Methodological issues related to sensitive questions: a focus on sexual orientation and gender self-identification

Authors
Fazzi G., Liani S., Romano M.C., and Rosati S.
Context and goals of the first study

2011 Discrimination by gender, sexual orientation and ethnic origin

- to estimate the number of people who experienced discrimination at school and at work
- to investigate opinions and attitudes about gender roles, homosexuality and immigration
- to estimate the number of homosexual people

Phases of the research
1. Qualitative study (focus groups and in-depth interviews)
2. Pilot survey (1000 CATI interviews)
3. Core survey (7725 CAPI interviews + SAQ)
To guarantee each respondent’s privacy, we wrote sensitive questions about sexual orientation in a separate Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ).

The interviewer had to put envelope (A) in a second one (B) and apply a seal in the presence of the respondent. The respondent filled out the SAQ and gave it back to the interviewer in a envelope (A).
### Self-assessment on sexual orientation

**How do you define yourself today?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CATI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosex - bisex</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transsex</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosex</td>
<td>96.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another way</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reluctance to disclose**

- Social desirability/privacy
- Presence of the interviewer
- Selection effect
# Self-assessment on sexual orientation

**How do you define yourself today?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CATI</th>
<th>SAQ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosex - bisex</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transex</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosex</td>
<td>96.4</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another way</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reluctance to the disclosure**

- Social desirability/privacy
- Presence of the interviewer
- Selection effect
Selection effect: respondents by age

Methodological issues related to sensitive questions: A focus on sexual orientation and gender self-identification

Neuchâtel, Switzerland 15 – 17 May 2019
### Self-assessment on sexual orientation

**How do you define yourself today?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample 18-74</th>
<th>Sample 45-74</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CATI</td>
<td>SAQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homosex - bisex</td>
<td>0.4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transex</td>
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<td>0.1</td>
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<td>Heterosex</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another way</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14.9% of the sample didn’t answer the self assessment question

14.9% of the sample 5.6% didn’t answer the SAQ at all
1151 people 432 people

9.3% answered other questions
719 people
14.9% of the sample didn’t answer the self assessment question

14.9% of the sample  5.6% didn’t answer the SAQ at all
1151 people  432 people

9.3% answered other questions
719 people

To whom do you feel sexually attracted?

Have you ever had sex with/ been attracted to someone of your same sex?

5.5% to the opposite sex
0.0% to the same sex
0.8% to nobody
3.0% no-answer
0.03% to men and women
0.1% yes
14.9% of the sample didn’t answer the self assessment question

5.6% didn’t answer the SAQ at all

9.3% answered other questions

To whom do you feel sexually attracted?

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0.8% to nobody
3.0% no answer
0.03% to men and women
0.1% yes
### No-answer responses: group profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CAPI</th>
<th>5.4% SAQ no answer</th>
<th>5.5% attracted to opposite sex</th>
<th>0.8% attracted to nobody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean age</strong></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max primary education</strong></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max lower sec. school</strong></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other nationality</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Total number**     | 7725 | 432                | 425                            | 59                       |

Methodological issues related to sensitive questions: A focus on sexual orientation and gender self-identification

Neuchâtel, Switzerland 15 – 17 May 2019
4.8% defined themselves “in another way”

To whom do you feel sexually attracted?

- 3.8% to the opposite sex
- 0.8% to nobody
- 0.03% to men and women

Have you ever had sex with/ been attracted to someone of your same sex?

- 0.1% yes
### “in another way” responses: group profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CAPI</th>
<th>3.8% attracted to opposite sex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean age</strong></td>
<td>48 y</td>
<td>51 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max primary education</strong></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Max lower sec. school</strong></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other nationalities</strong></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number</strong></td>
<td>7725</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Limitations of surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surveys could underestimate homosexual, bisexual and transsexual populations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are able to reach only people willing to disclose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys are important to highlight attitudes of the general population towards discrimination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discrimination against homosexuals and transsexuals

In your opinion, in Italy are homosexuals discriminated against, that is, not treated as equal as other people?

In your opinion, in Italy are transsexuals discriminated against, that is, not treated as equal as other people?

- Homosex
- Transex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Quite a lot</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Not very</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homosex</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transex</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s justifiable that:

- an employer does not hire an applicant with the required qualifications because she/he is...
  - Homosexual: 7.7%
  - Transsexual: 24.8%

- a landlord does not rent an apartment to a person because she/he is...
  - Homosexual: 8%
  - Transsexual: 22.4%

- an employee is not treated as equally as her/his colleagues because she/he is...
  - Homosexual: 4%
  - Transsexual: 10.1%
Main results

Stereotypes and prejudices are stronger against transsexual people than against homosexual or bisexual people.

Transsexuals are discriminated in several ways, even in the fundamental aspects of their daily life:
- working environment: it’s difficult to find a job, even to work as a freelancer
- finding a house to rent

The same insights were reached with focus groups and in depth interviews.
Lessons learned

Standard sample surveys on the LGBT population are time- and budget-consuming:
- low incidence of LGBT population in the general population
- lack of a frame list

The CAPI-SAQ performance is more accurate than CATI, but still far from a reliable estimate of our target population

Wording is really important: “politically correct” terms could be misunderstood by some groups of the general population
The points of view of the LGBT population and stakeholders

- discrimination in the work environment
- diversity management: best practices for LGBT employees

QUALITATIVE research on access to work, working conditions and discrimination in the workplace against transsexual people

Method: semi structured interviews
Cooperation with LGBT associations during research design and management

Next steps: UNAR PROJECTS 2019-2022
fazzi@istat.it
liani@istat.it
srosati@istat.it
romano@istat.it