option but there are also risks of not including a third response option. On balance the recommendation is to include the non-binary response option.

The risks of including the non-binary sex response option on the paper form are predominately associated with data quality concerns:

- Potential for inadvertent error or deliberate misreporting that compromises the quality of the male/female response distribution, noting that this was not observed in the field test.
- Potential respondent confusion that may increase item non-response or error, noting that this was not evident in the qualitative testing or in respondent feedback from the field test.

Commented [GC8]: How large is the risk

- Once the paper forms are distributed, unable to revert to a binary option in the event of a backlash or campaign to vandalise the form.

The risks of not including the third response option on the paper form are associated with community reaction and processing complexity:

- Makes it difficult for non-binary respondents to give this response on a paper form.
- As discussed with the online response option, Requiring extra effort to respond in a non-binary way may be construed as discriminatory.
- Additional instructions would be required, either on the form or in supporting material. These instructions would directing advise respondents to write their answer beside the response options or suggesting that they complete the Census online.
- Increased data capture effort to scan, repair and manually review non-binary responses written on the form.
- Increased processing effort to review and analyse written responses.

Commented [GC9]: As per the SRO briefing – I think

In both cases there is a risk of inconsistency with the online form. This is acceptable from a data quality perspective but may drive advocates to promote one mode over the other.

If a non-binary sex response option is not presented on the paper form as a tick box, options A and B in attachment B are alternative approaches to enable people to respond.

Commented [GC10]: Can we call them option 1 and 2 (as we have attachment A & B)

Attachment B also has a snip from the supporting material from the 2016 Census instructing respondents on how to answer as other than male or female.

Recommendation 2: SRO and Statistician to endorse the proposed paper form implementation of the sex question with three response categories.

C. Wording, explanatory text and response categories

It is proposed that the question wording is the same as recent Censuses noting that it is not consistent with the ABS standard.

- On the paper form
Is the person:
- On the online form
Is <person name>:

The standard requires that the question specifically mention 'sex'.

Qualitative testing found that this was only acceptable when a separate 'gender' question was included. With the Government's decision to not include gender identity in the Regulation, the less specific question variation continues to be used to enable respondents who wish to provide a gender identity that differs from their biological sex the ability to do so.

This particularly applies to respondents who identify as transgender, rather than fluid, agender or non-binary.

Since 1996, the Census hasn't collected sex according to the ABS standard. There is a strong argument to maintain continuity with previous Censuses with question wording that is proven in the self-enumeration and whole population context of the Census.

There is limited space on the paper form for explanatory text. The October test form referred to additional information available online. Instructions may need to be added to the explanatory text if the decision is made not to include the non-binary response category on the paper form.

Online there is scope for more explanatory text and this will guide respondents to the alternative sex question online implementation discussed in recommendation 1 above.

The key decision to make is regarding the terminology used in the response categories. The October test used the non sex specific term 'non-binary' as the third response option. This decision was made after extensive qualitative testing with LGBTI respondents and non-LGBTI respondents including those with lower levels of English proficiency and less familiarity with sex and gender diversity.

Recent advice is that this response option in combination with the non-specific question wording could be interpreted as the Census asking gender not sex. As sex is the prescribed topic in the Regulation, there is a risk that the ABS could face a legal challenge on this issue. The likelihood is low but the consequence could be major.

The proposed way to mitigate this risk and not disrupt the time series is to change the response option to 'non-binary sex'.

Further development work and engagement with stakeholders will occur to refine the wording of the response option in line with the direction shown in the attachments.

Feedback from the briefing meeting with the SRO, GM Census and GM PaSSD endorse this approach with the suggestion that a reference to 'intersex' be included in the online more information text and on the paper form either as explanatory text or associated with the Frequently Asked Questions on page 2 of the form. This change has been made.

Recommendation 3: SRO and Statistician to endorse the draft question wording, explanatory text and the change of the third response option to 'non-binary sex'.

The next two sections contain recommendations for endorsement and decisions to be made by the GMs Census, PaSSD and Methodology.

The guidance given by the SRO is that the direction taken should be to do what is 'easy and sensible'. Given the expected small number of non-binary responses, the statistical impact of a complicated derivation and

imputation process is likely to be marginal for both Census and demography estimates.

D. Derivation of binary sex

The Population Statistics Branch has confirmed that a binary sex variable (i.e. male and female) is required for the purposes of population estimates. The binary variable is also required for Census processing and coding and will be the basis of key Census output. Deriving binary sex when a person is able to respond as non-binary sex presents a reputational risk. It is critical that the process is defensible and transparent.

There are two types of information that could be used to derive the binary variable:

Multi-mark

Where respondents select a male or female response in addition to non-binary sex, this response can be used to derive the binary variable. This will require changes to the processing business rules but is achievable. Multi mark is a feature of the online form and will be possible on paper if three responses boxes are presented.

Responses to other questions

Various inputs could be used to inform the derivation in cases where only non-binary sex is selected. These include:

- Additional text provided in the other specify box online
- Response to the name question
- Response to the 'children given birth to' question

Note that responses to other questions could be utilised in an automatic or a manual way or some combination of both. The automatic approach would require system changes to apply logic rules. The manual approach would involve presenting the information to coders for them to make a determination on whether to assign the sex as male or female.

The Data Quality Specialist Working Group advised the Census Program that where possible, additional information should be used in the derivation.

Strong concerns were expressed by some members that there may be respondent sensitivities if additional text was collected and then not used in the derivations (noting that it would be used in further analysis for an article on non-binary sex).

It was also argued that using additional information might be a cautious way of implementing the change to collect non-binary sex in mainstream procedures. This could help manage the statistical impact.

The benefits of using additional input to inform the derivation are:

- Consistent with the advice from DQSWG.
- Fully utilises the additional information requested from respondents on non-binary sex.

The risks of using additional input to inform the derivation are:

Commented [GC11]: Is that the three points above or other questions beyond this. I think it's the former but not 100% sure.

- Would require changes to the processing and coding systems that are not a priority given the current amber project status and will not be delivered for the Operational Readiness Exercise.
- Cost and timetable impact to implement for the 2021 Census main event are still to be considered, noting that introducing this approach will be at the expense of other planned activities.
- Coding logic to inform how to derive a binary variable from a non-binary response needs to be developed and would be led by the subject matter area.
- Coding logic would require careful consideration on whether to interpret the response as the person's biological sex or the currently identified gender. Applying logic to alter someone's response would need to be both transparent and defensible.
- Organisational risk if the logic is not defensible and possible risk to general Census response if this attracts community backlash.
- Any manual review at this stage involves a degree of judgement by processing staff.
- A manual review process could add unmanageable delays to a very tight stage of the processing cycle.
- An automatic process requires more significant system changes.

Commented [GC12]: Is this for both automatic and manual?

Commented [GC13]: At this stage? Is that stage in the coding cycle. Or pre- coding logic being developed?

Commented [GC14]: Processing or coding staff? You have spoken of coding staff above

Commented [GC15]: Could this be tied into point one above?

Factors specific to the type of information to be used:

- Based on analysis of the October field test, it is possible that only 15% of respondents who select non-binary sex, will also multi-mark male or female.
- Approximately 10% of non-binary respondents provided additional information in both the 2016 Pilot and the 2019 field test. A review of all write in responses from the 2016 Census identified that about 20% contained information that could be useful in derivation. Therefore, this process would add value to only about 2% of non-binary responses.
- There is likely to be some overlap between respondents who multi-mark and those providing additional information.
- Preliminary discussions indicate that a pre-existing list of names with sex and prevalence for sex has potential to be used, although no work on design, testing or implementation has been done to date.
- The Census program uses names in image form. Processes would need to change to use names in text format, including changes to strict name access control.
- Having names stored as text and associated with other response data presents an increased privacy risk as the sensitive data would exist in a searchable format.

Commented [GC16]: Again Pilot not explained

Recommendation 4: endorse the use of binary multi-marked responses in the derivation process.

Recommendation 5: endorse the decision to not use 'children given birth to' responses in the binary sex variable derivation.

Commented [GC17]: Can we have more information about the pros and cons for this data item in the points above?

The Census program recommends that the additional information field and name are not used in the binary sex derivation. The effort to change systems and the risk to the delivery of the program outweighs the benefits of this approach. Note that the risk to delivery of systems is higher with an automatic process, but the reputational and privacy risk is higher with a manual process.

Demography do not agree with this recommendation. They state that it is important that the best possible information to support the derivation of male or female is used. For example there are studies that show that particular cohorts (e.g. young females) may be more likely to report a non-binary sex. Additionally, a person indicating that they have given birth is a strong indication that the person is female in terms of sex. It is Demography's view that all possible alternate information should be used to derive the binary sex in order to ensure sex ratios at different ages are as accurate as possible.

Decision 6: should the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?

Decision 7: should name be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?

E. Imputation approach

A majority of records with a non-binary response will not have additional information to inform the binary variable derivation approaches discussed in the previous section. The approach taken in the 2016 Census was to randomly impute the binary sex for these records based on a 50:50 ratio for males to females.

Commented [GC18]: if name was included they might?

Given the larger number of non-binary responses that are expected in the 2021 Census, alternatives to this imputation approach have been considered. It is possible that the non-binary responses may be clustered by age cohort or geographical area and a non-random imputation process may be warranted.

There is limited evidence supporting the age/geographical distribution of people who may respond with a non-binary sex. Analysis from the 2016 Census suggests that there may be greater rates in the major cities and in younger age cohorts (15 to 34 years of age), noting that this was a small and potentially biased sample.

In terms of implementing this approach, at the time of imputing the binary sex variable, the age data is preliminary. Theoretically different male to female ratios could be applied for different age cohorts.

It is also theoretically possible to vary the male to female ratio for different geographies, for example a particular SA4 might have a 60:40 split rather than 50:50.

	<p>Methodology does not support this approach.</p> <p>The main benefit identified for this approach was to get the imputation 'correct' for what has been reported as a tendency for young females to identify as gender fluid or gender diverse.</p> <p>The risks of applying a non-random sex imputation approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using age cohorts to vary the imputation is unlikely to reduce bias. • There are likely to be very small numbers of non-binary respondents in most geographies. The outcomes of a 50:50 and a 60:40 imputation approach may be the same when only a few records are involved. • Significant effort will be required to introduce this change, including benchmark information to be provided by Demography and technical support for the system changes. • There is limited existing data to inform targeted age and/or geography based imputation. • Systems and processes will not be developed prior to the Operational Readiness Exercise, resulting in an untested system being used in the 2021 Census. <p>Recommendation 8: endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available.</p>
Options considered	The major options considered are outlined in the relevant parts of the implications section.
Change analysis log	<p>Change Analysis log attached (Yes/No)</p> <p>This decision will be supported by a Statistical Impact Management Plan which is currently being drafted.</p>
Consultation	<p>5 Feb 2020 Census Data Quality Specialist Working Group</p> <p>10 Feb 2020 Michael Meagher (PM – Risk, Planning and Policy)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Demography)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – 2021 Post Enumeration Survey)</p> <p>4, 10 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Household Characteristics & Social Reporting)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Processing & Coding)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk)</p> <p>4 Feb 2020 S22 (Director – Census Data Capture)</p> <p>Versions of this decision paper were distributed for comments during March 2020 to:</p> <p>Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk Processing & Coding</p>

	<p>Data Capture</p> <p>Digital and Paper Services</p> <p>PaSSD Demography</p> <p>Post Enumeration Survey</p> <p>Household Characteristics and Social Reporting</p> <p>Other Household Survey Methodology</p> <p>Respondent Collection Methodology</p> <p>Version 5 was circulated on 25 March 2020 to directors in the Census Leadership Group and PaSSD and Methodology Program Managers.</p>
<p>Alternate views on recommendations</p>	<p>Household Characteristics and Social Reporting as the subject matter area responsible for the sex and gender standard, have a number of points of disagreement with the recommendations contained in this proforma:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-binary sex option should be available to all respondents on the online form without having to click through to the alternative question implementation (recommendation 1). They contend that such an approach could be in breach of the 2013 amendments to the <i>Sex Discrimination Act (1984)</i>. The amendments state that discrimination can occur indirectly if someone is required to take action that is different to others based on certain characteristics. There is provision for a 'reasonableness test' in the Act. The ABS defence is likely to be based on the risk to quality if the non-binary sex option is presented up front. Regardless there is a risk of unknown likelihood that the ABS may be challenged on this basis. • This argument also applies to not presenting a non-binary response option on the paper form (recommendation 2). • The term 'sex' should be included in the question, not in the response category (recommendation 4). They reflected feedback from stakeholders that the term 'non-binary sex' is nonsensical. <p>Respondent Collection Methodology also raised the risk of exposure to allegations of discrimination under the <i>Sex Discrimination Act (1984)</i> (recommendation 1).</p> <p>Demography and the Post Enumeration Survey agree that it needs to be clear that the concept being collected is sex. The ABS should not move closer to the collection of gender instead of sex in the Census. They are comfortable with this clarity being provided either in the question wording and/or the response category (recommendation 4).</p> <p>Demography only support the continued use of random 50:50 imputation if all additional information is used in the derivation of binary sex (recommendations 4 to 8).</p> <p>Methodology emphasised that the PES corrects for any errors in reporting and/or assignment of sex and therefore the imputation approach used in the Census have no bias impact on population estimates. While supporting the recommendations, they note that it would be preferable for Census and PES sex data to conceptually align.</p>
<p>Decision outcome</p>	

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

Attachment A: Proposed 2021 Census online form implementation

Note that these are draft versions to be further developed depending on the direction endorsed. Stakeholder input will be sought, including external input from the Gender Statistics Reference Group.

Default view of the question presents only male and female response options.

Is <person>:

If these options do not describe the person, they can [Select something other than male or female.](#)

- Male
- Female

The hyperlink in the explanatory text will change the presentation to an alternative question format. This updates the explanatory text and expands to a three response option format. There is a hyperlink in the text back to the original question presentation.

Male and female are mutually exclusive, but either can be selected with non-binary. When non-binary is selected, a text box appears to allow the respondent to enter in further information about their response.

Is <person>:

If the person does not wish to select 'Non-binary sex', they can [Select only male or female.](#)

A person may choose to select more than one response (for example, male and non-binary sex, or female and non-binary sex). If 'Non-binary sex' is selected, there will be an opportunity to provide more information.

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary sex

Please specify (optional)

Attachment B: Proposed 2021 Census paper form implementation

The proposed paper form implementation of the sex question is to present the three response options.

Is the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <p>i Go to www.census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Non-binary sex
--	---

If non-binary sex is not a response option on the paper form, two alternative versions were developed. Option A includes instructions on the form on how to respond in a non-binary way. Option B relies on instructions provided in supporting material, as was the case in the 2016 Census.

Option A: two response options with instructions

Is the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/>• If these options don't describe the person, write preferred response below male and female. <p>i Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--	--

Option B: two response options with no instructions

Is the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <p>i Go to census.abs.gov.au for more information.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
--	--

This approach would be accompanied by engagement activities and guidance material to be distributed through networks and on the ABS website. The following is the material which supported the question in the 2016 Census.

How do I respond on paper? If you have a paper form and the responses of male and female do not apply to you, please take the following steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Leave the Male and Female boxes unmarked.2. Write your response in the space to the right of the response boxes, using the term you are most comfortable with (see below).	
3 Is the person male or female? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark one box for each person, like this: <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">WRITE RESPONSE HERE</div>

Basics

Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS

30/04/2020 08:25 AM

Send	To Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS cc [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Re: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

A word on where we landed to close the door sounds good.

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

Mark Harding

I get that, thanks Chris - I definitely don't want it...

29/04/2020 10:16:27 PM

From: Mark Harding/Staff/ABS
 To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
 Cc: [S22] /Staff/ABS@ABS
 Date: 29/04/2020 10:16 PM
 Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

I get that, thanks Chris - I definitely don't want it reprocessed either, I'm just assuming people (such as Denise when she returns from leave) will ask what happened, and we're better off with Paul and Anders already seeing the outcome and communicating it directly. That was my take - not another round of consultation but just a final word on where we landed to close the door.

I'll have more of a think about it and possibly send something tomorrow.

Mark Harding

Program Manager, 2021 Census Data Operations

2021 Census | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Executive Assistant: [REDACTED]

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

Chris Libreri Thanks Mark My concerns are that this gets repr... 29/04/2020 05:04:12 PM

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
To: Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: [REDACTED] Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 29/04/2020 05:04 PM
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

Thanks Mark

My concerns are that this gets reprocessed and that we have invested enough time on this already. However if you feel we need another round (perhaps to keep relationships happening?) then go ahead.

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

Mark Harding Thanks Chris - great to have these decisions ma... 29/04/2020 03:57:46 PM

From: Mark Harding/Staff/ABS
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
Cc: [REDACTED] Staff/ABS@ABS

Date: 29/04/2020 03:57 PM
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

Thanks Chris - great to have these decisions made, thanks.

I'd like [S22] to send this summary back to Paul and Anders to communicate the result from the discussion, and allow them to forward the decisions on to interested people from their teams (mainly Denise!). Any objections?

Mark Harding

Program Manager, 2021 Census Data Operations

2021 Census | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

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Executive Assistant: [S22]

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Chris Libreri Hi I think this is fine. I don't think another round... 29/04/2020 03:23:09 PM

From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
To: [S22]/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 29/04/2020 03:23 PM
Subject: Re: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

Hi I think this is fine.

I don't think another round of consultation is needed - you have recorded their views and it is recorded in the paper. I also don't think we gave Paul and Anders any impression that we would be going back to them.

I am happy to sign off the decision.

Chris Libreri

General Manager Census Division

Head of Brisbane Office

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Executive Assistant: [S22]

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

S22

Hi Chris, Here is the discussion paper updated t...

29/04/2020 02:54:44 PM

From: S22 Staff/ABS
To: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Mark Harding/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 29/04/2020 02:54 PM
Subject: FOR REVIEW: Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

Hi Chris,

Here is the discussion paper updated to reflect the outcomes of this morning's meeting. Mark followed up Anders after the meeting to get a view on name. I have included this as a comment conveyed after the discussion. Mark and I have also put forward a contingency response that we could implement in the case of a cluster of responses. Again this is noted as occurring outside of the meeting.

Please let me know if there are any changes that you would like to make before circulating to Anders and PJ. For completeness I will then update the decision proforma to match this paper.

cheers,

S22

S22

Director - 2021 Census Data Assurance, Macro Editing and Dissemination

Census and Data Services 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.



- Discussion paper - derivation and imputation of binary sex outcomes.docx

To: Chris Libreri	GM – Census	Date Due:	1 May 2020
Anders Holmberg	GM – Methodology	Purpose:	For action: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paul Jelfs	GM – PaSSD		For information: <input type="checkbox"/>
		Contact Officer:	S22

Derivation and imputation of binary sex in the 2021 Census

Purpose

1. This paper presents the decisions to be made on deriving and imputing a binary sex output variable in the Census from the non-binary input variable. These decisions sit within a broader suite of decisions that outline the range of options and challenges associated with including non-binary sex in the 2021 Census.
2. The Senior Responsible Officer for the Census has requested that the General Managers with responsibility for the Census, Methodology and Population and Social Statistics Divisions consider the evidence to make the derivation and imputation decisions.
3. The recommendations presented in this paper have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders across the three divisions. See Attachment 1 for internal stakeholders consulted. The outcome of this discussion will feed into the formal decision-making process for the 2021 Census program.

Recommendations and decisions

R1. Endorse the use of binary (male/female) multi-marked responses in the derivation process.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
Comments: Agreed with no discussion.				
R2. Endorse the decision to not use ‘children given birth to’ responses in the binary sex derivation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
Comments: Noted the risk of public perception and sensitivity of asking respondents who have identified as non-binary the question on children given birth to.				
R3. Decision required – Should the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No Unless small area impact identified

S47C

R4. Decision required – Should name be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation? Yes No

S47C

R5. Endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available. Approved Not approved

Comments: Agreed

Background

4. The 2021 Census will enable respondents to answer as male, female or with a non-binary response.
5. The proposed collection of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census is to adhere to the Australian Government's guidelines requiring that individuals are able to identify in a way that is not exclusively male nor female and that this is reflected in their personal records held by the Australian Government and its agencies¹. There is also strong demand from the LGBTI community that the Census is inclusive of people who do not identify as male or female.
6. In addition to satisfying this requirement, the collection approach for non-binary sex needs to minimise data quality impacts of providing a response option in addition to male and female.
7. The recommendations presented in this briefing paper consider the above two requirements and are informed by discussions with external stakeholders, extensive qualitative testing and findings from the October 2019 quantitative field test.
8. Key issues and assumptions on the collection of non-binary sex in the 2021 Census are presented in Attachment 2.

Summary

9. The following sections present the evidence to support the five decisions to be made regarding the derivation and imputation of a binary sex output variable from the non-binary input variable.
10. The guidance given by the SRO is that the direction taken should be to do what is 'easy and sensible'. Given the expected small number of non-binary responses, the statistical impact of a complicated derivation and imputation process is likely to be marginal for both Census and demography estimates.

¹ Attorney-General's Department (2013). *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender* (updated November 2015)

Derivation of binary sex

11. Four decisions relate to the derivation process (R1, R2, R3 and R4). Attachment 3 presents the proposed online and paper collection approach including the features of multi-mark and other specify box described in this section.
12. The Population Statistics Branch has confirmed that a binary sex variable (i.e. male and female) is required for the purposes of population estimates. The binary variable is also required for Census processing and coding and will be the basis of key Census output. Deriving binary sex when a person is able to respond as non-binary sex presents a reputational risk. It is critical that the process is defensible and transparent.
13. There are two types of information that could be used to derive the binary variable:

Multi-mark

Where respondents select a male or female response in addition to non-binary sex, this response can be used to derive the binary variable. This will require changes to the processing business rules but is achievable. Multi mark is a feature of the online form and is also possible on paper.

Responses to other questions

Various inputs could be used to inform the derivation in cases where only non-binary sex is selected. These include:

- Additional text provided in the other specify box online
 - Response to the name question
 - Response to the 'children given birth to' question
14. Note that responses to these three questions could be utilised in an automatic or a manual way or some combination of both. The automatic approach would require system changes to apply logic rules. The manual approach would involve presenting the information to coders for them to decide on whether to assign the sex as male or female.
 15. The Data Quality Specialist Working Group (DQSWG) advised the Census Program that where possible, additional information should be used in the derivation.
 16. Strong concerns were expressed by some members of the DQSWG that there may be respondent sensitivities if additional text was collected and then not used in the derivations (noting that it would be used in further analysis for an article on non-binary sex).
 17. It was also argued that using additional information might be a cautious way of implementing the change to collect non-binary sex in mainstream procedures. This could help manage the statistical impact.
 18. The benefits of using additional input to inform the derivation are:
 - Consistent with the advice from DQSWG.
 - Fully utilises the additional information requested from respondents on non-binary sex.
 19. The risks of using additional input to inform the derivation are:
 - Both the automatic and manual approaches would require changes to the processing and coding systems that are not a priority given the current amber project status and will not be

delivered for the Operational Readiness Exercise. An automatic process requires more significant system changes.

- Cost and timetable impact to implement for the 2021 Census main event are still to be considered, noting that introducing this approach will be at the expense of other planned activities.
- Coding logic to inform how to derive a binary variable from a non-binary response needs to be developed and would be led by the subject matter area.
- Coding logic would require careful consideration on whether to interpret the response as the person's biological sex or the currently identified gender. Applying logic to alter someone's response would need to be both transparent and defensible.
- Organisational risk if the logic is not defensible and possible risk to general Census response if this attracts community backlash.
- Any manual review involves a degree of judgement by coding staff who are non-ongoing APS1s.
- A manual review process could add unmanageable delays to a very tight stage of the processing cycle.

20. Factors specific to the type of information to be used:

Multi-mark and additional text

- Based on analysis of the October field test, it is possible that only 15% of respondents who select non-binary sex, will also multi-mark male or female.
- Approximately 10% of non-binary respondents provided additional information in both the 2016 Pilot and the 2019 field test. A review of all write in responses from the 2016 Census identified that about 20% contained information that could be useful in derivation. Therefore, this process would add value to only about 2% of non-binary responses.
- There is likely to be some overlap between respondents who multi-mark and those providing additional information.

Children given birth to

- The 'children given birth to' question is currently only asked of respondents who have selected female, including those selecting non-binary sex in conjunction with female.
- This is a very sensitive question that can be upsetting to respondents. Qualitative testing found that this impact was heightened in non-binary respondents.

Name

- Preliminary discussions indicate that a pre-existing list of names with sex and prevalence for sex has potential to be used, although no work on design, testing or implementation has been done to date.
- The Census program uses names in image form. Processes would need to change to use names in text format, including changes to strict name access control.
- Having names stored as text and associated with other response data presents an increased privacy risk as the sensitive data would exist in a searchable format. Note that this approach wasn't assessed in the recently conducted Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA). The draft report

includes a number of recommendations to strengthen the ABS's approach to privacy, including one on the retention of name. Any change to how the ABS uses name could be sensitive enough that stakeholders could claim that such a change invalidates the PIA.

- R1. Endorse the use of binary (male/female) multi-marked responses in the derivation process.
- R2. Endorse the decision to not use 'children given birth to' responses in the binary sex derivation.

21.



22.



- R3. Should the text in the non-binary sex additional information field be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?
- R4. Should name be used to inform the binary sex variable derivation?

Imputation approach

- 23. At the conclusion of the processing phase when applicable derivations have been made, it is likely that a sizeable proportion of records will not have a binary response derived. The approach taken in the 2016 Census was to randomly impute the binary sex for these records based on a 50:50 ratio for males to females.
- 24. Given the larger number of non-binary responses that are expected in the 2021 Census, alternatives to this imputation approach have been considered. It is possible that the non-binary responses may be clustered by age cohort or geographical area and a non-random imputation process may be warranted.
- 25. There is limited evidence supporting the age/geographical distribution of people who may respond with a non-binary sex. Analysis from the 2016 Census suggests that there may be greater rates in the major cities and in younger age cohorts (15 to 34 years of age), noting that this was a small and potentially biased sample.
- 26. In terms of implementing this approach, at the time of imputing the binary sex variable, the age data is preliminary. Theoretically different male to female ratios could be applied for different age cohorts.
- 27. It is also theoretically possible to vary the male to female ratio for different geographies, for example a particular SA4 might have a 60:40 split rather than 50:50.
- 28. The main benefit identified for this approach was to get the imputation 'correct' for what has been reported as a tendency for young females to identify as gender fluid or gender diverse.
- 29. The risks of applying a non-random sex imputation approach are:

- Using age cohorts to vary the imputation is unlikely to reduce bias.
 - There are likely to be very small numbers of non-binary respondents in most geographies. The outcomes of a 50:50 and a 60:40 imputation approach may be the same when only a few records are involved.
 - Significant effort will be required to introduce this change, including benchmark information to be provided by Demography and technical support for the system changes.
 - There is limited existing data to inform targeted age and/or geography-based imputation.
 - Systems and processes will not be developed prior to the Operational Readiness Exercise, resulting in an untested system being used in the 2021 Census.
30. Demography only support the continued use of random 50:50 imputation if all additional information is used in the derivation of binary sex (R1, R2, R3 and R4).
31. Methodology does not support a non-random imputation approach.
32. Methodology also emphasised that the PES corrects for any errors in reporting and/or assignment of sex and therefore the imputation approach used in the Census has no bias impact on population estimates. While supporting the recommendation, they note that it would be preferable for Census and PES sex data to conceptually align.

R5. Endorse the continued use of a 50:50 imputation ratio for male and female when no other information is available.

Attachments

Attachment 1. Consultation

5 Feb 2020	Census Data Quality Specialist Working Group
10 Feb 2020	Michael Meagher (PM – Risk, Planning and Policy)
4 Feb 2020	S22 (Director – Demography)
4 Feb 2020	S22 (Director – 2021 Post Enumeration Survey)
4, 10 Feb 2020	S22 / S22 (Director – Household Characteristics & Social Reporting)
4 Feb 2020	S22 (Director – Census Processing & Coding)
4 Feb 2020	S22 (Director – Census Data Quality & Statistical Risk)
4 Feb 2020	S22 (Director – Census Data Capture)

Versions of the decision proforma were distributed for comments during March 2020 to:

Census	Data Quality & Statistical Risk Processing & Coding Data Capture Digital and Paper Services
PaSSD	Demography Post Enumeration Survey Household Characteristics and Social Reporting
Other	Household Survey Methodology Respondent Collection Methodology

An updated version of the decision proforma was circulated on 25 March 2020 to directors in the Census Leadership Group and PaSSD and Methodology Program Managers.

Attachment 2. Key issues and assumptions

Since 2006, the Australian Census has provided a method to report in a non-binary way on the paper Census form. In 2016, the ABS took a step towards collecting sex in a non-binary way on the online Census form by introducing special procedures for people who wanted to respond as other than male or female. A small pilot test was also conducted during the operations of the 2016 Census to test attitudes and responses among the wider population. Approximately 29,000 households were sent an access code which took them directly to a special online form with the non-binary sex question.

The development of questions for the 2021 Census started with the assumption that we will “do at least what we did in 2016”. With greater time for development and changing community expectations, the proposed direction is that the non-binary sex response option will be available through mainstream procedures while being cognisant of data quality and other risks.

As was the case in previous Censuses, a data quality assurance process will be undertaken to investigate and amend genuine errors in reporting non-binary sex.

The following factors need to be considered in deciding on the appropriate implementation approach:

- The question wording and response categories used to collect a topic listed in the Regulation is a matter for the ABS, rather than the Government.
- The sex variable is one of the most important collected in the Census. It is the basis for the estimated resident population and it is critical that the quality of the male and female responses is preserved.
- A binary sex variable will be derived for the Post Enumeration Survey, Demography and key Census outputs. Output plans for the non-binary sex variable are still to be considered, noting that there are stakeholder concerns about the quality of the non-binary sex data and whether it will be fit for release.
- The topics of sex and gender can be conflated. Although the intent of the question is to collect ‘sex’, it is known that some respondents choose to answer based on their ‘gender’.
- The ABS developed and tested a question on gender identity to be included in the Census. This was to be in addition to the sex question as they were designed to complement each other. The Government determined not to include gender identity as a topic to be collected on the 2021 Census.
- Consideration therefore needs to be given to framing a non-binary response option to the non-specific sex question. Some of the possible options imply that gender is the concept collected rather than sex. Selecting one of these options would be inconsistent with the Census Regulation that lists the topic to be collected as ‘sex’.
- In 2016, the ABS released the standard for sex and gender variables (cat.no. 1200.0.55.012). This added an ‘other (please specify)’ response category to the sex question. An updated standard is due to be released in mid-2020 and will most likely change this category to ‘non-binary’. This work was initially informed by findings from the Census research and was advanced through further standards consultation and finalisation. The Australian Government’s guidelines are expected to be updated to align with the new ABS standard in the future.

- There has been significant engagement with LGBTI advocates and testing of potential sex and gender questions with people in this community. This has demonstrated that there is no one best way to collect sex that is appropriate for the diverse range of experiences of these communities.
- User research with respondents not identifying in a non-binary way also presented mixed responses to implementation options, demonstrating the complexity of this question.
- LGBTI advocates are likely to have a keen interest in same-sex marriage statistics from the 2021 Census, noting that this is the first Census following the legal recognition of registered same-sex marriages in Australia. The family coding processes have been reviewed for this change and there will be a specific review of the impact of collecting non-binary sex on family coding. There will also be close attention on this data through data assurance and macro editing processes, particularly any consequence from the binary sex derivation process.
- Based on analysis of data from the 2016 Census pilot and the October 2019 field test, the proportion of respondents in the 2021 Census answering with a response other than male or female is likely to be very small (between S2P2D2 and S2P2D2).
- The content of the paper form needs to be locked down by 4 May 2020 to enable quality assurance processes to occur before printing commences on 30 September 2020.

Attachment 3: Proposed 2021 Census online and paper form implementation

Note that these are draft versions that have been presented to the Senior Responsible Officer. They are included for the purpose of demonstrating the collection approach.

Default view of the question presents only male and female response options.

Is <person>:

If these options do not describe the person, they can [Select something other than male or female.](#)

Male

Female

The hyperlink in the explanatory text will change the presentation to an alternative question format. This updates the explanatory text and expands to a three-response option format. There is a hyperlink in the text back to the original question presentation.

Male and female are mutually exclusive, but either can be selected with non-binary. When non-binary is selected, a text box appears to allow the respondent to enter in further information about their response.

Is <person>:

If the person does not wish to select 'Non-binary sex', they can [Select only male or female.](#)

A person may choose to select more than one response (for example, male and non-binary sex, or female and non-binary sex). If 'Non-binary sex' is selected, there will be an opportunity to provide more information.

Male

Female


Non-binary sex

Please specify (optional)

The proposed paper form implementation of the sex question is to present the three response options.

Is the person:

• Mark box, like this:

 Go to www.census.abs.gov.au for more information.

Male

Female

Non-binary sex

Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa June 2019 <header document> [DLM=Sensitive]
 2021 Census Content Development WDB Justine Boland 04/06/2019 12:26 PM

Sensitive

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS 04/06/2019 12:50 PM

Send	To Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS cc [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS bcc
Subject	Census topics recommendations to send to Teresa June 2019 <header document> [DLM=Sensitive]
Protective Mark	Sensitive:
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy Caveat <input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi Paul,

The Census topics recommendation paper and briefing to send to Teresa is attached. For info, there is some slightly altered info at the bottom of pages 23 (through to top of page 24) to address your feedback on the gender instructional text.

For the email to Teresa, I've proposed an email below - in case helpful.

Justine

To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS,
 cc: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS, [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB,

Subject: 2021 Census topic recommendations - briefing and report from PaSSD

Email body:

Teresa,

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 formally discuss the recommendations and next steps.

Paul



FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 4 June 2019.docx2021 Census Topic Review Investigations 040619.docx

Justine Boland

Program Manager

Indigenous and Social Information Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) S22

(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au **(W)** www.abs.gov.au

To: Teresa Dickinson
Deputy Australian Statistician

Date Due: 14 June 2019

Through: Paul Jelfs
General Manager – Population and
Social Statistics

Purpose: For action:
For information:

Contact Officer: Justine Boland, ^{S22} [REDACTED]

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
Comments:				
R2. Present the recommendations and planned process for making a recommendation to Government to the Australian Statistician for approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
Comments:				

Overview and proposed timetable

- 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.
- We are seeking your endorsement of the recommendations and provision to the Australian Statistician for approval.
- The following timetable and communications are planned to support recommendations on content to the Government. This timetable accommodates time for finalising the forms and setting up operations for processing data.

Planned activities to support 2021 Census content recommendations to Government	Planned timing
Inclusion of reference to 2021 Census content in the Incoming Government Brief	Late May / early June
Briefing for Minister <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Ministerial briefing recommending 2021 Census content will be prepared for transmission in June 2019. It is anticipated that the Statistician will meet with the Minister in June or July, with Census topic recommendations expected to be discussed as part of the meeting. Briefing material will be prepared. The Minister can approve the recommendations or may choose to put them to Cabinet for a decision. A separate Officer level meeting to discuss content will be sought with Ministerial staff as soon as possible after the election. 	Mid June

<p>Cabinet submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Census Content team will prepare draft content for the Cabinet Submission prior to discussions with the Minister so that it is available for when the formal process is ready to begin. • The formal 20 day preparation phase for cabinet submissions will be undertaken in August 2019. • The Minister will need to request the authority to discuss this matter with Cabinet. • We will aim for the cabinet submission to be discussed in September 2019. 	Aug - Sep 2019
<p>Tabling regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a decision is made by Cabinet, the changes to regulations will be drafted and submitted for approval. • Changes to the regulations will be enacted once approved, however there will be a disallowance period of 20 sitting days in both houses of Parliament. • Regulation changes will need to be tabled by 22 November 2019 for the disallowance period to be completed in time for the paper form printing deadline in March 2020. 	Between Nov 2019 – Mar 2020

4. Support for the Cabinet submission will also be needed from Treasury officials. Officers in PaSSD will liaise with relevant Treasury staff concerning the Cabinet Submission from June 2019 (noting that Policy and Legislation team have already highlighted this work with Treasury in recent discussions). It is also recommended that discussions between the Statistician and Secretary of Treasury will be needed to seek support with this planned process. Now that caretaker mode has ended, we will begin engagement again with Treasury in preparation.
5. Testing of questions will continue throughout 2019 to refine wording and determine processing requirements.
6. Work will also continue to support the management of risks regarding the topics proposed, including preparing talking points and communication strategies.
 - i. We are anticipating lobbying by LGBTI advocates to coincide with decisions being made by the Minister and the Cabinet. Key advocates have indicated their intent to strongly push for the inclusion of the sexual orientation topic in particular.
 - ii. Talking points for the key topics raised will be prepared prior to discussions the Minister in June.
 - iii. High level risk assessment has begun as part of preparations for the Census Program (including statistical risk assessment through the quality management program). This will be delivered beyond the October test.
 - iv. Topic related risk assessments will be prepared to coincide with testing and the different phases of Census operations. The assessments will include identification of needs for documentation, training and communications to support the new topics.

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.
8. Other topics that have been raised by data users are also included but not recommended for addition. They have been assessed as having higher risk in regard to the ABS ability to deliver adequate data to meet user needs through the Census. The reasons for not recommending these topics are also discussed.

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.

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

Paul Jelfs
General Manager Population and Social Statistics
Division
June 2019


Attachments

- A. 2021 Census topic review investigations

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

13/05/2019 12:30 PM

Send	To Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS cc [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS bcc
Subject	For action: Briefing re Census topic recommendations for Census SRO [DLM=Sensitive] 
Protective Mark	Sensitive:
Information management markers	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal privacy <input type="checkbox"/> Legal privilege <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative secrecy Caveat <input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Hi Paul,

I can talk you through these documents this afternoon in our catch up.

For your approval and transmission to Teresa, I have attached a cover briefing and the 2021 Census Topic Review document.

Justine



FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 13 May 2019.docx



DRAFT V3 2021 Census Topic Review Investigations - Final for approval.docx

Justine Boland

Program Manager

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2021 Census Topic Review - Investigations for changes to topics (internal paper) – Version 3 – 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)
- Removing household internet access
- Removing motor vehicles garaged.

Changes to enhance the value of some current topics are being tested, but those that remain actively under investigation will not require changes to the Regulations. Refinement work is continuing on these topics in readiness for inclusion in the October 2019 field test.

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

- Sexual orientation
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- Smoking status
- Household and family measures (including shared care of children).

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.

3 Process for recommendation approval

The process for approval of recommendations is as follows:

- Paper presented to ASAC and Census Executive Board in March 2019 for advice
- Endorsement of direction by Subject Matter SES in April 2019
- Detailed recommendations paper submitted to Senior Responsible Officer for approval early May 2019
- Australian Statistician approves ABS recommendations to Minister
- Minister briefing and approval of recommendations in mid/late June 2019
- Cabinet Submission drafting in August 2019 for presentation by Minister to Cabinet for approval by September 2019
- Regulations tabled in both Houses of Parliament to be passed between October 2019 – March 2020
- Census paper household form content finalised in March 2020
- Census digital channel household form content finalised in November 2020
- Final content published in mid-2020.

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.

5 Overview of public consultation

The public 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.

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.

A paper was published in early November 2018 outlining directions for new and existing topics resulting from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement, research, and testing ([cat. no. 2007.0.55.001](#)).

During the public consultation, 450 submissions were received with 355 focused on changes or additions to Census topics. The other submissions suggested changes to standards, classifications or Census procedures and have been referred to the relevant sections of the ABS for further consideration.

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). 58 submissions were received from individuals.

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.

Each submission was reviewed against the assessment criteria. The suggested changes for Census topics were also reviewed to determine if needs could be met from existing data sources.

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

- Chronic health conditions
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language assessment)
- Current or previous service in 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.

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
Journey to education	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	H	H	M	M	L	M	H
Australian Defence Force indicator	M	H	H	M	H	M	H
Smoking status	H	H	H	M	H	M	M
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
Household/Family composition improvements	H	H	M	M	M	H	H
Shared care of children	M	H	M	M	L	M	H

Changes to a number of existing topics were flagged for exploration based on consultation feedback. This includes changes related to disability assistance through aids and equipment, care provided by young carers, and better identification of participants in early childhood education.

Two topics were identified by the ABS for removal (household internet access, and motor vehicles garaged).

Each of the topics noted above are discussed further throughout this report.

A number of new topics that generated interest were not considered a priority based on assessment against the criteria. These topics have not been recommended for inclusion in the 2021 Census and investigations through the topic review work program were limited:

- Sources of income
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation
- Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling
- Other languages spoken
- Other health related topics
- Digital literacy or inclusion
- Multiple occupations and the gig economy.

A number of changes to existing topics were also not considered a priority for 2021 Census. This included changes to religion, occupation, industry of employment and volunteering.

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
Journey to education	Do not add new topic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	Do not add new topic
Smoking status	Do not add new topic
Household/Family composition improvements	Do not change current topic
Shared care of children	Do not add new topic

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.

To consider adding new topics, the respondent burden and cost implications are again important, requiring the removal of some topics that are less relevant. Two recommendations to remove topics are noted in the table below and outlined further in section 9.

Topic	Recommendations
Household internet access	Remove topic
Motor vehicles garaged	Remove topic

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.

Details of the topics for which changes are being considered are outlined in the table following and discussed further in sections 10 and 11. Some of these changes will continue

to be pursued beyond the timeframe for providing recommendations to Government. Where relevant, some changes that have been ruled out for the 2021 Census will continued to be investigated by relevant subject matter areas for possible future change.

Topic	Recommendations
Need for assistance	Changes to collect the use of aids and equipment are not recommended. There are challenges with expanding outputs to include the type of need for assistance (for self-care, body movement and communication activities). We are continuing to review options in consultation with the stakeholder, but the expanded output is not being recommended.
Highest non-school qualifications	No change recommended to 'year of qualification completion'.
Unpaid care of person due to disability, long term illness or old age	No change recommended to collect this topic for people under 15 years old.
Income	Changing to write in income is not recommended. Changes to the size of ranges and reversing the order of response options are recommended.
Attendance at educational institution	Recommend changes to response options and instruction text to better identify early childhood education, home schooling and Vocational Education and Training.
Type of tenure and landlord type	Recommend some changes to response options to better identify social/community housing and subsidised purchases. Changes to identify subsidised renting are not recommended.
Measures of homelessness	Recommend changes to instructions for usual address question to better capture couch surfing.
Country of birth of parents	Recommend changes to instructions only to provide better guidance for same sex parents.
Main language other than English spoken at home	Recommend instruction changes to encourage better representation for sign language and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as a response category.
Ancestry	Recommend adding response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestries.

Attachment B shows how the new and changed topics would be represented in amendments to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Tabling of new regulations will be late in 2019 after a Cabinet decision on the recommendations.

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.

Although exact costs have not been determined, the initial estimate for capture, processing and analysis of the four topics is under \$500 thousand, including:

- Chronic health conditions - under \$100 thousand
- Australian Defence Force service - under \$60 thousand
- Non-binary sex and gender identity - under \$150 thousand each.

If selected, sexual orientation would add costs of around \$150 thousand, while Journey to Education would add about \$1.5 million dollars to costs. Estimates have not been prepared for other reviewed topics.

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.

Communication strategies will be developed in collaboration with the Census Program, and employed at appropriate times to alleviate privacy concerns and to inform of the need for the topics and potential uses of the data. These will involve leveraging support of advocates and stakeholders requesting the topics to help inform how the data will be of value and may be used.

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

Topic Definition	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and/or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular and/or reserve).
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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:

53 Has the person ever served in the Australian Defence Force? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force and Australian Navy, Second Australian Imperial Force and national service.• Exclude service for non-Australian defence forces.• Mark all that apply, like this: <input type="checkbox"/>	<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
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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

Topic Definition	For all persons, collect sex with non-binary response options.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Change existing topic to collect sex with non-binary response options.</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 is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance and is used in generating population estimates as well as the denominator for reporting and analysis. There is concern and risk in any changes that could impact the quality of the sex data collected. There were no submissions in support of maintaining binary response options for sex, however engagement with demographers has emphasised the importance of binary data for population statistics.

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. 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.

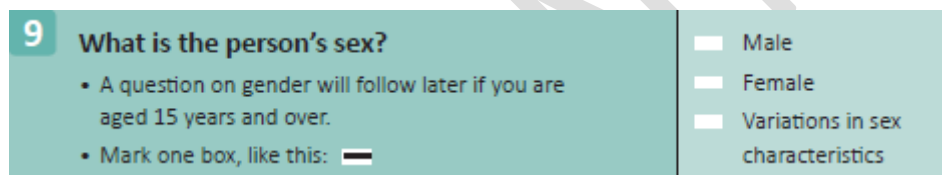
The requirement for change comes from the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*, which were established by the Attorney General’s Department to complement changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. The changes to the Act allow new protections from discrimination on 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 will be changed to ask specifically for sex and will offer a third non-binary response option. A write in option will not be included for the non-binary response. An example of the question currently being tested is below:



9 What is the person's sex?

- A question on gender will follow later if you are aged 15 years and over.
- Mark one box, like this:

Male

Female

Variations in sex characteristics

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). The wording for the third response option will continue to be developed through consultation with stakeholders and testing with participants. Stakeholders have cautioned that intersex people are also male or female, and the third option should not be assumed to be representative of their Australian population. They 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”. Depending on the terminology used, the limitation of the scope of the data would also need to be communicated on release.

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.

Further testing with the target population is planned during May to refine the terminology. Testing with the non-target population, including older people, CALD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents is planned before June 2019.

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. 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

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.

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8.4 Gender identity

Topic Definition	For all persons aged 15 years and over, collect gender.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census. 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.

Data or policy needs

A gender question would allow gender diverse individuals to identify as a gender other than their sex at birth.

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 publicly, 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. 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:

60 **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:

Male
 Female
 Non-binary
 Gender fluid
 Another gender (please specify)
 Prefer not to answer

The form includes a grid for specifying 'Another gender' with two rows of 10 boxes each.

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).

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.

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.

8.5 Sexual orientation

Topic Definition	For persons over 15 years old, current sexual orientation
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</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 (please specify)' option is followed by a grid of 10 small input boxes 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.

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.

8.6 Journey to Education

Topic Definition	For all persons, currently attending an educational institution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the name and address of the educational institution b) the mode of travel to the educational institution on Census day
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</p> <p>While the data would be valuable, there are accuracy and burden concerns in regard to respondents providing addresses, and major operational feasibility concerns due to the time, effort and cost required to develop, process and disseminate this topic. A number of options to reduce the cost, effort and burden for this topic have been tested or considered. While they may reduce the complexity, the overall cost, effort and risk with implementing this set of topics would still be significant, making the topic unfeasible to recommend for the 2021 Census.</p>

Data or policy needs

In the 2016 Census there were approximately 10 million employed people who provided details of how they travel to work. There was estimated to be around 5 million students who may also travel regularly for their education. Travel for education makes up a significant portion of travel during peak hours. Used with journey to work data, this information would provide an improved understanding of traffic flows and transport patterns in towns and cities. This data would be used by transport planners across state/territory government and local councils to model infrastructure demand. Details of the educational institution attended for students could also provide information to improve the quality of data collected on the type of educational institution attended.

An inter-jurisdictional group comprising officials from Commonwealth, state and territory transport and infrastructure agencies, provided strong support for this topic as a key data need from the Census. This group (Australian Transportation Data Action Network – ATDAN) is co-chaired by the ABS and Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) which is within the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

The submissions from ATDAN also included consultation and support from the Departments of Education and Training (Commonwealth and State in QLD and WA) and Local Government Associations. Support from submissions also came from individuals, a range of local councils and their representatives, and TAFE NSW. Some state transport departments also made separate submissions to voice support.

Engagement has been undertaken with BITRE and ATDAN to share the challenges with implementing this new topic, and the likely direction that it would not be recommended. BITRE have indicated that they are disappointed with this direction, but understand the reasons presented. At a meeting with ATDAN in April 2019, some jurisdictional representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the likely direction to not include this topic.

They noted their intention to challenge through political means at the Commonwealth and state levels. However, this was not raised by jurisdictions at follow on discussions with Commonwealth governing bodies and we are unlikely to see a challenge raised at this level or by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

Respondent implications

If included, this topic would apply to persons who indicate they are attending an educational institution (approx. 5.5 million in 2016). The name and address of the educational institution would be 1-2 questions with free text responses. The mode of transport would be similar to the mode of transport to work question currently asked, containing a list of responses and the ability to mark all that apply. There would also need to be response options for study from home and not attending an educational institution on Census day.

The Census form already collects one dwelling address, and up to four additional addresses per person (usual address, address one and five years ago, and workplace address). This topic would potentially add a fifth address per person. When completing a form for a family, a respondent may need to provide several addresses if they have a number of children attending preschool and/or school.

Testing has shown that respondents don't generally know the full address of educational institutions and they will either provide a guess, an incomplete address, or they will take additional time to look up the address. Names of educational institutions are also likely to generate abbreviated responses and various acronyms for the same institution. A tertiary student may also attend various campuses at the one institution and guidance in this situation would need to be provided.

Testing included options where only the name of the educational institution and a suburb or campus were requested. This was found to be easier for a respondent to answer, but creates more resource intensive process for the ABS to match their response to a list of institutions and addresses.

Topics including addresses can also generate additional privacy concerns, however this has not yet been identified as a concern in testing.

Operational feasibility

Collecting the responses to produce this data requires up to three questions which could take nearly two pages on the paper form. Expansion of the paper form from 22 to 26 pages is being considered; this topic on its own would utilise much of this space. Collecting through the online form is not limited by this constraint and functionality that may simplify response has been investigated, however most options result in more effort to edit, code and process data.

Journey to work data currently involves complex processing of addresses, destination zones and commuting distances. Coding addresses can require a large degree of manual intervention to ensure quality outputs. The amount of manual coding for incomplete addresses is likely to be higher for this topic as testing has shown most people will not know the street address of the educational institution and will use several names, abbreviations or acronyms for the institution name. In form coding for online forms may assist with improving the quality of responses and reducing processing, but needs further testing and development to determine the best way to implement.

The key information required to inform transport planning is the home address and educational institution address (to determine journey start and end points) and the mode of travel. The name of the educational institution will help with determining the address if insufficient information is provided. It is anticipated that there will be different degrees of non-response in providing the address for an educational institution. This could be related to a lack of knowledge of the address, or respondent fatigue if completing a form for a large family or household. Access to address lists of educational institutions may aid in the process of quality control, but it will still require a significant amount of manual intervention to provide quality data. Discussions with the Department of Education and Training showed there would be challenges with the availability and quality of lists covering all levels of education within scope of this topic. Lists of primary and secondary schools would be reasonable quality with sufficient detail. Gathering similar lists for pre-schools, early childhood, tertiary and vocational education and training would prove more challenging, with variable quality.

Current journey to work processes could provide the template for implementing journey to education processing and outputs. Journey to work processing incurs significant cost and effort to produce output data. Adding journey to education will incur significant additional processing cost. This will require extra resources and there is some risk that even with additional funds, implementing a change of this scale will take expertise away from other Census program development which is needed for setting up for the 2021 Census operations.

The journey to work topic provides detailed outputs with multiple modes of transport, origin and destination details and in 2016, interactive maps based on commuting distance. If the topic is included, the capacity to output similar detail would need to be explored, as well as a combined commuting picture (combining journey to work and journey to education data). This would be very costly. Engagement with stakeholders would be required to determine the minimum viable product rather than invest in replicating the outputs for journey to work.

Cost estimates were compiled and initial indications are that the topic could add a few million dollars to the cost of the Census (with \$1.5 million estimated for ongoing capture, coding, processing and analysis). While jurisdictional stakeholders indicated they may be

willing to contribute funding to adding this topic, there are risks and considerations beyond cost (mentioned above) which also impact on the feasibility of delivering this topic for the 2021 Census. The cost and complexity would also limit the ability to add other new topics to the Census. Similar estimates for the four topic changes recommended to add to the 2021 Census suggest that all four topics could be implemented for under \$500 thousand.

Statistical impacts

The potential for this additional set of questions creating address response fatigue needs to be considered. Many of the addresses collected in the Census are critical for population estimates and projections, as well as providing journey to work data. If this topic was added, further testing would be required to assess potential for address fatigue having an impact on the quality of other addresses. The overall increase in respondent burden may adversely affect overall Census response rates.

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8.7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity

Topic Definition	For all persons of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, more detail on their cultural identity in terms of identification with their clan/mob/nation.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census. The cultural identity topic has been assessed as not meeting data needs and the respondent sensitivities may affect the quality of response. The operational cost of implementing this topic would also be high. Changes will be explored for language and ancestry to increase inclusiveness, as well as investment into other strategies to improve participation.

Data or policy needs

The main driver for this new topic was to increase the relevance of the Census to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve participation and reduce the undercount. Submissions were received from the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet supporting the addition of a topic on identification with a clan/mob/nation as a means to improve the undercount, but there were not specific policy needs for the data from this topic.

Through initial rounds of testing (including user centred design tests on ways to improve participation), and discussion at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table, concerns were identified with how the data for this topic may be used. Potential misuse could include negative reporting of “true aboriginality” and impact on land claims.

Other suggestions included changes to the current ancestry and main language spoken questions, to better recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Early testing indicated the change to ancestry is particularly welcome. These changes are discussed further in section 10.

Though not in scope of the 2021 Census topic review, a strong interest was expressed in being able to measure the difference between those that are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, and those that identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This is a major piece of work with implications beyond the Census. A review of this concept, taking into account potential changes to the current standard, will be conducted in the next few years by the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.

Respondent implications

An additional question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity was initially tested including yes/no options and free text to identify clan/nation/mob. This was generally well received, although a small number of participants raised concerns with providing accurate data for a write in response – they noted both concerns with accurate spelling, as well as not knowing the answer, or having multiple answers, to this question. An example of the question which was tested is below:

<p>Does the person identify with a nation, clan, mob, language group or other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander regional group?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> No																																								
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify name)																																								
	<table border="1"> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </table>																																								
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but unsure of name																																									

Operational feasibility

If collected, outputs for a new clan/nation/mob topic would be based on free text responses, so an input and output classification will need to be created. The current standard language classification includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and can also be used where relevant.

A free text response would have a high processing burden. The potential for different spelling of responses will make developing and coding to a classification difficult with a large amount of manual intervention likely, especially for the first cycle where this topic is introduced.

There may be data quality concerns a low geographic levels, particularly in areas where there are diverse clans/language groups in a single location.

Statistical impacts

There is a risk of non-response for the additional clan/nation/mob question due to sensitivities and concerns about how the data could be used. We would need to also assess any potential quality risk to the Indigenous status question.

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8.8 Smoking Status

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and previous smoking status.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census There is strong demand for a health related topic, but the chronic health conditions topic is preferred and has broader data value. If required, the smoking topic could be implemented with relative ease and low risk.

Data or policy needs

While smoking rates continue to decrease, smoking is still a key contributor to chronic diseases in Australia. There is a need to identify smoking behaviours for small geographic areas and populations. For example, maternal age smoking is one of the biggest health risk factors in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and current surveys don't provide small population group data to plan strategies and support. This data would allow for targeted preventative action, and the monitoring of health related conditions induced by smoking.

Key Commonwealth agencies making submissions for this topic were the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, although both noted a preference for a chronic health topic, as a stronger need over a smoking status topic. There are some vocal groups advocating for the collection of smoking status, particularly academics. Direct engagement with these groups will occur prior to the release of topic recommendations.

Respondent implications

If included, the topic would require two questions asking for current smoking status and previous smoking status. The questions would be asked only of people aged 15 and over and most likely placed later in the form due to potential sensitivity of the topic.

Smoking status questions have been tested through a number of rounds of cognitive interviews. Participants did not identify any concerns or sensitivities answering these questions, although further testing would be required to explore if there are concerns answering on behalf of others.

Operational feasibility

If collected, data would be classified and output based only on the response options in the question. There is not expected to be any complexity in developing, processing and disseminating this topic.

National Health Survey data on smoking behaviour is available and could be of use for quality assurance of Census counts during processing.

Statistical impacts

There may be some non-response to this topic driven by people not wanting to disclose their smoking status to government. There may also be some concern with responding accurately for those under 18 years old (which is the legal age for purchasing cigarettes in Australia). As it is a personal topic, it may impact on overall response. However, the topic is collected in the New Zealand Census and the data is considered to be of reasonable quality. If this topic was added, further testing would be needed to identify the scale of any quality concerns.

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8.9 Households and family measures (including shared care of children)

Topic Definition	Collect relationships between a primary member of the household with other members. This is used to define household and family composition. Expansions would explore additional dynamic family structures and identification of shared care arrangements for children.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add to this topic or change the current collection approach. Explore opportunities through processing to enhance the data available.</p> <p>Do not add shared care of children as a new topic.</p> <p>This topic is extremely complex with a single collection question used to derive and output a range of variables. Improvements in processing for family coding systems are required and the statistical risk of changing the collection approach is considered too high to proceed. The review of systems will be used to explore ways to better meet stakeholder needs, with the potential for expansion of this topic to be explored in future cycles.</p>

Data or policy needs

The Census produces many output variables that describe household and family composition and characteristics. These are derived through a complex coding process that uses relationship between members of the household, persons temporarily absent and registered marital status as inputs.

Data users provided feedback that being able to understand more complex family and household structures would assist in policy development and service delivery, particularly in the area of targeting payments and support services to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The complex families identified included multigenerational family households; blended families; kinship care arrangements; and LGBTI households. A particular area of interest was being able to include children living in shared custody arrangements as part of the family in both their residences. This is important to understand the household economic resources in different family situations to inform social policy.

Key Commonwealth agencies submitting on this topic were the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Treasury. There was also interest from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and various state and territory departments. DSS submitted that persons temporarily absent on Census night be matched back into their usual residence for more accurate household and family data in particular household income and equivalised household income.

A workshop was held with DSS, AIFS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and researchers to explore what data was needed for a more contemporary understanding of household and family composition. Based on the input data already collected, significant additional value can be delivered by reviewing the family classification and coding principles.

Respondent implications

No changes to household and family composition were tested with respondents. Any change to input variables would require significant development of the processing system. This presents a major risk to the system which would need tests and a substantial investment of resources to implement. This is not possible for 2021.

Collection of shared care of children data would require a change to the relationships and persons temporarily absent questions, in addition to a new question. Given the previous decision, question development didn't occur.

Some challenges to accurate and efficient family coding occur when the wrong person reports as 'person 1'. The beta phase of the digital channel development and the front of form work for the paper instrument will develop and test guidance to help the most appropriate respondent to be person 1.

Guidance on who to report on the form, and who to report as away, will be tested for the 2021 Census. This will specifically review instructions for children, Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) workers and couch surfers. These changes are being considered to improve coverage within households and will draw from approaches taken by the ONS and Statistics Canada.

Operational feasibility

As noted in the section on respondent implications, change to the processing system is not possible for the 2021 Census.

Household and family relationship inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations. Census Data Operations has mapped the family coding processes and is working with Household Characteristics & Social Reporting (HC&SR) to look for opportunities to improve outputs from the variables currently collected. The possibility of matching persons temporarily absent data will be considered as part of this work. HC&SR is also undertaking a review of the family and household composition standards. This review is considering how to serve policy needs for family data by understanding the family coding rules and edits currently applied to Census and Household Surveys and looking at ways to tailor and expand to better suit policy needs. Additionally, the HC&SR team is working on development of a shared care of children data item. Consideration is being given to a flag for the presence of children in shared care arrangements, as well as a module of questions for household surveys. Internal and external stakeholder engagement is ongoing for both of these pieces of work.

Statistical impacts

Due to the complexity of use of family and household composition input variables, there is likely to be a considerable statistical impact on Census data. This hasn't been investigated, but will be for any proposed processing and coding changes.

It's considered that implementing changes to collect shared care of children may have an impact on the usual address concept and even if operationally feasible, it would need careful consideration of the data quality risk.

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9 Topics for removal from the *Census and Statistics Regulation*

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Remove the following two topics from the 2021 Census: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household internet access• Motor vehicles garaged Both topics have been assessed as no longer relevant to be collected on the Census or available in part through other sources.
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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. To consider adding new topics, the topics that are no longer considered relevant were assessed and are recommended for removal.

9.1 Household internet access

The 2016 Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions suggested that with the growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access has less relevance.

Stakeholders suggesting changes to the question on household internet access included the Department of Communication and the Arts (DoCA) and Infrastructure Australia.

DoCA suggested replacing the current topic with another individual internet access and use-based question, including measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy to understand the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population. Infrastructure Australia was interested in the role of internet access in the changing nature of employment, with particular interest in the use of home internet connections for work from home arrangements. While these topics are considered important, they are too complex to be collected in the Census and the data need was not well articulated.

9.2 Motor vehicles garaged

Previous discussions over the past two Census cycles have noted the intention to remove 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, may be an alternative to collecting this data through the Census. Stakeholders have noted a number of constraints with using administrative data sources as a replacement. For instance, there is acknowledged issues with business registrations that may not have up to date details of garaged addresses for their vehicles. Stakeholders noted that they would require further investment and development to get their sources to a state where they would be an adequate substitute. The submissions noted that registry data can provide an approximate measure of the number of motor vehicles at small area level, but cannot

presently provide the link to household demographic information provided by the Census which is required for existing urban travel models and to inform policy and planning. While some jurisdictions noted that they would be able to work with a cycle where this question is only asked every ten years, others noted that the five year cycle was still necessary. Those willing to accommodate a ten year cycle raised it only in the context of having access to Journey to Education data available for planning.

The ABS is currently investigating options to expand on the data from the Motor Vehicle Census to include the location where vehicles are garaged. This project is currently working with NSW registration data. It will then expand to see if this can be applied in other states and territories. While it won't be a complete replacement of Census data, it will potentially make this alternative source of data more valuable.

Motor vehicles garaged is recommended for removal from the 2021 Census as there are other potential sources that would meet some of the data needs, and it will reduce respondent burden in regard to the number of overall topics collected.

Opposition to the removal of this topic included submissions from the Australian Transportation Data Action Network (ATDAN) which comprises representatives from all Commonwealth, state and territory transport agencies, as well as the Australian Local Government Association. ATDAN is co-chaired by the ABS and the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) under the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. There has also been recent communication from the Secretary of Infrastructure requesting that this topic is not removed. Discussions at ATDAN also included an indication that jurisdictions will lobby state and federal government to try and influence the retention of this topic. However, reports back from representatives at the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials Committee (TISOC) have noted that the Census topic review was not raised by any jurisdictions and the subject matter area now feel it is unlikely that further action will be taken by TISOC or the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

10 Other changes to current topics

Beyond the suggestions for new topics, submissions were also made for changes to existing topics. A number of changes were considered worthy of further investigation. Exploring changes to topics provide 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 in making a decision to change.

The following section outlines the changes explored and the key agencies advocating for change. Where the changes are considered feasible, investigation will continue via testing and engagement throughout 2019 for most topics.

Some of the requested changes would require a change in scope of the topic on the Census and Statistics Regulation. While discussed further below, such changes were not considered feasible.

Changes to topics that do not require regulation changes are still being explored, and will be recommended and approved through the relevant Census Program streams.

Need for assistance – The need for assistance topic currently asks four questions which are used to derive a single output identifying persons with a need for assistance with core activities. While a number of changes or enhancements were suggested, many were not considered feasible to add to the current set of questions. Only the expansion of outputs and the incorporation of assistance through aids and equipment are being explored. Key stakeholders interested in changes to this topic include DSS and AIHW.

It was noted by stakeholders that maintaining the time series for this topic is vital, so changes would only be made where the change is stronger value than the risk to time series. Initial testing has shown that including response options for use of aids and equipment causes confusion for people who need assistance and use equipment, or have a paid carer (or aid). The addition of this concept is not recommended.

Due to the way these questions are consolidated for output, there are also challenges with incorporating the new categories, and then processing output. We are continuing to review options in consultation with the stakeholders, however at this point no changes to the questions or underlying topic are recommended.

Highest non-school qualifications – The Department of Education and Training were keen to collect year of completion of non-school qualifications to understand currency of completion. The topic is collected as pre/post 1998 for coding and classification purposes. This topic was tested in cognitive interviews. Respondents reported some problems with recall and accuracy. As this question would include free text, there is an additional effort in processing and coding that reduces the operational feasibility. This change is not recommended.

Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age – While there were a number of suggestions for additions to this topic, many were too detailed to implement. Among other requests, DSS suggested removing the age restriction on this question to get a measure of young carers (under 15 years old). Qualitative testing was undertaken with a number of participants likely to provide care, or receive it. Testing has revealed some sensitivity with asking this question of younger respondents. There are also operational challenges associated with where to position this question on the paper form as it currently sits with the other three questions on unpaid work and care. Positioning the questions with need for assistance and health questions has shown that more respondents misinterpret that the topic is about providing care rather than receiving care. They also don't always see the question wording referencing unpaid care, and begin talking in terms of paid care. Based on the potential statistical impact of separating this question from other unpaid work/care question, this change is not recommended for 2021 Census.

Income – Treasury suggested reviewing the income ranges used in this question to better align with current tax brackets and provide more response options for higher incomes. There were also requests made during engagement to use a write in response rather than selecting ranges. Income is a sensitive question with many respondents reporting concerns around privacy. A change to a write in response has been explored in cognitive testing. Respondents had difficulty answering and some suggested that they would have to look up their income. There was increased accuracy concerns when reporting on behalf of others. The cost and effort involved in processing and quality assuring a write in response is also higher than a question with response ranges. The impacts on quality, costs and burden mean that a write in response to income will not be pursued. Other changes to response options (including order and size of ranges) will be tested and implemented.

Attendance at an educational institution – Department of Education and Training and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group both asked for a review of this topic to try and better capture attendance at pre-schools, kindergartens and early childhood education. There were also requests to better capture vocational education and training and home schooling. Changes are being explored in terms of the respondent's ability to understand the response categories and with consideration of the impact on the time series for this topic. There is unlikely to be any operational feasibility or overall statistical impact concerns with this change.

Type of tenure, Landlord type – DSS is seeking better alignment of Census data on social/community housing with administrative data. Stakeholders are also looking for details of when rent is subsidised or provided through affordable renting schemes to aid access to social housing. Changes to questions on tenure and landlord type were both explored to consider if these data needs can be met through the Census. It was found that capturing affordable rental options made the questions too complex and there were concerns regarding the overall quality impact. Testing is continuing with options to capture affordable

housing schemes, but not subsidised rentals. There is also consideration of linking administrative data to meet this need.

Measures of homelessness - Usual residence at Census time, address 1 and 5 years ago – DSS and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) provided support for improving measures of homelessness especially among couch surfing youth. Submissions supported additions to questions on usual residence such as reasons for visiting, or a tick box for no usual address and address 1-5 years ago. As the usual address and address 1-5 years ago topics are critical for estimating the distribution of the usually resident population, it was considered too high a risk to data quality if changes to the question and response options were made. Changes to instructions and support materials are being tested to try and improve identification of couch surfers without risking the quality of this topic. The reasons for visiting question and tick box is not recommended. Options being explored will also include guidance on the front of form which will help establish who in a household should be included on the form.

Country of birth of parents – Some support was noted for providing options if a person has same sex parents. Country of Birth for mother and father is important for the Department of Home Affairs in analysing citizenship, so only instructions have been reviewed to be more inclusive.

Main language other than English spoken at home / Proficiency in spoken English – Deaf Australia noted that current language in the questions were not inclusive of those using sign language. Changes have been tested to improve inclusiveness for those using sign language. This testing will continue, including tests with culturally and linguistically diverse respondents to ensure the changes don't generate confusion which could impact time series data.

In submissions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity, better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was also raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Submissions noted support for improvements in the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language information to better understand if challenges with the English language create barriers to participation in society. The potential for change to this question was also discussed at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table. Views were shared that the current question may be a barrier, and that some people may not respond with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language as they may not be able to write in their response due to unclear or unknown spelling. They noted that there was a cultural 'shame' element to this where respondents are unlikely to try to write a language if they are not confident with the accurate spelling.

It is also believed that allowing respondents to check Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without requiring a 'write in' could reduce the reporting of a specific language. This is believed to have occurred with a change to the 2016 Interviewer Household Form

(IHF) used in communities where there was an increase in the proportion of responses indicating an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without providing further detail (when compared to the 2011 Census). In 2016, the majority of respondents (80%) indicating that they spoke an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language were from communities where the IHF was used. In 2021, design of the form and training of interviewers will be used to encourage them to provide more detail of languages spoken when completing the IHF.

To try and address concerns that respondents may not report Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander languages spoken at home if they are unable to write a response, there will be testing and consideration of options for the online form only. The online form can be adapted to present a different set of options if someone responds that they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander against the Indigenous Status question. A substitute question will be tested with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants which will include a tick box option for 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language' and an instruction encouraging respondents to write more detail in the 'please specify' box.

Changes are considered too complex to incorporate adequately on the paper form. Testing on the paper form has shown that providing a write-in response for 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages' as well as a write-in box for 'other language' was confusing to respondents. Adding a write-in box specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will not be recommended on the paper form. Instructional text to encourage respondents to write in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will be tested.

Approaches taken for the language question will need to consider impact on the understanding and scope of the question. There is potential for changes to increase the amount of people selecting languages even if they are not spoken regularly at home. Quantitative testing in October will be used to assess the potential scale of any quality impacts. Testing will also be undertaken with culturally and linguistically diverse participants to identify if there is an impact on their understanding of the questions.

Coding and processing for these options are unlikely to significantly impact current procedures.

Ancestry - Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestries was raised as a means of improving recognition for these groups. The inclusion of additional response categories of 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' for ancestry is considered likely to yield more relevant data for this population group, who likely would have previously marked 'Australian'.

Additional response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry have been tested and have performed well in cognitive testing. Further testing is planned with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and changes will be recommended for inclusion in the quantitative test.

Testing will also be undertaken with culturally and linguistically diverse participants to identify if there is any adverse impact on their understanding of the questions.

Output and processing will use current classifications and will not require any further processing or outputs over and above current procedures. This change is likely to be recommended for implementing on the 2021 Census.

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11 Topics not being recommended for addition or change

A number of suggested changes, and new topic suggestions were not included in the topic directions publication. These were assessed as either being unsuitable or as lower priority compared to other topic suggestions. The topics which may be raised again in consultation and engagement as final decisions are made, have been listed below. Where relevant, the source or suggestions for change have been noted.

11.1 Changes to topics not being investigated

Religious affiliation - Submissions were received from a range of individuals, religious organisations and secular/no religion bodies suggesting an additional question on religious involvement to give a better picture of how actively people participate in their religious activities. There were also suggestions to expand the representations of some religions in the classification, and to move the 'no religion' response back to the end of the list of responses. Collecting information on religious affiliation is consistent with international Census practice and is better aligned with planning for services delivered by religious organisations. There continues to be suggestions regarding religion through general correspondence to the ABS and the topic can sometimes be of interest to the media. Key messages will be prepared to assist in responding to media and correspondents on the reasons for not making any further change to this question.

Number of children ever born – 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 is not considered high priority, new instructions will be tested to recognise that people whose gender is not female may have given birth.

Work (including labour force status, status in employment, occupation and industry) – Treasury and a joint submission from Department of Jobs and Small Business, Comcare and the Fair Work Commission made suggestions for changes and enhancements to work topics. 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). There have been recent experimental estimates released by the ABS using LEED which may address some of the data needs raised by stakeholders.

Some submissions suggested a review of the occupation classification (ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations). While recognising this is desirable the ABS has decided not to undertake this review in the short term.

Unpaid work – voluntary work – There were suggestions from DSS and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group 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 is not being further explored for the 2021 Census. However, this information is available through the ABS General Social Survey.

11.2 New topic suggestions not being considered

Sources of income – A number of submissions were received suggesting the Census collect data on sources of income. This topic is not recommended as the information is available in administrative sources and can be provided through data integration work or existing comprehensive income surveys such as the Survey of Income and Housing. 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.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation – DSS and local councils noted a need for measures of participation in NDIS against disability measures to help with planning and delivery of services. Based on the potential availability of this data from administrative sources that can be linked with Census data, this was not assessed as a priority topic for collection in the 2021 Census. The ABS is actively working with the National Disability Insurance Agency to progress this.

Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling - Where submissions in 2016 came from a range of sources including federal, state and local government and industry groups, there has been less demand for this topic in the 2021 Census consultation. 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.

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; experiences of chronic pain; 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. Key agencies supported chronic health conditions over other health topics suggested in submissions.

Digital literacy or inclusion – As noted against the Household Internet Access topic, the Department of Communications and the Arts supported replacing household internet access with topics on personal internet access and use. This information would be to gain a better understanding of digital literacy or inclusion among vulnerable groups and the impact on social participation. While valuable, the data need was not well defined and the topic was too complex to collect adequately on the Census.

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>Chronic health conditions (diagnosed; lasting six months or more; list of most prevalent conditions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High demand for small area and small population group health conditions data Support from key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing well for accuracy and acceptability Some concern in reporting for others Some conditions, such as mental health, may have greater privacy implications, particularly in combination with other new topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant coding effort or dissemination demands QA against other sources such as the National Health Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be considered a personal topic in combination with other proposed additions
<p>Australian Defence Force service (current or previous service in ADF; regular and reserve forces)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to high demand for data on veteran population to inform health & mental health service delivery; understand employment outcomes & experiences of homelessness Considered a vulnerable population group Strong support from stakeholders and bipartisan push No administrative data exists for veterans not currently accessing DVA services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be asked only of 15+ Testing well for accuracy and acceptability Positive response from non-ADF respondents on value of topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant coding effort or dissemination demands Minimal space on paper form required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not significant
<p>Non-binary sex (third option for those born with variations in sex characteristics unable to respond male or female)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender Note this will not provide an accurate count of intersex people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing okay for accuracy and acceptability in qualitative testing More testing planned to refine wording of third option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need further consideration of imputation, coding and dissemination Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure impact on quality of male/female data in field test Implementation to consider how to minimise error and vandalism
<p>Gender identity (male, female, trans, gender diverse, other specify, prefer not to say)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to support these vulnerable groups Gender diverse seen as more vulnerable than lesbian/gay/bi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be asked only of 15+, would have a 'prefer not to say' option and appear late in the form Current testing has shown understanding and response accuracy for both LGBTI and non-LGBTI participants Some concern in reporting for others More testing planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables such as name to be measured in field test

Investigation summary of topics not recommended for inclusion

	Data or policy need	Respondent implications	Operational feasibility	Statistical impacts
Sexual orientation (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other specify, prefer not to say)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Testing has not identified concerns with the topic in the target population. Some reaction to the question by general population, mainly among older respondents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables.
Journey to education (name and address of education institution; mode of travel to institution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong demand within transport and infrastructure planning across Commonwealth, state/territory and local government Also interest from education sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns with respondents being able to accurately report address of education institution Accuracy in reporting name of institution problematic Possible confusion or duplication related to multi point journeys for one household, or attendance at multiple campuses Administrative lists not assessed as providing benefit to coding Reporting burden of providing multiple addresses on the Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires nearly two pages on paper form Data capture, coding and processing effort will be high and require a large degree of manual intervention Complex dissemination effort for calculation of destination zones and commuting distance Not viable to implement without institution lists Presents risk to processing and dissemination activities Significant cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibility of 'address fatigue' affecting accuracy and reporting of other addresses, including usual address and workplace address Possibility of privacy concerns linked to the number of addresses being requested
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (specify nation/clan/mob)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No strong data driver Need was based on motivation to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns with accurately being able to respond (spelling, which one to identify with, desire to report multiple) Some sensitivity if don't know Major concerns over data misuse to further disadvantage community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No list of cultural identities exists, would require significant work to create, quality assure and develop classification High processing burden Significant costs in data capture and repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status question if respondent does not know identity Concern over misuse may adversely impact community engagement and participation
Smoking status (current/previous smoker of tobacco)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to high demand within health sector for small area and population group data on smoking status Stakeholder priority is on chronic health conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would only be asked of 15+ Testing well for accuracy and acceptability Some concern in reporting for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant coding effort or dissemination demands Minimal space on paper form required Would require QA against other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not significant

<p>Household and family measures (complex household & family types, i.e. multi-generational, blended, kinship care & shared care of children)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high demand for more contemporary household and family structures • Can meet user needs to some extent by review of family classification and coding principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable questions to collect more complex compositions unable to be developed in a form that the respondent completes themselves • Not tested on respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any change of input would require significant processing and coding effort • Presents major risk as inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations • Insufficient development and testing of options has occurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have a statistical impact due to the complexity of use of household and family composition inputs
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Attachment B Changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*

The following table is a mock-up of how all changes would be represented in the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Shaded items represent changes or additions.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex and/or gender identity (change to allow for collection of gender identity)
Date of birth or age last birthday
Relationship to the other persons, if any, who spend the Census night in the same accommodation
Present marital status
Address of usual residence
Address of usual residence 1 year before the Census day
Address of usual residence 5 years before the Census day
Religion or religious denomination
Citizenship
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
Ancestry
Country of birth
Country of birth of each parent
For a person not born in Australia—the year of the person’s first arrival in Australia
Languages spoken at home
For a person who speaks a language other than English at home—their proficiency in speaking English
Present attendance at an educational institution, including the type of institution attended (if any)
Chronic health conditions (new topic)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age, the following:
(a) the highest level of primary or secondary school completed;
(b) educational qualifications;
(c) labour force status;
(d) income;
(e) domestic activities;
(f) the provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person;
(g) the provision of care to a child, without pay;
(h) voluntary work through an organisation or group
(x) Australian defence force service (new topic)

For a person who is not less than 15 years of age and was employed (including self-employed) during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following:
(a) status in employment during that week;
(b) occupation during that week;
(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;
(d) the main kind of business or industry carried on, or service provided, by that undertaking during that week;
(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;
(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;
(g) the mode of travel to work by the person on the Census day;
(h) if the person owns a business, the total number of persons who are employed by the business
The need for assistance with, or the supervision of another person for, any of the following activities (including the reason for the need):
(a) self-care;
(b) body movement;
(c) communication
For a female who is not less than 15 years of age—the number of children to whom she has given birth
Statistical information for the Census—household accommodated on the Census night in a private dwelling
The address on the Census night
For a person who is usually a member of the household but is absent from the household accommodation on the Census night, the following:
(a) name;
(b) sex;
(c) date of birth or age last birthday;
(d) student status;
(e) relationship to other members of the household;
(f) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
The right, title or interest of the household in the household’s accommodation
The number of bedrooms in the dwelling
The rent or loan repayments payable by the household for its accommodation
If the dwelling is rented—the nature of the person or body to whom rent is paid
The number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling (remove topic)
Access to the internet at the dwelling (remove topic)

Statistical information for the Census—private dwelling
The structure
The location
The status of a person in the dwelling
Statistical information for the Census—dwelling other than a private dwelling
The classification of the dwelling by reference to its purpose
The status of a person in the dwelling
The address of the dwelling
The name (if any) of the dwelling
The number of persons resident in the dwelling

To: Teresa Dickinson
Deputy Australian Statistician

Date Due: 17 May 2019

Through: Paul Jelfs
General Manager – Population and
Social Statistics

Purpose: For action:
For information:

Contact Officer: Justine Boland, S22

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
Comments:				
R2. Present the recommendations and planned process for making a recommendation to Government to the Australian Statistician for approval.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Approved
Comments:				

Overview and proposed timetable

- 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 following the federal election.
- We are seeking your endorsement of the recommendations and provision to the Australian Statistician for approval.
- The following timetable and communications are planned to support recommendations on content to the Government. This timetable accommodates time for finalising the forms and setting up operations for processing data.

Planned activities to support 2021 Census content recommendations to Government	Planned timing
Inclusion of reference to 2021 Census content in the Incoming Minister's Brief	Late May / early June
Briefing for Minister <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Ministerial briefing recommending 2021 Census content will be prepared for transmission in June 2019. It is anticipated that the Statistician will meet with the Minister in June or July, with Census topic recommendations expected to be discussed as part of the meeting. Briefing material will be prepared. The Minister can approve the recommendations or may choose to put them to Cabinet for a decision. A separate Officer level meeting to discuss content will be sought with Ministerial staff as soon as possible after the election. 	Mid June

<p>Cabinet submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Census Content team will prepare draft content for the Cabinet Submission prior to discussions with the Minister so that it is available for when the formal process is ready to begin. • The formal 20 day preparation phase for cabinet submissions will be undertaken in August 2019. • The Minister will need to request the authority to discuss this matter with Cabinet. • We will aim for the cabinet submission to be discussed in September 2019. 	Aug - Sep 2019
<p>Tabling regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a decision is made by Cabinet, the changes to regulations will be drafted and submitted for approval. • Changes to the regulations will be enacted once approved, however there will be a disallowance period of 20 sitting days in both houses of Parliament. • Regulation changes will need to be tabled by 22 November 2019 for the disallowance period to be completed in time for the paper form printing deadline in March 2020. 	Between Oct 2019 – Mar 2020

4. Support for the Cabinet submission will also be needed from Treasury officials. Officers in PaSSD will liaise with relevant Treasury staff concerning the Cabinet Submission from June 2019 (noting that Policy and Legislation team have already highlighted this work with Treasury in recent discussions). It is also recommended that discussions between the Statistician and Secretary of Treasury will be needed to seek support with this planned process. Once the election and caretaker mode is finalised, we will begin engagement again with Treasury in preparation.
5. Testing of questions will continue throughout 2019 to refine wording and determine processing requirements. Work will also continue to support the management of risks regarding the topics proposed, including preparing talking points and communication strategies.
 - i. Talking points for the key topics raised will be prepared by the Census Content team (taking on advice from Census Communications) prior to discussions the Minister in June.
 - ii. High level risk assessment has begun as part of preparations for the Census Program (including statistical risk assessment through the quality management program). This will be delivered beyond the October test.
 - iii. Topic related risk assessments will be prepared to coincide with testing and the different phases of Census operations. The assessments will include identification of needs for documentation, training and communications to support the new topics.

Key changes to the Recommendations document

6. The substantive recommendations for topics in the 2021 Census Topic Review paper remain unchanged. More significant updates in comparison to the version discussed with you on 9 April include:
 - i. Introduction of discussion on potential costs in section 7.2: Implementing the package of new topics proposed.
 - ii. Changes to improve the context and clarity of discussions in the new topics sections for non-binary sex, gender identity, sexual orientation (sections 8.3 – 8.5).
 - iii. Additions to reference recent stakeholder discussions and shows of support for Australian Defence Force service, gender identity, journey to education and motor vehicles garaged (sections 8 and 9.2).

- iv. Separation of the discussion on the approaches to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation through cultural identity (section 8.7), ancestry and main language spoken at home (section 10).

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.
8. Other topics that have been raised by data users are also included but not recommended for addition. They have been assessed as having higher risk in regard to the ABS ability to deliver adequate data to meet user needs through the Census. The reasons for not recommending these topics are also discussed.
9. A detailed set of supporting documents covering the content development work program has been maintained by PaSSD. Noting that cognitive testing is still underway, documentation of this work will be updated and maintained by PaSSD in consultation with relevant Census staff.

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

Paul Jelfs
General Manager Population and Social Statistics
Division
May 2019

Attachments

- A. 2021 Census topic review investigations V3

Basics

Justine Boland/Staff/ABS

30/05/2019 05:55 PM

Send	To Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS cc [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS, 2021 Census Content Development WDB@ABS bcc
Subject	Census topic recommendations - updated briefing 📎
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"/>
Categories	2. Project Management\Governance\Government recommendations\Internal recommendations paper

Paul, this version of the cover brief has been updated to remove the reference to changes in the document, as discussed. I'll confirm the preferred method of transmission to Teresa and let you know the advice.
Justine



FOR ACTION Briefing 2021 Census topics 30 May 2019.docx

Justine Boland

Program Manager

Indigenous and Social Information Branch | **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

(P) (02) 6252 6841 (M) [redacted]

(E) justine.boland@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

To: Teresa Dickinson
Deputy Australian Statistician

Date Due: 14 June 2019

Through: Paul Jelfs
General Manager – Population and Social Statistics

Purpose: For action:
For information:

Contact Officer: Justine Boland, S22

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
Comments:				
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Comments:				

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- 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.
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<p>Cabinet submission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Census Content team will prepare draft content for the Cabinet Submission prior to discussions with the Minister so that it is available for when the formal process is ready to begin. • The formal 20 day preparation phase for cabinet submissions will be undertaken in August 2019. • The Minister will need to request the authority to discuss this matter with Cabinet. • We will aim for the cabinet submission to be discussed in September 2019. 	<p>Aug - Sep 2019</p>
<p>Tabling regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once a decision is made by Cabinet, the changes to regulations will be drafted and submitted for approval. • Changes to the regulations will be enacted once approved, however there will be a disallowance period of 20 sitting days in both houses of Parliament. • Regulation changes will need to be tabled by 22 November 2019 for the disallowance period to be completed in time for the paper form printing deadline in March 2020. 	<p>Between Nov 2019 – Mar 2020</p>

4. Support for the Cabinet submission will also be needed from Treasury officials. Officers in PaSSD will liaise with relevant Treasury staff concerning the Cabinet Submission from June 2019 (noting that Policy and Legislation team have already highlighted this work with Treasury in recent discussions). It is also recommended that discussions between the Statistician and Secretary of Treasury will be needed to seek support with this planned process. Now that caretaker mode has ended, we will begin engagement again with Treasury in preparation.
5. Testing of questions will continue throughout 2019 to refine wording and determine processing requirements.
6. Work will also continue to support the management of risks regarding the topics proposed, including preparing talking points and communication strategies.
 - i. We are anticipating lobbying by LGBTI advocates to coincide with decisions being made by the Minister and the Cabinet. Key advocates have indicated their intent to strongly push for the inclusion of the sexual orientation topic in particular.
 - ii. Talking points for the key topics raised will be prepared prior to discussions the Minister in June.
 - iii. High level risk assessment has begun as part of preparations for the Census Program (including statistical risk assessment through the quality management program). This will be delivered beyond the October test.
 - iv. Topic related risk assessments will be prepared to coincide with testing and the different phases of Census operations. The assessments will include identification of needs for documentation, training and communications to support the new topics.

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.
8. Other topics that have been raised by data users are also included but not recommended for addition. They have been assessed as having higher risk in regard to the ABS ability to deliver adequate data to meet user needs through the Census. The reasons for not recommending these topics are also discussed.

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.

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

Paul Jelfs
General Manager Population and Social Statistics
Division
May 2019

Attachments

- A. 2021 Census topic review investigations

FW: Referral from the Office of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries (RN 3865) [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
 Secretariat WDB

S47F

01/11/2019 02:52 PM

Basics

S47F

01/11/2019 02:52 PM

S47F

@TREASURY.GOV.A

U

Send	To "Secretariat WDB" <secretariat@abs.gov.au> cc "MHAT DLO" <ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU> bcc
Subject	FW: Referral from the Office of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries (RN 3865) [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	

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

For Cos response.

Many thanks

S47F

From: Minister Foley (DHHS) <Minister.Foley@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 1 November 2019 11:57 AM

To: Minister Sukkar <Minister.Sukkar@TREASURY.GOV.AU>

Subject: Referral from the Office of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries (RN 3865)

Dear S47F

I enclose correspondence received by Martin Foley MP, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries, from Councillor Susan Rennie, regarding Census 2021 questions.

As the matter raised falls within the portfolio responsibilities of the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing, the Hon Michael Sukkar MP, I have enclosed the correspondence for his consideration.

The correspondent has been advised of this referral.
Should you require further information regarding the attached correspondence, please contact the Office of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries at minister.foley@dhhs.vic.gov.au or on (03) 9096 7500.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

S47F

Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister for Mental Health
Office of the Minister for Equality
Office of the Minister for Creative Industries

From: Mayor <MAYOR@DAREBIN.VIC.GOV.AU>
Date: 31 October 2019 at 12:31:28 pm AEDT
To: Martin Foley <Martin.Foley@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Cc: "Ltapinos@moreland.org.au" <Ltapinos@moreland.org.au>, "Danae.Bosler@yarracity.vic.gov.au" <Danae.Bosler@yarracity.vic.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Meeting request - Census 2021 questions

Dear Minister Foley,

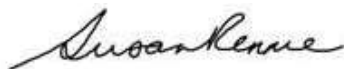
I write on behalf of the Mayors of Moreland, Yarra and Darebin.

We are seeking a meeting with you as the Minister for Equality to discuss recent indications that the 2021 census may not include questions relating to gender identity, intersex status and sexual orientation, and the scope for advocacy on this matter to the federal government. We are keen to discuss with you what the Andrews government may be doing or propose to do to support the inclusion of these questions, and also the scope for working together to achieve the inclusion of these questions.

As representatives from three Victorian local government areas with significant populations of LGBTIQ residents, we are extremely concerned at the prospect of the continuation of the current data vacuum and implications for informed planning, funding and provision of services to these local communities. We also note that this data is essential to addressing the significant health, wellbeing and inclusion disparities which LGBTIQ people connected to our municipalities experience.

Please contact my Executive Officer, S47F on S47F if you would like to meet or discuss the above.

Sincerely,



Councillor Susan Rennie
Mayor



Cr. Susan Rennie
 Councillor | Rucker Ward
 PO Box 91, Preston VIC 3072
 M [REDACTED] S47F
 Contact Council darebin.vic.gov.au/contactus



Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners and custodians of this land and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

CC
 Cr Lambros Tapinos – Mayor, Moreland City Council
 Cr Danae Bosler – Mayor, Yarra City Council

=====
 =====
 Disclaimer: This communication is intended only for the person or entity to which it is addressed and may contain confidential and/or privileged material. Any review, retransmission, dissemination or other use of, or taking any action in reliance on, this communication by persons or entities other than the intended recipient is prohibited. If you received this in error, please inform the city of Darebin immediately by return email and delete the material including all copies from the computer. The City of Darebin makes no express or implied representation or warranty that this electronic communication or any attachment is free from computer viruses or other defects or conditions which could damage or interface with the recipient data, hardware or software. This communication and any attachment may have been modified or otherwise interfered with the course of transmission,
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Office of the Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000068

Cr. Susan Rennie
Mayor, City of Darebin
PO Box 91
PRESTON VIC 3072
MAYOR@DAREBIN.VIC.GOV.AU

Dear Cr. Rennie

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 November 2019, originally directed to the Victorian Minister for Mental Health, Equality and Creative Industries, concerning topics for the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to the Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer as the minister responsible for this matter and he has asked me to respond on his behalf.

The Census is the largest and one of the most important statistical collections undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Information from the Census helps governments, businesses and not for profit organisations across the country make informed decisions. It improves the accuracy of population estimates for Australia. It informs decisions on electoral boundaries and underpins funding to states, territories and local governments. It also informs decisions for services and infrastructure such as roads, childcare, hospitals and schools for every community in Australia.

The 2021 Census will include new topics on long-term health conditions and service in the Australian Defence Force. These new topics were recommended by the ABS following extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the community.

Local level data on long-term health conditions will improve health service planning. While the ABS already collects survey data on health conditions, inclusion of this topic in the Census will strengthen our ability to improve health outcomes.

Collection of information on service in the Australian Defence Force will address data gaps and allow for a more detailed understanding of Australia's veteran community. It will assist the Government to improve services for veterans who do not currently engage with the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

S47F

Chief of Staff

S22

From: Attorney Correspondence
Sent: Monday, 6 January 2020 4:20 PM
To: Ministerial Correspondence Unit
Subject: MC20-003199 FW: LGBTI inclusion in 2021 Census [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: LGBTI Health Alliance LGBTI inclusion 2021 CensusAG - 13Dec19.docx

Categories: S47F

AG – RECEIVED			
Priority A (Date		Reply by AG	
Priority B		Reply by MIN	
Priority C		Sub Required	
Information Only		Reply by CoS	
Appr. Action		Reply by Dept	
NFA		Action Area	
Invitation		Allocated by	
Refer to	ABS (or Min Michael Sukkar's office)	Date Allocated	

Many thanks,

S47F | Departmental Liaison Officer

Office of the Hon Christian Porter MP | Attorney-General
 Minister for Industrial Relations
 Leader of the House

T: + S47F | M: S47F

From: Porter, Christian (MP) [mailto:Christian.Porter.MP@aph.gov.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 24 December 2019 1:26 PM
To: Attorney Correspondence
Subject: FW: LGBTI inclusion in 2021 Census

From: S47F [mailto:S47F@lgbtihealth.org.au]
Sent: Friday, 13 December 2019 11:40 AM
To: Porter, Christian (MP)
Subject: LGBTI inclusion in 2021 Census

Dear Attorney-General

Please find attached a letter from the National LGBTI Health Alliance in relation to the national importance of LGBTI inclusion in the 2021 Census.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you or your office.

Warm regards

S47F, Policy and Research Coordinator

Direct: S47F | Switch: 02 8568 1123 | Mobile: S47F | Postal address: S47F
2042 Email: S47F @lgbtihealth.org.au | Website: www.lgbtihealth.org.au

Preferred pronouns: He/Him/His

The Alliance acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia, their diversity, histories and knowledge and their continuing connections to land and community. We pay our respects to all Australian Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, and to Elders of past, present and future generations.



Procedures followed in 2016 Census

In 2016, there were a number of ways that people had available to report a non-binary response to sex. Information on the options available via both paper and online forms were distributed through stakeholder networks and available in the online help information. Details were also included in media talking points and field staff manuals.

Paper form – If requested, respondents were instructed to leave both male and female blank, and to provide more information in the space next to the response options.

3 Is the person male or female?
 • Mark one box for each person, like this: —

Male
 Female

WRITE RESPONSE HERE

Online form – the online form contained binary responses of male and female and an instruction for respondents to call the Census Inquiry Service if they wanted an alternative version of the form with non-binary response.

Is [Person name] male or female?
 • If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, it is possible to use a Census form to do so. Please call the Census Inquiry Service on 1300 214 531 for information on how to identify as other than male or female.

Male
 Female

Once a respondent had opted in, they were sent a log in for an alternative online form. The alternative was identical to the main Census online form, with the exception of the sex question which included three options of male, female and other (please specify).

Is [Person name] male, female or other?
[Less Information](#)

If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, please select 'Other'. The 'please specify' box can be used if the person wishes to provide more information.

Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population. All personal information provided in your Census form remains strictly confidential to the ABS.

Male
 Female
 Other (please specify)

A **live pilot** was also conducted with around 29,000 households being sent log in details for the alternative online form with non-binary responses. With the exception of those in the

pilot, there was no way to access the alternative online form without speaking to a call centre agent.

When processing 2016 Census data, all non-binary responses were coded randomly to male or female, and all output tables only reported binary sex. A series of special articles were released providing more information on non-binary responses.

The 2016 Census counted 1,260 sex and/or gender diverse people in Australia (190 from the pilot, and 1080 through other options). Some 35% of sex and/or gender diverse people indicated they were non-binary or another gender. A further 26% reported they were trans male, trans female or transgender.

TREASURY MINISTERIAL SUBMISSION

XX September 2019

PDR No. MS19-001997

Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

cc: Treasurer

APPROVAL OF CENSUS 2021 TOPICS AND CENSUS DATE

TIMING: 16 September 2019 to enable sufficient time for the Prime Minister's consideration and subsequent public consultation process.

Recommendation

- That you agree to collection of data on the topics on the Census 2021 as listed in Attachment A. This includes the addition of two topics: chronic health conditions and Australian Defence Force service (age 15 years and over); and the removal of one topic - household internet access.

Agreed/Not Agreed

- That you sign the attached letter to the Prime Minister seeking approval of the Census 2021 topics set out in Attachment A; seeking authority to make regulations under the *Census and Statistics Act 1905* to amend the prescribed Census topics and to prescribe that the next Census be held on 10 August 2021.

Signed/Not Signed

Signature:

KEY POINTS

- The next Australian Census of Population and Housing is planned for 10 August 2021. Census content needs to be finalised by April 2020 to allow for adequate preparation including printing of paper forms. (See timeline in additional information).
- Topics authorised to be collected on the Census are prescribed in the Census and Statistics Regulation.
- We recommend that the topics collected on the 2021 Census remain largely the same as the current Regulation with the following changes:
 - addition of a topic on chronic health conditions;
 - addition of a topic on Australian Defence Force service (age 15 years and over); and
 - removal of the current topic on household internet access.
- The overall recommended content for the 2021 Census is at Attachment A.
- The recommended changes aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflect current information needs, balanced with consideration of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. A public

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consultation process and program of qualitative testing have informed recommendations for change to Census topics.

- Subject to your approval of the proposed changes to the Census topics we recommend that you write to the Prime Minister seeking approval for the proposed Census 2021 topics, approval to make the changes to the current Regulation and approval to make a Proclamation specifying the date of the next Census as 10 August 2021.
- Subject to the Prime Minister's approval, an exposure draft and explanatory material would undergo a four week public consultation process before being finalised and the Regulation presented to the Executive Council for approval. The changes to the Census and Statistics Regulation would then be tabled in both Houses of Parliament and are subject to a 15 day sitting day disallowance period.

Ian Beckett
A/g Division Head
Macroeconomic Modelling and Policy
Division
Ext: 02 6263 3212

Contact Officer: S47F Ext: S47F

Consultation: Law Design Office, Australian Bureau of Statistics

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following table details the critical dates.

16 Sept 2019	Minister's decision on Census topics and Government approval process
30 Sept 2019	Prime Minister's response
16 Sept 2019	Commence drafting Regulation and Proclamation of Census date
By January 2020	Finalise exposure draft of regulation and explanatory materials for consultation
By early February 2020	Finalise 4 week consultation process for regulation
Feb 2020	Finalise instruments, Minister's approval and lodgement with ExCo
March 2020	Instruments considered by ExCo
March 2020	Instruments tabled in each house of parliament for a 15 sitting days disallowance period
31 Mar 2020	Census paper form finalised for quality assurance prior to printing
Jun 2020	Census paper form printing commences
Nov 2020	Census digital channel form finalised
Mid 2020	Final Census content published by ABS
Aug 2021	Census night

ATTACHMENT A

Proposed topics for inclusion in the 2021 Census

[Attachment A in ABS MS19-00039 to be updated by the ABS to reflect as set out in MinSub. recommendation box]

[Draft letter to PM]

I am writing to seek your approval of the topics authorised to be collected on the next Australian Census of Population and Housing (the Census). I am also seeking your authority to make a Regulation to prescribe the topics and authority to make a Proclamation specifying the date of the next Census as 10 August 2021.

The *Census and Statistics Act 1905* provides that the topics authorised to be collected on the Census may be prescribed by Regulation. Regulations can prescribe the matters on which topics may be covered in the Census. The Statistician is authorised to set questions within the parameters of the Regulation.

I recommend that the topics prescribed for the 2021 Census remain largely the same as the current Regulation with the following changes:

- addition of a topic on chronic health conditions;
- addition of a topic on Australian Defence Force service (age 15 years and over); and
- removal of the current topic on household internet access.

The overall recommended content for the 2021 Census is at [Attachment A](#).

These recommended changes aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with consideration of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. A public consultation process and program of qualitative testing have informed recommendations for change to Census topics.

The addition of a topic on chronic health conditions would provide demographic information about people diagnosed by a doctor or nurse with selected health conditions. The addition of a topic on Australian Defence Force service (for people age 15 years and over) recognises the distinct challenges faced by service personnel and would enable the targeting of services such as health care and financial support. The removal of the current topic on household internet access recognises growth in internet access outside the home and that the prevalence of personal devices makes the current topic of household internet access less useful and relevant.

Subject to your approval, an exposure draft Regulation and explanatory material setting out the proposed topics for the Census 2021 would undergo a four week public consultation process before being finalised and the Regulation presented to the Executive Council for approval. The changes to the Census and Statistics Regulation would then be tabled in both Houses of Parliament and are subject to a 15 day sitting day disallowance period.

I seek your response by 30 September 2019 to enable the Census content to be finalised by April 2020 to allow for adequate preparation including printing of paper forms.

If any officer of your Department wishes to discuss these matters, please contact Ian Beckett, Acting Division Head, Macroeconomic and Modelling Division on 02 6263 3212.

MHAT

ATTACHMENT A

Proposed topics for inclusion in the 2021 Census

[Attachment A in ABS MS19-00039 to be updated by the ABS to reflect as set out in MinSub. recommendation box]



The Hon xxxxx MP
Assistant Treasurer

cc: The Hon xxxxxxx MP, Treasurer
xxxxxxxxx, Secretary to the Treasury

Recommendations for change to 2021 Census topics

Timing: <delete inapplicable> Routine or Urgent – response required by

MB19-XXXXXX

Commented [TD1]: Highlighted components to be completed after draft is agreed

Recommendation:

1. That you provide initial approval for collection of data on the topics to the 2021 Census as listed in attachment B.

Approved **Not approved**

2. That you note that this includes collection of data on the following topics in the 2021 Census, which were not collected in 2016

- a. Chronic Health conditions **Noted**
- b. Australian Defence Force service (15 years and over) **Noted**

3. That you note that this includes removal of collection on data on the following topics that were collected in the 2016 Census

- a. Household internet access **Noted**
- b. Motor vehicles garaged **Noted**

4. That you advise your views on collection of the following potential topics in the 2021 Census. These would be new topics in 2021

- a. Gender identity **Yes, collect** **No, don't collect**
- b. Sexual orientation **Yes, collect** **No, don't collect**

5. That you approve the process for finalising changes to Census topics be through an Exchange of Letters, not Cabinet consideration.

Approved **Not approved**

Comments:

.....

.../.../....

Signature

Date

Commented [TD2]: David, it occurs to me that we need to give the Minister visibility of the totality of topics to be collected – he needs to see the whole package. I've pulled out the specific recommendations as you wanted, although I've made them for noting, given Rec 1. Also, someone else will have to fiddle with formatting, including the boxes – it's beyond my Word skills.

Recommendations

1. In advance of each 5 yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing (the Census) the Government makes a decision on Content of the Census. The result of this process is creation of a regulation outlining when the next Census is to be held and some aspects of its conduct, including the list of topics on which information is to be collected from the Australian public (the Census content).
2. The next Census is planned for 10 August 2021. Finalising content by March 2020 at the latest is necessary to allow for various aspects of Census preparation, including printing of paper forms. Starting the approval process now will allow sufficient time.
3. Therefore ABS is seeking the Minister's approval to proceed with the formal process for implementing changes to 2021 Census content via an exchange of letters and approval via the Prime Minister and Executive Council.
4. ABS has engaged in extensive consultation and some testing of possible Census topics.

5. Determining which topics should be asked in a Census requires choices between competing alternatives. Assessment criteria for inclusion of a topic are that:
 - a. It is of national importance
 - b. There is a need for data from a Census of the whole population
 - c. The topic can be accurately collected in a form which the household completes themselves
 - d. The topic would be acceptable to Census respondents
 - e. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic in the following Census
 - f. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the data need.
6. The ABS recommends that the topics collected on the 2021 Census remain as per the current regulation with the exception of the following changes:
 - a. Add a topic on chronic health conditions
 - b. Add a topic on Australian Defence Force service (15 years and over)
 - c. Remove household internet access
 - d. Remove motor vehicles garaged.
7. A Government decision concerning the inclusion of topics on gender identity and/or sexual orientation in the 2021 Census is also requested. While not assessed as strong a priority as the other new topics, the ABS acknowledges a need for information on gender identity and sexual orientation. Initial testing provides some indications that:
 - a) Information on either of these topics will be able to be collected with enough accuracy to be fit-for-purpose overall, although is unlikely to yield reliable estimates at very small areas of geography
 - b) these questions are unlikely to adversely affect willingness to respond to the Census overall or reduce data quality. It should be noted that these questions would be asked for persons over 15 years of age and allow for a 'prefer not to answer' option. The impact will be more thoroughly tested in October 2019 see paragraph 8.
7. 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 options in addition to Male and Female. This will not need to be made explicit in the regulation.
3. All of the topics noted in the recommendations above are discussed in further detail in **attachment A**.

Reasons

4. The Census of Population and Housing 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. However, 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 requested changes aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with considerations of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data.

Commented [TD3]: Paragraph numbering is stuffed from here on in – fix up when closer to final

5. Recommendations for change to Census topics have been informed by a public consultation process and a program of qualitative testing. Held between 3 April and 30 June 2018, the public consultation invited interested parties to contribute their views. 450 submissions were received from government agencies, private and not-for-profit sectors and from members of the public. A summary of results from the public consultation was published in November 2018 in *Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021*.
6. Cognitive testing was used to assess the respondent acceptance of the new topics proposed. Further research has included internal assessments of statistical impact, operational feasibility and efficiency of processing new topics, as well as consideration of findings from international testing and development of similar topics.
7. A substantial field test will be held in October 2019 to provide quantitative assessment of the proposed new topics. Testing of all proposed new topics, including sexual orientation and gender identity, will be included in this field test. If these topics are not included in the changes for 2021 Census, analysis of their performance will still be of value for future Census consideration and collection in other ABS surveys.
8. 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.
9. New topics raised during public consultation which are not recommended following initial testing and consideration of risks involved in implementation are:
 - Journey to education
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
 - Smoking status
 - Improved household and family measures (including shared care of children).
10. A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity topic is not recommended, due to indigenous community concerns, but changes will be implemented to improve acknowledgement in the current questions on ancestry and main language spoken at home. There will also be extensive work on strategies for supporting and encouraging Census participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which is subject to the ABS budget proposal for MYEFO.
11. The need for data on smoking status was deemed less than those on the proposed topics for inclusion, and data on journey to education and household and family measures proved too complex and expensive to collect in a Census setting.
12. Removing topics that have decreased value allows for new topics to be added without increasing the perception of burden. On the basis of reduced need compared with previous Census cycles these topics are recommended for removal from the 2021 Census:
 - the number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling; and
 - access to the internet at the dwelling

Risks and sensitivities

13. The impact of events during 2016 Census means that there is heightened risk of attention to changes being made in the 2021 Census. While this risk may be focused more on the technological performance of the 2021 Census, the impact of other changes may be amplified. The personal nature of the package

of proposed new topics is noted in this context and the government may not want to progress any controversial topics at this time. Community support will be essential to high response rates and good quality data.

Commented [TD4]: David asked for this addition explicitly.

14. There is an acknowledged risk that there may be public reaction to topics on gender identity and sexual orientation. Initial testing locally and internationally on both topics has not found this type of reaction significant enough to impact on response rates or quality of data. The field test in October will provide further evidence on this matter, with results on acceptability of the new topics available by <<insert month and year>> and allow ABS and the government to plan carefully for public reactions – which will occur whether questions on these topics are included or not. Note, however, that decisions on inclusion of these topics is required before data from the October test will be available.

Commented [TD5]: David asked for this too.

15. The ABS has consulted regularly with a number of countries to learn from their research and development on these topics. At this point in time, no countries have included questions on gender identity or sexual orientation on their Census. However, a number of other countries have been exploring these topics, and some have approved the inclusion of gender and orientation in their next Census. Details on the performance of these topics in a live Census will not be available prior to finalisation of topics for the 2021 Census in Australia.

16. Additional communication strategies will be employed at appropriate times to alleviate privacy concerns and to inform of the need for the topics and potential uses of the data. These will involve leveraging support of advocates and stakeholders requesting the topics to help inform how the data will be of value. These additional Communication initiatives are also included in the MYEFO proposal.

Process for approval

17. Senior officials from the ABS, including the Australian Statistician, are available to discuss the issues raised in this briefing with you.

18. Topics authorised to be collected on the Census are prescribed in the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Changes have not been made to the topics on the *Census and Statistics Regulation* since 2006.

19. Upon the Minister's approval, the ABS has been advised by Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet that the most expedient process for changing the Census topics is with an exchange of letters with the Prime Minister. This process would include a four week consultation and approval by the Prime Minister. This would be followed by presentation of changes to the Executive Council and tabling of changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation* in both houses of Parliament. This approach would need approval by the Cabinet Secretary.

20. The ABS has been advised that a discussion with Cabinet is not essential and this is at the Minister's discretion noting that this would add time to the overall process of approval.

David W. Kalisch
July 2019

Attachment B Proposed topics for inclusion in the 2021 Census

The following table is a mock-up of how all changes would be represented in the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Shaded items represent changes or additions.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex (non binary option)
Date of birth or age last birthday
Relationship to the other persons, if any, who spend the Census night in the same accommodation
Present marital status
Address of usual residence
Address of usual residence 1 year before the Census day
Address of usual residence 5 years before the Census day
Religion or religious denomination
Citizenship
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
Ancestry
Country of birth
Country of birth of each parent
For a person not born in Australia—the year of the person’s first arrival in Australia
Languages spoken at home
For a person who speaks a language other than English at home—their proficiency in speaking English
Present attendance at an educational institution, including the type of institution attended (if any)
Chronic health conditions (new topic)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age, the following:
(a) the highest level of primary or secondary school completed;
(b) educational qualifications;
(c) labour force status;
(d) income;
(e) domestic activities;
(f) the provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person;
(g) the provision of care to a child, without pay;
(h) voluntary work through an organisation or group
(x) Australian defence force service (new topic)

For a person who is not less than 15 years of age and was employed (including self-employed) during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following:
(a) status in employment during that week;
(b) occupation during that week;
(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;
(d) the main kind of business or industry carried on, or service provided, by that undertaking during that week;
(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;
(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;
(g) the mode of travel to work by the person on the Census day;
(h) if the person owns a business, the total number of persons who are employed by the business
The need for assistance with, or the supervision of another person for, any of the following activities (including the reason for the need):
(a) self-care;
(b) body movement;
(c) communication
For a female who is not less than 15 years of age—the number of children to whom she has given birth
Statistical information for the Census—household accommodated on the Census night in a private dwelling
The address on the Census night
For a person who is usually a member of the household but is absent from the household accommodation on the Census night, the following:
(a) name;
(b) sex;
(c) date of birth or age last birthday;
(d) student status;
(e) relationship to other members of the household;
(f) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
The right, title or interest of the household in the household's accommodation
The number of bedrooms in the dwelling
The rent or loan repayments payable by the household for its accommodation
If the dwelling is rented—the nature of the person or body to whom rent is paid
The number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling (remove topic)
Access to the internet at the dwelling (remove topic)

Statistical information for the Census—private dwelling
The structure
The location
The status of a person in the dwelling
Statistical information for the Census—dwelling other than a private dwelling
The classification of the dwelling by reference to its purpose
The status of a person in the dwelling
The address of the dwelling
The name (if any) of the dwelling
The number of persons resident in the dwelling

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Add new topic - Chronic health conditions

Topic definition

This topic measures people diagnosed by a doctor or nurse with selected health conditions. The specified health conditions have been determined in consultation with key stakeholders based on prevalence and consistency with other health surveys. There is scope to review this list of conditions in future cycles of the Census as the need arises. The topic would provide demographic information about people with the conditions listed as well as detail on people diagnosed with multiple conditions.

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 ABS' 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 sets collected by other Government agencies.

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

Practical 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. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive, and therefore may result in dissatisfaction from some stakeholders and advocacy groups.

Chronic health conditions data is not available from alternative administrative data sources such as Medicare data or the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The chronic health conditions question has tested well, and the participants have been able to identify their condition(s) from the response options provided. While early testing has not shown any sensitivities in relation to this question, this will be further evaluated through a large scale field test in late 2019.

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Add new topic – Australian Defence Force Service

Topic Definition

For all persons aged 15 years or older, collect current and/or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular and/or reserve).

Data or policy needs

A range of published health studies show that ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) members have distinct characteristics and health 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. Surveys estimate the population of ADF veterans at 3-5% of people aged 18 years and over.

The key agency advocating for this topic was the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA), with support from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group. Support was also provided by the Returned and Services League of Australia. 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 and found 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 data gaps and allow for a more detailed understanding of Australia's veteran and Defence community.

The Department of Defence did not make a submission, but they have indicated their support for the topic and question proposed. In addition, there has been mainstream media coverage supporting the inclusion of this topic, as well as bipartisan letters of support from ministers at state and federal levels.

Practical 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.

There have been no major concerns identified through participant 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.

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Remove topic – Household internet access

The 2016 Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions and engagement with key stakeholders suggested that growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other personal devices rendered the current question collecting *household* internet access as less relevant.

Some stakeholders, namely Department of Communication and the Arts, and Infrastructure Australia, were keen to explore other technology based concepts to collect on the Census. Some examples include topics on individual internet access and use, rather than household based access. Suggestions included measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy to understand the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. One of the main values of Census data is seeing change overtime to a constant topic. While these examples are interesting concepts, the fast pace of technological change makes it difficult to derive value from collecting a technology based topic every 5 years on the Census. In addition, stakeholders were not able to articulate a strong data need or policy driver for the inclusion of these topics.

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Remove topic – Motor vehicles garaged

Motor vehicles garaged is recommended for removal from the 2021 Census as there are other potential sources that would meet some of the data needs, and it will reduce respondent burden in regard to the number of overall topics collected.

Discussions over the past two Census cycles have noted the intention to remove the topic asking the number of motor vehicles garaged at the dwelling on Census night. The topic has decreased in relevance compared to other Census topics and administrative data sources may provide this information.

Submissions were received from the Australian Transportation Data Action Network (ATDAN) which comprises representatives from all Commonwealth, state and territory transport agencies, as well as the Australian Local Government Association. ATDAN is co-chaired by the ABS and the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) under the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. ATDAN representatives supported retaining this topic.

The ABS is currently investigating options to expand on the data from the Motor Vehicle Census to include the location where vehicles are garaged. This project is currently working with NSW registration data. It will then expand to see if this can be applied in other states and territories. While it won't be a complete replacement of Census data, it will potentially make this alternative source of data more valuable.

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Change existing topic - Non-binary sex

Topic definition

The sex topic is currently included on the *Census and Statistics Regulation* and is asked of all persons. Sex (biological) is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance and is used in generating population estimates, which are important denominators for a wide range of reporting and analysis.

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.

Data or policy needs

The current sex question with binary response options of male and female cannot be answered accurately by people who are neither male nor female. They may feel excluded or discriminated against by the question. 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 requirement for this change follows the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*, established by the Attorney General's Department to complement changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*. 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.

There were no submissions in support of maintaining a binary response option for sex, however engagement with demographers has emphasised the importance of binary data for population statistics (requiring a methodological allocation of the third category to the main two binary options for this purpose).

Practical 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. Two options for this question will be tested in the large scale field test in late 2019 to determine which question would be more acceptable to the Australian public, while minimising risk to collecting other Census data.

DRAFT IN CONFIDENCE

Potential topic – Gender identity

Topic definition

For all persons aged 15 years or older, this topic collects their gender identity. Response options would include a list of predefined terms, a write in to indicate a different gender, as well as a 'prefer not to say' option.

Data or policy needs

Stakeholders have identified a need for data from the Census on trans, non-binary or gender fluid populations in Australia. Stakeholders note that there is a significant lack of data available on LGBTI people. 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. The trans, non-binary or gender fluid populations are seen as vulnerable with studies available showing significant higher risk to the health and well-being of these groups.

A key data driver for the collection of gender would be to inform service providers, such as Departments 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.

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.

While there is the potential to ask gender identity in future surveys, such as the National Health Survey, should it proceed, and General Social Survey there is no large scale source of data on gender identity currently available.

Practical implications

Based on small scale testing, the topic can be collected with relative ease. While the question created confusion in some test respondents it generally did not detract from their ability or willingness to complete the Census overall. 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.

There would need to be consideration around output of data from this variable, reporting of non-binary responses may not be possible for small geographic areas or small population

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groups due to confidentialisation. Options to produce state and territory level data are going to be explored further.

There are noted sensitivities and potential risks with asking the gender identity of the wider population. These issues will be evaluated further through a large scale field test.

Further, there are a wide range of views in Australian society on this topic and whether the topic is included or not in the Census, the decision will garner public comment and debate. This will need to be carefully navigated by the ABS and Government in order to ensure the highest possible response rate to the Census overall.

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Potential topic – Sexual orientation

Topic definition

For all persons aged 15 years or older, this topic requests the sexual orientation a person identifies with. Response options would include a list of predefined terms, a write in to indicate a different identifier, as well as options for 'don't know' or 'prefer not to say'.

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.

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, Departments 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.

While there is there the potential to ask about sexual orientation in future surveys, such as the National Health Survey, should it proceed, and General Social Survey there is no large scale source of data on this topic currently available.

Practical 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.

There are, however, noted sensitivities and potential risks with asking the sexual orientation of the wider population. These include lack of trust in government by respondents and

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privacy concerns which could reduce the accuracy of the data. These issues will be evaluated further through a large scale field test.

The overall quality of the data collected and its ability to be reported at small area level remains under investigation. As some orientations reported would have small numbers, consideration would need to be made about what output is disseminated in order to manage confidentialisation issues.

Further, there are a wide range of views in Australian society on this topic and whether the topic is included or not in the Census, the decision will garner public comment and debate. This will need to be carefully navigated by the ABS and Government in order to ensure the highest possible response rate to the Census overall.

2021 Census Content Workshop

SES Discussion - 18 February 2019

In confidence

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Informing Australia's important decisions



Topic approvals

- ▶ Mar 2019: Topic recommendations to SRO, Census Executive Board and Statistician
- ▶ May 2019: ASAC
- ▶ June 2019: Discussion with Minister post election
- ▶ Aug 2019: Cabinet Submission
- ▶ Oct 2019: Table in both houses of Parliament

Question testing

- Qualitative testing:
 - Nov 2018 Focus groups
 - Dec 2018 - Mar 2019 Initial cognitive interviews
 - Apr - Jun 2019 Refining cognitive interviews
 - Jul – Dec 2019 IHF, SSF
- Quantitative testing:
 - Oct 2019 Field test
 - (Remote test)

Recommendation framework

Submission assessment criteria

Recommendation framework



Topics for discussion



Chronic health conditions

Topic Definition	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Add new topic to the 2021 Census</p> <p>This topic would be of value to a range of stakeholders and could benefit a large portion of the population with various chronic health conditions.</p> <p>There do not appear to be significant concerns about accuracy, acceptability or operational feasibility of collecting this topic.</p>

Journey to education

Topic Definition

For all persons, currently attending an educational institution:

- a) the name and address of the educational institution
- b) the mode of travel to the educational institution on the Census day

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer

Do not add new topic to 2021 Census

There is strong demand for this topic within the transport and infrastructure planning sector. There is also interest from the education sector.

The topic is likely to create additional respondent burden, and require significant investment and resourcing. There is also potential risk to delivery of other changes in the Census program as implementing this topic will require a wide range of expertise and effort.

This topic should not be recommended for inclusion on the 2021 Census without a strong assessment of risk and unless additional funds are available.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity

Topic Definition	For all persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, more detail on their cultural identity in terms of identification with their clan/mob/nation, ancestry and main language spoken at home.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census. Make changes to language and ancestry questions to improve relevance for this community.</p> <p>The cultural identity topic has been assessed as not meeting data needs and the respondent sensitivities are likely to impact the quality of response. The operational cost of implementing this topic would also be high. Changes will be explored for language and ancestry to increase inclusiveness, as well as investment into other strategies to improve participation.</p>

Australian Defence Force service

Topic Definition	For all persons aged 15 years or older, collect current or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular or reserve).
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census. 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.

Smoking status

Topic Definition	For all persons aged 15 years or older, collect current and previous smoking status.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</p> <p>There is strong demand for a health related topic, but the chronic health conditions topic is preferred and has broader data value.</p> <p>If required, the smoking topic could be implemented with relative ease and low risk.</p>

Household/family relationships

Topic Definition

Collects relationships between a primary member of the household with other members. This is used to define household and family composition. Expansions would explore additional dynamic family structures and identification of shared care arrangements for children.

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer

Do not add to this topic or change the current collection approach. Explore opportunities through processing to enhance the data available.

Do not add shared care of children as a new topic.

This topic is extremely complex with a single collection question used to derive and output a range of variables. Improvements in processing for family coding systems are required and the risk of statistical impact from changing the collection approach is considered too high to proceed. The review of systems will be used to explore ways to better meet stakeholder needs, with the potential for expansion of this topic to be explored in future cycles.

Sex with non-binary response

Topic Definition	For all persons, collect sex with non-binary response options.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Change sex topic to allow reporting non-binary response options.</p> <p>The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender were introduced in 2013 to recognise changes to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 to introduce new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. The guidelines requires that collection of sex or gender for statistical purposes should provide the option to select non-binary response options (male, female and another third option).</p> <p>2016 Census introduced special procedures for people to respond with options other than male and female. It is recommended that changes are made in the 2021 Census to continue to implement an approach to allow for a non-binary response option to sex.</p>

Topic Definition	For persons aged 15 years or older, collect gender identity.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Add new topic on gender identity for people aged 15 years and older (optional question)</p> <p>Collecting gender in addition to non-binary sex and sexual orientation would provide data on people who identify as LGBTI. This is a vulnerable group with specific needs for services inc. aged care, health and mental health.</p> <p>There is some sensitivity in asking this question and potential for inaccuracy in respondents' ability and/or willingness to answer the question, including on behalf of others. There are no real concerns in terms of operational feasibility but the impact on the overall quality of Census data from asking a personal question has to be considered.</p>

Sexual orientation

Topic Definition	For persons aged 15 years or older, current sexual orientation (optional question)
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic on sexual orientation for people aged 15 years or older (optional question) The considerations for sexual orientation are very similar to gender identity in terms of data need; sensitivity and acceptability of the topic; accuracy when reporting on behalf of others; and potential risk to overall data quality.

Topics for removal

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer

Remove the following two topics from the 2021 Census:

- **Household internet access**
- **Motor vehicles garaged**

Both topics have been assessed as no longer relevant to be collected on the Census or available in part through other sources.

Other changes

Topic	Change/s	Status
Need for assistance	Add use of aids or equipment and expand on outputs	Continue to explore
Highest non-school qualifications	Add year of qualification completion	Not recommended
Unpaid care of person due to disability, long term illness or old age	Collect of people under 15 years old	Continue to explore
Income	Change to size and reverse the order of response options	Continue to explore
Attendance at educational institution	Change response options for early childhood, home schooling and VET	Continue to explore
Type of tenure and landlord type	Change response options for social/community housing and subsidised rent/purchase	Continue to explore
Measures of homelessness	Change usual residence options to better capture couch surfing	Continue to explore instruction changes only
Country of birth of parents	Better guidance for same sex parents	Continue to explore instruction changes only
Main language other than English spoken at home	Better representation for sign language and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages	Continue to explore instruction changes only
Ancestry	Add response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry	Continue to explore

Possible combinations of new topics

Address, name

Non-binary sex

DOB, relationship, marital status,
Indigenous, usual address,
cultural diversity, need for
assistance

Chronic health conditions

Education attendance

Address, name

Non-binary sex

DOB, relationship, marital status,
Indigenous, usual address,
cultural diversity, need for
assistance

Chronic health conditions

Education attendance

Address, name

Non-binary sex

DOB, relationship, marital status,
Indigenous, usual address,
cultural diversity, need for
assistance

Chronic health conditions

Education attendance

Address, name

Non-binary sex

DOB, relationship, marital status,
Indigenous, usual address,
cultural diversity, need for
assistance

Chronic health conditions

Education attendance

Educational qualifications,
income, labour force

Australian Defence Force service

Unpaid work and care, children
ever born

Gender, sexual orientation

Persons temporarily absent,
dwelling questions

Educational qualifications,
income, labour force

Australian Defence Force service

Unpaid work and care, children
ever born

Gender

Persons temporarily absent,
dwelling questions

Educational qualifications,
income, labour force

Australian Defence Force service

Unpaid work and care, children
ever born

Persons temporarily absent,
dwelling questions

Educational qualifications,
income, labour force

Unpaid work and care, children
ever born

Persons temporarily absent,
dwelling questions

15+

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2021 Census Topic Review – Investigations for changes to topics (internal paper)

Outline

- Introduction (1/2 page)
- Background/context (1/2 page)
- Summary of draft recommendations (1 page) – note: progressing and potential not recommended
- Consultation, engagement and testing (1 page) – Summary of efforts to reach out and obtain views external to the ABS on the demand for topics, and the challenges in collecting them.
- Assessment overview (1 page) – Summary of the key elements used to assess the value and viability of implementing the topics in the 2021 Census. This section will introduce and explain the structure used to discuss the assessment of each topic.
- [data priority, sensitivity/community perspective – media/political]
- Topic assessments:
 - For each of the eight new topics emphasised in the November publication (1 – 2 pages)
 - For the two topics proposed for removal (1/2-1 page each)
 - For changes to current topics to meet user demand which do not require regulation changes (1/2 page each)
 - For significant topics/changes raised in consultation that were not prioritised (which may be raised in cabinet discussions) (1/2 page each)
- Summary of all existing topics to remain unchanged (1 page overview)
- Risk/change impact assessment – package of changes (1 page).

1 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).

2 Process for recommendation approval

The process for approval of recommendations is as follows:

- Detailed recommendations paper submitted to Senior Responsible Officer for approval mid-March 2019
- Paper submitted to Census Executive Board (28/3) for endorsement or modification
- Paper presented to ASAC in May 2019 for advice to Australian Statistician
- Australian Statistician approves ABS recommendations to Minister
- Minister briefing and approval of recommendations in mid/late Jun 2019
- Cabinet Submission drafting in Aug 2019 for presentation by Minister to Cabinet for approval by Sep 2019
- Regulations tabled in both Houses of Parliament to be passed between Oct 2019 – Mar 2020
- Census paper household form finalised in Mar 2020
- Final content published in mid-2020

3 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. 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. Ultimately the topics for the Census are decided by the Australian Government, informed by the ABS's recommendations.

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. For both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census there was no change in the list of topics, 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.

4 Overview of public consultation

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.

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.

A paper was published in early November 2018 outlining directions for new and existing topics resulting from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement, research and testing ([cat. no. 2007.0.55.001](#)).

During the public consultation, 450 submissions were received with 355 focused on changes or additions to Census topics. The other submissions suggested changes to standards, classifications or Census procedures and have been referred to the relevant sections of the ABS for further consideration.

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.

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.

Each submission was reviewed against the assessment criteria. The suggested changes for Census topics were also reviewed to determine if needs could be met from existing data sources.

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

- Chronic health conditions
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language assessment)
- Current or previous service in 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.

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
Journey to education	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	H	H	M	M	L	M	H
Australian Defence Force indicator	M	H	H	M	H	M	H
Smoking status	H	H	H	M	H	M	M
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
Household/Family composition improvements	H	H	M	M	M	H	H
Shared care of children	M	H	M	M	L	M	H

Changes to a number of existing topics were flagged for exploration based on consultation feedback. This includes changes related to disability assistance through aids and equipment, care provided by young carers, and better identification of participants in early childhood education. Two topics were identified for removal (household internet access, and motor vehicles garaged).

A number of new topics that generated interest were not considered a priority based on assessment against the criteria. These topics have not been further assessed 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
- Digital literacy or inclusion
- Multiple occupations and the gig economy.

A number of changes to existing topics were also not considered a priority for 2021 Census. This included changes to religion, occupation, industry of employment and volunteering.

Each of the topics noted above are discussed further throughout this report.

5 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
- further development and testing of the questions.

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, are able to be included in the 2021 Census.

The majority of testing and research has focused on building a better assessment of the 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 ensure that quality data can be obtained for the proposed new and amended topics. Large scale quantitative testing will also 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. This testing will continue beyond making the submission to government and will continue to 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 expands on the information that has been provided through testing and research beyond the initial consultation. 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.
- **Respondent implications** – This section further explores the acceptability criteria. It includes an outline of the types of questions required to collect the topic, and key findings from qualitative testing on the feasibility of collecting the topic (including sensitivities and potential public reaction).
- **Operational feasibility** – This further 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.

Other topics will draw from the above structure where necessary.

[section here that relates this framework to the assessment criteria]

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6 Recommendations to the Senior Responsible Officer

DRAFT Recommendations for the key topics noted in the Topic Directions paper are as follows:

Topic	Recommendation
Chronic health conditions	Add new topic
Journey to education	Do not add new topic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	Do not add new topic
Australian Defence Force indicator	Add new topic
Smoking status	Do not add new topic
Sex (non-binary response)	Change topic response options
Gender identity	Add new topic
Sexual orientation	? Add new topic?
Household/Family composition improvements	Do not change current topic
Shared care of children	Do not add new topic

DRAFT Other topics proposed for change are

Topic	Recommendation
Household internet access	Remove topic
Motor vehicles garaged	Remove topic
Need for assistance topics	
Educational qualifications	
Unpaid care	

[Section here describing overall impact of proposed change inc. risks of extent of change and discussion of adding a number of personal or more sensitive topics. To be drafted after meeting with SRO]

7 Individual Topic Assessments

7.1 Chronic Health Conditions

Topic Definition	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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 do not appear to be 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 to monitor change under the Health Reform Agreement, 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.

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 health conditions for response options. 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'.

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. There has not been any sensitivity noted in regard to 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 with no free text options is relatively straight forward, but multiple response outputs 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 combinations of conditions, prevalence of multiple conditions with numbers). 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. This impact will continue to be tested through cognitive interviews and the major test in October 2019.

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7.2 Journey to Education

Topic Definition	For all persons, currently attending an educational institution: a) the name and address of the educational institution b) the mode of travel to the educational institution on the Census day
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census There is strong demand for this topic within the transport and infrastructure planning sector. There is also interest from the education sector. The topic is likely to create additional respondent burden, and require significant investment and resourcing. There is also potential risk to delivery of other changes in the Census program as implementing this topic will require a wide range of expertise and effort. This topic should not be recommended for inclusion on the 2021 Census without a strong assessment of risk and unless additional funds are available.

Data or policy needs

In the 2016 Census there were approximately 10 million employed people who provided details of how they travel to work. There was estimated to be around 5 million students who travel for education. Travel for education makes up a significant portion of travel during peak hours. Used with journey to work data, this information would provide an improved understanding of traffic flows and transport patterns in towns and cities. This data would be used by transport planners across state/territory government and local councils to model infrastructure demand. Details of the educational institution attended for students could also provide information to improve the quality of data collected on the type of educational institution attended.

An inter-jurisdictional group comprising officials from Commonwealth, state and territory transport and infrastructure agencies, provided strong support for this topic as a key data need from the Census. This group (Australian Transportation Data Action Network – ATDAN) is chaired by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) within the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

The submissions from ATDAN also included consultation and support from the Departments of Education and Training (Commonwealth and State in QLD and WA) and Local Government Associations. Support from submissions also came from individuals, a range of local councils and their representatives, and TAFE NSW. Some state transport departments also made separate submissions to voice their additional support.

Respondent implications

This topic will apply to persons who indicate they are attending an educational institution (approx. 5.5 million in 2016). The name and address of the educational institution will be 1-2 questions with free text responses. The mode of transport will be similar to the mode of transport to work question currently asked, containing a list of responses and the ability to

mark all that apply. There will also be response options for study from home and not studying on Census day.

The Census form already collects one dwelling address, and four additional addresses per person (usual address, address one and five years ago, and workplace address). This topic will potentially add a fifth address per person. When completing a form for a family, a respondent may need to provide several addresses if they have a number of children attending school.

Testing has shown that respondents don't generally know the full address of educational institutions and they will either provide a guess, an incomplete address, or they will take additional time to look up the address. Names of educational institutions are also likely to generate abbreviated responses and various acronyms for the same institution. A tertiary student may also attend various campuses at the one institution and guidance in this situation would need to be provided.

Topics including addresses can also generate additional privacy concerns, however this has not yet been identified as a concern in testing.

Operational feasibility

Collecting the responses to produce this data requires up to three questions which could take nearly two pages on the paper form. Expansion of the paper form from 22 to 24 pages is being considered; this topic on its own would utilise most of this space. Collecting through the digital channel is not limited by this constraint and functionality could simplify it for respondents.

Journey to work data currently involves complex processing of addresses, destination zones and commuting distances. Coding addresses can require a large degree of manual intervention to ensure quality outputs. The amount of manual coding for incomplete addresses is likely to be higher for this topic as testing has shown most people will not know the street address of the educational institution and will use several names, abbreviations or acronyms for the institution name. In form coding for online forms may assist with improving the quality of responses and reducing processing, but needs further testing and development to determine the best way to implement.

The key information required to inform transport planning is the home address and educational institution address (to determine journey start and end points) and the mode of travel. The name of the educational institution will help with determining the address if insufficient information is provided. It is anticipated that there will be different degrees of non-response in providing the address for an educational institution. This could be related to a lack of knowledge of the address, or respondent fatigue if completing a form for a large family or household. Access to address lists of educational institutions will aid in the process of quality control, but it will still require a significant amount of manual intervention to provide quality data. Discussions are underway with the Department of Education and

Training to assess the availability and quality of lists covering all levels of education within scope of this topic. An indication of feasibility is expected by end February 2019.

Current journey to work processes could provide the template for implementing journey to education processing and outputs. Journey to work processing incurs significant cost and effort to produce output data. Adding journey to education will incur significant additional processing cost. This will require significant resources and there is some risk that even with additional funds, implementing a change of this scale will take expertise away from other Census program development which is needed for setting up for the current 2021 Census operations.

The journey to work topic provides detailed outputs with multiple modes of transport, origin and destination details and in 2016, interactive maps based on commuting distance. If the topic is included, there is potential to output similar detail as well as a combined commuting picture (combining journey to work and journey to education data). This would be very costly. Engagement with stakeholders may be required to determine the minimum viable product rather than invest in replicating the outputs for journey to work.

Statistical impacts

The potential for this additional set of questions creating address response fatigue also needs to be considered. Many of the addresses collected in the Census are critical for population estimates and projections, as well as providing journey to work data. If this topic was added, further testing would be required to assess potential for address fatigue having an impact on the quality of other addresses. The overall increase in respondent burden may adversely impact on overall Census response rates.

Further feedback focused on testing this set of questions with cognitive interviews is planned for early March. This round will include households with multiple members attending education institutions.

7.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language)

Topic Definition	For all persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, more detail on their cultural identity in terms of identification with their clan/mob/nation, ancestry and main language spoken at home.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census, make changes to language and ancestry questions to improve relevance for this community.</p> <p>The cultural identity topic has been assessed as not meeting data needs and the respondent sensitivities are likely to impact the quality of response. The operational cost of implementing this topic would also be high. Changes will be explored for language and ancestry to increase inclusiveness, as well as investment into other strategies to improve participation.</p>

Data or policy needs

The main driver for this new topic was to improve participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the quality of data on indigenous status which currently has a significant undercount. Submissions were received from the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet supporting the addition of a topic on identification with a clan/mob/nation as a means to improve the undercount, but there were not specific policy needs for the data from this topic. Through further engagement with stakeholders and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table, it was identified that they were concerned with how the data for this topic may be used. Potential misuse could include negative media reporting of “true aboriginality” and impact on land claims.

Submissions also noted support for improvements in the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language information to better understand barriers to participation in society.

Respondent implications

An additional question was tested including yes/no options and free text to identify clan/nation/mob. A number of participants raised concerns with providing accurate data for a write in response – they noted both concerns with accurate spelling, as well as not knowing the answer to this question.

Additional response options and/or instructions have been added to the current ancestry and main language(s) spoken questions. Early testing indicates the change to ancestry in particular is welcome. Further testing is planned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to improve and refine the language and ancestry topics.

Operational feasibility

Outputs for a new clan/nation/mob topic would be based on free text responses, so an input and output classification will need to be created. In addition, a free text response

would have a high processing burden. The potential for different spelling of responses will make coding to a classification difficult with a large amount of manual intervention likely, especially for the first cycle where this topic is introduced. This data item would potentially be difficult to output at small areas given the small population who would respond this question.

Output for ancestry and languages will use current classifications. Changes to the ancestry and main language questions will not require any processing or outputs over and above current procedures.

Statistical impacts

There is a large risk of non-response for the additional question due to sensitivities and concerns about how the data could be used. This may present a potential quality risk to indigenous status; if respondents cannot answer the new cultural identity question, they may be less likely to respond, or change their response, to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin question.

The inclusion of an additional response category for ancestry would yield more relevant data for this population group, who likely would have previously marked 'Australian'.

The inclusion of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language – specify response category caused some respondent confusion. In the 2016 Census, the interviewer administered Census form used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities included a mark response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language with a please specify option. It was found that less respondents used the 'please specify' option, decreasing the amount of detail available in outputs. This option is no longer being considered for the household form. Instead, additional instructional text to improve the write in response of an indigenous language will be tested. This will include assessing whether this will lead to a reduction in quality or detail for languages.

7.4 Australian Defence Force service

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular or reserve).
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census. 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 relative 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. 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. Potential alternative sources of this data have been assessed by the ABS and were found to be inadequate.

There has been some discussions in the media supporting this topic as an addition to the Census, as well as 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.

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.

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 this risk to be high. There is not expected to be an impact on overall response caused by this topic.

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7.5 Smoking Status

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and previous smoking status.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census There is strong demand for a health related topic, but the chronic health conditions topic is preferred and has broader data value. If required, the smoking topic could be implemented with relative ease and low risk.

Data or policy needs

While smoking rates continue to decrease, smoking is still a key contributor to chronic diseases in Australia. There is a need to identify smoking behaviours for small geographic areas and populations. This would allow for targeted preventative action, and the monitoring of health related conditions induced by smoking.

Key commonwealth agencies making submissions for this topic were the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, although both noted a preference for a chronic health topic, as a stronger need over a smoking status topic.

Respondent implications

The topic requires two questions asking for current smoking status and previous smoking status. The questions will be asked only of people aged 15 and over and will be placed later in the form due to potential sensitivity of the topic.

Smoking status questions have been tested through a number of rounds of cognitive interviews. Participants did not identify any concerns or sensitivities answering these questions, although if this topic progresses, further testing will be required to explore if there are concerns answering on behalf of others.

Operational feasibility

Data will be classified and output based only on the response options in the question. There is not expected to be any complexity in developing, processing and disseminating this topic. Quality assurance in editing would require some additional effort to set up business rules for edits (i.e.: when respondent's multi mark response categories).

National Health Survey data on smoking behaviour is available and may be of use for quality assurance of Census counts during processing.

Statistical impacts

There may be some non-response to this topic driven by people not wanting to disclose their smoking status to government. There may also be some concern with responding accurately for those under 18 years old (which is the legal age for purchasing cigarettes in Australia). As it is a personal topic, it may impact on overall response. If this topic is added,

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further testing will need to identify the scale of these quality concerns and changes to questions will need to be considered.

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7.6 Non-binary sex and/or gender identity

Topic Definition	For all persons, collect sex and gender with non-binary response options.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Collect existing sex topic with non-binary response options. Add new topic on gender identity for people aged 15 years and older (optional question)

Data or policy needs

Sex is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance and is used in generating population estimates as well as the denominator for reporting and analysis. There is concern and risk in any changes that could impact the quality of the sex data collected.

The intent of adding a third response option to the sex question is to improve the representation in the data collected. Some respondents are currently unable to accurately answer this question and may feel excluded or discriminated against.

The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender were established by the Attorney General's Department to complement the changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, which allows new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. *"The guidelines recognise that individuals may identify as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female, and that this should be reflected in records held by the government."* 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 need for inclusivity has the support of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Submissions in support of change to the current binary collection of sex came from Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Health (DoH), the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG), and a range of state departments, local government authorities and community and advocacy groups. Submissions specifically 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 sexual orientation question follows in the next section.

DSS and DoH noted an absence of data on LGBTI individuals to support delivery of services needed to improve social outcomes for these vulnerable groups. In particular examples of the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy and the National Mental Health and Suicide Plan were given.

Respondent implications

The sex question currently used in the Census does 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.

It is proposed that this question will be changed to ask specifically for sex and will offer a third non-binary response option. The third option is intended to provide a way for intersex people to identify, however stakeholders have cautioned that intersex people are also male or female and the third option will not be a complete representation of the population. The wording for the third response option will continue to be developed through consultation with stakeholders and testing with participants. 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.

It is also proposed that a gender identity question with non-binary response options is added to the Census. The question will only be asked of those over 15 years old and will be placed later in the form. Additional response options will be provided with a free text response for the final option. This question is intended to identify the trans, non-binary and gender fluid population. 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). Testing of gender identity will also focus on understanding of the difference with the topic of sex and the potential impact of confusion on responses.

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

Operational feasibility

[Section to be tidied up – general sense from Census operational managers is that both non-binary sex and gender identity require some work but are feasible; biggest concern is around sensitivity and statistical impact]

No problems with a third option for sex in terms of data matching from imputation team perspective. Linking would be roughly the same data. They said that ATO and Centrelink admin data all collects a third category (indeterminate/other/unknown), so this is consistent with their practices.

[Note characteristics of processing and outputs] May need to recode non-binary responses into binary category output as was done in 2016, but this was seen as unpalatable from a stakeholder perspective. Reporting of the non-binary response may not be possible for small geographic areas or small population groups. But options to produce state and territory level data is going to be explored further.

Will need rules based on multiple response and edits to determine valid responses.

There are consequences for PES to be included here – not insurmountable; they collected non-binary sex in 2016. Demography to make decisions about whether to use binary or non-binary sex in ERP. The latter would require a change to their current model.

Write in for gender identity would require additional capture and processing effort. Need to determine output classification based on free text responses. Could use the responses gathered from last Census to build upon and from GSS testing.

Use of the response to gender could potentially be used to impute a non-binary sex response to male or female if this direction is taken.

Statistical impacts

The biggest concern with including a non-binary sex response as part of mainstream procedures is the risk of inadvertent error or facetious responses reducing the quality of the male/female count which is critical to estimating the population.

Stakeholders have clearly outlined that a third response option for sex would not be considered representative of intersex individuals. They 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”. Responses may also be impacted by trust of government and privacy concerns, which will reduce the representative of results. The limitation of the data would not to be communicated on release, but there is the potential for misuse.

There is also some belief that providing non-binary options for sex and/or adding questions on gender identity, 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. International testing 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. ONS conducted a split sample test with and without questions on gender identity and sexual orientation. They did not find any impact on the overall response rate between the two samples.

The major test in October will apply a split sample approach to try and measure error associated with a non-binary sex option. It will also assess the potential for impact on response of adding more personal or sensitive questions. [the October test objectives will be informed by the direction discussed with the SRO and feedback from the Data Quality Specialist Working Group – this section will be updated]

7.7 Sexual orientation

Topic Definition	For persons over 15 years old, current sexual orientation
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic on sexual orientation for people aged 15 years and older (optional question)

Data or policy needs

The LGBTI population has been identified by the Commonwealth government as one of three key vulnerable groups in Australia, alongside the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Census currently collects data on the latter two population groups, however there is currently no national data currently collected about the LGBTI population to inform planning and measuring outcomes. Commonwealth and State/Territory policies and plans have been developed to facilitate improved outcomes and support to address the specific needs for LGBTI individuals in terms of health care, physical safety measures, mental health, aged care, suicide prevention, and to reduce outcomes of homelessness. To target and evaluate services, and to obtain an overall understanding of the size of the LGBTI population in Australia, demographic data about these communities is required at both high the broad and small areas. Key departments advocating for this data are Department of Social Services and Department of Health. There was also strong support from state and local government and community/advocacy groups. The Australian Human Rights Commission also supported the inclusion of this topic.

Collecting sexual orientation in addition to non-binary sex and gender identity would be needed to give the full picture of the LGBTI community.

Respondent implications

This topic requires a single question, with a pre-defined list of response options, and a free text option. The question will only be asked of people over 15 years old and will be placed later in the form due to the potential sensitivity of the topic to some people. The question will be listed as optional, and allow people to respond with 'don't know' or 'prefer not to answer'.

During testing, versions of this question have been received well by the target population. They are able to report their sexual orientation using the options provided, or the write in field. A small number of older, non-target population also responded to the question in testing.

The question used in testing needs further development but the response options were clear, and all so far were able and willing to provide a response.

Operational feasibility

[Section to be tidied up – general sense from Census operational managers is that sexual orientation is feasible; biggest concern is around sensitivity and statistical impact]

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.

An index can be drawn from the General Social Survey testing of this question, which would support coding of the write in field with limited cost associated.

There is currently a proposal to offer this 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

[Note risk of non-response for the question and potential impact on response to the Census as a whole – as described in sex/gender identity section]

The Census operational managers had concerns about the inclusion of a 'prefer not to say' option, raising that this might highlight that people do not have to answer other questions.

The placement of the question toward the end of the Census and being asked of only respondents 15 years and over, was supported. However, there was still a question of whether this could impact on a person filling in the form for multiple family members. It is expected that the potential for this effect can be uncovered in the October field test.

7.8 Households and family measures (including shared care of children)

Topic Definition	Collects relationships between a primary member of the household with other members. This is used to define household and family composition. Expansions would explore additional dynamic family structures and identification of shared care arrangements for children.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add to this topic or change the current collection approach. Explore opportunities through processing to enhance the data available.</p> <p>Do not add shared care of children as a new topic.</p> <p>This topic is extremely complex with a single collection question used to derive and output a range of variables. Improvements in processing for family coding systems are required and the risk of statistical impact from changing the collection approach is considered too high to proceed. The review of systems will be used to explore ways to better meet stakeholder needs, with the potential for expansion of this topic to be explored in future cycles.</p>

Data or policy needs

The Census produces many output variables that describe household and family composition and characteristics. These are derived through a complex coding process that uses relationship between members of the household, persons temporarily absent and registered marital status as inputs.

Data users provided feedback that being able to understand more complex family and household structures would assist in policy development and service delivery, particularly in the area of targeting payments to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The complex families identified included multigenerational family households; blended families; kinship care arrangements; and LGBTI households. A particular area of interest was being able to include children living in shared custody arrangements as part of the family in both their residences. This is important to understand the household economic resources in different family situations to inform social policy.

Key commonwealth agencies submitting on this topic were the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Treasury. There was also interest from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and various state and territory departments. DSS submitted that persons temporarily absent on Census night be matched back into their usual residence for more accurate household and family data in particular household income and equivalised household income.

A workshop was held with DSS, AIFS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and researchers to explore what data was needed for a more contemporary understanding of household and family composition. Based on the input data already collected, significant

additional value can be delivered by reviewing the family classification and coding principles.

Respondent implications

No changes to household and family composition were tested with respondents as operational feasibility constraints were identified concluding that changing the inputs of relationships and persons temporarily absent was not possible for the 2021 Census.

Collection of shared care of children data would require a change to the relationships and persons temporarily absent questions, in addition to a new question. Given the previous decision, question development didn't occur.

Some challenges to accurate and efficient family coding occur when the wrong person reports as 'person 1'. The beta phase of the digital channel development and the front of form work for the paper instrument will develop and test guidance to help the most appropriate respondent to be person 1.

Operational feasibility

Any change to input variables would require significant development of the processing system. This presents a major risk to the system which would need to be tested and substantial investment of resources to implement. This is not possible for 2021.

Household and family relationship inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations. Census Data Operations has mapped the family coding processes and is working with Household Characteristics & Social Reporting (HC&SR) to look for opportunities to improve outputs from the variables currently collected. The possibility of matching persons temporarily absent data will be considered as part of this work. HC&SR is also undertaking a review of the family and household composition standards.

Statistical impacts

Due to the complexity of use of family and household composition input variables, there is likely to be a considerable statistical impact on Census data. This hasn't been investigated, but will be for any proposed processing and coding changes.

An additional risk associated with implementing changes to collect shared care of children is that it may have an impact on the usual address concept and even if operationally feasible would need careful consideration of the data quality risk.

8 Topics for removal from the *Census and Statistics Regulation 2016*

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Remove the following two topics from the 2021 Census:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household internet access • Motor vehicles garaged <p>Both topics have been assessed as no longer relevant to be collected on the Census or available in part through other sources.</p>
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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. To consider adding new topics, topics that are no longer considered relevant were assessed and are recommended for removal.

8.1 Household internet access

The 2016 Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions suggested that with the growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access has less relevance.

Stakeholders suggesting changes to the question on household internet access included the Department of Communication and the Arts (DoCA) and Infrastructure Australia.

DoCA suggested replacing the current topic with another individual internet access and use-based question, including measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy to understand the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population. Infrastructure Australia was interested in the role of internet access in the changing nature of employment, with particular interest in the use of home internet connections for work from home arrangements. While these topics are considered important, they are too complex to be collected in the Census and the data need was not well articulated.

8.2 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. Stakeholders have noted a number of constraints with using administrative data sources as a replacement and noted that they would require further investment and development to get their sources to a state where they would be an adequate substitute.

Opposition to the removal of this topic included submissions from the Australian Transportation Data Action Network (ATDAN) which comprises representatives from all

Commonwealth, state and territory transport agencies, as well as the Australian Local Government Association. ATDAN is chaired by the head of the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) under the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. The submission notes that registry data can provide an approximate measure of the number of motor vehicles at small area level, but cannot presently provide the link to household demographic information provided by the Census which is required for existing urban travel models and to inform policy and planning. While some States noted that they would be able to work with a cycle where this question is only asked every ten years, others noted that the 5 year cycle was still necessary. Those willing to accommodate a ten year cycle raised it only in the context of having access to more detailed Journey to Education data available for planning.

Motor vehicles garaged is recommended for removal as there are other potential sources that would meet some of the data needs, and to manage respondent burden in regard to the number of overall topics collected. There will continue to be push from stakeholders to keep this topic and if removed, there will need to be clear messaging on why this decision was made.

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9 Other changes to current topics

Beyond the suggestions for new topics, submissions were also made for changes to existing topics. A number of changes were considered worthy of further investigation. Exploring changes to topics provide 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 in making a decision to change.

The following section outlines the changes being explored and the key agencies nominating for change. Investigation will continue via testing and engagement throughout 2019 for most topics. Recommendations have only been made on topics where the change in scope may require a change to the Census and Statistics Regulation, prompting an earlier decision on making the change. Topics that do not require regulation changes will be recommended and approved through the relevant Census Program streams.

9.1 Regulation change required

Some topic changes being explored will change the scope of how the topic is currently noted in the regulations. The topics this impacts are as follows:

Need for assistance – The need for assistance topic currently asks four questions which are used to derive a single output identifying persons with a need for assistance with core activities. While a number of changes or enhancements were suggested, many were not considered feasible to add to the current set of questions. Only the expansion of outputs and the incorporation of assistance through aids and equipment are being explored. It was noted by stakeholders that maintaining the time series for this topic is vital, so changes will only be made where the change is stronger value than the risk to time series. **(We are currently in discussions with the stakeholder to assess this trade off – status will be updated by next version of paper).**

Highest non-school qualifications – The Department of Education and Training were keen to collect year of completion of non-school qualifications to understand currency of completion. The topic is collected as pre/post 1998 for coding and classification purposes. This topic was tested in cognitive interviews. Respondents reported some problems with recall and accuracy. As this question would include free text, there is an additional effort in processing and coding that reduces the operational feasibility. This change is not recommended.

Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age – While there were a number of suggestions for additions to this topic, many were too detailed to implement. Among other requests, DSS suggested removing the age restriction on this question to get a measure of young carers (under 15 years old). Initial qualitative testing hasn't revealed any sensitivity with asking this question of younger respondents. This will continue to be explored in future testing. There are some operational challenges associated with where to position this question on the form as it currently sits with the

other three questions on unpaid work and care. This question suite is currently asked of respondents aged over 15 and separating them could have a statistical impact. This is being further explored and will be updated by the next version of this paper.

9.2 No regulation change required

Other changes to existing topics can be made without changing the scope of how it's currently represented in regulations. Of the submissions received, the following changes are being explored and will be considered depending on the outcome of quality impact assessments:

Income – Treasury suggested reviewing the income ranges used in this question to better align with current tax brackets. There were also requests made during engagement to use a write in response rather than selecting ranges. Income is a sensitive question with many respondents reporting concerns around privacy. A change to a write in response has been explored in cognitive testing. Respondents had difficulty answering and some suggested that they would have to look up their income. There was increased accuracy concerns when reporting on behalf of others. The cost and effort involved in processing and quality assuring a write in response is also higher than a question with response ranges. The impacts on quality, costs and burden mean that a write in response to income will not be pursued.

Attendance at an educational institution – Department of Education and Training and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group both asked for a review of this topic to try and better capture attendance at pre-schools, kindergartens and early childhood education. Changes are being explored in terms of the respondent's ability to understand the response categories and with consideration of the impact on the time series for this topic. There is unlikely to be any operational feasibility or overall statistical impact concerns with this change.

Type of tenure, Landlord type – DSS is seeking better alignment of Census data on social/community housing with administrative data. Stakeholders are also looking for details of when rent is subsidised or provided through affordable renting schemes to aid access to social housing. Changes to questions on tenure and landlord type are both being explored to consider if these data needs can be met through the Census. There is also consideration of linking administrative data to meet this need. Testing of these changes are planned in future rounds of cognitive interviewing.

Measures of homelessness - Usual residence at Census time, address 1 and 5 years ago – DSS and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) provided support for improving measures of homelessness especially among couch surfing youth. Submissions supported additions to questions on usual residence such as reasons for visiting, or a tick box for no usual address. As this topic is critical for estimating the distribution of the usually resident population, changes to instructions and support materials are being tested to try

and improve identification of couch surfers without risking the quality of this topic. The reasons for visiting question and tick box will not be recommended.

Country of birth of parents – Some support was noted for providing options if a person has same sex parents. Country of Birth or mother and father is important for the Department of Home Affairs in analysing citizenship, so only instructions have been reviewed to be more inclusive.

Main language other than English spoken at home / Proficiency in spoken English – Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Testing has shown that providing a write-in response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as well as a write-in box for 'other specify' was confusing to respondents. Additionally, allowing respondents to check Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without requiring a write in could reduce the reporting of a specific language. This occurred in the change to the 2016 Interviewer Household Form used in communities. Adding a write-in box specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will not be recommended. Instructional text to encourage respondents to write in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will be tested.

Deaf Australia also noted that current language in the questions were not inclusive of those using sign language. Changes have been tested to improve inclusiveness for those using sign language. This testing will continue.

Ancestry - Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry was raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Additional response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry are being tested as noted in the section on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity. This has performed well in cognitive testing and will be recommended for inclusion in the quantitative test.

10 Topics not being recommended for addition or change

A number of suggested changes, and new topic suggestions were not included in the topic directions publication. These were assessed as either being unsuitable or as lower priority compared to other topic suggestions. The topics which may be raised again in consultation and engagement as final decisions are made, have been listed below. Where relevant, the source or suggestions for change have been noted.

10.1 Changes to topics not being investigated

Religious affiliation - Submissions were received from a range of individuals, religious organisations and secular/no religion bodies suggesting an additional question on religious involvement to give a better picture of how actively people participate in their religious activities. There were also suggestions to expand the representations of some religions in the classification, and to move the 'no religion' response back to the end of the list of responses. Collecting information on religious affiliation is consistent with international Census practice and is better aligned with planning for services delivered by religious organisations. There continues to be suggestions regarding religion through general correspondence to the ABS and the topic can sometimes be of interest to the media. Key messages will be prepared to assist in responding to media and correspondents on the reasons for not making any further change to this question.

Number of children ever born – 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 people whose gender is not female may have given birth.

Work (including labour force status, status in employment, occupation and industry) – Treasury and a joint submission from Department of Jobs and Small Business, Comcare and the Fair Work Commission made suggestions for changes and enhancements to work topics. 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). There have been recent experimental estimates released by the ABS using LEED which may address some of the data needs raised by stakeholders.

Some submissions suggested a review of the occupation classification (ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations). While recognising this is desirable the ABS has decided not to undertake this review in the short term.

Unpaid work – voluntary work – There were suggestions from DSS and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group 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 is not being further explored for the Census. However, this information is available through the ABS General Social Survey.

10.2 New topic suggestions not being considered

Sources of income – A number of submissions were received suggesting the Census collect data on sources of income. This topic is not being proposed as the 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. 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.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation – DSS and local councils noted a need for measures of participation in NDIS against disability measures to help with planning and delivery of services. Based on the potential availability of this data from administrative sources that can be linked with Census data, this was not assessed as a priority topic for collection in the 2021 Census.

Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling - Where submissions in 2016 came from a range of sources including federal, state and local government and industry groups, there has been less demand for this topic in the 2021 Census consultation. 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.

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. Key agencies supported chronic health conditions over other health topics suggested in submissions.

Digital literacy or inclusion – As noted against the Household Internet Access topic, the Department of Communications and the Arts supported replacing household internet access with topics on personal internet access and use. This information would be to gain a better understanding of digital literacy or inclusion among vulnerable groups and the impact on

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social participation. While valuable, the data need was not well defined and the topic was too complex to collect adequately on the Census.

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11 DRAFT Changes to the Census and Statistics Regulation 2016

The following table is a mock-up of how all changes noted in this document would be represented in changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Shaded items represent changes or additions.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex
Date of birth or age last birthday
Relationship to the other persons, if any, who spend the Census night in the same accommodation
Present marital status
Address of usual residence
Address of usual residence 1 year before the Census day
Address of usual residence 5 years before the Census day
Religion or religious denomination
Citizenship
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
Ancestry
Country of birth
Country of birth of each parent
For a person not born in Australia—the year of the person’s first arrival in Australia
Languages spoken at home
For a person who speaks a language other than English at home—his or her proficiency in speaking English
Present attendance at an educational institution, including the type of institution attended (if any)
For a person attending an educational institution during the week during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following: (new topic)
(a) the name and address of the educational institution the person attended during that week; (new topic)
(b) the mode of travel to the educational institution by the person on the Census day; (new topic)
Chronic health conditions (new topic)
The provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person (changed scope to ask of everyone – not just 15 yo and over)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age, the following:
(a) the highest level of primary or secondary school completed;
(b) educational qualifications;
(c) labour force status;

(d) income;
(e) domestic activities;
(f) the provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person; (changed scope to ask of everyone – not just 15 yo and over)
(g) the provision of care to a child, without pay;
(h) voluntary work through an organisation or group
(x) Australian defence force service (new topic)
(x) smoking behaviour (new topic)
(x) gender identity (new topic)
(x) sexual orientation (new topic)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age and was employed (including self-employed) during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following:
(a) status in employment during that week;
(b) occupation during that week;
(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;
(d) the main kind of business or industry carried on, or service provided, by that undertaking during that week;
(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;
(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;
(g) the mode of travel to work by the person on the Census day;
(h) if the person owns a business, the total number of persons who are employed by the business
The need for assistance with, use of equipment or an aid , or the supervision of another person for, any of the following activities (including the reason for the need): (increase scope to include use of aids or equipment)
(a) self care;
(b) body movement;
(c) communication
For a female who is not less than 15 years of age—the number of children to whom she has given birth (potential change for inclusive language)
Statistical information for the Census—household accommodated on the Census night in a private dwelling
The address on the Census night
For a person who is usually a member of the household but is absent from the household accommodation on the Census night, the following:
(a) name;
(b) sex;
(c) date of birth or age last birthday;

(d) student status;
(e) relationship to other members of the household;
(f) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
The right, title or interest of the household in the household's accommodation
The number of bedrooms in the dwelling
The rent or loan repayments payable by the household for its accommodation
If the dwelling is rented—the nature of the person or body to whom rent is paid
The number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling (remove topic)
Access to the internet at the dwelling (remove topic)
Statistical information for the Census—private dwelling
The structure
The location
The status of a person in the dwelling
Statistical information for the Census—dwelling other than a private dwelling
The classification of the dwelling by reference to its purpose
The status of a person in the dwelling
The address of the dwelling
The name (if any) of the dwelling
The number of persons resident in the dwelling

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2021 Census Topic Review – Investigations for changes to topics (internal paper)

Outline

- Introduction (1/2 page)
- Background/context (1/2 page)
- Summary of draft recommendations (1 page) – note: progressing and potential not recommended
- Consultation, engagement and testing (1 page) – Summary of efforts to reach out and obtain views external to the ABS on the demand for topics, and the challenges in collecting them.
- Assessment overview (1 page) – Summary of the key elements used to assess the value and viability of implementing the topics in the 2021 Census. This section will introduce and explain the structure used to discuss the assessment of each topic.
- [data priority, sensitivity/community perspective – media/political]
- Topic assessments:
 - For each of the eight new topics emphasised in the November publication (1 – 2 pages)
 - For the two topics proposed for removal (1/2-1 page each)
 - For changes to current topics to meet user demand which do not require regulation changes (1/2 page each)
 - For significant topics/changes raised in consultation that were not prioritised (which may be raised in cabinet discussions) (1/2 page each)
- Summary of all existing topics to remain unchanged (1 page overview)
- Risk/change impact assessment – package of changes (1 page).

1 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).

2 Process for recommendation approval

The process for approval of recommendations is as follows:

- Detailed recommendations paper submitted to Senior Responsible Officer for approval mid-March 2019
- Paper submitted to Census Executive Board (28/3) for endorsement or modification
- Paper presented to ASAC in May 2019 for advice to Australian Statistician
- Australian Statistician approves ABS recommendations to Minister
- Minister briefing and approval of recommendations in mid/late Jun 2019
- Cabinet Submission drafting in Aug 2019 for presentation by Minister to Cabinet for approval by Sep 2019
- Regulations tabled in both Houses of Parliament to be passed between Oct 2019 – Mar 2020
- Census paper household form finalised in Mar 2020
- Final content published in mid-2020

3 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. 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. Ultimately the topics for the Census are decided by the Australian Government, informed by the ABS's recommendations.

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. For both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census there was no change in the list of topics, 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.

4 Overview of public consultation

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.

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.

A paper was published in early November 2018 outlining directions for new and existing topics resulting from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement, research and testing ([cat. no. 2007.0.55.001](#)).

During the public consultation, 450 submissions were received with 355 focused on changes or additions to Census topics. The other submissions suggested changes to standards, classifications or Census procedures and have been referred to the relevant sections of the ABS for further consideration.

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.

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.

Each submission was reviewed against the assessment criteria. The suggested changes for Census topics were also reviewed to determine if needs could be met from existing data sources.

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

- Chronic health conditions
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language assessment)
- Current or previous service in 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.

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
Journey to education	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	H	H	M	M	L	M	H
Australian Defence Force indicator	M	H	H	M	H	M	H
Smoking status	H	H	H	M	H	M	M
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
Household/Family composition improvements	H	H	M	M	M	H	H
Shared care of children	M	H	M	M	L	M	H

Changes to a number of existing topics were flagged for exploration based on consultation feedback. This includes changes related to disability assistance through aids and equipment, care provided by young carers, and better identification of participants in early childhood education. Two topics were identified for removal (household internet access, and motor vehicles garaged).

A number of new topics that generated interest were not considered a priority based on assessment against the criteria. These topics have not been further assessed 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
- Digital literacy or inclusion
- Multiple occupations and the gig economy.

A number of changes to existing topics were also not considered a priority for 2021 Census. This included changes to religion, occupation, industry of employment and volunteering.

Each of the topics noted above are discussed further throughout this report.

5 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
- further development and testing of the questions.

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, are able to be included in the 2021 Census.

The majority of testing and research has focused on building a better assessment of the 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 ensure that quality data can be obtained for the proposed new and amended topics. Large scale quantitative testing will also 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. This testing will continue beyond making the submission to government and will continue to 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 expands on the information that has been provided through testing and research beyond the initial consultation. 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.
- **Respondent implications** – This section further explores the acceptability criteria. It includes an outline of the types of questions required to collect the topic, and key findings from qualitative testing on the feasibility of collecting the topic (including sensitivities and potential public reaction).
- **Operational feasibility** – This further 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.

Other topics will draw from the above structure where necessary.

[section here that relates this framework to the assessment criteria]

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6 Recommendations to the Senior Responsible Officer

DRAFT Recommendations for the key topics noted in the Topic Directions paper are as follows:

Topic	Recommendation
Chronic health conditions	Add new topic
Journey to education	Do not add new topic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	Do not add new topic
Australian Defence Force indicator	Add new topic
Smoking status	Do not add new topic
Sex (non-binary response)	Change topic response options
Gender identity	Add new topic
Sexual orientation	? Add new topic?
Household/Family composition improvements	Do not change current topic
Shared care of children	Do not add new topic

DRAFT Other topics proposed for change are

Topic	Recommendation
Household internet access	Remove topic
Motor vehicles garaged	Remove topic
Need for assistance topics	
Educational qualifications	
Unpaid care	

[Section here describing overall impact of proposed change inc. risks of extent of change and discussion of adding a number of personal or more sensitive topics. To be drafted after meeting with SRO]

7 Individual Topic Assessments

7.1 Chronic Health Conditions

Topic Definition	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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 do not appear to be 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 to monitor change under the Health Reform Agreement, 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.

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 health conditions for response options. 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'.

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. There has not been any sensitivity noted in regard to 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 with no free text options is relatively straight forward, but multiple response outputs 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 combinations of conditions, prevalence of multiple conditions with numbers). 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. This impact will continue to be tested through cognitive interviews and the major test in October 2019.

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7.2 Journey to Education

Topic Definition	For all persons, currently attending an educational institution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the name and address of the educational institution b) the mode of travel to the educational institution on the Census day
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</p> <p>There is strong demand for this topic within the transport and infrastructure planning sector. There is also interest from the education sector. The topic is likely to create additional respondent burden, and require significant investment and resourcing. There is also potential risk to delivery of other changes in the Census program as implementing this topic will require a wide range of expertise and effort.</p> <p>This topic should not be recommended for inclusion on the 2021 Census without a strong assessment of risk and unless additional funds are available.</p>

Data or policy needs

In the 2016 Census there were approximately 10 million employed people who provided details of how they travel to work. There was estimated to be around 5 million students who travel for education. Travel for education makes up a significant portion of travel during peak hours. Used with journey to work data, this information would provide an improved understanding of traffic flows and transport patterns in towns and cities. This data would be used by transport planners across state/territory government and local councils to model infrastructure demand. Details of the educational institution attended for students could also provide information to improve the quality of data collected on the type of educational institution attended.

An inter-jurisdictional group comprising officials from Commonwealth, state and territory transport and infrastructure agencies, provided strong support for this topic as a key data need from the Census. This group (Australian Transportation Data Action Network – ATDAN) is chaired by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) within the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

The submissions from ATDAN also included consultation and support from the Departments of Education and Training (Commonwealth and State in QLD and WA) and Local Government Associations. Support from submissions also came from individuals, a range of local councils and their representatives, and TAFE NSW. Some state transport departments also made separate submissions to voice their additional support.

Respondent implications

This topic will apply to persons who indicate they are attending an educational institution (approx. 5.5 million in 2016). The name and address of the educational institution will be 1-2 questions with free text responses. The mode of transport will be similar to the mode of transport to work question currently asked, containing a list of responses and the ability to

mark all that apply. There will also be response options for study from home and not studying on Census day.

The Census form already collects one dwelling address, and four additional addresses per person (usual address, address one and five years ago, and workplace address). This topic will potentially add a fifth address per person. When completing a form for a family, a respondent may need to provide several addresses if they have a number of children attending school.

Testing has shown that respondents don't generally know the full address of educational institutions and they will either provide a guess, an incomplete address, or they will take additional time to look up the address. Names of educational institutions are also likely to generate abbreviated responses and various acronyms for the same institution. A tertiary student may also attend various campuses at the one institution and guidance in this situation would need to be provided.

Topics including addresses can also generate additional privacy concerns, however this has not yet been identified as a concern in testing.

Operational feasibility

Collecting the responses to produce this data requires up to three questions which could take nearly two pages on the paper form. Expansion of the paper form from 22 to 24 pages is being considered; this topic on its own would utilise most of this space. Collecting through the digital channel is not limited by this constraint and functionality could simplify it for respondents.

Journey to work data currently involves complex processing of addresses, destination zones and commuting distances. Coding addresses can require a large degree of manual intervention to ensure quality outputs. The amount of manual coding for incomplete addresses is likely to be higher for this topic as testing has shown most people will not know the street address of the educational institution and will use several names, abbreviations or acronyms for the institution name. In form coding for online forms may assist with improving the quality of responses and reducing processing, but needs further testing and development to determine the best way to implement.

The key information required to inform transport planning is the home address and educational institution address (to determine journey start and end points) and the mode of travel. The name of the educational institution will help with determining the address if insufficient information is provided. It is anticipated that there will be different degrees of non-response in providing the address for an educational institution. This could be related to a lack of knowledge of the address, or respondent fatigue if completing a form for a large family or household. Access to address lists of educational institutions will aid in the process of quality control, but it will still require a significant amount of manual intervention to provide quality data. Discussions are underway with the Department of Education and

Training to assess the availability and quality of lists covering all levels of education within scope of this topic. An indication of feasibility is expected by end February 2019.

Current journey to work processes could provide the template for implementing journey to education processing and outputs. Journey to work processing incurs significant cost and effort to produce output data. Adding journey to education will incur significant additional processing cost. This will require significant resources and there is some risk that even with additional funds, implementing a change of this scale will take expertise away from other Census program development which is needed for setting up for the current 2021 Census operations.

The journey to work topic provides detailed outputs with multiple modes of transport, origin and destination details and in 2016, interactive maps based on commuting distance. If the topic is included, there is potential to output similar detail as well as a combined commuting picture (combining journey to work and journey to education data). This would be very costly. Engagement with stakeholders may be required to determine the minimum viable product rather than invest in replicating the outputs for journey to work.

Statistical impacts

The potential for this additional set of questions creating address response fatigue also needs to be considered. Many of the addresses collected in the Census are critical for population estimates and projections, as well as providing journey to work data. If this topic was added, further testing would be required to assess potential for address fatigue having an impact on the quality of other addresses. The overall increase in respondent burden may adversely impact on overall Census response rates.

Further feedback focused on testing this set of questions with cognitive interviews is planned for early March. This round will include households with multiple members attending education institutions.

7.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language)

Topic Definition	For all persons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, more detail on their cultural identity in terms of identification with their clan/mob/nation, ancestry and main language spoken at home.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census, make changes to language and ancestry questions to improve relevance for this community.</p> <p>The cultural identity topic has been assessed as not meeting data needs and the respondent sensitivities are likely to impact the quality of response. The operational cost of implementing this topic would also be high. Changes will be explored for language and ancestry to increase inclusiveness, as well as investment into other strategies to improve participation.</p>

Data or policy needs

The main driver for this new topic was to improve participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the quality of data on indigenous status which currently has a significant undercount. Submissions were received from the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet supporting the addition of a topic on identification with a clan/mob/nation as a means to improve the undercount, but there were not specific policy needs for the data from this topic. Through further engagement with stakeholders and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table, it was identified that they were concerned with how the data for this topic may be used. Potential misuse could include negative media reporting of “true aboriginality” and impact on land claims.

Submissions also noted support for improvements in the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language information to better understand barriers to participation in society.

Respondent implications

An additional question was tested including yes/no options and free text to identify clan/nation/mob. A number of participants raised concerns with providing accurate data for a write in response – they noted both concerns with accurate spelling, as well as not knowing the answer to this question.

Additional response options and/or instructions have been added to the current ancestry and main language(s) spoken questions. Early testing indicates the change to ancestry in particular is welcome. Further testing is planned with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to improve and refine the language and ancestry topics.

Operational feasibility

Outputs for a new clan/nation/mob topic would be based on free text responses, so an input and output classification will need to be created. In addition, a free text response

would have a high processing burden. The potential for different spelling of responses will make coding to a classification difficult with a large amount of manual intervention likely, especially for the first cycle where this topic is introduced. This data item would potentially be difficult to output at small areas given the small population who would respond this question.

Output for ancestry and languages will use current classifications. Changes to the ancestry and main language questions will not require any processing or outputs over and above current procedures.

Statistical impacts

There is a large risk of non-response for the additional question due to sensitivities and concerns about how the data could be used. This may present a potential quality risk to indigenous status; if respondents cannot answer the new cultural identity question, they may be less likely to respond, or change their response, to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin question.

The inclusion of an additional response category for ancestry would yield more relevant data for this population group, who likely would have previously marked 'Australian'.

The inclusion of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language – specify response category caused some respondent confusion. In the 2016 Census, the interviewer administered Census form used in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities included a mark response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language with a please specify option. It was found that less respondents used the 'please specify' option, decreasing the amount of detail available in outputs. This option is no longer being considered for the household form. Instead, additional instructional text to improve the write in response of an indigenous language will be tested. This will include assessing whether this will lead to a reduction in quality or detail for languages.

7.4 Australian Defence Force service

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular or reserve).
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census. 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 relative 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. 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. Potential alternative sources of this data have been assessed by the ABS and were found to be inadequate.

There has been some discussions in the media supporting this topic as an addition to the Census, as well as 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.

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.

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 this risk to be high. There is not expected to be an impact on overall response caused by this topic.

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7.5 Smoking Status

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and previous smoking status.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census There is strong demand for a health related topic, but the chronic health conditions topic is preferred and has broader data value. If required, the smoking topic could be implemented with relative ease and low risk.

Data or policy needs

While smoking rates continue to decrease, smoking is still a key contributor to chronic diseases in Australia. There is a need to identify smoking behaviours for small geographic areas and populations. This would allow for targeted preventative action, and the monitoring of health related conditions induced by smoking.

Key commonwealth agencies making submissions for this topic were the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, although both noted a preference for a chronic health topic, as a stronger need over a smoking status topic.

Respondent implications

The topic requires two questions asking for current smoking status and previous smoking status. The questions will be asked only of people aged 15 and over and will be placed later in the form due to potential sensitivity of the topic.

Smoking status questions have been tested through a number of rounds of cognitive interviews. Participants did not identify any concerns or sensitivities answering these questions, although if this topic progresses, further testing will be required to explore if there are concerns answering on behalf of others.

Operational feasibility

Data will be classified and output based only on the response options in the question. There is not expected to be any complexity in developing, processing and disseminating this topic. Quality assurance in editing would require some additional effort to set up business rules for edits (i.e.: when respondent's multi mark response categories).

National Health Survey data on smoking behaviour is available and may be of use for quality assurance of Census counts during processing.

Statistical impacts

There may be some non-response to this topic driven by people not wanting to disclose their smoking status to government. There may also be some concern with responding accurately for those under 18 years old (which is the legal age for purchasing cigarettes in Australia). As it is a personal topic, it may impact on overall response. If this topic is added,

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further testing will need to identify the scale of these quality concerns and changes to questions will need to be considered.

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7.6 Non-binary sex and/or gender identity

Topic Definition	For all persons, collect sex and gender with non-binary response options.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Collect existing sex topic with non-binary response options. Add new topic on gender identity for people aged 15 years and older (optional question)

Data or policy needs

Sex is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance and is used in generating population estimates as well as the denominator for reporting and analysis. There is concern and risk in any changes that could impact the quality of the sex data collected.

The intent of adding a third response option to the sex question is to improve the representation in the data collected. Some respondents are currently unable to accurately answer this question and may feel excluded or discriminated against.

The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender were established by the Attorney General's Department to complement the changes to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, which allows new protections from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. *"The guidelines recognise that individuals may identify as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth, or may not identify as exclusively male or female, and that this should be reflected in records held by the government."* 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 need for inclusivity has the support of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Submissions in support of change to the current binary collection of sex came from Department of Social Services (DSS), Department of Health (DoH), the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG), and a range of state departments, local government authorities and community and advocacy groups. Submissions specifically 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 sexual orientation question follows in the next section.

DSS and DoH noted an absence of data on LGBTI individuals to support delivery of services needed to improve social outcomes for these vulnerable groups. In particular examples of the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy and the National Mental Health and Suicide Plan were given.

Respondent implications

The sex question currently used in the Census does 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.

It is proposed that this question will be changed to ask specifically for sex and will offer a third non-binary response option. The third option is intended to provide a way for intersex people to identify, however stakeholders have cautioned that intersex people are also male or female and the third option will not be a complete representation of the population. The wording for the third response option will continue to be developed through consultation with stakeholders and testing with participants. 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.

It is also proposed that a gender identity question with non-binary response options is added to the Census. The question will only be asked of those over 15 years old and will be placed later in the form. Additional response options will be provided with a free text response for the final option. This question is intended to identify the trans, non-binary and gender fluid population. 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). Testing of gender identity will also focus on understanding of the difference with the topic of sex and the potential impact of confusion on responses.

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

Operational feasibility

[Section to be tidied up – general sense from Census operational managers is that both non-binary sex and gender identity require some work but are feasible; biggest concern is around sensitivity and statistical impact]

No problems with a third option for sex in terms of data matching from imputation team perspective. Linking would be roughly the same data. They said that ATO and Centrelink admin data all collects a third category (indeterminate/other/unknown), so this is consistent with their practices.

[Note characteristics of processing and outputs] May need to recode non-binary responses into binary category output as was done in 2016, but this was seen as unpalatable from a stakeholder perspective. Reporting of the non-binary response may not be possible for small geographic areas or small population groups. But options to produce state and territory level data is going to be explored further.

Will need rules based on multiple response and edits to determine valid responses.

There are consequences for PES to be included here – not insurmountable; they collected non-binary sex in 2016. Demography to make decisions about whether to use binary or non-binary sex in ERP. The latter would require a change to their current model.

Write in for gender identity would require additional capture and processing effort. Need to determine output classification based on free text responses. Could use the responses gathered from last Census to build upon and from GSS testing.

Use of the response to gender could potentially be used to impute a non-binary sex response to male or female if this direction is taken.

Statistical impacts

The biggest concern with including a non-binary sex response as part of mainstream procedures is the risk of inadvertent error or facetious responses reducing the quality of the male/female count which is critical to estimating the population.

Stakeholders have clearly outlined that a third response option for sex would not be considered representative of intersex individuals. They 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”. Responses may also be impacted by trust of government and privacy concerns, which will reduce the representative of results. The limitation of the data would not to be communicated on release, but there is the potential for misuse.

There is also some belief that providing non-binary options for sex and/or adding questions on gender identity, 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. International testing 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. ONS conducted a split sample test with and without questions on gender identity and sexual orientation. They did not find any impact on the overall response rate between the two samples.

The major test in October will apply a split sample approach to try and measure error associated with a non-binary sex option. It will also assess the potential for impact on response of adding more personal or sensitive questions. [the October test objectives will be informed by the direction discussed with the SRO and feedback from the Data Quality Specialist Working Group – this section will be updated]

7.7 Sexual orientation

Topic Definition	For persons over 15 years old, current sexual orientation
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic on sexual orientation for people aged 15 years and older (optional question)

Data or policy needs

The LGBTI population has been identified by the Commonwealth government as one of three key vulnerable groups in Australia, alongside the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Census currently collects data on the latter two population groups, however there is currently no national data currently collected about the LGBTI population to inform planning and measuring outcomes. Commonwealth and State/Territory policies and plans have been developed to facilitate improved outcomes and support to address the specific needs for LGBTI individuals in terms of health care, physical safety measures, mental health, aged care, suicide prevention, and to reduce outcomes of homelessness. To target and evaluate services, and to obtain an overall understanding of the size of the LGBTI population in Australia, demographic data about these communities is required at both high the broad and small areas. Key departments advocating for this data are Department of Social Services and Department of Health. There was also strong support from state and local government and community/advocacy groups. The Australian Human Rights Commission also supported the inclusion of this topic.

Collecting sexual orientation in addition to non-binary sex and gender identity would be needed to give the full picture of the LGBTI community.

Respondent implications

This topic requires a single question, with a pre-defined list of response options, and a free text option. The question will only be asked of people over 15 years old and will be placed later in the form due to the potential sensitivity of the topic to some people. The question will be listed as optional, and allow people to respond with 'don't know' or 'prefer not to answer'.

During testing, versions of this question have been received well by the target population. They are able to report their sexual orientation using the options provided, or the write in field. A small number of older, non-target population also responded to the question in testing.

The question used in testing needs further development but the response options were clear, and all so far were able and willing to provide a response.

Operational feasibility

[Section to be tidied up – general sense from Census operational managers is that sexual orientation is feasible; biggest concern is around sensitivity and statistical impact]

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.

An index can be drawn from the General Social Survey testing of this question, which would support coding of the write in field with limited cost associated.

There is currently a proposal to offer this 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

[Note risk of non-response for the question and potential impact on response to the Census as a whole – as described in sex/gender identity section]

The Census operational managers had concerns about the inclusion of a 'prefer not to say' option, raising that this might highlight that people do not have to answer other questions.

The placement of the question toward the end of the Census and being asked of only respondents 15 years and over, was supported. However, there was still a question of whether this could impact on a person filling in the form for multiple family members. It is expected that the potential for this effect can be uncovered in the October field test.

7.8 Households and family measures (including shared care of children)

Topic Definition	Collects relationships between a primary member of the household with other members. This is used to define household and family composition. Expansions would explore additional dynamic family structures and identification of shared care arrangements for children.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add to this topic or change the current collection approach. Explore opportunities through processing to enhance the data available.</p> <p>Do not add shared care of children as a new topic.</p> <p>This topic is extremely complex with a single collection question used to derive and output a range of variables. Improvements in processing for family coding systems are required and the risk of statistical impact from changing the collection approach is considered too high to proceed. The review of systems will be used to explore ways to better meet stakeholder needs, with the potential for expansion of this topic to be explored in future cycles.</p>

Data or policy needs

The Census produces many output variables that describe household and family composition and characteristics. These are derived through a complex coding process that uses relationship between members of the household, persons temporarily absent and registered marital status as inputs.

Data users provided feedback that being able to understand more complex family and household structures would assist in policy development and service delivery, particularly in the area of targeting payments to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The complex families identified included multigenerational family households; blended families; kinship care arrangements; and LGBTI households. A particular area of interest was being able to include children living in shared custody arrangements as part of the family in both their residences. This is important to understand the household economic resources in different family situations to inform social policy.

Key commonwealth agencies submitting on this topic were the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Treasury. There was also interest from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and various state and territory departments. DSS submitted that persons temporarily absent on Census night be matched back into their usual residence for more accurate household and family data in particular household income and equivalised household income.

A workshop was held with DSS, AIFS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and researchers to explore what data was needed for a more contemporary understanding of household and family composition. Based on the input data already collected, significant

additional value can be delivered by reviewing the family classification and coding principles.

Respondent implications

No changes to household and family composition were tested with respondents as operational feasibility constraints were identified concluding that changing the inputs of relationships and persons temporarily absent was not possible for the 2021 Census.

Collection of shared care of children data would require a change to the relationships and persons temporarily absent questions, in addition to a new question. Given the previous decision, question development didn't occur.

Some challenges to accurate and efficient family coding occur when the wrong person reports as 'person 1'. The beta phase of the digital channel development and the front of form work for the paper instrument will develop and test guidance to help the most appropriate respondent to be person 1.

Operational feasibility

Any change to input variables would require significant development of the processing system. This presents a major risk to the system which would need to be tested and substantial investment of resources to implement. This is not possible for 2021.

Household and family relationship inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations. Census Data Operations has mapped the family coding processes and is working with Household Characteristics & Social Reporting (HC&SR) to look for opportunities to improve outputs from the variables currently collected. The possibility of matching persons temporarily absent data will be considered as part of this work. HC&SR is also undertaking a review of the family and household composition standards.

Statistical impacts

Due to the complexity of use of family and household composition input variables, there is likely to be a considerable statistical impact on Census data. This hasn't been investigated, but will be for any proposed processing and coding changes.

An additional risk associated with implementing changes to collect shared care of children is that it may have an impact on the usual address concept and even if operationally feasible would need careful consideration of the data quality risk.

8 Topics for removal from the *Census and Statistics Regulation 2016*

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Remove the following two topics from the 2021 Census:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household internet access • Motor vehicles garaged <p>Both topics have been assessed as no longer relevant to be collected on the Census or available in part through other sources.</p>
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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. To consider adding new topics, topics that are no longer considered relevant were assessed and are recommended for removal.

8.1 Household internet access

The 2016 Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions suggested that with the growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access has less relevance.

Stakeholders suggesting changes to the question on household internet access included the Department of Communication and the Arts (DoCA) and Infrastructure Australia.

DoCA suggested replacing the current topic with another individual internet access and use-based question, including measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy to understand the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population. Infrastructure Australia was interested in the role of internet access in the changing nature of employment, with particular interest in the use of home internet connections for work from home arrangements. While these topics are considered important, they are too complex to be collected in the Census and the data need was not well articulated.

8.2 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. Stakeholders have noted a number of constraints with using administrative data sources as a replacement and noted that they would require further investment and development to get their sources to a state where they would be an adequate substitute.

Opposition to the removal of this topic included submissions from the Australian Transportation Data Action Network (ATDAN) which comprises representatives from all

Commonwealth, state and territory transport agencies, as well as the Australian Local Government Association. ATDAN is chaired by the head of the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) under the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. The submission notes that registry data can provide an approximate measure of the number of motor vehicles at small area level, but cannot presently provide the link to household demographic information provided by the Census which is required for existing urban travel models and to inform policy and planning. While some States noted that they would be able to work with a cycle where this question is only asked every ten years, others noted that the 5 year cycle was still necessary. Those willing to accommodate a ten year cycle raised it only in the context of having access to more detailed Journey to Education data available for planning.

Motor vehicles garaged is recommended for removal as there are other potential sources that would meet some of the data needs, and to manage respondent burden in regard to the number of overall topics collected. There will continue to be push from stakeholders to keep this topic and if removed, there will need to be clear messaging on why this decision was made.

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9 Other changes to current topics

Beyond the suggestions for new topics, submissions were also made for changes to existing topics. A number of changes were considered worthy of further investigation. Exploring changes to topics provide 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 in making a decision to change.

The following section outlines the changes being explored and the key agencies nominating for change. Investigation will continue via testing and engagement throughout 2019 for most topics. Recommendations have only been made on topics where the change in scope may require a change to the Census and Statistics Regulation, prompting an earlier decision on making the change. Topics that do not require regulation changes will be recommended and approved through the relevant Census Program streams.

9.1 Regulation change required

Some topic changes being explored will change the scope of how the topic is currently noted in the regulations. The topics this impacts are as follows:

Need for assistance – The need for assistance topic currently asks four questions which are used to derive a single output identifying persons with a need for assistance with core activities. While a number of changes or enhancements were suggested, many were not considered feasible to add to the current set of questions. Only the expansion of outputs and the incorporation of assistance through aids and equipment are being explored. It was noted by stakeholders that maintaining the time series for this topic is vital, so changes will only be made where the change is stronger value than the risk to time series. **(We are currently in discussions with the stakeholder to assess this trade off – status will be updated by next version of paper).**

Highest non-school qualifications – The Department of Education and Training were keen to collect year of completion of non-school qualifications to understand currency of completion. The topic is collected as pre/post 1998 for coding and classification purposes. This topic was tested in cognitive interviews. Respondents reported some problems with recall and accuracy. As this question would include free text, there is an additional effort in processing and coding that reduces the operational feasibility. This change is not recommended.

Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age – While there were a number of suggestions for additions to this topic, many were too detailed to implement. Among other requests, DSS suggested removing the age restriction on this question to get a measure of young carers (under 15 years old). Initial qualitative testing hasn't revealed any sensitivity with asking this question of younger respondents. This will continue to be explored in future testing. There are some operational challenges associated with where to position this question on the form as it currently sits with the

other three questions on unpaid work and care. This question suite is currently asked of respondents aged over 15 and separating them could have a statistical impact. This is being further explored and will be updated by the next version of this paper.

9.2 No regulation change required

Other changes to existing topics can be made without changing the scope of how it's currently represented in regulations. Of the submissions received, the following changes are being explored and will be considered depending on the outcome of quality impact assessments:

Income – Treasury suggested reviewing the income ranges used in this question to better align with current tax brackets. There were also requests made during engagement to use a write in response rather than selecting ranges. Income is a sensitive question with many respondents reporting concerns around privacy. A change to a write in response has been explored in cognitive testing. Respondents had difficulty answering and some suggested that they would have to look up their income. There was increased accuracy concerns when reporting on behalf of others. The cost and effort involved in processing and quality assuring a write in response is also higher than a question with response ranges. The impacts on quality, costs and burden mean that a write in response to income will not be pursued.

Attendance at an educational institution – Department of Education and Training and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group both asked for a review of this topic to try and better capture attendance at pre-schools, kindergartens and early childhood education. Changes are being explored in terms of the respondent's ability to understand the response categories and with consideration of the impact on the time series for this topic. There is unlikely to be any operational feasibility or overall statistical impact concerns with this change.

Type of tenure, Landlord type – DSS is seeking better alignment of Census data on social/community housing with administrative data. Stakeholders are also looking for details of when rent is subsidised or provided through affordable renting schemes to aid access to social housing. Changes to questions on tenure and landlord type are both being explored to consider if these data needs can be met through the Census. There is also consideration of linking administrative data to meet this need. Testing of these changes are planned in future rounds of cognitive interviewing.

Measures of homelessness - Usual residence at Census time, address 1 and 5 years ago – DSS and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) provided support for improving measures of homelessness especially among couch surfing youth. Submissions supported additions to questions on usual residence such as reasons for visiting, or a tick box for no usual address. As this topic is critical for estimating the distribution of the usually resident population, changes to instructions and support materials are being tested to try

and improve identification of couch surfers without risking the quality of this topic. The reasons for visiting question and tick box will not be recommended.

Country of birth of parents – Some support was noted for providing options if a person has same sex parents. Country of Birth or mother and father is important for the Department of Home Affairs in analysing citizenship, so only instructions have been reviewed to be more inclusive.

Main language other than English spoken at home / Proficiency in spoken English – Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Testing has shown that providing a write-in response for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as well as a write-in box for 'other specify' was confusing to respondents. Additionally, allowing respondents to check Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without requiring a write in could reduce the reporting of a specific language. This occurred in the change to the 2016 Interviewer Household Form used in communities. Adding a write-in box specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will not be recommended. Instructional text to encourage respondents to write in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will be tested.

Deaf Australia also noted that current language in the questions were not inclusive of those using sign language. Changes have been tested to improve inclusiveness for those using sign language. This testing will continue.

Ancestry - Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry was raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Additional response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry are being tested as noted in the section on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity. This has performed well in cognitive testing and will be recommended for inclusion in the quantitative test.

10 Topics not being recommended for addition or change

A number of suggested changes, and new topic suggestions were not included in the topic directions publication. These were assessed as either being unsuitable or as lower priority compared to other topic suggestions. The topics which may be raised again in consultation and engagement as final decisions are made, have been listed below. Where relevant, the source or suggestions for change have been noted.

10.1 Changes to topics not being investigated

Religious affiliation - Submissions were received from a range of individuals, religious organisations and secular/no religion bodies suggesting an additional question on religious involvement to give a better picture of how actively people participate in their religious activities. There were also suggestions to expand the representations of some religions in the classification, and to move the 'no religion' response back to the end of the list of responses. Collecting information on religious affiliation is consistent with international Census practice and is better aligned with planning for services delivered by religious organisations. There continues to be suggestions regarding religion through general correspondence to the ABS and the topic can sometimes be of interest to the media. Key messages will be prepared to assist in responding to media and correspondents on the reasons for not making any further change to this question.

Number of children ever born – 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 people whose gender is not female may have given birth.

Work (including labour force status, status in employment, occupation and industry) – Treasury and a joint submission from Department of Jobs and Small Business, Comcare and the Fair Work Commission made suggestions for changes and enhancements to work topics. 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). There have been recent experimental estimates released by the ABS using LEED which may address some of the data needs raised by stakeholders.

Some submissions suggested a review of the occupation classification (ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations). While recognising this is desirable the ABS has decided not to undertake this review in the short term.

Unpaid work – voluntary work – There were suggestions from DSS and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group 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 is not being further explored for the Census. However, this information is available through the ABS General Social Survey.

10.2 New topic suggestions not being considered

Sources of income – A number of submissions were received suggesting the Census collect data on sources of income. This topic is not being proposed as the 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. 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.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation – DSS and local councils noted a need for measures of participation in NDIS against disability measures to help with planning and delivery of services. Based on the potential availability of this data from administrative sources that can be linked with Census data, this was not assessed as a priority topic for collection in the 2021 Census.

Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling - Where submissions in 2016 came from a range of sources including federal, state and local government and industry groups, there has been less demand for this topic in the 2021 Census consultation. 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.

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. Key agencies supported chronic health conditions over other health topics suggested in submissions.

Digital literacy or inclusion – As noted against the Household Internet Access topic, the Department of Communications and the Arts supported replacing household internet access with topics on personal internet access and use. This information would be to gain a better understanding of digital literacy or inclusion among vulnerable groups and the impact on

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social participation. While valuable, the data need was not well defined and the topic was too complex to collect adequately on the Census.

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11 DRAFT Changes to the Census and Statistics Regulation 2016

The following table is a mock-up of how all changes noted in this document would be represented in changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Shaded items represent changes or additions.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex
Date of birth or age last birthday
Relationship to the other persons, if any, who spend the Census night in the same accommodation
Present marital status
Address of usual residence
Address of usual residence 1 year before the Census day
Address of usual residence 5 years before the Census day
Religion or religious denomination
Citizenship
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
Ancestry
Country of birth
Country of birth of each parent
For a person not born in Australia—the year of the person’s first arrival in Australia
Languages spoken at home
For a person who speaks a language other than English at home—his or her proficiency in speaking English
Present attendance at an educational institution, including the type of institution attended (if any)
For a person attending an educational institution during the week during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following: (new topic)
(a) the name and address of the educational institution the person attended during that week; (new topic)
(b) the mode of travel to the educational institution by the person on the Census day; (new topic)
Chronic health conditions (new topic)
The provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person (changed scope to ask of everyone – not just 15 yo and over)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age, the following:
(a) the highest level of primary or secondary school completed;
(b) educational qualifications;
(c) labour force status;

(d) income;
(e) domestic activities;
(f) the provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person; (changed scope to ask of everyone – not just 15 yo and over)
(g) the provision of care to a child, without pay;
(h) voluntary work through an organisation or group
(x) Australian defence force service (new topic)
(x) smoking behaviour (new topic)
(x) gender identity (new topic)
(x) sexual orientation (new topic)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age and was employed (including self-employed) during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following:
(a) status in employment during that week;
(b) occupation during that week;
(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;
(d) the main kind of business or industry carried on, or service provided, by that undertaking during that week;
(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;
(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;
(g) the mode of travel to work by the person on the Census day;
(h) if the person owns a business, the total number of persons who are employed by the business
The need for assistance with, use of equipment or an aid , or the supervision of another person for, any of the following activities (including the reason for the need): (increase scope to include use of aids or equipment)
(a) self care;
(b) body movement;
(c) communication
For a female who is not less than 15 years of age—the number of children to whom she has given birth (potential change for inclusive language)
Statistical information for the Census—household accommodated on the Census night in a private dwelling
The address on the Census night
For a person who is usually a member of the household but is absent from the household accommodation on the Census night, the following:
(a) name;
(b) sex;
(c) date of birth or age last birthday;

(d) student status;
(e) relationship to other members of the household;
(f) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
The right, title or interest of the household in the household's accommodation
The number of bedrooms in the dwelling
The rent or loan repayments payable by the household for its accommodation
If the dwelling is rented—the nature of the person or body to whom rent is paid
The number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling (remove topic)
Access to the internet at the dwelling (remove topic)
Statistical information for the Census—private dwelling
The structure
The location
The status of a person in the dwelling
Statistical information for the Census—dwelling other than a private dwelling
The classification of the dwelling by reference to its purpose
The status of a person in the dwelling
The address of the dwelling
The name (if any) of the dwelling
The number of persons resident in the dwelling

Sex & gender - topic summary (Response to: Population - topic summaries)

2021 Census Content Development WDB

S22

09/05/2018 11:38 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

Draft Topic Summary

Sex & gender

Purpose of this document
Instructions for sign off by subject matter Program Manager

Question 3: Is the person male or female?

Paper:

3 Is the person male or female? Male

• Mark one box for each person, like this:

Female

Online:

2. Is Person 1 male or female?

• If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, it is possible to use a Census form to do so. Please call the Census Inquiry Service on 1300 2

Male

Female

Instructions for the alternative to report sex included an option on **paper forms** to leave both categories blank and write an option next to the response category.
 Or call help desk to be sent a log in for an alternative **online form** with the question

is below:

2. Is person 1 male, female or other?

Less Information

If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, please select 'Other'. The 'please specify' box can be used if the person wishes to provide more information. Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population. All personal information

Male

Female



Other (please specify)

C Sex [of person]
e Gender is a proposed NEW topic

Contacts for this topic	
Subject matter areas: (Primary and secondary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Household Characteristics and Social Reporting - S22 (primary)Demography - S22 (secondary) Note that this topic has strong dependencies across the Census program with particular interest from Processing, Dissemination and Data Quality.

Topic summary

<p>Initial direction from publication (2007.0) released prior to public consultation</p>	<p>There is increasing demand to include a non-binary set of response options (as per the <i>alternative text form</i> question noted above). This has also raised the question about whether the concept collected should be sex or gender or both.</p> <p>Both directions need investigation and feedback.</p>
<p>Summary of consultation topic suggestions</p>	<p>Data collected on sex from the Census is used by the ABS to produce state and territory population estimates, which is a key objective of the Census, and further informs sub-state population estimates. There is no suggestion to remove this concept and changes will need to be considered within the context of impact on Census data, other population statistics and key data linkage work. A key driver for change is recognition that the current binary response options (male/female) discriminates against some members of the population who are unable to provide a response that recognises their current identity. Introducing recognition with non-binary response options opens up further discussion on whether it is more appropriate to collect sex or gender or both.</p> <p>The key suggestions for change made by key stakeholders which are to be discussed with the NSC and considered for investigation and testing include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect sex with a non-binary option* • Collect both sex and gender (with non-binary options) • Collect gender instead of sex (with non-binary options) <p>*NB: This included suggestions from the Intersex Human Rights Association that it would be more appropriate to combine a non-binary response sex question with a question specifically addressing intersex variation characteristics. This is discussed in more detail below.</p> <p>Note that of all submissions relating to this topic, most also identified a need for a question on sexual orientation so that LGBTI status could be determined for the population. Understanding LGBTI (a noted vulnerable population group) is possible only through the combination of Sex (including non-binary), Gender (including non-binary) <u>and</u> sexual orientation variables.</p> <p>In 2016, there was an alternative text option provided for the online form (see snapshot above). Respondents who wished to report a sex other than those listed could receive a code to another form. While this was seen to be a move in the right direction, it required knowledge and additional steps for this population group (in an environment where the contact centre was often overloaded with calls). Responses collected in this way were processed and output as binary responses only. Special publications were made available which provided further detail regarding those that provided a response to identify as neither male or female (see related readings below).</p> <p>With this in mind, a range of options have been considered and assessed below which span collections options as well as processing and output options. Based on the Attorney-General's guidelines and the published</p>

	<p>ABS standard (see below) it is considered that all options need to have a method for people to respond using a non-binary sex or gender identifier if they choose. So the starting point is considered to be 2016 Census approach with instructions and options for non-binary response, output of the main content using binary sex with special release articles showing non-binary response.</p> <p>Related topic summaries</p> <p>Note that this topic summary relates only to sex and gender. Suggestions for collecting sexual orientation were raised by a number of stakeholders as part of the broader representation of the LGBTI community. These suggestions are here .</p> <p>Related reading</p> <p>2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016: Sex and Gender Diversity in the 2016 Census (published by ABS, Dec 2017)</p> <p>Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender (published by Attorney-General's Department, Dec 2015)</p> <p>Standard for Sex and Gender Variables (cat. no. 1200.0.55.012) (published by ABS, Feb 2016)</p> <p>Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Intersex Rights 2015 (published by Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015)</p> <p>A note on terminology</p> <p>Appropriate terminology in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status can be strongly contested and evolve over time. For the purposes of this report, the acronym 'LGBTI' is used to collectively represent a diverse community made up of a number of sub-groups (some which may not be directly represented by the letters in the acronym). While commonly used in submissions and this report, the use of the LGBTI acronym is not intended to exclude or offend any groups not directly identified.</p> <p>Definitions (extracted from the ABS Standard for Sex and...</p>
<p>Summary of submissions and engagement</p> <p> All 2021 submissions received on Sex & gender</p>	<p>32 submissions were received from a range of community/advocacy groups as well as a selection of federal departments (DSS, DoH), state and local government representatives. Feedback also includes input from engagement conversations.</p> <p>2021 Submissions or related submissions:</p>

Topic assessment against criteria

<p>1. The topic is of current national importance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>data is required</i> 	<p>Questions on Sex are essential for the production of accurate state and territory population estimates, a major objective of the Census, and for sub-state population estimates. They are valuable items in their own right for planning and policy development and evaluation. The vast majority of demographic studies rely on data about the sex of the relevant</p>
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for an electoral or legislative purpose

- *data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring*
- *data is used for research purposes*

population. The Australian Census also seeks to align with international statistical frameworks and guidelines for collection. The [United Nation's Statistical Division's - Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Revision 3 \(2017\)](#) which notes sex as being a core topic essential for inclusion in population and housing censuses. The principles note 'Sex, together with age, represents the most basic type of demographic information collected about individuals in censuses and surveys, as well as through administrative recording systems, and the cross-classification of these data with other characteristics forms the basis of most analyses of the social and demographic characteristics of the population, as it provides the context within which all other information is placed.'

Sex is a critical statistical variable of national and international importance. There is concern and risk in any changes which could impact the quality of the data collected. However, changes proposed could improve the quality of representation in the current data collected, and reduce the risk of discrimination resulting in some members of the population currently only being provided with incorrect response options. While 2016 Census provided an option for these members of the population to respond accurately, they needed to take additional steps to do this, which were not required for other members of the population. Those who made an effort to respond accurately then had their responses suppressed in the general Census data outputs more or less rendering them invisible. Allowing people to report a sex which is not binary would better enable representation in a population group which is currently under reported and under represented. It would move towards providing an avenue for people to represent their circumstances more accurately and thus have a positive impact on the quality of the data.

Submissions from the Department of Health, Department of Social Services and a number of representative community groups noted that national population data in the Census is vital to addressing the health needs of people who identify as a non-binary sex or gender or those who are bodily diverse. The experience of marginalisation, stigma, isolation, prejudice, social exclusion, discrimination, abuse, and violence in parts of this community result in heightened mental health diagnosis, psychological distress, self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts. The needs are just as strong for the trans community as they are for those with intersex variation characteristics.

It was suggested that many of the programs and initiatives developed by governments and organisations supporting the LGBTI community, and specifically those who identify with a non-binary sex or gender diverse are informed by research outcomes from overseas, or research which is insufficient due to sampling, reach and scope, or anecdotal evidence. 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 Local Governments for a reliable evidence base to inform better decision making on crucial legislation, policies, budgetary investments and programs directly affecting the health and well-being of LGBTI people.

	<p>Hence, it's felt that providing non-binary response options is of national importance from the perspective of representation in collection as well as filling a need for data to aid policy development and implementation, provide services and inform research. However, it's also recognised that the current sex variable is critical for a number of reasons and any potential changes should be well tested and researched to ensure that any quality impacts or known, understood and addressed as much as possible.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - data has a specific legislative purpose and/or is used across policy domains • Medium - data is used to inform some policy or program or in important research • Low - data is used to a limited extent in policy or program development or research 	<p>The existing topic meets the national importance criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex or gender with non-binary responses meets the national importance criterion to a high extent. Either of these options would be a step towards improving representation and removing potentially discriminatory barriers to participation. The pros and cons of asking gender instead of sex are discussed further in the sections on accuracy and acceptability.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the national importance criterion to a medium extent.</p>
<p>There is a need for data from a Census of the whole population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data is needed for small population groups</i> • <i>data is needed for small geographic areas</i> • <i>the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the</i> 	<p>Data on sex are required at the small geographic level and for small population groups for many purposes. Almost all decisions made by governments, businesses and local community groups depend on knowing how many men, women and children of different age groups are located in each part of Australia. Guidance from the United Nations Statistical Division on Censuses states that 'the disaggregation of data by sex is a fundamental requirement for gender statistics. For many socioeconomic and demographic characteristics that could be collected through a census, such as education, economic activity, marital status, migration, disability and living arrangements, there are generally variations by sex. The successful planning and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programmes requires the disaggregation of data by sex to reflect problems, issues and questions related to both men and women in society.'</p> <p>The Census usual residence population collected once every five years becomes the basis for calibrating population estimates across small areas and small population groups and is fundamental to estimating and projecting population statistics in between each Census. Projections are calculated on the basis of trends in births and deaths, total fertility rates,</p>

<p><i>Census</i></p>	<p>life expectancy for males and females and net overseas or interstate migration by sex. Current population estimation and projection models are not structured to consider treatment of non-binary responses and hence this data is treated as a non-response and randomly imputed. The assumption in these models is also that everyone is responding on the basis of their sex at birth even though it is known and accepted that this will not always be the case. Changes to include non-binary sex and/or gender would require revisiting the assumptions in these models and there is currently no international precedent to draw from.</p> <p>It is noted in submissions that the population for who the binary options do not fit are likely to be small relative to the larger population. This makes them hard to locate through sample surveys and makes a Census of the whole population the best opportunity to capture information on this small population group. One submission is quoted as saying 'these data are often thought of as pertaining to a small population group - but given that the only thing we can surmise from the 2016 census is that there was a massive undercount in the 'other' response category, it is hard to estimate the population. So we still have no idea how many gender non-binary, transgender or intersex people live in this country'. The policy drivers addressing under and unemployment, lack of access to housing and homelessness and the impacts of disadvantage and discrimination on mental health need to be measured at the fine geographical level.</p> <p>While the concerns with the impact on population projections are significant, they are not insurmountable. The comparable impact of not having data on the community who need to be reflected by a non-binary gender and sex option is also significant. Service provision is forced to be reactionary and inadequate. Changing the collection will add value in terms of this community increasing in visibility and recognition, but changing the output will also increase the capacity for the community to receive support and services where needed.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - critical need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables • Medium - some need for data at the small population or small area level or for 	<p>The existing topic meets the whole population criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the whole population criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the whole population criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the whole population criterion to a high extent.</p>

<p>cross-tab with other Census variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - no significant need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables 	
<p>The topic can be accurately collected in a form which the household completes themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic is likely to be easily understood by respondents</i> • <i>the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions</i> • <i>respondents will easily know the answer to the question(s)</i> • <i>the question(s) is easy and quick to answer</i> 	<p>On most occasions, a response to a binary sex question is able to be accurately reported by members within a household for themselves or others. For some members of the population, a binary response option cannot be accurately answered if a person does not fit into the categories of male or female. While the current question is treated as sex, the wording does not specify if sex or gender is being requested (although help notes generally referred to reporting sex). As already noted, 2016 Census provided an option for these respondents but there were additional steps involved in obtaining either a paper form or an alternative text online form. The non-binary response category included an optional 'please specify' field which allowed further insight of how people wished to identify. Of those choosing to respond using the 'other' response option, approximately 35% did not provide additional detail, three percent indicated they were intersex or indeterminate sex, and the remainder (just over 60%) responded on the basis of gender.</p> <p>In 2016, as well as the ability to opt in to receive an alternative text form, about 29,000 households were randomly sent only the alternative text form (with response options for male, female and other - please specify). This provided some insight into how respondents reacted to the question and potential quality and accuracy issues. While the numbers were small, results suggested that the non-binary population who were sent only the alternative text form were more than 50 times more likely to select a response of 'other' than those in the general population who needed to follow additional instructions to indicate a response other than male or female. However the respondents were also much less likely to provide additional detail of why they selected other (via the 'please specify' field). Those that provided additional detail were slightly more likely to respond on the basis of gender rather than sex. This live test provided at least some indication that providing non-binary response options would improve the willingness of people to select the 'other' option (where relevant) and showed no discernible impact on the responses of the remaining population. The impact on the quality of responses more generally is discussed further against the acceptability criteria.</p> <p>There have been concerns raised about how the current question on sex conflates sex and gender identity, and as a result yields inaccurate data. The notion that 'male' or 'female' confers on the respondent some specific physical characteristics is not entirely accurate. For instance, if a transgender man was answering the census he would respond with 'male'.</p>

For understanding the population through the lens of 'gender identity' then it serves the purpose. However, if a purpose is to use data for health service planning, then there would need to be a significant accuracy caveat, due to the different health needs that this person would have to that of a person who responded from a biological sex perspective.

Population estimates and projections are based on assumptions that biological sex is being reported. The ABS Standard for Sex and Gender Variables recognises that in some cases an individual may choose to report their gender when sex is being requested due to safety concerns or fear of discrimination. Population estimates and projections are made on the expectation that the response given is on the basis of biological sex, however there is an acceptable amount of error due to the understanding that some respondents will choose to respond on the basis of gender. Stakeholders have suggested that the ABS recognise that it already collects data on gender (on personal identification) rather than sex. By phrasing the Census question without specifying the collection of sex or gender, respondents have a choice to represent in a way they are comfortable. Asking them to respond on the basis of sex, will create circumstances where some respondents will need to actively make a choice to either select a response option that does not represent them, or select one that is not statistically accurate (eg for a trans person, a sex question would be asking them to respond based on sex at birth, but they may prefer to respond on the basis of their current gender). Submitters recommend that the ABS should implement the gender standard instead of the sex standard. They note that this would better represent how a person identifies themselves, rather than restrict them to report on their biological sex.

Another option discussed is the collection of both sex and gender (as separate but related questions). The ABS Standard for Sex and Gender Variables notes,

'In general, both sex and gender should not be collected in a single collection instrument as information gained from either of these variables is sufficient for the majority of statistical purposes. The Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, November 2015 (Attorney-General's Department), advocate the preferred Australian Government approach of collecting and using gender information, with sex only being collected where there is a legitimate need'.

This perspective is being reviewed with some of the statistical agencies in other countries researching options for the collection of both. The outcomes of these tests should be reviewed and further considered when setting the direction for the Australian Census.

Finally, there are further concerns that a lack of acceptability of a question with non-binary response options may result in impacts on accuracy of this and other topics. This is discussed in more detail in the assessment against the acceptability criteria.

Preliminary rating for criterion 3:

The existing topic meets the accurately collected criterion to a **high** extent.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - almost all applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question • 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. • Low - a significant proportion of applicable respondents are either unable to understand or know the answer to the question. 	<p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the accurately collected criterion to a medium extent due to the examples of people responding on the basis of gender noted above.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the accurately collected criterion to a high extent, but may create quality concerns in regard to population estimates and population projection assumptions.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the accurately collected criterion to a medium extent due to the potential confusion and redundancy of asking the two related concepts for the majority of the population.</p>
<p>The topic would be acceptable to Census respondents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic is not likely to be considered intrusive, offensive or controversial</i> • <i>respondents are likely to be willing and able to answer accurately</i> • <i>are there other considerations for specific groups?</i> 	<p>The current sex question is acceptable to the majority of respondents, however could be seen as unacceptable for those that are not identified as male or female. The alternate text form in the 2016 Census provided a more acceptable option for anyone not identifying with one of the binary options, however it required awareness and additional steps to participate and respond accurately.</p> <p>Testing in other countries (most recently New Zealand) has raised concerns that presentation of non-binary response options to this question may result in vandalism and deliberate invalid responses in protest from other members of the population. The Australian pilot test of around 29,000 households (over 70,000 people) in the 2016 Census found no impact on the response rate of households provided with an alternate text form. A small proportion of responses (20 out of 210 responses selecting the 'other' response option) were considered to be invalid on the basis of other indicators showing that they had given an accidental or deliberately invalid response. A proportion of these were for respondents wanting to report their sexual orientation rather than their</p>

	<p>sex or gender. There were no further indicators of vandalism on forms. While this needs further testing, it provides an initial indication that a question with non-binary responses may be generally accepted.</p> <p>There are also sensitivities around how a non-binary option is worded. The use of the term 'other' is not considered an acceptable option, but using more specific terms can alienate those not listed. It is critical that the ABS works with key stakeholders to arrive at appropriate and accurate response option/s which does not further alienate or stigmatise this population group.</p> <p>Finally, if the question is amended to ask for a response based on sex, there may be some concerns from those wanting to report on the basis of gender. The population of those expected to be diverse on the basis of gender is expected to be larger than the population of people with sex characteristics which are not male or female. Hence, a question on the basis of gender (or without specification of whether sex or gender is being requested) is likely to be more acceptable to a wider population of people who are sex, gender or bodily diverse.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - the question is not offensive or controversial and the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able and willing to answer it • Medium - the question may be offensive to some applicable respondents or may cause some controversy • Low - the question is likely to be offensive to a significant proportion of respondents or is highly 	<p>The existing topic meets the acceptability criterion to a medium extent as it is potentially offensive to those who can not accurately respond with the binary options presented.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the acceptability criterion to a medium extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the acceptability criterion to a medium extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the acceptability criterion to a medium extent depending on the outcome of testing.</p>

controversial.	
<p>The topic can be collected efficiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic or question will not present major difficulties for coding the information</i> • <i>the topic or question will not require extensive processing</i> • <i>the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census</i> • <i>the topic will not require a lengthy instruction or explanation</i> • <i>the collection of data on the topic will not require a large number of response categories or multiple questions</i> 	<p>The topic of sex or gender can be collected efficiently. Inclusion of a third response option will present additional difficulties as it will require additional coding, editing and processing. In 2016, while there were options to provide a response other than male or female, for the sake of processing the results, responses were randomly assigned a response of male or female and only reported as 'other' in special articles released alongside the main Census outputs. The presentation of all Census results showing a non-binary categorisation of sex or gender would present challenges that would need to be overcome, and addressed early with key stakeholders.</p> <p>To collect <i>both</i> sex and gender would require the addition of an extra question on the form, which has cost considerations. This extra question along with the sequencing aspect of the questions would have coding, editing and processing implications.</p> <p>Sex is a critical component of estimates of resident population at small area levels as well as models for population projections. A change to the collection of gender, or the addition of a third non-binary response option would present major challenges and require a reconsideration of models and processes for estimating and projecting populations.</p> <p>Efficiencies could be gained by the inclusion of the third response category into the mainstream form, rather than training staff to facilitate the supply of a code through the phone service for those interested in the form allowing them to report their non-binary response option.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 5 subject to closer estimation of cost impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - the topic won't require detailed explanatory text and can be collected in a single question with tick box response options. 	<p>The existing topic meets the collected efficiently criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the collected efficiently criterion to a medium extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the collected efficiently criterion to a medium extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the collected efficiently criterion to a medium extent.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium - the topic may require some explanatory text, multiple questions, or need to be collected in a form that will require some coding • 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. 	
<p>There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic in the following Census.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>there is a need for time series data on the topic</i> • <i>the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future</i> 	<p>The topic of sex is critical to population estimates and projections and has a high level of continuing need. If changes are implemented to introduce non-binary response options, or the collection of gender, this will continue to be of need into the future.</p> <p>The need to understand how policy and services are impacting on the lives of those who identify as gender diverse or as non-binary will continue. Ongoing evaluation of outcomes for this community will be critical to ensure that issues around mental health, general health and social and economic disadvantage are being addressed appropriately and can most effectively be measured through time series of small area Census data. While it's accepted that there may be quality implications with responses to the non-binary option, having this option on the Census will be a step further toward acceptability and in future Census cycles, the quality is expected to continue to improve as the target population becomes less fearful of identifying and the general population becomes more accepting and less concerned with a questions which may challenge their views.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - critical current need for time series data and/or certain need for data in 2026 • Medium - 	<p>The existing topic meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p>

<p>significant current need for time series data and/or likely need for data in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - no significant current need for time series data and/or unlikely that data will be needed in 2026 	
<p>There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data which is collected for administrative purposes</i> • <i>the topic is collected in an ABS survey or by another organisation</i> • <i>data is produced through integration of existing data sources</i> 	<p>There are no alternative data sources suitable for this purpose. As noted by the United Nations Statistical Division, the collection of sex (along with age) is fundamental part of any Census. The topic is critical estimates and projections of the population, as well as being a significant linkage variable for the purposes of enhancing Census data by matching it with other administrative data sets.</p> <p>There are also no alternative data sources for information on the sex, gender and bodily diverse population in Australia. The target population is difficult to identify through sample surveys, and service providers often have to rely on assumptions and international research to be able to estimate the size of the community and the likely demand for services.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - no suitable alternate data source available • Medium - suitable alternate data source available • Low - highly suitable alternate data 	<p>The existing topic meets the no suitable alternative criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on sex with non-binary response options meets the no suitable alternative criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a question on gender with non-binary response options meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p> <p>The proposed topic for a two part question for both sex <i>and</i> gender meets the continuing need criterion to a high extent.</p>

source available	
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Assessment for preliminary recommendation of topic

Explanation of the preliminary recommendation section of this document.

<p>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?</p>	<p>The preliminary assessment of direction is strong case for change to existing topic to add a non-binary response option. The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with investigating the addition of a new topic on gender. This is an area of strong community interest evidenced by the number of submissions received. It is also an area where community attitudes are changing rapidly both in Australia and internationally. Although there are some low ratings on some criteria it would be prudent to continue investigation of this area. 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>This assessment of direction and ratings of the topic against each criterion at close of submissions is endorsed by [Program Manager] on [Date]</p>
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<p>Feedback from external fora - PSSAG, SSF and ASAC (19 July and 1 August 2018)</p>	<p>Discussion at PSSAG resulted in strong support for a non-binary sex option, and a degree of hesitation about gender identity when collected in addition to sex. While members noted data on gender identity was important, issues relating to this population group were already being addressed at the local level. The conversation grounded was in the context of relative priority as well as the potential risk and error 📄.</p> <p>SSF were also supportive of including a non binary sex option, but had mixed levels of enthusiasm for a gender identity topic. QLD are very enthusiastic on this topic and have already started collecting gender identity information through their Queensland Social Survey. They were keen to share findings from their investigations into data quality and collaborate with the ABS on question wording as we move into the testing phase. WA on the other hand noted that gender identity information was not a relative priority when in comparison to other topics.</p> <p>ASAC 1/8 - 📄 Non-binary sex, gender identity and sexual orientation - These topics attracted the most interest and discussion. Was broad support for collecting non-binary sex. Questions were raised about whether it would be asked as a pick list or other specify.</p> <p>In terms of gender identity and sexual orientation there was discussion on what the policy/service delivery driver is. These items weren't generally supported. It was also discussed that there would be confusion in the community about sex vs gender if both were to be collected. The group</p>
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	recognised that this is an evolving area for future Censuses and that we should flag the longer term direction. ASAC believes that the priority for 2021 is for non-binary sex - the ASAC paper proposed gender identity in addition to sex, so no real feedback on non-binary gender instead of sex.
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 strong case to proceed with investigating options for this topic/s. 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

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

Draft Topic Summary

Sexual orientation (NEW)


Purpose of this document


Instructions for sign off by subject matter Program Manager

Questions relating to this topic:	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC
Census regulation wording 📄	PROPOSED NEW TOPIC

Contacts for this topic	
Subject matter areas: (primary and secondary)	Household Characteristics and Social Reporting

Topic summary

<p>Initial direction from publication (2007.0) released prior to public consultation</p>	<p>There are currently no questions on sexual orientation collected on the Census, however the inclusion of a question on this topic has been previously raised as a potential information need.</p>
<p>Summary of consultation topic suggestions</p>	<p>At all levels of government and across community organisations there is an expressed need to better understand the characteristics and circumstances of the LGBTI community in Australia.</p> <p>Submissions note that demand for data on the sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics of the Australian population far exceeds supply. Not having options to complete this data correctly leads to invalidation and erasure. LGBTI people experience multiple, interconnected and recurring forms of harm related directly to their gender identity and gender expression, sexuality and/or their sex characteristics. It is coming up against societal prejudices, rather than identity and expression, that results in LGBTI people’s experiences of marginalisation, stigma, isolation and prejudice. The Australian Human Rights Commission in their report released in 2015 (see below) discuss how not only culture, but legislation and policies have also impacted the experiences of LGBTI people. They note that 'the legacy of State-sanctioned discrimination is significant in its legitimisation of institutional and interpersonal discrimination across society. Governments have had a leading role in creating this culture, and so must also take a lead role in undoing it.'</p> <p>Of all submissions relating to this topic, many also identified a need for data on all three aspects that help define the community represented by the term LGBTI (this includes data on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status). Changes to questions on sex and gender will provide some of the data required, but a question on sexual orientation data will provide a more complete picture of the community. More detail on options for collecting sex and gender data is included in the summary here: .</p> <p>Related articles: Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Intersex Rights 2015 (published by Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015) Office of Survey Methods Research, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2018). "Assessing the Feasibility of Asking About Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Current Population Survey: Results from Cognitive Interviews." Available from: https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2018/adrm/rsm2018-06.pdf</p> <p>A note on terminology Appropriate terminology in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status can be strongly contested and evolve over time. For the purposes of this report, the acronym 'LGBTI' is used to collectively represent a diverse community made up of a number of sub-groups (some which may not be directly represented</p>

	by the letters in the acronym). While commonly used in submissions and this report, the use of the LGBTI acronym is not intended to exclude or offend any groups not directly identified.
Summary of submissions and engagement Link to PDFs of all submissions on this topic are here:  All 2021 submissions received on - Sexual identity/orientation	19 submissions were received requesting the addition of topics on sexual orientation or sexual identity. Over half of these submissions were from local councils. Department of Social Services and the Department of Health also indicated a need for data on this topic, as well as a range of academic, community and advocacy groups. 2021 Submissions or related submissions:
Working comments (to be deleted prior to finalisation for PM)	

Topic assessment against criteria

<p>1. The topic is of current national importance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data is required for an electoral or legislative purpose</i> • <i>data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring</i> • <i>data is used for research purposes</i> 	<p>National population data in the Census is vital to addressing the health needs that LGBTI people experience. The experience 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.</p> <p>Census data is being used as a key evaluation tool for different levels of government, specifically Local Government. Submissions note that the lack of visibility of this population group in data means that they are being omitted from being identified in reports, particularly those profiling vulnerable and priority populations.</p> <p>Currently many of the programs and initiatives developed by governments and organisations supporting the LGBTI community are informed by research outcomes from overseas, or research which is insufficient due to sampling, reach and scope or anecdotal evidence. 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 Local Governments for a reliable evidence base to inform better decision making on crucial legislation, policies, budgetary investments and programs directly affecting the health and well-being of LGBTI people and their children/families.</p> <p>By gathering statistics on sexual orientation, the three levels of government and non-government organisations are able to plan, legislate and provide resources that support the LGBTI communities health and development, in terms of aged care, mental health, general health services, childcare. Submissions note that there is the need to effectively evaluate national programs such as the Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan, Aged Care Diversity Framework, Ageing plan. These plans list three vulnerable priority groups for action: the LGBTI community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Culturally</p>
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	<p>and Linguistically Diverse people. The Census provides data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse people, but there is an absence of data to evaluate these programs for the LGBTI population group.</p> <p>The Department of Health support this data need to inform the Aged Care Diversity Framework which identifies the requirement to provide care that meets a person’s individual diverse needs. Where services are already being provided it also supports better evaluation of their success or otherwise, there is currently a gap in this data to facilitate small area measurement.</p> <p>Finally, submissions note that Australia is a signatory to the Yogyakarta Principles +10, which are a set of principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. The Principles affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply. These overarching principles outline the role of appropriate data collection in reducing poverty and social exclusion related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions and sex characteristics.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - data has a specific legislative purpose and/or is used across policy domains • Medium -data is used to inform some policy or program or in important research • Low - data is used to a limited extent in policy or program development or research 	<p>This topic meets the national importance criterion to a medium extent.</p>
<p>2. There is a need for data from a Census of the whole population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data is needed for small population</i> 	<p>There is a growing need to develop policies and programs to facilitate the enhanced and targeted provision of services available to people in the LGBTI community and their families with a goal to improve their social and health outcomes. To do this they need to access authoritative cross-cutting data to inform policy to address the unique and significant risks associated with individuals identifying as a part of the LGBTI community, such as increased risk of homelessness (ABS, General Social Survey, 2014) and higher risks of mental health problems (AHRC, 2014).</p>

<p><i>groups</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data is needed for small geographic areas</i> • <i>the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the Census</i> 	<p>Without a Census based collection able to report on small population groups, Government agencies need to rely on service providers to report anecdotal evidence on LGBTI demand for services. This is often inconsistently recorded and/or reported.</p> <p>There are repeated calls to access data which facilitates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • needs analysis across different geographic areas to determine priority areas for investment (small geographic areas) • cross classification to better understand disadvantage across the LGBTI community and analyse the intersectionality between LGBTI and other population groups • program design to provide necessary specialist services for LGBTI Australians where a need is identified • program implementation and management to ensure existing funded services provide necessary support for LGBTI people and their families. <p>Current policies, strategies and programmes identify Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and LGBTI people among three vulnerable priority groups for action. However, while national population data exists on two of these groups, there is a notable lack of inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and variations in sex characteristics. The value of LGBTI-inclusive questions with changes to the Sex and Gender topic will be enhanced through generating and combining data with all vulnerable and priority groups in the Census.</p> <p>There has also been significant interest in being able to drive services tailored to the aged care sector, the mental health services, and to address discrimination and social isolation. The Aged Care Diversity Framework, through the Dept of Health, identifies the need to provide care that meets a persons individual diverse needs.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - critical need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables • Medium - some need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with 	<p>This topic meets the whole population criterion to a high extent.</p>

<p>other Census variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - no significant need for data at the small population or small area level or for cross-tab with other Census variables 	
<p>3. The topic can be accurately collected in a form which the household completes themselves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic is likely to be easily understood by respondents</i> • <i>the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions</i> • <i>respondents will easily know the answer to the question(s)</i> • <i>the question(s) is easy and quick to answer</i> 	<p>There is an acknowledgement that there would need to be tests conducted to investigate the implications of having a question on sexual orientation on a household form. The accuracy could be impacted by whether the person completing the household form is aware of the sexual orientation of those they are completing the form on behalf of. However, promoting the ability for people to access a personal form may mitigate this issue.</p> <p>The ABS has had some experience with sexual orientation questions being asked in interviewer administered household questions. While the Census is self administered, experience from the development and testing of these questions will assist in the development of a question for the Census.</p> <p>Internationally there is ongoing research and discussion about introducing a question around sexual identity/orientation with Statistics Canada, Statistics NZ and Ireland opting not to include questions on this topic on the Census. ONS and Scotland are in the process of testing question design and response options.</p> <p>Overall, it's noted that there is a need for close collaboration with representatives of the LGBTI community and testing more generally to ensure questions are respectful, understood and clear in what responses are appropriate. There is no clear precedent in regard to appropriate questions to ask on this topic on a Census, however there is a range of international testing resources to refer to, and community researchers engaged in wanting to support the development of an appropriate question/s.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - almost all applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question • Medium - the 	<p>This topic meets the accurate collection criterion to a medium extent as there is a need for development work to better explore concepts and test how they can be accurately collected from all respondents.</p>

<p>majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able to easily understand and answer the question; development work may be required to explore concept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - a significant proportion of applicable respondents are either unable to understand or know the answer to the question. 	
<p>4. The topic would be acceptable to Census respondents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic is not likely to be considered intrusive, offensive or controversial</i> • <i>respondents are likely to be willing and able to answer accurately</i> • <i>are there other considerations for specific groups?</i> 	<p>There is a broad acknowledgement that both within the LGBTI community and the wider Australian public there may be concerns with why this question is being asked due to the perception that this question is of a personal nature. Within the LGBTI community there are historical concerns about prejudice and discrimination which could lead to a lack of trust around why individuals are required to provide this information. Consultations with LGBTI stakeholders by the Department of Health indicate that as a group who have a history of being discriminated against, addressing the lack of data on basic information about who they are and how they identify themselves is a core focus of LGBTI communities and they are likely to want to support mechanisms for increased collection of such information.</p> <p>There is also concern that the broader population may not understand why the government is interested in this information. However, with public discourse evolving around the topic of same sex marriage and the legalisation of same sex marriage in Australia in 2017, it is expected that this may contribute to reducing stigma the associated collecting data on sexual orientation.</p> <p>The Department of Health and the National LGBTI Health Alliance raised awareness to the parallels with the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status. Similar concerns of acceptability to be asked of the general population, and concerns from the community of how the data may be used have impacted on response over time. While there is still an acknowledged under count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the Census, it is an accepted quality impact that the ABS has worked to improve over time due to the importance and value placed on having a measure of this community. It's acknowledged that a similar journey may</p>

	<p>be required for LGBTI community statistics, acknowledging that quality is likely to improve over time as it becomes more accepted as part the general discourse.</p> <p>Several submissions have suggested that, like the question on religion, a question on sexual orientation could be an optional, non-compulsory question to mitigate any concerns or issues with respondents disengaging with the remainder of the Census. The ONS has tested a range of questions two of which allow the respondent to either elect not to say or not answer. The results are international research and testing will be referred to and considered as work on developing this topic is progressed.</p> <p>The LGBTI Health Alliance expressed the importance for the ABS to develop and test question wording and response options which would be accepted by the community, reaching out to organisations who can educate around the best use of terminology. This will also need to be considered from a culturally diverse perspective as well.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - the question is not offensive or controversial and the majority of applicable respondents are likely to be able and willing to answer it • Medium - the question may be offensive to some applicable respondents or may cause some controversy • Low - the question is likely to be offensive to a significant proportion of respondents or is highly controversial. 	<p>This topic meets the acceptability criterion to a medium extent.</p>
<p>5. The topic can</p>	<p>While there is no precedent of collecting this question in the Census, the</p>

<p>be collected efficiently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>the topic or question will not present major difficulties for coding the information</i> • <i>the topic or question will not require extensive processing</i> • <i>the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census</i> • <i>the topic will not require a lengthy instruction or explanation</i> • <i>the collection of data on the topic will not require a large number of response categories or multiple questions</i> 	<p>experience of collecting similar information in the General Social Survey (although interviewer administered) can assist in developing options for the Census. There is also significant international research and examples of collections by community and advocacy groups, and academic researchers that can assist. The question options are likely to be primarily mark in responses however an option for a free text field for people to respond using language they are comfortable with should be explored.</p> <p>As noted by the Australian Human Rights Commission in the report 'Resilient Individuals' linked above: <i>'Respect for individuality impacts on a person's self-worth and inherent dignity. The use of inclusive terminology respects individuality and enables visibility of important issues'</i> The reports goes on to note that <i>'Terminology is strongly contested, particularly terminology to describe gender identity. Previous consultation work conducted by the Commission revealed there is no clear consensus on what is appropriate terminology in this area.'</i> While there are common terms used, there are variations that individuals adopt on the basis of their own culture and experience. Each label can represent a long fight to claim with pride a term that the individual can relate to. It's important and respectful to allow opportunities for individuals to identify themselves in terms they are comfortable with. While this may represent additional processing effort to code and classify terminology for the purposes of producing data, it is a vital aspect of collecting data with respect and recognition. In a similar way to the continually evolving classification of religious groups, it should be anticipated that terminology in this instance may continue to evolve over time.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 5 subject to closer estimation of cost impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - the topic won't require detailed explanatory text and can be collected in a single question with tick box response options. • Medium - the topic may require some explanatory 	<p>This topic meets the efficiency collection criterion to a high extent.</p>

<p>text, multiple questions, or need to be collected in a form that will require some coding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	
<p>6. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic in the following Census.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>there is a need for time series data on the topic</i> • <i>the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future</i> 	<p>It is believed that this data need will be ongoing, and remain relevant into the future as it is an important step in recognising the members of the LGBTI community and with the ability to cross classify this will highlight the unique challenges faced by members of the community. Continuing collection of these characteristics in future Census' will not only inform contemporary policy making for the planning and provision of social policy, health services and infrastructure, but will also provide longitudinal insight into the changing circumstances and outcomes of these cohorts. This will serve to evaluate ongoing policy outcomes and inform the development of more relevant and effective services and their impact over time.</p> <p>Time series data can also inform ongoing work to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for intersectional sub-populations. It can also identify the impacts of inequity and discrimination on these sub-populations and highlight where intervention programs have achieved positive results.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - critical current need for time series data and/or certain need for data in 2026 • Medium - significant current need for time series data and/or likely need for 	<p>This topic meets the continuing need criterion to a medium extent.</p>

<p>data in 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low - no significant current need for time series data and/or unlikely that data will be needed in 2026 	
<p>7. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>data which is collected for administrative purposes</i> • <i>the topic is collected in an ABS survey or by another organisation</i> • <i>data is produced through integration of existing data sources</i> 	<p>Currently policy and service delivery is being formulated and based on overseas research, estimates and sampling from a biased sample base (namely those who are already engaged in the community and using services, missing those who are not as connected). At times the only evidence is anecdotal, which raises questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of development and delivery of targeted services. During engagement, stakeholders from advocacy groups commented that they were often asked for data to inform policy development and service delivery, and had to respond that the data just doesn't exist.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the ABS is able to identify same sex couples living together from data collected, however submissions are advocating the need to broaden this collection to capture those couples who are not living together or who are not in a relationship. The concern raised being that decisions have been found to be founded on the same sex couples living together counts, resulting in an undercount. While there are two ABS data sources collecting sexual orientation (4159.0 - General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia, 2014 and 4326.0 - National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007.) there is a need for whole of population data at a finer geographic area level to support local level service and policy provision.</p> <p>Similarly, data collection on LGBTI Australians from other agencies and organisations is inconsistent and is often narrow in scope or surveys only a small segment of the population. For example, the National LGBTI Health Alliance commissions targeted research into the physical and mental health of LGBTI Australians and the Australian Institute of Family Studies publishes research on same-sex parented families in Australia. Census data would serve to provide benchmark information for future research on LGBTI Australians.</p>
<p>Preliminary rating for criterion 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High - no suitable alternate data source available • Medium - suitable alternate data source 	<p>This topic meets the no alternative data source criterion to a high extent.</p>

available • Low - highly suitable alternate data source available	
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Assessment for preliminary recommendation of topic

Explanation of the preliminary recommendation section of this document.

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?	<p>The preliminary assessment of direction is limited case to proceed with investigating a new topic. This is an area of strong community interest evidenced by the number of submissions received. It is also an area where community attitudes are changing rapidly both in Australia and internationally. Although there are some low ratings on some criteria it would be prudent to continue investigation of this area. 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>This assessment of direction and ratings of the topic against each criterion at close of submissions is endorsed by Dean Bowley (PM ISI) on 3 Aug 18</p>
Feedback from external fora - PSSAG and ASAC (19 July and 1 August 2018)	<p>ASAC 1/8 - 📄 Non-binary sex, gender identity and sexual orientation - These topics attracted the most interest and discussion. Was broad support for collecting non-binary sex. Questions were raised about whether it would be asked as a pick list or other specify.</p> <p>In terms of gender identity and sexual orientation there was discussion on what the policy/service delivery driver is. These items weren't generally supported. It was also discussed that there would be confusion in the community about sex vs gender if both were to be collected. The group recognised that this is an evolving area for future Censuses and that we should flag the longer term direction. ASAC believes that the priority for 2021 is for non-binary sex - the ASAC paper proposed gender identity in addition to sex, so no real feedback on non-binary gender instead of sex.</p>
First internal peer review feedback and rating (8 August 2018)	<p>📄 2021 Census Topic Review - Peer Review 8 August 2018 [key documents]</p> <p>Discussion at the peer review resulted in a rating of moderate case to proceed with this topic. Next stage will be further engagement and testing (details to be captured here: 📄).</p>
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
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Is this topic recommended for inclusion in 2021?	
Comments	

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)
- Removing household internet access
- Removing motor vehicles garaged.

Changes to enhance the value of some current topics are being tested, but those that remain actively under investigation will not require changes to the Regulations. Refinement work is continuing on these topics in readiness for inclusion in the October 2019 field test.

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

- Sexual orientation
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- Smoking status
- Household and family measures (including shared care of children).

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.

3 Process for recommendation approval

The process for approval of recommendations is as follows:

- Paper presented to ASAC and Census Executive Board in March 2019 for advice
- Endorsement of direction by Subject Matter SES in April 2019
- Detailed recommendations paper submitted to Senior Responsible Officer for approval early May 2019
- Australian Statistician approves ABS recommendations to Minister
- Minister briefing and approval of recommendations in mid/late June 2019
- Cabinet Submission drafting in August 2019 for presentation by Minister to Cabinet for approval by September 2019
- Regulations tabled in both Houses of Parliament to be passed between October 2019 – March 2020
- Census paper household form content finalised in March 2020
- Census digital channel household form content finalised in November 2020
- Final content published in mid-2020.

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.

5 Overview of public consultation

The public 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.

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.

A paper was published in early November 2018 outlining directions for new and existing topics resulting from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement, research, and testing ([cat. no. 2007.0.55.001](#)).

During the public consultation, 450 submissions were received with 355 focused on changes or additions to Census topics. The other submissions suggested changes to standards, classifications or Census procedures and have been referred to the relevant sections of the ABS for further consideration.

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). 58 submissions were received from individuals.

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.

Each submission was reviewed against the assessment criteria. The suggested changes for Census topics were also reviewed to determine if needs could be met from existing data sources.

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

- Chronic health conditions
- Journey to education
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (inc. ancestry and main language assessment)
- Current or previous service in 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.

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
Journey to education	M	H	M	M	L	M	M
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	H	H	M	M	L	M	H
Australian Defence Force indicator	M	H	H	M	H	M	H
Smoking status	H	H	H	M	H	M	M
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
Household/Family composition improvements	H	H	M	M	M	H	H
Shared care of children	M	H	M	M	L	M	H

Changes to a number of existing topics were flagged for exploration based on consultation feedback. This includes changes related to disability assistance through aids and equipment, care provided by young carers, and better identification of participants in early childhood education.

Two topics were identified by the ABS for removal (household internet access, and motor vehicles garaged).

Each of the topics noted above are discussed further throughout this report.

A number of new topics that generated interest were not considered a priority based on assessment against the criteria. These topics have not been recommended for inclusion in the 2021 Census and investigations through the topic review work program were limited:

- Sources of income
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation
- Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling
- Other languages spoken
- Other health related topics
- Digital literacy or inclusion
- Multiple occupations and the gig economy.

A number of changes to existing topics were also not considered a priority for 2021 Census. This included changes to religion, occupation, industry of employment and volunteering.

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
Journey to education	Do not add new topic
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity	Do not add new topic
Smoking status	Do not add new topic
Household/Family composition improvements	Do not change current topic
Shared care of children	Do not add new topic

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.

To consider adding new topics, the respondent burden and cost implications are again important, requiring the removal of some topics that are less relevant. Two recommendations to remove topics are noted in the table below and outlined further in section 9.

Topic	Recommendations
Household internet access	Remove topic
Motor vehicles garaged	Remove topic

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.

Details of the topics for which changes are being considered are outlined in the table following and discussed further in sections 10 and 11. Some of these changes will continue

to be pursued beyond the timeframe for providing recommendations to Government. Where relevant, some changes that have been ruled out for the 2021 Census will continued to be investigated by relevant subject matter areas for possible future change.

Topic	Recommendations
Need for assistance	Changes to collect the use of aids and equipment are not recommended. There are challenges with expanding outputs to include the type of need for assistance (for self-care, body movement and communication activities). We are continuing to review options in consultation with the stakeholder, but the expanded output is not being recommended.
Highest non-school qualifications	No change recommended to 'year of qualification completion'.
Unpaid care of person due to disability, long term illness or old age	No change recommended to collect this topic for people under 15 years old.
Income	Changing to write in income is not recommended. Changes to the size of ranges and reversing the order of response options are recommended.
Attendance at educational institution	Recommend changes to response options and instruction text to better identify early childhood education, home schooling and Vocational Education and Training.
Type of tenure and landlord type	Recommend some changes to response options to better identify social/community housing and subsidised purchases. Changes to identify subsidised renting are not recommended.
Measures of homelessness	Recommend changes to instructions for usual address question to better capture couch surfing.
Country of birth of parents	Recommend changes to instructions only to provide better guidance for same sex parents.
Main language other than English spoken at home	Recommend instruction changes to encourage better representation for sign language and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as a response category.
Ancestry	Recommend adding response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestries.

Attachment B shows how the new and changed topics would be represented in amendments to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Tabling of new regulations will be late in 2019 after a Cabinet decision on the recommendations.

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.

Although exact costs have not been determined, the initial estimate for capture, processing and analysis of the four topics is under \$500 thousand, including:

- Chronic health conditions - under \$100 thousand
- Australian Defence Force service - under \$60 thousand
- Non-binary sex and gender identity - under \$150 thousand each.

If selected, sexual orientation would add costs of around \$150 thousand, while Journey to Education would add about \$1.5 million dollars to costs. Estimates have not been prepared for other reviewed topics.

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.

Communication strategies will be developed in collaboration with the Census Program, and employed at appropriate times to alleviate privacy concerns and to inform of the need for the topics and potential uses of the data. These will involve leveraging support of advocates and stakeholders requesting the topics to help inform how the data will be of value and may be used.

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

Topic Definition	For all persons, types of chronic health conditions as diagnosed by a doctor or nurse.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and/or previous service in the Australian Defence Force (regular and/or reserve).
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Add new topic to the 2021 Census 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:

53 Has the person ever served in the Australian Defence Force? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Includes Australian Army, Royal Australian Air Force and Australian Navy, Second Australian Imperial Force and national service.• Exclude service for non-Australian defence forces.• Mark all that apply, like this: <input type="checkbox"/>	<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

Topic Definition	For all persons, collect sex with non-binary response options.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Change existing topic to collect sex with non-binary response options.</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>7 What is the person's sex?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sex may be different to gender. A question on gender will follow later in the form.• Mark box, like this: <input type="checkbox"/> <p> Go to census.abs.gov.au 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>
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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.

Procedures followed in 2016 Census

In 2016, there were a number of ways that people had available to report a non-binary response to sex. Information on the options available via both paper and online forms were distributed through stakeholder networks and available in the online help information. Details were also included in media talking points and field staff manuals.

Paper form – If requested, respondents were instructed to leave both male and female blank, and to provide more information in the space next to the response options.

3 Is the person male or female?
• Mark one box for each person, like this:

Male
 Female

WRITE RESPONSE HERE

Online form – the online form contained binary responses of male and female and an instruction for respondents to call the Census Inquiry Service if they wanted an alternative version of the form with non-binary response.

Is [Person name] male or female?

- If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, it is possible to use a Census form to do so. Please call the Census Inquiry Service on 1300 214 531 for information on how to identify as other than male or female.

Male

Female

Once a respondent had opted in, they were sent a log in for an alternative online form. The alternative was identical to the main Census online form, with the exception of the sex question which included three options of male, female and other (please specify).

Is [Person name] male, female or other?

[Less Information](#)

If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, please select 'Other'. The 'please specify' box can be used if the person wishes to provide more information.

Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population. All personal information provided in your Census form remains strictly confidential to the ABS.

Male

Female

Other (please specify)

A **live pilot** was also conducted with around 29,000 households being sent log in details for the alternative online form with non-binary responses. With the exception of those in the pilot, there was no way to access the alternative online form without speaking to a call centre agent.

When processing 2016 Census data, all non-binary responses were coded randomly to male or female, and all output tables only reported binary sex. A series of special articles were released providing more information on non-binary responses.

The 2016 Census counted 1,260 sex and/or gender diverse people in Australia (190 from the pilot, and 1080 through other options). Some 35% of sex and/or gender diverse people indicated they were non-binary or another gender. A further 26% reported they were trans male, trans female or transgender.

8.4 Gender identity

Topic Definition	For all persons aged 15 years and over, collect gender.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Add new topic to the 2021 Census.</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 publicly, 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 for more information.

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Gender fluid
- Another gender (please specify)
- 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

Topic Definition	For persons over 15 years old, current sexual orientation
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</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.

8.6 Journey to Education

Topic Definition	For all persons, currently attending an educational institution: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) the name and address of the educational institution b) the mode of travel to the educational institution on Census day
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add new topic to 2021 Census</p> <p>While the data would be valuable, there are accuracy and burden concerns in regard to respondents providing addresses, and major operational feasibility concerns due to the time, effort and cost required to develop, process and disseminate this topic. A number of options to reduce the cost, effort and burden for this topic have been tested or considered. While they may reduce the complexity, the overall cost, effort and risk with implementing this set of topics would still be significant, making the topic unfeasible to recommend for the 2021 Census.</p>

Data or policy needs

In the 2016 Census there were approximately 10 million employed people who provided details of how they travel to work. There was estimated to be around 5 million students who may also travel regularly for their education. Travel for education makes up a significant portion of travel during peak hours. Used with journey to work data, this information would provide an improved understanding of traffic flows and transport patterns in towns and cities. This data would be used by transport planners across state/territory government and local councils to model infrastructure demand. Details of the educational institution attended for students could also provide information to improve the quality of data collected on the type of educational institution attended.

An inter-jurisdictional group comprising officials from Commonwealth, state and territory transport and infrastructure agencies, provided strong support for this topic as a key data need from the Census. This group (Australian Transportation Data Action Network – ATDAN) is co-chaired by the ABS and Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) which is within the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

The submissions from ATDAN also included consultation and support from the Departments of Education and Training (Commonwealth and State in QLD and WA) and Local Government Associations. Support from submissions also came from individuals, a range of local councils and their representatives, and TAFE NSW. Some state transport departments also made separate submissions to voice support.

Engagement has been undertaken with BITRE and ATDAN to share the challenges with implementing this new topic, and the likely direction that it would not be recommended. BITRE have indicated that they are disappointed with this direction, but understand the reasons presented. At a meeting with ATDAN in April 2019, some jurisdictional representatives expressed dissatisfaction with the likely direction to not include this topic.

They noted their intention to challenge through political means at the Commonwealth and state levels. However, this was not raised by jurisdictions at follow on discussions with Commonwealth governing bodies and we are unlikely to see a challenge raised at this level or by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

Respondent implications

If included, this topic would apply to persons who indicate they are attending an educational institution (approx. 5.5 million in 2016). The name and address of the educational institution would be 1-2 questions with free text responses. The mode of transport would be similar to the mode of transport to work question currently asked, containing a list of responses and the ability to mark all that apply. There would also need to be response options for study from home and not attending an educational institution on Census day.

The Census form already collects one dwelling address, and up to four additional addresses per person (usual address, address one and five years ago, and workplace address). This topic would potentially add a fifth address per person. When completing a form for a family, a respondent may need to provide several addresses if they have a number of children attending preschool and/or school.

Testing has shown that respondents don't generally know the full address of educational institutions and they will either provide a guess, an incomplete address, or they will take additional time to look up the address. Names of educational institutions are also likely to generate abbreviated responses and various acronyms for the same institution. A tertiary student may also attend various campuses at the one institution and guidance in this situation would need to be provided.

Testing included options where only the name of the educational institution and a suburb or campus were requested. This was found to be easier for a respondent to answer, but creates more resource intensive process for the ABS to match their response to a list of institutions and addresses.

Topics including addresses can also generate additional privacy concerns, however this has not yet been identified as a concern in testing.

Operational feasibility

Collecting the responses to produce this data requires up to three questions which could take nearly two pages on the paper form. Expansion of the paper form from 22 to 26 pages is being considered; this topic on its own would utilise much of this space. Collecting through the online form is not limited by this constraint and functionality that may simplify response has been investigated, however most options result in more effort to edit, code and process data.

Journey to work data currently involves complex processing of addresses, destination zones and commuting distances. Coding addresses can require a large degree of manual intervention to ensure quality outputs. The amount of manual coding for incomplete addresses is likely to be higher for this topic as testing has shown most people will not know the street address of the educational institution and will use several names, abbreviations or acronyms for the institution name. In form coding for online forms may assist with improving the quality of responses and reducing processing, but needs further testing and development to determine the best way to implement.

The key information required to inform transport planning is the home address and educational institution address (to determine journey start and end points) and the mode of travel. The name of the educational institution will help with determining the address if insufficient information is provided. It is anticipated that there will be different degrees of non-response in providing the address for an educational institution. This could be related to a lack of knowledge of the address, or respondent fatigue if completing a form for a large family or household. Access to address lists of educational institutions may aid in the process of quality control, but it will still require a significant amount of manual intervention to provide quality data. Discussions with the Department of Education and Training showed there would be challenges with the availability and quality of lists covering all levels of education within scope of this topic. Lists of primary and secondary schools would be reasonable quality with sufficient detail. Gathering similar lists for pre-schools, early childhood, tertiary and vocational education and training would prove more challenging, with variable quality.

Current journey to work processes could provide the template for implementing journey to education processing and outputs. Journey to work processing incurs significant cost and effort to produce output data. Adding journey to education will incur significant additional processing cost. This will require extra resources and there is some risk that even with additional funds, implementing a change of this scale will take expertise away from other Census program development which is needed for setting up for the 2021 Census operations.

The journey to work topic provides detailed outputs with multiple modes of transport, origin and destination details and in 2016, interactive maps based on commuting distance. If the topic is included, the capacity to output similar detail would need to be explored, as well as a combined commuting picture (combining journey to work and journey to education data). This would be very costly. Engagement with stakeholders would be required to determine the minimum viable product rather than invest in replicating the outputs for journey to work.

Cost estimates were compiled and initial indications are that the topic could add a few million dollars to the cost of the Census (with \$1.5 million estimated for ongoing capture, coding, processing and analysis). While jurisdictional stakeholders indicated they may be

willing to contribute funding to adding this topic, there are risks and considerations beyond cost (mentioned above) which also impact on the feasibility of delivering this topic for the 2021 Census. The cost and complexity would also limit the ability to add other new topics to the Census. Similar estimates for the four topic changes recommended to add to the 2021 Census suggest that all four topics could be implemented for under \$500 thousand.

Statistical impacts

The potential for this additional set of questions creating address response fatigue needs to be considered. Many of the addresses collected in the Census are critical for population estimates and projections, as well as providing journey to work data. If this topic was added, further testing would be required to assess potential for address fatigue having an impact on the quality of other addresses. The overall increase in respondent burden may adversely affect overall Census response rates.

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8.7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity

Topic Definition	For all persons of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, more detail on their cultural identity in terms of identification with their clan/mob/nation.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census. The cultural identity topic has been assessed as not meeting data needs and the respondent sensitivities may affect the quality of response. The operational cost of implementing this topic would also be high. Changes will be explored for language and ancestry to increase inclusiveness, as well as investment into other strategies to improve participation.

Data or policy needs

The main driver for this new topic was to increase the relevance of the Census to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve participation and reduce the undercount. Submissions were received from the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet supporting the addition of a topic on identification with a clan/mob/nation as a means to improve the undercount, but there were not specific policy needs for the data from this topic.

Through initial rounds of testing (including user centred design tests on ways to improve participation), and discussion at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table, concerns were identified with how the data for this topic may be used. Potential misuse could include negative reporting of “true aboriginality” and impact on land claims.

Other suggestions included changes to the current ancestry and main language spoken questions, to better recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Early testing indicated the change to ancestry is particularly welcome. These changes are discussed further in section 10.

Though not in scope of the 2021 Census topic review, a strong interest was expressed in being able to measure the difference between those that are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, and those that identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This is a major piece of work with implications beyond the Census. A review of this concept, taking into account potential changes to the current standard, will be conducted in the next few years by the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics.

Respondent implications

An additional question on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity was initially tested including yes/no options and free text to identify clan/nation/mob. This was generally well received, although a small number of participants raised concerns with providing accurate data for a write in response – they noted both concerns with accurate spelling, as well as not knowing the answer, or having multiple answers, to this question. An example of the question which was tested is below:

<p>Does the person identify with a nation, clan, mob, language group or other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander regional group?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> No																														
	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (please specify name)																														
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>																														
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but unsure of name																															

Operational feasibility

If collected, outputs for a new clan/nation/mob topic would be based on free text responses, so an input and output classification will need to be created. The current standard language classification includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and can also be used where relevant.

A free text response would have a high processing burden. The potential for different spelling of responses will make developing and coding to a classification difficult with a large amount of manual intervention likely, especially for the first cycle where this topic is introduced.

There may be data quality concerns a low geographic levels, particularly in areas where there are diverse clans/language groups in a single location.

Statistical impacts

There is a risk of non-response for the additional clan/nation/mob question due to sensitivities and concerns about how the data could be used. We would need to also assess any potential quality risk to the Indigenous status question.

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8.8 Smoking Status

Topic Definition	For all persons of 15 years or older, collect current and previous smoking status.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Do not add new topic to 2021 Census There is strong demand for a health related topic, but the chronic health conditions topic is preferred and has broader data value. If required, the smoking topic could be implemented with relative ease and low risk.

Data or policy needs

While smoking rates continue to decrease, smoking is still a key contributor to chronic diseases in Australia. There is a need to identify smoking behaviours for small geographic areas and populations. For example, maternal age smoking is one of the biggest health risk factors in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and current surveys don't provide small population group data to plan strategies and support. This data would allow for targeted preventative action, and the monitoring of health related conditions induced by smoking.

Key Commonwealth agencies making submissions for this topic were the Department of Health and the Indigenous Affairs Group from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, although both noted a preference for a chronic health topic, as a stronger need over a smoking status topic. There are some vocal groups advocating for the collection of smoking status, particularly academics. Direct engagement with these groups will occur prior to the release of topic recommendations.

Respondent implications

If included, the topic would require two questions asking for current smoking status and previous smoking status. The questions would be asked only of people aged 15 and over and most likely placed later in the form due to potential sensitivity of the topic.

Smoking status questions have been tested through a number of rounds of cognitive interviews. Participants did not identify any concerns or sensitivities answering these questions, although further testing would be required to explore if there are concerns answering on behalf of others.

Operational feasibility

If collected, data would be classified and output based only on the response options in the question. There is not expected to be any complexity in developing, processing and disseminating this topic.

National Health Survey data on smoking behaviour is available and could be of use for quality assurance of Census counts during processing.

Statistical impacts

There may be some non-response to this topic driven by people not wanting to disclose their smoking status to government. There may also be some concern with responding accurately for those under 18 years old (which is the legal age for purchasing cigarettes in Australia). As it is a personal topic, it may impact on overall response. However, the topic is collected in the New Zealand Census and the data is considered to be of reasonable quality. If this topic was added, further testing would be needed to identify the scale of any quality concerns.

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8.9 Households and family measures (including shared care of children)

Topic Definition	Collect relationships between a primary member of the household with other members. This is used to define household and family composition. Expansions would explore additional dynamic family structures and identification of shared care arrangements for children.
Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	<p>Do not add to this topic or change the current collection approach. Explore opportunities through processing to enhance the data available.</p> <p>Do not add shared care of children as a new topic.</p> <p>This topic is extremely complex with a single collection question used to derive and output a range of variables. Improvements in processing for family coding systems are required and the statistical risk of changing the collection approach is considered too high to proceed. The review of systems will be used to explore ways to better meet stakeholder needs, with the potential for expansion of this topic to be explored in future cycles.</p>

Data or policy needs

The Census produces many output variables that describe household and family composition and characteristics. These are derived through a complex coding process that uses relationship between members of the household, persons temporarily absent and registered marital status as inputs.

Data users provided feedback that being able to understand more complex family and household structures would assist in policy development and service delivery, particularly in the area of targeting payments and support services to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. The complex families identified included multigenerational family households; blended families; kinship care arrangements; and LGBTI households. A particular area of interest was being able to include children living in shared custody arrangements as part of the family in both their residences. This is important to understand the household economic resources in different family situations to inform social policy.

Key Commonwealth agencies submitting on this topic were the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Treasury. There was also interest from the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) and various state and territory departments. DSS submitted that persons temporarily absent on Census night be matched back into their usual residence for more accurate household and family data in particular household income and equivalised household income.

A workshop was held with DSS, AIFS, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and researchers to explore what data was needed for a more contemporary understanding of household and family composition. Based on the input data already collected, significant additional value can be delivered by reviewing the family classification and coding principles.

Respondent implications

No changes to household and family composition were tested with respondents. Any change to input variables would require significant development of the processing system. This presents a major risk to the system which would need tests and a substantial investment of resources to implement. This is not possible for 2021.

Collection of shared care of children data would require a change to the relationships and persons temporarily absent questions, in addition to a new question. Given the previous decision, question development didn't occur.

Some challenges to accurate and efficient family coding occur when the wrong person reports as 'person 1'. The beta phase of the digital channel development and the front of form work for the paper instrument will develop and test guidance to help the most appropriate respondent to be person 1.

Guidance on who to report on the form, and who to report as away, will be tested for the 2021 Census. This will specifically review instructions for children, Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) workers and couch surfers. These changes are being considered to improve coverage within households and will draw from approaches taken by the ONS and Statistics Canada.

Operational feasibility

As noted in the section on respondent implications, change to the processing system is not possible for the 2021 Census.

Household and family relationship inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations. Census Data Operations has mapped the family coding processes and is working with Household Characteristics & Social Reporting (HC&SR) to look for opportunities to improve outputs from the variables currently collected. The possibility of matching persons temporarily absent data will be considered as part of this work. HC&SR is also undertaking a review of the family and household composition standards. This review is considering how to serve policy needs for family data by understanding the family coding rules and edits currently applied to Census and Household Surveys and looking at ways to tailor and expand to better suit policy needs. Additionally, the HC&SR team is working on development of a shared care of children data item. Consideration is being given to a flag for the presence of children in shared care arrangements, as well as a module of questions for household surveys. Internal and external stakeholder engagement is ongoing for both of these pieces of work.

Statistical impacts

Due to the complexity of use of family and household composition input variables, there is likely to be a considerable statistical impact on Census data. This hasn't been investigated, but will be for any proposed processing and coding changes.

It's considered that implementing changes to collect shared care of children may have an impact on the usual address concept and even if operationally feasible, it would need careful consideration of the data quality risk.

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9 Topics for removal from the *Census and Statistics Regulation*

Recommendation to Senior Responsible Officer	Remove the following two topics from the 2021 Census: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household internet access• Motor vehicles garaged Both topics have been assessed as no longer relevant to be collected on the Census or available in part through other sources.
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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. To consider adding new topics, the topics that are no longer considered relevant were assessed and are recommended for removal.

9.1 Household internet access

The 2016 Census question asks whether any member of the household accesses the internet from the dwelling. Submissions suggested that with the growth in internet access outside of the home on mobile and other devices and the fast pace of technological change, the collection of data on household internet access has less relevance.

Stakeholders suggesting changes to the question on household internet access included the Department of Communication and the Arts (DoCA) and Infrastructure Australia.

DoCA suggested replacing the current topic with another individual internet access and use-based question, including measures of digital inclusion and digital literacy to understand the impact on disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the population. Infrastructure Australia was interested in the role of internet access in the changing nature of employment, with particular interest in the use of home internet connections for work from home arrangements. While these topics are considered important, they are too complex to be collected in the Census and the data need was not well articulated.

9.2 Motor vehicles garaged

Previous discussions over the past two Census cycles have noted the intention to remove 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, may be an alternative to collecting this data through the Census. Stakeholders have noted a number of constraints with using administrative data sources as a replacement. For instance, there is acknowledged issues with business registrations that may not have up to date details of garaged addresses for their vehicles. Stakeholders noted that they would require further investment and development to get their sources to a state where they would be an adequate substitute. The submissions noted that registry data can provide an approximate measure of the number of motor vehicles at small area level, but cannot

presently provide the link to household demographic information provided by the Census which is required for existing urban travel models and to inform policy and planning. While some jurisdictions noted that they would be able to work with a cycle where this question is only asked every ten years, others noted that the five year cycle was still necessary. Those willing to accommodate a ten year cycle raised it only in the context of having access to Journey to Education data available for planning.

The ABS is currently investigating options to expand on the data from the Motor Vehicle Census to include the location where vehicles are garaged. This project is currently working with NSW registration data. It will then expand to see if this can be applied in other states and territories. While it won't be a complete replacement of Census data, it will potentially make this alternative source of data more valuable.

Motor vehicles garaged is recommended for removal from the 2021 Census as there are other potential sources that would meet some of the data needs, and it will reduce respondent burden in regard to the number of overall topics collected.

Opposition to the removal of this topic included submissions from the Australian Transportation Data Action Network (ATDAN) which comprises representatives from all Commonwealth, state and territory transport agencies, as well as the Australian Local Government Association. ATDAN is co-chaired by the ABS and the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) under the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities. There has also been recent communication from the Secretary of Infrastructure requesting that this topic is not removed. Discussions at ATDAN also included an indication that jurisdictions will lobby state and federal government to try and influence the retention of this topic. However, reports back from representatives at the Transport and Infrastructure Senior Officials Committee (TISOC) have noted that the Census topic review was not raised by any jurisdictions and the subject matter area now feel it is unlikely that further action will be taken by TISOC or the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Cities.

10 Other changes to current topics

Beyond the suggestions for new topics, submissions were also made for changes to existing topics. A number of changes were considered worthy of further investigation. Exploring changes to topics provide 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 in making a decision to change.

The following section outlines the changes explored and the key agencies advocating for change. Where the changes are considered feasible, investigation will continue via testing and engagement throughout 2019 for most topics.

Some of the requested changes would require a change in scope of the topic on the Census and Statistics Regulation. While discussed further below, such changes were not considered feasible.

Changes to topics that do not require regulation changes are still being explored, and will be recommended and approved through the relevant Census Program streams.

Need for assistance – The need for assistance topic currently asks four questions which are used to derive a single output identifying persons with a need for assistance with core activities. While a number of changes or enhancements were suggested, many were not considered feasible to add to the current set of questions. Only the expansion of outputs and the incorporation of assistance through aids and equipment are being explored. Key stakeholders interested in changes to this topic include DSS and AIHW.

It was noted by stakeholders that maintaining the time series for this topic is vital, so changes would only be made where the change is stronger value than the risk to time series. Initial testing has shown that including response options for use of aids and equipment causes confusion for people who need assistance and use equipment, or have a paid carer (or aid). The addition of this concept is not recommended.

Due to the way these questions are consolidated for output, there are also challenges with incorporating the new categories, and then processing output. We are continuing to review options in consultation with the stakeholders, however at this point no changes to the questions or underlying topic are recommended.

Highest non-school qualifications – The Department of Education and Training were keen to collect year of completion of non-school qualifications to understand currency of completion. The topic is collected as pre/post 1998 for coding and classification purposes. This topic was tested in cognitive interviews. Respondents reported some problems with recall and accuracy. As this question would include free text, there is an additional effort in processing and coding that reduces the operational feasibility. This change is not recommended.

Unpaid care, help or assistance of another person due to disability, long term illness or old age – While there were a number of suggestions for additions to this topic, many were too detailed to implement. Among other requests, DSS suggested removing the age restriction on this question to get a measure of young carers (under 15 years old). Qualitative testing was undertaken with a number of participants likely to provide care, or receive it. Testing has revealed some sensitivity with asking this question of younger respondents. There are also operational challenges associated with where to position this question on the paper form as it currently sits with the other three questions on unpaid work and care. Positioning the questions with need for assistance and health questions has shown that more respondents misinterpret that the topic is about providing care rather than receiving care. They also don't always see the question wording referencing unpaid care, and begin talking in terms of paid care. Based on the potential statistical impact of separating this question from other unpaid work/care question, this change is not recommended for 2021 Census.

Income – Treasury suggested reviewing the income ranges used in this question to better align with current tax brackets and provide more response options for higher incomes. There were also requests made during engagement to use a write in response rather than selecting ranges. Income is a sensitive question with many respondents reporting concerns around privacy. A change to a write in response has been explored in cognitive testing. Respondents had difficulty answering and some suggested that they would have to look up their income. There was increased accuracy concerns when reporting on behalf of others. The cost and effort involved in processing and quality assuring a write in response is also higher than a question with response ranges. The impacts on quality, costs and burden mean that a write in response to income will not be pursued. Other changes to response options (including order and size of ranges) will be tested and implemented.

Attendance at an educational institution – Department of Education and Training and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group both asked for a review of this topic to try and better capture attendance at pre-schools, kindergartens and early childhood education. There were also requests to better capture vocational education and training and home schooling. Changes are being explored in terms of the respondent's ability to understand the response categories and with consideration of the impact on the time series for this topic. There is unlikely to be any operational feasibility or overall statistical impact concerns with this change.

Type of tenure, Landlord type – DSS is seeking better alignment of Census data on social/community housing with administrative data. Stakeholders are also looking for details of when rent is subsidised or provided through affordable renting schemes to aid access to social housing. Changes to questions on tenure and landlord type were both explored to consider if these data needs can be met through the Census. It was found that capturing affordable rental options made the questions too complex and there were concerns regarding the overall quality impact. Testing is continuing with options to capture affordable

housing schemes, but not subsidised rentals. There is also consideration of linking administrative data to meet this need.

Measures of homelessness - Usual residence at Census time, address 1 and 5 years ago – DSS and the Homelessness Statistics Reference Group (HSRG) provided support for improving measures of homelessness especially among couch surfing youth. Submissions supported additions to questions on usual residence such as reasons for visiting, or a tick box for no usual address and address 1-5 years ago. As the usual address and address 1-5 years ago topics are critical for estimating the distribution of the usually resident population, it was considered too high a risk to data quality if changes to the question and response options were made. Changes to instructions and support materials are being tested to try and improve identification of couch surfers without risking the quality of this topic. The reasons for visiting question and tick box is not recommended. Options being explored will also include guidance on the front of form which will help establish who in a household should be included on the form.

Country of birth of parents – Some support was noted for providing options if a person has same sex parents. Country of Birth for mother and father is important for the Department of Home Affairs in analysing citizenship, so only instructions have been reviewed to be more inclusive.

Main language other than English spoken at home / Proficiency in spoken English – Deaf Australia noted that current language in the questions were not inclusive of those using sign language. Changes have been tested to improve inclusiveness for those using sign language. This testing will continue, including tests with culturally and linguistically diverse respondents to ensure the changes don't generate confusion which could impact time series data.

In submissions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity, better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was also raised as a means of improving recognition and response for this group. Submissions noted support for improvements in the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language information to better understand if challenges with the English language create barriers to participation in society. The potential for change to this question was also discussed at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Round Table. Views were shared that the current question may be a barrier, and that some people may not respond with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language as they may not be able to write in their response due to unclear or unknown spelling. They noted that there was a cultural 'shame' element to this where respondents are unlikely to try to write a language if they are not confident with the accurate spelling.

It is also believed that allowing respondents to check Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without requiring a 'write in' could reduce the reporting of a specific language. This is believed to have occurred with a change to the 2016 Interviewer Household Form

(IHF) used in communities where there was an increase in the proportion of responses indicating an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language without providing further detail (when compared to the 2011 Census). In 2016, the majority of respondents (80%) indicating that they spoke an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language were from communities where the IHF was used. In 2021, design of the form and training of interviewers will be used to encourage them to provide more detail of languages spoken when completing the IHF.

To try and address concerns that respondents may not report Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander languages spoken at home if they are unable to write a response, there will be testing and consideration of options for the online form only. The online form can be adapted to present a different set of options if someone responds that they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander against the Indigenous Status question. A substitute question will be tested with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants which will include a tick box option for 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander language' and an instruction encouraging respondents to write more detail in the 'please specify' box.

Changes are considered too complex to incorporate adequately on the paper form. Testing on the paper form has shown that providing a write-in response for 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages' as well as a write-in box for 'other language' was confusing to respondents. Adding a write-in box specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will not be recommended on the paper form. Instructional text to encourage respondents to write in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language will be tested.

Approaches taken for the language question will need to consider impact on the understanding and scope of the question. There is potential for changes to increase the amount of people selecting languages even if they are not spoken regularly at home. Quantitative testing in October will be used to assess the potential scale of any quality impacts. Testing will also be undertaken with culturally and linguistically diverse participants to identify if there is an impact on their understanding of the questions.

Coding and processing for these options are unlikely to significantly impact current procedures.

Ancestry - Better recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestries was raised as a means of improving recognition for these groups. The inclusion of additional response categories of 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' for ancestry is considered likely to yield more relevant data for this population group, who likely would have previously marked 'Australian'.

Additional response options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestry have been tested and have performed well in cognitive testing. Further testing is planned with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and changes will be recommended for inclusion in the quantitative test.

Testing will also be undertaken with culturally and linguistically diverse participants to identify if there is any adverse impact on their understanding of the questions.

Output and processing will use current classifications and will not require any further processing or outputs over and above current procedures. This change is likely to be recommended for implementing on the 2021 Census.

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11 Topics not being recommended for addition or change

A number of suggested changes, and new topic suggestions were not included in the topic directions publication. These were assessed as either being unsuitable or as lower priority compared to other topic suggestions. The topics which may be raised again in consultation and engagement as final decisions are made, have been listed below. Where relevant, the source or suggestions for change have been noted.

11.1 Changes to topics not being investigated

Religious affiliation - Submissions were received from a range of individuals, religious organisations and secular/no religion bodies suggesting an additional question on religious involvement to give a better picture of how actively people participate in their religious activities. There were also suggestions to expand the representations of some religions in the classification, and to move the 'no religion' response back to the end of the list of responses. Collecting information on religious affiliation is consistent with international Census practice and is better aligned with planning for services delivered by religious organisations. There continues to be suggestions regarding religion through general correspondence to the ABS and the topic can sometimes be of interest to the media. Key messages will be prepared to assist in responding to media and correspondents on the reasons for not making any further change to this question.

Number of children ever born – 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 is not considered high priority, new instructions will be tested to recognise that people whose gender is not female may have given birth.

Work (including labour force status, status in employment, occupation and industry) – Treasury and a joint submission from Department of Jobs and Small Business, Comcare and the Fair Work Commission made suggestions for changes and enhancements to work topics. 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). There have been recent experimental estimates released by the ABS using LEED which may address some of the data needs raised by stakeholders.

Some submissions suggested a review of the occupation classification (ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations). While recognising this is desirable the ABS has decided not to undertake this review in the short term.

Unpaid work – voluntary work – There were suggestions from DSS and Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Affairs Group 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 is not being further explored for the 2021 Census. However, this information is available through the ABS General Social Survey.

11.2 New topic suggestions not being considered

Sources of income – A number of submissions were received suggesting the Census collect data on sources of income. This topic is not recommended as the information is available in administrative sources and can be provided through data integration work or existing comprehensive income surveys such as the Survey of Income and Housing. 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.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participation – DSS and local councils noted a need for measures of participation in NDIS against disability measures to help with planning and delivery of services. Based on the potential availability of this data from administrative sources that can be linked with Census data, this was not assessed as a priority topic for collection in the 2021 Census. The ABS is actively working with the National Disability Insurance Agency to progress this.

Second residence and/or ownership of other dwelling - Where submissions in 2016 came from a range of sources including federal, state and local government and industry groups, there has been less demand for this topic in the 2021 Census consultation. 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.

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; experiences of chronic pain; 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. Key agencies supported chronic health conditions over other health topics suggested in submissions.

Digital literacy or inclusion – As noted against the Household Internet Access topic, the Department of Communications and the Arts supported replacing household internet access with topics on personal internet access and use. This information would be to gain a better understanding of digital literacy or inclusion among vulnerable groups and the impact on social participation. While valuable, the data need was not well defined and the topic was too complex to collect adequately on the Census.

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>Chronic health conditions (diagnosed; lasting six months or more; list of most prevalent conditions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High demand for small area and small population group health conditions data Support from key stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing well for accuracy and acceptability Some concern in reporting for others Some conditions, such as mental health, may have greater privacy implications, particularly in combination with other new topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant coding effort or dissemination demands QA against other sources such as the National Health Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be considered a personal topic in combination with other proposed additions
<p>Australian Defence Force service (current or previous service in ADF; regular and reserve forces)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to high demand for data on veteran population to inform health & mental health service delivery; understand employment outcomes & experiences of homelessness Considered a vulnerable population group Strong support from stakeholders and bipartisan push No administrative data exists for veterans not currently accessing DVA services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be asked only of 15+ Testing well for accuracy and acceptability Positive response from non-ADF respondents on value of topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant coding effort or dissemination demands Minimal space on paper form required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not significant
<p>Non-binary sex (third option for those born with variations in sex characteristics unable to respond male or female)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender Note this will not provide an accurate count of intersex people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Testing okay for accuracy and acceptability in qualitative testing More testing planned to refine wording of third option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need further consideration of imputation, coding and dissemination Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure impact on quality of male/female data in field test Implementation to consider how to minimise error and vandalism
<p>Gender identity (male, female, trans, gender diverse, other specify, prefer not to say)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to support these vulnerable groups Gender diverse seen as more vulnerable than lesbian/gay/bi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would be asked only of 15+, would have a 'prefer not to say' option and appear late in the form Current testing has shown understanding and response accuracy for both LGBTI and non-LGBTI participants Some concern in reporting for others More testing planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables such as name to be measured in field test

Investigation summary of topics not recommended for inclusion

	Data or policy need	Respondent implications	Operational feasibility	Statistical impacts
Sexual orientation (heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, other specify, prefer not to say)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium demand for LGBTI data to support delivery of services to vulnerable groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Testing has not identified concerns with the topic in the target population. • Some reaction to the question by general population, mainly among older respondents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question would include a write in box that requires some processing and coding effort • Considered feasible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal topic that may have higher item non-response or prefer not to say • Potential for impact on overall Census response rate or other variables.
Journey to education (name and address of education institution; mode of travel to institution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong demand within transport and infrastructure planning across Commonwealth, state/territory and local government • Also interest from education sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with respondents being able to accurately report address of education institution • Accuracy in reporting name of institution problematic • Possible confusion or duplication related to multi point journeys for one household, or attendance at multiple campuses • Administrative lists not assessed as providing benefit to coding • Reporting burden of providing multiple addresses on the Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires nearly two pages on paper form • Data capture, coding and processing effort will be high and require a large degree of manual intervention • Complex dissemination effort for calculation of destination zones and commuting distance • Not viable to implement without institution lists • Presents risk to processing and dissemination activities • Significant cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of 'address fatigue' affecting accuracy and reporting of other addresses, including usual address and workplace address • Possibility of privacy concerns linked to the number of addresses being requested
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity (specify nation/clan/mob)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No strong data driver • Need was based on motivation to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Census 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns with accurately being able to respond (spelling, which one to identify with, desire to report multiple) • Some sensitivity if don't know • Major concerns over data misuse to further disadvantage community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No list of cultural identities exists, would require significant work to create, quality assure and develop classification • High processing burden • Significant costs in data capture and repair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status question if respondent does not know identity • Concern over misuse may adversely impact community engagement and participation
Smoking status (current/previous smoker of tobacco)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high demand within health sector for small area and population group data on smoking status • Stakeholder priority is on chronic health conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would only be asked of 15+ • Testing well for accuracy and acceptability • Some concern in reporting for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No significant coding effort or dissemination demands • Minimal space on paper form required • Would require QA against other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not significant

<p>Household and family measures (complex household & family types, i.e. multi-generational, blended, kinship care & shared care of children)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to high demand for more contemporary household and family structures • Can meet user needs to some extent by review of family classification and coding principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable questions to collect more complex compositions unable to be developed in a form that the respondent completes themselves • Not tested on respondents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any change of input would require significant processing and coding effort • Presents major risk as inputs are deeply embedded in the processing system and used in a complex set of derivations • Insufficient development and testing of options has occurred 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have a statistical impact due to the complexity of use of household and family composition inputs
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Attachment B Changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation*

The following table is a mock-up of how all changes would be represented in the *Census and Statistics Regulation*. Shaded items represent changes or additions.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex and/or gender identity (change to allow for collection of gender identity)
Date of birth or age last birthday
Relationship to the other persons, if any, who spend the Census night in the same accommodation
Present marital status
Address of usual residence
Address of usual residence 1 year before the Census day
Address of usual residence 5 years before the Census day
Religion or religious denomination
Citizenship
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
Ancestry
Country of birth
Country of birth of each parent
For a person not born in Australia—the year of the person’s first arrival in Australia
Languages spoken at home
For a person who speaks a language other than English at home—their proficiency in speaking English
Present attendance at an educational institution, including the type of institution attended (if any)
Chronic health conditions (new topic)
For a person who is not less than 15 years of age, the following:
(a) the highest level of primary or secondary school completed;
(b) educational qualifications;
(c) labour force status;
(d) income;
(e) domestic activities;
(f) the provision of unpaid care due to the disability, long term illness or old age of another person;
(g) the provision of care to a child, without pay;
(h) voluntary work through an organisation or group
(x) Australian defence force service (new topic)

For a person who is not less than 15 years of age and was employed (including self-employed) during the week immediately preceding the Census day, the following:
(a) status in employment during that week;
(b) occupation during that week;
(c) the name and address of the undertaking in which the person was employed during that week;
(d) the main kind of business or industry carried on, or service provided, by that undertaking during that week;
(e) the hours worked by the person during that week;
(f) the main duties or tasks that the person usually performs in the occupation;
(g) the mode of travel to work by the person on the Census day;
(h) if the person owns a business, the total number of persons who are employed by the business
The need for assistance with, or the supervision of another person for, any of the following activities (including the reason for the need):
(a) self-care;
(b) body movement;
(c) communication
For a female who is not less than 15 years of age—the number of children to whom she has given birth
Statistical information for the Census—household accommodated on the Census night in a private dwelling
The address on the Census night
For a person who is usually a member of the household but is absent from the household accommodation on the Census night, the following:
(a) name;
(b) sex;
(c) date of birth or age last birthday;
(d) student status;
(e) relationship to other members of the household;
(f) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
The right, title or interest of the household in the household's accommodation
The number of bedrooms in the dwelling
The rent or loan repayments payable by the household for its accommodation
If the dwelling is rented—the nature of the person or body to whom rent is paid
The number of registered motor vehicles, garaged or parked at or near the dwelling on the Census night, that are owned or used by residents of the dwelling (remove topic)
Access to the internet at the dwelling (remove topic)

Statistical information for the Census—private dwelling
The structure
The location
The status of a person in the dwelling
Statistical information for the Census—dwelling other than a private dwelling
The classification of the dwelling by reference to its purpose
The status of a person in the dwelling
The address of the dwelling
The name (if any) of the dwelling
The number of persons resident in the dwelling