

Person—sexual orientation, code N[N]

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Person—sexual orientation, code N[N]

Identifying and definitional attributes

Metadata item type:	Data Element
Short name:	Sexual orientation of a person
METEOR identifier:	755755
Registration status:	Health , Qualified 03/06/2022
Definition:	The sexual orientation of a person, as represented by a code.
Data Element Concept:	Person—sexual orientation
Value Domain:	Sexual orientation code N[N]

Value domain attributes

Representational attributes

Representation class:	Code
Data type:	Number
Format:	N[N]
Maximum character length:	2

	Value	Meaning
Permissible values:	1	Straight (heterosexual)
	2	Gay or lesbian
	3	Bisexual
	4	I use a different term
	5	Don't know
	6	Prefer not to say
Supplementary values:	97	Not applicable
	99	Not stated/inadequately described

Collection and usage attributes

Guide for use:

This Value Domain is based on the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) *Standard for sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation variables* (ABS 2021). The values are defined as:

CODE 1 Straight (heterosexual)

A person whose sexual orientation is towards persons of a different sex.

CODE 2 Gay or lesbian

A person whose sexual orientation is towards persons of the same sex.

CODE 3 Bisexual

A person whose sexual orientation is towards persons of the same sex and persons of a different sex.

CODE 4 I use a different term

A person who uses a different term to describe their sexual orientation other than those provided. (Other terms such as queer, asexual and pansexual may be covered by this code.)

CODE 5 Don't know

A person who does not know their sexual orientation.

CODE 6 Prefer not to say

A person who does not want to disclose their sexual orientation.

CODE 97 Not applicable

This supplementary value is for use in cases where the data is not self-reported. (Note the ABS uses the Code 0 for this value.)

CODE 99 Not stated/inadequately described

This supplementary value is used to code inadequately described responses and non-responses for sexual orientation. It is not to be used on primary collection forms. It is primarily for use in administrative collections when transferring data from data sets where the item is not collected.

Alternative codes

The ABS Standard also allows for the following alternative codes, which can be mapped to the codes specified above:

CODE S Straight

CODE G Gay or lesbian

CODE B Bisexual

CODE T Different term *

CODE U Don't know

CODE Z Prefer not to say

*Where there is a response for 'Different term', a descriptive, more detailed answer can be captured with a write-in facility.

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 24 February 2022, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/standard-sex-gender-variations-sex-characteristics-and-sexual-orientation-variables/latest-release#sexual-orientation>

Data element attributes

Collection and usage attributes

Guide for use:

Standard questions

The ABS standard sexual orientation question structure:

How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Please [tick/mark/select] one box:

- ☐ Straight (heterosexual)
- ☐ Gay or lesbian
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ I use a different term (please specify)
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Mandatory elements

The following elements must be included:

- The words 'sexual orientation' in the question to clearly articulate the concept being collected
- Label the response options 'Straight (heterosexual)', 'Gay or lesbian', 'Bisexual', 'I use a different term (please specify)', 'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say'
- A write-in facility should be made available when the 'I use a different term (please specify)' response option is selected
- Only one response is permitted
- If this question is interviewer administered, the question must always be asked as written and no assumptions made by the interviewer.

Recommended elements

The following element is recommended for inclusion:

- Use inclusive language (e.g. 'they' or 'their' rather than 'he/she' or 'his/her')

Alternative question module

The ABS Standard also allows for an alternative question module, which is the same as the standard question with the following amendments:

- Any or all of 'Asexual', 'Pansexual' and 'Queer' may be added to the question response options. Note: any of these responses should be mapped to CODE 4
- 'Gay or lesbian' response option may be split into separate response options of 'Gay' and 'Lesbian'. Note: either of these responses should be mapped to CODE 2.

Collection methods:

This data element is intended to capture data about a person's sexual identity (how the person thinks of their sexuality and the terms they identify with) and attraction (their romantic or sexual interest in another person). The element is not designed for specific or detailed studies of sexual behaviour. If there is an identified need for data on sexual behaviour, a series of more detailed elements may be more appropriate.

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. As such, this data element is only suitable to capture data that has been self-reported. A person should not be asked to respond on the sexual orientation of others.

Age considerations

Sexual orientation may not be appropriate to ask for people of all ages. The age at which a person is asked to provide a response to this question will be determined by the protocols of the data collection and should be consistent with the collection of other similar information. A person can have a sexual identity and attraction while not being sexually active.

As a guide, the age 15 years and older is the recommended age for asking the sexual orientation question in general demographic collections. However, some data collections may require a different target age (for example, younger ages for youth surveys). The decision on what age to apply this question to relies on the purpose of the data collection and the need for the information.

Write-in facility

Note: The inclusion of the write-in facility for 'CODE 4 I use a different term' recognises that there are a range of terms used to describe sexual orientation other than those provided. Where the 'I use a different term' code has been selected, the data element [Person—sexual orientation, text X\[X\(99\)\]](#) may be used to capture any further detail in variation.

Comments:

Sexual orientation is a subjective view of oneself and can change over the course of a person's lifetime and in different contexts. Any data captured using this question will only represent a point in time.

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.
<<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) 201. Australian Government Style Manual 2021. Gender and Sexual Diversity. 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. LGBTIQ+ glossary of common terms. Canberra: AIFS. Viewed 24 Feb 2022,
<<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/lgbtiq-glossary>>

Relational attributes

**Related metadata
references:**

See also [Person—gender, code X](#)
[Aged Care](#), Standard 30/06/2023
[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#), Qualified 17/01/2024
[Health](#), Standard 15/02/2022

See also [Person—sex, code X](#)
[Aged Care](#), Standard 30/06/2023
[Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#), Recorded 09/08/2023
[Health](#), Standard 15/02/2022
[Indigenous](#), Standard 27/08/2023
[Youth Justice](#), Standard 15/02/2022

See also [Person—sexual orientation, text X\[X\(99\)\]](#)
[Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022

See also [Person—variations of sex characteristics indicator, code N](#)
[Health](#), Qualified 03/06/2022