

Summary

LGBT Monitor 2018

The life situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the Netherlands

Gabriël van Beusekom
Lisette Kuyper

Original title:
LHBT-monitor 2018
978 90 377 0891 2

The Netherlands Institute for Social Research
The Hague, November 2018

Summary

This report examines the life situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The following question is central: 'To what extent does the life situation of LGBT-people differ from that of cisgender (non-transgender) heterosexual people, and to what extent has there been a change in their life situation in recent years?' Various aspects of life are examined, such as the areas of safety and health. The LGBT Monitor 2018 is based exclusively on large-scale, representative population studies: the SCP Life Situation Index, the Safety Monitor, the National Health Survey, the National Survey on Employment Conditions, the Sex Survey among people aged 25 years and under, and on registration data. The principal findings are summarised in this section.

LGB people and heterosexual people have similar resources and life situation indices

LGB people and heterosexual people do not differ in the extent to which they dispose of psychological resources such as the perception of having control over their own lives, self-esteem or resilience. There are also few differences with regard to objective life situation indices (a measure that the SCP uses to summarise the position of groups in various areas of life, such as cultural participation, holiday practices, living conditions and mobility). Those differences that do exist tend to favour LGB people: they are better-off in terms of socio-cultural leisure activities, sports and holidays, and they also tend to evaluate their own life situation more favourably. Despite higher scores on certain aspects of the objective and subjective life situation of LGB people, they tend to be slightly less happy than heterosexual people.

LGB people feel less safe than heterosexual people

In a number of respects, safety and perceptions of safety are lower among LGB people than heterosexual people. For instance, LGB people perceive lower social cohesion in their local neighbourhood, are more likely to feel unsafe in general and in a range of locations (e.g. on the street or in town centres), and are more likely to encounter disrespect (e.g. from people known to them or from staff working in companies) and various forms of cyber bullying than heterosexual people. In addition, lesbian and gay people believe that they are more likely to experience violence than heterosexual people, and bisexual people are more likely to be hacked.

In contrast to media reports of an increase in homophobic violence, in reality we see that over the past five years (2012 to 2017) LGB people experience less disrespect. At the same time, the percentage of lesbian/gay people who have been the victims of violent crime has fallen to such an extent that in 2017 there was no difference between lesbian/gay people and heterosexual people in this regard. This trend does not apply to bisexual people, who still experienced more violent crime than heterosexual people in 2017.

LGB people tend to have more health issues

As far as lifestyle, health and the use of healthcare are concerned, there are some similarities between LGB people and heterosexual people, but there are also many differences, with bisexual people in particular being worse off in these areas. Comparisons show that all groups are in a similar situation when it comes to being overweight, weekly participation in sports and visits to hospitals or medical specialists. Lesbian and gay people are no different from heterosexual people when it comes to obesity, excessive alcohol consumption, daily smoking, cannabis use, physical impairments (such as hearing problems, visual impairments or mobility issues) and contact with psychologists. However, lesbian and gay people are less likely to meet the standards for healthy physical activity, are more likely to have used hard drugs on occasion, tend to have poorer psychological health, are more likely to have suffered from depression, are more likely to experience poor health in general, and to suffer from chronic health conditions or illnesses. Additionally, lesbian and gay people had visited their GP more often in the year prior to the survey. The difference in the numbers of those who had used hard drugs on occasion and those relating to psychological health were large.

Bisexual people reported having a poor lifestyle/health on nearly all aspects, and these differences were also fairly large. For example, one in five bisexual people is obese, compared with one in eight heterosexual people. The percentage of bisexual people who have used soft drugs and/or hard drugs on occasion is more than twice as high as the percentage of heterosexual people. And while 11% of heterosexual people can be seen as having psychological problems and 8% have suffered from depression in the year preceding the survey, among bisexual people these figures were 26% and 18%, respectively. The proportion of bisexual people who experience poor health in general, at least one chronic health condition is also significantly higher than among heterosexual people. As such, it is no wonder that bisexual people had seen their GP more frequently in the month prior to the survey, and were more likely to have seen a psychologist in the previous year.

Between 2014 and 2016 there were hardly any significant changes in lifestyle, health and use of healthcare among either LGB people or heterosexual people. The fact that we only used three annual cycles from the Health Survey may have been a factor in this, because data over more than three years is necessary to discern trends in these areas.

Worse employment situation for LGB employees

LGB employees tend to have a less favourable position at work. They experience more undesirable behaviour and conflicts, for instance. LGB people also report more burn-outs and are less satisfied with their work than heterosexual people. The differences between bisexual and heterosexual employees appear to be even larger than those between lesbian/gay employees and heterosexual employees. Furthermore, the differences between LGB employees and heterosexual employees in relation to burn-out and negative behaviours do not apply to employees of large companies with more than 1,000 employees.

There were no changes of note in relation to undesirable behaviour, burn-out and work satisfaction between 2013 and 2017, except for the fact that - particularly among heterosexual employees - the percentage of employees suffering from burn-out rose.

The situation for transgender people is worse

Transgender people in the Netherlands have a relatively bad position. People who have changed their registered gender in the Personal Records Database have a significantly worse socio-economic position than the general population. They are more likely to be living on a lower income, have less capital available and larger debts, and they are less likely to be homeowners. Their position on the labour market position is also worse; they are less likely to be in fixed employment and more likely to be claiming benefits. Young transgender people are more likely to be bullied than their cisgender (non-transgender) counterparts of the same age, are more likely to experience emotional neglect or mistreatment at home, have lower self-esteem and more psychological problems.

Implications

This report shows that a number of aspects are going well, and a number of aspects are going less well. The monitoring nature of this report does not offer the opportunity to draw empirically grounded conclusions as to why LGBT people seem to have a worse position in society in certain areas. As such, no concrete recommendations can be made regarding specific measures that may improve their position. Nevertheless, the report does show clearly in which areas (perceived lack of safety, experiencing disrespectful behaviour, cyber bullying, psychological problems and an unfavourable position in the workplace) and among which groups (the differences between heterosexual and bisexual people and between transgender and cisgender people seem to be the largest) problems are occurring. Where possible, therefore, action in policy terms and in the professional field is required to improve the life situation of LGBT people.