

# Sexual orientation

## Identifying and definitional attributes

**Metadata item type:** Glossary Item

**METEOR identifier:** 755634

**Registration status:**

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

**Definition:** Sexual orientation encapsulates how a person thinks of their own sexuality and the terms they identify with. Their sexual orientation reflects their romantic and sexual attraction to others, to persons of the same **sex**, or to persons of a different sex. Some of the main ways of identification are: heterosexual (straight), gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

## Collection and usage attributes

**Comments:** The following definitions are based on the ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables (ABS 2021):

### Nominal definition

Sexual orientation is an umbrella concept that encapsulates:

- sexual identity (how a person thinks of their sexuality and the terms they identify with)
- attraction (romantic or sexual interest in another person)
- behaviour (sexual behaviour).

Responses to a sexual orientation question are a subjective view of oneself and can change over the course of a person's lifetime and in different contexts. An individual could respond differently to questions on either sexual identity, attraction or behaviour.

### Operational definition

Questions about a person's sexual orientation would usually relate to their sexual identity and attraction, i.e. how a person thinks of their own sexuality, the terms they identify with and their romantic or sexual attraction to others. To gather data on sexual behaviour, a series of more detailed questions and answer categories may be more appropriate.

## Source and reference attributes

**Submitting organisation:** Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

**Origin:** ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2021. Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables. Canberra: ABS. Viewed 23 Feb 2022, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release>>

**Reference documents:**

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2021. Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables. Canberra: ABS. Viewed 23 Feb 2022, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release>>

APSC (Australian Public Service Commission) 2021. Australian Government Style Manual 2021. Gender and Sexual Diversity. Canberra: APSC. Viewed 23 Feb 2022, <<https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/inclusive-language/gender-and-sexual-diversity>>

AIFS (Australian Institute of Family Studies) 2022. Canberra: AIFS. LGBTIQA+ glossary of common terms. Viewed 24 Feb 2022, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release>>

## Relational attributes

**Related metadata references:**

See also [Gender](#)

- [Health](#), Standard 15/02/2022
- [Youth Justice](#), Standard 15/02/2022

See also [Sex](#)

- [Health](#), Standard 15/02/2022
- [Youth Justice](#), Standard 15/02/2022

See also [Variations of sex characteristics](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

**Metadata items which use this glossary item:**

[Person—sexual orientation](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

[Person—sexual orientation, code N\[N\]](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

[Person—sexual orientation, text X\[X\(99\)\]](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

[Sex](#)

- [Health](#), Standard 15/02/2022
- [Youth Justice](#), Standard 15/02/2022

[Sexual orientation](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

[Sexual orientation code N\[N\]](#)

- [Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022