# Everything you ever wanted to know about asexuality… but were afraid to ask



A recent study conducted by King's College London sheds light on the misconceptions surrounding asexuality, revealing that a significant portion of the population holds inaccurate beliefs about the orientation. The study, which surveyed 400 people, found that approximately one-third, or 31 per cent, of respondents believed that asexuality could be "cured" through therapy. This reflects a broader trend of ignorance and misunderstanding faced by those in the asexual community.

Asexuality is characterised by a lack of sexual attraction to others and plays a vital role in the diversity of sexual orientations. According to the 2021 Census, there are around 28,000 individuals in England and Wales who identify as asexual. Despite this, Yasmin Benoit, an asexual activist and co-author of the study, highlighted the prevalence of misconceptions surrounding the orientation. Speaking to the Independent, Benoit noted, “It’s kind of like a rite of passage. I’ve been hearing things like this since I was 14, and now sometimes 300 times a month or so on social media.”

The study further revealed that 26 per cent of respondents believed that asexual individuals simply needed to meet the right person, while 11 per cent denied the existence of asexuality entirely. This contributes to a troubling landscape where misconceptions are not only widespread but also openly expressed, often at a higher rate than towards other sexual orientations. Benoit expressed concern over the tendency for society to medicalise asexuality, stating that “people will happily say that to asexual people” while refraining from applying similar reasoning to other sexual identities.

Benoit recounted her experiences of disbelief when she first identified as asexual in her teenage years, with many dismissing her claims and asserting that asexuality was not a legitimate identity. She advocates for the inclusion of asexuality in sex education, arguing that young people should have the opportunity to learn about the orientation in a supportive environment rather than having to navigate their understanding of it online.

Michael Sanders, a professor of public policy at King's College London, voiced his concerns about the implications of the findings. He remarked that the data is alarming, indicating a prevalence of misconceptions about asexuality, and noted that “as many as one in four interactions are with people who believe that their sexual orientation is a mental illness, or something that can be cured.”

Additionally, two in five participants expressed the belief that individuals could not be asexual if they had sexual relations. This reflects a misunderstanding of the spectrum of sexual orientations and the complexities inherent in human sexuality.

Notably, asexuality is not currently recognised under the UK Equality Act 2010, which means asexual individuals do not have the same protections against hate crimes as members of other sexual orientations. The implications of this lack of legal recognition are significant, contributing to the challenges faced by the asexual community, as the research also indicated that individuals who identify as asexual report lower levels of wellbeing compared to those who do not.

As conversations around sexual orientation continue to evolve, the findings from this study highlight the pressing need for increased awareness and understanding of asexuality, along with a call for its inclusion in educational curricula to foster a more inclusive environment for all sexual orientations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.publicnow.com/view/0AAAF6DC9D1F2CFBCF9D3FE89D36CA5D1B8CC646?1738889231> - This article supports the claim that asexuality faces considerable ignorance and intolerance, with many people holding misconceptions about the orientation. It highlights the prevalence of beliefs that asexuality can be 'cured' through therapy.
* <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/women-dancing-on-the-edge-of-time(2d009689-1f4e-4b5f-97e2-445baed4b553).html> - This thesis abstract from King's College London provides context on asexuality as a sexual orientation category, which is relevant to the study's focus on misconceptions surrounding asexuality.
* <https://www.asexuality.org/en/topic/115136-self-identified-asexual-women-sought-for-a-study-that-explores-experiences-of-sexuality-and-becoming-women/> - This link relates to research on asexuality, highlighting the ongoing interest in studying and understanding asexual experiences, which aligns with the need for increased awareness discussed in the article.
* <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents> - This URL provides access to the UK Equality Act 2010, which does not currently recognize asexuality, leading to a lack of legal protections for asexual individuals.