



Census

Submission guide

2026 Census topic consultation phase one

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



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Preparing your submission

Phase one of the 2026 Census topic consultation is open from 28 February to 28 April 2023.

The purpose of phase one is to help the ABS understand what information is needed, but not currently collected.

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

You will be able to include up to ten requests for the ABS to collect information within a submission.

For each information request within your submission you will be asked:

1. To provide a brief summary of the information you would like the ABS to collect and produce statistics on.
2. What topic the information most relates to.
3. Why it is important that the ABS collect and produce this information.
4. The purposes you will use the information for.
5. The smallest area or geography you will use the information for.

A high-quality submission should include evidence of specific use cases or documentation that highlights the data need. For example: upload or reference policy documents that provide evidence of the data need. The evidence provided should address the 2026 Census topic assessment criteria.

One quality submission with a strong case for the ABS to collect the information will be considered more highly than several submissions with limited information on how, or why the data is used. We encourage you to connect with other organisations to provide a consolidated submission to strengthen your evidence base.

2026 Census topic assessment criteria

The ABS will consider requests for new or changed topics for the Census against a set of criteria. 2021 Census topics will also be reviewed against the same criteria. This process will identify if the topic should be recommended to the Australian Government for inclusion in the 2026 Census. These criteria have been informed by the [United Nations Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses](#).

A successful Census relies on strong community support. This support is achieved through collecting data of national importance while also ensuring the Census is easy to complete and not seen as being too intrusive.

The first step in this process will be assessing the public value of collecting data on the topic. To do this, we will collate the evidence provided in the submissions by topic and then consider whether:

Criteria	For example
1. The topic is of current national importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data is required for an electoral or legislative purpose. • data is needed to support policy development, planning or program monitoring. • data is used for research purposes.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data is needed at the national level and/or is required for international comparability. • data is needed for small population groups. • data is needed for small geographic areas. • the value of the topic is enhanced through combining with other characteristics collected in the Census or with administrative data.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a need for time series data on the topic. • the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future. • data collected on the topic will have enduring value.

The ABS will further assess topics that rate strongly against the public value criteria. This assessment will help determine if the Census is the most appropriate way to provide data on the topic. The criteria are:

Criteria	For example
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic need is not met or likely to be met in the near future by an ABS survey or from administrative sources. • data to meet the topic need cannot be produced through integration of existing data sources. • there are extensive barriers to accessing alternate data sources.
5. Data on the topic can be collected efficiently.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic will not require multiple questions or a large number of response categories. • data collected on the topic will not require extensive processing or coding. • the collection of the topic will not significantly add to the overall cost of the Census.
6. A representative of the household would be willing and able to answer questions on the topic for each member of the household.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the topic can be collected in a simple question or questions using a form that the household completes themselves. • the question(s) will not require lengthy or complex explanation or instruction. • the question(s) is likely to be easily understood.

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

Support to participate

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

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

2026 Census Topic Consultation
Locked Bag 10
Belconnen ACT 2616

An [Easy Read Guide to the 2026 Census topic review](#) process is also available.

Consent to publish

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

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

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

We will only publish these sections of your submission where you provide your consent. Your name and email address will not be published.

Collection of personal information

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

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

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

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

Review of shortlisted topics from the 2021 Census

As part of phase one, the ABS will re-assess the evidence provided during the 2021 Census public consultation process for the six topics shortlisted for further consideration, but not included in the 2021 Census. The topics are:

- Gender identity
- More contemporary descriptions of household and family relationships (including those with shared care of children)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- Journey to education (including mode of transport, and name and address of educational institution)
- Smoking status
- Sexual orientation.

If you provided a submission on these topics in 2021 you do not need to make a new submission for 2026. You can choose to provide additional information, requests for new topics or changes to topics. You can provide this information through the ABS Consultation Hub.

Submissions to Statistical Standard Reviews and other ABS Consultations

The ABS is currently undertaking a review of the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) and the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS). A consultation process was undertaken at the end of 2022 regarding changing the Standard or Classification. You do not need to provide a submission regarding changing the topic of religion if you provided a submission during that consultation. Any proposed changes to the RAS will form part of phase two of the 2026 Census public consultation in June 2023.

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

Requests to retain existing topics in the 2026 Census

Phase one of the 2026 Census topic consultation is seeking submissions for information needs not currently captured by the Census or ABS statistical program. You do not need to put in a submission during phase one to retain a topic in the 2026 Census.

During phase two of public consultation (June 2023), the ABS will seek feedback on any proposed changes to an existing Census topic based on submissions received in phase one, or any plans to remove a Census topic or question.

We encourage you to [subscribe for updates](#) if you would like to be notified of the public consultation on proposed changes or removal of a topic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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