

# Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report

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# 1. Introduction

Over the years, there has been an increasing demand for data on sexual orientation to meet legislative requirements. These demands have come from potential key users including policy makers in central government departments, local government, public service providers e.g. police, health authorities, lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) service providers, the LGB population, academia and other research organisations.

In 2007 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) led a cross-government Review of Equality Data<sup>1</sup> which found that there was a lack of sufficient and reliable sources of data on sexual orientation and recommended work was completed to develop a question on sexual identity for household surveys to address this gap.

This further reinforced ONS's work on developing, testing and evaluating a question on self perceived sexual identity for use on government surveys<sup>2</sup>. Subsequently, ONS introduced the question on the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) from January 2009 and published user guidance in April 2009 to promote the use of the question in other government and relevant surveys<sup>3</sup>.

In April 2010 the *Equality Act 2010* replaced all existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. This included a new public sector Equality Duty, replacing the separate public sector equality duties relating to race, disability and sex, and also covering age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment more fully.

This report evaluates the sexual identity question after its first year on the IHS (April 2009 to March 2010)<sup>4</sup>. The report begins with background information on how ONS measures sexual identity on the IHS. This is followed by an evaluation of the first year's results from the IHS on sexual identity which discusses the headline estimates of people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. We also examine the impact of introducing the question on response rates and how the results compare with other survey estimates. The report concludes with an analysis of the characteristics of those who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

It is important to note that the IHS is an experimental data source and therefore all the IHS estimates provided in this paper are experimental. Experimental statistics are new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve customers and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/equality/equality-data-review/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Further information about question development and testing can be found here <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/equality/sexual-identity-project/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/equality/sexual-identity-project/guidance/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> Headline results from the IHS for the same period are available in the first IHS statistical bulletin <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15381>.

## 2. Measuring Sexual Identity

The sexual identity question was developed following consultations with experts, LGB groups, academics and focus groups involving a cross section of the public. Quantitative question testing on the Opinions and General Lifestyle Surveys (GLF) and cognitive interviews were carried out to test how respondents understood the question and whether they accepted it. In developing the question, efforts were made to ensure that it would collect reliable data, would use easily understood terminology and would maintain confidentiality when administered in either face to face or telephone interview environments. As such, the goal was to develop a question that would be accepted by both interviewers and respondents alike.

There are different dimensions of sexual orientation including attraction, behaviour and identity. Box 1 below gives a definition of these concepts.

### Box 1: The different aspects of sexual orientation

Sexual attraction	This refers to a sexual interest in another person based on a combination of factors including a person's looks, movement, voice, smell etc that are appealing to the person attracted. Sexual attraction can also be defined as having sexual feelings towards someone.
Sexual behaviour	Refers to how people behave sexually. That is whether they have sexual partners of the same sex or not. Sexual behaviour does not necessarily form a basis for a person's sexual identity.
Sexual identity	How individuals think of themselves. This does not necessarily match their sexual behaviour or attraction and can change over time.
Sexual orientation	One's sexual orientation can be derived from any of the above.

While the legislation refers to sexual *orientation*, ONS has focused on collecting data on sexual *identity* that is how people see themselves at the time the interview takes place. This is because no single question would capture the full complexity of sexual orientation. A suite of questions would be necessary to collect data on the different dimensions of sexual orientation, and to examine consistency between them at the individual level. Research during the development of the question also deemed sexual identity the most relevant dimension of sexual orientation to investigate given its relation to experiences of disadvantage and discrimination. Testing showed that respondents were not in favour of asking about sexual behaviour in a social survey context, nor would it be appropriate in general purpose government surveys (Betts et. al. 2008).

Following successful quantitative testing, focus groups and cognitive testing, all of which suggested a general acceptance of the question, the ONS decided that it was a rigorous measure

and introduced it on the IHS in January 2009. Further details about the IHS can be found in Box 2 below.

## Box 2 Integrated Household Survey

The IHS is a composite household survey combining the answers from a number of ONS household surveys<sup>5</sup> to produce an experimental dataset of core variables.

The aim of the IHS is to produce high-level estimates for particular themes including sexual identity to a higher precision and lower geographic level than current ONS household surveys.

ONS intends to publish an annual rolling quarterly IHS dataset quarterly and submit the survey for assessment to become a National Statistic by the UK Statistics Authority in 2012.

Since the IHS data are obtained from a sample of the population, they are subject to sampling error.

The IHS comprises both multistage and single stage samples of address (delivery point) selections. It should also be pointed out that the IHS contains data from both cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys. Detailed information about sampling variability can be found in Appendix 2 of the IHS bulletin 2010<sup>6</sup>.

To correct for the unequal probability of selection caused by selecting only certain households in the population, a household weight has been applied to all the cases in the IHS data set. This was done by grouping each individual survey components of the IHS into a weighting group. Each weighting group was then treated as a single sample where the weight is constructed to estimate back to the population. For more details on the weighting see IHS User Guide – Volume 1. A non proxy weight has also been developed to compensate for a variety of both planned and unexpected disproportionate effects of not asking some questions by proxy. This weight should be used when undertaking analysis of the sexual identity question.

Variables in the IHS dataset have been imputed to take into account item non response except for a small number of questions including sexual identity. Imputation is where a value is entered for a specific variable where the response is missing or unusable. This is usually done by taking into account other variables associated with the subgroup into which an individual falls into and by using those characteristics to impute the likely response the individual would have given. This could not be done for sexual identity as there are no specific variables that are known to be associated with an individual identifying as LGB.

<sup>5</sup> Current modules of the IHS are: General Lifestyle Survey (GLF), Living Cost and Food Survey (LCF), English Housing Survey (EHS), Annual Population Survey (APS) and Life Opportunities Survey (LOS). However, the Opinions Survey (OPN) has not been a part of the IHS since January 2010.

<sup>6</sup> [www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15381](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/statbase/Product.asp?vlnk=15381)

The IHS questionnaire is asked in two ways; face to face using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). In both cases, the sexual identity question was administered to all members of the household aged 16 or over who were available at the time of interview to provide their own responses. No proxy interviews were allowed because research in the development phase, particularly focus groups indicated that proxy responses were not suitable for the sexual identity question on the grounds of acceptability, accuracy and confidentiality.

Boxes 3 and 4 show the question asked for face to face interviews and telephone interviews respectively. For face to face interviews the question was designed to be asked using a concealed, unique showcard form for face to face interviews. These showcards were unique to each individual respondent to ensure that confidentiality was maintained between household members when they were being interviewed at the same time. 'Don't Know' and 'Refusal' were not provided as options on the show card, however, interviewers were able to record them if spontaneously provided by respondents, consistent with standard ONS survey practice. The telephone version varied from that used in face-to face interviewing since this method precludes the use of showcards. Instead, a different design was used to maintain privacy, even if the respondent was in the presence of other people during the interview.

### **Box 3      Face to Face question (CAPI)**

ASK ALL AGED 16 OR OVER

[NAME] SHOWCARD 1, [NAME] SHOWCARD 2, [NAME] SHOWCARD 3 etc

**Which of the options on this card best describes how you think of yourself?**

**Please just read out the number next to the description.**

27. Heterosexual / Straight

21. Gay / Lesbian

24. Bisexual

29. Other

*(Spontaneous DK/Refusal)*



#### **Box 4 Telephone unit question (CATI)**

ASK ALL AGED 16 OR OVER

**I will now read out a list of terms people sometimes use to describe how they think of themselves.** (INTERVIEWER: read list to end without pausing.

Note that 'Heterosexual or Straight' is one option; 'Gay or Lesbian' is one option. )

1. Heterosexual or Straight,
2. Gay or Lesbian,
3. Bisexual,
4. Other

*(Spontaneous DK/Refusal)*

**As I read the list again please say 'yes' when you hear the option that best describes how you think of yourself.**

(INTERVIEWER: Pause briefly after each option during second reading.)

### 3. Estimates of the population who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual

The table below shows the headline results for the sexual identity question. The question was asked to respondents aged 16 years and over and was not asked by proxy. Proxy interviews are defined as those when answers are supplied, through consent, by a third party, who is a member of the respondent's household. Also excluded were respondents who did not speak English and who responded to the questionnaire through a household member acting as an interpreter. This was to maintain the confidentiality within the household and also the reliability of the data.

The reference period in this report is April 2009<sup>7</sup> to March 2010. The IHS sampling frame covers the whole United Kingdom with around 450,000 respondents interviewed in the 12 month period<sup>8</sup>. The sexual identity question was asked of all household members aged 16 and above who were present in the household at the time of interview or were interviewed by phone resulting in a total of 247,623 eligible adults to be asked the sexual identity question. Of these, 238,206 (96 per cent) provided valid responses.

Table 1 **Sexual Identity, April 2009 to March 2010**

	Population aged 16 and over	
	Thousands	Percentages
Heterosexual / Straight	46,922	94.8
Gay / Lesbian	481	1.0
Bisexual	245	0.5
Other <sup>1</sup>	242	0.5
Don't know / refusal	1,393	2.8
Non response <sup>2</sup>	233	0.5

<sup>1</sup> Other is a valid response provided by the responder.

<sup>2</sup> ONS defines non response as no data provided to the question by an eligible responder.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, ONS*

The IHS data indicate that for April 2009 to March 2010 95 per cent of adults (46,922,000 people) identified themselves as heterosexual/straight, 1 per cent of adults (481,000 people) identified themselves as gay or lesbian and 0.5 per cent of adults (245,000 people) identified themselves as bisexual while a further 0.5 per cent (242,000) identified themselves as 'Other'.

The 'Other' option on the sexual identity question was included to address the fact that not all people will fall in the first three categories and that some people such as those that are asexual,

<sup>7</sup> When the Labour Force Survey (LFS) joined the IHS.

<sup>8</sup> See full publication from the IHS for April 2009 to March 2010 for more details on the IHS.

may feel no sense of sexual identity at all. In addition, individuals who disagree with the simplistic male/female gender binary, or who were against categorisation based on the gender of people to whom they were attracted or with whom they had relations, could also prefer to identify as other. Previous ONS work also showed that a small number of heterosexual respondents may not understand the terminology used in the question so may select 'Other' instead (Betts, 2009).

Just under 3 per cent of adults (1,393,000 people) stated 'Don't know' or refused the question. Don't know and Refusal is a response that was provided by the respondent spontaneously. Please note that interviewers were advised to code as refusal instances where a respondent did not volunteer an answer to the question but reacted in a way indicating embarrassment or offence, such as total silence. Even when it appeared that the respondent was likely to be heterosexual as this could not be assumed with complete certainty. A further 0.5 per cent (233,000 people) provided no response to the question. 'No response' refers to where an eligible responder did not provide any response to the question, this could be for a number of reasons, i.e. the interviewers were unable to ask the question.

## 4. Response rates

Before questions are added to a survey, testing needs to be carried out to ensure that there is no negative impact on overall response to the questionnaire. Prior to including the question on its household surveys, ONS carried out an experiment on the GLF which concluded that its inclusion would not have any adverse impact on survey response rate (Joloza et al, 2009)<sup>9</sup>. Where possible we have repeated the analysis for the IHS over the survey period April 2009 to March 2010 to see if the results are similar. Please note that this does not refer to the effect on the headline household response rate for the IHS but rather the response rate to the question after households have already agreed to participate.

The first set of results are for the individual response rate, where an individual may refuse to complete a survey once they have been asked the sexual identity question. The GLF trial found no measurable differences between individual response rates of the respondents who were asked the sexual identity question and those that were not. Table 2 shows the proportion of individuals from responding households who completed a full interview as well as the proportions who only partially completed an interview and those who did not take part. The proportion of GLF respondents in the IHS survey with complete interviews is almost that in the GLF trial at 99.7 per cent.

Table 2 **Overall individual response**

Individual Interview Outcome	GLF Trial in 2008	GLF in IHS
1 Full interview	99.8	99.7
2 Partial interview	0.2	0.3
3 No interview, ineligible	-	-
4 Refusal	-	-
5 Non contact	-	-
<b>Base (=100 per cent)</b>	3,663	12,892

Source: Office for National Statistics

The GLF trial also examined whether the inclusion of the sexual identity question may affect the willingness of the respondents to agree to take part in subsequent surveys. This again found no measurable differences between those who were asked the sexual identity question and those who were not. This is only applicable to part of the IHS. Therefore for consistency we have examined the agreement to recall rates on the GLF part of the IHS only and the question is also not asked of everyone. The proportion of respondents who were willing to be interviewed again was 94.5 per cent. In the GLF trial, 96.4 per cent of those who had been asked the sexual identity question

<sup>9</sup>The GLF trial tested overall household non-response, within household response, individual non-response and agreement to recall through an experimental arm and control group.

agreed to be contacted again to take part in the survey compared to 96.7 percent of those who had not been asked the sexual identity question.

Table 3 **Agreement to recall<sup>1</sup>**

Can we contact you again?	GLF Trial 2008	GLF in IHS 2010
1 Yes	96.4	94.5
2 No	3.6	5.5
<b>Base = 100 per cent</b>	3,663	2,476

<sup>1</sup> Asked only to a subset in some of the IHS constituent surveys

Source: Office for National Statistics

Finally, we examine item non-response to the sexual identity question. This is where individual responders are able to refuse to answer the sexual identity question either because they do not wish to answer the question or where they are unable to formulate a response. Table 4 below shows the results from the IHS. This shows that item non response to the sexual identity question on the IHS was 3.2 per cent refusing to answer or saying they did not know the answer to the question and 0.6 per cent not providing a response at all. Total item non-response was 3.8 per cent. This is lower than the GLF trial which found a total item non-response of 5.4 per cent. Note that the proportions in this table differ from those in Table 1 because they are based on unweighted data. This is for the purposes of looking at non response only.

Table 4 **Response to the sexual identity question, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom

Sexual identity question	Frequency	Per cent
Response	238,206	96.2
Don't know / refusal	7,846	3.2
Non response	1,571	0.6
<b>Total (Non proxy, aged 16 and above)</b>	247,623	100

Source: Office for National Statistics

Confidentiality is one of the key issues that can impact response when questions considered sensitive are asked in a household with more than one resident. The table below investigates whether the difference between interviewing a sole household member versus several household members together may lead to higher rates of item non-response.

Table 5 **Number of adults in household, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom	Percentages				
	1	2	3	4+	Total
Heterosexual / Straight	93.3	95.2	95.2	94.9	94.8
<b>LGB</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.5</b>
Gay / Lesbian	1.6	1.3	0.6	0.3	1.0
Bisexual	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.5
Other	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5
Don't Know/Refusal	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.9	0.5
Non Response	4.0	2.2	2.5	3.0	2.8
<b>Total item non response</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>

Source: Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

Prior to developing and testing work on the sexual identity question, the expectation was that the higher the number of adults in the household, the higher the proportion of item non response. This is because some household members might be reluctant to disclose their sexual identity in the presence of others. However, the results from the IHS do not indicate this. The lowest non response was found in the households with two adults (2.5 per cent) while single adult households had the highest item non response at 4 per cent. This is an indication that the concealed show card method designed for concurrent interviewing is working well and that it is not affecting item non response to the question. These are similar to results from the GLF pilot where the lowest non response was found to have been in households with three adults (3.3 per cent). Another observation here is that the proportion of people reporting to be LGB in a household decreases as the number of adults in the household increases. There is currently no explanation why this is the case but this is something that could be considered for further investigation in future.

## 5. Comparisons with other survey estimates

Historically in the UK, several estimates of the proportion of LGB people in the population have been used because of the lack of reliable data.

Table 6 below shows a comparison of LGB proportions on the IHS and other UK surveys that have asked the sexual identity/orientation questions in a similar way to that of the IHS. Apart from the Scottish Census Small Test and the Civil Service Diversity Survey, all these surveys were similar to the IHS in that they did not mention 'sexual identity' or 'sexual orientation' in the question stem.

Table 6 **Comparison of LGB estimates; surveys from within the UK**

Survey	Coverage	Year	LGB (%)	Sample Size	Non response (%)
Integrated Household Survey	UK	2009/10	1.5	238,206	3.8
Citizenship Survey	England and Wales	2009/10	2.3	9,203	2.7
British Crime Survey	England and Wales	2009/10	2.2	22,995	2.7
General Lifestyle Survey	Great Britain	2008	1.1	3,443	5.4
Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey	Northern Ireland	2005	1.7	1,199	1.3
British Social Attitudes Survey	Great Britain	2005	1.4	1,732	1.4
Scottish Census Small Test	Scotland	2005	1.3	692	14.7
DTI Fair Treatment at Work Pilot Survey	Great Britain	2008	2.4	2,704	9.0

The IHS estimate of 1.5 per cent LGB is broadly consistent with other household surveys in the UK that asked questions about sexual identity. This is also consistent with previous research which found survey estimates range between 0.3 per cent and 3.0 per cent (Betts, 2008). This estimate is lower than the most commonly used estimate of 5 to 7 per cent<sup>10</sup>. This higher estimate should be treated with caution primarily because it is based on the findings of a number of studies utilising different methods of administration and conducted among differing sampling populations measuring different dimensions of sexual orientation (Betts, 2008). The estimate is higher because it is derived from combining responses from a set of questions about sexual behaviour, sexual attraction and sexual identity both in the past and present.

<sup>10</sup> Final Regulatory Impact Assessment: Civil Partnership Act 2004

Another observation is that the DTI's Fair Treatment at Work Pilot Survey recorded a higher LGB estimate of 2.4 per cent which is higher than that in the IHS. It is important to note that this is a workplace based survey which would only cover a specific subset of the population (those in employment).

The estimates in the household surveys listed in Table 6 are based on surveys that have differences in sample designs, question wording, response categories, mode of administration and other aspects of survey design. There was also a difference in the age ranges to which the question was asked. For example, the IHS, GLF and Citizenship Survey asked the question to those aged 16 years old and over, the British Crime Survey asked only adults aged 16 and 59 years old. The other surveys had a different definition of adult with the questions being administered to those aged 15 years and older in some cases and 18 years and older in others. In addition, while the IHS covered the whole UK some of the surveys had a smaller geographical coverage for example the British Crime Survey covers only England and Wales. Also, sample surveys are subject to sampling variability and this will also affect the estimates produced from the different surveys which have different sample sizes. For these reasons it is not surprising that the estimates differ to some degree.

Table 7 shows a comparison between international estimates from US, Canadian and Norwegian surveys against those from the IHS. For the US only the National Survey of Family Growth and the National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey were national, the rest were state specific. In addition, all the international surveys were largely health surveys while the IHS is a multipurpose survey.

The US and Canadian estimates are higher than the IHS results while the Norwegian results are similar to those from the IHS. The fact that the questioning is different means that different concepts are being measured by each of them; additionally, the difference in the profiles of individuals in the sample by age means the results are not directly comparable but are provided here for indicative purposes only.

On all the surveys, the question is recommended to be asked only of all adults in the household. Who constitutes an adult varies from country to country and indeed from survey to survey. As stated earlier, ONS considers an adult to be anyone who is aged 16 and above, whereas in some surveys adults were considered to be those aged 18 and above. Because the respondent profile is different, this may also have contributed to the difference in estimates. Other factors that may explain the differences are survey design, coverage, questions, mode of administration, survey purpose, cultural differences and differences in attitude towards LGB individuals in these countries.



Table 7 **Comparison of LGB estimates; international surveys**

Survey <sup>1</sup>	Country	Year	LGB proportion of population (percentages)	Sample Size	Non response (percentages)
Integrated Household Survey	UK	2009/2010	1.5	247,623	3.3
Norwegian Living Conditions Survey	Norway	2010	1.2	6,238	8.5
Oregon Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System	USA	2006	2.4	9,853	2.3
Canadian Community Health Survey	Canada	2005	2.0	132,947	1.6
California Health Interview Survey	USA	2005	4.1	12,571	1.8
North Dakota Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System	USA	2004	1.0	3,045	3.8
National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey	USA	2003/2004	3.1	10,122	0.7
Vermont Behavioural Risk Factor Surveillance System	USA	2002	4.6	4,239	6.8

<sup>1</sup> The seven international surveys are primarily health surveys, while the IHS is a general, multi-purpose survey. This could be a major factor in explaining any differences the estimates.

As in the UK, deriving an individuals sexual orientation from a suite of questions results in higher LGB estimates in the US compared with using a single sexual identity question. In the US, about 5 per cent reported to be gay or lesbian in US Voter News Service exit polls in 1996 and 2000. About 6 per cent of a national sample of Americans identified as gay or lesbian in Yankelovich Monitor Research (1994) while Laumann et al found the incidence of same sex attraction was just over 7 per cent of both men and women in the USA. Janus and Janus (1993) found that 9 per cent of men and 5 per cent of women identified themselves as gay or lesbian<sup>11</sup>.

Direct comparisons cannot be made between the IHS and the others surveys from the US, Canada and Norway due to differences in methodology. It is therefore not surprising that findings are different.

<sup>11</sup> Final Regulatory Impact Assessment: Civil Partnership Act 2004

## 6. Characteristics of those identifying as a lesbian, gay or bisexual

As well as providing statistics on the overall proportion of the LGB population who identify as LGB the IHS dataset provides a potentially rich source of information on the characteristics of the LGB population. In its first year, the data and analysis are limited due to small sample size. As such, the tables below provide an initial picture of the LGB population based on the experimental IHS dataset.

Unless stated otherwise, results in this section are for the UK and apply to adults aged 16 and over. Results apply to the survey period April 2009 to March 2010.

Since the data is obtained from a sample of the population, they are subject to sampling error (see Box 2 on IHS for more details). Whilst the IHS provides a large population sample, the proportion of the population who identify as LGB is small (1.5 per cent). Due to the small proportion of LGB respondents any disaggregation by other characteristics has to be interpreted with caution. Please refer to IHS User Guide 1 2010 or Appendix 2 of the IHS 2010.

### Equality strands (age, gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status)

The IHS dataset provides a wealth of information on equality characteristics.

A breakdown of sexual identity by each equality strand (age, gender, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status) can be found in tables 8-12 below<sup>12</sup>.

#### Key findings

- In April 2009 to March 2010, people (aged 16 and over) who identified as LGB had a younger age distribution than heterosexuals – 64.9 per cent were aged under 45 compared with 48.6 per cent of people who identify as heterosexual
- A higher proportion of men than women identified as LGB (54.6 per cent compared with 45.4 per cent). However, women were much more likely to identify themselves as bisexual than gay/lesbian. Of those who identified themselves as gay/lesbian, only one-third were women (33.8 per cent) and two-thirds were men (66.2 per cent), whereas more than two-thirds (68.2 per cent) of bisexuals were women, and one-third (31.8 per cent) who were men.
- People who identified as LGB were less likely to identify with a religion than heterosexuals. One-third (33.5 per cent) of LGB respondents, said that they did not identify with a religion. This compares with one-fifth (20.4 per cent) of heterosexual or straight respondents.

<sup>12</sup> Data on Transgender is not collected on ONS social surveys. <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/measuring-equality/equality/equality-data-review/trans-data-position-paper.pdf>

The question on Disability is not harmonised across IHS constituent surveys so not included in analysis tables in this publication.

- A higher proportion of gay/lesbian people were in the managerial and professional classifications (49.1 per cent) than heterosexuals (30.6%) or bisexuals (28.1%). A higher proportion of bisexual people had never worked or were long-term unemployed than either gay, lesbian or heterosexual respondents.

**Table 8 Sexual identity by age group, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages				Total (Thousands) (=100%)
	16–24	25–44	45–64	65+		
Heterosexual/Straight	14.5	34.1	31.8	19.6	46,922	
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	18.4	46.5	26.9	8.2	727	
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	16.9	49.9	27.3	5.9	481	
<i>Bisexual</i>	21.1	39.9	26.2	12.7	245	
Other	11.1	32.9	30.4	25.6	242	
Don't know / Refusal	20.6	29.0	25.9	24.5	1,394	
Non response	35.2	34.7	25.6	4.5	233	

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

**Table 9 Sexual identity by sex, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages		Total (Thousands) (=100%)
	Male	Female		
Heterosexual/Straight	48.7	51.3	46,922	
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	54.6	45.4	727	
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	66.2	33.8	481	
<i>Bisexual</i>	31.8	68.2	245	
Other	46.2	53.8	242	
Don't know / Refusal	47.8	52.2	1,394	
Non response	59.1	40.9	233	

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Table 10 **Sexual identity by ethnicity<sup>1</sup>, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages	
	White	Other ethnic group	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	90.7	9.3	46,922
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	93.5	6.5	727
Other	85.9	14.1	242
Don't know / Refusal	81.8	18.2	1,394
Non response	85.3	14.7	233

1 "Which ethnic group do you consider yourself to belong to?"

2 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Table 11 **Sexual identity by religion, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages	
	Religion	No religion	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	79.6	20.4	45,643
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	66.5	33.5	714
Other	77.4	22.6	236
Don't know / Refusal	80.5	19.5	1,320
Non response	78.4	21.6	219

1 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 235,220.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Table 12 **Sexual identity by socio-economic classification, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages				
	Managerial and professional occupations	Intermediate occupations	Routine and manual occupations	Never worked and long term unemployed	Not classified	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	30.6	16.2	29.4	6.0	17.7	41,038
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	42.1	14.7	23.0	5.0	15.2	641
Gay/Lesbian	49.1	13.7	20.9	3.1	13.2	428
Bisexual	28.1	16.7	27.1	8.9	19.2	213
Other	23.2	14.5	31.1	9.4	21.8	213
Don't know / Refusal	24.4	13.5	23.0	9.9	29.1	1,290
Non response	15.9	8.2	12.1	7.8	56.1	227

1 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 221,936.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

## Education and Employment

Tables 13 and 14 below provide information on highest qualification and economic activity respectively.

Key findings:

- In April 2009 to March 2010, people (aged 16 and over) who identified themselves as gay or lesbian tended to be educated to a higher level than those who identified as either heterosexual or bisexual
- 38.1 per cent of gay/lesbian respondents were educated to degree level or higher, compared with 23.5 per cent of Bisexual respondents and 21.9 per cent of heterosexual respondents
- 11.8 per cent of gay/lesbian respondents had qualifications above A' level or equivalent but below degree level, such as NVQ level 4. This compares with 9.5 per cent of heterosexual respondents and 8.6 per cent of bisexual respondents
- At the other end of the educational scale, heterosexuals were more likely to have no formal qualifications - 13.2 per cent of heterosexual respondents had no formal qualifications. This compares with 12.3 per cent of bisexual respondents and just 5.7 per cent of gay/lesbian respondents.

Table 13 **Sexual identity by highest qualification, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom

Percentages

	Degree level qualification, or equivalent	Higher education qualification <sup>1</sup>	A level or equivalent	O level, GCSE or equivalent (Grades A* to C)	Other qualifications <sup>2</sup>	No formal qualifications	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	21.9	9.5	14.9	21.0	19.6	13.2	40,447
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	33.3	10.8	15.4	17.6	14.9	7.9	691
Gay/Lesbian	38.1	11.8	14.5	17.1	12.8	5.7	465
Bisexual	23.5	8.6	17.4	18.8	19.4	12.3	226
Other	21.3	8.0	12.0	18.0	20.6	20.0	194
Don't know / Refusal	21.7	7.3	14.1	21.3	18.1	17.4	1,116
Non response	19.5	7.7	23.9	24.3	14.2	10.4	228

<sup>1</sup> Below degree level but including National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4.

<sup>2</sup> Including O level and GCSE qualifications below Grade C.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 194,680.

Source: Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

These differences in educational attainment are reflected in the findings from the IHS on both employment and socio-economic class. Table 14 shows that:

- More than two-thirds (68.6 per cent) of heterosexual/straight respondents aged 16 to 64 were in employment compared with a slightly higher estimate for gay/lesbian respondents (74.8 per cent) and a lower estimate for bisexual respondents (63.0 per cent)

- Gay/lesbian and heterosexual/straight respondents had similar unemployment rates (8.4 per cent and 8.6 per cent respectively) whereas bisexual respondents had a higher unemployment rate at 12.6 per cent
- Almost one-quarter (24.8 per cent) of heterosexual respondents were economically inactive, compared with 27.8 per cent of bisexual respondents and 18.4 per cent of those aged 16 to 64 who identified as LGB

**Table 14 Sexual identity by economic activity status<sup>1</sup>, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages		
	In Employment (16–64) <sup>2</sup>	Unemployment (16+) <sup>2</sup>	Economically inactive <sup>2</sup> (16–64)	
Heterosexual/Straight	68.6	8.6	24.8	
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	71.0	9.6	21.4	
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	74.8	8.4	18.4	
<i>Bisexual</i>	63.0	12.6	27.8	
Other	60.5	13.5	29.9	
Don't know / Refusal	62.9	9.8	30.2	
Non response	71.4	11.7	19.1	

1 The headline employment and inactivity rates are based on the population aged 16–64 but the headline unemployment rate is based on the economically active population aged 16 and over. The employment and inactivity rates for those aged 16 and over are affected by the inclusion of the retired population in the denominators and are therefore less meaningful than the rates for those aged 16–64. However, for the unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over, no such effect occurs as the denominator for the unemployment rate is the economically active population which only includes people in work or actively seeking and able to work.

2 The data do not sum to 100 per cent because 'in employment' and 'economically inactive' are calculated using a different base than 'unemployment'.

3 The estimates of economic activity rates in this table exclude proxy responses and, therefore, will differ from those from the Annual Population Survey (APS) or Labour Force Survey (LFS) which provide the National Statistics for employment, unemployment and inactivity estimates.

4 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

## Household

Heterosexual or bisexual respondents were much more likely to be in a formally registered relationship such as marriage or civil partnership than those who identify as gay or lesbian<sup>13</sup> (see table 15). The data show that:

- Around half (48.2 per cent) of the heterosexual respondents were married and living with their spouse, compared with one-fifth (19.1 per cent) of those who identified as LGB
- 11.8 per cent of those respondents who identified as LGB were, or had previously been, in a legally recognised Civil Partnership

Table 15 **Sexual identity by legal marital status, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom	Percentages						
	Single (never married)	Married, living with spouse	Married, separated from spouse	Divorced	Widowed	Currently or previously in a civil partnership	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/straight	32.5	48.2	3.0	9.1	7.2	<0.1	46,922
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	61.7	19.1	1.3	5.4	0.7	11.8	727
Other	36.9	40.5	4.3	7.5	10.2	0.6	242
Don't know / Refusal	41.1	35.9	3.2	7.5	12.1	0.1	1,394
Non response	52.3	40.9	1.3	4.3	1.0	0.2	233

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

People (aged 16 and over) who were not married and living with their spouse or in a current civil partnership were then asked whether or not they were living with another person as part of a couple. Table 16 shows that a higher proportion of gay/lesbian and bisexual respondents who were not in a current civil partnership or married and living with their spouse were living with someone as a couple compared with heterosexuals. The data show that:

- 45.8 per cent of gay/lesbian and bisexual respondents not in a current civil partnership or married and living with their spouse lived as part of a couple

<sup>13</sup> There was a discrepancy in that some individuals reported to be heterosexual but also that they were in a same-sex civil partnership at this question. This occurred in a very small proportion of respondents (of less than 0.1 per cent) but it raises questions of whether some individuals are misinterpreting either the terms heterosexual or civil partnership.

- 34.6 per cent of heterosexual respondents not married and living with their spouse lived as part of a couple

Table 16 **Sexual identity by whether or not cohabiting, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages	
	<b>Cohabiting</b>	<b>Not cohabiting</b>	<b>Total (Thousands) (=100%)</b>
Heterosexual/Straight	34.6	65.4	15,461
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	45.8	54.2	318
Other	23.5	76.5	72
Don't know / Refusal	17.2	82.8	514
Non response	20.2	79.8	136

1 People living as a couple who are not married to each other or in a civil partnership together.

2 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 62,355.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Similar proportions of heterosexual and bisexual respondents lived in households where one or more dependent children were present, but a lower percentage of gay or lesbian respondents lived in households where dependent children were present:

- 34.1 per cent of heterosexual respondents lived in a household with at least one dependent child present
- 8.6 per cent of gay or lesbian respondents lived in a household with at least one dependent child present
- 30 per cent of bisexual respondents lived in a household with at least one dependent child present



Table 17 **Sexual identity by whether or not there are dependent children<sup>1</sup> in the household, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom		Percentages	
	Dependent children in the household	No dependent children in the household	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	34.1	65.9	46,922
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	15.8	84.2	727
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	8.6	91.4	481
<i>Bisexual</i>	30.0	70.0	245
Other	26.9	73.1	242
Don't know / Refusal	28.5	71.5	1,394
Non response	40.4	59.6	233

1 A dependent child is a child under the age of 16 or under the age of 18 and in full time education and living in a family with their parent(s).

2 The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

## Health

The IHS asks a selection of questions concerning health. Table 18 shows that similar proportions of adults who identified as LGB and adults who identified as heterosexual were likely to report being in perceived good health:

- 78.8 per cent of heterosexual respondents aged 16 and over felt they were in good health, compared with 78.1 per cent of LGB respondents
- However, 80.4 per cent of gay and lesbian respondents said that they were in good health compared with 73.6 per cent of bisexual respondents

**Table 18 Sexual identity by whether or not in perceived good health, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Yes	No	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	78.8	21.2	42,031
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	78.1	21.9	651
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	80.4	19.6	432
<i>Bisexual</i>	73.6	26.4	219
Other	72.8	27.2	212
Don't know / Refusal	74.5	25.5	1,156
Non response	86.5	13.5	152

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 197,163.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

Adults aged 18 and over who identified as LGB were more likely to be smokers, or to have smoked in the past, than those who identified as heterosexual or straight:

- 22.7 per cent of heterosexual respondents reported to currently smoke cigarettes and 34.9 per cent as ex-smokers. In comparison, 33.3 per cent of people who identified as LGB currently smoked and 32.4 per cent were ex-smokers
- 42.4 per cent of adults who identified as heterosexual have never smoked, compared with 34.3 per cent of people who identified as LGB
- Adults aged 18 and over who identified as bisexual were less likely to smoke than those who identified as gay or lesbian: 39.8 per cent of bisexual respondents had never smoked compared with 31.5 per cent of gay and lesbian respondents

**Table 19 Sexual identity by whether or not smokes cigarettes, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom	Percentages			
	Currently smokes cigarettes	Ex-smoker	Never smoked	Total (Thousands) (=100%)
Heterosexual/Straight	22.7	34.9	42.4	40,689
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual	33.3	32.4	34.3	637
<i>Gay/Lesbian</i>	35.0	33.5	31.5	423
<i>Bisexual</i>	30.0	30.2	39.8	214
Other	26.7	28.9	44.3	207
Don't know / Refusal	19.2	30.1	50.7	1,089
Non response	22.2	27.2	50.6	143

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 195,160.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

## Geography

Table 20 below shows the proportions of the population who identify as LGB within each Government Office Region in England and constituent countries of the UK. We do not recommend analysis below GOR due to small sample sizes. Sub-regional estimates are likely to be available from 2012 at the earliest through pooling data across a number of years.

**Table 20 Sexual identity by Government Office Region in England and countries of the UK, April 2009 to March 2010**

United Kingdom	Percentages				
	Heterosexual/ Straight	Gay/Lesbian/ Bisexual	Other	Don't know / Refusal	Non response
North East	96.7	1.1	0.5	1.3	0.4
North West	95.5	1.5	0.3	2.2	0.4
Yorkshire and The Humber	95.4	1.5	0.5	2.1	0.4
East Midlands	96.0	1.1	0.4	2.3	0.3
West Midlands	93.3	1.2	0.7	4.3	0.5
East of England	95.0	1.1	0.4	3.2	0.3
London	92.3	2.2	0.6	4.2	0.6
South East	94.7	1.5	0.6	2.8	0.5
South West	95.4	1.8	0.4	2.0	0.4
Wales	95.6	1.3	0.4	1.9	0.8
Scotland	95.7	1.3	0.3	2.0	0.6
Northern Ireland	92.4	0.9	0.4	5.3	1.0
<b>Total (Thousands) (=100%)</b>	46,922	727	242	1,394	233

<sup>1</sup> The total number of eligible responders to this question was 238,206.

Source: *Integrated Household Survey, Office for National Statistics*

### Key findings

- London had the largest proportion of adults identifying as LGB (2.2 per cent), followed by the South West, at 1.8 per cent
- In both Wales and Scotland 1.3 per cent of respondents identified as LGB
- Northern Ireland had the lowest proportion of adults identifying as LGB in the UK at just 0.9 per cent

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## 7. Conclusion

The publication of the first year's data on sexual identity marks a key achievement in improving equality statistics. It addresses one of the gaps identified in the ONS-led Equality Data Review in 2007 and provides important statistical evidence in support of the equality agenda.

The introduction of the sexual identity question on the IHS in January 2009 followed rigorous testing and feasibility testing by ONS. The findings of this report suggest its implementation on the IHS in the first year has been a success.

The IHS results for April 2009 to March 2010 show one and a half percent of the population identify as LGB. This is based on a measure of self perceived sexual identity, that is how individuals think of themselves. This estimate is broadly consistent with other comparable surveys in the UK, which suggests it provides a reliable benchmark. There may be differences with estimates from surveys which measure other aspects of sexual orientation such as behaviour and attraction.

There is no evidence of an adverse impact on response rates confirming the general acceptance of the question. Our analysis suggests response rates are broadly in line with earlier quantitative testing. Non response to the question was low with less than 4 per cent of eligible respondents refusing to answer, saying they did not know the answer or not providing a response.

An initial analysis of the characteristics of those identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual shows that the LGB population have a younger age distribution than heterosexuals. Those who identified as gay or lesbian were more likely to be men whereas those who identified as bisexual were more likely to be women. Those who identify as gay or lesbian were more likely to be in managerial or professional classifications, employed and qualified to a higher degree. Similar proportions of those who identify as LGB and heterosexuals were in perceived good health although the former were more likely to smoke, or have smoked in the past.

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