

Socioeconomic profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual population, 2015 to 2018

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Statistics Canada began collecting data on sexual orientation using the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) in 2003. Previous analysis focused on topics such as health and victimization, leaving a gap in available socioeconomic information about the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population.

Released today, a new data table presents a selection of variables of the population aged 15 and older by sexual orientation (lesbian or gay, bisexual or heterosexual). The table leverages Statistics Canada's existing data holdings, using pooled cycles of the CCHS (2015/2016 and 2017/2018) to highlight the profile of the LGB population in Canada (see note to readers).

The table presents socioeconomic characteristics, including marital status, the presence of children under the age of 12 in the household, education level, employment, household income, Indigenous identity, belonging to a population group designated as a visible minority group, language and place of residence, and can be broken down by sex, age group and region.

The LGB population is younger than the heterosexual population

According to CCHS data from 2015 to 2018, an estimated 900,000 Canadians were lesbian, gay, or bisexual, representing 3.3% of the population aged 15 and older. Within this group, a slightly larger proportion identified as bisexual than lesbian or gay (1.8% versus 1.5%). Women were more than twice as likely to identify as bisexual than lesbian or gay (2.4% versus 1.1%) and men were more likely to identify as gay than bisexual (1.9% versus 1.2%).

The LGB population was younger than the heterosexual population. Youth (aged 15 to 24) comprised 18.3% of the lesbian or gay population aged 15 and older, compared with 13.7% of the heterosexual population. Bisexual men and women (36.2%) were 2.5 times more likely to be aged 15 to 24 than their heterosexual counterparts (13.7%).

Bisexual women were proportionally younger than bisexual men. Among bisexual women aged 15 and older, 39.4% were aged 15 to 24 compared with 29.6% among bisexual men. Similarly, young women made up one-fifth (21.1%) of lesbian or gay women compared with 16.7% of gay men.

Upcoming series on LGB population

The table released today is the first statistical product among a series of analyses focusing on the LGB population. Four articles will be released over the course of 2021 to highlight the characteristics of lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual men and women on the following themes: families and households, linguistic and ethnocultural diversity, education, and labour. The data table and upcoming series will provide key data to inform planning, policies, and community-based research initiatives by offering insight into the LGB population.



Note to readers

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) is a cross-sectional survey that collects information related to the health status, health care use and health determinants for the Canadian population. The CCHS covers the population aged 12 and older living in the 10 provinces and the 3 territories. With a sample of 130,000 respondents every two years, it is a single data source for research on smaller populations such as LGB Canadians.

The table presents pooled data from the 2015/2016 and 2017/2018 survey cycles. The weights of the two two-year cycles were divided by two to represent the total average population over the four years. The CCHS sexual orientation variable contained three response category options: heterosexual (sexual relations with people of the opposite sex), homosexual, that is lesbian or gay (sexual relations with people of your own sex), and bisexual (sexual relations with people of both sexes). In the 2019 and subsequent cycles of the CCHS, the definitional text is omitted from these categories, and an additional response category is included for respondents to specify a sexual orientation beyond these three. As a result of this change in reporting methodology and its impacts on the comparability of sexual orientation data, data from the 2019 CCHS data were not included in the table.

Available tables: table [13-10-0817-01](#).

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3226](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).