



LGBT
IRELAND

For Inclusion
For Equality
For Everyone

Submission to the **Census 2027 Public Consultation**

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About LGBT Ireland

LGBT Ireland is a national charitable organisation working to improve the visibility, inclusion, and rights of LGBTI+ people living in Ireland. Through our national helpline, online, and face-to-face services, we provide confidential support and information to thousands of LGBTI+ people and their family members each year. Informed by the issues and experiences raised through our frontline services, we also work extensively in the area of policy and legislative reform to ensure that LGBTI+ people's voices are heard in the policy and practice developments that affect their lives. The submission below is informed by the issues and experiences of the LGBTI+ community and their family members who contact us. As a network organisation with seven regional LGBTI+ member services, we also have a strong regional focus, and the recommendations outlined below are deeply rooted in the knowledge and experience of our members working across the country.

Recommendations

In May 2015, the Irish people voted for LGBTQI+ inclusion, LGBTQI+ equality, and respect for LGBTQI+ identities. The inclusion of new questions on gender, sex characteristics and sexuality is part of the change required to build a more open and inclusive Ireland. Therefore, we recommend the following:

1. The addition of new Census questions on gender, sex characteristics and sexual orientation.
2. The final wording of these questions be based on a broad consultation with members of the LGBTQI+ community.
3. Research be undertaken in advance of the Census 2027 to provide a better understanding of the complex issues involved with these new questions, including but not limited to worries about confidentiality, the fear of disclosure and, as a result, issues around underreporting. This research should inform how the CSO interprets and analyses the subsequent Census data.
4. That concrete steps be taken to make the Census 2027 confidential.

Proposed New LGBTQI+ Questions

1. What is your sex assigned at birth?
 - Male
 - Female
 - I prefer not to say

2. Were you born with a variation of sex characteristics (sometimes called 'intersex' or 'DSD')?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 - I prefer not to say

3. What best describes your gender?
 - Woman/girl
 - Man/boy
 - Non-binary
 - 'I use a different term' (please specify) _____
 - I prefer not to say

4. What is your sexual orientation?
 - Straight/heterosexual
 - Mostly heterosexual
 - Bisexual/pansexual
 - Lesbian/gay woman
 - Gay man
 - Asexual
 - Don't know
 - 'I use a different term' (please specify) _____
 - I prefer not to say

Reasons

There are five key reasons why the proposed questions should be included:

Visibility Matters

At present, the LGBTQI+ population is a hidden subpopulation in official Census data. Including new questions on sexual orientation, sex characteristics, and gender will make our community visible in the results for the first time. Over time this data will enable the CSO to estimate the size of the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland.

Equality

The *Equal Status Acts 2000-2018* prohibit discrimination on nine grounds. Eight of these nine grounds are currently captured by the Census. Sexual orientation is the only ground excluded. There is no justification for this exclusion.

Best Practice

The OECD *Society at Glance* Report (2019) states that collecting information on sexual orientation and gender in Censuses is critical. They say, “Making LGBT individuals and the penalties they face visible in national statistics is a prerequisite to their inclusion.”¹

Keeping Pace

Several countries have started to include questions on gender and sexual orientation in official State level data collection. In the 2021 Census, the United Kingdom included questions on sexual self-identification and gender identity.² The inclusion of the new questions followed a census test in 2017 and a subsequent census test survey. The survey results found that the inclusion of a question on sexual self-identification would not impact the Census response rate.³ We believe that Ireland should follow suit.

¹ OECD, *Society at a Glance*, 2019 pg 10 - https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/soc_glance-2019-en.pdf?expires=1670851649&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E9AE9104865AD444EDCBF1096931497C

² Copies of these questions are included in Annex 1.

³ OECD, *Society at a Glance*, 2019 pg 40 - https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/soc_glance-2019-en.pdf?expires=1670851649&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=E9AE9104865AD444EDCBF1096931497C

Since 2021 the US Census Bureau has also included questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in official data collection.⁴ This allowed the Bureau to show the disproportionate impact the pandemic had on the economic and mental well-being of the LGBTQI+ population. Unfortunately, similar data is currently not available from the CSO in Ireland.

Impact

Census data matters. It matters for service planning and service provision and for understanding how Ireland is changing. At present, the Census tells us almost nothing about the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland. Including questions on gender, sex characteristics, and sexual orientation will help the Government measure the health, economic, educational and housing disparities faced by gender and sexual minorities. It will also enable them to estimate the demand for specialist gender and sexual health services. But most importantly, a previously hidden subpopulation will become visible.

⁴ Copies of these questions are included in Annex 2.

Concerns

There are three key concerns about the inclusion of new questions and gender identity, sex characteristics and sexual orientation.

Confidentiality

The current nature of the Irish Census means that answers to the proposed questions on sexual orientation, sex characteristics and gender won't be confidential as everyone in the household fills out just one shared form. The LGBTQI+ person may not be out at home or may not be out to one member of the household to protect their safety. In other cases, the LGBTQI+ person will be out at home but not to their wider community. Some people fear that their forms will be read by the enumerator who may be known to them. This lack of confidentiality will be a barrier for some LGBTQI+ people who do not want others to know their gender identity, sex characteristics or sexual orientation. Concrete steps should be taken to make the Census more confidential.

Other Fears

Beyond confidentiality, there are other reasons why people will choose not to disclose their gender identity, sex characteristics or sexual orientation on a Census form. These include a distrust of the State by some members of the LGBTQI+ community - a legacy of the criminalisation of homosexuality which only ended in the 1990s.

Accuracy

As a result of the lack of confidentiality and other fears, the Census return will not provide accurate data on the size of the LGBTQI+ population in Ireland. This is a key concern for us. Research must be undertaken to fully understand the issues involved, and steps must be taken to ensure that the barriers outlined are taken into account in any subsequent publications and data analysis.

Annex 1

Questions from the 2021 UK Census

3 What is your sex?

➔ A question about gender identity will follow if you are aged 16 or over

- Female
- Male

27 Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

➔ This question is **voluntary**

- Yes
- No, write in gender identity

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26 Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

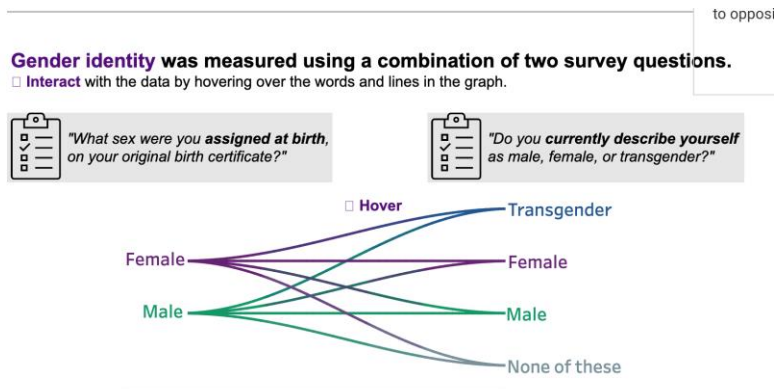
➔ This question is **voluntary**

- Straight/Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation, write in

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Annex 2

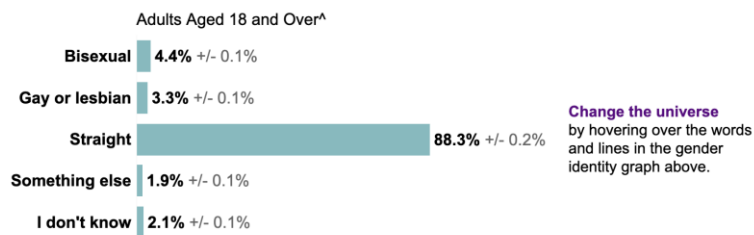
US Questions on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation and Sample Results



Sexual orientation was measured using one survey question.

☑
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"Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?"



Experiences of Economic Hardships for **LGBT** and non-LGBT Adults

Click on a label to view who is classified as being a part of that group.

