

Estimating the Number of Young Gay/Bisexual Men in the Community

Here is how to estimate the number of young gay/bisexual men in your community.

1. Go to the U.S. Census Bureau website at <http://www.census.gov/>. We have generally found it most useful to view the information in the 2000 Summary File 1 dataset. To go directly to these detailed tables, use the following address: http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTGeoSearchByListServlet?ds_name=DEC_2000_SF2_U&_lang=en&_ts=40924712556. (Note: these links change from time to time, so if this URL is not working when you try it, navigate to the 2000 Summary File 1 dataset from www.census.gov. You may find it helpful to look for the Census Fact Finder tables.)

If you don't have Web access from your home or office, many public and university libraries offer free terminals. Another option is to request the information you need directly from the U.S. Census Bureau or from a library.

2. Select your desired place. Begin by determining your desired geographic type (e.g., county, state, place). For this example, we will look at data from the city (or place) of Albuquerque, NM. After selecting PLACE as the geographic type, NEW MEXICO as the state, and ALBUQUERQUE CITY as the geographic area, the website prompts us to ADD Albuquerque to the list at the bottom of the screen. Do this by pressing the ADD button after you have selected Albuquerque City as the desired place.

The online census database allows you to specify states, metropolitan areas, census tracts, counties, or places (cities, towns, villages, etc.). Also, there is abundant evidence that people of color are undercounted by the census. So if you are particularly trying to estimate the number of young gay/bisexual men of color in your area, you should take this into account.

3. Select your desired tables. After choosing Albuquerque City as the desired place, click on the "NEXT" button to see a list of available tables. The census bureau has dozens of tables to choose from (even more detailed tables can be found in the 2000 Summary File 2 dataset), but for our purposes, we are most interested in Table Number 3 "SEX BY AGE." Highlight this table and click the "ADD" button to add it to the list of desired tables. Then click the "SHOW TABLE" button to display information on the number of males of every age.

Simply add up the numbers for your desired age range. This is easy to do by copying and pasting the desired rows into another program such as Excel or Word and using the programs SUM function. By adding up the information on males ages 18-30 in the city of Albuquerque, we can see that there are 44,437 males in this age range.

4. Estimate about how many of these men are gay or bisexual. This is where the guesswork really begins. A 1994 National Opinion Research Center report from the University of Chicago tells us that 4.9% of men have reported a same sex partner since age 18. In addition, 7.7% of men reported an attraction to other men, and considered the prospect of sex with a same-sex partner appealing. But only 2.8% of the men thought of themselves as homosexual or bisexual. However, in the 12 largest U.S. cities, 9.2% of the men described themselves as homosexual or bisexual.* Of course, any study which asks for a self-reported sexual orientation may underestimate the numbers of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals since these labels are still socially undesirable.

Since Albuquerque is not in the 12 largest cities, we will use 2.8% as the low estimate of gay/bisexual men and 7.7% as the high estimate. So, an estimate of the number of gay/bisexual men, ages 18-30, in Albuquerque gives us a range of 1,244 to 3,422. The midpoint of this range gives us an estimate of approximately 2,333 young gay/bisexual men in Albuquerque.

*In 1992, the 12 largest U.S. cities were: New York, NY; Los Angeles, CA; Chicago, IL; Houston, TX; Philadelphia, PA; San Diego, CA; Dallas, TX; Phoenix, AZ; Detroit, MI; San Antonio, TX; San Jose, CA, and Indianapolis, IN.