BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS (BRFSS)

Years Survey Included Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM)-related Questions
2014 - Present

Survey Description
The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is a collaborative project between all states in the United States, participating U.S. territories, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The BRFSS is an ongoing surveillance system whose objective is to collect uniform, state-specific data on U.S. adults’ health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions, and use of preventive services. The core sections include health status, healthy days, health care access, exercise, inadequate sleep, chronic health conditions, oral health, demographics, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, immunization, falls, seatbelt use and drinking and driving, breast and cervical cancer screening, prostate cancer screening, colorectal cancer screening, and HIV/AIDS.

In 2013, the CDC developed a question module for BRFSS to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity (SO/GI), and in 2014 gave states the option to add it to their BRFSS questionnaires. It is one of 25 optional modules that states decide on each year.

Survey Sample Population
BRFSS completes more than 400,000 adult interviews each year, making it the largest continuously conducted health survey system in the world. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam collect data annually; American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau collect survey data over a limited point in time (usually 1–3 months). The target population for this survey is the noninstitutionalized adult population 18 years of age and older.

Survey Mode
Since 2011 the BRFSS has been conducted using both landline telephone- and cellular telephone-based surveys. In 2016, 54 states or territories used computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) systems. In conducting the BRFSS landline telephone survey, interviewers collect data from a randomly selected adult in a household. In conducting the cellular telephone version of the BRFSS questionnaire, interviewers collect data from an adult who participates by using a cellular telephone and resides in a private residence or college housing.
State health personnel or contractors follow BRFSS interview guidelines. All health departments must ask the core component questions without modifying the wording, but the modules are optional. SGM-related questions are in an optional module. Prior to the availability of the BRFSS optional modules, some states collected SO/GI data on their own; they maintained their own question wording rather than adopting the module version of the SO/GI questions. The table below identifies states that use the SO/GI optional module. See individual states BRFSS websites for more information.

**States Asking the SO/GI Optional Module**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**SGM-Related Survey Questions**

**Survey**
The question below is asked of all BRFSS respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Question History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Identity</td>
<td>Currently no questions are asked in this category.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Attraction</td>
<td>Currently no questions are asked in this category.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Behavior</td>
<td>Currently no questions are asked in this category.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td>(C08.01) Format 1 What is your sex?</td>
<td>This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Question History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household Relationships</td>
<td>Currently no questions are asked in this category.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Module</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Identity</td>
<td>(M21.01a) Ask if Sex= 1 Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself? 1 = Gay 2 = Straight, that is, not gay 3 = Bisexual 4 = Something else 7 = I don’t know the answer 9 = Refused</td>
<td>This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M21.01b) Ask if Sex=2 Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself? 1 = Lesbian or Gay 2 = Straight, that is, not gay 3 = Bisexual 4 = Something else 7 = I don’t know the answer 9 = Refused</td>
<td>The following version of the question was used in 2017: Module 27 The next two questions are about sexual orientation and gender identity. (1) Do you consider yourself to be: Please read: 1 Straight 2 Lesbian or gay 3 Bisexual Do not read: 4 Other 7 Don’t know/Not sure 9 Refused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Behavior</td>
<td>Currently no questions are asked in this category.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Gender Identity** | (M21.02) Do you consider yourself to be transgender?  
1 Yes, Transgender, male-to-female  
2 Yes, Transgender, female to male  
3 Yes, Transgender, gender nonconforming  
4 No  
7 Don’t know/not sure  
9 Refused | This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.  
The following version of the question was used in 2017:  
Module 27  
(2) Do you consider yourself to be transgender?  
Read:  
1 Yes, Transgender, male-to-female  
2 Yes, Transgender, female to male  
3 Yes, Transgender, gender nonconforming  
4 No  
7 Don’t know/not sure  
9 Refused  
The following version of the question was used in 2016 and 2015:  
Module 31  
(2) Do you consider yourself to be transgender?  
1 Yes, Transgender, male-to-female  
2 Yes, Transgender, female to male  
3 Yes, Transgender, gender nonconforming  
4 No  
7 Don’t know/not sure  
9 Refused  
In 2014, the same version of the question was used as 2016, but it was located in Module 16. | |
| Household Relationships | Currently no questions are asked in this category. | Not applicable. |

**Response Rates**

The BRFSS reports response rates and cooperation rates by state and does not aggregate to national level. Response rate tables for the years that include SGM questions can be accessed using the links below.

**ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND**

**Organizations Involved**
The BRFSS is a collaborative project between all of the states in the U.S. and participating U.S. territories and the CDC.

**Survey Links**

*Questionnaires*
This source organizes the questionnaires by:
- Year, English Version.
- Year, Spanish Version.
- Optional Data Module by States.
- Optional Data Module by Category.

https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/index.htm

*Data*
Various data sets in different formats are available here: https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual_data/annual_2016.html

*General Information*
All information on the BRFSS can be found on CDC’s BRFSS website: http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/

*References*

