

---

# 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: NCHSDD  
Knowledgebase ID: 000904                      Version number: 2  
Metadata type: DATA ELEMENT  
Registration Authority: NCSIMG                      Admin status: DRAFT  
Effective date: 01-APR-02  
Definition: 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.  
Context: Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 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 required to monitor changes in wellbeing and to account for government expenditure in this area.

---

## *Relational and Representational Attributes*

Datatype: Numeric  
Representational form: CODE  
Representation layout: N  
Minimum Size: 1  
Maximum Size: 1  
Data Domain: 1                      Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin  
2                      Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin  
3                      Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin  
4                      Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin  
9                      Not stated/inadequately described (not for use in pi)  
Collection Methods: This should be reported for each child using a child care or preschool service at an outlet during the reference week.

The standard question for Indigenous Status is as follows:

[Is the child] [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.

It is strongly recommended that this question be asked directly of the child's parent wherever possible. However when the child's parent is not present, the person answering for them should be in a position to do so, i.e. this person must know the child about whom the question is being asked well and feel confident to provide accurate information about them.

This question should always be asked even if the child does not 'look' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

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).

The above information should be reported in this form for outlets reporting disaggregated data.

In some jurisdictions this information may be required to be reported in an aggregate form. This acknowledges that some

jurisdictions may be unable to collect at a disaggregated level in the early stages of the CS NMDS collection. In these instances outlets should report the total number of children attending during the reference week against each of the categories, i.e. Aboriginal but not Torres Strait Islander origin, Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin.

---

### *Administrative Attributes*

Source Document: Australian Bureau of Statistics: Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity, 1999, Catalogue No. 1289.0.

National Community Services Data Dictionary Version 2, 2000.

Source Organisation: National Community Services Data Committee,  
NCSIMG Children's Services Data Working Group,  
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

---

Comment: Australia has two groups of Indigenous peoples - Aboriginal peoples and the Torres Strait Islander people. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is defined by a decision of the High Court of Australia in *Commonwealth v Tasmania* (1983) 46 ALR 625. This definition states that '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 definition of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person: descent, self-identification and community acceptance. In practice, it is not feasible to collect information on the community acceptance part of this definition and therefore questions on Indigenous Status relate to descent and self-identification only. Ideally descent could be determined by asking if a person has either an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ancestor. Self-identification could be determined by asking if a person identifies culturally as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. In practice, people are asked if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. This question is considered to measure descent and for some, but not all, cultural identity.

There has been some controversy over the issue of whether South Sea Islanders should be included within the definition of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Australians. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) position on this issue is that South Sea Islanders are not Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander and should not be coded as such. South Sea Islanders should not be recorded as being either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, unless they are

also Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### [Data Element Links](#)

#### *Information Model Entities linked to this Data Element*

NCSIM Social-cultural characteristic

#### *Data Agreements which include this Data Element*

Draft NMDS - Children's Services National Minimum Data Set From 01-Jan-03 to

---