

Session 2

Gender responsive standards

Maxime Forest
External expert and trainer (Yellow Window)

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REGULATORY COOPERATION AND STANDARDIZATION POLICIES



UNECE

Introduction – agenda and objectives



Our objectives and flight plan:

- Providing basic and workable definitions (10')
- Introducing gender bias and gender blindness (10')
- Building the case for gender-responsive standards (GRS) (25')
- Introducing the dual approach of the WP6 Guidelines (20')
- Providing additional examples of GRS initiatives (10')

Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



A few definitions:

SEX refers to the biologically determined characteristics of men and women in terms of reproductive organs and functions based on chromosomal complement and physiology. As such, sex is globally understood as the classification of living things as male or female.

GENDER refers to the social construction of women and men, of femininity and masculinity, which varies in time and place, and between cultures. As a concept, gender is thus more fluid than sex, although changes in the definition of gender roles usually take time.

Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



More definitions about gender:

GENDER EQUALITY A situation where individuals of both sexes are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations imposed by strict gender roles, and where their different experiences, behaviours, aspirations and needs are equally considered when designing policies, services or products, making decisions and allocating resources.

Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



Proxies:

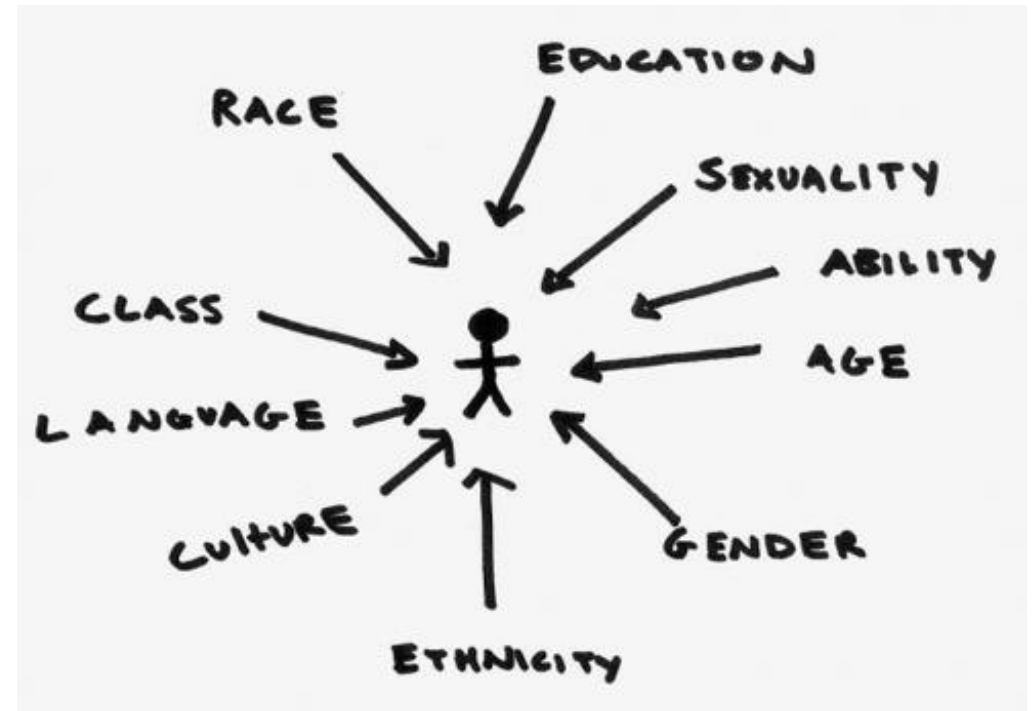
DIVERSITY The range of visible— such as age, gender and ethnicity – and invisible differences – such as cognitive abilities, educational background, religion, culture, attitudes – across members of an organization

INCLUSIVENESS While diversity is about the « what and who? », inclusiveness, literally the ability to be inclusive, is about the « how? »: in other terms, how to make organizations prone to proactively promote, acknowledge and value diversity, and to provide necessary changes?

Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



INTERSECTIONALITY Much debated in the fields of collective and policy action, intersectionality initially refers to an objective characteristic of human beings: to be a mosaic of identities and traits



Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



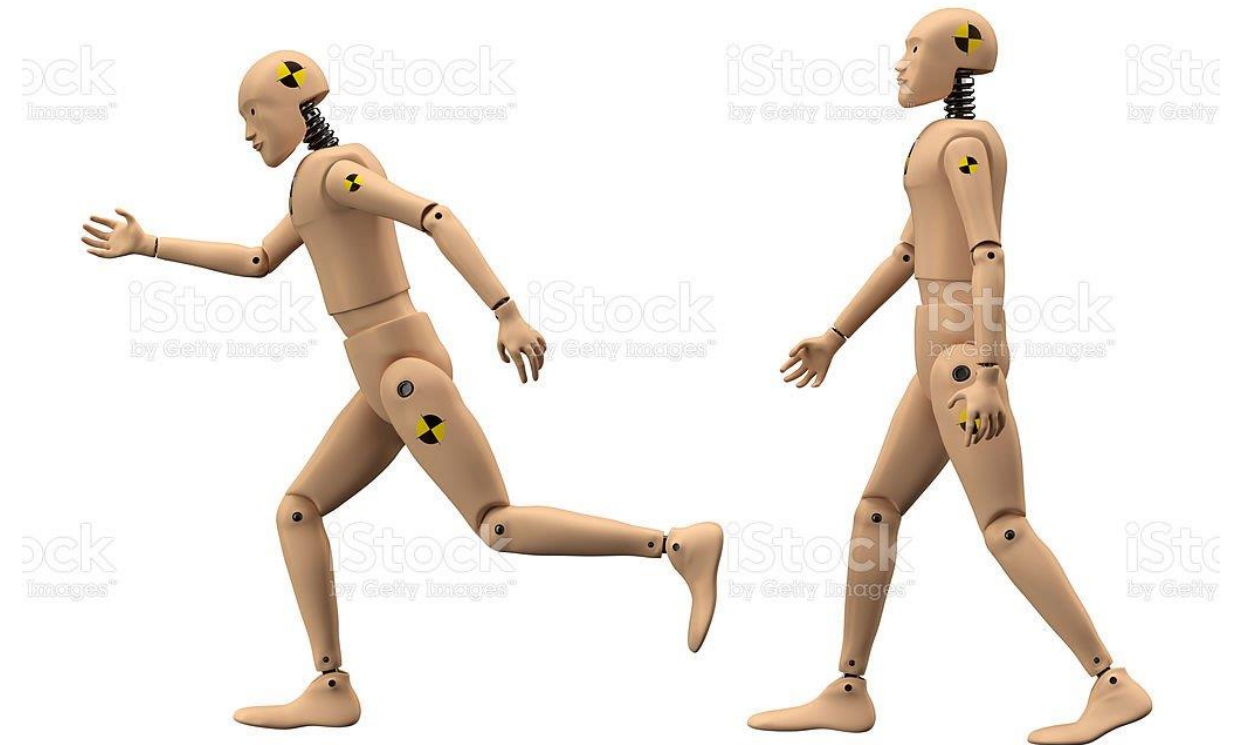
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS Occurs when we make judgements or decisions on the basis of prior experience, deep-seated thought patterns or interpretations, and we are not aware of it. Prejudice and discrimination are by-products of (efficient) human cognition!



Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



GENDER BLINDNESS Usually refers to failing to take into account potential **sex differences** and the **gendered roles** and conducts of women and men in society when designing research projects, programs or policies.



Gender bias and gender blindness: two by-products of a gendered world



Gender bias and gender blindness have long been fuelling an **andro-centric standpoint** at the time of developing policies, services, products or innovations. This standpoint has been our common metrics, leading to developing standards that fail to grasp a diversity of experiences, needs and personal characteristics.

While standardization is about finding common denominators for ensuring quality processes and outputs, androcentrism is bound to deliver solutions which are **exclusive**, rather than **inclusive**.

The case for gender-responsive standards

Women's under-representation among standards' setters

Comprehensive disaggregated data is scarce, but evidence shows that women are under-represented in standards development. In 2020, only 7% of technical committee chairs at IEC were women.

This pattern responds to the gendered horizontal segregation that prevails across occupational fields, and within each field, among technical and non-technical positions.



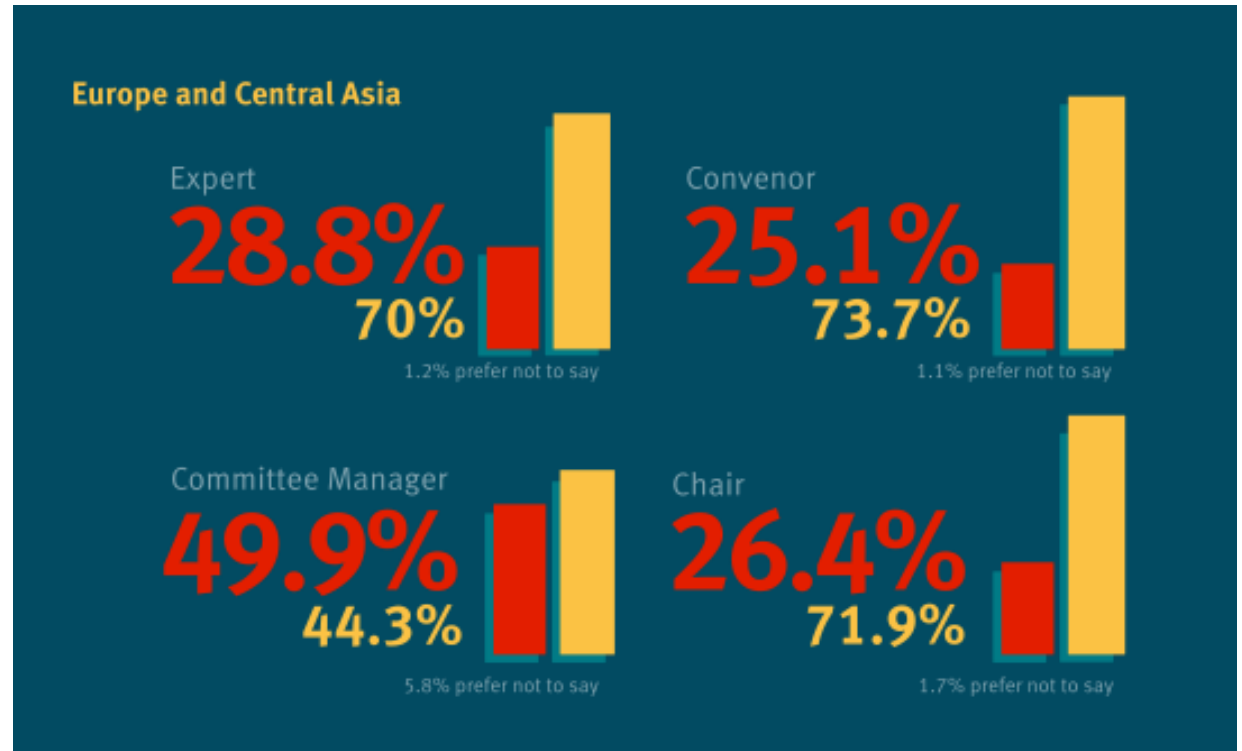
The case for gender-responsive standards



Importantly,

Data collected by ISO show a systematic pattern of women's under-representation across regions and standardization areas

There is evidence that improved gender representation is associated with more gender-responsiveness for products and services.

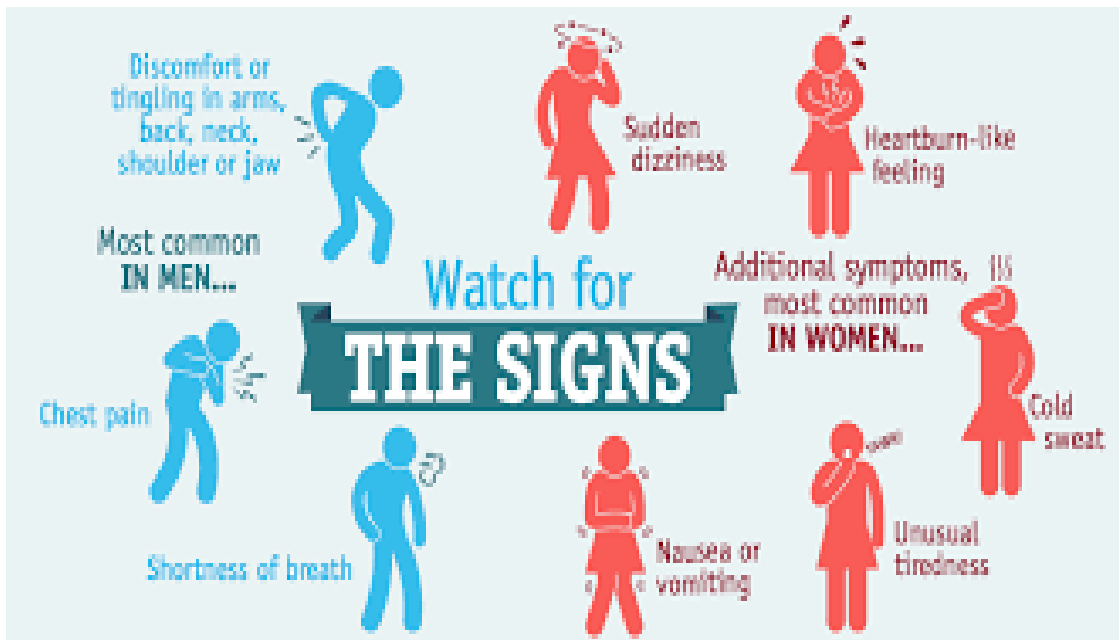


The case for gender-responsive standards



A few case studies highlighting the negative impact of gender-blind or gender-biased standard developments:

Medical research and medical protective equipment standards



The case for gender-responsive standards



Ergonomics and safety at work

The “thermal comfort model” setting the ideal temperature for AC and central heating, was developed in the 1960s, based on the needs of a 69kg white 40-year-old male.

Personal protective equipment at work is deemed to be often inadequate due to gender blind standards, leading to higher risk.



The case for gender-responsive standards



Transport and mobility

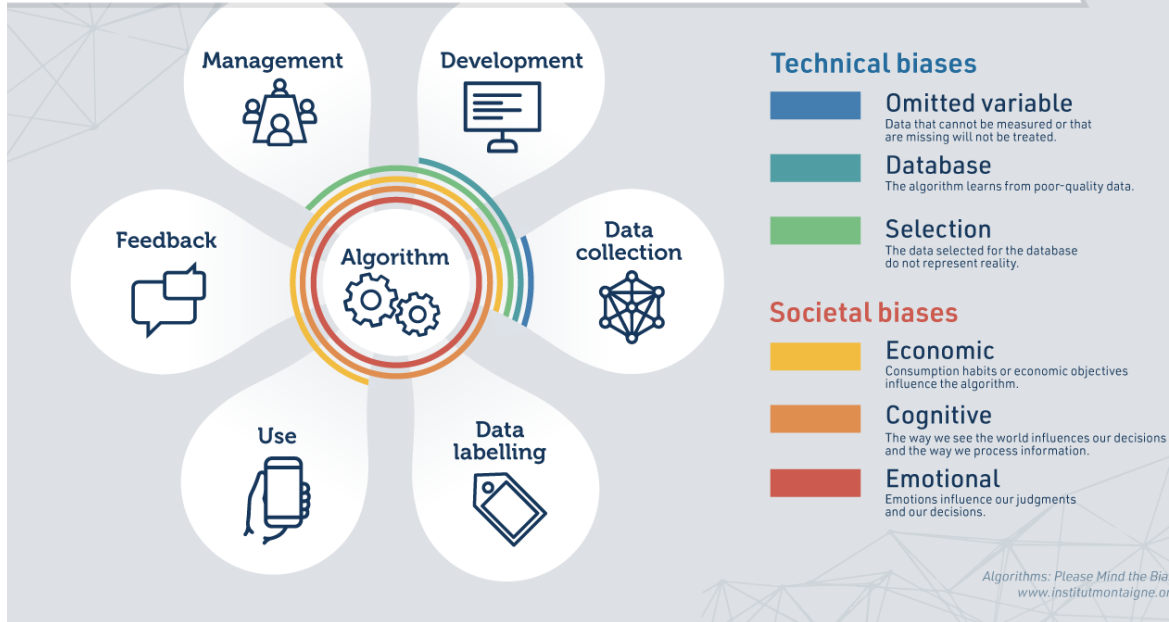


The case for gender-responsive standards



Artificial intelligence

Algorithms: at each step a risk of bias



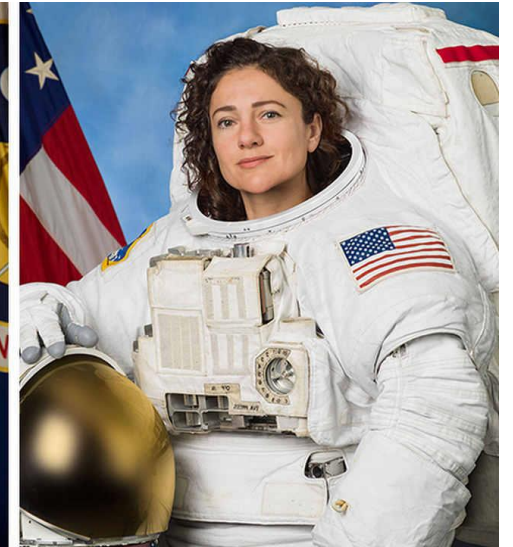
Gender Classifier	Darker Male	Darker Female	Lighter Male	Lighter Female	Largest Gap
Microsoft	94.0%	79.2%	100%	98.3%	20.8%
FACE++	99.3%	65.5%	99.2%	94.0%	33.8%
IBM	88.0%	65.3%	99.7%	92.9%	34.4%

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The case for gender-responsive standards



Space exploration



WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



Context

UNECE's **Gender Responsive Standards Initiative** (2016) aims at:

- 1) Strengthening the use of standards and technical regulations to attain SDG 5
- 2) Integrating a gender lens in the development of standards and technical regulations
- 3) Elaborating gender indicators and criteria to be used in standards development

Signed by 50 standard bodies, UNECE's **Declaration for Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development** (2019), invites standards bodies to take action. **Guidelines** developed by WP6 provide practical advice for standards developers on how they can improve the gender-responsiveness of their standards.

WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



Scope

- WHO? → Gender inclusive committees and processes
- WHAT? → Gender bias-free, inclusive standards
- HOW? → Adopting a Gender Action Plan (GAP)

WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



More gender balanced committees

The guidelines provide recommendations to achieve gender diversity in committees:

- ✓ Encourage women to join
- ✓ Ask for women and oversample them
- ✓ Seek women's inputs
- ✓ Track progress and report



WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



Inclusive committee meetings

Evidence shows that women tend to contribute less, to be interrupted more frequently and their credentials to be disputed or underrated.

Hence guidelines recommend to:

- ✓ Establish ground rules for fair and inclusive exchanges
- ✓ Monitor and ensure gender balance in speaking time
- ✓ Challenge gender stereotypes, also in the division of work
- ✓ Value individuals' input and credit contributors
- ✓ Offer alternative ways to contribute to the discussion

WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards

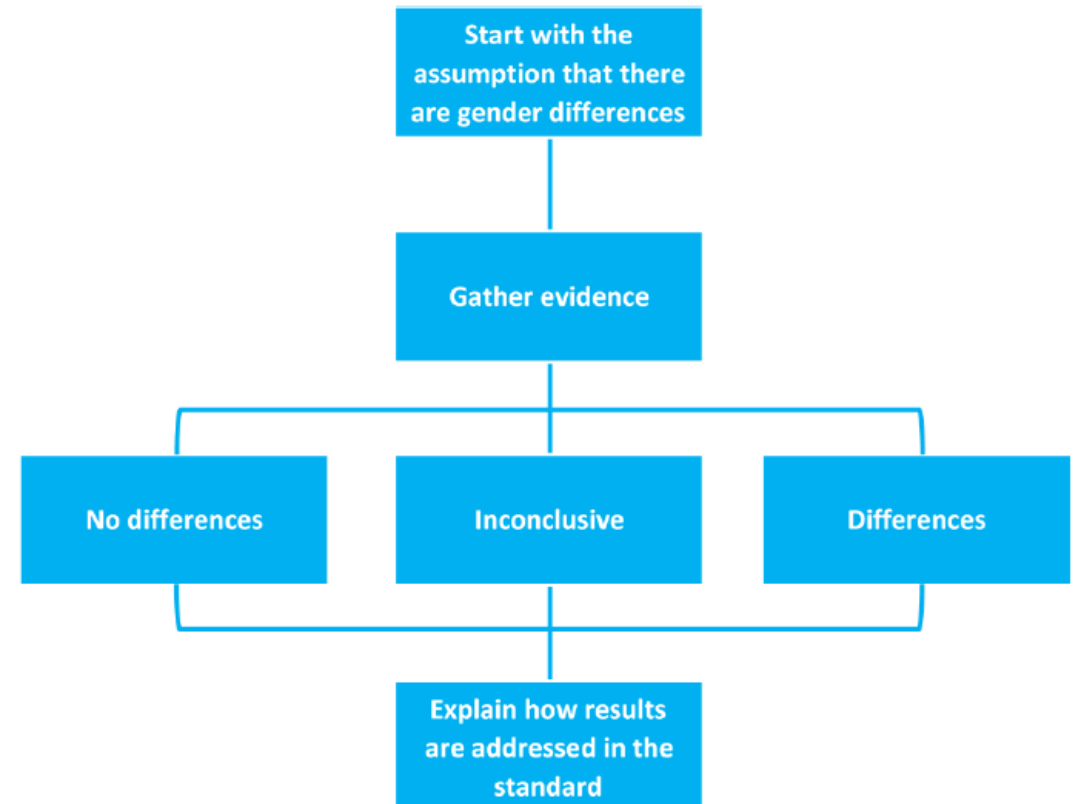


Content matters!

It is not only about inclusion: the process of designing standards can be gender blind/biased. Hence, it is recommended:

- ✓ To assume *there are* gender differences
- ✓ To gather evidence
- ✓ To take action to increase gender-responsiveness in standardization

Steps to ensure standards are gender responsive



WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



Assume there are gender differences: guiding questions

- How are individuals affected by the standard according to sex and gender?
- Is it based on specific assumptions and can those be gender biased?
- Does it anticipate and address how it might impact, or be used by, women?
- How will the product/process/service be used by either gender?
- Is the process flexible to accommodate bodily or cognitive differences?
- What is needed to ensure suitability for diverse women and men?
- Does the standard respond to different lived experiences according to gender?

WP6 Guidelines on gender-responsive standards



Gather evidence

Sex-disaggregated data enables standards developers to identify gender differences that may be attributed to physical differences and/or gender roles that need to be considered to ensure standards' effectiveness for all

Take action

How gender considerations were assessed, and what was the outcome of this assessment, should be communicated and lead to explicit actions/changes aimed at preventing an andro-centric bias to reproduce gender-blind patterns

Practices for gender-responsive standards



UNECE's Gender Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) is the leading effort in the field, for other organizations to take action:



As part of its Strategy 2030, **CEN-CENELEC** aims at developing an inclusive standardization system. Signatory of the UNECE declaration, along with 20 of its member organizations, it implements a **Gender Action Plan** and carried out a **survey** for its members to share about good practices and challenges

Practices for gender-responsive standards



Main challenges encountered by CEN-CENELEC members:

- Lack of sex disaggregated data
- Lack of awareness among the standardization community
- Complexity of creating gender-responsive standards
- Lack of women experts from various sectors
- Lack of gender-balanced representation in committees



Practices for gender-responsive standards



Also committed to UNECE's GRSI, ISO has launched its Women for standards initiative. It is backed up by a Gender Action Plan to be implemented in two phases: one for diagnosis (2019-2021), one for changes.

A comprehensive survey was carried out, showing a general lack of awareness for gender aspects in standard developments. Sex-disaggregated data and gender relevant information were compiled on [ISO website](#), complemented by infographics and an [informative video](#).

Practices for gender-responsive standards



«For committees that have not considered gender, 79 % believed it was not relevant to their sector. Respondents also noted that 50 % of committee members had not raised the topic. And in the comments received, a recurring viewpoint was that technical standards “are not a gender issue ».

Quoted from [ISO Survey on Gender Responsive Standards](#) (2019)

Takeaways



Standards touch every facet of our lives, a lack of gender-responsiveness has been shown to have health and safety implications and given the importance of standards to the economy, undoubtedly, the lack of gender-responsiveness would have implications there too. By taking action to improve representation of women in standardization and being intentional in considering gender in standards development, individuals, businesses, and countries will benefit from having standards that respond to the needs of the whole population.

WP6 Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards, 2022, p. 16

Merci ありがとうございました Hvala Ačiū
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 Tack Çox sağ ol Dziękuję Ci Obrigado
 მადლობთ תודה 감사합니다 धन्यवाद Dankon
 Natur nuhun Баярлалаа Хвала вам Dankon
 Спасибо Tak skal du have Diolch Хвала вам
 Go raibh maith agat Faleminderit Paldies
 Rahmat
 Grazi Dank je Рахмат сага Faafetai Благодаря ти
 Mulțumesc Ačiū Danke
 Grazie 谢谢 សូមអរគុណ Takk skal du ha
 Gracias Հնրիակալութիւնը Pakka þér fyrir
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 धन्यवाद Gràcies Asante
 Kiitos

Thank you

External experts: Maxime Forest and Lut Mergaert from Yellow Window (gender@yellowwindow.com)

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