

Self-identified gender reporting measures perform well in study of college students' drinking behavior

March 17 2023



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A tool allowing research participants to self-identify beyond binary categories of male and female performed well in a study of college

student drinking. The study, published in *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*, demonstrates a method to conduct research that is more inclusive of the increasing number of individuals identifying as transgender, nonbinary, and other genders who may be at higher risk for alcohol use disorders.

The study encourages the development of future research instruments that capture a broader diversity of genders in order to promote a more representative body of scientific knowledge and a more complete understanding of health influences and outcomes.

The majority of the existing body of evidence about sex and [gender differences](#) in alcohol use and health outcomes examined sex as binary categories of male and female. Studies have shown, however, that both [biological sex](#) assigned at birth and gender, which is influenced by attitudes, feelings, and behaviors regarding biological sex, affect alcohol-related outcomes.

This study tested participant self-identification on a continuum as an alternative to binary categories of male/man and female/woman. Nine hundred undergraduate college students aged 18 to 25 were asked to identify their sex assigned at birth and rate their gender for maleness and femaleness from one to 100 on unidirectional and bidirectional scales.

Using the more inclusive indices, the study found differences in drinking behaviors between [cisgender](#) (individuals whose [gender identity](#) aligns with their biological sex assigned at birth) men and cisgender women, and to a limited extent, between cisgender men and transgender students. Higher ratings of maleness and bidirectional indices of identification were associated with greater alcohol consumption, while higher ratings of femaleness and being a cisgender woman related to less drinking.

The findings align with previous research that supports the idea that a

variety of factors, likely including self-identified gender, play a role in decision-making behavior related to drinking. The effects of the self-identification indices across quantity and frequency were small but consistent.

This study is a preliminary, novel effort to capture the diversity of genders in research in order to be more inclusive and representative of the population. This study was limited by the largely white, female, cisgender sample from two regions of the United States. Future studies would benefit from a larger, more diverse sample. Additionally, categorization of [gender](#), even along a continuum.

As the terms maleness and femaleness may not be understood consistently by participants and may not best describe their self-identification, other terms should be explored.

More information: Kristen G. Anderson et al, Measures of self-reported identity associated with sex and gender: Relations with collegiate drinking, *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1111/acer.15013](https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.15013)

Provided by Research Society on Alcoholism

Citation: Self-identified gender reporting measures perform well in study of college students' drinking behavior (2023, March 17) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-03-self-identified-gender-college-students-behavior.html>

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