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The New Zealand Statistical Standard for Gender Identity

Statistics New Zealand

Statistical standard for gender identity

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Rationale

As leaders of the Official Statistics System (OSS), Statistics New Zealand has developed a statistical standard for the collection and dissemination of data on gender identity. The objectives of the statistical standard for gender identity are to:

- standardise definitions and measures of gender identity data across the OSS, to improve accessibility, interpretability, and comparability of data, and reduce duplication of effort
- meet human rights requirements for data collection and to support the legal requirements of the Human Rights Act 1993
- enable policy-makers to develop measures that will address matters of importance affecting gender minority groups. This will more adequately address the needs of these people across the gender identity spectrum in areas such as health, social, education, and employment.

Definitions

Gender identity

Gender identity is an individual's internal sense of being wholly female, wholly male, or having aspects of female and/or male.

Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex recorded at birth (adapted from International Commission of Jurists, 2007, p6). A person's gender identity can change over their lifetime, and can be expressed in a number of ways and forms. This expression includes outward social markers, such as name, clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, voice, and other behaviours.

Gender diverse

Gender diverse is having a gender identity or gender expression that differs from a given society's dominant gender roles (adapted from Open Society Foundations, 2013).

Operational issues

Collecting gender identity and sex

[The statistical standard for sex](#) acknowledged that understanding and representing the complexities of diverse gender identities required “new and separate definitions, questions, classification, and statistical standards” (Statistics NZ, 1995, p1). A person’s gender identity may or may not correspond with their biological sex (Human Rights Commission [HRC], 2008). (Protection from discrimination because of one’s gender identity is covered under section 21(1)(a) of the Human Rights Act 1993, under the grounds of sex.) Gender identity categories outside the binary female/male exist and need to be recognised in the collection and provision of gender identity information.

Additionally, New Zealand legislation guarantees non-discrimination on the basis of gender identity through the Human Rights Act 1993 (HRC, 2008). The Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (International Commission of Jurists, 2007) affirms the international legal standards that United Nations’ member states must comply with to provide human rights for populations defined by gender identity. The statistical standard for gender identity was created within these international guidelines and supports the legal requirements of the Human Rights Act 1993.

In some situations, knowing a person’s gender identity is important, to ensure the individual is treated with respect, that adequate services are provided, and that the individual is addressed correctly.

In other situations, it is important to know someone’s sex as recorded at birth. For example, in clinical situations when various medications react differently to the presence of the hormones and DNA that represent each sex. It may be vitally important to know the patient’s physiological make-up. Sex is also required to assist in population-growth calculations.

Gender identity changing with context

The context in which the gender identity question is asked can influence the response. Due to the sensitivity of gender identity information, it is possible that a person may give a different response depending on the context. Situations where this may occur would be:

- the reason why the information is being sought; for example, medical form versus employment form
- who will see the form, for example the respondent may be concerned about the level of knowledge and understanding that the people who see the form will have about gender diversity, and the overriding confidentiality of the data collection
- the social and/or cultural setting.

Gender identity changing over time

A person’s gender identity may change over time. It is necessary to allow for gender identity changing in longitudinal surveys and administrative data collections. Changes in gender identity over time and across contexts may affect the integration of different datasets. Individuals may give different gender identity answers in different collections. The decision on what is appropriate to use for integrated datasets needs to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Age

Gender identity is self-defined. The age at which a person can provide their own response will be determined by the protocols of the data collection and should be consistent with the collection of other similar information. There is an expectation that generally teenagers are able to self-define their gender identity.

Gender identity collection by proxy

In some circumstances a person may be unable to answer the question asked (eg in the case of death, or incapacity because of disability, injury, or sickness). In this case, the next-of-kin, parent, legal guardian, spouse, or partner needs to respond on their behalf. Parents, caregivers, or guardians of a child may also complete a gender identity question on behalf of their child. This is collection of information by proxy. Gender identity information should only be obtained by proxy when there is a clear need established for this information and when the individual is unable to respond by themselves. A person answering by proxy needs to think carefully about these points before providing a response on behalf of someone else.

Explanatory notes

The related concepts of sex, gender, and sexual orientation

These are related but different concepts. Care needs to be taken to ensure the correct concept/term is used, depending on the context, collection, and dissemination method, as the terms are not interchangeable.

Sex

Sex is the distinction between males and females based on the biological differences in sexual characteristics. These characteristics are determined by biological, chromosomal, and physical attributes.

Indeterminate sex is where physical appearance and/or genetic testing does not enable a person to be classified as male or female. They can have a combination of male and female features, or features which are not characteristic of either sex.

[See Statistical Standard for Sex](#) for more information.

Gender

Gender is the social and cultural construction based on expectations of what it means to be a man and/or a woman, including roles, expectations, and behaviour.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the sex and/or gender of people that an individual is sexually and emotionally attracted to. It is derived from someone's sexual attraction, behaviour, and/or identity.

Classification criteria

The criterion used to classify a person's gender identity is self-defined. It is the gender identity the person provides.

The scope of the classification covers the spectrum of gender identities, including agender.

Classification

The standard classification of gender identity is a hierarchical classification of two levels. Level 1 of the classification has three categories. Level 2 has six categories.

Classification of gender identity

1. Male
 - 11 Male / Tāne
2. Female
 - 21 Female / Wahine
3. Gender diverse
 - 30 Gender diverse not further defined / Ira tāngata kōwhiri kore
 - 31 Transgender male to female / Whakawahine
 - 32 Transgender female to male / Tangata ira tāne
 - 39 Gender diverse not elsewhere classified / Ira tāngata kōwhiri kore

Concept	Gender identity
Classification	Statistical classification of gender identity
Abbreviation	SCGI
Version	V1.0
Effective date	17 July 2015

A general review of the statistical standard for gender identity is scheduled to take place in three years (2018).

Coding process

Guidelines

When a gender identity question is asked, information about the collection's need for asking detailed gender diversity information must be available to respondents. It should include the privacy and confidentiality rules that the data collection will adhere to.

Gender identity is self-defined and not to be confused with sex; they are different concepts (see [glossary](#)). We suggest that when you need to ask questions on both gender identity and sex, the sex question should precede gender identity. You need to word the sex and gender identity questions clearly, so the question concepts of sex and gender identity are differentiated and the respondent knows what information is being asked.

When both sex and gender identity information are required (particularly in the health and disability sector, or for sociological research), asking both questions can outline a person's identity journey – it can be very personal. You should only ask both sex and gender identity questions at the same time when there is good reason for such information.

The 'gender diverse not further defined' (nfd) category of level 2 in the classification contains non-specific gender identity responses, such as trans or transgender.

The 'gender diverse not elsewhere classified' (nec) category of level 2 in the classification contains specific responses that are infrequent or unanticipated such as non-binary.

When a stated gender identity response is 'no gender', 'agender', or is elsewhere within the male/female spectrum, the response is covered by the umbrella term gender diverse. It is classified as 'gender diverse' for level 1 in the classification, or 'gender diverse not elsewhere classified' for level 2 in the classification.

People may identify with more than one gender identity. These responses are classified as gender diverse when collecting level 1 information. When collecting detailed information about gender identity, multiple responses are classified to the relevant detailed categories. Where this is not possible multiple responses are classified to gender diverse not elsewhere classified.

For some people, the gender identity question may be too personal and they may refuse to answer. A refusal/objection-to-answer response is recorded under the residual category response 'refused to answer'. If the question is unanswered and left blank, then the response

is recorded under the residual category 'not stated'. Residual categories are applied as part of the operational coding practice.

[See Residual categories](#) for definitions of residual terms.

Imputation

In general, gender identity cannot be imputed. However, when full coverage is required Statistics NZ can provide guidance on this matter, on a case-by-case basis.

Synonym report

We maintain a synonym report/list for gender identity. A synonym report is used to classify gender identity responses. It is a list of probable responses and the classification categories to which they are coded. For example, the synonym report for gender identity lists all variations of gender identities, and popular and similar gender identity terms used by the population. This can include abbreviations, slang, and some common misspellings.

The gender identity terms listed in the synonym report are popular today and may be superseded in the future by new terms. In order to keep up-to-date, we will review the synonym report and classification at regular intervals.

Email info@stats.govt.nz if you would like a copy of the gender identity synonym report.

Use the [Classification Coding System](#) and [Classification Code Finder](#) tools for help to code question responses.

Questionnaire module

Mandatory question requirements

A gender identity question is required to:

- be suitable for self-completion
- cater for all gender identities. Be-all inclusive – allowing for the capture of male, female and gender diverse information as a minimum
- elicit a single response as a minimum. Multiple responses are acceptable.

Points to consider when you develop a gender identity question:

- it is preferable to have a question with write-in facility, to allow the respondent to fully describe their gender identity
- the term 'gender diverse' is a relatively new term and may be unfamiliar to some
- it is preferable to include the words 'gender' with 'identity' or 'identify' in a gender identity question (to eliminate ambiguity/confusion about the concept).

The following question examples comply with the requirements of this standard and offer possible options on question wording and structure. Questions developed to suite individual needs and modes of collection may vary from these examples, but must conform to the requirements.

Examples

What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Gender diverse, please state:

What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Gender diverse

What gender do you identify as?

What is your gender identity?

Standard output

The standard output for gender identity is the same as the classification categories.

Subject to confidentiality requirements of the collection, no individual shall be identified and an individual response should not be identifiable.

[See Safeguarding confidentiality](#) in Privacy, security, and confidentiality of information supplied to Statistics NZ for more information.

Output levels

Level 1:

- Male / Tāne
- Female / Wahine
- Gender diverse / Ira tāngata
- Residual categories / Momo ahuatanga

Level 2:

- Male / Tāne
- Female / Wahine
- Gender diverse not further defined / Ira tāngata kōwhiri kore
- Transgender male to female / Whakawahine
- Transgender female to male / Tangata ira tāne
- Gender diverse not elsewhere classified / Ira tāngata kōwhiri kore
- Residual categories / Momo ahuatanga

Residual categories for output – where full coverage of gender identity is not required:

- Don't know / Aua hoki
- Refused to answer / Kāhore e whakahoki
- Response unidentifiable / Kāhore e mohio
- Response outside scope / Kei waho i te kaupapa
- Not stated / Kao/kaore e ki

The residual categories can be output separately or combined. Where a combination of residuals is used in output, this item should be labelled 'Not elsewhere included' and should have a footnote indicating its composition.

[See residual categories](#) for definitions.

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

Statistical standard for sex (Statistics NZ, 1995).

International

[The Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#) (International Commission of Jurists, 2007).

Glossary

Terms related to gender identity

This section provides definitions of terms relevant to the concept of gender identity.

Note: The **label is in bold**; definition is in normal font, and *supporting information in italics*.

Acquired gender: The new gender of a person who has had their gender reassigned and/or legally recognised. It is possible for an individual to transition fully without surgical intervention (Balarajan, Gray, & Mitchell, 2011).

Agender: A person who is internally ungendered or does not have a felt sense of gender identity (University of California – Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center, 2013).

Cisgender: Individuals who have a match between the gender they were recorded at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity (adapted from Schilt & Westbrook, 2009).

Cross-dresser: Refers to a person who wears the clothing of the opposite sex because it is the clothing of the opposite sex. This excludes people who wear opposite-sex clothing for other reasons. Cross-dressers may not identify with, or want to be, the opposite gender, nor adopt the behaviours or practices of the opposite gender, and generally do not want to change their bodies (Balarajan, Gray, & Mitchell, 2011).

Gender: The social and cultural construction based on the expectation of what it means to be a man and/or a woman, including roles, expectations, and behaviour. *The concept of gender diversity acknowledges this full range of genders. Societies, and cultures within societies, have different constructs and expectations of gender and this can vary over time.*

Gender diverse: Having a gender identity or gender expression that differs from a given society's dominant gender roles (adapted from Open Society Foundations, 2013).

Gender dysphoria: Distress caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics) (World Professional Association for Transgender Health, 2012).

Gender expression: How someone expresses or presents elements of masculinity and/or femininity externally (HRC, 2008). *This includes clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, voice, and other behaviours. Someone's gender expression may or may not reflect their gender identity.*

Gender identity: An individual's internal sense of being wholly female, wholly male, or having aspects of female and/or male.

Genderqueer: One of the terms used by people who do not identify as male or female, or may have aspects of male and female.

Trans/transgender: In New Zealand, this is often used as an umbrella term for transgender or transsexual people. It relates to a person whose gender identity differs from their sex recorded at birth. *It includes, for example, trans men (tangata ira tāne), trans women*

(whakawahine), fa'afafine, fakaleiti, akava'ine, genderqueer, and other gender diverse individuals. Transgender people may or may not choose to medically and/or surgically transition.

Trans man: A transgender individual who, although assigned female at birth, currently identifies as a male (Grant, et al, 2011). For example, a female-to-male transgender person (FtM).

Trans woman: A transgender individual who, although assigned male at birth, currently identifies as a female (Grant, et al, 2011), for example, a male-to-female transgender person (MtF).

Transitioning: When a transgender person take steps to live in their gender identity. It may involve social transition, legal gender recognition, and/or medical and/or surgical transition. *There is no single way of transitioning, nor is transition defined by medical and/or surgical steps someone has or has not taken.*

Transsexual: A term used for someone who intends to undergo, may be undergoing, or has undergone gender-affirming treatment to align their physical self with their gender identity.

Terms related to sex and sexual orientation

The following terms do **not** relate to gender identity. They are listed below to clarify distinctions between gender identity, sex, and sexual orientation.

[See Explanatory notes](#) for definitions for sex and gender.

Indeterminate sex: Physical appearance and/or genetic testing does not enable a person to be classified as male or female (Statistics NZ, 1995). *A person with indeterminate sex can have a combination of male and female features, or features that are not characteristic of either sex.*

Intersex: An umbrella term that relates to a range of physical, hormonal, or genetic features present (but not always evident) at birth, which are neither wholly female nor wholly male, or a combination of female and male (Adapted from ILGA-Europe, nd).

Sex: The distinction between males and females based on the biological differences in sexual characteristics (Statistics NZ, 1995). Sex is biologically determined and is based on chromosomal and physical attributes. A third category, indeterminate sex, is recorded on some administrative databases and in some cases is self-defined, with no medical evidence required.

Sexual behaviour: Refers to how people behave sexually, whether they have sexual partners of the same sex or not. Sexual behaviour does not necessarily form a basis for a person's sexual identity (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2010).

Sexual identity: How individuals think of themselves. This does not necessarily match their sexual behaviour or who they are attracted to, and can change over time (ONS, 2010).

Sexual orientation: A person's sexual orientation can be derived from their sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, and/or sexual identity (ONS, 2010). *It includes, for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, and asexual.*

Māori and Pacific terms related to both gender identity and sexual orientation

Terms outside the binary female/male exist within many cultures. See below for some examples.

Māori terms

Ira tāngata: Gender diverse. (*Note the macron over the 'a' in 'tāngata' defines the broadness/diverseness of gender.*) *How people live their life.*

Takatāpui: The traditional meaning of takatāpui is 'intimate companion of the same sex'. Many Māori people have adopted this term to describe themselves, instead of or in addition to terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or transgender. It refers to cultural and sexual/gender identity (Pega, Gray, & Veale, 2010). Also spelt takataapui.

Tāne (noun): husband, male, man (Moorfield, nd).

Tangata ira tāne: Someone born biologically female who has a male gender identity.

Wahine (noun): woman, female, lady, wife (Moorfield, nd).

Whakawahine, hinehī, hinehua: Terms describing someone born biologically male who has a female gender identity.

Pacific terms

Fa'afafine (Samoa, American Samoa, and Tokelau); **fakaleiti** or **leiti** (Tonga); **fakafifine** (Niue), **akava'ine** (Cook Islands); **mahu** (Tahiti and Hawaii); **vakasalewalewa** (Fiji); **palopa** (Papua New Guinea): These terms have wider meaning and are best understood within their cultural context.

Residual categories

Don't know

This category is used where the respondent does not know, or cannot give, an appropriate response.

Refused to answer

This category is only used when it is known that the respondent has purposefully chosen not to respond to the question. Use of this residual category in processing is optional. Its use is most applicable in face-to-face or telephone interviews, but may be used in self-completed questionnaires if the respondent has clearly indicated they refuse or object to answering the question.

Response unidentifiable

This category is used when there is a response given, but:

- the response is illegible, or
- it is unclear what the meaning or intent of the response is – this most commonly occurs when the response being classified contains insufficient detail, is ambiguous or vague, or
- the response is contradictory, or
- the response is clear and seemingly within the scope of the classification, but cannot be coded because no suitable option exists at the level being coded to.

Response outside scope

This category is used for responses that are positively identified (ie the meaning and the intent are clear), but which clearly fall outside the scope of the defined classification.

Not stated

This category is only used where a respondent has not given any response to the question asked, that is, it is solely for non-response.

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