

ONS Sexual Identity Project
Equality Impact Assessment: Action Plan

Background to the ONS Sexual Identity Project

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) established the Sexual Identity Project in 2006 to meet user requirements for information on sexual identity. The project has three main objectives:

- *Question development* – the development of a question (or set of questions) on sexual identity that can be used on social surveys and possibly for use in equality monitoring purposes
- *Question testing & implementation* – to test and evaluate (both quantitatively and qualitatively) the questioning to ensure that where possible they meet user requirements, are acceptable to respondents, and provide information of reasonable quality and accuracy. If acceptable questioning can be developed, it will be added to the Integrated Household Survey (IHS), which combines most ONS household surveys into one. This will allow estimates of the size and characteristics of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) populations to be produced and evaluated.
- *Guidance* – to provide guidance for those wishing to administer the questioning, and those wishing to analyse the data.

The project aims to deliver in 2009. Information about the project, including research findings and progress reports are available on the Office for National Statistics website.

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/sexual-identity-project/index.html>

Equality Impact Assessment and the ONS Sexual Identity Project

Equality legislation requires that all of ONS' public functions, policies, practices and projects are assessed in relation to their consequences on equality by means of an equality impact assessment. ONS affirms its commitment to this in its Single Equality Scheme 2008-11. The purpose of an equality impact assessment is to achieve equality improvements by identifying and removing or reducing barriers to equality and/or maximise positive impact for equality.

The Sexual Identity Project is likely to have a wide reaching impact. There is a strong user requirement for information on sexual identity, particularly as there is currently no harmonised approach for the collection of data on sexual orientation or reliable estimates of the Lesbian Gay and Bisexual (LGB) population in the UK. The Sexual Identity Project is the first stage in the collection of baseline data on the LGB population on ONS' Integrated Household Survey against which other data sources could be benchmarked. In addition, by providing guidance on the collection of sexual identity data more widely on social surveys and equality monitoring forms, public awareness of sexual orientation as an equality strand will be raised.

The equality impact assessment of the Sexual Identity Project is an on-going process and will be reviewed at key milestones throughout the course of the project. An initial assessment was undertaken in November 2007 by consultants Diversity Solutions [see SIP website]. This equality impact assessment action plan reports ONS' progress in addressing the impacts identified in the initial evaluation, and also those that have been subsequently identified.

An equality impact assessment is designed to identify both the positive impacts as well as the adverse impacts on equality.

The positive equality impacts identified to date are shown in Table 1. A positive impact is where functions have a positive influence on equality groups, or improve equal opportunities and/or relationships between different groups. The positive impact may be differential, where a positive impact for one group is likely to be greater than for another.

An adverse or negative equality impact is where functions disadvantage equality groups. These may also be differential. If an adverse impact were considered unlawful this would result in either direct or indirect discrimination. Action must be taken immediately to either develop/change or even abandon these functions. The adverse equality impacts identified to date, and the proposed actions to eliminate or mitigate these impact are detailed in Table 2.

Timetable to review the Sexual Identity Project equality impact assessment review

November 2007 – Initial equality impact assessment by Diversity Solutions

October 2008 – Review following the results on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey trial 4, focus groups and cognitive testing.

December 2008 – Review following results from the General Lifestyle Survey (GLF) pilot

April 2009 – End of project review

Key to abbreviations used in Table 1

DS	Diversity Solutions
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
CASI	Computer Assisted Self Interviewing
GLF	General Lifestyle Survey (formerly the General Household Survey)
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
LGB	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NS	National Statistics
ONS	Office for National Statistics
SIP	Sexual Identity Project

Table 1: Positive Equality Impacts and Actions

	Positive impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by positive impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
1	Sexual identity questions in the Integrated Household Survey should, over time, result in improved LGB population data across all diverse communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Publication of estimates of the LGB population at baseline and at regular intervals	ONS accepts that this is a potential positive impact of the project. ONS is committed to the production of high-quality statistics and thorough analysis of these statistics, as stated in the 'ONS vision and values' statement.	Yes As part of ONS future work programme, review data quality as estimates become available.	Question due to be implemented in the IHS in January 2009. Initial data available in 2010. ●
2	Developing a harmonised sexual identity question(s) for use in the Integrated Household Survey and other social surveys should reinforce positive change for heterosexual and homosexual people in all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Harmonised question on sexual identity to be published in the 'ONS guide to harmonised questions for government social surveys'.	ONS accepts that this is a potential positive impact of the project.	Yes Harmonised question development is a key output for the project and will be available from April 2009	Harmonised question development under way. ●
3	Raised awareness of the culture, experiences and needs of the LGB population, resulting from improved knowledge of the community and promoting cohesion across and within all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Monitoring of local and national media, particularly in relation to ONS data releases.	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 6:</i> Recommended actions for partnership working are as follows: a) A media campaign and press release should be agreed at an early stage so that various UK media can assist with raising awareness and highlight the benefits of asking and	Ongoing. ONS will develop a Sexual Identity Project communication plan to address how to communicate findings and raise awareness of the project. Stakeholders and users, equality groups,	A Sexual Identity Project communication plan will be developed by autumn 2008. ●

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				responding to sexual identity question(s). b) ONS should encourage central and local government to publish the press release in their internal and external newsletters. This would assist with awareness-raising across a broad range of communities. c) ONS should encourage the national voluntary sector umbrella organisations for England, Wales and Scotland to issue the press release to their members, asking them to publish it in their local community newsletters. The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action works with 164,000 third sector groups in England. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action works with 30,000 third sector groups in Wales. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations works with 45,000 third sector groups in Scotland.	advocacy groups and local and regional government offices will be engaged in disseminating key messages and publicising outputs of the project.	

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4	The inclusion of sexual identity question(s) in the Integrated Household Survey should result in a positive impact for those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual as researchers and others understand better the size, distribution and changing social-demographic profile of the LGB population.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Regular meetings and feedback sought from user/ stakeholder groups	ONS is committed to continue its engagement with the user/stakeholder community (from question development through to reporting of statistics) to understand and respond to community and research information needs on the LGB population.	Ongoing	Underway. ●
5	All communities should experience positive impact since the inclusion of harmonised sexual identity questions in other social surveys should lead to improvements across all business sectors, enabling the development and non-discriminatory targeting of appropriate products, facilities and services.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Regular meetings and feedback sought from user/ stakeholder groups	ONS is committed to continue its engagement with the user/stakeholder community (from question development through to reporting of statistics) to understand and respond to community and research information needs on the LGB population.	Ongoing	Underway. ●
6	The availability of more reliable LGB population data should enable homophobic discrimination to be monitored; and enable to provision of goods, facilities and services that meet the community's particular needs and requirements.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Regular meetings and feedback sought from user/ stakeholder groups	ONS is committed to continue its engagement with the user/stakeholder community (from question development through to reporting of statistics) to understand and respond to community and research information needs on the LGB population.	Ongoing	Underway. ●
7	The availability of authoritative and accessible guidance produced by ONS for those who administer the sexual identity question(s) and analyse the data should result in positive equality impacts for all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Publication of User guidance in April 2009	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 1:</i> ONS plans to produce an authoritative guide for those who administer the sexual identity question(s) and	Yes The User Guide is scheduled to be published on the ONS website in April 2009.	The guide will be written once all the testing of the sexual identity questions is complete. ●

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				analyse the data. The guide should be available in accessible ways, including through the National Statistics website.	Active engagement with user/stakeholder groups in the development of User Guide to get community buy-in.	
8	Training interviewers to ask sexual identity questions in appropriate and sensitive ways will help to overcome any discomfort when asking such questions; and any embarrassment felt by respondents when asked about sexual identity issues.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Interviewer training and briefing instructions to be included in the published guidance.	Refinement of briefing instructions and field training procedures used in the GLF pilot will be undertaken through field interviewer debriefings.	Yes Debriefing sessions are scheduled in 2008 with interviewers of the GLF pilot Underway. ●
9	Sharing corporate learning that results from implementing the interviewer training with other organisations that need to deliver similar training should result in positive equality impacts for all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Interviewer training and briefing instructions to be included in the published guidance.	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 2:</i> The corporate learning that results from the project should be shared across all sectors. ONS should share the learning by publishing practice notes, including the experience of training interviewers to ask personal and sensitive sexual identity question(s). This will enable other organisations to learn from the developing expertise of ONS in this area.	Yes. ONS interviewer training guidance for the GLF pilot has been developed, and will be refined incorporating direct feedback from interviewers. It is intended that the final guidance publication will provide information about the best practice for collecting data on sexual identity. The guide will be written once all the testing of the sexual identity questions is complete. ●
10	By working in partnership with other public bodies and the media, ONS can play an active role in improving the general population's knowledge of different sexual identities and acceptable descriptive words. This is likely to result in acceptability of harmonised sexual identity questions amongst the general population, and reliable data outputs. It is also	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Continuous monitoring of media in relation to data releases.	ONS: ONS will develop a Sexual Identity Project communication plan to address how to communicate findings and raise awareness of the project.	Yes. A Sexual Identity Project communication plan will be developed by autumn 2008. ●

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likely to promote community cohesion within and between communities.						
11 ONS is a model of good consultation practice and this includes organising effective consultations on the Sexual Identity Project. By publishing information papers on the outcomes of its consultation, including equality impacts, ONS should improve its good practice and contribute to that of other organisations.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Publication of all papers in relation to the Sexual Identity Project on dedicated web pages. Continued user/stakeholder engagement.	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 3:</i> ONS should publish information papers on the outcomes of its consultation, and include equality impacts. This will improve ONS good practice and contribute further to that of other organisations.	Yes. Results of all research conducted in relation to the ONS Sexual Identity Project will be published on the ONS website. ONS will in addition develop a Sexual Identity Project communication plan to address how to communicate findings and raise awareness of the project.	Sexual Identity Project has set up dedicated web pages on the ONS website for easy access and public dissemination of project progress, information and outputs. ● As they are completed, all research findings are being published on the ONS web pages. ● A Sexual Identity Project communication plan will be developed by autumn 2008. ●
12 This assessment should, in itself, have positive equality impacts by contributing to building trust and confidence of majority and minority communities in the Sexual Identity Project. If the assessment is published, it will enable ONS to consult on the assessment itself, which may not have considered every possible equality dimension or potential outcome.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority and majority sexual identity groups.	Publication of independent equality impact assessment.	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 4:</i> The equality impact assessment by Diversity Solutions should be published to enable consultation on the assessment, which may not have considered every possible equality dimension or potential outcome.	Yes.	The Equality Impact Assessment of the project by Diversity Solution is published on the ONS website. ●
13 Monitoring the equality outcomes of the Sexual Identity Project throughout the lifetime of the project will have positive equality impacts, assisting ONS to maintain accountability and transparency of the decision-making process related to developing sexual identity question(s); and to eliminate or mitigate any adverse equality impacts that are not already identified.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority and majority sexual identity groups.	Periodic review of equality impact assessment.	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 5:</i> The Diversity Solutions equality impact assessment should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals, or additional equality impact assessments completed, as	Yes. Equality impact assessments will be carried out at key project milestones. This action report will be updated accordingly, and published on the ONS	The first action report published in September 2008. ● Subsequent reviews to be carried out at key milestones of the project and beyond. ●

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					new data and information emerges during the course of the Sexual Identity Project.	website. Input will continue to be sought from the user/stakeholder community	

Table 2: Adverse Equality Impacts and Actions (last updated July 2008)

Adverse impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by the adverse impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
<p>1 Collecting sexual identity data from proxy respondents Collecting data by proxy, where one person answers questions on behalf of the household, may result in under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities. The respondent may assume that all household members are heterosexual; and they may be unaware of, or unwilling to disclose, the minority sexual identity of another household member. Since this survey methodology will affect the reliability of minority sexual identity data, greater adverse impact is likely to be experienced by LGB people in all equality groups compared to heterosexual people in all equality groups.</p>	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	National Statistics Labour Force Survey (the LFS is the largest of the component social surveys that will form the IHS)	<p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 7:</i> As with the introduction of equality monitoring for other groups, early data outputs should be viewed with caution since it is likely that the LGB population will be under-counted. As sexual identity data outputs grow, comparative analysis should be undertaken with sexual identity datasets.</p> <p>ONS: Investigate the consequences of asking, or not asking, the sexual identity question by proxy. This will be achieved by using the Labour Force Survey to assess whether proxy respondents differ systematically from respondents who are interviewed in person in order to assess the likelihood of the estimates being biased if the question were not asked of proxy respondents.</p>	<p>Yes. The sexual identity project has already produced findings from focus groups that questioning on sexual identity should not be asked by proxy.</p> <p>ONS are continuing to address issues of asking or not asking questioning by proxy.</p>	<p>A data quality review is scheduled for when the first results from the IHS become available and for the first few years of implementation. The first set of estimates of the LGB population is expected to be available in autumn 2010. ●</p> <p>A report on the comparative analysis between proxy respondents and those that were interviewed in person will be published 2008. ●</p>
<p>2 Miscomprehension of the formal and non-formal sexual identity terms might result in the misreporting of the minority sexual identities. This may be greater in some communities</p>	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity, Race	Quantitative trials on the NS Omnibus	<p><i>1. Diversity Solutions Recommendation 8:</i> The implementation of the sexual identity question</p>	Yes.	The focus group research was completed in November 2007. It concluded that the terms (heterosexual, straight, gay, lesbian,

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<p>compared to others, including ethnic minority communities where different sexual identity language is used.</p>			<p>Survey and NS General Lifestyle Survey; Qualitative research through focus groups and cognitive testing.</p>	<p>should be accompanied by guidance and awareness-raising information that explains, in plain English, why the question(s) are being asked and all of the terms used in the question(s).</p> <p>2. ONS: Focus group and cognitive testing to be carried out to assess the public's understanding of the terms used in the question. Sub-group analysis to be carried out to assess comprehension of terms by those from differing cultures and identities.</p> <p>3. ONS: Trial sexual identity questions on the NS Omnibus Survey and NS General Lifestyle Survey.</p>		<p>bisexual) were the most widely used within society and would be the most easily understood by survey respondents. The findings were published in autumn 2008. ●</p> <p>Cognitive testing is taking place (summer 2008) which includes minority populations to ensure question wording and response categories are understood. ●</p> <p>The sexual identity question is being trialled on the General Lifestyles Survey (GLF) from April to September 2008. Survey interviewers have received an information pack about why the question is being introduced and definitions of the terms used. Interviewers will provide respondents with further information if they request it. If this method is successful, it is planned that a similar approach will be used when the question is included on the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). ●</p>
<p>3 Use of an 'other' category Using an 'other' category when many individuals from all communities may not think about themselves in terms of sexual identity may result in under-reporting since the question may be misinterpreted or ignored.</p>	<p>November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)</p>	<p>Minority and majority sexual identity, Race</p>	<p>Focus Groups, Cognitive Testing</p>	<p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 8:</i> The implementation of the sexual identity question should be accompanied by guidance and awareness-raising information that explains, in plain English, why the question(s) are being asked and all of the terms used in the</p>	<p>Yes.</p>	<p>Focus group testing explored all the possible terms respondents used to describe their sexual identity. Based on the results from focus groups it was concluded that no additional (appropriate/relevant) sexual identity categories were identified. This will be further explored during cognitive testing, which will take place in summer 2008. ●</p>

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				question(s).		'Other' will remain as a response category whilst question is still being tested. The final version of the question will be decided once all the testing is complete at the end of 2008. ●
<p>4</p> <p>General knowledge and use of sexual identity words Knowledge and use of sexual identity language is low in the heterosexual population. As a consequence, heterosexual respondents in all communities are likely to under-report or misreport sexual identity.</p>	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Majority sexual identity	NS Omnibus Survey Trial, Focus Groups, Cognitive testing	<p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 8:</i> The implementation of the sexual identity question should be accompanied by guidance and awareness-raising information that explains, in plain English, why the question(s) are being asked and all of the terms used in the question(s).</p> <p><i>ONS:</i> Exploration of the use of sexual identity language among the heterosexual population to aid comprehension of the sexual identity question.</p>	Yes.	<p>Results from the NS Omnibus Survey trials 1 and 2 showed that some respondents had comprehension difficulties with 'heterosexual'. The inclusion of the term 'straight' in the second trial improved understanding among the heterosexual groups. ●</p> <p>Among the focus groups although there were some objections to the use of the term 'straight', the term was considered acceptable because it is commonplace and is more widely understood. Issues of acceptability and meaning will be further explored during cognitive testing. ●</p> <p>The final version of the question will be decided once all the testing is complete at the end of 2008. ●</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Colloquial words a. Comprehension is a major issue for the development of the sexual identity question(s). Colloquial sexual identity words are often offensive and used in offensive ways. In the wider population, such words may be misunderstood, or not understood.</p> <p>b. Because of negative sub-textual meanings, some LGB people consider the word 'straight' to be offensive when used within particular</p>	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	Focus groups, cognitive testing	<p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 9:</i> ONS should test whether the list of sexual identity categories is exhaustive and the need for alternatives such as 'none of the above'.</p> <p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 10:</i> ONS should keep under</p>	Yes	<p>Focus group testing completed in November 2007 concluded that 'straight' and 'gay' were currently the most widely understood terms. Although a few focus group participants did use alternative words to describe their sexual identity they were inappropriate to the concept being measured. ●</p> <p>Issues of acceptability and meaning</p>

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<p>contexts. If 'straight' is used to support the description of 'heterosexual' in sexual identity survey questions, this may result in adverse impact for LGB people.</p> <p>c. Both the accepted and sub-textual meanings of informal words such as 'straight' may offend some people. This may result in misreporting or under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities.</p> <p>d. Meanings and acceptability of colloquial words such as 'straight' change over time, and sometimes very quickly. This may result in misreporting or under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities.</p> <p>e. Some groups, such as young people and people from minority ethnic communities, may ascribe different meanings to sexual identity words. This may result in misreporting or under-reporting of minority sexual identity.</p>				<p>regular review the use of colloquial words such as 'straight' to confirm their continuing acceptability and meaning within majority and minority sexual identity communities.</p> <p>ONS: Undertake qualitative testing to ensure that terms are currently acceptable and relevant across different communities and age groups.</p> <p>Continued advice from stakeholder groups to be sought to ensure terms are acceptable and relevant.</p> <p>Guidance to be reviewed and updated regularly.</p>		<p>will be further explored during cognitive testing, ●</p> <p>In the GLF trial, the terms 'straight' and 'gay' will remain within the response categories. The final version of the question will be decided once all the testing is complete at the end of 2008. ●</p> <p>ONS reviews survey questions at regular intervals as part of its commitment to achieve harmonised survey questions and outputs through the ONS harmonisation group. ●</p>
<p>6 Acceptability issues: provision of 'object to answer' or similar category</p> <p>a. The inclusion of 'object to answer' or 'prefer not to say' options may result in persistent under-reporting if the categories enter the mainstream equality monitoring practice of UK public bodies and elsewhere. This may result in under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities.</p> <p>b. Since there are no reliable data on minority sexual identity, giving respondents an 'object to answer' category would affect the reliability of LGB population data, resulting in under-reporting of minority sexual identity across all equality groups. This would have an adverse</p>	<p>November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)</p>	<p>Minority sexual identity</p>	<p>NS Omnibus Survey Trials 1 and 2 and 3.</p>	<p><i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 11</i></p> <p>A full risk assessment should be conducted on the inclusion of 'object to answer' or 'prefer not to say' options to identify if either of these options might result in persistent under-reporting if they enter the mainstream equality monitoring practice of UK public bodies and elsewhere.</p> <p>ONS: Guidance documentation will include</p>	<p>Partially.</p>	<p>A follow-up of respondents answering 'object to answer' or 'prefer not to say' was undertaken after the NS Omnibus Survey Trials 1 and 2 and 3. There were a number of reasons for respondents to select these options (e.g. privacy, confidentiality, comprehension) ●</p> <p>For the Omnibus Trial 4 and the General Lifestyle Survey pilot (April to September 2008) the issues of privacy and confidentiality raised in earlier trials have been addressed by introducing a concealed response show card method. 'Object to answer'</p>

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impact on the LGB population since they would be under-counted. Equality monitoring guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the former equality commissions warns against the inclusion of easily allowing such 'refusal' options.				recommendations on the inclusion or exclusion of a 'prefer not to say' response option when using different modes of interview such as paper self completion or CASI/CAPI interviewing techniques.		and 'Prefer not to say' will not be included as response categories within these trials. Although respondents will still be able to spontaneously refuse to answer the question. Results from these trials are expected late 2008. ● Any decision to include or exclude an 'Object to answer' or 'Prefer not to say' response category will not be decided until testing is complete at the end of 2008. ●
7 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys: over cautious approach The professional and community caution about the social desirability of the sexual identity question is similar to that expressed when ethnic group questions were being developed in the 1980s. The impact of these concerns on question development and administration may result in under-reporting of sexual identity in all equality groups.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	All	Sexual Identity Project testing programme	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12a:</i> Lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people in all equality groups should be consulted about data collection and survey implementation methodologies. ONS: Establish and broaden stakeholder e-mail list to ensure action 12a can be continued in the future.	Yes.	ONS are committed to thoroughly test any new survey questions to assure that they are acceptable and outputs are accurate and fit for purpose. Balance between an over cautious approach and addressing issues of privacy has been constantly considered in the design of the question and its administration. ● As ONS has responsibility for creating a harmonised question that can be used across government and beyond, testing is crucial for ensuring we meet these commitments. ●
8 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys: ONS considers that the sexual identity question should be answered through computer-assisted self interviewing (CASI) since it is regarded as a sensitive question. This approach highlights sexual identity as a 'problem' question and may result in under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	NS Omnibus Survey Trials, NS General Lifestyles Survey pilot	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12 b:</i> Data collection methodologies should be kept under review.	Yes.	The NS Omnibus Trials have examined different ways of administering the sexual identity question; these include the use of CAPI (question is read out by interviewer), CASI (question is self-completed by the respondent) and concealed response show card. ONS view that confidentiality and privacy of the respondent are the most important considerations and therefore have

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						used different methods to ensure this, whilst minimising the impact on the flow of the survey questioning. ● The GLF trial will now use the concealed response show card method, which is also used for other sensitive questions. It is hoped that this method will ensure privacy and not highlight the question as a different or 'problem' question. In addition the sexual identity question in the trial will be located with other identity questions such as ethnicity, national identity and religion. ● The final decision on how the question will be administered on the IHS will be decided once all the testing is complete at the end of 2008. ●	
9	Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys Interviewer discomfort with using or explaining the sexual identity question may lead to question skipping and under-recording. This may result in under-reporting of minority sexual identity by all communities.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Minority sexual identity	NS Omnibus Survey Trials, NS General Lifestyles Survey pilot	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12 c:</i> All interviewers implementing the sexual identity question(s) should receive training in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGB history and culture; ● the reasons why the question is asked; ● the value of the data outputs to LGB people; ● how to ask sexual identity questions of any person in an appropriate and sensitive manner; ● data confidentiality. 	Yes.	Earlier trials on the NS Omnibus Survey allowed interviewers to skip the sexual identity question in specific circumstances (where privacy not guaranteed, inability to use laptop). In Omnibus Trials 4 and on the GLF trial the sexual identity question was administered using an alternative concealed response show card method and survey interviewers were not able to skip the question. Detailed written interviewer instructions have been provided to all interviewers on the GLF pilot. All interviewers have also been fully briefed on the background, the concept and the administration of the question. ●

Adverse impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by the adverse impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
						If this method is successful, it is planned that a similar approach will be used when the question is included on the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). ●
10 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys. Interviewers are highly unlikely to have the professional competence to judge the capacity of respondents to self complete the sexual identity question. Subjective interviewer judgments are likely to exclude disabled people, older people and people whose first language is not English, resulting in under-counting of these groups. This would have particular adverse impacts for LGB people in these equality groups, including the potential for under-provision of appropriate services by public bodies.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Sexual Orientation, Disability, Race, Age	NS Omnibus Survey Trials, NS General Lifestyles Survey pilot	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12 c:</i> All interviewers implementing the sexual identity question(s) should receive training in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGB history and culture ● the reasons why the question is asked; ● the value of the data outputs to LGB people; ● how to ask sexual identity questions of any person in an appropriate and sensitive manner; ● data confidentiality. 	Yes.	Earlier trials on the NS Omnibus Survey allowed interviewers to skip the sexual identity question in certain circumstances (where privacy not guaranteed, inability to use the laptop). In Omnibus Trials 4 and on the GLF pilot the sexual identity question was administered using the concealed show card system and survey interviewers were not able to skip the question. Detailed written interviewer instructions have been provided to all interviewers on the GLF pilot. All interviewers have also been fully briefed on the background, the concept and the administration of the question. ● GLF trial interviewers will be debriefed and cognitive interviews will be analysed. ● The GLF trial also included a series of questions for interviewers to complete in relation to problems encountered in administration, acceptability and respondents' reaction to the question on sexual identity. This will form the basis of an evaluation of the concealed showcard method of administration. ●

Adverse impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by the adverse impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
						If the method is successful, it is planned that a similar approach will be used when the question is included on the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). ●
11 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys Subjective interviewer judgments related to privacy issues may lead to question skipping and under-recording. This may result in under-reporting of the sexual identity of opposite-sex respondents, respondents from majority and minority ethnic communities, people from particular religions or denominations, disabled people and older people, since they may be asked sexual identity questions less frequently than respondents in other groups.	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Sexual Orientation, Race, Gender, Disability, Age, Religion & Belief	NS Omnibus Survey Trials, NS General Lifestyles Survey pilot	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12 c:</i> All interviewers implementing the sexual identity question(s) should receive training in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LGB history and culture ● the reasons why the question is asked; ● the value of the data outputs to LGB people; ● how to ask sexual identity questions of any person in an appropriate and sensitive manner; ● data confidentiality. ONS: Investigate ways that the sexual identity question can be administered without compromising the respondent's privacy in a concurrent household interview.	Yes.	In Omnibus Trials 4 and on the GLF pilot the sexual identity question was administered using the concealed response show card method and interviewers were not able to skip the question. The GLF trial also included a series of questions for completion by the interviewer in relation to the administration, any problems that were encountered, and the acceptability and respondents reaction to the question on sexual identity. This will form the basis of an evaluation of the concealed showcard method of administration. ● If this method is successful, it is planned that a similar approach will be used when the question is included on the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). ●
12 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys Lack of appropriate training would result in misinformation, question skipping and under-recording. This may result in under-reporting	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Sexual Orientation, Race, Gender, Disability,	NS Omnibus Survey Trials, NS General	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 12 c:</i> All interviewers implementing the sexual identity question(s) should	Yes.	Detailed written interviewer instructions have been provided to all interviewers on the GLF pilot. All interviewers have also been fully briefed on the administration and the

Adverse impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by the adverse impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
of majority and minority sexual identity of respondents, including respondents from majority and minority ethnic communities, people from particular religions or denominations, disabled people and older people, who may be asked sexual identity questions less frequently as a result of subjective interviewer judgments.		Age, Religion & Belief	Lifestyles Survey pilot	receive training in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGB history and culture • the reasons why the question is asked; • the value of the data outputs to LGB people; • how to ask sexual identity questions of any person in an appropriate and sensitive manner; • data confidentiality. ONS: Provide survey interviewers with appropriate training to administer the sexual identity question.		conceptualisation of the question. ● The GLF trial included a series of questions for completion by the interviewer in relation to the administration, any problems that were encountered, and the acceptability and respondents reaction to the question on sexual identity. This will form the basis of an evaluation of the concealed showcard method of administration. ● GLF trial interviewers will also be debriefed and interviewer training refined in light of this. ●
13 Design and administration of the sexual identity question in social surveys The CASI mode of interviewing may result in under-reporting and misreporting by disabled people and people with language issues such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dyslexia • visual and motor impairments • non/low-literacy • English as a second language • British Sign Language users 	November 2007 (Diversity Solutions)	Sexual Orientation, Race, Disability	Cognitive testing	<i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 13:</i> Groups of disabled women and men with a range of impairments should be involved from an early stage so that they can comment on the design and implementation processes of the sexual identity question(s). <i>Diversity Solutions Recommendation 14</i> Groups of disabled women and men from majority and minority ethnic communities and the Deaf Community should be involved from an	Partially. These issues are relevant to all questions that are included on ONS social surveys, and not just the sexual identity question. The Sexual Identity Project will consult with and inform ONS social survey data collection policy in this area. ONS is developing questioning for the longitudinal Disability Survey (Life Opportunities Survey). Alternative modes of	Awaiting recommendations from the Life Opportunities Survey testing programme. ●

Adverse impact	When identified (by whom)	Equality groups which are most likely to be affected by the adverse impact	Sources of evidence used to assess impact	Proposed actions/Recommendations	Will the proposed recommendation/action be taken forward?	Progress against recommendation/action ● Completed ● Underway ● Not yet started
				early stage so that they can comment on the design and implementation processes of the sexual identity question(s).	questioning to address these issues will be developed and rolled out as exemplars for all ONS survey data collection.	
14	<p>Accuracy of LGB population estimates Estimates of the prevalence of the LGB population using the sexual identity question(s) may be lower than previously quoted.</p>	November 2007 (ONS)	Sexual orientation	<p>10 UK-based surveys, 8 international surveys, Expert Research Group, NS Omnibus Survey Trial 4, GLF pilot</p> <p>To review the LGB estimates produced by organisations, both in the UK and internationally, which have recently administered survey questions about sexual identity/orientations.</p> <p>The Expert Research Group, made up primarily of academics and researchers with experience in this field, to validate estimates produced by the NS Omnibus Survey Trials and the GLF pilot.</p> <p>1. Assess the quality of the LGB population estimates produced.</p>	Yes.	<p>1. Reviews on the UK and international experiences in administering sexual identity/orientation questions have been published on the ONS website. ●</p> <p>2. The Sexual Identity Project Expert Group have validated estimates produced in the NS Omnibus Survey Trials and has concluded that these trials provide accurate estimates of the LGB population. ●</p> <p>3. An assessment of the first estimates produced on the IHS will be conducted at the end of 2010. ●</p>

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ONS Single Equality Scheme 2008-11

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APPENDIX

Definition of sexual identity

ONS are using the following definition of sexual identity:

Sexual orientation is one of the six equality strands covered by a range of legislation, along with race, gender, disability, religion and belief, and age. 'Sexual orientation' is an umbrella term which encompasses several dimensions, including sexual identity, attraction and behaviour. For the purposes of the legislation, sexual orientation is not defined in terms of any specific dimension. The prototype question developed by ONS is intended to ask about sexual identity, which is the dimension most related to certain groups' experience of disadvantage and discrimination.

Self-perceived sexual identity is a subjective view of oneself. It is asked as an opinion question, so it is up to respondents to decide how they define themselves based on a few broad categories. Essentially, it is about what a person is, not what they do. It is about the inner sense of self, and perhaps sharing a collective social identity with a group of other people.

ONS' research has found that understanding of the concept of sexual identity varied across groups, being more salient for lesbian and gay people than for heterosexuals or bisexuals. It is important to recognise that the question is not specifically about sexual behaviour or attraction, although these aspects might relate to the formation of identity. A person can have a sexual identity while not being sexually active. Furthermore, reported sexual identity may change over time or in different contexts (e.g. at home versus in the workplace).