

## What Do You Know About LGBT People?

For each statement below, please circle "T" if you think the statement is true, "F" if you think it is false or "U" if you are unsure.

- T F U 1. Children raised by lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are more likely to become gay.
- T F U 2. The majority of child molesters are gay men.
- T F U 3. Most trans people identify as lesbians or gay men.
- T F U 4. "Homosexuality" is unique to humans and is not found elsewhere in nature.
- T F U 5. There are few actual bisexuals; most people will eventually identify as either completely lesbian/gay or heterosexual.
- T F U 6. Being lesbian or gay is a type of mental illness and can be cured with appropriate psychotherapy.
- T F U 7. Most trans people seek gender reassignment surgery.
- T F U 8. Bisexual men are largely responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS to heterosexual women.
- T F U 9. The majority of self-identified LGBT people are white Americans and Europeans.
- T F U 10. Being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is a personal choice that people make.
- T F U 11. Most transsexuals are trans women (biological men who see themselves as female).
- T F U 12. Bisexuals are equally attracted to men and women.
- T F U 13. Bisexual people are more promiscuous than heterosexuals or gay men and lesbians.
- T F U 14. Bisexuals need at least one partner of each gender.
- T F U 15. Providing a young person with information about LGBT people may harm them or coax them to change their sexuality.
- T F U 16. Places of worship do not allow openly LGBT people to become members of their congregations.
- T F U 17. LGBT people are protected under civil rights laws like other groups and are asking for "special rights."

## Myths and Realities of LGBT Life

**Children raised by lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are more likely to become gay.**

FALSE

Numerous studies have found that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are not more likely to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual as adults than children raised in heterosexual families. Research also demonstrates that there are no differences between the children in intelligence, psychological and social adjustment, and popularity with friends. Some studies show that children with gay/lesbian parents are more accepting of diversity.

**The majority of child molesters are gay men.**

FALSE

Very few gay men molest children. Research indicates that about 95% of child molestation is committed by heterosexual men. The overwhelming majority of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are interested in other adults, not children.

**Most trans people identify as lesbians or gay men.**

FALSE

Gender identity (how someone perceives their own gender) is a different concept than sexual identity. Transgender individuals identify across the sexual-orientation spectrum, and in fact, studies show that the majority of crossdressers are heterosexual men.

**"Homosexuality" is unique to humans and is not found elsewhere in nature.**

FALSE

Same-gender sexual behavior has been scientifically documented as a normal, regular occurrence among nearly 300 species of mammals and birds, including chimpanzees, dolphins, elephants, squirrels, geese, and bears.

**There are few actual bisexuals; most people will eventually identify as either completely lesbian/gay or heterosexual.**

FALSE

Many people identify as bisexual all of their lives. There are probably as many bisexuals as there are gay men and lesbians. However, bisexuals frequently go unrecognized because they are seen as heterosexual when they are in relationships with people of another gender, and as lesbian or gay when in relationships with those of the same gender.

**Being lesbian or gay is a type of mental illness and can be cured with appropriate psychotherapy.**

FALSE

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed "homosexuality" from its list of mental disorders, and in 1975 it stated that "homosexuality, per se, implies no impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capacities." Although several "ex-gays" have become prominent in the mainstream media in recent years, very few gay people desire or are able to change who they are. Even many "ex-gays" admit that they continue to have attractions to people of the same gender; they just don't act on their feelings. Helping LGBT people to develop a greater level of self-acceptance is a more effective therapy.

**Most trans people seek gender reassignment surgery.**

FALSE

While some transsexuals take hormones, have electrolysis (for trans women) or mastectomies (for trans men), and undergo genital reconstruction surgeries, others choose only some of these procedures, because of the tremendous cost of the surgeries, the mixed results (especially for trans men), and their lack of access to medical care in general. Other transgender people decide not to alter their bodies permanently, but seek to express their gender identities in other ways, such as through crossdressing.

**Bisexual men are largely responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS to heterosexual women.**

FALSE

Although articles in many mainstream women's magazines in the 1980s and '90s raised fears that "irresponsible" and "deceitful" bisexual men were an imminent AIDS threat to "innocent" heterosexual women, bisexual men have not been a widespread source of HIV-transmission. Moreover, the stereotyping and scapegoating of bisexual men ignores the realities of AIDS. It is unsafe sexual practices and needle-sharing behavior, not membership in a particular group, that spreads HIV. People who are self-aware and educated about AIDS and safer-sex practices pose no extraordinary risk.

**The majority of self-identified LGBT people are white Americans and Europeans.**

FALSE

People attracted to others of the same gender exist in all cultures and communities. However, the mainstream U.S. media and many gay publications fail to be inclusive of LGBT people of color.

**Being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is a personal choice that people make.**

FALSE

The cause of sexual identity is unknown. Some studies suggest a genetic basis, while others cast doubt on a biological explanation. Similarly, some people feel that they were “born that way,” while others regard their sexual identity as a preference.

**Most transsexuals are trans women (biological men who see themselves as female).**

FALSE

While trans women have often been more visible, due in part to the history of drag in the gay male community and society's narrow limits on what is considered appropriate "male" behavior and appearance, it is estimated that there are approximately equal numbers of trans women and trans men.

**Bisexuals are equally attracted to men and women.**

FALSE

Some are. But many people who identify as bisexual are more attracted to men or more attracted to women. Some say they are attracted to men and women in different ways, and others say gender is not relevant to whom they are interested in.

**Bisexual people are more promiscuous than heterosexuals or gay men and lesbians.**

FALSE

Bisexuality is a sexual orientation. It is independent of the decision to be monogamous or non-monogamous. Some heterosexuals, gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals are monogamous, others are not. It is a mistake to assume that because someone has the potential to be attracted to men and women, they must have twice as many sex partners.

**Bisexuals need at least one partner of each gender.**

FALSE

Bisexuals have the potential to be attracted to people of more than one gender, but they do not necessarily need to have a partner of each gender. Most bisexuals do not have to be involved with more than one gender at a time in order to feel fulfilled.

**Providing a young person with information about LGBT people may harm them or coax them to change their sexuality.**

FALSE

Because of feeling isolated and lacking information that would enable them to accept themselves, LGBT teens are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Suicide is the leading cause of death among gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. These teens may face hostility both at school and at home. One in four gay, lesbian, bisexual youths is forced to leave home due to family conflicts over their sexual orientation.

**Places of worship do not allow openly LGBT people to become members of their congregations.**

FALSE

While some places of worship and religious denominations are intolerant of people with different sexual and gender identities, others are very accepting, including Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalists, the United Church of Christ, the Society of Friends (Quakers), United Christian Fellowship, and the predominantly LGBT Metropolitan Community Church. There are several religious institutions in Columbia and the surrounding area that readily welcome LGBT people as worshippers; and some have LGBT clergy.

**LGBT people are protected under civil rights laws like other groups and are asking for "special rights."**

FALSE

In most of Missouri, employers can fire or not hire someone simply because of their sexual or gender identity. LGBT people can also legally be denied housing and access to public facilities in much of the state.