

How to write the Sex-Gender Section of your proposal

This material has been summarised from the [Gender in EU-Funded research toolkit](#).

Excellent research requires careful consideration of a number of variables. Some of these variables include the biological sex and gender dimension of the content, methodology and outputs of research.

It is important that you distinguish between sex and gender in your proposal. It is possible that your project may have a sex dimension, a gender dimension, both or neither. Note that gender balance is often confused for gender dimension in the research. Be clear when giving your answer. The following definitions may be of use when preparing this section of your application:

Sex Sex refers to the biologically determined characteristics of men and women in terms of reproductive organs and function based on chromosomal complement and physiology. As such, sex is globally understood as the classification of living things as male or female.¹

Gender Gender refers to the social construction of women and men, of femininity and masculinity, which varies in time and place, and between cultures. It departs from the notion of sex to signal that biology or anatomy is not a destiny.

Note: It is important to distinguish clearly between gender and sex. These terms are often used interchangeably while they are conceptually distinctive.

Whether your proposal has a sex and/or gender dimension or not, it is important that you demonstrate that you have given due consideration to this. The following tips may be useful in developing this aspect of your proposal:

Sex and/or Gender in Research context

- Incorporating a **Sex and/or Gender** dimension into your research can provide a new perspective and increase the quality and validity of research. Take time to consider the relevance of gender to your research questions and incorporate your conclusions into the funding application. If you conclude that gender is not relevant to your research content, explain how you came to this conclusion.
- If relevant, ensure that your methodology is gender sensitive and demonstrate this in the relevant section of your proposal, e.g. using sex and/or gender as a variable, using gender-sensitive questionnaires, gender-balanced end-user focus groups etc.
- If there is a staff member in your department that could advise on the sex/gender dimension of your research – approach them for help. Highlight that you will have their support in your application.
- If your research has a gender bias, explain why this is the case and justify the relevant research

¹ Definitions are taken from the European Commission's Toolkit, *Gender in EU-Funded Research*.

questions.

- Ensure that the gender dimension of your research is fully integrated into the proposal. If you propose any activities, methodologies, publications when discussing gender, ensure that they are referred to in the corresponding sections of the proposal too e.g. work plan, scientific approach etc.
- Use gender-neutral language **throughout** the proposal.
- In terms of adequate gender coverage/representation, if you are aware that you have not met the criteria (e.g. 30% female participation) ensure that this will be addressed in the management/project execution/implementation section of the proposal.

Dissemination

- Note that you will use gender-neutral language in your publications.
- If a gender-related finding is of interest, suggest disseminating to a specialised audience e.g. appropriate gender-studies journals or conferences (if possible, find an appropriate journal for your research area and mention it by name).
- Indicate that your analysis of gender-specific data will be included in any 'mainstream' publications where relevant.

Checklist for gender in research (from [Gender Toolkit](#))

Research ideas phase:

- If the research involves humans as research objects, has the relevance of gender to the research topic been analysed?
- If the research does not directly involve humans, are the possibly differentiated relations of men and women to the research subject sufficiently clear?
- Have you reviewed literature and other sources relating to gender differences in the research field?

Proposal phase:

- Does the methodology ensure that (possible) gender differences will be investigated: that sex/gender-differentiated data will be collected and analysed throughout the research cycle and will be part of the final publication?
- Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how gender issues will be handled (e.g. in a specific work package)?
- Have possibly differentiated outcomes and impacts of the research on women and men been considered?

Research phase:

- Are questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data?
- Are the groups involved in the project (e.g. samples, testing groups) gender-balanced? Is data analysed according to the sex variable? Are other relevant variables analysed with respect to sex?

Dissemination phase:

- Do analyses present statistics, tables, figures and descriptions that focus on the relevant gender differences that came up in the course of the project?
- Are institutions, departments and journals that focus on gender included among the target groups for dissemination, along with mainstream research magazines?
- Have you considered a specific publication or event on gender-related findings?

Further resources

- The EC commissioned toolkit, [Gender in EU-Funded Research Toolkit](#), offers advice on how to make your research more gender sensitive. It includes a useful checklist that can be used for proposal preparation and case studies that demonstrate how gender is relevant in specific fields.

- [Gendered Innovations](#): The 'Methods of Sex & Gender Analysis' section of the [Gendered Innovations](#) publication offers step-by-step advice on how to consider the sex and/or gender dimension of your research. The website also contains case studies that demonstrate the benefit of making research gender sensitive.
- The EC's website includes a section on [Actions for Gender Equality](#)
- The EC's [roadmap for women's rights](#) and a new strategy for gender equality. The EU H2020 online manual has a section on [Gender Equality](#)
- [GEAR Tool](#) – Integration of the sex/gender dimension into research and teaching content
- [Research](#) Ireland (SFI) External Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2023-2028
- [HRB Policy on Gender in research funding](#)

Athena SWAN at UCD

UCD has been awarded the prestigious institutional Silver Athena Swan Award in recognition of its ongoing commitment to advancing gender equality and building capacity for evidence-based equality work across all equality grounds, building on our Bronze Awards from 2017 and 2020. We extend our gratitude to the entire University community for their support and engagement throughout this process.

To achieve this accreditation, the University conducted a thorough self-assessment of gender equality challenges and demonstrated significant progress and impact since receiving our Bronze Award in 2020. Additionally, UCD engaged in consultations with employees and students, using their feedback to strengthen the application and guide the development of the Gender Equality Action Plan 2024 - 2029.

- To view UCD's Gender Equality Action Plan 2024 - 2029, please click [here](#).