

# THE MOST IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE PROJECT FAMILIES OF CHOICE IN POLAND. FAMILY LIFE OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL PERSONS

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Families of choice are families of non-heterosexual persons. They do not have social or legal support in Poland. It is only by their choice that they become and call themselves a family. Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals constitute at least 5% of Poland's society. Consequently, there are about 2 million such people in Poland. It is estimated that half of them live in relationships, with some also raising children.

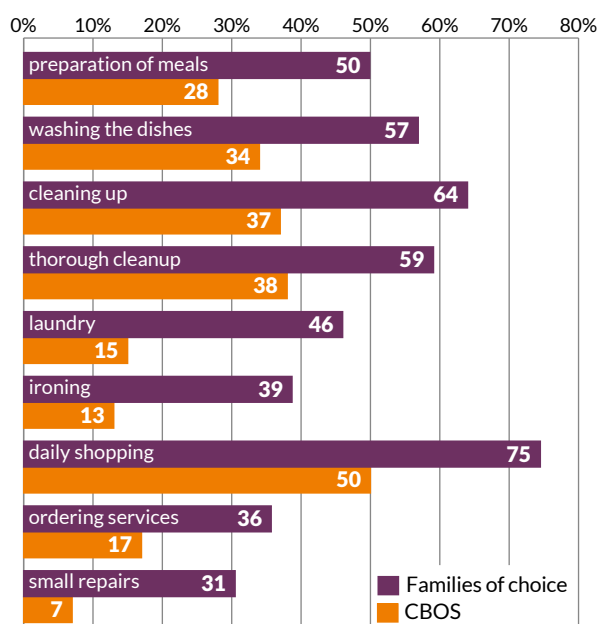
## The Families of Choice project included:

- **3038 people** from all over Poland from 18 to 81 years of age.
- All respondents were in a relationship with a same-sex partner (min. 6 months, max. 42 years).
- 9% of the people had children (12% of women and 5% of men).
- Data concerning **287 children** being raised by non-heterosexual persons were collected. Half of the children are below 13 years of age.

## Characteristics of families of choice:

- Over **90% of respondents are happy** and pleased with their relationship.
- **65%** of respondents live together in a single household. 93% of the rest want to live together in the future
- Half of the respondents, regardless of their age, got to know each other via LGBT media (mostly Internet).
- The relationships of non-heterosexual respondents are **more equal** than those of an average Pole. Domestic chores are carried out together more often than in the case of respondents of a CBOS

Domestic chores – comparison of poll results



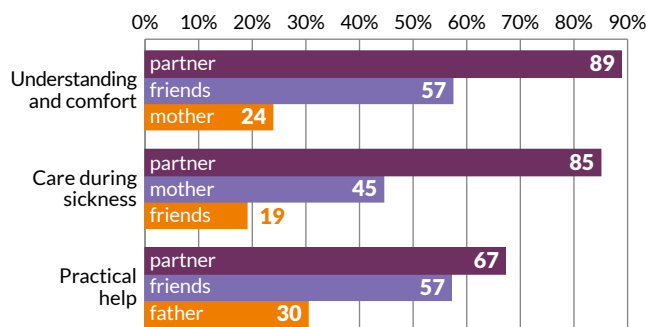
(Polish Opinion Research Center) poll (*The Role of Women in the Family*, CBOS 2013).

- According to the poll, the most important value in life is a **successful relationship** (78%), second is **health** (51%), and **friends** come third (28%).
- 89% of respondents are satisfied with their sex life. Women are more satisfied than men.
- Respondents of both sexes believe that a relationship of non-heterosexual persons is a family, 97% of them **consider their partners as family**. However, only 14% of Poles polled by CBOS consider a same-sex relationship a family. 23% of Poles consider them a family if the same-sex couple raises children together (*Meaning and Understanding of Family*, CBOS 2013).

## Families of choice and the society

- Sisters (73%) and mothers (72%) are most frequently aware of the existence of a non-heterosexual relationship. Brothers (64%) and fathers (55%) know about them less often. Among the people who know about the existence of a relationship and fully accept it are 85% of sisters, 78% of brothers, 71% of mothers, and 61% of fathers.
- Many non-heterosexual people conceal their relationships at work (31%), in the neighbourhood (49%), and from distant family (44%).
- **The partner is the most important source of support** for non-heterosexual people. They can also count on their friends and mothers. They usually seek practical and financial assistance from their fathers, and rarely seek their understanding and comfort (5%) or care during sickness (12%).

Who do you turn to when you need support?



- However, the majority of same-sex couples are not invited by their families of origin to family celebrations. As many as 53% are not invited to holidays such as Christmas and Easter, almost half (49%) to birthday parties of their family members, and 56% to other celebrations such as weddings, funerals, etc.

### Lack of possibility of obtaining a legal status and resulting issues

- Respondents live in relationships which they cannot legally register in Poland. If such a possibility arises, as many as 75% of them would register their relationship. The biggest group (87%) would choose registered partnership in a registry office, while 70% would prefer to get married in a registry office.
- The most serious problems resulting from living in an unregistered partnership are connected to healthcare, lack of joint property of spouses, and lack of social acceptance. The following quotations illustrate problems encountered by the respondents:

*The hospital refused to agree to provide her [my partner] with information concerning my health, even when I asked for it explicitly. They claimed that "she was not a member of family".*

*I was taken to the hospital [unconscious] and my partner was not even allowed in, as they said she was not a family member. In order to obtain any information from the hospital she had to call my mother whom she had not seen for over a year. They allowed in a person who at the time knew nothing about me and my illness and refused to let in the person who knew everything*

*There are difficult issues connected with finances, e.g. the costs of keeping a flat together. My partner cannot transfer money to my bank account to pay the bills when I do not have enough funds as she is a stranger from the legal point of view and there is no legal basis for her to give me money. Should I sign a housing rental agreement with my own partner? It's absurd (...).*

*As I am a teacher in a small town, it is unthinkable for me to be a childless bachelor. The headmaster and colleagues openly force me to present my prospective spouse to them.*

### Children in families of choice

- 92% of children were born in an earlier heterosexual relationship of a respondent or when he/she was not in a relationship. 8% of children were born in a same-sex relationship (in most cases of two women).
- The child most often lives with its mother and her female partner (58%). It happens much more rarely (7%) that the child lives with its father and his male partner.
- In most cases the child stays in touch with his/her other biological parent.
- 67% of the children know that their parent is in a same-sex relationship. 83% of children reacted positively to the information.
- The social parent, that is a person who raises his/her partner's biological child with the partner, is equally involved (also financially) in the child's upbringing. Most duties connected with childcare are performed together according to approximately 66% of the respondents.
- Most children (61%) address their social parents by their first name.
- Many parents/respondents encountered unfair opinions concerning same-sex couples raising children.
- In elementary schools and kindergartens, only 24% of teachers know about the family circumstances of their pupils. In the case of 14% of the children, nobody in their immediate surroundings knew the specific details of their family circumstances.

### Who knows about your child's family circumstances?

