

Topics for sex and gender identity statistical standards consultation

A statistical or data standard provides a comprehensive set of guidelines for surveys and administrative sources collecting information on a particular topic. Statistical or data standards allow us to collect reliable statistics using consistent procedures. If we follow these standards, we can integrate data over time and across different data sources, allowing data to be used beyond the immediate purpose for which it was produced. Statistical standards also reduce the resources required to develop and maintain surveys.

The table below documents the issues StatsNZ is seeking consultation on, and RPH's proposed response. All of the issues seek levels of agreement with the proposal.

The questions ask: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the (above proposal)?*

The response options are: *Strongly disagree > Disagree > Neutral > Agree > Strongly Agree*

StatsNZ Proposal	RPH submission
<p>Gender by default principle</p> <p>We propose that the ‘gender by default’ principle is adopted in the updated standard. This is an approach that defaults to the use of gender data as opposed to sex at birth. Collection of sex at birth information should be viewed as an exception.</p>	<p>Strongly agree.</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p> <p>Regional Public Health supports Statistics NZ’s data leadership, by recognising all of the diversity in New Zealand society. RPH strongly agrees with the ‘gender by default’ principle, as the ability for people to report their self-identified gender upholds their right to self-determination and maintains their dignity. It also allows for the identification of trans people (and others) through the two-step process.</p> <p>In the health and social sectors the terms sex and gender are used interchangeably, and it is common for research to be ambiguous about which concept is being measured.</p>
<p>‘Gender’ concept definition</p> <p>We propose the following gender definition:</p> <p>Gender refers to a person's social and personal identity as male, female, or another gender such as non-binary. Gender may include the gender that a person internally feels ('gender identity'), and/or the gender a person publicly expresses ('gender expression') in their daily life. A person's current gender may differ from the sex recorded at their birth and may differ from what is indicated on their current legal documents. A person's gender may change over time. Some people may not identify with any gender.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p> <p>We agree with Statistics New Zealand concept definition of gender because it allows people to self-identify their gender, identify with more than one gender or no gender.</p> <p>The proposed definition is simple and likely works for all parts of the population.</p>
<p>Another gender</p> <p>We propose ‘another gender’ as the category for classifying responses as opposed to ‘gender diverse’. This both renames that classification (which is currently known as</p>	<p>Strongly agree</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p> <p>We agree that the term ‘another gender’ is a better term than ‘gender diverse’, as it does not ascribe or assume a specific gender identity or alienate people who may not use the term gender diverse.</p>

<p>gender diverse’) and limits it to those who specify their gender as ‘another gender’.</p> <p>In the New Zealand context, the term ‘gender diverse’ is often used and understood as an umbrella term, similar to the terms trans or transgender. However, some trans people may not use the term and not all gender diverse people may identify as trans (Oliphant, 2018).</p> <p>This consistent approach also avoids ascribing an umbrella term that may not be a good fit for some respondents. It will also more clearly indicate that data reported in this third ‘another gender’ category does not represent all transgender people (as many will have selected male or female responses) and avoid the confusion created under the current ‘gender diverse’ classification.</p>	<p>Another gender also allows for diverse cultural understandings of gender to be included, such as whakawahine, tangata ira tāne, and takatāpui (Māori), fa’afafine (Samoan), fakaleiti (Tongan), ‘akava’ine (Cook Islands), mähū (Hawaiian), vakasalewalewa (Fijian), and fakafifine (Niuean).</p> <p>It would be helpful to get guidance from StatsNZ about whether these terms may be included as example terms in situations where it is important to measure Maori, Pacific and other ethnic populations. Maori and Pacific populations experience worse health outcomes than other populations, and capturing high quality accurate information about these groups is essential in the health and social sectors.</p> <p>It would also be helpful to receive guidance on how to use responses where more than one response option has been selected.</p>
<p>Two-step method</p> <p>We propose use of the two-step method in the updated standard.</p> <p>This involves asking a question about sex at birth, combined with a question on gender. The two-step approach is considered best practice for use in population representative data collections, where reflecting the transgender population is required, It is also the approach implemented by Statistics Canada in some of their surveys.</p>	<p>Strongly agree</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p> <p>We agree with the use of the two-step method in the updated standard as a best practice method of measuring gender and sex.</p> <p>There is a lack of information about the demographics, health service use, and health outcomes of transgender populations, although there is evidence that transgender populations have poorer outcomes in mental health, sexual health, access to appropriate health care, and access to the wider social determinants of health than cis-gendered populations.</p> <p>The two-step method is essential for ensuring the transgender population is not undercounted or misclassified. This is also relevant to differentiating other groups such as genderqueer. The one-question method does not necessarily identify transgender people who identify in binary terms. Having high quality accurate data for different sub-populations allows for evidence-based practice and policies when planning and delivering health promotion, health services and other programmes.</p>
<p>‘Sex at birth concept’</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p>

<p>We propose introducing a specific definition and question module based on 'sex at birth' for use in surveys used solely in the two-step method (where identifying transgender populations is required).</p> <p>Sex at birth refers to the sex recorded at a person's birth (e.g. recorded on their original birth certificate).</p>	<p>It eliminates ambiguity and enhances specificity. We agree with creating a write in response option to account for the range of 'classifications' that may be recorded at birth other than female or male, and would welcome guidance on this in the final standard.</p> <p>The wording ("recorded") implies certainty over the infants' sex even though there may be indeterminate primary sex characteristics. We prefer Statistics Canada use of the word "assigned".</p> <p>Asking a question about sex assigned at birth can be difficult or upsetting for some transgender people, but may also be important for accurately measuring the trans population.</p>
<p>Intersex information needs</p> <p>We propose adoption of an intersex variation question where intersex population data is required.</p> <p>Where intersex population data is required, international best practice is to use a separate question asking whether a person was born with an intersex variation.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p><u>Please explain the reason for your rating:</u></p> <p>We agree that a separate question is required in order to meet data requirements. StatsNZ guidance in how to phrase and use the question would be required.</p>