

A large, stylized rainbow graphic composed of several curved, overlapping bands of color (red, orange, yellow, green, teal, blue, purple) that tapers to a point on the left side of the page.

AN ALLY'S GUIDE TO BISEXUALITY+



WARRIOR YOGA NETWORK



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The Warrior Yoga Network

Primary Author: Sierra Duffey
Co-Author: Warrior Yoga Network
Cover Design: Shauna Wotherspoon

All information written and gathered in this resource were chosen with the subjective biases of the author, Sierra Duffey, as a queer, bisexual, Caucasian woman.

Bisexuality, pansexuality and all forms of gender and sexual expression are fluid and evolving. Our hope is that this document can be a positive resource for the queer community in today's understandings of queer identity.

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What does it mean to be bisexual?

The term “bisexual” is used to describe a person who experiences emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to, or engages in romantic or sexual relationships with, more than one sex or gender.

The term “pansexual” has also been adopted to reflect attraction to anyone regardless of gender.

A bisexual identity does not necessarily equate to equal sexual attraction to both sexes; commonly, people who have a distinct but not exclusive sexual preference for one sex over the other also identify themselves as bisexual. Robyn Ochs, a bisexual educator and activist, defined bisexuality as: “the potential to be attracted – romantically and/or sexually – to people of more than one sex and/or gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.”¹

Note: In this resource, the terms bisexual and pansexual are used interchangeably.

Often, being bisexual also means facing unique challenges; redefining the boundaries of gender, sexuality and love; and bringing important contributions to both the LGBTQ+ community and society.

Some considerations about the prevalence of bisexuality:

- Bisexuals are much less likely than gay men and lesbians to say that their sexual orientation is an important part of who they are. Only 20 per cent of bisexuals say being bisexual is extremely or important to their overall identity.²
- It is difficult to determine the size and composition of the LGBT population, especially using a survey-based approach that relies on the willingness of individuals to disclose their sexual orientation and gender identity. Some researchers have estimated that between [3.5%](#) and [5%](#) of the U.S. population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Of these, bisexuals comprise the slight majority of the community with 1.8% of the U.S. population compared to 1.7% who identify as homosexual.³

¹ [Bisexual](#)

² [Among LGBT Americans, bisexuals stand out when it comes to identity, acceptance](#)

³ [How Many People are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender? – Williams Institute](#)



Place in the LGBTQ+ Community

Despite what many believe, bisexual and pansexual individuals are not always accepted fully in the LGBTQ+ community. With many members “passing” as either homo or heterosexual, bisexuality is often robbed of its own identity, and bisexuals face unique challenges from all sides. Bisexual people experience alarming rates of invisibility, societal rejection, violence, discrimination, and poor physical and mental health—often at rates higher than their lesbian and gay peers. In particular, male-identifying bisexuals have poorer health and social outcomes than female-identifying bisexuals.⁴

Let's take a look at some of the reasons bisexuality faces particular challenges:

Bisexuality is often excluded from LGBTQ+ research

- Human bisexuality has mainly been studied alongside homosexuality. Van Wyk and Geist argue that this is a problem for sexuality research because the few studies that have observed bisexuals separately have found that bisexuals are often different from both heterosexuals and homosexuals
- Further, mainstream society is fascinated with bisexual women. Being a bisexual woman is seen as being sexually interesting and is widely accepted. The truth is not the same for men. Many studies and articles are focused on bisexuality in women, reducing the visibility of bi men even further.
- Bisexual people are underrepresented in research on mental health, although bisexuals are considered the largest segment of the LGBTQ+ community.

Bisexuals face high levels of discrimination

- One study noted that just short of 60% of bi women live with anxiety and mood disorders, almost double the rate of their straight peers.
- 58% of bisexuals are exposed to biphobic jokes at work, and 31% have been sexually harassed on the job because of who they are.
- Approximately 25% of bisexual men and 30% of bisexual women live in poverty, compared to 15% and 21% of non-LGB men and women respectively and 20% and 23% of gay men and lesbians.
- Bisexual people experience higher rates of sexual and intimate partner violence than gay, lesbian, and straight people.⁵ (61% of bi women compared to 43% of lesbian women and 35% of straight women)

⁴ [Understanding Bisexuality](#)

⁵ [8 things you didn't know about the bisexual community](#)



Bisexuality can be hidden

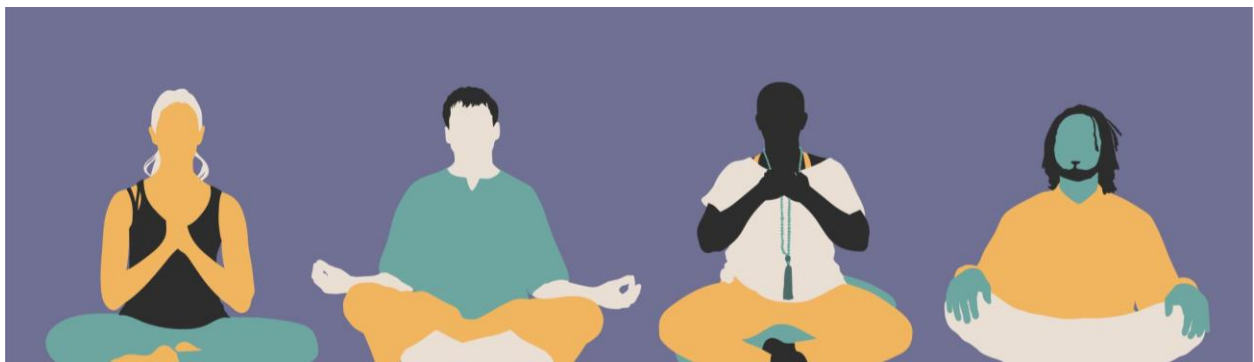
Bisexual people are more likely to suffer from social isolation than their gay and lesbian counterparts, as the bisexual community is often stigmatized by both the homosexual and heterosexual communities.

Because the bisexual identity may not be as visible as other queer identities, for a variety of reasons, pansexuals often find themselves constantly coming out in different ways.

- Only 28% of bisexuals say that all the important people in their life know they are bisexual, compared to 77% of gay men and 71% of lesbians.
- When broken down by gender, only 12% of bisexual men said that they were "out" vs. 33% of bisexual women.

Bisexuals often end up on one side or the other, either by choice or exclusion.

- Some who identify as bisexual may merge themselves into either homosexual or heterosexual society. Other bisexual people see this merging as enforced rather than voluntary; bisexual people can face exclusion from both homosexual and heterosexual society on coming out.
- Psychologist Beth Firestein states that bisexuals tend to internalize social tensions related to their choice of partners and feel pressured to label themselves as homosexuals instead of occupying the difficult middle ground where attraction to people of both sexes would defy society's value on monogamy.
- Bisexuals are much more likely than gay men or lesbians to be married, and most have a spouse of the opposite sex. In one survey, roughly a third (32%) of the bisexual women were married, as were 23 per cent of bisexual men.
- Only nine per cent of bisexuals have same-sex partners; 84 per cent are involved with someone of the opposite sex.
- Bisexual individuals regularly experience hostility from members of the LGBTQ community. These experiences make it difficult for bisexual individuals to find a safe and supportive community. (Feinstein)





Unique Challenges for the B in LGBTQ+

Bisexual erasure

- Bisexual erasure is the belief that bisexuality is not a true identity - either by believing that everyone is bisexual, or that no-one is. Erasure is a common experience for bisexuals and comes from both heterosexuals and those in the LGBTQ+ community.
- Sigmund Freud, whose theories are prevalent but mostly discredited, once stated: "All women / people are a little bit bisexual."
 - This is a false statement, as bisexuality is a distinct and legitimate identity. Many people may describe themselves as bi-curious or flexible - they are open to sexual or romantic relationships with other genders - but may not identify as fully bisexual.
- Others believe the opposite, that no-one can truly be attracted to both genders, but is simply confused or that the bisexual individual has not yet "picked a side".
- According to 2013 research by the University of Pittsburgh, 15 percent of people did not categorize bisexuality as legitimate sexuality, with straight men being three times as likely to think it is "not a thing."³
- Pansexuals know that their identity is unique and that their experiences differ from straight, gay or lesbian peers.

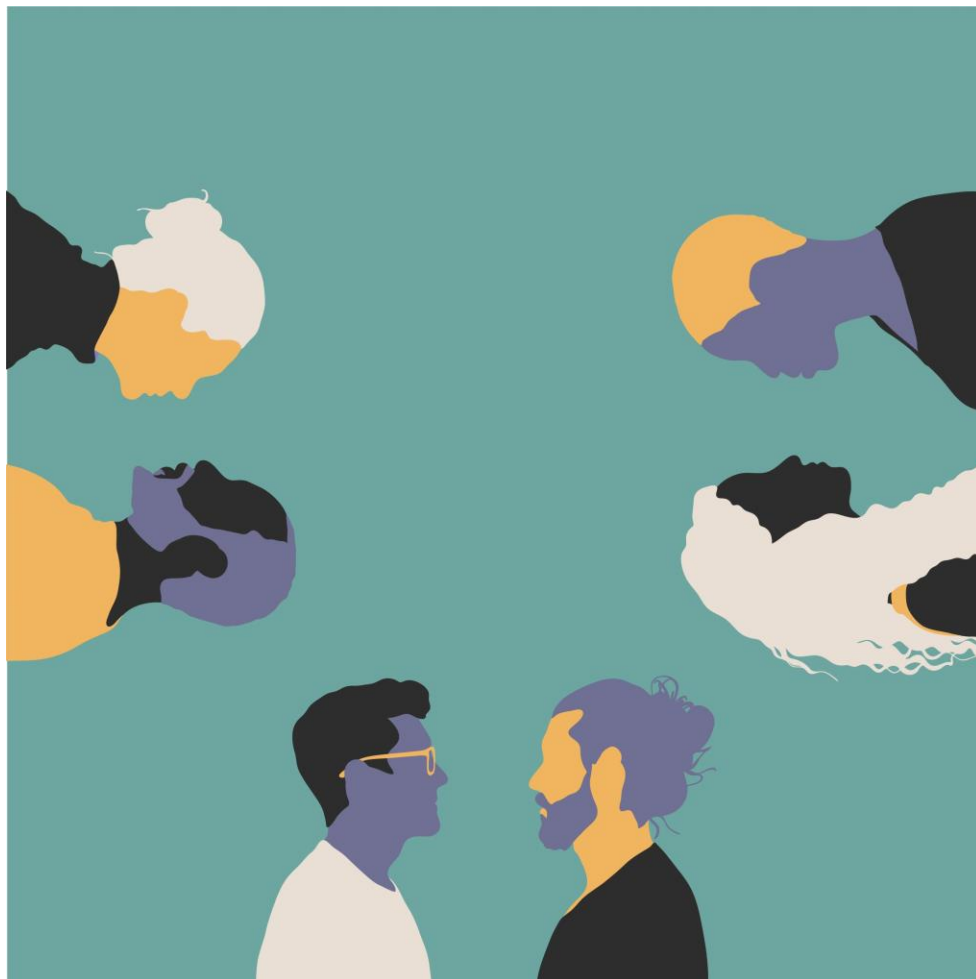
Lack of accurate representation in mainstream and LGBTQ+ media

- LGBTQ+ representation in mainstream media has been an issue for many decades. While representation is still low, the prevalence of LGBTQ+ characters and narratives is increasing.
- Despite the increasing LGBTQ+ stories that are emerging, bisexuality is often lacking even from LGBTQ+ specific creators and media channels.
- Many popular bisexual characters, are represented as having deep psychological illnesses and murderous neuroses. Examples include the HBO drama *Oz*, where Chris Keller was a bisexual serial killer who tortured and raped various men and women. Other films in which bisexual characters conceal murderous neuroses include *Black Widow*, *Blue Velvet*, *Cruising*, *Single White Female*, and *Girl, Interrupted*
- In other situations - such as Kalinda Sharma in *The Good Wife* - bisexuals are portrayed as a point of drama, created through love triangles and affairs.
- In LGBTQ+ - friendly narrative, bisexuals are either left out completely or misrepresented.
- A common narrative in LGBTQ+ media is that the main character is going through a period of confusion before exploring their sexuality and coming out as homosexual.
 - In many of these stories, bisexuality is not recognized as its own identity - it is simply an "in-between" on the way to full acceptance of homosexuality.
- While many homosexuals have experienced a sort of "confusion" period prior to coming out, the lack of consideration of or reference to bisexuality in these stories further erases bisexuality as a legitimate identity.



There are some stories (historical and contemporary) that feature authentic and unique bisexual narratives. Here is a short list of some well-represented bisexual/pansexual characters or celebrities:

- Elio in *Call My By Your Name* by Andre Aciman
- Nick Carraway in *the Great Gatsby* by Scott Fitzgerald
- David in *Schitt's Creek* (David)
- Freddie Mercury
- Virginia Woolf
- Rosa Diaz in *Brooklyn 99*
- Lady Gaga
- Phoebe in *Friends*
- David Bowie





Myths and Facts

Here are some common myths about bisexuality that bisexuals are constantly trying to debunk:

Bisexuals are attracted to men and women 50/50

- Bisexuality and pansexuality have broad definitions. While some bisexuals may be equally attracted to both men and women, this is not always the case.
- Many bisexuals and pansexuals are also attracted to people who do not fit into male / female identities.
- A common experience of bisexuals is that their preferences are fluid and change throughout their life or even throughout the day.
- Research suggests that, for most women, high sex drive is associated with increased sexual attraction to both women and men. For men, high sex drive is associated with increased attraction to one sex or the other, but not to both, depending on sexual orientation.
- Bisexuals may have a stronger preference for a specific gender, but still identify as bisexuals because the attraction for other genders still exists.
- Pansexuals often reference [the Kinsey Scale](#) to help conceptualize their sexuality. The Kinsey Scale is a widely recognized model used to demonstrate that sexuality is fluid. Pansexuals typically identify as somewhere along the scale that is between homosexual and heterosexual.

Bisexuals are promiscuous and not able to stay in a committed relationship

- While many pansexuals do explore non-traditional relationships, pansexuals can and are often in monogamous, committed relationships.
- Some research suggests that many bisexuals are generally happier and more committed to long-term relationships than their heterosexual or homosexual counterparts.

Bisexuals have a wider pool of dating choices

- Just like everyone else, bisexuals have preferences for partners based on appearance, personality, interests etc.
- Even if a pansexual is attracted to more than one gender, it does not necessarily mean that they have more choices when it comes to dating and love.
- In many cases, bisexuals have more challenging experiences dating and finding long-term relationships. Many people lack understanding of bisexuality or have pre-conceptions that can be barriers to healthy relationships with the pansexual individual.
- Dating is a unique experience for many bisexuals and is a hard landscape to navigate regardless of sexual orientation.

Bisexuals are confused or cannot admit that they are gay/lesbian yet.

- Historically, bisexual women have had their sexuality labeled by lesbian feminist circles as an "apolitical cop-out". Bisexual women have been seen as "not radical enough" because of their attraction to cisgender men.



- Many bisexuals, in fact, are quite confident and proud of their identity. Whether or not a bisexual person chooses to “come out” to people in their circle, the bisexual identity is distinct.
- Bisexuals may experience and enjoy relationships or sexual relations with multiple genders and have no intention of “choosing a side”.

The Bisexual Contribution

Despite all the challenges, being bisexual comes with a lot of positives too! Being bisexual provides a unique view of gender, love and sexuality that has made amazing contributions to both LGBTQ+ communities and heterosexual understandings.

Here are some fun facts about bisexuals as a community:

Bi+ have made significant contributions to understandings of sexuality and gender and in advancing LGBTQ+ rights

- In 1948, American biologist [Alfred C. Kinsey](#), who was himself bisexual, published two books on human sexual behaviors, [Sexual Behavior in the Human Male](#) and [Sexual Behavior in the Human Female](#), which are widely known as the "Kinsey reports". Kinsey and his team conducted 1,600 interviews with people about their sexual histories. He is also the originator of the Kinsey Scale, which is a common model for understanding fluid sexuality.
- Bisexual activist [Brenda Howard](#) is known as the "*Mother of Pride*", for her work in coordinating the first LGBT Pride march. She also originated the idea for a week-long series of events around Pride Day which became the genesis of the annual LGBT Pride celebrations that are now held around the world every June.
- In the 1980s AIDS began to affect the LGBT community, and bisexual people took an important role in combating it.

The bi community is extremely diverse

- People of colour are more likely to identify as bisexual.
- Trans people may be more likely than cisgender people to be bi+ as well, with more than 40 per cent identifying as bisexual or queer.
- 40 per cent of bi men report having a disability, compared to 26 per cent of gay men and 20 per cent of straight men.



Bisexuality helps us explore different views of gender, sexuality and love

- Though not always the case, many bisexuals participate in non-monogamous relationships. Like all other sexual orientations, bisexual people *may not* be monogamous while combatting the persistent stereotype that bisexual people *cannot* be monogamous. It is useful to be knowledgeable about consensual non-monogamy when working with any couple, it may be more likely to come up if at least one partner is bisexual.⁶

Studies like "Robust Evidence for Bisexual Orientation Among Men" help us to better understand human sexuality and pave the way for future, more insightful, research. Our sexuality is so much more than a yes or no question. The study provides hard evidence that sexuality exists on a spectrum, consistent with self-reported positions on the Kinsey Scale. Even within the bi community, many people worry that they are not "bi enough", that they need to be equally attracted to men and women. Findings like these can help us to educate people that there is no one right way to be bi.⁷

Some quotes from [The 10 Best & Most Empowering Things About Being Bisexual](#)

- "My bisexuality helped me see shades of gray in all aspects of life. "
- "I no longer view the people in my life as needing to strictly fall under platonic friends or sexual partners. There are different types of love, attractions, and connections I have with various people. I don't need to categorize my relationships and put them into a box."

Bisexuals can be extremely confident

- In a September 1976 interview with Playboy, David Bowie said, "It's true—I am a bisexual. But I cannot deny that I've used that fact very well. I suppose it's the best thing that ever happened to me."
- Bisexuals were found to have fewer personal insecurities than heterosexuals and homosexuals. (LaTorre and Wendenberg 1983)

⁶ [Shining a light into the darkness: bisexuality and relationships](#)

⁷ [Science is on Our Side](#)



Resources and Communities

Mental health and belonging are important for us all, but especially for members of the LGBTQ+ community. Reach out to the following Canadian organizations dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights and health:

The Warrior Yoga SPECTRUM Committee

Warrior Yoga Network is a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the barriers which prevent trauma impacted communities from accessing yoga and meditation. We provide free weekly classes, wellness packages, scholarships and more. Our SPECTRUM committee is committed to creating safe spaces for people within the LGBTQ2IA+ community to access wellness practices. Learn more at www.warrioryoga.network or email ali@warrioryoga.network.

Nation-Wide

- Egale Canada: [Egale – equal not other](#)
- [Rainbow Railroad - Home](#)
- [Out On Screen | Out On Screen is the driving force behind the Vancouver Queer Film Festival and Out In Schools](#)
- Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity: [CCGSD | For a world without discrimination](#)

Local Communities

- (Toronto) [The 519 - Space For Change - The519](#)
- (Ottawa) [Kind Space: Home](#)
- (Ottawa) [Family Services Ottawa - Around the Rainbow](#)
- (Ottawa) Ten Oaks Project: [About](#)
- (Vancouver) [QMUNITY — BC's Queer, Trans, and Two-Spirit Resource Centre](#)
- (Winnipeg) [Rainbow Resource Centre](#)
- (Saskatoon): [OUTSaskatoon](#)

Mental Health and Support

- Canadian Mental Health Association: [CMHA – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer identified People and Mental Health](#)
- [Links & Resources](#) from LGBT YouthLine

Ontario

- Assaulted Women's Helpline:
 - 1-866-863-0511
- Kids Help Phone:
 - 1-800-668-6868
- Talk4Healing, for Indigenous women:
 - 1-855-554-HEAL
- Support Services for Male Survivors of Sexual Violence:
 - 1-866-887-0015



- [Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line](#)
 - Text or call (647)-694-4275
- Sexual Health Ontario: [Chat](#)
- [Find Support – OCRCC](#)





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