



15 April 2026

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 16 March 2026, requesting information about policies and definitions of gender identity and biological sex as collected on forms.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Please find my decision on each part of your request set out separately below.

1. Purpose of Collecting Gender Identity Data MSD forms collect "gender" as a self-identified, open-ended category with no finite list of possible responses (e.g., male, female, gender diverse, or any self-described identity).

Please provide:

The specific operational purpose(s) for which MSD collects gender identity information.

All MSD policies, internal guidance, or decision-making frameworks that rely on gender identity.

Any services, entitlements, assessments, or eligibility criteria that are affected by a client's gender identity.

The Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) collects data on gender identity from clients in order to facilitate respectful, positive and inclusive interactions and collects data on staff gender identity for the same purpose but additionally also in order to meet the Public Service Commissions Standards of Workforce Data (linked below) in order to meet its responsibility to reflect the diversity of the society it serves and to ensure fair and equitable employment. It is also operationally required in order to address gender pay gaps within the Ministry.

The following links and documents are in scope of your request:

- www.publicservice.govt.nz/assets/Standards-of-workforce-data.pdf
- www.publicservice.govt.nz/guidance/information-standards-and-guidance
- www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/gender-pay-gap-action-plan/index.html
- www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/corporate/gender-pay-gap-action-plan/2024-2025/index.html
- Gender Identity – HIYA
- What is Gender Identity – Doogle

- Kia Toipoto – addressing pay gaps.

I can confirm that gender identity is not considered as part of the eligibility criteria for any Ministry support/assistance.

2. Standardisation and Data Processing

Given that gender identity is an unlimited, self defined category, please provide:

How MSD codes, standardises, or categorises gender identity entries that fall outside "male" or "female."

Any data dictionaries, coding manuals, or internal classification systems used to process gender identity data.

Any documents describing how MSD ensures data quality, consistency, or comparability for this open ended category.

The Ministry provides clients with three options for self-declaring their gender which are:

- Male
- Female
- Gender diverse.

For Ministry staff, the Ministry provides the following categories:

- Female
- Male
- Unknown
- Undeclared
- Another Gender
- No Selection

Regarding the last two points of your question, please refer to the links provided above for this information.

3. Distinction Between Gender and Biological Sex Please provide:

MSD's definitions of "gender" and "biological sex."

All MSD forms, systems, or datasets that collect biological sex.

The rationale for collecting gender identity instead of biological sex in contexts where biological sex may be operationally relevant (e.g., health related services, demographic reporting, statistical analysis).

The Ministry's definitions of gender and biological sex and included in the following document referenced above: What is Gender Identity – Doogie.

The Ministry does not collect data on client or staff biological sex. The operational purposes of collecting gender identity data are already provided above in the response to question 1.

4. Standards and Compliance

Please confirm:

Whether MSD follows the Stats NZ Data Standard for Gender, Sex, and Variations of Sex Characteristics.

Which version of the standard is currently in use.

Any MSD specific modifications, interpretations, or deviations from the Stats NZ standard.

As stated in the above link, the Public Service Commission's Standards of Workforce Data states that all Public Service agencies are mandated to implement the Statistics New Zealand Data standard for gender, sex, and variations of sex characteristics. The Ministry has not made any changes or amendments to the data standard.

5. Documents and Communications

Please provide:

All internal documents, memos, emails, or briefing notes that discuss MSD's adoption or implementation of the Stats NZ gender and sex standards.

Any impact assessments, risk assessments, or policy analyses relating to the shift from biological sex to gender identity in MSD data collection.

Your request for this information is refused under section 18(e) of the Act as the documents alleged to contain this information do not exist.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp.



Anna Graham
General Manager
Ministerial and Executive Services

Gender Identity

Gender identity changes made to our online applications and forms

Every day we have conversations with and support clients who come from diverse backgrounds and situations. When clients come to see us, or talk with us on the phone, we work hard to provide a positive experience every time. Clients have told us they have a good experience when they feel supported, respected and listened to.

We want everyone (our people and clients) to thrive, be who they are and have a strong sense of wellbeing. Being inclusive helps build mana and supports a sense of belonging.

Since December 2019 our forms and online applications have three gender options: Male, Female and Gender Diverse.

You can read more in the following pages:

- [What is Gender Identity? - Doogle](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion at MSD - Doogle](#)

For the process on how to change a client's or child's gender in CMS, see [Change gender in CMS \(Client/child\)](#)

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Kia Toipoto - Addressing Pay Gaps

Published 21/11/2025

Kia Toipoto, formerly known as the Gender and Ethnic Pay Gap Action Plan continues to focus on addressing pay gaps at MSD based on gender, Māori, Pacific, Asian and MELAA, Rainbow and Disabled employees.

What are Kia Toipoto pay gaps?

The gender pay gap is calculated by comparing the salaries of men and women across the organisation. Historically, the focus has been on binary gender, but we also monitor data for other genders. However, because of low participation, we cannot report on pay gaps for other genders yet.

Ethnic pay gaps are calculated by comparing the salaries of Māori employees with non-Māori employees across the organisation. Similarly, we compare Pacific employees with non-Pacific employees, Asian employees with non-Asian employees, and so on for other ethnic groups. We currently do not have data to measure pay gaps for Disabled and Rainbow communities, however, we focus on ensuring fair and inclusive outcomes for these groups.

To support Kia Toipoto, we encourage you to keep your myHR data, including gender, ethnicity, disability, and Rainbow information up to date.

Why do we have these pay gaps at MSD?

When people are doing similar work, such as Service Delivery staff roles, there are no pay gaps. However, our pay gaps are mainly caused by occupational segregation. For example, most women in our workforce (60-70%) work in middle and lower-level management or frontline roles. Around 50% of higher-level roles are held by women.

Additionally, more women work part-time or have flexible work arrangements. These factors, along with other complex reasons, contribute to gender and ethnic pay gaps when comparing pay across all roles at MSD, rather than just similar roles.

Our data shows there are very small horizontal (like-for-like) pay gaps within similar roles or pay bands. The main issue is vertical segregation. This means a higher number of women and ethnic employees are in lower-paid roles rather than higher-paid senior roles. Work is being done to address this vertical pay gap by creating pathways for progression into senior roles.

Past Kia Toipoto Plans - previously called Gender and Ethnic Pay Gap Action Plan

You can find our past action plans on the MSD website here: [Gender Pay Gap Action Plan - Ministry of Social Development \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz) or see the most recent version below.

- 2024-25: [Kia Toipoto, Papa Pounamu plan, MSD plan for addressing pay gaps, and raising diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace](#)
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How you can get involved

- **Update Your Details on MyHR:** Ensure your gender, ethnicity, disability, and Rainbow data is accurate to help MSD better understand pay gaps and representation. Update your details on myHR.
- **Join an Employee-Led Network:** Build a sense of community for employees to contribute, belong, and thrive. Networks create opportunities to share knowledge, raise issues, and build connections. They provide diverse insights into MSD's work and drive inclusion and change. Learn more about employee-led networks ([Employee Led Networks](#)).
- **Talk to your manager about participating in our action plan development and delivery cycles:** And email us to find out more at diversityandinclusion@msd.govt.nz.

On this page

- > [What are Kia Toipoto pay gaps?](#)
- > [Why do we have these pay gaps at MSD?](#)
- > [Past Kia Toipoto Plans - previously called Gende...](#)
- > [How you can get involved](#)

People Group

About us

HR Delegation Levels

myHR Guides

HR Forms

HR Policies

HR Procedures

AskHR (phone)

ext: 46508

DDI: 04 916 3508

Email AskHR

AskHR (email)

Other Links

Provide Feedback

myHR access request

Keeping ourselves healt...

IT Service Desk

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What is Gender Identity?

This page provides information on gender identity and includes some facts, things to consider and a glossary of terms.

On this Page:

[You can view and print a pdf version here \[pdf: 1MB\]. \[http://doogle/documents/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-and-inclusion/diversity/diversity-guide-summary-7.pdf\]](http://doogle/documents/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-and-inclusion/diversity/diversity-guide-summary-7.pdf)

Gender identity is a person's own sense of identification as male, female, neither, both, or somewhere in between.

Gender identity has more attention now than it ever has. More people are identifying with a gender other than 'male' or 'female'. This might sound like a more recent development, but in some cultures gender diversity has traditionally been acknowledged and celebrated.

Introducing a third gender to our systems

From December 2019, our forms and online applications will have three gender options for people to choose from. Male, Female and Gender Diverse.

We want to provide services that reflect who people are, so they feel included and respected.

Binary and Non-binary genders

On nearly every continent, and throughout history, cultures have recognised, revered and integrated more than two genders. It is understood that prior to the arrival of Europeans, Māori tīpuna who had fluid genders or sexuality were accepted within their whānau. Pacific cultures have also traditionally recognised gender diversity, with many recognised third genders including Mahu (Hawaii), Vakasalewalewa (Fiji), Palopa (Papua New Guinea), Fa'afafine or Fa'afatama (Samoa, American Samoa), Aka'vaine (Cook Islands), Fakaleiti (Tonga), Fakafifine (Niue) and many more.

In New Zealand, gender has typically been defined as binary (meaning two, i.e. male and female, or man and woman). Gender is now described as non-binary (more than two, i.e. male, female, gender diverse and other identities).

Sex and gender

Historically, "sex" and "gender" have had the same definition and have been used interchangeably. Sex and gender are determined in different ways and are becoming more widely known as different terms.

Sex is biologically determined at birth and assigned by medical professionals

Gender is socially constructed and becomes evident over time

What you can do

There are some ways to make our engagements with clients positive, respectful and inclusive. Here are some things to consider when interacting with clients:

Ask what name/title your client uses

Ask what pronouns they use (e.g.: she/he/they/zhe/xe)

Don't use their former name (or "dead name") as it can be hurtful and embarrassing and can create anxiety

Other ways to be respectful and inclusive of clients, colleagues, stakeholders and friends:

Be an ally – When you hear someone use the wrong pronouns for a friend, colleague or client, you can gently correct them, e.g., "I understand Jo like to be referred to as they or them". Part of being a good ally to trans and non-binary people is helping other people get pronouns right.

Respect pronouns – Feel free to ask which pronouns someone uses. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so.

Normalise pronouns – A great way to do this is including your pronouns in email signatures or on social media bios (for example, Pronouns: she, her) or on social media bios. This helps to normalise the idea that people shouldn't just assume they can tell someone's pronoun based on the traditional gendering of a name.

Make an effort – The only way to get better at using non-binary pronouns is to step outside of your comfort zone. Forget what you think you know about grammar and make an effort to respect identities by checking what pronouns people use.

Practise – The only way not to get flustered using non-binary pronouns is to practise, practise, practise!

Apologise – Mistakes happen. When you misgender someone say you are sorry, and fix your language moving forward. Don't make a big deal about your mistake and force the trans or non-binary person to spend a lot of time and energy consoling you for misgendering them.

Non-binary greetings – Instead of saying "ladies" to a group of people, try to incorporate language that isn't gendered like "folks".

Keep it appropriate – Don't ask trans and non-binary people about their genitals, surgical status or sex lives. If you wouldn't ask a cisgender person, don't ask a trans or non-binary person either.

Glossary

Gender diverse – a term that describes a range of gender identities, including non-binary, transgender and culturally specific identities such as tangata ira tane and whakawahine (Māori), fa'afafine (Samoa) and fakaleiti (Tonga).

Non-binary – a description of a gender identity that is neither male nor female.

Transgender – a person whose gender identity differs from that which was assigned at birth. Transgender people sometimes identify with a binary gender like male or female and other people identify as gender diverse.

Pronouns – a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

LGBTQIA+ – a term often used to describe people who identify as having a minority sexuality/sexual orientation, gender, gender expression and sex characteristics. The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-binary and non-heterosexual identities not listed.

Takatāpui – a Māori term that was reclaimed in the 1980s and used by individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or part of the rainbow community. The use of the word emphasises one's identity as Māori as inextricably linked to their gender identity or sexuality.

Cisgender (cis) – a term used to describe people whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity i.e. people who are not transgender or non-binary.

Allies – people who don't identify as LGBTQIA+ who work to end discrimination and oppression in their own personal and professional life by supporting and advocating for LGBTQIA+ people.

FtM – a person who was assigned female at birth but whose gender identity is that of a man. Terms sometimes used: trans man, trans masc.

Gender fluid – a person who does not identify as having a fixed gender.

Genderqueer – an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different to the binary male or female, similar to non-binary.

MtF – a person who was assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is that of a woman. Terms sometimes used: trans woman, trans femme.

Intersex – an umbrella term that has been in use for the last 60 years. It includes over 40 variations of sex characteristics where the sexual anatomy or the chromosomes are not the standard male or female.

Learning Activities

We've created an [Inclusion Series \[http://doogle/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-inclusion/diversity/inclusion-series-learning.html\]](http://doogle/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-inclusion/diversity/inclusion-series-learning.html) with activities that teams can do to engage more with diversity and inclusion. Activity 3 focuses on gender identity and thinking further about the pervasive nature of gender in our language. The activities take 15 minutes to run and should be worked through within your teams.

Find out more

There are a lot of resources that can help you become more familiar with gender inclusive language and supportive behaviours on a day-to-day basis. Here's a few you might like to check out:

[Gender identity \[https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ry.storage/'m+Local+Booklet+Sep+2019.pdf\]](https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/ry.storage/'m+Local+Booklet+Sep+2019.pdf) offers useful definitions, prepared by Rainbow Youth

[InsideOUT more than four \[http://insideout.org.nz/more-than-four/\]](http://insideout.org.nz/more-than-four/) links to short videos from the rainbow community, prepared by InsideOUT

[How to be a Trans Ally \[https://nz.lush.com/sites/aus_lush_website_nz/files/nz_a6_ally-booklet-digital.pdf\]](https://nz.lush.com/sites/aus_lush_website_nz/files/nz_a6_ally-booklet-digital.pdf) is a guide to trans, non-binary and gender diverse people, prepared Lush NZ

[Takatapui: Part of the Whanau \[https://takatapui.nz/#resources\]](https://takatapui.nz/#resources) is a resource providing information and support for takatāpui and their whānau, prepared by Dr Elizabeth Kerekere with Tiwhanawhana Trust and The Mental Health Foundation

[GQ Gender Questioning booklet \[https://www.twenty10.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/GenderQuestioning_TransMelbourne_2010.pdf\]](https://www.twenty10.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/GenderQuestioning_TransMelbourne_2010.pdf) is a resource providing useful terms and history, prepared by Rainbow Network Victoria

[Counting Ourselves \[https://countingourselves.nz/index.php/community-report/\]](https://countingourselves.nz/index.php/community-report/) provides reports from a survey about the health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand

[Proud@MSD \[https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/community/display/PROUD/Proud@MSD\]](https://doogle.ssi.govt.nz/community/display/PROUD/Proud@MSD) provides information about our employee-led network for our employees who are diverse in sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, and their allies

[Belonging@MSD \[http://doogle/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-inclusion/belongingmsd-survey-results.html\]](http://doogle/business-groups/people-culture-strategy/people-culture-inclusion/belongingmsd-survey-results.html) provides the findings from MSD's inclusion survey in 2019

Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Culture and Inclusion at DiversityandInclusion@msd.govt.nz [<mailto:DiversityandInclusion@msd.govt.nz>].

Content owner: [People Culture and Inclusion](#) Last updated: 16 May 2025