

Work to Measure Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) at the Census Bureau

Chair: Roberto Ramirez

Discussant: Naomi Goldberg, Movement Advancement Project

Panel: Jason Fields, Household Pulse Survey

Allyson Clark, American Housing Survey

Zoe Caplan, American Community Survey

Amy Smith, International Engagements

Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Experimental Household Pulse Survey

Jason Fields
U.S. Census Bureau

Session: Work to Measure Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at the Census Bureau
Population Association of America 2024 Annual Meeting
April 2024

This presentation is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion. Any views expressed are those of the author and not those of the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau has reviewed this data product to ensure appropriate access, use, and disclosure avoidance protection of the confidential source data used to produce this product (Data Management System (DMS) number: P-7527238, Disclosure Review Board (DRB) approval number: CBDRB-FY23-0282 and CBDRB-FY23-SEHSD003-045).

Outline

- Overview of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) questions on the Household Pulse Survey (HPS)
- Highlights of ongoing and past research
 - Allocated sex at birth (SAB)
 - Sex at birth/gender identity confirmation
 - Question order experiment
 - Sexual orientation write-ins
 - Test of nonbinary category
 - Record linkage
 - Breakoffs

HPS Background

- HPS remains an experimental survey.
- HPS has relatively low overall response rate (~4-7%).
- Questions asked only of respondents (i.e., no proxy response).
- Questions asked only of those aged 18 years and over.
- Self-response, online survey (no interviewer-administered option).
- Quick turnaround: data released less than two weeks after collection ends.
- Census Bureau dissemination policies determine granularity of products.
- Limited time for the Census Bureau to cognitively test revisions to baseline SOGI items.
- SOGI items added to HPS in Cycle 34 (July 2021).

Overview of SOGI Questions on the HPS

Sexual Orientation

Q1. Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?

- Gay or lesbian
- Straight, that is not gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Something else _____
- I don't know

Write-in line for 'something else' included for half of respondents in Phases 3.7-3.9 (Cycles 52-60).

Overview of SOGI Questions on the HPS

Gender Identity

Q1. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- Male
- Female

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

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- None of these

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

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

SOGI and HPS Data Products

- Consultation with internal and external stakeholders.
- Added SOGI to recurring table package.
- Focus on SOGI as standard demographic measure.
- Phase 3.2 package includes 37 tables; 34 include SOGI breakdowns.

Household Spending Table 1. Difficulty Paying Usual Household Expenses in the Last 7 Days, by Select Characteristics: United States

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, Week 34.

Note: These data are experimental. Users should take caution using estimates based on subpopulations of the data – sample sizes may be small and the standard errors may be large.**

Total Population 18 Years and Older

Select characteristics	Total	Difficulty paying for usual household expenses during the coronavirus pandemic				
		Not at all difficult	A little difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Did not report
Total	250,265,449	109,742,559	51,571,788	35,911,785	25,589,511	27,449,806
Age						
18 - 24	22,625,834	8,067,834	5,017,683	3,216,440	2,060,893	4,262,984
25 - 39	65,381,322	23,716,976	14,251,881	10,243,082	8,693,315	8,476,068
40 - 54	63,711,121	25,846,338	13,172,082	9,783,206	7,799,529	7,109,966
55 - 64	43,308,128	19,834,564	9,121,176	6,787,913	3,963,057	3,601,419
65 and above	55,239,045	32,276,847	10,008,968	5,881,144	3,072,717	3,999,370
Sex at birth						
Male	121,078,275	56,426,521	24,147,072	15,999,465	11,195,528	13,309,688
Female	129,187,174	53,316,037	27,424,716	19,912,320	14,393,983	14,140,118
Gender						
Cisgender male	115,088,468	54,693,201	23,435,365	15,084,188	10,280,913	11,594,800
Cisgender female	123,912,126	52,077,613	26,796,134	19,142,855	13,583,402	12,312,122
Transgender	2,344,440	678,499	360,427	473,153	595,955	236,406
None of these	4,827,520	1,449,666	556,426	900,398	970,799	950,232
Did not report	4,092,895	843,580	423,436	311,191	158,443	2,356,245
Sexual orientation						
Gay or lesbian	8,265,780	3,659,135	1,507,361	1,150,499	1,122,086	826,700
Straight	214,740,059	98,215,798	44,543,737	29,929,418	20,701,395	21,349,710
Bisexual	11,231,791	3,378,659	2,620,462	2,366,328	1,532,594	1,333,749
Something else	4,772,202	1,513,271	1,080,565	781,160	929,994	467,211
I don't know	5,719,190	1,703,823	1,078,102	1,108,314	946,572	882,379
Did not report	5,536,426	1,271,873	741,561	576,066	356,870	2,590,056
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender						
Yes	20,550,465	7,307,141	4,269,560	3,739,895	2,947,322	2,286,548
No	211,468,408	96,957,788	44,025,034	29,456,731	20,246,513	20,782,341
Other	11,274,214	3,626,426	2,243,221	1,950,286	1,935,715	1,518,566
Did not report	6,972,362	1,851,204	1,033,973	764,873	459,962	2,862,350

Data User Note

- User note designed to further highlight the inclusion of the new items and to provide additional context for data users interested in using the questions.

*“This dissemination approach was decided following careful deliberation with internal and external stakeholders but is not intended to serve as a standard for presenting SOGI measurement in other surveys. As part of the Census Bureau’s Experimental Data Products series, the HPS was designed to have low respondent burden, provide quick turnaround on product releases, and produce estimates that meet urgent public needs. **The HPS questions related to sexual orientation and gender identity aim to understand the impact of the coronavirus pandemic across different subpopulations. However, because the HPS is designed to rapidly produce experimental estimates, caution should be exercised when using these data as standalone markers of the prevalence of LGBT adults in the general population.”***

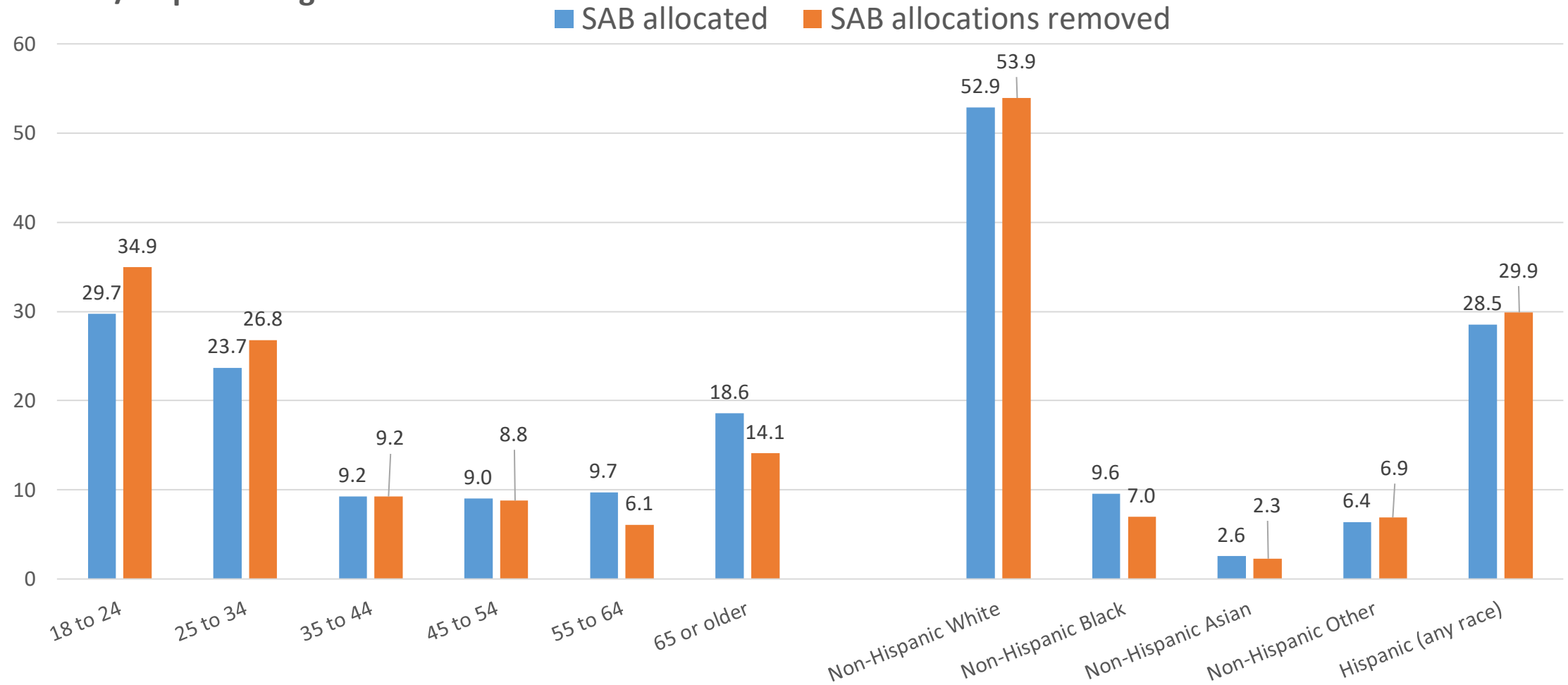
Existing SOGI Evaluations

- Effect of allocated SAB values on transgender estimates.
- Performance of SAB/gender identity confirmation check.
- Question order experiment.
- Sexual orientation write-in evaluation.
- Incorporation of a nonbinary response category for gender identity.
- Record linkage evaluation.

Effect of allocating Sex at Birth on transgender estimates

- Although removing allocated SAB values doesn't radically shift SOGI distributions, it does have effect.
- Although transgender estimates decrease across all groups, there does appear to be some differential effect by age and race/Hispanic origin.
- Overall distribution of transgender is younger and more White and Hispanic once we remove SAB allocations.

Effect of Removing Allocated Sex at Birth on Transgender Distributions by Age and Race/Hispanic Origin

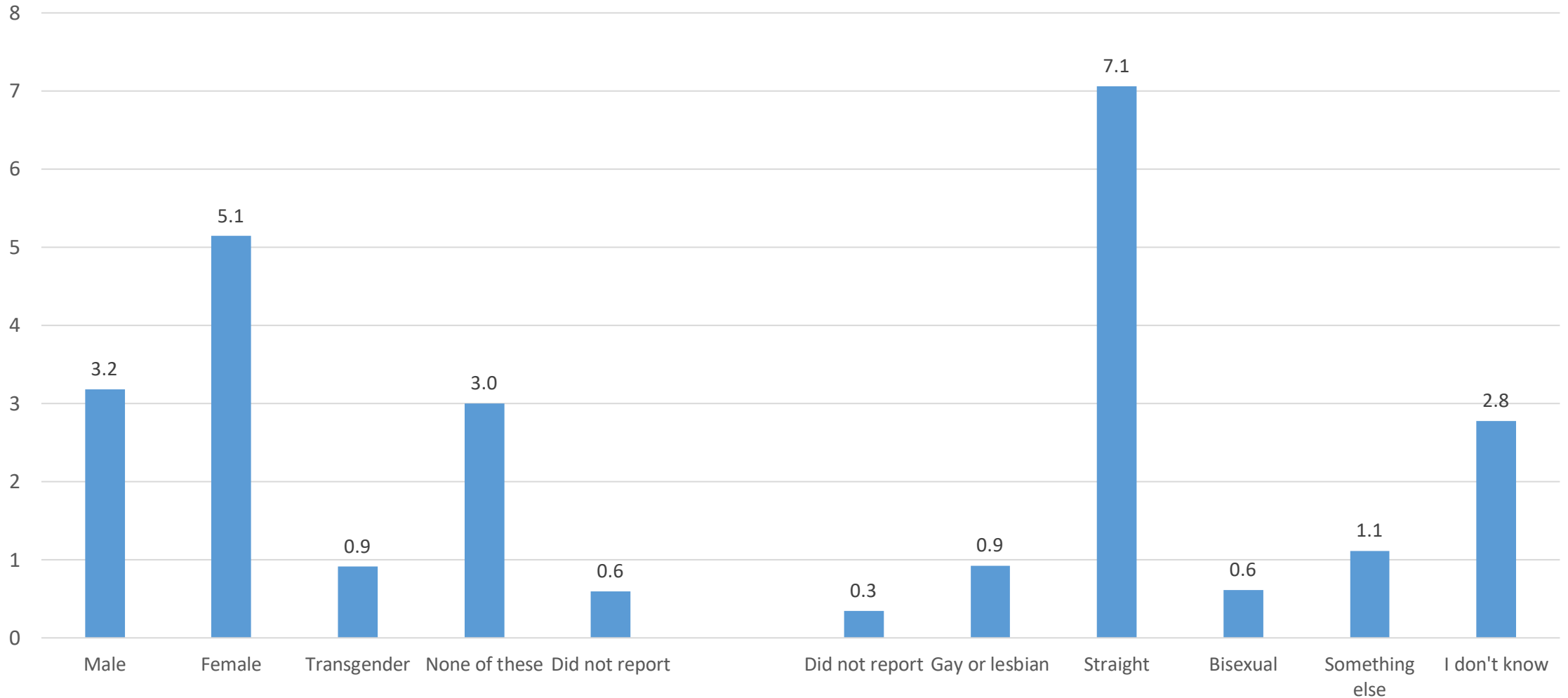


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 Household Pulse Survey, Phase 3.2 (Weeks 34 - 39)

Effect of SAB/GI Check

- Most reports of inconsistent gender and sex assigned at birth are confirmed as accurate when checked through follow-up confirmation questions.
- The percentage correcting their reporting tends to increase with age
- Non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics were most likely to correct their original answers.
- Straight respondents were also more likely than other sexual orientations to correct reports.

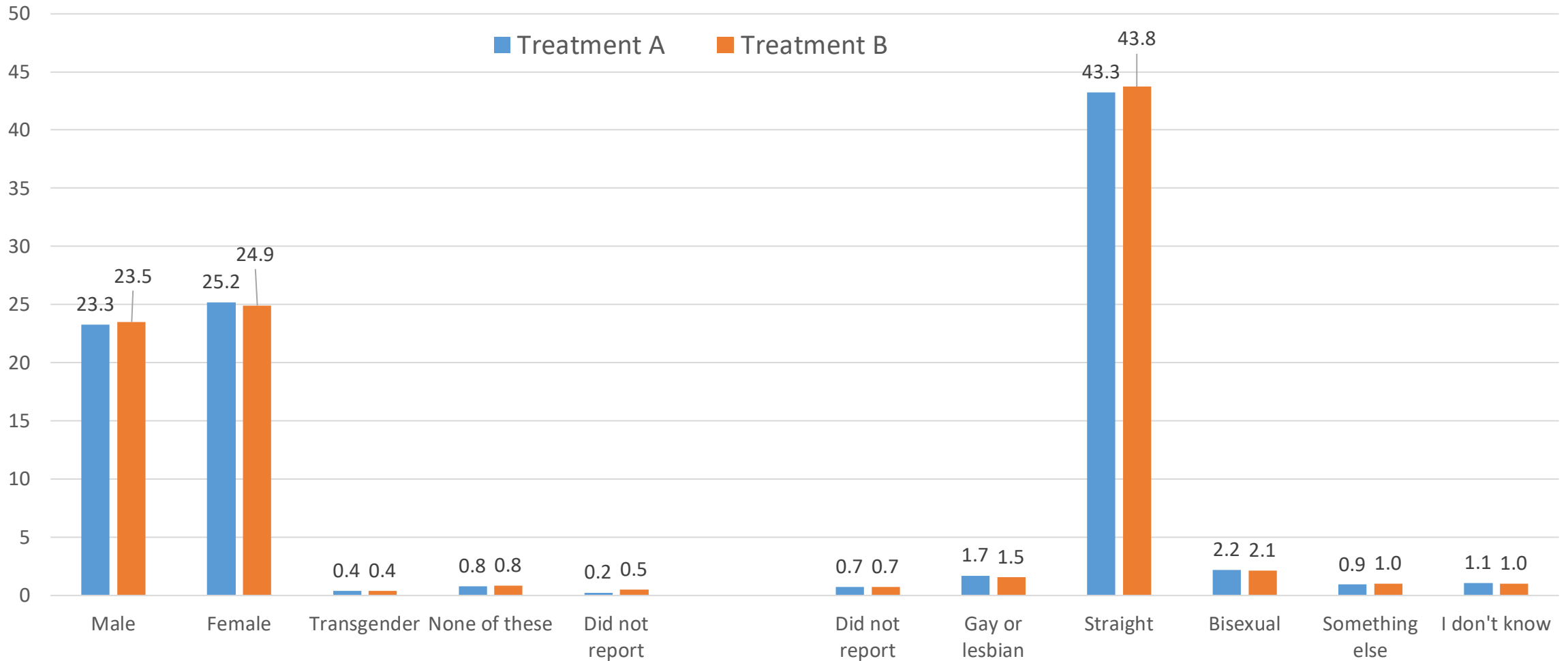
Of Those Who Get the SAB/GI Check, Who Corrects, by SOGI Outcome



Results from built-in question order experiment

- Overall question order did not affect SOGI outcomes or other demographics.
- LGBT recode also stable across experiment groups.
- Results similar for language of interview – other responses and DNRs worth keeping in mind going forward.

Distribution of SOGI Outcomes by Experiment Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 Household Pulse Survey, Phase 3.2 (Weeks 34 - 39)

Sexual Orientation Write-ins

Research Questions:

- Does the inclusion of a write-in line affect the overall distribution of responses to the sexual orientation question?
- What types of write-ins are being collected?

Sexual Orientation Write-ins

- Analysis of ~600 responses from Cycle 52 of the survey.
- Responses were independently coded by two people.
 - Where coding differed, a third coder adjudicated the category to use for the response.
- Coding followed scheme used in past Census Bureau research.
- Estimates are unweighted unless noted and conclusions are not generalizable beyond this dataset.

Sexual Orientation Write-ins

Distribution of sexual orientation responses by treatment

Category	Combined weighted	Unweighted w/o write-in line	Unweighted w/ write-in line
Gay or lesbian	3.1%	3.3%	3.4%
Straight, that is, not gay or lesbian	86.7%	88.0%	87.5%
Bisexual	4.7%	4.4%	4.2%
Something else	2.1%	1.7%	1.8%
I don't know	1.6%	1.2%	1.4%
Did not report	1.8%	1.4%	1.6%
Unweighted N	70,690	35,400	35,290

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, Cycle 52.

No substantive differences in distributions between those receiving the question version with the write-in line and question version without the write-in line.

Sexual Orientation Write-ins

- Alternative sexual orientations (e.g., pansexual, asexual, queer) represented 46.8 percent of write-in responses.
- ‘Trolling’ responses represented 8.4 percent of write-in responses.
- Hard refusals represented 9.5 percent of write-in responses.
- Addition of a write-in line does not alter distribution of responses to sexual orientation question and provides a space for people identifying as an ‘alternative’ sexual orientation to report this information.
- Write-in responses could be used to inform additional reporting categories depending on sample size of the survey.

Phase 3.10 Nonbinary Category Test

- Administered as a split-panel test (still under evaluation)

Gender Identity

Q1. What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- Male
- Female

Q2_alt How do you currently describe yourself? *Select all that apply.*

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Nonbinary

I use a different term _____

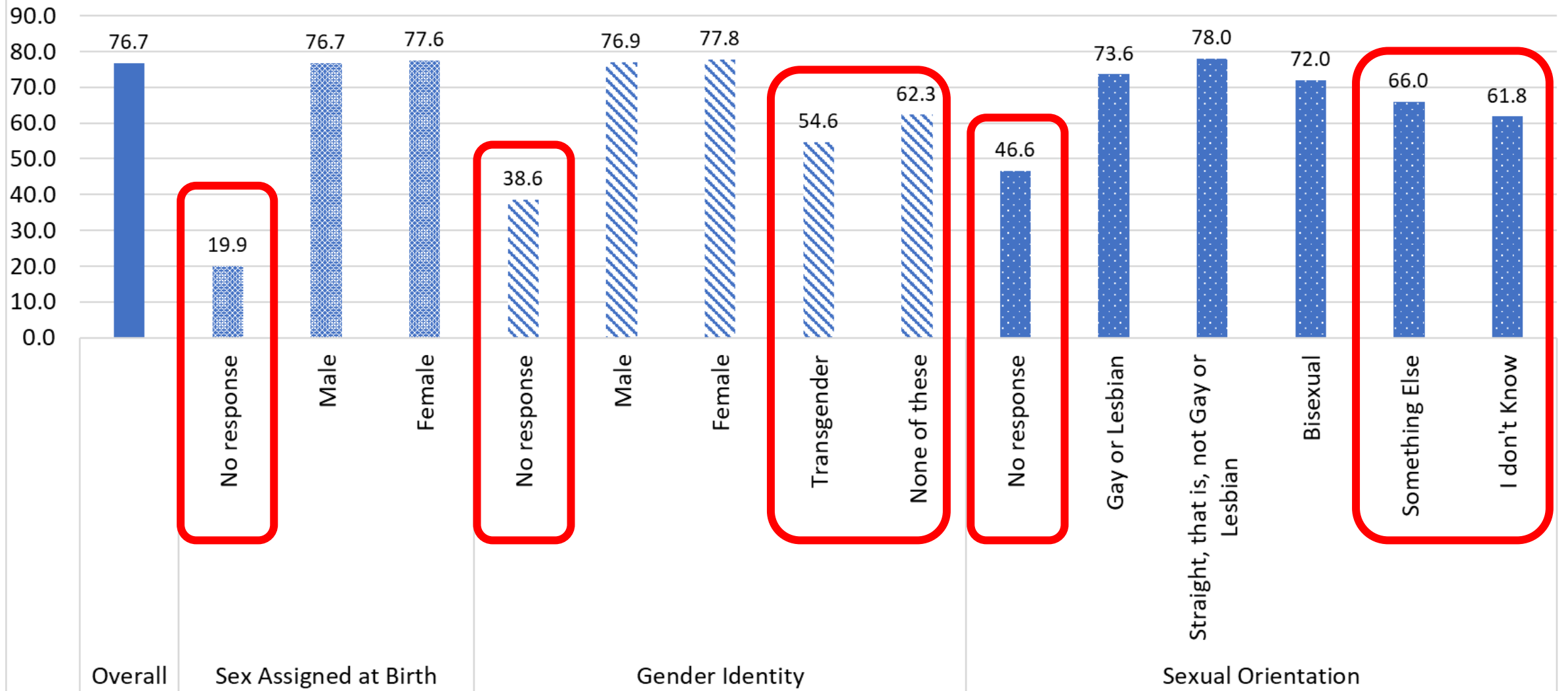
Q3. Just to confirm, you were assigned {FILL} at birth and now you describe yourself as {FILL}. Is that correct?

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

Record Linkage: Research Questions

- How do rates of matching to protected identification keys (PIKs) compare across HPS reporting categories?
 - PIKs are the field that the Census Bureau uses to link respondents across datasets, and are assigned by pulling in a variety of attributes for respondents, including sex.
- How do HPS response distributions to the sex assigned at birth and gender identity questions compare to the 'gender' distribution from the Census Numident?
- What can be learned from the gender difference flag on the Census Numident when evaluating responses to SOGI questions?

PIK Rates by HPS SOGI Reporting Category (in Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, cycles 34-52

In summary...

- Potential age and race/Hispanic origin effects in line with other evaluations.
- Data users encouraged to remove allocated SAB from SOGI analysis.
- Question order check is useful and operating as intended.
- Question order does not seem to matter, at least in this rapid response context.
- Sexual orientation: write-ins do not appear to affect question response distributions.
 - A plurality of write-ins are alternative sexual orientations.
- Nonbinary category evaluation ongoing.
- Record linkage:
 - Large differences in PIK rates across HPS reporting categories.
 - Some substantive differences in data patterns in the Numident among different HPS reporting categories.
- Much more to do!

Thank you!

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American Housing Survey Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Module

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Session: Work to Measure Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity at the Census Bureau
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American Housing Survey

The AHS is sponsored by HUD and is the most comprehensive national housing survey in the United States.

- Conducted biennially, longitudinal.
- Sample:
 - Panel follows housing units.
 - SOGI module was added to 2023 AHS, data has not been released yet.
- CAPI, interviewer-administered.

2023 SOGI Module

- SOGI questions asked of adult respondents in regular, occupied households.
 - 3 questions (sex, gender, sexual orientation) for adult (18+ years old) respondent.
- Half of sample includes experimental proxy questions along with the self-respondent questions.
 - 3 questions (sex, gender, sexual orientation) for each eligible adult in order by place in the household roster.

Sex

Respondent: “What is your sex?”

Other household members: “What is [household member’s] sex?”

1. Male
2. Female

Sex Recorded at Birth

Respondent: “Was your sex recorded as male or female at birth?”

Proxy*: “To the best of your knowledge, was [proxy’s] sex recorded as male or female at birth?”

1. Male

*Split-sample

2. Female

Gender Identity

Respondent: “Do you describe yourself as male, female, or transgender, or do you use another term?”

Proxy*: “To the best of your knowledge, does [proxy] describe themselves as male, female, or transgender, or do they use another term?”

1. Male
2. Female
3. Transgender
4. Use another term; specify

*Split-sample

Sex/Gender Error Check

Respondent: “Just to confirm, your sex was recorded as [sex] at birth and now you describe yourself as [gender]?”

Proxy*: “Just to confirm, [proxy’s] sex was recorded as [sex] at birth and now they describe themselves as [gender]?”

1. Suppress
2. Go to Sex Recorded at Birth
3. Go to Gender Identity

*Split-sample

Sexual Orientation

Respondent: “Which of the following best represents how you think about yourself?”

Proxy*: “To the best of your knowledge, which of the following best represents how [proxy] thinks of themselves?”

*Split-sample

1. Gay or lesbian
2. Straight, that is, not gay or lesbian
3. Bisexual
4. Something else; specify
5. I don't know the answer

Data Release

- Respondent data will be public with the release of the 2023 AHS PUF (released in fall of 2024).
- Proxy data/Household-level data will be internal only.

AHS SOGI Research

- SOGI sex and gender variables vs. core demographic sex question.
- Comparing LGBT+ households to non-LGBT+ households with other AHS data (housing characteristics, housing costs, housing quality, etc.).
- Respondent self data vs. proxy data.
- Paradata analysis (time per question, breakoff, etc.).
- Item nonresponse (comparisons to other modules).
- Write-in data analysis.

Write-In Data Analysis

- Comparisons between self and proxy responses.
- Comparisons between AHS and other federal surveys:
 - What might be attributed to methodological differences?

Thank You!

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Testing and Implementing Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Questions in the American Community Survey (ACS)

Zoe Caplan (she/her)

Survey Statistician, Social Characteristics Area

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Population Association of America

April 2024

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 personal interviews; includes special enumerations for group quarters, Remote Alaska, and tribal lands
- Data are used to distribute more than \$2.8 trillion 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.
- Requests undergo legal, technical, and policy review.
- OMB and Census Bureau decide whether the change has merit.

Testing

- Wording options are created and cognitively tested.
- Question performance is evaluated in a field test.
 - A Federal Register Notice is published for the 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 (ICSP) Subcommittee on the ACS.
- If approved, the Census Bureau implements the change.

Adding SOGI Content on the ACS

✓ Proposal

- The Department of Justice requested SOGI data.
- A legal review of the request confirmed that it met the strict requirements for adding content to the ACS.

Testing

- Wording options are created
- Cognitive testing is conducted.
- Question performance is evaluated in a field test.
 - A Federal Register Notice was published.

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 (ICSP) Subcommittee on the ACS.
- If approved, the Census Bureau implements the change.

Sexual Orientation Question

- Aligns with NASEM and OMB recommendations
 - Reworded for proxy reporting
 - An explicit “Don’t Know” option is not offered for any questions on the ACS
- Only one version of the question being tested
- Question skipped for people under 15

25

Which of the following best represents how this person thinks of themselves? *Mark (X) ONE box.*

- Gay or lesbian
- Straight, that is not gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- This person uses a different term - Specify ↴

Gender Identity

- Two-step question
- Questions replace the sex question on the ACS (What is Person 2's sex?)
- Similar to NASEM recommendation, except:
 - Question stem reworded for proxy response
 - Removed language about birth certificate in sex assigned at birth question
 - Male and Female category order matches other Census Bureau surveys
 - Added nonbinary category to current gender question
- Current gender question skipped for people under 15

4 What sex was Person 2 assigned at birth?
Mark (X) ONE box.

Male Female

5 What is Person 2's current gender?
Skip this question if this person is less than 15 years old.
Mark (X) ONE box.

Male

Female

Transgender

Nonbinary

Person 2 uses a different term. Specify ↴

Gender Identity Treatments

Treatment 1: Only one response option can be marked.

4 What sex was Person 2 assigned at birth?
Mark (X) ONE box.

Male Female

5 What is Person 2's current gender?
*Skip this question if this person is less than 15 years old.
Mark (X) ONE box.*

Male
 Female
 Transgender
 Nonbinary
 Person 2 uses a different term. Specify ↴

Treatment 2: More than one response option can be marked.

4 What sex was Person 2 assigned at birth?
Mark (X) ONE box.

Male Female

5 What is Person 2's current gender?
*Skip this question if this person is less than 15 years old.
Mark (X) one or more boxes.*

Male
 Female
 Transgender
 Nonbinary
 Person 2 uses a different term. Specify ↴

Other changes

- Removing gendered language from the relationship question (e.g., “parent” instead of “mother or father,” “spouse” instead of “husband or wife,” etc.)
- Removing gendered pronouns from all questions (e.g., using “their” instead of “his/her”)
- Adding qualitative questions to the end of the questionnaire to allow respondents to provide more information about response choices for gender minorities and write-ins for sexual orientation

Cognitive Testing

- Testing is being conducted in collaboration with RTI across all four modes of the ACS
- 64 English interviews, 80 stateside Spanish interviews, 74 Puerto Rico Spanish interviews
- Respondent Recruitment: Split between those with LGBTQ+ identities and those who are straight/cisgender

Cognitive Testing Goals

- Assess respondents' ability to comprehend and answer SOGI across languages, survey modes, and subgroups (e.g., sexual/gender identities, education level, geography)
- Probe respondents on willingness and ability to proxy report
- Evaluate performance of the “nonbinary” category in the current gender question
- Evaluate performance of the gender-neutral relationship categories
- Evaluate performance of fertility skip and pronoun changes
- Collect preliminary feedback on a question about intersex status

Intersex Question

- Almost no information about how this type of question would perform in a representative federal survey
- Researchers and stakeholders are increasingly interested in this type of data
- Cognitive interviews can provide some very preliminary feedback to one of the NASEM recommendations:

Were you born with a variation in your physical sex characteristics? *This is sometimes called being intersex or having a difference in sex development, or DSD.*

Yes

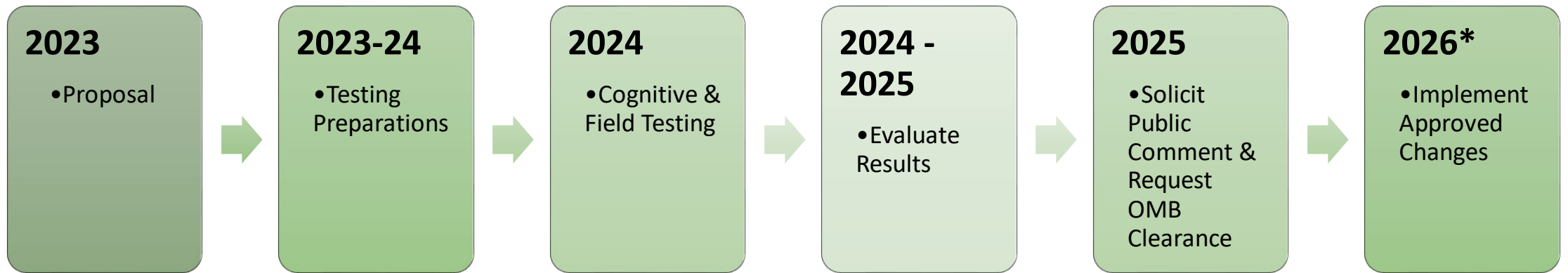
No

- Intersex question will only be included in cognitive testing; not in the field test

Field Test Plans

- Field test planned to occur in the summer of 2024
- Sample size: 480,000
- We will test two modes: internet and paper
- Reinterview (some with original respondent, some with different respondent) to determine reliability of proxy responses

ACS SOGI Content: Tentative Timeline



*2026 is the earliest possible implementation.

Thank you!

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The Census Bureau's International Engagements Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

Amy Smith (she/her)

Senior Demographer for Age, Sex and Gender Identity

U.S. Census Bureau

Population Association of American

April 2024

Today You Will Hear About

- The Census Bureau's commitment to active and strategic engagement with the international community
- United Nations Groups that we lead or are members of that focus on gender statistics
- Country specific practices that expand knowledge about SOGI and the LGBTQ+ community

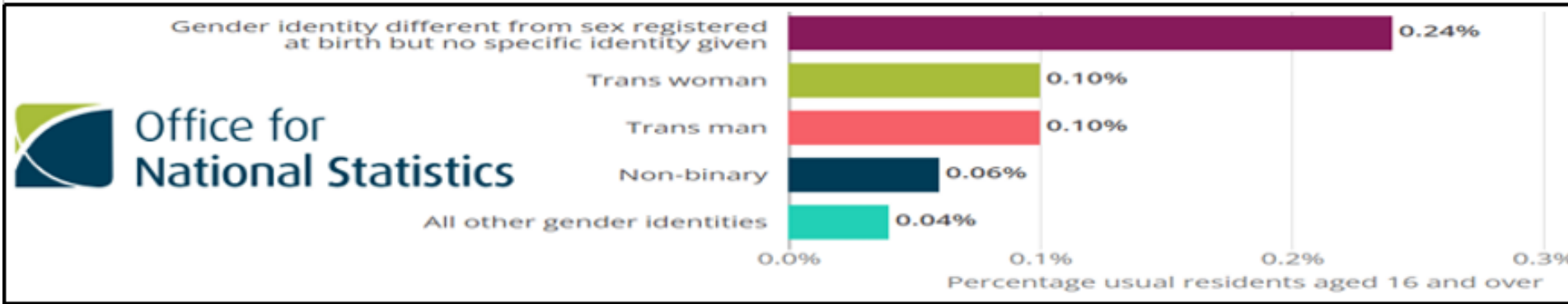
The Census Bureau's International Engagement

- Benefit from countries sharing about content development, data collection methods and techniques
- Build relationships to foster sharing of detailed and technical information about data processing and publication, as well as privacy and confidentiality
- Taken together these efforts improve our collection and methods in asking sexual orientation and gender identity questions and measuring the LGBTQ+ population.

United Nations Groups

- UN Economic Commission for Europe Gender Statistics (UNECE-GS) Working Group
- UN Statistical Division Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) Working Group
- Conference of European Statisticians (CES) expert group on Population and Housing Censuses

Country Specific Experiences



2021 PUBLIC CONSULTATION
ON GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY
STATISTICAL METADATA
STANDARDS

3 What is your sex?

Female Male

4 Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

- This question is **voluntary**
- Answer only if you are aged 16 or over
- Trans is a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were registered at birth
- Tick **one** box only

No

Yes, please describe your trans status (for example, non-binary, trans man, trans woman):

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A' dealbhadh ar n-àm ri teachd

8 Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

- This question is **voluntary**
- Answer only if you are aged 16 or over
- Tick **one** box only

Straight / Heterosexual

Gay or Lesbian

Bisexual

Other sexual orientation, please write in:

Census | Stats NZ

3 What is your gender?

male

female

another gender. Please state:

4 What was your sex at birth?

For example, what was recorded on your birth certificate.

male

female



Measuring Gender Identity

Wiki space of the UNECE Task Team on Measuring Gender Identity



Analysis of non-binary sex responses

Analysis of non-binary sex responses in the 2021 Census

Thank you!

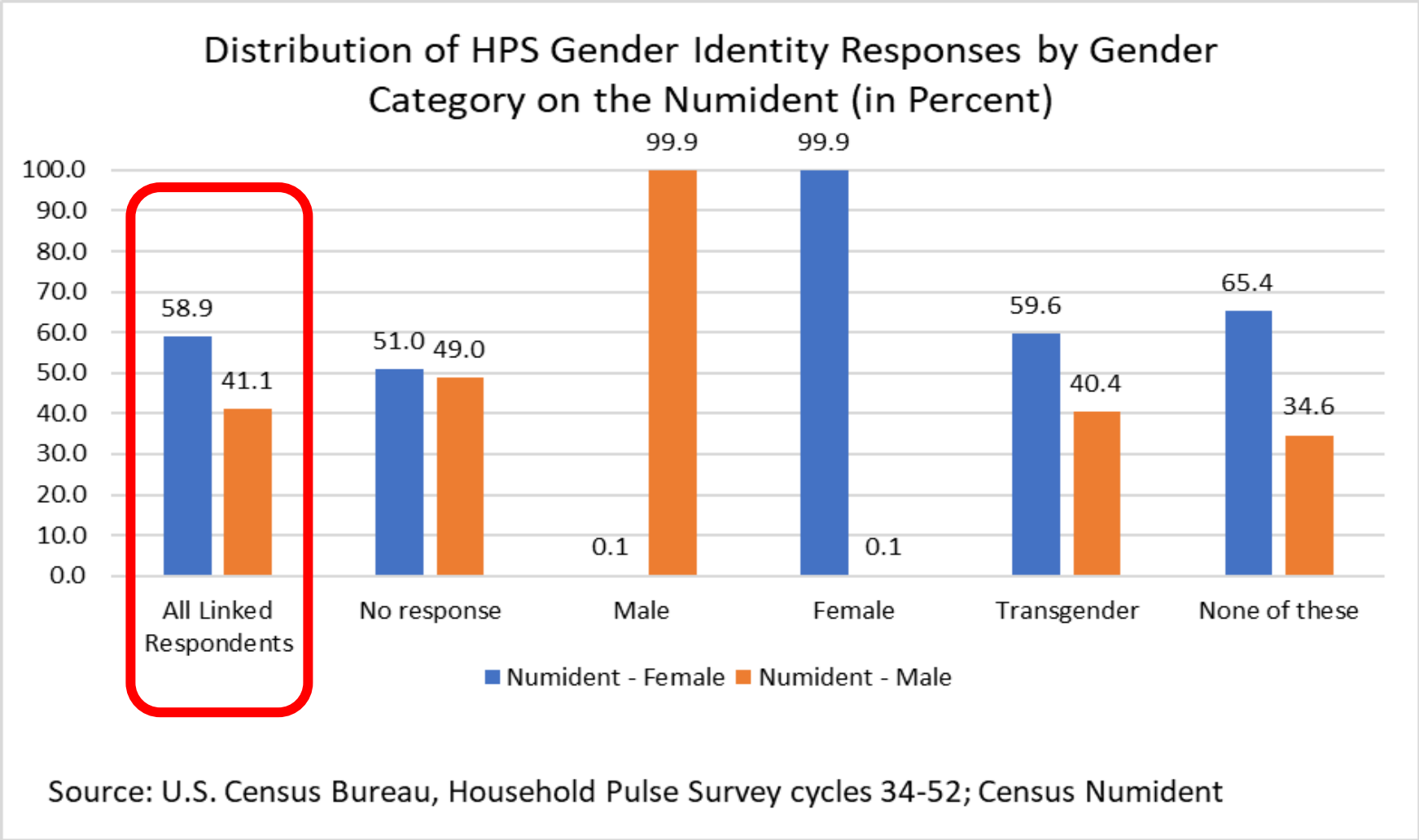
Amy.Symens.Smith@census.gov

Extra HPS:

Record Linkage

- Merged Cycles 34 through 52 of the HPS with the Census Numident via PIKs
- Total N = approximately 900,000 that were successfully linked to a Numident record, omitting:
 - Un-PIKed HPS records and PIKed HPS records without a matching Numident record
 - Those who appeared in the HPS multiple times and provided different sex at birth responses.
 - Those who appeared in the HPS multiple times and provided different gender identity responses.
- Estimates are unweighted and conclusions are not generalizable beyond this dataset.

Record Linkage



Record Linkage

- The vast majority (>90%) of those with a 'gender difference' flag in the Numident-HPS dataset are cisgender, and few individuals identifying as transgender have a gender difference flag. This likely reflects:
 - Individuals who have changed their name and/or sex not being successfully PIKed.
 - A large number of gender differences reflecting individuals correcting errors, rather than transitioning.
 - SSA rules requiring documentation to change gender value were adjusted in late 2022.
 - Changing 'gender' values on the SSA record may not be a priority for individuals who are transitioning, and does not have any practical/administrative implications.