

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**13. Gay Fathers:
Study Deals with Gay Men's Experiences as Planned Fathers**

Bos, H. M. V. In press. *Planned gay fathers: parenthood and family functioning*.

This study involves gay fathers who became parents as openly gay men. Various aspects of parenting experiences were compared between 23 gay male and 100 heterosexual fathers in the Netherlands¹.

Gay fathers more often noted happiness as a motive to have a child, but they were not more emotionally involved or concerned in raising their children than heterosexual fathers. As parents, gay fathers experienced more negative treatment, felt less competent, felt more pressure to justify their roles, and more often sought social support. This could be a result of the societal rejection of planned gay fatherhood or the part-time status of gay fathers. Perhaps because they became parents via sperm donation and shared custody with biological mothers, gay fathers lived less than 20 days a month with their children.

Gay and heterosexual fathers were equally likely to live in a suburban or urban area. Both groups of fathers were in romantic relationships with a partner lasting an average of 15 years. There were roughly equal numbers of daughters and sons with gay and heterosexual fathers. All fathers had similar levels of education, but gay fathers were significantly older than heterosexual fathers (average age of 43 compared to 41 years). The average number of children in planned gay father families was around one and children were an average age of about 4 years. The average number of children in heterosexual father families was around two and children were an average age of 6 years.

¹ The Netherlands became the first country to allow same-sex marriage in 2001. In general, public opinion in the Netherlands regarding LGBTQ people is relatively positive, but less positive towards parenting by LGBTQ adults. As in many Western countries, it remains difficult for gay men to adopt a child or become a father through surrogacy arrangements.