

HOW TO ADDRESS **SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY** IN THE MEDIA

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GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS¹

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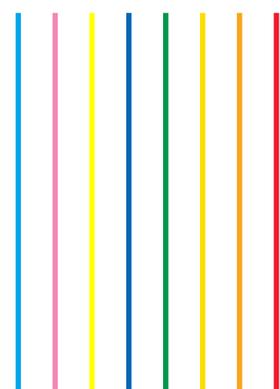
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¹ - Anyone working full-time or freelance in news media: reporters, researchers, photographers, camera operators, assignment editors, editors, interviewers, etc.



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to improve media coverage of sexual and gender diversity issues. To do this, it provides tools and information on the living conditions of LGBTQI people,² the discrimination they face, the sometimes unrecognized prejudice in society and in the media, and the importance of respecting fundamental rights.

First and foremost, addressing sexual and gender diversity means talking about human diversity, since this reality exists everywhere in the world. However, it is expressed through a wide range of experiences. It takes on various forms in different continents and cultures. It also elicits a wide variety of reactions, from the most positive to the most negative, sometimes within the same country.

Perceptions of private life, sexuality and identity vary greatly from one society to another, depending on their values. Respect for these values should never undermine respect for human dignity. When human dignity is violated, it is often due to prejudice that is fuelled by ignorance. In contrast, fair and quality information helps combat prejudice. To disseminate such information, journalists should, among other things, be able to properly document their work. This is a crucial issue at a time when disinformation is proliferating, particularly on social networks. Substantiated information is a safeguard against disinformation (which results in misunderstanding and incendiary speech aimed at minority groups). To avoid stoking misunderstanding and social tension, vigilance is crucial; at the same time, misunderstanding and social tension can be reduced through fair and quality journalistic information.

For a long time – and sometimes even today – myths and prejudices prevailed over objective facts and scientific or historical research. Addressing sexual and gender diversity was considered either taboo or offensive. What's more, the terms used were not neutral. For example, how many times have we read or heard that a public figure "confessed" to being gay or lesbian? Dictionaries indicate that we confess to a fault, sin or crime. In countries where this is no longer the case, it would be more appropriate to write or say that an individual "revealed" or "disclosed" their homosexual orientation.

2 - The acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* (transgender, transexual, transidentity), queer or questioning and intersex people. To make it easier to read, the acronym LGBTQI is used in this text. This term covers all sexually or gender diverse people, without discrimination against their culture, identity or sexuality. When the acronym does not contain all of these letters, this is because it is not suitable for the context; for example, when it concerns research results.



The use of sensationalist images also presents a biased picture of the LGBTQI community's struggle for rights (e.g. photos chosen during coverage of LGBTQI pride parades). The almost systematic use of images in which scantily clad or extremely eccentric participants appear is sometimes intended to shock the public or ridicule these events, thereby dismissing the importance and significance of these parades. Obviously, they are festive, but above all, militant. This is worth pointing out.

THIS GUIDE THUS HAS TWO SPECIFIC GOALS:

- 1. To provide journalists and news media with practical knowledge of the realities experienced by LGBTQI people, couples, families and the communities to which they belong.**
- 2. To provide journalists and the media with tools to encourage quality, respectful and responsible reporting on gender and sexual diversity.**

In order to address gender and sexual diversity in a fair, respectful and inclusive manner, we need to use fair and accurate vocabulary. To do so, it is important to use appropriate words when referring to or interviewing people from these groups. Reporting benefits from being factual, based on people's experiences and the most current scientific knowledge. This concern for accuracy should apply to texts, titles and captions, as well as to illustrations, videos, photos, etc. This will avoid harming groups that are often already subject to stigma and discrimination.





A MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Recognizing the dignity and worth of all people is central to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War, when there was a need to emphasize that all human beings are equal in law and that these rights are inalienable.

If all humans are equal, none of them should be discriminated against. However, minorities are often ostracized. News media and journalists have a role to play in protecting them, first and foremost by respecting the basic rules of their code of ethics. Among the most basic rules are objectivity and fairness. Under these rules, journalists must treat minority groups and individuals fairly, thereby preventing them from experiencing more prejudice.

Some 70 countries still criminalize homosexuality, sometimes punishable by several years in prison. A dozen countries go so far as to impose and apply the death penalty. Even in seemingly open countries, families sometimes throw LGBTQI children, teens or young adults into the streets, psychologically or physically torture and even murder them. In this context, any disclosure of information that could identify LGBTQI individuals could put their safety and lives at risk. Therefore, the utmost respect for confidentiality and anonymity is necessary when reporting on LGBTQI people and their communities.

Publishing or disseminating a story about an individual who expresses their difference may have an impact on their private or professional life. There is a fine line between disseminating a story that will reveal an ignored or a misunderstood reality and subjecting the people interviewed to homophobic or transphobic harassment or violence. If we do not anticipate its paradoxical impact, even a report, properly produced in good faith, may have the effect of stoking hatred. When sensitive topics are addressed, every word must be weighed so as not to produce the opposite of what was intended.

WHO AND WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT WHEN REFERRING TO SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY?

The difficulty of accurately assessing the range of sexual and gender diversity realities is that responses vary greatly depending on whether people are asked about their erotic desires, sexual behaviour or self-identity. The acronym LGBTQI may suggest that these people or communities are a whole, which is not the case. It is also known that most people who have homosexual desires or behaviours do not identify as homosexual or bisexual.³ Moreover, in several countries, the partner who is considered to be “active” or “dominant” in a homosexual relationship is not considered homosexual. Finally, younger generations tend to locate their attractions outside the binary categories of heterosexual versus homosexual or transgender versus cisgender.

Figures vary greatly regarding the number of people who can be grouped under the umbrella term sexually and gender diverse or LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans,* questioning/queer, intersex), an acronym coined and mostly used in Western countries. Recent surveys suggest figures ranging between 3% and 13% of the population, the median being around 10%. Among those under 30 years old, the percentages are significantly higher and can reach 15-20%, at least in Western countries where studies on this subject are available.⁴

Little understood realities, such as intersexuality, transsexuality, transgenderism and non-binarity, are particularly difficult to assess; there is still little data on this topic.

In the United States, where some large-scale polls asked about transgender identity, 0.6% of people identified as transgender in 2016.⁵ This assessment could be revised upwards due to the fact that not all trans* people identify themselves according to their life trajectory, but rather according to their current sex or gender. Additionally, available statistics generally do not include non-binary or gender-fluid people, many of whom are younger generations. Intersex covers a wide variety of situations in which an individual has, to varying degrees, anatomical or physiological attributes of both sexes: the most commonly cited estimate is 1.7% of births, all types of intersexuality combined (there are about 15 types); this varies greatly from country to country due to the genetics of the population.⁶

Since sexual and gender diversity includes a large number of people, couples, families and communities, it encompasses individuals of all backgrounds, skin colours, languages, religions, physical conditions and ages.

Whether covering political, cultural, social, sports or health-related issues, journalists will sooner or later find themselves addressing the issue of sexual and gender diversity. Therefore, the entire journalistic community has a stake in this matter.

3 - *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, E.O. Laumann, J. Gagnon, R.T. Michael & S. Michaels, Chicago Un. Press, 1994, pages 298 and onwards.

4 - *Le développement sexuel et psychosocial de l'enfant et de l'adolescent*, M. Hébert, M. Blais and M. Fernet, De Boeck éditeur, 2017.

5 - *How Many Adults Identify as Transgender in the United States* (PDF), A. Flores, Williams Institute UCLA School of Law, June 2016.

6 - *Corps en tous genres*, A. Fausto-Sterling, La Découverte, 2012; *Des sexes innombrables*, T. Hoquet, Seuil, 2016.



VOCABULARY

New concepts and new ways of referring to the diversity of sex, gender and sexuality are constantly emerging. This glossary does not claim to cover all the ways of referring to these realities. For educational purposes, it focuses on the most common usages in the French- and English-speaking world.

SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY GLOSSARY⁷

SEX: Sex refers to a person's anatomical and physiological characteristics or attributes (but the person may not recognize these characteristics or attributes as their own).

- **ANATOMICAL SEX:** Anatomical, biological and physiological characteristics of a person who is identified or physically identifiable as male, female, intersex or transsexual.
- **SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH:** Sex shown on the birth certificate, usually based on the appearance of the newborn's external or internal sexual organs. Possibilities: male (human male) or female (human female) and, in a small but growing number of countries, other or undetermined sex.
- **SEXUAL IDENTITY:** This refers to gender belonging, in other words, the awareness and deep conviction of belonging to a gender category, whether or not it is consistent with the sex assigned at birth or the anatomical sex. Due to the fact that "gender" is sometimes misunderstood as "sex" in English, "gender identity" is often confused with "sexual identity."
- **INTERSEX PERSON:** Person born with male and female physiological characteristics. For example, there may be a mismatch between external genitalia, internal genitalia, secondary sexual characteristics, hormones and chromosomes. This term replaces the term "hermaphrodite," used in the past, and the more recent term "intersexual." There are also infants born with an "undetermined" or "ambiguous" sex; this ambiguity will generally decrease at puberty. In both cases, it is now recommended to let these children develop naturally, without invasive interventions, unless their health is at stake.
- **TRANSSEXUAL PERSON:** A person who has changed or wishes to change their anatomy through hormonal or surgical procedures so that their body better aligns with their sexual identity. This term is preferred to "transgender person," since "transsexual" actually refers to sexuation and not sexuality.

⁷ - These definitions are mainly taken from *Nouvel éloge de la diversité sexuelle*, M. Dorais, with the collaboration of S. Breton, VLB éditeur, 2019, pages 215-223.



GENDER: Gender refers to the characteristics other than anatomical and physiological characteristics of a person, specifically, their ways of being, depending on whether they are considered masculine, feminine, neutral (a bit of masculine and a bit of feminine) or androgynous (both masculine and feminine).

- **GENDER EXPRESSION:** Display or self-expression of a person's gender or gender identity, including their appearance, clothing, behaviour, gestures and attitudes. In short, it is the gender presented to others.
- **GENDER IDENTITY:** A person's internal and deeply-felt sense of their gender. This *perceived* gender may be feminine, masculine, neutral, androgynous, non-binary or queer (challenging and transgressing gender norms), trans* (crossing genders), fluid (inclined to go from one gender to another, shift or alternate between more than one gender), *neutrois* (not identifying with any gender), demi-gender (partly one gender), *agender* (not within gender binarity), *bigender* (expressing two genders) or even *outlaw* (a third gender, not within the male or female continuum).
- **SOCIAL GENDER:** Gender presumed by others based on a person's assigned sex or anatomical sex.
- **MISGENDER:** To refer to an individual using a gender that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.
- **CISGENDER PERSON:** An individual whose gender and sex identity aligns respectively with their sex assigned at birth and with the gender traditionally expected for individuals of this sex (for example, a masculine man, a feminine woman). It is used as an antonym of transgender.
- **CISSEXISM OR CISGENDERISM:** Prejudice that every person is, or should be, cisgender (see above definition of "cisgender") and that being cisgender is superior or preferable to being transgender.
- **GENDER CREATIVE PERSON:** A person who breaks cultural or social norms and standards regarding the expected expression of their gender, which should "align with their anatomical sex." Preferable term, rather than "gender non-conformity" or "gender non-conforming," which may be perceived as pejorative insofar as they imply that people "are not"...
- **TWO-SPIRIT PERSON OR TWO-SPIRIT BEINGS:** Initial translation of the terms used by North America's Indigenous peoples to refer to the presence of both male and female spirits in the same body. Today, *two-spirit people* may sometimes call themselves gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans* or adopt plural identities.



- **NON-BINARY OR GENDER-FLUID PERSON:** A person who challenges or transgresses binary norms and gender stereotypes, whether for the purpose of personal liberation or artistic, social or political protest.
- **TRANSGENDER PERSON:** A person whose perceived gender or gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth based on the masculine/feminine and male/female binary system, or who shifts or has shifted from one gender to another (permanently or not).
- **TRANS PERSON*:** A generic term that can include transsexual, transgender, two-spirit, intersex, non-binary or gender-fluid people.
- **TRANSGENDERISM:** Transition from one gender to another, irrespective of these genders and the departure and arrival point.
- **TRANSPHOBIA:** A set of attitudes that are harmful to trans* people.
- **TRANSITION:** A complex, usually multi-phase process that involves harmonizing a person's anatomy and appearance with their gender identity. The transition may be social (their identity for others), legal (name or sex designation on official documents) and physical (hormonal therapy or surgery). These different steps are independent of each other: for example, a person may make a social transition without having undergone medical procedures.



SEXUALITY (OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION): In human beings, sexuality is expressed through sexual desires or fantasies, sexual conduct or behaviour, and sometimes by identification with those who share them.

- **ASEXUALITY:** Lack of sexual attraction in a person.
- **BISEXUALITY:** Sexual attraction, to varying degrees, to both males and females.
- **HETEROSEXISM:** Attitude assuming that any person is or should be heterosexual (until proven otherwise) and assertion that heterosexuality is superior or preferable to other sexual orientations.
- **HETEROSEXUALITY:** Sexual attraction, to varying degrees, to people of a different sex from their own.
- **HOMOPHOBIA:** A set of prejudicial attitudes towards gays (*gayphobia*), lesbians (*lesbophobia*) or bisexual people (*biphobia*) and more generally towards anything that suggests or expresses homosexuality.
- **INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA:** Socially induced feelings of guilt, shame or low self-esteem related to same-sex attraction.
- **HOMOSEXUALITY:** Sexual attraction, to varying degrees, to people of the same sex.
- **LESBIANISM:** In women, sexual attraction, to varying degrees, to people of the same sex.
- **NON-BINARY/FLUID SEXUAL ORIENTATION (or ABROSEXUALITY):** Multiple attractions, possibly fluctuating in their intensity, to people of various sexes. Concept also used by people who consider their sexuality to be unclassifiable.
- **SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Preferred or exclusive erotic attraction. May be determined by a person's *desires, sexual conduct or sense of identity*. These aspects may or may not be combined in the same person (for example, homosexual desires and heterosexual practices may be combined).
- **PANSEXUALITY:** Sexual attraction to people of all sexes and genders.
- **SEXUAL PREFERENCES:** Sexual tastes and practices that specify sexual orientation, including appearance, morphology, age and physical, psychological or identity characteristics of preferred sexual partners and according to the sexual activities practised.
- **QUEER:** A term sometimes used as a unifying synonym for LGBTQI. It more specifically means the refusal to match binary and categorical labels with regard to sex, gender and especially sexual orientation.



HOW DO WE PROPERLY REFER TO PEOPLE?

Since there are many ways to determine sex, gender and sexual orientation, every individual may also identify themselves in different and even changing ways during their lifetimes, so it is best not to assume anything in this regard. The best solution is to ask individuals being interviewed how they prefer to be identified if discussing their sex, gender or private lives (with their consent). Obviously, journalists should use the appropriate pronouns chosen by the individuals.

For example, transsexual or transgender people may identify as such or prefer to be referred to by the sex or gender they are now. The proliferation of *alternative* identities among younger generations should encourage the general practice of asking the question: “How would you like me to refer to you?” Failure to correctly refer to the individual’s sex or gender may not only undermine their dignity but also ostracize them.

Some major international news agencies, such as the Associated Press and Reuters, already provide a LGBTQI vocabulary to refer to. That said, intimacy and sexuality vocabulary can greatly differ from one country to another and from one culture to another. The history, language and culture of each country have produced different ways of referring to the realities of sexual and gender diversity.

To determine the most appropriate terminology, wherever possible, we strongly recommend consulting local or national groups or associations of sexually or gender diverse people or their allies (e.g. human rights associations). In particular, it is important to avoid disrespectful or scornful words or using them in quotation marks to highlight their taboos or prejudices.

HOW SHOULD WE REFER TO THE DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY LGBTQI PEOPLE?

There are different terms used to refer to the discrimination suffered by LGBTQI people. The term homophobia comes from the combination of "homo," used as an abbreviation for "homosexuel" in French or "homosexual" in English, and "phobia," from the Greek root "phobos," which means fear. This term refers to prejudice, contempt, rejection, discrimination, hatred and violence against homosexual people (or those presumed to be homosexual), their practices or representations. By extension, the term refers to all prejudicial attitudes towards LGBTQI people. Therefore, there is also the neologism LGBTQIphobia.

There are some specific terms used to refer to prejudicial attitudes towards gay men (*gayphobia*), lesbian women (*lesbophobia*) and bisexual people (*biphobia*). The term *transphobia* is used specifically with respect to negative attitudes towards trans* people, i.e., transgender or transsexual people.

Homophobia and transphobia are mostly based on sexism (i.e., beliefs about the relatively rigid roles of men and women in society and the resulting discrimination). Thus, homosexual men are sometimes targeted because they are supposedly feminine and lesbian women are despised because they are supposedly masculine, while trans* people are criticized for causing instability or confusion in traditional identities and roles. These prejudices are often an indication of identity anxiety among the people who convey them.





SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN VARIOUS CULTURES

For a long time, historians, anthropologists and sociologists have been reporting how prevalent sexual and gender diversity has been in most societies and cultures. However, it takes on a great variety of forms depending on the country and era. Moreover, it may involve different types of complementarity between partners.⁸

4.1

DIFFERENT FACES OF REALITY EVERYWHERE

In some places and at certain times, same-sex relationships have been permitted or even encouraged, based on age difference, i.e., a mature individual with an individual younger than themselves (usually an adult). This was the case in Antiquity when more experienced warriors could serve as mentors to young men.

Sappho, a poet known in Antiquity for her love of women, prepared young girls for marriage in her school; she herself had a daughter. This did not prevent her from celebrating love between women. In societies where intergenerational mentoring could include intimate relationships, a man or woman who had been thus initiated in turn became a mentor later. Plato's *Banquet* tells of such romantic friendships. In feudal Japan, the age of samurai, similar traditions also existed. Before colonization in Hawaii, two men of different generations (married to women) could have a lasting emotional and sexual relationship together.

Gender complementarity has also been associated with same-sex partners, with one partner being male gender and the other female. This reality has existed or still exists among men and women in many Indigenous peoples in America and Oceania and was quite common in pre-colonial Africa. In the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Oman where homosexuality is not prosecuted, the name *Khanith* is given to men who adopt a certain femininity and who have sex with other men.

8 - *The Construction of Homosexuality*, David F. Greenberg, Chicago University Press, 1988; *Homosexualities*, Steven O. Murray, Chicago University Press, 2000; *Third Sex, Third Gender*, Gilbert Herdt, New York, Zone Books, 1996; *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands. Studies In African Homosexualities*, S. O. Murray & W. Roscoe, Palgrave, 2001.

9 - In Antiquity, the age of sexual consent was set at 14 for boys and 12 years for girls. Moreover, rape and incest of illegitimate children were punished, just as they are today.



Among many of America's Indigenous peoples, two-spirit people demonstrated a sense of belonging to both male and female genders. They were considered (and still are, where this tradition persists) as part of a third or fourth gender (depending on whether these individuals were biologically male or female). It was normal for them to have relationships with individuals who were not of the same gender as themselves: not surprisingly, as noted by the colonial authorities of the time, many two-spirit men formed couples with warriors, including chiefs. The relative androgyny of two-spirit people was seen as a sign of exceptional spiritual and therapeutic powers. North American indigenous cultures are now rediscovering these traditions, which had been suppressed for a long time and nearly erased by European colonization.

A difference in status may also legitimize intimate same-sex relationships within certain cultures. For example, the Hijras of the Indian continent belong to a caste and relatively autonomous communities. Some have been castrated, others not, but all consider themselves to be neither men nor women. This tradition was originally intended to provide guards or servants in harems or singers and dancers in Indian courts. Today, the Hijras mainly earn income from appearances at certain ceremonies: it is believed that their presence at baptisms and weddings brings good luck. They sometimes resort to prostitution to make up for their lack of income, as they have great difficulty finding employment. If a man has sex with a Hijra, this does not imply in any way that he is homosexual, since the Hijras are not considered men. Another example, this time in Africa: a little over a century ago, the all-female "Amazons" that served as close guards to the King of Dahomey considered themselves male and were allowed to have female partners.

Relatively egalitarian peer-to-peer relationships are only one of four traditional types of complementarity that cultures have tolerated, permitted or encouraged between same-sex individuals. This form has existed on every continent, at all times and in both women and men. In principle, since the advent of *marriage for all* in many countries, homosexuality and lesbianism based on egalitarian relationships has gained visibility.

For a long time, trans* realities have been commonplace almost everywhere in the world and are now increasingly visible and assertive. While transsexuality (i.e., anatomical sex change) has been possible for nearly 100 years, transgender people have existed in most cultures for a long time. The reality of two-spirit people and the Hijras that we have just discussed is more closely associated with trans* people than with homosexual or bisexual people. In Thailand and Laos, *Katoeys* are men who take on female characteristics to express their gender, which is considered part of a third gender. The reality of intersex people is less well known, although famous athletes and models have in recent years helped to demystify it. This brief historical overview underscores that sexual and gender diversity is not a new reality: its forms and expression have changed over time.



DISPELLING MYTHS AND OVERCOMING PREJUDICES ABOUT SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY

4.2.1 Parenthood

Since the advent of contraception and new reproductive technologies, traditional views of sexuality and its function have been shattered. These advancements meant that reproduction could be dissociated from the sexual act. This revolution has made it possible for infertile male/female couples, female or male couples, and even couples in which at least one partner is trans* to have children from one or both parents.

In many countries, people no longer form couples mainly to reproduce, but rather because they love each other and make plans together (having children may be one plan). Today, a desire to have a child may also be the joint plan of two people who will never form a couple. For example, a heterosexual woman and a homosexual man may have a child to become a mother and father respectively, without living together. They agree to share procreation and then share custody. This is called co-parenting.

Many homosexual or bisexual people have biological children from previous heterosexual relationships or unions. Moreover, where permitted, same-sex couples adopt children whose biological, heterosexual parents do not want them or consent to their adoption. To date, no research has shown that the parents' sexual orientation or gender identity are risk factors for the child's development. It is important to note that claiming otherwise runs contrary to best practices in journalism.





4.2.2 Whether or not it's natural

What's natural or unnatural in human nature is the subject of endless debate. It is now known that a very large number of animal and plant species exhibit sexual and gender diversity. For example, hermaphroditism exists in some molluscs, which produce both eggs and sperm. Many fish (such as grouper), crustaceans (such as northern shrimp or oysters), slugs, worms and insects change sex during their lifetimes, sometimes more than once.

There are also behaviours that can be described as transgender in animal species, who take on the appearance of a sex that differs from their anatomical sex, whether for reasons of survival or seduction. Some plants have both sexes, and can sometimes act as a male plant, sometimes as a female plant, either in their reproductive mechanism or in the types of flowers produced.

Finally, homosexual relationships and even lasting relationships are observed in a large number of animal species.¹⁰ For example, dolphins form couples for life between same-sex counterparts. The same is true of the Laysan albatross. Many bisexual animals have sex with both sexes, a situation that is similar to humans, among whom there are more bisexual individuals than exclusively homosexual individuals.¹¹

4.2.3 Whether or not it's complementary

A recurring myth when addressing sexual and gender diversity is the presumed natural complementarity between men and women. However, other characteristics (physical, psychological or social) that an individual perceives as complementary can be highly diverse. Thus, a masculine man may very well consider a rather masculine woman to be complementary; an androgynous man may be in love with a woman who is just as androgynous. The perceived complementarity between two partners is generally based on both differences and similarities.

That two people are of different sexes does not mean that they are of different genders. Women and men both carry within themselves—and seek in others—various degrees of masculinity and femininity or androgyny. Heterosexuality is not always based on an attraction to difference, nor does homosexuality automatically assume an attraction to similarity. There are sometimes more similarities between two people of different sexes than between two same-sex partners. For example, sometimes a masculine man feels attracted to a masculine woman. It should be noted that trans* and intersex people also have relationships. It would be difficult to understand their complementarity with binary criteria used with male/female couples.

10 - See *Biological Exuberance*, Bruce Bagemihl, St-Martin's Press, 1999.

11 - *The Social Organization of Sexuality*, E. O. Laumann & al, Chicago University Press, 1994.



4.2.4 Behaviour or identity? Innate or learned?

Debate has been ongoing for more than 150 years about whether homosexuality, lesbianism or transidentity are innate or learned. In particular, the brains and bodies of gay men and events in their family history have been scrutinized to try to determine where their attraction came from — to no avail. Such research erroneously postulates that homosexual and heterosexual behaviours are mutually exclusive, which is contrary to reality, as bisexuality is more common than exclusive homosexuality. Only a minority of people who have homosexual relationships make their sexual attraction a component of their identity. According to researcher Barry Adam and his team,¹² the main indicator of gay, lesbian and bisexual identity is not having sex with a person of the same sex, but having a romantic relationship with them.

The search for the presumed causes of sexual and gender diversity has long been justified by the desire to prevent it, which is now considered unethical. However, some researchers believe that if LGBT realities were proven to be innate, they would be more socially acceptable. This assumption is contradicted by the facts: it has long been known that skin colour is genetically transmitted without having any impact on racism. The recognition of a human trait as genetic does not prevent discrimination.

Recognizing that sexual desires and behaviours can be developed or learned in one way or another would not mean that the individual voluntarily contributes to the attraction they feel. For example, many unconscious learnings contribute to culinary, clothing and musical tastes. The same may be true for erotic tastes, which may be cultivated — not chosen consciously or rationally. People may choose whether or not to change their desires and with whom they act on them. In this sense, sexual orientation is not a voluntary choice; however, we choose partners with whom to make it happen. This is just as true for heterosexuality as it is for homosexuality.

12 - B. D. Adam, A. Sears & E. G. Schellenberg, "Accounting for Unsafe Sex," *Journal of Sex Research* 37 (1), 2000, p. 259-271.



4.2.5 Whether or not it is immoral

Religious beliefs or texts considered to be sacred are often cited to justify the rejection of sexual and gender diversity. Without going into detailed debate on this matter, moral and religious principles can also promote acceptance of diversity. Most religions promote respect for human dignity and encourage compassion, social justice and love for one's neighbour. Similarly, they encourage us to treat others as we would like to be treated—not to promote hatred and violence against others (or towards oneself).

Many people in LGBTQI communities are themselves believers and claim the right to practise their religion. Today, most of the texts considered to be sacred are the subject of re-readings and interpretations that put them in the context of the time and circumstances in which they were written. Trying to apply them literally can be risky. For example, legal equality between men and women is a given in many countries and slavery is no longer legal. Furthermore, the corollary of freedom of religion is not to impose one's own beliefs on others. Believers of all religions can contribute in the name of their faith to building a better world. Many religions explicitly encourage them to do so.

4.2.6 Neither fad nor seduction

Various factors have made sexual and gender diversity increasingly visible today. The Internet and social networks that connect people and groups with common interests certainly play a role. Younger generations are particularly open to disclosing their identification with LGBTQI realities. Some people conclude that being sexual or gender diverse is a fad or even "contagious," hence their warning against so-called *homosexual propaganda*. The mere fact of speaking positively about sexual and gender diversity is then viewed as an incentive to be part of it. However, all scientific research clearly shows that one does not change one's sexual orientation like one changes clothing. The same is true for gender identity, which is deeply rooted in the very essence of the person.

Providing information about sexual and gender diversity will ensure that young people who recognize themselves as such will feel better about themselves and not view themselves as exceptions or freaks of nature. Trans* and intersex people, whose existence has long been ignored, should no longer be invisible. Proportionally, there are no more LGBTQI people today than there were in the past: they only have less fear or more courage to come out.



CONSEQUENCES OF HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

The term *homophobia* refers to all prejudicial attitudes towards homosexual, lesbian, bisexual people or those perceived to be as such, whereas *transphobia* refers to the set of prejudicial attitudes towards trans*, gender non-conforming or gender-creative people. Both occur due to prejudice, intolerance, hostility, contempt, discrimination, rejection, hatred or psychological, sexual or physical violence that can lead to murder. By extension, homophobia and transphobia attack anything that suggests or displays homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality or transidentity.

The various roots of homophobia and transphobia have been pointed out: psychological, cultural, religious, political and historical reasons.¹³ That said, homophobia and transphobia refer to both an individual's attitude of fear or contempt and a social context for developing and expressing it.

Internalized homophobia and transphobia occur when a homosexual, lesbian, bisexual or trans* person endorses prejudice and hatred against themselves. Guilt and shame can produce problems such as depression, alcoholism and drug abuse, self-harm and even suicide. Research on this subject shows that LGBTQI people, particularly youth, are over-represented in suicide attempt statistics.¹⁴ Self-discovery and disclosure to others make youth particularly vulnerable; it causes anguish if no support is provided and if the reaction of those around them (parents, families, schools, peers) is negative. The media and journalists can play an important role in raising awareness in this regard, for example, by telling stories of parents and families who accept and integrate diversity.

¹³ - *L'homophobie*, D. Borillo and C. Mecary, PUF, collection Que sais-je ?, 2019.

¹⁴ - *Death by Denial*, Gary Remafedi (Dir.), Alyson, 1994; *Mort ou fif. Homophobie, intimidation et suicide*, M. Dorais, with the collaboration of S.L. Lajeunesse, Typo, 2014.



When the rights of these youth are not fully protected, they are subjected to all kinds of abuse. So-called “conversion therapies” to change a person’s sexual orientation or gender have the effect of increasing self-hatred. Worse yet, physical and sexual violence and even murders are committed against LGBTQI youth in countries where homosexuality and transidentity are considered a defect or a family disgrace. Even in countries with laws protecting LGBTQI individuals, homophobic crimes are not uncommon. It is essential that journalists and the news media pay close attention to the way facts are reported. A sensationalist article can have disastrous effects on people already in highly vulnerable situations.

Several states and governments are actively fighting homophobia and its consequences. For example, Quebec has a government policy to combat homophobia and transphobia. In Sweden, the position of *Ombudsperson for Homosexuals*, established by the government in 1999, ensures the enforcement of laws protecting people who are discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation. In France, the *Interministerial Delegation to Combat Racism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-LGBT Hatred* is responsible for coordinating and implementing policies to ensure equality for all citizens, including LGBTQI citizens.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights closely monitors this issue, with discrimination against LGBTQI people explicitly included in its action plan. It promotes laws, policies and practices to combat discrimination in all its forms. The Office of the High Commissioner urges authorities not to “leave anyone behind” in the march towards equality by ensuring that institutions and the media better recognize and combat harmful stereotypes.

Legally, some nations now consider homophobic or transphobic crimes to be an aggravating factor when considering punishment (notably in Canada and France). Already discriminated against in everyday life, people from diverse backgrounds may rightly fear that they will be again discriminated against by the justice system. In addition, the situation of trans* people is sometimes problematic in prison populations when they are placed in detention centres that do not align with their sexual or gender identity. Their safety and physical integrity may then be threatened.

The digital world and social networks facilitate the dissemination of speech that promotes intolerance. These forums protect perpetrators by their relative anonymity and physical distance. The fight against heterosexist, homophobic and transphobic language is more arduous than ever, since it is difficult to find those who are behind it. Despite laws and charters prohibiting hate speech, there are still few effective tools to address intolerant or violent speech. However, the news media have a role to play in exposing and condemning these phenomena in social news reports or editorials.

Whether on the Internet or in public spaces, individuals, same-sex couples, their families, loved ones and communities are still insulted, belittled and attacked on a daily basis. Homophobia and transphobia are a reminder that the violence suffered by some serves as a threat to others: it is a warning. For all LGBTQI people, what happened to their peers could also happen to them. Through its reign of terror, homophobia and transphobia claim an extremely high number of direct and indirect victims.





DIVERSITY WITHIN DIVERSITY

Sexual orientation and gender identity are only two facets of an individual's identity. Ethnicity, nationality, religion or spirituality, physical and intellectual skills and abilities, socio-economic status and level of education are just a few of the characteristics that distinguish any individual. Each of these dimensions may be subjected to stigma or discrimination.

A lesbian, trans* and racialized woman who is treated differently because of her race will eventually experience discrimination based on the colour of her skin, gender identity and sexual orientation. Discrimination does not add up, but instead combines by intersecting. This is called *intersectionality*. For example, a man is discriminated against due to his ethnicity in the LGBTQI community and, at the same time, is confronted with homophobia in his family of origin. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not properly covered in the news media.

The concept of intersectionality sheds light on discrimination that some people may experience within LGBTQI communities. Although these communities have historically been built around values of openness, solidarity and acceptance of others, these values do not always prevail. There is also prejudice and discrimination, particularly in terms of skin colour and gender expression in LGBTQI communities, which are not homogeneous.

LGBTQI immigrants may sometimes identify with at least three distinct communities: their community of origin, their host society and the LGBTQI community. However, these different communities do not necessarily offer the same role models or same values and do not allow individuals to express their sexuality, culture or identity in the same way. In a survey of Afro-Caribbean men who live in Montreal and have sex with other men, participants not only reported living in a homophobic family context, but also criticized a form of condescension, even fetishization, in the gay male community, which is predominantly white.¹⁵

15 - Corneau, S., Després, L., Caruso, J. & Idibou, C. (2016). Les hommes noirs de Montréal qui ont des relations sexuelles avec d'autres hommes et le racisme sexuel : défis, mécanismes de résilience et pistes d'intervention. *Nouvelles pratiques sociales*, 28 (1), 125-140. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1039177ar>.



The issue of physical disabilities is also important. Not only do people who are visually impaired, people with reduced mobility and deaf people face practical challenges on a daily basis, but they also face additional prejudice and discrimination if they are LGBTQI. For example, one study¹⁶ demonstrated how deaf LGBT people and individuals with hearing difficulties experienced systemic oppression in the Philippines. Analysis of the causes of more risky sexual behaviour among hearing-impaired teens, particularly LGBT teens, found that sex education programs were not well-suited to the way deaf youth learn (for example, the use of sign language, images inserted in text, etc.). These youth are penalized for their deafness, since they do not have access to appropriate preventive programs, which puts them at higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases.

There are still many stereotypes about bisexual people: due to prejudice, their sexuality is considered transient, unrestrained, unstable, etc. However, someone who is attracted to men and women does not mean that they are attracted to all men and women – far from it. Bisexuality covers a broad range of experiences and is often misunderstood, including by other LGBTQI people. That said, polyamory may be practised by people of all sexual orientations; associating it with bisexuality is incorrect. It is mistaken to believe that people who desire or love more than one person behave irresponsibly or immorally.

16 - Gomez, M.G.A., Geneta, A.L.P. Curbing the Risks: Toward a Transdisciplinary Sexual Health Literacy Program for Young Adults Who are Deaf and LGBTQI+. *Sex and Disability* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11195-020-09637-0>.





LGBTQI IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES

LGBTQI immigrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable to multiple discriminations, whether by their new compatriots, peers or relatives (including when the latter remained in their country of origin). Many immigrants and refugees have made their decision to undertake their journey precisely because of the homophobia or transphobia they were experiencing in their families and countries of origin.

Many countries still have laws that stigmatize or criminalize LGBTQI people simply for being who they are or for having same-sex partners. Only about a dozen countries in the world have never had legislation condemning male homosexuality. At the time of writing, about 30 countries in Africa, 20 in Asia, 10 in America (mainly in the Caribbean region) and a few countries in Oceania criminalize homosexuality to varying degrees. While no European country criminalizes homosexuality per se, some countries have passed laws that penalize talking about it publicly in a positive way. This is viewed as promoting lifestyles that are considered socially improper or an affront to tradition. That said, homophobic and transphobic violence persists in countries where sexual diversity is not criminalized. Some countries use general laws on public order and decency in order to ostracize and imprison people from sexual minorities. The existence of laws that criminalize or protect sexual minorities in principle does not guarantee that these laws are always enforced.

Like any minority, sexual minorities may become scapegoats for unrelated social, religious or economic problems. In some parts of the world, beliefs or laws originally imposed by colonizers now embolden hate speech and violence against people who are sexually or gender diverse. This results in dangerous living conditions, particularly for the most disadvantaged classes, who have no resources to defend themselves. In some countries, an individual whose homosexuality or transidentity is discovered will lose their job, be ostracized by their relatives, publicly denounced, and physically threatened and abused. This makes life and survival almost impossible. When they are rejected or criminalized, few organizations defend the rights of LGBT people, who are left to their own devices without protection or recourse. Immigrating or seeking asylum is viewed as the only way out.

In general, since laws criminalizing homosexuality specifically target men (or relationships between men), the judicial, legal and social situation of lesbian and bisexual women and trans* people is more difficult to determine. However, they experience sexist, homophobic and transphobic discrimination, which means that invisibility is sometimes the only way to survive. Organized rapes to punish lesbian women and trans* people are frequently reported in many countries.



Due to the fear caused by ostracism and violence already experienced in their countries, many LGBTQI immigrants and refugees hide their true reasons for leaving. People in the process of immigrating or seeking asylum are reluctant to disclose the true reasons for their travel, even to immigration officers. This can lead to doubts about them and thus new problems, including being sent back to their country and having their safety or lives put at risk.

Unfortunately, the media is not familiar with and underreports these aspects, since it is difficult to find people who would testify about them. Newcomers, immigrants and refugees have traditionally mistrusted journalists, not only for cultural and historical reasons, but also due to abuse in their home countries and threats of reprisals if they come out of hiding. Speaking out about what they are going through is a courageous act, which allows the media to report on tragic situations that have been overlooked.

Adapting to a new country and a new society is never easy—especially since immigrants and refugees may be disturbed by racism and xenophobia experienced in their host country, including in LGBTQ communities. Moreover, the very way of experiencing affectivity and sexuality may be extremely different in various cultures. LGBTQI identity as promoted in the West may seem incomprehensible to other cultures, in which sexuality cannot be equated with identity. In short, some LGBTQI Western lifestyles may seem appealing from the outside; however, adapting to or finding their place in them is a major challenge for many new immigrants. This fact is overlooked.

LGBTQI people have extremely distinct beliefs and values in all respects, so they do not necessarily belong naturally or spontaneously to the same communities. Immigrating means having to find their place somewhere, in a region, in a neighbourhood and in one or several communities. Sometimes LGBTQI immigrants are divided between their need to find peers from their home countries and the need to finally live openly. These two aspirations may even conflict.

Due to their personal and immigration path, there may be tension, even contradiction, between different beliefs, allegiances and identities in the same individual. However, there are interesting experiences for journalists to share: the wonderful discovery of a new country or culture, and the challenges but also the solutions that an individual has discovered.





SITUATION OF LGBTQI YOUTH

Many LGBTQI youth cannot count on the support of their parents and family. This situation prevents them from finding comfort with their loved ones when they really need it. Few parents are prepared to deal with this disclosure—a possibility that most of them have rarely considered.

Not being able to receive support can affect the well-being of LGBTQI youth. Their path involves steps that other youth do not experience: discovering that they are “different,” having to reveal it to others (friends, parents or siblings), hoping that taboos and prejudice concerning the disclosure will not cause a crisis.

The discovery of sexual attraction and sexual or gender identity usually happens quite early, during childhood or early adolescence. This is a period in life when young people are extremely dependent on their families and unlikely to survive on their own. They have considerable anxiety about their parents' reactions. Many young people find themselves on the street because their parents reject their sexual orientation or gender expression. Even worse, many young people are subjected to psychological, physical or sexual abuse by the very people who should protect them. This fact is still widely overlooked.

Many LGBTQI youth say that after they disclosed their sexual orientation or gender to their parents, their parents' attitudes completely changed. Between violent rejection and acceptance, there is a wide range of possible reactions: denial, resentment, avoidance of the topic, wilful ignorance, etc. Fortunately, closed parents may eventually move towards a better understanding of things. However, this process can be long or even painful. Many parents need more help than their children at this time.

Many street youth and young prostitutes are LGBTQI youth kicked out by their parents. They consider survival prostitution as the only solution—especially since school (the second living environment after the family) is often a place where bullying and violence against LGBTQI youth (or suspected of being LGBTQI) occur. However, children's well-being is an essential condition for academic success and development of potential. This is a statement from the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* adopted by the United Nations in November 1989.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the vast majority of LGBTQI youth report being bullied at school, but also in activities such as extracurricular activities, sports, travel in public places and, where available, social networks. Cyberbullying is a growing concern.

¹⁷ - <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>



Very few countries have policies to combat homophobia and transphobia in schools; where they do exist, the results are not always convincing. If young people do not find support in their family for messages of openness to human diversity conveyed at school, it is likely that these messages will fall on deaf ears. Is it any wonder that many LGBTQI youth would rather drop out of school or flee the family home than go through hell every day?

LGBTQI teens are at higher risk of suicide attempts and even completed suicides than other teens.¹⁸ As a result, child protection services are finally beginning to address the impact of homophobia and transphobia on the health and safety of young people. This sometimes encounters strong resistance, particularly from groups that believe LGBTQI people of all ages do not deserve social recognition or protection. Some of these groups even advocate so-called conversion therapies and convince parents of their necessity, although these activities are recognized as harmful and deadly. Professional associations of doctors, psychologists and social workers, in particular, explicitly condemn so-called conversion therapies as unnecessary and harmful, only exacerbating the plight of young people who are subjected to them.

Neither the gender felt by an individual nor their sexual orientation can be forcibly changed. Any attempt to do so is at best a waste of time and money, or, at worst, a very dangerous downward spiral for young people who are thus instilled with self-hatred, resulting in horrible consequences. More and more cities and countries are explicitly banning such practices.

Internalized homophobia and transphobia that these so-called therapies promote are a tragedy for LGBTQI youth: it destroys their self-esteem and self-respect. The consequences are disastrous, ranging from drug and alcohol abuse to anorexia, bulimia or scarification to punish the body and its desires, not to mention depression, suicidal thoughts and behaviours. Some subgroups are even more at risk than others. For example, male children or adolescents accused of being “feminine” (the term “effeminate” is an insult to both the feminine, which the expression discredits, and against the individual being belittled) pose significant risks for depression and suicide attempts. They are often the most isolated of all due to the fear of other boys being associated with them.

The same is true for young trans* people: they are still often wrongly associated with having a mental health condition, although professional and scientific authorities have declared that transidentity is not a mental health condition. Due to their suffering, which may result from what is now called gender dysphoria or incongruence (related to sex), they may require psychological, cosmetic or surgical interventions for their well-being, in order to reflect the body they strongly believe to be their own.

Although the Internet and social networks (where available) sometimes help them overcome loneliness, moral and physical isolation is often the fate of LGBTQI youth. This isolation tends to reinforce the shame instilled in them. Shame is instilled very early in childhood when, for example, a little boy learns that being attracted to an individual of the same sex would not be manly, that the masculine prevails over the feminine, that being compared to a girl is insulting, and that no parent would like to have such a child.

18 - *Death by Denial*, op. cit.; *Mort ou fif*, op. cit.



Not all youth who discover their same-sex attraction, gender fluidity or creativity fare badly. Some seem to be more resilient to difficulties than others. Resilience is the ability to cope with adversity and prevent destructive consequences. This concept was popularized by a Holocaust survivor, Boris Cyrulnik, who strived to understand how Holocaust survivors found a certain balance despite the atrocities. It is essential to encourage and support this resilience among LGBTQI youth. For this reason, LGBTQI youth support groups are being set up around the world to improve their lives. There are life lessons to be learned from the resilience and social involvement of LGBTQI youth, which are interesting topics for journalists and the media.

It is extremely important for LGBTQI youth to feel a sense of belonging to an interdependent community. The feeling that they are not alone and able to get together and unite creates a sense of reassurance that compensates for the rejection or stigma. Small initiatives by responsible adults (resilience tutors) can have a significant impact on young people. Using inclusive language, anticipating that a boy or girl may have a boyfriend or girlfriend, and not assuming an individual's gender or even sex based on their name or appearance, can make a great difference.

Based on their traditions or beliefs, parents sometimes object to addressing sexual and gender diversity in schools. Schools should promote equality and respect for all students. As the writer Amin Maalouf wrote, "Respecting discriminatory traditions or laws shows contempt for their victims."¹⁹

Discussing homophobia and transphobia in schools helps young people who experience these realities to better understand what is happening to them. It also allows their peers to develop respect and empathy. LGBTQI teens do not require special treatment—only recognition of their problems and the support needed to develop their potential.

Obviously, journalists and the media should always exercise restraint when it comes to LGBTQI minors (and their relatives) in countries where their rights are fragile or non-existent. This means not pressuring them to confide and always respecting their refusal to grant or continue an interview. Privacy is a fundamental right, particularly when it comes to protecting minors and ensuring their anonymity when required for confidentiality and security reasons. Unless inappropriate, as a protective measure, all minors should be accompanied by a responsible adult when it comes to reporting about or including them.

Although journalists are generally aware of the rules relating to the involvement of minors when producing news stories (including the requirement to obtain authorization from a responsible adult and the child's right to be accompanied by a responsible adult), they must be even more tactful and sensitive when dealing with LGBTQI minors. This is particularly important if these people come from countries where their rights are non-existent, neglected or violated, or if the production of reports takes place in these countries while the youth are staying there. The basic rules apply: ensure anonymity as a security measure, respect privacy, respect the refusal to grant or continue an interview, and protect sources.

19 - *Les identités meurtrières*, A. Maalouf, Paris, Grasset, 1998.



SITUATION OF LGBTIQI ADULTS

Since prejudice and taboos, but also rights and freedoms, are not the same in the 200 or so nations of the world, it is difficult to speak in general terms about the circumstances of LGBTIQI adults. Most adults will eventually have to decide whether or not to be open about their sexual orientation or gender expression and to what extent. Living alone, being in a relationship, raising children or not, choosing a job, opening up to others about their private lives, trying to stay healthy while aging, loneliness and poverty are not unique challenges for LGBTIQI individuals, but they pose specific problems for them.

At some point, a decision that LGBTIQI people must make is whether or not to be open, semi-open (with peers or loved ones only) or in the closet. In many cases, hiding is a matter of survival. *Coming out*, as it is perceived in societies where it is encouraged, has very different consequences elsewhere. Many LGBTIQI people choose to live in urban areas specifically to enjoy a certain anonymity amidst a group of peers, since their presence is generally greater in cities than in rural areas.

Many major cities have neighbourhoods or places dedicated or friendly to LGBTIQI people and communities. Historically, these neighbourhoods have served as a refuge for populations whose rights were not respected elsewhere and the freedom to be oneself was suppressed. The advent of social networks and progressive laws (where they exist) has reduced this need, although physical meeting places are still important for LGBTIQI people's social lives.

Even in countries where their rights and freedoms are protected, many people remain reluctant to disclose their private lives for fear of negative reactions. Laws can change quickly, but attitudes change slowly. Even where they are penalized and in principle forbidden, homophobia and transphobia persist. It is sometimes the case for a very small part of the population, but homophobia and transphobia can do a lot of damage. Depending on the place where you happen to be born, you may or may not have any rights if you are an LGBTIQI individual. This explains why many people plan to immigrate or seek asylum in countries where they are less likely to lose their jobs, be ostracized, abused, imprisoned, tortured or even murdered.

Like heterosexual individuals, many LGBTIQI people live alone by choice. Sociologists notice in them the concept of the *chosen family* (or *family of choice*). Their chosen family is made up of a network of close friends, who may be any sex or gender and any sexual orientation. This makes up for the absence or shortcomings of their biological family. This network provides affection, listening, support and mutual aid. Since the advent of the Internet, even socially or geographically isolated people can overcome loneliness by developing supportive relationships with others.



For a long time (and still the case in many countries), every individual had to marry a person of the opposite sex in order to produce offspring. Until the very end of the 20th century, this was the recognized way to start a family throughout the world. For centuries, men and women who preferred same-sex partners married people of another sex in order to have and raise children.

LGBTQI people have always raised children born from heterosexual relationships. It is surprising that we consider LGBTQI fatherhood or motherhood as novelties, since they have existed for a very long time, although not always identified as such. When there was no other alternative, many gay men, lesbian women and trans* or intersex people who wanted to have children entered into traditional marriages. This continues to be the case in many countries. Parenthood resulting from a relationship or co-parenting with an individual of the same sex is still the most common form of LGBTQI parenting. Sometimes people subsequently form new same-sex couples, so their children are raised under two forms of parenting.

9.1

LGBTQI MARRIAGE FOR ALL AND PARENTING

Marriage for all (if the spouses' age permits) is a recent achievement, dating back to the early 2000s. At the time of writing, marriage-like unions (but not equal in responsibilities and rights, as is the case in Italy and Greece) are also allowed in some 30 countries, where two individuals of the same sex can form a legally recognized couple. Access to marriage is often, but not always, accompanied by the right to have children, whether through medical assistance, surrogacy or adoption.

GLOSSARY ON DIFFERENT FORMS OF LGBTQI PARENTING

- We can be a **biological parent**, also called **genetic parent**, since the child is from an egg or sperm from our body.
- We can be a **legal parent** (who may be simultaneously a biological parent) if a child has been officially and legally recognized as our own.
- We can be an **adoptive parent**, since we can legally be a parent without being biologically or genetically a parent. In the increasingly common blended family, the **step-parent** is the spouse of the biological and/or legal parent. A step-parent may become an adoptive parent of their spouse's children.
- Finally, **co-parenting** is a rarer case where two people (a man and a woman, at least one of whom is homosexual) decide to conceive a child together and then raise it with shared custody, while having no plans to cohabitate together.



There are several types of adoption in different countries. Adoption is permitted in many countries, although its conditions may vary. For male couples in particular, adoption is an alternative where the use of surrogacy for others (also known in popular language as “surrogate mother”) is prohibited. However, internationally, many countries prohibit same-sex adoption, which limits the possibilities (although a single individual who is discreet about their sexual orientation may in principle adopt). Some countries that recognize same-sex unions or marriages prohibit adoption.

In women, artificial insemination, from sperm provided by an acquaintance, is an easy non-medical reproductive technique. The donor generally has no intention of co-parenting, much less legally recognizing the child. That said, multi-parenthood is being debated in order to determine the status of the man who helped conceive the child (which was raised and recognized by a couple of women), but who nevertheless wanted to have parental responsibilities and rights. This could be a topic for media reports.

Medically assisted insemination can in principle be used by any woman, although laws and regulations may limit and sometimes prohibit access to single women or same-sex couples. In this case, the donor is anonymous; he will remain a stranger in the child's life (although several countries allow any child to know their father under certain conditions). However, surrogacy remains controversial, with some countries recognizing it, others not, or under certain conditions, for example, whether it is done on a voluntary basis in order to prevent any commodification of children or of women's bodies. Increased openness to parenting through adoption, insemination or third-party participation opens a door for sexually diverse youth who want to start a family. About two-thirds of LGBT youth want to live as a couple and have children.²⁰

Research on the topic shows that children of LGBT individuals or couples develop just as well as others. Like their parents, they sometimes encounter homophobic or transphobic reactions, but unfortunately this is commonplace for all children who can be associated from near or afar with a minority, be it ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc. Obviously, the more such families are visible in the public space, the less they are statistically marginal and marginalized and thus less likely to be treated differently. Many children have two fathers or two mothers without causing them any problems. The challenge is sometimes to find a different name for each parent, for example, daddy and dada, mom and mommy (children are very creative with vocabulary).

Although this is still a debated and controversial issue in many countries, marriage for all and recognition of LGBTQI parenting are two powerful affirmations of equality for LGBTQI people, who are no longer regarded as second-class citizens in terms of their rights.

20 - *Être homo aujourd'hui en France*, M. Dorais and I. Chollet H&O éditions, 2012; *De la honte à la fierté*, M. Dorais, A. Vaillancourt and M. Mendo, VLB, 2014.



9.2 WORKPLACES

Many LGBTQI individuals never disclose this aspect of their private lives at work. Being openly LGBTQI may even cause problems when looking for work. This likely explains why many LGBTQI people have turned to professions known for their open-mindedness. Not so long ago, most people believed that gay men were all hairdressers, artists or waiters: those who worked in these occupations were more open, therefore more visible, although not necessarily more numerous there than elsewhere. Given the surrounding prejudice in so-called traditional occupations, living openly as gay, lesbian or trans may still pose challenges today.

9.3 EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL LIFE

The emotional and sexual lives of LGBTQI people are both the object of curiosity and taboos. The possible forms of complementarity in a couple are almost infinite: we can be complementary based on difference, resemblance or, as is often the case, based on a combination of similarities and differences, regardless of our sex, gender, sexuality, culture, etc. Believing that certain practices are reserved for gay men (e.g. anal intercourse) or lesbian women (for example, the use of sex toys) is unfounded prejudice, since these practices are widespread among opposite-sex couples.





SITUATION OF LGBTQI SENIORS

The two most isolated and vulnerable groups in LGBTQI communities are in the opposite course of life: youth and seniors. We have already discussed the situation of LGBTQI teens; we will now consider the situation of LGBTQI seniors 65 years of age and over.

LGBTQI environments and communities do not have traditions of intergenerational collaboration, especially among men. Several factors contribute to this: gay culture is very much youth-oriented, so after 40 years, a gay man is generally considered to be old. Moreover, the myth that aging gay men are predators persists, even in the gay community, which means that generations usually do not mingle together. Unfortunately, a complementary myth persists that unscrupulous young people take advantage of and financially abuse LGBTQI seniors, which can put them on the defensive. Such abuse is obviously possible, but there is no evidence that it is more frequent in LGBTQI communities than elsewhere.

Even LGBTQI community events and gatherings tend to develop their own niche and audience. Too many elderly people will scare away young people; the opposite is equally true. In short, there are few or no opportunities for intergenerational sharing. However, learning about self-esteem or resilience and self-disclosure strategies are strengthened by peer support. Seniors can act as inspirational role models for younger generations. Conversely, young people can be sources of inspiration for seniors, especially through their innovative or dissenting spirit and non-conformity.

Many LGBTQI people associate aging with loneliness and isolation. Those who are not or are no longer in a relationship (when possible) or who do not have or no longer have families are more affected. Youthful friendships (if any) were often lost along the way. The AIDS epidemic resulted in many gay and bisexual men dying when drugs prolonging the lives of HIV-positive people did not exist. Seniors who lived through the late 1970s to the late 1990s experienced many bereavements of acquaintances, friends and lovers. What's more, these bereavements were experienced in silence and secrecy, due to a lack of social recognition of these bonds of love and friendship.

In general, there is a social invisibility of aging LGBTQI people in both LGBTQI communities and in society as a whole, which assumes that every senior is heterosexual, if not asexual. However, there are LGBTQI people of all ages and even people coming out or having their first relationship after they are in their 60s. This is particularly the case in countries where attitudes and laws have rapidly changed: older people are able to experience what they could not have considered possible when they were younger.



Without family or loved ones who are caregivers, many LGBTQI seniors have no alternative but to live in institutions reserved for people their age. Few of these places are truly open to LGBTQI realities. For many LGBTQI seniors, leaving home means going back into the closet for fear of reactions from staff or other residents. Couples who have been together for decades are sometimes separated or have to pretend not to know each other. This little-known reality has tragic consequences on the well-being and longevity of these individuals.

Trans* people face particular prejudice when living in institutions, which are most often organized in a binary way: either they are reserved for men, they are reserved for women, or they are mixed but separate men and women into non-mixed communities. This makes life nearly impossible for a transgender or non-binary individual: discrimination sometimes exists at the very stage of admission under the pretext that they are not willing to welcome this clientele. When it comes to body care, difficulties also arise when the individual's body does not match the male/female model, which can go as far as refusing to help the individual wash or take a bath.

In short, there is sometimes an increased marginalization of LGBTQI seniors since they belong to an invisible minority, are categorized as old and are away from their homes. In the case of debilitating diseases, they find themselves in serious difficulty if they have not developed a chosen family or surrogate family and do not have children, grandchildren, nephews or nieces able to support them.

Nearing death, questions may also arise about the burial site, especially when ties have been cut with their family of origin that owns the family burial site, but also questions about the inheritance, when there is one. A will can be an ultimate coming out when the loved one, who has hitherto remained in the shadows, or the chosen family are favoured. Not to mention the spiritual support needed by many people at the end of life: who can they turn to when most major religions and their representatives reject LGBTQI realities?

For a long time, LGBTQI people have had to be creative in order to survive: there is no doubt that they will need to draw on this attribute during their final stage of life. Growing old means coping with losses and bereavements, but it also means making the most of the remaining resources and strengths. To date, little attention has been paid in journalism to showing how this strength and resilience can be developed.

In Quebec, for example, the Fondation Émergence has developed the public service campaign *Aging Gayfully*, which focuses on the resources and achievements of LGBTQI people 70 years of age and over. Since 2001, *The LGBT Aging Project*, based in Massachusetts, USA, has been aiming to raise awareness of issues specific to aging sexually and gender diverse populations. These organizations introduce these unknown realities to both the general population and younger LGBTQI generations, which contributes to a more inclusive society.





ISSUES SPECIFIC TO TRANS* PEOPLE

Although there have always been variations in gender in every culture, never before have we heard so much about trans* people.

Not all trans* people that journalists meet will be at the same stage of their transition. There is a nearly infinite range of possible transitions. During the process of asserting their gender (depending on where they live in the world and what is available), individuals in the process of transition will have access to a variety of aesthetic, dress, biomedical and civil procedures. In countries open to sexual and gender transition and transidentity, in order to be entitled to a change of civil status and first name, it is no longer mandatory to have undergone reassignment surgery.

To understand their specificity, sometimes it is still important to distinguish between social and surgical transition. The change in their first name, the use of this first name on a daily basis and the permanent adoption of clothing associated with the gender they feel are all examples of social transition. The anatomical transition for people who want a sex change includes hormonal or surgical procedures. These changes may include modifications of the genitals, face, chest, etc.

In a growing number of countries, it is no longer mandatory to have undergone sex reassignment surgery—an operation that may include a transformation of the genitals—in order to be entitled to a change in civil status. Without a change in civil status, the trans individual may experience problems with police or identity checks when travelling abroad, since their physical appearance would not match their stated sex. This is a great source of anxiety for trans* people.

An individual presenting themselves as a woman will sometimes be denied the right to healthcare services because the gender on their identity papers does not match their gender expression. Some nations prohibit any form of sex change or even a change in the name assigned at birth, which can cause trans* people to experience significant psychological distress. Although gender identity generally develops around 3 to 4 years of age and many young trans* people are aware of their aspiration from childhood, it is often in early adolescence that these young people assert their gender. If support is not provided, the desire to be considered a sex other than the one assigned at birth or a gender that does not match their sex (at least by cultural standards) can cause turmoil for these youth and their loved ones.

Disclosing an identity involving a transition process (gender, sex or both) is often an agonizing time for trans* youth, especially those who do not have parental support. Reporting on this subject can play an important role in raising awareness.



On each continent, there are different ways of experiencing and expressing gender. Many cultures acknowledge the existence of more than two genders. Among Muxhes living in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, males at birth subsequently adopt traditionally female behaviour and roles. Among the Dagara people living at the northeastern tip of Ghana and across the border in Burkina Faso, gender is perceived as a masculine or feminine energy that can emanate from an individual regardless of their anatomical sex. In Polynesia, Rae rae are male-born individuals who are considered to be a third sex, who devote themselves exclusively to tasks considered to be feminine.

Trans* people face systemic discrimination almost everywhere in the world. Some are thus forced to turn to prostitution or begging to survive, two circumstances that expose them to even further physical and sexual violence. These already difficult conditions are worsened by limited or no access to healthcare.

Mainly due to trans* activism, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) removed gender identity disorder from its pages. The new designation, *gender dysphoria* or *gender incongruence*, means that the problem is no longer associated with a gender considered to be incongruent with the sex assigned at birth but rather the suffering experienced as a result of this incongruence. WHO has followed suit by removing gender identity disorder from its official diagnostic manual.

Moreover, a queer movement emerged in the West in the late 1980s. The *queer* designation, previously an insult, was reappropriated by activist groups to refer to any non-conformist identity regarding gender or sexual orientation. The term has since been used to refer to an identity that rejects man/woman, masculine/feminine or straight/gay binary relationships. It also refers to a philosophy, a way of life and sometimes a social movement. Widely used in LGBTQI communities, the term can have many meanings. When an individual uses this term, the proper thing to do is to ask them how they define it, since there is no common definition.

Many countries legally recognize the identity of intersex, trans* and non-binary people. For example, Canada, Germany and Australia recognize a neutral or undetermined gender on official identity papers such as passports and birth certificates. And more and more public and private health insurance plans pay for hormonal and/or surgical treatments for trans* people.

Gender transition among children and adolescents is still open to discussion or debate in many societies. Today, many journalists give voice to the people concerned, those around them and the specialists supporting them, which allows us to better understand these little-known realities. Encouraging forums for dialogue and safe spaces and promoting the expression of these youth can significantly enhance their well-being. The following text box provides suggestions to journalists who would like to address trans* realities.



A QUICK REMINDER OF THE BASIC RULES WHEN ADDRESSING TRANS REALITIES:

- **Protect the anonymity** of interviewees, minors and adults if their safety or **well-being may be threatened as a result of this disclosure.**
- **Never disclose anything without the explicit, free, informed and revocable consent of the people interviewed or observed.**
- Write in a balanced manner, without making value judgments, and use **appropriate terms** (for example, avoid confusing sex, gender and sexuality—see the lexicon included in this document).
- **Ask interviewees for their first names, last names and pronouns they prefer to use.**
- **Never assume their sex, gender or sexual orientation.**
- **Respect their self-determination in terms of their identity.** An individual has the right to self-determination and self-identification, but also to change their opinion on this matter during their lives, provided that they are not coerced. The de-transition of trans* people, although rare, does exist; it should be addressed without any sensationalism, since it is an expression of individuals' self-determination, as is the transition itself. De-transition should never be used to discredit transidentity.
- **Do not systematically address the taking of hormones and body modifications** (except at the individual's invitation and with their prior consent), as this can be very intrusive and disrespectful of their privacy.



SEXUAL VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY LGBTQI PEOPLE

A largely unknown fact, LGBTQI people (particularly youth) are significantly more likely than others to experience sexual violence.²¹ The perpetrators may be loved ones, such as original family members or ex-partners, or third parties seeking to “punish” LGBTQI people for their difference or prey on their vulnerability.

Transgender or transsexual people are at the highest risk. Due to the pressure to conform, rejection by family or peers, difficulty staying in school or remaining in the workplace, adolescence and early adulthood (the period when they become aware of their sexual or gender identity) can be a particularly difficult time. Malicious third parties may take advantage of the situation to assault, abuse or attack someone who is more vulnerable at this time.

Due to their portrayal in pornography, trans* people (particularly those who have begun a transition from male-to-female sex or from male-to-female gender) are hypersexualized because they are mistakenly perceived as willing to have sex with anyone. This myth emboldens perpetrators to attack. Moreover, given the discrimination and ostracism suffered in many parts of the world, one of the only means of survival for trans* people is prostitution or sex work. This situation is extremely vulnerable to violence and sexual assaults by clients and pimps.

Even worse, when a trans* individual who is a victim of sexual assault is considering seeking help following the abuse and trauma, they often face barriers. Some may not believe that they could be a victim, much less a credible individual, when they report violence against them. Centres that help or house abused women often refuse them entry on the grounds that they were not born women, that they are not “fully” women, or that other women or staff members would object.

Lesbian, bisexual and questioning women are the target of explicitly lesbophobic sexual assaults, committed in order to “punish” them for being who they are and to force them to have heterosexual intercourse. The perpetrators are sometimes family members, friends or acquaintances, but also homophobic or lesbophobic men. Some assaults experienced by lesbian or bisexual women are committed by a spouse preying on vulnerable situations. Violence in lesbian couples is not always taken seriously by the police. Violence committed by one woman against another is underestimated, since both partners are perceived as victims by the police and even by the justice system when cases go to trial.

21 - *Après le silence*, under the direction of M. Dorais and M.-J. Gervais, Presses de l'université Laval, 2019.



When the assault reported by the victim dates back a few years (childhood, adolescence, early adulthood), this drama is often mistakenly perceived as a possible “cause” of the victim’s lesbianism or bisexuality. Due to the unfortunate focus on the origins of the victim’s sexual orientation (even if it is not their reason for seeking help), the assistance provided does not meet the true need.

Some types of assaults specifically involve gay, bisexual or questioning men. Assaults on adolescents or young adults who are homosexual or bisexual are misrepresented by their perpetrators as an “initiation” in order to exonerate themselves. In this type of abuse, the perpetrator preys on the victim’s isolation. For example, a young man who is lonely in a rural area and is wondering about his sexuality may be desperately seeking guidance and support. Sometimes predators prey on this situation.

In places where men meet (as well as in places where men and women meet), some individuals use alcohol and drugs to desensitize their victims and deprive them of their ability to consent. This means that an adult man may be raped by a peer. Not to mention the explicitly homophobic rapes committed by gangs of young people who congregate around gay meeting places in search of prey.

In general, sexual assaults of men are minimized or even categorically denied. It is even worse when it comes to gay or bisexual men: it is wrongly assumed that a gay or bisexual man, if he already has an active sex life, will automatically consent to any sexual relationship with another man. This is not true. There is denial of peer sexual violence within gay communities. It is mistakenly believed that every man should and could have “defended himself,” especially if he is an adult and well-built. Above all, we forget that sexual assault is an abuse of power.

When assaults occurred in their childhood or adolescence, gay, bisexual or questioning men are also asked whether the assaults could be the “cause” of their same-sex attraction—as if homosexuality were a pathology arising from trauma (it’s not true).

Assaults and rapes are often reported by the media. In recent years, in particular as a result of the ME TOO movement, there has been increased sensitivity and empathy towards victims. However, there is still a long way to go to fully empower victims in their lives, first by listening to what they have to say. It is also important to ensure that social and health services that support victims, the police and the justice system are receptive to victims from sexual minorities.

In closing, reporting sexual assault against sexually or gender diverse people publicly identifies the individual, which they may not want. To avoid being re-victimized, some people do not want to make their sexual orientation or gender identity public. It is thus important to ensure that the privacy of these individuals, minors and adults is well protected.²²



LGBTQI HEALTH ISSUES

13.1 PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL HEALTH

Although varying from country to country, the prevalence of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBIs) and HIV is generally higher among men who have sex with men and among trans* people. There are many factors that lead to this discrepancy: an epidemiological history (in the West, the disease first spread among men who had sex with men), higher injection drug use among certain segments of the LGBT population, and sometimes a greater number of sexual partners on average. That said, the increasingly diverse range of prevention tools such as rapid screening, post-exposure treatment and preventive treatment (PreP) is increasing the effectiveness of prevention programs, resulting in fewer deaths from AIDS than ever before, including among LGBT people.

Therefore, the situation is improving. In addition to being a statistical observatory on the progress of the epidemic, UNAIDS is actively combating the spread of the virus around the world. Its 90-90-90 program aims to control the disease by 2030 by ensuring that 90% of people with HIV are aware of their HIV status, that 90% of people living with HIV receive treatment, and that 90% of people receiving treatment maintain a viral load below the threshold of virus transmission.

The news media can make a significant difference in the fight for access to health programs and services. For example, the gay community benefited from the dissemination of relevant information about AIDS through newspapers, magazines, educational programs and public service campaigns devoted to the topic. By contrast, sensationalist media coverage and silence on the disease have caused serious harm by depriving the gay community of public empathy.

HIV is transmissible regardless of sexual orientation and gender: heterosexual people make up the largest number with HIV worldwide. In some nations, the continued close association of AIDS with marginalized populations still hinders public awareness and prevention of the disease, which does not discriminate.



13.2 MENTAL HEALTH

Due to ostracism and discrimination that LGBTQI people face, they are more likely to experience psychological distress, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population. The prevalence of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts is significantly higher among homosexual and bisexual people and even higher among trans* people. In this regard, LGBTQI youth in the United States are on average five times more likely to have attempted suicide than their heterosexual peers.²³ In Canada, one in three trans* youth has thought about suicide in the past year alone.²⁴ It should be noted that obtaining data on this issue is not possible in all regions of the world. However, all studies on this subject tend to show a higher rate of suicidality among LGBTQI youth. Exclusion from the family environment, bullying at school and in the workplace, psychological, physical and sexual violence, in short, homophobic acts, produce very concrete consequences.

Rejection of one's own sexual orientation or gender identity (so-called internalized homophobia and transphobia) can be self-destructive, especially among young people. A recent survey conducted in France found that at least one quarter of homophobic attacks in the past year were committed by LGBT people themselves.²⁵

Confinement (a health measure in the event of a pandemic) significantly increases the social isolation of LGBTQI people, particularly those who are not in a relationship. In April 2020, as Coronavirus spread, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights called on its member states to be cautious about respecting the rights of LGBTQI people. People who are marginalized based on their gender identity or sexual orientation are more likely to experience financial insecurity and lack of support. As a result, they are hit the hardest by the economic crisis during an epidemic.

In addition, LGBTQI people are sometimes deprived of basic health care, especially in countries that do not recognize their existence or that even criminalize them. For some, using medical services may mean increased exposure to ostracism, violence, discrimination, arrests and even prison sentences. In addition, LGBTQI youth confined in openly homophobic and transphobic families or environments are at greater risk of domestic violence and ending up on the street.

LGBTQI people are also more affected by epidemics and pandemics because they depend on their own socialization environments. For example, when community organizations and commercial establishments dedicated to this clientele are closed, this can lead to isolation that is difficult to endure.

23 - Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016.

24 - Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015.

25 - Jasmin Roy Sophie Desmarais Foundation & Fondation Jean-Jaurès, 2019.



SEXUAL DIVERSITY IN SPORTS, ARTS AND MEDIA

Progress has been slow in reducing the under-representation of sexual and gender diversity in the media. In the past, diversity was often ridiculed and portrayed in a negative, stereotypical and sensationalist way. While more and more media are now demonstrating a willingness to respectfully portray LGBTQI people, many challenges remain.

According to the 2017 “LGBT Realities” survey, Canada’s first cross-country survey on LGBT communities,²⁶ although 81% of individuals surveyed say that Canadian society is inclined to make an effort to integrate people from these communities, 46% of LGBT+ people themselves say they are misrepresented in the media. Two-thirds of them would like to be depicted in a less stereotypical way and would like to see greater diversity in LGBTQI personalities in the media, on TV and in film.

14.1 SPORT CULTURE NEEDS TO CHANGE

Sexual and gender diversity in sports remains a great taboo to this day. The world of sport remains one of the last bastions of sexual and gender diversity prejudice. Although a significant portion of the population belongs to the LGBTQI communities, few athletes are “out.” In Canada and the United States, very few active professional players publicly identify themselves as sexually or gender diverse. In May 2019, the European heterosexual soccer player Antoine Griezmann publicly criticized the systemic homophobia that prevails in stadiums.²⁷ Among other things, he described homophobic chants that contribute to a culture of hatred towards homosexuals. LGBTQI-phobic slurs are almost standard practice in sports, especially among men.²⁸

The public disclosure of their private lives remains an important challenge for LGBTQI athletes. Deciding to make such a disclosure is tantamount to facing insults, in addition to living in fear that a sponsor will withdraw their financial support, sometimes from the entire team. Fortunately, sponsors are increasingly taking a stand against homophobic and transphobic discrimination. In recent years, several Olympic athletes have come out, but the battle is still far from over in men’s team sports. Homophobic slurs are still common among coaches, players and spectators. There is little effort to counter this behaviour openly and firmly.

26 - Survey conducted by CROP for the Jasmin Roy Sophie Desmarais Foundation.

27 - *Têtu* magazine, Summer 2019, No. 219.

28 - *Évaluation des attitudes des sportifs français envers les homosexuels : effets du genre et du type de sport*, Anthony Mette, André Lecigne, Lucile Lafont, Greg Décamps. Published in *Staps* 2012/2-3, No. 96-97, pages 157-167.



Journalists who cover sports have a greater responsibility, since this sector has a high profile in the media and on social networks. Titles and texts that stir up prejudice, hatred and contempt against LGBTQI athletes should be avoided. For example, instead of saying that an athlete *confessed* their homosexuality or gender identity, it would be better to explain that the individual publicly *disclosed* their sexual orientation or gender identity. After all, it is not a crime, but rather a self-affirmation.

Journalists and sports news media also have a duty to cover LGBTQI people without systematically referring to their difference. A common mistake in the media is to systematically identify an athlete as gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans* when that information is irrelevant. Michael Sam, the first openly gay American football player to be selected by an NFL team in 2014, was subjected to this treatment. After coming out publicly, the media almost systematically referred to his sexual orientation when they talked about him, even if the context was completely inappropriate. He quit.

At the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, two Canadian TV hosts made inappropriate comments about the appearance of figure skater Johnny Weir. One of them criticized the fact that the athlete wore lipstick, dressed in a feminine way and that this type of performance left a “bitter” (sic) image of figure skating. The other host compared the skater to runner Caster Semenya (who had been forced to take tests to prove that she was indeed a woman at the previous Olympic Games). This implied that the figure skater Johnny Weir should compete with women. This unfortunate display of sexism and homophobia was criticized by some of the public, which prompted the commentators to apologize.

Commentators and sports hosts should stick to analyzing the performance of athletes and their technical records. Comments about their gender expression, private lives, sex lives or dress style are inappropriate and harmful. The job of sports competition commentators is to analyze the performance of athletes, not to convey or encourage prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. For example, contrary to current practice, Canadian hosts could emphasize the creativity of the skater, who could serve as a role model for LGBTQI youth.





14.2 THE ARTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

The presence of sexual and gender diversity in the arts is not new. Aristophanes dealt with homosexuality in his works; Shakespeare played on sexual ambiguity in several of his works. The depiction of homoeroticism and transidentity have also been featured in visual art themes since Antiquity. To cite a few examples, the statue of the Sleeping Hermaphrodite, dating from the 2nd century A.D. and which can be seen in the Louvre Museum, depicts non-binarity. In 1864, Simeon Solomon created the painting *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*, in which two women embrace and kiss. Works by Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci were greatly inspired by their homosexual sensibility.

Sexual and gender diversity has almost always been expressed through the arts in most cultures. However, since the end of the 20th century, there has been an increasingly open and particularly assertive emergence of LGBTQI artistic expression. However, several challenges remain in the news coverage of cultural life.

Although some LGBTQI artists want their works to be associated with their sexual orientation, identity or gender expression, many do not necessarily want their private lives to be associated with their art, and it is not always appropriate to do so. If in doubt, the easiest and obvious way is to ask the individual concerned. In the case of recently deceased artists, relatives and biographers (if applicable) may be able to provide good advice on what should or should not be disclosed.

14.3 THE ISSUE OF FORCED *COMING OUT*

News media and journalists have sometimes forced the coming out of artists or public figures by publicly disclosing their sexual orientation and gender identity without their consent. However, journalists and the media have a duty and moral obligation to ask permission from the individual concerned before disclosing private information which, depending on context, could be harmful to the individual. Even in Western societies, which are considered open in this respect, nearly 50% of people do not disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity in their workplace in order to protect themselves. A forced coming out can be very stressful if they are not ready or do not feel the need. In countries where laws do not protect LGBTQI communities, the danger is even greater for artists and athletes: it could ruin their careers. They may also be rejected forever by their peers and loved ones or even condemned by the courts where their sexuality is a crime.

Journalists must respect the privacy of public figures. Before disclosing information about an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, we need to ask ourselves whether it is information of public interest and whether it may adversely affect their dignity or safety. It is always necessary to ask the individual concerned: they know their private lives best and are able to consent to what may or may not be made public.



LGBTQI TOURISM AND COVERAGE OF LGBTQI EVENTS

Tourism is an important sector of the global economy. The middle class is growing in many parts of the world: more and more people can afford to travel. However, the search for novelty and exoticism may result in a cultural shock. Each country has its own habits and customs.

LGBTQI tourism (sometimes called “pink tourism”) is playing an increasingly important role in the tourism industry. A growing number of private companies and destinations are becoming interested in this niche market. Marketing firms even argue that the gay market may be one of the most lucrative. However, activities and events aimed exclusively at LGBTQI people are still rare.

Most events celebrating the LGBTQI community are intended for everyone, regardless of participants’ sexual orientation or gender identity. The best known are the LGBTQI pride celebrations, shows and festive parades. Each year, they attract growing crowds of festival-goers in some major cities (there are nearly a thousand such events across every continent²⁹).

Various metropolises (e.g. San Francisco, New York, Montreal, Toronto, Paris, Berlin, Tel Aviv) are the scene of large-scale events over several days or weeks. While retaining the militant or political aspects that originally presided over these events, they have become major festivals. They highlight the wide variety of talents and resources among LGBTQI people.

There are sometimes individuals or organizations that criticize these events, going so far as to organize counter-demonstrations, which have caused injuries and even deaths. Protesters are outraged at what they consider to be the hypersexualization or indecency of certain participants. Public displays of affection, which would not be offensive if expressed by two people of the opposite sex, are sometimes perceived as provocations. For example, costumes are harshly criticized because they are considered to be too suggestive, although they are common in Rio’s Carnival, for example. The main purpose of such events is to raise awareness in order to eliminate the invisibility of LGBTQI people in the public space. Making diversity visible, including in the variety of its events, is precisely the aim.

29 - Interpride, Pride Radar report 2016/2017.



Organizations plan *Gay Games* and *Outgames*, international sports and cultural competitions open to anyone who wants to celebrate equality and diversity. As LGBTQI tourists are not welcome everywhere in the world, these forums for visibility ensure that participants feel safe and secure. When media cover these events, it is important to mention the mission of these games and their inclusiveness.

Since foreigners have to comply with the laws and customs of the countries they visit, it is sometimes necessary to act with restraint; otherwise, they may be putting their physical integrity or even their lives at risk. Even laws that promote sexual and gender diversity cannot ensure acceptance by the local population; this acceptance often varies from region to region within the same country, or even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood within the same city. LGBTQI tourists sometimes walk a fine line between respecting the culture and traditions of the community visited and respecting the rights acquired in their countries of origin.

The rise of LGBTQI tourism is often seen as a factor in developing and displaying human diversity. Although LGBTQI travellers face some risks when visiting countries where traditions are less open to their realities, in the medium and long term, these trips may be catalysts for opening up. Travel is synonymous with encounter, and meeting others often gives rise to dialogue, which can promote harmony together.

Finally, the pitfall of ethnocentrism persists. LGBTQI people are not free of prejudice. The desire to form ties with the local population sometimes turns into a desire to impose their own values, viewpoints or lifestyles on the inhabitants of the regions visited. The term *homonationalism* refers to this attitude of making homosexuality as experienced in the West as the ideal. This can lead to racist or xenophobic attitudes. The meeting of cultures should not mean their imposition. International LGBTQI organizations are striving to support advocacy initiatives in countries where they are sorely lacking, but by empowering those affected, not by thinking or acting on their behalf. These initiatives can serve as model examples to be cited.





CONCLUSION

LGBTQI people make up a significant part of the population. However, their realities are still unknown. To raise awareness about their living conditions, particularly the problems they face and the solutions they adopt (without perpetuating prejudice and stereotypes) is an ongoing challenge — especially since diversity is itself extremely diverse and not homogeneous. Depending on their cultural roots, where they live, their age and stages of life, LGBTQI people do not all face the same challenges.

There is a great range of sexual and gender diversity in the general population. LGBTQI realities provide a long list of overlooked issues to be creatively addressed by journalists and the media. In all cases, journalistic ethics encourage an objective, rigorous approach to the realities being addressed: accuracy of facts, balanced content and support for experiential and scientific knowledge. Journalists and the news media have a responsibility to publish reports that refute preconceived ideas and prejudices, especially when it comes to people or communities that are unknown or socially ostracized.

By valuing human rights, whatever the topic or angle taken, we can respectfully discuss the living conditions of LGBTQI people. In the past, media reporting on problems experienced by LGBTQI people living with HIV, for example, changed from sensationalism to compassion for the human tragedies. In some countries, this was a turning point. Journalism's task is to inform, but also to present new viewpoints, to stimulate reflection and, in doing so, to encourage openness to others and to live more harmoniously together.

At a time when misinformation is proliferating on the Internet, journalistic quality remains a highly sought-after commodity. More than ever, professional journalists and the media have a leadership role to play in combating the misleading information and conspiracy theories that are popping up everywhere — especially since this misinformation often targets already marginalized people, minority groups and communities.

More than ever, reports, investigations, editorials and journalistic analyses are widely disseminated on the Internet. They are among the watchdogs of freedom of thought. People are seeking reference points by learning about what is going on around them and in the world. The humanity in each individual is one of these reference points. We are all alike and different. This is an opportunity to unite and learn from each other.



SUMMARY

What's most important to remember about sexual and gender diversity

Sexual and gender diversity is primarily a matter of human rights to be respected by everyone, without exception.

Belonging to LGBTQI communities is often synonymous with discrimination, ostracism, threats, harassment, physical and sexual violence, sometimes imprisonment and even murder.

To avoid prejudicial impacts on LGBTQI individuals or communities, it is essential to choose words carefully using appropriate, non-judgemental vocabulary, adapted to the realities described.

Reference to an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity should not be included unless it is of public interest and relevant to the story.

Always ask the interviewee how they want to be identified. Beware of forced coming out: it is up to the individual concerned to disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity in their own way, if and when they deem necessary.

The journalistic code of ethics (specifically regarding fairness and objectivity) obviously applies when addressing LGBTQI realities. The facts must be based on experiences and scientific or historical research.

As information professionals, you have a role to play in eliminating prejudice. For example, stories about immigrants, youth and seniors from LGBTQI communities, especially trans* people (who are among the most vulnerable groups) can foster more empathy and support for them.

Sports journalists can help demystify sexual and gender diversity in the sports community, which is still one of the most closed bastions to these realities.

LGBTQI individuals and communities are very diverse.

Don't assume anything—ask!



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