

Acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals  
in the Netherlands 2013



# Acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals in the Netherlands 2013

Saskia Keuzenkamp  
Lisette Kuyper

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The Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP

Rijnstraat 50

2515 XP Den Haag

The Netherlands

Tel. +31 70 340 70 00

Website: [www.scp.nl](http://www.scp.nl)

E-mail: [info@scp.nl](mailto:info@scp.nl)

The authors of SCP publications can be contacted by e-mail via the SCP website.

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## Foreword

On 21 January 2013 US President Barack H. Obama said: ‘We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still...’ [...] ‘Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law – for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well’. With these words, he was writing history. Never before had a US president declared support in his inauguration speech for the struggle for equal rights for homosexual and heterosexual citizens. Obama is not an isolated figure here, as one country after another opens up civil marriage to same-sex couples

The Netherlands has a much longer tradition of equality before the law and political support for gay and straight citizens. The present Dutch government is continuing this tradition, among other things by calling for the rapid introduction of a new bill granting lesbian couples the same adoption rights as heterosexual couples, banning the appointment of new civil servants who refuse to marry gay couples and assigning priority to the battle against homophobia.

Unfortunately, that long tradition of equality before the law has also shown us that legal equality does not automatically lead to social acceptance. Accounts regularly appear in the Dutch media about incidents of homophobic violence. Earlier publications by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP confirm the limits of the social acceptance of homosexuality in Dutch society. And SCP reports on negative experiences and mental health issues among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals show that negative attitudes and serious mental health issues are sadly not marginal phenomena in some groups.

At the request of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, SCP reports every other year on trends in and the current status of the acceptance of homosexuality. For the first time, the present edition also includes the social acceptance of bisexual and transgender individuals. The report concludes that acceptance by the general public is continuing to move in the right direction, but that acceptance by certain religious, ethnic and political groupings is failing to keep pace with this trend, as is the acceptance of certain groups who do not behave in accordance with gender norms.

Prof. Paul Schnabel  
Director, Netherlands Institute for Social Research | SCP



## 1 Increase in social acceptance

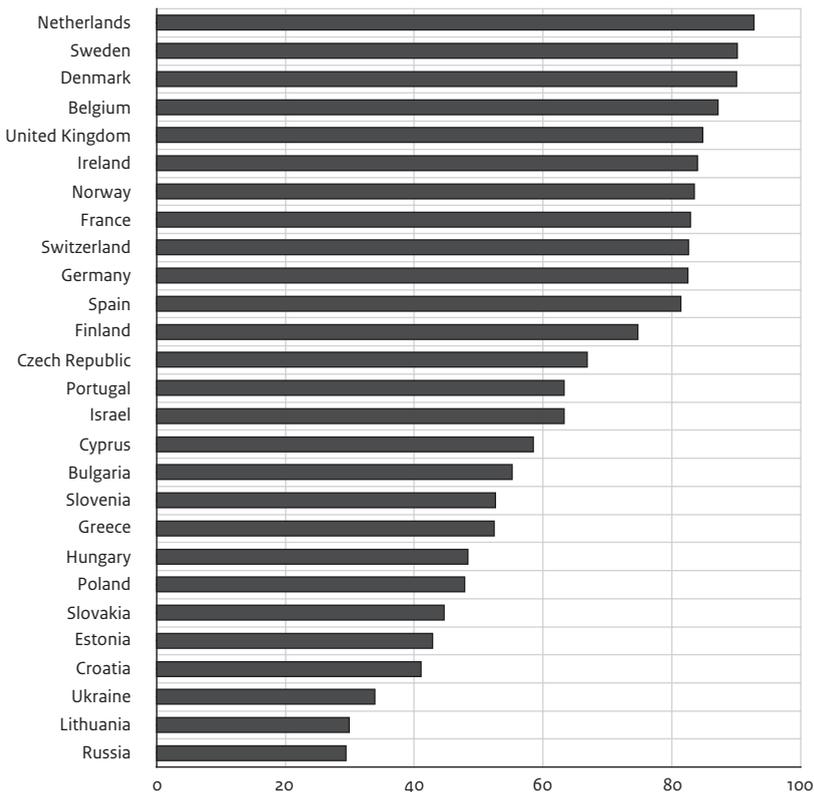
The Dutch government is committed to equal rights for and social acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (LGBT's), and also to securing their acceptance in Dutch society. Since social acceptance is one of the most important goals of the government's LGBT emancipation policy, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research/SCP carries out periodic research at the request of the Minister of Education, Culture and Science into trends in the attitudes of the Dutch public to homosexuality. Based on its own data sets, supplemented by data from third parties, SCP has published a concise report every two years since 2006. True to tradition, in the 2013 edition we begin with a brief outline of the attitudes of the Dutch population compared with attitudes in other countries. However, as this publication is appearing simultaneously with a report that looks in detail at acceptance of homosexuality in Europe (Kuyper et al. 2013), we devoted only limited attention to the international comparative perspective. We do however present a number of up-to-date, supplementary figures, including on attitudes to transgressors, which are not covered in Kuyper et al. (2013). This is followed by a description of the present situation in the Netherlands. First we look at views on homosexuality and explore dimensions such as acceptance of equal rights, visible homosexuality in public and people's acceptance of homosexuality in their immediate networks. We then discuss differences in attitudes between different population groups. In view of the particular attention in government policy for the social acceptance of homosexuality by non-Western migrants and young people, we treat these groups separately. Finally, for the first time we devote attention to the attitudes of the Dutch public to bisexual and transgender individuals – groups which have to date received little attention in research either in the Netherlands or internationally. As well as presenting the findings, where possible we compare them with the attitudes to homosexuality. For information on the sources used, see [www.scp.nl](http://www.scp.nl).

## 2 The Netherlands in an international comparative perspective

A frequently expressed view in international opinion research is that gay men and lesbian women should be free to live their own lives as they wish. The Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark take turns to head the rankings in their positive response to this statement, but as in the last survey, the proportion of the public who endorse that view is highest in the Netherlands. A large majority of people in the other Scandinavian countries also support this view, as do a majority in Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. By contrast, a majority of the population in Central and above all Eastern Europe do not endorse this view, with large tracts of the population in the former Soviet Union, in particular, rejecting the view that gay men and lesbian women should be allowed to live their own lives as they wish.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2.1

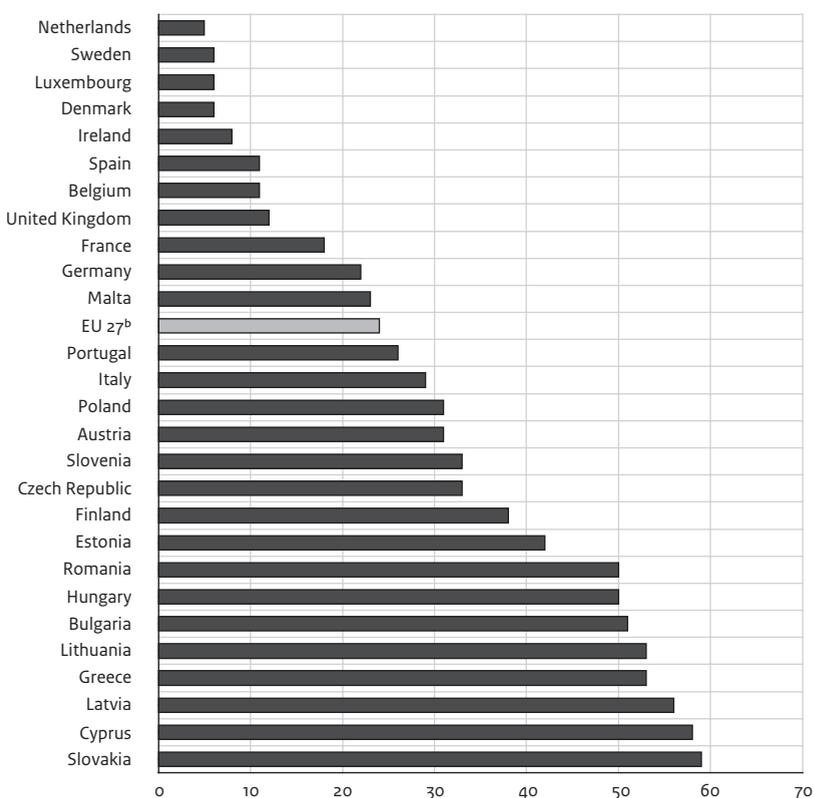
(Strongly) agree with the statement 'Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish', population aged 15 years and older, 2010 (in percentages)



Source: ESS (ESS'10)

A special edition of the European Commission’s Eurobarometer survey was devoted to discrimination in 2012, and also included attitudes to homosexuality. Unlike in the European Social Survey (ESS) used previously, the Eurobarometer only covers the Member States of the European Union (EU). Respondents were asked how they would feel if their government leader was gay, lesbian or bisexual (LGB). People in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries had the least difficulty with this, with Finland being an exception. The difference compared with countries such as Spain, Belgium and the United Kingdom is small, while in the Baltic states, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Slovakia, as well as in Greece and Cyprus, half or more of the population would find this a problem.

Figure 2.2  
 Would feel uncomfortable with a gay, lesbian or bisexual government leader,<sup>a</sup> population aged 15 years and older, 2012 (in percentages)



a Score from 1 (completely uncomfortable) to 10 (completely comfortable). The figure shows the scores from 1 - 4.  
 b This is an average.

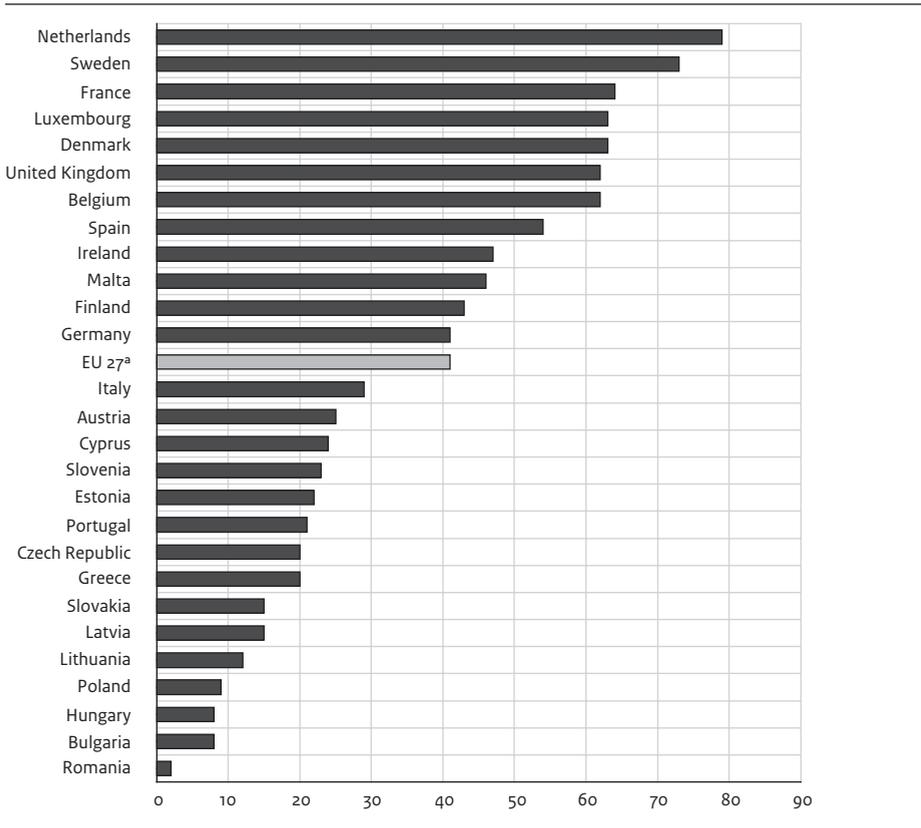
Source: European Commission (2012)

An interesting question in the Eurobarometer is whether people have gay friends or acquaintances. The responses to this question give an impression of how open gay men and lesbian women are about their sexual preference. Logically, this will be more likely where there is greater social acceptance of homosexuality, and this does indeed prove to be the case: three-quarters of the Dutch and Swedish populations have gay friends or acquaintances, while a majority of people in other countries with an accepting attitude know one or more gay people. In countries where the opinion climate towards homosexuality is less favourable, this applies for only a small proportion of the population.

Compared with the situation in 2009 (see Keuzenkamp 2011), the proportion of the public with homosexual friends or acquaintances has increased in countries where the climate was already accepting of homosexuality. In countries where a majority reject homosexuality, there has been little or no increase in this proportion.

Figure 2.3

Has gay, lesbian or bisexual friends or acquaintances, population aged 15 years and older, 2012  
(in percentages)



a This is an average.

Source: European Commission (2012)

As in the previous edition of this report, we may conclude that the social acceptance of homosexuality in Europe is greatest in the Netherlands, with Sweden and Denmark running very close (Keuzenkamp 2011). In most Southern European countries, but especially in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the situation is substantially less positive.

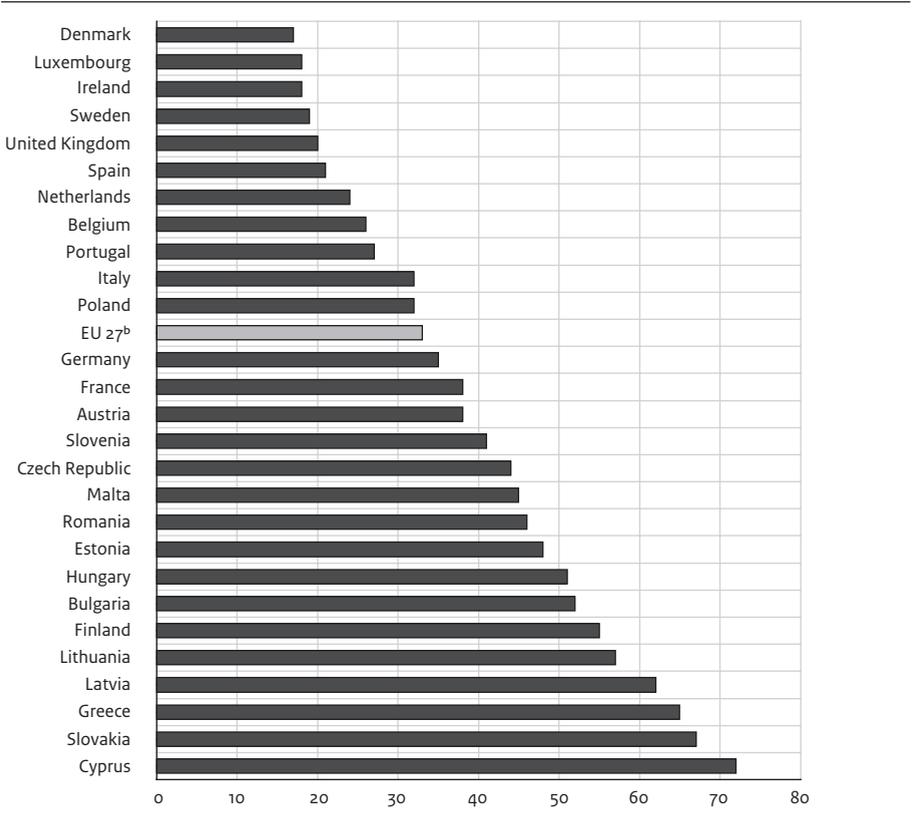
The study by Kuyper et al. (2013) shows that tolerance of homosexuality has increased in all European countries in recent decades, and especially in the period 1990-1999. In many cases, the increase in tolerance then came to an end or slowed significantly. How attitudes to homosexuality will develop in the future is of course impossible to say. On the one hand, there are factors which will contribute to increasing tolerance (such as rising education levels and processes of democratisation and modernisation). On the other, the economic crisis and the greater endorsement of national values and traditions could lead to growing intolerance (see also Kuyper et al. 2013).

#### Transgenderers

The 2012 edition of the Eurobarometer for the first time included questions designed to measure public attitudes to transgender individuals. The ranking of countries is broadly the same as for attitudes to LGBs, but the proportion who would feel not comfortable is larger for transgenderers in all countries. The questions on transgenderers also draw a slightly higher proportion of 'don't know' responses. This is particularly notable in Bulgaria and Romania (18% and 17%, respectively, followed by Portugal with 10%). The proportion of the population who would have difficulty with a transgender as government leader is lowest in Denmark, Luxembourg, Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom, at between 17% and 20%. The Dutch population scores slightly less positively on this point: 24% would not feel comfortable. There are in fact only six EU Member States where a majority would feel comfortable with a transgender government leader (i.e. a score of 7 or more on scale from 1 to 10; not shown in figure). These are Denmark (66%), Sweden (65%), Luxembourg (58%), Spain (57%), the United Kingdom (56%) and the Netherlands (53%).

Figure 2.4

Would feel uncomfortable if the government leader was a transgender,<sup>a</sup> population aged 15 years and older, 2012 (in percentages)



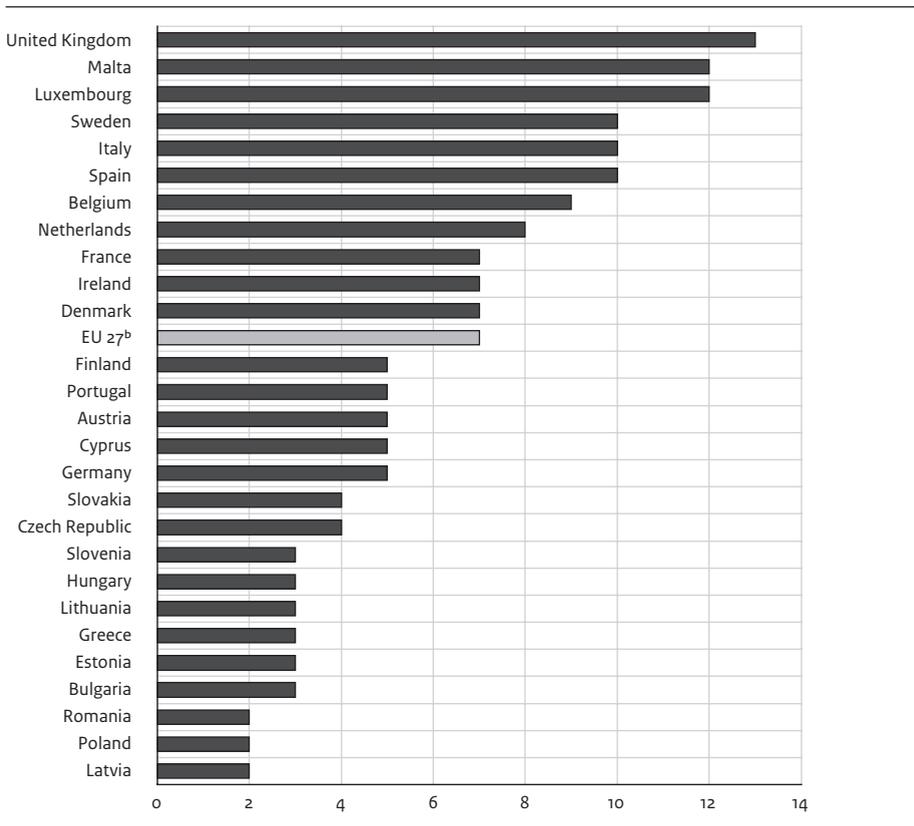
a Score from 1 (completely uncomfortable) to 10 (completely comfortable). The figure shows the scores from 1 - 4.

b This is an average.

Source: European Commission (2012)

Respondents were also asked whether they had friends or acquaintances who were transgenders. This is relatively uncommon, and much more so than having LGB friends or acquaintances. The United Kingdom, Malta, Luxembourg, Sweden, Italy and Spain are the only countries where at least 10% say they have a transgender person in their circle of friends or acquaintances. This is less common in Central and Eastern Europe.

Figure 2.5  
 Has friends or acquaintances who are transgenders,<sup>a</sup> population aged 15 years and older, 2012  
 (in percentages)



a 'Do you have friends or acquaintances who are transgender or transsexual?'

b This is an average.

Source: European Commission (2012)

All in all, the acceptance of LGBT's by the Dutch public is high, making the Netherlands one of the most LGBT-friendly countries in Europe. This is particularly the case for the social acceptance of homosexuality; the acceptance of transgenders is rather lower in comparison with a number of other European countries.

### 3 Attitudes of the Dutch to homosexuality in 2012

Although social acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands is high, it does vary depending on the aspects being considered. To obtain a picture of Dutch attitudes to homosexuality, we look at four dimensions of those attitudes (see Keuzenkamp et al. 2006). The first is what we call 'general acceptance': people's feelings and opinions about homosexuality in general. In international comparative research, this is often measured by asking respondents to what extent they agree with the statement that homosexual individuals should be free to live their own lives as they wish, but questions about disapproval of sex between people of the same gender also fall within this dimension. The second dimension is concerned with equal rights and discrimination and seeks to ascertain people's views on the extent to which homosexual citizens should have the same rights as heterosexual citizens, for example in the areas of marriage and adoption. The third dimension measures reactions to visible evidence of homosexuality in public, for example two men walking hand in hand or kissing each other in the street. Finally, we measure reactions to homosexuality 'at close quarters': for example, how would people feel about having a son or daughter living with someone of the same sex. To obtain a broad understanding of public attitudes, respondents were presented with a number of statements relating to these dimensions: four statements about general acceptance, two about equal rights, four about homosexuality in public and two about homosexuality in their immediate setting.

The most general statement is that gay men and lesbian women should be free to live their own lives as they wish. Almost nine out of ten members of the Dutch public agree with this statement. Two statements about sex also belong to the general dimension. The idea of sex between two people of the same gender elicits a fair amount of revulsion when it involves two men (17% find that repugnant). A fourth statement expresses the view that homosexuality undermines the distinction between women and men. One in twenty Dutch people feel that gay men are not real men.

Table 3.1

Opinions on homosexuality, population aged 16 years and older, 2012 (in percentages)

	(completely) agree	neither agree nor disagree	(completely) disagree	never thought about it
<i>general</i>				
Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish.	87	6	7	1
I think sex between two lesbian women is disgusting.	8	21	67	4
I think sex between two gay men is disgusting.	17	23	55	5
Gay men aren't real men.	5	12	81	2
<i>equal rights</i>				
Gay marriage should be abolished.	6	8	85	1
Gay couples should have the same rights to adopt children as straight couples.	64	15	20	2
<i>homosexuality in public</i>				
I find it offensive if two men kiss in public.	29	27	43	1
I find it offensive two women kiss in public.	19	24	55	2
I find it offensive if a man and a woman kiss in public.	14	25	60	1
If I see a man and a woman walking hand-in-hand I mind less than if I see two men walking hand-in-hand.	22	16	61	2
<i>homosexuality in own setting</i>				
I would have a problem if my child was being taught at school by a gay or lesbian teacher.	4 (very un- acceptable	8	86 (very) acceptable	3
Imagine you had a son or daughter cohabiting with a partner of the same sex. Can you say how acceptable you would find that. <sup>a</sup>	6	16	77	

a Score from 1 (very unacceptable) to 5 (very acceptable).

Source: SCP (HOMO'12)

A majority of the Dutch public support equal rights for homosexuals, but that support drops off if children are involved: 20% reject the idea of equal adoption rights for gay and straight couples. By contrast, banning marriage to same-sex couples is supported by only 6%; 85% believe that gay couples should be able to marry.

Earlier studies have shown that the public expression of (homo)sexual preferences frequently meets with disapproval. For example, in a 2000 survey of sociocultural developments in the Netherlands (SOCON survey), 42% of respondents aged 18-70 years said they found it offensive if two men kiss each other in public; 31% felt the same about two

women kissing (Keuzenkamp et al. 2006). When sCP put this question to the population aged 16 years and older in 2006, the results were comparable, though the proportion disapproving of men kissing in public was higher (49%) than in the earlier survey (Keuzenkamp 2007). The percentages in the most recent sCP survey are substantially lower: 29% find it offensive if two men kiss in public and 19% feel the same about two women kissing. Some people consider any form of kissing in public unacceptable, but the resistance is lower for straight couples (14%) than for LGB couples.

The fourth dimension is concerned with (hypothetical) situations in which people are confronted with homosexuality at closer quarters: a child being taught by a gay or lesbian teacher or cohabiting with a partner of the same sex. A small minority (4%) say they would find it a problem if their child had a gay or lesbian teacher, while 6% would find it unacceptable for their son or daughter to cohabit with someone of the same sex. This is a relatively small percentage, but still disconcerting for LGBs who have not (yet) come out to their parents.

#### Summary score

At the request of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, sCP has developed a summary score in order to ascertain whether the social acceptance of homosexuality is increasing. The measure is based on the response scores for the statements in table 3.1.<sup>2</sup> In 2006, 15% of the Dutch public recorded a negative score on the measure 'social acceptance in a broad sense' (table 3.2). This figure is much lower in all later surveys, and according to the most recent survey (May 2012) has dropped to 4%. It should be noted here that non-Western migrants are not well represented in these surveys, whereas they hold relatively negative views on homosexuality (see chapter 4). In addition, the four Intomart surveys are difficult to compare with the three regular sCP surveys due to differences in research methods.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the conclusion that the rejection of homosexuality is declining over time appears justified.

Table 3.2

Public attitudes to homosexuality summarised in a single score, population aged 16 years and older<sup>a</sup>  
(in percentages)

source	completely negative	negative	neutral	positive	completely positive
Cultural changes in the Netherlands survey 2006	3	12	33	40	12
SCP Life Situation Index 2008	2	7	27	46	19
SCP Life Situation Index 2010	2	8	31	43	17
Intomart survey for OCW* 2009	1	6	25	47	21
Intomart survey for OCW* 2010	1	6	23	45	26
Intomart survey for OCW* 2011	1	6	24	45	24
Intomart survey 2012	0	4	20	51	24

a The SCP data for 2008 relate to a group aged 18 years and older. Analyses of the other sources using only that age group produce the same outcomes as for the over-16s.

\* OCW = Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Source: SCP (CV'06); SCP (SLI'08); OCW (HOMO'09, '10, '11); SCP (HOMO'12)

## 4 Differences between population groups

As earlier publications have shown, different sections of the population differ markedly in their attitudes to homosexuality. In the most recent survey, the biggest differences are found in relation to the degree of church affiliation or, more broadly, religiosity, and in political preference. The most religious group (people who attend a religious gathering at least once a week) more often hold negative views on homosexuality: 26% disapprove, compared with 2% of those who never attend a religious gathering. There are also clear differences between supporters of different political parties. Least negative are supporters of Green Left (GroenLinks), the liberal-conservative vvd and the Socialist Party (sp); the most negative are supporters of the right-wing pvv; there were too few respondents who said they would vote for one of the small Christian parties to be able to calculate the percentage.

The factors that influence the acceptance of homosexuality may be related. For example, older people have a lower educational level on average and go to church more often. An analysis which includes all the personal characteristics in table 4.1 shows religiosity to be the main determining factor (not shown in table).

In addition to differences between population groups in the level of acceptance of homosexuality now, those attitudes have also developed differently over time. By way of comparison, the right-hand column of table 4.1 shows the proportion of each group who had a positive or completely positive attitude to homosexuality in 2010 (Keuzenkamp 2010). Although a comparison based on two measurement points is risky, it does show where there has been a clear increase in the proportion with a positive attitude to homosexuality. The biggest differences (10 percentage points or more) are found among the youngest and the oldest groups (16-24 years and 65 and over), the low-educated, orthodox religious Dutch natives and supporters of the Christian Democratic Alliance and Green Left party.

### Views of non-Western migrants on homosexuality

The public debate on homosexuality devotes a good deal of attention to non-Western migrants, a group who are more negative in their views on homosexuality than Dutch natives (Keuzenkamp 2010).

A large, representative survey was held in 2010 among the four largest migrant groups in the Netherlands (migrants of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean origin) (Survey of Integration of Minorities (SIM); see Huijnk en Dagevos 2012). Respondents were aged 15 years and older and included members of both the first and second generations.<sup>4</sup> Three statements were included in the questionnaire to measure attitudes to homosexuality.<sup>5</sup>

Table 4.1

Differences in attitudes to homosexuality by sex, age, education, religiosity and political preference, population aged 16 years and older, 2010 and 2012 (in percentages)

	(completely) negative	2012 survey neutral	(completely) positive	2010 survey (completely) positive
sex				
male	5	25	70	65
female	4	16	81	77
age				
16-24 years	2	12	85	71
25-34 years	6	19	75	73
35-44 years	4	18	77	74
45-54 years	4	15	82	74
55-64 years	6	29	66	74
≥ 65 years	5	27	68	58
education				
primary, pre-vocational secondary	6	20	74	61
senior gen sec / pre-university /sen sec vocational	4	21	75	75
higher professional /university	4	18	79	77
church involvement/religiosity				
goes to church once or more per week	26	32	42	30
goes to church once every two weeks or less	5	21	74	69
never	2	18	80	77
political preference <sup>a</sup>				
VVD (liberal-conservative)	1	26	74	73
PvdA (Labour)	4	13	83	84
CDA (Christian Democratic Alliance)	5	31	64	52
PVV (right-wing)	10	34	56	63
SP (socialist)	1	19	80	86
D66 (democrats)	2	7	91	84
GroenLinks (Green Left)	0	6	94	80
don't know	1	22	77	

a Responses to the question of how people would vote if elections were held now.

Source: SCP (HOMO'12); OCW (HOMO'10)

People of Turkish and Moroccan background less often agree with the general statement that gay men and lesbian women should be free to live their own lives as they wish than migrants of Surinamese and Antillean origin and the native population: where a large majority (84% or more) of the three latter groups agree with this statement, the figures in the Turkish and Moroccan groups are 54% and 62%, respectively. The responses to the two other statements also show clearly that people of Turkish and Moroccan origin often have difficulty with homosexuality. Migrants of Surinamese and Antillean origin are also more negative than Dutch natives in their responses to these statements. A minority

(28%) of migrants of Moroccan and Turkish origin think that gay men and lesbian women should be allowed to marry; the figure is two to three times higher in the other groups. Three-quarters of people of Moroccan and Turkish origin would consider it a problem if their child was in a same-sex relationship. Among migrants of Surinamese and Antillean origin and in the native Dutch population, the percentage ranges between 17% and 34%.

Table 4.2

Completely agree with statements about homosexuality, by ethnic origin, 2011 (in percentages)

	Turkish	Moroccan	Surinamese	Antillean	native Dutch
Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish.	54	62	86	84	91
It's good that gays and lesbians are allowed to marry.	28	28	61	58	80
I would find it a problem if my child had a steady partner of the same-sex.	75	76	34	32	17

Source: SCP (SIM '11; main study)

Huijnk and Dagevos (2012) also looked at differences in acceptance within the migrant groups. Perhaps contrary to expectations, they found very few differences between the first and second generations. For example, three-quarters of second-generation migrants of Moroccan and Turkish origin would consider it a problem if their own child was in a same-sex relationship. It is also striking that among those of Moroccan origin, a higher education level is not related to greater acceptance of homosexuality: 81% of this group with a higher professional or university degree would consider it a problem if their child was in a steady relationship with someone of the same sex. This contrasts with the other migrant groups, where a higher education level is associated with greater acceptance.

Huijnk and Dagevos (2012) investigated whether differences between migrant groups can be explained by factors such as religion. They found that almost 60% of the lower acceptance of homosexuality among migrant groups could be explained by religion, socioeconomic status and demographic factors. The factor 'religion' proved to be particularly important, explaining over 40% of the difference between Dutch natives and non-Western migrants. Being in paid work or not, education level and age also played a role. Ethnic concentration in the neighbourhood also appears to have an influence, though it is minimal compared with the other factors. Huijnk and Dagevos (2012) cite a number of possible factors which may explain the rest of the difference in acceptance between migrants and Dutch natives. Among other things they refer to the importance of the social setting in which migrants grew up (e.g. the norms and values in their former family) and the social setting in which they live now (e.g. the presence of openly homosexual friends or acquaintances). However, they were unable to test these explanations using the available data.

Finally, the authors looked at the influence of factors relating to integration on acceptance of homosexuality. They found that integration into Dutch society is associated with a positive attitude to homosexuality, while integration in the origin group is associated with lower acceptance. A longer period of residence in the Netherlands, identification with the Netherlands, contacts with Dutch natives and use of Dutch media were all found to be associated with greater acceptance of homosexuality. By contrast, a strong identification with the origin group and more contacts within that group were associated with lower acceptance. The authors also show that migrants who feel more accepted in Dutch society are more accepting of homosexuality, and vice versa. Seen from this perspective, a negative social climate towards migrants can contribute to them distancing themselves from Dutch society and its associated values.

#### Views of young people on homosexuality

The acceptance of homosexuality by young people also attracts a good deal of interest, with much attention being devoted to the suggestion of lower acceptance of homosexuality in schools and the consequences of this for young LGBT's. Attempts have been made in recent years to promote acceptance of homosexuality in schools, and since 1 December 2012 it has been mandatory to provide information on LGBT issues in Dutch primary and secondary schools. The survey of acceptance by the Dutch public (see table 4.1) shows that young people are not more negative in their attitudes to homosexuality than older people. However, that survey covers only 16-24 year-olds, whereas the political and public debate is concerned with the younger age groups.

One of the most important national studies of the acceptance of homosexuality among schoolchildren is *Health Behaviour in Schoolaged Children* (HBSC). In 2009, school pupils aged 11-16 years were asked a number of questions about their acceptance of homosexuality. This survey will be repeated in 2013, so that any changes will become visible. For the present report, however, we will have to make do with the figures from 2009.

Table 4.3

Views on homosexuality, 11-16 year-olds in primary and secondary education, by sex, 2009  
(in percentages)

	primary education			secondary education		
	boys	girls	total	boys	girls	total
I wouldn't mind having gay boys and lesbian girls as my friends.						
(completely) disagree	15	9	12	16	4	10
neither agree nor disagree	12	10	11	17	9	13
(completely) agree	44	58	51	45	73	59
never thought about it	29	24	27	22	13	18
I think it's disgusting if a boy and a girl kiss each other.						
(completely) disagree	70	68	69	84	84	84
neither agree nor disagree	17	17	17	8	9	8
(completely) agree	7	8	7	3	3	3
never thought about it	7	8	7	6	4	5
I think it's disgusting if two boys kiss each other.						
(completely) disagree	18	28	23	11	31	20
neither agree nor disagree	17	22	20	14	27	20
(completely) agree	53	32	43	67	31	49
never thought about it	12	17	15	9	12	10
I think it's disgusting if two girls kiss each other.						
(completely) disagree	21	29	25	42	31	37
neither agree nor disagree	19	22	20	21	28	24
(completely) agree	49	32	40	28	30	29
never thought about it	12	17	15	9	11	10

Source: Trimbos/UU/SCP (HBSC'09)

Table 4.3 shows that there are indeed limits to the acceptance of homosexuality by Dutch schoolchildren, especially when it comes to young people of the same sex kissing: 7% of primary school children think the idea of a boy kissing a girl is disgusting, whereas no fewer than 43% think the same about two boys kissing and 40% about two girls kissing. Although the exact percentages are slightly different (3%, 49% and 29%, respectively), the same patterns are found among secondary school pupils. Boys in particular are negative in their attitude to homosexuality. Roughly one in ten primary and secondary school pupils say they would not have gay boys and lesbian girls among their friends. Secondary school pupils were also asked whether a boy or girl would be able to say honestly if they were gay or lesbian. Three out of ten respondents thought this would not be possible and a further three out of ten did not know. Only 5% thought that gay and lesbian youth would be able to tell everyone at school.

Table 4.4

Views on ability to say honestly that one is gay/lesbian at school, 12-16 year-old secondary school pupils, by sex, 2009 (in percentages)

	boys	girls	total
yes, could tell everyone	5	6	5
yes, could tell friends	30	42	36
no	38	23	30
don't know	28	30	29

Source: Trimbos/UU/SCP (HBSC'09)

The survey 'Sex under 25' (*Seks onder je 25<sup>ste</sup>*) (De Graaf et al. 2012) asked young people aged between 12 and 25 years to react to statements about the acceptance of young people of the same sex kissing and having sexual relations, and also about friendships with LGB youngsters. The results confirm the findings from the HBSC study, showing that roughly one in ten young people do not want friends who are LGB and that a sizeable proportion of Dutch young people disapprove of young people of the same sex – especially boys – having sexual relations or kissing. Boys are more negative than girls across the board, as are young people aged 12-17 years, young people of Moroccan or Turkish origin, and young people who are strongly Christian, strongly Islamic and who have a lower education level.

## 5 Opinions on bisexuals and transgenders

Research on homosexuality, both national and international, initially concentrated on the well-being of homosexual men and asked people about their views on 'homosexuality'. Since then, more attention has been given to separate subgroups such as lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. These subgroups are found to face different problems which sometimes have different causes (Keuzenkamp et al. 2012; Kuyper 2011). Thanks to this knowledge, more attention is now also given to the social acceptance of bisexual and transgender citizens, and a number of studies have become available which examine the current status of that social acceptance. The lack of earlier studies means no statements can yet be made about any changes in attitudes.

### Bisexuality

A first, limited survey carried out by SCP in 2011 showed little difference in the attitudes of the Dutch public to bisexual men and women (Van Lisdonk & Kooiman 2012). Between 80% and 86% agreed with the statement: 'Bisexual men and women should be free to live their own lives as they wish'.

The 2012 survey contained more statements about bisexual men and women (table 5.1) with a view to ascertaining whether certain preconceptions about bisexuals were endorsed and in order to be able to compare the attitudes of men and women to gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. The two preconceptions about bisexual individuals were: 'Bisexuals have not yet discovered what their sexual preference is' and 'Bisexuals are not capable of maintaining monogamous relationships'. Roughly half the population reject those statements, with fewer than 10% endorsing them. However, the proportion of neutral responses is fairly high (a quarter) and quite a high percentage of people say they have never thought about it – far more than in the case of the statements about homosexuality. A majority of the survey respondents could imagine being friends with a bisexual woman/man; on the other hand, more than one in ten say this would not be possible.

Table 5.1

Attitudes to bisexuality, population aged 16 years and older, 2012 (in percentages)

	(completely) agree	neither agree nor disagree	(completely) disagree	never thought about it
Bisexuals have not yet discovered what their sexual preference is.	8	25	55	13
Bisexuals are not capable of having monogamous relationships.	8	24	49	18
I could be friends with a bisexual woman (female respondents) / bisexual man (male respondents)	68	12	13	7
I don't feel at ease around bisexual women (female respondents) / bisexual men (male respondents).	6	16	71	7
I don't feel at ease around lesbian women (female respondents) / gay men (male respondents).	6	14	77	3

Source: SCP (HOMO'12)

In response to the statements concerning whether or not respondents feel at ease around bisexual men (male respondents) or women (female respondents), almost three-quarters say they do not feel ill at ease around bisexuals. The percentages are virtually the same as those who feel uncomfortable around lesbian women and gay men. 'Feeling thermometers' ask what respondents think about certain groups of people, making it possible to see differences in attitudes to those groups. Respondents in the present study were asked to say what they think about homosexual men, lesbian women, bisexual men and bisexual women on a thermometer scale ranging from 0 to 100. The average attitude score for all four groups is above 50, and is therefore generally positive. Attitudes to bisexual individuals are rather less positive than those to homosexual individuals, and for both groups, attitudes to women are rather more positive than attitudes to men. It is also notable that women generally hold more positive views than men.

Table 5.2

Opinions on gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men and bisexual women, population aged 16 years and older, by sex, 2012 (average score on a scale from 0-100<sup>a</sup>)

	men	women	total
what you feel about:			
homosexual men	59	76	68
lesbian women	64	75	69
bisexual men	58	69	64
bisexual women	62	70	66
men who behave in a feminine way	45	64	55
women who behave in a masculine way	46	64	55

a Scores between 0 (very negative feelings) and 100 (very positive feelings).

Source: SCP (HOMO'12)

### Gender-deviant behaviour

A similar 'feeling thermometer' was used to ascertain respondents' views about men and women who do not behave in line with what is expected of their gender (masculine behaviour by women and feminine behaviour by men). Earlier research has shown that one of the roots of the disapproval of homosexuality is that people feel that LGBs should above all act 'normally' (cf. Keuzenkamp et al. 2006) and in a way that is expected of their sex. People do not reject a homosexual or bisexual orientation as such, but rather 'effeminate' or 'butch' behaviour, i.e. gender-deviant behaviour. Our present study shows that the Dutch do indeed have more difficulty with this on average than with homosexuality or bisexuality as such. For both gender-deviant categories, the average scores are 55 points. It makes no difference whether the focus is on men who display feminine behaviour or women who exhibit masculine behaviour.

### Transgenders

Rejection of gender-deviant behaviour could form the basis of a negative attitude to transgenders. Transgenders do not feel (completely) at home in the sex they were assigned at birth and might have a different gender expression. Although transgenders have been fully included in the LGBT emancipation policy of the Dutch government since 2007 (OCW 2007), until recently virtually nothing was known about attitudes towards transgenders in the Netherlands. The first figures come from the survey 'Sexual health in the Netherlands 2011' (*Seksuele gezondheid in Nederland 2011*) (Kuyper 2012), which was conducted among participants in an access panel. As this is not a representative sample, the figures need to be treated with some caution.

The participants in this survey were asked to respond to seven questions relating to their attitudes to transgenders and gender-ambivalent behaviour. There appears to be a high level of acceptance of transgenders. A small minority (around 9%) reported that they would break off a friendship with a good friend if they were to modify their body to affirm the desired or experienced sex. At the same time, the survey showed that a

sizeable proportion of the respondents attach value to clarity about someone's gender: 20% think there is something wrong with people who do not feel either male or female; 21% would rather not associate with people who do not feel clearly male or female; and 57% want to know when they meet someone whether they are a man or a woman. A majority of the participants (59%) endorse the notion that someone who has thought about it carefully should be able to have sex reassignment surgery, though a substantial proportion (39%) think that they should bear the costs themselves. In line with surveys of the acceptance of homosexuality, women are more tolerant of transgenders and gender-ambivalent behaviour than men. The level of acceptance is also greater among non-religious respondents. Attitudes to transgenders are more positive among Dutch natives and migrants of Antillean, Aruban and Western origin than migrants of Turkish and Moroccan background (Kuyper 2012).

Table 5.3  
 Agreement with statements about transgenders, population aged 15 to 70 years, 2011, by sex  
 (in percentages)

	men	women	total
I would break off the friendship if a good friend wanted to change her body to become a man.	13	5	9
I would break off the friendship if a good friend wanted to change his body to become a woman.	12	5	8
There is something wrong with people who don't feel like a man or a woman.	26	14	20
I would rather not associate with people who don't know for sure whether they are a man or a woman.	28	14	21
When I meet someone, I think it's important to know whether they are a man or a woman.	63	52	57
If someone has thought carefully about changing their gender, sex reassignment surgery is a good idea.	53	65	59
Sex reassignment surgery should be paid for by the people concerned themselves.	49	29	39

Source: Kuyper (2012)

SCP incorporated these questions into the 2012 edition of the 'Cultural changes in the Netherlands' survey (*Culturele veranderingen in Nederland*).<sup>6</sup> The data will become available in 2013.

## 6 Conclusion

Homosexuality is broadly accepted in the Netherlands, which is still one of the most LGBT-tolerant countries in Europe. Nonetheless, there are sections of the population where the social acceptance is lower. The survey carried out in 2012 shows that across the piece, 4% of the Dutch population aged 16 years and older disapprove of homosexuality. The proportion who disapprove is especially high among followers of orthodox religions (people who attend a religious gathering at least once a week), at 26%. A relatively high proportion of non-Western migrants also have difficulty with homosexuality, something that is closely associated with their religion. Socioeconomic factors explain some of the differences between non-Western migrants and Dutch natives in the acceptance of homosexuality.

Although by and large the situation in the Netherlands is already fairly favourable, then, the degree of acceptance is still increasing. This is happening especially among those with a low education level, the majority of churchgoers, 16-24 year-olds and the over-65s, as well as supporters of the Christian Democratic Alliance and Green Left political parties. Whether this trend is also occurring among migrants cannot be determined due to a lack of trend data. The analysis of factors that may explain differences in attitudes among migrants also fails to produce a uniform picture concerning any anticipated positive development. For example, there is virtually no difference between the opinions of first and second-generation migrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin.

Dutch public attitudes to bisexual citizens are generally positive, though slightly less so than attitudes to gay and lesbian individuals. It would seem that in most cases bisexual and transgender individuals in the Netherlands need have no worries about the possibility of losing friends if they come out. On the other hand, a relatively high proportion of people have difficulty with people who do not behave in the way that is traditionally expected of their sex. Being clearly recognisable as a man or woman and behaving accordingly is still regarded as important in the Netherlands.

## Notes

- 1 People who did not answer are left out of consideration. In Ukraine, Russia and Bulgaria, however, a large group (average 15%) answered 'don't know'. This response was also fairly common in the Baltic states, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Portugal (5 - 7.5%). If this non-response is included in the calculation of the proportion who agree with the statement, the degree of acceptance in those countries is lower than that shown in the figure.
- 2 The negatively formulated items were recoded. A total score was then calculated for all respondents, with respondents who had not answered more than three statements or who had reported that they had never thought about it being left out of consideration (1%). A score was imputed for any missing values from the other respondents, taking into account the overall response pattern of each respondent and the average among the respondents on the item in question. The statement on men and women kissing was of course not included in this measure.
- 3 The SCP surveys in 2006, 2008 and 2010 used written questionnaires, while the Intomart survey was completed online. The Intomart surveys use a panel of persons who are willing to participate in surveys on a regular basis – though only individuals are included who have come into the panel via another random sample of Intomart rather than through self-selection.
- 4 A main survey (face-to-face interviews) and a mixed-mode survey (Internet, telephone and face-to-face) were used. The representativeness of the cumulative survey (both modes together) is good, and better than that of the individual surveys.
- 5 An earlier SCP study also contained three statements, but differences in the research methods mean the findings are not comparable.
- 6 SCP Life Situation Index Survey 2012.

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