Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity on the American Community Survey

UNECE Group of Experts on Gender Statistics
4. Measuring sex and gender

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Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Data Collection

• The Census Bureau continues to engage with stakeholders on sexual orientation and gender identity data, including international peers
• Quarterly meeting with SOGI advocacy and expert groups to share progress and solicit input on plans
• Staff from across the Census Bureau participate in the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology SOGI Working Group
• Same-sex relationship categories added to American Community Survey, Current Population Survey, Survey of Income and Program Participation, and 2020 Census
• SOGI questions added to the Household Pulse Survey in July 2021
American Community Survey - Overview

• Replaced the Decennial Census “long form” between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses
• Largest demographic survey conducted by United States federal government
• Sample of ~3.5 million households per year divided into 12 monthly panels
• Data are collected via Internet, mailed paper questionnaires, and persona interviews; includes special enumerations for group quarters, Remote Alaska, and tribal lands
• Data are used to distribute more than $675 billion in federal funds annually
• Used by state and local governments, communities, and businesses to assess past and future demographic and economic trends
• Data are released in 1-year and 5-year products, with 5-year combined data going down to very small levels of geography
• Participation is required by law
• Content must have a statutory or regulatory justification
How a Question Becomes Part of the ACS

Proposal
- A federal agency proposes a new or changed question.
- Request specifies frequency, geographic precision needed, and consideration of other sources.
- OMB and Census Bureau decide whether the request has merit.

Testing
- Wording options are created and tested.
- Question performance is evaluated in a field test.

Evaluation
- Test results are reviewed by the Census Bureau and requesting federal agency.
- The Census Bureau solicits public comment through a Federal Register Notice.

Decision
- A final decision is made in consultation with the OMB and Interagency Council on Statistical Policy Subcommittee on the ACS.
- If approved, the Census Bureau implements the change.
Request for SOGI Content on the ACS

• U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) submitted a request in December 2022 to add SOGI content to the ACS. This request was deemed to meet the strict requirements for adding content to the ACS.

• Working with DOJ to determine specific requirements of data needs, including:
  • Level of reporting for sexual orientation/gender
  • Level of geographic detail needed for data products
  • Level of accuracy needed for survey estimates
  • Specific concepts to be measured (e.g., identity vs expression)
  • Degree to which data about gender can supplant sex data
Cognitive Testing

• Cognitive testing is planned to begin sometime in 2023
• Goals of cognitive testing will include:
  • Evaluation of Spanish translations
  • Evaluation of impacts of proxy reporting
  • Evaluation of differences between self-response modes and personal interview modes
  • Comprehension of non-gendered relationship categories (e.g., “Child” vs “Son or daughter,” “Sibling” vs “Brother or sister,” “Child-in-law” vs “Son-or daughter-in-law”)
Field Test Design

• Field testing planned for 2024
• Self-Response test with personal interviews for non-respondents if funding allows
• Two treatments and potentially a control treatment
• Reinterview of respondents to determine response reliability
Field Testing Goals

- Evaluation of question designs and placement
- Evaluation of question reliability
- Evaluation of impact of including a gender question on the sex distribution
- Evaluation of self-response modes vs personal interview modes
- Evaluation of proxy interviews
- Evaluation of write-in responses
- Evaluation of item missing data rates
- Evaluation of survey break off rates
Analysis and Results

- Following the conclusion of field testing, the Census Bureau will analyze data to answer our research questions.
- Hope to have conclusions available by the end of 2024.
- Results will be evaluated and decisions on implementation made.
- After testing, must create technical documentation for processing, editing, imputation, and tabulation.
- Implementation not expected until 2027 at the earliest.
Contact Info

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