



## Gender Values in the Data Exchange Fact Sheet

A client's gender is collected in the Data Exchange because it forms part of the Statistical Linkage Key (SLK) and provides important demographic information about the clients who are receiving services.

The gender value recorded is based upon how the client self-identifies. Gender is different to sexuality and sexual orientation, which are not recorded in the Data Exchange.

The Data Exchange de-identifies client data using Statistical Linkage Keys (SLK), an algorithm developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The SLK is a method that allows DSS to link clients with the service they received through a unique key, enabling two or more records belonging to the same individual to be linked.

The SLK algorithm creates a code consisting of the second, third and fifth characters of a person's family name, the second and third letters of the person's given name, the day, month and year of the person's date of birth and the gender of that person. For example, John Smith, a male born on 14th February 1971 has an SLK of: **MIHOH140219711**

Historically the Data Exchange has used standard data definitions for gender developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), with four options:

- Male
- Female
- Intersex/indeterminate
- Not stated or inadequately described

From February/March 2024, 'Intersex/indeterminate' as a gender value will be retired from the Data Exchange. Instead the values that will be captured into the Data Exchange will be:

- Man or male
- Woman or female
- Non-binary
- [I/They] use a different term
- Not stated

Where a client chooses [I/They] use a different term, an optional free text field will be available to record preferred term [up to 100 characters].

The preferred term will only be able to be seen by your Organisation, it will not be available to the department and will not be used for any reporting or analysis.

## Why have the Gender Values changed in the Data Exchange?

Non-binary is an umbrella term describing gender identities that are not exclusively male or female.

Gender includes the following concepts:

- Gender identity is about who a person feels themselves to be
- Gender expression is the way a person expresses their gender. A person's gender expression may also vary depending on the context, for instance expressing different genders at work and home
- Gender experience describes a person's alignment with the sex recorded for them at birth i.e. a cis experience or a trans experience. ([ABS 2021.](#))

Gender is about social and cultural identity, expression and experience. A person's gender may differ from their sex and may also differ from what is indicated on their legal documents. A person's gender may stay the same or can change over the course of their lifetime. The gender response option chosen will reflect a person's gender at that point in time. Some people may not identify with a specific gender or with the concept of gender at all.

When the Data Exchange was first introduced, it included an 'Intersex/indeterminate' option for gender to be used where a client does not identify as male or female.

Given the Data Exchange is collecting gender, consideration was given as to whether retaining existing Intersex values as an option is appropriate.

The ABS Standard states: *'many variations of sex characteristics are not evident at birth, and people may not be aware they were born with a variation of sex characteristics until puberty or later in life. The inclusion of intersex as a response option in a sex question, alongside male and female, is not capable of generating reliable or consistent results in measuring this population, and perpetuates the misconception that intersex people are neither male nor female.'*

The ABS' standard gender question structure is comprised of:

How [do/does] [you/Person's name/they] describe [your/their] gender?

Please [tick/mark/select] one box:

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

## How will the changes impact my XML upload or System to System upload?

Organisations are able to test the changes in the Data Exchange Staging Environment. Updated reference data can be downloaded from the Web Portal.

Although the descriptions for the following values has been updated, the gender codes used for uploads remain unchanged:

- Man or male
- Woman or female
- Unstated

The Statistical Linkage Key codes related to Gender are:

- Code 1 for Man or male
- Code 2 for Woman or female
- Code 3 for Non Binary
- Code 3 for [I\They] use a different term
- Code 9 for Not stated

## How will the changes impact on my reports?

The changes will not impact on clients previously reported into the Data Exchange as intersex/indeterminate unless you are updating their client record.

However, organisations will be able to update client records with a different gender value if clients would prefer to elect one of the new values should they feel this better represents them.

Clients who are happy to remain with a classification of 'Intersex/ indeterminate' will be able to do so, and clients who have ceased services, or no longer engage with the organisation will retain the gender value provided at the time they received the service. For these clients, if other edits are needed to be made to the client record at a point after the 'Intersex/ indeterminate' value is retired, then the organisation will be required to select a new 'current' gender value to save the record.