



Geek Sheet 10: Demographic Data

In this Geek Sheet, we'll take you through all of the data that is available in Lighthouse's Demographic Dashboard and help you understand it and how to use it.

Understanding the categories

Lighthouse's Demographic data sub-tab contains a whole host of incredibly useful information on your party organisation's demographics and how they compare to the local and national averages.

Within that, you are currently able to view data in nine key characteristics that we measure to track how we're doing on diversity.

The Characteristics are broadly based on the ones used in the 2011 Census - with a few exceptions - to allow the maximum amount of comparison to the Census.

England & Wales and Scotland have different censuses, which collect subtly different data. Where possible, we attempt to harmonise this and compare it to our own collected data.

These categories have also been checked with the party's Data Protection Officer and we've undertaken the necessary work to ensure we can legally collect the information and use it in this way.

So to add any new categories requires us to repeat that exercise, which can take some time and won't always be approved - so if there's something you think is missing, please do let us know - but we can't guarantee that we'll be able to add it!

Age

Age data is where a person belongs to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30-year-olds).

In Lighthouse, we use a range of ages.

Age is calculated based on the dates of birth provided by members and supporters themselves, automatically by the system.

The Dashboard then displays this data aggregated and in groups to allow you to analyse in the round.

Given the nature of our organisation, we would expect to under-represent people in the 0-14 age group, as they are not commonly politically active, but in all other areas, we would normally be aiming to be close to your areas' demographic balance.

Having more people within an age bracket than the census suggest is the norm for your area likely indicates that these people are overrepresented, whereas having fewer likely indicates an underrepresentation.

As with underrepresented groups in other categories, we aim to fix this by changing our internal culture so as to make our organisation more appealing to join and with targeted recruitment, to bring more people into the party.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the protected characteristic of ethnicity (also referred to as race).

It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

In Lighthouse, data is presented in the following groupings:

- Asian / Asian British
- Black African / Caribbean / British
- Gypsy / Traveller / Irish Traveller
- White
- Other ethnic group
- Mixed / Multiple Ethnic Groups

The underlying data is collected in a more granular way, allowing more precise definitions within sub-groups. Unfortunately, in many areas, there would be so few ethnic minority members that these groups would not be able to be displayed, rendering them essentially invisible.

No local party area is so homogenous that they should only have white members.

Across the party, we know that ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented versus the UK population and that this is a key area for us to improve.

Having more people within an ethnic group than the census suggests is the norm for your area likely indicates that these people are overrepresented, whereas having fewer likely indicates an underrepresentation.

As with underrepresented groups in other categories, we aim to fix this by changing our internal culture so as to make our organisation more appealing to join and with targeted recruitment, to bring more people into the party.

Gender

Refers to whether someone is a woman, a man, is non-binary or gender fluid.

Whilst some of those terms may be familiar - some may not, so we wanted to take a few moments to explain a bit more about some of the terms you may be less familiar with.

Non-binary people feel their gender identity is not be defined within the margins of the gender binary (IE Male / Female). Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman.

Genderfluid people are people whose gender changes over time. A gender-fluid person might identify as a woman one day and a man the next. They may also identify as non-binary at times.

Non-binary and gender-fluid folks may prefer to use a gendered pronoun, like he or she or a gender-neutral pronoun - like they or a gender-neutral title, like Mx. Lighthouse contains fields that allow you to store someone's title and pronoun preference, so you can keep a record of how best to address someone if you're writing to or engaging with them.

If you'd like to learn more about pronouns and how to use them, [you can do that here](#).

It's considered polite to address someone as they wish to be addressed and putting in the effort to understand people's pronouns will make a huge difference to making someone feel welcome in the party.

If you use the wrong one occasionally, that's fine. Everyone understands that we might use the wrong title or pronoun occasionally and if you do, people will usually politely let you know they'd prefer to use a different one.

With Gender, the party can only go by what people tell us - so we always accept the gender someone tells us that they are as valid and accurate.

In almost every part of the party, women are an underrepresented group - with some areas having a more acute issue than others.

Having more people within a gender group than the census suggests is the norm for your area likely indicates that these people are overrepresented, whereas having fewer likely indicates an underrepresentation.

As with underrepresented groups in other categories, we aim to fix this by changing our internal culture so as to make our organisation more appealing to join and with targeted recruitment, to bring more people into the party.

Gender identity as birth

At birth, a person is assigned a gender based on external sex characteristics. Over time, they may realise that the gender they were assigned does not match their gender identity.

These people may well then choose to live as another gender. This metric indicates if members in your local party have done that.

People whose gender doesn't match what they were assigned at birth are also referred to as being "transgender" and you may also encounter the Equality Act term of "gender reassignment".

There is a legal process for formally changing your gender on government documents, known as a "Gender Reassignment Certificate". The party does not require a person to prove that they have one of these. We accept that people know their own Gender Identity and will share that with us if they feel comfortable doing so.

The party also treats someone based on the gender that they identify as for any internal processes and we do not require people to "prove" their gender at any stage.

Having more people whose gender identity doesn't match what they were assigned at birth than the census suggests is the norm for your area likely indicates that these people are overrepresented, whereas having fewer likely indicates an underrepresentation.

As with underrepresented groups in other categories, we aim to fix this by changing our internal culture so as to make our organisation more appealing to join and with targeted recruitment, to bring more people into the party.

Religion

Religion refers to belief in and adherence to any religion, including a lack of religion.

With religious groups on Lighthouse we have again, grouped them into larger sub-groups, which are:

- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other
- No religion

All of these broad categories encompass any denominations or sects that may exist within the wider faith, as a graph showing each individual sub-division of a faith would very quickly become completely unusable.

We are currently not able to compare to the census in all areas because of differences in how the 2011 census handled religion in Scotland - but hope that the next census will resolve this issue.

It's also important to note that due to how we collect data, the "no religion" group is currently under-represented on this graph. The question is posed in two stages - first asking if someone is religious or not (a yes/no) and then a second question, asking what religion they adhere to.

We are working to resolve this issue.

As with previous characteristics, having more people who adhere to one religion than the census suggests is the norm for your area likely indicates that these people are overrepresented, whereas having fewer likely indicates an underrepresentation.

As with underrepresented groups in other categories, we aim to fix this by changing our internal culture so as to make our organisation more appealing to join and with targeted recruitment, to bring more people into the party.

Sexual Orientation

Refers to someone's sexual attraction, and whether a person is sexually attracted towards their own gender, the opposite gender, to both genders, to people regardless of their gender or does not experience sexual attraction. Sexual orientation may also be referred to as someone's sexuality.

The sexual orientations that are grouped and tracked by the party are:

- Heterosexual - this is someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender.

- Gay/Lesbian - this is someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.
- Bi-sexual - this is someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender (which may also include people who are non-binary or genderfluid).
- Pansexual - this is someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender.
- Asexual - this is someone who does not experience sexual attraction. Some asexual people also don't experience romantic attraction, but others do.

As with the other characteristics that are tracked, we allow people to self-identify their own sexual orientation and don't require them to "prove" this in any way.

The 2011 Census didn't contain a question on sexual orientation, so we can't currently compare this information to the Census. The 2021/22 Census does contain questions on this, allowing us to track this in the future.

Based on public estimates it's likely that the party is doing well in terms of LGBT+ representation compared to the population, but it's also very important to note that underrepresentation in other categories may still be a factor here.

For example, women are underrepresented in the party and as a result, lesbian women are likely underrepresented as well. Conversely men are overrepresented in the party as a whole and the fact that we have a large number of LGBT+ members means we have a larger number of gay men as members.

Economic Activity

Economic activity refers to the type of employment that someone is currently undertaking.

The categories that we track are:

- Working full time - someone who works at least 35 hours per week, on average over a month.
- Working part time - someone who works less than 35 hours per week, on average, over a month.
- Full-time student - someone who attends an academic institution full-time. This category includes students who may or may not also be working part-time.
- Full-time home-maker - someone who performs labour in the home full-time.
- Unemployed - someone not currently employed.
- Retired - someone who is no longer employed due to being over their retirement age.

- Not in paid employment for other reasons - someone who is not unemployed, but is also not in paid employment. They may, for example, volunteer full time or be a carer.

This characteristic allows you to estimate if it's likely that your local party is representative of your local area in terms of employment, especially when combined with occupation.

If for example, you live in an area of deprivation, but your local party has very few unemployed or underemployed people, then it's possible that you may not be representative of your local community.

This can also be a marker of class, though that is a much more complex and trickier picture.

In the future, we're hoping to add education level as a characteristic which would allow you to round out the picture even further. We're working to explore additional characteristics that will help get a better picture of social class, that we can legally collect and hope to update this in the future.

Occupation

Occupation refers to the type of employment that someone is involved with.

The current categories that we track are:

- Managers
- Associate and technical
- Administrative
- Skilled Trades
- Sales & Customer Service
- Elementary

The data we collect is based on a categorisation system known as "[NRS Social Grades](#)", whereas the census uses [Standard Occupational Classifications](#). This means that whilst most of our data is directly comparable to the census, not all of it is.

In due course, it's our intent to harmonise our data with the SOC version of this - which should see the graph start to more closely match the census, though at present, this should be sufficient to get a sense of the kinds of occupation your members undertake.

When used in combination with economic activity it may be indicative of the likely social class of party members - though is obviously only an economic picture of class and

doesn't encompass educational or cultural factors that may affect someone's class, so should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Disability

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

For this characteristic, the party asks people if they consider themselves to meet the Equality Act Definition of disabled, which is replicated above.

If they say yes, we consider them to be disabled. If they say no, we do not.

It's important to note here that not all disabilities are visible and that not all people who have physical or mental impairments in their day to day lives would consider themselves disabled.

The party does collect information on what specific disabilities people have, but as this is free-text, we have no easy way to parse it into an understandable format so the more detailed information is not displayed on the dashboard.

All local parties will have disabled members and it's important to make sure that you're thinking about accessibility when planning social events and campaigning. Hosting a social event somewhere that isn't accessible for people with mobility issues is likely to exclude people from participating.

In general the party has fewer people that identify as disabled across the UK and this is usually an under-represented group within the party.

How to use this data appropriately

This data is intended to be used to give you a broad snapshot of the party's performance against our targets on diversity.

For diversity, we are aiming for a party that reflects the country that we wish to serve - so people of all walks of life are represented and have full access to everything that the party offers. This is important not just so that we can say we are diverse, but because diversity of experience and thought makes us, our local parties, our party officers and council groups stronger and more effective.

The data is specifically not intended to help identify individuals, or to help you to market to people based on their innate characteristics.

Doing either of those things is likely to cause the party GDPR issues - so we very strongly recommend that you do not attempt to do either of them.

This is also why some categories with very few respondents are hidden on the graphs. So if a group is represented as a zero, it does not mean there are no members of that characteristic, but that there are so few who have told us they hold it that we cannot display them.

This threshold is currently set at 10 members.

It's our hope that local parties will begin tracking where they are on characteristics each month or quarter and report back to their executives any changes in the figures, alongside following the party's more general advice on engaging with and recruiting people from diverse backgrounds.

By doing this, we'll help to build a diversity-aware party culture that's always striving to do better and represent the communities we serve.

Where to find out what to do next

So, you've got your data and you know how your local party is doing at reflecting your community.

What's next?

Well, there's a couple of practical things that you can do to help make sure you're taking diversity seriously.

1. Make sure you have a Diversity Officer in place*. [You can learn more about Diversity Officers here.](#)

**Whilst lived experience is important, please don't just ask someone to be a Diversity Officer because they come from an underrepresented group and then expect them to deal with all diversity matters.*

This is the responsibility of all members, not just those from diverse communities.

2. Make contact with your Regional/State Diversity Officer to see if they can provide any help. You can find their contact details on the Demographic Dashboard in Lighthouse.

3. Read our training on diversity on the website and make a plan to engage diverse communities. [You can see what's on offer here.](#)
4. Read "Whose vote are you missing" - which is a comprehensive guide on how to build an inclusive culture in your local party. [You can find that here.](#)
5. Read the "Boost Guide" - which is a comprehensive guide on running an engaging and effective local party. [You can find that here.](#)
6. Set up regular reporting on demographic trends to your local party executive so that you can measure your performance over time.

At the moment, Lighthouse only displays point in time data, so if you're wanting to track it, you will need to do this by storing the data outside of Lighthouse - for example in an Excel or Google Sheet.

We're working on changing that in the future, so that this won't be necessary.

7. Put in place a practical, actionable plan on how you're going to work on improving your local party's culture and recruit more members from diverse backgrounds.

This could mean ensuring you canvass in areas of your local party where underrepresented groups tend to live, making contact with diverse faith groups in your area, or encouraging women in your party to stand for election, become local party officers or encourage their female friends to join the party.

[You can find out more about how to do this here.](#)