

Protected Characteristics Profile: Sexual Orientation

Purpose

This profile is one of nine, presenting quantitative (mainly through the Census) and qualitative (through locally run focus groups) data alongside desktop research. The purpose is to inform discussions about our local community.

Background

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination and unfair treatment in Britain; this is because of the Protected Characteristics they have. The Protected Characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

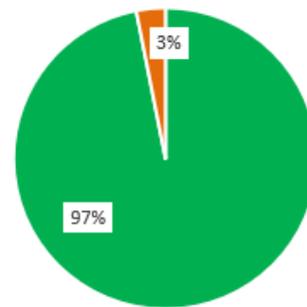
It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a Protected Characteristic. Sexual orientation discrimination is when a person is treated differently because of their sexual orientation in one of the situations covered by the Equality Act.¹

Key Points

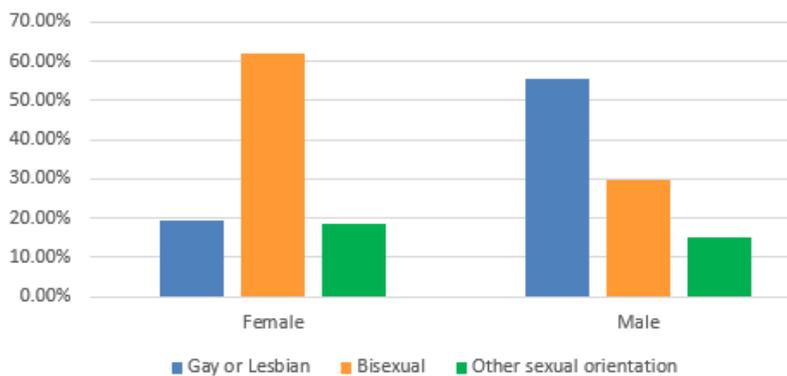
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In 2022, in Shetland, the majority (97%) of those who responded to the Census, stated their sexual orientation as heterosexual/straight, with 3% of respondents as gay or lesbian, bisexual, or another sexual orientation. This data is similar for Orkney, Western Isles, Highland, and Scotland as a whole.

Sexual Orientation of all People Aged 16 and over in Shetland



Percentage of people who reported in the Census as being Gay or Lesbian, Bisexual or Other Sexual Orientation, in 2022, by Gender in Shetland



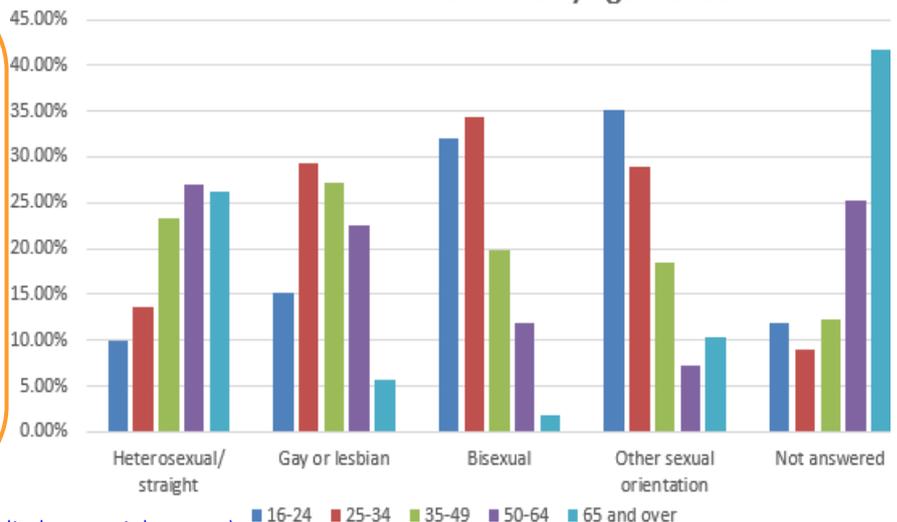
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In Shetland, among the gay or lesbian, bisexual and other sexual orientations, most females who responded to the Census said they were bisexual (62%), with most males (54%) stating that they were gay. This is similar to other rural areas and Scotland overall.

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In 2022, younger generations in Shetland were more likely to identify as LGBTQ+ in the Census, whereas older generations tended to identify as heterosexual or chose not to respond. While Scotland's highest percentage of bisexual individuals is in the 16-24 age group, Shetland's peak occurs in the 25-34 age group. Similarly, the 25-34 age group has the highest percentage of gay or lesbian individuals in both Shetland and Scotland.

Sexual Orientation in Shetland by Age in 2022



¹ [Sexual orientation discrimination | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/sexual-orientation-discrimination)

Data Sources: Scottish Census (2022);

Summary of Other Publications

Desk-top research of discrimination faced by individuals as a result of their sexual orientation highlights several key findings:

The UK is the 15th most inclusive country for LGBTI in 2024

In 2024, ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map ranked the UK 15th out of 49 countries, assessing laws and policies affecting LGBTI human rights. The UK scored well in family rights and civil society space but performed less strongly in areas like equality, hate crime, legal gender recognition, intersex rights, and asylum policies.

Hate Crime

Research from LGBT in Scotland: Hate Crime and Discrimination report by Stonewall Scotland 2017, reveals 20% of all LGBT people experienced a hate crime or incident due to their sexual orientation and / or gender identity; with almost half of trans people having experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity. 13% of LGBT people who visited a café, restaurant, bar or nightclub in the last 12 months stated they have experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation and / or gender identity. 87% of those who experienced hate crime, or an incident did not report it the police.

Discrimination and Less Fair Treatment at Work

Research from the Scottish LGBT Equality Report 2015 reveals 24% of respondents had personally experienced discrimination or harassment (22%) at work because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Fear of Prejudice

The Scottish LGBT Equality Report 2015 states that the majority of LGBT people in Scotland still never or only sometimes feel able to be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity with their own family (52%), at work (60%) or when accessing services (71%), for fear of the prejudice.

Health Disparities

Research from the Equality and Human Rights Monitor: Is Scotland Fairer report, reveals 69% of 289 trans and non-binary respondents had not been to a sexual health clinic in the last 2 years; 24% of this group said this was due to fear and anxieties relating to their gender identity. The report details that gay, lesbian and bisexual women face barriers accessing sexual health services; a health needs assessment of LGBT people found gay and lesbian women felt health professionals saw them as low risk and reluctant to do full sexually transmitted infection screenings; some bisexual women encountering staff making biphobic assumptions.

Employment

Research from LGBT in Scotland: Work Report by Stonewall Scotland, reveals one in six LGBT employees in Scotland in 2016 were subjected to negative comments or conduct from work colleagues in the previous year because they were LGBT. This increased to two in five trans-employees in 2017. One in seven (14%) LGBT employees in Scotland were excluded by colleagues for being LGBT, doubling to a third (32%) for trans employees and 20% for LGBT disabled employees.

Summary of Feedback from Local Focus Groups

A number of conversations were held with people in the local community, including members of the Pride Committee. To date, there has not been an opportunity to receive formal feedback. **However, efforts are ongoing as we continue to engage with this community and seek their input.**



Data Sources: [ILGA-Europe. \(2023\) Rainbow Europe Map: United Kingdom](#); [Stonewall Scotland \(2017\) LGBT in Scotland: Hate Crime](#); [Equality Network \(2015\) The Scottish LGBT Equality Report](#); [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(2023\) Equality and Human Rights Monitor 2023: Scotland – Fairer Scotland Duty](#); [Stonewall Scotland. \(2018\) LGBT in Scotland: Work Report](#).