

# We Ask Because We Care

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Understanding our patients' sexual orientation  
and gender identity

## Session overview

### The goals of today's session are to:

- improve your understanding of why we ask patients about sexual orientation and gender identity; and
- explain how you can gather this information while effectively addressing patient concerns.



# Important categories to know

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesbian, gay or homosexual</li> <li>• Straight or heterosexual</li> <li>• Bisexual or pansexual</li> <li>• Queer or questioning</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
<b>Gender Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Transgender male, trans man, female-to-male (FTM)</li> <li>• Transgender female, trans woman, male-to-female (MTF)</li> <li>• Genderqueer, neither exclusively male or female</li> <li>• Non-binary or agender</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>
<b>Assigned Sex at Birth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Male</li> </ul>
<b>Pronouns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She/her</li> <li>• He/him</li> <li>• They/them</li> <li>• She/they</li> <li>• He/they</li> </ul>

# Why do we ask about sexual orientation and gender identity?

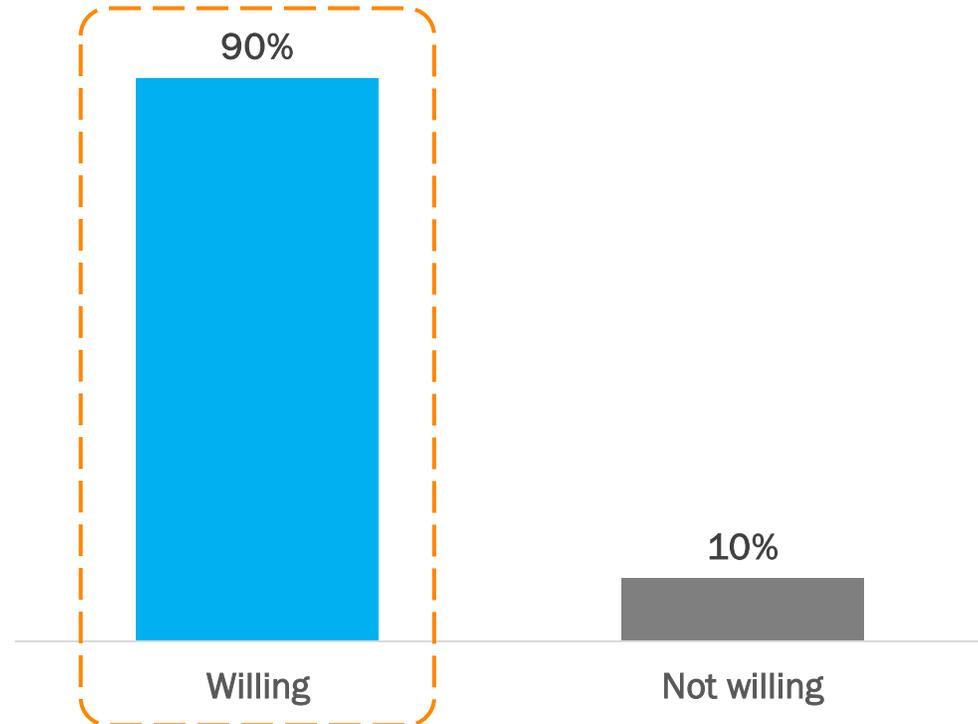
- ✓ To provide all patients with the highest quality of care
- ✓ To identify the needs of individual patients
- ✓ To eliminate disparities in the patient population
- ✓ To provide hospitals with information on each patient's cultural needs and preferences
- ✓ To monitor and analyze health outcomes at the population level



# Findings from a patient survey

**90% of patients**

from a survey of about 1,500 patients are willing to answer SOGI questions.

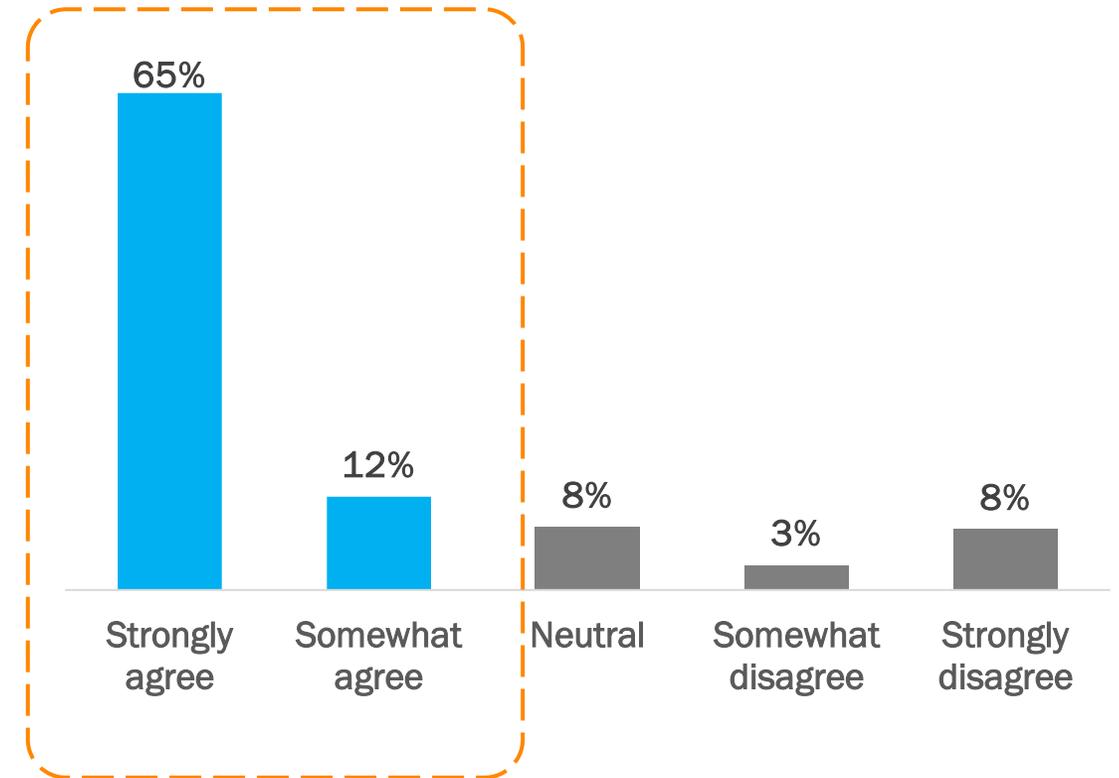


Source: Haider AH, Schneider EB, Kodadek LM, et al. Emergency Department Query for Patient-Centered Approaches to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity : The EQUALITY Study. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2017;177(6):819–828. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2017.0906

## Findings from a patient survey (continued)

**77% of patients agree**

that SOGI data is important for their medical provider to know.



Source: Cahill S, Singal R, Grasso C, King D, Mayer K, Baker K, et al. (2014) Do Ask, Do Tell: High Levels of Acceptability by Patients of Routine Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data in Four Diverse American Community Health Centers. PLoS ONE 9(9): e107104. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0107104>

# Why is patient-reported data important?

Self-reporting is the most accurate and consistent source of information.



Patients are more likely to select the same categories to describe themselves over time than staff who are assuming or guessing.



We should never make assumptions based on a person's name or appearance.



**All patients** should be asked about their sexual orientation and gender identity.

# Where, when and how do I ask?

## Where

During phone registration or in-person check-in

## When

Ask at the same time as all other registration information

## How

Ask in the same way as for all other registration information

# What if a patient does not want or does not know how to respond?

## Choose one of the following:

- Declined:** *if the patient is unwilling to choose or provide a category or cannot identify themselves with one of the options listed.*
- Unknown:** *if the patient is uncertain which category best describes them. You may offer to review definitions with the patient if they do not understand.*

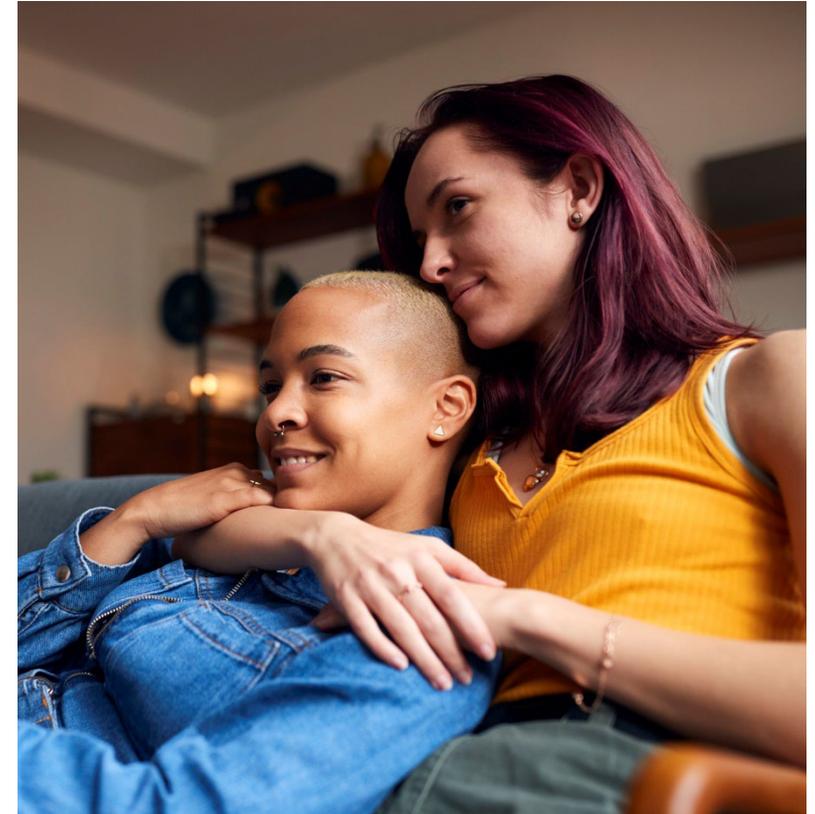
## Suggested script

“We are asking all of our patients about their sexual orientation and gender identity so we can make sure that you get the healthcare you need. Whatever questions or healthcare needs you have, I am ready to try to help.”

“What are your pronouns?”

“What is your current gender identity?”

“What sex were you assigned at birth?”



# How can I address patients' questions and concerns?



## Reassure patients that:

- the data they provide will serve a positive and valuable purpose;
- the quality of care provided will not be affected by their responses;
- their privacy and patient rights are being respected;
- data collection will take only a few minutes, so it will not delay care; and
- they are not required to provide the information.

# Patient FAQs

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

We are asking all of our patients about their sexual orientation and gender identity so we can make sure that you get the 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.

## 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 gender you were assigned at birth. Gender identity is personal to each individual.

## 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.

# Available resources

## For patients:

- *We Ask Because We Care* [brochure](#)
- *We Ask Because We Care* [poster 1](#) and [poster 2](#)
- *We Ask Because We Care* FAQs

## For staff:

- Staff FAQs on collecting SOGI data
- Understanding our patients' sexual orientation and gender identity slide deck
- Sample responses for patient questions

## Other resources:

- [Do Ask, Do Tell: High Levels of Acceptability by Patients of Routine Collection of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data in Four Diverse American Community Health Centers](#)
- [Emergency Department Query for Patient-Centered Approaches to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity : The EQUALITY Study](#)
- [The Health of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People](#)



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**EXCELLENCE AND INCLUSION**

# Questions?

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