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**Assessing the Feasibility of Asking About Sexual Orientation  
and Gender Identity in the Current Population Survey:  
Results from Cognitive Interviews**

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## Abstract

In 2016, the Department of Labor sponsored research to explore the feasibility of adding sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) questions to the Current Population Survey (CPS). The emphasis of the research was on the ability and willingness of respondents to answer SOGI questions in the context of an employment survey and via proxy reporting, in which one person generally responds for all eligible members of the household. To address these goals, researchers at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and U.S. Census Bureau conducted 132 cognitive interviews and four exploratory focus groups. The purpose of this report is to document results of the cognitive interviews which were conducted across four locations with a fairly even split between LGBT/ non-LGBT respondents.

Overall, feedback in these cognitive interviews suggests that most respondents do not find SOGI questions difficult or sensitive to report for themselves or for others in their households, and that few raised objections to these questions in the context of the CPS. However, perceptions of difficulty for self and others in the household were more frequent among LGBT respondents. While there were not many consistent demographic trends, we found that most of the respondents who had difficulty and sensitivity with the SOGI questions were lesbian, gay, or bisexual, often being unable to align their self-identity with the response options provided; this was especially true for transgender respondents.

**Keywords:** sexual orientation, gender identity, LGBT, proxy response, CPS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from cognitive interviews that were conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Cognitive interviews were conducted in four cities to explore the feasibility of asking about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the Current Population Survey (CPS). In the test questionnaire, we selected 46 questions from the basic CPS to both set the general context of the actual CPS, and to include items known to be challenging in some way for respondents to answer, either for themselves or others in the household, such as income, and disability. This gave a basis for comparing the difficulty and sensitivity of the SOGI items to others already in the questionnaire. Data from 132 respondents with diverse demographic characteristics were collected, in both “individual” interviews with one member of a household, and “paired” interviews with two members of a household interviewed separately. Both lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and non-LGBT respondents were included. The cognitive interviews were used to answer five research questions:

1. *How difficult are the SOGI questions for respondents to understand and answer? Do respondents have the knowledge to answer for other people in their household and are they willing to provide those answers?*

Overall, a majority of respondents found the SOGI questions clear and did not have difficulty answering for either themselves or for other people in their households. Respondents judged income, employment, and disability questions to be more difficult than the SOGI items for both self-response and proxy response (response for other household members). For proxy response, the date of birth item was found to be more difficult than both SOGI items, and gender identity was among the least difficult. The observed difficulty for SOGI questions tended to be related to the response categories, having a fluid identity, questioning one’s identity, and/or lacking knowledge of the sexual orientation or gender identity of others in the household.

The SOGI responses collected from household members via the paired interviews matched for almost all the respondents, suggesting respondents are able and willing to provide the information about other people in their household. Additionally, data collected during a card sort exercise indicates that while many respondents categorized the SOGI questions as difficult, the income, disability, and race questions were more frequently identified as difficult.

2. *How sensitive do the respondents perceive the SOGI questions to be when answering for themselves and for others in their household, and how does that sensitivity relate to willingness to answer the questions or complete the survey?*

Most respondents did not find the SOGI questions sensitive, but relative to other items in the questionnaire, the sexual orientation and disability items were found to be the most sensitive items for both self and proxy response,. Respondents who found the SOGI questions sensitive to report for themselves were both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, with the former finding their own identity personal to talk about, and the latter finding sexual orientation culturally sensitive and more private. Fewer respondents indicated that they found gender identify sensitive, for either self or proxy reporting. Those who did indicate sensitivity had similar reasons as for sexual

orientation, indicating the topic is personal or culturally sensitive. A few respondents (most of whom were LGB) indicated they found SO or GI questions sensitive because they were uncomfortable with the question wording and response options.

Despite some indications of sensitivity, all respondents were willing to answer the SOGI questions for themselves and other people in their households.

- 3. Do difficulty and sensitivity differ based on demographics - such as geography, household structure, race and/or Hispanic ethnicity, educational attainment, sexual orientation or gender identity?*

While there were not many trends by demographics, the main difference that emerged was that most of the respondents who expressed difficulty or sensitivity with the SOGI questions were lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). Furthermore, the few transgender respondents in the study almost universally expressed both difficulty and sensitivity with the SOGI questions as worded.

The demographic profile of the LGBT and non-LGBT samples were different, reducing our ability to detect demographic differences in the results between those groups. For some comparisons (e.g., difficulty for proxy reporting, sensitivity for self-reporting) however, some differences by household size, age, urbanicity, educational attainment, and race were identified. These differences were not consistent across comparisons, and so are difficult to interpret.

- 4. Are respondents willing to answer SOGI questions for themselves and others in their household in the context of a Federal government survey on employment?*

Results suggest that respondents are generally willing to answer SOGI questions for themselves and others in their household in the context of a Federal employment survey, although we note this study included only paid, volunteer respondents who were comfortable enough with the Federal government to participate. When asked directly for their thoughts on being asked SOGI questions in the context of the CPS, a majority said that they had no concerns with the idea, and no respondents refused to answer any SOGI question. A few respondents did raise issues about SOGI questions, discussing concerns over confidentiality, or mentioning that their responses could be less protected and/or used for discrimination in the current political climate. Additionally, the idea of cultural sensitivity was raised by a few respondents.

- 5. What feedback do respondents have on wording of SOGI questions?*

While question wording was not a main focus of this study, respondents provided some valuable feedback on the wording that was tested. In general, respondents understood the SOGI questions but some respondents, particularly LGBT respondents, had difficulty with or concerns about the response options in both questions. A variety of feedback and suggestions are detailed in the report, and will be a valuable guide for future research.

## *Conclusion*

Overall, feedback in these cognitive interviews suggests that most respondents do not find SOGI questions difficult or sensitive to report for themselves or for others in their households, and that few raised objections to these questions in the context of the CPS. However, perceptions of difficulty for self and others in the household were more frequent among LGBT respondents. These findings suggest that while collection of SOGI information on the CPS may be feasible, extensive further testing is needed. Additionally, beyond the problems identified in this study, there are a variety of issues that will need to be addressed before any implementation decisions can be made.

These interviews were just one part of a larger study on the feasibility of asking about sexual orientation and gender identity on the CPS. A decision on overall feasibility of collecting SOGI information in the CPS should consider the findings of the cognitive interviews as well as those of the focus groups with transgender respondents (Holzberg et al., 2017).

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) convened a working group of more than 100 representatives from 35 Federal agencies across 14 departments and 7 independent Federal agencies (Park, 2016). The purpose of the group is to share knowledge on the development and testing of questions on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in both Federal and non-Federal surveys in the United States (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a). The goal of including SOGI data in Federal surveys is to allow researchers to estimate the size and distribution of the sexual and gender minority populations in the U.S., and to identify disparities between people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and those who do not in domains such as health, crime, or employment. Currently, there are 11 Federal surveys that collect data on sexual orientation, and of these, seven also ask about gender identity (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a). These surveys vary on features such as question wording, mode of survey response, and population being surveyed. In terms of context (i.e., primary topic of the survey), most are health surveys; the exceptions are the National Inmate Survey (NIS), the Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI), and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). All of these surveys ask respondents to report SOGI for only themselves – not other household members.

The OMB working group has so far issued three working papers on the landscape of SOGI questions in Federal surveys: one on current SOGI measurement in Federal surveys, a second on evaluations of these Federal SOGI measures, and a third on research priorities moving forward (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). In this latter paper, the group identified proxy reporting and question wording as primary research priorities for SOGI questions and survey context as a secondary research priority (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016c). The working group has also recently taken an interest in asking about SOGI on the Current Population Survey (CPS), which serves as the primary source of labor force statistics for the U.S. population. The CPS is sponsored jointly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and the Census Bureau. The CPS differs from the surveys currently collecting SOGI information in two important ways. First, the context is employment, as opposed to health, which may affect respondents' perceptions of the relevance of SOGI questions. Second, a single household respondent answers questions about all other household members. Thus, in households with two or more members, household respondents provide self-reports for themselves, and also proxy reports for other household members. It is unknown whether respondents are able to report SOGI accurately by proxy and whether they feel comfortable doing so.

Because of these differences, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy sponsored research to explore the feasibility of asking about SOGI in the CPS. The overall goal was to assess the feasibility of collecting SOGI data in the CPS setting – that is, an employment survey context with proxy reporting. More specifically, we wanted to examine: (1) the sensitivity of the questions in general; (2) whether household members have the knowledge about each other with regard to SOGI questions and are willing to provide those answers, and (3) reactions to the inclusion of SOGI questions in an employment survey. To address these goals, cognitive interviews were conducted with both LGBT and non-LGBT populations, and focus groups were conducted with individuals who identified as transgender. Results of the focus



groups are provided in a separate report (Holzberg et al, 2017); the purpose of this report is to document the results of the cognitive interviews.

Cognitive interviews are one-on-one sessions between a researcher and respondent. The researcher presents the respondent with the verbatim survey questions and then probes the respondent on various aspects, such as interpretation and comprehension of the question, difficulty in formulating an answer, sensitivity in providing a response, and other issues that may arise during the response process. A total of 132 cognitive interviews were conducted with roughly equal numbers of GBT and non-LGBT individuals. These groups were further divided between “individual” interviews with one member of a household (80 respondents), and “paired” interviews with two members of a household interviewed separately (52 respondents). The cognitive interviews were used to answer five research questions:

1. How difficult are the SOGI questions for respondents to understand and answer? Do respondents have the knowledge to answer for other people in their household and are they willing to provide those answers?
2. How sensitive do the respondents perceive the SOGI questions to be when answering for themselves and for others in their household, and how does that sensitivity relate to willingness to answer the questions or complete the survey?
3. Do difficulty and sensitivity differ based on demographics—such as geography, household structure, race and/or Hispanic ethnicity, educational attainment, sexual orientation, or gender identity?
4. Are respondents willing to answer SOGI questions for themselves and others in their household in the context of a Federal government survey on employment?
5. What feedback do respondents have on wording of SOGI questions?

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Current Population Survey (CPS)**

The CPS is conducted monthly by the Census Bureau on behalf of BLS with an annually-selected probability sample of about 60,000 occupied households in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The survey excludes those living in institutions, such as prisons, long-term care facilities, and nursing homes. One person (age 15 or older), known as the “household respondent,” generally responds for all household members and is usually a person who owns or rents the housing unit. Households are in the survey for four consecutive months, out of sample for eight months, and then return for another four months before leaving the sample permanently, for a total of eight interviews. In terms of content, the CPS consists of a basic monthly survey, to which a supplemental or topical module is added in most months. The basic monthly survey is divided into two parts: household and demographic information (e.g., date of birth, marital status) and labor force information (e.g., employment during the past week). Supplements cover a range of topic areas, including annual work activity and income, veteran status, school enrollment, and volunteerism, among other topics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a).

Most of the household and demographic questions are asked only once, in the first interview. In subsequent interviews, respondents are asked to confirm that members of the household previously reported are still living there. If someone has left the household, they are removed from the household roster; if someone has moved into the household, demographic questions are asked for that person. Respondents are also re-asked demographic questions if they previously reported they did not know the answer (but if they refused initially, the question is not re-asked). Some questions (such as educational attainment and disability) are re-asked of all respondents in select subsequent interviews regardless of prior responses because the answers could change over time. The CPS is administered through both computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) and computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The majority of the first and fifth CPS interviews are conducted through personal visit, with other waves often being conducted over the telephone.

Currently, there are no questions on SOGI in the CPS. There is a question on sex, in the demographics section of the basic monthly survey. Household respondents are asked to respond for themselves and all other household members, regardless of age. The question is worded as shown below (note that for this and all items tested, responses of “don’t know” and “refused” are not explicitly displayed or read to the respondent, but they do exist as response categories):

CPS Current Question on Sex

What is [NAME’s] sex?

- Male
- Female

Interviewers are instructed to ask this question “only if necessary” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b). If SOGI questions were implemented in the CPS, gender identity questions would likely replace the current sex question, and the sexual orientation question would likely be placed in the demographic section of the basic CPS. Because of this placement at the beginning of the interview, there is concern that respondents may refuse to answer SOGI questions and break-off from the rest of the CPS.

## **2.2 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

According to a multidisciplinary expert panel convened by the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, known as the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (SMART), sexual orientation has three main dimensions: sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and sexual identity (SMART, 2009). In this report, we base “sexual orientation” on only sexual identity, rather than sexual attraction or behavior. The most commonly used terms to describe different sexual orientations are *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual/straight*. In general, people who self-identify as *gay* or *lesbian* are primarily attracted to and/or have sex with people of the same sex. However, the concepts of sexual identity, attraction, and behavior do not always follow these patterns, or individuals may not want to identify as gay or lesbian even if they are attracted to the same sex or only occasionally have same sex relations (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a). As for gender identity, SMART defines this as “A person’s internal sense of gender (e.g.,

being a man, a woman, or genderqueer) and potential affiliation with a gender community (e.g., women, trans-women, genderqueer)”<sup>1</sup> (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a). Throughout this report, we use the acronym “LGBT” to refer to sexual and gender minorities, encompassing both sexual orientation and gender identity. For sexual orientation, we use “lesbian, gay or bisexual” or “LGB” as an umbrella term to refer to anyone who self-identifies as anything other than straight. For gender identity, we use “transgender” as an umbrella term to refer to “anyone whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.” (GLAAD, 2017) It is important to note that any one individual may be LGB, transgender, both LGB and transgender, or neither LGB nor transgender.

## **2.3 Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Surveys**

### **2.3.1 Sexual Orientation**

Since at least the late 2000s, researchers have been exploring alternative methods for asking about sexual orientation in surveys. In 2009, the Williams Institute issued a report from SMART on best practices for question wording on sexual orientation as:

#### SMART Best Practices Recommendation

Do you consider yourself to be:

- Heterosexual or straight;
- Gay or lesbian; or
- Bisexual?

In the past few years, sexual orientation questions have been added to a number of state and Federal surveys. These generally use the wording that first appeared in the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) in 2013, or a variation of it. The NHIS question is asked of all sample adults age 18 and over, and response categories vary depending on sex:

#### National Health Interview Survey

Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

[for male respondents]

- Gay
- Straight, that is, not gay
- Bisexual
- Something else
- I don’t know the answer

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<sup>1</sup> See glossary for definitions.

[for female respondents]

- Lesbian or gay
- Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay
- Bisexual
- Something else,
- I don't know the answer

For this study, we maintained the question stem used in the 2013 NHIS for the self-response version of the question, but for the proxy-response version, we added the precursor "To the best of your knowledge," For both versions, we consolidated the response categories as shown.

#### CPS Test Question on Sexual Orientation

[Self-response]: Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, which of the following best represents how [NAME] thinks of themselves?

- Gay or Lesbian
- Straight, that is not gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- Bisexual
- Something else

### **2.3.2 Gender Identity**

There has been limited testing of question wording on gender identity, but studies thus far have demonstrated that transgender respondents are generally able to understand and answer questions on the subject (Baker & Hughes, 2016; Lombardi & Banik, 2016; Reisner et al., 2014; Cahill et al., 2014). In 2014, the Williams Institute issued a report addressing best practices for asking about gender identity in a survey based on research by a multidisciplinary expert panel known as the Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance (GenIUSS) Group. The group recommended using a two-question approach by first asking for a respondent's assigned sex at birth, and then asking for their current gender identity (GenIUSS group, 2014). Other organizations, such as the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (CoE) and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) also recommend using a two-question approach, but they suggest asking about current gender identity before sex assigned at birth (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016b). Of the seven Federal surveys that ask about gender identity, three of them – the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), the Survey of Prison Inmates (SPI), and the National Adult Tobacco Survey (NATS) – use the two-question approach. All ask the sex-at-birth question first, and all use slightly different wording and response categories, as shown:

Question 1: Sex at Birth

NCVS and SPI: What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

NATS: What sex were you at birth? [Field Interviewer Note: “Did they tell you that you were born male or female?”]

- Male
- Female

Question 2: Current Gender Identity

NCVS: Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender<sup>2</sup>

SPI: How do you describe yourself (select one)?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Do not identify as male, female or transgender

NATS: Do you currently consider yourself to be:

- Male
- Female

In terms of measuring prevalence, under a two-question approach respondents would be identifiable as transgender if they selected different options for their sex at birth and for their current gender identity. In the NCVS and SPI, those who chose “transgender” would also be added to the tally. The NCVS also includes a follow-up question that has interviewers verify they are recording the correct answer if there is a mismatch between the two questions:

[IF Q1 ≠ Q2] Just to confirm, you were assigned [male/female] at birth and now describe yourself as [male/female]. Is that correct?

- Yes
- No

The other four Federal surveys – the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the National Inmate Survey (NIS), the Population Assessment of Tobacco and Health (PATH), and the Health Care Patient Survey (HCPS) – use a one-question approach that asks directly about transgender status (though the PATH survey first asks a yes/no on transgender, then a follow-up on type of transgender). The HCPS also has a follow-up question for those who identify as genderqueer or “other” to determine skip patterns for subsequent survey questions. As with the

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<sup>2</sup> The response option “None of these” is not read by the interviewer, but is available on a flashcard that interviewers may choose to display to respondents.

sex-at-birth question, all three surveys use different question wording for gender identity, as shown:

BRFSS: Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

- Yes, Transgender, male-to-female
- Yes, Transgender, female-to-male
- Yes, Transgender, gender non-conforming
- No

NIS: Are you male, female, or transgender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

PATH:

(a) Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman, would be transgender. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

- Yes  Ask (b)
- No
- Not sure

[if R answers YES]

(b) Do you consider yourself to be male-to-female, female-to-male, or non-conforming?

- Yes, Transgender, male to female
- Yes, Transgender, female to male
- Yes, Transgender, gender nonconforming
- No
- Not sure

HCPS: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

[If age >13]:

- Female to male transgender male/trans male/female to male
- Male to female transgender female/trans woman/male to female
- Genderqueer
- OTHER, specify

[If Genderqueer or other]: We have entered your gender as [Genderqueer OR other]. In this interview, questions will appear based on gender. For example, we only ask questions about mammograms to females of a specific age. Since this is a research study collecting medical-related data, could you tell us your biological sex at birth?

- Male
- Female

Under the one-question approach, respondents would be identifiable as transgender only if they selected that answer category explicitly, which could risk under-reporting compared to the two-question approach (Tate et al., 2012).

For purposes of this CPS testing, we followed the recommendation of the GenIUSS report and used the two-question approach. We also adopted the approach we used for the sexual orientation question when a respondent is asked to report about another household member by adding the precursor “To the best of your knowledge,”

#### CPS Test Questions on Gender Identity

##### QUESTION 1: SEX AT BIRTH

[Self-response]: Was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, was [NAME’s] sex recorded as male or female at birth?

- Male
- Female

##### QUESTION 2: CURRENT GENDER IDENTITY

[Self-response]: Do you describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, does [NAME] describe themselves as male, female, or transgender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

With regard to age, we follow suit from the sexual orientation protocol and ask the question about those 15 and older. For those under age 15, we used the CPS current question on sex shown above.

In addition to issues of question wording, the OMB working group expressed concerns about “cultural and non-binary inclusivity”<sup>3</sup> noting that “Some individuals who vary in age, cultural and linguistic groups, etc., may not endorse terms such as ‘transgender’ when responding to Federal gender identity questions because they do not identify with this term” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016c). To address this, we recruited on a wide range of demographic characteristics and aimed to include respondents from various minority and non-minority groups, on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and urban or rural residency. We also recruited roughly

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<sup>3</sup> People whose gender identity falls outside of the categories of man and woman. (GLAAD, 2017)

equal numbers of LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, and we included eight respondents who identified as transgender in our study.

Another measurement concern is how surveys should use pronouns such as “he” or “she” in subsequent questions. Transgender respondents vary in their preferred pronouns; for example, some respondents prefer the gender neutral “ze” (University of California, Berkeley, 2017). Surveys collecting gender identity need to decide whether to use the preferred pronoun based on gender identity, the pronoun aligning with sex at birth, or “they” as a singular, non-gendered pronoun (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016c). After deciding how to use pronouns, surveys then need to implement this change throughout the entire survey, a task that is operationally complex and time-consuming. In this study, the option of using the gender-neutral pronoun “themselves” was used when a pronoun was used in the current CPS demographic questions, though for most questions the household member’s name was used.

Finally, the working group expressed concerns about terminology evolving over time. We acknowledge this, and below we discuss findings on the fluidity of some of these categorizations even in a static context (that is, even from day to day, self-identities may change).

## **2.4 Proxy Reporting**

Many Federal surveys use proxy response, in which one person generally responds for all eligible household members, primarily to reduce costs and nonresponse (Tamborini and Kim, 2013). It can be very time-consuming and difficult to collect survey responses when all members of the household are required to answer for themselves (Pierce et al., 1993; Park, 2015). However, proxy response involves other tradeoffs, as proxy answers may differ from those provided by other household members. Across survey topics, evidence on the quality of proxy response in surveys is mixed. Respondents may use less precise question answering strategies such as estimation when answering about other people in the household (Bickart, Blair, Menon and Sudman, 1990). Data quality can depend on the question topic and the relationship between the respondent and others in the household. For example studies have found that respondents most familiar with other household members, such as spouses, tend to be better proxies (Kojetin and Mullin, 1995; Tamborini and Kim 2013; Grieco and Armstrong, 2014; Pascale 2016). Small differences in agreement between proxy and self-response answers are more common than large differences (Mellow and Sider, 1983; Boehm, 1989; Moore, 1988; Tamborini and Kim 2013).

With regard to SOGI questions in particular, very little is known about whether respondents have the knowledge necessary to report for other household members, and whether they would be willing to report the information if they do have it. Surveys in New Zealand and the United Kingdom do not permit proxy reporting for sexual orientation due to concerns about accuracy and confidentiality (Joloza et al., 2010, Park, 2015). One of the only studies conducted on this issue employed an online nonprobability panel to test SOGI questions similar in wording to the questions we use in this study (Ortman et al., 2017). That study, while it could not determine the accuracy of the responses, found overall low rates of nonresponse for the SOGI questions. Item nonresponse for these questions was lower than for income, which is also considered to be a



sensitive question. However, nonresponse to the SOGI questions was also significantly higher for proxy reports compared to self-reports. Nonresponse rates also varied by relationship categories; rates of nonresponse were higher when respondents were reporting for children of respondents (age 16 or older) and roommates than for other household members, such as spouses and unmarried partners.

## **2.5 Survey Context**

As noted above, the OMB working group raised the issue of survey context – that is, asking SOGI questions in the context of an employment survey – versus the more common context of health surveys. The concern was that if respondents view SOGI questions as irrelevant to the subject matter of the survey, they may refuse to answer the questions or break-off from the survey entirely. Thus far, there is very little evidence available in this area. In one study, after SOGI questions were added to the NCVS, researchers conducted a debriefing survey with interviewers about issues they experienced when administering SOGI and other questions. A relatively small percentage of interviewers reported that at least one respondent asked why sexual orientation or gender identity was relevant to crime (Truman et al., 2017). Nonresponse to these questions was low and only a few respondents broke off from the survey after being asked these questions.

Feedback from respondents in the present study provides insight into whether SOGI questions are seen as irrelevant in surveys about topics other than health.

## **3 STUDY METHODOLOGY**

We conducted 132 cognitive interviews in Washington, DC; Portland, OR; Nashville, TN; and Fargo, ND. The Washington interviews were conducted from September through December 2016, while the Portland, Nashville, and Fargo interviews were held in March, April, and June 2017, respectively. These cities were selected to represent different geographic regions of the country, with the assumption that these regions would also vary on attitudes, political experiences, and other factors that would impact respondent experiences and opinions. Interviews were conducted by staff from the Census Bureau, BLS, and Community Marketing, Inc. (CMI). Each interview was allotted one hour, but many were shorter, with an average interview length of 39 minutes. All interviews were conducted in person, and respondents received \$40 each to compensate them for their time. Following standard Federal research procedures, OMB provided clearance for this study prior to the start of recruitment.

In order to have a more direct measure of the accuracy of proxy reporting, we also included 52 individuals from 26 unique households for “paired interviews.” Each respondent in the pair was interviewed separately, providing information both about themselves, each other and (in households with three or more members) all the other members of their household. This allowed us to directly compare survey responses between household members to gauge accuracy based on match rates.

### 3.1 Recruitment

For the research carried out in Washington, DC, recruitment methods consisted of posted flyers, advertisements through Craigslist.com, a broadcast message sent to all U.S. Census Bureau employees who work in the Suitland, Maryland headquarters, and posts on Facebook pages for LGBT groups that featured a telephone number and email address to contact a recruiter for screening.

For the other sites, the Census Bureau and BLS established a contract with CMI to handle recruiting, onsite logistics, and administration of some interviews. CMI maintains a nationwide research panel of LGBT individuals who were recruited for this study. CMI also recruited new respondents using targeted Facebook advertisements to transgender Facebook users, flyers, and Craigslist.com advertisements. Print recruiting materials featured a telephone number, while digital advertisements directed participants to a CMI intake survey first. Intake survey responses were used to evaluate whether the respondent was potentially appropriate for the study.

All prospective respondents were screened via telephone prior to being scheduled for interviews. Screening included questions on respondents' age, race, ethnicity, employment, geographic area (urban versus rural<sup>4</sup>), household composition, and LGBT status. On the latter, to identify LGBT individuals we used screener questions that differed from the SOGI questions being tested.<sup>5</sup> Single-person households were excluded because they would not be able to inform proxy reporting. The recruitment goals were as follows:

- At least 50 percent in households with three or more members,
- At least 50 percent in households with someone age 15 to 25,
- At least 25 percent in households with non-relatives,
- At least 33 percent non-White or Hispanic respondents,
- An equal or nearly equal balance of males and females,
- An equal or nearly equal balance of urban and rural households, and
- At least 50 percent with less than a Bachelor's Degree.

All goals were met or reached at least ninety percent of the target rate. The next section provides details on the characteristics of those successfully recruited.

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<sup>4</sup> For the majority of respondents, this classification was based on whether respondents' zip code fell within the bounds of Census Bureau defined urbanized areas (50,000 or more people) or urban clusters (2,500-49,999 people). If not, respondents were classified as rural. Respondents' self-description of their community was used to aid classification in a few instances.

<sup>5</sup> To screen for the DC interviews, participants were asked for their gender (male, female or transgender) and whether anyone in their household over 15, including themselves, identified as LGBT. To screen for the other interviews, participants were asked for their gender (male, female or transgender), an open-ended sexual orientation question, and whether anyone in their household over 15, including themselves, identified as LGBT.

### 3.2 Respondents

Tables 1 and 2 below show respondent and household characteristics, respectively, by site and interview type (individual or paired). In total, 71 interviews were conducted with respondents who were LGBT or had a household member who identified as LGBT, and 61 were conducted with respondents in non-LGBT households.

**Table 1. Respondent Characteristics, by Site and Interview Type (n = 132)**

Interview Type	Total		Washington, DC		Portland, OR		Nashville, TN		Fargo, ND	
	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair
<b>N</b>	80	52	16	4	17	14	23	12	24	22
<b>Age</b>										
15-19	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
20-25	13	11	5	1	1	1	3	3	4	6
26-35	21	12	3	1	8	3	4	1	6	7
36-50	25	14	5	1	4	6	10	4	6	3
Over 50	20	12	3	0	3	4	6	3	8	5
<b>Sex</b>										
Male	38	28	9	2	6	8	12	8	11	10
Female	37	21	4	1	10	6	11	4	12	10
Transgender/other	5	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	2
<b>LGB/non-LGB</b>										
LGB <sup>6</sup>	31	33	5	3	7	9	9	8	10	13
Non-LGB	49	19	11	1	10	5	14	4	14	9
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>										
White, non-Hispanic	44	35	5	3	11	9	11	6	17	17
Black, non-Hispanic	13	7	5	0	1	0	5	5	2	2
Other/multi-race, Non-Hispanic	17	4	4	0	4	4	6	0	3	0
Hispanic	6	6	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
<b>Education</b>										
< Bachelor's	43	34	7	1	12	9	11	9	13	15
Bachelor's	24	9	4	2	4	2	8	2	8	3
> Bachelor's	13	9	5	1	1	3	4	1	3	4

<sup>6</sup> Seven of the 8 transgender respondents also identified as LGB. The one transgender respondent who did not identify as LGB is considered to be non-LGB here. However, this person is counted as LGBT throughout the report. The number of LGBT households is 65, and the number of non-LGBT households is 67.

**Table 2. Household Characteristics, by Site and Interview Type (n = 106)**

Interview Type*	Total		Washington, DC		Portland, OR		Nashville, TN		Fargo, ND	
	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair	Ind.	Pair
<b>N</b>	80	26	16	2	17	7	23	6	24	11
<b>Household size</b>										
2 household members	28	13	1	0	6	4	9	4	12	5
3 or more	52	13	15	2	11	3	14	2	12	6
<b>Household Composition</b>										
Any non-family member	23	10	8	1	5	2	4	2	6	5
No non-family members	57	16	8	1	12	5	19	4	18	6
<b>Age</b>										
Any member age 15-25	39	14	9	2	8	2	12	4	10	6
No members age 15-25	41	12	7	0	9	5	11	2	14	5
<b>Gender Identity</b>										
Any member transgender	6	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	2	2
No members transgender	74	23	13	1	16	7	23	6	22	9
<b>Sexual orientation</b>										
Any LGB member	34	20	6	2	9	5	9	5	10	8
No LGB members	46	6	10	0	8	2	14	1	14	3
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>										
Any member non-White or Hispanic	40	13	11	1	8	3	14	4	7	5
No members non-White or Hispanic	40	13	5	1	9	4	9	2	17	6
<b>Geographic Area**</b>										
Urban	42	16	11	1	9	5	13	5	9	5
Rural	38	10	5	1	8	2	10	1	15	6
<b>Household Income**</b>										
Under \$50,000	26	13	4	0	3	4	7	3	12	6
\$50,00-\$99,999	36	8	6	1	12	1	11	2	7	4
\$100,000-\$149,999	9	3	3	1	2	1	2	0	2	1
\$150,000 or more	8	2	2	0	0	1	3	1	3	0
DK/Refused	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
* Paired interviews had two respondents from one household; we count each household only once in this table.										
** Based on screener.										

### 3.3 Interview Protocols

All respondents were provided with a consent form before beginning the interview session. They were also told that information they provided would be confidential and audio-recorded, and were notified if there were any observers. Interviewers then explained that the purpose of the study was to test new questions developed for the CPS – the primary source of labor force statistics, like employment and unemployment, in the nation. No mention was made at the start about testing of SOGI questions. Interviewers then administered several different interview protocols shown in Table 3 and explained in more detail below.

**Table 3. Interview Protocols**

Protocol	Task
Standardized Questionnaire	Questionnaire consisting of 46 CPS questions (with SOGI items embedded) administered by a researcher as if it were a standardized interview (see Table 4 for topic areas and content)
General Debriefing	Semi-structured protocol covering the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall thoughts on interview</li> <li>• Ease or difficulty answering questions</li> <li>• What topics were asked</li> <li>• Whether anything stood out or was bothersome</li> </ul>
Card Sort Exercise	Provide 15 cards, each representing a specific question, including SOGI, disability, and income. Ask respondents to sort cards twice, once for sensitivity and then for difficulty. Cards identified as sensitive or difficult were ranked from most to least sensitive/difficult.
Card Sort Debriefing	Semi-structured protocol covering the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale for sorting cards</li> <li>• Whether other household members would sort the cards the same way</li> </ul>
Question Specific Probing	Semi-structured protocol covering the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Sex at birth</li> <li>• Gender Identity</li> <li>• Income</li> <li>• Sexual orientation</li> </ul>
Paired Interview Match Rate	Calculate the frequency of matching answers between paired household members.
Paired Interview Debriefing	Semi-structured protocol covering the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings on reporting for other household members</li> <li>• Feelings on other member of pair reporting on their behalf</li> </ul>
Context Debriefing	Semi-structured protocol covering the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reactions to SOGI questions being asked in a Federal employment survey</li> <li>• Why government would be interested in SOGI in an employment survey</li> <li>• How self and other household members would respond or react to being asked SOGI questions in a Federal employment survey</li> <li>• Suggestions or feedback related to adding SOGI questions to the CPS</li> </ul>

#### 3.3.1 Standardized Questionnaire

Researchers administered 46 questions from five different questionnaire topic areas of the basic CPS interview (with the SOGI questions embedded in the demographics section) as if it were a

regular interview. See Table 4 for a list of topic areas and question content. Employment and unemployment questions were included in the Standardized Questionnaire in order to convey the context of the CPS as a survey on the labor force. Disability and income questions were also included since these are generally more difficult and/or sensitive than other CPS questions. This gave us the chance to evaluate the relative difficulty or sensitivity of SOGI questions by comparing them to disability and income questions. No probes were asked during administration of the CPS questions, but a respondent’s spontaneous, volunteered feedback was captured by the interviewer.

During personal interviews in the actual CPS, “show cards” are used for certain questions (relationship, educational attainment, race and income). Show cards include the full text of the question and response options and are presented to the respondent as the questions are asked. We used show cards for the questions that use them in actual CPS interviews, and we also included a show card for the sexual orientation question due to the length and complexity of the response options. A show card was not used for the gender identity question because it was brief and had fairly simple response options.

**Table 4. Topic Areas and Questions in the Standardized Questionnaire Protocol**

Questionnaire Topic	Question Content
Household Roster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Names of all household members</li> <li>• Whether address is usual place of residence</li> </ul>
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of birth, age confirmation</li> <li>• Current CPS sex question (asked only about those under age 15)</li> <li>• Sex at birth (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Gender identity (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Relationship to householder</li> <li>• Marital status (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Sexual orientation (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Educational attainment (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Military service (asked only about those age 15 and older)</li> <li>• Hispanic ethnicity</li> <li>• Race</li> </ul>
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 17 questions about work-related activities in the past week including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Employment status (worked/did not work)</li> <li>○ If worked: number of jobs, hours, type of employer, and name of employer for main job</li> <li>○ If did not work: reasons; if/when might return to work; activities looking for work</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three questions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficulty dressing or bathing</li> <li>○ Due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition, difficulty:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ doing errands (visiting a doctor’s office, shopping)</li> <li>▪ concentrating, remembering, or making decisions</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One question on family income</li> </ul>

### 3.3.2 General Debriefing

Interviewers debriefed respondents about their overall thoughts on the interview, ease or difficulty of answering the questions, and whether anything stood out or was bothersome. At this point respondents were still not told that SOGI questions were of particular interest, because we wanted to see what was salient to the respondent without prompting. Since this section was open-ended, some respondents offered their reactions at the question-level (e.g., they found the family income or the gender identity question to be sensitive), while others offered their reactions at the topic-level (e.g., they noted the disability questions were difficult, but did not specify a particular disability question). Interviewers did not probe for more specific details at this point, since this would be done in later sections of the protocol.

Often, but not always, a topic area consisted of just one question, as shown in Table 5. Thus, comparison between topic areas is imprecise because topic areas with more than one question provide more opportunity for the respondent to find the questions difficult or sensitive. However, we note that the range of the number of questions per topic area is small (one to three), with the notable exception of the employment topic area, which contained 17 questions. In the debriefings, however, only three specific items (on work last week, class of worker, and employer name) within this topic area were mentioned frequently in respondents' reactions. Nevertheless, the difference in number of questions per topic area will impact interpretation of the coding results, described in Section 3.4.

**Table 5. Number of Questions by Topic Area**

Topic Area	Number of Questions
Date of birth, age confirmation	2
Sex at birth; Gender identity (asked only about 15 and older)	2
Race and ethnicity	2
Educational attainment (asked only about 15 and older)	1
Employment (work-related activities in the past week) (asked only about 15 and older)	17
Military service (asked only about 15 and older)	1
Relationship to householder, unmarried partner/marital status (asked only about 15 and older)	3
Family income	1
Disability	3

### 3.3.3 Card Sort Exercise

Respondents were presented with index cards listing 15 of the 46 administered CPS questions and asked to complete two sorting tasks for themselves – first sorting cards into two piles that were either “sensitive” or “not sensitive,” then ranking the cards in the sensitive pile from most to least sensitive. A second Card Sort task was then administered, with respondents sorting cards

into “difficult” and “not difficult” groups, ranking the difficult cards by most to least difficult. Thus, the same question could be categorized as both difficult and sensitive.

### **3.3.4 Card Sort Debriefing**

After both Card Sort Exercises, respondents were asked debriefing probes about why they found the questions sensitive/difficult when answering for themselves. They also were asked if they thought other members in their household would sort the cards differently, and if so, why. Finally, they were asked if they would sort the cards differently based on answering for others in the household instead of themselves, and if so, why. For these probes, respondents were not asked to re-sort, or move the cards, though a few did so.

### **3.3.5 Question Specific Probing**

Using a semi-structured protocol, respondents were asked about a subset of specific questions from the Standardized Questionnaire: disability,<sup>7</sup> sex at birth, gender identity, income, and sexual orientation. For each of these, respondents were asked about their reaction to the question, the meaning of the question and/or specific terms within the question (such as “transgender”), their certainty and comfort in answering for themselves and for other household members, and whether they thought these other household members would be certain or comfortable answering for themselves and others.

### **3.3.6 Paired Interview Match Rate**

In the 26 households where two respondents (“Person A” and “Person B”) were sampled, each was administered the full Standardized Questionnaire protocol. Thus both respondents were asked the same questions about each other, the household as a whole, and, in households with three or more people, about other household members.

### **3.3.7 Paired Interview Debriefing**

A debriefing was conducted among each person in the pair to explore both SOGI and non-SOGI items from two perspectives: Person A’s reactions to being asked to provide information about Person B, and also Person A’s reactions to Person B providing information about them. During their individual interviews, both respondents in the pair were asked how comfortable they felt answering questions about the other person in the pair, and how accurate they thought their own answers would be about the other person. Respondents were also asked how they felt about the other person answering survey questions on their behalf, and how accurate they thought the person would be. Both in the pair were also asked whether they had any concerns about the

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<sup>7</sup> Just one of the three disability questions from the Standardized Questionnaire was asked about during the Question-Specific Probing section. This question asked “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?”



other person answering on their behalf, and whether they thought their answer to any particular questions might not match.

### **3.3.8 Context Debriefing**

Interviewers explained that the Federal government was considering adding SOGI questions to an employment survey. Respondents were asked what they thought about this idea generally, why they thought the government would be interested in collecting SOGI in an employment survey, and how they and other household members would respond if asked to provide this information in a government survey about employment.

## **3.4 Analysis**

The interview protocols produced both qualitative and quantitative data. The analysis of each is described below.

### **3.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis**

Six different protocols produced qualitative data: spontaneous comments made during administration of the Standardized Questionnaire, responses to Question Specific Probing, and comments from four Debriefings (General, Card Sort, Paired Interview, and Context). These data were analyzed for evidence of recurring themes and patterns. We also developed a coding scheme to flag the data as sensitive or difficult, and we coded whether the difficulty/sensitivity was reported or indicated in relation to a self-report or to a report about someone else. The coding schemes are described below. Note that in some instances, the difficulty/sensitivity was directly reported and other times the difficulty/sensitivity was indirectly indicated by the nature of respondents comments during debriefings. For convenience we use the term “reported” interchangeably with “indicated” but we note that “reported” does not necessarily mean a direct report.

For reliability, two staff members, working independently, coded the data from each of the protocols (shown in Table 3). Once the independent coding was completed, final codes were assigned through adjudication, either by a third staff member or by a discussion among the coders.

Results from each of the six protocols are shown in multiple tables below, specific to each section (e.g.: Difficulty for Self-Reporting). In addition to the individual protocol results, these tables show an “Interview Protocol Summary” column that is an indicator of difficulty/sensitivity in one or more of the six individual qualitative protocols. For the sake of simplicity, as we discuss results we draw primarily from the Interview Protocol Summary column. There are two caveats to keep in mind with this approach. The first, mentioned earlier, is the differing numbers of questions in each topic; for example, 17 employment questions were included in the test questionnaire, versus one income question. This discrepancy creates unequal opportunities for respondents to have difficulty or sensitivity within a topic area. The second caveat is the design of the Question

Specific probing protocol. Based on their expected level of difficulty and/or sensitivity, only four topics were selected for this protocol (SO, GI, income and disability). These topics received probes that other topics did not receive, again creating additional opportunities for respondents to have difficulty within a topic area. Thus, while the figures from the Interview Protocol Summary column represent an imperfect metric, it is convenient for making multiple comparisons, and results from individual protocols are maintained in the main results tables along with the summary column.

#### **3.4.1.1 Coding Difficulty and Sensitivity**

In general, across the six protocols, questions were coded as difficult if there was any evidence that respondents thought that they or others (within or outside the household) would be unable to answer the question, because either they lacked the relevant knowledge or they did not understand the question and/or certain terms in the question. Questions were coded as sensitive if there was any evidence that respondents thought they or others would be unwilling to answer them or if the respondent had a negative emotional reaction to the question. The evidence used for the coding was generally verbal – that is, respondents’ responses to a debriefing probe or a spontaneous comment made during the Standardized Questionnaire.

In the Standardized Questionnaire protocol, respondents were not asked directly about the difficulty or sensitivity of any questions, but interviewers were instructed to make question specific notes for the SOGI questions as they were administering the questionnaire, including observations of verbal and non-verbal reactions from respondents. Interviewers were also instructed to make notes on demographics, employment, disability, and income topics. Coding of difficulty and sensitivity was based on respondents’ verbal reactions while they were answering the questions. For example, a question was coded as difficult if respondents explicitly commented that it was hard for them to understand or answer, asked for clarification, answered “don’t know,” or voiced uncertainty about their answer. For sensitivity, if respondents volunteered that a question was upsetting or personal, or refused to answer, the question was coded as sensitive. In addition to volunteered comments like this, questions were flagged as difficult or sensitive based on interviewer notes about nonverbal behavior. For example, if an interviewer noted that a respondent was visibly agitated or upset when a particular question was asked, this would be flagged as a sensitive question.

#### **3.4.1.2 Coding Type of Report (Self, Proxy, Non-Household Member)**

A key goal at the beginning of the project was to identify and compare issues for self-reporting versus proxy reporting for others within the household. However, although we did not directly ask for respondents’ opinions about people outside of the household, many respondents offered comments about this during administration of one or more protocols. Respondents frequently volunteered that they expected that a given question would be sensitive or difficult for members of a particular group (e.g., people who identify as LGBT), even if no one from this group lived in

their household. For example, some respondents said the sexual orientation question was not sensitive for themselves or anyone in their non-LGBT household, but they thought the question would be sensitive to someone who is gay or lesbian. Respondents also said that unspecified “others” (not in the household) would, hypothetically, find a question difficult or sensitive, without specifying whether those others belong to a particular group. We coded these mentions of others as non-household members and distinguish them from proxy (i.e., within-household) responses. Ultimately we developed three categories to describe who the comment on difficulty/sensitivity referred to: self, proxy (within household), and non-household members.

For three of the Debriefings (General, Paired Interview, and Context) and the Question Specific Probing, coding of self, proxy and non-household was fairly straightforward and was based on how the respondent characterized the difficulty/sensitivity. Coding of the Standardized Questionnaire protocol was based on who the question referred to; respondents were asked separate questions for themselves and other household members.<sup>8</sup> If issues arose when the respondent was answering standardized questions for themselves, the difficulty/sensitivity was coded under self-response; if the issues arose when answering questions for others the difficulty/sensitivity was assigned as either proxy or non-household member. For the Card Sort Debriefing, respondents’ comments on their own rationale for their sorting and ranking were coded as related to self-response unless the respondent explicitly mentioned that their rationale was in relation to other people. When debriefed on whether other household members would sort the cards the same way, these comments were coded as related to proxy reporting.

The disability and family income questions were asked at the household level (i.e., “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, does anyone have difficulty [insert task]?”). Thus, sometimes it was not clear whether the respondent found the question difficult/sensitive for themselves, or for other household members. For difficulty, we coded comments as pertaining to proxy response by default unless the respondent (1) expressed comprehension issues with the question or certain terms in the question, or (2) was explicit that their reaction was based on their own status, and not the status of anyone else. For example, if a respondent said the income question was difficult because they work multiple jobs and had to add up the income across jobs, responses were coded as difficult for self-response. But, if a respondent said they were unsure of their roommates’ income amount, they were coded as difficulty related to proxy response. With regard to sensitivity, we coded comments as pertaining to self-response by default unless respondents were explicit that their reaction was based on the income or disability status of someone else, and not themselves. For example, in response to a disability question, if the respondent disclosed that a household family member has a physical or mental condition, and that this is upsetting to talk about, this would be coded as pertaining to a proxy response.

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<sup>8</sup> For several demographic questions, including the target SOGI items, questions were asked about only those 15 and older.

### **3.4.2 Quantitative Analysis**

#### **3.4.2.1 Card Sort Exercise**

The outcome of a Card Sort Exercise is the list of cards included in each pile and the ranking each card was given (e.g., most and least difficult of the difficult questions). Interviewers captured both these data elements, and they were analyzed to identify the questions most and least often considered sensitive and/or difficult.

#### **3.4.2.2 Paired Interview Match Rate**

The answers from Person A and Person B were evaluated as a “match” or a “mismatch.” If the answers given by each person in the pair were not the same, it was coded as a mismatch. For questions that had multiple response categories (e.g., marital status with categories of single, divorced, etc., or income which had 16 response categories) if the exact same category was not chosen by both respondents in the pair, it was considered a mismatch. The match rate was interpreted as a measure of accuracy.

The unique outcomes from these paired interviews were:

- How often do Person A and Person B match on the answers to questions for each other?
- How often do Person A and Person B match on the answers they provide about the household (e.g., family income)?
- In households with three or more members, how often do Person A and Person B provide the same answers to questions when asked about Persons C, D, and so on?

## **4 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Difficulty**

Table 6 provides a summary of results for difficulty across question topic areas from the six qualitative protocols. Each cell shows the number of respondents who expressed difficulty with each topic area and reporting type (self, proxy, or non-household). For example, during the Standardized Questionnaire protocol, two respondents expressed difficulty with self-reporting for the sexual orientation question, three expressed difficulty with proxy-reporting for someone within the household, and one indicated that “other people” would have difficulty. Note that a given respondent could report difficulty for multiple types of reports; that is, a respondent could find a question difficult to report for themselves, and also for someone else in the household. Also, note that the summary column is an indication of difficulty from one or more individual protocols.

Table 7 provides results on the demographic characteristics of those reporting difficulty for the sexual orientation (SO) and/or the gender identity (GI) items.<sup>9</sup> Results are shown for each type of report (self, proxy or non-household members), and for LGBT versus non-LGBT respondents.

We first discuss results about difficulty in self-reporting, concentrating on these four areas: the sexual orientation question, the gender identity question, demographic differences of respondents reporting difficulty with the SOGI questions, and differences in difficulty between SOGI and non-SOGI questions. We then discuss results in the same four areas for proxy reporting. Finally, we discuss respondents' perceptions of non-household members' reactions to SOGI questions.

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<sup>9</sup> Results for SO and GI items were analyzed separately, but as the base number of respondents who had difficulty was low (21), and the demographic profiles of respondents who had difficulty with the SO item was similar to those who had difficulty with the GI item, results were combined into the summary Table 7. The difficulty results for each question are shown in Appendix A.

**Table 6. Difficulty by Question Topic and Interview Protocol (n = 132)**

	Interview Protocol Summary			Standardized Questionnaire			General Debriefing			Card Sort Debriefing			Question Specific Probing			Context Debriefing		
	Self	Proxy	Non	Self	Proxy	Non	Self	Proxy	Non	Self	Proxy	Non	Self	Proxy	Non	Self	Proxy	Non
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	14	20	6	2	3	1	4	0	0	7	7	0	10	14	5	0	1	0
<b>Gender Identity</b>	11	6	14	3	0	0	1	0	3	8	4	0	9	3	11	0	1	0
<b>Income</b>	31	85	1	8	10	0	2	3	1	14	43	0	22	75	0	-	-	-
<b>Disability</b>	24	24	6	0	3	0	2	2	0	11	16	1	20	11	6	-	-	-
<b>DOB/Age</b>	0	28	0	0	23	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Race or ethnicity</b>	14	8	2	2	7	1	1	1	1	12	5	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Education</b>	4	13	0	4	10	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Employment</b>	24	21	0	13	14	0	6	2	0	5	9	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Military</b>	1	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Relationship &amp; marital status</b>	12	3	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	9	2	0	-	-	-	-	-	-

- Self=self-reports; Proxy=reporting for others within the household; Non-HH=reporting for unspecified others outside household.
- Respondents could report difficulty in more than one protocol. The summary column (“Interview Protocol Summary”) indicates difficulty in *one or more* of the protocols (thus, the summary columns could be lower than the raw sum of difficulty from each protocol).
- Respondents could report difficulty for multiple types of reports (self, proxy, and non-household members).
- Question Specific Probing was administered only for questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, income, and disability; a dash (-) in the table indicates that this was inapplicable to the other questions.
- Context Debriefing was administered only for questions about sexual orientation and gender identity; a dash (-) in the table indicates that this was inapplicable to the other questions.

**Table 7. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Difficulty with SO and/or GI Questions**

	All Respondents <sup>10</sup>			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT Respondents		
	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	21	24	19	19	18	16	2	6	3
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	3	6	4	3	5	4	0	1	0
Portland, OR	6	5	6	5	3	5	1	2	1
Nashville, TN	3	3	2	3	2	2	0	1	0
Fargo, ND	9	10	7	8	8	5	1	2	2
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household members	9	5	12	9	5	11	0	0	1
3 or more	12	19	7	10	13	5	2	6	2
<b>Household Composition</b>									
Family household	11	13	13	11	9	11	0	4	2
Non-Family household	10	11	6	8	9	5	2	2	1
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	15	17	10	14	13	10	1	4	0
Rural	6	7	9	5	5	6	1	2	3
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	12	9	7	11	9	6	1	0	1
30 and older	9	15	12	8	9	10	1	6	2
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelor's	12	12	11	11	8	9	1	4	2
Bachelor's or higher	9	12	8	8	10	7	1	2	1
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-Hispanic	14	12	15	13	10	13	1	2	2
Non-White or Hispanic	7	12	4	6	8	3	1	4	1

<sup>10</sup> A total of 132 respondents were interviewed; 65 of the 132 respondents were LGBT, and 67 were non- LGBT.

## 4.1.1 Self-Reporting

### 4.1.1.1 Sexual Orientation

#### CPS Test Question on Sexual Orientation

[Self-response]: Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, which of the following best represents how [NAME] thinks of themselves?

- Gay or Lesbian
- Straight, that is not gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- Bisexual
- Something else

There was little evidence from the qualitative protocols of respondents having any difficulty answering the SO question for themselves (see Table 6). Of 132 respondents, only 14 had any difficulty in any of the qualitative protocols. All respondents answered the question in the Standardized Questionnaire protocol, with only two indicating difficulty during that protocol. Most of the difficulty indicated during the Question Specific Probing protocol (10), followed by the Card Sort protocol (7).

When we asked what the question was asking in their own words during Question Specific Probing, all respondents were able to give an answer that indicated understanding of the question. Typical responses were:

- “Who are you attracted to.”
- “Your sexual and romantic preference in partners.”
- “It wants to know if I’m heterosexual or consider myself bisexual, or wanting to be with a same-sex partner, or if I consider myself to be something that is not documented already.”
- “How you view yourself. Not how the world categorizes you.”

In terms of choosing an answer, most indicated it was an easy question to answer.

- “No problem for me, I’m straight.”
- “It’s a good question. It’s pretty straightforward.”

Some respondents noted that it was an expected question:

- “What [is] expected from Census.”
- “It’s just something that’s common nowadays.”
- “It was simple, straightforward, just general demographic data.”

However one respondent noted, “These are not so much difficult as unexpected.” They caused her to hesitate and think about the answer, but she could provide an answer without a problem.



Most of the difficulty issues indicated throughout the interview protocols were expressed by LGBT individuals; 13 of the 14 respondents who indicated difficulty with the SO question were LGB and four were transgender. This amounted to half of the transgender respondents (four of eight)<sup>11</sup>, and 13 of the 64 LGB respondents expressing difficulty. For the most part the difficulty had to do with the response categories.

One main reason for the difficulty was among those who felt sexual orientation is an inherently fluid concept. For example, one said they were “Uncertain about where I fit in the choices, I know my identity but it can be fluid but primarily I am gay.” A related issue came from a respondent who, in the end, chose “bisexual” but said they are still questioning their orientation: “No one has asked me, still figuring out identity.” Another issue was respondents saying the response categories were too limited. Three transgender respondents had a hard time reconciling ideas of straight or gay with gender fluidity, and they all chose “something else” as the category:

- “If you identify as like, a non-binary, or some people, trans people, have issue with these words. See, take me for instance. I’m dating a woman. But some trans men, they would not be sure whether in my case if I would be straight, or if I would be in some way, like gay or queer.”
- “There are many ways to identify. This is only giving three categories.”

With regard to response categories being limited, some would have preferred something that fit them better than the catch-all “something else,” such as “queer,” “pansexual,” or “asexual.”

- “‘Something else’ is the only option I can say as I’m not represented 100 percent by the other three options.”
- “Something else is what I’d answer, but it also doesn’t give you an identity at all.”

In six cases, respondents had trouble selecting from among the LGB categories (gay/lesbian, bisexual or “something else”). However, the categories they said they would choose would be one of the three LGB categories, and not the straight/heterosexual category, so the difficulty would not result in a misclassification as long as the intent was to distinguish LGBT and non-LGBT respondents.

#### **4.1.1.2 Gender Identity**

##### CPS Test Questions on Gender Identity

##### QUESTION 1: SEX AT BIRTH

[Self-response]: Was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, was [NAME’S] sex recorded as male or female at birth?

- Male
- Female

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<sup>11</sup> To preserve confidentiality, we did not present the transgender-only results in a table.

## QUESTION 2: CURRENT GENDER IDENTITY

[Self-response]: Do you describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, does [NAME] describe themselves as male, female, or transgender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

Gender identity (GI) results were similar to those for the SO question. Only 11 of 132 respondents reported difficulty in any of the qualitative protocols when answering for themselves. All but one respondent answered the question for themselves during the Standardized Questionnaire, and only three indicated difficulty. Again, most difficulty was reported during the Question Specific Probing (9), followed by the Card Sort Debriefing (8).

When asked about ease/difficulty throughout the interview protocols, respondents tended to say things like, “Not much, these questions seem pretty easy to be answered, just straight up: male or female?” A few respondents expressed surprise at the addition of “at birth” to the sex question, and some also found gender identify question surprising, but they did not find them difficult, just unexpected: “I haven’t seen that much before in surveys or questions.”

When asked to define transgender in their own words, three respondents conflated transgender with sexual orientation (e.g., “If you feel comfortable with your sexuality.”). But more typical responses were:

- “I think about someone who was born the wrong sex that might not line up with his or her perceived identity.”
- “That you wish to live as a different gender than you were born.”
- “It is an umbrella term for someone who does not identify with, or falls outside of, the gender dichotomy.”

Those who did indicate difficulty were dominated by LGBT respondents; only one respondent was non LGBT (see Appendix Table A2), and seven of the 11 were transgender.<sup>12</sup> One respondent found it difficult because they were currently questioning their own gender identity, but most of the difficulty expressed had to do with response options rather than an understanding of the concepts. Respondents either did not see themselves in the list of response categories offered (e.g., because they were gender-fluid), and/or they wanted to choose more than one category. Some respondents did not like the limitation of choosing only one category because “transgender” was excluded from “male” and “female.” Others noted that male and female were biological concepts of sex and not exclusive from gender identities. Typical responses:

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<sup>12</sup> Unlike LGBT, where we had roughly equal numbers of respondents in the two categories (64 LBG and 68 non-LGB), we had a total of only eight transgender respondents in sample. Thus we cannot attempt to compare transgender and non-transgender respondents, but we note where all/most transgender respondents had similar comments.

- “When people ask, I just say ‘trans male.’ Um, I don’t know, I think, it doesn’t, I wouldn’t say male directly, unless it was a government agency or somebody who didn’t really matter to me. But, yeah, for me personally, I identify as trans male. Are there other options, or are those the only three options I’m given?”
- “I see myself as female and identify as female, but sometimes I have to put male or transgender.”
- “I would answer it as ‘other’ because I am not listed yet.”
- “I don’t like using the term ... I think as far as it goes the question is fine but it doesn’t really fit. The description of male and female aren’t consistent with transgender. They don’t mean the same things and aren’t mutually exclusive.”
- “I think it could have been phrased better. Transgender sort of, separates trans women and trans men from male and female.”

Difficulty did not result in unwillingness to answer. Respondents expressed that surveys were a place where they would be more willing to answer this question, even if they did not like the wording. One respondent, after thinking about the issues at length, concluded that there may not be a better a way and asking was more important than having a perfect question.

#### **4.1.1.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Reporting Difficulty with SOGI Questions**

In total, 21 of 132 respondents expressed difficulty for themselves with the SO and/or GI questions (Table 7). For the most part, the demographic profile of those who did and did not have difficulty with the SO and/or GI question was similar.

Nevertheless, some demographic differences were notable, even when considering the demographic distribution within the samples. Among the 21 respondents indicating difficulty, most were LGBT (19), White/Non-Hispanic (14), and/or urban (15). Furthermore, seven of the eight transgender respondents in the sample found the GI question to be difficult, and four also found the SO question difficult (data not shown).<sup>13</sup>

#### **4.1.1.4 Differences in Difficulty for SOGI versus non-SOGI Questions**

Despite the caveats noted in Section 3.4.1 on design differences by protocols, and thus potential for some CPS questions to provide more opportunities for respondents to identify difficulty concerns, we did some high-level comparisons to understand the relative difficulty of the SOGI questions compared to the non-SOGI questions.

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<sup>13</sup> Unlike LGB, where we had roughly equal numbers of respondents in the two categories (64 LBG and 68 non-LGB), we had a total of only eight transgender respondents in sample. Thus we cannot attempt to compare transgender and non-transgender respondents, but we note where all/most transgender respondents had similar comments.

Results from the qualitative protocols show that across topics, the income item stood out as the most difficult, with 31 respondents expressing difficulty at some point across all protocols (see Table 6). Disability and employment questions were next (24 each). Race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship/marital status and gender identify were next and fairly close, with between 11 and 14 respondents expressing difficulty across these topics.

For questions other than those about SOGI, respondents who reported difficulty most often said that they had to think about before answering.

- [On income]: “More difficult only because I had to think about them.”
- [On disability]: “It sounds a little general to me...I didn’t know what they were looking for.”

For some questions (such as educational attainment, and relationship to other household members), respondents reported having difficulty with the response categories, and these required more thought.

- Educational attainment: “Associate’s degree options were confusing”
- Relationship: “None of the relationship responses represent our partnership”

The question topic that most resembles the SOGI questions in relation to the reason for difficulty was race/ethnicity, where some respondents did not see themselves in the categories, and some had difficulty defining or deciding on the categories that fit them:

- “I don’t really know. I mean, this is restrictive. I’m mixed.”
- “I put race here [in the difficulty Card Sort Exercise] because my option wasn’t there.” During the initial CPS interview portion, this respondent answered White to the race question and Hispanic to the ethnicity question. Later the respondent said there should be options for Latino identity in the race question.

Quantitative results from the Card Sort Exercise were generally consistent with results from the qualitative protocols. Respondents put an average of 1.05 of the 15 cards into the difficult pile, with a zero card median. Sixty-eight respondents said that none of the questions provided on the cards were difficult, and an additional 29 and 12 respondents put only one or two cards in the difficult pile, respectively. Only 11 of the 132 respondents put four or more cards in the difficult pile. This indicates that most of the questions were not seen as difficult.

As shown in Table 8, the card most frequently sorted into the difficult pile was the question about income, with 46 respondents considering it to be difficult to answer. This was followed by two disability items, and then race and sexual orientation. Patterns from the card sort ranking task are similar. The item ranked most difficult for self-response by far was income (32). Race, and the questions about disability trailed far behind, with very few respondents ranking them as the most difficult to answer question.

**Table 8. Card Sort Exercise Results for Difficulty, Ranked by Question (n = 132)**

Question	N Sorted as Difficult	N Ranked as Most Difficult	N Ranked as Second-Most Difficult	N Ranked as Third-Most Difficult
Income	46	32	7	3
Disability (concentrating)	19	5	11	2
Disability (errands)	16	4	2	7
Race	13	6	5	1
Sexual orientation	8	3	4	1
Name of employer	7	2	2	1
Marital status	7	2	2	1
Gender identity	6	4	0	1
Education	6	2	1	1
Worked last week	6	2	0	3
Sex at birth	3	0	1	2
Ethnicity	2	2	0	0
Date of birth	1	0	1	0
Unmarried partner in household	0	0	0	0
Armed forces	0	0	0	0

#### 4.1.2 Proxy Reporting

##### 4.1.2.1 Sexual Orientation

When asked about SO for others in the household, only 20 of 132 respondents expressed any difficulty, all but one provided answers to the question, and only three respondents indicated some difficulty during the Standardized Questionnaire protocol. Reasons for the difficulty echoed the issues found for self-reporting in terms of choosing from among the response categories. Typical responses were:

- “He is asexual. Straight, and something else.”
- “[I] would feel bad for [my] roommate that was not included in identity categories.”
- “He does identify as something not listed on there, but ‘bisexual’ represents well enough as what he represents himself as.”
- “They would want to answer the sexual orientation question as ‘queer.’”
- “They see sexuality [as] more fluid. They might answer it ‘lesbian’, might answer ‘bisexual.’”

Another reason for the difficulty, unique to proxy reporting, was lack of respondent knowledge about other household members’ sexual orientation. Six respondents said they were not sure

about the identity of the younger people in the household (generally teenagers). These respondents thought they knew the answers, but were reluctant to rule out the possibility that the person had not decided on a sexual orientation:

- “...except my son. I don’t want to label him if I don’t know. Until then I assume he’s straight.”
- “My daughter is in college, she could be experimenting. My son is 18 and not talking to me about sex...I know the answer to the best of my knowledge but they are just starting to discover themselves, they are exploring...I don’t want to assume or judge anything.”
- “My son is still young and society is still not 100 percent accepting, so it is still possible that my son may be bisexual or something rather than straight and not told me.”
- “It’s something that we’ve talked about, but I don’t think that she definitely identifies as bisexual or lesbian or anything. I’m pretty sure she would share that with me because we’re pretty open like that.”
- “Partner’s sister is in college, so who knows what she’s up to.”

One respondent who reported difficulty was a teenager and did not know their parents’ sexual orientation because they had not talked to them about it. Other respondents thought that non-relatives or roommates who lived in their household would not have the knowledge to answer the sexual orientation about another household member: “The roommate does not know she is bisexual. He would probably say ‘straight.’” A few respondents also speculated that other household members would have difficulty understanding the terminology; this was generally in reference to older household members: “She would not relate to the language used in the SOGI questions. Concepts would be foreign to her.”

#### **4.1.2.2 Gender Identity**

Qualitative results indicate that only six of 132 respondents had any difficulty reporting GI for other household members. No respondent indicated difficulty with proxy reporting during the Standardized Questionnaire protocol, and all respondents answered the GI question for all of their household members age 15 and up.

Three of the six who had difficulty had older household members who they thought would have trouble answering this question about themselves and about others because of the language in the questions. For example: “The older people in the house might be thrown off by the transgender questions.” One of these respondents remarked that the older people in her household would have difficulty with the question, and also said that older people in general would have trouble with this question. Another respondent said their older mother would be confused by the terms used in this question.

Two other respondents said they lacked the knowledge about their roommates. One respondent thought he could answer for his roommate but was not 100 percent sure because they had not talked about it. The other found it difficult because she had new roommates that had moved in

that week: “Think I know the answer but I don’t know the roommates very well. They could be transgender, but I don’t think so.”

One respondent felt the questions would be difficult for other household members to answer because either the response options were not inclusive enough, or because they could not select more than one option. Two transgender respondents expressed uncertainty over whether other household members would identify their transgender identity in the same way they did: “I don’t know that they would answer that I am transgender or male.”<sup>14</sup>

#### **4.1.2.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Reporting Difficulty with SOGI Questions**

As shown in Table 7, total of 24 respondents found SO and/or GI questions difficult when asked about someone in the household, and most often the difficulty was with SO (20) rather than GI (6).<sup>15</sup> These 24 respondents were most often LGBT (18), from households with 3 or more people (19), and/or urban (17). Of the eight transgender respondents, three indicated difficulty with the SO and/or GI questions.

#### **4.1.2.4 Differences in Difficulty for SOGI versus non-SOGI Questions**

Despite the caveats noted in Section 3.4.1 on design differences by protocols, and thus potential for some CPS questions to provide more opportunities for respondents to identify difficulty concerns, we did some high-level comparisons to understand the relative difficulty of the SOGI questions compared to the non-SOGI questions.

Findings from the qualitative protocols indicate that by far the most difficult topic area for proxy reporting was income, with 85 respondents reporting difficulty (see Table 6).<sup>16</sup> Next was date of birth (28), followed by disability (24). The employment and SO questions were similar (21 and 20, respectively). Next were educational attainment and race, and GI was low with only six respondents reporting difficulty.

Across questions/topics, the most frequent reason for difficulty was response categories. For example, as with the SOGI questions, respondents had difficulty choosing among answer categories for the race question for other household members:

- “There isn’t quite an option because she’s completely Hispanic.”
- “With (daughter) Hispanic and White, it’s weird.”

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<sup>14</sup> Either response option would have correctly identified the respondent as transgender based on the assigned sex of female at birth.

<sup>15</sup> As the demographic profiles of those who indicated difficulty with the SO and GI questions were similar, results are combined in Table 7. Question specific tables are included in Appendix A.

<sup>16</sup> As noted in Section 3.4.1.2, income and disability questions were asked at a household level. Unless respondents who had difficulty were explicit that the problem was with self-reporting, the difficulty was coded as related to proxy reporting.

For disability, the difficulty was more about the question's intended meaning: "More explanation and examples, if you want to get into the natty gritty...Nowadays so many people have mental and emotional difficulties...Give examples, or define it a little bit more."

Lack of knowledge was sometimes a reason for difficulty, but answers of "don't know" for at least one other household member were mainly concentrated in the date of birth item (16). Education was next (5), followed by race/Hispanic origin (4). Only one respondent reported, "don't know" to the sexual orientation question for at least one other household member, and for gender identity there were no answers of "don't know."

The Card Sort Debriefing provided another angle on this same issue, because respondents were asked if other household members would sort and rank the cards differently than they did. About half of respondents (71 of 132) said other household members would identify only a subset of the cards they selected as difficult, or none at all. Some respondents (25) said that other household members would choose the same cards. The remainder (36) said other household members would select different or additional cards. Of these, the questions that respondents thought others would have difficulty with but they themselves did not have difficulty with were most often questions on income, disability, and sexual orientation. However, each were mentioned eight or fewer times in total across the 36 respondents.

The quantitative results on match rate complement the qualitative findings. The income item had the highest number of mismatched answers between pairs of respondents<sup>17</sup> (18 of 26) (See Table 9). Educational attainment was the next most-often mismatched item (13). Contrary to some expectations, only two mismatched answers to each of these questions were between non-relatives; most of the mismatches were among family members (data not shown). Two of these family pairs were between parents and their teenage children. SOGI questions ranked toward the bottom in terms of mismatches; SO had five, and GI had the lowest number of mismatches with only two.

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<sup>17</sup> The number of response categories, and therefore opportunities for mismatching, varied by question. The fact that income had the most mismatches may be an artifact of the fact that it had the most number of categories.



**Table 9. Mismatched Responses from Paired Interviews, Ranked by Question Topic**

Question Topic	Total Mismatched Responses (n=26 pairs)
Income	18
Education	13
Employment	8
Disability	6
Age/birthdate	6
Sexual orientation	5
Race/ethnicity	5
Marital status	4
Gender Identity	2

For the SO question in particular, two of five mismatched cases were opposite-sex partners where females identified themselves as “bisexual” or “something else” and males identified their spouse/partner as straight. In both cases, the females noted that their spouse/partner would report them (the females) as non-LGB. Also in both cases, the male partner at some point during the debriefing protocols said that their female partner might not identify herself as straight. In three cases, members of the pair answered the SO question about another household member differently. In two cases, both members of the pair identified a different household member as LGB but did not match on categories (“bisexual” versus “something else”). In one case, a parent and teenager were paired and were asked about another teenager in the household. The parent identified the other teenager as “bisexual,” while the teenager in the pair identified the sibling as “straight”. The teenager also answered “don’t know” about the parent’s sexual orientation.

For the GI question, all respondents matched on sex at birth and GI for the other person in the pair. Two pairs mismatched when reporting GI for other members of the household. One pair was reporting for a roommate.<sup>18</sup> The second pair mismatched on GI categories for a third household member.<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.1.3 Perceptions of Non-Household Members**

A few respondents volunteered that others outside the household would have difficulty with certain questions, and the questions cited most often were GI (14), SO, and disability (6 each).

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<sup>18</sup> One person in the pair reported them as male/transgender and the other reported them as male/male but noted during the Paired Debriefing that they were non-binary or genderqueer and there was not a category for that in the question. If there had been an “other” or “non-binary” response option, they would have selected that.

<sup>19</sup> One person in the pair listed them as male/female and the other as male/transgender. Despite the mismatch, the person would have been correctly classified as transgender.

The difficulty was most often reported in the Question Specific Probing and, to a lesser extent, in the General Debriefing (Table 6).

For GI, these respondents said the questions could be difficult for others, not in their household, because the answer choices were limited: “‘Something else’ covers it. But this list might be too limited for some people.” Cisgendered respondents echoed this sentiment when they talked about hypothetical transgender individuals not in their household:

- “I think it’s a little bit too limiting, especially in use of the word ‘or,’ because you could be more than one, or be non-binary, or intersex, and not identify with any of the three that are presented.”
- “Some people might have an issue with there not being a lot more options.”

One cisgender respondent thought new immigrants may find this question difficult.

In terms of demographics, respondents who volunteered that the SOGI questions might be difficult for non-household members more frequently lived in family households (13 of 19), were White/Non-Hispanic (15 of 19), and LGBT (16 of 19).

Some of these 19 respondents speculated about non-SOGI items in a similar way, suggesting that non-Whites and those with disabilities may find the questions on race and disability difficult:

- “I think the Census Bureau is behind on race. I think the whole cultural perspective is behind on race.”
- [Regarding disability]: “A more permanent status vs. ‘temporary’ may be a valid option here.”

## 4.2 Sensitivity

Table 10 provides a summary of results for sensitivity across question topic areas from the six qualitative protocols, and Table 11 provides results on the demographic characteristics of those who said they found the SOGI items sensitive.<sup>20</sup>

We first discuss results about sensitivity in self-reporting, concentrating on these four areas: the sexual orientation question, the gender identity question, demographic differences of respondents reporting sensitivity with the SOGI questions, and differences in sensitivity between SOGI and non-SOGI questions. We then discuss results in the same four areas for proxy reporting. Finally, we discuss respondents’ perceptions of non-household members’ reactions to SOGI questions.

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<sup>20</sup> As in the difficulty section, the demographic profile of respondents who found the SO item sensitive was similar to the GI item so results were combined into a single table. The sensitivity results for each question are shown in Appendix B.

**Table 10. Sensitivity by Question-Topic and Interview Protocol (n = 132 respondents)**

	Interview Protocol Summary			Standardized Questionnaire			General Debriefing			Card Sort Debriefing			Question Specific Probing			Context Debriefing		
	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	42	27	20	0	0	0	6	0	1	36	22	13	2	5	9	10	13	4
<b>Gender Identity</b>	27	17	31	0	0	0	1	0	2	17	14	21	12	3	15	2	4	1
<b>Income</b>	26	18	14	0	0	0	2	0	1	19	17	8	18	2	5	-	-	-
<b>Disability</b>	37	58	28	0	0	0	5	1	1	30	52	16	14	43	13	-	-	-
<b>DOB/Age</b>	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Race or ethnicity</b>	9	22	11	0	0	0	3	0	0	8	11	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Education</b>	7	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Employment</b>	14	6	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	14	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Military</b>	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Relationship &amp; marital status</b>	19	13	4	0	3	0	4	0	0	16	10	4	-	-	--	-	-	-

- Self=self-reports; Proxy=reporting for others within the household; Non-HH= reporting for unspecified others outside household.
- Respondents could report sensitivity in more than one protocol. The summary column (“Interview Protocol Summary”) indicates sensitivity in *one or more* of the protocols (thus the summary columns could be lower than the raw sum of sensitivity from each protocol).
- Respondents could report sensitivity for multiple types of reports (self, proxy and non-household members).
- Question Specific Probing was administered only for questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, income, and disability; a dash (-) in the table indicates that this was inapplicable to the other questions.
- Context Debriefing was administered only for questions about sexual orientation and gender identity; a dash (-) in the table indicates that this was inapplicable to the other questions.

**Table 11. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Sensitivity with SO and/or GI Questions**

	All Respondents <sup>21</sup>			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT Respondents		
	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	54	36	38	28	22	21	26	14	17
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	11	8	5	8	5	1	3	3	4
Portland, OR	6	7	8	3	3	6	3	4	2
Nashville, TN	18	8	11	7	4	7	11	4	4
Fargo, ND	19	13	14	10	10	7	9	3	7
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household members	18	14	18	11	10	14	7	4	4
3 or more	36	22	20	17	12	7	19	10	13
<b>Household Composition</b>									
Family household	36	22	28	15	13	16	21	9	12
Non-Family household	18	14	10	13	9	5	5	5	5
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	35	19	17	23	13	11	12	6	6
Rural	19	17	21	5	9	10	14	8	11
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	16	14	8	14	11	6	2	3	2
30 and older	38	22	30	14	11	15	24	11	15
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelor's	27	20	25	13	11	13	14	9	12
Bachelor's or higher	27	16	13	15	11	8	12	5	5
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-Hispanic	36	19	25	18	13	16	18	6	9
Non-White or Hispanic	18	17	13	10	9	5	8	8	8

<sup>21</sup> A total of 132 respondents were interviewed; 65 of the 132 respondents were LGBT, and 67 were non- LGBT.

## 4.2.1 Self-Reporting

### 4.2.1.1 Sexual Orientation

#### CPS Test Question on Sexual Orientation

[Self-response]: Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, which of the following best represents how [NAME] thinks of themselves?

- Gay or Lesbian
- Straight, that is not gay, lesbian, or bisexual
- Bisexual
- Something else

Forty-two of 132 respondents found the question about sexual orientation sensitive for themselves in one or more protocols, though none identified it as sensitive during the Standardized Questionnaire (Table 10).

Of those who did find the SO question sensitive, most expressed sensitivity during the Card Sort Debriefing (36), followed by the Context Debriefing (10), and General Debriefing (6). The majority of these 42 respondents said sexual orientation was something they viewed as private. LGBT respondents indicated that they viewed their own sexual orientation as a private matter, while non-LGBT respondents found sexual orientation culturally sensitive and therefore more generally private.

Nearly all (21 out of 23; see Appendix B) of the LGBT respondents who mentioned sensitivity concerns about SO said their own sexual orientation was private:

- “As someone who is ‘L’ [lesbian], I grew up in the south. It’s a sensitive topic. [I’m] not nervous you’re going to judge me, but it’s not a totally comfortable topic.”
- “After all the years of hiding that I am gay, it’s personal. It’s different than back then...I don’t go announcing it to anyone, but it is better.”

These respondents indicated they were reluctant to talk about their sexual orientation with just anyone, and some of these respondents were specifically concerned about disclosing their sexual orientation to strangers. One LGBT respondent said that it would be out of place for an interviewer to ask for their sexual orientation over the phone and they would not feel comfortable disclosing it to them.

- “There are several bills in the state of Tennessee that are anti-LGBT and anti-marriage equality...a lot of attention and fear in our community.”
- “[There’s a] stigma [where] you don’t know how people would react.”

Seven LGBT respondents further specified they thought disclosure of sexual orientation was sensitive because they were worried that the data would be used for discriminatory purposes:

- “Sometimes you could get hurt if you say it to the wrong person.”

However, most of these respondents specifically identified the CPS or government surveys generally as acceptable places to disclose SO:

- “[These are] questions that I wouldn’t be answering under all circumstances, [but I] would be comfortable answering for the CPS.”
- “I would verify that the person is a government employee...If they are, I am fine with it.”

Nearly all (18 out of 19) of the non-LGBT respondents who indicated sensitivity concerns about SO said that it is a private, culturally sensitive topic receiving a lot of attention in society generally but their comments were not always about surveys.

- “A little odd the question about sexuality...It feels intrusive.”
- “Too personal. Tired of hearing about that.”
- “With everything in news, and politics, the politically correct language that is used...it is like you need to apologize for being straight or not changed genders.”
- “Sexual orientation receives more focus than it should in society; it is an irrelevant thing.”
- “No one’s business.”

Five respondents also felt that SO was not relevant to the CPS or government surveys.

A less frequent reason for finding the SO question sensitive was feeling uncomfortable with response options offered or labeling of sexual orientation in general. Five respondents mentioned this concern; all but one were LGB. The non-LGB respondent thought the question should include the term “heterosexual.” For other respondents, the “something else” response option was particularly problematic, with a few respondents saying it is too broad and a few respondents saying it is an unnecessary category.

- “I keep focusing on the something else, because I don’t fit [in] the other three. It’s not the question itself, it’s just that option – [I] would be lumped together with a larger group that I don’t represent.”
- “‘Something else’ is what I’d answer, but it also doesn’t give you an identity at all.”
- “‘Something else’ bothered me; what else could you be?”

#### 4.2.1.2 Gender Identity

##### CPS Test Questions on Gender Identity

###### QUESTION 1: SEX AT BIRTH

[Self-response]: Was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, was [NAME's] sex recorded as male or female at birth?

- Male
- Female

###### QUESTION 2: CURRENT GENDER IDENTITY

[Self-response]: Do you describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?

[Proxy response]: To the best of your knowledge, does [NAME] describe themselves as male, female, or transgender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

Twenty-seven of 132 respondents found the GI questions about for themselves to be sensitive, though none identified it as sensitive during the Standardized Questionnaire (Table 10). Respondents who did find these questions sensitive most often expressed sensitivity during the Card Sort Debriefing (17) and Question Specific Probing (12). Of the 105 respondents who did not find the GI question sensitive, a few firmly stated it was not sensitive:

- “Nothing to be offended by, no problem with the question.”
- “Doesn’t bother me.”
- “Normal, not offended.”

As with sexual orientation, perceptions of sensitivity mostly had to do with GI being something respondents viewed as private. Eleven LGBT respondents indicated that they viewed their own identity as private, while eight non-LGBT respondents had thought of transgender identity as stigmatizing and therefore considered identity generally private. All respondents who found their own identity private to talk about were LGB, and most were transgender.

- “Based on first reaction - is this something I want to answer? The others don’t get that kind of scrutiny.”
- “Sex recorded at birth, seemed a little more personal.”

Respondents who said disclosing their own GI was sensitive also said that any question asking about a characteristic central to a person’s identity is sensitive. Some respondents mentioned disability and/or race as being similarly central to people’s identities.

- “Sensitive questions are about how you define yourself.”
- “The sensitive [questions have] negative connotations attached to them, and groups that [may] feel slighted [by them].”

Eleven non-LGBT respondents indicating sensitivity discussed gender identity as a private, culturally sensitive topic and did not feel comfortable with questions that identify people as transgender. One respondent felt it questioned his masculinity:

- “It challenges me if I am male.”

There were eight LGBT respondents who found the GI questions sensitive because they were uncomfortable with the wording of the questions themselves, and their comments generally echoed those from the difficulty section. Most of the eight respondents indicating sensitivity were transgender and said they did not see a response option that described them; one respondent said they wanted to select more than one response option. Additionally, a couple of cisgender<sup>22</sup> respondents thought the “at birth” wording in the sex question was unexpected or unnecessary.

- “It’s all right, I understand it but I’m not terribly comfortable with it.”
- “I don’t know why it would be asked.”
- “What was your gender at birth...when I was born, this would not be asked.”
- “What matters is what is now, not what is past.”
- “Sex at birth is silly. I am female. To expedite the process, start with this and make two questions into one. I am old school. Male or female. I still respect gay and transgender, but to me I just know male or female.”

While most respondents talked about the two GI questions as a package, not all respondents found each individual question sensitive. Of those respondents who only found one of the gender identity questions sensitive, sex at birth was selected as sensitive more often than current gender. It is not clear if all respondents who found just sex at birth sensitive understood how the two parts of the question would be used together to identify transgender respondents.

As with the SO question, some respondents who indicated reluctance to answer questions about gender identity also indicated that the CPS or a government survey was an appropriate place for it to be asked and that they would answer it.

- “A little personal, but I am male, I know the answer.”
- “If you just said it’s a survey about employment...I wouldn’t be opposed.”
- “If I knew it was going to government data, I feel safe giving that info.”

#### **4.2.1.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Reporting Sensitivity with SOGI Questions**

In total, 54 respondents found SO (42) and/or GI (27) sensitive when reporting for themselves (Table 11). The respondents indicating sensitivity were about evenly split between LGBT (28) and non-LGBT (26). All eight of the transgender respondents indicated SO and/or GI questions were sensitive for themselves.

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<sup>22</sup> Cisgender, sometimes abbreviated as cis, refers to “a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are consistent.” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)



As noted above, the different demographic composition of the LGBT and non-LGBT groups limits the group comparisons that can be drawn. Within the groups, however, the LGBT respondents who indicated sensitivity reporting for themselves were primarily urban (23 of the 28) while the non-LGBT group expressing sensitivity was fairly evenly split on this characteristic. Also, the non-LGBT group was primarily older (24 of 26 were 30 or older), while the LGBT group was evenly split on over/under 30 years old.

#### **4.2.1.4 Differences in Sensitivity for SOGI versus non-SOGI Questions**

Despite the caveats noted in Section 3.4.1 on design differences by protocols, and thus potential for some CPS questions to provide more opportunities for respondents to identify difficulty concerns, we did some high-level comparisons to understand the relative difficulty of the SOGI questions compared to the non-SOGI questions.

Results from the qualitative protocols displayed in Table 10 show that across topics, the sexual orientation item stood out as the most sensitive, with 42 respondents expressing sensitivity at some point across all protocols, and disability was not far behind with 37 respondents expressing sensitivity. Gender identity and income questions were next, with 27, and 26 respondents reporting sensitivity, respectively. Relationship/marital status (19) and employment (14) were next and fairly close.

When respondents identified questions as sensitive, it was because the topic was salient in their daily life, and/or the topic was a sensitive part of their identity. Respondents indicated these questions required an additional moment of thought and consideration. Respondents recognized that particular response options would indicate they were members of a particular group. This was especially relevant to questions about SOGI as well as the race/ethnicity questions (e.g., they would be identified as a racial or gender minority).

- “These are sensitive because they are personal...I might not want to tell a stranger the answer.”
- “Seems almost a little invasive, and makes me a little hesitant...who is going to see the answer.”
- “Because when I think about who I am and my race, I think about what it means, and what the downside is of being Black. It bothers me because I know what I have to deal with in today’s society.”
- “It makes me think about if I have difficulties doing these normal tasks that I can’t complete sometimes. Makes me think about myself.”

In the Card Sort Exercise, respondents put an average of 2.36 of the 15 cards into the sensitive pile, with a two-card median. Thirty-five respondents said that none of the cards were sensitive, and an additional 20 and 21 respondents only put one or two cards in the sensitive pile, respectively. Only 34 of the 132 respondents put four or more cards in the sensitive pile. This indicates that most of the questions were not seen as sensitive.

Results from the exercise of sorting cards into sensitive and not sensitive mapped almost exactly on to the qualitative results from Table 10. The card most frequently sorted into the sensitive pile was the SO question, to which 47 respondents considered it to be sensitive (Table 12). This was followed by the two disability items, sex at birth, gender identity, and then income. In terms of ranking, the top three items ranked as the most sensitive were disability/concentrating (19), sexual orientation (18), and disability/errands (11). Thus, the questions about disability and sexual orientation were the most frequently selected as being sensitive, and were also ranked as the top most sensitive in the Card Sort Exercise.

**Table 12. Card Sort Exercise Results for Sensitivity, Ranked by Question (n = 132)**

Question	N Sorted as Sensitive	N Ranked as Most Sensitive	N Ranked as Second-Most Sensitive	N Ranked as Third-Most Sensitive
Sexual orientation	47	18	14	8
Disability (concentrating)	41	19	8	8
Disability (errands)	38	11	12	4
Sex at birth	35	8	11	8
Gender identity	32	9	8	7
Income	29	9	5	6
Unmarried partner in household	17	4	5	2
Race	16	5	3	2
Name of employer	11	3	3	3
Marital status	10	4	0	2
Ethnicity	10	2	2	2
Education	8	2	1	1
Worked last week	5	0	2	2
Date of birth	5	1	2	0
Armed forces	4	0	0	1

## 4.2.2 Proxy Reporting

### 4.2.2.1 Sexual Orientation

When asked about SO for others in the household, 27 of 132 respondents expressed some sensitivity in at least one of the protocols (Table 10). The 105 respondents who did not find the question sensitive made remarks such as:

- “No, we are pretty open about everything.”
- “This sort of question is becoming more prevalent in society. I don’t believe it’s a very intrusive question, more often than not people that are gay or lesbian are more out about

being gay or lesbian. I don't want to say it like this, but it's kind of become more mainstream, where it's more easily accepted, so this is not a question that would offend anybody to my knowledge."

The number of respondents expressing sensitivity about the SO items for others (27) was lower than for self-reporting (42). Most of these reports of sensitivity occurred during the Card Sort Debriefing (22) and Context Debriefing (13). Reasons for sensitivity echoed the issues found for self-reporting in terms of the topic being private; response option wording and relevancy were also mentioned again.

Another reason for sensitivity, unique to proxy reporting, was that some respondents felt uncomfortable responding about other household members' SO. Eight respondents commented on this, and the majority of respondents making these comments were from LGBT households.

- "Feels uncomfortable answering about anyone else, whether they are in the room or not, because it's a little bit of a personal statement."
- "Would not want to answer for others. [I] would prefer they answer for themselves."
- "Because they don't get a say, don't know what I'm saying about them, [that] makes it more sensitive for [roommates] self-identifying stuff."
- "Weird to answer that on his behalf."

Four respondents said their discomfort stemmed from the fact that they were unsure which response option was most appropriate.

- "Some questions are easier to answer for someone else, but things like sexuality are tougher. It's a complex issue when you're thinking about what a child may or may not have told you about themselves."
- "Answering for relatives, not knowing exactly how they identify or their own history, was sensitive."

Fifteen respondents speculated that one of their household members would feel sensitive answering this question about themselves. All but one of these respondents lived in a non-LGBT household. Three respondents also felt this household member would be uncomfortable providing information about others living in the household. Five respondents felt that someone in the household would be offended by having a sexual orientation question on the survey because they found it a culturally sensitive topic.

- "Husband would find the gay and lesbian, the transgender and the medical, sensitive... He was raised in Alabama as a Baptist."
- "Elder mother would feel frustrated by this question. It is not something they talk about. She knows he is gay (came out in 40s), but it is not talked about."
- "He's a male, and males are very sensitive on the topic of identifying themselves. Not a lot of people are open to it."

However, only three respondents said they thought a household member would refuse to answer sexual orientation for themselves or other people, and only one respondent said their household

member would refuse to answer due to finding questions about SO culturally sensitive. One of the other two respondents said this was because her partner would find the question too personal and the other thought a roommate would not be willing to answer any survey questions at all.

#### **4.2.2.2 Gender Identity**

When asked about GI for others in the household, 17 of 132 respondents expressed some sensitivity across at least one of the qualitative protocols (Table 10). Most of these reports of sensitivity occurred during the Card Sort Debriefing. Reasons for sensitivity varied depending on whether the respondent lived in an LGBT household or not. Ten respondents living in an LGBT household said that their household members would find it sensitive because of their own personal identity or expressed a preference for household members to answer for themselves instead.

- “Gender questions for brother is ‘kind of sensitive,’ because I feel like, I don’t like to speak for him on behalf of his gender identity, and I can’t go into very many details about it. He identifies as genderqueer, but I don’t want to explain for him, and be incorrect in some way. I’d rather him be able to explain it for himself.”

Seven respondents in non-LGBT households thought a household member would be uncomfortable with being asked gender identity questions due to cultural sensitivity. Four of these respondents thought the older people in their household would find this sensitive, and one identified a teenage daughter as possibly feeling sensitive. However, only one respondent believed that a household member would not answer these questions for themselves or other people in the household.

- “[My dad] grew up in a different era ... he does not talk about some of this stuff.”
- “She [daughter] might be a little uncomfortable answering for her parents.”

#### **4.2.2.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Reporting Sensitivity with SOGI Questions**

Among the 36 respondents who found the SO and/or GI questions sensitive for proxy reporting, more were LGBT (22) than non-LGBT (14), as shown in Table 11. There were no other clear demographic differences.

Although caution should be used as the LGBT and non-LGBT group had different demographic compositions, within the non-LGBT group, more respondents indicating sensitivity were over 30 than under (11 versus 3).

#### **4.2.2.4 Differences in Sensitivity for SOGI versus non-SOGI Questions**

Despite the caveats noted in Section 3.4.1 on design differences by protocols, and thus potential for some CPS questions to provide more opportunities for respondents to identify

difficulty concerns, we did some high-level comparisons to understand the relative difficulty of the SOGI questions compared to the non-SOGI questions.

Results from the qualitative protocols displayed in Table 10 show that across topics, the disability items stood out as the most sensitive for proxy reporting by far, with 58 respondents expressing sensitivity at some point across protocols. Sexual orientation and race/ethnicity were next with 27 and 22 respondents, respectively. Income and gender identity were next and fairly close, with 18 and 17 respondents expressing sensitivity, respectively. The majority of comments about these questions being sensitive in the qualitative protocols were made during the Card Sort Debriefing.

Respondents who identified questions as sensitive often did not want to answer for other household members, stating that they preferred household members respond for themselves. In some cases, respondents were concerned about answering incorrectly for the other person. This reason was most frequent for disability and sexual orientation. Some respondents thought a household member would find questions sensitive to answer for both themselves and other household members, and this reason was most frequently cited for the disability, income and sexual orientation items.

In the Card Sort Debriefing, where respondents were asked if other household members would sort and rank the cards differently for sensitivity than they did, some respondents (41 of 132) said other household members would only select a subset of the cards they selected, or none at all. Other respondents (56) said other household members would select different or additional cards. Of these, the questions that respondents thought others would find sensitive but they themselves did not were most often disability items (52) and sexual orientation (22).

Sensitivity rarely resulted in refusal to answer during the Standardized Questionnaire. Only two respondents refused to answer a question about a household member because they found it sensitive. One refusal was to the employment questions out of concerns about identity theft, and the other felt the respondent should answer for themselves about their disability.

### **4.2.3 Perceptions of Non-Household Members**

Some respondents volunteered that “others” outside the household would find certain questions sensitive, and the questions cited most often were gender identity (31), disability (28), and sexual orientation (20). In terms of protocols, the sensitivity was most often reported in the Card Sort Debriefing and, to a lesser extent, in the Question Specific Probing.

For the most part respondents offered these kinds of comments because they thought people in certain minority groups could feel stigmatized by being asked questions about being part of those minority groups. For example, sexual, gender, or racial minorities were mentioned, as well as those who have a disability or have a lower income:

- “As someone without a serious issue, it doesn’t faze me.”

- “Separation of the Hispanic versus the other race questions. Could see some [Hispanic] people might feel singled out.”
- “People with mental health issues would not want to talk about them on a survey.”
- [Race and ethnicity] “marginalizes some people.”
- “Just the sexual orientation one. For some people it’s just not an appropriate, casual topic of conversation; they may consider it rude or personal.”
- “Some might not want [the government] asking.”
- “I question if a person was struggling [with a disability] if they would answer those truthfully.”

Overall, some respondents thought sexual orientation (20) and/or gender identity (31) would be sensitive for “others” not in their household. Twenty-eight respondents thought gender identity questions and 12 respondents thought sexual orientation questions would be sensitive for respondents who are LGBT. Respondents perceived sensitivity may occur because LGBT status would be considered personal, question wording was not adequately inclusive, or because of concerns about questions being used to discriminate against LGBT individuals.

- “Could see some people being off put by not being represented.”
- “I don’t know. Under the current climate, I don’t know. It could be used against the person.”
- “Not [sensitive] for me, but I work at a college and the transgender question always comes up as sensitive when we ask it on applications. It doesn’t for me, but I know there are some very strong feelings about that. I think people identify in a lot of different ways.”
- “While I am not transgender, if I was, I might not want to specify that.”
- “There can be a negative connotation to transgender.”
- “People who are trans and trans allies might have an issue with the limited options.”
- “It’s good, but my problem is that I wouldn’t want them to be discriminated against if they’re transgender.”

Respondents in non-LGBT households also thought that transgender individuals may not want to talk about the sex they were assigned at birth, if they had transitioned.

- “It seems more intrusive, asking at birth, shouldn’t we just accept?”
- “People who are transgender want to be recognized for the person they identify as now, not their birth certificate.”
- “If I was transgender, I would think it is not your business how I was born. How I am now is what matters.”

Very few respondents said they thought these questions were sensitive because someone outside of the relevant minority group or community might find it sensitive or offensive. Only a few respondents indicated this as a concern for sexual orientation (8) or gender identity (3).

- “I’ve had to ask them [sensitive questions] to people at work, you should see some of the looks and responses you can get. They were uncomfortable for me, and I know that they can be uncomfortable for others - if you ask if they’re transgender and they look like a woman, they can get offended.”

- “[He] feels most people in his community do not care and would answer the question. But some that are part of the old boy network will not be happy with these questions.”

Respondents who indicated the SOGI questions would be sensitive for “other” non-household members were more frequently over 30 (30 of 38) and lived in family households (28 of 38). LGB and non-LGBT respondents were fairly similar except on household size; LGBT were more often in 2-person households (14 of 21), and non-LGBT were more often in households with three or more members (13 of 17).

### **4.3 Context (SOGI Questions in a Federal Employment Survey)**

In the Context Debriefing protocol, where respondents were asked explicitly about their thoughts on SOGI questions being included in a Federal survey on employment, 109 of 132 respondents did not have any issues with the SOGI questions. Of the 109 respondents, some (34) said they considered the SOGI questions normal or routine. Others (65), roughly evenly split on LGBT and non-LGBT, expressed support for the addition of SOGI questions:

- “It’s excellent that you’re going to add it to the employment stuff, good to measure it.”
- “It is a government function to make sure those people are treated equally. So asking the question determines that scope. It is a reasonable thing to ask, even if I think it is a little personal.”
- “I think it is great to have more information about all queer populations. I would answer them even though I don’t like the wording for something like this [government surveys] but not in most cases.”
- “I think it would probably be useful. I think that’s relevant in employment issues.”
- “I think it’s a good idea. Wouldn’t damage anything, we wouldn’t know until we ask.”
- “I think it’s good, because in order to move forward as a nation, it’s good to find out how many there are. People will be more truthful if you ask this way. Are there more than we realize? If so, we will learn how to message to these communities.”

Respondents who generally understood the purpose of the questions made comments such as:

- “Probably [because] they want to have some sense of where the population is, in terms of the reality of these questions. What percentage of us does identify a certain way? And whether or not there are impediments to hiring in the workplace, or workplace safety, and to do workplace advancement. I think that those are legitimate questions to get at.”
- “To track to see if a certain sexual orientation is having trouble in the working field. Some see that there is discrimination, so it would be good if the government had numbers to back up if that was true or not.”
- “Same reason as questions about race and ethnicity, to be sure they are represented in the workforce.”

Of the 23 respondents who did raise issues about SOGI questions in the Context Debriefing, most of them (17) discussed concern over confidentiality, mentioning that the current political climate could make their responses less protected and/or be used for discrimination:

- “Right now, we are not ready to be that open...Too early right now.”
- “I think it’s a good idea, but in the current political climate, how honest or accurate people would be?”
- “If it helps us being counted, I am in favor.” This respondent also stated that he fears the information could be used to be “targeted.” Recent political changes make him uncomfortable answering these questions.

The other six respondents found the questions culturally controversial and generally identified themselves or an older household member as the person who found the questions sensitive. These respondents questioned the relevance of SOGI questions in the context of an employment survey, and a few suggested adding an explanation of the reasons for the SOGI questions.

- “I don’t see why. What does that have to do with employment statistics?”
- “I do not see the connection between sexuality data and your stated purpose.”
- “Why...what would be the reason, I don’t see any reason to have these...gay people have always existed. Why do we need questions now?”

Respondents who found the questions sensitive in the Context Debriefing generally agreed they would answer the questions in the context of a government survey about employment. However, some indicated that they would need to feel they trusted the interviewer or would check credentials:

- “I would verify that the person is a government employee...if they are, I am fine with it.”
- “As long as I know the person I’m responding to is who they say they are, I wouldn’t have any reservations. If someone called me out of the blue, I may want to verify.”

In the Card Sort Debriefing, one respondent remarked that these types of questions were “not the government’s business.”

Respondents who found the questions culturally sensitive recognized there may be value in asking these questions, and they were just not sure how to balance privacy concerns and the need for questions:

- “Why would they care? Positives for statistics, negatives you are being nosy.”
- “Collecting data has value, but I do believe you will hit sensitivities questioning people about their sexuality. You can run into a whole bunch of problems.” This respondent indicated that the problems could be on both sides – non-LGB people not liking the question, and LGB people being concerned about privacy.
- “Why is it important? It is intrusive. We live in a strange time... [gender] is in everyone’s face, the government overregulates everything in life. Yet these people do get stepped on. Where is the line?”

Additionally, during the General Debriefing, only two respondents questioned the relevance of the SOGI questions. Throughout all the protocols, other respondents commented that they were surprised, but not necessarily confused or bothered, to get this type of question:



- “Sex identification stood out because I know it’s really important and it’s like ‘wow, everything is changing with how people identify themselves on forms.’”
- “It is not a common thing to be asked.”
- “Surprised you asked those so quickly in the interview.”
- “Not used to that yet.”

## 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Conclusions

#### 5.1.1 Summary of Findings

##### 5.1.1.1 How difficult are the SOGI questions for respondents to understand and answer? Do respondents have the knowledge to answer for other people in their household and are they willing to provide those answers?

Overall, across interview protocols, most respondents found the SOGI questions clear and did not have any difficulty with self-response. All respondents were able to answer the sexual orientation question for themselves during the Standardized Questionnaire, and all but one respondent were able to answer the gender identity questions. Sexual orientation and gender identity were equivalent in terms of difficulty for self-response. In comparison to other items, we found that SOGI questions had fewer instances of difficulty for self-response than current CPS questions about income, disability, or employment, and that SOGI questions had similar rates of difficulty to current CPS questions about race and relationship/marital status.

Reasons for difficulty with self-response to the SOGI questions included having a fluid identity, questioning one’s identity, or not having a preferred option for the term that one uses to describe oneself.

With regard to proxy response, most respondents found the SOGI questions clear and did not show any difficulty across interview protocols. All but one respondent were able to answer the sexual orientation question for everyone in their household (age 15 and older) during the Standardized Questionnaire, and all were able to answer the gender identity questions for everyone in their household (age 15 and older). In terms of relative difficulty across items, gender identity questions were easier for respondents than sexual orientation, and we found that both SO and GI questions had fewer instances of difficulty for proxy response than for some of the current CPS questions (e.g., income, employment, disability and date of birth).

Reasons for difficulty with the sexual orientation question in proxy response were similar to those for SOGI questions in self-response. In addition, some respondents reported lack of knowledge about the sexual orientation of others in the household. Reasons for difficulty with the gender identity questions in proxy response included lack of knowledge about the gender identity of

others in the household, household members not having a preferred response option, or perceiving that older household members would not understand the terms in the question. Based on paired interviews, responses to the gender identity question had a higher rate of matching responses for all household members than any of the comparative CPS questions. Responses to the sexual orientation question had a higher rate of matching responses for all household than CPS questions about income, education, and employment, and this rate was similar to other CPS questions.

#### **5.1.1.2 How sensitive do the respondents perceive the SOGI questions to be when answering for themselves and for others in their household, and how does that sensitivity relate to willingness to answer the questions or complete the survey?**

Across interview protocols, there was little evidence of respondents perceiving the SOGI questions to be sensitive for self-response. All respondents were willing to answer the SOGI questions about themselves during the Standardized Questionnaire. Gender identity was less sensitive than sexual orientation. In comparison with other CPS items, we found that the sexual orientation question and disability questions were identified as sensitive more often than any of the other questions, followed by gender identity and income.

Reasons for sensitivity to self-response for SOGI questions differed between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents. For LGBT respondents, sensitivity was due to finding this information personally sensitive to disclose. For non-LGBT respondents, “cultural sensitivity” applied to the SOGI subject matter in general. A few respondents (most of whom were LGB) indicated they found SO or GI questions sensitive because they were uncomfortable with the question wording and response options. For the sexual orientation question in particular, some respondents also found it sensitive due to the “something else” option – some disliked this option, or found it problematic or too general.

For proxy response, a majority of respondents again did not perceive the SOGI questions to be sensitive for other members of the household. All respondents were willing to answer the SOGI questions about everyone in their household (age 15 and older) during the Standardized Questionnaire; the only questions with any refusals for proxy response were the CPS questions about disability and employment. Interestingly, sensitivity to SOGI questions was lower for proxy response than for self-response. In terms of relative sensitivity across items for proxy response, disability was by far the most sensitive, followed by sexual orientation, followed by race/ethnicity, income and gender identity.

As with self-response, reasons for sensitivity to SOGI questions in proxy response differed between LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, with LGBT respondents feeling personally sensitive, and non-LGBT respondents indicating cultural sensitivity. In addition, some respondents felt uncomfortable answering about identity of others in their household due to uncertainty over which option was most appropriate, or reluctance to disclose this more generally.

**5.1.1.3 Do difficulty and sensitivity differ based on demographics - such as geography, household structure, race and/or Hispanic ethnicity, educational attainment, sexual orientation or gender identity?**

Overall, most of the respondents who expressed difficulty or sensitivity with the SOGI questions were lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB). Additionally, almost all of the few transgender respondents in the study found the SOGI questions difficult and/or sensitive.

Because the demographic profile of the LGBT and non-LGBT samples were different, and because the individuals who found the questions difficult and/or sensitive were dominated by LGBT respondents, our ability to detect demographic differences in the results between those groups was reduced. Some differences by household size, age, urbanicity, educational attainment, and race were identified for individual comparisons (e.g., difficulty for proxy reporting, sensitivity for self-reporting). However, these differences were not consistent across comparisons, and so are difficult to interpret.

**5.1.1.4 Are respondents willing to answer SOGI questions for themselves and others in their household in the context of a Federal government survey on employment?**

When asked in the General Debriefing which questions “stood out” or were “bothersome,” over 60 percent did not find anything notable about the CPS interview questions. About half of those who did say something stood out or was bothersome mentioned SOGI questions, largely because of concerns about how the response options aligned (or did not align) with their self-identity, and not about the general presence of the SOGI questions in a Federal employment survey. Only a couple of respondents spontaneously questioned the relevance of the SOGI questions. Others commented that they were surprised, but not necessarily confused or bothered, to see these types of questions.

In the Context Debriefing protocol, where respondents were asked explicitly about their thoughts on SOGI questions being included in a Federal survey on employment, very few respondents had any issues with the SOGI questions, with several indicating it could be a positive change. Of those who did raise concerns in the Context Debriefing, most of them discussed concerns about confidentiality, mentioning that their responses could be less protected and/or be used for discriminatory purposes in the current political climate. The remaining respondents found the questions culturally controversial and generally identified themselves or an older household member as the person finding the questions sensitive. These respondents questioned the relevance of SOGI questions in the context of an employment survey, and a few suggested adding an explanation of the reasons for the SOGI questions.

Respondents who found the questions sensitive in the Context Debriefing generally agreed they would answer the questions in the context of a government survey about employment. However,

some indicated that they would need to feel they trusted the interviewer or would check credentials.

#### **5.1.1.5 What feedback do respondents have on wording of SOGI questions?**

While question wording was not a main focus of this study, respondents gave feedback during the interviews that can be used to inform future research. Respondents generally understood the SOGI questions, but some LGBT respondents had difficulty. Most of the respondents who had difficulty indicated this was due to insufficient response options being available. A few respondents thought older people in their household (or older people in general) might be confused by the terminology in these questions.

For gender identity, while we only spoke to eight transgender respondents, some found the use of “at birth” in the sex question sensitive, despite understanding the purpose of the phrase. Some cisgender respondents also thought this wording would be sensitive for transgender respondents. Additionally, respondents commented on the lack of response options and the inability to mark all that apply. Respondents suggested adding “gender non-binary,” “trans-man,” “trans-woman,” and “something else.” They also said that transgender respondents may identify as both male and transgender or female and transgender; these response options are not mutually exclusive.

For sexual orientation, most of the feedback we received was on the use of the “something else” category in the response options. Some respondents did not want to be categorized in the “something else” category but indicated no other response option was suitable. Other options suggested by respondents were asexual, pansexual, and queer.

## **5.2 Study Limitations**

Overall, results from these cognitive interviews suggest that most respondents do not find SOGI questions difficult or sensitive to report for themselves or for others in their households, and that almost no respondents raised objections to the context of these questions in the CPS. However, evidence of difficulty and sensitivity for self and proxy reporting were more frequent among LGBT respondents.

These findings suggest that while collection of SOGI information on the CPS may be feasible, extensive further testing is needed on issues such as question wording and the wording of response categories, placement of the questions within the context of the overall CPS questionnaire. Furthermore, these cognitive interviews were just one part of a larger study on the feasibility of asking about SOGI on the CPS. A decision on overall feasibility of collecting SOGI information in the CPS should consider the findings of the cognitive interviews as well as those of the focus groups conducted with members of the transgender population (Holzberg et al., 2017).

This qualitative study was carefully designed to evaluate the feasibility of asking SOGI questions in the context of an employment survey – specifically the CPS – which relies on proxy response. While the results above are sound and provide valuable information to the specified research questions, there are some limitations that need to be kept in mind when considering the implications of the findings.

### **5.2.1 Qualitative Research**

While this research included some quantitative components (e.g., Card Sort Exercise, Paired Interview Matching Rates), the main data collected were qualitative and respondents are not meant to be representative of any given population. This means the results are not designed to produce point estimates or standard errors, or to represent the population as a whole.

However, compared to most cognitive interviewing studies, our sample was large (132 individuals) and diverse in terms of demographic, household and geographic characteristics. Additionally, a team of eight researchers, from three different organizations, collected data which mitigates potential interviewer effects.

Additionally, the artificial testing environment may limit the generalizability of the findings. All respondents volunteered to participate in the study, and while we explained that we were testing new questions for a Federal survey on employment, it is likely each respondent had a slightly different understanding of what that meant, based on their prior knowledge or experience with government surveys. Some respondents were clearly confused about the government aspect of this inquiry, which resulted in misunderstandings we would not expect to see in actual data collection, such as the conflation of the CPS with a job application or the belief that survey data is not kept confidential.

### **5.2.2 Respondent Characteristics**

Although attempts were made to recruit respondents with a wide variety of demographic characteristics and backgrounds, the nature of the recruiting methods (e.g., Craigslist ads mentioning LGBT; use of a known LGBT contractor) may have attracted people who were more ‘friendly’ to the LGBT community than the average population and/or advocates for LGBT issues eager to share their perspective. As a result, these respondents may react differently to SOGI questions than a typical cross-section of the population.

Additionally, as is typical with these types of studies that rely on volunteer samples, respondents may be more cooperative and comfortable with the Federal government and/or research studies than actual survey respondents outside the lab setting.

### **5.2.3 Question Specific Feedback**

Interviewing protocols were designed to maximize the information collected about the research questions. That meant that some protocols called for very detailed feedback and targeted only

specific items (e.g., topics included in the Question Specific Probing protocol) while other protocols were more open-ended in terms of the items and the nature of feedback (e.g.: only spontaneous respondent feedback was collected during the administration of the Standardized Questionnaire). Additionally, within the production CPS survey the number of questions within given topic area varied (e.g., 17 employment questions but only 3 SOGI questions). Not only did that lead to increased opportunities for respondents to spontaneously indicate difficulty or sensitivity; it may have affected the comparisons between SOGI questions and other items in the questionnaire. Additionally, when looking at match rates in the paired interviews, the number of response categories may have impacted the results. For example with 17 response categories, there were more opportunities for mismatch on the income question than there were on the gender identity question which had fewer response categories. These limitations reduce our ability to compare results across questions, but we still find valuable information when looking at the question by question results.

#### **5.2.4 SOGI Question Placement and Wording**

Although we interviewed a large number of respondents, we simply did not have the resources to split the sample and test alternate placements of the SOGI questions within the CPS questionnaire. Therefore, we were limited to testing the SOGI items in only one place: embedded in the demographics section, which is asked early in the questionnaire. Context effects based on question context and sequence are well-known in the field of survey methodology (Schwarz & Sudman, 2012) and may have impacted the findings. Therefore, we acknowledge, the results may have varied if the SOGI questions had been tested in alternative locations. Additional research should be done to determine the ideal placement of these questions.

However, there are some logistical implications on where the gender identity questions are placed that must be considered. Currently in the CPS, the question on sex is asked early in the interview and used to select pronouns in later questions (e.g.: 'What was *his* main job?'). Placing the sex and/or gender identity questions later in the interview would have cascading impacts on so many other CPS questions, which might be undesirable.

That said, pronoun choice is not a simple decision when considering gender identity. In this study, the gender-neutral pronoun "themselves" was used, rather than the sex-specific pronoun, in the demographic questions. For most other questions, the household member's name was used in the question. We did not collect feedback on this pronoun choice, or test alternatives, and so cannot speak to its effectiveness. It may be possible that there is an interaction between the effectiveness of the gender identity question and pronouns used throughout the survey; yet another research topic to explore.

#### **5.2.5 Emphasis on Proxy Reporting**

One main research question from this study was the feasibility of collecting SOGI information via proxy reporting. That led to the exclusion of single-person households from this study, despite the fact that they make up 28 percent of the typical CPS sample (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013).

It is possible that respondents from single-person households have different levels of difficulty or sensitivity to the SOGI questions, and that finding is not represented in these results.

### **5.2.6 Testing Locations**

The four data collection locations (Washington, DC; Portland, OR; Nashville, TN; and Fargo, ND and their outlying areas) were selected with the goal of collecting information from a variety of respondents with differing experiences and cultural backgrounds. While these cities were expected to represent a variety of cultural perspectives, they are not expected to be comprehensive. Additional testing in other locations will reveal whether the opinions expressed by the respondents in this study are similar to or different from those in other regions of the country.

### **5.2.7 Small Sample of Transgender Respondents**

We set out to include a sample roughly evenly split between LGB and non-LGB individuals and that goal was met. In a companion study, we conducted focus groups with transgender individuals (Holzberg et al, 2017). However, we did not have the additional resources to include roughly equal numbers of transgender and cisgender individuals in the cognitive interviews; only eight of the 132 respondents were transgender and only two additional respondents had transgender household members. This limits the conclusions that we are able to draw about the feasibility of collecting SOGI information for transgender respondents, either through self or proxy response.

### **5.2.8 English Language Only**

All testing for this study was conducted in English, and all respondents spoke English fluently. We anticipate cultural and language issues may arise when translating the SOGI questions to other languages. The CPS is regularly administered in English and Spanish, and translators are called on when necessary for other languages. Thus, translation and accompanying cultural issues need to be explored before adding SOGI questions to the CPS.

### **5.2.9 Additional Analyses Required**

As with any qualitative study, the amount of data to be analyzed is immense. While we identified many themes, and answered the primary research objectives, there remains data that has yet to be fully analyzed. Continued analysis of the data would add value and depth to the existing analyses and more insights to the SOGI topic overall.

### **5.3 Recommendations and Future Research**

If it is deemed feasible to include SOGI questions in the CPS based on this study and its companion focus group study, the next steps are to identify the outstanding potential issues that need to be addressed by future research, such as:

- Question wording, and wording of response categories
- Translation and cultural issues for non-English populations
- Impact of survey administration mode on respondent reactions
- Further examination of the sensitivity of questions, and whether this varies by demographics
- Optimal question placement within the CPS
- Appropriate age cutoff for questions, and procedures for obtaining consent
- Quality of estimates generated using the CPS, including whether the sample size would be sufficient to develop reliable labor force estimates for the LGBT population, or an analysis of the likely error bounds of such estimates
- Comparison of methodologies and estimates of SOGI questions included in other surveys

We emphasize that there remain serious concerns about classification error due to the small estimated size of the LGBT population. Mistakenly classifying respondents who are not LGBT as LGBT, or vice versa, would likely increase the statistical error in population estimates, although the full extent and statistical consequences of these errors are beyond the scope of this research. We cannot yet make any conclusions about the quality of data these questions would collect if added to the CPS.

Given the dearth of research available on this topic, we encourage researchers working on other surveys to further explore difficulty, sensitivity, and accuracy of proxy data collection of SOGI items. This could be done with additional cognitive interviews and focus groups, with both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents, as well as larger-scale feasibility and field testing to understand item nonresponse, response distributions, impact on response rate, and attrition. In addition, we have specific recommendations related to proxy response, survey context, and question wording.

#### **5.3.1 Proxy Response**

Currently, the only option for data collection in the CPS is for one household member to report about all members of the household including themselves. The majority of respondents did not express difficulty or sensitivity concerns with proxy response. Interestingly, respondents reported more sensitivity for themselves than for others in the household. However, some of the respondents who indicated difficulty said they lacked knowledge about other household members' sexual orientation or gender identity, while some of the respondents who indicated sensitivity did not feel comfortable disclosing SOGI information for members of their household.



These concerns were voiced more frequently by those who are LGBT, suggesting a particular need for further research with these respondents.

### **5.3.2 Survey Context**

Another area of study relevant to the collection of SOGI on the CPS is the potential for respondents to view questions as irrelevant. If respondents view these questions as unrelated to the subject matter of the survey, they may refuse to answer the questions, break-off from the survey entirely, or refuse to participate in subsequent interviews.

When asked in the General Debriefing which questions “stood out” or were “bothersome,” only two respondents questioned the relevance of the SOGI questions. During the Context Debriefing, six respondents found the questions culturally controversial and generally identified themselves or an older household member as the person who found or would find the questions sensitive. These respondents questioned the relevance of SOGI items in the context of an employment survey, and a few suggested adding an explanation of the reasons for the SOGI questions. However, respondents who found the questions sensitive in the Context Debriefing generally agreed they would answer the questions in the context of a government survey about employment.

In sum, we found little evidence that the survey context of employment is of significant concern for most LGBT and non-LGBT individuals. If the CPS were to add questions about SOGI in the future, we would recommend testing scripted help text for interviewer use if they encounter respondents who are skeptical of the relevance of the question.

### **5.3.3 Question Wording**

Finally, while question wording was not a primary focus of this research, comments made by respondents suggest that the current questions pose very little difficulty for non-LGBT respondents. However, contrary to previous cognitive testing, current questions may be inadequate for LGBT respondents, especially gender identity questions for transgender respondents. Feedback received from LGBT respondents illustrated the difficulties inherent in wording questions that reflect the way LGBT respondents self-identify to allow for accurate classification. If the CPS were to add questions about SOGI in the future, we recommend conducting additional cognitive testing on revised wording with both LGBT and non-LGBT respondents.

We suggest additional research on the following aspects of question wording in particular:

1. Effectiveness of SOGI question wording across different age groups, as terminology used likely varies by generation; some respondents indicated their household members would have difficulty understanding the questions.

2. Consider additional response options for gender identity, possibly including broad categories such as “other,” “none of these,” or “something else.” While it is almost certain that responses in this category would be collapsed up for analysis, the existence of an alternative option may be reassuring for some transgender respondents.
3. Explore the feasibility of allowing respondents to mark all that apply for gender identity, and evaluate what impact that would have on classification.

We encourage researchers interested in survey measurement of SOGI to test these question changes, as improvements to the wording will benefit all surveys currently collecting or considering collecting SOGI.

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## 7 GLOSSARY

The glossary below defines several key terms that are used throughout the report, as well as other terms related to sexual orientation and gender identity relevant to the reader. Note that this is not an exhaustive list; additional terms are used by some for various sexual orientations and gender identities.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Asexual	“A sexual orientation generally characterized by not feeling sexual attraction or a desire for partnered sexuality.” (UC Davis, 2017)
Binary	“The gender binary is a system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two identities and sexes, man and woman or male and female.” (Adams, 2017)
Bisexual	“A person whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same and other genders, or towards people regardless of their gender.” (UC Davis, 2017)
Cisgender	Cisgender, sometimes abbreviated as cis, refers to “a person whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth are consistent.” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Gay	“A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender; can be used as an umbrella term for men and women.” (UC Davis, 2017)
Gender	“The socially constructed characteristics of women and men—such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between women and men.” (WHO, 2014; Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Genderqueer	“The word ‘genderqueer’ is a term used to describe one whose gender identity may or may not necessarily fit categorically as male or female.” (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017)
Gender expression	“An individuals’ external manifestation of gender” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Gender-fluid	“A person whose gender identification and presentation shifts, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations. Being fluid in motion between two or more genders.” (UC Davis, 2017)
Gender identity	“A person’s internal sense of gender (e.g., being a man, a woman, or genderqueer) and potential affiliation with a gender community (e.g., women, trans women, genderqueer).” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Intersex	“Intersex people are born with (or develop naturally in puberty) genitals, reproductive organs, and/or chromosomal patterns that do not fit standard definitions of male or female (OII-USA, 2013). In the United States, intersex infants and minors are often (but not always) diagnosed with a medically-determined intersex condition or ‘Difference of Sex Development’ (DSD) (Hughes et al., 2006). However, some people use the term ‘intersex’ as an identity label, sometimes even in the absence of such inborn physical characteristics.” (The GenIUSS Group, 2014)

Lesbian	“A woman whose primary sexual and affectional orientation is toward people of the same gender.” (UC Davis, 2017)
LGB	An acronym meaning “lesbian, gay, and bisexual.” (SMART, 2009) For the purposes of this report, we use “LGB” as an umbrella term to refer to anyone who self-identifies as anything other than straight.
LGBT	An acronym meaning “lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.” (SMART, 2009) For the purposes of this report, we use “LGBT” to refer to sexual and gender minorities.
Non-binary	People whose gender identity falls outside of the categories of man and woman (GLAAD, 2017)
Pansexual	A term used to describe people “who have romantic, sexual or affectional desire for people of all genders and sexes.” (UC Davis, 2017)
Passing or stealthing	Referring to “a transgender person’s ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender.” (GLAAD, 2017)
Proxy response	A method of survey response in which one person responds for all members of the household.
Queer	“One definition of queer is abnormal or strange. Historically, queer has been used as an epithet/slur against people whose gender, gender expression and/or sexuality do not conform to dominant expectations. Some people have reclaimed the word queer and self-identify as such. For some, this reclamation is a celebration of not fitting into norms/being ‘abnormal.’” (UC Davis, 2017)
Sex	“The genetic, hormonal, anatomical, and physiological characteristics on whose basis one is labeled at birth as either male or female.” (IOM, 2011; Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Sexual orientation	“Sexual orientation has three main dimensions: sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and sexual identity ... Sexual identity refers to the way a person self-identifies with a given sexual orientation (for example, how an individual thinks of the individual’s self) (SMART, 2009).” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a) For the purposes of this report, sexual orientation is based on sexual identity, rather than sexual attraction or behavior.
SOGI	An acronym meaning “sexual orientation and gender identity.” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a). For the purposes of this report, we use “SOGI” when discussing matters that concern both sexual orientation and gender identity, rather than just one of these.
Straight	A term primarily for those with “different-sex attraction and/or partners.” An alternative term for this is “heterosexual.” (Federal Interagency Working Group, 2016a)
Trans	An abbreviation for “transgender.” (The GenIUSS Group, 2014)
Transgender	For the purposes of this report, we use “transgender” as an umbrella term to refer to “anyone whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.” (GLAAD, 2017)
Transitioning	“A process (social and/or medical) where one undertakes living in a gender that differs from the sex that one was assigned at birth.” (The GenIUSS Group, 2014)

Transsexual	“An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. Still preferred by some people who have permanently changed - or seek to change - their bodies through medical interventions, including but not limited to hormones and/or surgeries.” (GLAAD. 2017)
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**Appendix A. Difficulty Results by Respondent Characteristics**

**Table A1. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Difficulty with Sexual Orientation Question**

	All Respondents			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT		
	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	14	20	6	13	15	5	1	5	1
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	2	6	2	2	5	2	0	1	0
Portland, OR	4	4	1	4	3	0	0	1	1
Nashville, TN	3	3	1	3	2	1	0	1	0
Fargo, ND	5	7	2	4	5	2	1	2	0
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household	8	4	4	8	4	4	0	0	0
3 or more	6	16	2	5	11	1	1	5	1
<b>Relationships</b>									
Family household	8	10	4	7	7	4	1	3	0
Non-Family	6	10	2	6	8	1	0	2	1
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	9	14	3	9	11	3	0	3	0
Rural	5	6	3	4	4	2	1	2	1
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	6	8	1	6	8	1	0	0	0
30 and older	8	12	5	7	7	4	1	5	1
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelors	7	9	1	7	6	1	0	3	0
Bachelors or higher	7	11	5	6	9	4	1	2	1
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-	10	10	6	10	7	5	0	3	1
Non-white or	4	10	0	3	8	0	1	2	0

**Table A2. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Difficulty with Gender Identity Questions**

	All Respondents			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT		
	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	11	6	14	10	4	12	1	2	2
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	3	1	3	3	1	3	0	0	0
Portland, OR	2	1	5	1	0	5	1	1	0
Nashville, TN	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Fargo, ND	5	4	5	5	3	3	0	1	2
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household	2	1	8	2	1	6	0	0	2
3 or more	9	5	6	8	3	6	1	2	0
<b>Relationships</b>									
Family household	5	4	10	5	3	8	0	1	2
Non-Family	6	2	4	5	1	4	1	1	0
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	9	4	8	8	3	8	1	1	0
Rural	2	2	6	2	1	4	0	1	2
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	9	3	7	8	3	6	1	0	1
30 and older	2	3	7	2	1	6	0	2	1
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelors	7	3	8	6	2	6	1	1	2
Bachelors or higher	4	3	6	4	2	6	0	1	0
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-	7	3	10	6	2	9	1	1	1
Non-white or	4	3	4	4	2	3	0	1	1

## Appendix B. Sensitivity Results by Respondent Characteristics

**Table B1. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Sensitivity with Sexual Orientation Question**

	All Respondents <sup>23</sup>			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT		
	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	42	27	20	23	16	10	19	11	10
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	9	5	4	7	4	1	2	1	3
Portland, OR	13	9	5	7	6	4	6	3	1
Nashville, TN	15	7	6	6	3	3	9	4	3
Fargo, ND	5	6	5	3	3	2	2	3	3
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household	15	11	10	10	7	9	5	4	1
3 or more	27	16	10	13	9	1	14	7	9
<b>Household</b>									
Family household	29	17	13	14	9	8	15	8	5
Non-Family	13	10	7	9	7	2	4	3	5
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	29	12	8	18	8	4	11	4	4
Rural	13	15	12	5	8	6	8	7	6
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	13	9	5	12	7	4	1	2	1
30 and older	29	18	15	11	9	6	18	9	9
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelor's	22	14	14	10	8	7	12	6	7
Bachelor's or higher	20	13	6	13	8	3	7	5	3
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-	28	13	12	17	7	9	11	6	3
Non-White or	14	14	8	6	9	1	8	5	7

<sup>23</sup> A total of 132 respondents were interviewed; 65 of the 132 respondents were LGBT, and 67 were non-LGBT.

**Table B2. Characteristics of Respondents Indicating Sensitivity with Gender Identity Questions**

	All Respondents <sup>24</sup>			LGBT Respondents			Non-LGBT		
	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-	Self	Proxy	Non-HH
<b>Total</b>	27	17	31	12	10	17	15	7	14
<b>Site</b>									
Washington, DC	6	3	3	5	1	1	1	2	2
Portland, OR	11	9	6	5	7	4	6	2	2
Nashville, TN	6	3	9	0	1	5	6	2	4
Fargo, ND	4	2	13	2	1	7	2	1	6
<b>Household Size</b>									
2 household	8	6	14	3	5	11	5	1	3
3 or more	19	11	17	9	5	6	10	6	11
<b>Household</b>									
Family household	19	11	20	4	6	12	15	5	8
Non-Family	8	6	11	8	4	5	0	2	6
<b>Geographic Area</b>									
Urban	16	8	12	11	7	10	5	1	2
Rural	11	9	19	1	3	7	10	6	12
<b>Age</b>									
Under 30	7	8	6	6	7	4	1	1	2
30 and older	20	9	25	6	3	13	14	6	12
<b>Education</b>									
Less than Bachelor's	17	10	19	7	6	10	10	4	9
Bachelor's or higher	10	7	12	5	4	7	5	3	5
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>									
White, Non-	18	8	22	9	7	13	9	1	9
Non-White or	9	9	9	3	3	4	6	6	5

<sup>24</sup> A total of 132 respondents were interviewed; 65 of the 132 respondents were LGBT, and 67 were non-LGBT.