

Senate Economics Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Additional Estimates

2015 - 2016

Department/Agency: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Question: AET 166-172

Topic: 2016 Census

Reference: written - 18 February 2016

Senator: Rice, Janet

Question:

166. I understand that the ABS is intending to include a category for 'other' under gender for the 2016 Census. I also understand that the ABS is intending to only make the 'other' category available to those who specifically contact the ABS prior to the Census date. Is this still the intention of the Bureau?

167. And what is the expected impact of this on reporting rates?

168. Did the ABS anticipate that those who identify as non-binary or gender diverse will be undercounted?

169. What actions does the Bureau intend to take to ensure that this does not happen (information campaigns, community outreach etc.)?

170. A media release from the Bureau on the 2nd of February states that the ABS is investigating the inclusion of a 'please specify' section to further breakdown 'Other' into subcategories via written in responses. Is the Bureau now committed to this, or are options still being considered?

171. What consulting with gender diverse communities and other affected has the Bureau done? Has there been any input from these communities on survey design?

172. Has the Bureau engaged with people who identify as intersex, in order to understand how best we develop an appropriate model for the inclusion of intersex people?

Answer:

166. Sex has been collected in every Census since 1911 and is considered a key demographic variable. Consistent with the Census regulations and demographic requirements the 2016 Census will collect sex rather than gender. The question though, for simplicity and respondent ease, simply asks "Are you:".

While Census forms, both paper and online, only provide two options male/female, there are processes that enables respondents to report male/female/other. On a paper form the respondent simply has to mark both male and female options and then write their desired response next to the boxes (e.g. "Other", "Intersex" or preferred response. For the online form the respondent will need to contact the Census Inquiry Service to request a new logon code that will open a form that has three options "Male", "Female" or "Other – please specify".

This service is available any time throughout the conduct of the Census, from July 26 to September 24.

167. The ABS does not have any evidence to expect that these changes will have any impact on Census response rates.

168. The ABS does not have any evidence to expect that those who identify as non-binary or gender diverse will be undercounted.

169. The ABS will promote these procedures through the ABS website, the online form and community engagement.

170. The online Census form that is available on request will include “Other – please specify” as the third option. The data collected will be analysed and published after the Census. The Standard for Sex and Gender Variables recognises the need to include a third category to ensure the standard caters for the whole population. Further, the standard recommends the inclusion of a 'please specify' write in facility for the 'Other' category allowing respondents to describe their sex/gender using a term they are comfortable with.

171 & 172. The ABS has received submissions through the Review of 2016 Census Nature and Content, and through the review of the Standard for Sex and Gender. Direct engagement and consultation has occurred with a number of organisations that represent intersex people and people that identify as non-binary on both the Standard and the Census.