

The Question of Sexual Orientation: Research Adventures in Measuring a Sensitive Topic in a National Sample

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New Zealand
Attitudes and
Values Study

NZAVS

Overview

- Measuring Sexual Orientation
- The challenge of non- or inappropriate responses
- Prevalence, Demographic differences
- Politics, Personality, Asexuality
- Where to next?

The Diversity and Prevalence of Sexual Orientation Self-Labels in a New Zealand National Sample

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In Press – The Archives of Sexual Behavior

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Measuring Sexual Orientation

- How to measure sexual orientation in the NZAVS?
 - Limited space
 - Potential to cause offence
 - Allowing participants to describe *their* sexual orientation in *their own* words
- Why?
 - Maintaining up-to-date population estimates
 - Civil unions legalised 2005, marriage equality 2013
 - Age and gender differences, future research projects
 - Wells, McGee and Beautrais (2011; interviews 2003/04) found that 98.0% were heterosexual, 0.6% bisexual, 0.8% homosexual, 0.4% something else/not sure

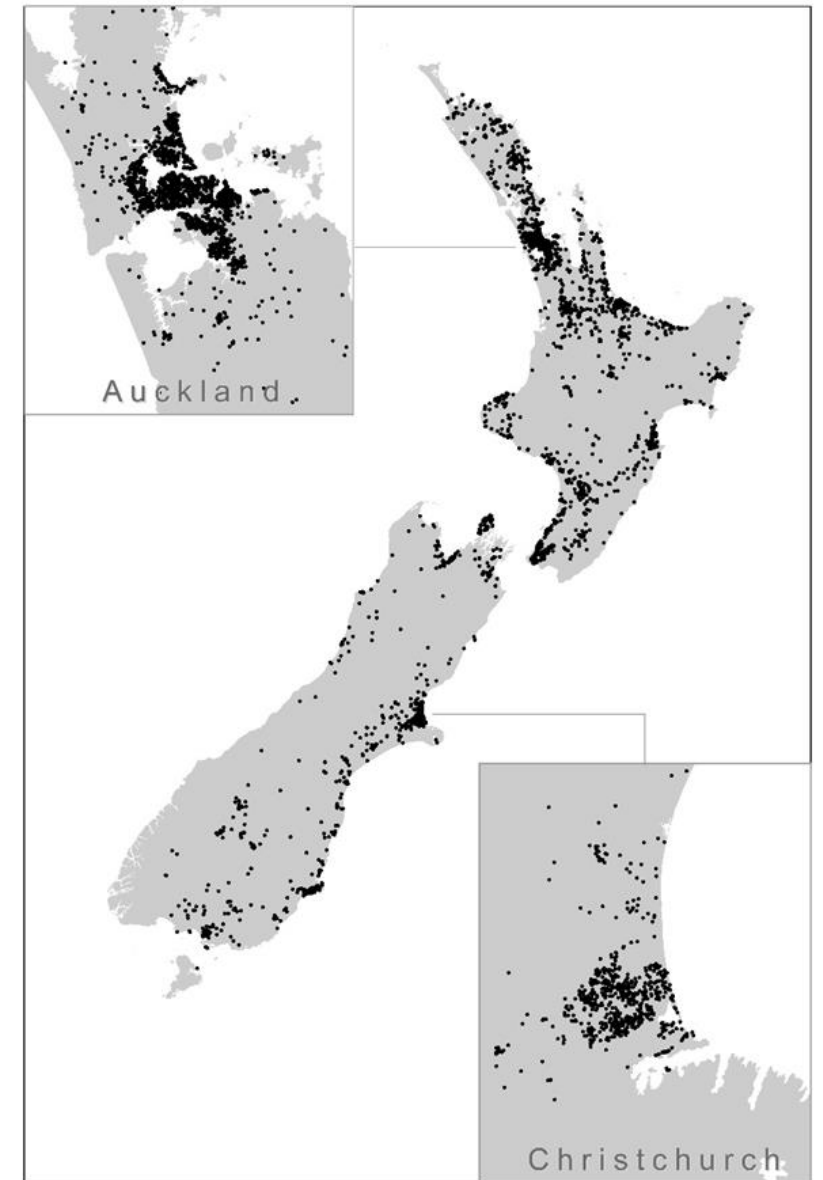
Measuring Sexual Orientation

- Attraction
 - Rate how attracted (or not) you are to men, women
- Behaviour
 - Report your involvement in (at least) genital contact with males and/or females
- Identity
 - Pick from these six options:
 - gay or lesbian;
 - bisexual, but mostly gay or lesbian;
 - bisexual, equally gay/lesbian and heterosexual;
 - bisexual, but mostly heterosexual;
 - heterosexual;
 - and uncertain, don't know for sure

The 2013/14 NZAVS

- Using wave 5 data
- $N=18,261$
- Applied Post-Stratification sample weighting (region, ethnicity, gender, age)
- Included sexual orientation as the last item of the 8 page questionnaire

25. How would you describe your sexual orientation?



(From Milfont et al. 2014, PLOS ONE, Fig. 1, p. 4)

Values Study

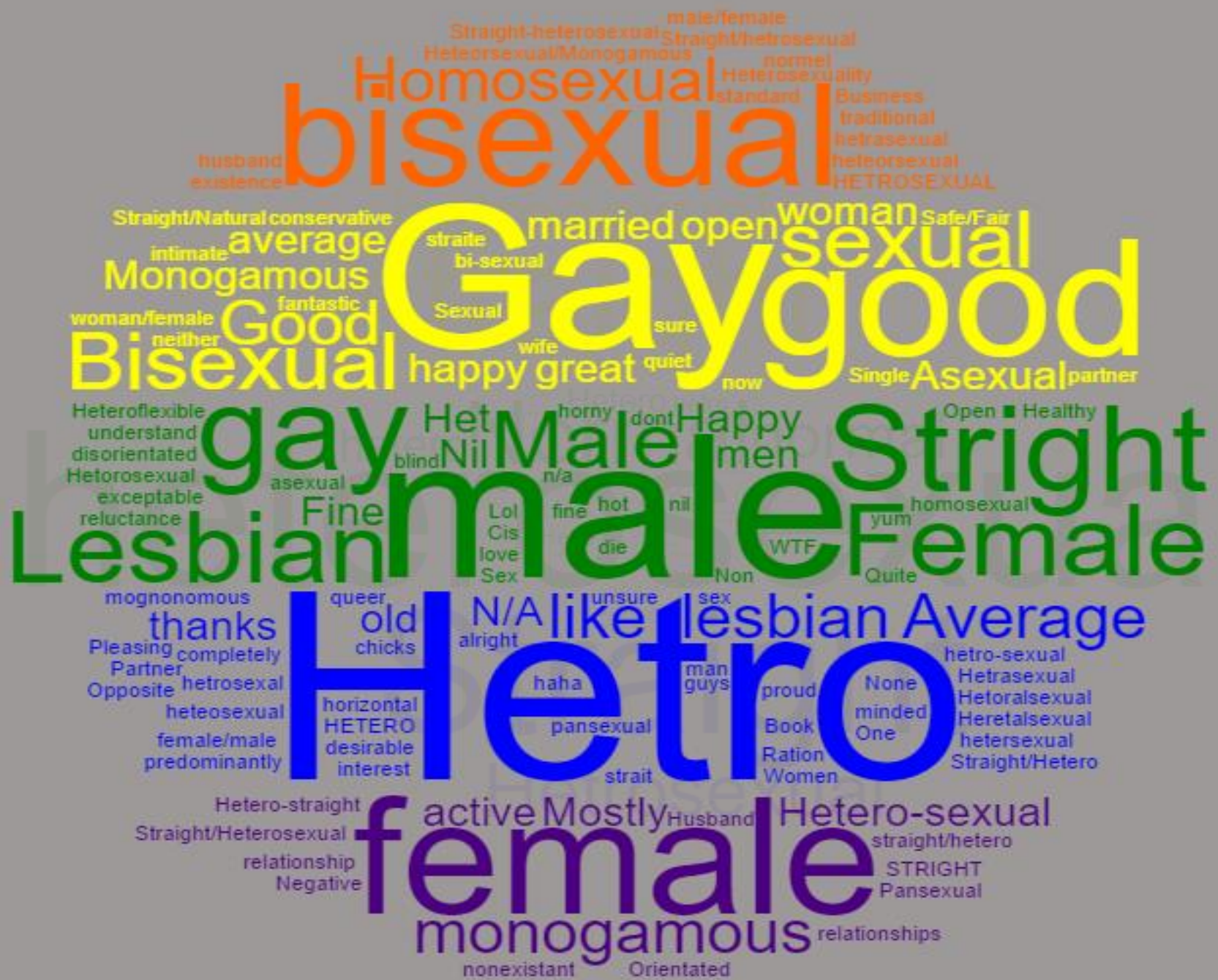
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Results



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Level 2 - Heterosexual

Heterosexual/Straight			
100	Heterosexual	"HETEROSEXUAL," "hetero," "het"	40.6% (7,417)
101	Heterosexual AND straight	"Heterosexual (Straight!)," "straight/heterosexual"	0.7% (119)
102	Straight	"Straight," "Sraight," "Stright"	19.0% (3,462)
103	Straight/Heterosexual AND states own gender	"A straight female," "Hetro Male," "Active heterosexual male!"	0.4% (69)
104	Straight/Heterosexual AND states preferred gender	"straight towards men," "Heterosesxual (Like men)"	0.1% (10)
105	Straight/Heterosexual AND specification of preference/strong preference	"strictly straight," "Straight!," "100 percent Straight"	0.3% (49)
106	Straight/Heterosexual AND attempt at humor	"straight (vagitarious...)," " "like it lots-hetro," "Straight-like strippers"	0.3% (48)
107	Straight/Heterosexual but confused (likely at question)	"Straight (?)," "straight?," "hetrosexual?"	0.1% (17)
108	Straight/Heterosexual but suggests they are gay friendly	"Straight. LGBT friendly," "straight, gay accepting"	<0.1% (6)

Level 2 - Heterosexual

109	"Normal"	"Standard," "ordinary," "typical"	7.9% (1,443)
110	"Normal" with explanation that this means straight/heterosexual	"Normal (Straight)," "Normal/Heterosexual," "normal-man/woman"	0.8% (141)
111	"Normal" with humor/emphasis/outrage/misc.	"normal :-)," "Completely normal," "not very PC but normal"	0.4% (67)
112	"Normal" with confusion	"Normal?," "not sure what you mean by this question-normal"	0.1% (21)
113	"Normal" with own gender label	"normal as a female," "Normal healthy male with healthy sex drive"	0.2% (35)
114	Specifies that they are Homophobic or NOT Homosexual	"Not Gay," "Homophobic Male," "normal (ie not homo)"	0.3% (54)
115	Marriage theme/Religious theme	"man marry woman," "man/wife," "God ordained-only with my husband"	0.7% (130)
199	Describes heterosexuality (misc.)	"opersit sex," "female who likes blokes!," "I like vaginas"	0.9% (163)

Heteronormative Responses

- “Normal” were 9.4% of the sample
 - SYNONYMS: "Standard", "ordinary", "typical", "Conventional", "average", "Appropriate", "traditional", "Majority", "Mainstream", "plain"
 - EXAMPLES: "Normal For A Man", "not very PC but normal"
- A small number of participants (0.3%) defined themselves as homophobic or not homosexual
 - EXAMPLES: "normal (ie not homo)", "Homophobic Male"
- Religious/marriage themes featured in 0.7% of responses
 - EXAMPLES: "read bible each day", "A man who loves his wife regularly", "God ordained - only with my husband"

Level 2

Lesbian/Gay			
200	Homosexual	"homosexual"	0.2% (45)
201	Queer	"Queer :)," "queer"	0.1% (14)
202	Lesbian	"lesbian"	0.3% (61)
203	Gay	"gay," "openly gay and proud," "Gay/Queer"	1.3% (232)
299	Describes Lesbian/Gay (misc.)	"same sex," "Takaatapui"	0.1% (16)
Bisexual			
300	Bisexual	"bi," "Queer(bi)," "bisexual"	1.4% (254)
Bicurious			
350	Bicurious	"bi-curious," "Predominantly heterosexual, bi-curious"	0.1% (16)
351	Heterosexual/Straight but suggestion this is not exclusive	"hetero with bi leanings," "Hetro-flexible," "Straight(-ish)"	0.3% (64)
Pansexual/Open			
400	Pansexual	"Pansexual/lapsed lesbian," "pansexual," "OMNI"	0.1% (13)
401	Open-minded/Fluid/Flexible	"open minded," "Liberal," "anything goes"	0.3% (58)
Asexuality			
500	Asexual	"Asexual"	0.2% (38)
501	Self-Sexual	"self-sexual"	<0.1% (1)

Level 2 – Missing data

Does not understand question (6.8%)			
700	Just specifies dissatisfaction	"Deprived," "Dull," "Bleak"	0.2% (39)
701	Just specifies satisfaction	"happy!," "PERFECT," "5 stars"	3.7% (679)
702	Expresses they are sexually active (no orientation suggestions)	"virile," "active," "regular vanilla"	0.6% (111)
703	Expresses frustrations/general lack of sexual activity	"Horny," "oral???:-)," "Haven't had it for ages (lol)"	0.2% (45)
704	Describes masculinity/femininity/gender	"Meterosexual," "alpha male," "I'm a lady"	0.1% (23)
705	Just specifies a gender	"a Woman," "male," "female"	1.3% (236)
706	Specifies marital status or relationship type (no suggestion of orientation)	"Single," "Married," "Monogamous"	0.5% (99)
707	Specifies both genders but not in any order/relationship	"woman/man," "male and female"	0.2% (39)

Level 2 – Missing data

80	Stated no Sexual Orientation			
	800	Expresses that they are celibate/virgin	"Celibate," "virgin," "involuntary celibate female"	0.2% (29)
	801	Expresses illness or age (orientation as no longer relevant)	"Waning with age," "too old," "concluded"	0.3% (53)
	802	None/Not applicable	"0," "none," "N/A"	0.9% (169)
	803	Does not know	"don't know," "disorientated," "Unsure"	0.3% (50)
90	Outside scope/Refusal to answer/Missing			
	900	Outside scope	"wellbeing," "Haha," "European"	0.6% (102)
	901	Transgender	"transgender," "trans"	<0.1% (5)
	902	Confusion	"?," "???", "ahmmmm"	0.3% (59)
	903	Expresses confusion with question	"what?????," "What does this mean," "Don't know what that is!"	0.1% (15)
	904	Does not label	"I don't believe in labelling sexual orientation," "I don't define it," "No label"	0.1% (15)
	905	Stated refusal to answer	"Refused," "My Biz," "No Comment"	0.5% (90)
	998	Missing Data (just orientation question)		9.9% (1,810)
100	Missing Data due to Incomplete Questionnaire Response			
	999	Missing Data due to Incomplete Questionnaire Response		2.9% (522)

Missing data

- A total of 22.8%
 - This is lower than Wells et al. who had 26.7%
- Reviewers hate this measure
- What might this missing data show?

Level 1

Heterosexual/Straight
94.2% (*n*=13,256)

Lesbian/Gay
2.6% (*n*=367)

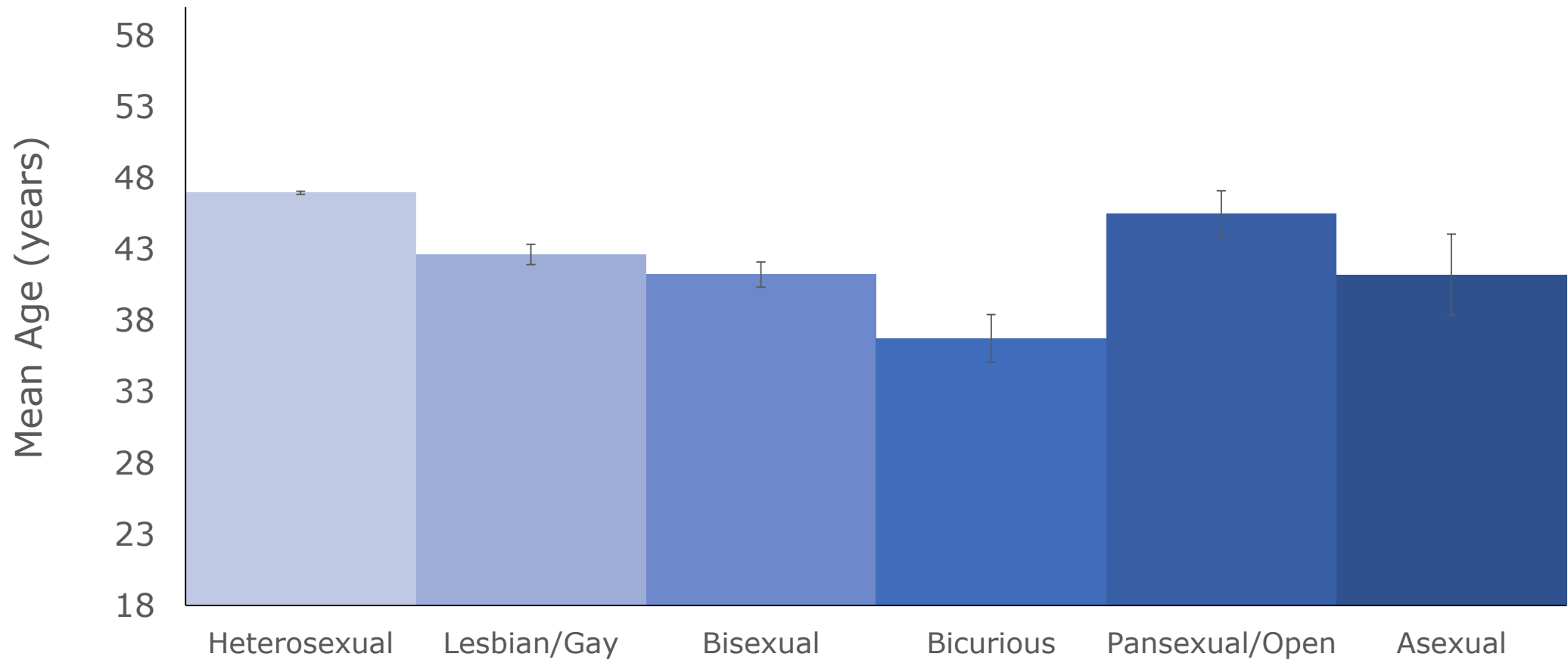
Bisexual
1.8% (*n*=254)

Bicurious
0.6% (*n*=79)

Pansexual/Open
0.5% (*n*=71)

Asexual
0.3% (*n*=39)

Age



Gender

Gay men: 3.5%

Bisexual men:
1.5%

Bicurious men:
0.4%

Asexual men
<.01% (*n*=8)

Lesbians: 1.8%

Bisexual
women: 2.1%

Bicurious
women: 0.7%

Asexual women
0.4% (*n*=31)

- Differences for heterosexual and pansexual/open n.s.

What else have we found?

Greaves, L. M., Robertson, A., Cowie, L. J., Osborne, D., Houkamau, C. A., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). Predicting Party Vote Sentiment: Identifying the Demographic and Psychological Correlates of Party Preference in Two Large Datasets. *Manuscript Submitted for Publication.*

Greaves, L. M., Barlow, F. K., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). Demographics Differences in Sexual Orientation. *Manuscript in Preparation.*

Greaves, L. M., Barlow, F. K., Huang, Y., Stronge, S., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). Personality across Sexual Orientations in a National Probability Sample. *Manuscript Submitted for Publication.*

Greaves, L. M., Barlow, F. K., Huang, Y., Stronge, S., & Sibley, C. G. (2016). The Asexual Identity in a National Sample: Demographics, Wellbeing, and Health. *Revise and Resubmit at the Archives of Sexual Behavior*

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Voting

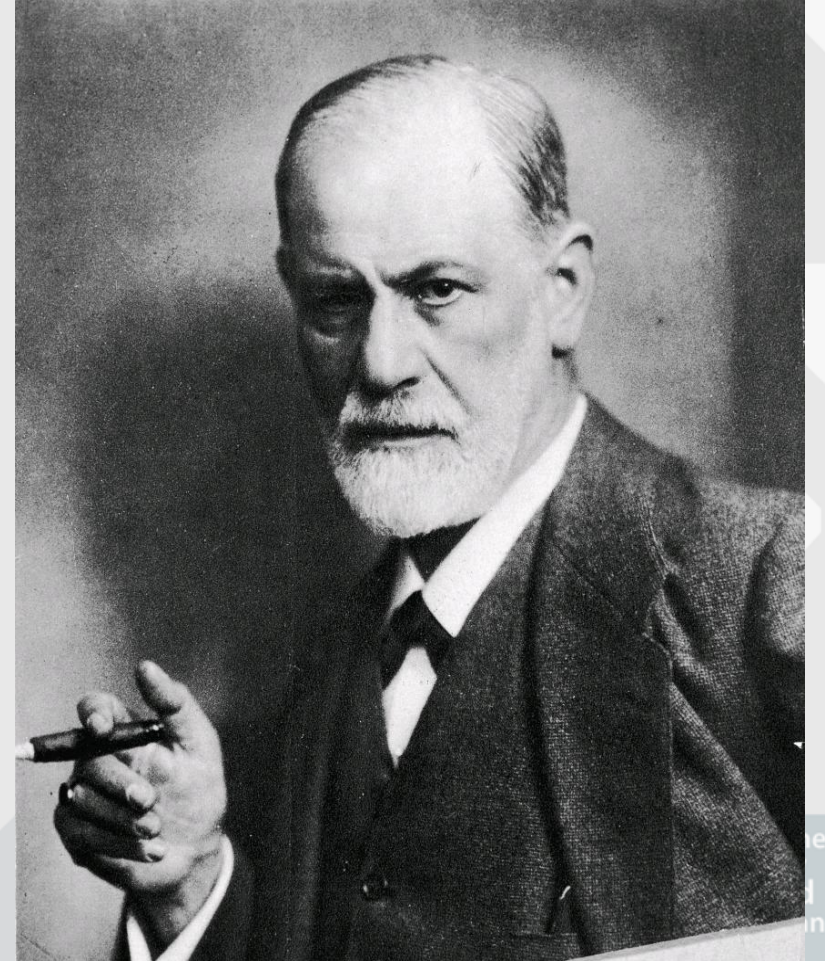
- Tested intended vote while controlling for a wide range of demographic and psychological variables
- Those identifying as LGB (Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual) were 1.9 times more likely to vote for Labour ($b=.615$, $se=.146$, $z=4.221$, $OR=1.850$, $p<.001$) than National
- 2.7 times more likely to vote for the Greens ($b=.980$, $se=.137$, $z=7.126$, $OR=2.664$, $p<.001$) over National
- There were no significant differences in sexual orientation between National and NZ First voters

Demographic Differences

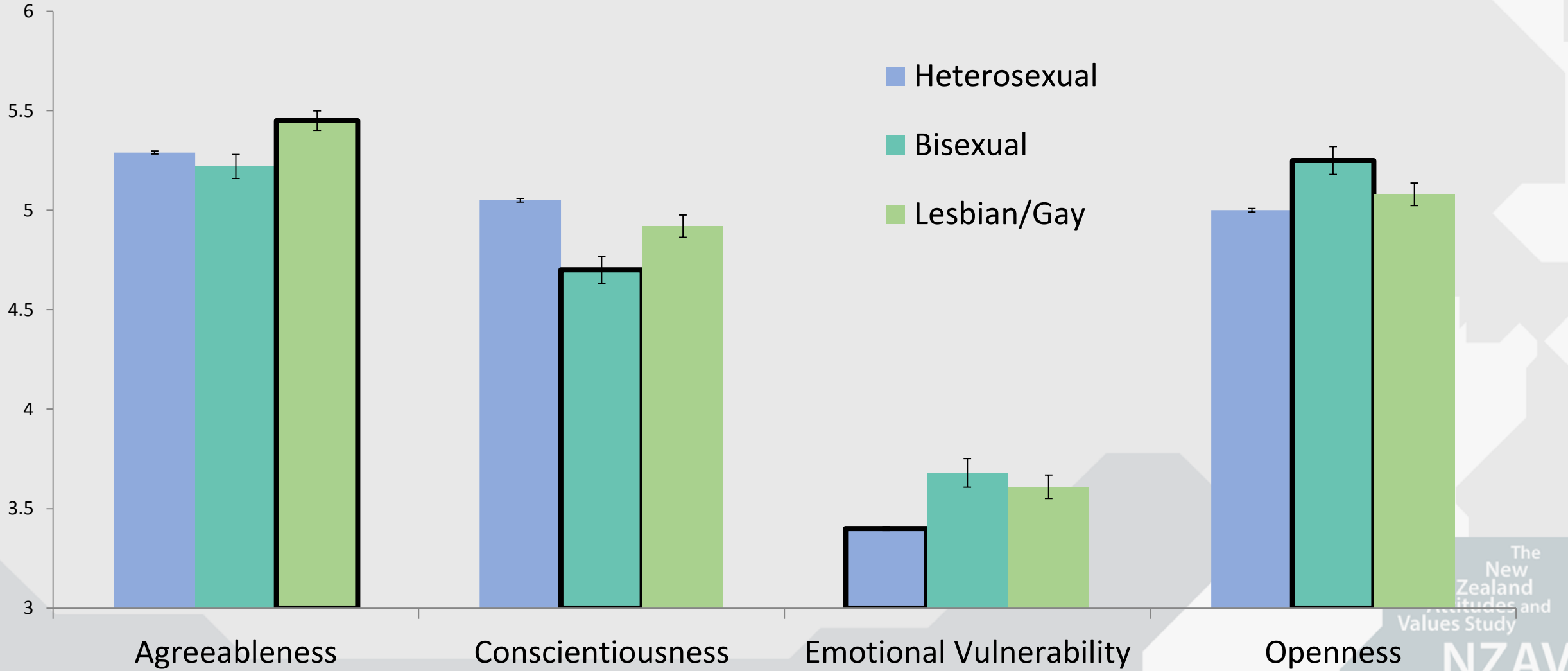
- Māori identified as lesbian or gay at higher rates than all other ethnicities
- Asian women were less likely to identify as bisexual
- Lesbians, gay men, and bisexual men were all less likely to be parents
- Bisexual men and women were less likely to be in a serious romantic relationship
- Lesbians, Gay men, and Bisexual women were all less likely to identify as religious
- Lesbian/Gay participants were more educated than heterosexuals
- Bisexual women were more likely than heterosexual women to live in more economically deprived areas.
- Bisexual people lived in urban areas at higher rates than heterosexuals.

Personality

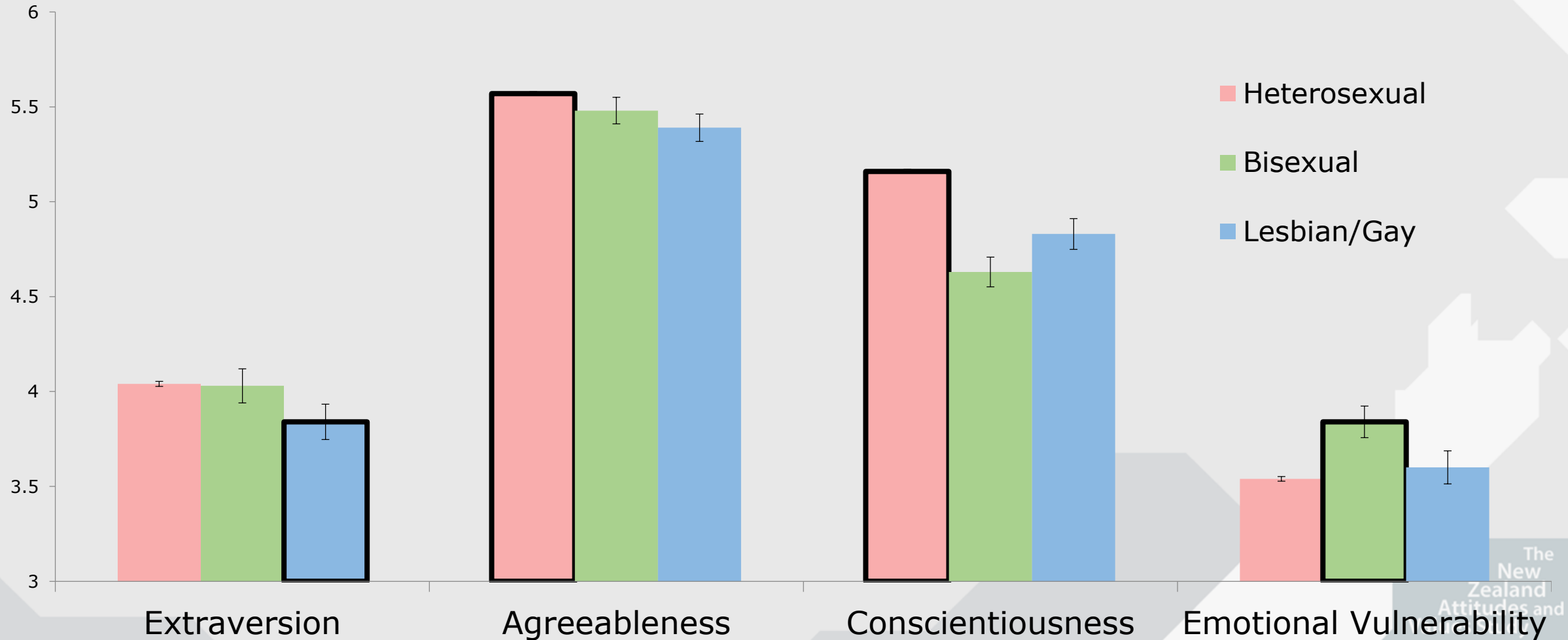
- Freud (1905; Ellis, 1915)
- Gay men have feminine-typed traits, so similar to straight women
- Lesbian women have masculine-typed traits, making them more like men



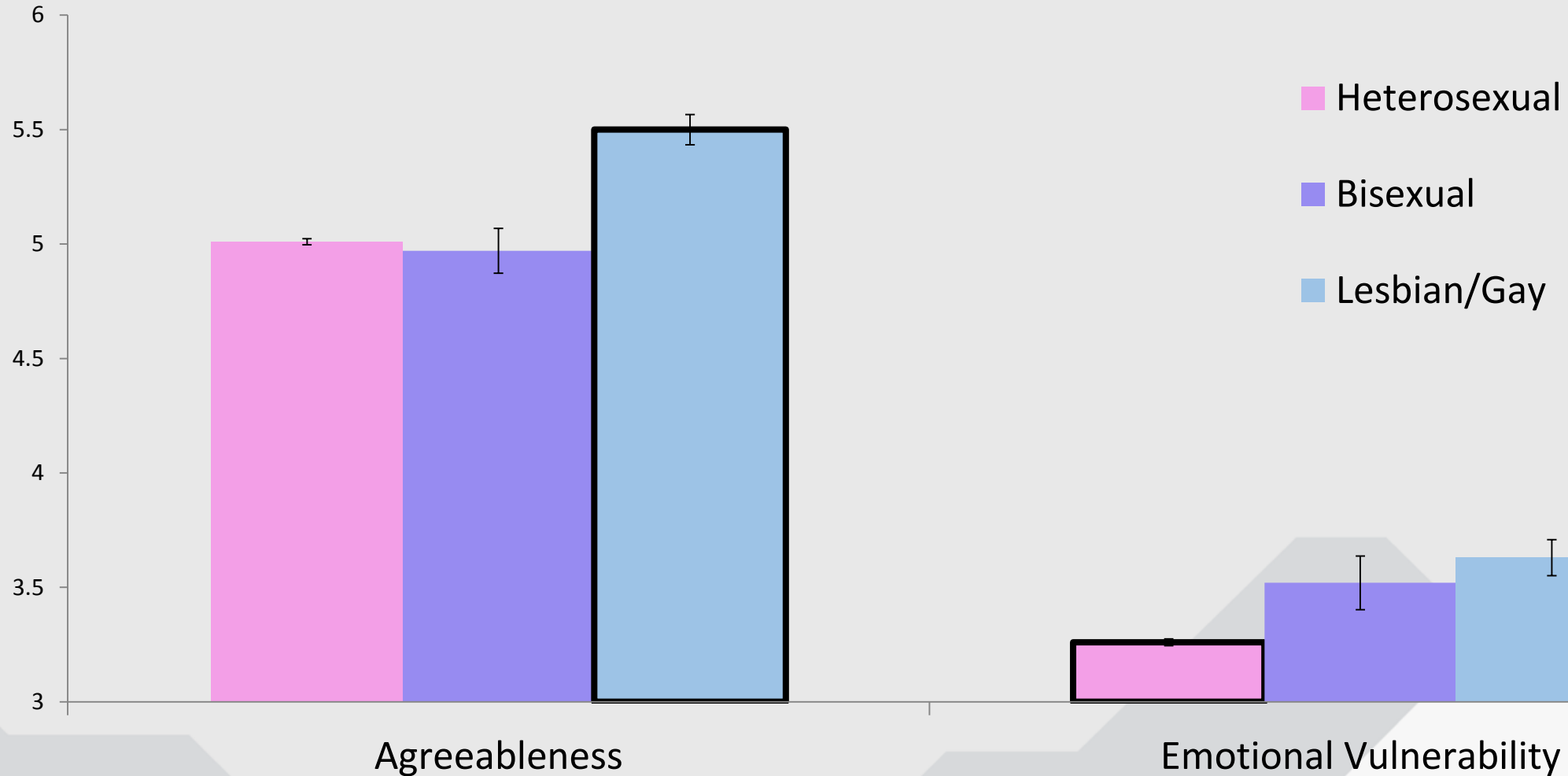
Results



Results - Women



Results - Men



Summary

- Lesbian women are more like straight men on extraversion, conscientiousness, supporting the gender shift hypothesis
- But why are gay men, heterosexual women, lesbians, and bisexual women highest on agreeableness?
- Additionally, why are gay men, heterosexual women, lesbians, bisexual women, and bisexual men higher than heterosexual men on emotional vulnerability?
- Future research: adapting to a prejudiced environment/role expectations?

Asexuality

- Asexuality is characterised by a lack of, or low levels of, sexual attraction to anyone.
- Asexual people still often have sex, romantic relationships, and masturbate, but at lower levels than the sexual population.
- When someone identifies as asexual they may use a number of terms for their identity. This study analyses data from those who identified as asexual.
- Asexual people face prejudice, often have to 'come out', and feel misunderstood.
- Studies have shown inconsistent results for mental health, social wellbeing and physical health.
- Although research in this area is fairly new.
- Our study tests this in a national sample.

Asexual Responses

- We compared those coded as Heterosexual ($n=11,822$) with those who identified as Asexual:

Self-generated Sexual Orientation	Number
“Asexual”	34
“Nonsexual”	1
“Heterosexual or Nonsexual”	1
“Platonic”	1
“Aromantic”	1
“Demisexual”	2
“Bisexual leaning towards asexual (bi but not usually interested in dating or sex)”	1
“Grey Asexual”	1
“Polyromantic asexual”	1
“Heteroromantic asexual”	1
Total	44

The questions we asked:

- A lot of them!
- **DEMOGRAPHICS:** Age, Gender (woman/man), Cisgender (cisgender/gender diverse), Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific, Asian vs being Pākehā), Parental Status, Relationship Status, Religious or not, Urban vs. Rural, NZDep Index (for Socio Economic Status), Education.
- **HEALTH:** Height, Weight, Living with an Illness or Disability, Subjective health e.g. "I expect my health to get worse," "I seem to get sick a little easier than other people."

The questions we asked:

- **MENTAL HEALTH:**

- Kessler-6 e.g. rating how often they: “feel worthless,” “feel nervous,” “feel that everything was an effort.”

- **SOCIAL WELL-BEING:**

- Felt belongingness e.g. “I know that people in my life accept and value me.”
- Perceived social support e.g. “There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.”
- Satisfaction with life, e.g. “I am satisfied with my life,” and “In most ways my life is close to ideal.”
- Self-esteem e.g. “I... On the whole am satisfied with myself.”

Results

- Women were more likely to identify as asexual ($b=-1.485$, $se=.502$, $z=-2.957$, $OR=.226$, $p=.003$).
- Cis-gender participants were less likely to identify as asexual ($b=4.011$, $se=1.015$, $z=3.953$, $OR=55.219$, $p<.001$).
- For reference, people who were gender diverse were 55 times more likely to identify as asexual relative to those who identified as cisgender.
- Asexuals were less likely to be in a serious romantic relationship ($b=-2.156$, $se=.473$, $z=-4.561$, $OR=.116$, $p<.001$). Heterosexuals were ten times more likely to be in a serious romantic relationship than their asexual counterparts.
- Asexuals had a reduced likelihood of being a parent ($b=-1.289$, $se=.419$, $z=-3.076$, $OR=.276$, $p=.002$),

Where to next?

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Where to next?

- Plans to explore mental health (University of Queensland)
- Body image
- Political identity centrality
- Non-respondents
- Identity change

With Thanks to the NZAVS Research Team...

