

Information sheet on gender-inclusive administrative forms

A wide range of administrative forms are used to ask for information related to gender. It's important to take into account that a person's **gender identity**, **sex** (assigned at birth), **legal gender** and preferred **pronouns** don't always correspond. Asking for the right details while providing gender-inclusive response options is essential to ensure you're gathering accurate and reliable information. It also helps you, as an individual or an organisation, to create an inclusive environment in which everyone can be themselves.

Keep in mind that the best way to ask for certain information depends on several factors, including the purpose and target audience of your form. For scientific research, the type of research is also important. More information on how to inquire about gender in scientific research can be found in the information sheet on measuring gender identity in quantitative research (only available in Dutch).

Below are some tips and tricks for creating gender-inclusive forms both for broad target groups (e.g. students, staff, participants) and for general administrative purposes.

In order to create gender-inclusive forms, you should start by asking yourself the following questions:

Is gender relevant here?

If you want to keep forms short and accessible, it's important to collect only the data you actually need. So always ask yourself if you really need to know someone's title, pronouns or legal gender. If not, leave these questions out – that not only makes the form shorter, but also makes it more accessible for **trans and non-binary people**. It can be very unpleasant for them to be confronted with such questions, especially if they don't see the relevance. Needlessly asking about gender also upholds the old habit of dividing and pigeonholing people. So if you don't really need to know for the purposes of your form, don't ask.

What exactly do you want to know, and why?

Depending on the reason why you want to know something, you can formulate specific and targeted questions that are also gender-inclusive. Below are some tips on how to ask for certain data in a gender-inclusive way.

1. Preferred title

We often want to know how to address someone in our communication with them (e.g. in further emails and letters, or on the phone). Often, we still automatically deduce this from someone's name, legal gender, etc. However, such assumptions may be false, especially for trans people or people with a non-binary gender identity. In order to communicate in a gender-inclusive way, it's best to ask the person how they would like to be addressed.

The options you offer in your form may differ depending on the context and the target audience. However, it's important to always provide a gender-neutral option when asking for someone's preferred title.

You can ask: 'How would you like to be addressed?' and then provide several options, in line with the context and the target audience of your form. Be sure to include a non-binary variant or to provide a text input field where people can add an option that they feel is missing from your list.

Example:

UAntwerp currently uses the following categories in the personnel registration system: *'Dr, Mr, Ms, Prof., Gender non-binary'*.

While Doctor and Professor are gender-neutral, there was previously no gender-neutral option for Mr and Ms, which is why the 'Gender non-binary' category was added. In practice, this comes down to simply leaving out the title in letters, emails, personal staff pages, and so on.

You can also choose to leave out this question and opt for gender-inclusive forms of address in further communication. You can find more information about this in the information sheet on gender-inclusive forms of address.

2. Pronouns

In addition to the preferred form of address, you can also ask for someone's pronouns. Besides 'he/him/his' and 'she/her/hers', be sure to include at least the most common set of gender-neutral pronouns: 'they/them/their'. Others may prefer 'ze/hir/hir' (pronounced zee, here, here), 'ze/zir/zir', or another set of pronouns, which is why it may be advisable to include a text input field.

Example:

Bart identifies as both male and female, and prefers to be referred to with the pronouns 'they/them/their'.

Instead of: ***He** wants to be addressed with the pronouns of **his** choice, as these suit **him** best.*

We say: ***They** want to be addressed with the pronouns of **their** choice, as these suit **them** best.*

You can also choose to leave out this question and opt for gender-inclusive wording in further communication. You can find more information about this in the information sheet on gender-inclusive texts.

3. Legal gender

One's legal gender (also called official sex or legal sex), is one's sex as registered by the government. This is displayed on identity cards or driving licences, for instance. In certain specific cases, it may be necessary to request this information for official documents, e.g. diploma, RISIF, Dimona declaration, etc. At the moment, people in Belgium are still exclusively registered as either male or female. When inquiring specifically about legal gender, be sure to use the correct terminology by explicitly asking for the person's 'legal gender' or 'legally registered gender'.

Please note: A person's legal gender may differ from their preferred title or pronouns. It would therefore be wrong to assume that you know how someone wants to be addressed based only on their legal gender. For many trans and non-binary people, the legal gender mentioned on their official documents is a constant source of misunderstandings and problems. If you really do need to know people's legal gender, make sure you also inquire about their preferred title and/or pronouns. That way, you can still respect their **gender identity** in further communication.

None of the above?

If you need more information, you may need to inquire about **gender identity, sex** (assigned at birth), etc. However, this is rarely necessary for administrative forms. More information can be found in the information sheet about measuring gender identity in quantitative research (only available in Dutch). If you have any questions or doubts with regard to gender, don't hesitate to contact the Diversity Team at diversiteit@uantwerpen.be.