

# Bi the Way:

A Guide to Bisexual+ Research

melbourne  
bisexual  
network



**Melbourne Bisexual Network**

Cavara, R., Amos, N., Muller, J. 2023

# Acknowledgements

We wish to acknowledge that this work was completed predominantly on the lands of the **Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nations, in Naarm**. Consultation occurred across the lands of many nations, and we pay our respects to elders past and present.

These lands were stolen and not ceded, and Melbourne Bisexual Network stands in solidarity with the First Nations people of Australia.

**Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.**

We wish to thank the **Department of Families, Fairness and Housing** for funding the Bi+ Communities project, and therefore making possible the creation of *Bi the Way: A Guide to Bisexual+ Research*. We are enormously grateful for their support of greater LGBTQIA+ communities in Victoria, and especially appreciate trusting Bi+ communities with specific funding for projects that make a difference.

# Authors

Rebecca Cavarra (DPCT, La Trobe University)  
Natalie Amos (ARCSHS, La Trobe University)  
Juniper Muller (Melbourne Bisexual Network)

## Enquiries:

Please contact Melbourne Bisexual Network:  
[melbournebinetwork@gmail.com](mailto:melbournebinetwork@gmail.com)  
[www.melbournebisexualnetwork.com](http://www.melbournebisexualnetwork.com)

Design and illustration by Briar Rolfe:  
[www.briarrolfe.com.au](http://www.briarrolfe.com.au)

## Suggested citation:

Cavarra, R., Amos, N., & Muller, J. (2023). *Bi the Way: A Guide to Bisexual+ Research*. Melbourne Bisexual Network.

**Disclaimer:** Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this publication is accurate and current at the date of printing.

*Bi the Way: A Guide to Bisexual+ Research* by Melbourne Bisexual Network is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

# Bi the Way Expert Advisory Group

## (“Bi+ Brains Trust”)

Bi the Way was generously supported by an Expert Advisory Group. Members included:

- ▼ Amber Loomis (Sydney Bi+ Network)
- ▼ Andrea Waling (ARCSHS, La Trobe University)
- ▼ Joel Anderson (Australian Catholic University)
- ▼ Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli (Deakin University)
- ▼ Jo Doley (Victoria University)
- ▼ Pip Buckingham (ARCSHS, La Trobe University)

Bi the Way also benefited from feedback and review from the community, including activists and researchers. Contributors included:

- ▼ Ruby Mountford (MBN)
- ▼ Duc Dau (Bi+ Community Perth)
- ▼ Misty Farquhar (Bi+ Community Perth)
- ▼ Misia Julia (Bi+ Collective Australia, South Australia)
- ▼ Sally Goldner AM (Bi Alliance Victoria)
- ▼ James Dominguez (Bi Alliance Victoria)
- ▼ Gail Claremont Goulet (TLLPC, South Australia)
- ▼ Ruby Grant (ARCSHS, La Trobe University)
- ▼ Nicholas Cowley
- ▼ Natalie Cavallaro

These guidelines couldn't have been put together without the support and organisation of the rest of Melbourne Bisexual Network committee. These dedicated community activists and advocates chose to focus efforts on this project as an area of community need, which they hope will have broad reaching effects for the wellbeing of Bi+ people in Victoria, Australia, and internationally.

—*Juniper Muller (they/she)*

On behalf of all study authors



# *Bi the*

**Bisexual and multigender attracted people constitute the majority of non-exclusively heterosexual people by current best estimates.**

(Gallup, 2021)

Increasingly people are feeling able to openly identify as bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual or other plurisexual labels (grouped under the community-used umbrella term here, “bi+” rather than the academic term “plurisexual”). Research that meaningfully includes bi+ people in positive ways is relatively new, and funding for bi+ specific research is chronically low (Lawther et. al, 2022). Much of the research currently being published either does not include bisexuality as a separate category of sexual identity/experience, or when it does, misses key factors of context, language, or framing. Both of these oversights unfortunately contribute to biphobic myths, stigma, and discrimination, without substantially improving outcomes for bi+ people.

The current set of guidelines aims to build upon these to support research into bi+ people and ensure this work more accurately represent the community, is inclusive of community needs, and relevant to important contemporary issues of sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. Guidelines for Researching and Writing About Bisexuality (Barker et. al 2012) provide a useful and robust set of guidelines for researchers who are approaching this topic, and though much has changed in 10 years, these guidelines remain relevant. We would also like to acknowledge Bi Us, For Us (Beach & Hall, 2020), which lays out in detail modern principles of approaching bi+ research, following the inaugural Bisexual Health Research Workshop in the USA.

# Way

Bisexual Invisibility (SFHRC, 2011) details a broad spectrum of bi+ experiences, outcomes, and recommendations, and remains relevant today. Utilising these guidelines and foundations, a researcher will be well placed to improve the quality of their research and avoid common pitfalls.

This project was led by Melbourne Bisexual Network (a volunteer, not-for-profit community group), with support from research staff at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University, with the backing of a Victorian Government grant. Relevant researchers and community activists with expertise in bi+ populations were consulted for the content of the guidelines, with a majority of advisors being bi+ themselves. Though created by Australians, we hope this document will be of use to similar countries and contexts.

These guidelines may be useful for both qualitative and quantitative research, and it is recommended that you consider how the design of your research will impact how you involve and collect data related to bi+ people. Understanding your research aims, study design and population of interest prior to reflection on the below document will be beneficial in addressing issues specific to each design. We acknowledge the differing structure for broader theoretical or descriptive research. Although these guidelines may be less prescriptive for this type of research, an understanding of these broader

considerations is necessary. Higher order writing and theorising should benefit bi+ populations and must be done in a manner that is inclusive, respectful, and not harmful.

These guidelines are not a comprehensive "how-to", but rather a set of considerations and directions for a researcher wanting to approach bi+ issues. We have many references here for further reading, to better understand certain frameworks and contextual factors. We hope this document will be useful to both generalist researchers who happen to include bi+ people in their studies, as well as sexuality specialist researchers who may not have bi+ specific knowledge.



# Broader Considerations

## Practice reflexivity

Consider your positionality as a researcher: what is your role as an ally or as a member of this community? Reflect on power imbalances throughout the research process. Consider your unconscious biases, including biphobia, and work to reduce their negative impact on your research. If you are discovering your multigender attraction as a researcher, you might benefit from connecting with and learning from community, as well as exploring bi+ and sexuality research/academia. Be mindful that there has been, and continues to be, biphobic research published about our communities, often by monosexual researchers (Engelberg, 2020).

## Avoid reinforcing common myths

Biphobic myths form the critical content of negative cultural attitudes towards bi+ people, and lead to increased stigma and discrimination, and the negative outcomes associated with them (Johnson, 2016). Do not assume attraction between genders is evenly split, or bi+ populations are hypersexual. Be inclusive of, but do not assume non-monogamy (this includes meaningfully making space for describing the existence, importance, and variation of more than one partner, including queer platonic partners). Respect and account for fluidity of attraction. Make yourself aware of current bi+ community discourse, to navigate areas of current controversy or stigma. See **Common Bi+ Myths** below for more details.

## Presume heterogeneity and draw on intersectional frameworks

Bi+ people come from all walks of life, and so to be bi+ inclusive, we must consider frameworks of racial justice, disability justice, class analysis, feminism, and trans liberation amongst other social justice lenses. Reflect on specific intersections of experience (Crenshaw, 1991), where living with multiple marginalised identities may compound issues (such as where bi-misogyny describes bi+ women's specific experience of sexualisation/fetishisation resulting from being both bisexual and a woman).

Consider intersections of age, gender (including trans experiences), faith, class, ethnicity, disability and neurodiversity. Be inclusive of First Nations people and people of colour, and consider the effects of colonialism. It is imperative that researchers know how much of the previous literature has been conducted with predominantly white, educated, Western populations, and that they take cross-cultural considerations (including varying terminology and understandings) into account. There is no 'one way' to look/sound/be bi+, and this lack of clear in-group signifier can lead to both incredible diversity, and also bi-invisibility.

## Consider inclusive models of attraction, such as Split Attraction Model (Elgie, 2020)

This model separates romantic and sexual attraction, and allows one to describe *amount* of attraction, rather than just direction. This is especially useful for the inclusion of people who describe themselves as biromantic and asexual, or aromantic and bisexual for instance. Asexual and aromantic people are often left out of research or are not identifiable with common question responses. For considering this across gender and attraction, see *Flying Gender Unicorn* (Florida International University & Trans Student Educational Resources, 2020). See also **Appendix B** for how to separate romantic and sexual attraction in quantitative research.

### Draw on bi+ specific theory

Rather than relying on broader LGBTIQ+ theories and frameworks, utilise bi+ specific theory and research where possible. When research examines identity groups separately, differences emerge. Therefore, solely using LGBTIQ+ or Queer theory to explore bi+ specific issues can reinforce bi-erasure.

In acknowledging this heterogeneity, theory utilised should also reflect these differences. Note differences between identity groups within bi+ communities also, for example between bisexual and pansexual individuals where relevant.

Overarching theories such as the Minority Stress model still have significant use for bi+ populations, though the experience of such may be different to gay and lesbian populations. Utilise theory and research pertaining to the group you are exploring and blend LGBTIQ+ considerations when useful but not when harmful (e.g. harmfully assuming that a bisexual woman in a relationship with a man does not experience biphobia or homophobia). Engage with bi+ community advisors for current theories and applications.



### Be informed about bi+ definitions

Terminology is rapidly evolving and expanding. See definitions list toward the end of this document as a starting point. Know that differences in meaning (e.g., between bisexual and pansexual) is very important for some and less important for others. Acknowledge that terminology being newly coined does not equate to the experience being new. Consider what wording is best suited to your research population and why (e.g. Bi+, Multi-gender attracted, Bisexual, Non-Monosexual, Queer, etc.) It is crucial to be trans and non-binary inclusive in bi+ definitions (Iantaffi & Barker, 2019), not least because many trans and gender diverse people identify as multigender attracted (i.e. bisexual does not mean “attraction to cisgender men and cisgender women only,” Strauss et al., 2017). There may be differences between someone who identifies as bisexual, someone who has attraction to more than one gender, and someone who has a sexual/romantic history with people of more than one gender.

### Be informed about bi+ history

Reflect on historical discrimination toward this group. Within the broader LGBTIQ+ group, bi+ populations have historically been ostracised and so there is a sense of “not feeling welcome anywhere” (e.g. being excluded from Mardi Gras parades or pride marches). This can cause increased difficulty for bi+ populations to engage fully with research, though it should also be noted that in the past, research would often group bi+ and gay or lesbian people together as “gay”. Given our histories, consider that no particular age group or demographic should be assumed to have significant knowledge or acceptance of bi+ identities (nor assumed not to have this knowledge). Bi+ populations tend to experience higher rates of conversion practices as compared to other LGBTIQ+ people (Hill et al., 2021). This group also experiences generally poorer health outcomes compared to both heterosexual and homosexual populations; including higher rates of smoking, homelessness, and poorer mental health (Rosenberg, 2021). Consider the experiences of bi+ people in same/similar gender relationships vs. those in mixed gender relationships, or same/mixed orientation relationships (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2016).

## Further Reading

- ▼ Allen, L. (2020). [Queer\(y\)ing the Straight Researcher: The Relationship\(?\) between Researcher Identity and Anti-Normative Knowledge](#)
- ▼ Folkes, L. (2022). [Moving beyond ‘shopping list’ positionality: Using kitchen table reflexivity and in/visible tools to develop reflexive qualitative research](#)
- ▼ Moseson H, Lunn MR, Katz A, Fix L, Durden M, Stoeffler A, et al. (2020) [Development of an affirming and customizable electronic survey of sexual and reproductive health experiences for transgender and gender nonbinary people](#)
- ▼ Smith, L. Tuhiwai (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*
- ▼ Xiberras, A. (2018). Welcome to country. In M. Pallotta-Chiarolli (Ed). *Living and loving in diversity: an anthology of Australian multicultural queer adventures*
- ▼ Ghabrial, M.A. (2019). [We can Shapeshift and Build Bridges: Bisexual Women and Gender Diverse People of Color on Invisibility and Embracing the Borderlands](#)
- ▼ Paz Galupo, M., Taylor, S. M., & Cole Jr, D. (2019). [“I Am Double The Bi”: Positive Aspects of Being Both Bisexual and Biracial](#)
- ▼ Ochs, R. (2011). [Why we need to “get bi”](#)
- ▼ Eisner, S. (2013). *Bi: Notes for a bisexual revolution*
- ▼ Scales Rostosky, S., Riggle, E. D., Pascale-Hague, D., & McCants, L. E. (2010). [The positive aspects of a bisexual self-identification](#)
- ▼ Shaw, J. (2022). *Bi: The Hidden Culture, History and Science of Bisexuality*



# Engaging with Bi+ Communities

## Identify bi+ community groups and advocates in your area

Utilise web searching, social media, and LGBTIQ+ networks within your institution. Remember that while no individual can speak for the whole bi+ experience, established grassroots organisations will be aware of key issues. Search locally, nationally, and internationally for a variety of perspectives of bi+ excellence (Farquhar & Dau, 2020). Some bi+ groups have research working groups who consult with researchers to help improve their design, recruitment, analysis, and reach.

These community members who form part of the participant group may be collaboratively involved in all parts of the research process, though we acknowledge there can be barriers to this process in academia.

## Connect with First Nations groups and their bi+ experiences

Work to decolonise your research practices, utilising different forms of knowledge, local histories, and perspectives beyond Western binaries.

## Keep connection alive

Engage with bi+ communities throughout the entire research process, as early as possible. Obtain guidance during the project's development and retain this connection whilst analysing the data and interpreting findings. This can have the dual effect of improving recruitment and being useful for bi+ people themselves.

Avoid asking bi+ groups to disseminate a recruitment brochure or online survey which includes biphobic language or themes by consulting early. Compensate this expertise fairly and consider it in your research budget.

## Develop a good working relationship

When connecting with bi+ community members, put time and effort into developing trust and avoid entering this relationship with a saviour complex. Bi+ people who are active in the community will have some of the most current language and definitions, often years ahead of academic research.



### **Acknowledge bi+ places within LGBTIQ+ communities.**

Given larger LGBTIQ+ organisations may not always represent bi+ populations sufficiently, engagement with bi+ specific community advisors or groups is necessary. In working with LGBTIQ+ organisations, consider that funding may be allocated to research that includes bi+ populations within larger LGBTIQ+ projects, and advocate for bi+ specific funding opportunities. Consider that recruitment via LGBTIQ+ organisations may result in bi+ populations being left out, and so target recruitment toward this group specifically where possible.

### **Bi+ research should benefit bi+ populations.**

Ensure bi+ community advisors and organisations you engage with are remunerated appropriately. Promote opportunities for networking through your research and development of profiles by inclusion in publication acknowledgements.

## Further Reading

- ▼ Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). [Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory](#)
- ▼ Islamic Council of Victoria (2017). [ICV Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnership](#)
- ▼ Beach, L. B., & Xavier Hall, C. D. (2020). [Bi Us, For Us: Articulating foundational principles for research in partnership with bisexual communities](#)
- ▼ *Private Lives 3*: Hill, A., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M., & Lyons, A. (2021). [Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia](#)
- ▼ Lyons, A., Anderson, J., Rasmussen, M. L., & Gray, E. (2020). [Toward making sexual and gender diverse populations count in Australia.](#)
- ▼ Lyons, A., Rasmussen, M. L., Anderson, J., & Gray, E. (2021). [Counting gender and sexual identity in the Australian census](#)
- ▼ Van Anders, S. M. (2015). [Beyond sexual orientation: Integrating gender/sex and diverse sexualities via sexual configurations theory.](#)



# Collecting & Analysing Data

## Reflect on what you are asking, why you are asking, and who you are asking

Think about who specifically you want data on: for example, is it all multigender attracted men? This would include many men who identify as 'straight' but might fall into the MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) category commonly used in sexual health research. Is it people who identify as Pansexual and/or Bisexual? This would exclude many multigender attracted people who do not use these labels, who potentially use no label, a monosexual label, or a more varied label such as "queer".

- ▼ Is it necessary that you ask this? If not, and the nature of the question is sensitive, then remove this or make optional.
- ▼ Is it necessary that participants select one option? If not, make responses multi-select.
- ▼ Is it necessary that this question is categorical (i.e. will this data be analysed according to group)? If not, use open answer questions which allow more freedom for the participant to express themselves.

## Provide participants with a brief explanation of the reasoning behind multi-choice response options (required/forced choice)

Bi+ people can hold justified suspicion of researchers, given the history of exclusion and pathologisation. Bringing participants into your reasoning can help foster trust and engagement.

### Recommended phrasing:

"Please note, selection of a response option rather than written responses is sometimes required to analyse data in a meaningful way. Please use the open text box next to [X] option if the below options are not applicable."

## Use respectful and inclusive language when asking about sexual identity

There are many ways to ask basic demographic questions to identify bi+ people, given the separate yet overlapping areas of identity, attraction, and behaviour. The way these questions are asked can impact responses significantly.

For instance, we do not recommend the Kinsey Scale as this reinforces the gender binary and flattens the experiences of many bi+ people. A current example of best practice for sexuality labels can be drawn from *Private Lives 3*, a 2019 survey of LGBTIQ+ adults in Australia, which asked a two-stage question; first- multi-select (including a *specify* open text), second- "if you had to choose one" single select (including "prefer not to say" [See **Appendix A**]). As mentioned above, consider why you are asking this. If possible, it is recommended that this be asked via open text response, to allow for greater freedom of self identification.

Never assume sexuality based solely on the gender of someone's current or past partners (e.g., a man married to a woman may identify as straight or bi+). Consider directly asking about multi gender attraction to allow for participants to report this without being confined to labels (See **Appendix A**).

## Use the language of participants

Where possible, it is best practice to use terms and words that participants would use to describe themselves. Labels in community may hold specific and different meanings to what researchers may assume, often blurring boundaries and resisting strict definition.

### Avoid “Othering”

Rather than using response options such as “Other” or “Something different”, the following alternatives are recommended; “I use a different term”, “Something else”, “Specify”, or “Not listed”. Next to this, always include an open text response box. Bi+ people have significant experiences of othering, and research can contribute to this through language (Mohr, 2008).

#### Why “othering” is hurtful:

“...using open text answers for questions about identity was actually something that was included in a study I recently did. And it was one of the best things I ever saw. Because not only did it enable people to feel really empowered to be able to express their identity, but also just the beautiful range of identity expressions that came through in the research, it really was a highlight, to be able to see people use their own words to describe themselves...”

—Bi+ community input,  
Sydney Bi+ Network

### Use inclusive and respectful language in recruitment

Apply the same amount of time, consideration, and effort into ensuring language used in recruitment is to a similar standard of respect and inclusivity as what is included in the research (e.g., in a survey). This includes explanatory statements, advertising etc.

### Weigh up the risks and benefits of the research

When designing a survey that bi+ people will fill out, consider any discomfort they may experience while participating and adjust accordingly. Reflect on whether the benefit of specific data being collected justifies the risk of participant discomfort or distress. If you can, amend your survey to ensure minimal discomfort is experienced by participants.

### Ensure participants are informed when providing consent and data is managed appropriately

Responses in bi+ research can be sensitive. There are specific considerations such as individuals who have kept their bi+ identity/attraction private, or only shared with specific people/groups (family, friends, workplace, etc.), that need to be thoroughly reviewed when informing participants of how their data will be stored and used. Participant’s privacy is incredibly important in all research, but due to the nature of bi+ identity, in some research participants may be “outed” without consent due to being identified in a small sample. Open science/data repositories may appear to have large samples, but using a combination of demographic variables, it may be quick to identify a particular bi+ participant. It is important to ensure participants understand any potential secondary usage of their data subsequent to the current research.



### Put careful consideration into re-categorisation

When using multi-select data or open text answers, recategorization is sometimes necessary. Engage with bi+ community advisors if you are unsure and respect participant responses as much as possible.

#### **A worked example: *Distinguishing between sexual attraction and behaviour.***

First, I reflect on why I am asking this question. If I am enquiring about labels participants identify with, I may use the Private Lives 3 template (Appendix A). If I am also enquiring about sexual attraction and behaviours I might use the Private Lives 3 template and include two open answer questions on sexual attraction and behaviour or use the example in Appendix B. During analysis, I will consider these questions separately and be respectful by not recategorizing participants into identity labels other than those they selected. I would consider how to group participants identifying as “queer”, and if I could establish if they were multi-gender attracted or not through checking against an ‘attraction’ question. I may also consider whether to keep ‘bisexual’ and ‘pansexual’ identity groups separate, or merge them, depending on the specific research question. I might invite community consultation on the ramifications of grouping or not grouping, for how research reports may be used in advocacy.

### Provide contact details for both general and LGBTIQ+ specific mental health services

At the commencement and conclusion of your study, it is imperative to provide contact details for mental health services should participants require counselling or support. It is important to provide details for specific LGBTIQ+ services as some bi+ individuals may feel more comfortable speaking with professionals they are confident will be inclusive and respectful (Ideally, check to see if the LGBTIQ+ service regularly does bi+ specific training, as many do not). Bi+ specific services may be ideal, though are often underfunded or unfunded. An Australian example of a general mental health service is [Beyond Blue](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) (www.beyondblue.org.au), and an example of a LGBTIQ+ specific service is [Queerspace](http://www.queerspace.org.au) / [QLife](http://www.qlife.org.au) (www.queerspace.org.au, www.qlife.org.au).

## Further reading:

- ▼ National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).
- ▼ Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
- ▼ LGBT Foundation. [Ethical research: Good practice guide to researching LGBT communities and issues.](#)

### On distinguishing between sexual attraction and behaviour:

- ▼ Moseson H, Lunn MR, Katz A, Fix L, Durden M, Stoeffler A, et al. (2020) [Development of an affirming and customizable electronic survey of sexual and reproductive health experiences for transgender and gender nonbinary people.](#)

# *Bi+ 101*

## *Relevant Background Summary*

**“I call myself bisexual because I acknowledge that I have in myself the potential to be attracted—romantically and/or sexually—to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, not necessarily in the same way, and not necessarily to the same degree.”**

—Robyn Ochs



A list of simple definitions is presented below. However, it is important to note that people use labels and language in different ways and should be free to apply (or reject) a label for themselves. One might use multiple labels or no labels. Researchers should be mindful of how fluid these definitions may be, and navigate the tension between academic/analytic rigour, and the beauty of radical, queer expression.

## Definitions:

### *Bisexual*

Attraction to more than one gender

### *Pansexual*

Attraction regardless of gender

### *Omnisexual*

Attraction to all genders Monosexual – attraction to only one gender (gay/lesbian/straight or homosexual/heterosexual)

### *Bi+*

A current community driven umbrella term, including all multigender attracted people, regardless of chosen label

### *Plurisexual*

An academia driven umbrella term for multi-gender attracted identities

### *MGA*

Multi-Gender Attracted, describing a group of people who are not exclusively attracted to a single gender

### *Biphobia*

Discrimination and stigma specifically due to one being or perceived to be multigender attracted or having had partners of different genders. This can be internalised by bi+ people.

### *Monosexism*

The system under which being monosexual is prized over being bisexual/bi+, creating a hierarchical binary, leading to biphobia.

### *Bi Erasure*

The experience of bi+ people being left out, “invisible”, or unacknowledged. This ranges from people naming “homophobia and transphobia” and not listing or knowing about biphobia, to television/movie characters almost never using the word “bisexual” out loud (despite gay/lesbian characters more freely using those terms).

### *Dual Discrimination*

The experience of being “unwelcome everywhere”, not queer/gay enough for LGBTQIA+ spaces, not straight enough for mainstream spaces, receiving biphobia from all.

### *Minority Stress*

The term describing how experiences of being a marginalised minority, such as bi+ people in a biphobic culture, lead to chronic and acute stress.

#### **NOTE:**

Definitions evolve over time and are not arrived at by consensus, so for bi+ specific research, draw more deeply from a number of sources for more nuanced definitions.

# Common Bi+ Myths

**NOTE:** The following are biphobic myths and stereotypes, so please consider your wellbeing while reading and reflecting on them. Where you describe them in research, consider trigger/content warnings for biphobia.

## Bisexual people...

- ▼ Don't exist
- ▼ Are “going through” a phase/experimenting (usually assumed on the way to stable heterosexuality for women, and homosexuality for men)
- ▼ Haven't “made up their minds” or decided on a valid sexuality (gay/straight)
- ▼ Lie/will cheat on their partners
- ▼ Are hypersexual
- ▼ Are all non-monogamous/can't commit to one person
- ▼ Are dangerous/diseased/mentally ill/unstable (this ranges from the “bisexual serial killer” trope in media, to pathologisation in research and medical studies)
- ▼ Are only attracted to men and women/are transphobic/ means “50/50” attraction (sometimes used to divide Bisexual vs. Pansexual groups)
- ▼ Have “straight-passing privilege”
- ▼ Bi+ women are always interested in group sex/threesomes, and are “unicorns” for couples to use
- ▼ Bi+ men are “carriers” of HIV or other STIs (and a “gay risk” to the “straight community”)

**NOTE:** Bi+ people are also affected by homophobia, though sometimes in different ways to gay and lesbian people.

▼ *Further reading:* [Busting 7 myths about being bisexual](#) (Minus 18, 2022)



# Important Research & Survey Findings

- ▼ **There are more bisexual people than gay or lesbian people** (Richters et al., 2014).
- ▼ **Bi+ people disclose their sexual identity to others at lower rates than gay or lesbian people, and bi+ men disclose at the lowest rates of LGB people** (Dias, 2018; Hill et al., 2021).
- ▼ **Young people are more likely to identify as bi+ or multi-gender attracted than older people, and rates of identification are increasing over time** (Wilson & Shalley, 2018; Fisher et al., 2019).
- ▼ **There is a much higher prevalence of multi-gender attraction amongst trans and gender diverse people** (Strauss, 2017).
- ▼ **Bi+ people have high rates of anxiety, depression, and mental distress, including rates of suicidality, often higher than both gay/lesbian people and straight people** (Hill et al., 2021)
- ▼ **Bi+ people experience higher rates of homelessness and poverty than both gay/lesbian people and straight people** (Ross et al., 2016; McNair et al., 2017).
- ▼ **Bi+ people experience higher rates of sexual assault and intimate partner violence, especially bi+ women, and trans and nonbinary bi+ people** (Hill et al., 2021).
- ▼ **Bi+ people access mainstream services, often more so than LGBTQIA+ specialist services** (Hill et al., 2021).
- ▼ **Bi+ people smoke tobacco, drink alcohol, and use illicit drugs at high rates** (Praeger et al., 2019), often as a coping tool to deal with the stresses of other items in this list.
- ▼ **Bi+ specific organisations receive some of the least funding of LGBTQIA+ groups** (Lawther, 2022).
- ▼ **Bi+ people experience high rates of discrimination in dating, with many people refusing to consider dating a bisexual person (including both gay and straight men and women)** (Martino, 2021).
- ▼ **Bi+ people see less representation in media at all, and less positive representation or specifically “named” representation where it does exist. Negative attitudes towards bi+ people vary systematically, including by age, income, religion, education, and gender** (Anderson & Maugeri, 2022).

# References

- Allen, L. (2010). Queer (y) ing the straight researcher: The relationship (?) between researcher identity and anti-normative knowledge. *Feminism & Psychology, 20*(2), 147-165. doi: [10.1177/0959353509355146](https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509355146)
- Anderson, J., & Maugeri, J. (2022). Correlates of Attitudes Toward Bisexuality: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Homosexuality, 1*-34.
- Banks, N., Liddy, M. & van der Linden C. (2019). *Australia Talks National Survey*. Toronto: Vox Pop Labs Inc.. Ultimo, NSW: Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Beach, L. B., & Xavier Hall, C. D. (2020). Bi Us, For Us: Articulating foundational principles for research in partnership with bisexual communities. *Journal of bisexuality, 1*-22. doi: [10.1080/15299716.2020.1841478](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1841478)
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299. doi.org/10.2307/1229039
- Dias, A. (2018, August 1). Young bisexual men are the least likely to have come out, triple j survey finds. *Triple J Hack*. [www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/triple-j-whats-up-in-your-world-survey-on-coming-out-bisexual/10058348](http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/triple-j-whats-up-in-your-world-survey-on-coming-out-bisexual/10058348)
- Eisner, S. (2013). *Bi: Notes for a bisexual revolution*. Seal Press.
- Elgie, E. (2020). *Being and doing: interrogating dominant narratives of asexual kinship in an amatonormative culture* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).
- Engelberg, J. (2020). Stop Medicalising Bisexual Men. *Bisexual Research Group*. [www.bisexualresearch.com/bi-researcher-interviews/bimenarenotyoutexperiment](http://www.bisexualresearch.com/bi-researcher-interviews/bimenarenotyoutexperiment)
- Farquhar, M., & Dau, D. (2020). Real, visible, here: Bisexual+ visibility in Western Australia. *Critical Social Policy, 40*(2), 258-278. doi.org/10.1177/0261018319895674
- Fisher, C., Waling, A., Kerr, L., Bellamy, R., Ezer, P., Mikolajczak, M., et al., (2019). 6<sup>th</sup> National Survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health. *Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University*.
- Folkes, L. (2022). Moving beyond 'shopping list' positionality: Using kitchen table reflexivity and in/visible tools to develop reflexive qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*. doi.org/10.1177/14687941221098922
- Gallup Organization (2021). Gallup Poll Social Series: Americans' Self-Identified Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity. [news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx](https://news.gallup.com/poll/389792/lgbt-identification-ticks-up.aspx)
- Ghabrial, M.A. (2019). We can Shapeshift and Build Bridges: Bisexual Women and Gender Diverse People of Color on Invisibility and Embracing the Borderlands. *Journal of Bisexuality, 19* (2), 169-197. doi: [10.1080/15299716.2019.1617526](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1617526)
- Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). *Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia*. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Melbourne, Australia: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. [www.latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS/publications/private-lives/private-lives-3](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcsHS/publications/private-lives/private-lives-3)
- Hill, A., Lyons, A., Jones, J., McGowan, I., Carman, M., Parsons, M., Power, J., & Bourne, A. (2021). *Writing Themselves In 4: The health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ young people in Australia*. National report, monograph series number 124. Melbourne: Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. doi.org/10.26181/6010fad9b244b
- Iantaffi, A. & Barker, M (2019). *Life Isn't Binary: On Being Both, Beyond, and In-Between*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Islamic Council of Victoria (2017). ICV Guidelines for Muslim Community-University Research Partnership. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2017-09/apo-nid112136.pdf>
- Johnson, HJ. (2016). Bisexuality, mental health and media representation. *Journal of Bisexuality, 16*(3):378-96 doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1168335
- Lawther, A., Wallace, A., Howe, E., Frazer, S. (2022). 2019-2020 Resource Tracking Report. LGBTQ Grantmaking by U.S Foundations. *Funders for LGBTQ Issues*.
- LGBT Foundation. Ethical research: Good practice guide to researching LGBT communities and issues. <http://lgbt.foundation/downloads/EthicsGuide>
- Lyons, A., Anderson, J., Rasmussen, M. L., & Gray, E. (2020). Toward making sexual and gender diverse populations count in Australia. *Australian Population Studies, 4*(2), 14-29. doi: [10.37970/aps.v4i2.69](https://doi.org/10.37970/aps.v4i2.69)
- Lyons, A., Rasmussen, M. L., Anderson, J., & Gray, E. (2021). Counting gender and sexual identity in the Australian census. *Australian Population Studies, 5*(1), 40-48. doi: [10.37970/aps.v5i1.80](https://doi.org/10.37970/aps.v5i1.80)

- Management of Data and Information in Research: A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- McNair, R., Andrews, C., Parkinson, S., & Dempsey, S. (2017). *LGBTQ homelessness: Risks, resilience, and access to services in Victoria*. GALFA LGBTQ Homelessness Research Project.
- Minus 18. (2022) Busting 7 Myths about being Bisexual. <https://www.minus18.org.au/articles/busting-7-myths-about-being-bisexual>
- Mohr, J. M. (2008). Oppression by scientific method: The use of science to "Other" sexual minorities. *J. Hate Stud.*, 7, 21. doi: [10.33972/jhs.57](https://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.57)
- Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 28 (78), 331-347. doi: [10.1080/08164649.2013.876664](https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2013.876664)
- Moseson H, Lunn MR, Katz A, Fix L, Durden M, Stoeffler A, et al. (2020) Development of an affirming and customizable electronic survey of sexual and reproductive health experiences for transgender and gender nonbinary people. *PLoS ONE* 15(5): e0232154. doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0232154](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0232154)
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018). The National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
- Ochs, R. (2011). Why we need to "get bi". *Journal of Bisexuality*, 11(2-3), 171-175. doi: [10.1080/15299716.2011.571983](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.571983)
- Pallotta-Chiarolli, M. (2016). *Women in Relationships with Bisexual Men: Bi Men By Women*. Lexington Books.
- Paz Galupo, M., Taylor, S. M., & Cole Jr, D. (2019). "I Am Double The Bi": Positive Aspects of Being Both Bisexual and Biracial. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19(2), 152-168. doi: [10.1080/15299716.2019.1619066](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1619066)
- Praeger, R., Roxburgh, A., Passey, M., & Mooney-Somers, J. (2019). The prevalence and factors associated with smoking among lesbian and bisexual women: Analysis of the Australian National Drug Strategy Household Survey. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 70, 54-60. doi: [10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.03.028](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.03.028)
- Richters, J., Altman, D., Badcock, P. B., Smith, A. M., De Visser, R. O., Grulich, A. E., ... & Simpson, J. M. (2014). Sexual identity, sexual attraction and sexual experience: the Second Australian Study of Health and Relationships. *Sexual Health*, 11(5), 451-460. doi: [10.1071/SH14117](https://doi.org/10.1071/SH14117)
- Rosenberg, S., Carman, M., Power, J., & Taylor, J. (2021). Research Matters: Bisexuality, health and wellbeing. Melbourne (VIC): Rainbow Health Victoria, La Trobe University.
- Ross, L. E., O'Gorman, L., MacLeod, M. A., Bauer, G. R., MacKay, J., & Robinson, M. (2016). Bisexuality, poverty and mental health: A mixed methods analysis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 156, 64-72. doi: [10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.03.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.03.009)
- San Francisco Human Rights Commission LGBT Advisory Committee (2011). *Bisexual invisibility: Impacts and recommendations*. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Human Rights Commission.
- Scales Rostosky, S., Riggle, E. D., Pascale-Hague, D., & McCants, L. E. (2010). The positive aspects of a bisexual self-identification. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 1(2), 131-144. doi: [10.1080/19419899.2010.484595](https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2010.484595)
- Shaw, J. (2022). *Bi: The Hidden Culture, History and Science of Bisexuality*. Canongate Books.
- Smith, L. Tuhiwai (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Strauss, P., Cook, A., Winter, S., Watson, V., Wright Toussaint, D., Lin, A. (2017). [Trans Pathways: the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people. Summary of results](https://www.transstudies.org/gender). Telethon Kids Institute, Perth, Australia.
- Erica Friedman, Florida International University. (2020; Modified Version) "The Flying Gender Unicorn". Original version: Landyn Pan and Anna Moor, Trans Student Educational Resources (2015). "The Gender Unicorn." <http://www.transstudent.org/gender>.
- Van Anders, S. M. (2015). Beyond sexual orientation: Integrating gender/sex and diverse sexualities via sexual configurations theory. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 44(5), 1177-1213. doi: [10.1007/s10508-015-0490-8](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0490-8)
- Wilson, T., Shalley, F. (2018). [Estimates of Australia's non-heterosexual population](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-018-0490-8). *Australian Population Studies* 2(1), 26 – 38.
- Xiberras, A. (2018). Welcome to country. In M. Pallotta-Chiarolli (Ed). *Living and loving in diversity: an anthology of Australian multicultural queer adventures*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press



# Appendix A

Template for asking about sexual orientation quantitatively. Q1 and 2 use the template from *Private Lives 3* (Hill et al., 2021).

**Q1. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation (Choose as many as apply)?**

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Heterosexual
- Prefer not to have a label
- Prefer not to say
- Do not know
- Something different
  - o Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Q2. For the purposes of this survey, if you had to choose only one way to describe your sexual orientation, what would you choose? [Only appears for those who selected multiple responses in the previous question]**

- Lesbian
- Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- Heterosexual
- Prefer not to have a label
- Prefer not to say
- Do not know
- Something different
- I cannot choose
  - o Please describe\_\_\_\_\_

**Q3. Are you sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one gender? (i.e. men and women, women and nonbinary people, etc.)**

- Yes
- No, I am only attracted to one gender

# Appendix B

Suggested template for asking about sexual and romantic attraction.

**Q1. Which of the following best describes who you are sexually attracted to (Choose as many as apply)?**

- Men
- Women
- Non-Binary people
- No one
- Prefer not to say
- Do not know
- Something different
  - o Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

**Q2. Which of the following best describes who you are romantically attracted to (Choose as many as apply)?**

- Men
- Women
- Non-Binary people
- No one
- Prefer not to say
- Do not know
- Something different
  - o Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C

Checklist for research with bi+ communities.

- I am familiar with relevant definitions and terminology
- I have designed my study and am considering the above document regarding the type of research I will be conducting (e.g., quantitative, qualitative)
- I understand which sexual minority group(s) my research will focus on, and I have clear understanding of who this group is, and why I have made this decision
- I have reflected on my positionality (e.g., a part of this group or not, and level of knowledge / connectedness)
- I am familiar with common myths about this group, and have worked to avoid perpetuating them in my study
- I have read *Bi Us, For Us* (2020) and *Guidelines for Researching and Writing About Bisexuality* (Barker et. al., 2012) in addition to the above guidelines
- I have reflected on any power imbalances present (e.g., between research and participant)
- I have considered intersections of age, gender (including gender history), ethnicity and neurodiversity/autism within my sample and the literature
- My research is trans, non-binary and gender diverse inclusive
- My research is inclusive of First Nations and people of colour
- The language used in **all** my research is inclusive and respectful, and avoids 'othering' (ethics applications, explanatory statement, advertising and recruitment, informed consent documents, surveys, debriefing, reports etc.)
- I have consulted theory and research specific to the group I am exploring
- I have reflected on my research aims and considered whether my intention is to examine sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or sexual behaviours
- I have reflected on why I am asking what I am asking and whether it is possible to ask this qualitatively or via multi-select questions
- I have used open ended and/or multi select questions where possible
- I am informed about bi+ history including historical discrimination generally and tension within LGBTIQ+ communities
- My research does not reinforce stigma or victim blaming
- I have engaged with the bi+ community throughout my research and have reimbursed consultants appropriately
- I have provided contact details for general and LGBTIQ+ specific mental health services
- My research benefits bi+ populations

