

HOW MANY HOMOSEXUALS ARE THERE IN AUSTRALIA

There has often been confusion in the minds of the average Australian about the number of homosexuals and other people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) in Australia. This is understandable because of the media attention and the often loud voice this group of people have. This confusion has also been seen in the USA. A Gallup poll in 2011, asked people to estimate how many Americans were homosexual. The majority of people estimated 25 per cent, but the actual number, reported recently by another Gallup poll, is 3.4 per cent.

Research conducted by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University in 2003, has shown that of the 20,000 people surveyed, about 1.2% of adults identify as homosexual. Among men, 1.6% identify as homosexual, and among women, 0.8% identify as lesbian, while 1.4% of women and 0.9% of men identify as bisexual. Another study conducted by the Victorian government in 2008, found that among Victorians aged 12 to 24 years old, 97.9% identified as heterosexual, 1.5% as bisexuals, and 0.6% as homosexual. Monash University in Victoria did a study called "How Gay is Australia?" which was based on the 2001 Australian Census data. They found that only 0.2% of the population comprises same-sex couples, which is only 0.47% of all couples in Australia.

The 10% figure is a widely quoted number that came from research done by Alfred Kinsey around 60 years ago and is likely to influence people's estimates of the number of homosexuals in Australia. However, it doesn't accurately represent what Kinsey reported. Kinsey wrote that "10% of the males are more or less exclusively homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55", and about 4% of white males were exclusively homosexual throughout their lives. Studies since then have found much lower numbers, and the Kinsey studies have been criticised for methodological limitations such as biased sampling, flawed statistics and unethical research methods.

The subjects used for his 1948 Male Report were far from representative of American males. Up to 25 per cent were prison inmates, of which 44 per cent had homosexual experiences as prisoners, while the adolescent subjects were recruited by a homosexual teacher at only one school. As the sample of people surveyed by Kinsey was not randomly drawn from the population and thus cannot be considered representative, conclusions drawn should not have been generalised to the population. Despite these flaws being pointed out to Kinsey, he chose to ignore them and refused to correct for the errors predicted.

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