

# Collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data



## Staff FAQs

We ask all of our patients for information about their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). This helps us better understand and care for our diverse community.

### How do I ask patients for sexual orientation and gender identity data?

Tell the patient you have a few simple questions you would like to ask and explain your reason for asking:

“I have a few simple questions to ask you about yourself. I am gathering this information to ensure that you are receiving the best quality of care.”

### Why is collecting SOGI data important?

Your SOGI information helps us identify and respond to inequities experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or LGBTQ+ patients in the clinical setting.

Collecting this information will help providers create a safe environment for all of our patients, focus our quality improvement work and deliver the highest quality of care.

### Are patients comfortable answering SOGI questions?

Yes! In a [survey of about 1500 patients](#) of all backgrounds and identities around the country, 90% responded that they are willing to answer SOGI questions.

### How is SOGI information relevant in a clinical setting?

Understanding a patient’s sexual orientation and gender identity provides valuable context that may improve and enhance treatment and care. There is value in knowing who you serve so that leadership can appropriately allocate funding for training and equipment needed.

LGBTQ+ patients may experience higher rates of discrimination in healthcare. LGBTQ+ patients may also have special needs that their providers should be able to address. Collecting SOGI information enables us to ensure we are delivering affirmative and quality healthcare.

### How does collecting SOGI data help my patients?

Asking about SOGI [improves patient satisfaction](#). It ensures that all patients, particularly LGBTQ+ patients, feel safe and welcome in the healthcare setting and receive high quality care.

### How does collecting SOGI data help my organization?

When patients experience negative interactions in healthcare settings, they are more likely to change providers, file complaints and, in some cases, take legal action. Collecting SOGI data shows patients that their care team is making an effort to validate and affirm their identity.

### Are there any professional organizations that recommend SOGI data collection?

Yes. The American Medical Association, the Institute of Medicine and the Health Resources and Services Administration encourage hospitals and health systems to collect SOGI data.

### How should I address a patient whose preferred name doesn't match the name on their state-issued identification card?

Always address patients using their preferred or currently used name and pronouns, even if the name on their ID card does not match. This will help patients feel respected and able to bring their whole selves into care with you. It also lets them know that this is a safe space to receive care.



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## Sample scripts

This tip sheet provides scripted answers to patients' frequently asked questions. To provide the best possible service and ensure that all patients receive the highest quality of care, we are asking all patients about their sexual orientation and gender identity.

### Why are you asking about my sexual orientation and gender identity?

We are asking all of our patients about their sexual orientation and gender identity so we can make sure that you get the specific and appropriate healthcare you need. This is meant to be a comfortable and safe environment, where you can show up as your whole self. Whatever questions or healthcare needs you have, I am ready to try to help.

### How do I know that this will be kept private?

All of our patient data is kept confidential, always. We want to provide a safe environment, and provide the highest level of care to meet your specific needs. You may decline to answer any of these questions, but your responses will help us to better serve you.

### What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation describes your physical and emotional attraction to others. The form provides some options, but if you do not see one that fits your sexual orientation, feel free to choose "other" and describe it in your own words.

### What is gender identity?

Gender identity is your internal sense of your own gender, regardless of the sex you were assigned at birth. Gender identity is personal to each individual.

### What if I am not sure how to answer?

If you feel as though the options do not describe you, you can respond "other" and write in how you would describe yourself.

### What if none of these categories describe me?

If your sexual orientation or gender identity is not listed, you can respond "other" and write in the terms you use to describe yourself.

### I am only here for a quick test. How is this relevant to my care?

This information helps us better understand the communities that we serve. It helps us meet individual patients' needs and preferences and provide the best care possible.

### Why are you asking for the sex listed on my birth certificate?

Asking for your sex at birth helps staff understand which organs might be present in your body and which follow-up questions to ask. This information, when combined with your sexual orientation and gender identity, helps us create a care plan that best fits your needs.



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