



International Day
Against **Homophobia**
and **Transphobia**

An initiative from



Taking action for the emergence of a
world inclusive of sexual and gender diversity.

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Fondation Émergence needs your donations

Donations by cheque made payable to:
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Sexual orientation is not a choice
A campaign produced in 2007



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International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

The annual campaigns to fight homophobia and transphobia culminate on May 17th, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. This date is symbolic; the World Health Organization (WHO) removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses on May 17, 1990.

Holding an annual theme day dedicated to fighting homophobia and transphobia is an idea that originated in Quebec in 2003, at the initiative of Fondation Émergence. With the help of partners, this day also became recognized in Canada, Belgium, France and other countries, finally becoming an international day: homophobiaday.org.

The annual campaigns to fight homophobia and transphobia belong to everyone. Fondation Émergence creates the annual theme, produces promotional material and invites people from all backgrounds to adopt the campaign, organize activities and spread the message.

Participate!

This day belongs to YOU!

The campaign to fight homophobia and transphobia provides a special opportunity to contribute to the development of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in many ways, including:

- hanging posters and distributing brochures;
- using the campaign's promotional material available on the internet or any other relevant material to spark discussion;
- organizing activities, conferences or talks or setting up booths;
- screening films and documentaries that have an LGBT theme;
- speaking out against acts of homophobia and transphobia;
- asking administrative and governmental bodies to adopt resolutions to support the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia;
- encouraging major players in civil society to acknowledge the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and to participate in the campaign.

Find out more ways you can participate by going to homophobiaday.org and clicking on "Participate"

Resources for immediate assistance



Aide aux Trans du Québec

24/7 helpline and e-mail assistance during daytime hours. Aide aux Trans du Québec's main goals are to assist transgender-identifying people and help them break out of their isolation.

www.atq1980.org



Parlons de
diversité sexuelle
et de genre

Interligne

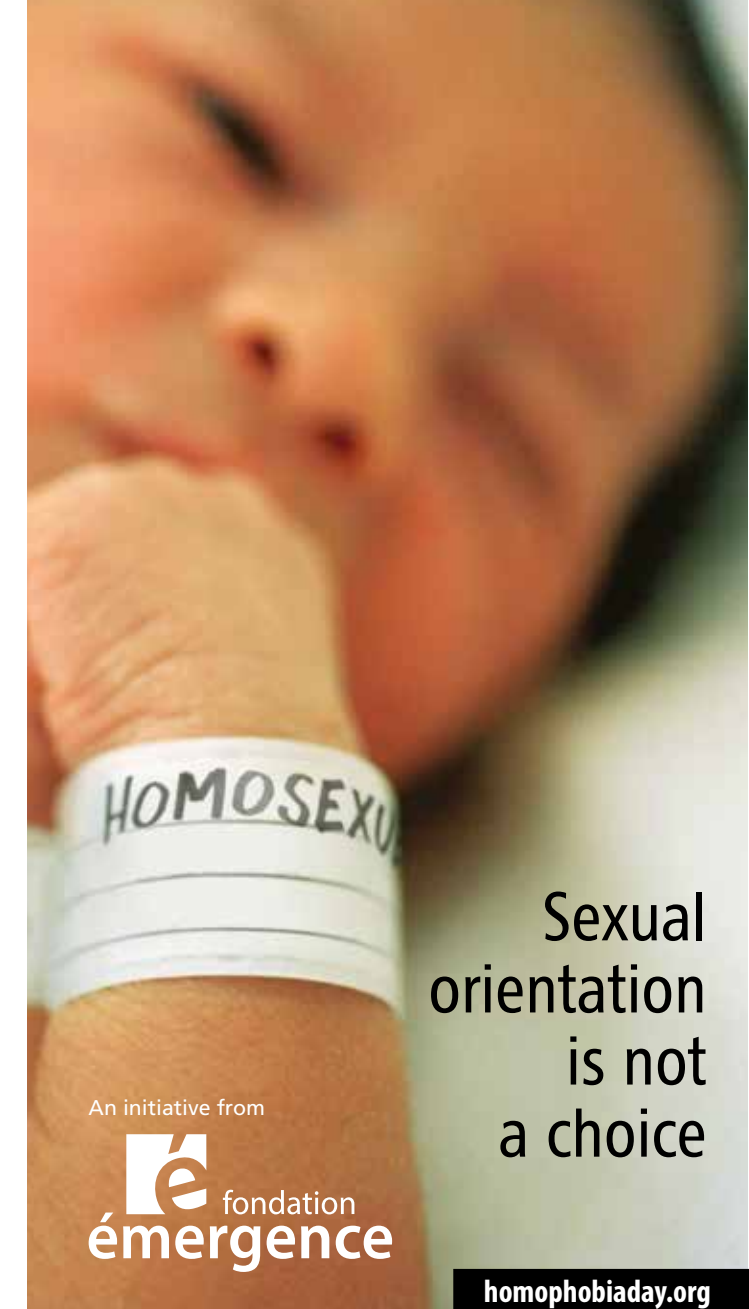
24/7 helpline, online chat and e-mail for LGBTQ+ communities, their friends and family, and service providers in the health, education and social service sectors.

www.interligne.co

Tools and resources

All of Fondation Émergence's awareness campaigns since 2001 can be seen at www.homophobiaday.org. It is also possible to order material such as stickers, information guides, informational brochures, etc., at the website free of charge.

Visit the "Resources" section on
www.homophobiaday.org to find out about
other available resources and tools,
suitable for all settings.



Sexual
orientation
is not
a choice

An initiative from



homophobiaday.org

In partnership with
Justice
Québec



International Day
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Sexual orientation is not a choice

Sexual orientation: when, how, why?

Many questions

We often try to understand sexual orientation and find a cause for it. Many questions come to mind:

- Are we born lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)?
- Can we become lesbian, gay or bisexual?
- When does it happen?
- Whose fault is it? The parents’?
- Do some experiences influence our sexual orientation?
- Is it because we have not met the right person of the other sex?
- Can a person’s sexual orientation be changed?
- Is it genetic?

In scientific settings, all these questions about homosexuality come under the umbrella of one main line of inquiry: is homosexuality innate or acquired? In other words, is a person born with their sexual orientation or do they become lesbian, gay or bisexual based on their experiences, upbringing or influences?

It’s not something a person chooses!

Many researchers have sought to find an explanation for homosexuality and many studies have been conducted in search of answers. In spite of the different theories that exist, there is consensus about two facts: people do not choose their sexual orientation and there is no way to change it.

It’s something you discover!

Discovering one’s sexual orientation is an important process in one’s life. A person’s sexual orientation is not suddenly revealed to them; it is something that one gradually becomes aware of. The discovery often occurs at puberty, but not in all cases. Without being able to put words on it, many people say later in life that they have felt different ever since they were young children.

What about transgender identity?

Although this campaign focuses on homosexuality, it is important to remember that transgender people do not choose their gender identity, just as LGB people do not choose their sexual orientation. Most of transgender people realized their gender identity was different from the sex they were assigned at birth during childhood. They might decide to transition as a teen, an adult, or a senior, and this transition process is different according to people.

Feeling good about oneself

Adults’ contribution to children’s happiness

Can LGBT people be as happy as heterosexual people? A survey conducted on behalf of *Interligne* (formerly known as *Gai Écoute*) indicates that the main concern of parents is to see their children happy. But we have to admit that this is not always easy. Sexual orientation and gender identity are not the source of hardships - the homophobia and transphobia in our culture is.

Acceptance and, mainly, tolerance towards homosexual, bisexual and trans people have come a long way in recent years. Even though we are privileged to live in one of the most open-minded societies in this respect, homophobia and transphobia are still present. Fighting homophobia and transphobia contributes to the happiness of LGBT people.

Revealing one’s sexual orientation and gender identity

After discovering and developing an awareness of one’s sexual orientation and gender identity, coming out to one’s parents, family and friends is a major concern, especially for young people. The act of telling can be liberating as the person can then stop hiding. The positive or negative reaction from people will be either the reward or the price to pay. For the person coming out, it is important to properly evaluate the situation, choose the right person and, most importantly, the right time. For people on the receiving end: remember that reacting positively to the person’s coming out contributes to their happiness.

Parents and family

Parents should want only one thing for their child: happiness. Young lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people need their parents’ support as they go through the affirmation of their identity. It is understandable that parents might be upset at first – few of them anticipated this path for their child and they need to get used to the idea but supporting one’s child contributes to their happiness.

Fear

Fear of friends’ and family members’ reactions and rejection often results in LGBT young people keeping their sexual orientation and gender identity to themselves. Among them, some are already victims of homophobia or transphobia and others refrain from talking about it out of fear of being rejected. They live in isolation, without the comfort and support of friends and relatives.

¹ Léger Marketing, Sondage Omnibus - Attitude des Québécois à l’égard de la sensibilisation des jeunes aux réalités de l’homosexualité et notoriété de Gai Écoute (Quebecers’ attitudes about raising young people’s awareness of the realities of homosexuality and the visibility of Gai Écoute), 2000.



Bullying and harassment

Acts of bullying and harassment among young people are not new realities. The victims are often young people who appear vulnerable. Young LGBT people and those thought to be LGBT individuals are easy prey. Even before their sexual orientation or gender identity has been revealed, they are labeled and have to pay the price. For example, girls and boys whose physical appearance does not correspond respectively to standards of femininity and masculinity are the first to be affected; adults should therefore pay special attention to them.

Suicide

Homosexuality and transgender identity are not causes of suicide, but homophobia and transphobia can be. Many studies have shown that, during their sexual identity crisis period, homosexual and bisexual boys are 2 to 7 times more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual boys. Among transgender people, 33% have attempted suicide. Boys and girls need the support of their family, their friends, and their school. It is reassuring to know that they usually manage to overcome these obstacles, accept their sexual orientation and gender identity and live fulfilling lives.

Diversity in Quebec and Canada

In Quebec and Canada, the charters of rights ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. This is not the case in all countries. People who settle in Quebec and Canada become aware of this reality and adapt to it. They are informed that discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression is as unacceptable as discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic and national origin or religion.

² Beck, F., Firdion, J.-M., Legleye, S. and M.-A. Schiltz. (2010). *Les minorités sexuelles face au risque suicidaire* (sexual minorities and the risk of suicide). *Acquis des sciences sociales et perspectives*, Saint-Denis: INPES, coll. Santé en action.

³ Aide aux trans du Québec. (2017). *Statistiques sur les personnes transgenres* (statistics on transgender people). Taken from <https://atq1980.org/2017/07/01/statistiques-sur-les-personnes-trans/>

Definition of homophobia

Like racism, xenophobia or antisemitism, homophobia is a form of discrimination. It consists of negative attitudes and feelings and an aversion towards homosexual people or homosexuality in general. Manifestations of homophobia take the form of hatred, insults, hostility and rejection towards people considered to be homosexual and towards anything associated with them. Anyone whose appearance and behavior do not conform to stereotypes of masculinity or femininity could be a target.

Definition of transphobia

Any negative attitude that could lead to the rejection of, or direct or indirect discrimination against, transgender people, and people who do not conform to gender and sexual norms and representations.

The fight against homophobia and transphobia

Admittedly, schools are constantly and increasingly being asked to do more. The inclusion of LGBT people should not be a burden for schools. The goal should be to create a climate where students and teachers of all sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, feel comfortable and safe. Bringing up the subject is an opportunity to introduce values such as tolerance, acceptance of others and respect for differences.

Hurtful words

Some words make us happy and others are hurtful. Homosexuality and transgender identity are associated with a history marked by condemnation and prejudice, traces of which still exist today. Words such as “fag”, “tranny”, “butch” and “queen” are hurtful terms and their use at school should be discouraged.

Breaking the silence

We cannot remain silent about the issue of homophobia and transphobia. If it has not already been done, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression should be part of the school inclusion policy. We have to fight homophobia and transphobia and crack down on homophobic and transphobic violence in order to ensure the safety of young LGBT people. Taunting cannot be tolerated; and we should encourage initiatives that help demystify sexual diversity and gender plurality and address homophobia and transphobia in suicide prevention programs.