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PREFACE

A question on ancestry was asked in the Census of Population and Housing for the first time in 1986. The aim of this paper is to provide users of census data with an assessment of the quality of the ancestry data. The paper examines the level and significance of non-response, non-specific responses and multiple responses to the ancestry question, and consistency between people's ancestry response and their answers to other related questions in the census.

The paper is one of a number of publications which examine the quality of 1986 Census data. It was prepared by Siew-Ean Khoo. Comments on earlier drafts of the paper from Peter Hardie (Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs) and Charles Price were much appreciated.

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MAIN FINDINGS

Statistics for most ancestry groups are reasonably accurate. However there appears to be significant understatement for Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German and Scandinavian ancestries.

The ancestry question had a non-response rate of 7 per cent (*see* Section 2). Non-response was more likely among the Australian-born population than the overseas-born population. The overseas-born population had a non-response rate of less than 2 per cent. Data on the birthplace and parents' birthplace of non-respondents suggested that the majority were likely to be at least third generation Australians.

Persons stating 'mixed' or 'not known' made up less than 1 per cent of the population (*see* Section 3). This low rate of non-specific response should not affect the reliability of ancestry statistics.

People's answers to the ancestry question were generally consistent with their answers to the questions on birthplace, parents' birthplace, language and Aboriginal origin (*see* Section 6). Birthplace was a reasonable measure of the ancestry of recent migrant groups, particularly those from countries with an ethnically homogenous population.

1 in 8 people stated multiple ancestries (*see* Section 4). Many people of multiple ancestries might have simplified their responses or identified with a single group. The multiple response rate was highest for children and declined with increasing age.

20 per cent of the population stated Australian ancestry. Almost all these people were born in Australia and 85 per cent had parents who were both born in Australia (*see* Section 5). The 'Australian' response was highest for children less than 5 years old and lowest for the elderly population.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Population Census Ethnicity Committee

In 1982 the 1986 Population Census Ethnicity Committee was formed to advise the Australian Statistician on, among other matters, ways in which information could be obtained in a census to satisfy unmet requirements for data on ethnicity (see the Committee's report, *The Measurement of Ethnicity in the Australian Census of Population and Housing*, (2172.0). As a result of the Committee's advice the 1986 Census included a question on ancestry, the first time that such a question was asked in an Australian census.

For a proper interpretation of data resulting from the 1986 Census ancestry question it is necessary to understand that there is neither a universally accepted concept nor measurement technique associated with the topic of ethnicity. The Population Census Ethnicity Committee looked at international experience in this field and found that "views as to the very meaning of the word 'ethnicity' varied widely, both between countries and between different bodies within the same country. Similarly approaches adopted to the development of measurement techniques are somewhat disparate" (the Committee's report, p.3 para.2.2).

The Population Census Ethnicity Committee in its report discussed two approaches to directly measuring ethnicity. The *self-perceived identification approach* is concerned with establishing the ethnic group with which a person identifies and is based on the person's current perceptions, irrespective of origin (the Committee's report, p.4). The *ancestry approach* is an historical one and seeks to identify the ancestry or origin of the person.

Under the self-perceived identification approach, people could identify with any ethnic group or groups, irrespective of their background. Thus, they could identify with an ethnic group through being closely associated with the lifestyle and culture of that group even if they were not of that group.

Under the ancestry approach, people would be asked to base their ancestry on the ethnic group from which they and their ancestors were descended. This is irrespective of whether they continue to be associated with the lifestyle or culture of that group.

Tests indicated that the self-perceived identification questions did not satisfy the criteria for inclusion of a question in the census. Consequently, the Committee recommended the inclusion of an ancestry question.

1.2 The 1986 Census ancestry question

An ancestry question is not without problems, although they are less severe than those affecting a self-perceived identification question. While the ancestry approach 'presumes an objective basis, respondent reporting is likely to be less than totally so and the ethnic allegiance or origin nominated by a respondent could be dependent on his/her views and values at the particular time' (the Committee's report, p.5 para.2.10).

In particular there are two problems associated with the self-enumeration method of census-taking used in Australia that need to be remembered. First, the ancestry which persons ascribe to themselves may differ from that which would be ascribed by the community. Second, census forms are often completed by a single person in the household, or even in some cases by a person outside the household and there could easily be some inaccuracy in the reporting of ancestry by someone other than the individual concerned.

Despite these problems, in view of the interest in ethnicity data, the ABS recommended to the government that the question be included in the census on the basis that the data produced from the question be subject to a full analysis of its adequacy and reliability.

A test of the ancestry question showed that there was apparent common understanding of the word 'ancestry', which centred around meanings such as 'forefathers/forebears', 'our origins', 'family tree' and 'where you came from' (the Committee's report, p.27). Respondents were less sure about how far back in time to extend the concept and many could go no further than their grandparents on whom to base their ancestry. The test also showed that a significant proportion of the population considered their ancestry to be Australian (the Committee's report, p.26).

The census question on ancestry asked:

What is each person's ancestry?

- For example, Greek, English, Indian, Armenian, Aboriginal, Chinese etc.

Respondents were asked to write their answer in the space provided. As recommended by the Committee, the first two responses were coded if multiple ancestries were given.

In view of the test results, the following definition and guidelines were given in the guide to householders distributed with the census forms:

'Ancestry' means the ethnic or national group from which you are descended. It is quite acceptable to base your answer on your grandparents' ancestry. Persons of mixed ancestry who do not identify with a single group should answer with their multiple ancestry. Persons who consider their ancestry to be Australian may answer 'Australian'.

The instructions suggested that people should base their answer to the ancestry question on the origin(s) of their ancestors. However, persons of mixed ancestry were allowed to answer with one of their multiple ancestries. The instructions were less specific about the basis for Australian ancestry. Effectively, the instructions relating to mixed ancestry and Australian ancestry allowed for some element of self-perceived group identification.

A total of 94 specific ancestry groups were coded for each of the first two responses (see Appendix A). Other groups not on the list were coded to an 'other' category. Persons who answered 'mixed' or 'not known' were also coded to separate categories, as were those whose ancestries were inadequately described. Non-respondents were coded to a 'not stated' category.

2. NON-RESPONSE

Non-response can affect the reliability of statistics produced from the question, depending on its level and the characteristics of non-respondents. The Population Census Ethnicity Committee's report has pointed out that the significance of a high level of non-response depends on what is known about the characteristics of non-respondents and the nature of the particular topic under consideration (p.18). In the case of ancestry, the birthplace and parents' birthplace of non-respondents, if known, can provide an indication of their ancestry. There was no imputation for non-response.

2.1 Non-response rate

The ancestry question was not answered for over one million people, resulting in a non-response rate of 6.8 per cent. The question on religion (an optional question) had the highest non-response rate in the census of 11.9 per cent. Although the non-response rate for the ancestry question was higher than that for the question on birthplace or father's birthplace (Table 1)(1), it was the same as that for the question on income (6.8%) and lower than the non-response rate for the question on highest qualification (9.6%).

TABLE 1. NON-RESPONSE TO ANCESTRY AND RELATED QUESTIONS, 1986 CENSUS

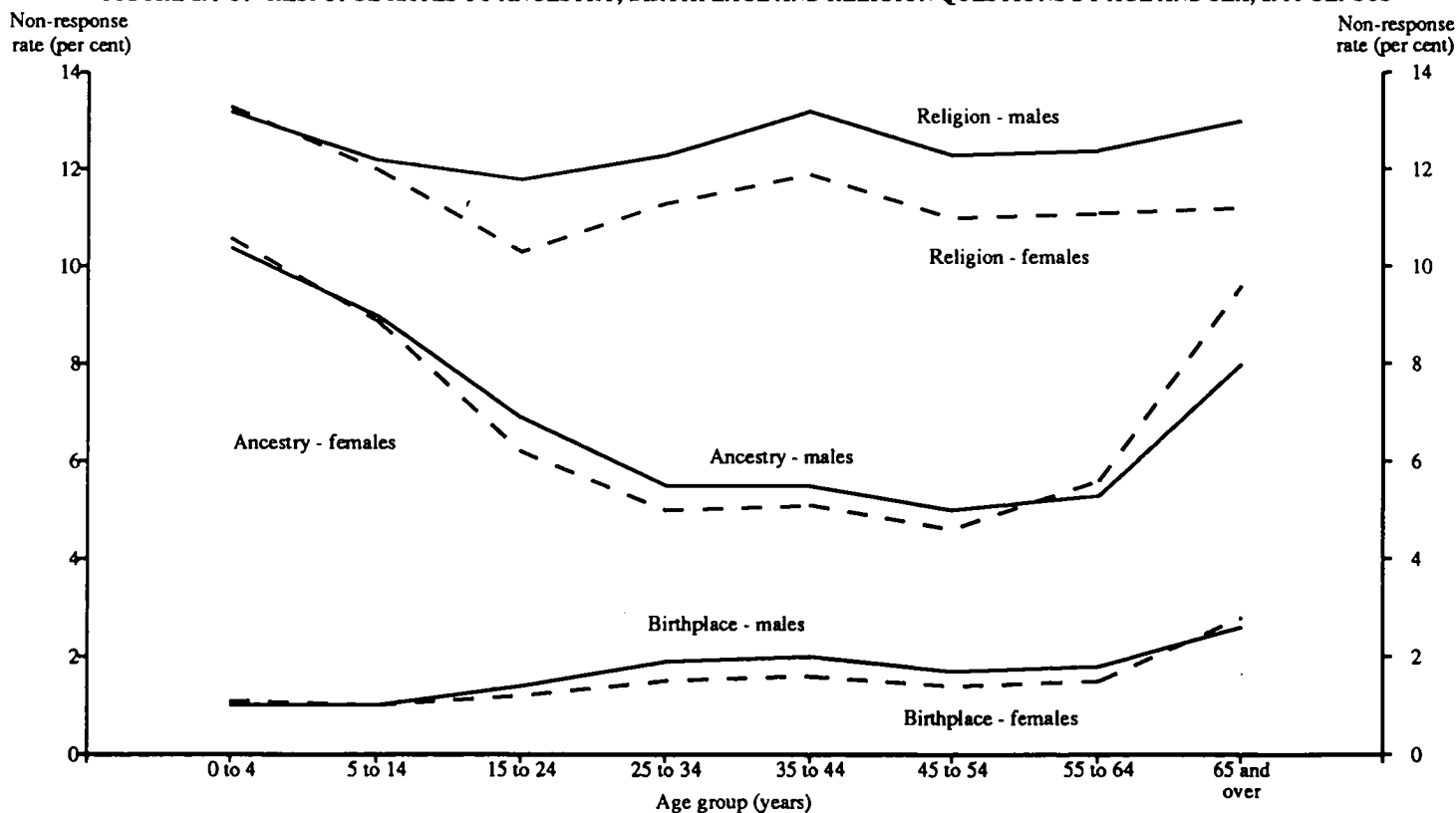
Census question	Number	Non-response rate (a)
	'000	Per cent
Ancestry	1,066.5	6.8
Birthplace	244.3	1.6
Birthplace of father	491.2	3.1
Language spoken at home	252.7	1.8
Religion (b)	1,863.6	11.9

(a) Persons not responding expressed as a percentage of the total census count.
(b) Response to the religion question was optional.

Source: Tables VF037, CX0001, CX0002 and CSD016.

Non-response rates to the ancestry question by age and sex are shown in Figure 1. Also shown for comparison are the corresponding rates for the questions on birthplace and religion.

FIGURE 1. NON-RESPONSE RATES TO ANCESTRY, BIRTHPLACE AND RELIGION QUESTIONS BY AGE AND SEX, 1986 CENSUS



Source: Table CX4137.

(1) If birthplace was not stated, an attempt was made to impute it from other answers or from responses for other family members. A code of 'not stated' was given only when birthplace could not be imputed. This might contribute to the lower non-response rate for the birthplace question.

The patterns of the three sets of non-response rates vary according to the different age groups. Non-response to the ancestry question was highest for children, low for adults aged 25 to 54 years and then higher again for the elderly. In contrast, the birthplace question showed the lowest non-response rate for children. Non-response to the religion question was highest among children under 5 years and peaked again among adults aged 35 to 44 years. It should be noted that often one person in the household completed the census form for all household members; thus information on children was likely to be provided by an adult household member who appeared to have more problems answering the ancestry question for children than for adults.

Non-response rates to the ancestry question also varied slightly across the States and Territories (Table 2). Victoria and the Northern Territory had the highest non-response rate at 8 per cent. The Northern Territory also had the highest non-response rate for all the other questions shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. NON-RESPONSE RATES^(a) TO ANCESTRY AND RELATED QUESTIONS, STATES, TERRITORIES AND AUSTRALIA
1986 CENSUS

Census question	NSW	Vic.	Qld.	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Australia
Ancestry	6.6	8.0	6.8	5.7	5.5	7.3	8.0	5.0	6.8
Birthplace	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.2	3.7	1.3	1.6
Birthplace of father	3.1	3.5	3.0	2.7	3.3	2.5	5.3	2.4	3.1
Language spoken at home	1.8	2.0	1.5	1.3	1.6	1.5	4.8	1.2	1.8
Religion (b)	10.1	14.3	11.7	12.1	11.7	13.6	18.2	10.8	11.9

(a) Persons not responding expressed as a percentage of the total census count in each State/Territory. (b) Response to the religion question was optional.

Source: Tables VF035, VF037, CX0003 and CSD016.

Non-response rates for the ancestry question by birthplace are shown in Table 3. Australian-born persons were much more likely than the overseas-born not to have their ancestry stated. None of the overseas-born groups had a non-response rate of over 2.5 per cent and persons born in the UK and Ireland, Southern Europe and Asia had non-response rates of less than 1.5 per cent compared with 7 per cent among Australian-born persons. About 71 per cent of the people whose birthplace was not stated were also non-respondents to the ancestry question.

Differences in the non-response rate by period of residence and English language proficiency were insignificant. The overseas-born population had a very low non-response rate regardless of length of residence in Australia. People who spoke another language at home, particularly those who did not speak English well or at all, were mostly born overseas and all had a low non-response rate (2 per cent or less) to the ancestry question.

TABLE 3. NON-RESPONSE RATE^(a) TO THE QUESTION ON ANCESTRY BY BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS

Birthplace	Rate
Australia	7.0
Overseas:	1.3
Oceania	2.4
UK and Ireland	0.8
Southern Europe	1.4
Other Europe, USSR	1.8
Eastern Asia	0.7
South Eastern Asia	1.2
Southern Asia	1.0
Western Asia	1.2
South America	2.3
Other America	2.0
Africa	1.7
Not stated	71.2
Total	6.8

(a) Percentage of persons in each birthplace group not responding to the ancestry question.

Source: Table VF035.

2.2 Characteristics of non-respondents

Eighty per cent of people whose ancestry was not stated were born in Australia. Only 4 per cent of non-respondents were born overseas compared with 21 per cent of the total population (Table 4). The remaining 16 per cent were also non-respondents to the birthplace question. It is possible that most people whose birthplace was not stated were born in Australia and probably thought the question did not apply to them.

Data on parents' birthplace showed that three-fifths of the non-respondents to the ancestry question had parents who were both born in Australia. For over one-fifth more of the non-respondents, either one or both parents' birthplaces were not stated (Table 5). Only 8 per cent of the non-respondents had overseas-born parents and 4 per cent spoke a language other than English at home.

TABLE 4. NON-RESPONDENTS TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL POPULATION: DISTRIBUTION BY BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS (Per cent)

<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Non-respondents to ancestry question</i>	<i>Total population</i>
Australia	79.7	77.6
Overseas:	4.0	20.8
Oceania	0.6	1.7
UK and Ireland	0.9	7.2
Southern Europe	0.8	4.1
Other Europe, USSR	0.8	2.9
Eastern Asia	0.1	0.6
South Eastern Asia	0.3	1.5
Southern Asia	0.1	0.5
Western Asia	0.1	0.8
South America	0.1	0.3
Other America	0.1	0.5
Africa	0.2	0.7
Not stated	16.3	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Tables VF035 and CX0003.

Thus, although ancestry was not stated for over one million people, the birthplace, parents' birthplace and/or language spoken at home were stated for more than 80 per cent of these non-respondents. This other information gives a good indication of the ancestry of the non-respondents and shows that the majority of non-respondents were at least third generation Australians. Since the early settlers and migrants to Australia in the early part of this century were mostly from the United Kingdom and Ireland or other northern and western European countries, the majority of non-respondents were likely to be Anglo-Celtic or of other north-western European origin.

TABLE 5. NON-RESPONDENTS TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL POPULATION: DISTRIBUTION BY PARENTS BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS (Per cent)

<i>Parents birthplace</i>	<i>Non-respondents to ancestry question</i>	<i>Total population</i>
Both Australian-born	59.7	58.5
Father Australian-born (a)	3.3	4.0
Mother Australian-born (a)	6.2	7.1
Both parents overseas-born (b)	8.3	28.0
Both parents birthplace not stated	22.5	2.4
Total	100.0	100.0

(a) Other parent born overseas or not stated. (b) Or one parent born overseas and other not stated.

Source: Table CX4135.

TABLE 6. NON-RESPONDENTS TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL POPULATION: DISTRIBUTION BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME, 1986 CENSUS (Per cent)

<i>Language Spoken at Home</i>	<i>Non-respondents to ancestry question</i>	<i>Total population</i>
English only	74.2	84.1
Other language	4.1	14.0
Not stated	21.7	2.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Table AH4005.

2.3 Interpretation of non-response

Analyses of non-responses in census tests have shown that non-response can indicate several things; for example, uncertainty about the meaning of the question or the answer to the question, a real lack of knowledge about the answer to the question, and/or hostility to providing an answer to the question. People are also less likely to answer a question if they think that it may not apply to them.

A test of the ancestry question carried out before the census showed that most people understood the meaning of the question. The main reasons given by people for non-response in the test were uncertainty about the answer, lack of knowledge about their ancestry and difficulty in deciding on one answer. The test showed little adverse reaction to the question. It also showed that non-response was more likely among the Australian-born population than the overseas-born and that the non-response rate was significantly higher among persons aged 65 or more than other adults (Population Census Ethnicity Committee Report, pp.23-28).

The low non-response rate for the overseas-born population indicates that most overseas-born people had no difficulty answering the ancestry question. The fact that most non-respondents were Australian-born and/or had Australian-born parents suggests that they might have had a long family history of residence in Australia and were uncertain about their ancestry.

3. NON-SPECIFIC AND 'OTHER' RESPONSES

Non-specific responses to the ancestry question consist of those in the categories 'mixed', 'not known' and 'inadequately described'. Ancestries which were not among the 94 specific categories were coded to 'other ancestry' and are also considered in this section.

The number of people stating non-specific responses was relatively small and the proportion of the population in each of the non-specific categories was less than 1 per cent (Table 7). Only 21,500 persons (0.1 per cent) answered 'mixed' and 77,400 persons (0.5 per cent) answered 'not known' to the ancestry question.

TABLE 7. NON-SPECIFIC AND 'OTHER' RESPONSES AND NON-RESPONSE TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION, 1986 CENSUS

Response category	Number	Rate (a)
	'000	Per cent
Non-specific responses:		
'Mixed' so described	21.5	0.1
'Not known'	77.4	0.5
Inadequately described	14.4	0.1
Other ancestry (b)	116.5	0.7
No response	1,066.5	6.8
Total	1,296.5	8.3

(a) Persons in each category as a percentage of total census count. (b) Ancestries which were not among the 94 specific coded categories were allocated to 'Other ancestry'.

Source: Table VF035.

South American-born people had the highest proportion of non-specific or *other* responses (Table 8). Most of these were in the *other* category and closer examination of these instances showed that many were born in Uruguay. The highest rate of a mixed ancestry was for 'Other America' - most of these people were born in the USA.

Persons for whom it was recorded that they did not know their ancestry were mostly (92 per cent) Australian-born and 68 per cent had parents who were Australian-born. They were therefore mostly at least third-generation Australians. 20 per cent of those with 'not known' responses also had a non-response on one or both parents' birthplace.

TABLE 8. NON-SPECIFIC AND 'OTHER' RESPONSE RATES^(a) BY SEX AND BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS

	Response			
	Other ancestry	'Mixed' so described	'Not known'	Inadequately described
Sex:				
Male	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.1
Female	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.1
Birthplace:				
Australia	0.6	0.1	0.6	0.1
Other Oceania	3.4	0.2	0.4	0.2
UK and Ireland	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Southern Europe	0.4	-	0.1	-
Other Europe, USSR	2.4	0.1	0.2	0.2
Eastern Asia	0.4	-	-	-
South Eastern Asia	1.7	0.1	0.1	0.1
Southern Asia	2.7	0.1	0.1	0.4
Western Asia	0.5	-	0.1	0.1
South America	17.2	0.2	0.1	0.2
Other America	5.2	0.5	0.3	0.3
Africa	6.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Not stated	0.4	0.1	0.6	0.2
Total	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.1

(a) Persons responding with non-specific answers to the ancestry question as a percentage of the total census count in each sex or birthplace category.

Source: Tables CX4137 and VF035.

The very low incidence of non-specific responses suggests that they do not affect the accuracy of ancestry statistics.

4. MULTIPLE ANCESTRIES

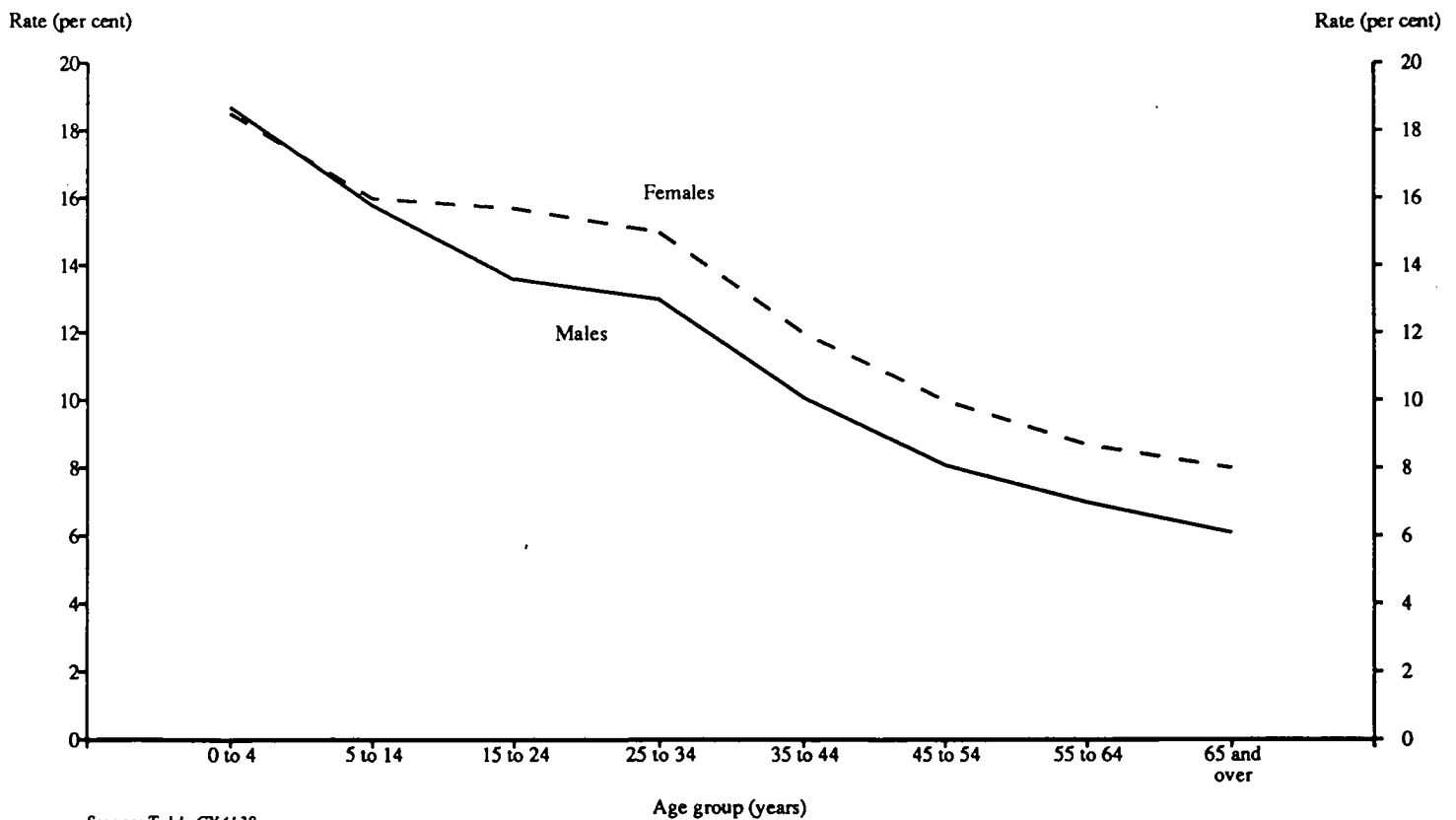
4.1 Multiple response rate

The Australian demographer, Dr. Charles Price, has estimated that two-thirds of the Australian population had 'mixed origins'⁽²⁾. However, in the census, only 12.6 per cent of the total population stated multiple ancestries aside from the 0.1 per cent who responded 'mixed' to the ancestry question. Dr. Price did not allow for an 'Australian' ancestry category in his estimates and it might be argued that the census multiple response rate would be higher if Australian ancestry was not allowed in the census. However, the 'Australian' ancestry response rate in the census was 20 per cent (see section 5) and even if this was added to the multiple response rate, only one-third of the population would have mixed origins according to the census.

It is likely that some people of mixed origins might have simplified their answers to a single ancestry. This might be expected considering that instructions in the guide to householders had allowed people of mixed ancestry to identify with a single group. It was not known how many people actually read the instructions or were influenced by them to answer with a single ancestry. Similar instructions regarding persons of mixed origins were given in the United States of America 1980 Census which asked the same ancestry question, and the multiple response rate there was 31 per cent. The American census, however, did not allow for American ancestry as a valid response for immigrants and their descendants.

Figure 2 shows that the multiple response rate to the ancestry question was highest for children and declined with age. The multiple response rate was higher for women than for men in all adult age groups.

FIGURE 2. MULTIPLE RESPONSE RATE TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION BY AGE AND SEX
1986 CENSUS



Source: Table CX4138.

There was not much difference between the multiple response rates for the bigger States. Tasmania had the lowest multiple response rate while the ACT had the highest multiple response rate (Table 9).

(2) Charles Price (1988), *Measuring Ethnic Origins in Australia*. Paper prepared for presentation at the Australian Population Association National Conference, Brisbane.

TABLE 9. MULTIPLE RESPONSE RATES^(a) TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION BY SEX, STATES, TERRITORIES AND AUSTRALIA, 1986 CENSUS

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Persons</i>
New South Wales	11.5	12.8	12.1
Victoria	11.4	12.6	12.0
Queensland	13.5	15.1	14.3
South Australia	11.8	13.0	12.4
Western Australia	12.3	13.4	12.9
Tasmania	9.2	10.4	9.8
Northern Territory	12.5	14.2	13.3
Australian Capital Territory	16.7	18.0	17.4
Australia	11.9	13.2	12.6
		<i>Number ('000)</i>	
Australia	925.9	1,034.5	1,960.4

(a) Persons responding with more than one ancestry as a percentage of total persons in each category.

Source: Table VF039.

The Australian-born population had a relatively high multiple response rate (14.2 per cent) compared to most overseas-born groups. Less than 5 per cent of people born in Southern Europe, Eastern Asia and the USSR stated multiple ancestries. People born in Italy had the lowest multiple response rate (1.2 per cent). Those born in Korea, Greece and Portugal also had multiple response rates of less than 2 per cent. However, certain birthplace groups stand out with multiple response rates of over 20 per cent. These were people born in Papua New Guinea, Burma, India, Argentina, Canada and the United States of America (Table 10).

TABLE 10. MULTIPLE RESPONSE RATE^(a) TO ANCESTRY QUESTION BY BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS

<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Rate (%)</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Rate (%)</i>
Australia	14.2	Korea	1.5
Fiji	12.7	Total Eastern Asia	3.7
New Zealand	17.2	Burma	24.8
Papua New Guinea	24.4	Indonesia	10.2
Other Oceania	11.7	Kampuchea	5.3
England	5.6	Laos	2.7
Scotland	5.5	Malaysia	8.3
Wales	10.4	Philippines	9.2
Northern Ireland	6.7	Singapore	12.5
Eire	4.3	Thailand	8.0
Total United Kingdom and Ireland	5.7	Timor	11.3
Albania	7.0	Vietnam	2.5
Greece	1.9	Total South Eastern Asia	7.1
Italy	1.2	Bangladesh	11.5
Malta	3.2	India	21.0
Portugal	1.8	Iran	3.7
Spain	2.7	Pakistan	12.8
Yugoslavia	8.1	Sri Lanka	13.6
Total Southern Europe	3.2	Total Southern Asia	16.7
Austria	7.9	Cyprus	14.3
Belgium	11.3	Iraq	4.0
Bulgaria	5.1	Israel	9.9
Czechoslovakia	5.2	Lebanon	3.1
Denmark	5.3	Syria	5.4
Finland	2.3	Turkey	2.4
France	13.2	Total Western Asia	5.8
Germany	6.7	Argentina	21.3
Hungary	3.6	Brazil	18.3
Netherlands	3.6	Chile	8.2
Norway	8.9	Uruguay	13.7
Poland	2.5	Total South America	13.1
Romania	5.7	Canada	24.2
Sweden	9.3	United States of America	31.6
Switzerland	11.3	Total Other America	27.8
Total Other Europe	5.4	Egypt	8.5
Total Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	4.1	South Africa	16.8
China	3.3	Total Africa	13.1
Hong Kong	4.3		
Japan	5.4	Grand total	12.6

(a) Persons in each birthplace category responding with more than one ancestry as a percentage of all persons in that birthplace category.

Source: Table VF036.

Persons who had one Australian-born parent and one overseas-born parent were more likely to state multiple ancestries than those with parents who were both Australian-born or both overseas-born (Table 11). Persons with both parents born overseas had a lower multiple response rate than those with both parents born in Australia.

TABLE 11. MULTIPLE RESPONSES TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION
BY PARENTS' BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS

<i>Parents birthplace</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Rate (a)</i>
	'000	<i>Per cent</i>
Both Australian-born	1,072.3	11.8
Father Australian-born (b)	186.3	29.6
Mother Australian-born (b)	335.0	30.1
Both parents overseas-born (c)	357.1	8.2
Both parents birthplace not stated	9.5	2.5
Total	1,960.3	12.6

(a) Persons in each category responding with more than one ancestry as a percentage of all persons in that parents' birthplace category. (b) Other parent born overseas or not stated. (c) Or one parent born overseas and other not stated.

Source: Table CX4136.

The question of which ancestry groups were more likely to state multiple ancestries is examined in Table 12 which shows the proportion of persons with a multiple response according to their first ancestry response. Certain ancestry groups stand out with particularly high or low multiple response rates.

The ancestry group with the highest multiple response rate was Byelorussian with 61 per cent giving a multiple response. Of those giving a multiple response, three-quarters stated 'Australian' as their second response. This is a small group, with less than 2000 people. Other groups with high multiple response rates were: Other British including Anglo-Saxon (49 per cent); French, Norwegian and Swedish (all with 45 per cent); Danish (42 per cent); Brazilian and Welsh (both 38 per cent); Swiss and Irish (both 36 per cent); Canadian, Breton/Celtic, American (all with 35 per cent); and German and Scottish (both 33 per cent). With the exception of Brazilians (a very small group), all of these were Anglo-Celtic or of other north-western European origin.

The ten most common second responses were all Anglo-Celtic or of other north-western European origins (except for 'Australian'). One-third of all multiple responses were Anglo-Celtic combinations and about one-quarter were combinations involving Australian ancestry.

Groups with very low multiple response rates were mainly those of Asian or Southern European ancestries. Less than 2 per cent of persons stating Korean or Vietnamese as their first or single ancestry gave a multiple response. Most of the Asian ancestry groups had a multiple response rate of less than 10 per cent and many Southern European and Middle Eastern ancestry groups also had lower than average multiple response rates.

TABLE 12. PERSONS' FIRST RESPONSES TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION: PER CENT GIVING MULTIPLE RESPONSES AND PER CENT WHOSE SECOND RESPONSE WAS 'AUSTRALIAN', 1986 CENSUS

Ancestry (first response)	Per cent giving multiple ancestry responses	Per cent whose second response was 'Australian'	Ancestry (first response)	Per cent giving multiple ancestry responses	Per cent whose second response was 'Australian'
Aboriginal	11.1	1.4	Khmer	4.2	0.1
Afrikaaner	30.0	2.2	Korean	1.7	0.3
Albanian	13.6	1.6	Lao	2.6	0.2
American	34.6	9.0	Latvian	15.8	3.5
Arab	10.4	0.8	Lebanese	5.8	1.1
Argentinian	15.0	0.4	Lithuanian	17.8	3.7
Armenian	7.6	0.7	Macedonian	8.2	0.6
Assyrian	8.4	1.6	Malayan	22.1	2.9
Australian	8.1	..	Maltese	12.2	3.6
Austrian	24.8	3.9	Maori	29.9	3.0
Belgian	25.1	4.0	Mauritian	30.3	1.3
Bengali	5.7	0.5	New Zealander	20.8	5.0
Brazilian	38.1	1.8	Norwegian	45.0	6.2
British	9.8	2.2	Pakistani	12.3	2.6
Bulgarian	24.6	2.5	Palestinian	31.9	0.6
Burmese	15.4	1.5	Papuan or New Guinean	23.9	7.6
Byelorussian	60.8	45.0	Polish	19.0	2.9
Breton, Celtic, Cornish, Manx	34.8	2.2			
Canadian	35.4	10.4	Portuguese	11.6	0.7
			Romanian	16.9	1.0
Chilean	6.4	0.9	Romany (Gypsy)	39.7	1.7
Chinese	7.0	1.1	Russian	24.3	2.4
Croatian	5.9	0.9	Scottish	32.6	3.8
Cypriot	22.1	1.6	Serbian	13.6	1.0
Czech	18.0	3.0	Sinhalese	12.3	1.1
Danish	42.4	4.1	Slovakian	12.4	1.2
Dutch	22.5	6.8	Slovenian	21.0	1.0
Egyptian	8.9	1.3	South African	15.4	2.5
English	10.6	1.6	Spanish	22.7	1.4
Estonian	17.8	3.4	Swedish	44.9	4.6
Fijian	26.3	4.3	Swiss	35.6	5.1
Filipino	8.1	1.8	Syrian	13.7	1.3
Finnish	17.2	4.2	Tamil	25.6	0.2
French	45.3	2.6	Thai	11.0	2.6
German	32.5	3.0	Timorese	21.8	0.8
Greek	9.0	1.6	Tongan	11.6	1.8
Hungarian	15.4	2.7	Torres Strait Islander	12.7	1.5
Hmong	21.5	2.0	Turkish	4.6	0.5
Indian	12.3	1.6	Ukrainian	13.3	2.3
Indonesian	13.6	2.7	Vietnamese	1.7	0.1
Iranian	6.3	0.8	Welsh	37.9	3.9
Iraqi	30.0	0.7	West Indian	29.6	3.4
Irish	36.2	3.4	Yugoslavian	16.5	1.7
Israeli	16.9	2.4	Other British incl. Anglo Saxon	49.1	6.2
Italian	10.1	2.5	Other	12.5	1.8
Japanese	9.3	2.8	'Mixed'	9.7	1.4
Jewish	8.2	1.0	Inadequately described	7.4	1.6
Jordanian	28.2	2.3			
Kurdish	20.4	1.1	Total	12.6	1.5

Source: Table VF039.

There was not much difference in the rate of multiple response among the overseas-born population by duration of residence or English language proficiency. The differentials in multiple response rates indicate that people with multiple ancestries tended to be in the younger age groups and of Anglo-Celtic and/or north-western European background. 88 per cent of people with multiple ancestries were born in Australia, 81 per cent had one or both parents who were born in Australia and over 90 per cent spoke English only at home.

4.2 Accuracy of multiple responses

People of most Anglo-Celtic (exceptions were those stating British and English ancestries) or other north-western European backgrounds were more likely to state multiple ancestries than those of Southern European or Asian backgrounds. It is possible that persons of most Anglo-Celtic or other north-western European origins and their forebears are more likely to have inter-married with other groups as a result of a longer family history in Australia⁽³⁾.

(3) Data on the ancestry of husbands and wives show that persons of Anglo-Celtic or north-western European backgrounds are more likely to inter-marry with one another than with persons of Southern European or Asian origins. There were very few inter-marriages between persons of different non-English speaking origins.

However, a long family history of residence in Australia and mixed ancestry may adversely affect the accuracy of the ancestry responses. Persons who are several generations removed from their immigrant ancestors and whose family history includes a mixture of ethnic origins are less likely to know or be certain of their correct ancestry mix than persons who have recently migrated from their native land or who are of unmixed ancestry.

Very little information was lost by coding only the first two ancestries given. Since only 13 per cent of the total population stated two or more ancestries, the proportion stating three or more ancestries is bound to be very small.

Loss of information is likely to result more from people with multiple ancestries stating only one ancestry (or who did not respond to the ancestry question). Dr. Price's work shows that most of these people were Anglo-Celtic or of other north-western European origin. They were likely to have stated one but not all of their Anglo-Celtic or other north-western European ancestries. Alternatively, some might have stated Australian ancestry (*see* Section 5), or not answered the question at all. The result would be an understatement of some Anglo-Celtic and north-western European ancestries.

5. AUSTRALIAN ANCESTRY

The three main reasons given by persons responding with Australian ancestry in the pre-census test of the ancestry question were that:

- (a) they had a long family history in Australia (of at least three generations) and felt this was sufficient grounds for claiming Australian ancestry;
- (b) a feeling of 'being Australian' among some adult persons with overseas-born parents; and
- (c) a feeling among a small proportion of overseas-born persons that their children born in Australia were Australian (Population Census Ethnicity Committee report, p.26).

The guidelines to householders completing census forms did not specify what was meant by Australian ancestry. It was therefore left to people to consider whether their ancestry was 'Australian' largely on their own criteria. Although the guidelines stated that it was acceptable for people to base their ancestry on their grandparents' ancestry, it was not required that they did so. Thus, people could have responded with Australian ancestry for any reason including the three mentioned above.

The strict meaning of ancestry would imply that Australian ancestry could not be a valid response for the overseas-born population or their children. Thus, an examination of the birthplace and parents' birthplace of persons with Australian ancestry can provide some indication of the validity of their response.

5.1 'Australian' response rate

One out of five persons reported their ancestry as 'Australian', either as a first or second response (Table 13). There were slight differentials across States and Territories. The ACT had the highest rate of 'Australian' responses and the Northern Territory had the lowest.

TABLE 13. PERSONS RESPONDING 'AUSTRALIAN' TO ANCESTRY QUESTION
BY SEX(*) STATES, TERRITORIES AND AUSTRALIA, 1986 CENSUS
(Per cent)

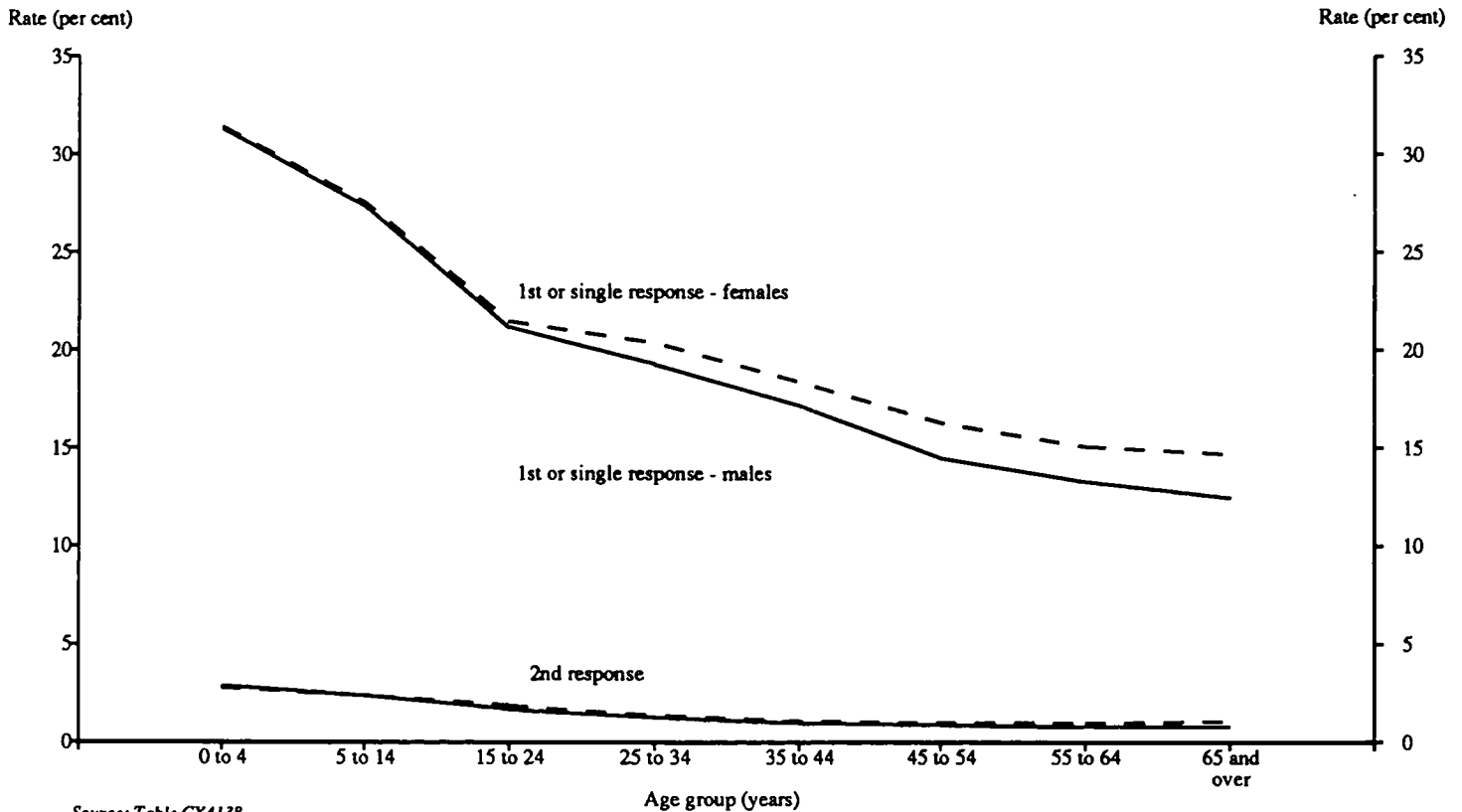
State/Territory	Males		Females		Persons	
	1st response	2nd response	1st response	2nd response	1st response	2nd response
New South Wales	20.1	1.5	20.9	1.6	20.5	1.5
Victoria	18.7	1.4	19.5	1.5	19.1	1.4
Queensland	21.9	1.5	22.4	1.6	22.2	1.6
South Australia	20.4	1.6	21.1	1.7	20.7	1.7
Western Australia	18.1	1.8	18.9	1.9	18.5	1.8
Tasmania	20.7	1.3	21.4	1.4	21.1	1.3
Northern Territory	16.1	1.4	16.5	1.4	16.3	1.4
Australian Capital Territory	22.1	2.1	22.6	2.2	22.4	2.1
Australia	19.9	1.5	20.6	1.6	20.3	1.5
Australia ('000)	1,546.0	116.2	1,615.3	124.6	3,161.2	240.8

(a) Persons responding with 'Australian' ancestry as a percentage of the population in each category.

Source: Table VF039.

The proportion of people with Australian ancestry as a first or single response was over 30 per cent among children less than age 5 years but less than 15 per cent among people over age 65 (Figure 3). The proportion of people having 'Australian' as their second ancestry response was also higher among children than adults. About equal proportions of males and females under age 25 stated Australian ancestry but above age 25 a slightly greater proportion of women than men stated Australian ancestry.

FIGURE 3. 'AUSTRALIAN' RESPONSE RATE TO THE ANCESTRY QUESTION BY AGE AND SEX
1986 CENSUS



Source: Table CX4138.

One-quarter of the Australian-born population and 29 per cent of people with Australian-born parents stated 'Australian' as a first or single response (Table 14). By comparison, 1 per cent of the overseas-born population and those with both parents born overseas stated 'Australian' as their single or first response. Persons with an Australian-born father and an overseas-born mother were more likely than persons with an Australian-born mother and an overseas-born father to state Australian ancestry as a first or single response, but persons belonging in the second category were more likely than those in the first category to state Australian ancestry as a second response.

TABLE 14. PER CENT OF POPULATION STATING AUSTRALIAN ANCESTRY
AS A RESPONSE: BIRTHPLACE AND PARENTS BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS
(Per cent)

Particulars	Australian as 1st or only response	Australian as 2nd response
Birthplace:		
Australia	25.8	1.9
Overseas	0.9	0.3
UK & Ireland	0.6	0.3
Southern Europe	0.2	0.1
Other Europe, USSR	0.6	0.2
Eastern Asia	0.9	0.3
South Eastern Asia	1.6	0.3
Southern Asia	0.6	0.2
West Asia	0.4	0.2
South America	0.4	0.1
Other America	4.2	1.7
Africa	1.1	0.4
Other Oceania	3.6	1.0
Not stated	1.9	0.2
Parents birthplace:		
Both Australian-born	29.4	0.9
Father Australian-born (a)	25.5	6.5
Mother Australian-born (a)	20.9	9.4
Both overseas-born (b)	1.3	0.2
Both not stated	3.9	0.2

(a) Other parent born overseas or not stated. (b) Or one parent born overseas and other not stated.
Source: Tables VF035, VF036, CX4135 and CX4136.

Overseas-born persons who had lived in Australia for more than 5 years were more likely to state 'Australian' than those who arrived recently but the proportion was still less than 1 per cent.

5.2 Characteristics of persons with 'Australian' ancestry

As expected, those who reported their ancestry as 'Australian' were overwhelmingly Australian-born and a large majority had Australian-born parents: 99 per cent of those stating 'Australian' as the first or only ancestry were born in Australia and 85 per cent had parents who were both born in Australia. Approximately 2 per cent of persons stating Australian ancestry as a first or single response had parents who were both born overseas (Table 15).

TABLE 15. PERSONS STATING 'AUSTRALIAN' ANCESTRY: DISTRIBUTION BY BIRTHPLACE AND PARENTS BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS (Per cent)

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Australian as 1st or only response</i>	<i>Australian as 2nd response</i>	<i>Australian as 1st or 2nd response</i>
Birthplace:			
Australia	98.9	95.2	98.6
Overseas	0.9	4.6	1.2
Not stated	0.1	0.2	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Parents birthplace:			
Both Australian-born	84.9	35.7	81.5
Father Australian-born (a)	5.1	17.1	5.9
Mother Australian-born (a)	7.4	43.3	9.9
Both overseas-born (b)	2.2	3.6	2.3
Both not stated	0.5	0.3	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Other parent born overseas or not stated. (b) Or one parent born overseas and other not stated.

Source: Tables VF035, VF036, CX4135 and CX4136.

Over 40 per cent of persons who stated 'Australian' as a second response had an Australian-born mother and an overseas-born father. It is likely that these persons had based their ancestry on both of their parents, putting their father's ancestry first and combining it with 'Australian' because their mother was Australian-born.

5.3 Validity of the 'Australian' ancestry response

The birthplace and parents' birthplace of persons stating Australian ancestry suggest that in most cases Australian ancestry is a valid response within the guidelines given because the respondents were likely to have ancestors who were born in Australia. The proportion of 'Australian' ancestry responses which would be considered invalid because the persons were overseas-born or had overseas-born parents was very small and unlikely to affect the overall reliability of the data.

In an analysis of the ancestry of parents and children, it was observed that children were more likely to have Australian ancestry when the parents were of different or multiple ancestries than when the parents were of the same single ancestry. This suggests that Australian ancestry is also perceived as a 'blending' of different ancestries and as a single (neutral) group with which persons of mixed origins could identify.

6. COMPARISONS WITH OTHER DATA

In the absence of ancestry data in past censuses, ethnicity has been measured using a number of surrogate characteristics such as birthplace and parents' birthplace. Language spoken at home is also an indicator of ethnicity. Religion can be an indicator for some groups. The level of consistency between the ancestry response and those to the census questions on birthplace, parents' birthplace, language and, in some cases, religion, can therefore give some indication of the accuracy of the ancestry data.

Comparison of the ancestry data with data on birthplace, parents' birthplace and language can also provide an indication of the extent of additional information on ethnic origin that is obtained from the ancestry question. The Population Census Ethnicity Committee in its assessment of the results of testing of ethnicity questions had concluded that a direct ancestry question did yield data which were different from those derived from other questions, but that the extent of additional information provided varied by ethnic group. A direct question is more likely to provide additional data for those groups which come from parts of the world that are racially and culturally heterogeneous - the very groups inadequately defined by the traditional census questions on origins. The Committee noted that the broad patterns in the data from the test of the ancestry question compared reasonably well with estimates of the ethnic origin of Australia's population derived by Dr. Charles Price from the surrogate characteristics of birthplace and parents' birthplace, and suggested that 'given this, a straight ancestry question may add little information at highly aggregated levels, although this is less the case for small areas' (the Committee's report, p.60).

6.1 Comparison of aggregate statistics

Table 16 compares the number of persons of non-English speaking ancestries with the number according to the corresponding language, birthplace and father's birthplace groups. Also shown are the ratios of each language, birthplace and father's birthplace group to the corresponding ancestry group. A ratio close to 1.0 would indicate close correspondence between the aggregate numbers according to ancestry (the sum of first/only and second responses) and birthplace or father's birthplace while a ratio much less or greater than 1.0 would indicate poor correspondence between the aggregated statistics⁽⁴⁾. Since data on language are available only for the population aged 5 years or more, a language to ancestry ratio of 0.94 rather than 1.0 would be obtained if there were perfect agreement between the number according to language and the number according to ancestry.

(4) Persons in any language, birthplace or father's birthplace group can state their ancestry as a first/single or second response. Therefore, the sum of the first and second ancestry responses is used to compare with the language, birthplace or father's birthplace statistics. It can be argued that because the sum of the number of persons based on the first and second ancestry responses involved double counting, the ratios should be greater than 1. This is correct when the total population is considered. The ratio would be 1.125 because 12.5 per cent of the population stated multiple ancestries. However, most multiple ancestries concerned Anglo-Celtic and Australian ancestries. When these ancestries are excluded and only individual non-English speaking groups are concerned, the effect of double counting is small. Also, a large number of people stated Australian ancestry and the number of non-respondents to the ancestry question is greater than the number of non-respondents to the language, birthplace and father's birthplace questions.

TABLE 16. NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING GROUPS: COMPARISON OF PERSONS IN EACH GROUP BASED ON ANCESTRY, LANGUAGE, BIRTHPLACE AND FATHER'S BIRTHPLACE, 1986 CENSUS

Group	Ancestry and related questions				Ratios		
	Total giving ancestry as 1st or 2nd response	Language	Birthplace	Father's birthplace	Language to ancestry	Birthplace to ancestry	Father's birthplace to ancestry
	'000	'000	'000	'000	Proportion	Proportion	
Italian	620.2	404.0	261.9	540.9	0.65	0.42	0.87
German	510.4	108.5	114.8	179.6	0.21	0.22	0.35
Greek	336.8	264.5	137.6	264.1	0.79	0.41	0.78
Dutch	231.1	61.0	95.1	191.9	0.26	0.41	0.83
Chinese (a)	201.3	128.9	67.8	119.7	0.64	0.34	0.59
Aboriginal	186.6	36.9	..	..	0.20	..	..
Yugoslav	148.3	67.8	150.0	245.3	0.46	1.01	1.65
Polish	142.7	66.0	67.7	125.4	0.46	0.47	0.88
Maltese	125.8	57.8	56.2	113.8	0.46	0.45	0.90
Lebanese (b)	117.5	106.0	56.3	100.4	0.90	0.48	0.85
French	111.8	50.9	14.9	20.3	0.46	0.13	0.18
Spanish	73.1	69.7	16.3	26.9	0.95	0.22	0.37
Indian	71.2	12.8	47.8	72.6	0.18	0.67	1.02
Vietnamese	65.0	59.0	83.0	77.6	0.91	1.28	1.19
Hungarian	57.9	30.8	27.2	50.7	0.53	0.47	0.88
Danish	52.2	5.5	8.6	17.3	0.11	0.16	0.33
Croatian	47.8	49.4	..	..	1.03	..	..
Russian	46.4	21.6	15.2	34.2	0.47	0.33	0.74
Macedonian	41.7	43.1	..	..	1.03	..	..
Austrian	39.0	..	22.6	40.3	..	0.58	1.03
Filipino	38.7	23.9	33.7	35.1	0.62	0.87	0.91
Turkish	36.9	31.2	24.5	39.2	0.85	0.66	1.06
Ukrainian	29.9	14.8	10.5	23.2	0.49	0.35	0.78
Swedish	29.9	3.9	5.1	10.3	0.13	0.17	0.34
Portuguese	28.5	19.6	14.9	21.4	0.69	0.52	0.75
Czech	24.2	9.7	17.9	28.9	0.40	0.74	1.19
Swiss	22.0	..	8.7	13.5	..	0.40	0.61
Sinhalese	20.8	3.5	22.5	29.5	0.17	1.08	1.42
Latvian	20.6	9.3	10.8	19.6	0.45	0.52	0.95
Norwegian	19.2	1.4	2.8	7.6	0.07	0.15	0.40
Finnish	17.4	8.0	9.1	14.1	0.46	0.52	0.81
Egyptian	15.6	..	30.6	41.1	..	1.96	2.63
Armenian	14.0	7.8	..	..	0.56	..	..
Japanese	13.9	11.6	11.2	11.6	0.83	0.81	0.83
Chilean	13.3	..	18.7	21.5	..	1.41	1.62
Lithuanian	11.4	4.2	5.3	11.4	0.37	0.46	1.00
Cypriot	11.1	..	23.6	40.4	..	2.13	3.64
Indonesian	10.4	18.4	17.7	20.9	1.77	1.70	2.01
Korean	10.3	8.0	9.3	10.0	0.78	0.90	0.97
Khmer	9.7	8.3	13.2	14.0	0.86	1.36	1.44
Mauritian	9.4	..	13.1	17.8	..	1.39	1.89
Serbian	9.2	10.3	..	..	1.12	..	..
Romanian	9.0	4.4	8.1	12.3	0.49	0.90	1.37
Slovenian	8.5	5.4	..	..	0.63	..	..
Estonian	7.8	3.0	3.9	7.0	0.38	0.50	0.90
Fijian	7.6	3.1	14.8	17.3	0.41	1.95	2.27
Belgian	6.9	..	4.5	6.2	..	0.65	0.90
Albanian	6.6	4.2	1.1	3.2	0.64	0.17	0.48
Lao	6.5	6.2	7.4	7.6	0.96	1.15	1.17
Tongan	6.2	4.4	4.5	6.4	0.71	0.73	1.03
Iranian	6.0	..	7.5	8.9	..	1.25	1.48

(a) China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. (b) For ancestry and language, includes Arab.

Source: Tables VF035, VF036, VF037, CX0001 and CX0011.

The language to ancestry ratios in Table 16 are much less than 0.94 for most groups indicating that the number of people speaking a particular language at home is usually less than the number of people stating that they were of that ancestry. This is to be expected since some people, while aware of their ancestry, no longer speak the native language but English at home. (For an analysis of the number of people who responded with the same answer to the language and ancestry questions, see Section 6.2).

Groups with ratios greater than 0.94 indicate a larger number speaking the language than reporting the corresponding ancestry. For instance, the Croatians and Macedonians had ratios greater than 0.94 because some of the people speaking these two languages probably stated Yugoslav ancestry; note that the Yugoslav language to ancestry ratio is only about 0.5.

The aggregate statistics by father's birthplace are better approximations of ancestry than the statistics by birthplace of the individual. The ratio of the number of people by father's birthplace to the number according to the corresponding ancestry is between 0.8 and 1.2 in 21 groups while the birthplace to ancestry ratios are in that range for only 7 groups. Most of the European groups who migrated to Australia after the Second World War had birthplace to ancestry ratios of 0.4 to 0.5 and father's birthplace to ancestry ratios close to unity. Obviously, statistics by father's birthplace rather than the individual's birthplace would give a better indication of the ancestry of Australian-born children of these migrants. However, statistics by

father's birthplace would not give a good measure of the ancestry of groups which have been here for more than two generations such as the French and Germans. But for more recent migrant groups such as the Turks and Filipinos aggregate statistics from the questions on father's birthplace and the individual's birthplace are both similar to those obtained from the ancestry question. (For an analysis of the number of people who responded similarly to the birthplace, parents' birthplace and ancestry questions, see Section 6.2).

The number of people who spoke English only at home is obviously greater than the number of people stating English ancestry. However, if it is compared with the total number of people stating Anglo-Celtic, Australian, New Zealand, American and Canadian ancestries and the number of non-respondents (most people in these ancestry categories would be expected to be English-speakers), ratios close to 1 are obtained⁽⁵⁾.

The number of people stating Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (TSI) ancestries can be compared with the number of Aboriginal and TSI people obtained from the question on Aboriginal origin (Table 17). In response to this latter question, 227,600 persons were reported with Aboriginal or TSI origin. The number of persons who had Aboriginal or TSI ancestry stated was 198,400 or 87 per cent of the Aboriginal/TSI counts. The Aboriginality to ancestry ratio is 0.91 for Aboriginals but only 0.55 for TSI. Some people who reported Aboriginal or TSI origin stated Australian ancestry (see next section) which would also be a correct response for them.

TABLE 17. ABORIGINAL/TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS
ORIGIN AND ANCESTRY COMPARED, 1986 CENSUS

<i>Origin</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Ancestry(a)</i>	<i>Ancestry to population</i>
	'000	'000	<i>Proportion</i>
Aboriginal	206.1	186.6	.91
Torres Strait Islander	21.5	11.8	.55
Total	227.6	198.4	.87

(a) First or second response.

Source: Tables CSC006, VF035 and VF036.

The aggregate statistics on Jewish people from the ancestry and religion questions differed quite considerably. Over 69,000 people had their religion stated as Jewish but less than 36,000 people had their ancestry stated as Jewish. Responses to the language question showed that the number of people speaking Yiddish at home was only 3,700. Thus people of Jewish religious affiliation appeared to interpret the ancestry question as different from the religion question and stated their religion but not their ancestry as Jewish⁽⁶⁾.

6.2 Comparison with surrogate measures

Table 18 shows the proportion of each birthplace or father's birthplace group whose ancestry response was the same as the birthplace or father's birthplace, and Table 19 compares the ancestry response with the birthplace of both parents for selected birthplace groups. Among the total population, 39 per cent gave a first or second ancestry response that was the same as their birthplace. This is rather low, primarily because only 29 per cent of the Australian-born population (which numbered over 12 million out of a total of 15.6 million) said they were of Australian or Aboriginal ancestries. Among the overseas-born population, over 77 per cent gave a first or second ancestry response that was the same as their country of birth.

(5) The total number of persons with the first or single ancestry response being an Anglo-Celtic ancestry, Australian, American, Canadian, New Zealander or 'not stated' was 12,128,000. The number of people who spoke English only at home was 12,139,000. The number of people with birthplace or father's birthplace being Australia, United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, United States, Canada or 'not stated' was 13,756,000 and 12,633,000 respectively. Therefore, for the English speaking group taken altogether, the ratio ancestry (first response) to language was 1.00; the ratio ancestry (first response) to birthplace was 0.88; and the ratio ancestry (first response) to birthplace of father was 0.96. Only the first response of ancestry is used in these calculations (rather than both the first and second responses) because most multiple ancestries concerned these ancestry groups. The total of first and second responses would lead to significant double-counting and therefore would not be comparable to the figures for language, birthplace and birthplace of father.

(6) In the 1980 Census of the United States where the same ancestry question was asked, specific instructions were given to householders that 'a religious group should not be reported as a person's ancestry'.

TABLE 18. CONSISTENCY IN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON ANCESTRY, BIRTHPLACE AND FATHER'S BIRTHPLACE
1986 CENSUS (a)

Group	Persons born in selected country-			Persons with father born in selected country-		
	per cent who gave this country as :			per cent who gave this country as :		
	1st ancestry response	2nd ancestry response	An ancestry response	1st ancestry response	2nd ancestry response	An ancestry response
Australia (b)	27.3	2.0	29.3	30.9	1.4	32.3
Fiji	25.2	2.8	27.9	24.4	3.5	27.8
New Zealand (c)	27.3	4.4	31.7	25.3	5.1	30.5
Papua New Guinea	11.7	4.3	16.0	27.2	5.4	32.7
Tonga	83.8	1.9	85.8	75.6	4.3	80.0
England(d)	87.3	1.1	88.4	83.3	2.2	85.5
Scotland	73.1	1.7	74.8	55.8	4.7	60.4
Wales	58.5	3.3	61.8	40.8	5.7	46.5
Ireland	77.5	1.9	79.5	60.2	6.3	66.6
Albania	70.6	0.4	71.1	64.5	8.0	72.5
Greece	96.0	0.2	96.2	93.1	1.2	94.2
Italy	96.4	0.3	96.7	89.5	2.8	92.3
Malta	92.3	1.1	93.4	80.8	3.8	84.6
Portugal	93.8	0.4	94.2	87.8	1.9	89.7
Spain	91.8	0.6	92.5	83.0	3.2	86.2
Yugoslavia (e)	52.9	2.1	55.0	48.4	3.9	52.2
Austria	67.4	1.7	69.1	56.0	5.9	62.0
Belgium	60.6	3.2	63.8	57.1	5.8	62.9
Bulgaria	70.2	1.4	71.6	56.0	7.8	63.8
Czechoslovakia (f)	75.5	1.7	77.1	62.1	6.5	68.6
Denmark	87.9	1.4	89.3	69.0	7.5	76.5
Finland	91.9	0.6	92.6	81.4	3.9	85.2
France	68.1	3.2	71.3	68.1	6.3	74.4
Germany	74.5	1.9	76.4	69.0	6.4	75.4
Hungary	88.4	1.1	89.4	74.3	6.4	80.7
Netherlands	94.0	0.7	94.7	79.3	5.2	84.5
Norway	76.3	3.0	79.3	55.4	11.1	66.4
Poland	84.1	0.6	84.7	74.6	4.2	78.8
Romania	60.3	1.7	62.0	48.4	4.7	53.1
Sweden	76.6	2.7	79.2	60.3	8.6	68.9
Switzerland	76.8	2.5	79.2	71.0	6.1	77.2
Estonia	85.5	1.2	86.8	73.0	5.4	78.4
Latvia	85.9	0.6	86.5	74.3	4.9	79.2
Lithuania	81.6	0.9	82.5	66.0	5.4	71.4
Ukraine	88.7	0.7	89.4	78.7	4.4	83.1
Other USSR (g)	63.4	1.8	65.2	60.0	4.0	64.0
China, Taiwan (h)	77.1	0.8	77.8	87.7	1.4	89.1
Hong Kong (h)	85.0	1.2	86.2	79.7	3.1	82.8
Japan	86.1	2.0	88.1	88.9	1.9	90.8
Korea	93.9	0.3	94.2	93.5	0.5	94.0
Burma	38.8	14.6	53.4	37.0	15.4	52.5
Indonesia	30.9	4.7	35.6	29.9	6.3	36.2
Kampuchea	53.9	2.6	56.6	61.5	2.1	63.6
Laos	72.7	1.1	73.7	78.0	1.0	78.9
Philippines	82.9	3.4	86.3	84.6	3.1	87.7
Thailand	50.9	2.4	53.3	75.9	1.9	77.8
Timor	19.8	5.4	25.2	21.6	4.7	26.3
Vietnam	63.9	1.3	65.2	77.1	1.1	78.1
Bangladesh	47.2	1.7	48.8	49.2	3.1	52.3
India (i)	47.4	14.1	61.5	45.8	13.2	59.0
Iran	57.9	1.1	58.9	55.1	1.7	56.8
Pakistan	31.4	1.6	33.0	35.2	3.7	38.9
Sri Lanka	62.9	2.2	65.1	57.2	3.5	60.7
Cyprus	12.9	11.7	24.6	12.2	11.2	23.3
Iraq	16.0	1.1	17.1	16.2	1.5	17.8
Israel (j)	35.0	2.0	37.0	22.8	2.4	25.2
Lebanon	78.9	1.0	79.9	76.8	1.9	78.7
Syria	39.1	1.6	40.7	38.7	2.5	41.1
Turkey	81.2	0.4	81.6	67.6	0.9	68.5
Argentina	30.8	3.8	34.6	33.9	3.6	37.6
Brazil	33.3	3.8	37.1	34.6	4.1	38.7
Chile	55.8	1.9	57.7	53.8	2.1	56.0
Canada	21.3	4.4	25.7	23.4	7.7	31.2
Caribbean / West Indies	21.9	2.1	24.1	21.4	4.7	26.2
USA	36.0	5.2	41.2	33.9	9.2	43.1
Egypt	30.7	1.2	31.9	30.4	2.2	32.7
Mauntius	34.7	2.5	37.2	32.0	3.5	35.4
South Africa (k)	30.3	3.5	33.8	29.6	3.6	33.1
Total (excluding not stated)	37.2	1.8	39.0	45.6	2.3	47.9
Total overseas-born	75.4	2.0	77.4	73.0	3.8	76.8

(a) This table includes only birthplace groups for which there is a corresponding ancestry group. (b) Corresponding ancestries are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian. (c) Corresponding ancestries are Maori and New Zealander. (d) Includes British, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic ancestries. (e) Corresponding ancestry is Yugoslavian only. (f) Corresponding ancestries are Czech and Slovakian. (g) Corresponding ancestries are Byelorussian and Russian. (h) Corresponding ancestry is Chinese. (i) Corresponding ancestries are Indian and Sikh. (j) Corresponding ancestries are Jewish and Israeli. (k) Corresponding ancestries are South African and Afrikaaner.

Source: Tables VF035, VF036, VF037 and VF038.

The proportion of the population stating a first or second ancestry response that was the same as their father's birthplace was 48 per cent. About 77 per cent of people with an overseas-born father stated a first or second ancestry that was the same as their father's country of birth.

The birthplace groups that stand out with particularly high consistency in reporting birthplace or father's birthplace and ancestry (more than 80 per cent of the birthplace/father's birthplace group with ancestry response the same as birthplace or father's birthplace) are the Southern European countries (except Albania and Yugoslavia), Tonga, UK and Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, the Eastern Asian countries (except China) and the Philippines. Persons in these birthplace groups numbered 2 million and made up 62 per cent of the overseas-born population.

TABLE 19. CONSISTENCY IN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON ANCESTRY AND PARENTS BIRTHPLACE FOR SELECTED GROUPS, 1986 CENSUS

Parents birthplace	<i>Persons with both parents born in selected country-</i>		<i>Persons with father only born in selected country-</i>		<i>Persons with mother only born in selected country-</i>	
	<i>per cent who gave this country as their:</i>		<i>per cent who gave this country as their:</i>		<i>per cent who gave this country as their:</i>	
	<i>1st ancestry response</i>	<i>2nd ancestry response</i>	<i>1st ancestry response</i>	<i>2nd ancestry response</i>	<i>1st ancestry response</i>	<i>2nd ancestry response</i>
UK and Ireland	97.6	1.9	79.1	13.5	73.9	18.7
Germany	91.9	0.6	36.0	14.8	25.3	23.0
Greece	95.3	0.3	75.4	8.0	64.6	13.6
Italy	95.3	0.3	62.7	14.3	48.1	22.5
Malta	90.3	0.6	46.3	15.2	29.2	26.7
Netherlands	94.6	0.3	49.3	14.7	30.6	28.6
Yugoslavia with ancestry:						
Yugoslav	51.6	1.9	31.2	14.5	20.5	17.8
Croatian	19.2	0.8	5.2	1.2	3.5	1.1
Macedonian	11.6	2.6	3.0	0.7	3.8	1.0
Serbian	3.2	0.5	1.1	0.3	0.8	0.2
Slovenian	2.0	0.3	1.3	0.5	1.4	0.8
China	93.1	0.4	74.6	3.8	55.6	3.7
Vietnam with ancestry:						
Vietnamese	78.5	0.9	30.6	5.8	18.4	6.1
Chinese	18.4	0.6	46.5	1.5	68.9	1.7

Source: Tables CX4135 and CX4136.

Consistency in the reporting of birthplace and ancestry is usually low for groups born in places which have a heterogeneous population from past immigration (such as New Zealand and the American countries) or because they are nations of diverse ethnic groups (such as Yugoslavia, and some South Eastern and Southern Asian countries). Country of birth is not the same as ancestry for people from these countries and they apparently were able to distinguish between their ancestry and their country of birth or nationality.

Since ancestry is defined in the guidelines as 'an ethnic or national group' from which a person is descended, responses such as American, Canadian, New Zealander, Brazilian, Egyptian, Argentinian, Chilean and Yugoslav were accepted. While people stating these ancestries presumably had ancestors who had lived a long time in these countries and therefore responded correctly, some might have stated these 'ancestries' because they were uncertain about the ethnic group from which they were descended.

Comparison of ancestry response with parents' birthplace shows a high level of consistency when both parents were born in the same country: over 90 per cent of people with both parents born in the same country (those shown in Table 19) had a first or single ancestry that was the same as their parents' birthplace. When parents were born in different countries, the level of consistent response remains high when both the first and second ancestry responses are taken into account since one parent's birthplace may be mentioned as a second response. For countries like Yugoslavia and Vietnam which have a mixed ethnic population, a high level of consistency is obtained if all the relevant ancestry groups are taken into consideration.

In comparing the individual's responses to the ancestry and language questions, it is observed that a person's language response is a better predictor of his/her ancestry than the reverse: the proportion of a language group stating the same ancestry is usually greater than the proportion of an ancestry group speaking the native language (Table 20). In more than half of all the language groups shown in Table 20 (column 2), more than 80 per cent stated the same ancestry as language spoken at home. Those with lower ratios are groups coming from what is now Yugoslavia and language groups such as French, German and Spanish which are spoken by people of other than French, German or Spanish ancestries. Overall the ratios do not indicate any major inconsistencies.

TABLE 20. CONSISTENCY IN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON ANCESTRY AND LANGUAGE FOR SELECTED GROUPS, 1986 CENSUS

Group	<i>Persons who gave this group as their 1st ancestry response-</i>	<i>Persons who spoke this language at home-</i>
	<i>per cent who spoke this language at home</i>	<i>per cent who gave this group as their 1st ancestry response</i>
Aboriginal	21.8	87.8
Afrikaaner	13.2	2.4
Albanian	60.1	74.8
Arab	83.9	13.8
Armenian	62.7	91.6
Bengali	64.9	29.8
Bulgarian	38.8	81.1
Burmese	45.4	56.9
Chinese	72.5	95.2
Croatian	87.1	74.0
Czech	43.3	86.1
Danish	15.3	85.3
Dutch	30.5	90.6
Estonian	43.5	88.6
Fijian	41.0	64.2
Filipino	70.5	86.9
Finnish	56.2	92.2
French	26.8	33.0
German	20.9	63.0
Greek	82.4	94.1
Hungarian	55.7	85.2
Indonesian	70.8	25.8
Italian	69.0	91.0
Japanese	79.4	74.3
Khmer	88.3	83.7
Korean	87.7	94.8
Lao	91.2	84.5
Latvian	49.7	91.3
Lithuanian	41.4	88.3
Macedonian	86.0	60.4
Maltese	50.9	91.2
Maori	12.7	55.5
Norwegian	8.9	67.0
Polish	51.8	89.1
Portuguese	71.1	82.0
Romanian	51.8	83.7
Romany	3.6	6.9
Russian	46.4	73.6
Serbian	66.3	47.4
Sinhalese	17.7	86.1
Slovak	60.6	50.1
Slovenian	38.6	47.4
Spanish	63.3	47.3
Swedish	15.4	67.9
Tamil	56.0	6.2
Timorese/Tetum	24.5	62.5
Thai	70.5	67.6
Tongan	77.8	82.6
Turkish	90.2	92.4
Ukranian	54.2	89.1
Vietnamese	93.5	88.0
Welsh	1.6	67.1
Yugoslav	45.7	83.6
Total non-English	53.1	76.3
English	99.3	46.8
Total	84.3	50.8

Source: Table CX4139.

Data on the first or single ancestry responses of persons who identified as Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders to the Aboriginal origin question also showed no major inconsistencies. More than 80 per cent of persons with Aboriginal or TSI origin had stated Aboriginal or TSI ancestries and 8 per cent had Australian ancestry stated (Table 21). Other ancestries stated were mainly Anglo-Celtic ancestries. The differences across States and Territories in the proportions stating Aboriginal or TSI ancestries could reflect differences in the degree of homogeneity in the State and Territory Aboriginal populations. In the case of Tasmania, the high *other* category appears to reflect a mis-identification of Torres Strait Islanders (see *Census 86 Data Quality - Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, (2602.0)).

TABLE 21. ABORIGINALS AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS: FIRST ANCESTRY RESPONSE, 1986 CENSUS
(Per cent)

State/Territory	First ancestry response			Total
	Aboriginal/TSI	Australian	Other	
New South Wales	78.1	9.2	12.8	100.0
Victoria	66.9	13.1	20.0	100.0
Queensland	81.0	7.0	12.0	100.0
South Australia	81.9	7.7	10.4	100.0
Western Australia	83.9	9.5	6.6	100.0
Tasmania	60.1	13.5	26.4	100.0
Northern Territory	93.8	2.8	3.4	100.0
Australian Capital Territory	75.6	9.2	15.2	100.0
Australia	81.3	7.9	10.8	100.0

Source: Unpublished table.

6.3 Comparison with estimates from other sources

In a recent paper on measuring the ethnic origins of the Australian population, Dr. Charles Price estimated the size of the various ethnic groups in Australia as of June 1987, based on surrogate measures and immigration statistics(7). He then adjusted the ancestry counts to refer to the same time in order to compare his estimates with those according to the ancestry question from the census (Table 22).

TABLE 22. COMPARISON OF ETHNIC ORIGINS ACCORDING TO ANCESTRY RESPONSE AND DR. PRICE'S ESTIMATES

Origin	Ancestry strength (a)	Ethnic strength (b)	Ancestry strength as a percentage of ethnic strength
	'000	'000	Per cent
English, Cornish	6,344.1	7,137.3	88.9
Irish	667.1	2,801.4	23.8
Scots	562.9	1,941.6	29.0
Welsh	85.6	221.1	38.7
Channel Islands, Manx	..	36.2	..
British, Anglo Saxon	400.4	..	..
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>8,060.2</i>	<i>12,137.5</i>	<i>66.4</i>
Australian, NZ, American etc.	3,423.7	..	..
Not stated, not known etc.	1,230.1	..	..
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>4,653.8</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>
Total	12,714.0	12,137.5	104.8
Scandinavian	86.1	164.7	52.3
Dutch	198.5	234.9	84.5
German	386.0	610.0	63.3
Italian	603.1	604.5	99.8
Maltese	116.0	134.0	86.5
Greek	328.2	322.0	101.9
South Slav	237.3	254.9	93.1
Polish	124.9	133.0	93.9
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>2,080.0</i>	<i>2,458.0</i>	<i>84.6</i>
Lebanese	91.1	120.0	75.9
Chinese	194.7	207.7	93.7
Indo-Chinese	83.8	99.1	84.6
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>369.6</i>	<i>426.8</i>	<i>86.6</i>
Aborigine, TSI	187.2	163.0	114.8
Other	909.2	1,074.8	84.6
GRAND TOTAL	16,260.0	16,260.0	100.0

(a) Ancestry strength for an origin is derived from the first and second ancestry responses and is equal to the sum of all the single responses plus half the sum of multiple responses. Dr. Price has adjusted the figures to refer to 30 June 1987, the time reference for his estimates of ethnic strength, so that the numbers are comparable.

(b) For a description of how these estimates have been obtained see paper by Charles Price (1988), op. cit.

Source: Price (1988), Table 1.

(7) Charles Price (1988), op. cit.

For many groups there is reasonable agreement between the ancestry counts and Dr. Price's estimates as shown in Table 21. The ratio of the ancestry counts to Dr. Price's estimates was 80 per cent or more for most groups. Only the Irish, Scottish and Welsh ancestry figures were way below (less than 40 per cent of) Dr. Price's estimates. The ancestry counts of Scandinavians and Germans were about 50 to 60 per cent of his estimates. The discussion in Sections 2 and 5 of this paper has suggested that many persons stating 'Australian' ancestry or not responding to the ancestry question were probably of Anglo-Celtic descent. If the 'not stated' and those of Australian, New Zealand, American and Canadian ancestries were added to the Anglo-Celtic ancestries, the total ancestry count of possible Anglo-Celts (assuming that persons in these categories were mainly Anglo-Celts) was close to Dr. Price's estimate of the total number of people of Anglo-Celtic origin.

6.4 Summary

The comparisons of ancestry data with data from other related census questions suggest that people's answers to the ancestry question are generally consistent with answers to the questions on birthplace, parents' birthplace, language and Aboriginal origin. The ancestry statistics appear to be reliable for most ancestry groups except Anglo-Celtic groups such as the Irish and the Scots which appear to have a high level of under-reporting. Many of them probably had stated English, Australian, British, Anglo-Saxon or did not answer the question.

Birthplace is a reasonable measure of the ancestry of recent migrant groups, particularly those from countries with an ethnically homogeneous population. Father's or parents' birthplace are reasonable measures of the ancestry of second generation migrant groups, again particularly those from countries with a homogeneous population in terms of language and culture. For groups which have been in Australia for more than two generations, birthplace and parents' birthplace obviously cease to be adequate measures of ancestry. However, for these groups, the ancestry question is not always successful either in eliciting their ethnic origins because they might be uncertain about their ancestry or that they felt they have a legitimate claim to Australian ancestry.

Language is an adequate measure of ethnic origin only for those people who still speak their native (non-English) language at home and these are likely to be recent migrant groups. As the Population Census Ethnicity Committee suggests (the Committee's report, p.71), it may be a better measure of active ethnicity than ancestry.

The ancestry question provides additional data for those groups who come from ethnically mixed countries (such as Yugoslavia) or from countries other than their native countries, such as the Chinese and Indians who come to Australia from several Asian and Pacific countries. The language question can also provide reasonable estimates for those groups who maintain their native language. Generally, comparisons of ancestry data with data on birthplace, parents' birthplace and language confirm the conclusions of the Population Census Ethnicity Committee (the Committee's report, p.60) on the extent of additional data yielded by the ancestry question.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Accuracy of the data

Analyses of the data indicate that statistics from the ancestry question have a reasonable level of accuracy for most ancestry groups. Most people appeared to have understood the question and responded to the best of their knowledge about their ancestry. In most cases, the ancestry response appears to be consistent with the responses on birthplace, parents' birthplace and language. The number of inconsistent responses observed was too small to have much effect on the overall accuracy of the data.

The non-response rate of 7 per cent was not exceptionally high and non-specific responses were extremely low in number. More important, information on the birthplace and parents' birthplace of non-respondents and non-specific respondents were usually available and gave an indication of their ancestry. Eighty percent of persons who did not respond to the ancestry question were born in Australia.

Most overseas-born people or those with overseas-born parents appeared to have no difficulty answering the ancestry question. Their non-response and non-specific response rates were very low, and their ancestry response appeared to be highly consistent with their answers to the questions on birthplace and parents' birthplace.

Third and subsequent generation Australians might be less certain about their ancestries if their ancestors were of various Anglo-Celtic or other European origins. Many might have simplified their multiple Anglo-Celtic ancestries to one or two ancestries or stated Australian ancestry. Given the guidelines accompanying the question, Australian ancestry can be considered to be a valid response for Australian-born persons with Australian-born ancestors. Validation of the 'Australian' ancestry response with data on birthplace and parents birthplace suggests that in most cases, persons stating Australian ancestry were making a valid response. For those stating one of their multiple ancestries, their answers would also have to be considered valid since the instructions given in the census guide to householders had implied that persons of mixed ancestry could identify with a single group. The omission of the other ancestries would result in some understatement of those ancestry groups. There appears to be significant understatement of the number of persons of Irish, Scottish, Welsh, German and Scandinavian ancestries.

Ancestry data for children might not be as accurate as those for adults, particularly if the children's parents were of different ethnic origins or of multiple ancestries. The levels of non-response and 'Australian' ancestry response were higher for children than for adults. There was also some evidence that a small proportion of overseas-born respondents stated Australian ancestry for Australian-born children.

This study has not covered each of the 94 ancestry groups⁽⁸⁾. The objective has been to assess the general level of accuracy of the data by examining the data for significant patterns and any major inconsistencies that should give cause for concern. Although the degree of accuracy may vary somewhat among the various ancestry categories, no major anomalies have been observed other than those discussed above that are likely to significantly affect the overall accuracy of the ancestry data.

7.2 Additional data from the ancestry question

Responses to the ancestry question made it possible to identify the ethnic origins of some groups which could not be identified from questions on birthplace and parents' birthplace. These groups are:

- (a) those who come from countries with a mixed ethnic population (such as Yugoslavia and Malaysia);
- (b) those who come from countries other than their native country (such as the Chinese and Indians who come from many Asian and Pacific countries);
- (c) the so-called 'lost groups' such as the Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds.

⁽⁸⁾ There has been a recent study of the ancestry response of people born in Indo-China which has examined in detail all the specific Indo-Chinese ancestries categories (James E. Coughlan (1988), *Ancestry of the Indo-Chinese born population in Australia*. Paper presented at the Australian Population Association National Conference, Brisbane). The study concludes that ancestry data for the Indo-Chinese born population are valid and reliable.

However, these groups made up a relatively small proportion (less than 3 per cent) of the total population. Some of them could also be identified from the language question if they spoke the native language at home.

For most non-English speaking ethnic groups, ethnic origin can be ascertained quite adequately from one or more of the surrogate measures - birthplace, parents' birthplace or language spoken at home, depending on the immigration history of the group and their maintenance of their native language. The ancestry question did not provide additional information about ethnic origin for the majority of non-English speaking ethnic groups.

It was thought that the ancestry question might yield data on the ethnic origins of third and subsequent generations of Australians which could not be obtained from the surrogate measures. However, additional data yielded were less than expected because people whose ancestors migrated to Australia a long time ago were less likely to answer the ancestry question and more likely to state Australian ancestry if they did respond. About 37 per cent of persons (a total of 3.4 million) with both parents born in Australia either stated Australian ancestry, did not respond or gave a non-specific response. Thus, the ancestry question provided additional information about the ethnic origin of about two-thirds of third and subsequent generations of Australians.

The ancestry question did yield some additional data on those people who came from countries which had been populated through migration from other countries (such as the United States, Canada, the South American countries, South Africa and New Zealand). However, many people from these countries interpreted ancestry as their national origin and responded with ancestries such as 'American', 'Argentinian' or 'New Zealander'. In those cases no additional data are obtained because national origin can be also ascertained from the birthplace or parents' birthplace questions since most of these people were first or second generation Australians.

7.3 Meeting users' needs

Whether ancestry data meet the needs of users depends on what those needs are. For users interested in obtaining a profile of the ethnic origins of the population, statistics from the ancestry question give a reasonably accurate picture of the ethnic background of the population. The user should be aware, however, that ancestry data do not measure current identification with an ethnic group. The user would also have to accept that some people stated their national origin rather than their ethnic origin and that many third and subsequent generation Australians considered themselves to be of Australian ancestry.

Users who require data in order to plan or monitor services and programs for various ethnic groups may find that ancestry data do not quite meet their needs. In most cases ancestry statistics overstate the number of people who speak a particular language or actively identify with a particular ethnic group. Many people although aware of their ancestry no longer speak their native language at home and may not identify with the ethnic group from which they are descended.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. Scope and coverage of the 1986 Census

The 1986 Census of Population and Housing aimed at counting every person who spent census night 30 June 1986 in Australia, including persons on vessels in or between Australian ports, or on board long-distance trains, buses or aircraft. All private dwellings were counted whether occupied or unoccupied. Occupied non-private dwellings, such as hospitals, prisons, hotels, etc., were also included.

People were counted where they were on census night which might not be where they usually lived. All data in this publication are based on place of enumeration. They have not been adjusted for underenumeration, nor has any adjustment been made to exclude visitors to Australia or to include Australian residents overseas. Visitors to Australia were enumerated regardless of how long ago they had arrived or how long they planned to stay. Australian residents out of the country on census night were excluded from the count.

Overseas diplomatic personnel and their families were not included in the census.

2. Data quality

Statistical collections such as the census are subject to a number of sources of error. While some errors defy detection and correction procedures the number of errors in overall census results is considered to be insignificant.

The main sources of error in the census are:

- (a) *Undercounting.* Despite efforts to obtain full coverage of persons and dwelling (other than those associated with overseas diplomatic missions), some undercounting still occurs. A measure of the extent of undercounting was obtained from a survey of households undertaken shortly after the census. This is the Post Enumeration Survey. Undercounting of persons in the 1986 census was estimated to be 1.9 per cent for Australia as a whole on a place of enumeration basis.
- (b) *Partial response.* In those instances where a householder omitted to provide a response to a question, a 'not stated' code was allocated; with the exception of non-response to age, sex, marital status, and SLA of usual residence. These variables were imputed using other information on the census form and specially constructed random tables based on the distribution of the population according to these variables in the 1981 Census. In addition, variables such as Aboriginal origin and birthplace were imputed where the appropriate response was clear from other information on the census form.
- (c) *Respondent error.* Computer editing procedures are used to detect obvious errors made by individuals in completing the census form (for example, a six year old person who was married). However, such procedures cannot detect all respondent errors and some remain in the final output.
- (d) *Processing error.* Errors created during the processing of the census are kept to an acceptable level by means of a quality control system, which involves sample checking at different stages of the coding and keying operations, and taking corrective action where necessary.
- (e) *Introduced random adjustment.* Adjustments are made to table cells to allow the maximum of detailed census data to be released, while protecting the confidentiality of information about individual persons. For this reason, and also because of possible processing errors, no reliance should be placed on cells of three or less.

3. Symbols and other usages

The following symbols, where shown in columns of figures or elsewhere in tables mean:

- ..not applicable
- nil or rounded to zero

Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of component items and totals.

4. Guide to data sources

A number of sources given for tables and figures in this publication are abbreviated for ease of reference. A full list of abbreviated titles follows.

CSCxx	Seven page format consisting of 46 tables based on census count at place of enumeration.
CSDxx	Twenty-one page format consisting of 70 tables based on census count at place of enumeration.
CXxxxx	Cross-classified tables on microfiche.
VFxxx	Tables produced for internal use. Note: The second version of these tables, which was produced in November 1989, included changes to compensate for coding errors which were present in the first version.

5. Related ABS publications

Other publications in the series of papers evaluating the quality of data from the 1986 Census of Population and Housing are:

Census 86 : Data Quality - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Counts (2602.0) (released Sep 1989). *Census 86 : Data Quality - Undercount (2607.0)* (released Feb 1990).

Further information about 1986 Census statistics is available from the nearest ABS office.

Current publications produced by the ABS are listed in the *Catalogue of Publications and Products, Australia* (1101.0). The ABS also issues, on Tuesdays and Fridays, a *Publications Advice* (1105.0) which lists publications to be released in the next few days. The Catalogue and Publications Advice are available from any ABS office.

6. Electronic services

DISCOVERY	Key *656# for selected current economic, social and demographic statistics.
AUSSTATS	Thousands of up-to-date time series are available on this ABS on-line service through PAXUS COMNET. For further information phone the AUSSTATS Help Desk (06) 252 6017.
TELESTATS	This service provides foreign trade statistics tailored to users' requirements. Further information is available on (06) 252 5404.

7. Floppy disk services

Selected ABS statistics are available on floppy disk. For further information phone (06) 252 6684.

APPENDIX A

ANCESTRY CLASSIFICATIONS (a)

Australian	Arab
Aboriginal	Armenian
Torres Strait Islander	Assyrian
	Cypriot
Fijian	Iraqi
Kanaka	Israeli
Maori	Jewish
New Zealander	Jordanian
Papua New Guinean	Kurdish
Pitcairn	Lebanese
Tongan	Palestinian
	Syrian
British	Turkish
Breton, Celtic, Cornish, Manx	
English	Bengali
Irish	Burmese
Scottish	Chinese
Welsh	Filipino
Other British, Anglo-Saxon	Hmong
	Indian
Albanian	Indonesian
Croatian	Iranian
Greek	Japanese
Italian	Khmer
Macedonian	Korean
Maltese	Lao
Portuguese	Malayan
Serbian	Pakistani
Slovenian	Sinhalese
Spanish	Sikh
Yugoslavian	Tamil
	Thai
Austrian	Timorese
Belgian	Vietnamese
Bulgarian	
Byelorussian	American
Czech	Argentinian
Danish	Brazilian
Dutch	Canadian
Estonian	Chilean
Finnish	West Indian
French	
German	Afrikaaner
Hungarian	Egyptian
Latvian	Mauritian
Lithuanian	South African
Norwegian	
Polish	Other ancestry
Romanian	'Mixed' so described
Romany	'Not known'
Russian	Inadequately described
Slovakian	Not stated
Swedish	
Swiss	
Ukrainian	

(a) Classification used for both first and second responses.

It may be noted in retrospect that some of these categories contain very small numbers of people and are not useful for further analysis either at the small area level or in terms of cross-tabulation of characteristics. Categories with less than 1000 people include Afrikaaner, Bengali, Jordanian, Kanaka, Pitcairn, Sikh and Tamil. Those with 1000-2000 people include Brazilian, Hmong, Kurdish, Palestinian, Romany and West Indian.

Many categories are predominantly national rather than ethnic groups and do not precisely identify ethnic origin. Some of these categories are Argentinian, Brazilian, Chilean, Egyptian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, South African, Canadian, American and New Zealander. However, it may be argued that they are acceptable as ancestry categories on the same grounds as Australian ancestry for the non-Aboriginal population.

APPENDIX B

General Inquiries

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SYDNEY NSW 2000
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VIC Information Services
Level 5
Rialto North Tower
525 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
(Box 2796Y, GPO Melbourne 3001)
Phone (03) 615 7000
Fax (03) 615 7798

QLD Information Services
313 Adelaide Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
(Box 9817, GPO Brisbane 4001)
Phone (07) 222 6351
Fax (07) 229 6171

WA Information Services
Hyatt Centre
30 Terrace Road
PERTH WA 6000
(Box K881, GPO Perth 6001)
Phone (09) 323 5140
Fax (09) 221 2374

SA Information Services
41 Currie Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
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APPENDIX B *continued***General Inquiries**

TAS Information Services
1st Floor, 175 Collins Street
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Phone (002) 20 5800
Fax (002) 34 6237

NT The Statistician - Northern
Territory
6th Floor, MLC Building
81 Smith Street
DARWIN NT 0800
(Box 3796, PO Darwin 0801)
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ACT Information Services
Australian Bureau of
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