



Review of 2021 Census Topics: Submission Form

On completion, check and submit your form via

- **Email:** census.content@abs.gov.au
- Or
- **Mail:** Census Topic Review, GPO Box 9817, Brisbane QLD 4001

Consent to Publish

While all responses received will be included in the analysis of this consultation, the ABS intends to make submissions publicly available after the closing date of 30 June 2018 to share views about the data needs of the Australian community.

If your submission identifies or names an organisation you have collaborated with, please consider obtaining their consent prior to agreeing for the ABS to publish your submission.

Can we publish your submission after the consultation period closes? (see below for details of what each option represents)

- Yes
- Yes, but do not publish any parts that are identifiable
- No

After the closing date of 30 June 2018, submissions received will be available on this consultation where your approval has been given.

- **By selecting Yes:**
You give permission to publish your responses to the assessment criteria as well as who you are representing and organisation name (if applicable). Contact details, including name, phone number and email address will not be published.
- **By selecting Yes, but do not publish any parts that are identifiable:**
You give permission to publish your responses to the assessment criteria only. Who you are representing, organisation (if applicable) and contact details will not be published.
- **By selecting No:**
No part of your submission will be published.



Contact Details

Should we need to communicate regarding this submission, please provide details of the appropriate contact. We will contact you only if we have questions regarding your submission.

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

Contact name: Maria Leebeek

Email address: maria.leebeek@qyhc.org.au

Phone number: 0448 073 463

Who you are representing:

(please select applicable)

- Commonwealth government department
- State/territory government department
- Local government
- Business
- Industry body/association
- Community group
- Educational institution
- An individual
- Other

If other please specify:

Name of your organisation (if applicable):

Queensland Youth Housing Coalition Inc

Please list any other organisations you have collaborated with on this submission.

Please consider obtaining their consent prior to agreeing for the ABS to publish your submission.

What is your submission about?

Below is a list of topics related to data currently collected on Census.

Choose one that is the most closely related to your submission.

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

If Other topic please specify: Homelessness

Please note: If you would like to submit ideas on more than one area of interest, please complete separate submissions.

Please provide a brief summary of your submission

The ABS Census have been providing accurate homelessness estimates that have enabled local services as well as social planners to reflect on the service delivery to young people and to ensure that wherever possible programs are positively impacting on the lives of young people and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The Queensland Youth Housing Coalition submission identifies areas where there are currently issues with the forms and recommendations for consideration in any changes to the form for the 2021 Census.

Proposed changes to Census Household form changes

1. Question 3 – is the person male or female
Include an option for a drop down list of LGBTI or for the option of a free text box, both options reflective of the fact that not all people identify as male or female.
2. Question 5 – what is the persons relationship to Person 1/Person 2
As many young people are couch surfing and in many cases in the homes of their friends if the data can be more explicit this will provide a better picture of where young people are residing on Census nights.
Additional questions could include;
 - What is your relationship to that person1?
3. Question 8 – where does the person usually live?
In terms of people couch surfing there needs to be an acknowledgement that people may not have a usual residence and this a more explicit way to describe this needs to be included. This could be in the form of an additional Tick-box response options for people with no fixed address (NFA) and would include supporting instructions e.g if you usually rough sleep or if you are couch surfing please write NFA
4. Question 9 and 10 – where did the person live 1 and 5 years ago
There should be an option to note that people again may not have had a NFA. However, caution is needed here as there cannot be an assumption that a person is chronically homeless.

Assessment criteria 1

The topic is of current national importance.

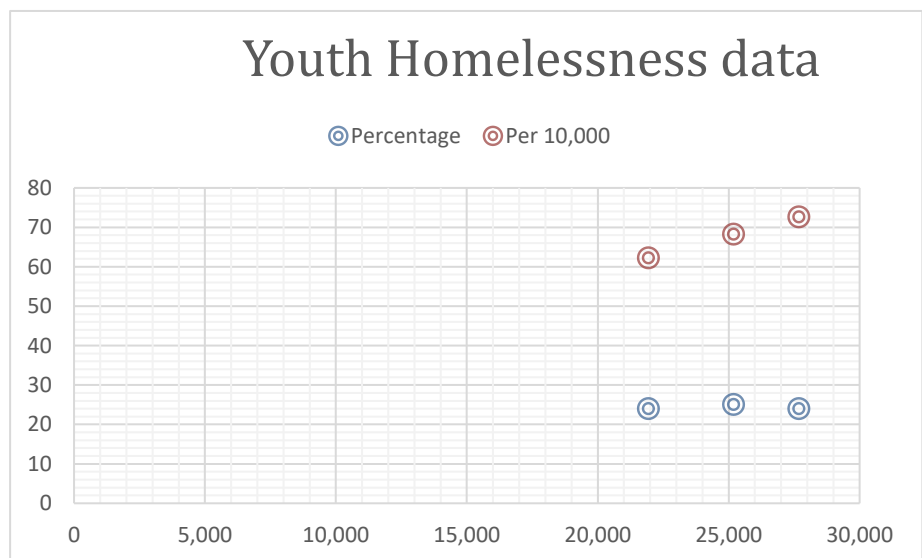
The ABS Census have been providing accurate homelessness estimates that have enabled local services as well as social planners to reflect on the service delivery to young people and to ensure that wherever possible programs are positively impacting on the lives of young people and their families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The policy objective in homelessness programs should be that the experience of homelessness for young people is short, rapidly resolved and not chronic. This would enable young people to move out of homelessness and to be able to undertake positive life opportunities.

The Census data provides the homelessness sector both in government and the NFP sector a key indicator every 5 years and to explore trends. It provides a picture of where homeless young people are across the age bracket of 12 to 25 years and where they are living in the community. It enables policy and practice responses to be based on data and evidence. In particular if we can better understand the numbers of young people who are couch surfing a more effective response to their needs can be developed. Further, this issue is vitally important because if people who are couch surfing are forced for whatever reason into the formal homelessness support service system this will overwhelm those services where demand is already exceeding supply - not to mention the trauma that is caused.

Homelessness is a national issue, it is not one that can be dealt with alone on a State by State level. Responding to homelessness requires government and community to work together to develop strategies to reduce homelessness. The Commonwealth Government has agreed to a National Housing and Homelessness Agreement with the State and Territory Governments. What has been identified in the development of the Agreement and is supported by QYHC is the need for transparency and accountability about the deliverables under this agreement. The Census data is a vital element for the provision of accurate homelessness data along with the AIHW datasets and those from other community and NFP partners.

There has been an increase in the numbers of young people that are experiencing homelessness in the 2016 census and an understanding of the numbers, rate as well as characteristics enables models to be funded and developed.



The Census data can be aligned to other data sets as well to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of homelessness such as the administrative data sources such as the AIHW data, juvenile justice and out-of-home care data.

¹ Adapted from ABS data

Assessment criteria 2

There is a need for data from a Census of the whole population.

The administrative data sources such as the AIHW data, juvenile justice and out-of-home care data provide only a picture of young people who are in the service system. Many young people do not utilise the service system and couch surf. Therefore, the census provides a vital point in time data set.

Young people (12 to 24 years) are a key sub-population. MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) clearly articulate that the homeless career is fundamentally different between young people and adults. They also highlight that inadequate support for homeless young people can create a transition to adult homelessness where adult homelessness “is not a separate career typology, but a continuation of the youth homeless career into adult homelessness” (p.vi).

Young people at risk of homelessness may be young people who:

- Have been harmed or continue to be at risk of harm from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect;
- Have no significant caring adult figure who can exercise care and responsibility;
- Are engaged in risk taking behaviours and have families who are unable and/or unwilling to protect them from the harm this exposes them to;
- Experience family conflict and breakdown;
- Have no or limited support networks;
- Are unable to value and respect themselves;
- Experience emotional instability and/or mental health issues; and
- Experience education and employment issues.

The protective needs of young people may be further exacerbated because of particular disadvantage due to cultural and social impacts such as:

- Young people with intellectual disability or learning difficulty;
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people;
- Young people from diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Young people with mental health conditions;
- LGBTI young people;
- Young people with substance abuse issues;
- Young people who are pregnant and parenting;
- Young people exiting child protection services, from either ageing out of care at 18 years of age or young people disengaging from child safety; and
- Young people exiting Juvenile Justice Services, particularly young people on dual child protection and juvenile justice orders.

Whilst the Census may not be able to cover all risk factors or cohorts, there is still significant data that can be collected and modifications can enable more accurate data collection. A word of caution however, the Census is not an appropriate mechanism to ask about traumatic experiences, such as domestic and family violence and in many cases it may not be safe to do so.

Assessment criteria 3

The topic can be accurately collected in a form which the household completes themselves.

The current strategy to count people who are experiencing homelessness is quite diverse and includes

- The Special Short Form (SSF)
- Inclusion of questions into the Census Household Form (HHF)

There is also a process of engaging with State government and the NFP sector where they are supporting homelessness people through the street count and green sticker approach.

Adding specific questions that relate to homelessness contribute will minimise any errors in homelessness assumptions.

A number of suggestions by members about promoting the Census to ensure a more accurate response rate were made as part of seeking responses for the census and included;

- promoting to young people and households that people not names in the tenancy agreement are able to be counted in the census and this won't be reported to real estate agents. This is a common barrier to young people that are couch surfing being counted. A question could be, is there anyone staying in your house tonight that is not a regular household member? or something like that
- ensuring strong support to service around Queensland to assist young people to fill out the Census form
- Improving on how homeless people can access the form. Online version through centrelink/mygov, handed one in person at centrelink. Funding for ground workers helping people complete the form. Could city rough sleepers have access to food, showers etc. on census night and workers be there to help complete the form?
- The person completing the survey is given a briefing (written) about the importance of including all people staying at the address
- Use of social media such as Facebook to provide information to young people about the Census

Assessment criteria 4

The topic would be acceptable to Census respondents.

- There is currently a Registry process that has been employed by many cities around Australia where the VISPDAT has been used to collect information from people about their homelessness, housing and health issues. In most cases, people have been forthcoming with telling their stories. Whilst the Census does not require the level of detail of the VISPDAT it does serve to tell a story about the willingness of respondents to disclose their information particularly if they perceive either a personal or social benefit.

As noted earlier some caution needs to be applied with regard to questions about domestic and family violence if this places the person at risk. It may be the case where there is an elimination of answers – rather than the inclusion of questions may enable data assumptions to be made.

The 2016 Census also highlighted the need to be have a good communication strategy that highlights that personal identifiable information will not be shared – this will deal with concerns around parents finding out information a and concerns about breaches of the lease with landlords in the case of overcrowding.

Assessment criteria 5

The topic can be collected efficiently.

The proposed changes may add some time to the collection of the data either through the Special Short Form (SSF) or the Census Household Form (HHF) but as noted earlier this will not be onerous to the people filling out the forms. There may be some addition work around the enumeration of the homeless population but this would increase the accuracy of the data and would outweigh any issues around addition work that is needed for enumeration.

Assessment criteria 6

There is likely to be a continuing need for data on this topic in the following Census.

You may wish to consider the following points in your response.

- there is a need for time series data on the topic

- the topic is likely to remain relevant in the future

Unfortunately, homelessness is an ongoing issues and the collection of data is required on an ongoing basis to assess the effectiveness of current strategies and programs to address homelessness both at a government, NFP sector and community level.

Further once the data provides a clearer picture about the prevalence and characteristics of people who experience homelessness there may be a need to refine some of the questions particularly around health, mental health and disability issues.

Assessment criteria 7

There are no other alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

There is no national collection of data that captures, at a point in time, the type of data that the ABS collects through the Census- it is the only source that provides a complete measure of homelessness prevalence in Australia. The current process has a high level of confidence in the NFP sector and government.

Prior to Census collection homelessness data there was no consensus on the numbers of homelessness people living in Australia. This lack of consensus created policy tension and inconsistencies in the response to homelessness.

The use of the Census data by State and Federal governments have not always been optimal but that is not an issue about the quality or nature of the data being collected, collated and analysed by the ABS.

Any further comments?

Other content-related issues raised by community members and services are included below.

Responses from members revolved around issues in relation ensuring that the Census accurately captured young people couchsurfing and suggested questions such as;

- If you were asked to leave this household tonight, do you have a place to go home to.
- How many nights per year do you stay at this address? Or how often do you stay at this address?
- How many people live in the house? Do you have a bedroom? Do you share a bedroom? Do you stay here 7 days / week? Do you sleep in a bed/on a lounge/on a mattress on the floor etc?
- Are you here due to lack of other housing options?

Other suggestions for questions to be included in the Census:

- In the past month, how many different households have you lived in? Drop down menu including options like: "one household with an occasional sleep over" through to "I move between multiple places"
- Why are you homeless?
- Asking how many addresses they've stayed at over the past year/s. Asking how many of these addresses have been stable housing options/their housing/they're on the lease. Asking if they've had no fixed address? For how long over the past year/s?
- How many dwellings/locations have you lived in during the last x months/years?

There were other concerns noted about:

- people who are in correction centres because they had no fixed address and were denied bail.

“We need to find a way to measure those people in prison who, if they are released today, would not have a safe place to live tonight (we could add a second question, if you were given time to prepare for your release, do you think you would then locate somewhere safe to move to or are your homeless?)”

- people who are in hospital either general wards or mental health facilities who are homeless.
“We need to find a way to check the people in Hospital and Mental Health wards who, if released today, would not have a safe place to live”

Lastly, there was broad agreement that communication about the special collections was insufficient and most of the respondent were not aware of the special collection strategies around homelessness.

On completion, check and submit your form via

➤ **Email:** census.content@abs.gov.au

Or

➤ **Mail:** Census Topic Review, GPO Box 9817, Brisbane QLD 4001