



Gender Stratifier: Guidance on Measuring and Reporting Health Inequalities

Definition

Construct: Gender identity

The Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) defines this construct as each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is their sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither or anywhere along the gender spectrum.^{1,2} A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their assigned sex at birth and may change over time.

Measure: Self-identified gender

Table Reporting categories for gender identity

| Categories | Definition | Considerations |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Female* | A person's sense of being a female gender. | Must be declared by the person. Where collected, woman/girl are also valid identities within this category.† |
| Male* | A person's sense of being a male gender. | Must be declared by the person. Where collected, man/boy are also valid identities within this category.† |
| Another gender | Includes persons who report being unsure of their gender, being both male and female, or being neither male nor female (e.g., a non-binary gender). | Any gender identities rolled up into this category for reporting should be declared by the individual. |
| Unknown | Includes not stated, not recorded or a value is applicable but not known. | Not applicable |
| Not applicable | Included if the question of gender is not appropriate to ask. | Not applicable |

Notes

* CIHI uses the reporting categories *female* and *male* for both gender identity and sex at birth. This facilitates easier cross-tabulation to determine whether an individual's current gender identity does or does not match their assigned sex at birth (e.g., they may identify as transgender or gender non-conforming and experience inequalities in their health care and outcomes).³

† CIHI believes the approach of using *female* and *male* as reporting categories is clearer than man/woman/boy/girl because it applies across all age groups and is supported in the literature.⁴ This approach aligns with Statistics Canada and the Treasury Board.^{1,5}





Equity Stratification

Use of the label *other* should be avoided as it may be seen as endorsing an inferior status of gender minority people or “othering.”³⁻⁴

Variations

At minimum, CIHI recommends 3 categories to report on gender identity data (*female*, *male* and *another gender*). More granular data under the *another gender* category (e.g., non-binary, two-spirit) can be reported where the data is collected and sample sizes are sufficient.

Key considerations

Recorded sex or gender

Historically, health card registration and other administrative sources have captured assigned sex at birth. In response to changes such as the 2017 amendment of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination, Canadians have increasingly been able to change their health cards and other documentation to reflect their gender identity.

At this time, data sourced primarily from health cards or other administrative sources may represent sex or gender, depending on whether individuals have updated their official documentation to reflect gender identity different than sex at birth. In these cases, it is recommended to relabel and describe the data as a mix of sex at birth and gender (i.e., recorded sex or gender). This data can be reported on for the cisgender population only (i.e., those whose sex at birth aligns with their gender identity).

2-step approach

The 2-step approach of using assigned sex at birth and gender identity data facilitates the identification of individuals who experience or express a different gender identity from their assigned sex at birth (e.g., transgender or gender non-conforming individuals). Measuring inequalities in this group is not possible with gender identity alone.³⁻⁵

How can I access data on gender identity?

Gender identity data can be obtained where collected by the data provider.

CIHI’s [Measuring Health Inequalities: A Toolkit — Equity Stratifier Inventory](#) is periodically updated with a complete list of the stratifier information available in CIHI’s databases, as well as in certain Statistics Canada databases. Where the data is collected using open-text responses (the gold standard for self-identification) or more granular response categories, responses beyond the gender binary (i.e., not female or male) can be included in *another gender* for submission and reporting.



Equity Stratification

If data includes only response options *female*, *male*, and *unknown* or *not applicable*, it is not sufficient to report on gender identity because those who do not identify with the gender binary are not provided with any response option that acknowledges categories beyond the binary. This data should be labelled and reported on as “recorded sex or gender.”

Statistics Canada’s standards

Statistics Canada implemented the 2-step approach for the [2021 Census](#) and uses open-text data to report on 3 categories of gender identity (per the most recent version of [its standard](#)).

- Classification of gender, October 1, 2021, to current

Related resources

See the [CIHI Reference Data Model Toolkit](#) for more information on minimum data collection values and labels.

Visit the [Equity stratifiers page](#) for guidance on additional stratifiers.

Version history

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|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June 2022 | Updated text and format for information sheet. |
| April 2020 | Updated to replace <i>gender diverse</i> with <i>another gender</i> . |
| April 2018 | Initial definition released as part of In Pursuit of Health Equity: Defining Stratifiers for Measuring Health Inequality (PDF) . |

References

1. Government of Canada. [Modernizing the Government of Canada’s sex and gender information practices: Summary report](#). Accessed January 27, 2022.
2. Ontario Human Rights Commission. [Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression](#). Accessed January 27, 2022.
3. Stats NZ. [Sex and gender identity statistical standards: Consultation](#). Accessed January 27, 2022.
4. Slade T, Gross DP, Niwa L, McKillop AB, Guptill C. [Sex and gender demographic questions: Improving methodological quality, inclusivity, and ethical administration](#). *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. September 2020.
5. Statistics Canada. [Sex at birth and gender: Technical report on changes for the 2021 Census](#). Accessed January 27, 2022.

How to cite this document:

Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Gender Stratifier: Guidance on Measuring and Reporting Health Inequalities*. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; 2022.