



LGBTIQ+ Health Australia Fact Sheet: ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables

Following our work with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to review 2021 Census topics, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (formerly known as the National LGBTI Health Alliance) was invited to participate as an active member of the Sex, Sex Characteristics, Gender and Sexual Orientation Reference Group, to provide expert advice on updating the 2016 Sex and Gender Standard, as well as developing a new Sexual Orientation Standard. This continues our collaborative partnership with the ABS to achieve nationally consistent LGBTI data indicators that can be embedded in data sets across the health system.

What is the 2020 Standard?

The Standard for Sex, Gender, Variation of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020 ("2020 Standard") has been developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to standardise the collection and dissemination of data relating to sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation.

This Standard replaces the Standard for Sex and Gender Variables, 2016, updating the variables of sex and gender and introducing variables for variation of sex characteristics (also called intersex or 'DSD') and sexual orientation.

The Standard will present statistical standards for four variables:

- Sex
- Gender
- Variations of sex characteristics
- Sexual orientation.

The 2020 Standard will describe the four variables and their associated conceptual issues and definitions. The standard for each variable includes the concept(s), definition(s), questionnaire modules, classification, coding structure, and output categories used in ABS interviewer-based and self-enumerated collections. The 2020 Standard also provides guidance on deriving cisgender and trans and gender diverse counts using the sex and gender variables.

What will the Standard do?

The four variables presented in the 2020 standard, when cross-classified with other variables, will provide comprehensive data on a particular topic, issue or population group. The resulting information can be used for a range of purposes, including:

- Informed decision making and planning
- Policy formulation and monitoring
- Social, population and economic research and analysis
- Program provision and evaluation (e.g. health services).

Who can use the Standard?

These standards can be used by other government, academic and private sector organisations in their own statistical collections to improve the comparability and quality of data.



Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables

The standard sex question structure is comprised of:

What was [your/Person's name/their] sex recorded at birth?

Please [tick/mark/select] one box.

- Male
- Female
- Another term (please specify)

The standard gender question structure is comprised of:

How [do/does] [you/Person's name/they] describe [your/their] gender?

Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be different to what is indicated on legal documents.

Please [tick/mark/select] one box:

- Man or male
- Woman or female
- Non-binary
- [I/They] use a different term (please specify)
- Prefer not to answer

The standard variations of sex characteristics question structure is comprised of:

Were you born with a variation of sex characteristics (sometimes called 'intersex' or 'DSD')?

Please [tick/mark/select] one box:

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

The standard sexual orientation question structure is comprised of:

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

