



Response to Australian Bureau of Statistics consultation on 2026 Census topics

28 April 2023

Q1. Please provide a brief summary of the information you would like the ABS to collect and produce statistics on.

Mental Health Australia supports LGBTIQ+ Health Australia's request that topics on sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation be included in the 2026 Census, through full implementation of the ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables.

Q2. To help us assess your submission, tell us why it is important that the ABS collect and produce this information, including how you would use the data.

LGBTQIA+ people experience mental health challenges and suicide risk factors at far higher rates than other Australians. Mental Health Australia's Report to the Nation research found LGBTQIA+ Australians reported significantly lower overall mental health and more barriers to accessing support compared to others in the community. Other research indicates LGBTIQ people are two and a half times more likely to have been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the previous year, and LGBTI young people aged 16-27 are five times more likely to have attempted suicide than their peers.

Alternate approaches are needed to address these extreme disparities and the need for better support for LGBTQIA+ Australians' mental health and wellbeing. LGBTQIA+ people are identified as a priority population in national health strategies, but delivery of these strategies is limited due to poor methodological approaches in collecting data specific to this cohort. For example, Primary Health Networks are responsible for the delivery of significant Australian Government funded mental health services and are required to undertake Needs Assessments to identify the health needs of the population in their region. The Needs Assessment is required to include explicit consideration of populations with special needs, however without accurate data on the size or health needs of the LGBTQIA+ population, this group is easily missed in health service planning.

Inclusion of sex, gender, variations of sex characteristics and sexual orientation topics in the 2026 Census would provide a robust measure of the LGBTQIA+ population, to support such national and regional health service planning and delivery. This would also support further research into LGBTQIA+ population wellbeing and health service use, with many other data sets and research linked to or drawing on Census data.

Mental Health Australia believes inclusion of the ABS 2020 Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables meets the ABS criteria for consideration of new Census topics, as LGBTQIA+ health and wellbeing is a topic of current national importance across the community and Australian Government long-term strategies; there is a need for population data at both national and local levels to support health service planning and resource allocation; and there is a continuing need for data to track changes in the LGBTQIA+ population and health and wellbeing over time.