

Facts and Myths

Confusion exists about bisexuality, and bisexual people. Here are some questions you may want answered, or others may ask of you.

What is bisexuality?

Bisexuality is the potential to be physically, emotionally or sexually attracted to both men and women, including transgendered people.

Sexual identity is a personal thing – many people engage in sexual activity with people of both genders, but do not call themselves bisexual. People may call themselves straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or just plain sexual, and enjoy or desire sex with both women and men. People may identify as bisexual because of the feelings they have for both genders, but engage in sexual activity or have relationships with people of only one gender.

This leaflet was produced by part of a growing group of people who proudly identify as bisexual. We are part of a national and international bisexual movement.

Are bisexuals really just gay or straight, and pretending to be something they are not?

A small number of homosexual or heterosexual people may claim to be bisexual, for any number of reasons. However, because of the pressure to choose one or the other, it is more common for bisexuals to try and identify as gay/lesbian or straight. Many have found that they still have strong feelings for people of both genders. This can be a confusing time, as little information has been available on bisexuality or “coming out as bi”. It can be a painful process to identify as bisexual because in the past there has been little support for people trying to assert a bisexual identity. This is changing slowly.

Are bisexuals “fifty-fifty”?

Some bisexuals are attracted equally to both genders, but many are attracted to more men than women, or vice-versa. The degree of attraction for people of either gender can vary over time.

Gender is just one attribute of a person. To many bisexuals, this is less important than other attributes, such as personality, ambition, or the way they style their hair.

How common is bisexuality?

It is probably more common than you realise. According to various surveys and studies, at least thirty per cent of sexually active people admit to some form of bisexual behaviour. The older the person, the more likely they are to experience a same-sex encounter, and to admit to such behaviour. Social attitudes inhibit many people from admitting bisexual or homosexual behaviour, and this can lead to under-reporting of the number of bisexually-active people in society.

How come I don't see as many bisexuals as I see gay men or lesbians?

Since there is not a stereotypical bisexual appearance, way of acting or type of clothing, bisexuals are usually assumed to be either heterosexual or homosexual. Bisexual men or women in a gay and lesbian march are assumed to be homosexual or straight supporters, unless they are marching as a bisexual group. A bisexual man and woman in a relationship would appear to others as a straight couple, and similarly, two bisexual women or men together appear as a gay couple. Where there is prejudice against bisexuals, it is hard to challenge these assumptions. You can help by not presuming that anyone is straight, gay/lesbian or bisexual until you have given them a chance to define their own sexuality or identity.

Are all bisexuals promiscuous? Do they cheat on their partner?

These are common misconceptions. Bisexuals are no more or less promiscuous than any other group. Because most bisexual people have had to think deeply about their sexuality, they also may have had to seriously consider the sorts of relationships that work for them. Contrary to myth, a bisexual does not need to be involved with both a man and a woman at the same time, nor does attraction involve acting on every desire. Why should a bisexual's attraction to people be any different to those of straights or gays? Some act on them, some don't. Many bisexuals have long-term monogamous relationships, others may have a greater number and range of partners. Some may cheat on or deceive their partner, as occurs in other groups, but many are faithful and honest to their partner. One thing all the best arrangements or relationships have in common is a great commitment to honesty from the start.

Don't bisexuals spread HIV/AIDS?

Bisexual men are often scapegoated as the agents of transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, from the gay community to the heterosexual population. Lesbians are also concerned that bisexual women may pose a threat to their community because bisexual women have sex with men. However, it is unsafe sexual *behaviour*, rather than sexual *orientation*, that puts people at risk of infection. Often bisexuals have more cause to think about their sexual practices than most other people. Nevertheless, bisexuals, as well as straights, gays and lesbians, must continue to educate themselves about safer sex practices. One guideline has become very clear: it does not matter whom you have sex with, provided you have safer sex.

What about discrimination? Can't bisexuals pretend to be straight?

It can be just as painful for a bisexual person to hide their sexual identity as it is for any gay man or lesbian who is in the closet. "Out" bisexuals can experience similar types of discrimination as those faced by lesbians and gay men, and at the same time face discrimination and prejudice from the gay and lesbian community. Whether they have come out or not, bisexual people may face violence and abuse in the same manner as gay men and lesbians.

Legislative protection and increased education and understanding are what is needed. Bisexuals are an increasingly visible presence in a variety of political movements and organisations, fighting for equal rights and opportunities, and for better HIV education and support services.

I think I may be bisexual! What can I do?

Plenty! The number of bisexual groups – and lesbian/gay groups that welcome bisexuals – is increasing all the time. Most of these groups are listed in gay and lesbian community newspapers and publications. A list of bisexual groups in Australia and other countries can be obtained from the Australian Bisexual Network, whose address appears on the back of this leaflet. You can also get in touch with the Sydney Bisexual Network, again details are on the back.

Strength through Diversity!

We believe that our diversity encourages acceptance and respect, and that it is one of our greatest strengths. If you are in an area where there is no bisexual group, you may consider organising one or being a contact for other bisexual people in that region. If you are involved in a lesbian or gay men's group, you may consider including bisexual people as well. You could invite a bisexual speaker to address a meeting, rally or workshop.

Sydney Bisexual Network

SBN is a social and support group, based in Sydney. It has regular social activities and members undertake various activities to raise the awareness of bisexuality.

The best way to keep up with our activities is via the Web. Our web page is: <http://sbn.bi.org>

If you only have email you can request info from: **sbn-admin@yahoo.com**

We also have an info line with a message detailing upcoming events: **(02) 9565 4281**

If you want information in the traditional manner please send a business-sized, stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

**SBN
PO Box 281
Broadway
NSW 2007**

Australian Bisexual Network

The Australian Bisexual Network is a national body for bisexual men, women and their partners. It is affiliated with the Sydney Bisexual Network and other Australian bisexual groups.

ABN's bi-monthly publication, *National Biways*, contains national and international news, articles by and for bisexuals and their partners, personal columns, reviews, and more.

For information about ABN the web page is: www.rainbow.net.au/~ausbinet/

Email: ausbinet@rainbow.net.au

For mailed info on ABN and *National Biways*, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

**ABN
PO Box 490
Lutwyche
Qld 4030.**

Bisexuality.



Assume Nothing.