
Main language spoken at home

Important note: This is an archived metadata standard from the AIHW Knowledgebase. For current metadata standards and related information please access METeOR, the AIHW's Metadata Online Registry at <http://meteor.aihw.gov.au>

Identifying and Definitional Attributes

Data Dictionary: NHADD
Knowledgebase ID: 000759 Version number: 1
Metadata type: DATA ELEMENT
Registration Authority: NHDAMG Admin status: SUPERSEDED
Effective date: 01-MAR-05

Definition: The main language spoken by a person in his or her home (or most recent private residential setting occupied by the person) on a regular basis, to communicate with other residents of the home and regular visitors to the home.

Context: Main language spoken is required as one of the four core data as part of the ABS standard for cultural and Language Diversity. These combined data elements replace the previously used concept of non-English-speaking background (NESB). Data on main language spoken at home are regarded as an indicator of 'active' ethnicity and also as useful for the study of inter-generational language retention. The availability of such data may help providers of housing assistance to effectively target the geographic areas or population groups that need assistance. It may be used for the investigation and development of language services such as interpreter/translation services.

Relational and Representational Attributes

Datatype: Numeric
Representational form: CODE
Representation layout: NN
Minimum Size: 2
Maximum Size: 4
Data Domain: NOVAL Refer to the ABS Australian Standard Classification of Languages, 1997, Cat. No. 1267.0 for details. A four digit code based on a hierarchical structure. Includes codes for Indigenous Australian languages and sign language.

Guide For Use: Persons not in private residential settings should respond for 'at home' as the most recent private residential setting in which that person has resided.

If a person reports that he or she speaks more than one language at home, they are asked to report the language spoken most often.

Collection Methods: Agencies may collect Main Language Spoken at Home in a variety of ways. Some agencies may use a question that contains a predetermined list of languages accompanied by an 'other (please specify)' category. Other agencies may use an open ended question asking the person to specify their main language spoken at home. Regardless of the exact format used by the agency, Main Language Spoken at Home should be collected in such a way as to allow the information to be coded to at least the 2-digit level of the adaptation of the ASCL.

Data collected at the 4-digit level will obviously provide more detailed information than that collected at the 2-digit level, but may be more difficult to collect.

The standard question for obtaining detailed data for Main Language spoken at home is as follows:

Which language [do you] [does the person] mainly speak at home?
(If more than one language, indicate the one that is spoken most often).

(Mark one box only)

English Italian

Greek Cantonese

Mandarin Arabic

Vietnamese German

Spanish Tagalog (filipino)

Other - please specify: _____

Alternately, a shorter version can be used

Related metadata: relates to the data element Indigenous status version 1

relates to the data element Country of birth version 1

relates to the data element Interpreter services required version 1

relates to the data element Proficiency in Spoken English version 1

Administrative Attributes

Source Document: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian Standard Classification of Languages, 1997, Cat. No. 1267.0

ABS Standard for cultural and Language Diversity (ABS Cat. no. 1289.0)

Source Organisation: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Comments: The Minimum Core Set of Cultural and Language Indicators as identified in the ABS standard for cultural and Language Diversity

(ABS Cat. no. 1289.0) are:
Country of birth of person
Main Language other than English Spoken at home
Proficiency in Spoken English
Indigenous Status

Data Element Links

Information Model Entities linked to this Data Element

Data Agreements which include this Data Element
