

Supplementary Materials for ‘Examining life course trajectories of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in England – exploring convergence and divergence among a heterogeneous population of older people’

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Operationalisation of different definitions of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB)

As outlined in the main paper, ELSA participants were asked about their sexual desires and experiences over the life course, and reported whether this was (1) exclusively for/with the opposite sex; (2) mainly for/with the opposite sex with some for/with the same sex; (3) equally for/with the opposite and same sex; (4) mainly for/with the same sex with some for/with the opposite sex; (5) exclusively for the same sex; in addition to (6), a no desire/experience category. Sexual orientation was not directly asked about, and these data provide a number of options on how LGB status can be defined. Table S1 demonstrates the impact of using alternative definitions of sexuality both in terms of sample size and the number of those defined as LGB (restricted to those with information on transitions to adulthood). The numbers identified as LGB vary, depending on whether to classify reports of ‘some’ same experiences and desires as affirmative of LGB status, and reduce when the focus shifts from reports of attraction to behaviour.

As we describe in the main paper, ascribing LGB status based on these data is challenging, particularly for this cohort of people, who were raised at a time when being a gay or bisexual male was, in effect, criminalised, and being a lesbian or bisexual female was subject to substantial societal hostility. In addition, sexuality can vary across the life course, and the collection of experiences and desires across the life course, adds to the complexity of defining people as LGB.

Conceptually, in classifying people as LGB in the main paper, our strategy was to place greater importance on reports of same sex experiences, in recognition that for most people, same sex experiences are suggestive of same sex attraction that was important or strong enough to be acted upon. We therefore classified anyone with some, mainly or exclusively same sex experiences as LGB. Drawing on the work of others who found that particularly for older people, new same sex experiences can occur late in life (Knocker, 2012), we deemed that same sex desires that are not accompanied by experiences should also be incorporated into our main definition of LGB, provided they reached the threshold of reporting mainly or exclusively same sex. This definition is referred to as our ‘main definition’. Falling within the threshold of LGB on either dimension was sufficient to be assigned LGB status; for example even where a respondent reported same sex experiences but no desire (or information on desires (but not experiences) was missing), they would still be classified as LGB.

Other definitions are also presented in table S1, to better understand the implications of our analytical choices. The samples exclude very small group who reported no sexual experience and no sexual desires were omitted from our analyses in order to facilitate comparisons between LGB and non-LGB people. These people could not be designated as LGB or heterosexual, but potentially could have been defined as asexual, although their very small number precluded further analysis as a separate category.

Table S1: Descriptive statistics on variant classifications of sexual orientation and the implications for sample size. (based on those with information on transitions to adulthood)

	Identified as LGB	Identified as heterosexual	Unweighted Total
Definitions of LGB status based only on reports of sexual desires			
1. Some, equal or mainly same sex desires*	4.5% (176)	95.5% (3434)	100% (3610)
2. Equal or mainly same sex desires	1.9% (73)	98.1% (3537)	100% (3610)
Definitions of LGB status based only on reports of sexual experiences			
3. Some, equal or mainly same sex experiences	3.1% (124)	96.9% (3506)	100% (3630)
4. Equal or mainly same sex experiences	1.1% (41)	98.9% (3589)	100% (3630)
Definitions of LGB status based on reports of sexual experiences and sexual desires			
5. Some, equal or mainly same sex experiences or desires	5.9% (228)	94.1% (3419)	100% (3647)
6. Equal or mainly same sex experiences or some, equal or mainly same sex desires*	4.6% (180)	95.4% (3467)	100% (3647)
7. <u>Main definition</u> : equal or mainly same sex desires or some, equal or mainly same sex experiences	4.1% (159)	94.3% (3488)	100% (3647)
8. Equal or mainly same sex desires or experiences	2.1% (78)	97.9% (3569)	100% (3647)

Notes: Weighted percentages; Parentheses include unweighted numbers

**Used in sensitivity analyses*

Exploring different definitions of LGB

While our main definition is of central interest, we also conducted sensitivity analyses using two other definitions. The first alternative definition, numbered 1 in table S1 and referred to as **'desires only definition'**, is based on reports of some, equal or mainly same sex desires and helps to illuminate the importance of accounting for same sex desires as distinguishing a particular set of life course trajectories. The second, numbered 6 in table S1 and referred to as **'prioritising desires definition'**, places greater emphasis on attraction, than experiences, defining as LGB people having some, equal or mainly same sex desires, and/or equal or mainly same sex experiences. This definition helps to understand the implications of placing a lower threshold on desires in designating people as LGB, as opposed to experiences as was the case with our main definition. The model results from using these alternative definitions are displayed in Table S2 below and can be contrasted with the results in the main paper. These alternative definitions of LGB status are also used in Kaplan-Meier survival curves disaggregated by gender and age group (separately, figures S1-S8 below. Results are discussed in the main paper under the heading 'alternative definitions of LGB'.

Table S2: Time ratios from log-logistic accelerated failure time models for different transition experiences contrasting results by definition of LGB used

Desires only definition: LGB people defined as having some, equal or mainly same sex desires								
	Age at first parenthood		Age at first sexual assault		Age at first experience of severe financial hardship		Age at first provision of care	
Sexual orientation (base: heterosexual)								
	Un-adjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted	Unadjusted	Adjusted
Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual	1.103* (0.041)	1.128** (0.040)	0.466 [§] (0.398)	0.693 (0.386)	0.648* (0.185)	0.729 [§] (0.182)	0.894 (0.010)	0.954 (0.010)
Gender (base: Male)								
Female		0.888*** (0.009)		0.209*** (0.237)		0.876 (0.084)		0.775*** (0.003)
Age group (base: 50-64)								
65-74 years		0.992 (0.011)		3.795*** (0.239)		1.428*** (0.102)		1.129** (0.004)
75+ years		1.054*** (0.015)		8.372*** (0.394)		1.889*** (0.151)		1.213*** (0.006)
N	3610	3610	3156	3156	3026	3026	3055	3055
[§] p<0.09								
Prioritising desires definition: LGB people defined as having equal or mainly same sex experiences or some, equal or mainly same sex desires								
	Age at first parenthood		Age at first sexual assault		Age at first experience of severe financial hardship		Age at first provision of care	
Sexual orientation (base: heterosexual)								
Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual	1.113* (0.042)	1.139** (0.041)	0.480 [§] (0.398)	0.700 (0.385)	0.636* (0.185)	0.710 [§] (0.181)	0.885 (0.010)	0.945 (0.010)
Gender (base: Male)								
Female		0.888*** (0.008)		0.212*** (0.237)		0.887 (0.084)		0.777*** (0.003)
Age group (base: 50-64)								
65-74 years		0.992 (0.011)		3.927*** (0.239)		1.442*** (0.102)		1.137*** (0.004)
75+ years		1.054*** (0.015)		8.476*** (0.393)		1.863*** (0.151)		1.219*** (0.005)
N	3647	3647	3192	3192	3059	3059	3089	3089
[§] p<0.09								

Further descriptive analyses – Kaplan Meier Survival Curves

Figure S1: Time to parenthood by definition of sexuality and age at interview

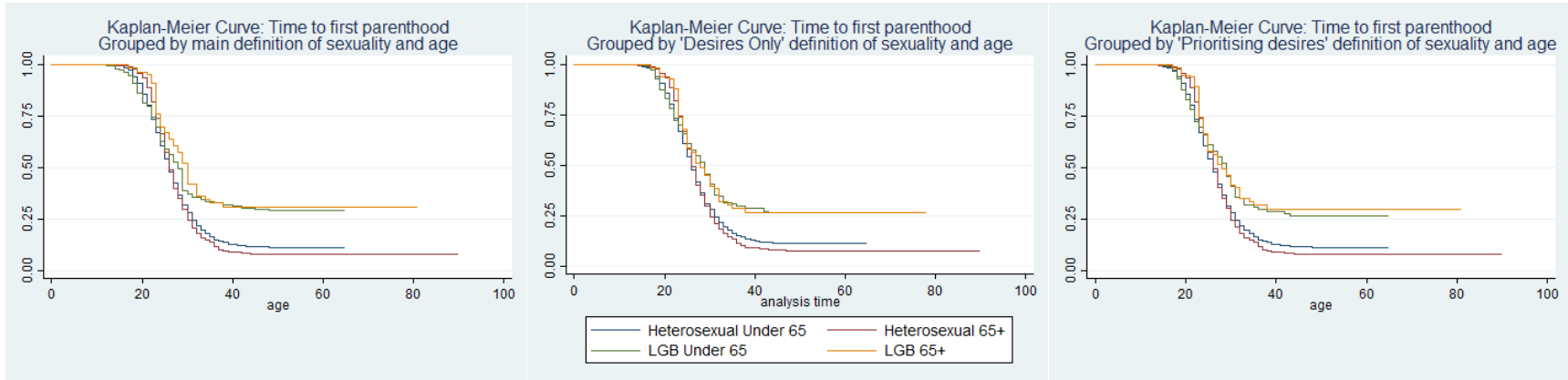


Figure S2: Time to **parenthood** by definition of sexuality and gender

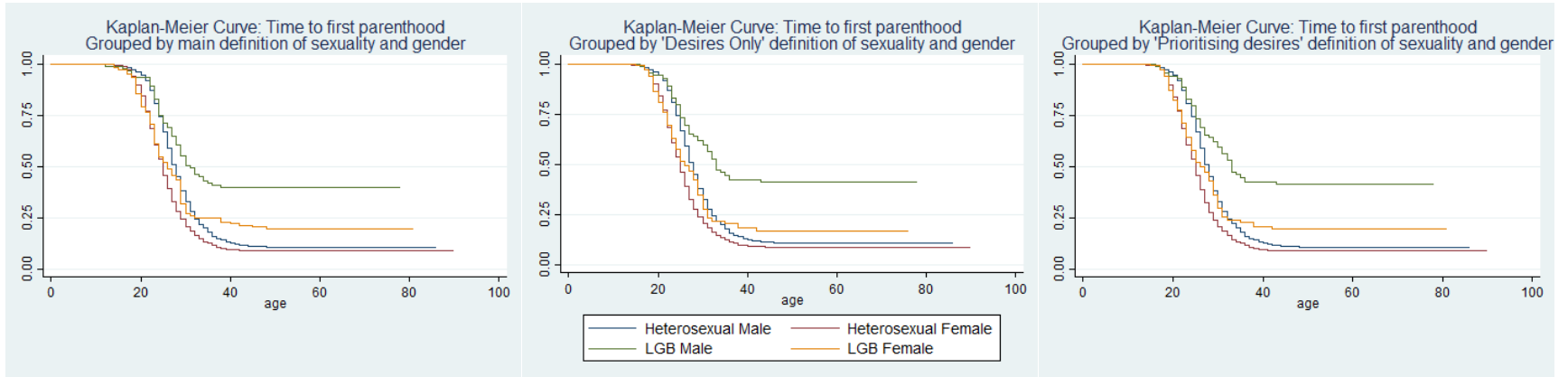


Figure S3: Time to **first provision of care** by definition of sexuality and age at interview

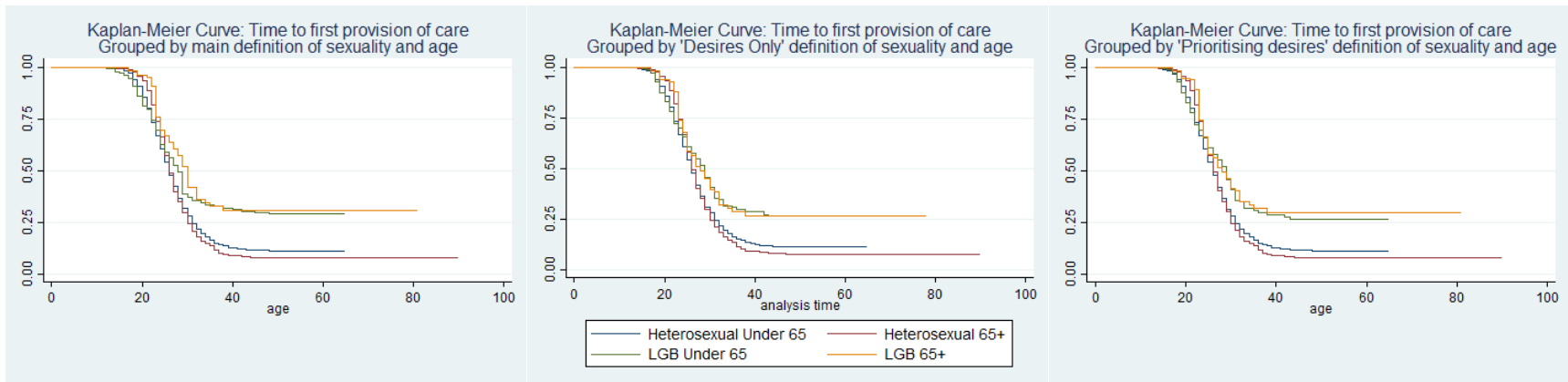


Figure S4: Time to **first provision of care** by definition of sexuality and gender

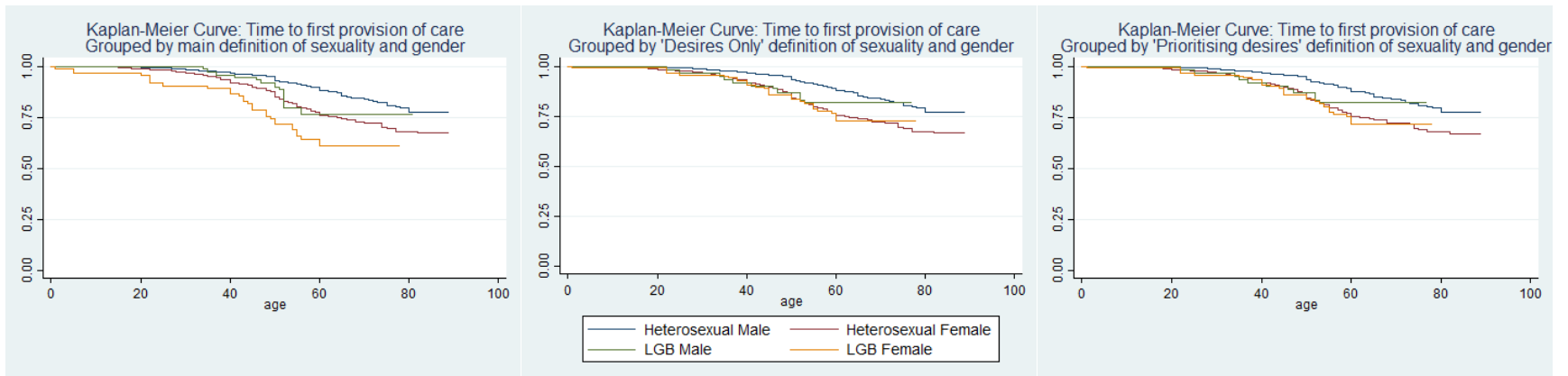


Figure S5: Time to **first sexual assault** by definition of sexuality and age at interview

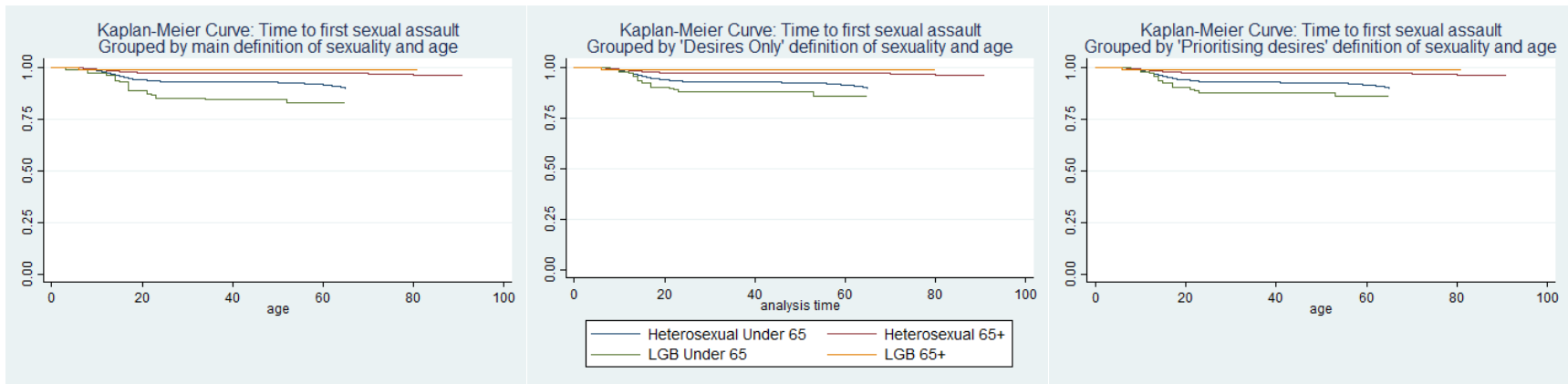


Figure S6: Time to **first sexual assault** by definition of sexuality and gender

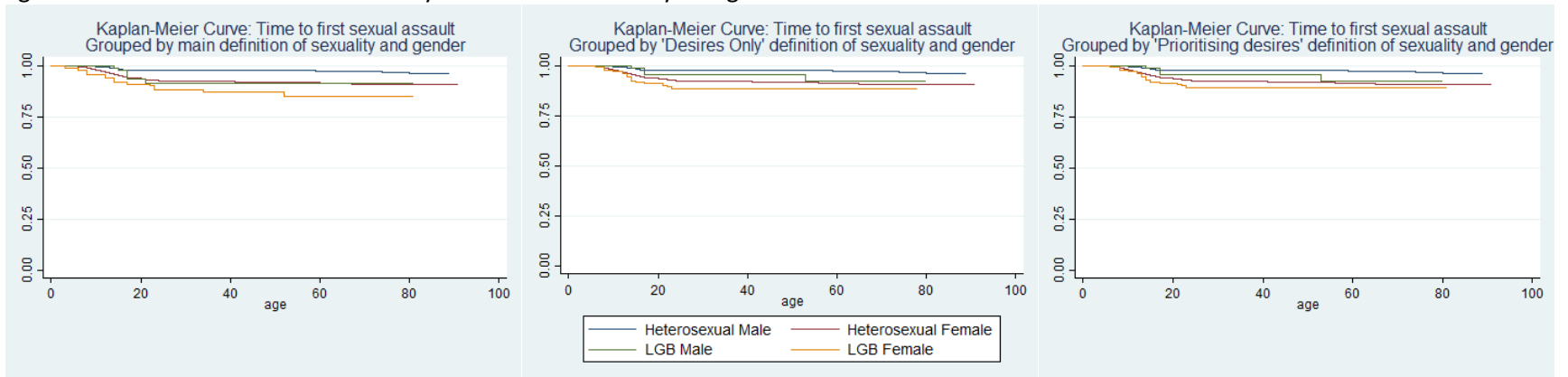


Figure S7: Time to **first experience of financial hardship** by definition of sexuality and age at interview

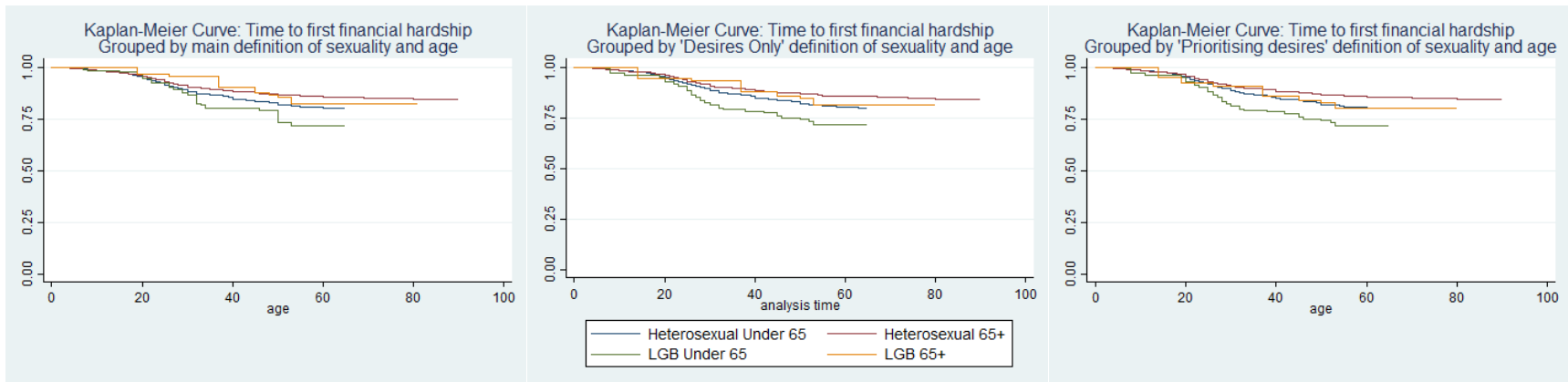


Figure S8: Time to **first experience of financial hardship** by definition of sexuality and gender

