



# MEASURING SEXUAL IDENTITY



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for Health Statistics**

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# NCHS Staff

- NSFG

- Anjani Chandra
- Casey Copen
- Bill Mosher
- Catlainn Sionean

- QDRL

- Heather Ridolfo
- Kristen Miller
- Aaron Maitland

- NHIS

- Marcie Cynamon
- Jim Dahlhamer
-

# Background

- Need to better understand health of sexual minority groups
- Some evidence of health disparities

# Challenges to researching sexual minority health

- Conceptual Complexity
  - Sexual identity
  - Sexual attraction
  - Sexual behavior
- Fluidity of identity
- Comprehension of terms
- Commonality of terms
- Population subgroup differences
- Survey design
  - Context of questions
  - Incorporation into ongoing survey
  - Consideration of future survey changes

## Results Thus Far

- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)
- National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)
- Questionnaire Design Research Laboratory (QDRL)

# NHANES Results

- 2001-2008 NHANES
  - High rates of missing data in comparison to the target group (something else, not sure, don't know, refused and don't know responses)
  - Unevenly distributed across population
    - Higher among low education
    - Higher among minority population

# NSFG Results

- 2002 NSFG
  - High rates of missing data in comparison to the target group (something else, refused, and don't know responses)
- 2006-2008 NSFG
  - Significantly improved question wording
  - Lower rates of missing data
  - Still high rates of missing in some populations
    - Lowest educational level
    - Spanish speaking, especially women

# QDRL Preparation of NHIS Questions

- Observational study of interviews
- 130 Cognitive Interviews
  - Developed questions
  - Developed ACASI procedures



**The Washington Post**

## **Main federal health survey will ask about sexual orientation, gender identity**

**By David Brown,**

**Published: June 29**

The Department of Health and Human Services will start asking questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in its flagship survey of the health of the American population. Starting in 2013, the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) will include questions about sexual orientation along with those covering health insurance, usual site of medical care, vaccination, obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption and many other topics. Sometime later, questions about gender identity — a more complicated subject — will be added. “We are taking critical steps toward ensuring the collection of useful national data on minority groups, including for the first time, LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] populations,” Kathleen Sebelius, the Health and Human Services secretary, said in a statement.