

# Gender and Demographic Data Collection: Challenges in "measuring" gender and gender inequalities with censuses and large-scale data

## Problem Statement:

- Until recently, only sex (but not gender) had been collected in most population surveys (including censuses). Many surveys conflate sex and gender.
- Increasing numbers of people around the world are identifying openly as nonbinary/transgender.
- Intersex, trans, and nonbinary activists have been calling for inclusion of gender on surveys (not just sex).

## Current Solutions:

- Many countries suggested a "gender by default" strategy: data on sex is only collected in circumstances when information on sex traits is needed (e.g., clinical screenings). Gender should be collected with sex.
- **Two-step measures** can be used to collect sex and gender for these instances. These measures reduce error and have been widely tested.

**Table 1: Examples of Two-Step Measures for Sex and Gender**

Survey	Sex Question	Gender Question	Gender Question Response Options
England and Wales Census (2021)	What is your sex?	Is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?	Yes; No, write in gender
Scotland Census (2022)	What is your sex?	Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?	No; Yes, please describe your trans status
Canada Census (2021)	What was this person's sex at birth?	What is this person's gender?	Male; Female; Or please specify this person's gender
New Zealand Recommendations (2021)	What was your sex at birth?	What is your gender?	Male; Female; Another gender (please state)
Australia Census (2021) and Recommendations (2021)	Is this person... male, female, non-binary sex	How do you describe your gender?	Man or male; Woman or female; Non-binary; I use a different term (please specify); Prefer not to answer
US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2022)	What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?	What is your current gender?	Female; Male; Transgender; I use a different term; Don't know; Prefer not to answer

## Challenges with Two-Step Measures:

- Many sex questions currently do not include space for intersex people and still maintain a binary response option.
- Many gender questions force respondents to select one option, but some might identify with multiple options (e.g., both "transgender" and "male" using the US National Academies of Sciences question).
- Different surveys utilize different guidance on how to answer a sex question (e.g., as on national IDs, gender recognition certificates, passports, birth certificates...). This could cause respondent confusion.
- Some surveys use male/female, instead of man/woman, as gender response options to avoid confusion.

## Select Citations:

Lagos, Danya, and D'Lane Compton. 2021. *Demography*  
 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26424>.  
 Saperstein, Aliya, and Laurel Westbrook. 2021. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*

## Short Definitions & Clarifications:

*Cisgender* (adj.): denoting that one's gender identity corresponds to birth sex  
*Female/Male* (n.): "sex-typed" words; often conflated with woman/man  
*Gender* (n.): links gender identity, expression, and social expectations  
*Intersex* (adj.): denoting that sex traits do not all correspond to a single sex  
*Man/Woman* (n.): "gender-typed" words; often conflated with male/female  
*Nonbinary* (adj.): gender identities that lie outside the gender binary (woman/man)  
*Sex* (n.): based on a cluster of anatomical and physiological traits (sex traits)  
*Transgender* (adj.): denoting that one's gender identity does not match birth sex

## Background Image Info:

Intersex Inclusive Progress Flag  
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 Learn more: [bit.ly/3O6gkfX](http://bit.ly/3O6gkfX)

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