



## Francis Collins

**Titles** Founder, Senior Fellow  
**Specialty** Genetics

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LGBTI, OBSERVANCES, SGM

### From the NIH Director: NIH 2021 Pride Month



June 4, 2021  
By: Dr. Francis Collins



Dear NIH Family,

*Each June, the National Institutes of Health joins the rest of the country in celebrating Pride Month and recognizing the struggles, stories, and victories of those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and others under the sexual and gender minority (SGM) umbrella. I applaud the courage and resilience it takes for individuals to live openly and authentically, particularly considering the systemic challenges, discrimination, and even violence that those and other underrepresented groups face all too often. As a White cisgender and heterosexual man, I have not had the same experiences, but I am committed to listening, respecting, and supporting those individuals as an ally and advocate. I know that developing allyship is critical as we continue to make NIH, and the world, a more inclusive place for all.*

For that reason, I am excited to share this year's Pride theme, **Allyship in Action**, which builds on the larger exploration happening within the NIH community on the vital role and responsibility of allies and how we can leverage allyship in different ways to promote inclusivity in both the workforce and in health. In my view, NIH can demonstrate leadership and have a significant and positive impact on the lives of SGM individuals by using science as a form of allyship. Health research, clinical care, and policy should be representative, inclusive, and accessible by and to all SGM people.

NIH has made significant strides in this regard over the past several years. From 2015 to 2019, our agency saw a 35.6% increase in the number of funded SGM-related projects. In 2020, NIH released the [NIH FY 2021–2025 Strategic Plan to Advance Research on the Health and Well-being of Sexual and Gender Minorities](#), an effort led by the [Sexual & Gender Minority Research Office \(SGMRO\)](#). This plan provides a roadmap for the SGMRO, and all NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices, as we seek to expand our work in SGM-related activities. Similarly, our [Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\)](#) has been coordinating education, cultural awareness programs, and other activities via a designated Principal Strategist and supportive committee to improve the work and quality of life for our SGM colleagues.

Our agency has also been working on several key initiatives to address structural racism, discrimination, and harassment within the biomedical workforce at NIH and beyond, including the [UNITE Initiative](#), [FIRST Consortium](#), and the [NIH Anti-Harassment Program](#). We know that SGM individuals, especially those of color, are at greater risk of encountering experiences of discrimination and harassment. For that reason, we are constantly striving to ensure SGM voices are welcomed and integrated across the numerous steering committees and working groups for these initiatives.

Despite noteworthy progress, one of the most prevalent issues in SGM health research and equity is the lack of adequate inclusion and collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data. To address this need, I am proud to announce that NIH recently funded a [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine consensus study](#) to review current measures and methodological issues related to measuring sex as a non-binary construct, gender identity, and sexual orientation in surveys and research studies, in administrative settings (such as grant and job applications), and in clinical settings (such as doctors' offices or clinical trials). This consensus study will culminate in a report that will provide recommendations for measures and guidelines for collecting these data to better inform policy and programmatic efforts and, in turn, yield better outcomes for SGM individuals. The study was broadly supported across several Institutes and Offices, including EDI, SGMRO, Scientific Workforce Diversity, the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, and 15 others.

Here at NIH, we remain deeply committed to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in our research and our workplace. One of the best ways we can reaffirm our commitment to these principles is by exemplifying our allyship for SGM people through inclusive science. We must continue to put Allyship into Action by ensuring SGM individuals are heard, seen, respected, included, and valued in research and within the biomedical workforce. I hope that you join me this Pride Month in exemplifying allyship and celebrating the broad diversity of SGM communities.

For more information about Pride month and other EDI 365 events at NIH, please visit the [EDI Pride 2021 website](#) and follow EDI on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

*Sincerely,*

*Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.*

*Director, NIH*

Do you have a story idea for us? Do you want to submit a guest blog? If it's about equity, diversity, or inclusion, please submit to [edi.stories@nih.gov](mailto:edi.stories@nih.gov).

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