



OECD INSIGHTS

Debate the issues

LGBT inclusivity: a priority for the OECD

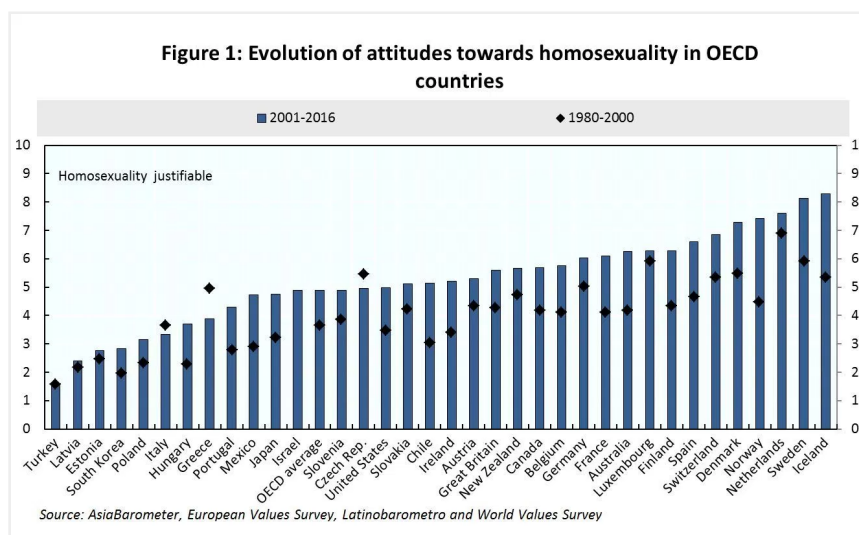
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by Guest author

Today is the **UN International Day for Tolerance**. Stéphane Carcillo and Marie-Anne Valfort of the OECD **Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs** explain why the OECD wants to play a leading role in promoting LGBT inclusivity.

Over the last two decades, attitudes toward LGBT have been improving in a majority of OECD countries (see Figure 1). Yet, even among this group of countries which turns out to be the most tolerant worldwide, homophobia and transphobia remain widespread, with an average score lower than 5 on the “justifiability of homosexuality” scale – where 1 means that homosexuality is never justifiable and 10 means that it is always justifiable.

In this context, sexual minorities are at risk of unfair treatment, with deleterious effects on their well-being. The mere awareness of belonging to a group which is discriminated against is indeed associated with emotional distress, not to mention the traumatic effects of undergoing verbal or physical violence. Anti-LGBT discrimination likely weighs more indirectly on happiness, by adversely impacting **dimensions critical for welfare**, including family life, education, labour market outcomes and health.

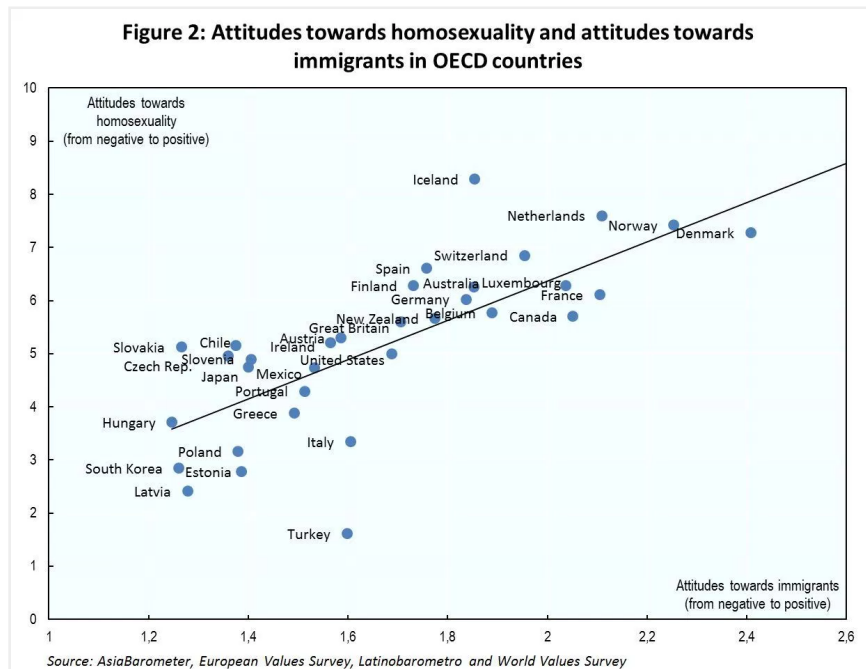


Ensuring that LGBT can openly express their sexual orientation and gender identity without being discriminated against constitutes a priority for the OECD, for at least three reasons.

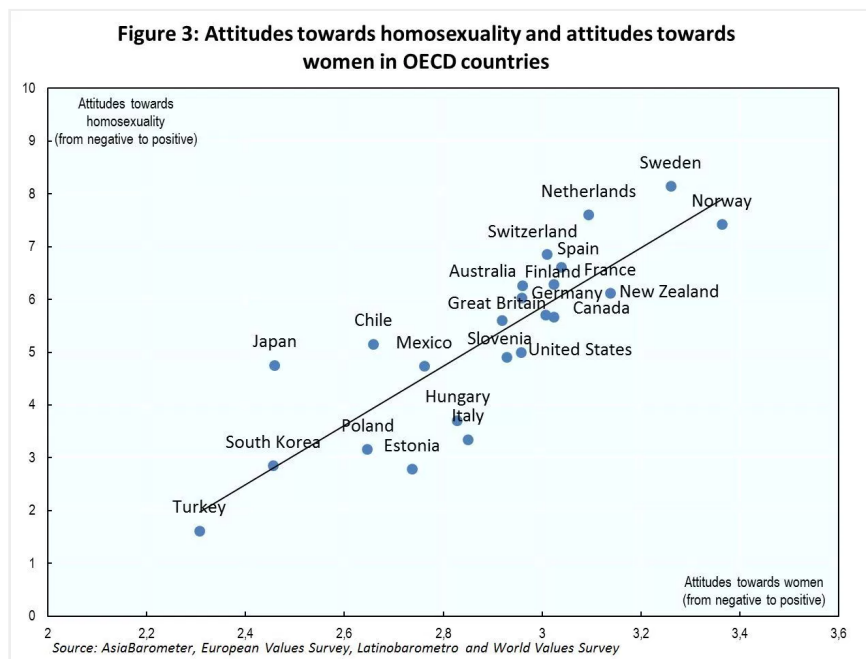
The first reason is ethical. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral aspects of our selves and should therefore never be subjected to forced concealment or discrimination when revealed.

The second reason is social. Improving attitudes toward LGBT has the potential to dramatically boost individuals' capacity of living together. Greater acceptance of any minority likely leads to greater acceptance of other people's differences in general. And, indeed, people who accept homosexuality also have more positive attitudes toward immigrants (see Figure 2). But there is more. Attitudes toward LGBT are closely related to endorsement of traditional gender roles. In this context, reducing

homophobia and transphobia could considerably enhance social cohesion by not only improving attitudes toward LGBT and other minorities but by also prompting support for gender equality (see Figure 3).



Note: Attitudes toward immigrants are based on responses to the following EVS/WVS question: “When jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to people of this country over immigrants.” (=1 if agree, =2 if neither agree nor disagree, =3 if disagree).



Note: Attitudes toward women are based on an average of responses to the following three EVS/WVS questions: “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.” (=1 if agree, =2 if neither agree nor disagree, =3 if disagree); “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.” (=1 if strongly agree, =2 agree, =3 if disagree, =4 if strongly disagree), “A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl” (=1 if strongly agree, =2 agree, =3 if disagree, =4 if strongly disagree).

The third reason behind combating anti-LGBT discrimination is economic. Discrimination against LGBT at school and in the labour market generates a considerable cost. Moreover, an economy unable to value diversity misses substantial benefits. Diversity enables the sharing of a richer array of competences, experiences and viewpoints that is not offset by greater difficulty of communication or

greater likelihood of conflict, at least in contexts where diversity inclusivity is a commitment. All in all, reducing anti-LGBT discrimination might trigger off important economic gains. This is all the more plausible given that LGBT constitute a sizeable minority (roughly 4% in the US, based on recent estimates of the **LGB** and **transgender** populations). As a comparison, Muslims, another minority at risk of discrimination, **represent 1% of the US population**.

For all these reasons, with the support of the Netherlands, the United-States, Austria and Denmark, the OECD is undertaking an ambitious research project that aims to better measure anti-LGBT discrimination and its consequences on a cross-national basis, and identify policies conducive to LGBT inclusivity. As a first step, the OECD will soon release a background paper that provides a comprehensive overview of the scientific evidence on the extent of anti-LGBT discrimination and its impact on key socioeconomic dimensions of their lives.

Useful links

[OECD work on gender](#)

[Marie-Anne Valfort's web page](#)

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