

Identifying Sexual Orientation among Adult Spanish Speakers

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Background

- Prior research conducted by NORC on behalf of the Office of Enterprise Data and Analytics (OEDA) and the Office of Minority Health (OMH) at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)
- Key finding: Spanish speakers experienced comprehension problems with questions about sexual orientation

This study

- NORC conducted research at the request of the Office of Minority Health (OMH) at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the National Center for Health Statistics' (NCHS) Collaborating Center for Questionnaire Design and Evaluation Research (CCQDER)
- Goal: Explore the effectiveness of two alternative Spanish-language survey questions designed to measure sexual orientation

Background and prior research

([Stern et al. 2016](#))



Prior NORC research

- Cognitive interviews using current National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) sexual orientation measure to understand comprehension and answerability among Spanish-speaking individuals ([Stern et al. 2016](#))
 - Spanish speakers exhibited comprehension problems with sexual orientation question's response options
 - Term “heterosexual” was particularly problematic
 - Among Spanish-speaking respondents who struggled to comprehend this term, more than half stated “I don't know how to answer” or “something else.”

NHIS Measure of Sexual Orientation: English

Male respondents

Which of the following best represents how you think about yourself?

[SHOW CARD]

1. Gay
2. Straight, that is, not gay
3. Bisexual
4. Something else
5. I don't know how to answer

Female respondents

Which of the following best represents how you think about yourself?

[SHOW CARD]

1. Lesbian or Gay
2. Straight, that is, not lesbian or gay
3. Bisexual
4. Something else
5. I don't know how to answer

NHIS Measure of Sexual Orientation: Spanish

Male respondents

¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo?

[SHOW CARD]

1. Gay
2. **Heterosexual**, o sea, no gay
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

Female respondents

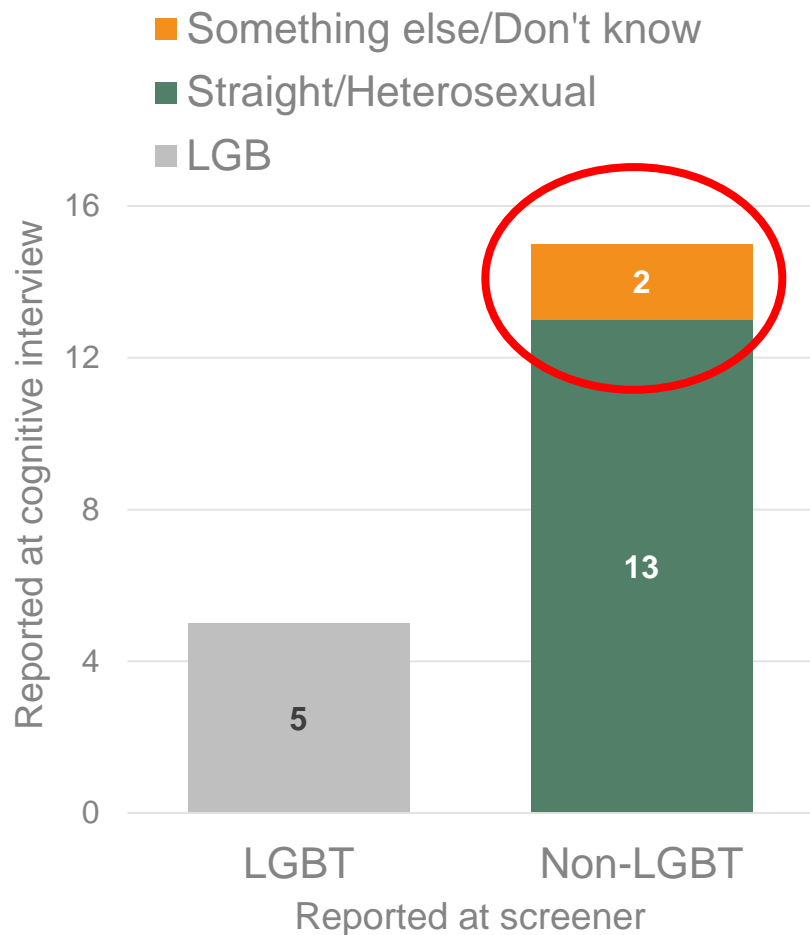
¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí misma?

[SHOW CARD]

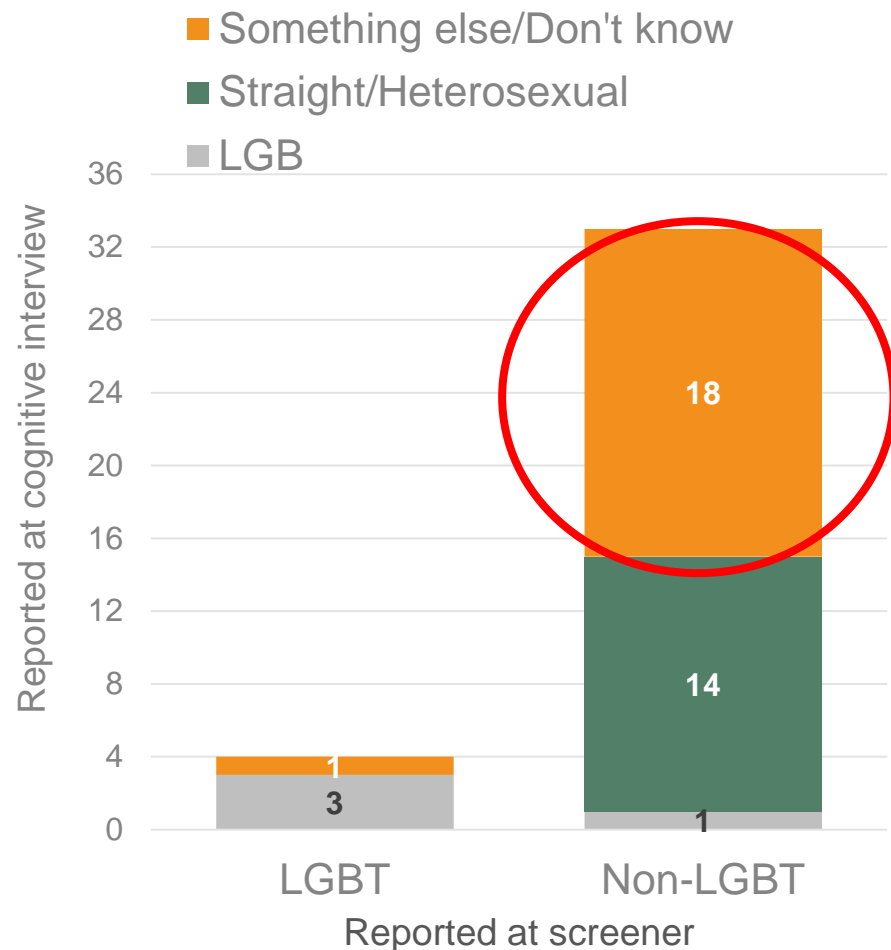
1. Lesbiana o Gay
2. **Heterosexual**, o sea, no gay o lesbiana
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

Discordance of sexual identity report in screener (yes/no LGBT status) vs. cognitive interview (NHIS measure)

English speaking Rs (N=20)



Spanish speaking Rs (N=37)



Recommended adjustment to Spanish version of NHIS sexual orientation response option # 2

	NHIS Current Version	Recommended version
English translation of Spanish response option		
Male	Heterosexual , that is, not gay	Not gay, that is, heterosexual
Female	Heterosexual , that is, not lesbian or gay	Not lesbian or gay, that is, heterosexual
Spanish		
Male	Heterosexual, o sea, no gay	No gay, o sea, heterosexual
Female	Heterosexual, o sea, no gay o lesbiana	No lesbiana o gay, o sea, heterosexual

Current study

(Milesi et al. 2017)



Eligibility and recruitment

- Eligible population: Adults 18 years or older who spoke Spanish as their primary language
- Multiple recruitment methods:
 - Non-for-profit community organization serving Hispanic community
 - Third party vendor
 - NORC researchers' personal networks
- Compensation: \$40
- Interviews conducted May 20-27, 2016 in Chicago, IL

Cognitive interviews

- Sample (n=39)
 - 24 women, 15 men
 - 37 median age
 - Wide range of nationalities
- 20 exposed to Version A and 19 to Version B
- In-person interview with NORC staff with experience in cognitive interviewing
- Interviews conducted in Spanish
- Abbreviated sections of current MCBS questionnaire
- Interviewer administered complete questionnaire and returned to LGBT items to conduct retrospective probing

Two alternative measures of sexual orientation

[English translation of Spanish version]

Version A

Which of the following best represents how you think about yourself? Gay; **not gay, that is, heterosexual**; bisexual; or something else?

1. Gay
2. **Not gay, that is, heterosexual**
[Female Rs: Not lesbian or gay, that is, heterosexual]
3. Bisexual
4. Something else
5. I don't know how to answer

Version B

Which of the following best represents how you think about yourself? Gay; **not gay**; bisexual; or something else?

1. Gay
2. **Not gay**
[Female Rs: Not lesbian or gay]
3. Bisexual
4. Something else
5. I don't know how to answer

Two alternative measures of sexual orientation

[Spanish version]

Version A

¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo? Gay; **no gay, o sea, heterosexual**; bisexual; u otra cosa?

1. Gay
2. **No gay, o sea, heterosexual**
[Female Rs: No lesbiana o gay, o sea, heterosexual]
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

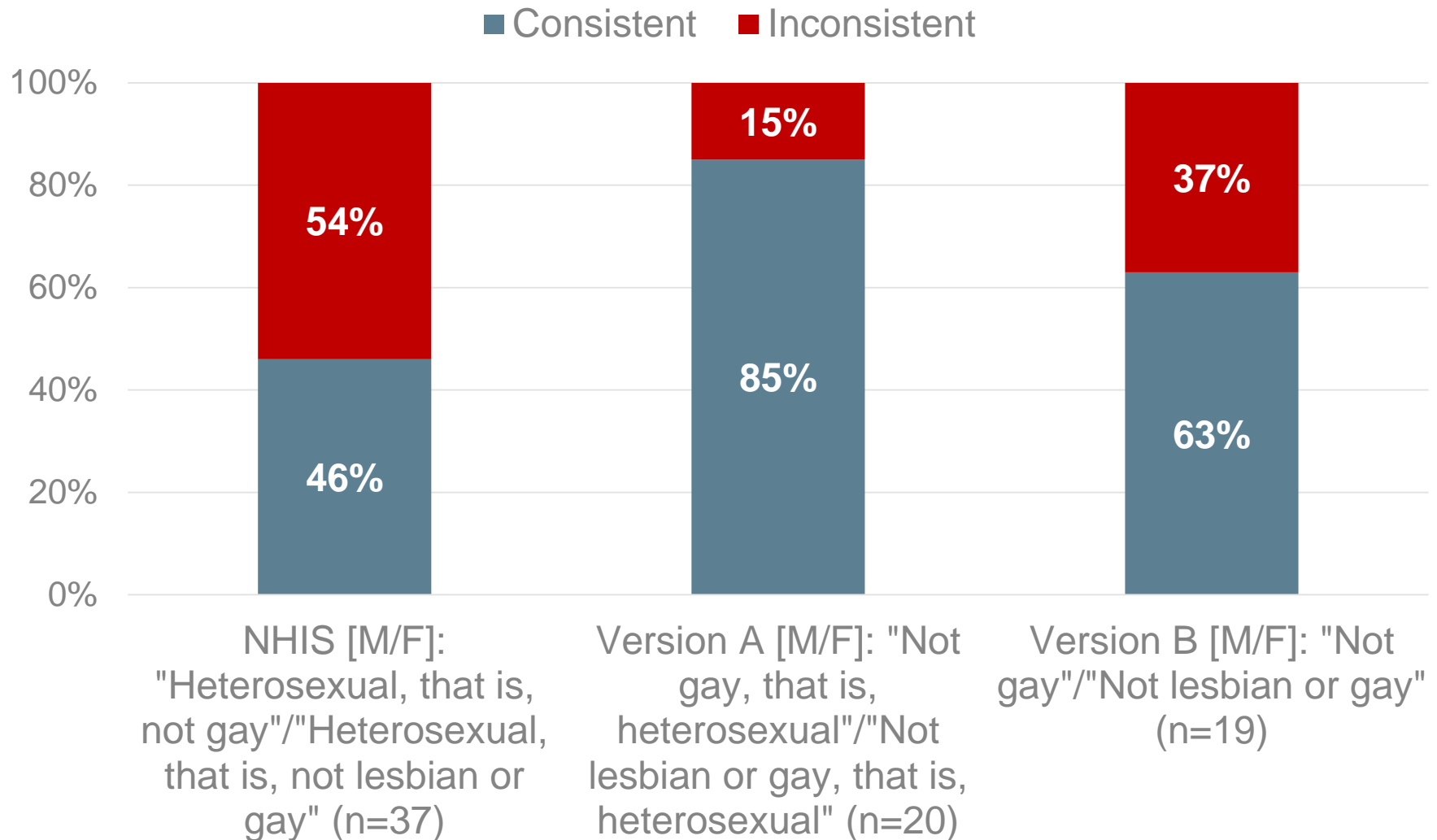
Version B

¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo? Gay; **no gay**; bisexual; u otra cosa?

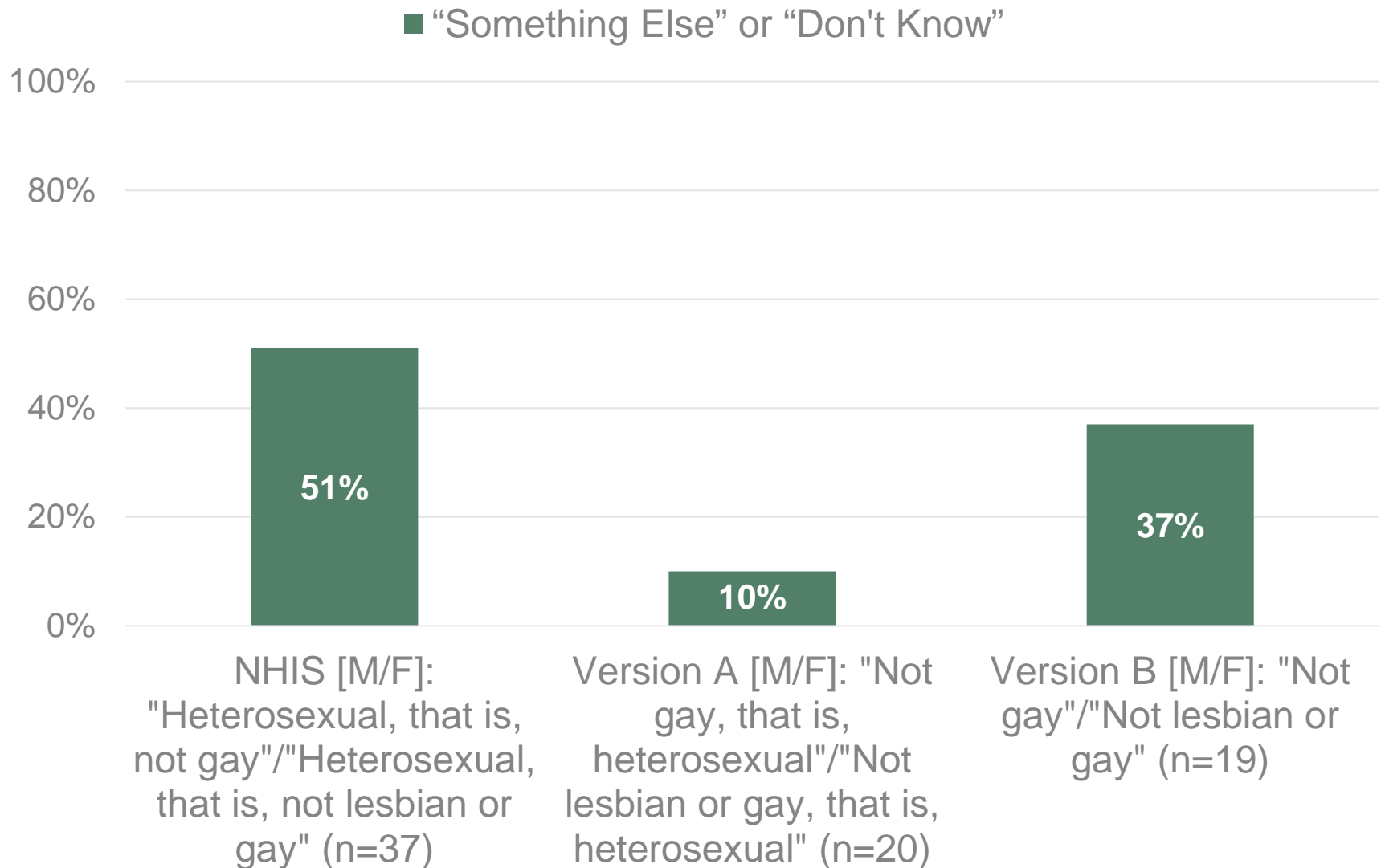
1. Lesbiana o gay
2. **No gay**
[Female Rs: No lesbiana o gay]
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

Results

Consistency in sexual orientation responses in screener and cognitive interview



Respondents' use of "Don't Know" or "Something Else"



Qualitative analysis of responses

- Conflation of sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Heterosexual sexual orientation as “normal”
- Discomfort with sexual orientation question
- Sexual orientation as a construct
 - Sexual orientation as a proxy for sexual attraction
 - Sexual orientation as a proxy for sexual behavior
- Limited or objectionable response options
- Comprehension problems with term “heterosexual”
- Version B respondents’ challenges regarding absence of term “heterosexual.”

Discussion



Summary

- Among Spanish speakers, reversing the order of phrases in the heterosexual response category (“not gay, that is, heterosexual”) performs better than current NHIS translation and elimination of term “heterosexual”. This question (“version A”):
 - reduces inconsistency between screener and interview responses reporting sexual orientation
 - reduces non-substantive responses such as “don’t know” and “something else”
 - seems less offensive than response option “not gay” or “not gay or lesbian”
- Version A performs better among respondents of different sexual orientations, gender, and education levels

Final recommendation

¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor representa su manera de pensar en sí mismo?

Male Rs

1. Gay
2. No gay, o sea, heterosexual
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

Female Rs

1. Lesbiana o gay
2. No lesbiana o gay, o sea, heterosexual
3. Bisexual
4. Otra cosa
5. No sé la respuesta

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Thank You!

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