

SURVEY: Lesbians and Gender Roles



100 Completed Responses

5 questions total (survey on p. 6)

INTERESTING DISCOVERIES

- 52% of lesbians prefer to date feminine lesbians, however, only 38% of lesbians in this survey report being more feminine
- 73% of masculine lesbians prefer feminine lesbians, yet only 26% of feminine lesbians prefer masculine lesbians
- Pet care seems to be the most evenly shared responsibility among all gender-identified lesbians.

SURVEY SUMMARY

The second survey in the AskLesbians.com series addresses the topic of lesbians and gender roles as they relate to lesbian relationships. This five-question survey inquires about how lesbians self-identify their behavior in terms of masculine, feminine, or a combination of both, as well as what types of women lesbians are most attracted to, and the roles they play in relationship with one another.

Survey participants were asked to describe their gender. To clarify, gender is our sense of our self as male, female, somewhere in between, neither, either or both. Our sex, on the other hand, is our biological status as male or female. It has been said that gender is from the neck up, and sex is from the neck down.

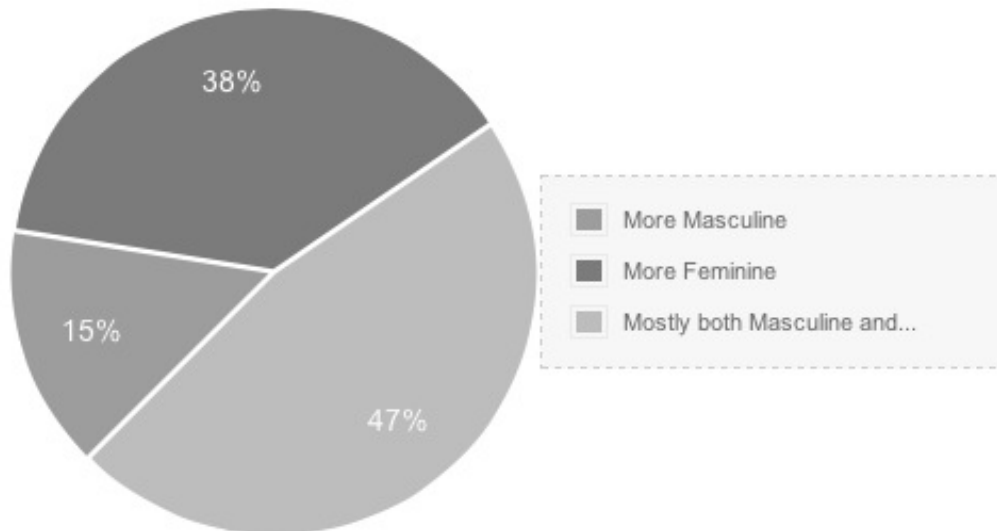
SURVEY RESULTS

In this survey, seventy-eight women report they were born female, and identify as female. Seven-percent were born male and identify as female. Two-percent were born female and identify as male. Five-percent report being born female yet identify as neither male nor female, while seven-percent indicate they were born female and identify as both male and female. One participant identifies as intersex (having biological characteristics of both genders).

	Response Percent	Response Count
Born female and identify as female	78.0%	78
Born male and identify as female	7.0%	7
Born female and identify as male	2.0%	2
Born female and identify as neither male nor female	5.0%	5
Born female and identify as both male and female	7.0%	7
Born with an intersex condition (biological sex characteristics of both genders)	1.0%	1

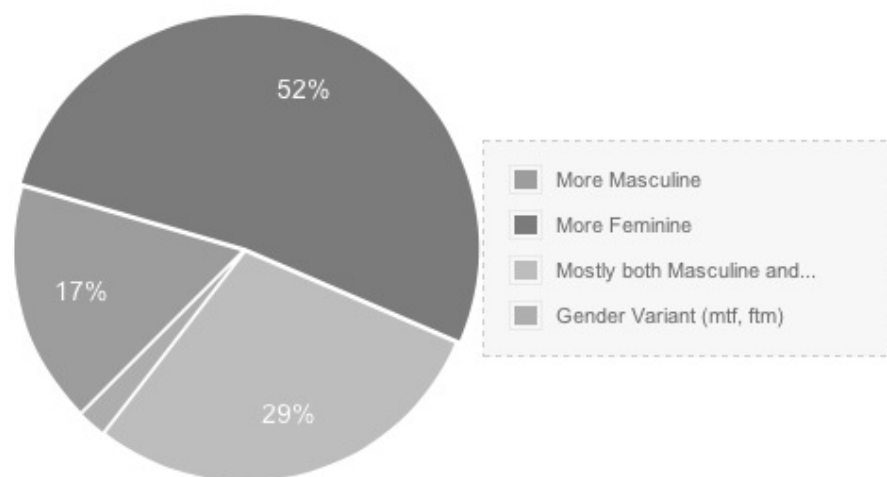
Gender Behavior Identification

Of the 100 responses, thirty-eight percent identify as more feminine, fifteen percent identify as more masculine and forty-seven percent identify as mostly both masculine and feminine.



Most Attractive Gender Behaviors to Lesbians

When it comes to lesbians and which gender behaviors lesbians are most attracted to, the feminine lesbians are at the top of the list with fifty-two percent of lesbians preferring to date more feminine lesbians. The next most desirable group in this survey includes lesbians with a mixture of masculine and feminine behaviors. Seventeen-percent of lesbians report having a preference for dating more masculine behaving women.



Dating Preferences by Gender

As mentioned above, the most desirable group of lesbians to date according to this survey is, in order, more feminine (52%), mostly both (29%), followed by more masculine (17%) with gender variant representing one-percent. When it comes to which self-identified lesbians and which gender behaviors of lesbians they are most likely to want to date there are several possible combinations of gender roles. The strongest combination of gender attractions reported in this survey is masculine identified lesbians who are attracted to feminine lesbians (73%). The next most reported combinations of attraction are from feminine lesbians who are attracted to feminine lesbians (53%). The mostly masculine and feminine lesbians attracted to feminine lesbians (45%) and the mostly masculine and feminine lesbians attracted to other masculine and feminine lesbians (45%) are tied for the third most reported combination of attractions based on gender behaviors.

Interestingly, when you consider the highest desired combination of attractions is masculine women to feminine women (73%), the opposite does not hold true. Only twenty-six percent of feminine women report desiring to date masculine lesbians, and even fewer feminine lesbians desire to date women with a combination of masculine and feminine behaviors (18%).

Self-identified gender behaviors and the correlating attractions

Self-identified behavior + gender behavior most attracted to = percent in this category

1. Masculine + Feminine = 73%
2. Feminine + Feminine = 53%
3. Masculine/Feminine + Feminine = 45%
4. Masculine/Feminine + Masculine/Feminine = 45%
5. Feminine + Masculine= 26%
6. Masculine + Masculine = 20%
7. Feminine + Masculine/Feminine = 18%
8. Masculine + Masculine/Feminine = 7%
9. Masculine/Feminine + Masculine = 9%

	More Masculine	More Feminine	Mostly both Masculine and Feminine	Gender Variant (mtf, ftm)	Response Count
More Masculine	20.0% (3)	73.33% (11)	6.67% (1)	0.0% (0)	15
More Feminine	26.32% (10)	52.63% (20)	18.42% (7)	2.63% (1)	38
Mostly both Masculine and Feminine	8.51% (4)	44.68% (21)	44.68% (21)	2.13% (1)	47

Of the women who identify as more masculine, eighty-eight percent were born female and identify as female. Six percent were born female and identify as neither male or female, and six percent also identify as both male and female. None of the lesbians who identify with more masculine behaviors in this survey indicate identifying as a male. This would suggest that contrary to some myths, masculine lesbians, do not identify as men.

About Masculine-Identified Lesbians (15%)

As for actual gender behaviors as they relate to how a lesbian self-identifies her gender, masculine identified lesbians report the strongest division of roles in their relationships. Topping the charts for home and car maintenance (67%) and lawn care (53%) are masculine identified lesbians. However, contrary to stereotypes of masculine behavior, only twenty seven percent of masculine-identified lesbians report being primary breadwinners. As for cleaning, cooking, childcare and creating social plans, or the sharing masculine identified lesbians are not the best pick with only twenty percent or less who report engaging in these behaviors.

About Mostly both masculine and feminine identified lesbians (48%)

As for lesbians who identify as both masculine and feminine, the most commonly reported behaviors are expressing feelings (57%) and initiating sex (49%), and primary bread winner (45%). This group reports the most evenly distributed responsibilities, with lawn care (38%), creating social plans (38%) and grocery shopping (38%) and home / car maintenance (43%) occurring at similar rates. In fact, every category is solidly above 30% except childcare, which, as it turns out is not a helpful category for this survey because it is unknown how many of these women even have children, which is obviously relevant. Surprisingly, given the even distribution of behaviors noted, only twenty percent of these lesbians report sharing most tasks.

About feminine identified lesbians (37%)

The most commonly reported behaviors by feminine identified lesbians are grocery shopping (45%) and expressing feelings (47%). The least reported behavior for feminine women is primary breadwinner (18%) with initiating sex (21%). Twenty-nine percent of feminine identified lesbians report sharing most tasks. This is higher than any of the three groups studied. Over 40 percent feminine lesbians report creating social plans, expressing feelings and doing the grocery shopping.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

In this survey, participants were invited to share their observations about the differences they perceive between lesbian relationships and heterosexual relationships as it relates to gender roles.

Of forty-eight comments, I synthesized similar comments to create a picture of what lesbians perceive about their relationship roles compared to heterosexual relationships.

The top response centers on the idea that lesbians have less emphasis on gender roles in their relationships when it comes to the responsibilities associated with living together. Thirty-eight percent of the comments analyzed use words such as “choice,” “freedom,” “undefined,” “whoever’s best at” to describe how the division of labor is assigned in lesbian relationships. Twenty-three percent say there are no differences between heterosexual and lesbian gender roles. Only two percent indicate they do think there are gender-based roles in lesbian relationships.

CONCLUSIONS

- Feminine lesbians are best positioned for dating. They are the most desired by all groups, but there are less of them than there are women desiring them, so supply and demand is on your side if you are a feminine lesbian.
- If you want to increase the chances of having a partner who will initiate sex, and discuss her feelings, find a partner who is both masculine and feminine.
- If you want a partner who is going to take charge of home and car maintenance, including lawn care, choose a more masculine partner.
- If you want your partner to be the primary breadwinner, pick a lesbian who is both masculine and feminine, and do not select a mostly feminine partner.
- Lesbians take care of their pets.
- If you include childcare on a survey, be sure to determine whether participants have children or not.

PARTICIPATING IN FUTURE SURVEYS

Michele O’Mara, PhD is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Board Certified Clinical Sexologist practicing in the state of Indiana with lesbians throughout the U.S. (thanks to skype and the like). These surveys are designed to learn more about lesbians, and to establish a better understanding of the diversity of lesbians in love and in life. **If you are a lesbian and you would like to participate in the next survey, please join my newsletter** where you will find the information about and links to future surveys. **Please contact me if you have topics or questions you would like to see included on a future survey.**

ACTUAL SURVEY

1. Which of the following best describes your behaviors?*

- More Masculine
- More Feminine
- Mostly both Masculine and Feminine

2. Are you more likely to date women who are?*

- More Masculine
- More Feminine
- Mostly both Masculine and Feminine
- Gender Variant (mtf, ftm)

3. In your current relationship with a woman (or most previous relationship with a woman), which of the following are behaviors more typical of you than your partner?*

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Home/Car maintenance
- Primary Breadwinner
- Pet Care
- Lawn care
- Childcare
- Initiating Sex
- Creating social plans
- Expressing my feelings
- Grocery shopping
- None of the above, we typically share most tasks

4. How do you think gender roles are different for lesbian couples than for heterosexual couples?

5. Which gender status best describes you?*

- Born female and identify as female
- Born male and identify as female
- Born female and identify as male
- Born female and identify as neither male nor female
- Born female and identify as both male and female
- Born with an intersex condition (biological sex characteristics of both genders)