



# lgbt: Status 2014



## Factbooklet

**Summary of Research on  
Living Conditions and Quality  
of Life for Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual and Transgender  
People in Norway**



lgbt knowledge centre



Norwegian Directorate for Children  
Youth and Family Affairs

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Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

**IN NOVEMBER 2013**, the LGBT Knowledge Centre at the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs organised the conference *LHBT: Status 2013*.

This conference summarised the knowledge and research that has been conducted on living conditions and the status quo of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) in Norway in recent years. This fact booklet is intended to provide a clear representation of the knowledge that was summarised at the conference.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, a new law that provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression took effect. The law contains an “activity and reporting duty” - which means that a systematic and continuous effort must be made in order to prevent discrimination against LGBT people in public services and in the workplace. The law entails that service providers, authorities and employers must implement an equality and non-discrimination perspective in their daily work. We aim to facilitate this by disseminating knowledge about what impact sexual orientation and gender identity have within different areas of society.



This booklet is divided by themes, where we first provide general introduction, followed by a bullet-point summary of results from recent Norwegian research on LGBT.

The work against discrimination, and for equality, is about creating a good society for everyone, where human resources are seen and utilised, regardless of who you are attracted to or what gender identity you might have.

Enjoy!

*Mari Trommald*

**Mari Trommald, Director**  
The Norwegian Directorate for  
Children, Youth and Family Affairs



## THE LGBT KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

The LGBT Knowledge Centre is Norway's national knowledge centre for sexual orientation and gender identity, and is a part of the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs. Our main task is to collect and disseminate knowledge about the living conditions and quality of life among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

On this basis, we want to contribute to making LGBT people of different ages feel that all public services and arenas are perceived as inclusive, relevant and respectful.

For more information, please visit **lhbt.no**

## ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

The following pages contain both current and comprehensive information. The booklet may be used as a reference book based on what is relevant to you and your job. The field of LGBT has many terms and concepts that might be unfamiliar, which is why you will find a glossary at the start of the booklet. In the thematic sections, you will find a summary of recent research, divided into different chapters.

We could have shed light on many other issues but we have selected areas where we, based on recent research, know there are challenges.

The research we refer to, which can be found in the reference list, can be found using the literature search on **lhbt.no**. This research is mainly available in Norwegian. There you will also find a more comprehensive glossary, some topical articles and other relevant publications (the website has an English language option, but only limited English content).



## GLOSSARY

**Bisexual:** Being bisexual means being attracted to, or falling in love with people regardless of their gender.

**Cisperson/cisgender:** To be a cisperson means that you identify with the biological sex you were born with and raised as. The term is used as a contrast to “transgender”. By using the term “cis”, it is made clear that everyone has a gender identity, not only transgender people.

**Co-father:** A new term like co-mother (see below). Legally, however, there is no such designation, since the male partner of the biological father cannot be the father from birth. For two men to be regarded as parents, the non-biological father adopts the child.

**Co-mother:** When two women have children through assisted reproduction or a private sperm donor, the partner who does not give birth to the child is considered a co-mother from birth onwards. To be a co-mother, the women must either be married or be in a stable partnership, and they must apply for co-maternity before birth. The co-mother enjoys the same legal rights as the birth mother.

**Gay:** Being gay means to be attracted to, or fall in love with, someone of the same sex. A gay man is attracted to other

men, while a gay woman is attracted to other women.

**Gender binary** is a common understanding of gender as two opposite and mutually exclusive categories as “male” and “female.” The differences between men and women are regarded as biological and related to reproduction, thus making heterosexuality key in order to understand gender. Gender binary is the opposite of gender diversity.

**Gender diversity** means that there are many ways to be a woman/man/boy/girl – for gay, heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. The term might also include the idea of more gender identities than woman or man. Gender diversity stands in opposition to heteronormativity and the gender binary. Gender dysphoria is a medical term that is defined as a discomfort caused by a mismatch between a person’s gender identity and the gender the person was born with. Gender dysphoria is one of the criteria for the diagnosis “transsexualism” in Norway.

**Gender identity** is a person’s internal experience of being male, female, both, or neither. Most people identify with the gender they were given at birth, but not everyone does.

**Heteronormativity** means that heterosexuality and cisgender almost always are taken for granted when people meet. Heterosexual norms include the cultural and social institutions, norms, practices and language reflecting a society and culture that assume everyone is heterosexual.

**Homophobia** is the fear of homosexuals and homosexuality, which can manifest itself in prejudice and aggressiveness. Homophobia is used to describe negative actions and attitudes directed at gay and bisexual people in a society or a subculture. A person may also experience “internalised homophobia”, which means an aversion to his/her own sexual orientation.

**Intersex** is an umbrella term for many different conditions in which people are born with ambiguous sex characteristics, and might be difficult to place in the gender categories boy or girl. Most of these children are subject to surgery and then allocated a gender as male or female.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to, or falls in love with, someone of the same sex, i.e. other women.

**Legal gender** is the gender assigned at birth and registered with in the National Registry.

**LGBT** stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. It is used by authorities, rights activist groups and researchers. The LGBT term encompasses terms related both to sexual orientation (LGB) and gender identity (T).

**MSM** is an abbreviation for “men who have sex with men”. The term describes sexual practices, not sexual identity and/or sexual orientation.

**Queer:** Many people in Norway use the term queer – which is “skeiv” in Norwegian – as a synonym for LGBT. For some, “queer”, or “skeiv”, is an identity that challenges and transcends the categories heterosexual, lesbian, gay and bisexual. The term can also be used as a criticism of our heteronormative society. Queer is also used by people who do not fit in to society’s division of people into two genders. Historically, “queer” was used as a derogatory term for “homosexual”, but the term has since been “reclaimed” by the LGBT community as a positive self-identifier. However, to some people “queer” is still regarded as a derogative and offensive word, therefore it is advisable to be cautious when using the term.

**Same-sex couple** is a couple made up of two women or two men.

**Sex affirmative treatment** can be surgical and/or hormonal treatment

with or without psychotherapy. The result being to help a person to function in accordance to their gender identity.

**Sexual identity** is about whether a person perceives and experiences himself/herself as gay, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, queer or otherwise.

**Sexual orientation** is about who we fall in love with, are sexually attracted to, and want to be with. The most common sexual orientations are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and lesbian. Some also use the term “queer”.

**Surrogacy** is when a woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby in order to hand it over to someone who will be the child's social and legal parents.

**Transgender** is an umbrella term for people who have an appearance or identity expressing a different gender than what was registered at birth. Some transgender people feel that they are neither men nor women and challenge our gender binary by defining themselves as a third gender, or by not defining themselves in gender categories at all. Having a transgender identity is about a person's self-perceived gender identity or how this is expressed. It has nothing to do with the person's sexuality or sexual orientation. Transgender people can be queer, lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual or gay.

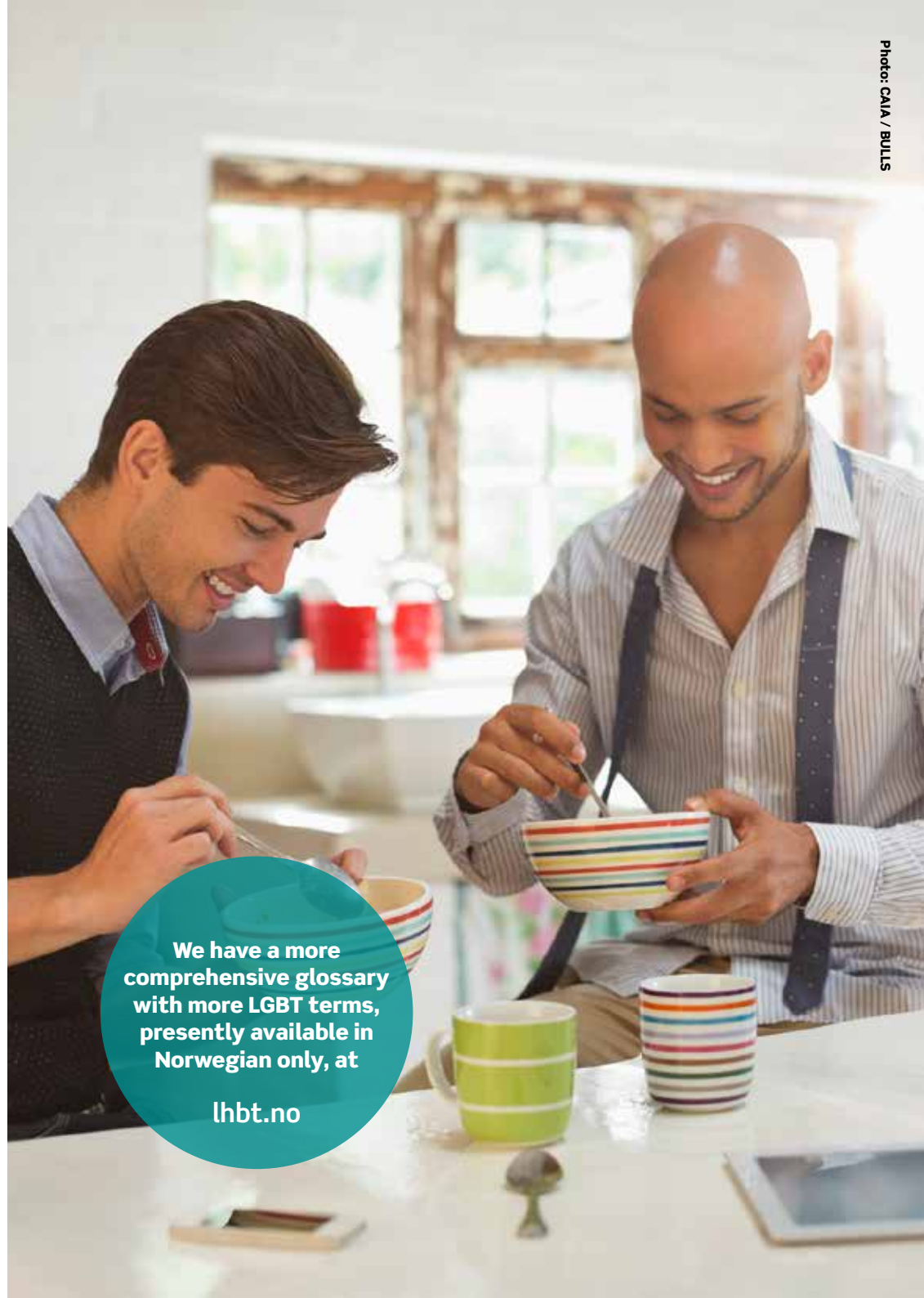
**Transphobia** is the fear of transsexuals and transgender identity. The term corresponds to “homophobia” which you can read about on page 6.

**Transsexualism** is a medical diagnosis for people who feel they are a different gender from what their bodies say. This means that a person born with a male body sees herself as a woman and a person born with a female body sees himself as male. The diagnosis is currently required in order to have gender reassignment treatment in Norway. In order to get the diagnosis one must be examined and have strong and persistent gender dysphoria. The treatment involves psychotherapy, specific hormonal changes and surgery. The aim being for the body to receive a gender expression that correlates to the psychological gender. The resulting consequence is being able to legally change one's gender. Transsexualism is equally common in biologically born men and women.

**WSW** is an abbreviation for “women who have sex with women.” The term describes sexual practices, not sexual identity and/or sexual orientation.

We have a more comprehensive glossary with more LGBT terms, presently available in Norwegian only, at

[lhbt.no](http://lhbt.no)



## ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND PROACTIVE DUTIES

On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, a new law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression entered into force. This law gives LGBT people protection against discrimination in all areas of society, with the exception of private relations.

This is the first time transgender people receive protection against discrimination in Norway, and are thus recognised as a minority. The law grants the right to dress, behave or identify oneself based on one's own perceived gender identity, regardless of biological sex, without being discriminated against. People diagnosed with transsexualism who have had sex reassignment treatment, and changed legal gender, are also protected against discrimination in the Norwegian Equality Act (Likestillingsloven).

Even before the new law came into force, Norway had protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation in The Penal Code, The Housing Laws and in The Working Environment Act. The new

law gives lesbian, gay and bisexual people general protection against discrimination in all areas of society.

### ACTIVITY AND REPORTING DUTIES

The new law requires authorities and employers to work pro-actively, purposively and systematically to prevent discrimination and ensure inclusion of LGBT people.

This means that all employers and service providers need competence in the field of LGBT to implement these duties. With the new law, the efforts toward equality and inclusion shall include sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression on equal terms with gender, ethnicity and disability.<sup>1</sup>

In their capacity as employers, government bodies and offices, as well as private enterprises with more than 50 employees, must record in their annual reports which measures they have initiated.

<sup>1</sup> The Act Relating to Gender Equality (gender), The Anti-Discrimination Act (The Act on Prohibition of Discrimination Based on Ethnicity, Religion etc.), and the Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act (disability) also contain activity and reporting duties.

## ACTIVITY AND REPORTING DUTIES

The activity duty means that employers are required to make an assessment to find out whether what they are doing, or are planning to do, will have a different impact for LGBT people compared to people who do not belong to these groups. The assessment applies to the following HR areas:

- RECRUITMENT
- WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS
- PROMOTIONS
- DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
- PROTECTION AGAINST HARASSMENT

In addition, it is important to work on inclusion in general. Below are some examples of measures that can be taken to follow up the activity assessment:

### IN GENERAL:

Include images of LGBT persons in the business' public communication (such as brochures, web sites and press releases).

### AS AN EMPLOYER:

- Have clear procedures or plans for how the business will deal with a situation where an employee undergoes gender confirmation treatment.
- Facilitate that employees are able to be open about their sexual orientation without fear of negative consequences. This can be achieved by making it known to all employees that homophobia and harassment are behaviours that will not be tolerated.

### AS A SERVICE PROVIDER:

- Go through educational programs and curricula to ensure that teaching content is not heteronormative.
- Create awareness that not all patients/service users are heterosexual, and what challenges there might be for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people when facing health care professionals or service providers.

### THESE EXAMPLES ARE TAKEN FROM THE FOLLOWING PUBLICATIONS (NOT AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH):

Like muligheter for alle i arbeidslivet (LDO)<sup>35</sup>

Ta det ikke for gitt at pasienten er heterofil (LLH, Rosa kompetanse)<sup>47</sup>

En hbt-handbok för företagare (Företagarna)<sup>19</sup>

Arbeidstakere som skifter kjønnsuttrykk (LO)<sup>33</sup>

Seksualitet i skolen: perspektiver på undervisning<sup>50</sup>

## LIVING AS AN LGBT PERSON

***What is it like to live as a gay, bisexual, lesbian or transgender person in Norway today? Research speaks of better living conditions for lesbian women and gay men today than ten or twenty years ago, and attitudes towards LGBT people are becoming more favourable. At the same time, many face challenges with regards to being LGBT. Some LGBT people still feel that they need to hide their identity, LGBT persons are in several cases worse off in terms of living conditions, and suicide statistics raise concern.***

Being different from the majority can affect a person's living conditions and quality of life in different ways. There can be strength in having to contemplate who you are, and having a different point of view from the majority can be an asset. However, belonging to a minority can still lead to invisibility, being treated unequally and being discriminated against.

A comprehensive Norwegian survey on living conditions shows that the similarities between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals are greater than the differences. The survey also concludes that the vast majority of LGBT-people experience their sexual orientation as "enriching".<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, a significant proportion of lesbian, gay and bisexual people show signs of marginalization, manifesting itself in serious health problems, lesser life satisfaction, more negative experiences at work and in educational institutions, as well as less openness about their sexual orientation. However, there are major differences between the groups: Lesbians are consistently better off in these surveys, in some respects better than heterosexual women, while challenges are more significant for bisexuals.<sup>4</sup>

Bisexuals stand out negatively in terms of openness in the workplace, mental health, suicide, loneliness, and satisfaction with life in general. The suicide numbers are drastic among gay and lesbian respondents as well, with the proportion that report having tried to take their own life being more than twice as high as among heterosexuals. A greater degree of mental ill health applies to all groups of non-heterosexual orientation,<sup>42</sup> in particular for young people under 30 years of age.

We have no representative surveys about the living conditions of transgender people in Norway, but we do know that many in this group face significant challenges. In interviews, transgender people talk of mental health issues, in parts related to not being open, and many feel they are not getting the help they need from the health services. There is generally little knowledge in our society about what it means to experience gender identity issues.<sup>55</sup> A positive trend is that more and more transgender people choose to be open.

### WHEN "EVERYONE" IS HETEROSEXUAL

Taking for granted that everyone you meet is heterosexual, and that everyone can be categorised as either a "man" or a "woman", is called "heteronormativity". The norm is then to be like the majority: a heterosexual and cisgendered man or woman. Structures in society are also heteronormative.<sup>3, 7, 26</sup> This may be reflected in curricula in schools, treatment in health care services, and public schemes and documents.<sup>13</sup>  
<sup>49, 55</sup> The heteronormative structures become more evident for those who violate the norms of gender and sexuality. Therefore, LGBT organisations usually take a critical stance towards established norms in order to point out that social structures and established categories are not inclusive of everyone.

Not long ago, being LGBT was defined as a disease, and carried stigma, shame and taboo. A few decades ago, homosexuality was still illegal, and not until 2010 did Norway remove transvestism as a diagnosis for illness.



Today, few Norwegians carry outwardly negative attitudes toward LGBT people, but between ten and twenty per cent still report that they are sceptical to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, according to the latest survey results.<sup>4</sup> Men's attitudes are more negative than women's, and a larger share are negative to bisexuals and transgender people than to lesbian women and gay men. "Faggot" is one of the most common insults in Norway<sup>51</sup> and in some communities being gay or transgender can be such a strong violation of the norm that it will lead to exclusion, violence or other sanctions.<sup>48, 54, 55</sup> Homophobia and transphobia are the most negative consequences of heteronormativity. With society's attitudes and phobias as a backdrop, being "proud and gay", or openly transgender, requires great strength.

### MINORITY STRESS AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA

To break with heteronormativity can result in feelings of exclusion. Whether to come out as gay or not is a decision that must be made every day. Research shows that those who are in the closet at work<sup>4, 10</sup> and not open to their family<sup>53, 55</sup> have poorer mental and physical health and are less happy at work and in school. Keeping their LGBT identity hidden has both interpersonal and psychological costs - also referred to as "minority stress".<sup>4</sup> Minority stress describes the additional burden individuals from stigmatised groups suffer because of their minority status.<sup>13</sup> Many people still have unpleasant experiences with "coming out", and others live hidden in fear of negative reactions.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the strain of hiding can often be greater than the cost of coming out. Transgender people say that life did become easier when they came out as the gender they felt like after all.<sup>55</sup> Openness can in turn lead to more people getting to know LGBT people and thus become less prejudiced.

For some, experiencing minority stress could also be about internalised homophobia or transphobia. This means that the individual absorbs other people's negative attitudes towards LGBT people, and struggles to accept their otherness to a degree where they despise or deny their own homosexual feelings or gender identity. This can also happen to children and young people growing up in environments with a positive attitude towards homosexuality: Even though being different is OK, they do not want to be different.

### ATTITUDES AND OPENNESS

Other people's prejudices and attitudes are an important factor that affects the living conditions of LGBT people. Two comprehensive surveys on attitudes towards the LGBT population over the recent years, show that a significant majority among both women and men express positive attitudes towards LGBT people.<sup>4, 5</sup> Women's attitudes are more positive than men's. We can also see a tendency where Norwegian men are moving towards greater acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Although most claim to treat everyone equally, the surveys show that many are negative towards same-sex couples or transgender people holding hands or kissing. There are larger shares of people (and mostly men) who show negative attitudes toward bisexuals. A minority also responds negatively towards lesbian women and gay men. The most common forms of negative behaviour are making jokes, but as many as one in six men have moved away from a gay man to create distance between them. About the same number say they shudder when they think of a transgendered person.<sup>4</sup>

Transgender people say that they experience low tolerance for "disturbing" gender expressions at work, at school, when facing health care and other public institutions, in public and within the family.<sup>55</sup>



Photo: LGTB Knowledge Centre



## FACTS

## TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

- Transgender people are a diverse group. Being a transgender can involve everything from dressing up with a different gender expression on occasion, to constantly live in a different gender expression than their biological one. It can also entail seeing yourself as “a third gender” – which is neither man nor woman – or to refuse to be defined in one gender category altogether.
- People with the diagnosis “transsexualism” who would like to have sex reassignment treatment can be considered part of the group transgender people. Women and men who have undergone gender confirmation treatment, and have obtained a new legal gender, should be treated as the gender they are now.
- No one knows how many transgender people there are in Norway, but it is estimated that there are at least 19,000-20,000.<sup>55</sup> There are great differences in health services for those diagnosed with “transsexualism” versus transgender people without a diagnosis. Transgender people without a diagnosis often face inadequate health services.<sup>55</sup>
- In order to obtain a new legal gender in Norway, you must first have been diagnosed with transsexualism, lived as your preferred gender for a set period of time, and then undergo hormone treatment and removal of breasts/construct new breasts, genitalia surgery and sterilisation. This process can take between 5 and 8 years.<sup>39</sup>
- More than 500 people have received gender confirmation treatment in Norway since 1963. Every year, about 110-130 people are referred in order to be assessed for the diagnosis of “transsexualism”, a quarter of whom get the diagnosis. Yearly about 15-20 undergo gender confirmation treatment.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Read more at The Harry Benjamin Resource Centre :  
[www.hbrs.no](http://www.hbrs.no) (only available in Norwegian)



## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

***The feeling of being different can be a challenge for many children who later will self-define as non-heterosexual or transgender. Many of these children are also particularly vulnerable to bullying. How can we make sure they will be comfortable with their own identity despite being different from the majority?***

Today, there is more openness about sexual orientation and gender identity than before, and there are several visible role models for LGBT people. Families are becoming more diverse and many children have parents who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Some children's institutions, however, may lack expertise in offering a space for diversity in terms of gender identity and gender expression during childhood.<sup>50, 55</sup>

### LGBT FROM A CHILDHOOD PERSPECTIVE

Finding adequate terms can be difficult when talking about sexual orientation and gender identity when it comes to children. This is due to the difficulties in defining children's sexuality or gender identity. Perhaps the most important thing we can do, is allow for children to find out who they are and to be themselves without having labels attached to them, or experience adverse reactions or sanctions from their surroundings. A term that may be used to create such a climate, could be "gender diversity." Without categorising children as gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual or transgender, the term gender diversity can act as a reminder of the importance of children being allowed to be different.

Commercial products contribute to a clear separation between boys' and girls' toys, clothes and activities. Product developers exploit gender



Photo: OREDIA/BULLS

In the Norwegian book **Gay Kids**, adult LGBT people share memories from their childhood. The stories show that some knew they were attracted to the same gender during early childhood, while others did not think of this before they hit puberty - or even later in life. Some did not realise that they were LGBT people because they did not fit the stereotype of gay men or lesbian women.<sup>14</sup>

Experiences vary for transgender people as well. Some feel that there is a discrepancy between their physical and mental gender from as early as three years of age. Others may experience a more vague feeling of being different, but might be unable to articulate or interpret this feeling before they reach adulthood.<sup>55</sup>

stereotypes in order to increase sales, which make it more difficult for children to express themselves beyond what is expected from them as a boy or a girl. If the physical sex does not match their gender identity, a child is prone to expressing the gender identity they identify with. This may lead to negative reactions from their surroundings.<sup>29, 55</sup> This feedback may lead to children developing a sense of guilt and fear, which in turn might lead to hiding their self-experienced gender identity to avoid bullying and exclusion.<sup>55</sup>

Heterosexual and cispersons might also have felt different growing up when it comes to attraction, gender identity, or how to fit into gender roles. Boys might receive reactions when participating in activities or gender expressions that are perceived as feminine, while it is generally less problematic for a girl to be a "tomboy".<sup>29, 55</sup>



Offering and creating spaces for gender diversity is beneficial for all children – not only the most vulnerable. This provides them with space to explore different aspects of themselves, and helps foster acceptance for difference and diversity in others.

### DIVERSE FAMILIES

Since the Norwegian Parliament passed The Marriage Act in 2009, two people of the same sex can marry on an equal basis as two of the opposite sex. The Adoption Act gives same-sex couples the opportunity to be considered as adoptive parents, and both same-sex couples and single people can become foster parents in Norway. The Norwegian Biotechnology Act also gives lesbian couples the right to Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART).

In order for the woman who is not pregnant with the child to obtain legal status as a co-mother, ART and a donor must be used. Surrogacy is illegal in Norway, yet some gay couples go abroad to have children through surrogacy.

Available international research indicates that there are few differences between children who have same-sex parents and children who do not, in terms of mental health, social functioning, school achievement and bullying. The same research shows a tendency that children with two mothers are slightly better off than other children, however this seems primarily to be related to the gender of the parents, and that having two mothers is a resource, rather than it having to do with the parents' sexual orientation.

WHAT  
DO WE  
KNOW?

- Research on people who have experienced gender identity issues in their childhood shows that breaking with the norm often will lead to sanctions from parents, teachers and peers.<sup>55</sup>
- Young adult transgender persons report a lack of knowledge on what it means to be a transgender person among the grown-ups during their childhood. Furthermore, they felt that their alternative gender identity often meant that their surroundings interpreted them as lesbian or gay.<sup>55</sup>
- A survey among adolescents in Oslo showed that a much larger share of non-heterosexual youth received help from child protection services, than heterosexual youth.<sup>53</sup>
- Motherhood and fatherhood can be expressed in a variety of ways. Same-sex parents give the term “family” a new meaning.<sup>52</sup>
- During the last few years the proportion of same-sex couples who have children has increased sharply. From 1993 to 2001, six per cent of same-sex couples had children, compared to 18 per cent from 2002 to 2011. The number of gays and lesbians who have children is on the increase. It is primarily female couples who have children together.<sup>1</sup>
- There is little available knowledge concerning children living with LGBT parents. Existing research primarily focuses on children who live with two mothers.<sup>20</sup>
- The most important factor is the care given and space for personal development offered by parents – not the parents' sexual orientation or gender identity.<sup>20</sup>



## LEISURE AND SPORTS

*There seems to be only small differences between LGBT people and heterosexuals in regards to how they spend their leisure time. However, we do not know a lot about how LGBT people perceive leisure time.*

The latest research on living conditions for lesbians, gays and bisexuals shows no distinct difference between heterosexuals and LGBT persons in regards to leisure activities.<sup>4</sup> Sexual orientation does not seem to have any influence on exercise, training or outdoor activities. These findings contradict earlier research that indicated lower participation rates in physical activity among LGBT persons. Some differences were found, however, for instance with regards to music, culture and affiliation to organisations. The research does not conclude as to why these differences exist.<sup>4</sup>

### TRANSGENDER AND LEISURE: COMMUNITY AND BARRIERS

Interviews with transgender people show that leisure activities can act as a sanctuary. Especially while growing up, various leisure activities might provide access to arenas where gender norms are not as heavily enforced. For instance, excelling in music or sports, or using the same uniform as others on a team, can provide for a freedom that might not exist at school. On the other hand, certain leisure activities can be less accessible for transgender people with an ambiguous expression of gender, and for transgender people who are having gender confirmation treatment. Swimming and other activities where changing rooms are used, as well as public spaces with bathrooms for men and women only, can be problematic for some transgender people.



*I was teased when I was little because I looked girly /.../ But I was into music, which enabled me to ignore all the negative comments. I managed to rise above all of that and survive.<sup>55</sup>*

FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH A TRANS PERSON

### WORKING AGAINST ANTI-GAY SENTIMENTS IN SPORTS

In organised sports, LGBT issues have been invisible for a long time.<sup>17, 41</sup> Many have pointed out that sports have been a place where homophobia thrives, and that very few athletes who define themselves as LGBT have “come out”.<sup>17, 18</sup>

Sports associations have over the last few years understood that lack of visibility, coupled with homophobia, might mean that LGBT people experience coming out as unsafe, resulting in many of them leaving sports all together. Over the last years, the Norwegian Confederation of Sports, The Norwegian Football Association and the Norwegian Basketball Association have all taken an outspoken stance on this issue.<sup>40, 41</sup>

#### THE NORWEGIAN CONFEDERATION OF SPORTS' WORK TO TACKLE HOMOPHOBIA<sup>41</sup>

- Coaches are to raise the issue and communicate that not everyone is necessarily heterosexual. All leaders are to tell their respective teams that everyone is welcome – no matter if you are “white or black, gay or straight”.
- There is a zero tolerance policy for using LGBT-related swearwords. This will be addressed during training of coaches and leaders.
- When hearing words like “gay”, “fag”, “dyke” etc., the problem will be addressed immediately. This entails asking: “What did you mean by that?” and to make clear that these words will not be tolerated. This is done regardless of knowing whether there are LGBT people on the team or not.

**There are many leisure activities** catering for LGBT people. Most are found in larger towns and cities, and many are organised by the Norwegian National Association for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender People (LLH). Some examples are:

The Homofonien Choir, Rabalder Handball Team, Lesbisk Turlag (Lesbian Hiking Association), Fjellgruppa for menn som liker menn som liker fjellet (The Gay Men's Mountain Group), damegruppa Gudrun (Women's Group), Ressursgruppen for Transpersoner (Resource Association for Trans People), Åpen Kirkegruppe (Open Church Group), Queer Cinema, Skeivt Studentlag (Queer Students), Kulturgruppa Lesber i dagslys (The Culture Group Lesbians in Daylight), Bamseklubben (Bear Club), Sommertreff for transpersoner på Stensveen ressurscenter, (Summer Meetings for Trans Persons at the Stensveen Resource Centre) Café Don't tell Mama, Kvinnekvelder (Women's nights), Queer Tango and Regnbuefamilier (Rainbow Families).

Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

INFO

- Sports is one of the remaining social arenas with a stark gender division. This can contribute to an exaggerated focus on gender, sexuality and the body.<sup>17, 34</sup>
- There are clear gender differences with regards to who chooses to come out as non-heterosexual. While female top athletes have been open about their lesbian/bisexual orientation, very few top athletes who are men have come out as gay or bisexual.<sup>17</sup>
- Stereotypes in sports have traditionally been reinforced due to a stereotypical view on masculinity in sports. This stereotyping has contributed to making it challenging for male athletes to come out as gay.<sup>17, 34, 40</sup>
- The changing room is a place where a lot of people have experienced harassment and heard terms that are derogatory towards LGBT people.<sup>17, 34</sup>
- Young footballers say that they have had positive experiences when coming out as gay. Even though few top athletes are openly gay, it looks like the younger generation of athletes have different attitudes and are more open.<sup>41</sup>
- Compared to heterosexuals, a larger share of lesbian women participate in musical leisure activities such as choirs, bands or marching bands in Norway, while a larger share of gay and bisexual men frequent cafes, the theatre and museums. In terms of trade unions and political work, bisexual women are the most active.<sup>4</sup>
- Only a small number of LGBT people are members of an LGBT civil society organisation.<sup>4</sup>

## SCHOOL AND EDUCATION

*The majority of us become aware of our sexual orientation and gender identity during school. Both primary and secondary education are important arenas for establishing an identity. Whether the students decide to be open about their feelings and identities is of course a matter of personal choice. Yet it is up to school staff to contribute to the idea that to be who you are is welcomed and accepted.*

“Faggot” is one of the most used derogatory terms or swearwords in Norwegian schools. Schools are places where LGBT students might be exposed to exclusion, teasing and sexual harassment. We know that bisexual and gay students, and those with an atypical gender expression, are bullied more than heterosexual students.<sup>46, 25</sup>

One particularly vulnerable group are young LGBT people who come from an ethnic minority background. How can teachers and textbooks contribute to reflect diversity, ensuring that all students can build a safe identity in order to lay the foundations for a good and safe sexual life?

### HETERONORMATIVE EDUCATION

Being inclusive as an adult means using an open language and contributing to positive visibility. It often requires increased general awareness, in order to avoid talking about gay and transgender people as “the others.” A first step is not to take for granted that students are heterosexual or cispersons. Furthermore, a teacher who deliberately talks about sexual orientation and gender identity in a positive way, both in academic and social contexts, could make a positive difference for a student who



does not fit the heterosexual norm. Research shows that many people are not open about sexual orientation in the workplace.<sup>4</sup> Young LGBT people need positive role models, and an open-minded teacher may help prevent bullying.

### AN LGBT PERSPECTIVE IN EDUCATION

The curricula clearly state that a diversity of sexual orientations and gender expressions are to be included in social science, science, religious education and partly in history. LGBT perspectives are often absent or lacking in textbooks and in classroom education.<sup>49, 50</sup> Examples of LGBT-inclusive teaching include using two fathers in a practical math problem, to write an essay in a gender-neutral language, or having a picture of a transgender person illustrate gender roles. LGBT themes can also be part of history, culture and literature classes.

Many schools use the teaching programme “Uke Sex” which is an LGBT-inclusive week-long initiative. In 2013, more than 54,000 students in the 7th-10th grades participated in this programme. There are several mobile teaching programmes that contribute to knowledge about LGBT for students: Restart (Queer Youth), MSO (Medical Students’ Sexual Education), Queer World, Sexuality and Society (Oslo) and the project “Sexual Health and Harassment” (in South Trøndelag county). The capacity-building programme Pink Expertise (run by the Norwegian association for lesbian, gays, bisexuals and transgender people - LLH), the Association for Transgender people and the Harry Benjamin Resource Centre all educate teachers on LGBT perspectives and gender identity in Norway.



WHAT  
DO WE  
KNOW?**Education:**

- Teachers often have the best intentions when it comes to inclusive education, but lack the competence and knowledge about sexuality and how to include an LGBT perspective in their teaching. LGBT people are often construed as “the others”.<sup>50</sup>
- The curricula includes various family constellations and sexual orientations, but this is often not mentioned in textbooks.<sup>49</sup>
- Sexual orientation is raised in relation to identity and difficult emotions in textbooks, but are absent in sexual education. Themes related to the body, sexuality and sex are concerned with heterosexual practices, with “conception” as the typical narrative.<sup>49</sup>
- Textbooks generally do not deal with transgender people when addressing the curricula’s knowledge goals of gender identity and gender expressions.<sup>49</sup>

**Identity Development:**

- While only 1 to 2 per cent of young people define themselves as gay, bisexual or lesbian, 25 per cent of girls and 10 per cent of boys have had sexual experiences and/or imagine themselves with someone of the same sex.<sup>44</sup> Experiences with homosexuality do not necessarily affect the identity development.<sup>24</sup>
- Bisexual and gay students are significantly more prone to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, compared to heterosexuals.<sup>46</sup>
- Transgender people often experience puberty as a very difficult time. Expectations from their surroundings, such as they should live up to the gender binary, can make it worse. At the same time difficult questions about their own identity come into full force at this time.<sup>55</sup>

**Bullying:**

- Derogatory use of LGBT terms is common in schools. One study showed that 44 per cent of the boys had been called “faggot” last year.<sup>11</sup>
- To use the term “faggot” as an insult in school is not necessarily about homosexuality, rather it tends to imply that a boy is perceived as “effeminate”. “Faggot” as an insult is therefore more often about gender expression – not sexual orientation.<sup>50</sup>
- Bisexual and gay students are bullied far more than heterosexuals. The proportion of adolescents in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade who are bullied two to three times per month or more, is estimated at 7 per cent for heterosexuals, 15 per cent for bisexuals and 35 per cent for gay and lesbian students.<sup>46</sup> The type of bullying can be physical and in person, or psychological, via mobile phone or the internet.
- Students who say they are gay or bisexual, are also most likely to bully others.<sup>46</sup>
- Transgender people say they had two choices in school; either to hide their gender identity, or learn how to cope with bullying, harassment and violence.<sup>55</sup>
- One in four gay students reports that they have been harassed by their teachers the past year. That is more than three times as frequent as heterosexual male students. Gay male students experience more than double the amount of harassment compared with heterosexual males, from fellow students (37 per cent vs. 16 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

## HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE CURRICULA

Homosexuality was first mentioned in Norwegian curricula in 1974: "Unusual sexual expressions, such as homosexuality and exhibitionism, will be dealt with briefly." In 1987: "All students will learn about homosexuality and heterosexuality in sexual education." In accordance with the Knowledge Promotion Reform (2006, revised in 2013), some of the competency requirements in science, religious education and social sciences are for students to be able to:

- **By year 4:** "Talk about diversities in family lives"
- **By year 7:** "Talk about different gender identities and diversities of sexual orientation", "Talk about diversities in sexual orientation in relation to love, relationships and family"
- **By year 10:** "Discuss issues related to sexuality, different sexual orientations and gender identity", "Reflect upon ethical issues related to interpersonal relationships, family and friends, relationships, heterosexuality and homosexuality" and "Discuss how love and sexuality are related in light of cultural norms."

(Source: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. [Utdanningsdirektoratet.no](http://utdanningsdirektoratet.no))



## EMPLOYMENT

***Employers have a duty to make sure that LGBT people think of their workplace as inclusive. But what challenges does this group face, and how can we actively work towards LGBT-inclusive workplaces?***

Working life is an arena which has great influence on people's living conditions. This is because employment provides access to economic resources, professional development as well as access to social arenas. By taking some conscious steps, an employer can ensure that the workplace is equally accessible to all – regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

### **A WORKPLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE YOURSELF**

Why is openness so important? "I don't care what people do in the bedroom" is a commonly heard statement. However, what you do in the bedroom is only a small part of your sexual identity. Yet being open means to be able to talk to others about what leisure activities you and your partner did over the weekend, or other everyday events in your life. Negative attitudes, thoughtless comments and jokes at the expense of LGBT people can make it difficult to show a non-heterosexual orientation at work.

Implementing an LGBT perspective at work means ensuring that the workplace is inclusive for all. As an employer, you can take a stand and introduce a zero tolerance policy on harassment, hate speech and derogatory jokes, and strive to make the workplace a safe place where everyone can be who they are without having to hide their identity for colleagues, customers or clients.<sup>35</sup>



Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

For transgender people, it is especially important to have the management's backing in order to show their identity.<sup>55</sup> Clear signals and support from management, including when dealing with customers and clients, may assist transgender people in being open about their gender identity at work. Some physical workplace adjustments, for example being flexible with regards to changing room facilities, might further contribute to easing someone's transition.<sup>33</sup>

Having an LGBT perspective in the workplace is also about making sure that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are not discriminated against in the hiring process, or at work. Little research has been conducted on this subject in Norway, but international research shows that discrimination during the hiring process is a problem.<sup>2</sup>

Establishing credibility is achieved when micro level measures are reflected in the company's structural framework. Has it for example been considered that not everyone is heterosexual and that gender may consist of more than the gender binary of a man and a woman? In a thoroughly inclusive workplace, the LGBT perspective is integrated on a more structural level, and implemented in business plans, service development plans, appraisals and communication strategies. An open use of language and a varied use of imagery in publications and online can send a strong signal that can contribute to the workplace being perceived as inclusive and equal.



### AN LGBT PERSPECTIVE AS A MARKETING STRATEGY?

Having an inclusive company profile can have advantages beyond contributing to a good working environment and inclusion for all employees. Several businesses have opened their eyes to the LGBT population's potential as a consumer group, and have as a result included an LGBT perspective in their marketing strategies in order to reach LGBT consumers.

<sup>19</sup>

As a group of customers, the LGBT segment is attractive for many reasons. Firstly, same-sex couples are less likely to have children, compared to heterosexual couples, and are therefore an important part of the so-called "DINK" group (Dual Income, No Kids) - a group considered to have generous disposable incomes.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, the LGBT population are considered as consumers who quickly pick up on or reject new ideas and products, and therefore have an important trendsetting role.<sup>19</sup> An LGBT friendly company profile will also appeal to LGBT friendly customers who themselves are not LGBT. "Friends and Allies" are a key segment in big cities and among young people. Businesses that have included an LGBT perspective say that the changes have led to good publicity worth far more than the cost of their investments.<sup>19</sup>

***Employers have an activity and reporting duty with regards to sexual orientation and gender identity from 2014. This means that they must work actively against discrimination of LGBT persons in the workplace.***

(More information about this on pages 10 and 11).

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### REFLECTION

#### HOW WOULD PEOPLE AT WORK REACT IF:

- The boss brings their same-sex partner to an office social event?
- Someone at work wants to use the uniform of the opposite sex?
- A female employee says she is taking parental leave, without being pregnant?
- There are negative remarks and jokes about gay people during lunch?
- A colleague changes his/her gender expression from one day to another?
- A colleague has a picture of someone of the same gender on their desk?
- You are asked to use a gender-neutral pronoun when addressing or referring to a colleague?
- A female colleague is divorcing her husband and declares that she is now with a woman?
- Someone points out that there are images of heterosexual families and cispersons on the company web page and PowerPoint presentations exclusively?
- A male employee arrives at the Christmas party wearing a dress?

## WHAT DO WE KNOW?

- Just under 80 per cent of lesbian and gay people regard their workplace as mostly inclusive. Among bisexual men and women, the figures are respectively 49 and 66 per cent.<sup>4</sup>
- Nine out of ten lesbians and eight out of ten gay men are open to close colleagues. Around seven out of ten are generally open at work. Bisexuals are significantly less open about their sexual orientation at work: Two out of ten bisexual men and three out of ten bisexual women are open to immediate work colleagues, and even fewer are open in general.<sup>4</sup>
- Discrimination at work leads to higher levels of stress, poorer physical and mental health, reduced work capacity and a poorer career development.<sup>10</sup>
- Research indicates that lesbian women and gay men are less discriminated against at work than before. Many people have positive experiences in the workplace, yet there are still significant challenges.<sup>10</sup>
- One in ten LGBT people has experienced discrimination in the workplace because of their sexual orientation.<sup>4</sup>
- Many have experienced receiving generally negative attitudes at work from others, due to sexual orientation. 17 per cent of heterosexual women had experienced this, 26 per cent of heterosexual men, and 29-30 per cent of gay men, lesbian and bisexual women. The figure for bisexual men is 42 per cent.<sup>4</sup>
- More gay women and men than bisexuals have experienced discrimination in the workplace, which may be related to fewer bisexuals being open about their sexual orientation at work.<sup>4</sup>
- For transgender people, the workplace can be a difficult arena. They experience more discrimination in the workplace than gay men and women, and several studies show high levels of unemployment among transgender people.<sup>10</sup>

- Transgender people report that they experience severe discrimination at work – including exclusion, harassment, being reassigned from important work tasks or even losing their jobs.<sup>55</sup>
- In Norway, only a minority of workplaces have action plans for diversity and inclusion. There is a slightly higher number of these plans in existence in the public sector, compared to the private sector. LGBT is included in only a few of these plans.<sup>10</sup>



Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

## HEALTH CARE

***The majority of LGBT people are in good health, yet the proportion that is experiencing bad health is significantly higher than in the average population. To ensure that LGBT people have access to a good and equitable public health system, healthcare professionals need to acquire solid knowledge regarding the health issues that are particularly prominent in, or specific to, these groups.***

A physician who has knowledge of topics such as homosexual practice, HIV and AIDS, assisted reproduction and gender confirmation treatment, will be better prepared to meet LGBT patients. It is also an advantage to be familiar with key terms and concepts – such as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, bisexuality and transgender.

### LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AMONG HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ON LGBT ISSUES

LGBT people report of poorer mental health than the general population and are over-represented in suicide statistics.<sup>4</sup> As a health care professional, it is important to spot the possible link between mental health and sexual orientation or gender identity issues in individual patients.

The latest research report on sexual orientation and living conditions shows that bisexuals, especially bisexual women, are struggling in several areas.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Norwegian and international research shows that transgender people report major health challenges and have experience of inadequate health services.<sup>27, 54, 55</sup>

To meet these challenges, there is a need for knowledge on LGBT in the health sector. Today, some lesbians have been wrongfully told that there is no need for a cervical screening test in order to screen for cervical cancer, and many transgender people end up having to educate their doctor or

psychologist about gender identity issues.<sup>13, 27, 55</sup>

In elderly care, it is also necessary to raise awareness around sexual orientation and gender identity. Today's elderly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people grew up during a time where homosexuality was a crime and diagnosed as a disease in Norway. Today, a generation of open lesbians and gay men are approaching old age, and it is not unlikely that some of them have fallen out with or have had conflicts with family members, friends and colleagues over the years. For many, their social networks will be based on friends rather than family. Many of them probably do not have children. We have reason to believe that this group will present the health services with new and different and new challenges.<sup>32, 36,</sup>

<sup>37, 9</sup>

### GOOD COMMUNICATION GENERATES CONFIDENCE

By being attentive to how their patients communicate and to what kind of signals they send, healthcare professionals can ensure that LGBT patients feel safe in contact with the healthcare system. Being able to be open about sexual orientation and gender identity in contact with healthcare services is important, both because everyone has the right to be themselves, and because it may be relevant to the health situation. However many LGBT people are reluctant to disclose their identity because they are afraid of how the health care professional will react.<sup>13</sup> This applies particularly to older LGBT people, who in some cases end up being “back in the closet” when they are in need of health care.<sup>8</sup>

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A GOOD CLINICAL PRACTICE<sup>13, 47</sup>

- Be aware that patients could have a sexual orientation or gender identity other than heterosexual or cisgender.
- Make a habit out of using a gender-neutral language, for example when referring to partners.
- Demonstrate that you acknowledge and respect the patient's sexual orientation.
- Acquire knowledge about what types of stress minority LGBT people typically are exposed to.
- There is nothing wrong in asking about sexual orientation or gender identity as long as you make sure to signal that any response to such a question is OK, and that the question is posed under neutral and safe conditions.



WHAT  
DO WE  
KNOW?**In general:**

- The majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual people self-assess their health as "good".<sup>4</sup>
- Lesbian women, gay and bisexual men do not differ from heterosexual men when it comes to self-assessed health, chronic illness or physical disabilities.<sup>4</sup>
- Even though the majority of bisexual women assess their own health as good (66 per cent), the number is significantly lower than for heterosexual women (78 per cent). Bisexual women score significantly lower than all the other groups in terms of self-assessed health, chronic illness, physical disability and long-term sick leave.<sup>4</sup>

**Mental health:**

- The mental health of most LGBT people is good, and on the same levels as the rest of the population. At the same time, there is a higher proportion of mental health problems among lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Bisexual women have a higher rate of symptoms of psychological ill health compared to lesbians, who in turn have a higher rate of psychological ill health than heterosexual women. The same applies to bisexual and gay men.<sup>4</sup>
- A minority within all groups report of a mental disability (mental illness, or disorders that impair daily life functioning), with a slightly higher share among bisexuals, lesbians and gay men compared to heterosexual women and men.<sup>4</sup>
- Loneliness is relatively widespread. As many as 21 per cent of bisexual women report that they often feel lonely. Among heterosexual and lesbian women, the figures are 14 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. A significantly higher proportion of bisexual men (16 per cent) and gay men (15 per cent) often feel lonely compared to heterosexual men (7 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

Photo: Lotus Head/Freemages.com



## INFO

*The LGBT knowledge centre and Uni Helse Bergen are launching a report in 2015 with research on lesbian and bisexual women's health.*

- Bisexual women and men more frequently report that they do not have anyone to talk to in confidence.<sup>4</sup>
- LGBT people, to a greater extent than heterosexuals, report that they have attempted suicide. One in eight lesbians, one in five bisexual women and one in ten gay men and bisexual men have tried to take their own life, compared to one in twenty heterosexual women and men.<sup>4</sup>
- Transgender people say that not being able to live as their perceived gender identity leads to a poorer quality of life and that this is a strain on their mental health.<sup>55</sup>

**Sexually transmitted infections and HIV:**

- Gay men, bisexual men and bisexual women have higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than heterosexual women, heterosexual men and lesbian women. Lesbian women have particularly low occurrences (6 per cent), while a high proportion of gay men (26 per cent) and bisexual women (24 per cent) have had STDs. In all groups, chlamydia is the most common diagnosis.<sup>4</sup>
- Norway has, like the rest of Western Europe, had a sharp increase in the number of new HIV infections over the last years. The highest increase is found amongst men who have sex with men (MSM).<sup>12</sup>
- An increased occurrence of other sexually transmitted infections - such as syphilis and gonorrhoea - has been recorded in MSM.<sup>12</sup>

- A larger study among MSM shows that 35 per cent have never taken an HIV-test. Not to be tested is particularly common among the following groups: Younger men with a low educational attainment; men who are not open about their sexual orientation; men who have little knowledge about HIV and HIV testing; and men who did not know that HIV testing is free of charge in Norway.<sup>12</sup>

### Women's health:

- The percentage of women screened for cervical cancer in Norway in 2011 was at 63.3 per cent.<sup>30</sup> The share of lesbian women who say they follow the recommendations regarding cervical screening test is lower (47 per cent) than for bisexuals (66 per cent) and heterosexual women (73 per cent).<sup>4</sup>
- The degree of mammogram coverage in Norway for 2011 was 75 per cent of women.<sup>31</sup>
- The share of lesbian women who say they follow the recommendations for mammography screening is lower (47 per cent) than for heterosexual women (73 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

### The elderly:

- An increasing number of lesbians and gay men will in the years ahead expect their healthcare services to adapt to their lives and experiences.<sup>37</sup>
- The care needs of today's elderly lesbian and gay population should be viewed in connection with their lived lives, rather than the identity they might have today. The life strategy they chose when they were younger might still be part of who they are in old age, despite the fact that public opinion towards LGBT people has changed.<sup>32</sup>
- Lesbian women and gay men are more often single and childless, compared with heterosexuals, which means less access to assistance and support from the side of family. Children are usually an important



Photo: S. Braswell/FreemImages.com

Today, everyone in Norway is protected under the law so that they can live out their identity and have the gender expression they so choose, including in old age and when in need of care.

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factor in caring for the elderly, providing on average approximately half of all support.<sup>37,36</sup>

- A minority status may lead to developing coping strategies in order to deal with a long life of stigmatisation. This in itself can be a valuable resource when dealing with challenges related to old age, such as ageism.<sup>37</sup>

### Transgender people:

- There are major differences in health services provision for transgender people with and for transgender people without a diagnosis of transsexualism. Transgender people without a diagnosis are excluded from transgender-related public health programmes.<sup>55</sup>

### In contact with the health system:

- Heteronormativity causes there to be barriers in communication between health professionals and patients. Being able to relate your story to someone else's story is part of building and creating an identity, which requires a common system of understanding.<sup>3,4</sup>

## VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION AND LEGAL STATUS

***Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face some distinctive challenges related to discrimination and violence. In order to protect this group's rights, LGBT people are afforded a special protection in Norwegian legislation.***

### PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW

Legislation is there to ensure all individuals enjoy the same opportunities and rights. Some groups in our society have historically had their rights violated, and one of these groups is LGBT people. Over the last years, a lot has changed and today LGBT people's rights are protected under several laws. The Marriage Act provides same-sex couples the right to marry and have a family, and LGBT people have been awarded protection against discrimination in The Working Environment Act and the Housing Acts. From 2014, legislation pertaining to protection against discrimination was assembled in a new Discrimination Act. This law provides comprehensive protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The law applies to all areas of society with the exception of the private sphere.

### HATE CRIME

The Penal Code also protects lesbian, gay and bisexual people against infringement. When a person is a victim of crime due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression it is defined as a hate crime. Hate crime is often equated with hate violence. The term also includes any other crime that is motivated by prejudice against a person or a group of people on the basis of their actual or perceived group identity. Examples of hate crimes may be vandalism, threats or harassment. Hate



crime is regarded as a serious crime for the persons directly affected, as well as because it might instil insecurity and fear in the population as a whole.<sup>45</sup>

### DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

All violence against LGBT people is not hate crime, however. Although there is little research on violence against LGBT people in Norway, international research suggests that this group is particularly vulnerable when it comes to domestic and intimate partner violence, i.e. violence caused by a partner or a family member.<sup>21, 54</sup>



WHAT  
DO WE  
KNOW?**The Legislation:**

- The new Discrimination Act on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression is the first law providing transgender people protection against discrimination.
- Hate motivated crime related to sexual orientation or gender expression constitutes an aggravating circumstance when sentencing for an offense.

**Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence:**

- Findings from various international studies consistently show that LGBT people are more often subjected to domestic and intimate partner violence than heterosexuals, although the difference is not great.<sup>21</sup>
- In Norway, research shows that bisexual women are more likely than others to become victims of violence and threats.<sup>4</sup>
- Young LGBT people seem to be a particularly vulnerable group with regards to domestic violence, and may be in need of targeted support. They experience rejection, are thrown out of their homes, or are subjected to physical or psychological violence from their family. Young people from ethnic minorities, lesbian and gay people with a Sami background, and young people with non-normative gender identity, are particularly vulnerable.<sup>22, 55, 16</sup>

**Hate crimes:**

- In a survey among men who have sex with men (MSM), nearly 40 per cent said they had experienced at least one type of abuse in the past year because someone knew, or assumed, that they were attracted to men. The abuse ranged from staring, threats and verbal attacks, to violence. The youngest were the most vulnerable.<sup>6</sup>
- 42 per cent of gay men and 33 per cent of bisexual men who claim to have been subjected to violence during the past year, said that the violence was related to their sexual orientation.<sup>4</sup>

- The police, beginning to record reports of hate-motivated crimes in 2006, have since received between 21 and 47 reports annually that have been filed as a hate crime based on sexual orientation.<sup>45</sup> The unrecorded figures for hate crime are believed to be high.
- LLH runs a campaign on an annual basis encouraging LGBT people to report hate crime. They receive 30-40 complaints per year on the issue. 90 per cent of these cases are not reported to the police.

**Contact with emergency services:**

- Fear of discrimination, homophobia and not being taken seriously prevent some LGBT people from being open when in contact with emergency services.<sup>21</sup>
- The staff working in emergency services often regard violence between two people of the same sex as less serious, less credible, and less likely to worsen over time, in contrast to violence between people of different sex.

**Milestone years in Norwegian LGBT history:**

**1972:** Section 213 in The Penal Code, which criminalises homosexuality, is repealed. Homosexuality was classified and diagnosed as a disease until 1977.

**1993:** The Civil Union Act is passed in the Norwegian Parliament.

**1998:** LGB persons are protected against discrimination in The Working Environment Act.

**2002:** Stepchild adoption becomes legal for lesbians and gays who are in a civil union.

**2004:** LGB persons are protected against discrimination in The Housing Act.

**2009:** The Marriage Act comes into effect. Same-sex couples are awarded the right to be considered as adoptive parents and lesbian couples get the right to Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART).

**2014:** The law prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression enters into force.

## INTERSECTING IDENTITIES

***All human beings have multiple identities. Ethnicity and physical ability are some of the many aspects that also affect how lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people live their lives.***

That a person has a double minority identity does not necessarily mean that they are doubly exposed to discrimination and as a consequence face twice as many challenges. On the contrary, it might translate into challenges and a complex life, as well as unique resources, opportunities and strengths. A risk for those with multiple minority statuses is that their whole identity, or parts of it, is made invisible. Below we present research on LGBT people with an ethnic minority background, Sami background or a disability.

### NON-WESTERN LGBT PEOPLE IN NORWAY – A COMPLEX PICTURE

What is it like to live as a LGBT person with an ethnic minority background in Norway today? A new survey among non-Western minorities shows that some LGBT people with a minority background may feel lonely and struggle to find a sense of belonging. This applies especially to those who were not accepted by their family when disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity. Those without a partner also seem to have a poorer quality of life than those with a steady partner.<sup>16</sup>

There are differences between the various ethnic groups in regards to stigma and negative reactions from their surroundings, a result that researchers partly attribute to how long the various immigrant groups have lived in Norway. Transgender people with a non-Western background report of generally more harsh and negative sanctions than LGB people do.



Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

Over the last few decades, various forms of sexual orientation and gender expression have gone from being criminalised and from being a taboo, to becoming areas of increased openness and acceptance throughout Norwegian society. Attitudes have changed towards more inclusiveness and transparency for the majority of the population. The public debate has shifted to what attitudes society displays towards LGBT people from ethnic and religious minorities, and in particular attitudes towards groups from a non-Western background.

A challenge when the issue of LGBT people from ethnic minority backgrounds is being debated, is emphasising that we are talking about a diverse group that is represented by many different backgrounds and life experiences. It may be problematic that LGBT people in ethnic and religious minorities are automatically viewed as victims of conservative attitudes, exclusion and harassment from where they originated. Although many with a multiple minority background might face challenges when it comes to coming out and living as they wish to, this picture is at the same time much more complex.<sup>16</sup>

### LITTLE AWARENESS ABOUT GAY SAMI PEOPLE

The Sami are an indigenous people in Norway, and constitutes a minority population in Norwegian society. Little attention has been given to the life stories of LGBT people of Sami origin, however interviews with lesbian and gay Sami people show that although this is a group that has experienced rejection and discrimination, they are also proud of being both Sami and lesbian or gay.<sup>22</sup>

### LUMINOUS AND INVISIBLE? LGBT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Having a different sexual orientation than the majority combined with a disability, can be challenging. There is little research on LGBT people with disabilities, and little attention has been paid to this group until recently. One new report in Norway sheds light to this matter. Silence and invisibility are major challenges.<sup>23</sup> People with a highly visible disability might, for instance, face non-acceptance for their sexual orientation or gender identity in their community. Disabled people might not be as well facilitated for as others in the gay community. Some gay people with disabilities report of negative attention, bullying and discrimination. For them, the multiple minority status might mean a degree of visibility that is too high - they are too different and become “luminous”, as it were. For others, these two identities are not perceived as obstacles. They all, however, wish to be perceived as complete human beings who have a multitude of life experiences.<sup>23</sup>

### Ethnic minorities:

- Many report of negative reactions from their family or the ethnic community they originate from. In some cases these negative reactions stem from upholding family honour and not bringing shame upon the family. Examples of sanctions from the side of family or community may be psychological pressure, rejection, threats of violence and actual violence.<sup>16</sup>
- Some LGBT people from ethnic minorities might feel rejected by the mainstream gay community, where they might face racism and a lack of acceptance for their values and attitudes.<sup>16</sup>
- Respondents who have an accepting family and/or have a permanent partner they live with are the most likely to report good mental and physical health.<sup>16</sup>
- Gay, lesbian and bisexual people from a Muslim background said in interviews that the multiple minority status sometimes makes it difficult to explain who they are, both to the Norwegian gay community and in their ethnic community. In their ethnic surroundings, they found that



Photo: Uros Milic/Freeimages.com



the category “gay” was considered sinful, immoral and non-Islamic. In the ethnically Norwegian gay community, it seems to be perceived that being both gay and Muslim is an impossible combination.<sup>38</sup>

- Some people immigrate to Norway because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. For some, it is about escaping oppression, extreme violence or torture. Others come to Norway because they want to live in a society where they feel more acceptance and tolerance than in their native country.<sup>16</sup>
- Up until 2012, The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration could only grant asylum based on sexual orientation or gender expression for people who are persecuted in their native country. In other words; this included LGBT people who were open, and thus in danger of being persecuted, or who would be persecuted if they were to be returned to their native country. From 2012, it has been possible to apply for asylum if coming out as gay or transgender in their native country may lead to persecution.<sup>28 16</sup>
- LGBT people who have applied for asylum in Norway say that it was uncomfortable and difficult to end up at a transit centre due to fear of other residents, as well as little understanding and help from the staff.<sup>16</sup>

### The sami

- It is hard to say for sure how many LGBT Sami live in Norway today, but it is estimated to be between 1000 and 1500. The Sami lesbian and gay community in the north of Norway is described as small, and few live openly.<sup>22</sup>
- Stories from lesbian and gay Sami report of silence in regards to homosexuality, identity issues, and living in a tight-knit community. There are also reports of mental health problems.<sup>22</sup>
- There is an important, religious element to coming out as a lesbian or a gay Sami. Religion is perceived as an obstacle to coming out.<sup>22</sup>

- Those who have come out and disclosed their sexual orientation describe the process as being hard, yet they feel that it made them stronger and view the experience as a personal victory.<sup>22</sup>

### Disability

- People who report of major challenges have dealt with exclusion, bullying and prejudice. Others have been met with silence and exclusion.<sup>23</sup>
- Several report of particularly bad experiences when accessing psychiatric services.<sup>23</sup>
- There seems to be a gender dimension present in that the female communities are perceived as being more socially generous and less body-focused than the male, gay community and culture.<sup>23</sup>
- Deaf people are the only disability group to have an independently organised LGBT community.<sup>23</sup>
- LGBT people with disabilities say that their multiple minority status has provided them with the life experience and strength to handle adversity, which is a resource that can be utilised when facing upcoming challenges.<sup>23</sup>



## QUEER ARTS, CULTURE AND HISTORY

***Writers and artists have for many years – long before homosexuality was decriminalised – portrayed gay life. Today, it makes sense to talk about queer art and culture in Norway and abroad – diverse cultural expressions that are represented in, or specific to, LGBT communities.***

From having to hide their identity, and write and paint about homosexuality behind aliases, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are now well-represented in mainstream culture: On TV gay men help straight men become more stylish. The television series *The L Word* opened up lesbian culture to a world audience. Margaret Cho is a popular bisexual stand-up comedian, lesbian Ellen DeGeneres has her own TV show, and a transgender person was on the Norwegian reality show *Paradise Hotel*.

In Norway, we are proud of the gay male “Fagott Choir”. The Tarjei Vesaas’s Literature Prize was awarded to Tarald Stein who describes his journey from woman to man in his poetry. And a Norwegian Bollywood movie with a gay theme is in the making, produced by the lesbian performance group *The Hungry Hearts*.

Visibility is important for a group that for years was made invisible. The LGBT movement celebrates gay culture at annual Pride marches, events and film festivals. Nowadays, magazines, websites, clubs and art expressions aimed at one or several LGBT groups are in the mainstream culture. In past times, “gay lifestyles” was more hidden and the memories of these times may be lost if we do not look after and preserve this history.

### QUEER LIVES BECOME RECORDED HISTORY

People who love someone of the same sex, or transcend a conventional gender expression have existed at all times. But sexual categories, emotions and identities have been given a different meaning and place in different societies and cultures.<sup>4</sup> Traces of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions have often been regarded as something that should go into oblivion. As a result they have rarely been of interest to Norwegian museums or national archives.

Queer culture is, however, a part of our national heritage and in order to preserve this for posterity, the University of Bergen is now establishing a “Queer Archive”. The aim is for this archive to have a national responsibility in identifying, preserving and enhancing the source material that can shed a light on Norway’s gay history. The material at hand today has not been researched or systematised to a large degree.

#### INFO

##### A project documenting queer life

Queer Stories, or “*Skeive historier*” in Norwegian, is a project that was initiated as a part of the largest and most recent research project on living conditions among LGBT people in Norway, “*Seksuell orientering og levekår*” (Sexual Orientation and Living Conditions).<sup>4</sup>

The project collects queer stories via a website. “Queer Stories” aims to preserve the variety of lifestyles and ways of perception for all queers, including those who define themselves outside the LGBT term. The goal is to let the stories speak for themselves and to lay a foundation for researchers, journalists, LGBT organisations and the general public – today and in the future – to understand what gay lives, and their living conditions, are like in our time. At the time of printing, the documentation project is a part of The Queer Archive ([www.skeivtarkiv.no](http://www.skeivtarkiv.no)).



Photo: Bilge Öner/bilgeoner.com

## KEY ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

**The Association for Transgender People in Norway (FTPN)** is an organisation for transgender people. The FTPN aims for transgender people to get in touch with people who might share the same experience within a safe and social context.

**The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO)** provides advice and guidance to: people who experience discrimination; employers; service providers; union representatives; and others who are working for equality and diversity against discrimination. This agency enforces the anti-discrimination legislation.

**The Gay and Lesbian Health Organisation (HU)** is an organisation engaged in the promotion of health, and preventive information work with women who have sex with women (WSW), and men who have sex with men (MSM). The organisation is also a resource centre on homosexual health.

**The Harry Benjamin Resource Centre (HBRS)** is a patient and user organisation for women and men who seek, have or have had a diagnosis of transsexualism, and for those who have undergone gender confirmation surgery. The organisation also deals with parent and family unification.

**The National Association for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender (LLH)** is Norway's largest LGBT organisation, working for equality and against all forms of discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. LLH also has a number of regional and local chapters, as well as associations at national and local levels.

**Queer Youth** is aimed at young people under 30, and work on the one hand to ensure equal and legal rights for the target group, and on the other to create social functions for queer youth all over the country.

**Queer World** is a multicultural network for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people working against discrimination regardless of their ethnic and religious origin. Queer world works to create a safe meeting place for LGBT people from ethnic minorities.

**The Stensveen Resource Centre** is a private organisation that provides physical and psychological support to transgender people who are transitioning. The centre's goal is to be a place where transgender people can find support and strength for self-development, and to create a multidisciplinary network in the field of transgender.

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# lgbt: Status 2014

## Factbooklet

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### The LGBT Knowledge Centre's website for knowledge on inclusion

- Search for research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
- Look for terms in the LGBT Dictionary
- Read The LGBT Knowledge Centre's own information articles



[www.lgbt.no](http://www.lgbt.no)



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