

Everything
you always
wanted to know

—ABOUT—

LGB's*

**but were afraid to ask*



Vlaanderen
is gelijke kansen

COLOPHON

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Legal Deposit no. D/2013/3241/007

This publication must not be sold.

Published by: Heidi Van der Poorten, Boudewijnlaan 30, 1000 Brussels.

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Introduction

Dear reader,

People are different. You're either young or less so, some do sports and others do not. You're either handy or you have two left hands. You're either black or white and so on and so forth. People are different sexually as well, since they are either straight or LGB.

But not all differences are equally accepted. Only your PE teacher will get annoyed if you're not into sports. Clumsiness could even be received with a certain degree of sympathy. Feelings and thoughts about LGB people however are less forgiving - if they even get an airing - because sexuality is not the most common topic of conversation. Not between parents and children, teachers and pupils or even among friends.

Maybe you are a young LGB person and you're asking yourself where you can meet like-minded people. Or maybe you're a teacher looking for some reading tips to broach the LGB subject in class? Or maybe you're a parent who suspects their child to be bisexual and you're not quite sure whether you should broach the subject. Or maybe you have witnessed homophobic behaviour and you would like to know if discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is punishable by law? Or maybe you're a grandmother who is secretly asking herself how her gay grandson does it?

If you recognise yourself in one of these situations, this brochure is aimed at you. It is meant for everybody – regardless of sexual orientation – who would like to know more about LGB people. It is of the utmost importance to find correct information because it will remove prejudices and doubts and can also make sexual orientation a subject of discussion. That will then simultaneously be a first step in creating an open society where sexual diversity is not a problem nor an obstacle but something that goes without saying.



Pascal Smet
Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities

A black and white photograph of two women, Romy Schneider and Lilli Palmer, in profile, kissing. They are both wearing light-colored, high-collared blouses. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on their faces and necks, and deep shadows elsewhere. The background is dark and out of focus.

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Romy Schneider and Lilli Palmer in 'Mädchen in Uniform' (1958)

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WHAT IS LGB?

LGB' is an acronym, derived from the words 'lesbian', 'gay' and 'bi-sexual'.

under the spotlight

ORIENTATION • If you feel attracted to someone of the same sex, or to both sexes, you can call yourself LGB. You do not necessarily need to have sex or be in a relationship with that person, it is sufficient to just romantically long for that person.

WHAT DO YOU CALL YOURSELF? • Do you not fancy calling yourself 'LGB'? That is fine. It is up to each individual person to decide what to call themselves. Some choose to call themselves 'a woman who loves other women', others do not label themselves at all. "I just love people," still others will say, "regardless of their sex."

FLEMISH 'HOLEBI'S' • • The word was invented in Flanders in 1996 because lesbian women and bi-sexual people were often forgotten in text and word. The word is therefore mainly used in Flanders as in the Netherlands '**homosexuals**' can mean both men and women. French people on the other hand will talk about 'lesbigay', and in English speaking countries the acronym '**LGB**' is used. (**lesbian, gay and bisexual**)

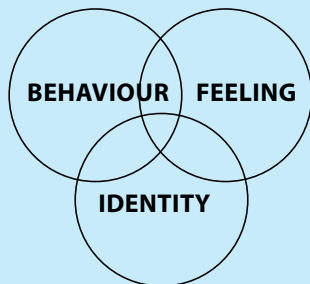
ALPHABET SOUP • The English acronym LGBT is gaining prominence and is also getting longer. Some people will use LGBTQIPAA, short for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersexual, Pansexual, Asexual and Agender, which in its turn can be lengthened with A(llies), S(traight), H(eterosexual) and D(emisexual). As you can see, this becomes unpronounceable! That is why in the meantime other acronyms are already introduced. In the Netherlands for example the acronym LHBT (Lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals and transgenders) is gaining ground. The **United Nations** talk about '**SOGI**' (**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identification**) and therapists in London prefer '**GSD**' (**Gender and sexual diversity**). Until somebody makes a final decision, we shall talk about LGBTs.

timeline

7th
Century
BC

Sappho, born on the Greek island of Lesbos, was one of the first women in history to express her personal feelings in poetry. Many myths exist about her personal life and relationships with other women. Her work made it to the list of banned literature and apart from a few lines, did not survive the Middle Ages.

NUMBERS



3 TO 8%

of the population calls themselves LGB. Those numbers however differ from one research project to another because there are several different aspects of sexual orientation. See pdf for graphs.

You can ascertain what someone feels or desires (physical and/or emotional

attraction, fantasies), what that person does (relationship and sex) and what they call themselves (identity) but those aspects will not always correspond. It is possible to call yourself heterosexual and still sometimes fantasise about homosexual sex or have sex with someone of the same sex.

GAY TEST

Are you gay?

Yes

No

If you answered 'yes',
you are gay.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN LGB-TEST? Except for the one mentioned, there are no self-tests which are foolproof in deciding someone's sexual preference. Sexual feelings cannot really be tested because feelings are not absolute: they can change throughout all your life.

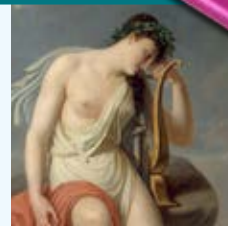
ARE YOU BORN WITH IT OR IS IT A CHOICE? Is it in your genes? Hundreds of research projects have already been carried out in order to determine what makes you LGB or heterosexual, i.e. research on genes, hormones, brains, education No subject is too crazy for a theory about it. There is for example 'research' claiming that eating soya products makes you gay. Rubbish, of course.

Actually we don't know, but does it really matter? Whether LGB people come from cabbages or have different brains, it does not change your feelings. Being in love or sexual arousal is something that takes you by surprise and that is also the case for LGB people. They don't have a say in the matter, either.

IS IT CONTAGIOUS? If only 'is what LGBs think who are secretly in love with a heterosexual person. You do not become LGB by reading LGB cartoons, by meeting lesbian teachers, by drinking soymilk or by listening to George Michael or Kylie Minogue. Most LGBs come from heterosexual families, which so far have not seen homosexual epidemics.

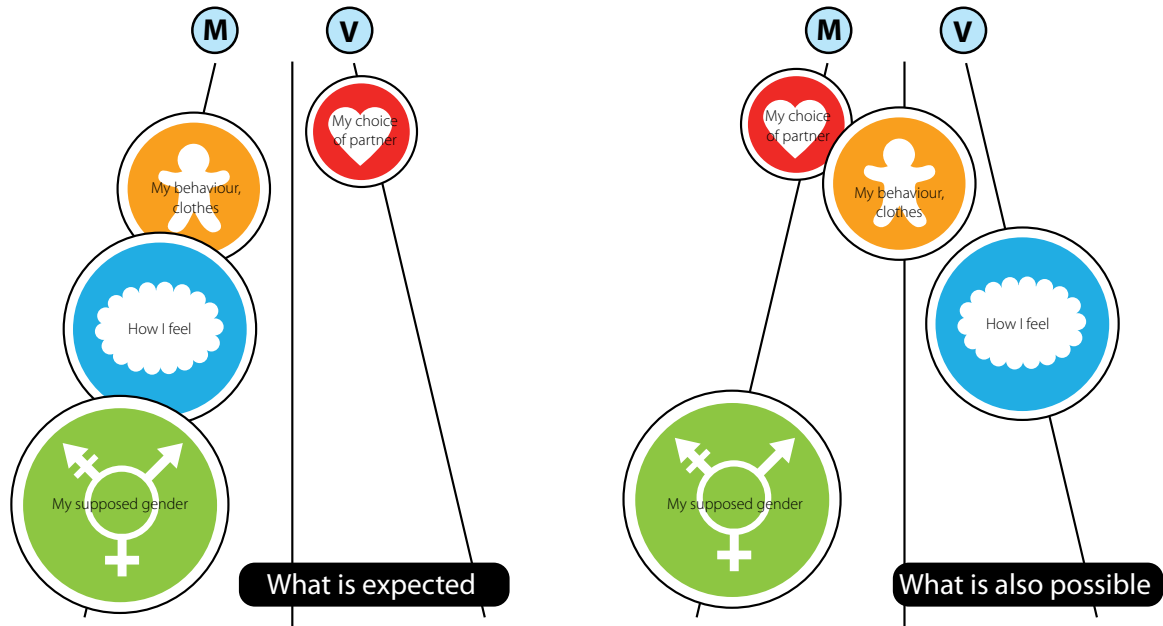


"If I were allowed to compare mortals to goddesses, please know that the sight of your beauty fends off all my worries"



FEMININE MAN, MASCULINE WOMAN

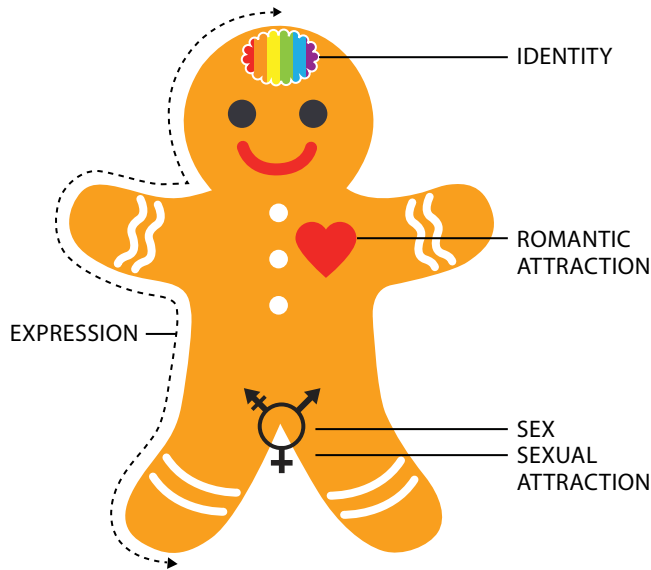
Quite a few people think that gays are feminine men and lesbians masculine women. Along those same lines, they also think that transvestites and transsexuals really are gay and feminists are secret lesbians. However, that is not how it works.



TOE THE LINE Contrary to what is often thought, your sex does not predict how you feel (gender identity), how you express yourself (gender expression) or which partner you are going to choose (sexual orientation). Those elements usually do toe the line for the majority of people but it is definitely is not a law of nature. You can have male genitals, feel like a woman, send out both male and female signals and fancy men. Or, with the same body, you can dress, feel and behave very manly and fancy both men and women.

timeline

356 BC – The sexual preference of **Alexander the Great**, one of the greatest conquerors of ancient times, is controversial. Reason for this is the **Oliver Stone** film 'Alexander', which depicts Alexander as bisexual or even gay. Historically correct or a distortion of history?



BOY OR GIRL? The fact that this gender ginger bread biscuit (sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual and romantic orientation) allows for so much variation, is not to everybody's liking. We like to know immediately whether someone is a man or a woman, whether a new-born baby is 'a boy or a girl'. If that's not immediately clear, we feel uneasy.

COMPELLING EXPECTATIONS There are a lot of expectations we link to this M or F. While dad takes his son to play football in the garden, mum will maybe order her daughter to do some chores. An exaggerated example? Not as exaggerated as we would like to think. These expectations about masculinity and femininity

are very strongly present in our culture and according to some studies, go a long way in explaining our aversion to LGBTs. These people stray from expectations, you see. They do not behave as you would expect them to, do not choose the partner you would expect them to and do not dress as you would expect them to either.

NUMBER

When a little boy feels more like a girl from a young age onwards and also prefers to wear skirts, it does not necessarily remain that way.

80%

of all children referred to the gender team do reconcile themselves with their sex at a later age. 75% of those children do turn out to be LGBT, though.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSGENDER:

www.transgenderinfo.be

Brochure 'Everything you always wanted to know about transgender people'

FREE OF ALL INHIBITIONS "But don't you tend to see more gays behaving in a feminine way than heterosexual men?" Correct. Once you have crossed one line, like the one concerning your choice of partner, it sometimes becomes easier to question other expectations as well. It leaves you with a lot more room to experiment and to search.



Moreover, Ancient Greece did not recognise the modern day heterosexual – homosexual difference. Gay friendships between older men and younger boys were part of the culture.



A WHOLE RANGE OF LGBS

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS 'THE' LGB No, not all gays love Abba. No, not all lesbians have short hair and wear walking boots. LGBs are a very diverse group.

Some gay and lesbian people will copy for example the dress sense of other LGBs to whom they feel close. That, in itself, is not that exceptional – heterosexual people do that as well – but it can create the impression that LGBs 'are all the same'. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole group contains not only feminine and masculine men and women, but also transgender people, sportsmen and women, lovers of culture, young and old people, party animals, scientists, politicians, farmersSome are involved in one relationship, others in several, and still others prefer their bachelor/bachelorette lifestyle. Some are sexually very active, others completely not.

BISEXUALITY The letter 'B' is often forgotten in LGB. Bisexual people encounter a lot of ignorance, both from heterosexuals as well as from gays and lesbians: "Bisexual people want to have their cake and eat it, cannot choose,..." That is what we call biphobia. If a man enters into a relationship with a woman, we assume that both are heterosexual, which is clearly not always the case.

GROUPS WITHIN GROUPS Just like heterosexual people, LGBs form groups based on shared interests. These can be sport based, or bike or theatre based but these groups can also be based on sexual preference and behaviour. That explains the existence of for example 'bears' (hairy men) and 'butch' (women with a rather masculine expression).

MORE INFORMATION

A summary of LGBT organisations can be found on www.cavaria.be/verenigingen

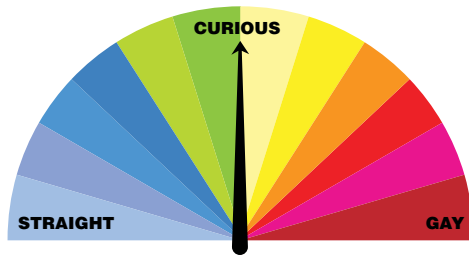


timeline

1292

8 September: in Gent werd **Jan van Wetteren** was executed at Ghent. It was, insofar as sources allow us to check for its correctness, the first time in the history of West-European Christianity somebody was convicted for the crime of committing sodomy.

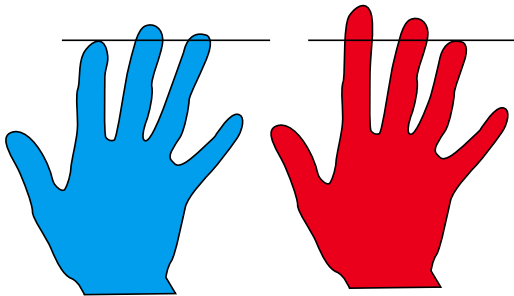




GAYDAR, , THE LGB'S SIXTH SENSE Some LGBs say they recognise other LGBs immediately and they often do as well. Some people will therefore say that LGBs have a sixth sense, a 'gaydar' (a contraction of the words 'gay' and 'radar'), which is in-built with their orientation. Others will take the more rational approach and explain this gaydar as a sensitivity developed for small details or signals which give the game away. Those signals are a logical result of your interest for someone of the same sex – you look differently at boys or girls – and of your identification with other people to whom you feel close. Both sending and receiving those signals often happens unwittingly.

However you explain it, such a radar is not 100% LGB proof, but that is not a disaster. LGBs are not offended should they accidentally be called heterosexual so why should heterosexual people be offended if you think they are LGB?

TEST YOURSELF Have you got a high quality gaydar? You'll find a whole range of tests on-line but it really is not that important. Best thing to do is to assume that anybody you meet can be either straight or LGB.



SEEK FOR DIFFERENCES Some scientists look for physical differences between straight people and LGBs. They claim they noticed for example differences in finger length: should your index finger be longer than your ring finger, you would be a feminine person and therefore as a man you would have more chance of being LGB. This test is more often incorrect than correct but is nice as a conversation starter at parties.

1475 - 1564



Michelangelo Buonarroti was an Italian painter, sculptor, architect and architect. He painted the Sistine Chapel and sculpted David's muscles in marble. That sculpture became one of the most famous works of art in history.



FAMOUS LGBTs

Fame is not just for straight people. Do you know these famous LGBTs?



Karolien Debecker (radio-dj)



Ian McKellen (actor)



Cynthia Nixon (actress)



Paul De Leeuw (all-round broadcaster)



Wim De Vilder (journalist)



Ellen DeGeneres (actress)



Luc Appermont (TV-presenter)



Sarah Bettens (singer)



Elio Di Rupo (ex-PM)



Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir (ex-PM)



Wim Ballieu (chef)



Amber De Wispeleir (chef)



Amélie Mauresmo (tennis-player)



Matthew Mitcham (swimmer)



Saskia De Coster (writer)



Tom Lanoye (writer)

timeline

1564 - 1616



Was **Shakespeare** gay? There is no clear answer but his early sonnets seem to be serenading a man, rather than a woman.





iStockphoto

MORE THAN ONE LABEL Of course, no-one is ever just LGB. If you ask people what parts of their identity they think are important, you will receive as many answers as there are people. One person will tell you it is the fact that he is a dad, another will mention their job and another person still will mention the fact they are doing sports at the highest level. It is striking that those things you deem important, are exactly the things that set you apart from a majority. For a woman with Moroccan roots, those roots are probably more important than for a woman born and raised in Belgium.

YOUR OWN CROSSROADS What labels do you identify with? Your gender? Your orientation? Your place of residence? Your hobby? Put them in these squares underneath. At the heart of all these squares, that is where you are, unique. Just like every other human being.

EXTRA HURDLES It is possible that for some people several of their squares are subjected to discrimination or repression. Maybe you are and an immigrant and LGBT and disabled? It is quite possible you will face difficulties on several levels. Careful though, this is not to say that lesbian women are exactly twice as much discriminated against as straight women, black lesbian women thrice as much and so on. There is no scorecard but research does show that bigger problems do occur if you belong to several minorities or disadvantaged groups.

YOU DON'T BELONG ANYWHERE? If you belong to a minority within a minority, there is a big chance that even within that minority, you are overlooked. For example within groups of young people with a mental disability, LGBs are not always paid attention to, but it is also true that LGBs sometimes forget that there are LGBs with mental disabilities. Luckily, there are more and more groups who do pay attention to these issues.

16th – 17th Century – Hundreds of thousands of 'bad women' are put on the bonfire. A 'bad' woman was not married and practised dark arts, a bit like a witch or a whore. Midwives, poor and old women and women who loved other women were also 'bad'. A 'good' woman was married and took care of her husband and children or was a virgin.

LGBs FROM ETHNIC-CULTURAL MINORITIES In some cultures homosexuality is not considered a matter of orientation but one of behaviour. It is not something that you are but what you do. Sometimes it is even considered a disease or a sin. If, furthermore, as an immigrant boy you admit to fancying other boys, or as a girl fancying other girls, you are faced with a true hurdle race. You have to juggle several values and standards and also expectations from your family, the LGB community and society as a whole. All these elements added together are a likely recipe for stress. Add on top of that the stress of being in a double minority position – you know that being an immigrant and LGB will be held against you – and you will begin to get an idea of the pressure heaped on an LGB person from an ethnic-cultural minority.

LOCKED CLOSET Coming out is often very difficult. It is possible that, when doing so, they have to confront face-to-face the beliefs and traditions of their families and communities. It is quite possible that in such a case you would want to meet like-minded people with whom you can share your feelings. Luckily enough, there are quite a few of such groups in Flanders.



MORE INFORMATION

www.cavaria.be/community/allochtone-holebis

timeline

1830 - 1899 **Guido Gezelle** the priest-teacher, has a very intense bond with one of his pupils. They wrote poems to each other, including the famous 'Dien avond en die rooze'.



*"... toch lang bewaart, dit zeg ik u,
't en ware ik 't al verloze,
mijn hert drie dierbare beelden: u
dien avond - en - die rooze!"*



Getty Images



BELIEVING UNDER THE RAINBOW Most monotheistic religions have a reputed negative attitude towards homosexuality based often on a few sentences from either the Bible, Torah or Koran thrown in for good measure.

Some religious LGBs manage to perfectly reconcile their orientation and religion. There are specific ceremonies for gay blessings and even the Belgian Pride festival usually kicks off with a religious celebration.

STRIKE AND ANOINT The Vatican is both against gay marriages as well as against discrimination of LGBs. Biblical texts do indeed indicate that 'a man who lies with a male' has 'committed a detestable act' (Leviticus 20:13), but at the same time they also say that as a human being you must not condemn any other person, in other words no LGBs either. Luckily enough, more and more local communities are beginning to genuinely appreciate the expression of love between LGBs and consider it to be equivalent to love between heterosexual people.



NO GAYS, NO MEATBALLS You can ask yourself if religious people who are against homosexuality, are really against it "because the Bible says so". If they truthfully live by the book of Leviticus, then neither are they allowed to eat meatballs, because they contain pork, or mussels (Leviticus 11), nor are they allowed to wear clothes from H&M because clothing made out of more than one fabric – such as cotton and polyester – is not permitted either. (Leviticus 19).

MORE INFORMATION



- Christians and homosexuality: "Geloven onder de regenboog. Toolkit hulpverlening aan christelijke homo's, biseksuelen en lesbiennes." ("Believing under the rainbow. Toolkit for assistance to Christian gays, bisexuals and lesbians.") Movisie and LCC Plus organisations, 2013. Can be downloaded from www.movisie.nl
- Muslims and homosexuality: "Allah heeft ons zo gemaakt. Liefde tussen vrouwen." ("Allah created us this way. Love between women"). Khadija Arib, 2011.

1854 - 1900



Oscar Wilde, writer and poet of Irish descent, was "The reason we so gladly discover other people's secrets, is that it diverts the attention from ours".
incarcerated for two years because of his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas.

What if I am LGB?

HOW EXACTLY DO I KNOW?

YOUR GUT FEELING There are no tests and nobody can make the diagnosis for you. You'll know when you fall in love with someone of the same sex. Some know from a very young age on, others only discover it after years of marriage to someone of the other sex. Still others remain in doubt or don't want to be labelled.



"We all experience our orientation in our own way and of course we all have an idea as to how we want to deal with the situation. Me, I am still in the process of finding my own way, but I am sure that will happen."

Singer **Sarah Bettens**, Zizo-magazine

EVER EARLIER Most youngsters start thinking about their sexuality during their puberty. It is said that more and more LGBs discover their sexual preferences ever earlier. That is why the youth organisation 'Wel Jong Niet Hetero' (Young but not Heterosexual) also has an 'Under 19' branch.



Wel jong
niet hetero
www.weljongniethetero.be

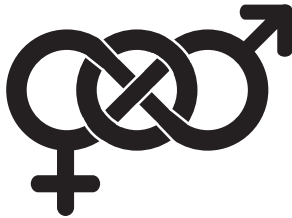
timeline

1879



Magnus Hirschfeld established the first organisation protesting against anti-gay laws: the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee.

"I definitely did not call it 'homosexual'. I did not see it as if from now on I was going to fall in love with other boys as well. Definitely not. No, I was in love with my best friend. Plain and simple."
 Presenter **Tom De Cock** in 'Coming out'
 (Nine Cornelissen & Miriam Van Damme, Linkeroever Publishers)



SET IN STONE? How sure can you be then, that you are gay or lesbian when you feel that spark? That is a difficult question. Maybe you are bisexual but you did not feel the need to explore any further after your first homosexual or heterosexual experience? Studies show for example that women identify themselves easier as being bisexual than men or as having a changing sexuality and that they do that more often the older they get.



"I am a happily married woman and I am married to a man. I do not believe that denies my bisexuality. Some find it strange that you identify with a certain non-heterosexual orientation but you still get married to someone of the other sex. [...] That is their problem."
 Actress **Anna Paquin** in Red Magazine 2012

MORE INFORMATION

The Holebifoon is a reception and information phone line for all your questions about LGBTs. You can request information or tell your story. You can also send an e-mail to vragen@holebifoon.be or chat. www.holebifoon.be



holebifoon.be
0800 99 533
vragen@holebifoon.be

1894 - 1956

the American biologist and sexologist **Alfred Kinsey** executed a large-scale research into human sexual identity and experiences. The 1994 film 'Kinsey' tells the story of all taboos he encountered. He was a pioneer but the scientific value of his work is controversial.



Salomé (1923)*Wings (1927)**Pandora's Box (1929)*

RECOGNIZE YOURSELF • Of course you discover your sexual orientation when you fall in love, but you can also 'virtually' explore yourself. Films and especially books allow you to get carried away and invite you to identify with their characters. You could possibly recognise yourself in one of the LGB characters? Give it a try. ZiZo made a list of a number of films and books that can 'show you the way'.

You can download the ZiZo film trail on www.cavaria.be/filmspoor

*Henry and June (1990)**Philadelphia (1993)**Heavenly Creatures (1994)*

timeline

1940 - 1945
WO II

World War II: During the War, the **Nazis** arrested over 100,000 gays whom they forced to wear a gay triangle on their outfit.



Wizard of Oz (1939)



Rebel without a cause (1955)



Rope (1948)



Brokeback Mountain (2005)



Mixed Kebab (2012)



Milk (2009)

1953

Suzan Daniel established Belgium's first LGBT organisation.



COMING OUT, WHEN IT SUITS



COMING OUT? When we talk about ‘coming out of the closet’ or shorter ‘coming out’, we mean that you openly acknowledge your bisexual, homosexual or lesbian feelings. Whether you do so or not, is totally your choice. It is best though to only come out when you’re completely ready. When you do come out, you usually do it in stages. For example, you first tell your best friends, maybe later your parents and family and later still you tell others.

OVER AND OVER AGAIN Funnily enough, it often does not suffice to come out just the once. You have to do over and over again. When you move house, go to another school or start a new job, your acquaintances will probably assume you’re heterosexual. That is not completely illogical because there are much more heterosexual people than there are LGBs. They have therefore a very big chance of their assumption being correct. That is exactly the reason why heterosexual people do not have to come out of the closet and why LGBs always have to indicate they do not meet the typical man-women expectations.

TA-DAH! With hindsight, coming out mostly seems to be a very liberating experience. You have rid yourself of a secret and you are finally allowed to share your feelings. You can finally be openly in love!

POSITIVE REACTIONS The run-up to coming out is experienced by most as being very stressful because you never really predict how others will react. Of course you hope they’ll be happy for you and that they will support you. That is why you often hear parents or friends say: “that they have always known”, “that for them nothing changes” and “that they want you to be happy”.

OR NEGATIVE... • It might happen that your environment doesn’t react as positively as you had hoped. Maybe your dad yells that you’re no longer his child, or that he no longer wishes to see you. If that’s the case, talk to people who do support you, friends who do accept your coming out or who are gay themselves and understand what you are going through.

timeline

1969 New York: The **Stonewall** riots took place at the end of June when police forcefully evacuated the gay bar The Stonewall Inn. After years of bullying and violence by police, LGBT people decided to fight back. These riots have become the leading example all over the world for all LGBT protest marches and Prides.



STAY IN THE CLOSET Some choose very consciously to keep that closet locked tight. It is their well-considered choice. Others remain closeted their whole life for fear of negative reactions. It is also possible they find it hard to accept their homosexual feelings, let alone tell their environment about them. They can carry this secret with them for ages which of course will keep causing a stressful situation for them.

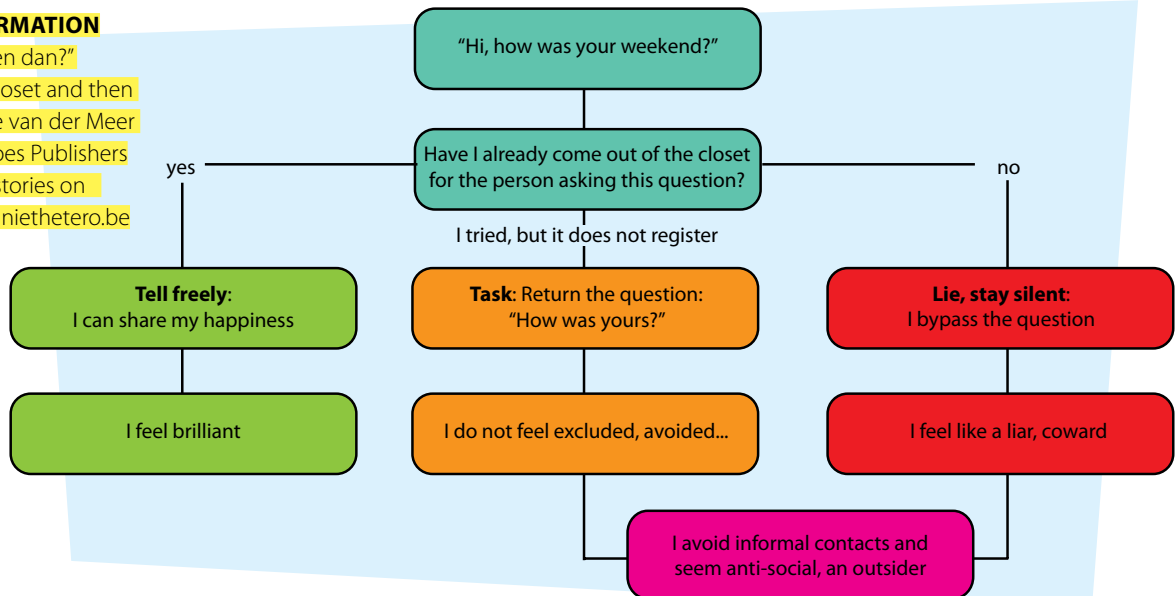
COST OF THE CLOSET A recent Canadian study indicated something that many already suspected: coming out is good for your health. LGBs, who have come out have lower levels of stress hormones and fewer symptoms such as tiredness, depression and burn-out. Researchers did add that LGBs first and foremost need to accept themselves as such, but, so they say, media and education share a responsibility in this process.

If you have not come out, every discussion about personal experiences can be tricky. It becomes difficult, for example, to share a nice weekend experience, as you can see in the graph underneath. (*freely copied from: The cost of thinking twice - Claudia Woody*). It is possible that after a while you will feel ever worse.



MORE INFORMATION

- "Uit de kast en dan?"
("Out of the closet and then what?") Yvette van der Meer (ed), Appelmoes Publishers - youngsters' stories on www.weljongniethetero.be



1970

Will Ferdy was the first Flemish singer to come out during the television programme 'Zo Zijn' on national TV.



HOW BEST TO TELL? You probably won't believe it but ... "There's an app for that". More than one even. These apps ask you to think about the way you want to tell it, how to assess all risks involved, when the best time would be and also how to look beyond that one moment.

It is striking that none of these apps tell you exactly how to come out of the closet because there is no 'one way'. However, there are lots of tips and styles.

THE FORMAL STYLE You call for a meeting, indicating a definite time and place. That can be on the same day, after dinner, or even later, giving everybody the chance to be there. You open this meeting by saying "there is something I need to tell you" after which you say you fancy boys/girls. Some people will advise against using words as 'gay' or 'lesbian' because these are rather loaded words. Do not expect immediate fireworks and champagne. Give others time to get used to the idea and to ask questions.

Advantage: you cannot back out; the other party is prepared for the worst but it all turns out to be alright in the end.

Disadvantage: sometimes it feels too forced and if everybody reacts nicely, you feel like a twit for feeling so scared. That feeling, by the way, is totally unnecessary. Your uncertainty is totally justified: you cannot know.

Another way of doing it like this is the letter or e-mail, whether or not with cake...

Advantage: here you're in the position where you can re-read your text several times, work on it, dictate its rhythm...whereby nobody interrupts your little speech. They, on the other hand, have time to think before reacting.

Disadvantage: it's a bit impersonal, you are biting your nails as they are reading it and they can't look you in the eyes, making it sometimes easier to react negatively.



THE CORRECTING STYLE You're on tenterhooks until the person you want to tell it to makes it clear they consider you to be heterosexual after which you can correct them. Your mother for example says: "if you meet a girl one day..."; to which you can reply: "and what if I meet a boy...?"

Advantage: it feels unforced.

Disadvantage: it is possible you have to wait a long time. On top of that it is also possible you catch the other person out, making them possibly feel ashamed, which in its turn can be an advantage, however, because they might want to compensate for that with openness.

timeline

1973

The **American Psychiatric Association** decides on 15 December to remove homosexuality as a psychiatric illness from the list of DSM III (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders)

THE DROPPING HINTS-STYLE You can also 'drop hints', i.e. drop subtle hints about your partner, your night-life, a film or book you highly rate of which others know it deals with gay subjects. Or you leave magazines behind.

Advantage: it feels unforced if you do it correctly.

Disadvantage: if you have to drop too many hints in one evening, it can become cumbersome. Sometimes the other person gets it after the first hint but gets annoyed with the fact that you don't just come out with it.

It will always remain a touchy subject because homosexuality isn't as common and many prejudices remain.

THE DIPLOMAT Maybe you don't fancy the confrontation but you know someone you're close to who could act as the go-between. You know that this person does accept LGBs and they get along very well with your parents and/or friends. That person can then very diplomatically inform the others. You can choose to ask this diplomat to come along to a formal conversation or you can ask them to have that conversation without you.

Advantage: you don't have to face it on your own. There is definitely already somebody to back you up, whom you can share your feelings or doubts with. It gives you more certainty.

Disadvantage: you remain dependent on the go-between's style. When parents or friends react positively, you may feel a bit clumsy or guilty for asking for help because it may seem like you didn't trust them. Your fear, however, is not without reason. It remains a crystal ball exercise and it is a virtue to be careful.

"I have already tried 10,000 times to tell my environment. I had even studied a text and planned a moment. But every time the moment was there, I didn't dare"

Nick about his coming out, which he did during the VTM-programme 'Uit de Kast' with **Roos Van Acker** as diplomat. He needed that push, he said in ZiZo-Magazine.



© vtm

1976



Establishment of **De Rooie Vlinder** (The red butterfly), a socialist-feminist action group fighting for the liberation of homosexuality. After its dissolution in 1981, the **Roze AktieFront** (Pink Action Front) took up its militant torch.



APART FROM COMING OUT, COMING IN

WELCOME 'Coming in' means you are now going to try and find your way in the world of LGBs. You also want to meet other LGBs in order to see your orientation recognised, to make friends, to start a relationship. A whole new world opens up for you. For some people such a coming in follows a coming out, for others it is the other way round while still others never choose to do either.

THE WORLD OF LGBs Heterosexual people can hardly believe it, but there truly is such a world. It is a very diverse sub-culture with its own bars, organisations, events, parties, shops and so on. A lot of LGBs also have circles of friends consisting mainly of LGBs. Is it a necessity to be part of this world? Of course not. Some people will find it very comforting, will feel supported and safe and feel at home. Others however aren't attracted to this sub-culture or don't need it. Again, there are no rules set in stone.

LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE There are more than one hundred LGB organisations in Flanders and you can find them on the çavaria website: www.cavaria.be. You will find organisations mainly aimed at doing sports together, others at theatre, another still will organise walking trips or board game nights. Some organisations are meant for youngsters, others are for older people while a lot of organisations are simply open for all LGBTs from the area.

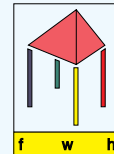
All these groups offer a personal reception. You don't just write your name down on a list. You can expect a one-to-one with someone from the group making you immediately feel safe and accepted.

PINK HOME Do you fancy some exploring? Go and clear matters up for yourself at the pink house in your area: Casa Rosa in Ghent, The Pink House-çavaria Antwerp, the Rainbow House in Hasselt or Brussels, the Holebihuis in Leuven or Polaris in Ostend. You will find their addresses at www.cavaria.be/verenigenen.

COMING SAFE Coming in does come with a safety tip. Opportunities for sex are endless, especially in the gay world. Some resistance against seduction is required and should you give in to seduction, please practise safe sex.

timeline

1977 16 January: Establishment of the **Federatie Werkgroepen Homofilie** (Federation of Working Groups on Homosexuality). This was an umbrella organisation for LGBT organisations in Flanders and Brussels, later renamed the **Holebifederatie** (The LGB federation).



MOVING LGBs Compared to other countries, Flanders does seem to have a very tight-knit group of LGBs. Each province has several organisations and its own pink house, usually also affiliated with the Flemish umbrella organisation **çavaria**. This organisation gets its name from the contraction of 'ça va' & 'varia' ('diversity is top'), supports all LGB and T organisations and defends the rights of LGB and transgender people at the governmental level. The organisation was instrumental for example in getting LGBs the right to marry, the possibility for LGB couples to adopt children, the protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and the battle against homophobia.



a mummy. Events like the Belgian Pride, Bruges or Antwerp Pride therefore like to get as many LGBTs as possible out and about, often with very specific demands but basically to celebrate diversity. The message is clear: there's nothing wrong with being different on the contrary, it's something we should embrace as a community.

DANCING IN Do you fancy going out and meeting other LGBs? There are quite a few LGB pubs, parties and other places you can go. You don't have to come in being a wallflower, you can come waltzing in. The ZiZo online calendar surely contains something to your liking.



MORE INFORMATION

www.cavaria.be/agenda

Çavaria also manages the **Holebifoon**, where you can get help or talk about your worries via e-mail, chat or telephone. It is also responsible for the news channel **ZiZo-Online.be** and the magazines **ZiZo Magazine** and **Gay&Night-ZiZo**.

PRIDES For a few days every year LGB and transgender people take to the streets to happily make a statement. Heterosexual people are so seldom in contact with LGBs, they often forget there are other relationship possibilities than the stereotypical male-female one and that not every family has a daddy and

1978

18 march: The very first international **Gay Day** took place in Ghent and notwithstanding a bomb scare, it was a successful day with more than 2,000 people taking part.



LGB fc As LGB it is possible you don't quite feel at home within straight organisations, such as sports clubs. Many of them do still have a very macho culture, regardless of the high number of awareness campaigns.

Sometimes rotten remarks about LGBs are made and you consequently expect remarks in the dressing room or in the shower. That is why since 2007 Flanders has a charter for sports clubs motivating them to have a more welcoming attitude towards LGBs. It's a step in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go.

Of course not all sports carry that same negative label. Women's cycling for example is not too bad with lesbian **Judith Arndt** having won several Olympic medals and the World Championship. No player from the professional League in men's football on the other hand has so far come out. Are they really all heterosexual?

Many openly out athletes prefer to practise sports in their own teams and that is also why they'd rather participate in their own national and international LGB sporting events, such as the EuroGames, Gay Games and World Outgames. These Games combine sports with culture and entertainment and everybody is welcome, including heterosexual sports people.



Judith Arndt

timeline

1979



Using the slogan **'Janetten tegen de raketten'** (Fags against missiles) LGBs took part in the anti-missile protest marches in Brussels.



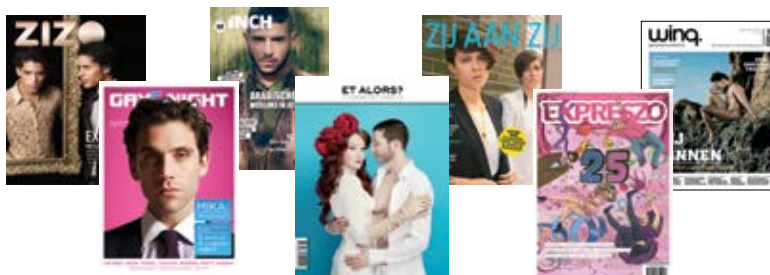
COMING IN-TERNET The arrival of the internet has really opened up the globe. It provides a worldwide pink tour of discovery.

Here are a few starting points:

- **zizo-online.be**: LGBT news, both national and international, politics, sports or culture
See also: gayworld.be, gaylive.be, lacquemant.wordpress.be
- **cavaria.be**: a haven of information about rights, issues and demands
- **facebook** (zizo-magazine, cavaria, pink houses...): stay up-to-date daily
- **twitter** (zizo-online, cavariatweet,...)
- **fora**: weljongniethetero.be/forum
- **chatrooms**: first read important tips on www.weljongniethetero.be/chattips
bullchat.be - 18min.eu - holebichat.eu - gayromeo.com - gaylog.com - gay.be - gaydargirls.com
- **Grindr**: an app about meeting places for gay men on your smartphone

PAPER FRIENDS If you prefer to read a magazine, there is plenty of choice

- **ZiZo-Magazine** quarterly magazine, distributed freely for LGBTs - zizo-online.be



- **Gay&Night-ZiZo** free monthly magazine for gays - zizo-online.be
- **Inch** bimonthly magazine for gays - inch-magazine.be
- **Et Alors?** Magazine about queer, fetish and the extravagant alternative scene
- **Zij aanZij** (NL) magazine for lesbians and bisexual women - zijaanzij.nl
- **Expreszo** (NL) bimonthly magazine for LGB youngsters - expreszo.nl
- **Winq** (NL) bimonthly magazine for gay men - winq.nl

1980

First **Pink Saturday** march in Brussels, in 1996 re-named into Belgian Lesbian and Gay Pride, which then changed into the Belgian Pride in 2010.



SEX: SENSUAL? SERIOUS? SAFE!

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX Yes, it is called 'homosexual'. You didn't think sex wouldn't come up, did you? And yes, when you have sex with someone of the same sex, it is different compared to having sex with someone from the other sex but don't think too quickly that one or two words will cover it all. (*from: homoinfo.nl*)

SAFE SEX Sex is a bit like an exciting discovery but isn't free from risks. By practicing safe sex you avoid contracting and passing on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Especially men should be extra careful. A condom reduces the risk for STDs considerably, but doesn't exclude it completely.

ACTIVE • A gay person is called active when he penetrates another man – *synonym: top*

TO JERK OFF • Make a man cum by stimulating his helmet.

AGE OF CONSENT • Age at which it is legal to have sex, which in Belgium is 16.

AIDS • Disease affecting your immunity system, caused by the HIV-virus.

ANAL • through your anus

ANONYMOUS SEX • Sex with someone you do not know. Some men have anonymous sex with other men at specific locations.

ORAL • Making a woman cum by stimulating her clit – *synonym: licking*

DENTAL DAM • Small thin piece of rubber covering labia and clit, avoiding contact between mouth

and vagina and therefore STDs, but still enabling the clit to be stimulated – *synonym: rubber dam*

CONDOM • Rubber covering the penis, avoiding physical contact between penis and partner and enabling sperm to be collected. Use of condoms offers important protection against HIV and other STDs.

CRUISING • Looking for fleeting sexual contact, often at specific locations such as parking lots, parks or supermarkets.

DILDO • Oblong toy meant for fucking.

HIV • Virus causing AIDS. Approximately one in twenty Flemish gay men has the virus, of which one in six doesn't know it yet.

ARSE LICKING • Anus licking – synonym: rimming.

ARSE FUCKING • Fucking up the arse

Are you gay and in a monogamous relationship? Take into account that most gay men get hiv from their partner. Be sure to both get tested before having unprotected sex and to be honest and clear with each other. By having safe sex you show you respect your own health and that of your partner(s)."



MORE INFORMATION

www.mannenseks.be

www.allesoverseks.be

www.levenmethiv.be

book: "Lesbische Seks. Een praktisch handboek." M. Hermans

MASTURBATION • Make yourself cum however you fancy, be that fantasising, whether or not using toys or porn.

TO FUCK • To penetrate arse or vagina with penis, fingers, dildo or vibrator.

PASSIVE • Partner who enjoys being fucked –
synonym: Bottom

BLOWJOB • To use mouth and tongue in order to stimulate sex partner's helmet and cock.

PISS SEX • form of sex whereby participants get excited when seeing, smelling, touching or tasting urine - *synonyms: Watersports, golden shower, golden rain, urophilia.*

POPPERS • fluids which easily evaporate and which can easily be inhaled. They sometimes cause

a harder erection and a loosening of the arse's sphincter.

STD • Sexually Transmitted Disease, also called venereal disease such as chlamydia, hepatitis B, herpes genitalis, gonorrhoea, genital warts, HIV and syphilis.

SAFE SEX • Sex without risking HIV or transferring any STDs. Condoms are used and no sperm or period blood enters the mouth.

VERSATILE • Someone who enjoys fucking and being fucked.

VIBRATOR • Oblong vibrating toy used for fucking or clit stimulation.

FINGERING • Make a woman cum by stimulating her clit or arse with fingers.

SAFE SEX - FOR MEN

1. Talk about sex: agree on what you want and do not want
2. Always use condom and lubricant
3. Do not let sperm enter your mouth
4. Have injections
5. Do regular tests

SAFE SEX - FOR WOMEN

1. Talk about sex: agree on what you want and what not
2. Do not let period blood enter your mouth, use a dental dam if you do want to give oral during period
3. Wrap a condom round any dildo you share with others
4. Have injections
5. Do timely tests

IN LOVE, ENGAGED, MARRIED

ROMANCE Some people say that the word “homosexual” stresses the word “sex” too much. After all, it’s also about love and relationships. LGBs need romance, just like heterosexual people. Relationships can be just as complex and just as diverse. Some are monogamous, others have several relationships simultaneously; some prefer their bachelor/bachelorette status and others get married after knowing one another for a year.



MARRIAGE LGBs have the same co-habiting options as heterosexual couples:

- **Marriage** Belgium was the second country in the world allowing same-sex marriages. Since 1 June 2003 LGB couples have the same rights as married heterosexual couples with one exception: children born within marriage do not automatically get the non-biological parent as parent. For now you still have to apply for adoption.
- **Actual co-habiting.** This form of co-habitation holds no formalities: there are no specific obligations, nor are there any specific rights for either partner. Couples do have the option though to contractually stipulate some arrangements between them by drafting a co-habitation contract executed before a notary.
- **Legal co-habiting.** This is a form of co-habiting in-between marriage and actual co-habitation and can be created by filing a declaration of legal co-habitation with the registrar. Filing this declaration creates a whole raft of rights and obligations comparable to those for married people, but less exhaustive. People who are legally co-habiting however can lay down their respective rights and obligations more in detail in a co-habitation contract, preferably executed by a notary.



MORE INFORMATION

Would you like to know more about marriage or co-habiting?
www.notaris.be

timeline

1989 Sunday 20 August: Eighty or so police barge into the disco **Le Délire** in Aalbeke. It was a place frequently patronised by gays. The raid, officially to snare drug users and dealers, was executed very aggressively and the Human Rights' League declared it afterwards as a discriminatory action against gays.

WHO IS THE MAN? As an LGB couple you will often hear the question: who is the man, who is the woman? The more caring male or the one who does most of the cooking shall often be called 'the woman' and the lesbian woman with a career or the one who puts out the rubbish will be called 'the man'. At least, that's how others see it. The actual partners in the couple will often assess it differently. Two cohabiting women or men will deal more creatively with the classic role pattern. You can never assume that one party does this, that or the other just because they are a man or a woman. You organise your life according to what you both enjoy and you make decent arrangements.

"Asking who's the 'man' and who's the 'woman' in a same-sex relationship is like asking which chopstick is the fork." – Ellen DeGeneres

"We were applauding standing on the benches of the House of Representatives' balcony, what wasn't really allowed. Louis Tobback came to tell us the next day we should have been thrown out of the room. But nobody had taken any offence. It's curious though that everything went so smoothly for us. The registered partnership that René and I symbolically signed as the first ever couple was much more intense, but it helped to speed everything else up."

Tom Lanoye on Studio Brussel, january 2013



© Belga



© Belga

Marion Huibrechts and **Christel Verswyvelen** were the first same-sex couple to get married in Belgium on 6 June, 2003.

"We are still as happy as we were then. [...] I think that in the meantime society has come to nearly fully accept same-sex marriages, and us for that matter. Ten years ago we didn't know how everybody in Belgium would to react. Our friends and family obviously reacted very positively."

Marion Huibrechts on Radio 2, january 2013

1994

Wel Jong Niet Hetero (Young but not heterosexual), the national youngsters' organisation for and by LGBTs in Brussels and Flanders, was established.

**Wel Jong
Niet Hetero**
www.weljongniethetero.be

TWO DADDIES, TWO MUMMIES

CHILDREN People who are opposed to same-sex marriages usually also feel very reluctant towards LGBs raising children. To them it seems completely impossible. However, one study after another indicates that children don't feel burdened by the situation.

ADOPTION Since 2006 it is legally possible for LGBs to adopt children, making it possible for 2 men and 2 women to be a child's legal parents. In practice however, children had been raised by 2 mummies or 2 daddies even before the adoption of the law.

CO-MOTHERS Lesbian couples can conceive a baby by using (generally anonymous) donor sperm. Most hospitals can accommodate this procedure. If the lesbian couple is married, the co-mother will automatically be recognized as the second legal parent of the child. If the couple is not married, the co-mother can recognize the child as her own with consent of the birthmother (law implemented since January 2015).

MEN Gays who wish to have children are often left in the lurch. Although adoption is a legally organised procedure, they don't have many options, practically speaking. Especially international adoption remains an issue because most countries that give children away for adoption will refuse to have them placed with LGB couples. National adoption on the other hand does seem to be a possibility and the majority of children adopted nationwide in 2012, were adopted by gay couples.

NUMBER

The Zzip2-study in 2011 showed that

15,4%

of all LGB couples had children. 37.6% of heterosexual couples had children.

61%

of LGB couples have children from a previous heterosexual relationship and 17% was created within the LGB relationship. 18% had been adopted, 9% were step-children and 2% were foster children.

timeline

1995 2 May, at 6.22pm: First call to the **Holebifoon** (The LGBT hotline), a hotline for people with questions about homosexuality.





MORE INFORMATION

'Samen Mama. Zwangerschapsgids voor lesbische koppels' ('Being a mother together. Pregnancy tips for lesbian couples') Barbara Claeys, Lan-
noo, 2008

'Juridische gids over ouderschap voor holebi's en transgenders,' ('Legal guide in terms of parenthood for LGBTs') Paul Borghs, cavaria, for the organisation Gelijke Kansen in Vlaanderen, 2013

www.cavaria.be/dossier/ouderschap
www.cavaria.be/dossier/ouderschap

Questions about adoption:

www.kindengezin.be/adoptie

Book tip for children: 'Ik heb twee moeders.' Marja Vos, Bookscout.nl, 2009

"I have two mothers, one biological, one non-biological. My mothers are married. My non-biological mother has three children. They are my older brother and my two older sisters. For me they are my real brother and sisters. I also have another brother. We share the same mother and the same sperm donor. We do not know that person."

"The bond between our family members is very strong and we always treat one another as if we are a 'normal' family because that is exactly what it feels like. My brother has always been my father figure. I have however experienced the one time missing a father. I was at a friend's home and he was monkeying around with his dad. That was the only time I realised that that was something I've never had."

"When I attended secondary school, it automatically popped up in conversation before my new friends came round to my place. I have also never had any annoying reactions."

"When I was growing up I received an awful lot of love and attention, even though there were five of us. I am therefore very happy with my childhood. Sometimes I think I am too soft which could possibly be explained by the fact I have never had a father figure. I probably would have become a bit harder, someone who knew how to stand up for themselves. But it is not as if I miss it terribly. All in all, I never wanted for anything. I have had a normal and happy childhood, just like any other child, but with two mothers. I consider my life to be very normal and as a matter of fact, I am proud of it, because it is reasonably unique."

Abel in Puberteit, portretten over het leven van pubers, Judith Grobecker 2013 (Abel in Puberty, portraits of adolescents' life, Judith Grobecker, 2013)

1996



Anne Van Asbroeck becomes the first Flemish Minister for Equal Opportunities. LGB people were an important target group from the start.

In-between open arms and closed fists

Although there is nothing wrong with falling in love or having sex with people of your own sex, it is quite possible that your sexual orientation does cause a bit of a stir. Often this has to do with the fact that not everybody accepts homosexuality but it is also possible that you yourself are struggling with it.

TO BE DIFFERENT IS CONFUSING



SUICIDE Such confusion can express itself in very serious ways. More than half of all lesbian or bisexual girls are thought to have seriously considered suicide. That figure is three times as high as their heterosexual counterparts. The number of suicide attempts is five times as high. Gay youngsters attempt twice as many suicide attempts as their heterosexual counterparts. Researchers think that the cause for these issues lies in the lack of role models, the troublesome development of a minority identity, stigmatisation and internalised homophobia.

**Do you struggle with thoughts about suicide?
Do not hesitate to ask for help.**



0800 99 533
HOLEBIFOOON.BE
vragen@holebifoon.be

zelfmoord1813.be
voor info en hulp

1813
zelfmoord

timeline

1997 **Ellen DeGeneres**, American actress and stand-up comedian, came out. At the same time, the main character in the television series *Ellen* (Ellen Morgan, played by Ellen DeGeneres) also came out. Many praised Ellen for her courage but she also faced a lot of criticism and her series were stopped. After a difficult period, she made her comeback in the very popular 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show'.



NUMBERS

LESBIAN WORRIES

42,6%

of all lesbians and bisexual girls are coy about their orientation.

37,5%

is worried their behaviour can be seen as 'typically lesbian or bisexual' and

43,4 %

of them have already been confronted with either psychological or verbal violence at least once. (Welebi-research, 2009).

MORE INFORMATION

'Ik wou dat ik dood was', Movisie, 2012

www.movisie.nl/publicaties/ik-wou-ik-dood-was

LACK OF ROLE MODELS When you consider yourself to be 'different', you tend to search for others who are 'different', preferably public figures who are living proof that 'being different' doesn't necessarily have to be a problem or obstacle. The LGB community also has these role models but not as many as you would expect. We reckon that about 10% of the population is LGB so therefore there should also be about 10% of all actors, politicians and sports people who should be LGB, but that is not the case. The possibilities to identify with such a role model are therefore relatively scarce.

Moreover, the invisibility of many LGBs also has a discouraging effect. It seems as if those LGBs 'expect problems' should they come out. We're not quite sure why some famous people choose to remain in the closet. Some might just think that their private lives are exactly that: private.

MINORITY IDENTITY LGBs share with people with an immigration background that they belong to a minority group but the latter will receive a 'minority identity' from within their group. They are often surrounded by identification opportunities. As a LGB person you often grow up in a heterosexual environment giving you the impression at times that you are on your own.

STIGMAS, MINORITY STRESS AND INTERNALISED HOMOPHOBIA As a member of a minority group you sometimes feel or experience that you are unduly treated in a different way. Your minority group is often linked with certain prejudices which you yourself would rather not be associated with. You then get the feeling that your 'being-different' is becoming a stigma and that you're losing out on opportunities for exactly that reason.

These prejudices can make you feel insecure or maybe even make it difficult for you to see yourself as part of that group. It is not unheard of that some LGBs copy these negative feelings existing in society towards other LGBs.

This mix of feelings is called minority stress, and is a feeding ground for feelings of suicide and self-loathing. This stress will only increase when LGBs try to keep their orientation, feelings and behaviour a secret.

2000

The first **Pink Houses** opened their doors. Casa Rosa opened on 24 March in Ghent and on 23 September, Casa Rosa opened in Antwerp. Later on, a Pink House was also opened in Brussels, Ostend, Hasselt and Leuven.



TO EXCLUDE IS EXCLUDED

HOMO-NEGATIVE Some people keep having problems with LGBs. Some still call homosexuality a sin or a disease and they more than disapprove of LGBs. Thankfully, they are an ever decreasing group of people.

Nowadays we are confronted with an ever more subtle and modern form of homo-negativity. We can regularly hear people say that "LGBs don't always have to show their sexual orientation" or that people "don't have a problem with LGBs, as long as they stay out of my face". You can then sometimes tell by their facial expression there is a lot more they would like to say but they realise they can't do that anymore in 21st century Flanders.

LGBs themselves have been known to struggle with these feelings and they will develop a negative attitude against LGBs who have a more showy life style.

HOMOPHOBIA Instead of 'homo-negative' we also sometimes use the word 'homophobic'. That doesn't mean that phobia of LGBs is a psychological condition such as 'arachnophobia' (fear of spiders) or 'agoraphobia' (fear of open spaces) but sometimes it seems to be that way. The aversion is at times so irrationally rooted and deep that it has all the elements of a condition.

Thus far quite a few reasons for this phobia have been suggested:

- Lack of understanding of anything that is different;
- Confusion between homosexuality and paedophilia;
- Religious or cultural standards disapproving of homosexuality since the beginning of time.
- The fear of or insecurity about personal homosexual feelings;
- Feeling that gay people undermine or question the macho-ideal and the man-woman relationship;



NUMBERS

65 %

of all Flemish people agree that LGBs should be able to get married.

48 %

thinks that LGBs shouldn't show off their sexual preference too much. (VRIND-report 2006)

timeline

2003

A historic year for the LGBT emancipation! Sexual orientation was included in the **anti-discrimination legislation** and the first LGB couples got married.



DISCRIMINATIE LGB people can get confronted with discrimination. It's know to happen that a gay or lesbian couple don't get a rental property because the landlord has issues with LGBs. Or they don't get a double bed in a hotel, whereas heterosexual couples do. In some cases it's bullying, continuous (denigrating) remarks at the workplace, hostile language on the internet and so on and so forth.

Discrimination means you are denied a certain item based on some unrelated issue. Discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation is forbidden by law in Belgium.

ARE YOU THE VICTIM OF BULLYING OR DISCRIMINATION?

Don't sit with it or take it in silence. Repeated discrimination and bullying can end in depression. As a result of which you possibly censor yourself or you don't visit certain places anymore.

Contact the Holebifoon (holebifoon.be) or one of the discrimination focal points (<http://www.diversiteit.be/> links) in Flanders to talk about it. They're also the place where you can officially report discrimination.

GATHER PROOF When you report a case of discrimination, you will be asked for proof. It's advisable therefore to keep hold of e-mails, letters, texts or graffiti on your wall. Ask witnesses whether they would be prepared to testify. Don't rip up hateful letters and don't erase messages from your machine left by a stalker. If real estate agents leave you a voicemail saying you and your partner are not considered for this rental property because you're not a 'traditional couple', keep that message. Should someone attack you and you need medical attention, let the medical people write a certificate and have pictures taken of your injuries.

MORE INFORMATION

'Discriminatie van holebi's. Wat is het en wat doe je er aan' ('LGBT discrimination. What is it and what to do against it?') Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, 2009



2004

'**The L Word**', a popular American soap about lesbians appeared for the first time on Flemish TV.



GAY BASHING IN FLANDERS

A MULTI-FACED MONSTER When we hear the words 'homophobic violence' or 'gay bashing', we immediately picture bloody noses and black and blue eyes. 'Violence' however is much more than that:

- PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: hitting, pushing, pulling...
- VERBAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE: insults, swear words, laughter at, take the micky, discredit, intimidate, bully, denigrate, hurt, unwelcome outing, forbid you to come out or experience your sexuality.....
- MATERIAL VIOLENCE: damage or destroy property, spray graffiti on walls or cars.....
- SEXUAL VIOLENCE: inappropriate touching, stroking, rape.....

Report violence

With:

- Police station in the area where facts took place (call 101)
- Call meld-het 0800 12 800 – a discrimination hotline
- The Holebifoon 0800 99 533 – the Holebifoon also gives tips for a smooth report with police.
- Local discrimination focal points available in 13 cities (see www.diversiteit.be)

You don't fancy going to police but you do want to file a report? Call the Holebifoon. The volunteer at the other end of the line or chat knows the LGB world, knows what you are talking about and is also trained to assist you. They will listen to your story and have advice and the correct referral ready for you.

timeline

2005 The Flemish TV station **JIM TV**, which is mainly aimed at the younger generation, cooperated with Wel Jong Niet Hetero to launch in April their first programme for LGBT youngsters: **ShOut!**





SWEARWORDS They're very rarely creative, the verbal abusers. Pathetic, really. In Brussels they call you 'pédé' and in Flanders they will shout 'homo'. That is probably the saddest bit of it all: some people seem to think that 'homo' is a swearword and tend to use it that way. They even shout it at referees should these dare to send one of their players off, which really says a lot more about the abuser than the receiver. As a gay person you know you are – it does not really upset you – but what is upsetting is the fact that some people obviously take so much offense that they consider the term in its own right to be offensive.

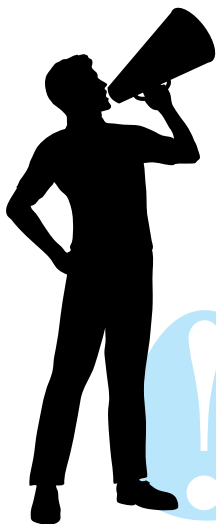
Schools should forbid the use of the word 'homo' as a swearword for it is exactly that which makes it seem as if it is a bad thing if you are called 'homo' and mainly if you are one. If you are still in the closet, then being sworn at will not invite you to come out, even if that 'Homo!' was meant for the overzealous referee.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH? You could say that all abuse or swearwords should be made punishable by law. That, of course, is not possible because there is also this small thing called 'freedom of speech'. If, for example, someone says that 'LGBs are not fit to raise children and therefore should not be allowed to adopt them',

2006

The law enabling **adoption** by LGB couples was very narrowly approved by a majority of 34 against 33 senators





then we can reply that scientific research will contradict his opinion, but we cannot forbid them to have that opinion.

ATTENTION: it is on the other hand forbidden to incite discrimination, hatred or violence: you can not knowingly encourage others to thwart LGBs or to attack them nor is anybody allowed to regularly and publicly issue insults and negative statements and in doing so trying to create an anti-LGB atmosphere.

BULLYING AT SCHOOL It is obvious that bullying is not allowed, not even at school. However, LGB youngsters still report more incidents of bullying than their heterosexual counterparts. One third of heterosexual youngsters will find it annoying when a boy behaves 'too feminine'. They will hurl insults at these 'feminine boys' or 'masculine girls' just because of their sexuality, although they might not even be gay. The difference between gender expression and sexual orientation is often blurred.



HOMO-FRIENDLINESS REQUIRED LGB youngsters do not always feel good about themselves. Some struggle to accept themselves for what they are, others are afraid to tell people close to them. They need support, confidence and positive expectations. They need to know their school is an LGB-friendly environment. This, of course, is not only true for pupils but also for teachers, who of course may also be LGB.

timeline

2007

The **EuroGames** took place in July at Antwerp, with more than 3,000 participants and 10,000 visitors from all over the world.



FIVE TIPS FOR A MORE LGBT-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

1. Make non-traditional forms of relationships visible.

Also mention LGBT couples as examples in history or reading lessons and assignments. Mention the sexuality of openly gay politicians, artists or scientists. LGBT teachers who have come out can also be role models for their pupils.

2. Support coming out, but do not impose anything

Whoever wants to come out must be able to do so out of their own volition and on their own initiative in a safe, welcoming and friendly environment. Make abundantly clear it is not a problem, but do not impose anything on pupils or teachers.

3. Make use of any available counsellors

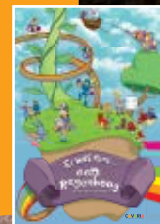
Anybody who is bullied must have the option to contact a counsellor, be that a teacher, a pupils' guidance counsellor or some management person. Publish the name of such counsellor and make it abundantly clear they are also there for among others LGBTs.

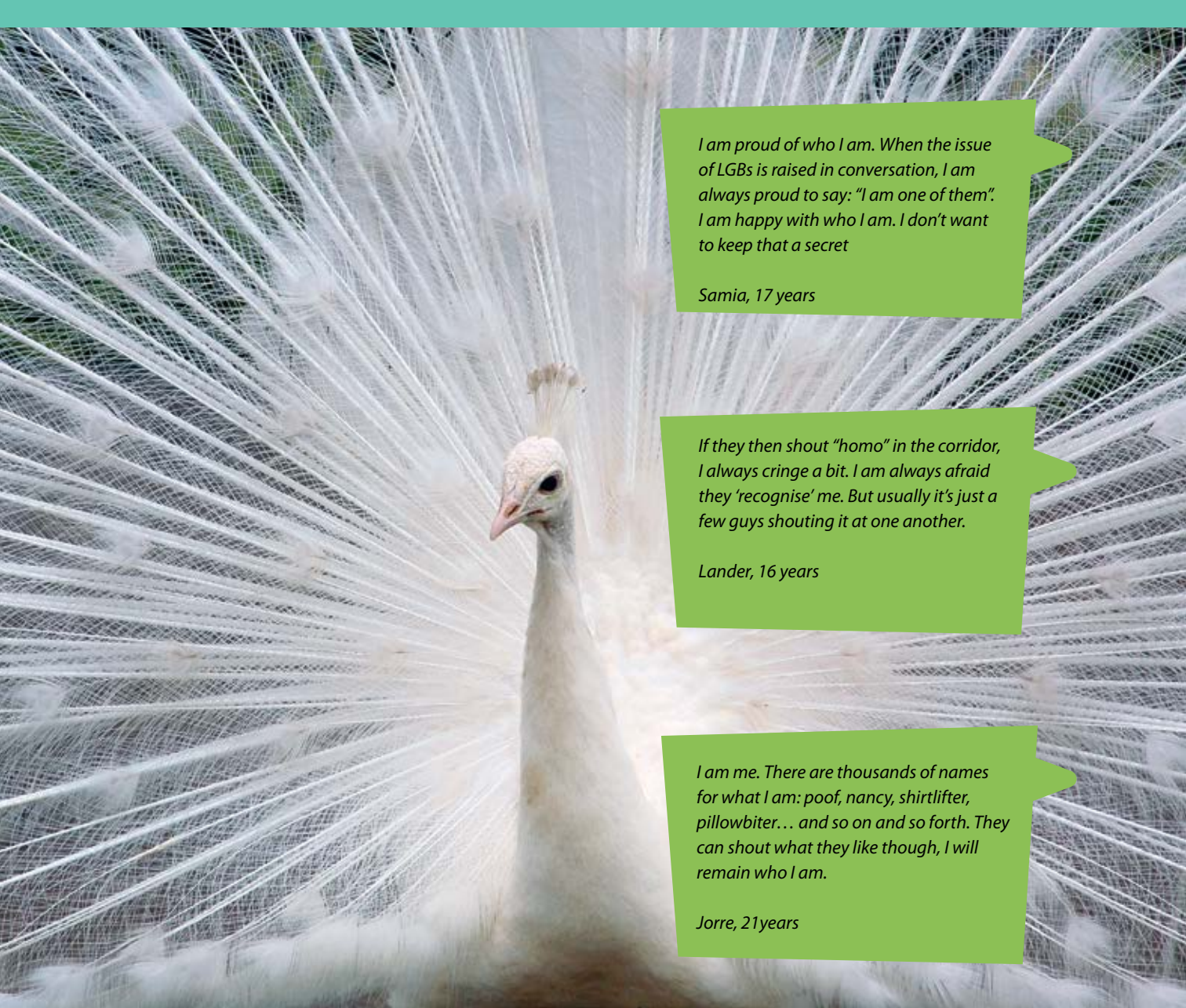
4. Deal with bullying

Do not make light of bullying. Do not say "they need to toughen up" but show you take it seriously and act against bullying. Organise anti-bullying campaigns.

5. Pay attention to sexual identity

It is there in black and white listed in the interdisciplinary final attainment levels: you must pay attention to it. Do you not know how? Contact çavaria. Read the brochure 'Bank Vooruit! Op naar een holebivriendelijke school.' (Front of the class! On our way to an LGBT friendly school) The educational tool "Er was eens.... een regenboog" ("There once was... a rainbow") was developed for primary schools and contains a lot of information, tips and ready-made methodologies to acquaint children in primary education with the notions of gender diversity and sexual identity.





I am proud of who I am. When the issue of LGBs is raised in conversation, I am always proud to say: "I am one of them". I am happy with who I am. I don't want to keep that a secret

Samia, 17 years

If they then shout "homo" in the corridor, I always cringe a bit. I am always afraid they 'recognise' me. But usually it's just a few guys shouting it at one another.

Lander, 16 years

I am me. There are thousands of names for what I am: poof, nancy, shirtlifter, pillowbiter... and so on and so forth. They can shout what they like though, I will remain who I am.

Jorre, 21 years

2011



Elio Di Rupo was the first openly gay Prime Minister of Belgium and indeed in the whole of the world.

BULLYING AT THE WORK PLACE Even at the work place you can get bullied because of your sexuality or because people suspect you to be gay. Sometimes you have to deal with annoying but 'innocent' stupid jokes or annoying gossip, but it can sometimes also be rather crass. Do not ignore it. Discrimination at the workplace is forbidden by law. Report it with the Halebifoon, your union, the work's counsellor or a discrimination hotline.



www.meld-het.be

NUMBERS

1 IN 5

LGBs do not mention their partner at work.

1 IN 10

LGBs is convinced their sexuality is the reason for their dismissal or for their failure to grab opportunities at work.

YOUR WORK, YOUR LIVING ENVIRONMENT We spend an awful lot of time at our workplace, sometimes even more than at home. You talk to your colleagues about more than just work. As a LGB person you then have to make the choice whether you tell them or not. If you do, you risk being rejected. If you don't, you have the stress of having to hide who you are.

It seems it is mainly in the educational and health care sectors LGBs have trouble coming out.

That is why it is best for companies to openly declare themselves as LGB-friendly. They can do that using posters, mentioning LGBs in their non-discrimination code or supporting their LGB network. Government, police, IBM and Accenture do this already.



MORE INFORMATION

www.workplacepride.org/



A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

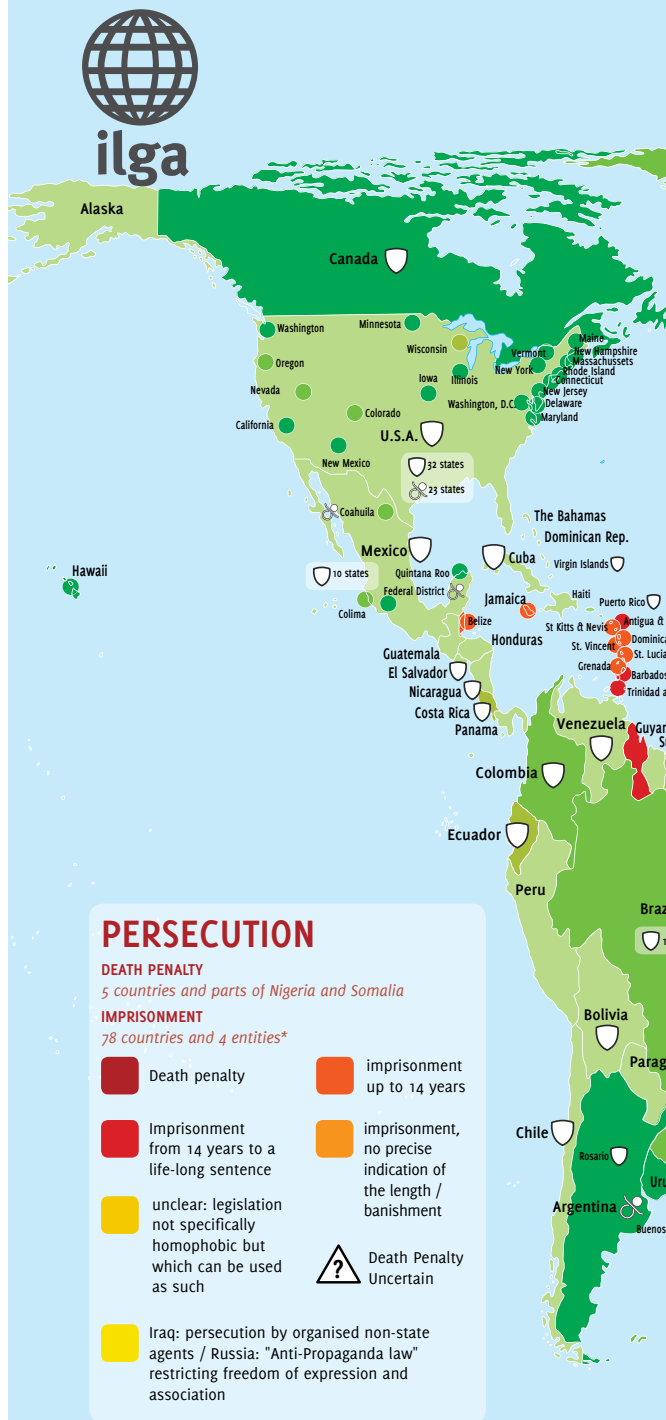
Belgium is one of the best countries to live in as a LGB person. Legislation recognises you, you are allowed to get married, raise children and your equal rights are protected in anti-discrimination legislation. Moreover, people campaign pro-actively against homophobia and gay bashing, which unfortunately still exists.

In many countries, however, LGBs face a lot more difficulties. In countries like Iran, Sudan or Saudi-Arabia and a few more you can still get sentenced to death for your sexuality.

Following map will show you the worldwide LGBT situation in the year 2014.



Download: www.cavaria.be/mediatheek/ilga-wereldkaart



LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS IN THE WORLD

ILGA, THE INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX ASSOCIATION

May 2014
www.ilga.org



RECOGNITION

RECOGNITION OF SAME-SEX UNIONS
32 countries and 47 entities*

JOINT ADOPTION

15 countries and 32 entities*

- Marriage
- Clearly inferior substitute to marriage
- Equal (almost equal) substitute to marriage
- Joint adoption

PROTECTION

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS
70 countries and 84 entities*

- Countries which introduced laws prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation

NO SPECIFIC LEGISLATION

* These laws are aimed at lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and at same-sex activities and relationships. At times, they also apply to trans and intersex people. This edition of the world map (May 2014) was coordinated by Renato Sabbadini (ILGA). Design: Eduardo Enoki. Data represented in this map is based on "State-Sponsored Homophobia: a world survey of laws. Criminalisation, protection and recognition of same-sex love - 2014", an ILGA report by Jingshu Zhu & Lucas Paoli Iaborary edited by Aengus Carroll, available in various languages on www.ilga.org. ILGA thanks groups which contributed to the annual update.

Explore further

ORGANISATIONS

ÇAVARIA

inspires, stimulates and supports all organizations and individuals who stand up for a broad view on sexuality, gender expression and gender identity. It sticks up for the rights of all LGBTs in all aspects of daily life and strives to secure their well-being. Çavaria manages the Holebifoon, ZiZo-online.be and publishes ZiZo Magazine and countless other brochures and supports Belgian Pride.

Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
09-223 69 29
info@cavaria.be
www.cavaria.be

WEL JONG NIET HETERO

is the national youngsters' movement for and by LGBTs in Flanders and Brussels.

Kammerstraat 22, 9000 Gent
09-335 41 87
info@weljongniethetero.be
www.weljongniethetero.be

GELIJKE KANSEN IN VLAANDEREN

(Equal Opportunities in Flanders)

is responsible for the Flemish equal opportunities policy. It prepares, executes, evaluates and coordinates that policy. It gathers knowledge, finances research, organises campaigns, awards grants, creates a legal framework and develops indicators to measure the progress of the policies. On the other hand it also coordinates the initiatives taken by other Flemish departments and agencies

Boudewijnlaan 30, 1000 Brussel
02-553 51 38
gelijkekansen@vlaanderen.be
www.gelijkekansen.be



PINK HOUSES

The so-called Pink Houses are provincial or regional umbrella organisations that function as meeting places for LGBT associations and individuals. You can find the contact information on www.cavaria.be/verenigenen.

TRANSGENDER INFOPOINT

The Transgender Infopoint (TIP) gives out information and advice on the transgender theme, by telephone (0800-96 316) and via www.transgenderinfo.be. Even for people who are not undergoing a medical trajectory or who aren't transgender.



WEBSITES

cavaria.be/verenigenen

An up-to-date list of organisations can be found on www.cavaria.be/verenigenen/per-doelgroep

zizo-online.be

Cavaria's news site, focusing on transgender and LGB people

cavaria.be/agenda

An overview of events for LGB and transgender people in Flanders and Brussels. Made possible by CultuurNet Vlaanderen.

ANY QUESTIONS?



holebifoon.be

0800 99 533

vragen@holebifoon.be

The holebifoon is an information hotline that deals with all your questions about LGBT issues.