



Frequently Asked Questions: August 2026 Census



General

For a long time, LGBTIQ+ people and families have been largely missing from one of Australia's most important sources of information about who we are and how we live.

Without this information, governments, community organisations and service providers have had to make decisions without a complete picture of our communities.

We know LGBTIQ+ people can experience higher rates of housing insecurity, loneliness, health issues, and barriers in education and employment — but until now, we haven't had national data to fully understand these experiences.

Our communities have been advocating for these questions to be included in the Census for many years. This change means we can finally start building a clearer picture of our communities and the diversity of people and families across Australia.

Why is the Census asking about my gender and sexual orientation?

Census data helps governments, researchers, community organisations and service providers plan for the future. Better information can help improve planning and delivery of services such as:

- mental health support
- aged care
- family violence prevention and support
- education and community programs

Privacy

I'm worried about being outed in my household. What can I do?

If you don't feel safe or comfortable answering these questions as part of your household's Census form, there are options available.

From late July, the ABS will send instructions to every household explaining how to complete the Census online or by paper.

The best thing to do is to contact the ABS on 1800 181 227 to discuss your options and get advice about how to complete the Census in a way that works for you.

They can explain how to keep your responses separate from your household – plus ensure they are counted properly! For example, ordering a separate form to complete privately.

It's important to note that the same name, sex at birth and address need to be consistent on both forms.

This could be upsetting for some people – and the ABS needs to **find a better way** of doing this in the future. But right now, it's the only way the ABS can eliminate duplication and ensure accurate data collection, while still giving people the option of a response that is private and confidential from other members of the household.

What if I don't want to provide my name, address or other personal information?

The Census asks for your name and address to help make sure everyone is counted accurately and to improve the quality of Census data.

Your name and address are **kept separate** from your Census answers, including information about your age, occupation, education, income, sex recorded at birth, gender and sexual orientation.

That means no one analysing Census data can see your personal details alongside your responses.

The ABS has collected names and addresses in every Census since 1911 and is legally required to protect your information.

Also, your personal information isn't kept forever. The ABS **securely destroys names** after up to 18 months and **addresses** after up to 36 months.

Any Census data used for research or statistics is **de-identified**, so no one outside the ABS can link your name or address to your answers.

Can other government agencies access my Census information?

No.

Your Census information is protected by law and cannot be shared with other government agencies, courts or tribunals in a way that identifies you.

The ABS is legally required to keep your information confidential. This applies to everyone who works on the Census, including temporary staff.

It is a **criminal offence** for any current or former ABS staff member to disclose information that could identify you.

Will my answers affect my Medicare, Centrelink, passport or birth certificate?

No.

Census responses are used to produce statistics and are separate to your government records. No identifiable personal Census information can be shared with government departments.

Do I have to answer these questions if I don't feel comfortable sharing this information?

No. The new questions on gender and sexual orientation have the option **"Prefer not to answer"** if you don't want to respond.

You should only answer these questions if you feel comfortable answering.

Trans and gender diverse people

How can I be recorded as a trans person?

The Census doesn't ask directly whether someone is trans.

Instead, it uses **two questions** — one about your **sex recorded at birth** and one about your **gender**. Together, these responses allow the ABS to produce statistics about trans and cis Australians.

The online form will initially present two options: Male and Female. If you wish to provide a different response, you can select a link that reveals the third option: Another term.

Online Census Form

What was Person 1's sex recorded at birth?

Select 'Another term' when Person 1 was registered as something other than male or female at birth.

Select the option that applies, or you can [select from only male or female](#).

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Another term

What is Person 1's gender?

This question refers to how Person 1 currently identifies or expresses their gender, which may be different to sex at birth.

[More information](#)

This question is only asked for people aged 16 years and older.
Data from this question will help plan health and social programs and services.

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Person 1 uses another term (specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Paper Census Form

8 What was the person's sex recorded at birth? - Mark 'Another term' when the person was registered as something other than male or female at birth. - Mark one box, like this: ☒	☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Another term	☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Another term
9 What is the person's gender? - Answer for people aged 16 years and older. - This question refers to how the person currently identifies or expresses their gender, which may be different to sex at birth. - Mark one box, like this: ☒ - Go to www.census.abs.gov.au/questions for more information.	☐ Man ☐ Woman ☐ Non-binary ☐ Uses another term (specify) ☐ Prefer not to answer	☐ Man ☐ Woman ☐ Non-binary ☐ Uses another term (specify) ☐ Prefer not to answer

If your gender is different from your sex recorded at birth, you will be included in the data about trans Australians.

This approach, known as the **two-step method**, is recognised internationally as the best practice for collecting data about trans and gender diverse populations.

It was developed through extensive research and testing, including with trans and gender diverse people and community organisations.

We understand this approach won't feel right for everyone. While it's not perfect, it is currently the best available method for producing reliable national data that can help improve policies, services and support for trans communities.

In Australia, pioneering trans advocate and researcher Roberta Perkins was among the first to use this approach in research with trans communities in the 1980s, helping lay the foundations for the methods used today.

But there is another option available.

In the gender question, you can also use the **"Another term (specify)"** option to write in a trans-related term (such as trans man, AFAB, trans woman or MTF), which will ensure you'll be counted correctly.

What is "sex recorded at birth"?

This refers to what was first recorded for a person at their birth, usually either male or female.

For the Census, all people are asked to answer based on what was on your original birth record, even if this has changed over time.

There will be 3 options: male, female or 'another term'.

I don't feel comfortable disclosing sex recorded at birth, what can I do?

We know this is problematic and will be upsetting for some people.

It's possible to still be counted as trans by writing in a response to the **"Another term (specify)"** in the **gender question** – e.g. writing trans woman, trans masculine etc.

There is also a check box for non-binary.

What if my gender isn't listed?

You can write any term you wish in the free-text box. The ABS has worked with LGBTIQ+ groups and individuals to help identify and categorise the thousands of potential free text responses, e.g. agender, genderqueer, gender fluid or gender diverse.

What if I use more than one term?

If you use more than one term to describe your gender, you should provide the single term that best reflects your identity. This supports the collection of accurate data.

What if I haven't legally updated the sex listed on my birth certificate or other formal records?

You should answer the gender question based on what you know yourself to be, rather than what is on your ID.

You can select either male, female or non-binary, or write in your gender if those options don't include you.

Young people

The questions on sexual orientation and gender say I can only answer if I'm 16 or over. Should I still answer it?

Once you put in your date of birth, the online form **will not** make these questions available to you.

You can fill it out in the paper form, but your response **will not be** counted. We understand how frustrating and disappointing this will be for some young people.

Intersex people

Is there any way to record that I'm a person with an innate variation in sex characteristics?

No, this Census will not have a question asking about whether individuals were born with a variation in sex characteristics.

This follows extensive user testing by the ABS, which did not recommend the question to the federal government for inclusion after it failed to produce meaningful responses.

Along with intersex advocates and organisations, we'll keep working towards the inclusion of a question to appropriately capture people with innate variations in sex characteristics in 2031.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer people

How do I answer the question on sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is about a person's sexual identity and attraction, and how they identify their romantic or sexual attraction to others, if any.

How do I answer if I'm celibate or don't have sex?

The question is not intended to collect information on sexual behaviour or practice. This means you can select a sexual orientation category regardless of whether you have ever acted on that attraction.

What if my sexual orientation isn't listed?

If the options available don't describe your sexual orientation, you can choose to write a term on the paper form. This could include terms like asexual or pansexual, for example. This data is just as valid as ticking one of the boxes.

If you use more than one term to describe your gender, you should provide the single term that best reflects your identity. This supports the collection of accurate data.

How do I answer if I'm ace or aro?

Asexual or aromantic orientations can be recorded by writing in how you identify under "Another term (specify)".

Paper Census Form

57 How does the person describe their sexual orientation? - Answer for people aged 16 years and older. - Data from this question will help plan health and social programs and services. - Mark one box, like this: ☐ - Go to www.census.abs.gov.au/questions for more information.	☐ Straight ☐ Gay or Lesbian ☐ Bisexual ☐ Uses another term (specify) ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not to answer	☐ Straight ☐ Gay or Lesbian ☐ Bisexual ☐ Uses another term (specify) ☐ Don't know ☐ Prefer not to answer
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Online Census Form

How does Person 1 describe their sexual orientation?

Data from this question will help plan health and social programs and services.

[More information](#)

This question is only asked for people aged 16 years and older.

To request an extra form for a person to complete their Census separately from other household members, call us on 1800 181 227.

- ☐ Straight
- ☐ Gay or Lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Person 1 uses another term (specify)
-
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

I'm married to someone of a different gender but I'm bisexual/pansexual. How should I answer?

Your answer should be based on your orientation, not who you are in a relationship with.

Rainbow Families

How do I answer the questions about where my child's parents were born if they don't have one mother and one father?

Although these questions refers to a person's 'mother' and 'father', you can provide the details of a parent of any gender for either question. This applies to both the online form and the paper form.

This means that two-parent non-heterosexual families will be captured. However, we acknowledge that the wording of these questions is not inclusive and may cause offence to some rainbow families.

How do I answer these questions if there are more than 2 parents?

The Census only provides space for two parents. You should record the two parents or parent figures who best reflect your child's family circumstances. Unfortunately, there isn't currently a way to record more than two parents.

How do I answer these questions if I'm a solo parent by choice?

You can leave the 2nd parent question blank.

Can/should I put down my child's donor?

You are not required to include your child's donor. However, if you have a known donor with an ongoing parent-like relationship with your child, you may choose to do so.

These questions are intended to understand the cultural backgrounds of people living in Australia. Whether you wish to include a donor in answer to this question is personal matter for each individual or their family, and some people may find it meaningful to record their donor's heritage, even if the donor is not the child's legal or social parent.

