

# Data quality statement

## Sex

**Sex is a mandatory data field within the NCIS data collection.**

The Sex data field refers to the physical or biological characteristics of a person at the time of death. This includes reproductive organs, hormones and chromosomes.

### Sex and gender

While the terms 'sex' and 'gender' can be used interchangeably throughout society, they do have distinct meanings which can influence the collection and use of applicable data<sup>1</sup>.

Sex differs from gender, in that gender is a person's deeply felt internal and individual identity, and the way a person presents and is recognised within the community<sup>2</sup>.

Gender is not a consistently collected variable within coronial courts around Australia or New Zealand. There is consequently no data field in the NCIS that consistently represents the gender of each deceased person.

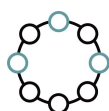
### Data field overview

Table 1. Information about Sex data field

Component	Details
Definition	In most cases, the Sex data field refers to the physical or biological characteristics of a person at the time of death. This includes reproductive organs, hormones and chromosomes. In a small number of cases, the variable in this field may represent a person's gender if a coroner has referred to a deceased by their gender rather than their sex in a coronial finding.
Reporting status	Mandatory for closed cases
Source organisation	Coroners courts in each contributing jurisdiction
Variables	1 – Male 2 – Female 8 – Still enquiring 9 – Unlikely to be known
Coverage	All jurisdictions
Time span	• From 1 July 2000: ACT, NSW, NT, SA, TAS, VIC and WA

<sup>1</sup> AIHW data by sex and gender - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, 2015.



## National Coronial Information System

Component	Details
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From 1 January 2001: QLD</li> <li>From 1 July 2007: NZ</li> </ul>
Collection method	Collected during the death investigation process. May be collected via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the police report of death</li> <li>autopsy report</li> <li>statements made to the coroner through police briefs, witness statements or communications</li> </ul>
Method of provision to the NCIS	Data entered into local court systems or directly into NCIS online by coders
Frequency of provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nightly: ACT, NSW, NT, SA, TAS, VIC QLD and WA</li> <li>Weekly: NZ</li> </ul>
Completeness	The Sex data field is completed in 100 per cent of closed cases, across all nine jurisdictions as it is a mandatory field.
Accuracy	Although a variable must be selected for all closed cases, the accuracy of the entered data is dependent on the appropriate information being collected or ascertained during the coroners' investigation.
Quality assurance (QA) processes	The NCIS Unit verifies the information contained in this field as part of the QA program for cases which meet the required criteria. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only cases which have a non-natural case type (or are natural deaths with specific terms in the medical cause of death) are manually reviewed through the NCIS quality assurance program</li> </ul> During the QA program, the Sex data field is checked to ensure it accurately represents the information contained within the attached reports, where such information is available.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mandatory for all closed cases</li> <li>Verified during quality review</li> </ul>
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current limited codes or descriptors do not allow for accurate representation for intersex or indeterminate sex</li> <li>The data field is a combination of sex and gender based on the determination of the coroner</li> </ul>

### Coding advice when a person's sex differs from their gender

Coronial findings may refer to a deceased by their gender, rather than their sex to respect how a person identified during life. In the event the gender indicated in a coronial finding is different to the physical/biological characteristics of the deceased as outlined in an autopsy report, coders are advised to populate the Sex data field based upon what is used in the coronial finding.

It is recognised that this practice creates some inconsistency within the Sex data field, however in the absence of a specific field to capture gender, this compromise was made to both respect how the person identified during life and to capture the legal determination made by a coroner about an individual.

### Planned changes for the Sex field

Current variables within the Sex field do not allow for instances where a deceased is intersex or of indeterminate sex. This NCIS Unit is planning to broaden the variables available in the Sex data field during 2023-2024 to enable collection of information about sexes other than male or female.

### Will gender be considered as a field for the NCIS data collection?

In keeping with the goal to *Grow the data collection* in the [NCIS Strategic Plan 2022-26](#), the NCIS Unit will be examining the feasibility of adding a number of new data fields to the NCIS data set. Gender is one of these.

A determining factor about the addition of any new field to the NCIS is the ability to source this information reliably from either coronial courts or a supplementary source. Discussions with the coroner's courts about this possibility will be an important first step.

### Where can I find further information?

More information on the Sex data field can be found in the NCIS [Data dictionary](#) and the [Coding manual](#).