

**“Straight but not necessarily narrow...”
Hungarian fathers views on same-sex couples
having children**

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Structure:

Contextualization

Sample

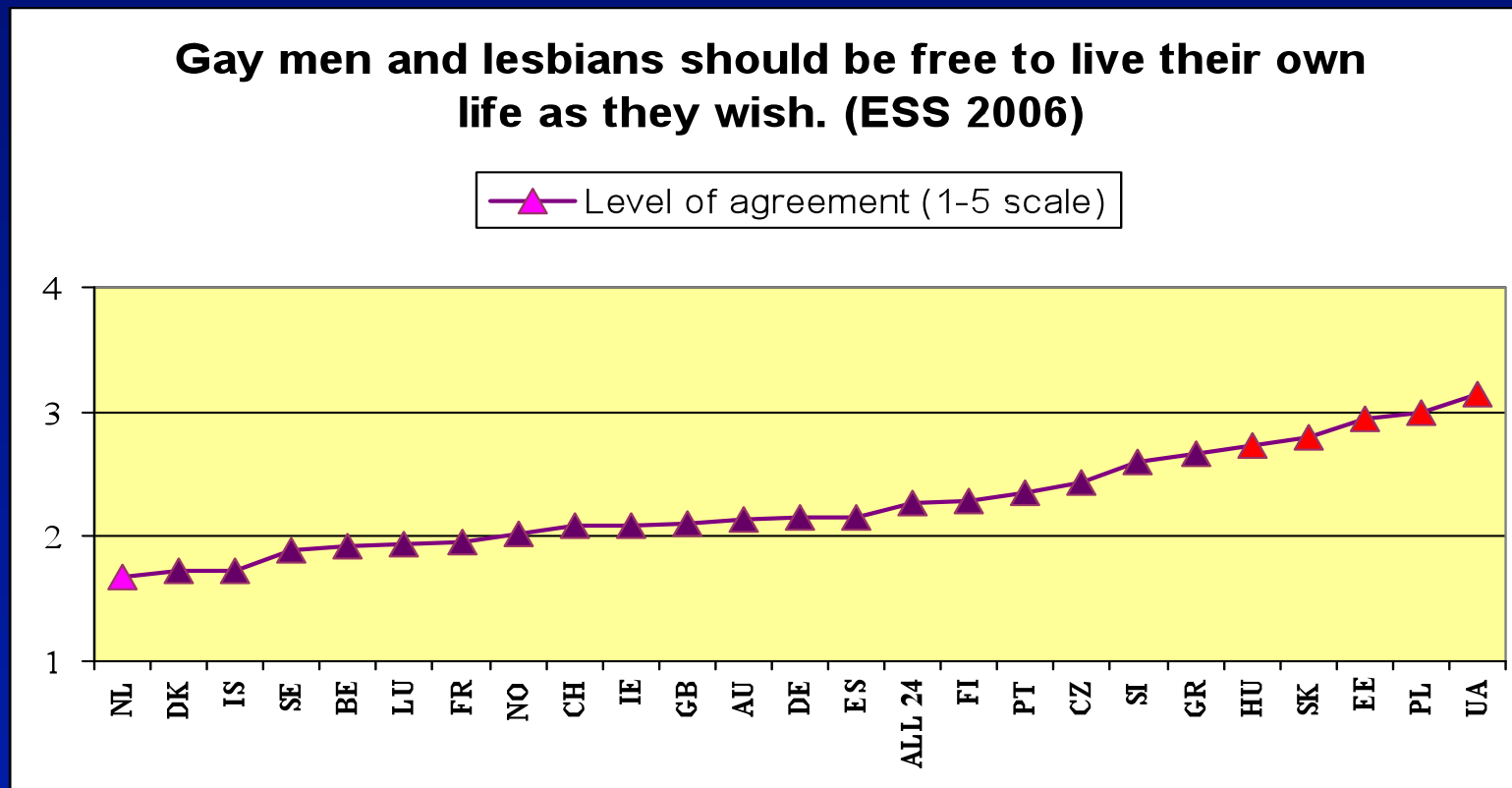
Positive/non-rejecting approaches

International context:

Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish.

(Freedom of lifestyle is meant 'free/entitled to live as gays and lesbians')

European Social Survey, Round 3, 2006/7 (N=45.681)



Adoption of children should be authorised for homosexual couples throughout Europe.

Eurobarometer 2006

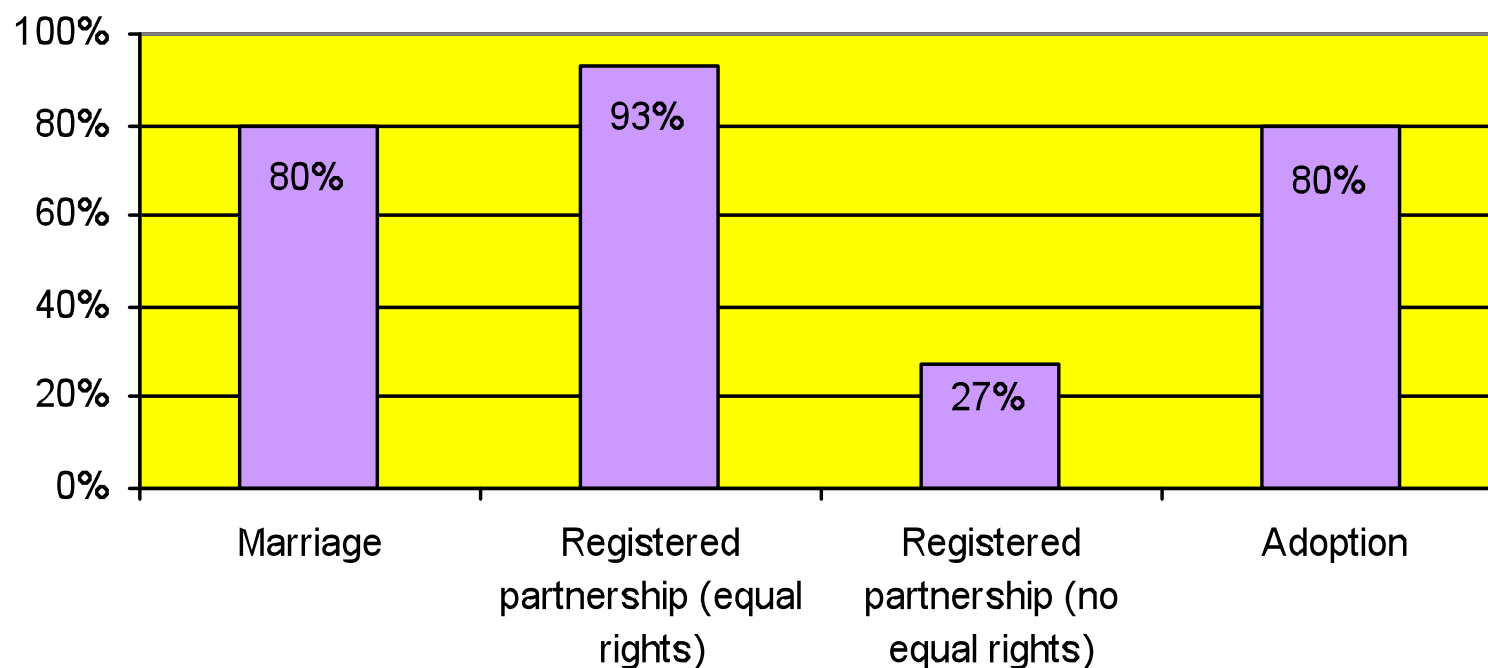
(N=29.152) covering the population aged 15 years and over in the 25 EU member states (+ Bulgaria and Romania)

On the average **32%** of the respondents from the European Union agreed. (Marriage: 44%)

The Netherlands (69%), Sweden (51%), Denmark (44%) were characterised by the highest levels of acceptance, while responses from Romania (8%), Malta (7%) and Poland (7%) indicated the lowest level of acceptance. In Hungary **13%** of the respondents expressed their agreement.

Hungarian context:

Support for same-sex marriage, registered partnership and joint adoption among LGBT respondents (N=1122)



Source: Social Exclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People in Hungary (research conducted in 2007 by the Institute of Sociology, HAS in cooperation with the Háttér Support Society for LGBT People in Hungary and the Labrisz Lesbian Association, sponsored by the Hungarian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)

Joint adoption by same-sex partners was supported more by women than men (similarly to marriage), as well as those with higher educational degree and people living in Budapest. According to the household types joint adoption was favoured most by those who already live together with a same-sex partner, and people living alone.

Almost half of the respondents (47%) referred to their experiences of discrimination in the Hungarian legal system, which included the lack of same-sex marriage and joint adoption in the first place, and the difficulties of leading a single life, lack of artificial insemination, lack of hate crime and hate speech legislation.

Do gays have such rights (marriage, inheritance, adoption), as straights have? That's discrimination, isn't it? (M 18 city)

Discrimination? Are you joking? I am a second class citizen (F 33 Bp)

These days – when they are talking a lot about gay marriage and adoption – I am always amazed that the aspect that I am forced to lead my entire life without having a child. ... And ... it is not emphasised how bad it is for so many to have to live alone! (F 55 Bp)

Naturally I consider my self legally discriminated against (as well as those who belong to such a group). I would, for example, like to have a child, but I can see that this would run into great difficulties in the Hungarian legal system. If I find a partner I would like to get married in the long term ... (F 34 Bp)

No marriage, nor adoption, nor artificial insemination; there is no efficient action against hate speech and hate crime. (M 28 Bp)

It was also emphasised that in the case of 'second parent adoption', 'step parent adoption', or 'co-parent adoption' when the child is already usually the biological child of one partner, and the child is going to grow up in the household with the same-sex family where they are – so the only question is whether it is better for the child to have two legal parents or one. In this context it is important to point out that children living in different family arrangements must not be discriminated on grounds of a state supported normative hierarchy of less or more desirable family arrangements, as children usually have little control over these developments – they just suffer the disadvantageous consequences.

There is remarkably little if any mention of the argument in favour of adoption that very many lesbian women have had naturally born children (as well as numerous gay men), even in Hungary too, and while this demands a lot of lying, it does prove the fact that there is no harm in homosexuals raising children. ... I know that they are avoiding this argument in "the interest of the children", because nobody wants to stand out in public with their own child or children ... (F 67 Bp)

Sample N=49

Empirical findings from the “*Changing Role of Fathers*”
qualitative research project
(sponsored by the HAS Bolyai Award between 2005 and 2008)

Out of the 90 Hungarian fathers (having at least one child aged 14 or younger, being identified by themselves or by a close family member/friend as an active, caring father) with whom I have conducted in-depth interviews 49 answered the question:

What do you think of same-sex couples having children?

Fathers' average age: 37.3 (Age range: 22-60)

Place of living: 62 Budapest; 27 countryside, 1 abroad

Educational level: 58 university; 23 medium; 6 vocational school; 3 max. elementary

Cohabiting status: 69 married (7 second time); 18 cohabiting partner (1 same-sex partner); 3 single parent (widower, divorced, never married)

Number of children: 1 child – 39 fathers; 2 children – 27; 3 children – 18 (6 multiple mothers); 4 children – 3; 5 children – 2 (1 multiple mothers); 6 (including 1 adopted) children – 1

Mothers' average age: 35 (Age range: 26-45)

Educational level of mothers: 59 university; 23 medium; 8 vocational school

What do you think of same-sex couples having children? N= 49

Complete rejection: 19

Rejection: 2

“Questioning”/neutral: 5

Acceptance: 4

Complete acceptance: 14

+ 1 gay father cohabiting with a same-sex partner

Context: What do you think of it if a woman decides to have a child/children on her own?



POSITIVE APPROACH TO SAME-SEX PARENTING

MOTTO: *“just being hetero[sexual] does not necessarily make one a good parent”*

(Bulcsú 33-1, skilled worker, countryside)

PROBLEMATIC POINTS:

Lack of information: on everyday aspects of same-sex relationships: *It is not part of my life, and I do not know anyone...*

Lack of experience: *I have never met or heard of such an adult who had this experience – people are afraid of unknown things.*

Lack of evidence: effects on children's psychological development

Lack of tolerance: *“it is a fact that this [growing up with same-sex parents] is a form of deviance in the given society, and it is also a fact that deviance affects children in a bad way”*
(+ Motivation of having children: *“First it is a part of you and a part of someone you love, so the two of you together will be immortalized somehow in your children... this is the main goal, isn't it?”* (Poincare33-2, judge, Bp))

“Emotionalization” argument

If the same-sex couple is emotionally-spiritually stable, the child they are raising will be all right. On the other hand, the child is being raised in an institutionalized foster home it won't be all right. Emotional stability is more important than having distinctive mother and father roles. (Krisztián 37-4, chemist, Bp)

A well functioning same-sex relationship can provide a child with much more than a “mother-keeps-beating-up-father-or-the-other-way-around” type of relationship. Providing emotional and intellectual nurturing/upbringing is much more important than the fact that they happen to be same-sexed (Miklós33-2, ergonomist, Bp)

[T]he main thing is the emotional model [the parents provide] (Konrád 47-2, writer, Bp)

If conditions are met, you know, if there is maturity... if they [the parents] are grown up enough to realize what it all involves then this is what I say: “Go for it!” (Rezső44-2, bar owner, Bp)

Individual empirical experience

I have personally witnessed it that a homo male couple can bring up a little boy without the child having any problems – it went in such a perfect way that most straight couples could not have done it. And the boy knew exactly that they [the parents] were like that, and he also knew that it was not at all compulsory for him. (Bernát 60-3, former social worker, countryside)

Not an accident

In my view, especially if two men want to have children, they have to want that very much. Women can have children by accident or by intention, or when one is raped, or who knows what kinds of methods were applied in the past... Surely it is a greater challenge if two men, after gathering enough inner strength, decide to go for it. (Dénes 35-1, actor, Bp)

Advantage of having more than one parent

(Note: in Hungary the legal option of individual adoption is provided for gays and lesbians.)

Surely it is better for a child to have two parents to look after it than just one... It is good because you can always appeal against a first opinion, and ask for a second one... And with two parents you have much more chance in the evenings to get one of them to play with you and your Lego. (Márk 42-2, Bp)

I can imagine much more easily that a same-sex couple would bring up a child than that an individual would. Peace and harmony are important aspects here. Acceptance by society is another matter... (Béla34-1, repairman, countryside)

Socialization argument

If a homosexual, male or female, couple adopts a child – though I am afraid there are very few such instances... –, it must be the consequence of a conscious decision. It can also function as a rationally constructed family model, in the case of adopting a somewhat older child: for example, if two gay men adopt a gay teenager it can lead to a classic [gay] family, where the gay boy can learn from his parents how a healthy gay relationship functions in everyday life.

(Balázs 34-1, handicrafts teacher, Bp)

Matter of principle

I cannot stand it when anyone thinks that their lifestyle should be forced on others in any way. I think this is unacceptable. Thus as a matter of principle we must stick to tolerance here.

(Gergő 40-1, financial director, countryside)

Basic human need – form of happiness seeking

I agree with it. I support it and respect it – as those basic human feelings related to wanting to have children and starting a family are not dependent on one's sexual identity... they have the right... and no one can tell anyone that YOU can do it, on the other hand, YOU cannot... [I heard that this whole thing is very much rejected in the gypsy communities...] I am already such a kind of gypsy that you can call a modern gypsy if you like, and I will accept it. Yes, indeed lesbian and homosexual couples can and SHOULD have children as there are ways to materialize these via sperm banks, artificial insemination or adoption. ... There is nothing wrong with healthy, well-intentioned, good people, including lesbians or homosexuals, wanting to have children – so they should have them! Because happiness is something they are also seeking for. And everyone has the right to be happy.

(Szilva 35-1, musician, Bp)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!