

**South-American gay and lesbian couples coming out in the 2010 census:
The Brazilian and Uruguayan cases**

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Same-sex couples are modestly but increasingly contributing to family diversification in many developed societies. In this paper, we present evidence on the demographics of same-sex couples and their families in South America. We focus on Brazil 2010 and Uruguay 2011, the first countries in the region to include an item on same-sex partnerships in their last census questionnaires. We examine how partnered gays and lesbians differ from partnered heterosexual men and women on issues like their geographic distribution, income, education, race and family structure. Inspired by findings from the US, we test the hypothesis of gay and lesbian couples as monolithic and stereotypes of high educated, wealthy, childless and urban individuals. First findings nevertheless seem to fit the stereotypes. We discuss the extent to which gay and lesbian couples may be underreported and whether selection into union formation and into self-reporting accounts for most of the observed socioeconomic profile.

Introduction

As legislation supporting same sex marriage in Argentina, Mexico City and recently in Brazil reveals, the expansion of rights related to gender and sexuality seem to be unstoppable, despite the strong resistance by growing religious fundamentalist agendas in the region. Also, the debate over gay couples and their rights to be parents have been hot-button topics, the gay communities are making some of the biggest strides in Latin America. Mostly in countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, gay rights advocates are using innovative legal strategies before courts with a progressive bent. That has led to a range of rulings that are giving gays rights that were once unthinkable in a traditionally conservative and Catholic region, including the right to adopt children.

The new demographic trends in Latin America where fertility rates went down to below replacement in several countries, raises a question about the real impact of religion on sexual-reproductive behavior in the region. It seems clear that people's choices related to contraception and/or premarital sex have not followed their church's prescriptions. Also, the recent approval of same-sex marriage legislation in Argentina, Mexico and Brazil has challenged the Catholic Church's traditional influence regarding sexual rights. These facts and legislative changes, along with the practice of some priests and pastors providing

comfort, and even empowerment for many non-heterosexual worshipers suggest the existence of a double standard by the Church in terms of sexuality and reproduction in the largest Latin American countries. Or as said for Brazil, the churches tend to be more tolerant with life styles than legislation.

Within this context, statistical visibility of gay and lesbian couples is also increasing in South America. The most important step in this direction has been the decision of statistical offices to enumerate same-sex couples in the 2010 census round. Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil and Uruguay are among the countries that will provide estimates on same-sex couples. In this paper we focus on Brazil and Uruguay, the only countries in the region that included in the questionnaire an item on same-sex couples and that are providing access to their microdata already. We compare the Brazilian and Uruguayan cases on variables such as geographic distributions, education, income, race and family structure. More broadly, our results will be compared with the United States, Canada and European countries. In doing this we are aware of the fact that LGBT causes encompass diverse realities in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity which intersect with class, race, ethnicity, language, and other sources of social oppression.

Gay and lesbian rights in Brazil and Uruguay

Brazil

In a landmark decision in May 2011, Brazil's supreme court ruled that same-sex partners were entitled to every legal right enjoyed by heterosexual couples. However, we have to note that since the late 1990s many concessions have been granted to homosexual couples and in 2006 the Superior Justice tribunal determined that same-sex couples could be *de facto* partners and this gave some rights to same-sex couples through stable unions.

In the sequence of events, the 1st National Conference for Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals (LGBT) organized by the Brazilian Government in 2008 was also very important to the final regulation of legal rights for same sex couples. The event, the first in the world to be convened by a government, was a result of demands made by civil society and the Brazilian government's support of LGBT people's rights. During the conference public policies were defined for this segment of the population and a National Plan for the Promotion of LGBT Citizenship and Human Rights was also prepared. At the same event there was a positive evaluation of the Brazil Without Homophobia programme, launched by the federal government in 2004, to combat violence and discrimination against

the LGBT population .

The history of gains on legal issues that culminated with the conquest of equal married rights for same sex couples at national level in 2011, resulted from pioneer measures in some states years before. For example, in the State of Rio de Janeiro the government employees of the same sex couples received the same benefits as married couples in 2006. In the State of Rio Grande do Sul judges went even further and have determined that homosexual relationships should also be legally recognized many years before the Supreme Court decision in 2011. Now, in August 2012, the first Brazilian gay man has been granted a four-month "maternity" leave for a child he and his civil partner adopted. He will be the first gay father in the country to benefit from a paid leave equal in length to the one granted to a mother, rather than the usual five days off work for paternity. Thus, Brazil's social security agency has now agreed with the men that it would be discriminatory if one of them was not granted the time off. Putting this in perspective we observe that in the UK, one of the two adoptive parents, who may both be the same sex, qualifies for 52 weeks' leave provided he or she has been employed for 26 weeks at the qualification date.

Brazilian statistics on homosexuality and/or same sex couples before the 2010 Census are scarce and some estimates show large variation around the country. In 2009, a survey conducted by the University of Sao Paulo in ten Brazilian cities show that the Brazilian gay and bisexual male population represented about 10.4% of total Brazilian males while the lesbian population was 6.3% of total females. These values varies among the cities with Rio de Janeiro been in first place of gays and bisexual males, 19.3%, among total male population and Manaus in the first place of lesbians and bisexual women, 10.2%, among the total female population.

Uruguay

Uruguay was the first Latin American country to allow same-sex civil unions on a countrywide basis. Since January 1, 2008, unmarried couples in Uruguay, including those of the same-sex who have been together for at least five years, are legally entitled to sign a registry and enter into a civil union. They then are recognized as being entitled, as part of a civil union, to receive health benefits, and inheritance, parenting, and pension rights associated with their civil partner. Although not creating the equal rights that gay marriage would bring like in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, this changing attitude points that Uruguay is willing to take steps toward greater equality. Uruguay has also amended its laws to allow same sex couples the same rights to adopt as heterosexual couples. Since September 2009, same-sex

couples in a civil union can jointly adopt. Uruguay was the first country to allow this despite staunch opposition from the Roman Catholic Church. Uruguayan legislation was also passed to allow transgender individuals to change their name on all official documents, from birth certificates to passports, to reflect the gender of their choice. The measure authorizes sex changes starting at age 18, although earlier proposals did suggest allowing these changes from the age of 12. The Uruguayan government also lifted a ban on gay persons serving in the armed forces in May 2009. The ban was imposed by the 1973-85 military dictatorship. This trend fits a broad movement to lift such bans in Latin America. For example, Peru, Columbia, and Argentina have also removed bans in recent years. Following the government progressive attitude to gay rights the current president's liberal political ideology is being pressured--- from gay rights activists and human rights groups---to legalize gay marriage. Such as in Brazil the church influence on political issues has increasingly waned in Uruguay. In fact, a Marriage Equality Bill was introduced to Congress in 2011 and awaits a vote in both the House and the Senate. Also, in June 2012, a judicial court in Uruguay recognized a foreign same-sex marriage, leaving the country in a juridical paradox in which same-sex couples can't marry in Uruguay but could marry in other countries and have their marriages recognized in the country. Therefore, Uruguayans who marry overseas can already go to a judge and have their marriage recognized under Uruguayan law.

The 2010 round censuses of Brazil and Uruguay

Brazil and Uruguay have been the first and, to date, the only countries in Latin America that included an item on same-sex partnerships on their 2010 census round questionnaires. Other censuses in Latin America like Mexico 2010, Argentina 2010 and Venezuela 2011 will also provide estimates of same-sex couples using a methodology that combines information from the 'relationship to head' and the 'sex' questions. Under this approach, a same-sex couple is enumerated when the householder and his or her partner report the same sex. Nonetheless, errors on the sex of individuals may overestimate the number of same-sex couples. Assume an heterosexual couple in which one of the spouses reports wrongly his or her sex. This couple would be recorded as a same-sex couple unless other verifications are being implemented. Due to large differences in size between heterosexual and homosexual couples, small percentages of misreporting on the sex question may increase substantially the number of same-sex couples. The U.S. Census Bureau had to revise their initial estimates on same-sex couples in 2010 because they were inflated by the fact that the wrong sex was checked in a number of cases.

The way Brazil and Uruguay enumerated same-sex couples is nevertheless is different than the US approach. Both countries introduced an item on same-sex couples in the census questionnaire. Brazil did it through the relationship to householder question, including the item: ‘spouse/partner of the same sex’. In Uruguay 2011, there was a question about ‘type of union’ to any person that was in union within the household. One of the options was ‘unmarried partner of the same sex’. The main difference between the two countries is that in Brazil only co-residing same-sex couples in which the householder was involved were enumerated while in Uruguay all co-residing couples were enumerated. However, the percentage of same-sex couples in Uruguay that did not involve the householder was less than 5%. It is reasonable to assume that a similar percentage would have been found in Brazil.

To describe the characteristics of same-sex couples, we use census microdata. Brazil and Uruguay provide access to their census microdata online. In the case of Brazil, we worked with a 10% representative sample of households. The sample contains 10,618 persons in same-sex couples, which after expanding to the total population represent 134,988 persons. If we divide these numbers by two, we obtain 5,309 same sex couples in our sample and 67,494 in the total population. 46% of them are gay couples and 54% lesbian. For Uruguay we worked with a 100% sample of anonymized individual records organized into households: 2,784 persons reported to have a same-sex partner within the household, corresponding to 1,392 couples. Contrary to Brazil, in Uruguay there were more gay couples (62%) than lesbian couples (38%).

Characteristics of gay and lesbians in union in Brazil and Uruguay

One way of measuring the level of same-sex couples in a country is to look at their relative frequency among all types of couples. Table 1 shows the distribution by age of partnered gay and lesbian populations and partnered heterosexual men and women in Brazil and Uruguay. It also presents the rate of partnered gays and lesbians per 1000 men and women in union respectively. Results for Brazil show that for every 1000 men in union, there are 1.6 in a same-sex union. The rate for women is 1.9. Compared to Brazil, Uruguay shows a higher rate of gay couples, 2.6, but a lower rate of lesbian couples, 1.6. Despite differences in levels, age patterns are fairly similar. The rate of partnered gays and lesbians decreases by age. Table 2 and 3 inform about the geographic distribution of gay and lesbian couples by region in Brazil and Uruguay respectively. Figure 1 shows the share of population with tertiary education by relationship status by sex and country. Regardless of age, the proportion of gays and lesbians in union with tertiary education is higher than in any other group. Table 2 shows only for Brazil, the mean earning by

relationship status, sex, and education. Again, regardless of age and education, gays and lesbians in union have higher income than any other group, particularly among men. The final version of the manuscript will also include references to family structure. Data for Brazil shows that more than 95% of gay couples are childless. Among lesbians, the percentage is 68% (see Table 5).

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Table 1. Share of same-sex partnered persons among partnered persons by age and sex, Brazil 2010* and Uruguay 2011

	Men			Women		
	Partnered Gays (A)	Partnered heterosexual (B)	A / B *1000	Partnered Lesbians (A)	Partnered heterosexual 1 (B)	A / B *1000
Brazil						
Less than 25	8,940	1,956,239	4.5	12,731	3,702,769	3.4
25-29	12,040	3,672,694	3.3	13,564	4,703,461	2.9
30-34	11,826	4,690,579	2.5	13,981	5,384,898	2.6
35-39	8,986	4,808,114	1.9	10,744	4,940,220	2.2
40-45	8,148	4,746,718	1.7	9,396	4,454,725	2.1
45-49	5,576	4,300,758	1.3	7,155	4,127,997	1.7
50 or more	6,782	13,523,694	0.5	5,119	10,385,689	0.5
Total	62,298	37,698,796	1.6	72,690	37,699,759	1.9
Uruguay						
Less than 25	226	31,939	7.0	176	58,088	3.0
25-29	256	53,760	4.7	174	66,529	2.6
30-34	319	72,825	4.4	211	80,498	2.6
35-39	240	77,107	3.1	146	78,867	1.8
40-45	233	71,459	3.3	136	71,142	1.9
45-49	193	69,374	2.8	122	67,725	1.8
50 or more	261	294,184	0.9	91	247,799	0.4
Total	1,728	670,648	2.6	1,056	670,648	1.6

* Results are expanded to the total population. Differences in weights explain why there are slightly less women in heterosexual unions than men.

Source: Brazil 2010 IBGE, Uruguay 2011

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Table 2. Distribution of gay and lesbian couples in Brazil, 2010 Census

State	Percentage of gay sample in the State	Percentage of lesbian sample in the State	Percentage of Brazilian population in the State
Rondônia	0.4	0.5	0.8
Acre	0.3	0.2	0.4
Amazonas	0.8	1.3	2.1
Roraima	0.1	0.2	0.3
Pará	2.9	4.0	4.2
Amapá	0.1	0.4	0.3
Tocantins	0.2	0.4	0.8
Maranhão	1.1	1.0	3.4
Piauí	0.4	0.8	1.7
Ceará	4.1	5.3	4.3
Rio Grande do Norte	1.3	1.3	1.7
Paraíba	1.2	1.9	2.1
Pernambuco	4.1	4.1	4.7
Alagoas	0.8	1.4	1.6
Sergipe	0.4	1.0	1.1
Bahia	5.4	4.5	7.2
Minas Gerais	6.9	7.8	10.1
Espírito Santo	1.5	2.1	1.8
Rio de Janeiro	18.1	14.8	8.4
São Paulo	28.8	25.6	21.5
Paraná	3.0	4.4	5.5
Santa Catarina	3.3	3.5	3.4
Rio Grande do Sul	6.4	5.5	5.5
Mato Grosso do Sul	1.3	1.8	1.2
Mato Grosso	1.0	1.1	1.6
Goiás	3.8	3.2	3.0
Distrito Federal	2.6	1.9	1.3
Total	100	100	100

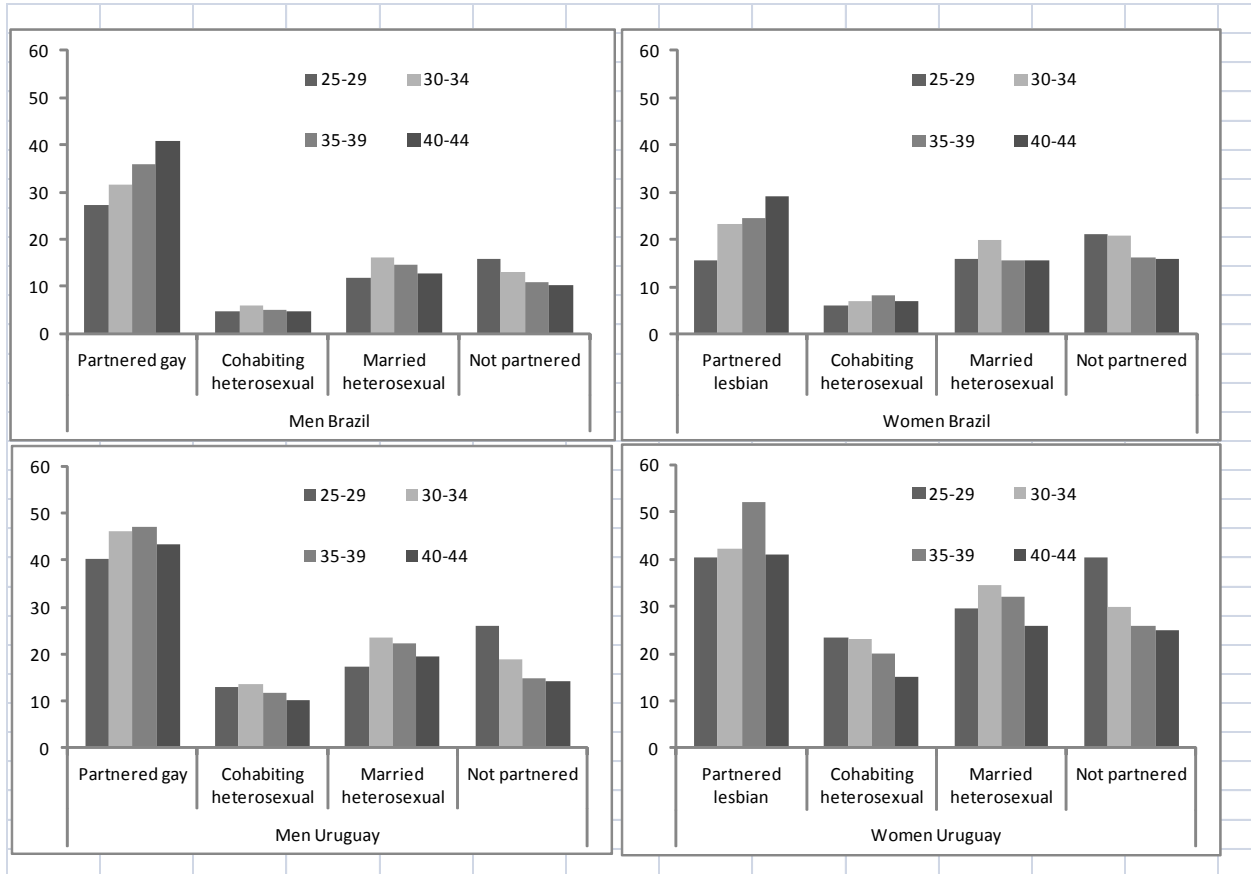
Source: Brazil 2010 IBGE, Uruguay 2011 INE.

Table 3. Distribution of gay and lesbian couples in Uruguay, 2011 Census

State	Percentage of gay sample in the Department	Percentage of lesbian sample in the Department	Percentage of population in the Department
Montevideo	69.1	62.5	40.1
Artigas	0.6	0.4	2.2
Canelones	9.8	16.3	15.8
Cerro Largo	1.2	1.1	2.6
Colonia	2.2	1.3	3.7
Durazno	0.6	0.6	1.7
Flores	0.7	0.4	0.8
Florida	0.3	0.6	2.0
Lavalleja	0.7	1.1	1.8
Maldonado	6.1	3.2	5.0
Paysandú	1.4	3.0	3.4
Rio Negro	0.5	0.4	1.7
Rivera	1.2	1.3	3.1
Rocha	1.2	1.7	2.1
Salto	1.2	1.9	3.8
San José	2.3	2.3	3.3
Soriano	0.6	0.9	2.5
Tacuarembó	0.3	0.6	2.7
Treinta y Tres	0.1	0.4	1.5
Total	100	100	100

Source: Brazil 2010 IBGE, Uruguay 2011 INE.

Figure 1. Percentage with tertiary education by relationship status, age and sex, Brazil 2010 and Uruguay 2011



Source: Brazil 2010 IBGE, Uruguay 2011 INE.

Table 3. Mean earnings by age, education, and relationship status, Brazil 2010

	Men				Women			
	Partnered gay	Cohabiting heterosexual	Married heterosexual	Not partnered	Partnered lesbian	Cohabiting heterosexual	Married heterosexual	Not partnered
Age 25-29								
Less than Primary	1023	637	818	625	604	401	420	487
Primary Completed	970	869	1003	754	694	562	627	584
Secondary Completed	1545	1170	1396	1182	1140	763	785	795
Tertiary Completed	3346	2806	3023	2580	2450	1991	2419	1960
Age 30-34								
Less than Primary	936	713	832	638	591	503	471	531
Primary Completed	1314	1054	1155	933	855	639	1125	633
Secondary Completed	1624	1382	1497	1370	1342	811	938	827
Tertiary Completed	4902	3387	4427	3265	3830	2325	2623	2241
Age 35-39								
Less than Primary	3862	812	1073	639	636	443	574	508
Primary Completed	1354	1140	1368	1188	844	783	740	629
Secondary Completed	2384	1584	1696	1352	1445	1033	1055	987
Tertiary Completed	5379	3901	5561	4231	4341	2961	2713	2879
Age 40-44								
Less than Primary	2910	814	915	666	1323	465	526	512
Primary Completed	1740	1172	1661	1174	951	886	796	964
Secondary Completed	2684	1738	1930	1368	1874	1032	1091	1019
Tertiary Completed	7994	6303	5670	4720	3992	2650	2753	2811
Source: Brazil 2010 IBGE								

Table 5. Children presence by relationship status, Brazil census 2010						
	Men			Women		
	Partnered gay	Cohabiting heterosexual	Married heterosexual	Partnered lesbian	Cohabiting heterosexual	Married heterosexual
No children	94.8	24.5	24.3	68.7	25.9	26.3
Only couple's children	1.4	54.8	70.6	2.5	40.1	65.5
Couple's children plus children from previous relationships	0.0	9.0	2.3	0.6	10.2	3.4
Only children from previous relationships	3.8	11.7	2.8	28.2	23.9	4.8

Source: Brazil 2010, IBGE