

YOUR GUIDE TO
UNDERSTANDING
KEY DISCUSSION
POINTS



BELIEF BRIEF



GAYTHER

LGBTQIA+ FOCUS

Lgbtqia+ Edition



"Silence is the real crime against humanity."

HARVEY BERNARD MILK

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CONTENTS

01 ABOUT THE BELIEF BRIEFS	4
02 INTRODUCTION	5
03 CORE CLAIMS	6
04 QUICK REFERENCE	27
05 FURTHER READING	30

CONTENT WARNING | The Belief Briefs aim to encourage questioning of established ideas, the use of divisive language, and the provision of alternative perspectives. They are not meant to insult or belittle any faith or belief but to challenge assumptions and promote reflection. If questioning your beliefs makes you uncomfortable or you prefer your truths remain unchallenged, approach with caution.

01 ABOUT THE BELIEF BRIEFS



How often have you seen, heard, or had firsthand experience of someone using outdated rhetoric, selective interpretations of religious scripture, or personal opinions to justify how they speak about others and, more importantly, how they treat you?

Too often, these views and opinions are rooted in fear, misinformation, or limited engagement with the communities involved, all of which can lead to racist, homophobic, or transphobic language and actions that clash with modern societal values and with the principles of compassion, dignity, and humanity found across numerous faiths and cultures worldwide.

Even though many of these opinions may come from far-right groups, extremists, bad-faith actors, or simply uninformed individuals, they are still hard to ignore. If we do not challenge them, these false stories and baseless claims can quickly be accepted as truth, shaping public perceptions of people and influencing how they are treated in everyday life, politics, and society.

The Belief Briefs are here to support and inspire open conversations. They are a collection of downloadable guides covering a wide range of topics, from Christianity to transgender identities. Created to gently challenge assumptions, long-standing opinions, and misinformation, they do so without attacking anyone's faith or personal beliefs. The hope is to foster understanding, encourage critical thinking, and promote open, evidence-based dialogue where everyone can feel heard and respected.

These briefs examine how misinformation, selective interpretation, and historical narratives are often accepted as fact without question. They also show how some people or groups might use long-standing beliefs to support personal, political, or ideological aims.

By using historical background, factual details, and thoughtful reasoning, the Belief Briefs are here to help you better understand tricky topics, spot and challenge misinformation, and join in more meaningful conversations.

Think of the Belief Briefs as a helpful guide for tackling fact-related challenges, encouraging critical thinking, and sharing well-informed views on common beliefs and social stories.

02 INTRODUCTION



Today, it is difficult to ignore what feels like a constant wave of negative rhetoric directed at the LGBTQIA+ community. Across parts of the world, governments are reintroducing antiquated laws and policies that many believe are designed to marginalise, degrade, and target LGBTQIA+ individuals. For many within the community and its allies, it feels as though progress is being challenged, and rights once considered secure are increasingly under threat.

Much of this rhetoric is amplified by far-right and deeply conservative groups and political movements that continue to gain visibility and influence globally. For decades, advocates and members of the wider LGBTQIA+ community have worked tirelessly to educate, inform, and challenge harmful misconceptions. Their efforts have sought to dismantle outdated stereotypes, fears, and narratives that have historically been used to divide people. At its core, the message has always been simple: there is far less that separates us than unites us. In many cases, the only difference is who someone loves or how they identify.

Yet increasingly, public discourse appears to be shifting backwards. Narratives that many believed had been left behind generations ago are resurfacing and being reframed for modern audiences. Through the spread of misinformation, exaggerated statistics, and sensationalised stories, fear is once again being used as a political and social tool. Arguments have evolved from claims that LGBTQIA+ people are “turning children gay” to accusations of “brainwashing” through books, education, and media that reflect the reality of modern society.

These narratives are often successful only when uncertainty, fear, or unresolved questions already exist within society. When people are led to believe there is a threat where none exists, division becomes easier to manufacture. The belief briefs are not intended to portray the LGBTQIA+ community as flawless or beyond criticism. As in every community and society, there are individuals whose actions do not reflect the values of the wider group. However, those individuals should not define millions of ordinary people simply living their lives.

LGBTQIA+ people are your friends, neighbours, family members, colleagues, and community members. Their identity does not erase the person they have always been - their childhood, values, experiences, or humanity. The only difference is that they may now openly identify as LGBTQIA+.

At our core, most people are driven by similar hopes, values, and aspirations: the desire to live freely, safely, honestly, and without fear of discrimination. Just as no one should have the right to dictate how you live your life, the same principle applies to those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

03 CORE CLAIMS

In the Core Claims section, we will explore common arguments both supporting and opposing the treatment of the LGBTQIA+ community. While many perspectives seem well-established, rooted in centuries of tradition and belief, closer examination often reveals them to be modern reinterpretations. History indicates that societies and individuals who have shared the same faith for thousands of years did not always view certain beliefs or values as these arguments

For a long time, LGBTQIA+ people and other vulnerable groups have been targeted in political discourse not because they pose a threat, but because they are often used to amplify broader social anxieties. These anxieties commonly include fear of change, uncertainty, and difference. In such contexts, misinformation may be presented as fact, statistics can be exaggerated, and isolated incidents may be framed as widespread issues. This can contribute to the politicisation of minority communities, diverting attention from structural issues that more directly affect people's lives, such as governance, economic inequality, and access to opportunity.

The LGBTQIA+ community is highly diverse, encompassing individuals from every continent, ethnicity, religious background, language group, and socio-economic context. While lived experiences vary widely, a common aspiration among many LGBTQIA+ people is to live freely, without fear of persecution, and with equal protection under the law. Although individuals are entitled to their beliefs and perspectives, challenges arise when those beliefs are imposed in ways that restrict others' rights or dignity. In such cases, it is important to ensure space for informed discussion, scrutiny, and correction, as well as opportunities for greater understanding.

This discussion will now turn to some of the key arguments that have been made, and continue to be made, about LGBTQIA+ people.

An outdated view still believed by some



- Historically, same-sex relationships and gender nonconformity were often treated in many societies as sinful acts or behaviours rather than as innate identities. In the late 19th century, emerging fields such as sexology began to frame sexuality as a more stable aspect of human identity. Early figures in this development, including Karl-Maria Kertbeny, argued that same-sex attraction should not be criminalised.
- In the 20th century, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and in the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases (ICD). It was removed from the DSM in 1973 and from the ICD in 1990.

- Transgender-related diagnoses were later removed from the ICD chapter on mental and behavioural disorders in 2019, reflecting evolving clinical classifications.
- This historical development helps explain why understandings of sexuality and gender have shifted significantly over time, and why different generational or cultural perspectives on LGBTQIA+ identities may still exist alongside contemporary scientific and medical consensus.

THE REALITY

- Modern medical and psychological understanding recognises LGBTQIA+ identities as part of the natural variation in human sexuality and gender. They are not classified as sins, moral choices, or mental illnesses.
- Key developments include:
 - The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1973.
 - Major medical and psychological organisations worldwide, including the World Health Organisation, the American Psychiatric Association, and the British Psychological Society, recognise LGBTQIA+ identities as part of human diversity and do not classify them as mental disorders.
 - In ICD-11 (2019), "gender incongruence" was removed from the chapter on mental and behavioural disorders and reclassified under sexual health.
 - Being transgender is not classified as a mental illness. Some transgender individuals may experience gender dysphoria, a clinically significant distress arising from incongruence between gender identity and assigned sex or physical characteristics. It is this distress-not the identity itself-that may require clinical support.
- Overall, contemporary medical consensus understands LGBTQIA+ identities as part of the range of human sexual and gender diversity, rather than as pathological conditions.

A catch-all phrase used to highlight a perceived difference



- People may sometimes fear or misunderstand what they are unfamiliar with or perceive as different.
 - Historically, in many societies, LGBTQIA+ people were viewed through moral, legal, or cultural frameworks that characterised same-sex relationships or gender nonconformity as deviant or outside prevailing social norms.
 - The criminalisation of same-sex relationships in numerous legal systems also contributed to LGBTQIA+ people being less visible in public life, which may have reinforced perceptions that such identities were rare or absent in society.
- Stereotypes, political discourse, and media representation have at times framed LGBTQIA+ people as abnormal or morally deviant, though these portrayals have varied significantly across cultures and historical periods.

THE REALITY

- The “appeal to nature” is a well-documented logical fallacy: nature includes disease, parasites, natural disasters, and death, none of which serve as moral standards.
- Same-sex sexual behaviour has been observed in a wide range of animal species, with documented cases in over 1,000 species, including bonobos, dolphins, penguins, and giraffes. However, its frequency and interpretation vary across contexts and studies.
- LGBTQIA+ people have been documented across many human cultures throughout history, although how sexual orientation and gender diversity were understood, recorded, and expressed have varied significantly over time and place.
- In this context, “natural” is not a reliable indicator of moral value, and “unnatural” is not a reliable indicator of moral wrongness. Many widely accepted medical interventions, such as antibiotics, vaccines, and surgery, are also “unnatural” in the sense that they intervene in biological processes.
- From a sociological perspective, what has changed in modern societies is not the existence of LGBTQIA+ people, but levels of visibility, legal recognition, and the extent to which individuals can live openly.

#3 IT'S JUST AN IDEOLOGY / AGENDA

A way to reframe a civil rights movement as a political threat



- LGBTQIA+ rights are sometimes described in public discourse as an “agenda” or “ideology.”
- This framing can imply coordinated intent, rather than treating LGBTQIA+ identity as a matter of lived experience and civil rights advocacy.
- It may also suggest that LGBTQIA+ people are promoting a cohesive belief system, rather than seeking equal legal and social treatment.
- Within this framing, equality movements can be portrayed as

ideologically driven or socially imposed, rather than as extensions of broader rights-based frameworks.

THE REALITY

- LGBTQIA+ movements primarily advocate for legal equality, protection from discrimination, and the right to live openly without fear of harassment or persecution.
- Equality is generally understood in legal contexts as ensuring that the same rights and protections apply to all individuals, rather than creating additional or privileged categories of rights.
- Anti-discrimination protections cover a range of characteristics, including race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity. They are designed to prevent unequal treatment rather than to deprive others of rights.
- Major medical and psychological organisations do not classify sexual orientation or gender identity as choices, behaviours that can be adopted through exposure, or conditions that are socially “transmissible” in the way infectious or learned behaviours are.

The idea that sexual orientation or gender identity is a voluntary choice



- A common belief in some traditional or socially conservative perspectives is that humans are naturally heterosexual, with attraction primarily oriented towards the opposite sex and an expectation of forming heterosexual relationships and families.
- From this perspective, variation from heterosexuality or traditional gender roles is sometimes interpreted not as an innate difference but as behaviour shaped by choice, environment, or social influence.
- This view often assumes that biological sex and associated gender roles are closely linked to identity and life trajectory, and may be understood in more fixed or normative terms.
- As a result, some who hold this perspective believe that sexual orientation or gender expression may be subject to change through personal decision, social context, or external influence. However, views on the extent of such change vary significantly.

THE REALITY

- Sexual orientation, attraction, and gender identity are not considered voluntary choices in the same way as preferences or lifestyle decisions.
- Major medical and psychological organisations do not classify sexual orientation or gender identity as consciously chosen.
- Instead, research suggests they emerge from a complex interplay of biological, developmental, and environmental factors.
- There is no scientific consensus or reliable evidence that individuals can deliberately change their sexual orientation or gender identity at will.
- Many LGBTQIA+ individuals report recognising aspects of their identity from a young age, often before they have the language to describe it.
- The presence of LGBTQIA+ people across cultures and historical periods is often cited as evidence that these identities are not merely socially produced trends.
- The persistence of social stigma and discrimination in many societies is also cited as inconsistent with the idea that individuals would voluntarily adopt identities that carry significant social risk.

Visibility is often mistaken for emergence



- Some argue that LGBTQIA+ identities are more visible in modern societies due to changes in media, education, and social media.
 - From this perspective, increased visibility is sometimes interpreted as evidence that more people are “becoming” LGBTQIA+, rather than that existing identities are being expressed more openly.
 - It is also sometimes suggested, in certain cultural or political contexts, that LGBTQIA+ identities are a modern social construction or a product of contemporary cultural influence.
- Within this view, LGBTQIA+ identities are often treated as a relatively recent development, rather than as historically continuous forms of human diversity.

THE REALITY

- LGBTQIA+ people have existed throughout recorded history across many regions and cultures.
- What changes over time is not the presence of same-sex attraction or gender diversity, but the degree to which individuals can live openly without fear of punishment, exclusion, or stigma.
- In many historical contexts, legal, religious, and social systems restricted or criminalised same-sex relationships and gender nonconformity, often limiting visibility and public expression.
- Evidence of same-sex relationships and gender diversity appears across numerous societies, including ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, Japan, and various Indigenous cultures. However, the meanings and social interpretations of such behaviour varied significantly across contexts.
- From this perspective, increased visibility of LGBTQIA+ people in modern societies is often understood as reflecting reduced stigma and greater safety, rather than the emergence of a new phenomenon.

USING RELIGION TO JUSTIFY OUTDATED VIEWS AND HARM

Balancing faith, interpretation, and human rights



- Many people hold sincere religious beliefs that LGBTQIA+ identities are at odds with their understanding of faith.
- Within some religious traditions, certain texts are interpreted as prohibiting same-sex sexual relationships or prescribing particular gender norms.
- In Judaism and Christianity, passages such as Leviticus 18:22 are often cited in discussions of same-sex relationships. At the same time, broader scriptural themes are sometimes interpreted as supporting heterosexual marriage as divinely intended.
- In Islam, the story of Prophet Lut is commonly interpreted in some traditions as addressing same-sex sexual behaviour, and certain Hadith literature is also referenced in discussions of gender roles and sexual ethics.
- These interpretations are sometimes invoked in debates over law, education, and public policy and, in some contexts, have been used to support exclusionary or restrictive practices. However, religious views on their application vary widely across denominations and communities.
- For believers, these texts can shape moral frameworks and personal convictions, which may contribute to discomfort with or disagreement about LGBTQIA+ identities and relationships.

THE REALITY

- Faith is deeply personal, and core religious convictions are often strongly held and resistant to change. At the same time, interpretations of scripture are not uniform. Across religious traditions, theologians and communities frequently reach different conclusions from the same texts, and LGBTQIA+ affirming denominations and scholars exist within Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and other faith traditions.
- Many scriptural passages historically cited in relation to LGBTQIA+ people—such as those found in Leviticus 18:22—coexist with other religious laws and teachings widely understood as context-dependent or not applied in the same way in contemporary practice. This reflects the broader role of interpretation, tradition, and historical context in shaping how sacred texts are understood over time.
- Within Christianity, many interpretations of Jesus' teachings emphasise compassion, inclusion, and care for marginalised people. While the Gospels do not explicitly address sexual orientation or gender identity in modern terms, contemporary theological interpretations range from affirming readings grounded in broader ethical themes to more traditional doctrinal interpretations.
- Within Islam, the Qur'an does not explicitly reference sexual orientation as a modern category. The story of Prophet Lut is interpreted in different ways across Islamic scholarship, with some readings

emphasising coercion, violence, and abuse of power. In contrast, others interpret it as addressing same-sex sexual conduct more broadly. Interpretations vary significantly across schools of thought and communities.

- Across faith traditions, many believers hold sincere moral and doctrinal convictions. At the same time, there is a long-standing ethical discussion within religious thought about how compassion, harm, and dignity should shape the treatment of others, even amid disagreement.
- Religious conviction can coexist with close relationships with LGBTQIA+ individuals. Many religious frameworks distinguish between personal moral accountability and the separate dignity and autonomy of others, including family members and friends.
- Within pluralistic societies, respecting LGBTQIA+ rights does not require abandoning personal religious beliefs. It involves recognising that disagreement over doctrine does not, in itself, justify exclusion, harm, or denial of equal treatment under the law.
- Ultimately, religious diversity and moral disagreement are longstanding features of human societies. The central question in public life is not whether individuals must agree on theology, but how people with differing convictions can coexist while maintaining safety, dignity, and equal rights for all.

#7

LETTING GAY PEOPLE MARRY HARMS TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

Seen as a threat to the sanctity of marriage



- For many religious believers, marriage is understood not only as a legal contract but also as a sacred covenant established by God.
- Within traditional interpretations of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and other faiths, marriage is often defined as a union between one man and one woman, grounded in long-standing doctrinal and scriptural readings.
- From this perspective, extending marriage to same-sex couples is seen by some believers as altering the meaning of an institution they regard as divinely instituted, rather than simply expanding its civil definition.
- Some argue that this change may affect the cultural and religious significance of marriage within their communities and raise concerns about the relationship between religious definitions of marriage and civil law.
- For some believers, attending a same-sex wedding can also raise questions of conscience, as participation in a celebratory ceremony may be interpreted as implying endorsement of a union they do not theologically affirm.

THE REALITY

- Two people committing to one another does not inherently diminish the validity or meaning of other people's commitments. Love, loyalty, and devotion are not finite social resources.
- The argument that same-sex marriage weakens traditional marriage assumes that marriage has always been understood in a fixed, uniform way. This is historically inaccurate.
- In early Christian history, marriage functioned primarily as a social, familial, and legal institution. Over time, theological and ecclesiastical traditions developed more formalised religious understandings of marriage, including its recognition as a sacrament in some denominations.
- Across history, marital norms have changed significantly. Practices such as arranged marriages, dowries, coverture, and legally subordinate roles for women were once widely accepted but have since been reformed in many societies. This shows that "traditional marriage" has not been a single, unchanging model over time.
- While some Christians point to Adam and Eve as a model for marriage, biblical texts describe a range of marital and familial arrangements that differ from modern expectations of monogamous, egalitarian partnership.
- In contemporary societies, marriage serves both religious and civil functions. For some, it is a sacred covenant before God; for others, it is a legal institution that confers rights and responsibilities, such as inheritance, taxation, parental recognition, and medical decision-making.
- Because marriage exists in both religious and civil domains, different communities attach different meanings to it. Religious and civil marriage may overlap, but they are not identical in purpose or authority.
- In jurisdictions where same-sex marriage has been legalised, some studies and long-term observations have not found clear evidence of negative effects on opposite-sex marriage rates or stability, though interpretations of social data vary.
- For many believers, objections to same-sex marriage are primarily theological rather than empirical. Individuals may sincerely hold that marriage should be defined within their faith tradition as between a man and a woman, while still distinguishing that conviction from claims about harm to others in civil law.
- Religious freedom includes the right to maintain traditional beliefs about marriage, while pluralistic societies also recognise the right of others to legal equality under civil law.
- Ultimately, the legal recognition of same-sex marriage does not alter the vows, commitments, or beliefs of existing marriages. Debates about marriage equality therefore centre less on whether existing marriages are affected and more on how societies define marriage as a legal and cultural institution across differing worldviews.

Does teaching empathy influence what comes naturally to a child?



- Some believe that the growing number of young people identifying as LGBTQIA+ is influenced by broader social and cultural changes, including social media, education, peer environments, and shifting public attitudes.
- From this perspective, earlier exposure to discussions of sexuality and gender identity may shape how some individuals understand and describe their experiences.
- The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ characters and themes in books, films, television programmes, and educational materials is sometimes seen by critics as contributing to greater visibility and normalisation of same-sex relationships and gender diversity, and as influencing cultural understandings of family and relationships.
- For some critics, this is part of why LGBTQIA+ inclusion is framed as an “ideology,” understood as a set of ideas shaping social norms and institutions rather than merely describing lived identities.

THE REALITY

- As with any subject, education is generally understood to be age-appropriate. For young children, discussions of family diversity do not require sexual detail; they can reflect that families take different forms, including two parents, single parents, adoptive parents, or extended family carers.
- Introducing the idea that families may differ is not, in itself, sexual education. It is often framed as basic social awareness and inclusion rather than instruction on sexual behaviour or identity.
- Visibility and representation can help individuals understand themselves and others. However, major medical and psychological organisations find no evidence that exposure to information about LGBTQIA+ people, or the presence of LGBTQIA+ characters in the media, determines or “creates” a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Concerns about the influence of visibility on identity have also appeared historically in relation to other forms of social change. In many cases, increased openness has been associated with greater self-reporting rather than changes in underlying prevalence.
- Research in child development broadly indicates that children raised by same-sex parents do not differ in outcomes such as emotional well-being, educational attainment, or social development compared with those raised by different-sex parents.
- There is also no evidence that LGBTQIA+ individuals are inherently more likely to harm children than heterosexual individuals. Safeguarding concerns in all contexts are associated with behaviour and environment rather than sexual orientation.

- Children are routinely exposed to heterosexual relationships through the media, advertising, and everyday social life. Concerns about influence are often applied selectively to LGBTQIA+ representation in ways that do not extend to heterosexual representation.
- More broadly, child outcomes are strongly shaped by factors such as stability, support, and the absence of stigma. Experiences of rejection, bullying, and exclusion are consistently associated with worse mental health outcomes.
- Within this framework, education about diversity is not primarily about shaping identity, but about fostering understanding, empathy, and respectful social interaction.
- Ultimately, societies transmit values and information to children across many domains, including religion, politics, and culture. The central question is not whether children are exposed to differences, but how they are taught to engage with them.
- Most LGBTQIA+ people seek the same core outcomes as other members of society: safety, stability, and the opportunity for children to grow up supported, protected, and treated with dignity.
- Teaching empathy and respect does not determine who a child will become, but it does shape how they relate to others within a diverse society.

#9

LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PREDATORS OR GROOMERS

One of the oldest and most persistent smears



- Some people hold the belief that LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to engage in predatory behaviour, grooming, or sexual offences.
- This belief is often associated with broader assumptions that same-sex attraction, bisexuality, or gender diversity fall outside what is considered “normal” social or moral behaviour.
- Some argue, in this framing, that exposure to LGBTQIA+ people or representation may pose risks to children, or that it could influence behaviour or identity development. However, these claims are not supported by evidence in mainstream psychological or medical research.
- Others claim that LGBTQIA+ individuals are more likely to have experienced trauma, and may generalise from this to suggest patterns of harmful behaviour; however, this is not supported by empirical findings on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Such narratives are sometimes used in public discourse to portray LGBTQIA+ people as a potential threat to children or vulnerable individuals, despite the lack of scientific consensus supporting these claims.

THE REALITY

- The claim that LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to be predators or groomers is a long-standing accusation directed at sexual and gender minorities across historical and cultural contexts.
- Historically, same-sex attraction and gender diversity were often pathologised within medical and psychiatric frameworks. This contributed to broader social assumptions that LGBTQIA+ individuals were deviant or morally suspect. However, these assumptions are not supported by contemporary empirical research.
- There is no credible evidence that LGBTQIA+ people are more likely than heterosexual people to commit child sexual abuse, sexual assault, or grooming offences. Major psychological, criminological, and child protection organisations do not identify sexual orientation or gender identity as risk factors for predatory behaviour.
- It is important to distinguish between sexual orientation and abusive conduct. Attraction to consenting adults is unrelated to the sexual exploitation of minors, which involves coercion, power imbalance, and violation of consent.
- Research on sexual offending indicates that child sexual abuse is associated with factors such as opportunity, access, coercion, psychological control, and individual offending patterns, rather than sexual orientation or gender identity.
- More broadly, sexual violence is often driven by dynamics of power, domination, and control, and can occur in a wide range of contexts regardless of the identities of perpetrators or victims.
- The vast majority of LGBTQIA+ individuals, like the vast majority of heterosexual individuals, do not engage in criminal or abusive behaviour. They live ordinary lives as parents, teachers, neighbours, colleagues, and community members.
- As with any population group, harmful behaviour is attributable to individual actions rather than identity categories.
- Overall, sexual orientation and gender identity are not predictors of predatory behaviour, and conflating them with abuse is not supported by evidence. Such conflation can also obscure the behavioural and situational factors that are most relevant to safeguarding and prevention.

The belief that transgender identities are not real



- Many people, often influenced by religious or traditional frameworks, understand gender primarily in terms of the biological sex assigned at birth.
- From this perspective, sex is typically viewed as fixed, with individuals remaining male or female regardless of later identity, social role, or medical transition.
- This view is often associated with a strongly binary understanding of sex categories, although intersex variations may be interpreted differently depending on the tradition or level of awareness.

- Some people, therefore, do not recognise a person's affirmed gender identity and may find social or medical transition difficult to reconcile with their understanding of sex and gender.
- Underlying this perspective is the belief that biological sex is the primary determinant of gender and is not subject to change in the way gender identity is understood in contemporary clinical and social frameworks.

THE REALITY

- Biological sex and gender identity are related but distinct concepts. Biological sex typically refers to physical characteristics such as chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy, while gender identity is a person's internal sense of self.
- For transgender people, gender identity does not align with the sex assigned at birth. Transitioning is generally understood as an attempt to align a person's external life with their internal sense of identity.
- Transgender individuals are typically aware of their biological sex; their experience is not one of misunderstanding it, but of it not fully defining their identity.
- Cultural and social expectations shape many aspects of gender expression and roles. Norms such as "boys don't cry" or "girls should be gentle" reflect learned social behaviours rather than fixed biological imperatives.
- Major medical and psychological organisations recognise gender identity as a meaningful and important aspect of human experience, distinct from biological sex.
- Transgender people have been documented across many cultures and historical periods, including identities such as Two-Spirit people in some Indigenous cultures and Fa'afafine in Samoa. However, these roles are culturally specific and not directly equivalent to modern Western categories of transgender identity.
- Biological sex itself is not strictly binary in all cases, as intersex variations in chromosomes, hormones, and anatomy occur naturally in a small percentage of the population.

- While research into the biological correlates of gender identity is ongoing, there is currently no single biological marker that determines or defines gender identity.
- In social and legal contexts, transgender women are generally recognised as women. This reflects recognition of lived identity rather than a denial of biological sex.
- Most major medical bodies find that affirming transgender individuals' gender identity is associated with improved mental health outcomes compared with approaches that involve denial or suppression of that identity.
- Overall, sex and gender are related but not identical concepts: one refers primarily to biological characteristics, while the other relates to identity and lived experience. Reducing gender entirely to biology does not capture the full range of human variation.

#11 LGBTQIA+ ARE TRYING TO RECRUIT AND CONVERT

The belief that being LGBTQIA+ can be forced on others



- Often associated with narratives describing LGBTQIA+ inclusion as an “ideology,” some people express the belief that LGBTQIA+ individuals or advocacy efforts may encourage or influence others to identify as LGBTQIA+.
- This perspective is typically based on the assumption that sexual orientation and gender identity are choices or externally shaped behaviours, rather than aspects of personal identity that develop through complex biological, developmental, and social factors.
- In some cases, LGBTQIA+ identities are framed metaphorically as something that can be “adopted” or socially influenced, particularly in discussions about children, adolescents, or vulnerable individuals.
- Concerns of this kind are often linked to broader anxieties about social change and exposure to differing identities, rather than evidence of intentional recruitment or conversion.

THE REALITY

- Sexual orientation is not considered a choice in contemporary medical and psychological understanding. While some people may explore or question their identities, this process of self-understanding is distinct from sexual orientation itself, which is generally understood as an enduring aspect of identity.
- Historically, political leaders, media outlets, and social movements have at times promoted claims that LGBTQIA+ people pose a “recruitment” risk. These claims are not supported by empirical

evidence and are often understood by researchers as reflecting broader social anxieties during periods of cultural change.

- There is no credible scientific evidence that LGBTQIA+ people recruit others or that exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals causes someone to become LGBTQIA+. Anecdotal accounts are sometimes presented as evidence, but they are not supported by empirical research.
- Similar “contagion” or moral panic narratives have been directed at various minority groups throughout history, including religious, political, and social minorities. However, such claims have not been substantiated in those contexts.
- Practices such as “conversion therapy” have been widely discredited by major medical and psychological organisations and are not considered effective in changing sexual orientation.
- More broadly, visibility, representation, and education are understood as factors that can help individuals recognise and understand their identities, rather than as mechanisms that create or alter sexual orientation.
- Within this framework, claims of “recruitment” are generally viewed in academic and clinical literature as misconceptions rather than as evidence-based descriptions of how sexual orientation develops.

#12

PRIDE IS NOT NECESSARY

That representation is more about flaunting than visibility



- Pride festivals and marches take place in cities around the world each year, often drawing large crowds and significant media attention.
- These events typically combine political demonstration with celebration, featuring music, performances, community gatherings, and visual displays.
- Some people view Pride events as no longer necessary, arguing that LGBTQIA+ people have achieved formal legal equality in many countries and therefore do not require continued public demonstration.
- Others express concern that Pride places excessive emphasis on sexuality and gender identity in public spaces, or that it encourages the public display of private aspects of identity.
- Some also argue that, given the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships and the expansion of legal protections in many jurisdictions, the original civil rights purpose of Pride has largely been fulfilled.

THE REALITY

- Pride did not begin as a celebration. It began as a protest.
- The first Pride marches took place in 1970, marking the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, which followed decades of criminalisation, discrimination, police harassment, and social exclusion faced by LGBTQIA+ people in many parts of the world.
- At that time, same-sex relationships were illegal in many jurisdictions, and LGBTQIA+ individuals often risked arrest, loss of employment, public humiliation, family rejection, and violence.
- Pride emerged as a public assertion that LGBTQIA+ people should not be required to live in secrecy or shame.
- While legal progress has been made in many countries, equality is not universal. In some regions, same-sex relationships remain criminalised and, in certain jurisdictions, can still result in imprisonment or severe penalties. Even where legal protections exist, LGBTQIA+ people may still experience discrimination, harassment, family rejection, or violence.
- Pride today serves multiple functions: it is a celebration of community, a remembrance of those who contributed to civil rights struggles, a platform for ongoing advocacy, and a visible reminder that challenges remain in many contexts.
- Public visibility has been a feature of many civil rights movements. Increased representation of marginalised groups can influence social attitudes by making lived experiences more visible in everyday life.
- By contrast, heterosexual relationships are widely represented and celebrated in public culture through events, media, and commercial advertising, and are therefore often perceived as socially “neutral” rather than visible.
- For many LGBTQIA+ people, Pride is not about display but about visibility, belonging, and the ability to exist openly without concealment.
- It can also serve a supportive function for individuals who are questioning their identity or living in unsupportive environments, offering a sense of community and reassurance.
- More broadly, Pride reflects the ongoing role of visibility in social change. Its aim is not to elevate one group above others but to support inclusion and participation in public life without fear of discrimination.

BISEXUAL PEOPLE ARE GOING THROUGH A PHASE

The belief that bisexuality is confusion rather than a sexual orientation



- Bisexuality is often misunderstood, and bisexual people may face prejudice from both heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ communities.
- Because bisexual individuals may be attracted to more than one gender, they are sometimes assumed to be heterosexual or gay, depending on the gender of their current or past partners, rather than being recognised as bisexual.
- Some people view bisexuality as a transitional stage rather than a stable sexual orientation, particularly when individuals later identify as gay or lesbian.
- Common stereotypes portray bisexual people as confused, indecisive, attention-seeking, or avoiding a clear identity category, although these characterisations reflect misconceptions rather than clinical or scientific understandings of sexual orientation.
- As a result, bisexuality is sometimes questioned or invalidated because of changes in individual identity over time, rather than being understood as a legitimate orientation in its own right.

THE REALITY

- The assumption that bisexuality is a phase often stems from a binary view of sexuality, in which individuals are expected to fall into only two categories: heterosexual or gay. In reality, human attraction is more complex than this framework allows.
- Bisexual people are sometimes told they are “too gay” for heterosexual spaces and “not gay enough” for LGBTQIA+ spaces, which can contribute to feelings of invisibility or marginalisation in both contexts.
- Bisexual people are widely recognised as a sexual orientation by psychologists, sex researchers, and major health organisations.
- It does not imply equal attraction to all genders. Some bisexual people experience relatively balanced attraction, while others have preferences that may shift over time or vary between individuals.
- A person’s current relationship does not determine their sexual orientation. A bisexual person in a relationship with someone of a different gender remains bisexual, and the same applies when they are in a same-gender relationship.
- Some individuals identify as pansexual, a term often used to describe attraction that is not primarily based on gender. While there is overlap between bisexual and pansexual identities, they are not identical and may be understood differently by different people.
- It is true that some people who initially identify as bisexual later come to identify as gay, lesbian, or heterosexual. This reflects individual processes of self-understanding rather than evidence that bisexuality as an orientation is invalid.

- The existence of identity change over time does not imply that bisexuality is inherently transitional. Many bisexual people maintain a stable identity throughout their lives.
- Like other sexual orientations, bisexuality is generally understood as describing patterns of attraction rather than a conscious choice.
- Research and survey data suggest that bisexual people may face higher levels of misunderstanding and “erasure” compared with both heterosexual and gay communities, reflecting a pattern of marginalisation in multiple social contexts.
- Overall, bisexuality does not require equal attraction, simultaneous attraction, or validation through current relationships. It is one of several recognised patterns of human sexual orientation.

#14

ASEXUALITY IS NOT REAL

The belief that everyone experiences sexual attraction



- Some people find it difficult to understand or accept that a person can experience little or no sexual attraction to others.
- Because sexual attraction is a common human experience, there is often an assumption that it must be present in everyone to some degree.
- In this context, some argue that asexuality may be explained by factors such as medical conditions, hormonal variation, low libido, trauma, or simply not having met the “right person,” rather than being a distinct

sexual orientation.

- Others view asexuality as a temporary phase, a personal choice, or an identity adopted for social reasons, such as attention or distinctiveness.
- A further misconception is that asexuality is equivalent to celibacy, with the assumption that asexual individuals are simply choosing not to engage in sexual activity, rather than experiencing a lack of sexual attraction.

THE REALITY

- The assumption that asexuality is not a valid orientation often rests on the belief that everyone experiences sexual attraction in the same way. Yet human experiences of attraction are more diverse than this framework allows.
- Asexuality is generally understood as experiencing little or no sexual attraction towards others. It is recognised in sexual health and psychological literature as a variation in human sexuality.
- Asexuality is often understood as existing on a spectrum. Not all asexual people experience attraction, relationships, or forms of intimacy in the same way.
- Some asexual individuals experience romantic attraction and may desire emotional or romantic

relationships. Others may experience non-sexual forms of attraction, such as emotional, aesthetic, or intellectual connection, without sexual desire.

- Asexuality is distinct from celibacy. Celibacy is a behavioural choice to abstain from sexual activity, whereas asexuality is a pattern of sexual attraction.
- It is also distinct from libido. Libido refers to a person's level of sexual drive, which may or may not align with whether they experience sexual attraction towards others.
- While factors such as medical conditions, medications, hormonal changes, or trauma can influence sexual desire, these are generally understood as separate from asexuality itself, which is not classified as a disorder in contemporary clinical frameworks.
- The belief that asexual people have not "met the right person" assumes that sexual attraction is universally latent and will eventually emerge. While some individuals' identities may evolve, many asexual people report a stable and enduring lack of sexual attraction.
- Asexual individuals are not defined by deficiency or incompleteness, but by a different pattern of experiencing attraction compared with the majority population.
- Overall, understanding asexuality requires recognising that sexual attraction is not a universal or uniform human experience, but one that varies across individuals.

#15

CONVERSION THERAPY WORKS

The premise that being LGBTQIA+ is a choice



- Conversion therapy refers to a range of practices based on the belief that a person's sexual orientation or gender identity can be changed, suppressed, or redirected through counselling, religious intervention, behavioural techniques, or other forms of treatment.
- Supporters or promoters of such approaches often view LGBTQIA+ identities as undesirable, disordered, sinful, or as resulting from trauma, social influence, or personal experience, rather than as innate aspects of identity.
- In some cases, parents, faith leaders, or practitioners believe that, with appropriate guidance, therapy, prayer, discipline, or intervention, an individual can change their sexual orientation or align their gender identity with traditional expectations.
- Many individuals who undergo or seek conversion-related practices do so under significant social or familial pressure, including fear of rejection from family, community, or religious environments. In other cases, participation is encouraged by people who believe they are offering support or moral guidance.
- The stated aim of such practices is often framed as healing, correction, or realignment, with the expectation that a person can change their underlying identity to resolve conflict with religious, cultural, or familial values.

THE REALITY

- Traditional therapy aims to help people understand themselves, develop coping strategies, improve well-being, and address psychological distress. Conversion therapy differs in that its primary aim is not self-understanding or acceptance, but to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Major medical, psychological, psychiatric, and counselling organisations worldwide have concluded that there is no credible evidence that conversion therapy can reliably change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Many professional bodies also consider conversion therapy unethical, and some practitioners may face disciplinary action when it conflicts with established professional standards.
- Research consistently shows that exposure to conversion therapy is associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, shame, self-harm, trauma, and suicidal ideation. However, these outcomes are generally understood as correlational and linked to the distressing nature of the experience and its underlying assumptions about identity.
- Reports from former participants often indicate that the process did not change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Instead, many describe learning to suppress, conceal, or deny their feelings to meet the expectations of family members, religious communities, or practitioners.
- A common feature of conversion therapy frameworks is the implicit message that a person's natural patterns of attraction or identity are undesirable or require correction. For some individuals, particularly young people, this can contribute to feelings of shame, guilt, and psychological distress.
- Many parents or guardians who seek out such approaches do so with sincere intentions, often believing they are acting in their child's best interests or helping them remain aligned with their faith or cultural values. However, good intentions do not necessarily determine outcomes.
- Individuals who undergo conversion therapy are often motivated by external pressures, including fear of rejection from family, community, or religious institutions, rather than a voluntary desire to change their identity.
- As a result, many participants report that the primary effect of conversion therapy is not a change in identity, but increased concealment of it.
- In response to concerns about harm and lack of efficacy, numerous jurisdictions have introduced restrictions or bans on conversion therapy, particularly for minors, based on recommendations from health and professional organisations.
- Overall, the consensus among major professional bodies is that conversion therapy does not alter sexual orientation or gender identity. What it often affects, instead, is an individual's willingness or sense of safety to express those aspects of themselves.
- From this perspective, the central ethical concern is not whether identity can be changed, but whether attempting to change or suppress it through therapeutic or quasi-therapeutic means is appropriate within healthcare and safeguarding frameworks.

CHILDREN NEED BOTH A MOTHER AND A FATHER

Reinforcing traditional family values



- Many people believe that a child benefits from being raised by both a mother and a father, and that this dual-parent structure is important for healthy emotional and social development.
- This view is often based on the idea that mothers and fathers may contribute different but complementary forms of emotional support, guidance, and role modelling within a child's upbringing.
- From this perspective, some argue that children raised in single-parent households or by same-sex couples may lack certain developmental experiences that are considered important for later life outcomes.
- Others express concern that same-sex parenting could influence a child's understanding of gender roles, relationships, or identity.
- Some also believe that children raised by LGBTQIA+ parents may be more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+ themselves, viewing this as evidence of social or environmental influence on identity development.

THE REALITY

- The most important factors in a child's development are love, stability, safety, consistent caregiving, and emotional support.
- Children tend to thrive when they have emotionally available adults who are invested in their well-being and able to provide a secure environment. Research in developmental psychology consistently shows that these relational and environmental factors are more strongly linked to positive outcomes than the gender of caregivers.
- Many single parents successfully raise healthy, well-adjusted children, often with support from extended family, friends, educators, and other stable adult role models.
- Similarly, many same-sex couples and transgender parents raise children in loving, supportive homes. Families take many forms, and children can flourish across a range of family structures.
- Overall, child outcomes appear to be more closely linked to factors such as family stability, parental involvement, financial security, and the quality of relationships within the home than to parental gender configuration itself.
- The idea that mothers and fathers possess fixed, unique qualities that others cannot provide is not strongly supported by research. Traits such as care, discipline, encouragement, and protection are human capacities rather than exclusively male or female attributes.
- Studies comparing children raised by same-sex and different-sex parents have not found consistent differences in outcomes such as emotional well-being, educational attainment, social development, or mental health.

- A child's sexual orientation or gender identity is not determined in a direct or deterministic way by their parents. Heterosexual parents raised most LGBTQIA+ individuals, and children raised by LGBTQIA+ parents are not, in general, more likely to identify as LGBTQIA+.
- Children raised in same-sex households are not understood in research to be “indoctrinated” into any particular identity. Rather, they are often exposed to a broader awareness of different family structures and relationship forms.
- Ultimately, the key question in child development is not whether a family conforms to a particular traditional model, but whether it provides consistent love, stability, and support. The evidence indicates that children need caring, reliable adults rather than a specific gender configuration of parents.

04 QUICK REFERENCE

In the Quick Reference section, we provide a concise sheet summarising the main points and counterarguments. It's a handy guide for quickly checking facts or preparing a reasoned response, whether online or in person

#	POINT	CLAIM	COUNTERARGUMENT
1	BEING LGBTQIA+ IS A MENTAL ILLNESS	Historically classified as a disorder, some still believe it reflects a psychological abnormality.	Modern psychiatry (APA, WHO, BPS) recognises LGBTQIA+ identities as normal human variation. Homosexuality was removed from DSM (1973), and gender incongruence was removed from mental disorders in ICD-11 (2019). Identity is not illness; distress (e.g. dysphoria) is what may require support.
2	IT'S NOT NATURAL / GOES AGAINST NATURE	Seen as “unnatural” or outside of how humans should behave, reinforced by stigma and lack of visibility.	“Natural = good” is a logical fallacy. Same-sex behaviour exists in 1,500+ animal species and across human history. Nature contains wide variation; moral value is not determined by nature alone.
3	IT'S AN IDEOLOGY / AGENDA	LGBTQIA+ rights are framed as a political movement rather than an identity; they are seen as socially imposed.	LGBTQIA+ people are not an ideology; they are a demographic. The aim is equal rights and protection from discrimination. Exposure does not change orientation; it enables visibility and safety.

#	POINT	CLAIM	COUNTERARGUMENT
4	PEOPLE CHOOSE TO BE GAY / TRANS	Assumes sexuality and gender identity are conscious lifestyle choices.	Major medical consensus shows they are not choices. They arise from complex biological and developmental factors. No credible evidence shows people can change them at will; “conversion” approaches are ineffective and harmful.
5	IT’S A MODERN TREND	Belief that LGBTQIA+ identities are new, driven by media and social influence.	LGBTQIA+ people have existed throughout history. Visibility has increased due to reduced stigma, not increased “creation.” Evidence spans ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, Japan, and Indigenous cultures.
6	RELIGION JUSTIFIES REJECTION	Religious texts interpreted as condemning LGBTQIA+ identities; used to justify exclusion or legal restriction.	Religious interpretation varies widely. Many faith traditions and theologians are LGBTQIA+-affirming. In pluralistic societies, personal belief does not justify harm or the denial of others’ rights. Compassion and dignity are core religious principles.
7	SAME-SEX MARRIAGE HARMS TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE	Marriage is defined as a sacred male–female union; however, it weakens “traditional” family structure.	Marriage has changed across history. No evidence that same-sex marriage harms heterosexual marriage or divorce rates. Marriage is both civil and religious; extending it does not reduce existing marriages.
8	“WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?”	Concern that exposure to LGBTQIA+ topics influences children’s identity or confuses development.	No evidence that exposure changes orientation. Children benefit from age-appropriate education about diverse families. Major medical bodies find same-sex parenting outcomes equal to heterosexual parenting. Harm is linked to stigma, not visibility.
9	LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE ARE PREDATORS/GROOMERS	Stereotype linking LGBTQIA+ identity with abuse or predatory behaviour.	No evidence of increased risk. Abuse is linked to power and opportunity, not orientation. Major safeguarding organisations reject the link. This is a historically persistent but unsupported smear.

#	POINT	CLAIM	COUNTERARGUMENT
10	"MEN ARE MEN, WOMEN ARE WOMEN"	Gender is defined strictly by biological sex; transgender identities are rejected.	Biological sex and gender identity are distinct. Trans people exist across cultures and history. Intersex variation exists. Medical consensus recognises gender identity as real and distinct from sex assigned at birth.
11	LGBTQIA+ RECRUITMENT MYTH	Belief that LGBTQIA+ people influence or convert others.	No evidence of recruitment or "turning." Sexual orientation is not contagious or learned. Moral panics have historically targeted many groups. Visibility enables understanding, not conversion.
12	PRIDE IS UNNECESSARY	Pride is seen as excessive now that legal equality exists.	Pride began as a protest (Stonewall era). Legal equality is uneven globally. Pride is visibility, remembrance, and advocacy. Public representation reduces stigma and supports those still in unsafe environments.
13	BISEXUALITY IS A PHASE	Seen as confusion or temporary experimentation.	Bisexuality is a recognised orientation. Attraction varies across individuals and time. The current partner does not define identity. Biphobia often erases bisexual validity.
14	ASEXUALITY IS NOT REAL	The belief that everyone must experience sexual attraction.	Asexuality is a recognised spectrum. It is not celibacy or low libido. Many experience romantic/emotional attraction without sexual attraction. Supported in scientific literature as natural variation.
15	CONVERSION THERAPY WORKS	The belief that orientation or identity can be changed through therapy or religion.	Major medical bodies reject it as ineffective and harmful. Associated with increased anxiety, depression, and self-harm. Most participants do not change orientation-only suppress identity.
16	CHILDREN NEED A MOTHER AND A FATHER	The belief that gendered parenting roles are essential for development.	Child outcomes depend on stability, love, and support-not parental gender. Research shows that same-sex, single-parent, and diverse families perform equally well when caregiving is strong. Parents do not shape sexual orientation.

05 FURTHER READING

The Belief Briefs are intended to encourage critical thinking and informed discussion by examining assumptions, long-held views, and common misconceptions. Their purpose is not to challenge or undermine faith or personal belief systems, but to promote a deeper understanding of the topics explored.

If you would like to continue learning about this subject, we recommend the following resources for further reading.

SUGGESTED READING

Explore a selection of articles, publications, and educational materials designed to help you deepen your knowledge and engage with a range of perspectives on the subject.

- The Gay Revolution - Lillian Faderman
- The Deviant's War - Eric Cervini
- Coming Out Under Fire - Allan Bérubé
- Evolution's Rainbow - Joan Roughgarden
- Before We Were Trans - Kit Heyam
- God and the Gay Christian - Matthew Vines
- Torn - Justin Lee
- Queer Virtue - Elizabeth Edman
- Unprotected Texts: The Bible's Surprising Contradictions About Sex and Desire - Jennifer Wright Knust
- Love Makes a Family - Sophie Beer
- Different Families, Same Love - Rebecca Merkel
- We Are Everywhere - Matthew Riemer & Leighton Brown
- The Book of Pride - Mason Funk
- Folk Devils and Moral Panics - Stanley Cohen
- The Righteous Mind - Jonathan Haidt
- Humankind: A Hopeful History - Rutger Bregman

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