



Review of 2021 Census topics

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

The ABS is consulting to seek views on the information to be collected in the next Census and this topic brief provides detail about what has been previously included on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The opportunity to participate in the consultation will be available from 3 April to 30 June 2018 via consult.abs.gov.au

The questions asked on the 2016 Census

Respondents can identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the Census by how they answer the question:

- Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

There are further opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to share their cultural background through responses to the following questions:

- Does the person speak a language other than English at home?
- What is the person's ancestry?

How is this information used?

The Census is the key data source for the determination of estimates and projections of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. There are no other data sources that provide a picture of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population over time for this purpose. Census data is also used in conjunction with deaths data to provide a high quality measure of Indigenous life expectancy. A sample of records is linked between Censuses to produce the Australian Longitudinal Census Dataset. Commencing with the 2006 Census, the Australian Longitudinal Census Dataset is providing new insights into the dynamics and transitions that drive social and economic change over time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Census remains the only comprehensive source of local area data for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. As one of the most widely used statistical sources for this population group the data produced from the Census guides the allocation of government funding and planning both nationally and for targeted services and programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use the information from the Census to shape the decisions for their community. The information is used to plan what services are needed, strengthen business cases to secure financial support, or reflect changes within the community such as increases in educational achievement.

The 2021 Census will mark 50 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being included in the official estimates of the Australian population, following the amendments to the *Constitution Act* after the 1967 referendum. Since the 1971 Census, there has been a clear upward trend in the number of people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The 2016 count of 649,171 represented an increase of 18% from the 2011 Census.

Data produced from the 2016 Census

Questions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin provide data on:

- Indigenous Status ([INGP](#))
- Indigenous Household Indicator ([INGDWTD](#))
- Ancestry (1st, 2nd and multi response) ([ANC1P](#), [ANC2P](#), [ANCP](#))
- Language Spoken at Home ([LANP](#))

Census data quality and the undercount

While every effort is made to count everybody in the Census, some people are missed. The number of those missed is measured by the net undercount. Consistent with the pattern in previous Censuses, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people missed in the 2016 Census was considerably higher than the rest of the population. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the net undercount in 2016 was 17.5% (137,750 persons) compared to 1.0% for the whole population.

The ABS is committed to improving participation in the 2021 Census and ensuring the Census better reflects the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. We will build stronger partnerships and work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in urban, rural and discrete communities, to identify ways to improve participation and coverage.

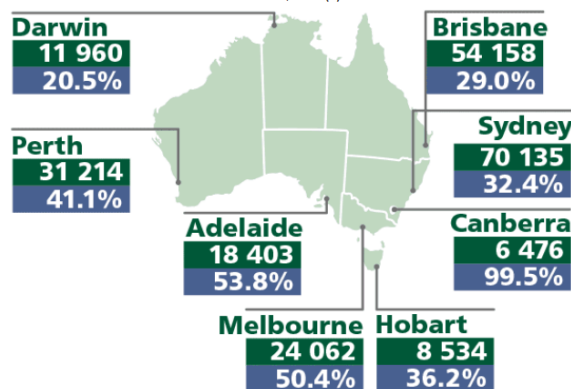
Highlights from the 2016 Census on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POPULATION, 2016 (a)



(a) Usual residence Census counts. Excludes overseas visitors. Includes Other Territories.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

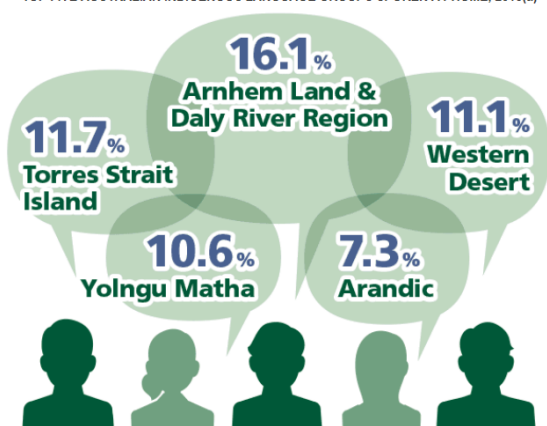
PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE LIVING IN CAPITAL CITIES, 2016 (a)



- No. of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within capital city
- Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within capital city

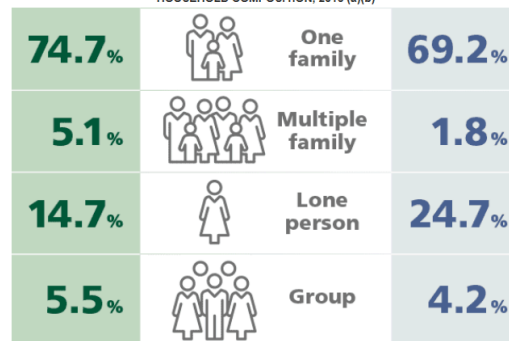
(a) Usual residence Census counts. Excludes overseas visitors. Includes Other Territories.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

TOP FIVE AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE GROUPS SPOKEN AT HOME, 2016(a)



(a) Usual residence Census counts. Excludes overseas visitors. Includes Other Territories.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2016 (a)(b)



- Households with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person(s)
- Other Households

(a) Includes households in occupied private dwellings only. Excludes visitor only and other non-classifiable households.
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

Standards

A number of standards are used by the ABS to classify statistics relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

[1200.00 - Indigenous Status Standard, 2014](#)

[1200.0.55.005 - Language Standards, 2016](#)

[1200.0.55.009 - Ancestry Standard, 2014, Version 2.1](#)