

Developing survey questions on sexual identity:

UK experiences of administering survey questions on sexual identity/orientation

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Contents

1	Executive Summary	2
2	Introduction.....	6
2.1	Scope of the review.....	7
2.2	Defining sexual identity or orientation	7
2.3	Methodology	8
2.4	Surveys reviewed and organisations involved.....	8
3	Survey designs	9
3.1	Sample designs and population coverage	10
3.2	Modes and methods of administration.....	10
4	Analysis.....	11
4.1	Drawing conclusions and confounding factors.....	11
4.2	Estimates from the surveys	12
4.3	Conceptual basis, purpose, context and location of question	13
4.3.1	Conceptual basis	13
4.3.2	Purpose and context	14
4.3.3	Location in questionnaire.....	14
4.4	Preambles to and explanations of the question	15
4.5	Question wording and format	16
4.5.1	Question Stem.....	18
4.5.2	Response categories	20
4.6	Missing data	24
4.6.1	Options not to answer the question.....	25
4.6.2	‘Don’t know’ responses	26
4.6.3	Non-response and ethnic group	26
4.7	Confidentiality, privacy and acceptability	27
4.7.1	Confidentiality pledges	27
4.7.2	Providing privacy in the survey environment.....	28
4.7.3	Acceptability of the question and survey/item response.....	29
4.8	Accuracy and completeness: honesty and social desirability	30
4.9	Interviewer attitudes to asking about sexual identity.....	32
4.9.1	Non-professional interviewers in communal establishments	32
4.9.2	Professional interviewers	32
4.10	Longitudinal data collection	33
4.11	Issues about asking sexual identity not addressed by the review	33
5	References.....	34
6	Appendices.....	34
	Appendix A: Summary table – mode/sample design/sexual identity question designs and estimates.....	36
	Appendix B: Information about each survey included in the review	38

Tables

Table 1	Surveys reviewed and suppliers of information	9
Table 2	Minimum and maximum percentage rates for each substantive sexual identity category and type of missing data, by survey mode	12
Table 3	Question stems and response categories	17

1 Executive Summary

Introduction: ONS initiated a project, in 2006, to develop, test and evaluate a question, or suite of questions, on self-perceived sexual identity for use on government social surveys. As part of the exploratory phase a review was conducted of the experiences of other organisations in the UK which have recently administered survey questions about sexual ‘identity’ or ‘orientation’. The former term is used generically in the review unless otherwise specified. It is difficult to determine commonly agreed definitions of either term and there has been much research into the concepts. The working premise of the project is to develop a question about respondents’ self-perceived sexual identity (for example, as heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual), allowing them to take into consideration whichever dimensions of sexual orientation (e.g. behaviour, attraction, fantasy, emotional and social preferences, identification and lifestyle) they so choose in order to determine their sexual identity. The feasibility of operationalising this intention in the social survey environment is one of the main focal points of the project. The purpose of the review was to obtain insight to inform subsequent stages of the project.

Methodology: Ten public sector surveys were reviewed¹. Their target populations covered people of all sexual identities, though in some cases were limited geographically or to people with certain characteristics. Information was obtained by semi-structured telephone interviews with researchers at sponsoring organisations or research and fieldwork contractors, and by further correspondence and reference to survey reports and other materials. Information collected included survey and sexual identity question designs, estimates produced, and feedback from respondents and interviewers. A content analysis of the information obtained was conducted. A summary of information collected (sample designs, modes of administration, question designs and estimates) is at Appendix A.

Modes of administration: Sexual identity questions were either administered by interviewers, using CAPI or PAPI, or were self-administered by booklets placed during face-to-face or postal surveys.

Analysis & drawing conclusions: The review provided useful insight, generated hypotheses and identified areas for research through the remainder of the project. However confounding factors, such as the small number of surveys reviewed, differing survey and question designs, small sample sizes, the uncertainty as to the robustness of estimates and the lack of a reliable benchmark of the proportion of the population which is lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), sometimes made comparisons difficult. In this review terms such as ‘the LGB population’ and ‘heterosexual

¹ Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2005); Policing For London Survey (2000); Employees’ Awareness, Knowledge and Exercise of Employment Rights Survey (2005); Fair Treatment at Work Survey (2005); The National Mental Health and Ethnicity Census 2005 Service User Survey (2005); The National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census (2006); British Social Attitudes Survey (2005); Newham Household Panel Survey (2002-6); Scottish Census Small Scale Test (2005); Civil Service Diversity Survey (2001). While this review was conducted the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS, 2006-7) and Citizenship Survey (2007-8) introduced questions on sexual identity into the field – limited commentary on these is included.

respondents' are used as shorthand for people who selected particular response categories.

Survey estimates: Estimates were obtained for most of the surveys. Rates of the proportion of respondents self-identifying as LGB ranged from 0.3% to 3.0%, lower than the government estimate of LGB people constituting 5% to 7% of the population.

Concept being measured: All surveys asked a single question to capture sexual identity, rather than asking separate questions about its different dimensions. Little information was provided about the conceptual basis of the questions, or what respondents understood them to be asking, and on what basis their answers were given. A respondent's answer might vary according to which dimension(s) they are considering. ONS's project will include qualitative research with members of the public into the concept to be measured. It will address the feasibility of capturing sexual identity in a single question, in the context of government social surveys with varying purposes.

Purpose, location and explanation of questions: Generally the purpose of the questions was less to measure prevalence of sexual identities than for use in analysis relating to domains where sexual identity might have a bearing (e.g. discrimination). Questions were generally located among socio-demographic questions, usually toward the end of interviewer-administered questionnaires but sometimes followed by other modules in self-administered instruments. Explanations about the purpose of questions, or about confidentiality, were generally not provided. Interviewer feedback suggested attention should not be drawn to the question. The purpose and location of the questioning, and what explanation should be provided to respondents, are topics which will be covered in the ONS project.

Question wording and format:

Question stems: Question stems varied in whether the term 'sexual identity' (or similar) was mentioned, or left the subject to be inferred from the response categories by asking respondents which category '(best) described' them. Definitions were generally not included in question wording. Limited feedback on comprehension from respondents suggested the need for some definition to be given of what is being measured. This topic will be addressed in ONS's project.

Response categories: The questions tended to provide 'discrete' or 'absolute' response categories, clearly separating heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual, rather than a set which reflected the possibility that sexual identity might exist on a continuum (e.g. 'completely heterosexual, mainly heterosexual, bisexual, mainly homosexual, completely homosexual'). The different approaches might have implications for measuring the prevalence of the LGB population: for example, whether those responding 'mainly heterosexual', implying some degree of LGB orientation, should be included. However, identity might be more discrete than other dimensions such as behaviour and attraction.

Only a few terms were used in the response categories, but there was great variety as to which formal and colloquial alternatives were used and in which combinations: for example, whether 'heterosexual' was used with or without 'straight', or 'gay' and 'lesbian' with or without 'homosexual'. Definitions of categories were generally not

provided. Some respondent comprehension problems were apparent, particularly regarding ‘heterosexual’. No effects on estimates resulting from the terms used or the order of categories were obvious. The ONS qualitative work will investigate understanding and use of terms, what are the appropriate response categories and the need for definitions to be provided. The need for additional response categories, such as ‘other’, ‘none of the above’ and alternatives to the categories commonly provided will also be explored.

Missing data: All surveys recorded missing data, from item non-response (‘don’t know’, refusal to an interviewer, or leaving a self-completion question unanswered), or from response categories such as ‘do not wish to answer’, or from both. Higher proportions of missing data tended to be found on self-administered surveys (totals ranging from 1.4% to 25.0%) compared with interviewer-administered surveys (0.2% to 9.0%). A possible issue was identified regarding potentially higher non-response among minority ethnic groups due to cultural/religious beliefs which will be looked at in the ONS development work.

Confidentiality: Surveys did not mention confidentiality at the point the question was asked, though all gave general assurances elsewhere, for example in advance or covering letters. Little information was gathered about respondents’ views on confidentiality and fears of disclosure of their data to other parties; this will be covered in the ONS research.

Privacy in the survey environment: There was little evidence of respondent concern about privacy, that is, the interviewer or any other person present knowing which answer had been given. On interviewer-administered surveys the common approach to providing privacy and reducing embarrassment was use of concealed response show cards, where respondents answered by giving a letter or number rather than stating their answer in words. However no surveys prevented interviewers from knowing the response category given by the respondent. Views on within-household privacy, concurrent interviewing, and preferences for interviewer- or self-administered modes will be explored in the ONS research.

Acceptability of the question:

Survey response

There was no evidence to suggest that survey response rates had been affected by the inclusion of a question on sexual identity. Indeed one survey tested its questionnaire with and without a sexual identity question to confirm this.

Item response

Higher rates of missing data were obtained when questions were administered by self-completion compared with interviewer-administered mode. This suggested that perhaps there was an issue of invasion of privacy or objection to being asked about sexual identity. Feedback from one postal survey supported this assumption, although it found that objecting to being asked and objecting to giving an answer did not necessarily correspond. Such concerns were less evident when the question was interviewer-administered, where missing data was lower probably due to the fact that respondents tend to be more compliant in interviewer-administered surveys.

Accuracy and completeness of data: When producing benchmark data, it is important to minimise missing data particularly when the characteristic of interest is found in a small proportion of the population. However it is also important that the accuracy of substantive responses (that is, to the sexual identity categories including other, or similar) is not compromised. This could occur if respondents feel pressured into providing an answer which is incorrect but which may be considered more socially acceptable. Mode of administration is an important consideration in relation to this.

LGB rates across the modes appeared to be more consistent than those for heterosexual respondents. So it might be that LGB respondents tended to give correct answers in either mode. However, it is not known whether a proportion of the LGB population gave incorrect, socially desirable answers in interviewer-administered mode, or avoided giving substantive answers in self-completion mode.

Estimates of the heterosexual population tended to be higher when the question was interviewer-administered compared with self-administered questions. Respondents would have been able to ask interviewers for help in understanding the question or response categories, which might have reduced the amount of missing data. Another possible reason is that a proportion of heterosexual respondents avoided giving substantive answers to self-administered questions, but answered truthfully when 'forced' to answer on interviewer-administered surveys.

The questions raised above will be covered in the remaining research. Issues which will be considered include:

- whether respondents should be allowed to avoid giving substantive answers, in different modes, and, if so, how;
- whether respondents might give socially desirable answers, and what characteristics they have;
- and the optimal balance between minimising missing data and maximising data accuracy.

Interviewer attitudes: Experiences on some surveys led to the conclusion that interviewer instruction should be given sufficient attention to avoid problems. Such problems included interviewers on one survey being unwilling to ask the question, and lay interviewers, in an establishment context, determining sexual identity by observation, without asking the respondent. However, as far as the researchers spoken to were aware, such problems were rare.

Issues not addressed: Some issues of relevance to the development of a question for ONS and other surveys were not covered by the review. These included CASI or telephone methods; administering the question face-to-face to more than one household member; and proxy data. One survey had a longitudinal design, but little was discovered about effects of asking the question repeatedly over time. These issues will be addressed by the ONS project.

2 Introduction

There is an increasing requirement for data on sexual orientation or identity in order to meet current and future legislative requirements. Sexual orientation is the term used in the legislation but sexual identity is the preferred term used by the ONS. The key users of this data will include central government departments; local government; public service providers (e.g. police & health authorities); lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) service providers; the LGB population; academia and other research organisations.

A project was initiated that aimed to provide advice on best practice with regard to data collection in this field, and also examine the feasibility of providing benchmark data. The primary outputs from this project will be a question, or suite of questions, asking people to self-identify to a particular sexual orientation, along with advice on administration. Alongside the question(s), a user guide will be produced discussing the conceptual issues as well as the methodological issues, such as context and mode effects. General information on the project is available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-equality/sexual-identity/default.asp>
The methodology is described in Wilmot (2007).

The impact of asking a question on sexual identity on an ONS multi-purpose social survey such as the new Integrated Household Survey (IHS) is unknown. It is possible that some respondents may be unhappy about being asked for what could be considered very personal and sensitive information. This may well impact on the response to the survey overall or to the individual question. Moreover it may impact on willingness to be contacted for further research which would have implications were the question to be included on a longitudinal survey.

There may be issues relating to the administration of this question amongst particular groups in society. For example, people's cultural, religious or political beliefs may be offended. The age of the respondent may also relate to their ability to answer or their attitudes towards such questioning. Examining personal barriers to response would enable us to suggest how the methodology could be improved. Respondents' ability to comprehend the questions and answers has clear implications for the quality of the data. Furthermore, the comprehension and attitudes of the interviewers is important since they are often called upon to justify the inclusion of a particular topic in a survey.

Data Collection Methodology (DCM) branch was commissioned to develop, test and evaluate question(s) on sexual identity for implementation in a government social survey context, with particular reference to the IHS. This report forms part of the initial exploratory phase of the project.

As part of the exploratory phase of the project, ONS conducted a review of the experiences of other organisations in the UK which have administered survey questions about 'sexual identity' or 'sexual orientation', reported in this document. The purpose of the review was to obtain insight which might be useful in informing

subsequent stages of the project, including qualitative exploration of the issues of interest with the general public and the design and testing of a question, or questions, for use on social surveys.

2.1 Scope of the review

The review included UK organisations in central and local government and the private sector which have recently administered questions on respondents' sexual identity, to survey populations inclusive of people of all sexual identities. In some cases coverage was limited geographically or to people with particular characteristics.

The review excluded the following areas.

- Questions specifically about sexual behaviour and attraction, as the focus of the development project is on self-perceived sexual identity. (However, questions were included where the precise concept was not specified in the question stem).
- Surveys conducted with only the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) community were excluded, as the project is aiming to develop a question for use with the general population.
- Surveys prior to 2000, because information collected more than a few years ago might have become out of date, with regard to the general public's conceptualisation of sexual identity, language used and understood and views on the acceptability of such questions.

A less detailed review of sexual identity questions asked in other countries was conducted at the same time – this is reported separately (Taylor [a]).

2.2 Defining sexual identity or orientation

Note that in this review the term 'sexual identity' is used, and generally also encompasses 'sexual orientation'. However, it is difficult to determine a commonly agreed definition of either term. The surveys reviewed here referred to, variously, 'sexual orientation', 'sexuality' or were not explicit about which concept they were measuring. There has been much research into the concepts of sexual identity and orientation, with regard to different dimensions such as sexual attraction, behaviour, fantasies, emotional and social preferences, identification and lifestyle, and whether they can/should be measured individually or if it is possible to capture sexual identity/orientation with a single question (summarised in McManus). The working premise of the project is that a question is developed which should ask about respondents' self-perceived sexual identity, allowing them to take into consideration whichever dimensions they so choose in order to determine their sexual identity. The intention is that sexual identity will not be defined for them as only being about a particular dimension (e.g. behaviour), or prescribe a formula to derive the overall identity. This multi-dimensional approach is informed by models of sexual orientation such as the Klein Grid and the Sell Assessment². The feasibility of operationalising this intention in the social survey environment is one of the main focal points of the project.

² See http://www.gaydata.org/ms001_Index.html

2.3 Methodology

Data for the review was collected primarily by means of semi-structured telephone interviews conducted with project managers or others with relevant knowledge (at either the sponsoring organisation or the survey design/fieldwork contractor). Further information was provided by email. In addition, research and technical reports, questionnaires and other field materials, and data estimates were all referred to.

In Appendix B detailed information is provided about each survey, obtained from the interviews and documents. General information, to provide context for comparison and assessment of the sexual identity question, includes when it was conducted, who the sponsor was, the sample design and mode of administration and survey response. Specific information about the sexual identity question includes the question wording and response categories; method of administration; how refusals and other missing information were recorded; estimates (where publicly available); information on instructions and training given to interviewers; and feedback from respondents and interviewers on the experience of administering a sexual identity question (e.g. comprehension and acceptability).

Much of the information, including estimates from the questions where available, is summarised in a table at Appendix A, to enable easier comparison between surveys and modes.

Information for some surveys is incomplete, because it was not available, or because consultation could not always be with researchers involved day to day in the projects, or because not all the topics could be covered with each organisation. Estimates were not available for every survey reviewed. Thanks go to the suppliers of the information at the organisations acknowledged in Table 1 below.

A content analysis of the information was then conducted.

2.4 Surveys reviewed and organisations involved

Information was collected about all but one of the surveys falling in the scope of the review of which ONS was aware. Ten surveys were included in the review, listed in the table below. The year of reference for each survey reviewed is given, either one-off or the most recent full year.

Table 1 Surveys reviewed and suppliers of information

Survey or data collection (year)	Information/feedback suppliers
Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (2005)	Queen's University, Belfast - survey sponsor
Policing For London Survey (2000)	National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) - survey contractor; Prof. Mike Hough (formerly South Bank University) – research contractor
Employees' Awareness, Knowledge and Exercise of Employment Rights Survey (2005)	Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) - survey sponsor
Fair Treatment at Work Survey (2005)	Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) - survey sponsor
The National Mental Health and Ethnicity Census 2005 Service User Survey (2005)	NatCen – survey design consultant
The National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census (2006)	The Mental Health Act Commission – survey sponsor
British Social Attitudes Survey (2005)	NatCen – survey contractor
Newham Household Panel Survey (2002-6)	London Borough of Newham - survey sponsor
Scottish Census Small Scale Test (2005)	Information obtained from 'Sexual Orientation in the Census' report by GRO Scotland
Civil Service Diversity Survey (2001)	ORC International - survey contractor

Note that during the period when this review was conducted the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (APMS, 2006-7) and Citizenship Survey (2007-8) introduced questions on sexual identity into the field. Some information was provided by, respectively, NatCen (the survey contractor) and Communities and Local Government (the survey sponsor), though no information was available regarding estimates and little feedback from the field. Generally they are not included in the survey descriptions and analysis below, except when referred to explicitly.

As part of the development project, in 2006 ONS conducted experiments asking about sexual identity on the National Statistics Omnibus Survey. A separate report on this work has been written (Taylor [b]).

3 Survey designs

This section provides some contextual information on the surveys' sample designs and modes of administering the sexual identity question, both of which were varied.

3.1 Sample designs and population coverage

Seven surveys were conducted in private households, while three were in institutions or establishments.

Eight of the surveys used random probability sampling. The exceptions were the Fair Treatment at Work Survey which was included on an omnibus survey employing quota sampling, and the National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census (2006) which was a census of inpatients in mental health and learning disability establishments.

Five of the surveys sampled the general population. They varied geographically as to whether they covered Great Britain, particular countries within the UK, London, or a local authority area. Only one general population survey, British Social Attitudes Survey, covered Great Britain as a whole, and it should be noted that its sexual identity question was not intended to measure the prevalence of the LGB population.

The two DTI surveys were limited to people of working age who were currently working as employees or had worked within the last two years. The Civil Service Diversity Survey sampled civil servants in all departments. The National Mental Health and Ethnicity Census 2005 Service User Survey (2005) and the National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census (2006) covered in-patients in NHS and private/voluntary mental health and learning disability establishments.

The ages of respondents included by the different surveys varied from 15 and over, to 16 and over, and 18 and over. All household surveys selected one person to respond, except the Newham Household Panel Survey which interviewed all household adults. Among the institutional/establishment surveys, two sampled individuals while the third was a census.

3.2 Modes and methods of administration

Predominantly, two modes of administration were applied for the sexual identity questions, with different methods used within each mode, as follows:

- interviewer-administered mode:
 - CAPI;
 - PAPI;
- self-administered mode:
 - self completion booklet placed during a face-to-face interview;
 - postal survey.

Computer assisted self-completion (CASI or ACASI) was not generally employed. The single exception was the Fair Treatment at Work Survey pilot, which experimented with self-completion using a 'CAPI pen' in some cases, though the main mode was interviewer-administered.

No surveys employed telephone methods, so no information was obtained which might inform the potential administration on ONS surveys conducted this way.

Concurrent personal interviewing was not conducted on any of the surveys for the sexual identity question (the Newham Household Panel Survey utilised paper self-completion). Thus no experience of the data collection environment used on the

majority of ONS's social surveys could be drawn on to inform the design of ONS's questioning.

4 Analysis

4.1 Drawing conclusions and confounding factors

In this section various aspects of the design of the questions are described and compared across the surveys reviewed. The effect of the design on the estimates is explored.

Analysis of the information collected provided insight which will be used to inform the design of the questioning for use on UK government social surveys, and the topics to be covered in the qualitative research being conducted as part of the development process. It also generated hypotheses for further testing both qualitatively and quantitatively. Areas for further research are identified throughout the review.

Comparisons were sometimes difficult to make between the surveys, and conclusions were hard to draw about the effect of mode, question design, location or context on the estimates. A number of confounding factors needed to be taken into account. The number of surveys included in the review was small, overall and for each mode of administration. The sample designs and survey populations differed. The question designs also varied, such as in the ways in which respondents could avoid providing their sexual identity, or answer 'other', 'don't know' or 'do not wish to answer'/'prefer to not say'. The robustness of the estimates obtained was in some cases perhaps doubtful, due to small sample sizes and/or low response rates (both unit and item), and therefore subject potentially to sample variation and/or non-response bias.

Furthermore, lack of a reliable benchmark made analysis of estimates difficult. For comparative purposes the working assumption used was that nationally lesbian, gay and bisexual people comprise 5% to 7% of the population (the figure used by government and thought reasonable by Stonewall)³. However this figure should perhaps be treated with caution due to it encompassing, variously, dimensions of sexual identity/orientation – self-identification, behaviour and desire - and having been derived from several sources and countries.

In this review terms such as 'the LGB population' and 'heterosexual respondents' are used as shorthand for people who selected particular response categories.

³ The report *Final Regulatory Impact Assessment: Civil Partnership Act 2004* (available at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/files/file23829.pdf>) states: "Whilst no specific data is available, a wide range of research suggests that lesbian, gay and bisexual people constitute 5-7% of the total adult population..." The figure was based on the findings in a number of studies, from various countries, conducted among differing sample populations and measuring different dimensions of sexual identity. A footnote acknowledges that there is very little reliable data about the size of the LGB population.

4.2 Estimates from the surveys

The estimates from the sexual identity question were obtained for most of the surveys. Weighted data was supplied in most cases. The percentages are shown in detail in the table at Appendix A. Estimates were not available for two of the ten surveys; however, these were the two with mental health inpatients, which were the least typical surveys in terms of sample and design, so estimates from them would, perhaps, be misleading anyway.

In this section, the estimates are discussed at a general level, while in following sections more detailed consideration is given to the relationship of estimates to particular features of the question design.

For those surveys where estimates were available, the table below shows the minimum and maximum percentage rates for each substantive sexual identity category and type of missing value. For the purpose of this review, ‘substantive’ categories means those covering the different sexual identities (including ‘other’ or similar), while ‘missing data’ refers to responses from categories presented to respondents such as ‘do not wish to answer’, as well as don’t knows and refusals.

As will be described in Sections 4.5 and 4.6 the category breakdowns and labels varied across surveys – in the table below they are consolidated. And the types of missing values did not all apply to each survey.

The category percentages are based on total cases, not just valid cases. The ranges are shown for all surveys, and separately for interviewer-administered and self-administered.

Table 2 Minimum and maximum percentage rates for each substantive sexual identity category and type of missing data, by survey mode

Survey mode		Substantive categories					Missing data					
		Hetero-sexual	Lesbian/ Gay	Bisexual	LGB total	Other/ none	All subst.	Don't know	Do not wish to answer	Ref	Blank	All missing
All	Min	70.4	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.0	75.0	1.6	1.3	0.2	1.4	0.2
	Max	98.9	2.0	2.0	3.0	4.7	99.8	1.6	15.0	9.0	10.0	25.0
Int. - admin	Min	87.8	0.5	0.2	0.9	0.0	90.9	1.6	1.3	0.2	n/a	0.2
	Max	98.9	2.0	1.2	2.4	0.7	99.8	1.6	1.3	9.0		9.0
Self-admin	Min	70.4	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.9	75.0	n/a	8.5	n/a	1.4	1.4
	Max	95.3	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.7	98.6		15.0		10.0	25.0

The estimates had to be treated with caution, since most of the surveys were limited in their population or geographical coverage, and might be subject to sample design variation. The sexual identity question on the only GB-wide general population survey was not intended to measure the prevalence of LGB people.

That said, the main observation is that rates of lesbian, gay and bisexual respondents, combined, ranged from 0.3% to 3%. This is lower than the 5% to 7% government estimate.

The surveys which recorded the highest rates of LGB respondents were not of the general population. They might reflect different compositions, with regard to sexual

identity, among the specific populations sampled (civil servants and people currently or recently employed) compared with the general population.

The highest estimate of LGB respondents among any of the general population surveys was 2.1%.

The estimates varied as to whether prevalence of lesbian & gay (combined) was higher than bisexual, or vice versa, though lesbian & gay tended to be higher.

Not all the researchers contacted commented on their estimates. But among them were some who acknowledged that their own figures were unreliable or underestimated the LGB population – in the words of one, “*by any reasonable standards the results are pretty hopeless... baldly unsatisfactory*”. The report on the Scottish Census Small Scale test questioned the “*accuracy*” and “*utility*” of the data, due to high unit and item non-response.

A hypothesis put forward by researchers on one survey, comparing their estimate with the benchmark, was that the clustered sample design might have led to under-representation of the LGB population, if they were concentrated in particular geographical areas. Whilst factors including survey coverage, sample design and non-response might explain the low estimates of LGB respondents to some degree, albeit that the benchmark against which they are being compared is of uncertain reliability, the findings of the review do provide some useful insight into the effects of the question design and mode of administration.

The analysis posed a question about the balance to be achieved between, on one hand, reducing missing values and obtaining as much substantive data as possible, and, on the other hand, the accuracy of the substantive data. A key question is whether accuracy is compromised when the question is interviewer-administered, by, for example, respondents giving more socially desirable answers. This subject is discussed in section 4.8.

4.3 Conceptual basis, purpose, context and location of question

4.3.1 Conceptual basis

Little information was ascertained about the conceptual basis of the questions, that is, what precisely they were intended to measure. The surveys apparently all took a ‘lumper’ approach to collecting information on sexual identity (McManus). That is, they only asked one question, rather than taking a ‘splitter’ approach, asking separate questions about different dimensions. The questions were generally non-specific about which dimension(s) of sexual identity/orientation was or were being measured. Little information was available as to what respondents understood the question to be asking (see later sections). (Note that the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, at time of writing still in the field, asks separate questions about orientation/identity and behaviour).

Further research

ONS’s programme of development work will be addressing the concept which is intended to be measured and whether it can be captured in a single question or

requires more than one (see also sections 4.4. and 4.5). The work will consider the points of view of both members of the public and the analysts and users of the data. If more than one question is ideally required, the feasibility and appropriateness of asking more than one question in the context of government social surveys with different purposes will be considered.

4.3.2 Purpose and context

The purpose of the sexual identity question on the surveys reviewed was primarily for use as an analysis variable, not to measure prevalence of different sexual identities. The question was usually considered to be a socio-demographic question, so that experiences and attitudes measured at other questions could be compared between sexual identities.

All surveys had at least one question about a subject where a person's sexual identity could have a bearing, e.g. experience of discrimination, service provision, diversity issues or social attitudes. The British Social Attitudes Survey question was used to identify respondents with particular identities for subsequent questions.

Questions tended not to include any mention of the purpose of asking (see section 4.4 on preambles and explanations below). Little was discovered about the public's perceptions of the purpose of asking about sexual identity. Focus group research conducted during the development of one survey indicated that people accepted the use of the question in monitoring diversity and unfairness in the workplace.

A different purpose applied to the Scottish Census Small Scale Test, which was to assess the feasibility of asking such a question on the 2011 Census in Scotland.

Due to the confounding factors mentioned above it was difficult to assess what effect, if any, the perceived purpose and context of the questions had on the data quality (e.g. how carefully respondents considered the question), or on non-response (whether unit or item, due, for example, to sensitivity over subject matter or data confidentiality).

4.3.3 Location in questionnaire

No conclusions could be drawn about the effect on item non-response or estimates of the sexual identity question's location in the questionnaire. The question was generally included among socio-demographic questions (along with, for example, age, marital status, ethnicity, religion, employment status, income). In interviewer-administered surveys it was the final or penultimate question, suggesting caution on the part of researchers with regard to the possible effect on item or unit non-response, as was expressed by one researcher: "*... we put the question last so that it wouldn't put people off. We feared that they might worry what was coming next*". In self-administered surveys the question was sometimes followed by other topics, perhaps suggesting less concern due to the fact that respondents could skip the question.

Further research

The purpose, context and location of a sexual identity question will be discussed with participants in ONS's planned qualitative research.

4.4 Preambles to and explanations of the question

Explanations specifically relating to the sexual identity question – whether about its purpose or to provide confidentiality assurances - were generally not provided. There was no conclusive evidence as to the relative benefits and drawbacks of a prescribed preamble, or an optional explanation, to the sexual identity question. The limited feedback available was from interviewers' perspectives, not respondents'.

Only one organisation included a preamble or explanation immediately before the question, in their current or most recently used instruments. The Citizenship Survey, in the field at the time of writing, included this preamble:

“The next question is about sexual identity. We are asking this question because the government department funding this study, Communities and Local Government, is responsible for helping to reduce all forms of prejudice and discrimination in society”

A further clause on confidentiality (“As with all our questions, your answers will be kept strictly confidential”) was included in the question which was cognitively tested but dropped prior to the survey going live. It was dropped because interviewers felt it was unnecessary and made the question more of a “big deal”.

Separate explanation, was provided to respondents on the National Mental Health ...Census (2006), in a booklet to respondents called ‘Your questions answered’. It included the following question:

“Why are you asking me about sexual orientation? This is really very personal.”

The response explained that:

- LGB people sometimes don't receive the same standard of care and have more mental health problems than other people, so the Mental Health Act Commission wants to know how to improve services. But it doesn't know how many LGB patients there are.
- The question was voluntary.

Two examples were given of a preamble being dropped after initial use on interviewer-administered surveys. The preambles addressed confidentiality and/or attempted to explain terminology.

One preamble had been used on a pilot of the survey:

“The last question in this section is about sexual orientation - that is whether someone is gay or lesbian, heterosexual or bisexual. As with all questions on the survey you do not have to answer this if you do not want to, but all answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.”

It was dropped in response to interviewer feedback, that it drew attention to the question and embarrassed respondents.

Another preamble was dropped after being used in the field for some time. This preamble explained that

“Some people have a partner of the same sex as themselves (homosexual) while others have a partner of the opposite sex (heterosexual).”

The reason for it being dropped was not ascertained. This preamble, being behaviour-related, would not be appropriate for a question about self-perceived sexual identity.

In an alternative approach to a standard preamble, the two DTI surveys provided an interviewer prompt for use if respondents objected to or queried the purpose of the question:

“We’re collecting this information to find out more about the discrimination people may face for different reasons. The information is kept completely anonymous.”

It is not known how often it was used by interviewers or its reception by respondents.

Confidentiality and anonymity regarding data respondents provided more generally was addressed in various ways across the surveys: in advance letters, cover letters, on the front of self completion booklets and at the beginning of demographic questions.

Further research

The necessity for a preamble or explanation, and the dimensions which should be covered, is an issue for exploration in the exploratory and main stages of ONS’s research. That is, whether respondents require explanation of the question’s meaning and language to aid comprehension and improve accuracy, or of its purpose and assurances of confidentiality to maximise unit response. Or, on the other hand, whether to mention these things draws respondents’ attention to its potential sensitivity which would otherwise not occur to them. Omnibus Survey interviewer feedback will also be pertinent.

4.5 Question wording and format

The table below lists the question stems and response categories for the data collections reviewed. It also includes those used on the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (two versions were used in a split sample comparison) and the Citizenship Survey.

Table 3 Question stems and response categories

Survey	Question stem	Response categories
Northern Ireland Life And Times Survey	Can you tell me which of these best describes you? Please just give me the number on the card.	I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) I am heterosexual or 'straight' I am bi-sexual Other I do not wish to answer this question
Policing For London Survey	Please choose a letter from this card which best describes how you would think of yourself?	K - completely heterosexual D - mainly heterosexual I - bisexual R - mainly gay or lesbian M - completely gay or lesbian
Employee's Awareness...Survey	Which of these best describes you? - please just give me the number on the card.	1. Straight/heterosexual 2. Gay/lesbian/homosexual 3. Bisexual 4. Other
Fair Treatment At Work Survey	Please look at this card. Which of the answers on the card best describes you? Please just give me the letter alongside the appropriate answer.	R. Straight or heterosexual D. Gay or lesbian or homosexual P. Bisexual H. Other
National Mental Health...Survey (2005)	Which of the categories on this card would you say describes your sexual orientation? Please give me the letter.	M. Heterosexual (like people of the opposite sex) Z. Gay male or lesbian female (like people of the same sex) P. Bisexual (like people of both sexes) C. Transgender
National Mental Health...Census (2006)	Which of the following terms would you use to describe your sexual orientation?	2. Lesbian/Gay/Homosexual 1. Straight/Heterosexual 3. Bisexual 4. Other 5. Do not wish to answer
British Social Attitudes Survey	Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY	1. Heterosexual ('straight') 2. Gay 3. Lesbian 4. Bisexual 5. Transsexual 8. Can't choose
Newham Household Panel Survey	Please tell us what best describes you.	I am heterosexual or 'straight' I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) I am bisexual If none of the above applies. (PLEASE WRITE): I am _____ I do not wish to answer this question
Scottish Census Small Scale Test	Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?	Heterosexual Lesbian/gay Bi-sexual Other Prefer not to answer
Civil Service Diversity Survey	If you have no objections to stating your sexuality, please could you state it here?	Bisexual Gay man Heterosexual Lesbian

Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (Version A)	Which statement best describes your sexual orientation? This means sexual feelings, whether or not you have had any sexual partners.	Entirely heterosexual (attracted to persons of the opposite sex) Mostly heterosexual, some homosexual feelings Bisexual (equally attracted to men and women) Mostly homosexual, some heterosexual feelings Entirely homosexual (attracted to persons of the same sex) Other
Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey (Version B)	Please choose the answer below that best describes how you think of yourself...:	Completely heterosexual Mainly heterosexual Bisexual Mainly gay or lesbian Completely gay or lesbian Other
Citizenship Survey	Looking at this card, which of the options best describes your sexual identity? Please just read out the letter next to the description.	W ...Heterosexual or straight P ... Gay or lesbian H ... Bisexual S ...Other G ... [or would you] Prefer not to say?

4.5.1 Question Stem

Little information was obtained on the provenance of the questions, or their conceptual development. Instances were cited of questions having been taken from or adapted from other surveys, being provided by the client, and being designed by the survey consultant/contractor.

It was difficult to assess the effect of different question stem wordings on estimates – even between those which did and did not mention ‘orientation’ or ‘sexuality’ - since there were too many confounding factors.

Mention of the concept being measured

The general approach to the question stem wording was one which perhaps avoided addressing the inherent difficulties and subtle nuances related to defining sexual identity. The intended concept being asked about - a definition or specific dimension of sexual identity or orientation - was not usually explicit in the question stem wording and generally not known to the researchers contacted, beyond it being respondents’ self perception.

The majority of questions did not refer explicitly to the subject in the stem, leaving it to the response categories to convey it. Of those which did mention the subject, the reference was either to ‘sexual orientation’ or ‘sexuality’. (The Citizenship Survey referred to ‘sexual identity’).

Definition provided

Only the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey provided any definition of the question’s subject, one of the two variants explaining that ‘sexual orientation’ meant “*sexual feelings, whether or not you have had any sexual partners*”. Such a definition

of sexual orientation was more limited than that which the ONS is intending to measure (see section 2.2).

Acknowledgement of the potential complexity in determining sexual identity

The questions generally used variants on a theme, asking respondents to choose a category which ‘described’ or ‘best described’ themselves. Use of ‘best’ suggests an acknowledgement by the designers of the complexity of the subject, and the possibility of sexual identity being fluid (e.g. because it is changeable over time or in different contexts, or because of ‘inconsistency’ between different dimensions) or not easy to determine.

One exception asked respondents to ‘state’ their sexual orientation; the designer of this question perhaps expected that answers would be more ready-made or concrete. The latter approach is more similar to that often used in other countries (and on the second NS Omnibus trial). This approach asks ‘Do you consider yourself to be...’ which perhaps anticipates a more self-assertive assessment compared to the passivity of a category describing them.

Perspective

As for whose point of view should be provided, questions varied as to whether they made it clear that it was respondents’ own perception (e.g. ‘...how you think of yourself’) or left it more open to interpretation (e.g. ‘...best describes you’).

Respondent comprehension

What respondents understood the question to be asking about is uncertain. The evidence, from a limited amount of feedback from cognitive testing and written comments by respondents to one postal survey, suggests the need for some definition of what is being measured to be given.

Comments from respondents to the Scottish Census Small Scale Test included those that *"suggested they had possibly misunderstood or misinterpreted the question"*. These included an elderly woman who answered the question with a sexual orientation but did not think the question applied to her, and another who had to think what the question meant but answered as best she could.

In the cognitive testing of the Citizenship Survey question it was found that respondents understanding of it included *"who you like as a partner"* and *"it's what you are or your sexual preference is"*. These comments suggest respondents were considering behavioural and/or identity-related dimensions, and perhaps not consistently.

Further research

The conceptualisation of sexual identity and the need or otherwise to make reference to it in the question stem will be explored in the ONS research. The need to provide a definition, and if so what it should be, will also be addressed. So will the need to make clear the perspective to be taken – that is, the respondent’s self-perception rather than it being left more ambivalent. Whether it is better to ask if respondents consider themselves to have a particular sexual identity, implying they have considered it previously, or to choose a category which best describes them, which allows for them not having given it much thought, will also be assessed.

4.5.2 Response categories

Discrete identities v scale or continuum

All but two of questions listed in Table 3 used categories which provided 'discrete' or 'absolute' sexual identities - that is, there was clear separation between heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual - rather than a scaled set which reflected the possibility that sexual identity might exist on a continuum.

One of the exceptions, the Policing for London Survey, included categories from 'completely heterosexual', through 'mainly heterosexual', 'bisexual', 'mainly gay or lesbian' to 'completely gay or lesbian'. While self-perceived sexual identity might indeed be located on such a continuum, such categories might imply that behaviour or desire was being asked about, without the question stem being specific. Indeed on the other exception, the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, the question stem did include a definition of sexual identity, as 'sexual feelings'. It also used slightly different vague quantifiers, substituting 'entirely' for 'completely' and 'mostly' for 'mainly', though which, if either, is better is probably unimportant.

Again the confounding factors make it difficult to compare the estimates from discrete or 'continuous' [sic] categories and draw any conclusions. From an analytical perspective, though, some interesting questions arise, assuming that it is possible to capture sexual identity with a single question.

Firstly, would the 0.4% of respondents choosing the 'mainly' gay/lesbian category have placed themselves in the gay/lesbian category, the bisexual category or another category, if given absolute choices? The importance of this question perhaps is dependent on the extent to which, analytically, bisexual respondents need to be distinguishable from gay and lesbian respondents.

Secondly, using less absolute categories would have implications for measuring the prevalence of LGB people in the population. For example, should the total LGB population include respondents in the 'mainly heterosexual' category, which implies some degree of LGB orientation? On the Policing for London Survey, the LGB rate was 1% when including the bisexual and 'completely' or 'mainly' gay/lesbian categories. If the 'mainly heterosexual' category, chosen by 2.3% of respondents, was included, the total LGB proportion thus increased to 3.3%. However, it is not known on which dimension(s) of sexual identity respondents were basing their answers. Identity might be more discrete than other dimensions such as behaviour and attraction. Making the question wording more specific would be likely to have an affect.

Furthermore, all surveys allowed only one response option to be chosen, rather than the possibility of respondents considering themselves to have more than one sexual identity simultaneously (which might, in theory, be the case in different contexts – for example, domestic, work, social – and depending on which dimensions of sexual identity – behaviour, attraction, lifestyle etc - they wished to consider).

Further research

The issue of whether people consider their sexual identity to be absolute or more qualified, and how they would respond if given absolute categories, will be covered in the qualitative research exploring the conceptualisation of sexual identity. Whether people consider themselves to have a single sexual identity (consistent across all dimensions, or considered to be the ‘overall’ identity when there are differences between particular dimensions) or more multiple, fluid identities from which they cannot derive an overall identity, will be another topic.

Terminology used in categories

Regarding the terms used for different sexual identities, the same few ‘formal’ or scientific/medical terms (e.g. ‘heterosexual’, ‘homosexual’) and ‘colloquial’ terms (e.g. ‘straight’, ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’) were used across all the surveys. But there was great variety as to which alternatives were used and in which combinations.

‘Heterosexual’ was used both on its own, and in combination with ‘straight’, but the latter was never used on its own. No other term for heterosexual was used.

‘Gay’ and ‘lesbian’ were used both with and without ‘homosexual’. No other terms for homosexual were used. ‘Homosexual’ was used alone only in the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey.

No alternative term to bisexual was used.

When both formal and colloquial terms were used in the same category, the order varied for ‘heterosexual’ and ‘straight’, but ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’ always preceded ‘homosexual’. There were instances where the second term used in a category was in parentheses, e.g. ‘heterosexual (straight)’. The colloquial terms were sometimes given in inverted commas, e.g. ‘straight’, perhaps to convey that they were less formal.

There were instances where a colloquial term was included for some categories in the set but not for others; for example, a category for ‘heterosexual’ (without reference to straight) and one for ‘gay/lesbian’ (without reference to homosexual).

There did not appear to be any meaningful difference in the estimates obtained from questions which could be put down to using particular variants of gay, lesbian and homosexual.

‘Gay’ and ‘lesbian’ were usually combined in a single category. There were two instances of them as separate categories. There appeared to be little difference in the estimates of homosexual respondents obtained from separate or combined categories, though the confounding factors make this difficult to assess. Since respondent’s sex is generally collected by surveys, there would seem to be no need to distinguish between homosexual men and women, unless the ONS qualitative research reveals either or both groups to strongly object to being together in a single category.

It is also difficult to disentangle any possible effect of ordering straight before heterosexual, and vice versa, from other factors.

Explanation/definition of terms provided to respondents

Only two surveys included a definition of each category. In one instance, the National Mental Health...Survey (2005), the explanation was expressed in terms of having a 'like' for people of the same or opposite sex, or both sexes. In the other, the Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, the definition was in terms of 'attraction' to the same or opposite sex, and 'feelings' (as was also defined in the question stem). Such explanations seem more appropriate to questions about behaviour or attraction specifically, and would probably not be appropriate for a question about identity.

The need or otherwise for an explanation of each category, or specific categories, will be explored in the qualitative work.

Comprehension of terms by respondents

Feedback showed that some respondents do not understand terms used in the questions. An interviewer on the Policing for London Survey commented that:

"Respondents often misunderstood the question. Many laughed and replied 'None of these!', or in several cases 'None of those - just 'Normal!''. Others chose an answer, but when probed, it became apparent that they had misunderstood the meaning of the terms, and had therefore given an answer which did not describe them accurately....In London, many respondents have a limited working knowledge of the English language, which does not extend to polysyllabic technical terms of Greek and Latin origin. The only way to obtain reliable data from them is to use simpler words."

That survey did not use the word 'straight'. Such comprehension problems were also cited in McManus. 'Heterosexual' has also been reported to be unfamiliar or misunderstood, particularly among older or less well educated respondents, from feedback from interviewers working on the NS Omnibus Survey trials. The cognitive testing of the Citizenship Survey question found that there was some "confusion" about the term 'heterosexual' – even though the term 'straight' was also given – and a "process of elimination" used to decide the correct category.

A resulting hypothesis is that some heterosexual respondents are less likely to have considered 'sexual identity' and to understand and use the associated terminology, than LGB or younger or more highly educated heterosexuals.

Regarding the presence or absence of the term 'straight' in the heterosexual category, the two postal data collections did not include it. The high rates of 'prefer not to say' or 'not answered' they produced might be explained partly by this.

It would be useful to understand how respondents who did not understand terms answered the question and the implications for the accuracy of data. That is, did they choose a substantive category, and if so which, or did they choose 'other/none'? Alternatively, did they choose 'do not wish to answer' or not provide any answer at all?

Further research

The qualitative work being conducted by ONS will explore the terminology used, understood and preferred by respondents of all sexual identities, and what are the

appropriate response categories. It will also investigate respondents' answering strategies when they do not have a good understanding of the terms used.

Category order

The questions generally, but not always, placed the heterosexual/straight category first, followed by homosexual/gay/lesbian, then bisexual. The rationale seems likely to have been to reflect the anticipated order of incidence of the main categories (though while heterosexual is undoubtedly most prevalent, the relative incidence of homosexual and bisexual is less certain and might vary according to what concept is measured – e.g. identity, behaviour, attraction). One survey placed the categories in alphabetical order. It can only be speculated if this was an attempt to avoid implying any kind of hierarchy.

No obvious effect of the category order, such as primacy, was apparent from the estimates. It can be observed that the survey which placed 'bisexual' first obtained the highest rate for that category across all surveys. However, other surveys had higher rates for bisexual than for gay/lesbian, even when it was later in the order.

Further research

Category order will be considered as part of the ONS development work.

'Other' category

The surveys varied as to whether or not they included an 'other' category (or similar). Where 'other' was not presented to respondents, the research assumption, presumably, was that the categories offered were comprehensive.

'Other' rates ranged between 0% and 0.9%.

No information was available as to why respondents answered other (e.g. if because of miscomprehension of other categories, or genuine 'other' sexual identities, or satisficing). It is not known what the respondents who answered 'other' considered their sexual identity to be, or if any respondents felt they did not have a sexual identity.

When questions did not include an 'other' option, it is not known how respondents who did not think any of the substantive categories applied answered (e.g. answer one of the substantive categories, or don't know, or not provide an answer).

When questions were administered by self-completion, it varied as to whether respondents answering 'other' were asked to specify further in an open question. No information about the responses to 'specify' questions was available. GRO Scotland decided against asking in case "facetious" responses were attracted.

'Other' was sometimes included when the question was interviewer-administered. It varied as to whether interviewers probed for a description. On the survey where they were expected to probe, no 'other' responses were recorded, for reasons unknown. It is possible that respondents were unwilling to answer 'other' because of concerns about how that would be perceived by interviewers. On surveys where no 'specify' question was asked, the reason can only be speculated, e.g. that researchers were wary of causing embarrassment to respondents.

The availability of ‘other’, ‘none’ and ‘can’t choose’ categories, and the potential need for any alternative substantive categories, will be another topic of investigation during the qualitative stages of the development project.

Alternatives to ‘other’

Alternative categories to ‘other’ were used in two instances. One self-completion question included: ‘If none of the above applies, (please write) I am _____’, while another offered ‘Can’t choose’ as a category (with no follow up ‘specify’ question).

There appeared to have been some fluctuation in the rates across the ‘other’, ‘none...’ and ‘can’t choose’ categories. Intuitively, it is possible that each was perceived by respondents differently. Unfortunately the written responses from the ‘none...’ category were not available for review. Any differences can only be hypothesised: perhaps ‘none...’ and ‘can’t choose’ were more inclusive for respondents who did not consider themselves to have any sexual identity. Or perhaps they provided a more suitable alternative for respondents who didn’t understand the meaning of the sexual identity categories.

Additional response categories: transsexual and transgender

Only two surveys included response categories additional to heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, other and do not wish to answer. The categories were ‘transsexual’ and ‘transgender’ respectively. In one case the question was being used to identify respondents with certain identities for follow up questions, rather than measure prevalence of sexual identity specifically, which explains the apparent mismatch of sexual identity and gender identity concepts. The concept of gender identity is distinct from sexual identity, and will therefore not be covered in the question ONS is developing. However, if possible the qualitative research will include transsexual and transgender people to ensure they are able to answer the sexual identity question.

Further research

The need to provide an ‘other’ category and a ‘specify question’, and the way in which they are used, will be addressed (although analysis of ‘other – specify’ data from the NS Omnibus trial suggests it is a minor issue). Also to be considered are whether ‘none’ or ‘can’t choose’ should be considered as a category, and provision of alternative categories at the main question or a follow-up question.

4.6 Missing data

As mentioned above, all surveys recorded some non-substantive data (that is, item non-response and response categories such as ‘do not wish to answer’). This resulted because either i) respondents were presented with a category such as ‘do not wish to answer’ on a show card or in a self-completion question; or ii) interviewers could record refusal or don’t know; or iii) on paper self-completion forms the answer was left blank.

On interviewer-administered surveys missing data ranged from 0.2% to 9.0%. The high end of that range was an outlier; without it, the upper end was 2.3%. On self-

administered surveys they were higher, from 1.4% to 25.0%. This time the lower figure was the outlier; without it the lower end was 8.0%.

4.6.1 Options not to answer the question

For both interviewer- and self-administered modes there were examples both of an option to not answer the question being presented to respondents and of no such option being presented.

‘Do not wish to answer’ and spontaneous refusals - interviewer-administered surveys

Among the interviewer-administered questions, an option such as ‘do not wish to answer’ was presented as a category on the show card on two surveys. Data for this category from one of these surveys were not available. On the other survey, the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, the proportion of respondents answering ‘I do not wish to answer this question’ had reduced from 5% in 2000 to 1.3% in 2005. The wording of the question and response categories did not change in that period, and no obvious reason for the reduction was apparent to the researcher providing the information. We can only hypothesise that respondents in Northern Ireland have become more willing to answer substantively because they have become more aware of issues relating to sexual identity, which public bodies have a statutory duty to monitor as a diversity strand and/or because interviewers have become more experienced at administering the question over time.

When ‘do not wish to answer’ was not included on the show cards, interviewers were instead able to code spontaneous refusals. Refusals ranged from 0.2% to 9%, though see ‘Interviewer issues’ below regarding the latter figure. These surveys also included an ‘other’ category, or allowed ‘don’t know’ to be recorded (though none of the estimates provided contained cases in both ‘other’ and ‘don’t know’).

Do not wish to answer & no answer – self-administered surveys

When included on self-administered surveys, higher rates of ‘do not wish to answer’ were recorded than on the interviewer-administered survey which included that category. The Civil Service Diversity Survey and the British Social Attitudes Survey did not offer ‘do not wish to answer’, but were subject to the question being left unanswered. On the British Social Attitudes Survey the rate was much lower than on the other self-administered surveys, for unknown reasons.

Despite the inclusion of a ‘do not wish to answer’ category the Scottish Census Small Scale Test and the Newham Household Panel Survey also experienced high levels of the question being left unanswered.

Clearly, it was easier for respondents not to answer a question on a self-completion form. The conclusion that might be drawn is to exclude a ‘do not wish to answer’ option on paper self-completion forms, to try to reduce missing answers, since respondents can and do leave the question unanswered anyway. However, this might compromise consistency across modes or methods, if it were felt that such an option had to be offered in CAPI and CASI because respondents would not otherwise have an equivalent obvious means of not answering (they might not be aware that they could spontaneously refuse).

4.6.2 'Don't know' responses

Only one survey allowed the recording of 'don't know' answers, if given spontaneously to the interviewer. At 1.6%, these responses outnumbered refusals (0.7%). It is worth noting that this survey did not use the term 'straight'; as previously mentioned, evidence suggests some people do not know the meaning of 'heterosexual', which might explain this rate to some extent.

It is not possible to gauge whether respondents answered 'don't know' due to their lack of comprehension of the question or knowledge of terms, and/or their inability to decide what their sexual identity was.

Nor is it possible to say how many respondents would answer 'don't know' if it was possible to record (other than on the basis of the one survey which recorded it); or whether they would instead not answer the question at all, would answer 'other' or 'do not wish to answer', guess, or use a process of elimination to answer with one of the substantive categories.

4.6.3 Non-response and ethnic group

Potential issues regarding the acceptability and comprehension of sexual identity questions were highlighted among the surveys.

The Newham Household Panel Survey found that white respondents were more likely to answer the sexual identity question than respondents from Asian and 'other' ethnic groups:

"In all waves those giving their ethnic origin as 'white' were significantly more likely to answer the question; whilst those giving their ethnic origin as 'Asian' or 'Other' were significantly less likely to answer the question. All 'Asian' categories displayed this tendency. Around a third of respondents from Asian origins did not answer the sexuality questions compared with around 1 in 7 of those with a 'White' ethnic origin."

Further to not answering the question at all, respondents whose first language was not English were, on average, slightly more likely to answer 'none of the above' and much more likely to answer 'I do not wish to answer this question'. It can be hypothesised that some respondents from minority ethnic groups had cultural or religious beliefs resulting in objection to being asked the question or unwillingness to answer it. It is not possible to say whether there were any problems with comprehension due to English not being respondents' main language.

The Policing for London Survey carried out an ethnic boost to its sample. The figures on missing data by ethnicity were not obtained for that or any other survey, so no comparison with the Newham findings could be made. However, an interviewer commented that whilst there were problems with comprehension, including among respondents with limited English, *"I don't recall any problems of privacy, confidentiality or acceptability, and people were quite happy to try to answer the question."*

Further research

Minority ethnic groups' views of the question among will be an area which ONS intends to explore in the qualitative research.

4.7 Confidentiality, privacy and acceptability

Following on from the above references to missing data, and respondent beliefs, embarrassment and objection to the question, the review will now consider more generally the topics of privacy in the survey environment (i.e. with regard to other people in the household or an interviewer), confidentiality (i.e. disclosure of information to other people), and acceptability of asking about sexual identity (i.e. feelings about the personal nature of the subject and of invasion of privacy), and their affect on survey response, and the completeness and accuracy of data.

Considered overall, it seems there was little concern expressed by respondents, particularly to interviewer-administered surveys, about the three aspects outlined above. The cognitive testing of the Citizenship Survey question found no objections to the question among respondents, although "*several were slightly embarrassed*". Additional support came from two surveys which asked interviewers to indicate whether the respondent showed any 'hesitation' or 'reluctance' – respectively only 2% and 10% answered yes - the latter was ascribed to a few interviewers being reluctant to ask the question (see 'Interviewer issues' below).

Each aspect is considered further below.

4.7.1 Confidentiality pledges

As mentioned earlier, all surveys gave confidentiality assurances in their advance or cover letters, or within self-completion booklets, or at the start of the section of questions including the sexual identity question. None of the surveys mentioned confidentiality at the point when the question was asked, though two provided interviewers with an optional explanation which mentioned anonymity.

In focus groups conducted as part of the development of the Civil Service Diversity survey, concerns had been expressed at respondents being identifiable individually. Such concerns might have been higher in the context of a survey conducted for respondents' employers than they would be in surveys conducted for sponsors less immediately related to them.

No other information was gathered with regard to respondents' views on confidentiality of the data they were being asked to provide, such as any concern about the data being divulged to a third party, deliberately or accidentally.

Further research

People's views on confidentiality, and fears of the likelihood and consequences of disclosure to other parties, is another subject to be covered in the qualitative research.

4.7.2 Providing privacy in the survey environment

Only limited information was available about respondents' views on privacy in the survey environment. Researchers were generally unaware of any widespread concern fed back by interviewers. There was only a little evidence of respondent concern.

Interviewer-administered questions

The common approach taken to dealing with providing privacy to respondents on the interviewer-administered surveys was the use of concealed response show cards. That is, respondents were asked to give a letter or number corresponding to the response category, rather than state the answer in words. The letters or numbers were usually, though not always, randomised – i.e. they were not immediately sequential or in alphabetical/numerical order (e.g. 'R, D, P, H' rather than 'A, B, C, D'). This approach was intended to reduce the potential for embarrassment. On the Fair Treatment at Work Survey pilot the show card question was "*not met with any resistance*".

All of the interviewer-administered household surveys only interviewed one person per household, so there were no issues to deal with relating to concurrent interviewing. That is, how to maintain confidentiality between household members hearing or seeing the same question and/or show card.

However, the concealed response show card method was only intended to provide privacy between the respondent and any people present other than the interviewer. No surveys made any assurances to respondents that the interviewer would be unaware of the response category to which the number or letter corresponded. Indeed, it was said by a respondent to one survey that interviewers knew the answer so it was "*clearly not anonymous*". The issue of social desirability due to the presence of interviewers is addressed in section 4.8.

In one of the surveys conducted in mental health establishments, the intention was that the interview be conducted in a private place but that was dependent on availability. On the National Mental Health ... Census (2006), it is unknown what efforts to provide privacy from other staff or patients were made by the staff conducting it.

Self-administered questions

Respondent preferences for interviewer-administered or self-administered questions are little known.

The Fair Treatment at Work Survey pilot, an interviewer-administered survey, experimented with self-completion using a CAPI pen in a proportion of cases. The respondent was given the laptop and an electronic pen with which to select their answer on the screen. This method was reported to have been "*slightly preferred*" by respondents as "*more anonymous*". But it was also reported to have broken up the interview and been difficult for certain respondents. However, all pilot respondents were apparently heterosexual, so the views of LGB respondents were unknown. A question remains as to whether respondents considered self-administered questions to be adequate in maintaining privacy and confidentiality, despite the lack of an interviewer.

One researcher recollected that a respondent on a self-completion survey had contacted the organisation to say he had not “*felt comfortable*” answering the question, as the answer might be seen by other people (it was not specified whether this meant other people known to the respondent seeing the form, or the people collecting or using the data).

The Newham Household Panel Survey was the only survey to collect data from more than one household member. It is not known whether the high rates of missing data it experienced were in any way connected to this, for example if there were concerns that other household members would be able to see answers.

Further research

The subject of within-household privacy and the concurrent interviewing environment, and views on interviewer- and self-administered modes will be covered in ONS’s further research.

4.7.3 Acceptability of the question and survey/item response

Survey response

No researcher gave any indication that survey response rates had been affected by the inclusion of a question on sexual identity.

The Scottish Census Small Scale Test experimented with using four variants of the questionnaire, to examine the effect on response rates of asking about sexual orientation. Each variant employed a different combination of two questions: one on sexual orientation and one on experience of discrimination on the basis of a number of grounds, including sexual orientation. The combinations were: both questions (separated by several other questions; with sexual orientation asked second); one question but not the other; and neither question. Unit and item response rates were very similar across the variants, suggesting there was no effect, either of asking about sexual orientation per se, or of asking it with and without the context of a question on the subject of discrimination.

Item response

The relatively low rates of missing data when the question was interviewer-administered would seem to indicate that on the surface questions were broadly acceptable to respondents, in the sense that they did not generally didn’t refuse to give a substantive answer.

However the rates of refusals or not answering the question were higher on the self-completion surveys. This suggested that there might after all be an issue of invasion of privacy or objection to being asked the question, which was not so apparent from the interviewer-administered surveys.

Indeed, this was borne out in feedback to the Scottish Census Small Scale Test. Respondents were asked to indicate how happy they felt about each question. The test report stated that “*The question on sexual orientation stands out with around 11% of respondents selecting very unhappy or unhappy*” compared to less than 5% for most questions. Respondents could also write comments. For the sexual orientation

question they "*ranged from fully accepting to hostile*". Concerns expressed included: "*not understanding the need for the data*"; "*offence*" and "*unhappiness at the intrusive nature of the question*"; and concerns about confidentiality (e.g. being asked for their postcode).

Such concerns did not necessarily "*translate into refusal to record an answer*". As reported above, the response rates were similar to the versions of the questionnaire with and without the sexual orientation question, suggesting that the question did not cause people not to respond to the survey. Conversely respondents who "*accepted the question without reservation*" included some who answered 'prefer not to say'. It would therefore appear there was a distinction to be made between objecting to being asked the question, and objecting to give an answer, and that the two positions did not necessarily correspond.

Non-responders to the Scottish Census Small Scale Test question "*generally also declined to record any comments*".

4.8 Accuracy and completeness: honesty and social desirability

An important issue in collecting data on sexual identity with the intention of providing a benchmark measure is minimising the extent of missing data. Missing data compromises the quality and usefulness of estimates. This is exacerbated when the characteristic of most interest – minority sexual identities – is found in a small proportion of the population: even a relatively small proportion of missing data can cast serious doubt on the accuracy of estimates, and hence their usability. However, when considering the potentially sensitive topic of sexual identity, it is also important that in attempting to reduce the extent of missing data, the accuracy of substantive responses given is not compromised as a result.

Such compromising of the data could occur if respondents feel pressured into providing an answer to a question they would rather avoid. If respondents are unaware of how to avoid answering – the absence of a 'do not wish to answer' category and, in interviewer-administered mode, not knowing or remembering that they can spontaneously refuse – they might instead give a substantive answer, but one which is inaccurate.

Reasons respondents would wish to avoid providing an accurate, substantive answer might include 'social desirability' or the urge to conform; an example of which could be LGB respondents answering heterosexual, being the majority sexual identity, because of perceived societal disapproval of non-heterosexuality. In the interviewer-administered context, this might occur because a respondent has concerns that the interviewer, or any other person present, such as a family member who is unaware of it, might disapprove of their sexual identity. In any mode of administration, it might occur because a respondent has concern that the data will not be kept confidential and will be seen by someone they would prefer did not see it.

As has been shown above, interviewer-administered surveys generally obtained a higher proportion of substantive answers and lower rates of missing data than self-administered surveys. The most likely explanations of this observation are the presence of an interviewer, and in most cases, the absence of an obvious means of

avoiding giving a substantive answer. Respondents who wished to avoid giving a substantive answer for one reason or other were more at liberty to do so when self-administering – when given the chance, they were more likely to take it.

A number of questions arise. Do those respondents to interviewer-administered surveys who would avoid answering the question if they could, provide truthful or untruthful answers? If they provide untruthful answers, why do they do so? Are respondents of certain sexual identities more likely to do so than others? In what way are the answers inaccurate?

The generally low rates of homosexual and bisexual obtained, when compared to the government 5% to 7% estimate, suggest it is possible that some respondents to interviewer-administered surveys were giving a socially desirable answer, rather than being willing to respond with one of the ‘sexual minority’ categories, or saying to the interviewer ‘I don’t want to answer’ or ‘I don’t know’. The latter two answers might have been avoided due to respondents feeling the interviewer or someone else might have made an inference about their sexual identity.

However, a number of factors make it difficult to make firm conclusions about any social desirability effect.

Firstly, the reliability of the benchmark proportion of the population which is LGB.

Secondly, other confounding factors such as population and geographical coverage, sample designs and clustering of the LGB population, response rates and potential non-response bias.

Thirdly, the rates of missing data on the self-administered surveys were generally higher than the estimated proportion of the population which is LGB. And LGB estimates appeared to be more consistent across modes than those for heterosexuals. So it might be that LGB respondents tended to give correct answers in either mode. However, it is not known whether a proportion of the LGB population gave incorrect, socially desirable answers in interviewer-administered mode, or avoided giving substantive answers in self-completion mode.

Estimates of the heterosexual population tended to be higher when the question was interviewer-administered, ranging from 88% to 99%, compared with self-administered questions, where they were between 70% and 95%. Respondents on interviewer-administered surveys who did not understand the question or response categories were able to ask the interviewer for help and so give a substantive answer, which might have reduced the amount of missing data. On self-administered surveys they might have been less able to check with someone. Another possible reason is that a proportion of heterosexual respondents avoided giving substantive answers to self-administered questions, but answered truthfully when ‘forced’ to answer on interviewer-administered surveys.

As well as the possibility that some respondents gave deliberately untruthful answers for social desirability reasons, other forms of satisficing might have been at play. Respondents might have given any answer just to satisfy the interviewer and/or avoid having to consider a subject which might be embarrassing or sensitive, rather than

deliberately being untruthful. For example, by choosing the first category in the list presented (the ‘primacy’ effect).

Further research

The questions raised above on missing data, confidentiality, privacy and acceptability will be covered in the further research. Issues which will be considered include:

- whether respondents should be allowed to avoid giving substantive answers, in different modes, and, if so, how;
- whether respondents might give socially desirable answers, and what characteristics they have;
- and the optimal balance between minimising missing data and maximising data accuracy that can be achieved.

Issues which will be considered include: relating to the presentation, or not, of ‘avoidance’ options (such as ‘do not wish to answer’) in the different modes; and measurement error effects such as social desirability and satisficing. A key question is what the optimal balance is that can be achieved between minimising the amount of missing data on one hand, and maximising the accuracy of the data on the other.

4.9 Interviewer attitudes to asking about sexual identity

Experiences on some surveys, relating to interviewer attitudes to asking about sexual identity, lead to the conclusion that their instruction should be given sufficient attention to avoid problems which would affect data quality. However at least from this sample, and as far as the researchers spoken to were aware, such problems were not the norm.

4.9.1 Non-professional interviewers in communal establishments

A problem experienced in conducting the surveys was related to the use of non-professional survey interviewers. The National Mental Health... Census (2006) used ward and other staff employed in mental health establishments. This is not the approach which would normally be followed by survey organisations like ONS. The context and environment of the data collection was non-standard for social surveys. However the experience is worth noting, for the benefit of any other organisation which would use non-professional interviewers. Problems were encountered with many establishments not asking the question at all, or only asking a proportion of the population. The sponsors learned that views existed among the people administering or supervising the census that sexual orientation could be determined without asking the subject, by observation, and that staff could not be expected to ask such an ‘embarrassing’ question. Consistency of administration across and within organisations, and appropriate training/briefing and supervision of people administering the question, is clearly required. Indeed, feedback from other mental health establishments was more positive – the question had been administered to more people and without reported problems.

4.9.2 Professional interviewers

Even among professional interviewers, who it might be assumed were used to administering questions on potentially sensitive topics, and to be impartial, some reluctance to ask about sexual identity was experienced. One of the surveys

experienced a high rate of refusal to the question. The researchers attributed this to a “*small number*” of interviewers coding a refusal for all or the majority of their interviews, suggesting that some “*do not feel able to ask this question...*” The characteristics of these interviewers (e.g. age, sex, experience) were not discovered and any correlation with high levels of refusals unknown. It is worth noting that the interviewers on this survey received written instructions but received no briefing, whereas on other surveys with lower refusal rates, interviewers had been briefed. It was concluded that “*future attempts to ask a question on sexual identity must pay particular attention to interviewer training and briefing to ensure interviewers feel able to ask the question.*”

Further research

This recommendation and interviewer-related issues generally will be addressed by ONS as part of its development work.

4.10 Longitudinal data collection

The Newham Household Panel Survey collected data on sexual identity from respondents over time – they were interviewed over 4 annual waves (to date). The sexual identity question was asked at each wave. No information was available on the stability of responses over time, at the individual person level. However the response rate to the question overall was stable, from waves 1 to 4. This might indicate that respondents in general became neither more nor less happy over time to answer the question (though attrition and sample replenishment has not been considered).

Further research

ONS will be considering the effect of asking about sexual identity on agreement to take part in further waves on panel surveys. It will also look at whether the question need only be asked at the first wave or each wave.

4.11 Issues about asking sexual identity not addressed by the review

There are some important issues pertinent to the potential introduction of a sexual identity question on ONS surveys such as the Integrated Household Survey, which have not been addressed in this review.

None of the surveys on which the sexual identity question was interviewer-administered interviewed more than one household member, unlike the majority of ONS’s surveys. Therefore no issues relating to concurrent administration were covered. Nor were any issues to do with either telephone interviewing or proxy interviewing, both of which are conducted on some ONS surveys.

Further research

The three topics above will all be addressed in ONS’s development project.

5 References

McManus S (2003), National Centre for Social Research, 'Sexual Orientation Research Phase 1: A Review of Methodological Approaches' on behalf of the Scottish Executive. Available at

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Taylor T (2007a), ONS, 'Developing survey questions on sexual identity: International experiences of administering questions on sexual identity/orientation'.

Taylor T (2007b), ONS, 'Developing survey questions on sexual identity: Report on National Statistics Omnibus survey trials 1 and 2'. Available at

Wilmot A (2007), ONS, 'In search of a question on sexual identity' - paper presented at the 62nd Annual Conference of the American Association of Public Opinion Research, May 2007.

(The above three papers are available at

<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-equality/sexual-identity/default.asp>)

6 Appendices

See over page.

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Appendix A: Summary table – mode/sample design/sexual identity question designs and estimates

Mode/sample design/sexual identity question design/survey response rate KEY: n/a = not applicable; dk = no data					Estimates: Substantive categories (Percentages are weighted; of all cases)								Estimates: Missing values (inc. presented)					Base
Survey	Mode of administration	Sample	Question stem	Response Categories	Survey response rate %	Heterosexual/straight	Homosexual/gay/lesbian	Bisexual	Total LGB	Other (or similar)	Additional categories	Total % in substantive categories	DK (presented)	Do not wish/Prefer not to answer (presented)	Refno answer (int code)	Unanswered on SC	Total % missing values	(u)=Unweighted (w)=weighted
Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey	Interviewer-administered (CAPI; showcard)	Random probability; general population (NI); 1 person/hhold (18>)	Can you tell me which of these best describes you? Please just give me the number on the card.	I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual); I am heterosexual or 'straight'; I am bi-sexual; Other; I do not wish to answer this question	61	97.0	0.5	1.2	1.7	0.0	n/a	98.7	n/a	1.3	n/a	n/a	1.3	1199 (w)
Policing for London Survey	Interviewer-administered (CAPI; showcard)	Random probability; general population (London) + ethnic boost; 1 person/hhold (15>).	Please choose a letter from this card which best describes how you would think of yourself?	Completely heterosexual Mainly heterosexual Bisexual Mainly gay or lesbian Completely gay or lesbian	49	completely: 94.4 mainly: 2.3	completely: 0.4 mainly: 0.4	0.2	(1.0 or 3.3?)	n/a	n/a	97.7	1.6	n/a	0.7	n/a	2.3	2800 (u)
DTI Employees' Awareness Knowledge and Exercise of Employment Rights Survey	Interviewer-administered (CAPI; showcard)	Random probability; men 16-64, women 16-59 employees now/in the last 2 years; 1 person/hhold.	Which of these best describes you? - please just give me the number on the card.	Straight/heterosexual Gay/lesbian/homosexual Bisexual Other	58	98.9	0.7	0.2	0.9	0.1	n/a	99.8	n/a	n/a	0.2	n/a	0.2	1038 (w)
DTI Fair Treatment At Work Pilot Survey	Interviewer-administered (CAPI; showcard)	Quota sampling (part of an omnibus survey); employees now/in last 2 years; 1 person/hhold.	Please look at this card. Which of the answers on the card best describes you? Please just give me the letter alongside the appropriate answer.	Straight or heterosexual Gay or lesbian or homosexual Bisexual Other	n/a	87.8	2.0	0.4	2.4	0.7	n/a	90.9	n/a	n/a	9.0	n/a	9.0	2704 (w)
National Mental Health and Ethnicity Census 2005 Service User Survey	Interviewer-administered (PAPI; showcard)	Simple random sample of patients in each of 41 NHS/private hospitals	Which of the categories on this card would you say describes your sexual orientation? Please give me the letter.	Heterosexual (like people of the opposite sex) Gay male or lesbian female (like people of the same sex) Bisexual (like people of both sexes) Transgender	31	dk	dk	dk	dk	n/a	trans-gender: dk	dk	dk	n/a	dk	n/a	0	<400 (u)
National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census 2006	Interviewer-administered (PAPI; showcard)	Census of inpatients in all mental health/learning disability establishments, England and Wales	Which of the following terms would you use to describe your sexual orientation?	Lesbian/Gay/Homosexual Straight/Heterosexual Bisexual Other Do not wish to answer	dk	dk	dk	dk	dk	dk	n/a	dk	dk	dk	n/a	n/a	0	dk
British Social Attitudes Survey	Self-administered (paper) after interviewer-administered survey	Random probability; general population; 1 person/hhold (16>)	Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY	Heterosexual ('straight') Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transsexual Can't choose	dk	95.3	gay: 0.4 lesbian: 0.4	0.6	1.4	can't choose: 1.7	trans-sex'l: 0.2	98.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.4	1.4	1732 (u)

Survey	Mode of administration	Sample	Question stem	Response Categories	Survey response rate %	Heterosexual /straight	Homosexual/ gay/lesbian	Bisexual	Total LGB	Other (or similar)	Additional categories	Total % In substantive categories	DK	Do not wish/Prefer not to answer (presented)	Refino answer (int code)	Unanswered on SC	Total % missing values	(u)=Unweighted (w)=weighted	
Newham Household Panel Survey	Self-administered (paper) after interviewer-administered survey	Random probability; general population (Newham); all household members (16>)	Please tell us what best describes you.	I am heterosexual or 'straight' I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) I am bisexual If none of the above applies. (PLEASE WRITE): I am _____ I do not wish to answer this question	W1: 74 W2: 82 W3: 78 W4: 44 ⁴	W1: 74.5 W2: 75.2 W3: 70.4 W4: 71.7	W1: 0.0 W2: 0.7 W3: 0.7 W4: 1.0	W1: 0.3 W2: 1.1 W3: 1.3 W4: 2.1	W1: 0.3 W2: 1.1 W3: 1.3 W4: 2.1	none of the above: W1: 2.0 W2: 3.3 W3: 3.4 W4: 4.7	n/a	W1: 76.8 W2: 79.5 W3: 75.0 W4: 78.5	n/a	W1: 13.7 W2: 11.7 W3: 15.0 W4: 12.0	n/a	W1: 9.5 W2: 8.8 W3: 10.0 W4: 9.5	W1: 23.2 W2: 20.5 W3: 25.0 W4: 21.5	W1: 1286 W2: 1218 W3: 1132 W4: 636 (u)	
Scottish Census Small Scale Test	Self-administered (postal)	Random probability; general population (Scotland); 1 person/hhold. Half sample asked sexual orientation question.	Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?	Heterosexual Lesbian/gay Bi-sexual Other Prefer not to answer	31	83.1	0.9	0.4	1.3	0.9	n/a	85.3	n/a	8.5	n/a	6.2	14.7	692 (u) (versions with SO Q)	
Civil Service Diversity Survey	Self-administered (postal)	Simple random sample of civil servants from every department, plus boosts.	If you have no objections to stating your sexuality, please could you state it here?	Bisexual Gay man Heterosexual Lesbian	48	89.0 (rounded)	gay: 1.0 lesbian 0.0	2.0	3.0	n/a	n/a	92.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	8.0	8.0	7863 (u)	
Omnibus (July-Aug06) (exc 15% skipped)	Self-administered (CASI) within interviewer-administered survey	Random probability; general population; 1 person/hhold (16>)	Which of the following best describes your sexual identity?	Heterosexual Lesbian/Gay Bi-sexual Other Prefer not to say		92.0	1.3	1.2	2.5	0.9	n/a	95.4	n/a	4.6	n/a	n/a	4.6		
Omnibus (Nov-Dec06) (exc 14% skipped)	ditto	ditto	Do you consider yourself to be...	Heterosexual or Straight Gay or Lesbian Bisexual Other Prefer not to say?		96.8	0.8	0.6	1.4	0.3	n/a	98.5	n/a	1.5	n/a	n/a	1.5		
Adult Psychiatric Morbidity	Self-administered (CASI) within interviewer-administered survey	Random probability; general population (Eng); 1 person/hhold (16>). Split sample experiment	Version A: Which statement best describes your sexual orientation? This means sexual feelings, whether or not you have had any sexual partners.	Entirely heterosexual (attracted to persons of the opposite sex) Mostly heterosexual, some homosexual feelings Bisexual (equally attracted to men and women) Mostly homosexual, some heterosexual feelings Entirely homosexual (attracted to persons of the same sex) Other															
			Version B: Please choose the answer below that best describes how you think of yourself...	Completely heterosexual Mainly heterosexual Bisexual Mainly gay or lesbian Completely gay or lesbian Other															
Citizenship Survey	Interviewer-administered (CAPI; showcard)	Random probability; general population; 1 person/hhold	Looking at this card, which of the options best describes your sexual identity? Please just read out the letter next to the description.	Heterosexual or straight Gay or lesbian Bisexual Other [or would you] Prefer not to say?															

⁴ DK survey rate. % of completed individual interviews returning self-completion booklet. Estimates and bases for the sexuality question are for those who returned self-completion booklet only.

Appendix B: Information about each survey included in the review

1. INTERVIEWER ADMINISTERED QUESTIONS

1.1 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

Sponsor	Queen's University Belfast and University of Ulster
Information provided by	Queen's University Belfast
Year conducted	2005 (SID has been asked since 2000)
Survey mode	CAPI (plus paper self-completion module)
Sexual identity question mode	CAPI (concealed response show card)
Sample design	Random probability; general population, Northern Ireland. One person per household (aged 18 or over) is selected for interview.
Survey response information	61%
Survey topics	Social attitudes (evolved from Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey).
Sexual identity question purpose/definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intended to reflect the respondent's 'self-perception', not anything more specific (e.g. behaviour, attraction). • In Northern Ireland public bodies have a statutory duty to monitor 9 diversity strands, including sexual identity.
Location in questionnaire/interview	The final question, in the 'background' section (demographic/classificatory questions) at the end of the interview. Religion and income are also asked.
Other SID-related questions	With reference to equality laws; whether various groups, including 'Gays/lesbians/bisexuals', are generally treated unfairly.
Sexual Identity question	<p>Can you tell me which of these best describes you? Please just give me the number on the card.</p> <p>I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) I am heterosexual or 'straight' I am bi-sexual Other I do not wish to answer this question</p> <p>Interviewers were expected to probe 'other' and write in the respondent's description.</p>
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	No preamble to SID question (see below). The background section began with a preamble explaining, among other things, that the survey was confidential and answers would be anonymous.
Interviewer instructions	-
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	Gay/lesbian/homosexual: 0.5 Heterosexual: 97 Bisexual: 1.2 Other: 0 Do not wish to answer this question: 1.3
Non-response / non-substantive responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no 'don't know' responses. • The rate of 'don't wish to answer' reduced steadily from 5% in 2000 to 1% in 2005.
Pre-testing; piloting; changes made over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot survey used a preamble: "The last question in this section is about sexual orientation - that is whether someone is gay or lesbian, heterosexual or bisexual. As with all questions on the survey you do not have to answer this if you do not want to, but all answers <u>will</u> be treated in the strictest confidence. Can you tell me whether you would describe yourself as ... READ OUT...". Interviewers advised that it be dropped, as it

	<p>drew attention to the question and made some people feel embarrassed; thus it was dropped for the main stage (beginning 2000).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After piloting they discarded various versions of the question which did not give the options in both formal and informal language. Interviewers felt that some people weren't quite sure what heterosexual meant, and confused it with homosexual. The options now used include 'I am heterosexual or straight'.
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researchers had no feedback from the fieldwork agency on acceptability and comprehension of the question by respondents. • No known explanation for there being no 'other' responses being given in 2005. • The phrase 'I do not wish to answer this question' was thought to be clearer for respondents than 'Refused', having less negative nuances. • Interviewers thought that it was less embarrassing for respondents if they were given a show card than if the responses were read out by the interviewer. Also, respondents only give the associated numbers, rather than the phrase on the card, which again cuts down potential embarrassment.
Links	<p>http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/ http://www.esds.ac.uk/government/nilts/</p>

1.2 Policing For London Survey

Sponsor	Metropolitan Police				
Information provided by	National Centre for Social research (NatCen) - fieldwork and research design contractor; Prof. Mike Hough, formerly South Bank University Criminal Policy Research Unit				
Year conducted	Fieldwork conducted July-December 2000				
Survey mode	CAPI.				
Sexual identity question mode	CAPI (concealed response show card).				
Sample design	Random probability; general population, London; plus ethnic boost (over-sampling of areas with high density BME and focused enumeration). One respondent per household randomly selected from members aged 15 or over.				
Survey response information	Overall response 49% (though "difficult to calculate when using focused enumeration")				
Survey topics	Experience of living in their locality; contact with the Police; views of the Police; views on policing priorities; collaboration with the Police; and experiences of crime.				
Sexual identity question purpose	-				
Location in questionnaire/interview	In the final section, along with other demographic questions. Positioned between questions on religion and political affiliation. Further questions followed.				
Other SID-related questions	-				
Sexual Identity question	Please choose a letter from this card which best describes how you would think of yourself? K - completely heterosexual D - mainly heterosexual I - bisexual R - mainly gay or lesbian M - completely gay or lesbian				
Explanations/definitions provided to respondent	No preamble included before the section or this question. Confidentiality was mentioned in the advance letter sent.				
Interviewer instructions	"This Q has previously been used in a Sexual Lifestyles survey – but not in a 'normal' survey. It asks respondents to self-report their sexuality and as such may be a sensitive question to ask. Please ensure the respondent is able to answer the question themselves (if a translator is required, take care to ensure the answer is the respondent's). [...] This Q is asked to investigate the relationship between sexuality and any experience of crime and attitudes to the police. Respondents can refuse to answer. If necessary, remind respondents that homosexual = 'gay/lesbian' and heterosexual = 'straight'."				
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)		Weighted		Unweighted	
		all	valid	all	valid
	Completely heterosexual:	94.4	96.6	93.4	97.4
	Mainly heterosexual:	2.3	2.3	1.7	1.8
	Bisexual:	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
	Mainly gay or lesbian:	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
	Completely gay or lesbian:	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.2
	Not answered:	0.7	-	1.6	-
Don't know:	1.6	-	2.6	-	

	Base	=8293		=2800	
Non-response / non-substantive responses	No 'prefer not to say' category was offered. Interviewers could code 'don't know' and 'not answered'.				
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	-				
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical report didn't indicate any particular issues about the question on 'sexual orientation'. • Mike Hough: "by any reasonable standards the results are pretty hopeless... baldly unsatisfactory." • One interviewer, contacted by NatCen for this ONS review, commented that there were problems with comprehension, including among people with limited English, but that there were no problems with privacy, confidentiality or acceptability: "Respondents often misunderstood the question. Many laughed and replied 'None of these!', or in several cases 'None of those - just 'Normal'!". Others chose an answer, but when probed, it became apparent that they had misunderstood the meaning of the terms, and had therefore given an answer which did not describe them accurately....In London, many respondents have a limited working knowledge of the English language, which does not extend to polysyllabic technical terms of Greek and Latin origin. The only way to obtain reliable data from them is to use simpler words." 				
Links	Technical report: www.blink.org.uk/docs/policereport.pdf				

1.3 Employees' Awareness Knowledge and Exercise of Employment Rights Survey

Sponsor	DTI		
Information provided by	DTI		
Year conducted	2005		
Survey mode	CAPI		
Sexual identity question mode	CAPI (show card).		
Sample design	Random probability (PAF). Population: individuals of working age (16-64 for men and 16-59 for women) who were employees or had been employees in the previous two years. One person selected per household.		
Survey topics	Various issues relating to employment rights		
Survey response information	58%		
Sexual identity question purpose	A 'socio-demographic' sexual identity question was included in order to examine the experiences of LGB employees compared to heterosexual / straight employees, in respect of employment rights and fair treatment.		
Location in questionnaire/interview	Last substantive question (followed by a recontact question).		
Other SID-related questions	Relating to awareness of employer's obligation re. unfair treatment and whether employee had been unfairly treated		
Sexual Identity question	<p>"Which of these best describes you? - please just give me the number on the card." (Showcard categories numbered 1 to 4).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Straight/heterosexual 2. Gay/lesbian/homosexual 3. Bisexual 4. Other 		
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	<p>Prompt for interviewer use if respondents objected to or queried the question:</p> <p>"We're collecting this information to find out more about the discrimination people may face for different reasons. The information is kept completely anonymous."</p>		
Interviewer instructions	Briefed (by video) and received written instructions.		
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)		All	Valid
	Straight/heterosexual	98.9	99.1
	Gay/lesbian/homosexual	0.7	0.7
	Bisexual	0.2	?
	Other	0.1	?
	Refused	0.2	-
	Base	=1038	
Non-response / non-substantive responses	A 'refusal' category was available to interviewers. It was not shown on the card in order to maximise response to the question.		
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	-		
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DTI researchers hypothesised that the clustered design might have led to under-representation of LGB people, if they are concentrated in certain urban areas. • For each interview the interviewer was asked "Was there any reluctance or objection from the respondent in answering this question?" To which the responses were Yes: 2%; No: 98%. The fieldwork contractor reported after piloting that "everyone was happy to answer the sexual orientation question - the show card helped lessen any potential embarrassment for respondents and interviewers asking the question". 		
Links			

1.4 Fair Treatment at Work Pilot Survey

Sponsor	DTI		
Information provided by	DTI		
Year conducted	2005		
Survey mode	CAPI		
Sexual identity question mode of administration	CAPI (concealed response show card).		
Sample design	Quota sampling. Administered as part of an omnibus survey. Population: adults in work as employees or who had worked as employees in the previous two years. One person was selected per household.		
Survey response information	Response rate not applicable (quota sample). 2366 interviews achieved in main survey plus 1570 from boosts.		
Survey topics	Perception of unfair treatment in workplace; reporting of personal and observed unfair treatment		
Sexual identity question purpose	A 'socio-demographic' sexual identity question was included in order to examine the experiences of LGB employees compared to heterosexual / straight employees, in respect of employment rights and fair treatment.		
Location in questionnaire/interview	Last substantive question (followed by a recontact question).		
Other SID-related questions	Awareness of/personal experience of unfair treatment due to sexual orientation.		
Sexual Identity question	<p>"Please look at this card. Which of the answers on the card best describes you? Please just give me the letter alongside the appropriate answer." (Show card categories labelled R, D, P, H).</p> <p>R: Straight or heterosexual D: Gay or lesbian or homosexual P: Bisexual H: Other</p>		
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	<p>Prompt for interviewers to use if respondents objected to or queried the question:</p> <p>"We're collecting this information to find out more about the discrimination people may face for different reasons. The information is kept completely anonymous."</p>		
Interviewer instructions	Interviewers received written instructions. No briefing.		
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)		All	Valid
	Straight/heterosexual	87.8	96.5
	Gay/lesbian/homosexual	2.0	2.2
	Bisexual	0.4	?
	Other	0.7	0.7
	Refused	9.0	-
	Base	=2704	
Non-response / non-substantive responses	A 'refusal' category was available to interviewers. It was not shown on the card in order to maximise response to the question.		
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	On the pilot, self-completion was also tried, using a CAPI pen, which was reported to have been "slightly preferred" by respondents as "more anonymous". But it broke up the interview and was a struggle for certain respondents. The show card version was "not met with any resistance", though it was said that interviewers knew the answer so it was not confidential. However, it appears that all pilot respondents were straight - different views might be expressed by LGB respondents.		
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fair Treatment at Work Survey asked "Was there any reluctance/hesitation at all when answering the earlier question about sexual orientation?" To which the 		

	<p>responses were Yes: 10%; No: 89%; Don't know: 1%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "considerably higher levels" of refusal to answer, and of interviewer perceptions of reluctance or objection, have been ascribed by DTI to "a small number of interviewers" coding a refusal for the majority or all of their interviews. The refusals did not occur at random, suggesting "that some interviewers do not feel able to ask this question and record a refusal, instead of asking the question and recording the correct response." It is worth noting that those interviewers received no briefing. DTI conclude that "Future attempts to ask a question on sexual identity must pay particular attention to interviewer training and briefing to ensure interviewers feel able to ask the question."
Links	

1.5 Count Me In: The National Mental Health and Ethnicity Census 2005 Service User Survey

See also 1.6 below regarding experiences of the 2006 NHME Census itself.

Sponsor	Mental Health Act Commission
Information provided by	NatGen - provided expertise in the questionnaire and sample design of this survey, conducted by another fieldwork contractor.
Year conducted	2005
Survey mode	PAPI. "Action research" was employed: interviews were conducted by non-professional interviewers - people with mental health problems themselves ("trained service user interviewers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds"), and there were problems with administering the sample properly. The aim was to conduct interviews in a private place in the hospital but that was dependent on availability.
Sexual identity question mode	PAPI (concealed response show card).
Sample design	The survey was of in patients in mental health hospitals - a sample taken in each of 41 NHS and private/voluntary hospitals.
Survey topics	Patient needs and services received. To compare the experiences of BME patients with white patients (e.g. how appropriate were the services received, with reference to the culture of patients).
Survey response	31%.
Sexual identity question purpose	To explore whether sexual orientation was a factor having a bearing on patient needs or service received. The question had been included in the survey rather than the 'main data capture element', i.e. the 2005 MH Census, because of "anticipated difficulties in collection" – not elaborated - (from Census 2006 'Inclusion of data capture field on sexual orientation: Background and supporting information'). NB In the 2006 MH Census, a question was included – see below.
Location in questionnaire/interview	Dk
Other SID-related questions	-
Sexual Identity question	Which of the categories on this card would you say describes your sexual orientation? Please give me the letter. M. Heterosexual (like people of the opposite sex) Z. Gay male or lesbian female (like people of the same sex) P. Bisexual (like people of both sexes) C. Transgender Categories were given random letters so as not to imply any hierarchy and to ensure privacy.
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	Dk
Interviewer instructions	Dk
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	n/a. Achieved sample <400 (white and BME) was too small to allow meaningful analysis.
Non-response / non-substantive responses	Don't Know and refused options available to interviewers.
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	-
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	None.
Links	Report accessible from this web page: http://www.mhac.org.uk/Pages/publications.html

1.6 Count Me In: The National Mental Health and Learning Disability Ethnicity Census 2006

Sponsor	Mental Health Act Commission
Information provided by	Mental Health Act Commission
Year conducted	2006
Survey mode	IT staff in NHS, private and voluntary sector mental health and learning disability establishments were compiled the required information in a spreadsheet – much from administrative records – see also below.
Sexual identity question mode	PAPI. A member of the staff on each ward, assumed to usually be nursing staff, administered the question. They were informed by their IT people of what gaps there were in the information required, and expected to look it up from notes or ask the patient. Sexual orientation is not routinely collected administratively. A “flash card” (show card) was used, to promote privacy and sensitivity.
Sample design	The Count Me In Census of mental health and learning disability inpatients is conducted annually, of all patients in all MH and LD establishments in England & Wales. A Census Day is fixed (31 March). Question intended to be asked of all patients >16.
Response	Dk
Survey topics	Age, sex, preferred language, religion/faith and health related questions. Most of the information required is, in theory, already collected for administrative or medical reasons, but this is not always the case in practise.
Sexual identity question purpose	The main impetus is that DH has a 5 year programme to improve the service to BME patients. A sexual orientation question was introduced in 2006. To provide a baseline so services can be appropriate.
Location in questionnaire/interview	-
Other SID questions	-
Sexual Identity question	Which of the following terms would you use to describe your sexual orientation? 2 Lesbian/Gay/Homosexual 1 Straight/Heterosexual 3 Bisexual 4 Other 5 Do not wish to answer Question and response categories both shown on flash card.
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	A ‘your questions answered’ booklet was available to patients, including “Why are you asking me about sexual orientation? This is really very personal.” The response explained that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGB people sometimes don’t receive the same standard of care and that they have more mental health problems, so MHAC wants to know how to improve services. • But it doesn’t know how many there are. • You do not have to answer the question.
Interviewer instructions	A briefing note was sent to all participants, covering the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It stressed confidentiality. • People who hadn’t considered or didn’t know their sexual orientation, or did not fall within options, and those for whom it was deemed inappropriate were to be recorded as ‘other’. • It said that staff’s discomfort should not be a reason for not asking and using ‘other’.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients did not have to reply. • It explained difference between orientation and activity.
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	Full results not published. 2.1% of all records were coded LG or B. But many providers (nearly 50%) did not return any records coded LGB – they might not have asked the question. Of those providers who returned any LGB cases, the rate was 3.1%. They ranged between under 1% to over 10%. Highest proportions were in private and voluntary establishments rather than NHS (were felt to have a better environment).
Non-response / non-substantive responses	There was no category for 'not asked' (will be from 2007) but a value had to be entered somewhere. So 'other' might have included the cases where the question wasn't asked, as well as genuine others/don't knows.
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	-
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No information on feedback from patients. • Problems were encountered with many providers administering the Census not asking the question. Providers were given a feedback questionnaire; only a third responded to a question on the % of patients who had been asked the SO question; of which 63% said they had asked 75% of patients; 14% had asked <25%. • MHAC conducted road shows with providers to discuss issues about conducting the Census. There were some "shocking" findings including views that the question didn't need to be asked, you could tell just by looking if someone was gay (no information on how often it was answered by providers rather than asked of patients); and how can staff be expected to ask - it was too embarrassing. But there was also positive feedback from the establishments which had administered the question to more people.
Links	www.mhac.org.uk/census

2 SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONS IN INTERVIEWER-ADMINISTERED SURVEYS

2.1 British Social Attitudes Survey

Sponsor	Various bodies. ESRC for sexual identity/orientation.
Information provided by	NatCen (research and fieldwork contractor)
Year conducted	2005
Survey mode	CAPI
Sexual identity question mode	Paper self-completion. Booklet given at end of interview. Preferred model is for the interviewer to return to the household to collect the completed questionnaire. Alternatively respondent posted it back.
Sample design	Random probability, general population, GB. One person selected in household. The sample was subdivided - different versions of the questionnaire were given to each randomly selected subgroup (so more questions could be administered over the whole sample, for cost efficiency). The SI question was not on all versions.
Survey response	Dk
Survey topics	A range of topics from Health to Transport to general attitude statements. Sexual identity question within social identities module.
Sexual identity question purpose	The question was not primarily intended to measure prevalence. It was part of a self-completion module on social identities.
Location in questionnaire/interview	Self completion booklet. Question 38 out of 55.
Other SID questions	Question on how much respondents felt they had in common with others identifying in this way: a lot more, a little more, or no more than with other people.
Sexual Identity question	Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heterosexual ('straight') 2. Gay 3. Lesbian 4. Bisexual 5. Transsexual 6. Can't choose
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to resp.	None (booklet anonymised).
Interviewer instructions	n/a
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	Heterosexual ('straight') 95.3 Gay: 0.4 Lesbian: 0.4 Bisexual: 0.6 Transsexual: 0.2 Can't choose: 1.7 Not answered: 1.4 N=1732
Non-response / non-substantive responses	'Can't choose' response category provided. Respondents able to skip.
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	The pilot study didn't ask a sexual identity question but one where people chose from shuffle cards some identities which they related themselves to (inc heterosexual and gay). No respondents identified as LGBT.
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	One respondent contacted them to say that he didn't feel comfortable ticking his sexual orientation on a paper document, which might then be seen by other people.
Links	http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/or_socialattitudes.htm Questionnaires/topics/methodology: http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk/surveys/bsa/bsa05.htm

2.2 Newham Household Panel Survey

Sponsor	London Borough of Newham
Information provided by	Newham Corporate Research Unit
Year conducted	Annual waves since 2002
Survey mode	Face to face interview. Interviewers speak a range of community languages that Newham residents speak and can carry out interviews in the languages required. Questionnaires are also translated into community languages.
Sample design	A simple random sample of addresses (every 56th address). People stay in the panel as long as they wish to - if they move within Newham they are traced if possible, though there is a high attrition rate due to this. When respondents have moved, the new occupants are invited to join. New addresses are added each wave. All adults (16+) in the household are interviewed.
Survey topics	SC booklet: mental health, satisfaction with various aspects of life, questions about harassment/discrimination (which precede the sexual identity question) and questions about friends.
Survey response information	Number of achieved households over waves ranged from 857 to 1051. Number of individuals ranged from 1481 to 1828. Response rates for self-completion: W1: 75% W2: 82% W3: 78% W4: 43% (% of all completed individual interviews)
Sexual identity question purpose	To provide context for other questions about discrimination/victimisation.
Sexual identity question mode of administration	Paper self-completion booklet. This is administered to individuals before or after their individual questionnaire, the appropriate time being judged by the interviewer. The booklet can be completed then and given to the interviewer, or later and posted back.
Location in questionnaire/interview	11 th of 14 questions
Other SID questions	Questions about unfair treatment, harassment/abuse or discrimination by employers because of sexual orientation.
Sexual Identity question	In Wave 4: Please tell us what best describes you: I am heterosexual or 'straight' I am 'gay' or 'lesbian' (homosexual) I am bisexual If none of the above applies. (PLEASE WRITE): I am _____ I do not wish to answer this question.
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	Preamble used up to Wave 3 but dropped – see below. The booklet explains confidentiality, anonymity and data protection. It contains a serial number to match to the questionnaire.
Interviewer instructions	n/a
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	See table below
Non-response / non-substantive responses	Total % who left question blank or answered 'I do not wish to answer...' See estimates below for breakdown. Wave 1: 23.1 Wave 2: 20.5 Wave 3: 25.0

	Wave 4: 21.5
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	A preamble was formerly used, but dropped from Wave 4. It read "Some people have a partner of the same sex as themselves (homosexual) while others have a partner of the opposite sex (heterosexual)."
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'none of the above' – verbatim responses not available. • None from interviewer debriefing or from respondents. No apparent problems. • In all waves 'white' respondents were significantly more likely to answer the SID question (1/7 did not answer), 'Asian' (3/10) and 'other' (base too small) ethnic groups significantly less likely. • No analysis of individual responses from wave to wave was available.
Links	http://www.newham.info/research/NHPS.htm

Survey Estimates

Wave 1	% of all individual interviews	% of all cases where s/c returned	% of valid cases
Heterosexual or straight	55.3	74.5	97.0
Gay or lesbian (homosexual)	.0	.0	.0
Bisexual	.2	.3	.4
None of the above	1.5	2.0	2.6
Do not wish to answer this question	10.1	13.7	-
Total answering question			N=988
Not answered on s/c	7.0	9.5	-
Total returning s/c form	74.2	N=1286	
Self completion not returned	25.8		
Total individual interviews	N=1733		

Wave 2	% of all individual interviews	% of all cases where s/c returned	% of valid cases
Heterosexual or straight	61.8	75.2	94.5
Gay or lesbian (homosexual)	.6	.7	.8
Bisexual	.4	.4	.5
None of the above	2.7	3.3	4.1
Do not wish to answer this question	9.6	11.7	-
Total answering question			N=969
Not answered on s/c	7.2	8.8	-
Total returning s/c form	82.2	N=1218	
Self completion not returned	17.8		
Total individual interviews	N=1482		

Wave 3	% of all individual interviews	% of all cases where s/c returned	% of valid cases
Heterosexual or straight	55.0	70.4	93.9
Gay or lesbian (homosexual)	.5	.7	.9
Bisexual	.5	.6	.8
None of the above	2.6	3.4	4.5
Do not wish to answer this question	11.7	15.0	-
Total answering question			N=849
Not answered on s/c	7.8	10.0	-
Total returning s/c form	78.2	N=1132	
Self completion not returned	21.8		
Total individual interviews	N=1448		

Wave 4	% of all individual interviews	% of all cases where s/c returned	% of valid cases
Heterosexual or straight	31.4	71.7	91.2
Gay or lesbian (homosexual)	.4	1.0	1.2
Bisexual	.5	1.1	1.4
None of the above	2.1	4.7	6.0
Do not wish to answer this question	5.3	12.0	-
Total answering question			N=500
Not answered on s/c	4.2	9.5	-
Total returning s/c form	43.9	N=636	
Self completion not returned	56.1		
Total individual interviews	N=1451		

3 SELF-ADMINISTERED - POSTAL SURVEYS

3.1 Scottish Census Small Scale Test

Sponsor	General Register Office Scotland
Research and/or fieldwork contractor	General Register Office Scotland
Information provided by	Obtained from report 'Sexual Orientation in the Census', on the small scale postal test
Year conducted	2005
Survey mode	Postal
Sexual identity question mode of administration	Paper self-completion.
Sample design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative random sample of households. One person in the household, nominated by the householder, was asked to fill in the form, for him or herself. So issues relating to privacy within the household, which might apply in the real Census, were not addressed. • Four variants of the form were used, two of which included a 'sexual orientation' question, and two of which included a question on discrimination experienced on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and seven other grounds. The discrimination question was included to see if it had any effect on answers to the sexual orientation question. The following combination of these two questions was each sent to a quarter of households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ sexual orientation/discrimination; ○ sexual orientation/no discrimination; ○ no sexual orientation/discrimination; ○ no sexual orientation/no discrimination.
Response information	31% (biased towards respondents aged over 30, females, and those in less deprived areas, suggesting response cannot be generalised to the whole population). Response rates to the variants were very similar.
Survey topics	Socio-demographic
Sexual identity question purpose	To assess feasibility of asking in 2011 Scottish Census (to provide a baseline)
Location in questionnaire/interview	The question was number 17 of 29, after religion, ethnicity and confidence about going out in the evening in your area, and before caring and employment status.
Other SID questions	Experience of discrimination – see above
Sexual Identity question	Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? Heterosexual Lesbian/Gay Bi-sexual Other Prefer not to answer
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	Instruction between question stem and response categories: 'Only answer this question if you are 16 years old or more.' Confidentiality was mentioned in the cover letter. Nothing was mentioned about the voluntary nature of questions (but there was a 'prefer not to answer' category).
Interviewer instructions	n/a

Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	Unweighted data	Total %	Both Qs	No discrimination Q
	Heterosexual	83.1	82.7	83.5
	Lesbian/gay	0.9	1.4	0.3
	Bi-sexual	0.4	0	0.9
	Other	0.9	0.6	1.2
	Prefer not to answer	8.5	9.2	7.8
	Non response	6.2	6.1	6.4
	Base	692	346	346
Non-response / non-substantive responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Prefer not to answer' and item non-response far outweighed response to the LGB categories. • Item non-response is higher than for religion and other questions (but lower than for caring, the next question on the form - a possible order effect?). 			
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	-			
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'specify' box for other was not included, considered relevant only to a small number of respondents and a potential 'magnet' for facetious responses. • The conclusion of the author was that the "accuracy" and "utility" of the data is questionable. • The researchers conclude that the <i>"absence of a difference in response rates between the variants ... may indicate that the most compliant sections of the population ...are not put off by the inclusion of a sexual orientation question."</i> • At the end of the form respondents were asked to indicate how happy they felt about each question. <i>"The question on sexual orientation stands out with around 11% of respondents selecting very unhappy or unhappy"</i> compared to less than 5% for most questions. • Respondents could also write comments. For the sexual orientation question they <i>"ranged from fully accepting to hostile"</i>. • People who "accepted the question without reservation" included people answering 'prefer not to say'. • Concerns expressed included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "not understanding the need for the data"; ○ "offence" and "unhappiness at the intrusive nature of the question"; and concerns about confidentiality (e.g. being asked for their postcode). They did not necessarily "translate into refusal to record an answer" [to the question]. • Some respondents' comments "suggested they had possibly misunderstood or misinterpreted the question". These included an elderly woman who answered the question with a sexual orientation but did not think the question applied to her, and another who had to think what the question meant but answered as best she could. • Non-responders to the question "generally also declined to record any comments". 			
Links	Report: http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/census/censushm2011/question-development/sexual-orientation-in-the-census.html			

3.2 Civil Service Diversity Survey

Sponsor	Cabinet Office
Information provided by	ORC International (fieldwork contractor)
Year conducted	2001
Survey mode	Postal.
Sexual identity question mode	Paper self-completion.
Sample design	Simple random sample of civil servants from every department, plus boosts. Paper questionnaire sent to the selected sample's work address.
Survey response	48%.
Survey topics	Subjects relating to the respondent's job, including work-life balance; diversity/fairness/equality; harassment/discrimination; dealings with members of the public and career development.
Sexual identity question purpose	Equality and diversity monitoring.
Location in questionnaire/interview	At the end of the questionnaire, in a section on demographics, as the penultimate question. It followed question on gender and preceded a question asking if the respondent considered him or herself to be transsexual.
Other SID questions	Question about unfair treatment at work as a result of various characteristics including 'sexuality'.
Sexual Identity question	<p>If you have no objections to stating your sexuality, please could you state it here?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Bisexual Gay man Heterosexual Lesbian</p> <p>The question and answer categories were provided by Cabinet Office.</p>
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	The cover letter mentioned confidentiality e.g. that respondents would not be identifiable in the published results and that no-one in the Civil Service would see their data. The questionnaire was to be returned in a prepaid envelope to ORC, and was anonymised - no serial number/barcode or name was recorded. The department would be recorded but nothing about the unit in which the respondent worked.
Interviewer instructions	-
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	<p>Bisexual: 2%</p> <p>Gay man: 1%</p> <p>Heterosexual: 89%</p> <p>Lesbian: 0%</p> <p>Missing: 8%</p>
Non-response / non-substantive responses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No 'prefer not to say' category was included; the researchers thought it a waste of a box and that respondents could just leave the question blank instead. • No 'other' category was included as it was thought the categories captured all eventualities.
Pre-testing, piloting, changes made over time	In developing the survey focus groups were conducted, during which people said they accepted the question's use in monitoring diversity and unfairness. Concerns included being able to be identified individually, and at the accuracy of any count based on the question (no further details available).
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	The researcher had no recollection of any feedback from survey respondents.
Links	http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/diversity/publications/index.asp (scroll down to Diversity Survey).

4. SURVEYS IN FIELD DURING TIME OF REVIEW – NO ESTIMATES AND LIMITED FEEDBACK AVAILABLE

4.1 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2006-7

Sponsor	Information Centre for Health and Social Care
Information provided by	NatCen - research and fieldwork contractor
Year conducted	October 2006- September 2007
Survey mode	CAPI
Sexual identity question mode	CASI. May be administered by interviewer in a small proportion of cases where respondents unable to self-administer – interviewer reads question and respondent keys answer.
Sample design	Random probability; general population (England); 1 adult selected in each household, age 16 and over (no upper age limit as there was in APMS 2000 [age 74])
Survey response information	In progress.
Survey topics	Focus on mental health (common mental disorders, psychosis, personality disorder) with additional questions on other topics such as general health, use of services, intellectual functioning, alcohol consumption, key life events, socio-demographics.
Sexual identity question purpose; definition of SexID/orientation	<p>Designed to compare two versions of the sexual identity question (see below). Version assigned at random during course of interview (CASI controlled).</p> <p>Also, evidence from earlier research of variation in rates of psychiatric morbidity by sexual identity.</p> <p>Sexual identity may be conceptualised in terms of attraction, identity and/or behaviour. The two questions used are a basic way of assessing feelings and behaviour (see questions A1, A2; B1, B2).</p>
Location in questionnaire/interview	At the end of a CASI module in the middle of the interview. Module takes c15 minutes. Covers general health; use of health services; drinking; drug use; gambling; personality disorders; violence; self-harm. In section 'Discrimination and Sexual Identity', the sexual identity questions are asked after questions about discrimination.
Other SexID-related questions	There is a question about sexual partners, asked as a follow up to the question about sexual identity. Two version of the question about sexual partners were used - see questions A2 and B2 in section below.
Sexual Identity question	<p>Two versions of the sexual identity question (A1 and B1) and follow up question on sexual partners (A2 and B2).</p> <p>VERSION A</p> <p>A1. Sexori Which statement best describes your sexual orientation? This means sexual feelings, whether or not you have had any sexual partners. "</p> <p>Entirely heterosexual (attracted to persons of the opposite sex) Mostly heterosexual, some homosexual feelings Bisexual (equally attracted to men and women) Mostly homosexual, some heterosexual feelings) Entirely homosexual (attracted to persons of the same sex)</p>

	<p>Other</p> <p>A2. Sexpart Have your sexual partners been... / "Sexual partners" : only opposite sex", mainly opposite sex but some same sex partners", mainly same sex but some opposite sex partners", only same sex", or, I have not had a sexual partner")</p> <p>VERSION B</p> <p>B1. Sexdes Please choose the answer below that best describes how you Think of yourself...: completely heterosexual mainly heterosexual bisexual mainly gay or lesbian completely gay or lesbian Other</p> <p>B2. SexPart2 Sexual experience is any kind of contact with another person that you felt was sexual (it could be just kissing or touching, or intercourse, or any other form of sex). Has your sexual experience been..." : Only with <i>women/men</i> (or a <i>woman/man</i>), never with a <i>man/woman</i>, More often with <i>women/men</i>, and at least once with a <i>man/woman</i>, About equally often with <i>women/men</i> and <i>men/women</i>, More often with <i>men/women</i>, and at least once with a <i>woman/man</i>, Only with <i>men/women</i> (or a <i>man/woman</i>), never with a <i>woman/man</i>, I have never had any sexual experience with anyone at all"</p>
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	No specific assurances about this question, but all respondents assured of confidentiality of all data provided in the study.
Interviewer instructions/briefing	Interviewers shown questions and told about the different versions tested in this study, but are not given any special instructions.
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	None available
Non-response / non-substantive responses	Not yet available. To refuse or answer 'don't know' respondents would have to inform the interviewer.
Pre-testing; piloting; changes made over time	Cognitive pilot carried out. No feedback on this question available but no change made.
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	Not yet available
Links	None

4.2 Citizenship Survey

Sponsor	Communities and Local Government
Information provided by	Communities and Local Government
Year conducted	2007
Survey mode	CAPI
Sexual identity question mode	CAPI (concealed response show card)
Sample design	Random probability; general population, England and Wales. One person selected in household.
Survey response information	Not yet available
Survey topics	Social networks; community; influencing politics; trust; volunteering; civil renewal; race; and religion.
Sexual identity question purpose; definition of SexID/orientation	Requested by Women and Equality Unit and others: Will provide an indicator of the respondents self-reported sexual orientation/identity.
Location in questionnaire/interview	In the middle of the second of two demographics sections, towards the end of the questionnaire. Preceded by: media consumption (newspapers, radio, TV, internet); vehicle ownership; health; and caring. Followed by: employment status; main job; qualifications; and income (banded). The first demographics section, at the start of the questionnaire, covers: sex; marital status; tenure; ethnicity; nationality; whether employed.
Other SexID-related questions	A question on personal identities: "Suppose you were describing yourself, which of the things on this card would say something important about you?" The 16 response categories include work, family, income and several identities including ethnicity, religion, social class, gender and "your sexuality". The question is multicode, followed by one asking which is "the most important thing".
Sexual Identity question	(Asked if interview is not being translated by family member or friend) Looking at this card, which of the options best describes your sexual identity? Please just read out the letter next to the description. W ...Heterosexual or straight P ... Gay or lesbian H ... Bisexual S ...Other G ... [or would you] Prefer not to say? [NB Abridged question shown on show card: Which of the following best describes your sexual identity?] Ask if =Other How would you describe your sexual identity? (Open question).
Explanations/definitions/assurances provided to respondent	Preamble: The next question is about sexual identity. We are asking this question because the government department funding this study, Communities and Local Government, is responsible for helping to reduce all forms of prejudice and discrimination in society.
Interviewer	

instructions/briefing	
Estimates (weighted % unless otherwise indicated)	Not yet available
Non-response / non-substantive responses	Not yet available
Pre-testing; piloting; changes made over time	<p>Cognitive testing conducted by NatCen, with regard to respondent reactions, objections and comprehension.</p> <p>Question tested:</p> <p>“The next question is about sexual identity. We are asking this question because the Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for helping to reduce all forms of prejudice and discrimination in society. As with all our questions, your answers will be kept strictly confidential.</p> <p>Please read out the letter which best describes your sexual identity?</p> <p>C. ...Heterosexual or straight B. ... Gay or lesbian D. ... Bisexual A. ...Other E. ...[or would you] Prefer not to say?</p> <p>(If Other) How would you describe your sexual identity?</p>
Feedback from researchers, interviewers, respondents	<p>Cognitive testing: no objections, refusals encountered, though “several were slightly embarrassed”. One LGB respondent was interviewed (the testing was not specific to this question).</p> <p>Respondents either said the response option in full or just the letter.</p> <p>Comprehension of the question included “who you like as a partner” and “it’s what you are or your sexual preference is”. There was some confusion about the term ‘heterosexual’ - a process of elimination was used or people said they would have chosen “Straight” if that had been an option on its own.</p> <p>It was recommended that the question be included in the dress rehearsal.</p> <p>NB the confidentiality clause was dropped – interviewers felt that it was unnecessary and made asking the question more of a "big deal"</p>
Links	