

Data Policy Partnership Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document

A shared foundational understanding of key data terms and concepts is important for enabling the Data Policy Partnership (DPP) to achieve its desired outcomes.

The DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document has been compiled as a living document from existing work and resources to support consistent understanding.

The key concepts, terms and resources from the APS [Framework on the Governance of Indigenous Data](#) have been included, with additional technical terms largely from the [ABS Statistical Terms and Concepts Glossary](#). Further context on Indigenous Data Sovereignty in Australia through links to the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute [communique](#) are included.

Making the DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document more widely available aligns with the aim of uplifting data capability across both the community-controlled sector and government.

Key concepts

Concept	Explanation
Australian Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles	<p>The Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute assert that in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.• Data that are contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).• Data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.• Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.• Data that is protective and respects Indigenous peoples individual and collective interests.¹

¹ Maiam nayri Wingara. (2018). *Indigenous Data Sovereignty Communique Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit*, 20 June 2018, Canberra, ACT, accessed 19 January 2026, <<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3043afb40b9d20411f3512/t/63ed934fe861fa061ebb9202/1676514134724/Communique-Indigenous-Data-Sovereignty-Summit.pdf>>.

Concept	Explanation
	See the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit 2018 Communique for further context on ‘Indigenous Data’, ‘Indigenous Data Sovereignty’ and ‘Indigenous Data Governance’ in an Australian context.
FAIR Guiding Principles and CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance	<p>The FAIR Guiding Principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) focus on increasing data sharing but do not address the tension for Indigenous people in also seeking greater control over and use of Indigenous knowledge for collective benefit.²</p> <p>The CARE principles (Collective Benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, and Ethics) reflect the important role data plays in advancing self-determination. They complement the FAIR Guiding Principles and encourage greater consideration of people and purpose.</p>
Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap	<p>At the centre of the National Agreement are four Priority Reforms that focus on changing the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>The Priority Reforms are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making; 2. Building the community-controlled sector; 3. Transforming government organisations; and 4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level.³

Key Terms

Term	Source	Definition
Administrative data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Information (including personal information) collected by agencies for the administration of programs, policies or services.
Aggregate data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Produced by grouping information into categories and combining values within these categories.
BADDR Data	Walter (2018)	<p>Defined by Walter (2018) to describe the dominant deficit discourses within data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blaming data, • Aggregate data, • Decontextualised data,

² Global Indigenous Data Alliance. (2026). *CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance*, accessed 19 January 2026, <<https://www.gida-global.org/care>>.

³ [National Agreement on Closing the Gap | Closing the Gap](#)

Term	Source	Definition
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deficit, Government Priority data, Restricted Access data.
CANZUS	Kukutai & Taylor (2016)	Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States – A group of Anglo-Colonised countries with a similar experience of colonisation.
Census	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	A study of every unit, everyone or everything, in a population.
Chief Data Officer	Department of Finance (DoF)	Is accountable for their organisation’s enterprise-wide governance and use of data as an asset, as well as building agency data capabilities.
Classifications	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Used to collect and organise information into categories with other similar pieces of information.
Comparability	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	The ability to validly compare statistics that have been collected over time, or from different sources.
Confidentiality	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	The obligation of organisations that collect information to ensure that no person or organisation is likely to be identified from any data released
Data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Measurements or observations that are collected as a source of information. There are a variety of different types of data, and different ways to represent data.
Data custodian	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	An organisation or agency responsible for the collection, management and release of data; including ethical and legal obligations to keep the information they are entrusted with confidential.
Data disposal	Derived from National Archives of Australia	Arranging secure destruction of data and datasets in accordance with their minimum retention period.
Data Ecosystem	Stobierski (2021)	The programming languages, packages, algorithms, cloud-computing services and general infrastructure an organisation uses to collect, store, analyse and leverage data.
Data dissemination	Derived from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Releasing, distributing or transmitting data to users through various media (e.g. websites, reports, data cubes, etc.).

Term	Source	Definition
Data governance	Derived from APS Data Capability Framework	Practices and processes ensuring the formal management of data assets within an organisation.
Data immersion	Derived from Green et al (2007)	Deeply engaging with data (particularly qualitative data) to understand underlying meanings, context, and experiences, often involving repeated review of information, experiencing place / context or using advanced technology for sensory-rich data exploration (i.e. immersive analytics) to build empathy and greater insights.
Data integration	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Data integration is the process of combining data from two or more sources at the unit level (e.g. person and/or business).
Data lifecycle	APS Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data Appendix C	The data life cycle involves the: creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data.
Data linkage	Commonwealth Arrangements for Data Integration	The process of finding and determining links between individual records across different datasets.
Data provider	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	An individual, household, business or other entity that supplies data for statistical or administrative purposes.
Data security	Commonwealth Arrangement for Data Integration	The protective measures and safe data management practices that safeguard data from unauthorised access, disclosure, loss or misuse, including personnel, physical and ICT security.
Data sharing	Derived from Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy	Data sharing is the practice of providing partners with access to information or knowledge they can't access in their own data systems. Data sharing allows stakeholders to learn from each other and collaborate on shared priorities.
Data steward	Australian Public Service Commission	Is responsible for the day-to-day management of data assets to ensure relevant data governance, data management and data policy requirements are met.
Data structure	Lenovo AU	The way data are organized, stored, and manipulated in a computer system. It provides a means to efficiently manage and access data, enabling faster and more effective computations. By using different

Term	Source	Definition
		data structures, programmers can optimize their code and improve the performance of their applications.
Data translation	Derived from Australian Public Service Commission	Interpreting and communicating data insights in a way that effectively generates impact and understanding by the end-user.
Data quality (or “fitness for purpose”)	Derived from ABS Data Quality Framework	An assessment of an output with specific reference to its intended objectives or aims. Assessment of quality may consider institutional environment, relevance, timeliness, accuracy, coherence, interpretability and accessibility.
Data unit	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	One entity (such as a person or business) in the population being studied, about which data are collected.
Data user	Derived from Commonwealth Arrangement for Data Integration	An individual or organisation that accesses, analyses, or utilises data for specific purposes.
Dataset	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	A complete collection of all observations.
Decontextualised data	Walter, 2018	Are simplistic and decontextualised focusing on individuals and families outside of their social / cultural context.
De-identification	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)	A process which involves the removal or alteration of information that identifies a person or is reasonably likely to identify them, as well as the application of any additional protections required to prevent identification.
Disaggregated Data	National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)	Data that is broken down into smaller units. For example, data being available at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, clan or Nation level.
Governance of Indigenous Data	NIAA	The practices and processes of governing the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data.

Term	Source	Definition
Identified data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Data that includes information that refers directly to an individual or organisation, such as name or address, ABN, Medicare number, Indigenous status.
Indigenous Data	Maiam nayri Wingara 2018 See Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit 2018 Communique	Information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which is about and may affect Indigenous peoples both collectively and individually.
Indigenous Data Governance (IDG)	Maiam nayri Wingara 2018 See the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit 2018 Communique	The right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously decide what, how and why Indigenous Data are collected, accessed and used. It ensures that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects [their] priorities, values, cultures, worldviews and diversity.
Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS)	Maiam nayri Wingara 2018 ; See the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit 2018 Communique Additional definitions in Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Towards an Agenda (2016)	The right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous Data.
Indigenous Data Voice (or Indigenous Data Governance)	Walter, 2018	Asserts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in relation to data, informing the when, how and why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data is gathered, analysed, accessed and used; and ensuring that Indigenous data reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities, values, culture, lifeworlds and diversity.
Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles	Maiam nayri Wingara 2018 See the Indigenous Data Sovereignty	In Australia, Indigenous Peoples have the right to: 1. Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure;

Term	Source	Definition
	Summit 2018 Communique	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Data that are contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels); 3. Data that are relevant and empower sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance; 4. Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations; 5. Data that are protective and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ individual and collective interests.
Indirect data collection (“secondary” or “retrofitting” data)	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Involves sourcing and accessing existing data that were not originally collected for the purpose of the study. This type of data is known as secondary data.
Interoperability	Australian Digital Health Agency	The ability to move information easily between people, organisations, and systems.
Metadata	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	The information that defines and describes data by providing data users with information about the purpose, processes and methods involved in the data collection.
Observation	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	An observation is an occurrence of a specific data item that is recorded about a data unit.
Open data principles	Open Data Charter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Open by default; 2. Timely and comprehensive; 3. Comparable and interoperable; 4. For improved government and citizen engagement; and 5. For inclusive development and innovation.
Open government data	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)	Open Government Data (OGD) is a philosophy- and increasingly a set of policies - that promotes transparency, accountability and value creation by making government data available to all. This means data are freely available for everyone to access. Public bodies produce and commission huge quantities of data and information.
Paradata	Sage Research Methods	Paradata, or <i>process data</i> , contains information about the primary data collection process (e.g. survey

Term	Source	Definition
		duration, interim status of a case, navigational errors in a survey questionnaire).
Population	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Any complete group with at least one characteristic in common.
Quantitative data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Measures of values or counts and are expressed as numbers.
Qualitative data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Measures of 'types' and may be represented by a name, symbol, or a number code.
Sample	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	A subset of units in a population, selected to represent all units in a population of interest.
Strengths-based approach	Saleebey (1996)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every individual, group, family, and community has strengths; 2. Trauma, abuse, illness, and struggle may be injurious, but they may also be sources of challenge and opportunity; 3. Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change, and take individual, group, and community aspirations seriously; 4. We best serve people by collaborating with them; 5. Every environment is full of resources; and 6. Caring, caretaking, and context.
Statistical standards	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	A set of rules used to standardise the way data are collected and statistics are produced.
Suppression	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Not releasing information that is considered a disclosure risk (i.e. removing specific values from a table or specific records from a dataset so that people and organisations cannot be re-identified from the released data).
Time series data	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	A collection of observations of well-defined data items obtained through repeated measurements over time.
UNDRIP	United Nations	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
Unit record data (microdata)	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Datasets of unit records where each record contains information about a person, organisation or other type of unit.

Term	Source	Definition
Variable	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Any characteristic, number, or quantity that can be measured or counted. A variable may also be called a data item. Age, sex, business income and expenses, country of birth, capital expenditure, class grades, eye colour and vehicle type are examples of variables.

Resources

- [AIATSIS Code of Ethics | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#)
- [APS Data Capability Framework | Australian Public Service Commission](#)
- [APS Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data | National Indigenous Australians Agency](#)
- [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance | Global Indigenous Data Alliance](#)
- [Data Development Plan – 2022-2030 | Closing the Gap](#)
- [Establishing an information governance committee | National Archives of Australia](#)
- [Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities | National Health and Medical Research Council](#)
- [FAIR Guiding principles for scientific data management and stewardship | GO FAIR](#)
- [Five Safes Framework | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)
- [Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Policy \(Edited by Maggie Walter, Tahu Kukutai, Stephanie Russo Carroll, Desi Rodriguez-Lonebear\) | Routledge](#)
- [Indigenous Data Sovereignty Readiness Assessment and Evaluation Toolkit | Lowitja Institute](#)
- [Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an agenda \(Edited by Tahu Kukutai, John Taylor\) | Australian National University Press](#)
- [National best practice guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)
- [National best practice guidelines for data linkage activities relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: 2012 | Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)
- [Statistical terms and concepts glossary | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)
- [The Foundational Four \(Starting an ongoing data improvement journey\) | Office of the National Data Commissioner](#)
- [Yumi Sabe \(Indigenous Knowledge Exchange\) | Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies](#)