

ABS Minute MB19-000039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Secretariat WDB 22 25/07/2019 03:57 PM

For-Official-Use-Only

Basics

Secretariat WDB 25/07/2019 04:46 PM
Sent by 22

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Subject	ABS Minute MB19-000039 Government decision on 2021 Census topics [DLM=For-Official-Use-Only]
Protective Mark	For-Official-Use-Only
Categories	Ministerial Briefings\2019

Good afternoon

For approval

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 recommendations for your consideration regarding 2021 Census topics.



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

Regards,

22

Assistant Director

Parliamentary and Partnerships | Communication and Parliamentary Branch
People, Capability and Communication Division

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Australian Statistician

MB19-000039

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP, Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

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

Government decision on 2021 Census topics

Recommendation:

1. That you provide initial approval for collection of data on the topics on the 2021 Census as listed in **Attachment A**.

Approved Not approved

2. That you note, and agree that this includes collection of data on the following topics in the 2021 Census, which were not collected in 2016

- a. Chronic health conditions **Agreed**
- b. Australian Defence Force service (15 years and over) **Agreed**

3. That you note and agree that this includes removal of collection of data on the following topics that were collected in the 2016 Census

- a. Household internet access **Agreed**
- b. Motor vehicles garaged **Agreed**

4. That you advise your view on collection of the following potential topics in the 2021 Census to be proposed to the Prime Minister. If collected, 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 progressing changes to Census topics be through an Exchange of Letters.

Approved Not approved

Comments:

.....
Signature

.../.../...
Date

Recommendations

1 In advance of each five yearly Australian Census of Population and Housing (the Census) the Government makes a decision on content of the Census. The government then issues a Census regulation, tabled in Parliament, 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. Census content needs to be finalised by March 2020 at the latest to allow for various aspects of Census preparation, including printing of paper forms, to be completed in advance of the Census date.

3 The ABS has engaged in extensive community consultation, has received hundreds of submissions, and undertaken some statistical testing of possible Census topics.

4 Determining which topics should be asked in a Census requires choices between competing alternatives, while also mindful of the overall burden placed on the community to complete such a comprehensive Census as we have in Australia. Assessment criteria for inclusion of a topic are that:

- it is of 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,
- there is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic in the following Census, and
- there are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the data need.

5 The ABS recommends that the topics collected on the 2021 Census remain as per the current regulation, with the exception of the following changes;

- add a topic on chronic health conditions;
- add a topic on Australian Defence Force service (15 years and over),
- remove household internet access, and
- remove motor vehicles garaged.

6 The overall recommended content for the 2021 Census is shown in **Attachment A**.

7 I would also ask that the Government further consider the inclusion of topics on gender identity and/or sexual orientation in the 2021 Census. There is not such a strong case for these two topics as the other new topics proposed, and collection could be problematic given the nature of the issues and associated sensitivities. However, claims have been made about the need for information on gender identity and sexual orientation, that Government is best placed to judge.

8 Initial testing on the topics of gender identity and sexual orientation provides some indications that:

- Information on either of these topics should be able to be collected with enough accuracy to be fit-for-purpose overall, although – in common with other attributes with a low prevalence – data is unlikely to yield reliable estimates at very small areas of geography, which is one of the usual benefits of Census collection.
- From our preliminary tests, it appears that these questions may not adversely affect willingness to respond to the Census overall or reduce quality of data from other topics in the Census. It should be noted that if government wishes to proceed with these questions, they would only be asked for persons over 15 years of age and allow for a ‘prefer not to answer’ option. More thorough testing of some of these sensitivities will be undertaken in the October 2019 Census test, but outcomes from this test may not be available prior to decisions on content needing to be finalised.

9 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 a non-binary option in addition to Male and Female. This will not be explicit in the regulation, that only includes reference to the topic.

10 All of the topics noted in the recommendations above are discussed in further detail in **Attachment B**.

11 ABS is also seeking your approval to proceed with the formal process for Government agreeing to the 2021 Census content. This could be done via an exchange of letters between the Minister and the Prime Minister, with approval by the Prime Minister to present the final Census regulation, including agreed content, to the Executive Council. Alternatively, you or the Prime Minister may suggest that Census content be considered by Cabinet; we have factored sufficient time into the process if this is the desired approach.

Reasons

12 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, and Australia has one of the longest and most comprehensive Census collections.

13 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 recommended changes aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with considerations of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. There is a strong case to maintain a large number of questions from past Censuses to produce reliable trends over time.

14 A public consultation process and a program of qualitative testing have informed recommendations for change to Census topics. 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*.

15 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.

16 A substantial field test will be held in October 2019 to provide some quantitative assessment of possible new topics. Testing of all possible new topics, including sexual orientation and gender identity, will be included in this field test. Even if these topics are not included in the 2021 Census, this testing will still be of value for future Census consideration and collection in other ABS surveys.

17 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.

18 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, and
- Improved household and family measures (including shared care of children).

19 A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity topic is not recommended, due to indigenous community concerns, but changes will be implemented in the Census form 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 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO).

20 The need for Census data on smoking status was assessed to be of less value than other proposed topics for inclusion, such as chronic health conditions. Data on journey to education and household and family measures proved too complex and expensive to collect in a Census setting.

21 Removing topics that have decreased in value over time allows new topics to be added without increasing respondent burden. On the basis of reduced need compared with previous Census cycles two 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

22 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 some potential new topics is pertinent and the government may not want to progress any controversial topics at this time. Strong community support for the Census overall will be essential to high response rates and good quality data.

23 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.

24 There is an acknowledged risk of adverse public reaction to possible 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, although the scale of testing in Australia has been necessarily modest to date. The field test in October will provide further evidence on this matter, but unfortunately the results are unlikely to be available in time to help inform Government decisions on Census content.

25 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 sexual orientation in their next Census. Details on the performance of these topics in a live Census overseas will not be available prior to finalisation of topics for the 2021 Census in Australia.

Process for approval

26 Senior officials from the ABS, including the Australian Statistician, are available to discuss the issues raised in this briefing with you.

27 Topics authorised to be collected on the Census are prescribed in the *Census and Statistics Regulation*.

28 The ABS has been advised by Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet that the most appropriate process for changing the Census topics, given the types of changes under consideration, is with an exchange of letters between the Minister and the Prime Minister. This process would include a four week consultation and approval by the Prime Minister to

present the changes to the Executive Council. The changes to the *Census and Statistics Regulation* are then tabled in both Houses of Parliament and are subject to a 15 sitting day disallowance period.

29 The ABS has been advised that Cabinet consideration is not essential, but this is at the Minister's or the Prime Minister's discretion. If it was proposed to have a Cabinet consideration, this would need to be scheduled by the Cabinet Secretary.



David W. Kalisch

25 July 2019

Attachment A 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.

Note: Gender identity and sexual orientation are not listed. These topics would be added under the section 'For a person who is not less than 15 years of age'.

Statistical information for the Census—persons
Name
Sex (non binary option – no regulation change required)
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

Attachment B – Topic briefs

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. Chronic health conditions data is not available from alternative administrative data sources such as Medicare data or the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

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. 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.

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.

This has strong support from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. 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 administrative data 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.

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 the prevalence of personal devices such as smart phones and tablets rendered the current question collecting *household* internet access as considerably less useful and 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 alternative topics.

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 minimise respondent burden on households in the context of proposals to add new topics that are assessed to be of greater value.

Public consultations during the past two Census cycles have noted the potential 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 now hold greater prospect of providing this information into the future.

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 on the basis that there are a number of constraints with using administrative data sources as a replacement. For example, there are acknowledged issues with business registrations that may not have up to date details of garaged addresses for their vehicles. While registry data can provide an approximate measure of the number of motor vehicles garaged at small area level, work is required to relate this to demographic details.

The ABS is currently investigating options to expand on the data from the current Motor Vehicle survey 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 will not be a complete replacement of Census data, it will potentially make this alternative source of data more useful.

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 comply 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 October 2019 to determine which question would be more acceptable to the Australian public, while minimising risk to collecting other Census data.

Potential topic – Gender identity

Topic definition

For all persons aged 15 years or older, this topic would collect 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. They claim 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 health and aged 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 there the potential to ask gender identity in future surveys, such as the National Health Survey, should it proceed given dependence on user funding, and General Social Survey, there is no large scale source of data on gender identity currently available.

Practical implications

Small scale testing suggests the topic can be collected. 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, 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.

Data on non-binary, gender fluid and other genders may be less reliable due to the size of the population and the need for confidentialisation of personal information when numbers

are small – these factors apply to all characteristics with a low prevalence. Consideration would be given to the quality of response, and whether there is greater utility in combining some of the categories to be able to provide output with more reliability. Analysis of the quality, and considerations for disseminating this topic, can only fully occur after collection.

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, we expect there are a wide range of views in Australian society on this topic and its suitability for the Census. Any decision, to include or to not include, is expected to generate public comment and debate. This will need to be carefully navigated by the Government and ABS in order to ensure the highest possible response rate to the Census overall.

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

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 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. They claim 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.

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 it is hoped that this would allow targeted support to be developed nationally and, potentially, in small areas.

Sexual orientation has previously been collected in the General Social Survey (GSS) and will continue to be one of the topics in future GSS cycles. There is potential to ask about sexual orientation in other surveys, such as the National Health Survey. Data from surveys is restricted to national and state based estimates, and there are no large scale detailed sources 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, 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 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 sexual orientations reported would be anticipated to have small numbers, consideration would need to be made about what output is disseminated in order to manage confidentialisation and accuracy issues. This may limit its use in planning service delivery across small regional locations.

Further, we expect there are a wide range of views in Australian society on this topic and its suitability for the Census. Any decision, to include or to not include, is expected to generate public comment and debate. This will need to be carefully navigated by the Government and ABS in order to ensure the highest possible response rate to the Census overall.

Basics

Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS

21/08/2019 01:55 PM

Send	To: [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] Staff/ABS@ABS. Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS. [REDACTED] bcc:
Subject	Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics 📎
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Briefings\2019

All, FYI, the MO has called and Mike Xanthis will call Teresa to discuss these questions.
Nick

Nick Stathis

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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[REDACTED]

Thanks Nick, I've had a few conversations in...

21/08/2019 12:51:55 PM

From: [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS
To: Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] @ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 21/08/2019 12:51 PM
Subject: Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics

Thanks Nick,
I've had a few conversations in PaSSD and with Chris. I've drafted responses below that we would like Teresa (and potentially David) to review.

22

22

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

47C; 47E(d)

Nick - I understand that Teresa is in transit to Darwin. [REDACTED] - can you please bring this to her attention.

Please let me know if I can provide any more information at this point.

cheers,

[REDACTED]

[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.

Nick Stathis | Hi [redacted], see attached questions regardin... | 20/08/2019 07:00:45 PM

From: Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS
To: [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, Secretariat WDB@ABS, [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS
Date: 20/08/2019 07:00 PM
Subject: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics

Hi [redacted], see attached questions regarding MB19-00039 Government Decision on 2021 Census Topics (attached). On the question about why we worded recommendations the way we did, para 7 and 8 of the brief go some way to explaining that inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation were not as clear cut in terms of our testing.

Given we have subsequently asked for a response on this brief by 23 August, I recommend we aim to get a response back by COB tomorrow at latest.

Happy to help if required.
Nick

22 - Duplicate

Nick Stathis

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

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

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

----- Forwarded by Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS on 20/08/2019 06:52 PM -----

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

22

Hi Nick,

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

- Could you clarify why the question on sexual orientation was not raised in the 2016 census.
- Could you give an indication of the degree of detail that would be included in the letter to the PM about new topics to be included in the 2021 census
- If you could also clarify why the wording of recommendations 2 and 3 is different to the wording of recommendation 4 (in [MB19-000039](#))

Thank you again for your assistance

22

From: Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, 7 August 2019 8:56 AM

To: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>

Cc: 22 @abs.gov.au>; 22 @abs.gov.au>

Subject: RE: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi 22,

22

22

22 ---06/08/2019 03:49:20

PM---*****

From: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>
To: "Nick Stathis" <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>
Date: 06/08/2019 03:49 PM
Subject: RE: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

22

Hi Nick,

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

Thank you

22

From: Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 5 August 2019 5:24 PM
To: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>
Cc: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>; 22 @abs.gov.au; 22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: Re: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi 22, we are pulling together a timetable so next steps and dates are clear. We aim to get this to you tomorrow.
Nick

Nick Stathis

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

P: (02) 6252 6546 M: 22 E: nick.stathis@abs.gov.au

W www.abs.gov.au F: @absstats T: @ABSStats

22 ---05/08/2019 01:53:50
PM---*****

From: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>
To: "Nick Stathis" <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>
Cc: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>, "22 @abs.gov.au" 22 @abs.gov.au>
Date: 05/08/2019 01:53 PM
Subject: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

22

Hi Nick,

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

Thanks

22

22

Departmental Liaison Officer
Office of the Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

22

22

From: 22 @abs.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, 5 August 2019 11:50 AM
To: 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU>
Cc: 22 @abs.gov.au>
Subject: 22 , here is the brief as discussed.... [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

22 - Duplicate

Nick Stathis

Program Manager | Communication and Parliamentary Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics

P: (02) 6252 6546 M: 22 E: nick.stathis@abs.gov.au

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

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please notify the sender immediately by reply e-mail and delete all copies of this transmission together with any attachments.

[attachment

22 - Duplicate

Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED] (Response to :)
 Secretariat WDB

Teresa Dickinson 21/08/2019 01:22 PM

Basics

Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS 21/08/2019 01:22 PM

Send	To [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, cc Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul Jelfs/Staff/ABS@ABS, "[REDACTED]" bcc
Subject	Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Briefings\2019

Hi [REDACTED]

Yes, I am in the air, but have wifi!

See my responses below - [REDACTED]. I would also like David to be given the option of reviewing the answers, noting that he is also travelling, so turnaround may not be instantaneous.

Hope my responses help!

T

From: [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au>

Date: 21 August 2019 at 12:51:55 pm AEST

To: Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>

Cc: Bindi Kindermann <bindi.kindermann@abs.gov.au>, Chris Libreri <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>, Lane Masterton <lane.masterton@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au, Paul Jelfs <paul.jelfs@abs.gov.au>, [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au, Teresa Dickinson <teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au>

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

Thanks Nick,

I've had a few conversations in PaSSD and with Chris. I've drafted responses below that we would like Teresa (and potentially David) to review.

22

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

47C, 47E(d)

47C, 47E(d)

Nick - I understand that Teresa is in transit to Darwin. [redacted] - can you please bring this to her attention.

Please let me know if I can provide any more information at this point.

cheers,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) (07) 3222 6272 **(M)** [redacted]

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

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22 - Duplicate

Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED] (Response to:)
Secretariat WDB

Teresa Dickinson 21/08/2019 02:34 PM

Basics

Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS 21/08/2019 02:34 PM

Send	To [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS Cc Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS, Paul bcc
Subject	Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Briefings\2019

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

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

[redacted] - many thanks for the quick turnaround

T

From: [redacted]@abs.gov.au>

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

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

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

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

Hi Teresa,

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

review.

22

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

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

cheers,

22

22

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) 22 (M) 22

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22 - Duplicate

ABS Minute MB19-000038 2021 Census Test - October 2019

Secretariat WDB

22

24/07/2019 04:17 PM

Basics

Secretariat WDB

24/07/2019 04:53 PM

Sent by 22

Send	To 22 @treasury.gov.au David Kalisch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS, Luise Mcculloch/Staff/ABS@ABS, Jenet Connell/Staff/ABS@ABS, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS. 22 @treasury.gov.au. 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; Michelle S Howe/Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 bcc 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 /ABS@ABS; 22 22 /LTDACC/ABS@ABS; 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Subject	ABS Minute MB19-000038 2021 Census Test - October 2019
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Briefings\2019

Good afternoon

For information

Please bring the attached minute to the attention of the Treasurer, the Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer, and the Secretary to the Treasury. It provides information about upcoming testing for the 2021 Census to be conducted in October 2019.



ABS Minute MB19-000038 2021 Census Test - October 2019.pdf

Regards,

22

Assistant Director

Parliamentary and Partnerships | Communication and Parliamentary Branch
 People, Capability and Communication Division

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) 22 (E) 22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au



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

MB19-000038

The Hon. Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP
Treasurer

Cc: Philip Gaetjens, Secretary to the Treasury

2021 Census Test – October 2019

For information

22

6 A media strategy will be prepared to support possible sensitivities of some Census Test questions, particularly gender and sexual orientation. Your office will receive a brief about Census content recommendations this week.

22



Teresa Dickinson
Senior Responsible Officer, 2021 Census Program

24 July 2019

The Australian Statistician has reviewed this Minute.

Basics

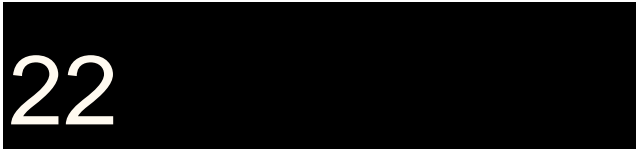
Secretariat WDB
Sent by [redacted]

09/09/2019 09:30 AM

Send	To "[redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>, [redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU> cc Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS, [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS, Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS; [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS; [redacted] Staff/ABS@ABS; Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS; [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS
Subject	Re: For action: Please send Census QTBs (QB19-000004 and QB19-000005)📎
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	QTBs\2019

Dear [redacted],

As discussed, here are the two QTBs the ABS has prepared. Please let us know if there is anyone we should add to the distribution list for these.



QB19-000005 2021 Census Topics Recommendations.docx

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

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

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

[redacted] For action: Please send Census QTBs [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED] 07/09/2019 11:27:38 AM

For action: Please send Census QTBs [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Secretariat WDB

[redacted] 07/09/2019 11:27 AM

Basics

"²²" 07/09/2019 11:27 AM
²²@TREASURY.GOV.A
U

Send	To "Secretariat WDB" < ²² @abs.gov.au> cc
Subject	For action: Please send Census QTBs [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Protective Mark	
Categories	
Visibility	Public
Editors	²² @TREASURY.GOV.AU>, [Wkgroup]
Document Usage	General Operations - determines recordkeeping action
Document Id	DCOO-BFS3SL

22

Good morning,

As discussed with ²² on Friday, please send the two census QTBs the ABS has already prepared as soon as possible Monday morning.

Many thanks

²²

²²

Departmental Liaison Officer
Office of the Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

P: ²²

M: ²²

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AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS - 2021 CENSUS TOPIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Message:

- An extensive consultation and a public submission process has been undertaken on potential topics to be included in the 2021 Census. The Government will ensure that the information collected in the next Census reflects Australia's priority information needs, while also mindful of the burden on the community to complete the Census.

Key Facts And Figures:

- The ABS has engaged in extensive community consultation, has received hundreds of submissions, and undertaken some statistical testing of possible Census topics.
- Last year the ABS released a short-list of eight topics that were being tested for inclusion:
 - Chronic health conditions
 - Journey to education
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
 - Current or previous service with the Australian Defence Force
 - Smoking status
 - Non-binary sex and/or gender identity
 - Sexual orientation.
 - More contemporary measures of household and family relationships including shared care of children
- There is a limit to the number and type of questions that can be reasonably asked through a Census, due to the burden on respondents, the space limitations of a paper form, and the cost of collecting and analysing the information collected. While a number of new topics would be of value, it is not feasible to add them all to the 2021 Census.
- Determining which topics should be asked in a Census requires choices between competing alternatives, while also being mindful of the overall burden placed on the community to complete such a comprehensive Census as we have in Australia.

Coalition Action:

- The Government will decide on the topics for the 2021 Census and will issue a Census regulation, with the list of topics. This is expected to be tabled in Parliament in early 2020.

QTB Number	QB19-000005	Adviser	
Contact Officer	Chris Libreri	Contact Number	22 [REDACTED]
Division responsible	Census Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics		
Office Responsible	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP	Date of Update	06/09/2019

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS - 2021 CENSUS TOPIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Background:

- The Census provides a contemporary picture of Australian society every five years. As the Census is collected from the entire population in Australia, it is a critical source of information on the population, allowing for an understanding of small areas and small groups in ways that surveys do not provide. The total number of topics and range of subjects has changed over time, and Australia has one of the longest and most comprehensive Census collections.
- There has been no change in the list of topics for both the 2011 Census and 2016 Census, meaning topics have not changed since the 2006 Census. The ABS has recommended changes that aim to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with considerations of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. There is a strong case to maintain a large number of questions from past Censuses to produce reliable trends over time.

QTB Number	QB19-000005	Adviser	
Contact Officer	Chris Libreri	Contact Number	22 [REDACTED]
Division responsible	Census Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics		
Office Responsible	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP	Date of Update	06/09/2019

22

Hi ²² [redacted],

As requested, please find below the updated versions for our existing QTBs on the 2021 Census.

As discussed, we have indicated the sections in the documents where changes were made. An additional QTB on content for the Census Test is also being prepared.

QTB reference number (ABS PDMS)	Title	Document
22		
QB19-000005	Australian Bureau of Statistics - 2021 Census Topic Recommendations	22 - Duplicate

Please let us know if there are any queries.

Kind Regards,

²² [redacted]

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

(P) ²² [redacted] (E) ²² [redacted] [@abs.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@abs.gov.au) (W) www.abs.gov.au

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS - 2021 CENSUS TEST CONTENT

Key Message:

- The Australian Statistician is responsible for determining the content and the objectives of the testing program for the Census.

Key Facts And Figures:

- The decision has been made to include the topics of non-binary sex, chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force in the Census test which is currently underway.
- To limit time and effort required by the public to complete the Census test, and in light of other testing already undertaken, the ABS decided to not include questions relating to other potential new topics under consideration.
- The ABS has made recommendations to the Government on topics that could be included in the 2021 Census. This was based on extensive public consultation, stakeholder engagement and testing activities.
- The Government determines the content of the Census and has yet to make a decision on what topics will be included in the 2021 Census.
- Last year the ABS released a short-list of eight topics that were being considered for inclusion in the 2021 Census. Of these, three have been included in the field test - non-binary sex, chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force.
- Inclusion, or not, of questions in this Census test may not reflect the questions that will be included in the 2021 Census as government has not yet made this decision. This field test, while very important, is only one step in a comprehensive testing program that the ABS will run in the lead up to the Census. Learnings from this test and other testing, including a full readiness test in 2020, will inform the processes, systems and forms to be used in the 2021 Census.

Coalition Action:

- The Government will decide on the topics for the 2021 Census and will issue a Census regulation with the list of topics. This is expected to be tabled in Parliament in early 2020.

QTB Number	QB19-000006	Adviser	Other
Contact Officer	Chris Libreri	Contact Number	22 [REDACTED]
Division responsible	Census Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics		
Office Responsible	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP	Date of Update	10 October 2019

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS - 2021 CENSUS TEST CONTENT

Background:

- Last year the ABS released a short-list of eight topics that were being tested for inclusion in the 2021 Census:
 - Chronic health conditions
 - Journey to education
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
 - Current or previous service with the Australian Defence Force
 - Smoking status
 - Non-binary sex and/or gender identity
 - Sexual orientation
 - More contemporary measures of household and family relationships including shared care of children.
- Since this time, questions have been developed and tested for each of these short-listed topics. The testing has involved focus group discussions and cognitive interviewing techniques with respondents using draft versions of the Census form.
- Questions on gender identity and sexual orientation were included in this testing. Additionally the ABS has asked a question about sexual orientation in other surveys for more than a decade.
- The Australian Statistician is responsible for determining the content and the objectives of the testing program for the Census. The decision to include the topics of non-binary sex, chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force was made by the Statistician, not by the Government.

QTB Number	QB19-000006	Adviser	Other
Contact Officer	Chris Libreri	Contact Number	22 [REDACTED]
Division responsible	Census Division, Australian Bureau of Statistics		
Office Responsible	The Hon Michael Sukkar MP	Date of Update	10 October 2019

Probable media interest in 2021 Census
Secretariat WDB

22

10/10/2019 09:15 AM

Basics

22 Staff/ABS 10/10/2019 09:24 AM

Send	To "22 [REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU> cc Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS, Secretariat WDB@ABS, "AT DLO" <ATDLO@TREASURY.GOV.AU> bcc
Subject	Probable media interest in 2021 Census
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Liaison with Minister's Office\Media\2019

Hello 22 [REDACTED],

Further to my voicemail, we wanted to let you know that there is likely to be further interest in relation to the Census test/2021 Census and sex and gender.

The National LGBTI Health Alliance has issued a [media release](#) in support of including questions on [sexual orientation](#) and gender identity in the 2021 Census. We are advised that they are due to be interviewed the Feed on SBS on Friday and are also starting a letter campaign. You may have seen that the #CountUsIn2021 has been getting some traction on Twitter.

We are handling any media inquiries and have an earlier media statement [on our website](#). We are also preparing QTBs. I understand that the Minister is overseas next week, has it been decided who will be acting in his portfolios or will responsibility fall to the Treasurer? Happy to discuss further.

Cheers,

22 [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED]

Director

Transformation, Internal and Media Communications | Communication and Parliamentary Branch |

Australian Bureau of Statistics

T: 22 [REDACTED] M: 22 [REDACTED]

E: 22 [REDACTED]@abs.gov.au W: www.abs.gov.au

F: [@absstats](#) T: [@ABSStats](#)

Copy of Supplementary Budget Estimates Briefs for the ABS

Secretariat WDB

22 [redacted]

21/10/2019 12:51 PM

Basics

Secretariat WDB

21/10/2019 03:38 PM

Sent by 22 [redacted]

Please respond to

22 [redacted]

Send	<p>To 22 [redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU></p> <p>cc 22 [redacted]@TREASURY.GOV.AU>, Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS, 22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS, Lane Masterton/Staff/ABS@ABS, 22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS</p> <p>bcc 22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS; 22 [redacted]/Staff/ABS@ABS</p>
Subject	Copy of Supplementary Budget Estimates Briefs for the ABS
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Senate Estimates\Supplementary Budget Estimates 2019

Good afternoon

For information

Please find attached the briefs (numbers 3 to 19) prepared by the ABS to support its appearance at Supplementary Budget Estimates on 24 October 2019. As discussed we have not included the reference material such as committee details and corporate documents. If you do require these, please let me know.



ABS Supplementary Senate Estimates 2019 - (Briefs no. 3 to 19).pdf

Regards

22 [redacted]

Assistant Director

Parliamentary and Partnerships | Communication and Parliamentary Branch
People, Capability and Communication Division

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) 22 [redacted] (E) 22 [redacted]@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

22

15	2021 Census Topics and decision process
----	---

22

2021 Census Topics and decision process

Key speaking points

- 1 An extensive consultation and a public submission process has been undertaken on potential topics to be included in the 2021 Census. The *Census of Population and Housing: Topic Directions 2021* (cat.no.2007.0.55.001) publication, available on the ABS website, summarises the outcomes of the consultation and public submissions process and outlines the next steps in determining the topics for the 2021 Census.
- 2 The Government determines the content of the Census and has yet to make a decision on what topics will be included in the 2021 Census.
- 3 A Census regulation, with the list of topics is expected to be tabled in Parliament in early 2020.
- 4 Field testing of some questions which may be included in the 2021 Census is currently underway in the areas of Wagga Wagga and surrounds and south of Brisbane. The test Census forms include questions on chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force, as well as some potential changes to existing questions on ancestry, language and education.
- 5 Field testing is only a partial test in October 2019. This test provides an opportunity to test strategies designed to encourage high response, build staff capability to increase levels of preparedness, and provide suppliers and prime partners the first window to road test critical supporting strategies including Recruitment, Risk, Privacy, Communication and Engagement.

Background information

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

Additional information

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

10 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. Some change to topics is desirable to ensure the 2021 Census reflects current information needs, balanced with considerations of capability to ask questions that produce reliable data. There is also a strong case to maintain a large number of questions from past Censuses to produce reliable trends over time.

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

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

MC: Draft response for [REDACTED] (MC19-000022)
 Secretariat WDB [REDACTED] 06/08/2019 04:51 PM


Basics

Secretariat WDB 06/08/2019 05:12 PM
 Sent by [REDACTED]

Send	To [REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU> cc [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	MC: Draft response for [REDACTED] (MC19-000022)
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Correspondence\General 2019

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a draft response for [REDACTED]. This MC was referred to us through PDMS from PM&C. [REDACTED]. Following the guidance in the quality assurance checklist for Ministerial Correspondence we have used the writer's full name in addressing the response.

PDR Number	Original Correspondence	Re
MC19-000022	 MC19-000022 Original Correspondence.pdf	

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

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

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

09/06/2019 02:00:42 PM

47F

47F@gmail.com

Census of Population and Housing

I write to you in my capacity as 47F of Bisexual Alliance Victoria.

As you may be aware, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently identified eight new and existing topics for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Non-binary sex and/or gender identity and sexual orientation are among those topics being considered.

The ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service that strives for data excellence. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services.

An LGBTI-inclusive Census that captures sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex data is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for LGBTI health policy development in terms of prioritising, planning and analysis. This is essential in addressing the health needs that LGBTI people experience. The collection of quality and robust data and evidence will help increase social inclusion and reduce stigma and discrimination in the lives of LGBTI people. Being counted in the Census will result in a more supporting and accepting societal environment that will act as a protective factor for the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people.

We respectfully ask that you consider these issues when the ABS make their recommendations to your government on the additional questions to be included in the 2021 Census. Without the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the upcoming Census in 2021, we will need to wait until 2026 for us to be counted and this is too long; we desperately need to gain the insights that the Census will provide to us so that health and social services are better able to respond to our needs by making better use of their resources. Countries such as New Zealand and UK are ensuring that this data is captured, and we hope very much that you will support this to happen in the next Census.

We also offer our services to the ABS to work with them on ensuring that the questions they ask are appropriate and will return useful data.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

47F



THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000022

47F

47F

Dear 47F

Thank you for your correspondence of 09 June 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need for robust information about our LGBTI community is an important issue. I have recently received a recommendation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding the 2021 Census topics. The Government will take your viewpoint into consideration when it reviews the recommendation.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP

MC: Draft response for [REDACTED] (MC19-000021)
 Secretariat WDB

[REDACTED] 06/08/2019 11:32 AM

Basics

Secretariat WDB


06/08/2019 04:59 PM

Sent by [REDACTED]

Send	To [REDACTED]@TREASURY.GOV.AU> cc [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	MC: Draft response for [REDACTED] (MC19-000021)
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Correspondence\General 2019

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a draft response for [REDACTED]. This MC was referred to us through PDMS from PM&C.

PDR Number	Original Correspondence	Re
MC19-000021	 MC19-000021 Original Correspondence.pdf	MC

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

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

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

12/06/2019 09:23:53 AM

47F

47F

Census of Population and Housing

Hon. Scott Morrison MP

Prime Minister

Parliament House

Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Census of Population and Housing

I write to you in my capacity as 47F of Bits and Bods.

As you may be aware, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently identified eight new and existing topics for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Non-binary sex and/or gender identity and sexual orientation are among those topics being considered.

The ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service that strives for data excellence. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services.

An LGBTI-inclusive Census that captures sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex data is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for LGBTI health policy development in terms of prioritising, planning and analysis. This is essential in addressing the health needs that LGBTI people experience. The collection of quality and robust data and evidence will help increase social inclusion and reduce stigma and discrimination in the lives of LGBTI people. Being counted in the Census

will result in a more supporting and accepting societal environment that will act as a protective factor for the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people.

We respectfully ask that you consider these issues when the ABS make their recommendations to your government on the additional questions to be included in the 2021 Census. Without the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the upcoming Census in 2021, we will need to wait until 2026 for us to be counted and this is too long; we desperately need to gain the insights that the Census will provide to us so that health and social services are better able to respond to our needs by making better use of their resources. Countries such as New Zealand and UK are ensuring that this data is captured, and we hope very much that you will support this to happen in the next Census.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Kind regards



Bits and Bods acknowledges Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people as the true owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia, and pays respect to their elders past, present and emerging.



THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000021



Dear 47F

Thank you for your correspondence of 12 June 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need for robust information about our LGBTI community is an important issue. I have recently received a recommendation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding the 2021 Census topics. The Government will take your viewpoint into consideration when it reviews the recommendation.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP

MC: Draft response MC19-000025, MC19-000026 and MC19-000027

Secretariat WDB

22

06/08/2019 12:39 PM

Basics

Secretariat WDB






07/08/2019 05:32 PM

Sent by 22

Send	To 22 @treasury.gov.au cc 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS, 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	MC: Draft response MC19-000025, MC19-000026 and MC19-000027
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Correspondence\General 2019

Good afternoon,

Please find attached draft responses and original copies of correspondence for MC19-000025, MC19-000026 and MC19-000027. These MCs were referred to us through PDMS from PM&C.

PDR Number	Original Correspondence	Respon
MC19-000025 47F	 MC19-000025 Original Correspondence- Part 1.pdf  MC19-000025 Original Correspondence- Part 2.pdf	MC19-00
MC19-000026 47F	 MC19-000026 Original Correspondence.pdf	MC
MC19-000027 47F	 MC19-000027 Original Correspondence- Part 2.pdf  MC19-000027 Original Correspondence- Part 1.pdf	MC19-00

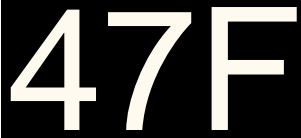
Kind Regards,

22

Bureau of Statistics

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

30/05/2019 04:14:51 PM



47F

ATT:460687 2021 Census of Population and Housing

Letter to PM Scott Morrison re Census

National LGBTI Health Alliance

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other
sexuality, sex and gender diverse people and communities
PO Box 51 Newtown NSW 2042
Email: info@lgbtihealth.org.au
Telephone: 02 8568 1123
Fax: 02 8212 9013



Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Census of Population and Housing

I write to you in my capacity as 47F of the National LGBTI Health Alliance (the Alliance) to on behalf of our Board of Governance and members, congratulate you on your recent election win. The National LGBTI Health Alliance is the national peak health organisation in Australia for organisations and individuals that provide health-related programs, services and research focused on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (LGBTI).

As you may be aware, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently identified eight new and existing topics for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Non-binary sex and/or gender identity and sexual orientation are among those topics being considered. The inclusion of these questions to capture sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in national population research, specifically the Census of Population and Housing, is vital if we are to tackle the ongoing significant health disparities among LGBTI people and communities.

As Australia's official statistical organisation, the ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service that strives for data excellence. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services. The inclusion of LGBTI indicators will ensure an end to inaccuracy in reporting and a greater understanding of the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Current national policies, strategies and programmes identify LGBTI people as a priority population for action. This is due to an overwhelming amount of research evidence consistently demonstrating that a disproportionate number of LGBTI people experience poorer mental health outcomes and have higher risk of suicidal behaviours, higher rates of alcohol and other drug use as well as other significant health disparities in areas of health such as cancer than non-LGBTI people. An LGBTI-inclusive Census that captures sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex data is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for LGBTI health policy development in terms of prioritising, planning and analysis. This is essential in addressing the health needs that LGBTI people experience.

Further, the collection of quality and robust data and evidence will help increase social inclusion and reduce stigma and discrimination in the lives of LGBTI people. Being counted in the Census will result in a more supporting and accepting societal environment that will act as a protective factor for the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people. Good mental health and wellbeing



National LGBTI Health Alliance

will inevitably lead to an increase in their economic and workforce participation and enhance Australia's productivity and economic growth overall.

We respectfully ask that you consider these issues when the ABS make their recommendations to your government on the additional questions to be included in the 2021 Census. If we are not successful in the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the upcoming Census in 2021 we will need to wait until 2026 for us to be counted. This is too long; we desperately need to gain the insights that the Census will provide to us so that health and social services are better able to respond to our needs by making better use of their resources. Countries such as New Zealand and UK are ensuring that this data is captured, and we hope very much that you will support this to happen in the next Census.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you in person the health and wellbeing needs of our communities and look forward to continuing to work with your government to ensure that LGBTI Australians are supported to be in the best of both physical and mental health.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box containing the white text '47F' in a large, bold, sans-serif font.

30/05/2019

Cc: The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer



THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000025

47F

Dear 47F

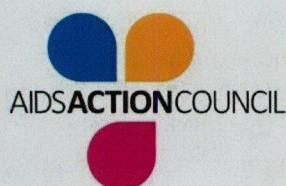
Thank you for your correspondence of 30 May 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need for robust information about our LGBTI community is an important issue. I have recently received a recommendation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding the 2021 Census topics. The Government will note the issues you raise and take your viewpoint into consideration when it reviews the recommendation.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP



AIDS ACTION COUNCIL OF THE ACT

ABN 97 812 719 846

02 6257 2855

contact@aidsaction.org.au

Havelock House
85 Northbourne Avenue
(Gould Street entrance)
Turner ACT 2612

PO Box 5245 Braddon ACT 2612

aidsaction.org.au

Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister

Census of Population and Housing

I write to you in my capacity as 47F of the AIDS Action Council of the ACT.

As you may be aware, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently identified eight new and existing topics for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Non-binary sex and/or gender identity and sexual orientation are among those topics being considered.

The ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service that strives for data excellence. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services.

An LGBTI-inclusive Census that captures sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex data is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for LGBTI health policy development in terms of prioritising, planning and analysis. This is essential in addressing the health needs that LGBTI people experience. The collection of quality and robust data and evidence will help increase social inclusion and reduce stigma and discrimination in the lives of LGBTI people. Being counted in the Census will result in a more supporting and accepting societal environment that will act as a protective factor for the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTI people.

We respectfully ask that you consider these issues when the ABS make their recommendations to your government on the additional questions to be included in the 2021 Census. Without the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the upcoming Census in 2021, we will need to wait until 2026 for us to be counted and this is too long; we desperately need to gain the insights that the Census will provide to us so that health and social services are better able to respond to our needs by making better use of their resources. Countries such as New Zealand and UK are ensuring that this data is captured, and we hope very much that you will support this to happen in the next Census.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.



47F

5 June 2019



THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000026

47F

Dear 47F

Thank you for your correspondence of 05 June 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need for robust information about our LGBTI community is an important issue. I have recently received a recommendation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding the 2021 Census topics. The Government will note the issues you raise and take your viewpoint into consideration when it reviews the recommendation.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP

20/06/2019 03:53:41 PM

47F

47F @fpnsw.org.au

ATT:465142 LGBTI inclusive census - Submission from Family Planning NSW

Dear Prime Minister

Please find attached a copy of a letter from 47F
47F to Prime Minister Scott Morrison. This letter calls for the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the 2021 Census.

Kind regards

47F

Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

Census of Population and Housing

I write to you in my capacity as 47F of Family Planning NSW, Australia's leading provider of reproductive and sexual health services.

As you may be aware, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recently identified eight new and existing topics for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). Non-binary sex and/or gender identity and sexual orientation are among those topics being considered.

The ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service. The Census allows us to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services.

An LGBTI-inclusive Census that captures sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex data is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for LGBTI health policy development in terms of prioritising, planning and analysis. This is essential in addressing the health needs of LGBTI people. Improving awareness about the LGBTI community, including through collection of national statistics, is a prerequisite of inclusion¹.

¹ OECD. Society at a glance 2019: OECD social indicators. 2019. [Cited 2019 June 11]. p.39. Available from: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/c64c3d3f-en.pdf?expires=1560216922&id=id&acname=guest&checksum=8661D2C4E730933F12992CA38DE26387>



We respectfully ask that you consider these issues when the ABS makes its recommendations to Government on the additional questions to be included in the 2021 Census. Without the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex questions in the upcoming Census in 2021, Australia will need to wait until 2026 for all citizens to be appropriately included in the Census, and this is too long.

Australian policy makers and service providers need Census so insights to inform health and social services for all Australians, including LGBTI people. Countries such as New Zealand and UK are ensuring that this data is captured, and we hope very much that you will support this to happen in the next Census.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter.

Yours sincerely,



20 June 2019



THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000027

47F

Dear 47F,

Thank you for your correspondence of 20 June 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The need for robust information about our LGBTI community is an important issue. I have recently received a recommendation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics regarding the 2021 Census topics. The Government will note the issues you raise and take your viewpoint into consideration when it reviews the recommendation.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP

MC: Draft Response to MC19-000039
Secretariat WDB

22 11/10/2019 02:09 PM

Basics

Secretariat WDB 11/10/2019 04:19 PM
Sent by 22

Send	To 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU> cc 22 22 @TREASURY.GOV.AU> bcc
Subject	MC: Draft Response to MC19-000039
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	Ministerial Correspondence\General 2019

Good afternoon

Please see attached a draft response for 47F for consideration by the Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer. This MC was referred from PM&C.



MC19-000039 - Original Correspondence.pdf



MC19-000039 - Draft Response for 47F.docx

Regards

22

Assistant Director

Parliamentary and Partnerships | Communication and Parliamentary Branch
People, Capability and Communication Division

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) 22 (E) 22 @abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

21/08/2019 06:16:17 PM

47F

47F

ATT:473897 Joint Statement for the inclusion of LGBTI data in the 2021 Census

Dear Prime Minister

Please find attached a Joint Statement of peak organisations in Australia in support of the appropriate and meaningful collection of data on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status of the Australian population in the 2021 Census.

The National LGBTI Health Alliance has led this approach so as not to bombard you with letters of support, instead consulting with our colleagues in other peak health organisations, many of which represent a significant membership base across Australia, to develop a consensus statement highlighting the national importance of collecting this data.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue further with you or your office.

Kind regards

47F

National LGBTI Health Alliance

JOINT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE INCLUSION OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND INTERSEX STATUS IN THE 2021 CENSUS OF POPULATION AND HOUSING

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently identified sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status for further testing and potential inclusion in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing (the Census). The meaningful inclusion of data on these topics is most welcomed as there are no other alternative data sources or solutions that could meet these topic needs.

As Australia's official statistical organisation, the ABS aspires to be a high quality, objective, and responsive national statistical service that strives for data excellence. The Census is best placed to understand the cultural, economic and social diversity of our communities, providing information about the population across small geographic areas and long-time trends in key aspects of the lives of Australians. Census data underpins government funding and investment and informs government decisions in a range of areas, including healthcare and social services planning.

The current exclusion of appropriate sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status questions in the Census means that clear demographic data of the Australian population is not being captured.

A number of national health and wellbeing policies, strategies and programs rightly identify LGBTI people as a priority population for action. This is due to the ongoing significant health and wellbeing disparities experienced across and within LGBTI communities. This includes for example disproportionate rates of mental health diagnoses, suicidal behaviours, as well as elevated rates of drug and alcohol use, higher rates of HIV and STIs, and a significantly higher cancer burden. Discrimination and stigma have a negative impact on accessing high quality and culturally safe community and residential services, for example in aged care, domestic and family violence, homelessness and disability.

Asking appropriate questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in the Census is crucial in fostering an evidence-informed environment for health and economic policy service planning and understanding health and social service utilisation. This is essential in addressing the significant health disparities that LGBTI people experience.

There is a strong shift internationally towards collecting this data. Scotland and Northern Ireland are considering a sexual orientation question for their 2021 Census. The Office for National Statistics in the UK are recommending the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity questions in the 2021 Census in England and Wales. These decisions have been made after their testing showed it would be acceptable to the population and will deliver good-quality data with minimal effect on overall response and respondent burden. The United States and Canada are also currently taking steps to achieve accurate population counts for LGBTI people in their Censuses.

Australia has a unique opportunity to provide statistical leadership in the collection, production and analysis of data for LGBTI populations. The inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in the 2021 Census will promote scientific excellence and data integrity. This will have an enormous impact on improving social cohesion and the health outcomes of LGBTI people and communities.

We, the undersigned, place on the public record our support for the appropriate and meaningful collection of data on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status of the Australian population in the 2021 Census.



Western Australian Association for Mental Health





THE HON MICHAEL SUKKAR MP
Minister for Housing and Assistant Treasurer

Ref: MC19-000039

47F

Dear 47F

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 August 2019, originally directed to the Prime Minister, regarding new content on the 2021 Census of Population and Housing. Your correspondence has been referred to me as I have responsibility for this matter.

I acknowledge the Joint Statement you have provided in support of the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in the 2021 Census of Population and Housing to the Government. I note this statement supports the position you put forward in your previous correspondence dated 30 May 2019.

Yours sincerely

The Hon Michael Sukkar MP



Census content recommendation Teresa Dickinson to: David Kalisch 23/07/2019 03:39 PM

Cc: Paul Jelfs, Justine Boland, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], "Chris Libreri", Bindi Kindermann,

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS

To: David Kalisch/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, "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>, Bindi Kindermann/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED] /Staff/ABS@ABS

5 Attachments

[REDACTED]
Brief for Statistician - 2021 Census topic recommendations.docx

22

David

Please find attached a, hopefully, final Ministerial brief on Census content. A hard copy of the pack of material is with [REDACTED], as it's probably easier to read in hard copy.

I have adopted your feedback. In particular:

1. Minister to specifically agree to each topic decision. Although I have done something a bit different around that, as you'll see. This is because I suddenly realised we needed to give the Minister visibility of the entire set of topics in the Census - to not do so would appear disingenuous and not allow him to make decisions within the broader and appropriate context of the Census content overall.
2. More info up front in the recs section about the government process and what we're actually asking for in detail
3. Some additional material in the Risks and Sensitivities section
4. More detail on the process from here on in
5. Additional material in Attachment B on gender identity and sexual orientation including:
 - more on sensitivities
 - more explicit about likelihood of producing small area estimates (though this commentary is relevant to any topic with low prevalence, not particularly because of the nature of the topic - the methodologist in me felt this was important to note)

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have checked and finessed my changes and also provided a back pocket brief for you which includes a bit more information on the topics, including potential estimates and some details about small area data and cross classification potential. It is for your information and is too detailed to include in the material to the Minister.

T

22

(See attached file: Brief for Statistician - 2021 Census topic recommendations.docx)

Teresa Dickinson

Deputy Australian Statistician

Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5590

(E) teresa.dickinson@abs.gov.au (W) www.abs.gov.au

(See attached file: SSA_2023.png)

Back Pocket Brief – 2021 Census Topic Review

The following brief includes additional information on the new topics in consideration for the 2021 Census to aid in discussions with the Minister.

Topics covered include:


- For each new topic:
 - Snapshots of questions from paper forms (currently still being tested)
 - Key agencies with interest in the subject or involvement in development
 - International consideration
 - Estimated population size
 - Small area data and cross classification considerations and uses
 - Time series expectations
- Processing and dissemination for data on new topics
- Topic interest expressed against each government portfolio
- Key NSO approaches to all new topics considered after the public consultation

Sexual orientation

Current question in testing

59 Does the person consider themselves to be:

• Mark all that apply, like this:

 Go to censustest.abs.gov.au for more information.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Straight (Heterosexual)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gay
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual
<input type="checkbox"/>	Different identity (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to answer

Stakeholder support of topic (submissions and/or engagement)

- Department of Health
- Department of Social Services
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- National Mental Health Commission
- National LGBTI Health Alliance

International approach

- Scotland has agreed through parliament that they will collect sexual orientation on their next Census.
- New topic proposed and being tested for UK, and Canada
- NZ decided not to include in their 2018 Census. Based on media and public response, they have moved quickly to include the topic in their social surveys.

Estimated population

- The General Social Survey in 2014 included a measure of sexual orientation for people 18 years and over. It was estimated 3% of people 18 years and older were gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (with about half reporting as gay or lesbian, and the other half as bisexual or other).
- 15 OECD countries include a question on sexual orientation or identity in one of their national surveys. On average LGB people across these countries represented around 2.7% of the adult population.

Small area data use and cross-classification

- Due to the lack of data on this population, there will be interest in cross classifying with all other Census topics.
- While numbers will be small for some areas or population groups, it will be of value to stakeholders to know understand sub-groups with higher representation.
- Data at all geographic levels is of value for developing strategies and support. Census data will help with funding resources and future planning.

Time series

- Sexual orientation may also change over time and there may be many contributing factors that impact willingness to respond.
- Growth may be related to increases in the population, as well as increases in willingness to declare a response.

Census Dissemination - Small Area Data and cross-classification

- All topics on the Census are coded to mesh block and then disseminated at the same level in all Census products (table builder, microdata etc).
- There are no restrictions on cross tabulation topics, and depending on the Census product, data may be available at SA1 level or smaller for microdata.
- The smaller the numbers the greater the impact of perturbation methods which are applied to confidentialise data.
- While stakeholders will be able to access all topics at low levels of geography and cross classify how they see fit, the quality and the data will be less reliable for small numbers.
- Where survey data, or other sources are available, they will be used during processing to assess the quality of the response to the Census.
- Key stakeholders will continue to be engaged to help improve processing decisions, edit rules and validation of data. This will all feed into quality reports which are published for all topics on the Census.
- There will be value in conducting specialised analysis and realising articles dedicated to the new topics. This will allow for further explanation of the quality considerations for interpreting the data. Subject Matter Experts in the ABS and key stakeholders will be consulted in preparing these articles.

Topic interests by Australian Government Portfolio

Portfolio	Stakeholder support (submission and/or engagement)
22	
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support and engagement on a number of topics listed in the following priority order: 22 Non-binary sex, gender and sexual orientation
22	

22

Social Services (including Human Services)

- Department of Social Services provided submissions for the following new topics:

22

22

22

COM

NSO approaches to topics

Topic	New Zealand	United Kingdom	Canada	USA
<p>22</p>				
	<p>Sex with non-binary responses, Gender identity, Sexual orientation</p>	<p>Did not include on 2018 Census but has researched and released standard since.</p>	<p>Exploring combination of topics with binary sex, gender identity and sexual orientation</p>	<p>Exploring combination of topics with binary sex, gender identity and sexual orientation</p>
<p>22</p>				

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



SSA_2023.png

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

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

22

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

It was an amicable and helpful conversation And now I must board my plane.

T

Teresa Dickinson

22



Re: Census content rec to the Minister - where are we at? (Especially as we now have a Mininster) [DLM=Sensitive] Chris Libreri to: Teresa Dickinson 19/07/2019 03:17 PM
Cc: 22, Justine Boland
From: Chris Libreri/Staff/ABS
To: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: 22/Staff/ABS@ABS, Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS

22

Hi a few high level responses :

22

2) The inference that we might not publish sex and gender small area data is also not helpful. The facts are that we expect small responses and like every item that has small responses it will be subject to data quality scrutiny to ascertain our comfort with the level of release - a shorter more general note might be more useful.

22

Chris Libreri

General Manager Census and Statistical Services Division

Head of Brisbane Office

Australian Bureau of Statistics

(P) (02) 6252 5234 (M) 22 (F) (02) 6252 0000

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

Executive Assistant:

(P) 22 (E) 22@abs.gov.au

* Teresa Dickinson---19/07/2019 01:21:49 PM---Hi folks 22

22

From: Teresa Dickinson/Staff/ABS
To: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS@ABS, 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: "Chris Libreri" <chris.libreri@abs.gov.au>
Date: 19/07/2019 01:21 PM
Subject: Census content rec to the Minister - where are we at? (Especially as we now have a Minister)

Hi folks

22

In essence here's what David wanted:

1. Minister to specifically agree to each topic decision. I have done something a bit different around that, as you'll see. This is because I suddenly realised we needed to give the Minister visibility of the entire set of topics in the Census - to not do so would appear disingenuous and not allow him to make decisions within the broader and appropriate context of the Census content overall. Does my approach work, do you think? 22

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5. More material in (current) Attachment A on gender identity and sexual orientation:

- will the proposed advantages be able to be realised?
- other data sources currently available or could be available soon 47C

47C

- more on the sensitivities of the topics and implications of that (I've added a bit)

22

22

Teresa Dickinson

Deputy Australian Statistician

Census and Data Services Group | Australian Bureau of Statistics

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(See attached file: SSA_2023.png)

Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]Justine Boland to: 22
22 21/08/2019 10:24 AM
Cc: Nick Stathis
From: Justine Boland/Staff/ABS
To: 22 /Staff/ABS@ABS
Cc: Nick Stathis/Staff/ABS@ABS
Hi 22

I expect you are in a meeting now.

22

In the 2nd point we'd suggest you refer to sensitivity and don't need to say point b.

I should be free to call you in about 30 mins.

Justine

From: 22 @abs.gov.au>
Date: 21 August 2019 at 9:55:29 am AEST
To: Nick Stathis <nick.stathis@abs.gov.au>, Justine Boland <justine.boland@abs.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Fw: ABS Minute on Census 2021 topics

Hi Nick and Justine,
Following are some draft comments for your review. I'd appreciate your advice on the level of detail and directness that is appropriate.

22

- The wording of recommendation 4 is intended to directly seek the Minister's advice on the inclusion of 4.a gender identity and 4.b sexual orientation because there is not as strong a case for inclusion of these topics compared to those in recommendation 2. Data users have identified a need for information on gender identity and sexual orientation, particularly in terms of health, mental health and aged care policy development and service delivery. The Minister's advice is sought because of the heightened community sensitivity to these topics and the risk of adverse public reaction.

22

22

cheers

22

22

Director - 2021 Census Content Review

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

(P) 22 (M) 22

(E) 22 [@abs.gov.au](mailto:22@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.

Nick Stathis---20/08/2019 07:00:45 PM---Hi 22, see attached questions regarding MB19-00039 Government Decision on 2021 Census Topics (

22 - Duplicate

Basics

2021 Census Content Development 22/10/2019 01:25 PM

WDB

Sent by [REDACTED]

Send	To "2021 Census PMO" <[REDACTED]@abs.gov.au> cc [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS, [REDACTED]/Staff/ABS@ABS bcc
Subject	Addition to decision register - Census conten [REDACTED]
Protective Mark	UNCLASSIFIED
Categories	01 Program Decision Register\2019

Could you please append this document to the decision register? It has been cleared by Teresa and is an addendum to decision 68.

cheers,

[REDACTED]



Decision Proforma October field test content test addendum 22 Oct 2019.docx

Topic for decision	Content plan for October 2019 field test – addendum 9 Oct. 19 (D68)
Stream Lead	22 [REDACTED], 2021 Census content review
Purpose	The purpose of this document is to outline the final decision on the questions to be tested in the October 2019 field test.
Addendum	<p>The Australian Statistician is responsible for determining the content and the objectives of the testing program for the Census. The decision to include the topics of non-binary sex, chronic health conditions and service with the Australian Defence Force, but not sexual orientation or gender identity, was made by the Statistician, not by the Government.</p> <p>This decision included an assessment of the time and effort required by the public to complete the Census test, and other testing already undertaken on potential new topic areas.</p> <p>In preparation for the test two form types were printed (A and B) as there is a considerable printing lead time required. The 'B Form' (not including sexual orientation or gender identity) was subsequently confirmed for use in the 2019 Census Test and will enable the assessment of the new health and Australian Defence Force questions across the whole sample.</p> <p>It will also enable testing of the new non-binary 'sex' question which is a modification of the 2016 Census wording where the term 'sex' is not used and respondents may interpret the question in either a sex or gender way. The three response options are male, female and non-binary. On selecting non-binary on the online form, the respondent is able to provide additional information in the text field.</p> <p>Questions for other potential new topics under consideration - such as a separate question on gender identity (in addition to the sex question), sexual orientation, journey to education and smoking - have been developed and undergone a range of testing through focus groups and cognitive testing. Information on sexual orientation is also collected in the General Social Survey.</p> <p>The ABS will continue to prepare for all eventualities, noting that questions that are included in the Census test won't necessarily be the final set to be included in the 2021 Census, as this is a decision for Government.</p> <p>This field test, while very important, is only one-step in a comprehensive testing program that the ABS will run in the lead up to the Census. Learnings from this test and other testing, including a full readiness test in 2020, will inform the processes, systems and forms to be used in the 2021 Census.</p>
Decision outcome	
Decision reached and reasoning	The 'B Form' (not including sexual orientation or gender identity) was confirmed for use in the 2019 Census Test and will enable the assessment of the new health and Australian Defence Force questions across the whole sample.
Decision sign off/date	Australian Statistician, 20 September 2019
Decision register	Recorded in 2021 Census Decision Register on 22 October 2019