

**Province of British Columbia**

# **Gender and Sex Data Standard**

**Version 1.0**

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## Purpose

This Standard provides consistency and guidance for the collection of gender and sex data. This standard:

- Supports inclusive and non-discriminatory delivery of provincial government programs and services.
- Standardizes gender and sex terminology.
- Improves accuracy, interpretability, and comparability of data.
- Reduces duplication of effort.

## Description

The Province recognizes the need for gender and sex data practices that address the needs of people of all genders. Recent amendments to the British Columbia Human Rights Code (2016), the Canadian Human Rights Act (2017), and hate crime provisions of the Criminal Code (2017) highlight the importance of ensuring data practices and the services they support do not discriminate based on gender identity or expression.

### **Sex and gender are two distinct concepts and are not interchangeable.**

Sex is a category used to classify people based on physical and physiological features including chromosomes, genetic expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is most often assigned at birth based on a visual examination of genitalia by a doctor or other health care provider. Based on this examination, the child is assigned as Female, Intersex, or Male.

Gender involves a personal, deeply held, internal sense of self as man or woman, a blend of both, or neither. Broadly speaking, gender includes self-identification as well as socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviours, and expressions. The current gender of a person (e.g., Man, Non-binary person, Woman) may or may not align with social or cultural expectations based on their sex assigned at birth (e.g., Female, Intersex, Male). People for whom this is true may identify as transgender.

The scope of this standard is limited to standardizing definitions required for consistent gender and sex data collection practices in provincial government administrative data.

This Standard does not require or limit the collection of data that a ministry may require to support its programs or services. Additionally, this Standard does not instruct delivery of government programs on the use or storage of data.

## Application

Ministries, agencies, boards, and commissions that are subject to the Core Policy and Procedures Manual (CPPM) should apply this Standard to government information that is collected, recorded and/or used.

## Authority

Core Policy and Procedures Manual Chapter 12.

## Advice on this standard

For questions or comments regarding this Standard, please contact:

BC Data Service, Ministry of Citizens' Services

E-mail: [data@gov.bc.ca](mailto:data@gov.bc.ca)

## Review

This Standard will be reviewed annually for effectiveness and updated on an as needed basis.

## Requirements

### Need for Collection

Information about a person's gender or sex is personal information and therefore must only be collected as authorized under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA). Under FOIPPA, mandatory completion of a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) will outline why the information is necessary and under what legal authority collection, use and disclosure is authorized.

Ministries, agencies, boards, and commissions should collect the minimum amount of personal information necessary for the purpose (e.g., program and service delivery and evaluation).

## Determine if Collection is Necessary

Evaluate the service delivery requirements for your program.

- Does the program currently collect gender data? If yes, is it needed? If not, stop collecting.
- Does the program currently collect sex data? If yes, is it needed, if not, stop collecting.

If you determine there is a need/purpose for this information, the next step is to determine if you need “sex” or “gender” data.

As some existing systems, forms and practices confuse the terms gender and sex, you will need to refer to the definitions in this document and determine what should be collected. This also means that you may need to correct the current term being used to ensure you are accurately referencing and collecting the correct information.

As defined in the terminology, “sex” is about biology and physiology and categories include female, intersex and male where “gender” is a person’s internal sense of self as a man, a woman, a blend of both, or neither.

**Collection of gender information is the default when such information is necessary for program area delivery.** Gender, or how a person identifies, the pronouns they use, their sense of self, is necessary for respectful delivery of service. The most common necessity for sex (biological) information is for health-related service delivery. If you need support on the collection of data as part of health services, please refer to the Health Information System Standard.

## Classification of Gender

This Standard defines “gender” as a person’s self-identified sense of self. This can be described using words like man/boy, non-binary person, or woman/girl. A person’s gender should not be assumed based on their assigned sex. For example, if the documentation provided to you by a client contains information on their sex, and the system you are using has gender listed for clients, do not presume that these two should be the same and update gender identity to match the client’s sex information.

Gender information must be collected from the individual.

Just like you cannot presume gender based on sex, you cannot presume a person wants to harmonize or update data across systems or between services. Any changes to a person’s gender data can only be completed with the permission of that person. In the case of children too young to identify their own gender, collection should be delayed until the child is able to communicate their gender.

During collection of gender information, the following classifications and markers should be used. These should not be confused with sex classification markers found in this Standard.

**Gender Classifications (listed alphabetically)**

Classification	Marker	Description
Man/Boy	M	Cisgender and transgender persons who self-identify as a man or boy.
Non-Binary person	X	Persons who self-identify as non-binary (i.e., not exclusively man or woman), this includes but is not limited to Two Spirit, agender, gender fluid as examples.
Woman/Girl	W/F*	Cisgender and transgender persons who self-identify as a woman or girl.
Prefer not to answer/Unknown	U	Persons whose gender is not known at the time of data collection. It may or may not get updated at a later point in time. U is different than X (see above for use of the X marker).  This classification includes persons whose gender is not known at the time of data collection because the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers not to answer</li> <li>• Is unable to answer</li> <li>• Is unsure</li> <li>• Data is missing</li> </ul>

\*Note: The “F” marker may be needed to accommodate legacy system integration but, when possible, should be replaced by “W”.

## Classification of Sex

This Standard defines “sex” as a code that identifies the category assigned to an individual at birth. Also referred to as “sex assigned at birth”, it is often based on visual assessment. It is most often derived from physical characteristics and information, such as a person’s chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, genitals, reproductive system. Depending on the measure, assigned sex can be based on one or more of these characteristics.

In the collection of sex information, the following classifications and markers should be used.

### Sex Classifications (listed alphabetically)

Classification	Marker	Description
Female	F	A category of sex, usually assigned at birth, typically associated with reproductive/sexual anatomy (e.g., vulva, vagina, uterus).
Intersex/ Indeterminate	I	A category of sex that describes a biological situation where one factor of anatomy, chromosomes, or hormone production or sensitivity does not align in a binary way. Part of normal human variation and not a disorder.
Male	M	A category of sex, usually assigned at birth, typically associated reproductive/sexual anatomy (e.g., penis, testes).
Unknown/Prefer not to answer	U	This classification includes persons whose sex is not known at the time of data collection because the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefers not to answer</li> <li>• Is unable to answer</li> <li>• Is unsure</li> <li>• Data is missing</li> </ul>

## Definitions

Terms used in this standard align with definitions found in the Gender and Sex Data Guidelines.

**Cisgender:** refers to persons whose gender aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

**Female:** a category of sex, usually assigned at birth, typically associated with XX chromosome, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy (e.g., vulva, vagina, uterus).

**Gender:** refers to a person's self-identification as being a man/boy, non-binary person, woman/girl, a blend of both, or neither. Gender involves a personal, deeply held, internal sense of self. Broadly speaking, gender includes self-identification as well as socially and culturally constructed roles, behaviours, and expressions.

**Intersex / Indeterminate:** a category of sex associated with reproductive or sexual anatomy that is outside the common range of variance assigned as male or female. It may be related to genitalia, secondary sex characteristics, chromosomal make-up, hormonal receptivity, and may not be identified at birth.

**Male:** a category of sex, usually assigned at birth, typically associated with XY chromosome, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy (e.g., penis, testes).

**Man/boy:** an individual who self-identifies as a man/boy based on elements of importance to the individual, which may include gender identity, physiology, gender roles, behaviour, and expression.

**Non-Binary person:** an individual who self-identifies as non-binary (i.e., not exclusively man or woman). Some individuals self-identify as non-binary, while others use terms such as genderfluid, genderqueer, agender, or Two-Spirit.

**Sex:** refers to biological attributes and legal categories used to classify people as male, female, intersex, or other categories, primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, genetic expression, hormone levels and function and reproductive/sexual anatomy. Sex is usually assigned by a clinician based on observable external genitalia of a newborn (i.e., sex assigned at birth).

**Trans (Transgender):** an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people whose gender differs from their sex assigned at birth.

**Two-Spirit:** An Indigenous person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit and is used by some Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. The term reflects complex



Indigenous understandings of gender roles, spirituality, and the long history of sexual and gender diversity in Indigenous cultures. Two-Spirit is an umbrella term, and Nations can vary in how they conceptualize gender and sexual diversity. This can also include Nation-specific terms.

Note that including the definition of Two-Spirit in this Standard is a starting point. This document will be reviewed and updated when Indigenous specific parameters for data collection are defined by Indigenous partners including Two-Spirit.

**Woman/girl:** an individual who self-identifies as a woman based on elements important to the individual, which may include gender identity, physiology, gender roles, behaviour, and expression.

## Supporting Documents

Guidelines to the Gender and Sex Data Standard