

# EXPERIENCES OF SEX AND GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN SCIENCE CLASSROOMS

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**SUBTHEME:** Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

## BACKGROUND

The growing LGBTQIA+ community continues to face stigma in everyday life, as well as in the university context. Further, tertiary science education involves discussions on identity and biological sex that often employ language that can marginalise transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) individuals. Despite this, there are limited prior studies that have delved into the experiences of students and educators regarding inclusive language and practices in science classrooms.

## AIMS

This study aimed to assess the comfort levels of different identity groups in the classroom, and identify inclusive and exclusionary teaching approaches.

## METHOD

The mixed-methods approach utilised an online voluntary survey of students and staff in science education at an Australian University. Reflexive thematic analysis of open responses (n=108) was conducted alongside statistical analysis of demographic and Likert-scale responses (n=109).

## RESULTS

Our findings revealed that TGNC individuals (24.8% of respondents) reported more frequently feeling unsafe or excluded by their peers and teaching staff in class, compared to gender conforming individuals. Predominant qualitative themes and narratives included (1) the persistence of cis-normativity through the use of language that conflates sex and gender; (2) the harm of cis-normative language and practices such as the lack of representation of gender diversity in curricula; and (3) the fostering of safety through inclusive language and practices in science education such as pronoun use. We will discuss recommendations for inclusive teaching practices, to help foster students' feelings of inclusion within our science classrooms.