

## **Question in Project:**

FReDA-W2b - Questions on the topics of women's fertility, affective touching behavior, sexual orientation, and transnational families (English Version)

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## **Question Topic:**

Personality/ Various characteristics

## **Construct:**

Sexual Orientation

## **Question Text:**

How would you describe your sexual orientation?

## **Answer Categories:**

Heterosexual (i.e. interested in another sex)

Homosexual (gay or lesbian, i.e., interested in own sex)

Bi-sexual or pansexual (i.e., interested in more than one gender)

Other sexual orientation, namely:

No answer

## **Cognitive Techniques:**

Sensitivity Probing

## **Findings for Question:**

### **Aim of the pretest:**

The aim of the pretest was to find out whether respondents perceive the question as sensitive or delicate or whether they find it appropriate to be asked about their sexual orientation in an online survey. In this context, it was also investigated whether an alternative category ("No answer") should be offered or not. The sensitivity sample used (see Appendix, N1\_F10) was given to all 240 respondents.

### **Findings:**

The frequency distribution of responses to question 10 is shown in Table 13. As can be

seen, the majority of respondents (96.2%) indicated their sexual orientation. One respondent selected the semi-open response category "Other sexual orientation, namely:" and entered "Nonbinary" in the open response field. Only nine respondents (3.8%) selected the fallback category "No answer."

However, when asked cognitively how appropriate or inappropriate they thought it was to be asked this question in an online survey, 50 respondents (20.8%) said they thought it was "rather" or "very inappropriate." The reason given was that this was a sensitive question about the private sphere, which is perceived as too personal:

- *"None of anyone's business."* (TP190)
- *"Because many feel uncomfortable with such a question."* (TP221)
- *"It's too private and personal."* (TP246)
- *"It's private and none of a stranger's business."* (TP624)

Further, some respondents indicated that they did not understand why the question was being asked:

- *"I don't understand at this point in the survey why it's important. If it is the pure interest, then the question is more than inappropriate."* (TP211)
- *"The question is, why does this question need to be asked? Is it important to the research outcome? Then it would be appropriate. But so far I can't see what this survey is supposed to be about. Therefore, the assessment rather inappropriate."* (TP241)

## **Recommendations:**

Since the question deals with a sensitive and private topic, which was perceived as too personal by about one fifth of the respondents and partly led to discomfort, we recommend displaying an explicit fallback category ("No answer"). In addition, it might be helpful to describe the reason for which the question is asked.