

The Labor Market Outcomes of LGBT People with a Migration Background

Aim

To examine how LGBT people with a migration background perform in the labor market compared to LGBT people without a migration background, and non-LGBT people with a migration background.

Theoretical background

Despite significant progress in recognizing the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, they are still treated unequally in the labor market. Although about 18 million people in the EU identify as LGBT, one out of five felt discriminated against at work specifically due to being LGBT. This hurts the LGBT individuals in question, but also the organizations and societies, estimated to result in a loss in real GDP in the U.S. of more than a trillion USD. Previous research has also documented that this discrimination results in lower productivity, earnings, and the probability of employment for LGBT people. However, due to data unavailability, these studies have typically ignored heterogeneity within the LGBT population by migration background. Yet, increased international migration and legal recognition of LGBT people have led to a sizeable population of LGBT migrants in recent years (about 10,000 LGBT migrants in the Netherlands). Therefore, studying LGBT migrants provides a unique opportunity to gain theoretical insights into how migration background intersects with gender identity.

In this project, we pose the question of how LGBT people with a migration background perform in the labor market compared to, on the one hand, LGBT people without a migration background, and on the other hand, non-LGBT people with a migration background and non-LGBT people without a migration background. Moreover, we explore how potential differences vary by occupation, urbanization, and time. In particular, we formulate four subquestions:

1. What is the role of having both an LGBT identity and migration background for the probability of employment and earnings from labor?
2. Are labor market outcomes of LGBT individuals with a migration background conditioned by the extent to which occupations are male- or female-dominated?
3. To what extent does the regional level of urbanization explain the labor market performance of LGBT individuals with a migration background?
4. How have labor market outcomes for LGBT individuals with a migration background changed over time?

We draw the subquestions from *intersectionality theory* which suggests, in the labor market context, that the outcomes of workers who are members of two distinct minority groups may not be predicted by the labor market experience of each independent minority group (Del Rio & Alonso-Villar, 2019). Structural obstacles to integration faced by all ethnic minorities imply a multiplicative disadvantage for LGBT individuals with a migration background (Douglas & Steinberger, 2015). Moreover, previous literature has shown that ethnic minorities as well as gender- and sexual minorities experience greater workplace discrimination in male-dominated occupations, rural regions, and periods of economic crisis.

Research design

We use unique administrative population data from Statistics Netherlands. The Netherlands is particularly suited to investigate this topic as it is the first country to legalize same-sex marriage (already in 2001) and is considered an LGBT haven for migrants who live in countries with a prohibitive legal and cultural environment. To examine the four subquestions, we will use a range of quasi-experimental methods for causal inference, including sibling fixed effects and difference-in-differences.

Literature

Del Rio, C., & Alonso-Villar, O. (2019). Occupational Achievements of Same-Sex Couples in the United States by Gender and Race. *Industrial Relations*, 58(4), 704-731.

Douglas, J. H., & Steinberger, M. D. (2015). The sexual orientation wage gap for racial minorities. *Industrial Relations*, 54(1), 59-108.

Project initiators

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Location

Utrecht