

Spring Directive 2020

Part 1: Gender

In recent years, much media coverage has been given to celebrities like Caitlyn Jenner, Kellie Maloney, and Laverne Cox – or even to fictional characters like Hayley Cropper (Coronation Street) – all of whom have very publically challenged the permanence of gender identity. All of these women are transgender and their stories highlight how gender can, for some people, be changeable. This Directive uses this idea as its starting point and asks you to reflect on gender identity.

We understand that gender is personal and our questions may not be relevant to everyone. Please feel free to write as little or as much as you can.

Please start each part of your Directive reply on a new sheet of paper with your **MO number, gender identity, age, marital status, the town or village where you live and your occupation or former occupation.**

Remember *not to identify yourself or other people* inadvertently within your reply. It is best to use initials instead of real names.

Word association

What are the first 3 words that spring to your mind when you think of the term 'masculine'?
What 3 words come to mind when you think of the term 'feminine'?

You and your gender identity

Do you identify as a particular gender?

Have you always been comfortable with your gender identity? Alternatively, have there been times when you have not conformed, or felt uncomfortable?

Have you or someone you known, ever-presented gender differently? We are interested to hear stories of how people have reacted to you or others. Either in the past or now.

Terms

Do 'male' and 'female' mean something different from 'masculine' and 'feminine'? What do you think of the idea of gender as a 'spectrum', rather than as two identities?

Non-binary

Have you heard of the term non-binary? Without reading ahead, what does the term mean to you?

Recently, the singer Sam Smith 'came out' as non-binary and defined this as meaning that "I'm not male or female, I think I flow somewhere in between. It's all on the spectrum." (*Guardian*, 13/09/2019). How does this definition make you feel?

If a friend came to you confided in you that they are non-binary, what advice, if any, would you give to them?

Living lives

We have noticed that many public buildings and spaces have 'gender inclusive' toilets. Have you seen this? Are you happy to use these facilities?

Part 2: Covid19 (Update)

Please share your experiences and reflections on the challenging times we are currently experiencing. Below are some questions we would like you to think about.

Health

Please describe any physical or mental health issues you or anyone you live with have experienced during the lock-down period.

Have you required any medical or professional help? If so, please tell us about this.

How would describe your emotions in the last few weeks?

The Government

What are your thoughts on the political decisions that have been made?

What steps do you think the British Government will make in the coming months?

News

Through what forms of media are you reading and/or hearing news of latest developments?

Have you been watching the daily Government press broadcasts at 5pm? If yes, please tell us what your thoughts and experiences of this have been like.

Have you or anyone you know experienced challenges with access to the news? There is a petition underway to the UK Government and Parliament to include a British Sign Language Interpreter in these briefings. BSL interpreters are used for Nicola Sturgeons briefings in Scotland. What do you think about this?

Work and home life

Have you been working during the lockdown? Or maybe you have been furloughed? Please share your experiences.

How has lockdown impacted your home life? Have you been home schooling children? Has it affected any relationships with people you live with? How have you managed these challenges?

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Technology

Many people have been learning to use new forms of technology during the crisis. What has your experience been of this?

Have you been keeping in touch with friends, family and/or work colleagues with tools such as FaceTime, Zoom, HouseParty or WhatsApp? If so, what has this been like? Have you re-connected with people or have you found this a challenge or a pressure?

Have you been using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date or escape from the events?

Shopping and food

What have been your experiences of buying groceries either in shops or online? Have you experienced any challenges?

Have your eating/cooking habits changed or stayed the same?

Entertainment and Leisure

We would like you to share your experiences of how you have been entertaining yourselves. Have you taken up any hobbies, learnt new skills or games, or increased your exercise? Maybe you have completed some DIY jobs?

We would also like to hear what you have been watching, listening to and/or reading.

Personal hygiene

We are interested to know whether your habits of personal hygiene have changed in recent months.

Has the regularity of your washing, shaving, personal care been any different since the period of lock-down? If so in what way and how do you feel about this?

Sleep

There have been many reports of people experiencing insomnia and nightmares in recent weeks. We would like to hear about your sleep and those of your family or people that you live with.

If you have experienced difficulties, what have you been doing to help relieve this?

Have you had any interesting dreams? Please describe.

Please post your response to: **Freepost: RTGU-AYJE-YSSC, The Mass Observation Archive, The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton, BN1 9BP (please note that the MOA team are currently working from home and unable to respond to directives sent by post)** or by email to: moa@sussex.ac.uk.

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