

Study: Labour and economic characteristics of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in Canada

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A new article released today using data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2015 to 2018) examines the labour and economic characteristics of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people in Canada. Employment and income, as well as challenges stemming from financial hardship, are key social determinants affecting the health and quality of life of individuals.

Bisexual individuals earn significantly lower employment incomes than their heterosexual and gay or lesbian counterparts

This study examined the before-tax annual employment incomes of individuals aged 25 to 64 years who worked full-time. The median employment income of bisexual individuals (\$39,200) was significantly lower than that of their heterosexual (\$55,000) and gay or lesbian (\$50,100) counterparts.

Heterosexual men (\$61,400) earned the highest median income overall, followed by gay men (\$51,400). Bisexual men (\$39,400) had the lowest median employment income among men. Lesbian women (\$48,600) and heterosexual women (\$47,300) earned similar median incomes, while bisexual women (\$38,500) had the lowest median employment income.

A gender disparity in employment income was seen only between heterosexual men and heterosexual women (\$61,400 versus \$47,300). There was no statistically significant difference in earnings between gay men and lesbian women, nor between bisexual men and bisexual women.

Among full-time workers aged 25 to 64 years, bisexual people (38 years) were younger on average than their gay or lesbian (41 years) and heterosexual (43 years) counterparts. The younger average age of the bisexual population suggests that they were likely in earlier stages of their careers, which may be a factor in the lower employment incomes seen among bisexual men and bisexual women.

Heterosexual women and bisexual women are less likely to be employed than lesbian women, heterosexual men and gay men

Among the population aged 25 to 64 years, heterosexual men (83.8%), lesbian women (83.7%) and gay men (80.5%) were the most likely to be employed full-time or part-time. A lower proportion of bisexual men (77.7%) were employed, followed by heterosexual women (74.0%) and bisexual women (68.1%).

Women of all sexual orientations and gay men are more likely than heterosexual men to work in sales and service jobs, as well as in business, finance and administration occupations

Among full-time and part-time workers aged 25 to 64 years, women of all sexual orientations and gay men were more likely than heterosexual men to work in sales and service occupations, which are among the lowest-paid occupations. Compared with 16.3% of heterosexual men, around one-quarter of women across all sexual orientations and gay men worked in sales and service occupations.

When it came to business, finance and administration occupations, women of all sexual orientations and gay men were approximately twice as likely as heterosexual men to work in these occupations.



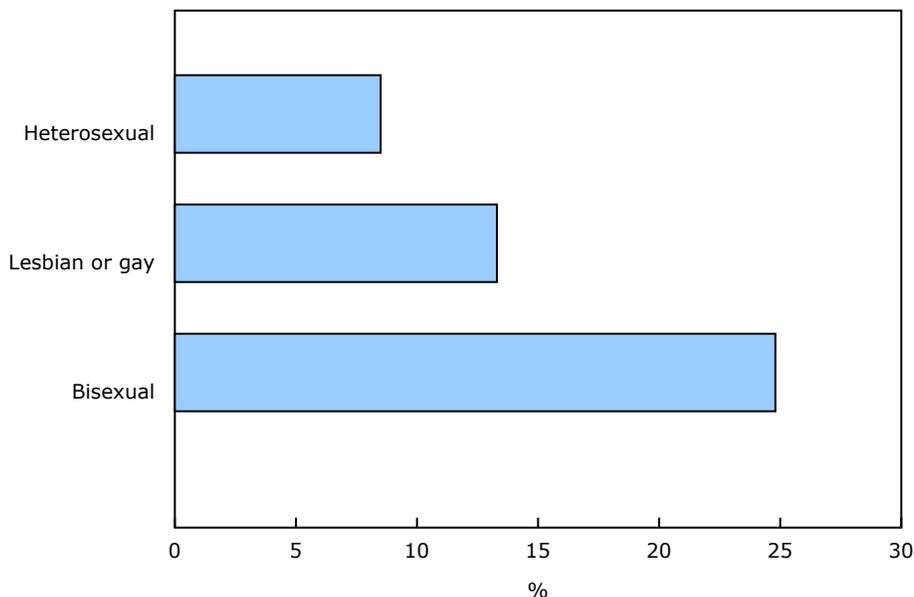
One-quarter (25.2%) of heterosexual men worked in trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations—a higher proportion than that observed among all other groups studied. Gay men, lesbian women and bisexual women were less likely than heterosexual men and bisexual men to work in these occupations, the lowest proportion being among heterosexual women (2.0%).

While occupational group, educational attainment and age are often used to explain income inequalities, the findings of this release suggest that these factors cannot entirely explain the differences seen in employment income. Indeed, heterosexual men working full-time in sales and service occupations earned higher incomes than both heterosexual women and LGB people in the same occupational group. Similarly, among full-time workers with the same level of education, heterosexual men tended to earn higher incomes than other groups studied. Among the younger population (aged 25 to 34 years), bisexual men and bisexual women with a bachelor's degree and above earned less than their heterosexual and gay or lesbian counterparts with the same educational attainment.

Bisexual people are almost three times more likely than heterosexual people and nearly twice as likely as gay or lesbian people to live in food-insecure households because of financial constraints

Household food insecurity occurs when a household's access to food is inadequate or precarious because of lack of money to buy food. Food insecurity is associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes. Among the population aged 15 years and older, one-quarter (24.8%) of bisexual people and one in eight (13.3%) gay or lesbian individuals experienced food insecurity in their household in the previous 12 months. In comparison, 8.5% of heterosexual people experienced household food insecurity in the same period.

Chart 1
Household food insecurity (moderate or severe) in previous 12 months, by sexual orientation, population aged 15 and older, 2015 to 2018



Note(s): All differences between sexual orientation groups are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).
Source(s): Canadian Community Health Survey (3226).

Low wages and precarious employment may result in the inability to afford enough food or a sufficient variety of food. Despite their work status, employed LGB people aged 25 to 64 years, bisexual people in particular, were significantly more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to live in a household that experienced food insecurity in the previous 12 months.

Note to readers

The article is part of a series intended to fill a gap in socioeconomic data on the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population in Canada. Based on pooled data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (2015 to 2018), the series includes a [data table on the socioeconomic characteristics of the LGB population](#), and the articles "[Family and household characteristics of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Canada](#)" and "[Educational participation and attainment of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Canada](#)." A forthcoming article will take a closer look at the ethnocultural diversity among the LGB population.

The sample for the portion of this study on employment income was restricted to people aged 25 to 64 years who were employed full-time in the week preceding the survey, with income from wages, salaries or self-employment over \$1,000 in the previous year. All income estimates averaged over the 2015 to 2018 period were expressed as 2015 constant dollars. Amounts presented have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Income-related household food security status was measured using the 18-item Household Food Security Survey Module. Household food insecurity in the previous 12 months was defined as moderate or severe. Food security data were not available for Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Yukon from 2015 to 2016. Data from 2017 to 2018 for these regions were weighted to represent the four-year period.

Readers can refer to the survey documentation pages for additional methodological information about the [Canadian Community Health Survey – Annual Component](#).

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

The article "[Labour and economic characteristics of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Canada](#)," which is part of *Just the Facts* ([89280001](#)), is now available.

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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).