



Counting on us: How start dates affect Census participation

The Census is the most comprehensive data collection activity in Australia. It is an invaluable source of information that enables communities, governments and businesses to make informed decisions.

The Census has previously focused on a single ‘Census Night’. In 2021, to encourage participation, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) highlighted that people had a number of days to complete the Census. BETA partnered with the ABS to test this change.

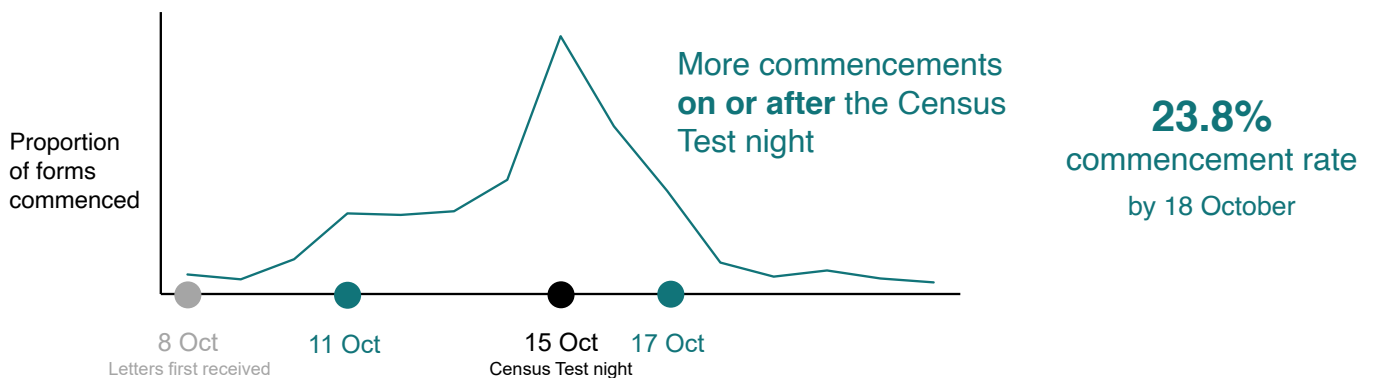
What we did

BETA tested two ways of describing the ‘response window’, or the time available to complete the Census. We ran a randomised controlled trial as part of the ABS Census Test in October 2019.

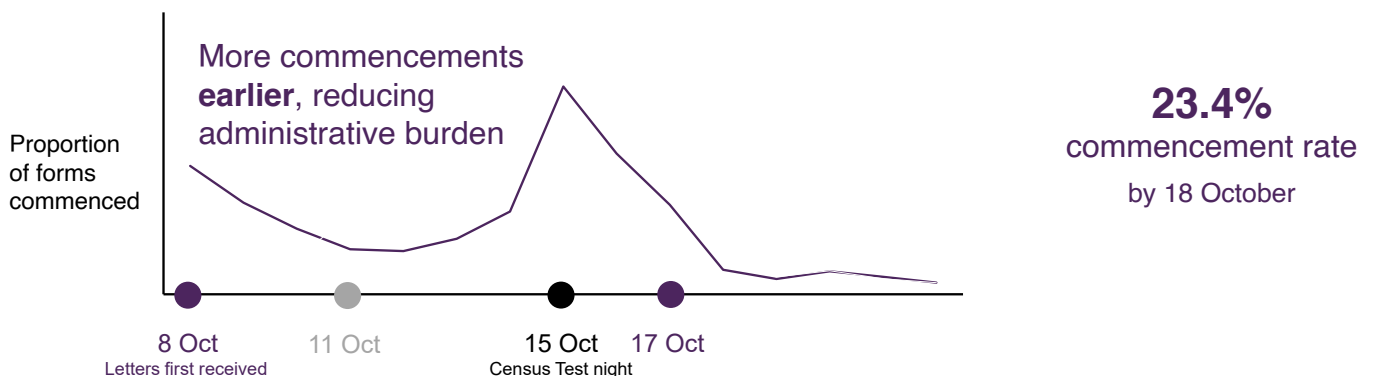


Over 26,000 households in Logan and Wagga Wagga received one of these letters.

1. A ‘complete between’ response window of 1 week (between 11 and 17 October)



2. A ‘complete now’ response window (between now and 17 October)



The ‘complete now’ response window was better at reducing administrative burden, without negatively impacting commencement rates. This wording was used in the 2021 Census.