Why is sexual diversity a human right?

‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights

According to the UN [1], ‘Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible’.

Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents. Like heterosexual people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people are entitled to the same rights as those of other human beings.

For example, as far back as 1994 and 1995 respectively, the United Nations' (UN) International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women debated the concepts of sexual health and rights and reproductive health and committed to enshrining rights that incorporate the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and trans people.

Despite these important landmarks and the existence of numerous international treaties on human rights, people who do not conform to gender expectations (that make assumptions about how men and women should behave, the work they should do and the ways they express themselves), or sexual expectations (about who men and women should be attracted to) experience stigma and violence. Harmful expectations about gender and sexuality are sometimes created by a government's national laws and policies, and they can also be reinforced by cultural and religious organisations. Equally, cultural and religious organisations play a powerful role in challenging stigma and promoting equality and justice; and laws can also be changed, or implemented, to protect the rights of all people regardless of their sexuality and gender identity.


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