Myths About LGBTQ People

I don’t know any lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans-identified people.

You may not know any LGBTQ people who are “out” to you, but you likely do know some. Research suggests that at least 10% of the population is lesbian or gay and a far greater proportion is bisexual. The prevalence of trans-identified people is more difficult to estimate because trans individuals often “pass” as the gender they identify with and do not want to be known as the sex they were assigned at birth.

You can “spot” lesbian, gay man, or trans-identified person.

For the most part, you can only “spot” LGBTQ people if they want to be identified, or if they fit your stereotypes of what LGBTQ people look like. But don’t let the stereotypes fool you. There are feminine, masculine and androgynous appearing men who are straight, bisexual trans and gay. There are also feminine, masculine and androgynous appearing women who are straight, bisexual, transgender and lesbian.

A disproportionate number of pedophiles and sexual abusers of children are gay, lesbian and bisexual.

Pedophilia is not linked to sexual orientation. Pedophiles who have gender preferences for children may not have the same gender preferences in their adult attractions (if they have them). Pedophiles' attraction to children has less to do with sexual gratification than it has to do with power. Incidentally, 90% of pedophiles identify as heterosexual men.

Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is abnormal.

The Canadian Psychological and Psychiatric Associations consider the human desire for same sex relationships to be healthy and normal. The American Psychological Association stated that, “it is no more abnormal or sick to be homosexual than to be left-handed.”

Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals “flaunt” their sexual identity.

One could argue that it is heterosexuals who continuously “flaunt” their sexuality and wedding rings, pictures in the office, and constant references to their opposite sex partners. Same sex lovers are often criticized for engaging in affectionate behaviour that goes unnoticed in heterosexual couples.

Early experiences of abuse, or problems with brain chemistry cause people to be lesbian or gay.

We don’t know what causes difference in sexual orientation. Some believe that their orientation was chosen or developed later in life, while others believe that they were “born that way.” We do know that social forces pressure all of us to be heterosexual, and it might be worth thinking about why we ask the question “what causes homosexuality,” but rarely, “what causes heterosexuality?”
HIV/AIDS is a gay disease.

HIV/AIDS is caused by a virus. Viruses infect all kinds of people, regardless of their sexual orientation. HIV/AIDS is spread through the exchange of bodily fluids such as blood, semen and breast milk. Some people have contracted HIV/AIDS from sharing intravenous needles. While HIV/AIDS has been contracted by a large number of gay men, it has also been contracted by an increasingly large number of heterosexual men, women, children and infants.

Trans-identified people are unnatural. The sex assigned to us at birth is our “real” sex and gender.

The sex assigned to us at birth is not necessarily our “real” sex or gender. Trans-identified people may experience a very painful discrepancy between their core sense of gender identity and their bodies. For some, surgery or hormone therapy can help resolve that discrepancy. Even our clear cut ideas about there being two distinct biological sexes are unfounded. About 4% of the population are born to some extent with ambiguous genitalia or the sex characteristics of both sexes. This is largely hidden from mainstream society because these children, called intersex, are often surgically altered to bring them in line with social expectations about sex and gender.

LGBTQ people are promiscuous.

LGBTQ people are neither more nor less sexually active than heterosexual people. Some heterosexuals and gays and lesbians are involved in long term, monogamous relationships while others may have multiple partners. Some remain celibate.

Bisexuals are sex fiends who will do it with anyone.

There is no evidence to suggest that bisexuals are more sexually active than anyone else. Bisexual women and men are emotionally and sexually attracted to more than one gender. They may be with women at one point in their lives and men at another time, or engage in sexual activity and relationships with a variety of partners, regardless of gender.

Homosexuality exists only in Western societies. Same-sex desire and relationships do not exist outside of North America and European countries.

LGBTQ people exist in all cultures, even though they may go by different names. For example, in some Aboriginal cultures, gay and trans-identified people may identify themselves as “two-spirit,” and they are perceived to play a special role because they have qualities of both genders. However, there are many countries where homosexuality is criminal, punishable by death, or at the very least strictly forbidden. In such circumstances LGBTQ people will go to great lengths to hide their identity. It is worth noting that many LGBTQ people in Western cultures also feel the need to hide their identities because of social stigma and discrimination.