

International comparisons of indigenous enumeration methods

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ABSTRACT

Censuses are the basis of standard population estimates in developed countries. They are also generally the main source of data for minority populations. Minority indigenous populations are the subjects of intense policy interest in former colonial nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Census data is the key source of statistical information used to allocate a significant amount of money to targeted programs and services for indigenous people. Thus high quality data is essential for appropriate levels of funding to reach these populations.

A wide range of enumeration methods has been used in all four countries, indeed some countries offer a choice of enumeration methods to individual communities. As a related issue, the questions used have also varied considerably over time. Different census practices may be interpreted as having meanings independent of the intentions of the designers. These assigned meanings may influence people's interpretation of and responses to the census as a whole and to individual questions in particular. Judgements about the relative status of response categories may be made from the entire set of circumstances surrounding the enumeration, which may prompt respondents to answer in a certain way. Thus the practices employed by censuses in order to derive data about indigenous populations have the potential to radically affect the resultant data for population size and characteristics.

The official statistical agencies of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States produce publications and documents detailing the methods used to enumerate indigenous populations. Such publications provide the source data for this discussion of enumeration methods. There, of course, may be a gap between stated intentions and field practice, however, these documents are themselves part of the overall matrix of influence upon respondents.

This paper will focus on comparisons between Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. Where information is available, a broad overview of enumeration history is given, followed by more detailed analysis of the most recent census period and plans for the 2001 censuses of Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

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UNDERCOUNT RATES

AUSTRALIA 1996		NEW ZEALAND 1996		UNITED STATES 1990	
	%		%		%
Indigenous	7.1	Maori	2.9	Native American	4.5
				- on reservations	12.2
Non-Indigenous	1.5	Pacific Islander	3.1	Black	4.4
		European	0.8	White	0.9
Total	1.6	Total	1.2	Total	1.6

CANADA:

Total undercount rate was 2.5% in 1996. No separate undercount for Aboriginal peoples, however it was estimated that 44,000 Indians were resident on reserves that were not included in the census. If there was no other undercount apart from this the undercount rate would be 3.8%.

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AUSTRALIA

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Enumeration changes</i>
1966	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time particular efforts made to include all Indigenous people in the census
1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Indigenous people in parts of remote Northern Territory were enumerated by interview</i>• <i>Mainstream enumeration continues to be by drop off and pick up of form by enumerators</i>
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indigenous people in parts of Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia were enumerated by interview
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Indigenous people in parts of Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland were enumerated by interview</i>• <i>Employment of local Indigenous people as interviewers</i>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indigenous people in parts of Northern Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and some urban areas such as town camps were enumerated by interview• Employment of local Indigenous people as interviewers• Used State Indigenous Managers – senior level public service position to oversee enumeration for each state
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Possibility that Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey will be run during preparatory stages of census</i>• <i>Full integration of Indigenous and standard enumeration to avoid duplication and confusion over collection responsibilities. One enumeration only.</i>• <i>Flexibility, plan for local needs</i>• <i>Liaison with Indigenous organisations</i>• <i>Awareness activities but not give impression that census counts linked directly to funding or that communities should boost their populations</i>• <i>Use of interview forms in nominated discrete communities where cultural or language difficulties require additional enumeration and some urban areas</i>• <i>Employ Indigenous people both in their own communities and as special collectors in urban areas</i>

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NEW ZEALAND

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Enumeration changes</i>
1916-1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enumeration conducted jointly by the Post Office and the Department of Statistics
<i>Up to 1926</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Maori and mainstream censuses designed and conducted separately</i>
1926	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two census operations conducted in a similar way but still separate exercises. Maori census had fewer questions.
1951	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Two censuses combined as one. Used the same form.</i>
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bilingual form available on request• Enumeration generally by drop off and pick up of form by enumerators• Specially appointed Maori liaison officers on Marae• Maori enumerators recruited as part of mainstream recruitment as well as through special recruitment

CANADA

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Enumeration changes</i>
Up to 1966	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enumeration by personal interview only
1971	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Self-enumeration introduced for approximately 98% of the population</i>• <i>Persons resident on Indian reserves or in remote northern areas continued to be enumerated by interview</i>
1981 and on	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some Indian reserves/settlements have refused permission for the census to be conducted on their reservation. No persons from these reserves are included in census data as a result.

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UNITED STATES

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Enumeration changes</i>
Up to 1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation by enumerators used to identify American Indians and Alaska Natives
1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Self-identification introduced as primary approach</i>
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First time American Indians and Alaska Natives involved in the census process• Discussions with tribal leaders and other promotional activities• Employment of American Indians and Alaska Natives
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Created Tribal Governments Liaison Program. Federally recognised tribes encouraged to appoint a tribal member to liaise between the tribe and the Census Bureau</i>• <i>Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Populations created in 1985 as part of census preparation</i>• <i>Employment of tribal members in census enumeration</i>
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnerships with tribal governments• Based on President Clinton's 1994 Whitehouse Memorandum which recognised the unique legal relationship of federally recognised tribes, their sovereign status as tribal governments and required all federal government agencies to deal with tribes in a government to government relationship• Continued Tribal Governments Liaison Program• Promoted use of Tribal Complete Count Committees• Tribes can choose form of enumeration – mailout/mailback or interview• Tribes can manage promotional activities, recruitment campaign and monitor census progress

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AUSTRALIA

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Question concept(s)</i>	<i>Indigenous specific or general?</i>	<i>Multiple responses?</i>
1911-1966	Race	General	Yes. Instructed to specify 'half-caste' or to give fractions of races.
1971-1976	Racial origin	<i>Indigenous focus. Responses of European, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Other.</i>	<i>No. Instructed to choose one.</i>
1981	Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	Indigenous specific. Responses of No, Yes Aboriginal, Yes Torres Strait Islander.	No. Instructed to choose one.
1986	<i>Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</i>	<i>Indigenous specific. Responses of No, Yes Aboriginal, Yes Torres Strait Islander.</i>	<i>No. Instructed to choose one.</i>
	<i>What is the person's ancestry?</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Multiple responses permitted but instruction to give multiple responses in separate information booklet.</i>
1991	Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	Indigenous specific. Responses of No, Yes Aboriginal, Yes Torres Strait Islander.	No. Instructed to choose one.
1996	<i>Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?</i>	<i>Indigenous specific. Responses of No, Yes Aboriginal, Yes Torres Strait Islander</i>	<i>Partial. If both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander could mark both Yes boxes.</i>
2001	Is the person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?	Indigenous specific. Responses of No, Yes Aboriginal, Yes Torres Strait Islander.	Partial. If both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander could mark both Yes boxes.
	<i>What is the person's ancestry?</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Yes</i>

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NEW ZEALAND

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Question concept(s)</i>	<i>Maori specific or general?</i>	<i>Multiple responses?</i>
1916-1921	Race and/or descent	General	No
1926-1971	<i>Race and/or descent</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Yes. Instructed to specify 'half-caste' or to give fractions.</i>
1976	Ethnic origin	General	Yes. Asked to give fractions.
1981	Maori race of New Zealand <i>Ethnic origin</i>	Maori specific <i>General</i>	No <i>Yes. Asked to give fractions.</i>
1986	What is your ethnic origin?	General. Tick box list of responses.	Yes. No longer required to give fractions.
1991	<i>Which ethnic group do you belong to?</i>	<i>General. Tick box list of responses.</i>	<i>Yes</i>
	<i>Have you any New Zealand Maori ancestry?</i>	<i>Maori specific</i>	<i>No</i>
1996	<i>Iwi or tribe</i> Which ethnic group do you belong to?	<i>Maori specific</i> General. Tick box list of responses.	Yes
	Are you descended from a New Zealand Maori?	Maori specific	No
2001	<i>Iwi or tribe</i> <i>Which ethnic group do you belong to?</i>	Maori specific <i>General</i>	<i>Yes</i>
	<i>Are you descended from a Maori?</i>	<i>Maori specific</i>	<i>No</i>
	<i>Iwi or tribe</i>	<i>Maori specific</i>	<i>Yes</i>

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CANADA

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Question concept(s)</i>	<i>Aboriginal specific or general?</i>	<i>Multiple responses?</i>
1901-1921	Racial or tribal origin	General	No
1931-1941	<i>Racial origin</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>No</i>
1951	Origin	General	No
1961-1971	<i>To what ethnic or cultural group did you or your ancestor (on the male side) belong on coming to this continent?</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>No</i>
1981	To what ethnic or cultural group did you or your ancestor belong on first coming to this continent?	General	Partial. No instruction was given and only a limited set of combinations were coded.
1986	<i>To what ethnic or cultural group did you or your ancestor belong?</i>	<i>General</i>	<i>Yes. Instructed to mark as many as applicable.</i>
1991	<i>Do you consider yourself an Aboriginal person?</i> To what ethnic or cultural group did you or your ancestor belong?	<i>Aboriginal specific</i> General	Yes. Instructed to mark as many as applicable.
1996	With which Aboriginal group do you identify? <i>To what ethnic or cultural group did you or your ancestor belong?</i>	Aboriginal specific <i>General</i>	<i>Yes</i>
2001	<i>Is this person an Aboriginal person?</i> To which ethnic or cultural group(s) did this person's ancestors belong?	<i>Aboriginal specific</i> General	<i>Yes</i> Yes
	Is this person an Aboriginal person?	Aboriginal specific	Yes

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UNITED STATES

<i>Census year(s)</i>	<i>Question concept(s)</i>	<i>Native American specific or general?</i>	<i>Multiple responses?</i>
1900-1940	Color or race	General	No
1950	Race	General	No
1960	Is this person... (followed by list of races)	General	No
1970	Color or race	General	No
1980	Hispanic origin	Hispanic specific	No
	Is this person... (followed by list of races)	General	No
1990	Hispanic origin	Hispanic specific	No
	What is this person's ancestry?	General	Accepted but no instruction.
	Race	General	No
2000	Hispanic origin	Hispanic specific	No
	What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?	General	Yes but instruction in separate guide.
	What is this person's race?	General	No
	Hispanic origin	Hispanic specific	No
	What is this person's ancestry or ethnic origin?	General	Yes but no instruction on form.

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