

Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism – submission from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Background

On 29 November 2016, the Senate resolved that the Select Committee on Strengthening Multiculturalism be established on 27 March 2017. The committee is to inquire into and report on ways of protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion, with particular reference to:

- a. the views and experiences of people from culturally and linguistically diverse, and new and emerging communities;
- b. the adequacy and accessibility of settlement social inclusion services and resources available to individuals and communities;
- c. the adequacy of existing data collection and social research on racially motivated crimes;
- d. the impact of discrimination, vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- e. the impact of political leadership and media representation on the prevalence of vilification and other forms of exclusion and bigotry on the basis of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- f. how to improve the expected standards of public discourse about matters of 'race', colour, national or ethnic origin, culture or religious belief;
- g. how to better recognise and value the contribution that diverse communities bring to Australian social and community life;
- h. the potential benefits and disadvantages of enshrining principles of multiculturalism in legislation;
- i. the potential benefits and disadvantages of establishing a legislative basis for the Multicultural Advisory Council, or for an ongoing Multicultural Commission; and
- j. any related matters.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collects and disseminates a range of statistical information which could inform and report against protecting and strengthening Australia's multiculturalism and social inclusion.

This submission outlines the statistical information available in ABS surveys and products to assist in addressing the terms of reference for this inquiry.

The Census of Population and Housing (Census)

The Census is Australia's largest statistical collection. For more than 100 years, it has provided a snapshot of Australia and showed how our nation has changed over time, allowing us to plan for the future. Census data is used to make informed decisions on policy and

planning issues that impact the lives of all Australians, including those who were born overseas (approximately 1 in 4 people in 2011).

The Census disseminates data through a number of product platforms. [QuickStats](#) and [Community Profile](#) tables provide quick and easy access to Census data for large and small geographic areas. For more complex queries, [Census TableBuilder](#), allows users to build their own complex tables that can cross-classify many different variables at the same time, across a range of geographic areas. [Census DataPacks](#) contain data for all geographies in Australia. They provide comprehensive data files and associated Geographic Information System (GIS) boundary files in a format suitable for loading into proprietary software and/or custom-built systems. Each of these products has a section on Cultural and Language Diversity with varying levels of complexity which can provide great analysis of multiculturalism in Australia.

The [QuickStats Country of Birth](#) product presents key themes from the 2011 Census relating to persons, families and dwellings for persons born in a selected range of countries. It is an ideal product for data users needing general statistics on selected migrant sub-groups by a range of demographic areas.

[Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset \(ACMID\)](#)

The Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID) was created by linking the 2011 Census of Population and Housing and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection's (DIBP) Settlement Database (SDB). The DIBP SDB provides statistical information for the planning of settlement services within DIBP, along with other government and community agencies involved in the settlement of migrants.

The resulting data is available through [TableBuilder](#), an ABS online tool for creating graphs and tables. The ACMID provides a range of data including demographic information, visa characteristics, and data on cultural and language diversity, employment, disability, and education.

[The Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset \(ACLD\)](#)

The ACLD links data from the 2006 and 2011 Censuses of Population and Housing to build a longitudinal picture of Australian society. In its current form, a 5% random sample (around 1 million records) from the 2006 Census was linked with records from the 2011 Census. Subsequent census data will be added over the years. The ACLD is also able to be linked with administrative datasets to look at population transitions. (for example, it is currently linked with the Social Security and Related Information (SSRI) dataset from the Department of Social Services (DSS)).

In taking a longitudinal view of Australians' journeys through life, the ACLD uncovers new insights into the dynamics and transitions that drive social and economic change over time, and how these vary for diverse population groups, including migrants. [For example](#), the ACLD can monitor how migrants have developed their spoken English language skills between Censuses. In 2006, approximately 20% of migrants who had arrived in Australia between 2001 and 2006 did not speak English well, or at all. By 2011, 56% of these people spoke English well or very well.

The ACLD is accessed through the TableBuilder product and covers all areas of Census data including demographic information, education and labour force data, income, caring responsibilities and disability, voluntary work, household characteristics, and family composition.

Characteristics of Recent Migrants

The Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey was conducted in November 2013 and provides detailed information about migrants who have come to Australia over the past 10 years. The survey captures information on visa status, education, household income and labour market outcomes. One key area of interest is how migrants have settled into employment and whether their likelihood of finding work relates to their visa type, education, language skills and/or other characteristics.

Personal Income Tax and Migrants Integrated Dataset (PITMID)

The 2011-12 Personal Income Tax and Migrants Integrated Dataset (PITMID) provides estimates of the personal income of migrants, and details sources of their total income. PITMID was created by linking the Australian Taxation Office Personal Income Tax (PIT) records with migrant records from the Australian Government's Settlement Database (SDB). The personal income of migrants is presented by characteristics such as entry conditions to Australia, country of birth, year of arrival, and length of stay.

Migrant Data Matrices

These data matrices provide users with links to data on migrants from a range of ABS surveys. The data includes a selection of demographic, geographic and socio-economic characteristics.

Topics include Crime and Justice, Culture and Leisure, Family and Community, Health, Housing, Labour, Education and Training, and Personal and Household Finances.

The Crime and Justice topic, for example, outlines migrants' experiences of crime, collected in the Crime and Safety Survey, the Crime Victimization Survey and the Personal Safety Survey. Links to data on experiences of discrimination are also provided, which is collected in the General Social Survey (GSS). The Family and Community and Culture and Leisure topics provide information on migrants' social inclusion and community involvement, through voluntary work and participation in cultural activities, sports and physical recreation.

General Social Survey (GSS)

The General Social Survey (GSS) collects data on a range of social dimensions, including country of birth. A major focus of this survey is to enable exploration of the multi-dimensional nature of relative advantage and disadvantage across the population, and facilitate reporting on and monitoring people's opportunities to participate fully in society. The GSS also contains a key indicator for measuring attitudes towards multiculturalism in Australia. In 2014, 84.8% of all Australians felt 'it is a good thing for society to be comprised of different cultures'. Approximately 1 in 25 Australians overall (4.4%) disagreed with this statement. This proportion was slightly higher for those born in Australia, with 5.5% disagreeing.

Other key data of note in this survey include family and community support, social inclusion, volunteering activity, participation in civic and community groups, experiences of discrimination, crime victimisation, and feelings of safety.

Perspectives on Migrants

This article uses data from the [2009-10 Family Characteristics Survey](#) to explore comparisons between migrant and non-migrant families. It looks at family composition, geographic distribution and country of origin of migrant families, family types, and the year of arrival of the most recently arrived "key member" of the family.

Further work

The ABS would be pleased to provide more detailed information on any of the products mentioned above, or assistance for further analysis, should the Select Committee require it.

Sources:

[Australians' journeys through life: Stories from the Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset, 2006-2011 \(cat. no. 2081.0\)](#)

[Census: Community Profiles](#)

[Census DataPacks](#)

[Census: QuickStats](#)

[Census TableBuilder](#)

[The Census of Population and Housing](#)

[Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, Nov 2013 \(cat. no. 6250.0\)](#)

[Family Characteristics, Australia, 2009-10 \(cat. no. 4442.0\)](#)

[General Social Survey, 2014 \(cat. no. 4159.0\)](#)

[Microdata: Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset, 2011 \(cat. no. 3417.0.55.001\)](#)

[Migrant Data Matrices, 2016 \(cat. no. 3415.0\)](#)

[Personal Income of Migrants, Australia, 2011-12 \(cat. no. 3418.0\)](#)

[Perspectives on Migrants, Mar 2013 \(cat. no. 3416.0\)](#)