

# **D&I Data at Work**

**Diversity questions and  
response options**

## Want to use our research?

Materials contained in this document are © Copyright of Diversity Council Australia Ltd, 2025 and come under our [Terms of Use and Privacy Statement](#).

If you wish to use any content contained in this report, please contact DCA at [research@dca.org.au](mailto:research@dca.org.au), to seek consent.

You are not permitted to commercialise these materials, including by providing training or consulting services to third parties for a fee or otherwise.

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

## Using these questions and response options

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

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

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

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

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

DCA Members can access our full D&I Data at Work guide to learn about leading practice for data collection and reporting. Download the full D&I Data at Work guide [here](#).

# Contents

Want to use our research? .....2

Using these questions and response options .....2

Want to learn more about D&I Data at Work? .....2

What is diversity data? .....4

Why collect diversity data? .....4

How do I select questions and response options to use? .....4

**Sample questions and response options to use.....5**

    Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity .....5

    Age .....5

    Caring .....6

    Cultural Diversity.....6

    Disability status .....9

    Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation.....9

    Social class.....12

Want to learn more about D&I Data at Work? .....12

Appendix.....13

    Suggested citations for question sources .....13

### What is diversity data?

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

### Why collect diversity data?

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

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

### How do I select questions and response options to use?

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

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

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

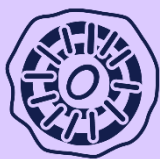
## Sample questions and response options to use

These questions and response options are drawn from:

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

### Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Identity

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



**Source:** DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

Q. Do you identify as an Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person? (Please select one only)

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

### Age

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



**Source:** DCA's [Inclusion@Work Index](#)

Q. What is your age?

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

## Caring

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

Carers Australia defines carers as “people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged”. Their definition does not include caring for children without disability or chronic conditions.

The ABS considers carers' status using Carers' Australia definition (above), as well as caring for children (without disability or chronic conditions).

### Source: Adapted from the ABS

#### **Q. In the last two weeks, did you spend time providing unpaid care, help or assistance for family members or others?**

(Please select as many as relevant)



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

## Cultural Diversity

DCA's Counting Culture guide suggests a range of different 'Core' and 'Additional' questions and response options organisations can use to measure and report on workforce cultural diversity. This approach recognises that many organisations have limited in-house resources and are constrained in the number and range of questions and response options they can use. The guide therefore lists questions priority order i.e. if your organisation only has space to ask 2 questions on cultural diversity, we suggest they be the first 2 'Core' Measures (and so on).

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

1. Cultural background
2. Language, and
3. Country of birth

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

4. Religion
5. Global experience

### **Cultural background**

**Source:** DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

#### **Q. How would you describe your cultural background?**

(Please select up to two cultural backgrounds)

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

- ☐ ABS Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (alphabetical order)
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Ethnicity not listed, please specify



### **Language**

**Source:** DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

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

- ☐ Speak English only
- ☐ ABS Standard Classification of Languages (alphabetical order)
- ☐ Language not listed, please specify

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

- ☐ Read English only
- ☐ ABS Standard Classification of Languages (alphabetical order)
- ☐ Language not listed, please specify

### Country of birth

Source: DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

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

- ☐ ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries (alphabetical order)
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Country not listed, please specify

### Religious affiliation

Source: DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

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

- ☐ No religion
- ☐ ABS Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (alphabetical order)
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Religion not listed, please specify

### Global experience

Source: DCA's [Counting Culture](#)

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

- ☐ ABS Australian Standard Classification of Countries
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Country not listed, please specify



### Disability status

As outlined in DCA's and the Australian Disability Network's [Disability Data at Work](#) report, leading practice in disability data collection is to:

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



Source: [Australian Disability Network](#)

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

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

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

**UN's CRPD** definition:

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

### Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation

#### Sex and Gender

The ABS<sup>5</sup> explains that "the terms sex and gender are interrelated and often used interchangeably within the general community. However, they are two distinct concepts:

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

Where it is necessary to collect information on an employee's sex or gender, an explanation should be provided as to why the information is being collected and how it will be used. When an organisation does wish to collect this information, DCA recommends including a question about gender, rather than sex.

**Source:** [ACON](#)

**Q. How do you describe your gender?**

(Please select the most relevant response)



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

**Cisgender and trans & gender diverse status**

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

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

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

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

This involves a 2-step method approach, outlined in the ABS [Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#).

**Source:** ACON

**Q. At birth, were you recorded as?**



- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Another term (please specify)
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

### Sexual orientation

Language is constantly evolving and the terms people use to describe their sexual orientation also shift at times. For example, once considered a slur, the term “queer” has been reclaimed by LGBTIQ+ people as an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities. As such, we suggest asking about how people describe their sexual orientation.

#### Source: ACON

Q. How do you describe your sexual orientation?

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



### LGBTIQ+

Organisations may not have scope to:

- ask multiple questions on sex, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation
- take the 2-step method approach for capturing trans/gender diverse workforce representation.
- In this case, organisations can take an approach like below that captures multiple data points in the one question.

#### Source: DCA's Inclusion@Work Index

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

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, Lesbian, gay, or homosexual
- ☐ Yes, Bisexual
- ☐ Yes, Queer
- ☐ Yes, Trans/gender diverse or a person with a trans history\*
- ☐ Yes, a person with an intersex variation
- ☐ Yes, not listed, please specify
- ☐ Prefer not to answer



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

Social class

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

Source: DCA’s [Class at Work](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

DCA members can access our full D&I Data at Work report to learn leading practices in how to inclusively:

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

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

## Appendix

### Suggested citations for question sources

(see question for relevant source):

ACON, [Recommended community indicators for research](#), 2016.

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

ABS, [Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables](#), ABS, 2021.

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

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

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