

Memo

2 May 2018

To: Chair and members of the Environment and Community Committee

From: Esther Rootham, Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU)

Subject: Submission to Statistics New Zealand on the proposed statistical standard for sexual identity

Key Messages

Together with government agencies and other organisations, Statistics New Zealand (Stats NZ) is developing a statistical standard for sexual identity as part of the proposed framework for sexual orientation.

Stats NZ invited submissions on the framework with a closing date 1 May 2018. (An extension was granted to Auckland Council to 2 May 2018). These tight timeframes resulted in the inability of staff to receive committee approval for the submission prior to the closing date. However, the draft submission was sent to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the committee to provide the opportunity, if time permitted, for input.

Auckland Council submitted jointly with Auckland Council's Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel (with feedback from Auckland Council's Head of Diversity and Inclusion).

The submission is in general support of the statistical standard for sexual identity but with suggestions for the inclusion of more detailed and diverse categories to ensure that the questions make sense for all of Auckland's rainbow community, particularly its younger members and members from Pasifika and Māori communities.

Background

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term that covers three key aspects of sexuality: sexual attraction, sexual behaviour and sexual identity. The statistical standard that Stats NZ invited submissions on was specifically on *sexual identity*. They invited feedback on the framework that they had developed and its related definitions, on the question design and provided an opportunity for any further information which would assist them in developing the standard to be provided.

The current lack of a standardised approach for collecting and reporting sexual orientation information in New Zealand means that policymakers have limited access to the data they require to quantify issues affecting populations of particular sexual orientations.

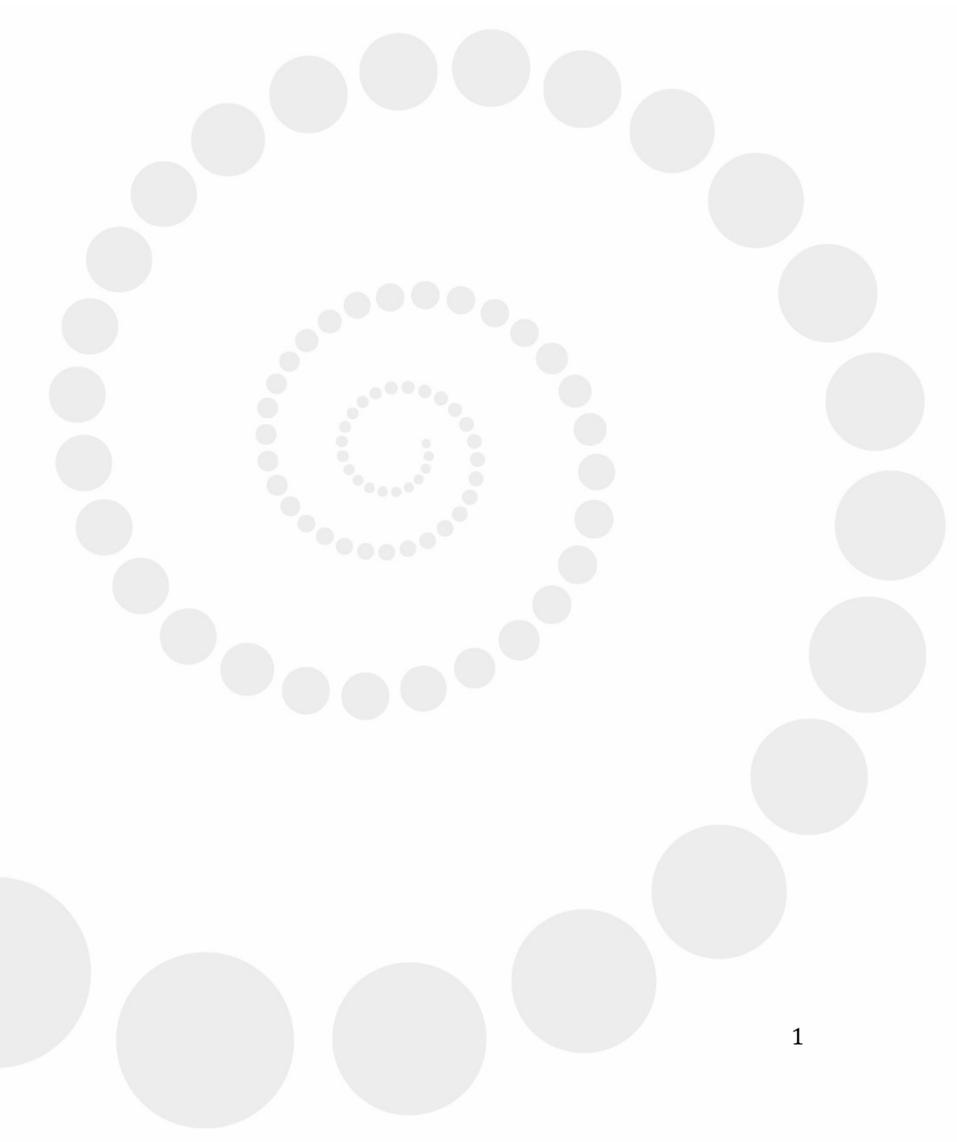
Auckland Council Interest

Auckland Council and its community partners routinely use data generated by Stats NZ in a range of work that we do. At the moment NZ does not have robust data about the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) community in many areas. Robust statistical data generated by the proposed inclusion of a question on sexual identity in a range of social surveys, including the census, would be useful to Auckland Council and the Auckland Council Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel for a range of purposes, including the following:

- to monitor community wellbeing;
- to monitor discrimination and inequality;
- to enhance health provision and other relevant forms of social support;
- to increase the visibility of rainbow communities in Auckland.

Please see attached for the full submission.

Sexual orientation: Developing a statistical standard for sexual identity – submission form



Please return your completed submission form by 9am Tuesday, 1 May 2018.

Return by email to:

- Identity@stats.govt.nz

Section 1: Contact details

Who is making this submission?

Esther Rootham and John Kingi

On behalf of Auckland Council and the Auckland Council Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel

This submission is made:

by an individual

on behalf of a group

on behalf of a business or organisation

on behalf of a government agency

other: _____

Are you happy for us to contact you?

Yes

No

Contact details:

Email:

esther.rootham@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz and john.kingi@xtra.co.nz

Phone number:

09 484 6449

Section 2: Completing the form

This project's focus is to develop a statistical standard for sexual identity, as part of the sexual orientation framework, for use within New Zealand organisations and government agencies.

Please answer the following questions on the proposed sexual orientation definitions, related terms, and question guidelines.

The final question provides space for additional comments or thoughts relating to the topic that you would like to share.

Question 1: Proposed framework for sexual orientation

A framework standardises information on a topic, enabling the topic to be measured and reported in a consistent way. The framework below brings together and describes the aspects and definitions that relate to sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation covers three key aspects of sexuality: sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, and sexual identity. These are related – sexual orientation is generally based on sexual attraction; sexual attraction can result in different sexual behaviours and sexual identities. The three key aspects can independently change.

Definitions

Sexual attraction – sexual interest in another person. Sexual attraction is having sexual feelings towards someone.

A person may be attracted to males, females, both, no-one, or to people who are gender diverse.

Sexual behaviour – how a person behaves sexually. It is whether they have sexual partners of the opposite sex, same sex, intersex, both sexes, or refrain from sexual behaviour.

Sexual identity – how a person thinks of their own sexuality and which terms they choose to identify with.

Note: Identity may be as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, **Takatāpui**, **Fa'afafine**, **Queer**, or asexual, among others.

a) Do you agree with the sexual orientation framework outlined above? That is, that sexual orientation has three aspects – sexual attraction, sexual behaviour, and sexual identity.

Yes, with the inclusion of further identities highlighted in yellow in the Note, as edited above.

No

If 'no' please explain.

b) Looking at the definitions of the aspects of sexual orientation (attraction, behaviour, and identity), do they adequately cover the meaning of each term?

Yes

No

If 'no' please explain

Question 2: Proposed definitions of related terms

Looking at the related terms in the *Sexual orientation: Consultation for developing a statistical standard for sexual identity* paper, do the proposed definitions explain the terms fully?

Yes

No

If 'no' please provide suggestions for improvement.

Question 3: Question design

Sexual identity is one aspect of sexual orientation. Sexual identity is how the person sees themselves at the time they answer the question (self-perceived sexual identity at a point in time).

a) Question categories:

Do you agree with the terms/options we use in the proposed sexual identity question examples?

No, we think its important to include terms that people commonly use, particularly Māori and Pacifica communities and younger generations . Please see our suggestions for this below.

[please see below] No

If 'no' please explain.

We strongly suggest that it is important to provide people with options that capture the range of identity terms that people actually use, particularly Māori and Pacifica communities and younger generations. We suggest having a drop down menu (similar to the one for ethnicities) to allow a fuller range of more nuanced options. The wording could be something along the lines of:

Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? (Tick as many as apply)

*Heterosexual or straight
Gay or lesbian
Bisexual
Takatāpui
Fa'afafine
Queer
Pansexual*

*Asexual
(maybe add others here)
Other - please specify
Choose not to answer*

b) Question categories:

Do you think a “refuse to answer” and/or “choose not to answer” response option should be included in a sexual identity question?

Yes

No

If ‘no’ please explain.



c) Age of person answering:

Around the world the age for sexual identity questions varies from 15 years and over (15+) to 18+ years.

What age do you think is appropriate to be asked a sexual identity question?

We believe that this is to some extent context specific, but in general, 16 and over is an appropriate age to be asked a sexual identity question in line with the general age of consent in New Zealand.

d) When is it appropriate to ask about sexual identity?

To help with our question guidelines, we would like to know when it is appropriate to ask for this information. Please tell us in what situation, or context, you think it is appropriate to ask a question on sexual identity and why?

Generally, we believe that the information requested on sexual identity is appropriate in most contexts. We do not consider it overly sensitive, particularly when the option not to answer is available. We support and encourage the inclusion of this question in national surveys such as the census and other work that Statistics New Zealand carries out for several reasons:

- *National surveys and other forms of large scale research can play an important role in normalising the idea that sexual identities may be diverse and in this way, help to create a more equitable and inclusive society¹. We think it is important that the sexual identity question becomes more familiar to New Zealanders to generate awareness and acceptance of the diversity of sexual identities that exist.*
- *Robust statistical data generated by the inclusion of a question on sexual identity in the census will help provide critical information for the development of services which better support LGBTIQ community across a wide range of areas, including mental health, youth, housing, social and economic and other quality of life indicators. At the moment NZ does not have robust data about the LGBTIQ community in many areas.*
- *Robust statistical data generated by the proposed inclusion of a question on sexual identity in a range of social surveys, including the census, would be useful to Auckland Council and the Auckland Council Rainbow Communities Advisory Panel for a range of purposes, including the following:*
 - *to monitor community wellbeing;*
 - *to monitor discrimination and inequality;*
 - *to enhance health provision and other relevant forms of social support;*
 - *to increase the visibility of rainbow communities in Auckland.*

The statistical standard developed earlier by Statistics New Zealand has generated important data for Auckland Council. Auckland Council routinely uses this standard in

¹ For an academic discussion on the role of statistics both describing and shaping society, please see the following resources: Saetnam, A, Lomell, H and S Hammer (Eds). (2011) *The mutual construction of statistics and society* Routledge: New York/London.

Desrosiere, A. (1998) *The politics of large numbers: A history of statistical reasoning*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

its research and public consultation in order to ensure that we have a good understanding of our communities, their needs and the strength of our engagement with them. A standard on sexual identity would further our work in this area.

e) Question design

Looking at the proposed question examples in the *Sexual orientation: Consultation for developing a statistical standard for sexual identity* paper, do you have any comment on the question design?

The questions are well designed.

Question 4: Further information you would like to share

Is there any other information you would like to share to help us develop the statistical standard for sexual identity?

We support moving forward on the statistical standard for sexual identity, for the reasons outlined in the previous question. That is, the data would be useful for us and our community partners.

In addition, we believe that by asking about sexual identity in research contexts a clear message is communicated to the public which will help generate awareness and acceptance of the existence of a diversity of sexual identities and contribute to more equitable social outcomes.

We recommend that Statistics New Zealand include the sexual identity question on the next census and use it in other social surveys.

We also recommend that the current gender identity standard be reviewed at this time, to consider better ways of acknowledging the diversity of genders that exist.

To help with future consultations...

Which of the consultation papers presented were helpful to you? Tick all that apply.

Collection practices paper – “Collecting sexual orientation information: New Zealand and international practices”.

Comprehensive paper – “Sexual orientation: Consultation for developing a statistical standard for sexual identity”.

Summary paper – “Sexual orientation: Summary for developing a statistical standard for sexual identity”.

No material provided was helpful.

Thank you!

Thank you for your submission. Your comments and feedback will help us improve the collection of information for and about sexual minority groups.

Once the submission period has closed on **1 May 2018**, we will gather all submissions for analysis, to guide us in developing a statistical standard for sexual identity.

Thank you for your contribution to this process.

