

More than half of generation Z gay, bisexual teenage boys report being out to parents

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A majority of gay and bisexual Generation Z teenage boys report being out to their parents, part of an uptick in coming out among young people that researchers have noted in recent decades, according to research published by the American Psychological Association. However, stigma and religious beliefs still prevent some young people from disclosing their sexual identity.

This study offers a glimpse into the coming out practices of Generation Z, those born between 1998 and 2010, a group that researchers are only beginning to study.

"This study is encouraging in that it shows that many teens, including those under 18 years old, are comfortable with their sexuality," said lead author David A. Moskowitz, Ph.D., assistant professor of medical social sciences at Northwestern University's Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing. "At the same time, we must be cautious, as the data also point to some of the same barriers and discrimination that previous generations have faced. Work still needs to be done."

In the study, published in the journal *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, researchers examined [survey data](#) from 1,194 13-to-18-year-old boys, all of whom identified as gay, bisexual or as being attracted to people regardless of gender. The data were collected as part of an HIV prevention study between January 2018 and January 2020.

Participants were asked demographic questions, such as their race and age and social questions such as their religious affiliations and the frequency with which they attended religious events. They were also asked to respond on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being strongly agree and 4 being strongly disagree, to a series of statements to gauge their attitudes about their own sexual identities. These statements included, "Sometimes I think that if I were straight, I would be happier" and "If there were a pill to make me straight, I'd take it." They were also asked a series of questions, such as, "How many times has someone chased you because of your sexuality?"

Researchers found that 66% of those surveyed were out to their mothers or other female parental figures and 49% were out to their fathers or other male parental figures. In the 1990s, in contrast, an estimated 40% of adolescent boys were out to their mothers and less than 30% were out to their fathers, according to the researchers.

The study also found that white participants were more likely than Black participants to be out to a parent or parental figure. Those identifying as gay were more likely to be out to a parent than bisexuals or those unsure of their sexuality. Participants who said they were not religious were more likely to say they were out to a parent than teens who identified as religious. Teens who were not fully accepting of their identity were less likely to come out than those who embraced their identity.

"This gives us an understanding of the factors that move teenagers to share this type of information with the people closest to them," said Moskowitz. "We can now compare these practices with how other generations deal with these issues and think about what it all means for [future generations](#)."

More study is needed to fully understand how this [generation](#) views sexuality, according to the researchers.

"An important next step would be to determine the coming out practices of females in this age group," Moskowitz said. "This study provides a roadmap for such an effort. In the meantime, these findings should be helpful to those who work with teenagers identifying as sexual minorities."

More information: "Demographic and Social Factors Impacting Coming Out as a Sexual Minority Among Generation-Z Teenage Boys," *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, published online April 26, 2021.

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