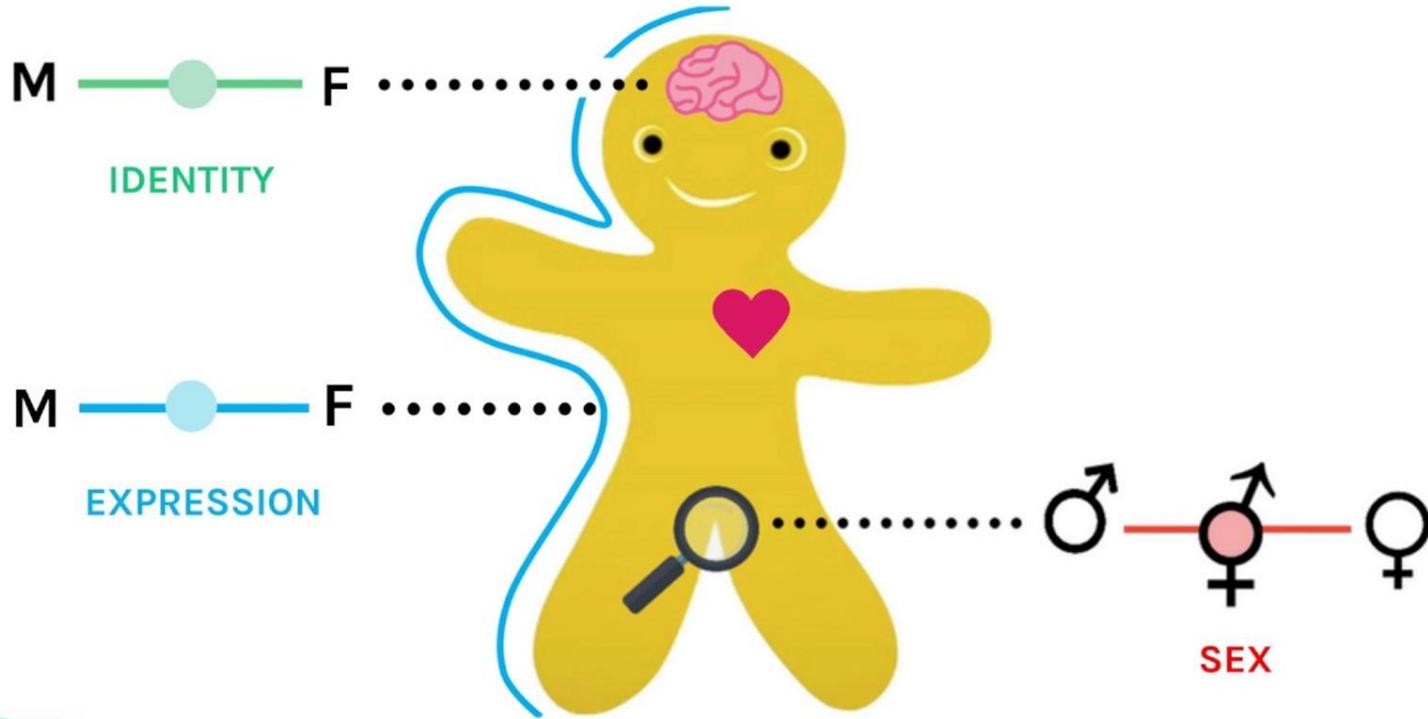

Measuring sex and gender identity in a cross-national adolescent population survey: Perspectives of adolescent health experts from 44 countries

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Approaches to Sex and Gender



'Are you a boy or a girl?'

ITEM

1. **Sex or gender?**
2. (If gender) No information on **sex assigned at birth**; cannot separate **cis- and transgender** adolescents; no option for those who **cannot identify** as either boy or girl
3. (If sex) No option for those with an **intersex variation**
4. **Cisgenderism**

CHANGING THE ITEM

1. **Understanding**
2. Difference between sex and gender may be **confusing**
3. **Temporal** comparability
4. **Cross-cultural** comparability
5. May be confused with **sexual orientation** (which is also not fully investigated in HBSC)
6. Potential **negative** reactions

Have you faced problems using the mandatory question 'Are you a boy or a girl'?

- 7 of 44 national teams (**16%**) faced problems
- Some children indicated '**neither**' or added **other text response**
- Data from France, French Belgium, Ireland and Luxembourg: **between 0.4% and 1.2% missing**
- Children, teachers, local authorities, funders or other **stakeholders** criticized the item and **requested change**

Existing amendments or consideration

- In three countries: **Third response option**
- One country: **'Sex: 1. Male 2. Female'** (cultural considerations)
- Two countries: **Additional item(s)** on feeling about gender or gender identities
- Six countries are **considering** amendment or alternative item

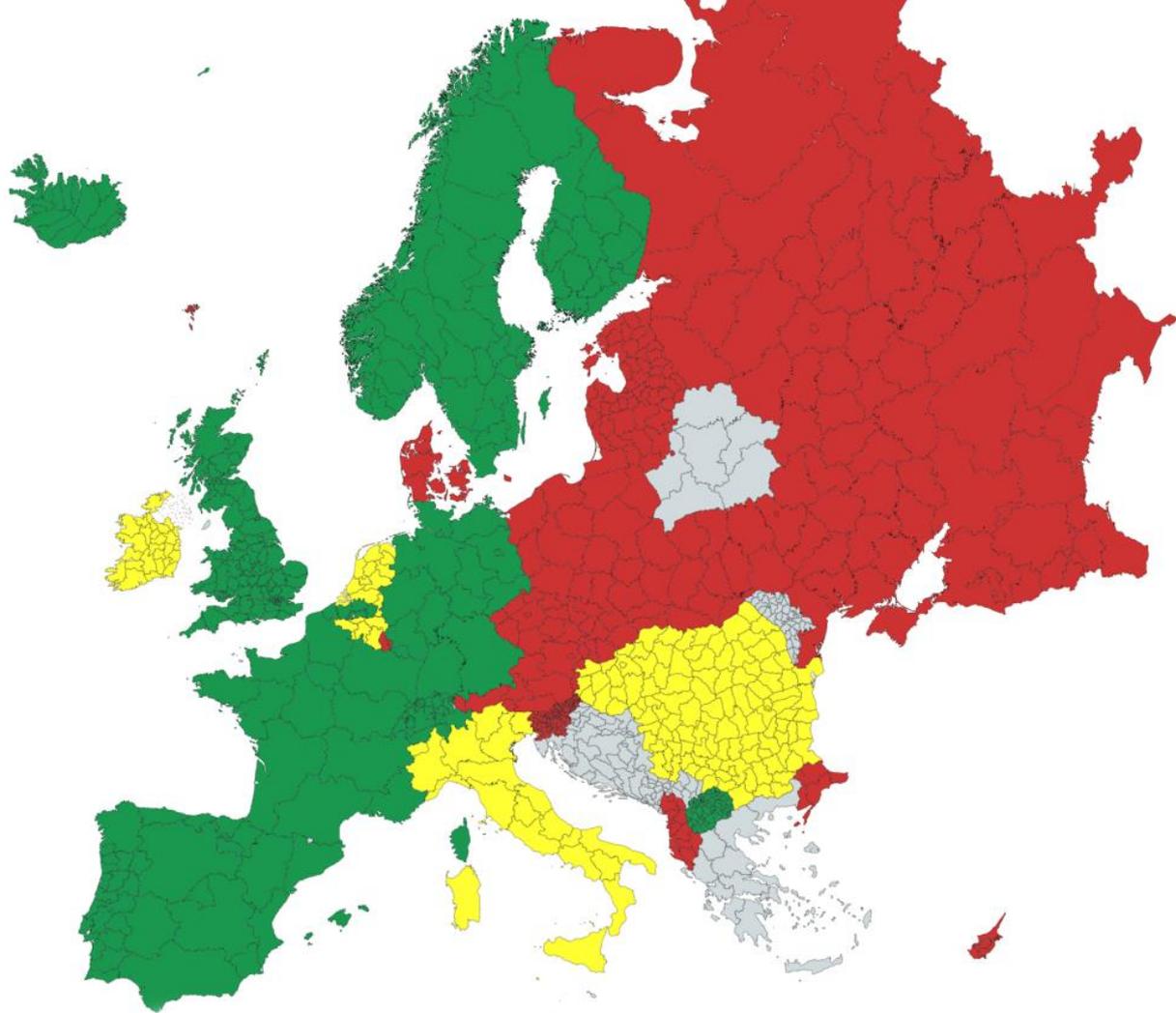
Do you think that HBSC should make any changes to the way we currently measure gender/sex?

Yes (15), 34%

Don't know or not sure
(10) 23%

No (19), 43%

Canada
Greenland
Israel
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Uzbekistan



Suggestions for amending the 'Are you a boy or a girl?' item

- “At least **another option than girl/boy** (other, Don't want to answer...) + any other complementary question on gender **to be discussed.**”
- “Actually we think that at least we should **ask two questions**, one to explore which was the sex assigned at birth, and another asking about gender identity.”
- “**Adolescents' perspective/views** should be taken into account when designing new gender items.”

Perceived risks and benefits of changing the item

RISKS

- **Sensitivity**, potential refusal (18)
- Potential **jeopardizing** of the survey (13)
- Limited **comparability** (8)
- Changes may not suit **younger children** (5)
- **Low number** of children potentially affected (5)

BENEFITS

- **Inclusivity** (17)
- Up-to-date and reflective **research** (8)
- Keeping pace with **societal changes** (5)
- Policy and **human rights** (2)

DILEMMA: Risks of changing and risks of retaining the item...

Example of good practice (Jones, 2019)

Approach	Items	Response option	Advantages	Disadvantages	Age
Two-step approach	What sex were you assigned at birth?	Male / Female / Other option (please give)	Easy to understand and answer; allows for intersex and non-binary identities;	May trigger false positive answers; some may find it confusing	10–13 years and older
	What gender do you see yourself as now?	A man or boy / A woman or girl / Other option (please give)	separates cisgender and transgender		

Recommendations

1. More **conceptual work** is needed to arrive to a consensual and well-established way of assessing sex and gender. 👍
2. Investigation of **gender non-response** should be extended to more countries. 👍
3. The item **'Are you a boy or a girl?'** should be retained. Any addition or amendment to the item, or addition of new item(s), must be **voluntary**, but it should happen in a **uniform** fashion in order to maximise cross-cultural comparability. 👍

Recommendations

4. Measurement of **sex and gender** should be **separated**. 👍
5. It is crucial to **validate** any amendment or alternative item in many countries and to **engage young people and stakeholders** in the pilot study. 📢
6. National teams who decide to introduce the agreed change may also make steps to **uniformize** the use of **mental health and well-being** optional packages, to enable cross-cultural investigation on **gender diversity and mental health**. 👍

Ongoing and planned work

- Development of Sex/Gender and Sexual Orientation **Optional Packages**
- Cross-national **validation work** (hopefully school-based and community samples)
- Using the new Optional Packages in the **2021/2022 HBSC survey**

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