

Forsideark Eilert Sundt-oppgave

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SAME SEX PARENTS

**Are people more critical to same sex
parents than same sex couples?**



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Contribution to the Eilert Sundt-prize 2020

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1. Introduction for the research

The views on homosexuality have changed tremendously throughout the generations, thus making people today more accepting and open to same sex

couples, marriage and parents. According to Statistisk sentralbyrå, there have been 150 registered marriages in 2000 between the same sex in Norway¹, whereas in 2018 this number has increased to 331². These numbers can, among other things, indicate that same-sex partners are growing increasingly more comfortable with getting married officially.

We were curious about whether people are more critical towards same-sex parents than same-sex couples, and therefore decided to write and focus on other people's perspectives of same sex parents. The report is divided into six sections. Part two is about the background of the research paper and previous research. Then, in part three, we present the method we chose to use. Part four is about the execution of our research paper, and we present, discuss and conclude the results of our research in the last two parts.

2. Background for the research

2.1 Research questions

Our research questions for the research paper are the following:

“Are people in Norway more critical to same-sex parents than same-sex couples?”.

“Why are some people against same-sex parents?”

“Does religion, gender and/or age affect how critical one is to same-sex parents?”

2.2 Previous research

Bufdir

¹ Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2009

² Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2019

Buudir is an administrative body who has, among other things, carried out research and provided statistics on people's attitude towards the lgbt+ community in Norway³.

These statistics show that males are prone to be more critical towards non-heterosexual people, than females. On average, around 3% of the females who have taken part in this research, are negative towards lesbian and homosexual people. When it comes to males, it differs a lot. Men seem to be more accepting of lesbians than homosexuals. Only a mere 5% of the men who answered, had negative views towards lesbians, while 12% were critical in regards to homosexuality.

It also shows that older generations are less open towards heterosexuals and homosexuals having equal rights. Only 6% of people between the ages of 18 and 29 were against lesbians and homosexuals having the same rights as heterosexuals, whereas the numbers increase to 13% for people between the ages of 30 to 59. Out of all the answers from those who are 60+ years old, 16% are negative to members of the lgbt community having the same rights as heterosexuals.

Pew Research Center

Pew Research Center has conducted polls and research regarding the public's opinion on homosexuality. We will talk about two of those.

The first one is about countries attitude towards homosexuality⁴. Overall African, muslim, middle-eastern and asian countries seem to have strong, negative views on homosexuality, whereas there's more acceptance in North America, Latin America and the European Union. Countries where religion is less important and central in people's lives seem to be more accepting of homosexuality, and these are among the richest countries, while few believe homosexuality should be accepted by society in poorer countries with high levels of religiosity.

All-in-all, homosexuality seems to be most accepted in european countries.

³ Buudir, 2019

⁴ Pew Research Center, 2013

The second research paper by Pew Research Paper focuses only on Americans opinions about homosexuality and same-sex marriage⁵. In this research, statistics show that people under 30 years, are more supportive of same-sex marriage. The statistics also show us that younger people who are less religious are more likely to support gay marriage. Meanwhile, religious people are mostly opposed to same-sex marriage, but even here it varies depending on their belief. Evangelical Protestants are a lot more likely to oppose same-sex marriage, rather than being supportive of it. In contrast to this, most mainline Protestants and Catholics are in favor of same-sex marriage.

KIFO, Tore Witsø Rafoss

In a research conducted by Tore Witsø Rafoss⁶, sociologist and researcher at KIFO from Mandal, results show that there's a larger number of people against homosexuality in Vest-Agder than on average in Norway.

When confronted with the statement "There is nothing wrong with the fact that adults of the same sex have a sexual relationship", one out of ten norwegians responded that they "disagree" or "strongly disagree", while one out of four have the same response in Vest-Agder. This is very clearly the highest number of negative responses, and a large difference from the average in Norway.

Rafoss also states that there is a connection between this negative attitude towards homosexuality and certain branches of christianity. Conservative christians and free church members seem to be especially skeptical, which there are a lot of in Vest-Agder.

2.3 Hypotheses

We are able to create four hypotheses based on both what we believe and what previous research has shown. These are:

⁵ Pew Research Center, 2016

⁶ Ankersen, 2020

- Hypothesis 1.* On average, more people are open to same-sex couples than same-sex parents. Both same-sex couples and marriage revolves mainly around the partners in love, but when it comes to same-sex parents, a third party comes into the picture: the child. People might believe that the child could suffer consequences from having same-sex parents.
- Hypothesis 2.* Religious people are more critical of same-sex parents. Religions have stronger rules and beliefs that one must follow and fulfill, which could make them have more negative opinions on same-sex parents because they go against those religious beliefs.
- Hypothesis 3.* Older people are more critical of same-sex parents. Younger people might have it easier to accept new norms and changes than older people, because they have not lived most of their life believing that it was wrong.
- Hypothesis 4.* Women are more open to same-sex parents than men. Males have stronger norms to not be feminine, whereas society is more positive towards the fact that females can be both feminine and masculine. This could cause men to harbour worse opinions regarding male same-sex parents, because they can appear feminine.

3. Method

There are two research methods one can use when collecting data: qualitative and quantitative. We decided to use the quantitative method as it seemed like it would work the best for our research paper.

3.1 Quantitative method

Quantitative method is used to get an overview over quantities. We have chosen to use this method by conducting a survey. We deemed this method to be the best for our research as this gives us an opportunity to get answers from people of various cultures and religions. It also gives us a chance to cross-examine the different answers to see if there is a correlation between, for example, the religion and views on same-sex couples.

A few possible sources of errors come with the use of this method. We have only gotten a couple hundred answers, meaning that this increases the risk of the answers being random, instead of being representative of the population. There are several other likely sources of error in our research.

One possible source of error is that our survey didn't reach a large enough variety of people. We preferred to get answers from as many different age-groups and religions as possible, and although we got a lot of answers in regards to age-groups, we would've liked to have more variety in religion. The majority of our religious participants were christian, so the results of our research may not be accurate or representative of the other beliefs mentioned in our research. However, christianity is the biggest religion in Norway. Therefore, even if this survey reached a larger amount of people, there would still be a small percentage of other religions. In addition, our survey was only shared by one person on Facebook, which increases the chances of this survey not being representative.

Another possible source of error is the way we spreaded the survey: it was only shared on the platform ItsLearning and by one person on Facebook. This is a non-neutral way of spreading the survey, which can increase the possibilities that the answers are not representative. However, there wasn't much we could have done about this situation, because this was caused by our limited resources in this project.

Some people, especially the younger participants, might also look at the survey as a joke, and decide not to answer seriously. There is also the chance that some participants misunderstood some of the questions, and therefore chose an answer that they do not agree with. Seeing as our society today is more open to same-sex relationships, marriages and parents, some of the participants may have given

answers that they don't actually agree with, but instead chosen to go along with what is mainstream.

Even though this method can cause sources of errors, we generally look at it as being representative and will therefore analyse the results.

4. Execution

We began by creating a survey using Google Forms. The reason why we chose Google Forms over other websites, is because Google Forms is not blocked on Facebook which we were planning to use when spreading the survey. The survey was written in Norwegian as our target audience for this research project was Norway. We ended up with 9 questions: the first three were about the respondent and the others were about same-sex couples, marriage and parents. Furthermore, we made sure that the survey could be completed under 2 minutes by limiting the number of questions. This is because more people are willing to complete a survey that doesn't take long to finish. You can view the completed survey at the end of the research paper.

After the survey was completed, we started spreading it.

We decided to share it on Facebook, because we wanted to reach more than just teenagers with this survey. On Facebook we had one of the group members mother share it on her page as she would be able to reach people that were older than 20. We also asked numerous groups on different social media for help sharing the survey, however none of them ended up doing so.

On top of that, we also shared it on ItsLearning where our teacher sent the survey to both students and teachers from Kristiansand katedralskole Gimle. This is where we got answers from those under 20 years old.

5. Results & Discussion

5.1 Results

We ended up getting 881 answers on our survey, out of these the vast majority were women, people between the ages 41-50 and 15-20 and nonreligious. Approximately 75% were women, 23% male and the rest identified themselves as “other”. People between the ages of 21 and 30, had the least answers with a mere 7.8%.

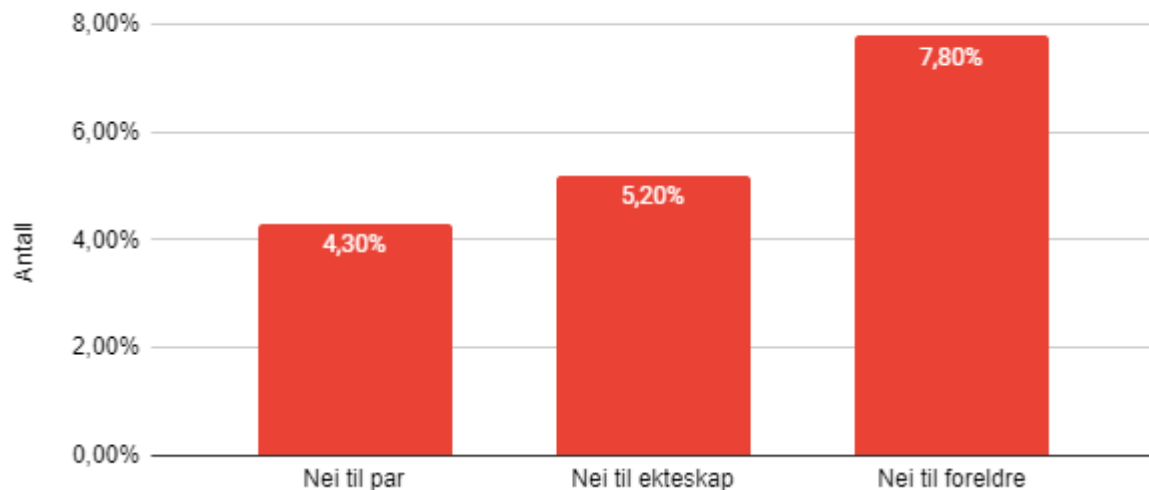
Respondents in the age group of 15 to 20 and 41 to 50 amounted to 50% of the votes, with 25% each. When it comes to religion, a whole 55.6% were not religious, 25.1% were christian, 15.6% were unsure, 2.3% follow a different religion, and only 1.5% were muslims.

We will now present the rest of the results and discuss what they can tell us. In addition, we will also look into whether or not the findings correspond with our hypotheses.

5.2 Analysis of results

Results on general opinion about same-sex

Antall personer som svarte nei

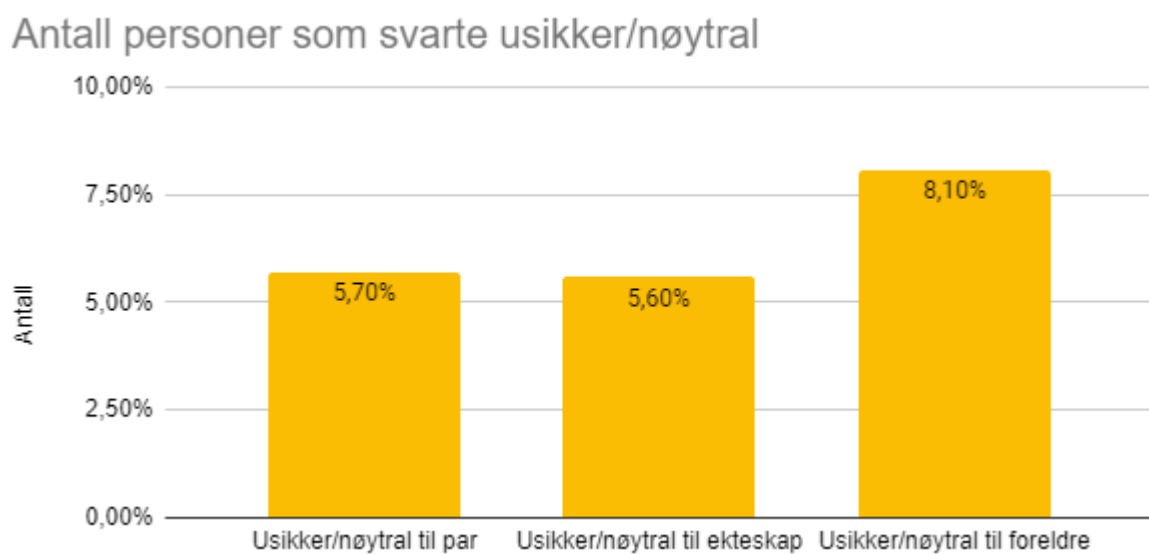


Picture 1: Statistics based on questions 4, 6 and 8.

This is a diagram that shows how many people answered “no” when asked about whether they support same-sex couples, marriage and parents. The first red bar represents same-sex couples, the second same-sex marriage and the last same-sex parents.

The diagram shows the respondents that have a negative view on same sex couples and parents. It is clear that the respondents have a increased critical view on same sex parents compared to a same sex relationship and marriage. Out of the 881 people that took the survey, 4.3% answered no to same sex-couples. They have a negative attitude towards homosexual relationships. Another definition of being against homosexuals is homophobia, however, their reasoning is not necessarily always a reflection of their character, nor malicious. There are many factors and reasons that contribute to these opposing morals, beliefs, attitudes and prejudice against gay people. The concept of sex parenting can for instance clash with their religious beliefs, political party, and desire to protect traditional values. Out of people that responded no, 5.2% were against same-sex marriage. Lastly, 7.8% people responded they were against same sex parents. We can therefore conclude that more people were critical to same-sex parents than same-sex couples, which was our first hypothesis.

The respondents might see the role of mothers and fathers in a childhoods development as vital, hence their prejudices against homoparentality in the first place. Moreover, both parents having a biological connection to the child would increase the likelihood that they would identify with the child and be willing to sacrifice more for their child. Defenders of traditional marriage claim that children generally fare best when raised by their biological mother and father. However, there are many studies proven that children of gay or lesbian parents fare no worse than other children. These studies concluded that children raised by same-sex parents did not differ from other children in terms of emotional functioning, substance abuse, sexual orientation, academic performance, social and cognitive development, stigmatization, gender role behavior, behavioral adjustment and gender identity.



Picture 2: Statistics based on questions 4, 6 and 8.

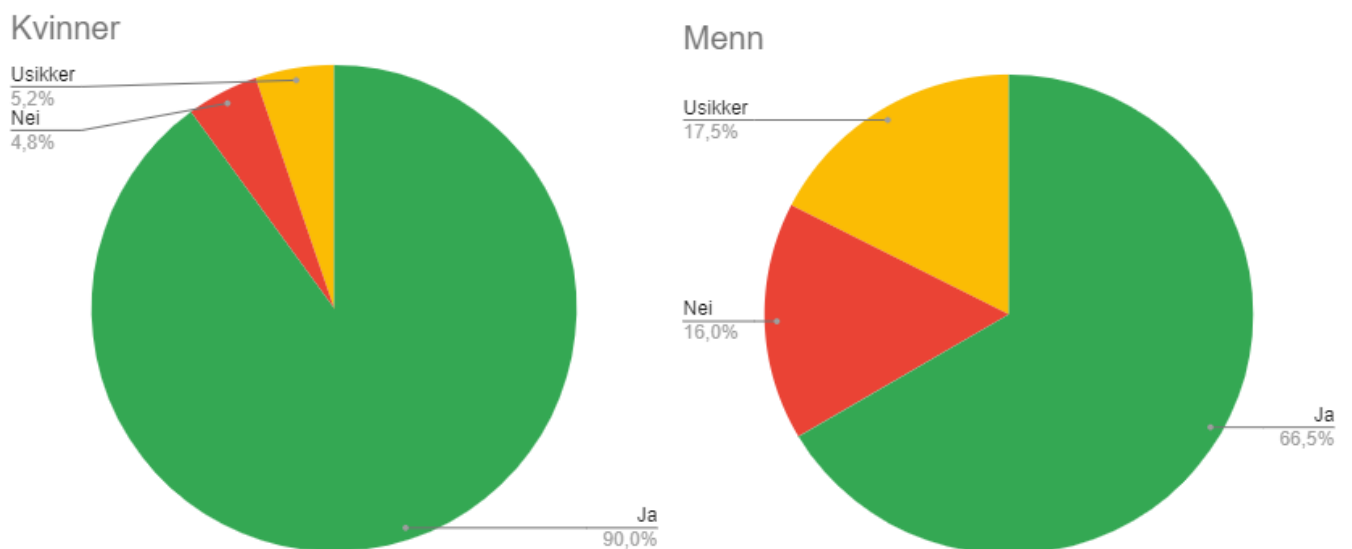
This diagram is based on the same questions as the previous diagram, but this one shows how many people answered “unsure/neutral”. In addition to people being more negative towards same-sex parents than same-sex couples, we can also see that more people are unsure or neutral when it comes to same-sex parents. A possible explanation to this difference could be that people generally don’t speak much about same-sex parents. People tend to focus more on the fact that people of the LGBT community should have the same rights as heterosexual couples in

regards to marriage, so people might not have much knowledge about same-sex parenting.

Since there are significantly more respondents that harbour negative views on same-sex parents, compared to same-sex couples and marriage, we have decided to only focus on analysing the answers regarding same-sex parents.

Results sorted by gender

Er du positiv til foreldre av samme kjønn?



Picture 3 & 4: Statistics based on questions 1 and 8 from the survey.

The diagrams above show us how many people were positive towards same-sex parents, with regards to gender. The left diagram are the results from our female respondents, whereas the right diagram is from our male respondents. The green colored part represents those who answered “yes” to the question “are you positive towards same-sex parents”, the red part represents those who answered “no”, and the yellow part represents those who were “unsure/neutral”.

As the statistics above show us, out of 881 answers, 90% of the females who took part in this survey were positive when it came to parents of the same sex, while only 4.8% voted against this. The remaining 5.2% were neutral or unsure. 66.5% of the

males who took part have positive views when it comes to same-sex couples having kids, while 16% against it, and 17.5% are unsure or neutral. These results correspond with our hypothesis that females are more open to same-sex couples than men. They also correlate to what previous research has found out.

The statistics imply that males are less accepting of same-sex couples raising children, than females. One factor might be that society expects males to be “manly”, meaning that they’re not supposed to cry, or generally show much emotion, or do things associated with femininity⁷. This can make males more critical to both themselves and others, and can therefore make them have more negative views towards same-sex parents, as same-sex couples can be viewed as feminine. A possible reason for women being more open towards same-sex parents, may be that they’ve experienced more oppression and discrimination than men. This can lead to them to sympathizing more with people who have gone through similar situations, which in this case are parents of the same sex.

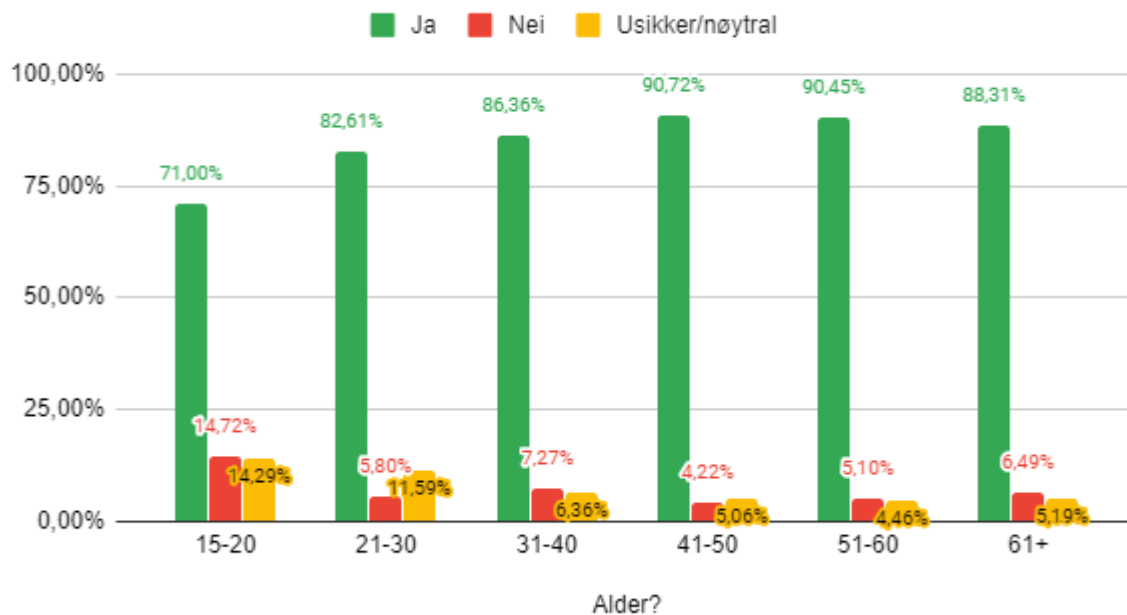
Possible sources of error might include the fact that more women took part in the survey than men. Another possible source of error is that most of these male participants were young, and may have been sending in less serious answers. Studies also show that women mature earlier than men⁸, and immature men may find homosexuality funny or not take the topic seriously.

⁷ Fardet, 2019

⁸ Storr, 2015

Results sorted by age

Er du positiv til foreldre av samme kjønn? (i prosent)



Picture 5: Statistics based on questions 2 and 8 from the survey.

This diagram shows us how many of our survey respondents were positive to same-sex parents, sorted by age. We have the age groups from left to right, starting from the youngest respondents. The green bars represent those who answered “yes” when asked if they were positive towards parents of the same sex, the red bar represents those who answered “no”, and the yellow bar represents those who were “unsure/neutral”.

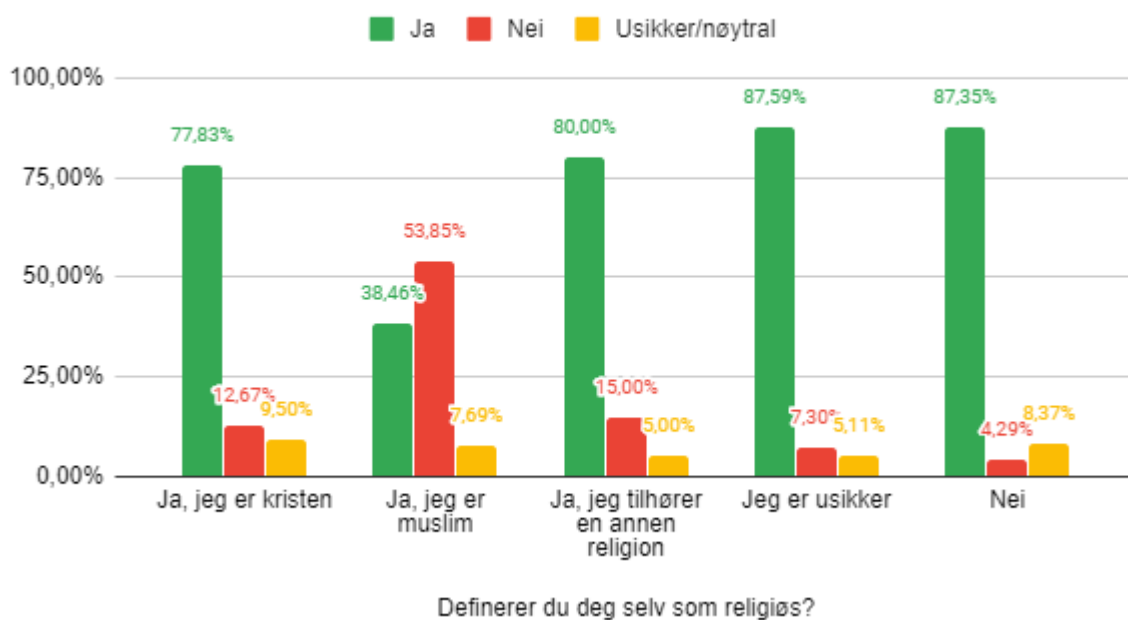
This diagram shows that older people are more accepting to same-sex parents. Ages from 15 to 20 shows that 71% are positive, from ages 21 to 30, 82.6% are positive, from ages 31 to 40, 86.4% are positive, ages from 41 to 50, 90.7% are positive, ages 51 to 60, 90.5% are positive, and lastly 60+ are 88.3% are positive.

Our hypothesis was “older people are more critical of same-sex parents”. This diagram proves our hypothesis and previous research wrong. Our results show that younger people are more critical than older people. This could be because younger people did not take the survey serious, or maybe they weren't honest. However, another cause could be because we only got young respondents from Kristiansand Katedralskole Gimle, which is located in Vest Agder, whereas the older respondents were from different places in Norway. As mentioned in previous research by KIFO, it

was stated that people in Vest-Agder had more negative views on same-sex couples than any of the other counties in Norway. Therefore, since all of our younger respondents were from Vest-Agder, this could be a source of error which resulted in the youngest age-group being more negative towards same-sex parents than all the other age-groups.

Results sorted by religion

Er du positiv til foreldre av samme kjønn? (i prosent)



Picture 6: Statistics based on question 3 and 8 from the survey.

Here we have a diagram showing us what different religious and non-religious people answered when asked if they were positive towards same-sex parents. From left to right, we have Christians, Muslims, people belonging to a different religion, unsure and lastly, no. The green bar represents those who answered “yes”, red “no” and yellow “unsure/neutral”.

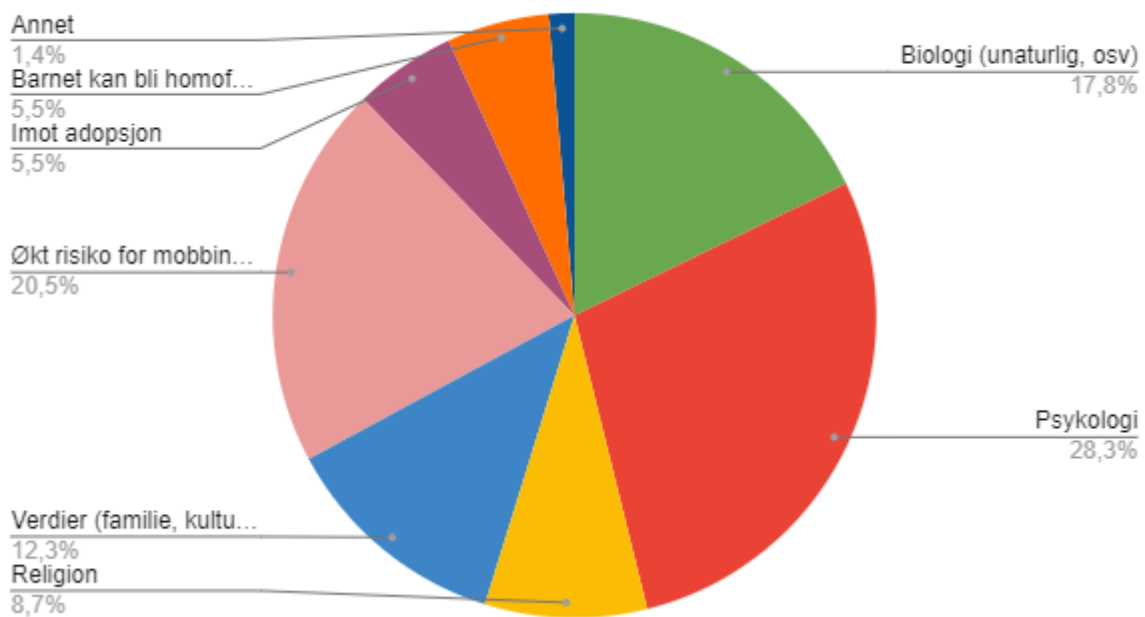
About 87% were positive among non-religious and unsure people. When it comes to christian respondents, around 78% were positive, but 13% were negative. Muslims were the only group that had more negative views than positive, where over 50% did not find same-sex parents to be good. Lastly, those belonging to other religions not stated, were 80% positive and 15% negative.

These results correlate to our hypothesis that religious people would be more critical to same-sex parents. As shown, christians were a tad bit more critical than non-religious respondents, but muslims were mostly negative. A reason for this difference could be that acting on homosexual thoughts and desires is considered sinning in christianity and islam, and while christians have become more open and accepting of homosexuality, islam still holds onto their critical views on it. A possible reason for why christians have become more open towards homosexuality, could be because christianity has become affected by the secularization of society. Muslims, however, may not have been as affected by this, since some islamic countries haven't been secularized - some countries even follow sharia, which is based on the Quran and the Hadith. So based on the fact that most muslims in Norway have immigrated, or have parents with such backgrounds, they haven't gone through the same secularization as the christians from Norway. Thus, muslims could have more critical views on homosexuality.

In our survey, there could be one specific source of error that could weaken the credibility of the results for the muslims. There were only 1.5% muslim respondents in this survey, which could cause the answers to not be representative. However, muslims are a minority in Norway, so even if we had gotten more answers, there would still be less of muslims respondents than christians and non-religious in this survey.

Results on why people are against same-sex parents

Årsaker til negative holdninger til foreldre av samme kjønn



Picture 7: Statistics based on question 9, where the respondent could choose multiple options.

This diagram shows how our respondents answered when asked why they had negative feelings towards same-sex parents. Starting from the green colored part and going clockwise, we have; biology (unnatural, etc.), psychology (children need parents of both genders), religion, values (family, culture etc.), an increased risk of children of same-sex parents being bullied, they're against adoption, the child can become a homosexual and "other".

The biggest cause was "psychology". 28.3% of those who had negative a negative attitude towards same-sex parents, chose psychology as one of the reasons for their skepticism towards it. A lot of people believe that the psyche of a child with same-sex parents can be affected in a negative way. For example, some may say that parents of the same sex may not be able to provide care and protection to their children, like any other, homosexual parents would. Some may believe that the children have a higher risk of encountering developmental problems, or that they may have a higher chance of developing a sexual orientation other than heterosexuality. However, research has shown that none of these statements hold any truth. The thing that may impact children with same-sex parents the most, could

be the prejudice that people outside of immediate family or circle of friends may have.⁹

Same-sex parenting can be seen as “unnatural”, hence why biology can play a big role. Both parents can not be the biological parent of their child, therefore some people believe same-sex parenting is wrong since it defies nature. However, it has been proved that animals can have homosexual relationships¹⁰. This can mean that same-sex parenting actually is not as unnatural and wrong, as some people say.

Over 12% of people said that the reason they are against same sex parents is because of their values. Different people have different values, and culture, religion and family may be a big part of the way people think, and view different situations. In some cultures having same-sex parents is not accepted, and some people value their culture more than their own opinion. Conservative people, or people from cultures where tradition is an important part of their lives, may be more skeptical towards homosexuals, and growing up in a such a culture, could make one internalise these values and negative attitudes towards homosexuality.¹¹ Religious beliefs may also influence what kind of values people have, and can in turn have people view homosexuality negatively, seeing as homosexuality is a sin in two of the largest religions in the world.

Religion can in general have a large impact on people's opinions on same sex parents. Nevertheless, religious views on same sex parents are closely related to religious views on homosexuality. For instance, the 25,1% that were christians find convenient justification for these biases in the bible, thus their negative views on homosexuality.

A common fear has produced the claim that children who are raised by those who identify as gay or lesbian would grow up with a general confusion regarding their own sexual identity. A reason for this fear could be because children with same-sex parents might feel more comfortable with coming out as gay, lesbian or bisexual, compared to those raised by heterosexual parents. This could make it seem like

⁹ Heasman 2016

¹⁰ Ghose 2015

¹¹ Xie & Peng 2017

same-sex parents increases the chances of children being gay, lesbian og homosexual. However, it is important to note that gender identity and sexual orientation are not in any way equal.

Of the people who picked the “other” option, one person wrote “haram” which could be considered both values and religion, depending on the person. Another person wrote that a normal family is already a risk, so they did not see the point in risking even more by having a family with same-sex parents.

Conclusion

To conclude, homosexual relationships have become widely common in today's society. Along with the subsequent building of families, concern over the differences between homosexual and heterosexual parenting have become of great interest and importance. Hence, why we were intrigued and chose to discuss this specific thesis statement. In this quantitative research paper, we specifically discussed the different views on same sex parents. A larger scepticism arose when it came to same sex parenting compared to same sex couples or even marriage, and more men were against same sex parents than women. Moreover, It does not matter whether parents are heterosexual or homosexual, but what really matters is that parents put in the time and effort to ensure that their children are raised with warmth, positivity and encouragement. What genuinely matters the most is to ensure that children are able to develop within nourishing and positive environments, without social stigma, and regardless of familial structure.

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8. Copy of the survey

Holdninger til ekteskap og foreldre av samme kjønn

1. Er du kvinne eller mann?

- Kvinne
- Mann
- Annet

2. Alder?

- 15-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61+

3. Definerer du deg selv som religiøs?

- Ja, jeg er kristen
- Ja, jeg er muslim
- Ja, jeg tilhører en annen religion
- Jeg er usikker
- Nei

4. Er du positiv til par av samme kjønn (homofile/lesbiske)?

- Ja
- Nei
- Usikker/nøytral

5. Hvis ikke – hvorfor?

(hopp over om du svarte ja/usikker/nøytral på forrige spørsmål.)

- Biologi (unaturlig, osv.)
- Religion
- Verdier (Familie, kultur, osv...)
- Andre: _____

6. Er du positiv til ekteskap av samme kjønn?

- Ja
- Nei
- Usikker/nøytral

7. Hvis ikke – hvorfor?

(hopp over om du svarte ja/usikker/nøytral på forrige spørsmål.)

- Biologi (unaturlig, osv.)
- Religion
- Verdier (Familie, kultur, osv...)
- Andre: _____

8. Er du positiv til foreldre av samme kjønn?

- Ja
- Nei
- Usikker/nøytral

9. Hvis ikke – hvorfor?

(hopp over om du svarte ja/usikker/nøytral på forrige spørsmål.)

- Biologi (unaturlig, osv.)
- Psykologi (Barn trenger foreldre av begge kjønn)
- Religion
- Verdier (Familie, kultur, osv...)
- Økt risiko for mobbing av barnet
- Imot adopsjon
- Barnet kan bli homofil/lesbisk/bifil
- Andre: _____

Original version of the survey.

Attitudes towards marriage and parents of the same-sex

1. Are you a woman or man?

- Woman
- Man
- Other

2. Age?

- 15-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61+

3. Do you define yourself as religious?

- Yes, I am a Christian
- Yes, I am a Muslim
- Yes, I belong to another religion
- I am unsure
- No

4. Are you positive towards couples of the same-sex (gays/lesbians)?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/neutral

5. If not – why?

(skip this question if you answered yes/unsure/neutral on the previous question.)

- Biology (unnatural, etc.)
- Religion
- Values (Family, culture, etc...)
- Other: _____

6. Are you positive towards same-sex marriage?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/neutral

7. If not – why?

(skip this question if you answered yes/unsure/neutral on the previous question.)

- Biology (unnatural, etc.)
- Religion
- Values (Family, culture, etc...)
- Other: _____

8. Are you positive towards parents of the same-sex?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/neutral

9. If not – why?

(skip this question if you answered yes/unsure/neutral on the previous question.)

- Biology (unnatural, etc.)
- Psychology (Children need parents of both genders)
- Religion
- Values (Family, culture, etc...)
- Increased risk of the child getting bullied
- Against adoption
- The child can become gay/lesbian/bisexual
- Other: _____

Translated version of the survey.