

# **Developing survey questions on sexual identity:**

## **Report on National Statistics Omnibus Trial 4**

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# Background Notes

## The National Statistics Omnibus survey

The Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics. Interviewing is carried out every month and each month's questionnaire covers a variety of topics, reflecting different users' requirements.

Interviews are conducted with approximately 1,200 adults (aged 16 or over) in private households in Great Britain each month. A random probability sample is drawn from the Postcode Address File of small users; all private household addresses in Great Britain are included in this frame. In households with more than one adult member, just one person aged 16 or over is selected at random for interview. The primary mode of interviewing is CAPI<sup>1</sup> but CASI<sup>2</sup> is used for questions which are sensitive so that the respondent can answer in privacy.

## Presentation of data

The row or column percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Small bases are associated with relatively high sampling errors and this affects the reliability of estimates. In general, percentage distribution is shown if the base is 50 or more.

## Sampling error

Since the data in this report were obtained from a sample of the population, they are subject to sampling error. The Omnibus survey has a multi-stage sample design, and this has been taken into account when identifying statistically significant differences in the report.

Any differences mentioned in the report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, unless otherwise stated. Sampling errors and design effects were calculated for age or sex comparisons and were usually between 1.0 and 1.2. For other comparisons, an estimated design effect of 1.2 was used.

## Weighting the data

Weighting factors are applied to Omnibus data to correct for unequal probability of selection caused by interviewing only one adult per household. The weighting system also adjusts for some non-response bias by calibrating the Omnibus sample to ONS population totals. The weighting ensures that the weighted sample distribution across regions and across age-sex groups matches that in the population.

All proportions presented in this report are weighted unless otherwise specified. The unweighted bases are also shown to give an indication of the precision of the estimates.

## Estimates of the LGB population in Great Britain

The ONS is conducting ongoing development work to provide reliable estimates of the proportion of the population who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. The results published in this report form part of this development process. They are responses to the specific question being tested in this round of the Omnibus Survey and cannot be interpreted as official estimates of the LGB community. Once the development work is complete, it is intended that a question on sexual identity will be added to the Integrated Household Survey (IHS). First estimates from the IHS will be released as 'experimental' statistics and, subject to evaluation for reliability and robustness, released as official statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing, that is face-to-face interviewing where the interviewer keys responses straight onto a computer.

<sup>2</sup> Computer Assisted Self Interviewing, that is the respondent reads the question and keys their own responses onto the computer.

## Executive summary

The ONS sexual identity project was established in 2006 to meet user requirements for information on sexual identity. Central to the projects aims is the development of questioning in relation to sexual identity that can be used on social surveys.

Building on previous trials, trial four had three main objectives:

- To test two different versions of the question in a split sample trial.
- To gauge any effect of moving to a CAPI concealed showcard system of administration from a mainly CASI method of administration.
- To investigate what effect removing a ‘prefer not to say’ response option from the question had on the data.

It is worth noting that a small percentage of interviews on the Omnibus Survey are administered by telephone where face to face contact is not possible. The overall mode of administration of the question was intended to maintain privacy if the respondent was being interviewed in the presence of other people.

### ***Assessment of two versions of question wording***

Two different versions of the question were tested in a split sample trial. The question differed only in terms of the question stem, with the mode of administration and the response categories remaining the same.

***Question A:** Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself? (Heterosexual / Straight; Gay / Lesbian; Bisexual; Other)*

***Question B:** ‘Looking at this card, which of these do you consider yourself to be? (Heterosexual / Straight; Gay / Lesbian; Bisexual; Other)*

Both versions of the question were the result of development work conducted prior to the trial. Version (A) was the wording preferred by focus group participants. Version (B) had been refined and tested in previous trials.

A comparison of the data from the two arms of the trial showed no significant differences: both the proportion of respondents choosing any of the response categories and the overall item non-response rates were similar.

Since no measurable differences were found between the two versions of the question stem it is recommended that question A - the preferred wording of the focus group participants- should be used in the prototype question and progress into the final piloting phase.

## ***Mode of administration***

Previous trials had been conducted using a predominantly CASI (computer assisted self interviewing) mode of administration in which respondents were handed the laptop and asked to key in the answer themselves, thereby maintaining privacy of response. Where this was impracticable, such as when respondents could not use a laptop or were unable to self complete using a laptop, in trials one and two interviewers were instructed to skip the question whereas in trial three interviewers were required to administer the question directly by reading the question aloud (if privacy was assured), and record the response in the normal way. These trials had shown that the CASI mode of administration interrupted the flow of the interview and made the sexual identity question ‘stand-out’ as being different from similar self-defined social identity questions (eg. ethnicity, religion).

In the fourth trial, therefore, the mode of administration was revised to be interviewer administered (CAPI) using a concealed showcard system, whereby the interviewer reads out the question and then hands each respondent a unique showcard. Each showcard contained four response options: *Heterosexual / Straight; Gay / Lesbian; Bisexual; Other*, with a sequence of letters associated with each category. The respondent was asked to simply read out the letter on the showcard associated with their response. Although the Omnibus survey interviews just one adult in the household, the concealed showcard system was trialled to assess acceptability and identify problems in implementation before piloting it in a standard concurrent interviewing environment where more than one person is interviewed at the same time. In multi-person households, it is intended that each respondent will be given a separate showcard and the sequence of letters in each showcard will be unique thereby ensuring that privacy is maintained within the household during concurrent interviewing.

Response distributions were compared across trials to gauge the possibility of any mode effect from the move from CASI to CAPI. The proportion of respondents reporting ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’ or ‘other’ identities was not found to be significantly different from previous trials. However an increase in those reporting heterosexual identity when compared with previous trials was found to be statistically significant. For example 96.8 per cent of respondents reported a heterosexual identity in trial four compared with 95.1 per cent in trial three.

Differences in heterosexual prevalence rates between trial four and previous trials are not thought to be the result of mode effects since it is likely that any mode effect would be distributed across response categories rather than affecting only the heterosexual response category. The increase in heterosexual response is more likely a result of dropping the ‘prefer not to say’ response option which is considered below.

## ***Dropping the ‘prefer not to say’ response option***

In the first three trials an additional (fifth) ‘prefer not to say’ option was presented to respondents primarily as a means for them to enter a valid response (if they did not wish to answer the question or objected to the question in any way) before moving forward to

answer the remaining questions in the interview. In trial four the use of a concealed showcard enabled the 'prefer not to say' option to be dropped entirely as a respondent's spontaneous refusal to answer the question could be coded in the normal way by the interviewer.

Comparison with previous trial results revealed a significant reduction in unusable data (i.e either 'prefer not to say' in trial 1-3 or 'don't know' and refusal in trial four) from 2.4 per cent in trial three to 1.0 per cent in trial four. Dropping the 'prefer not to say' option had therefore been successful in reducing item non-response since respondents had chosen from the remaining response options rather than spontaneously refusing the question. However, as reported above, results also indicated a rise in the heterosexual / straight response category. This was not unexpected since analysis of those electing to 'prefer not to say' in trial two had shown that this group were primarily heterosexual.

## ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings of this trial, it is recommended that the following elements are taken forward into the final piloting stage:

- a) **the question:** Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself?
- b) **response categories:** the 'prefer not to say' response option is dropped resulting in four remaining categories - *Heterosexual / Straight; Gay / Lesbian; Bisexual; Other*
- c) **administration:** face-to-face interviewing in household (CAPI) using concealed showcard system of administration

# 1. Introduction

Over the past forty years equality legislation has grown in the UK with the aim of achieving an equal and fair society for all. With the introduction of the 2007 Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations<sup>i</sup> it is now illegal to discriminate on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation in addition to gender, age, disability, ethnicity and religion.

The ONS initiated the Sexual Identity Project in 2006<sup>ii</sup> recognising the emerging need for information on sexual identity: for statistical evidence to support the legislation; and the need for a harmonised measure of sexual identity. The project has three main aims:

- To develop questioning on sexual identity that can be used on social surveys and for equality monitoring purposes.
- To test such questioning, and implement it on the core of the new ONS Integrated Household Survey (IHS)  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=936&Pos=&ColRank=1&Rank=192> (link IHS web page).
- To provide guidance for those wishing to use the questioning for their own purposes and those wishing to use the post-implementation data.

Prior to this report, three previous trials had taken place on the ONS Omnibus survey as part of the development of a question on sexual identity. The first two trials took place between July and December 2006<sup>iii</sup> and the third between July and August 2007<sup>iv</sup>. These trials had variously tested the location of the question, administration in a CASI environment, question wording and the order of response categories.

In addition to the quantitative trials, focus groups had also been conducted with members of the public to gauge people's understanding of the concept of sexual identity, appropriate use of language and terminology and acceptable ways of administering the question in a household survey environment.

This report builds on the findings of the previous work and presents an analysis of data from the fourth and final quantitative test conducted on the ONS Omnibus survey between November 2007 and January 2008. The report makes recommendations on the development of a prototype question for use in the final testing phase which includes a large scale quantitative pilot on the General Lifestyle Survey (GLF).



## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Split sample trial

Two versions of the question were administered in a split sample experiment. Half the sample was presented with question ‘A’ and half with question ‘B’. Allocation between the two arms of the trial was random and based on address numbers within interviewer quotas to eliminate any interviewer and area effects.

The formats and wording of the questions are shown below:

A.) Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself? Please just read out the letter next to the description.

(letter) Heterosexual / Straight

(letter) Gay / Lesbian

(letter) Bisexual

(letter) Other

B.) Looking at this card, which of these do you consider yourself to be? Please just read out the letter next to the description.

(letter) Heterosexual / Straight

(letter) Gay / Lesbian

(letter) Bisexual

(letter) Other

Question ‘A’ was the preferred wording of focus group participants conducted with members of the public.<sup>v</sup> Participants remarked that the wording ‘best describes how you think of yourself’ reflected better the concept of sexual identity and was an ‘open’ and ‘softer’ form of question than question ‘B’ which had been used in previous trials. Focus group participants also commented that question ‘A’ recognised the fluidity of a person’s sexual identity which may change in different contexts and over time. It was also believed that question ‘A’ gave respondents more time to consider the question as it was less direct than ‘...do you consider yourself to be’ which appeared to be more labelling and implied a mutual exclusivity.

### 2.2 Mode of administration

In trial four the administration of the question moved from a mixed CASI/CAPI mode used in trial three to a CAPI concealed showcard system. It was important to trial a mode of administration that both protected the respondent’s privacy and ensured that the mode of administration fitted in with the usual practice for similar questions so that the sexual identity question did not stand out.

The questions were tested in a concealed show card system of administration in a pseudo concurrent interviewing environment. Since the Omnibus Survey interview is conducted with only one adult per household it is not a concurrent interview environment (where all interviewees in a house are interviewed at the same time); whereas most ONS household surveys (including the IHS) interview all adult members of the household together at the same time. Using a selection of showcards as if several respondents were interviewed at the same time, the trial attempted to replicate as closely as possible a concurrent interview.

### **2.2.1 Mixed mode CASI/CAPI**

In general, a CASI mode of administration is used in surveys questioning on a sensitive topic, such as the use of contraception in the General Lifestyle Survey (GLF). Interviewers normally introduce the topic to respondents and ask whether they would prefer to answer the questions themselves using the laptop (CASI) or continue with the interview in the normal manner (CAPI).

If the respondent requests to use the laptop the interviewer runs through a set of simple training questions with the respondent until both are satisfied with the respondent's proficiency. At this point the laptop is handed to the respondent until the required set of questions is answered. However, should the respondent decide to continue with the interview in the normal manner, the questions are simply read aloud and the response recorded by the interviewer.

The sexual identity question was administered solely in CASI in the first two trials, without the option of asking the question directly in CAPI. In trial three interviewers were allowed to ask the question in CAPI where respondents were unable to use the laptop and privacy was assured. In previous trials a number of problems were identified with the administration of the sexual identity question.

1. As the sexual identity question was located alongside other identity questions administered using showcards in CAPI, interviewers reported that unnecessary attention was being drawn to the sexual identity question when administered in CASI. Interviewers also felt that in many instances the question could have been asked directly.
2. As the sexual identity question was administered on its own in CASI the amount of time allocated to the question (and the training of the respondent) was reported as being too burdensome by some interviewers.
3. In CASI respondents are required to key in the response themselves. The system therefore requires the addition of a 'prefer not to say' response category for those wishing to refuse the question. Although only a small proportion of respondents refused the question, 2.4 per cent in trial three, this was still more than the combined response for those selecting lesbian, gay and bisexual identities which were 1.9 per cent in the same trial.
4. Although the majority of respondents elected to use the laptop themselves, in nearly a third of interviews (31 per cent in trial three) respondents were asked the

- question directly if confidentiality was assured. This is not problematic on the Omnibus Survey where only one respondent per household is interviewed. However in most general purpose household surveys interviews take place concurrently with all adult household members together. In such instances confidentiality cannot be assured and makes direct questioning difficult.
5. The CASI/CAPI method of administration also incorporated a ‘section refused’ option which interviewers coded in instances where they considered it inappropriate to administer the question such as instances where privacy was likely to be compromised (such as the presence of other people). The coverage of the sexual identity question was therefore inadequate when administered in CASI.

### **2.2.2 CAPI concealed showcard administration**

General purpose surveys have used showcards on sensitive questions for many years, and have a proven track record for eliciting valid responses. Respondents are simply handed cards detailing the response options available to them for a particular question, and asked to either respond to the question by reading out the response option itself, or a number associated with each response.

In situations where a respondent is being interviewed alone, showcards can ensure privacy. However, where respondents are interviewed together (concurrent interviews) if the same showcard is used then privacy and confidentiality are compromised. To address this issue and ensure confidentiality within the household environment, a concealed showcard system was developed for questioning on sexual identity. In the concealed show card system of administration each respondent is given a unique card with identical response options available to them; however in this instance the combination of numbers associated with the response options are exclusive to the card and hence the respondent.

For example in the case of two members of a household being interviewed together the question and showcards administered are as follows:

*(Question- read out by interviewer)* Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself? Please just read out the number next to the description.

#### **Person 1**

*(Showcard 1)*

- 15 Heterosexual / Straight
- 10 Gay / Lesbian
- 17 Bisexual
- 16 Other

#### **Person 2**

*(Showcard 21)*

- 25 Heterosexual / Straight
- 21 Gay / Lesbian
- 29 Bisexual
- 22 Other

In preparation for the GLF pilot where concurrent interviewing in multi person households is the norm, the CAPI concealed showcard system was developed and tested in the fourth trial.

### ***2.3 Instructions to interviewers***

As commonly practised on ONS household surveys interviewers were instructed that spontaneous 'don't know' and 'refusal' answers should be coded using special key strokes on the laptop. In this manner refusals are entered by pressing 'Cntrl' and 'R' together, and 'don't know' responses by pressing the 'Cntrl' and 'K' keys. This is only administered where respondents verbally state they cannot give a response, or refuse to answer the question.

Interviewers were also given the opportunity to record their observations on acceptability, respondent reactions, and on the administration of the sexual identity question for each interview.

Since the concealed showcard administration was new to interviewers, training was provided.

### 3 Results

The test results are split into four sections:

- 1) An examination of the response differences between the two questions stems used in the split sample trial.
- 2) An examination of the impact of the move to a CAPI mode of administration using concealed showcards.
- 3) An examination of the effect of dropping the ‘prefer not to say option’.
- 4) Other general findings and observations.

#### 3.1 Response distributions

In both arms of the split sample experiment, the questions were administered in CAPI using concealed showcards. A full description of the options available to the respondent and the process by which the questions were administered is described in the methods section. For both questions the response options were: *Heterosexual/Straight, Gay/Lesbian, Bisexual; Other.*

**Table 1: Comparison of response distributions between the two question stems**

Response options	Question stem A ‘Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself?’	Question stem B ‘Looking at this card, which of the following do you consider yourself to be?’
	%	%
Heterosexual / Straight	97.2	96.3
Gay / Lesbian	0.9	0.8
Bisexual	0.4	0.9
Other	0.5	0.8
Don’t know	0.2	0.9
Refused	0.7	0.3
<i>Base=100%</i>	<i>1731</i>	<i>1698</i>

Notes: Weighted percentages and unweighted bases shown

Four cases of missing data (where data was not entered or interviewer comments were not made) were excluded from Table 1

Results show no significant difference between the two question stems in terms of the proportion describing themselves as Heterosexual/Straight (97.2 per cent, 96.3 per cent), Gay/Lesbian (0.9 per cent, 0.8 per cent), Bisexual (0.4 per cent, 0.9 per cent), Other (0.5 per cent, 0.8 per cent). There is also no difference between the two questions in terms of overall non-response when the combined ‘refusal’ and ‘don’t know’ categories are considered (0.9 per cent compared with 1.2 per cent). No significant difference existed between the proportion of respondents refusing to answer the two questions. However, there was a significant difference in the proportion of respondents who gave a ‘don’t

know' response to the questions (0.2 per cent and 0.9 per cent, respectively). Given there is no statistical difference in the overall non-response rates in the two arms, the small differences in the distribution of non-response between the two categories 'don't know' and 'refused' is insufficient evidence to make the case that one question performed better than the other in reducing non-response.

As differences in response distributions and non-response rates between the two questions were small, the recommendation on whether question A or B should progress into the prototype question for piloting was made on supplementary evidence gathered in the focus groups. Participants in the focus groups preferred the wording of question A "Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself?" as it was thought to better reflect the concept of sexual identity, was more 'open' and 'softer' and recognised the fluidity of identity over time and in different environments.

### ***3.2 Assessment of the working of the concealed showcard system***

Interviewers had been asked to record their comments on acceptability, respondent reactions, and the administration of the sexual identity question for each interview. The concealed showcard system of administration is in part assessed by using this information to ascertain how far interviewer's previous concerns have been addressed. Potential mode effects were assessed by comparing the distribution of responses in this trial against previous trials where a predominantly CASI mode of administration was used.

#### **3.2.1 Administration**

Several areas of concern had been identified by interviewers in previous trials over the administration of the question in CASI which the new CAPI system with concealed showcards was developed and trialled to mitigate.

##### ***Attention to the question***

In previous trials interviewers had commented that the CASI mode of administration had drawn unwarranted attention to the question. In trial four none of the interviewers mentioned concealed showcards drawing unnecessary attention to the question. This was not unexpected since the question on sexual identity sat alongside other identity questions which also employed showcards, such as national identity and ethnicity.

##### ***Reduction in the amount of time allocated to the question***

Interviewers had previously noted that the amount of time allocated to the question was burdensome. It was hoped that the use of concealed show cards would reduce the amount of time allocated to the question and thus reduce interviewer and respondent burden. Interviewers made no adverse comments in respect to the amount of time it took to administer the question, and therefore the use of showcards seemed effective in reducing interviewer and respondent burden.

### **Increased privacy and administration of the question**

In trials one and two interviewers were instructed to only administer the question in CASI and to skip the sexual identity question in these types of situations: if privacy was not assured; if the respondent was not thought capable of using the laptop; or if the respondent was unwilling to self complete using the laptop. As a result interviewers skipped the question in 15 per cent of cases in trial one and 14 per cent in trial two. In the third trial a less cautious approach was taken with interviewers instructed to administer the question directly in CAPI if privacy was assured and the respondent was unable to use the laptop. In trial three the question was skipped in 2.4 per cent of interviewers.

In trial four the showcard system meant that the question could be administered in private in most instances. The only exceptions were where respondents were unable to read or where an interpreter was required. In all, only four cases were recorded in the trial of the question not being administered. The use of the concealed showcard was therefore successful in effectively reducing to a tolerable level the number of instances where the question could not be administered. Furthermore, interviewers commented that they had few concerns over privacy issues with the concealed showcard system of administration.

### **3.2.2 Mode effects**

A comparison of the percentage distribution of responses to the sexual identity question across trials is presented in Table 2 to gauge what effect the move to the CAPI concealed show card system of administration from previous modes had on the data.

**Table 2 Responses to the sexual identity questions across trials**

	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Trial 1, 2 and 3 combined	Trial 4
	CASI	CASI	CASI (some CAPI)	CASI	CAPI
	%	%	%	%	%
Heterosexual or Straight	92.0	96.8	95.1	94.7	96.8
Gay or Lesbian	1.3	0.8	1.2	1.1	0.9
Bisexual	1.2	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7
Other	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.7
Prefer not to say	4.6	1.5	2.4	2.8	-
Don't know	-	-	-	-	0.5
Refusal	-	-	-	-	0.5
	2126	1907	2389	6422	3429

Notes: Weighted percentages and unweighted bases shown

Four cases of missing data (where data was not entered or interviewer comments were not made) were excluded from the table.

There were no significant differences between previous trials and the trial four in the proportion of respondents describing themselves as gay or lesbian, bisexual or other. However a higher proportion of respondents described themselves as heterosexual in trial four (96.8 per cent) compared with trial one (92.0 per cent). This was likely to be due to inclusion of the word 'straight' next to the heterosexual response options in trials two to four, which may have improved understanding of that option. Compared to trial three (95.1 per cent) the proportion of respondents described themselves as heterosexual in trial four was significantly higher (96.8 per cent). However it is unlikely that such differences can be ascribed to mode effects, since changes directly attributable to a change in mode would have impacted on all the response options rather than heterosexual responses alone.

### **3.3 Dropping the 'prefer not to say' response option**

Table 2 shows the percentage of respondents who chose the 'prefer not to say' response option in the first three trials compared with the replacement 'don't know' and 'refusal' categories in trial four. Even though this is not a fair comparison of non-response given the considerable number of instances in which the interviewer had skipped the question in the first three trials, non-response in trial four (1.0 per cent) was significantly lower than the previous three trials (2.9 per cent overall). It is evident that dropping the 'prefer not to say' response option was clearly effective in reducing non-response.

The corresponding rise in the proportion of respondents reporting heterosexual identity in trial four compared to trial three is believed to have resulted from a decrease in non-response caused by dropping the 'prefer not to say' option. After trial two, follow up interviews had been conducted over the telephone with a purposive sample of 19 respondents, 15 of whom had selected the 'prefer not to say' option. All those who confirmed during the follow-up interviews that they had selected 'prefer not to say' either stated or implied that they were heterosexual.

### **3.4 Other findings**

#### **3.4.1 Reasons for non-response**

Of the 17 respondents who refused to answer the question in trial four, 10 were recorded as 'OK' by the interviewer, with no information recorded in a further two instances. Of the remaining five, only one interviewer recorded a problem, as follows:

*'Very difficult did not see the need or relevance of the question'*

Fifteen responses were recorded as 'don't know'. For most, interviewers recorded no problems with the process. However interviewers recorded five instances where difficulties existed in relation to the conceptual understanding or acceptance of the question due to religious/cultural belief or due to difficulties in translating the concept into another language. For example:



*‘English not first language she did not understand the terms on the card’*

*“I left the question as answered unknown, but did explain the meanings of the terms with which he was unfamiliar”*

### 3.4.2 Comparing item non-response between equality strands

Table 3 compares the percentage of those who did not respond (item non-response) to the sexual identity question with item non-response to other equality questions included in trial four of the Omnibus survey. These were ethnicity, national identity and limiting long standing illness. This shows that a higher proportion of respondents did not answer the sexual identity question (1.05 per cent) compared to other equality measures (range 0.0 to 0.20 per cent). These findings suggest that respondents were much more reluctant to answer the question on sexual identity. This could be for a variety of reasons including sensitivity of the topic and problems with comprehension.

**Table 3: Comparison of item non-response rates across equality strands**

Responses to question	Ethnicity	National identity	Limiting long standing illness	Sexual identity
Number of responses	99.96	100.00	99.80	98.95
item non-response	0.04	0.00	0.20	1.05
Base=100%	3433	3433	3433	3429*

Note: Weighted percentages unweighted bases

\*Four cases of missing data (where data was not entered or interviewer comments were not made) were excluded from the table

### 3.4.3 Interviewer comments

Most interviewers recorded that there was no problems or concerns regarding privacy or administration of the question. The majority stating ‘ok’ or ‘no problem with showcard’ or ‘read as written’.

Other interviewers commented that the showcard was:

*‘So so, concerns about confidentiality of respondent. with presence of family member, parent’*

*‘Five cards is a pain and the ‘privacy’ idea can’t work with such bold print!’*

*‘Give show card to respondent, both (interviewer and respondent) aware of code letters i.e. not confidential.’*

### **3.4.3 Telephone Unit**

Thirty eight interviews were conducted by telephone in trial four and the sexual identity question was asked in each one. Of these, 23 respondents were asked question A. Only one of these respondents refused to answer the question. Fifteen respondents were asked question B. None of these respondents refused to answer the question.

There were very few reported problems and interviewers mostly commented that the interview was 'ok'.

## 4 Recommendations

- **To use the question wording developed from focus group discussions as the prototype question.**

As there was no significant difference between the question stems, it is recommended that the preferred wording of the focus group participants should be taken forward for the prototype question (Question A):

“Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself? Please just read out the letter next to the description.”

- **To remove the ‘prefer not to say’ category from the response options.**

Since there was a significant reduction in unusable data (i.e. item non-response and ‘prefer not to say’ in trial four compared to previous trials, it is recommended that the ‘prefer not to say’ category is removed from the prototype question.

- **To administer the question using CAPI and a concealed showcard system for the trial in the General Household Survey**

In the fourth trial the mode of administration was revised to a CAPI concealed showcard system. To test for possible mode effects arising from a move from CASI to CAPI responses were compared with previous trials. Only the proportion responding heterosexual showed any significant increase compared to trial three which used the same substantive question and response categories. This is most likely to be the effect of removing the ‘prefer not to say’ response option.

As the CAPI mode of administration reduced interviewer burden in terms of the time taken to administer the question and the concealed showcard system was effective in maintaining privacy, it is recommended that this system is used in subsequent piloting of the question in field trials.

## 5 References

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<sup>i</sup> Hand C, Betts P (2008). 'Developing survey questions on sexual identity: The legislative context'. Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/sexual-identity-project/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Wilmot A (2007) 'In search of a question on sexual identity'- paper presented at the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the American Association of Public Opinion Research, May 2007. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-eequality/sexual-identity/question-development.asp>

<sup>iii</sup> Taylor T (2008). Developing survey questions on sexual identity: Report on National Statistics Omnibus Survey trials 1 and 2. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-eequality/sexual-identity/question-testing.asp>

<sup>iv</sup> Taylor T, Ralph K (2008). Developing survey questions on sexual identity: Report on National Statistics Omnibus Survey trials 3. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-eequality/sexual-identity/question-testing.asp>

<sup>v</sup> Betts P, Wilmot A, Taylor T (2008). Developing survey questions on sexual identity: Exploratory Focus Groups. Available at: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/about/data/measuring-eequality/sexual-identity/question-testing.asp>