

Monitoring of LGBTQ service users, visitors, etc

On 10 Jan, we posted a request for some information:

When you have people join, sign in, or otherwise fill in a form – which also involves monitoring – have you included options around male/female/trans/prefer not to say (as the barest minimum)?

If you have, do members of the public complete this themselves? Are there examples where a member of staff takes people through the form and asks them how they identify?

Thank you very much to everyone who replied – and lots of you did! Here is a summary of the responses.

Three broad suggestions:

- Ensure that people can self-identify
- Ensure that there is a way for people to include the gender they were assigned at birth and the gender they currently identify as
- Reduce the information you ask for as far as possible.

Suggested questions

Gender options should as a minimum include man/woman/other/prefer not to say.

Trans or transgender should not feature as an option.

If, for some reason, you need to record trans identity, you should ask in a separate question whether people identify as trans/transgender, with options yes/no/prefer not to say.

In terms of the inclusion of transgender in gender options, this is incredibly problematic. Transgender is not a gender identity. Trans people identify their gender as male, female, gender fluid, non-binary etc., not as trans or transgender. The inclusion of transgender as a gender option is not only erroneous but actively harmful, as it leads people to believe that transgender people cannot truly be men or women, but their own category.

Reducing information required

Some organisations have reduced the information they ask for, eg Halifax Public Libraries (Canada):

In the past year, we have changed our registration for library card holders. We have removed the requirement to identify by gender, and we no longer collect

stats on that. When people register, we ask their preferred name. If their legal name differs from that, we record it in a field which is never used for telephone contact, email contact etc. (so the borrower is never addressed by the non-preferred name). This name is only recorded for legal reasons, i.e., the responsibility to pay for lost materials, and related account matters.

... or have even stopped collecting information altogether (LSE):

We used to have this, but we reviewed it recently and have now removed the gender option entirely from our membership forms. After reviewing it there was no need for us to know what gender a person is or isn't, so now no longer ask. We also used to have titles (Mr/Mrs/Ms) but again, have removed this.

LSE's joining form is at:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/library/membership/home.aspx#Applicationform>.

Useful resources

The simple guide to inclusive monitoring. The Proud Trust, 2016,
<https://www.theproudsttrust.org/resources/simple-guide-to-inclusive-monitoring/>.

MRS guidance note on collecting data on sex and gender. Market Research Society, 2016,
<http://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/Guidance%20on%20Collecting%20Data%20on%20Sex%20and%20Gender.pdf>.

Meera Balarajan, Michelle Gray and Martin Mitchell. *Monitoring equality: developing a gender identity question*. Equality and Human Rights Commission (Research report 75), 2011,
https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/rr75_final.pdf.

Acknowledgements

With many thanks to:

Clare Barlow (Tate); Jamie Cross (Bristol University); Jenny Gale (Surrey Libraries); Apryl Hammett (Essex Libraries); Amelia Lee (The Proud Trust); Sammy Li (University of Wolverhampton); Emily Macaulay (Libraries Unlimited, Devon); Darla Muzzerall (Halifax Public Libraries); Michael Nastari (Stonewall Housing); Sam Parr (University of Warwick Students' Union); Daniel Payne (LSE); Di Stiff (Surrey History Centre); Mariangela Veronesi (Building and Social Housing Foundation).

February 2017