



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales (Census 2021) (revised)

The self-reported sexual orientation and gender identity of usual residents in Wales aged 16 years and over in 2021.

First published: 6 January 2023

Last updated: 1 November 2023

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This bulletin was revised on 1 November 2023 to include corrected versions of the sexual orientation data from the 2021 Census.

A processing error in the original census data meant that the "Pansexual" category included responses where "Other sexual orientation" had been ticked but no write-in information had been provided. Across England and Wales as a whole, this had caused approximately 64,000 people who should have been in "All other sexual orientations" to be classed as pansexual.

Only values for "Pansexual" and "All other sexual orientations" have changed. The values for all other categories remain as they were.

Introduction

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published Census 2021 data on sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales and England (Friday 6 January 2023) in two separate bulletins:

- [Sexual orientation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)
- [Gender identity, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

This statistical bulletin contains summaries for these two topic areas for Wales.

Voluntary questions on sexual orientation and gender identity were asked for the first time in Census2021. Respondents aged 16 and over were asked their sexual orientation, and the different options that they could choose from included "Straight/Heterosexual", "Gay or Lesbian", "Bisexual", and "Other sexual orientation". If the respondent selected "Other sexual orientation", they were asked to write in the sexual orientation they identified with.

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Respondents aged 16 and over were also asked “Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?” and had the option of selecting either “Yes” or selecting “No” and writing in their gender identity.

Main points

Sexual orientation

- On Census Day, 21 March 2021, responses to the voluntary sexual orientation question were provided for 2.4 million usual residents in Wales (92.4% of the population aged 16 years and over).
- 2.3 million people (89.4% of the population aged 16 years and over) described themselves as “Straight/Heterosexual”
- 38,000 (1.5%) described themselves as “Gay or Lesbian”
- 32,000 (1.2%) described themselves as “Bisexual”.
- A further 7,000 (0.3%) indicated that they had a different sexual orientation, among whom the most common responses included “Pansexual” (0.1%), “Asexual” (0.1%) and “Queer” (0.02%) (r).
- In total, 77,000 usual residents in Wales (3.0% of the population aged 16 or over) selected an LGB+ sexual orientation (“Gay or Lesbian”, “Bisexual” or another minority sexual orientation) in 2021.
- The remaining 194,000 people aged 16 years and over (7.6%) did not answer the question on sexual orientation.
- Amongst local authorities in Wales, Cardiff had the highest proportion of usual residents aged 16 and over identifying with LGB+ orientations in 2021 (5.3%), followed by Ceredigion (4.9%).

Gender identity

- There were responses from 2.4 million people (93.7% of the population aged

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- 16 years and over) to the voluntary gender identity question in Wales.
- 93.3% of usual residents aged 16 years and over answered “Yes”, indicating that their gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth.
 - More than 10,000 people (0.4%) answered “No”, indicating that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth.
 - 1,900 people identified as a trans man, 1,900 people identified as a trans woman, and 1,500 people identified as non-binary. 4,000 people answered “No” but did not provide a write-in response.
 - The local authorities with the largest proportions of the usual resident populations aged 16 and over identifying with a gender different to their sex registered at birth were Cardiff and Ceredigion (0.7% each), followed by Newport (0.6%).

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same. For example, someone in an opposite-sex relationship may also experience same-sex attraction, and vice versa. This means the statistics should be interpreted purely as showing how people responded to the question, rather than being about whom they are attracted to or their actual relationships.

The question on sexual orientation was new for Census 2021. Data has previously been collected on sexual orientation through the Annual Population Survey (APS), but including the question on the census questionnaire enables a much more detailed understanding of sexual orientation in England and Wales. The data will meet the needs for better quality information on the LGB+ population for monitoring and supporting anti-discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010. The data will also provide evidence for the Welsh Government’s [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#).

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The question was voluntary and was only asked of people aged 16 years and over. People were asked “Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?”. The different sexual orientations that people could choose from included:

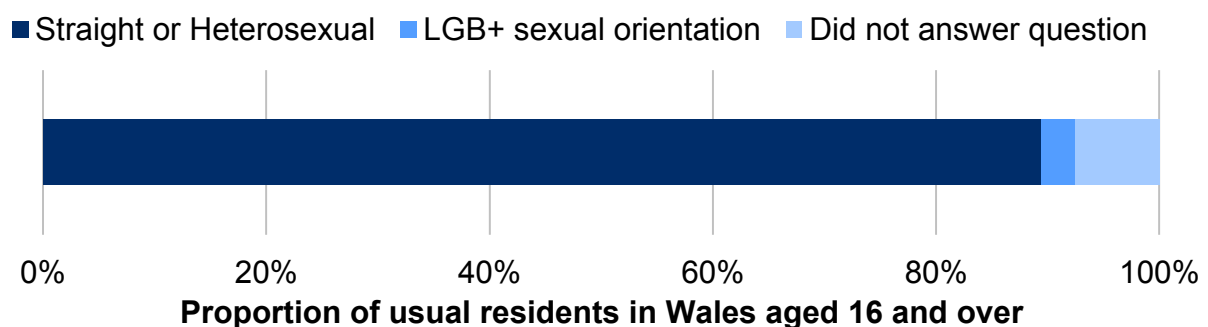
- “Straight/Heterosexual”
- “Gay or Lesbian”
- “Bisexual”
- “Other sexual orientation”

If respondents selected “Other sexual orientation”, they were asked to write in the sexual orientation with which they identified.

In this bulletin, we make reference to those who identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation. This refers to the group of respondents who selected “Gay or Lesbian” or “Bisexual”, or chose to write in a different sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation in Wales

Figure 1: Responses to the sexual orientation question in Wales, 2021



This stacked bar chart shows how usual residents in Wales responded to the question on sexual orientation in 2021.

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Source: Census 2021

In total, 2.4 million usual residents in Wales (92.4% of the population aged 16 years and over) answered the question on sexual orientation.

2.3 million people (89.4% of the population aged 16 years and over) described themselves as “Straight/Heterosexual”, 38,000 (1.5%), described themselves as “Gay or Lesbian”, and 32,000 (1.2%) described themselves as “Bisexual”. A further 7,000 (0.3%) chose to write in their sexual orientation.

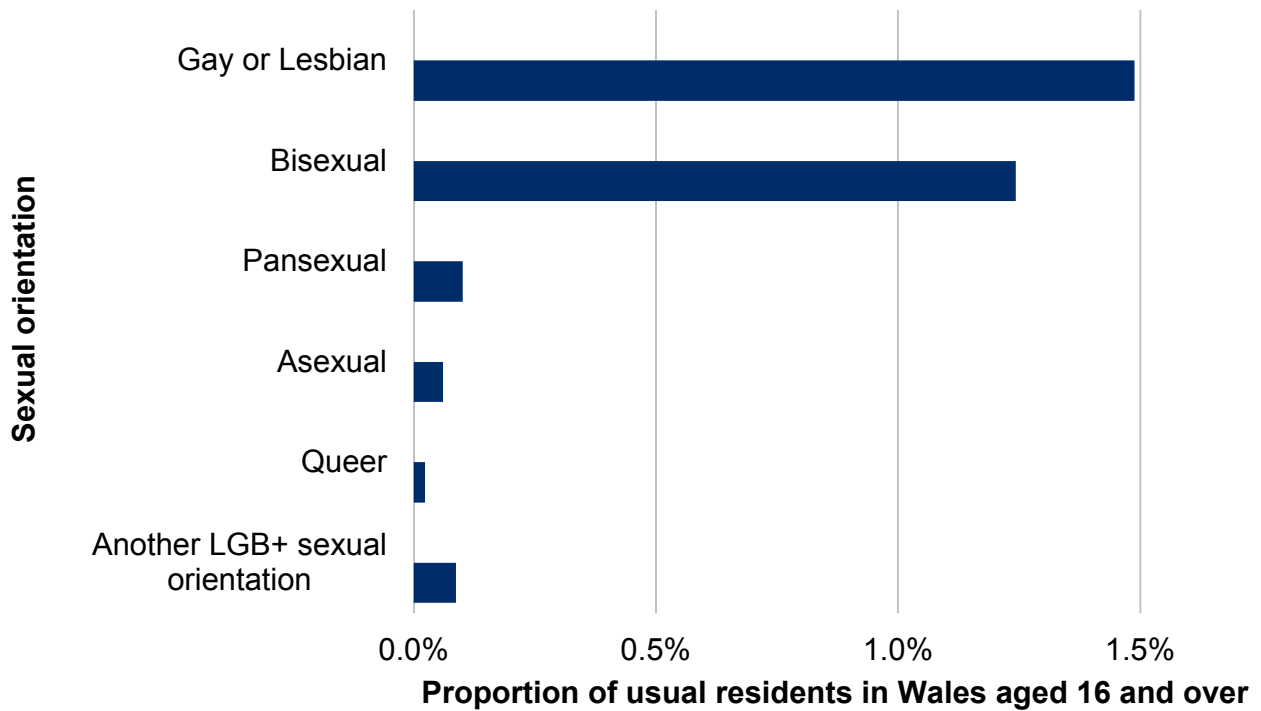
Overall, 77,000 usual residents in Wales (3.0% of the population aged 16 or over) identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation in 2021. This is a smaller proportion than in England (3.2%), and in six of the nine English regions.

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Figure 2: LGB+ sexual orientation composition in Wales, 2021 (revised)



This bar chart shows the proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over in Wales who identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation in 2021. "Gay or Lesbian" and "Bisexual" were the most common LGB+ orientations.

Source: Census 2021

Of the 7,000 people who indicated that they had a different sexual orientation, the most common responses included:

- "Pansexual" (2,600, 0.1%) (r)
- "Asexual" (1,600, 0.1%)
- "Queer" (600, 0.02%)

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Another 2,200 (0.1%) indicated that they had a different sexual orientation aside from those listed above (r).

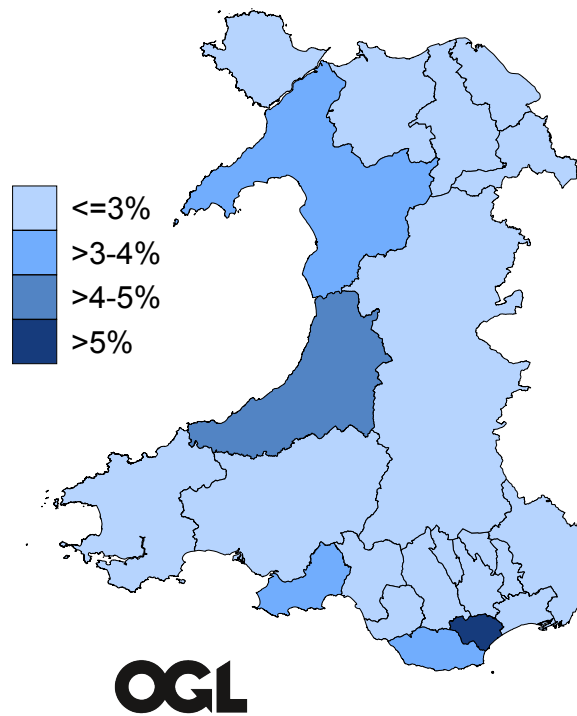
The remaining 194,000 people aged 16 years and over (7.6%) did not answer the question on sexual orientation.

How sexual orientation varied across Wales

Cardiff (5.3%) had the highest proportion of usual residents aged 16 and over identifying with an LGB+ sexual orientation in 2021. Cardiff had the 21st largest proportion of the population identifying with an LGB+ sexual orientation across all 355 local authorities in England and Wales. Ceredigion (4.9%), Swansea (3.4%), Gwynedd (3.3%) and the Vale of Glamorgan (3.1%) were the only other local authorities which had a higher proportion of people identifying with an LGB+ sexual orientation than the Wales average (3.0%). The proportion of people identifying with an LGB+ sexual orientation was lowest in the Isle of Anglesey (2.0%).

The four local authorities with the highest proportion of people identifying with an LGB+ sexual orientation (Cardiff, Ceredigion, Swansea and Gwynedd) were also the four local authorities with the highest proportions of the population aged 16 to 24 in 2021. Similarly, three of the four local authorities with the lowest proportions of people identifying with LGB+ sexual orientations (Isle of Anglesey, Powys and Monmouthshire) also made up three of the four local authorities with the lowest proportion of residents aged 16 to 24.

Figure 3: Proportion of usual residents aged 16 and over who identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation in Wales, by local authority, 2021



Source: Census 2021

This map shows how the proportion of usual residents aged 16 and over who identified with an LGB+ sexual orientation varied by local authority in 2021. Cardiff had the highest proportion, followed by Ceredigion.

The proportion of people identifying as “Gay or Lesbian” was highest in Cardiff (2.4%), the Vale of Glamorgan (1.7%), Neath Port Talbot and Swansea (1.6% each). The lowest proportions were found in Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire,

Powys and the Isle of Anglesey, in each of which 1.1% of the population identified as “Gay or Lesbian”.

The proportion of people identifying as “Bisexual” was largest in Ceredigion (2.6%), Cardiff (2.4%), Gwynedd (1.6%) and Swansea (1.5%). Ceredigion and Gwynedd were the only local authorities in Wales with more people identifying as “Bisexual” (2.6% and 1.6% respectively) than “Gay or Lesbian” (1.5% and 1.3% respectively).

The local authorities with the largest proportions of people choosing to write in their sexual orientations were Ceredigion (0.7%) and Cardiff (0.5%).

In Ceredigion and Cardiff, 0.2% of the population aged 16 and over identified as “Pansexual”. This proportion was around 0.1% in all other local authorities (r).

The proportion of people aged 16 and over identifying as “Asexual” was also highest in Ceredigion (0.2%). The proportion of people identifying this way was 0.1% in ten other local authorities – Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Monmouthshire, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.

“Queer” was the most common write-in response after “Pansexual” and “Asexual” in Wales in 2021. The proportions of the population identifying this way were highest in Ceredigion, Cardiff and Gwynedd (0.1% each).

Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person’s sense of their own gender, whether someone is a man, woman or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth.

The question on gender identity was new for the 2021 Census. It was added to

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provide the first official data on the size of the transgender population in England and Wales. The data will help to provide better quality information for monitoring purposes, support anti-discrimination duties under the Equality Act 2010, and aid allocation for resources and policy development. It will also provide evidence for the Welsh Government's [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#).

The question was voluntary and was only asked of people aged 16 years and over. Respondents were asked "Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?" and had the option of selecting either "Yes", or selecting "No" and writing in their gender identity.

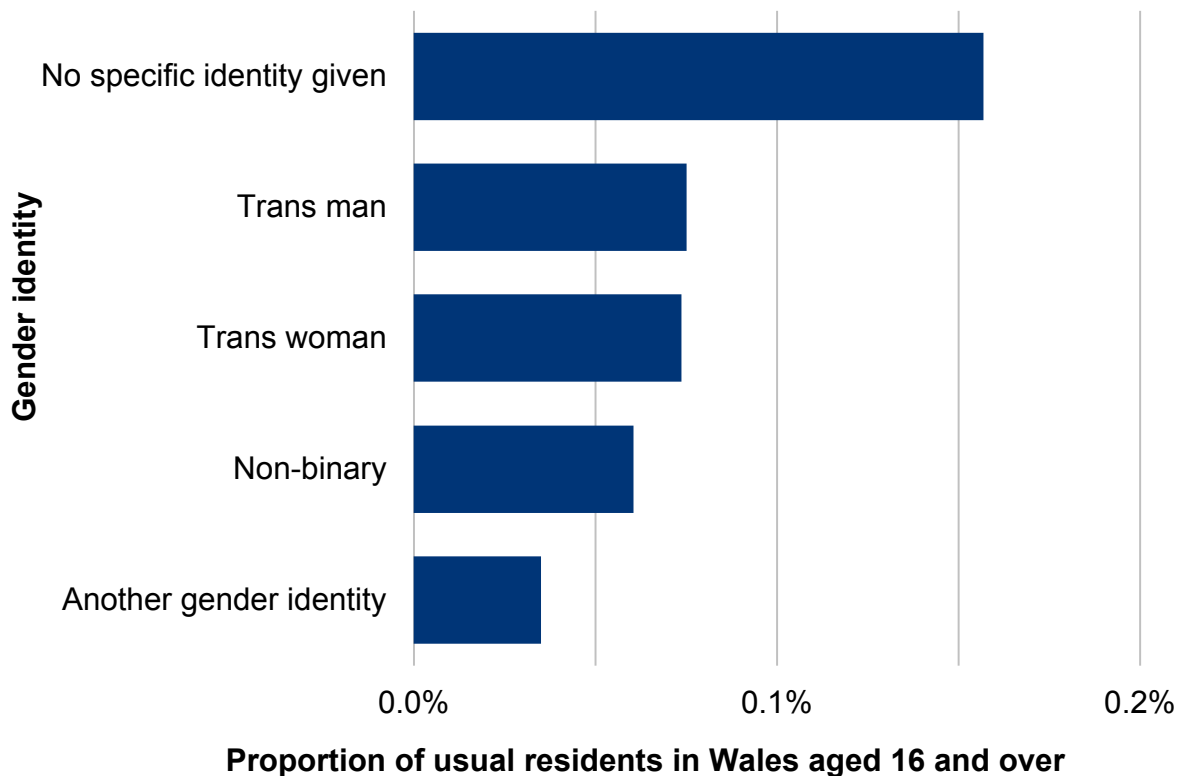
Gender identity in Wales

In Wales, there were responses to the question on gender identity from 2.4 million people (93.7% of the population aged 16 years and over).

93.3% of the population of Wales aged 16 or over answered "Yes", indicating that their gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth. More than 10,000 people (0.4%) answered "No", indicating that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth.

The proportions of people answering "Yes" and "No" were both lower in Wales (93.3% and 0.4% respectively) than in England (93.5% and 0.5% respectively), while the proportion of people who did not answer the question was larger in Wales (6.3%) than in England (6.0%).

Figure 4: Gender identities in Wales, 2021



This bar chart shows the proportion of usual residents aged 16 years and over in Wales who responded "No" to the question on gender identity in 2021. Many people did not write in a gender identity, while "Trans man", "Trans woman" and "Non-binary" were the most common gender identities that respondents wrote in.

Source: Census 2021

Note: Those who answered "Yes" to the question on gender identity have been excluded from Figure 4 to make it easier to clearly see the differences for the responses from people who answered "No", who account for a smaller percentage of the overall population.

Within the 10,000 people aged 16 and over who answered “No”:

- 4,000 (0.2% of the population aged 16 years and over) answered “No” but did not provide a write-in response
- 1,900 (0.1%) identified as a “Trans man”
- 1,900 (0.1%) identified as a “Trans woman”
- 1,500 (0.1%) identified as “Non-binary”
- 900 (0.04%) provided a different write-in response.

How gender identity varied across Wales

The local authorities with the largest proportions of the usual resident populations aged 16 and over identifying with a gender identity different to their sex registered at birth were Cardiff and Ceredigion (0.7% each), followed by Newport (0.6%). In all other local authorities this proportion was 0.3% or 0.4%.

In all local authorities, 0.1% or more of the population aged 16 and over answered “No” to the gender identity question but did not write in a specific gender identity, with Newport (0.4%) having the largest proportion of the population responding this way in 2021.

In terms of specific gender identities, 0.1% of the population of all local authorities identified as a “Trans woman” except in Conwy and Torfaen (less than 0.1%). Similarly, 0.1% of the population of all local authorities identified as a “Trans man”, except Denbighshire, Monmouthshire and Powys (less than 0.1%).

The proportion of the population aged 16 and over in Ceredigion who identified as “Non-binary” was 0.2%. This was the only local authority in which more than 0.1% of the population identified with a specific gender identity. The proportions of people identifying as “Non-binary” were 0.1% in Cardiff, Gwynedd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, and the Vale of Glamorgan.

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The highest proportions of write-in responses other than “Trans woman”, “Trans man” and “Non-binary” were in Cardiff, Ceredigion and Gwynedd (0.1% each).

Quality and methodology information

For full quality and methodology information, please visit the [ONS' quality and methodology information report \(ONS\)](#). A glossary of terms can be found in the [Census 2021 Dictionary \(ONS\)](#).

Further information on ONS' quality assurance processes is provided in the [Maximising the quality of Census 2021 population estimates methodology \(ONS\)](#).

Population change in certain areas may reflect how the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic affected people's choice of usual residence on Census Day. These changes might have been temporary for some and more long-lasting for others.

Reliability of gender identity estimates

The ONS has said that the census estimates for gender identity are subject to a higher level of uncertainty than some other topics. There are some patterns in the data that are consistent with some respondents not interpreting the question as intended. For example, the percentage of people reporting that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth was higher for people whose main language was not English or Welsh than the general population. It was higher still among people who did not speak English or Welsh well at all.

As such extra consideration needs to be taken when interpreting the data. Smaller geographic breakdowns should not be used as a precise estimate of the trans population and comparisons between areas or groups should be

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considered with caution, particularly where there are different levels of English language proficiency.

For further information and to support appropriate use, please refer to the [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Quality Information page on the ONS website](#) before using these estimates.

Glossary

For a full glossary of terms, please see the [ONS's Census 2021 dictionary](#).

Usual resident

A usual resident is anyone who on Census Day, 21 March 2021, was in the UK and had stayed or intended to stay in the UK for a period of 12 months or more, or had a permanent UK address and was outside the UK and intended to be outside the UK for less than 12 months.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same. For example, someone in an opposite-sex relationship may also experience same-sex attraction, and vice versa. This means the statistics should be interpreted purely as showing how people responded to the question, rather than being about whom they are attracted to or their actual relationships.

ONS have not provided glossary entries for individual sexual orientation categories. This is because individual respondents may have differing perspectives on the exact meaning.

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LGB+

An abbreviation used to refer to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other minority sexual orientations (for example, asexual).

Other sexual orientation

One of the options on the Census 2021 questionnaire for the sexual orientation question was “Other sexual orientation”. Respondents who selected this option could write in their sexual orientation.

Based on feedback from Wales-based Equality communities, including the LGB+ communities, terms like “other” tend to centre a specific group. For example in terms of sexual orientation, the term “Other” would centre heterosexuality as the ‘norm’ which contributes to othering for people who are LGB+.

Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person’s sense of their own gender, whether someone is a man, woman or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth.

Non-binary

Someone who is non-binary may not identify with the binary categories of man and woman. In these results the category includes people who identified with the specific term “non-binary” or variants of this. However, those who used other terms to describe an identity which was neither specifically man nor woman

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have been classed in “All other gender identities”.

Trans man

A trans man is usually someone who was registered female at birth, but now identifies as a man.

Trans woman

A trans woman is usually someone who was registered male at birth, but now identifies as a woman.

Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given

These are people who answered “No” to the question “Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?” but did not write in a gender identity.

Official Statistics Status

On 5 September 2024, Emma Rourke, Deputy National Statistician, wrote to Ed Humpherson (ONS), Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), to request that the gender identity estimates from Census 2021 are no longer **accredited official statistics (OSR)** and are classified as **official statistics in development (OSR)**. The change in designation was confirmed by the OSR on 12 September.

This change in designation reflects the innovative nature of the gender identity

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estimates and the evolving understanding of measuring gender identity, along with the uncertainty associated with these estimates.

For further information and to support appropriate use, please refer to the [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Quality Information page on the ONS website](#) before using these estimates.

All other Census 2021 estimates, including those on sexual orientation, are still designated as accredited official statistics.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier, and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act](#)

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2015.

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

Contact details

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