

# 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

Year	Module	Data Source	States
2014	16: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Combined Land Line and Cell Phone data	Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Guam
2015	21: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Combined Land Line and Cell Phone data	Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin
2016	21: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Combined Land Line and Cell Phone data	California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin

### SGM-Related Survey Questions

#### Survey

The question below is asked of all BRFSS respondents

Category	Question	Question History
Sexual Identity	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Sexual Attraction	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Sexual Behavior	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Gender Identity	(C08.01) Format 1 What is your sex?	This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.

	<p>Format 2</p> <p>What was your sex at birth?</p> <p>Read if format 2 is selected:</p> <p>1 Male</p> <p>2 Female</p> <p>Do not read:</p> <p>7 Don't know / Not sure</p> <p>9 Refused</p> <p>States may adopt one of the two formats of the question. If second format is used, read options.</p>	<p>The following version of the question was used in 2017 and 2016:</p> <p>(8.1) Are you...</p> <p>1 Male</p> <p>2 Female</p> <p>9 Refused</p> <p>The following version of the question was used from 1984–2015:</p> <p>Indicate sex of respondent. Ask only if necessary.</p> <p>1 Male</p> <p>2 Female</p>
Household Relationships	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.

### ***Optional Module***

The questions below are asked in the optional SOGI module.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Question History</b>
Sexual Identity	<p>(M21.01a)</p> <p>Ask if Sex= 1</p> <p>Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?</p> <p>1 = Gay</p> <p>2 = Straight, that is, not gay</p> <p>3 = Bisexual</p> <p>4 = Something else</p> <p>7 = I don't know the answer</p> <p>9 = Refused</p> <p>(M21.01b)</p> <p>Ask if Sex=2</p> <p>Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?</p> <p>1 = Lesbian or Gay</p> <p>2 = Straight, that is, not gay</p> <p>3 = Bisexual</p> <p>4 = Something else</p> <p>7 = I don't know the answer</p> <p>9 = Refused</p>	<p>This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.</p> <p>The following version of the question was used in 2017:</p> <p>Module 27</p> <p>The next two questions are about sexual orientation and gender identity.</p> <p>(1) Do you consider yourself to be:</p> <p>Please read:</p> <p>1 Straight</p> <p>2 Lesbian or gay</p> <p>3 Bisexual</p> <p>Do not read:</p> <p>4 Other</p> <p>7 Don't know/Not sure</p> <p>9 Refused</p> <p>In 2016 and 2015, the same version of the question was used as 2017, but it was located Module 21.</p> <p>In 2014, the same version of the question was used as 2017, but it was located in Module 16.</p>
Sexual Attraction	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.

Sexual Behavior	Currently no questions are asked in this category.	Not applicable.
Gender Identity	<p>(M21.02) Do you consider yourself to be transgender?</p> <p>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</p>	<p>This is the current version of the question and was used in 2018.</p> <p>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  Do not read:  7 Don't know/not sure  9 Refused</p> <p>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</p> <p>In 2014, the same version of the question was used as 2016, but it was located in Module 16.</p>
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.

- BRFSS Combined Landline and Cell Phone Weighted Response Rates by Applicable State- 2015: [https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual\\_data/2015/2015\\_responserates.html](https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual_data/2015/2015_responserates.html)

- BRFSS Combined Landline and Cell Phone Weighted Response Rates by Applicable State- 2016: [https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual\\_data/2016/pdf/2016\\_ResponseRates\\_Table.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/annual_data/2016/pdf/2016_ResponseRates_Table.pdf)

## 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](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

American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys. (2016). [http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR\\_Main/media/publications/Standard-Definitions20169theditionfinal.pdf](http://www.aapor.org/AAPOR_Main/media/publications/Standard-Definitions20169theditionfinal.pdf)

Center for American Progress. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data Collection in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Center for American Progress. (2016). <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/reports/2016/03/29/134182/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-data-collection-in-the-behavioral-risk-factor-surveillance-system/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Division of Population Health. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. <http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/about/index.htm>

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH). United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Developing Better Information. (2015). <http://www.hhs.gov/programs/topic-sites/lgbt/better-information/index.html>