

Sexual orientation and gender identity quality information for Census 2021

Known quality information affecting sexual orientation and gender identity data from Census 2021 in England and Wales to help users correctly interpret the statistics.

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1 . Quality information

Corrected "pansexual" figures

Some responses to the sexual orientation question that should have been coded to "All other sexual orientations" in the detailed classification were incorrectly coded to "Pansexual". This error did not affect estimates using the standard six-category "checkbox" census outputs classification (SO_6A) for sexual orientation but did affect estimates using the nine-category detailed classification (SO_9A) used in the [Sexual orientation estimates in the England and Wales Census 2021 statistical bulletin](#) and in our [Sexual Orientation \(detailed\) dataset \(TS079\)](#).

In November 2023, we published two new datasets containing corrected figures:

- [Corrected sexual orientation \(9 categories\), category totals only, geographic areas in England and Wales](#)
- [Sexual orientation \(9 categories\) by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

We also published a dataset allowing users to see the difference between the correct and original data:

- [Sexual orientation detailed comparison of correct and original data, England and Wales Census 2021](#)

Links to these datasets are provided in the affected products.

The corrected figures show that for England and Wales:

- The estimate for "Pansexual" is 48,000 rather than 112,400 as originally published.
- The estimate for "All other sexual orientations" is 74,600 rather than 10,200 as originally published.

Figures for all other groups in this nine-category classification are unchanged. Figures for all groups shown in the standard six-category classification are unchanged, including the "All other sexual orientations" category in that classification.

Corrected figures were produced by using write-in responses to recode records initially coded to "Pansexual". The 6,700 records in this group created through the undercoverage adjustment did not have a write-in response and have been assumed to be correctly coded as "All other sexual orientations".

Reliability of estimates

We have published a final summary of our recent investigations into the quality of census data from the gender identity question and further planned research into this topic. For more information, please see our [Quality of Census 2021 gender identity data](#).

While there are no previous directly comparable estimates available, the estimates are considered broadly in line with other data on gender identity. All census estimates contain a degree of statistical uncertainty as described in the Section 6 of our [Quality and methodology information \(QMI\) for Census 2021](#). This uncertainty will be proportionately higher for relatively small population groups such as those who report a gender identity different to their sex registered at birth. This relative uncertainty will increase if the population group is further broken down by geographic area or other characteristics.

Not answered

As sexual orientation and gender identity were voluntary questions in the census, missing values on census responses were legitimate responses. So, (unlike with mandatory questions) we did not impute values to replace those missing on received responses. This means that these questions include a "not answered" category in standard outputs. Any write-in responses that did not relate to the question were coded as if the question had not been answered. Take care to not confuse between proportions of all people aged 16 years and over falling in a particular category and proportions of all people aged 16 years and over who answered the question falling in that category.

Data collection and coding

As with all census questions, the questions on sexual orientation and gender identity were tested thoroughly as described in our [Sexual orientation question development for Census 2021](#) and [Sex and gender identity question development for Census 2021](#). The final questions collected information on these topics using a combination of tickboxes.

Answers for these questions did not always correspond to well-defined concepts and write-in answers have been coded, both automatically and manually, to categories shown in published tables. While overall estimates for both these topics are consistent with other available sources it is possible that the comparability of individuals' responses was affected by different interpretations of the questions and that proxy responses for these sensitive topics may be less accurate than for other topics. A proxy response is where someone has answered the census questions on behalf of someone else.

Student adjustment for sexual orientation and gender identity

An adjustment made to improve the estimation of students living at their term-time address will have slightly increased the proportion of "Not answered" and decreased proportions of other categories. Take care when interpreting data for 18- to 22-year-olds or, specifically, full-time students. Other than this, the effect of this adjustment should not materially affect analysis of these topics.

Age and geographical distributions

Census data on sexual orientation and gender identity show age and geographical patterns which may affect relationships between these topics and topics such as education, employment, health and housing. In particular, people who report a sexual orientation other than 'straight/heterosexual' and people who report a gender identity different from sex registered at birth are more likely than average to be younger and to live in urban areas. You should be aware of these factors when drawing conclusions from the census estimates for these topics.

Topic summary feedback

Tell us what you think about this publication by [answering a few questions](#).

2 . Related links

[Quality and methodology information Census 2021](#)

QMI | Updated 9 December 2022

Details the data strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used for Census 2021, England and Wales.

[How we quality assured the census population estimates](#)

Methodology | Released 7 November 2022

Methodology for the validation of Census 2021 population estimates for England and Wales, including the assurance of processes, assessment of estimates, and involvement of local authorities.

[Sexual orientation and gender identity variables Census 2021](#)

Supporting information | Released 4 January 2023

Variables and classifications used in Census 2021 data about sexual orientation and gender identity.

3 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 6 January 2023, ONS website, methodology, [Sexual orientation and gender identity quality information for Census 2021](#).

