



Information and Data Collection Involving Gender and Sexuality

The following recommendations are meant to guide researchers, higher education and government administrators, student affairs professionals, and others collecting information and data related to gender and sexuality.

These recommendations are based on the best practices outlined by the [Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals](#) in their publication “Suggest Best Practices for Asking Sexual Orientation and Gender on College Application”.

1. Provide information about how the information and data collected will be used, how it will be protected and who will have access to it.

Individuals may have questions and concerns about how information related to gender and sexuality will be used, if the information will be public at any point: if the information could be connected to identifying information such as their name or a student identification number, and so on. If possible, communicate the following to individuals prior to completing the survey

- This information is used for...
- Only [name of office] will have access to this information.
- Your response will be kept private and secure (and if the form is anonymous, please indicate).
- The information will not be used for a discriminatory purpose.
- You can change this information in the future by...

2. Avoid conflating concepts of sex and gender.

Too often, concepts of sex and gender are conflated in surveys and forms, and data analysis. The terminology “male” and “female” should be associated with sex assigned at birth whereas “man”, “woman”, “transgender”, “cisgender”, “genderqueer”, “agender”, etc. should be associated with gender identity. Recognize that individuals can identify their gender identity in a multitude of ways, include using language associated with sex assigned at birth.



3. Avoid asking questions that are not relevant or helpful for meeting the unit or research objectives.

Consider what the objective of the information request or survey is and what data collections will support that objective. For instance, if the objective is to learn how individuals of different genders experience an activity, asking individuals to disclose their sex assigned at birth is unlikely to be helpful. This is because sex assigned at birth is a label related to sex and biological traits; whereas gender identity is related to how individuals define and experience their gender, how they move through the world, how others are perceive them as gendered people as so on. In this case, gathering information about individuals' gender identities will be most helpful for meeting the objective.

If gathering data about sex assigned at birth is not relevant to the survey objectives, we recommend not including a question about it on the survey.

4. Ask questions related to gender and sexuality using the most inclusive option possible.

Gender and sexual identities are complex, nuanced, and sometimes fluid depending on the individual completing the form of survey. We recommend that allowing individuals to describe their gender and/or sexual identities in their own words will be the most inclusive option when constructing surveys.

However, if allowing individuals to fill in answers is not feasible for the research outcomes or data analysis confines, we recommend that offering as many options as possible will be the most inclusive. Ultimately, the more inclusive one's survey is, the more complete and accurate the data will be.



Survey formatting options:

Inquiries regarding gender identity:

Statement	Options	Level of Inclusivity
Gender (optional; fill in the blank)	_____	Most inclusive (allows complete agency in choosing gender)
Gender (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agender - Bigender - Cisman - Ciswoman - Genderqueer - Gender Fluid - Non-binary - Questioning/unsure - Transman - Transwoman - Other gender identity _____ - Prefer not to disclose 	<p>Very inclusive (provides a very comprehensive list of options including an other category preferably with a fill-in)</p> <p>If you would like to include any additional you are encouraged to.</p>
Gender (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Man - Woman - Non-binary - Other gender identity _____ - Prefer not to disclose 	Somewhat inclusive (provides a very small list of gender identities, but still allows for identities outside of a gender binary)
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Man - Woman 	Least Inclusive (Forces students to select between a gender binary with which they may not identify)
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Female 	Inaccurate (conflates sex assigned at birth with gender)



Inquiries regarding sexuality:

Statement	Options	Level of Inclusivity
Sexuality (optional; fill in the blank)		Most inclusive (allows complete agency in choosing sexuality)
Sexuality (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asexual - Bisexual - Gay - Straight (Heterosexual) - Lesbian - Omnisexual - Pansexual - Polysexual - Queer - Questioning/unsure - Other Sexual Identity _____ - Prefer not to disclose 	<p>Very inclusive (provides a very comprehensive list of options including an other category preferably with a fill-in)</p> <p>If you would like to include any additional you are encouraged to.</p>
Sexuality (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bisexual - Gay - Straight (Heterosexual) - Lesbian - Queer - Other Sexual Identity _____ - Prefer not to disclose 	Somewhat inclusive (includes the acronym, but may leave out some identities causing people to feel less included in your survey)
Sexuality (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bisexual - Gay - Straight (Heterosexual) - Lesbian 	Least Inclusive (Forces students to choose from identities that they may not feel best fit them)

Try and keep up with terminology and avoid words that may be upsetting or offensive to different populations.





Inquiries regarding sex assigned at birth:

Statement	Options	Level of Inclusivity
Sex Assigned at Birth (optional; select all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Female - Intersex - Prefer not to disclose 	Most Inclusive (provides a full menu of options as well as the opportunity for students to not disclose)
Sex Assigned at Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male - Female 	Least Inclusive (may force students to choose a sex that is not accurate)
Sex Assigned at Birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Man - Woman 	Inaccurate (conflates sex assigned at birth with gender)