

The Yellow Brick Blog

Feb 2023

Yellow Brick Blog News

2021 census data continues to be published, with recent releases showing statistics for the proportion of LGBT+ citizens in England and Wales. This is the first time that questions on gender identity and sexual orientation were asked in the national census, which now presents much more accurate statistics for the country, rather than estimates.

Whilst 89.4% of the population aged 16+ identified as straight, 3.2% of the population identified as LGB+. Of that:

- 1.5% identified as gay or lesbian
- 1.3% identified as bisexual
- 0.23% identified as pansexual
- 0.06% identified as asexual
- 0.3% identified as queer

Alongside the sexual orientation data, 0.5% of the population identified as transgender.

In the summer of 2022, Sandi Toksvig wrote an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury urging him to move forwards and welcome LGBT+ people with 'equal footing'. She then met with The Archbishop at the beginning of the year to discuss her concerns – shared by many in the community. Recently, the Church of England has revealed that they would like to offer formal blessings to same-sex couples – a huge step for the LGBT+ community. The Church also issued a formal apology regarding their past “shameful” history of their “exclusion and rejection”.

In the news of entertainment, the first episode of a long-awaited series, HBO's rated 18 'The Last of Us' aired on the 15th January this year. Bella Ramsey, who plays one of the protagonists, Ellie, identifies as genderfluid, stating that when it came to pronouns: “I really couldn't care less”. This is a big moment for the LGBT+ community as we see more nonbinary actors in lead roles, such as nonbinary star Emma D'Arcy's role in 'House of the Dragon'. As well as this, the series features an MLM (men loving men) relationship and a lesbian main character.

Due to the Governor of Florida Ron DeSantis' bill nicknamed “Don't Say Gay”, thousands of books throughout the state are being removed from high schools after being deemed “inappropriate” for students. Some of these titles include “The Handmaid's Tale” by Margaret Atwood, “The Perks of Being a Wallflower” by Stephen Chbosky, and “Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe” by Benjamin Alire Sáenz - which was recommended in our last issue - as well as many other LGBT+ books.

Reviews & Recommendations

"Alex As Well" by Alyssa Brugman - 14+

YA novel which follows an intersex teenager, Alex, who embraces the female gender rather than the male gender that has been partly artificially assigned since birth.

"The Deepest Breath" by Meg Grehan - 14+

An eleven-year-old girl comes to terms with her feelings when she realises that she has a crush on one of her friends, also a girl.

"Good Omens" by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett - 11+

A comedy book following the story of the growing relationship between an Angel and a Demon, who are working together to try and prevent the Apocalypse

"Kiss" Jaqueline Wilson - 11+

Follows best friends Sylvie and Carl and their changing relationship as they get older. When Carl's new friend Paul comes onto the scene, Sylvie hardly gets to see him. Why is Carl spending so much time with Paul? And why doesn't he want to kiss Sylvie?

LGBT+ terms explained



Homophile movement

Homophile movement is a political term referring to the support and representation of minorities, in particular the LGBT+ community, in the post-WW2 society. It describes the social-political activism movement on both a national and international scale.

Nonbinary

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably within the gender binary of either 'male' or 'female'. Nonbinary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, whilst others reject them entirely. As an umbrella term, some people may choose to identify with it whereas others may not, as the perception of the identity may vary between individuals.

Demigender

The term demigender refers to anyone who feels a partial connection to a certain gender identity. This is an umbrella term, including gender identities such as demiboy, demigirl, and demi-androgyne.

Gaybaiting: provocative, or protective?

Gay-baiting has been a topic of much contention recently, gaining visibility after the events concerning Kit Connor in late October. The 18-year-old star of Netflix's *Heartstopper* series was "force[d]" to come out as bisexual after being accused of gay-baiting, sparking controversy around whether or not this is something real people can do.

However, gay-baiting is defined as a marketing technique, used in media to draw in—or "bait"—an LGBT audience. While arguably individuals with extensive publicist teams will promote whatever image they believe will capture the most interest, we—the public—have no way of knowing who is sincere and who is only vying for attention.

As with the case of Connor, just because someone has not publicly announced their sexuality does not make it any less of the case, and the LGBT community has always placed emphasis on the importance of allowing sexuality to remain undisclosed.

Originally, this was a point of safety, but more and more, people are accepting that both sexuality and gender are such diverse areas that many find it hard to label themselves—or simply do not want to.

Meanwhile, sexuality is, for many, such a private affair that they do not want to declare it either way; does it really make sense to punish people for this? Does a celebrity "acting gay" give us a right to their private life? If they are not promoting anything which hurts the LGBT community, why does it matter?

Moreover, what does it really mean to "act gay"? In recent years, many have pointed to Harry Styles, singer formally of One Direction, as the poster-boy for performed homosexuality in the name of marketing.

Such actions that have resulted in gay-baiting accusations range from wearing flamboyant clothes and being affiliated with LGBT charities, to his perceived sexual ambiguity: in 2017, he said his sexuality was not "something [he] ever felt like [he has] to explain".

This has widely been seen as a deliberate attempt to gain an LGBT audience, even taking away attention from other LGBT artists, by giving "hope" that he might secretly be gay or bisexual. However, while his clothes have always been one of his largest areas of criticism, have LGBT activists, feminists, and men alike not been campaigning for years to normalise feminine fashion for heterosexual men?

It has long been argued that clothing has no gender, and that straight men adopting "gay" fashion not only allows them freedom of expression, but also helps to protect gay men who don't want to be seen as such obvious targets for homophobia.

So should we not be encouraging men like Styles, who have the platform, popularity, and financial safety to continue their work however they express themselves, to help break down these societal barriers which prevent ordinary people from being themselves? How can it be bad to make these things more normal?

Therefore, I must ask you if gay-baiting is truly a crime which can be committed by real people, or if people are only protecting their own privacy, and leading the lives they want to live—and, in doing so, making it easier for the rest of us to do the same.