



11 August 2020

Submission to Statistics New Zealand Tauranga Aotearoa

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine would like to thank Statistics New Zealand Tauranga Aotearoa for the opportunity to make a submission on sex and gender identity statistical standards.

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (the College) is the professional body representing the medical specialty of public health medicine in New Zealand. We have 205 current members, all of whom are medical doctors, including 185 fully qualified Public Health Medicine Specialists with the majority of the remainder being registrars training in the specialty of public health medicine.

Public Health Medicine is the branch of medicine concerned with the assessment of population health and health care needs, the development of policy and strategy, health promotion, the control and prevention of disease, and the organisation of services. The NZCPHM partners to achieve health gain and equity for our population, eliminating inequities across socioeconomic and ethnic groups, and promoting environments in which everyone can be healthy.

Background

The NZCPHM supports Statistics New Zealand's proposals to update statistical standards for sex and gender identity to enable data collection in ways that are clear, consistent and reflect all New Zealand society in its diversity. Given our professional involvement in the collection of demographic data in public health research, we would value standards that ensure accurate and inclusive disaggregation of data by sex and/or gender identity that respects human rights and meets information needs.

General points

The NZCPHM welcomes clarification of the terms "sex" and "gender identity", to clearly distinguish between these two concepts. In particular, the College supports the proposed solution of aligning the existing concepts of gender identity and gender into an overarching concept and definition of "gender", as it is more inclusive and will better enable respondents to describe who they are.

The College endorses the changes to the statistical standards for both sex and gender identity as they will enhance the ability of public health researchers to collect, analyse and report accurately and inclusively on both sex and gender specific factors using Statistics New Zealand data. The roles of both the biological and sociocultural factors in disease prevention and health outcomes may therefore be better understood. Interventions that meet the needs of different population groups in New Zealand can be tailored accordingly.

A more inclusive definition of gender will be particularly useful for researchers identifying and addressing the needs of people with marginalised sexual and gender identities, such as transgender

and intersex people. These groups are known to face many health inequalities across clinically diverse areas, including cancer, addiction and mental health, domestic violence, and sexual health.¹

The NZCPHM supports this update to statistical standards, as it would also allow New Zealand researchers using Statistics New Zealand data to keep pace with other countries in sex and gender analysis in health and medical research. There is increasing recognition internationally of the need to integrate sex and gender analyses in competitive research grants and publications in journals. Several countries, including the United States, Canada, Ireland and Germany, have introduced policies and practices that facilitate the integration of sex and gender into health research.² If New Zealand based researchers are not able to collect robust statistical data from Statistics New Zealand that enables sex and gender specific analyses, we risk becoming increasingly less competitive when applying for funding from international bodies and risk reduced international partnership opportunities with overseas organisations.

Thank you for the opportunity for the NZCPHM to submit on sex and gender statistical standards. We hope our feedback is helpful and are happy to provide further clarification on matter covered in this submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'FD', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dr Felicity Dumble, President, NZCPHM

References:

¹ Taylor, O; Rapsey CM; Treharne GJ. Sexuality and gender identity teaching within preclinical medical training in New Zealand: content, attitudes, and barriers. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 2018;131: 35-44.

² Wainer Z; Carcel C; Hickey M; Schiebinger L; Schmiede A; McKenzie B; Jenkins C; Webster J; Woodward M; Hehir A. Sex and gender in health research: updating policy to reflect evidence. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 2020;212:57-62.