

# Summary

## LGBT Monitor 2016

Opinions towards and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons

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## Summary

Large-scale Dutch population surveys in recent years have included questions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. This improved data infrastructure has made it possible to compile an 'LGBT Monitor': a report which describes current public opinion about LGBT persons and the life situation of this group. The LGBT Monitor will be published every two years. This report is the first in the series. By 'life situation' we mean all aspects of a person's life that are connected to their individual welfare and well-being, including aspects such as social networks and participation, employment, safety, care, school and health. Since data are not available on all these aspects for LGBT persons, and as not all aspects are of equal importance for emancipation policy, in this first LGBT Monitor we explore three themes in depth: 1) work situation and experience of work; 2) lifestyle; and 3) victimhood and safety. Large-scale population surveys currently contain no data about the life situation of transgender persons, and we therefore limit our observations on this group to public attitudes towards them.

This report addresses the following general research questions:

- 1 What are the attitudes of the Dutch public to LGBT persons? How have those attitudes developed over time and how do they compare with attitudes in other countries?
- 2 What differences and correspondences are there in the life situation of LGB and heterosexual persons in the Netherlands?

Broadly speaking, the results show that attitudes to homosexuality and bisexuality in the Netherlands are becoming more positive, but that the life situation of LGB persons as regards work and safety is less good than that of heterosexual citizens.

### Opinions

Along with Sweden and Denmark, the Netherlands is among the European countries with the most positive attitudes to homosexuality. The gulf between Eastern and Western Europe on this point has widened rather than narrowed over the last 12 years. In countries where public attitudes to homosexuality were already positive 12 years ago, those attitudes have remained or become more positive. By contrast, in countries where public attitudes were relatively negative 12 years ago, that was still largely the case in 2014.

People with negative opinions on LGBT persons are in the minority in the Netherlands: 7% of Dutch citizens take a negative view of homosexuality and bisexuality, while 10% have a negative attitude towards transgender persons. The percentage of people with a negative attitude to homosexuality has fallen since 2006 (from 15% to 7%), while the proportion with a positive attitude has risen sharply (from 53% to 70%). There are however still some topics on which views remain negative; with regard to attitudes on homosexuality and bisexuality this is the case for visible intimacy: people generally find it more objectionable for two men or two women to kiss in public than a man and woman. When it

comes to transgender persons, attitudes towards gender-ambiguous behaviour in particular are relatively negative: they believe there is something wrong with people who do not feel wholly male or female and that it must be clear on first meeting someone whether they are a man or woman.

There has been convergence between different population groups in the Netherlands over the last eight years in how they think about homosexuality and bisexuality. There are however still differences: women are more positive than men; young people are more positive than older people; well-educated people are more positive than lower-educated people; religious persons are more negative than non-religious persons; residents of urban areas are more positive than people who live in the countryside; and political party preferences are sometimes associated with more positive (especially in the progressive parties) or more negative (mainly in the Christian parties) attitudes. The biggest differences are found for religion and party preferences.

Research among migrants shows wide variation in the opinions to homosexuality of Dutch citizens from various origin groups in 2015. There is particular disagreement on issues such as same-sex marriage or having a child who goes to live with a same-sex partner. People of Moroccan, Turkish, Polish and Somali origin have more negative attitudes towards these issues than Dutch natives. People of Surinamese, Antillean or Aruban origin have more positive attitudes, but they are also more negative than those of the native population.

### Broad life situation

There are no differences between LGB and heterosexual Dutch citizens in their scores on the SCP Life Situation Index, which measures objective life situation. On average, however, life satisfaction is lower among LGB persons. This may be connected to their more negative experience of work and reduced mental well-being.

### Lifestyle

There are four lifestyle aspects for which we initially find different prevalences among LGB and heterosexual persons: smoking, alcohol consumption, being overweight and club-based sport. Lesbian and bisexual women more often smoke; gay and bisexual men more often consume excessive amounts of alcohol; LGB persons are less often overweight than heterosexuals; and gay and bisexual men participate less in club-based sport. After controlling for background characteristics (sex, age, education, ethnicity, religion and degree of urbanisation), however, virtually all these differences disappear; the only one that remains is that LGB persons more often smoke.

### Experience of work

The biggest differences in relation to experience of work are found between bisexual and heterosexual employees. Bisexual employees encounter more conflicts and harassment at work, suffer from more burnout symptoms, are less satisfied with their work and have higher absenteeism rates. The main problem affecting lesbian and gay employees are burnout symptoms, but they too experience more conflicts and harassment at work and

less job satisfaction. These differences cannot be explained by background characteristics of individual persons or work situations.

### Victimhood and safety

The perceived and actual safety of LGB persons, especially lesbian and gay persons, compares negatively with heterosexuals. Although the differences are often not large, they are consistent across all areas. LGB-citizens less often experience social cohesion in their neighbourhood and feel less safe both in their own neighbourhood and in public places (e.g. where young people gather or on public transport). They experience more lack of respect from strangers and from staff of private companies and government agencies (lesbian and gay), or acquaintances (bisexual). They are also more often victims of cyber-bullying. Lesbian and gay citizens have more experience of violence, concerning both abuse and threatening behavior.

Bisexual citizens experience more problems especially in relation to subjective safety in their personal sphere. They feel less safe at home and more often encounter lack of respect from acquaintances.

Between 2012, 2013 and 2014 we see a number of (small) developments in perceived safety, and these are largely the same for LGB and heterosexual persons. The differences in victimhood and perceived safety between these groups are not due to socio-demographic or socio-economic characteristics.

### Conclusion

The first edition of the LGBT Monitor shows that Dutch public opinion towards LGBT persons is largely positive, but that the life situation of LGB persons is worse than that of heterosexual citizens in the areas of work and safety. In addition to substantive information, this first Monitor provides an insight into the added value of asking about sexual orientation in general population surveys. It would be a positive development if other large-scale Dutch and European population surveys included a question about sexual orientation. Which question should be added to which surveys is not entirely clear-cut, because to date the question formulation has varied. In addition, no representative population survey has yet asked about transgender background. As a result, it is not possible to obtain a clear picture of the life situation of transgender persons.