

# Topic Selection for the Australian Census of Population and Housing

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**Abstract:** We describe how topics were selected for the Australian Census of Population and Housing. Australia has adopted an open assessment of topics submitted by users and the general public and then performed field tests of difficult or sensitive questions. For

the 1986 Census, special attention was given to the development of a census question on ethnic origin.

**Key words:** Census; topic; evaluation.

## 1. Introduction

The Australian Census of Population and Housing is conducted every fifth year and uses self enumeration to obtain information. Each household is asked to complete the census form with relatively little assistance from the census collector. This methodology, coupled with the need to ensure that the large census operation is conducted as efficiently and effectively as possible, imposes certain constraints on the type of topics and questions that can be included in the census if the public is to provide accurate data.

The 1976 Census received considerable publicity that resulted in less public cooperation and diminished data quality. It was the largest Australian census ever attempted. In 1976 53 questions were asked, a considerable increase over the 37 questions asked in 1971. Despite the increase in the number of questions, the questions used in 1971 demanded a greater number of responses, and hence

response burden was not increased (the number of responses actually decreased slightly from 70 in 1971 to 68 in 1976). In 1976, however, a large number of questions were asked about the social characteristics of the population. Questions concerning handicaps, childcare, benefits, holidays, life assurance and licence to drive increased the number of questions to 53. The length of the form and the more sensitive nature of some of the questions generated considerable public criticism. Critics maintained that the census was intrusive to the degree that it was an invasion of privacy.

As a result of this criticism the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reduced the range of topics covered in population censuses and introduced a public topic submission scheme for the 1981 and 1986 Censuses.

The call for public submissions for the 1981 Census was important for the success of that census. An open assessment of topics submitted by users and the public, supported by objective field tests of topics likely to be diffi-

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cult or sensitive, is considered the best method of developing a census form widely accepted by the public. The experience in Australia with the 1976 Census and in other countries in recent years indicates the great importance of having public cooperation when conducting a census.

## **2. 1986 Census Topic Submission Scheme**

Approval was received from the government in November 1982 to proceed with the development of the 1986 Census provided that the content would not be more extensive than the 1981 Census. Immediately after approval was obtained, all known users of population census data were invited to submit topics both for inclusion in or exclusion from the 1986 Census. Advertisements were placed in major newspapers inviting the public to make submissions. The heads of Australia's States and territories and federal government Ministers were also invited to make submissions.

When calling for submissions, an information paper was issued to users explaining the objectives of the 1986 Census. These objectives were:

- (a) to provide accurate population counts for the production of up-to-date population estimates at national, State and local government levels; and
- (b) to provide detailed characteristics of the Australian population and its housing, to meet priority statistical needs of government and other users.

This brief statement of objectives was followed by an outline of the criteria used by the ABS to evaluate and recommend topics to the government. These criteria are:

- (a) the importance of the topic;
- (b) whether a census is an appropriate method of collecting the data, given other already existing data sources and alternative collection methods; and

- (c) whether the nature of the topic itself is suitable for a census.

Factors important in determining a topic's suitability are defined and discussed in Section 3, 'Evaluation of Topics.'

Based on assessments conducted prior to the 1981 Census, the ABS wanted the following basic topics to be included in the 1986 Census: name, sex, age, relationship (family structure), marital status; usual residence at census time, one year ago, and five years ago; country of birth, year of arrival, birthplace of parents, Aboriginal origin; income, labour force and employment status, occupation, industry, and number of rooms. These topics were listed in the information paper and users were asked to confirm their continuing need for these data. Users were also asked to state their reasons for wanting a given question or for changing a question's wording.

Submissions were received from over 650 persons and organizations. Of the 3 200 requests for topics 2 300 were for the basic topics, and about 900 were for more than 100 additional topics. Most requests were for topics previously included in the 1981 Census, with some improvements or modifications to meet additional needs. A summary of the topics submitted is in Appendix A together with the suggestions made at the preliminary recommendation stage. (See Section 6 'From Evaluation to Decision.') The summary excludes 42 topics that were submitted three or fewer times. These were considered to be either not sufficiently justified for inclusion in a census, already adequately handled by data from other sources, or did not lend themselves to satisfactory treatment in a census.

## **3. Evaluation of Topics**

It is essential that the criteria for selecting topics be applied rigorously because of the cost of collecting information in a census, not

to mention the great burden placed on the public who are required to supply the information. For example, some requested topics and questions are better served by sample surveys. Sampling uses less expensive methods and places less burden on the total population.

Each topic submission was carefully examined to assess its importance compared with other statistical needs in the same general field. For each topic we considered alternative data sources, the uses to be made of the data, and whether the justifications for the topic were adequate. Other considerations included: whether the topic was asked in previous censuses, if the data need be collected every five years, the results of previous tests of the topic, the experience of other countries with the topic (see Section 5 '1986 Population Census Tests' for more information), whether the topic was suitable for the census, and whether the census was an appropriate method of collecting the data. A number of topics required field testing to evaluate their suitability for the census.

The criteria for assessing suitability are as follows:

- (i) a question must stand on its own and not require detailed explanation by the census collector or extensive support from publicity;
- (ii) a question must have widespread acceptance and must not jeopardize the level or quality of response to other questions on the form;
- (iii) a question must yield statistical data that are different from the data derived from other questions included in the form; and
- (iv) a question must produce statistics that have an acceptable level of validity and reliability.

The first and second of the above criteria are self-explanatory, but some explanation of the third and fourth is necessary.

### 3.1. Provision of additional data

Demand for census topics is always greater than the available capacity to include topics. The selection of the questions that finally appear on the census form is a lengthy and important task. To maximize the utility of the census, we consider the extent that different census questions produce similar information. In some cases, the users' needs can be met by other census questions.

Because the inclusion of one question may lead to the exclusion of some other, a question must produce data that are clearly unobtainable from other questions.

### 3.2. Valid and reliable statistics

Given the limited capacity of the census, every attempt is made to ensure that questions yield statistics that have a high degree of validity and reliability.

Two key factors affecting both validity and reliability are the level of nonresponse and the way in which respondents interpret and answer questions. Much of the evaluation of the tests of ethnicity related questions was based on these factors and is discussed below.

### 3.3. Nonresponse

Despite that it is compulsory to complete the census form, (this obligation is stipulated in the legislation that mandates the census) some nonresponse does occur. The significance of high nonresponse rate depends on what is known about the characteristics of nonrespondents and on the nature of the particular topic under consideration. For example, a nonresponse rate of say 5 % to the country of birth question may be perfectly tolerable if it is known with some certainty that most nonrespondents are born in Australia, or that nonresponse is evenly distributed across all birthplace groups. Alter-

natively, a nonresponse rate of say 2 % may be critical if we want to provide statistics on minority groups and know little about the nonrespondents' characteristics. This is the case for some of the smaller ethnic groups in Australia.

Factors that have been shown to have a significant effect on response levels are the sensitivity of questions, doubts in respondents' minds about the questions' applicability to themselves, and misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the questions. The ABS is particularly concerned that people who object to certain questions may be less favourably disposed to the census as a whole and provide poor responses to other census questions. These people may even refuse to respond to the census at all. To minimize this risk, sensitive questions are omitted from the form. ABS's testing has shown that the predominant reason for item nonresponse is that people do not believe that a given question is applicable to them. Another important reason for item nonresponse is that people simply do not understand the question. To reduce the incidence of these types of non-response, questions are designed to appear applicable to all respondents, and to be as simple as possible.

### *3.4. Respondents' interpretations of questions*

What is looked for in a census question is a universally common understanding and interpretation of the question and its terminology, together with a high degree of consistency of responses from different persons in the same situation. It is these factors that often determine the quality of the resultant statistics.

## **4. The 1986 Population Census Ethnicity Committee**

During preparations for the 1981 Census, considerable interest was shown in the vari-

able ethnic origin. We did not believe that the traditional census questions, for example country of birth, nationality, religion, etc., could provide accurate data on ethnic origin. It was clear that it was not a simple matter to devise a set of census questions that would be universally understood. We also recognized that expert assistance was needed to advise the ABS. Consequently, a small committee of experts was established in December 1982 to advise the Australian Statistician on census questions on ethnic origin.

All topic submissions relating to ethnic origin were made available to the committee. The committee also issued a press release inviting submissions from interested persons and organizations. The press release was translated into 11 languages for distribution among ethnic communities. Persons and organizations who had made submissions on topics concerning ethnic origin were invited to meet with the committee. The committee chairman consulted with Aboriginal organizations on both the census question on Aboriginal origin and a more general question on ethnic origin.

Five field tests on the ethnic origin question were conducted for the committee by the ABS on samples of the population. The alternative questions tested were as follows:

- Does each person consider himself or herself to have an ethnic origin? (If so, ethnic origin was requested).
- What is each person's ancestry? e.g., English, Greek, Lebanese, Vietnamese, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander.
- What is each person's ancestry? For example, Greek, English, Indian, Armenian, Aboriginal, Chinese, etc.
- With which Australian ethnic group(s) does each person identify?
- Australia's population is made up of people of many ethnic/cultural communities or groups. To which such community or group does each person consider he/she belongs?

- Australia's population is made up of people of many national/cultural backgrounds. What is the national/cultural background of each person?
- The Australian population is made up of many ethnic communities or groups. With which community or group does each person identify?

A report from the committee to the Australian Statistician was made in March 1984 and subsequently published. The report (see ABS (1984b)) describes the tests in detail. The recommendations made in this report and the public's reaction were taken into account in the submission to the government on the content of the 1986 Population Census.

The committee indicated that the requirements of users for ethnic origin data could be classified into two broad categories: data based on a self-perceived identification or on one's ancestry. The main problem with a self-identification question is that it would not produce valid or reliable statistics on the groups of people that identify with a number of different ethnic groups. Because the question confused many people and consequently increased nonresponse, there would be a significant undercount of the number of people identifying with more than one ethnic group. Because the rates of undercount would differ for different groups to an unknown extent, the data would be misleading to users.

Experience in Australia and in other countries shows that the problems with a self-identification question could not be removed or reduced to a tolerable level by publicity, brochures or explanatory notes accompanying the question form. For these reasons, the committee did not recommend the inclusion of a self-identification question in the census.

The tests indicated that a question on ancestry was not without problems. An ances-

try question is likely to have a nonresponse rate higher than most other questions recommended for inclusion in the 1986 Census. There are respondents who either do not know their ancestry, are of mixed ancestry, or are unable to determine how far back to go in determining their ancestry. Nevertheless, in view of the interest in ethnic origin data, the committee recommended the inclusion of an ancestry question in the 1986 Census.

The ABS recommended the inclusion of an ancestry question in its submission to the government on the basis that the data produced from the question would be subject to a full analysis of its adequacy and reliability. This analysis would later be used to determine the suitability of including a similar question in the 1991 or future censuses. The inclusion of questions on birthplace of parents and language used at home, (also under consideration for inclusion) would greatly assist this type of analysis.

## 5. 1986 Population Census Tests

A program of ten field tests with sample sizes ranging from 53 to 5 000 dwellings was implemented over the period January 1983 to May 1985. These tests were conducted to evaluate new topics, to improve questions on regular topics, and to evaluate new methods or procedures. Eight of these tests were used for topic evaluation and development. A summary of the tests appears in Appendix C.

For each test, a sample of dwellings was selected and a self-enumeration census form delivered to each selected dwelling. After collection of the completed forms, intensive interviews were conducted by trained ABS interviewers at some or all of the responding households. The object of these interviews was to explore respondents' understanding of the census questions and, where possible, to determine the accuracy and completeness of responses.

The experience of other countries was drawn upon in the development of the forms used in the tests. For example, the experience of the United States of America and the United Kingdom was particularly useful in developing the ethnic origin topic. Appendix A of the Ethnicity Committee report (see ABS (1984b)) contains a summary of other countries' experiences with questions on ethnicity. For the family relationship topic, the experience of the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand was of particular importance.

It was recognized early in the development program that there were a number of questions under consideration for the 1986 Census that needed to be field-tested. The topics tested were labour force status, occupation, and family relationships.

The labour force and employment status topics have been an essential part of every Australian census. The questions have, however, caused confusion among some respondents, particularly retired persons and persons engaged in home duties. A number of tests were conducted to simplify these questions and improve their comparability with other ABS sources of labour force data.

Occupation data from the 1986 Census will be coded to the new Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO). The census field tests were used to help evaluate the new classification. The new classification resulted in an extra question on tasks or duties a person performs in his/her job and is expected to improve significantly the accuracy of the occupation coding.

The Australian census is conducted by enumerating persons at their actual location on the census night. When a household member is absent on census night, the coding of families is based only on those persons present on census night. In previous censuses, there was a problem with absent spouses that led to an overstatement of the number of

single parent families and an understatement of the number of families with both parents residing in the same household. The field tests showed that these problems can be greatly reduced by the inclusion of a question on usual residents who are temporarily absent. The family structure can thus be coded taking into account all members, whether present or temporarily absent. The tests also helped develop procedures for extending family coding to persons residing in caravans or mobile homes in caravan parks. Other questions included in field tests then adopted will enable identification of blended families (families that have both natural/adopted children and stepchildren) and improve data on de facto living arrangements.

In addition to these improvements, the testing for the 1986 Census also resulted in the exclusion of the following topics:

- receipt of government pensions and benefits;
- highest level of schooling;
- shared dwellings;
- sources of income;
- time taken to get to work.

(See ABS (1984a).)

## **6. From Evaluation to Decision**

The preliminary recommendations on inclusion or exclusion of topics were publicly released by ABS in February 1984, in Preliminary ABS Views on the Content of the 1986 Census. A summary of the topics and the recommendations is in Appendix A.

Examples of topics that did not meet the criteria of suitability discussed in Section 3, 'Evaluation of Topics', are given below. These examples are preceded by the criterion the question failed to meet.

- (i) A question must stand on its own and not require detailed explanation by the census collector or extensive support

from publicity. First home ownership, handicaps and the self-perception approach to ethnic origin questions.

- (ii) A question must have widespread acceptance and must not jeopardize the level or quality of the responses to other questions on the form. Ownership of dwellings elsewhere and relations living overseas questions.
- (iii) A question must yield statistical data that are additional to those that could be derived from other questions included on the form. Full-time/part-time employment question.
- (iv) A question must produce statistics that have an acceptable level of validity and reliability. Time taken to get to work, age of dwelling and the self-perception approach to ethnic origin questions.

The opinions of users of census data and the general public were extremely valuable in formulating the final recommendations on census content.

After further consultation with users and field testing, recommendations were made to

the Australian Statistics Advisory Council in July 1984, a body that advises the Australian Statistician and the Federal Government Minister responsible for official statistics. This was followed by a submission to the federal government. The government's decision resulted in regulations approved by the Australian Parliament in February, 1985. These regulations established the contents of the census. (See ABS (1985).) Appendix B lists the 34 topics included in the 1986 Census.

7. References

ABS (1984a): Preliminary ABS Views on the Content of the 1986 Census. February 1984 and addendum of 19 April 1984. (ABS Catalogue No. 2171.0).

ABS (1984b): The Measurement of Ethnicity in the Australian Census of Population and Housing, April 1984. (ABS Catalogue No. 2172.0).

ABS (1985): 1986 Census of Population and Housing, Content and Procedures. February 1985.

Appendix A  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
Topics Recommended for Inclusion

Topic	Asked in 1981	Topic	Asked in 1981
<i>Demography</i>		<i>Ethnicity</i>	
Name	yes	Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander	yes
Age	yes	Birthplace	yes
Sex	yes	Language (proficiency in English)	yes
Marital status	yes	Year of arrival	yes
Family structure (relationship)	yes	Citizenship	yes
Issue (number of children)	yes	Languages used	no
		Birthplace of parents	yes
		Ethnic origin	no
<i>Usual residence and internal migration</i>		<i>Religion</i>	
Usual residents temporarily absent	no	Religion	yes
Usual residence at census time	yes		
Usual residence 1 year ago	yes		
Usual residence 5 years ago	yes		

Topic	Asked in 1981	Topic	Asked in 1981
<i>Education</i>		<i>Ethnicity (cont.)</i>	
Age left school	yes	Grandparents' ethnic origin	no
Qualifications	yes	Racial origin (other than Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander)	no
Attendance at an educational institution	yes	Birthplace of grandparents	no
Type of educational institution being attended	no	<i>Education</i>	
<i>Income</i>		Highest level of schooling	no
Income	yes	Participation in adult education	no
Receipt of government pensions or benefits <sup>1</sup>	no	Current level at school	no
<i>Labour force</i>		<i>Income</i>	
Occupation	yes	Source of income	no
Industry	yes	Superannuation	no
Hours worked	yes	Use of disposable income	no
Labour force status	yes	<i>Labour force</i>	
<i>Journey to work</i>		Previous occupation	no
Journey to work (destination zone coding)	yes	Full-time/part-time employment	no
Mode of travel to work	yes	Characteristics of the unemployed	no
<i>Housing and related topics</i>		More than one job/number of jobs held	no
Number of rooms/bedrooms	yes	Usual major activity	no
Non-private dwelling (classification)	yes	Alternative working arrangements	no
Nature of occupancy	yes	Flexible working hours	no
Rent	yes	Industrial accidents	no
Mortgage	yes	Labour force mobility	no
Number of motor vehicles garaged	yes	Period in present job	no
Dwelling structure	yes	Shift work	no
Reason for unoccupied dwelling	yes	Type of occupation: land or sea	no
		Type of workplace	no
		Voluntary welfare work	no
		<i>Journey to work</i>	
		Journey to school, shops (destination zone coding)	no
		Mode of travel to school, shops	no
		Time taken to get to work	no
		Licence to drive	no
		Access to motor vehicle	no
		Number of public transport transfers	no
		Parking at work	no
		<i>Housing and related topics</i>	
		Stock of dwellings	no
		Water supply	no
		Sewage disposal	no
		First home ownership	no
		Use of home equipment (video, TV etc)	no
		Telephone ownership	no
		Household fuel	no
		Insulation in dwellings	no
		Age of dwelling	no
		Length of occupancy	no
<b>Topics Recommended for Exclusion</b>			
Topic	Asked in 1981		
<i>Demography</i>			
Duration of marriage	yes		
Whether married more than once	yes		
<i>Usual residence and internal migration</i>			
Reason for internal migration	no		
<i>Ethnicity</i>			
Language (spoken by parents, ancestral language, mother tongue and hours of non-English conversation per week)	no		
Parents' ethnic origin	no		

<sup>1</sup> Subject to further testing



Topic	Asked in 1981	Topic	Asked in 1981
<i>Housing and related topics (cont.)</i>		<i>Leisure and recreation (cont.)</i>	
Material of outer walls	yes	Ownership of recreational equipment	no
Condition of dwelling	no	Persons playing sport by type of sport	no
Dwelling on agricultural holding	no	Relations living overseas	no
Dwelling use (commercial use)	no		
Household insurance	no	<i>Health and welfare</i>	
Number of bicycles garaged	no	Childcare	no
Number of motor cycles garaged	no	Handicaps	no
Ownership of dwelling elsewhere	no	Ability to swim	no
Passive solar design in houses	no	Family meal	no
Recycling	no	Heart attacks	no
Sources of housing finance	no	Morbidity and use of services	no
Swimming pools	no	Quality of life	no
Value of improvements	no	Welfare service usage	no
<i>Leisure and recreation</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
Involvement in clubs/activities	no	Armed service	no
Domestic and overseas travel	no		
Holidays	no		
Library membership	no		
Media use as source of information	no		

Appendix B  
Topics included

No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?	No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?
<i>A. Person Questions</i>			5	Marital status	What is each person's present marital status? (Never married, married, separated but not divorced, divorced, widowed). Yes
1	Name	Surname and Christian or given name of each person who spent the night of 30 June 1986 in this household. (Not entered in the computer record). Yes	6	Year first married	In what year was the person first married? Yes, as duration of marriage
2	Sex	Male/Female Yes	7	Whether married more than once	Has the person married more than once? Yes
3	Age	Age (in years and months). Yes	8	Number of children	For each female aged 15 years or more, how many babies has she ever had? (Total and now living). Yes
4	Relationship	What is each person's relationship to the persons listed first and second on the form? Yes			

(cont.)

No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?	No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?
9 Internal migration	Where does each person usually live? (full address or 'overseas' if not an Australian resident). Where was each person's usual residence both one and five years ago, i.e., 30 June 1985 and 30 June 1981? (full address or 'overseas' if not then an Australian resident). (Identifiable individual address not entered in the computer record).	Yes	17 Proficiency in English	How well does the person speak English?	Yes
			18 Religion	What is each person's religious denomination? (This question is optional).	Yes
			19 Attendance at an educational institute	Is the person attending a school or any other educational institution? If yes, indicate whether part-time or full-time and type of educational institution being attended.	Yes, but not type of institution
10 Birthplace	Where was each person born? (Country).	Yes	20 Qualifications	Has the person obtained a trade or other qualification since leaving school? The details of the highest qualification obtained are required, i.e., qualification name, name of institution, field of study and year obtained.	Yes
11 Birthplace of parents	Where was each person's father and mother born? (Country).	Yes			
12 Year of arrival	For each person born overseas, in what year did the person first arrive in Australia?	Yes			
13 Citizenship	Is the person an Australian citizen?	Yes	21 Age left school	How old was each person when he or she left school?	Yes
14 Ancestry	What is each person's ancestry?	No	22 Income	What is the gross income (including pensions and/or allowances) that each person usually receives each week from all sources? (Respondents to indicate the range in which their income falls).	Yes
15 Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander origin	Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	Yes			
16 Language used at home	Does the person speak a language other than English at home? If yes, please print language spoken.	No			

No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?	No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?
23	Labour force status	Last week, did the person have a full-time or part-time job of any kind? Did the person actively look for work at any time during the last 4 weeks? In the main job held last week, was the person <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a wage or salary earner</li><li>• conducting own business but not employing others</li><li>• conducting own business and employing others</li><li>• a helper not receiving wages or salary?</li></ul>	Yes		employers are not entered in the computer record).
			26	Hours worked	In the main job held last week, how many hours did the person work? Yes
			27	Mode of travel to work	How did the person get to work on a specified day? (i.e., tram, bus, ferry or car, etc) Yes
				TOTAL PERSON RESPONSES	37
			B. Dwelling Questions		
			1	Number of rooms	How many rooms are there in this dwelling? (Respondents are asked to show how many of each type of room they have). Yes
24	Occupation	In the main job held last week, what was the person's occupation? What are the main tasks or duties that the person usually performs in that occupation? Yes			
			2	Mortgage	Is this dwelling owned (or being bought) by you or any usual member of this household? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If being bought, what payment (or average monthly payment) is being made on the loan(s) for this dwelling?</li></ul> Yes
25	Industry	For the main job held last week, what was the employer's trading name and address of workplace? What kind of industry, business, or service is carried out by the employer at that address? (Address is required only for coding of industry and destination of journey to work. Names and addresses of	Yes		
			3	Rent	Is this dwelling rented by you or any usual member of this household? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If yes, to whom is rent paid? (State Housing Commission, other government agencies, others).</li></ul> Yes

(cont.)

No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?	No. Topic	Proposed Type of Question(s)	Topic Included in 1981 Census?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the weekly rent?</li><li>• Is the dwelling rented furnished or unfurnished?</li></ul>			(Identifiable details not entered in the computer record).	
				TOTAL DWELLING RESPONSES	9
4	Number of motor vehicles garaged	How many registered motor vehicles owned or used by members of this household were garaged or parked at or near this dwelling for the night of 30 June 1986.	Yes		
5	Usual residents temporarily absent	List any persons who usually live in this household who were not present on the night of 30 June 1986 and give name, age, sex, relationship to person 1, whether studying full-time, and marital status, as for persons present in the dwelling on census night.	No		
C. Questions Completed by Collector					
1	Dwelling structure	The census collector is asked to indicate the type of structure which best describes the dwelling (i.e., a separate house, a semi-detached house, a row or terrace house, etc).	Yes		
2	Reason dwelling unoccupied	The census collector is asked to indicate why dwelling is unoccupied (i.e., for sale, to let, newly completed, etc).	Yes		
				TOTAL COLLECTOR RESPONSES	2

**Appendix C**  
**1986 Census of Population and Housing Test Program**

Date	Location	Sample size	Topics and procedures evaluated
January 1983	Melbourne	235 dwellings	Ethnic origin
March 1983	Brisbane	5 000 dwellings	Usual residents temporarily absent; ancestry; labour force status; occupation; mortgage; optical mark recognition.
May 1983	Sydney	560 dwellings	Marital status; ethnic origin (group identified with); languages used at home; income (sources of); mode of travel to work.
July 1983	Sydney/ Wollongong	1 750 dwellings 2 caravan parks	Age/date of birth; marital status; issue; usual residents temporarily absent; usual residence (3 questions); qualifications; type of educational institution being attended; income (sources of); occupation; labour force status (including usually work part-time or full-time); hours worked; mortgage; no. of motor vehicles; stock of dwellings; caravan parks.
October 1983	Melbourne	1 200 dwellings	Marital status; family structure (relationships); ethnic origin; year of arrival; age left school; qualifications; attendance at an educational institution; occupation; labour force status; nature of occupancy; mortgage; rent; stock of dwellings; form layout and wording; field system; family coding; data entry.

(cont.)

Date	Location	Sample size	Topics and procedures evaluated
February 1984	Adelaide	3 000 dwellings	Ethnic origin
March 1984	Sydney/Wagga Wagga/ Narranderra	700 dwellings	Family structure (relationships); issue; usual residents temporarily absent; Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander; citizenship; attendance at an educational institution; receipt of government pensions or benefits; occupation; labour force status; coverage; input processing procedures.
July 1984	Melbourne	3 500 dwellings	Duration of marriage; year of first marriage; issue; ancestry; languages used at home; citizenship; occupation; hours worked; labour force status. input processing procedures.
November 1984	Wollongong	1 500 persons	Field procedures; personal form; non-private dwelling form; caravan parks.
May 1985	Central Australia	53 dwellings	Aboriginal interview form.

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