

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Treasury Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

17 October – 18 October 2012

Question: SBT 55-58

Topic: 2011 Census

Written: Received from Committee – 24 October 2012

Senator BIRMINGHAM asked:

55. In regards to the 2011 Census form, specifically, Question 19, please detail how responses provided in the 'other' box are classified.
56. What proportion of people provided a response in the 'other' box? What proportion of these responses were classified into recognised categories? Please detail.
57. What happens to responses that are not able to be classified into a recognised category? What effect does this have on the overall total? What types of responses are not able to be classified? Please provide examples.
58. What proportion of people did not provide any answer to Question 19? How are these responses treated?

Answer:

55. Responses to Question 19 are processed as the topic, 'Religious Affiliation'. This topic is coded using the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG), Second Edition, Revision 1. The variable records a person's religious affiliation and answering Question 19 is optional. The question is coded according to the ABS's Religious Affiliation Standard and is based on the ASCRG coding index, which contains a list of the most probable responses to questions relating to religious groups and correct classification codes.

Responses provided via the Census do not always precisely reflect classification categories. The coding index is necessary to link responses to the correct classification category. The index has been developed by reference to existing literature in the field, consultation with religious experts and ethnic and community groups and analysis of existing ABS data. A series of coding rules are applied to ensure that the index is utilised properly. These rules are:

- Responses which relate directly to a religious group category are coded to that religious group. Such instances include responses which are an exact match with the religious group category title, responses which are an exact match with the religious group category title except in terms of alternative spelling, the use of abbreviations, etc., and responses which match the title in terms of the fundamental or basic words of the title and differ only in terms of qualifying or extraneous words.
- Responses which relate directly to a religious group because they describe an entity which is one of a group of religions comprising the religious group, or a subset of the religious group (denomination, administrative or organisational grouping, etc.) are coded directly to that religious group.

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- Responses which cannot be identified as relating to a separately identified religious group in the classification are assigned to a relevant supplementary code.
56. 2,651,948 or 12.21% of persons provided a response in the 'other' text box for Question 19 on the 2011 Census form. All of these responses were classified to an appropriate category in the ASCRG or a related supplementary code.
57. All responses to Question 19 are classified to a relevant category of the ASCRG or related supplementary code. Those responses classified to supplementary codes are included within overall totals. The supplementary codes are:
- 0002 Religious Belief, nfd - Used where the respondent has identified some form of religious belief but has either not provided further information or their belief is not recognised within the classification. An example would be, 'Own Religion'.
 - 0003 Not defined - Used where the respondent has provided a response that is not recognised within the rest of the classification or the other supplementary codes. Examples would be, 'Non practicing' or 'Non Orthodox'.
 - 0004 New Age - Used where the respondent has described their religious beliefs as New Age. An example would be, 'New Age'.
 - 0005 Theism - Used where the respondent has provided a response indicating a belief in god with no further information about an associated religion. An example would be, 'God'.
 - &&&& Not Stated - Used where the respondent has chosen to not answer the Religion question.
 - VVVV Overseas Visitor - Used where the respondent has identified themselves as an overseas visitor.

In the 2011 Census, 174,281 persons were classified to the supplementary codes 0002, 0003, 0004 and 0005:

Counting – Religious Affiliation – 4 Digitl Level – Supplementary Codes	Persons, Place of Usual Residence
Religious Belief, nfd	35,170
Not Defined	132,598
New Age, so described	2,629
Theism	3,884

58. In the 2011 Census, 1,839,648 persons (8.55% of all respondents) chose not to answer Question 19. Respondents who did not answer Question 19 were classified as 'Not Stated' and assigned the supplementary code &&&&. As it is optional for persons to respond to Question 19, persons who do not provide a response are classified as described above and included in totals where appropriate.