

# Probing for sensitivity in translated survey questions: Differences in respondent feedback across cognitive probe types

## Background and Methods

- Cognitive interviewing is increasingly being used for pretesting survey questionnaires adapted to different populations.
- Cognitive interviewing was carried out to pretest the Arabic version of the World Mental Health survey instrument using different types of cognitive probes:
  1. Proactive direct
  2. Proactive indirect
  3. General probes

## Findings



### Variation in respondent feedback length

- General probe: lengthiest responses
- Direct probe: briefest amount of feedback

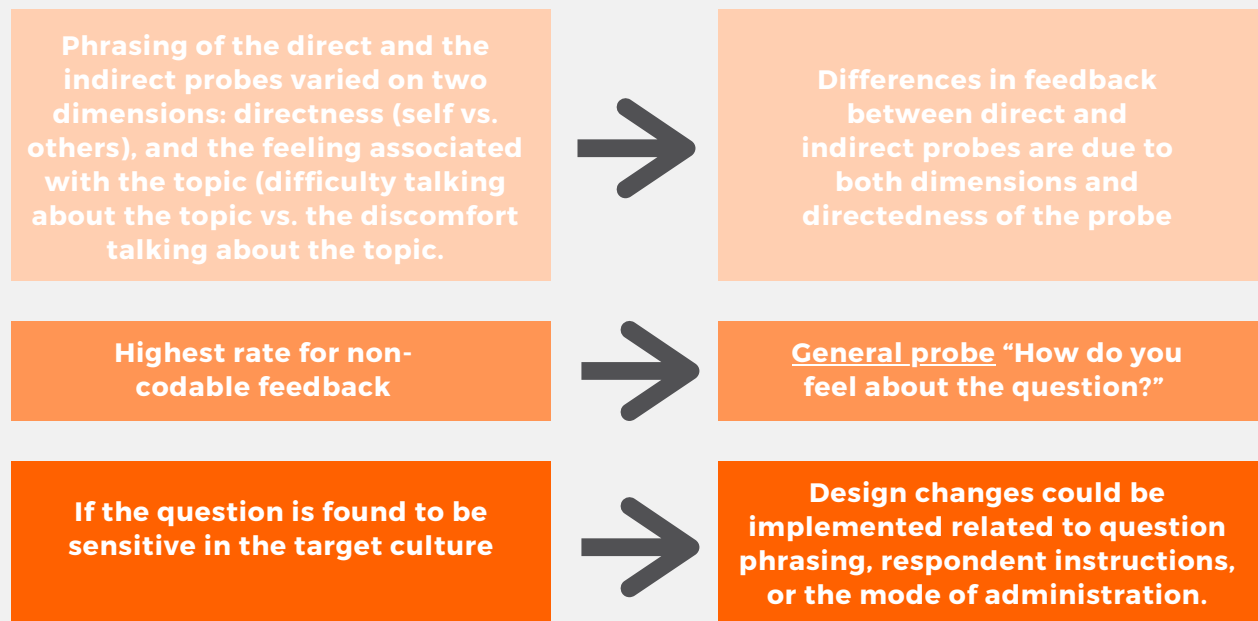
### Variation in respondent feedback about the sensitive nature of the survey question

- Amount and content of feedback differed by probe type
- Indirect probe: more feedback that topic is sensitive
  - Direct probe: more feedback that topic is non-sensitive
  - General probe: highest non-codable feedback

### Variation in respondent feedback by probe type by survey question type

- Most differences for questions about feelings
- Indirect probe: most feedback identifying feelings question as sensitive
  - Direct probe: most feedback identifying feelings question as non-sensitive
  - General probe: highest non-codable feedback

## Discussion



## Conclusion

- In cognitive interviewing, when asked directly about the perceived sensitive nature of a survey question, a respondent might deny it so as to avoid any social stigma.
- Need for experiments designed to systematically assess differences in feedback elicited by different probe.