

Study: Two-thirds of gay fathers stigmatized

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More than three years after same-sex marriage became legal nationwide, many gay fathers say they still are being stigmatized.

“Ongoing health supervision should include discussions about stigma and help families learn strategies to counteract its corrosive effects,” authors wrote in the study “Barriers and Stigma Experienced by Gay Fathers and their Children” (Perrin EC, et al. *Pediatrics*. Jan. 14, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-0683>).

Researchers conducted an anonymous online survey of 732 gay fathers from 47 states, asking whether they experienced stigma related to gay fatherhood, defined as being “made to feel uncomfortable, excluded, shamed, hurt, or unwelcome.”

About 39% of gay fathers’ children were born via a heterosexual relationship, 35% came through foster care or adoption and 13.5% through a surrogate. However, having a child through a heterosexual relationship has become much rarer in recent years, especially in states with high equality scores.

About 41% of fathers who tried to adopt a child had a hard time doing so, and 33% whose child was born via their heterosexual relationship said they had trouble getting custody.

About 63.5% of gay fathers experienced stigma in the past year, which authors said can impact their physical and mental health. Religious institutions were the most common source, affecting 35% of gay fathers. About a quarter of gay fathers have been stigmatized by family, friends, neighbors or service providers.

“Although these experiences were not commonly reported, the fact that they happened in settings that are traditionally expected to be sources of support and nurturing is particularly troubling,” authors wrote.

The lowest rates of stigma were linked to health care, the workplace and their child’s school. Gay fathers were more likely to be stigmatized when they lived in low-equality states, and religious stigma was most prevalent when they were part of religions deemed low tolerance.

Results showed rates of children being stigmatized for having gay parents were low in most settings except among their friends.

Resources

- [AAP policy "Promoting the Well-Being of Children Whose Parents Are Gay or Lesbian"](#)
- [Information on gay/lesbian parenting from HealthyChildren.org](#)

