

## Report to the Minister of Statistics: Understanding gender and sexuality through the Census

<b>Date:</b>	24 November 2017	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security level:</b>	In confidence	<b>File number:</b>	MM1746

### Contact details

Name	Position	Telephone		First contact
Jarrold Williams	Private Secretary to the Minister of Statistics	[redacted under section 9(2)(g)(ii)]	[redacted under section 9(2)(g)(ii)]	✓
Denise McGregor	General Manager - 2018 Census	[redacted under section 9(2)(g)(ii)]	[redacted under section 9(2)(g)(ii)]	

### Purpose

- You have requested further information on why the next census will not include questions to cover sexual orientation, gender identity, or an intersex option for the biological sex question, and how Stats NZ intends to capture such information.
- No action is required of you in relation to this briefing, however you may wish to share the information in it with individuals or groups who want to know more about the content decisions.



Denise McGregor  
General Manager - 2018 Census

Hon James Shaw  
Minister of Statistics  
Date:

## **Stats NZ: data collection for sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation**

1. Stats NZ has been working for a number of years on how to enhance collection of data for the topics of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.
2. Stats NZ work has focussed on developing standards, testing topics for the 2018 Census, and investigating how these topics can be incorporated into our wider social statistics programme.
3. A standard for gender identity was developed in 2015, with more information available online ([www.stats.govt.nz/tools\\_and\\_services/media-centre/media-releases-2015/gender-identity-17-july-15.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/tools_and_services/media-centre/media-releases-2015/gender-identity-17-july-15.aspx)).

## **2018 Census Content decisions were made earlier this year**

4. On 31 July 2017, the Government Statistician released the final decision about the content for the 2018 Census. A number of potential new topics were researched, developed and tested over a three year period. These included:

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Included in the 2018 Census</b>	<b>Excluded from the 2018 Census</b>	<b>To be collected via another method or Stats NZ survey</b>
Intersex addition to the current biological sex question ('third' category)		▲	
Sexual orientation			▲
Gender identity		▲	

## ***The decisions followed extensive consultation***

5. The consultation began in late 2014, and included face to face seminars and workshops in five centres, a formal submission process, and online engagement using the Loomio platform.
6. During consultation, we received submissions from the following stakeholders:
  - NZ AIDS Foundation
  - Family Planning
  - Gay Men's Sexual Health Research Group (University of Auckland)
  - Rainbow Youth
  - Ara Taiohi
  - Otago University (group submission led by Melanie Beres & Gareth Terharne)
  - Southland District Council

7. Meetings were also held with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development and the Human Rights Commission.

## ***The decisions were made on statistical grounds***

8. Following both cognitive and public testing in 2016 and early 2017, we were unable to guarantee that the quality of the information we could gather on these topics would meet user needs at this stage. This conclusion was based on the results and analysis of our testing. The existing topic (sex) was retained with minimal change, and the other topics (listed above) were not added.

9. The decision to not include a third category for the sex topic reflects the challenge that statistical agencies all over the world are facing, where providing an alternative to a binary sex question (male / female) is proving difficult to design, given the need to guarantee the quality and comparability of the information captured. To date, no statistical agency has introduced a third option for biological sex in their census.

### **Stats NZ will endeavour to find ways to responsibly collect the information missed by these decisions**

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10. Although the 2018 Census will not include a third sex category, Stats NZ is developing an alternative way to capture intersex population information in the 2018 Census and will work with representative groups in the lead up to the census to ensure the intersex population of New Zealand is able to answer this question accurately. At a minimum this will involve providing those who wish to identify as intersex with a paper form on which they can mark both 'male' and 'female'.

### ***General Social Survey***

11. The General Social Survey (GSS) provides information on the well-being of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. It covers a wide range of social and economic outcomes and shows how people are faring. In particular the survey provides a view of how well-being outcomes are distributed across different groups within the New Zealand population. The 2018 GSS will begin in April 2018 and takes a year to complete.
12. It was agreed that the GSS will include a question on sexual orientation. This question will be based on the question used by the UK Office of National Statistics and used in the Census testing process.
13. The results from the GSS will be used to better understand data collection for this topic and inform a wider piece of work to include this topic in all of our social surveys.

### **Next steps**

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14. In addition to the inclusion of sexual orientation as a topic in the GSS, Stats NZ will continue working on the best ways to collect data across this range of topics and create outputs that meet users' needs. Officials will come back with further advice once the GSS has gone into the field in April 2018.
15. Officials will work to develop a new sexual identity standard, and will seek feedback through a public consultation process following the 2018 Census.