

2026 Census – People experiencing homelessness

About the Census

Every five years, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) counts every person and household in Australia through the Census of Population and Housing. The next Census is on **Tuesday 11 August 2026**.

The Census provides a snapshot of Australia's people and housing and is the only national estimate of the prevalence of homelessness. Government, service providers, community organisations and businesses use Census data to plan services and support programs for people experiencing homelessness. This includes emergency shelters, family and domestic violence programs, transitional housing and programs for young people.

Approach for different types of homelessness

Tailored approaches are used to ensure people can participate in the Census, no matter where they sleep:



People sleeping rough, living in improvised dwellings, tents and cars.

The ABS will work closely with the sector to help plan the rough sleeper count.

Trained Community Field Officers will interview people sleeping rough, asking a subset of the Census questions.



People staying in crisis accommodation, shelters, refuges and boarding houses.

The ABS will work closely with service providers to identify supported accommodation where residents may need support to participate in the Census.

Where the accommodation address is sensitive (such as family and domestic violence refuges) we have processes to ensure we provide residents with support while protecting the confidentiality of the address.



People who are between homes and staying temporarily in other households.



People living in 'severely'* crowded homes.

The ABS works with the sector to target messages to couch surfers and people living in 'severely' crowded households, including through social media. They can participate in the Census as part of the household they are staying in, or they can request a separate form.

**four or more additional rooms required to accommodate people living in the dwelling.*

How you can help

Provide knowledge of your area including locations where people are known to sleep rough, addresses of supported accommodation (e.g. shelters, boarding houses, youth foyers, transitional housing, common grounds) and services operating in your area. You can share this information with us using the contact details below.

This information will assist with Census planning to help ensure homelessness estimates are as accurate as possible.

Encourage and support people using your services to take part in the Census.

We will provide information to display and share. There will be materials you can download via our website from May 2026.

Work with us

Apply for 2026 Census field roles or encourage staff and volunteers to apply.

We'll be looking for people who have worked in the sector, or with lived experience of homelessness. You can help people feel safe and respected when participating in the Census.

A number of temporary roles will be available:

- **Local Engagement Officers** – manage a small team of local field staff and targeted Census collection activities.
- **Community Field Officers** – provide in-person support to people who may face barriers participating in the Census.

Join our Talent Community at census.abs.gov.au/jobs. We'll let you know when applications open.

2026 key dates

January

Local Engagement Officer applications open.

February

ABS working with the sector to assist planning.

March

Community Field Officer applications open.

Local Engagement Officers commence.

May

Community Field Officers commence.

July

ABS contacts supported accommodation providers.

August

Census night (Tuesday 11 August 2026).

Community Field Officers visit areas where people sleep rough and help them complete the Census (10–16 August 2026).

Contact us:

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