

## Numbering the LGBT Group – Problems and Pitfalls

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Focus on the Family

Letter of Information

I always start out by talking about how this is impossible to measure, because there's no real agreed on scientific definition for measuring homosexuality. This is something I wrote a while ago:

One of the difficulties in thinking and writing about homosexuality is that the term is very hard to define, especially since there has been such a shift in language. Some view homosexuality as an activity, others as a type of person, others as feelings and desires, and yet others as a sexual orientation. But what is a "sexual orientation"?

### ***How is it defined or measured?***

Researcher Edward O. Laumann co-authored what is probably one of the best and most complete studies of sexuality in America.<sup>31</sup> He and his fellow researchers encountered this very difficult when they began the process of trying to define and measure homosexuality. Here's what they wrote about trying to find out how many men and women were "homosexuals":

*...estimating a single number for the prevalence of homosexuality is a futile exercise because it presupposes assumptions that are patently false: that homosexuality is a uniform attribute across individuals, that it is stable over time, and that it can be easily measured. (Edward O. Laumann, John H. Gagnon, Robert T. Michael, and Stuart Michaels, *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994), pp. 287-290.)*

The researchers questioned participants in the survey about same-sex desire, behavior and identity, in the past and in the present. Interestingly, they found that the three areas overlapped, but were not identical. For example, some people reported same-sex attractions, but did not identify as homosexual. Others reported same-sex behavior, without attractions or identity. They also found that, for many individuals, each of these areas was fluid and changed over time. The study did not find how many "homosexuals" there are in America; the researchers could not scientifically define and count such a group.

Then I talk about numbers. This is from a booklet we wrote two years ago, attached:

## HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CULTURE

We live in a time where “sexual fluidity” and the celebration of homosexuality are commonplace. One outcome of this is that more people now identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, with greater numbers in younger age groups. A 2012 Gallup poll found that 3.5% of American adults identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). *But that percentage increased to 4.5% in 2017, and within that survey, 8.1% of Millennials—those born between 1981 and 1996—identified as LGBT.*<sup>1</sup>

*Even more of the next generation identifies as something other than heterosexual: 12% of Gen Z teens, according to one poll.*<sup>2</sup> That’s a startling increase from generation to generation over such a short period of time.

1. Frank Newport, “In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%,” Gallup Online, May 22, 2018.
2. Kate Shellnutt, “Get Ready, Youth Group Leaders: Teens Twice as Likely to Identify as Atheist or LGBT,” *Christianity Today Online*, January 23, 2018.

**Most population studies show a shift downward in LGBT identification as people age.**

Then there’s this, from 2019 from the Williams Institute, an LGBT activist research group: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/in-the-news/some-4-5-percent-of-u-s-adults-identify-as-lgbt-study/>