

Crosswalk: Proposed ACS SOGI Wording Compared to OMB Best Practices

The questions crosswalked here are proposed for the ACS SOGI Field Test in 2024. We anticipate further testing of SOGI as part of the 2027 Content Test.

Gender identity

We propose to use a two-step gender identity question, comprised of sex assigned at birth and current gender. Questions appear together in the basic person section of the ACS. Respondents who select different responses to these two questions will be asked a verification question to reduce measurement error from accidental selections, as described in the OMB Best Practices document.

	ACS Proposal	OMB Suggestion (Best Practices Document) ^{1, 2}	Differences	Justification
Sex assigned at birth	Treatments 1 and 2 What sex was Person 2 assigned at birth? <i>Mark (X) one box.</i> <div><input type="radio"/> Male</div> <div><input type="radio"/> Female</div>	What sex was Person 2 assigned at birth, on their original birth certificate? <div><input type="radio"/> Female</div> <div><input type="radio"/> Male</div>	<div><input type="radio"/> ACS proposal removes the phrase “on your original birth certificate”</div> <div><input type="radio"/> Order of male and female categories</div>	<div><input type="radio"/> The Census Bureau tested wording without the birth certificate phrase for the CPS (“was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?”) and it performed well. Versions of this question without the birth certificate language have been fielded in the NIH All of Us panel, National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System (NHIVBS), and the National Adult Tobacco Survey (NATS). Furthermore, this proposal may make it easier for two groups of respondents to answer more easily. Removing the reference is more culturally sensitive to non-English speakers, some of whom may not have a birth certificate or may not have seen theirs. In recent years, many people who have a designation of X on their birth certificate were assigned male or female at birth before their parents chose to use X instead. Removing the birth certificate reference may help parents of those children answer this question. We do not propose split ballot testing versions of this question with and without the birth certificate language because it would not be possible to detect significant differences in the distribution of results. Instead, results from cognitive testing will provide more information about whether</div>

¹ [Recommendations on the Best Practices for the Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data on Federal Statistical Surveys \(whitehouse.gov\).](#)

² Wording has been changed slightly to demonstrate proxy wording.

				<p>the birth certificate phrasing is needed. If needed, the birth certificate language will be added into the question after the field test (but prior to implementation in ACS production).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o We propose keeping the original order of the male and female categories to address a serious concern about how an inconsistency in the order of male/female categories across Census Bureau surveys could lead to field interviewers accidentally keying the wrong sex at birth. Keeping the male/female order also minimizes the number of changes being tested at once.
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	ACS Proposal	OMB Suggestion (Best Practices Document)	Differences	Justification
Current gender	<p>Treatment 1 What is Person 2's current gender? <i>Skip this question if this person is less than 15 years old. Mark (X) one box.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Transgender <input type="radio"/> Nonbinary <input type="radio"/> This person uses a different term [free-text] <p>Treatment 2 What is Person 2's current gender? <i>Skip this question if this person is less than 15 years old. Mark (X) one or more boxes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Transgender <input type="radio"/> Nonbinary <input type="radio"/> This person uses a different term [free-text] 	<p>How does Person 2 currently describe themselves (mark all that apply)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Transgender <input type="radio"/> I use a different term [free-text] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Question stem differs <input type="radio"/> OMB version uses mark all that apply- ACS Treatment 1 does not <input type="radio"/> ACS proposal adds “nonbinary” category <input type="radio"/> Order of male and female categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> We propose to use the question stem that aligns with the NASEM report recommendations. It refers to the subject of the question in the stem so that respondents are not left to reason what the question is asking based solely on the response options. The wording is also more concise in the proxy version of the question. <input type="radio"/> While suggested as an OMB practice, most federal surveys do not currently use mark all that apply for this question.³ The CHIS decided not to implement mark all that apply in part due to concerns about “the potential for increases in gender minority reporting from those who do not primarily identify as non-cisgender.” Given the lack of consensus, we propose to test a treatment that does not use mark all that apply (Treatment 1). Results can be compared to Treatment 2 to further research in this area. <input type="radio"/> We propose to add “nonbinary” as a response option. Estimates suggest that over one million American adults use this term to describe themselves. In previous research (e.g., CPS pretesting), respondents have commented that this category should be added and that not every person who is nonbinary considers themselves transgender. “Nonbinary” was also part of the request from the Department of Justice. <input type="radio"/> See “sex assigned at birth” for justification for the order of the male/female categories.

³ We are only aware of The All of Us study at NIH and the High School Longitudinal Survey of 2009 (HSL:09) using mark all that apply.

	ACS Proposal	OMB Suggestion (Best Practices Document)	Differences	Justification
Verification question	<p><i>(Asked of those with discrepant responses to the first two questions)</i></p> <p>Just to confirm, Person 2 was assigned {FILL} at birth and their current gender is {FILL}. Is that correct?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct></p>	<p><i>(Asked of those with discrepant responses to the first two questions)</i></p> <p>Just to confirm, Person 2 was assigned {FILL} at birth and now they describe themselves as {FILL}. Is that correct?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No <skip back to Q1 and/or Q2 to correct></p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Question stem differs</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> Changes better align with the proposed wording for the second step of the gender identity question.</p>

Sexual orientation

The same wording will be used across both treatments. The question will appear in the detailed person section.

	ACS Proposal	OMB Suggestion (Best Practices Document)	Differences	Justification
Sexual orientation	Which of the following best represents how this person thinks of themselves? <i>Mark (X) one box.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Gay or lesbiano Straight, that is not gay or lesbiano Bisexualo This person uses a different term [free-text]	Which of the following best represents how this person thinks of themselves? <ul style="list-style-type: none">o Gay or lesbiano Straight, that is not gay or lesbiano Bisexualo This person uses a different term [free-text]o I don't know	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o No explicit “don’t know” in the ACS proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o This change follows the conventions of the ACS. ACS does not offer an explicit “don’t know” option for any topics in the survey to minimize item nonresponse and increase data quality. Respondents can indicate a soft don’t know/refusal by skipping the question in the internet and paper modes. Interviewers can select don’t know/refusal in the CAPI instrument.