

# September National News



Bi/Pan Awareness Month

Volunteering

Events +

## Bi/Pan Awareness Month

“ While I don't often use the word, the technically precise term for my orientation is bisexual. I believe bisexuality is not a choice, it is a fact. What I have 'chosen' is to be in a gay relationship. ”

—Cynthia Nixon Actress/Activist 2012

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**Bisexuality:** While it can be used to describe someone who is attracted to both male and females, many in the community use it to mean that they are attracted to both people of the same and other genders (making the term inclusive of nonbinary attractions).

**Pansexual:** By changing the prefix bi – (two, both) with pan- (all), poly- (many), omni- (all), ambi- (both, and implying ambiguity in this case), people can communicate that either gender does not factor into their own sexuality, or that they also experience attraction to trans, genderqueer, and other people who may or may not fit into the mainstream gender categories of male and female.

**What's the difference?** There doesn't have to be any difference at all; many may use these terms interchangeably. A broad definition of bisexuality is inclusive of these terms, but they all do have different political, community, focus, and interpretation differences. Here are some reasons why some people prefer to use one over the other:

- Bisexual can mean you're attracted to same and other genders- but not all of them (like polysexual can).
- The word Bisexual has a long history in activism and is the most easily recognized.
  - The word Pansexual can make nonbinary attraction more obvious or centered.

# Bi+ Visibility Day

Although the name differs from group to group, 'Celebrate Bisexuality Day' is celebrated annually on Sept 23rd. One of the the founders explains a little about the history on their website:

<http://www.binetusa.org>

These are some of their words! Please head to the original website for a full expose...

"As the event continues to take on traction, there's a morphing of the name in some circles. Some groups call their

event "bi pride" or they celebrate "Bisexuality Day". This drives me insane. Perhaps it's because 3 of us spent 6+ months brainstorming on a name, a date, and a theme. The name is not just a name to me - it was out gift to our community. In Early 1999, 3 BiNet USA national coordinators: Michael Page (originator of the bi pride flag and original owner of the Bi Cafe), Gigi Raven Wilbur (first weekly bi themed radio show hostess), and I started brainstorming on bi day.

In the 90's, much of the bisexual activism involved one of three actions:

- 1) "we're here too" at "gay" events; trying to prove we were an important part of the GLBT family
- 2) countering the belief that bisexuality is just a phase.
- 3) Fight our biggest obstacle - invisibility.

The common theme in the above actions is a kind of defensiveness. we ARE here; we ARE queer; gosh darn it! Many of us felt like we were on this endless treadmill, fighting the same battles every day. If you really study civil rights/diversity acceptance, you'll see that people start to respect people once they respect themselves. As long as we were in this endless begging for inclusion, we weren't addressing the respect issue.

So, those two themes - wanting to respect ourselves and wanting to celebrate the previous year's battles were the dual driving forces behind CBD. We wanted to celebrate our fabulousness and remind our peers to celebrate THEIR fabulousness. It's not a "pride" day, though many of us our proud. it's not about usurping a gay event and making a smaller one for ourselves. it's a truly unique day, just for us.

We picked September because it was Freddie Mercury's birthday month (though not his actual birthday because it didn't fall on a weekend day that first year). We finally went with the 23rd as it was one of our birthdays. And we sent out a bunch of emails. the rest, as they say, is history. Michael, Gigi, and my gift to the community was the seed. However you all chose to grow that seed is up to you."



# Misconceptions

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## **Bi/Pan people are confused/in a phase:**

People who identify as Bi/Pan should not be confused with those who are in the process of figuring out their identity. These situations are not the same. Bi/Pansexual people acknowledge their attractions for multiple genders, while those who are questioning are not sure what kind of attraction they experience. Many people are attracted to more than one gender all their lives and don't feel any more confused over their sexual orientation than anyone else.

There is a valid discussion on how sexuality and gender can be fluid and people may not always identify the same way their whole life, however, that doesn't mean it's ever okay to assume that someone will change and invalidate their identity. Many people also incorrectly assume that bisexual identifying people have a much higher probability of changing their identity than someone identifying as gay or lesbian, this is false. Current studies show very low percentages of identity change in all polled groups.

## **Bi+ people are sexually promiscuous:**

"No. Just because a person has the capacity for attraction to more than one gender does not mean that their sexual appetite is ravenous. Bisexual people are a diverse group with many different preferred relationship models. Some are monogamous. Some are polyamorous. Some are celibate. As with heterosexuality and homosexuality, bisexuality [or pansexuality] refers to orientation. It does not imply anything about preferred relationship models." A person's sexual orientation has nothing to do with how many or how few partners a person will have.

## **All Bi/Pan people are polyamorous:**

No. Bi/Pansexuality and Polyamory are completely different identities. "One does not cause the other. Bisexuality is the ability to be attracted to more than one biological sex. Polyamory means that a person is able to maintain a romantic relationship with more than one person *at the same time*. There are many straight, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people who are polyamorous, just as there are many who are not."

## **"Everybody's a little bit Bi":**

"It's not uncommon to hear people say things like "everyone is bisexual, deep down." While usually well-intended, it's not a particularly helpful comment. First of all, it's simply not true. Some people are bisexual, and some are not. Secondly, while sounding like a validation, these kinds of statements can actually contribute to bi erasure. Bi people are a significant proportion of the population, and it's difficult to know just how large, but we aren't 100% of the population. To pretend that we are would be to render the term meaningless and thus to erase the term altogether. Whatever percentage of the population is bi, it's not 100%."<sup>1</sup>

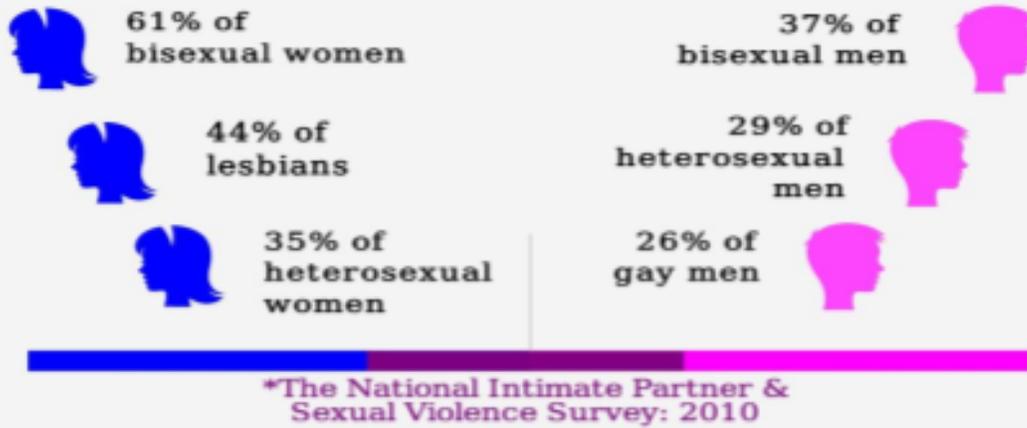
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<sup>1</sup> -[https://bisexual.org/qna\\_categories/bisexuals/](https://bisexual.org/qna_categories/bisexuals/)

# Discrimination

## High Rate of Violence Against Bisexuals *A Community at Risk*

Percentage of women and men who report experiencing rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner\*



**Over-sexualization:** “Bisexual+ people are treated as beings that are willing to partake in any sexual activity and receive any sexual attention. In short: bisexual bodies are not theirs, they are the property of everyone else.

The culture of sexualizing bisexuality means that it can create a whole host of issues in a relationship. Partners often react with confusion and think that means they can never satisfy the person with they are with, which is reflective of our poor attitudes towards relationships and sex in general but it also runs far deeper than that. Coming out as bisexual is unfortunately often a dangerous act. Bisexuality is seen as an excuse for straight and gay partners to assert controlling behavior. [...]

The constant erosion of bisexual identity has therefore compounded creating a situation where bisexual people aren't deemed worthy of basic respect while increasingly the likelihood of experiencing discrimination, oppression and poverty and thereby making it exceptionally difficult to leave a partner who is abusive and/or violent. Until bisexuality is accepted as a valid identity by society and not just treated as a coded label for being easy to get into bed, then bisexual people are always going to face the realities of having their lives sexualized, demeaned and of experiences of abuse by an intimate partner being dismissed and unrecognized.”<sup>2</sup>

**Stuck in the closet:** According to an American 2013 PEW report bisexuals are less likely to be out of the closet to people in their lives than lesbians or gays. “77 percent of gay men and 71 percent of lesbians say most or all of the important people in their lives know of their sexual orientation, just 28 percent of bisexuals say the same. Bisexual women are more likely to say this than bisexual men (33 percent vs. 12 percent).”

<sup>2</sup> -[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephanie-farnsworth/bisexuality-and-intimate-\\_b\\_11648872.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stephanie-farnsworth/bisexuality-and-intimate-_b_11648872.html)

**Dating:** Negative stereotypes persist and can make dating as an out Bi/Pansexual person very challenging.

- Bi+ people can have their identity negated - pressured to choose between gay or straight or seen as straight/gay depending on their partner's gender
- Bi/Pan people can get interrogated about their sexual life
- Assumption about Bi/Pansexual people's preference for group sex
- Assumption that Bi+ people aren't faithful in relationships
- Bi/Pan people seen as "dirty" for having experience with multiple genders

**Bi/Pan dating issues with a biphobic world:**

- Lack of non-biphobic partners that are willing to seriously date them
- Lack of partners with real understanding on bi/pan feelings and experiences
- Erasure due to partner's gender or even excommunication from LGBT+ communities

## Bi/Pan Partner Signs of Abuse

**Does your partner<sup>3</sup>:**

- get jealous of people in your life regardless of their gender?
- make fun of you for being bisexual?
- try to control how you dress or act?
- force you to choose between being straight or being gay/lesbian?
- accuse you of cheating or flirting with others?
- prevent you from being out as bisexual?
- pressure you to have sex in ways that you don't want to?
- keep you from going to LGBTQ events?

**Abusers may say:**

- *"I know I can't trust you alone with your friends because you'll sleep with anyone."*
- *"You aren't really part of the LGBTQ community."*
- *"If you leave me, I'll tell your boss that you are bi."*
- *"I know that all you bisexuals are just sluts."*
- *"You are just confused about your sexuality."*
- *"If you want to be with me, you have to be a lesbian/gay."*
- *"If you want to be with me, you have to be straight."*
- *"Don't tell anyone that you've been with men/women before, that's disgusting."*
- *"I know you are going to leave me for a woman/man."*



<sup>3</sup> -<http://tnlr.org/en/>

# 5 WAYS TO END MONOSEXISM & BIPHOBIA

Monosexism is the discrimination or marginalization of people who are bisexual, polysexual, pansexual or omnisexual.

1. Acknowledge that bi/poly/pan/omnisexual people aren't "actually just gay".
2. Don't exclude bi/poly/pan/omnisexual people from the queer umbrella simply because their partner is not the same gender as they are.
3. Don't reinforce the stereotype that bi/poly/pan/omnisexual people "just like having sex."
4. Don't assume that somebody is straight simply because their partner is another gender, and don't assume that somebody is homosexual simply because their partner is the same gender.
5. Acknowledge that bi/poly/pan/omnisexuality is not any less valid than any other queer orientation.

