



DIVERSITY
COUNCIL
AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION

2026 Census Topic Consultation

8 September 2023

Thursday, 8 September 2023

2026 Census Topic Consultation

Dear Dr David Gruen,

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

We have over 1,200 member organisations, reaching more than 20% of the Australian labour market.

We believe the 2026 census is an opportunity to collect better data on cultural background and LGBTIQ+ communities. Our research shows that these identities can have a profound impact on individuals' experiences of inclusion or exclusion at work.

In April 2023, Phase 1 of the Census consultation, DCA made a submission with the following two recommendations:

1. That the ABS consider replacing the current Census questions about ancestry, with DCA's first core measure, which asks respondents:

How would you describe your cultural background? 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.

2. That the ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables is added to the census.

DCA would like to reiterate these recommendations in Phase 2 of the Census consultation and provide a rationale, including evidence from research conducted by DCA, to support the inclusion of a question asking respondents to describe their cultural background (as per 1. above) to replace current Census questions about ancestry.

DCA will also provide expert advice regarding questions relevant to members of LGBTIQ+ communities via the LGBTIQ+ Expert Advisory Committee which will begin meeting on 28 September 2023.

Please feel free to contact myself or Jacqueline Braw, Senior Advocacy and Government Relations Manager on jacqueline@dca.org.au should you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Annese
Chief Executive Officer

CONTENTS

SUBMISSION	
CONTENTS	3
ABOUT US.....	4
Who we are.....	4
DCA’s Membership represents over 20% of the Australian workforce	4
About our members.....	4
Our belief, vision and mission	4
What we do.....	4
Our Research.....	5
POSITIONING	6
The importance of taking an intersectional approach	6
A note on binary language used in this submission	6
INTRODUCTION	7
RECOMMENDATION 1: CULTURAL BACKGROUND	8
RECOMMENDATION 2: DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLES	10
RECOMMENDATION 3: LGBTQI+ EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK	11
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	12
ENDNOTES.....	13

Diversity Council Australia Ltd

Customs House, Level 3, 31 Alfred Street, Sydney NSW 2000 • Email: admin@dca.org.au
SYDNEY OFFICE Phone: (02) 8014 4300 • MELBOURNE OFFICE Phone: (03) 9067 8000
ACN 006 898 406 • ABN 64 421 748 342

ABOUT US

Who we are

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the independent not-for-profit peak body leading diversity and inclusion in the workplace. We provide unique research, inspiring events and programs, curated resources and expert advice across all diversity dimensions to a community of member organisations.

DCA's Membership represents over 20% of the Australian workforce

DCA's prestigious group of over 1,200 members is drawn from business and workplace diversity leaders and includes some of Australia's biggest employers. Our membership reaches over 20% of the Australian labour market.

About our members

1,200 member organisations, including almost 40 ASX100 Listed companies.

Our members are drawn from across the corporate, government and not-for-profit sectors and vary from small to large workforces in size.

Our founding members include ANZ, AMP, BHP, Boral, Coles, IBM Australia, Myer, Orica, Rio Tinto and Westpac.

DCA's Members are listed on our website here: <https://www.dca.org.au/membership/current-dca-members>.

Our belief, vision and mission

- Our **belief** is that diversity and inclusion is good for people and business.
- Our **vision** is to create a more diverse and inclusive Australia.
- Our **mission** is to encourage and enable Australian organisations to create diverse and inclusive workplaces.

What we do

DCA, formerly known as the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Ltd, was established in 1985 as a joint initiative of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Business Council of Australia to demonstrate the business community's commitment to equal opportunity for women.

Our focus since then has expanded to cover all aspects of diversity in employment, reflecting changes in practice to embrace all areas of the diversity of human resources.

DCA is not government funded – its income is generated from membership fees, sponsorships and services to business/employers.

Our Research

DCA works in partnership with members to generate ground-breaking evidence-based diversity and inclusion resources that enables Australian organisations to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

- **DCA research is grounded in the contributions of people with lived experience.** DCA projects use expert panels, focus groups, think tanks and surveys to make people with lived experience central to the project findings.
- **DCA resources are ahead of the curve.** They establish leading diversity thinking and practice, enabling Australian organisations to re-imagine and reconfigure the way they manage talent in today's dynamic operating environments.
- **DCA resources drive business improvement.** They are high impact, driving business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.
- **DCA resources are practice focused.** They respond to the information needs of industry leaders and the people they employ.
- **DCA resources speak to the Australian context.** DCA projects generate leading diversity thinking and practice that speaks to Australia's unique and distinctive institutional, cultural and legal frameworks.
- **DCA resources considers all diversity dimensions.** The full spectrum of diversity dimensions are investigated including age, caring responsibilities, cultural background and identity, disability, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status, sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, social class and work organisation.

POSITIONING

The importance of taking an intersectional approach

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

DCA's work over many years has recognised how intersectionality impacts the experiences of diverse women in Australian workplaces. For example:

- DCA's *Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) women in Leadership*¹ research explored how the intersections of two key marginalising characteristics - race and gender - are still operating in workplaces to lock CARM women out of leadership.
- DCA, WGEA & Jumbunna's research, *Gari Yala: Gendered Insights*², found that Indigenous women who are also carers experience 'triple jeopardy'. That is, the combination of these three aspects of their identity overlap to amplify their experiences of discrimination and exclusion at work.
- DCA's *Class at Work*³ research shows that 45% of women from self-identified lower classes reported having experienced discrimination and/or harassment of some type.
- DCA's *Out at Work*⁴ recognised the 'double jeopardy' that LGBTIQ+ women face, where the combination of being a woman, and having a non-heterosexual identity combine to make it more difficult for them, relative to cisgender-gay-men or cisgender-heterosexual-women, to progress in the workplace.
- DCA's *Capitalising on Culture and Gender in ASX Leadership*⁵ found that culturally diverse women experience a 'double jeopardy' when accessing leadership roles due to their gender and cultural background. This double jeopardy results in a 'glass-cultural ceiling' in which invisible organisational barriers lock out culturally diverse women from accessing leadership positions in their workplaces.

A note on binary language used in this submission

While gender does not exist in binary categories, these categories still have very real effects.

However, DCA recognises that there are people whose experiences and identities cannot be captured by the use of binary language, and these limitations should be acknowledged whenever binary language is used.

Should the Census include a race measure?

In our research⁶, it has become clear that to effectively understand experiences of marginalisation and discrimination in Australia there is a need to include a race measure in the Census.

However, for such a measure to be widely accepted and understood it will require extensive consultation with community and industry groups, work which DCA plans to undertake over the coming year.

INTRODUCTION

DCA welcomes the consideration of ethnic identity for inclusion in the Census 2026. In Phase 1 of the Census consultation, the DCA submission referred to research that we believe will be helpful in formulating the 2026 census questions: [Counting Culture: Towards a Standardised Approach to Measuring and Reporting on Workforce Cultural Diversity in Australia](#). A synopsis of this report is attached to this submission.

Produced with the University of Sydney Business School, and sponsors City of Sydney and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), *Counting Culture* is a standardised approach for defining, measuring, and reporting on workforce cultural diversity in a respectful, accurate and inclusive way.

Counting Culture was the result of extensive consultation and research, drawing on several key sources of evidence including a literature review, consultation survey, 8 think tanks, a pilot survey and expert panel consultations with experts from industry, government and academia.

This research informed the development of measures for cultural background which held most meaning for participants and incorporates ethnicity, ancestry and cultural identity.

The report recommends organisations use three Core Measures, supplemented where space and resources allow by two Additional Measures.

In our Phase 1 submission, DCA recommended that the ABS consider replacing the current Census questions about ancestry, with DCA's first core measure, which asks respondents:

How would you describe your cultural background? 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.

This definition better reflects a person's current experience of identity than information about ancestry and incorporates concepts of ethnicity, ancestry and cultural identity.

RECOMMENDATION 1: CULTURAL BACKGROUND

DCA recommends that the ABS adopt Recommendation 1 from the DCA Phase 1 submission which was to consider replacing the current Census questions about ancestry, with DCA’s first core measure from *Counting Culture*:

How would you describe your cultural background? 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.

Further, we recommend that the response options are the cultural/ethnic groups listed in the [Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups \(ASCCEG\)](#).

Finally, for reporting on the data collected under this question, we recommend the reporting categories recommended in *Counting Culture*:

Reporting Categories

We recommend an approach adapted from the ABS’s ASCCEG classification structure. This is a hierarchical structure based on 4 levels, from most specific to broadest, as summarised below.

Cultural Background	
Specific	278 x specific cultural/ethnic groups (from the ASCCEG)
Narrow	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>14 x narrow cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ASCCEG broad and narrow groups)</p> </div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous Australian 2. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian) 3. New Zealander (not Maori) 4. Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian 5. Anglo-European 6. North-West European (excl. Anglo-European) 7. South-East European 8. South-East Asian 9. North-East Asian 10. Southern and Central Asian 11. North American 12. South and Central American and Caribbean Islander 13. North African and Middle Eastern 14. Sub-Saharan African </div> </div>
Broad	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>8 x broad cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ASCCEG broad groups)</p> </div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous Australian 2. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian) 3. New Zealander and Pacific Islander 4. Anglo-European 5. Other European (excl. Anglo-European) 6. Asian 7. Americas 8. African or Middle Eastern </div> </div>
Broadest	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 10px;"> <p>2 x broadest cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ABS ‘Main English-Speaking Country of Birth’ approach)</p> </div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 10px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main English-speaking background 2. Non-main English-speaking background </div> </div>

Looking for the above classification system of cultural/ethnic groups?
DCA members can request this classification system (in Excel form) from DCA.

FOR EXAMPLE: For a respondent who identifies as having a Vietnamese cultural background, their cultural background would be classified as **Vietnamese** at the specific level, **South-East Asian** at the narrow level, **Asian** at the broad level and **non-main English-speaking background** at the broadest level.

In *Counting Culture* we recommend the following approach for reporting on respondents with 2 cultural backgrounds:

As respondents can select up to 2 cultural backgrounds, we used the pilot data to explore the most meaningful reporting categories to use. On this basis and influenced by the New Zealand Census reporting categories approach to a similar question on ethnicity, we propose the below:

- *Reporting on Your Workforce Diversity? Use Specific, Narrow, Broad or Broadest Categories, and 'Total Responses'*
 - *Use Specific, Narrow, Broad or Broadest Categories. You could report on specific categories (e.g., the top 3 specific cultural groups among workers are Australian, English, and Irish), narrow (e.g., 5% of workers have a North East Asian background), broad (e.g., 10% of workers have an Asian background), and/or broadest categories (e.g., 40% of workers have a Non-Main English Speaking background)*
 - *Use 'Total Responses'. Count the total number of responses. People with more than 1 cultural background are therefore counted twice – once for each cultural/ethnic group they identify with. For example, an Australian Chinese person would be counted once in the 'Australian' group AND once in the 'Chinese' group.*

There is currently no widely used standardised approach for defining, measuring, and reporting on workforce cultural diversity in a respectful, accurate and inclusive way.

Currently, many Australian workplaces ask employees about their country of birth, and while this is a useful measure in some ways, just asking about 'country of birth' fails to capture Australia's diverse cultural fabric.

We consulted widely in developing this report, including with many culturally diverse Australians and experts in data collection. We believe these measures to be an accurate and respectful way to understand much more about our community than our current data sets allow.

In preparing our submission, DCA met with the ANU's Centre for Asian-Australian Leadership ("CAAL") and Centre for Social Research and Methods ("CSRМ") to compare our findings in this research area. DCA supports the approach developed in CAAL and CSRМ's Counting for Change research project to include in the Census a new demographic question on ethnicity.

RECOMMENDATION 1: DCA recommends that the ABS adopt Recommendation 1 from the DCA Phase 1 submission which was to consider replacing the current Census questions about ancestry, with DCA's first core measure from *Counting Culture*:

How would you describe your cultural background? 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.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLES

DCA research suggests that in order to accurately measure the cultural diversity of the Australian workforce, and to research and report on workplace experiences of inclusion and exclusion, the question as expressed in Recommendation 1 will most successfully collect the data required.

DCA's members – currently 1,200 representing over 20% of the Australian workforce – will more easily be able to benchmark their results of inclusion with the Australian population as a whole, should the Census 2026 collect data on cultural background as per Recommendation 1.

Further, the Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Census 2023 adopted the *Counting Culture* question and measure of cultural background. This Census is an annual survey of APS employees on issues in the workplace and surveys over 155,000 employees. The DCA question is fast becoming an accepted standard in Australian workplaces.

The impact of collecting Australian population data on cultural background will extend beyond immediate improvement of knowledge and understanding of workplace experiences of inclusion and exclusion. It will enable organisations, large and small, to benchmark their progress in diversity and inclusion initiatives and provide organisations with useful data to further develop programs that will contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious Australia.

DCA recommends that the ABS take note of these case examples of collecting data on cultural background and likely impacts should the Census 2026 replace the current question about ancestry with the question on cultural background as per Recommendation 1.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DCA recommends that the ABS take note of these case examples of collecting data on cultural background and likely impacts should the Census 2026 replace the current question about ancestry with the question on cultural background as per Recommendation 1.

RECOMMENDATION 3: LGBTQI+ EXPERT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

DCA acknowledges that gendered language and other issues impacting on LGBTQI+ communities are very complex and strongly suggests that the ABS considers the advice to be provided by the LGBTQI+ Expert Advisory Committee soon to be established. DCA is represented on this committee. DCA supports the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and variations of sex characteristics in the Census.

We are aware of the extensive and thorough consultation that went into the development of the [ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#). Adding these questions to the Census is crucial for fostering an evidence-informed environment for policy, program and service planning. What's more, having a better understanding of the diverse make up of Australia is critical in fostering a more inclusive society for everyone.

Our research shows that these identities have a significant impact on the way people experience inclusion and exclusion at work. Our [Inclusion@Work Index 2021-2022](#) found that:

- LGBTQI+ workers (45%) report significantly levels of experience with discrimination and/or harassment than non-LGBTIQ+ workers (23%)

Collecting accurate data on LGBTQI+ communities by asking the right questions on sexual orientation, gender diversity or variations of sex characteristics will enable policies that support LGBTQI+ people and promote inclusion in the workplace and in the community more broadly.

RECOMMENDATION 3: DCA acknowledges that gendered language and other issues impacting on LGBTQI+ communities are very complex and strongly suggests that the ABS considers the advice to be provided by the LGBTQI+ Expert Advisory Committee soon to be established. DCA is represented on this committee. DCA supports the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and variations of sex characteristics in the Census.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DCA welcomes the consideration of collecting better data on cultural background and LGBTIQ+ communities in the 2026 Census. Our research shows that these identities can have a profound impact on individuals' experiences of inclusion or exclusion at work. Therefore, our recommendations are:

1. **DCA recommends that the ABS adopt Recommendation 1 from the DCA Phase 1 submission which was to consider replacing the current Census questions about ancestry, with DCA's first core measure from *Counting Culture*:**

How would you describe your cultural background? 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.

2. **DCA recommends that the ABS take note of these case examples of collecting data on cultural background and likely impacts should the Census 2026 replace the current question about ancestry with the question on cultural background as per Recommendation 1.**
3. **DCA acknowledges that gendered language and other issues impacting on LGBTIQ+ communities are very complex and strongly suggests that the ABS considers the advice to be provided by the LGBTIQ+ Expert Advisory Committee soon to be established. DCA is represented on this committee. DCA supports the inclusion of questions on sexual orientation, gender identity and variations of sex characteristics in the Census.**

ENDNOTES

¹ Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O’Leary). *Culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.

² Evans, Olivia (2021). *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth): gendered insights*, WGEA Commissioned Research Report in partnership with the Jumbunna Institute of Education and Research and Diversity Council Australia, Sydney, Australia, accessed at: <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/gari-yala-speak-truth-gendered-insights>.

³ Diversity Council Australia (Brown, C., D’Almada-Remedios, R., Dunbar, K., O’Leary, J., Evans, O., and Rubin, M.) *Class at Work: Does Social Class Make a Difference in the Land of the ‘Fair Go’?*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2020.

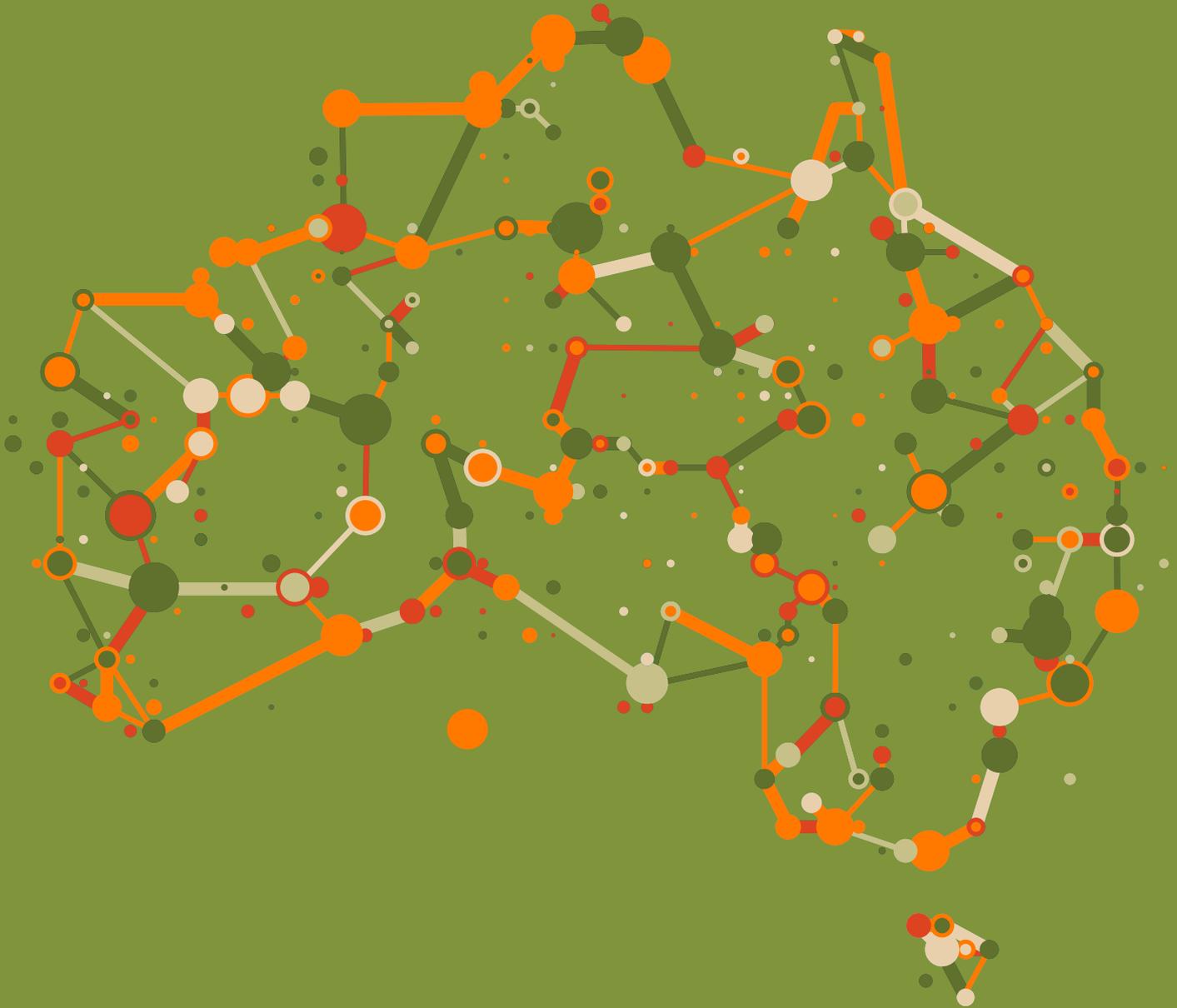
⁴ Diversity Council Australia (Brown, C., O’Leary, J., Trau, R., Legg, A.) *Out At Work: From Prejudice to Pride*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2018, accessed at: <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/out-work-prejudice-pride>.

⁵ Diversity Council Australia (Shireenjit, J., O’Leary, J., Legg, A. and Brown, C.) *Capitalising on Culture and Gender in ASX Leadership*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.dca.org.au/research/project/capitalising-culture-and-gender-asx-leadership>

⁶ Diversity Council Australia, *Culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action*.

Diversity Council Australia (P. Anderson, V. Mapedzahama, A. Kaabel, and J. O’Leary), *Racism at Work: How organisations can stand up to and end workplace racism*, Diversity Council Australia, 2022.

SYNOPSIS



COUNTING CULTURE

TOWARDS A STANDARDISED APPROACH TO MEASURING AND REPORTING ON WORKFORCE CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIA

Foundation sponsor:



Supporting sponsor:



Report embargoed until 18 May 2021.

An electronic executive summary of this research can be found on the [DCA website](#).

Want to use our research?

Materials contained in this document are © Copyright of DCA Ltd, 2021. If you wish to use any content contained in this report, please contact Diversity Council Australia Limited at research@dca.org.au to seek its consent.

Where you wish to refer to our research publicly, it must be correctly attributed to DCA. 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/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*, Sydney, Diversity Council Australia, 2021.

About Diversity Council Australia

Diversity Council Australia (DCA) is the only independent, not-for-profit workplace diversity advisor to business in Australia. We offer a unique knowledge bank of research, practice and expertise across diversity dimensions developed over 30 years of operation. In partnership with our members, our mission is to: lead debate on diversity in the public arena; develop and promote the latest diversity research, thinking and practice; and deliver innovative diversity practice resources and services to enable our members to drive business improvement. DCA works in partnership with members to generate groundbreaking high impact diversity research that drives business improvement through providing evidence-based guidance on how to fully leverage the benefits of a diverse talent pool.

Diversity Council Australia Limited
Hub Customs House, Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone: (02) 8014 4300
www.dca.org.au

Designed by McGill Design Group 0417 730 464

CONTENTS

A Message From DCA	05
Our Thanks	05
A Message From Sponsors	06
An Important Note on Terminology	07
Why This Project	08
Critical Considerations	10
Our <i>Counting Culture</i> Approach	14
When Counting Cultural Diversity, Start With Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Background	18
(CORE) MEASURE 1: Cultural Background	20
(CORE) MEASURE 2: Language	22
(CORE) MEASURE 3: Country of Birth	24
(ADDITIONAL) MEASURE 4: Religion	26
(ADDITIONAL) MEASURE 5: Global Experience	28
Our Methodology	30
Find Out More	30
References	31



**Mapping the cultural diversity
of your workforce – that is,
measuring and reporting on the
background, capabilities and
inclusion/exclusion experiences
of your employees – needs to be
done in a way that is respectful,
accurate, inclusive and well suited
to our contemporary Australian
business context.**



“ DCA is thrilled to present this report – the culmination of over a decade of research and collaboration with Australian organisations to better understand the cultural diversity of our workforces.

Diversity can be a powerful contributor to improved performance and profitability for Australian businesses. But, until now, we haven't had a meaningful and contemporary way to measure and benchmark the cultural diversity (or lack of) in Australian organisations. Being able to effectively 'count culture' in our businesses will help us better reflect the diversity of Australia, and help us to build inclusion by better understanding our workforces. DCA's aspiration is for these measures to become standard across Australian organisations so that, when we do 'count culture', we have a benchmark and it starts to become more meaningful.

This project would not have been possible without the time and generous insights of our Expert Panel and respondents to DCA's surveys.

DCA would also like to acknowledge that this tool is just one part of a broader conversation that we need to keep having about the complexities of cultural diversity, especially race-based language in our workplaces and beyond. DCA is committed to continuing that dialogue in an inclusive and respectful way. ”

LISA ANNESE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DIVERSITY COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

OUR THANKS

We thank and acknowledge the project's Expert Panel. The project has benefitted immensely from Panellists generously sharing their expertise and insights.

Daniel Coase, *Senior Advisor, FECCA*

Joshua Gilbert, *Senior Manager, PwC's Indigenous Consulting, PwC*

Joanne Gilroy, *Board Diversity Manager, Australian Institute of Company Directors*

Joshua Griffin, *Head of Inclusion & Talent Development, SBS*

Judy Lyng, *Senior Manager, Organisational Development, ASIC*

Kate Niedorfer, *Assistant Director, 2021 Census Content, Australian Bureau of Statistics*

Prof Greg Noble, *Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney*

Harleen Oberoi, *Diversity and Workforce Planning Advisor, City of Sydney*

Jen Pallath, *Manager, Diversity and Performance, ASIC*

Susan Pettifer, *Director – People, Performance, Technology, City of Sydney*

Prof Tim Soutphommasane, *Professor of Practice (Sociology and Political Theory), Director, Culture Strategy, University of Sydney*

Nicole Steele, *Director – Workforce Research & Analysis, Australian Public Service Commission*

Elissa Trafford, *Diversity & Inclusion Manager, Settlement Services International*

Caroline Walsh, *Group Manager, Inclusion and Implementation, Australian Public Service Commission*

CITY OF SYDNEY

“ The City of Sydney, with almost half of its residents born overseas, is one of the more diverse councils in NSW. Creating inclusive communities free from racism and bias is incredibly important to the City, so supporting a project to develop a credible way to measure the makeup of our own workforce was an easy decision.

It has been well documented that diversity leads to better business results, innovation and performance, as well as simply being the right thing to do. The *Counting Culture* project gives the City, and other organisations, a clear picture of their workforce, which can be used to guide future action to improve workplace diversity and inclusion.

We're proud to be pioneering the development of a practical tool that helps companies better understand the diversity of their workforce. In adopting a standardised approach, organisations can be confident they are working with accurate benchmarks that can inform action. ”

MONICA BARONE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CITY OF SYDNEY



ASIC
Australian Securities &
Investments Commission

“ ASIC is pleased to partner with DCA on *Counting Culture*. This important work helps to unlock the rich cultural tapestry of the Australian workforce.

Measuring cultural diversity is an important first step towards a deeper understanding of each colourful thread. It empowers organisations to build a full picture of their people and harness diverse perspectives.

At ASIC, we seek diversity in all that we do for a fair, strong and efficient financial system for all Australians. We proudly foster an inclusive culture so that everyone belongs, regardless of difference.

We join our partners in putting the valuable findings of this research into practice. ”

DANIELLE PRESS

COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN SECURITIES AND INVESTMENTS COMMISSION (ASIC)

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Language is a powerful tool for inclusion. DCA and the University of Sydney Business School are committed to language that is respectful, accurate and relevant.

While we endeavoured to use language, questions, and response options that capture the unique situations of all Australian workplace participants, we understand we may not always have been able to achieve this.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In this report, we use the terms 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' and 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' (where the 'and/or' recognises that some individuals belong to both groups) interchangeably with 'Indigenous' to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia. However, we recognise that this approach is not without contention. First, these terms do not reflect the diversity of Indigenous Australians, and it is important to remember that many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people prefer to be known by their specific group or clan names, and some by 'First Nations' or 'First Peoples'. Second, we acknowledge that some Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people do not like being referred to as Indigenous, as this is deemed a catch-all term often used by government to include all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have therefore, wherever possible, referred to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples but, where appropriate and sometimes for brevity, we have used 'Indigenous'. We apologise if this causes any offense – this is not our intention.

Lived Experience. The terminology we have used in this report is based on the generous advice from culturally and non-culturally diverse people, academic experts, industry experts, and peak groups involved with and serving people with the lived experience of being culturally diverse.

Constantly Evolving. It's important to acknowledge that as people's lived experiences change, so too does language. Language is socially constructed, dynamic and constantly evolving. We recognise that one label or description may not capture the breadth and depth of culturally diverse people at work. Our intention has always been to be as succinct as we can, but inclusive of everyone, and apologise for any unintended negative consequences. After significant consultation and careful consideration, we present what is the start of the conversation and invite and encourage further discussions and feedback from you.

Willing to Change. We acknowledge that we may not always get it right but commit ourselves to being open to change, to hearing diverse voices, to listening and continuing to learn from the people we aim to represent.

WHY THIS PROJECT?

To Capitalise on Cultural Diversity, We Need to Measure it

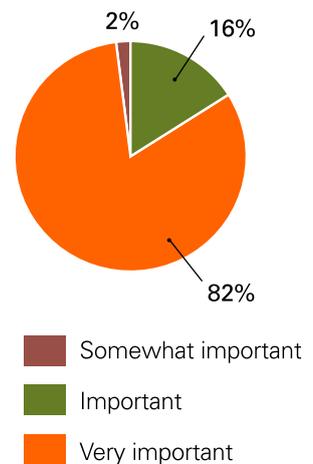
Failure to fully capitalise on cultural diversity represents a missed business opportunity for Australian organisations. Research shows board-level, leadership team, and workforce cultural diversity is linked to enhanced organisational performance and firm profitability.¹ Added to this, we know the Australian 'multicultural market' has an estimated purchasing power of over A\$75 billion per year.²

For Australian organisations, a first critical step in effectively capitalising on cultural diversity is 'counting culture' – that is, measuring the degree and breadth of culturally diverse talent in their leadership team, workforce, customer base, and labour market pool. This enables organisations to assess how well their current workforce and leadership team supports the markets and clients they serve.

Human Resource (HR) and Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) practitioners recognise this. For this project we surveyed almost 300 practitioners and they all believed measuring workforce cultural diversity is important, with a notable 82% saying it was very important.

Yet, they also told us counting culture isn't easy as there is no widely used standardised approach for defining, measuring, and reporting on workforce cultural diversity in a respectful, accurate and inclusive way. Consequently, they are uncertain about which measures to use and how to most meaningfully report on, as well as benchmark, their workforce findings.

How important is it for organisations to measure workforce cultural diversity?

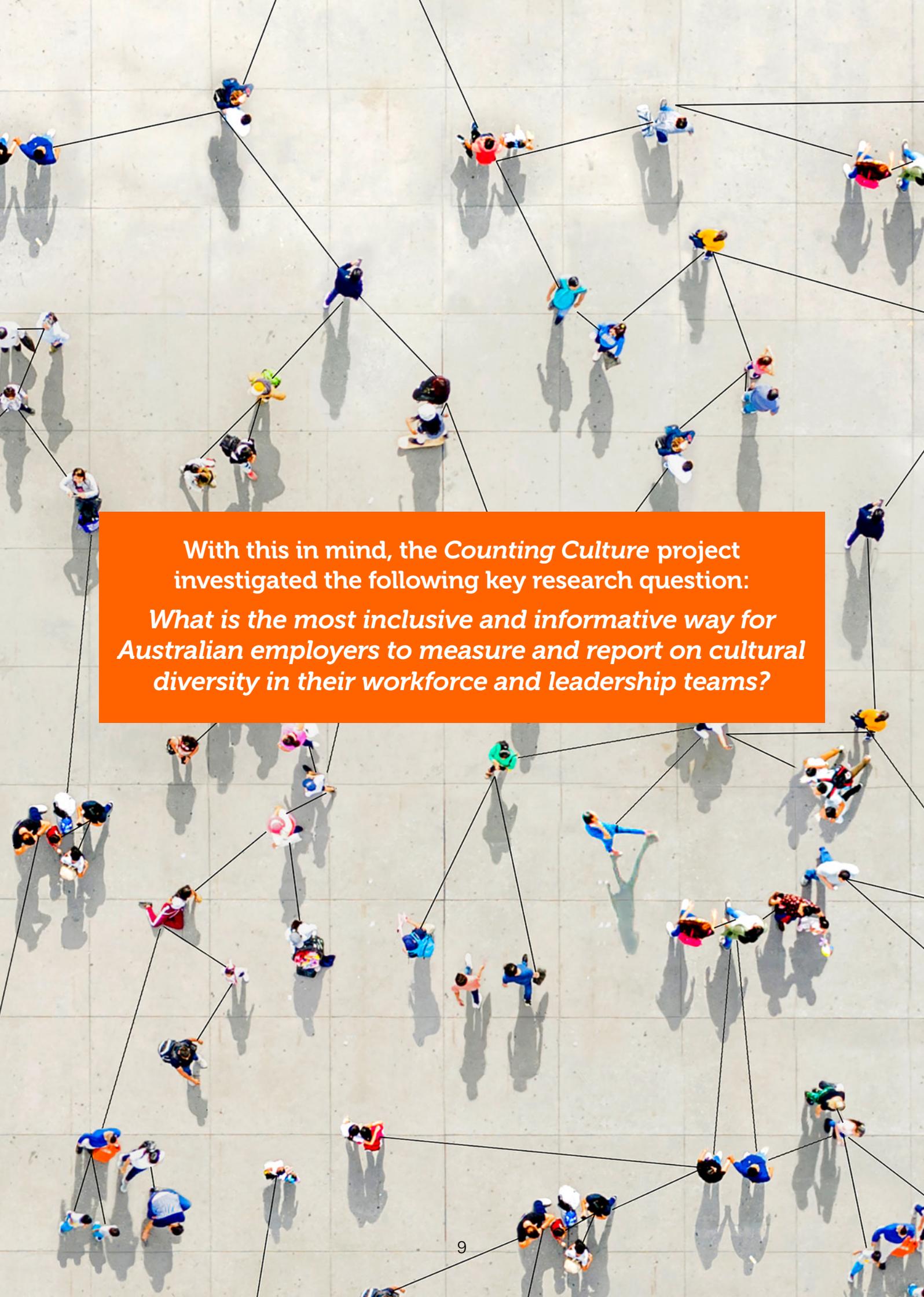


“ People in Australia still often find it strange that we ask questions about workers’ cultural diversity. There is also a lot of discomfort about language and what is the right or wrong thing to say. We need to start having better conversations about this. ”

Our Aspiration

DCA partnered with the University of Sydney Business School, and sponsors City of Sydney Council and ASIC, to undertake this project with the key objectives of:

- encouraging Australian organisations to count workforce and leadership cultural diversity, and
- providing Australian organisations with guidance on how to measure and report on workforce cultural diversity in an inclusive and informative way that suits our contemporary multicultural business context.



With this in mind, the *Counting Culture* project investigated the following key research question:

What is the most inclusive and informative way for Australian employers to measure and report on cultural diversity in their workforce and leadership teams?

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Counting Cultural Diversity is Critical – But Hard!

Cultural Diversity Covers Many Elements. Cultural diversity is more than just where people in a workforce were born – it is made up of many different aspects.

FOR EXAMPLE: An employee may be born in Australia, have Lebanese ancestry, speak English, Arabic and French, and identify as Christian – and these all have relevance to their experience of inclusion at work. Even in relation to cultural background, Australians can find it difficult to nominate just one cultural or ethnic group to which they feel they belong – previous DCA research has shown that 30% of Australian workers identify with more than one cultural background.³

It's Not Just Cultural Diversity that Needs Mapping. While clearly any *Counting Culture* Approach needs to map workforce cultural diversity, to be really useful for employers it also needs to map cultural capability and identify which employees are more or less likely to experience workplace inclusion/exclusion.

Language Constantly Evolves. The terminology and language used to describe race/ethnicity/cultural backgrounds in Australia and globally constantly evolves.

FOR EXAMPLE: In Australia, the term 'New Australians' was coined in 1949 to refer to non-British people who arrived in the wave of immigration following World War II'. The 1970s saw a shift to the term 'non-English-speaking background (NESB) people', which was then replaced in 1996 by 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people' to recognise that cultural diversity goes beyond linguistic factors. More recently, we have seen the term 'culturally diverse people' used, as well as race-based terms imported from the United States such as 'people of colour' (POC) and 'Black, Indigenous and people of colour' (BIPOC).

Some People Want 'Short and Sharp'. Many people prefer to count cultural diversity using a simple broad reporting category such as culturally diverse, CALD, BIPOC, BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic), visible minority or ethnic minority. These terms, they argue, make it easy to understand and communicate progress (or lack thereof) in addressing race-based exclusion and disadvantage. Moreover, some terms (e.g. BIPOC) also help Australians to recognise that race makes a difference – and, specifically, that Whiteness is linked to privilege – and so any *Counting Culture* Approach should reflect this.

“ My personal view is that acronyms like these make it easier for companies to understand and start to track progress. So, if this our aim ... then this is the way to go. This could be a first step, and then go into a conversation about race from here. ”

Other People Want Detail and Nuance. Others are opposed to such simple broad output categories, viewing them as contributing to people from some cultural groups being consistently 'othered'. They argue that the categories are too broad to be meaningful and are not relevant to the Australian context.

“ CALD rubs me the wrong way ... We need to understand that there is a complexity behind it, instead of putting it into an acronym. ”

“ How do you use acronyms and terms without reducing the person who they are applied to? Everyone besides a white straight Australian male is a minority. ”

(Our Australian) Context is Critical

At DCA, we have spent over a decade researching how to best measure and report on workforce diversity. One thing we know from this is that Australian organisations require an Australia-specific approach if they are to collect and report on workforce cultural diversity data in a meaningful and inclusive way.

The language that works in surveys in Australia is the language that reflects and respects our history – a history marked by British colonisation, various migration waves post colonisation, and entrenched racism against First Nations peoples, as well as people of colour, migrants, refugees, and their collective descendants.⁴

Our history means that it is simply not possible to import a workforce cultural diversity metrics approach from another country without Australian workers experiencing this approach as disrespectful and irrelevant.

While much of the content in this Guide will be of use to employers outside Australia, the recommended definitions, language, questions, response options, and reporting categories are designed for Australian organisations – they are not intended to be implemented ‘as is’ in global or other national contexts.

Definitions are Critical

Despite the popularity of diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the business arena, there is often lack of clarity about what organisations mean when they talk about it.

DCA Definitions of Diversity and Inclusion



Diversity is the Mix of People in Your Organisation. This includes all the differences between people in how they identify in relation to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, age, caring responsibilities, class, cultural background, disability, faith, gender, and sexual orientation (Social Identity), and their profession, education, and organisational role (Professional Identity).⁵



Inclusion is Getting This Mix to Work. Inclusion occurs when a diversity of people (e.g., of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders) feel respected and connected, and have the ability to progress and contribute in their organisation.⁶

DCA Definition of Cultural Diversity

In this project we were unable to find a widely accepted and used standard definition of cultural diversity. This oversight has created confusion about what cultural diversity refers to and therefore hindered measuring and reporting in many organisations. Accordingly, below we provide our own definition of cultural diversity, developed in consultation with our Expert Panel (noting that this definition is specific to Australia).



Cultural diversity means having a mix of people from different cultural backgrounds – it can include differences in cultural/ethnic identity (how we identify ourselves and how others identify us), language, country of birth, religion, heritage/ancestry, national origin, and/or race and colour.

This definition of cultural diversity recognises that:



Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples have a unique position as First Nations people in Australia.



Cultural diversity includes both *objective and subjective aspects* of people's background.



Cultural diversity has *multiple aspects*.



Cultural diversity includes *cultural identity*.

Should We Move to Race-Based Reporting in Australia?

Calls for 'Race' to be Reclaimed. In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement exploded onto centre stage in the United States and dispersed quickly across the globe, including to Australia. This backdrop meant that many people we spoke with as part of this project called for Australian organisations to turn away from the sanitised language of cultural diversity, CALD and NESB in preference for race-based language that acknowledges colour. They valued terms used overseas, such as BIPOC (US), BAME (UK) or visible minority (Canada), and saw them as important for helping Australians to understand that race makes a difference – that Whiteness is linked to privilege and structural inequities, and so any *Counting Culture* Approach should reflect this.

Calls for 'Cultural Diversity' to Continue. Strikingly, just as many other people we spoke with thought terms such as 'cultural diversity' and 'CALD' should be retained and viewed race-based terms disparagingly, noting:

- There is no generally accepted definition or understanding of who is and is not a person of colour and/or Black in Australia and creating agreement would require extensive community consultation.
- Who is and is not a minority in Australia very much depends upon the context – some cultural backgrounds may be a minority in one workplace setting but a majority in another.
- The terms 'culturally diverse' and 'CALD' recognise that race/colour are not the only determinants of cultural-diversity-related workplace exclusion – other aspects also play a part (e.g. accent, name, dress, religious practices, recency of arrival).

What this Project Revealed. In this project, we explored race-based language, including testing the term 'person of colour' in a pilot survey. We found that, while some workers identified as being a person of colour, there were usually too few who identified in this manner to enable meaningful analysis. Moreover, even within a particular cultural group, some people did while others did not identify as being a person of colour – for example, many people from different Asian cultural backgrounds mentioned they saw themselves as a person of colour, but an equal amount of people from those same backgrounds did not.

It became clear that, while there may well be a role for using race-based language when reporting on workforce diversity in Australia, it is contentious. And to be widely accepted and understood it would require extensive national consultation with community and industry groups.

OUR COUNTING CULTURE APPROACH

Criteria for Developing our Approach

Our *Counting Culture* Approach was designed to be *practical for employers* (even if they had limited in-house resources and expertise to count cultural diversity) and *inclusive for employees* (i.e., experienced as respectful and meaningful).

Specifically, our Approach was designed to meet the following criteria:

1. Enable Australian Organisations to Measure, Report and (where possible) Benchmark on:

- workforce *Cultural Diversity* (i.e., cultural mix/cultural diversity profile of their workforce)
- workforce *Cultural Capabilities* (i.e., their workforce's global experience and languages spoken)
- workplace *Inclusion/Exclusion Experiences* (i.e., identify which cultural-diversity-related groups are more likely to experience workplace inclusion and/or exclusion).

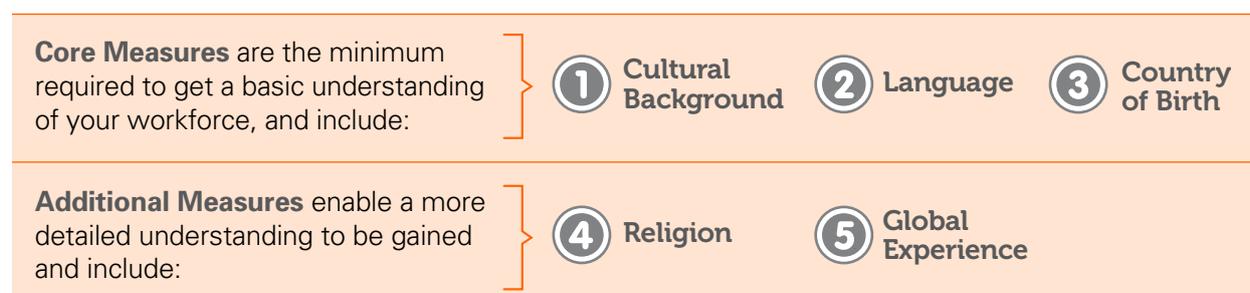
2. Align with the 6 Counting Culture Principles:⁷

- *Recognise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique position* – Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers have unique workplace experiences that differ from other culturally diverse colleagues.
- *Remember identity is key* – how we see ourselves and how others see us.
- *Use multiple measures* – our cultural identity is made up of many aspects (e.g., cultural identity, country of birth, ancestry, main language spoken at home, religious affiliation).
- *Simple is good, but not too simple* – while broad response options and categories can make analysis and reporting of cultural diversity data quicker, there is a very real risk of missing the real story of cultural diversity in your organisation.
- *Think benchmarking* – look for questions and response options that allow your data to be benchmarked against the Australian community, your industry, or key markets.
- *Engage with intersectionality* – understanding how our cultural background interacts with other parts of our identity (e.g., our age, gender) makes counting culture more meaningful.

What Measures Should My Organisation Use?

Following the above criteria and guided by the ABS approach, we recommend organisations use **Core Measures**, supplemented where space and resources allow by **Additional Measures**.

In all, there are 5 Measures. These are listed in order of priority so that if, your organisation only has space to ask 2 questions on cultural diversity, we suggest these be Measures 1 and 2.



For each Measure, we have suggested a main question that organisations could use to ask about people's backgrounds in the most inclusive and meaningful way. Two Measures (Language, Country of Birth) also include supplementary questions that organisations could use if there is space to dive deeper into their workforce's cultural diversity.

What Response Options Should My Organisation Use?

We include a full list of response options (recommended), as well as a shorter list (to accommodate organisations with constraints and limitations in their data collection capabilities). We recommend organisations use the full (long) version of response options wherever possible as this:

- is typically experienced by employees as being more inclusive,
- provides more ways to investigate the data and therefore reveal deeper insights, and
- minimises time-intensive manual coding of response options.

What Reporting Categories Should My Organisation Use?

Counting Culture Guiding Principles for Using Reporting Categories	
Ensure reporting is respectful of First Peoples in Australia	The percentage of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander workers should be reported on as a stand-alone grouping and, wherever possible, not collapsed into other groupings.
Be respectful of privacy	When reporting findings make sure you do not accidentally reveal respondents’ identities. This can happen if you report very specific findings. For example, reporting that in a particular department there are 3 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or Muslim or LGBTIQ+ employees may result in these employees being publicly identified as such in their workplace even though this was not their wish.
Use categories that allow you to map diversity, capability, and inclusion	For example, you could report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of workers with an Asian cultural background (<i>diversity</i>), • % of workers who are multilingual (<i>capability</i>), and • % of multilingual workers versus % of workers who only speak English who feel they are treated fairly at work (<i>inclusion</i>).
Remember that size matters when reporting	<p>Larger organisations with larger sample sizes will be able to explore the data using both specific and broad reporting categories. Smaller organisations with smaller sample sizes are likely to be limited to using mainly broad reporting categories.</p> <p>For example, a larger organisation may be able to report using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specific ethnicities (e.g., % of workers born in China), • narrow categories (e.g., % of workers born in North-East Asia), • broad categories (e.g., % of workers born in Asia), • broader categories (e.g., % of workers born in a non-main English-speaking country⁸), and • broadest categories (e.g., % of workers born overseas). <p>A smaller organisation may only be able to report using the above broad or broadest categories. Using more specific categories may accidentally breach respondent anonymity and/or result in statistical analyses comparing different groupings being compromised by having too few respondents in each group.</p>

Counting Culture Guiding Principles for Using Reporting Categories (continued).

<p>Use narrow categories to map diversity</p>	<p>Reporting categories for describing workforce cultural diversity should be the narrowest groupings that are meaningful for that organisation – and retain respondent confidentiality.</p>
<p>Use broader categories to map inclusion</p>	<p>Reporting categories for investigating workplace inclusion may need to be broad to ensure statistical analyses comparing different categories have enough respondents in each category. For example, for many organisations, comparing the inclusion experiences using specific ethnicities (e.g., Chinese) or narrow categories (e.g., North- East Asian) would result in too few respondents in each group to enable meaningful statistical analysis. Broader categories (e.g., Asian or non-main English-speaking background) are more likely to enable meaningful statistical analyses to be conducted.</p>
<p>Avoid reporting categories that are divisive</p>	<p>Reporting categories need to reveal workplace inclusion without being too simplistic and without othering particular employee segments – broad reporting categories can run the risk of being too broad to be meaningful, while also inadvertently creating binary categories that pit groups against each other. This is why we have avoided using ‘culturally diverse’ as a reporting category in this Guide (<i>see below</i>).</p>

“ ‘Culturally diverse’ is not specific enough. It’s like an anything bucket that all non-Anglo Australians go into. ”

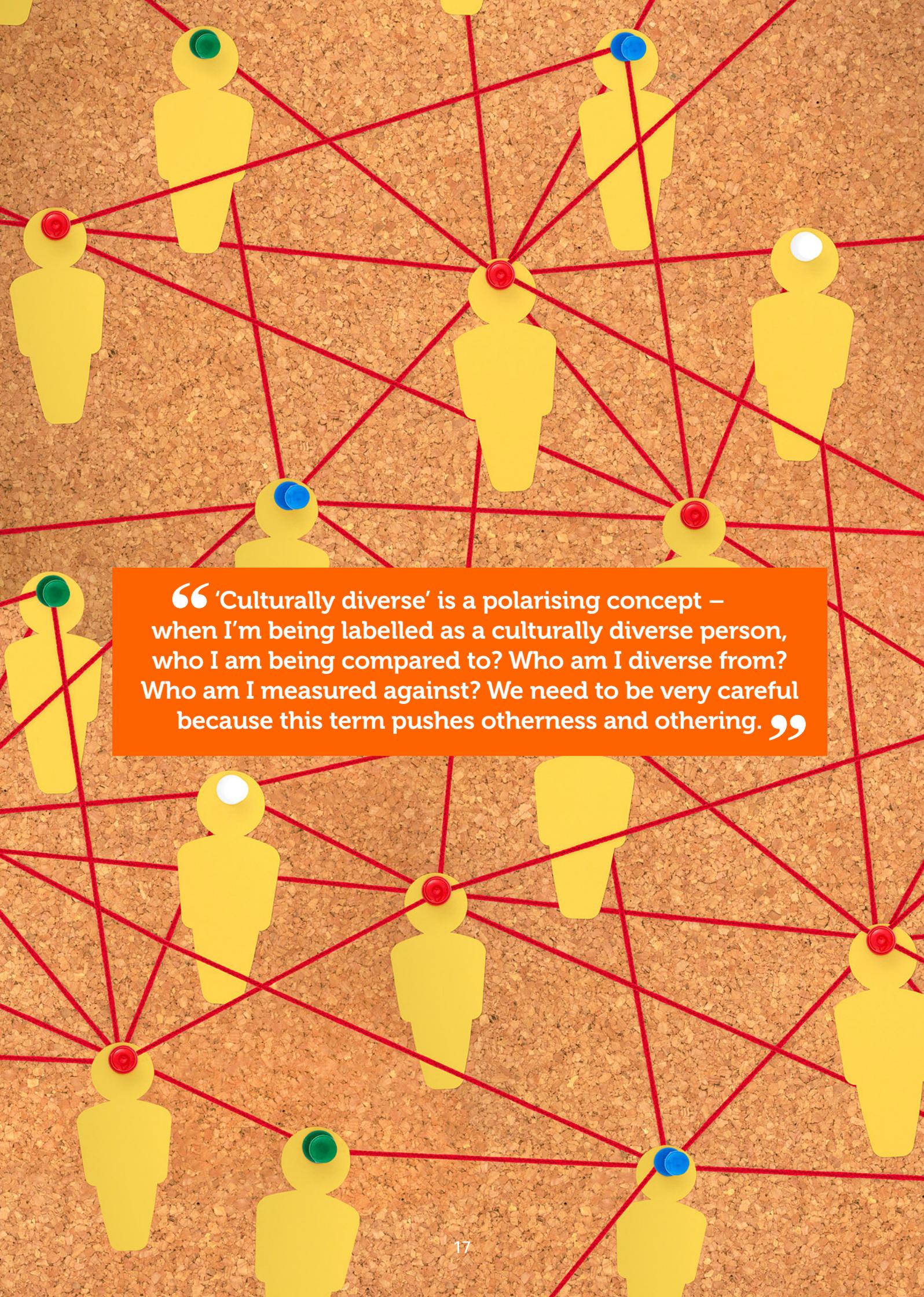
Should We Use ‘Culturally Diverse’ as a Reporting Category?

Our consultations indicated that it is preferable not to use an umbrella term such as ‘culturally diverse’⁹ to investigate and report on workforce cultural diversity and workplace inclusion and exclusion.

In general, consultation participants we spoke with indicated it is more respectful and meaningful to investigate and report on the experiences of particular groups such as workers from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and non-main English-speaking cultural backgrounds, multilingual workers, workers affiliated with a non-Christian religion and so on.

‘Culturally diverse’ was seen as being too broad to be meaningful and potentially divisive.





“ ‘Culturally diverse’ is a polarising concept – when I’m being labelled as a culturally diverse person, who I am being compared to? Who am I diverse from? Who am I measured against? We need to be very careful because this term pushes otherness and othering. ”

WHEN COUNTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY, START WITH ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BACKGROUND

When starting to count cultural diversity, organisations should first include a stand-alone question about workers' Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background.

This emphasises the centrality of Indigenous issues to any diversity and inclusion work. Importantly, it also enables employees who identify as, for instance, being Aboriginal and as having a Chinese cultural background to not have to choose between indicating they are 'Australian Aboriginal' or 'Chinese'.

Question and Response Options

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

(Please select one only)

Source: This question has been adapted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, both Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Australian Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Torres Strait Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |

Source: These response options have been adapted from the ABS.

Why 'Australian' Aboriginal?

HR/D&I practitioners recommended 'Australian Aboriginal' be used in the question and response options as they had found that staff who were aboriginal in other national contexts (e.g., Maori in New Zealand) sometimes ticked 'Aboriginal' unless the 'Australian' was also added. We acknowledge this is not without contention as First Peoples preceded the notion of Australia.

Supplementary Question and Response Options

We acknowledge the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the Australian First Nations. So if space allows and coding is manageable, organisations should include the below open text box question as a supplementary question.

(If you know) Which Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander group(s) do you identify with?

This might be a tribal group, language group, clan, mission, regional group, or some other group.

Source: This question was developed by DCA–Jumbunna Institute, Gari Yala Survey, 2020.



“ We want to recognise the unique position of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples as First Nations in Australia, while also acknowledging that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people may have additional cultural backgrounds. ”

Reporting Categories

We recommend an approach adapted from the ABS’s classification structure. This is a hierarchical structure based on 2 levels, specific and broad, as summarised in the table below.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Background			
Specific	4 x specific backgrounds (from ABS)	}	1. Australian Aboriginal 2. Torres Strait Islander 3. Both Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 4. Not Indigenous Australian
Broad	2 x broad backgrounds (from ABS)	}	1. Indigenous Australian 2. Not Indigenous Australian
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Group			
Specific	Groups nominated (could be tribal group, language group, clan, mission, regional group, or some other self-described group)		



(CORE) MEASURE 1: CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Cultural background is the most meaningful and important measure of cultural diversity out of all possible measures, according to the practitioners, workers, and experts we consulted as part of this project.

Expert Panel, Consultation Survey, and Think Tank participants told us that this is because cultural background incorporates ethnicity, ancestry, and cultural identity, and is a term that is generally well understood and frequently used by Australian workers.

They also emphasised the importance of allowing workers to select multiple cultural/ethnic backgrounds – something supported by DCA research which has found that between 30% and 70% of Australian workers identify with more than one cultural background.¹⁰

 **30-70%**
of Australian workers identify with **more than one cultural background**

“ I am one of the first in my family to be born in Australia. Whenever I fill out a form asking for only one cultural background I have to stop and think – which one of my cultural backgrounds do I have to sacrifice? Which one am I betraying? It brings about a lot of guilt for something as simple as a question on a form. ”

Question and Response Options

How would you describe your cultural background? (Please select up to 2 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.

Source: This question has been adapted from the New Zealand Census.

Full List of Responses	Short List of Responses
<input type="checkbox"/> The full list of cultural/ethnic groups listed in the <u>Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG)</u> (long version, approx. 278) <input type="checkbox"/> Other cultural/ethnic group, please specify <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> The most common cultural/ethnic groups from the ASCCEG recorded in the latest Australian Census (e.g., most common 200, 100, 50, 20 or 10) <input type="checkbox"/> Other cultural/ethnic group, please specify <input type="checkbox"/> Unsure <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

Should 'Australian' Be Included as a Cultural Group?

Our Expert Panellists and Think Tank participants told us that it was important to include 'Australian' as a cultural group in the response options. As a third of the population identified as Australian in the last Census,¹¹ not including it as an option means many employees may instead choose a cultural/ethnic group they do not strongly identify with, inflating the cultural diversity recorded in your workforce.

For example, an employee whose family has been in Australia for 6 generations would have to default to a cultural/ethnic group they may not feel attached to if Australian wasn't listed.

Reporting Categories

We recommend an approach adapted from the ABS's ASCCEG classification structure. This is a hierarchical structure based on 4 levels, from most specific to broadest, as summarised below.

Cultural Background	
Specific	278 x specific cultural/ethnic groups (from the ASCCEG)
Narrow	<p>14 x narrow cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ASCCEG broad and narrow groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous Australian 2. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian) 3. New Zealander (not Maori) 4. Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian 5. Anglo-European 6. North-West European (excl. Anglo-European) 7. South-East European 8. South-East Asian 9. North-East Asian 10. Southern and Central Asian 11. North American 12. South and Central American and Caribbean Islander 13. North African and Middle Eastern 14. Sub-Saharan African
Broad	<p>8 x broad cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ASCCEG broad groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indigenous Australian 2. Australian (excl. Indigenous Australian) 3. New Zealander and Pacific Islander 4. Anglo-European 5. Other European (excl. Anglo-European) 6. Asian 7. Americas 8. African or Middle Eastern
Broadest	<p>2 x broadest cultural/ethnic groups (adapted from ABS 'Main English-Speaking Country of Birth' approach)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Main English-speaking background 2. Non-main English-speaking background

Looking for the above classification system of cultural/ethnic groups?

DCA members can request this classification system (in Excel form) from DCA.

FOR EXAMPLE: For a respondent who identifies as having a Vietnamese cultural background, their cultural background would be classified as **Vietnamese** at the specific level, **South-East Asian** at the narrow level, **Asian** at the broad level and **non-main English-speaking background** at the broadest level.



(CORE) MEASURE 2: LANGUAGE

The Australian population is language rich – over 300 languages were recorded as being spoken in Australia in the 2016 Census.¹²

For some, linguistic diversity may come from migration – being a first-generation migrant to Australia or having studied or worked abroad for some time. For others, it may have come through being born in Australia but raised using multiple languages due to their family’s heritage, or learning other languages through schools/ universities, friends or living in an international household. In the workplace, such linguistic diversity should be considered an asset, but to benefit from it, it needs to be identified, recognised, and rewarded.

Question and Response Options

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

Source: This question has been adapted from the New Zealand Census and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey.

Full List of Responses	Short List of Responses
<input type="checkbox"/> English only	<input type="checkbox"/> English only
<input type="checkbox"/> The full list of languages from the Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) (long version, approx. 400)	<input type="checkbox"/> The most common languages from the ASCL recorded in the latest Australian Census (e.g., 200, 100, 50, 20, or 10 most common)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other language, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Other language, please specify

Supplementary Question and Response Options

If your organisation has more space and can ask a second question about language ability, we recommend asking about the ability to *read* in other languages. For response options, use those referred to above, adapted from the ASCL.

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

Source: This question has been adapted from the HILDA Survey.

Why Move Away from ‘Main Language’ and ‘At Home’?

Asking about ‘main language’ can inadvertently underestimate the degree of linguistic diversity in a workforce – many workers are in family and household situations in which English is a second language for them but it is still the ‘main language’ they use.

“ I wouldn’t use main language to capture cultural diversity. You’d miss too many people like that and too much human capital. Main language doesn’t allow complexity – not everyone in one family can speak one main language. ”

Many national and international surveys include the phrase ‘at home’ in questions about language. ‘At home’ is seen as a proxy for ‘native’ or ‘first’ language, or ‘mother tongue’, meaning the language the respondent is probably most fluent and comfortable in. Our Expert Panellists and Think Tank participants, however, argued that ‘at home’ is an outdated concept due to the existence of many non-traditional (single or shared) and international households.

“ I speak English at home with my partner, but my native tongue is Spanish. By adding the ‘at home’ it makes me answer English. But it does not reflect my multilingual identity, and my first identity as being a Spanish speaker. ”

We recommend using ‘language of everyday conversations’ as done in the New Zealand Census and in the HILDA survey. We have found that asking about everyday conversations is more likely to capture employees who are second- or third-generation migrants, skilled first-generation immigrants fluent in English, or other respondents whose everyday social interactions require using multiple languages.

Reporting Categories

We recommend an approach adapted from the classification structure used by the ABS in the ASCL. This is a hierarchical structure based on 4 categories – specific, narrow, broad, and broadest.

Languages Used (Spoken/Read)			
Specific	~400 x specific languages (from the ASCL)		
Narrow	10 x narrow language groups (adapted from ASCL broad groups, expanded)	1. English 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages 3. Maori, Melanesian, Papuan, Micronesian, and Polynesian languages 4. North-West European (excl. English) languages 5. South-East European languages	6. South-East Asian languages 7. North-East Asian languages 8. Southern and Central Asian languages 9. African languages 10. Other languages
Broad	7 x broad language groups (adapted from ASCL broad groups, expanded)	1. English 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages 3. Pacific Islander languages	4. European (excl. English) languages 5. Asian languages 6. African languages 7. Other languages
Broadest	2 x broadest language groups	1. English only	2. Multilingual

Looking for the above classification system of languages?

DCA members can request this classification system (in Excel form) from DCA.

FOR EXAMPLE: Someone who selects Latvian would have their language classified as **Latvian** at the specific level, **South-East European** at the narrow level, **European** at the broad level, and **Multilingual** at the broadest level.



(CORE) MEASURE 3: COUNTRY OF BIRTH

By far the most common way of asking about cultural diversity in national census and employee data collections in Australia and overseas is to ask about country of birth.

This measure is easy to use and allows for national and international benchmarking. A word of warning though – to be meaningful, country of birth should be used with other measures. To illustrate, DCA's *Leading in the Asian Century* research¹³ found that, while 10% of Australian workers are born in Asia, a much larger 17% actually identify as Asian (in part or whole).

10% of Australian workers are **born in Asia**

WHEREAS

17% actually **identify as Asian**

“ If you are Tongan, born in NZ and migrate to Australia – what do you capture if you only ask about country of birth? ”

Question and Response Options

What country were you born in? (Please select one only)

Source: This question has been adapted from the ABS.

Full List of Responses	Short List of Responses
<input type="checkbox"/> Australia	<input type="checkbox"/> Australia
<input type="checkbox"/> The full list of countries from the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (long version, approx. 299)	<input type="checkbox"/> The full list of countries from the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (long version, approx. 299)
<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure	<input type="checkbox"/> Unsure
<input type="checkbox"/> Other country, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Other country, please specify

Source: These response options have been adapted from the SACC.

Supplementary Question and Response Options

Being born overseas can indicate a migration background. It is therefore important to capture the context and settlement experience through an additional question. 'Time of arrival' is a common measure used in datasets to provide context for country of birth. This measure is a good proxy for understanding how well migrants have settled in Australia.¹⁴

When did you first come to Australia to live for 6 months or more?

Source: This question has been adapted from the HILDA Survey.

- Less than 1 year ago 1 to 4 years ago 5 to 9 years ago
 10 to 19 years ago More than 20 years ago

Source: Developed by the Counting Culture project team, based on analysis of the settlement/integration literature.

Reporting Categories

We recommend an approach adapted from the ABS's ASCCEG classification structure. This is a hierarchical structure based on 5 levels, from most specific to broadest, as summarised below.

Country of Birth	
Specific	~299 x specific countries (from the SACC)
Narrow	<p>13 x narrow country groups (adapted from SACC broad groups, expanded)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia 2. New Zealand 3. Melanesia, Papua New Guinea, Micronesia, and Polynesia 4. UK and Republic of Ireland 5. North-West Europe (excl. UK and Republic of Ireland) 6. South-East Europe 7. South-East Asia 8. North-East Asia 9. Southern and Central Asia 10. North America 11. South and Central America and Caribbean Islands 12. North Africa and Middle East 13. Sub-Saharan Africa
Broad	<p>7 x broad country groups (adapted from SACC broad groups, condensed)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia 2. New Zealand and Pacific Islands 3. UK and Republic of Ireland 4. Europe (excl. UK and Republic of Ireland) 5. Asia 6. Americas 7. Africa and Middle East
Broader	<p>3 x broader country groups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia 2. Main English-speaking country (i.e., America, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa, Wales) 3. Non-main English-speaking country
Broadest	<p>2 x broadest country groups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Born in Australia 2. Born Overseas

FOR EXAMPLE: A respondent born in Croatia would have their country of birth classified as Croatia (specific), South-East Europe (narrow), Europe at (broad), non-main English-speaking country (broader), and Born Overseas (broadest).

Following the approach of the ABS, reporting on time of arrival places respondents into the two broad groups of recent migrants (arrived less than 10 years ago) and longer standing migrants (arrived 10 or more years ago).¹⁵ The more detailed option is to report on the five specific time periods as listed below.

Time of Arrival	
Specific	<p>5 x specific time periods</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Less than 1 year ago (recently arrived) 2. 1 to 4 years ago (early settling period) 3. 5 to 9 years ago (settled) 4. 10 to 19 years ago (likely permanent residents or citizens) 5. More than 20 years ago (residence in Australia spans a generation)
Broad	<p>2 x broad time periods</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recent migrant (arrived less than 10 years ago) 2. Longer standing migrant (arrived 10 or more years ago)



(ADDITIONAL) MEASURE 4: RELIGION

Religion can be an important part of cultural identity. For some, religion can be intertwined with their cultural or ethnic background, while for others it is not.

For example, someone may have a Greek-Australian cultural background and identify as being Greek Orthodox (whether they actively practise or not) while another person may have a Greek-Australian cultural background and identify as having no religion. At the same time, other individuals may consider their cultural background and their religion to be completely separate while still equally significant to their cultural identity – for instance a Greek-Australian of Islamic faith.

Question and Response Options

What is your religion? (Please select one only)

Source: This question has been adapted from the ABS.

Full List of Responses	Short List of Responses
<input type="checkbox"/> No religion <input type="checkbox"/> The full list of religious groups from the Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) (long version, approx. 131) <input type="checkbox"/> Other religious group, please specify <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/> No religion <input type="checkbox"/> The most common religious groups from the ASCRG recorded in the latest Australian Census (e.g., 50, 20 or 10 most common) <input type="checkbox"/> Other religious group, please specify <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say

Source: These response options have been adapted from the ASCRG.

Reporting Categories

We suggest an approach adapted from the classification structure used by the ABS in the ASCRG. This approach takes a hierarchical structure based on 3 levels varying in depth of detail.

Religion			
Specific	~131 specific religious groups (from the ASCRG)		
Narrow	9 x narrow religious groups (adapted from ASCRG broad groups, expanded) <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: 3em; vertical-align: middle;">}</td> <td> 1. Aboriginal Traditional Religions and Spiritualities 2. Buddhism 3. Christianity 4. Hinduism 5. Islam 6. Judaism 7. Sikhism 8. Other religions 9. No religion </td> </tr> </table>	}	1. Aboriginal Traditional Religions and Spiritualities 2. Buddhism 3. Christianity 4. Hinduism 5. Islam 6. Judaism 7. Sikhism 8. Other religions 9. No religion
}	1. Aboriginal Traditional Religions and Spiritualities 2. Buddhism 3. Christianity 4. Hinduism 5. Islam 6. Judaism 7. Sikhism 8. Other religions 9. No religion		
Broad	3 x broad religious groups (from ABS) <table style="display: inline-table; vertical-align: middle;"> <tr> <td style="font-size: 3em; vertical-align: middle;">}</td> <td> 1. No religion 2. Christian religions 3. Non-Christian religions </td> </tr> </table>	}	1. No religion 2. Christian religions 3. Non-Christian religions
}	1. No religion 2. Christian religions 3. Non-Christian religions		

Looking for the above classification system of religions?

DCA members can request this classification system (in Excel form) from DCA.



A respondent identifying as Taoist would be classified as Taoist at the specific level, other religions at the narrow level, and non-Christian religions at the broad level.





(ADDITIONAL) MEASURE 5: GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

Global experience, like multilingual ability, is a cultural capability of value to the individual and the organisation within which they work.

Question and Response Options

Have you lived and/or worked in any country other than Australia for more than 6 months?
(Please select as many as apply)

Source: This question has been adapted from DCA's *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of Professional Services Firms research report*¹⁶

Full List of Responses	Short List of Responses
<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the full list of countries from the <u>Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC)</u> (long version, approx. 299, excluding Australia)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the most common birthplaces from the SACC recorded in the latest Australian Census (e.g., 200, 100, 50, 20, or 10 most common)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other country, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Other country, please specify

Source: These response options have been adapted from the SACC.

Many members of the Australian workforce have lived and/or worked abroad, including in multiple countries.

Why more than 6 months?

While expatriate adjustment is an individual matter, it has been found that, on average, expatriates begin to grow accustomed to their new home within 6 to 12 months after arriving.

It is around this time that daily activities become routine and the customs of the host country are accepted.¹⁷ Therefore, we assume that employees who have spent 6 months or more abroad have significant local knowledge, which can be considered an organisational asset.



Expatriates begin to **grow accustomed** to their new home within

6-12 months

Reporting Categories

We suggest an approach adapted from the classification structure used by the ABS in the SACC. This approach takes a hierarchical structure based on 4 levels varying in depth of detail.

Global Experience	
Specific	~299 x specific countries (from the SACC)
Narrow	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>13 x narrow country groups (adapted from the SACC broad groups, expanded)</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia only 2. New Zealand 3. Melanesia, Papua New Guinea, Micronesia, and Polynesia 4. UK and Republic of Ireland 5. North-West Europe excl. UK and Republic of Ireland) 6. South-East Europe </div> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. South-East Asia 8. North-East Asia 9. Southern and Central Asia 10. North America 11. South and Central America and Caribbean Islands 12. North Africa and Middle East 13. Sub-Saharan Africa </div> </div>
Broad	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>7 x broad country groups (adapted from the SACC broad groups, condensed)</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Australia only 2. New Zealand and Pacific Islands 3. UK and Republic of Ireland </div> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Europe (excl. UK and Republic of Ireland) 5. Asia 6. Americas 7. Africa and Middle East </div> </div>
Broadest	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="flex: 1;"> <p>2 x broadest experience groups</p> </div> <div style="flex: 1; border-left: 1px solid black; padding-left: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Any global experience 2. No global experience </div> </div>

Looking for the above classification system of countries?

DCA members can request this classification system (in Excel form) from DCA.

FOR EXAMPLE: A respondent who has lived or worked in India would have their global experience classified as **India** at the specific level, **Southern and Central Asia** at the narrow level, **Asia** at the broad level, and **any global experience** at the broadest level.

OUR METHODOLOGY

The *Counting Culture* project investigated the following key research question: *What is the most inclusive and informative way for Australian employers to measure and report on cultural diversity in their workforce and leadership teams?*

To answer this, we drew on several key sources of evidence, as follows:

- **a literature review** of national and international academic and industry/government approaches currently used to define, measure, and report on cultural diversity.
 - **a consultation survey** of 293 D&I and HR practitioners, and others with experience in measuring cultural diversity, to explore Australian organisations' current approaches and respective benefits/limitations.
 - **8 think tanks** with 90 participants (including D&I and HR practitioners and staff) from 34 different organisations across Australia to more deeply investigate current approaches to defining, measuring, and reporting on workforce cultural diversity; including the most inclusive questions, response options, and reporting categories.
 - **a pilot survey** of shortlisted cultural diversity-related questions, response options, and reporting categories tested in a sample of over 1200 employees in DCA member organisations.
 - **expert panel consultations** with experts immersed in the field in industry, government, and academia at each of the above key stages of the project to help shape the final *Counting Culture* Approach.
-

FIND OUT MORE

DCA members can access the full *Counting Culture* Report by logging into the Members Only area of the DCA website. The full report includes detailed information on:

- critical considerations when counting culture
- rationale for questions, response options, and reporting categories
- useful resources
- research methodology and research references
- glossary.

REFERENCES

1. V. Hunt, D. Layton, and S. Prince, *Diversity Matters*, London, McKinsey & Company, 2015; T. Barta, M. Kleiner and T. Neumann, 'Is There a Payoff From Top-Team Diversity?', *McKinsey Quarterly*, April 1, 2012, accessed at <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/is-there-a-payoff-from-top-team-diversity>; R. Labelle et al., 'Ethics, Diversity Management, and Financial Reporting Quality', *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 93, no. 2, pp 335–353.; Q.M. Roberson and Q.M. & H-J. Park, 'Examining the Link Between Diversity and Firm Performance: The Effects of Diversity Reputation and Leader Racial Diversity', *Group & Organizational Management*, vol. 32, 2007, pp. 548–560.; UK Government Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, *BIS Occasional Paper No. 4, The Business Case For Equality And Diversity: A Survey Of The Academic Literature*, 2013; O. Richard et. al., 'Employing an Innovation Strategy in Racially Diverse Workforces,' *Group and Organization Management*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2003, pp. 107–126.
2. MultiCall Pty Ltd, 'Marketers Are Missing the Multicultural Opportunity', *Marketing*, 14 August 2013.
3. DCA, *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of Cultural Diversity amongst Australian Senior Executives and their Immediate Pipeline*, Sydney, DCA, 2011; DCA, *Leading the Asian Century: A National Scorecard of Australia's Workforce Asia Capability*, Sydney, DCA, 2015.
4. R. Steinwall, 'Here's why Black Lives Matter resonates in Australia', *Canberra Times*, 10 July 2020, accessed at: <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6826632/heres-why-black-lives-matter-resonates-in-australia/>.
5. DCA, *D&I Planning*, accessed at: <https://www.dca.org.au/di-planning>.
6. DCA (J. O'Leary, G. Russell and J. Tilly), *Building Inclusion: An Evidence-Based Model of Inclusive Leadership*, Sydney, DCA, 2015.
7. DCA (J. O'Leary and D. Groutsis), *Counting Culture: Six Principles for Measuring the Cultural Diversity of Your Workplace*, Sydney, DCA, 2019.
8. 'Non-main English-speaking country' refers to countries other than United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, United States of America, and South Africa (as determined by ABS).
9. In Australia, 'culturally diverse' is commonly used to refer to people with a non-Anglo-Celtic background (i.e., people not from English, Irish, Scottish, or Welsh cultural backgrounds).
10. DCA (J. O'Leary and G. Russell), *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of Cultural Diversity Amongst Australian Senior Executives and Their Immediate Pipeline*, Sydney, DCA, 2011; DCA (J. O'Leary), *Leading in the Asian Century: A National Scorecard of Australia's Workforce Asia Capability*, Sydney, DCA, 2015.
11. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia – Stories from the Census*, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Data%20Summary~30>.
12. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia – Stories from the Census*, 2017, accessed at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Data%20Summary~30>.
13. DCA (J. O'Leary), *Leading in the Asian Century: A National Scorecard of Australia's Workforce Asia Capability*, Sydney, DCA, 2015.
14. Department of Home Affairs, *National Settlement Framework*, 2020, accessed at: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settle-in-australia/key-settlement-topics>.
15. Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Perspectives on Migrants*, 2013, accessed at: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/perspectives-migrants/latest-release>.
16. DCA (J. O'Leary and G. Russell), *Capitalising on Culture: A Study of Cultural Diversity Amongst Australian Senior Executives and Their Immediate Pipeline*, Sydney, DCA, 2011.
17. P-A. Friedman, L.S. Dyke and S.A. Murphy, 'Expatriate Adjustment from the Inside Out: An Autoethnographic Account', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2013, pp. 252–268; M. Brayer Hess and P. Linderman, *The Expert Expat: Your Guide to Successful Relocation Abroad*, Nicholas Brealey, 2007; E. Marx, *Breaking Through Culture Shock: What You Need to Succeed in International Business*, Nicholas Brealey, 2001.



© 2021 Diversity Council Australia Ltd

Hub Customs House, Level 3 & 4, 31 Alfred Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 8014 4300 Email: admin@dca.org.au

www.dca.org.au