
Indigenous status

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	Version number:	1
Knowledgebase ID:	000682		
Metadata type:	DATA ELEMENT		
Registration Authority:	NHDAMG	Admin status:	SUPERSEDED
		Effective date:	01-MAR-05
Definition:	Indigenous Status is a measure of whether a person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. This is in accord with the first two of three components of the Commonwealth definition. See Comments for the Commonwealth definition.		
Context:	Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupy a unique place in Australian society and culture. In the current climate of reconciliation, accurate and consistent statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are needed in order to plan, promote and deliver essential services, to monitor changes in wellbeing and to account for government expenditure in this area. The purpose of this data element is to provide information about people who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. Agencies or establishments wishing to determine the eligibility of individuals for particular benefits, services or rights will need to make their own judgements about the suitability of the standard measure for these purposes, having regard to the specific eligibility criteria for the program concerned.		

Relational and Representational Attributes

Datatype:	Numeric	
Representational form:	CODE	
Representation layout:	NN	
Minimum Size:	1	
Maximum Size:	2	
Data Domain:	1	Indigenous (not further defined)
	1.1	Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin
	1.2	Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin

- 1.3 Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin
- 2 Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin
- 9 Not stated / inadequately described

Guide For Use: This data element is based on the ABS Standard for Indigenous Status. For detailed advice on its use and application please refer to the ABS Website as indicated below under source document.

The classification for 'Indigenous Status' has a hierarchical structure comprising two levels. There are four categories at the detailed level of the classification which are grouped into two categories at the broad level. There is one supplementary category for 'not stated' responses. The classification is as follows:

Indigenous:

- Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander Origin
- Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal Origin
- Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin

Non-indigenous:

- Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander Origin

Not stated/ inadequately described:

The not stated/inadequately described category is not to be available as a valid answer to the questions but is intended for use:

- primarily when importing data from other data collections that do not contain mappable data;
- where an answer was refused;-where the question was not able to be asked prior to completion of assistance because the client was unable to communicate or a person who knows the client was not available.

Only in the last two situations may the tick boxes on the questionnaire be left blank.

Collection Methods: The standard question for Indigenous Status is as follows:
[Are you] [Is the person] [Is (name)] of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?

(For persons of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, mark both 'Yes' boxes.)

No.

Yes, Aboriginal

Yes, Torres Strait Islander

This question is recommended for self-enumerated or interview-based collections. It can also be used in circumstances where a close relative, friend, or another member of the household is answering on behalf of the subject.

When someone is not present, the person answering for them should be in a position to do so, i.e. this person must know the person about whom the question is being asked well and feel confident to provide accurate information about them. However, it

is strongly recommended that this question be asked directly wherever possible.

This question must always be asked regardless of data collectors' perceptions based on appearance or other factors.

The Indigenous Status question allows for more than one response.

The procedure for coding multiple responses is as follows:

If the respondent marks 'No' and either 'Aboriginal' or 'Torres Strait Islander', then the response should be coded to either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as indicated (i.e. disregard the 'No' response).

If the respondent marks both the 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' boxes, then their response should be coded to 'Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin'.

If the respondent marks all three boxes ('No', 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander'), then the response should be coded to 'Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Origin' (i.e. disregard the 'No' response).

This approach may be problematical in some data collections, for example when data are collected by interview or using screen based data capture systems. An additional response category Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

May be included if this better suits the data collection practices of the agency or establishment concerned.

There has been some controversy over the issue of whether South Sea Islanders need to be included in the definition of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The ABS clearly states that South Sea Islanders are not Indigenous and should therefore be coded accordingly. Subsequently, South Sea Islanders are to be coded under category 2 'Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin'.

Related metadata: relates to the data element concept Indigenous community acceptance version 2

supersedes the data element Indigenous status version 1

relates to the data element concept Indigenous household version 1

Administrative Attributes

Source Document: Available on the ABS Website. From the ABS Home page (www.abs.gov.au) select: About Statistics/About Statistical Collections (Concepts & Classifications) /Other ABS Statistical Standards/Standards for Social Labour and Demographic Variables/Cultural Diversity Variables/Indigenous Status.

Source Organisation: Australian Bureau of Statistics
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Comments: Some service providers may find it difficult to ask a question about

a person's Indigenous status. Furthermore, some Indigenous persons may be reluctant to answer a question about their Indigenous status because previous experience has led them to believe that identifying as an Indigenous person may disadvantage them. Without assistance with implementing this data element the data provided are likely to be of low validity and reliability. Presently, the CSHA data collections do not differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Commonly, the question asked is 'Does the person (client) identify themselves as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?' and the possible responses are Yes/No/Not known.

This does not conform with the ABS national standard, which incorporates the more detailed data domains of:

1. Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin
2. Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin
3. Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin
4. Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin
9. Not stated/inadequately described

It is also not possible to map the CSHA response of 'Indigenous - not further defined' to the ABS standard.

The following definition, commonly known as 'The Commonwealth Definition' was given in a High Court judgement in the case of *Commonwealth v Tasmania* (1983) 46 ALR 625. 'An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives'.

There are three components to the Commonwealth definition:

- descent;
- self-identification; and
- community acceptance.

In practice, it is not feasible to collect information on the community acceptance part of this definition in general purpose statistical and administrative collections and therefore standard questions on Indigenous Status relate to descent and self-identification only.

[Data Element Links](#)

[Information Model Entities linked to this Data Element](#)

[Data Agreements which include this Data Element](#)
