



Diversity + Inclusion Resources

A collection of blogs from
Your D+I



Contents



Myth Busting: LGBT+

Myth Busting: Bisexuality	p. 2
Myth Busting: Coming Out	p. 4
Myth Busting: Intersex	p. 7
Myth Busting: Non-Binary	p. 10
Myth Busting: Pride	p. 13
Myth Busting: Lesbian	p. 16
Myth Busting: Pansexuality	p. 19

The Business Case for Diversity + Inclusion	p. 23
---	-------

Pronoun Particulars	p. 27
---------------------	-------

Contact Your D+I	p. 30
------------------	-------



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Myth Busting: Bisexuality

In the first instalment of our new Myth Busting: LGBT+ series, we'll be tackling some common fallacies surrounding bisexuality. The idea around this blog series is that to fully support LGBT+ colleagues, you must clear up any stereotypes or misinformation you or your employees might hold.

Busting the following myths will allow for a more inclusive workplace that better supports bisexual staff in their identities.

What is bisexuality?

Before we get into the myths surrounding bisexuality, let's set out what it means to be bisexual. Being bisexual is generally defined as the attraction to two or more genders. Someone of any gender can identify as bisexual, and they can be attracted to any two or more genders.

Now, that definition may have already cleared up one or two myths you've heard about bisexuality. However, let's now go into more detail about some harmful bisexual stereotypes you don't want circulating your workplace.

'Bisexuals are always attracted to men and women'

While many bisexuals are in fact attracted to men and women, this isn't true for everyone. Because bisexuality is defined as the attraction to two or more genders, the genders each bisexual person is attracted to can be different. They can also include non-binary genders like agender and genderqueer.

Even those bisexual people who are attracted to both men and women may be attracted to other genders in addition to this. For example, a bisexual man could be attracted to other men as well as women and non-binary people.

'Bisexuals are more inclined to infidelity'

Another common myth surrounding bisexuality is that those who identify as bisexual will cheat on their partner. However, bisexuality is the attraction to two or more genders and has nothing to do with whether a person thinks cheating is okay.

Just because bisexuals have a larger dating pool doesn't mean they are more likely to cheat on their partner. An inclination towards infidelity relates to a person's morals, not how many options they have.

'Bisexuals are greedy'

Just like you didn't choose your sexuality, your bisexual colleagues didn't choose their attraction to multiple genders. So how can they be greedy? The stereotype that



bisexuals are greedy likely comes from the fear that they may cheat. Like we just established, however, being bisexual does not make you more likely to cheat on your partner.

'Bisexuals need to pick a side'

Unfortunately, this myth can be heard both inside and outside the LGBT+ community. This is likely because those who are only attracted to one gender, whether they are straight or gay, can sometimes find it hard to imagine what it is like to be attracted to multiple.

What can someone do if they are finding it hard to understand attraction to more than one gender? Remember that the human experience is incredibly diverse, and it is impossible to fully understand every single person's perspective. The most important thing is to be respectful anyway.

'Bisexuals are impure'

Another myth around bisexuals is that they are less pure than their heterosexual or homosexual counterparts. This is usually said because bisexuals are attracted to, and may have had relationships with, people of different genders.

Sadly, this is another fallacy that circulates the LGBT+ community, such as in the term 'gold star lesbian'. This phrase refers to lesbian who has never dated a man, and it is offensive for many reasons¹. In short, though, being attracted to people from multiple genders has no relation to sexual or moral purity.

The more you know

It is no myth that the more you know about something, the better you can understand it. This is particularly true when it comes to LGBT+ identities such as bisexual. Understanding the truth behind an identity's biggest myths can help you become a more inclusive employer.

To learn more about LGBT+ identities so that you can create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, keep an eye out for future posts on the Your D+I blog or take a look at our workshops.

¹ <https://www.pride.com/lesbian/2016/2/18/5-reasons-phrase-gold-star-lesbian-needs-die#media-gallery-media-3>

Myth Busting: Coming Out

Happy National Coming Out Day! Today allows LGBT+ people to celebrate when they came out of the closet. Many people in the community who are ready to come out also use NCOD to take the leap. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness for the homophobia that exists within silence.

However, we're taking the opportunity to continue our Myth Busting: LGBT+ blog series and talk about the myths surrounding coming out! To learn the truth behind more LGBT+ myths, check out our previous instalment, Myth Busting: Bisexuality.

Understanding LGBT+ experiences such as coming out is essential if you want to support your colleagues and staff from the community. So, to improve your diversity and inclusion efforts, let's talk coming out!

What is coming out?

Coming out is short for the phrase, 'coming out of the closet'. This is when you tell somebody about your LGBT+ identity, such as your sexuality or gender.

There are many reasons a person might come out, but it is usually so that they can live freely without hiding a part of themselves. For example, coming out might allow you to talk to your friends about who you are dating. Alternatively, it might let them know to use different pronouns and a new name if you are trans.

Now that we've covered what coming out is, let's get to the myths!

'You have to come out'

Probably the biggest myth of all is that everybody has to come out. Many of us in the LGBT+ community thought about coming out as soon as we realised we weren't straight and/or cisgender. However, this can delay you coming to terms with your identity yourself.

There is no need to rush coming out or to even come out at all. While many LGBT+ people find coming out freeing, this is not the case for everyone. In fact, many people are in situations where coming out would not be safe. They may live with unsupportive family or even in a country where homosexuality is illegal.

Nobody should be pressured into coming out, and the myth that it is necessary can actually be very harmful.

'You owe it to them to come out'

Even if your family and friends are supportive of the LGBT+ community, you do not owe it to them to come out. This is a common myth, and many LGBT+ people

themselves believe that others have the right to know. At the end of the day, however, your identity is private information that only you have a right to.

Some parents might find it upsetting if their child has kept their sexuality a secret from them. However, this is usually because they don't understand that they do not inherently have the right to this information.

When (or if) you come out should be all about being ready and nothing about others wanting to know.

'You should come out on National Coming Out Day'

This may seem trivial, but a large number of people do come out on National Coming Out Day every year. If you are already planning on coming out, NCOD can help you get through your nerves.

However, if you aren't totally sure you are ready to come out or that you will be safe if you do so, don't do it. You should come out when it feels right and not just because it's National Coming Out Day.

'You can tell others that someone is LGBT+'

It might sometimes seem natural to mention your friend's sexuality or gender identity, but you should always make sure they are okay with this beforehand. As we mentioned already, a person's LGBT+ identity is theirs to share and no one else's.

There are a number of reasons you shouldn't share this information. For example, someone might only want to be out to a circle of close friends, or they may simply prefer telling people themselves. You also may not have judged the situation correctly and could put your friend in danger.

'Coming out shows people's true colours'

When you come out and don't get the reaction you were hoping for, it is easy to feel defeated. In some cases, getting a negative reaction to coming out can mean having to cut ties with the other person. And this is sometimes for the best.

However, it is a myth that having a negative reaction means that this person will never change their mind. Many people find the news shocking but come to accept their loved one's identity in time. While the journey to this point varies from person to person, it is certainly possible.

Celebrate but educate

Coming out is something to celebrate, but there are many myths surrounding this LGBT+ rite of passage. Clearing up these fallacies should give you a better understanding of the LGBT+ people you work with.

To learn more about LGBT+ identities, take a look at our LGBT+ workshop, The A-to-T of LGBT+!



Myth Busting: Intersex

It's Intersex Awareness Day, and today's blog post is about intersexuality! IAD is all about raising awareness of intersexuality, so we're here to bust some harmful myths surrounding this term!

Not all intersex people identify as LGBT+, particularly if they don't also identify as trans or experience same-sex attraction. However, many people still place intersex people under this umbrella regardless. We don't want to pigeon-hole anybody, but we've decided to include intersex in our Myth Busting: LGBT+ series in order to bust this myth as well as some others!

What is intersex?

Intersex is a term for somebody whose reproductive or sexual anatomy does not conform to strict ideas of male or female. When they are born, doctors will assign them a legal sex. However, this choice will not necessarily align to the gender identity they develop as they grow up. This happens with non-intersex (endosex) people too, but an intersex person is even more likely to differ from their assigned gender.

When doctors assign a sex to an intersex baby, this happens in a different way to endosex children. This is because doctors often perform surgeries to 'correct' their genitals to fit the box of male or female. These surgeries are usually not medically necessary but are instead taken out to fit the child into a box. Therefore, intersex people are assigned both a legal and physical gender before they can develop a gender identity themselves.

Now that we've established what intersex means, let's get on to the myths that surround this term.

'Intersex people are LGBT+'

Like we already mentioned, not all intersex people feel they belong within the LGBT+ acronym. Does conflating LGBT and intersex prevent intersex people from getting their own visibility? Or does their inclusion give them recognition as another sexual minority? Do intersex people even want to be seen as a sexual minority?

The LGBT+ acronym is always growing, and it's no secret that many don't understand every identity within it. And this even goes for those within the community, which can mean smaller minorities are given less support. This means that intersex people can feel tokenised by their inclusion in the acronym. There is no 'yes' or 'no' answer to this question (at least not from an endosex person). So what can you do? Support any intersex individuals in their identity inside or outside of the LGBT+ community. Also do not categorise an intersex person as LGBT+ if you don't already know this is how they identify.

‘Intersex is all about genitalia’

While primary sex characteristics are a part of being intersex, they’re not all it concerns. Being intersex can also be related to a person’s chromosomes, hormones and secondary sex characteristics. In fact, there are dozens of known ways to be intersex.

It is important to normalise the discussion of genitalia to allow for dialogue on intersex genital mutilation². However, associating being intersex only with genitalia overgeneralises the experiences of intersex people.

‘Intersex and non-binary are the same’

A common misunderstanding of intersex is that it is another word for non-binary. In case you don’t know, non-binary is a spectrum of gender identities outside the binary of male and female. Examples of non-binary genders are genderqueer, agender and genderfluid. Both intersex and endosex individuals can be non-binary.

The key difference between the two is that intersex relates primarily to the physical (anatomy and/or chromosomes) and non-binary relates to the mental (gender identity). Intersex people who don’t identify as their assigned gender or its opposite might identify as non-binary or simply intersex.

‘Being intersex is not natural’

Some intersex people feel, or would have felt, more at home in their bodies without intersex genital mutilation. Being intersex is a natural way for their body to be, and this should not be overlooked just because they do not conform to binary ideas of sex.

At the end of the day, intersex bodies occur in nature and are just as natural as endosex bodies.

Many believe, in fact, that the ‘corrective’ surgeries performed on intersex children are more unnatural. Some surgeries are needed, but if your body functions and makes you happy, why should it be changed? Especially since many surgeries prioritise potential, future, heterosexual partners’ pleasure over that of the patient.

Use your knowledge!

These myths about intersexuality spread ignorance. However, they also promote harmful beliefs that lead to the genital mutilation of many intersex people. Spreading awareness instead of misinformation will not only help you become more socially conscious. It will also help the fight against intersex genital mutilation.

² <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/intersex-genital-mutilation>



To learn more about LGBT+ identities, you can check out the other posts in the Myth Busting: LGBT+ series!



Myth Busting: Non-Binary

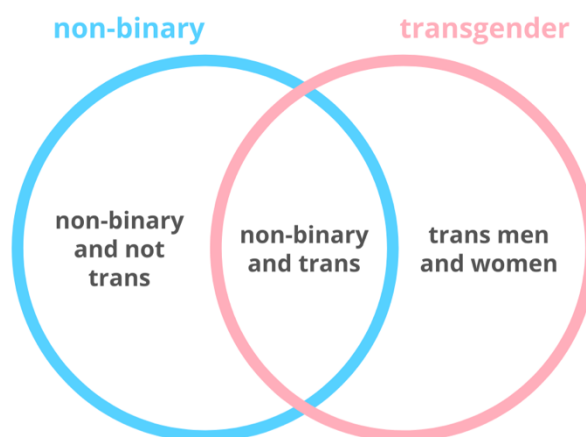
Today's blog is a particularly exciting one for three reasons. Not only is it the newest instalment of the Myth Busting: LGBT+ blog series, but it is also a part of our Trans Week blog series! This is a brand-new Your D+I blog series that celebrates Transgender Awareness Week as well as Trans in the City. Our goal with this series is to support you in making your company even more inclusive of trans individuals, including non-binary people.

So why is understanding non-binary genders important for businesses? Well, we've already talked about the business benefits of Diversity + Inclusion as a whole in *The Business Case For Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*.³ But, to get all of those benefits, you and your employees need to be able to support those of all identities. And this includes non-binary people.

However, non-binary genders are confusing topic for many, and there are many myths out there that could be making it even more puzzling. This post will help replace those myths and misunderstandings with knowledge that can help your business be more inclusive!

What is non-binary?

As usual, let's start off with a definition of today's topic. Non-binary can be described as having a gender that doesn't fit neatly into the boxes of 'male' or 'female' (or not having one at all). These gender identities fall under the umbrella of 'transgender'. This is because non-binary people also identify as a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth.



Some non-binary people do not identify as trans, so non-binary and transgender can be seen as a Venn diagram of sorts. However, many non-binary folks do identify as trans and experience many of the same things as trans men and women. For

³ <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion-business-case/>

example, many non-binary people transition both socially and physically. They can also experience gender dysphoria.

Now that we all know what non-binary means, let's get on to busting some myths!

'Non-binary isn't real'

By far the biggest myth surrounding non-binary genders is that they are made-up. This fallacy also takes the form of 'there are only two genders' and 'non-binary is just a fad'.

Some people are hesitant when they hear of non-binary because it's new to them. Newness is also an argument that many use against the reality of non-binary genders. However, non-binary people have existed in many societies for thousands of years. Many cultures even have words for them, such as the Indigenous Northern American term 'Two-Spirit'.

Some don't believe in non-binary genders because they believe there are only two sexes. First of all, the existence of intersex people (who make up about 2% of the population) mean that this is entirely untrue. Secondly, non-binary is a gender and really has nothing to do with sexual anatomy.

We could probably talk about this myth for much longer, but we'll move on so that we can cover some others.

'Non-binary is the same as intersex'

If you read the previous instalment of this series, Myth Busting: Intersex, you might remember this myth. Many who are only just learning about genders and sexes outside of male and female can find it a little confusing. And this can often take the form of mixing up non-binary and intersex.

An intersex person's reproductive or sexual anatomy does not conform to the strict categories of male or female. This means that their primary sex characteristics, as well as their secondary sex characteristics and chromosomes, may be different to ideas of 'male' and 'female'. On the other hand, non-binary is a gender and isn't about physical sex.

A simple distinction between the two is that intersex relates to physical anatomy and non-binary relates to gender, which is mental.

'All non-binary people are trans'

While many non-binary people identify as trans, some do not feel the word suits them. For example, the common non-binary identity 'agender' means that the person has a lack of gender identity. While some agender people do identify as transgender, they may not if they feel it implies they have a gender.

It's best not to assume somebody is trans just because you know they are non-binary. As with all things LGBT+, only describe people with the words know they use.

'Non-binary people use they/them pronouns'

Many non-binary people do use they/them pronouns, but plenty also use others. Some may be surprised to hear that this includes the common pronouns of she/her and he/him. This can be because some non-binary people have a connection with male or female genders, or these pronouns may simply just feel right.

Some non-binary people also use neo-pronouns. These are lesser known pronouns usually created by non-binary people to better describe themselves. Examples include 'xe/xem/xyr' and 'e/em/eir'. To learn more about pronouns, including how to learn them, read our blog Pronoun Particulars.⁴

Final fact!

To finish off, let's end on a final fact about the topic on non-binary! A non-binary person can also be referred to as an 'enby', which comes from the letters 'NB', standing for non-binary.

Hopefully, this blog post helped you get a better understanding of non-binary genders. This will allow you to better support any non-binary colleagues in your workplace and, therefore, make your business even more inclusive!

If you'd like to further improve your Diversity + Inclusion, share this post around your peers or take a look at our workshops.



⁴ <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/pronoun-particulars/>



Myth Busting: Pride

This LGBT+ History Month, we're back with another instalment of our Myth Busting: LGBT+ series. For those who are new to the Your D+I blog, this is a series that takes LGBT+ topics and explains the common fallacies that surround them. This makes it great for those still learning about the LGBT+ community.

This time, we're talking all about pride. That includes everything from the pride felt as an LGBT+ person to the specific events held to celebrate it. If you'd like to learn about pride and the myths that surround it, keep reading.

What is pride?

The word 'pride' means a feeling of pleasure due to your own achievements or qualities. Though similar, the meaning of 'pride' in the context of the LGBT+ community is slightly different. Pride is generally associated with accepting your own LGBT+ identity and the feelings that come with this – whether that is celebration, feeling understood, relief or anything else.

It can also be the feeling of connecting with others in the community (past and present) and celebrating achievements. This can be both personal milestones, such as coming out, and shared milestones, like progress made for LGBT+ rights.

'Pride', of course, is also used to refer to LGBT+ pride parades. These annual events usually consist of group marches around the city they are held and usually end in a party. However, pride parades also act as a demonstration for LGBT+ rights, often taking place in June to honour the Stonewall riots.


Now that we've briefly covered the meaning of pride, let's get onto the myths...

'Pride excludes non-LGBT+ people'

One of the main myths about LGBT+ pride is that it unduly excludes cisgender (non-trans), heterosexual individuals. The first thing to tackle when it comes to this myth is that pride doesn't, in fact, exclude these individuals. While some do believe that only LGBT+ people should attend pride, this is not the reality for most. Everyone from passionate allies to friends and family who want to support a loved one are welcomed at pride parades worldwide.

As long as you're coming along to be supportive, anyone is welcome at pride. However, even if this wasn't the case and pride was an exclusionary event, this would be justified. Pride is one day a year where LGBT+ individuals can feel safe and happy surrounded by people like them. If we can deal with living in a heteronormative society every other day of the year, non-LGBT+ people should be able to deal with one day.

'Pride is selfish – there's no straight pride'



No, there isn't. Because what would it celebrate? All of the fights won against heterophobia? How about the courage it took to come out to your friends and family who always assumed you were gay?

There is no straight pride simply because it isn't needed. Pride allows LGBT+ individuals to celebrate their identities that usually aren't accepted. And, at the end of the day, the inconveniences that pride causes don't compare to those experienced by LGBT+ people. Which leads us to the next myth...

'Pride isn't needed – LGBT+ people have rights now'

Some argue that pride is no longer needed as LGBT+ individuals have the same rights as heterosexual, cisgender people. This simply isn't true for two reasons.

One is that LGBT+ people do not have the same rights as their non-LGBT+ counterparts. This map⁵ shows just how much of the world LGBT+ people cannot travel to if they want any kind of protection. It also shows the many countries in which they could be killed for their sexuality.

In the UK itself, transgender rights are particularly lacking – with strides backwards⁶ even being taken. The fight for LGBT+ rights is far from over, leaving plenty of reason for pride events to continue. This is especially true when the impact of not only legal but also social issues faced by the LGBT+ community is considered. Homophobia and transphobia are still very present in many areas of society – from schools to healthcare.

The second reason this myth is untrue is that LGBT+ people can celebrate their rights even once they already have them. If our rights do match those of non-LGBT+ people one day, the very fact that we had to fight for them gives us a right to celebrate.

'Pride is just about partying'

Another common fallacy about pride is that it's just about having a good time. Some believe that pride parades are just a party, which minimises the impact of these events on the welfare of LGBT+ people. In many aspects, pride is a party. But it is a party that brings hope into people's lives. It is also a party that doubles as a demonstration for current LGBT+ issues.

Those who see the LGBT+ community's pride as vain partying are missing the point. The celebration is for how far we've come and to raise awareness of how far we still have to go. In fact, the origins of pride events⁷ go to show how much meaning they truly possess. Additionally, events like LGBT+ History Month allow the community to educate all on the struggles of the past.

⁵ <https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws>

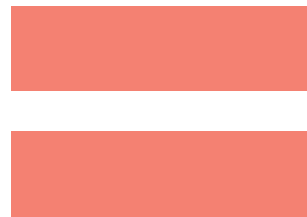
⁶ <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/stonewall-statement-high-court-puberty-blockers-ruling>

⁷ <https://time.com/5858086/pride-parades-history/>

The importance of pride

Most of the myths that surround LGBT+ pride fail to see the true importance of pride. While it may look like an exclusionary, unnecessary party to some, pride is a justified and important experience to LGBT+ people. It not only allows the community to reflect on the past but also plan for the future. It empowers us to keep going in a world that would, in many cases, see us give up.

Learning the meaning of LGBT+ topics like pride is key in understanding and supporting the LGBT+ community. This blog post should have provided a bit of insight into LGBT+ experiences and helped you get closer to Diversity + Inclusion.





Myth Busting: Lesbian

Happy Lesbian Visibility Day! Today, we're helping raise awareness by busting harmful myths about lesbians in another instalment of Myth Busting: LGBT+. This blog series helps you learn about the LGBT+ community by refuting fallacies surrounding a certain topic. Previous posts in the series include Bisexuality, Intersex and Non-Binary. Now let's get into definitions and some lesbian myths!

What is a lesbian?

Many myths and confusions surrounding the lesbian identity come from a lack of understanding of the word. From negative connotations (we'll get back to those) to confusion around the definition, the word lesbian is often misinterpreted. That's why we're starting with a simple definition to clear things up.

A lesbian is a woman who is attracted exclusively or primarily to other women, of course including trans women. That doesn't mean that all those who fit this description have to identify as a lesbian however. Some women prefer the word gay or even homosexual. This may be down to negative experience with the word lesbian or just personal preference. Either way, remember to only refer to someone's sexuality in the terms they use.

Those who use the word lesbian to describe themselves can also vary somewhat from this definition. For example, some women who identify as lesbians are attracted to both women and non-binary people. And some non-binary people who are only attracted to women (and sometimes other non-binary people too) identify as lesbians.

While it's not necessarily a myth, remember that lesbians can be (and be attracted to) non-binary people. Now, let's get onto the lesbian myths we'll be covering in this post.

'Lesbian is a bad word'

We've already touched on this, but many people feel the word lesbian has negative connotations.⁸ This is often because we were told as children not to say 'lesbian' because it's a bad/dirty word. This leads many lesbians to feel distanced from the word even if they feel the definition fits them perfectly.

One reason people see the word lesbian as a dirty word is its association with sex. While being attracted to other women is no more sexual than being attracted to men, gay women are often seen as sexual beings. The pornography industry reinforces this idea by producing a disproportionate amount of media it labels as 'lesbian'.

⁸ https://medium.com/@rebeccawarner_59678/lesbian-is-not-a-dirty-word-cbd585afa7c3

So let's be clear: lesbian is not a bad word. You don't have to lower your voice or whisper when saying it. Being a lesbian is completely normal and no more sexual than any other orientation.

'All lesbians are either butch or femme'

Another common myth about lesbians is that they all identify and fit into the categories of butch and femme. If you don't know, a butch is a lesbian who expresses themselves in a more typically masculine way. They may have short hair and prefer to wear clothes typically deemed as menswear. A femme, on the other hand, is a lesbian who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way. They may wear more feminine clothing and make-up and have longer hair.

However, these two categories have never been the only ways to be a lesbian. And some say the labels are becoming less and less common in the community. For the many who do continue to use the labels, the line between them continues to blur. Femmes can have short hair, and butches can have long hair for example. And these two categories are far from the only ones a lesbian may fit into. Others include 'high femme' and 'chapstick lesbian'.

There are many more categories within the lesbian community that we don't have room for in this blog, and many lesbians don't even identify with a category at all. The myth that all lesbians are either butches or femmes is no longer accurate (if it ever was).

'There's a man and a woman in every lesbian relationship'

A question that many gay couples dread is 'who's the man and who's the woman?' Those asking seem to forget the definition of a gay relationship – it's between two people of the same gender. There simply isn't a man and a woman. Just because you view the world in a heteronormative way, doesn't mean others have to fit into this.

For lesbians, this myth often coincides with the previous one. This is because some straight people interpret the butch and femme dichotomy as an imitation of men and women. However, this is not the case at all.⁹ Butch and femme lesbians are just expressing themselves and their gender how they feel most comfortable.

This myth sometimes even extends to believing that all butches are tops and all femmes are bottoms. This is because they think that butches take the 'man's role' and femme's take the 'woman's role'. Again, this is completely untrue, and many butches and femmes take the opposite position.

This myth also seems to overlook the fact that many lesbians date within the same label as themselves. Some femmes prefer to date other femmes, and some butches date other butches.

⁹ <https://www.dailyca.org/2020/10/28/heterosexuality-is-not-the-blueprint/>



'Lesbians hate men'

The final myth we're doing to discuss today is that all lesbians hate men. This likely comes from the idea that since lesbians aren't attracted to men, they have no use for them. However, it is of course possible for lesbians to be friends with men, and many are.

Another reason for the prevalence of this myth is the association of lesbians with the feminist movement. Because they fight for the rights of women, feminists are often viewed as man-haters. In reality, feminists just want women to be on an equal playing field with men. They don't want to tear men down. In fact, many feminists also fight for the rights of men who are parts of other minorities.

Perhaps the real reason for the stereotype that lesbians hate men is that men feel rejected by lesbians. In this case, men should remember that women don't owe it to men to be attracted to them. And rejecting somebody you physically cannot even be attracted to does not mean you hate all men.

Share facts not fallacies

There are many myths about different LGBT+ people and topics, and lesbians are no exception. In fact, there are numerous fallacies about the sex lives of lesbians¹⁰ alone. This is why it's so important to continue learning if you want to support the ever-changing LGBT+ community.

If you hear somebody spreading one of the lesbian myths we discussed today, make sure you share your knowledge. Being a good ally to the lesbian community, just like with others, means speaking up against misinformation. If your business needs help with inclusive language, check out our workshops on workplace banter¹¹ and the LGBT+ community.¹²



¹⁰ <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/love-sex/sex/a28246/myths-about-lesbian-sex/>

¹¹ <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/its-just-banter>

¹² <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/the-a-to-t-of-lgbt>

Myth Busting: Pansexuality

Happy Pansexual and Panromantic Awareness Day from the Your D+I team! We're helping spread awareness with a brand new blog post all about pansexuality. Today's blog continues our Myth Busting: LGBT+ blog series that busts any misconceptions you may have about LGBT+ terms. As usual, we'll start by clearly defining the topic, pansexuality, and then go into a few common pansexual myths. For each fallacy, we'll explore why it might exist and, of course, why it isn't true.

However, there is lots of overlap between bisexual and pansexual myths due to the similarity of the two identities. For example, those who identify as either might encounter stereotypes of infidelity and indecisiveness. As we've already covered these misconceptions in Myth Busting: Bisexuality, this post will cover myths exclusive to pansexuality. If you're wondering where a certain pansexual myth you've encountered is, check out our post on bisexuality as it might just be in there.

What is pansexuality?

If a person is pansexual, they are attracted to people of all genders. This means they are attracted to men, women, those who identify as non-binary (outside of the definitions of man or woman) and anyone else.

One way that some pansexuals describe their sexuality is being 'gender-blind'. This means that when it comes to attraction, pansexuals do not consider the gender of the people they may be attracted to. Being a certain gender isn't a requirement for pansexuals to be attracted to someone like it can be with other sexualities.

Now, let's explore some myths about pansexuality...

'Pansexual is the same as bisexual'

Understandably, one of the most common misconceptions around pansexuality is that it's just another word for bisexuality. This myth largely comes from the fact that these two sexualities are indeed very similar. While it isn't the case for all bisexuals, many do experience attraction to all genders – just like pansexuals.

One distinction between the two sexualities, however, is that bisexuals are not *all* attracted to all genders. Some people who identify as bisexual are only attracted to two genders, whether that be men and women or a combination of their own gender and non-binary people, for example. On the other hand, *all* pansexuals are attracted to all genders.

Another difference between bisexuality and pansexuality is the concept of being 'gender-blind'. This means that while some bisexuals might be attracted to different genders in different ways, most pansexuals are not. And while some bisexuals are also attracted to all genders, using the pansexual label makes your attraction to any gender explicit without need for explanation.



‘Only pansexuals are attracted to non-binary people’

The idea that only pansexuals can be attracted to non-binary people is one of the biggest and most contentious pansexual myths out there. This is because it concerns the very definitions of both pansexuality and bisexuality.

One reason for this myth is the words pansexual and bisexual themselves. ‘Pan’, the prefix used in the word pansexual, is Latin for ‘all’. And ‘bi’, the prefix used in the word bisexual, indicates ‘two’ in Latin. This leads many people to believe that bisexuality is more limited and even exclusionary compared to pansexuality. However, the Latin origin of words is rarely an accurate representation of their modern definitions as language, by nature, changes.¹³

Those who believe that bisexuals cannot be attracted to non-binary people understand bisexuality as attraction to only two genders (men and women). However, most people define bisexuality as attraction to two or more genders, one of which usually being your own.

In addition, many gay and straight can people feel attraction to non-binary people. This is especially true if a non-binary person express their gender similarly to the people someone is usually attracted to. However, because this occurrence is rare or just because of a personal preference, they may continue to identify as gay or straight instead of bi.

‘Pansexual and panromantic is all the same’

Another common pansexual myth is the confusion around panromanticism. For many hearing these terms for the first time, their definitions may sound very similar. After all, they are both about being attracted to all genders.

However, the key difference between these identities – and between any identities that end in ‘sexual’ and ‘romantic’ – is the type of attraction they refer to. Pansexuals experience *sexual* attraction towards all genders, and panromantics experience *romantic* attraction towards all genders. Now that isn’t to say that pansexuals don’t experience romantic attraction – in fact, most pansexuals are panromantic too. However, a person can be panromantic and have sexual attraction only towards specific (or no) genders.

‘Pansexuals are attracted to cooking equipment’

This myth is a little less serious than the others, but it’s something pansexuals hear all the time. ‘So you fall in love with pots and pans?’ ‘Do you only do it in the kitchen?’ If you don’t take yourself too seriously, you might not mind these jokes. However, when you come out, being ambushed with kitchen-related jokes instead of supporting words can get old.

¹³ https://www.ted.com/playlists/228/how_language_changes_over_time

Even if your sexuality can sound a little funny to some people, it should still be taken seriously. And as pansexuals already have to deal with people not believing their sexuality is real, hearing silly jokes can make this even worse. In fact, the innocent jokes about pots and pans can evolve into hate speech about minority sexualities and genders.

Joking that you are attracted to inanimate objects is disrespectful both to pansexual and non-binary people. This is because these jokes indirectly – and sometimes even directly – compare non-binary people to random objects or animals. ‘If you’re genderfluid, then I’m a cat!’ ‘If you sometimes wake up and feel like a woman, I think I’ll wake up as an umbrella tomorrow!’

These jokes are not okay and are one of the main reason this pansexual myth needs to end. Tackling language, especially when it is seen as banter, is tricky. However, our It’s Just Banter¹⁴ workshop can help your team understand the impact of these kinds of jokes and how to put a stop to them.

‘Pansexuals fancy everyone they meet’

Another misconception about pansexual people is that because they are attracted to all genders, this means they are attracted to all people. Like the previous myth, this one is often said as a joke. However, that doesn’t mean it isn’t hurtful and that all people spreading this myth don’t believe it.

This myth is perpetuated in an experience many LGBT+ have after coming out. After a pansexual person comes out, they are often asked by friends whether they are attracted to them – just because they now know it is possible. This may sound like a harmless question. However, when you ask an LGBT+ person this, you’re telling them you see them as predatory. It also means they’re less likely to feel safe sharing things like this with you again.

At the end of the day, pansexuals are simply not attracted to everyone. Just like those attracted only to women are not attracted to all women, and just like those attracted only to men are not attracted to all men.

Bust these pansexual myths!

Now that you have hopefully learned something new about pansexuality, it’s your turn! Be a good ally to the pansexuals and panromantics out there by busting these myths whenever you hear them. Remember that even pansexual myths that take the form of misinformed jokes can be very harmful to the community.

If you want to improve your team’s awareness of different LGBT+ identities and terminology, check out our workshop The A-to-T of LGBT+.¹⁵ This training course,

¹⁴ <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/its-just-banter/>

¹⁵ <https://www.yourdandi.co.uk/the-a-to-t-of-lgbt/>

which is available online or in person, guides you through the 'ABC's of LGBT+ terminology!





The Business Case for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Who are the people in your workforce? Do they all look, think and talk like you? Or are they all from different walks of life? Maybe some of them are treated differently and it's affecting their performance, for better or worse?

Equality, diversity and inclusion isn't about political correctness, or being best buddies with your colleagues. It's about getting the best talent, a more productive work environment and the best results for your business.

Here's a helpful guide to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace: what it is, why it matters, and how to achieve it.

What is equality, diversity and inclusion?

Equality, diversity and inclusion all have the same aim – to create a level playing field in the workplace. But they each serve a particular purpose for employers and employees.

Let's look at each one in turn:

Equality means that everyone is treated fairly and that no one is discriminated against for any reason. Everyone has access to the same opportunities.

Diversity is the range of individuals that are in your workforce. This includes gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion and people with learning or physical disabilities.


Inclusion means that everyone feels like they're a valued part of the team.

Your business and your employees will see much better results if you commit to these three things together.

Employers must follow the law on equality and discrimination

Employers are legally responsible for protecting their employees from discrimination in the workplace. Breaking the law can be very costly. Discrimination cases can result in lost time, lost money and a loss of trust in management. Not to mention the damage to brand reputation.

That's why it's so important to have clear policies for how employees should behave, how to identify discrimination and how to handle grievances.



Discrimination can affect anyone at any point in their career. It can take several forms, such as unfair pay, unfair treatment and bullying. The law lays out some 'protected characteristics' that employers cannot use to discriminate against someone. These include the employee's age, sexuality, religion, race and gender.

I'm pretty sure every single person would say 'yes' if I asked them, 'do you think everyone should be treated fairly and equally at work?'. But unfortunately, that's not the reality.

In fact, workplace discrimination might be costing the UK economy around £127bn per year¹⁶ in lost productivity, according to the Centre for Economics and Business Research. On the other hand, companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity can increase their revenue by around 35% (McKinsey Diversity Database).

So there you have it: equality and diversity in the workplace can make us all better off!

Your business will appeal to more customers

It doesn't matter if your business is there to serve consumers or other businesses – society has become more openly diverse. Your target markets will do too, if they haven't already. And the best way for any business to fully relate to their customers is to reflect their values and diversity in the workplace. From product development to marketing and communications, a diverse workforce can bring more expertise and fresh perspectives.

Unfortunately, there are businesses that communicate diversity and inclusion in their 'brand values' but do very little to support it in the workplace. For example, it's not enough just to change a logo for Pride or Black Lives Matter and to pledge support on social media. Diversity and inclusion must be embedded in the culture of your business if you really want to make a difference. And of course, if you don't practice what you preach, you could be in for a PR disaster.

You'll attract a better range of talent

When people don't have the right connections, it can be hard for them to access certain professions or senior positions. In some cases, it can be physically impossible or uncomfortable for candidates to access the places they need to go. This creates a risk that people who are perfect for the job don't even apply.

This isn't just an issue for minority groups, though it is more likely to affect them. It could also be people who need the flexibility to balance work and family life, or even people whose age could be a barrier to success.

¹⁶ <https://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2018/03/workplace-discrimination-costs-uk-ps127bn-year-says-report>

From a business perspective, it doesn't make sense to form barriers to talent. These barriers could be deliberate and discriminatory or they may be unintended. They could even be unconscious.

'Unconscious bias' is when people make fast judgements based on stereotypes. It could be a common social stereotype, or it could be based on personal experience. For example, a candidate could get ahead in the hiring process simply because of the university they went to, or be left out because of how they look.

It's fair to say that humans can be pretty judgemental creatures. So it's a good job that employers can overcome this through awareness training and better designed recruitment processes.

But remember, it's not enough just to focus your recruitment processes on diversity and inclusion. A culture of inclusion that runs through the whole business will mean your people are much more likely to stay on board.

Employees will want to keep working for you

Hands up who wants to feel miserable and excluded at work every day?

That might seem like a stupid question. But in some companies and for some people, it seems to be a fixture of working life. This is clearly bad news for employers as well as their staff. An unhappy workplace means a higher staff turnover, lower morale and lower productivity. These are all things that can hit your finances.

Equality, inclusion and diversity can really help to create a positive working culture. But it's so much more than just an HR exercise. Your whole company culture must be geared towards supporting people and treating them fairly. From the recruitment policies to everyday behaviours, it's an ongoing process that affects everyone.

A great example of this is was a prominent public service company and their quest to diversify their workforce. They had reported a 40% increase in their BAME hires in 2018, following a successful recruitment campaign. But then 40% of these new starters dropped out within the first year. The desire for diversity was there. But nothing had been put in place to make those employees feel included and supported once they started work.

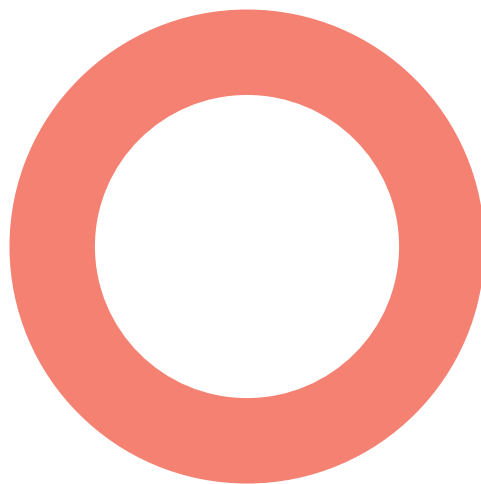
After realising this they went on to develop a successful diversity and inclusion programme. This really shows how diversity and equality isn't just about getting bums on seats; it's about embedding it into your company culture.

We know that harassment can happen to anyone, at any time in their working life. Bullying can even become the norm in some workplaces. So it's crucial to have clear policies on how to recognise, report and handle cases of harassment. This will make discrimination less likely and create a better all-round working environment.

When your business sees and treats people as individuals rather than just employees, everyone's a winner!

How can your own business benefit from equality, diversity and inclusion?

We'd love to have a chat to you about what you're trying to achieve for your business when it comes to your diversity and inclusion. Head over to our Contact page and submit your details, and we'll get back in touch with you shortly!





Pronoun Particulars

Making an effort to understand personal pronouns will improve your company's Diversity + Inclusion in many ways. For one, you gain the appreciation of your trans staff and reduce drop-out rates. You will also ensure you aren't excluding any trans or non-binary talent in your recruiting process. After all, you don't want to prevent an important hire or internal progression just because of misused pronouns.

Being informed about personal pronouns is essential if you want to be an inclusive employer. This is because it lets your staff know that you support their gender identity. In today's blog post, we're going to explore what pronouns are and how to use them.

What are pronouns?

Pronouns are words that we use in place of nouns. When talking about other people, we don't like to repeat their name over and over again. So instead, we use personal pronouns like 'she' or 'him'.

When a trans person socially transitions, they often change their pronouns. If they used to use 'he/him' pronouns, they might start using 'she/her' or 'they/them' pronouns.

Why are personal pronouns so important?

Pronouns are incredibly important to many trans people. This is because their proper use shows that you respect their identity, just like using their correct name.

Many trans people experience discomfort, also known as gender dysphoria, when others use the incorrect words to describe them. When others use the correct words, however, you can avoid causing these negative feelings.

What are 'they/them' pronouns?

'They/them' pronouns are often used by non-binary people, who identify outside the constraints of 'male' or 'female'.

Using 'they/them' pronouns to describe a single person rather than a group of people can be a little confusing at first. You may not have knowingly done it before, but it's almost certain that you've do so subconsciously.

For example, imagine you are walking down the road and see a pair of sunglasses on the ground. You might think to yourself, 'Somebody has lost their sunglasses.' When you use the word 'their' here, you're talking about one person rather than a group. But because you didn't know their gender, you used 'they/them' pronouns for the sunglasses-owner.



What are neo-pronouns?

Neo-pronouns are lesser known pronouns that are used by some trans and/or non-binary folks. This may be because other pronouns cause them discomfort.

Examples on neo-pronouns include 'xe/xem/xyr' and 'e/em/eir'. They are far less common than other pronouns, but inclusive employers should have at least some understanding of them.

How can I learn someone's personal pronouns?

You should try your best when somebody at work asks you to change the pronouns you use for them. Whatever the new pronouns are, it can sometimes take a while for them to stick. However, with consistent practice, you can get someone's pronouns down fairly quickly.

This is especially true if you speak to or about them a lot. However, if you don't have much interaction with your colleague, try a pronoun dressing room. This allows you to input a name and a set of pronouns so you can practise through a story.

What if I mess up someone's personal pronouns?

It happens. While it can sometimes hurt their feelings, most people will be understanding. One of the worst things you can do, though, is loudly apologise in public and create a spectacle. Everyone is different, but most people will appreciate you briefly apologising and carrying on with the conversation as normal. Just remember to keep trying.

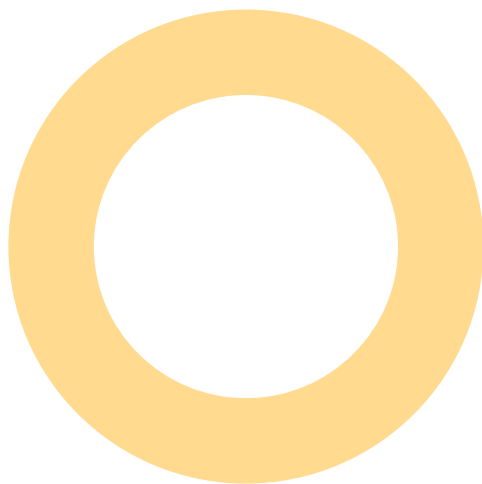
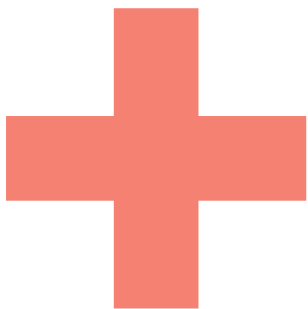
What else can I do?

Someone's pronouns aren't always what you expect, and if you use the wrong ones, it creates a sticky situation. However, there is a simple way to prevent this – ask! While it can sometimes be awkward to ask someone's pronouns when you first meet, you're doing the right thing. And it'll be worth it when you ask someone who really appreciates it.

You can also help normalise the discussion of pronouns by letting people know yours when you introduce yourself. Do this digitally too by putting them on your LinkedIn profile and any digital work environments. You can normalise 'they/them' pronouns by using them instead of the phrase 'he or she' in any content you produce. This is particularly important if you're sending this content to your employees.

Finally, avoid the term 'preferred pronouns'. This is an outdated term that is now discouraged in the trans community. This is because it implies that using someone's correct pronouns is a preferable choice rather than a necessity. In reality, everyone should be making an effort with personal

pronouns to ensure that inclusivity is at the heart of your company culture.





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