Data standard for gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics

New Zealand Government

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Purpose

This standard was developed by Stats NZ for the collection and dissemination of data on gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics. It was developed through a review process with extensive public consultation, input from government agencies, international peers, and the support of an external advisory group including subject matter experts and community advocates.

The objectives of the standard are to:

- standardise the definitions and measures of data on gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics, to make them consistent, interpretable, and interoperable
- outline the key principles for collection and output, including a step-by-step decision diagram for collecting and outputting data
- meet human rights requirements for data collection and support the Human Rights Act 1993
- support a human-rights based approach to data collection, ensuring the principles of self-identification and disaggregation of data for specific populations are upheld.

The standard includes definitions and guidance on the collection of gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics, as well as guidance for deriving cisgender and transgender population data.

This standard replaces the previous statistical standards on gender identity and sex.

Background to gender and sex concepts

Gender and sex concepts in Aotearoa New Zealand

Many cultures do not draw lines between the concepts of gender, sex, variations of sex characteristics, or sexual orientation in the way this standard does. In Aotearoa, Māori and Pasifika identities often span more than one of these domains.

Takatāpui (also spelt 'takataapui'), for example, is 'an umbrella term that embraces all Māori with diverse gender identities, sexualities, and sex characteristics including whakawāhine, tangata ira tāne, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer' (Kerekere, 2017). Pasifika identities such as fakaleitī and fa'afafine are also understood within their own cultural reference points. Counting Ourselves (Veale et al, 2019) highlighted the variety of terms used to describe gender diverse people.

The framing of these concepts in the standard is based mainly on western understandings of these concepts. This is only one of many valid ways to understand them. In data standards, concepts are defined as distinct with mutually exclusive categories for the purpose of collecting data that is consistent and comparable for a range of uses. This approach allows for data to be disaggregated for specific populations (for example, transgender and intersex populations). We recognise the tension between this 'standardised' view and wider cultural and philosophical understandings. Stats NZ is committed to working further with communities to determine how to better reflect culturally specific identities in data.

Related concepts of gender, sex, variations of sex characteristics, and sexual identity

Data on gender and sex is critical for determining the demographic characteristics of a population for statistical, policy, and research purposes. [Sexual identity](), while related to gender and sex, is a separate and different concept with its own statistical standard. Care needs to be taken to ensure the correct concept and definition is used, depending on the context, collection, and dissemination method, as gender, sex, and sexual identity are not interchangeable.

Transgender and intersex[1] populations

There will be instances when data about transgender or intersex populations may be required. This standard includes guidance on how to collect and output that information using both questions on gender and sex at birth or using a stand-alone question on variations of sex characteristics.

Mā ngā tikanga e arahina | Be guided by good principles

This section discusses the key principles for collecting and outputting gender and sex data:

- collection principles
- gender by default
- Ngā Tikanga Paihere.

Collection principles

Privacy, safety, confidentiality, and comfort

A person's privacy, safety, confidentiality, and comfort are important. Questions on gender, sex, variations of sex characteristics, and transgender status should not be asked in a way that potentially compromises a person in any of these ways.

Dignity

People deserve respect as whole and complex beings who are valued members of whānau and communities. Treating all people, their experiences, and their identities as valid and accepted is an important part of challenging discrimination and upholding dignity.

Relevance

It is not always relevant to ask about a person's gender, sex, whether they are transgender, or have variations of sex characteristics (intersex). There must be a purpose for collecting this information; it must also be necessary to collect this information to satisfy that purpose.

Provide information about collection

When these questions are asked, information about the collection's need to ask must be available to respondents. It is good practice to provide information on why the information is being collected,

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[1] 'Variations of sex characteristics' is suggested as the formal and legal term for best practice, but in this document we use 'intersex', which is the community nominated term. These two terms are beginning to be used interchangeably in some settings.

how it will be stored, how the information will be used, and an outline of the privacy and confidentiality rules that the data collection will adhere to.

Gender by default principle

Gender by default is an approach that defaults to the collection and output of gender data as opposed to sex. Users should have a clearly established information need for collecting and outputting sex data. This approach is in line with self-determination from a human rights perspective (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020) and promotes the respect and inclusion of all people.

Step-by-step guide to determining if and how to collect and output gender and sex data

The following guide should be used to determine what, if anything, should be collected around gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics. The guide also applies to what data should be output.

Gender information should only be collected if there is a clear need for the information. Please refer to the privacy principles for further information on collection of personal information. If deemed necessary, gender should be asked by default. In some instances, data on sex may also be necessary (collecting transgender population data or for vital statistics). In these cases, the two-step process (that is, asking for gender and sex at birth) should be followed. If sex information is needed in a medical context, then this may have different requirements to administrative health contexts and is beyond the scope of this standard.

Figure 1 is a step-by-step guide to collecting data on intersex population, as well as an alternative approach for collecting transgender population data.

Figure 1

Guide to collecting gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics data (see Appendix A for text alternative)
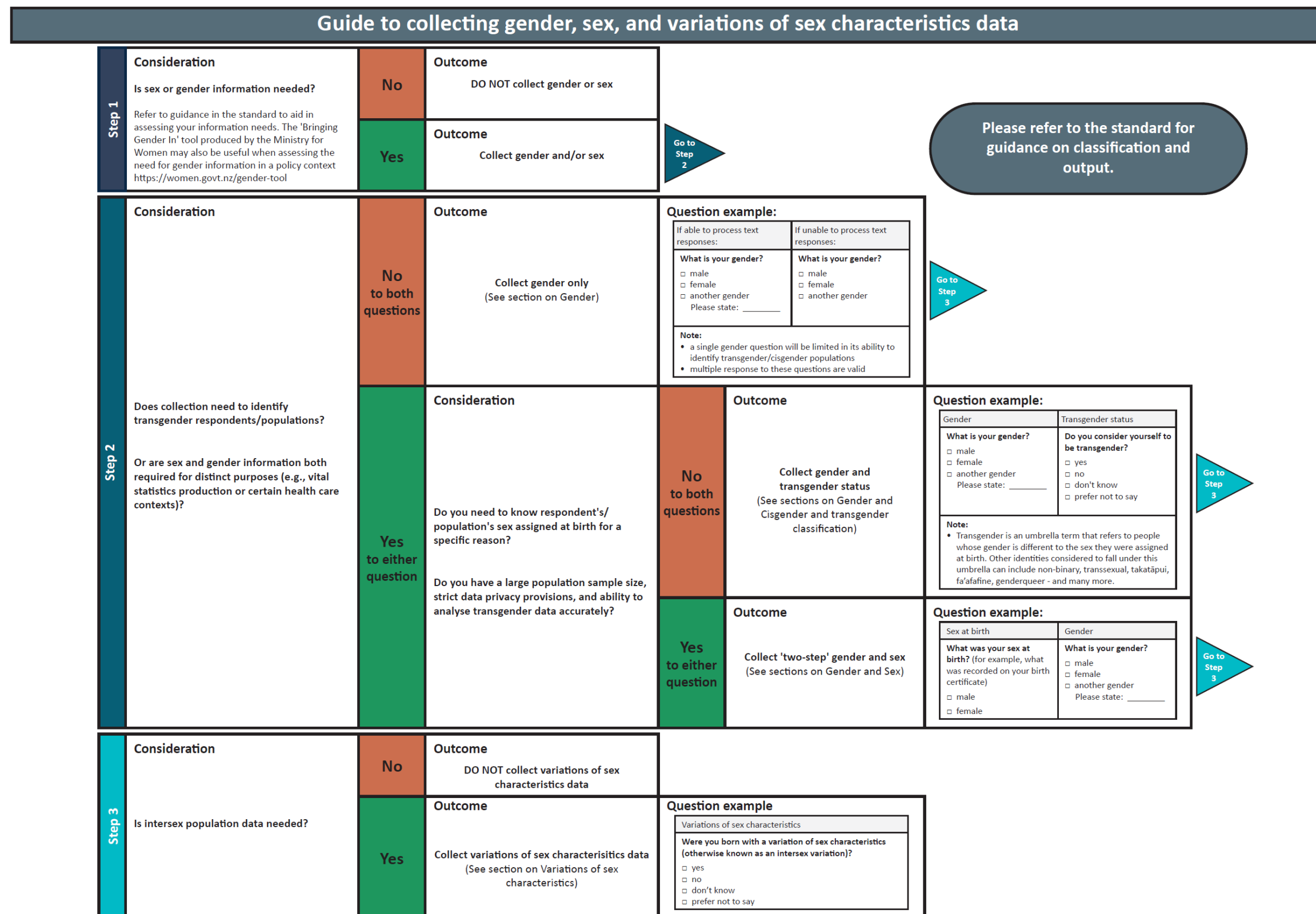
Source: Stats NZ

Ngā Tikanga Paihere

Ngā Tikanga Paihere draws on 10 tikanga (appropriate customary practices developed by Māori communities and individuals informed by common cultural values and concepts) to help establish goals, boundaries, and principles that guide and inform data practices.

In the past, many statistical outputs were criticised for being heavily deficit-focused, with very little insight into or recognition of the cultural values that reflect diverse communities. A principles-based approach to working with data is fast becoming a modern-day requirement for gathering useful data and producing statistics. An impact of not having a principles-based approach is seen in the way some communities are negatively portrayed, especially minority and marginalised communities. This is harmful to the overall wellbeing of these groups. Further, the information gathered made no difference to the communities of interest, because there was no alignment with their values, or governance and oversight over data use.

Data practices that focus on marginalised sections of society, including under-represented groups at risk of negative harm through data use, will benefit from being assessed using Ngā Tikanga Paihere. In the context of this standard, this practice is particularly pertinent to transgender and intersex peoples. Assessing each data collection context against these tikanga ensures the approach taken is suitable for the context, the data gathered is of good quality, and that this information is used appropriately.

Ko te Tāhuhu o Ngā Tikanga Paihere | Core principles of the framework

Ngā Tikanga Paihere – the principles in detail includes a set of tāhuhu (core principles) that are balanced between two tikanga (cultural practices) to prompt a set of guiding considerations over how the data is treated (from design to reuse):

- Principle 1 – have appropriate expertise, skills, and relationships with communities
- Principle 2 – maintain public confidence and trust to use data
- Principle 3 – use good data standards and practices
- Principle 4 – have clear purpose and action
- Principle 5 – balance benefits and risks

The principles emphasise the need to develop relationships with relevant communities in order to ensure that collection and output of data is with their knowledge, guidance, and understanding. This helps ensure that "researchers can…demonstrate they have made themselves accountable to communities in the use of data about them or why they may be impacted by its use."

For more specific guidance on the core principles, contact Stats NZ's Standards team at standards@stats.govt.nz

Figure 2

Five principles of Ngā Tikanga Paihere (core principles in the orange pillar; see for text alternative).

(Knowledge and expertise)
Researchers demonstrate an awareness of and intention to work with data in culturally appropriate ways.

(Accountability and transparency)
Level of accountability to communities of interest is explained and there is community support for the research.

(Organisations)
Institutions have established systems, policies, and procedures to support culturally appropriate practices when working with data.

(Community good)
Community objectives align with research objectives and any potential harm is considered

(Sensitivity and risk)
Sensitivities in the use of data are identified including privacy issues for whānau and identifiable groups.

(Community relationships)
Researchers establish suitable relationships with communities before undertaking substantive research.

(Value for all)
Research should be part of a body of work that contributes towards better outcomes for Māori and New Zealanders.

(Data stewardship and governance)
Communities of interest are identified and involved in research decisions as early as possible.

(Data transformation and provenance)
Researchers show how data transforms from its original collection purpose to support research objectives.

(Benefit and opportunity)
Data is readily accessible and there is demonstrated awareness of the impact on communities of interest.

Have appropriate expertise, skills, and relationships with communities

Maintain public confidence and trust to use data

Use good data standards and practices

Have clear purpose and action

Balance benefits and risks

Pūkenga

Pono

Wānanga

Wairua

Tapu

Whakapapa

Tika

Kaitiaki

Mauri

Noa

Ngā Tikanga Paihere

Mā ngā tikanga e arahina - Be guided by good principles

Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi

The tikanga principles work to safeguard and protect the relationships researchers form with participants and their communities. This approach is not only guided by tikanga but by kaupapa Māori (Māori values and social practice) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi).

Human rights considerations

Ngā Tikanga Paihere includes human rights considerations, described in the Human Rights Act 1993 by the Human Rights Commission, alongside the tikanga principles. The Human Rights Act 1993 protects the human rights of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand. When applying the standard, users must ensure that people are not discriminated against.

Gender

Concept definitions

Gender

Gender refers to a person's social and personal identity as male, female, or another gender or genders that may be non-binary. Gender may include gender identity and/or gender expression. 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.

Gender expression

Gender expression refers to a person's presentation of gender through physical appearance – including their dress, hairstyles, accessories, cosmetics, mannerisms, speech, behavioural patterns, names, and personal references. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person's internal and individual experience of gender.

Standard classification

Classification scope

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

The scope of the classification covers the spectrum of genders, including agender.

Classification description

The standard classification of gender is a flat classification with three categories.

1 Male / Tāne

2 Female / Wahine

3 Another gender / He ira kē anō

Note that te reo Māori translations of the categories are consistent with those used by other agencies and organisations. There is, however, ongoing work to translate based on concepts and not just literal translations.

Name	Standard classification of gender
Abbreviation	GENDER
Version	1.0.0
Valid from	22 April 2021

Collection

Operational issues

Gender changing with context

Some people may give a different answer to a question on gender, depending on the context it is asked in. The degree of privacy, safety, and relevance as well as the perceived relevance for collecting this information may dictate how an individual responds.

Gender changing over time

A person's gender may change over time. It is necessary to allow for gender changing in longitudinal surveys and administrative data collections. Changes in gender over time and across contexts may affect the integration of different datasets. Individuals may give different 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

Queries around what age is appropriate to ask a question on gender (rather than sex) are common. As gender is self-defined, gender information is suitable to ask at any age. Refer to the section on Gender collection by proxy for more detail.

Gender collection by proxy

In some circumstances a person may be unable to answer the question asked (for example, in the case of death, incapacity because of disability, injury, or sickness). In this case, collection by proxy is appropriate, that is, next-of-kin, parent, legal guardian, spouse, or partner may need to respond on their behalf. Parents, caregivers, or guardians of a child may also complete a gender question on behalf of their child.

An adult who provides this information on behalf of an infant or young child will often base their answer on the infant or child's sex at birth. A household member who provides this information on behalf of another (for example, a flatmate) will often base their answer on their perception of the household member, which may not be accurate. This is the nature of any demographic question with an element of self-identification – it is considered personal and may develop over time.

Questionnaire module

Mandatory question requirements

A gender question is required to:

- include the word 'gender' in the question to clearly articulate the concept being collected
- be suitable for self-completion
- cater for all genders; be all-inclusive – allow for the capture of male, female, and another gender information as a minimum
- elicit a single response as a minimum – multiple responses should be permitted.

Points to consider when developing a gender question:

- it is preferable to have a question with write-in facility, to allow the respondent to fully describe their gender
- a partial write-in question (that is, tick boxes for response categories followed by a write-in facility) is the preferred response format because listing response categories helps respondents understand the question
- if interview-administered, the question must always be read aloud as written and no assumptions must be made by the interviewer.

The following question example complies with the requirements of this standard and offers possible options on question wording and structure. Questions developed to suit individual needs and modes of collection may vary from this example but must conform to the requirements.

Example

What is your gender?

[ ] Male

[ ] Female

[ ] Another gender (please specify): . . . .

Processing methods

Coding process

Guidelines

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

Gender is self-defined. It is the gender the person provides. The scope of the classification covers the spectrum of genders, including agender. The following are examples of how certain responses should be coded to classification categories, but this is not an exhaustive list:

- a response of 'cis man', 'cisgender man', 'trans man', or 'transgender man' should be coded to 'male'
- a response of 'cis woman', 'cisgender woman', 'trans woman' or 'transgender woman' should be coded to 'female'
- a response of 'no gender' or 'agender' should be coded to 'another gender'
- people may identify with more than one gender identity – each response is coded to the appropriate category.

For some people, the gender question may be too personal and they may refuse to answer. A refusal/object-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 (see Glossary) are applied as part of the operational coding practice.

Imputation

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

Synonym report

A synonym report is used to classify gender responses. It is a list of probable responses and the classification categories to which they are coded. For example, the synonym report for gender lists all variations of gender and popular and similar gender terms used by the population. The report contains descriptions obtained from a variety of sources which include specific survey responses and misspellings. The inclusion of these in no way implies or represents the expression of any opinion by Stats NZ.

The gender 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 standards@stats.govt.nz if you would like a copy of the gender synonym report.

Outputs

Standard output

The standard output for gender is the same as the classification categories. For analytical purposes, the use of 'man' or 'boy' instead of 'male', the use of 'woman' or 'girl' instead of 'female', and the use of 'non-binary' instead of 'another gender' may be considered. This will need explanatory notes regarding the use of these descriptors.

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

See Privacy, security, and confidentiality of survey data for more information.

Classification description

Gender is a flat classification with three categories:

1 Male / Tāne

2 Female / Wahine

3 Another gender / He ira kē anō.

Residual categories

Residual categories where full coverage of gender 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 / Kaore e ki.

Note that te reo Māori translations of the categories are consistent with that used by other agencies and organisations. There is, however, ongoing work to translate based on concepts and not just literal translations.

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

Name   [Standard classification of gender](#)

Abbreviation   GENDER

Version   1.0.0

Valid from   22 April 2021

Related standards

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

The [Standard classification of gender](#) is related to the [Standard classification of gender of sole parent](#). This new classification is in line with the 'gender by default' principle outlined in this combined gender and sex standard. It is similar to the existing Classification of sex of sole parent.

We are working on other classifications that will be added to this standard and Ariā once finalised. More information on Gender of Sole Parent and these classifications is available in [Appendix C](#).

International

This data standard for gender, sex and variations of sex characteristics is consistent with the definitions and classifications recommended by the United Nations Statistics Division (2017).

It is also consistent with [The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10](#) (YP+10) or Additional Principles and State Obligations on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics to Complement the Yogyakarta Principles (International Commission of Jurists, 2017).

Sex

Note that, as per the gender by default principle, specifically the decision diagram (figure 1), sex is only to be collected and output as part of the two-step process. That is, data on sex is to be collected and output in combination with gender and not to be collected or output in isolation.

Concept definitions

Sex

Sex is based on a person's sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. While typically based upon the sex characteristics observed and recorded at birth or infancy, a person's sex can change over the course of their lifetime and may differ from their sex recorded at birth.

Sex characteristics

Sex characteristics refer to each person's physical features relating to sex, including genitalia and other sexual and reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary physical features emerging from puberty.

Sex at birth

Sex at birth refers to the sex recorded at a person's birth (for example, what was recorded on their birth certificate). Sex at birth may also be understood as sex assigned at birth. This standard uses sex at birth as the operational definition for data on sex.

Standard classification

Classification criteria

The criterion used to place a person into the classification is the sex recorded at the person's birth.

Classification description

Sex is a flat classification with two categories:

1 Male / Tāne

2 Female / Wahine.

Note that te reo Māori translations of the categories are consistent with that used by other agencies and organisations. There is, however, ongoing work to translate based on concepts and not just literal translations.

There are, however, other collection and response issues outlined under Operational issues.

Name	Standard classification of sex
Abbreviation	SEX
Version	2.0.0
Valid from	22 April 2021

Collection

Operational issues

Collection only when necessary

Sex data should only be collected if there is a clear need for the information and should only be asked as part of the two-step approach, as outlined in the gender by default principle.

Questionnaire module

Mandatory question requirements

A sex question is required to:

- include 'sex at birth' in the question to clearly articulate the concept being collected
- be suitable for self-completion
- elicit a single response.

Points to consider when developing a sex question:

- alternative phrasings of the question stem may be appropriate for different modes of collection, for example, where the question is read aloud in an interviewer-administered setting
- if the question is interviewer-administered, the question must always be asked as written and no assumptions made by the interviewer
- a write-in response field may be appropriate to account for birth registrations that are neither male nor female; if necessary, this category should be labelled 'another term'.

The following question example complies with the requirements of this standard and offers possible options on question wording and structure. Questions developed to suit individual needs and modes of collection may vary from this example but must conform to the requirements.

Example

What was your sex at birth?

(for example, what was recorded on your birth certificate)

[ ] Male

[ ] Female.

Processing methods

Coding process

Guidelines

Imputation

When full coverage is required, Stats NZ can provide guidance on this matter, on a case-by-case basis.

Third response option: In some circumstances, particularly administrative collections dealing with perinatal data, the term 'indeterminate' (see Change the registered sex on your birth certificate) is used for individuals whose sex at birth cannot be determined as male or female.

Sample or self-administered surveys will generally only require, and only be able to collect, male and female. Within Stats NZ, the indeterminate sex category is applicable only in processing of the birth registrations data used in the derivation of vital statistics. For statistical reporting purposes, sex will be imputed in those rare cases where it is recorded as indeterminate.

For collections that require a classification including a third option, the suggested classification for use with numeric codes is:

1 Male

2 Female

3 Another term.

There are significant concerns about the conflation of the term 'indeterminate' with 'intersex'. These terms are not interchangeable. Collection of data on variations of sex characteristics is discussed in a separate section in this document.

Note that any response that is not male or female provides insufficient information to be cross-classified with gender in the two-step method to determine whether someone is transgender or cisgender.

Outputs

Standard output

Classification scope

The standard output is the same as the classification categories, male and female.

Name	Standard classification of sex
Abbreviation	SEX
Version	2.0.0
Valid from	22 April 2021.

Related standards

Related classifications and standards

New Zealand

The Standard Classification of Sex is related to the Standard classification of Sex of Sole Parent and Type of couple. More information about these classifications is available in Appendix D.

International

This combined data standard for gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics is consistent with the definitions and classifications recommended by the United Nations (2017).

Variations of sex characteristics

While variations of sex characteristics (VSC) is the overarching technical term used in the context of this standard, 'intersex' is also noted as a community nominated term. These terms can be used interchangeably depending on the context. Intersex is used in this standard when referring to population groups.

Concept definitions

Variations of sex characteristics

Variations of sex characteristics refers to people born with innate genetic, hormonal, or physical sex characteristics that do not conform to medical norms for female or male bodies. It refers to a wide spectrum of variations to hormones, chromosomes, genitals and/or reproductive organs. Other terms used to describe being born with variations of sex characteristics are intersex person, a person with an intersex variation, or Differences of Sex Development (DSD).

Some people may identify as intersex, while others may see their intersex variation more as part of their medical history, rather than their identity.

Standard classification

Classification scope

The criterion used to classify a person's variations of sex characteristics is self-defined. It is the status the person provides.

Classification description

The input classification of variations of sex characteristics is a flat classification with seven categories:

1 Yes

2 No

4 Don't know

5 Refused to answer

7 Response unidentifiable

8 Response outside scope

9 Not stated.

The output classification of variations of sex characteristics is a flat classification with four categories:

1 Persons who know they were born with a variation of sex characteristics

2 Persons who know they were not born with a variation of sex characteristics

4 Persons who do not know if they were born with a variation of sex characteristics

9 Not elsewhere included[2].

Name	Standard classification of variations of sex characteristics
Abbreviation	VSC
Version	1.0.0

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[2] 'Not elsewhere included' is the aggregation of all residuals (for example, response unidentifiable, response outside scope) for output purposes.

Valid from   22 April 2021

Operational issues

Separate question required

Where variations of sex characteristics data are required, international best practice is to use a separate question asking whether a person was born with a variation of sex characteristics (Bauer et al, 2017; Carpenter, 2019; Lee Badgett and The GenIUSS Group, 2014). This approach is endorsed by intersex advocacy organisations such as Intersex Trust Aotearoa New Zealand (ITANZ), Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA), and by research bodies.

There is no singular intersex experience. For these reasons, intersex organisations have stated that sex questions should not include intersex as a third sex category (see the regional Australasian Darlington Statement (2017) and the International Malta Declaration (2013). Data collected taking this approach are likely to be of poor quality.

Questionnaire module

Mandatory question requirements

A variations of sex characteristics question is required to:

- include the terms 'variations of sex characteristics', 'intersex', or 'intersex variation' in the question to clearly articulate the concept being collected
- be suitable for self-completion.

Points to consider when developing a variations of sex characteristics question:

- Many respondents may not understand what is meant by the terms 'variations of sex characteristics' or 'intersex'. We recommend including a definition of what it means. We also recommend guidance that includes a list of the most common variations where possible.
- Some respondents may be unsure or may have privacy concerns about the question. We recommend including response options such as 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say'.

Example

Were you born with a variation of sex characteristics (otherwise known as an intersex variation)?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Don't know

[ ] Prefer not to say.

Standard output

Classification scope

The standard output is a flat classification with four categories:

1 Persons who know they were born with a variation of sex characteristics

2 Persons who know they were not born with a variation of sex characteristics

4 Persons who do not know if they were born with a variation of sex characteristics

9 Not elsewhere included

Name	[Standard classification of variations of sex characteristics](#)
Abbreviation	VSC
Version	1.0.0
Valid from	22 April 2021

Related concepts and populations

This section provides definitions and guidelines for the collections and outputs of concepts related to gender and sex, specifically for the cisgender and transgender classification. Note that the collection of data on these concepts and populations should only be done when necessary. Use the [guide](#) to determine if and when to collect these concepts.

Cisgender and transgender classification

Concept definitions

Cisgender

Cisgender refers to a person whose gender is the same as the sex recorded at their birth.

Transgender

Transgender refers to a person whose gender is different from the sex recorded at their birth.

Standard classification

Classification scope

The criterion used to classify a person as cisgender or transgender is self-defined. It is the status the person provides to the transgender status question or what is derived based on the responses provided to the gender and sex questions.

It is important to note that this does not ascribe an identity to someone (that is, it should not be assumed that people identify with any of these terms). Instead, this classification sorts responses into categories to compare groups. Being classified into a cisgender or transgender category reflects the relationship between a person's sex at birth and their gender, and whether these differ or align. It is not a statement about the terms that someone identifies with.

Classification description

The classification of cisgender and transgender status is a hierarchical classification of two levels. Level 1 has three categories and level 2 has six categories.

1 Cisgender

   11 Cisgender man

   12 Cisgender woman

2 Transgender

   21 Transgender man

   22 Transgender woman

   23 Transgender person of another gender

3 Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable

   31 Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable.

Name	[Standard classification of cisgender and transgender](#)
Abbreviation	CISTRANS
Version	1.0.0
Valid from	22 April 2021

Operational issues

Two-step approach versus transgender status question

For most surveys that require information about transgender populations, the two-step approach (that is, including questions on gender and sex at birth) is adequate. There are instances, however, when this may not be suitable. This could be due to having a small sample size or privacy limitations when collecting the data. In these contexts, a transgender status question is recommended. Note that a gender question is still recommended along with the transgender status question, and will be required to derive transgender status.

Users should refer to the [guide](#) (figure 1) and [Ngā Tikanga Paihere](#) (figure 2) to select the most suitable approach to use.

Questionnaire module

Mandatory question requirements

A transgender status question is required to:

- include the term 'transgender' or 'trans' in the question to clearly articulate the concept being collected
- be suitable for self-completion
- include response options of 'yes', 'no', 'don't know', and 'prefer not to say' at a minimum.

Some respondents may not understand what is meant by the term 'transgender'. We recommend including a description of what transgender means.

Example

Are you transgender*?

[ ] Yes

[ ] No

[ ] Don't know

[ ] Prefer not to say.

*Transgender is an umbrella term that refers to people whose gender is different to the sex recorded at their birth. Identities that may fall under this include trans, non-binary genders, transsexual, takatāpui, fa'afafine, genderqueer, and many more. Some people who come under this umbrella term as it is defined may not use the term 'transgender' to describe themselves.

Standard output

This classification is designed to produce population data for cisgender and transgender.

Data for this classification may be derived from the two-step method (questions on gender and sex at birth). This is by cross-classifying the categories of the gender classification (male, female, another gender) with the sex classification (male, female).

- Responses to the sex classification of 'another term' do not provide enough information to derive cisgender or transgender status. The same applies where a person has not provided an answer or ticked 'prefer not to say' to either the gender or sex question.

Data for this classification can also be derived from the gender question and the transgender status question.

We recommend users exercise caution when comparing data using this approach with data using the two-step method as they may only partially align. This is because not everyone classified as transgender using the two-step method will necessarily respond with 'yes' to a question asking if they are transgender.

- Comparability of data between the two-step method and the transgender status question approach can be improved by creating a combined output category for transgender and non-binary people (that is, anyone who has specified 'another gender').
  - To do this using the gender and transgender status questions, 'another gender' responses (with either 'yes' or 'no' responses to the transgender status question) are grouped with those who identify as transgender in the status question for output purposes. The output category would be described as 'transgender and non-binary'.

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- o This would require combining the 'another gender' category from the gender classification table with the 'transgender' categories in table 3, [Cisgender and transgender status derivation matrix using gender and transgender status questions](#)
  - o A footnote must be included to describe how the data has been grouped.
- For further advice on how to output these based on these classifications, contact Stats NZ's Standards team at [standards@stats.govt.nz.](mailto:standards@stats.govt.nz)

A single gender question will not always identify whether someone is transgender or cisgender – for example, it will not identify trans men or trans women if they do not specify this in a text response. This is why either a sex at birth or a transgender status question is required along with the gender question.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 provide more information on the classification as well as the derivation process using the two-step method and the gender and transgender status questions.

Classification scope

The standard output for transgender status is the same as the classification categories. Table 1 provides definitions for each category.

Table 1

Cisgender and transgender status classification		
Code	**Descriptor**	**Definition**
1	Cisgender person	This category includes persons whose gender is the same as their sex at birth. This category also includes persons who respond with 'no' to a question on transgender status.
1.1	Cisgender man	This category includes persons whose gender was reported as male and whose sex at birth was reported as male.
1.2	Cisgender woman	This category includes persons whose gender was reported as female and whose sex at birth was reported as female.
2	Transgender person	This category includes persons whose gender is different from their sex at birth. This category also includes people who respond with 'yes' to a question on transgender status.
2.1	Transgender man / trans man	This category includes persons whose: gender was reported as male and whose sex at birth was reported as female gender was reported as trans/transgender man gender was reported as male who has transgender status (that is, report 'yes' to a transgender status question)
2.2	Transgender woman / trans woman	This category includes persons whose: gender was reported as female and whose sex at birth was reported as male gender was reported as trans/transgender woman gender was reported as female who has transgender status (that is, report 'yes' to a transgender status question)
2.3	Transgender person of another gender	This category includes persons whose: gender was reported as another gender that may be non-binary, that is, not reported exclusively as male or female gender was reported as both male and female, neither male nor female, either male or female in addition to another gender gender was reported, for example, as agender, pangender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or gender-nonconforming gender includes culturally specific identities such as tākatapui or fa'afafine
3	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable	This category includes persons who: did not respond to a gender or sex question did not respond to a transgender status question ticked 'prefer not to say' to a gender, sex, or transgender status question ticked 'don't know' to a transgender status question
3.1	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable	As above

Table 2 outlines how to derive transgender status using the two-step method (that is, using both the gender and sex questions).

Table 2

Cisgender and transgender status derivation matrix using two-step approach		
Gender question response	**Sex at birth question response**	
	Male	**Female**
Male	Cisgender man	Transgender man
Female	Transgender woman	Cisgender woman
Another gender	Transgender person of another gender	Transgender person of another gender
Prefer not to say	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable

If required for analytical purposes, 'non-binary person assigned male at birth (AMAB)' can be used instead of 'transgender person of another gender' for persons who responded with 'another gender' for gender and 'male' for sex at birth. Similarly, 'non-binary person assigned female at birth (AFAB)' can be used instead of 'transgender person of another gender' for persons who responded with 'another gender' for gender and 'female' for sex at birth. There is not sufficient information to disaggregate data to this level using the gender and transgender status questions.

Table 3 outlines how to derive transgender status using gender and the transgender status question.

Table 3

Cisgender and transgender status derivation matrix using gender and transgender status questions			
Gender question response	**Transgender status question response**		
	Yes	**No**	**Don't know or** **Prefer not to say**
Male	Transgender man	Cisgender man	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable
Female	Transgender woman	Cisgender woman	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable
Another gender	Transgender person of another gender	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable

Cisgender and transgender status derivation matrix using gender and transgender status questions			
Gender question response	**Transgender status question response**		
	Yes	**No**	**Don't know or** **Prefer not to say**
Prefer not to say	Transgender person	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable	Cisgender and transgender status unidentifiable

Glossary

agender – someone who does not identify with any gender.

another gender – used to encompass any genders that are not male or female. This term is used in the Stats NZ gender question format and classification.

assigned female at birth (AFAB) – person whose sex at birth was recorded or assigned as female.

assigned male at birth (AMAB) – person whose sex at birth was recorded or assigned as male.

cisgender – refers to a person whose gender is the same as the sex recorded at their birth.

endosex – refers to a person whose innate physical sex characteristics match what is expected for female or male bodies within a Eurocentric model and construct. They are both born with these characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, genitals, and other anatomy. Endosex is the opposite of intersex.

fa'afafine and other Pacific cultural terms – Pacific communities have their own culturally specific terms relating to sexual orientation and gender identities. These concepts are more or just as much about familial, genealogical, social, and cultural selfhood. These include but are not limited to the following terms: Fa'afafine (Samoa and American Samoa), Leiti/Fakaleiti (Tonga), Fakafifine (Niue), Akava'ine (Cook Islands), Pina (Tuvalu), Māhū (Tahiti & Hawaii), Vakasalewalewa (Fiji), and Palopa (Papua New Guinea).

gender – refers to a person's social and personal identity as male, female, or another gender or genders that may be non-binary. Gender may include gender identity and/or gender expression. 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.

gender expression – refers to a person's presentation of gender through physical appearance – including dress, hairstyles, accessories, cosmetics, mannerisms, speech, behavioural patterns, names, and personal references. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity.

gender diverse – umbrella term used by some people who identify outside of the male/female gender binary. Being transgender can be one way of being gender diverse, but not all gender diverse people identify as transgender and vice versa (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

gender identity – refers to a person's internal and individual experience of gender.

genderqueer – umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different to the binary male or female (from [Outline NZ](#)).

intersex – an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of variations in sex characteristics. Many intersex variations are not visible or detected at birth and many people may not be aware they have an intersex variation until later in life (for example, when trying to conceive). Some people may identify as intersex, while others may see their intersex variation more as part of their medical history, rather than their identity.

non-binary – a term to describe a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. There are many different ways that people may be non-binary.

Residual categories – Within Stats NZ, [residual categories](#) may be broadly described as universal classification categories that capture particular types of survey responses. These include:

> **don't know** – used where the respondent does not know, or cannot give, an appropriate response.

> **refused to answer** – only used when it is known that the respondent has purposefully chosen not to respond to the question.

> **response unidentifiable** – 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, for example, when the response is ambiguous or is vague, or
> - the response is contradictory, for example, both the yes and no tick boxes have been ticked, 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** – used for responses that are positively identified (that is, the meaning and intent are clear) but which clearly fall outside the scope of the defined classification.

> **not stated** – only used where a respondent has not given any response to the question asked, that is, it is solely for non-response.

sex – is based on a person's sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. While typically based upon the sex characteristics observed and recorded at birth or infancy, a person's sex can change over the course of their lifetime and may differ from their recorded at birth.

sex at birth – refers to the sex recorded at a person's birth (that is, what was recorded on their birth certificate). Sex at birth may also be understood as sex assigned at birth.

sex characteristics – refer to each person's physical features relating to sex, including genitalia and other sexual and reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary physical features emerging from puberty.

sexual orientation – covers three key aspects: sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, and sexual identity. These are related – sexual orientation is generally based on sexual attraction; sexual attraction can result in different sexual behaviours and sexual identities (Pega et al, 2013).

> **sexual attraction** – refers to sexual interest in another person. Sexual attraction is having sexual feelings towards someone. A person may be attracted to one specific gender or sex, to more than one gender or sex, or to no one.

> **sexual behaviour** – how a person behaves sexually. It is whether they have sexual partners of another gender or sex, the same gender or sex, or refrain from sexual behaviour.

> **sexual identity** – refers to how a person thinks of their own sexuality and which terms they identify with. Sexual identity terms include lesbian, gay, straight, asexual, takatāpui, bisexual, or pansexual, among others.

standard classification – set of categories which may be assigned to one or more variables registered in surveys or administrative files and may be used in the production and dissemination of statistics. The categories are defined in terms of one or more characteristics of a particular population of units of observation. A standard classification may have a flat, linear structure or may be hierarchically structured, such that all categories at lower levels are subcategories of a category at the next level up. The categories at each level of the classification structure must be mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of all objects in the population of interest.

synonym report – list of probable responses and the classification categories to which they are coded. The report contains descriptions obtained from a variety of sources, which include specific survey responses and misspellings. The inclusion of these in no way implies or represents the expression of any opinion by Stats NZ.

tāhine – also ira tāhūrua-kore, which are te reo Māori terms that refer to a person who identifies with mixed genders, non-binary, or transgender not-otherwise-specified (Gender Minorities Aotearoa, 2020).

takatāpui – also spelt 'takataapui', is a traditional Māori term which means 'intimate companion of the same sex'. It has been reclaimed by some Māori to describe their diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and sex characteristics (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

tangata ira tāne – te reo Māori term that roughly translates as 'trans man'.

tangata ira wahine – te reo Māori term that roughly translates as 'trans woman'.

transgender – refers to a person whose gender is different from the sex recorded at their birth.

trans man – refers to a man who was assigned female at birth (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

trans woman – refers to a woman assigned male at birth (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

transsexual – an older term considered to be outdated by some younger populations. Transsexual is not an umbrella term; those who prefer this term often see it as an important distinction from transgender. It may refer to a person who has had or is in the process of changing their body to affirm their gender (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

variations of sex characteristics – refers to people with innate genetic, hormonal, or physical sex characteristics that do not conform to medical norms for female or male bodies. It refers to a wide spectrum of variations to hormones, chromosomes, genitals and/or reproductive organs.

whakawahine – is a te reo Māori term that roughly translates as 'trans woman'. More literally, it translates as being or becoming, in the manner of spirit of a woman (New Zealand Human Rights Commission, 2020).

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Further reading

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Appendix A: Text version of the step-by-step guide to determining if and how to collect and output gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics data

Step 1: Consideration – Is gender or sex information needed?

Refer to guidance in the standard to aid in assessing your information needs. The Bringing Gender In tool produced by the Ministry for Women may also be useful when assessing the need for gender information in a policy context https://women.govt.nz/gender-tool

If NO → Outcome: DO NOT collect gender or sex

If YES → Outcome: Collect gender and/or sex → Go to step 2

Step 2: Consideration – Does collection need to identify transgender respondents/populations? Or are gender and sex information both required for distinct purposes (for example, vital statistics production or certain health care contexts)?

If NO to both questions → Outcome: Collect gender only → Go to step 3

See section on gender

If YES to either question → Go to step 2.1

Step 2.1: Considerations

Question 2.1.a. Do you need to know respondents' sex for a specific reason?

Question 2.1.b. Do you have a large population sample size, strict data privacy provisions, and ability to analyse transgender data accurately?

If NO to both questions → Outcome: Collect gender and transgender status → Go to step 3

See sections on gender and cisgender/transgender populations

If YES to both questions → Outcome: Collect 'two-step' gender and sex → Go to step 3

See sections on gender and sex

Step 3: Consideration – Is intersex population data needed?

If NO → Outcome: DO NOT collect variations of sex characteristics data

If YES → Outcome: Collect variations of sex characteristics data

See section on variations of sex characteristics

Appendix B: Text version of the Five principles of Ngā Tikanga Paihere

Ngā Tikanga Paihere includes five tāhuhu (core principles), each balanced between two tikanga (cultural practices) to prompt a set of guiding considerations over how the data is treated (from design to reuse). These are outlined below.

Principle 1 – Have appropriate expertise, skills, and relationships with communities

- This principle includes ngā tikanga Pūkenga (skills/knowledge and expertise) and Whakapapa (genealogy, community relationships)
- Pūkenga (knowledge/skills and expertise): Researchers demonstrate an awareness of and intention to work with data in culturally appropriate ways.
- Whakapapa (genealogy, community relationships): Researchers establish suitable relationships with communities before undertaking substantive research.

Principle 2 – Maintain public confidence and trust to use data

- This principle includes Pono (accountability and transparency) and Tika (value for all).
- Pono (accountability and transparency): Level of accountability to communities of interest is explained and there is community support for the research.
- Tika (value for all): Research should be part of a body of work that contributes towards better outcomes for Māori and New Zealanders.

Principle 3 – Use good data standards and practices

- This principle includes Wānanga (organisation) and Kaitiaki (data stewardship and governance).
- Wānanga (organisation): Institutions have established systems, policies, and procedures to support culturally appropriate practices when working with data.
- Kaitiaki (data stewardship and governance): Communities of interest are identified and involved in research decisions as early as possible.

Principle 4 – Have clear purpose and action

- This principle includes Wairua (community good) and Mauri (data transformation and provenance).
- Wairua (community good): Community objectives align with research objectives and any potential harm is considered.
- Mauri (data transformation and provenance): Researchers show how data transforms from its original collection purpose to support research objectives.

Principle 5 – Balance benefits and risks

- This principle includes Tapu (sensitivity and risk) and Noa (benefit and opportunity).
- Tapu (sensitivity and risk): Sensitivities in the use of data are identified including privacy issues for whanau and identifiable groups.
- Noa (benefit and opportunity): Data is readily accessible and there is demonstrated awareness of the impact on communities of interest.

Appendix C: Related classifications to gender

Other classifications that we are working on will be added to this section later.

Gender of sole parent

Gender of sole parent is a derived variable that classifies one-parent families by the gender of the sole parent. It can be applied to (embedded or nested) in the following standard classifications: family type and household composition.

Classification criteria

The criteria for putting a unit (either a family or a household) into the classification is the gender of the sole parent(s) in that unit.

Gender of sole parent is a flat classification with three categories:

1 Male sole parent

2 Female sole parent

3 Sole parent of another gender.

Appendix D: Related classifications to sex

Sex of sole parent

Sex of sole parent is a derived variable that classifies one-parent families by the sex of the sole parent. It can be applied to (embedded or nested) in the following standard classifications: family type and household composition.

Classification criteria

The criterion for putting a unit (either a family or a household) into the classification is the sex of the sole parent(s) in that unit.

Sex of sole parent is a flat classification with two categories:

1 Male sole parent

2 Female sole parent.

Type of couple

Type of couple is a derived variable that indicates whether two people are an opposite- or same-sex couple at level 1 of the classification, or an opposite-sex, male, or female couple at level 2 of the classification. It can be applied to (embedded or nested in) the following classifications: family type and household composition.

Classification criteria

The criterion for putting a unit (either a family or a household) into the classifications is the type of couple(s) in that unit.

Type of couple is a hierarchical classification of two levels. Level 1 has two categories and level 2 has three categories. These are:

1 Opposite-sex couple

    11 Opposite-sex couple

2 Same-sex couple

    21 Male couple

    22 Female couple.

Appendix D: Related classifications to sex