

Statistical bulletin

Sexual orientation, UK: 2020

Experimental Statistics on sexual orientation in the UK in 2020 by region, sex, age, marital or legal partnership status, ethnic group and socio-economic classification, using data from the Annual Population Survey (APS).

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1 . Main points

- The proportion of the UK population aged 16 years and over identifying as heterosexual or straight was 93.6% in 2020; there has been a decreasing trend since the series began in 2014.
- An estimated 3.1% of the UK population aged 16 years and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in 2020, an increase from 2.7% in 2019 and almost double the percentage from 2014 (1.6%).
- The proportion of men in the UK identifying as LGB increased from 1.9% to 3.4% between 2014 and 2020; the proportion of women identifying as LGB has risen from 1.4% to 2.8% over the same period.
- People aged 16 to 24 years continue to be the most likely to identify as LGB in 2020 (8.0%) reflecting an increasing trend for this age group since 2014; this breaks down to 2.7% identifying as gay or lesbian, and 5.3% identifying as bisexual.
- In 2020, women (1.6%) were more likely than men (0.9%) to identify as bisexual but were less likely to identify as gay or lesbian (1.1% compared with 2.5%); these differences between men and women are more pronounced in the younger age groups.
- Among those identifying as LGB in 2020, almost three-quarters (72.5%) had never been married or in a civil partnership, while just under one-quarter were married or in a civil partnership (23.7%); this may reflect the younger age structure of the LGB population and that the legislation for same-sex civil partnerships and same-sex marriage is relatively recent.

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2 . Sexual orientation data

[Sexual orientation, UK](#)

Dataset | Released 25 May 2022

Sexual orientation in the UK from 2012 to 2020 by region, sex, age, marital or legal partnership status, ethnic group and National Statistics Socio-economic Classification.

3 . Glossary

Sexual orientation

"Sexual orientation" is an umbrella term that encompasses sexual identity, attraction and behaviour. The Annual Population Survey (APS) question informing the statistics in this publication is designed to capture sexual identity. The question was not designed for specific or detailed studies of sexual attraction or behaviour where a series of more detailed questions and answer categories might be more appropriate.

Sexual identity

The measurement of sexual identity, as explained in [our guide for researchers on sexual identity \(PDF, 116KB\)](#), has been identified as the component of sexual orientation most closely related to experiences of disadvantage and discrimination. Sexual identity does not necessarily reflect sexual attraction and/or sexual behaviour, which are separate concepts not currently measured by the Annual Population Survey (APS). Sexual identity may change over time.

Sexual orientation categorised as "other"

The "other" category captures people who do not consider themselves to fit into the heterosexual or straight, bisexual, gay, or lesbian categories. It might also include people who responded "other" for different reasons such as those who did not understand the terminology or who are against categorisation.

4 . Measuring the data

Sexual orientation estimates are based on data from the Annual Population Survey (APS), which collects information on sexual identity from the household population aged 16 years and over in the UK. The household population excludes people living in communal establishments, with the exception of those in NHS housing and students in halls of residence (sampled via the private households of their parents).

This bulletin presents the sexual orientation estimates as percentages. Estimates of the population numbers and measures of quality (to show the levels of uncertainty associated with survey estimates) are presented in the datasets. We advise users to consult the quality measures when interpreting the estimates because some estimates are based on a relatively small sample. As a result, these estimates are subject to uncertainty, particularly when making comparisons, such as changes from one year to another. In this bulletin, such comparisons are [statistically significant](#) unless otherwise stated. This means that there is likely to have been a real change in the underlying population proportions and that the difference we are observing is unlikely to be a result of chance.

Revision

The adjustment to the estimates for 2014 to 2017, to remove the artificially increased number of "don't know or refuse" responses to interviews carried out by field interviewers using a mobile phone, has been applied to the estimates for 2018, 2019 and 2020. Further information on these revisions is available in [our Sexual orientation quality and methodology information release](#).

More detailed information on the sexual identity question and design of the APS is available in the [our LFS user guide](#).

Change of terminology

In 2019 (publication of the 2017 data), the terminology in this release changed from "sexual identity" to "sexual orientation" to align with legislation ([Equality Act 2010](#)); please see the Glossary for definitions.

Although the terminology changed, the data source and methodology used to produce the estimates were not changed and remained consistent with previous years.

5 . Related links

[Annual Population Survey user guide \(PDF, 689KB\)](#)

User guide | Released 2022

Further information on the Annual Population Survey (APS).