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Size and Structure of Same-Sex Couples in Germany

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Abstract:

This report uses two administrative data sets provided by the German Federal Statistics Office to analyse brief information on same-sex couples and registered same-sex unions. The numbers of same-sex couples increases slightly over time. The data sets show how mixed and same-sex couples differ in terms of socio-economic determinants, such as employment, regional differences or family formations.

Keywords: Same Sex, Couples, Registered Same Sex Unions, Germany

JEL Classification: J12, J16, Z13

1. Introduction

In 2001 the German government decided that homosexual men and women were allowed to join a quasi-marriage, called registered same-sex union. However, this is still a quasi-marriage, because some legal rights are not full the same. Since 2013 legal children from earlier relation can be adopted by a partner. Chamie and Mirkin calculate the number of nearly 100,000 same-sex marriages worldwide for the end of the year 2009. For a given year they observe that 2 to 3 percent of all marriages in selective European countries, such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden are made by same-sex couples. Those rates are even higher for some US states, such as Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Vermont (Chamie and Mirkin 2011).

This descriptive report gives an overview of a recently provides administrative German census data set: the Zensus 2011. It is used to compare the sub-populations of same-sex and registered same-sex couples with existing data of the German Mikrozensus. The analysis shows differences in terms of employment, regional disparities and family formations. However, the analysis of small sub-populations is always difficult, especially when a question on sexual orientation is voluntary.

The structure of the paper is the following. After this brief introduction, section two gives a contribution to earlier literature findings. The next two sections show descriptive findings from the two data sets in use, different waves of the Mikrozensus and the new Zensus 2011. In section five a brief conclusion is drawn.

2. Literature review

It is known from the literature that homosexuals slightly differ in their social demographics from heterosexuals. This is especially the case for same-sex couples on an individual or household level. Key problems are identification or self-identification, and therefore the population size of homosexuals in a given population (Kudek 2005). Same-sex couples have higher age differences than heterosexuals (Schwartz and Graf 2009). While same-sex couples without any registered same-

sex unions are less stable than those in unions (Balsam et al. 2008), those living in same-sex unions have less stable relationships than those in mixed sex-marriages. The last seems to be the case for lesbian women (Anderson et al. 2006). Black et al. (2000, 2002) show clear preference for liberal metropolises where homosexuals can live in a more tolerant atmosphere. Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) argue that homosexuals are more often sexually active and have more sexual partners in a life time. Badgett et al. (2008) argue that both demographic and economic factors play a role in forming a registered same-sex union. While registrations increase for gay couples with income, registrations of lesbian couples increase with age.

A brought part of the economical literature analyses hiring discrimination, occupational segregation, and income differentials (e.g. Weichselbaumer 2013). See Humpert (2015) for the case of gay and lesbian income differentials in Germany. Solomon et al. (2005) compare housework activities between same and mixed-sex couples. Both kinds of same-sex couples, gays and lesbians, share the housework more equally, while mixed couples have a straight shift in tasks.

3. Data no. 1: Mikrozensus

The German Mikrozensus is the main source of information about Germany's population. It is collected by the Federal Statistics Office in Wiesbaden. Every year a sample of 1 percent of all households are obliged to participate for a four year window of time. Both data sets Mikrozensus and Zensus 2011 are household specific. So there is neither any information on sexual orientation for individuals in single households nor on those in partnerships but living apart together. Since 1996 the federal statistics report the number of same-sex couples by extrapolation.

While the questionnaire is voluntary to answer, some hard assumptions are implemented to investigate the upper bound of this specific sub-population. The values are shown on the left side of table 1. However, Humpert (2015) shows that this information is rather noisy, while the other information on the table are more valid.

Table 1: Number of same-sex couples

	upper bound	same-sex couples			registered same-sex couples	
		all	male	female	all	male
1996	124,000	38,000	23,000	15,000	/	/
1997	114,000	39,000	22,000	17,000	/	/
1998	134,000	44,000	25,000	19,000	/	/
1999	128,000	41,000	25,000	16,000	/	/
2000	142,000	47,000	27,000	20,000	/	/
2001	147,000	50,000	29,000	21,000	/	/
2002	148,000	53,000	31,000	22,000	/	/
2003	159,000	58,000	32,000	26,000	/	/
2004	160,000	56,000	30,000	26,000	/	/
2005	173,000	60,000	36,000	24,000	/	/
2006	177,000	62,000	39,000	23,000	12,000	8,000
2007	176,000	68,000	44,000	24,000	15,000	10,000
2008	186,000	69,000	46,000	23,000	19,000	14,000
2009	177,000	63,000	37,000	27,000	19,000	12,000
2010	184,000	63,000	36,000	27,000	23,000	13,000
2011	185,000	67,000	40,000	27,000	27,000	16,000
2012	203,000	73,000	42,000	31,000	32,000	18,000

Source: Mikrozensus several years, cited by Hammes (2013)

The information about registered same-sex unions was introduced in 2006 for the first time. These numbers are shown on the right side of table 1. Till 2005 data collection was always in spring, later the data is collected all over the year. There are actually 73,000 same-sex couples. The half of it (32,000) is in a registered same-sex union. The analysis of the sex ratio shows that 58 percent of all same-sex couples are made by males, while 56 percent of the registered same-sex unions are male made (Hammes 2013).

4. Data no. 2: Zensus 2011

On the cut-off date of May 11th 2011 the Federal Statistics Office collected the recent census data set. It is a mixed collection of a survey and a register based data collection of the recent population in Germany. The questionnaire of the survey part is a shortened version of the Mikrozensus questionnaire.

Table 2: Distribution of the German population after families

	observations	share %
single	32,039,091	39.9
married different-sex couples	36,669,868	45.7
married different-sex couples, widowed	5,733,361	7.1
married different-sex couples, divorced	5,677,654	7.1
registered same-sex unions	68,268	0.1
registered same-sex unions, partner died	1,350	0.0
registered same-sex unions, partner separated	5,531	0.0
not specified	24,572	0.0
all	80,219,695	100.0

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

In this section the demographic structure of individuals living in registered same-sex unions and those living in mixed-sex marriages are compared. In 2011 68,268 individuals live in 28,591 registered same-sex unions (see table 2). However, these are only 0.1 percent of all individuals.

Along with the findings presented above, questions about sexual orientation were not obligatory to answer in the 2011 Zensus questionnaire. So there is a lower bound and a problem of self-selection in the data. Festy (2007) compares different strategies to identify same-sex couples in official census data. He uses information for the UK, the US, France, Germany and Canada. Here between 0.1 and 1.0 percent of each population is identified as homosexual.

Table 3: Age structure of married heterosexuals and registered homosexuals

	male				female		
	married different- sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions	share %	married different- sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions
10-19	892	0.0	19	(0.05)	6,679	0.0	27
20-29	458,042	2.5	3,088	7.6	874,795	4.8	2,421
30-39	2,210,946	12.1	8,739	21.5	2,762,005	15.1	7,293
40-49	4,271,145	23.3	13,786	34.0	4,477,457	24.4	9,275
50-59	4,153,553	22.7	7,725	19.0	4,180,202	22.8	5,061
60-69	3,412,296	18.6	4,955	12.2	3,152,570	17.2	2,499
70-79	2,920,766	15.9	2,017	5.0	2,329,414	12.7	882
80+	909,857	5.0	272	0.7	549,247	3.0	209
all	18,337,499	100	40,601	100	18,332,369	100	27,667

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

German Zensus numbers are compared with a much higher number of 36,669,886 married mixed-sex individuals, who live in 16,951,303 marriages. Even with these two large administrative data sets, same-sex couples or registered same-sex unions are rather small sub-population. Members of registered same-sex unions are demographically younger than, those in mixed-sex marriages (see table 3). The numbers in brackets are not statistically valid.

Table 4 shows that about 90 percent of registered same-sex unions tend to live without an additional person. This is driven by the absence of children. Only 7 percent of the same-sex unions have a third person in their household. However, it can be only assumed that this may be children. There are legal differences in adoption law between same and mixed-sex couples in Germany.

Table 4: Household structure of married heterosexuals and registered homosexuals

	married different- sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions	share %	difference %
2 persons	8,511,122	50.2	25,837	90.4	+40.2
3 persons	4,029,023	23.8	1,879	6.6	-17.2
4 persons	3,312,537	19.5	683	2.4	-17.2
5 persons	859,137	5.1	148	(0.5)	(-4.6)
6+	239,484	1.4	44	(0.2)	(-1.2)
all	16,951,303	100.0	28,591	100.0	0.0

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

Differences in employment are presented in table 5. However, there is only information about those individuals who are employed. On one hand 77.3 percent of those in registered same-sex unions work as employees, 82.3 percent of those in mixed-sex couples do so. On the other hand members of registered same-sex unions are more often self-employed, with and without own employees, respectively.

Table 5: Employment structure of married heterosexuals and registered homosexuals

	married different-sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions	share %	difference %
employees	20,292,370	82.3	34,800	77.3	-5.1
civil servants	1,351,310	5.5	3,130	7.0	+1.5
self-employed with employees	1,287,490	5.2	3,200	7.1	+1.9
self-employed no employees	1,400,990	5.7	3,830	8.5	+2.8
helping family members	313,260	1.3	/	/	+1.3
all	24,645,420	100.0	45,030	100.0	0.0

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

In table 6 occupations are presented for males and females separately for individuals in married and registered couples each. It is obvious that homosexual in general are more often in high skilled jobs than heterosexuals. E.g. gays and lesbians are more often employed in the ISCO groups one (legislators, senior officials and managers) and two (professionals).

Table 6: Occupations of married heterosexuals and registered homosexuals

	male				female		
	married different- sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions	share %	married different- sex couples	share %	registered same-sex unions
ISCO 1	987,470	7.4	2,890	11.8	322,270	2.9	982
ISCO 2	2,250,230	16.9	6,300	25.7	1,751,780	16.0	6,490
ISCO 3	2,300,100	17.3	4,654	18.9	2,265,940	20.7	3,952
ISCO 4	1,027,770	7.7	2,540	10.3	2,217,870	20.3	2,690
ISCO 5	1,250,540	9.4	4,820	19.6	2,370,750	21.7	2,560
ISCO 6	311,310	2.3	/	/	79,350	0.7	/
ISCO 7	2,858,760	21.5	1,420	5.8	300,610	2.7	430
ISCO 8	1,424,510	10.7	900	3.7	258,230	2.4	460
ISCO 9	792,670	6.0	850	3.5	1,368,080	12.5	860
ISCO 0	89,920	0.7	/	/	4,900	0.0	/
All	13,293,280	100.0	24,560	100.0	10,939,780	100.0	18,530

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

Vice versa they are less often in low skilled occupations, such as ISCO group seven (craft and related trade workers), and eight (plant and machine operators, and assemblers), and nine

(elementary occupations). Others, such as ISCO groups six (skilled agricultural and fishery workers), and zero (armed forces) are not reported because of very low observations. All other groups are less different (technicians and associate professionals (3); clerks (4); service worker, and shop, and market sales workers (5)). Humpert (2015) conforms that that homosexuals in Germany differ in their occupational sorting relative to heterosexuals.

Table 7 shows that registered same-sex unions are not equal distributed over German regions. Obviously there are regional preferences for those federal states, who are federal states and metropolitan cities, such as Berlin (+9.6 percentage points), Hamburg (+3.0) or Bremen (+0.5). North Rhine Westphalia with a gain of +3.2 percentage points is not only the largest federal state, there is also the fourth largest German city Cologne.

Table 7: Regional structure of married heterosexuals and registered homosexuals

	married different- sex couples	share %	registere d same- sex unions	share %	difference %
North Rhine Westphalia	3,733,041	22.0	7,215	25.2	+3.2
Bavaria	2,667,279	15.7	3,485	12.2	-3.5
Baden-Wuerttemberg	2,265,124	13.4	2,627	9.2	-4.2
Lower Saxony	1,684,320	9.9	2,450	8.6	-1.4
Hesse	1,264,320	7.5	2,570	9.0	+1.5
Rhineland Palatinate	881,773	5.2	1,241	4.3	-0.9
Saxony	867,015	5.1	737	2.6	-2.5
Schleswig Holstein	600,239	3.5	1,114	3.9	+0.4
Brandenburg	531,883	3.1	737	2.6	-0.6
Berlin	527,371	3.1	3,541	12.4	+9.3
Saxony Anhalt	494,052	2.9	335	1.2	-1.7
Thuringia	467,090	2.8	245	0.9	-1.9
Mecklenburg Western Pommerania	342,733	2.0	320	1.1	-0.9
Hamburg	290,052	1.7	1,335	4.7	+3.0
Saarland	217,826	1.3	286	1.0	-0.3
Bremen	117,102	0.7	353	1.2	+0.5
Germany (all)	16,951,303	100.0	28,591	100.0	0.0

Source: Zensus 2011, own results

Other federal states especially those with high shares of people living on the country side (e.g. Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria) have lower shares of registered same-sex unions relative to mixed-sex marriages. However, the numbers are sometimes rather small, especially in the former eastern part of Germany, with the exception of the German capital.

5. Conclusion

This brief report shows the development of same-sex unions in Germany. Here two administrative data of German Federal Statistics Office are used: long-run information taken by the Mikrozensus and the recently published Zensus 2011 data. The key findings are slightly increasing numbers of same-sex couples and registered same-sex unions. However, there is clear evidence of some social-demographic differences between mixed marriages and registered same-sex unions. These are related to age, family, employment or the region.

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