

FEDERAL COMMITTEE ON STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY
MEASURING SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY RESEARCH GROUP

1. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) research group is to explore the best practices of the measurement of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in the context of Federal information collections.

2. BACKGROUND

Federal statistics on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are used to inform policy affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations in the United States. Accordingly, there is interest in improving the measurement of SOGI.

Although some Federal surveys have collected information describing LGBT populations for well over a decade, some aspects of SOGI have been more routinely measured, collected, and extensively studied than others. SOGI measures are one specific instance in which Federal statistical programs strive to produce relevant, accurate, and objective statistics while protecting participant confidentiality.

The collection of accurate SOGI survey data, however, does present a number of measurement and methodological challenges. The comparatively small population of LGBT persons in the United States suggests that relatively small sampling or reporting errors can lead to significant errors in description and estimation, requiring an emphasis on precision and accuracy in the measurement of SOGI. Furthermore, the constructs of gender identity and sexual orientation are becoming more fluid in the U.S. and some of the terms used by individuals to describe themselves are changing at a rapid rate. Finally, gender and sexuality can be sensitive topics, and the privacy and confidentiality of respondents and respondent data must be handled with care.

This research group will have the opportunity to build upon [three previously issued reports](#) from the Federal Interagency Working Group for Improving Measurement of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity¹ in its pursuit of precise, accurate and rigorous measures of SOGI.

3. SCOPE AND APPROACH

FCSM research groups provide ongoing opportunity for individuals interested in a particular aspect of statistical methods or data quality to interact, exchange information on the topic, and explore issues related to that topic. In addition, FCSM research groups develop research plans and create project teams to address particular aspects of those research plans. This FCSM research group will also serve as a resource for technical expertise and recommendations about the collection of SOGI in Federal information collections.

¹ The three previously issued reports include: 1) Current Measures of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys, 2016; 2) Evaluations of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Survey Measures: What Have We Learned?, 2016; and 3) Toward a Research Agenda for Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Federal Surveys: Findings, Recommendations, and Next Steps, 2016

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4. PROPOSED DELIVERABLES AND DATES

The SOGI FCSM research group will develop an annual report describing the research group's progress toward meeting its objective, including work products addressed in "Scope and Approach."

The SOGI FCSM research group will submit this report to the chair/co-chairs of the FCSM, for inclusion in a report to the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy and to the U.S. Chief Statistician.

The SOGI FCSM research group will also create a research plan, on a schedule set by its chair/co-chairs, and subject to approval by the chair/co-chairs of the FCSM.

5. SPONSOR

This FCSM research group serves under the auspices of the FCSM and is subject to direction from it. There must be regular contact with FCSM, either through an FCSM Member serving as a co-chair or a temporary FCSM membership for the Chair(s) of the research group, to be determined at the discretion of the FCSM co-chairs.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

At least one co-chair of this FCSM research group will be a FCSM member. This person will liaison with FCSM, providing regular, informal status reports to the sponsor.

The SOGI FCSM research group will decide how frequently it wishes to convene. It will use the MAX Federal Community, particularly FCSM's child page, as a way to communicate and to document materials.

7. GROUP MEMBERS

Membership of FCSM research groups is generally open to all interested career Federal personnel, generally comprised of individuals with expertise and interest in relevant statistical methods and the related subject matter. The chair/co-chairs will select from among the membership individuals to join specific research project teams, based on expertise.

8. FCSM CHAIR/CO-CHAIRS SIGNATURES