

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Standard for
Year of arrival in Australia

INTRODUCTION

1. Since the Second World War, Australia has settled large numbers of immigrants from both English and non-English speaking backgrounds. As it is important to trace the effects of settlement over time, there is substantial interest in the period of time people have been in Australia after migrating here from other countries. The length of time migrants have been in Australia can give an indication of how familiar they are with Australian society and practices.
2. Although it can be used as a variable in its own right, Year of Arrival in Australia is sometimes used to derive the variable Period of Residence in Australia (included in this standard). Both variables ideally should measure the length of time that a person born overseas has spent living in Australia. In recent years, the number of long term residents (resident in Australia for 12 months or more) has increased significantly. It is important that the definition of Year of Arrival in Australia includes long-term migrant residents as well as newly arrived immigrants.
3. When cross-classified with other data, Period of Residence in Australia is useful for analysing how the characteristics of immigrants and long-term residents change with the length of time they have been in Australia. For example, Year of Arrival in Australia can be used with data on Proficiency in Spoken English and Country of Birth of Person to examine patterns of settlement difficulties, resulting from inadequate English language skills, for various migrant groups. This data can be used to analyse the speed at which different groups overcome these difficulties.
4. Year of Arrival in Australia, and Period of Residence in Australia, is closely associated with the variable Country of Birth of Person, as the Year of Arrival in Australia question is only asked of those people who were born in a country other than Australia. When used with Country of Birth of Person, Year of Arrival in Australia identifies migrant populations within Australia.
5. The variable Year of Arrival in Australia (and Period of Residence in Australia) has been endorsed by the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs as one of the standard set of indicators for use in measuring cultural and linguistic diversity. The set is to be progressively implemented in administrative and service settings to provide data to determine, measure and monitor service needs (in terms of access and equity requirements), and to provide a measure of cultural diversity in its broader sense.

UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

Name of variable

6. The standard name of the variable is **'Year of Arrival in Australia'**.
7. Although 'Year of Arrival' is most commonly used in existing collections, 'Year of Arrival in Australia' is more precise without being pedantic (eg. 'year of first arrival in Australia with the intention of staying for one year or more'). The term 'period of arrival' has been used in some collections, but it is not recommended because it is easily confused with the term 'period of residence'.
8. The standard name for the variable derived from Year of Arrival in Australia is **'Period of Residence in Australia'**.

Definition of variable

Nominal definition

9. Year of Arrival in Australia is defined as the year a person (born outside of Australia) first arrived in Australia, from another country, with the intention of living in Australia for one year or more.

10. Period of Residence in Australia is derived from Year of Arrival in Australia by first subtracting the year of arrival from the year of the collection and then subtracting from this result any significant periods spent outside of Australia. Significant periods are absences of one year or more, excluding holidays, visits and business trips overseas. In the case of multiple entries into Australia, add the total number of significant years (rounded to the nearest whole number) spent outside of Australia and subtract this from the difference between the year of the collection and the year of first arrival.

11. Both variables are attributes of the statistical unit, 'person'. That is, they are attributes of an individual as opposed to a family or a household.

Operational definition

12. Year of Arrival in Australia is measured by the calendar year 'date unit' of the first arrival of an individual in Australia, expressed as a four-digit year (eg. 1985).

13. Period of Residence in Australia is measured by subtracting the year of first arrival in Australia from the year of the collection and expressing the result in completed years. It is then necessary to subtract from the initial result significant time periods (expressed in whole years) spent living outside of Australia (as in the Nominal Definition). In practice, it may be necessary to approximate the time spent outside Australia.

Discussion of conceptual issues

14. Historically, a question on year of first arrival of people born overseas has been included in every Australian Census of Population and Housing. In the 1996 and 1991 Censuses, the variable was called 'Year of Arrival in Australia'. In previous censuses, this information was stored in terms of Period of Residence in Australia.

15. This standard defines Period of Residence in Australia as a measure of how long an individual has actually been living in Australia. The problem of extensive periods of living outside of Australia since the year of first arrival was briefly mentioned in the Definition of Variable section above. A second question which collects all periods of absences of one year or more, excluding holidays, visits or business trips overseas, is recommended to improve the accuracy of Period of Residence in Australia data (see the topic [Collection methods](#)).

16. For people who have had multiple arrivals in Australia, it is possible to report either the **first** 'year of arrival in Australia' or the **most recent** 'year of arrival in Australia'. Clearly, there must be only one standard for Year of Arrival in Australia, and since this variable is also used to derive Period of Residence in Australia, the **first** year of arrival in Australia is appropriate as the standard. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recommends that for any collections that currently capture data on the most recent year of arrival in Australia, the probes for interviewers be changed so that first year of arrival is collected.

CLASSIFICATION AND CODING

The classification criteria

17. The criterion used for classification units of Year of Arrival in Australia is the 'date unit' of calendar years (eg. 1985).

18. The criterion used for classification units of Period of Residence in Australia is the 'time unit' of completed years (eg. 7 years) of living in Australia.

The standard classification

19. Year of Arrival in Australia data is collected and stored as four-digit calendar years (eg. a response of '1985' is coded as '1985' in the classification).

20. Period of Residence in Australia is calculated as two-digit categories '00' to '99', representing the number of years spent living in Australia. Period of residence data is rounded to the appropriate category in terms of completed years. For example, a period of residence in Australia of 7 years and 10 months would be coded to the '07' category of the classification.

The code structure

21. The Year of Arrival in Australia classification stores the four-digit calendar year response to the question (ie. the classification has a four-digit code structure which directly relates to calendar years).

COLLECTION METHODS

Standard question module

29. The question modules for Country of Birth of Person and Year of Arrival in Australia are found together in many collections, with the Country of Birth of Person question asked before the Year of Arrival in Australia question module. The ABS recommends that this practice be standardised in all collections, using the standard questions as follows:

[<HR NOSHADE>]

Question 1 for both Self Enumerated and Interview-Based Collections:

Q1. In which country [were you] [was the person] [was (name)] born ?

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Australia | <input type="checkbox"/> | No More Questions |
| England | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| New Zealand | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Italy | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Viet Nam | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Scotland | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Greece | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Germany | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Philippines | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Netherlands | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Other - please specify: | | |

Sequence Guide

If response is Australia, then No More Questions.

If response is other than Australia, the go to Q2.

[<HR NOSHADE>]

Question 2 for Self Enumerated Collections:

Q2. In what year did [you] [the person] first arrive in Australia to live here for one year or more?

(Write in the calendar year of arrival or mark the box if here less than one year)

Calendar year of arrival
Will be here less than one year

[<HR NOSHADE>]

Question 2 for Interview-Based Collections:

Q2. In which year did [(name)] first arrive in Australia to live (for one year or more)?

Calendar year

[<HR NOSHADE>]

Question 3 for both Self Enumerated and Interview-Based Collections:

Q3. Excluding holidays, visits or business trips overseas, [have you] [has the person] [has (name)] had any periods of living overseas for one year or more since first arriving here?

(If 'Yes', please list each absence from Australia of **one year or more** and its duration in years and months.)

No
Yes, First absence years, months
Yes, Second absence years, months
Yes, Third absence years, months
etc.

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30. The questions suggested above are suitable for either self-enumerated or interview-based collections. It is anticipated that for the majority of respondents not born in Australia, their answer to Question 2 will be the date of their **only** arrival in Australia. However, some respondents may have multiple arrivals in Australia. To deal with these cases in self-enumerated collections, an instruction such as "Please indicate the year of first arrival only" should be included with the question.

31. For interview-based collections, clear directions should be given by the interviewer so that the respondent understands the year of first arrival is to be reported. The distinction between "to live" and "to live for one year or more" is a fine one. The words "to live" imply the intention to make ones home in Australia and then "(for one year or more)" is bracketed and need only be asked if respondents query the meaning of "to live".

32. In collections where the focus is only on Year of Arrival in Australia, Questions 1 and 2 will suffice. However, if Period of Residence in Australia is collected, the ABS recommends that Question 3 should be asked in addition to Questions 1 and 2. This will improve the accuracy of Period of Residence in Australia data by collecting all significant absences since first arrival.

Standard input categories

33. Input categories for Year of Arrival in Australia are the four-digit calendar year dates (eg. 1937) and the supplementary category is also included.

34. Input categories for Period of Residence in Australia are the two-digit numbers of elapsed whole years of living in Australia, as opposed to selected ranges of elapsed years. They are normally derived by taking the difference between the year of collection and the year of first arrival. In some exceptional circumstances where the person has lived outside of Australia after first arriving here, Period of Residence in Australia is calculated by deducting from the above difference, the number of years of significant absences from Australia reported by the respondent. The supplementary category is also included.

OUTPUT

Standard output categories

Year of arrival in Australia

35. The standard output for Year of Arrival in Australia can be presented in calendar years, or as the number of elapsed years since the person arrived.

Calendar years

36. For a collection undertaken in, for example, 2003 the output categories could be:

- Arrived before 1986
- Arrived 1986 - 1990
- Arrived 1991 - 1995
- Arrived 1996
- Arrived 1997
- Arrived 1998
- Arrived 1999
- Arrived 2000
- Arrived 2001
- Arrived 2002
- Arrived 2003
- Born in Australia
- Not stated/Inadequately described

The data is grouped into five year intercensal time periods with recent years output in single years.

37. For collections that are unable to support output in single years the data may be grouped together or with the previous intercensal period, for example:

- Arrived before 1986
- Arrived 1986 - 1990
- Arrived 1991 - 1995
- Arrived 1996 - 1998
- Arrived 1999
- Arrived 2000
- Arrived 2001
- Arrived 2002
- Arrived 2003
- Born in Australia
- Not stated/Inadequately described

or

Arrived before 1986
Arrived 1986 - 1990
Arrived 1991 - 1995
Arrived 1996 - 2000
Arrived 2001 - 2002
Arrived 2003
Born in Australia
Not stated/Inadequately described

38. If output in single years is not possible, the remaining years may be grouped together, for example:

Arrived before 1986
Arrived 1986 - 1990
Arrived 1991 - 1995
Arrived 1996 - 2000
Arrived 2001 - 2003
Born in Australia
Not stated /Inadequately described

39. The output structure therefore consists of:

- A final output period of the shortest time period that the collection will support (e.g. perhaps two by two year groupings if the last year listed is four years after a census year). This may include output in single years back to the previous census year if such output is possible.
- two or more standard five year intercensal time periods
- an open-ended time period (e.g. 'Arrived before 1986')

40. Output categories for 'Born in Australia' and 'Not stated/Inadequately described' are also required.

Elapsed years since arrival

41. Output may also be grouped in 5 year categories to allow analysis based on comparisons of most recent arrivals with those who arrive 10 or 15 years ago.

42. For example, in a collection undertaken in 2003 the output categories would be:

Arrived 20 or more years ago
Arrived 15 - 19 years ago
Arrived 10 - 14 years ago
Arrived 5 - 9 years ago
Arrived within last 5 years
Born In Australia
Not stated/Inadequately described

43. Therefore the basic output structure consists of:

- A time period of five years from the year of collection
- Three five year time periods
- An open-ended time period (e.g. 'Arrived 20 or more years ago')

44. These categories should be calculated based on the enumeration date (year) of the survey and the Year of Arrival in Australia. For example, a respondent answering a survey in 2001 and with a Year of Arrival in 1996 would be coded to 'Arrived 5-9 years ago'. Note that because the Year of Arrival in Australia is collected by 'year' rather than 'month and year' the output will be inaccurate for some respondents ie, if a respondent was enumerated in Feb 2001 and arrived in Australia in Dec 1996 they would still be output to the category Arrived 5-9 years ago even though they arrived 4 years and 2 months prior to enumeration.

Period of Residence in Australia

45. The standard structure of output categories for Period of Residence in Australia data is much simpler than for Year of Arrival in Australia as it does not vary with the year of collection. It aggregates the single year categories into five-year groupings up to 20 years of residence. For a collection in any year, the following output categories should be standard:

- 0 - 4 years of residence
- 5 - 9 years of residence
- 10 - 14 years of residence
- 15 - 19 years of residence
- 20 or more years of residence
- Born in Australia
- Not stated/Inadequately described

46. Since the focus of analytical interest will frequently be on persons who have a short period of residence, the following presentation of output may be used:

- 0 - 4 years of residence
 - Less than 1 year of residence
 - 1 year of residence
 - 2 years of residence
 - 3 years of residence
 - 4 years of residence
- 5 - 9 years of residence
- 10 - 14 years of residence
- 15 - 19 years of residence
- 20 or more years of residence
- Born in Australia
- Not stated/Inadequately described

Supporting variables

47. Year of Arrival in Australia requires the supporting variable Country of Birth of Person.

MEASUREMENT ISSUES AND RELATED CLASSIFICATIONS

Measurement issues

48. It is important to collect Year of Arrival in Australia in single years, instead of aggregated groups. This allows the greatest flexibility for derivation of new data items, cross classification with other variables and the production of output categories.

Related classifications

49. Not applicable.

GLOSSARY

Year of Arrival in Australia

The year a person (born outside of Australia) first arrived in Australia from another country, with the intention of staying in Australia for one year or more.

Period of Residence in Australia

For a person born overseas, the time (in years) since first arrival minus all significant periods spent outside of Australia. Significant periods are those of one year or more, not including holidays, visits and business trips overseas.

REFERENCES

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity, Cat. no. 1289.0, ABS, Canberra, 1999.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Census Dictionary, Cat. no. 2901.0, ABS, Canberra, 1996.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force, Australia, Cat. no. 6203.0, ABS, Canberra, 1999.