

creating trans-inclusive forms

Collecting data for transgender,
gender diverse, and non-binary people

Trans-Inclusive Forms

Forms are a useful tool to quickly capture information to populate databases, perform staff and client intakes, and more. Filling out a form with your personal information may seem like the easiest thing to do, but for many transgender, gender diverse and non-binary (TGD) people it can be **less straightforward**.

TGD people often don't fit into forms the way they have been made for the last few decades, so it's important to consider how you can change any forms you have to be more **accessible & safer** for TGD people to use.

Here is an overview of how to make your forms TGD inclusive. There may be some industry specific differences, but using these principles should allow you to create any form in a TGD inclusive way.

Self-description

As a general rule of thumb, providing the option for form users to input their own words as answers can ensure your form provides options that accurately reflect the user. If that is not possible an alternative is providing in-depth options for them to select.

Gender Neutral

Use gender neutral language throughout your form. This means avoiding terms like "man" or "woman" or "he/she" unless absolutely necessary (ie. asking for gender identity).

Exclusive Language

If something you want to include is not listed in our guide, think: "Does the way I am writing this exclude anyone?" If so, think of a new way to phrase it or consider not asking the question at all.

These are the three foundational principles to keep in mind when creating forms in the workplace. Read on for more specific advice about asking for names, gender, pronouns & titles, and family details.

Names

Names are how we refer to ourselves and how we're known to others, which can be a crucial part of a TGD person's identity. The name that a TGD person uses in their everyday life can be different from the name that appears in their legal documents. When creating a form, in some instances it may be important to request a person's legal name if it's not what they usually use everyday.

Identify if the form **truly requires** someone's legal name. Sometimes certain organisations require legal names for their work processes, such as the Australian Tax Office.

If legal names are required it is good practice to **disclose the reason why** legal names will be needed or used.

In addition to Legal Name, always ask for a person's "**Chosen Name**" or "**Name in use**" -- this can be left as "Name" on the form, with chosen name and/or name in use in brackets next to it.

Avoid using terms like "**preferred name**" -- this is not a preference, this is part of a person's social identity.

Ensure the **chosen name or name in use** is the **prominent name** in your database, or train staff to look for this name when accessing data, to **avoid deadnaming** people when they engage with you or your organisation.

What is deadnaming?

Deadnaming is the act of calling someone by their **birth name** after they have chosen a **new name**. Doing so can be especially **uncomfortable and psychologically triggering** for a TGD person.

Gender

When asking for information, first consider whether you really need to know about a person's gender as part of your form. Why is it relevant? It is also important to determine if you are referring to **gender** or **sex**. Gender refers to someone's **gender identity**, a social label with which they identify, while sex refers to the way a person was assigned at birth based on their physical and/or biological characteristics. If you mean **sex** then ask for that specifically.

If you need gender to be captured you can be TGD-inclusive by:

- Offering more than the three common options of man, woman, and other
- Not using "other" at all, as this can be literally othering and make TGD people feel like they are a second thought
- **Including many options** that people can pick from, for example:

Gender	▼
Non-Binary	
Sistergirl	
Brotherboy	
Genderqueer	
Bigender	
Genderfluid	
Agender	
Woman	
Man	

- The best practice is to leave a **blank space** for people to **self-describe**, and also an option to opt out altogether if they don't wish to respond

Gender
...
<input type="checkbox"/> No response

Sex

It is only necessary to ask about a person's **sex** if your organisation requires information about their **physical and/or biological characteristics**. One common attempt to ask about sex in a way that is inclusive of TGD people is to provide the following options:



Sex	▼
Male	
Female	
Transgender	

There are a few things wrong with this approach.

- It forces trans people to make a choice between being male, female, *or* transgender, which implies that their status as a man or a woman is **invalid** or otherwise **in conflict** with their transness
- It also suggests that “transgender” is a **monolithic category**, and it still fails to capture any detail about the person's physical characteristics
- These three options also ignore the existence of **intersex** people

An inclusive way to ask the question would look like this:



Sex	▼
Male	
Female	
Intersex	
Prefer to self-describe	
<input type="checkbox"/> No response	
Self-describe: optional...	

This option includes male, female, and intersex people, allows those whose sex is not captured by these options the choice to self-describe, and offers everyone the opportunity not to respond to the question.

Pronouns & Titles

Just like names, pronouns and titles can be quite important for representing and affirming the identity of a TGD person. It is crucial that everyone gets the opportunity to disclose the pronouns and titles that best represent them, but there are some things to keep in mind when asking about them.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that replaces a person's name to avoid the need to repeat it over and over again in a sentence. We all use them as a function of the English language, but correctly using a TGD person's chosen pronoun(s) is an important and easy way to affirm their gender identity.

When asking for this information in a form:

- Avoid using the term "preferred pronouns". The pronouns that someone wants to use are not a preference, they are part of a person's social identity. Instead, **just use "pronouns"**
- Don't make the question compulsory. Simply leave space for pronouns to be added if a person chooses to do so:

Pronouns: optional...

Titles

- Titles can be very gendered and some people do not feel comfortable being made to choose one. Consider **removing them** altogether
- If you need to include a title, ensure that non-binary identities are included e.g. mx, and provide an option for someone to choose "none"

Other People's Details

If you need to capture details about other people relevant to the person who is filling out the form, **use gender inclusive substitutes like below**. Some of these are not necessarily about being gender neutral, but about respecting that TGD and all LGBTQIA+ people may have different family structures to what has historically been recognised e.g. chosen family vs. family of origin.

Don't Use

- . Next of Kin
- . Mother/Father
- . Husband/Wife
- . Son/Daughter
- . Family
- . Grandmother/Grandfather
- . Aunt/Uncle
- . Niece/Nephew
- . Nuclear Family
- . Brother/Sister

Instead Use

- . Emergency Contact
- . Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
- . Spouse/Partner
- . Child(ren)
- . Support People/Chosen Family
- . Grandparent(s)
- . Extended Family
- . Niblings/Extended Family
- . Household
- . Sibling(s)

Need more?

This resource is a general overview of how to create inclusive forms. If you would like a more personalised guide, **reach out to the Transgender Victoria Training Team** at training@tgv.org.au to book an initial consult with us.