

Testing questions on sexual identity – experiences from optional data collection modes

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LCS 2008: questions on sexual identity

- Initiative from external users
- Statistics Norway management reluctant, but "user needs" rule
- A sensitivity issue – response rates threatened?
- Careful development and testing before pilot in LCS 2008
- Pilot report soon ready
- QUEST 2009: Methodological, not substantial results

Testing Procedure and Results

Sampling:

- **Young and old people**
- **Homosexuals and heterosexuals**
- **Different levels of education**
- **Different levels of engagement**

Instruments:

- **Concept mapping**
- **Think-aloud session**
- **In depth discussions**

Procedure:

- **Three iterative rounds**

- **With high validity**
 - Sexual attraction \neq Sexual identity
- **With high reliability**
 - Even by those who are uncertain or have not previously spoken about their sexuality
- **Not offending people**
 - The elderly
 - Immigrants
- **Avoiding bias**
 - Item non-response
 - Question order effects

Challenges and Solutions

- The different dimensions
 - Measuring both sexual attraction and sexual identity
 - Approach to suit fixed and floating identities
 - Sexual orientation is not [allways] given for a lifetime - may change
- Sensitivity issues
 - Contextualisation
 - ♦ What has sexual identity to do with living conditions?
 - Flexible data collection mode
 - ♦ Alternative mail attachment for “don’t want to answer”
- Interviewer scepticism towards these kind of questions
 - Motivation of interviewers
 - No responsibility for item non-response or mail attachment

Final questions and procedure

1. How much would you say sexuality means for your quality of life?
2. Which [sex] do you feel sexually attracted to?
3. Do you consider yourself to be homosexual or lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual?
4. Have your sexual orientation ever caused problems for you in relation to your family/friends/colleagues?

Dropped:

Have you ever had a sexual relationship to a person with the same sex as yourself?

Sub sampling (q3+q4):

- **People who felt attracted to same or both sex**

Instrument:

- **Presented as one of several lifestyle questions**
- **Response given by numbers**
- **First question highlighting relevance**
- **Attraction + Identity**
- **Perceived problems**

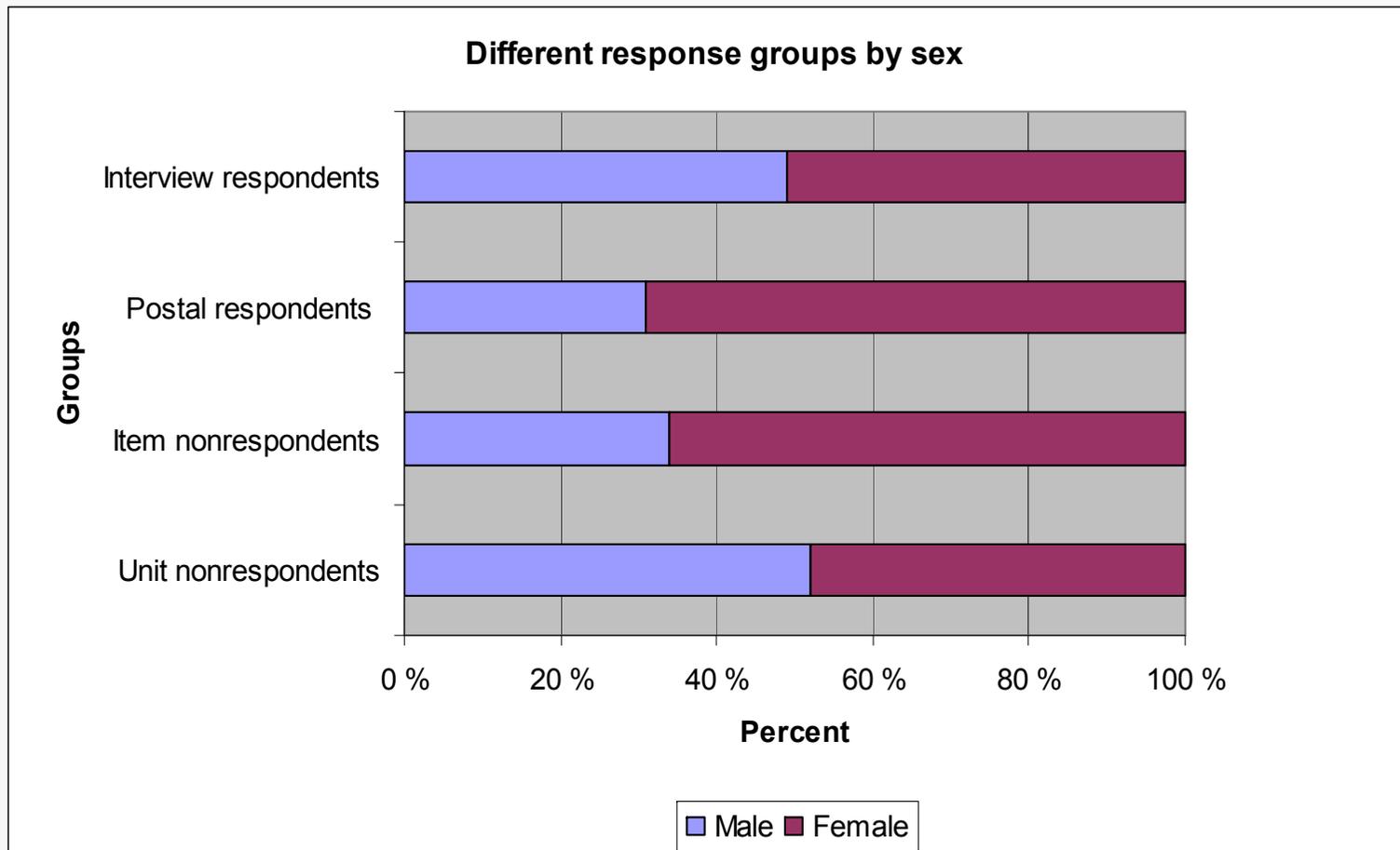
Procedure:

- **Telephone interview**
- **Mail option only after refusal**
- **Follow up on interviewers**

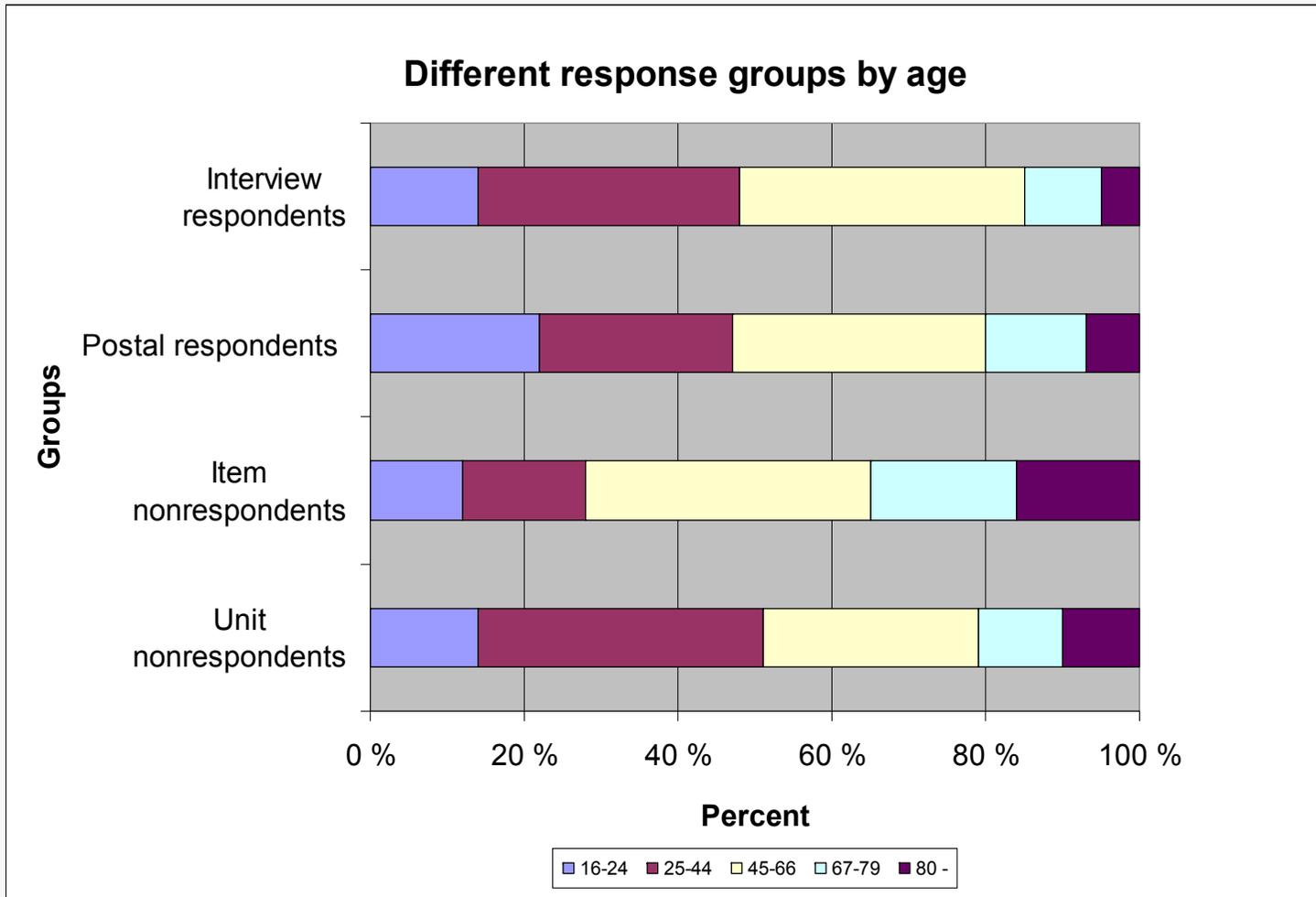
Unit and Item Non-response during the Data Collection

Unit non-response:	34 %
Initial item non-response:	2,3 %
Final item non-response:	1,7 %

Different response groups by sex



Different response groups by age



Preliminary results

- Still an unanswered question whether we have identified all with a different sexual inclination
- Initial item non-response was low, the postal version made it even lower
- None of those who answered the postal survey identified themselves as homo- or bisexual
- Interviewers sceptical before the data collection, predominantly positive after the data collection
- As found in qualitative interviews: there seems to be a difference between sexual inclination and sexual identity

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