

# Sexual Identity in Today's World & Church

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# The Sexual & Gender Identity Institute

**SGI is comprised of professionals who conduct research on sexual or gender identity and faith to help further our understanding of these complex experiences for individuals, to be a resource to families navigating these experiences; and to be a resource to Christian institutions (e.g., churches, colleges and universities, campgrounds, parachurch ministries, and so on) as they make decisions about these topics and how to best serve others.**

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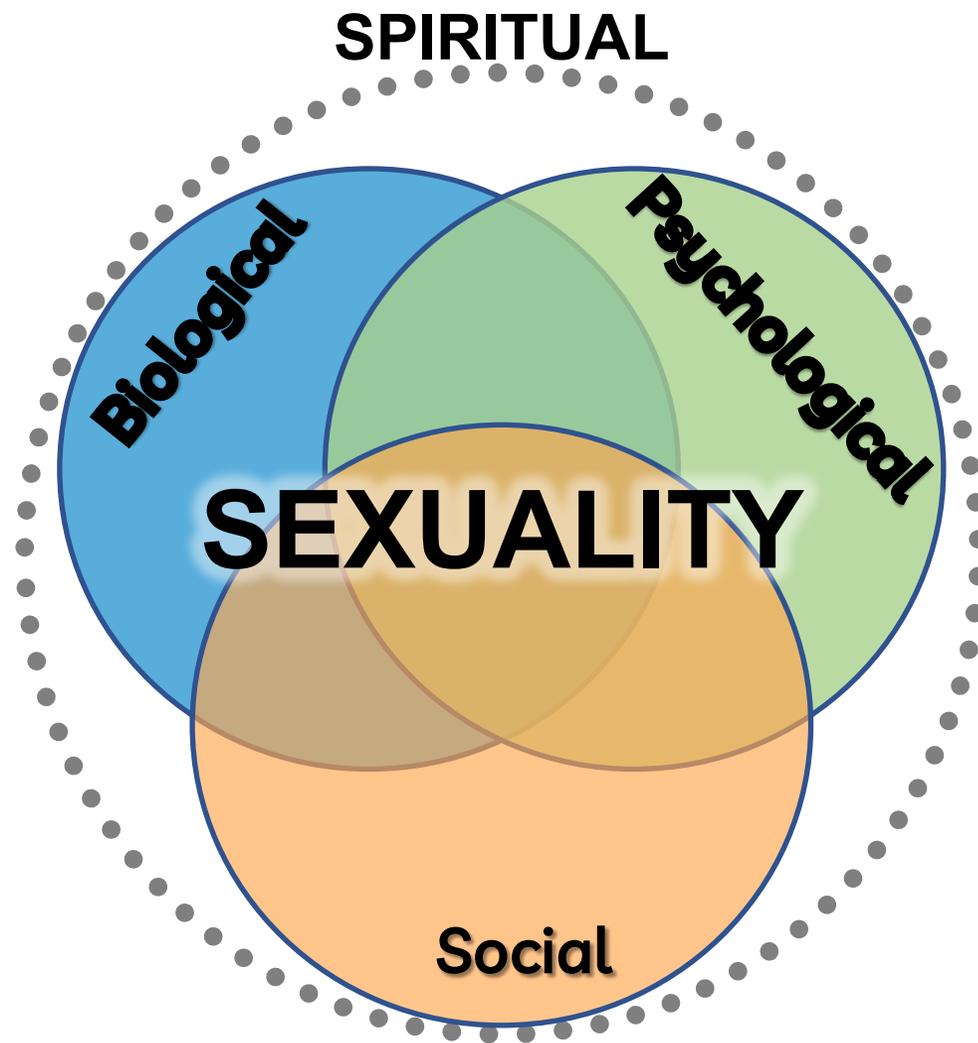
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# Getting Theologically Grounded

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# Key Theological Points

- 1 Human Sexuality is Good.**
- 2 Our Bodies are Good.**
- 3 Our Desire for Intimate Relationships is Good.**
- 4 But Sin Twists and Distorts All of It.**
- 5 We Have the Power Through the Spirit to Steward Our Sexuality.**

# Seeing the Trends in Sexual Identity

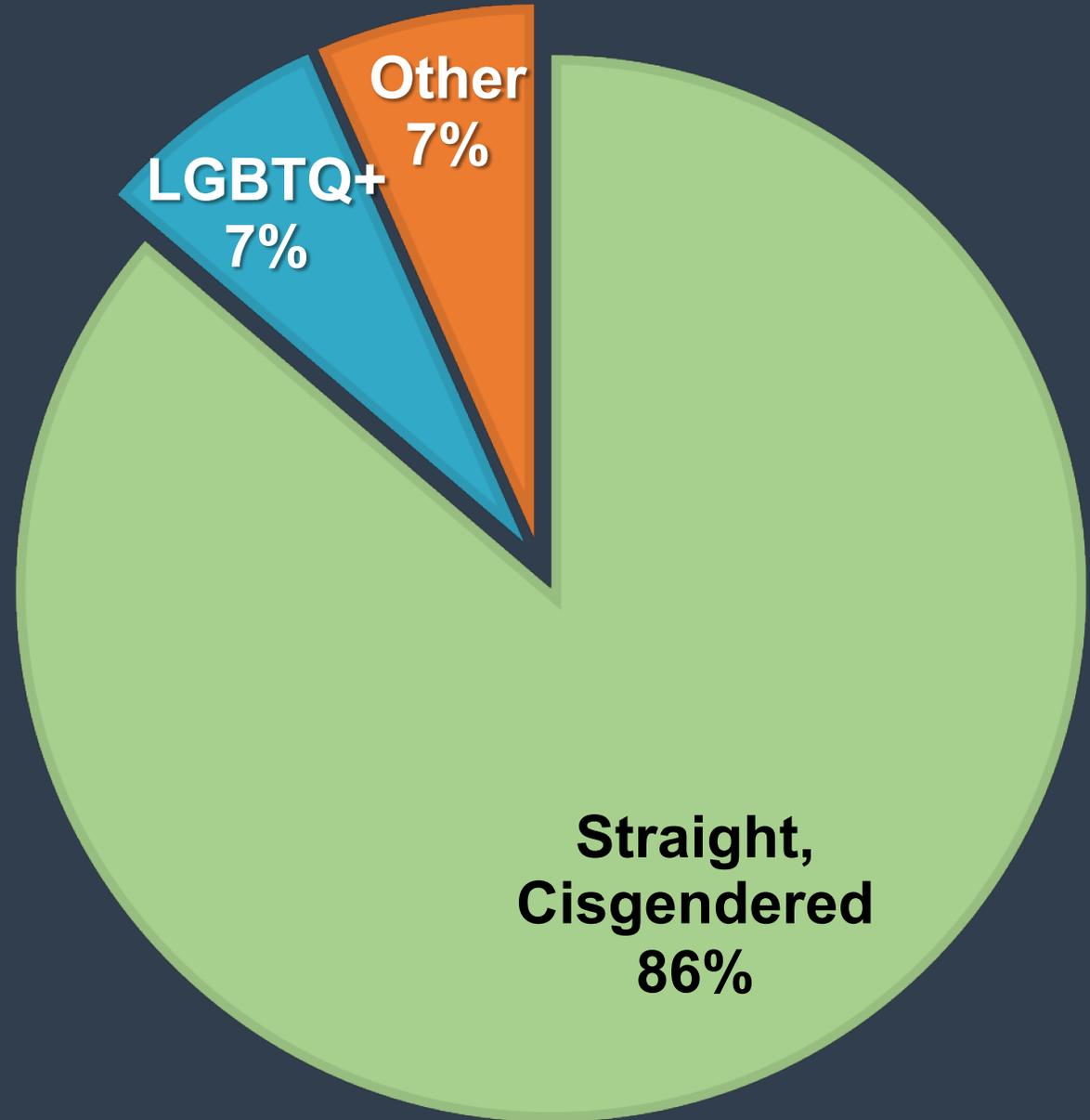
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# Gallup Poll

February 2022





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**About 0.7 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds living in the U.S. identify as transgender** (Williams Institute, UCLA, 2018).

**Teen girls are showing the fastest increasing prevalence rates – up 4400% between 2007 and 2017**

(Littman, 2018).

Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social and cultural influences on sexual orientation, *no findings have emerged* that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors.

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American Psychological Association, 2019

Many think that  
*nature and nurture both*  
play complex roles;  
most people experience  
*little or no sense of choice*  
about their sexual orientation.

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**American Psychological Association, 2019**

# Ministering to Sexual Minorities

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**What is gained and what is lost  
in relying on theological statements  
regarding sexual ethics to function as  
pastoral care and outreach?**

# Where Pastoral Care Falls Short

- **Oversimplifies causation**
  - **Offers trite solutions**
  - **Forces rigid gender stereotypes**
  - **Doesn't engage media**
  - **Claims this is worst sin**
- **Doesn't work with other medical professionals**
  - **Ignores diversity**
  - **Never asks about experiences**
  - **Focuses on behavior instead of transformation**

A landscape of cracked, dry earth under a dramatic, orange-hued sky at sunset or sunrise. The foreground is dominated by a network of deep, dark cracks in the parched soil, with some sparse, dry grasses growing in the crevices. The middle ground shows a flat, cracked expanse leading to a range of low, dark mountains on the horizon. The sky is filled with heavy, dark clouds, with a bright, glowing light source (the sun) breaking through the clouds in the center, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene with a warm, golden-orange light. The overall mood is one of desolation and hope.

**You play an important role in people navigating faith and sexual identity:**



*Be Intentional*

# Intentionally Secure

*Co-create a predictable and trustworthy atmosphere that reduces anxieties and fear-based ways of being with one another.*

- Language
- Facilities
- Policies
- Boundaries

**Environment**

- “Special Case”
- Family Centered Ministries

**Structure**

- Judgment & Condemnation
- Stereotypes
- Threat of Loss

**Attitudes**

# Intentionally Relational

*Become a source  
of hospitality  
and friendship*

- 1 *Exhibit Relational Qualities*
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

“Soul hosts prepare for their gift of hospitality by cultivating a place of quiet within themselves. This is the place where they will receive others. If I have no such place within myself, I am unable to offer myself in a gift of hospitality. But when I have begun to be a person with a quiet still center, I can invite others to come and rest there.”

David Benner, *Sacred Companions*

# Becoming Soul Hosts

# Intentionally Relational

- 1 *Exhibit Relational Qualities*
- 2 *Cultivate Friendships, including  
Spiritual Friendships*
- 3 *Practice Good Listening*
- 4
- 5

**To listen is very hard, because it asks of us so much interior stability that we no longer need to prove ourselves by speeches, arguments, statements, or declarations.**

**True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known.  
They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept.**

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**Henri Nouwen**

# Intentionally Relational

- 1 *Exhibit Relational Qualities*
- 2 *Cultivate Friendships, including Spiritual Friendships*
- 3 *Practice Good Listening*
- 4 *Give Micro-Affirmations*
- 5 *Meet Needs for Belonging & Intimacy*

# Intentionally Formational

*Foster a discipling atmosphere in which people are “held” so that they learn how to “hold” complex aspects of personhood*

- Discipleship
- Seeing Self in God’s Story
- Holy Sexuality

**Orthodoxy**

- Stewardship
- Discernment of Vocational Singleness
- Alternatives

**Orthopraxy**

- Address Shame
- Lament
- Self-Acceptance
- Grace to Self

**Orthocardia**



**EXIT 13**

**EXIT 12**

Faith



**22**



**21**

Sexuality

**1 MILE**

**1 MILE**



# Intentionally Trinitarian

- **The “perichoretic” balance of community, emphasizing self-giving & self-limiting love.**
- **The human need for support and challenge for all in the sanctifying journey.**



**A biblically faithful starting point +  
Compassion and empathy +  
Ability to speak into identity & community**

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**= A more nuanced approach to ministry**