

# Census 2021 Population Profile

# Sexual Orientation

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# CENSUS 2021 POPULATION PROFILE

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN BRISTOL

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# SEXUAL ORIENTATION HEADLINES

## NUMBERS

- Based on the overall size of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other (LGB+) population, Bristol local authority was ranked 5th nationally.
- 23,649 people aged 16 and over identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other (LGB+).
- 6.1% of the population aged 16 and over in Bristol identify as LGB+, almost double the England & Wales average (3.2%).

## SEX

- The heterosexual population is split evenly between males and females – in contrast the LGB+ population is made up of 59% females and 41% males.
- Males were more likely to have identified as 'gay or lesbian', however females were more likely to have identified as 'bisexual', or 'any other sexual orientation'.

## AGE

- 70% of those who identified as LGB+ were aged between 16 and 34 years (for comparison, 39% of the total population are aged 16-34 years).

## DISABILITY

- Despite having a younger age profile, almost a third (30%) of people who identified as LGB+ were disabled, compared with 19% of the heterosexual population.
- Breaking down the LGB+ group further, even higher proportions of people who identified as 'bisexual' (33%) or as 'other sexual orientation' (40%) were disabled.
- Twice as many people who identified as LGB+ had a disability that limited day-to-day activities a little (22% compared with 11% of the heterosexual population) - and slightly more were limited a lot (8.1% compared to 7.5%).

## ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- The LGB+ population make up 13% of the total full-time student population aged 16 and over compared to just 6% of the population who are not full-time students.

## QUALIFICATIONS

- More than half (52%) of the LGB+ population in Bristol have a degree or higher, ten percentage points higher than the heterosexual population (42%).

## HOUSING

More than half (53%) of the LGB+ population privately rent, significantly higher than the heterosexual population (26%).

## 1.0 OVERVIEW

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. The question was voluntary and only asked of those 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 or Heterosexual’; ‘Gay or Lesbian’<sup>1</sup>; ‘Bisexual’; or ‘Other sexual orientation’. If they selected ‘other sexual orientation’, they were asked to write in the sexual orientation with which they identified.

A total of 23,649 people in Bristol identified with a ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other’ (LGB+) orientation, representing 6.1% of the population aged 16 years and over. This is a much higher proportion of the population than the England and Wales average of 3.2%.

***‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or another minority sexual orientation’ population is referred to collectively as LGB+ throughout this profile. All the analysis is for the population aged 16 years and over.***

## 2.0 NATIONAL CONTEXT

The local authority in England and Wales with the largest LGB+ population as a proportion of all people aged 16 years and over was Brighton and Hove (10.7%). Figure 1 shows those local authorities in England and Wales where more than 5% of their population aged 16 and over identified as LGB+ in Census 2021. Bristol is ranked 15<sup>th</sup> at 6.1%.

Based on the overall size of the LGB+ population, Bristol was ranked 5th nationally with a total of 23,649 people LGB+. The local authorities with larger LGB+ populations include Manchester (29,222), Leeds (27,962), Birmingham (26,804) and Brighton and Hove (25,247).

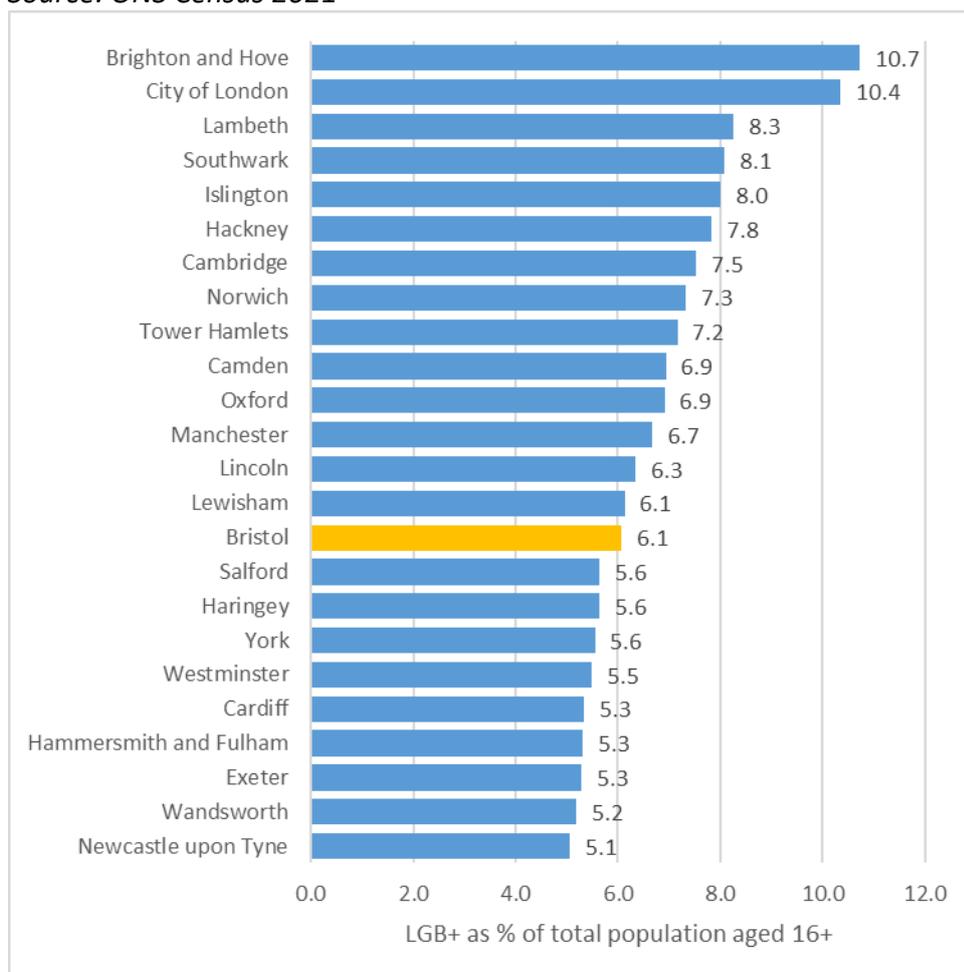
Other notable rankings based on population numbers for Bristol out of 331 local authorities in England and Wales include:

- Bristol has the largest ‘pansexual’ population of all local authorities in England and Wales
- 2nd for number of ‘bisexual’ people (Leeds 1st)
- 2nd for number of ‘queer’ people (Brighton and Hove 1st)
- 4th for number of ‘asexual’ people
- 10th for number of ‘gay or lesbian’ people

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<sup>1</sup> Using Census 2021 data, ‘Gay or Lesbian’ cannot be broken down into two separate groups

Figure 1: Local Authorities with a LGB+ population greater than 5% (England and Wales only)  
Source: ONS Census 2021



### 3.0 SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN BRISTOL

In the Census 2021, a total of 333,008 people in Bristol, 85.5% of the population aged 16 years and over, identified as ‘straight or heterosexual’ (E&W 89.4%). A total of 23,649 people identified with a ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other’ (LGB+) orientation, representing 6.1% of the population aged 16 years and over. This is a much higher proportion of the population than the England and Wales average of 3.2%. The remaining 8.5% of people aged 16 years and over did not answer the question (figure 2).

Based on the tick boxes and write-in responses people gave to the census question it is possible to see how LGB+ people identify in more detail (figure 3).

In Bristol:

- 8,568 people (2.2%) described themselves as ‘gay or lesbian’ (E&W 1.5%)
- 12,020 people (3.1%) described themselves as ‘bisexual’ (E&W 1.3%)
- 3,061 people (0.8%) selected ‘other sexual orientation’ (E&W 0.3%)

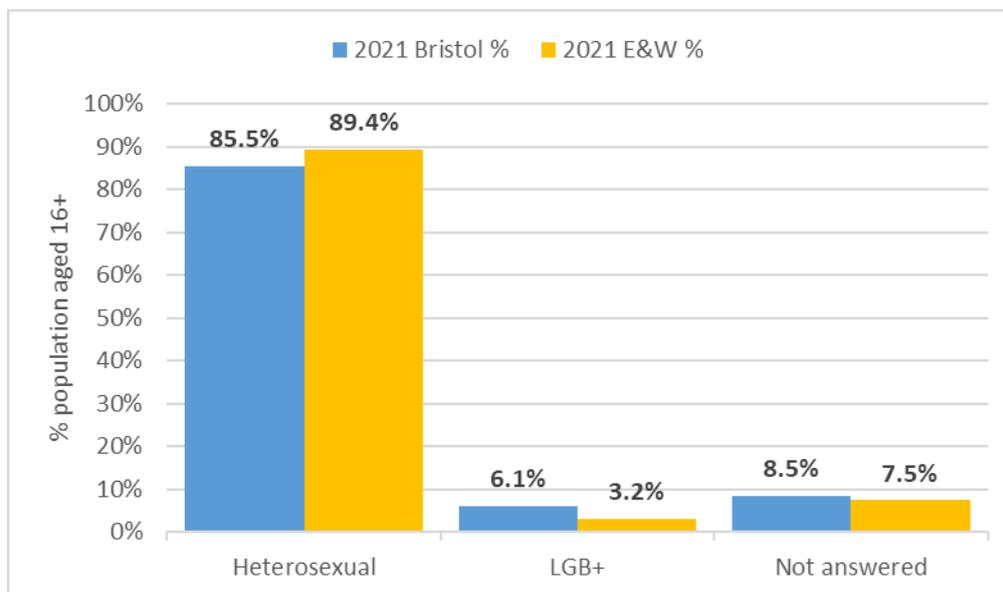
Of those who selected 'other sexual orientation', the most common write-in responses included:

- 'Pansexual' 1,075 people, 0.28% (E&W 0.10%)
- 'Asexual' 435 people, 0.11% (E&W 0.06%)
- 'Queer' 496 people, 0.13% (E&W 0.03%)

Another 1,055 people (0.27%) wrote in a different sexual orientation.

The remaining 8.5% of people aged 16 years and over did not answer the question.

*Figure 2: People identifying as LGB+ as a % of population aged 16+*  
 Source: ONS Census 2021



*Figure 3: Detailed breakdown of LGB+ population in Bristol*  
 Source: ONS Census 2021

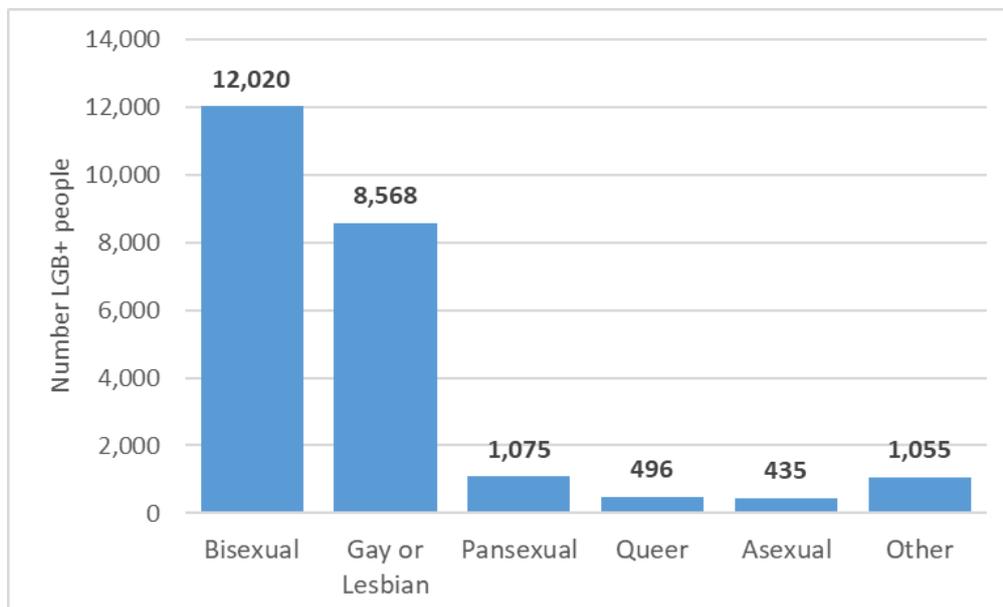
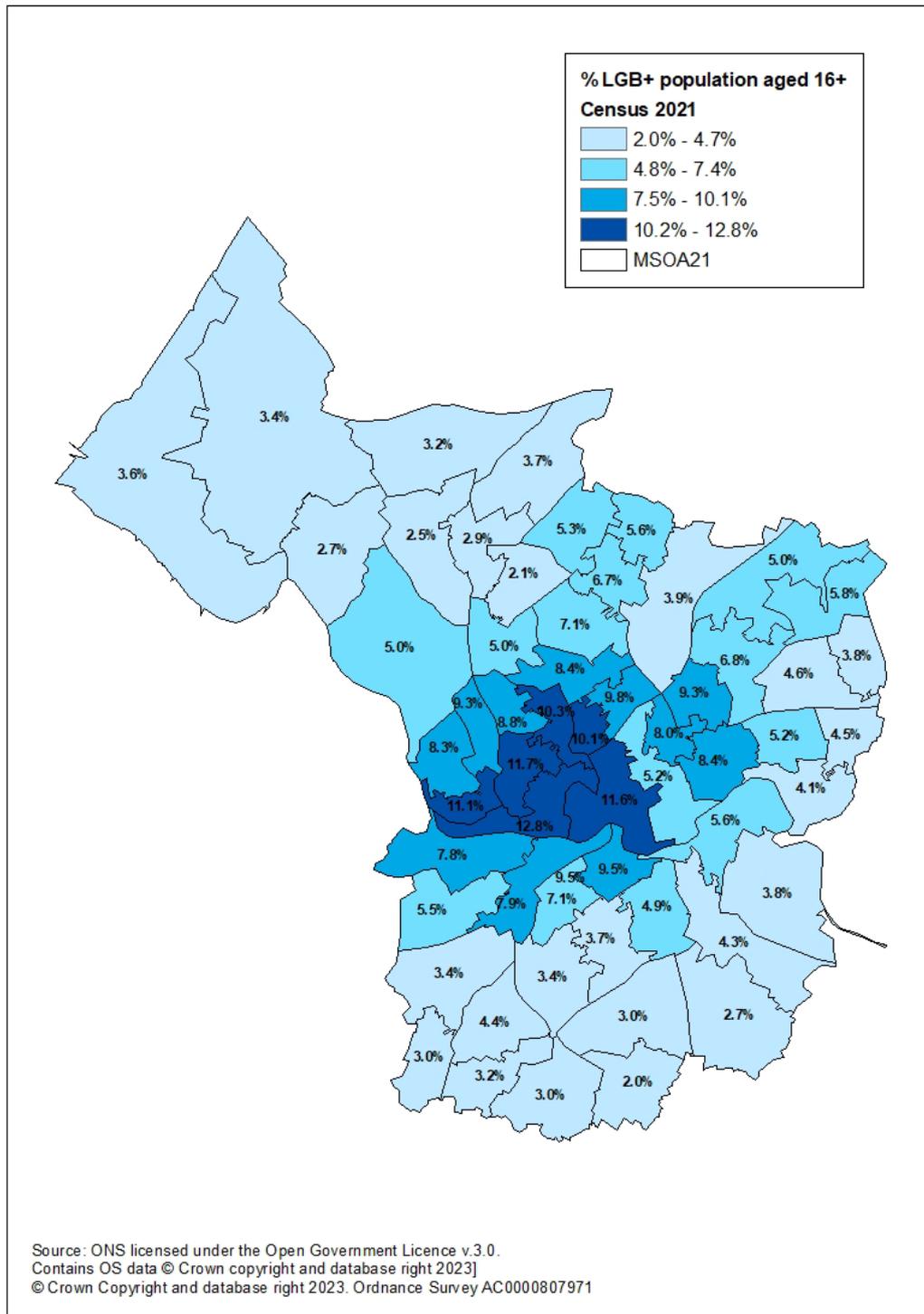


Figure 4 maps the proportion of the population who are LGB+ by neighbourhood<sup>2</sup> across the city.

Figure 4: LGB+ population by neighbourhood (Middle Layer Super Output Area MSOA21)

Source: ONS Census 2021



<sup>2</sup> Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are a statistical geography created by the office for National Statistics for presenting small area statistics in England and Wales. Middle layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs) are made up of groups of LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas), usually four or five. They comprise between 2,000 and 6,000 households and have a usually resident population between 5,000 and 15,000 persons. MSOAs fit within local authorities and there are 6,856 MSOAs in England.

## 4.0 SEXUAL ORIENTATION DIFFERENCES IN AGE, SEX, CHARACTERISTICS, HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION & HOUSING

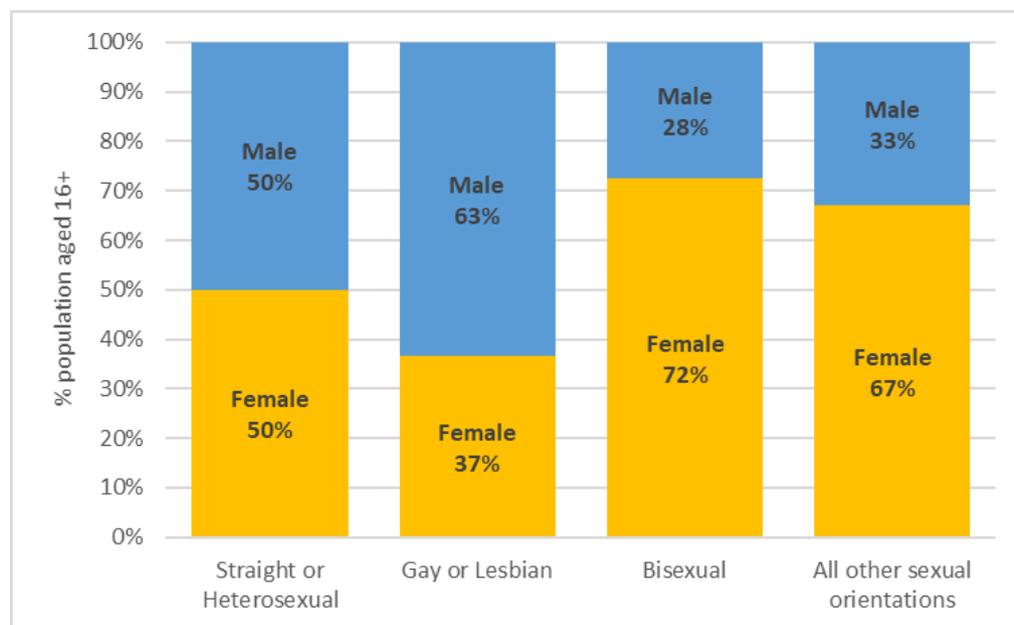
### 4.1 AGE AND SEX PROFILE

#### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

In Bristol, the heterosexual population is split evenly between males and females. In contrast the LGB+ population overall is made up of 59% females and 41% males. The differences within the LGB+ population are shown in figure 5.

Figure 5: Sexual orientation by sex in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Males were more likely than females to have identified as ‘gay or lesbian’, however females were more likely than males to have identified as ‘bisexual’, or ‘any other sexual orientation’. Males make up a two thirds (63% of the ‘gay or lesbian’ population, females make up almost three quarters (72%) of the ‘bisexual’ population and two thirds (67%) of the ‘other sexual orientation’ population.

People who identified as LGB+ tended to be younger than the overall population. In Bristol, 70% of those who identified as LGB+ were aged between 16 and 34 years. In contrast, just 39% of the overall population were aged between 16 and 34 years. This proportion then decreased with each successive age group (figure 6). Figure 7 shows the age breakdown of the population by more detailed sexual orientation.

Figure 6: Sexual orientation and age profile in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021

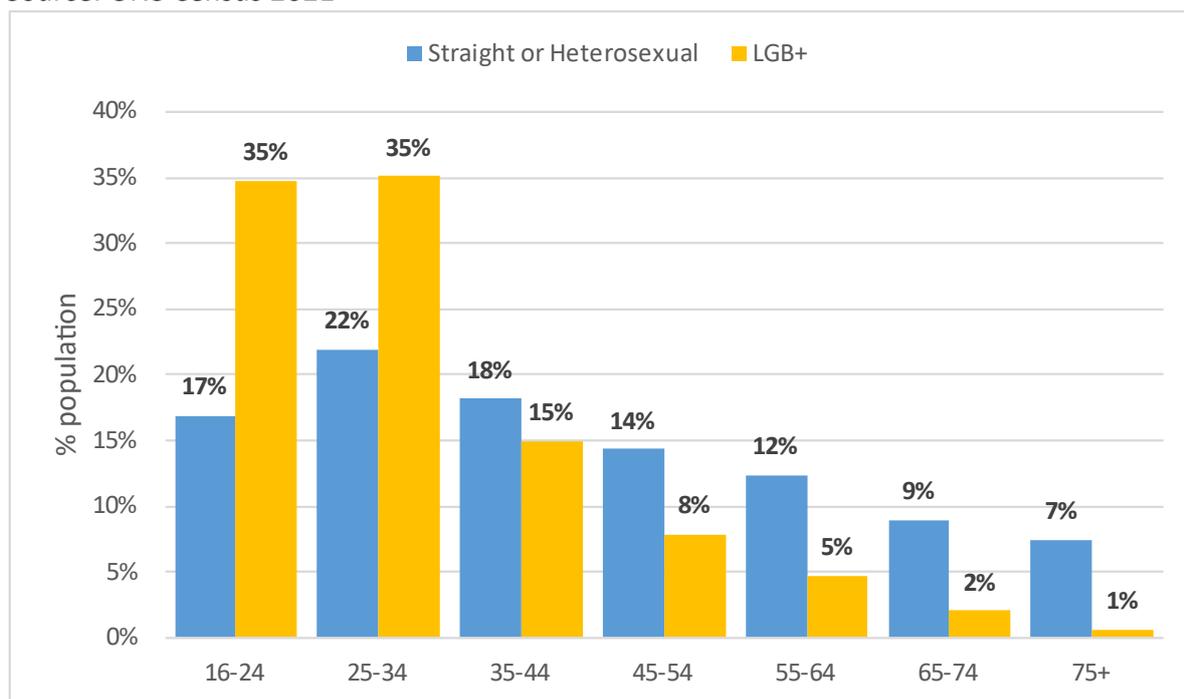
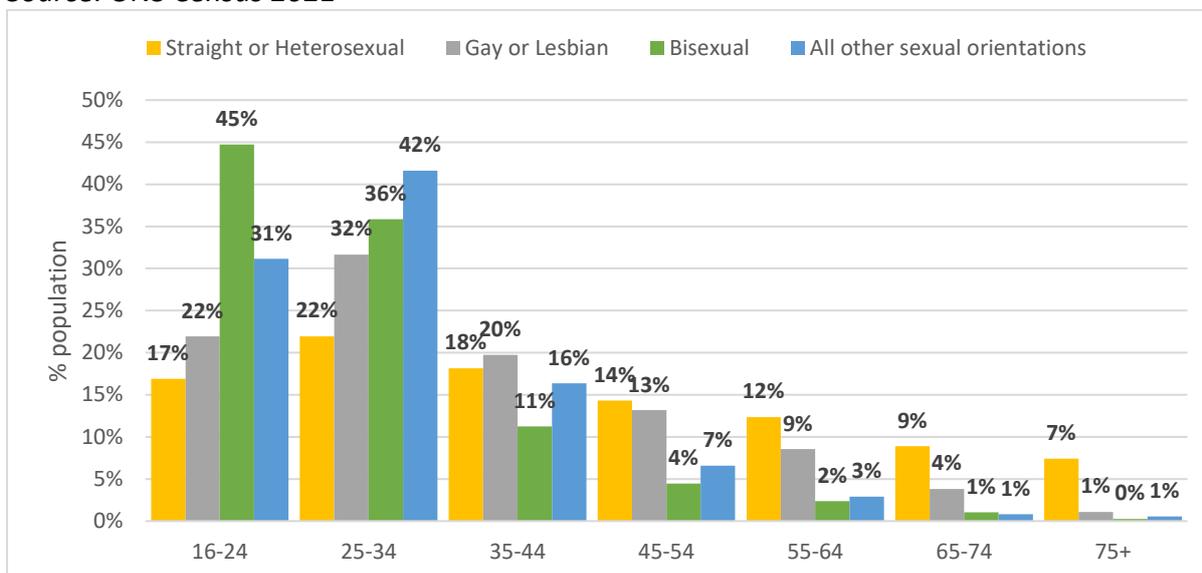


Figure 7: Sexual orientation (detailed) and age profile in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



## 4.2 ETHNIC GROUP

At local authority level, sexual orientation data is only available by broad ethnic group

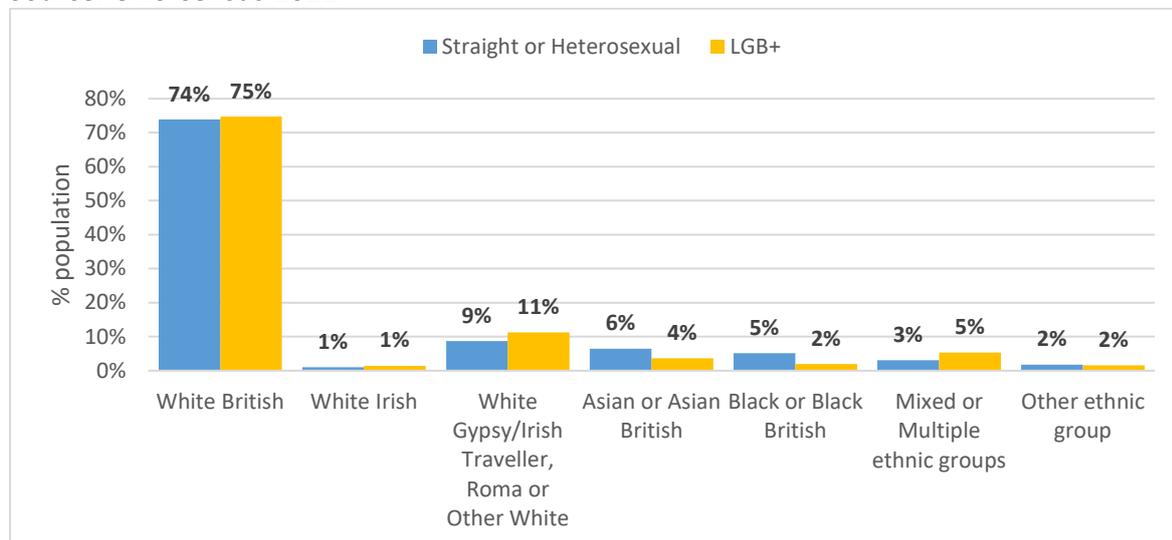
### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Ethnicity on the census is self-reported; people said which group they feel best describes their ethnic identity. All 19 ethnic groups are tick-box selections within five main categories, which are part of people’s answers.

The ethnic profile of the LGB+ population in Bristol is very similar to the heterosexual population (figure 9). There are slightly higher proportions of ‘White Gypsy/Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White’ and ‘Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups’ which reflects the younger age profiles within these broad groups.

Figure 9: Ethnic group profile of the heterosexual and LGB+ population in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021

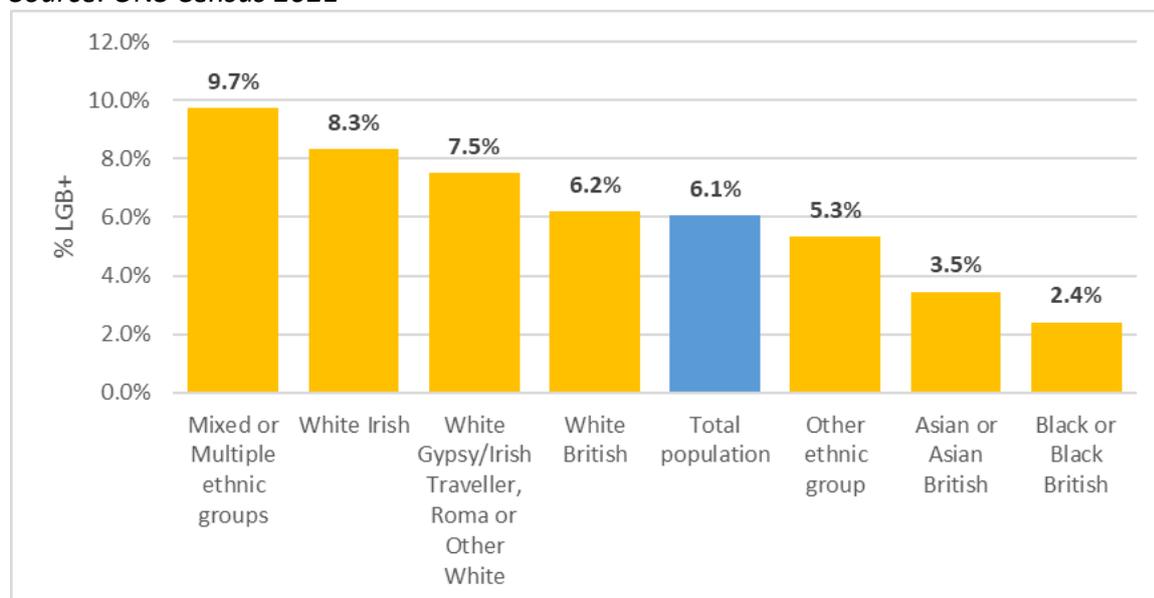


Note: At local authority level, sexual orientation data is only available by broad ethnic group

### LGB+ proportions by ethnic group

Figure 10: % LGB+ population within each broad ethnic group in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Note: At local authority level, sexual orientation data is only available by broad ethnic group

Figure 10 shows the proportion of the population identifying as LGB+ within each ethnic group. ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups’ have the highest LGB+ population at 9.7% of all people in this ethnic group. ‘White Irish’ (8.3%) and ‘White Gypsy/Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White’ (7.5%) also have higher proportions of LGB+ populations than the population

as a whole. 'Asian or Asian British' and 'Black or Black British' groups have lower proportions of LGB+ populations than the population as a whole.

### 4.3 RELIGION

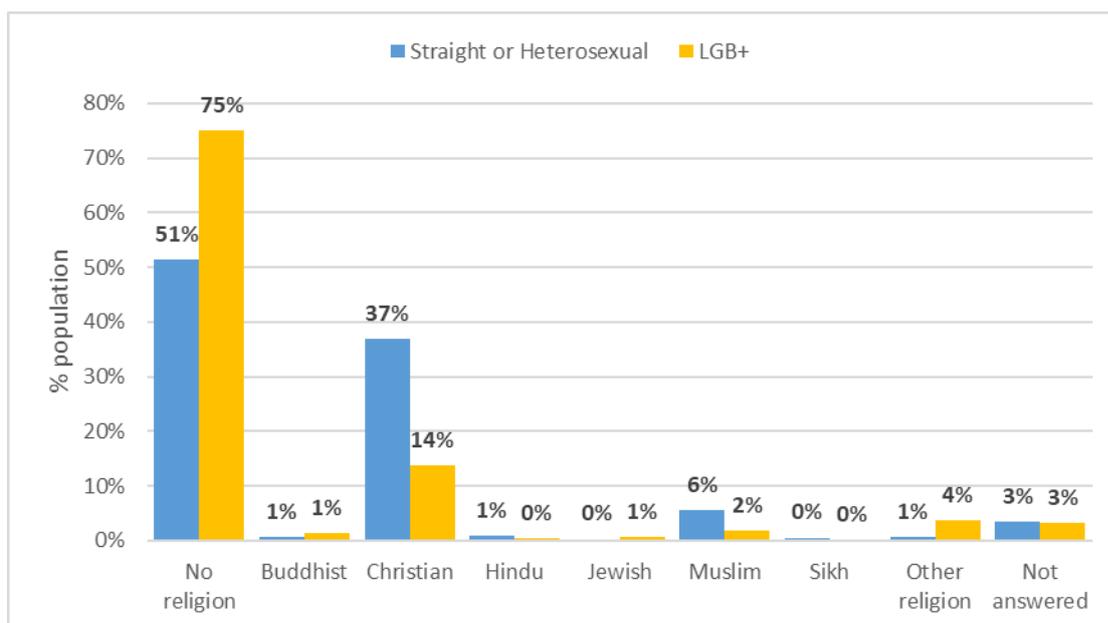
#### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

In the census data, religion refers to a person's religious affiliation. This is the religion with which they connect or identify, rather than their beliefs or active religious practice. The religion question is voluntary and in 2021 93% of the overall population in Bristol chose to answer the question (E&W 94%).

Among people who identified as LGB+, three quarters (75%) stated they had 'No religion', followed by Christian (14%). This differs from the heterosexual population, where half (51%) reported 'No religion' and 37% identified as Christian (figure 11).

Figure 11: Sexual orientation by religion in Bristol

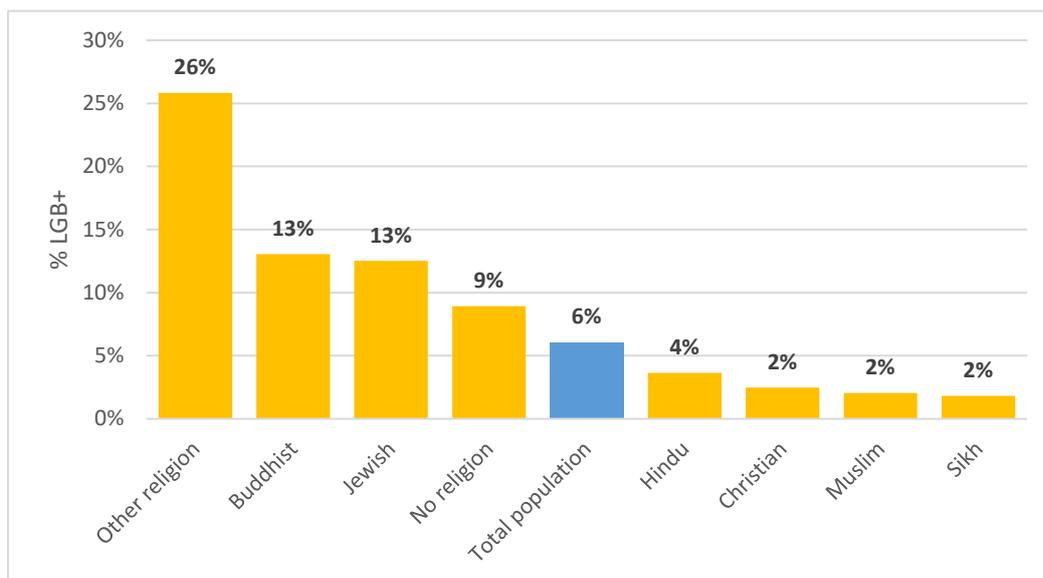
Source: ONS Census 2021



#### LGB+ proportions by religion

When looking at people who identified with different religions, there were marked differences in the proportions identifying as LGB+. People who identified as Sikh, Muslim, Christian or Hindu were less likely to identify as LGB+ than the overall population of Bristol. In contrast, those who identified as Buddhist or Jewish, and those reporting 'No religion' and any 'Other religion' were more likely to identify as LGB+ than the overall population (figure 12).

**Figure 12: % LGB+ population within religious groups in Bristol**  
 Source: ONS Census 2021

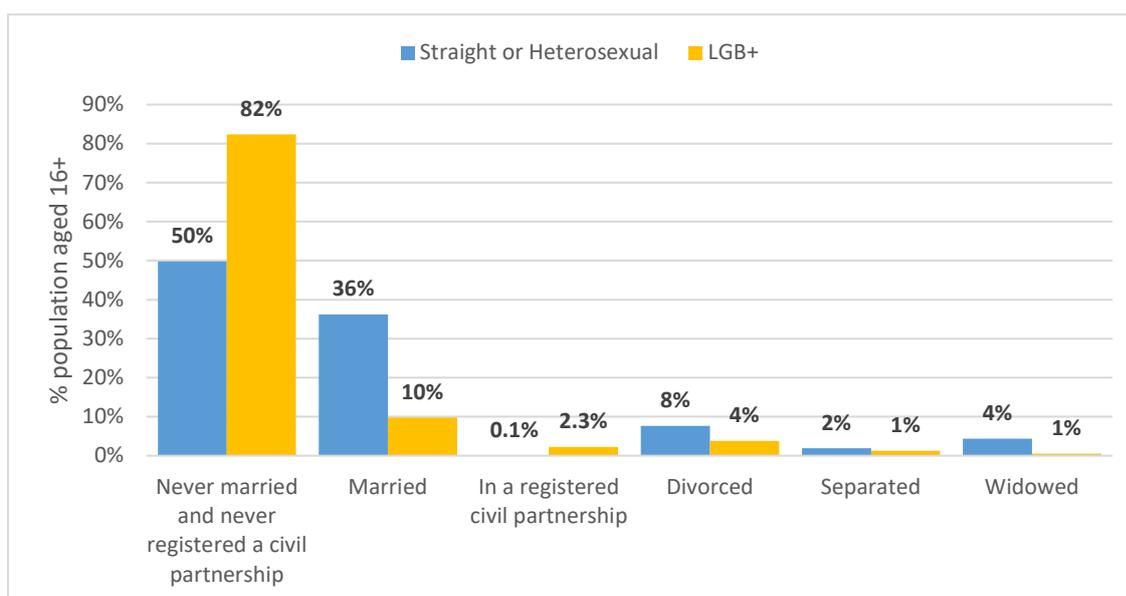


#### 4.4 LEGAL PARTNERSHIP STATUS

##### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Four fifths (82%) of the LGB+ population in Bristol have never been married or never registered a civil partnership. This is much higher than the heterosexual population where only half of people (50%) aged 16 and over have never been married or never registered a civil partnership (figure 13).

**Figure 13: Sexual orientation and legal partnership status in Bristol**  
 Source: ONS Census 2021



Just 10% of the LGB+ population are married compared to a third (36%) of the heterosexual population.

There are more LGB+ people in a registered civil partnership than in the much larger heterosexual population - a total of 536 LGB+ people (2.3% of total LGB+ population) are in a registered civil partnership, compared to just 432 heterosexual people (0.1% of total heterosexual population).

The legal partnership status by sexual orientation is a reflection of the younger age profile of the LGB+ population.

## 4.5 HEALTH

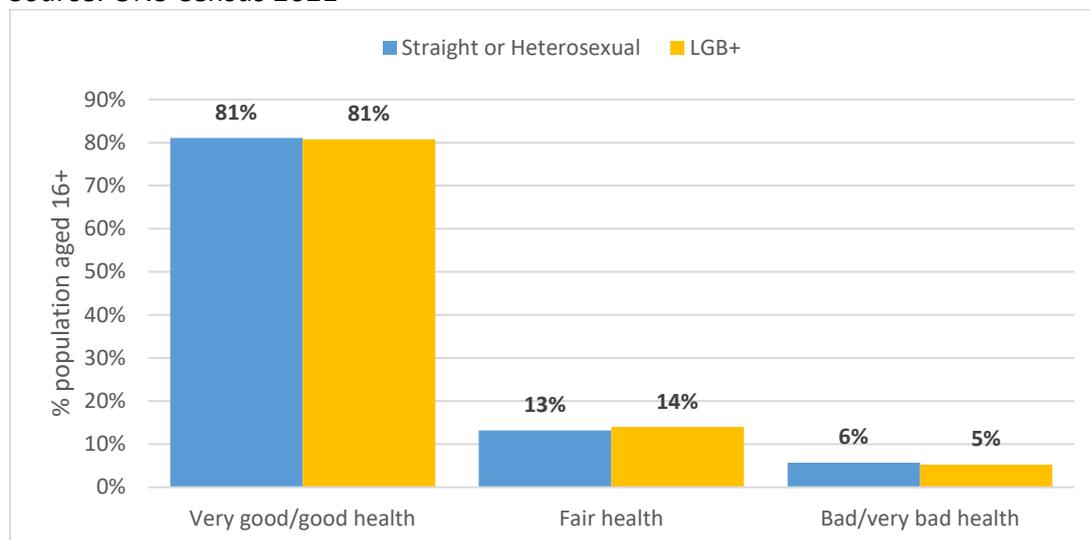
### GENERAL HEALTH

#### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Among people who identified as LGB+, the proportion who reported very good or good health was the same as in the heterosexual population (figure 14). This is despite those identifying as LGB+ tending to be younger than average and younger people being more likely to report very good or good health.

Figure 14: Sexual orientation and general health in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



### HEALTH ISSUES AND DISABILITY

**This data uses the Census 2021 Equalities Act definition of disability, that is including people who have physical or mental health conditions or illnesses that negatively impact their daily life either a lot or a little.**

## LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Disability is self-reported on the census and broadly follows the same trends as overall health. People are considered disabled if they reported being limited ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ in their day-to-day activities by a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness. This aligns with the Equality Act (2010) definition.

People who identified as LGB+ were more likely to have reported being limited ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ in their day-to-day activities by a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness than either the overall population or the heterosexual population of Bristol.

Figure 15: Sexual orientation and long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses that negatively impact daily life in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021

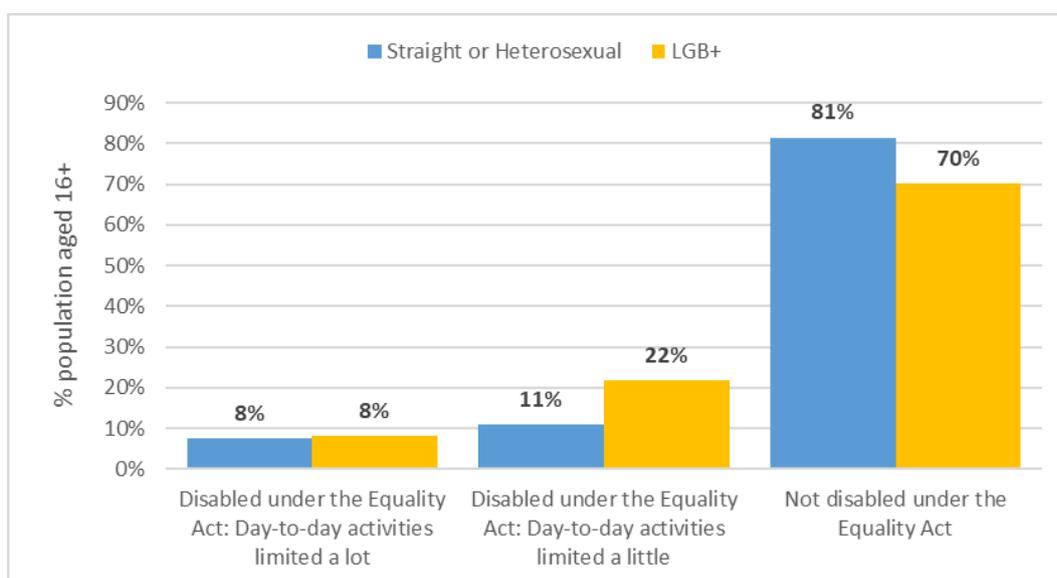
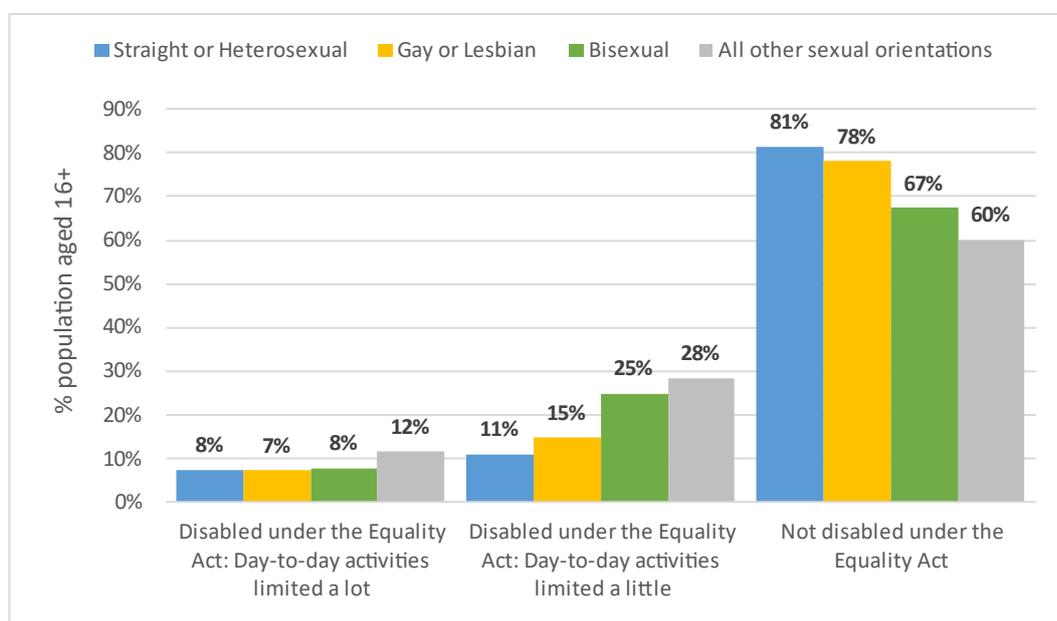


Figure 16: Sexual orientation (detailed) and long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses that negatively impact daily life in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Despite having a younger than average age profile, which is generally associated with lower levels of disability, almost a third (30%) of people who identified as LGB+ were disabled, compared with 19% of the heterosexual population (figure 15). Breaking down the LGB+ group further (figure 16), even higher proportions of people who identified as 'bisexual' or with 'other sexual orientation' were disabled (33% and 40%, respectively).

For level of limitation, twice as many people who identified as LGB+ had a disability that limited day-to-day activities a little, 22% compared with 11% of the heterosexual population of Bristol. Those identifying as LGB+ were also slightly more likely to have disabilities that limited day-to-day activities a lot (8.1% compared to 7.5%).

## 4.6 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Disability and long-term illness, caring for others, where someone lives, and their age can affect whether more or fewer people are employed within a population group. This section looks at census data for whether people aged 16 to 64 were in employment, unemployed, or not looking for work (termed 'economically inactive') mainly because they were a student, retired, long-term sick or looking after the home or family.

Data in this section refers to the population aged 16 and over not just the working age population. This will affect the analysis of economic activity status as LGB+ people have a younger age profile than the heterosexual population.

*Note: Census 2021 was taken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. ONS asked people on furlough to record themselves as employed, but some people may have said they were out of work instead.*

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### EMPLOYMENT

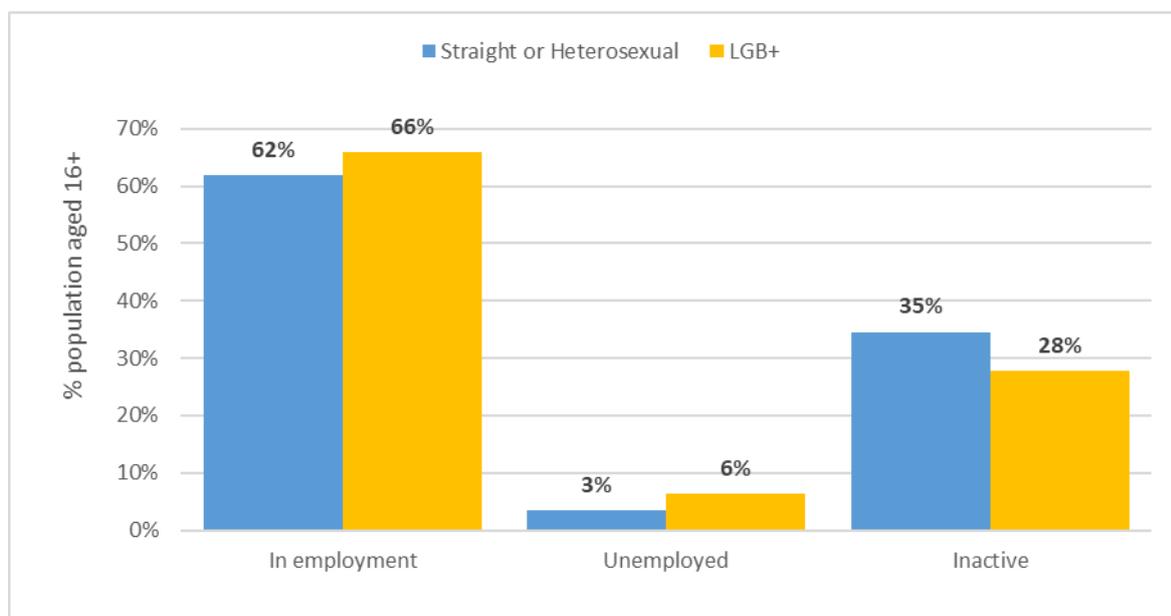
#### **LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population**

The LGB+ population are more likely to be economically active than the heterosexual population due to their younger age profile.

Figure 17 shows that the LGB+ population are more likely than the heterosexual population to be economically active – with 66% in employment (heterosexual population 62%) and 6% unemployed and looking for work (heterosexual population 3%). Overall 28% of the LGB+ population are economically inactive compared to more than a third (35%) of the heterosexual population. This is partly due to the older age profile of the heterosexual population.

Figure 17: Sexual orientation and economic activity status in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



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## ECONOMICALLY INACTIVE

### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

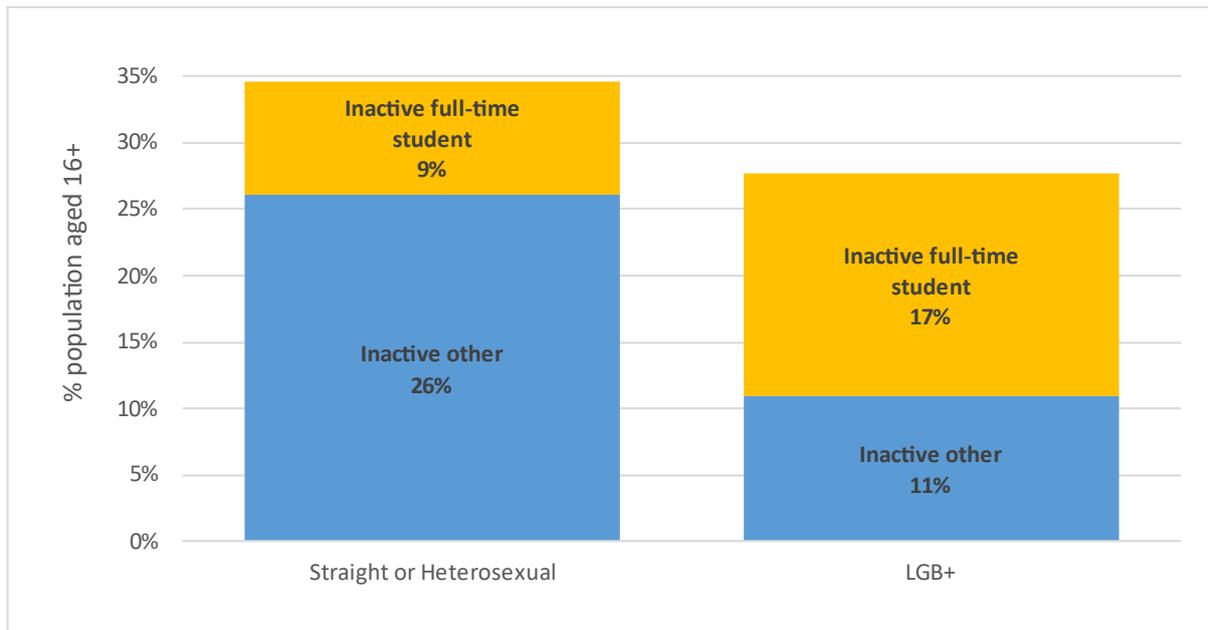
Because of their relatively young age profile, the economic inactivity reasons were different for economically inactive people who identified as LGB+ than for the heterosexual population.

Among people who identified as LGB+, being a full-time student was a most common reason for economic inactivity. Of the total LGB+ population aged 16 and over, 17% were economically inactive full-time students compared to just 9% of the heterosexual population (figure 18).

Just 11% of the LGB+ population were inactive due to other reasons including long-term sickness or disability, looking after the family or home, retirement or other reasons. In the heterosexual population, these reasons accounted for economic inactivity in more than a quarter (26%) of the total heterosexual population aged 16 and over.

Figure 18: Sexual orientation and economic inactivity in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021

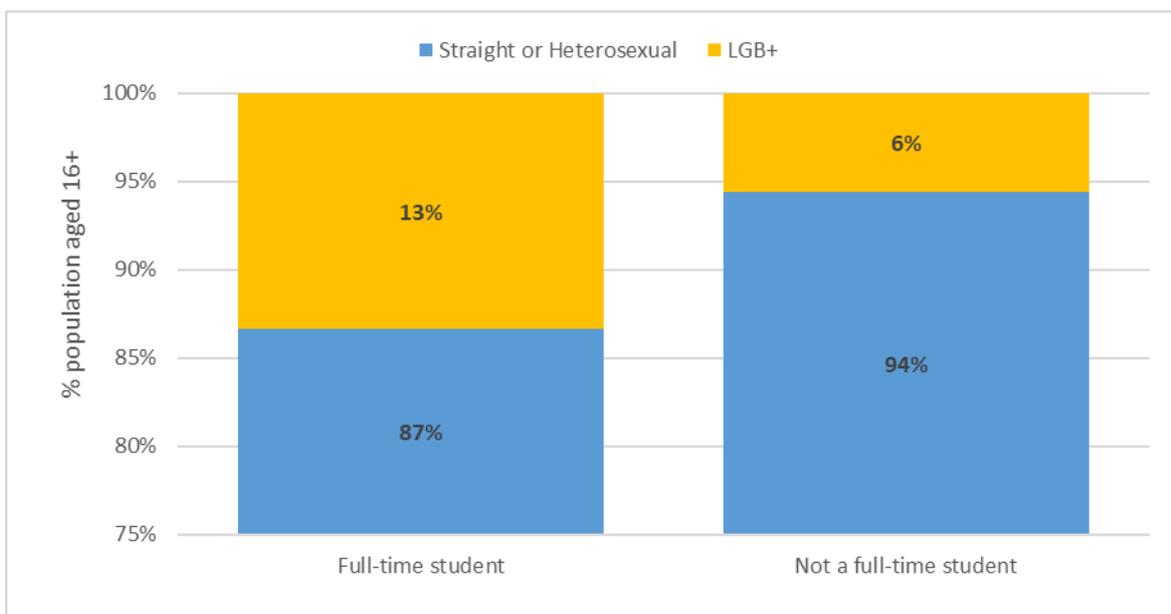


## FULL-TIME STUDENTS

The LGB+ population make up 13% of the total full-time student population aged 16 and over (whether active or inactive) compared to just 6% of the population who aren't full-time students (figure 19).

Figure 19: Sexual orientation proportions and full-time students in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



## 4.7 OCCUPATION

There are nine categories for the types of work people do in the census. These are:

1. Managers, directors or senior officials
2. Professional occupations
3. Associate professional and technical occupations
4. Administrative and secretarial occupations
5. Skilled trades occupations
6. Caring, leisure and other services
7. Sales and customer service
8. Process, plant and machine operation
9. Elementary occupations

### **LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population**

Among people in work at the time of Census 2021, the percentage who worked in each of the nine occupation categories did vary between the heterosexual and the LGB+ population (figure 20).

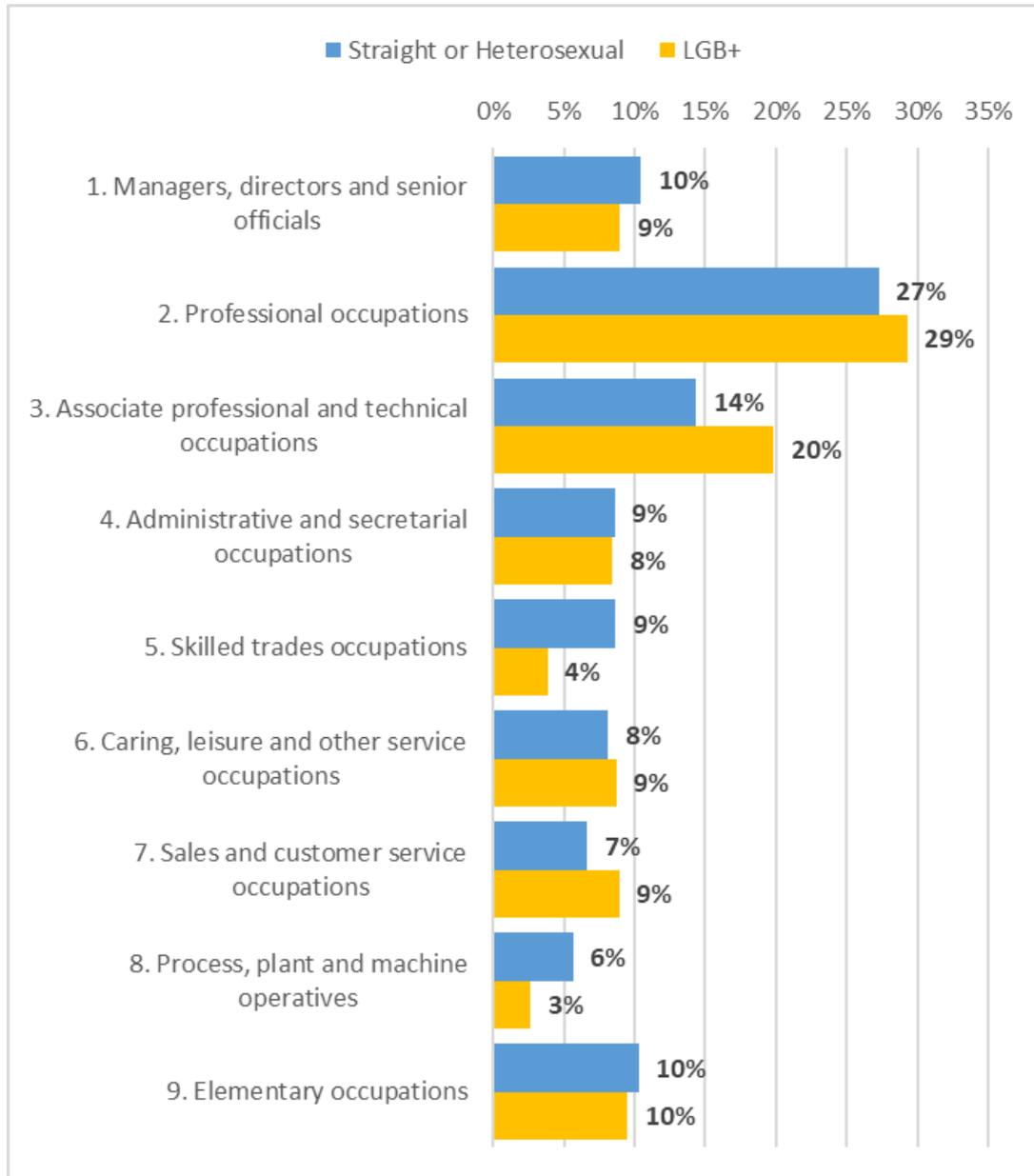
Both population groups had the highest proportion of people employed in 'professional occupations' (eg doctors and nurses, legal professionals, and teachers) followed by 'associate professional and technical occupations' (eg actors, aircraft pilots, authors, IT technicians and estate agents). LGB+ people were more likely to work in these two occupation groups with 29% employed in 'professional occupations' (27% heterosexual) and 20% employed in 'associate professional and technical occupations' (14% heterosexual).

The LGB+ population had a slightly higher proportion of people (two percentage points) employed in 'sales and customer service occupations' (9%).

Working in skilled trades occupations (eg plumbers, roofers and car technicians) was less frequent among employed people who identified as LGB+ (4% compared to 9% heterosexual) and also less frequent in 'process, plant and machine operative' occupations (3% compared to 6% heterosexual).

Figure 20: Sexual orientation and occupation in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



## 4.8 QUALIFICATIONS

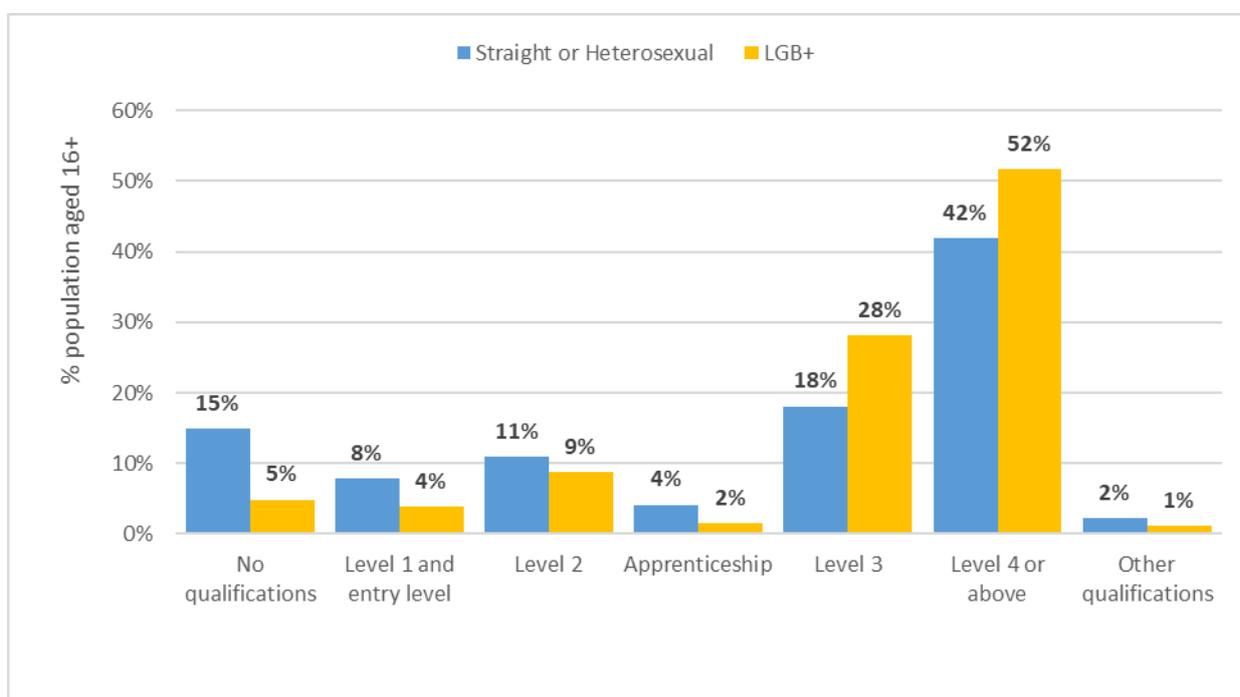
Qualification levels in the Census 2021 include the following categories:

- **No qualifications:** No formal qualifications
- **Level 1:** One to four GCSE passes (grade A\* to C or grade 4 and above) and any other GCSEs at other grades, or equivalent qualifications
- **Level 2:** Five or more GCSE passes (grade A\* to C or grade 4 and above) or equivalent qualifications
- **Apprenticeships**
- **Level 3:** Two or more A Levels or equivalent qualifications
- **Level 4 or above:** Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Bachelor's degree, or postgraduate qualifications
- **Other:** Other qualifications, of unknown level

### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Figure 21: Sexual orientation and highest qualification level in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



More than half (52%) of the LGB+ population in Bristol have a degree or higher as their highest level of qualification, ten percentage points higher than the heterosexual population (42%)(figure 21).

Of the population with no qualifications, just 5% of the LGB+ population aged 16 and over had no qualifications, 10 percentage points lower than the heterosexual population (15%).

Many factors contribute to differences in highest level of qualification with age likely to be a contributing factor to differences in educational outcomes.

## 4.9 HOUSING

### HOUSING TENURE

#### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

The census tells us if people lived in a home that is owned outright, owned with a mortgage or loan, or if they lived in a rented home. If rented, the census tells us if that was social rented housing (such as from a council or housing association), private rent, or if they were living rent free (for example, in a home owned by a family member or friend). Sexual orientation is individual, so we are looking here at percentages of people, rather than the percentage of rented or owned properties.

*Figure 22: Sexual orientation and housing tenure in Bristol*

*Source: ONS Census 2021*



More than half (53%) of the LGB+ population privately rent (or live rent free), significantly higher than the heterosexual population (26%). The younger age profile of the LGB+ population may partly explain why they are more likely to live in private rented and rent-free homes (figure 22).

For the LGB+ population, home ownership levels were 21 percentage points lower than for the heterosexual population, with 36% owning their own home compared to 57% of the heterosexual population.

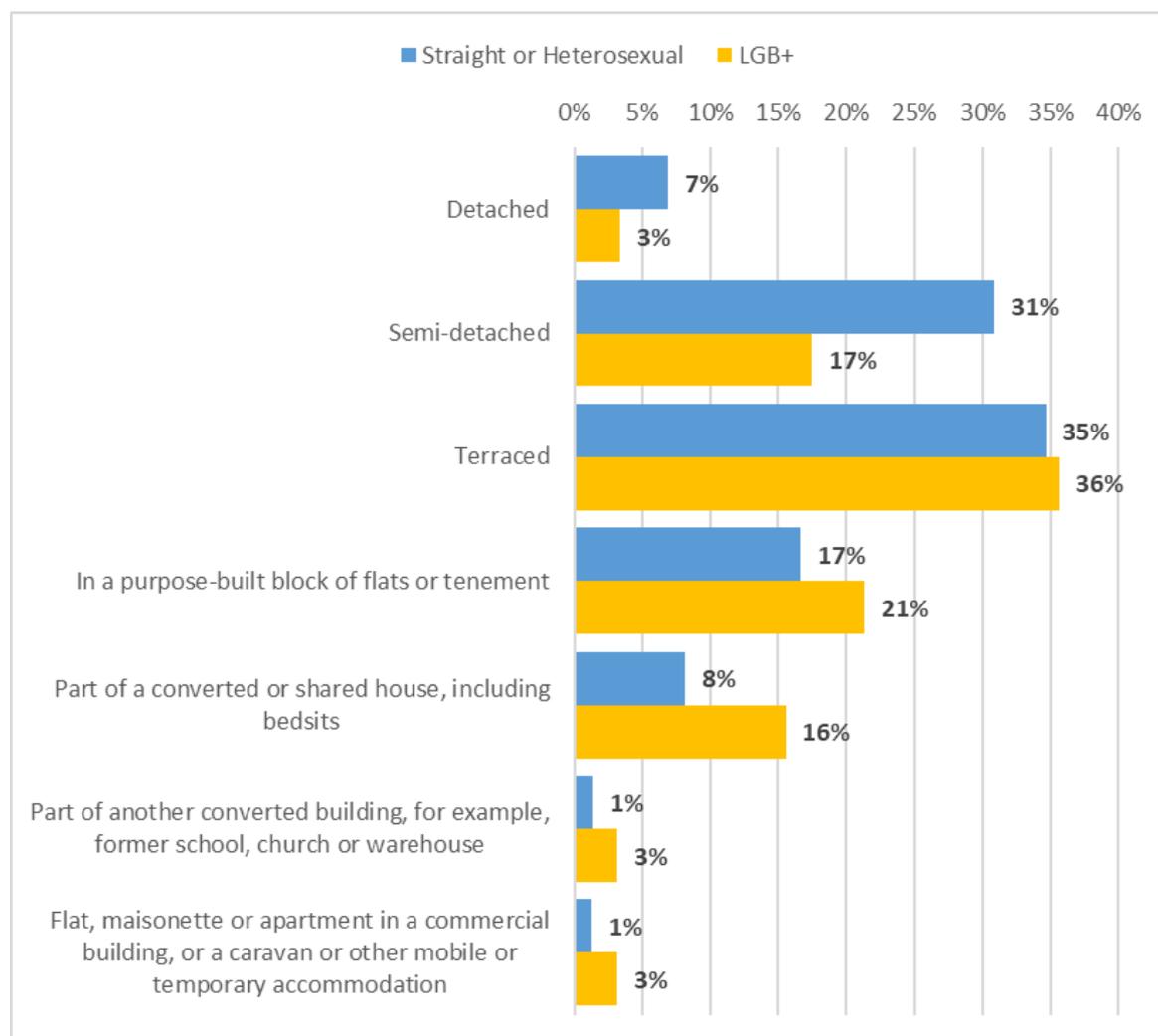
## HOUSING TYPE

### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Overall in Bristol, around 27% of the population live in flats (including maisonettes or apartments). The variation between the LGB+ and heterosexual population by accommodation type is quite marked, which again will reflect the different age profiles (figure 23).

Figure 23: Sexual orientation and accommodation type in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



A higher proportion of the LGB+ population (43%) live in flats (including maisonettes and apartments), or a caravan or other mobile or temporary accommodation, than the heterosexual population (27%). Consequently, a lower proportion of the LGB+ population (56%) live in whole houses than the heterosexual population (72%), mainly due to lower proportions living in detached and semi-detached houses.

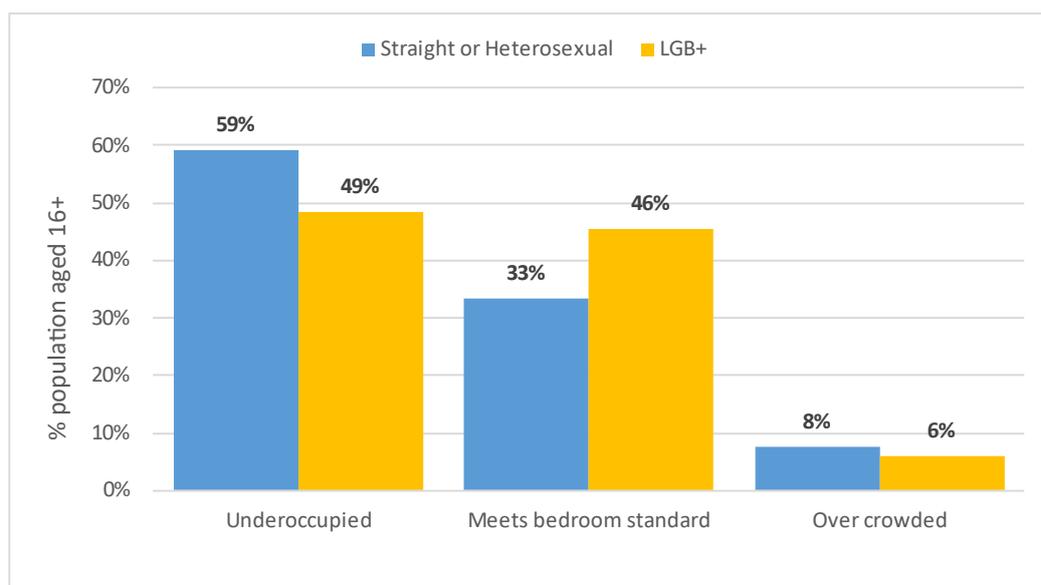
## OVERCROWDING

### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

The LGB+ population are less likely than the heterosexual population to live in large houses with more bedrooms than are needed by the number of people living there (figure 24).

Figure 24: Sexual orientation and occupancy rating in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021

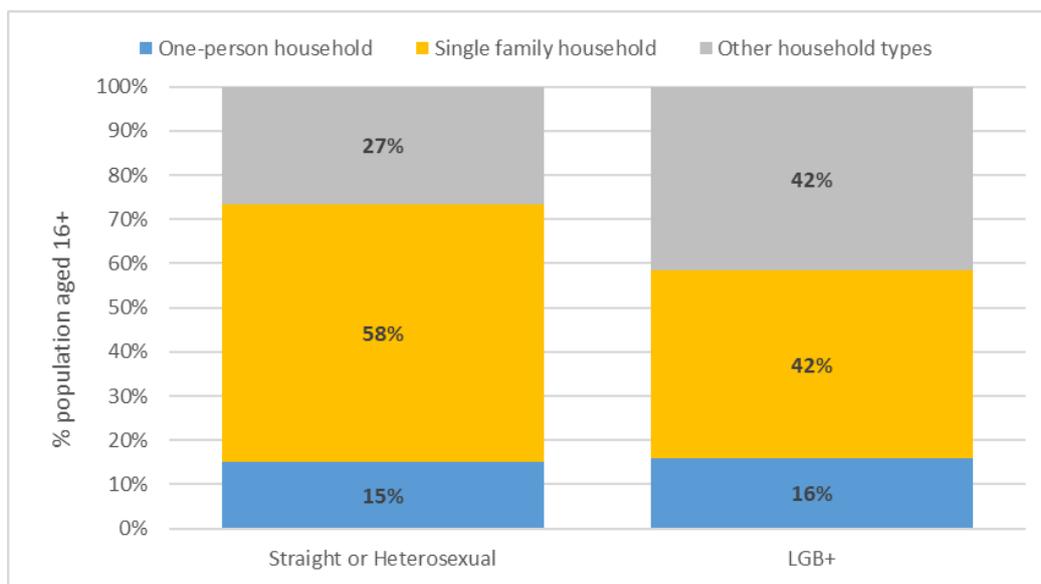


## 4.10 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

### LGB+ population compared to the heterosexual population

Figure 25: Sexual orientation and household composition in Bristol

Source: ONS Census 2021



Note: 'Other household types' include households that aren't just one person or one family and include all student households and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

The LGB+ population is split between single family households (42%) and 'other household types' (42%) which include non-family household types, all student households and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). This compares to the heterosexual population where the majority (58%) live in single family households (figure 25).

## 5.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

ONS Census 2021 articles on sexual orientation:

[Sexual orientation, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Sexual orientation: age and sex, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Sexual orientation, further personal characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

Alongside this profile, a new interactive [Equalities Dashboard](#) presents more detailed results from Census 2021. Each equalities group is available for a selection of age groups and by ward.

More information about census results for Bristol, including links to our Census 2021 Dashboards, can be found on the [Bristol City Council Census web page](#). Links to a selection of useful ONS Census tools can also be found here.

A guide to equalities statistics and profiles for other population groups, together with wider information about the Bristol population can be found on our [population web page](#).

If you have any questions about this report please contact:

Strategic Intelligence and Performance - Bristol City Council

Email: [research@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:research@bristol.gov.uk)