

Centre for Inclusive Design submission to Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 2026.

CfID made several recommendations to ABS proposing questions, data collection, and the process in developing non-biased questions.

CfID suggested the ABS consider any languages a person uses, or has previously used regularly, including non-verbal language, i.e. Auslan and others.

This information could be collected in addition to the existing information on a language other than English a person uses at home (Question 20 on the [2021 Census Household Form](#)). CfID would like to see a more comprehensive analysis of verbal and non-verbal languages used from the 2026 Census.

Suggested questions would be; *‘Does the person also use, or has previously used, any other languages regularly?’ – ‘Does the person also use, or has previously used, any non-verbal (e.g., Auslan) languages regularly?’*

This information would enhance the census data on languages, including non-verbal, used in Australia.

CfID would like to see more relevant questions being asked regarding the LGBTQI+ community, and people living with disability, and the results be publicly available to assist governments and organisations provide inclusive products and services. The data should be available to end-users on a range of personal characteristics relevant to diversity, inclusion, and equity, subject to sufficient privacy safeguards. For example, the sample size chosen for obtaining such data from the ABS must be greater than a threshold to ensure no persons are personally identifiable.

CfID recommended ABS structure questions using inclusive design to engage with communities, carers, and representatives to negate unintentional bias and avert controversy. During the 2021 Census, LGBTQI+ community were angered when questions about gender and sexual orientation were left out, and argued *the census should have gone a step further and asked questions on gender and sexuality*, instead of only offering a ‘non-binary’ option. Subsequently, the issue became a news item across the nation.

To avoid these incidents, CfID strongly suggested ABS consult those communities, carers and advocates seen as being on the edge of main-stream society, LGBTQI+, aged, disability, homeless and others. Before questions are designed, employing inclusive design principals by engaging with these edge groups, informing them of the information ABS requires, will then help structure appropriate and non-biased questions to obtain the desired outcome. Thus, avoiding any controversy.

In addition, CfID tendered its **endorsement of ACCAN’s submission**.

Access to internet services, be it phone or computer, has become an important part of increasing social, economic, and educational opportunities, and an essential service during emergencies, especially natural disasters.

CfID shares ACCAN's concerns around the lack of census questions on digital inclusion. This includes household internet use, as well as a lack of recent data on Target 17 of the Closing the Gap Strategy on digital inclusion for First Nations communities, and usage and accessibility by people with a disability. Providing this information will be critical towards ensuring First Nations communities remain connected and experience equal levels of digital inclusion and help address shortfalls experienced by people with a disability.

As ACCAN explains, one in four First Nations households still need access to the internet in Australia. The digital divide for First Nations peoples and communities also increases with remoteness, with only 49.9 per cent of First Nations peoples living in very remote areas have access to the internet. And many people with disability continue to be digitally excluded and experience poor outcomes due to the 'prohibitive costs of digital technologies, the limitations of current technologies and a lack of digital education and training.' Available, affordable, and accessible communications goods and services are essential for people with disability to be able to participate equally in society.

CfID fully supports ACCAN's submission to ABS on the topic of digital inclusion to map the digital landscape, address the issues so all Australia's, as is their right, have affordable and reliable access to internet services.

CfID works to create policies, products, services, and experiences with inclusivity in mind, delivering outcomes of the highest standard, resulting in an ever-growing evidence base for the benefits of inclusive design. By incorporating inclusive design more people can access and use the environments, products, and services they need.