

Tuesday, 2 June 2015

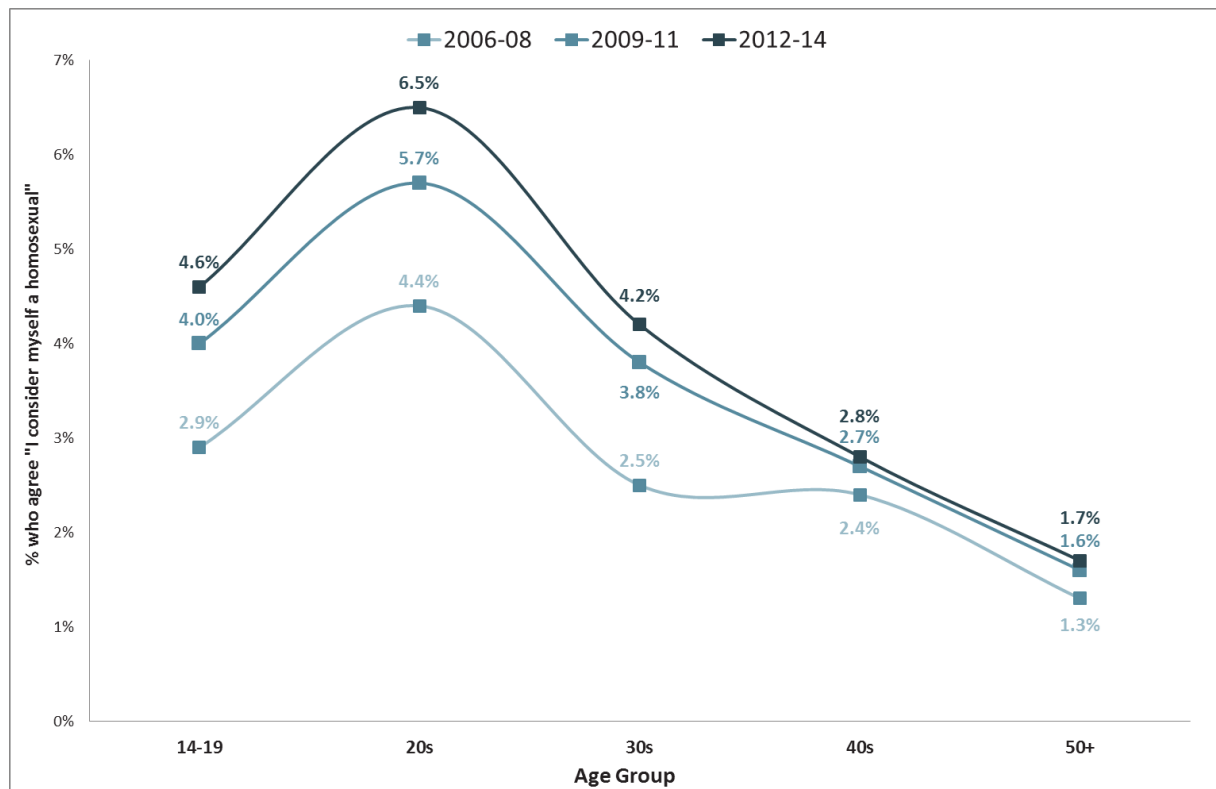
## Is Australia getting gayer—and how gay will we get?

It should be a simple question: how many people are homosexual? But, as Roy Morgan Research has found, getting a straight answer is still problematic—and the number just keeps growing.

Between 2006 and 2014 Roy Morgan Research asked almost 180,000 Australians (14+) to agree or disagree to the statement, “I consider myself a homosexual”. In 2006-08, around 1 in 42 people (2.4%) agreed. By 2009-11, this had risen to around 1 in 32 (3.1%). And during the latest triennium 2012-2014, the figure was higher again, at around 1 in 29 (3.4%).

The proportion of people who say they are homosexual is increasing across all age groups, but inconsistencies remain: 4.6% of Australian teenagers (14-19) now agree they are homosexual (up from 2.9% in 2006-08), rising to a peak of around 1 in 15 people in their 20s (6.5%, up from 4.4% in 2006-08). From there, the rate declines to 4.2% of those in their 30s (up from 2.5%), to 2.8% in their 40s (up from 2.4%), down to less than 1 in 55 people aged 50+ (1.7%, up from 1.3%).

Proportion in each Age Group who say they identify as homosexual



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source, January 2006 – December 2014, average three-year sample n = 59,654 Australians 14+

In the same Single Source survey, respondents agree or disagree to scores of other attitudinal statements, covering everything from red meat to recycling, risk-taking to coupon-clipping, call-screening to holiday-making to hybrid cars.

If we assume (as we would were a similar trend revealed by ‘I consider myself a vegetarian’, for example) that all respondents answer accurately, the pattern of responses raises such queries as:

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- Does homosexuality go away? With each decade of maturity from 20s to 30s to 40s and onwards, do around a third of gay people de-homosexualise?
- Has incidence of homosexuality been rising over time? Were more homosexuals actually born in the 1980s than in the 1970s, 1970s than 1960s, and so on?
- Is homosexuality a recent and niche innovation, like Blu-Ray, and are younger people more likely to be 'early adopters'?
- Or finally, is it that younger homosexuals are more likely (and/or older homosexuals are less likely) to complete comprehensive market research surveys than heterosexuals the same age, thus skewing the data?

The other (and most likely) option, of course, is that the downward trend across age groups includes a decline in candour. One can intuitively understand why the rate rises from 14-19 to 20s, as more young people 'come out'. But the subsequently decreasing prevalence suggests some older respondents are less candid.

Whether this is due to their being 'in the closet', more concerned with privacy, or even perhaps less agreeable to the black-and-white nature of the question, we might nevertheless take the 20s rate (6.5% today, but potentially still not done rising) as the most accurate and forthright overall figure.

Across all age groups, men are more likely than women to agree they consider themselves homosexual. Overall, 4.1% of men and 2.8% of women agree, with those in their 20s the most likely among both genders: 7.6% and 5.5% respectively.

### **Michele Levine – CEO, Roy Morgan Research, says:**

*"With the issue of same-sex marriage once again in the spotlight, trying to determine the 'real' number of gay people in Australia is pretty irrelevant, except perhaps for politicians wishing to count up potential votes. Whether it's 1 in 50 or 1 in 15, there isn't some minimum threshold for what counts as discrimination.*

*"However the rising rate across all age groups shows that people who consider themselves homosexual are becoming more open about it, which reflects increasing acceptance across society.*

*"Finding out the 'real' number, therefore, is less about getting a head-count and more a gauge of just how open we are. As the Single Source survey continues over the coming decade, perhaps we'll see the figure steady and flatten across age groups, with the question answered as readily and casually as any about vegetarianism or coupon-clipping."*

**To learn more about the attitudes, lifestyles, purchasing intentions and media habits of Australians identifying as homosexual, contact:**

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**About Roy Morgan Research**

Roy Morgan Research is the largest independent Australian research company, with offices throughout Australia, as well as in Indonesia, the United States and the United Kingdom. A full service research organisation specialising in omnibus and syndicated data, Roy Morgan Research has over 70 years' experience in collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

**Margin of Error**

The margin of error to be allowed for in any estimate depends mainly on the number of interviews on which it is based. Margin of error gives indications of the likely range within which estimates would be 95% likely to fall, expressed as the number of percentage points above or below the actual estimate. Allowance for design effects (such as stratification and weighting) should be made as appropriate.

Sample Size	Percentage Estimate			
	40%-60%	25% or 75%	10% or 90%	5% or 95%
5,000	±1.4	±1.2	±0.8	±0.6
7,500	±1.1	±1.0	±0.7	±0.5
10,000	±1.0	±0.9	±0.6	±0.4
20,000	±0.7	±0.6	±0.4	±0.3
50,000	±0.4	±0.4	±0.3	±0.2

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