Demographics and Proxy Reporting on Economic Surveys: Thinking Through SOGI and Race Measures on a Survey of Youth in Residential Placement

Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement

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The Project

This project is highlighting changes to demographic measures (specifically Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) and race) on a survey capturing the incarcerated youth populations of the United States.

The Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP)

- All juvenile facilities across the U.S. designed to hold youth age 21 or under

- Out of home placement contact with the justice system

- Two surveys, another about characteristics of facilities
  - Run every other year since 1997

- Roster of young persons released in prior month

- Primary way to measure trends, including demographic, of youth incarceration
  - State, offense, legal status, race, age, sex

Respondents

- Respondents are proxies
  - Population of focus: Youth in residential placements
  - Respondents: Staff at these facilities
- Facilities include: large juvenile detention facilities, treatment programs, runaway shelters, group homes
- Very enthusiastic and want to answer/help
- Many rely on records
  - Information sometimes at intake, sometimes off top of their head
  - Some know demographic information from interacting with youth

Rounds of Testing

- Cognitive testing with respondents
- Representing 178 facilities total
- Three rounds of moderated testing (39 respondents)
- One round of unmoderated testing (139 respondents)

Timing	Mode	Number of Responses
Round 1		
October 2023	Initial moderated, 1A	9
January 2024	Moderated, 1B	10
Round 2		
February – March 2024	Moderated, 2	20
February – March 2024	Unmoderated, 2	139

Types of Facilities

- Purposive sampling – type of facility, mode of collection, region
- Most head of admin or directors of facilities

	Moderated (N = 39)	Unmoderated (N = 139)
Type Of Facility		
Detention	17	68
Training School	13	12
Group/Halfway Home	8	19
Residential Treatment	11	45
Runaway/Bootcamp/Ranch	5	10
Other	10	11
Geographic Region		
Northeast	5	22
South	11	35
Midwest	15	58
West	9	24

SOGI Questions

- Sex was already on survey, did add "at birth"
- Gender identity and sexual orientation were added
- In line with White House guidelines
  - Gave several options of what questions could look like to sponsor staff
- Adapted language for an institutional setting and proxy reporting

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SOGI Measures

Sex:

Please enter this person's sex assigned at birth.

- Male
- Female

Gender:

Please enter this person's gender identity.

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Nonbinary
- They use a different term, describe [textbox]
- Unknown

Sexual Orientation:

Please enter this person's sexual orientation.

- Straight
- Gay/Lesbian
- Bisexual
- They use a different term, describe [textbox]
- Unknown

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Race Question

- Standard two-part question was already on survey
- In line with OPM guidelines
- Main changes
  - Combining Hispanic/Latino into race question
  - Addition of Middle Eastern/North African (MENA) category
  - Change from "two or more races" to "They use a different term," and highlight "select all" option

Race Measure

Please enter this person's race.
Check all that apply.

❑ White

❑ Black or African American

❑ Hispanic or Latino

❑ American Indian or Alaska Native

❑ Asian

❑ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

❑ Middle Eastern or North African

❑ They use a different term, describe [textbox]

❑ Unknown

Lessons Learned from Round 1

- We tested two questions in the first round weren't viable
- SOGI on the aggregate
  - This was doable for most facilities
  - Two smaller facilities with overall concerns about privacy preferred it
  - Obscured variation, especially with gender identity
- Intersex
  - Not familiar
  - Definition not set
  - Not in records
  - Concern for HIPAA and medical information

Findings – Demographics Overall 1

- Facilities either had complete demographic information for certain questions or lacked it entirely

- SOGI
  - PREA-compliant facilities had this at intake
  - Runaway federal grant required this reporting

- Race
  - Some only had "2 or more races"
  - Those with MENA youth had it in records as an option or write in

Findings – Demographics Overall 2

- Facilities that lacked this information:
  - SOGI
    - Some had on file or in therapist notes, but not in system
    - Some relied on disclosure or did not often receive transgender youth
  - Race
    - Some facilities in specific regions had not had MENA youth
- Most facilities were willing to add these questions to their records should we ask them

Findings – Demographics Overall 3

- Some respondents did not understand what demographics were used for
- Especially reported in unmoderated testing
  - "Why is this information so important?"
  - "These factors do not matter when it comes to running a jail or prison. What we truly care about is classification for housing and the behavior of the inmates while they are in custody."
  - "In my role, all inmates are treated equally, regardless of race, sexual orientation, or gender."

Findings – Sex Assigned at Birth

- Easiest of the demographics to answer

- Universally on record

- 80% self-reported by youth, 85% intake, and 66% from external documents such as referrals or court records

- Some complications if a single-gender facility and only one gender on record
  - For example, an "all male" facility may only have male as the record choice or may not keep records on gender in system

Findings – Gender Identity 1

- 14% found it difficult to answer
  - Less negative than other economic surveys
- 81% from self-report, 72% from intake, and 42% from documents
- Some facilities did not have it on record:
  - "I don't have this in records. I would have to make some assumptions."
  - "This is something we are not currently gathering or asking yet. It's not in records. I expect it to be added in future."
- We suspect transgender youth not disclosing or recorded accurately

Findings – Gender Identity 2

- Most PREA-compliant institutions had gender identity in records
  - "It's in records, we do a PREA vulnerability and risk screening when they arrive."
- Even those who didn't often had intake
  - "Whatever the kid says, we give them a form they have to fill out. Youth reporting to staff at intake."
- Respondents were familiar with terms
  - Those with Indigenous population noted importance of write in option
- Select all that apply didn't seem to work
  - "I would put her transgender, she never actually said nonbinary. I would just put transgender."

Findings – Gender Identity 3

- Participants relying on disclosure mostly unfamiliar with trans youth
- Likely these youth were assigned elsewhere or not disclosing
    - "We don't record this right now. Not really yet. We had one years ago obviously male but wanted to be female, so we isolated him. We didn't have anything on file. I would know if they tell us."
    - "Our record does not include transgender/nonbinary. I have a young lady claiming to be transgender, but that would not be in any formalized way I can scan. She requested to see me. I would happen to know. I could not run in system. I would go back to answering what I know. You would have missing data."
- These were in states with restrictive laws for trans youth
- Institutions' approaches often did not align with best practices

Findings – Sexual Orientation 1

- 28% did not have information, and 31% said difficult to answer
- More likely to have it as write in or in notes
- 66% from self-reports, 45% from intake, and 14% from documents
- PREA or grant reporting had it in records
- For others it was in assessments or with clinical staff
  - "This one does not live in our database, not in the main area… I would open the record for each youth, look for note, go into assessment."
  - "We do not have an electronic field for [that in] the database. It's not easily pulled from records. The information would be captured in intake process with clinical staff. I do have access to the individual information but it's written case notes so not easy to get."

Findings – Sexual Orientation 2

- Respondents emphasized unknown and write ins as an answer choice
  - Write ins especially useful to honor what youth reported
  - Asexual, pansexual, and queer most common
- Disclosure an unreliable mechanism
  - "We would only know if they told us. Parents tell us, since we call them after we book them in."
  - "I feel like we do know if they want to tell us. It's something extra we've added, but I'm not sure it's required."
- Split on if they would add it in the future
  - "I'm not aware of queer, asexual, pansexual orientations. It wasn't covered in LGBTQ training. We don't ask. It should not matter while they're here."

Findings – Sexual Orientation 3

- Interesting reasoning for avoiding recording that did not align with best practices
  - "[Youth are] all straight currently. I would be pulling from how they carry themselves. You can pretty much tell, or they come in and tell you."
  - "Sexual Orientation question would be difficult especially for youth ages 10-14."
- Two brought up concerns that youth change sexuality too frequently to be recorded
  - "You don't know when the person comes out…Today a youth is gay, tomorrow not anymore, today they want to stay in a female facility because they identify as a female, but tomorrow they are uncomfortable and say they are not really gay. It is often not clear. A lot of young people search for themselves, who they are, what they are, who they belong to, who they trust."
  - "If you envision partner in the future, are they male female or other? We have several questions like that. Teenagers very rarely have a firm grasp if they are questioning any part of that. We would be using terms that are specific may not be accurate for what the youth feels…It would be difficult, impossible to answer accurately."

Findings – Race 1

- Only 5% rated this as difficult
- Most moderated said categories matched records, 65% of unmoderated cases
- 85% from self-report, 84% from intake, and 59% from documents
- Huge emphasis on reflecting how youth identified
  - "We go with what the youth tell us. Hispanic/Latino matches up like this [in the race question]. We match the standard. We have Middle Eastern in our database. We have a lot multiracial youth, two or more races, combos of categories. When I'm filling it out, I can click more than one. We don't have multiracial where you don't know what the races are."
- Two had databases from the state and could not change categories
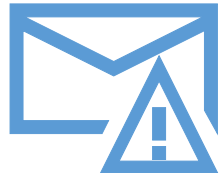
Findings – Race 2

- Positive response to adding MENA
  - "That's pretty cool."
  - "We can type in anything, [in the] other describe [option]."
- Those unfamiliar said they would not be impacted very much
- Supportive of Hispanic/Latino integrated
  - Only 10% had separate question in records
  - Better reflected youth's understanding of race, especially multiracial youth
- Didn't always realize they could check off more than one race
  - "Our software does not allow for further specificity when selecting bi-racial."

Findings – Race 3

- Asking about "youth's racial identity" rather than "race" may be more in line with a proxy reporting a youth's race
  - "Racial identity would indicate more I should go with what youth reported."
- Outdated and unconventional views about race translating over
  - "Who has a pure race?"
  - "They say they are black because that is closer to the color of their skin. I don't believe 1/2 black and 1/2 white should be considered a minority."
- Concerned staff were assigning races rather than asking at two facilities in white majority locations
  - "In intake, we ask the child what their race is. Sometimes we don't know a youth's race, because staff will look at the child and will say he looks light even though the name says something else. Then I will ask what their race is and change on the intake. Kids self report but staff will assume by looking and will write in what they feel instead of asking."

Next Steps

- Sex question is staying with "at birth" added
- Gender identity single selection multiple choice added
- Sexual orientation single selection multiple choice added
- MENA category added
- Hispanic/Latino integrated into race question
- Select all that apply change from single selection multiple choice
- Currently in final OMB process

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