

The Truth about Sexual Orientation

1. **Lesbian, gay and bisexual people cannot be identified by certain mannerisms or physical characteristics.** People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual come in as many different shapes, colors and sizes as do people who are heterosexual.
2. **Sexual experiences as a child are not necessarily indicative of one's sexual orientation as an adult.** Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people have early heterosexual experiences, but are still lesbian, gay or bisexual; many avowed heterosexuals have had sexual contact with members of their own sex, but are still heterosexual.
3. **No one knows what causes sexual orientation.** Many lesbian, gay and bisexual people know that they are attracted to members of their own sex at an early age, sometimes as young as 6 or 7 years old. Others learn much later in life, in their 30's, 40's or 50's. Some research indicates that sexual orientation is determined between birth and age 3, but no one is sure what causes particular orientations.
4. **Many people accuse lesbian, gay and bisexual people of "flaunting" their sexuality when they talk about their partner, hold hands or kiss one another in public.** These are activities that heterosexual couples do all the time. Due to homophobic reactions, some lesbian, gay and bisexual people are actually forced to hide their sexuality in public, not flaunt it.
5. **People who are lesbian, gay and bisexual work in all types of jobs and they live in all types of situations.** They belong to all ethnic and racial groups. They are members of all religious communities. They exhibit a range of mental and physical capabilities. They are young, middle aged, and old.
6. **Sometimes oppression based on sexual orientation escalates into acts of physical violence.** In surveys of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, 52-87% have been verbally harassed, 21-27% have been pelted with objects, 13-38% have been chased or followed and 9-24% have been physically assaulted.
7. **Most lesbian, gay and bisexual people are comfortable with their own biological sex; they don't regard themselves as members of the opposite sex.** Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not the same as being transgender.
8. **The majority of child molesters are heterosexual men, not lesbian, gay or bisexual people.** Almost all studies show that over 90% of child molestation is committed by heterosexual men.
9. **Homosexuality is not a type of mental illness and cannot be "cured" by psychotherapy.** Although homosexuality was once thought to be a mental illness, the American Psychiatric and Psychological Associations no longer consider it to be one. Psychiatric and psychological attempts to "cure" lesbians and gay men have failed to change the sexual orientation of the patient. These "treatments" may help change sexual behavior temporarily but also can create emotional trauma.

10. **There is no definable gay "lifestyle."** Similarly, there is no standard heterosexual lifestyle. Some people might like to think that a "normal" adult lifestyle is a heterosexual marriage with two children. Less than 7% of all family units in the US consist of a mother, a father and two children living together.

Compiled by **Youth Pride, Inc.** with the help of **The Campaign to End Homophobia.**

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