Statistical bulletin

Sexual orientation, UK: 2024

Sexual orientation in the UK in 2024 by age, sex, marital status, and country, using data from the Annual Population Survey (APS). These are official statistics in development.

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1 . Main points

- An estimated 2.1% (1.2 million) of the UK adult household population identified as gay or lesbian in 2024, which is an increase from 1.6% in 2019, and 1.6% (855,000 thousand) identified as bisexual, which is an increase from 1.1% in 2019.
- 93.4% of people (50.7 million) identified as heterosexual or straight in 2024, which is a similar proportion to 2019 (93.7%).
- Younger people were more likely to identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) than older people in 2024; 8.0% of people aged 16 to 24 years identified as LGB, compared with 1.2% of people aged 65 years and over.
- The percentage of people identifying as LGB between 2019 and 2024 grew the most for those aged 25 to 34 years, increasing from 3.6% to 6.4%.
- Men were more likely to identify as gay or lesbian (2.9%) than as bisexual (1.1%) in 2024, while women were more likely to identify as bisexual (2.0%) than as gay or lesbian (1.4%).
- The proportions of people who identified as LGB were broadly similar in England (3.7%), Scotland (4.2%) and Wales (3.6%) in 2024, while Northern Ireland had a lower proportion (2.4%).

Labour Force Survey data used to produce estimates for sexual orientation in recent years have higher uncertainty due to a dip in response rates. While response rates improved throughout 2024, they are still below pre-pandemic levels. For more information on response rates see our Labour Force Survey quality update: September 2025. Measures of uncertainty and statistical robustness have been included the datasets accompanying this release.

2 . Sexual orientation in the UK

Of the UK household population aged 16 years and over, an estimated 50.7 million people (93.4%) identified as heterosexual or straight in 2024. This is a similar proportion to 2019 (93.7%).

The proportion who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) increased from 2.7% (1.4 million) in 2019 to 3.7% (2.0 million) in 2024.

Figure 1: Higher proportions of people identified as gay or lesbian, bisexual or selected the ‘other’ category in 2024 than in 2019

Sexual orientation as a proportion of the UK household population aged 16 years or over, 2019 and 2024.

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The bar chart in Figure 1 shows that 2.1% of people in households in 2024 identified as gay or lesbian (1.2 million), which is an increase from 1.6% in 2019. The proportion of people identifying as bisexual was 1.6% (855,000), which is an increase from 1.1% in 2019.

The proportions identifying as gay or lesbian, bisexual, and as other sexual orientations increased between 2019 and 2024. The proportion identifying as heterosexual or straight was similar (the difference was not statistically significant) at both time points.

The proportion of people who identified in the "other" category increased from 0.7% in 2019 to 1.1% in 2024. This group includes people who do not identify as heterosexual or straight, gay or lesbian or bisexual. It may also include people who are against categorisation or who did not understand the terminology.

The increase in people identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) may be explained by social attitudes becoming generally more accepting of LGB identities. Read about a liberalisation in attitudes towards same-sex relationships in the British Social Attitudes A liberalisation in attitudes? report (PDF, 654KB).

3 . Sexual orientation by age and sex

Sexual orientation by sex

Most men and women identified as heterosexual or straight in 2024, with women slightly more likely to identify as heterosexual or straight than men (93.0% of men and 93.7% of women).

Figure 2: Men were more likely to identify as gay or lesbian, while women were more likely to identify as bisexual

Sexual orientation of the UK household population aged 16 years and over split by sex, 2024

Notes

1. Men and women answered the same question in the Annual Population Survey (APS); one of the response options is "gay or lesbian". We therefore use the term "gay or lesbian" when describing both men and women who identified with this response option.

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Men (4.0%) were more likely to identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) than women (3.4%) in 2024. The bar chart in Figure 2 shows men were more likely to identify as gay or lesbian (2.9%) than as bisexual (1.1%), while women were more likely to identify as bisexual (2.0%) than as gay or lesbian (1.4%).

Sexual orientation by age

The proportion of people identifying as heterosexual or straight was higher at older ages. In 2024, 96.1% of people aged 65 years and over identified as heterosexual or straight, compared with 87.1% of people aged 16 to 24 years.

Figure 3: Younger people were more likely to identify as LGB, with the fastest growth among people aged 25 to 34 years

Percentages of the UK household population aged 16 years and over identifying as gay or lesbian, or as bisexual, split by age group, 2019 and 2024

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The bar chart in Figure 3 shows that younger people were more likely to identify as LGB than older people in 2024, with 8.0% of people aged 16 to 24 years identifying as LGB, compared with 1.2% of people aged 65 years and over.

Higher proportions of people aged 16 to 24 identified as bisexual (5.1%) than gay or lesbian (2.9%) in 2024.

The proportion of people identifying as LGB has increased fastest for those aged 25 to 34 years, from 3.6% in 2019 to 6.4% in 2024. There were also significant increases seen for people aged 35 to 49 years and 50 to 64 years. People aged 16 to 24 were almost twice as likely to identify as LGB than people aged 25 to 34 years in 2019 (6.6%, compared with 3.6%), but by 2024 there was no significant difference.

Most of the growth in LGB in the 25 to 34 years age group was caused by increases in the proportion identifying as bisexual, which grew from 1.3% in 2019 to 3.3% in 2024. The proportion identifying as gay or lesbian grew more slowly, from 2.3% to 3.1%. This will partly reflect the higher proportion of people aged 16 to 24 years who identified as bisexual in 2019, as many of those individuals were aged 25 to 34 years in 2024.

Sexual orientation by age and sex

The proportions of men and women who identified as LGB were broadly similar within most age groups, unlike the proportions identifying as bisexual, or as gay or lesbian.

Figure 4: Younger people, particularly younger women, were more likely to identify as bisexual than older people

Percentages of the UK household population aged 16 years and over identifying as gay or lesbian, or as bisexual, split by age group and sex, 2024.

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The bar chart in Figure 4 shows that higher proportions of young women identify as bisexual than as gay or lesbian. Of women aged 16 to 24 years, 6.7% identified as bisexual, compared with 1.9% who identified as gay or lesbian. Of women who were aged 25 to 34 years, 4.5% identified as bisexual, compared with 1.8% as gay or lesbian.

Men were more likely to identify as gay or lesbian than as bisexual in most older age groups. However, among men aged 16 to 24 years, a similar proportion identified as gay or lesbian (3.9%) and as bisexual (3.5%).

4 . Sexual orientation by marital status

The most common marital status for people identifying as heterosexual or straight in 2024 was married. For people identifying in all other sexual orientation groups, it was never married nor civil partnered.

Marriage and civil partnership became available at different times to opposite-sex and same-sex couples across the UK. We consider this when exploring the marital status of each group.

Figure 5: People who identified as heterosexual or straight were most likely to be married

Percentage of the UK household population aged 16 years and over in each legal partnership type, split by sexual orientation, 2024

Notes

1. Married includes opposite and same-sex married.

2. The legal age of marriage or civil partnership increased from 16 to 18 years in England and Wales in February 2023 under the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022.

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The bar chart in Figure 5 shows that in 2024, people who identified as heterosexual or straight were most likely to be married, compared with other sexual orientations, and least likely to have never married or civil partnered.

The proportion of people identifying as heterosexual or straight in marriages has decreased from 49.5% in 2019 to 45.9% in 2024. The proportion of those who had never married or formed a civil partnership has increased from 34.4% in 2019 to 37.3% in 2024. This reflects the trend of increasing proportions of the adult population having never been married or civil partnered, as discussed in our Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2024 bulletin.

People who identified as gay or lesbian were more likely to be married (18.7%) in 2024, than in a civil partnership (6.5%). A higher proportion of people identifying as gay or lesbian were in civil partnerships than any other sexual orientation. Civil partnerships have been available for same-sex couples in the UK since 2005. Same-sex marriage has been available since 2014 (since 2020 in Northern Ireland). Since same-sex marriage was introduced, couples have been able to convert civil partnerships into marriages.

People who identified as bisexual were most likely to have never married or formed a civil partnership (78.7%) in 2024. This figure partly reflects their younger age profile. Lower proportions of younger adults are married or in a civil partnership than those in older age groups, as described in our Marriage and civil partnership status in England and Wales: Census 2021 article.

More information on legal partnerships in the UK is available in:

- our Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2024 bulletin
- our Marriages and civil partnerships in England and Wales: 2023 bulletin
- our Divorces and dissolutions in England and Wales: 2023 bulletin
- our Marriage and civil partnership status in England and Wales: Census 2021 article

5 . Sexual orientation by UK countries

The proportions of people who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) were broadly similar in England (3.7%), Scotland (4.2%) and Wales (3.6%) in 2024. Northern Ireland had a lower proportion (2.4%).

Figure 6: Northern Ireland had a lower proportion of people identifying as LGB in 2024 than other UK countries

Sexual orientation as a proportion of the household population aged 16 years or over in UK countries, 2024.

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The bar chart in Figure 6 shows the percentage identifying as LGB (split into gay or lesbian and bisexual) in the UK constituent countries. The lower proportion of people identifying as LGB in Northern Ireland is consistent with the results of the Census 2021 in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. Same-sex marriage was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2020, six years after the rest of the UK.

London was the only region to have a significant higher proportion who identify as LGB than the UK as a whole in 2024 (5.9% in London, compared with 3.7% in the UK). This may be partly explained by the low age profile of people in London. The median age was 35 years in London and 40 years in the UK in 2024.

6 . Data on sexual orientation

Sexual orientation, UK
Dataset | Released 9 December 2025
Sexual orientation in the UK by region, sex, age, legal partnership status and ethnic group, using data from the Annual Population Survey (APS). These are official statistics in development.

Sexual orientation
Dataset | Released 6 January 2023
This dataset provides Census 2021 estimates that classify usual residents aged 16 years and over in England and Wales by sexual orientation. The estimates are as at Census Day, 21 March 2021.

7 . Glossary

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term that includes sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. The Annual Population Survey (APS) question informing the statistics in this bulletin 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

Sexual identity has been identified as the component of sexual orientation most closely related to experiences of disadvantage and discrimination, as explained in our Measuring sexual identity: A guide for researchers (PDF, 117KB). Sexual identity does not necessarily reflect sexual attraction and/or sexual behaviour. These are separate concepts not currently measured by the APS. Sexual identity may change over time.

Sexual orientation categorised as "don't know/refuse"

"Don't know/refuse" is not a specific response option on the survey. The interviewer will code this if the person indicates that they do not want to answer the question. We cannot break this category down any further.

"Don't know/refuse" is distinct from "other", which is a response option that a person may choose if they do not identify with the "heterosexual or straight", "bisexual", or "gay or lesbian" response options.

Sexual orientation categorised as "other"

The "other" category captures people who do not consider themselves to fit into the "heterosexual or straight", "bisexual", or "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.

8 . Data sources and quality

More quality and methodology information on revisions, strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our Sexual orientation quality and methodology information (QMI).

Annual Population Survey

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

Official statistics in development

APS estimates are currently not considered accredited official statistics and are designated as official statistics in development. Until September 2023, these were called "experimental statistics". Read more about the change in our Guide to official statistics in development.

More information about the APS being classed as "official statistics in development" can be found in this Office for National Statistics (ONS) letter to the Office for Statistics Regulation about the Annual Population Survey.

Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey reweighting

Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates have been reweighted to more recent population estimates, as described in our Impact of reweighting on LFS key indicators: December 2024 article. APS estimates have not been reweighted in line with this recent LFS reweighting exercise, and therefore remain on population estimates as described in our Impact of reweighting on Labour Force Survey key indicators: 2022 article. APS estimates of levels should therefore be treated with caution, while estimates of percentages remain more robust.

Response rates

Labour Force Survey data used to produce estimates for sexual orientation in recent years have higher uncertainty because of a decrease in response rates. While response rates improved throughout 2024, they are still below pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels. For more information on response rates see our Labour Force Survey quality update: September 2025. Measures of uncertainty and statistical robustness have been included the datasets accompanying this release.

Uncertainty in our estimates

The coefficient of variation (CV) included in our accompanying dataset indicate the robustness of each estimate. The CV is categorised from "A" to "D". "A" is considered precise and "D" is considered unreliable for practical purposes. Where estimates are considered unreliable for practical purposes, these estimates are based on small sample sizes. These results should be interpreted with caution and considered alongside the confidence intervals published with our estimates.

Census 2021

There are differences between survey-based and Census 2021-based estimates of sexual orientation. This is because of differences in the questions asked, including the available response options, and the larger number of responses to the Census 2021 question overall.

The method of delivery can also affect engagement. For example, it was a legal requirement to complete Census 2021, though the sexual orientation question was voluntary. This may have yielded different results to a voluntary survey.

Additionally, it was possible to provide a proxy response on someone else's behalf on the census. The APS does not permit proxy responses for the question on sexual identity. Users should not make direct comparisons between Census 2021 and APS estimates.

More information can be found in the Cabinet Office's Help Shape Our Future white paper and in our Sexual orientation question development for Census 2021 article.

Opposite-sex civil partnerships

Civil partnership became available in 2019 for opposite-sex couples in England and Wales. APS estimates of civil partnerships among those identifying as heterosexual or straight are high for recent years, compared with civil partnership registrations. This may be because respondents mistake the term "civil partnership" for other non-legal partnership types, such as long-term cohabitation. For this reason, we have not discussed civil partnerships among those identifying as heterosexual or straight in this bulletin.

APS estimates of civil partnerships among those identifying as gay or lesbian are in line with estimates of same-sex civil partnerships from other data sources.

9 . Related links

Annual Population Survey user guide (PDF, 830KB)
User guide | Released 2024
Further information on the Annual Population Survey (APS).

Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021
Article | Released 6 January 2023
The sexual orientation of usual residents aged 16 years and over in England and Wales, Census 2021 data

Population estimates by marital status and living arrangements, England and Wales: 2024
Bulletin | Released 15 October 2025
Annual estimates of population by legal marital status and cohabitation status by age and sex for England and Wales.

Sexual orientation QMI
Methodology | Updated 9 December 2025
Quality and methodology information (QMI) report for sexual orientation, detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

10 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 9 December 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, Sexual orientation, UK: 2024