

RAINBOW BRITAIN



**ATTRACTION, IDENTITY
AND CONNECTION IN
GREAT BRITAIN IN 2022**

WRITTEN BY NANCY KELLEY AND ROBBIE DE SANTOS

Stonewall

INTRODUCTION

For decades now, we have seen a steady increase in social acceptance of lesbian, gay and bi relationships, and steady increase in the percentage of the population who identify as lesbian, gay or bi. Measuring the trans population and attitudes to trans people through social surveys is a newer phenomenon, so we don't have the same longitudinal data.

This groundbreaking report using data from Ipsos UK paints a picture of a Britain that is becoming a Rainbow Nation.

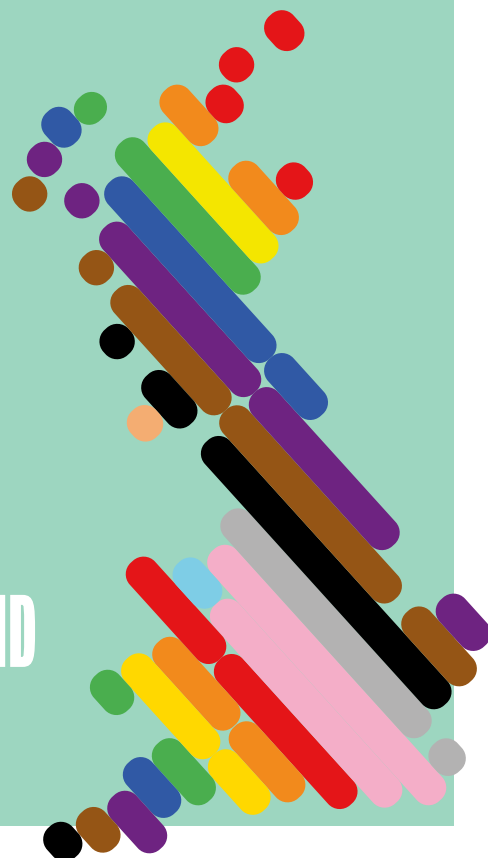
LGBTQ+ people, our lives and experiences are now more visible than they have ever been - in every community, and in all aspects of life, in Great Britain.

There are stark differences between the generations - with more younger people identifying as lesbian, gay, bi and trans. In Gen Z, only 71% of people identify as straight (compared to 91% of Baby Boomers), and 14% of people identify as bi or pansexual (compared to just 2% of Baby Boomers).

When we look beyond the label and ask about who people are attracted to, the picture is even more dramatic. Just 53% of Gen Z are exclusively straight, and 40% have a pattern of attraction that could be described as queer (ie outside the scope of exclusively heterosexual attractions between cisgender people). This suggests that in a single lifetime we may have travelled from a world in which lesbian, gay, bi and queer relationships were hidden and LGBTQ+ people were criminalised, to one in which we are a thriving and growing community.

And we are seen, known and loved by the community around us. Some 39% of the public have a personal friend or family member who is lesbian or gay, 22% have a personal friend or family member who is bi, and 9% have a personal friend or family member who is trans. As more lesbian, gay, bi and trans people feel safe to come out, we expect these numbers will only rise.

THIS IS OUR RAINBOW BRITAIN A SOCIETY IN WHICH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE ARE COMING OUT TO OURSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND US IN EVER GREATER NUMBERS, AND A WORLD IN WHICH EVERY COMMUNITY AND EVERY FAMILY IS BUILDING BONDS OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP WITH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE.



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METHOD

This data is taken from three surveys using Ipsos' online Omnibus. Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,150 Britons aged 16-75 10th-14th June. A second poll was conducted with a representative quota sample of 2,176 Britons aged 16-75 10th-13th June. A third poll was conducted with a representative quota sample of 2,187 Britons aged 16-75 5th-8th August 2022.

Data are weighted to match the profile of the offline population. All polls are subject to a wide range of potential sources of error.

Due to differences in methodology and question wording, figures on sexual orientation and identity and gender identity should not be seen as comparable with official statistics (below).

DATA ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION

The best quality currently available data on sexual orientation is collected as part of the Annual Population Survey (APS) and published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The APS only collects data on lesbian, gay and bi identities. The timeseries data shows a slow but steady increase in the percentage of the population who identify as lesbian or gay, and a more rapid increase in the percentage of the population who identify as bi.

The most recent data analysed by the Office for National Statistics is available here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2020>.

In 2021, the Census asked voluntary questions about both sexual orientation and gender identity. When this data is published, it will give us the best quality population estimates for LGBTQ+ identities.

CHAPTER 1

WHO ARE WE?

The typical way we all talk about sexual orientation in everyday life and in social research is to use categories and ask people which category best fits them. We ask people what their sexual orientation is.

WE ASKED ¹: WHICH, IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU IDENTIFY AS?

- Heterosexual / straight
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Lesbian
- Omnisexual
- Other (specify)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

When we ask the question in this way, the vast majority of the population (84%) tells us they are straight.²

The most common identity after straight is bi (5%), and an additional 1% of the population identify as pansexual.³ In total, 7% of us identify as having a sexual orientation that involves being attracted to people of more than one gender.

By comparison identifying as being gay (3%) or lesbian (1%) is much less common. This in itself is significant – most studies to date have shown the lesbian and gay population to be larger than the bi population.

Importantly, this data indicates that 2% of the population identify as asexual or ace. Asexual people experience little or no sexual attraction, and asexual activists are increasingly visible in their work to raise awareness and combat discrimination that targets their community.

1. Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,150 Britons aged 16-75 10th-14th June via their online panel.

2. Due to differences in methodology and question wording, figures on sexual orientation should not be seen as comparable with official statistics on sexual orientation.

3. The prefix pan- means "all", so pansexuality is an attraction to all gender identities or attraction regardless of gender identity, while bisexuality is the attraction to multiple gender identities.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND AGE

Age makes a very significant difference to the way in which people answer questions about their own sexual orientation. The data shows that younger generations are less likely to identify as straight. This suggests that younger people are more likely to feel comfortable coming out as being LGBTQ+.

	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY BOOMERS
STRAIGHT	71%	82%	87%	91%
BI	10%	7%	4%	2%
GAY	2%	3%	4%	3%
ACE	5%	2%	2%	*
PAN	4%	1%	1%	*
LESBIAN	3%	1*	*	*
OTHER	4%	*	1%	*
DON'T KNOW	1%	1%	1%	1%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	3%	2%	1%	2%

Only 71% of Gen Z identify as straight, compared to 91% of Baby Boomers. This is a rainbow generation.⁴

The percentage of people who identify as gay appears relatively similar across the generations in our data. However, Gen Z are more likely to identify as lesbian compared to the older generations (3% of Gen Z compared to less than 1% of Baby Boomers and Gen X). In addition, Gen Z are more likely to identify as ace (5% compared to just 2% of Gen X and less than 1% of Baby Boomers).

In Gen Z, 14% of our respondents identify as either bi (10%) or pan (4%). This suggests that being attracted to people of more than one gender is becoming more and more common compared to older generations (just 2% of Baby Boomers identify as bi and none surveyed identified as pan).

Why do we see these kinds of generational differences? Increases in the percentage of people who identify as something other than straight is observed in social surveys around the world. As societies become less hostile to LGBTQ+ people, and as LGBTQ+ people are more visible in public life, more and more of us feel comfortable coming out, and living our full lives.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ETHNICITY, SOCIAL CLASS AND EDUCATION

The size of our sample means that we can only make broad observations about the relationship between sexual orientation and ethnicity, social class and education.

When we look at ethnicity or measures of class position: social grade, education, employment, there does not appear to be any statistically significant differences by sexual orientation across any of these groups.

This is important because stories in the press and commentary in popular culture often suggest that coming out as LGBTQ+ is in some way an affectation of the more privileged in society. However, in our data there is no evidence of this – sexual orientation doesn't appear to be influenced by social class in any way.

4. In this survey, Generation Z are defined as those currently aged 16-26; Millennials are defined as those currently aged 27-42; Generation X are defined as those currently aged 43 to 56 and Baby Boomers are defined as those currently aged 56 to 75.

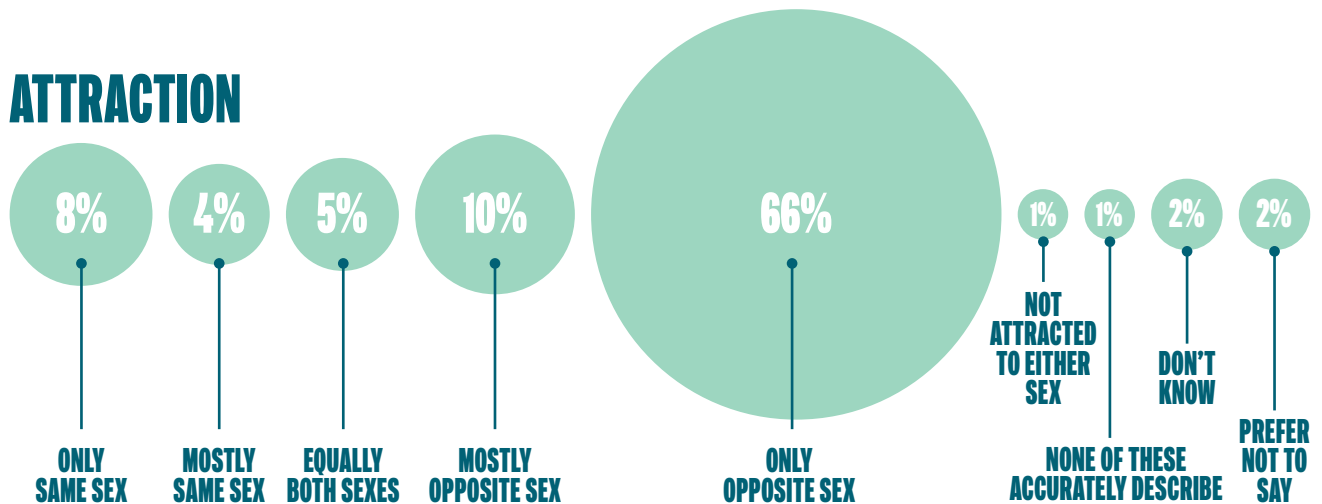
LOOKING BEYOND THE LABEL

What happens when we look beyond the label, and instead of asking people which sexual orientation they identify with, ask them who they find sexually attractive? The picture alters dramatically.

WE ASKED: WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING, BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU THINK OF YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

- Only attracted to the same sex
- Mostly attracted to the same sex
- Equally attracted to both sexes
- Mostly attracted to the opposite sex
- Only attracted to the opposite sex
- I am not attracted to either sex
- None of these accurately describe my sexual orientation
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

ATTRACTION



When we ask people to tell us about their sexual orientation: to tell us their label, 84% of the population tell us they are straight. But only 66% of us say we are exclusively attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Accounting for the small percentage of people who either don't know (2%) or prefer not to say (2%) who they are attracted to; this means that three in ten (29%) of the population is at least a little bit queer.

The percentage of people who say they are only attracted to people of the same sex is double the percentage who use the identity labels lesbian or gay (8% compared to a 4%). And the percentage of people who describe attractions that align with bi or pan sexual orientations is almost triple the percentage that use those labels (19% compared to 7%).

What does this mean? Firstly, it means that when we talk about LGBTQ+ lives and relationships, we are talking about a wider group than those who explicitly identify themselves as part of the community. This shouldn't be news: for example, the sexual health field has for years targeted 'men who have sex with men' as an audience, in order to deliver health promotion and health services to everyone who needs it. Secondly it gives us a clearer indication of the true pattern of sexual attraction in the population – a sense of how many people might one day come out in a world where discrimination against LGBTQ+ people didn't exist, and we were all free to live our lives.

SEXUAL ATTRACTION AND AGE

When we look beyond the label, we see a similar trend of younger people being more likely to report same-sex attraction. Only just over half of Gen Z (53%) are exclusively attracted to people of the opposite sex, compared to over three quarters (77%) of the Baby Boomers. Taking account of the 7% who don't know, or prefer not to say, two in five (40%) of the youngest people in our survey have attractions that are queer.

The percentage of people who say they are only attracted to people of the same sex is relatively stable across generations. Among our youngest cohort, just 7% of people say they feel this way, compared to 8% of the oldest cohort. But the percentage of people whose attractions align with bi- or pansexual orientations looks very different by age: 28% of Gen Z are attracted to both sexes, compared to just 11% of Baby Boomers.

	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY BOOMERS
ONLY SAME SEX	7%	7%	9%	8%
MOSTLY SAME SEX	7%	4%	3%	2%
EQUALLY BOTH SEXES	10%	8%	3%	2%
MOSTLY OPPOSITE SEX	11%	15%	8%	7%
ONLY OPPOSITE SEX	53%	61%	71%	77%
NOT ATTRACTED TO EITHER SEX	3%	1%	1%	1%
NONE OF THESE ACCURATELY DESCRIBE	2%	1%	1%	*
DON'T KNOW	4%	2%	2%	2%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	3%	1%	2%	2%

Looking across gender, ethnicity, social class and education, there does not appear to be any statistically significant differences by sexual attraction across any of these groups. Age therefore appears to be the most significant factor in shaping how likely people are to have some form of queer attraction.

GENDER IDENTITY

Estimates of the size of the trans population in the UK vary, and until the release of 2021 England and Wales Census analysis, none are based on data with a random probability sample. The best currently available estimates suggest that less than 1% of the UK population is trans, including non-binary people.

Canada is currently the only country in the world to release census data on the trans and non-binary population. The 2021 Canadian Census data show that trans and non-binary people make up 0.33% of the Canadian population aged over 16, and 0.2% of the population over 18. Put simply, that means that about 2 Canadian adults in a 1000 are trans or non-binary.

The total population estimate is likely to change over time because we can see that younger Canadians are more likely to be trans and non-binary than older Canadians.

'The proportions of transgender and non-binary people were three to seven times higher for Generation Z (0.79%) and millennials (0.51%) than for Generation X (0.19%), baby boomers (0.15%) and the Interwar and Greatest Generations (0.12%).'

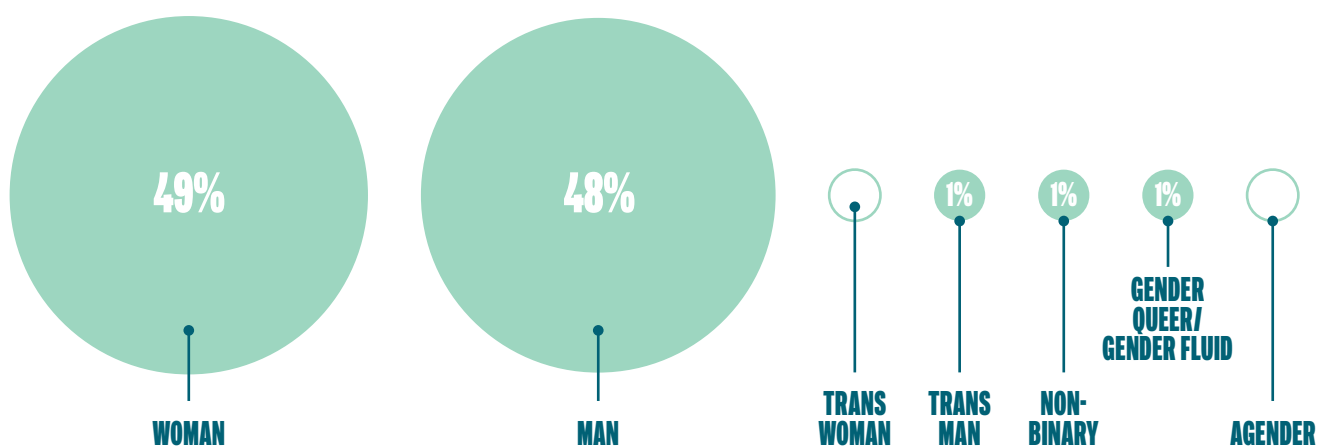
Statistics Canada, Census 2021

WE ASKED⁵ : WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU PERSONALLY USE TO DESCRIBE YOUR GENDER?

- Woman
- Man
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Non-binary
- Genderqueer/gender fluid
- Agender
- Another gender identity (please specify)
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify)
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

In our survey, the data indicates a slightly larger trans population, though the actual numbers are so small these differences are unlikely to be significant. The publication of the 2021 Census for England and Wales will give a more robust figure for the size of the trans population in England and Wales.

GENDER IDENTITY



4. Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,176 Britons aged 16-75 10th-13th June via their online panel.

CHAPTER 2

WHO DO WE KNOW (AND WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT?)

The day-to-day experience of LGBTQ+ people and the place we have in society is not only about how large our community is; it is also about how visible and interconnected we are in wider society.

Our Rainbow Britain is made up of LGBTQ+ people and all the people who know and care about us.

We asked a series of three questions designed to understand how well the public knows LGBTQ+ people⁶. We asked separately about bi people, because evidence suggests that bi people are much less likely to be out than lesbian and gay people, and consequently we might expect the general public to be less likely to know or be connected to openly bi people. We also asked separately about trans people because the trans population is very small, and only recently more visible to the public at large.

WE ASKED⁷: THINKING ABOUT LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?

THINKING ABOUT BI PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?

THINKING ABOUT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE, WHICH IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?

- I have met or encountered people like this
- As far as I know, I've never met or encountered someone like this
- I know of celebrities or people in the media like this
- I have acquaintances like this
- I have personal friends/family like this
- I myself am like this
- Don't know

6. LGBT in Britain: Work Report (2018) Stonewall. Data shows that 38% of bi people were not out to anyone in their workplace.

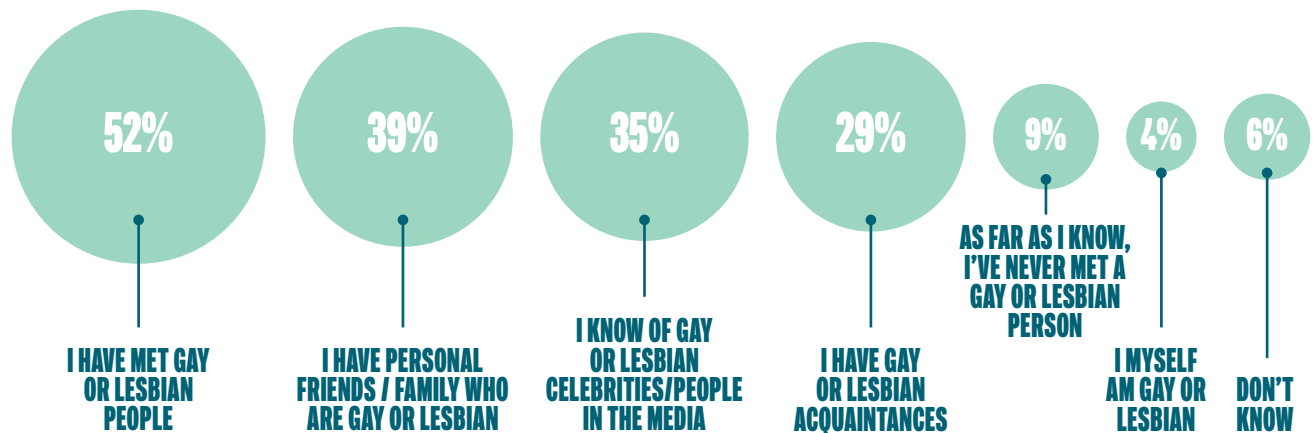
7. Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,187 Britons aged 16-75 5th-8th August via their online panel.

CONNECTIONS WITH LESBIAN AND GAY PEOPLE

Two in five (39%) have a personal friend or a family member who is lesbian or gay. Over half of the population (52%) have met a lesbian or gay person, just under a third (29%) have lesbian or gay acquaintances and 35% can think of lesbian or gay celebrities. This is unsurprising considering the number of gay people and lesbians who are now visible in public life.

Just one in 10 (9%) of the population have never to their knowledge met a lesbian or gay person.

CONNECTION



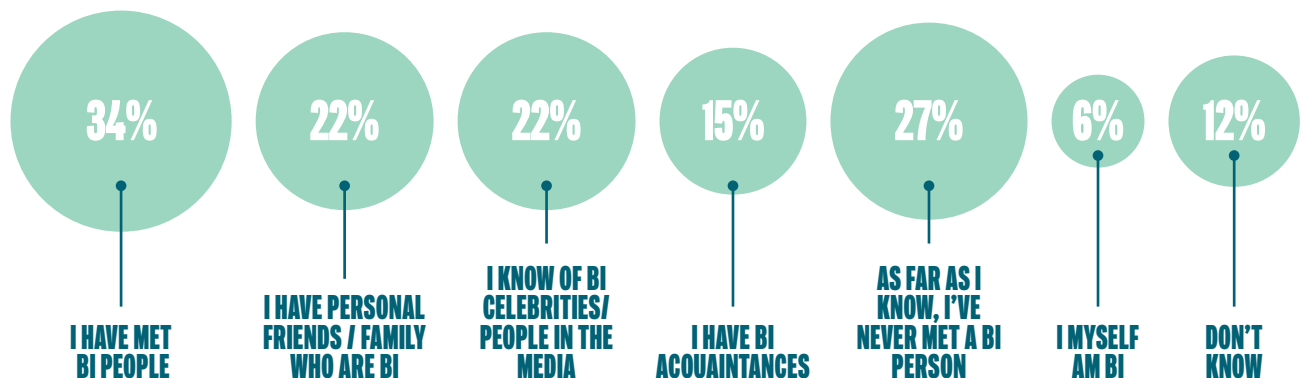
CONNECTIONS WITH BI PEOPLE

Despite being a larger and faster growing community than lesbian and gay people, bi people are less visible and less connected within wider communities.

Just over one in five (22%) of the public have a friend or family member who is bi, compared to two in five (39%) of people who said they have a lesbian or gay friend or family member. Only a third of the public (34%) say they have met bi people, compared to just over half who say they have met a lesbian or gay person. Bi people are even less visible in the media: just over a fifth (22%) of people know of a bi celebrity, compared to over a third (35%) who know of a lesbian or gay celebrity)

One potential explanation for these differences is that bi people are less likely to be out in key spaces like workplaces, so fewer people might know that their friends and acquaintances are bi. Another is that a key aspect of biphobia is not acknowledging bi people's identities, and viewing bi people as straight. This means that even when bi people are out in their public or private life, it isn't always recognised or respected.

CONNECTION



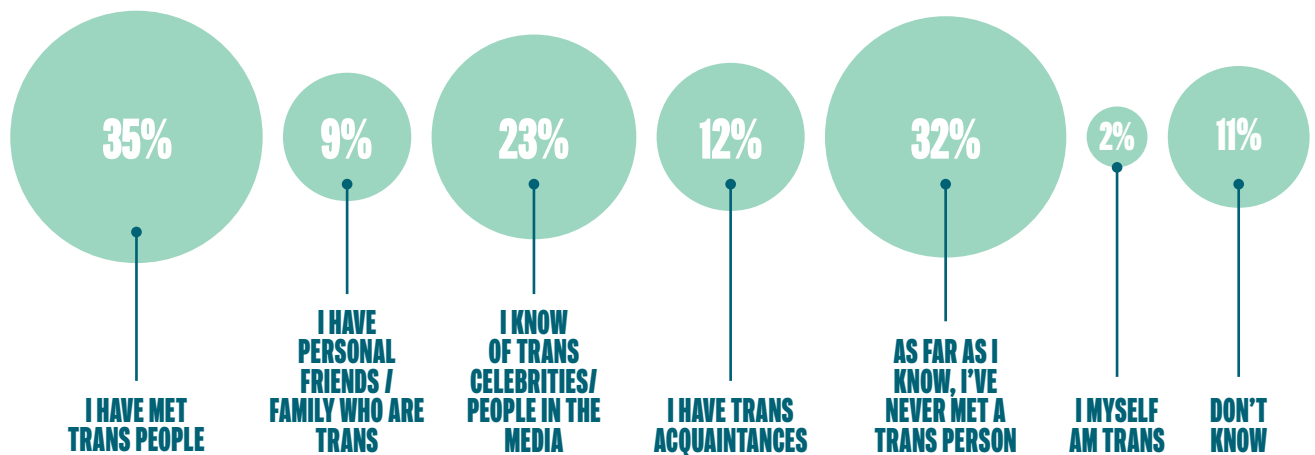
CONNECTION WITH TRANS PEOPLE

Unsurprisingly, given the size of the trans community, and the relatively short period of time in which trans people have been able to live as themselves and be visible in wider society, the percentage of the public who have a family member or close friend who is trans is relatively small: just one in ten (9%) of us have a trans friend or family member 8.

That said, when we include acquaintances, one fifth (19%) of the population know a trans person in real life, and over a third (35%) have met a trans person. In fact, slightly more people tell us they have met a trans person than a bi person.

It's also worth recognising that a significant proportion (11%) of the population tell us they 'don't know' if they've met a trans person.

CONNECTION



8. Ipsos interviewed a representative quota sample of 2,176 Britons aged 16-75 10th-13th June via their online panel.

CONNECTIONS WITH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE BY AGE

Our connection with lesbian and gay people has a complicated relationship with age. Living longer means having more opportunities to meet people, and this may account for the fact that Baby Boomers are far more likely to have met a lesbian or gay person (63%) than Gen Z (38%), despite the fact that Gen Z is much more likely to be LGBTQ+.

Generation X is the most likely to have friends or family members who are lesbian or gay (44%) and to have lesbian or gay acquaintances (36%). This is possibly due to a combination of growing up alongside the LGBTQ+ liberation movement and being old enough to have had a lot of time to meet people, including a generation of children and young people of their own.

	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY BOOMERS
MET	38%	44%	57%	63%
HAVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY	37%	36%	44%	37%
KNOW OF CELEBRITIES	35%	36%	34%	33%
ACQUAINTANCES	23%	27%	36%	28%
NEVER MET	14%	14%	5%	5%
DON'T KNOW	5%	9%	6%	4%

CONNECTIONS WITH BI PEOPLE BY AGE

As we might expect given how fast the bi community is growing, this picture of relative invisibility and disconnection is changing rapidly, and our generations look very different.

Over a third (34%) of Gen Z have a bi friend or family member compared to just 13% of Baby Boomers. Over a fifth (21%) have a bi acquaintance, compared to just 10% of Baby Boomers. Unlike for gay and lesbian people, connection shows a straightforward age gradient: each successive generation is more likely to be connected to bi people.

	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY BOOMERS
MET	41%	36%	36%	27%
HAVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY	34%	24%	20%	13%
KNOW OF CELEBRITIES	27%	26%	22%	14%
ACQUAINTANCES	21%	16%	17%	10%
NEVER MET	14%	19%	25%	44%
I AM BI	12%	9%	3%	2%
DON'T KNOW	5%	12%	15%	14%

CONNECTION WITH TRANS PEOPLE BY AGE

Again, we can see a distinctive pattern across the generations, with older generations having more opportunity to have met a trans person over time, and younger generations having more opportunity as a consequence of visibility. As with other questions, it is Gen X that combines both factors: 40% of Gen X have met a trans person, compared to 30% of Gen Z and 36% of Baby Boomers.

But the youngest generation is far more likely to have deep connections with trans people. In Gen Z, 14% of people have personal friends and family members who are trans, and another 15% have trans acquaintances (compared to 7% and 9% of Baby Boomers). A quarter of this generation has a trans person in their lives, and a third is aware of trans celebrities. The future is far more familiar and connected with trans people.

	GEN Z	MILLENNIALS	GEN X	BABY BOOMERS
MET	30%	33%	40%	36%
HAVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY	14%	11%	8%	7%
KNOW OF CELEBRITIES	33%	24%	22%	15%
ACQUAINTANCES	15%	13%	13%	9%
NEVER MET	23%	32%	32%	38%
I AM TRANS	4%	4%	1%	*
DON'T KNOW	11%	13%	10%	10%

CONNECTIONS WITH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE BY GENDER

There are some marked differences between men and women when it comes to connections with the lesbian, gay and bi people. Men and women are equally likely to say they've met a lesbian or gay person (51% to 52%). But men are less likely to say they have a family member or friend who is lesbian or gay (31% compared to 46%) or to have acquaintances that are lesbian or gay (25% compared to 32%). Men also are twice as likely to say they have never met a lesbian or gay person (12% compared to 6%).

As with lesbian and gay people, men are not less likely to have met bi people but are significantly less likely to have a friend or family member when we compare them to women (18% compared to 25% of women). It's reasonable to assume that this is a consequence of men being, and/or being perceived as less likely to be inclusive and accepting of bi people in their lives.

We know that men are more likely than women to hold homophobic views, as part of a broader orientation towards less socially liberal attitudes⁹. This data might suggest men are more likely to avoid forming close bonds with lesbian and gay people or that lesbian and gay people are less likely to be out to the men in their life.

Interestingly, gendered differences are less apparent for connection to the trans community compared with connection to lesbian, gay and bi communities.

Men are less likely than women to have met a trans person (32% compared to 38%) but are just as likely to have trans family members, friends or acquaintances.

9. See for example, British Social Attitudes Survey 36 (2019) NatCen.

CONNECTIONS WITH LGBTQ+ PEOPLE BY ETHNICITY

There are some significant difference between White people and people from ethnic minority groups when it comes to connections with lesbian and gay people.

People from ethnic minority groups are less likely to say they have met a lesbian or gay person (42% compared to 53% of White people), they are less likely to have friends and family who are lesbian or gay (25% compared to 40%), or to have acquaintances in the community (20% compared to 30%).

People from ethnic minority groups communities are significantly less likely to have met a trans person than White people (26% compared to 37%).

CONCLUSIONS

Our polling with Ipsos paints a clear picture of a Rainbow Britain: a country where, generation by generation, more of us feel able to use lesbian, gay and bi labels to describe our sexual orientations, and beyond those labels, more younger people acknowledge same sex attraction, including 2 in 5 people from Gen Z.

Age is the main factor that correlates with same-sex attraction. LGBTQ+ people are broadly evenly represented across gender, ethnicity and class group. We exist, in growing numbers, in every community in Britain. We are plumbers, teachers, engineers, siblings, parents, rugby coaches, priests.

This is significant for leaders in all parts of society – whether politicians, editors, educators, employers, sports organisers or faith leaders.

Connecting with younger voters, readers, learners, workers, sport participants or worshipers will mean responding to generations that are much more likely to have same-sex attraction. That means creating inclusive cultures in all workplaces, schools, gyms and sport clubs. It means recognising our relationships and identities in national policy, HR policies and in the faith communities where we worship. It means taking action against the prejudice, discrimination and abuse that we experience.

The polling also shows how closely connected LGBTQ+ people are to wider society. It is not just the youngest adults, Gen Z, who are closely connected to LGBTQ+ people. Working age adults, particularly those in their 40s and 50s, more likely to have children of their own, are the most likely group to have close friends or family who are LGBTQ+, and those connections are strong across all part of society.

Rainbow Britain is all of us who are LGBTQ+ and closely connected to LGBTQ+ people. This challenges archaic notions of the LGBTQ+ community existing in a liberal, metropolitan bubble. Our constituency is significantly bigger and broader.

This means that a failure to act on issues facing LGBTQ+ people at work, in school, in sport, through policy, reflects negatively to that larger community who care about us. It means that attempts to belittle LGBTQ+ people and our lives will eventually fall flat, because there are simply too many people right across society that know and love LGBTQ+ people.

RAINBOW BRITAIN IS THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

**WE ARE HERE.
WE ARE PROUD.**

