



# Exploring Stereotypes: MythBusters

Unsure what's a stereotype, what's an assumption and, for want of a better term, what's absolute rubbish? This might get you started. Here are 10 common misconceptions about LGBT+ people and their lives/

## 1. Coming out only happens once

Incorrect. 'Coming out' is something LGBT people have to do again and again, if they choose to do so. Whether we start a new job, meet new neighbours, make new friends, come into contact with old friends or meet up with distant relatives, it's a decision we have to make constantly. There's also a misconception that people usually come out at a young age. Realising you're LGBT, and feeling comfortable enough to tell others, can happen at any stage of life, whether you're 15, 55 or 95 years old.

## 2. Same-sex couples have 'male' and 'female' roles

Same sex relationships come in different shapes and sizes. Some people may display attributes or take on responsibilities typically associated with what it means to be 'male' or 'female' but others won't. (And even then, there's a longer conversation to be had around the fact that those associations are based on sexist stereotypes, rather than what makes someone 'male' or 'female'.) On the flipside, people's assumptions that same sex couples don't form families is also way off.

There's a whole host of ways for LGBT couples to have children, children, whether that's donor insemination and fertility treatment, adoption, fostering, or surrogacy.

## 3. Gay men are 'feminine' and lesbian women are 'butch'

Nope. There's a whole spectrum of identities within the LGBT community and 'butch' and 'feminine' are just some of the ways people might identify. These attributes aren't related to gender identity or sexual orientation. They are just part of who someone is and how they present themselves to the outside world.

## 4. Bisexual people are greedy and/ or they can't make up their minds



Again, this is an out-and-out no, and is a biphobic assumption to hold. Being attracted to more than one gender doesn't make someone 'greedy', or imply that they plan on dating more than one person at a time. It also has no impact on someone's fidelity.

You're attracted to the person. Full stop. Stop for a minute and think about all the different things you find attractive in a person. Don't get carried away! Are you always attracted to people of the same weight, height, race? With the same eye colour, hair colour, accent? No? Does that mean you can't make your mind up? Or that you don't know what you want? No. For bi and pansexual people, part of this openness is the genders they're attracted to. It doesn't mean they're confused or undecided.

## 5. Being trans means having surgery

Trans is an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they

were assigned at birth. Being trans doesn't automatically mean that someone will undergo any medical interventions. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some trans people, this might include hormone therapy or surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this.

## 6. Being trans means you're straight. Or gay. Or you only date other trans people.

Who you're attracted to is who're you're attracted to. Someone's gender identity, before, during or after transition, doesn't make a difference. People in the trans community come in all shapes and sizes. Some trans people are lesbian, gay and bisexual, in the same way that some are straight. This is no different to the way in which people who aren't trans identify. And trans people don't only date other trans people, like people with blue eyes don't only date other people with blue eyes!

## 7. We look and act like the LGBT people you see on telly

Unfortunately, we're still at a point where LGBT representation is often white, young, cisgender and of non-faith background. That leaves a LOT of gaps for a LOT of people who're part of our community. If you hear LGBT people talk about 'visibility' a lot, that's because it's vital for us.

Have you heard the phrase, 'you can't be what you can't see'? Well, if you're growing up without visible role models, it can be really hard to understand and embrace your identity. Don't forget that LGBT people are present across all communities within society – this means there are lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people who are also:

Senior citizens

- People of colour and /or black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)

Disabled people

People of faith

Young people

That might sound obvious, but often the specific experiences of those groups are overlooked, which in part is because LGBT representation is not diverse enough. It's important to understand the idea of 'intersectionality' – a term which describes how someone can suffer lots of different types of discrimination just because their identity overlaps several minority groups, like race, class, gender, age, ethnicity, health and so on.

## 9. Queer

This was, and still can be, used as a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. But the term has been reclaimed by many LGBT people, particularly those of a younger age, who feel empowered by it. For many, 'queer' provides a particular freedom of expression that 'gay', 'lesbian' bisexual' or 'trans' might not, and provides an identity that they feel relates to their experience.