

# CLOSER Conference

Mental health and wellbeing 3:  
Wellbeing

Chair: **Praveetha Patalay**

- The Effect of Sexual Orientation on Subjective Well-being  
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# The Effect of Sexual Orientation on Subjective Well-being

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E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL

# Why (theoretically) might there be a difference in wellbeing between sexual minorities and heterosexuals?

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Meyer (1995)

- Sexual minorities face additional stress as a result of their sexual identity.
- Internalised, Perceived and Enacted stigma
- Internalisation of negative attitudes prior to realisation or identification of sexual identity.
- The perception of negative societal attitudes towards sexual minorities.
- Experiences of non-acceptance, discrimination, and violence.

# Does this translate into a wellbeing differential?

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Chakraborty et al (2011)

- Binary sexual minority variable based on sexual identity/ sexual behaviour. British Non-Heterosexuals were significantly less happy (irrelevant of the identification method).

Powdthavee & Wooden (2015)

- British and Australian homosexuals and bisexual are significantly less satisfied with their lives.

Perales (2016)

- Australian sexual minorities (in a random effects model) had lower wellbeing than heterosexuals according to four different measures of wellbeing

# Research Questions

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*(RQ. 1)* Does a wellbeing differential persist after controlling for fixed unobserved heterogeneity?

*(RQ. 2)* Can partnership help to alleviate the wellbeing differential between sexual minorities and heterosexuals?

*(RQ. 3)* Does the size of the wellbeing differential differ depending on where in the distribution of wellbeing we are examining?

# Data

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## Understanding Society Data (2009 - 2014)

### **Wellbeing**

- Likert score derived from the GHQ component
- Life Satisfaction

### **Sexual Orientation**

- Sexual Identity
- Gender of cohabiting/ legal partner

# Controls

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## ECONOMIC

- Education
- Income
- Employment

## SOCIAL

- Legal partnership status
- No. of children
- Member of organisation

## COVARIATES

- Health
- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Location

# Empirical Methodology

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- Pooled OLS
- Correlated Random Effects (Mundlak, 1978).
  - Ferrer – I – Carbonell & Frijters (2004)
- Unconditional Panel Quantile Regression
  - Binder & Coad (2011), Binder (2016), Firpo et al (2009)



# Results (1) Sexual Identity Method.

**Table 1: OLS Specification for Sexual Identity by gender**

		Wellbeing Measure	
		Likert (GHQ)	Life Satisfaction
Sexual Identity			
<b>All</b>			
	Homosexual	-0.963*** (0.141)	-0.085** (0.035)
	Bisexual	-2.013*** (0.175)	-0.499*** (0.043)
<b>Male</b>			
	Homosexual	-1.772*** (0.183)	-0.229*** (0.046)
	Bisexual	-1.570*** (0.242)	-0.430*** (0.066)
<b>Female</b>			
	Homosexual	0.129 (0.216)	0.103*** (0.054)
	Bisexual	-2.278*** (0.246)	-0.543*** (0.036)

**Table 2: CRE Specification for Sexual Identity by gender**

		Wellbeing Measure	
		Likert (GHQ)	Life Satisfaction
Sexual Identity			
<b>All</b>			
	Homosexual	-0.833*** (0.210)	-0.071 (0.049)
	Bisexual	-1.975*** (0.247)	-0.467*** (0.059)
<b>Male</b>			
	Homosexual	-1.637*** (0.278)	-0.209*** (0.065)
	Bisexual	-1.468*** (0.330)	-0.392*** (0.087)
<b>Female</b>			
	Homosexual	0.242 (0.305)	0.105 (0.075)
	Bisexual	-2.265*** (0.246)	-0.513*** (0.036)

RQ. 1 Not controlling for fixed personality traits = upward bias.

# Results (2) Partnership method.

**Table 3: OLS Specification for Partnered method by gender**

		Wellbeing Measure	
		Likert (GHQ)	Life Satisfaction
<b>Partnered</b>			
<b>All</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	-0.622*** (0.189)	0.026 (0.048)
<b>Male</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	-1.423*** (0.245)	-0.155** (0.071)
<b>Female</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	0.278 (0.276)	0.221*** (0.064)

**Table 4: CRE Specification for Partnered method by gender**

		Wellbeing Measure	
		Likert (GHQ)	Life Satisfaction
<b>Partnered</b>			
<b>All</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	-0.426 (0.281)	0.027 (0.066)
<b>Male</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	-1.173*** (0.375)	-0.127 (0.096)
<b>Female</b>			
	Non-Heterosexual	0.344 (0.392)	0.197** (0.088)

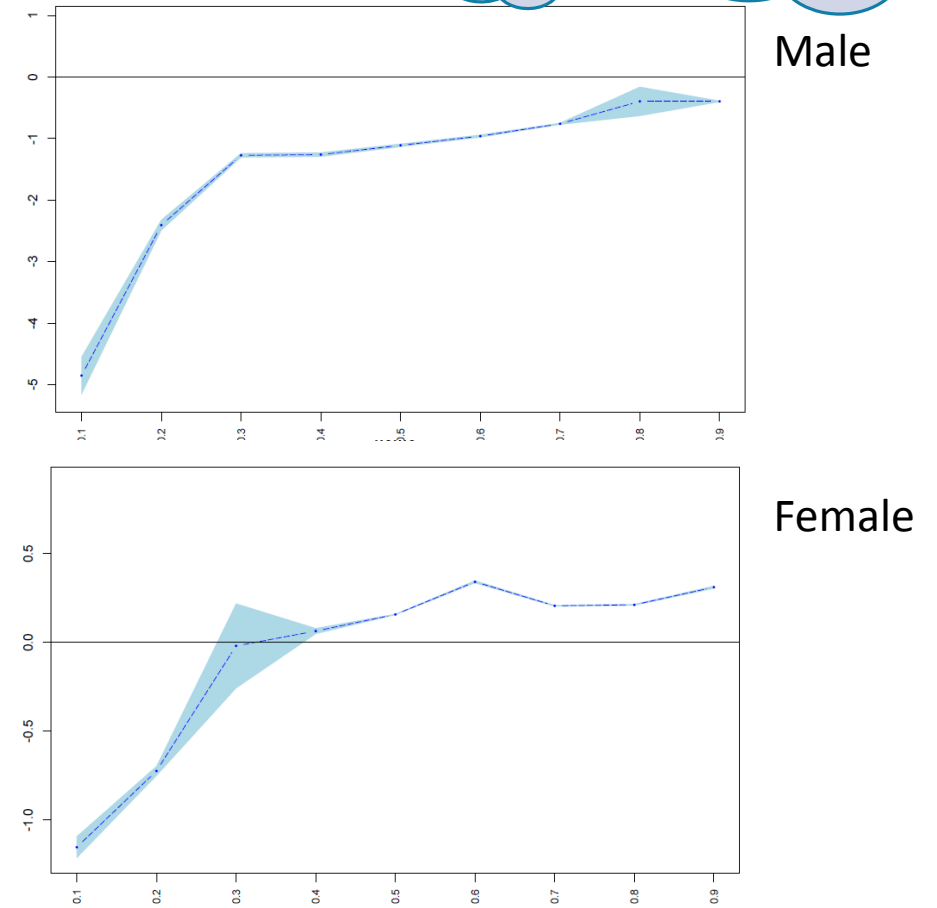
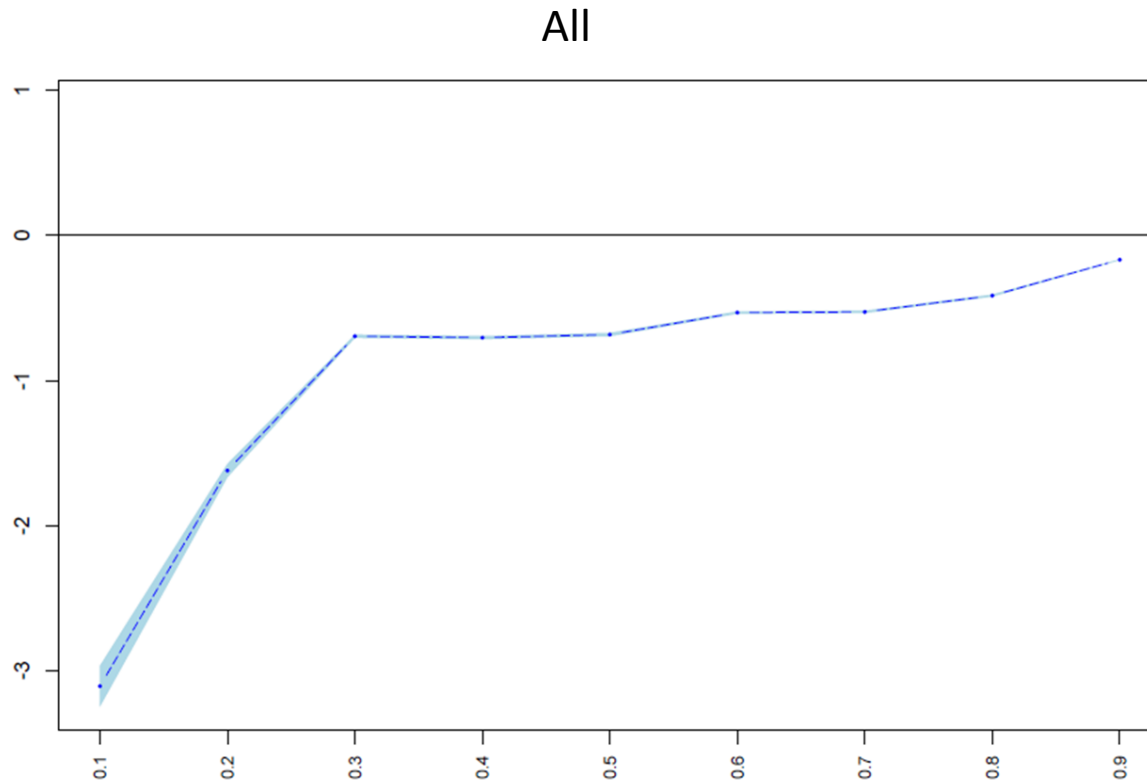
RQ. 2  
Partnered individuals have a smaller wellbeing differential.

RQ. 1  
Not controlling for fixed personality traits = downward bias.

# Results (3) Panel quantile for sexual identity method - Homosexual

RQ. 3

The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.

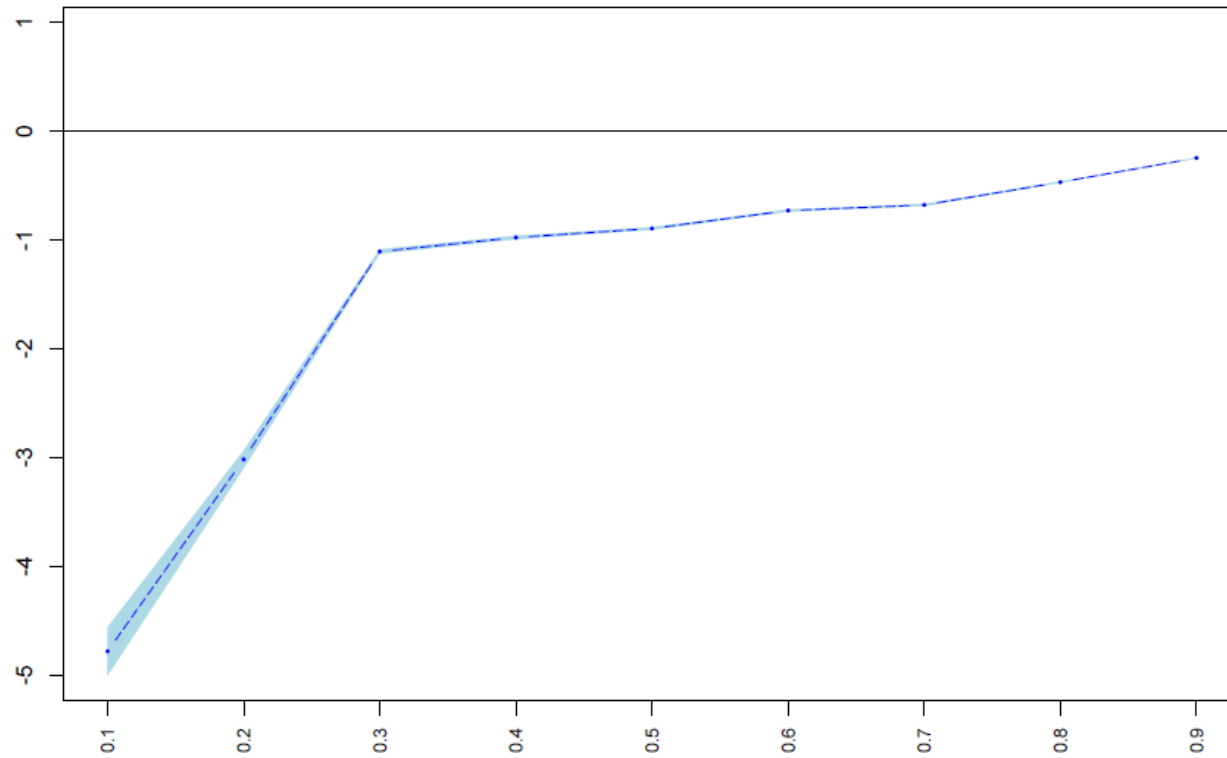


# Results (4) Panel quantile for sexual identity method - Bisexual

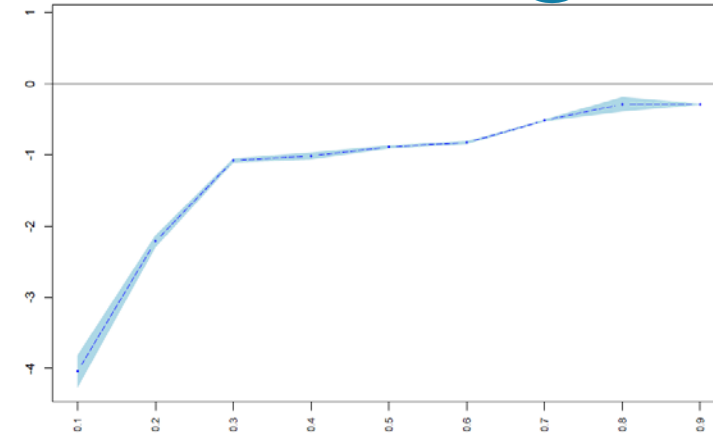
RQ. 3

The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.

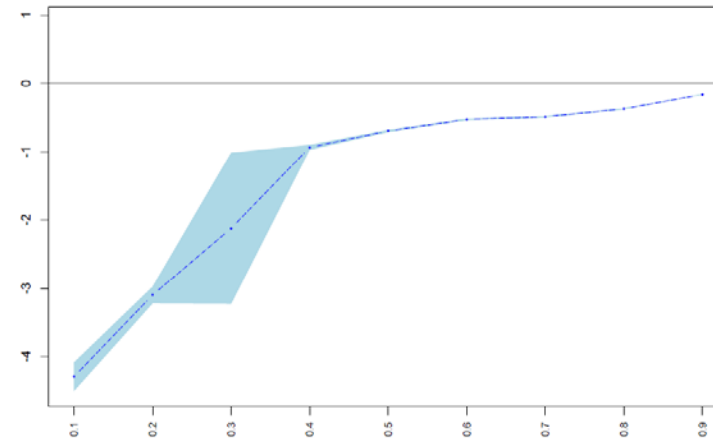
All



Male



Female

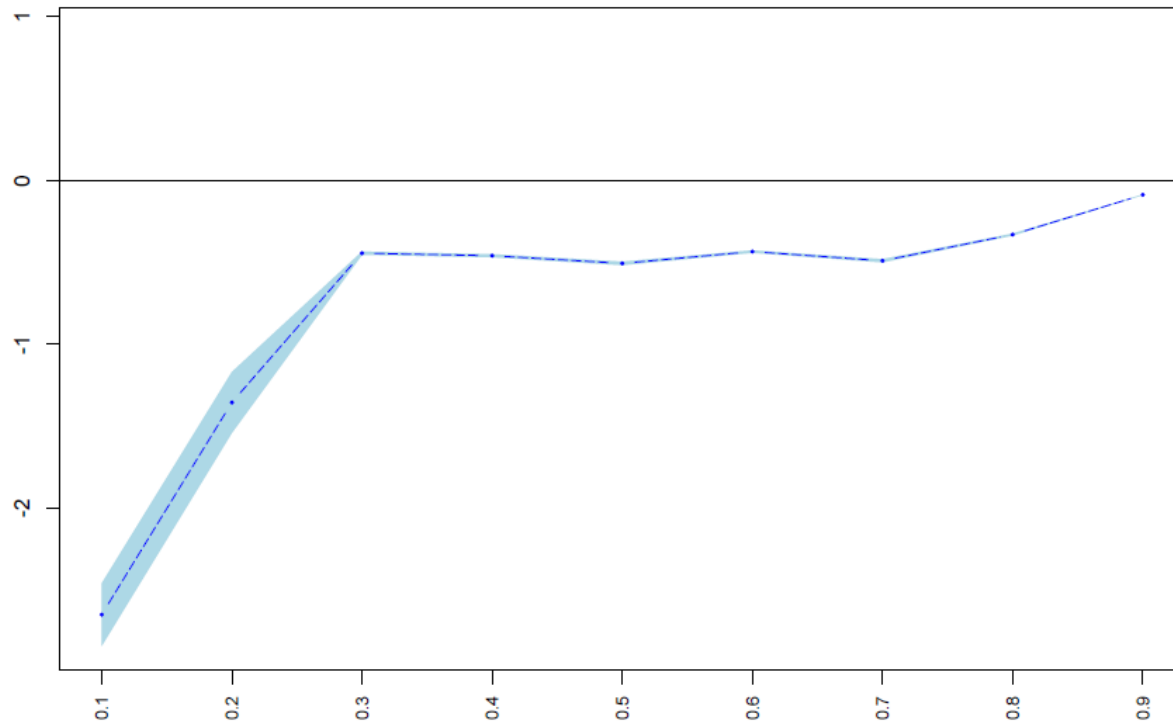


# Results (5) Panel quantile for partnership method

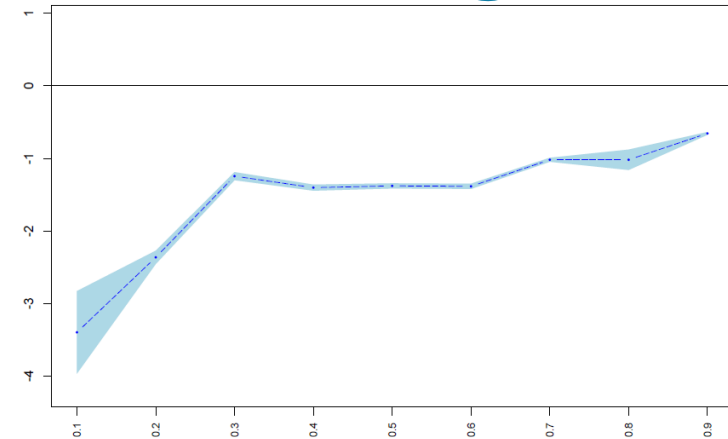
RQ. 3

The effect of being a sexual minority is generally negative across the entire distribution.

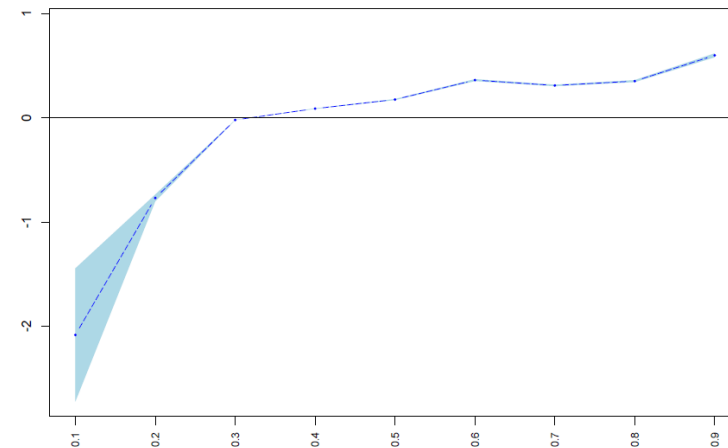
All



Male



Female



# Summary of Findings

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- Sexual orientation effects both psychological wellbeing and life satisfaction.
- Gender plays a significant role in the effect of sexual orientation on wellbeing.
- Partnership reduces the impact that sexual orientation has on wellbeing. We cannot be decipher whether this is due to partnered sexual minorities being happier before becoming partnered, or if partnership itself improves wellbeing.
- Controlling for fixed personality traits highlights that previous analyses have been upward bias.
- Quantile analyses have highlighted that the effect sexual orientation has is, in general, negative across the distribution. Mean based findings are a result of significant gaps at the bottom of the distribution of wellbeing.

# Conclusions

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The unique findings presented here highlight that public policy needs to change in order to reflect the needs of, and positively engage LGB persons across the distribution.

Mean based analyses are unable to capture the full picture.

Bisexuals have the lowest wellbeing, thus must be seen as a priority.

# References

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# Thank You.

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Any Questions?

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