

### GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN RESEARCH

#### Definitions

**Gender or Gender Identity** describes the internal/psychological sense of self, regardless of biology. Response options to questions categorizing gender would typically include woman, man, transgender, and non-binary.

**Sex** is the biological category based on chromosomes, hormones, and secondary sex characteristics. Response options to questions categorizing sex would typically include male, female, and intersex.

**Sexual Orientation** refers to an individual's emotional, physical and sexual attraction to other people. Response Options to questions categorizing sexual orientation would typically include heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, etc.

#### Description

When researchers ask questions about sex, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation, there must be an understanding of what is being asked and what information is sought. Sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation are specific terms and should not be used interchangeably. Investigators must be specific when asking questions and collecting information with regard to gender identity, sex, and sexual orientation.

When investigators plan to collect information about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation, the following items should be considered:

- Investigators should determine whether questions about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation are necessary. If the investigator has no plans to use the data, it may not justify asking the question.
- Questions about sex, gender, and sexual orientation should be separate. Investigators do not need to collect data about all three, but investigators should ensure that the questions are designed to obtain the information that is sought.
- Investigators must allow individuals the option to decline responding to questions about sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- Because sexual orientation and gender identity are separate aspects of identity, investigators should not combine them into one question (not asking, for example, "Do you identify as a part of the LGBTQ community?").
- In order to provide additional response options for identifying sex, gender, or sexual orientation, the preferred response option is "Not Listed." The use of the word "Other" can have a negative connotation.
- Rather than simply introducing options following the title, "Gender," it is preferable to ask a question such as, "How do you identify?" or "To which gender identity do you most identify?"

Please contact the OPRS Office at (217) 333-2670 or [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu) for additional guidance.



# Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

# Research Guidance Document

## Sample Questions

### Sex

Sex:

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Not Listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to reply

### Gender/Gender Identity

How do you identify?

- Woman
- Man
- Transgender/Trans woman
- Transgender/Trans man
- Non-Binary
- Not Listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to reply

### Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation:

- Heterosexual/Straight
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Not Listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to reply

### Pronouns

When appropriate, investigators should ask subjects which pronouns they use. An example question that can be used in a survey (or reworded into an interview question) follows:

Pronoun Use:

- He/Him/His
- She/Her/Hers
- They/Them/Their
- Not Listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to reply

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# Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

## Research Guidance Document

### References & Links

*American University  
Center for Diversity and  
Inclusion: Inclusive  
Survey and Data  
Collection Practices  
Concerning Gender, Sex,  
and Sexual Orientation  
SurveyGizmo.com: How  
to Write Gender  
Questions for a Survey*

<http://nebula.wsimg.com/4c27929f438a2dee7c064e1c5b2a7b51?AccessKeyId=B6885E9DB42D0C2EAC6F&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

<https://www.surveygizmo.com/resources/blog/how-to-write-survey-gender-questions/>

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