



Bisexuality: information to know

“What attracts me most to the bisexual community is not sexual identity, but my respect for the honesty and openness I find there. More than anywhere else, I encounter people who understand the value of knowing yourself well, realizing why you choose what you do, and of making those choices openly.”
—Kevin McCulloch, *Anything That Moves*, Summer 1998

The Basics

Some people do not believe bisexuality exists. Others believe everyone is bisexual. Neither statement is accurate. Ultimately, each person must decide how to identify for oneself, though often people do not have enough information to truly identify their own sexual orientation, let alone others.

Bisexuality is the name of the orientation for people who find both men and women attractive.

Attraction

Attraction is more than about sex. We are attracted to people for a variety of reasons, sexually being just one of them. We are also attracted to people emotionally and socially. This is true for people of all sexual orientations—including bisexual people, though often non-bisexual people forget this when thinking about bisexuality and bisexual people.

Being bisexual is about more than sex.

Kinsey Scale

Alfred Kinsey was famous for creating the scale of sexual orientation. He said that people fell in a range from 0 (completely heterosexual) all the way up to 6 (completely homosexual). Numbers in between represented being neither completely heterosexual nor homosexual. While some people refer to the 1's as predominantly heterosexual and some people refer to the 5's as predominantly gay or lesbian, these people could also be described as bisexual.

Bisexuality does not necessarily mean a person is equally attracted to men and women. This is not the case for many bisexual people.

Klein Scale

Fritz Klein believed sexual orientation was more complicated and not static. He asked people about who they were sexually attracted to, what their actual sexual behavior was, who they fantasized about, who they preferred emotionally, social preference, lifestyle preference, and how they self-identified. He also asked about each person's past, present life within the last year, and their ideal. The seven factors and three time periods make up orientation.

People's understanding of their sexual orientation may vary depending on how they are asked and may change over time.

Self-Identification

A person may identify as heterosexual but have sexual experiences with men and women. A person may identify as bisexual who is in a monogamous relationship with a woman (or man). Some people may have no sexual experiences but wish to have a relationship with someone. This person may identify as bisexual, gay, or heterosexual even with no sexual experience. Asking questions using the factors and time periods from the Klein scale may be useful, but...

Ultimately, each person decides for themselves how to identify and express their sexual orientation.



Bisexuality and Monogamy

A person who identifies as bisexual is as likely as a straight, gay, or lesbian person to be monogamous. Being attracted to more than one gender does not mean that a person will be in relationship with more than one gender. Being straight or gay or lesbian does not mean a person is more likely to be monogamous than a bisexual person.

Being bisexual does not mean a person is necessarily more promiscuous (a common and incorrect myth), nor does it mean a person is necessarily more like to be in non-monogamous relationships.

Biphobia

Biphobia is a fear or condemnation of bisexuality. It is also evident through silencing and making or keeping bisexuality invisible. This silencing can be done by using exclusive language or saying there are only heterosexual and homosexual people. Biphobia is not limited to straight people. Many gay and lesbian people are also biphobic.

Bisexual people suffer from biphobia from gay and lesbian people as well as from straight people.

Pansexual

Terms such as *pansexual*, *omnisexual*, *polysexual*, and *pomosexual* (post-modern sexuality), as well as *queer*, are other labels that people who are attracted to more than one gender use. Many people believe there are more than two genders and are attracted to people of all genders.

“Bisexual” can be a limiting term for people who others might describe as bisexual but who prefer to use different terms to describe themselves.

The Most Common Myths

- Everyone is bisexual
- No one is bisexual
- Bisexual people are promiscuous and interested in everyone
- Bisexual people can't make up their minds
- Bisexuality is a phase

Resources*

- Bisexuality Curriculum from Interweave: www.interweaveuu.org
- Workshops on bisexuality in the Welcoming Congregation Handbook and the Living the Welcoming Congregation curriculum: www.uua.org/lgbt/welcoming/program
- Bi the Way, a 2008 film on bisexuality: <http://www.bithewaymovie.com>
- “Bisexual Invisibility”: A report from the San Francisco Human Rights Commission’s LGBT Advisory Committee: www.birequest.org/docstore/2011-SF_HRC-Bi_invisibility_Report.pdf
- Bisexual resources from author Robyn Ochs: www.robynochs.com/resources/Bisexual.html
- Bisexual Resource Center: www.biresource.org
- BiNet USA: www.binetusa.org

*Note: There are very few organizations and resources that address issues specific to bisexual people, which is further evidence of the need for more understanding and education around bisexuality. Some LGBT organizations and websites have little specific information on bisexuality and some are even more exclusive of bisexuality despite including the word “bisexual” when describing whom they serve.