



**Out &  
Proud  
Program**

**fact sheet**

## **MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES DEBUNKED**

### **MYTH: “LGBT People are perpetrators of abuse”**

**FACT:** Approximately 90-95% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by heterosexual males. The sexual abuse of children is an expression of power and control rather than sexual orientation, even when the victim is the same sex as the perpetrator. Heterosexual males may abuse girls and/or boys but still identify as heterosexual.

### **MYTH: “People become gay because they were abused”**

**FACT:** Since the vast majority of sexual abusers are male, this myth would suggest the illogical conclusion that boys who are abused by men become attracted to men, while girls who are abused by men become afraid of them. Further, research indicates that the incidence of sexual abuse among lesbians when they were children is the same as the incidence among heterosexual women when they were children; conversely many LGBT people were never abused as children.

### **MYTH: “Homosexuality can be caught”**

**FACT:** The vast majority of LGBT individuals grow up in heterosexual families, where even overt attempts to ensure they are heterosexual and follow rigid gender norms does not succeed in “converting” them to heterosexuality or ensuring they necessarily are gender conforming. Many heterosexuals have LGBT family, friends, co-workers, foster parents, acquaintances, or may even experiment sexually with someone of the same sex, but remain heterosexual.

### **MYTH: “It’s a phase...you can change”**

**FACT:** Many adults think that if a youth declares that they are gay, it is just a passing part of the growing up process. It becomes equated with changing hairstyles as a phase or listening to different types of music. If someone declares they are lesbian or gay, they have known for a long time that their feelings for the same sex are not going to go away or change. The messages in this society are so strong against homosexuality that to get to a point where someone can publicly come out takes a lot of courage and self-knowledge. Claims that sexual orientation can be changed, unlearned or “deprogrammed” are unsubstantiated by empirical research. However, the damaging effects on self-esteem and identity development of these attempts have been well documented. Likewise, someone who says their inner gender is not the same as their biological sex has likely had these feelings for a long time and they will not just disappear, nor can they will them away.

### **MYTH: “You can spot a homosexual or a tranny”**

**FACT:** Some LGBT individuals do exemplify some stereotypes in appearance or manner and are more easily identified as being LGBT. However, most do not fit the stereotypes. If at least 10% of the population is LGBT, do you “spot” every tenth person on the street as being LGBT? Furthermore,

**Fostering Safe Spaces For People Of All Sexual And Gender Diversities:  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Transgendered, Intersex,  
Queer, Questioning And Others**



many of these stereotypes reflect diverse gender expression (eg. Feminine boys/men or masculine girls/women) rather than sexual orientation, which deserves to be valued, not denigrated. Children who exhibit gender non-conforming behaviours may actually stand out in the crowd, while others make enormous efforts to hide it. These children may grow up to be trans, LGB or neither.

**MYTH: “We know what causes homosexuality (so we can cure it)”**

**FACT:** It is not actually known what causes homosexuality...or any other sexual orientation. Research has verified that homosexuality is NOT caused by sexual abuse, growing up without a mother or father, a broken home, not enough peers of the opposite sex, exposure to LGBT people, etc. The important thing to recognize is that there is nothing wrong with being LGBT, so we do not need a cure. All cultures, societies, races, religions have LGBT people, even though sexual orientation and gender may be hidden in very repressive societies. LGBT people they have existed throughout the history of humanity. In many indigenous cultures, LGBT people were given esteemed status in the community. In fact, virtually all mammal species have some individuals who exhibit some same sex sexual behaviour. LGBT people simply are less common members of the sexual orientation and/or gender continuums, but are as equally normal as the more common members. This is the crux and beauty of diversity.

**MYTH: “HIV/AIDS is a gay male disease”**

**FACT:** Although HIV and AIDS originally seemed to affect just the gay population, we know today that HIV and AIDS do not discriminate. In fact, currently the fastest-rising group to contract HIV is young heterosexual women between the ages of 16 to 24. To be low-risk, protection like condoms and dental dams must always be used during sex, and clean needles must be used during IV drug use.

**MYTH: “Lesbians are a bunch of man-haters”**

**FACT:** Just because a woman loves a woman does not mean she hates men. It means she feels emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or intellectually attracted to women. Lesbians do not want to be men either (although some trans people come out as LGB first while they are exploring their emerging gender identity). Lesbians, like many women, want to have the same rights and responsibilities as men, and access to the same privileges. Lesbians may have many close loving bonds with men that are not sexual, such as fathers, brothers, sons, and friends.

**MYTH: “All male dancers/hairstylists/decorators are gay”**

**FACT:** Gay men can be in any kind of occupation: financial, construction, military, medical, legal, social work, fashion, and, yes, some are dancers/hairstylists/decorators. Any many male dancers/hairstylists/decorators are heterosexual. However, it is true that it may be safer to be “out” as LGBT in some professions than in others, based on the degree of openness to difference and rigidity of gender expectations.

**MYTH: “Trans people are really just gay or lesbian”**

**FACT:** Most trans people are heterosexual. Some are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Gender identity does



not determine sexual orientation and vice versa...these are separate concepts. Sexual Orientation addresses who you are attracted to. Gender is about how masculine or feminine you feel deep inside. However, for clarity's sake, although someone may be clear about what sex or gender they are attracted to, they need to be clear about what their own gender is before they can label their sexual orientation. For example, if your body (sex) is female, your gender is male, you identify as a transsexual (FTM – i.e. Female to Male), and if you are attracted to women, then your sexual orientation is heterosexual.

**MYTH: There Is No Longer Discrimination Against LGBT Individuals**

**FACT:**

- LGBT people may still be denied the opportunity to foster or adopt children based on their identity (although not at CAS of Toronto)
- LGBT individuals may not be recognized as next of kin by medical or legal establishments even in an emergency
- Books destined for gay bookstores may be “lost” or destroyed at Canada Customs
- “Gay bashing” still exists at an alarming rate
- Although LGBT people are increasingly portrayed in media, they often play stereotypical and/or derogatory roles and situations
- Children and youth still regularly experience and/or witness anti-gay put-downs and tight gender-conformity expectations on a daily basis, negatively affecting not only LGBT young people, but also heterosexuals

“ The opportunity to be threatened, humiliated, and to live in fear of being beaten to death is the only ‘special right’ our culture bestows on homosexuals. - *Former youth in care* ”