

Pink Bloc for the 8th of March on International Women's Day
2021 in Luxembourg City. Photo credit : Maura (2021).



VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND QUEER WOMEN IN LUXEMBOURG

**Input for the U.N. Independent Expert on
protection against violence and discrimination
based on sexual orientation and gender identity**

Laboratoire d'Etudes Queer, sur le Genre et les Féminismes – LEQGF Asbl

Authors: Dr Sandy Artuso & Enrica Pianaro

This document offers an insight on the situation of lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women in Luxembourg. Its aim is to inform and to give recommendations for the acknowledgement, the visibility and the respect of LBQ women's existence in Luxembourg.

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www.leqgf.lu

LEQGF – A perspective combining research, community expertise and embodied knowledge

The Laboratoire d'Études Queer, sur le Genre et les Féminismes - LEQGF Asbl is a non-profit organisation established in August 2020. Our association uses action-research to ignite social change through the production and transmission of knowledge and tools on gender, sexualities and intersectional equality issues in Luxembourg.

Although our association was founded in 2020, the co-founders have over 15 years of professional and voluntary experience in project management, and in social, cultural and community work focused on the realities of marginalised communities in Luxembourg. Our members are embedded in the Luxembourgish feminist, LGBTIQ+, art and trade-unionist movements.

Luxembourg has no tradition in gender studies and even less in queer studies. Research on these topics is crucially lacking funding and sustainable implementation. With LEQGF we aim to create meaningful research and social interventions that best benefit communities touched by invisibility and disinterest by mainstream research.

We offer our expertise to public administrations and activist organisations. We have already worked on questions of gender equality in sports, non-sexist and inclusive communication in public services, and LGBTIQ-inclusion in museums. Besides external requests, we conduct independent research. We lead a long-time project on the history and culture of LGBTIQ+ lives in Luxembourg with a strong focus on lesbian involvement in activist practices. Our latest project is the Luxembourg LGBTIQ+ Panel – a community-based study on the situation, experiences and aspirations of LGBTIQ+ people in Luxembourg and the border region. The aim is to develop recommendations based on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people to inform policies and actions designed to improve the lives of queer people.

LEQGF is member of ATGENDER, the European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation and EL*C, a lesbian feminist and intersectional network.

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Introduction: a testimony

In the week of the 15th of December 2025, a lesbian couple took their dog out for a walk in the suburbs of Luxembourg-City during day time. N. was walking the dog on the lawn while B. was standing on the sidewalk. B. self-describes as an androgynous lesbian. Her gender expression does not match current representations of femininity. Suddenly, a seemingly drunk man approached and started yelling: “You stupid cow!” B. did not react at first, as she did not realise it was directed at her. Then the man shouted again: “You stupid lesbian!” At this moment, B. understood that the man was in fact addressing her. Before she could react, the man had left the street and entered his house. She was very upset because she felt that she had not been able to properly defend herself. The couple left filled with sadness, confusion and anger. For the moment, they have decided not to file a complaint.

In 2026, lesbians, bisexual and queer women still cannot live a life free of stigmatisation and hatred in Luxembourg. The story of this couple shows that the public space is not a safe space for queer women. It also shows that depending on your gender expression and gender non-conformity, the likelihood to hear humiliating remarks on your behalf is bigger.

This report will offer some insights on the situation of LBQ women in Luxembourg. In our definition, the notion “LBQ women” encompasses cis, trans and non-binary lesbians, as well as bisexual and queer women who identify within the gender binary or not. It also encompasses different gender expressions, whether they are in conformity with current gender norms or not.

We will address key issues for LBQ women and give some recommendations to improve life for lesbians in Luxembourg. This report does not claim to be exhaustive and we are well aware that the histories and experiences of a lot of LBQ women from Luxembourg are missing. Nevertheless, we hope that this report contributes to a better understanding of LBQ women’s lives and struggles.

Missing data

In general, data on LGBTIQ+ people in Luxembourg is missing. Quantitative studies realised by governmental and research institutions do not sufficiently integrate responses by LGBTIQ+ individuals. This starts with the heteronormative conception of surveys and the way data is processed and presented. Moreover, there is no collection of intersectional quantitative data. In consequence, statistics documenting LBQ women’s lives do not exist.

First steps to integrate more inclusive perspectives in quantitative data collection were taken in 2024, when LEQGF was mandated by the Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity to produce a discussion paper on the introduction of a non-binary category in the collection of national statistics.¹

Furthermore, qualitative research on the lived experiences and intersectional realities of LGBTIQ+ communities is rare and underfunded. Organisations like LEQGF who are invested in developing qualitative and community-based research have to work with scarce resources and precarious funding. Most of LEQGF’s work is realised on a voluntary basis.

Moreover, the absence of structured and coordinated political work done by LGBTIQ+ and feminist civil society organisations makes it difficult to collect information and document the lives of LBQ women. Currently, there is no active lesbian political movement in Luxembourg that would

¹ Website of the Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity: <https://mega.public.lu/fr/observatoire-egalite/actualites/publication-document-reflexion-leqgf.html> (retrieved 05.01.2026).

monitor and promote the advancement of LBQ women's rights. LBQ women therefore rely on the political work of LGBTIQ+ and feminist civil society organisations to support their struggles, but as evidence from our research suggests, their voices are not always heard.

Invisibility as a systemic form of violence

If invisibility can be used by LBQ women to navigate challenges and stay safe in everyday life, it only offers temporary protection against discrimination. On the long term, it does not lead to liberation from structural heterosexism and social justice for LBQ women. The following observations will highlight a selection of shortcomings for the advancement of LBQ women's rights in Luxembourg.

Evidence from our research

Our organisation has identified challenges and barriers impacting LBQ women in Luxembourg, as evidence from our qualitative study on the situation, experiences and aspirations of LGBTIQ+ people in Luxembourg shows.² The research was based on thematic focus groups with members of the LGBTIQ+ community. One focus group was dedicated to LBQ women and their combined experiences as women and queer persons. Key issues identified show that (1) lesbophobia ranges from verbal violence to physical threats; (2) LBQ women protect themselves by stepping back from discriminatory and/or threatening interactions; (3) coming out still means weighing risks and benefits; (4) LBQ women struggle to find their space, even within LGBTIQ+ and/or feminist groups; (5) cultural and social spaces are perceived as male-centred and queer spaces as gay-centred.

➔ The fact sheet (in French) of the focus group "Femmes Queer" contains a more detailed description and can be downloaded on the project page: <https://www.lgbtpanel.lu/results>

Institutional invisibility

In every aspect of social, political, economic, activist and cultural life, lesbians are invisible in Luxembourg. For the purpose of this report, we will focus on invisibility of LBQ women in governmental policies and institutional practices committed to reducing inequalities, discrimination and violence. The Luxembourgish government has developed multiple action plans and strategies to improve the life of its citizens. There are action plans on poverty, anti-racism, disability, health and mental health, prevention of diseases, youth, culture, etc. Although some progress has been made in the past years to include LGBTIQ+ issues in different action plans, a brief review of some of the recent plans shows that LGBTIQ+ people are not mentioned in the majority of these plans. In consequence specific needs of LBQ women cannot even be addressed.

Regarding action plans addressing gender equality and diversity in particular, the Luxembourgish government has introduced three action plans. One addresses equality between women and men, the second addresses gender-based violence, and the final one addresses LGBTIQ+ equality.

Despite the intention to implement these three action plans in a coordinated manner and to ensure coherence between the various measures, the intersectional needs of certain groups are not taken into account. In particular, LBQ women are neither mentioned in the action plan on equality between women and men, nor in the action plan on gender-based violence. Furthermore, specific barriers and vulnerabilities related to the experiences of LBQ women are neglected in the action plan on LGBTIQ+ equality. This has concrete consequences on policy-making.

² Luxembourg LGBTIQ+ Panel (2024-2025) : <https://www.lgbtpanel.lu/>

Legal aspects

Since January 2015, Luxembourg has legally established marriage equality and adoption for married couples, including same-sex couples. Despite the opening of marriage equality, unequal treatment of homosexual couples prevails in the law on filiation. In 2017, an amended version of the draft law on filiation was proposed, but was never voted.³ Until today, there has been no progress on filiation rights for same-sex female couples regarding the automatic second parent recognition in case of medically assisted procreation. Lesbian couples still have to go through an adoption procedure, where the “non-biological” parent has to adopt the child of her partner.

Regarding legal protection when facing violence, discrimination or hate speech, the Luxembourgish criminal code (Art. 454 à 457-4)⁴ counts “sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, gender identity”⁵ as discrimination grounds. However, it must be noted that the naming of specific discriminations (e.g. lesbophobia, transphobia, homophobia, etc.) would give more precise information on the nature of discrimination. It would also be relevant for criminal statistics and policy-making.

Intersectional experiences

In Luxembourg particular life stages, circumstances and intersectional identities create heightened vulnerabilities for LBQ women. Our study, the Luxembourg LGBTIQ+ Panel, offers insights into the experiences of LBQ women whose identities intersect with young age, old age, rural life, immigration status and ethnic identity. Selected insights show that (1) elderly lesbians and young LBQs lack essential networks in rural areas; (2) Chinese queer women are confronted with stigmatisation when accessing public administrations; (3) Muslim lesbian asylum seekers face exclusion from fellow Muslims who are not LGBTIQ+, as well as from law enforcement officers who question their identity based on heteronormative and racist assumptions.

➔ Details can be found in various fact sheets and in the final report: <https://www.lgbtpanel.lu/results>

³ Website of the Luxembourgish Parliament referring to the draft law “Projet de loi 6568A portant réforme du droit de la filiation”: <https://www.chd.lu/de/dossier/6568A> (retrieved 05.01.2026).

⁴ Code pénal luxembourgeois, Chapitre VI. - Du racisme, du révisionnisme et d'autres discriminations (L. 19 juillet 1997) (Art. 454 à 457-4) : <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/code/penal> (retrieved 05.01.2026).

⁵ Our translation from the original wording in French “de leur sexe, de leur orientation sexuelle, de leur changement de sexe, de leur identité de genre, ...” from the above-mentioned article of the criminal code.

Recommendations

Main expectations of LBQ women for meaningful change in Luxembourg drawn from the study “Luxembourg LGBTIQ+ Panel”:

- More spaces specifically for LBQ women and non-binary, trans and intersex people.
- More listening to lesbian voices in politics, in society and in LGBTIQ+ organisations.
- Feminist groups should truly reflect all women.
- Less gay-male-centred culture, more lesbian culture.
- Education and awareness trainings on LGBTIQ+ topics.

Suggested recommendations to improve the situation of LBQ women drawn from LEQGF observations:

- Research & Data collection:
 - Collect and analyse information about the situation of LBQ women in Luxembourg, including intersectional needs and challenges.
 - Provide necessary financial resources for independent research on gender and sexuality topics, with special focus on LBQ women.
- Tackling invisibility and discrimination on an institutional and legal level:
 - Create adequate action plans and evaluations that integrate an LBQ women's perspective on education, health, family, employment, prevention of violence, including domestic violence and hate crimes, asylum, culture, etc.
 - Ensure that LBQ women in same-sex relations could realise their family rights on equal basis, and particularly adopt a law that would provide mechanisms for the automatic recognition of a child's second parent without adoption procedure.
 - Recognise and implement lesbophobia as a discrimination ground in criminal law and other binding procedures, e.g. on gender-based violence.
 - Adopt an intersectional point of view to make sure that specific social demands and needs of LBQ women are addressed in a comprehensive way.
- Listening to community voices:
 - Regularly consult with and recognise the expertise of LBQ women's lived experiences and knowledge.
 - Intolerance and prejudice within the LBQ women's community exist and should be addressed. It is therefore important to provide platforms where LBQ women from different backgrounds can think, discuss and share experiences.