

# Community factors may determine whether sexual minority parents view their community as tolerant vs supportive

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A new *Family Relations* study has found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) parents feel more positive about where they live when that place is more legally, politically, and religiously supportive of LGB people; when there are more LGB-friendly employers; and when there are other LBG-headed households.

Community characteristics alone, however, did not determine perceived climate, as LGB [parents](#) living in the same communities rated them differently. The differences seemed to hinge on whether parents experienced a fit between themselves and their communities. Those perceiving a supportive climate felt comfortable being open about their identity and were able to access support without barriers. Any stigma that they experienced was an exception to their overall positive experience.

Those reporting tolerant communities described numerous barriers to social involvement and connection such as stigma, harassment, or apathy of institutions towards bullying and discrimination. For these parents, feeling support was the exception, and they found support in specific locations such as religiously affirming congregations.

Overall, community structural factors were necessary for a community to be considered tolerant, but they were not sufficient for a community to be perceived as supportive.

"These findings show that legal protections, employer support, and religious affirmation are important for sexual minority families. These features should not, however, be taken for granted," said lead author Dr. Ramona Faith Oswald, of the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. "Even within communities that look supportive at the level of community factors, not all LGB parents are able to find [support](#). That is why, in addition to instituting inclusive and protective policies, we encourage community leaders to identify and remedy barriers that may be preventing LGB parents and their children from fully accessing what the community has to offer."

**More information:** Ramona Faith Oswald et al, Tolerance Versus Support: Perceptions of Residential Community Climate Among LGB Parents, *Family Relations* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/fare.12292](https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12292)

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