

Sateenkaariperheiden
lasten ja nuorten
hyvinvointi ja kokemukset

**The well-being and
experiences of children and
adolescents in Finnish
rainbow families**



“The well-being and experiences of children and adolescents in rainbow families” is the first study of its kind in Finland. The extensive study consists of three parts: interviews with 7–10-year-old children (n=17), a survey of 10–12-year-old children (n=41), and a survey of 13–18-year-old adolescents (n=47). The survey results are compared with those of children and adolescents of similar age in the whole population, as surveyed in the nationwide School Health Promotion Study in Finland.

The results from the interviews indicate that the children in rainbow families have a flexible concept of a family. The children have good relationships with their parents, many friends and, for the most part, good experiences from school. In most cases, they reported that they were happy. Living in a LGBT family appears to be straightforward for these 7–10-year-old children as the matter did not particularly come up in their speech.

The results from the two surveys indicate that the psychological, physical and social well-being of children and adolescents in Finnish LGBT families resembles that of other Finnish children of the same age. The quality of parent-child relationships appears to be mostly similar to that of the rest of the population, once the effects of parental divorce are taken into account. Children and adolescents in rainbow families also have as many friends and equally positive experiences from school as their peers do. Most other children and youth, teachers and health care professionals have reacted either neutrally or positively towards the rainbow families of the study participants. The children and adolescents from LGBT families also provide each other with peer support. The parents in rainbow families seem to have created even more trustful relationships with

their children than parents in other families, and support and encourage their children a lot. The well-being of children and adolescents living with transgender parents seems to be in line with the well-being of their peers living with parents who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

None of the 10–18-year-old respondents who have had a crush on someone or experienced sexual feelings towards someone, have had such feelings solely towards people of the same sex. Among the 16–18-year-old respondents, half of the females said that they were sexually interested in both sexes.

Nearly half of the 10–18-year-old children living in LGBT families have heard annoying questions about their parents from their peers. One third of the adolescents have heard insulting comments from adults regarding their families. One third of all the respondents feel anxious about telling about their LGBT family and fear that people might change their attitudes towards them after hearing about their family. This is especially true for those whose LGBT family has formed only after their birth.

The majority of 7–18-year-old children brought up positive aspects about being part of a LGBT family or described it as “just ordinary”. According to the children themselves, the upsides of living in a LGBT family include close and committed parents combined with an upbringing that emphasizes diversity. The children and adolescents report negative attitudes and bullying, or the fear thereof, as the downsides of living in a rainbow family. The respondents hope for popular education about LGBT related issues, acceptance for diversity, and a future without discrimination.

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