

Homophobia Myth Busting Facts

EAST SIDE CONSORTIUM

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Introduction

What is this myth-busting pack about?

Every day people are targeted or picked on because they are seen as “different” in some way – it may be because of their race, their religion, their gender or their sexuality.

One group that is often the target of abuse or discrimination is “gay” people.

This pack aims to dispel some of the myths about homosexuality, provide you with the facts and hopefully increase understanding. It is part of a series of myth-busting packs produced by the East Side Consortium.

Other myth-busting packs currently available from the East Side Consortium include:

- New Arrivals
- Islamaphobia

Barking & Dagenham Racial Equality Council, Redbridge Equalities & Community Council and Waltham Forest Race Equality Council came together to form the East Side Consortium so that they could work together on projects across the three boroughs.

If Michelangelo had been straight, the Sistine Chapel would have been wallpapered.

Robin Tyler

Homophobia is like racism and anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry in that it seeks to dehumanize a large group of people, to deny their humanity, their dignity and personhood.

Coretta Scott King

There's this illusion that homosexuals have sex and heterosexuals fall in love. That's completely untrue. Everybody wants to be loved.

Boy George

Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?

Ernest Gaines

MYTH: "The term 'homosexual' refers only to men."

THE FACTS: Actually the term homosexual means "same sex" so it refers to males and females.

MYTH: "Homosexuals are more likely to be paedophiles."

THE FACTS: It is probable that most cases of sexual abuse of children are not reported and certainly there are more allegations made to police than ever result in conviction or even prosecution. About twice as many of the victims are girls rather than boys, and over 90% of known adult sexual abusers of children are men. In most cases the abuser is known to the victim and often is a member of the victim's family. The characteristics of offenders include those who are primarily attracted towards children (of either gender), people who are mentally disturbed, those indiscriminately seeking immediate sexual and people with an inability to form sexual relationships with adults. There is no evidence to suggest that homosexuals are either more or less likely to be paedophiles.

MYTH: "Only younger men are homosexuals."

THE FACTS: Sexual orientation has nothing to do with age. In fact, with an ageing population there is a real issue about the provision of services for and institutional discrimination against older homosexuals. The age at which people come to understand their own sexuality can vary.

MYTH: "People who cross-dress are gay"

THE FACTS: Not necessarily. Some heterosexual people like to cross-dress. Also, people who are awaiting gender reassignment may dress in the clothes of the gender they are being reassigned to before the reassignment process is complete

I believe that one day the world will judge the witch hunt against homosexuals just as harshly as it judges the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust.

Mae West

Who would give a law to lovers? Love is unto itself a higher law.

Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, A.D. 524

I'm a supporter of gay rights. And not a closet supporter either. From the time I was a kid, I have never been able to understand attacks upon the gay community. There are so many qualities that make up a human being... by the time I get through with all the things that I really admire about people, what they do with their private parts is probably so low on the list that it is irrelevant.

Paul Newman

MYTH: "Homosexual couples act out stereotypical male/female roles in their relationships"

THE FACTS: As with heterosexual couples, each relationship is different and whilst there may be some couples that do act out stereotypical gender roles in their relationships this is not true of the majority of homosexual couples.

It is worth noting anyway that "stereotypical" gender roles vary from culture to culture.

MYTH: "The lines between homosexuals and heterosexuals are absolute and un-crossable. You're either "gay" or you're not."

THE FACTS: People do not choose who they are attracted to or who they fall in love with. It just happens. Some people fall in love with a person regardless of gender.

Some people may have a one-off same-sex relationship but not regard themselves as "gay".

Others may have the occasional same-sex sexual experience but again, not consider themselves to be homosexual.

MYTH: "Homosexuality is a lifestyle choice"

THE FACTS: Nobody chooses their sexual orientation. It seems unlikely that many people would choose to experience the discrimination and persecution that homosexuals are subject to around the world.

Labels are for filing.
Labels are for clothing.
Labels are not for
people.

Martina Navratilova

Everybody's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality. **James Baldwin**

My own belief is that there is hardly anyone whose sexual life, if it were broadcast, would not fill the world at large with surprise and horror.

W. Somerset Maugham

Labels are for filing.
Labels are for clothing.
Labels are not for
people. **Martina Navratilova**

MYTH: "Homosexuality is a modern thing."

THE FACTS: Homosexuality has probably been around as long as human beings have. We do know that it existed in ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire.



The Warren Cup

A silver cup from the Roman Empire, now in the British Museum, features explicit images of homosexual acts

MYTH: "Homosexuality is an illness"

THE FACTS: This is a very old fashioned and now discredited idea. Homosexuality is **not** an illness any more than attraction to blondes, brunettes or redheads, slim people or chubby people.

MYTH: "Homosexuality only occurs in human beings"

THE FACTS: There is evidence of homosexual and bisexual activity amongst a range of birds, animals and insects including beetles, sheep, fruit bats, dolphins, orang-utans, Japanese macaques, penguins, ostriches and flamingos.

James Owen in London for National Geographic News 23/7/2004

MYTH: "Lesbians hate men, gay men hate women"

THE FACTS: It is not true that lesbians and gay men hate people of the opposite sex, they are just not sexually attracted to them.

EAST SIDE CONSORTIUM

The aims of East Side Consortium are:

- To work towards the elimination of racial, religious and other forms of discrimination;
- To promote equal of opportunity and good relations.

We provide:

- Help and support to people who are victims of harassment or discrimination
- Advice and training on equality issues
- A range of myth-busting packs and briefings

Our grateful thanks go to all those people who gave their advice and assistance in the production of this leaflet.

The East Side Consortium consists of three organisations working in partnership:

Barking & Dagenham Racial Equality Council

Unit 2, 30 Thames Road, Barking IG11 0HZ

Tel: 0208 594 2773

Email: bardag_rec@yahoo.co.uk

Opening hours: Monday to Friday
11 am – 5 pm

Redbridge Equalities & Community Council

United Reformed Church

39 Woodford Avenue, Gants Hill,
Ilford, IG2 6UH

Tel: 0208 551 8178

Email: office1@redbridgeequalities.org

Opening hours: Monday to Friday
11 am – 3 pm

Hate Crime Hotline daily 6 pm until midnight
0208 551 8178

Waltham Forest Race Equality Council

Community Place, 806 High Road Leyton,
London E10 6AE

Tel: 0208 279 2425

Email: info@wfrec.org.uk

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday and
Thursday 10 am – 3 pm

Other Myth-Busting publications available in this series:

- **New Arrivals**
- **Islamaphobia**

FACTS and FIGURES

There are estimated to be between 3 and 4 million lesbian and gay people in Britain today.

Every day people are bullied, called names or assaulted. They are targeted because they are seen as being “different” to others.

The people who commit this sort of crime are bullies, and they pick on people who they think are vulnerable or isolated.

Hate crime is always unacceptable.

Hate Crime IS a crime

The logo for 'Report it!' features the words 'Report it!' in a bold, sans-serif font. Each letter is a different color: 'R' is red, 'e' is orange, 'p' is yellow, 'o' is green, 'r' is blue, 't' is purple, 'i' is pink, and 't!' is light blue. The text is set against a background of horizontal lines that create a sense of motion or a shadow effect.

According to a report published by **Stonewall** in 2008:

One in five lesbian and gay people had experienced a homophobic hate crime or incident in the previous three years

One in eight had been a victim in the previous year.

Three in four of those experiencing hate crimes or incidents did not report them to the police.

Only **six per cent** reported them to third parties.

Seven in ten did not report hate crimes or incidents to anyone.

One in six experiencing homophobic hate incidents in the previous three years experienced a physical assault.

Eight per cent of all black and minority ethnic lesbian and gay people had experienced a physical assault as a homophobic hate incident, compared to **four per cent** of all lesbian and gay people.

One in six lesbian and gay people had been insulted and harassed in the previous three years because they are gay.

One in eight lesbian and gay people experiencing homophobic hate incidents had experienced unwanted sexual contact as part of the incident.

Overall, **three in five** lesbian and gay people had been a victim of any crime or incident in the previous three years.