



Interagency Technical Working Group on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Items in the Household Pulse Survey: *Report and Recommendations*

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Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Items in the Household Pulse Survey: Report and Recommendations

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Household Pulse Survey (HPS), conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, is designed to provide researchers and decision-makers with timely, relevant, and accurate information on the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the American public. Survey content on the HPS is provided by several different agency partners to reflect priority information needs across government.

Sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations have differential health and mental health access to care and outcomes (e.g. Ivey-Stephenson et al, 2019 and Heslin and Hall, 2021). They also have differential economic and educational experiences. As such, they are an important demographic group to measure in the HPS to monitor the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on them; however, the HPS does not currently have SGM items.

While some federal surveys already collect data by SGM, different agencies may ask about SGM status in different ways. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) convened an interagency technical working group (ITWG) to provide a consensus recommendation to OMB and Census on how to measure sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) on the HPS, taking into consideration relevant features and analytic goals of the HPS. OMB also charged the ITWG with designing a plan for monitoring, testing, and revising any SOGI questions added to the HPS.

OMB's Statistical and Science Policy Office (SSP) chaired the ITWG with membership composed of Federal employees from Census HPS partner agencies and selected on the basis of their subject matter expertise.

This report provides recommendations to guide Census and OMB. The Census Bureau is responsible for pre-testing, refining, and deploying any SOGI items in a manner that supports the overall success and analytic needs of the HPS. Census agrees to include this report with their Phase 4 HPS (July through October 2021) Information Collection Request (ICR) to OMB for review and approval.

OMB may reconvene the ITWG to assist in evaluation of the performance of the questions once tested by Census and to evaluate the need for revisions or additional research.

Census's Household Pulse Survey

The [HPS](#) is an online survey intended to measure how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted households across the country from a social and economic perspective. The HPS includes questions from partner agencies about how education, employment, food security, health, housing, social security benefits, household spending, consumer spending associated with stimulus payments, intention to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, and transportation have been affected by the ongoing crisis.

The HPS is designed to provide useful and expeditious information to support the nation's recovery, focusing specifically on identifying how the pandemic has affected people's lives and livelihoods. Therefore, the HPS is designed to have low respondent burden, quick turnaround on product releases, and provide experimental data estimates. Data from this survey show the widespread effects of the coronavirus pandemic on individuals, families, and communities across the country.

Respondents are encouraged to participate in the HPS to provide information that will help federal and state officials to direct aid, assistance, and support to the people and places that need it most. Respondents are also reminded that the HPS provides information that cannot be collected elsewhere.

Below are some important points about the HPS methodology. Any items proposed for inclusion in the HPS should match the fitness of use for the HPS, meaning quick turnaround, experimental data estimates that meet urgent needs for information to inform policies and the public.

- Questions will be asked only of respondents (i.e., no proxy response).
- Questions will only be asked of those aged 18 years and over.
- This is a self-response, online survey (no interviewer-administered option).
- While Spanish language responses are a small percentage of completed cases, a viable Spanish translation is still needed for all items.
- The HPS has a very tight turnaround time for data processing. This means that Census only produces counts for the number of responses in any open-ended items on the survey.
- The sample size within cells along with Census Bureau dissemination policies determine the granularity of published results.
- There is limited time for Census to cognitively test any revisions to baseline SOGI questions. However, there may be time and resources for Census to conduct cognitive testing of proposed survey items during fielding of the HPS. There may also be opportunities in the future to explore split-sample tests to examine survey item wording differences.

These considerations informed the following principles that the ITWG established:

- SOGI questions on the Household Pulse Survey provide another demographic variable for use in looking at various indicators on the survey (e.g., vaccine hesitancy, food insecurity, physical and mental wellbeing) to better understand the impact of federal programs and improve equitable deployment.
- The SOGI items should **not** be used for prevalence estimates of sexual or gender minority populations.

ITWG Deliverables

This report contains a draft module for classifying the sexual orientation and gender identity of HPS respondents (SOGI module). It also includes a draft testing strategy for consideration.

2. EXISTING RESEARCH ON SURVEY ITEMS

The ITWG reviewed the existing literature as well as discussed results from SOGI cognitive testing and/or data collections with survey researchers. Below are brief highlights of research findings and an expanded list can be found in Appendix C.

- In general, respondents don't have difficulty providing responses for SOGI items, meaning there is low item nonresponse, especially compared to other sensitive data items. Item nonresponse varies, though, by demographic group, with older, women, non-Hispanic African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics, and those with less education having higher rates.
- Also, the addition of SOGI items does not lead to survey breakoffs.
- Terms used in the most commonly fielded questions on sexual identity do not exhaustively describe respondents' identities, primarily for youth or young adults.

- Write-in responses to “something else” provide mixed results.
- Research to date has illustrated the difficulty in translating SOGI terms in a way that conveys the intended meaning in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way as well as a lack of terminology that conveys concepts in some languages.
- Two-step questions (i.e., ask sex assigned at birth followed by current gender identity) are recommended by many researchers.
- Some studies use a third gender identity question, which if responses to the previous two gender questions are inconsistent, respondents are asked to confirm both of their previous gender identity answers.
- Most respondents have no difficulty responding to the sex assigned at birth and gender questions. However, they do not work well for all transgender individuals as some gender minority groups do not see transgender as an identity distinct from male or female; others prefer genderqueer or another term to female or male.
- Spanish Translation remains a challenge for the SOGI items.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Proposed Module

Below are the recommended SOGI items for use in the HPS, given the ITWG’s deliberations. More details about what was discussed and justification for the item wording can be found in Appendix A (QxQ - Sexual Orientation Items) and Appendix B (QxQ - Gender Identity Items).

The SOGI questions should be placed at the end of the beginning demographic questions, with the gender identity series appearing together (i.e., not split up) for appropriate context. These items are based on the NHIS and NCVS surveys. Recommendations for changes to current HPS questions (including those that are related to the SOGI questions) are outside of the scope of this working group.

Accordingly, HPS decision-makers and their OMB desk officer should reach consensus on whether the items recommended in this document should replace or alter existing questions.

The Spanish versions of the questions should undergo expert review to determine if any changes are needed prior to implementation; however, if meaningful changes are made, testing should be employed (if none already exists). Expert reviewers should draw upon existing research and evaluation of translation of these items, such as the Census Barriers, Attitudes, and Motivators (CBAMS) survey questionnaire, to inform their expert review.¹

Sexual Orientation – English

Based on 2014 NHIS question series. Q1. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

- 1 Gay or lesbian
- 2 Straight, that is not gay or lesbian
- 3 Bisexual
- 4 Something else

¹ The CBAMS questionnaire is available at: https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/program-management/2020_cbams_questionnaire_final.pdf

5 I don't know

Sexual Orientation – Spanish

Based on 2014 NHIS question series. Q1. ¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo?

- 1 Gay o lesbiana
- 2 Heterosexual, o sea, no gay o lesbiana
- 3 Bisexual
- 4 Otra cosa
- 5 No sé

Gender Identity – English

Based on the 2016 NCVS. Q1. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

Q2. Do you currently describe yourself as male, female or transgender?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Transgender
- 4 None of these

Q3. Just to confirm, you were assigned {FILL} at birth and now you describe yourself as {FILL}. Is that correct?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct>

Gender Identity – Spanish

Based on the 2016 NCVS. Q1. ¿Qué sexo le asignaron al nacer, en su acta de nacimiento original?

- 1 Hombre
- 2 Mujer

Q2. ¿Actualmente se describe a sí mismo(a) como hombre, mujer o transgénero?

- 1 Hombre
- 2 Mujer
- 3 Transgénero
- 4 Ninguna de las anteriores

Q3. Solo para confirmar, le asignaron el sexo {FILL} al nacer y ahora se describe como {FILL}. ¿Es esto correcto?

- 1 Sí
- 2 No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct>

b. Recommendations for Reporting SOGI Information

The ITWG also discussed how Census might report SOGI information in their data releases. These recommendations are as follows:

Gender Reporting Categories

The ITWG recommends reporting out four gender categories for "gender" based on the following response logic. There is not enough evidence at this time to inform classifying "none of these" into the "gender minority" category.

1. Male – would be determined by Q1 male AND Q2 male
2. Female – would be determined by Q1 female AND Q2 female
3. Gender minority would be any of these combinations:
 - a. Q1 female and Q2 male
 - b. Q1 male and Q2 female
 - c. Q2 transgender
4. None of these

Sexual Orientation Reporting Categories

Evaluation of NHIS data has found that people who use "don't know" are qualitatively different than those that use "something else" for "sexual orientation." Therefore, it is recommended that these categories be reported out separately.

1. Gay or lesbian
2. Straight
3. Bisexual
4. Something else
5. Don't know

c. Recommended Testing

The first topic the ITWG discussed was whether a test, such as a split-sample test, was needed to determine whether inclusion of SOGI items in the HPS would lower response rates or increase item nonresponse rates, versus a survey without these items included. Given that research has found low item nonresponse rates to SOGI items and no impact on survey break-off rates, the ITWG believes that such a test is not needed prior to implementing SOGI items in the HPS.

The ITWG recommends that Census consider conducting the following research on the recommended module, as permitted by time and resources:

- Explore changes to the response categories for the sexual orientation question including using "none of these describe me" as a replacement for the "something else" response as well as considering additional prospective categories, such as "asexual."
- Explore more about respondents who answer "something else" or "I don't know" on the sexual orientation question.

- The current gender identity items fit the purpose and use of the HPS, but other researchers should examine how the gender identity items could better reflect contemporary self-labeling of gender. This includes research to incorporate the addition of “intersex” or “X” in the question text on birth certificates, the use of “man” or “woman” as response categories for gender identity, and possibly using a “check all that apply” response option for gender.

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5. Appendix A: QxQ – Sexual Orientation

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/ Refused
Sexual Orientation						
<p>Q1. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lesbian or Gay or lesbian 2. Straight, that is not gay or lesbian 3. Bisexual 4. Something else 5. I don't know 	Item is not intended as a prevalence estimate for SGM. It is intended to help policy makers use the HPS to determine inequities for SGM during the coronavirus pandemic.	2014 NHIS	<p>NHIS: https://wwwn.cdc.gov/qbank/report/Miller_NCHS_2011_NHIS%20Sexual%20Identity.pdf²</p> <p>NCVS SOGI: https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html³</p>	No change. The team discussed having follow-up questions for 4s and 5s, much like NCHS surveys, however, this isn't well-suited or aligned with the specific interests of the HPS, as this is a much more burdensome construction.	<p>Recommendation is no change, meaning to keep "something else" as used in the NHIS, unless there can be testing at some point of possibly changing this to "none of these describe me".</p> <p>The NHIS uses "Lesbian or gay" as opposed to "gay or lesbian". While the order hasn't been explicitly tested, 'gay' could come first since it's a more widely known term than 'lesbian'. Also gay may be a broader category.</p>	Response 5 was shortened to "I don't know" from " I don't know the answer. " The phrase "the answer" implies there is a right or wrong answer to the question and is simpler language.
Q1. ¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor	See above	2014 NHIS Spanish	NHIS: https://wwwn.cdc.gov/qbank/report/Miller_NCHS_2011_NHIS%20Sexual%20Identity.pdf	See English version.		

² Miller, K., and Ryan, J.M. 2011. Design, Development and Testing of the NHIS Sexual Identity Question, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at https://wwwn.cdc.gov/qbank/report/Miller_NCHS_2011_NHIS%20Sexual%20Identity.pdf

³ Martinez, M., A. Henderson, J. Luck, and M.C. Davis. 2017. Cognitive Pretesting of the National Crime Victimization Survey Supplemental Victimization Survey. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Survey Measurement. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html>

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/Refused
representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo? 1. Gay 2. Heterosexual, o sea, no gay 3. Bisexual 4. Otra cosa 5. No sé		language questionnaire, with same updates as made to the English version.	gov/qbank/report/Miller_NCHS_2011_NHIS%20Sexual%20Identity.pdf ⁴ NCVS SOGI: None Center for Medicare and Medicaid Studies: https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168 ⁵			

NOTES: SGM = Sexual and Gender Minorities

⁴ Miller, K., and Ryan, J.M. 2011. Design, Development and Testing of the NHIS Sexual Identity Question, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/qbank/report/Miller_NCHS_2011_NHIS%20Sexual%20Identity.pdf

⁵ Micheals, S., Milesi, C., Stern, M., Viox, M.H., Morrison, H., Guerino, PI, Dragon, C.N., and Haffer, S.C. 2017. Improving measures of sexual and gender identity in english and spanish to identify lgbt older adults in surveys. LGBT Health, 4(6), 412-418. Available at <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168>.

6. Appendix B: QxQ – Gender Identity

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/ Refused
Gender Identity						
<p>Q1. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?</p> <p>1. Male</p> <p>2. Female</p>	Item is not intended as a prevalence estimate for SGM. It is intended to help policy makers use the HPS to determine inequities for SGM during the coronavirus pandemic.	2016 NCVS	NCVS SOGI: https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html ⁶	No change. Prior testing found specifying the “ original birth certificate ” (as opposed to “biological sex assigned at birth”) was needed to ensure the respondent understood what information was requested. Use of “ Intersex ” may not be widely understood and research would be needed to determine if it can be appropriately be included as a response option, which is beyond the scope of the current endeavor. Also HPS survey respondents are aged 18 and over. It is highly unlikely that any of these individuals would have had “intersex” reported as a category on their <i>original birth certificate</i> .	No change, but could explore using “ man ”, “ woman ” if testing can be done at some point.	Deleted “don’t know” and “refused” as respondents can skip any questions they don’t want to answer in the HPS. [“Refused” is not a response option in the HPS.]

⁶ Martinez, M., A. Henderson, J. Luck, and M.C. Davis. 2017. Cognitive Pretesting of the National Crime Victimization Survey Supplemental Victimization Survey. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Survey Measurement. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html>

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/ Refused
Q2. Do you current describe yourself as male, female or transgender? 1. Male 2. Female 3. Transgender 4. None of these	For those respondents that show an inconsistency between Q1 and Q2, they would also be labeled as “transgender”.	2016 NCVS	NCVS SOGI: https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html ⁷	No change. Prior testing and evaluation suggests use of the term “gender identity” may not be widely understood. This may be further complicated if attempting to translate the term into Spanish.	No change. The Group discussed “check all that apply” and believed it may introduce non-SGM-minority response error and the analytic granularity is not needed for the HPS. Testing would be needed to evaluate this and is out of scope for this application.	“Don’t know” is not in the baseline NCVS version. Future testing can compare different types of “don’t know”s included (see Williams Institute Recommendations).
Q3. Just to confirm, you were assigned {FILL} at birth and now you describe yourself as {FILL}. Is that correct? 1. Yes 2. No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct>	This is confirmation that the respondent did not make a keystroke error in Q1 or Q2.	2016 NCVS	NCVS SOGI: https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html ⁸	In a recent NCVS, 10% of the 152 respondents who received Q3 indicated a response was not correct, 5% indicated they were confused, and 2% indicated they did not know the answer. Therefore, the ITWG believe this question is needed.	No change.	N/A
Q1. ¿Qué sexo le asignaron al nacer, en su acta de	See English revisions	2016 NCVS	NCVS: None	See English version.		

⁷ Martinez, M., A. Henderson, J. Luck, and M.C. Davis. 2017. Cognitive Pretesting of the National Crime Victimization Survey Supplemental Victimization Survey. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Survey Measurement. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html>

⁸ Martinez, M., A. Henderson, J. Luck, and M.C. Davis. 2017. Cognitive Pretesting of the National Crime Victimization Survey Supplemental Victimization Survey. Suitland, MD: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Survey Measurement. Available at: <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/adrm/rsm2017-03.html>

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/ Refused
nacimiento original? 1. Hombre 2. Mujer			Center for Medicare and Medicaid Studies: https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168 ⁹			
Q2. ¿Actualmente se describe a sí mismo(a) como hombre, mujer o transgénero? 1. Hombre 2. Mujer 3. Transgénero 4. Ninguna de las anteriores	See English revisions	2016 NCVS	NCVS: None Center for Medicaid Studies: https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168 ¹⁰	See English version.		
Q3. Solo para confirmar, le asignaron el sexo {FILL} al nacer y	See English revisions	2016 NCVS	NCVS: None Center for Medicaid	See English version.		

⁹ Micheals, S., Milesi, C., Stern, M., Viox, M.H., Morrison, H., Guerino, PI, Dragon, C.N., and Haffer, S.C. 2017. Improving measures of sexual and gender identity in english and spanish to identify lgbt older adults in surveys. LGBT Health, 4(6), 412-418. Available at <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168>

¹⁰ Micheals, S., Milesi, C., Stern, M., Viox, M.H., Morrison, H., Guerino, PI, Dragon, C.N., and Haffer, S.C. 2017. Improving measures of sexual and gender identity in english and spanish to identify lgbt older adults in surveys. LGBT Health, 4(6), 412-418. Available at <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168>

Proposed item	Purpose of item	Baseline item from what survey?	Cognitively Tested?	Question Text	Response Categories	Don't Know/ Refused
<p>ahora se describe como {FILL}. ¿Es esto correcto?</p> <p>1. Sí</p> <p>2. No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct></p>			<p>Studies:</p> <p>https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168¹¹</p>			

NOTES: SGM = Sexual and Gender Minorities

¹¹ Micheals, S., Milesi, C., Stern, M., Viox, M.H., Morrison, H., Guerino, P., Dragon, C.N., and Haffer, S.C. 2017. Improving measures of sexual and gender identity in english and spanish to identify lgbt older adults in surveys. *LGBT Health*, 4(6), 412-418. Available at <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/lgbt.2016.0168>

7. Appendix C: SOGI Measurement – Previous Experimental Results

The ITWG carried out a targeted review of literature and consulted with experts from the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, National Center for Health Statistics, National Institutes Health, National Center for Education Statistics, Health Resources and Services Administration, and Williams Institute to document what we know about field SOGI questions. Below are additional resources the ITWG used during discussions:

Federal Resources

- NHIS SOGI items: [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [NHIS Questionnaires](#)
- [2016 NCVS Questionnaire](#) (for SO + GI) – English
- [“All of Us” NIH SOGI items](#)

Non-Federal Resources

- [Best Practices for Asking Questions to Identify Transgender and Other Gender Minority Respondents on Population-Based Surveys \(GenIUSS\)](#) – 2014
- Williams Institute [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity \(SOGI\) Adult Measures Recommendations FAQs](#) – March 2020
- CHIS Questionnaires (translated): [Design & Methods | UCLA Center for Health Policy Research](#)
- CHIS Spanish Questionnaire (Web): [CHIS 2021 Spanish CAWI v1.02 19MARCH2021 Adult Questionnaire.pdf \(ucla.edu\)](#)
- CHIS English Questionnaire (Web): [CHIS 2021 CAWI v1.25 05APRIL2021 Adult Questionnaire.pdf \(ucla.edu\)](#)
- CHIS report: [CHIS 2019 SOGI Work Group Summary and Recommendations 20180629.pdf \(ucla.edu\)](#)

What have we learned about item non-response relative to Sexual Orientation (SO) questions from research and evaluation?

- The majority of respondents appear to have **no difficulty answering** sexual identity items (Case et al., 2006; Coffman et al., 2013; Dahlhamer et al., 2014; Fisher et al., 2001; Joloza et al., 2010; Mohr and Kendra, 2011; Saewyc et al., 2004).
- Overall, **item nonresponse appears to be relatively low** across all studies that have examined sexual identity, varying from less than 1% to just over 6% (Bates et al. 2019; Case et al., 2006; Christopher and Burns, 2021; Dahlhamer et al., 2014; Grant and Jans, n.d.; Ridolfo et al., 2012; Truman et al., 2019; VanKim et al., 2010).
- Item nonresponse may also vary over time. Cross-sectional data from the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) showed that **sexual minority self-identification increased over time as item nonresponse declined** (Jans et al., 2015).
- Research has found that **nonresponse to sexual identity questions tends to increase with age** (Gruskin et al., 2001). The NHIS found that there were significantly more adults ages 65 and older

<p>in the shortest and longest response time groups (based on quintiles), suggesting possible comprehension problems often associated with item nonresponse (Dahlhamer et al., 2014).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item nonresponse has been found to be higher for women compared to men (Grant and Jans, n.d.; Gruskin et al., 2001). In some cases, it is particularly high for women who speak a language other than English (Grant and Jans, n.d.) In contrast, Saewyc et al., (2004) found that male adolescents and young adults had higher nonresponse than female adolescents and young adults in a survey of students ages 12 to 20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, non-Hispanic African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics had higher nonresponse rates than non-Hispanic whites (Grant and Jans, n.d.; Gruskin et al., 2001; Jans et al., 2015; Kim and Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2013; Saewyc et al., 2004).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons with less education (less than a high school degree or no college education) were less likely than those with at least some college education to respond to sexual identity questions (Dahlhamer et al., 2014; Gruskin et al., 2001).
<p>What have we learned about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) questions from research and evaluation?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item nonresponse rates to SOGI items are generally lower than for other survey items.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truman et al. (2019) found that 2.77% of National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) respondents refused to answer the sexual orientation question and less than 1% refused to answer the gender identity question, In contrast, about 25% of the respondents refused to answer the income question.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakoffs on the NCVS at the SOGI questions were also low – 0.24% happened at the sexual orientation question; 0.10% happened at the sex at birth question; 0.04% happened at the current gender identity question; and no respondents broke off at the gender confirmation question (Truman et al. 2019). For contrast, about 13% of breakoffs occurred when respondents were asked if their house was rented or owned.
<p>What have we learned about additional sexual identities relative to Sexual Orientation (SO) questions from research and evaluation?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms used in the most commonly fielded questions on sexual identity do not exhaustively describe respondents’ identities, primarily for youth or young adults who might be more likely to identify with sexual identities other than “gay,” “lesbian,” “straight,” or “bisexual.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In several studies for both youth (Temkin et al. 2017; Steiger et al. 2017; Russell, Clarke and Cary 2009) and adults (Bulgar-Median 2017; Meyer et al. 2019), suggestions of additional sexual identities such as “pansexual,” “demisexual,” “asexual” and “aromantic,” “queer,” “questioning,” “same-gender loving” were provided or chosen when available on the instrument.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write-in responses to “something else” provide mixed results – some identify a Sexual Orientation category, while others use it as a place to voice an objection or misunderstanding of the question.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research from the Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Study (CBAMS) survey found that of the over 200 non-blank write-ins, 16 percent represented other sexual minority labels (e.g., queer, pansexual, or asexual); the majority were write-ins expressing objections to or misunderstanding of the question, entering answers such as “All male” or “Normal” (Bates et al. 2019).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some sexual minority groups, especially teens, do not like using labels for their sexual orientation. Eliason and Streed (2017) found that persons who reported their sexual identity as “something

else” subsequently responded that they “haven’t figured out their sexuality,” “don’t use labels,” or “are not straight but use another label.” Similarly, Eliason et al. (2016) reported that persons identifying as “something else” responded that they were “not straight, but identify with another label such as queer, trisexual, omnisexual, or pansexual.”

- Research suggests the response of “something else” was typically selected by English-speaking respondents when they did not want to disclose their identity or when the existing categories did not reflect their identity. Spanish-speaking respondents seemed to select “something else” due to confusion about the terminology. (Truman et al. 2019).
- Findings for cisgender adults (Klein et al. 1985; Diamond 2003) and teens (Russell, Clarke and Clary 2009; Galupo, Henise, and Mercer 2016) show that **sexual orientation is best characterized as a spectrum or continuum that can change over time, but the terminology typically used does not treat it as such.**

What have we learned about fielding Gender Identity (GI) questions from research and evaluation?

- **Two-step questions (i.e., ask sex at birth followed by current gender identity) are recommended** by the Gender Identity in the U.S. Surveillance (GenIUSS) Group, the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (CoE), and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH; Deutsch et al., 2013). Furthermore, **a third (“confirmation”) item** is needed so that respondents may verify their answers to the two items and be given a chance to revise them if something was incorrect. In a recent NCVS, 10% of the 152 respondents who received Q3 indicated a response was not correct, 5% indicated they were confused, and 2% indicated they did not know the answer.
- Single-item measures compel respondents who identify as both “male” or “female” and “transgender” to decide between both identities. Respondents who do not identify as transgender, but whose gender identities are incongruent with their natal sex will not be included in the estimate of the transgender population (resulting in an undercount).
- **Most respondents have no difficulty responding** to the sex at birth and gender questions, though some cisgender respondents found the questions redundant (Cahill et al. 2014; Glaze 2015; Lombardi and Banik 2016; Reisner et al. 2014).

Current survey measures and terminology for Gender Identity (GI) do not work well for all transgender individuals.

- Some gender minority groups do not see “transgender” as an identity distinct from “male” or “female;” others prefer “genderqueer” to “female” or “male.” Some respondents want to be able to mark “all that apply” when asked “Are you male, female or transgender” and suggested adding responses such as “gender non-binary,” “trans-man,” “trans-woman,” and “something else” (Ellis et al. 2018).
- Members of the transgender population indicated that they would use “transgender” as an umbrella term to describe members of a diverse community, even if it was not personally their first choice of self-identification (Holzberg et al. 2017). These respondents self-identified in many ways, including “man, woman, transgender, queer, gender-fluid, non-binary, and genderqueer.” Some indicated that their self-identification had changed over time or that it might change in the future, a process one respondent described as “fine tuning” their own self-description. Finally, some respondents explicitly said that they thought it would be difficult for researchers to create questions with adequate response options, given the diversity of terms used and debate within the transgender community about terminology.

Translation challenges associated with the Sexual Orientation (SO) and Gender Identity (GI) questions.

- Research to date has illustrated the **difficulty translating SOGI terms in a way that conveys the intended meaning in a culturally appropriate way as well as a lack of terminology that conveys concepts in some languages**. As an example, research has found there is no comparable word for “straight” in Spanish (Miller and Ryan 2011) and evidence of comprehension problems among Spanish-speaking respondents (Michaels et al. 2016a, Michaels et al. 2016b). Research has also shown that nonresponse rates to SOGI questions are higher among respondents to surveys conducted in Spanish and other languages (Jans et al. 2015, Miller and Ryan 2011, Ridolfo et al. 2012).
- **Translation remains a challenge for the gender identity items**. Studies show that English-speaking respondents have no problems comprehending the items, although a few conflated sexual identity and gender identity. A majority of Spanish-speaking participants conflated sexual identity and gender identity, and some expressed discomfort in being asked about their gender identity. In addition, a number of Spanish-speaking cisgender participants expressed that their gender identity was “normal” or “non-deviant.” Ultimately, both English and Spanish speakers were able to respond to the questions in a manner consistent with screener questions, indicating that the conflation of concepts did not necessarily result in measurement issues for this study (Stern et al. 2016).