



Counting people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

Why every answer matters

What is the Census?

The Census counts every person and home in Australia. It asks questions about our communities, who we are, where we live and about people living or staying with us.

The Census helps to tell the story of communities over time. It can show community strengths and what's needed to help them continue to grow – such as health care, schools, transport and infrastructure.

Why the Census matters

When everyone is included in the Census, we can help plan for Australia's future.

Census data on languages used in a community could help in-language books be placed in local libraries, or the cultural backgrounds of a region could mean speciality foods are stocked in supermarkets. That's why it's important we hear from everyone in Australia on Census night. This includes Australian citizens, visa holders, international visitors, and international students.

When is the Census held?

Census night is Tuesday 11 August 2026.

How the ABS keeps your information safe

Protecting your privacy and keeping your information safe and secure is very important to us. It's a key factor in designing all elements of the Census, including the Census online form.

Your personal information is protected by the *Privacy Act 1988* and the secrecy provisions of the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*. It is not shared with anyone, including government agencies such as the police, housing, Department of Home Affairs, the Australian Tax Office and Centrelink.

By law, we must keep your information secure, and we cannot release information in a way that is likely to identify anyone.



How to participate in the Census

You can complete your Census online, by paper, or with help from us. **You can start as soon as you get your instructions if you know where you'll be on Census night.**

- **Most households will get a letter in the mail.** This will have your Census number and temporary password to complete online. If you prefer to complete using a paper form, you can request one from the Census website.
- **Some households will get a paper form.** Once completed, you can return it using the Reply Paid envelope provided. There are instructions on the form if you prefer to complete the Census online.

How to answer some Census questions

- There are multiple questions on the Census form where you can write your answer in the text box if you cannot see a response that applies to you.
- There are also some questions on the Census form where you can choose 'prefer not to answer'.

Cultural Background

The Census asks questions on cultural backgrounds to provide important insights on the diverse cultural make-up of Australia including:

Ancestry

This question helps us understand a person's ethnic or cultural background. Ancestry can be the place you, your parents or grandparents were born, or the group you most identify with.

You can list up to four ancestries on the Census form. If you have more than four, write the four ancestries you identify with the most. If your ancestry is not listed, it is important that you write your ancestry in the 'Other' box to make sure your ancestry is counted. Ancestry is coded using the *Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG), 2025*.

Religious affiliation

This is an optional question. Religious affiliation asks about the religion you identify with. This may be different from your practice of, or participation in, religious activities.

The question includes mark boxes or write your answer in the 'Other' free text box if your religious or spiritual affiliation is not listed. If you do not identify with any religion, you can mark 'No religion'. Religion is coded using the *Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups, March 2024*.

Country of birth of parents

We ask about country of birth to understand the origins of everyone who lives in Australia. This information plays an important role in developing policies and services that meet the needs of our diverse society, and to understand the cultural make-up of the whole of Australia. Country of Birth is coded using the *Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)*.

Language

This question asks whether someone uses a language other than English at home, and if so, which language they use most often. We ask these questions to help us understand the languages spoken across Australia. This helps us plan for different language communities and helps services to decide which languages to use for their services. Language used at home is coded using the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL)*.

Where you usually live

We ask where you usually live to ensure accurate community information. 'Usually live' means the address where you have lived, or plan to live, for 6 months or more in 2026.

If you usually live overseas or are visiting Australia for less than 1 year, mark 'Other country'.

If you are an **international student** living in Australia for at least 1 year, give your current Australian address. It does not matter if you have gone home for holidays during the year.

Remember, you'll need to complete a Census form wherever you are staying on Census night, Tuesday 11 August 2026.

This may be a different address from where you usually live. If someone is completing the Census form at your usual address, you'll need to be marked as 'away' but usually living at the dwelling.

Where you can get help to complete your Census

- You can ask someone you trust for help – a family member or friend
- For help in your preferred language, you will be able to call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)
- Find where you can get in-person help at **[www.census.abs.gov.au/find us](http://www.census.abs.gov.au/find-us)**
- Call the ABS Contact Centre on **1800 181 227**
- Find information to help you complete the Census at **www.census.abs.gov.au/help**