Asking About Gender Identity in Surveys

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GfK Custom Research
Introduction

• Gender identity is an important indicator in public policy and research investigations across an array of fields, such as health, employment, inequality, and discrimination.

• Yet few national surveys include questions on gender identity.

• There is a growing body of research testing various methods of asking gender identity for inclusion in surveys.

• KnowledgePanel, GfK’s online probability-based panel, has been asking a question on gender identity as part of our profile surveys on panelists since 2010.
Introduction

• In 2010, we began asking – the direct approach:

  Do you consider yourself to be transgender?
  
  ○ Yes
  ○ No
While there are few surveys that have asked questions to measure gender identity, comparing our survey estimate to an external estimate showed that with this question we might be overestimating the size of the population.

Confirmation rates also tended to be low – that is when re-asking someone who had identified as transgender on a profile survey their current gender identity – often less than a third would confirm transgender identity on follow-up.

Study 1
In 2012, GfK conducted a study using sample from our KnowledgePanel®

- Sampled all panelists who identified as transgender
- Conducted a short, less than five minute survey

**Invited**
- 397

**Responded**
- 282

71% Completion Rate
Diagnosing the Situation

The study first asked respondents the same question:

Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

- Yes
- No

• 27% Confirmation Rate: That is, 27% of those who first told us they were transgender responded again that they were transgender when asked in the follow-up survey.
Defining Transgender

We then asked participants:

How would you define transgender?

A number provided accurate definitions:

• "Meaning I am one sex but think and feel that I am the other sex."
• "Identifying as a gender other than the one you were born"
• "I am a man trapped inside of a woman's body."
• "Conflict between birth assigned gender and self-perceived gender."
Defining Transgender

We then asked participants:

How would you define transgender?

Many incorrectly explained transgender, despite having earlier identified as such:

- "Straight meaning attracted to the opposite sex"
- "attracted to the opposite sex"
- "Straight"
- "a person who can have relations with either sex"
- "someone born with 2 private parts"
- "Some one who is content with your sex"
- "Darned if I know but I assume it means my ability to work with both genders."
- "I'm not sure"
Revising our Question

After reviewing the results of the study, we revised our question on transgender identity to include a definition. In 2013, we began asking:

Do you consider yourself to be transgender?
Transgender individuals are those who identify with a gender that is different from their gender at birth.

- Yes
- No
Results after Adding Definition

- After adding the definition, we saw the estimate increase, moving further from the external national estimate of 0.3%.
- Perhaps more importantly, confirmation rates did not improve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>KnowledgePanel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study 2 Design

• After conducting a literature review and attending a couple of the LGBTQ sessions at AAPOR in 2015, we revised our approach.

• A number of researchers have tested a two-step method (Cahill et al., 2014; The GenIUSS Group, 2014; Reisner et al., 2014; Tate et al., 2013).

• This method includes two separate questions:
  – Sex assigned at birth
  – Current gender identity
Study 2 Method

- Used sample from GfK’s KnowledgePanel®
- Conducted short, less than five minute survey
- Included a general population sample as well as all panelists who had previously identified as transgender

Invited: 4,400
Responded: 2,841
65% Completion Rate
Experiment 1

Random Assignment: Question Order

Current First

1) What is your current gender identity?
2) What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?
   - Male
   - Female

Sex at Birth First

1) What sex were you assigned at birth on your original birth certificate?
   - Male
   - Female
2) What is your current gender identity?
Experiment 2

Random Assignment: Response Options

Simplified

What is your current gender identity?
- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- I do not consider myself male, female, or transgender

Detailed

What is your current gender identity?
- Male
- Female
- Female-to-Male (FtM)/ Transgender Male/Trans Man
- Male-to-Female (MtF)/ Transgender Female/Trans Woman
- Genderqueer, neither exclusively male nor female
- Other, please specify
Results – Confirming Gender Identity

- With new questions – 99% confirmed cisgender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Previously Profiled Cisgender</th>
<th>Previously Profiled Transgender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Confirming Gender Identity

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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• With new questions – 5.4% confirmed transgender, reiterating concern with earlier version of profile question
Results – Weighted Gender Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Population Sample</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 0.7% of the general population sample identified as transgender and 0.3% identified as "Other"
Results – Experimental Results (Weighted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current First/ Simplified</th>
<th>Current First/ Detailed</th>
<th>Sex at Birth First/ Simplified</th>
<th>Sex at Birth First/ Detailed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No significant difference across conditions, though asking Current Gender Identity First with Detailed Response Options yielded higher estimate, furthest away from national estimate of 0.3%
Results – Data Quality

• Approximately 94% of respondents indicated the questions allowed them to accurately provide their gender identity.

• No difference by experimental condition.

• 90% of those who said it did not allow them to accurately provide their gender identity were cisgender.
Results – Data Quality

• We asked those who said it didn't allow them to accurately provide gender identity, "Why not?"

  Among cisgender:
  – "It's very simple you were born male or female regardless of what you feel."
  – "Your gender is the one you were born with."

  Among transgender and other:
  – "I'm a girl boy"
  – "fluidity, fluctuation"
  – "Male and transgender are not exclusive options, but I had to pick only one. I am male before I am transgender, so I chose that. There are other genders too, like bigender, gender fluid, and agender."
Conclusions and Discussion
Conclusions and Discussion

• Across conditions, the new gender identity questions resulted in a lower proportion of respondents who identify as transgender, and the proportions were closer to the existing estimate.

• Comparing the experimental conditions, a slightly higher proportion of respondents identified as transgender when asked about their current identity first using the detailed response options, and measures of data quality were slightly lower for this condition.
Conclusions and Discussion

• Based on survey results, moving forward we are asking:

Sex at Birth First

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

1. Male
2. Female

Simplified Response Set

What is your current gender identity?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Transgender
4. I do not consider myself male, female, or transgender
Conclusions and Discussion

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**Sex at Birth First**

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

1. Male
2. Female

**Simplified Response Set**

What is your current gender identity?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Transgender
4. I do not consider myself male, female, or transgender
   Something else, please specify

Changed response option in an effort to address concerns about gender fluid
Thank you!

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