DRAFT
Guide

ISO/IEC DGuide 79

Gender responsive standards — Guidance for standards developers

ICS: ISO ics

ISO/TMBG

Secretariat: **ISO**

Voting begins on:
2026-04-03

Voting terminates on:
2026-06-26

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Reference number
ISO/IEC DGuide 79:2026(en)

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives or www.iec.ch/members_experts/refdocs).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html. In the IEC, see www.iec.ch/understanding-standards.

This document was prepared by the ISO/IEC Joint Strategic Advisory Group on Gender Responsive Standards.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html and www.iec.ch/national-committees.

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Introduction

On 19 May 2019, ISO and IEC signed the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development,[1] pledging to make standards and the standards development process gender responsive. The UNECE Declaration recognizes that currently women are not as well-served by standards as men. The declaration encourages standards development organizations of all types to create gender responsive standards (GRS) and standards development environments. The Declaration and its implementation aim to provide a practical framework for standards bodies and standards developers seeking to make the standards they develop, and the standards development process they follow, gender responsive.

In response to the UNECE Declaration, and as part of ISO and IEC's respective gender and diversity action plans, the Joint Strategic Advisory Group (JSAG) was established to develop guidance to help technical committees ensure the standards they are developing are gender responsive.

Enabling gender equality in standards and standards development is a complex challenge requiring action on different elements of the system and process and the complexity is compounded by the breadth and depth of subjects covered through standardization. The focus of this document is specifically on enabling the development of gender responsive standards. The guide is intentionally broad so that it is applicable regardless of the subject matter and it is meant to generate meaningful discussions within the committee to support standard developers as they work to ensure their standards are gender responsive.

All committees should apply this document, make use of the accompanying assessment form (Annex A) and complete the declaration form (Annex B).

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Gender responsive standards — Guidance for technical committees

1 Scope

This document provides guidance to standards developers on how to consider gender in the drafting, revision and updating of ISO and IEC standards and similar deliverables. It provides an assessment form and other tools and information which can be used to ensure standards are gender responsive.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp
— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
gender
continually evolving social construct codifying expected behaviours, social and cultural norms used to define and describe roles and individuals in a society, often reduced to concepts of femininity and masculinity (i.e. what it means to be a woman and/or a man) despite the diversity (spectrum) of genders

Note 1 to entry: Gender varies from one society to another, and is based on cultural, economic and historical contexts.

3.2
gender responsive standard
GRS
standard that reflects an understanding of differences and equally addresses the needs of women/females and men/males

3.3
standards developer

individual or group taking part in any activity throughout the development of standards or similar deliverables

3.4
gender equality
equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys

Note 1 to entry: Gender equality does not mean that women and men, girls and boys, will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are a man or a woman.

Note 2 to entry: Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and girls, men and boys, are taken into consideration, recognizing them in all their diversity.

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[SOURCE: ISO 53800:2024,[2] 3.4, modified – note 1 to entry has been modified.]

3.5
standardization
activity of establishing, with regard to actual or potential problems, provisions for common and repeated use, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context

Note 1 to entry: Important benefits of standardization are improvement of the suitability of products, processes and services for their intended purposes, prevention of barriers to trade and facilitation of technological cooperation.

Note 2 to entry: In particular, the activity consists of the processes of formulating, issuing and implementing standards.

[SOURCE:ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004,[3] 1.1]

3.6
gender implications
effect that the content and use of a standard will have on men and women, including social structures, individual experiences, physical and mental health, policy design, etc.

3.8
sex
assigned sex at birth and/or one's physical attributes which includes a combination of hormones, chromosomes, physiology and anatomy

3.9
physiological
relating to the way in which the bodies of living things work

3.10
socially constructed
concept or idea that is created and accepted by a society, and is not based on any natural or innate source

3.11
anthropometry

study and measurement of the physical dimensions and mass of the human body and its constituent (external) parts

[SOURCE: ISO 15535:2023,[4] 3.6]

3.12
social responsibilities
responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

— contributes to sustainable development, inclusiveness, health and the welfare of society;

— takes into account the expectations of stakeholders;

— is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour;

— is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships

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Note 1 to entry: Activities include products, services and processes.

Note 2 to entry: Relationships refer to an organization's activities within its sphere of influence.

Note 3 to entry: Includes activities on members and workforce of organizations.

Note 4 to entry: Social responsibility includes gender equality.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010,[5] 2.18, modified — the word "inclusivity" has been added, as well as Notes 3 and 4 to entry.]

3.13

bias

tendency, inclination or opinion that hinders impartial judgement

Note 1 to entry: Bias can be both explicit and implicit.

Note 2 to entry: Bias can be unconscious, conscious or systematic.

Note 3 to entry: Bias can lead to differences in treatment between people or groups in comparison with others.

[SOURCE: ISO 30400:2022,[6] 3.7.2]

3.14

sex-disaggregated data
data that is collected, categorized and presented separately based on sex, allowing for the measurement of differences between males and females

Note 1 to entry: It is the responsibility of the committee to determine whether it is more relevant to distinguish in terms of sex or gender disaggregated data, or both, on a case-by-case basis.

3.15

Gender-disaggregated data
data that is collected, categorized and presented separately based on gender identity, allowing for the measurement of differences between different gender identities

Note 1 to entry: It is the responsibility of the committee to determine whether it is more relevant to distinguish in terms of sex or gender disaggregated data, or both, on a case-by-case basis.

3.16

data

representation of information in a manner suitable for communication, interpretation, or processing by human beings or computers

[SOURCE:ISO 10303-2:2024,[7] 3.1.207 modified — “formal” has been removed from definition]

3.17

data source

where the data comes from and who collected it

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3.18

diversity

characteristics of differences and similarities between people

Note 1 to entry: Diversity includes factors that influence the identities and perspectives that people bring when interacting .

Note 2 to entry: Diversity can support the development of environments and practices that foster learning from others to gain diverse perspectives on inclusiveness.

Note 3 to entry: Diversity dimensions include the demographic and other personal characteristics , for example age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, as well as characteristics related to the socio-economic context. These are often identified and agreed-upon dimensions, which can be associated with legal requirements in different jurisdictions.

[SOURCE: ISO 30400:2022,[6] 3.7.1, modified — "at work" has been removed from note 1 to entry; "the workforce" has been removed from note 2 to entry.]

4 What are gender responsive standards?

Gender responsive standards, and similar deliverables, are developed with consideration for gender implications in the content, requirements, and application of standards. When developing standards, or other similar deliverables, developers should identify relevant differences based on both sex and gender and determine how to address the implications of those differences in the standard. There are physical/physiological differences as well as social and cultural constructs defining roles and expectations for women and men that standards developers need to consider. Taking such factors into account will ensure that both women's and men's needs for the specified product, process, system or service are equally met by the standard.

5 Role of standards developers

All standard developers have an important role in shaping the direction, the scope and content of standards and guiding the development process and thus, all standards developers have a role to play in ensuring that standards are gender responsive. It is essential to ensure standards developers have ongoing discussions on gender implications throughout the standards development process. These discussions should begin at the earliest stage of the standards development process and continue through all other stages of development to ensure the final standard can effectively address gender considerations.

6 Identifying and assessing gender implications

6.1 General

Standard developers should start with the assumption that sex and gender differences will have implications for their standards' content. Starting with this assumption can enable a more robust examination to determine how sex and gender differences impact (or are relevant to) can enable a more robust examination to determine how these differences impact (are/or relevant to) the standard(s) under development and what actions should be taken to ensure the standard equally meets the needs of men and women.

EXAMPLE When in a car accident, women are 73 % more likely to be seriously injured or die than men. This is because crash test dummies are based on male's anthropometry. While overall safety of cars has improved, the improvement has been greater for men than women, because cars are not required to be tested with an equivalent female crash test dummy. Failure to account for women in the design, results in worse outcomes for women in the final product.[8]

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