



D&I Data at Work

Diversity questions and
response options

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- Formal attribution to DCA is required where references to DCA research material are in a written format.
- Citing DCA as a source will suffice where the reference is made in a verbal format.

Suggested citation: Diversity Council Australia (R. D'Almada- Remedios), D&I Data at Work: diversity questions and response options, DCA, Sydney, 2025.

Using these questions and response options

You are welcome to use these questions and response options in your organisation's surveys and data collection.

A citation is not required when administering your survey. However, we ask that you attribute questions and response options appropriately when providing any written analysis of results, especially in instances where these will be published or made publicly available.

Many of the questions in this guide are already in the public domain, such as questions from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and ACON. Others are drawn from DCA resources and attributed accordingly.

See the Appendix for a list of suggested citations for these resources.

Want to learn more about D&I Data at Work?

DCA Members can access our full D&I Data at Work guide to learn about leading practice for data collection and reporting.

Download the full D&I Data at Work guide [here](#).

What is diversity data?

Diversity data is simply information about the demographic mix of the employees in your organisation.

Why collect diversity data?

Diversity data is a powerful tool in D&I work – it can help your organisation:

- **Understand the mix of employees in your workforce.**
When compared to benchmarks (e.g. diversity in the Australian population) this can help you identify where you might be underrepresented, and what action you need to take to address this.
- **Diagnose your D&I priority areas and need for change.**
For example, you might find employees with disability are seriously underrepresented in your management and leadership roles.
- **Identify how to provide a more inclusive work environment for your employees.**
For example, the need for workplace adjustments, flexible work options, or quiet room facilities
- **Understand the cultural capabilities of your workforce.**
This can help you assess your capability to access and better serve different markets, clients, and members of the community you serve.

How do I select questions and response options to use?

Leading practice in selecting questions and response options is to remember that self-determination and self-identity is key. This means:

- using language, questions and response options developed by people with lived experience of the question being asked and/or through consultation with people with lived experience
- asking your employees how they see themselves (e.g. if they identify as a person with disability, or how they describe their gender).

Try testing the wording of your questions with key stakeholder groups internally, like your employee network/resource groups or D&I council. This can build support for and confidence in the wording of your questions and response options with stakeholders with lived experience of marginalisation.

Sample questions and response options to use

These questions and response options are drawn from:

- DCA's own research (e.g. [Counting Culture](#))
- peak organisations representing people with lived experience of the question being asked (e.g. [ACON](#)), and
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics (which enables you to compare your findings with national benchmarks).



**Aboriginal
and/or
Torres Strait
Islander
identity**

DCA suggests using the question below, from our [Counting Culture](#) measures, adapted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) question.

Source: DCA's Counting Culture

Q. Do you identify as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?

(Please select one option only)

- No
- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, both Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say



Age

Some organisations prefer an open-ended question that allows participants to insert their exact age – this allows flexibility in how responses are grouped together post data collection. Other organisations prefer to keep coding of responses to a minimum and so use five- or ten-year age bands as response options, like the example below.

Source: DCA's Inclusion@Work Index

Q. What is your age?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0–17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40–44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65–69 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18–24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45–49 | <input type="checkbox"/> 70–74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25–29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50–54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30–34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55–59 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35–39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60–64 | |



DCA's suggested question for caring responsibilities is adapted from the ABS Census questions on caring. DCA's question asks employees about whether they care for children and/or adults. It allows employees to select more than one response option (e.g. caring for children and for adult relatives).

- Carers Australia defines carers as "people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged". Their definition does not include caring for children without disability or chronic conditions.
- The ABS considers carers' status using Carers' Australia definition (above), as well as caring for children (without disability or chronic conditions).

Source: Adapted from ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

Q. In the last two weeks, did you spend time providing unpaid care, help or assistance for family members or others? (Please select as many as relevant)

- No
- Yes, child or children with disability
- Yes, child or children without disability
- Yes, adult(s) with disability
- Yes, adult(s) without disability
- Prefer not to say



DCA's Counting Culture guide suggests a range of different 'Core' and 'Additional' questions and response options organisations can use to measure and report on workforce cultural diversity. This approach recognises that many organisations have limited in-house resources and are constrained in the number and range of questions and response options they can use.

As such, the guide lists questions priority order. This means that if your organisation only has space to ask two questions on cultural diversity, we suggest they be the first two Core Measures (and so on).



Core Measures are the minimum required to get a basic understanding of your workforce, and include:

- 1 Cultural background
- 2 Language
- 3 Country of birth

Additional Measures enable a more detailed understanding to be gained, and include:

- 4 Religion
- 5 Global experience

Cultural background

Q. How would you describe your cultural background?
(Please select up to two cultural backgrounds)

Your cultural background is the cultural/ethnic group(s) to which you feel you belong or identify. This background may be the same as your parents, grandparents, or your heritage, or it may be the country you were born in or have spent a great amount of time in, or you feel more closely tied to.

- ABS Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (listed in alphabetical order)
- Unsure Prefer not to say
- Ethnicity not listed (please specify): open text

Language

Q. Apart from English, in which language(s) could you have a conversation about a lot of everyday things? (Please select as many as apply)

- Speak English only
- ABS Standard Classification of Languages (listed in alphabetical order)
- Language not listed (please specify): open text

Q. Apart from English, in which language(s) can you read everyday materials, such as newspapers (Please select as many as apply)

- Read English only
- ABS Standard Classification of Languages (listed in alphabetical order)
- Language not listed (please specify): open text

Source: DCA's Counting Culture

Country of birth

Q. Which country were you born in? (Please select one only)

- ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries (listed in alphabetical order)
- Unsure Prefer not to say
- Country not listed (please specify): open text

Religious affiliation

Q. What is your religion? (Please select one only)

- No religion
- ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries (listed in alphabetical order)
- Unsure Prefer not to say
- Religion not listed (please specify): open text

Global experience

Q. Have you lived and/or worked in any country other than Australia for more than six months? (Please select as many as apply)

- ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries (listed in alphabetical order)
- Prefer not to say
- Country not listed (please specify): open text

Source: DCA's Counting Culture



Disability status

As outlined in DCA and the Australian Disability Network's Disability Data at Work report, leading practice in disability data collection is:

- to avoid asking employees to name their disability (because this can lead to unhelpful labels, stereotypes, assumptions and biases)
- instead, to take a self-identity approach, as suggested in this guide.



Disability status (cont.)

Source: [Australian Disability Network](#)

Q. Do you identify as a person with disability, illness or injury?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Some organisations find it useful to include a note on what disability may include. Other organisations might use a legal definition like that in the United Nations' (UN) [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#).

UN's CRPD definition:

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

Sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics & sexual orientation

Sex and gender

The ABS* explains that "the terms sex and gender are interrelated and often used interchangeably within the general community. However, they are two distinct concepts:

- Sex is understood in relation to sex characteristics. Sex recorded at birth refers to what was initially determined by sex characteristics observed at birth or infancy.
- Gender is about social and cultural identity, expression and experience."

*Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2021

Where it is necessary to collect information on an employee's sex or gender, an explanation should be provided as to why the information is being collected and how it will be used.

When an organisation does wish to collect this information, DCA recommends including a question about gender, rather than sex.

Source: [ACON](#)

Q. How do you describe your gender?
(Please select the most relevant response)

- Man or male
- Woman or female
- Non-binary
- I use a different term (please specify): open text
- Prefer not to answer

Cisgender and trans & gender diverse status

Cisgender (cis) people are persons whose gender is the same as their sex recorded at birth. Trans and gender diverse people are people whose gender is different to their sex recorded at birth. A small number of people do not have a sex of male or female recorded at birth or infancy.

Often it is not necessary to ask employees about their sex.

However, to measure the workforce representation of trans and gender diverse people via surveys, both ACON and the ABS recommend comparing responses to:

- a question that asks about 'sex recorded at birth' and
- a question about a person's gender.

Source: [ACON](#)

Q. At birth, were you recorded as?

- Male
- Female
- Another term (please specify): open text
- Prefer not to answer

Sexual orientation

Language is constantly evolving. The terms people use to describe their sexual orientation can also shift at times. For example, once considered a slur, the term "queer" has been reclaimed by many LGBTIQ+ people as an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities.

As such, we suggest asking about how people describe their sexual orientation.

Sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics & sexual orientation (cont.)

Source: ACON

Q. How do you describe your sexual orientation?

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

LGBTIQ+

Organisations may not have scope to ask multiple questions on sex, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation, or to take the 2-step method approach for capturing trans/gender diverse workforce representation.

In this case, organisations can take an approach (such as the one outlined below) that captures multiple data points in one question.

Source: ACON

Q. Are you, or do you describe yourself as LGBTIQ+?
(Please select as many as apply)

- No
- Yes, lesbian, gay or homosexual
- Yes, bisexual
- Yes, queer
- Yes, trans/gender diverse or a person with a trans history*
- Yes, a person with an intersex variation
- Yes, not listed (please specify): open text
- Prefer not to answer

* Trans/gender diverse includes people with a trans history and people who are non-binary/gender fluid



Social class and socioeconomic status (SES) can be a complex demographic to capture, and a sensitive question to ask employees.

DCA therefore suggests using the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status, a single-item subjective measure of social class and SES that captures individuals' own sense of their place in society. The MacArthur Scale takes into account employees' own perceptions of their standing based on multiple dimensions of socioeconomic status and social position. In this way, it provides a summative measure of social class, across the indicators of education, income, and occupation.

Source: DCA's [Class at Work](#)

Q. Below, you will see a scale that represents where people stand in society.

At the far-right hand side of the scale are the people who are best off - those who have the most money, the most education, and the most respected jobs.

At the far-left hand side of the scale are the people who are worse off - who have the least money, the least education, and the least respected jobs or no job.

Thinking about your current situation, please indicate where you would place yourself on this scale relative to other people in Australia.

Income, Education and Occupation										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Appendix

Suggested citations for question sources

(see question for relevant source):

ACON, Recommended community indicators for research, 2016.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia: Summary of findings, ABS, 2022.

ABS, Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, ABS, 2021.

Diversity Council Australia (R. D'Almada-Remedios), DCA Inclusion@Work Index 2023-2024: Mapping the State of Inclusion in the Australian Workforce, DCA, Sydney, 2024.

Diversity Council Australia and Australian Disability Network, Inclusion at Work Index: Disability Data at Work - How organisations can capture disability data safely and respectfully, DCA, Sydney, 2024.

Diversity Council Australia/University of Sydney Business School (R. D'Almada-Remedios, D. Groutsis, A. Kaabel, and J. O'Leary), Counting Culture: Towards a Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia, DCA, Sydney, 2021.

Want to learn more about D&I Data at Work?

DCA Members can access our full D&I Data at Work guide to learn about leading practice for data collection and reporting, including how to:

- Plan for D&I data collection
- Collect D&I data
- Analyse D&I data
- Report on D&I data

Download the full D&I Data at Work guide [here](#).